

Maya Lifeway

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The following is based on a series of narrative exercises that attempted to incorporate research about the Maya people in order to create a plausible "lifeway" of a typical Maya individual. The characters depicted in this story are not based on real, historical characters. Instead, this work attempts to infer what life might have been like in the Classic Maya time period, developing a fiction that attempts to accurately replicate the life of a Mayan person. As research on the Maya develops, there will undoubtedly be portions of the narrative that no longer agrees with the latest research. The footnotes constitutes the research aspect of this work. They are intended to justify story elements within the context of research, acting as a sort of behind the scene element. As a result, it is highly suggested that the reader ignores the footnotes on their first reading.

Sachinaq Okox ²

a young potter who had been drafted for the defense of his home city, Calakmul. Sachinaq Okox has a secondary name, Ixkuch Nimajik. He is captured and enslaved following a disastrous defeat. His names translate into Lost Mushroom and Fleeing Salamander respectively.

Jalink

one of the captives at the slave encampment. He is a close friend to Sachinaq Okox. His name translates into He Who Falls When Drunk.

K'ix ak

the younger brother to Sachinaq Okox, drafted alongside his brother. His name translates into Chicken with Messed Up Feathers.

Masked men

a group of mysterious shamans from the invading city-state of Tikal.

Ajan To'bal

an outstanding commander from Tikal's army. His name translates into Carved Shield.

²All names here were developed using a K'iche' dictionary (Christenson). Due to limited records regarding the names of commoners, I have taken some liberty in developing the names, with the exception of Ajan To'bal, which is a fairly typical nobleman name.

Chapter 1: The Aftermath

The distant cries of howler monkeys and quetzal calls inhabited the living jungle.³ A young man, Sachinaq Okox, stepped over a moss covered root. From the corner of his eye, Sachinaq Okox spotted a green snake silthering underneath a fallen tree branch. The snake did not concern him; it was not venomous.⁴ Even under the shadows of the rainforest's towering canopy, Sachinaq Okox found himself perspiring. But it was not the environment that distressed him.⁵ He was not alone; a band of his fellow countrymen walked besides him. Warriors dressed in jaguar skin and armed with obsidian blades and atlatsls, spearthrowers, were positioned at the four corners of the group.⁶The warriors were from Tikal, and they were conquerors.⁷

Looking up, Sachinaq Okox could see patches of the blue sky through the canopy. The green leaves of the rainforest were matched by the green moss growing on the branches and roots of the trees. Even a stone boulder was not spared from the green growth.⁸ Jungle plants populated the earth below, but the ground remained open enough for men to cross without tools. In a younger forest, Sachinaq Okox would have found himself hacking away the growth with a stone axe.⁹

A warrior signaled for the group to stop. Sachinaq Okox looked over the shoulder of a countryman and saw the quarry.¹⁰ He could see enslaved captives toiling away under the sun, building the facilities that would house the slave labor required to build Tikal's war monuments.

Chapter 2: Home

It had been over a moon cycle since his capture. Sachinaq Okox sat against the wattle and daub wall of his new home.¹¹ A hearth sat in the center of the oval room.¹² A makeshift altar stood against a wall while hammocks hung down on the remaining sides

³Howler monkeys and quetzals are some of the most vocal animals within the Central American rainforests. This allows for them to be included without forcing a physical appearance.

⁴Sachinaq Okox's calm reaction to the snake signals both his knowledge of the fauna and the Mayan adaptation to their environment.

⁵The Mayan are acclimatized to the rainforest, thus they would likely not be sweating unless under a strenuous or stressful environment.

⁶Jaguar skins, obsidian weapons, and atlatsls are common equipment worn by Mayan warriors.

⁷Tikal and Calakmul were two rival Mayan city-states. Around 700 AD, Tikal won a decisive victory against Calakmul, likely taking many slaves in the process. I use this as a backdrop for the setting (Coe 2011).

⁸Moss can often be found growing on many surfaces, including trees and rocks. I used a mixture of videos from class and pictures online to build my model of the rainforest.

⁹Depending on the age of the rainforest, the jungle floor may or may not be accessible. Older forests with high canopies block out enough sun light so that forest growth becomes limited, allowing for a relatively open walk space. Younger forests often have large amount of jungle plants that prohibit movement without path clearing. Under those scenarios, tools would be used to clear a trail large enough for one man to pass (Moyes Sept. 27 2013).

¹⁰Stone monuments such as stelae are often built after a victorious campaign. Slave labor taken from the defeated opponents was likely used to gather the resources and eventually build these monuments (Coe 2011).

¹¹Mayan houses are often built using a wattle and daub construction technique. Loose sticks of wood would be covered in clay to form walls (Wauchope 1938).

¹²Hearths are often at the center of a Mayan house for both practical and religious purposes (Vogt 1976).

of the room.¹³ There were little other furnishing. Across from him sat a fellow slave, Jalinik.¹⁴

"They make us build these houses," said Jalinik, "but they did not have the foresight to let us appease the Earth Lord."¹⁵ Then Jalinik chuckled. "When the Earth Lord finds that there has been no tribute, he will move the ground beneath us." Jalinik held his hands in the air and vibrated them before dropping them to the ground.¹⁶ "Like that. Then all of these houses will be gone."¹⁷

"When my father built his first house, he was too stubborn to listen to the advice of others," said Sachinaq Okox. "He insisted on building his first house only a short distance away from a crossroads."¹⁸ Sachinaq Okox grinned. "The first night we were sleeping in the house, a scorpion fell from the ceiling into his hammock. My mother was very startled and insisted that it was a bad omen, but he did not listen to her. My father was very tak; he was very stubborn."¹⁹ Jalinik drank from a gourd and then offered it to Sachinaq Okox. "If only we had alcohol to drink instead."²⁰ I would love some balché," remarked Jalinik.²¹

"Then you would be too merry to stand up in the morning," responded Sachinaq Okox. "But only after I fall in the evening," joked Jalinik.²² They laughed.

"A hurricane came only half a moon cycle from when the house was built," continued Sachinaq Okox.²³ "The whole house was wrecked. That time, my father listened."

"The hurricane must have been from the Wind Lord,"²⁴ commented Jalinik. "He often travels on the crossroads."²⁵

"When my brothers and sisters were born, my father had built a new house," said

¹³Altars would provide both cultural and spiritual comfort; enough so that it can be reasonable that slaves may attempt to construct one with their limited resources (Vogt 1976).

¹⁴Jalinik translates to "He Who Falls When Drunk" in K'iche' (Christenson).

¹⁵Earth deities are believed to inhabit the natural world. The Mayan acknowledge and respect these spirits through rituals (Vogt 1976).

¹⁶The construction of Mayan houses involves many rituals. One of the most important ritual is the appeasement of the spirits that inhabit the land. The Maya believe that they need to offer a fair exchange in return for using the land space. If the ritual is not fulfilled, it may be swallowed up by the earth I interpret the "swallowing" of a house as an earthquake (Vogt 1976).

¹⁷Although superstitious, it is not unreasonable for individuals to joke about religion. Jalinik's humor is not an attack on the house rituals, but rather, it is intended as dark humor to mirror their current situation.

¹⁸Christenson mentions that the Maya are suspicious of crossroads as they believe that the four directions invite spirits and invisible forces. I reasoned that although the Maya were superstitious on the whole, nuances in human nature may lead to individuals attempting to defy certain superstitions (Christenson 2003).

¹⁹Tak loosely translates to stubborn, crazy, or mad. Its meaning is given from the context taken in the conversation (Christenson).

²⁰Gourds are commonly used by the Maya as drinking vessels (Grandia 2004).

²¹Balché is an alcoholic drink fermented from corn (Grandia 2004).

²²The Maya often have multiple names. Here, Jalinik's name is implied to have come from his frequent alcohol consumption (Christenson 2003).

²³To avoid western connotations and to preserve a Mayan perspective, I avoided using western terms for time cycles. While I could have used time cycles from the Mayan calendar, the terminology there might confuse the reader. So I settled with moon cycles as a compromise.

²⁴I use the term "Wind Lord" and "Earth Lord" to generalize the idea of earth deities. The Maya believe in many deities so I use the generic terms to capture the general idea without having to describe a particular deity.

²⁵I intentionally let Jalinik speak about the "Wind Lord" in an attempt to prevent his character from seeming agnostic, based on his previous comments regarding the "Earth Lord," which may have misled readers.

Sachinaq Okox.²⁶ "I loved that house. The plastered walls were painted red, and my mother had a flower garden outside. There was an altar in a separate building. My father built it carefully because of what had happened to his first house."²⁷

"Your father must have been a wise man." "He was very wise. He kept the obsidian on the rafters because my brother and I were always trying to get our hands on them."²⁸

"What did you remember best about that house? Recalling a memory, Sachinaq Okox grinned before responding. "During a harvest celebration,²⁹ I caught my little brother eating one of the tamales at the altar. I started screaming for everyone to come. I thought he was going to get into a lot of trouble. My father ran over, but he just started laughing when he saw my brother. Everyone was laughing. My brother was very young at the time, he didn't understand what was going on."³⁰

Sachinaq Okox sat, grinning for a while. He sighed. "I miss my brother." "It is a shame that he died during the battle," commented Jalinik. "He was a good man."

They sat in silence for the rest of the evening, waiting for sleep before the next day's labor.

Chapter 3: Shaping

Dawn had passed by quickly. Sachinaq Okox and Jalinik stood side by side in a workshop with orange clay in their hands. The orange clay rope was piled in a coil.³¹ Sachinaq Okox began smoothing the clay with his hands, the material merging together into single vessel.³² The pot was small. If Sachinaq Okox had been crafting a larger pot, an entire day's labor may have been justified.³³ Today, he was an instructor, not an apprentice.

"This is the easy part," he motioned to Jalinik. "The hard part is when we must heat the clay in the furnace."³⁴ Since their capture by the Tikal warband, the slaves have been forced to produce basic living materials. Sachinaq Okox, who was an apprentice potter, now found himself teaching the craft to his fellow prisoners.³⁵ The lack of women at the camp had led to a shortage of pottery, amongst other things.³⁶ Jalinik's own pot was

²⁶Since Mayan houses were often built from wood and thatched with palm leaves, houses likely have a limited use cycle, resulting in the construction or reconstruction of houses over time (Moyes Oct. 4 2013).

²⁷Depending on their wealth level, Mayan homes may include a flower garden, multiple buildings, or painted walls (Moyes Oct. 4 2013).

²⁸Archaeologists uncovered a Mayan site at Cerén where obsidian pieces were left on top of the rafters. It has been speculated that it may have been done to keep out of the reach of children (Moyes Oct. 4 2013 and Coe 2011).

²⁹As an agricultural society, the Maya had special days corresponding to cycles of farming. I use the term "harvest celebration" to generalize this notion here.

³⁰The tamale story was inspired by my own personal experiences. During a ceremony, I was reported to have bit the rear end of a roasted duck left on the altar. A similar experience happening to a Maya seems reasonable enough to incorporate.

³¹The construction of pots begins with ropes of clay being piled into a coil (Moyes Sept. 20 2013).

³²After being piled into the appropriate shape, the potter will smooth out the coil (Moyes Sept. 20 2013).

³³Depending on the size of the pot, an entire day's worth of labor may be warranted to build a pot (Grandia 2004).

³⁴The riskiest phase of Mayan pottery is during the heating. The heat must be controlled at the appropriate temperature (Rice 2009).

³⁵Here, I used the setting to allow for a teaching session in order to help the readers ease into the basics of Mayan pottery.

³⁶Pottery has been speculated to be done jointly by both men and women. Since the slaves were taken

coming into form. "So this must be what it's like for the Shaper and Framer when they made men," remarked Jalinik.³⁷ "This is not that difficult."

"Not yet," replied Sachinaq Okox. "Put your pot into the furnace, and watch the fire." Jalinik placed his pot into the furnace. The fire began beating against the clay, hardening it. A few moments later, the heat crackled. Then the pot cracked.³⁸ "No, what happened?" cried a surprised Jalinik. "My pot, it broke!"

"I told you to watch the flames," responded Sachinaq Okox, as he placed his own pot into the furnace. Immediately, he began working the flames, keeping the temperature steady. "Do not be discouraged. It did take the gods many tries to make men after all."³⁹ In the distance, he could see the beginnings of the war monuments coming into form, as slave laborers moved great blocks of stone into place. Artisans were shaping the stone. He had been told that upon their completion, they would be released. As the sun rose to its full glory, Sachinaq Okox could feel the perspiration around his head. He watched the monuments, the new calendar of his days.

Chapter 4: The Cave

Sachinaq Okox approached the thatched roof house on the raised dirt platform.⁴⁰ Climbing up the steps, he smelled the aroma of a stew being cooked. Glancing over, Sachinaq Okox saw the chili plants in the garden. The flowers on the chili plants were in full bloom. When he was last here, there had been bright red chili fruits dangling from the branches of the plants.⁴¹ He had been gone for over a tun, an entire cycle of seasons.⁴²

A woman, his sister, appeared at the doorway carrying a basket. She gasped. Laying down the basket, she ran over to Sachinaq Okox. "Ixxkuch Nimajik!" she cried out.⁴³ It had been a while since he had been called by his family name.⁴⁴ The name, Ixxkuch Nimajik, felt foreign to him, almost silly in a way. "The gods have brought you back to us!"

His sister began yelling. Within a moment, Sachinaq Okox found himself surrounded by his sisters and mother. A man appeared, his hands covered with bits of clay. "My son, it is good to see you again," said the man, as he embraced Sachinaq Okox. "But tell me, where is your brother?" The smiles disappeared, and the laughter ceased. Sachinaq

from a battle, the slave population for this particular encampment would be predominantly male. A shortage of pottery seems possible due to the lack of refined goods available at a newly built residence (the slave encampment) and the lack of female potters. This may also force men to do what would traditionally be considered woman's work (Rice 2009).

³⁷The origin story is an ideal topic for conversation as it seems to be a topic that would be shared across Mayan populations. Here, the story is useful as a metaphor for the pottery crafting (Christenson 2003).

³⁸Pots may be destroyed during the heating process should the temperature be too high.

³⁹This references the attempts by the gods to create people as told in the Popoh Vuh (Christenson 2003).

⁴⁰Mayan homes are often built on raised ground or platforms to prevent water from coming in (Moyes Oct. 4 2013).

⁴¹Chili plants were cultivated by the Mayan for food substance (Moyes Sept. 20 2013).

⁴²A cycle of 360 days on the Mayan calendar (Coe 2011).

⁴³Ixxkuch Nimajik translates to Fleeing Salamander (Christenson).

⁴⁴A Maya individual may have multiple names, with certain names being kept reserved for people of close relation (Moyes Sept. 20 2013). This is because the Maya believed that giving away your true name would put you into a disadvantaged position. The Popoh Vuh contains many scenes where characters attempt to hide their names or reveal the names of their enemies (Christenson 2003).

Okox recalled the day of the battle.

Shouts echoed through the forest as Sachinaq Okox ran. His beating heart pounded against his ribcage. The enemy had won a decisive victory, crushing the bulk of Calakmul's forces. The victors had begun killing and capturing stranglers. Sachinaq Okox and his brother, K'ix ak', found themselves fleeing from the disastrous battle.⁴⁵

For a brief moment, Sachinaq Okox's heart stopped. Before him was the maw of a stone beast embedded into the side of the earth.⁴⁶ A small stream of water poured out of the beast's jaw. K'ix ak' grabbed his shoulder. "What do we do now?" he asked while panting. Sachinaq Okox pointed towards the cave. "No, we will anger the earth spirits," said K'ix ak'. "We are not shamans."⁴⁷ "There is no choice," urged Sachinaq Okox. The shriek of a man echoed through the jungle. "The spirits will understand."

They ran into the maw of the stone beast.⁴⁸ The two brothers hid in a dim nook of the cavern. They did not dare venture any further into the cave. "I miss mother's cooking," commented K'ix ak', as he sat against the gray cavern wall. "We'll be home soon," responded Sachinaq Okox, who sat opposite to K'ix ak'. "Then she'll prepare a great feast for our return." "We should bring back some iguana meat," remarked K'ix ak'. "Iguana? You never did know what's good," chuckled Sachinaq Okox.⁴⁹ "We should hunt for a gibbon while we're here."⁵⁰

"Do you think everyone back home is safe?" asked K'ix ak'. "Yes," answered Sachinaq Okox. But his answer felt empty to himself. How could he know? The battle had gone so poorly. "We'll grab an iguana on the way back. Iguana isn't so bad."

They slept. An orange glow radiated from the mouth of the cave. Voices echoed. Sachinaq Okox awoke and hid behind a column as the orange glow grew. A smoky haze invaded the chamber. Sachinaq Okox was bombarded by the scent of pine and ashes. Men wearing monestrous masks emerged, some carrying pine torches while others carried pots.⁵¹ He could hear the soft cries of a captive. Sachinaq Okox hid as they walked passed him. He counted seven masked men and their captive.

Looking around, Sachinaq Okox realized his brother was absent. He became worried. Did the masked men take K'ix ak'? Sachinaq Okox lurked behind the masked men as they moved deeper into the cave, following the orange glow of the pine torches.

They entered a large chamber. The white walls of the cavern were darkened by the black smoke from Copal incense and burning pine torches.⁵² Sachinaq Okox had never been so far into a cave. The formations of the wall resembled the parts of an animal. From the ceiling, stalactites pointed down, like the sharp teeth of a predator. Within the smoke, the white walls looked like the rib cage of a large animal. The earthen cavity was

⁴⁵K'ix ak' translates to Chicken With Messed Up Feathers (Christenson).

⁴⁶The Maya regarded caves as stone beasts, often as giant turtles or crocodiles (Mautner 2005).

⁴⁷As caves are considered sacred sites, ritual knowledge from shamans would probably be considered necessary when traversing through caves (Prufer 2005).

⁴⁸There are speculations that caves may have been used as war refuges (Moyes and Brady 2012). However, there are little evidence that suggests such a use was common, likely because caves were used primarily by Mayan elites for ritualistic practices. K'ix ak's reaction is intended to demonstrate the reluctance of entering a cave.

⁴⁹Small game including iguanas were often hunted and eaten by the Maya (Grandia 2004).

⁵⁰Gibbon meat are considered a delicacy for the Maya (Grandia 2004).

⁵¹As they did not have candles or lanterns, the Maya used pine torches as their primary means of illumination. Pine torches produce a bright light and heavy amounts of smoke (Brady and Polly 2008).

⁵²I was able to observe the burning of Copal incense. The scent is very difficult to describe, but the incense produces a very distinct black smoke when burned.

the belly of a beast.⁵³

"Lords of Xibalba," beckoned a masked man, whose mask resembled a crocodile with oversized eyes.⁵⁴ "We bring offerings."⁵⁵ A pair of masked men carried two pots into the chamber. The masked men placed their pine torches into the pots.⁵⁶

"We bear witness to the legitimation of Ajan To'bal,⁵⁷ descendent from Teotihuacan,"⁵⁸ cried the man with the mask of a crocodile with oversized eyes. "He who has captured his enemies in battle and brought victory to the land of the Tikal.⁵⁹ Truly, he is worthy of his bloodline, to be a lord of his people!"⁶⁰

A man with the mask of a laughing jaguar stepped forth. He carried a stone hammer in one hand. "I, Ajan To'bal, make this offering," declared the man. He smashed apart a piece from each of the two pots.⁶¹

The captive had cotton cloth pulled through his ears.⁶² He was binded. Two masked men grabbed the captive, forcing his mouth open. The man with the mask of a crocodile with oversized eyes then stuffed a mixture of ground flora into his mouth.⁶³ The man with the mask of a laughing jaguar produced an obsidian blade, with which he used to puncture the tongue of the captive. Pushed forth, blood from the captive's mouth dripped on the cavern floor. It was then that Sachinaq Okox recognized the captive. He was a leader of men in the army, a notable warrior who was said to hold the favor of the commander of Calakmul's forces. The captive began sobbing, his voice was barely intelligible. He began thrashing around, shouting and begging. "Do not lead me to the underworld," the captive begged. "Do not lead me to the underworld!" the captive shouted.

Then a shadow fell over Sachinaq Okox; one of the masked man had discovered him. Sachinaq Okox froze, but the masked man did not act. Looking for an escape, Sachinaq Okox hurled himself down a dark tunnel, falling deeper into the cave until he could no longer see where he came from. They did not follow him. Sachinaq Okox stumbled in the darkness. Cursing to himself, he sat up. His foot gripped the cavern floor as he

⁵³The description of the cave was inspired by my own experience from visiting two caves in California. While geographically separated, cave formations should have a fair degree of resemblance.

⁵⁴The Lords of Xibalba are considered the rulers of the Maya Underworld. Each lord were depicted as demon-like creatures who held domain over a particular ailment. E.g. the Pus Lord (Christenson 2003).

⁵⁵The Maya underworld is depicted to be filled with animals with large, nocturnal eyes. I use the mask here to denote the symbolic meaning of the ritual and its association with the Maya underworld (Christenson 2003).

⁵⁶Pots could be used in ceremonies to carry items such as pine torches, freeing the hands of the ritualists (Moyes 2008).

⁵⁷Ajan To'bal translates to Carved Shield (Christenson).

⁵⁸Teotihuacan was a very powerful, militaristic city-state. Even after its destruction, many rulers often claim lineage from Teotihuacan for the purposes of ruling legitimacy (Coe 2011).

⁵⁹Warriors who captured their enemies in battle were highly regarded. Maya warfare emphasized taking captives (Coe 2011).

⁶⁰Shamans were politically motivated, occasionally performing rituals that legitimize rulers or people of high ranking positions (Prufer 2005).

⁶¹Cave ritual offerings were often mundane household items such as pots. These items would have been worn with use and deliberately broken (Brady and Polly 2008).

⁶²Captives were often depicted with cloth pulled through their ears, along with a notable loss in composure. The basic notion is that captives have lost control to the victor, including their ability to withhold their own emotions (Houston 2001).

⁶³During cave rituals, the Maya often used hallucinogens on both themselves and captives. Here, I interpret the hallucinogens as the leaves of the datura plant, which is known to have caused both hallucinations and delirium (Bliss 2001). Datura would have been a plausible candidate for hallucinogens used during this time period.

felt with his hands. He could see nothing. For what seemed like an eternity, Sachinaq Okox crawled on his hands and knees until he gave up. There was no point; he was lost. Exhausted, he laid against the cavern wall until sleep overcame him. The sound of footsteps awoke him. Sachinaq Okox listened carefully and crawled towards the direction of the sound until he pressed himself against the cavern wall. He wanted to yell, but thoughts of the masked men held him back. The footsteps became faint, and Sachinaq Okox became desperate. "K'ix ak'!" he yelled. He waited for a response. "Help me! I am lost in the cave!" Again, he waited for a response. He listened for the footsteps but heard nothing.⁶⁴

Frustrated, he began clawing at the air and ground. "K'ix ak'!" Sachinaq Okox screamed. He laid in the black silence, shivering from the cold perspiration on his skin. The sound of water drops made him aware of his parched throat. He crawled along the floor until he came across water. He drank.⁶⁵

"Spirits of the earth, forgive me," he whispered. "I have nothing to offer for this sacred water." With his hand in the water, he felt a soft current. He crawled along the stream of the water, letting the flow guide him. Water was leading out of the cave he remembered.⁶⁶ His hands crept along the floor, feeling the passage before him. He moved on his belly because he could not see. Reinvigorated, he crawled and crawled until he reached a pool of water. The flow stopped.

He laid on the cavern floor. Fatigue overcame him. Sachinaq Okox awoke in the jungle. K'ix ak' sat beside him, along with another survivor of the Calakmul warband. "K'ix ak'," Sachinaq Okox said hoarsely. "Where were you?" "I was hunting gibnut, when the masked men appeared," explained K'ix ak'. "I dared not alarm them." "When you did not return, I came back with some help," he gestured to the other survivor. "We found you passed out on the cavern floor." K'ix ak' grinned. "You are a lost mushroom afterward."

At that moment, an obsidian blade ripped through K'ix ak'. Warriors wearing jaguar skin appeared. Sachinaq Okox felt the harsh grip of a warrior on his hair as he was laid claim to by a Tikal warrior.⁶⁷ Defeated, he did not resist. He could only watch his brother's body bleeding out before him.

Sachinaq Okox remained silent after recalling his brother's death. His mother was crying while one of his sisters attempted to comfort her. The silence was finally broken when his father spoke. "What happened after?" he asked.

"I was taken to a work camp, where they kept their prisoners of war," responded Sachinaq Okox. Then he said bitterly, "I built monuments celebrating K'ix ak's death. When the monuments were completed, they released us."⁶⁸

⁶⁴During cave rituals, the Maya often used hallucinogens on both themselves and captives. Here, I interpret the hallucinogens as the leaves of the datura plant, which is known to have caused both hallucinations and delirium (Bliss 2001). Datura would have been a plausible candidate for hallucinogens used during this time period.

⁶⁵Caves often have water in them. The Maya associated water in cave as being sacred (Freidel 1993 and Molesky-Poz 2009).

⁶⁶Being lost in the darkzone of the cave can be harrowing. Water flow is one method which one could potentially use to find a way out.

⁶⁷When capturing an enemy, warriors will grip the hair of their victim and subdue them (Coe 2011).

⁶⁸Using estimations on the man hours and labor costs of Mayan construction of various temples at Copan, I estimated that a relatively small force of about 300-400 laborers could finish a major construction project within a year (Webster 1995). Noting that sacrifices are typically reserved for elite captives, it seems reasonable that a Mayan state would release its slaves rather than sacrifice them when their labor is no longer required.

His father embraced him once more. Tears rolled down the slopes of Sachinaq Okox's cheeks as his breathing became uneven. He cried for Calakmul. He cried for K'ix ak' and for his family. He cried for himself.

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Tony Hua is a 4th year, Economics major with minors in Writing and Applied Math. Before moving to Merced, Tony grew up in the city of El Monte, a suburb of Los Angeles. His interests are varied, ranging from scientific research, creative writing, and computer gaming. He was a former student editor on the UC Merced Undergraduate Research journal staff, where he served as the senior editor. He is currently working as a research assistant for the Economics faculty at UC Merced while conducting his own research. Tony aspires to go to graduate school for a doctorate in Economics, with the intent to conduct research. Never just quite satisfied with what he knows, Tony believes it is critical to maintain a healthy appetite for learning new things and to approach life with a critical and sometimes skeptical perspective. On occasion, he can be seen at the local grocery store, which he likes to frequent when brainstorming or developing an idea.