

Copyright
by
Nadya Helena Prociuk
2010

**The Report Committee for Nadya Helena Prociuk
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:**

**A Seat at the Table:
A Gendered Approach to Re-Conceptualizing Feasting Practice**

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Samuel Wilson

Enrique Rodriguez

**A Seat at the Table:
A Gendered Approach to Re-Conceptualizing Feasting Practice**

by

Nadya Helena Prociuk, B.A.

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2010

Acknowledgements

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the hard work and support of my advisor Dr. Sam Wilson, who has helped me through this process and provided me with the tools to make this project possible. Also thank you to Dr. Enrique Rodriguez for his time, patience, and excellent advice. Thank you as well to my family and friends, who provided love and support when I most needed it. This would not have been possible without you all, thank you very much.

Abstract

A Seat at the Table: A Gendered Approach to Re-Conceptualizing Feasting Practice

Nadya Helena Prociuk, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2010

Supervisor: Samuel Wilson

The currently popular approach to conceptualizing feasting practices in the archaeological record leaves little room for diversity in motivation or identity. At the moment, the only social actor given attention in the literature concerning feasting events is hypothesized to be a self-aggrandizing, elite-aspiring male. The narrow conception of who was responsible for feasts, and the reasons for holding them, shuts out the multitude of other standpoints and motivations which have the potential to broaden our understanding of these important social events. Through the intersection of the ancient Maya ritual ballgame, associated feasting, and gendered participation, I demonstrate the necessity of accounting for, and incorporating, a variety of perspectives and motivations when considering the feast as an important form of social interaction.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Feasting.....	4
The Ballgame.....	12
Gendered Players in the Ritual Feast.....	21
Discussion.....	25
Conclusion.....	30
References.....	32
Vita	37

Introduction:

Issues of social complexity and competition have come to dominate the study of feasting practices conducted by archaeologists in recent years (Clark & Blake 1994, Dietler & Hayden 2001, Bray 2003). The explanatory power feasting offers for conceptualizing increasing social complexity in communities and early states is an attractive element of this previously neglected social phenomenon, because it provides demonstrable evidence through the material record of specific types of social behaviour. Hence, the political and economic aspects of feasting have received considerable attention from archaeologists, and have assumed the status of primary mover in the debates on the subject (Hayden 2001). The main focus of research has primarily been based on the idea of a hypothetical individual; a self-aggrandizing actor aspiring to elite status (typically gendered male) whose efforts to manipulate an unwitting populace are variously met with success or failure, depending on his ability to marshal resources and labour, and out-do his rivals in lavishness and hospitality. This is exemplified in events such as the potlatch of the North American northwest, which Marcel Mauss wrote about in the mid twentieth century (Mauss 1990) . With few exceptions (see Dietler 2001, Bray 2003, and Hendon 2003), the study of feasting has ignored or taken for granted the gendered implications of the now well-established assumptions about the nature of feasting as a vehicle for social competition. The unmarked male actor, an ambitious and socially aggressive member of the elite (or one who wishes to gain elite standing), is unproblematic in the feasting literature produced by archaeologists today. Other types of social actors (female, non-elite, younger or older community members) are not generally noted as significant contributors to the social drama enacted in the feast. If they are mentioned, it is usually as auxiliary labour commandeered by the male aggrandizer

(Clark & Blake, 1994), but exhibiting none of the characteristics of an autonomous agent. The study of feasting thus far has generally been approached at such a broad scale that little can be said about the actual people who participated in the feasts. This approach to feasting has been caught up in such sweeping narratives of social complexity and change that the individual experience of a feasting event has been lost to the grander vision of societal power relations and competition.

To begin to broaden the scope of the present theorizations we must start looking beyond one type of social actor, one type of motivation for feasting, toward the possibilities of the intersection of multiple actors and multiple motivations. Though alternative motivations to competition and self aggrandizement have been obscured in the currently prominent literature on feasting, there were likely other explicit and implicit motives for holding such communal gatherings. Religious and ideological considerations are often extremely important to communities and individuals, and to underestimate such motives is to lose elements of depth and complexity from our analyses. The desires and motivations which drive people to action are not always straightforward or clear-cut, even to the individuals themselves, and to posit the intentional manipulation of social relations in every case of feasting does not seem tenable.

In attempting to articulate these questions of scale, motivation, and agency in relation to feasting practices, it is useful to consider a specific convergence of elements which might have created the space for just the types of issues mentioned above; in this case I focus on an analysis of social interaction in the form of ritual feasting, particularly situated in association with the ancient Maya ballgame. In conjunction with issues of feasting and ritual in the world of the ancient Maya, I believe it is essential to consider the gendered implications of these social practices in the Maya community in which they may have occurred. In looking at more personal aspects of these social dramas, we must

consider how issues of individual identity affect people's perceptions and participation in these events. These issues include: gender, age, social status, and community membership. Of particular interest in this formulation is how gender norms and conceptions among the ancient Maya may have influenced the process of social interaction taking place during these communal rituals. Given a setting such as the ancient Maya ballgame, an activity replete with ritual and ideological meaning, how might feasting have functioned as a social unifier or divider? How and for what reasons might people have been invested in the success or failure of such ventures? How did these things shape, or take their shape from, wider societal ideologies? These are the questions that I will consider through an examination of the existing literature on feasting, the Mesoamerican ballgame, and gender relations among the ancient Maya.

Feasting:

Pioneered by the work of Marcel Mauss on gift exchange and potlatch (Mauss 1990), feasting and communal consumption have become a vehicle through which archaeologists access issues of social complexity and competition. According to Michael Dietler and Brian Hayden, feasts are, in essence, events involving the consumption of food and/or drink on a communal scale, which must be differentiated in some way from everyday meals, or the exchange of food not involving communal consumption (Dietler & Hayden, 2001:3). A feast is a special event, something set apart from the ordinary and mundane realities of everyday life. Arguably, it is this connotation as a distinctive occurrence which lends it power to influence and transform social ties. The exchange and consumption of food can be an intimate event or one elevated to a grand pageant involving complicated codes of etiquette and presentation. It is the latter manifestation which Mauss explores in his influential treatise *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (Mauss 1990 [1923-1924]). Mauss frames feasts and the events which often accompany them as cycles of gift-exchange which create bonds between individuals and communities. As Mary Douglas writes in her foreword to Mauss' book: "[t]he theory of the gift is a theory of human solidarity" (Mauss 1990: x). Far from the selfless, altruistic gift of the Christian tradition, Mauss formulates the gift in terms of the enforcement of social obligations through competitive exchange and generosity. "There are no free gifts; gift cycles engage persons in permanent commitments that articulate the dominant institutions" (Mauss 1990: ix). As in Malinowski's Kula ring, the giving of gifts and mounting of feasts creates an unspoken contract between the giver and the receiver. The creation of a debt based on the exchange of hospitality or a gift binds the recipient to the donor as long as the debt remains unpaid.

The value of such a gift does not necessarily reside in the objects or food items themselves so much as in the social ties they propagate. “[E]xchanges and contracts take place in the form of presents: in theory these are voluntary, in reality they are given and reciprocated obligatorily” (Mauss 1990: 3). For Mauss, the obligatory nature of feasting and gift exchange is sublimated, concealed by the rhetoric of pure generosity devoid of ulterior motive. In this framework, a gift is never given, a feast is never held, without it functioning in some way to create social bonds and networks. Though it may not publicly be admitted as such, there is the assumption that everyone in the community understands this to be the case.

Michael Dietler has similar ideas about the sublimation of motivations for feasting and public displays of generosity. According to Dietler, “commensality is a powerfully expressive trope of intimacy creating and reproducing relationships capable of encompassing sustained aggressive competition by effectively euphemizing it in a symbolic practice encouraging collective misrecognition of the self-interested nature of the process” (Dietler 2001: 73). The emphasis here is on “aggressive competition” masked by ideas which often have more socially acceptable connotations, such as hospitality and generosity. The implication seems to be that although all members taking part in these societal conventions understand on some level that the professed purpose of public displays of generosity are not always (or even mostly) the real motivations, they continue to participate in such a collective fiction because it allows them to pursue their own self-interest while appearing to maintain public standards of community solidarity.

According to the literature there are several types of advantages which can be accrued by employing feasting practices. Brian Hayden lists nine practical benefits in the most comprehensive articulation of the potential advantages of feasting available at this time. Among these are the mobilization of labour, the creation of cooperative alliances,

the investment of surplus, the ability to attract potential mates, labour resources, or allies through the display of material success, the creation of a network of reciprocal debts, the ability to solicit favours, and compensation for transgressions (Hayden 2001: 30). According to Hayden however, and in line with Mauss, most of the benefits of feasts cluster around the creation and maintenance of important social relationships (Hayden 2001: 30). It is possible for feasting to function in these ways because of the central role food and beverages play in human life. “Because of the daily need for these elements, they can be a powerful means of social control: manipulating access to food and drink or to essential means of production can be translated into control over people” (Pollock 2003: 18). It is the conception that somehow the control over important resources can transform into control over human beings which, in this framework, connects feasting to social competition.

Social competition is thought to be the result of situations in which people pursuing their own self-interests come into conflict with one another (Clark & Blake 1994: 18). Self-interest in this case is presumed to be the accumulation of social influence and prestige, which is defined as public recognition by supporters and the ensuing control of resources provided by those supporters (ibid). In competing for prestige in their own community and beyond, these ambitious individuals become the engine for social change (Clark & Blake 1994: 17). From this springs related arguments about increasing social stratification which results from the control and display of an individual’s prestige through feasting.

Dietler divides what he terms “commensal politics” into three categories: empowering feasts, patron-role feasts, and diacritical feasts (Dietler 2001: 76-85). Empowering feasts relate to the idea of social gatherings which are understood “sincerely by participants as harmonious celebrations of community identity and unity” but which

are at the same time arenas for the acquisition of prestige and social credit (Dietler 2001: 77). Such feasts may be hosted by an individual, kin-group or household, and generally focus on creating and maintaining ties within the community, though at the same time providing opportunities for emergent social distinctions (Dietler 2001: 77). Patron-role feasts involve an unequal pattern of hospitality in which those invited to the feast are understood not to be in a position to reciprocate in an equally lavish manner, which functions to formalize asymmetrical relations of power between the host and guests (Dietler 2001: 82-3). Such feasting may take place in a community with an emerging elite who are in the process of attempting to solidify their social position and enhance their personal prestige by engaging the goodwill and support of other members of their community (Clark & Blake 1994: 21). Finally, diacritical feasts employ specialty cuisines and modes of consumption (elaborate codes of etiquette) in order to reify concepts of ranked differences in class and social status (Dietler 2001: 85). Diacritical feasting generally occurs among elites as a display of power, wealth, and social status, and marks the achievement of complex social stratification (see LeCount 2001).

In all of these influential formulations of feasting (excepting solidarity, or empowering feasts, which are generally underrepresented in the literature), the emphasis is primarily on the role of a particular social actor pursuing his own ends through the strategic employment of a practice which in appearance is socially constructive and inclusive, but which in reality is often aggressively competitive and socially divisive. John Clark and Michael Blake “postulate the necessary presence of ambitious males (aggrandizers) competing for prestige within a regional setting” (Clark & Blake 1994: 18). Aggrandizers must persuade people to follow them and support their initiatives, often by employing incentives and strategies which appear to conform to the self-interest of their followers (Clark & Blake 1994: 21). This process often starts at home, argue

Clark and Blake, where an aggrandizer accumulates resources (which he can later entice supporters with) “by the sweat of his brow, and through the efforts of his wife (wives) and children. The more wives and children the better” (Clark & Blake 1994: 19). In this formulation, wives and children function merely as a built-in labour resource which a male aggrandizer can draw upon to aid his quest for personal prestige. The possible motivations of the wives and children mentioned in this passage are not considered, they are simply and unproblematically subsumed within the ambitious male leader’s desire for personal advancement. It is taken for granted that a man’s wife will have the same desires and goals as her husband, and that she will unquestioningly work towards them with no expectation of accruing a portion of the honour or prestige accorded to her husband for providing these generous resources to his followers. Wives, children, and other members of an aggrandizer’s kin group are not counted as autonomous individuals in the same category as the ambitious male leader. Instead, they fade into the background after a cursory nod in the direction of their labour input. Though not always explicitly employed by scholars, this model, or a version of it, is visible in their work through the use of the unproblematized male subject-position, which is still widely used as the default when discussing the individual (Cohodas 2002: 15). When the gender of an individual is not specifically addressed, it is generally assumed that the social actor is male.

It is important to note that I am not arguing against feasting as a form of social interaction which has the potential to foster such aggressive competition, or inversely to build alliances and group solidarity. Instead I wish to make the point that I am not comfortable with the representation of feasting in the literature as being solely controlled and consciously manipulated by elite male actors who function independently of those around them. This attribution of clearly articulated aims of self-aggrandizement to a fully autonomous male agent is an imposition of modern ethnocentric values of individualism

and capitalist economic models upon a past which was almost certainly not understood by its inhabitants in those terms. To consider the actions and motivation of peoples in the past according to this schema is to disregard the possibilities of their own worldviews, values, and ways of knowing, and to impose our own onto them without considering the differential contexts in which they lived.

There are other lenses of interpretation for feasting practices however, and it is important to explore these alternatives when attempting to articulate the ways people interacted with and through these events. An important element of Dietler's analysis of feasting includes the consideration of feasting as a form of ritual (Dietler 2001: 65). Ritual is here defined as a set of circumscribed and repeated actions performed in relation to either social or religious custom which possess some form of symbolic meaning for those performing them. Rituals function to condense a variety of meanings into a set of actions which, as Dietler argues, infuse social norms with emotion (Dietler 2001: 71). This shared emotional experience hypothetically allows participants to naturalize elements of inequality in their relationships by subsuming them to a greater ideology, whether religious or otherwise. In addition, Brian Stross writes in his ethnography of food practices among the modern Tzotzil Maya that,

[f]ood, in its eating or its denial among other things, appears to mark the passage of participants into or out of a ritual state or phase thereof. Denial as fasting creates ritual purity for activities requiring communication with deities. Denial through food taboos avoids ritual impurity or interference with communication with deities. Feasting appears not to mark impurity, but rather the communion of related beings in this world signalling an ending to the state of ritual activity. (Stross 2010: 562).

In the subset of literature which examines feasting practices among the Maya, the focus is predominantly on feasts as markers of religious ritual events. The first European observer to document this was Fray Diego de Landa, a Spanish missionary priest who recorded his observations of the indigenous Maya population of the Yucatan in *Relación de las cosas*

de Yucatan (Landa 1978). Though not an unbiased account, it nevertheless contains valuable information on the lifeways of the Yucatec Maya at the time of European contact.

Archaeologically, Julia Hendon notes that among the ancient Maya, important lifecycle events such as birth, ear-piercing, marriage, pregnancy, and death, required feasting to commemorate them (Hendon 2003: 204). Stross suggests that “religious feasting is a common ritual practice pertaining to effecting a successful conclusion to activities [...] that are otherwise more likely to have uncertain outcomes” (Stross 2010: 561). This facility of feasting to bridge marginal territories is partially due to the fact that the action of eating is never only or simply a biological function, it is also a ‘technique du corps’ which inscribes meaning on and through the body in the performance of culturally determined physical actions (Dietler 2001: 72). It is by incorporating ritual into aspects vital to human life, such as food consumption, that rituals gain and retain the power to influence people’s actions and emotions, which can, in turn, lead to social manipulation by individuals or groups (Lucero 2003: 525).

This social manipulation, in the case of the ancient Maya, was not only focused on living members of the community, but also on the dead. Gabriella Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi writes that “food offerings for the dead (and gods) can be understood as a language, a way of communicating with otherworldly spirits to bring about a desired outcome in the lives of the living, in effect, a materialized prayer” (quoted in McNeil 2010: 294). This is particularly significant for the Maya because it has been proposed that they did not, and still do not, regard their ancestors as divorced from their immediate lives. The ancient practice of burying important members of the family within the domestic structure, and the prolonged habitation of the same structures and areas for many generations, seems to indicate a profound sense of continuity and connection to

those who came before (Christenson 2010: 590). In fact, Allen Christenson argues that a Maya home or domestic structure does not belong to its living inhabitants as much as it does to the ancestors who also inhabit it and watch over it (Christenson 2010: 591). Given this belief in the importance of ancestors in the worldview of the ancient (and modern) Maya, it is not surprising that they should wish to be in as good graces with their deceased kin as with living members of the wider community. Linda Howie et al. (2010) emphasize the importance of feasting practices as functioning to create bonds among the Maya. They write about,

the integral role of consumption, offering and sharing of food and drink in religious and ceremonial proceedings. These ritual acts and forms of reciprocity signified, solidified, symbolized and reinforced conventional and appropriate social practices. [...] Such practices, however, were not confined to the face-to-face interactions of the living but also played an important role in funerary and mortuary rites, and in ancestor veneration, when they would symbolize and reinforce relationships between the living and the dead, and among the ancestors and their descendants. (Howie et al. 2010: 369).

These “materialized prayers” or attempts to communicate with the dead and supernatural forces of their world functioned in the same ways that attempts to communicate and build alliances with living peoples did among the ancient Maya. If feasts are about the creation and maintenance of social networks and interpersonal relations, then a host must repay old social debts, and foster new ones in the same way for deceased community members as for living (Hendon 2003: 205).

It is the connection with otherworldly beings which I will turn to in the next section, in an attempt to articulate how feasting practices and the ancient Maya ballgame were linked in important ways to the project of ensuring prosperity and building social networks among individuals and communities.

The Ballgame:

The Mesoamerican ballgame was a sporting event which had simultaneous religious and political import in the communities in which it was played. With roots stretching back to the Olmec period, the ballgame spread across Mesoamerica, adapting its form in different places and time periods, and was an important part of religious and secular life for the next 3, 500 years (Bradley 2001: 39). Across Mesoamerica the ballgame seems to have been divided into at least five different modes of play (Hill & Clark 2001: 334). “Variants of the game included versions of (1) handball, (2) stickball, (3) hipball, (4) kickball, and (5) ‘trick’ games similar to the ‘keep-away’ games played by children today” (Hill & Clark 2001: 334). Played on a masonry court with two opposing teams, the “hipball” version of the ballgame as commonly manifested in the Maya world carried a host of symbolic meanings for those who participated in its spectacle, whether as players or observers. Modern scholars are still unsure as to the exact rules of how the ancient game was played among the Maya, but the general consensus is that the object of the game was to keep a rubber ball in the air for as long as possible by deflecting it off specific body parts, such as the hips and legs of players (Cohodas 1975: 99). Special equipment was used to protect the players from the impact of the hard rubber and the abrasion of sliding across the ground during play, and this equipment, along with depictions of the ballcourt and ball, have allowed the ballgame and players to be identified in the iconographic and figurine records from different sites across the Maya world (Bradley 2001, Cohodas 1975: 99). There has also been evidence, though not in all places or time periods, that some players were sacrificed after the game in rituals of fertility and renewal (Uriarte 2001, Miller 2001, Cohodas 1991, Gillespie 1991). Often

situated at the heart of an urban area, ballcourts were a focal point for social and religious gatherings, drawing people together in a communal experience (Scarborough 1991: 130). Vernon Scarborough writes in his influential essay on the Maya ballgame that “ball courts were forums for expressing political alliance and religious doctrine. In addition, the game was a public spectacle drawing the diversity in society under one ideological standard” (Scarborough 1991: 130). The ballgame functioned similarly to feasting practices, as well as in conjunction with feasting events, in the way it brought people together in expressions of alliance solidarity or competition. It channelled social tensions and affirmations through a symbolic conduit expressing group ideology in a form which was widely understood and accepted by the participants (Fox 1991: 225). It has also been suggested that the ballgame worked as a substitute for inter-factional violence and opposition, and as an allegory for warfare (Uriarte 2001: 41). “As an element of the successful mediation of conflict, the game acted as a forum for opposing groups to vie for social and political status” (Scarborough 1991: 141). The ballgame allowed participating factions to express aggression without a substantial loss of life, thus conserving valuable human resources (Taladoire & Cloenet 1991: 161).

As with feasting, the ritual elements of the Maya ballgame are important in the interpretation of its significance to the people who participated in it. Not solely a vehicle for social competition, the ballgame functioned to exemplify and re-inscribe the belief-system which dominated the Maya world-view. The best-known example of this ideology exists in the Quiché Maya creation tale recorded in the early 18th century by Francisco Ximénez, a Franciscan friar, which is now known as the *Popol Vuh*. This text, while providing an explanation of the creation of humankind, recounts the exploits of the mythical Hero Twins and narrates the origins and history of prominent Quiché lineages. In this account, the divine couple Ixpiyacoc and Ixmucané (meaning Old God and

Ancient Goddess in Quiché) attempted to create beings who would worship them (Barba de Piña Chán 2002: 211). They first used mud, and then wood, in this attempt, but neither of these substances created beings who were dutiful to the gods, and so the gods destroyed them. In the third attempt, Ixmucané crafted humans using gruel made from corn found growing in the cleft of the sacred mountain, at the entrance to the Underworld (Barba de Piña Chán 2002: 211, Bassie-Sweet 2002: 170-171). Twin brothers Hun Hunahpu (One Hunter with Blowpipe) and Vucub Hunahpu (Seven Hunter with Blowpipe), offspring of the creator couple, were invited into the Underworld to play the ballgame with the Lords of the Underworld, and were defeated (Barba de Piña Chán 2002: 203). The severed head of Hun Hunahpu was placed in a calabash tree, and impregnated Xquic, a virgin, by spitting on her hand. Xquic (Female Blood, or Line of Female Magicians) bore another pair of twins, Hunahpu (Hunter with Blowpipe) and Ixbalqué (Little Jaguar Witch), who also drew the attention of the Underworld gods, and were in turn invited down to play the ballgame (Barba de Piña Chán 2002: 203, 207). This time the twins managed to outwit the Lords of the Underworld by passing a series of tests which their father and uncle had failed, and then went on to defeat the Underworld gods in the ballgame, though they ultimately allowed themselves to be sacrificed as well. Eventually, Hunahpu and Ixbalqué ascended to the heavens as the Sun and Moon.

This creation myth underscores the importance of the ballgame in ancient Maya religious ideology as the place where the gods of death were defeated, and where the sun and moon, important agricultural symbols, were created (Whittington 2001: 17). It also highlights the vital aspect of corn in Maya life, as the life-giving substance of which all humans are symbolically composed (Schele & Friedel 1991: 308). John Fox writes that “the meaning of the mythic contest probably varied from one set of circumstances to the next, but it held basic ‘truths’ for a variety of situations” (Fox 1991: 228). The game

was thus a signifier for a set of symbolic meanings which would likely have been easily accessible to the majority of those who encountered it. These meanings include concepts of agricultural fertility in connection with the cycles of the sun and moon, death and rebirth, as well as the ball court as representative of a liminal space, and the concept of a fundamental duality underpinning all of creation.

Based on the ascension of the Hero Twins to the sky as the sun and moon, cycles of agricultural fertility were linked to the playing of the ballgame. “A basic interpretation is that the ball and its movement in the court symbolize the movement of heavenly bodies in the sky.” (Stevenson Day 2001: 66). Walter Krickeberg was one of the earliest to propose such an idea, suggesting that the ballgame was symbolic of the struggle between day and night, and the daily and seasonal journey of the sun in a cyclical descent into the Underworld (Gillespie 1991: 319). This idea is premised on the contest between the Hero Twins and the Lords of the Underworld, in which the Twins defeated the Underworld gods and so conquered darkness, yet allowed themselves to be sacrificed and so passed into darkness themselves. However, the eventual ascension of the Hero Twins to the heavens as the sun and moon fixed them into eternal cycles of light and dark. In contrast, Esther Pasztory advocated an interpretive approach geared toward agricultural cycles, but as Susan Gillespie points out, solar and agricultural cycles are inextricably tied to one another (Gillespie 1991: 319). The 365 day solar cycle related to planting, and the 260 day lunar cycle related to ritual which Maya astronomers developed, reflect the time and energy which the ancient Maya devoted to comprehending the workings of the cosmos, and demonstrate their complex understanding of the intertwining of the practicality of agricultural cycles with the symbolically powerful ritual cycles which the Maya used to order their existence (Bassie-Sweet 2002: 183).

The sacrifice of the mythical players was at times mirrored in the literal sacrifice of mortal ballplayers to ensure fertility and prosperity for the community. Such sacrifice is depicted on the ballcourt panels at Chichen Itza, as well as at El Tajin (Uriarte 2001: 46, Hill & Clark 2001: 337). María Teresa Uriarte suggests that “[t]he delicate balance of the cosmic order could only be maintained through the sacrifice of human beings” (Uriarte 2001: 44). Whether through human sacrifice or the bloodletting ceremonies commonly practiced by both genders, the offering of blood was an essentially sacred act for the ancient Maya because blood was the essence of human life, the most important substance every human being possessed (Uriarte 2001: 44). “Life was not cheap, but regarded as a person’s most valuable treasure and therefore worthy of offering to the gods” (Bradley 2001: 260). Blood acted symbolically as food to nourish the land and ensure a good crop (Stross 2010: 566). Thus, as Linda Schele and David Friedel write, the goal of ballgame sacrifice “is the manifestation of death, the necessary prelude to life” (Schele & Friedel 1991: 309). Just as the Hero Twins had to die before they could be reborn in another form, the sun had to descend and “die” in the Underworld before it could return to the Upperworld and bring light and life to those inhabiting the mortal realm. By following in the footsteps of the Hero Twins, and either literally or symbolically being sacrificed, Maya ballplayers were enacting a sacred ritual which helped to symbolically perpetuate the astronomical cycles which supported their existence.

As the ground for such weighty events, the ballcourt itself represented a transitional space, the interface between the mortal realm and the world of the dead (Fox 1991: 213). As such, it had considerable transformative potential (Cohodas 1991: 269, Gillespie 1991: 339). Gillespie discusses the importance of the ballcourt as a boundary marker, a place which signalled the dual presence of the living and the dead. “To be at

the boundary between these two realms and thus have access to both is to be in a position of extraordinary power” (Gillespie 1991: 339). Those who occupied this liminal space maintained a special position in relation to otherworldly forces, and so could wield substantial clout in the socio-political sphere as well. This powerful aspect of the ball court has led some to propose that it was the site not only for ballgames but for other ritual ceremonies as well (Gillespie 1991: 339, Stevenson Day 2001: 73, Fox 1996). If this was the case, then those who controlled access to the ball court or facilitated the ceremonies and rituals enacted on the court also controlled access to an element of what was considered sacred in ancient Maya society. It is not a far leap from this to an understanding of how the ballgame thus functioned as a mechanism for social contestation or alliance-building. Just as the Lords of the Underworld met with the Hero Twins on the masonry court, so too might rival factions of the living Maya have met on the court to settle disputes or solidify social status (Hill & Clark 2001: 338). Liminal not only in the symbolic sense of a passage between worlds, it was also a passage between social spheres where competing lineages or communities might stake their claims for recognition and legitimacy (Scarborough 1991: 141). Those who were successful on the court might claim the support of gods and ancestors and access to the sacred (Hill & Clark 2001: 341).

It would be a mistake to take from this that these events only created social divisions, because the ballgame also drew people together in the observance of a spectacle which, as previously suggested, had significant symbolic import for the majority of people in ancient Maya society (Scarborough 1991: 130). Such a communal activity may have been experienced differently along class, gender and ethnic lines, but it did function to bring people together in a shared ritual and social event. It has also been hypothesized that the ballgame as an arena for team sports would have been an important

contributor to the creation of community identity (Hill & Clark 2001). “The emotions and excitement surrounding competitive matches would have promoted a mutual association of teams, sponsors, and villages that culminated over time in a shifting sense in the region of ‘we’ versus ‘they’” (Hill & Clark 2001: 342). This sense of group association would likely have led to a feeling of belonging which Hill and Clark term ‘communitas’, which “denotes a social perception among village coresidents of a common sense of belonging to the same community, a sense that cross-cuts lineage loyalties” (Hill & Clark 2001: 342).

When discussing evidence of dedication rituals performed at ball court sites, John Fox writes that “[t]hrough offerings of food and human sustenance the ballcourt was given life and nurtured as part of the social landscape. In essence, these actions prepared the ballcourt for use, transforming it from an inert structure into a meaningful setting for social action” (Fox 1996: 487). Through the ritual performance of consecrating the ballcourt, the ancient Maya opened up a space in which societal tensions could be brought forth and perhaps resolved through a shared belief in a sacred process of life, death and rebirth, as represented in the symbolic re-enactment of a shared creation myth. As a space already rife with symbolic potential, it represented an ideal platform on which to perform other acts of social significance, such as feasting. Indeed, in more recent work on the social significance of gambling to increasing social complexity (Hill & Clark 2001), Clark has somewhat tempered his previous formulation of a power-hungry, materially-motivated aggrandizer by admitting that the “nonmaterial outcomes from ballgame sponsorship may have been as important as material ones” (Hill & Clark 2001: 343), thereby acknowledging the potential importance of social and belief-oriented motivators.

The ballcourt seen as a boundary between two worlds also reflects another important aspect of ballgame symbolism, which is the concept of fundamental duality (Fox 1991: 225). “The structure of the ritual ballgame was a duality metaphor for all human existence, not simply winning and losing, but living and dying as well” (Bradley 2001: 36). In myth, the ballcourt represented the dividing line between the land of the dead and that of the living, it was a portal that allowed access between worlds which were inimical to one another. The opposing players also embodied these tensions; the Hero Twins representing life, light, and fertility and the Lords of the Underworld embodying death, darkness, and sterility (Stevenson Day 2001: 67, Cohodas 1975: 113). It is important to remember, however, that this was not a rigidly hierarchical oppositional structure. The antagonisms of the game travelled a cyclical route, allowing for the ascendancy of both light and dark, life and death, at certain times in the ritual drama and over the course of the year (Gillespie 1991: 321).

The concept of a non-antagonistic duality is further demonstrated by the Hero Twins themselves. Beatriz Barba de Piña Chán discusses this idea in her reflection on the meanings of the Hero Twins’ names. Hunahpu, the firstborn twin, takes his father’s name, which was common in ancient Maya tradition. His twin however, received the name Ixbalanqué, and Barba de Piña Chán positions Ixbalanqué as Hunahpu’s alter ego, his complementary half (Barba de Piña Chán 2002: 207). She writes that,

the prefix ix is feminine, but also means ‘sorcerer’ or ‘small’. The word ‘Balam’ means jaguar, and it must be translated as ‘the little jaguar witch,’ because the alter ego completes the personality of Hunahpu, giving him the qualities he himself does not have, such as coldness or detachment, self-effacing, feminine, with supernatural powers. (Barba de Piña Chán 2002: 207)

The alter ego, the complementary other half, was, and still is, an important concept for the ancient Maya. It represented the holistic balance necessary for life. It was also the

model upon which the Maya based their conceptions of gender roles, and it is the topic to which I will turn in the following section.

Gendered Players in the Ritual Feast:

The notion of a fundamental duality runs deep in Maya ideology, both ancient and modern (Cohodas 2002, Hendon 2002, Bassie-Sweet 2002, Gómez 2000, Joyce 2001, O'Connor 2010). Bassie-Sweet articulates this duality as the male/female principle, and claims that among the ancient Maya a person was considered to be both male and female, with the right side of the body gendered male, and the left side female (Bassie-Sweet 2002: 169). A person achieved full adulthood once she or he married, thus connecting with his or her other half, and becoming a whole human being (*ibid*). “Throughout Mesoamerica, the stable and productive marriage of a fully feminine woman to an entirely masculine man represented the hallmark of social maturity and formed the basis of the socioeconomic order” (Klein 2001: 189). Among the ancient Maya, a married couple were seen as working in complementary unison with one another (Bassie-Sweet 2002: 169, Hendon 2002: 80, Joyce et al 1993: 257). Male and female action, when joined by marriage, was seen to create an economically interdependent and complementary microcosm (Hendon 2002: 80-1). In discussing her ethnographic work in a modern Maya community, Amber O'Connor writes that “[t]hese separate gender roles are not seen as hierarchical; they are seen as a continuation of the ideal of balance, as both parts are needed to keep society functioning. While this labor is identified as separate, it is also considered as two parts necessary to make a whole” (O'Connor 2010: 495). In this context, gender is defined more by productive tasks and specifically gendered performance than by biology (Hendon 2002: 80).

It is helpful to consider Judith Butler's ideas on the performativity of gender roles when conceptualizing Maya gender relations (Butler 1999). Butler writes: “[t]he various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender

at all” (Butler 1999: 178). In this formulation, a person’s gender is not a fixed category firmly rooted in biological experience, but a malleable and continually renewed performative reinforcement of a society’s culturally constituted conception of gender in a particular time and place (Butler 1999: 176).

The performativity of gender in the Maya world was based on specifically gendered tasks and responsibilities which a person may have been required to undertake in her or his lifetime. For men, these roles most likely included labour outside of the home and village, such as tending the milpas (cornfields), hunting game, and participating in warfare (Cohodas 2002: 25). For women, these roles were generally performed in and around the home, and included raising domestic animals, preparing meals, textile manufacture, and raising children (ibid). The complementarity embodied by these gendered divisions of labour is symbolized in the traditional Maya idea that a woman has the ability to transform the raw products which her husband provides her with into a cooked form which is societally consumable (Dornan 2004: 464, O’Connor 2010: 488). O’Connor relates that Don Luis, a Maya elder, explained to her the idea of “woman as a symbol of civilization and holiness via her ability to transform men’s ‘rawness’ via food and birth. She takes a man’s raw corn and makes sustenance and she transforms his seed into human beings” (O’Connor 2010: 489). Like Ixmucané, who fashioned humans out of corn gruel in the Popol Vuh, Maya women, both in the past and present, were and are seen to embody the essential transformative power of shaping the unformed and transfiguring the raw into a ‘cooked’, consumable form. The actual performance of these differentiated gender roles in everyday life almost certainly varied along class lines among the ancient Maya. The productive roles of elite women are considered to have been more symbolic than practical in terms of the tasks which they carried out daily (Joyce 2001). However, the gendered division of labour was still evoked

by elite sponsored representations of women in monumental architecture, as demonstrated by Rosemary Joyce in her argument that such representations functioned in attempts to control and normativize the bodily practices and images of the non-elite population (Joyce 2001: 116).

The belief in the transformative power held by women had significant implications for the ritual role women played in ancient Maya society. As an extension of their daily labour creating sustenance for themselves and their household, it was also their duty to transform the products of their husbands labour in the milpas into sacred foods for offering to the gods and ancestors (McNeil 2010: 305, O'Connor 2010: 493). Cameron McNeil suggests that for Maya women, the act of cooking, especially for religious occasions, was itself an act of ritual and prayer (McNeil 2010: 305). This would be doubly the case if, as suggested earlier, the offering of food to gods and ancestors was a “materialized prayer” communicating hopes and supplications to otherworldly beings, it follows that the creation of food for such a sacred purpose could easily be seen as an extension of the ritual process (McNeil 2010: 294).

Another important role available to Maya women in their communities today is that of Mother/Father (Joyce 2001: 110, Bernal-García 2002: 235, Reilly 2002: 320, Bassie-Sweet 2002: 170). These contemporary Maya holy people are considered the living embodiment of balanced gender complementarity, which is considered essential to maintain the social and natural harmony of a community (Reilly 2002: 320). “This title [Mother/Father] identifies the bearer, no matter what their sex, as balanced and harmonious and thus an individual who can ritually intercede with the restorative power of cosmic forces when balance and harmony are lacking in the natural order” (Reilly 2002: 320-1). The position of Mother/Father is usually held by a married couple, and both share in the status and prestige of the office (Bassie-Sweet 2002: 170). In modern

Quiché communities ritual diviners known as Daykeepers usually also work as a married pair to serve the ritual needs of their community, including midwifery performed by women and matchmaking performed by men (Bernal-García 2002: 235). Given their participation in important ritual events in the present, it seems likely that Maya women in the past also potentially worked in similar capacities in their communities to maintain balance and order. This may have been manifested in ceremonial roles played by a Mother/Father individual or pair in the context of ritual feasts held to celebrate the symbolic renewal of agricultural and cosmological fertility, as exemplified in the ballgame.

Discussion:

In the preceding sections I have argued that the ancient Maya worldview was composed of complexly interconnected beliefs and understandings about the world they inhabited and their relation to it. In a work of this limited scope it is impossible to include the entirety of diverse elements which functioned alongside and interacted with the ideas I have presented. I have focused on the themes most relevant to the topic I wish to highlight: the inadequacy of the existing formulation of feasting practices understood as serving the purpose of an elite male actor functioning independently of those around him. Though it is not impossible that such an individual existed, it is far more likely that those who hosted feasts and participated in ballgames understood their participation in a very different light than we might impose upon them today. In this final section I would like to draw together the themes discussed above and attempt to show how, when considered together, they may represent an intricate and multifaceted worldview which invites a more holistic and integrative approach to the explication of social interactions of this nature.

The first point to be made is that both feasting and the ballgame likely occurred together frequently in the Mesoamerican world (Fox 1996: 492). Though obtaining evidence of activity from the surface of a ballcourt itself is difficult due to the regular clearing of the courts for games and rituals, it is possible to glean ideas of what occurred on or around them from the middens associated with ballcourt areas (Fox 1996: 490). John Fox argues for the likelihood of feasting in conjunction with the ballgame by emphasizing the powerful symbolic potential inherent in these two events for social manipulation and power negotiation (Fox 1996: 494).

Feasts in the monumental setting of the ballcourt would have been both more impressive and more symbolically charged than feasts in domestic settings. By linking feasts to the cosmological drama of the ballgame, the sponsor claimed prestige by demonstrating control over both social and supernatural resources. (Fox 1996: 494)

Here again, however, is the language of prestige and control of resources. Fox takes seriously the importance of ideological motivation in feasting practices related to the ballgame, but ultimately subsumes them to the overriding Nietzschean logic of the inevitable will to power. The connections Fox draws between the ritual nature of both the ballgame and feasting are important, especially his advocacy of “an understanding of ballcourts and associated rituals as polysemous, communicating multiple effects and meanings” (Fox 1996: 487), however he ultimately neglects those other meanings in favour of an explanation focusing solely on political maneuverings.

Part of the difficulty with utilizing an approach dominated by material-political explanations is that it buries the multiplicity of other factors which may influence a person’s actions and decisions under a dominant and exclusionary explanatory mechanism. A person is constituted at the intersection of diverse elements of identification such as: age, gender, class, ethnicity, race, and sexuality (Crenshaw 1991). One or multiple of these elements may be privileged in one time and place, and take a secondary role in other contexts, depending on the nature of the interaction. For instance, a woman among the ancient Maya may have understood her role as a wife and mother within her own household as being different from her role at a public event, such as a feast, where she was also a representative of her household, class, and community. Depending on which point she occupied in her lifecycle she may have held a subordinate position to other members of her community, as when she may have gone through initiation ceremonies as a child or adolescent (Landa 1978: 43-5). Alternatively upon marriage and the acknowledged completion of full personhood she may have in turn

acquired greater status and influence over other members of her household and community, though perhaps even then remaining of lesser standing in comparison to community elders or elites (Clendinnen 1982: 430, Klein 2001: 189).

In imagining the possible trajectories that led people to participate in feasts and ballgames it is important to remember that social interactions are always a negotiation. It is not a simple thing for one person to impose their will upon another, and still less simple to disguise that imposition within a fallacy of mutual goodwill. All of the people involved in such an enterprise will be implicated in its outcome, and to suppose a strictly top-down system of power is to forget the potential for contestation and resistance. Though not often discussed in the literature, these enterprises of social manipulation also have the potential to fail. Support or affirmation is not a guarantee, and it is probable that most of those who embarked upon a project of 'personal aggrandizement' may never have seen it come to fruition. On the other hand, it is also important to remember that a person's complicity in contributing to the social advancement of another is not always the result of that person being duped by a wily manipulator, but can also be a conscious choice based on the perceived benefits that supporter might in turn receive, such as protection, advocacy, or aid in times of hardship. A ballgame and accompanying feast may indeed have been sponsored by a particular household or individual, but in most instances a wide cross-section of society may have been involved in these events, either as participants or observers (Scarborough 1991: 130).

In discussions of this kind as well it is often easy to overlook other possible motivators which may have prompted people to participate in these events, such as building and maintaining networks of support and alliance. To posit a single host for a feast or ballgame in every case is to privilege the individual over the collective, an imposition of modern Western values on a past which did not necessarily function

according to the same rules as our society. It is possible that a household or entire community may have chosen to hold such an event for many different purposes, perhaps in celebration of a good harvest, victory in war, in commemoration of an important community member's death, ritual calendrical events, or to thank or beseech gods and ancestors for some favour. Even if a feast was sponsored by a particular individual, the time, energy and effort which necessarily must have gone into mounting an event of larger scale would most likely not have been shouldered by a single person. The combined effort of members of a kingroup or community must have been essential in many cases for the success of such an event, especially considering the time-consuming and laborious nature of many ancient cooking practices.

For instance, among the Maya the traditional practice of grinding corn into flour on a stone metate (mortar) can take hours, and was in some cases seen as being equivalent to the amount of labour a man put into cultivating a milpa (O'Connor 2010: 503). At the El Salvadoran site of Cerén evidence has been found of communal food preparation at the domestic structure of a prominent lineage, based on the presence of several metates without corresponding manos (hand-held grinding stones) (Brown et al 2002: 91). It has been hypothesized that women from the community would gather at this dwelling to prepare food for special occasions, bringing their portable manos with them to contribute time and labour to the production of feast-day foods (ibid).

To devote such significant time and energy to the production of a feast the women (and perhaps children) who prepared the food must have had some form of significant investment in the process and outcome of the event. Perhaps if, as suggested above, food was materialized prayer and the making of it an act of prayer in itself, the food which these women cooked represented an aspect of their contribution to the ritual process. Indeed, Landa records of the Maya women he encountered that "[t]hey were very devout

and pious, rendering many devotions to their idols, burning incense before them, offering gifts of cotton, food and drink; it was also their charge to prepare the offerings of food and drink to be made during the ceremonies” (Landa1978: 56). The act of preparing ritual meals may have been a form of communication with the beings of the Otherworlds for Maya women.

It is a common oversight in modern, secular, Westernized scholarship to dismiss religious belief as a valid motivating factor, and to substitute a sublimated desire for prestige and social control in its stead. As Saba Mahmood argues, “within our secular epistemology, we tend to translate religious truth as force, a play of power that can be tracked back to the machinations of economic and geopolitical interests” (Mahmood 2005: XI). However, among the ancient Maya, belief in gods, ancestors and supernatural powers was likely to have been a powerful presence woven through everyday experience, and not easily separable from their worldview (Uriarte 2001: 46, McNeil 2010: 312, Stross 2010: 554, Christenson 2010: 582). To fail to take this aspect of the ancient Maya experience seriously would be to cancel out a significant facet of richness and depth from our understanding of their lived experience. There is evidence that ballgames and associated feasts were held at important times of the yearly cycle, such as equinoxes and solstices, when the cosmological symbolism of the ballgame was especially potent (Cohodas 1975: 110). If this was the case, then it is possible that the timing of such events played a significant role in their ritual importance, perhaps signifying a celebration, reaffirmation, and continuing dedication to the cyclical principles of fertility, death and renewal symbolized in the ballgame.

Conclusion:

The traditional conception of feasting practices in archaeological literature is an inadequate framework for appreciating the full array of possible significance such events may have held in the past. The narrow focus on an elite male agent intent upon his own aggrandizement has functioned to exclude other possible actors and motivations from our view and limit our understanding of these complex events. I am not suggesting a quantum leap in methods of identification of such activities in the past. Much of the material necessary to understand feasting practices in a more holistic way is already available to us. It is not so much the ability to find new and previously unknown markers of feasting in the archaeological record which is crucial, but the necessity of asking different questions and establishing a different framework of possibility around the data we already have.

Taking the Maya world as an example, given what has already been established archaeologically and theoretically about their culture and lifeways, it is possible to see that feasting practices in association with ritual and social events, such as the ballgame, were an intricately symbolic affair. Requiring the participation of multiple community members to prepare and stage such an event, many members of the household, lineage, or community would have had a stake in the success or failure of such an event, and all likely contributed in some way. This contribution could have been made through the donation of raw resources, the processing of those resources into consumable products, their performance in ritual practices or simply in their presence and support of such an event. Alternatively, dissenting members may have been able to make pointed statements about their belief in the legitimacy or potential for success of such a venture by not being

present, not contributing time or labour, or by actively attempting to undermine the process in various ways.

Given these considerations I would like to posit feasting as a collective process and activity, which was necessarily multivocal and polyvalent in its scope. Feasting, particularly in the Maya world, was an affair undertaken by a group of people who represented different positionalities within their society, were likely from different social strata, and divided by age, gender and a host of other subject markers, yet united by a common ideology and understanding of the process by which they could create and maintain symbolic relationships with the gods, ancestors, and cycles of fertility and renewal. It is crucial not to underestimate the importance of such beliefs and customs within a society, and to take seriously the possibility that these may have been important motivating factors for a person's decisions and actions. This consideration of feasting practices in conjunction with ballcourt ritual among the ancient Maya may serve as an example of the ways in which it is possible to expand our understanding of what (and who) constituted a feast, and how such an event may have functioned within the society it took place in. In other words, it is time to decentre the reigning conception of feasts as events taking place for and by elite male subjects and to start making room for everyone else at the table.

References

- Barba de Piña Chán, B. (2002) 'The Popol Vuh and the Decline of Maya Women's Status' in L. S. Gustafson and A. M. Trevelyan (eds) *Ancient Maya Gender Identity and Relations*, pp. 191-226. Westport: Bergin and Garvey.
- Bassie-Sweet, K. (2002) 'Corn Deities and the Male/Female Principle' in L. S. Gustafson and A. M. Trevelyan (eds) *Ancient Maya Gender Identity and Relations*, pp. 169-190. Westport: Bergin and Garvey.
- Bernal-García, M. E. (2002) 'A Divine Couple's Gender Roles in the Setting of the Earth at Palenque' in L. S. Gustafson and A. M. Trevelyan (eds) *Ancient Maya Gender Identity and Relations*, pp. 227-279. Westport: Bergin and Garvey.
- Bradley, D. E. (2001) 'Gender, Power, and Fertility in the Olmec Ritual Ballgame' in E. M. Whittington (ed) *The Sport of Life and Death: The Mesoamerican Ballgame*, pp. 33-39. Charlotte: Mint Museum of Art
- Bray, T. L. (2003) 'The Commensal Politics of Early States and Empires' in T. L. Bray (ed) *The Archaeology and Politics of Food and Feasting in Early States and Empires*, pp. 1-13. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Brown, L. A. et al. (2002) 'Household Production of Extra-Household Ritual at the Cerén Site, El Salvador' in P. Plunket (ed) *Domestic Ritual in Ancient Mesoamerica*, pp. 83-92. Los Angeles: The Cotsen Institute of Archaeology
- Butler, J. (1999) *Gender Trouble*, New York: Routledge.
- Christenson, A. J. (2010) 'Maize Was Their Flesh: Ritual Feasting in the Maya Highlands', in J. E. Staller and M. Carrasco (eds) *Pre-Columbian Foodways: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Food, Culture, and Markets in Ancient Mesoamerica*, pp. 577-600. New York: Springer.
- Clark, J.E. and Blake, M. (1994) 'The power of prestige: competitive generosity and the emergence of rank societies in lowland Mesoamerica', in E. M. Brumfiel and J.W. Fox (eds) *Factional Competition and Political Development in the New World*, pp. 17-30. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clendinnen, I. (1982) 'Yucatec Maya Women and the Spanish Conquest: Role and Ritual in Historic Reconstruction' , *Journal of Social History Special Issue on the History of Love* 5(3): 427-442.

- Cohodas, M. (2002) 'Multiplicity and Discourse in Maya Gender Relations' in L. S. Gustafson and A. M. Trevelyan (eds) *Ancient Maya Gender Identity and Relations*, pp. 11-53. Westport: Bergin and Garvey.
- Cohodas, M. (1991) 'Ballgame Imagery of the Maya Lowlands: History and Iconography', in V. L. Scarborough and D. R. Wilcox (eds) *The Mesoamerican Ballgame*, pp. 251-288. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.
- Cohodas, M. (1975) 'The Symbolism and Ritual Function of the Middle Classic Ball Game in Mesoamerica' *American Indian Quarterly* 2(2): 99-130.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991) 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color', *Stanford Law Review* 43(6): 1241-1299.
- Dietler, M. (2001) 'Theorizing the Feast: Rituals of Consumption, Commensal Politics, and Power in African Contexts' in M. Dietler and B. Hayden (eds) *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics, and Power*, pp. 65-115. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Dietler, M. and Hayden, B. (2001) 'Digesting the Feast: Good to Eat, Good to Drink, Good to Think', in M. Dietler and B. Hayden (eds) *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics, and Power*, pp. 1-23. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Dornan, J. (2004) 'Blood from the Moon: Gender Ideology and the Rise of Ancient Maya Social Complexity', *Gender and History* 16(2):459-475.
- Fox, J. G. (1996) 'Playing with Power: Ballcourts and Political Ritual in Southern Mesoamerica', *Current Anthropology* 37(3): 483-509.
- Fox, J. G. (1991) 'The Lords of Light Versus the Lords of Dark: The Postclassic Highland Maya Ballgame', in V. L. Scarborough and D. R. Wilcox (eds) *The Mesoamerican Ballgame*, pp. 213-238. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.
- Gómez, M. L. C. (2001) 'Maya Cosmivision and gender perspectives', in *Faces Without Masks: Maya women on identity, gender and ethnicity in Guatemala*, pp.43-55. Oxfam.
- Gillespie, S. D. (1991) 'Ballgames and Boundaries', in V. L. Scarborough and D. R. Wilcox (eds) *The Mesoamerican Ballgame*, pp. 317-345. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.
- Hayden, B. (2001) 'Fabulous Feasts: A Prolegomenon to the Importance of Feasting' in M. Dietler and B. Hayden (eds) *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics, and Power*, pp. 24-64. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.

- Hendon, J. A. (2003) 'Feasting at Home: Community and House Solidarity among the Maya of Southeastern Mesoamerica', in T. L. Bray (ed) *The Archaeology and Politics of Food and Feasting in Early States and Empires*, pp. 203-234. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Hendon, J. A. (2002) 'Household and State in Pre-Hispanic Maya Society: Gender, Identity and Practice', in L. S. Gustafson and A. M. Trevelyan (eds) *Ancient Maya Gender Identity and Relations*, pp. 75-92. Westport: Bergin and Garvey.
- Hill, W. D. and Clark, J. E. (2001) 'Sports, Gambling, and Government: America's First Social Compact?', *American Anthropologist* 103(2): 331-345.
- Howie, L. et al. (2010) 'Potographies and Biographies: The Role of Food in Ritual and Identity as Seen Through Life Histories of Selected Maya Pots and People', in J. E. Staller and M. Carrasco (eds) *Pre-Columbian Foodways: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Food, Culture, and Markets in Ancient Mesoamerica*, pp. 369-398. New York: Springer.
- Joyce, R. (2001) 'Negotiating Sex and Gender in Classic Maya Society' in C. F. Klein (ed) *Gender in Prehispanic America: A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks*, pp. 109-141. Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.
- Joyce R. et al. (1993) 'Women's Work: Images of Production and Reproduction in Pre-Hispanic Southern Central America', *Current Anthropology* 134(3): 255-274.
- Klein, C. (2001) 'None of the Above: Gender Ambiguity in Nahua Ideology' in C. F. Klein (ed) *Gender in Prehispanic America: A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks*, pp. 183-253. Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.
- Landa, D. (1978) *Yucatan Before and After the Conquest*, W. Gates (trans) New York: Dover Publications Inc.
- LeCount, L. (2001) 'Like Water for Chocolate: Feasting and Political Ritual among the Late Classic Maya at Xunantunich, Belize', *American Anthropologist* 102(4): 935-953.
- Lucero, L. (2003) 'The Politics of Ritual: The Emergence of Classic Maya Rulers' *Current Anthropology* 44(4): 523-558.
- Mahmood, S. (2005) *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Mauss, M. (1990) *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, W. D. Halls (trans) New York: W. W. Norton.

- McNeil, C. L. (2010) 'Death and Chocolate: The Significance of Cacao Offering in Ancient Maya Tombs and Caches at Copan, Honduras', in J. E. Staller and M. Carrasco (eds) *Pre-Columbian Foodways: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Food, Culture, and Markets in Ancient Mesoamerica*, pp. 293-314. New York: Springer.
- Miller, M. (2001) 'The Maya Ballgame: Rebirth in the Court of Life and Death', in E. M. Whittington (ed) *The Sport of Life and Death: The Mesoamerican Ballgame*, pp. 79-87. Charlotte: Mint Museum of Art
- O'Connor, A. (2010) 'Maya Foodways: A Reflection of Gender and Ideology' in J. E. Staller and M. Carrasco (eds) *Pre-Columbian Foodways: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Food, Culture, and Markets in Ancient Mesoamerica*, pp. 487-507. New York: Springer.
- Pollock, S. (2003) 'Feasts, Funerals, and Fast Food in Early Mesopotamian States', in T. L. Bray (ed) *The Archaeology and Politics of Food and Feasting in Early States and Empires*, pp. 17-38. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Reilly, K. (2002) 'Female and Male: The Ideology of Balance and Renewal in Elite Costuming among the Classic Period Maya' in L. S. Gustafson and A. M. Trevelyan (eds) *Ancient Maya Gender Identity and Relations*, pp. 319-328. Westport: Bergin and Garvey.
- Scarborough, V. L. (1991) 'Courting the Southern Maya Lowlands: A Study in Pre-Hispanic Ballgame Architecture', in V. L. Scarborough and D. R. Wilcox (eds) *The Mesoamerican Ballgame*, pp. 129-144. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.
- Schele, L. and Friedel, D. (1991) 'The Courts of Creation: Ballcourts, Ballgames, and Portals to the Maya Otherworld', in V. L. Scarborough and D. R. Wilcox (eds) *The Mesoamerican Ballgame*, pp. 289-315. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.
- Stevenson Day, J. (2001) 'Performing on the Court', in E. M. Whittington (ed) *The Sport of Life and Death: The Mesoamerican Ballgame*, pp. 65-77. Charlotte: Mint Museum of Art
- Stross, B. (2010) 'This World and Beyond: Food Practices and the Social Order in Mayan Religion', in J. E. Staller and M. Carrasco (eds) *Pre-Columbian Foodways: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Food, Culture, and Markets in Ancient Mesoamerica*, pp. 553-576. New York: Springer.
- Taladoire, E. and Cloenet, B. (1991) "'Bois Ton Sang, Beaumanoir': The Political and Conflictual Aspects of the Ballgame in the Northern Chiapas Area", in V. L. Scarborough and D. R. Wilcox (eds) *The Mesoamerican Ballgame*, pp. 161-174. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

Uriarte, M. T. (2001) 'Unity in Duality: The Practice and Symbols of the Mesoamerican Ballgame' in E. M. Whittington (ed) *The Sport of Life and Death: The Mesoamerican Ballgame*, pp. 41-49. Charlotte: Mint Museum of Art

Whittington, E. M. (2001) 'Introduction' to E. M. Whittington (ed) *The Sport of Life and Death: The Mesoamerican Ballgame*, pp. 17-19. Charlotte: Mint Museum of Art

Vita

Nadya Helena Prociuk was born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. After completing her work at Oakwood Collegiate Institute she entered the University of King's College in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. During the summer of 2004 she attended the University of Toronto, and during the summer of 2005 she attended the University of Alberta in Ossaia, Italy. In the summer of 2006 she attended Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from the University of King's College in May 2007. She entered the Graduate School at the University of Texas at Austin in September of 2008.

Permanent address: 191 Bartlett Ave, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6H 3G2

This report was typed by Nadya Helena Prociuk