THE IDEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MONKEYS IN THE MAYA WORLD: AN ETHNOARCHAEOLOGICAL APPROACH

By Abigail Lewis

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Approved:

Jaime Awe, Ph.D., Chair

Gavin Healey, Ph.D.

Nicole A. Rose, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

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ABIGAIL LEWIS

Monkeys are a part of the lived experiences, culture, and cosmology of the Maya. This is evident through their appearance in Maya creation narratives, Maya art, and occasionally burial contexts. Despite their apparent importance in Maya ideology, however, previous research on the subject of monkeys in the Maya world has primarily focused on their primatological, linguistic, and archaeological significance. Unlike these previous studies, this research follows an ethnoarchaeological framework that weaves together monkey iconographic themes as they appear fixed archaeologically and manifest actively through revitalized dances and traditions outlawed in the past. With the analysis of prominent iconographic themes depicted in Classic period imagery, connections are made to iconography present in monkey-related artifacts collected through the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project (BVAR). In addition, by conducting qualitative ethnographic research with participants at a revitalized traditional deer and monkey dance, this research also explores and connects to the active representation of monkeys as characters and figures in a postcolonial context. With the incorporation of semiotics-based and decolonial-influenced perspectives, the ideological and indexical importance of monkeys show the unbroken connections to monkeys in the Maya world between the past, present, and future.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

For more than a century, monkey imagery and myths associated with monkeys have been recorded by both archaeologists and cultural anthropologists working in the Maya world. During the Contact period in the 17th century, Spanish priests and authors recorded several myths and traditional dances in which monkeys play prominent and significant roles in Maya culture. One of these includes the myth of the Hero Twins, where the second pair of twins transform their half-brothers into monkeys. In addition, monkeys are thought to be evolved from the survivors of the second creation and destruction of humans by the creator gods. They also recorded Maya languages and even epigraphic materials that depict monkeys. More contemporary ethnographic sources have written about the traditional dances that include monkeys, which are still performed in traditional Maya communities in southern Belize and Guatemala.

In an archaeological context, many examples of monkey-related artifacts exist within the Maya world. Most of these include ceramics, but there are also representations on cave walls, and effigies made from wood, stone, and clay. Very rarely, monkey remains have also been discovered in burials and caches. Most of the information about monkeys in the Maya world have existed within separate mediums. Building on ethnohistorical evidence, which includes narratives of monkeys in both the recordings of the Popol Vuh and the Maya creation narrative, we can expand to both another form of evidence in the past (archaeology) and evidence of the present (ethnography).

This thesis functions as a way to help blend and weave together two main mediums, ethnography and archaeology. Ethnography serves as a necessary piece in order to explore community insight and emic perspectives about monkeys, through both oral traditions and the

continuation of monkey-related dances (such as the Deer Dance). The archaeological piece of this project explores the material evidence that depict monkeys in the Maya world mainly during the Classic period (600-900 C.E), taking into account their corresponding contexts and associations. Both of these main mediums have rich evidence that paint a picture of an important ideological significance that monkeys held (and continue to hold) in Maya culture.

This thesis seeks to address three main questions:

1. What significance is accorded to monkeys in the ethnohistoric and ethnographic literature, and in archaeological remains?
2. What is the role of monkeys in revitalized dances and oral traditions according to emic Maya perspectives?
3. What main iconographic themes related to monkeys are evident on ceramic art, and how are those themes reflected in the context and association of artifacts depicting monkeys in western Belize?
4. What semiotic connections can be made between ethnographic and archaeological representations of monkeys, and how do these connections point to larger ideologies that continue to be manifested in present day Maya culture, cosmology, and creation myths?

In this thesis, my central question revolves around the presence of iconography (similar and repetitive artistic representations of monkeys) and their contexts (where they are found). My main focus is to observe where monkeys are found and how they are represented in ethnohistoric, archaeological, and ethnographic contexts. Looking at iconography in Classic Maya art, I am focused on central themes of how monkeys are depicted and their associations.

This creates a larger question of "What is the significance of monkeys in Maya art?". Going deeper into the significance of monkeys in Maya art, I am looking for consistencies and connections between iconographic themes depicting monkeys in both ethnographic and archaeological contexts to distinguish larger ideologies of monkeys in Maya culture. In terms of archaeological evidence, this means interpreting the iconographic themes depicting monkeys, as well as the context and association of the physical artifacts and provenience (when available) that have been characterized as 'simian' or with 'monkey-like features'.

The representation of monkeys, in an iconographic sense, is not limited to the past or the remains left behind in the archaeological record. The Maya continue to practice traditional dances and ceremonies, honoring the creation of the world, of humans, and of animals. A number of traditional dances include monkeys as necessary and important characters of cultural and cosmological significance. Historical and ethnographic evidence suggests that traditional Maya monkey dances, or dances that featured monkeys, were considered taboo and outlawed as a result of Spanish Contact and influences by Catholic priests and ideals. In certain parts of the Maya world, these dances ceased to be practiced for a significant period of time. However, many communities brought back these dances, despite the historical taboo and perception of monkeys through Catholic influences. By looking at the nature of dance as a more physical form of iconography, I want to explore the constant nature of representation of an animal, despite its associations with licentiousness and trickster behavior, in a postcolonial world. With the implementation of a dual approach led by ethnographic evidence, conversations with the Maya community of Santa Cruz at a Cacao Festival in June 2023, and supported by the archaeological presence of monkey iconography in Western Belize, this research highlights the necessity of Indigenous, emic perspectives within archaeological interpretation of iconography.

This thesis is composed of eight main sections and chapters in order to examine monkeys in the Maya world from a general, more biological and ecological perspective to a more varied and in-depth look at their iconographic and ideological significance.

Chapter 2 paints a contemporary picture of the common species of monkey in the Maya world and the cultural relationship between the Maya and monkeys. The political and ritual significance of animals within the Maya past and present is also explored. Previous research covering the iconographic study of monkeys in greater Mesoamerica covers the last part of this chapter.

Chapter 3 (Theory-Informed Methods) highlights the main theoretical framework and ethnoarchaeological methods used in this research. This chapter outlines the implementation of pragmatics and Decolonial-led frameworks within both the archaeological and ethnographic methods and further analysis. Chapter 4 (Ethnohistoric and Ethnographic Insight: Monkeys in Maya Culture) provides a deeper look at the interpretation of monkeys in ethnohistory through a colonial lens and provides emic insight concerning Maya cosmology, creation narratives, and in traditional dance. This chapter also highlights the outlawed nature of monkey-related dances starting in the Contact period and the relatively recent revitalization of these dances in the Maya world. Chapter 5 (The Deer Dance) is an ethnographic chapter that serves to bring Indigenous, emic perspectives to the forefront of monkey iconographic analysis through embodied knowledge and oral traditions. This chapter outlines the setting of the Cacao Festival and the continued practice of the Deer Dance at Santa Cruz Village in Belize through community insight and participant observation.

Chapter 6 (Archaeological Evidence of Monkeys in Maya Culture: Artifacts from The Western Belize Regional Cave Project (WBRCP), The Belize Valley Archaeological

Reconnaissance Project (BVAR), and the Justin Kerr MayaVase Database) covers the presence, context, and associations of Classic period monkey artifacts found through WBRCP and BVAR. In addition, the results of common iconographic themes attributed to monkey imagery within the Justin Kerr collection of Classic ceramics is introduced. This leads to Chapter 7, which dives deeper into the analysis of iconographic themes associated monkeys across ethnohistoric, archaeological, and ethnographic mediums. This analysis weaves in pragmatics and Decolonial-influenced perspectives in order to observe the dialectical relationship between monkey iconography and meaning based on context, as well as the revitalization and cultural continuity of monkey-related practices in a postcolonial setting. The last part of this chapter acts as a section that summarizes the main connections made between archaeological and ethnographic examples of monkey iconography and representation. Finally, Chapter 8 acts as a concluding chapter where the elements introduced throughout the course of this thesis are re-addressed and research questions are answered. With a focus on positionality and reflexivity, this chapter also expands on possible future directions of research and the importance of Tribal Survivance.

Monkeys in the Lives and Landscapes of the Maya

The two main types of monkeys that inhabit the Maya region are howler monkeys (*Alouatta palliata* and *Alouatta pigra*) and spider monkeys (*Ateles geoffroyi*). There is also some evidence of Capuchin monkeys (*Cebus capucinus*) seen in parts of the Maya world, such as in Honduras (Baker 2013:2). The Yucatan black howler (*Alouatta pigra*) is found all over Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico, the main regions where the Maya lived and established large, interconnected cities across the landscape (Reid 1997, Rylands et al. 2006:55). Of spider monkey species within the subfamily of Atelidae, Geoffroy's spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*), the

Mexican spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi vellerosus*), and the Yucatan spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi yucatanensis*) are distributed across the modern countries of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Mexico (Rylands et al. 2006:56,63,65).

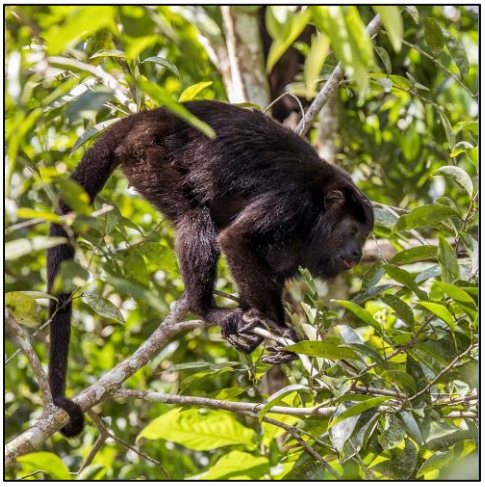


Figure 1 and 2 : *Alouatta pigra* (Yucatan black howler monkey) (left) and Ateles geoffroyi (Geoffroy's spider monkey) (right). Courtesy of Thomas Hirsch and Charles J. Sharp.

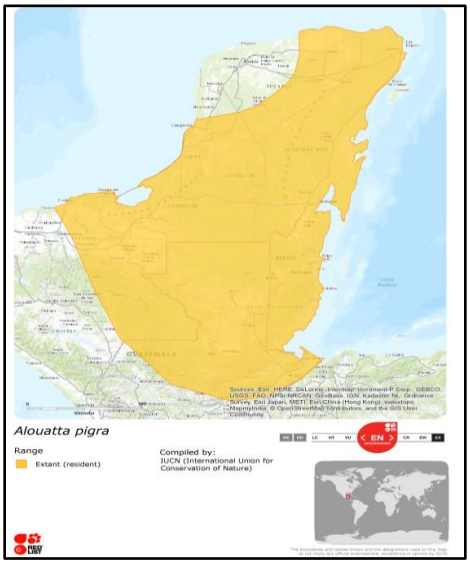


Figure 3: Distribution Map of *Alouatta pigra* (Marsh et al. 2008:4).

Figure 4: Distribution Map of *Ateles geoffroyi* (Cortés-Ortiz et al. 2020:5).

Figure 5 : Distribution Map of *Cebus capucinus* (De la Torre et al. 2021:3).

Both howler monkeys (*Alouatta* spp.) and spider monkeys (*Ateles* spp.) play an important role in the landscape of the Maya world. They reside in the forests and jungles surrounding many Maya sites and current Maya communities (see Estrada and Mandujano 2003), and they play significant roles in Maya creation stories, ancestry, and religion. Today, many species of

monkeys, such as the Mexican howler monkey and Geoffroy's spider monkey are protected in reserves, such as the Biosphere Reserve in Los Tuxtlas, Mexico and the Belize Howler Monkey Sanctuary (Pinto-Marroquin and Serio-Silva 2020:4). The presence of faunal remains associated with *Alouatta pigra*, *Ateles geoffroyi*, and *Cebus Capucinus* are not common in the archaeological record in Maya regions (Rice and South 2015:278, Sugiyama et al. 2022:4). Even though these animals were an everyday part of the lives and landscapes of the Maya, there are not many reports of faunal assemblages containing these animals. Geoffroy's spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*) remains have been found in a few parts of the Maya world (such as Guatemala) and surrounding areas (Teotihuacan) within burial contexts with indications of trade and captivity (see Sugiyama et al. 2022).

Howler monkeys serve an important role within the ecosystems and environments of the Maya world, as they communicate signals associated with weather. The belief that howler monkeys indicate when rain is about to come stems from an Indigenous root and is still believed to be true in Central and South America today, particularly in the Maya world (Urbani 2020:xii). The Indigenous Popolucan peoples of Los Tuxtlas, Mexico, believe that howler monkeys indicate when serious changes in weather occur. The Popoluca are considered descendants from the Olmec people, an ancient culture that shared influences with the Maya (Pinto-Marroquin and Serio-Silva 2020:4). For example, the howler monkeys are said to make specific sounds to indicate the start of the cold air and the heavy rainy season called *nortes*, as well as the start of the hot and dry season called *suradas* (Pinto-Marroquin and Serio-Silva 2020:7). The Popoluca have been using the communications from the howlers to plan daily activities since ancient times (Pinto-Marroquin and Serio-Silva 2020:7).

It is likely that spider monkeys have been kept as pets in the Maya region since the time of human contact, due to their more plastic and adaptable behavioral attributes compared to howlers (Bruner and Cucina 2005:115). Mexican artist Frida Kahlo's "Self-Portrait with Monkeys" highlights the close relationship between people and spider monkeys in Mexico, as they are seen as animal companions (Bruner and Cucina 2005:115). However, the behavioral attributes of the howler monkey does not allow them to become pets, as they are harder to domesticate (Bruner and Cucina 2005:111, Urbani 2020:xii).

Another important ecological factor that monkeys contribute to is the distribution of the cacao plant. According to Hunt (2013), the earliest plants of cacao depended on monkeys, rats, bats, and squirrels to digest and distribute it across Mesoamerica. Since cacao trees undergo a cauliflory process (produces pods), the monkeys are often attracted to these plants because of the delicious pulp inside the pods (Hunt 2013). This influences other animals, such as peccaries, because they heavily rely on the discarded and half-eaten fruits left behind by spider monkeys on the forest floor (Schlesinger 2001:154).

Monkeys in Maya Language

Because of the wide variety of languages within the Maya world, there are many words given to describe or refer to common species of monkey. Although most terms use descriptors associated with the two main species of monkeys in the Maya world (howler and spider monkeys), there are some words that translate to more vague primates such as "long-tailed monkey" or "small black monkey sometimes kept as pet" (see figure below) (Baker 1992:223). Monkeys are given different labels characterized by species in both K'iche and Yucatec Mayan

languages. In K'iche, the word for spider monkey is 'K'oy' and the word for howler monkey is 'B'atz' which is also a named day in the traditional Maya calendar (Christenson 2013: 75 & 99).

In Yucatec Mayan, the word for spider monkey is 'Ma'ax', while the word for howler monkey is 'Chuen' (Tozzer and Allen 1910: 367). In other parts of Mesoamerica, such as Central Mexico, the Zapotec word for howler monkey is either 'pillao' or 'pilloo' and for spider monkey it is 'pixiyo' (Seler et al. 1996 :167).

Table 1. Regional Maya terms for Central American monkeys

Source	Page	Word	Translation	Source	Page	Word	Translation
Cakchiquel				Tzeltal			
Coto 1983	355	*baaq*	mona	Hurley and Ruiz 1986	19	*bats*	saraguato
	355	*qoy*	mono(a)		81	*max*	mono
	355	*baaq*	mono(a)	Laughlin 1975	78	*bac*	howler monkey
Chol					230	*maš*	spider monkey
Attinasi 1973	243	*bac*	howler monkey				howler monkey
	292	*maš*	spider monkey				character of
Aulie and Aulie 1978	31	*bats'*	mono				Chamula Carnival
	78	*max*	mico	Laughlin 1988	162	*batz'*	howler monkey
	169	*ijc'al max*	mono araña		256	*max*	long-tailed monkey
Cholti				Ruz 1986	249	*batz*	mono, mico
Moran 1935	44	*batz*	mono burbado		332	*max*	simia, gato
			[barbudo?]	Slocum and Gerdel 1980	102	*bats'*	saraguato
	43	*batz*	mono de		161	*max*	mono (chango?)
			gueguecho	Yucatec			
	45	*max*	mico	Barrera Vásquez 1980	40	*baats'*	aullador,
Chorti						*bats*	mono negro
Wisdom 1950	1047	*maac*	monkey				grande barbado,
	1029	*p'urem maac*	small black mon-				saraguate
			key occasionally		511	*ma'ax*	mono
			seen as a pet	Heath 1980	591	*maax*	monkey
	1047	*u maac*			591	*ah maax*	monkey
		a ak'ap'	night monkey	Luna Kan 1945	261	*baats*	howler monkey
	1008	*ma'as*	monkey		115	*maash*	monkey
Keckchi					115	*ma'ax*	monkey
Sedat 1955	30	*batz*	mono		261	*xtuch*	spider monkey
	105	*mas, mico*	gorgojo	Perez 1898	232	*maax*	mona
Mam					232	*ah maas*	mona
Reynoso 1915	108	*ixmai*	mono, mico		232	*ix maax*	mona
Mopan				Solis Alcalá 1949	402	*xmaax*	mona
Ulrich and Ulrich 1976	24	*baatz*	zaraguate		402	*maax*	mono
	127	*ma'ax*	mico araña		402	*xtuch*	mono hembra,
Quiche							mona
Edmonson 1965	10	*baatz*	spider monkey		402	*badz*	mono negro
	29	*ch'oven*	monkey	Swadesh, Alvarez, and			
Pontious 1980	235	*u k'ab che*	mono	Bastarrachea 1970	35	*badz*	saraguato
	235	*c'oy*	mono		64	*maax*	mono
Teletor 1959	74	*xbatz*	mona	Tozzer and Allen 1910	367	*baac*	monkey
	72	*joy*	mico	Zavala 1975	51	*maax*	mono
	72	*coy*	mico		51	*maas*	monkey

Figure 6: Common Mayan terms for howler and spider monkeys (Baker 1992:223).

Chapter 2: Background

The Maya Region

The Maya region lies within the modern-day countries of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador. The Maya area is geographically and ecologically diverse. The Maya occupied three main areas of the region: The North, Central, and South, which are further sub-divided into two distinct natural zones: the Highlands and Lowlands (Coe and Houston 2015: 14,24). The Northern and Central areas of the Maya region make up the Lowlands, geographically situated between northern Guatemala, southern parts of Mexico such as Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo, Belize, and Western Guatemala (Coe and Houston 2015:24). The Southern portion of the Maya region is regarded as part of the Highlands, which lie between the Southeastern portion of Chiapas, Mexico towards the Southern portion of Central America (Sharer and Traxler 2006:14). This region is known for its higher elevation (more than 1,000 m) and rich soils produced by both extinct and active volcanoes, making it perfect for growing crops such as maize, beans, and squash on hillsides, in milpas (Sharer and Traxler 2006:14).

Periods and Change over Time

Among most scholars, it is agreed that the developmental phases of Maya civilization can be divided into three main cultural periods: The Preclassic or Formative period, The Classic, and the Postclassic. Even though there are some shared similarities between various regions in the Maya world during these periods, it is important to note that there were also regional differences between the Highlands and the Lowlands (Sharer and Traxler 2006). Furthermore, because of the

extreme diversity of the Maya world, it is impossible to assume that changes occurred at the same time and to the same extent across all regions (Sharer and Traxler 2006).

During the Preclassic period (~2000 B.C.E- 250 C.E), the Maya established small farming villages in the North, Central, and Southern parts of the Maya world (Awe 2005:7, Coe and Houston 2015: 41). Agricultural crops such as beans, maize, and corn (the holy trinity) began to be cultivated in most of these early settlements, around 1800 B.C (Awe et al. 2021; Drew 1999:6). During the Middle and Late Preclassic, there is evidence of social stratification between elites and non-elites-based on kinship and lineages- and the beginnings of congregated living in city centers (Coe and Houston 2015: 26, Sharer and Traxler 2006:45).

The Classic (~250- 900 C.E) is characterized by its increase in writing, artistic expression, the established use of the *Tzolk'in* and *Haab*' calendars, and the proliferation of monumental architecture across the Maya world (Coe and Houston 2015: 63, Martin and Grube 2000:14). This period was predominantly a time associated with the inscription of the Long Count, a calendar system using a base of 20, that was recorded on large stelae (stone monuments) throughout the Southern lowlands (Coe 1999:81, Coe and Houston 2015: 66). Heavily populated urbanized areas arose, and city centers became powerful city states (Coe 1999: 81, Longhena 2006:21). Political organization of this time transitioned into rulership based on moderately divine status, as leaders would present themselves as intermediaries between the mortal and supernatural realms (Awe et al. In Press; Martin and Grube 2000:14). Divine rulers provided ceremonial services for the Gods and guidance in exchange for labor and trust by the common people and the elite (Schlesinger 2001:25). Most studies emphasize the division between elite and non-elite though some scholars suggest that a middle class, comprised of

artisans, merchants and lesser elites, may have emerged during this time period (Chase and Chase 1986, Jordan 2019:7).

Instead of being solely seen as ‘ajaw’ (meaning ‘lord’), rulers transitioned to referring to themselves as ‘k’uhul ajaw’ (meaning ‘divine lord’) (Awe et al. In Press; Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993: 16). The ajaw was the political administrative leader, and directed construction, tribute, and forged political ties with other elites (Schlesinger 2001:25). Elite individuals lived in the larger structures within the city centers, and non-elites lived in surrounding hilltop settlements in proximity to the center. Unlike monumental architecture, house mounds located on the peripheries of city centers did not preserve well in the archaeological record, as they were predominantly made out of perishable materials (Sharer and Traxler 2006:97).

The transition from the height of the Classic period to the Terminal Classic (900 C.E) came with large changes in sociopolitical organization and ideology. Around this time, there is evidence that people started vacating large city centers, particularly in the Southern and Western lowlands (Demarest 2004). Although there are multiple possibilities as to why this happened, many scholars agree that this was due to a combination of rapid overpopulation, changes in climate (drought) and distrust in the centralized leadership (Coe 1999:151, Martin and Grube 2000). It is evident that around 820 C.E to 870 C.E (during the Terminal Classic period) and again around 1020 B.C.E and 1100 C.E (during the Postclassic), the Maya suffered extreme droughts, as evident through sediment cores from the Yucatan and the analyses of speleothems harvested from caves in Western Belize (Coe and Houston 2015:32; Kennett et al. 2012). The decline of major city centers within the Southern and Central lowlands led to the abandonment of many of these communities, and with migration to the northern lowlands and southern highlands.

The Postclassic period (950 C.E- 1539 C.E) witnessed a social reorganization centered on economics and trade, and a move away from divine hereditary kingship to a system of governance based on the rule by council known as the multepal system (Sharer and Traxler 2006:156). New areas of population growth at this time were mainly focused near the Guatemalan highlands and near the Caribbean and Gulf coasts, establishing reorganized cities governed by joint council rule instead of sole rulership, such as Mayapan (Foias 2010:100, Masson 2012). These areas flourished up until the period of Spanish contact and colonization around the mid 1500's C.E.

Maya Relationship to Animals

Animals played a large role in the cultural, economic, and political lives of the Maya. They were a large part in both sacred settings and household, everyday settings. It is evident that animals were used to create hides, to produce fats for lubricants, for the creation of tools, and even for medicinal purposes (Boileau et al. 2020). They serve as figures in the written languages of the Maya, active agents in creation narratives, and play a key role in the process of rituals and ceremonies. In addition, they were commodities in long-distance trade amongst the Maya world, and were often domesticated (Boileau et al. 2020). Moreover, animals served as entities in which political leaders and those in power could align with in order to legitimize their reign and identify themselves ancestrally.

Today, it is evident that animals, both native and imported species, continue to be a central part of Maya life. They serve as pets or companion animals, are raised to produce milk or meat, and various parts of animals are used to create medicines. Durable portions of the skeleton are often preserved for later so that they can be pulverized and created into a variety of medicinal

forms, such as powders and pastes (Boileau et al. 2020:176). The hunting of animals remains as a key aspect of Maya ritual, as people often hunt animals and bury them at the mouths of caves or rock shelters. This practice stems from the belief that planting the bones will help to regenerate beings, a concept explored in the Popol Vuh (Boileau et al. 2020:176).

Although agriculture and hunting are major contributors to contemporary Maya subsistence, there are additional resources used that are often overlooked. Barrera-Bassols (2005:23), for example, highlights the importance of other production activities and land use systems, such as agroforestry, bee-keeping, cenote fishing, and gardening. Many Maya communities often keep accessible house gardens on their property, which include a wide variety of plant and animal species. Most of these plants are used for medicinal purposes, as seasoning, firewood, and fodder, while the domesticated animals are usually turkeys, pigs, chickens, and ducks that are consumed during feasts and rituals (Barrera-Bassols 2005:23).

Animals as Political Symbols

In the ancient Maya world, some animals were associated with elite status. Not only were they associated with ritual contexts, in sacrifices with two-way relationships with the gods, but they were used as status symbols. The treatment and ownership of animals during the Classic period and beyond, especially domesticated wild cats and dogs, reflects differentiation in status and political power. Emery (2014:501) determined that certain animals were identified as luxury or rare goods, particularly in the region of Petexbatun in Guatemala, starting in the Early Classic period (600-800 C.E). The ruling class and those in power at the sites of Petexbatun, as well as nearby site Aguateca, evidently had more access to acquired and ‘exotic’ faunal goods such as wild cats (Emery 2014:501). At sites such as Colha and Ceibal, Wild cats (Felidae) and dogs

were domesticated and raised in captive environments, and often fed a maize-rich diet (Boileau et al. 2020:16 and White et al. 2001).

There are differences in access and consumption of animal products between elite and non-elite individuals at different points in Maya history (ex: Pre-Classic to Terminal Classic). The difference in animal access between high middle class and lower-class Maya in the Petexbatun region extends to consumption, as the higher middle class had more access to freshwater fish, peccaries, and white-tailed deer (Emery 2003:507). Spanning from the early periods of occupation to the Late Classic, Emery (2003: 510) determined that variation in access and consumption of animals shifted over time. By observing frequency and distribution of zooarchaeological remains from elite households at the site of Aguateca, it is evident that there was not a strict dichotomy between elite and non-elite access to animal products (Emery 2003:509). Excavations at Aguateca show that animal remains at elite households are distributed similarly as at craft-specialized residences, where the patterns are largely different from both the higher and lower status households (Emery 2003:509). This shows that Maya nobles, specifically at Aguateca, possibly defined their use of different animal species (such as iguana, freshwater turtle, and domestic dogs) based on their status within an elite hierarchy instead of differences in occupations and activities (Emery 2003:509).

Noble individuals often associated themselves with the names of animals to tie themselves to leadership through ancestry and lineage, such as in the case of Tikal. The lineage of kingship and leadership at the large site of Tikal was tied to ‘balam’ or jaguar, as rulers were named after the animal’s characteristics such as the fourteenth king “Chak Tok Ich’aak” or “Great Jaguar Paw” (Coe 1999:90).

Animals in Ritual and Ceremony

Animals have been frequently depicted in ritual and sacrifice scenes in Classic Maya art, especially deer, jaguars, rabbits, eagles, and monkeys (Justin Kerr MayaVase Database). Blood was seen as a special part of ceremony, and giving one's blood solidified ritual (Schlesinger 2001). The ancient Maya let blood in order to feed gods ch'ulel (soul-stuff) and give up their souls (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:204). They would do this by either piercing their penis (men), or their tongue (usually women) with a sharp stingray spine, obsidian blade, or a knotted cord (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:205, Marcus 1978:182, Schlesinger 2001). Apart from humans, domesticated dogs, birds, and fish were commonly sacrificed with the occasional deer and wild peccary (Marcus 1978:182). Although contemporary Maya do not usually practice self-induced bloodletting, they still practice animal sacrifice with animals such as chickens, deer, along with burning candles and incense. In addition, blood was seen to carry *itz,* or a sacred secretion of life, other substances include sweat, dew, rust, copal resin, and mother's milk (Schlesinger 2001: 119,146). Both human and animal blood were used in ceremonies, often poured into sacrificial bowls and offered to the gods (Schlesinger 2001). The white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) was commonly used for sacrifice in Maya ceremonies (Looper 2019, Schlesinger 2001).

Previous Research on Monkey Iconography in Maya Art

One way in which monkeys have been tied to icons within Maya culture and cosmology is through creation narrative. In the Popol Vuh, also known as the Book of Council of the Quiche Maya, monkeys are featured in both the creation story, and its account of the Hero Twins. Hunahpu and Xbalanque (The Hero Twins and sons of One Hunahpu, known as the Maize God) completed a series of trials set up by the Lords of the Underworld (Xibalba) who lured them

there after becoming annoyed by the ballgame being played by them on Earth. Because they were able to beat the Lords of Xibalba, they ended up resurrecting their father One Hunahpu after he was previously trapped alongside his brother, Seven Hunahpu, after they failed the same tests. Hun Batz and Hun Chuen are characterized as the older half-brothers of the Hero Twins (Hunahpu and Xbalanque). Hun Chuen and Hun Batz (their names meaning "One howler monkey" and "One Craftsman") are regarded as great artisans, singers, flautists, and writers (Christenson 2003:60; Coe 1977:328). They were considered 'divine men' and were said to be worshiped by countless craftsmen and artisans (Coe 1977:329).

By looking at Classic representations of monkeys on ceramics, Coe (1977:332) made connections between the described features of Hun Batz and Hun Chuen in the Popol Vuh and their physical representations on painted pottery. Looking at specific noted attributes such as god-markings (known as death spots, or vertical spots) and extra-ears (diagnostic of scribal duties) featured on painted monkey figures, Coe (1977:336) highlighted a symbolic connection between monkeys and the patrons of artisans and craftsmanship featured in the Popol Vuh. Other notable characteristics aligning to scribesmanship includes the presence of a scribal reed, conch shell paint pot, ink pots, or an Ah'Khun headdress (Coe 1977). The similarities in monkey-scribe characteristics featured all the way from cultural narratives to tangible art show a consistent iconography of these characters in Maya purview and culture. Coe (1977:3) also introduced a number of ceramic examples in which the Hero Twins, or sometimes the Maize God, is portrayed in association with simian characters or scribe monkey-men as well. This relates to the written renderings of Hun Batz and Hun Chuen as the brothers of the Hero Twins, the son of the Maize God, and the great patrons of the arts and music.

The repetitive simian iconography featured across mediums (cultural narratives, ceramics, figurines) was explored even deeper by archaeologists Prudence Rice and Katherine South. With a lens focused on primatological characteristics, Rice and South (2015:275) examined 142 monkey images depicted on 97 pots, many of which were Classic period lowland polychromes. Among this collection of ceramic depictions, Rice and South (2015) characterized figures based on their physical and behavioral attributes most likely pointing to species native to the Maya region (*Alouatta pigra* and *Ateles geoffroyi*). They also allowed for the inclusion of possible Capuchin monkeys (*Cebus capucinus*) depicted on ceramics based on evidence linking Capuchin behavior, physical attributes, and historic sightings of the species to their appearance in Maya art. The sample used for this study was composed of ceramics with images depicting monkeys as scribes. Key indicators of species such as facial features, size, physical appearance, and behavior were accounted for and used for distinguishing between possible howler, spider, or capuchin monkeys (Baker 1992:221-222).

Rice and South (2015:281) also accounted for the inclusion of adornments, the presence of other figures, and the location of the scenes in order to distinguish their possible roles and contextual importance. Both ethnohistoric text about the Maya creation story and Mayan lexicality in language were used to highlight the associations between certain species of monkey, their representations in myth, and their further representations in language as spiritual and religious figures (Rice and South 2015:279). In order to measure these variables represented in the ceramic sample, they used an Excel spreadsheet software and conducted further species identification through cluster analyses (Rice and South 2015:281). In terms of behavior characterization, monkey images were differentiated by four main categories of activities: scribal

activities, ritual activities associated with offerings, processions often incorporating dancing and musical instruments, and handling cacao pods (Rice and South 2015:280).

A deeper look at Mesoamerican primate iconography suggests a key discrepancy in species representation. Looking at primatomorpha (primate-like) iconography, Bruner and Cucina (2005: 111-112) consider that even though howler monkeys (*Alouatta pigra*) tend to have more unique characteristics such as a loud, echoing vocalization and a protruding exterior facial structure, they tend to not be featured in Classic Art as much as spider monkeys (*Ateles geoffroyi*). Even though the features of a howler (vocally) would be more aligned with the role of music and the arts, it is interesting to see that a majority of depictions are of spider monkeys instead, with stylized features such as long legs and arms, thin thorax, rounded/protruded abdomen, periorbital mask, and a long-curled tail (Bruner and Cucina 2005:112).

Chapter 3: Theory-Informed Methods

Ethnoarchaeological Foundations

This thesis weaves multiple strands of data, evidence, and forms of thought from both archaeological and ethnographic modes of research pertaining to monkey imagery and representations in Maya culture. The archaeological pieces serve as artistic and cultural representations of monkeys depicted in a historical time and place fixed in the Maya past. Building on empirical and fixed data within the ancient past, the implementation of ethnographic interviews and conversations with Maya descendants in a postcolonial, traditional context highlights the continual importance of monkeys in Maya culture. Supplementary knowledge, coming from ethnohistoric sources, provide additional perspectives surrounding monkeys during the times of first contact between Spanish and Maya peoples. This framework is largely postprocessual, as it builds on processual ideas with an added emphasis on the roles of individuals, systems of knowledge, and the possibility of multiple interpretations (Preucel 1995:143).

In addition to an archaeological analysis of iconography, an ethnographic and cultural view of iconography broadens the scope of ideology and social behavior, due to the difficulty of reaching directly into the past (Trigger 2006:399). Monkey artifacts paint a certain picture of the Maya past based on a set research potential that can determine its form, function, and chronological association. The lived experiences, rich narratives, and cultural knowledge about monkeys from Maya descendants themselves are also forms of evidence that are indicative of emic perspectives. The direct inclusion and prioritization of Indigenous perspectives, in the case of this thesis, serves as a starting point in which to further analyze and interpret artifactual representations of these figures. Even though this thesis employs some fundamental ideas

mirrored in ethnoarchaeology, it does not attempt to establish any generalization from my own outside perspective. As I spoke with and attended an Indigenous Maya festival it is only appropriate to highlight their perspectives and incorporate Indigenous theory in order to build more holistic and critical perspectives.

Pragmatics

The monkey icon is a continual figure in Maya cosmology, ritual, and lived experience, both past and present. Iconography, or the study of how images or icons reflect meaning, is a major component of this research. At its root, iconography focuses on the repetitive function of an icon, or a sign that directly resembles its object (Wilce 2017:61). Iconography can also be described as the portrayal of images that build meaning through other literary source material, such as cultural stories or narratives (Hasenmueller 1978:291). The frequency and repetitive contexts in which monkeys appear in Maya art is therefore incredibly significant for iconographic studies. Monkeys, in this case, are also symbols because they draw meaning not only limited to their role as monkeys (Wilce 2017). The iconic and symbolic relationships between the Maya and monkeys are abstract and point to larger constructions of meaning, which in turn transforms them into indexes as well (Wilce 2017:61).

Because the nature of active iconography (or the expression of iconography through dance) is another dimension of physical representation of this animal, it is important to observe this aspect in conjunction with archaeological evidence of the past. In a traditional, postcolonial setting, the process of the monkey dance reflects and indexes or points to larger, historical ideologies about monkeys and their place in Maya culture. Furthermore, the representation of monkeys in traditional dance reflects a continuity or closeness to these larger historical ideas over time and space (Wilce 2017: 61). One way of looking at this continuity can be through

understanding material culture and cultural meanings. To better understand the function of monkey figures in their ceramic form and representation, the cultural meanings need to be highlighted and further observed. According to Preucel-Bauer (2001:89), the notion of semiotics is to explore the connections between meaning, objects, and behavior. Culture itself is a complex system of icon-indexical relationships of meaning, where icons not only physically resemble what they depict but point to larger ideologies of meaning (Preucel-Bauer 2001, Silverstein 1976). Applying this line of thought, the meaning behind the use of monkey figures as icons in Maya culture can be interpreted through the examination of the form and function of the objects they are depicted on, as well as the influences of behaviors surrounding the context of their presence in both the past (archaeological space) and present (postcolonial space, dance, perspectives). A Peircean approach also highlights the function of ceramic or pottery styles as 'replicas' which are generated from a template that is further indexed (Preucel-Bauer 2001:90). This means that the style of pottery and its pattern of replication can associate with a larger allegiance to a dominant ideology or belief (Preucel-Bauer 2001:90).

Semiotic theory has been framed in two main ways by scholars Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. Saussurean 'semiology' primarily focuses on a two-dimensional understanding of signs that exist in the system of language as it compares to the use of language, and its key role in constructing reality. This includes the understanding of the signifier (exists in material and physical form) and the signified (corresponds to an abstract meaning) (Yakin and Totu 2014:6). Peircean semiotics (or pragmatics) focuses on a three-dimensional understanding of semiotics through the sign (or representatum), object (referent), and interpretant (Yakin and Totu 2014:7). The main difference here is related to the understanding of what a sign is and the limitations of signs. More importantly, Peirce believed in contrast to Saussure, that people can

think through signs, giving meaning to anything that exists within their reality, and that the existence of a sign does not have to be purposely conveyed (Yakin and Toku 2014:7). According to Peirce, everything can exist as a sign, as long as it represents something according to individual interpretation (Yakin and Totu 2014:7).

Instead of relying on Saussurean semiotics (focused upon codes and rules instead of practice), Peircean semiotics has the potential to reveal a dialectical relationship of material culture meanings (Preucel-Bauer 2001:92). It is important to realize that words (perspectives, language) and things (material culture) have a discursive relationship, even though they might convey meanings beyond semantic (Preucel-Bauer 2001:92). Acknowledging the nature of a discursive connection between words and objects is necessary to this research because monkeys, as icons, have continued to be portrayed as cultural figures in the Maya world consistently over time, despite gaps in historical knowledge left by colonial erasure of practices surrounding these figures.

The use of pragmatics highlights how archaeology is inherently a process of meaning-making balanced by both past actors and archaeologists themselves (Preucel 2016:1). With the use of pragmatics instead of just semiotics, meaning is not seen as static, but rather dialectical because it differs based on audience and time (Preucel 2016). The interpretation of monkeys as icons, symbols, and indexes changes meaning based on the interpretant, whether that is the Classic period Maya or modern-day archaeologists. Focusing on the time and setting of iconographic representation of monkeys, whether that is from Classic period ceramics or through revitalized dance, highlights the dialectical meaning of these figures.

A Decolonial Approach: Simulation and Survivance

The overall trend of representation centered on Western knowledge and scholars instead of Indigenous knowledge has also led to a literature of dominance (Atalay 2006, Kovach 2009). This is the written reliance on place names and scholarship related to the colonial history of the land, but not directly tied to the Native languages (Tuhiwai-Smith 1999). This stems from colonialism and can be seen in a different manner with W. Belize and Belize as a whole. Belize was a British colony until 1981 and many town names are associated with England and/ or English terms and phrases.

Adding to the nature of differences in Western and Indigenous knowledge, expertise (in the sense of the educational background and establishment of a "formal" degree) is often taken as word over other forms of knowledge. Knowledge that is obtained and practiced within an academic university standing is taken more as "fact" or "reality" than the lived and embodied experiences, traditional knowledge, and wisdom held by Indigenous folks in a non-academic setting.

Archaeological interpretation establishes or continues a Western knowledge paradigm or simulation that largely leaves out the incorporation of Indigenous insight and perspectives. In order to avoid contributing to narratives that tend to speak for or completely leave out emic perspectives, ethnographic research and insight is a necessary part of highlighting the embodied experiences of those Indigenous to the culture you are studying.

In this context, defined and discussed by Gerald Vizenor (1999:8), a simulation refers to the fictions of reality that have become widely accepted by the mainstream, Western Culture, even though they lack any real reference to actual tribal remembrance. In this case, it is important to harken back to the purpose of this thesis and its roots. With this subject and thesis, I

want to expand knowledge to accompany and encompass real, postcolonial perspectives and ideas and oral traditions (if comfortable) about physical iconography that does not only play a role in their current culture, but their worldview and cosmology. It establishes an insight into part of Maya postcolonial narratives and culture, placing their insight and perspectives and historical knowledge in a time and place affected by both colonialism and continual misrepresentation or altogether absence in archaeological research and publications. I acknowledge that these insights or perspectives are not representative of or should be a monolith for Maya culture altogether.

However, it is evident that similar monkey figures show up in the archaeological record, in the iconography, as well as oral tradition across the Maya world and even Mesoamerica. Jean Baudrillard states that simulation is no longer an embodiment of a being or a substance, but a generation model created by a reality not tied to any origin (Vizenor 1999:9). This adds on to beliefs about simulation, about the creation of Indigenous narratives. As archaeologists, we do this a lot. We need to realize that this is all due to the continuation of a lack of Indigenous perspectives and explanations related to our research. Expertise is often prized over the lived experience or familial, traditional knowledge of Indigenous, descendant populations and communities of which cultures we speak about.

Vizenor (1999:12) states that the postindian simulations arise from the silence of heard stories and the imagination of oral literature in translation. These simulations are often created by the narratives and stories about peoples without direct descendant correspondence or inclusion. Heard stories about tribal peoples are often recorded but not taken into account when conducting archaeological research, as the physical evidence often trumps oral tradition or ancestral stories. What results from this is the continuation of a dominant narrative, one that is either maintained

by colonial narratives and beliefs, or one that fictionally represents Indigenous peoples and voices altogether.

In the Maya world, traditional dances and practices were outlawed for an extended period of time after initial Spanish Contact and colonialism (Gann 1926). Some of these dances are the Danza de los Monos (Monkey Dance) and the Danza de los Venados (Deer Dance) where monkeys play a significant role. In recent years, these dances have been revitalized by Maya communities and continue to be practiced annually. This resistance and survival of Indigenous practices and traditions through revitalization is a form of survivance (Vizenor 1999). Specifically in the case of the Mopan Maya community of Santa Cruz Village, these revitalized dances and their settings echo the continued survivance of Indigenous communities despite facing heavy imperialism, colonialism, and assimilation.

Inevitably, the sole analysis and interpretation of monkey imagery without the perspectives of the Indigenous people and community leaves a large gap in knowledge and understanding. Looking for and including those voices, narratives, and traditions about the role of the monkey within the Maya region of Belize is a representation of deeper knowledge through lived experiences and personal ties. Those narratives and experiences also help to add another layer to the ethnohistoric recordings gathered during the Contact period in the Maya region, sources that are largely colonial in nature. The inclusion and highlighting of Indigenous insight and perspectives within archaeological-based research brings emic truths to the forefront, instead of the reliance on scopes of view from etic observation.

When framing my own role within this thesis, it is important for me to highlight my own, etic perspectives as an American, non-Maya individual. I am not a part of the community that I spoke with, nor am I attempting to speak for them. I recognize the problematic history of

anthropology, as a way for scholars and students to achieve significance through their conversations with Indigenous informants, without giving any credit to those who they spoke with. Indigenous peoples and communities have a long history of being exploited by anthropologists, as they are often persuaded to speak about intimate details of their lives with no clear consent or idea of where that information may go. Instead of starting research with getting permission and establishing mutual understanding with the community or individual, anthropologists have often led the research goals with what they want in mind instead of what can serve their community. Marcus and Cushman (1982) seek to call out and suggest changes to the process of ethnography as the perpetuation of colonialism, imperialism, and the notion of the "other". Instead, they highlight the imperative nature of recognizing and stating subjectivity and inescapable biases within ethnographic research and publication. I want to establish my own background as a white, American anthropologist, my own limitations and biases tied to the experiences I have had, and my own role in existing and participating in a mainly Western academic institution (Marcus and Cushman 1982). I want to account for the problematic history of research and what that word means for many Indigenous people, as it has been used to justify racism and colonialism (Tuhiwai-Smith 2004).

Another part of this research is intentional reflexivity, or a deeper self-reflection of my own biases and cultural perceptions that play a part in my observations and analysis of the Maya and community members of Santa Cruz Village. Reflexivity entails "the sense of distancing from the self in order that the self becomes an object of study itself" (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984) (Cormier and Urbani 2015:273). According to Kovach (2009), self-reflexivity allows the writer to position themselves in both the research process and the construction of knowledge itself. By incorporating reflexivity, I am positioning myself in relation to the Maya I spoke with at the

Deer Dance and the Maya of the past that I write about in this thesis. I hope to employ self-reflexivity in order to realize my own privileges, biases, and preconceived notions. I also do not want to speak for the Maya as a whole, as I spoke with one community of Maya people in a specific region and time.

Within the limits of this research (such as time, access, money, and culturally sensitive information), I was able to attend a traditional Maya dance with the representation of significant animals (specifically monkeys) and speak to a few members of the community at the site of Uxbenká in Santa Cruz Village, Belize. Because of time constraints, and the overall focus of this research, I did not have the opportunity to establish pre-existing or continuing relationships with the community members I visited and spoke with. Because of the deeply ethical foundations of this aspect of my research and the nature of culturally sensitive settings and conversations, it was also imperative to go through the full IRB process. This part of my research is compliant with IRB standards to make sure that those whom I spoke with remain anonymous and will not be subjected to any form of exploitation. It is important to acknowledge that the IRB is a largely Western institutional process and even though it provides ethical protection for both informants and researchers, it has the potential to leave out a lot of insight and objectives held by descendant communities themselves.

The individuals of the Santa Cruz community that I was able to speak with were very open and accepting. From what I was told and the manner of my experience, I felt their passion about sharing their own history and the importance of their continuation of tradition. They also expressed this through excitement and connection to the performances and speeches centered around the influence of cacao within their community, in their economy, and as a part of their livelihood.

Archaeological Methods

A major part of my research examines evidence for monkeys and monkey imagery in the archaeological record. This includes the study of Classic period imagery from the Justin Kerr Database and archaeological materials gathered from the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project. The Justin Kerr Database collection was primarily used for access to photographs of Classic period ceramics, which hold 31 examples of monkeys depicted in a variety of contexts. With the 31 available and relevant photographs of Classic period ceramics depicting monkeys, eight major themes related to their physical appearance and context were analyzed. These themes were further examined and compared to the context and associations belonging to archaeological examples related to monkeys (figurines, ceramics, beads, cave art, and faunal remains) collected through BVAR excavations, The Western Belize Regional Cave Project (WBRCP), and recorded in field reports and student theses/dissertations.

The Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project (BVAR) is an archaeological project regionally focused on the Maya region of Western Belize and began by Dr. Jaime Awe in 1988. More recently, the project is co-directed by Dr. Jaime Awe (Northern Arizona University), Dr. Julie Hoggarth (Baylor University), and Dr. Claire Ebert (University of Pittsburgh). The main sites associated with this project are Cahal Pech (occupied between 1200 B.C and A.D 900), Xunantunich (AD 1000-1200), and Baking Pot (900 BC to 1000 AD) (Awe et al. 1990, LeCount et al. 2022, Aimers et al. 2020). The Western Belize Regional Cave Project (WBRCP) is an archaeological-focused cave project in Western Belize that was launched by Dr. Jaime Awe in 1997. This project centered on the survey and recording of Western Belize cave sites and associated cultural materials, such as the inclusion of monkey cave artifacts and imagery.

The Justin Kerr Database provides a more comprehensive description of the noted characteristics in Classic Maya ceramics with high-quality photographs and associated published materials. Many images are present on polychrome ceramics that were photographed by Justin Kerr and archived in his MayaVase Database. This database holds a significant collection of artifacts related to monkey imagery from a variety of regions within the Maya world (when provenience is included). These materials are obtained from some museums (such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Museum of Fine Arts Boston, New Orleans Museum of Art, and Princeton Art Museum), institutions (U.S Library of Congress), and private collections. Because of the accessibility and the size of the collection, the Kerr Database serves as a great resource for ceramics and figurines depicting monkeys.

Using this database, I conducted a comprehensive search of photographed Maya ceramics with the presence of monkey or simian-like figures which yielded 31 matches. Using these matches, I created a detailed spreadsheet highlighting six main variables of organization:

- Source (where the artifact is housed and where it is located)
- Provenience (where the artifact was originally found contextually (site), often not provided),
- Context (any additional information about the ceramics, comments left by Justin Kerr)
- Chronology (time period that the artifact is dated to, if available)
- Type (shape and outside appearance of artifact)
- Illustration (observed characteristics of the presence of monkeys, setting they are depicted in, actions, and any other noticeable details about the artifact).

If there was any indication of function (features suggestive of what function the vessel provided in time of use), I also included that under 'type'. Along these lines, I was looking for the presence of 'kill' holes, which are indicative of ritual releasing of the vessel's spirit. In the case of context, I observed variables based on similar presences of themes that the monkeys were associated with, such as ties to the Popol Vuh, depictions of cacao, the Underworld, scribal duties, dance, ritual, and 'ways' or coessences.

In addition to monkey imagery recorded in Western Belize, this study also incorporates some examples of other monkey artifacts from Mexico, Guatemala, and other Maya regions. This is because the artifact assemblages, particularly ceramics, from Mexico and Guatemala are numerous in comparison to the evidence found in Western Belize. These artifacts serve as supplementary sources of monkey iconography that depict similar themes evident in both BVAR and Justin Kerr collections.

Information on the presence of monkey imagery on the artifacts from western Belize, as well as their proveniences, contexts, and associations, were recorded in BVAR Project field reports, student theses or dissertations, and in publications. Instances of artifacts with physical attributes indicative of monkeys (ape-like, simian-like features) found through BVAR were added to the collection spreadsheet with the ceramics from the Justin Kerr MayaVase Database. The *Ateles geoffroyi* faunal remains are associated with materials recovered by the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project (BVAR). Like Baker (1992) and Rice and South (2015), artifact iconographic features related to artistic depictions of monkeys, their context, and association were also recorded in order to observe possible ties to previous iconography, creation narratives, and epigraphy. Other factors present, such as burial assemblages and other indications related to monkeys as deities, craftsmen, or scribes, were also noted.

Due to the limitations of provenience and other context of excavation, focusing on the illustrative and iconographic features on the exterior of the ceramics themselves serves as a foundation for the archaeological methods for this research. Most of the methods surrounding the analysis of depicted monkeys align with Rice and South's (2015) methods, where the positions, characteristics, and associations depicted in Classic period imagery were noted and characterized. This thesis, at its foundation, builds on Rice and South (2015) through the lens of iconography in an ethnoarchaeological manner. Iconographic themes present in the Justin Kerr database were used to compare to other evidence related to monkeys in both archaeology and ethnography, accounting for both the fixed and the active nature of monkeys as icons.

Ethnographic Methods

In order to create a thread between the physical, cultural remains and the continued traditional dances depicting monkeys in the Maya World, I wanted to incorporate and highlight the voices and experiences of living descendants in archaeological research. After learning about a monkey dance in Belize that takes place every year in southern Belize from Jaime Awe, I decided to do some research and try to attend. I found out that there was a Cacao Festival in Santa Cruz Village, Toledo, Belize on May 20th, 2023. My main goals for my ethnographic methodology were to have at least four recorded, semi-structured interviews with dancers and community members at the Cacao Festival in order to gain insight and learn about the role of monkeys within their culture and within the context of dance. I also planned on speaking with and interviewing Maya workers at the site of Xunantunich, to get insight about monkeys within an emic and archaeological context in another Maya region of Belize.

To attend this festival and speak with local Maya people about subjects of traditional dance and monkeys, the IRB Determination of Human Research Form was processed through NAU. With this form, a project plan was created in the hopes of having at least 4 semi-structured recorded interviews with attendees and dancers of the Cacao Festival. After the decision came back from the IRB Review Board, it was determined that the full IRB process was necessary to complete due to the culturally sensitive nature of the setting and project. It was important to make clear that the participant's consent could be retracted at any time of the interview and would not be used in any part of the thesis. In addition, it was imperative the participants' names would not be in the transcriptions (or would have any specific identifying factors) and would remain without a name in the thesis. My associations with NAU and the IRB Board were clearly stated, along with their contacts. In accordance with IRB guidelines, a consent form (Appendix A) and a recruitment script (Appendix B) were edited, finalized, and approved by the IRB board on the 16th of May 2023.

With the help of Gavin Healey, proposed documents of an interview script and interview questions that explicitly highlighted the nature of the project and the procedures of continuous, informed consent were formulated. The script served as a reference for recruiting those interested in having a semi-structured interview or conversation with me. This script outlines my own background, my interest in attending the Deer Dance, and the goal of learning more about the significance of monkeys in their culture. This document also defines what their role in the research would be if they decided to participate and that any personal, identifiable information or demographic information would not be included in my thesis. This document served as a foundational establishment of trust, where I would then ask if they would be interested in participating and further direct participants to the guidelines within the consent form and go over

that with them. The interview questions served as the main document used to reference during my actual interview with participants. These questions were organized by whether the individual was a performer or attendee of the dance and festival. With each set of questions, the goal was to establish repertoire through introducing myself and getting to know the individual. If the individual was a dancer, the foundational questions were focused on getting to know them, their connection to the event as a dancer, and their own perceptions surrounding monkeys culturally and cosmologically. If they were not performing, questions were centered around learning about them as a person, their own connection to the event, and their perceptions on monkeys in a cultural and cosmological sense. It was apparent and expected that individuals may not want to talk about themselves, their connection to the festival, or speak about monkeys. The possibility that people might not want to talk to me at all, not want to participate in a setting that has historically exploited and misunderstood Indigenous people, and not speak about the role of monkeys in their culture was accounted for.

I attended the Santa Cruz Village Cacao Festival at the site of Uxbenká (or Uxbenkaj) in Toledo District, Belize in order to speak with Maya descendants and community members about their perspectives, connections, and possible cultural perceptions of monkeys. In order to do this, travel to southern Belize about a week before the first field session of BVAR (May 28th) was planned in order to attend the Cacao Festival on May 20th.

During the Cacao Festival itself, participant observation was conducted while I watched and experienced the performances of the Deer Dance. Details based on the setting, materials, and dancers were written down. Photos and a couple videos were taken (with permission from the festival leaders and dancers) of the Deer Dance down at the bottom of the site, as well as in the site core. After multiple attempts to meet with and recruit dancers and attendees of the Deer

Dance for semi-structured interviews, a head dancer and I were able to have a recorded, semi-structured conversation. Before this interview, I spoke with a couple of members of the Mopan Santa Cruz Village community about the town, the site of Uxbenká, and the history of monkey dances in the area. Recorded conversations with those individuals were planned to occur before and after the interview, as they expressed interest. However, these interviews didn't happen due to the fast pace of the day and their busy roles throughout the duration of the festival.

Because this was my first time conducting ethnographic work as an outsider of a community with no established connections, as well as the size and pace of the festival, original goals were not met. Only one recorded interview, instead of the planned four, was conducted with a participant during the six-hour festival. The schedule of events made it so that there were happenings at every hour of the day, and the dancers themselves danced three times for around 20 minutes in the very humid sun.

Despite these limitations, much was learned about the site of Uxbenká, the larger Santa Cruz Community, and the nature of traditional dance from the brief and insightful conversations with community members. The process and meanings behind the Deer Dance itself were told through the embodied experiences of the community members. After this festival, the recorded interview was uploaded to a password-protected hard drive, transcribed, and deleted (as per IRB approval requirements).

The methods incorporated in this research are used to help weave together both archaeological and ethnographic forms of iconographic analysis. In addition, the use of pragmatic and decolonial-influenced theoretical perspectives highlight the meaning-making process of archaeology influenced by Indigenous perspectives and insight. In terms of pragmatics, the representation of monkey iconography draws meaning from both archaeological

contexts and ethnographic contexts based on time period and setting. Monkeys, as semiotic beings, draw meaning from both the archaeological contexts they are associated with and their role in revitalized dances and traditions within Maya descendant communities. Monkeys play a role in the survivance of Maya communities through active iconography in revitalized dances and oral traditions. The weaving together of pragmatic and decolonial-influenced theoretical frameworks and ethnoarchaeological methods recognizes the importance of Indigenous voices and embodied knowledge, the dialectical nature of meaning, as well as the revitalization and continuation of practices that were once outlawed and demonized by colonial entities.

Chapter 4: Ethnohistoric and Ethnographic Insight: Monkeys and Maya Culture

Ethnohistoric Insight into Maya Culture and Cosmology

The first contact between Spaniards and Maya was first recorded in 1502, when Christopher Columbus' and his brother Bartholomew encountered Maya merchants traveling in large canoes from the Yucatan to the Honduran island of Guanaja (Awe and Helmke 2019:239, Chamberlain 1948, Clendinnen 2003, Keen 1959). Subsequently, there are many other recorded expeditions into the Maya lowlands from 1517-1525, some of which were campaigns led by conquistadors such as Francisco Hernandez de Cordoba and Hernan Cortes (Clendinnen 2003:4, Sharer and Traxler 2006). The period of Spanish conquest in the Maya region (approximately A.D 1526- 1697) started in the highland regions of the K'iche and Kaqchikel Maya in Guatemala and followed by colonization and forced assimilation of the Indigenous people living in the regions of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador (Lovell 2005:58, Sharer and Traxler 2006).

This period is also associated with many ethnohistoric accounts in which Spanish individuals (some of whom include Hernan Cortes, Bernal Diaz del Castillo and Bishop Diego de Landa) recorded their interactions with the Maya and perspectives of the region, culture, and languages (Chase and Chase 1986, Pugh and Cecil 2012:316). Much of what archaeologists understand about some of the cultural aspects of the Maya during this period comes from sources such as Landa's *Relaciones de Las Cosas de Yucatán* and codices such as the Madrid, Paris, and Dresden codices (Chase and Chase 1986, Vail 2006:498).

Fr. Diego de Landa (1571-79) was a Spanish bishop who was sent to spread Catholicism throughout the Yucatan (Clendinnen 2003: n9). In the process of spreading the dogma of

Catholicism to the Maya peoples, de Landa was involved in the torturing, killing, and purposeful burning of Indigenous texts in the Yucatan (Clendinnen 2003, Timmer 1997). In addition, because of the motivation and ties to the church, much of de Landa's descriptions are infused with a Catholic and ethnocentric view (Clendinnen 2003, Tozzer 1941). De Landa wrote down a lot of his experiences with the Maya peoples, and notably commented on their religious practices and beliefs revolving around human sacrifice and 'idols' (Clendinnen 2003, Tozzer 1941).

Although Bishop de Landa was involved in the atrocities of forced colonization and assimilation in the Yucatan, much of their experiences compiled in the *Relaciones de las Cosas de Yucatán* provides much of the current understanding of the Maya writing system, culture, and religion during the time of Spanish contact (Gates 1978, Roys 1943). De Landa writes about the intersection between religion and government in the Yucatan, stating the position of the high priest or the "Ahau Can Mai" and the training of young boys in the studies of Maya ceremony and religion (Tozzer 1941:27). In addition, de Landa writes about witnessing ceremonies involving human sacrifice where people were thrown into cenotes at the Maya city of Chichen Itza (Tozzer 1941).

Another major contribution from De Landa's *Relaciones de las Cosas de Yucatán* is the recording of what was originally thought to be the Mayan alphabet but was discovered to be Mayan syllables by Russian linguist Yuri Knorozov (Coe 1987:220). Even though De Landa mistakenly believed that the glyphs being recorded were representations of singular letters of the Mayan alphabet, this proved to be very influential for later Maya linguists and archaeologists to better understand the language system (Coe 1987). Seler (1983) copied many of these glyphs, along with many other animal glyphs, in his "Las Imágenes de Animales en los Manuscritos Mexicanas y Mayas' from both Maya and Central Mexican manuscripts and sources. In the

German to English translation of these papers edited by Frank E. Comparato, J. Eric S. Thompson, and Francis B. Richardson, there are six monkey figures copied from original 16th century manuscripts (such as the Dresden and Borgia Manuscripts) (Seler et al. 1996:168-171).

One of these later Maya linguists, Grube (2021:165) described that Maya glyphs consist of both logograms and syllabograms, which work to visualize meaning through pictoral representation. Logograms are glyphs that serve as a label for a specific object, while syllabograms represent parts of glyphs that refer to syllables or parts of speech. *Essential* personifications are logograms that refer to the names of specific beings (both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic) by depicting important parts of their bodies (such as the head) (Grube 2021:165). This type of logogram is the main representation of monkey glyphs in the sources from Seler et al. (1996), Macri and Looper (2003), Thompson (1958), and Tozzer and Allen (1910). These resources, much of which give extensive information about Maya religion, ritual, and creation narrative, give a deeper understanding of the foundations of Maya cosmology.

Maya Cosmology

Much can be interpreted about Maya culture and ideology from Bishop Landa's *Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatan*, and from the Codices that were written by the ancient Maya. Additional information is available on the subject of religion, ritual, and language in later ethnohistoric sources, such as the Popol Vuh that was recorded by Friar Francisco Ximenez during the 18th century. The Popol Vuh also highlights the deeper narratives of the creation of earth, and the creation of the Maya people (Christenson 2003, Tedlock 1985).

The Popol Vuh, a manuscript that focuses on the highland K'iche Maya, provides information on creation narratives and was said to be the doctrine of their community at the time

(Christenson 2003:12). The version of the Popol Vuh that we know of today came from an original copy written and owned by the K'iche Maya of Chichicastenango, and which was kept hidden from Christian authorities. Francisco Ximenez, a Dominican priest who traveled to Chichicastenango in Guatemala in the early 18th century, was able to persuade the elders of the Chichicastenango community to borrow it to make a copy of it (Christenson 2003:12). During the 17th and 18th centuries, many original manuscripts and sacred texts were burned purposefully by Catholic missionaries and priests stationed in the Maya region during the Spanish conquest (Christenson 2003:12). The copy of the original manuscript by Ximenez is one of the surviving pieces of texts that still remains from that time, giving anthropologists access to Maya cosmological narratives and insight from the time of Contact.

Between 1701-1703, Ximenez translated the stories in the Popol Vuh into Spanish (Christenson 2003, Tedlock 1985, Quiroa 2011). The original text, which was most likely passed down through oral tradition dating back to pre-colonial times (Tedlock 1985, Quiroa 2011), focused on the mytho-historical events surrounding the universe and the creation of the K'iche Maya peoples and most likely included detailed illustrations and glyphs (Christenson 2003, Tedlock 1985, Quiroa 2011). The narratives outlined in the Popol Vuh have been since translated in many different languages, particularly in the Western world, and are known to highlight the creation of the universe, the creation of humans, and the story of the Hero Twins (Christenson 2003, Tedlock 1985, Quiroa 2011).

The Popol Vuh and other codices have been translated and reproduced many times for both scholarship and general public reading. It is also important to note that the Maya, at the time of recording, had already been influenced and assimilated by the Spanish. In addition, ethnohistoric texts such as the Popol Vuh highlight only the perspectives of one Maya group (the

K’iche) and should not be seen as an overarching generalization of all Maya peoples at the time. Quiroa (2011:468) highlights that even though many scholars are using the Popol Vuh as a framing device for looking into precolonial Maya culture, it is inherently a postcolonial text. This remains to be true in present academia, and although the narratives and insight into the K’iche Maya peoples is rich and irreplaceable, it is necessary to be aware of the context surrounding the original translation of this text and the Catholic lens it carries. In spite of these concerns, archaeological research across the Maya area suggests that there existed various but related regional versions of the main stories recorded in the Popol Vuh (Awe, personal communication 2024).

A Brief Look at the Creation of the Universe

According to the K’iche creation narrative, at first the universe did not contain any kind of living being (animal, plant, rock, etc.), only the primordial sea and the sky as a connected entity (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993, Tedlock 1985). In the Popol Vuh, the Maker and Modeler of ‘sky-earth’ are named Xpiyakok and Xmukane and are said to be responsible for the first and subsequent creations within the universe (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993: 107). Beings named the Plumed Serpent and Heart of Sky decided to create and raise the earth, simply by speaking it into existence (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993, Tedlock 1985). This made the mountains rise and resulted in the separation of the sky and earth (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993, Tedlock 1985). After the creators decided that this was good, they were ready to create humans who could praise the gods work and design (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993, Tedlock 1985).

The Hero Twins, Hun Chuen, and Hun Batz

The story of the Hero Twins begins with Hunahpu (One Blowgunner) and Xbalanque (Jaguar Sun). The meanings behind these two names are somewhat problematic and is mainly pieced together through archaic Cholan and K'iche spellings, but a rough translation of both has mainly been considered One Blowgunner and Jaguar Sun (Christenson 2003:80). Some scholars have even reconsidered that the twin Xbalanque may be a female, since it includes the prefix "xis" which is a feminine indicator. However, consensus concludes that the twins are boys because of constant reference to them as "sons" or "boys" (Christenson 2003:79).

When the twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque were born, the older two stepbrothers One Chuen (One Monkey) and One Batz (One Artisan) were told to take them outside to abandon them by their grandmother (Christenson 2003:125, Tedlock 1985: 119). They laid them on an anthill, and when they did not die, they set them on the thornbush, where they still remained completely untouched and healthy (Christenson 2003: 124, Tedlock 1985:119). Hunahpu and Xbalanque, because of their survival and their unwelcomeness in the house, grew up in the mountains and were great hunters with excellent survival skills. One Monkey and One Artisan were now great flautists, singers, carvers, writers, sculptors, jade workers, and metalsmiths (Christenson 2003:126, Tedlock 1985:120). They had become sages, due to their service as replacements for One Hunahpu, their deceased father, and were ingenious (Christenson 2003:126).

Hunahpu and Xbalanque were not loved by their Grandmother, or their stepbrothers, and depended on the forest for their food and shelter (Christenson 2003:127, Tedlock 1985: 120). Because the stepbrothers already had knowledge of everything, they knew about the legacy of

Hunahpu and Xbalanque, and were jealous (Christenson 2003:127, Tedlock 1985:121). Every day, Hunahpu and Xbalanque went to the forest and hunted birds. When they would bring these birds, One Monkey and One Artisan would often eat them. Even though this made Hunahpu and Xbalanque very angry, they did not show it, and instead remained quiet (Christenson 2003:127, Tedlock 1985:121).

One day, Hunahpu and Xbalanque did not return with any birds, and the Grandmother was angry. She asked why they did not have any birds, and they said that their birds had been shot but had remained stuck in the tree. Because they could not retrieve the birds themselves, they asked for their older stepbrothers to come help them. One Monkey and One Artisan agreed to go help them at dawn (Christenson 2003:128, Tedlock 1985:120). They had planned to defeat One Monkey and One Artisan the next day, due to their cruel behavior towards them, and they wanted revenge (Christenson 2003:128, Tedlock 1985:120).

When they got to the tree the next day, Hunahpu and Xbalanque shot down many birds that they saw stirring and singing in the tree (Christenson 2003:128, Tedlock 1985:121). However, none of them fell below the tree, so they asked One Monkey and One Artisan to climb up and retrieve the dead birds (Christenson 2003:128, Tedlock 1985:120). When they agreed to climb up there, One Monkey and One Artisan noticed that the trees were growing larger and larger and became frightened and wanted to climb back down (Christenson 2003:128, Tedlock 1985:121). They asked their younger brothers, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, about how to better grab ahold of the tree, and were told by them to loosen their loincloths and pull the long end behind them to walk more freely (Christenson 2003:129, Tedlock 1985:121). They did as they were asked, loosening the loincloths and pulled the long end behind them, like a tail. However, when they did so, the loincloth trailing behind them turned into a real tail, and they appeared as

real monkeys (Christenson 2003:128, Tedlock 1985:120). Thus, One Monkey and One Artisan became monkeys, and trailed off into the forest howling, and then turning quiet as they disappeared into the trees (Christenson 2003:128, Tedlock 1985:120).

After returning to the house of their Grandmother, Hunahpu and Xbalanque told her that their brothers' faces had changed and they were like animals now (Christenson 2003:130, Tedlock 1985:122). When the Grandmother inquired after what had happened to One Monkey and One Artisan, they told her to not worry, that they would see their faces again, and to promise to not laugh when that happens (Christenson 2003:128, Tedlock 1985:122). Hunahpu and Xbalanque took out their flutes and drums and began to play the song "Hunahpu Spider Monkey" to call to their monkey stepbrothers (Christenson 2003:131, Tedlock 1985:122). One Monkey and One Artisan came over while dancing, drawn to the music and Grandmother laughed at once (Christenson 2003:131, Tedlock 1985:122). As a response to this, the monkey stepbrothers ran back into the trees, and Hunahpu and Xbalanque stated that they would only do it four times in all, and she had to contain her laughter (Christenson 2003:131, Tedlock 1985:123). After the first three times, the monkey stepbrothers would come dancing back to them, and each time the Grandmother would start laughing (Christenson 2003:132, Tedlock 1985:124). Hunahpu and Xbalanque tried to call them back the fourth time, but they did not come. So, they told their Grandmother that they tried but they could not bring One Monkey and One Artisan back, and to not be sad (Christenson 2003:128, Tedlock 1985:120).

One Monkey and One Artisan remained to be prayed to by the ancient flautists and singers, as well as the writers and carvers. They were remembered for their great accomplishments in the house of their Grandmother (Christenson 2003:128, Tedlock 1985:120).

The Popol Vuh also mentions a large bird called Seven Macaw that would fly up and knock down fruit from the nance tree and the Twins would notice this day after day (Christenson 2003:82). Eventually, Seven Macaw was killed by the twins. Some translations add that one day the twins became restless that there were no other humans on the face of the earth, which places the story of the Hero Twins as a previous event to the final creation of humans (Tedlock 1985:89).

The Creation of Humans

The Hero Twins play a very important role in the third and final creation of humans, as they help to resurrect their father, One Hunahpu from his untimely demise in Xibalba. According to K'iche Maya creation narratives, there were three waves of the creation of humans by the Creators (Maker and Modeler, Xpiyakok and Xmukane). The first wave was created and modeled using mud, but the beings were not strong enough, as they quickly crumbled (Christenson 2003:64, Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993: 108). They spoke, but without knowledge (Christenson 2003:64). Dissatisfied at this, the Creators attempted a second time to create humans, this time out of wood (Christenson 2003: 65, Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:108, and Tedlock 1985:83). This time, the beings could move around and speak, but they still did not recognize their creators or revere them (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:108, Tedlock 1985:83). They continued to populate the earth and had many daughters and sons (Christenson 2003: 71, Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:108). However, they did not have any blood, their limbs were not fully developed, and their faces were dry (Tedlock 1985:84). When the Creators realized that these wooden beings did not have any recognition for them, nor did they praise or worship them, so they sent a large flood and wiped out this wave of creation (Christenson 2003:71, Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:108, and Tedlock 1985:84). In a sudden

chain of violent events, there was resin raining down from the sky, gouging of eyeballs, and tearing of bones and flesh (Tedlock 1985:84). During the flood, the faces of these wood people were said to also have been crushed by their cooking ware, plates, pots, grinding stones, and their dogs as a form of punishment (Christenson 2003:74). Not only was there a metaphorical flood of violence, but an actual flood of water that swept most of this creation away. Those that did survive did so by climbing up trees to escape the floods (Christenson 2003:72). It is said that spider monkeys that still live in the forests and the trees are the descendants of one generation of wood people, as they appear to look similar to humans (Christenson 2003:75).

The third creation of humans follows the birth and maturity of Hunahpu and Xbalanque. According to the Popol Vuh, the Twins found out where their father and uncle (Seven Hunahpu) had hidden their ball equipment. Just like One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu, they began to play the ballgame. Eventually, the loud banging of the ball on the ground annoyed the gods of the underworld, and the Twins were summoned to Xibalba by the Lords of Death (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:109). They each planted a maize ear in the center of their house and told their Grandmother that when they dry up, it is a sign that they have died (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:109). When they traveled down to Xibalba with their blowguns, they found that the Lords of Death had already created several traps for them, just like they did to One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu before (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:109). The twins, however, were a lot smarter than their father and uncle, and were able to overcome every trial laid out by the Lords of Xibalba, in addition to beating them in their daily ball games (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:109).

Eventually, the Lords of Xibalba became so mad that Hunahpu and Xbalanque knew that they were going to be killed, so they spoke to diviners in order to plan to die in a way in which

they could be brought back to life (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:109). The diviners arranged for the Xibalban Lords to demand that Hunahpu and Xbalanque be killed via a burning fire within an oven, which the twins were expecting (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:109). They jumped into the fire happily, as they knew that the Lords of Death would crush their bones and throw it into the nearby river, thereby making the Twins turn into fish people (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:109). Once they transformed into fish people, they went around dressed as vagabonds, performing tricks of resurrection and miracles to villages and communities (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:110). The Lords of Xibalba eventually heard of the miraculous performers who were able to magically bring back people and themselves from death, and were interested in being a part of these miracles (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:110). They volunteered to be sacrificed by Hunahpu and Xbalanque, and when the twins killed them, they chose to not revive them (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:110).

By defeating death, they were able to ban the Lords of Xibalba from the world of humans, limit their domain, and go to the tree where the head of their father One Hunahpu had been placed (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:110). They resurrected their father and uncle by reconnecting their body parts, but found that although Hunahpu was reanimated, he did not remember a lot of things properly, so they left him in the ballcourt to be worshiped eternally (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:110).

The Fourth Creation is seen as the final and current creation of humans, where the figures the Bearer, Begetter, Maker, and Modeler expressed that the morning of humans to populate the earth had finally come (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:111). They needed to find yellow and white corn in order to create these humans, and fortunately the coyote, the parrot, the fox, and the crow told them that they could find it in the mountain called “Split-Place” or “Yax-Hal-

Witz" (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:111). Once they were able to find this corn, Xmucane ground the corn nine times and the flour from it became human flesh, and the water she used to mold it became human fat (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:111). Thus, humans were created and modeled with maize and water, perfect as they were. They recognized everything under the sky and on the landscape, their knowledge was limitless like the gods, and they thanked their creators (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:111). Once the gods realized that they were very intelligent and on the same level as the gods themselves, they decided to change the humans a little bit by weakening their vision so that they could not see to the extent of the gods (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:112).

These recorded narratives of K'iche Maya narratives highlight that monkeys not only appear as the half-brothers of the Hero Twins, but also as the descendants of the second creation of humans made out of wood. In addition, the lexical nature of the names given to the half-brothers (Hun Chuen and Hun Batz) indicate their depictions as monkeys and is explored in more depth in Chapter 7. It is important to acknowledge that these narratives surrounding the role of Hun Chuen, Hun Batz, and the second creation of humans tie monkeys to themes of creation, ancestral importance, and the Arts. The ways in which monkeys appear semiotically within the contexts of both archaeological and ethnographic insight is also explored in more depth later in Chapter 7.

Ethnohistoric and Ethnographic Insight: Maya Dances Featuring Monkeys

In terms of contemporary Maya dances that reflect cosmological and cultural ideologies incorporating monkeys, there are a few other examples in the Maya world. Similar to the Deer Dance in southern Belize, there is a Danza de los Venados (Dance of the Deer) in San Cristobal,

Totonicapan, Guatemala. This ritual dance is said to have occurred pre-Contact and continues to be practiced every year in July. According to the Folkloric Group of San Cristobal, Totonicapan website, it features 26 dancers altogether, who are hunters, wild animals (deer, lions, tigers, lions, and monkeys), and old man and woman who are in charge of the hunting ritual. The dogs help the men chase after the deer, while the man and woman are in charge of the hunting ritual, in conjunction with the monkeys (The Folkloric Group of Totonicapan Website). For this specific dance, a house is rented in order for the dancers to isolate themselves and purify the body and soul of the dancers (especially those who represent the monkeys, lions, and tigers) (The Folkloric Group of Totonicapan Website).

Other dances are more centralized on monkey figures, such as the Danza de los Monos or the Dance of the Monkeys. Speaking with B at the Cacao Festival, I learned that they knew about the Dance of the Monkeys but had never seen it. In Totonicapan, the Danza de los Monos recalls the ancient narrative recorded in the Popol Vuh (Pop Wuj) and the "equilibrium" of the twin brother monkeys in tree branches (Folkloric Group of Totonicapan Website). The performance of the dance uses a 35 meter high pole tied to the front of a Catholic church, where the monkey balances themself on a rope while the dance happens below (Folkloric Group of Totonicapan Website). In addition to music production by a marimba with one musician (similar to the Deer Dance), there is a special flute that is named 'Ah Xul' (Folkloric Group of Totonicapan Website). In Momostenango, Guatemala, the Dance of the Monkeys takes place every other year at the town's church. A tightrope from the roof of the town's church is tied to a 20 meter tall pine tree trunk (stripped of its bark) and is erected as an axis mundi (or a central axis), where the monkeys descend along a slanted line to the plaza's dance ground (Cook and Offit 2013, Newman 2018:829). One of the main ritual aspects of this dance is that each of the nine K'iche

dancers is represented by a broken pottery sherd throughout the ritual, nine most likely representing the nine levels of the underworld. Candles and incense are burned on the potsherds during a series of ceremonies that involve cutting and re-erecting the dance pole and the potsherds are transported to a predetermined altar the following year (Cook and Offit 2013, Newman 2018:829). The Chamula people also have a dance called "Los Monos" (The Monkeys), where the 'Max' (monkeys) act out the old creation story and the tearing down of the old world (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:118). This 'tearing down' is linked to the creation narratives in the Popol Vuh, where monkeys are the wood people from the second creation, later mostly wiped out by a flood sent by the creator gods (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:118). In this dance, some of the monkey impersonators act mischievously, running free, playing tricks on the crowd, and making sure no-one took an unauthorized photo (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:118).

Unlike these dances mentioned, Miller and Taube (1993) and Taube (2003:118) refer to dances in the Highlands that involve the depiction of monkeys as ritual clowns that act out immoral and inappropriate behavior. This depiction of monkeys that characterizes them as 'immoral' and 'licentious' has ties to an earlier account referring to a dance featuring monkeys. Thomas Gann was appointed as a medical officer for British Honduras (Belize) in the 19th century and wrote many books about his travels to different Maya 'ruins'. In 1926, Gann published a book that included a very important piece of information in regard to the practice of monkey dances in the Maya area. When Gann traveled to San Pedro, Belize, he spoke about being able to see and photograph monkey masks that belonged to an old Maya man who lived a distance from the village. According to Gann (1926:160), the old Maya man would not let anyone from his village near the masks-let alone him- but he managed to view them only after

giving him two dollars (considered a great sum). He described the masks as "…very disappointing, consisting of thirteen small, black, and red wooden masks of monkeys' faces, with one a good deal larger, provided with a bead and three horns, to represent the devil" (Gann 1926:161). The reason why these masks were kept so secretive and out-of-sight had to do with the fact that, according to Gann (1926:161), "It was many years since the monkey dance had been performed openly in San Pedro, as, being a relic of former idolatry, it was strictly forbidden by the Roman Catholic priests, and the Indians found it greatly to their advantage to be on good terms with the church".

Gann (1926:161) alluded to the dance as being long outlawed, as he stated that the "merest skeleton" of the original tradition of the dance had now been left and that "…the monkeys and their father the devil at one time a very considerable influence in the affairs of men, and were especially powerful in assisting or reducing the growth of corn and the rainfall at the time when rain was most needed…". He further describes that since the introduction of Christianity to the Maya region, the ancient dance which was now forbidden by the church was "connected with devil worship" was now put to "Christian uses" with people using a fan with Christian symbolism to "wave in front of the masked individuals, representing the devil and his children, upon which they promptly turned tail, and ran howling away" (Gann 1926:161). This report by Gann provides not only information about how Maya traditions (particularly the monkey dance) were seen by Westerners and the Christian colonial gaze, but also key similarities of the contemporary monkey dance (Danza de los Monos) in terms of the use of masks, ritual offerings, and cultural amalgamation. This account also highlights that monkey dances in San Pedro had power in bringing fertility through the control of the rainfall and the growth of corn. The liminal contexts of these dances and the embodied representation of

monkeys within them show that monkeys were symbols of fertility and through the process of the dance, were able to index the control of rain and harvest.

As evident in some key characteristics and descriptions of the monkey dance given by Gann (1926) and others, there is a noticeable influence of Christian symbolism and beliefs within traditional Maya dances. A large part of this stems from the creation of an amalgamated religion called 'Costumbre', or a blend of traditional Maya and Catholic beliefs. According to the "Maya Ritual Dance Past and Present" page on the Folkloric Group of San Cristobal, Totonicapan website, many traditional dances still practiced today (such as the Dance of the Moors and the Dance of the Conquest) were introduced as a way of altering traditional dance to evoke Christian values and beliefs. Additionally, this webpage also discusses the role of ritual dances (such as the Dance of the Deer and the Dance of the Monkeys) in honoring patron saints, an important part of Costumbre religion.

The ethnohistoric recordings by Gann (1926) highlight the colonial and Catholic influences within the interpretations and practices of an outlawed monkey dance in San Pedro. The characterizations of the dance as 'idolatrous' and associated with the devil shows the heavy Catholic biases tied to the perspectives of monkeys and their dances in the Maya world. This account also shows the long prohibition or outlawed nature of monkey-related dances that once had control over rainfall and fertility of crops, and that the Maya had been persecuted for this.

With the insight from the Folkloric Group of Totonicapán, Cook and Offit (2013), and other emic and ethnographic sources, it is evident that these dances (along with others) have been revitalized and commonly practiced in the Maya world after a long duration. Many of these dances are continued to be associated with fertility, rain, and the Popol Vuh similar to Maya dances of the past. However, the time and place in which these dances occur create meaning

through the postcolonial settings they are practiced in and also index continued cosmological and ideological beliefs about monkeys. The revitalization of practice that embody monkeys and index themes seen reflected in past dances and traditions, as well as creation narrative, are further explored in Chapter 5.

In addition to recognizing the Western, institutional process of IRB requirements and approval in Chapter 3, it is imperative to acknowledge the colonial and ethnocentric biases tied to most of the ethnohistoric accounts within this research. The time and context in which most of these accounts were written is important to draw attention to, as it was during a time of heavy imperialism, colonialism, and assimilation. During the time in which texts such as the Popol Vuh were copied and translated, there was active persecution and Catholic assimilation of Maya peoples. Even though a lot of these texts were originally written by the K'iche Maya and other Maya communities, it is necessary to point out the inherent biases that are tied to the recording and repetitive translation of their words through worldviews influenced by Catholicism and colonialism.

This research relies heavily on ethnohistoric texts, both to highlight the role of monkeys within written creation narratives and to draw attention to the outlawed and taboo reputation of monkey traditional dances in the Maya world. The sole reliance on texts and perspectives such as these within research about the Maya is inherently simulative, as it establishes narratives about the Maya based on what was written about them in a heavily Western, colonial, and Catholic context. This often constitutes a reality that often does not involve emic, Indigenous input and perspectives. A solution to this is the incorporation of a multi-faceted set of methods that include both etic and emic realities and insight. This project employs a methodology that incorporates and highlights both archaeological sources and ethnographic insight in addition to existing

ethnohistoric materials. This research aligns with decolonial objectives because it brings to the forefront the embodied knowledge of Maya descendants along with the inclusion of ethnohistoric insight, in order to reach across gaps in knowledge that can result in simulation.

Chapter 5: The Deer Dance

The Cacao Festival at Uxbenká

On May 20th, 2023 the second day of the Santa Cruz Village Cacao Festival called 'Cacao and Culture' was held at the Classic period archaeological site of Uxbenká. Uxbenká is located the district of Toledo, in Belize, which sits near Santa Cruz, a Mopan Maya village (Prufer et al. 2017). This site was occupied in during the Classic period, from around 300-900 C.E (Prufer et al. 2017). The landscape is surrounded by green jungle, with the luscious Maya mountains surrounding the village and site. During the main part of the festival, there were various speakers (community members, farmers, archaeologists, and leaders from the Belize government), some of which spoke in both Mopan and then English about cacao, its importance to their community, and the changing environment and economy. The Deer Dance was the main cultural dance featured at the festival, and it was performed three times for about 15-30 minutes each time.

Figure 7: View of the Maya mountains near the site of Uxbenká.

The Deer Dance and Monkeys- As Told by B

"Well, for me, I don't feel nothing, but I am very interested in-of giving them the information…people just come and watch, they don't really know what it really means. You know?" [B, May 20th, 2023].

I had just asked B, a dancer in the Deer Dance, "How do you feel about tourists watching the Deer Dance?". B was a nice individual, someone who was excited to talk about the narrative behind the Deer Dance and about their culture. After a few times of coming up to them and asking if they would like to have a conversation with me about the dance, we were able to have a conversation for about 20 minutes near the end of the festival. We went and stood near a tent located in the periphery of the circle of tents filled with farmers and other community members selling their cacao products, a little away from the lively and booming music being played by the DJ. After I introduced myself a little more, I spoke about my interest in being here, and my hopes to speak to dancers and other individuals about the role of monkeys in the Deer Dance and their culture. After giving them a consent form, we went through it together, and I asked if they would be interested in having a recorded, semi-structured conversation with me as I took out my phone and showed them the recording app. They agreed, signed the form, and we began the conversation. I pressed 'record' on my phone a little after we began talking, because some other folks came over to talk with him.

B first began our conversation by explaining the meaning and process behind the dance, according to their role as a dancer. According to B, this dance is a depiction of a hunting scene.

The deer is..um..from the jungle. The Spanish and the captain are the representative of the..how.. The Maya people were discovered..yeah. The jaguar and the…the um.. Monkeys, those are the ones from the jungle as well. And then the old man, the dog, and his wife.. He is a person doing hunting as well, you know, hunting deer, hunting other animals, the wild animals. So..but em..during when he was huntin…his dog was-his dog got harmed by the..em..by the-by the jaguars, because of-because of..of not confirming whether the lady is going to come, ya know? So, em, that is-that is why now the-the old man will go (do?) hunting but what happened is that the dog started to go and then it was caught by the jaguar, and it was in-injured, ya know? By the jaguar then, so that is when now we start the dance with the (their?) dogs, the dogs will sleep under the marimba, and then the man will say "oh"- and then he'll will start to look for medicine… and cures that. So that is why now- and that- that is a significant of how the people um believe or behave within the community…ya know? Because, like I said, if I-if I- let's say for yourself, you are my wife. And then, I left you home and I go hunt. Along with my dog, along with my gun. But, I never did know if someone came to you while em-uh at the forest do-doing my hunting. So, em, but while I am there, the monkeys will start to indicate to me what is happening at home [B, May 20th, 2024].

Figures 8 and 9: Deer Dancers at the beginning of the Deer Dance, moving back and forth. Maya women circling them with burning copal, the Spanish are dancing behind them.

Figure 10: (From left to right) The old woman, the old man, the dog, a jaguar, and a jackal. The dog is dancing around the old man.

B explained that this dance is a hunting scene where the Maya, the Spanish, and wild animals each play a role. While the old man was out hunting with his dog, the dog became injured by a jaguar. When this happens, the music on the marimba starts and the search for medicine for the dog begins. While his wife was at home, the monkeys indicated to the man what is happening.

> Monkeys are very em-very they can-you know, they can indicate to you what is happening at home when that is really how-em our ancient or our elder people taught us.

So, em that is why then the monkeys get-harm the dog, harm everything, so the old man-um- get offended because he doesn't know why-why is it that his dog is getting injured, ya know? So-so that is why then the old man come back… and then from coming back home his dog was harmed, the dog was injured, and then from there they start to look for medication. For the dog to get cured. Yeah, so the old man will go and find the- the em, the person that who will um- assist him in- to cure his dog. So, but the person who told him that there is no medication, but he'll have to go to the Spanish, to the captain, so that is where you can find the medication or you know, the remedy for dogs. So that is why now the- that old man and the old lady will be walking around, and that is what they do when we perform this deer dance.. and the old man and the old lady they are starting to walk and you know, looking for remedies for their dog. So, em, so when they arrive to me because I am the first captain, they ask for the remedy for their dog, but I told them "I have a little" but the Spanish have more. So, the Spanish give them a little bit more so we just like add it together, so that is how we cure this dog and that is why now- and that is the…the different kind of remedy [B, May 20th, 2024].


Figures 11 and 12: (left) Two monkeys in the Deer Dance dance around one another with bandanas (red and black), (right) one of the monkeys points up to the trees

Participant Observation of the Deer Dance

The procession started at the bottom of the site, near the entrance to the event, where a large group of women, some with regular and traditional Maya dress, circled the dancers and swung little censers with burning copan. These women did the same thing, again, when the procession moved up to the actual site. There were a few people playing a tune with the marimba and maracas, and the same beat continued throughout the entire performance. The dancers were all wearing very bright regalia, in colors of orange, blue, green, yellow, red, pink, and purple and

there were multiple different fabrics and patterns used (floral, velvet, tassels). They also had small circular mirrors covering these outfits.

All of the dancers appeared to be men, and these masks appeared to represent Caucasian men with blonder features (rubio) and blue eyes. The masks reminded me of Spanish conquistadors, as they had the style of facial hair from that time (curled mustaches and pointed beards). They also had 17th century-esque hats and canes. Some of them were holding wooden guns. There was one woman's mask, who was the wife of one of the conquistadors. There were eight deer, two monkeys, one dog, another spotted animal, three jaguars, and the rest were men (and one woman). As the women were circling around the dancers, the deer were dancing to the beat by moving forward and then back. The other dancers were stepping in place to the music.

The dance began again with the deer dancing to the beat forward and backward, while the 'conquistadors' danced in place. The two monkeys stepped a bit forward and then a bit backward to the beat. The jaguars stepped a bit forward and a bit behind as well. The two monkeys would dance in place, and at times, circle each other and pull the bandanas tight between their hands. The old man, dog, and two other spotted animals (one jaguar, one unknown) had more activity. The man and woman circled each other, with the dog, while the other animals danced forward and backward a bit. The dog would let out a little yelp from time to time.

The layout of the dancers was organized by a few different sections. At the front, there were eight deer dancers. Behind the deer, there were about eight people representing the Spanish. Two jaguars stood behind the eight Spanish conquistadors. Two monkeys (clad in black fur, tails, one carrying a blue bandana and one carrying a red bandana) stood behind the two jaguars, and then three other animals stood in front of them (one had a black mask with white spots, dog, and a smaller jaguar). The last people in the dance layout were the man and woman, at the other

end of the formation. The two monkeys danced around each other for most of the dance, pulling their red and blue bandanas tight, pausing to point up to the trees every once and a while. At the end of the dance, the monkeys came around and engaged with the audience, holding a pouch and asking for money.

Ceremonies/Ritual Tied to Preparation of the Deer Dance

After B spoke about the mixing together of medicine from both the Spanish and the Maya to cure the dog, I asked if there is a mix of Catholic as well as traditional Maya beliefs in the dance.

> Well, em, actually what is happening now is only the Catholic church is (performing?) the culture. *Our* culture. Because, our culture, our way of living, is not only what the culture- or the dance or whatever, it goes along with our entire livelihood. Because, we the Maya people, we do hunting, we do-we do slash and burn, we clear the area, we chop it, we burn it, we plant it, and all of those have significant. All of those have meaning to us. Why when we start to do chopping, we have to be careful about how we move out in the field. Because you don't know what is there. Maybe there is snakes, maybe there's wasps, you know- there's small insects that bite or snip, so you have to be careful what you do. So what our elderly used to do-em-they-they-they em have an incense, a copal, they burn it for, a, for a prayer, a sacred prayer that will chase all of those bad animals. So then you start your cleaning. That is how we have burned it from the very beginning [B, May 20th, 2023].

After hearing this, it made me think back to the beginning of the dance and the Maya women burning copal. I asked B about this process, and they started to go more in depth by discussing the practice of burning copal in a circle around the dancers and its significance to their culture.

> That is a ceremony we do, yes. We do that as well, because, the reason why we do burning the copal and the smoke and the-the masks, and things like that is because we don't want nobody to get injured by the-by the *way*. So because this is not like a- well, it is just a wooden mask, but it has a significant because the people who made them, they know exactly how and why is it that we wear them. You know they don't just go cut the-the wood and start to make- ya know? And start to make the mask or whatever, they, they have to have a secret as well. Ceremonies as well. When they do and cut the trees, they start to-to make them. You know? So that is why now it is very important that we keep that. So, that is why we are practicing. Yeah [B, May 20th, 2023].

Cacao and Environment

A little bit later in our conversation, I asked B about the connection between cacao and monkeys. Was there any specific reason why monkeys are featured in the cacao festival?

> No, no, no. I think why is it we are performing this is because with the um cacao feast now, because um the people are, ya know, how they said early-early up there {referring to the prior festival events and speeches about the cacao festival and farming of the area} the amount of cacao, how the cacao was made, worked, and how the farmers then do the work and how they cultivate the lands. They use machete, they use {unintelligible}, they use everything, but what happened then is related to the environment. So that is why we um need to have the monkeys then, because monkeys come, some of the monkeys are uh-

> uh-uh like the-the-the they walk at night, they do eat the cacao as well. So that is why they say they have them here, if-if-if related to everything, you know [B, May 20th, 2023].

With this insight from B, I learned that in terms of the larger festival itself, the connection between monkeys and cacao takes on more ecological meaning. Conversations that occurred earlier in the festival highlighted the environmental and ecological importance of cacao to the Mopan Maya community. The monkeys, as ecological figures, eat the cacao and contribute to the management of cacao within the forest. Later on, I learned that monkeys also appear in Mopan Maya oral traditions and creation narrative.

> It's relevant to everything. Like I said, its almost relevant to everything. It's all connected. So, to the environment, to the animals, everything. So, that is how we need to like be careful of how we do things, you know? Yeah, that my opinion, but most of us, or most of the community members are not doing that anymore or not practicing it anymore because of-due to the em, religion. Due to the em, you know, that is why it is the Catholic that do have more, uhhh, participating in culture [B, May 23, 2023].

Community Insight at the Cacao Festival

Speaking with community members in Santa Cruz Village, it was evident that themes of survivance and simulation were reflected in their experiences and connections to Uxbenká. One individual spoke about the Belize government not having much power or control over the Maya people there. "They are very protective of the Maya site [Uxbenká]" (Community Member, May 20th, 2023). Walking around the site core, I noticed there were many stone slabs that might be stelae. Another individual spoke about the history of British encampment at the site, pointing out

the stelae and their old engravings of possible rulers. According to them, “the British Army had tried to scratch out this piece of our cultural heritage…the army was stationed at the site and used it as a camp…” (Community Member, May 20th, 2023). This site, which was once a setting used as a camp for colonial forces, was now the setting for the revitalized Deer Dance. Even though this setting has the very real evidence of colonial occupation and the misuse of Maya cultural materials, this community chooses this space to perform their traditional dances.

Figure 13: Large slabs of stone at Uxbenká that seemed to be stelae, Carved stelae at Uxbenká have been stylistically linked to Tikal (Wanyerka 2009).

Speaking to other community members, it was evident that despite the long durée of traditional practice, local oral traditions involving monkeys were still being passed down. When I asked about the practice of the monkey dance at Santa Cruz Village, they responded with “No- one has practiced it since the 1980’s” (May 20th, 2023). B, one of the lead dancers of the Deer Dance, said that, “Yeah, they used to have it- to play it in San Jose. They have- there is an old

man that he used to play- he had- he had everything. The costumes, and the mask, but the old man pass away, I don't know where they have that now." (B, May 20th, 2024).

Local Oral Traditions about Monkeys

One of the members of the village said, "My father told me about how humans were punished and turned into monkeys…they grew hair and a tail" (Community Member, May 20th, 2023). After speaking with B a little later, there was another local narrative that was shared. This was also passed down from their father. B said, "there is a, a-a-a story about the-the-the Mayan people who are, you know, starting way back" [B, May 20th, 2023]. I asked, " how there is ancestry between monkeys [and the Maya people]?" B replied, "Yeah, exactly, yeah. Mhmm" [B, May 20th, 2023]. B continued to speak about this narrative that they had learned from their father:

> My dad had told me about the stories about the-about the ancient people. In the past, my dad learned it from his dad, so my dad teach me and then I have those stories, um, you know, there is a story about how the Mayas were made- well how the creation was started, you know, so that is why you said they- that the monkeys came from the people as well. Because, you know why? My dad um, taught me but like I said, we don't if it is true, but it is just a story, you know? So, but my dad taught me that em, the people from before is-they, em do slash and burn, like I said, in their community they do slash and burn, and then-but from there, you have-they have three, three-em-brothers and their grandmother. It's a story! It's not related to this but it's a story almost connected to the same deer dance now that we are performing [B, May 20th, 2024].

With this introduction, B explained that this narrative took place during a time in the past when the community practiced slash and burn agriculture. This agricultural method is still used by the Maya today. In addition, this narrative mirrored how the Mayas were made, how creation began, and serves almost as connection to the Deer Dance that they performed.

> So, this story is still-um, three boys and their grandmother. So, these three boys go early in the morning and do chopping. But after all when their grandmother observed that they don't- that they're not chopping, they only find a tree with a lot of branch, and when they go in the farm, they take their tortilla, they take their water or their drinks and they just want to play on that tree, running all around on the branches, you know? But, em, what happened when the time was about to come-when the time was about to burn, while what they have chopped, but they don't have no field, they don't have nothing that they have chopped, they only do playing on the sticks on the tree. So-em, when the grandmother told them, "boys, and now its time for burn, so what you will do- you'll do your burning and when you will be planting? And they said-they get frightened, they don't know what to say because they aren't doing their work, they are just playing on bunches of trees, so from there they um..they-they hurry started to have smoke, they started to put it in a trunk or something like that. Thereby, the big smoke can come. So now what happened then, they-they-they put, they collect smoke, they store it in a trunk, and then from there, they hovered up by the branch, they have it on the branch where by they used to play. So now when their grandmother wanted to go and check, because she don't want nobody to get injured, so she went along with them. But while when she was entering whereby they do their farming, she said, "No, nothing". But she saw the smoke, the smoke, when the smoke is on the top of a tree, on a branch of a tree, whereby they have that big trunk

with-full of smoke. So, but the old lady started to see the smoke but there is no chopping, ya know? [B, May 20th, 2023].

In this narrative, the brothers are acting mischievous and choose to play on the tree branches instead of preparing for the slash and burning of the forest. B further described what the brothers proceeded to do while they were expected to contribute to the preparation of slash and burn, how their grandmother reacted, and how they were transformed into monkeys.

So now what happened then, they-they-they put, they collect smoke, they store it in a trunk, and then from there, they hovered up by the branch, they have it on the branch where by they used to play. So now when their grandmother wanted to go and check, because she don't want nobody to get injured, so she went along with them. But while when she was entering whereby they do their farming, she said, "No, nothing". But she saw the smoke, child (?), the smoke, when the smoke is on the top of a tree, on a branch of a tree, whereby they have that big trunk with-full of smoke. So, but the old lady started to see the smoke but there is no chopping like this, ya know? So, then from there the old lady- when the old lady reached whereby the boys them there were playing, and then from there the old lady told them, "What are you boys doing?!" And they hurried climb up more and they were told to come down. "Please, come down, let's go home, it's getting dark!" and they said, "If I am able to come down, I will come home." So, she went home, but those boys doesn't reach back. They-they stay there, they sleep there, and their grandmother go again and when she-she went again and looked for them, when she reached there, nobody. They were still more up. And then they- the old lady started to bring them down, call them, but they said "no", they don't want to come down again. So the old lady

said, “Okay. So you will be remaining as stuck, so you will be called ‘monkey’”. So that is how the monkey was… That is how the monkeys begin [B, May 20th, 2023].

At this point, I realized that the described personalities of these brothers mirror the narratives about the half-brothers of the Hero Twins in the Popol Vuh. Similar to that K’iche narrative, these brothers are described in a mischievous or trickster-like manner, where they are supposed to do work but end up playing in the branches of the trees. Their grandmother checks up on them multiple times to see if they are doing their work and ask them to come down, which they refuse to do. After they refuse to come down from the trees, they are destined to be turned into monkeys. This element of transformation is also reflected in the K’iche narratives, as Hun Chuen and Hun Batz become stuck in the trees and also turn into monkeys.

Even though some community members wanted to share their oral narratives about monkeys, others wanted to talk about a gap in Maya cultural knowledge. The last person I spoke to said, “Even though they [Maya children] know how to hunt, survive in the forest, build a house, and medicinal plant knowledge, they will not ever know the ways of the Ancients. This is because there is a clear gap in between that occurred when the Spanish came. They wrote down what they thought was relevant, their own bias, but what about the other side?” (Community Member, May 20th, 2023).

The place, space, time, and social action within the Deer Dance at Santa Cruz Village indicates larger meaning and reflects both themes of simulation and survivance. Themes of simulation were tied to community insight that expressed ‘gaps in knowledge’ left behind from the Contact period. With community member insight, it was interesting to learn that there are felt ‘gaps in knowledge’ between their ancestral past and their postcolonial present that are due to the

written recordings and inherent biases by colonial forces. This theme of simulation was also reflected in the conversation with B, as they expressed that people come to see the dance, but many don't know the meaning behind it. This highlights a form of a 'gap in knowledge' between etic observer and emic participant.

The themes of survivance are reflected in the setting where revitalized dance is chosen to be practiced and performed. The site of Uxbenká, according to the perspectives of community members, has a British colonial history and clear evidence of the destruction of artifacts (stelae). Despite this history, the ancestral ties to Uxbenká, the respect of the site, and the performance of a dance that was outlawed for a long period of time at the site bring new meaning to this setting. Many community members spoke of their oral traditions that were passed down from generations past about the roles of monkeys, along with ancestral and ecological interpretations of the behavior of monkeys in the forest used to indicate events and prevent danger.

The liminality of this space also plays a role in survivance and meaning making, because it establishes a context that allows for the performers to embody animals or 'ways' along with people in order to represent a hunting scene of the past. This performance and its liminal context echo oral traditions and ancestral knowledge within a postcolonial and culturally-hybrid sphere, due to the nature of Costumbre or Catholic and traditional Maya practice. The monkey icons which are depicted in this setting, in turn, index and draw meaning to creation narratives and ancestral knowledge in a postcolonial setting of survivance.

Chapter 6: Archaeological Evidence of Monkeys in Maya Culture: Artifacts from The Western Belize Regional Cave Project, The Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project, and the Justin Kerr MayaVase Database

Western Belize Monkey Pots and Cave Paintings

Looking at the instances of a number of Terminal Classic monkey pots, sherds, and cave paintings from Upper Belize Valley, there are evident similarities in the iconography itself. Along with these similarities, we can focus on the use of these items as offerings with any indicative patterns of discarding, in order to observe the nature of the ritual itself (Marcus and Flannery 1994).

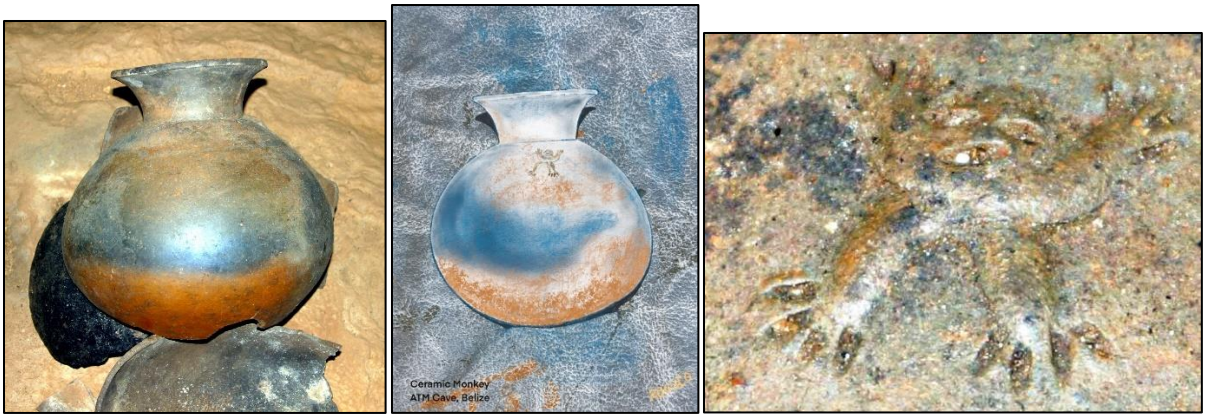
The process of the creation and further 'killing' of a ceramic is an important piece to focus on, due to its larger reflection of Maya religion and belief systems of animism. Ceramics, along with many other objects, have spirits that can be ceremonially 'killed' through creating a hole on the vessel's surface, thus releasing their spirits or souls. These can be further seen as termination rituals, where they are performed for the purpose of deactivating or 'killing' objects at the end of their life/ use cycle (Lucero 2003:526).

One prominent example is the monkey jar from Actun Tunichil Muknal (Cave of the Stone Sepulcher) a wet cave located along the Roaring Creek in Cayo District, Western Belize (Moyes and Awe 1998). This jar has an appliqued monkey located just below the rim and has arms stretched out in all four directions, four phalanges on each limb, and an open mouth. It also contains a kill hole (or the spot where the ceramic was ritually released) on the opposite side. This physical attribute of the vessel suggests that it was ritually released of its spirit and left in the cave as an offering. This cave is thought to have been visited by the Maya from the Preclassic to Postclassic periods and holds a lot of cultural remains in four major chambers and tunnels (Moyes and Awe 1998). One of the most prominent type of cultural artifact found are

ceramics, where most in the Main Chamber have been left un-looted, calcified and in-situ from the time of deposition (Moyes and Awe 1998, Moyes 2001). A lot of these are smashed, which was (and still is) a ritual often used in ceremonies (Moyes 2001).

Table 1: Monkey Artifacts Collected from the Western Belize Regional Cave Project (WBRCP) and Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project (BVAR)

Type of artifact	Monkey Depiction	Provenience	Cave or above-ground	Chronology	Condition
Jar	Appliqued monkey located just below the rim, arms stretched out in all four directions, four phalanges on each limb, open mouth (Awe et al. 1997)	Actun Tunichil Muknal	cave	Terminal Classic	Kill hole
Jar	Figure that resembles a monkey appliqued on the neck (similar to a motif found at ATM) with its head floating above the body (Moyes 2006:245-246)	Chechem Ha	cave	Terminal Classic	broken
sherd	Similar motif to Barton Ramie sherd (Gifford 1976)	Barton Creek	cave	Terminal Classic	broken
sherd, rim piece	Appliqued monkey figure on rim piece	Deep Valley	cave	Terminal Classic	broken
jar	Appliqued monkey figure with limbs detached from body	Indian Creek	cave	Terminal Classic	Unknown
sherd, rim piece	Appliqued monkey figure on rim piece (Gifford 1976)	Barton Ramie	above ground	Terminal Classic	broken
sherd	According to Helmke (1999:316), there were definite connections made between the monkey sherd displaying an incised monkey figure at Pook's Hill Plazuela and other caves within the Roaring Creek (such as Actun Tunichil Muknal and Chechem Ha).	Pook's Hill	above ground	Terminal Classic	broken
Jar	Monkeys modeled to both sides of the neck of the jar and noted that similar designs were found at both Baking Pot and cave sites, such as Chechem Ha and Actun Tunichil Muknal (Awe 1999, Audet and Awe 2002)	Baking Pot	above ground	Terminal Classic	unknown



Figures 14 (left), 15 (right), and 16 (below): Actun Tunichil Muknal Monkey Pot, Drawing of vessel by Roger Scott, Close up of appliqued monkey figure (Moyes and Awe 1998).

Similarities in iconography are apparent between this monkey jar from Actun Tunichil Muknal (ATM), other cave sites, and above-ground sites. Some of these cave sites are Chechem Ha Cave, Barton Creek, Deep Valley, and Indian Creek. The above-ground sites include Barton Ramie, Pook's Hill, and Baking Pot.

In terms of the Chechem Ha monkey vessel, there is a figure that resembles a monkey appliqued on the neck (similar to a motif found at ATM) with its head floating above the body (Moyes 2006:245-246). A similar motif was found by Gifford (1976:237) on a Vaca Falls Red Jar from Barton Ramie and a sherd from Barton Creek Cave (Mirro 2007:68, Moyes 2006). According to Helmke (1999:316), there were definite connections made between the monkey sherd displaying an incised monkey figure at Pook's Hill Plazuela and other caves within the Roaring Creek (such as Actun Tunichil Muknal and Chechem Ha). During BVAR excavations conducted by Audet and Awe (2002:6) at Baking Pot, a vessel was found of monkeys modeled to both sides of the neck of the jar and noted that similar designs were found at both Baking Pot and cave sites, such as Chechem Ha and Actun Tunichil Muknal (Awe 1999).

Most recently, during a BVAR cave expedition to the site of Painted Cave in 2023, a large monkey cave painting was rediscovered (publication in progress). This figure seems to

have all four limbs spread out in the same formation, with an open mouth, as the other iconographic depictions in the caves of Actun Tunichil Muknal, Chechem Ha, Deep Valley, as well as above ground sites. Photographs and 3D models of this cave painting were taken by Estevan Ramirez, one of the archaeologists on the expedition.

Figures 17 and 18: Chechem Ha Monkey Vessel (left), close up of appliqued monkey on Chechem Ha vessel (right) (Moyes 2006).

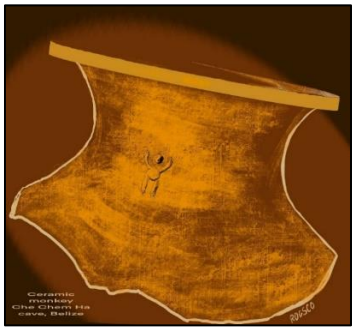


Figure 19: Drawing of Chechem Ha Monkey Vessel by Roger Scott

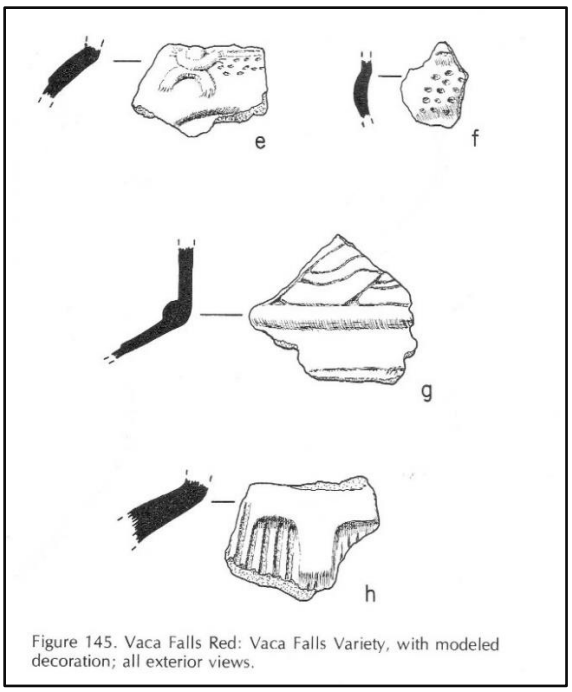


Figure 20: Barton Ramie, Belize Vaca Falls Red Sherd, Rim Piece (Gifford 1976).

Figure 21: Sherd found at site of Deep Valley in Belize (Awe).

Figure 22: Vessel with Monkey Applique from site of Indian Creek, Toledo, Belize (Awe).

Figures 23a and 23b: Monkey cave painting in Painted Cave, Belize. Photographed by Estevan Ramirez.

Monkey Artifacts Collected through BVAR

Excavations through the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project (BVAR) has yielded some prominent examples of cultural materials resembling monkey or simian-like characteristics in both above ground and cave sites. At above ground sites, artifacts include zoomorphic figurines, beads, vessels or sherds, as well as an ocarina. In addition, the faunal remains of Geoffroy's spider monkey was found at the site of Cahal Pech. In a few Western Belize (or surrounding area) cave sites, vessels or sherds have been found depicting similar applique monkeys near the rim, some of which have kill holes or signs of ritual deposition.

Table 2: Monkey Artifacts and Remains found through the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project (BVAR)

Type of artifact	Provenience	Context
Zoomorphic figurine	site core, Baking Pot	found in the humic layer of the site core at Baking Pot, with a "bug eye face" and a pronounced brow ridge, indicative of a facial characteristic of monkeys (Gillaspie 2020:171)
Zoomorphic figurine (part of ocarina)	Cahal Pech	Resembles a monkey with a "hollow pot belly" was found at the site of Cahal Pech during the 2017 field season, thought to be part of a musical instrument (Ebert 2017:26)
bead	Baking Pot	Limestone bead with an incised monkey face found during the 1998 Western Belize Regional Cave Project Field Season, found at the site of Baking Pot (Piehl 1998:234)
Monkey ocarina	Cahal Pech	This monkey ocarina was found inside a burial, associated with "4 vessels, (Benque Viejo Polychrome Bowl, Macal Red Orange Jar, Imitation Slateware bowl, Cayo Unslipped Jar), 1 ceramic flute, 1 jaina figurine, and 1 whistle ocarina" (Zanotto 2017: 219)
Ateles geoffroyi ulna fragments	Ballcourt East Plaza C, Cahal Pech	During the 2019 BVAR Field Season, 20 fragments of the right ulna (similar to the forearm) of *Ateles geoffroyi* (Geoffroy's spider monkey) were found in the Ballcourt East Plaza C at the site of Cahal Pech (Burke et al. 2019:316).

Two fragments of zoomorphic figurines thought to have characteristics of a monkey (whether that be facial or otherwise) have been found at the sites of Baking Pot and Cahal Pech in Western Belize. The first was found in the humic layer of the site core at Baking Pot, with a "bug eye face" and a pronounced brow ridge, indicative of a facial characteristic of monkeys

(Gillaspie 2020:171). Beads, such as a limestone bead with an incised monkey face found during the 1998 Western Belize Regional Cave Project Field Season, was found at the site of Baking Pot (Piehl 1998:234). Another zoomorphic figurine fragment, one that resembled a monkey with a “hollow pot belly” was found at the site of Cahal Pech during the 2017 field season and is thought to be part of a musical instrument (Ebert 2018:26). Another artifact thought to be a musical instrument, specifically an ocarina, was also found during the 2017 field season at Cahal Pech. This monkey ocarina was found inside a burial, associated with "4 vessels, (Benque Viejo Polychrome Bowl, Macal Red Orange Jar, Imitation Slateware bowl, Cayo Unslipped Jar), 1 ceramic flute, 1 jaina figurine, and 1 whistle ocarina" (Zanotto 2017: 219).

During the 2019 BVAR Field Season, 20 fragments of the right ulna (similar to the forearm) of Geoffroy’s spider monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*) were found in the Ballcourt East Plaza C at the site of Cahal Pech (Burke et al. 2019:316). The remains of the Geoffroy’s spider monkey made up most of the 27 specimens found in the Ballcourt, and two of the other mammalian specimens closely followed Odocoileus virginianus (white-tailed deer) and Canis lupus familiaris (dog) (Burke et al. 2019:316).

Common Themes Associated with Monkeys in the Justin Kerr MayaVase Database

With the 31 available Classic ceramic vessels from the Justin Kerr MayaVase Database that included monkeys in some illustrative capacity, eight main themes were created. These themes were based on the similarity or closeness of characteristics of the vessels mentioned in Chapter 3 (source, provenience, context, chronology, type, and illustration). Most of the similarities were associated with illustrative elements in terms of the depiction of monkeys or other figures present. There was not a lot of chronological data available (besides their

characterization as Classic period ceramics) and original provenience was rare. Despite this, the Classic period representations of monkeys placed these figures in illustrative contexts that display both their sacred and profane importance to the Maya.

Of the 31 vessels, 35.48% of illustrations included monkeys depicted as scribes or artisans. In terms illustrations with music and dance, 12.90% of these settings included monkeys. 32.25% of ceramics depicted monkeys in association with settings or figures that appear in the Popol Vuh and Maya creation narrative. 35.25% of illustrations included monkeys participating in settings of ritual, offering, or sacrifice. In terms of themes associated with the Underworld (known as Xibalba), 6.45% of ceramics with monkeys had this illustrative element. In addition, 6.45% of these ceramics also depicted hunting scenes with monkeys as figures. 25.80% of ceramics depicted monkeys holding or next to cacao pods or fruits. Lastly, 45.16% of illustrations included the theme attributed to a stated ‘way’ or ‘nagual’ meaning ‘coessence’.

Monkey icons are featured in these various contexts through their own physical depictions (such as in the case of scribes and artisans), as well as who or what they are depicted with (in the case of The Underworld or the Popol Vuh). The themes attributed to these 31 Classic period ceramics with monkey imagery are described in greater detail in Chapter 7. These iconographic and illustrative themes of monkeys from the Maya past are explored and analyzed in comparison to other archaeological examples, as well as to revitalized monkey dances and oral traditions.

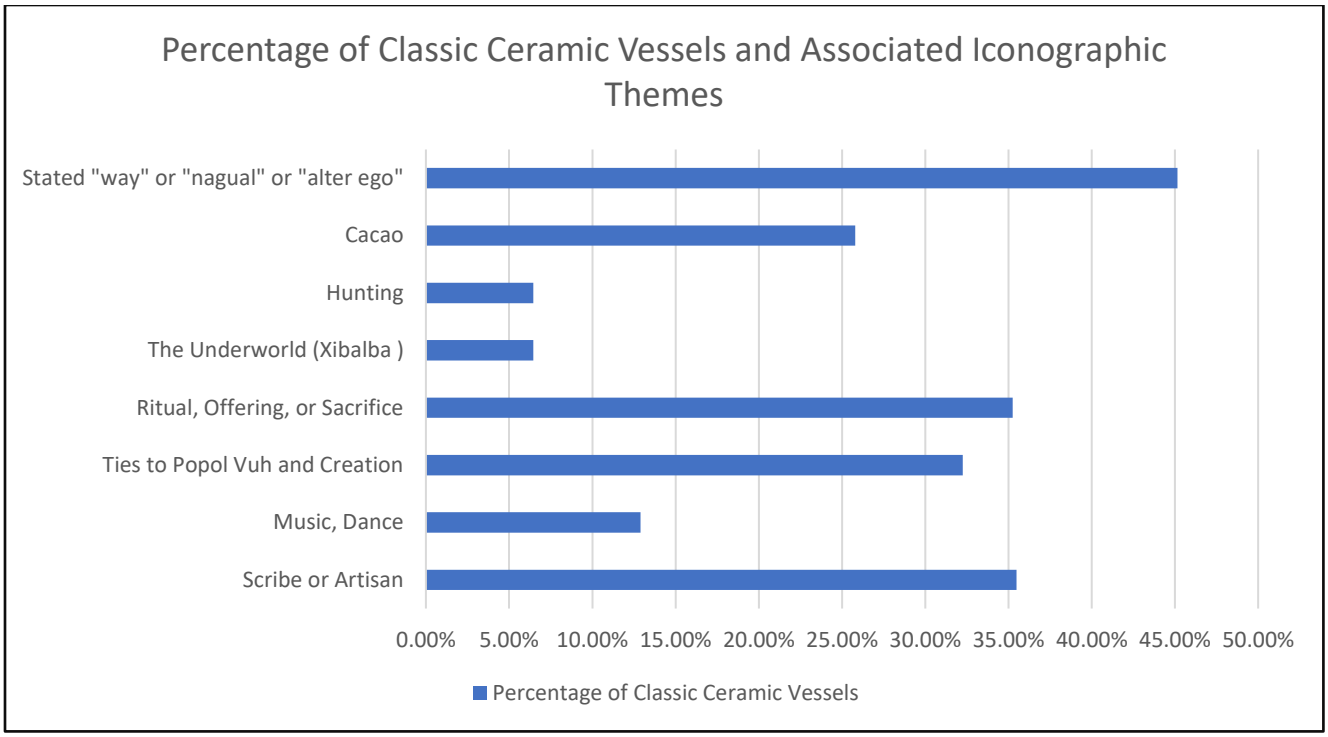


Figure 24: Graph of Percentage of Maya Classic Period Ceramics and Associated Iconographic Themes

Chapter 7: Iconographic Connections Across Ethnohistoric, Archaeological, and Ethnographic Mediums

This thesis seeks to address the larger significance of monkeys as figures in the lived experiences, culture, and cosmology of the Maya through an ethnoarchaeological approach. Using ethnographic insight as well as archaeological evidence, we can look deeper at the semiotic relationships that manifest from the use of monkeys as icons and their further indexical references to larger ideologies. Using the monkey imagery from the available Classic period ceramic vessels within the Justin Kerr Database, the contexts and associations depicting monkeys can be narrowed down to eight main themes. These themes build upon one another, creating the sacred context with which monkeys are associated with. With this being said, some themes will be discussed more in depth than others due to more connections both archaeological and ethnographically.

These include:

- Scribe or Artisan
- Music and Dance
- Ties to Popol Vuh and Creation
- Ritual, Offering, or Sacrifice
- The Underworld (Xibalba)
- Hunting
- Cacao
- Stated ‘way’ or ‘alter ego’

These themes can be further explored in the archaeological and ethnographic mediums involving monkeys in the form of physical icons and as active icons. By diving deeper into the illustrative and contextual elements of monkeys and their associations, we can observe larger iconographic themes that further reflect, or index central ideologies of these creatures supplemented through the Popol Vuh and oral traditions surrounding creation (Hassenmueller 1978). These central themes act as a thread, weaving together the past and present through an ethnoarchaeological medium.

Looking at representations of monkeys within Maya material culture, specifically through Classic period imagery, iconographic themes can be extrapolated related to their context and associations. These iconographic themes can further be connected to other archaeological evidence, as well as the perspectives and lived experiences of the Maya. Building on Preucel-Bauer (2001:92), the use of Peircean semiotics can be applied to this analysis in order to explore the dialectical relationship between material culture and meaning. This includes the interpretation of the relationship between the sign (icon) and the object (artifact).

Monkeys as Artisans, Scribes, and Musicians

Looking at Maya language, we can see a resemblance of monkeys as artisans and with a dual meaning as artisans. These glyphs show that monkeys carry lexical meaning that also correspond to their roles in creation narratives. As mentioned previously, the word for ‘artisan’ in the K’iche Maya language is ‘B’atz’ which also refers to the howler monkey (Christenson 2003: 99, Tedlock 1985:105). In the Yucatec Maya language, howler monkeys are referred to as “Chuen” or “Chuwen” and represent the howler monkey, an animal with heavy ties to the old gods and the role of the scribe and artisan (Coe 1977, Wright 1989).The word ‘b’atz’ and the

word ‘chuen’ are both given to Hun B’atz and Hun Chuen, the patrons of the arts from the Popol Vuh.

In addition to representing monkeys as scribes and artisans within Classic art, specific glyphs refer to sacred calendrical days of the Maya calendar (Braakhuis 1987). One of the calendars that heavily incorporates animal glyphs is the Tzolk’in, which is a two-hundred-and-sixty-day calendar with a cycle of twenty days associated with thirteen numbers (Kettunen and Helmke 2020:49). Seven of these named days are related to animals, which are further correlated to specific meanings within the organization of the calendar (Wright 1989).

Howler monkeys, as referred to as “Chuen” or “Chuwen” and “B’atz’” in Yucatec and K’iche Maya languages respectively, further correspond to their hieroglyphic representation of a monkey head and the 11th day in the Maya mantic cycle (Braakhuis 1987:26). ‘Chuen’ is the spelling associated with 16th century Yucatec, whereas ‘Chuwen’ is associated with the new orthography according to Kettunen and Helmke (2000:46). The eleventh day (Chuen) is associated with the traits of wiseness and intelligence (Wright 1989). Similar to the Aztec day “Ozomatli” (meaning spider monkey), the Yucatec ‘Chuen’ is associated with singing, weaving, carving, and spinning while the K’iche ‘Batz’ is associated with carving, weaving, and master craftsmanship (Braakhuis 1987:27). According to Tedlock (1986:30), in both the Mayan languages and Nahua (language spoken by Central Mexicans and Aztec peoples) there is a dialectical relationship between the writing and logograms associated with monkeys, which both refer to patrons and artisans with similar skills, such as the figures Hun Batz and Hun Chuen, and a specific day.

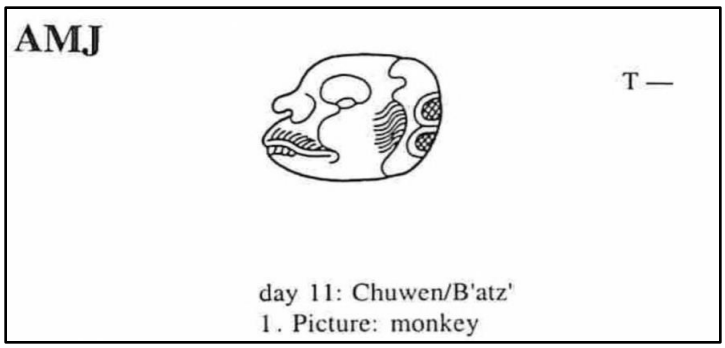


Figure 25: AMJ glyph, Chuwen (Chuen)/B’atz’ associated with Day 11 of the Tzolk’in Maya Calendar. ‘Aj chuen’ is a title meaning “artisan” (Barrera-Vasquez 1995:110), (Macri and Looper 2003:72).

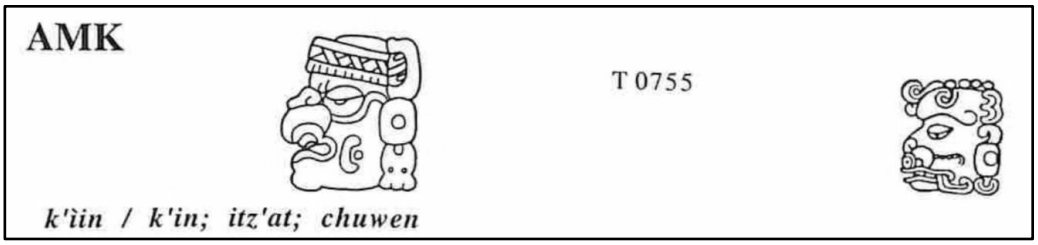


Figure 26: AMK glyph, K’iin/k’in; itz’at; chuwen, meaning: artist, scribe, (Macri and Looper 2003:72).

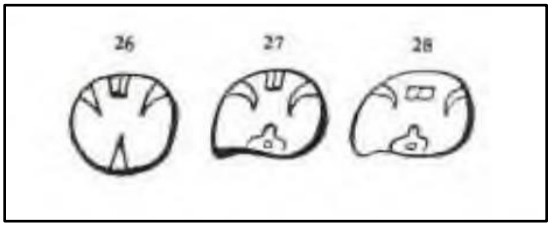


Figure 27: Drawing of Chuen in the Dresden Codex by de Landa, courtesy of Seler (1983:168). These glyphs depict an open mouth of a monkey and represent the marking of the 11th day sign in the Uinal (20-day) calendrical period for the Maya and depicted on Maya monuments (Seler et al. 1996 :170).

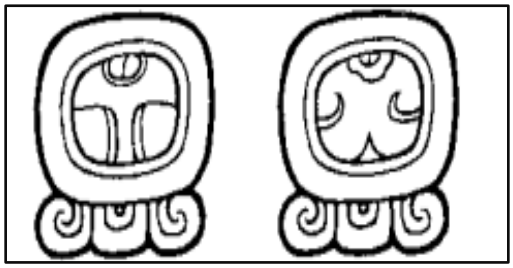


Figure 28: Chuen (Chuwen), T’zolkin Calendar. Courtesy of Coe and Van Stone (2001), Kettunen and Helmke 2000:46.

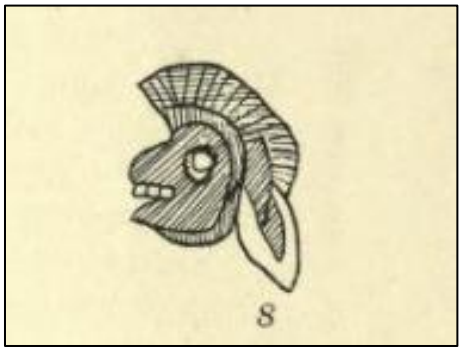


Figure 29: Head of monkey representing Nahua day sign ‘Ozomatli’ meaning ‘monkey’ (Tozzer and Allen 1910:10).

Of the 31 ceramic vessels chosen from the Justin Kerr MayaVase Database that include monkeys in some illustrative capacity, 10 of depictions are of monkeys as scribes or some kind of artisan (not including music or dance). This imagery is the predominant association often attributed to monkeys, because of their reputation in the Popol Vuh as the scribe and artisan brothers Hun Batz and Hun Chuen (Coe 1973). Sometimes these figures appear to be ‘monkey-men’ as they have traits characterized as both human and monkey (usually howler monkey). According to Coe (1994:210), there might have been cults of monkeys or monkey-man scribes all over Mesoamerica, not just in the highland Maya region but also in the Yucatan during Spanish conquest.

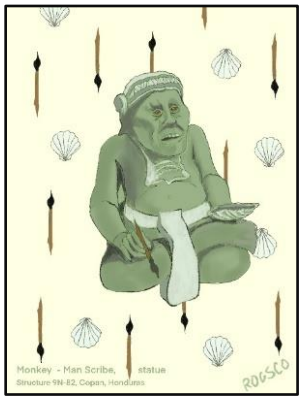


Figure 30: Monkey-Man Scribe, Drawing by Roger Scott.

In ceramics, these depictions involve seated or standing figures with scribal headdresses or bark paper and pencil tied to their heads (Lacadena 1996:46). A widely accepted term given to those with these headdresses is “Aj k’uhul h’un” which further translates to “He of the Holy Books” and often refers to scribes and bookkeepers, often in royal courts (Coe and Kerr 1997, Jackson and Stuart 2001:222). In addition, these scribes and artisans are featured in sitting positions, either looking over codexes or some kind of writing tablet, with writing tools near their hands (see Figure 31). More often than not, the scribes themselves or other figures are holding a Sabak Kuch (an ink or paint pot) used for writing or painting (Figure 31). Conch shells with remnants of pigments or other signs that they might have been used as paint pots are evident in the Maya archaeological record, such as in the case of one burial found during 2011 BVAR Excavations at Cahal Pech (Novotny 2011:61).

Figure 31: Two seated monkey scribes with codexes and sabak kuch pots from New Orleans Museum of Art (Justin Kerr K1225).

Ties to Popol Vuh and Creation Narrative

Many of these ceramic depictions of monkeys also show some significance to the Popol Vuh and larger ideas of creation. In some cases, monkeys are nearby or within the same context as the Hero Twins (Hunahpu and Xbalanque) and other deities that function as characters within that narrative (such as the Maize God, Vucub Caquix, and Itzam-Ye).

The Hero Twins have been depicted in ceramics numerous times through their similar iconography, usually with Hunahpu depicted with a singular circle and Xbalanque depicted with jaguar spots or skin. Similarly, the half-brothers Hun Chuen and Hun Batz have been depicted as simian-like monkey scribes. In these cases, they are often depicted as scribes, the characters Hun Batz and Hun Chuen, or as unspecified monkey beings.

One of the main visual devices associated with denoting Hunahpu is a figure with a blowgun, often hunting a bird or shooting another animal. This is because Hunahpu means 'One Blowgunner'. In one instance, there is presence of both Hero Twins with their blowguns, as well as two scribe figures (presumably Hun Chuen and Hun Batz) seated and taking notes (see Figure 32). On a carved bowl from Chocola, Yucatan, a seated monkey scribe with name glyph possibly associated with "Hun Chuen" or "Hun Batz" is hovered over a codex or writing tablet, holding a writing tool or brush in one hand and a possible Sabak Kuch (paint pot) in the other (see Figure 33). In some cases, the Hero Twins are also mentioned in the inscription of the vessel, as there is mention of Hunahpu and Xbalanque in association with "scribes, artists, and carvers" (see Figure 34).

Figure 32: Two seated monkey figures (bottom, near center) thought to be Hun Batz and Hun Chuen wearing scribal headdresses (Aj k'uhul h'un), garments, and holding writing utensils seem to be writing on a tablet or codex while animals bring offerings of vases and plates to Itzamna or Itzam-Ye, (Justin Kerr K3413).

Figure 33:Carved bowl from Chochola, Mexico depicting a monkey scribe (either Hun Batz or Hun Chuen) with a scribal headdress sitting in front of a codex or possible writing tablet, writing tool in hand, and an ink of paint container near its hand, (Justin Kerr K954).

Figure 34: Exterior inscription mentions monkey possibly associated with scribes, artists, carvers, and the Hero Twins (Hunahpu and Xbalanque) (Justin Kerr K2220).

Visual cues pertaining to other events or figures of the Popol Vuh are commonly present in conjunction with monkeys. Vucub Caquix is referred to as the 'Principal Bird Deity' and is featured in the Popol Vuh as a monster-bird entity. One of the Hero Twins, Hunahpu, shot Vucub Caquix while he was in the nance tree to eat its fruit. Itzam-Ye is a bird deity associated with the sky divinity god, Itzamna. Although this deity is usually associated with the sky, they are also featured in scenes of Xibalba, the Underworld, with the Hero Twins (Coe 1989:174).

Although there are examples of scribe figures and monkeys in association with the Hero Twins in both inscription and illustration, it is also important to highlight that other gods or supernatural beings are present as well. Some of the main gods that make an appearance in a number of scenes are the Maize God and Itzamna (or Itzam-Ya). The Maize God, or Hun Nal Ye, is the father of the Hero Twins and creator god (fertility) who ends up being rescued from Xibalba (the Underworld) by them in the Popol Vuh. The figure Itzamna is a god of the sky, and

during the Classic and Post-Classic periods, has been associated with wisdom and esoteric knowledge (Taube 1992:35). Figure 35 depicts a scene where a Classic period Maize God seems to be reincarnated and getting dressed by women attendants, while a kneeling monkey is present wearing an Ah' K'hun headdress (Justin Kerr MayaVase Database K626, Boot 2002:7). In Figure 36 the Maize god is being shown a mask by Itzamna, while a Classic period monkey scribe (possibly Hun Batz) is polishing the masks they hold and wearing the Ah' K'hun headdress (Boot 2002:7).

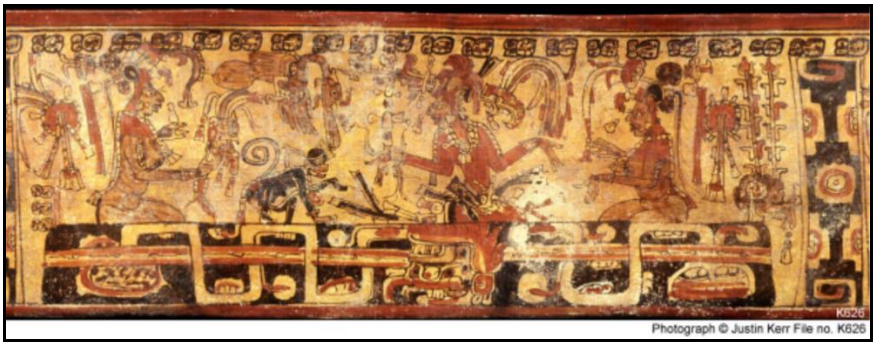


Figure 35: Kneeling monkey wearing Aj k'uhul h'un headdress sits in front of the Maize god, possibly representing the event of the resurrection of the Maize god in the Popol Vuh, (Justin Kerr K626).

Figure 36: Late Classic (750-900 C.E) fragmentary vase with Hun Batz (monkey scribe) located as the second being from the left, next to the Maize god (first figure on left) and Itzamna (figure on the right). Itzamna is showing a mask to the Maize god and Hun Batz, in which they look like they are fashioning their own and possibly polishing them, (Justin Kerr K8457).

Monkeys in the Context of Ritual

In approximately 11 out of the 31 Classic period examples of Maya monkey imagery, monkeys were featured in ritual contexts. Part of this association was derived from comments left by Justin Kerr, and some was interpreted through proximity to what is known about Maya ritual practices (blood-letting, enemas). This includes scenes where they are actively participating in contexts where there are offerings (physical items or blood-letting) (Figures 37 and 38) and ritual enemas (Figures 39, 40, 41). The use of enemas was thought to be another way of achieving alcoholic drunkenness with chih or fermented agave (Houston, Stuart, and Taube 2006).

Figure 37: Shallow bowl with monkey (left) and peccary (right). The monkey is holding an offering plate with body parts. Schlesinger (2001:154) states that peccaries heavily rely on the discarded fruits left behind by spider monkeys on the ground of the forest canopy, (Justin Kerr K1203).

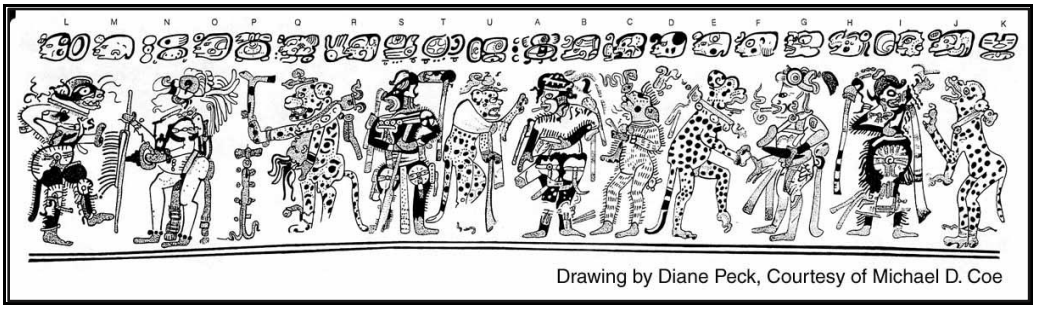


Figure 38: Drawing of scene from Tikal vessel featuring God A, God A prime, jaguars, a dog, and a monkey with weapons (such as axes), as well as blood-letting through penis perforation. Drawing by Diane Peck, Courtesy of Michael D. Coe, (Justin Kerr K5509).

Figure 39: Polychrome vessel depicting an enema scene. Deer (far right), jaguar (two in the middle register), and two monkeys (both near the center of register- one on either side of middle character) all participate in the activities, (Justin Kerr K774).

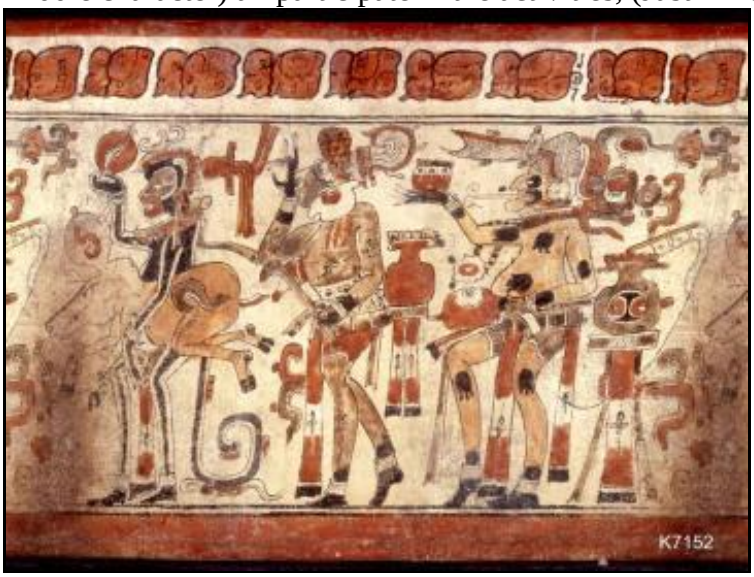


Figure 40: Polychrome vessel scene with a monkey (left) carrying a dead deer, God A prime with a decapitated head in an olla, and an old god smoking and carrying an enema tube. The markings on the old god may indicate similar 'blood' signs seen in Teotihuacan, (Justin Kerr K7152).

Figure 41: Polychrome vessel depicting scene (left to right) with a monkey, a jaguar balancing an enema tube, an unknown animal, a peccary, a deer, and a dog, (Justin Kerr K7525).

Monkeys and the Underworld

Ethnohistoric insight suggests that caves have been fundamental features in Maya religion since the Contact period of Spanish colonialism (Brady and Prufer 2005:365). As a sacred space, the Maya came to caves in order to leave offerings and even sacrifices. These places are where the gods were believed to live, where the Underworld exists, and where rain comes from (Moyes 2006). During the Classic period, elites and rulers aligned themselves with rain making in order to ensure agricultural success, thus establishing and maintaining trust with the common people (Moyes 2006:67). In addition, divine kingship was connected to both rain making and caves, as caves were the place where ancestors lived and emerged from (Brady 1989, Moyes 2006, Vogt 1969). During extensive drought after the Terminal Classic (eighth and ninth centuries C.E), ritual was thought to be intensified within caves as a way to relieve environmental stress (Gill 2001:344). This is partially due to the belief that rain deities, such as the Maya Chac (or Chaac), are thought to dwell in caves and can thus bring water and fertility to the land (Miller and Taube 1993:184). An interesting connection found in the representation of monkeys in association with rain deities is the presence of Chaac (the god of thunder, rain). Figure 42 depicts Chaac or Chac Cib Chak threatening a monkey with an ax (Justin Kerr MayaVase Database K7602). There seems to be some kind of tied object around the monkey's neck, similar to the scribal headdress Ah' K'hun. Ob Chan, a bearded dragon figure associated with the Underworld, also makes an appearance on this polychrome vase (Justin Kerr MayaVase Database K7602).

Figure 42: Polychrome scene with monkey (left) being threatened by Chak Cib Chak (version of Chaac, the god of thunder and rain) (Justin Kerr K7602).

Another interesting connection between monkeys and rain indexes the K'iche story of creation. Figure 43 depicts monkeys sitting in moving, canoe-like figures. The fact that these monkeys appear to be on some kind of water raft or canoe could be tied to the story of the second creation, when the Wood people were wiped out by heavy flood sent by the Creator god and those able to escape ended up evolving into monkeys. Figure 43 depicts two monkeys in wide, U-shaped objects with the upper half of their body visible. Connected underneath the U-shaped objects, there are two detailed monster-like beings with identical flames seemingly carrying the monkeys. On the right side of these two main features, there is a long, curled monkey tail. It is noted that the identical flame-like details may be associated with God G or the Sun God, and they appear to be similar to that identified on a Late Classic drawing of God G (Justin Kerr MayaVase Database K3433, Taube 1992:51). This theme of water, particularly with canoes, helps to illustrate the relationship between the second creation and the subsequent flood brought by the creator gods. According to Miller and Taube (1993), floods provide a contrast between natural chaos and order that made way for the creation of the four corners of the world and the cosmos.

Figure 43: Monkeys shown sitting atop canoes, possibly depicting the survival of the flood sent by the old gods during the second creation of humans (Justin Kerr K3433).

The presence of canoes is also prevalent in Maya astrological understanding of the Milky Way, as it is said to be a great canoe in which the gods paddled the Maize God to a place of creation where he is resurrected through a tortoise shell (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993). This scene symbolizes fertility through the indexical connection to the Maize God and the Popol Vuh. An example of this is a scene inscribed on one of 37 incised Tikal bones belonging to the burial of a Hasaw Ka'an (also spelled 'Chan') K'awil (see figure ?) (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993, John Montgomery JM00780). According to Freidel, Schele, and Parker (1993:89), Hasaw Ka'an K'awil was one of the most important rulers in Late Classic Tikal. This scene depicts the Maize God, the "Paddler Gods" (Stingray Paddler and Jaguar Paddler), along with an iguana, spider monkey, macaw, and a spider monkey (John Montgomery JM00780). This scene is thought to have astronomical associations, and according to the date of September 16th, 743, the Milky Way would have been stretched across the sky from east to west and might have looked like a canoe (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:90).

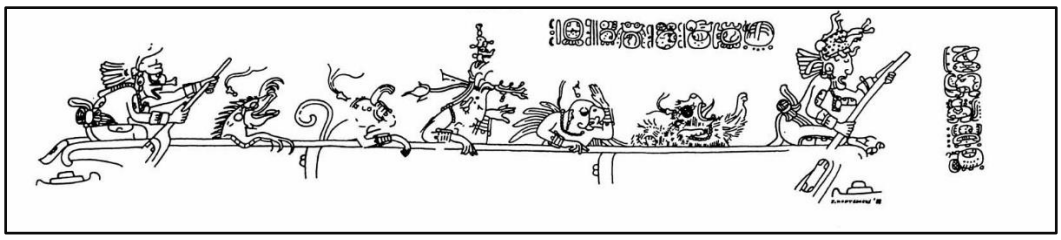


Figure 44: Carved Scene depicted on one of 37 incised bones found in Tikal Burial 119-tomb of ruler Hasaw Chan K'awil. Image of Maize God at center of canoe, being carried by "Paddler Gods" (Stingray Paddler and Jaguar Paddler). Other figures in canoe: iguana, spider monkey, macaw, and howler monkey (John Montgomery JM00780).

Another example of representation involving the second creation (and subsequent destruction) of the wood people, who were later evolved to monkeys, is a K'iche San Juan Cotzal Incense Burner from Guatemala (The Cleveland Museum of Art). This incense burner contains appliqued monkeys arranged on the bottom half of the vessel with limbs apart, as in an active dancing motion. The head of the incense burner holds a single appliqued monkey and appears to be bigger than the rest. This monkey appears to have a lot longer limbs, and they hold a tree-like texture with vertical ridgelines and little holes similar to bark on a tree. This vessel is interesting because it seems to depict characteristics that index ties to the second creation. The monkeys could symbolize the surviving beings who became monkeys by escaping to the trees during the flood, due to the wood-like texture represented and the fact that they were wood people.

Figure 45: Late Classic Incense Burner (600–1000 C.E) (The Cleveland Museum of Art).

Figure 46: Carved Early Classic tripod (3 pegged) vase with ballgame gear (such as yokes and two monkey figures poking out (left side of vessel) (Justin Kerr Database K3838).

Figure 47: Late Classic Maya Hacha (ballcourt marker) depicting a monkey (600-900 C.E). Hachas of animals (such as monkeys, crocodiles, humans, etc.) were thought to have been used in re-enacting cosmological events (Stone-Miller 2002).

Using a sign-object relationship between monkey icons and their corresponding artifact not only creates meaning but creates indexes to larger ideas present in the Popol Vuh. This proximity to Maya creation narratives is observable between characteristics of the monkey icon and the form/function of the artifact.

Looking specifically at the monkey figurines collected through BVAR mentioned in Chapter 6, there are indications that these artifacts were used as ocarinas or another type of mouth-piece musical instrument (Ebert 2018, Zanotto 2017). In addition, one of these musical instruments was found in a context with another 'whistle' ocarina and one ceramic flute (Zanotto 2017:219). As mentioned in Chapter 4, One Batz and One Chuen were known to be "great flutists, singers, craftsmen, writers, sculptors, jade workers, and metalsmiths" (Christenson 2003:100, Tedlock 1985:105). In this case, the characteristics of the monkey depicted on these artifacts are indicative of a sign-object relationship that could further be indexed to represent the roles of One Batz and One Chuen as great musicians and craftsmen. Continuing with this indexical connection between artifacts and the Popol Vuh, there are artifacts that associate

monkeys with the ballgame. The ballgame, which has ties to the Hero Twins, the Maize God, and Xibalba (the Underworld) is indexed through the depiction of monkeys as or alongside ballgame equipment (figures?). In addition, the faunal remains of *Ateles geoffroyi* were found buried at a ballcourt at the site of Cahal Pech, making monkeys physically associated with themes of Popol Vuh and Xibalba. These associations between monkeys, the Popol Vuh, the Maize God, and Xibalba further draws proximity to death, rebirth, and reciprocity (Ratcliffe 2023:18).

This connection between monkeys and Xibalba, reciprocity, and rebirth can be extended to the collection of Terminal Classic monkey pots and sherds within the Upper Belize Valley. The appliqued monkey ceramics were found primarily within the Roaring Creek caves, with some found at above ground sites close in proximity to the Roaring Creek (Helmke 1999:316). At least one of these pots contains a kill hole, or a physical representation of releasing the soul or spirit of the vessel. Other conditions of ceramics, such as broken or sherds, may suggest that these artifacts could have been ritually released as well. The morphological similarities between all of these appliqued monkeys on these ceramics suggests that they might be depicting a monkey that indexes a particular ideology or belief. Caves, as discussed in Chapter 6, are places connected to Xibalba and the gods (such as Chaac and the Maize god), places of rain, as well as a place where ancestors came from (Miller and Taube 1993, Moyes 2006, Ratcliffe 2023).

Given the context and condition of these artifacts in a ritual setting, as well as the evident closeness in physical morphology of the appliqued monkeys, it is possible that these artifacts could serve as semiotic ‘replicas’ which are created from a template that is further indexed. The style of the appliqued monkey and its similarities across the region of Upper Belize Valley could correspond to a larger, dominant ideology or belief (Preucel-Bauer 2001:90). The liminality of

caves, as a space connected to the Underworld (Xibalba), rain, and fertility, is also a space of reciprocity through the leaving of ritual offerings and depositions. Thinking about the extensive periods of drought and ritual intensification during the Terminal Classic period, it is possible that the ritual deposition of these pots served a reciprocal purpose as an offering to the gods (such as Chaac) and indexed the role of monkeys as ancestral beings tied to creation (Gill 2001:344).

Connections between the Deer Dance and Classic Period Imagery

Examining Classic iconographic themes and the relationship between sign (monkey icon) and object (artifact) can be extended to the postcolonial practice of the Deer Dance. This dance, and the meaning it holds to those performing it, is a form of embodied knowing that transforms the body into an 'artifact' (Peterson Royce 2002:XV). Additionally, the context that this dance takes place in involves culturally-specific signs and interactions that create a liminal space. The embodiment of 'ways' and the interactions between performers actively portrayed a hunting scene of the past in a postcolonial context of survivance. As the dance began, the burning of copal both indexed and mediated the larger transformational process that was happening to the performers within the dance. The monkeys served as both symbols and icons, as they both served as ecological figures and figures harkening back to creation narrative. Looking at dance as a form of active iconography, the Deer Dance and the narrative it portrays indexes ideologies that are reflected in archaeological contexts as well.

Speaking with B, I learned that the burning of copal at the beginning the performance was done in order to prevent anyone from getting injured by the 'way'. As B said, even though the wooden masks used in this dance were made out of physical materials, " the people who made them, they know exactly how and why is it that we wear them." The term 'way' or 'wayob' translates to 'sleep' or 'dream' and refers to the belief in a coessence or cospirit (Gossen

1996:533). Another word for this is a ‘nagual’ and both terms refer to a sleep or dream state in which the individual transforms into an animal without losing any human consciousness besides their outward animal appearance (Paz 1995:445). Using the term ‘way’ in this case is not only more appropriate to use because B did, but more respectful, because terms like ‘nagual’ and ‘tonalism’ have been used by Western scholars as a way of othering the Maya (Paz 1995:445). Another term, ‘nagual’ has been used in the past in order to describe this belief, but is largely misunderstood and carries a history of being used to ‘other’ Indigenous Maya peoples (Paz 1995:445). During the Contact period in the 16th century, ‘nagualists’ were burned and were referred to as ‘pagans’ as they would bury and visit their dead in caves, where they took “copal incense and flowers” to leave where they lay (Butler 1934:223-224).

In an archaeological context, monkeys are depicted as ‘ways’ and ‘naguals’ in 14 out of the 31 Classic period ceramics from the Justin Kerr Database collection (figure 1, figure 2, figure 3). Although comments pointing to this were left by Justin Kerr, interpretation was influenced by source materials belonging to the research and publications of these objects.

Figure 48: Jaguar sits (left) while a monkey stands in the center next to God A (skeletal appearance attributed to death, the underworld, and sacrifice, Taube 1992: 11). Text inscription mentions “way” and “nagual” (Justin Kerr K3038, Drawing by Persis Clarkson FLAAR 1976).

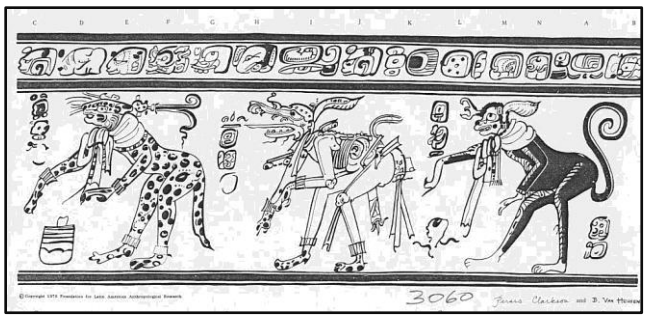


Figure 49: Scene with jaguar (left), deer (middle), and monkey (right) in a procession. Mention of ‘way’ or ‘alter ego’ (Justin Kerr K3060, Drawing by Barbara Van Heusen, FLAAR 1976).

Figure 50: Dog and Monkey as ways. The dog's head looks like it may contain the EG of Tikal (The dog may be the way (nagual- animal spirit that can be transformed at night) of Tikal) (Justin Kerr K7993).

Links to Hun Chuen and Hun Batz, Hunting, and Cacao

As I learned from B, the Mopan Maya lead dancer of the Deer Dance at Santa Cruz Village, the two monkeys in the performance symbolize and mirror an oral tradition of the brothers who turned into monkeys, a version of the narrative that is told in the Popol Vuh. This dance holds a heavily intertwined meaning that involves ancestral ecological ways of knowing, on top of its spoken connection to oral traditions mirroring the Popol Vuh.

During the course of the dance, a deer hunting scene in the Maya world at the time of Spanish contact is unraveling. After the dog that belongs to the old man and woman gets injured by a jaguar, the howler monkeys serve as communicators to indicate to the old man what is happening. Using a method that their ancient or elder people taught them, the old man was able

to address the situation and save the dog with medicine that was gathered in part from the Maya and in part from the Spanish.

This larger performance of hunting, which involved animals such as deer, jaguar, as well as monkeys, can be reflected back to iconographic themes from the Classic period ceramics housed in Justin Kerr Database (K4599). Figure 51, Figure 52, and figure 53 depict three hunting scenes involving a deer, monkeys, birds, and other animals (such as rabbits) centered around trees (possibly cacao). It is possible that these scenes may represent older hunting traditions similar to the one depicted in the Deer Dance, where the monkeys are functioning as ecological communicators within the trees. In this case, Classic imagery that carried specific meaning by the Maya from the past takes on new meaning through the representation in revitalized dance, indexing or pointing to past hunting traditions.

Figure 51: Carved vessel depicting monkey (center) under a cacao tree during scene of deer sacrifice (Justin Kerr K4599).

Figure 52: Mold-made vase depicting a hunting scene featuring hunters (far left and far right) with a deer, tree, monkey, and a bird in the center (Justin Kerr K8829).

Figure 53: Carved vessel picturing a deer hunting scene with two people (left), one holding an atlatl and one capturing a deer. A monkey is to the right of the deer, seemingly running away from the hunters (Justin Kerr Database K3235).

Another medium in which the ethnographic importance of monkeys is reflected within an archaeological and iconographic context is in association with cacao. The setting of where this Deer Dance was held, at the Cacao Festival, shows the proximity and indexicality between monkeys and cacao as intertwined ecological entities. As I learned with my conversation with a B, a lead dancer that performed at the Deer Dance, monkeys are related to cacao and the environment because they walk around at night and eat the cacao. According to them, that is why monkeys are featured as a part of the Cacao Festival. Relating back to Chapter 1, monkeys played (and continue to play) a large part in the ecosystem, particularly with the distribution of the cacao plant across Mesoamerica (Hunt 2013). They also eat the cacao, leaving the remnants of plants for other species (such as peccary) (Schlesigner 2001). In addition to monkey-cacao motifs present in Classic Maya art, there are many instances of similar motifs in Tuxtla Guitierez, Oaxaca, Puebla, Tonina, and Villahermosa) (Tibere 2011:66). The scenes (Figures 54, 55, and 56) show monkeys holding cacao or with cacao plants perhaps recognize the role that these creatures play in the distribution and continuing production of cacao.

Figure 54: Scene depicting a man (left), jaguar (middle), and monkey (right). Monkey seems to be holding a cacao pod or fruit. The phonetic complement *ba* appears in front of the portrait head for howler monkey translating to the word *batz* (Justin Kerr K5070).

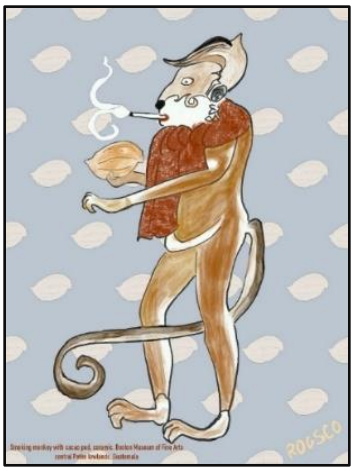


Figure 55: Smoking Cacao Monkey from Central Belize lowlands (Boston Museum of Fine Arts). Drawing by Roger Scott.

Figure 56: Plate depicting a scene with deer, Itzamna (otherwise known as God D) sitting on a throne next to a little person. Two monkeys hold what looks like cacao on either side of the rim (Justin Kerr K2249).

Looking at the ways in which monkeys are characterized as icons, symbols, and indexes within Classic art serves as a way to draw connections to other mediums. Using the Justin Kerr collection, the eight most common themes that were present across vessels characterized monkeys and their associations with both sacred and profane contexts. The similarities in iconographic themes also appear in the ethnohistoric, archaeological, and ethnographic evidence of monkeys in the Maya region. Ethnohistorically, monkeys are the descendants of the failed second creation of humans and are a reminder of ancestral importance. They are also seen as Hun Batz and Hun Chuen, the old deities and older half-brothers of the Hero Twins, whose names draw lexical meaning to their roles as scribes and artisans. Monkeys in Classic art mirror these themes and index ideologies of creation and the Popol Vuh. Ethnographically, the revitalization of monkey-related dances that were outlawed create new meaning through the liminality of space and furthermore are a form of survivance. These performances embody and index past hunting scenes and creation narrative. The themes present in Classic period imagery show past hunting scenes, as well as scenes where monkeys are associated with cacao, drawing from symbolic meaning that is seen in the context of the Deer Dance at the Cacao Festival of Santa Cruz Village. Finally, archaeologically, the contexts and associations of monkey artifacts from the Western Belize Regional Cave Project and the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project show ties to the iconographic themes present in the Justin Kerr Database and index themes of creation narratives, fertility, and the Popol Vuh. The liminality of caves and the ritual deposition of monkey artifact ‘replicas’ within them indicate the larger symbolism of monkeys as beings of creation, fertility, and ancestors.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Monkeys hold much importance in the archaeological past of the Maya and the lived landscapes of the Maya. This thesis incorporates and examines ethnographic insight from a current, postcolonial time and place where Maya monkey-related dances are being revitalized, as well as archaeological evidence that depict monkeys as icons in the Classic period. Through the examination and comparative process between a number of Classic period themes of monkey iconography to both other archaeological as well as ethnographic evidence, larger connections and indexes to Maya culture, creation, and cosmology are apparent. Through this thesis, it is important to highlight the significant nature of monkeys as part of sacred contexts, echoing the connection to the ancestors of humans and the creation of the world. In part, this meant observing and challenging the colonial and Western influences that have affected the ethnohistoric narratives surrounding monkeys and monkey-related practices. Drawing back to the beginning of this thesis, the main research questions can be addressed:

<u>What significance is accorded to monkeys in the ethnohistoric and ethnographic literature, and in archaeological remains?</u>

Looking at the ethnohistoric records that were written during the mid to late 17th century, there is much detail about the K'iche Maya narratives of creation and the Hero Twins (Christenson 2003, Tedlock 1985). Monkeys appears in two very significant contexts of the Popol Vuh that characterize them as both ancestral beings and tricksters, harkening back to creation and the transformation of Hun Batz and Hun Chuen (half-brothers of the Hero Twins) into monkeys (Christenson 2003, Tedlock 1985). In addition, epigraphic records highlight the

indexical nature of Maya language as words for monkey also mean ‘artisan’ and correspond to the 11th day in the Uinal (Grube 2021, Seler et al. 1992).

The ethnohistoric literature written during the early 20th century by Gann (1926:160) paints a very specific picture of the interpretations of monkey dances in San Pedro, Belize, as they are described as ‘idolatrous’ ‘licentious’ and associated with the devil. These dances and practice were said to be outlawed for a long time by the Catholic priests in the area. However, in the same document, Gann (1926:160) describes that the monkey dance had power in controlling the rainfall and thus the fertility of crops.

The revitalization of the Deer Dance and other monkey-related dances in the Maya world after a long prohibition period index ideological connections to the Popol Vuh and creation narrative. These dances draw from meaning within the contexts of their practices, whether that be an archaeological site or a Catholic church with a heavy colonial history. The liminality of these spaces allow for past practices to be continued through a postcolonial and culturally-hybrid nature (as in the case of Costumbre) and the indexing of the Popol Vuh and cosmological narratives.

Archaeologically, monkey artifacts are found within many parts of the Maya region, particularly within Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala. Looking specifically at the monkey artifacts within Western Belize, there are a range of artifacts depicting monkeys such as ceramic vessels, sherds, figurines, beads, and ocarinas. These artifacts were rediscovered in both above ground and cave contexts. Looking at the context, chronology, and association of these artifacts, the depiction of monkeys on these artifacts tie to larger semiotic themes also present in ethnohistoric and ethnographic evidence.

What is the role of monkeys in revitalized dances and oral traditions according to emic Maya perspectives?

According to the community members of Santa Cruz Village at the Cacao Festival, monkeys carry important ancestral and continued meaning through shared oral traditions and revitalized dances (Community Members, B, May 20th, 2023). The insight of some community members expressed themes of simulation and addressing gaps in knowledge between the Maya and the Spanish. In addition, the place and space in which they practice and perform these dances echo larger connections to survivance, as the site of Uxbenká has a colonial history that is felt by the community.

What main iconographic themes related to monkeys are evident on ceramic art, and how are those themes reflected in the context and association of artifacts depicting monkeys in western Belize? What semiotic connections can be made between ethnographic and archaeological representations of monkeys, and how do these connections point to larger ideologies that continue to be manifested in present day Maya culture, cosmology, and creation myths?

The analysis of 31 Classic period ceramics from the Justin Kerr MayaVase Database yielded eight main iconographic themes associated with monkeys. These themes were extrapolated from the artifact itself, chronology, provenience (when available), and the illustrative contexts in which the monkey icons were featured. These iconographic themes represent monkeys as icons, symbols, and indexes that place these figures in contexts such as ritual, supernatural scenes in the Popol Vuh, creation, the Underworld, cacao, and hunting.

These themes are similarly reflected through the meaning making of archaeology, objects, and liminality. The iconographic themes distinguished in the Justin Kerr collection are

further connected through pragmatics with the contexts and associations of Western Belize artifacts. The ideologies of monkeys as ancestors, associated with the Underworld, and fertility are evident through the indexicality between sign, object, and meaning.

By looking at the body as another form of artifact, the revitalized practices of monkey-related dances and the continued oral traditions surrounding them can be connected back to Classic period imagery from the Justin Kerr Collection. Community members spoke about the importance of monkeys as ecological communicators within the trees, connected to cacao, and in the context of hunting rituals. Scenes depicting monkeys with cacao pods or fruits, as well as with deer and hunters in hunting rituals were present in the Justin Kerr Collection of Classic ceramics (see Figures 52, 53, and 54 in Chapter 7).

Using Classic period iconographic themes as a starting point, the semiotic connections to ethnohistoric sources, other archaeological artifacts, and ethnographic insight show the use of monkeys as icons, symbols, and indexes that indicate ties to ideological and cosmological themes present through cultural continuity. This is based on the Peircean and pragmatic relationship between signs, objects, and meaning, which is also dialectical and shifts meaning based on the utterance (Preucel-Bauer 2001, Preucel 2015).

Re-Addressing Positionality

Of course, my own position within this research and my active role as an etic, non-Indigenous individual plays a role in establishing knowledge in a Western academic sense. I have a lot of privilege in regard to the opportunities I have access to, the resources I have, and the insight I was able to learn. I wanted to avoid continuing the problematic and unethical legacy of misuse and exploitation of Indigenous peoples by prioritizing their interest, continual mutual

consent, and anonymity. If I had the ability to, I would have established more long-term relationships with those I spoke with in order to build more trust, acceptance, and mutual understanding. Through this thesis, Indigenous perspectives were highlighted in a way that incorporates a post-processual and postcolonial approach, that accounts for the complex nature of Maya religion, reality of multiple interpretations, and the respect for the continuing connection of the past with the present and future (Atalay 2008).

Even though this thesis establishes connections between the nature of monkey iconography across ethnohistoric, ethnographic, and archaeological mediums, I do not want to establish any narratives that speak for the Maya. I also do not want to create the perception of the Maya people as a monolith, as I recognize the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Maya from a Belizean regional perspective, as well as elsewhere in Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras.

Future Directions

In terms of future research, many avenues can be explored in order to examine the deeper relationships between the Maya and monkeys. One avenue should be to expand this research to involve a more Indigenous-led and collaborative methodology. Community-based and collaborative methods allow for the ability for long-term relationships to be made with local communities in order to promote the incorporation of multivocality with decolonial practices and decolonial dissemination of information (Atalay 2008:3). This longer-term relationship with more involved research goals led by the communities themselves would gather more emic insight and interpretation of their own cultural heritage for their own objectives and purposes.

In terms of future archaeological endeavors, research centered on the presence of monkeys within liminal spaces (such as cave contexts and dance contexts) and the dialectical

meaning that is constituted from those settings in terms of fertility can be further explored. The incorporation of another form of semiotics that explores the interconnectedness of meaning and place, or geosemiotics, could be used as a main theoretical framework in this research. There are many ideological connections between monkeys as tied to fertility (especially within caves) and the expansion on this subject could explore the complex connections to this theme in a variety of mediums.

Building on Bourdieu, the shifting nature of the cultural capital to objectified capital of monkeys could be explored in terms of different access to materials as well as the commodification of animal masks in a tourism market (Appadurai 1986, Bourdieu 1985). Focusing on contemporary, traditional dances as echoing ancient Maya beliefs, Christian beliefs, and also existing within a context of globalization could also be explored more closely with themes of Indigenous activism within descendant communities. This highlights the complex and interconnected nature of Maya religion in a postcolonial setting, existing within a larger globalized society, where the monkey as an icon has "both a material and discursive existence that transcend the particular local tradition itself" (Chiappari 2002:48).

Overall, the incorporation of ethnographic insight into archaeological-based research is an important piece of providing more embodied forms of knowledge and avoiding simulative practices within the field. The inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, voices, and insight not only builds upon archaeological knowledge, but provides new meaning and new ways of understanding that would not be possible otherwise.

The Importance of Tribal Survivance

It is the behavioral nature for monkeys to be playful and mischievous, to be seen as 'tricksters' in some ways. As referenced in Chapter 4, some traditional dances still practiced today in the Maya Highlands incorporate the depiction of monkeys as ritual clowns that act out 'immoral' and inappropriate behaviors (Miller and Taube 1993, Taube 2003). In a more ethnohistoric sense, it is important to point out and examine the Western and Catholic biases of interpreting these dances and the role of monkeys within them. Sometime after Spanish Contact, monkey dances in places such as San Pedro were outlawed and labeled as "idolatry" which led them to be "strictly forbidden by the Roman Catholic priests" (Gann 1926:160). This account, along with insight from community members of Santa Cruz village, shows a larger disruption in Maya traditional dance involving monkeys after Spanish contact. Furthermore, the account by Gann (1926) describes paying to see wooden monkey masks housed by an old Maya man after a significant period of time practicing this dance. According to Gann (1926:160), one of these masks had three horns to represent the devil. Through an ethnocentric, colonial, and Catholic lens, these descriptions alluding to monkey traditions and practices among the Maya create narratives that distinguish monkeys as 'evil' and connected to "devil worship".

When expanding understanding of these figures through a wider lens, one that examines monkeys as icons to the Maya in a postcolonial world, we incorporate the possibility of multiple interpretations and interpretations that reside inside or within an Indigenous community. The community of Santa Cruz Village, among many other Maya communities that have experienced the prohibition of monkey-related dances, have revitalized these dances in recent years. This, in of itself, is a form of tribal survivance and is a larger representation of trickster hermeneutics. According to Vizenor (1999:15), trickster stories within oral tribal stories and written narratives

depict themes of transformation and are the translation of creation. According to Vizenor (1999:15), “the very nature of the trickster is one that evades a consistent character or personality…and goes through transformation.” As discussed, Hun Batz and Hun Chuen were transformed into monkeys by their younger brothers, the Hero Twins. The Deer Dance allows for transformative processes that allow for dancers to become ‘ways’, embodying animals such as monkeys.

The resiliency and nature of the act of revitalizing these dances, despite a long, forbidden history, is an act of tribal survivance. Shifting the colonial narrative that labels monkeys as ‘sinful’ and ‘evil’ to a narrative that highlights the indexical nature between monkeys, cosmology, and ancestral ecological importance through Indigenous perspectives highlight Indigenous survivance.

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Appendix A

Northern Arizona University Consent to Participate in Research Form (Front Side of Document)

NAU NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

Office of Research Compliance

Project Number: 2043139-2
Approval Date: May 16, 2023
This stamp must be on all consenting documents

APPROVED

Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Monkey Business: Examining the Significance of Monkey Imagery in Maya Ideology

Your name: Abigail Lewis

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you do not have to participate. This document contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate.

My name is Abi Lewis and I am currently a graduate student in the United States working with the Belizean archaeologist Jaime Awe. The purpose of my research is to further examine the significance of monkeys as figures in Belize, focused on Maya religion by looking at monkeys depicted in the archaeological record (in hieroglyphic language, pottery, and monkey burials), in creation narrative, and in the perspectives of Maya people today. To help tie my research to the perspectives of Maya people today, I am hoping to interview willing and comfortable participants about their perspectives of monkeys.

In terms of the interviews, I am looking to speak with adult individuals for at least 15- 20 minutes about their own perspectives of the deer dance, the roles of monkeys in the dance, and their own connections to monkeys.

There are no expected risks to you as a result of participating in this study. You will not benefit directly from participating in this study.

Although you are free to share any information that you feel comfortable with sharing, I will not be using your real name. Any personal information about you will remain anonymous. I will be storing all of the notes and recordings from this interview or the duration of the project (until May 2024). If you choose to withdraw your permission while the interview is in process, I will be able to delete your interview data. After the interview has been completed, your data cannot be deleted because the data will be de-identified.

With your permission, I would like to audiotape this interview so that I can make an accurate transcript. Once I have made the transcript, I will erase the recordings. Your name will not be in the transcript or my notes. Because of the nature of the data, it may be possible to deduce your identity; however, there will be no attempt to do so and your data

Northern Arizona University Consent to Participate in Research Form (Back Side of Document)

NAU NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY
Office of Research Compliance

Project Number: 2043139-2
Approval Date: May 16, 2023
This stamp must be on all consenting documents

will be reported in a way that will not identify you. The only time I will use the information for this study is when writing and presenting my research for my thesis. I will not use your information in any other way. Information collected about you will not be used or shared for future research studies. The information that you provide in the study will be handled confidentially. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released or shared.

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact ***Abi Lewis*** *(ajl523@nau.edu)* ***or Dr. Jaime Awe*** *(Jaime.awe@nau.edu)*

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form, and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I affirm that I am at least 18 years of age and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

Printed name of person participating	Signature of person participating	Date

AGREEMENT TO BE AUDIORECORDED

Signature:_____ Date:_____

Appendix B

Deer Dance Recruitment Script (Approved by Northern Arizona University IRB)

Deer Dance Recruitment Script

Intro: Hello! My name is Abi Lewis and I am currently a graduate student working with the Belizean archaeologist Dr. Jaime Awe for my thesis project. For this project, I am really interested in the significance of monkey imagery here in Belize and in the wider Maya world. I want to ask people attending this Cacao Festival (as well as people who are workers at the archaeological sites) about how they perceive this deer (monkey) dance (or how they perceive monkeys in their experience). If you are interested, would you want to be a part of an interview with me for about 15 to 20 minutes?

Your answers will be included in the process of my research and will be directly a part of my thesis research, if you agree to participate. If you would like to partake in this interview, I would love to speak with you. Your interview will be confidential, and I will not be including any personal identifying information or demographic information about you in my actual project.

If they agree and are comfortable with proceeding:
Great! I am excited to speak with you a bit about monkeys and your ideas, perspectives, and insights about them. Continue on to go over with them about the consent form, all of the details of the research (consent for recording, outlining what kinds of questions I will be asking), and that they are free to stop at any time or withdrawal their consent at any time if they decide to not be a part of the interview anymore.

-If progresses, begin interview process with written and spoken consent and proceed to asking the interview questions

If they are not on board and would not like to participate:
Okay, no worries! Thank you for your time, I really appreciate it.