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Chapter 1 : Notes on Mesoamerican Civilization

*"The University Press of Colorado has developed a very strong list of titles dealing with Ancient Mesoamerica. The most recent addition to that list is *The Social Experience of Childhood in Ancient Mesoamerica*. This book fills a clear gap in our knowledge concerning children and childhood in the pre-contact period.*

Late Classic, CE Maya, Guatemala Codex vessels are quite rare and named for the painting style, which resembles the fine-line painting of fan-folded, bark paper Mayan codices, or books. The vessel shows a pair of scribes, possibly the supernatural Hero Twins of the "Popul Vuh," the Mayan genesis story. Rendered in dark ink on a cream background, the artist elegantly drew the scribes seated cross-legged on opposite sides of the vessel, delicately painting a codex in a jaguar-skin cover. The scribes have elaborate feather headdresses. From the front of the headdress extends the open mouth of Och Chan, the serpent of the otherworld. On the upper arm, back and thigh are "god signs" indicating that they are supernatural. The scenes are significant for the graceful lineation and elegant composition. Although most codex vessels are painted with a red rim, this example is accented with a black rim. Black is often a representation of the underworld in Mayan iconography. Many codex style vases were found in burials below house floors or in palaces in the northern Peten in contexts suggesting offerings. Step-frets, possibly symbols of hills or mountains, in alternating black and orange rectangles, flank a central black band with simple incised decoration. On the interior, the sides of the bowl are painted red. The tripod feet are hollow, with rattles inside. The rabbit is in a fluted circle, with mammiform fruit or vegetal images on both sides. On the inside of the bowl, on the sides between the rim and the bottom, are black and orange rabbits seated alternately, two sets of three rabbits and one set of two. Between the rabbits are three sets of vertical bars with three pods attached. Between the central rabbit figure and the seated rabbits on the side of the bowl is a circular band of squiggles. On the exterior of the bowl are three registers: These registers are interrupted between two feet of the bowl to apply small face and forefeet of what may be a turtle. Turtles, or other reptiles, suggest the underworld. In Maya cosmology, the rabbit is the offspring of the Moon Goddess, and the face that the Maya saw in the moon was a rabbit. On this bowl, presenting the rabbit as alternately black and orange might suggest night and day, or above ground world and otherworld. The rabbit has elsewhere been portrayed as a scribe, and he has the role of trickster in scenes on other Maya vase painting. Parrots, macaws and quetzals provided feathers for extensive use on headdresses, shields, capes, fans, staffs and canopies. Maya carved monuments, wall murals and painted ceramics provide a view of the visually vibrant life of the Maya elite. This black tripod vase has three orange parrots with detailing in red. The body is spotted, which does not occur in the natural world and may be a jaguar reference. The long tail feathers are more like those of the quetzal. This imagery, along with the black color, may indicate death or the underworld. The black color suggests the underworld. The monster has a feathered headdress and feathers coming off the back of the head. The black stripe around the eye and the "darkness" infix in the forehead are further symbols of death. This vessel displays the wind god, evidenced by the full cheeks ready to blow a gale. The lower register of the vessel is a series of vertical flutes such as on melons. The upper band consists of crude glyph-like carved and incised images. The jar is of brown clay, with red slip clumsily applied. Wind Gods might have been associated with Chacs, the Rain Gods, and were associated with the cardinal directions. His face is wrinkled, he has lost teeth and seems to have a mouth or lip plug. His ears are pierced. His arms and legs display the thinness of the elderly, and may symbolize firewood of the hearth. There is a small handle at the back of the vessel. Some of the burnished orange slip has worn away. Naturally fire was important to the Maya, and everyone used fire in some way or other. The importance of fire to community well-being was recognized in ceremony and ritual, and by placing the Fire God in the Maya pantheon. The chin of the god protrudes, suggesting the toothless shrunken mouth of the aged. He has a sash tied around his neck. Down each arm are four painted crosses. Close inspection reveals a line of miniscule punctations around the shoulder of the jar, and three circles on the back about an inch in diameter defined by

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the same small dots, each with a single cross in the center, as on the arms. The meaning of this symbolism is not known. The Fire God represented the hearth, and the earth below the hearth. The base has two ears with spools and a plain rectangular plaque in front. The female figure on the lid has nose and ear plugs and stylized hair. Cacao cocoa beans decorate her chest and arms and may be the elements of her necklace and bracelets. A small jar rests between her arms. Smoke from copal incense burning below would exit through a hole in the bottom of the jar, one in the back of each arm, and one in the back of the head. The flanges on the upper arms were to lift the hot lid. Cacao, the beans used to produce chocolate, was grown widely in southern Mesoamerica and functioned as currency. Cacao was an important trade and tribute item, and the foundation of all commercial transactions. Ek Chuah the Black God was the god intimately associated with cacao, and therefore the patron of the merchants who carried it. Bishop Landa reported that during the Maya month of Muan owners of cacao orchards conducted a festival honoring Ek Chuah, sacrificing a dog with cacao-colored spots, blue iguanas, feathers and copal. A jaguar with large fangs splays across the lid of the vessel, which could have been tied to the base through the three matching lugs near the rim on the upper and lower pieces. Perhaps the vessel contained an offering. Bequest of Lester K. Reptiles inhabit the area between the world in which we live and the underworld, a liminal space allowing them to travel in both realms. This effigy vessel is a ceramic type called Plumbate, characterized by a glaze high in alumina and iron, fired in an atmosphere with reduced oxygen, which produced a shiny grey or grey-green surface. Plumbate pottery was made in the area of the Pacific Coast between Mexico and Guatemala and became a widely circulated Mesoamerican trade ware in the Early Postclassic.

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Chapter 2 : Mesoamerica's Classic Heritage : David Carrasco :

Children have been readily accepted as active agents in the archaeological past but finding material traces of child practice remains a challenge.

The Mayan civilization was known well for the only fully developed written language along with its exquisite architecture, mathematical, artistic and astronomical systems. The ancient Mayan social hierarchy structure may be briefly stated as follows. The top of the ladder was constituted by priests and kings along with royal families who lived in the palaces. Then were the wealthy nobles placed on the second level. Commoners and officers were at the next level in the hierarchy. The bottom of ladder incorporated the servants and workers. In the end were slave who lived a miserable life. The ancient Mayan hierarchy structure is described below in brief with a little description.

Ancient Mayan Social Hierarchy Upper Class – The people who were considered superior to other people were categorized in the upper class and it included king, priests and nobles that are described as below:

Kings – The highest power and authority holder in the ancient Mayan social hierarchy structure was the king. These people were considered son of the god and everyone was required to obey the king without any doubt in the mind.

Priests – The next rank in the ladder of ancient Mayan social hierarchy structure is of priests. Religion played a significant and crucial role in the society of Mayans. Majorly all walks of life were regulated by the religion. That is why it was accepted that the priests were considered to be the most important out of all the people. Only they possessed the right to intervene in the decisions of the king.

Nobles – The nobles acquired this position on hereditary basis and assisted the Kings with major decision-making process. The noble class was small in number but very powerful.

Middle Class – The middle class as the name implies lies lower to upper class and is described as below:

Officers and Commoners – This group made the middle class within the ancient Mayan society. This class was made of professionals, officials, bureaucrats, merchants and artisans.

Lower Class – The lowest class of the ancient Mayan social hierarchy structure incorporates workers, slaves and servants. These are described below:

Workers and Servants – This was the lowest category in the ancient Mayan social hierarchy structure since slaves were not even considered a part of the social system. These people worked for the upper class for performing their day-to-day work which was considered unimportant by the society.

Slaves – The people who possessed zero rights, power and authority and were forced to lead a miserable life were slaves. These were bought servants who were treated like animals. They were to work only under the orders of their owners. These poor people were not even allowed to defend themselves in case they got beaten up by their owner.

Ancient Mayan Social Hierarchy was last modified:

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Chapter 3 : The Divine Power of Childhood in Ancient Mesoamerica | Traci Ardren - www.nxgvision.com

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So what chances do we stand of learning about Mesoamerican children growing up centuries ago, when the whole subject has been very little explored in academic literature? We know from these and other sources that centuries ago Mesoamerican parents were loving, strict, and placed great emphasis on the correct training and bringing up of children to be responsible and hardworking members of the community. But we know little about the journey itself through early life. In general, childhood was seen - in particular by the Mexica - as a period fraught with dangers of all kinds, from physical infection, poor health. It was also a period in which the individual enjoyed at least, as we shall see below, in the early years maximum purity of spirit, permitting fluid communication between child and gods. Today, however, this idea is subject to increasing scepticism: Stage 1 - infancy. Stage 2 - youngster. By the end of this period, they had received the ear perforations that would eventually accommodate adult earspools, were subject to physical discipline, and were initiated into key aspects of ritual practice, notably ceremonial drinking. As already noted, the youngster now had to switch to the traditional maize-based diet of grown-ups, heavy on carbohydrates and light on protein, and this, combined with the stresses of urban life in a city the size of Tenochtitlan - crowds, noise, dirt, walking through busy streets to market, even petty crime - placed a severe strain on their physical and emotional health. The latter would have been further tested by the imposition of a harsh disciplinary code spelt out in detail in the Codex Mendoza. The pain and discomfort was magnified by the children then being directly introduced to the smoke of burning incense and to the sacred drink octli pulque. If we should not gather it up, it would accuse us before our lord. Children crying, Codex Mendoza, fol. In a classic study of Mexica festivals, H. Nicholson calculated that, of the 18 annual veintena ceremonies - the yearly round of twenty-day monthly feasts - four of them included child sacrifice. Stage 3 - pre-adult. In many ways, of course, these and other family-based tasks continue to be performed by youngsters throughout Mesoamerica today, and they remain just as demanding. It could also dramatically raise their status in later life: Marriage was now only a few years away, and elite adolescents, particularly among the Maya, were also now old enough to take on the ultimate adult responsibility: We know that several Maya kings acceded to power at this tender young age; a dramatic reflection of just how quickly Mesoamerican youngsters grew into adulthood. It tallies with data from the Codex Mendoza showing that only after the thirteenth year did Mexica youths qualify for a full ration of two whole tortillas. Hutson, University Press of Colorado, In particular, the chapters by Traci Ardren, Scott R. This article was uploaded to the Mexicolore website on Oct 24th

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Chapter 4 : Download [PDF] Social Patterns In Pre Classic Mesoamerica Free Online | New Books in Politi

Get this from a library! The social experience of childhood in ancient Mesoamerica. [Traci Ardren; Scott Hutson;] -- "The first book to focus on children in ancient Mesoamerica, this reference offers a key methodological guide for archaeologists studying children and their roles not only in Mesoamerica, but also in.

Mesoamerican Civilization El Caracol, named for the winding staircase within the cylindrical structure aka the "Observatory" because of its resemblance to an astronomical observatory among the ruins at the Mayan site of Chichen Itza, dating to the tenth century; photo credit Edit Grof Tisza Mesoamerica was yet another world location for the emergence of an early civilization, but Mesoamerican societies were not necessarily connected to a single famous river like the Nile as the other early civilizations were, though there were plenty of rivers in the New World. Because of the physical separation from Europe, Asia and Africa, large-scale civilization in the Americas tended to emerge somewhat later than elsewhere maybe bce versus bce in Mesopotamia , and Mesoamerican did not benefit as much from the exchange of ideas and objects that accompanied contact between civilizations on the other three continents. There have been complicated geophysical arguments put forward--to explain the differences between what happened in Eurasia versus Mesoamerica--about the ease of material and intellectual exchange in an east-west direction, such as from Beijing to Paris, and the difficulty of such exchanges taking place in a north-south direction, across different climactic zones, such as between Chicago and Rio de Janeiro. In addition, civilization in Mesoamerica did not have the cultural unity like that enjoyed by, for example, Egypt or China. There were several different societies in Mesoamerica that rose and fell over time, most widely known were the Olmec, Zapotec, Toltec, Mixtec, Mexica, Aztec, Inka. In this respect, Mesoamerica most closely resembled what happened in Mesopotamia where one after another they appeared, spread, and then decayed. It was the initial emergence of the Olmec along the Gulf coast - bce that set many of the patterns of future civilization in Mesoamerica. Though isolated, it is clear that Mesoamerican civilization achieved some very impressive mathematical, architectural, engineering and calendrical advances. In terms of urban population, for example, the city of Teotihuacan in the Valley of Mexico not too far from present-day Mexico City reached a size of well over , by ce; that size easily rivaled anything that had existed anywhere else in the ancient world. One feature that Mesoamerican society had in common with its Near Eastern and later West European counterparts was a proclivity to violence. There was almost continuous violence as societies rose and fell; again very much like the history of Mesopotamia. Some similarities to pre civilizations: Writing existed; Mayan script was hieroglyphic based like in Egypt or China A priestly temple class was a very powerful element in society such as in Egypt, Mesopotamia or India. Quetzalcoatl, the most important god, was usually portrayed as a plumed serpent a snake with feathers --it is pretty interesting trying to figure out exactly what he meant and his role in religious myth. One difference of Mesoamerican religions was the prominent role of human sacrifice Yet that is also another point on which there is much controversy. Monumental architecture pyramid and temple construction such as in Egypt, Mesopotamia and India Sedentary agricultural villages which eventually evolved into massive cities such as Teotihuacan, Chichen Itza, Cuzco, Tenochtitlan. Starting in approximately ce, Mesoamerican society confronted the arrival of Europeans. Initially that was Spanish and Portuguese conquistadors, but eventually French, British and Dutch also made their way to the New World. The latter three had much less of a presence in Central and South America. The year was not a sharp break point in the development of American culture; it was the introduction of a new culture that would take a lot of years to assimilate. Note that I say nothing here about the population disaster that befell Mesoamerican societies. This is controversial issue and one on which there is no scholarly consensus, the wiki entry is as good as any for a starting point for further investigation. The past and present live side by side in much of present day Mexico, Central and South America. The reminders of the past are everywhere from the preserved remnants of Mesoamerican society to the linguistic merger of native dialects and Spanish. The inhabitants also struggle to find different meanings in the past and actually to discover the

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true past. You may send me any suggested corrections or additions.

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Chapter 5 : Ancient Mayan Social Structure Hierarchy | Hierarchy Structure

The Social Experience of Childhood in Ancient MesoAmerica The first book to focus on children in ancient Mesoamerica, this vital reference offers a key methodological guide for archaeologists studying children and their roles not only in Mesoamerica, but also in ancient societies worldwide.

A main distinction groups these different niches into two broad categories: The highlands show much more climatic diversity, ranging from dry tropical to cold mountainous climates ; the dominant climate is temperate with warm temperatures and moderate rainfall. Cultural sub-areas[edit] Several distinct sub-regions within Mesoamerica are defined by a convergence of geographic and cultural attributes. These sub-regions are more conceptual than culturally meaningful, and the demarcation of their limits is not rigid. The Maya area, for example, can be divided into two general groups: The lowlands are further divided into the southern and northern Maya lowlands. The southern Maya lowlands are generally regarded as encompassing northern Guatemala , southern Campeche and Quintana Roo in Mexico , and Belize. The tallest mountain in Mesoamerica is Pico de Orizaba , a dormant volcano located on the border of Puebla and Veracruz. The Sierra Madre mountains, which consist of several smaller ranges, run from northern Mesoamerica south through Costa Rica. The chain is historically volcanic. There are 83 inactive and active volcanoes within the Sierra Madre range, including 11 in Mexico, 37 in Guatemala, 23 in El Salvador, 25 in Nicaragua, and 3 in northwestern Costa Rica. According to the Michigan Technological University, [12] 16 of these are still active. One important topographic feature is the Isthmus of Tehuantepec , a low plateau that breaks up the Sierra Madre chain between the Sierra Madre del Sur to the north and the Sierra Madre de Chiapas to the south. This area also represents the shortest distance between the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean in Mexico. The northern side of the Isthmus is swampy and covered in dense jungle”but the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, as the lowest and most level point within the Sierra Madre mountain chain, was nonetheless a main transportation, communication, and economic route within Mesoamerica. Bodies of water[edit] Outside of the northern Maya lowlands, rivers are common throughout Mesoamerica. Some of the more important ones served as loci of human occupation in the area. Additionally, no lakes exist in the northern peninsula. The main source of water in this area is aquifers that are accessed through natural surface openings called cenotes. The biodiversity is among the richest in the world, though the number of species in the red list of the IUCN grows every year. Chronology and culture[edit] Main article: Mesoamerican chronology Tikal is one of the largest archaeological sites, urban centers, and tourist attractions of the pre-Columbian Maya civilization. The history of human occupation in Mesoamerica is divided into stages or periods. These are known, with slight variation depending on region, as the Paleo-Indian , the Archaic , the Preclassic or Formative , the Classic , and the Postclassic. The last three periods, representing the core of Mesoamerican cultural florescence, are further divided into two or three sub-phases. Most of the time following the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century is classified as the Colonial period. The differentiation of early periods i. The Classic period through the Postclassic are differentiated by the cyclical crystallization and fragmentation of the various political entities throughout Mesoamerica. Paleo-Indian[edit] The Mesoamerican Paleo-Indian period precedes the advent of agriculture and is characterized by a nomadic hunting and gathering subsistence strategy. Big-game hunting, similar to that seen in contemporaneous North America , was a large component of the subsistence strategy of the Mesoamerican Paleo-Indian. These sites had obsidian blades and Clovis -style fluted projectile points. Archaic[edit] The Archaic period ” BC is characterized by the rise of incipient agriculture in Mesoamerica. The initial phases of the Archaic involved the cultivation of wild plants, transitioning into informal domestication and culminating with sedentism and agricultural production by the close of the period. Transformations of natural environments have been a common feature at least since the mid Holocene [14]. Archaic sites include Sipacate in Escuintla , Guatemala, where maize pollen samples date to c.

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Chapter 6 : Stages of childhood in ancient Mesoamerica

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