result of human sacrifice. The imagery of the western side of the plaza clearly represented death, sacrifice, and dismemberment and the borrow pit symbolized an Underworld entrance. West is the direction of "death and the Underworld" (Schele and Miller 1986: 42); hence, the location of the remains to the west is understandable. In Group A, Underworld and death symbolism of the west were further illuminated by the presence of four speleothems, the only such objects found in Late Postclassic/Contact period deposits at Zacpetén. These objects originated in caves, obvious Underworld symbols, and are often found in Maya burials and caches (Brady et al 1997: 740). Two of the speleothems at Zacpetén were found in Str. 615 and two others in Op. 1000; hence, the western placement and artifact content of this open hall associates it with death and the Underworld. Human remains were also found on the west side of Group C and the central group of Topoxté, demonstrating that the western side of the Petén temple assemblages is associated with death and the Underworld.

While the buildings and deposits of the western side of the *sakbe* are low, those of the east are placed on high platforms. Both Group A and Group C have temples on high platforms with multiple deities in their superstructure. In Maya cosmology, the east is the place of life, heat, and cosmic balance. In both groups, the temples are centered on the eastern edge of the plaza. In many Yucatecan groups, the east is associated with celestial layers and the height of the temples and the presence of the deities seem to echo this at Zacpetén. In Group C, thirteen steps led to the top of the temple and nine steps on the western edge of the plaza led down to a lower platform, the numbers thirteen and nine represent the heavens and the Underworld, respectively.

The relationship between the western and eastern sides of the plaza in Group A seems to parallel that of sacrifice/death and rebirth. The deposit of human remain in Op. 1000 in the ranges of A.D. 1321 to 1352 (26% relative probability) and A.D. 1389 to 1437 (74% r.p.). The initial construction of the temple assemblage appears to have taken place between A.D. 1306 to 1367 (40% r.p.) and A.D. 1383 to 1441 (60% r.p.). Hence, the deposition of the remains correlates with the construction of the temple assemblage. It also occurred around the time of the fall of Mayapán and the end of the Xiw *may* cycle. Interestingly enough, a Kowoj elite was one of the four *b'atab'* at the fall of Mayapán and was likely Xiw (Edmonson 1986: 38-39). The dismembered human remains in Op. 1000 evoke the similar end to Itzam Cab Ayin at the creation of the universe, whose sacrifice was reenacted in period-ending rituals in Colonial Yucatán. The remains seem to be an initial sacrifice reenacting that of creation and allowing the rise of the First-True-Mountain (the temples) from the primordial sea (the plazas).

The location of the pit or cenote in the same position in all four groups of the temple assemblages with two open halls illustrates its importance in orienting the groups. The Itzmal Ch'en cenote at Mayapán was used by recent inhabitants of nearby Telachaquillo to make offerings for rain (Thompson 1970: 261). It may have been similarly used in the Late Postclassic period. However, another feature found in the Itzmal Ch'en is a round shrine, next to which lies a stucco sculpture of the Central Mexican earth goddess, Tlaltecuhtli, in the "birth-giving squat" being dismembered by two serpents, likely Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca---the initial sacrifice allowing the separation of the earth and sky (Klein 1976: 55; Taube 1992: 128-131; Taube and Miller 1993: 167). This is the sacrifice and division of the flood caiman and is an overt

statement of violence and sexuality, which of course brings one back to the womb-like form of cenotes, caves, and borrow pits and the dismembered sacrificial victims in Op. 1000 at Zacpetén.

One may also recall that Yucatecan saint images, the modern equivalents to deities, were found/born in caves and borrow pits (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934: 109) and that Xiw and Lacandon gods and ancestors were born from flowers. Flower births are earth births similar to cave births (J. Brady 2000: personal comm.) and flower imagery may have been associated with caves and the earth goddess (Heyden 1981: 27). Hence, if the Petén Kowoj were part of the Xiw and had flower birth creation myths, the northwest cave component in their ceremonial groups may have represented social origins. The cenotes and borrow pits may have embodied primordial female power allowing creation and the birth of mountains/temple pyramids, ancestors, and the gods. However, creation and regeneration do not come without a cost and at Zacpetén, the dismembered individuals in the Ops. 1000 and 1001 appear to have paid the tab.

The remains in Op. 1001 were deposited just below the second construction of the plaza, which corresponded with the second construction of the *sakbe* and all the other buildings in Group A. The second sacrificial event directly preceded the second construction and appears to have been another reenactment of the primordial sacrifice of creation, though on a smaller scale than found in Op.1000. While the west is the place of death, it may also be paralleled with female creative power and the womb (Gossen and Leventhal 1993: 196-199). These sacrifices provided the energy or offering necessary to allow rebirth. While no dates are available for the second construction of Group A, it likely occurred during a large calendric interval such as a *k'atun* or half-*k'atun*.

The architecture and activity areas in Group A and Group C of Zacpetén and the central group of Topoxté demonstrate the essential east/ west and life/ death dichotomy that underlies Maya cosmology and ideology. Participants could experience and play a part in social birth, death, and rebirth through the construction and reconstruction of this architectural model. However, the groups are more than models. As representation of primordial creation, these groups shared in and took power from creation itself. These were consecrated ceremonial centers with roots in creation.

The microcosmic model apparent in Group A may have also existed in the temple floor plans, but their meanings are less easily discerned. The long interior altars that bisect each of the three structures are also points of symbolic divergence, just as Str. 603 is for Group A. Their forms seem to parallel that of Str. 603. One can further speculate that the medial altar stood in the position of central focus, paralleling the placement of the temple. Finally, the performers in the temple primarily sat parallel to the medial axis of the temple analogous to the position of participants in the open hall. While speculative, the temple layout may be a microcosm of the temple assemblage, a further refining and specification of essential categories. One problem with the proposed association is that god pots to the west of the temple do not correspond with Underworld imagery on the west of the plaza. The god pots in the temples are not dead, as living god pots in Lacandon god houses follow the same pattern. Nevertheless, one can see in both the plaza and the temple, the long low structures in the form of an altar or *sakbe* connect two different planes of existence. In both cases, participants to the east make offerings to the west. Hence, the repeated pattern might reflect essential ritualizations of intra-planar relationships rather than just a microcosm.

Temple Assemblages as Ethnic Icons

In Petén, Guatemala and Belize, temple assemblages, have only been encountered to the east of Lake Petén Itza, north of Lake Macanché, no further east than Tipú, and no further north than Topoxté. Outside of this region, ceremonial assemblages are open hall-based rather than temple-based. Excavations at Nixtun-Ch'ich' revealed that like open halls in basic ceremonial groups at Mayapán, halls in the Itza region doubled as god houses (Pugh 1996: 212). It seems likely that the architectural correlate of both Late Postclassic Itza and Mopan population in Petén is the open hall-based ceremonial group. The prototypical Mopan assemblage might be characterized as having a large hall with two or more smaller halls facing into it, such as found at El Fango and Yalain (D. Rice 2000: person comm.). A clear Itza pattern is yet to be defined. The Early or early Late Postclassic occupants of Zacpetén seem to have had open-hall based ceremonial groups, but a population utilizing temple assemblages later displaced these early occupants (Pugh 1999). It has been suggested the Kowoj constructed these temple assemblages.

The temple assemblages at Zacpetén were configurations of ritual space that allowed the intermingling of three primary social categories within the larger Kowoj identity: deities, ancestors, and lineage, "house," or *onen*. Temples and oratorios held effigy censers of deities that existed in different cosmic planes. If these artifacts operated similarly to Lacandon censers, then they and the spaces that contained them were mediate connections between the earth and sky. Oratorios contained an aged or dead deity, separated from the other deities nearly identical to the Lacandon treatment of Sukunkyum, described in Chapter 3. His placement in an oratorio to the east side of the *sakbe* seems contradictory to the model of "west as the Underworld," but the Lacandon

also placed this deity to the east. In addition to being the lord of the Underworld, he was also one of the firstborn of the primary deities and at the onset of creation; he existed in the material world. The low platforms extending from the temples allowed access to deities in a less sacred context. Raised shrines were houses of the dead, perhaps the house of Mensabak or the Late Postclassic/ Contact period equivalent, Chak. They were places where interaction could occur between the living and the dead; therefore, these buildings were also mediate connections between cosmic planes. Open halls were the centers of some sort of corporate group, perhaps real or fictive kin-based social organizations such as lineages, elite "houses," and *onen*.

The temple assemblages at Zacpetén seem to have interwoven various spheres of existence by including council, ancestral, and deity rituals. God houses are the central building of each group and these buildings have activity areas nearly identical to those of Lacandon god houses. The parallel activity areas suggest similar ritual performances and it was suggested that the *balché* rites were conducted at Zacpetén similar to the way they are still performed among the Lacandon. God pots at Zacpetén appear to have been used in the same way as those of the Lacandon, which suggests deeper significance than simply continuity in ritual practice. Lacandon god houses are places where men socialize and are sources of social solidarity among participants and between participants and their dependents. This was likely also the case at Zacpetén, but an obvious difference is that the site has only four god houses. While the god pots and other objects within the temples were the same as Lacandon god houses, the community rather than the household monopolized the temples at Zacpetén. This is a very significant difference. Those who controlled the god house also controlled the god pots within them and, therefore, had

greater access to the deities. In the Lacandon area, each adult male ideally had his own pots and eventually his own god house and mediated between the gods and his family. At Zacpetén, there were only two public god houses and two domestic gods houses, the latter two of which appear to have been later innovations. Hence, at Late Postclassic Zacpetén, mediation was a public event clearly separated from domestic contexts, but Group 719, which appears to have been constructed in the 17th century, suggests a melding of public and elite household ritual.

If community officials controlled ritual mediation with deities, then the unifying effects of mediation would have also belonged to ritual performers. Mediation implies dependence upon another person or deity to interact on one's behalf. A hierarchy of priests once controlled ritual performances in Yucatán and Petén. Hence, instead of families being dependent upon the head of households to intercede with the deities, they depended upon community priests. God pots were monopolized by a single group and placed in restricted locations, thereby limiting direct access to them. Nevertheless, a shrine in front of the temple allowed everyone to present offerings to god pots, but not inside the god house. Furthermore, spectators seated in open halls and standing in plazas would have witnessed and unified in ritual events.

As mentioned, god houses are sacred because they are intermediate between the earth and sky, but they were also alive. Both public temples at Zacpetén were awakened through the placement of caches along the medial axes in front of the altar. God houses at Zacpetén differed from those of the Lacandon as the latter had no caches. The contents of both temple caches were burned and the interior of these vessels appear to have been burning just before the lid was placed upon the cache vessel and it was interred. The

deposition of fire in the heart of the structure established a symbolic hearth and ensouled the building (Stuart 1998: 417-418). In one of the temples at Zacpetén and the main temple of Topoxté, cached/buried beheaded humans also played a role in activating the temple. Ensouling is also evident by the color of stone beads within the cache vessels: green, red, and black. These are the same colors used by the Lacandon to awaken their god pots. The souls of temples were periodically terminated and renewed. During termination, structures were burned or "purified by fire" and their caches removed. Renewal involved reconstruction and the placement of a new cache or soul.

Architectural reconstructions of ceremonial groups, especially those with recurrent forms such as E-Groups and Twin Pyramid Complexes, were timed according to temporal cycles; it is likely that the reconstruction of temple assemblages and ensouling of temples was also so timed. At Zacpetén, the entire ceremonial group, not just the temple, was reconstructed. Since both groups were constructed twice and the rituals in the two were synchronized, it is possible that both groups were reconstructed at the same time. However, radiocarbon dates suggest Group C may have been constructed earlier. The temporal interval between groups and construction phases were probably *k'atun* or half-*k'atun*, though it is impossible to prove such precise intervals without calendric inscriptions.

The fact that the temples had souls and were alive is problematical as the Lacandon god houses provide us with no comparable information. However, if the god house was the same as god pots, then ensouling and awakening the temple established contact with the celestial deities (Stuart 1998: 402). Nevertheless, as mentioned in Chapter 3, many ritually awakened inanimate objects, such as crosses, were actually

considered living and sentient. The awakening of temples also seems to have brought them to life (Freidel and Schele 1989: 233), perhaps as sentient beings.

Temples were alive and, since some were the locations of more powerful events, whether one is speaking of history, ritual offerings, or proof of healing power, they would have been more powerful than others. Therefore, a hierarchy of living ritual spaces would have existed. In the Colonial period, the highest level of this hierarchy was the seat of the *may*, 'born of heaven' (Edmonson 1986: 5), logically followed by those of the *k'atun*, and then others. Just as creation was periodically reflected in ripples of cyclical time, the seating of the *may* was the renewal of the center and would have been an exemplary model emulated by periodic smaller scale renewals within the greater cycle. Objects "born of heaven" were mimicked to appropriate some of their power, divinity, and legitimacy (following Taussig 1993: 2). Mimicked architectural forms were constructed, renewed, and ensouled---in sum, born---at completion of important temporal cycles, thereby linking them with those they imitated.

In addition to intersite hierarchies, differentiations exist between ritual buildings within sites. Temples and their extensions (statue shrines) are the only buildings in the two public temple assemblages with dedication cache vessels. Since temples were also in the medial portion of the eastern edge of the groups, they were also the center of focus. Temples were the heart-soul of the temple assemblage, not just through the power of the cache, but the practice of giving offerings and communicating with the gods. As the heart-soul, these buildings were the closest to creation and the center of cosmic balance (Fischer 1999: 483). The statue shrines were continuations of the medial axis of the temple, but their caches did not contain burnt offerings as seen in the temple caches.

Another transformation in the layout of temple assemblages is found at Cante Island and Coba, where the oratorio has been moved from its position to the right of the temple to a position directly in front of, yet still facing in the same direction as, the temple. In both cases, the open hall and ancestral shrine were oriented by the temple and its ritual performances, which in turn, were centered upon the temple cache. The ceremonial groups were surrounded by numerous domestic groups and were obviously centers of architectural space and, therefore, hearts of social space. The public temple assemblages at Zacpetén meet the criteria of centers defined in Chapter 2: they are the location of monumental constructions, foci of sociopolitical activity, socially ambiguous relative to the buildings centered by them, linked to creation and cyclical time, boundaries between the earth and other cosmic layers, and, as explained below, the centers of social identity.

Among many speakers of Yucatec Maya, ritual objects and practices are sources and symbols of social identity. As mentioned, prominent central buildings often become symbols of the society that built them (Barthes 1979: 2-26) and this appears to have been true in Mesoamerica. In Mixtec codices (Smith 1973: 172-175) and paintings on Maya ceramics (Coggins 1979: 263) and murals (Pugh n.d.), images of temples represent places and social groups. Furthermore, even imitations of architectural styles may have advertised political connections with the represented places (Kowalski 1999: 102-105). Cyclical replications of buildings such as the Castillos of Chich'en Itza, Mayapán, and supposedly that of Champoton created chains of representation illuminating historical continuity (P. Rice 2000: personal comm.). Place of origin was another source of social identity and was often represented by ceremonial architecture constructed to mimic that of the homeland (Boone 1991: 145). Given these examples, it

is suggested that ceremonial architecture provided Maya groups with symbols of place, history, political ties, and social identity.

The Kowoj claimed to have migrated from Mayapán and built ceremonial assemblages nearly identical to that site. Migrants from Mayapán were known to have built ceremonial buildings upon arrival in their provinces and origin from the city was very prestigious (Landa 1941: 39 and 98). Mayapán-style temple assemblages at Zacpetén were architectural metaphors of Kowoj claims to origin from Mayapán. These groups were built to resemble those at Mayapán, constructed, and renewed according to calendrical cycles. Resemblance is a means through which symbolic connection and continuity are made and a part of the power of an object or entity is appropriated. Renewals occurred cyclically and were, therefore, linked to the initial construction of the assemblages at Zacpetén, which were in turn connected to the model assemblages at Mayapán. The heart-centers or souls of the temple assemblages were tied to those of Mayapán, which were heaven born and ultimately tied to creation. Hence, the assemblages at Zacpetén contained part of the essence of creation and origins from Mayapán: of cosmic foundation and ethnic foundation.

Factionalism

The model of temple assemblages as symbols of migration from Mayapán that also act as emblems of Kowoj identity becomes problematic when one considers that there are three assemblages at Zacpetén, at least two at Topoxté, one at Muralla de León, and possibly variants at Ixlú and Tipú. The northern Lacandon are even more divided as each household ideally has its own god house. Nevertheless, practices within the various Lacandon god houses were patterned nearly identically to those of Zacpetén. All temple

assemblages in the Kowoj region were emblems of Kowoj identity. As mentioned, sacred images in Yucatan may depict the same saint and have the same name, but they may be considered distinct beings (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934: 108).

Given that each assemblage includes an open hall, the architectural symbol of a corporate group, such as a lineage, *onen*, or "house," and is surrounded by numerous residential structures, they seem to have been centers of social factions within the site. Some minor differences in practice where found in the two assemblages and human image censers in the temples of each group are made slightly differently, as well. Group C also contains more bird imagery than Group A. Nevertheless, these various differences do not necessarily indicate the form of intra-site factionalism. Possibilities include senior/ junior B'atab' pairings and social dualism of kin-based groups such as *onen*. Another problem is that Group A contains two open halls that also appear to belong to distinct groups, one of which does not have a temple assemblage. The same pairings are possible explanations of the division in Group A. Since *onen* are strong sources of identity that are unified under the Kowoj category, it seems possible, though speculative, that this social division could explain the presence of Group A and Group C. Despite the minor differences, ritual practices were nearly identical in Group A and Group C, and this conformity would have help perpetuate internal social unity at Zacpetén. If this were the case, it is likely that the constructions, then reconstructions of Groups A and C occurred simultaneously as the dual society replicated itself.

The presence of assemblages at different sites may also be indicative of social divisions within the Kowoj area. Each site had its own social center(s) containing a temple assemblage. The degree of conformity in practice between these groups and those

of Zacpetén is unknown, but it is known that one temple at Topoxté had activity areas very similar to those of Zacpetén. Nevertheless, the buildings lying directly in front of the two temples at Topoxté are different from those at Zacpetén though they are similar to each other. These differences may indicate strong variation in practice and some social variation between the two sites. Hence, communal variations and identities exist within the larger Kowoj identity. Alternatively, if no construction occurred in the ceremonial groups at Topoxté after A.D. 1450, the differences may have been the result of temporal change.

Temple assemblages in Petén suggest ties with Mayapán and were likely symbols of migration and, hence, symbolic connections with the city. However, communal factions may have existed within the Kowoj area and sub-factions may have been present within each community. These slight variations in ritual performance are not surprising. All people have numerous identities with greater or lesser degrees of exclusion. Overall, the Kowoj area was unified by the presence of temple assemblages because they exist throughout the eastern part of the Petén lakes region. They communicated to all Late Postclassic/ Contact period occupants of Petén the foundations of Kowoj identity, thereby illuminating criteria for distinguishing the in-group from the out-group and creating social boundaries.

Temple assemblages in the Kowoj area were exemplary centers. They provided an interactive model of cosmogony, group origins, and divisions within society. Since the group could interact with the model through periodical reconstruction, it was subject to change through time. During the 17th or 18th century, the Kowoj exemplary center was

appropriated and modified by an elite social group occupying Group 719; however, this modification was but one of many in the repetition of the temple assemblage.

Architectural Transformations

Between the first construction of temple assemblages at Mayapán and their transplantation to Zacpetén, the raised shrine had been shifted from its position opposite the temple to one of opposition with one side of the open hall. Corresponding with this transformation was the appearance of masonry rectangles in the side of the halls that the raised shrine faced. Burials, which presumably had formerly been contained in the raised shrine, seem to have been interred beneath these rectangles. Furthermore, the statue shrine was reoriented with its length parallel with the medial axis of the temple and a masonry altar was added to its end.

The primary change in the groups was the reorientation of the raised shrine. One possible explanation for the transformation is a reevaluation of participation of deity avatars in funereal rituals. The Northern Lacandon do not use god pots in funeral rites because contact with dead spirits will immediately kill the god pots. At Zacpetén, god pots were secluded in the temples and appear to have played no part in funeral rituals or ancestral rites. The shift of the ancestral shrine from its former opposition with the temple distanced the dead ancestors from the deities. The transformation also indicates a possible reevaluation of ancestors themselves---they were essentially removed from the spotlight. Even the burials that they once contained had been transferred to the open hall.

It is uncertain how late Group A and Group C were utilized as fully functioning temple assemblages. A white clay pipe stem encountered in ceremonial trash behind Str. 615 provides a *terminus post quem* of A.D. 1595 (though they likely appeared in the

Maya area much later). Two temples were found outside the two ceremonial groups, one of which appears to have been part of a basic ceremonial group and the other part of a modified temple assemblage, Group 719. Only the latter group was excavated and proved to have been constructed rather late with an uncorrected AMS date (Beta-107791) of AD 1750 $\pm$ 40. As mentioned, it was an elite residential group, but it also had all the activity areas of a temple assemblage. Group 719 combines domestic activities with public ceremonial activities, which at first seems to put a damper on the crisp division of public ritual space and everyday life, but is actually just a new form of temple assemblage that incorporated the domestic space of an elite family into its layout.

Residential groups often have clearly demarcated ceremonial areas, but Group 719 deviates from usual practices because instead of ceremonial areas within a domestic group, the domestic group was constructed as a ceremonial area. More specifically, it was constructed as a temple assemblage. It is common for elites to dress their residences in "monumental signs," but such mixing of domesticity and monumentality is often indicative of social change (Lefebvre 1991: 223). Private individuals had appropriated the instruments of collective memory and the exemplary center, the temple assemblage, and its rituals as signs of social and cosmic origins.

The early 18th century was a time of great change for Petén. The Itza hegemony had been destroyed and replaced by the Spaniards and many Kowoj central leaders had been killed in revolts or been relocated to mission communities. The central rulership had been dismantled, leaving family units to unite in new configurations or survive independently. Many families chose the latter and moved to their *milpa* houses (Jones 1998: 350). With the breakdown of central authority and dispersion of population,

families were in a situation similar to that of the modern Lacandon Maya and many practices that had formerly been controlled by central ritual specialists were taken over by families. Even so, one elite family seems to have attempted to maintain Kowoj symbols and practices of social unity. In addition, by dressing their residence in the signs of group origins, thereby associating themselves with Mayapán, these elites would have added to their own prestige and power. The occupants must have been religious elites as they continued Kowoj ritual practices in addition to the architectural mimicry. It is possible that the last *k'atun* celebrated at Zacpetén was seated in this elite residence. Nevertheless, in the end, the residence was suddenly abandoned and the temple burned.

At first appearance, the termination of Group 719 might appear to have been conducted by outsiders because the group temple was burned, but other evidence suggests otherwise. The occupants of the buildings had been preparing for a ceremony as red paint was being produced in the back room. One of the objects involved in the ceremony was the Kulut Modeled image censer that rested upon the medial shrine/ oratorio. This object faced to the west with its offering cup inside its bowl. This is the same pattern the Northern Lacandon use to kill or terminate their god pots; hence, this god pot was terminated or dead. The elite family occupying Group 719 likely terminated the group when they moved elsewhere: either to a mission settlement, likely on the north shore of Lake Petén Itzá, or beyond the reach of Spanish control.

During the Late Postclassic period, the god house was part of temple assemblages, but its modern day descendents among the Lacandon Maya of Chiapas, México are part of residential groups. Instead of resting within centers, god houses provide each family with the ability to communicate with and make offerings to deities. The ancestral shrines

and open halls have been eliminated and rituals focus upon pleasing the angry gods. Despite the transformation in ritual space, the structure of activities within god houses is little changed. The god pots themselves are much more abstract, perhaps to avoid attracting the attention of the Spaniards. The god houses no longer contain caches; however, stones within god pots, which came from the "houses" of the gods, to establish contact with deities. The houses of deities are ruined cities that are the center of the world and important places in the historical consciousness of the Lacandon just as Mayapán was to the Kowoj.

Migrant populations often use a real or imagined homelands as a foundation of social identity (Malkki 1997: 70-72; Smith 1992: 438-452). The Kowoj of Petén, Guatemala, migrated from Mayapán sometime after the collapse of the city in AD 1441 and used their prestigious claim of ancestry as a powerful social datum. This origin myth bound them together and distinguished them from the Itza, who claimed to have migrated from Chich'en Itza. Chich'en Itza and Mayapán were connected in cyclical time, two manifestations of the heaven born seat of the *may*. Interestingly enough, just as Mayapán succeeded Chich'en Itza, the Kowoj sought to follow the Itza as the central rulers of Petén. Hence, through their strategic claim of ancestry, they both grounded their social identities and argued for the right of succession. Since the Itza and Kowoj claimed to have had origins outside Petén, neither claimed to have autochthonous ties to their territory as is common in modern myths of ethnic origins. The migration claims are even more interesting because the Itza may have actually occupied in Petén in the Classic period (Schele and Mathews 1999: 187; Boot 1995: 333-335). Migrations and their associated trials and tribulations were a form of political legitimacy in Postclassic

Mesoamerica because such origin myths are present among the Itza of Yucatán (Schele and Mathews 1998: 202-204), the Quiché of the Guatemalan highlands (Tedlock 1985: 171), and the Aztec of Central México (Boone 1991: 121-148).

The Spaniards documented that return migrations from Mayapán resulted in the construction of temples (Landa 1941: 39). The Kowoj celebrated their ancestral origins by constructing ceremonial groups nearly identical to those of Mayapán. These architectural groups were both part of Kowoj collective memory and visual analogies that established continuity between the group and their apical ancestors. Since no other groups in Petén constructed temple assemblages, they were clearly markers of group boundaries. In addition to information concerning social origins, the assemblages contained within them a basic template of the creation and organization of the universe. They also provided the Kowoj with a means of communicating with the deities and preventing the destruction of the universe. Temple assemblages were centers that unified the Kowoj, held their most crucial collective memories, and bridged the divided universe.

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