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The Origins of the Maya: A Comparative Analysis of Narratives

Thomasina I. Morris

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

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Master of Arts

The purpose of this thesis is to document the changes in archaeological origin narratives concerning the lowland Preclassic Maya. This was accomplished by tracking the changes in four major narratives over several decades. These narratives include Herbert J. Spinden's *Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America*; *The Ancient Maya* written by Sylvanus G. Morley, with additional editors, George Brainerd, Robert J. Sharer, and Loa Traxler; Michael D. Coe's *The Maya*, and Richard E.W. Adams's *Prehistoric Mesoamerica*.

The specific parts of the narratives analyzed were the origins of agriculture, ceramic technology, writing, and monumental architecture. Changes in metaphorical language and illustrations that accompanied these texts were also analyzed. Shifts in narratives were tracked through the changes made to the texts in sequential editions, and were then compared between editions, and between books.

The analysis of these narratives showed that the changes in the narratives resulted from a number of factors, including new technology, such as radiocarbon dating; new discoveries, in the form of artwork, sites, and artifacts; the decipherment of the Maya glyphs; and changes in the field of archaeology. The largest change that archaeological research has shown that Maya civilization is older than first imagined. Writing, ceramic technology, and monumental architecture are all now known to be centuries older than previously thought, all of which require a much different narrative than first told in 1841 by John Lloyd Stephens.

Keywords: Preclassic, Maya, Lowland, Chronology, Architecture, Origins, Writing

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I. Introduction

Since the discovery of Maya cities in 1787, questions concerning their origins have been asked by the public and scholars alike. Archaeologists have proposed many explanations for the origins of the Maya people, their cities, and civilization, and these explanations have changed over time. The purpose of this thesis is to document the major changes in scholarly narratives of Maya origins and to investigate the reasons for these changes. A textual analysis of the changing explanations written in English reveals major shifts and factors behind them. Changes in content, rhetoric, artwork, and interpretive framework of narratives are analyzed here to understand how explanations shifted and why they were altered. My analysis shows that major narrative shifts occurred due to changes in contemporary sociopolitical attitudes, advances in technology used in archaeology, and discoveries of new cities.

A word of explanation will clarify my approach and basic descriptive language. Explanations of Maya origins given in individual reports, articles, and books constitute single “narratives.” For purposes of my analysis, a “narrative” refers to a story, interpretive framework, or commentary given by archaeologists, and it includes basic underlying themes conveyed, specific facts, artwork, and rhetorical style used to convey the story. Each narrative also includes metaphorical language and presentation of the information concerning the origins of the Maya. Each narrative can be attributed to an author or multiple authors. Changes made in reworking a narrative over time by a single author or group of related authors creates a “narrative stream.” For example, Michael D. Coe’s popular book, *The Maya*, has gone through eight editions. In each edition, Coe has made substantial changes while maintaining continuity of his general narrative. Thus, the eight editions of his book comprise a single narrative stream. Other narrative

streams were written by Herbert Spinden, Richard E. W. Adams, and Sylvanus G. Morley, George W. Brainerd, Robert Sharer, and Loa P. Traxler.

A “meta-narrative,” or synthetic, global narrative of the Maya origins can also be constructed as the history of changes among individual narratives. The global narrative is highly generalized and is a single historic sequence of changes in proposed explanations of Maya origins. The global narrative provides additional context for individual narrative streams and provides a point for further analysis.

Although there are many topics discussed in relation to the origins of the Maya, this thesis focuses on just four key developments. Changes in Maya narratives concerning the origins of maize agriculture, ceramic technology, writing, and monumental architecture will be analyzed. Changes in descriptions and artwork will also be tracked through multiple-edition books and placed within the global narrative. My analysis of Maya narratives relies on principles of hermeneutic interpretation (Hodder and Hutson 2003). I compare narratives both within narrative streams and to a global narrative. Discrepancies or continuities within narrative streams and with the global narrative will thus become apparent and provide a basis for understanding the changing story of the early Maya.

Several parameters need to be established to facilitate analysis of the narratives. For this thesis, the focus is on the origins of the early lowland Maya for the era now known as the “Preclassic” period. “Preclassic” refers to a developmental phase in which the foundation for a Classic period was laid, and it includes the development of pottery and agriculture (Willey and Phillips 2001: 147-148). Over time, scholars have proposed a variety of terms to describe the Preclassic period, including “Archaic,” “developmental,” and “Formative,” and “Preclassic.” In this thesis, the beginning of the Maya Preclassic period in the lowland area begins with the

development of ceramic technology and agriculture, around 2000 BC and ends around AD 250 (Coe 2005: 26).

Narrative Streams

Four narrative streams will comprise the primary dataset for my comparative analysis of changes in the larger global narrative concerning the Preclassic Maya. The oldest story is Herbert J. Spinden's *Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America*, first published in 1917, with subsequent editions in 1922 and 1928. This book was influenced by his earlier work, *Study of Maya Art* (Spinden 1913). The second narrative stream starts with *The Ancient Maya*, by Sylvanus G. Morley, first published in 1946, with five later editions revised respectfully by George W. Brainerd, Robert J. Sharer, and Robert J. Sharer and Loa O. Traxler. The third narrative stream is Michael D. Coe's *The Maya*, with eight editions, starting in 1966, and the latest edition in 2011. The last narrative stream is *Prehistoric Mesoamerica* by Richard E.W. Adams, published in 1977, 1991, and 2005 (see Appendix A).

The global narrative reconstructed in this thesis covers a longer timeframe, starting in 1841 with John Lloyd Stephens's book, *Incidents in Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, and it comes up to 2010. Publications used to piece together the global narrative include principal books based on missing years in the chronology of the four titles listed above, as well as publications that caused major developments and changes in Maya archaeology. For the nineteenth century, most publications are secondary sources and summaries of contributions by different individuals, with supplemented primary material. To create a background and foundation, the meta-narrative before 1920 will be given before the four narrative streams, with

the remaining global narrative following the final narrative stream. Appendix A lists in chronological order the books considered in my analysis.

Background

Following the Spanish Conquest in 1524 (Coe 2005: 242), narratives concerning the Maya came from several different sources, including the historical records of the Spanish and native chroniclers, the codices or ancient books of the ancient Maya, monuments and stelae, and oral traditions (Gann and Thompson 1931). However, the years following the Conquest, including most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, produced little information about the lowland Maya, ancient or contemporary.

In 1841, a revolutionary narrative was published in English by John Lloyd Stephens (*Incidents in Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*), and since that time there have been major shifts in the narrative. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century explorers include Augustus and Alice Le Plongeon, Alfred P. Maudslay, Alfred V. Kidder, J. Eric S. Thompson, and Teobert Maler. Most of their published works were site descriptions of monumental architecture with hieroglyphic texts, with minor theoretical references and speculations.

The first half of the twentieth century saw narratives of romanticized Mayas and their mysterious origins. The following decades introduced new methods and theories into Maya archaeology, including radiocarbon dating, settlement pattern studies, and New Archaeology, which produced new artifacts, data, and interpretations that transformed the global narrative. The most recognizable shift in the global narrative has been the change from viewing the Mayas as the peaceful and artistic “Greeks” of the New World, to a bloody, warlike civilization ruled by powerful kings, like the Aztecs or Romans.

Maya Calendars

It is important to understand the mechanics and function of the Maya calendar and the Long Count to provide a foundation for understanding the basic arguments of narratives and of authors. The Maya had several calendars that worked in synch with each other and recorded different increments of time. These calendars include the sacred almanac, the vague solar year, or *Haab*, the calendar round, and the Long Count.

The calendar round was composed of two permutating cycles, the sacred almanac and the vague solar year, that combined created a 52 year calendar. The sacred almanac was a calendar of 260 days, which represented 13 number coefficients intermeshing with 20 day names, with the same number and day name reoccurring every 261 days. The beginning of the cycle was 1 Imix, followed by 2 Ik', 3 Ak'bal, and so on until the calendar reached 13 Ajaw, at which point it started over with 1 Imix (see figure 1).

The vague solar year, or *Haab*, is the second permutating cycle in the calendar round. Called the vague year because it consisted of only 365 days, while the actual solar year is about one fourth of a day longer, the *Haab* was the second part of the calendar round. The *Haab* was composed of 18 months of 20 days, with a five day interval at the end. Thus, a specific day in the calendar round, such as 3 Ak'bal 5 Pop would only occur once every fifty-two years (Coe 2011:63-64). The calendar round was used to record events that occurred over relatively short amounts of time, or a single lifetime, and was called the short count (see figure 2).

The second important notation system is called the Long Count, and appeared throughout Mesoamerica, although the most refined instances occurred in the central Maya area during the Classic period. Also composed of a permutation count, the Long Count had such large cycles that any event in written history could have a unique date, rather than the ambiguity that existed

in the short count. Rather than using the Vague Year, the Long Count employed a 360 day count, or a tun. Coe explains the components of Long Count as follows:

The Long Count cycles are:

20 k'ins 1 winal or 20 days

18 winals 1 tun or 360 days

20 tuns 1 k'atun or 7,200 days

20 k'atuns 1 bak'tun or 144,000 days

Long Count dates inscribed by the Maya on their monuments consist of the above cycles listed from top to bottom in descending order of magnitude, each with its numerical coefficient and all to be added up so as to express the number of days elapsed since the end of the last Great Cycles, a period of 13 bak'tuns whose ending fell on the date 4 Ajaw 8 Kumk'u. The starting point of the *present* Great Cycle corresponds, in the Thompson correlation, to 13 August 3114 BC (Gregorian calendar), and its ending point to 23 December AD 2012. Thus, a Long Count date conventionally written as 9.10.19.5.11 Chuwen 4 Kumk'u would be:

9 bak'tuns 1,296,000 days

10 k'atuns 72,000 days

19 tuns 6,840 days

5 winals 100 days

11 k'ins 11 days

Or 1,374,951 days since the close of the last Great Cycle, reaching the Calendar Round position 10 Chuwen 4 Kumk'u. (Coe 2011:65)

The important point is that the Maya left numbers on monuments with historical dates that can be correlated with the Christian calendars of the Western world.

Most inscriptions, especially those on stelae, recorded relatively short intervals of time, often within a lifetime to tell the story of a ruler. However, some of the inscriptions recorded mythical dates that spanned millions of years. Other dates that were often inscribed on stone monuments included period-ending dates to commemorate the completion of tuns or k'atuns (Coe 2011: 232). When monuments with dates are mentioned in the thesis, they refer to Long Count.

Historically, the various correlations between the Maya and Christian calendars have been proposed, with the different correlations suggesting different histories of Maya achievements. The history of Maya studies can only be understood by taking the calendar controversies into account, and a correct history of the Maya requires the correct correlation. Thus, I first address the Maya calendar correlation problem before considering narratives of Maya origins in the following chapters.

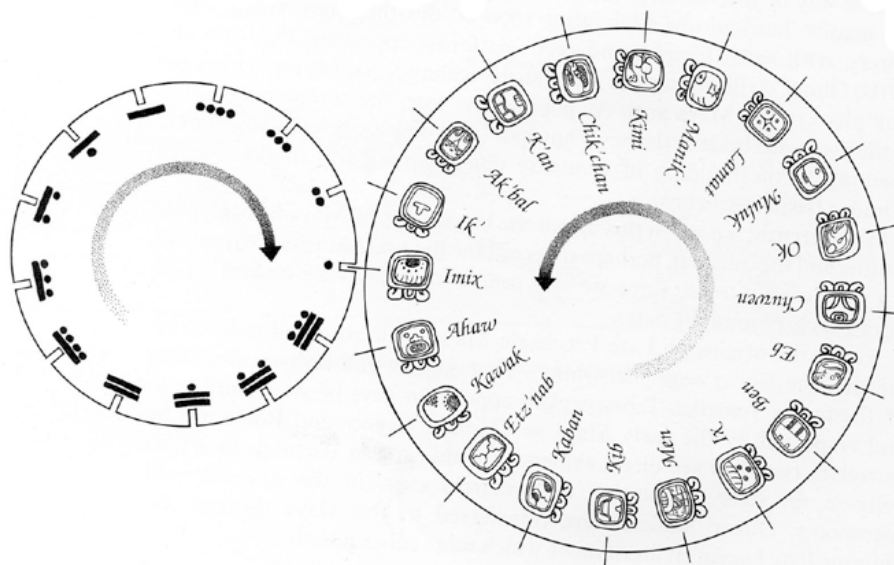


Figure 1: Representation of the 260-day calendar (Coe 2011:62)

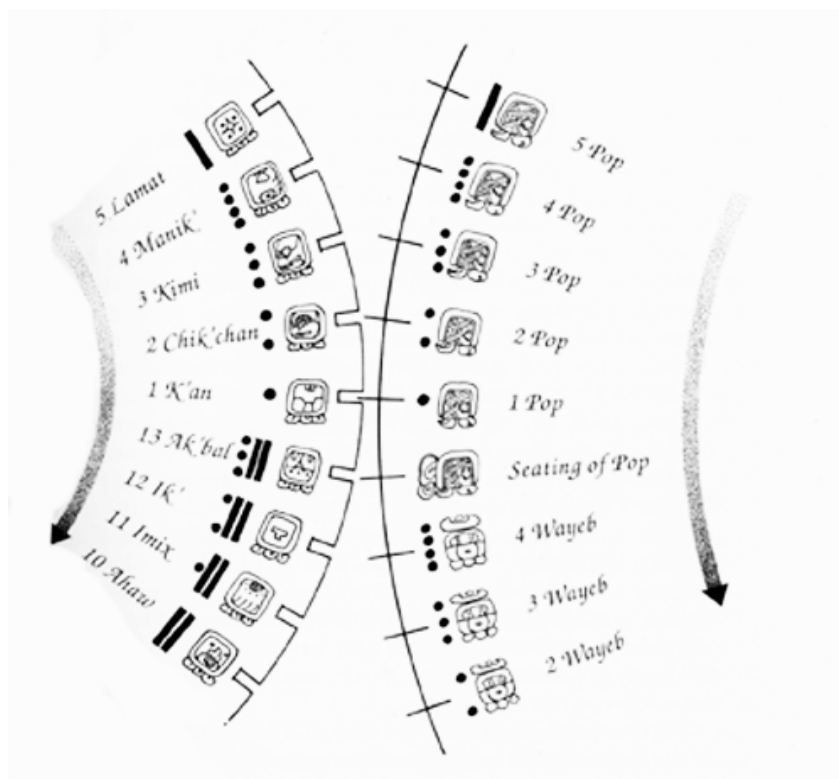


Figure 2: Representation of part of the 52-year Calendar Round (Coe 2011:65)

Christian Correlation and Chronology

A major challenge in Maya archaeology has been to correlate the Maya and Christian calendars. When creating a correlation between the Long Count system and the Gregorian calendar, several steps must occur, which is why different correlations have arisen. One issue is that the Maya recorded time to the day, with cycles of months, years, and centuries that were all recorded as a number of days elapsed since the base date. The Maya calendar was still in operation at the time of the Conquest, but the notation had been shorted to only include the Short Count, or count of k'atuns (period of 20 years each); the bak'tun count had been dropped. Several events during the century of the Spanish Conquest were recorded by Friar Diego de Landa and others in both the Julian calendar and the Maya Short Count. A specific k'atun 13 Ahua came to an end during the Julian year 1539 (Morley 1947:457). The main problem is that the specific bak'tun correlation in the Long Count was not recorded by the Spanish, so it is not clear how the Landa correlation fits with the Long Count dates of the Classic period. The problem of abbreviated dates is apparent in our own place notation wherein 1776, 1876, and 1976 can all be abbreviated as '76. Without evidence for the century, the abbreviated date is hard to interpret. The abbreviated dates recorded for the Maya after the Conquest mean that archaeologists have had to guess the appropriate Maya century to make the link to the Christian calendar. Thus, archaeologists make educated guesses on the specific k'atun 13 Ahua that was ending. Further adjustments also had to be made to relate the Julian and Gregorian calendars.

Based on these mechanics of the Maya calendar, many possible correlations were created, but only two were believed to be credible, and these are more than 200 of our years apart. The correlations are the Goodman, Martínez, and Thompson (GMT) correlation of 584,283 days and the Spinden correlation of 489,383 days. The main disagreement between the two proposals is

the number of k'atun cycles that had elapsed between the last Long Count dates and the Short Count of the conquered Maya. Some archaeologists still discuss the possibility of a different correlation being correct, but most are completely on board with the GMT correlation. Coe argues, "In spite of the oceans of ink that have been spilled on the subject, there now is not the slightest chance that these three scholars (conflated to GMT when talking about the correlation) were not right; and that when we say, for instance, that Yax Pac, King of Copan, died on 10 February 822 in the Julian Calendar, he did just that" (Coe 1992: 114). The narratives perception of Maya origins of early archaeologists, especially those of Herbert Spinden and Sylvanus Morley, differed based on the calendar correlation ascribed to.

Research Outcomes and Expectations

Little has been published concerning the shifts in archaeological narratives concerning the Maya, and why these changes have occurred. There have been biographies written of early Mayanists and Maya archaeologists (Brunhouse 1973, 1975; Desmond and Messenger 1988; Evans 2004) and of changes to the field of Mayan archaeology (Bernal 1980; Marcus 1983, 1995, 2003; Sabloff 2004). However, these publications have focused on the influence of individual scholars and how they changed the focus of Maya archaeology during their lifetimes. There has never been an in-depth study of the changes in the overall narrative and its influence on the general public. This thesis analyzes these changes and uses the analysis to explain the development and current state of Maya archaeology, with respect to lowland Maya origins.

II. Global Narrative Part I: 1492-1940

Over the past 150 years, the narrative concerning the Preclassic Maya has drastically changed. This section will show major trends and changes in the narrative during these years. Major shifts have occurred since the initial encounters with the archaeological record, changing the view of the Maya and other ancient Americans from supposed savages to civilized people on par with the greats, but obsessed with time. Further shifts later occurred, transforming the perception of the Maya into a warlike, bloody civilization ruled by powerful kings. These shifts occurred over an extended amount of time and could be a result of changing political and social thought, in combination with new excavations and discoveries.

Although Spanish priests and others recorded information about the existing Maya, it was not until John Lloyd Stephens wrote his book in 1841 about his travels in Central America and Mexico that this ancient American people began to be understood and their great civilization uncovered. Stephens's focus on monumental architecture and hieroglyphics directed the focus of Mesoamerican archaeology for the following century and created the framework for creating narratives. Retaining the emphasis of Mayan archaeology on monumental archaeology and hieroglyphics, some slight changes were made, including changing terminology, shifting timeframes, and an emphasis on ceramics. It was only after the development of processual and postprocessual archaeology that other topics besides architecture and writing began to be explored, including issues of gender roles, agency, and the everyday practices of the common people. Because there was such a heavy emphasis on certain types of evidence, other available sources were overlooked or ignored. Overall, these more recently explored topics have led to an increased awareness of the intelligence and intentionality of the ancient Maya and of the high levels of artistic and social achievement reached during the Preclassic stage.

Little was published concerning the Preclassic Maya for many years following Stephens's books, and it was not until 1917 that the Preclassic was mentioned in another book written for the public (Spinden 1917). The narrative concerning the origins of the Maya changed as more excavations, technology, and information concerning the Preclassic Maya became known. It is important to understand how the narrative concerning the Classic and Postclassic Maya was told, sometimes in absence of the Preclassic, because the narratives concerning other Maya time periods can provide insight into how the narrative of the Preclassic Maya developed.

1492-1819: Narratives from Conquest Times

During the century following the Spanish conquest, narratives were written by native and Spanish writers. Maya individuals were taught Spanish by Catholic priests, which allowed them to write down their own Maya history. Several Franciscan priests also left behind chronicles, of which the most notable is that by Diego de Landa. The histories, ethnographies, and information recorded by these two groups of individuals have been useful in understanding Maya civilization as it existed at the time of the Conquest. The following two centuries produced little in the way of Maya history, and it was John Lloyd Stephens who fathered Maya archaeology.

1820-1900: Early Narratives and Explorers

Many of the chronicles and narratives told during the nineteenth century regarded the Maya as the wonder of the New World and thought this ancient people was vastly different from the other natives living on the continent. The narratives mainly consisted of descriptions of explorations and discoveries of large architecture and hieroglyphics, with some theoretical references and speculations. This era also set the stage for many of the metaphorical references and thoughts concerning the ancient Maya, and the development of the Maya culture, including

comparisons to the Old World, especially to Greek society and achievements. Major players during this time include John Lloyd Stephens and Augustus and Alice Le Plongeons. Some ideas of these early explorers were rejected by later archaeologists, were found to be correct at an even later time, while other hypotheses were completely off the mark and soundly rejected.

John Lloyd Stephens's Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan.

One of the first narratives published in English (1841) concerning the Maya people was *Incidents in Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* by John Lloyd Stephens, with illustrations by Frederick Catherwood. Two years later, they published a second book titled *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*. Both books were a huge success and resulted in numerous printings and thousands of copies sold. Stephens and Catherwood both had traveled the world, including the Middle East, Europe, and Mediterranean areas, studying the ruins and ancient civilizations in the Old World.

Jeremy A. Sabloff (1993) explains how Stephens's book still has merit for the modern reader and helps in understanding the roots of Maya archaeology. Sabloff explains how Stephens's work includes many of the topics that were typical of traditional Maya archaeology, writing,

The emphases on big sites, elite architecture, and monumental art that dominated Stephens and Catherwood's work came to typify Maya studies for the next century or so. These almost exclusive concerns with the elite aspects of ancient Maya civilization were not successfully challenged until the 1950s with the rising interest in Maya settlement patterns and growing attention to peasant lifeways and their contribution to the development of Maya civilization. (Sabloff 1993:xiii)

These areas of focus dominated the research and played a major role in the available data and the narrative told concerning the early Maya.

Stephens was the forefather for the narrative concerning the Preclassic Maya in many ways. Although little was known concerning the most ancient Maya during Stephens's time, it was obvious to him that views that saw the Maya as savages were incorrect. Before Stephens, little information was available for the general public concerning the lives of ancient Americans, and the contemporary Native Americans were seen as living in a barbaric and primitive condition. The origins of these cultures were explained by two main schools of thought: degeneration from a mysterious race of Moundbuilders or others who were destroyed or forced to move due to the savage Indians (Trigger 2006).

Exploration and excavations of the mounds in North America and the ruins in Central America came support for the belief of the uncivilized nature of the Indians as a case of degeneration. However, Stephens did not believe in the possibility of uncivilized people inhabiting the ruins he was observing. He stated, "This unexpected monument put to rest at once and forever, in our minds, all uncertainty in regard to the character of American antiquities...that the people who once occupied the Continent of America were not savages" (Stephens 1993:36-37). Stephens originally denied the genetic and cultural relationship between the ancient and existing populations, but eventually he accepted the connection. However, he still stated that the modern population was in a degraded state because of the influence of the Spaniards and were not at the level of their ancestors (Evans 2004).

Stephens often compared the Maya writing, architecture, and sculpture to that of the ancient Egyptians. This could be a result of his earlier visit to the Middle East and Egypt. He used his knowledge of Old World civilizations and practices to explain the artifacts and

architecture he was finding in the New World. According to R. Tripp Evans, Stephens used metaphorical language, rather than making actual comparisons between the Old and New World cities. Evans (2004:63) explains, “He asserted, for example, that Palenque rivaled the majesty of Constantinople; hailed Uxmal as the New World Thebes; and, in another passage, linked Copan with Periclean Athens.” These comparisons present the Maya as peaceful and artistic, similar to the Greeks, and created the interpretive framework for many years. Mary Miller and Linda Schele (1986:21) explained this trend, stating, “the Maya were considered the Greeks of the New World, and the Aztecs were seen as the Romans—one pure, original, and beautiful, the other slavish, derivative, and cold.”

It is interesting to note that a century later, prominent Mayanists, including Sylvanus Morley and J. Eric Thompson, praised the descriptions Stephens made, but they rejected many of his claims and conclusions. Stephens’s conclusions included: 1. Copan being a large populated city, 2. images on stelae were kings or heroes, and 3. panels of hieroglyphics reminded Stephens of cartouches for recording the names or information of individuals. In his description of the Temple of the Cross at Palenque, he believed the larger text of hieroglyphics explained the scene, while other hieroglyphics near the carved individuals “reminded us of the Egyptian mode for recording the name, history, office, or character of the persons represented” (Stephens 1993:215). Morley and Thompson rejected Stephens’s conclusions, claiming that Copan was an empty ceremonial center and that the images on the stelae were gods or calendar priests. Ackerman quotes Morley as having stated in relation to the hieroglyphics: “They are in no sense records of personal glorification and self-laudation like the inscriptions of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia...Indeed, they are so utterly impersonal, so completely nonindividualistic, that it is even probable that the name glyphs of specific men and women were never recorded upon Maya

monuments” (Stephens 1993:7). Although these statements were not made until years later, they resulted in a very different narrative than the one told by Stephens, and it was Morley and Thompson who actually got the story wrong, not Stephens. Therefore, Stephens was telling an accurate narrative that was later rejected and then revived after further exploration and data showed that he was correct in his conclusions.

Augustus and Alice Le Plongeon. Other nineteenth century explorers who had an impact on Maya archaeology were Augustus and Alice Le Plongeon. Le Plongeon went to the Yucatan in 1873, and he followed traditions of prior photographers and explorers of the New World civilizations. Unlike these previous individuals, Le Plongeon was prepared with experience, a will for a life-long project, and a hypothesis. Augustus Le Plongeon proposed that the Maya were the founders of world civilization and he went to the Yucatan to let the facts test his hypothesis (Desmond and Messenger 1988:xxi).

Both Augustus and Alice took an active role in exploring the ruins of the Maya cities and the city archives in Merida. In order to gain information about the Maya, they both learned Yucatec Maya and did ethnographic work among the modern Maya to learn more about their ancient ancestors (Desmond and Messenger 1988:18-19). This allowed them to explore the Spanish chronicles, current Maya practices, and the archaeological record. They could easily recognize the similar traditions between the modern and ancient Maya, and they realized that the current population descended from the builders of the ruins.

Le Plongeon was telling a narrative of Mesoamerica as the cradle of civilized life and of the Maya as the inventors of civilization which then spread to the rest of the world, including to Egypt and other Old World civilizations. This can be seen in his book title *Sacred Mysteries among the Mayas and the Quiches 11,500 years ago. Their relation to the Sacred Mysteries of*

Egypt, Greece, Chaldea and India. Free Masonry in Times Anterior to the Temple of Solomon (1886). In this publication, Le Plongeon goes to great lengths to describe different theories concerning the origins and development of Free Masonry. Le Plongeon stated “I will endeavor to show you that the ancient, sacred mysteries, the origin of Free Masonry consequently, date back from a period far more remote than the most sanguine students of its history ever imagined, I will try to trace their origin, step by step, to this continent which we inhabit,—to America—from where Maya colonists transported their ancient religious rites and ceremonies, not only to the banks of the Nile, but to those of the Euphrates, and the shores of the Indian Ocean, not less than 11,500 years ago” (Le Plongeon 1886: 22).

His narrative centered on Queen Móo, and her brother, Chaacmol, both of whom were represented in murals around Chichen Itza. Queen Móo, according to Le Plongeon, was forced to flee to Egypt, and helped created Egyptian civilization. It was through a discovery of a statue of Chacmool that Le Plongeon believed his diffusion hypothesis to be correct, and he continued to interpret the ancient Maya in relation to his belief (Desmond and Messenger 1988). Much of his evidence was derived from linguistic and architectural similarities between Maya, Egyptian, Indian, Chaldean cultures. He also compared these similarities to the rites and beliefs of the Free Masons.

Le Plongeon’s theories were not well accepted, and his wife would continue to defend him after his death. His concepts of diffusion were taken to the extreme and came at a time when the theory was becoming unpopular, and evolution was the new school of thought. *Sacred Mysteries* was rejected by two publishers because it was seen as bad speculation (Le Plongeon 1886:xiii). Although much of Le Plongeon’s theory was speculation and storytelling, his purpose for undertaking research and writing was sound. He explained previous concepts of the Maya

presented in the first annual report of the executive committee of the “Archaeological Institute of America”. He quoted,

The study of American archaeology relates indeed to the monuments of a race that never attained to a high degree of civilization and that has left no trustworthy records of continuous history. It was a race whose intelligence was for the most part of a low order, whose sentiments and emotions were confined within a narrow range, and whose imagination was never quickened to find expression of itself in poetic or artistic forms of beauty. From what it was or what it did, nothing is to be learned that has any direct bearing on the progress of civilization. (Le Plongeon 1886: 150)

Le Plongeon explains that these men had never visited the Maya ruins, so they could not understand the importance and splendor of the civilization. He encouraged additional archaeology and preservation to occur in Mesoamerica before everything disappeared. Even though Le Plongeon did not have sound theories, he did further the field of Mesoamerican archaeology and help create the excitement surrounding the Maya.

In addition to Stephens, Catherwood, and the LePlongeon, several other archaeologists had an impact on the development of Maya archaeology and influenced the basic narrative that Spinden and Morley would use as a foundation for their narratives.

1900-1940: Romanticized Mayas as America's Greeks

Most of the narratives from the first half of the twentieth century were romanticized stories about the travels of explorers and the mysterious origins of the Maya. It is during this time that the Preclassic period was called the “Archaic” stage. The stage consisted of a

widespread culture with basic agriculture, crude clay figurines, and ceramics. Another focus of this research era was the calendar correlation of the Maya Long Count and the Christian calendar. The focus remained on the Classic Maya and their great achievements, with some archaeologists, such as J. Eric S. Thompson, refuting claims that there were civilized populations before the Classic Maya. As mentioned above, these were some of the years that Stephens's focus on large architecture and hieroglyphics were the most prominent matters for archaeologists.

During the first part of the twentieth century, major excavations and projects were conducted by the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of Harvard University and the Carnegie Institute. Some of the major players involved with these excavations include Alfred V. Kidder, Teobert Maler, Alfred Maudslay, and J. Eric S. Thompson. These archaeologists created the foundation for modern practices and were contemporaries with Herbert Spinden and Sylvanus Morley.

Thomas Gann wrote several books outlining his travels in Mesoamerica and the development of Maya culture. The narrative bias towards a peaceful, artistic, and Greek-like Maya can be seen in Gann's descriptions of the "Archaic" people. He explained how the civilization flourished "under the stimulating and favorable conditions of a warm climate, a fertile soil, and a plentiful and easily procured food supply, with ample leisure for the cultivation of science, and the fine arts, with these connoted, than it had in the millennia under the harsh and withering conditions of the hill country" (Gann and Thompson 1931:10-11).

In the discussion of the precursors of the Classic Maya, Gann again presented the Maya as peace-loving people, stating that "The first settlers were probably not left long in peaceful occupation of their new territory. No doubt constant incursions by hostile neighbours on all sides

soon led to the construction of the two hill-top fortresses” (Gann 1939: 185). Although warfare can be a factor in construction and changes in cultures, Gann focused on creating a narrative that portrayed the Preclassic Maya as peaceful people who only enter conflict when driven to it by necessity.

Gann (1939) lists three reliable means of learning about the origins of the Maya, namely linguistic, anthropological, and archaeological. He also explains that the Maya culture was influenced by outside areas at three different times, including the Valley of Mexico around 2000 BC, Toltecs from Guatemala around 1000 BC, and the Toltec-Aztecs around AD 1200 (Gann 1939:232). Through dated monuments, Gann states that from about 150 BC to AD 600, a large and homogeneous culture existed over much of Mesoamerica, and this time period is called the Old Empire. This category is comparable to the Classic Maya culture, but Gann does not discuss what developments occurred before this time, or the culture before the Classic period.

Besides the large monumental architecture and hieroglyphics, there was also a focus on the development of agriculture, early ceramics, and sculpture. There was little evidence concerning the Preclassic Maya during this time, but some archaeologists tried to give fair treatment to the available data. Certain archaeologists, such as Morley and Thompson, had been working with the Maya for so long that they had become mystified in some ways, and they were unwilling to accept early dates on monuments outside the Maya area, or other topics that humanized the ancient Maya.

Sabloff (1990) explains some of the traditional views held during this research period. The prevailing view was that the Maya did not live in urban centers but had large empty cities for priests and rulers, with a theocratic rule. “It was believed that in the midst of change elsewhere in Mesoamerica, they remained unaffected by the militarism and materialism of the

‘less cultured’ and more worldly Central Mexicans” (Sabloff 1990:26). Sabloff’s language, and that of others, evokes an image of a pure and peaceful group who celebrated the arts and avoided war, similar to traditional concepts of the Greeks. He further explains, “Their [the Mayas’] special, isolated rainforest setting produced a peaceful, harmonious environment that permitted the unparalleled intellectual and artistic accomplishments of the Maya” (Sabloff 1990:27-28). There is an overall, mystical feeling surrounding the Maya that their development was so unique it was not possible for them to have been influenced by other people. These romanticized views have become what the general public knows about the Maya and have led to a lack of information and a bias towards the peaceful people in the general narrative.

III. Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America

Dr. Herbert Spinden's *Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America* was one of the first books written since Stephens's books about the Maya that was intended for a general readership. The book's size was kept small for easy handling, and the language does not overwhelm a nonscholar. Spinden's book was also one of the first to address the origins of the Maya and their great civilization. The pre-civilized culture groups are labeled "Archaic." They are thought to have had agriculture and simple ceramic vessels.

Spinden was born in Heron, South Dakota, in 1879. He attended Harvard University from 1902 until 1909, earning a Ph.D. in Anthropology. While attending Harvard, he came under the influence of Roland Dixon, Frederick Putnam, and Alfred Tozzer. His thesis, *A Study of Maya Art*, was published in 1913. Upon finishing at Harvard, he started working at The American Museum of Natural History where he was in charge of the industrial and decorative art exhibits. In 1920 he took the position of curator at the American Indian Art and Primitive Cultures Museum at the Brooklyn Institute. Later, in 1924, he published *The Reduction of Maya Dates*. In this, he gave the correlation of dates with our calendar and the Maya calendar. In 1930, John E. Teeple proved the dates to be wrong. Based on radiocarbon dating and other dating methods, the GMT correlation is now accepted as correct and is the main correlation in use today. Spinden's other publications include *Maya Art and Civilization*, published in 1957, and *Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America* in 1917. Spinden died in 1967 (Osterloh).

Part of the problem in comparing Spinden's narrative with the others considered here is that his focus was on the Mexican highlands, which are rather distant from the Maya lowlands. He provided little information about the Maya lowlands, and there are few changes to the information that he published in subsequent editions. Spinden's Maya narrative remains virtually

the same throughout the different editions, with most new information concerning the Mexican highlands.

Spinden identified several main characteristics that are typical of “Archaic” cultures, including agriculture, ceramics, clay figurines, and carved stone figures. The ceramic vessels discussed in Spinden’s book consist of thick, simple bowls and plates which sometimes have tripod leg supports. The only decorations on the ceramics are modeled faces similar to the faces on the clay and stone figurines. Overall, Archaic peoples were viewed as simple farmers with crude artistic styles that existed over most of Central America and northern South America.

Most of the illustrations in the three editions remained unchanged, with only four additions and two deletions combined for the three editions. The illustrations appear to have been chosen for a popular audience, with pictures of plants, geographic locations, stone carving, and ceramic types which would be beneficial for a general audience. Most of the illustrations are related to differences in ceramics and architecture, and they add support to the text and make the book a good introduction to Mesoamerican archaeology.

Spinden’s “Archaic horizon” correlates with the Early Preclassic designation used today. Spinden’s “Protohistoric” has similarities to the Middle Preclassic, and the first part of his Early period relates to the Late Preclassic.

Overall, Spinden appears to have had few archaeological facts to construct a narrative, but he still showed tendencies toward a mother culture theory. In his view, people from different geographic areas influenced each other, and ideas diffused back and forth. Spinden received some criticism from Morley and other Mayan archaeologists, but he was one of the first to address pre-Maya developments that led to the Classic Maya civilization. The focus on art and

interpretation based on the images is evident in his detailed analysis given when discussing writing. This emphasis could be a product of his earlier work on Maya art.

Like many writers and archaeologists from this early time, Spinden compared the Maya and Aztecs to the Greeks and Romans of the Old World. He explained that it is a remarkably close analogy, and stated, “The Mayas, like the Greeks, were an artistic and intellectual people who developed sculpture, painting, architecture, astronomy, and other arts and sciences to a high plane...The Aztecs, like the Romans, were a brusque and warlike people who built upon the ruins of an earlier civilization that fell before the force of their arms” (Spinden 1917:177). The analogy is so comprehensive that the Toltecs are even compared to the Etruscans whose advanced culture was magnified by their successors. This historic analogy was present in all three editions of *Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America*.

The origins of the Maya were explained in a short introduction at the beginning of the chapter on the Maya:

With their calendrical system already in working order the Mayas appear on the threshold of history about the beginning of the Christian Era according to correlation with European chronology that will be explained later. The first great cities were Tikal in northern Guatemala and Copan in western Honduras, both of which had a long and glorious existence. Many others sprang up into prominence at a somewhat later date; for example, Palenque, Yaxchilan or Menche, Piedras Negras, Seibal, Naranjo, and Quirigua. The most brilliant period was from 300 to 600 A.D., after which all these cities appear to have been abandoned to the forest that soon closed over them. The population moved to northern Yucatan, where it no longer reacted strongly upon the other nations of Central America and where it

enjoyed a second period of brilliancy several hundred years later. (Spinden 1917:67)

According to Spinden, the beginning of the Maya civilization dated to AD 300 and started with the great cities of Tikal and Copan.

Chronology

Spinden gave a brief summary of Maya history, and his first two periods apply to the Preclassic. In Spinden's Maya calendar correlation the Protohistoric period began before AD 160, during which time the calendar and hieroglyphic systems were being developed. The earliest Long Count date is the Tuxtla Statuette, at 113 BC, followed by the Leiden Plate in AD 47. An early stela from Uaxactun discovered by Morley was also mentioned (Spinden 1917:130). The second period mentioned was the Early Period, from AD 160 to 358. Spinden stated that this is the time when large cities began to be constructed, although the stone carving was rather crude and primitive. Stelae had been found at Tikal, Copan, and other sites dating to this early period, which suggested a beginning of the cities (Spinden 1917:130-131).

The second edition of Spinden's book has slight changes in specific dates. Each of the previously listed dates was now about 15 years later, so the beginning of the Protohistoric period moved from AD 160 to AD 176 (Spinden 1922: 132-133). No other changes were made in the chronology in the second edition. The third edition had several more changes to the chronology. The Protohistoric period began in 613 BC, which was based on the internal evidence for the creation date of the calendric system (Spinden 1928:145-146).

Writing

Spinden focused on the symbolism within the artwork and the deities, and the different components of the writing system, although he explained little concerning the origins of writing. At the time of the publication of *Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America*, the only knowledge of Mayan hieroglyphics was related to the calendar. The 20 day signs, the 19 month signs, the face signs for the numbers 0-19, the period glyphs for 1, 20, 360, 7200, and 144,000 days were all identified, as well as several other Long Count components such as glyphs for the four directions, several gods, and heavenly bodies such as the sun and moon. No changes were made concerning Maya writing in Spinden's second edition, and by the third edition the only additional glyphs understood were for special times of the year, such as solstices (Spinden 1928:126).

The date Spinden associated with the origin of writing was sometime before AD 160 (Spinden 1917:113). The only dates discussed in relation to writing were for the creation of the calendar in 613 BC. The earliest dated object was from 98 BC, so the writing had to have been invented sometime before then (Spinden 1928:146).

Spinden incorporated many of the beliefs and practices of his time in his Maya narrative. He described the Maya as being similar to the Greeks, and he used the metaphors of the day. Spinden also focused on ancient Maya writing and artwork as a way of understanding the Maya, although his interpretations differed from those of Morley and Thompson. Original invention and development did not occur for the Maya, but Maya civilization developed as a result of outside influence and interaction. Spinden also believed the Maya were older than other archaeologists thought, and he used his calendar correlation to support this hypothesis. In the eleven years between the first and third editions, few changes were made, but Spinden presented a narrative

that was unique for his day and presented his arguments contemporary with those of Sylvanus Morley.

IV. The Ancient Maya

The longest narrative stream in regard to both textual length and historical sequence is *The Ancient Maya*, originally written by Sylvanus G. Morley in 1946. The book has subsequently gone through four revisions by various authors, including George W. Brainerd in 1956, Robert J. Sharer in 1983 and 1994, and Robert Sharer and Loa P. Traxler in 2006. A short biography of each author will be given, followed by an analysis of the narrative.

Biographical Information on the Authors

Sylvanus (Vanus or Vay) Griswold Morley was born June 7, 1883, to Benjamin F. Morley and Sarah Eleanor Constance De Lannoy. Morley attended college at both the Pennsylvania Military Academy and Harvard University, where, at the latter, he discovered his passion for archaeology. While at Harvard, the focus of his studies shifted from Ancient Egypt to the pre-Columbian Maya, at the encouragement of Peabody Museum director F. W. Putnam and the young Alfred Tozzer. Morley also had interactions with Alfred V. Kidder, a fellow student and later colleague. Morley received bachelors and masters degrees in archaeology from Harvard in 1907 and 1908. In 1908, he married Alice Gallinger Williams, and they had one child, Alice Virginia Morley. Sylvanus and Alice got divorced around 1914.

After finishing school, Sylvanus worked as a research associate, starting in 1915, and he began his work with the Carnegie Institute in 1918, investigating the ancient Maya in the Yucatan Peninsula. He also visited and worked at sites throughout Mesoamerica, including Copan, Tikal, Chichen Itza, and Uxmal. His interests included hieroglyphics, monumental architecture, and the Classic and Postclassic Maya. In 1927, Sylvanus G. Morley married

Frances Rose Lou Rhoads, and she began to accompany him on excavations and acted as a site photographer.

Morley wrote and published many works over his career. Some of the major works include guide books for cities throughout the Yucatan Peninsula, *An Introduction to the Study of the Maya Hieroglyphs* in 1915, *Inscriptions of Copan* in 1920, and *Inscriptions of Peten*, a five volume set published in 1938. In 1946, Morley wrote *The Ancient Maya*, a large volume detailing Maya archaeology. This was Morley's comprehensive life's work. He died on September 2, 1948, while serving as Director of the School of American Research in Sante Fe and the Director of the Museum of New Mexico.

George Walton Brainerd was born in 1909 in Blacksburg, Virginia. In 1930, Brainerd received his B.A. degree in zoology from Lafayette College. He taught at the American Boys' College (now Elborz College) in Teheran, Persia (now Iran) from 1930-1934 and was a member of an expedition sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania during his last year in Persia, where he first experienced archaeological research. Brainerd received his M.S. degree in 1935 and his Ph.D. in 1937 from Ohio State University in zoology. His doctoral dissertation was on the research done on animal remains recovered in the Ohio River Valley at the mound sites, thus continuing his archaeological interest.

Brainerd spent several summers with Ohio State University in the late 1930s on the Rainbow Bridge Monument Valley Expedition. From 1940-1943, he held the post of archaeologist of the Carnegie Institution of Washington's Division of Historical Studies. He moved to Los Angeles in 1946 to take the position of Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Staff Archaeologist at the Southwest Museum at the University of California where he ended his career. Later, he moved to the southwest to improve his field survey, excavation, and laboratory

analysis. While in Mexico, he worked on many different sites in the Yucatan and in the Valley of Mexico (Lunde 2003). He died suddenly of a heart attack at his home in Pasadena, California, on February 14, 1956. He was in the middle of revising *The Ancient Maya* when he died, and the book was completed by his assistant and other professionals.

Robert J. Sharer was born in 1940. He earned his PhD in 1968 from the University of Pennsylvania. He continues at Pennsylvania and is a Professor of Anthropology and the curator of the American section at the university's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Sharer has been a lecturer and professor for the Department of Anthropology for more than 30 years. His work has focused on pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, including the origins of civilization and general archaeological theory and method.

Loa P. Traxler graduated in 2004 from the University of Pennsylvania with her Ph.D., with her dissertation focused on Early Classic architecture in Copan, Honduras, and she holds undergraduate degrees from the Université de Strasbourg and Manchester College. She is a Research Scientist in the American Section of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and is currently serving as an Associate Deputy Director at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. Previously, she served as assistant curator of the Pre-Columbian Collection at Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection in Washington, DC, a collection manager at the Penn Museum, and as an exhibition coordinator. Dr. Traxler works closely with museums in Central America and is currently President of the Board of the Friends of the Ixchel Museum, Guatemala, and an officer for the Copán Maya Foundation, Honduras.

General Narrative

Morley started his manuscript for *The Ancient Maya* after he was well into his career as an archaeologist and had spent many seasons in the field. Morley's interest in monumental architecture and hieroglyphics are heavily emphasized and run throughout his book. In discussing *The Ancient Maya*, the first edition will not be used because the only difference between the first and second edition was the improved pictures in the second edition (Brunhouse 1971:316). The text is the same in the first and second editions.

1st and 2nd editions. An important part in understanding the specifics within a narrative is to explore how an author defines the "Maya" and the "origins of civilization" for the Maya. Morley defined "Maya civilization" as "applied exclusively to that ancient American culture which had as its two principal material manifestations a unique hieroglyphic writing and chronology, and...an also equally unique stone architecture, involving the use of corbeled-stone roof-vaults" (Morley 1947:38). As evident, Morley was rather restricted and exclusive in his definition, with writing, a calendar, and corbelled roofs defining Maya civilization.

Morley stated that there are two different schools of thought concerning the origins of the Maya, "One that believes it originated somewhere on the coastal plain of the state of Veracruz, Mexico; and another, to which I subscribe, that holds it originated somewhere near the region where its oldest remains have been discovered, namely near the ancient cities of Tikal and Uaxactun" (Morley 1947:40). The two schools place the origins in either the coastal plains or near Tikal and Uaxactun in the lowlands. Unlike other authors, Morley stated which theory he supported and did not attempt to appear unbiased or openminded, as apparent in the following paragraph.

There are, however, a few scattered dates which, *if accepted, at their face values*, are considerably earlier than either the Leyden Plate or Stela 9 at Uaxactun, which present the two earliest-known certain Maya dates. These doubtful, and indeed disputed, possibly earlier dates are by no means clear, however; they create a situation such as would arise if we were to find a Gothic cathedral dating from 1000 B.C., or a skyscraper with the year 1492 carved on its corresponding cornerstone---obvious anachronisms. These few scattering dates are only *apparently* very early, I believe, all of them having *actually* been carved at much later dates than they appear to represent. (Morley 1947:40-41, original emphasis)

The three objects with early dates that Morley referred to are Stela 1 at Tres Zapotes, Stela 1 at El Baul, and the Tuxtla Statuette. He continued on to discredit each of these early dates as either missing parts of the long count date or as being non-Maya in style. According to Morley, the idea of the Olmec civilization being the mother culture, or influencing the beginnings of Maya civilization, is wrong and based on anachronistic artifacts.

3rd edition. The most significant change between the second and third edition is in condensing. Morley was excessively wordy and descriptive, and George Brainerd condensed and clarified. The book was revised due to the discoveries at Bonampak and the Palenque Tomb. Certain sections were completely rewritten by Brainerd, with many sections remaining intact or being abridged (Morley and Brainerd 1956:v).

Brainerd removed most of the cynical commentary, and he included photos of the three artifacts with early Long Count dates. This shows a need for political correctness, gives some validity to the early dates, and allows readers to make their own decision concerning the

accuracy of the dates. Whole sections of chapters were also removed that expressed Morley's speculations that were not based on any evidence. For example, Brainerd removed a section titled, "The Maya Chronological System Probably the Product of a Single Mind" (Morley 1947:46). Morley had no evidence to back up this claim, and he tried to make the narrative more exciting and more like a novel with this topic. Many of these novelized assertions were removed, and the narrative was made more concrete and fact-based.

Many of the metaphorical references that Morley used were also removed by Brainerd. References to the Greeks and other ancient cultures were common throughout Morley's and other archaeologists' narratives. Morley tried to show the gentle, peaceful nature of the Maya, and he was a strong believer in the analogy to the ancient Greeks. He used language such as "some ancient Maya Hipparchus" (Morley 1947:47) and "The calendrical data presented by each on the other hand, was completely developed; like Minerva it is born fully armed and ready to function" (Morley 1947: 45).

Brainerd also made a major shift by changing the definition of "civilization." He stated, "Maya civilization, as the term is used in this book, refers only to the culture of the Classic stage, which begins with the earliest decipherable Maya dates so far discovered in the central Peten lowlands" (Morley and Brainerd 1956:40). The beginning of Maya civilization was still defined by dated monuments, which Brainerd admitted was an arbitrary distinction. However, dated monuments continued to be used based on archaeological tradition. The basic definition was changed from only writing and the corbelled arch, and is thus defined: "The word 'civilization' is generally employed to describe a culture which has developed to the point of centralized government, craft specialization, and formalized religion" (Morley and Brainerd 1956:40). The area of Maya civilization was still restricted to the lowlands, and Brainerd stated that because the

highlands of Guatemala and the south coastal plain did not have the wide variety and the unified complex of characteristics seen in the lowlands, they did not “participate in the cultural florescence which we here call the Maya civilization” (Morley and Brainerd 1956:41).

According to Morley and Brainerd, there was no evidence that the lowland Maya area ever supported a heavy population, with an estimate of 30 people per square mile being the maximum. There is also no evidence that the Classic Maya lived in large residential settlements, and urbanization was not present among the Maya. Other normal characteristics of civilization include high population density which facilitates the need for an organized irrigation system, and other organizations like a centralized government, religion, and writing system. However, the Maya are the exception to these universal traits for the creation of civilization (Morley and Brainerd 1956:47).

A major difference between the second and third editions involves the early dated objects discussed above. A plate was included of early monuments, including the Tuxtla Statuette, Stela C (previously called Stela 1) from Tres Zapotes, and Stela 1 from El Baul. Although details were not provided for all three objects, they were acknowledged and placed in context. However, Brainerd still discounted their importance by explaining that their existence suggested an origin of Maya civilization outside the Peten area, but significant excavation had still not occurred within the Peten region.

4th edition. Major changes were made between the third and fourth editions. Robert Sharer became the new editor, and over 25 years of new research and excavations had occurred. Changes were made to *The Ancient Maya* narrative in facts, organization, images, and other significant ways. Over 30 pages were devoted to the Preclassic beginnings of the Maya

civilization. Sharer also focused on trade and competition, issues related to main tenants and concerns of New Archaeology.

Chronology

In the first edition of *The Ancient Maya*, the Pre-Maya era extended from about 3000 BC to AD 317, and it was subdivided into Pre-Maya I, II, and III (Morley 1947:38). The Pre-Maya I period extended from about 3000 BC to 1000 BC, during which there were no monuments, of stone or wood, and it was before the invention of the calendar and writing. Next came the Pre-Maya II period, which lasted from 1000 BC to 353 BC. There were still no monuments, calendrical inscriptions, or writing, but both agriculture and ceramics had been introduced to the lowland Maya area. The Pre-Maya III period began with the introduction of the Long Count dating system in 353 BC and lasted until AD 317. The calendar, writing, and wood monuments also were believed to have been introduced for recording dates (Morley 1947: Table III).

The third edition of *The Ancient Maya* had changes in both dates and the terms involved in the chronology. It was no longer called the Pre-Maya but was termed the Preclassic or Formative period. Both terms are used interchangeably through the book. The beginning of the Preclassic was brought forward to 1500 BC, but otherwise the chronology remained virtually the same (Morley and Brainerd 1956: 40).

There were major changes to the presented chronology in the fourth edition. The Preclassic period was thought to have lasted from 2000 BC to AD 250, so the Preclassic and Classic periods both started earlier. The subdivisions consisted of the Early Preclassic from 2000-1000 BC, Middle Preclassic from 1000-400 BC, Late Preclassic from 400 BC to AD 100, and the Protoclassic, or Terminal Preclassic period from AD 100-250 (Morley et al. 1983:61).

No changes were made to the chronology in the fifth (Sharer 1994:71) and sixth editions (Sharer and Traxler 2006:155).

Origins of Maize Agriculture

Agriculture was one of the major components needed for the beginnings of civilization. In Mesoamerica and South America, the substantial food is maize, and it has long been a point of discussion for archaeologists. In *The Ancient Maya*, the theories of the point of origin of maize changed from Peru and the highlands of Guatemala to northern Mexico as more evidence and radiocarbon dates became available.

1st and 2nd editions. In the first edition, Morley devoted an entire chapter to agriculture. The first section is about the origins of agriculture and the subsequent sections are about current agriculture practices and the importance of maize and other foods. Two different hypotheses for the original hearth of maize are presented: Peru and the highlands of Guatemala. The Peru hypothesis is based on the large number of varieties of maize found there, and the Guatemala hypothesis is based on the fact that the closest known living relatives to maize are found there (137). These two hypotheses generated three proposals for the biological origins of maize: 1. development of maize from *teosinte* through evolution, 2. maize as the result of hybridization of *teosinte* and another grass, and 3. development of maize from another unknown plant (Morley 1947:140). Morley firmly stated his opinion concerning the origins of maize, that it occurred in Guatemala as a result of evolution of the *teosinte* plant. He further explained how the intermediate mutational stages between *teosinte* and maize had disappeared, leaving just the original and end plants. He stated, “I believe further that maize, and consequently agriculture in the New World, originated in western Guatemala” (Morley 1947:140).

3rd edition. When Brainerd edited the book he significantly shortened certain sections, the section on the origin of agriculture being one of them. Brainerd reduced it from four pages to less than one. The two different theses of maize origins are stated, with no further explanation. No decision concerning the origin of maize agriculture had been made, and the date was also uncertain, although radiocarbon dates from northern Mexico and New Mexico suggested dates as early as 2500 BC. Thus, unlike Morley, Brainerd left the argument open for interpretation (Morley and Brainerd 1956:128).

4th edition. Although Sharer made many points in the 4th edition clearer and more direct, that was not so with the origin of agriculture. He talked around the issue and did not present a clear theory or evidence for one theory. Rather, he discussed many theories. The best estimate for the change from hunting and gathering to agriculture was between 3300 and 2500 BC. There is little information specifically about the origins of agriculture in the Maya lowlands, but several dates for early examples of agriculture existed. The data available showed that the earliest evidence for settled life came from the Belize coast and dated to around 4200-3300 BC, which predated the highland villages (Morley et al. 1983:48-49). The earliest evidence related specifically to agriculture was the discovery of at least one mano and one metate at the earliest levels at the site of Cuello in Belize, dated to 2000-1250 BC. These food processing artifacts were the earliest recorded in the Maya area at that time (Morley et al. 1983:49).

5th edition. Much of the information concerning the origins of agriculture remained the same. The earliest lowland evidence was still from the Belize coast and dated to 4200-3300 BC (Sharer 1994: 52). One major change was the dating of Cuello. The site no longer was considered an Early Preclassic site. Instead, it is typical Middle Preclassic and dated to about 1000-500 BC (Sharer 1994:52). The earliest evidence of sedentism and of an agriculture-

dependent culture appears all across the lowlands during the Middle Preclassic, in Cuello, and along the Belize coast.

6th edition. Evidence for agriculture is now dated to the Archaic period, with its origins traced to two different areas: the Mesoamerican highlands and the coastal lowlands (Sharer and Traxler 2006: 157). By 3000 BC, maize agriculture was occurring in coastal Chiapas and eastern Mesoamerica, but evidence in the lowlands is scarce. In the village of Chalchuapa in western El Salvador, excavations show maize agriculture occurred by 1600 BC (Sharer and Traxler 2006:162). This firmly places agriculture in the Maya lowlands by the Early Preclassic.

Origins of Ceramic Technology

Determining the origin of ceramics is important in understanding Maya origin narratives because the presence of ceramic technology marks the transition from nomadic to sedentary life. Studies of ceramic vessels and potsherds are also useful in understanding interactions and trade between groups.

1st and 2nd editions. In the first edition, Morley relied on ceramic and architecture evidence to support his theory that the Tikal-Uaxactun area was the birthplace of Maya civilization. The architecture evidence will be discussed below in another section. The earliest ceramic vessels in the Tikal-Uaxactun region are not found anywhere else in the Yucatan Peninsula, but they are similar to earlier, non-Maya ceramics from Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Dating to the Pre-Maya II and III eras, the Mamom and Chicanel ceramics were used as reference for early construction and people.

Mamom phase ceramics had only been found in a few cities at the time Morley published his book. The ceramic vessels were located below and earlier than any stone construction or

stelae and were thus seen as the earliest pottery in the Yucatan Peninsula (Morley 1947:385). Other instances of Mamom-like ceramics occur in the highlands of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Mexico. Modeled figures also were created during the Mamom phase. Morley dated the beginning of pottery making to around 1000 BC (Morley 1947:386).

The following Chicanel ceramic complex appears to coincide with the introduction of the Long Count and writing and was typical of the Pre-Maya III period. No interruption occurs between Mamom and Chicanel ceramics at Uaxactun. The Chicanel phase is related to the earliest stone construction there. More decoration techniques appear on Chicanel ceramics, and these are more widespread in the Yucatan but are more restricted in distribution outside of the lowland area (Morley 1947: 387-389).

3rd edition. In the third edition, like many other sections, Brainerd shortened the ceramic descriptions from four pages to just over one page. He also combined the two pottery complexes into one section that addressed all Formative pottery. The biggest change was the introduction of three new ceramics complexes, Las Charcas, Sacatepequez, and Miraflores (Morley and Brainerd 1956:369). All three are from the highlands of Guatemala. The only two complexes from the lowlands continue to be Mamom and Chicanel. Overall, the Preclassic coverage of ceramics is condensed and simplified by Brainerd.

4th edition. For this edition of the book, the earliest pottery types were believed to be Swasey in northern Belize, and Barra and Ocos ceramics along the Pacific coast, both dating to the Early Preclassic, 2000-3000 BC (Morley et al. 1983: 367). Swasey ceramics were thought to date from 2000-1250 BC, and they constituted a complex, diverse, and sophisticated assemblage (Morley et al. 1983: 49). In the Middle and Late Preclassic and Protoclassic, pottery styles evolved and became more elaborate with more decoration and various forms.

5th edition. In the fifth edition, Sharer again refers to Mamom and Chicanel ceramic complexes. This is similar to the first and second editions by Morley. The descriptive writing style is also similar (Sharer 1994:682). Swasey pottery was no longer considered Early Preclassic, and was removed from the text. Instead, the Middle Preclassic was characterized by two ceramic complexes, Xe and Mamom. Xe pottery is found in the western part of the southern lowlands, and Mamom pottery is found throughout the Yucatan, lowlands, and highlands (680). The Late Preclassic period is dominated by Providencia/Miraflores pottery in the highlands and Chicanel pottery in the lowlands (682). The illustrations of ceramics vessels remained unchanged from the 1983 edition. “The earliest evidence of *inland* pottery-producing settlements does not appear until the subsequent Middle Preclassic” (52). “The Xe colonization can be tentatively associated with Mixe-Zoquean peoples originating in the isthmian area of Chiapas to the southwest....the Swasey (and other, possibly related, early ceramic traditions, such as the Eb Ceramic Complex, found at Tikal in the central Peten) can be tentatively associated with Mayan speakers ultimately deriving from the Maya highlands to the south and southeast” (Sharer 1994:80).

6th edition. For the current edition, pottery located within the Maya lowlands is believed to date later than in other Mesoamerican regions. At the site of Chalchuapa in western El Salvador, excavations recovered potsherds that date to around 1200 BC (Sharer and Traxler 2006:162). The earliest pottery in Mesoamerica is found along the Pacific coast of Chiapas and Guatemala.

Origins of Writing

Morley begins his chapter on writing by quoting H.G. Wells and Edward Gibbon on the importance of writing as the true measure of civilization that separates the civilized from savages (Morley 1947: 259). Writing is one of the primary characteristics that Morley used to define Maya civilization. Hieroglyphics and writing were Morley's specialties, and his theories dominated epigraphic thought for many years.

1st and 2nd editions. Morley makes several claims concerning early Maya writing, including the notion that the system was devised by a single mind, early writing being on media other than stone, and the creation of the system happening between 353 and 235 BC (Morley 1946:46-47). Based on internal evidence, the Long Count system was believed to have started at either 7.0.0.0.0 or 7.6.0.0.0 according to the Maya reckoning. Presumably, all of the evidence for these early dates was recorded on materials other than stone, and have not been preserved. Thus, it was not until the fourth century AD that any dates are recovered from stone monuments at Tikal and Uaxactun.

One of the most influential theories concerned inscriptions, about which Morley stated, "The Maya inscriptions treat primarily of chronology, astronomy—perhaps one might better say astrology—and religious matters. They are in no sense records of personal glorification and self-laudation like the inscriptions of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia" (1946:262). Morley explained that monuments were erected to help correct the difference between the vague solar year and the true solar year. The vague year was 365 days, but the true solar year is 365.25 days long, so eventually the growing season would not match up with the solar calendar based on vague years that lost a fourth of a day per year (Morley 1947:262-263).

3rd edition. It could be based on Morley's extensive coverage of writing, but no factual changes were made to the narrative about the origins of writing between the 2nd and 3rd editions. The only changes made were in abridging and simplifying the concepts.

4th edition. Dated monuments occur in the southern area, along the Pacific coast, and thus it is believed that writing began in this southern area (Morley et al. 1983:66). Despite the rapid growth of centers in Late Preclassic times, no examples of Maya hieroglyphic writing or calendrical notions are present outside the southern (coastal) area (Morley et al. 1983:80). This was a major change from the first edition. Morley was sure that the Maya independently developed all of their civilization, including writing, while Sharer stated that writing developed outside of the Maya lowland region.

5th edition. One main difference between Sharer's view and those of earlier authors is the definition of Maya and the identification of the region where Maya culture developed. Morley firmly stated his opinion that the Maya developed independently, and any writing found outside of the lowland area was a reproduction. Writing was developed in the lowlands by the Maya, and other people copied their language and notation system. However, Sharer took a different stance on the origins of writing: "The most distinctive characteristic of Late Preclassic and Classic Maya civilization was the development of hieroglyphic writing and a distinct sculptural-art style. Writing in Mesoamerica seems to have originated outside the Maya area, however, in the Middle Preclassic period" (Sharer 1994:85). Sharer explained that the Maya did not develop writing on their own but inherited it from other Mesoamerican cultures. "Given the presence of these earlier Mesoamerican writing traditions, it is logical to assume that the knowledge of writing came to the Maya area from the Oaxacan and Gulf coast centers" (Sharer

1994:85). This opinion differs significantly from the claims in the first and second edition, and it is one of the major changes to *The Ancient Maya* narrative.

6th edition. With regards to writing, the changes made in the sixth edition are minimal and mostly consisted of abridging and clarifying the facts in the previous edition.

Origin of Monumental Architecture

“It was inevitable, given the high intelligence and native genius of the ancient Maya, coupled with their strong religious fervor, that they should develop a great religious architecture of their own....Beyond the immediate needs of their domestic economy—corn-planting, pottery-making, and weaving—no other activity consumed so much of their remaining time and energy as did their architecture” (Morley 1947:343).

1st and 2nd editions. Morley used several lines of evidence to trace the origins of the Maya to the Tikal-Uaxactun region. In addition to epigraphy, Morley used monumental architecture to provide additional support for his theory. Although local variations existed in architecture throughout the Maya area, the basic fundamentals of the architecture are the same. And again, Morley cited Tikal and Uaxactun as the origin for universal architecture (Morley 1947:48). The most important characteristic of such architecture is the corbel-arch, used throughout the Maya area. Morley suggests that this design might be based on the common people’s thatched houses that had two sharply sloped sides of the roof.

At Uaxactun, stone buildings did not exist from the Pre-Maya I and II periods, but simple stone structures began to be built during the Pre-Maya III period. It was towards the end of the period that the first major construction occurred with the E-VII-sub pyramid. Many characteristics of this structure are typical Maya, including large stucco masks. However, Morley

states that this structure is of a proto-Maya style, rather than pure Maya, and is a substructure, rather than a proper stone building (Morley 1947:344-345). Morley dated the structure to the second century AD and explained that, in addition, several dated monuments exist from the early Classic period. However, without the use of the corbelled arch, Maya civilization could not be said to have begun, and evidence for corbelled arches in the lowland Maya area comes 150 years later.

3rd edition. Unlike some other sections of Morley's book, the changes made in the architecture section were not based on content, but on clarity. The facts and information remained the same, but Brainerd trimmed the section down and removed much of Morley's over explanation (Morley and Brainerd 1956:310, 315). The images used within the section remained unchanged, and no new content was included by Brainerd. In the section about the origins of the Maya, Brainerd states that the Maya public constructions were all rather small in comparison to the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan and Egyptian pyramids. Rather than their size, it was the skilled workmanship and labor that made the constructions unique (Morley and Brainerd 1956:47-48).

4th edition. The major modification in this edition was inclusion of fresh evidence from Belize. The Early Preclassic village of Cuella was then dated to 2448 +/- 88 BC. At this site there were low house platforms, hearths, and human burials (Morley et al. 1983:49). "The oldest lowland buildings of monumental size date from the Late Preclassic, and compare in size and energy expenditure with the larger Olmec and southern Maya 'pyramids' built in the Middle Preclassic" (Morley et al. 1983:78). Sharer again changed the prior narrative from independent development to diffusion from the Olmec and the southern coast.

5th edition. With this edition, Cuello was thought to date to the Middle Preclassic rather than the Early Preclassic period. “The meager sample of Middle Preclassic architectural remains seems to reflect a simple division between domestic structures and a few, slightly larger public platforms, the latter perhaps used for community festivals or ceremonies” (Sharer 1994:81). Platforms of this nature appear at Altar de Sacrificios and Cuello. An additional Late Preclassic city is introduced: Nakbe. “Nakbe is the first known Middle Preclassic lowland Maya site with evidence of monumental construction” (Sharer 1994:82). Structures there were said to date from 1000-2000 BC. Additional Late Preclassic cities are mentioned, including El Mirador and Cerros. However, there is little factual information about these sites or their development.

6th edition. The sixth edition contains additional information about El Mirador and Nakbe. The development of the Maya civilization is said to have begun during Middle and Late Preclassic times, including large masks and the pyramid complex.

Conclusion

The narrative that Morley presented to the reader consisted of all evidence pointing back to the origin of Maya civilization occurring in the lowland region, especially in the vicinity of Tikal and Uaxactun. He discounted earlier dated monuments as anachronological. With this modification, the earliest evidence for writing, ceramics, and architecture all occur within the small area around Tikal. Any evidence that suggested an alternative location was rejected and criticized. Morley was so sure in presenting the Maya as the first of all higher civilizations in Mesoamerica and the peaceful Greeks of the New World that he became condescending of others and dismissed their theories and strong evidence.

V. *The Maya Narrative*

Michael Douglas Coe was born March 14, 1929, in New York City. Professor and Curator Emeritus at Yale University, whose main concentration has been on the Maya and the Olmec, he is world famous for his research and publications on those groups. In 1955, he married Sophie Dobzhansky. Together, they have five children: Nicholas, Andrea, Sarah, Peter, and Natalie. After graduating from Harvard University with a doctorate in Anthropology in 1959, Coe began as an Assistant Professor at the University of Tennessee from 1958 to 1960. He then accepted a faculty position at Yale University. He has done research on Maya hieroglyphic writing and iconography, the Maya and Olmec civilizations of Mesoamerica, Khmer cultural history, the history of chocolate, and the archaeology of colonial New England (Sehr and Dolentz 2009).

Coe began his Maya series of books in 1966, and he has since had seven additional editions published. When he began the first edition, Coe was an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Yale University and had just begun an extensive project on an Olmec site in Veracruz, Mexico (Coe 1966:2).

The Maya was long presented as a basic reader for the general population and is thus a shorter book, with crisp language, simple details, and extensive illustration. The back cover of the seventh edition explains how *The Maya* is “the best, most readable introduction” and “distills a lifetime’s scholarship for the general reader and student” (Coe 2005: back cover). The book is intended to be used as an introduction to the Maya and is not overly scholarly. A simple example of writing to the general public is the use of illustrations. In the seventh edition, there is an illustration every 1.5 pages, which seems more frequent than scholarly articles or even other

general textbooks, including the sixth edition of *The Ancient Maya*, which has an illustration every 2 pages.

Chronology

The chronology changes between editions, sometimes drastically and others only have minor changes. The first edition has the Formative period running from 1500 BC to AD 150. The Middle Formative lasts from 800 BC to 300 BC.

Origins of Maize Agriculture

1st edition. Coe explained how some scholars theorized that the expansion and development of villages at the beginning of the Formative period was due to the improvement of maize productivity through back-crossing with *teosinte* (Coe 1966:42). The Early Formative people lived in small villages, and most of the evidence concerning these people was taken from the Chiapas coast. Away from the Chiapas coast, little to nothing was known about this Early Formative period (Coe 1966: 46).

The Middle Formative showed a marked increase in population in the Highland and Lowland Maya area, but there appeared to be few cultural changes from the Early Formative, and none of the major characteristics of the Classic Maya had begun yet. There is no writing, little architecture, and art was poorly developed. Thus, the large population increase is the only indicator of change.

A discussion is given concerning various theories for the rise of Maya civilization. These include influence from oceanic travelers, influence from outside the lowland area, and a *sui generis* culture, with no outside influence.

2nd edition. Several major format changes were made between the first and second editions. The first of these was the integration of photographs into the text, rather than having plates at the end of the book. In addition to moving the images, captions were also included in the second edition. There were very few changes to content and facts, and only slight changes to sentence structure and wording. However, there were some additions and changes between the two editions that are worth noting.

Field archaeology had produced changes in perceptions concerning the intensity of agriculture and population density. Field research also pushed the dates earlier for the earliest villages in the lowlands and solidified knowledge concerning the highlands (Coe 1980: foreword).

In addition to the information concerning the Olmec in the prior edition, excavations had provided more information on San Lorenzo. Excavations conducted at that site were started in 1966 by Yale University and lasted until 1969. Excavations showed that sophisticated art of San Lorenzo was established by 1200 BC, but around 900 BC, something caused the demise of San Lorenzo, which opened the way for the later Olmec center at La Venta. The exploration of San Lorenzo extended the beginnings of the Olmec culture back into the Early Formative. A photograph of Monument 52, a were-jaguar deity, from the Early Formative is also included (Coe 1980). Art style characteristics of the San Lorenzo phase were seen in later Olmec and Maya art, which similarities were used to support the Mother culture hypothesis -- the idea that Maya civilization derived from Olmec civilization.

In the second edition, several major developments were included. These were the discoveries of Cuello and San Lorenzo. Cuello, in northern Belize, had Swazey pottery that was placed in the Early Formative, dating between 2000 and 1000 BC. There were organic remains,

including cobs of pop corn and root crops. Architecture beginnings were also seen in plastered platforms. Coe expressed doubt concerning the age of the pottery, explaining how some specialists believe the pottery looks similar to Middle or Late Formative pottery in other areas (Coe 1980: 34).

3rd edition. Between the second and third edition, there were no changes to the main chapters on the Preclassic Maya or the artwork used. The only additional information was contained in the epilogue of the third edition. Coe explains how additional research in archaeology, epigraphy, and iconography has occurred since the publication of the revised edition of *The Maya*, so he has written an epilogue to provide the most up-to-date information. A number of different topics are covered, including the Archaic Period, agricultural systems, epigraphy, iconography, and the Late Formative. More sites are being found with artifacts and structures dating to the Late Formative. Research at Cerros, Lamanai, and El Mirador showed a cultural expansion several centuries before the Classic period, with large temple complexes with stucco masks, similar to later pyramids and temples (Coe 1983:170).

4th edition. The fourth edition showed only minor changes to the text, with integration of information from the epilogue in the third edition. Several paragraphs about theories behind trans-Pacific influence and similarities were added, but very few other changes were made, besides some word changes and clarification. One image was added in the fourth edition, but overall very few changes were made for the fourth edition.

5th edition. The fifth edition had major revisions and additions of information in relation to the Early Formative period and large centers of the Late Preclassic. Along the Chiapas coast, a ceramic assemblage was found that was earlier than Ocos and Cuadros, and it was called the

Barra complex. Barra and subsequent phases showed a level of sophistication and production that is unknown in the Central and Northern Maya areas for this time period (Coe 1993).

Coe again focused on the Olmec mother culture and discussed how Olmec-like villages were being found in the Copan valley. This village later became one of the major centers for the Classic Maya, and these early Olmec roots could have influenced the development of cultures in that valley. Additional excavation at Uaxactun, Nakbe, and El Mirador were revealing large centers with monumental architecture and features that were typical of Classical Maya structures. Features that were traditionally used to designate the Classic Maya from earlier groups were being found at sites dating before the Classic period, causing such criteria to be questioned for validity.

6th edition. Unlike the prior edition, the sixth edition had few changes. About ten sentences concerning the Preclassic Maya were added or changed, and one image was removed. Most of the changes to the text were grammatical in nature, and were clarifying a previous thought. The biggest change to the sixth edition was in relation to site names. Unlike all other editions, the sixth edition spelled site names phonetically and nontraditionally. Examples include Wuaxactun, Ti'kal, and Nak'be (Coe 1999: 82). However, in editions both before and after, the traditional spellings were used, so this was a change that was made and later removed.

7th edition. In the seventh edition, some major changes were made to incorporate findings from continuing excavations and new sites. Coe removed the information about trans-Pacific influence and instead explained reasons for the origins of the Maya coming from the Olmec. The newly discovered site of San Bartolo revealed the earliest Maya painting and provided new insights about the religious and social practices of Late Preclassic times. The

creation myth is included, and the painting shows practices, such as bloodletting, that were continued in later Classic times.

8th edition. The eighth edition continues the narrative that effective farming was developed sometime during the Preclassic period, which continues to date from 1800 BC to AD 250. Coe continues to ascribe to the theory that the adoption of the *nixtamal* process (soaking maize in lime-water before grinding), which increased the nutritional value of corn, could have been more significant in the development of agriculture (Coe 2011:48). The evidence continues to point to the development of Preclassic life beginning outside the lowland area, specifically in the area around Chiapas, with research focused on the Soconusco.

Origins of Ceramics

1st edition. A cenote at Mani in the Yucatan could have ceramics from the Early Formative period, since the layer is underneath pottery typical of the Middle Formative (Coe 1966:46). In the Middle Formative period, the main ceramics are Mamom, with nothing substantial before this period (Coe 1966:49). During the Late Formative, there was a single, widespread ceramic culture, namely Chicanel. Ceramic vessels are found throughout the Central and Northern lowlands and are relatively simplistic in form and decoration (Coe 1966:70).

2nd edition. Early ceramics from Cuello date between 2000-1000 BC. “Swazey ceramics are admittedly a puzzle, since they bear no resemblance to Early Formative ceramics elsewhere in Mesoamerica; in fact, to some specialists they look Middle or even Late Formative” (Coe 1980:34). No other early Formative ceramics were discussed, and Coe skipped directly to the Late Preclassic. Chicanel ceramics were Late Preclassic, and these dominated the Central and

Northern areas, thus showing no additional changes besides the inclusion of Cuello (Coe 1980:61).

3rd edition. Cuello was understood to not date from the Early Preclassic, but was rather a typical Middle Preclassic village. Coe expressed doubt as to how early the ceramics at Cuello dated, and his hesitancy was correct because additional dating showed that the site was Middle Preclassic.

4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th editions. Changes were made to the editions concerning the ceramics outside of the lowland area, but the lowland ceramics are still constituted of Chicanel and Swazey ceramics.

8th edition. A new ceramic horizon has been found in the Maya lowlands at the very lowest levels of the earliest villages. This “Cunil Horizon” dates from the 10th century BC, and has been found at Ciebal, Altar de Sacrificios, and Tikal in the Peten, with additional vessels at Cahal Pech and Cuello in Belize. The Cunil Horizon led directly into the Mamom culture, which dated from 800 to 400 BC, which is earlier than previously dated (Coe 2011:56-57). The Late Preclassic ceramic complex continues to be constituted of Chikanel, which is the same as previous editions, except for the spelling change.

Origins of Writing

1st edition. Unlike the Maya in the central and Northern areas, a culture developed that had writing and monumental architecture. In Veracruz to the west, the Olmec culture was starting, with monumental architecture, sculpture, and the possible beginnings of the Long Count (Coe 1966: 46). The center at La Venta had a developed art style. Coe explained how there are good reasons to “believe that it was the Olmec who devised the elaborate Long Count Calendar,

and the Olmec who invented writing” (Coe 1966: 47). Although it is not necessary to view the Olmec as the mother culture, Coe stated that many cultures, including the Maya, were “ultimately dependent on the Olmec achievement” (Coe 1966:47). He used an analogy with the Old World, explaining how the Maya received influence from the Olmec, “as in ancient Europe barbarian peoples in the west and north eventually had the benefits of the achievements of the contemporaneous bronze age civilizations of the Near East” (Coe 1966: 47).

2nd edition: Although many of the characteristics of Classic Maya were present in the Late Preclassic, two things are missing or rare: monuments with Long Count dates and writing. These occurred in the Izapan region and the Olmec of the Gulf Coast, but few examples in the Maya region exist. Examples include a broken carving in the Tikal acropolis, early Tikal frescoes, and paintings at Loltun cave (Coe 1980:59). The discoveries of Emblem glyphs and personal histories recorded at Piedres Negras helped with the interpretation of the glyphs. Although the writing was still not completely understood, a basic history had been established in certain cities, and Maya stelae were known to be telling of the reign and history of rulers and their conquests and families (Coe 1980: 165-168). “It was the Olmec who devised the elaborate Long Count calendar, and the Olmec who invented writing” (Coe 1980:37).

3rd edition: The changes made in the third edition were minimal because the only changes were in an epilogue that is only several pages long. Additional clarification on certain characteristics of the Maya writing system were included.

4th edition: Although many of the other characteristics of the Classic Maya are present at the end of the Late Preclassic, dated monuments and writing were still missing in the lowlands. These two things are known at Izapan sites in the highlands and Olmec sites, but none exist until the very eve of the Classic period (Coe 1987:65).

5th edition: There was still a lack of evidence for writing and dated monuments. This could be due to a lack of royal or elite tombs found at large Preclassic sites, such as El Mirador and Nakbe. At the very end of the Preclassic, some writing begins to appear celebrating personages (Coe 1993:69). Towards the close of the Terminal Preclassic, additional examples of writing appear, but these examples are small in number.

6th edition: No new examples of early writing had surfaced, so all of the information from the previous edition was retained (Coe 1999:78-79).

7th edition: Again, the information on early writing remained virtually the same, with one addition. San Bartolo was a new site that had early hieroglyphics. On the walls, there are a few glyphic texts, but these are small because “full phonetic writing had not yet been developed by the Maya” (Coe 2005:84). Thus, there are examples of early writing, but these are small and do not show a completely developed writing system, and this lack of writing was still the characteristic that distinguished Preclassic and Classic periods.

8th edition. The narrative on early writing remained virtually the same between the seventh and eighth editions. However, several sentences about San Bartolo were added to the end of the paragraph quoted above. They read,

Excavations in 2005 proved that there were even earlier structures underneath Room I, and revealed a stone block painted with a vertical column of ten glyphs, one of which is recognizable as the sign for *ajaw*, ‘king’; the remaining signs are at present undecipherable, but bear a vague formal resemblance to Isthmian glyphs. Associated radiocarbon dates show that this text is the oldest known writing in the Maya area, and perhaps the oldest anywhere in Mesoamerica. By at least 400 BC, the Maya were a literate people. (Coe 2011:87).

Another major change in narrative is that, when discussing Late Preclassic characteristics, rather than saying, “The list is impressive, but two items are missing or extremely rare: monuments with Long Count dates, and hieroglyphic writing” (Coe 2007:85), Coe revised this statement, so that it now reads, “The list is impressive, but while hieroglyphic writing is sporadically present, Long Count dates are not” (Coe 2011:88). With further excavations, these examples of early writing have surfaced, and constitute the most recent narrative concerning the development of Maya writing.

Origins of Monumental Architecture

1st edition. The Mamom culture consisted of simple villages with no examples of public architecture. However, Middle Formative architecture may exist, but it is too costly to investigate (Coe 1966:50). The Late Formative architecture at Tikal and Uaxactun showed features of latter Classic architecture and “By the Proto-Classic of the second and third centuries AD we are on the threshold of Classic Maya civilization. Temples arranged around plazas, construction with limestone and plaster, apron mouldings and frontal stairways on pyramids, tomb building, and frescoes with naturalistic subjects – all had already taken shape by the end of the Late Formative” (Coe 1966:72).

2nd edition. There had not been additional finds concerning the Formative period from the previous edition, so the text remained virtually the same. Although many of the characteristics of Classic Maya were present in the Late Preclassic, two things were missing or rare: monuments with Long Count dates and writing (Coe 1980:59).

3rd edition. The changes made in the third edition were all contained in the epilogue, and there were several paragraphs about the new discoveries of sites and monumental architecture.

The Late Formative sites of Cerros and Lamanai showed a remarkable resemblance to Classic architecture, including temple-pyramids and huge platform masks. However, the most important discovery was at El Mirador, which “has turned out to be the oldest Maya capital city, far in advance of Tikal, which it dwarfs by its size and lessens by its antiquity” (Coe 1984: 170). Further speaking about El Mirador, Coe stated, “this suggests that there was a flowering of culture in the southern lowlands just prior to the beginning of the Christian era, several centuries before the so-called Classic” (Coe 1984:170).

4th edition. The changes made in the fourth edition were minimal in relation to the discussion on monumental architecture. Coe moved the information about Cerros, Lamanai, and El Mirador from an epilogue to the body of his text. However, the text remained unchanged, as well as Coe’s stance on the beginning of Maya civilization. Although large cities and many other Classic Maya characteristics existed several centuries before the opening of the Classic era, both writing and monuments with Long Count dates were still missing in the lowlands.

5th edition. The earliest examples of monumental architecture occur at Uaxactun, Tikal, and El Mirador. The site Nakbe was also discovered in between editions, and is included. Coe stated, “The largest buildings at Nakbe were erected at the beginning of the Late Preclassic (c. 300 BC) over Middle Preclassic platforms” (Coe 1993: 67). Thus, examples of monumental architecture occurred over 500 years before the beginning of the Classic era, showing a long and complex development many years before the early narratives were stating.

6th edition. The excavations and information gathered between the fifth and sixth editions continued to support the prior narrative, so no changes were made.

7th edition. Again, no changes were made in regard to the Preclassic architecture and construction.

8th edition. The architecture of the Preclassic period continues to be better understood and included in the Maya narrative. Coe explains, in relation to Mamom and Middle Preclassic architecture,

Mamom...at one time was also interpreted as a simple village culture, since until recently there was no real examples of public Mamom architecture on the scale of La Venta, for instance...the recent discoveries by Richard Hansen at the northern Peten site of Nakbe have drastically changed our minds about Mamom temple architecture. At first no more than a large Middle Preclassic village, by 750 BC Nakbe had begun to look like a city, with buildings and platforms as high as 59 ft (18 m) covering up the old village structures. While these lack the spectacular mask-panels that were to be a hallmark of this and other cities in the Late Preclassic, the Nakbe temples testify that the lowland Maya had begun to emerge at even this early date from simple peasant life to a more complex society. (Coe 2011:58)

These temples are the only new Preclassic architecture that is discussed in the eighth edition. Further excavations continue to push the origin of the Maya into an earlier time, and this is another example.

Other Changes

In all of the editions, Coe tried to make the language more precise. Words and phrases were revised or deleted based on lack of clarity or repetitious language. Some word changes reflected the changing field of Maya archaeology, such as the shift from Formative to Preclassic in the fourth edition. Most of the changes between editions were in small revisions to language

and wording, with new facts and data being added in small pieces over time or in a complete revision of the book.

Certain sections remained virtually the same through the seven editions. Between the first and seventh editions, the information about the calendar had only minor changes in wording in two sentences, and two additional paragraphs added in the 5th edition about which group could have created the calendar system. Overall, there was only an addition of two paragraphs out of 4.5 pages over a forty year period. This lack of change could be a result of the long intellectual knowledge of the Maya calendar system, so no new information concerning the mechanics of the system was being discovered.

Another area that remained relatively unchanged was the artwork and illustrations used. The first edition contained 19 illustrations and photographs located in the text and plates. In the following three editions, a total of three additional images were added, and none of the images were removed. The fifth and seventh editions had more additions and deletions, averaging about 3 deletions and 5 additions. However, of the 24 images included in the seventh edition, thirteen were also used in the first edition. It is interesting to note that over half of the seventh edition images had been used for forty years, with only minor changes in size of image and orientation on the page.

VI. Prehistoric Mesoamerica

Richard E. W. Adams has a long career in archaeology, and he specializes in Latin American archaeology, particularly, Mayan civilization. Adams excavated many Mayan Lowland sites in Mesoamerica. To study its origin, Adams has been to the Rio Bec region in the central Yucatan peninsula several times from 1969 to 1973. He founded the Rio Bec Ecological Project during one of his field seasons. Adams believes that the Rio Bec region is the place of origin of Maya civilization. He has acted as a Project Director, collecting data on soils, climatic patterns, and ancient farming patterns (Buswell 2008).

Adams is a professor of archaeology at the University of Texas, San Antonio. The narrative that he tells is different and more integrated than those of the other authors considered here. Adams's books cover all of Mesoamerica and present an overarching picture of the entire region.

1st edition

Adams explained the shift from village life to more complex towns as a combination of factors, but he privileged population growth as a principal cause. "Efficiency of interaction, distribution, and conflict resolution demand a new social apparatus. The new way elaborates on the old structure, but, nonetheless, quantitative changes do bring about qualitative changes" (Adams 1977:134). For his theory concerning the origins of the state, he uses population pressure as the main catalyst. He explained,

To date, the most appealing explanation combines the important factors mentioned above and one crucial matter not discussed. Robert Carneiro has developed a theory of the origin of the state that revolves around the growth of

population and the intense use of scarce resources. He argues that as population grows, certain resources such as prime farm land and water assume an overwhelming importance and must be managed and enlarged. (Adams 1977:122)

Adams used Carneiro's theory as the basis for his theory, and Adams furthers Carneiro's explanation:

Thus we may see the rise of Maya civilization as due to population growth, and as leading to increased need for water supplies at a crucial point of the year, and further, to competition among Maya communities over water and land. Ideas from other parts of Mesoamerica, and especially from the epi-Olmec cultures were absorbed and transformed. Once developed, the social, military, and agricultural systems had imperatives and consequences of their own. One such imperative would be exotic wealth to symbolically bolster the status of the leadership class. Religion would also bolster its social status, and the more complex the liturgy and philosophical underpinnings, the more the need for specialists. In other words, the transition from village culture to civilization is not just a step, but a quantum jump. (Adams 1977:123)

The social organization of the state was a product of the population creating pressure and competition for resources, such as water. The ritual, religious, and social stratification were simply products of the other systems that developed, including the military and agricultural practices.

At the end of the chapter on Maya beginnings, Adams includes an addendum that addresses the discovery of Cuello in northern Belize. Adams was excited about the discovery of Cuello, and he believed the early radiocarbon dates that were associated with it. "The most

important and most spectacular is the date near the bottom of the pit 2000 BC, corrected back to 2600 BC....Therefore, the Maya area has now produced pottery nearly as early as any in Mesoamerica, and more sophisticated for its age than any yet found. Further, Hammond's discoveries have added a thousand years to the previously known Preclassic occupation of the Maya lowlands" (Adams 1977:135).

Chronology. The Preclassic period dates from 1500 BC to AD 300. This phase includes the "development of most of the early civilizations and is based on cultural elaboration that took place during these 1800 years. The Olmec seem to have been the earliest florescence and appear near the beginning of the period. By AD 300 most of the features defining Mesoamerica and distinguishing it from North and Central American cultural areas were in existence" (Adams 1977:13). The Protoclassic dates from AD 1 to AD 300, which makes it contemporary with the Preclassic. "In certain selected regions of Mesoamerica precocious developments lead to what is called the Protoclassic. In most ways these cultures are distinguished from the following Classic cultures in only three ways: (1) in their artistic styles, obviously transitional between late Preclassic and Classic cultures; (2) in their appearance earlier than most Classic cultures; and (3) in their contemporaneity with late Preclassic cultures. Generally, the concept of the Protoclassic has only been used in the Maya area, but it might also be useful in areas such as the Valley of Mexico" (Adams 1977:13).

Agriculture. The earliest farming villages date to around 1000 BC. "Two sites, Altar de Sacrificios and Seibal, have produced pottery and other evidence to indicate that here are some of the first agricultural colonists....However, none are as early as the Xe farming villages on the Pasion" (Adams 1977:117).

Writing. “The earliest known Maya stela is presently Stela 29 at Tikal” dating to AD 292 (Adams 1977: 160). During the Preclassic period, Maya writing and mathematics were developed and used to create a calendric system. “However, there are few early examples of hieroglyphics, numbers, and temporal periods left to us” (Adams 1997:120).

Ceramics. There are two early types of ceramics: Xe and Mamom. The Mamom period is from 550-300 BC and these are contemporaneous with the beginnings of formal architecture and ritual buildings (Adams 1977:118).

The transformation of the Maya culture came in a two-part sequence. “These two acts are in the guise of two archaeological phases. The earliest (late Preclassic) is the period lasting from 300 BC to AD 150” (Adams 1977:119). During this period, Chicanel pottery was used and the beginnings of architecture appeared, as seen at Uaxactun and Tikal. “During this period, Maya writing and the mathematical system were developed and applied to problems of time and astronomy to produce a formal set of calendars....However, there are few early examples of hieroglyphs, numbers, and temporal periods left to us” (Adams 1977:20).

Monumental Architecture. Monumental architecture had an early development, although it was later than in other parts of Mesoamerica. “The earliest known Maya stela is presently Stela 29 at Tikal” dating to AD 292 (Adams 1977: 160). Earlier than this monument, during the late Preclassic, the Maya were constructing monumental architecture. “Around the time of Christ some clearly different matters have transpired. Many centers are erecting much more elaborate architecture. Yaxuna in the far north Yucatan has a pyramid dating from this phase which is over 60 feet high” (Adams 1977:119).

2nd edition

The second edition shows a greater emphasis on the Maya than the previous edition. They are moved to the first few chapters, and a more general historical development is given in regard to the Olmec and other cultures and their relation to the Maya.

Chronology. The Formative period dates from 1500 BC to AD 150. The chronology is virtually the same as in the first edition, with some small changes. The Formative period ends in AD 150, rather than AD 300. Adams also mentions that there might be some earlier cultures than the Olmec, along the Pacific coast. “In certain selected regions of Mesoamerica precocious developments led to what have been called Protoclassic cultures. However, it is clear that this second florescence is really a part of the Classic period. Because a textbook is no place to be innovative in basic chronology, I have shortened the Formative period, and in effect, the earliest Classic cultures overlap between Formative and Classic periods” (Adams 1991:24). So, rather than making two distinct periods, Adams has just put the Protoclassic with the Classic, and started the Classic period earlier.

Agriculture. “The Early Formative is remarkably weak in the Maya lowlands....The earliest certain agricultural villages date to the Middle Formative, about 1000 BC. This is the Swasey phase, also of northern Belize. It was formerly thought to be considerably older, but a new series of radiocarbon dates indicated otherwise. Swasey has been defined on the basis of excavations at the small site of Cuello. Carbonized plant remains in the deepest levels there have been proven to include maize” (Adams 1991:125).

Writing. Adams still asserted that the writing system had its origins in the Late Formative period, and included several examples. He stated, “An increasing number of finds now indicate the nature of writing in this early period” (Adams 1991:132). These finds include an incised

glyph on a Chicanel vessel found at Colha, and a whole text that includes a personal name found at Kichpanha.

Ceramics. The Late Formative period appears to have one ceramic phase, Chicanel. These ceramics date from 250 BC to AD 250, with strong continuity between them and earlier Mamom pottery (Adams 1991: 128-129).

Monumental Architecture. Monumental architecture had an early development, although it was later than in other parts of Mesoamerica. “The earliest known Maya stela is presently Stela 29 at Tikal” dating to AD 292 (Adams 1977: 160). Earlier than this monument, during the late Preclassic, the Maya were constructing monumental architecture. “El Mirador and the preliminary work there has changed a great many of our ideas about the nature of the Maya Late Formative and its transformation. The work of Dahlin, Matheny, Demarest, and Sharer all indicates that by AD 1, and perhaps earlier, El Mirador was an immense center, calling on thousands of people and controlled by an elite which could plan the construction of an incredibly large and complex system” (Adams 1991:130).

3rd Edition

“In this major revision of his classic text on the ancient civilizations of Mesoamerica, Richard E. W. Adams adds new information available from archeological fieldwork in the region from the 1990s through 2004” (Adams 2005: back cover). However, most of the writing and facts are the same as the previous edition, at least in regard to the Preclassic Maya. El Mirador is still the preeminent Late Preclassic site, and it still dates from the same time frame. The two examples listed above for the earliest examples of Maya writing are still the only examples that

Adams listed, so it does not appear that any additional excavations or information was available concerning the Preclassic Maya.

VII. Global Narrative Part II: 1941-2010

1941-1960: Changing Theories and Methods

The 1940s through the 1960s presented a growing field of information and theories concerning the Maya and their predecessors. Olmec architecture and artifacts began to surface, with the term “Olmec” first being used to identify a Preclassic culture in 1927. Olmec origins and their place at the beginning of the sequence of Mesoamerican cultures presented a point of discussion and difference. Strong advocates of the Maya tried to discount the early dates for the Olmec and push them to the Postclassic period, but radiocarbon dates were produced, and pushed the Olmec into the first and second millennia BC (Bernal 1980).

In some ways, these early years could be considered one of the high points for Mayanists, with the excavations of Carnegie Institute continuing and the publication of Sylvanus Morley’s *The Ancient Maya*. However, this also was a time when Mayanists were getting negative press from Clyde Kluckhohn and Walter Taylor for focusing on the elite and extravagant monuments rather than on the common people, thereby creating a skewed and unfair representation of the ancient Maya. This criticism was probably one of the first times that the focus on monumental architecture and hieroglyphics was questioned since Stephens had written about those topics a hundred years before.

By the end of these years, the terminology for the early era had changed from “Archaic” to “Formative,” and the characteristics of this developmental stage were being constructed. This change could be the result of the publication of several articles by Gordon R. Willey and Philip Phillips (2001) that outlined specific developmental and social characteristics for different developmental phases of a culture. However, several problems arose in relation to this

terminology because the characteristics were intended to define a stage that was independent of an absolute chronology, but boundaries had been set previously between the Preclassic and Classic stages based on specific dates on Maya monuments. The traditional start of the Classic period had been marked with the earliest Long Count date on a stela, but with more excavation monuments with earlier Long Count date continued to appear, which constantly changed the date of the start of the Classic period. The changing terminology did seem to reflect a change in attitudes concerning the early Maya, or an acknowledgement of the impact that these early people had on later Classic civilization.

Unlike earlier times, diffusion was no longer an acceptable theory by the 1960s (Von Hagen 1960). There seemed to be an overall feeling that the Maya were a completely unique group who developed unlike any other and were not related to the other groups. Victor Von Hagen explained that they were an American group, but nothing more could be inferred about the pre-Maya group.

To infer more about these 'before-people' would involve fiction.... But the cultural sequence is missing, as is the archaeological evidence that shows the slow evolution of the primitive into the sophisticated.... Suddenly, it seems, archaeology reveals mounds and small pyramids; there is a developed pottery and much other evidence that the Maya type of social organization is formed. (Von Hagen 1960:28)

Von Hagen then jumped right into the Classic Maya, with no other transition, which is typical of this time where little was said about anything that was not Classical. Although little was said overall, some of the changes produced the foundation that was needed for later changes.

1961-1990: New Archaeology and the Preclassic Maya

The development of New Archaeology beginning in the 1960s created a number of new areas of focus and changed the direction and emphasis of the narratives concerning the Maya origins. As “processual” archaeologists strove to become more scientific in their excavations and developed new theories, the focus of Mesoamerican archaeology also shifted. Archaeologists returned to theories held forty to sixty years earlier, and they rejected those of their immediate predecessors. These changes also led to a shifting narrative and a different understanding of the Preclassic Maya.

New Archaeologists helped change some of the perceptions concerning the Maya. Internal social change was emphasized, which produced an equal level of intelligence and civilization between the Old and New World populations (Trigger 2006). Preclassic peoples were no longer viewed as simple, primitive villagers but were thought to have possessed many of the characteristics of the Classic stage. Large cities began to be seen as urban centers, hieroglyphic inscriptions were seen as historical texts, and the Preclassic had a complex political structure that laid the foundation for later kings.

A new method that was developed during the 1950s and 1960s was settlement pattern studies. These studies led to information being gathered on more of the population, and not just the elite, which was a criticism expressed prior to that time (Sabloff 2004). Settlement pattern studies allowed the general population to be studied in ways that previously had been missing from Maya excavations and narratives. It included the elite and the farmers both being important for understanding certain aspects of Maya culture. Analyses of settlement patterns of a group could be used to explain religious beliefs, political and social organization, and other areas of life.

Another change was the theory of Mesoamerica as a “macroregional unit” (Trigger 2006:438). The area did not consist of small cultures that developed independent of the others; rather, the close relationships between regions caused a ripple effect where changes in one region resulted in changes to the other areas. These changes could be seen in ceramics, elite items, art motifs, and the iconography that were used. There was an acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of the cultures over most of the continent within each time period, and over a long developmental sequence through time. It also reflects the changing attitude surrounding the Maya and their cultural development. Previously, it was expressed that the Maya had developed independently of all other groups and were unique in their development sequence. However, the Maya were now seen as related to and influenced by other cultures, making them less pristine and mystical.

In 1983, Joyce Marcus wrote an article outlining the directions that Maya archaeology had previously taken, and some of the possible directions available for the future. She discussed reasons why the narrative concerning the Maya remained mysterious for so long, and why certain Mayanists strove to maintain that mystery. “...Lowland Maya archaeologists often display two of the principal qualities they attribute to the Maya: (1) they are conservative in the face of archaeological change, and (2) their progress on major issues has often been, like the Maya view time, cyclic rather than linear” (Marcus 1983:454). Marcus explained some of the views were previously held and that certain archaeologists had fought changes in archaeological evidence which resulted in narratives remaining unchanged, despite evidence suggesting otherwise.

A main point she stressed is the cyclical nature of Maya archaeology and the theories that are employed for certain topics. She selected three examples to illustrate her point: cities versus

vacant ceremonial centers, slash-and-burn or milpa agriculture versus intensive agriculture, and the interpretation of hieroglyphic inscriptions as historical texts versus only astronomical observations (Marcus 1983:454-456). Marcus believed this “cyclical cycle” is ironic because, rather than furthering the field of Mayan archaeology using data from other academic fields, archaeologists have specialized and made Mayan archaeology a closed field. It could also be influenced by the concept that progress is going against one’s predecessors and swinging the pendulum from one extreme to the other.

Some of the most significant changes to the narrative came as a result of excavations at new sites, and the artifacts and architecture recovered at them. Sites such as El Mirador, Cerros, Cuello, and Lamanai changed the way Classic and Preclassic peoples were viewed. An example of how the excavations at new sites changed the narrative can be seen with Cerros. This Late Preclassic center was said to be one of the first sites to experience the development of kingship, and it exhibited characteristics employed by later Classic cities. Large stucco masks with single glyphs appeared on temples, which would later become part of the Classic temples architecture, as well as bloodletting and ritual sacrifice (Schele and Freidel 1990). Cerros and other new sites provided additional information and understanding concerning the Preclassic Maya.

Towards the end of this timeframe, certain narratives began to change to include kings and the development of the Classic Maya culture during the Middle and Late Preclassic. Linda Schele and David Freidel (1990) explained how in the Middle Preclassic monumental architecture and carved stone monuments began to appear, sometimes with images of rulers. In the Late Preclassic, kingdoms rose with erected stelae with carved images of rulers and accompanying texts. This was the period that set the foundation for the development of public

construction and temples, and the principles for later kings were established (Schele and Freidel 1990).

Processual and Postprocessual archaeologists introduced new questions, theories, and methods into the excavation, analysis, and interpretation of the Preclassic Maya in the latter half of the twentieth century. These changes have created the foundation for current studies and narratives, and they have created a number of different sources of available data that can enhance understanding if the sources are integrated and used to address different questions.

1991-2009: Recent Changes and Developments

Sharer (1992) discussed several different theories that were commonly held concerning the origins of the Maya. He mentions how the three most common (the indigenous lowland Maya, Maya as highland transplants, and the *cultura madre*, or Olmec) are unilinear and insufficient to explain the complex development of the Maya. When the article was written, many of the large Preclassic sites had only recently begun to be excavated, but the additions to the archaeological record were so significant that these cities were the focus of most narratives. Sharer expressed a need to combine theories over space and time in order to produce an adequate explanation of Maya culture and its origins.

Marcus (2003) provided a compilation of research done in the preceding decade. She made such compilations and analysis on three different occasions; in 1983, 1995, and 2003. Some concerns addressed in the 1983 article had already been addressed, and now some of her 2003 statements will be discussed. In 1995, Marcus wrote an article entitled “Where is Lowland Maya Archaeology Headed?,” and she answered that question eight years later in this article.

There are three main directions that Mayanists took: traditional anthropology, hard-science, and postmodern anthropology (Marcus 2003). This split shows the different schools of thought: the processual, the cultural-ecological, and the postprocessual. The main concern for some archaeologists had become whether the archaeological record was capable of answering the questions that archaeologists wanted answered, which is a concern that archaeologists still have today.

According to Sabloff, many of the changes that occurred in Maya studies during the second half of the twentieth century resulted from the criticisms made by Kluckhohn and Taylor. He identifies five ways that Maya archaeology changed:

1. New emphasis on non-elite;
2. Research that moves beyond the description of the elite;
3. Concern with method and theory;
4. Connecting the ancient Maya to broad comparative studies of preindustrial civilizations;
5. Relating the ancient Maya to the historic and modern Maya and drawing understandings from historic writing and current studies. (Sabloff 2004:15)

The changes that occurred created a more holistic understanding of the Maya, and led Sabloff (2004) to suggest that the traditional Preclassic-Classical-Postclassic terminology has become an obstacle for further understanding and cohesion and should be dissolved to help increase further understanding.

Research at Cuvello drastically changed the narrative concerning the Preclassic, although there were also concerns and problems that arose in relation to the initial radiocarbon dates that were produced from the site. Norman Hammond (1991) started his excavation at the site in 1975, and although problems with radiocarbon dates were later discovered, the data gathered were influential in understanding the Middle Preclassic development. The ceramics, artifacts, and

architecture showed a developed society, with the foundation characteristics for later Late Preclassic and Classic characteristics and culture.

In recent years, further excavations and analyses of both elite and pedestrian artifacts and construction has led to a more holistic and positive narratives. Although the Maya are no longer considered peaceful, harmonious, artistic, and isolated, there seems to be a greater level of intelligence and intentionality accorded these people. It is also understood that the characteristics that define the Classic stage began in the Late Preclassic and that Maya civilization developed earlier than previously thought. The Maya may be considered brutish, bloody, with controlling kings, but there is also an underlying message of great intellectual and artistic achievement amidst the warfare.

VIII. Comparison of Narratives

The chronological divisions employed in this section differ from those in the global narrative. The ones here are arbitrary and used as a device for comparison rather than as concrete divisions based on major changes in narratives. Some time periods may have continuations of changes from prior periods.

A large difference can be seen between the narratives of Morley and Coe in relation to Olmec culture. Coe states, “Whether or not one thinks of the Olmec as the ‘mother culture’ of Mesoamerica, the fact is that many other civilizations, including the Maya, were ultimately dependent on the Olmec achievement” (Coe 1966:47). Morley, on the other hand, was firmly against the Olmec and explained that he disagreed with any statements of the Olmec being the mother culture or being the location of the origin of the Maya culture (Morley 1947:42).

1840-1909

John Lloyd Stephens established the foundations of Mesoamerican archaeology with his book in 1841. There are several narratives that had their beginnings in this early phase, including the metaphors of the Maya being the Greeks of the New World and the focus on hieroglyphic texts and monumental architecture. Stephens did not discuss certain topics, including the origin date for the Maya, ceramic vessels and other artifacts, or agriculture. He did state that the large sites he was observing were large cities, that the hieroglyphic texts contained information about individuals, and that a cultural and genetic relationship existed between the ancient Maya and the original inhabitants of the Americas at the time of the Conquest.

Augustus Le Plongeon presented a very different set of narratives concerning the Maya than Stephens and other early writers. Rather than the Maya being the Greeks of the New World,

Le Plongeon wrote that the Maya were the cradle of civilization and carried their knowledge from Mesoamerica to the Old World, and thus were the actual foundation of later Greek society. Few specific facts were given in Le Plongeon's writings, but his enthusiasm and acknowledgement of the intellect of the ancient Maya influenced the study of Maya archaeology.

One important thing to recognize is that many of the early narratives did not specifically address the Preclassic Maya. Few early publications discuss the origins of the Maya beyond making hypothetical claims about transoceanic travelers or comments on similarities between Old and New World civilizations and characteristics. Herbert Spinden was one of the first to specifically mention a Pre-Maya people and to give specific information concerning to them.

1910-1929

The only narratives that were presented during this time were by Herbert Spinden. However, comparisons will be made between Spinden's views and earlier narratives. Early works of Morley will also be considered. One of the biggest controversies in this early period revolved around the calendar correlation. Spinden created his own correlation which calculated the Maya Long Count dates as being 260 years (13 Katuns) earlier than proposed by the Goodman-Martinez-Thompson correlation. Depending on which correlation an archaeologist adhered to, the dates concerning and the antiquity of the Maya would change to reflect the chosen correlation.

Spinden's focus was on the Mexican highlands. Spinden considered the Maya as being the Greeks and the Aztecs being the Romans of the new world. He did not provide information on the Preclassic period, except in discussing the "Archaic" cultures. This horizon is similar to the later distinction called the "Early Preclassic" and has similar features of agriculture, ceramic

vessels, and clay figurines. The beginning of architecture and cities dates to the early period, around AD 160 to 358. The third edition showed a significant change in chronology, in that the Protohistoric, or Preclassic, period began in 613 BC, which was the supposed date of the creation of the Long Count calendar. Very little was known about the hieroglyphic writing system beyond elements of the Long Count and calendar. Spinden placed the beginning of writing before 98 BC, which was the earliest Long Count date recovered at that time.

1930-1949

There were several important writers during the 1930s and 1940s, including Gann, Thompson, and Morley. Gann and Thompson argued that the Maya had developed in a fertile country and that they had time to develop science and the fine arts, similar to the ancient Greeks. However, unlike Morley and Thompson, Gann believed that the Maya were influenced by others throughout history. Classical monumental architecture and hieroglyphic writing continued to be the focus of most writing, although ceramic vessels and agriculture were also mentioned but received very little coverage. Gann's chronology for the Preclassic is included in his "Old Empire," which he dated from 150 BC to AD 600. No cultural developments were discussed prior to this time.

In the first two editions of his book, Morley presents a compelling narrative concerning the Preclassic Maya. He continues the tradition of referring to the Maya as the Greeks of the New World, and he is one of the major proponents for this metaphor. Maya civilization was restricted to a single culture that had both hieroglyphic writing and corbelled roof-vault architecture. Maya civilization developed in the lowland region, near the sites of Tikal and Uaxactun. Morley also discounted any early Long Count dates that were found outside the Maya

area, and thus the Olmec culture could not be earlier than the Maya or have influenced them in any way.

According to Morley, the Pre-Maya period lasted from 3000 BC to AD 317. Agriculture and ceramic vessels were both introduced during the Pre-Maya II period, from 1000 BC to 353 BC. Morley stated that maize agriculture started in western Guatemala, although he does not give a time frame. The ceramic complexes that Morley discussed include the Mamom and Chicanel, both of which are found at Uaxactun with no interruptions, with the beginning of pottery production beginning around 1000 BC. The origins of monumental architectures were traced back to Tikal and Uaxactun, with simple stone structures appearing in the Pre-Maya III phase. These structures date from around the second century BC, but the corbelled vault is missing, and would not appear for another 150 years, which is when true Maya civilization began for Morley. According to Morley, the writing system developed between 353 and 235 BC, but stone monuments with Long Count dates were not fashioned until the fourth century AD. In his view, these monuments recorded astronomical and chronological events of the Maya, rather than historic or personal events of individuals.

1950-1969

Many books were published during this period, including the 3rd edition of *The Ancient Maya*, Von Hagen's *The World of the Ancient Maya*, and the first edition of *The Maya* by Coe. This period witnessed many changes in the basic understanding of the Maya and included the introduction of new sites and technology.

Following the invention of radiocarbon dating in the 1940s, the dates of the Maya began to be more concrete and also introduced new issues. The correlation of the Gregorian calendar

and Maya Long Count became more accurate and solid. The narratives in the 1950s began to include this technology, which affected the specific dates the most. Most narratives, including that by Von Hagen, still did not discuss the Preclassic in any great detail, and they discounted early people as the developers of Maya civilization as being unrealistic.

Brainerd's revision of *The Ancient Maya* was completed and published in 1956, and had many changes. The metaphorical language was still present but was greatly toned down, and many comparisons were removed. Interestingly, Brainerd notes that the use of dated monuments as the distinction between Classic and earlier people is an arbitrary measure, although that same characteristic is still used today. The definition of the Maya changed from only applied to the civilization with corbelled roof-combs and writing, to include centralized government, craft specialization, and formalized religion. Brainerd found a discussion of agriculture less important than Morley had, which also is true of the discussion of ceramic technology. Mamom and Chicanel were still the only ceramic complexes found in the lowlands. The narrative on writing and monumental architecture also remained virtually unchanged and focused on Tikal and Uaxactun.

Another basic reader was introduced in 1966 by Michael Coe, and a slightly different narrative began to be told. There was an avoidance of metaphorical language, with little to no reference to the Greeks. Agriculture was mentioned, but not to any great length. The two types of ceramics continued to be the Mamom and Chicanel, all the way to the eighth edition, for all of Coe's narratives and these other authors. The development of writing specifically related to the Maya is not discussed, but rather Coe proposes the Olmec as the inventors of the writing system, and the Maya being dependent on the Olmec for writing. Tikal and Uaxactun were the only sites

that had monumental architecture, starting the Late Preclassic, and had some features of Classic architecture.

1970-1989

A variety of books were published during this period, including the first edition of *Prehistoric Mesoamerica* by Richard Adams, *The Maya* editions two through four, and *The Ancient Maya*, fourth edition, which was the introduction of Robert Sharer as an editor and author. This variety of authors and narratives created competing narratives, especially on certain issues, like the dating of Cuello and others.

One of the major changes that came in 1976 was the excavation of the site at Cuello and early dates for Maya Preclassic settlement. Most books that were published during these years included some reference to Cuello and would explain the artifacts and unusually early dates there. However, the level of belief or skepticism differed between the different authors. For example, Adams used the radiocarbon dates enthusiastically and was prepared to move forward with a new narrative.

Adam's *Prehistoric Mesoamerica* was the first book published during this period, in 1977. Adams does not mention agriculture to any great extent, but he stated that the earliest farming villages date to around 1000 BC. The same coverage is also true for writing, with the only information being that the calendar and writing developed during the Preclassic, although there are few examples of this. Ceramic technology was still comprised of Mamom and Chicanel. There is also little said about monumental architecture beyond mentioning the earliest dated stone monument, Stela 29 at Tikal, dating to AD 292.

During the 1980s, Michael Coe published three different editions of *The Maya*. Overall, there were few changes between these editions. In the second edition, Coe mentioned Cuello, but expressed doubt about the early dates, which is a very different narrative than the one told by Adams. These dates were later found to be incorrect, and Coe's hesitancy was shown to be warranted. The third edition included the introduction of several Preclassic sites, including Cerros and Lamanai, which showed similarities to Classic architecture. El Mirador had also been discovered, which opened up a whole new line of exploration, being both larger and older than other lowland sites. Thus, the changes to Coe's narratives in the second, third, and fourth editions were the introduction of new sites, the most important of which were Cuello and El Mirador.

The narrative that had the greatest number of changes was *The Ancient Maya*, which saw the introduction of a new editor. Sharer estimated the beginning of agriculture at around 3000 BC, with Cuello possessing the earliest food processing artifacts from between 2000 and 1250 BC. Swasey ceramics, from Cuello, were believed to be the earliest ceramics in the lowlands, although that later changed. Cuello was also the only new information in relation to architecture, with a small mention of similarities between Olmec and early Maya structures.

One major change that Sharer introduced is the inclusion of the Olmec, and he even stated that writing probably developed along the Pacific coast, which is outside the core Maya area. This is very different from Morley, who would not even discuss any objects that suggested an origin outside the Maya area, let alone admitting that the writing might have developed somewhere else.

1990-2011

The last period had a number of different publications and editions, including Adam's *Prehistoric Mesoamerica*, second and third editions; Coe's *The Maya*, fifth through eighth editions; and *The Ancient Maya*, fifth and sixth editions. Of the changes to narratives, the most extensive changes have come from Coe's eighth edition of *The Maya*, which includes new finds in ceramics, architecture, and writing.

The second edition of Adams' *Prehistoric Mesoamerica* was published in 1991. Cuello continued to be showcased as the earliest example of agriculture in the lowland area, although it now dated to a much later date, with the earliest agricultural villages still dating to around 1000 BC. Additional examples were included of Late Preclassic writing, including an incised glyph on a Chicanel vessel and a text found on a carved bone from Kichpanha. El Mirador was introduced as an important site, and by AD 1 it was an immense center. Although the third edition was published fourteen years later, the narrative on the Preclassic remained virtually the same.

The Ancient Maya underwent revisions two additional revisions with editions five and six being published during this period. Similar to other narratives during this time, the only information that changed about the origin of agriculture related to Cuello, which was now considered a typical Middle Preclassic site. The sixth edition did show some changes in that the evidence now suggested that the origin of agriculture was in the Archaic period, although most evidence was scattered. But by the Early Preclassic, agriculture was definitely in the lowlands. Ceramic horizons continue to be composed of Mamom and Chicanel.

The sections pertaining to writing and monumental architecture are relatively limited as well. There were virtually no changes concerning the origin of writing between the fourth, fifth, and sixth editions. The fifth edition does include the introduction of Nakbe, El Mirador, and

Cerros, and the sixth edition contains additional information about these sites and the idea that the development of the Classic Maya began during Middle and Late Preclassic times.

The Maya by Coe went through several revisions during this period, including the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth editions. There were no changes in relation to lowland ceramics in the fifth, sixth, and seventh editions. The changes to writing were also minimal in most editions, but the discovery of San Bartolo changed the narrative because it had some of early hieroglyphic writing. The narrative on monumental architecture remained very similar, with the inclusion of additional information on El Mirador, Nakbe, and Cerros as it became available from excavations.

Coe explains the early beliefs of Maya archaeologists, stating “The origins of the Classic Maya civilization must be sought in the Preclassic. Since the early part of this century, Maya archaeologists – a jingoistic lot – have taken a totally Mayacentric view of Mesoamerican culture history: it was ‘their’ beloved Maya who first domesticated corn, who invented the Mesoamerican calendar, who gave the light of civilization to everyone else” (Coe 1992:60).

Coe’s eighth edition of *The Maya* introduces a number of new ideas, and is the most current narrative considered here. In the general narrative concerning the Maya, Coe stated, “It is clear that the birth of Maya civilization lies not in the Classic but during the Preclassic period, above all in the Mirador Basin of northern Guatemala, where the builders of gigantic ancient cities erected the world’s largest pyramid as early as 200 BC” (Coe 2011:back cover).

For many years, the only ceramic horizons that were present in the lowlands during the Preclassic period were the Mamom and Chicanel, with Swasey being introduced for a short time. Morley discussed these in the first edition of *The Ancient Maya*, and it was not until Coe’s eighth edition that a new horizon was discussed in a popular narrative. The Cunil horizon is earlier than

anything previously discussed, and it is found in several locations, including Cuello, Tikal, Ciebal, and others.

Monumental architecture is also earlier than previously thought, with Mamom horizon architecture at Nakbe. This shows that by 750 BC Nakbe looked like a city, which is almost as early as Adam's dates for the earliest agricultural villages. Maya writing has also been verified at San Bartolo to be centuries earlier than previously thought. An additional text was located in 2005 that, with radiocarbon dates, is the earliest writing in the Maya area, and possibly in Mesoamerica. This narrative is significantly different from the prior narratives that Coe, Sharer, and Adams had told, but this is remarkably similar to the narratives of Morley and Thompson.

IX. Why the Changes Occurred

It is interesting to note the cyclical process that Preclassic Maya narratives have taken. The early narratives concerning the Preclassic Maya focused on descriptions of expeditions and making comparisons with the Old World civilizations. Many of the conclusions of early explorers and archaeologists were correct, later rejected, and then subsequently accepted. Most recently, the narratives that were written by Morley and Thompson that had previously been rejected are starting to be proven, such as the discovery of writing at San Bartolo radiocarbon-dated as possibly the earliest writing in Mesoamerica.

Brainerd made changes to Morley's book based on the discoveries of the wall paintings at Bonampak and the Palenque tomb (Morley and Brainerd 1956:v). The Bonampak murals were explained as giving more information about the social structure, including social stratification, trade, conquest, and human sacrifice during Classic times. Although these discoveries were mostly focused on the Classic Maya, the perceptions and analogy to the peaceful Greeks began to fade away because the Maya were no longer viewed as a peaceful people.

Pikal's tomb under the temple of Inscriptions at Palenque helped provide support for burial customs and provided some of the most elaborate Maya artifacts and architecture discovered up to that time (Morley and Brainerd 1956:180). According to the Preface of the 4th edition of *The Ancient Maya*, Sharer made changes based on additional discoveries, and the need to replace outdated information and wordy explanations. *The Ancient Maya* had major changes with the editorship of Robert Sharer. Some of these changes are based on discredited ideas, but most is changes in organization and writing style. Reasons for these changes were a confirmed calendar correlation, C-14 dating, excavations and new discoveries, epigraphy, and changes in the field of archaeology, as discussed below.

The Preclassic Maya were not a topic of scholarly contemplation or investigation for many years. Early scholars of the Maya, including Stephens, Morley, Le Plongeon, and Thompson did not address the Preclassic, and Thompson even refuted any claims that any population existed in the lowlands before the Classic Maya.

One of the biggest changes in narratives related to dates. Several things were influential in the changes antiquity of the Maya. These include the calendar correlation and C-14 dating, which will be discussed next. The calendar correlation influenced the perception of the Maya because it changes when the Maya developed and the timing of their basic history. The Spinden correlation placed the calendar correlation 260 years earlier than the GMT correlation.

C-14 dating: This produced changes in the dating because now there was independent evidence for the different correlation schemes. This was a major contention in early years because two different correlations existed, the GMT and the Spinden. C-14 dating made correlation and seriation more accurate. There are some problems with C-14 dating, as seen in the case at Cuello, where the original dates were much earlier than they should have been presumably because of contaminated carbon samples. Because of its supposed antiquity, Cuello was a remarkable and unique discovery until additional dates proved it to be otherwise.

Art: This includes finding the murals at Bonampak and other sites that depicted the Maya in new ways and also changed theories concerning them. Brainerd explained that human sacrifice was believed to have been an exclusively Postclassic practice, but the murals at Bonampak showed that sacrifices occurred in large amounts during the Classic times as well (Morley and Brainerd 1956:393). The introduction of the Bonampak murals greatly affected the perceptions of the Maya and changed their portrayal from the peaceful and artistic “Greeks” of the New World, to more warlike and normal people.

Continuing excavations: One of the things that changed the perceptions and narratives on the Preclassic Maya the most was the continued excavation of sites, both recently discovered and those with long archaeological histories.

Cuello was a site that changed the narrative drastically during the 1970s and 1980s. However, after its early dating was discredited and later dates were established, the importance of the site faded. Certain authors, including Adams and Sharer accepted the early dates and used them in their narratives, while Coe and others were more hesitant about the authenticity of the dates. While this site was discounted in the 1980s and 1990s, in Coe's eighth edition, Cuello is again mentioned

New sites such as El Mirador, Nakbe, and excavations at other sites showed that the Maya built cities earlier than previously believed and that Maya civilization is older than previously thought. San Bartolo has immensely changed the narrative concerning the origin of writing. Discoveries there show that Maya writing is also centuries earlier than previously thought.

Epigraphy: Major changes and advancements were made in Maya archaeology when the Maya glyphs were finally understood. Writing on stelae and other monuments was translated, and these native testimonies of ancient Maya beliefs and practices further changed the perceptions of the Maya as being a peaceful people. Similar to the calendar correlation, epigraphy provides information and narratives concerning the Maya written by the Maya. The ability to read and understand the writings of the Maya has greatly increased our knowledge of their history and has provided a more personal voice.

Another influence on the narratives concerning the Maya relates to the internal changes in the field of archaeology. Brainerd changed the definition of "Maya civilization" in the third

edition of *The Ancient Maya* to include civilizations with corbelled roof-combs and writing, with the addition of centralized government, craft specialization, and formalized religion. This reflects the shifts that were happening in the discipline towards processual archaeology, which focused on large processes and mechanisms in cultures.

Although Sharon MacDonald originally applied this description to museum studies, her remarks explains some reasons for the major shifts I have documented for Maya narratives in this thesis. She stated,

The shift in perspective evident in *The New Museology* was part of a broader development in many cultural and social disciplines that gathered pace during the 1980s. It entailed particular attention to questions of representation – that is, to how meanings come to be inscribed and by whom, and how some come to be regarded as ‘right’ or taken as given. Academic disciplines and the knowledge they produced were also subject to this “representational critique.” Rather than seeing them as engaged in a value-free discovery of ever-better knowledge, there was a move toward regarding knowledge, and its pursuit, realization, and deployment, as inherently political. What was researched, how and why, and, just as significantly, what was ignored or taken for granted and not questioned, came to be seen as matters to be interrogated and answered with reference not only to justifications internal to disciplines but also to wider social and political concerns. In particular, the ways in which differences, and especially inequalities, of ethnicity, sexuality and class, could be reproduced by disciplines – perhaps through exclusions from “the canon,” “the norm,” “the objective,” or “the notable” – came under the spotlight. This mattered, it was argued, not least

because such representations fed back into the world beyond the academy, supporting particular regimes of power, most usually the status quo. (MacDonald 2006:3)

This “representational critique” was present in archaeology as well, and many of the trends of the 1970s and 1980s are explained as part of this critique. By recognizing that the trends of the field influence the narratives, biases are recognized and better understood.

Early narratives of Maya beginnings have influenced how the Preclassic Maya are currently understood and the way in which they are perceived. Many of the early narratives that regarded the Maya as peaceful and artistic, similar to the Greeks, are still widely popular in the general population, despite recent and more data-rich narratives that have been published. By identifying historical changes to archaeological narratives of Maya origins, one can recognize interpretive biases and, consequently, be more objective in archaeological interpretation.

Appendix A: Book Chronology

1840-1909

- 1841 Stephens, John Lloyd *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*
 1886 LePlongeon, Augustus *Sacred Mysteries among the Mayas and Quiches*

1910-1919

- 1917 Spinden, Herber J. *Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America*

1920-1929

- 1922 Spinden, Herber J. *Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America* 2nd ed.
 1928 Spinden, Herber J. *Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America* 3rd ed.

1930-1939

- 1931 Gann, Thomas, and Eric Thompson *The History of the Maya*
 1935 Mitchell, J. Leslie *Conquest of the Maya*
 1939 Gann, Thomas *Glories of the Maya*

1940-1949

- 1946 Morley, Sylvanus G. *The Ancient Maya*
 1947 Morley, Sylvanus G. *The Ancient Maya* 2nd ed.

1950-1959

- 1954 Brainerd, George W. *The Maya Civilization*
 1956 Morley, Sylvanus G. and George W. Brainerd *The Ancient Maya* 3rd ed.

1960-1969

- 1960 Von Hagen, Victor W. *World of the Maya*
 1966 Coe, Michael D. *The Maya*

1970-1979

- 1977 Adams, Richard E.W. *Prehistoric Mesoamerica*

1980-1989

- 1980 Coe, Michael D. *The Maya* 2nd ed.
 1983 Morley, Sylvanus G., George W. Brainerd, and Robert J. Sharer *The Ancient Maya* 4th ed.
 1984 Coe, Michael D. *The Maya* 3rd ed.
 1987 Coe, Michael D. *The Maya* 4th ed.

1990-1999

- 1990 Schele, Linda, and David Freidel *A Forest of Kings*
 1991 Adams, Richard E.W. *Prehistoric Mesoamerica* 2nd ed.
 1993 Coe, Michael D. *The Maya* 5th ed.

1994 Sharer, Robert J. *The Ancient Maya* 5th ed.

1999 Coe, Michael D. *The Maya* 6th ed.

2000-2009

2005 Coe, Michael D. *The Maya* 7th ed.

2005 Adams, Richard E.W. *Prehistoric Mesoamerica* 3rd ed.

2006 Sharer, Robert J. and Loa P. Traxler *The Ancient Maya* 6th ed.

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