

## RITUAL EFFIGIES AND CORPOREALITY IN KAQCHIKEL MAYA SOUL HEALING



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To treat some cases of soul-loss, Kaqchikel Mayas use ritual effigies of the sufferer. These effigies, called *k'al k'u'x*, are made by wrapping the sufferer's clothing around a wooden armature. For the effigy to be a viable ritual surrogate, the ritualist must douse it with water, heat it, and strike it during a soul-calling ceremony. This handling instantiates corporeality in the effigy by kindling normative body states in it, states that must be stimulated in the sufferer's own body for it to spiritually reintegrate. Such Maya ritual substitution practices are how Kaqchikels deploy ritual surrogation processes that hinge on both an understanding of the body and knowledge of the sacred landscape. This article explores the settings and applications of ritual surrogation, which is a recurrent feature of Maya healing. (Kaqchikel Mayas, ritual effigies, corporeality, surrogation)

Using a ritual effigy is one way of addressing what Kaqchikel Mayas call *xib'iril*, an affliction that glosses roughly as a state resulting from fright, and generally referred to as soul loss. It is common enough; anybody can develop it. In most cases, when a person shows signs of soul loss, a parent or spouse will find a ritualist to treat it and will arrange a meeting. If, however, the afflicted one cannot attend one of the treatment sessions, of which there are usually at least three, the parent or spouse will make an effigy, called a *k'al k'u'x*, to receive the treatment. The treatment for the afflicted person is then done to the effigy. The effigy does not replace the client (Hutcheson 2003: 288), but rather transacts a vital contiguity between the treatment, the client, and the fractioned soul. It can do this because of how it is crafted and activated.

This essay on the use of ritual effigies in a Kaqchikel community examines how ritual corporeality is enacted in them. Based on 15 months of fieldwork between 1995 and 2000, followed by a visit in 2003, it argues that certain crafting methods and clothing set the stage for effigy corporeality, which is then instantiated by striking, dousing, and heating. In order to create effective surrogate effigies, the body's own living principles must be identified and then enacted in the effigies. Effigy use exists within a tradition of ritual surrogation in the Maya area, and is best understood by first discussing the living landscape.

In San Juan Comalapa, as in other Maya communities, spirit-owners of the earth (*rajawala'*) are stewards of different species of animals and also preside

over features of the landscape. They control access to animals, mostly wild, and protect them from illicit hunting and abuse. The rajawala' "own" specific hills and valleys, guard the bounty of their fields, and must be asked for their permission to plant crops. Many Maya narratives report how certain earth "lords" have vast estates and storehouses of riches in the mountains (Cook 2000:201; Oakes 1951:98). People who find themselves in these places are reportedly invited into precarious agreements with the spirits (Warren 1992: 80), and experience radical time shifts when they leave.

People generally try to maintain a respectful, or at least a benign, relationship with the spirits for two good reasons. One is that Kaqchikels recognize that their *abuelos* (ancestors) exist among the spirits in a diffuse way and that they themselves may one day enter that order of being. Second, because the earth lords control the fertility of the earth and cause rain or unleash wind and hailstorms, economic survival rests in their hands. A larger relationship between humans and these beings also exists. Among the Mixtec, humans and earth lords try to maintain a balanced state of relations, a covenant of sorts in which each party acknowledges the importance of the other (Monaghan 1995:223). These deities bestow sustenance and protection on those who give them their devotions, and humans pay what they owe them when they die. In line with this, Mayas often attribute good human health to a state of harmony with the deities and with one's fellows (Holland and Tharp 1964:49).

To maintain good health and ensure good harvests, Mayas are mindful of the nearby rajawala' and some Mayas believe they must also live close to their ancestral spirits. Spiritual problems arose among groups like Q'eq'chi' Maya when they were displaced from their homes during the civil conflict of the early 1980s and could no longer interact with their local spirits (Wilson 1993:127, 131). The ties between Mayas and their local earth lords are acutely critical as they involve safeguarding peoples' souls. Some mountains enclose a community's lineage souls that coexist with those of the living (Vogt 1970:11). For some Tzeltal Mayas, it is better for the ancestral mountain to be far away since it is considered fraught with conflict and likely to cause illness and soul loss (Pitarch 2010:31).

In many towns in the Guatemalan highlands, ritualists burn offerings in accordance with the 260-day sacred calendar (Cook and Offit 2008:50–51; Scott 2009). In Comalapa, only occasional processions, sometimes scheduled according to the Catholic calendar, take place. They are usually staged by sodalities aligned with either the traditional or catechist (Catholic Action) wings of the Church, which have coexisted uneasily in Guatemala since the 1950s (Carey 2006:158–61). Expressions of Maya spirituality in other towns depend on calendrical specialists for ritual direction.

Maya spirituality exists at many levels and with many kinds of observances (Bricker 1981:179; Wilson 1993:128). In Comalapa, for example, belief in spirits underwrites activities as different as traditional dances and truck driving. Kaqchikels give most attention to spirit aid in agriculture. Many families hold occasional *días de campo* (field outings) to thank the rajawala'. Before eating, the household head kneels and offers the local spirit some food and *kuxa* (homemade liquor). A prayer of thanks follows the meal. These outings are a rare chance to get a change of scenery, eat, drink kuxa, and relax. But some Mayas are less inclined to embrace all aspects of them. Catholic Action-allied Mayas discourage the use of alcohol, while *evangélicos* (Protestants) disavow alcohol and beliefs associated with what they consider paganism. This is part of an effort to "clean up" Maya practices, as local Catholic and Protestant clergy say.

Protestant leaders have been especially eager to transform Maya practices along Christian lines, and enact Protestant analogues to widespread Maya-inspired Catholic practices. For instance, Protestant churches have adopted the practice of Catholic Mayas who donate some of their first fruits to their churches, which then sell the produce to raise money for social service programs and church upkeep. Protestant churches have also adopted a prayer practice associated with Catholic masses, when sick congregants are invited to receive a special blessing (*evangelio*). The sick persons' godparents can accompany them, in hopes of curing what is often said to be soul loss. While Protestants do not avow soul loss in their adaptation of this Sunday prayer, they do encourage family accompaniment during the healing.

Traditionalist Mayas say that doing *días de campo* and Holy Week rituals is in keeping with the will of God. Affirming this, a soul-therapist named Victor said that not long after he planted his milpa, right next to an *evangélico's* field, it was hit by a strong *aire*, a supernatural wind. It knocked down all of the *evangélico's* plantings, but none of Victor's. "One sees (what happens) to those who don't keep the days holy," he concluded. Catholics have also felt vindicated by practices surrounding their patron saint, San Juan Bautista. In recent decades Comalapans carried the image of the saint, who enjoys high status among local rajawala', to the top of a high hill when the annual rains were delayed so he could behold the dry milpas and authorize the hill to release rain. Recalling this practice, a parish priest chuckled and said that when the rains are late, even *evangélicos* ask him when the image of San Juan will be brought to make rain. San Juan Bautista is the saint most turned to in times of distress, but a few other images in the principal church also are approached for help.

Given the many agents that affect peoples' lives, the Maya ritual healer must have a deep understanding of this spiritual landscape, for the rajawala'

can have fickle relations with humans. Treating the sick often requires dealing with them in an engagement often framed as making “payment” to the earth (McGee 2002:148; Pitarch 2010:138; Stanzione 2003:56; Wisdom 1940:436). Part of this bid for a person’s recovery can be through ritual surrogation.

#### THE PLACE OF SURROGATES

Ritual surrogation facilitates transactions between humans and earth lords, to whom ritualists supply payments and devotions. Animal surrogation is widespread in Middle America, and Kaqchikel Mayas use chickens to surrogate for victims of soul loss, and for the sick whose ancestors want to spirit them away. Small stock animals are often used to surrogate for people (Hart 2008:90; García et al. 1999:242; Molesky-Poz 2006:77; Paul and Paul 1975:709; Pitarch 2010:175). The offering may be called the “representative” or “image” of the patient, as among Tzotzil Mayas (Gossen 1986:241–42; Fabrega and Silver 1973:179).

Effigy use in ritual surrogation varies throughout Middle America. Poqomams and Tzotzils use effigies for protection and aid for individuals. Poqomams make finely featured effigies of spirit beings and take them to the woods to locate stray souls (Gillin 1948:391–93), while Tzotzils make a stylized representation of someone to recover his soul (Fabrega and Silver 1973:187–90). To protect people from human aggressors, Mams (Oakes 1951:166–67) and other Guatemalan Mayas (Rupflin-Alvarado 1995:175) use effigies of the alleged aggressors.

Effigies have also been used as vectors of individual aggression, often employing imitative or contiguous magic to further the surrogation. Making and burying doll effigies was done as witchcraft among the K’iche’ (Saler 1969:36), and Chortis (Wisdom 1940:337–39), and appears to be what one of Oakes’s (1951:160–61) Mam ritualist informants did to protect his client from an “evil person.” Schultze-Jena (1947:114) referred obliquely to such an effigy use when he reported how the K’iche’ “*brujo*” (sorcerer) used an idol that looked both human and animal, but did not say how it was used. While witchcraft practices are both indigenous and European concepts (Correa 1960:77), using figurines in witchcraft is likely non-native (Roys 1965:166).

Effigy surrogates can serve as allies for families and communities, as among the Lacandon Mayas, who craft human surrogates, with hair and facial features, from copal or rubber on *xikal* boards, and burn them in god pots in the family god house to feed the gods (McGee 2002:55, 139). Effigies transact community supplication in many parts of Guatemala. In Maya towns like Xecul (MacKenzie 2009:368), San Andrés Itzapa (Tedlock 1993:213–27), Momostenango (Cook 2000:150–53), and Santiago Atitlán (Mendelson 1959),

anthropomorphic San Simón-Maximon figures are constructed for local petitions.

Like other Maya, Kaqchikels in Comalapa make most of their effigies to promote group well-being. Kaqchikels create effigies as part of the San Simón-Maximon cult, with aspects of this cult centering on the petition-granting power of the *Axutix*, a life-size male effigy and local Maximon analogue. Another aspect of this cult centers on the Judas effigy that gets assembled during Holy Week, hanged in public, and sometimes burned, but not before getting chastised and ordered to extirpate local vices.

Upholders of Comalapa's Maya dance tradition make effigies from dance costumes, masks, and other materials in the opening rituals of the dance season. Perhaps the most recognizable dance effigy is a deer-headed figure called the *brujito*, made from a doll armature and synthetic fabric. When the crafter finishes dressing the *brujito* he prays over it, and it then can surrogate for the spiritual lord of the dance. This allows it to attract money during the staged dances. The proceeds go to the Comalapa dancers. Similar dance-spirits effigies exist elsewhere in the Guatemala highlands (Cook 2000:197–98; Hutcheson 2003:147).

Those who use these effigies insist that they serve families, the town, or the dancers, bringing different orders of spiritual entities into physical form to respond to human appeals. Kaqchikel effigies that take treatments for suffering humans have the most mimetic potential. The *k'al k'u'x* effigy is an effective therapeutic surrogate, not because it takes a client's place in the healing encounter, but because it links the client squarely to it. To do this, the *k'al k'u'x* must be prepared properly.

#### MAKING THE EFFIGY WORK

To use effigies as ritual surrogates, Kaqchikels fashion and then activate them spiritually. Each process is different, but in each case the objective is to awaken a spiritual consciousness in the object. Depending on its purpose, those who make the effigy use special materials, arrange them in a particular way, and ritually activate awareness in the effigy. The completed effigy becomes imbued with the potential and ability to meet certain needs. With the *k'al k'u'x*, the processes are aimed at making an effigy that approximates the human condition and mimetically becomes a particular person. This requires three measures. One centers on crafting the effigy, the second on clothing it, and the third entails instantiating corporeality in the effigy by subjecting it to forces that have known effects on the human body.

*Crafting*

Surrogate effigy-making begins with identifying the person to be surrogated. When an effigy is made for a sufferer who cannot attend the curative rituals, a physical link with the sufferer is made part of the surrogate effigy. This creates the preconditions for a spiritual contiguity with the sufferer, and sets the stage for applying measures to the effigy that instantiate its corporeality.

The k'al k'u'x effigy can be made from a pair of crossed sticks or a broom to which personal belongings of the sufferer are attached by wrapping around the sticks or affixing to the broom's bristles. The word "k'al" denotes wrapping something around an object, and the term "k'u'x" centers on the vital life-sources of a person: the heart, the soul, the seat of emotions, and even the placenta as an organ that houses spiritual processes. Taken together, "k'al k'u'x" means the essence of a person in a bound form, or the wrapped image of a person. The binding element is pivotal, as Maya conceptions of giving something form are often framed as "tying something up" (Pieper 2002:55) or creating a "knotted" or "bound" living entity (Stanzione 2003:54–55). Because a person's spiritual recovery depends on it, the effigy must be built at home and kept at home.

*Clothing*

The next step is to wrap clothing of the sufferer around the armature to make a "little image" of him or her. Locals insist that only clothes that the sufferer has worn but not washed should be used. Angelina, an *oyonel* (ritual caller), followed these steps for a child who was too sick to attend his rituals. Angelina said she first sought guidance from God, acquired some of the sick child's clothes, and then fitted the clothes onto a small broom, bristles pointing upward. Over a series of five evenings at 8:00 p.m., she performed an *oyonik* (ritual calling) with a wash basin, using items like quince sticks, candles, roses, and incense. After the fifth calling ritual, the child reportedly awakened in his bed at home, said he was hungry, and recovered shortly thereafter.

As Angelina and other ritualists attest, only recently worn and unwashed clothing can be used to make the effigy. Using personal clothing to create a spiritual link with the sufferer makes sense considering the Kaqchikel concept of *ruxla'*, which refers to a smell or odor emitted from someone or something. In a spiritual context, this links to an explanation of soul being anchored in human bodies, but remaining detectable through body emanations. This indicates an ensoulment, for which a body is required, that others can sense and

that can imprint itself onto clothing and personal items. They preface the sufferer's spiritual contiguity with the ritual effigy.

Other Mayas use clothing ritually to carry the spiritual imprint of its wearer. For instance, Roys (1976:xxii) reported how the Yucatec Maya *ah men* uses clothes from a Maya patient to perform "absent treatment" of that patient. In a Kaqchikel community of Lake Atitlán, a ritualist dealing with soul fright might take all the sufferer's clothes to the location of the fright to attract the soul and implore it to return to the sufferer's body (Tenzel 1970:377). Neighboring Tz'utujiils have treated sick children by dressing them in clothing associated with a patroness of fertility (Mendelson 1958:123), and have treated infertile women by having them drink the wash-water of the local Maximon's clothing (Mendelson 1959:59).

In Comalapa even clothing not worn by people can be imbued with spirit, as with dance costumes. Dancers say the costumes are infused with *ruxla'* by the very act of sewing them. The spiritual patrons of the dance are said to impart an odor in the woodland places associated with them. Of such a place near Comalapa, an *oyonel* says, "the storehouse of the clothes is there at Las Delicias. There it smells like a storehouse of clothes." The odor alerts wary humans of their proximity to these earth lords and their costumes.

### *Corporeality*

After being dressed, the effigy has corporeality instantiated in it initially by praying over it, then by striking it and heating it in order to heighten the clothing's contiguity with the lost soul fraction. Striking and heating rouses the effigy and actuates certain expressions of human corporeality in the effigy, such as movement and even a sensory faculty. The viability of the surrogate effigy depends on this specialized physical handling.

Once she has called out to the lost soul fraction, the *oyonel* strikes the effigy to kindle its *ruxla'* and draw the soul back to the patient's body. Although the earlier steps set the stage for corporeality, striking and heating enact it. To tighten the connection between the effigy and the sufferer, when it is struck, the *k'al k'ux* should be held by a family member of the sufferer, preferably the mother. This striking mirrors is usually done directly to a sufferer's body. In Comalapa, most ritualists use a quince stick with which to strike clients, so they use this on the *k'al k'u'x*. Some ritualists use the client's sash or belt to hit with, depending on the client's sex. The belt can be used to hit the person or the surrogate, "since it pertains to the person," as one woman said. It is afterwards left atop the bowl of water used in the calling, which is placed under the client's bed.

After striking the k'al k'u'x, it may be splashed with water just as the client's body would be. Whoever holds the k'al k'u'x also gets doused, and the shock from the cold water causes the effigy to experience the same reaction. Ritualists perform this dousing in similar ways. For example, Lencha takes a dripping handful of flowers from the water bowl and with it splashes the client three times. With each splash she blows and says, "Dios Padre, Dios Hijo, Dios Espiritu Santo." Another oyonel, Victor, sprinkles his clients with the "Holy Water" from the bowl. He favors the sudden breathing reaction because, "When God gave life to Adam, he blew [spirit] into him, it is an *aire*, it is something invisible." As his words suggest, the splashing is done with the breath to reinfuse the client with ruxla'. With similar intent, Alicia takes flowers from the water bowl and sprinkles water on the client, saying "ruxla'" each time. She invokes the *xamanil... loq'olaj ri kakiq'* (invisible Holy wind) and God, so that "the blood comes back." Alicia thus voices how the blood anchors the inner soul, the *ranima*, and must be deliberately replenished with the returning soul. When her client feels the shock of the splash and inhales rapidly, it indicates the espíritu is returning into the blood. She reinforces this by having the client drink water from the bowl.

Comalapan farmers craft an effigy (*p'oy'*) made of crossed sticks and old clothes to guard the milpa and scare off animals and thieves. After reciting the Lord's Prayer and an Ave María over the *p'oy*, a farmer strikes it repeatedly with a quince stick to provoke a shock, to awaken the effigy to do its job. He warns it that if it fails to do so, he will strike it again.

When Kaqchikels strike effigies it is in recognition of the human body's properties and needs. The healthy human body should have movement, as with heartbeat and breath, color as exemplified by red blood and a ruddy complexion, and heat as embodied in the blood. If any of these qualities diminish, they can be stimulated by striking or shocking the body, which should get redder and warmer. This might explain the widespread Maya usage of striking and shock in healing rituals that treat soul loss (Gillin 1948:394; Hinojosa 2010:78; Logan 1979:158; Watanabe 1992:88) or that strengthen soul in children (García et al. 1999:243; Hart 2008:129; Nash 1970:110).

When Kaqchikels strike an effigy, they want it to perform specific tasks. The nature of these tasks makes it crucial to enact corporeality in the effigies, for their effective deployment hinges on their state of ritual strength, and heating is necessary for this. Heat is increased in the effigy by manipulating ritual elements around it, like candles and red rose petals. Comalapans often use *kuxa* in these rituals, placing it on the ground, pouring it on offerings, and giving it to the ritualist and client to consume. It heats the blood, and thereby stimulates effigy activation. The bowl of water is another ritual element. The oyonel taps the bowl, moving the red mixture inside and transforming it into a

blood simulacrum that parallels a spiritual infusion in the client's blood (Hinojosa 2005), which is then channeled to the client resting at home.

#### TASKING THE SURROGATE EFFIGY

The ability to spiritually reintegrate someone or guard a milpa is a key expression of the spiritually activated effigy. Kaqchikels expect an activated effigy to engage in physical movement, even if unseen in performing its task. Comalapanans say that images on their home altars can eat and drink what is placed before them. Dancers aver that their costumes arranged on their home altars rattle their sabers at night.

K'iche's declare the same about effigies in their communities. For example, a ritualist told Schultze-Jena (1947:57) that a stone image located above Chichicastenango could see and hear. A caretaker of the Ximon image in Xecul says the effigy moves, sleeps, and that "he'll drink a lot of booze" (MacKenzie 2009:368). San Simón figures often receive tobacco offerings (Tedlock 1993:215), and that cigarettes burn slowly in San Simón's mouth in Momostenango is considered proof that the image is actually smoking (Cook 2000:155). The same principle operates in Comalapa when *oyonela*' insert lit cigarettes into the ground during soul-calling ceremonies or when dancers put lit cigarettes into the mouths of dance masks. When cigarettes burn steadily, it means the earth lords are smoking and look favorably upon the offerings.

Having corporeal expectations of the activated effigy is also true for the *p'oy* in Comalapa, which whistles at and scares off intruders in the milpa, and may even throw stones at them. But as vocalization and stone-throwing are elsewhere linked with unruly spooks (Cook 2000:99), the maker tells it what to do while striking it. He must direct its corporeality to specific tasks and channel its power. To instantiate corporeality will always invite some peril. To minimize risk, he must subordinate it to his authority.

Clothing is instrumental in this respect because dressing one or something binds it to the norms of a community of humans. Such use of clothing is well documented in the case of the San Simón-Maximon cult (Hart 2008:177; Tedlock 1993:213). One of the main duties of those in charge of these cult centers is dressing the figures and changing their clothing on a regular basis. For this reason an anthropomorphic San Simón-Maximon effigy might wear an army colonel's uniform one day, and sport a coat and tie the next (Castañeda-Medinilla 1979:132). Dressing the effigy in different ways suggests how clothing is used to control and direct its dangerous power. When people petition these effigies with offerings of liquor, candles, tobacco, money, and other gifts, it is not only to enlist their help, but to channel their power to fulfill requests. People want a certain outcome and use forceful

persuasion, if necessary, to bring it about. Still, because the full effects of an intervention can never be predicted, the petitioner must try to shield himself from any unwanted effects. He does this by binding the effigy to a set of expectations. The figurative binding is strengthened with human clothing, as when the effigy feels the constraints of a coat, sash, or necktie. Other means, like dressing in tandem with striking, are also used for the same end.

That non-physical entities can be controlled and coerced by lashing is seen among the K'iche of Santiago El Palmar, where the *nagual* or *win*, who is impervious to shotguns, knives, or machetes, can be killed by hitting it with a stick, kicking it, or strangling it (Saler 1969:24). Among Tzotzils, similarly, “[t]o punish [a spook], one beats it with whips as though one were taming an animal” (Blaffer 1972:8). But to exert one’s will upon supernatural entities, they must be enticed as well as coerced, and for this *kuxa* is helpful. *Kaqchikels* give *kuxa* not only to awaken, feed, and heat spiritual entities, but also to placate them and goad them into action. That *kuxa* can help disarm a dangerous entity is well known to dancers from Comalapa and other towns (Hutcheson 2003:305). Comalapa dancers say that if the spirit of the dance is affronted by a paucity of offerings, it can seize a dancer, causing derangement or an early death. To deny the spirit of the dance its preferred drink, therefore, is to carelessly expose oneself to peril.

#### REFRAMING RITUAL SURROGATION

To make sure that it does its job when they create a surrogate effigy, *Kaqchikels* dress it, activate it, and channel its power. So long as they can control the effigy, they can make it useful, while minimizing risk to themselves. As living situations change, Mayas have adapted the use of surrogate effigies to reflect those changes. The following vignette reflects this.

Starting around four o’clock every Monday morning, Comalapans appear in the town plaza dragging large duffel bags and rolling suitcases into the square. Some carry laptops in their briefcases and shoulder bags. Most had arrived in town the previous Friday evening after completing a workweek in Guatemala City, 82 kilometers away. Now they hope to get a seat on the bus for the return trip. This scene repeats itself every week as local people head back to their jobs in the capital and other cities where they work in schools, offices, banks, and construction sites. Most commuters will rent a room in the city where they work and live there during the week; the lucky ones secure room and board in a relative’s house. But for all their non-agrarian character, these travel routines have not kept people from experiencing soul loss. If anything, their mobile lives expose them to a higher risk of *xib’iril*, while limiting their chances to treat it. Comalapa *oyonela’* have come to expect

clients to visit them only when their commuting schedules permit, or when people must return to their hometown, such as during elections. As Comalapans have become enmeshed in the urban workplace, the k'al k'u'x has taken on renewed importance.

The k'al k'u'x has become indispensable for families that need to spiritually reintegrate their loved ones amidst these modern work demands. If a person needs treatment for xib'iril but cannot attend the rituals because she is away working, her family can make a k'al k'u'x which the oyonel will use to appeal to the sufferer's stray soul portion. Ideally, the sufferer is told ahead of time of the exact moment when the calling ritual is done in Comalapa, so she can kneel in her urban residence and join her family in the ritual. With many Comalapans in the urban workforce today, many oyonela' keep the k'al k'u'x of a client or two in their homes.

The k'al k'u'x enables Kaqchikels to access reintegrative care even as they work in cities. It also speaks to how adaptable ritual surrogation can be. Among the Maya surrogation is quite applicable to situations where getting all agents together is difficult, so some ritualists use other kinds of surrogation to deal with absent objects of therapy or absent aggressors.

In one case, a K'iche' ritualist treated an absent person through a human surrogate by asking him to stand in for a man's suffering father. Harvey (2006) enabled the presence of the sufferer by sitting and holding a piece of paper with the sick man's name and thinking about him. The healer touched Harvey with a small metal object, and placed bags of different herbs on his lap to determine how each affected the surrogated bodily energies (Harvey 2006).

Human-for-human surrogation is also used to deal with an absent antagonist. In a Teenek case, a surrogate stood in for a woman who had to be ritually chastised in order to help recover her mother-in-law's soul and treat her for an *ataque* (Ariel de Vidas 2004:214). The mother-in-law had been harassed by her husband and had not been helped in daily chores by her daughter-in-law. While clothing is not used to establish contiguity between people in either of these cases, it is still established via a conscious link with the person being surrogated. Access to a person's clothing may still be used, as among Mixe specialists who try to cure soul-fright by acquiring the culprit's clothing so they can manipulate it ritually, even wearing it inside-out (Lipp 1991:177).

It is not unusual for Mayas to "[stand] in on behalf of other, physically absent, 'patients,'" even when seeking medical care (Harvey 2008:579), and even to the point that a stand-in "patient" will consume the actual medications (Harvey 2006:7). It comes as little surprise, then, that Maya often pursue care in groups at local health centers, where they not only arrive together, but "co-compose their sickness narrative across multiple participants" (Harvey 2008:579). This linkage between co-afflicted people is also visible in Comalapa. An

oyonel reported that entire families can be treated together when one or more of their members suffer fright sickness. During the early 1980s when fathers of several households were abducted, the remaining family members contracted fright sickness and asked the oyonel to conduct group rituals. Getting care in groups is in keeping with Maya expectations that recognize the primacy of social relationships in illness (Manning and Fabrega 1973:286). The cases reported by Harvey (2006) and Ariel de Vidas (2004) may be another way to stage group healing with the use of surrogates.

While the active role-playing may suggest that specific people's bodies are being surrogated, another explanation is possible. Hutcheson (2003) argues that surrogation events are better understood as the surrogation of community roles and not of individuals or supernaturals. In Hutcheson's (2003) description of Maya dance dramas, surrogation occurs when dancers perform roles that have been performed many times. The performance of specific dancer roles reanimates those characters and renders them "ever-present within the lived memory of the community" (Hutcheson 2003:288–89). In this way, dancers enact roles long kept alive in the town's festival calendar.

The possibility that surrogation occurs more through roles than through bodies is bolstered by the way a sufferer's companions often co-narrate the sufferer's illness experience as well as stand in for the absent sufferer. This action by the many in the healing of the one makes sense in view of how the locus of healing is often said to be the family (Adams and Rubel 1967:350; Harvey 2006:4; Holland & Tharp 1964:46; Ingham 1986:75; Riley 1969:820). The healing encounter may be primarily addressing the role of the sufferer within her family and restoring it to its fullest expression as parent, spouse, provider, or other role. Impediments to the role must be removed. If we recognize Comalapa's calling ritual as a family-driven event, then we can appreciate how this ritual foregrounds family roles as well. When the ritualist beckons the fractioned soul to return to his home and family, he is voicing the sufferer's role as a nexus of social ties. If a *k'al k'u'x* is used, it is usually held by the sufferer's mother or by another close relative with the greatest stake in the fulfillment of the sufferer's role. To restore the sufferer to his proper place within the family, his relatives should closely flank him during the calling. During riverside calling rituals, the sufferer's close relatives literally grasp the sufferer by each arm, rebinding him to them even as they rebind his soul fraction to him.

While Hutcheson's (2003) view of role surrogation has some bearing on the Kaqchikel case, it does not explain why Mayas craft surrogate effigies so carefully. If restoring a person's role as a nexus of social relationships is so important, why do Mayas try very hard to instantiate corporeality in the *k'al k'u'x*? They instantiate corporeality in the effigy because the person being

surrogated must be fully ensouled in order to be able to perform his social roles, and the effigy should reflect that state. This means he should have a favorable state of blood and a vigorous ruxla', so these qualities of health and life must be kindled in the effigy. If not, he could not function well, and his relationships with others would suffer. He should also have clear cognitive and sensory faculties, which are absent with soul loss or debility. A person with soul loss can be lethargic and sleepy, or even nervous and jumpy, and would have trouble interacting with others. Just as normal good health is a baseline for proper social functioning, the same must be enacted in the effigy for it to surrogate effectively. The effigy thus gives form to the surrogate, provides a bodily ground for mimetic presence of the individual, and instantiates the agency that exercises social roles.

That effigy rituals center on social roles rather than on individuals marks an enlarged view of effigy use and reveals somewhat limited Western understandings of "patient." The Western construct of patient depends heavily upon the therapeutic roles and expectations of the biomedical encounter. For one, it rests on the assumption that there is a single, fully physically present care seeker. For another, the patient construct assumes that the care-seeker is acknowledging an authoritative biomedical knowledge in the caregiver, against a background of power asymmetry between the two. This idea entails a certain disavowal of agency on the part of the care-seeker and a subordinate posture.

Harvey (2008) disputes the assumption that "patient" has the same meaning everywhere and resists interpretation. He adds that in many cultures care for an individual is sought in groups. As a Western concept, "patient" does not fit comfortably with non-Western practices like those of the k'al k'u'x, where the care seeker is not physically present, but only mimetically so. The care-seeking itself may be deployed by a group, the sufferer's family, that does not recognize an authoritative biomedical knowledge in the oyonel. Consequently there is no power asymmetry at play during the healing encounter. Far from assuming a passive quality, the use of the ritual surrogate stems from the sufferer's agency and that of his family. Although the calling ritual requires the oyonel to ritually dominate the k'al k'u'x, the ritual presupposes that the group seeking care has deliberately chosen the ritualist.

## CONCLUSIONS

Effigy-making helps heal souls because of actions like heating, striking, and dousing that instantiate normative body states. These actions also drive an effigy to do what it is supposed to do. It is the same as what Stross (1998) reports for Tzeltals: "to be made functional, [a crafted object] must undergo

animation procedures that empower it as an agent of appropriate action” (Stross 1998:35). Kaqchikels also try to do more than just animate an object. They direct it toward an appropriate action or intention that will restore persons to spiritual wholeness while rehabilitating their roles in social relationships. Surrogation techniques help Mayas manage the risks of a sometimes perilous world, but these techniques work only when people deploy them in a way that views the body both as a vehicle for and an expression of spiritual health.

This study helps bring additional perspective to the role of objects in Maya culture. It demonstrates in an ethnographic case how common items can become vehicles for spiritual transformation, and raises the possibility that there is much yet to learn about the crafting and handling of objects found in archaeological settings. If the k'al k'u'x treatment works, it is not because the surrogate effigy looks like the sufferer, but because the sufferer is physically built into the effigy. When the sufferer's normative body states are kindled in the effigy, this wrapped object then transacts a vital contiguity between the treatment session, the sufferer, and his fractioned soul.

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## 94 ETHNOLOGY

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