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The Peccaries Above and Below Us

by Matthew G.Looper

Citing their associations with skybands in the Casa de las Monjas at Chich'en Itza, in the Paris Codex (24) and especially in the Bonampak' Structure 1 murals (Fig. 1), Mayanists have long suspected an astronomical symbolism of the peccary in Classic and Postclassic Maya art (see Seler 1961: 227-233).¹ Unfortunately, however, incomplete ethnographic data and ambiguous dictionary entries have foiled attempts to identify conclusively a group of stars with a mythological peccary. While this note adds little to the understanding of these "pec-

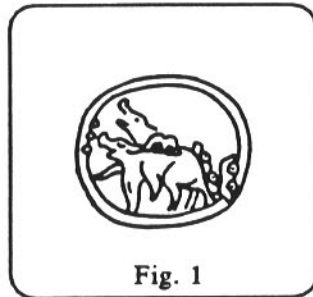


Fig. 1

caries above," it does identify a second iconographic category of the ancient Maya peccary—that of an earth symbol.

Perusal of Michael Coe's (1973) *The Maya Scribe and His World* catalog yields a curious incised shell pendant (Fig. 2), which depicts a man

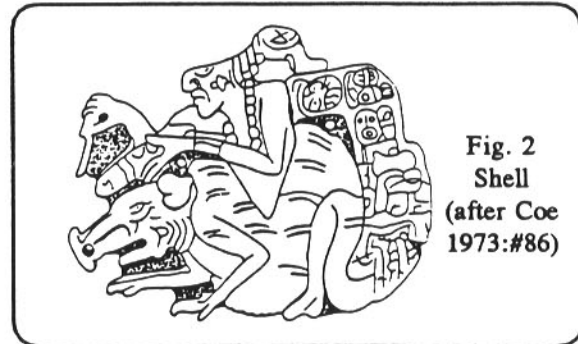


Fig. 2
Shell
(after Coe
1973:#86)

¹ The marking of a peccary with a *k'in* sign on a vessel illustrated in Coe 1973 (no. 66) also implies a celestial connection.

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Fig. 3
Kerr Pot
1892



Fig. 4
Paddler Pot
after Hellmuth
1987:109

