

Apocalypto 2006 essay

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



Apocalypto, 2006 is a movie directed by Mel Gibson. It is set during the age of the Mayan civilization in Mexico. It tells of the time when the Mayan civilization was declining and the rulers recommend offering human sacrifices and building of more temples to appease their gods and restore the civilization to prosperity.

Apocalypto outlines the tale Jaguar Paw, whose village is attacked by Mayans seeking slaves for human sacrifice. He hides his son and pregnant wife in a deep hole and is unfortunately captured. He is spared from sacrifice by an eclipse and has to struggle to survive. He manages to save his wife who had delivered and his two sons (Carvalho 1).

Evaluation

Historically, the movie accurately depicts the Mayan culture. The movie shows scenes of human sacrifice. Bodies and heads of the sacrificial victims were tossed down the steps of the temple while hearts were burned on the altar. This was done historically by the Mayans (Carvalho 1). There was however, heated controversy regarding the depiction of depiction of the Mayans as barbaric through the scenes of human sacrifice. Some historians argue that human sacrifice was a practice carried out by the ruthless Aztecs and not Mayans (Carvalho 1). Other historians and historical accounts do prove that practices by the Aztecs did influence the Mayans. Due to this, the Mayans indeed practiced human sacrifice as a result, albeit not as fiercely as the Aztecs (Carvalho 1).

The movie also depicts the Mayans as carrying out widespread slavery. In yet another controversial scene, the captives including Jaguar Paw were used

as target practice. In this case, the movie departed from history and incorporated Hollywood flair. The use of the slaves as target practice was designed to ignite the chase sequence. The movie also uses profane language for example the (F-word) was not used in ancient Mayan civilization. This is also an example of Hollywood flair which is not a true representation of the Mayan culture.

Another scene which was objected was the depiction of a large pit which was filled with corpses rotting away near the Mayan fields. This was acknowledged as a conjecture designed to bring across the terror and gravity of sacrifice. Hollywood flair is also demonstrated in the fact that the plot best suits an action movie. Critics claim that by doing so, the movie missed many chances to rise above the various cruelties in the Mayan culture to depict a deeper meaning (Carvalho 1).

Mel Gibson selected actors who were from Mexico or were descendants of the native peoples of the United States and Canada. This was done so that the characters would be believable as pre-Columbian Mesoamericans. Some of the cast members especially the oldest and youngest members could only speak the Maya language. Others had actually never seen a tall building before. The movie itself is acted out in the Maya language and contains subtitles. This makes the movie more realistic and believable, giving it the appearance of authenticity. The costumes used in the movie are an accurate reflection of the people's culture. These include: tattooed bodies; scarred faces; nose rings; and ear rings. The set up of the film featured real buildings instead of computer-generated images. The buildings designs contained

many correct architectural details but others were blended from different eras in order to improve the aesthetic appeal of the movie.

Works Cited

Carvalho, C. Apocalypto (2006). The Internet Movie Database. Web. 04 April 2011. www. IMDb. com