

APOCALYPTO

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America in the Early Modern Age

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Apocalypto is a historical epic film directed, co-written and produced by Mel Gibson, an American actor and director, famous for having worked on works such as Braveheart. The main characters are Jaguar Paw, played by Rudy Youngblood, Middle Eye, played by Gerardo Taracena and Zero Wolf, played by Raoul Max Trujillo. This film was realised in 2006, and it is set in Yucatan, Mexico in the early modern age in 1502, after Columbus and his troop will arrive to the continent in 1492.

Mel Gibson, with the movie Apocalypto, narrates the end of a story, the end of a culture. The film is based on the way of life of the vanished Mayan culture. The film begins presenting the life of Jaguar and his people, giving way later to the assault of their lands by the oppressor group, the enslavement of their women in the city and the murder of their men in the middle of rituals of human sacrifice in which Jaguar Paw is involved, escaping by a natural phenomenon, an eclipse by which the night overshadows the day, a fact that gives rise to his escape in the middle of the shooting between swords to which he had to submit with his friends of which, although he was seriously injured, did not give end to his life.

After the escape, Jaguar Paw enters the jungle and begins the pursuit of Zero Wolf (the chief of the oppressors) and his men giving way to a series of events in which the protagonist takes courage and eliminates his executioners one by one until leaving only two who let him go to see on the beach where they see the arrival of the Spanish and / or white men. Jaguar Paw instead of seeing the arrival of the boats takes the opportunity to escape completely and thus helps his wife and children in the jungle.

First of all, we have to place this film in its historical context: the pre-Columbian Mayan civilization. The Mayan civilization developed in Mesoamerica,

in what are today the territories of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and El Salvador, during a period spanning from approximately 2000 B.C. until the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century. The Maya were known for their sophisticated hieroglyphic writing system, monumental architecture, art, astronomy and advanced calendar system. The film "Apocalypto" is specifically set in the late period of the Mayan civilization, around the 15th century, shortly before the arrival of the European conquerors. At this time, some Maya city-states experienced a decline in power and witnessed internal conflicts and power struggles.

While the film "Apocalypto" presents an authentic historical context, it is important to keep in mind that it is a work of fiction and does not necessarily reflect all aspects of Mayan life and society accurately. Mel Gibson used historical elements as a backdrop to tell a dramatic and exciting story. It must be said that Mel Gibson declared that this film, had no historicist pretensions. He was interested in the idea of the indigenous people whose quiet existence as hunter-gatherers is shattered to find themselves caught up in a maelstrom of horror, as well as the fact that, in turn, the aggressors were also taking their last steps as a civilization.

To begin with the analysis, let's comment on a scene that appears at the beginning of the movie. At the beginning of the movie, some men of the protagonist's tribe appear hunting, making themselves known as a hunting tribe. This is incorrect, since during the Classic period, the Maya were an agricultural people. Although they practiced hunting, wild prey represented a relatively small percentage of their diet and, in general, meat may have been considered a luxury item.

On the other hand, the film shows the Maya civilization on the verge of decadence, with massive human sacrifices and a society in chaos. Although there was conflict and decline in some Maya city-states in the late period, the film exaggerates these aspects and does not represent the diversity and complexity of Maya society as a whole. For example, the film portrays Maya rituals as violent and brutal, centered on human sacrifice. While the Maya practiced rituals that included sacrifices, these were not as widespread or as bloodthirsty as depicted in the film. In addition, the film portrays the Maya as a primitive society, while in reality they were an advanced civilization with remarkable cultural achievements.

In addition, although the film is set in the pre-Columbian period of Maya civilization, the film combines elements from different periods of Maya history. For example, it presents the Maya in the late period (15th century) using step pyramids and costumes that correspond more to the early classical period (3rd century A.D.). It also includes the presence of the Aztec culture, which was a different civilization and was not located in the same geographical area.

Moreover, it must be said that even if the film is not valid to give real historical data, it offers a vision detached from Eurocentrism. It is true that at the end of the film we see how the Spanish ships arrive on the American continent, but the film is not about that. The most important thing and what the director wants to teach us is how the indigenous people lived and how their relationship was between them. Life before the arrival of the Europeans is not something that is shown much in the film industry, nor is it taught much. For this reason, this film has that interesting point where we see the Modern Age from an unusual point of view and just as important.