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A Study of Classic Maya Rulership

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology

by

Mark Alan Wright

August 2011

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Karl A. Taube, Chairperson
Dr. Wendy Ashmore
Dr. Stephen D. Houston

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The Dissertation of Mark Alan Wright is approved:

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Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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Dedication

For Traci

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Study of Classic Maya Rulership

by

Mark Alan Wright

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Anthropology
University of California, Riverside, August 2011
Dr. Karl A. Taube, Chairperson

Classic period Maya rulers are often reduced to "ideal types" and are discussed in terms that would suggest they were a homogenous group of individuals cut from the same cloth. Contrary to that assumption, this study employs epigraphic, iconographic, archaeological, ethnohistoric and ethnographic data to demonstrate there was significant local and regional variation in the way kingship was expressed through artistic programs, calendrics, ritual activity, accoutrements of power, sacred warfare, the taking of theophoric throne names and titulary, and the composition and adaptation of local pantheons.

The identity of each polity was inseparably connected with that of its ruler, and variations on the rulership theme served to reinforce their unique identity in the larger landscape vis-à-vis other polities. The underlying theoretical approach relies on concepts of mimesis and alterity, duality, and complementary opposition, all of which are creative

acts which serve to establish a sense of Self in contrast to the Other, both human and divine. This study also examines concepts of divine kingship and deification, and argues that rulers were "functionally divine" while living and were elevated to "ontologically divine" status upon becoming apotheosized ancestors after death. As apotheosized ancestors, they took their place in the pliable local pantheon which further reinforced the unique identity of each site.

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Chapter 1

Theoretical, Historical, and Methodological Foundations of the Study of Divine Kingship in Mesoamerica

The Theoretical Foundation

The academic study of divine kingship was first popularized by Sir James Frazer's magnum opus *The Golden Bough* in 1890 (Frazer 1890), but the years have not been kind to his data, methodology, or conclusions.[1] The ensuing decades have seen a great many more works on the subject in general and on regionally specific institutions of sacral rulership (Feeley-Harnik 1985). The trend has been a move away from generalized meta-theories that attempt a cross-cultural explanation for the institution of divine kingship and a move towards concentrated micro-theories that find little application outside of a specific time and place. Among the Maya, the study of divine kingship is something of an exercise in infinite regression. The first question, therefore, asks which Maya are being discussed. As data have become more abundant, it has become clear that the Maya area was a heterogenous palimpsest of cultures and polities with a great deal of variation across space and time. The second question asks what it means for a ruler to be divine. How was divinity conceptualized? What was the ruler's relationship vis-à-vis the divine realm?

Up until about 1960, Maya scholars typically referred to kings by the general designation "rulers" (Morley 1911; Proskouriakoff 1960). In 1961, Michael Coe

[1] For an in-depth analysis of the many problems in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, see Feeley-Harnik (1985)

(1961:74) intimated the lack of understanding of Classic rulership when noting that certain multi-room structures likely belonged to "a king, prince, noble, priest, or whoever ruled the Classic Maya." Based on the then-recent discovery of the sarcophagus in the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque and other similar finds across the Maya area, he argued that "one can infer the existence of more powerful political authority at the head of the Maya social order than has yet been assumed by writers on this questions – perhaps even absolute kings" (ibid.). Within a decade, Coe (1972:9) was referring to Maya rulers as "divine kings." Mayanists were similarly unsure whether the individuals depicted on monuments represented "a deity, a priest or ruler, or an abstract conception symbolically portrayed" (Proskouriakoff 1950:4). Proskouriakoff (1960) was the first to demonstrate that the individuals depicted on monuments were historical rulers, based on recurring intervals of dates on the monuments of Piedras Negras that she presciently determined were birth, inauguration, and death dates. J. Eric Thompson (1973) was one of the first to systematically demonstrate that Classic period Maya rulers were considered divine. Drawing upon ethnographic analogies from Late Postclassic Yucatan and Central Mexican polities, he argued that rulers claimed descent from the gods, were selected by them to act as their mouthpieces, and arrogated their divine power. The terms "divine kingship" and "divine rulership" began entering the common parlance of Maya studies by the mid-1970s (see Furst 1976; Robertson et al. 1976). A more intensive study of divine kingship was launched by Schele and Miller's 1986 catalogue *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art*, followed by Schele and Freidel's *A Forest of Kings* (1990) and, ultimately, forged into a trilogy by Schele and Mathews' *The Code of Kings*

(1998). Although the works by Schele and her collaborators were ground-breaking and still have much to recommend them, Freidel (2008:192) himself recently acknowledged that *A Forest of Kings* is "now thoroughly obsolete as a result of advances in textual decipherment and archaeology," and the other two books in the trilogy are likewise showing their age. The most concise work on divine kingship among the Maya has been Houston and Stuart's (1996) article *"*Of Gods, Glyphs and Kings: Divinity and Rulership Among the Classic Maya," which has been cited in virtually every ensuing work on the subject for its authority rather than by way of critique (Beekman 2004; Zender 2004; Colas 2003a; Looper 2003; Lucero 2003; Trigger 2003; Kaplan 2001; Martin and Grube 2008; Rice 1999; Vail 2000; Webster 2000).

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical underpinnings, historical foundations, and methodological approaches and concerns that will inform the remainder of the dissertation. The broad strokes used in the following section will provide the backdrop for the detailed analysis in the chapters to follow.

Divine vs. Sacred: The Contested Nature of Kingship among the Classic Maya

In the nearly six *katuns* that have passed since Frazer's *Golden Bough*, much has been published on the topic of divine kingship. This umbrella term encompasses a great many institutions that manifest themselves in disparate ways. Among some cultures the ruler is explicitly divine—a god on earth—whereas in other cultures he or she may be mere representatives of the divine or supernatural realm. In general terms, a "sacred ruler" may be thought of as a conduit of supernatural power, a medium through which the divine

passes, whereas a "divine ruler" is a receptacle of supernatural power and possesses that power in and of himself. Among researchers of the ancient Maya, there is still little agreement concerning how "divine" these rulers were considered to be by the ancient Maya themselves and what their role was vis-à-vis the divine realm (Houston and Stuart 1996). This dissertation examines the nature of kingship among the Classic Maya. In particular, it tests the assertion that the rulers were divine kings in the fullest sense: living gods on earth. In addition, it examines the variety of ways the institution of kingship was expressed at the local and regional levels and seeks to understand the significance of variation across space and time.

The challenge to modern students of ancient Maya religion is the inescapable fact that religion, in large measure, deals with internal beliefs and is a cognitive function that is difficult to quantify or subject to empirical testing (Sachse 2004:3). We are left with the external, material manifestations of how their religion was practiced, with precious few textual clues as to their underlying beliefs. At times, we find obscure and singular textual references to mythological events we know nothing else about, with no apparent clues from the iconographic or ethnohistoric record.[2]

Entwined with the debate concerning the divinity of Maya rulers is the ongoing debate as to whether the rulers were "shamans" or "priests" (Houston 1999:60). Freidel, Schele, and Parker (1993) laid out the most detailed arguments for the "shaman-king" concept, and Freidel (2002; 2008; Freidel and Guenter 2006) continues to be a vocal proponent.

[2] For example, on the Creation Tablet at Palenque there is a passing reference to the beheading of a "day fisherman" and a "night fisherman" by an important local god, but nothing else is known about this mythological event (Miller and Martin 2004:105).

While there is no question that the Classic rulers used religious symbols and ideology as a means of legitimizing their right to rule, David Stuart (2002:411) believes that the shaman king concept is faulty when applied to the Classic Maya case, as there is little epigraphic or iconographic evidence to support it. At issue is the anthropological definition of what it means to be a shaman. The very use of the term *shaman* and its application to ancient Mesoamerican rulers has been severely critiqued in recent years—most harshly by Klein et al. (2002), but likewise by Kehoe (2000), Marcus (2002), Pasztory (1982), and Zender (2004) — because shamans are traditionally dissociated from state-level societies and stand at the fringes of those societies of which they are a part (for contrary views, see Humphrey 1994; Thomas and Humphrey 1994:1-12; Vitebsky 2001:116-119).

Rather than shaman-kings, Marc Zender (2004) argues for the existence of a bureaucratic priestly class among the Classic Maya, and suggests that the rulers were *ex officio* high priests. He acknowledges that there are some shamanic aspects of rulership in the Early and Middle Preclassic periods and suggests that as Maya societies grew more complex, so did the ecclesiastical bureaucracies, yet some "shamanistic survivals" can be found in their beliefs and practices that are holdovers from an earlier era (ibid., 2004:79). McAnany (2001:143) similarly notes that although many of the duties performed by rulers are similar to those performed by shamans, "their authority stems not from their ability to conjure ancestors (as among contemporary Tzotzil shamans); rather, the conjuring of ancestors is an expression of their authority."

The Functional Divinity of Classic Maya Rulers

The question remains as to how divine the ancient Maya rulers actually were. I argue that Classic Maya rulers were "functionally divine" (Selz 2008:16) rather than "ontologically divine"; that is to say, for all intents and purposes, they acquired god-like powers from the divine realm and they functioned as gods to their subjects on a full-time basis, and not just during certain rituals, but they were not self-possessed of divinity.

The relationship between kings and their gods was paralleled by the relationship between the people and their king. He could propitiate, interact with, and even control the supernatural realm on their behalf, so his power was functionally equivalent to that of the gods. The ruler had pragmatic control over the elements and it was his responsibility to keep the cosmos in their proper order through proper ritual action. This is not to say that the king was the exclusive entity worthy of devotion by commoners. Ancestor worship was clearly a central element of their religious practice as well, among both elites and commoners (to be discussed in Chapter 4). Central Mexican ethnohistoric accounts demonstrate the prominent place that the worship of living and dead kings held; when the Zapotecs were asked about their gods by the Spanish, they "responded with the names of former and contemporary rulers, the names of royal ancestors, and expressions addressed to supernatural forces" (Tate 1999:181).

The ethnographic concept of *ch'ulel* aids our understanding Classic Period kingship. The word is based on the root *ch'uh*/*k'uh*, "god." Among Zinacantecos, *ch'ulel* is the animating 'inner soul' that dwells in humans and gods, as well as in objects that provoke

physical and emotional sensations, such as musical instruments, flowers, salt, or holy crosses. This soul is considered immortal and indestructible (Vogt 1965:33), and continues on to the diurnal paradise of the sun after death (Guiteras-Holmes 1961:150, 176, 270). Evon Vogt (1976:141) notes, "the most important interaction in the universe is not between persons, nor between persons and objects, as we would perceive them; it is, instead, between the *ch'ulel* souls possessed by these persons and objects." Each person possesses *ch'ulel*, but that of Classic Maya kings was closer to that of the gods than to the commoners. Rulers even took upon themselves the title *k'uhul ajaw*, "god-like/holy lord" upon accession to distinguish themselves from mere humans (to be discussed later). *Ch'ulel* resides in the heart and circulates through the bloodstream, so when rulers performed autosacrificial rites, it wasn't just their blood they were offering; it was their very soul (Schele and Mathews 1998: 413).

The Ideological Aspect of Divine Kingship

Social hierarchies must be legitimized to maintain order in a society. The factors affecting a person's status can vary—physical might, wealth, beauty, intelligence, skills, charisma, ancestry, divine sanction, and so on—and a person's status and position within a hierarchy may shift throughout his or her life as attributes are developed or lost. As a matter of self-preservation, those at the highest levels of society—the ruling class—seek to establish the legitimacy of their positions and do all they can to ensure that their ideology is embraced by their subjects, a stance that Gramsci labels "hegemony" (Lawner 1973). Hegemony refers to the widespread acceptance by commoners of elite

ideology vis-à-vis the social and political order, which essentially serves to "naturalize" the system in the eyes of the people.

A common way for elites to legitimize their status is through ritual. Among its many definitions, religious ritual refers to "an agreed-on and formalized pattern of ceremonial movements and verbal expressions carried out in a sacred context" (Livingston 2005:81). Rituals serve to unite a community (Durkheim 1995) and are a vital part of group identity. Among the ancient Maya, there was a distinction between public and private rituals. We may be tempted to view all public ritual as a spectacle or performance, but as Houston (2006:135) succinctly states, "ritual ≠ spectacle ≠ performance," although admittedly the categories do at times overlap (ibid.). Regardless of whether the event was a ritual, a spectacle, or a performance, all public events enhanced the sense of cohesion in Classic Maya society and the effectiveness of divine rulers (Rivera Dorado 2006:829).

Concomitant with ritual is myth, and Classic Maya rulers similarly relied upon mythology to legitimize their right to rule (Schele and Freidel 1990; Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993; Reese 1996; Kappelman 1997; Freidel and MacLeod 2000). The initial process of legitimization works within an established system of belief. However, after the ruler's legitimacy has been established, he or she is then in a position to modify the beliefs and practices of their subjects through hegemonic means (Ringle 1999:186). Among the Classic Maya, "ideology provided a set of metaphors whose application to society grew and changed over time, but nevertheless continued to reflect their Formative roots" (ibid.). Coe (1989) has shown the great influence that the mythical charter set forth in the Quiche Popul Vuh had in the legitimization of authority, but as Kerr (2000:1)

points out, there were surely distinct versions of the tale that varied from region to region according to local traditions.

The Social Aspect of Divine Kingship

Along with their roles as religious and political leaders, Classic Maya rulers were also "social leaders who served as embodiments of community identities" (Inomata 2006:832) that created social integration within the community. The king's person had a unifying effect on his polity and played a vital role in the creation and maintenance of group identity for those living within it.[3] In the quadripartite cosmos, the city itself marked the fifth cardinal direction, with the center of power found in the main plaza or acropolis (Valdés 2001:138), with the king himself standing as the living *axis mundi* to his subjects (Schele and Miller 1986:77). The rulers created these sacred spaces, and in so doing, created a space where large groups of citizens could enter sacred space and participate in sacred events (Freidel et al. 1993; McAnany 1995; Schele and Freidel 1990). Through their participation in these events they reaffirmed their sense of belonging to that particular society and reinforced their identity as a cohesive group (Durkheim 1995 [1912]). As they witnessed the interaction of their ruler with their local gods, as he performed rituals on their behalf in their city center, the king was further exalted and the people were drawn together with a unified sense of identity.

[3]There were certainly subgroups within each polity that identified themselves through kin or other local groups (Inomata 2006:833), but the present discussion is concerned with the sense of identity of the polity as a whole.

The Divided Aspect of Divine Rule

Although the ruler stood as the ideological and social center of his polity, it would be a mistake to suggest that he ruled with unilateral power and authority. Although not completely understood, there was clearly a bureaucratic organization that governed Classic period polities. Some scholars have opposed the term "divine rule," charging that the phrase implies a singular command of the polity (Becker 2006:821). Braswell (2001:313) argues that rulership was divided among multiple individuals as a way to distinguish between "power" and "divine authority," which was necessary to resolve the contradictory pressures of the preservation of power and the maintenance of sacred authority. He further argues that sacred rulers effectually lost power because they were conceptually distanced from their subjects to the point that they were unable to directly exercise force upon the general populace. He declared that "'[d]ivine kingship' is an oxymoron, and…the opposed centripetal and centrifugal tendencies of sacred rulership were an important source of instability in Maya political systems" (Braswell 2001:313).

The Material Aspect of Divine Kingship

There is a human tendency to materialize ideology, to take religious beliefs and concepts and fashion them into objects that range from the portable to the monumental for the purpose of communicating that ideology to others (DeMarrais et al. 1996:16). In so doing, meanings are "envehicled" in symbols (Geertz 1980:135). DeMarrais et al. (1996) suggest four "means of materialization" in which the profane is transformed into the sacred: public monuments, symbolic objects, written documents, and ceremonial

events. Schoenfelder (2004:402), in discussing the Balinese, adds a fifth means that is equally salient among the Maya: profane flesh is made sacred in the bodies of cultural experts. To these, we may add a sixth: sacred geography, referring to natural features that are not of human creation but that are made sacred through human ideology. For the Maya, mountains, caves, rivers, *cenotes*, and other geographic features were all places that were imbued with an extra portion of sacredness and such features may have influenced their site planning principles (Brady 1997; Vogt 1981). In all of these "envehicled" symbols, the supernatural takes a natural form, and intangible beliefs are made into tangible objects of devotion.

Ritual objects, events, and places are all necessary in providing a phenomenological experience for both participants and observers. Ritual has the power to create, reinforce, and authenticate belief through the subjective experiences of participants, and the performative, experiential aspects of beliefs and symbols are critical in imbuing beliefs with meaning (Eliade 1963). In other words, it is through an individual's embodied experience (either as participant or observer) that their beliefs are authenticated (Dornan 2004:29). The power held by Maya rulers was legitimate in that it was *believed* to be legitimate (Weber 1978) both by the rulers themselves and by their subjects who consented to that authority (Dornan 2004:30), and possession and ritual use of sacred objects enhanced their claims. There was regional and site specific variation in the use of sacred objects, and these will be discussed in their contexts in later chapters.

The Historical Foundation of Divine Kingship in Mesoamerica

The first great civilization in Mesoamerica was the Olmec, which has been conceptualized as the *cultura madre* or "mother culture" of later Mesoamerican civilizations since the days of Matthew Stirling (1940:333), Alfonso Caso (1942:46) and Miguel Covarrubias (1944). The Olmec are both poorly understood and poorly defined (Pool 2007:12). Christopher Pool (ibid.) restrictively defines them as "the archaeological culture of the southern Gulf Coast that existed from about 1500 to 400 B.C." Clark and Pye (2000:218) more loosely define the Olmec as "a politicoreligious entity (or several) of societies and peoples with deeply shared cultural practices" that reflects a "cultural and/or political commitment to certain beliefs, practices and material representations" rather than a specific ethnic group. Many scholars continue to carry the *cultura madre* torch (Clark 1997; Clark and Pye 2000; Cyphers 1996:61; Diehl and Coe 1995; Taube 1995, 1996, 2000; Tolstoy 1989). The essential argument is that the complex socio-political institutions, cultural practices, and symbolic systems created by the Olmec were diffused to their less complex contemporaries and later successors (Pool 2007:16).

Not all scholars agree with the *cultura madre* claim for the Olmec, but rather prefer to see the Olmec as a *cultura hermana*, or Sister Culture to other Formative societies that all shared a common ideological and symbolic ancestry and who mutually interacted and influenced one another (Demarest 1989; Flannery and Marcus 2000; Grove 1997; Hammond 1988). They point to traits that are attested to among contemporaries of the Olmec but that are not found among the Olmec themselves, such as the use of lime

plaster, adobe brick, and stone masonry by Central Mexican cultures, all of which became widespread during Classic period civilizations (Flannery and Marcus 2000:8).

The debate between the Mother Culture and Sister Culture adherents is still far from over, although there has been some inching towards a middle ground. John Clark, the reigning heavyweight champion of the Mother Culture cause, has at least acknowledged that the Olmec did not hold unilateral influence over their contemporaries (1997:230) and that many aspects of Maya culture date to pre-Olmec times that are indigenous to the Maya area, clearly indicating that certain aspects are not Olmec in origin (Clark et al. 2000).

In the Sister Culture corner, Flannery and Marcus (2000:6) have admitted that "the Olmec look impressive relative to their contemporaries" and they concede that the Olmec were more advanced than some of their contemporaries and contributed much to them and later cultures, but they ultimately feel the Mother Culture adherents "credit the Olmec with many things their neighbors did earlier or better" (ibid.:2). The truth probably lies somewhere in the middle; Pool (2007:17; see also Lesure 2004:79) argues that

> social stratification and a pronounced political hierarchy appeared first in Olman; Olmec societies influenced some of their neighbors and interacted with others to different degrees and in diverse ways; and many Early and Middle Formative societies, including the Olmecs, contributed significantly to the development of later Mesoamerican civilizations.

Taube (2004c:42) similarly posits that "it is clear that the Zapotec, Maya, and other Formative peoples outside the Olmec heartland were not simply diluted Olmec, but people who possessed their own distinct cultural patterns and trajectory." It seems clear,

however, that some specific ideological concepts and artistic styles found among cultures such as the Zapotec, Teotihuacan, and the early Maya have their origins in the Olmec. Of these, the early Maya showed the most similarity (Fields 1989; Taube 2004c:46), to the point that they explicitly linked themselves to the Olmec by both treasuring and modifying Olmec heirloom jades (Schele and Freidel 1990; Freidel and Suhler 1995; Schele 1995) and creating their own imitations of them (Freidel et al. 2002:46). For our present discussion, the most significant ideological inheritances and material influences that the Classic Maya received from the Olmec are those associated with rulership: stelae celebrating a particular ruler and/or his gods, stone thrones, conventionalized body poses and portraiture, bloodletting, the cult of rulership, and the prized status of jade and quetzal plumes and their use in royal ritual (Taube 2004c:46). "On all counts," Clark and Hansen (2001:34) claim, "the Maya appear to have borrowed from institutions of Olmec kingship and sacred space," yet the Maya adapted these Olmec institutions and made them uniquely their own, a concept that will be explored in more depth below.

The Uniqueness of Each Polity and the Creation of Identity

From an outsider's perspective, the differences between closely related groups appear to be overshadowed by their similarities. However, ancient Maya polities seemed to have been preoccupied with distinguishing themselves from their neighbors. They clearly conceptualized themselves as being different from their neighbors. Referring to distinct Classic Maya polities, Rosemary Joyce (2005:308) argues that there is "no support for the idea that adherents of different factions or alliances recognized each other as part of a

single overarching entity." Inomata (2006:832) similarly argues that we must "recognize the problem of uncritically assuming the homogeneity of culture and note the prevalence of multivocality" when dealing with the ancient Maya. But Inomata cautions that "multivocality does not necessarily mean outright rejection of religious beliefs but may entail varying degrees of commitment to such beliefs, indifferent conformity, covert dissent, and individualized ways of internalizing religious notions" (ibid.). Yet despite this multivocality and the existence of disparate factions, they of necessity shared much in common, indeed, "groups that individuate themselves within a community of this sort are connected to each other by shared principles of individuation" (Harrison 2003:352).

Beyond the factions within particular polities, there is clearly a great deal of similarity between ancient Maya polities—enough that we can confidently place them under the umbrella category of "Maya" and make distinctions between them and non-Maya cultures that coexisted with them in Mesoamerica. Yet despite the many similarities, there is a great deal of variation from one site to the next. Indeed, no two Maya cities are identical nor are any specific aspects of any two Maya cities identical. How did the similarities and the differences come about, and what significance can we attribute to them? To answer these questions, a fundamental discussion of identity creation and the concepts of Self and Other in is order.

Concepts of Self and Other

Each Maya polity was composed of a self-contained group of individuals whose identity was unique to its specific place and time. In the written records, there is no sense

of a cohesive "Maya history," but rather their histories focused on the specifics of their own individual polity (Stuart 1995).[4] It appears that each city-state had its own historical traditions and origin myths and each "conceived of itself as an independent player in the passage of the *tun* and *katun*" (Stuart 1995:171). Constructivist approaches to the creation of ethnic identity suggest that peoples actively create and define their ethnic affiliation through their shared cultural practices (Jones 1997). Yet their cultural, ethnic, and historical identity—their Self—was also created through ambivalent relations to the neighboring Others who were not a part of their specific group (Wobst 1977:329). Beyond creating identity by sharing practices amongst themselves, Harrison (2003:345) argued:

> Groups define themselves through contrasts, not just with any others at random, but with specific others with whom they represent themselves as having certain features of their identities in common. For it is only when people identify with one another that a felt need can arise for them to differentiate themselves.

Among the Maya, as discussed above, the commonalities in the features that identify each group derive in large measure from a shared ideological ancestry, primarily from the Olmec (Coe and Diehl 1980; Clark 1997; for contrary views, see Grove 1997; Flannery and Marcus 2000), as well as from contemporaneous mutual emulation, which can be either explicit or unacknowledged.[5] Importantly, despite their differences, they are united by the shared visual language that was used to express those differences (Harrison 2003). The common symbols allowed them both to identify with and to distinguish themselves

[4] For a discussion of cross-culture models concerning the organization of Classic period polities (Segmentary State model [based on African models] vs. Galactic Polity model [based on Southeast Asian models]) vs. Theater State model) see Chase and Chase 1996; Demarest 1992; Geertz 1980; Inomata 2001; Marcus 2003; Sharer and Golden 2004; Webster 2000.

[5] Wiener (1990) coined the term "Versailles effect" to describe this phenomenon in the Old World.

from each other, even across great distances and culture areas. As Houston, Stuart and Taube (2006:2) argue, "conventionalized representations expressed conventionalized ideas among the Classic Maya." Some of the conventions included general site-planning principles (Ashmore 1986), writing systems, and calendrics, as well as sociopolitical sytems, rituals, and regalia (Morley and Brainerd 1983; Sabloff 1986). Yet despite the many superficial similarities, there is considerable local variation on most if not all of these points.

For example, all Maya polities are similar in that they propitiated both major gods and local ancestors, yet they emphasized their differences from each other by the pan-Maya gods that held preeminence at their particular polity, and obviously, the ancestral deities would differ from site to site. Each community seems to have identified itself by and consecrated itself to a specific deity cult (Houston 2000:166). However, there also appear to be distinctions in the roles these deities played at each site. At Copan, kings had deities that were so personalized that both ruler and god were enthroned on the same day, which stands in stark contrast with Palenque's gods that transcended individual kings (ibid.). Houston (ibid.) argues that the gods of a certain city aided in the creation of the unique ethnic identity of that individual polity:

> [C]ontrasts in belief and ritual practice would have been as effective a mechanism as any in distinguishing such communities from their neighbors; the notable variability in Maya elite culture may have existed both for historical reasons and as a means of reinforcing such differentiation between dynasties.

Freidel (1979:50) has shown that the similarities among Maya polities span a wide range of regions. Schortman (1989:58) suggested that,

> the shared material patterns noted reflect the existence of, and were used to symbolize membership in, a spatially extensive salient status system that linked the rulers of a number of different independent polities. . . . The postulated identity system apparently developed as early as the last centuries B.C. as part of a strategy by its members to promote and control the flow of goods among their dispersed localities.

This creation of group identity goes beyond simply emphasizing the differences between a group and their neighbors, what Taussig (1993) terms alterity. It is rather to be understood as a denial of resemblance to the Other and a disavowal of them in regular and systematic ways, yet this systematic denial of similarity can only work within their closed system of shared symbols. As Harrison (2003:345) states, "constructs of difference and of shared identity always exist together." Polities that are geographically the closest often make the greatest efforts to emphasize their differences.

Perceived differences are not always negative. The Other may be seen as inferior, but they may also be perceived as equals and, in some instances, may be seen as superior in relation to the Self. In discussing the Classic Maya, it may be useful to employ Harrison's (2003) three categories of differences and denied similarity between Self and Other: difference-as-inferiority, difference-as-superiority, and difference-as-equality. As Sax (1998:294) argues, there is

> a double movement, where the Other is simultaneously emulated and repudiated, admired and despised, and the source of this ambivalence is the recognition of Self in Other. That is to say, the Other represents a kind of screen upon which both the despised and the desired aspects of the Self can be projected, so that the dialectics of sameness and difference is resolved into a kind of difference in sameness.

This concept is not new. Freud (Freud 1930:114; 1945:101; 1957:199; 1964:91) long ago commented on the "narcissism of minor differences," where closely related groups of

people tend to exaggerate the differences between their own group and their neighbors, and suggested that those with the most in common are those who make the most effort to differentiate themselves.

In keeping with Freud and later theorists who shared his view (Harrison 2003; Sax 1998), I argue that the Maya went to great trouble to differentiate themselves from their neighbors for purposes of identity creation and reinforcement. As a broad and preliminary example, despite modern generalizations and idealized types of Maya site-planning principles, each Maya city was in fact unique in its site plan and there is no "typical template" (Miller and Martin 2004:21). Classic Maya cities were constantly trying to outdo each other in art, architecture, and pageantry (Miller and Martin 2004: 21; Valdés 2001:138). Beyond the conceptual attempts at asserting superiority, they typically "made bad neighbors to one another, predisposed to mutual animosity and sporadic violence, only occasionally interspersed by alliance and cooperation" (Miller and Martin 2004: 20). This animosity was driven by a sense of Self and Other.

Mimesis

The lover's maxim claims "distance makes the heart grow fonder," and this appears to be true of political relationships in ancient Mesoamerica. The fiercest rivalries were often between those polities who were geographically the closest, and the highest admiration was for those who were most distant, both spatially and temporally. As mentioned previously in our discussion of the Olmec, many ideological and artistic conventions were emulated by Late Formative, Protoclassic, and Classic Mesoamerican groups, and

we find a similar hearkening and appropriation of the past among the Late Postclassic Aztec, who seem to have used conventions from the desolate but revered sites of Teotihuacan, Xochicalco, and Tula (Umberger 1987; López Luján 1989; Matos Moctezuma and López Luján 1993; Taube 2004c:47). Certain Maya polities, such as Tikal and Copan, seemed to maintain a relationship (whether real or fictitious) with Teotihuacan that involved an intense identification with them as the Other. As Miller and Martin (2004:282, Footnote 5) noted:

> The historical relationship between the Maya and Teotihuacan was complex, but receives scant attention in the inscriptions. Military intervention may have been of less importance than more subtle forces, among them intermarriage, religious cults, and trade agreements, which required other sorts of contact. Teotihuacan appears to have manipulated dynastic succession at Tikal in 378—perhaps by force—and provided some of the impetus or inspiriation for colonizing missions, such as the one that took a new ruler to Copan in 427 AD (Martin and Grube 2000:29-34, 192-193; Stuart 2000a:465-513).

Rather than producing an antagonistic relationship, Teotihuacan was an exalted Other that was viewed as a well-spring of appropriable power, even after its political collapse, when only its aura remained. In Harrison's (2003) terminology, this view of Teotihuacan would be categorized as "difference-as-superiority."

Teotihuacan represented the pinnacle of military prowess, so the Maya appropriated their war gods, weaponry, and even their style of armor (Miller and Martin 2004:20). For example, in warfare, Maya rulers would don the headdress and armor of the Mexican War Serpent, called *waxaklajuun ub'aah kaan* ("18 heads/images of the snake") by the Maya (Freidel et al. 1993:281). This relationship between the Maya and Teotihuacan went both ways; it represents an ancient mutual admiration society. To the Teotihuacanos, the Maya area was one of wealth and prosperity, brimming with

resplendent feathers, jaguar pelts, cacao, and precious jade (Taube 2006:165; Miller and Martin 2004:21). Unlike the relationship certain Maya polities maintained with their closest neighbors, they did not go out of their way to differentiate themselves from Teotihuacan, but rather they wanted to imitate them to a degree that they merged with them conceptually in an effort to blur the lines between Self and Other, a concept that Taussig refers to as *mimesis*. However, the Maya did not want to become carbon-copies of Teotihuacan. They wanted to harness the prestige of Teotihuacan while simultaneously setting themselves apart from it. As Harrison (2003:350-351) states,

> Borrowing of this sort is neither pure imitation, nor pure differentiation of Self from Other, but something in between. It is imitation intimately involved in the production of difference. It is a kind of mimetic appropriation, an attempt to re-enact the identity-myths of others so deeply as to make them completely, and genuinely, one's own.

Harrison's discussion of the appropriation of identity-myths is particularly appropriate when considering Teotihuacan in relation to the Maya, as its power and very existence began to fade in the seventh century. However, the Maya continued to view it as a mysterious and sacred place, known more through myth and legend than experience, but whose memory was called upon for purposes of legitimization (Miller and Martin 2004: 20). For example, on Altar Q at Copan, K'inich Yax Pasaj gives a retrospective history of the dynasty's founding and subsequent line of rulers. The founder, K'uk' Mo', traveled to what we suppose was Teotihuacan, which somehow legitimized his right to rule. Upon his return, he was known as K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'.[6] Interestingly, K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' appears to have been an influential figure at Teotihuacan itself, at least after his

[6] The significance of the K'inich prefix and the taking of throne names will be discussed in detail in a later chapter.

death when he had been apotheosized as the Sun God. Taube (2006:165) noted that figures from the Conjunto del Sol and Pinturas Realistas from Teotihuacan may be depictions of an apotheosized K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' and argues that

> As a ruler of the easternmost major Maya site, K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' may have embodied both Teotihuacan as well as Maya concepts of the sun. Just as the Postclassic Tonatiuh was based on the concept of a Maya king, K'inich Yax K'uk' may have been apotheosized as the sun not only at Copan but at Teotihuacan as well.

The mimetic influence between Teotihuacan and Copan, therefore, appears to have been mutual to some degree.

Similarly, at Tikal we find explicit references to Teotihuacan in the context of legitimization of a Maya ruler, but this may be another instance of mythology replacing history. The father of Yax Nuun Ayiin, Spearthrower Owl, is named as a Teotihucano.[7] However, unlike the case at Copan during the reign of Yax K'uk Mo', during Yax Nuun Ayiin's reign there was a major shift in the iconographic program. He is depicted as a Teotihuacano warrior during his lifetime. A variety of explanations have been offered as to why he chose to adopt Teotihuacan's symbols of power. James Borowicz (2004) argues that in emulating Teotihuacan, Yax Nuun Ayiin was valorizing his foreign ancestry over his local heritage. However, his ancestry is still subject to debate, and strontium isotope ratios conducted on relevant Tikal burials do not support the hypothesis that Yax Nuun Ayiin was a Teotihuacano by birth, but rather was born and raised in or near the Tikal region (Wright 2005a). Others suggest that the Teotihuacanos came at Tikal's invitation with the hope and expectation that they would intervene in the dynastic

[7] According to David Stuart's (2000) interpretation of *Teotihuacan* as the 'Place of Reeds.'

succession (Culbert 2005). Whether real or fictitious, the ideological linkage to Teotihuacan served a legitimizing purpose, and it is significant that it was specifically the iconography of war that was appropriated by Yax Nuun Ayiin. Teotihuacan was seen as the preeminent war power, and their gods of war were likewise paramount. Teotihuacan's difference-as-superiority was embraced by Tikal, and through mimetic processes, Yax Nuun Ayiin was re-enacting the identity-myths of Teotihuacan while simultaneously making them completely and genuinely his own (Harrison 2003).

Methodology and Methodological Concerns

Houston, Stuart and Taube (2006:1-2) raise and address a number of methodological concerns that arise for researchers of the Classic period Maya, namely (1) using evidence from historic or ethnographic Maya, (2) using what Classic elites say according to their own texts, (3) using information, past and present, from other parts of Mexico and northern Central America, (4) using comparative anthropology, (5) using data from one Maya site to explain another, and (6) using glyphs and imagery at all. As it must, this dissertation relies upon all of the above datasets, mindful of the pitfalls each may potentially present, but recognizing them for the mine of information that they are. A brief discussion of the value and dangers of these sources of data follows.

Cross-Cultural Comparison and Ethnographic Analogy

Although the institution of divine kingship is widely attested in many parts of the ancient and modern world, the danger of using cross-cultural comparison and

ethnographic analogy is that all too often it reifies models. If these models were applied to the Maya case, it would only serve to minimize the temporal and spatial diversity of individual polities (Sharer and Golden 2004:24; Marcus 1995). Manipulating the data from the Classic Maya into models from other cultures separated by space or time is akin to forcing a square peg into a round hole. Sharer and Golden (2004:24) call for a model that synthesizes parallel features from a variety of non-Maya-based models to create a Maya-specific model. However, due to the heterogeneous nature of Maya polities and the considerable local variation that is known to exist at each site, Lewis (1995:135) cautioned, "no single interpretive model can be applied to all of ancient Maya society." Houston (1993:9ff) called for a move away from all-encompassing pan-Maya theorizing and a move toward a regional emphasis that places local, site specific variation within its regional context, without micro-focusing to the point that the individual polities lose their broader context. Heeding Houston's call, this dissertation attempts to examine the temporally and spatially specific ways in which the institution of divine kingship was implemented at a number of Classic Maya sites, and place them within their regional context. Although some cross-cultural information regarding divine kingship may be drawn upon, it will be for comparative and illustrative purposes rather than a Frazerian attempt to create a universal "ideal type" of divine king.

The (somewhat) Direct Historical Approach

Similar to the problems with the cross-cultural approach and ethnographic analogy, there are several challenges when using ethnohistoric data from the Colonial period as a

tool for understanding the Classic Maya. It is often difficult to determine which beliefs and practices were Prehispanic and which represent Christian influence (Sachse 2004:4). Complicating the matter further is the fact that Colonial Mayan texts such as the Quiche Popol Vuh and the Yucatec books of Chilam Balam were often written as reactions to colonialism and, therefore, used metaphors and concepts that were intentionally obscure to Western readers (ibid.). Even when not doing so intentionally, the concepts and metaphors are still foreign and a great deal of effort is required of modern readers to make any sense of them.

Beyond these challenges is the evidence that the institution of divine kingship had all but collapsed by the tenth century in the Maya area, and ethnohistoric accounts of political organization reflect a Late Postclassic system rather than the organization that was in place during the Classic period.

Despite these challenges, much useful information can be gleaned from later Mesoamerican cultures, especially the Aztecs, for whom we have a wealth of data thanks to meticulous chroniclers such as Fray Berdardino de Sahagún and Diego Durán, and among whom the institution of divine kingship was still flourishing. Sahagún is often described as the "father of American ethnography" due the depth and breadth of his knowledge of native language and culture and his meticulous recording of virtually every aspect of the lives of both commoner and elite (Keber 1988:53; Taube 1992:8). For our purposes here, the Florentine Codex will prove especially useful due to its detailing of both the supernatural realm and divine rulers, and the interactions between the two.

Epigraphy and Iconography

A concern when using epigraphic and iconographic data is that virtually all texts and images were produced by elites, arguably for propagandistic purposes, and only represent a glimpse into elite ideology and lifestyle (Houston, Stuart and Taube 2006:1). Fortunately, for purposes of this dissertation, that is precisely the view we are interested in. Although not fully deciphered or perfectly understood due to insufficient linguistic data (e.g., logograms with no known phonetic compliments) or obscure idioms that defy Western understanding, the glyphic system still provides a massive corpus of readable, understandable data that complement the iconographic program. The data sets are symbiotic, and unlike ethnohistoric or cross-cultural data, the light they shed on each other is both temporally and spatially salient.

In the epigraphic data we find the names and titles of humans and gods, we are informed about relationships and genealogies, and we are given dates and locations for significant events. The iconographic data gives us a glimpse into how they visualized the natural and supernatural realms, and invite us to witness how porous the boundary between the two realms truly was. Although clearly slanted and one-sided, beyond what they actually tell us, we can interpret the meta-messages of elite world-views based on what they chose to record with chisels and paint and what they chose to ignore.

Outline of Text

This dissertation draws heavily on the concepts of mimesis and alterity, whereby concepts of Self and Other were created among the Classic Maya vis-à-vis their

relationships with foreign entities, both near and far, past and contemporary, human and supernatural. The thread of mimesis weaves together seemingly disparate elements of this work, from the microcosmic to the macrocosmic. As Classic Maya rulers were the center of focus in their polities, the actions and material culture they produced affected concepts of identity within their communities. The principle goal of this dissertation is to understand divine kingship among the Classic Maya and to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship the kings had with their gods, but these concepts cannot be understood without examining rulership from multiple angles: ideology, ritual, material culture, identity, etc. Previous research on Maya divine kingship has focused in large measure on pan-Maya generalities while ignoring how rulership was practiced at specific sites or regions and the significance of local and regional variation. This dissertation attempts to analyze the site and regionally specific ways in which rulership was practiced and seeks to understand the motivation behind the variation.

Chapter 2 is a discussion of the function of divine rulership among the Classic Maya. It discusses "ideal types" of divine rulers and their polities, and then explores the local variation that veers from the ideal type and the significance that the variation may have. It explores a wide range of aspects relating to rulership, from political legitimization to ritual performance, all of which had a distinctively divine flavor. Chapter 3 discusses the sacred process of royal succession: pre-accession rituals, rituals of accession, mortuary rituals, and efforts made by successors to deify the deceased. Chapter 4 is a discussion of the divine realm and the ruler's place within it after death, with a focus on the gods of regeneration—specifically the Sun God and Maize God—and the king's apotheosis in

relation to them. The discussion in Chapter 5 weaves together the pieces of the tapestry presented in earlier chapters, and offers suggestions for avenues of further research concerning divine kingship among the Classic Maya.

Chapter 2

Royal Responsibilities

The Polity

The identity of a polity was deeply rooted in the activities of its king. Rulers determined the architectural and monumental programs for their cities, and used their sacred buildings and designated natural features as stages for their ritual activities. In this chapter we will examine royal responsibilities that pertain to the ordering of both polity and cosmos.

The "Ideal Type" of Classic Maya Polity

Any generalized discussion of Classic Maya polities must, of necessity, be a reduction to what Max Weber refers to as an "ideal type." According to Weber (1969:90), an ideal type "is not a description of reality but it aims to give unambiguous means of expression to such a description." While ideal types allow for comparisons, contrasts, and points of connection between spatially and temporally disparate peoples and places, thoughts and things, they also have a tendency to homogenize or essentialize them. Such is often the case in the study of the Classic Maya.

A discussion of ideal types of Maya polities is not merely an etic exercise: we can presume that the ancient Maya similarly had some emic conceptions of what qualities an ideal polity would have (Reents-Budet 2001:222). However, despite the many similarities in Maya polities we find across space and time, they were not homogeneous, and we cannot reduce the system to a single "Maya political organization" (Stuart 1995:186).

Sharer and Golden (2004:35) note "the particularities of administration, organization, and implementation of the Classic polity differed from place to place and changed dramatically over the centuries even within the same polity," making it somewhat challenging to generalize. Stuart (1995:118) coined the phrase "site-specific genres" to refer to the distinct meanings, materials, and methods that define localized styles, although others before him certainly showed an awareness of local variation in material culture (e.g., Ball 1993; Proskouriakoff 1950; Spinden 1913; Willey et al. 1967). Houston and Stuart (2001:60) applied the term "ethnic kingdoms" to polities that "may speak the same language and share similar customs, yet they appear to have based their collective identity on propriety mediations with certain gods or local materialization of deities."

Settlement data may suggest that many Classic period polities were inhabited long before they were inaugurated as dynastic kingdoms. The transitions to kingdoms and the birth of dynasties were momentous occasions—or at least they were commemorated as such by later generations—that marked a change from chaos to order and were "tantamount to the rebirth of the world" (Florescano 2005). The initial construction of monumental architecture was likely concomitant with the birth of dynasties, and newly constructed sites would have served to create group identity (Clark and Colman 2008:96).

At any given polity, "temples" and "palaces" typically anchor the site core. "Temples" are buildings whose primary function we assume to be religious, and "palaces" are structures that appear to have been the seat of political authority, but these realms do not appear to have been clearly distinguished among the Classic period Maya so the precise

function of these structures is not clearly understood. The epigraphic and iconographic records contain virtually no clues concerning the function of temples. Larger sites typically have multiple temples, often within a single site core, each of which may have served different religious or political purposes (Lucero 2007:407). In very general terms, there appears to have been a shift concerning the "ideal type" of temple from the Preclassic to the Classic periods. Formative period temples are generally not focused on individual rulers; rather, they tend to highlight specific supernaturals – the Principal Bird Deity being a favorite – and reflect grand cosmologies rather than individual histories (Schele 1998). As the focus of Preclassic temples was typically not on specific human agents, it is unsurprising that most of them do not contain royal tombs (Hansen 1998). There are exceptions, however. Mound E-III-3 at Kaminaljuyu, for example, contained two richly furnished burials, apparently those of rulers from the Miraflores phase (400-100 B.C.) (Shook and Kidder 1952). A richly furnished burial (designated Tomb 1) was discovered at San Bartolo, but it was discovered in the Grupo Jabalí residential compound, a triadic grouping of structures located to the northwest of the site core (Pellecer 2006). Similarly, at the site of K'o in Belize, a burial was discovered in a residential compound that contained a greenstone diadem and other high-quality grave goods, indicating it was a royal tomb (Estrada-Belli 2009). While the burials at San Bartolo and K'o indicate the growing reverence given to deceased rulers, it is not until the Early Classic (after about AD 300) that the principal pyramids at the site cores were used primarily for the purpose of deifying their ancestors rather than focusing predominantly on the gods (McAnany 2001:136). As Fransisco Etrada-Belli (2011:63)

notes, "these sporadic finds of high-status burials in unassuming residential locations indicate that rulers and elites were not buried in temple-pyramids prior to AD 100." However, it is certainly possible that the lack of known burials from the Preclassic period may simply be due to the fact that less excavation has been done on structures dating to that period (Stephen Houston, personal communication 2011).

Mimesis of the Divine Realm

Mircea Eliade (1959:5-12) argued that city designs reflect a desire for heavenly mimesis. Unlike other ancient cultures such as China, India, and Cambodia, there are no Maya texts that explicitly state that rulers were deliberately following cosmological models when laying out their capital cities (Smith 2003:222). Michael E. Smith (2003; 2005) has sharply criticized Mesoamericanists for their over-reliance on the cosmogram as an explanation for site-planning principles (see also Carl et al. 2000). He suggests that "Maya architectural cosmograms are modern phenomena, invented by scholars to satisfy their desire to reconstruct ancient cosmology from fragmentary evidence" (Smith 2005:220). His primary critique is that too many of our scholars use language befitting established empirical fact to draw their conclusions when more cautious language is called for. He commends the scholarship of Wendy Ashmore (1989, 1991, 1992), which does not treat speculations as though they were established fact, but rather uses "cautious and judicious" language in formulating her arguments (Smith 2005:217).

With that caveat, there is evidence that suggests the designs of Maya royal courts and the rituals performed within them intentionally mimicked divine models (Reents-Budet

1994:236). By the Late Classic the court of the supreme creator deity Itzamnaaj appears to have been considered the most powerful and worthy of emulation (Miller and Martin 2004:29).[8] It would seem they did not merely emulate heavenly architecture and spatial layout for their cities and courts, but the lives of the gods were considered models for behavior for the human realm, "a mirror held to the aspirations and behavioral norms of a culture" (ibid:95).

At Palenque, for example, the mythological accession of Muwaan Mat as *k'uhul ajaw* of Matawiil in 2325 BC was said to be *unaah tal*, "the first" (Martin and Grube 2000:61). The opening phrase on the inscription of the Tablet of the Cross related to Muwaan Mat's birth as an aspect of the Maize God, who was also the creator of the Triad gods, designated GI, GII and GIII (Stuart and Stuart 2008:198). As Stuart and Stuart (ibid:211) note, Muwaan Mat's "overseeing of the creation and establishment of the Triad deities served as a model for kingship at Palenque, and established a mythical charter for how rulers interact with the gods they are entrusted to care for and protect."

The throne of a particular city may have belonged conceptually to its patron gods, with the ruler sitting in as their regent. Book 6 of the Florentine Codex (Sahagún 1950-1982 Book 6:24) informs us that the principal priest would pray to Tezcatlipoca when preparing to install a new ruler, "Concede, O master, O our lord, that [the ruler] live.[9]

[8] The palace template based specifically on the court of Itzamnaaj (God D) appears to be a relatively late innovation (Stephen Houston, personal communication, 2011), which I suggest demonstrates diachronic variation and ideological flexibility.

[9] Despite his reputation as the Mesoamerican proto-ethnographer, we must caution that Fray Bernardino de Sahagún was not a dispassionate, objective anthropological observer, but rather a Franciscan Friar whose intent was to proselytize the native inhabitants. The Florentine Codex was primarily intended to be used as a resource for missionaries in their efforts at evangelization (Bremer 2003).

Concede to him, designate him, that he may guard this. Give him as a loan for a little while thy reed mat, thy reed seat, and thy rule, thy realm." The rulers themselves would offer humble prayers upon their accessions, proclaiming that they were not just regents of the gods, but actually vessels of their essence:

> Who am I? Who do I think I am that thou movest me along, thou bringest me among, thou countest me with acquaintances, thy friends, thy chosen ones…Thou wilt have them substitute for thee, thou wilt hide thyself in them; from within them thou wilt speak; they will pronounce for thee…and [it is they] who will pronounce for thy progenitor, the mother of the gods, the father of the gods, Ueueteotl, who is the in the center of the hearth…I await thee at thy humble home, at thy humble waiting place. I do what I can for thee, I place my trust in thee. I request, I seek, I expect, I ask of thee thy spirit, thy word, with which thou hast inspired thy friends, thy acquaintances, who ordered things for thee on thy reed mat, on thy reed seat, thy place of honor. It is where thou art given a proxy, where thou art replaced by another, where thou art substituted, where there is pronouncing for thee, where there is speaking for thee, where thou usest one as a flute, where thou speakest from within one, where thou makest one thy eyes, thy ears; where thou makest one thy mouth, thy jaw" (Sahagún 1950-1982, Book 6:42-44).

Such garrulous sentiments from Central Mexican ethnohistory offer intriguing insights into the nature of the ruler's essence and may represent enduring ideologies from earlier Mesoamerican cultures, but we must be cautious not to presume identical beliefs among the Classic period Maya, whose texts are as laconic as the Florentine Codex is verbose. Though not explicitly spelled out, there are certainly hints that these ideologies were held among the Maya which must be gleaned from short, formulaic texts and iconography steeped in culturally specific artistic conventions.

The Royal Court

The *k'uhul ajaw* were not autocrats who single-handedly administrated all of the affairs of their polities, but the precise size and role of organized bureaucracies during the Classic period is still a contested issue (Inomata and Houston 2001). The ethnohistoric data suggest that, in Late Postclassic Yucatan, a supreme ruler sat in council with principal men known as *ah kuch kabob* (McAnany 1995). William and Barbara Fash argued that a similar council style of governance traces back to Late Classic Copán based on their interpretation of the so-called Popol Nah, or Council House designated Structure 10L-22a (Fash 2002:14-15; Fash et al. 1992; Fash and Fash 1990; Fash et al. 1992; Fash et al. 1996:441-56), but Wagner (2000) demonstrated it was actually a *waybil*, a shrine that housed ancestral effigies. The toponyms that adorn the structure refer to mythical locations (Stuart and Houston 1994:72). Despite Wagner's rejection that Str. 10L-22a was a *popol na*, she notes that the throne room within a palace served as a location where a ruler would receive visits from other nobles (Wagner 2000:44). Regardless of whether or not Copan had some type of formal noble council, the existence of noble titles indicates that other elites populated the royal court at Copan and elsewhere. But the ruler was not merely *primus inter pares*—he was qualitatively different due to his supreme office and sacred status.

The "royal court" and the "royal household" are not synonymous. The royal household included the ruler, his wives, children, and other relatives, as well as a variety of attendants, specialist retainers, and slaves (Traxler 2001:47). In contrast, the royal court was composed of politically powerful men and women with specialized duties who

often bore named ranks or titles (ibid). The size and function of royal courts display diachronic and geographic variation reflecting the specific histories of each site, and could change quite quickly for better or for worse. At Copán, for example, the prosperous court of Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil was responsible for innovative artistic styles and an aggressive building campaign (Stuart 2008). The court of his successor, K'ahk' Joplaj Chan K'awiil, was understandably less productive, with no known stela and only one architectural contribution, the so-called Popol Nah or Council House. Barbara Fash (2005:138, Footnote 16) suggested that some type of council existed prior to K'ahk' Joplaj Chan K'awiil's reign and that they gained much greater political power in the wake of Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil's beheading. Their public portraits and their accompanying toponyms in the façade of the Popol Nah would have been unthinkable during the more authoritative reign of Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil. However, as noted above, the portraits and toponyms may actually be gods and mythological locations (Stuart and Houston 1994:72).

Members of Tonina's royal court shared the public stage with the king to an unusual degree. This was likely due to the extremely young age at which many of its rulers acceded to the throne and their reliance on regents and guardians to govern the affairs of the kingdom until they were capable of governing themselves (Miller and Martin 2004:188). The inscription on Monument 183 recounts the seating of an individual into the office of *Aj k'uhuun* in the year 612 (Fig. 2.1; Zender 2004:156-157). He is depicted wearing a Jester God headdress, a piece of regalia normally reserved for rulers. This was a time of turmoil for Tonina and no supreme ruler is known. An eight year old K'inich

Hiix Chapaht would not accede until three years later (Miller and Martin 2004:188), so it is plausible this *Aj k'uhuun* acted as his regent.

Sacred Architecture

The royal complexes were centers for domestic, administrative, and ritual activities. Palace scenes are common on polychrome vases, and activities range from mundane administrative transactions, such as receiving tribute to elaborate costumed impersonation rituals. Royal buildings were often decorated with powerful symbols of rulership and used images of gods and ancestors to validate their authority (Traxler 2001:49). Structures were considered living entities, and dedicatory rituals would imbue them with a soul (Freidel et al. 1993:234). Within the private chambers, rulers would offer prayers and incense and perform bloodletting rituals (Schele and Freidel 1990). Many of the rituals (such as deity impersonation and bloodletting) and even some of the paraphernalia (such as headbands) associated with the *k'uhul ajaw* were at times used by subsidiary rulers or even nobles within a particular ruler's court, yet the king's role and status were paramount.

Maya rulers typically commissioned royal palaces for themselves that served as a central place for them to sit in rulership. The public architecture they commissioned was an expression of their individual identity (Reilly 1995). The sacred texts and cosmologically charged iconography that adorned these buildings, along with the rituals that were performed there, served to reinforce the social differences that existed between king and commoner (McAnany 2008:221). Each new building was a creation of ordered

space that reflected the quadripartite division of the cosmos (Ashmore 1991; Mathews and Garber 2004), which contrasted with the chaos of the forest. It is likely that powerful kingdoms that controlled large geographic regions established multiple palace complexes in each of their subordinate centers (Ball and Taschek 1991). These satellite palaces were not "places where the king was but rather places where the king might be" (Webster 2001:161). His physical presence was not necessary for his spiritual essence to be manifest, and the *sajals* or other lesser nobles who ruled in his absence did so under his auspices.

Monumental architecture served as markers of both sacred space and seats of power (McAnany 2001:135). Buildings were considered living beings and were frequently anthropomorphized. The doors of the temples were literally referred to as "mouths," and from them would issue forth oracular pronouncements and commandments (Houston et al. 2006:238). Schele and Mathews (1998:34) suggested that regional and local architectural styles may have been a combination of limitations of local building materials and the legacies of individual, long-lived rulers who created unique local templates within their polities. Furthermore, the authors suggest that there was a conscious stylistic emulation of other sites as a way to affiliate themselves with contemporary sites or to evoke the style of the site of their supposed origin. As they succinctly stated, "style could be political" (ibid).

While there are some general similarities in the architectural designs and site planning principles across the Maya area (such as raised platforms, monumental structures with corbelled vaults, multiple interior courtyards, and areas of restricted access), there is a

great deal of local variation in regards to the royal court complexes of the Classic period. The first multi-room structures with vaulted ceilings date to the Late Preclassic. The earliest known examples are found at El Mirador, Nakbe, Cerros, Tikal, and Uaxactun (Valdés 2001:139). This new architectural style was intended to accomodate and elevate a new class of ruler, and the variations of this architectural theme served to distinguish one site from another. House A at Palenque, for example, has soaring corbels that are cut at right angles to produce a cathedral-like interior space. As Miller and Martin (2004:204) note, "No other Maya engineers ever approached these architectural feats."

Simon Martin (2001a:176) contrasted the dispersed court plans of Tikal to the concentrated layout of Calakmul, as well as the radial causeways within the complex at Caracol and the distinctive layout of Naranjo's ceremonial center. He noted significant differences in their respective arrangements, sizes and proportional emphases. Like Schele and Mathews, Martin suggested the disparities may be due to the unique political histories of each site, but also suggests that functional differences may explain why the court complexes were so different (ibid:175).

Polities distinguished themselves architecturally and artistically by what they emphasized and shunned. Stelae, so common at sites like Copán and Tikal, are notably absent from Palenque, whose history is instead recorded in stucco panels set within the walls of its temples. Palenque's neighbor Yaxchilán is noted for eschewing wood in favor of stone for its intricately carved lintels. Tonina and Copan are distinguished by carving sculptures in the round, a feat virtually unknown at other lowland sites. It is also unique architecturally in that the city is essentially one massive building that covers the side of a

mountain. Tikal is noted for its striking Twin-Pyramid complexes. The western Maya region in general is characterized by its use of finely worked stucco (Miller and Martin 2004:161). The artists at Tonina and Comalcalco also showed great mastery of stucco working, the latter incorporating mortar with oyster shells. Additionally, Comacalco is the only Maya city known to have used fired-clay bricks.

Architectural features often served mythological as well as functional purposes. For example, in northern Yucatan, burial chambers in the Puuc and Chenes architectural styles had corbelled vaults that may have been symbolically equated with the maw of the Underworld. Hull and Carrasco (2004) argued that the central capstones may have served as portals through which supernatural beings could manifest themselves. The vaults were also linked to creation events, seen as representations of the turtle carapace earth from whence the Maize God regenerates (ibid:133-134). These capstones often portrayed images of celestial deities. The format was generally similar: there was typically an image of a propitiatory deity, a short text that framed the image that gave the date, the verb *mak* 'to close, cover' in passive voice, a reference to the building and the name of the building's owner (Grube et al. 2003:11-14). For example, at Ek' Balam we find many capstone images of K'awiil and Itzamnaaj, but on Capstone 15 from Ukit Kan L'ek Tok's burial chamber we find a unique depiction of the Maize God seated atop 5 Flower Mountain (Fig. 2.2). More precisely, we see Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' transformed into the Maize God. Significantly, this is not an impersonation, but rather "the king idealized and transformed himself into the Maize God" (Grube et al. 2003:47).

Surprisingly, despite the vast differences in the layouts and structural materials of royal complexes that have been uncovered archaeologically across and within regions, there does appear to have been an emic concept of an "ideal type" of royal court. Reents-Budet (2001:222) compared a stylistically diverse range of pictorial pottery that was produced in distinct geographical regions and noted that they all depicted "similar architectural forms, human and artifactual contents, formal layouts, and ritual activities in the royal court." While there were undeniably expressions of local stylistic preferences and even idiosyncratic functional differences, there were baseline similarities that created a sense of social cohesion with other Maya polities (ibid; Harrison 2003:354).

E-groups

Distinctive architectural complexes known as E-Groups began appearing in the southern lowlands as early as the late Middle Preclassic (ca. 700-400 BC), and continued through (or more precisely, were resurrected during) the Late Classic period. They are the namesakes of Group E at Uaxactun, first mapped by Ricketson (1928) and identified as a recurring assemblage in the southern lowlands by Ruppert (1940). They are typified by three linear buildings located on the east side of a plaza with a north-south orientation, often on a shared, substructural platform, which face toward a fourth building to the west, either on the other side of the plaza or in the middle of it (Fig. 2.3). The earliest examples, such as those from Balakbal, Nakbe, Tikal, Uaxactun, Wakna, and Yaxha, are sometimes called "Commemorative Astronomical Complexes" (Hansen 1998) and are more correctly described as "horizon calendar complexes" (Aveni 2010:210) because

they served as rudimentary observatories for the solstices and equinoxes. The western structures were typically square radial platforms with stairs on all four sides and no superstructure, which suggests their use as a place of ritual performance (Cohodas 1980). It is likely that rulers performed public rituals to mark celestial and agricultural cycles and to reenact creation events (Aveni and Hartung 1989; Aveni et al. 2003; Cohodas 1980; Fialko 1988; Laporte and Fialko 1995). Radial pyramids may be microcosmic representations of the quadripartite earth, and as such, a ruler performing rituals on the platform would become the *axis mundi* at the center of the cosmos (Cohodas 1980:219).

Over one hundred E-Groups or pseudo-E-Groups have been identified in the southern Maya lowlands (Aveni et al. 2003; Chase and Chase 1995; Guderjan 2006; Ricketson 1928). Pseudo-E-groups are identified by having the general form of Late Middle Preclassic E-groups but lack the precise orientation to serve as functional horizon calendar complexes (Cohodas 1980:215). Guderjan (2006:97) noted that there are significant temporal and regional differences found among E-groups, and argued that these differences were an expression of identity for each polity and further served to legitimatize the ruler's authority. Despite the variations, the sheer number of E-groups or pseudo-E-groups suggests that these architectural forms were "embedded into the Maya conception of necessary elements in public architecture" (ibid:101).

The orientation of E-Groups shifted during the Early Classic period, which may have been due to the influence of Teotihuacan (Aveni and Hartung 1989; Aveni et al. 2003). The haitus of E-group construction has been correlated to the rise of Teotihuacan's influence in the central Peten. Like E-groups, ballcourts formed a core of Maya identity

(Guderjan 2006:101). Significantly, E-groups and ballcourts are often found in close proximity to each other (Aimers 1993), and both types of constructions ceased during the peak of Teotihuacan's architectural influence in the central Peten. But eventually, as Teotihuacan's influence faded, many polities in the Peten began hearkening back to their own architectural histories by creating "pseudo-E-groups." Their role shifted from serving predominantly astronomical functions in the Late Middle Preclassic to fulfilling primarily social functions in the early part of the Late Classic (Guderjan 2006:98). Guderjan (ibid:99) argued that these non-functional pseudo-E-groups mimicked earlier functional E-groups "Not on desire for the function of an E-group but on the integration of the idea of an E-group into the sacred space of a polity and the need for its rulers to incorporate such a complex because it was a necessary part of their identity." Even small ceremonial centers constructed E-groups, sometimes serving as their only civic construction (Cohodas 1980:214).

The "Ideal Type" of Classic Maya Rulers

As is the case with Classic Maya polity, any discussion of Classic Maya rulership as a general institution must also be a reduction to an ideal type. This discussion of ideal types is not merely an etic exercise, for we can presume that the ancient Maya similarly had emic conceptions of what qualities an ideal ruler would have. To reconstruct an emic ideal type of the Classic Maya ruler, we must consult the Maya's own depictions and descriptions of rulers as found in their iconographic and epigraphic records. However, caution must be exercised to avoid homogenizing the ancient Maya. For example,

Houston and Stuart (1996:302) have cautioned against interpreting all Maya beliefs and practices through the lens of Palenque's mythology. Similarly, we should exercise caution in our use of Colonial period documents in our interpretation of Classic period iconography. While they are clearly useful in some instances, we may have developed an over-reliance on the Colonial era K'iche' *Popol Vuh* as a rubric for understanding virtually all earlier Mesoamerican art. As Stuart and Stuart (2008:256 Note 10) caution,

> …it is fair to say that interpretations of Classic Maya religious iconography based on the *Popol Vuh* have been overemphasized in the last few decades (Coe, 1973 and Tedlock, 1985). While strands of individual stories that we read in the *Popol Vuh* have deep and obvious reflections in the ancient art, they are few.

That is certainly not to say that the Popol Vuh is completely disconnected from the beliefs and practices of earlier periods and has no light to shed. Many of the mythological episodes from the Popol Vuh are clearly attested to from the Preclassic through the Postclassic, but there is not a one-to-one correlation. The murals of San Bartolo, for example, show many clear correspondences to the Popol Vuh, but there is also much that is different (Saturno et al. 2005:51). When used appropriately, the Popol Vuh can shed valuable light on earlier Maya cultures, but the point is simply that not all Classic period iconography can necessarily be illuminated by it.

Similarly, we must exercise caution when using ethnohistoric sources from Central Mexico to interpret Classic period kingship, but they admittedly offer fascinating and detailed insights into the later Mesoamerican emic "ideal types" of ruler. Book 6 of the Florentine Codex, for example, outlines the qualities of both good and bad rulers. Unsatisfactory rulers were those who grew prideful, engaged in "perverseness," were prone to drunkenness, displayed irreverence in sacred locations, and abused their

"position of merchanthood" for personal gain (Sahagún 1950-1982, Book 6:25-26). For such unworthy rulers the principal priest would earnestly petition Tezcatlipoca to show mercy upon the ruler (but in reality, the ruled) by allowing the contemptible regent to come quickly to the land of the dead to join the ancestors; in other words, they would pray for him to die as soon as possible.

Hierarchical Concerns

Unlike ancient empires such as Egypt or China, the Classic Maya were never unified under a single supreme ruler. Rather, the lowlands were home to many city-states of varying sizes. Sometimes at peace, but often at war, these polities sought to control the resources within their territories. Cities could be linked to each other by familial, economic, religious, or political ties. But through competition and conflict, certain polities gained dominion over others both near and far. Conquered cities would typically retain their local leadership, but allegiance and tribute were requisite.[10] Subordinate kingdoms would make reference to their overlords on monumental inscriptions. These overlords would oversee the accessions and other significant ritual activities of their subordinates.

Teotihuacan's influence on the Maya area is most directly evidenced by an abrubt shift in architectural and ceramic styles in the lowlands during the late 4th century (Stuart and Stuart 2008:120). Epigraphically, the "Entrada" of 378 is noted at La Sufricaya, El Perú, Uaxactun, and Tikal. Siyaj K'ahk', a warlord who is believed to have been sent by

[10] Scenes of tribute are common on polychrome vessels, but extremely rare on monumental inscriptions (Miller and Martin 2004:282 Footnote 8, Ch. 4)

the emperor of Teotihuacan, appears to have come from the west, as evidenced by the inscription on Stela 15 from El Perú that mentions him 8 days before his arrival at Tikal. Subsequently, Yax Nuun Ahiin was placed in power as ruler of Tikal in AD 379 by Siyaj K'ahk' (Stuart 2000a; Wright 2005b:89).

It mattered who oversaw a ruler's enthronement. An illustrative example comes from Stela 4 at the site of Moral-Reforma. One of the site's rulers, Hawk Skull (possibly read *Muwaan Jol*), acceded to his throne in 661. Yuknoom Ch'een II, the great king of Calakmul, oversaw a "second crowning" event one year later. Significantly, in 690, Hawk Skull underwent a "third crowning" under the authority of K'inich Kan Bahlam II of Palenque (Martin 2003), demonstrating his shifting alliances. Quirigua's founder, nicknamed Tok Casper, acceded under the auspices of or "by the doing of" K'inich Yax K'uk Mo', Copán's illustrious founder. Curiously, however, Tok Casper's accession was on the same day as that of Yax K'uk Mo' (6 September 426). Yax K'uk' Mo's accession appears to have had ties to both Teotihuacan and Tikal (Looper 2003:37).

The Mural of the 96 Glyphs at Ek' Balam records the "arrival" of *Chak Jutuuw Chan Ek'* at Ek' Balam (more specifically at *Talol*, the presumed toponym for Ek' Balam), a foreign ruler who carries the title *k'uhul ajaw* and an Emblem Glyph of a polity that has yet to be identified (Lacadena 2004a). Significantly, he is also called a *B'akab'* ("Head/Prince of the Land") and *Xaman* ("North") *Kaloomté*.[11] He appears to have arrived with the purpose of overseeing the enthronement of Ek' Balam's first ruler, U-Kit Kan Le'k, although the exact relationship between the two is unclear. The relationship

[11] The only other example of the *Xaman Kaloomté* title was identified by Stanley Guenter from the Terminal Classic period Ixlu Altar 1 from Central Peten (Grube et al. 2003:II-11)

glyph reads *u-b'a-tz'a-ma* or *u-b'a[ah]tz'am*, which is not completely understood but seems to refer to the "head throne" or "chief throne" of somebody, presumably Chak Jutuuw Chan Ek' (Grube et al. 2003:12). Although the text is syntactically challenging and therefore difficult to decipher, it appears to relate that Ukit Kan Le'k was *i-patlaj Talol Ajaw*, "and then was made the king of *Talol*" under the auspices of and upon the "First Throne" of the foreign *kaloomté*, Chak Jutuuw Chan Ek' (ibid:18).

The most supreme title a ruler could wield was *kaloomté* (Stuart et al. 1989; Wagner 1995). The precise meaning of the title remains elusive, but those who carried it were the most powerful rulers within their regional hierarchies (though it is not indicative of a unified empire or state). The earliest forms of the *kaloomté* title from the beginning of the Classic period were not linked with any of the cardinal directions, but later the title was typically preceded by a directional glyph (Fig. 2.4; Martin 2003b:63-64). For example, at Lamanai in Belize we have record of an Elk'in ("East") Kaloomté, at Copán and Quirigua (in reference to Copánec rulers) we find Nohol ("South") Kaloomté, at Ek' Balam we find the title Xaman ("North") Kaloomté, and most commonly we find Ochk'in ("West") Kaloomté, which often seems to be a reference to Teotihuacan. The title may have been brought in from the west with the *entrada* at Tikal under the auspices of Spearthrower Owl, who is named as an Ochk'in Kaloomté on Stela 31 at Tikal (Grube et al. 2003:12).

Beneath the *k'uhul awajtaak* were the *sajals*. *Sajal* was a title used for subsidiary lords of secondary centers or for military captains (Stuart and Stuart 2008:223). They were typically beholden to the ruler of the regional polity. For example, a *sajal* known only as

He of White Lizard (Aj Sak Teleech) ruled over the city of Lacanha but was under the overlordship of Knot-Eye Jaguar of Bonampak (Miller and Martin 2004:80). The use of the *sajal* title is fairly limited in both space and time. It is found only during the Late Classic period and is highly favored in the western Maya lowland region (Houston and Stuart 2001:61). Much like the status of *ajaw*, "a *sajal* may be born into his status but acquires its essence, its "*sajal*-ship" (*sajal-il*), only through rituals of enthronement" (ibid). *Sajals* could sit in positions of subordinate authority at sites ruled by a *k'uhul ajaw*. Chak Sutz' ("Red Bat") of Palenque carried the *sajal* title and appears to have been a war captain.[12] The Tablet of the Slaves comes from his modest throne room, similar to the Oval Palace Tablet in House E and the Palace Tablet in House A-D (Stuart and Stuart 2008:223). Sites typically ruled by a *k'uhul ajaw* could be governed by a *sajal* during interregna due to turmoil or as regents for child-kings. At Yaxchilán, a *sajal* named Yopaat Bahlam II ruled during the ten year interregnum between the reigns of Shield Jaguar and Bird Jaguar IV (Escobedo 2004:77). *Sajals* were expected to be present at ceremonies sponsored by their overlords. Panel 3 from Structure O-13 at Piedras Negras (Fig. 2.5) commemorated Ruler 4's k'atun anniversary on the throne, and he is surrounded by 14 nobles and visitors, several of whom bore the *sajal* title (including Yopaat Bahlam II of Yaxchilán) (Escobedo 2004:77).

Overlords also appear to have paid visits to their subordinate sites. Ruler 4 of Dos Pilas, for example, visited Seibal and performed a scattering rite, and two days later he did the same thing at Tamarindito, apparently as part of some kind of ritual circuit

[12] He also carried the titles *bah ajaw* ("Head Lord") and *yajaw k'ahk*, ("Fire Lord") (Schele 1991).

(McAnany 1995:87-90). Ethnohistoric data from the Late PostclassicYucatan shows that vestiges of this hierarchy remained. The *halach uinic* appears to have been functionally similar to a Classic period *k'uhul ajaw* in that he was the supreme leader in matters of both state and religion (Zender 2004:80). Below him were the *batabs*, who appear to be fairly comparable to the Classic period *sajals*, in that they were somewhat autonomous regional governors and heads of their municipal civil and religious functions, as well as military leaders (ibid).

Martin and Grube (2008) argue that the two greatest "superstates" of the Classic Maya were Calakmul and Tikal. In effort to assert their hegemony over their subordinate kingdoms, they would effectually hold certain nobles hostage in royal complexes at these capital cities. One young lord, presumably from La Corona, appears to have been held hostage at Calakmul for three years (Houston and Stuart 2001:67). Such hostages may have been supported by tribute sent from their hometowns, as was the case in 14th and 15th century Mayapan (Tozzer 1941, cited in Miller and Martin 2004:281 Footnote 1:10).

The Divinity of Classic Maya Rulers

The most explicit statement regarding the divinity of Mesoamerican rulers comes from Book 6 of the Florentine Codex (Sahagún 1950-1982 Book 6:52). A priest, noble, or great dignitary would address the newly enthroned ruler and proclaim;

> Although thy common folk have gladdened thee, and although thy younger brother, thy older brother put their trust in thee, now thou art deified. Although thou art human, as are we, although thou art our friend, although thou art our son, our younger brother, our older brother, no more art thou human, as are we; we do not look to thee as human. Already thou representest, thou replacest one.

The Classic period Maya made no such explicit statements concerning the divinity of their rulers, but there are some clues that they may have held similar beliefs. Epigraphic evidence that some Classic Maya kings considered themselves divine can be found in king lists that trace a living ruler's genealogy back to a supernatural ancestor. These fictive genealogies were politically motivated tropes "which conveyed the sacred identity of a person through his or her divine bloodlines" (Looper 2003:203). Altar Q from Copán depicts the polity's first 16 kings, each seated upon throne-like renditions of their respective name glyphs (Fig. 2.6; Martin and Grube 2000:192). Its central theme shows a literal 'passing of the torch' from the founding king of Copán, Yax K'uk Mo', to the sixteenth ruler, Yax Pasaj (Taube 2004b:267). While Yax K'uk Mo' may or may not have been considered divine in his own lifetime, he was clearly apotheosized as the Sun God after his death, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. Claiming descent from a deified ancestor reinforces the divinity of the living king.

Also from Copán comes the bench of Temple 11. Similar to Altar Q, a number of Copán's rulers sit upon identifying glyphs (Fig. 2.7). But unlike Altar Q, some of the Copán's patron gods also sit on top of their name glyphs, among them Chante Ajaw and K'uy Nik Ajaw. Stela I from Quirigua sheds additional light on these two patron gods. Although the decipherment of the text is not entirely certain, it seems to indicate that "the gods of Waxaklajun Ub'ah K'awil," the wooden effigies of Copán's ancestral deities Chante Ajaw and K'uy Nik Ajaw, were captured and burned during a battle between Quirigua and Copán (Looper 2003:78). Thus, the Temple 11 bench, in depicting the

living king, deified ancestors, and patron deities all seated in similar fashion, suggests the equivalency between them all.

The Temple XXI carving at Palenque is conceptually comparable to Copán's Altar Q. An enthroned but long-deceased K'inich Janaab' Pakal hands a feathered bloodletter to his grandson K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb (Fig. 2.8), likely a gesture that conveyed the legitimization of Ahkal Mo' Nahb's rule as well as the fundamental importance of royal bloodletting rituals (Stuart and Stuart 2008:230). Taken as a whole, the monuments commissioned by Ahkal Mo' Nahb represent a persistent campaign of legitimization that called upon the support of parents, deified ancestors, patron gods, and other nobles (Miller and Martin 2004). Similarly, the inscriptions at the Temple of the Cross, Foliated Cross, and Sun were commissioned by K'inich Kah Bahlam II with the intention of linking his patriline with the supernatural narrative regarding the kingdom's foundation (Martin and Grube 2008:169). The origins of their dynasty begin in mythological time with accounts of the "Triad Progenitor" – a local aspect of the Maize God named Muwaan Mat – and his three divine offspring (Stuart 2005:80). These deities were Palenque's principal patrons and tutelary gods, and their doings were essentially cast as narratives of heroism and their actions "served as a metaphor for the trials and triumphs of the kingdom as a whole" (Stuart and Stuart 2008:191). There is a rare glyphic phrase that may characterize rulers as literal successors to specific gods that were the mythological founders of their dynasties (Houston and Stuart 1999:37). Kan Bahlam II made every effort to explicitly link Palenque's human dynasty to the Triad and their

Progenitor (Le Fort 1994:33; McAnany 1995:128). The Cross Group, then, is as much a political statement as a religious one (Schele and Freidel 1990).

Such narratives legitimize the power of a ruler by linking him to the exemplary actions of his forebears (McAnany 2001:138), regardless of whether the individuals were real or the connections to them are genuine. The authenticity of a ruler's genealogy was largely irrelevant, as long as the general population bought into it (Fowler 1987). Lineage histories also served as charters for the social order that existed in each polity (Carmack 1973:13), and the doings of the gods would have provided a model of behavior for rulers (Stuart and Stuart 2008:214; Coe 1989).

The Founder figure at Naranjo does not seem to be a historical figure. Later rulers refer to themselves as being his 36th or 38th Successor, so he would have lived well in the distant past. His name is that of the "Zip Monster" or the "Square-Nosed Beastie," which has supernatural or stellar connotations. We see a similar practice in the names of other dynastic founders (such as at Tamarindito), but not frequently enough to see a pattern (Houston 2000:167).

At Palenque, the historical dynastic founder appears to have been K'uk' Bahlam. He is referred to as "the Holy Lord of Toktahn," a specific location that remains unknown to us. This title was also taken by some of his immediate successors, in addition to the "Holy Lord of Baakal" honorific that was used by virtually all later rulers of Palenque. Curiously, K'uk' Bahlam's successors made almost no reference to him, either iconographically or epigraphically. This contrasts sharply with sites such as Copán and

Tikal, whose rulers made great efforts to celebrate the founders of their own individual polities (Stuart and Stuart 2008:113).

Nobility may have been genetically closer to the gods than they were to commoners, at least according to later Mesoamerican belief systems. Among the Late Postclassic Zapotec, for example, commoners were thought to be descended from "mud men" or "stone men," or at best from other lowly commoners, whereas nobility claimed descent from supernatural forces or beings (Marcus 1992:222). Although Classic period rulers did not make such explicit claims, they were believed to embody some type of vital force known as *ip* that was so powerful that it was dangerous for others to touch or even draw too near unto them (Houston 2000:167).

Theophoric Throne Names and Divine Titulary

Names are powerful things. They can draw people together or, conversely, construct and reify social divisions (Charmaz 2006:396). An individual's identity vis-à-vis the community transforms as they acquire different names as they pass through various life stages (Lévi-Strauss 1982:167). Among the Colonial period Yucatec Maya, individuals could possess a number of different names depending on their age and social status. At least four types of names have been identified in the Colonial period: the paternal name, maternal name (*naal*), childhood name (*paal kaba*), and the jesting name (*coco kaba*) (Roys 1940).

Onomastics (the study of names) of the Classic period gives us insight into the relationship between kings and their gods and the divinity of rulers. Among the Classic

Maya, rulers would receive new names and titles upon accession which established their relationships to both the human and divine realms (Colas 2003b; Houston and Stuart 1998:85 Footnote 11). Once they received their throne name, their birth names were typically never mentioned again (García Barrios et al. 2004:3). Rulers' throne names were celebrated through playful epigraphic and iconographic variations in spelling. No less than ten variant spellings of K'inich Janaab Pakal's name are known from Palenque (Stuart and Stuart 2008:30). Headdresses typically served to identify the ruler (Kelley 1982), at times seamlessly melding syllabic, pictographic, and rebus signs to indicate the name of the ruler (Fig. 2.9; Martin and Grube 2008:77). It is only the throne name that appears in the headdresses; a ruler's "proper" or childhood name is never incorporated into the iconography (Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004:116). A ruler's identity was so closely associated with his throne name that it was carried to the grave and beyond as he was venerated as an ancestor (ibid).

Titles and names provide additional epigraphic evidence that Maya rulers considered themselves divine. Deity names were appropriated by rulers upon their accession in order to associate themselves with specific gods and thus emphasize their divine authority (Taube 2001b:267). The taking of a theophoric throne name upon accession was a clear indication of the individual's transformation to an elevated, sacred or even divine status (Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004:102), a turning away from their childhood names and identities. Although relatively few examples of the childhood names of Classic rulers survive, a few observations can be made. They are highly variable and do not seem to rely on names of dynastic predecessor, and they are rarely, if ever, theophoric (ibid:116).

Rulers typically never made reference to their childhood names after accession. However, a jadeite portrait was recovered from the *cenote* at Chichen Itzá that depicts K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II of Piedras Negras from a period early in his reign where he is still using his childhood name, possibly *kooj*, "puma." The portrait may be a visual pun for his name, as the sign for *kooj* is a feline with a *winik* sign in its mouth, and the portrait depicts a man wearing a feline headdress (Fig. 2.10)

Regional Variation of Names

As we would expect, there is a great deal of variation in regards to throne names, and even the manner in which the appropriation of a throne name was indicated had regional associations. For example, the designation 'divine headband-tying name' only occurs in the western region, specifically at Palenque and Piedras Negras (Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004:115). Different sites favored different gods as their dynastic patrons. They often highlighted certain attributes of the god, and the ruler was likely making claims of sharing said attributes with the god in question (Grube et al. 2003:80-81). Incorporating the name of the rain god Chaak into ones throne name, for example, would highlight the ruler's association with agricultural fertility, or using K'inich in his nominal phrase would link him to the cycles of death and rebirth associated with the sun. Certain theophoric names could associate rulers not only with the gods, but with other prestigious polities. The rulers of the Yucatecan sites of Dzibilchaltun and Uxmal, for example, both used Cholan appellatives in their nominal phrases rather than following a Yucatecan

syntax, likely a form of mimesis of southern lowland naming practices and even an appropriation of the cult of the god Chaak (Lacadena 2004b:95).

Some sites are characterized by specific dynastic lines, where the same name was used by multiple individuals. At Tikal, the names Sihyaj Chan K'awiil, Chak Tok Ich'aak, and Yax Nuun Ahiin are all reused by later rulers. The god Chaak was clearly favored at Naranjo; at least six of it rulers incorporated his name into their regnal name. Interestingly, we see a shift in naming practices at Naranjo after the arrival and rule of Lady Six Sky from Dos Pilas at Naranjo, suggesting a major conceptual shift concerning their dynasty (Tokovinine 2007:19). At Caracol the names K'ahk' Ujol K'inich, Yajaw Te' Kinich, and K'an are all repeated. At Calakmul the name Yuknoom is incorporated in the names of at least six of its known rulers. The dynasty at Yaxchilán is perhaps one of the longest lasting and the most well documented, and the names Bird Jaguar, Itzamnaaj Bahlam, and K'inich Tatbu Skull were each taken by no less than four rulers apiece, not to mention those that recycled the names of Yopaat Bahlam and Knot-eye Jaguar (two apiece). After AD 460, all Piedras Negras kings use *ahk*, "Turtle," as part of their name (Houston 2004:273), and the specific name Yo'nal Ahk is taken by at least three of its kings. At Palenque, the names Janaab Pakal, Kan Bahlam, and Ahkal Mo' Nahb are each used three times, and K'an Joy Chitam is taken by two rulers. Tonina dynasts favored the name Chapaat, which was incorporated into the names of at least four of its rulers. Four Late Classic rulers of Copán incorporated the name of the god K'awiil into their throne names, and at least two of Quirigua's rulers worked Yopaat into their throne names.

K'inich

Pierre Colas (2003a) argued that the *K'inich* lexeme prefixed to throne-names taken by many Classic period rulers upon accession served a similar function to the *k'uhul* aspect of Emblem Glyphs (Fig. 2.13).[13] K'inich in the pre-position is never found in pre-accession names and is clearly a part of that ceremony. As a prefix, *K'inich* is grammatically unconnected to the rest of the ruler's name and, therefore, serves as a rigid designator, an epithet connected with rulership (Colas 2003:275). *K'inich* is the name of the Classic Maya Sun God, and Colas further argues that kings would explicitly liken themselves to the Sun God by prefixing their names with his, thus proclaiming their own divinity. The prefixed *K'inich* acted more as a title than as a name, and like the *k'uhul* prefix, it seems to have been recognized only within the boundaries of a ruler's own polity. For example, K'inich K'an Joy Chitam, the Holy Lord of Palenque, is depicted as a prisoner on Tonina Monument 122, and his name is given only as K'an Joy Chitam (Fig. 2.11). He has been stripped of both his *k'uhul* and *K'inich* titles (ibid:275).

K'inich has a different function when it is in the post-position of a ruler's name and is grammatically connected with the rest of his name. Throne names were typically epithets that were descriptive of certain aspects of a specific deity or deities (Houston and Stuart 1996:295) that formed stative, antipassive, and passive sentences (Colas 2003:272). These personal names were verbal statements that associated the ruler with a particular aspect of a god. For example, the name K'ahk' Ujol K'inich from Carocol can be interpreted as 'Fiery head of the Sun God' (ibid:273). These names are non-rigid

[13] Emblem Glyphs were first identified by Heinrich Berlin (1958).

designators and refer to the personal self of the ruler as opposed to the pre-fixed *K'inich* title that acted as a rigid designator of his public persona.

Whether *K'inich* was used in the pre- or post position, the rulers were clearly anxious to associate themselves with the Sun God. McAnany (2008:224) noted that roughly a third of all rulers whose names have yielded to translation included *K'inich* in some way. During the Late Classic, some elites even engaged in dental modification to create T-shaped incisors, likely in effort to mimic this characteristic trait of the Sun God (Fig. 2.12; ibid:224). *K'inich* became an integral title in some polities. K'inich Janaab Pakal was the first to take the title upon his accession at Palenque in 615 AD, and all of his successors followed suit (Stuart and Stuart 2008:148).

K'inich is not the only deity name taken upon accession, but most of the throne names appear to be associated with the sky, and the deities whose names are chosen are virtually all celestial in nature. Most of these sky-diety names are forms of the rain/lightning god, such as *B'ajlaj Chan K'awiil*, *K'ahk' Yipyaj Chan K'awiil*, and *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Yo'paat*. These names are verbal statements essentially conveying that "God X" does something to or in the sky; for example, the name of *B'ajlaj Chan K'awiil* of Dos Pilas can be translated as 'K'awiil Hammers (in) the Sky' (Guenter 2003), and *K'ak' Tiliw Chan Yo'paat* can be translated as 'Fire Burning Celestial Lightning God' (Looper 2003). The lightning god was a powerfully symbolic name for a king to use because lightning was believed to crack the carapace of the cosmic turtle that led to the rebirth of maize, and he provided the rains that nourished the maize and enabled it to grow (Taube 1985;

Looper 2003). By taking such a name, the ruler inserts himself into larger mythological narratives.

The *K'uhul Ajaw* Title

The title *ajaw* was taken by Maya kings at least as early as the Late Preclassic as a designator of rulership (Fig. 2.13). Mathews and Justeson (1984) suggested *ajaw* stems from an ancient root with connotations of planting seeds, implying the ruler was a "sower," thus highlighting his associations with agricultural fertility. Although etymologically uncertain, it may be based on the proto-Cholan root **aw*, 'shout' (Kaufman and Norman 1984:116). Combined with the *aj-* agentive prefix, it would literally mean "he of the shout" or "shouter" (Houston and Stuart 1996:295, Footnote 3).

It was not until the fifth century AD that *k'uhul* was appended to the titles of the mightiest kings (Fig. 2.13; Grube and Martin 2001:149; Houston 1989:55). This was done to elevate the ruler's status above that of the growing class of nobles, much like the *hueitlahtoani* ('great speaker/ruler') of the Aztec empire distinguished himself from the lesser *tlahtoani* ('lord' or 'speaker') (Grube, et al. 2003:84; Houston and Stuart 1996:295). *K'uhul* as an adjective means 'holy, sacred, divine' and is based on the root *k'u*, 'sacred entity' (Houston and Stuart 1996:291). Phonetic decipherment has revealed that these are exalted titles composed of three terms; *k'uhul, ajaw,* and the name of the area where the ruler claimed authority (ibid.:295). For example, the Emblem Glyph of the ruler of Tikal would read *K'uhul Mutal Ajaw*, translated as 'Holy Tikal Lord' (Martin 2001b). Significantly, references to *k'uhul ajawob* found at other polities often do not include the *k'uhul* prefix (Mathews and Justeson 1984:217), which suggests that a ruler's

divinity was not recognized outside of his own polity (Colas 2003:281). This self-designation of "divine lord" is perhaps the strongest and most straightforward epigraphic evidence that Classic Period Maya rulers considered themselves divine.

The Ajk'uhuun Title

Additional textual evidence for the divinity of the living kings may come from the courtly title *ajk'uhuun* (Fig. 2.1). Various interpretations have been offered over the years for this title, such as 'Dignitary, Lord', 'He of the Blood', 'He of the Temple', 'Intermediary, Mediator', 'Mason, Architect', 'Courtier', 'Servant of God', and many others (Zender 2004:168). David Stuart (2005:32) suggests the root of the word may be *k'uh*-Vn and offers a meaning of 'to guard something' or 'to venerate' and expands these semantically as 'one who guards' or 'one who obeys.' Marc Zender argued that the *ajk'uhuun* title could best be translated as 'worshipper' (2004:180-195) and suggested that they were cultic priests who worshipped the gods or euhemerized ancestors. However, because these *ajk'uhuunob'* are typically depicted in association with living kings, Freidel (2008:193) argues that these courtiers were worshippers of the king himself rather than cultic priests, as Zender suggested. The *ajk'uhuunob'* were sometimes captioned as "belonging" to the ruling kings. For example, the inscribed hieroglyphic bench from Structure 9N-82 of Copán refers to a local lord as the "*ajk'uhuun* of" the ruling king of Copán, and the caption of the Temple XIX panel expresses the same relationship with the living king of Palenque (Stuart 2005:32). If Zender's decipherment of this title is correct and Freidel's interpretation of its meaning is valid, it would support

the view that the Classic Maya kings were indeed considered divine and were actually worshipped as gods during their lifetimes. However, *Aj k'uhuun* could simply be a title for someone who worships the gods on behalf of the king rather than indicating it was the king that they were worshiping. Ultimately, the meaning of the title is unclear, and is at best only weak, indirect evidence for the divinity of Maya rulers.

Royal Artistic Programs

Monumental art was critical in establishing a polity's identity *vis-à-vis* their neighbors, and the differences in themes are striking. Regular iconographic quotations from a site's own artistic history helped to establish a distinctive local identity (Tate 1992:xi). When one site mimics the artistic style of another, it typically denotes some type of political relationship (Looper 2003:33). The monumental art of some cities emphasized militaristic themes and portrayed their rulers as mighty warriors, providing details of their conquests and captives, while others seem to have largely avoided the subject. Copán, for example, has virtually no epigraphic references to war—there are no "star war" events mentioned in the epigraphy, no bound captives appear in their iconography, and rulers typically cradle a ceremonial bar in their arms rather than wielding a weapon and shield (Stuart 1992). This is not to say Copanec rulers did not actually engage in war; lithic evidence suggests that the Copan valley was active militarily from the Early to Late Classic periods (Aoyama 2005). Rather, it may suggest that Copanec rulers chose to play up their role as cosmic center and downplay their role as military leader.

The stelae tradition can be traced back to the Formative period Olmec, and Taube (1996) has suggested that the stelae are essentially jade celts writ large, which are themselves identified with maize.[14] At La Venta (1000-600 B.C.) we find the earliest upright stone monuments carved in both high and low relief. Thematically, we find both natural and supernatural representations carved into these stones. La Venta Monument 25/26, for example, is a purely supernatural portrait of a deity who wears a headdress topped by a trefoil maize icon (Fig. 2.14). La Venta Stela 2 conveys the message that the veil between the natural and supernatural realms is extremely porous, as a living ruler stands holding a staff of power, surrounded by six supernatural beings that hold similar staffs (Fig. 2.15).

Stelae were common at Preclassic sites such as Kaminaljuyu, Takalik Abaj, Izapa, and El Baúl (Looper 2003:8). As for subject matter, Preclassic iconography focused more on gods than it did on historical individuals (Freidel and Schele 1988a: 550-552; Reese-Taylor and Walker 2002:92) and the earliest inscriptions tended to privilege theology over history (Houston 2004:308). Classic period rulers, in contrast, typically depicted themselves as protagonists, and if supernatural beings were present, they were relegated to the periphery of the scene. They portrayed themselves as idealized figures, which emphasized their vigor, but left them all but devoid of individuality and personality (Miller and Martin 2004).

Rulers could initiate bold new artistic programs at their sites that would endure for generations. At Tikal, Jasaw Chan K'awiil's Stela 16 (A.D. 711) created a new stylistic

[14] The Classic Maya term for stela was *lakamtun*, which means "banner stone" or "large stone" (Stuart 1996b:154).

template where the ruler was depicted with a front-facing body but his with his head in profile, accompanied by a short text naming the protagonist and just one or two events (Fig. 2.16). This template was followed by Yik'in Chan K'awiil's Stelae 21 and 5 and Yax Nuun Ahiin II's Stelae 22 and 19 (Fig. 2.17; Miller 1999:129-130). According to the pattern established by Jasaw Chan K'awiil, stelae commissioned by later Tikal rulers were planted in Twin Pyramid Complexes (which represented the path of the sun) which symbolically associated the ruler with celestial authority (Ashmore 1991:201).

In the mid-sixth century, Tonina inventively began creating fully rounded sculpture (Miller and Martin 2004:48). The creation of three dimensional stelae there, as well as at Copán, is certainly a testament to the mastery of their artisans, but it is also a function of the supple texture of their locally available stone (Stuart 1996b:149).

While variation between sites is to be expected, there can also be a great deal of variation within a single site throughout the site's history. A concise example comes from Quirigua, which has a comparatively short lived monumental history. After Waxaklajuun U'bah K'awiil's unfortunate encounter with the ruler of Quirigua, K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Yopaat's monuments clearly emulate those of Copán in both style (Riese 1986) and content (Stuart 1995). The content, like those of Stelae C and N from Copán, hearkens back to calendrically significant events in deep history (Stuart 1995). We ultimately see a shift away from stelae at both Quirigua and Copán by the end of the Late Classic. Sky Xul at Quirigua and his contemporary at Copán Yax Pasaj shifted their efforts to architectural texts, altars, and zoomorphs (Stuart 1995). The subject and length of Quirigua's texts shifted as well; the focus of the texts found on their stelae was primarily

dedicatory in nature, the zoomorphs being inscribed with lengthy and complex narratives. Clearly Quirigua and Copán were influencing each others' stylistic programs. Copán had been erecting stelae for centuries and to suddenly turn away from them as a form of public media is a striking change of program (ibid).

Quirigua's monumental tradition appears to be variously cribbed from Tikal, Uaxactun and Copán. When their political alliances shifted, so did their artistic style. The iconographic elements found on Monument 26 (Fig. 2.18) appear to be directly copied from Uaxactun Stela 20 (Fig. 2.19), although the execution is decidedly different. Monument 26 ultimately appears to owe its iconographic heritage to Tikal Stela 4 (Fig. 2.20). In general, early stelae at Quirigua follow the pattern set by Tikal Stelae 1, 2, and 28, in that the frontal iconography continues onto the sides of the monument, rather than treating each side as a self-contained unit, as is typical of Copán's sculpture.

Palenque was not a member of the "stelae cult" that was so pervasive across the lowland area. Rather, their large bas relief tablets, often with extraordinarily lengthy texts, were set into walls and seem to have been functionally equivalent to stelae as they likewise served to "immortalize rulers and to record rituals and the key dates of myth and history" (Stuart and Stuart 2008:28). The lone stela from Palenque was a three-dimensional portrait commissioned in 692 by Kan Bahlam to commemorate the end of the 13th K'atun (Martin and Grube 2008:169). Some sites in the Puuc region also appear to have rejected the stela cult (Stuart 1996b:149).

At Piedras Negras, Period Endings were extremely important and monuments were erected every *hotun* (five years) to commemorate them, but the rest of the Usumacinta

region appears to have paid them little attention. Although Piedras Negras' immediate neighbors did little to celebrate Period Endings, they were also a central theme on Quirigua's monuments far to the east (Stuart 1995). In stark contrast to the generally brief, formulaic dedicatory texts of Copán and Quirigua are more western sites such as Yaxchilan, Aguateca, and Dos Pilas, which all had strong militaristic and ritual themes to their texts. Yaxchilan, in fact, seems to have the largest number of inscriptions concerning warfare of any Maya site, with most of the references occurring in the Late Classic (Stuart 1995). Unlike the stelae programs at Quirigua and Copán, Yaxchilan instead concentrated its inscriptions on doorway lintels (Tate 1992). Along with descriptions of warfare, Yaxchilan's lintels give us insight into many of the royal rituals that were performed, such as bloodletting and dance (Grube 1992).

Monumental Texts

Literacy was limited to nobles and elites. Classic Maya writing may have represented a prestige language, distinct from that used by commoners (Houston et al. 2000), which also served to give literate persons access to esoteric knowledge. Prior to the Late Classic, texts were extremely concise. In the Late Classic, lengthier texts began to be used on a variety of media, such as stelae, lintels, and ceramic vessels (McAnany 2001:141).

Substitutions patterns in Maya epigraphy suggest that language use was linked to regional identity (Wichmannn 2006:290). Ek' Balam, for example, demonstrates unique traits in its glyphic system. In general, the syntax is extremely complex and has proven a

difficult challenge for epigraphers. For example, Mural A (also called the Mural of the 96 Glyphs) from Substructure 29 of Structure 16 breaks from the standard paired column reading order, but rather the text is presented horizontally in long rows (Grube et al. 2003:10-11). The mural is also unusual (though not entirely unique) for its length. On the same text, we find titles that are unique to the site, such as *K'ahk Okxam* ("Fire ?") and *Ocho'm*, that are poorly understood. Another unique feature of this text is that at one point, in place of a Distance Number, the scribe wrote out forty-nine consecutive days with their coefficients (Grube et al. 2003:18). The carved human femur found in the left hand of *Ukit Kan Le'k* in Tomb 1 contains many unknown appellatives to deities (ibid:45).

Rituals of Rulership

Classic Maya rulers fit into the Pan-Mesoamerican model of being the head of both civic and ceremonial life of their polities, similar to the Late Postclasssic emperors among the Aztec and Mixtec that acted as both supreme political rulers and high priests (Zender 2004). Their public rituals would therefore have served both political and religious purposes. Houston (2006:145) noted the emotional impact that a ruler's strategic appearance and disappearance would have had on an expectant crowd.

Ritual activity seamlessly connected the past and the present, and the passing of centuries were presented as if but a moment. As Looper (2006:826) states, "The rhetoric of texts and images constantly refers to the prototypical actions of supernatural beings who conduct sacrifices and dedicate stone monuments just as historical rulers do."

Yaxchilán Lintel 21, for example, connects the ritual actions of Bird Jaguar at the "4 Zotz House" to an identical ceremony performed by Yo'pat Balam (now a revered ancestor) over three centuries earlier.

Although Classic period inscriptions detailing rituals tend to be vague or cloaked in metaphor, what is recorded gives us important glimpses into their fundamental religious beliefs (Sachse 2004:14). We know the names of some specific ritual actions, but there is no general term for the concept of 'ritual' among the ancient or modern Maya (ibid). Mesoamerican ritual in general is primarily geared towards satisfying Mauss's (1990:16) notion of the "fourth obligation," giving to the gods. Humans are indebted to the gods, and will be so in perpetuity (Morehart and Butler 2010:592). Among the Nahuatl of the sixteenth century, sacrifice and offerings were referred to as *nextlahuanlizti*, "debt payment" (Morehart and Butler 2010:592).

Scattering, Bloodletting, and Conjuring

One of the most common rituals performed by rulers was known as *chok*, which translates as "scatter," "sow" or "cast." Iconographically, the ruler is typically shown with his arm extended downward with his palm facing up or inward, with varying elements issuing from his hand, such as incense (*ch'aaj*) or blood (Fig. 2.21). Human blood was considered a precious, even sacred substance, and offering it to the gods may have been a way to symbolically reenact the sacrifices the gods made while creating the world (Bradley 2001:33). Blood sacrifice, then, was symbolic of death yet a source of life (ibid.). Sacrificial blood could be dripped on bark paper and burned within a bowl, and

the smoke rising up would be both a way for the gods to manifest themselves unto humans as well as an offering to the gods (Fig. 2.22; Freidel at al 1993:204). The casting of drops of incense or blood mimicked the way farmers would cast seeds into the ground and pour liquid offerings onto the field to propitiate the gods (Looper 2003:13-15). Maya rulers sought to portray themselves as humble agriculturalists (Miller 2001:203), so royal scattering rituals "reproduced popular practices, establishing connections with common people but at the same time veiling rulers in an aura of awesome spiritual power" (Looper 2003:15). They reinforced the ruler's role as caretaker of his city.

Clear iconographic representations of bloodletting from the penis can be found from the Late Preclassic to the Late Postclassic. Although the archaeological evidence for bloodletting in Mesoamerica dates to the Formative period, the ritual is never actually depicted in Olmec art (Taube 2004c:122). A tomb discovered in Mound A-2 at La Venta contained several implements associated with bloodletting, such as a shark's tooth, stingray spines (as well as a jade effigy of a stingray spine), and a jade "ice-pick" perforator (Coe 1977:188; Drucker 1953:23-26; Drucker et al. 1959:272; Joyce et al. 1991:3).

Among the Maya, the earliest iconographic representation of autosacrifice comes from the Preclassic site of San Bartolo (Taube et al. 2010:10-13). The west wall mural graphically depicts Young Lord (an analogue of Hun Ahaw of the Classic period or Hunahpu of the *Popol Vuh*) piercing his genitals before four different trees, each with a distinct offering being made to the Principal Bird Deity (Fig. 2.23; ibid:120-121). The mythological scenes of sacrifice by the Young Lord would have provided a divine

prototype for humans, particularly for rulers. Young princes also engaged in autosacrifice and their first bloodletting or *yax ch'ab* seems to have been a rite of passage at the time of puberty (Houston 2006:144).

Bloodletting paraphernalia, in the form of stingray spines, shark teeth, obsidian lancets, etc., were often a part of royal regalia (Joyce et al. 1991:1-2). When "personified" (Joralemon 1974), the bloodletting implement itself was deified (Coe 1977:188), and typically donned a headdress of three-knotted bands, which were emblematic of bloodletting (Fig. 2.24). The three-knotted bands were sometimes tied around the wrists and ankles of ritual participants and the staffs that they held (Joyce et al. 1991:1).

The Paddler Gods are sometimes associated with Period Ending bloodletting rituals (Schele and Miller 1986:52), but other gods have strong bloodletting associations with it as well.[15] The specific associated deities varied from site to site, as would be expected. For example, at Piedras Negras, bloodletters depict Chak Xib Chaak, while those at their rival site of Yaxchilán depict K'awiil (Fitzsimmons 2002:203). At Palenque, the strongest bloodletting associations are predictably with the Triad (Berlin 1963).

The conjuring of deities, *tzak*, was often the goal of bloodletting rituals. The smoke arising from the sacrificial bowl provided a medium through which gods and ancestors could manifest themselves. Glyphic texts that accompany conjuring scenes occasionally

[15] The Paddler Gods are more closely affiliated with water generally and the summoning of clouds and rain specifically (Stephen Houston, personal communication 2011). That they are also sometimes associated with bloodletting demonstrates the polyvalent nature of Maya gods as well as the the conceptual link between bloodletting and agricultural fertility, which ultimately depends on the rains.

refer to the event as the "birth" of the deity (Looper 2003:22) and they were subsequently nurtured by the offering (Freidel and Schele 1988).

Raising of the World Tree

One of the primary royal rituals in Mesoamerica was the raising of the cruciform "world tree." The ritual has great time depth, dating back to at least the Middle Formative. For example, Monument 1 from San Martin Pajapan in Veracruz depicts the raising of the world tree by a ruler wearing an Olmec style Maize God headdress (Fig. 2.25; Reilly 1994:186-187).[16] The world tree served as an *axis mundi* that centered and ordered the cosmos both vertically and horizontally. It bridged the three vertical levels of the cosmos; its roots extended into the Underworld and its branches pierced the heavens, and its cruciform shape established the quadripartite horizontal plane (Mathews and Garber 2004). Eliade used the term *axis mundi* to refer to specific places that are made sacred through hierophanies, or manifestations of the divine, "a place where communication with sacred power is made possible" (Livingston 2005:46). A Classic Maya ruler, then, as a living *axis mundi*, was an embodiment of sacred space – wherever they stood was a 'holy place'. A ruler's control over this cosmological axis would have been a powerful reminder of the distinction between ruler and ruled (McAnany 2001:141).

At Palenque the 'world tree' was named the *uh te,* "Shiny Jeweled Tree," and rather than a general concept of cosmic centering, at Palenque it appears to have carried a more

[16] Interestingly, Monument 1 was found on the summit of a volcano (Reilly 1994:186).

specific connotations of prosperity (Stuart and Stuart 2008:176). It was bejeweled and resplendent as the rising sun, and as such was associated with the eastern sky and GI.[17] The tree is shown rising out of a *k'in* or solar bowl, representative of the womb of the cosmic alligator from which the sun is reborn (Fig. 2.26; ibid).

Dancing

Dancing was one of the most common rituals performed by Classic Maya rulers throughout their reigns (though curiously uncommon as an accession ritual; see Chapter 3). Nikolai Grube (1992) was the first to translate the T516 glyph as 'to dance' (Fig. 2.27). This glyph is read phonetically as *ahk'ot* and may be semantically related to the term for "give," *ahk'* (Macri and Looper 2003:206). *Ahk'* also serves as the root for *yahk'a(w)*, "he/she gives (it)," which is used in the context of offerings made to the gods (Looper 2009:17).[18] In essence, dances may be seen as offerings or tributes to the gods (ibid:18), and dance continues to be an acceptable attitude of prayer among traditional Mesoamerican communities (Houston 2006:144). Significantly, the verb *ahk'ot* is exlusively used in reference to human agents, and these agents are always male rulers, be they a supreme *k'uhul ajaw* or a subordinate *sajal* (ibid:19). While images of dancing gods are prevalent, the actions of the gods were apparently not considered "offerings."

Dances were associated with a wide variety of events: deity impersonation rituals, sacrifice, as a way to penetrate into the supernatural realm, heir designation and other

[17] GI appears to embody the sun in its transitional pre-dawn status (Stuart and Stuart 2008:198)

[18] In modern Yucatec we similarly find *óok'ot* "dance," and *ok'ot b'a*, "to pray, intercede and defend someone, and thus prayer and intercession" (Acuña 1978:19)

dynastic events, warfare, and visits by overlords (Looper 2009:5). Just as dance was used to strengthen the bond between rulers and their gods, it was used to reinforce alliances with other powerful rulers and their subordinate lords. Sahagún (1950-1982, Book 8:150) lists dancing as one of the ruler's primary responsibilities, and claims it was done "in order to hearten and console all the peers, the noblemen, the lords, the brave warriors, and all the common folk and vassals."

The distinctive dances performed by rulers, associated with locally significant deities, along with their specific accoutrements would have been employed by each ethnic kingdom to distinguish themselves from neighboring polities (Boas 1955:346-347). Such dances would have heightened the sense of community identity and reinforced the local sociopolitical status quo (Leach 1954:13-14; Looper 2009:6; Tambiah 1985).

One of the earliest portrayals of dancing is on the San Bartolo west wall mural, where the Maize God dances and taps his turtle shell drum within a quatrefoil earth, depicted as a turtle (Taube et al. 2010:125). He is flanked by water deities seated upon thrones; the rain god Chaak to the viewer's left and the god of terrestrial standing water to the right. The Maize God bears the burden of corn on his back, secured by a tumpline across his forehead (Fig. 2.28).

Curiously, the glyphic recording of dance was relatively short lived and late (all references come from the Late Classic period), but despite the limited data set some chronological and geographical patterns are discernable. The earliest known reference to dance dates to AD 653, found on Altar L at Quiriguá (Fig. 2.29; Looper 1991:91). Other early references (AD 668-733) come from Dos Pilas, Naranjo, Piedras Negras, La

Corona, and related sites. From AD 752-780 the majority of dance references come from the Yaxchilan region. After about 780, reference to dance is found scattered throughout the Maya area (Looper 2009:18).

Dances and public spectacles (Houston 2006) need not be seen as purely religious events, but they also served socio-political functions in legitimizing the ruler's power (Looper 2009:5; Sachse 2004:15; Schele and Freidel 1990; Schele and Miller 1986). Tokovinine (2003) translates the glyphic phrase *cha'nil* as "public ceremony," which sometimes occurs in conjunction with dance expressions, such as on the unprovenienced door jamb (likely from Xcalumkin), which suggests that some dances were intended to be performed in front of an audience (Looper 2009:18).

Impersonation Rituals

Rituals involving dance are often done while the ruler is in the guise of a god or deified ancestor, typically referred at as a "deity impersonation" ritual. The ruler was not the only person permitted to do such rituals; other nobles, occasionally even women, could perform them with the king. Houston and Stuart (1996:297-300) note that the ruler's identity is not displaced, but rather he is "concurrent" with the deity being impersonated. The purpose of deity impersonation rituals was likely to reenact mythological or historical events of local import. Ancestral figures may also have been impersonated regularly. For example, K2695 may depict Yax Nuun Ahiin II preparing to impersonate an earlier ruler from Tikal's dynasty (Fig. 2.30). Although approximately fifty instances of this ritual have been identified across the lowlands, no discernable

pattern emerges with regard to which gods were impersonated or why. Houston (2006:148) notes the wide range of gods they impersonated, such as:

> wind gods (*ik' k'uh*), an enigmatic god known as *9 yokte' k'uh*, a watery serpent (once "concurrent" with a royal lady), gods of incense burning, the sun god, underworld gods who exercise dominion over (pre-Hawking) "black holes," supernaturals connected to the Mexican state of Teotihuacan (*18 u'b'aah k'awiil*), gods of ball playing, moon goddesses, hunting gods, stony gods, fire drilling jaguar deities, and the major god known as Itzamnaaj.

The only discernable regional trait associated with impersonation rituals is the "X-ray" iconographic convention of depicting a cut-away of the mask being donned in order to reveal the identity of the performer (Fig. 2.31; Coe 1978: pl. 20), which is found primarily in the vicinity northwest of Lake Peten Itza (Houston 2006:146).

The Significance of Sacred Time

The Classic Maya are celebrated for their advanced knowledge of time reckoning. They employed a wide variety of ways to mark the passage of time. To them, time and history were far more cyclical than they were linear; repeated dates would bring associated events (Looper 2003:10). They reckoned time with a boggling variety of perpetual cycles: seven day cycles (Yasugi and Saito 1991), nine day cycles (Thompson 1929), 13 numbers that cycle with 20 named days to create a 260 day sacred round we call *tzolk'in*, 18 named months that cycle with the numbers 1 to 20 to form a *haab* of 360 days (plus a 5 day *wayeb* to approximate the solar year), a *haab* times a *tzolk'in* that gives a 52 year cycle, an 819 day count (likely 7 x 9 x 13 days), *hotuns* of 5 years, *k'atuns* of

20 years, *b'ak'tuns* of 400 years, *piktuns* of nearly 8000 years, and various cycles of lunations.

The popular media have suggested that "the Mayan calendar" will end in December of 2012 when the 13th cycle is completed, bringing with it all manner of calamities. This misconception is unfortunately quite common, as is the concept that there was a single "Mayan calendar" that was synchronized among the various ancient polities throughout their history. At Palenque, for example, they clearly did not expect 2012 to be the end of days. They calculate a *piktun*-ending with a *piktun* of 20 *bak'tuns*, which would clearly be impossible if the *bak'tun* count reset after it reached 13.

Regardless of the differences in the details, 13.0.0.0.0 appears to have been the Pan-Maya "zero date" for the reckoning of time. Rituals were timed in accordance with important dates, typically Period Endings. Rulers were responsible for re-enacting creation through ritual action on calendrically significant dates in order to recreate the world on a microcosmic scale (Martin and Grube 2008:221). When a ruler erected a stela in commemoration of a station of the calendar, he was connecting himself to replicating the actions of the creator gods and asserting his powers of cosmogenesis (Looper 2003:11).

Despite seeming uniformity, different polities could reckon time according to local inclinations. For example, Yaxchilán is typical in that its *piktuns* appear to cap out at 13 cycles, however on Tikal Stela 10 we find a date with a *piktun* coefficient of 19 and at Palenque on the West Panel of the Temple of the Inscriptions K'inich Janaab' Pakal connects his accession to a future date that essentially requires a *bak'tun* count of 20.

Janaab' Pakal appears to have been the first to initiate the 819 day count in the Maya lowlands, and while its oldest and most frequent usage comes from Palenque, it appears to have spread outward from there to nearby sites such as Yaxchilán and Bonampak and to distant polities such as Quirigua and Copan (Berlin 1965:341). Diachronic variation is also evident. Early monuments from Copán (Stela 16, 9.1.17.4.0, A.D. 472) and Quirigua Stela U (9.2.5.0.0, A.D. 480) truncate the Long Count after the tun and reverse the calendar round, placing the haab before the tzolk'in (Fig. 2.32), reminiscent of the archaic calendric structure found on the Hauberg Stela (Looper 2003:39).

Interestingly, unlike the Late Postclassic period, there does not seem to be any association between "auspicious" days and the dates associated with a ruler's enthronement, as is documented among the Aztec (Sahagún 1950-1982, Book 4:87-88) and is prognosticated in the Dresden Codex. Le Fort's (1994:35) analysis of accession dates revealed no clearly discernable regional or site specific patterns during the Classic period.

The greatest amount of local variation in the calendar is found in the shorter cycles of time. Fuls' (2007) analysis of month counts and Lunar Series data suggests that rulers could initiate new calculation methods when they acceded to the throne. In the Lunar Series from Dos Pilas, La Corona, Naranjo, Piedras Negras, Yaxchilan, and Quirigua, a relationship can be seen between the Glyph C coefficient and the *Ajaw* who was ruling when the monument was erected (Fuls 2007:279). Furthermore, the lunar cycle was reckoned according to local empirical observations, and at times a particular 29-day lunar "month" noted at one site might be reckoned as 30 days at a different site. And each city

determined for themselves whether the moon was the first, the third, or the sixth moon of a lunar half year. Contrary to Teeple's (1930:54) assertion, there does not appear to have been an 80 year "Period of Uniformity" where lunar cycles were synchronized across the lowlands (Fuls 2007:279). Copán's Lunar Series is so inconsistent with the rest of the lowlands that it may represent a different system entirely (ibid:281). Lunar cycles could be aggregated into larger units, but again, we find variation in the specifics. Copán, for example, had a cycle of 149 moons (totaling 4400 days), whereas Palenque's aggregate lunar cycle was only 81 moons (2392 days). In the Postclassic, the Dresden Eclipse Pages account for 405 moons (11,960 days).

King as Time

Just as time could be materialized when inscribed on stone monuments, rulers themselves could become embodiments of time (Houston et al. 2006:87). There are several Classic period monuments where the day sign Ajaw was fused with the portrait of the king. Quirigua Altar L, for example, conflates an image of the ruler K'awiil Yopaat with the day name Ajaw (Fig. 2.29; Martin and Grube 2008:217). Their most basic count of days was originally based on the number of fingers and toes on the human body. The name of this count of days, *winal*, was thus conceptually and semantically related to the human body. The calendar was inseparably connected with the four cardinal directions, so as a personified world tree and living *axis mundi*, the body of a *k'uhul ajaw* was the embodiment of the calendar (Stuart 1996b:165-167; Estrada Belli 2006:64). The dancing rituals performed on calendrically significant dates would have metaphorically

represented the movement of time (ibid). Some of the language of accession rituals likewise reinforces this association, as 'seating' and 'binding' are used to indicate both the dedication of monuments at important stations of the *k'atun* as well as the enthronement of rulers (Houston et al. 2006:83). Furthermore, their bearing of the title *K'inich* would have linked them to the passage of time with each sunrise (Houston et al. 2006).

A special class of monument dubbed "Giant Ajaw altars" are most commonly found at Caracol and are a hallmark for their local artistic style (Chase and Chase 1992:45), but they are found to a lesser extent at Tonina (Miller 1998:211), and Quirigua (Looper 2003:52-53) and Tikal (Schele and Freidel 1990:205) each have one. They are typically defined by the presence of a large Ahaw day sign in reference the day of the monument's dedication. Quirigua Altar L explicitly conflates their ruler with time itself by featuring his portrait inside of the cartouche rather than the day sign (Looper 2003:51). The presence of these distinctive monuments at Quirigua serve to reject the artistic tradition of Copán (where no Giant Ajaw Altars exist) while simultaneously ideologically aligning themselves with Caracol (Looper 2003:52-53). Houston (2011, personal communication) notes that the the Giant Ajaw altars at Caracol portray time as if it were a war captive reduced to wearing perforated cloth, and they are found in figuratively subterranean spaces.

Calendric Rituals and the Re-enactment of Creation

The most important rituals performed by Classic Maya rulers involved the re-enactment of local "creation" events (Freidel et al. 1993). We typically gloss the date 4 Ajaw 8 Kumk'u as the date of creation, and a number of inscriptions state that the location of these events was the "First Three Stone" place (for example, Quirigua Stela C, the Tablet of the Cross at Palenque, Dos Pilas Panel 18, and Piedras Negras Altar 1; Fig. 2.33). The specifics about what actually happened on that day and at that place vary from site to site, as do the preceding and subsequent events in a site's primordial history. To be clear, there are events recorded that predate 13.0.0.0.0 by millions of years, so it cannot accurately be described as a day of creation. It appears to be the date that the cosmos were reorganized, renewed, or set in order and it ushered in the age of humanity (Stuart and Stuart 2008:256, Footnote 22).

Quirigua Stela C contains the most detailed account of 4 Ajaw 8 Kumk'u events. According to their local mythology, on 13.0.0.0.0 4 Ajaw 8 Kumk'u (13 August 3114 B.C.), the Paddler Gods dedicated the Jaguar Throne Stone at Naahho'chan ("First Five Heavens"), then a god whose name resists decipherment dedicated the Snake Throne Stone at Lakam Kah (Large Town), followed by the dedication of the Water Throne Stone by Itzamnaah at the "??-Sky, First Three Stone Place." All of these events were overseen by a god named Six Sky Ajaw (Freidel et al. 1993:67; Looper 2003:11). Yaxchilán's creation mythology includes the beheading (*ch'ak baah*) of the Maize God and two other deities (whose names remain undeciphered).

The main focus of Palenque's primordial mythology is the creation of the Triad and their subsequent actions. Rulers explicitly linked and likened their own accessions to those of the Triad, specifically to GI. K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb, for example, glyphically recounts GI's accession and rebirth on the day 9 Ik' on the left side of the Temple XIX tablet. He then recounts his own accession on 9 Ik' on the right side of the tablet, and in the middle he is depicted sitting upon his throne in the guise of GI (Fig. 2.34). His cousin, Janaab Ajaw, embodies Yax Naah Itzamnaah and acts as overseer of the accession in direct emulation of mythological events. As Stuart (2004b:264) notes, "The historical accession of Ahkal Mo' Nahb is not simply a harkening back to mythical symbolism, but truly becomes a re-creation of that earlier event, where one god installed another in office."

The Sacred Landscape

The Maya landscape was alive with spiritual beings and energy. As Ashmore (2009:185) states, "Earth, sky, and underworld are sacred animate realms, and all Mesoamerican landscapes are thus inherently sacred landscapes." But some locations were deemed more spiritually potent than others. Rulers would visit such places for their ritual activities, which symbiotically imbued both person and place with even greater spiritual potency. Although Maya religion was in many ways a local expression (to be discussed in Chapter 4), the existence of pilgrimage sites denotes there was a basic, underlying Pan-Maya belief system. Though each Maya city had its locally significant sacred spots, some features of the landscape were so magnificent that supplicants would

travel great distances to perform rituals there, such as the cenote at Chichen Itza. Pilgrimages continue today among modern Maya priests, who make long trips to perform rituals at important but distant ceremonial centers (both man-made and natural features) (Vogt 1969; Jiménez-Sánchez 2004:190).

Caves, as entrances to the Underworld, were extremely sacred features of the landscape and as such were important pilgrimage sites (Brady 1989). Some caves appear to have been more important pilgrimage sites than others. Naj Tunich, for example, has no archaeological settlements associated with it, yet its richly adorned walls indicate it would have been an important destination for pilgrims (Ashmore and Blackmore 2008). The sacrifices and offerings associated with cave ritual are extremely varied across space and time, due to local and regional social and geographical conditions (Morehart and Butler 2010:594). At a cave near Cancuen, ceramic evidence for long-distance pilgrimage associated with cave rituals spans from the Middle Preclassic all the way through the Late Classic (Spenard 2006:3).

But it was not just the natural landscape that was considered sacred. Man-made structures were likewise imbued with spiritual potency. The natural and man-made were not in conflict with each other, but rather could merge seamlessly together. Lakamha', the ritual center of Palenque, is an elegant blend of natural and man-made sacred space where rulers and other elites conducted their rituals (Stuart 2005:184). The Temple of the Foliated Cross, built into a hillside, harmonizes natural and man-made sacred space, as does Temple XIX's location adjacent to the spring from whence the Rio Otulum originates.

Ritual Warfare

The Florentine Codex (Sahagún 1950-1982, Book 8:51) details "the exercises of the rulers and how they might perform well their office of government," and lists their roles and responsibilities in regards to warfare first and foremost among their kingly duties. The ruler was to be the supreme commander, strategist, and supplier for his armies, and he would reward brave warriors by presenting them with insignia. The Classic Maya likely held similar beliefs about their own rulers. Our purpose here is not to recount the specific battles that were waged between sites throughout the Classic period. The overarching question in this research study is concerned with the relationship between the Maya rulers and their gods. Ritual warfare was, in essence, the pitting of one ruler's god against another, and it put to the test a god's ability to act as protector to his people. The emblems of war were ritual objects, often emblazoned with images of their gods.

The importance of warfare in the Maya area is plainly manifest in the Preclassic period. There is abundant archaeological evidence that attests to large-scale war efforts (Webster 2000:69) as evidenced by defensive ditches and walls at the Late Formative sites of Becan, Edzna, and El Mirador (McAnany 2001:138). Warfare is also attested to iconographically. The bas-relief at the entrance of Loltun caves depicts a ruler wielding a weapon resembling a *macuahuitl* in his right hand and a "fending stick" in his left (Grube and Schele 1994:2-3), similar to the one held in the hand of the ruler on Kaminaljuyu Stela 11. Although these weapons are sometimes associated with Teotihucan, the early date of the carving demonstrates that such weapons were in use prior to the expansion of Teotihucan's influence in the Maya area (ibid.). Bound captives appear on Preclassic

monuments such as La Venta Altar 4, Chalcatzingo Monument 2, Kaminaljuyu, Monument 65, and Izapa Stelae 21 and 55. El Jobo Stela 1 depicts a bound captive at the feet of the triumphant protagonist (likely a ruler), who carries a trophy head in his left hand and in his right hand wields a weaponized femur that has been fitted with a flint blade at one end and an anthropomorphic head at the other (Miles 1965:259). One of the more graphic representations of royal warfare from the Preclassic period is found on Izapa Stela 21. A ruler (dressed in avian regalia) holds an obsidian knife in his left hand, and in his right hand he grips the hair of a severed head that gushes blood, and the decapitated body lies at his feet with blood flowing out of its neck. The victim is likely a ruler, as he is adorned with a jade necklace and earspools. In the background is a jaguar palanquin being carried by two attendants.[19] The victim's left hand appears to cradle the foot of the attendant at the rear, perhaps indicating it was he who had been carried to the battlefield in it.

During the Early Classic, there appears to have been a subtle shift away from the iconography of warfare, where rulers would typically hold religious objects such as the ceremonial bar rather than weapons of war. But as the Classic period progressed, the emphasis on warfare once again returned to prominence, culminating in the Late Classic which is characterized by the abundance of warfare iconography. At end of the fourth century that we begin to see iconographic representations of rulers depicted with Central Mexican-style warfare regalia such as Tlaloc shields and shell mosaic helmets (McAnany

[19] Taube (2003a:480) notes that jaguar palanquins were common in Classic Maya art, and metaphorically represented the ruler as 'king of the forest' who "prowled the landscape as fierce beasts guarding and extending their domain."

2001:137). Tikal Stela 31 explicitly unites the ideologies of rulership with that of warfare (Fig. 2.35; Webster 2000:93). Curiously, for a comparatively brief period during the 7th-8th centuries, Maya rulers again moved away from fearsome "warrior king" depictions of themselves and instead portrayed themselves as "refined, courtly monarchs" (Miller and Martin 2004).

Although the preferred royal regalia sometimes shifted between weapons of war and purely ritual objects such as the ceremonial bar, the underlying function of these objects was essentially the same. The wielding of sacred objects was a way for the ruler to establish himself as the world center, a bringer of order to the cosmos. Likewise, the weapons of war were a way for the ruler to subdue his enemies, those who were sources of chaos and disorder to his polity, the microcosm over which he had dominion (Webster 2000:94). Invading enemies could throw a city into chaos by destroying its temples and capturing or even burning the wooden images of their patron gods. This role became so important that even rulers with no recorded war events would be portrayed in full military regalia (ibid; see also Fash 1991; Baudez 1994).

The shifting emphasis on the warrior-king motif calls in to question the notion that military prowess was always considered a prerequisite for rulership. Even during the Late Classic period, when a ruler's role as warrior was iconographically ubiquitous, there is a curious absence of weapons in burial contexts. This may speak to beliefs concerning the afterlife, namely, that the ruler would not be required to engage in combat to secure his place in the heavens (McAnany 2001:138). Yet iconographic depictions of deified ancestors may portray them in full warrior regalia. For example, Stair Block II of

Structure 10L-16 at Copán portrays K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo as "a solar war god performing a dance of victory as he rises skyward out of the dark realm of the dead" (Fig. 2.36; Taube 2004b:290).

While the cosmological underpinnings of warfare are clear, the astronomical import of warfare has been overstated by Maya scholars in the past (Miller and Martin 2004). The "star war" glyph used to indicate war was overzealously argued to correlate to stations of the planet Venus, claiming major wars were timed to correspond to different points of the Venus cycle (Kelley 1977; Closs 1978, 1981, 1994; Lounsbury 1982; Schele and Freidel 1990; Aveni and Hotaling 1994; Nahm 1994). A more careful analysis of the dates connected with these star war events, however, demonstrates that Maya rulers were not "automatons programmed to wage war according to a celestial clock" (Aldana 2005:318).

The iconography of Palenque is not dominated by warfare as it is at other polities, although it is certainly present. A Late Classic style panel excavated from Temple XVII (Fig. 2.37) depicts "a militaristic scene of conquest – a rare theme in Palenque's art – with a ruler standing above a kneeling captive," but it appears to be a retrospective history of events that happened some two centuries earlier than the date of the panel itself, and Stuart and Stuart (2008:115) suggest it may represent the establishment of Lakamha as the ritual and political center of the dynasty. Emblems of war were used as sacred regalia for K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II's accession. On the Palace Tablet, his father presents him with the "drum-major" headdress and his mother presents him with a personified eccentric flint and a rather gruesome shield made of a flayed human face (Fig. 2.38). Of their local patron gods, the Jaguar God of the Underworld appears to be

primarily a solar god but is also strongly associated with fire and with warfare. Its warfare associations are most clearly illustrated on the inner tablet of the Temple of the Sun, which depicts K'inich Kan Bahlam in the act of offering an animated flint (*took'*) and shield (*pakal*) to the Jaguar God of the Underworld. *Took'* and *pakal* represent specific implements used in warfare (Houston 1983), but the phrase *took' pakal* may also have been a *difrasismo* denoting the general concept of war (Martin 2001d: 178-179). The central icon of the Tablet of the Sun is a ceremonial shield with two crossed spears (Fig. 2.39). Warriors would embellish their shields with the visage of the Jaguar God of the Underworld (or that of other gods) so that when it was raised to protect their face they would effectually become that god, akin to a deity impersonation ritual (Miller and Martin 2004:165). Maya warriors would also don Tlaloc masks or headdresses into battle to invoke the power of Teotihuacan (ibid.).

The ritual aspects of war continued after the battles had ceased. Some sites, such as Tonina, would bring high status captives back to their city where they were paraded around town and publicly humiliated, then dressed as gods, and subsequently sacrificed. Rulers would be depicted monumentally as literally trampling their victims under their feet, which signified the king's victory. Captives would also be depicted on the tread of stairs (Miller and Martin 2004:168). Monument 155 from Tonina depicts a captive from the city of Anaay Te' named Yax Ahk Ajaw (a vassal of K'inich K'an Bahlam of Palenque) who was dressed as the Jaguar God of the Underworld in preparation for his sacrifice (Fig. 2.40; Martin and Grube 2008:182). It is possible that the way a captive was killed depended upon which god he was compelled to impersonate. For example, dressed

as the Jaguar God of the Underworld, Yax Ahk Ajaw may have endured immolation as a re-enactment of the mythological episode found on K1299 and K4598 where the Hero Twins set the JGU on fire. Clearly, warfare and ritual sacrifices "follow a program ordained by the gods" (Miller and Martin 2004:177).

The Royal Ballgame

Numerous depictions of rulers as ballplayers suggest that participation in the ballgame was one of their primary ritual responsibilities (Taladoire 2001:97). Evidence for the ballgame extends back to the Olmec. For example, San Lorenzo Monument 34 depicts a kneeling ruler wearing a Sun God mirror pendant dressed in ballplayer garb (Fig. 2.41). Nearly identical garb is found on figurines from Tlapacoya and Tlatilco, suggesting a wide-spread shared belief that divine rulers had access to the gods, controlled fertility, and needed to be ballplayers in order to do so (Bradley 2001:36). The ball playing abilities of Late Postclassic Aztec emperors was symbolic of their overall power, and Moctezuma and Nezahualpilli, ruler of Texcoco, famously determined the fate of the empire by playing against each other (Taladoire 2001:97).

Through the ballgame rulers were able to bridge the gap between the mythological past and human history. It has long been held that one of the functions of the ballgame was to reenact the adventures of the Hero Twins in the *Popol Vuh* (Baudez 1984; Miller and Houston 1987; Schele and Miller 1986:241-264; Freidel et al. 1993), but there is no epigraphic evidence and little iconographic support that directly links Classic period ballplayers to the heroes of the *Popol Vuh* (Tokovinine 2002). This is not to say the game

did not have cosmological significance, but rather it re-enacted more locally significant mytho-history. Tokovinine (2002:6) notes that among the Aztec there are several very distinctive legends that involve the ballgame, such as:

> a version of Huitzilopochtli myth recorded by Tezozomoc (1878: 227-229); a story of Topiltzin and a *tlachtli* model as written by Ixtlilxochitl (1975: 279); the ballgame of Quetzalcoatl versus Tezcatlipoca (when the latter turned into a "tiger") recorded by Mendieta (1870: 82; Stern 1966:67); the ballgame between Huemac and the tlalocs as told in the codex Chimalpopoca (Bierhorst 1992:156).

Tokovinine suggests the ballgame served as a conceptual framework for any story that involved competition, and that the ballgame in the *Popol Vuh* is merely the result of the way the K'iche' framed their local myths. Regardless of the specific myths particular rulers were re-enacting, the ballgame was an extremely important function, as evidenced by the wide range of media on which such events were recorded.

A common (but not necessarily universal) underlying theme in the ballgame, similar to the *Popol Vuh*, is the struggle for life over death. Interestingly, the most common deity who is impersonated during the game is actually the hunting god (Tokovinine 2002:6), and hunting metaphors are extremely common in ballgame scenes, as players wear animals and birds in their headdresses (Miller and Martin 2004:91). Warfare imagery is also quite common.

The game may also have had associations with storms. Ballcourts would have been filled with the sounds of trumpets, rasps, and heavy rubber balls bouncing off of masonry walls, all of which would have created quite a racket (Zender 2004b:1-2). Iconographically, the noise is represented by ubiquitous speech scrolls coming off of the walls themselves (ibid.). The great noise may have been likened unto thundering clouds

(Stephen Houston, personal communication, 2011) and one of the purposes of the game may have been to summon rainclouds.

Whether or not the ballgame at each site had specific links with the Maize God cycle, hunting, or warfare, the common underlying theme was that the ballgame was a metaphor of life, death, and regeneration (Miller and Taube 1993:43). As Freidel et al. (1993:350) state, "The essence of the metaphor was that life was a game, and that the ultimate stakes were the rebirth of the ancestral dead in the afterlife." Whether or not the ballgame is truly a reenactment of the *Popol Vuh*, the ballcourt was clearly depicted as a meeting place for the living and the dead. Panel 7 at Yaxchilán depicts the living king Bird-Jaguar IV playing ball, and to the left and right of it we see Panels 6 and 8, respectively, which depict his deceased forebears Itzamnaaj Bahlam III and Bird Jaguar III (Fig. 2.42). Itzamnaaj Bahlam III is depicted sitting in the middle of an Otherworld portal, which clearly demonstrates that the ballgame has Otherworld associations (Freidel et al. 1993:358-360) and that any division between the two realms is porous.

The modern game of *ulama* that continues to be played in Sinaloa bears many similarities to the ethnohistoric accounts of the Aztec game, and the gear worn by these modern players as well as the positions they assume while in play strongly resemble ancient monumental and ceramic depictions (Taladoire 2001:100). But research into the modern survival of the game and 16th century accounts suggest that the way points were scored varied according to where and when the game was played (Miller and Martin 2004:64). The rules must have differed at various sites due to distinctive court designs. For example, the largest ballcourt at Chichen Itza (measuring 96.5 x 30 m) is six times

larger than Tikal's small ballcourt (16 x 5 m) (Taladiore 2001:100). Beyond just the size of the court, the rings that appear at sites such as Chichen Itza, Uxmal, Xochicalco and Tenochtitlan appear to be a Postclassic innovation that would have required new methods of scoring than were used in the Classic period (ibid.).

Due to its time-depth and wide geographical dispersion, variation in the ballgame with its associated architecture and regalia is to be expected (Taladoire 2001:99-100). Well over 1500 ballcourts have been discovered by archaeologists in every region of Mesoamerica (ibid.:97). Most of the larger archaeological sites throughout Mesoamerica had at least one ballcourt, although there are certainly exceptions, such as Teotihuacan in Central Mexico and Bonampak and Tortuguero in the Maya area (ibid.:98), and many of the smaller Classic period sites lack them (Stephen Houston, personal communication). Interestingly, in the Middle Preclassic Yucatán, the smallest of sites had ballcourts, even those with little signs of sociopolitical complexity (Anderson 2010). Larger sites sometimes had multiple ballcourts. In the state of Veracruz, for example, El Tajin has 18 known ballcourts and Cantona has 24 (Taladoire 2001:98). Although there is a great deal of chronological and geographical variation in the architectural design of the ballcourts, Taladoire (ibid.:103-107) has identified 13 general types, with variations of each type.

Curiously, during the Early Classic period (A.D. 300-600) no new ballcourts are constructed in the Maya lowlands (or almost anywhere else throughout the Mesoamerica core area, for that matter) and those that had been constructed earlier began to fall into disuse (Taladoire 2001:109). It is significant that all of the areas that were influenced by Teotihuacan turned away from the ballgame during the Early Classic, only to vigorously

resurrect the tradition after Teotihuacan declined in AD 600 (ibid.). The vast majority of ballcourts from the lowland Maya area were constructed in the Late Classic period, and there was similarly an explosion in ballcourt construction in the Central Mexican highlands and in the Gulf Coast region (Taladoire 2001:110). Importantly, it is during this construction boom in the Late Classic that we also find marked diversification in ballcourt types (ibid).

The Entrada of 378 made explicit Teotihuacan's influence over Tikal. Although Teotihuacan does not have a ballcourt, a ballgame using sticks called Pelota Tarasca is depicted in the murals of the Tepantitla Palace. This game has been documented at Tikal as well (Taladoire 2001:112-113). After Teotihuacan's decline, Tikal reverted back to building typical Maya-style ballcourts.

The "ideal type" of ballcourt proposed by many archaeologists was oriented along a north-south axis. However, Taladoire's (1979) detailed analysis has shown that in practice there is no consistent orientation. In fact, even within sites that have at least two ballcourts, there are no identifiable patterns; they "may belong to the same or different types, be similarly oriented, or oriented at angles to one another. They may be located in the same part of the site or quite apart from one another" (Taladoire 2001:114). Scarborough (1991:138) similarly noted, "of the five well-mapped sites along the Usumacinta drainage, three [including Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán] represent the most unconventional court orientations recorded in the southern lowlands." He suggests their "buffer zone location" led to a reduced influence of "core zone building conventions," but I propose the opposite; the underlying reason was due to a desire to consciously

distinguish themselves from their more orthodox neighbors. Similarly – and as we might expect – Quirigua's ballcourt also manifests an "unconventional orientation," and I would likewise argue it was done to contrast themselves from their more orthodox rivals at Copán. These polities sought to distinguish themselves from their neighbors through variations in their ballcourts, while maintaining a sense of social cohesion by the very act of constructing a ballcourt (cf. Harrison 2003).

Summary

This chapter examined the ruler's responsibilities with regards to his people. The ruler oversaw construction projects at his polity, and the ideal city was laid out according to cosmological principles and was an earthly model of a divine prototype. At times the "ideal types" of architecture shifted depending on who a particular polity was striving to emulate at any given period (Teotihuacan, earlier dynastic periods from one's own site, etc), as demonstrated with the waxing and waning of E-groups, ballcourts, and *talud-tablero* architecture. The ruler was also ritually responsible for his polity as a whole. His sacred or divine status was reinforced in the eyes of the people by his taking the titulary and names of his gods, which varied from site to site according to local mythologies. He was viewed as a living *axis mundi* and an embodiment of time itself; his body effectually comprised the center of both space and time. Although the commoners undoubtedly engaged in household rituals, the ruler performed rituals on behalf of his polity as a whole to propitiate the gods through autosacrifice and conjuring, dancing and impersonation, and even by playing ball. He brought order to the cosmos through ritual

activity, and prevented chaos by subduing his enemies in warfare. The variation that is found in all of these themes throughout space and time served to create or reinforce a polity's identity vis-à-vis neighboring, rival sites. In the next chapter we will turn to the process of becoming king, and the rituals and regalia specifically associated with accession, and the variations that are found therein.

Figure 2.1. Seating of an individual into the office of *Ajk'uhuun*. Tonina Monument 183. (Photo from Miller and Martin 2004:188; Drawing by Marc Zender in Zender 2004:505)

Figure 2.2. Ek Balam's ruler Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' deified as the Maize God while seated upon glyphs denoting Five Flower Mountain. The text reads *Ho'…lnal ajaw Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'* "(At) *Ho…nal* [Five…Flower] there is the king Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'". Ek Balam Capstone 15. (Drawing by Alfonso Lacadena; in Lacadena et al. 2003:II-26).

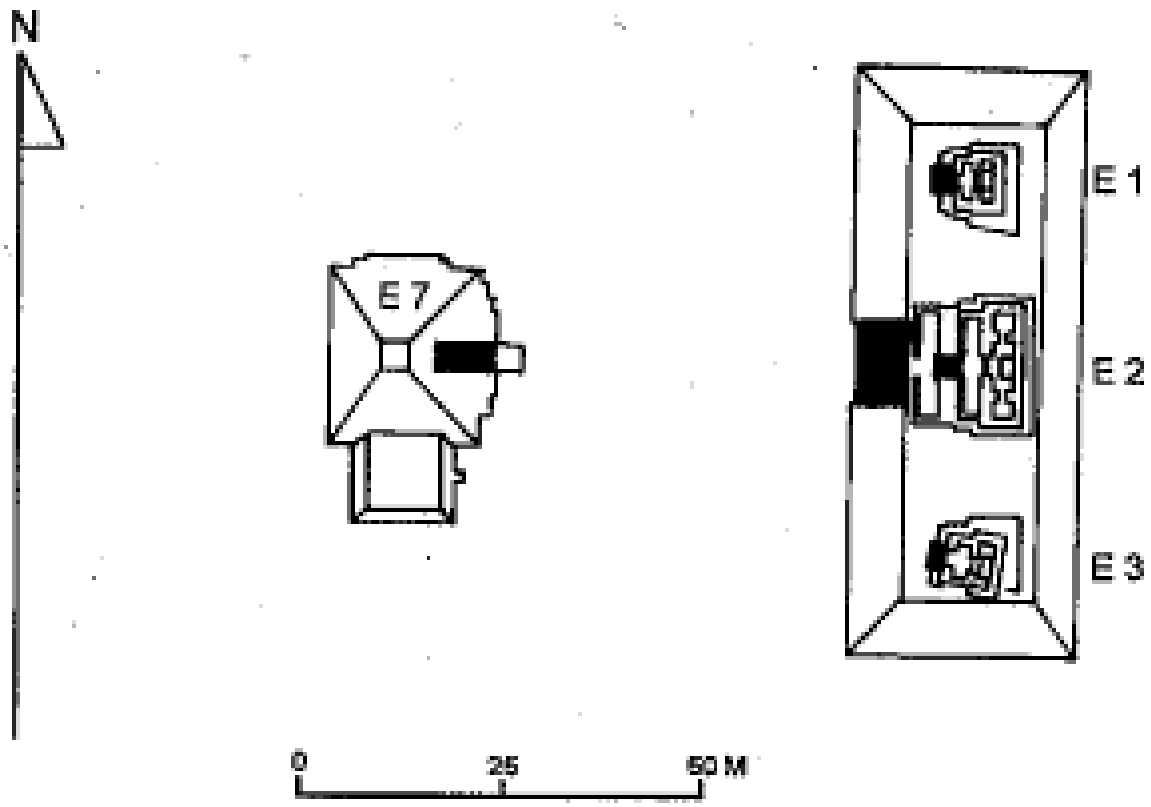


Figure 2.3. Group E at Uaxactun, the type-site for E-group Commemorative Astronomical Complexes. (From Chase and Chase 1995:90 Figure 56)

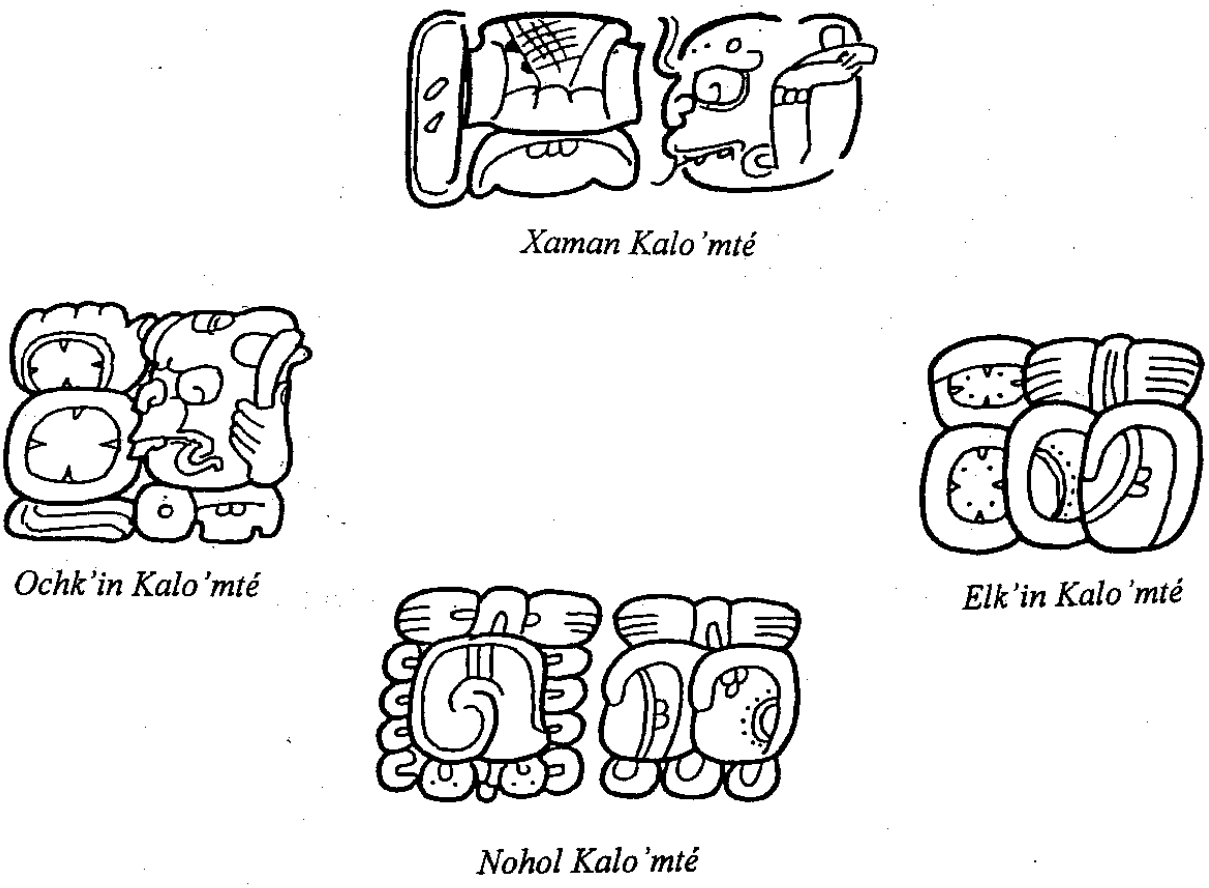


Figure 2.4. Directional *Kaloomte'* titles. (Drawings by Simon Martin; in Grube, Lacedena and Martin 2003:13 Figure 12)

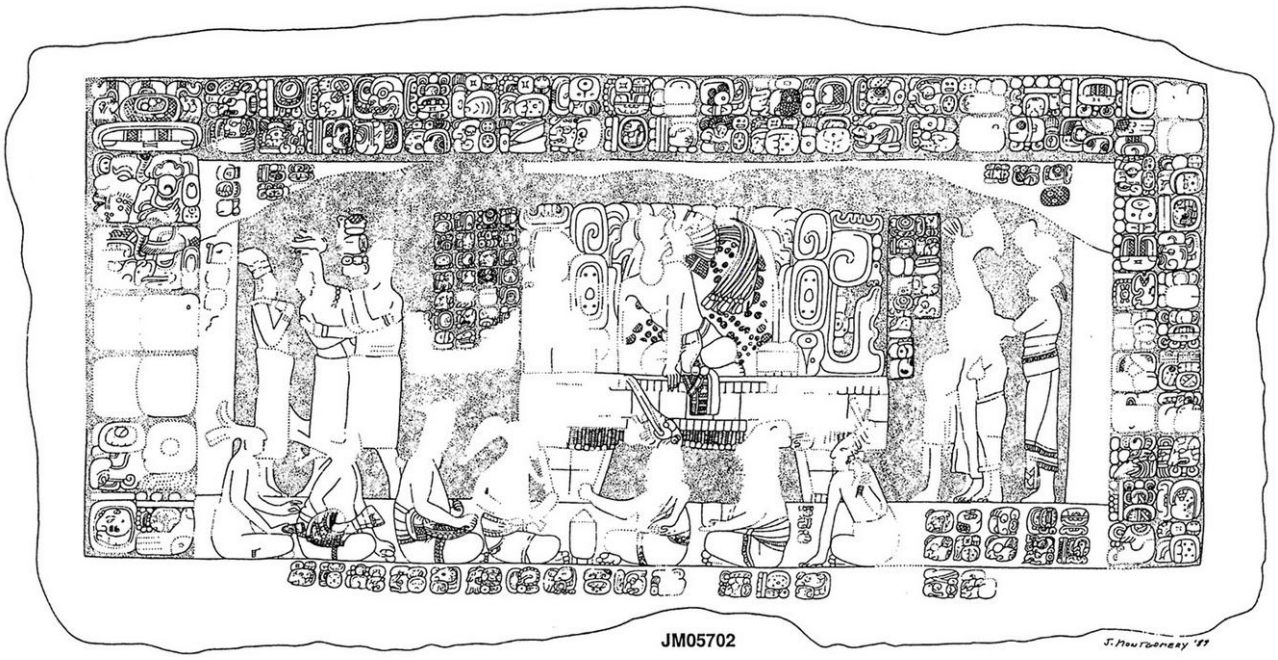


Figure 2.5. Piedras Negras Ruler 4 commemorating his *k'atun* anniversary accompanied by *sajals* and other high-ranking nobles. (Drawing by John Montgomery 1989; Courtesy of FAMSI)

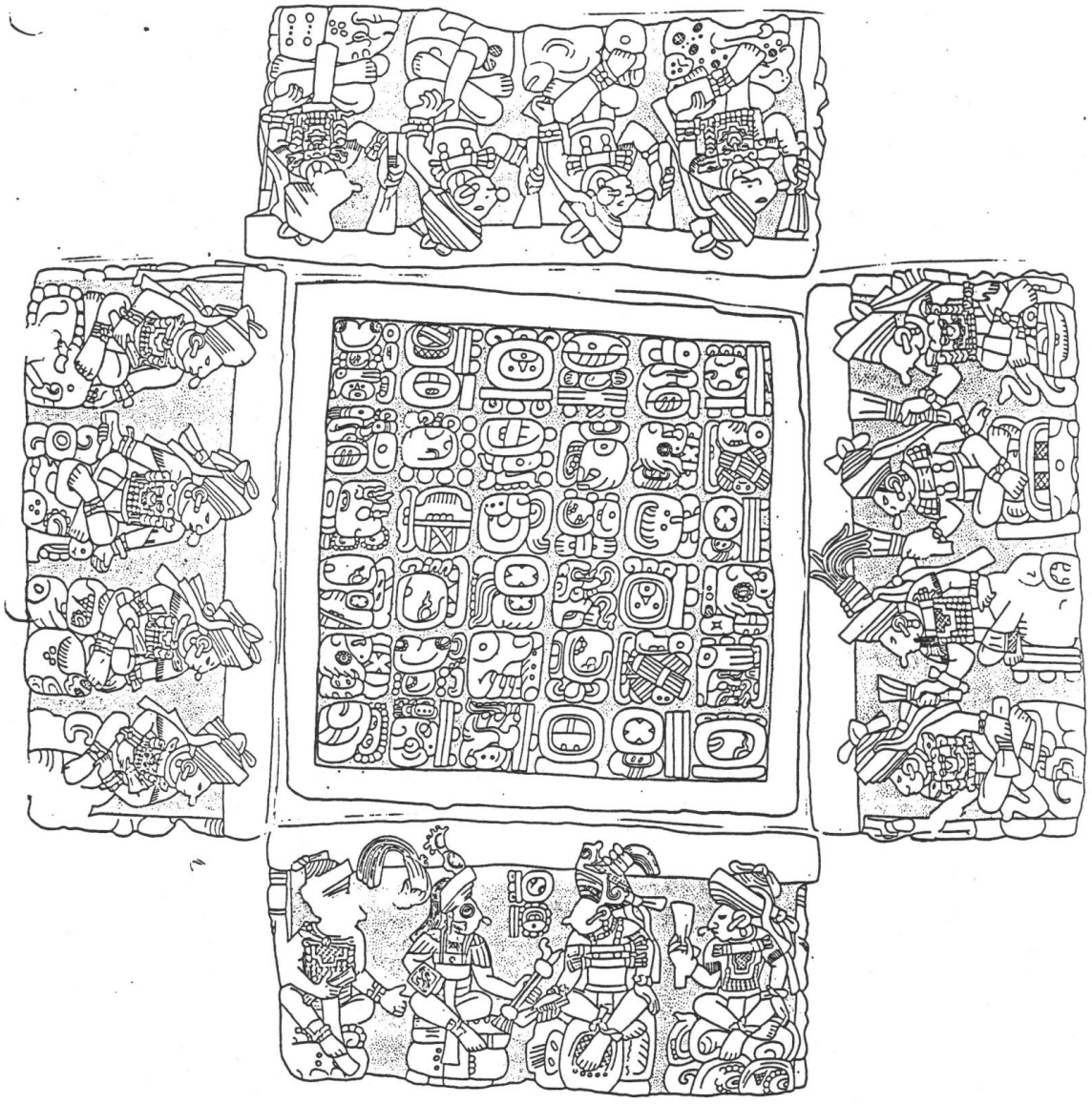


Figure 2.6. Altar Q from Copan. (Drawing by Instituto Hondoreño de Antropología e Historia; in Schele 1990:10 Fig. 1)

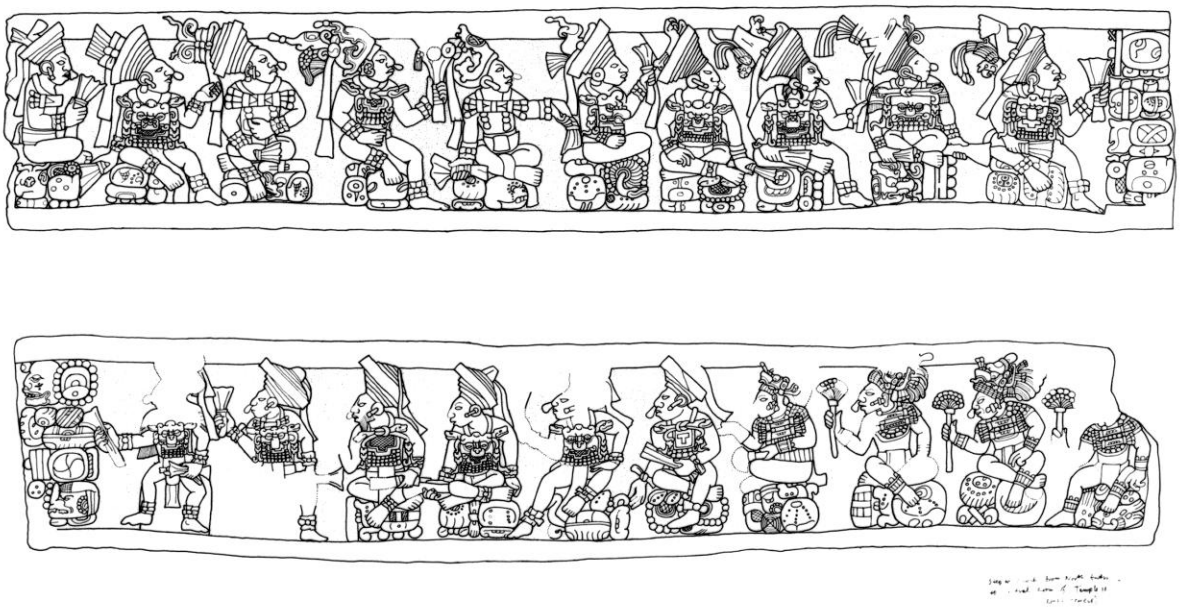


Figure 2.7. Temple 11 Bench from Copan, displaying rulers, gods, ancestors and foreign dignitaries sitting upon identifying glyphs. (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI)

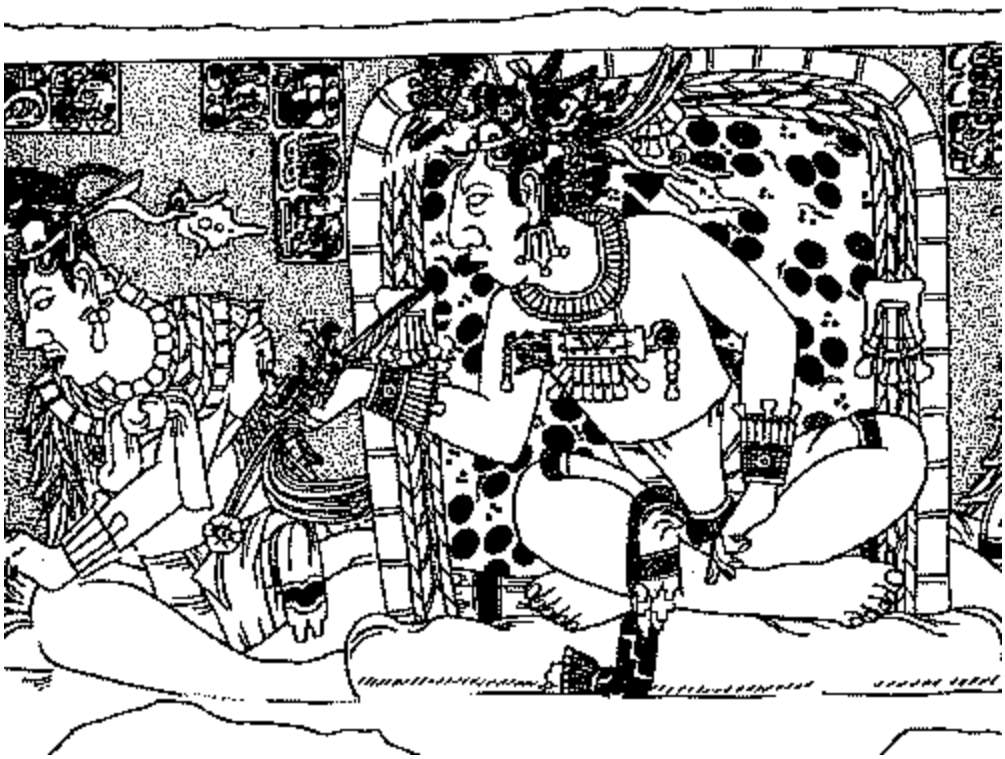


Figure 2.8. A long-dead K'inich Janaab Pakal passes a personified bloodletter to his grandson K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb. Temple XXI platform face. (Drawing by David Stuart, in Stuart and Stuart 2008:228-229)

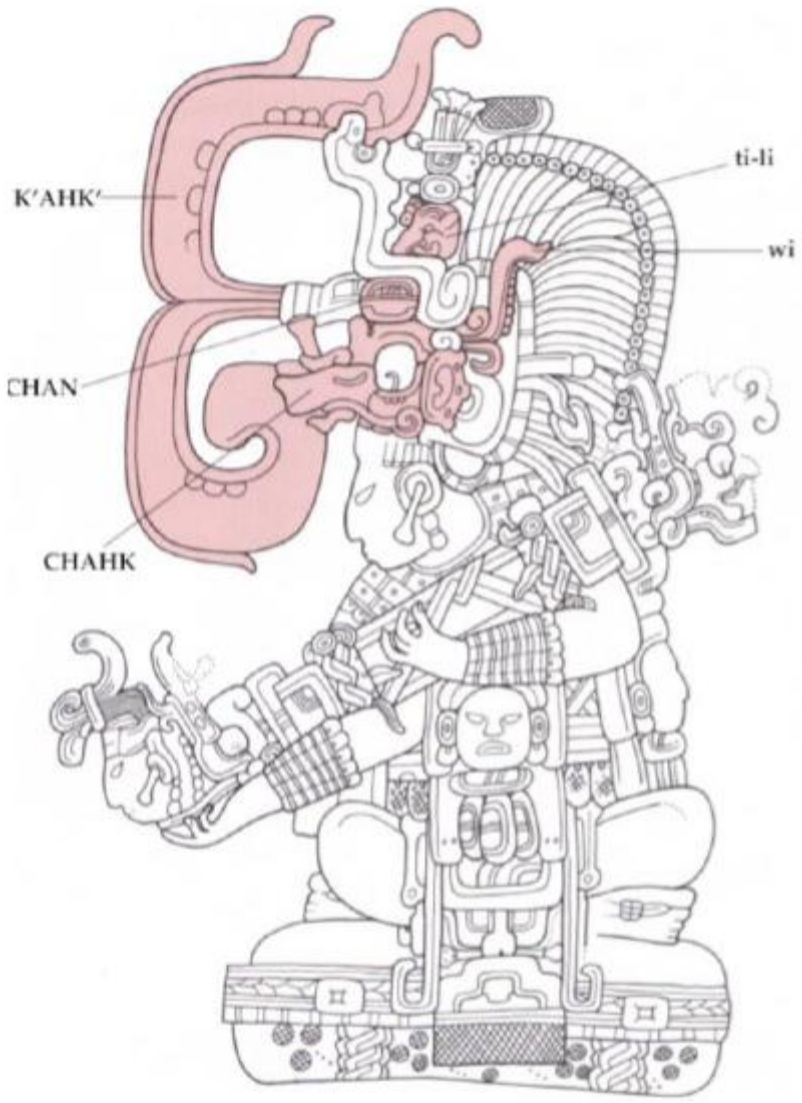


Figure 2.9. The elements of K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak's headdress are used to spell his name. Naranjo Stela 22 (drawing from Martin and Grube 2008:77)

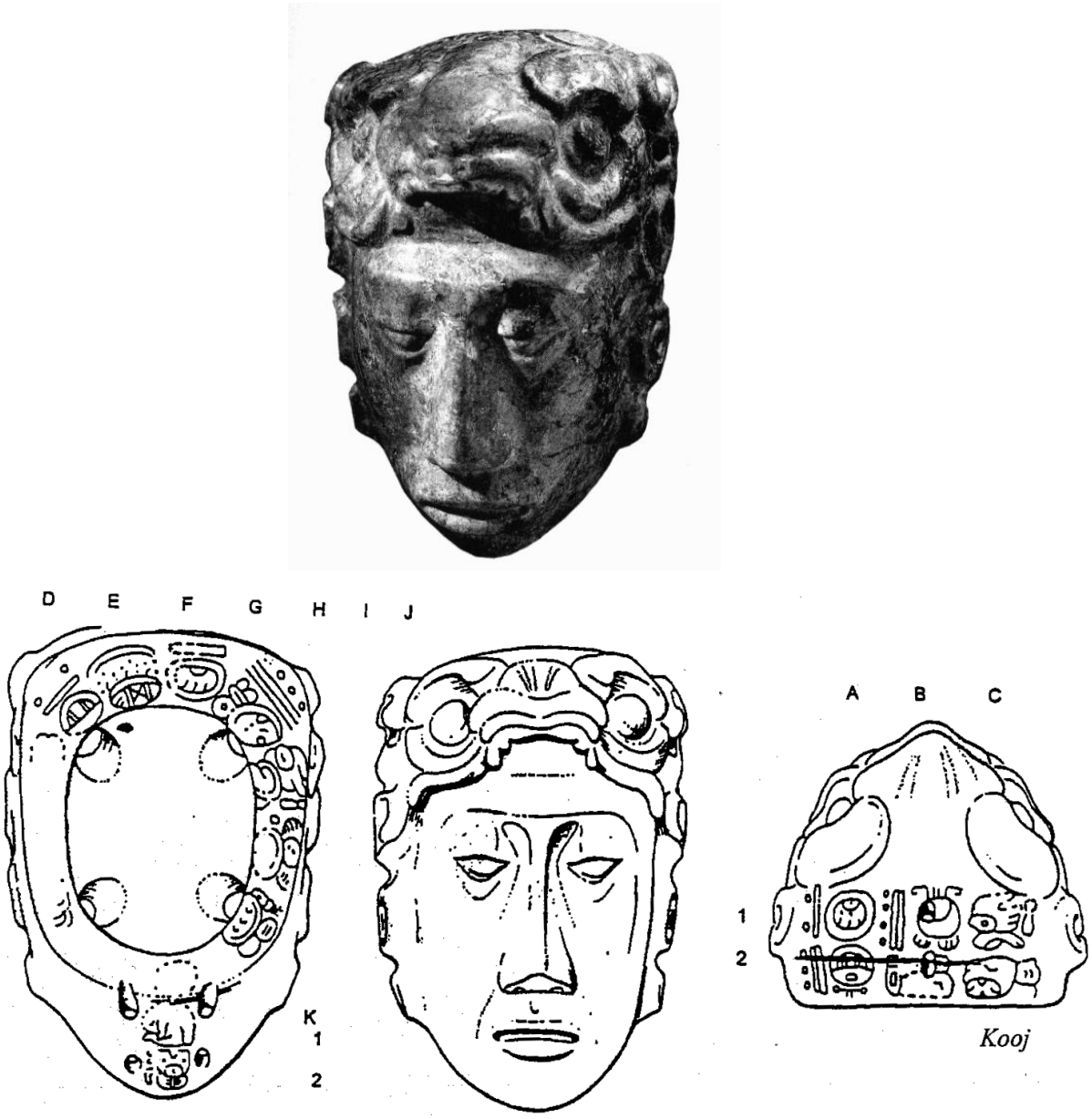


Figure 2.10. Jadeite portrait found in the *cenote* of Chichen Itza that iconographically references the pre-regnal name of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II, *kooj*, "Puma" (photo in Martin and Grube 2008:145; drawings by Proskouriakoff in Grube et al. 2003:6)

Figure 2.11. A captive K'an Joy Chitam of Palenque is stripped of his exalted *K'inich* and *K'uhul Ajaw* titles. Tonina Monument 122. (Drawing in Graham and Mathews 1999 Fig. 6:153).

a.

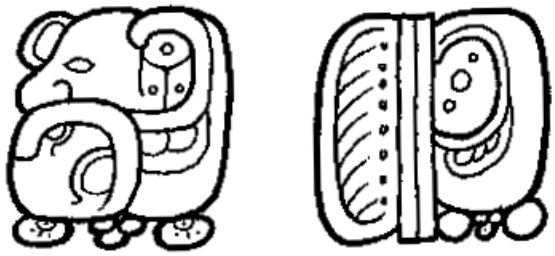
b.

Figure 2.12. (a) The Maya Sun God, K'inich Ajaw, with T-shaped incisors (from Joyce 1914: Figure 72).
(b) Examples of dental modification mimicking the K'inich Ajaw's T-shaped incisors (Figures from Williams and White 2006:140-141 Figures 1 and 2; modified from Romero Molina 1986:11).

a.

b.

c.



d.

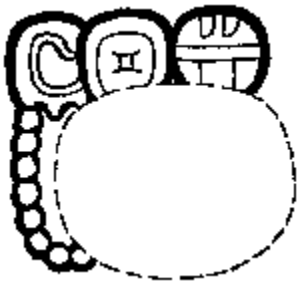


Figure 2.13. Royal titulary. (a) Variants on the *K'inich* title. (b) Variants on the *ajaw* title. (c). Variants on the *sajal* title. (d) An idealized *k'uhul* prefix to an Emblem Glyph. (Drawings from Coe and Van Stone 2001:69-77)

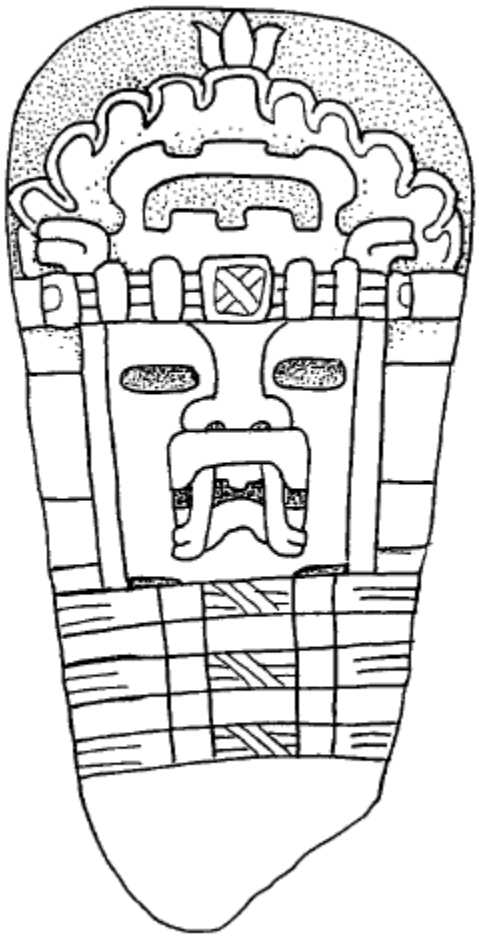


Figure 2.14. Supernatural portrait. La Venta Monument 25/26. (Drawing by Karl Taube 2005:24, Figure 1b, after James Porter 1996:Figure 8)

Figure 2.15. Formative Period ruler surrounded by supernaturals. La Venta Stela 2. (Drawing by James Porter, in Taube 2004c:14 Fig. 5)

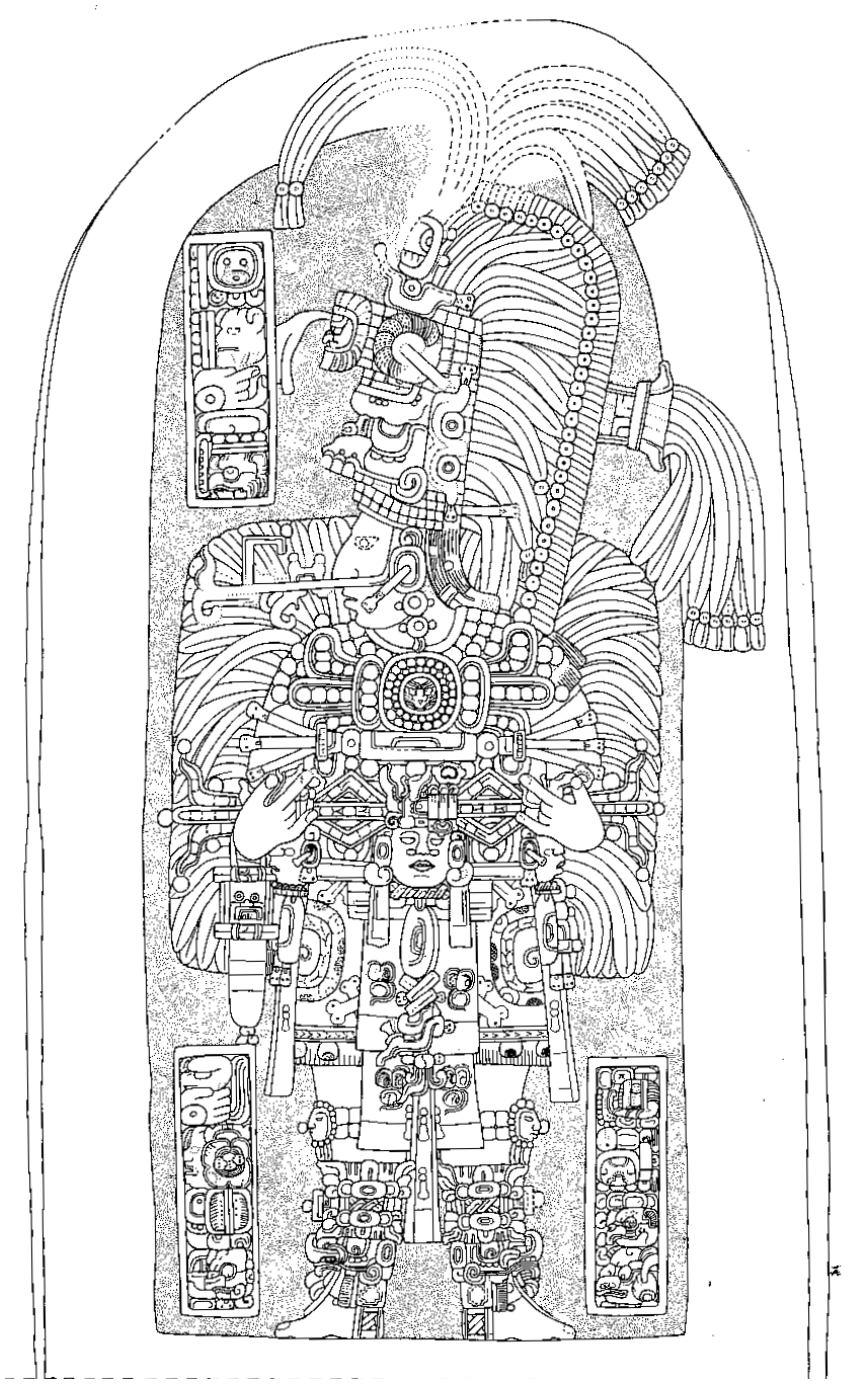


Figure 2.16. Jasaw Chan K'awiil's Stela 16 initiated a new iconographic program at Tikal (drawing by William R. Coe, University of Pennsylvania Museum, Neg. # Tikal 69-5-55; in Harrison 1999:138 Figure 79)

Figure 2.17. Yax Nuun Ahiin II's Stela 22 mimicked the template set by Jasaw Chan K'awiil. (Drawing by William R. Coe, University of Pennsylvania Museum Neg. # Tikal 69-5-59; in Harrison 1999:168 Fig. 101)

Figure 2.18. Quirigua Monument 26 mimicking Uaxactun Stela 20. (Drawing by Matthew Looper 2003:41 Figure 1.6).

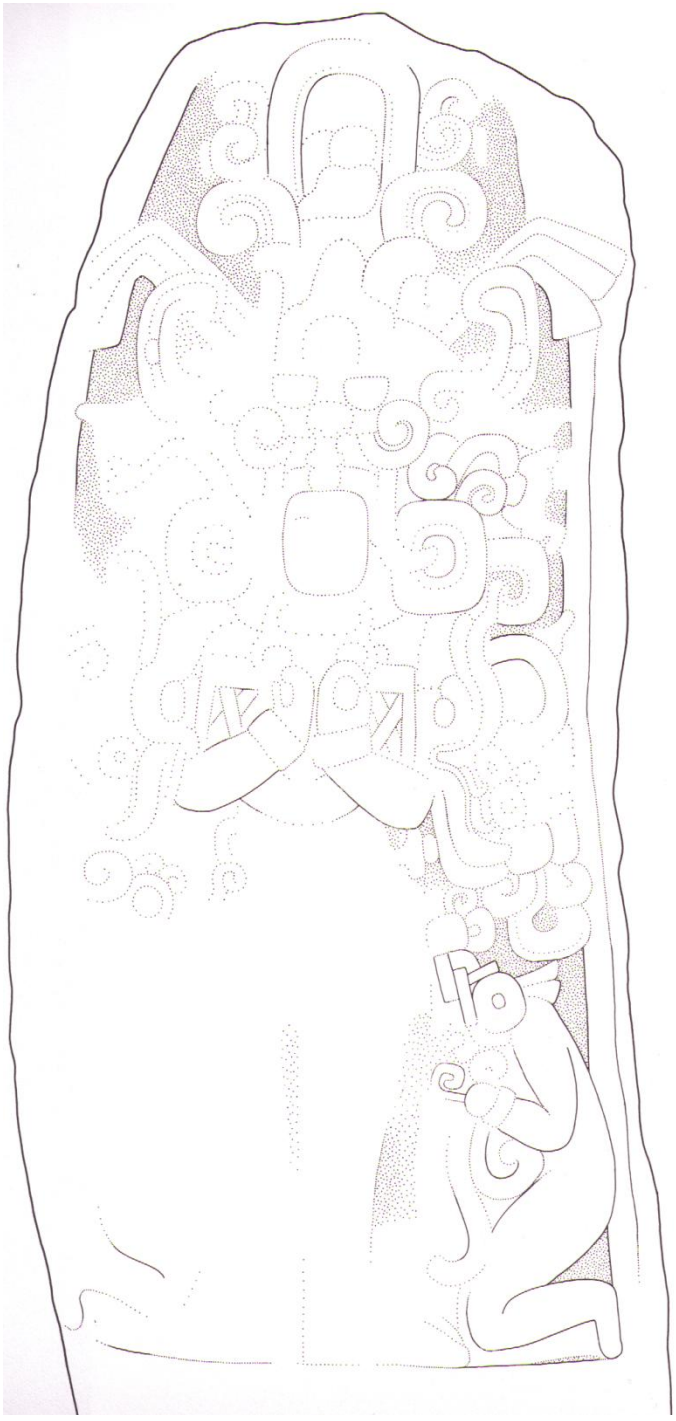
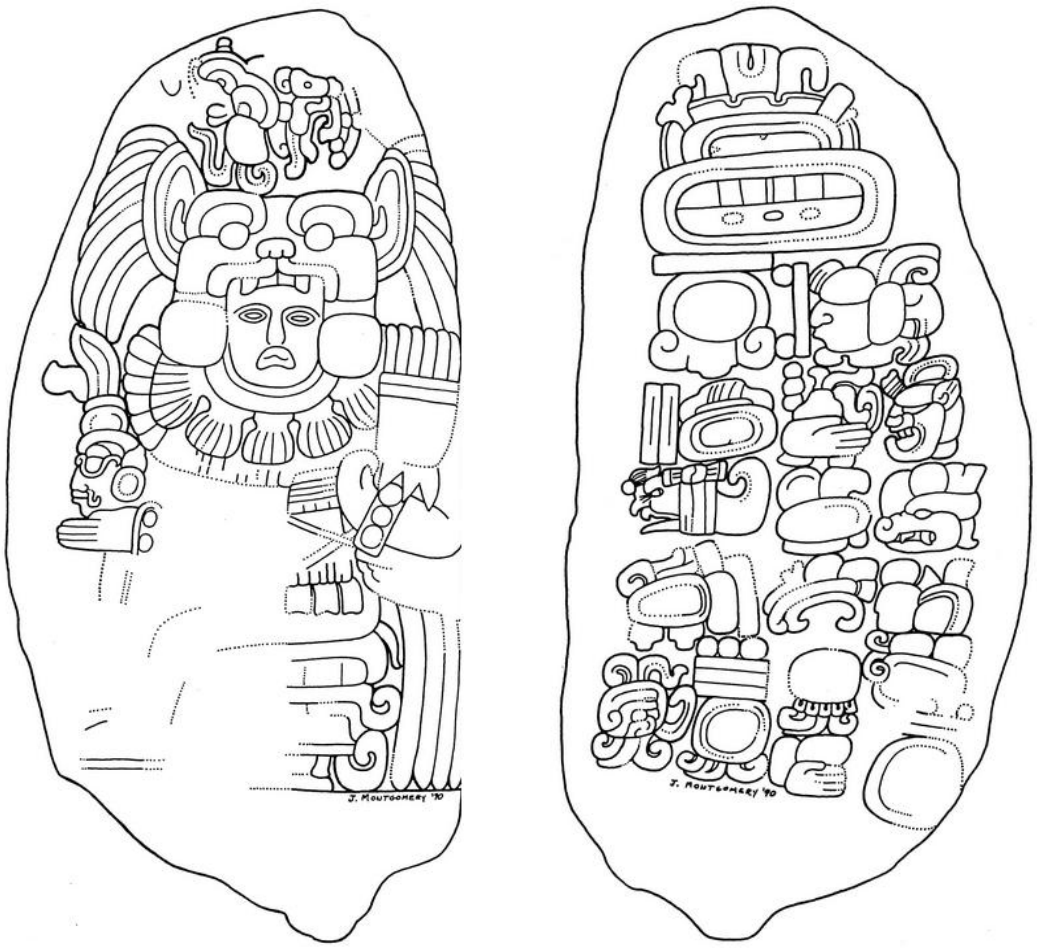


Figure 2.19. Uaxactun Stela 20 may have influenced the iconographic conventions of Quirigua Monument 26. (Drawing by Ian Graham 1986:181 Fig. 5:181)



a. b.

Figure 2.20. Tikal Stela 4. (a) Front: Iconographic precursor to Uaxactun Stela 20 and Monument 26 from Quirigua (among others). (b) Back: First contemporaneously recorded accession at Tikal (Yax Nuun Ahiin I on 8.17.2.16.17). (Drawings by John Montgomery, courtesy of FAMSI)

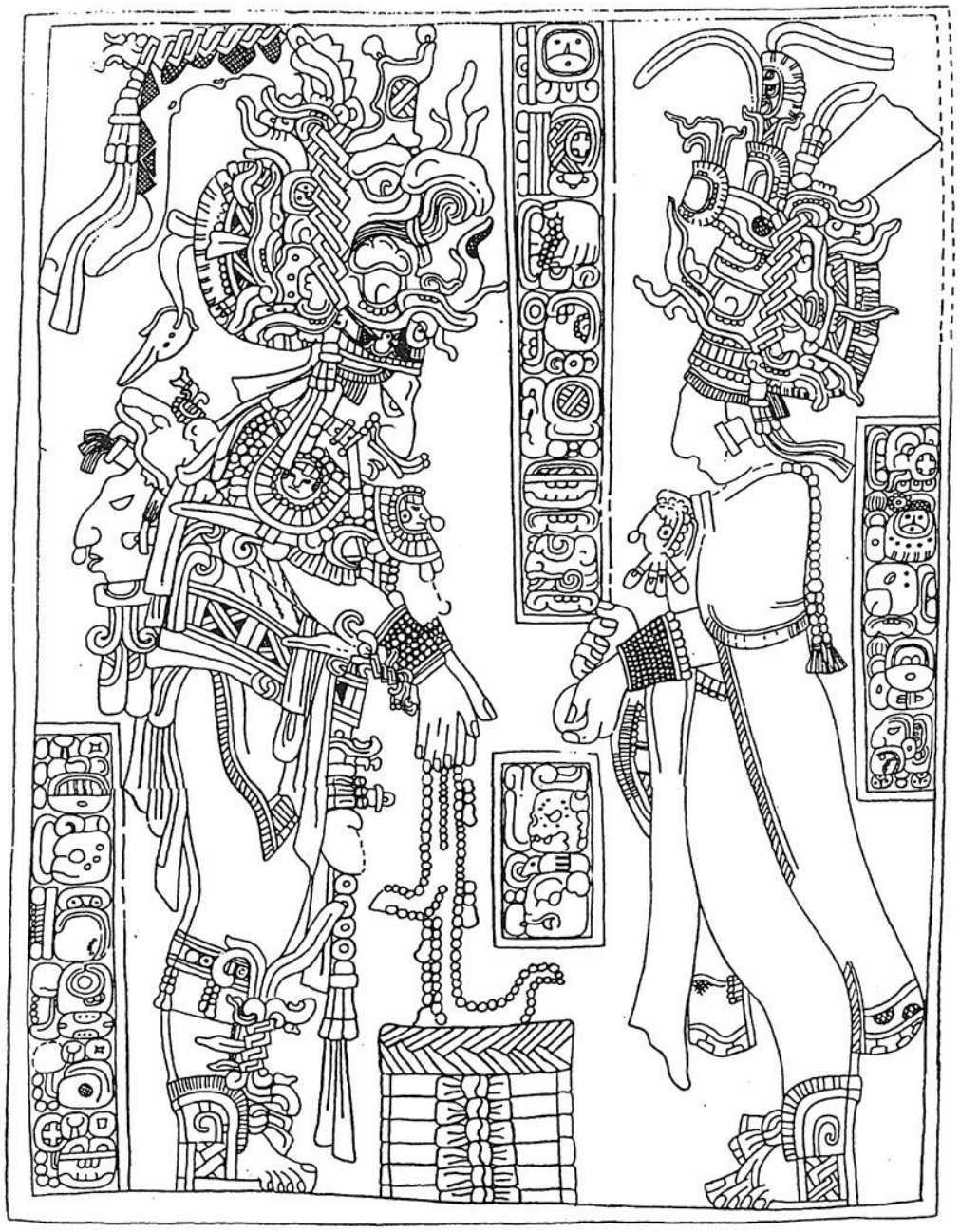


Figure 2.21. Scattering ritual performed by Bird Jaguar IV of Yaxchilán (left) accompanied by Tiloom, ruler of the subsidiary site of Pasadita. La Pasadita Lintel 2. (Drawing by John Montgomery, courtesy of FAMSI).

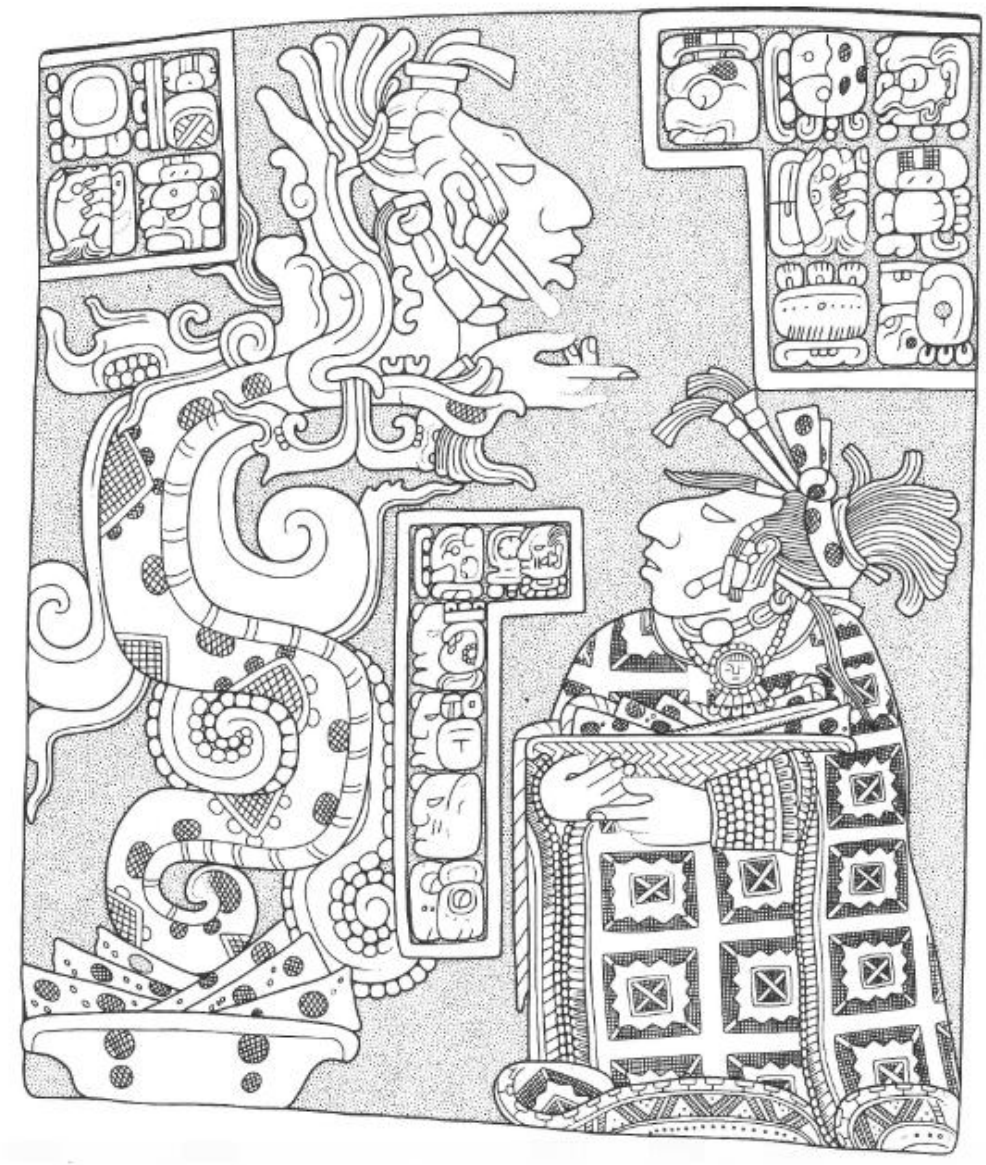


Figure 2.22. Yaxchilán Lintel 15. A supernatural (the Waterlily Sepent, *wahy* of K'awiil) is summoned forth by the burning of bark paper soaked with the sacrificial blood of Lady Wak Tuun (wife or consort of Bird Jaguar IV). (Drawing by Ian Graham 1977 Fig. 3:39, courtesy of CMHI)

Figure 2.23. Preclassic sacrificial bloodletting from the penis. San Bartolo West Wall. (Drawing by Heather Hurst, in Taube et al 2010:10 Figure 7)

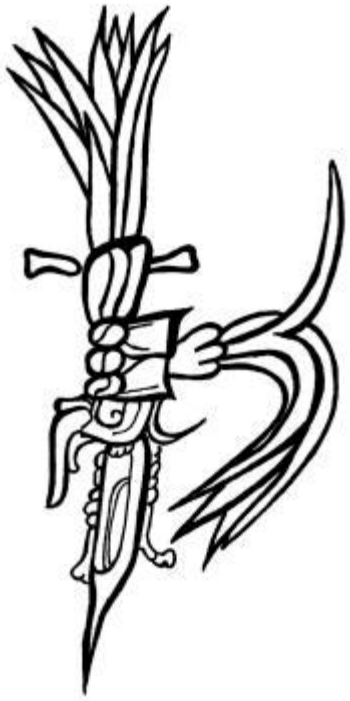


Figure 2.24. Personified bloodletter. (Drawing by Linda Schele in Schele and Miller 1986:176, Fig. IV.1, courtesy of FAMSI)

Figure 2.25. Middle Formative ruler from the Veracruz region preparing to raise the World Tree. San Martin Pajapan Monument 1. (Drawing by Elizabeth Wahle, in Karl Taube 2004c:108 Figure 49)

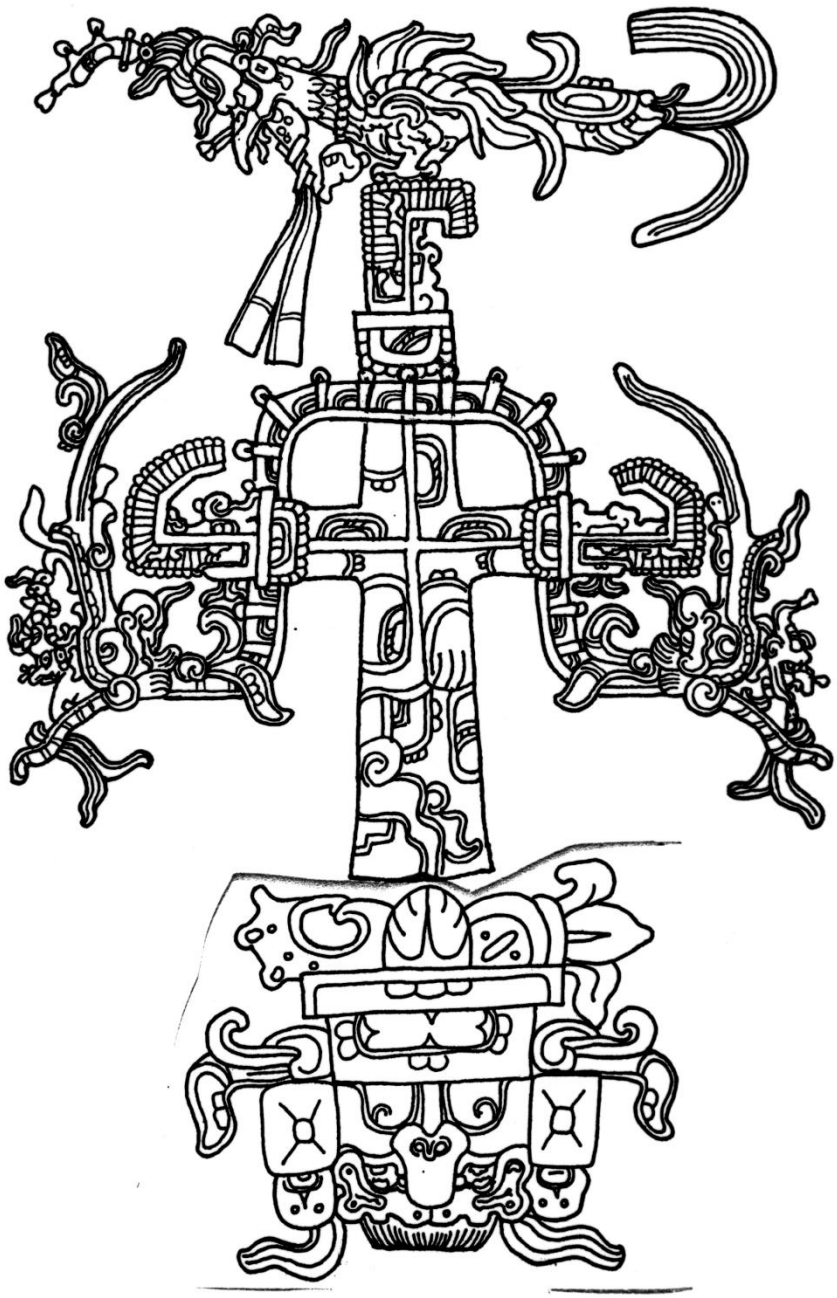


Figure 2.26. Detail of the *uh te*, "Shiny (or Jade) Jewel Tree" from Pakal's Sarcophagus in Temple of the Inscriptions. (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI)

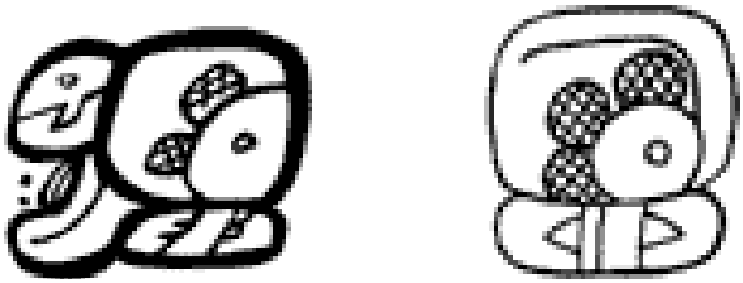


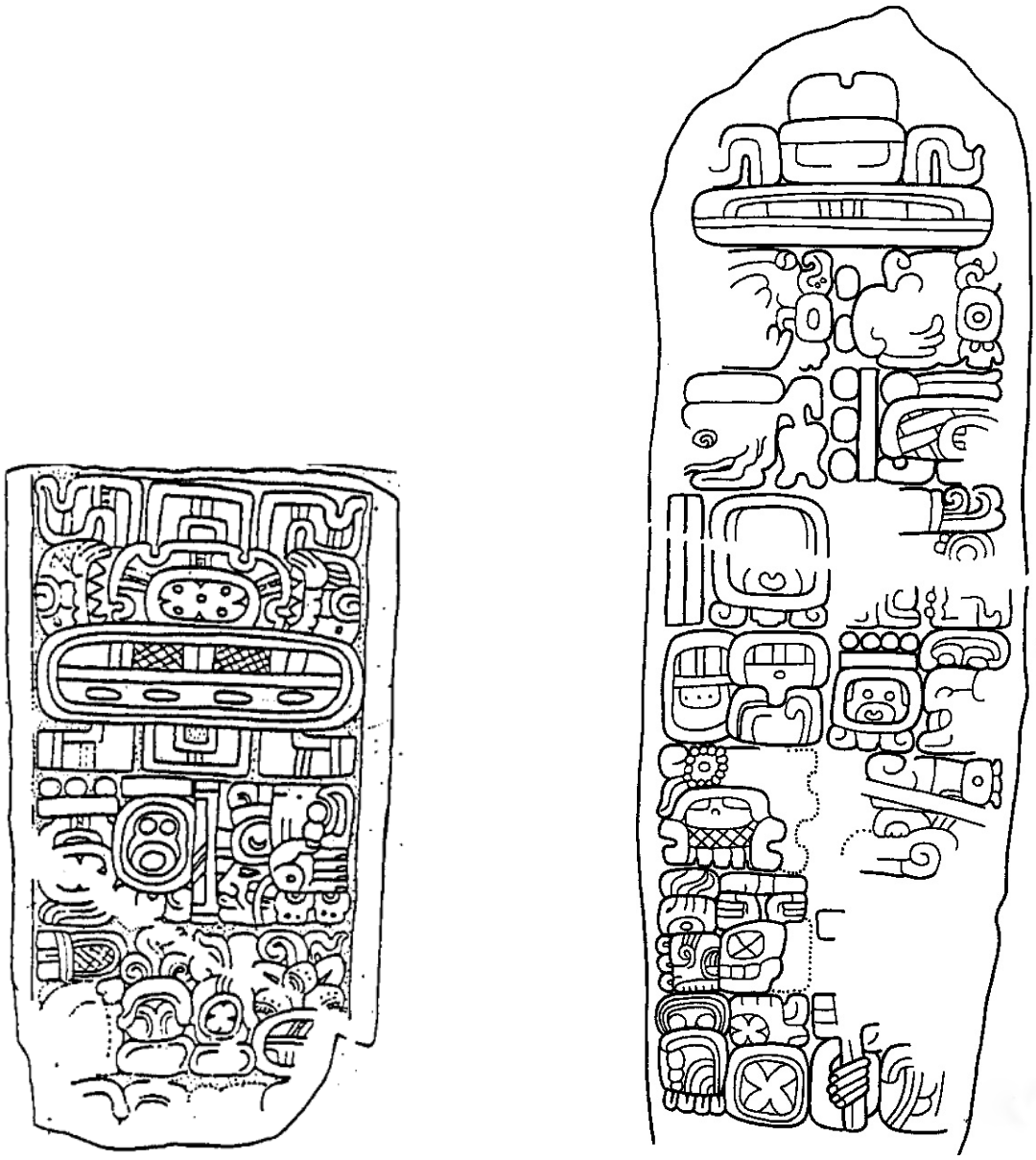
Figure 2.27. Variants of the “dance” glyph, T516. (Drawings by John Montgomery, courtesy of FAMSI)

Figure 2.28. The Maize God dancing out of the turtle earth. San Bartolo West Wall. (Drawing by Heather Hurst, in Taube et al 2010:11 Figure 7)

Figure 2.29. The earliest epigraphic reference to dance, dating to AD 653. Quirigua Altar L (after drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

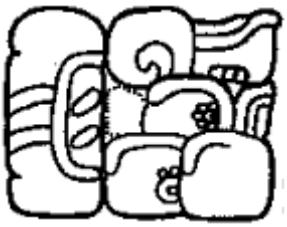
Figure 2.30. A ruler being presented with a mask in preparation for an impersonation ritual. (Photo by Justin Kerr; K2695).

Figure 2.31. Nobles engaged in an impersonation ritual, depicted using the “X-ray” iconographic convention to indicate the identities of the participants. (Photo by Justin Kerr; K2795)

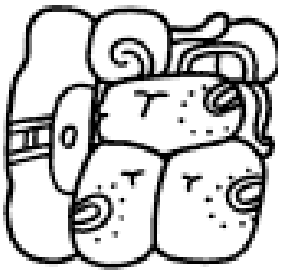


a b

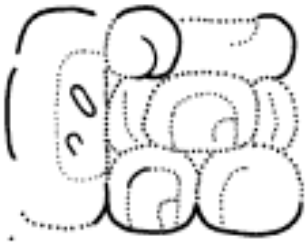
Figure 2.32. Examples of truncated Long Count and reversed Calendar Round. (a) Copan Stela 16, (drawing by Linda Schele in 1990:26 Figure 17a) (b) Quirigua Stela U (drawing by Matthew Looper 2003:40 Figure 1.5)



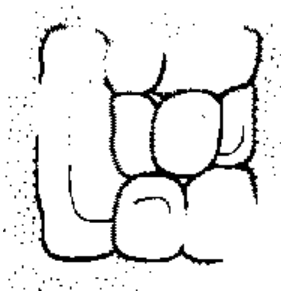
a



b



c.



d.

Figure 2.33. The First Three Stone Place. (a) Quirigua Stela C (drawing by Looper 2003:12 Figure 1.11) (b) Palenque, Temple of the Cross, main panel, C7 (drawing by Looper 2003:14 Figure 1.14). (c) Piedras Negras Altar 1 (drawing by Looper 2003:14 Figure 1.14). (d) Dos Pilas Panel 18 (drawing by Stephen Houston, in Carrasco 2005:310 Figure 5.4).

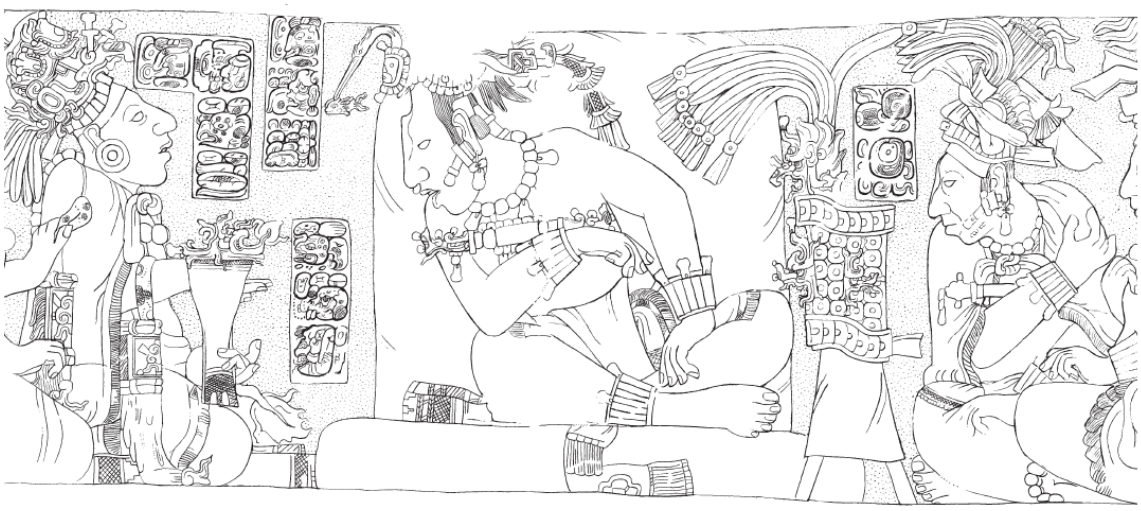


Figure 2.34. The Temple XIX platform at Palenque. (Drawing by David Stuart 2005)

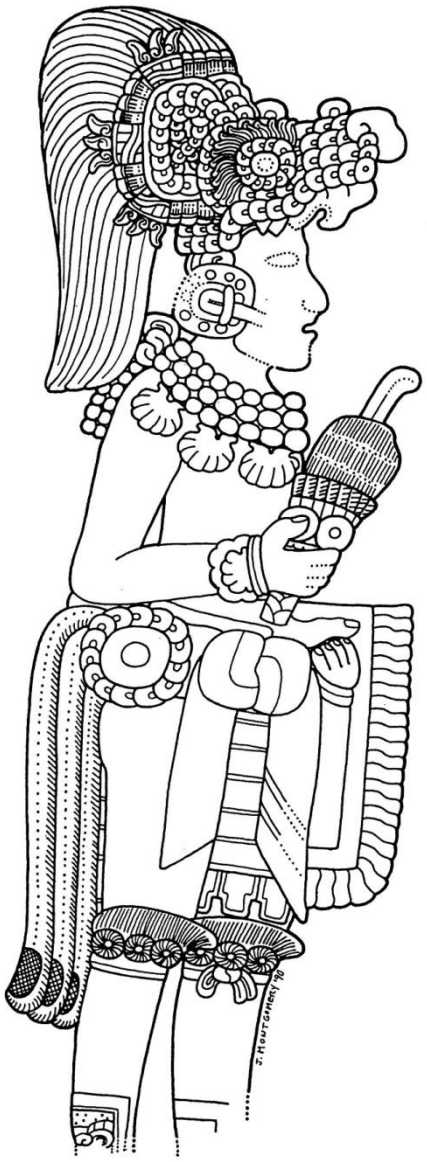


Figure 2.35. Central Mexican-style war regalia. Detail from Tikal Stela 31. (Drawing by John Montgomery, courtesy of FAMSI).

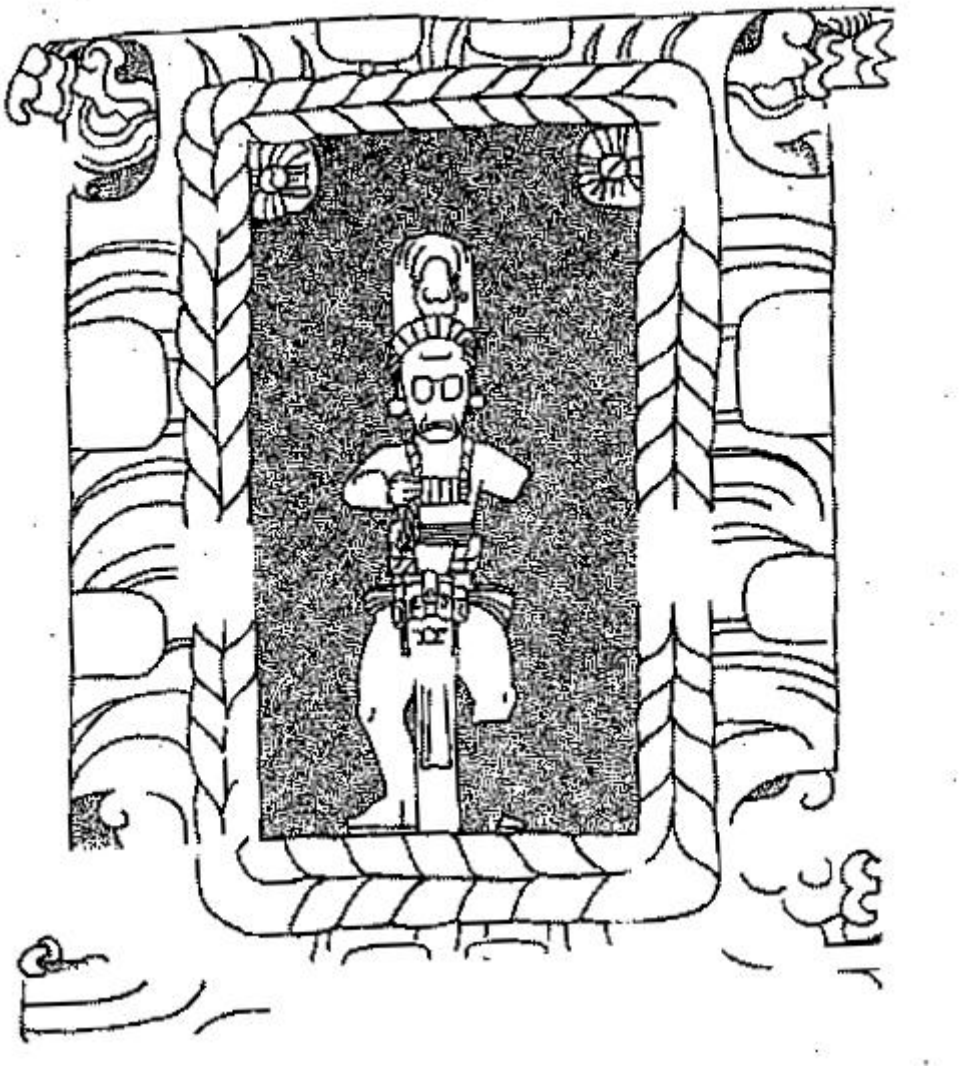


Figure 2.36. K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' as the Sun God. Stair Block II of Structure 10L-16 at Copan. (Drawing by Karl Taube, in 2004:287 Figure 13.13)

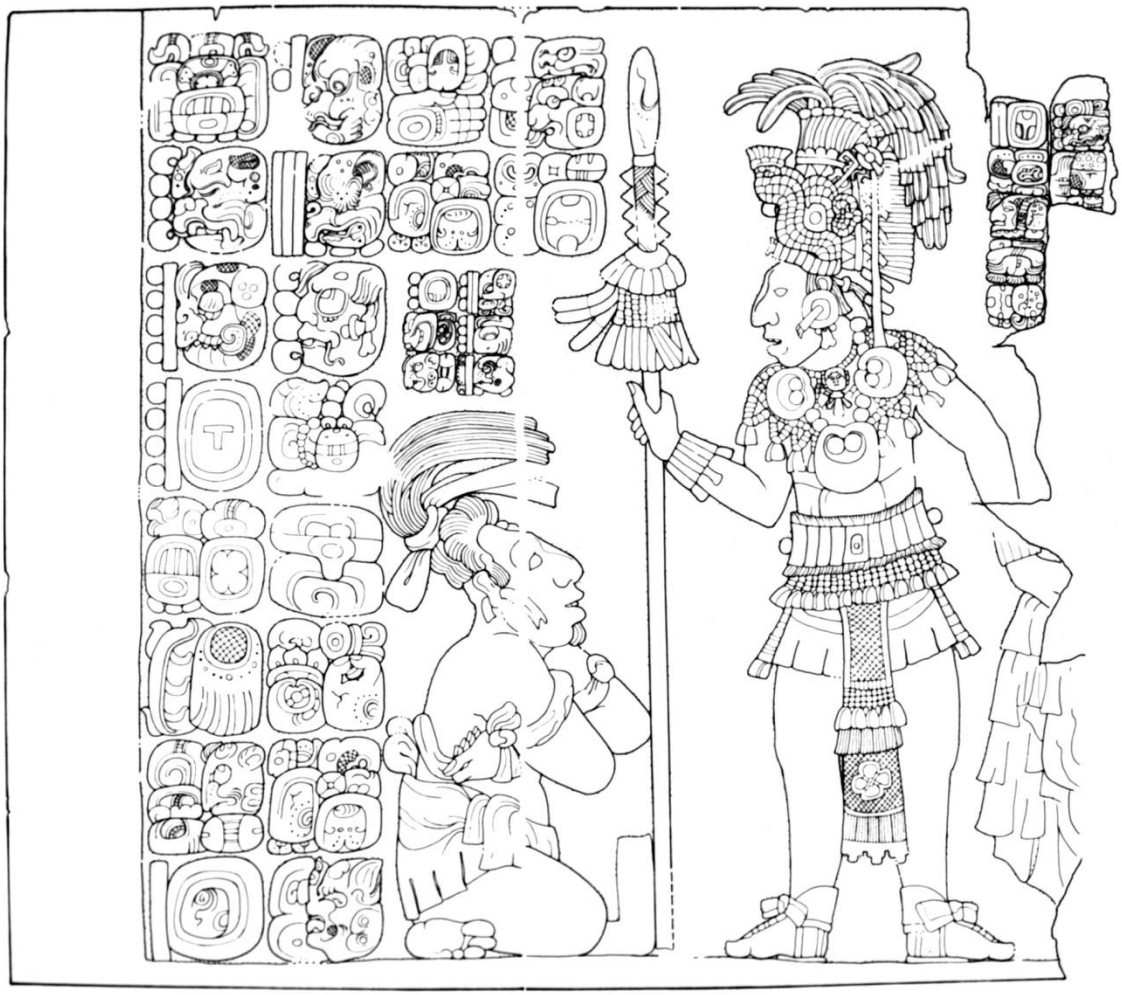


Figure 2.37. Rare militaristic scene from Palenque depicting a victorious K'inich Kan Bahlam. Temple XVII tablet. (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

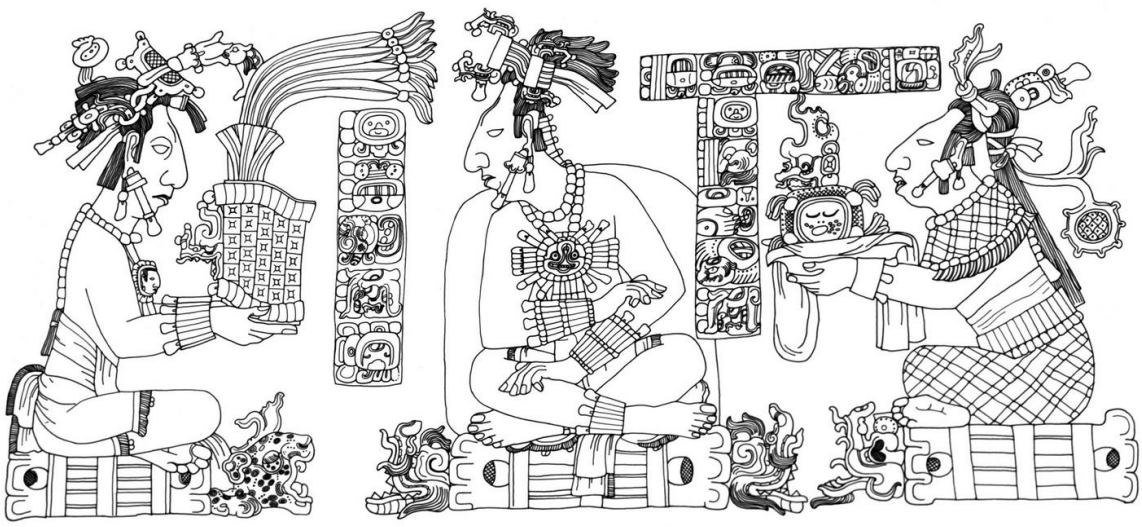


Figure 2.38. K’inich K’an Joy Chitam II’s being presented with emblems of war as part of his accession regalia. Palace Tablet, Palenque. (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

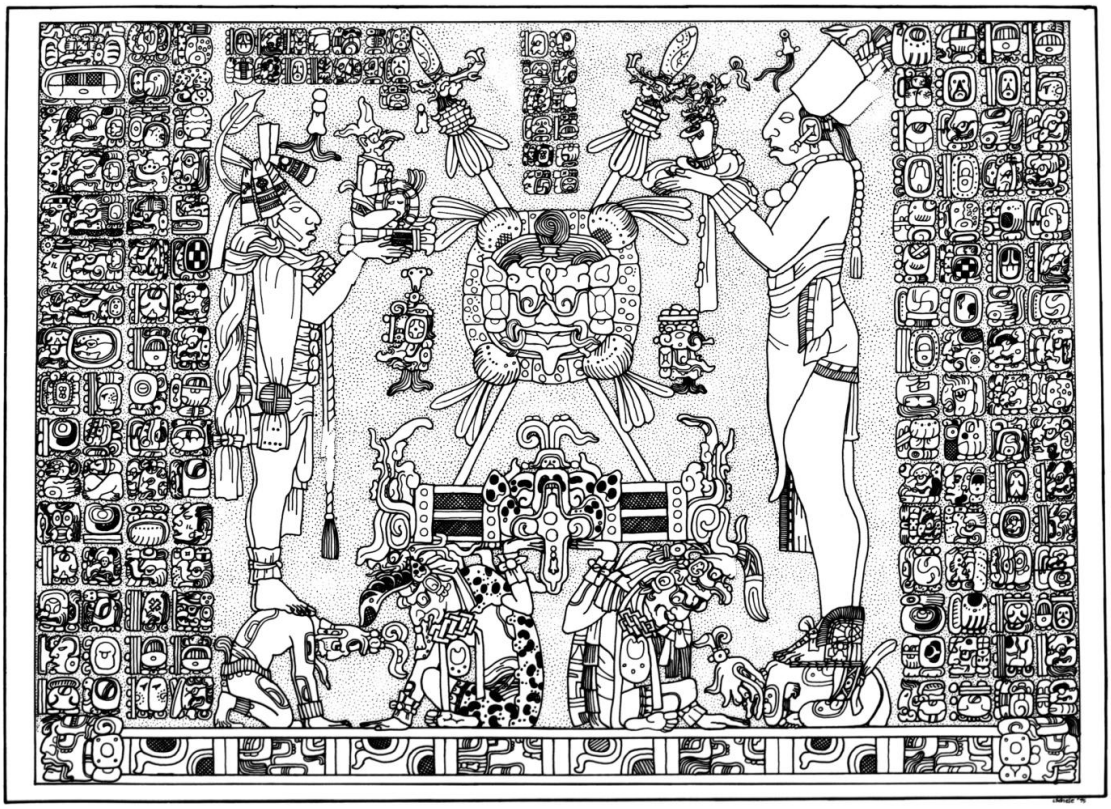


Figure 2.39. K'inich Kan Bahlam offers emblems of war to GIII. Temple of the Sun, Palenque. (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

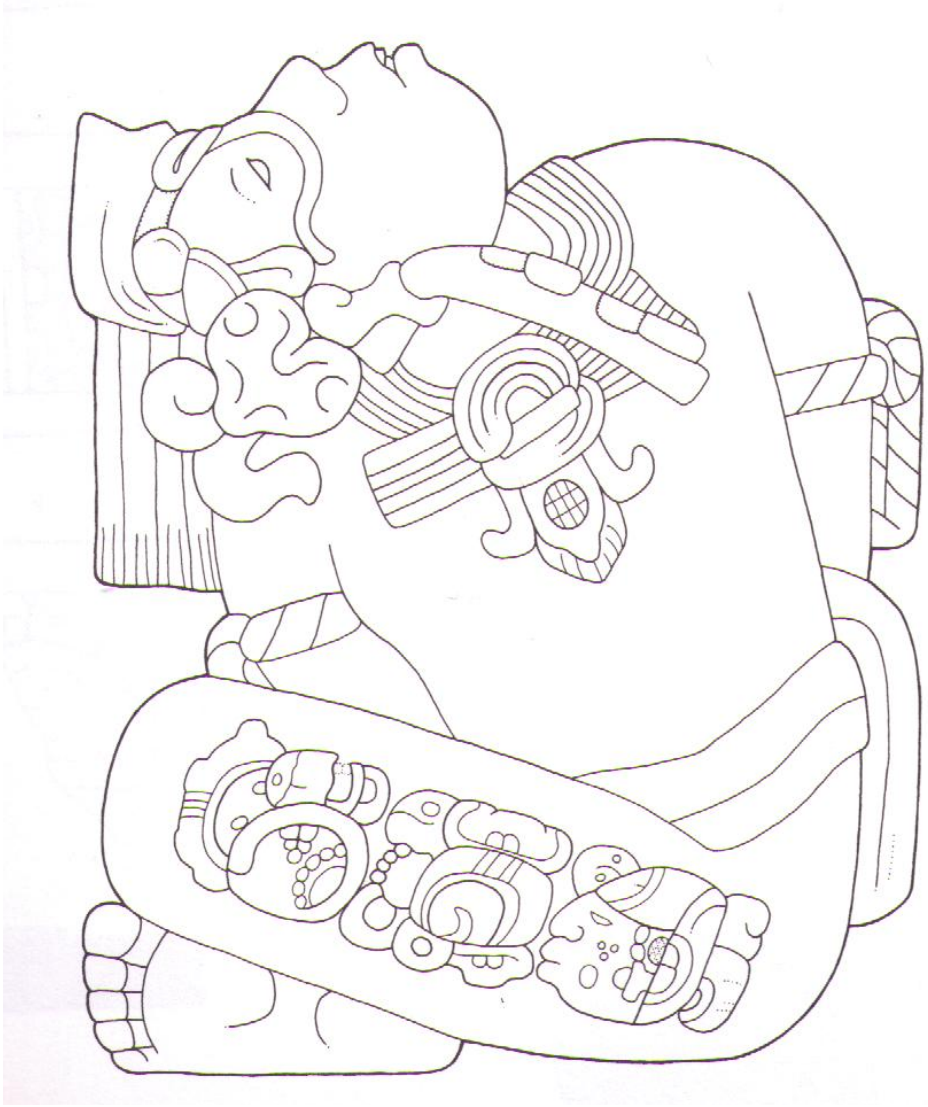


Figure 2.40. Yax Ahk (“Green Turtle”), Ruler of Anaayte, taken captive and dressed as JGU in preparation for sacrifice. (Drawing by Lucia Henderson 2006 Figure 9:89, courtesy of CMHI)

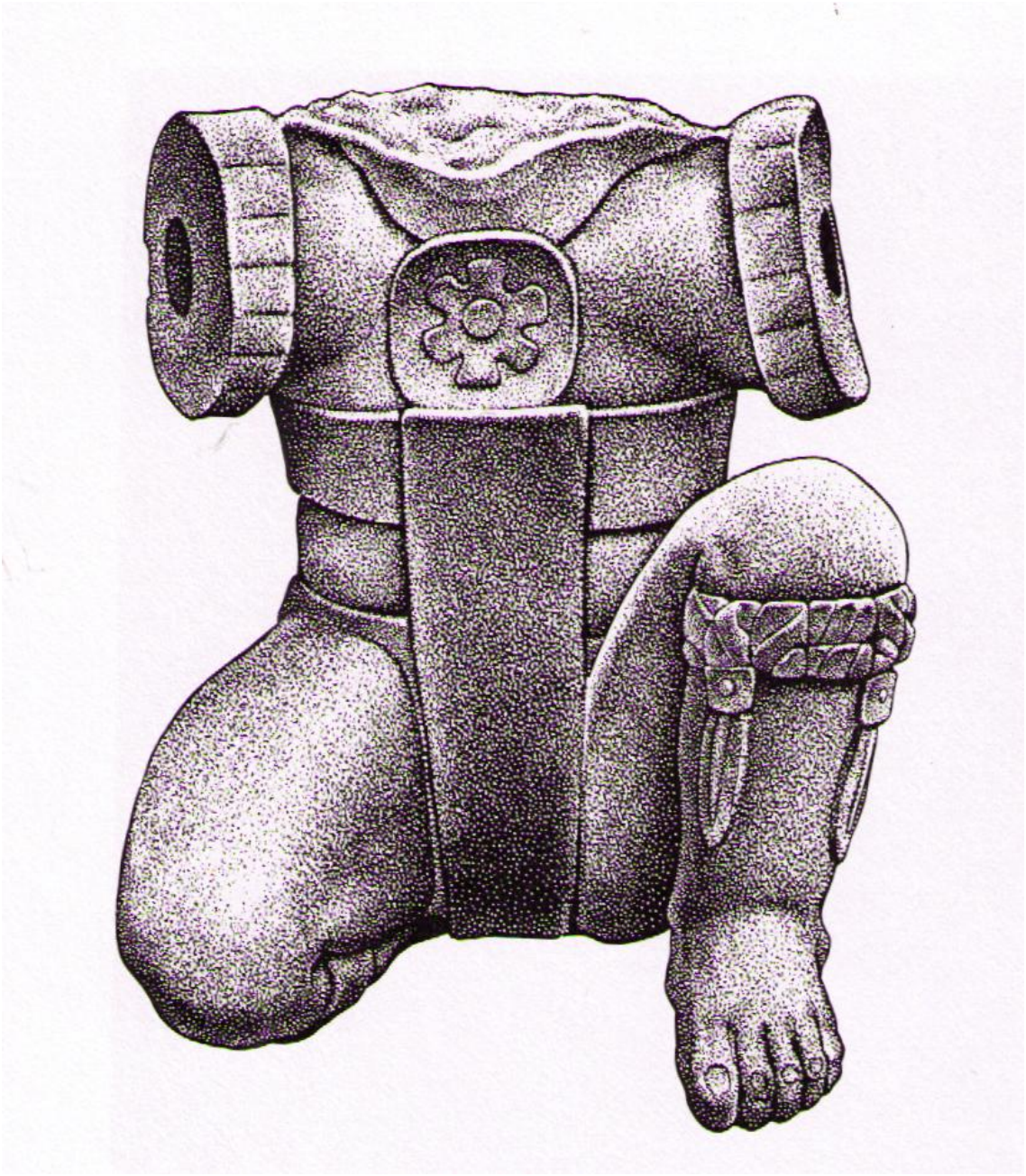


Figure 2.41. Olmec ruler in ballplayer garb. San Lorenzo Monument 34. (Drawing by Coe and Diehl 1980:342 Figure 466).

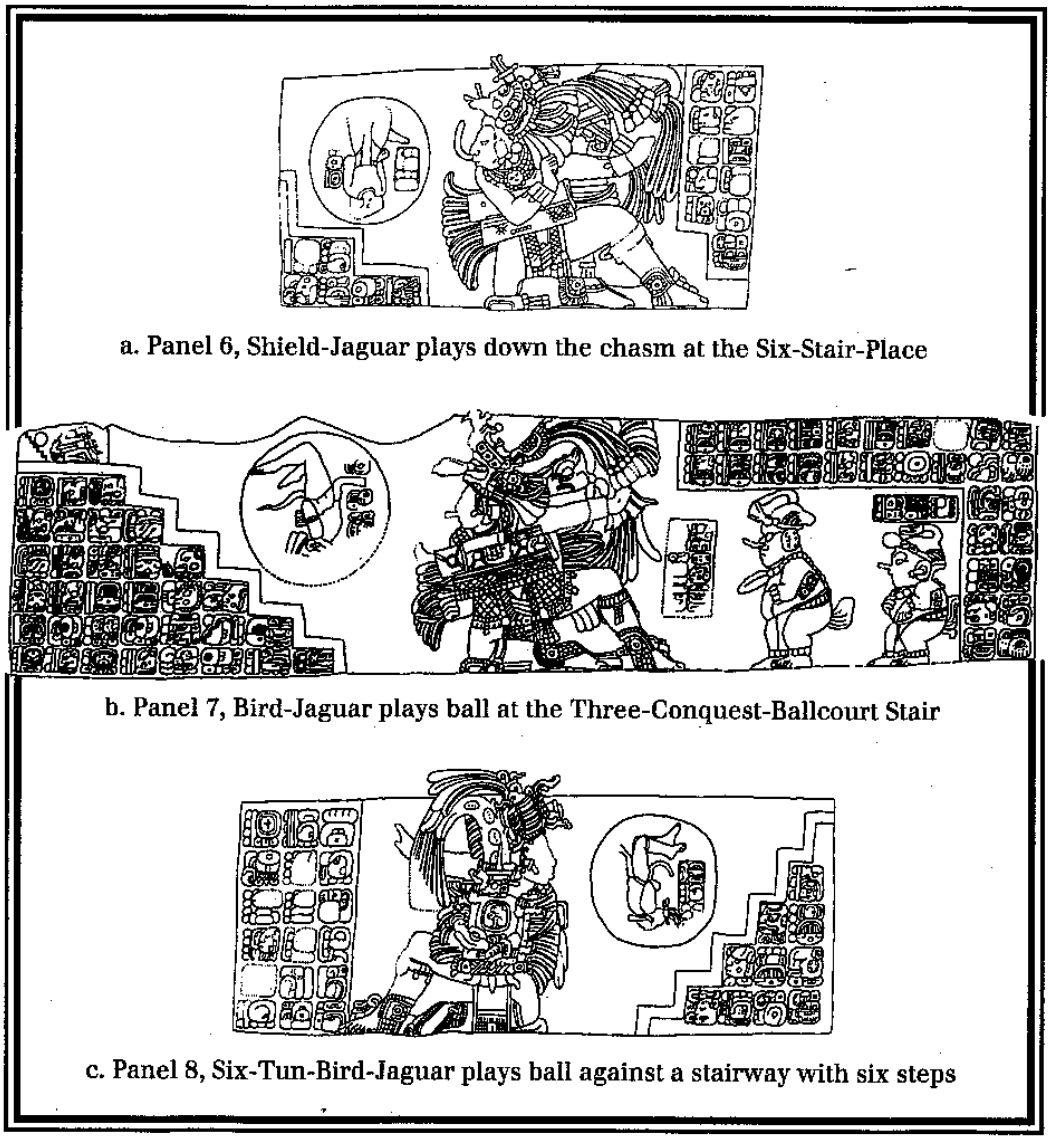


Figure 2.42. Bird Jaguar IV (b) plays ball flanked by his deceased predecessors (a) Itzamnaaj Bahlam III and (c) Bird Jaguar III. (Drawing by Linda Schele in Freidel et al 1993:360 Figure 8:16).

Chapter 3

The Passing of Rulership Among the Classic Maya

As with previous chapters, we must begin with a discussion of "ideal types" when it comes to the passing of rulership among the Classic Maya. The ideal transfer of power was from father to first-born son, an heir born of the king's principal wife—one from a prominent lineage (Fox and Justeson 1986:28-29). The heir should have been designated from his childhood as a *baah ch'ok*, 'head youth' (Martin and Grube 2008:14; Miller and Martin 2004:26), who had performed the necessary pre-inaugural rituals (ibid.), had proved himself worthy as a leader and protector through successful warfare and captive taking, had been placed into office soon after his father's death (Fitzsimmons 2002:387), and had received the headband of rulership, the K'awiil scepter, or other accoutrements of power. Kingship, ideally, was anticipated and prepared for from youth. It was a gradual progression, beginning with heir designation in childhood and culminating in coronation at an average age of thirty one and a half years old (Le Fort 1994:35). Accession was the focal point of a ruler's life (Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004:104) and would be celebrated on calendrically significant anniversaries with dance (Looper 2009) and other rituals, including the erection of commemorative stela every five years (Le Fort 1994:37). But no matter the number of rituals performed or accomplishments amassed, only accession to the throne fully elevated a noble to the status of divine ruler (Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004:104), although evidence from Palenque suggests certain childhood rituals may have imbued young princes with a measure of divinity years prior to

enthronement. Enthronement rituals could even take one who was unknown, unprepared and without designation and elevate him to the status of *k'uhul ajaw*. Designation and preparation, then, were ideal, but not mandatory. As we shall see, this ideal was frequently departed from.

In this chapter we will survey what is known about succession from some of the regional capitals, such as Palenque, Piedras Negras, Tikal, Copan, and Naranjo. We will begin with a general overview of the pattern of succession, the pre-accession and accession rituals, and the ritual regalia associated with the accession process. We will also discuss the burial and deification of an incoming ruler's predecessor as an aspect of the accession process. In essence, we follow the process of legitimization that begins from the time of a ruler's heir designation in youth, his pre-accession rituals, accession rituals, and post-accession burial of his predecessor which essentially completes the process. We will synthesize the baseline similarities across the Maya area while examining the function of variations that occur within and between specific geographic regions.

Stages of Accession

There is a variety of rituals and royal regalia that are associated with accession, and the question arises as to whether such variations represent temporal and spatial variation or whether these divergent data form something of a sequence that can be reconstructed into a pan-Maya "ideal type" that was a part of a shared ideological and ritual program

employed by the Classic Maya themselves (Le Fort 2001:20-21). Schele and Miller (1986:109) argued that

> By the early Classic period, the transformation of humans into kings had been formalized into a precise ritual consisting of several stages that seems to have been used at most sites. Different sites and their rulers chose to emphasize different points in this ritual sequence.

Le Fort (2000:17) argues that the specific sequence of accession rituals used by the Classic Maya were essential rites of passage (see also van Gennep 1960) in which symbolic death and rebirth were manifested through the ritualized retreat and reinstatement of the king. Several scholars have attempted to outline the accession sequence among the Classic Maya, but none of them quite agree on all of the elements (Bardsley 1996:4; Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004:102; Martin and Grube 2008:14; Schele and Miller 1986:112). Synthesizing the various models yields the following sequence:

1. Heir designation as a youth
2. Performance of pre-accession or youth rituals
3. Announcement of one's having been appointed to some office (Bardsley 1996:4)
4. Enthronement; the seating of the heir on a jaguar skin cushion (Martin and Grube 2008:14)
5. Accompanied or overseen by parents (either seated next to ruler or in the skyband), other nobles (Schele and Miller 1986:111-112), or gods (Schele and Grube 1994:109)

6. Adornment with some regionally accepted symbol of authority (Bardsley 1996:4)
    a. Tying on of the *Sak Hu'n*/Jester God Headband (Schele and Miller 1986:111)
    b. Receiving a mosaic helmet of jade and shell with quetzal plumes (Schele and Miller 1986:112)
    c. Taking of the K'awiil scepter (Martin and Grube 2008:14)
    d. Holding the Double-headed Serpent Bar (Schele and Miller 1986:110)
7. Receiving a new name, typically theophoric and that of a predecessor and/or grandparent (Colas 2003b; Martin and Grube 2008:14)
8. Captive sacrifice (Schele and Miller 1986:110)
9. Autosacrifice (Schele and Miller 1986:110)
10. Commissioning of some marker of the ceremony (Bardsley 1996:4)
11. Dedication and setting up of that marker (Bardsley 1996:4)

While all of the elements above are certainly common, they represent an idealized sequence, and rarely do we find evidence that any particular ruler fulfilled all of the above requirements. The question arises as to whether this is due to an incomplete data set or whether there was in fact a fixed, pan-Maya ritual sequence that was rigidly followed across the lowlands.

Although there is undeniably a great deal of overlap in many of the accession rituals at various Classic period polities, I reject the hypothesis that a formalized "precise ritual" (Schele and Miller 1986:109) existed across the Maya area. I argue that the overlapping

elements merely provided a common base from which the unique variations could create group identity within each site while simultaneously contrasting themselves with their neighboring polities. As Harrison explains,

> in order for ethnic groups or any other entities to differ, they must resemble each other in some way, sharing some dimension on which they can be contrasted and compared. . . . In this respect, differences always presuppose similarities, and can exist only against a background of resemblance. To create diversity, one has to ensure the existence of the background similarities against which the differences can appear. (Harrison 2003:354)

We must, therefore, examine the specific epigraphic and iconographic evidence relating to accession rituals from specific sites, and rather than questioning whether or not a certain ritual was "emphasized" at a particular site, we must question whether or not the ritual was even performed and the implications that that might have in the creation of local identity. Bergesen (1998:63) argued that accession to the throne is a macro-rite oriented to the society as a whole. Although these macro-rites revolved around a single individual, that individual was representative of the society as a whole, and his formal public ceremonies reinforced the unique local identity of that society. As Eberl and Graña-Behrens (2004:105) state, accessions "are specific events with specific actions having its own rules and which took place at special times and in specific locations," all of which were unique to each polity. David Stuart (1995:206) acknowledged the similarities in accession formulae but also emphasized that the subtle differences can be significant:

> Despite the overall heterogeneity of themes and genres characteristic of Maya inscriptions, it is true that rulership is expressed in much the same way from site to site, employing the same titles and iconographic conventions. *Ahaw* glyphs are identical, as are statements of seating, taking office, receiving the headband of rule, and so forth. Yet despite the almost monotonous repetitions of events and

> titles associated with rule, there exist some differences which may reflect important distinctions in political organizations or hierarchies.

The question then becomes one of addressing the specific differences concerning accession rituals that are found at different Classic Maya sites. Rather than invent an exact accession sequence for each major polity—an impossible task with the surviving data—I will instead examine the anomalies, the outliers that seem to break away from the pan-Maya "ideal type" that scholars have cobbled together. Instead of adhering to a formal sequence, it seems clear each polity intentionally emphasized or ignored certain rituals or regalia to the point that it set them apart from their peers. Rather than a precise ritual sequence, each site had its own variation on the inaugural theme and that these variations served to form a unique "accession template" for that site, which in turn served to reinforce the unique group identity. However, these templates were not static. Rulers could modify the templates at their own sites (especially useful when following on the heels of an unsuccessful predecessor), or they could appropriate portions of another site's template while modifying it for their own purposes, or even create entirely new and innovative accession templates that would shape future generations.

The Royal Succession

A royal successor was typically designated in very early childhood and seated in *ch'oklel*, which literally translates as 'youthship' but in specific contexts it designates 'princeship.' At Palenque, K'an Joy Chitam I was just six years old when he received his *ch'ok* title and became the designated heir to the throne of Ahkal Mo' Nahb I (Martin

and Grube 2008:158).[20] The *ch'ok* title itself does not necessarily imply either youth or heir apparency, but rather indicates heir potentiality, whereas the *b'aah ch'ok* title seems to have been reserved for the principal heir (Houston and Stuart 1998:79). A clear example of the distinction between these titles comes from Palenque, when the 40-year-old K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II was elevated from a mere *ch'ok* to *baah ch'ok* on the same day his brother K'inich Kan Bahlam II acceded to the throne, apparently because K'inich Kan Bahlam II had no sons.[21] Eighteen years later, K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II finally transitioned from *baah ch'ok* to *k'uhul ajaw* as a 57-year-old man. In such instances, the *ch'ok* title is helpful in tracking the evolving status of rulers from childhood through adulthood.

Ideally, the order of succession would have been laid out by a ruler prior to his death to lessen the potential for a contested throne after his passing. The best evidence for this comes from Palenque, on a stucco sculpture from Temple XVIII (Fig. 3.1) dated 9.12.6.12.0 5 Ajaw 4 K'ayab (26 January 679), four years before Pakal's death. We are given the pre-accession names of K'inich Janaab Pakal's three sons, and the inscription states *tz'akbuaj*, "(they) are arranged in order" and *tihmaj awohl atz'akbuij*, "You are satisfied (that) you put them in succession" (Stuart and Stuart 2008:162). These sons did in fact all accede to the throne; K'inich Kan Bahlam, K'inich K'an Joy Chitam, and Tiwol Chan Mat. This public declaration of succession order was likely necessary since Pakal himself had acceded under questionable circumstances.

[20] The Tablet of the Cross informs us that a preaccession rite for K'an Joy Chitam I took place at Tok Tahn on 9.3.1.15.0, 12 Ahau 8 Ceh (Guenter 2007:9).

[21] Although it was not an ideal order of succession, it was not uncommon for the throne to pass from brother to brother rather than from father to son.

Pre-Accession Rituals

An important part of the gradual progression towards rulership was ritual performance. The evidence for childhood rituals is somewhat scant, and the only generalizations that can be accurately made is that they were performed by boys who were between six and fourteen years of age, they typically assumed adult costume and pose (Joyce 2000:128), and bloodletting seems to have been one of the rites. Rather than falling into the trap of over-generalization, I will discuss specific pre-accession rituals known from particular sites.

Palenque

One of the best attested—yet still poorly understood—pre-accession rituals at Palenque is the *k'al may* "deer hoof binding" event. This youth ritual was performed by *ch'oktaak* (youths), typically years before their accession (Lounsbury 1980; Stuart 2000c:5) and may have constituted some sort of training for designated heirs (Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004:110). K'inich Ahkal Mo' Naab engaged in this ritual when he was a *ch'ok* of 14 years old (Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004:110). K'inich K'an Joy Chitam performed a similar ritual when he was about seven years old (Stuart 2000c:5), then known by his childhood name of Ux Ch'ak Kab'an Mat Ch'ok (Carrasco 2005:452). He also appears to have performed his first bloodletting ritual at about this same time (Guenter 2003:8). The mythological texts of Palenque inform us that Muwaan Mat—the "Triad Progenitor"—engaged in a "deer hoof" ceremony when he was an eight year old child (Stuart 2005:172), followed later by ritual bloodletting, accession, and ultimately

the erection of a building.[22] All of these actions were those expected of human rulers at Palenque, and therefore Palenque's mythology appears to have created a "cosmological precedent for the transformation from childhood to adult status" (Joyce 2000:124)—their earthly kingdom becoming a microcosmic reflection of their localized conception of the divine cosmos.

The piers from the Temple of the Inscriptions provide intriguing evidence that the rulers of Palenque did not have to wait until the day of their accession to have some measure of divinity bestowed upon them, but rather it began to be infused into them at least as early as their heir-designation ceremonies. Pier B (Fig. 3.2), for example, depicts a six-year-old Kan Bahlam II as the god Unen K'awiil, otherwise known as GII of the Palenque triad (Robertson 1983:37; Schele and Freidel 1990:236; Spencer 2007:94).[23] He is cradled in the arms of his illustrious forebear K'an Joy Chitam (who had been deceased for well over a century by that time) and they are framed by a skyband that emanates from a personified sacrificial bowl, which indicates a supernatural setting (Schele and Mathews 1998:99).[24] This was no mere impersonation event by the child; he is cradled like Unen K'awiil, his forehead penetrated by the emblematic K'awiil axe and his left leg transformed into a serpent, his right leg displaying Kan Bahlam's characteristic six-toed foot. As Schele and Mathews (1998:99) state, "he is both the child heir (the *ba ch'ok*, or

[22] Loundsbury (1980) and Schele and Freidel (1990:246) interpret this event as the implied birth of GI; Joyce (2000) recognized it as a childhood ritual, but similarly attributed the event to GI rather than to Muwaan Mat (Carrasco 2005:452).

[23] Stanley Guenter (2007:5) makes a strong case that the baby is actually K'inich Janaab Pakal reborn as Unen K'awiil, but the polydactyl foot is never otherwise associated with him as it is with Kan Bahlam II

[24] Schele and Mathews (1998:99) identified the ancestor as K'uk' Bahlam I based on an inaccurate rendering of his headdress, but David Stuart's examination of Maudslay's 1890 photographs revealed the headdress represents a peccary head with an infixed *k'an* cross in the eye (Stuart 2007).

"first sprout," of the lineage) and the embodiment of the divinity personified in K'awiil." Kan Bahlam II is also presented to the public on Pier E by Kan Bahlam I and on Piers C (Fig. 3.3) and D by either his parents or grandparents (Stuart 2007), all of whom were deceased. Deified ancestors from their own dynasty presented K'an Balam II as if he were a god of their local triad.The entire suite of heir designation ceremonies was clearly localized in the way it was carried out.

As a young man, K'inich K'an Joy Chitam was involved in a little understood "cord taking" rite (Stuart 2000c:5). The Temple XIX stucco panel records the forty-year anniversary of a pre-accession ritual performed by K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb, and the Hieroglyphic Jambs of Temple XVIII record one of his pre-accession events when he was fifteen years of age (Stuart 2000c:5). While all of these youth rituals are poorly understood, Stuart has suggested that the dates on which they fell were related to stations of the k'atun and were calendrically significant. He further suggests the braided cloth and ribbons that youths wore were part of pre-accession ritual attire (Stuart 2000c:5; Stuart and Stuart 2008:197).

Piedras Negras

Piedras Negras Panel 2 (AD 667; Fig. 3.4) may depict a pre-accession ritual related to warfare. It depicts a number of youthful *ajawtaak* ("lords"), four from Lacanha and one each from Yaxchilán and Bonampak (Martin and Grube 2008:144), all of whom Schele and Miller (1986:149) estimate to be about twelve years old. They are all kneeling in seeming submission to a ruler and his heir (exactly which ruler and which heir is still

subject to debate).[25] What is clear is that the monument commemorates Ruler 2's taking of the Teotihuacan-style war helmet called *ko'haw*, which the text further explains was a re-enactment of the same ritual performed by Turtle Tooth in 510 (Martin and Grube 2008:144). Significantly, Turtle Tooth's reception of the *ko'haw* – the Teotihuacanoid war helmet – was overseen by a foreigner named Tahoom Uk'ab Tuun who bore the *ochk'in kaloomté'* title (ibid.,141). A wooden box discovered in Tabasco directly states Tajoom Uk'ab' Tuun was a Teotihuacan lord and successor to Siyaj K'ahk' (Anaya Hernandez et al. 2002), the famous warlord who brought down Tikal's dynasty and re-established it according to Spearthrower Owl's designs. The events recorded on Panel 2, and Turtle Tooth's right to rule, were directly linked to Teotihuacan. Ruler 2, in re-enacting the event, likewise ties himself to Teotihuacan.

The re-enacted event was overseen by three gods which had been conjured by Ruler 2 to witness the event; Yaxha' Chaak (the Maya god of lightning), the obscure Waxak Banak Hun Banak (8 Banak 1 Banak), and the Jaguar God of the Underworld (Fitzsimmons 1998:273; 2009:147). Although Chaak and the JGU were pan-Maya deities, the combination of them along with Waxak Banak Hun Banak constituted a triad unique to Piedras Negras. Tikal, Naranjo, Caracol, and Palenque all had triadic groupings of gods that were unique to each of their polities (Stuart 2005:160).

The pre-accession rituals from Piedras Negras and Palenque were clearly different, yet both re-enacted events significant to their local dynasties (whether mythological, historical, or some combination of the two) and in connection with their local gods. Ruler

[25] Martin and Grube (2008:144) suggest it may be a retrospective depiction of Turtle Tooth, the Early Classic ruler of Piedras Negras.

2 from Piedras Negras sought to legitimize his ritual performance by juxtaposing it iconographically and epigraphically with those performed by Turtle Tooth under the eye of the Teotihuacan empowered *ochk'in kaloomté*, whereas Palenque's youth were re-enacting the rituals that were performed by Muwaan Mat in mythological time—a mythology unique to Palenque. These early rituals were influential in creating a local identity for these future rulers, an identity that would only become more ingrained as they progressed towards the throne. Beyond creation of identity, they also legitimized the ruler's right to rule. In essence, they stood as evidence that the rulers had many years worth of experience under their belts when it came to interacting with and sacrificing to their gods (Stuart and Stuart 2008:195).

Yaxchilan

We can look to Bird Jaguar IV of Yaxchilán as an example of one who definitively breaks from the ideal type of heir apparent. He paints a vivid picture of the innovative methods used to legitimize the rule of one who was not designated as an heir in his youth and had little to recommend him as the rightful successor before his accession to the throne (Bardsley 1994; Fitzsimmons 2002:383; Martin and Grube 2008:129). Bird Jaguar IV was the son of an elderly Itzamnaaj Bahlam III and one of his obscure lesser queens, Lady Ik' Skull. There is no mention of either Bird Jaguar IV or his mother in any texts dating to the reign of Itzamnaaj Bahlam III (Bardsley 1994:1), and there is a ten-year interregnum between the death of Itzamnaaj Bahlam III and Bird Jaguar IV's accession,

suggesting a contested throne.[26] Bird Jaguar, therefore, commissioned retrospective monuments containing revisionist histories that depict him engaged in pre-inaugural rituals with his father—events that likely never happened. The most explicit of these comes from the river side of Stela 11 (Figure 3.5), which depicts Bird Jaguar engaging in a flapstaff dance with his father and dates the event to 741, a year before his father's death. Curiously, Bird Jaguar's accession is mentioned three times in the hieroglyphic inscription on the stela, but the event is not depicted iconographically (Bardsley 1994:4). The iconography itself is an innovative break from Yaxchilán's typical program, and each of its two scenes pulls double-duty. According to the accompanying inscription, the flapstaff ritual represents both a pre-accession heir designation ceremony during his father's life and a much later period-ending rite performed on behalf of his now-deceased father. The iconography on the temple side of the stela represents both a pre-inaugural military conquest attributed to Bird Jaguar IV as well as his own forthcoming inauguration (Bardsley 1994:4).

Other Known Childhood Rituals

At Dos Pilas, B'ajlaj Chan K'awiil's pre-accession rituals are recorded on the central portion of Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 (Guenter 2003:3). B'ajlaj Chan K'awiil engaged in a "flat-hand" event, likely a first bloodletting ritual, when he was nine years old (ibid.:8). Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk of Calakmul appears to have undergone some pre-accession

[26]The retrospective history contained on Panel 3 from Piedras Negras provides limited but intriguing evidence that an individual named Yopaat Bahlam II ruled at Yaxchilan during part or all of the "interregnum" between Itzamnaaj Bahlam III and Shield Jaguar IV (Martin and Grube 2008:127).

rituals at *Yaxa'* (likely *Yaxha'*), which, intriguingly, was witnessed by Nuun U Jol Chaahk and B'ahlaj Chan K'awiil of Tikal (ibid.:19).[27]

Interregna

The period between a ruler's death and the accession of an heir varies widely from site to site, and even within a single site there are vast differences at various periods in their history. Exceptionally long interregna are typically attributed to periods of political unrest, but there appears to be no standardized pan-Maya timeframe between the death of one ruler and the accession of the next (Fitzsimmons 2002). Caracol stands unique in that the ruler K'ahk' Ujol K'inich II apparently acceded to the throne 29 days *before* his father K'an II had died (Fitzsimmons 2002; Martin and Grube 2008:94). Copan is unusual for its efficiency and regularity; the throne always passes between two to five weeks after the death of the ruler (Fitzsimmons 2002:388). Somewhat surprisingly, Palenque—which has at times been abused by Mayanists as an "ideal type" for all things Classic Maya (Houston and Stuart 1996:302)—indicates wild variations in the duration of interregna, ranging from under two months to over four years, with no clear pattern ever emerging.

The time between a ruler's death and his heir's succession appears to have been something of a liminal period in Classic Maya polities. Although there were regents who oversaw the affairs of the kingdom during these periods, they did not carry the title *k'uhul ajaw*, they rarely receive any mention in the inscriptions and they governed only until the

[27] For the potential political implications of this event, see Guenter 2002, 2003.

designated heir was elevated to the throne. As Fitzsimmons (2002:391) argues, "the institution of *k'uhul ajaw* was temporarily frozen following the burial of the dead king" until the time that the new heir acceded.

Accession Phrases

Despite the paramount importance of inauguration to a ruler's legitimacy and frequent references to it throughout his lifetime, accession statements (Figure 3.6) are curiously infrequent as the main subject of either the epigraphic record or the accompanying iconography on monumental texts (Le Fort 1994:37). Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1960) was the first to identify an inaugural statement in the glyphs of Piedras Negras, namely T684, nicknamed the "Toothache" glyph by Thompson because of the knot tied around the head, which we now read as *hoy/joy* (Martin and Grube 2000:231, citing personal communication from D. Stuart). In the inscriptions at Yaxchilán and Copan Proskouriakoff (1960:470) recognized that the "seating" verb, T644 (now read *chum*), was used in analogous contexts to the T684, but suggested that a different observance was taking place on those dates rather than being synonymous expressions.[28] Mathews and Schele (1974), however, argued that T644 *chum* was interchangeable with other accession expressions. They also identified the T713/757 compound, the headband-tying expression, as an inaugural statement. In addition, T670 (*ch'am,* "to receive") is sometimes used to denote accession, although it is not exclusive to enthronement

[28] "Seating" as an expression of inauguration continued into the Late Post-classic among the Acalan Chontal (Smailus 1975:32) and among Yucatec speakers, as found in the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel (Roys 1933).

ceremonies (Le Fort 1994:19). It is still not entirely clear if the differing terms referred only to specific moments of the enthronement ritual or if they could all be used to denote accession in general, but there is evidence that T684 and T713/757 denote specific moments of the ritual (Le Fort 1994:41).

In general, accession phrases fall into two categories; those that refer to the office itself and those that refer to the accoutrements of power received by the ruler during his accession (Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004:102). The statements that refer to the office itself include *chumlaaj ti/ta ajawlel* "to sit down in rulership" and *joy?-aj ti/ta ajawlel* "to be 'encircled' in rulership" ('encircling' may make reference to the headband being wrapped around the head). The statements explicitly referring to the accoutrements that the ruler received include *ch'am/k'am k'awiil* "to take or receive the K'awiil scepter" or *k'al u sak hu'unal tu b'ah* "to wrap the white headband around oneself" (ibid.).

In discussing local variation in the selective employment of accession verbs in the ancient inscriptions, the challenge facing epigraphers is a compromised data set. Poor preservation and unrecovered or unrecoverable texts prevent us from knowing with certainty if the variation in usage represents actual ancient rhetoric or is merely a product of modern sampling limitations (Stephen Houston, personal communication 2008). Excavations at some sites have unearthed an abundant glyphic and iconographic corpus whereas others have produced a dearth. Without claiming statistical precision, a sufficient number of accession statements have survived from major sites across the Maya area that some broad observations can profitably be made.

The basic formulae for accession remain essentially the same throughout the Maya area, and in very general terms the individual phrases are not specific for one site or one time period (Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004:103). As Marc Zender (2004:154) notes, "accession statements in Classic Mayan inscriptions have long been known to involve formulae such as *chumlaj ti*-X-*il* "he sits in TITLE-ship" or *k 'ahlaj huun tub 'aah ti*-TITLE-*i*l "the headband is bound onto his head in TITLE-ship."

Although there are only a limited number of phrases that were used to designate accession in the ancient texts, there are some general trends as to how they were used. As David Stuart (1995:204) notes:

> "Seating" [T644] was a popular statement of accession in the central Petén sites such as Tikal, but was virtually unknown at Piedras Negras, for instance. *Hok'* [*joy* – T684], in turn, never was employed by the scribes of Palenque, and neither of the terms was ever used in the relatively short-lived textual history of Quirigua. . . Many other sites, such as Copan and Yaxchilán, employ both verbs.

Stuart suggests the variation in verb use may be due to linguistic differences between sites or perhaps there may even be functional differences as to how they were used (Stuart 1995:204), although if this is the case, the distinctions are not yet clear. Genevieve Le Fort (1994:23-24) similarly suggests that the different verbs may reflect different portions of the ritual, and Eberl and Graña-Behrens (2004:103) note that the same accession may be described by several different phrases found on distinct monuments. For example, *chum* may be used to refer generally to accession, whereas the *k'al hu'n* event may refer to the specific moment of accession where the ruler puts on the headband. However, in her analysis of the geographical distribution of accession statements, Le Fort (1994:22) found that "each site, rather than each region, made its

choice concerning the use of the verb." Berlin (1970) noted that T684 was used predominantly at Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán, and Le Fort found that "it appears only in the early texts at Tikal, rarely at Copan, and never at Palenque." However, through time the preferences seem to have shifted, as T644 began to be used more often at Tikal, much more prominently at Copan, and it became the exclusive accession statement at Palenque (Le Fort 1994).

At times the accession phrases used in the texts make direct reference to what is being portrayed iconographically (Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004:102), but this is not always the case. For example, T644 is the most common accession expression used throughout the Classic period, but it typically serves as background information rather than the main focus of a text, as suggested by accompanying iconography. In contrast, when the T713/757 compound is used, the event is typically depicted iconographically as well (Le Fort 1994:31).

Significantly, sites that are near neighbors with frequent interaction – if not conflict – seem to favor different accession verbs. For example, the only accession statement that is completely absent at Palenque, T684, happens to be the exclusive statement used by its downstream rival at Piedras Negras and the predominant statement used at Yaxchilán. At the eastern extreme, Copan favors T644 and T684 whereas their rival Quirigua preferred to use T670. Tikal ultimately preferred T644 while Naranjo, its close rival to the east, used T684 and none other. Although it is still unclear whether these accession verbs represented one phase within a larger ritual sequence or were singular events unto themselves at their respective sites, the fact that certain verbs are used to the exclusion of

others and seemingly in deliberate contrast to their neighbors strongly suggests that they were seeking to differentiate themselves in effort to create a unique identity vis-á-vis their rivals (Harrison 2003).

Palenque

Palenque gives us a taste of the fluid and localized flavor that accessions could take even within a single polity throughout its history. Despite the wealth of texts we enjoy from Palenque, when attempting to reconstruct their political history we are challenged by the fact that the rulers sought to situate themselves in the larger cosmological framework, making it "difficult to say where myth ends and history begins" (Stuart and Stuart 2008:109).

Stuart and Stuart (2008:144) noted a curious pattern in the glyphic expressions employed to denote accession at Palenque. None of the rulers who preceded Ajen Yohl Mat—the ninth known ruler of Palenque—sat in *ajawlel* ("rulership"), but rather they sat in *hu'n* ("headband"), a word often used to refer to the paper scarf that was tied onto a ruler's head upon accession. Although it is unclear what the qualitative difference is between the statuses of *hu'n* and *ajawlel*, what is significant is the fact that a clear distinction is made in the narrative itself. The historical backdrop adds meaning to this shift, as it comes after the disastrous reign of Ajen Yohl Mat's mother, the queen Ix Yohl Ik'nal. It was under Ix Yohl Ik'nal's reign that Palenque was brutally conquered and had their gods "thrown down" by Calakmul in AD 599 (Grube 1996:3). Palenque was attacked again just a few years later by Chan Muwan of Bonampak in AD 603 (Grube

1996:3). Stuart suggests the new use of *ajawlel* reflected Palenque's debut on the larger regional stage and was a move away from their previously insular tendencies. Ajen Yohl Mat may have been attempting to create a new accession template to dissociate his reign from that of his mother. But his reign did not fare much better than his mother's, however, and Palenque was harshly attacked by Scroll Serpent of Calakmul in 611. His reign was followed by that of the poorly understood ruler Muwaan Mat, who may have been a divine regent (Martin and Grube 2000:161) – a metaphorical "second coming" of the Triad Progenitor – or perhaps it was merely a pseudonym for Lady Sak K'uk' who served as regent until her nine-year old son, the future K'inich Janaab Pakal, was old enough to ascend to the throne (ibid.,161). It was during Muwaan Mat's reign that heartbreaking laments were recorded in the Temple of the Incsriptions (Figure 3.7); *satay k'uhul ixik, satay ajaw* "lost is the divine lady, lost is the lord," *ma u nawaaj*, "he was [or they were] not presented publicly," and *ma' yak'aw* "(s)he did not give [offerings to the gods]" (Guenter 2007:21-22). As *ex officio* high priest (Zender 2004), the ritual care and presentation of god effigies was the responsibility of the ruler, and these duties were apparently forsaken by Muwaan Mat due to the troubled times they were in.

Fortunately, during K'inich Janab Pakal's long and glorious reign he took it upon himself to give Palenque's royal template a dramatic make-over, equal parts restoration and re-invention. In an effort to compensate for the failures of his immediate predecessors and reclaim his kingdom's former glory, he placed heavy emphasis on his ritual activities, which elaborately expanded upon earlier prototypes (Stuart and Stuart 2008:168). He is unique in that both of his parents appear to have been living witnesses

to his accession. As Stuart and Stuart (2008:149) note, "Elsewhere in Maya history, as far as we know, inheritance of a throne or major office occurred after the death of a parent."[29] In 654 he commissioned the *sak nuk naah*, the 'White Skin? House' (House E) which housed the new seat of power and the Oval Palace Tablet (Figure 3.8) on which he depicted his own accession to the throne. The Oval Palace Tablet itself provides an interesting example of variation in both space and time, a break away from the "ideal type." It is unique not only in the Maya world but also in Palenque itself. As Mary Ellen Miller (2004) notes,

> The Oval Palace Tablet at Palenque was completely innovative; it was the first intimate, indoor scene of accession, carved on an unusually shaped interior panel that itself replicated the jaguar cushion for the ruler's back, it has the subjects off center, even the subject – the transmission of power from mother to son – is fresh and adventurous.

By commissioning this monument, K'inich Janaab Pakal I created a new tradition, and at least three of his successors were inaugurated on that very throne (Le Fort 2000:20; Martin and Grube 2008). He created, in effect, a new localized accession template.

Janab Pakal's son, K'inich Kan Bahlam II, also displayed a restorationist (or perhaps revisionist) bent. He hearkens back to deep time in order to associate himself with the mythical founders of Palenque. On the Tablet of the Cross (Figure 3.9), he uses the T713/757 *k'al sak juun* ("the white headband was tied") expression to declare the accessions of the purely mythical Muwaan Mat (the Triad Progenitor; at F7-F8), the

[29] As noted above, K'ahk' Ujol K'inich II at Caracol also appears to be an exception to this rule (Martin and Grube 2008:94).

quasi-mythical U Kokan Chan[30] (at P1-P2), the historical dynastic founder K'uk' Bahlam (at Q7-P8), and ultimately his own. At the Temple of the Cross on the inner sanctuary jamb panel (Figure 3.10) he dons an antique costume and a headdress bearing the name of U Kokan Chan, the semi-mythical ruler who is said to have acceded in 967 BC. Schele and Mathews (1993:33) suggested U Kokan Chan was an actual historical ruler whose memory had been preserved through legend, and Stuart and Stuart (2008:215) argue that the rulers of Palenque viewed him as "a proto-typical king, worthy of emulation." Curiously, however, the only rulers to liken themselves to this legendary ruler were K'inich Kan Bahlam II and his reformationist father, K'inich Janaab Pakal I (Skidmore 2003). Just as rulers created gods in their own image (Coe 1982:159), dynastic ancestors could likewise be invented to legitimize one's rule (McAnany 1995). As Fitzsimmons (2009:117) states, "in large part, then, dynastic founders were manufactured entities, with honors and attributes bestowed upon them long after their deaths…these ancestors supported future dynasts in their claims to supremacy."

An "ideal type" of accession at Palenque was suggested by Schele and Miller (1986:112). Generally speaking, accessions are depicted at Palenque in three separate scenes. The first scene depicts the simply-dressed acceding ruler flanked by his parents, who are presenting him with the emblems of rulership: the jade plaque helmet and the flint-shield. The parents are depicted as living and active participants, regardless of whether or not they were still alive. Interestingly, on both the Oval Palace Tablet (Figure 3.8) and the Palace Tablet (Figure 3.11), the ruler is depicted iconographically in the act

[30] Formerly known as Uk'ix Kan (or Chan), but Albert Davletshin (2003), Marc Zender (2004), and Luis Lopes (2005) have argued the stinger or fish spine glyph be read *kokan* rather than *k'ix.*

of receiving these regalia, but the accompanying glyphs do not mention these as part of the accession phrase. Also of interest is the fact that the Oval Palace Tablet only portray's the ruler's mother; the father is absent despite the fact that both were alive at the time of his accession. Furthermore, K'inich Janaab Pakal is depicted as an adult, despite the fact that he was only 12 years old at the time of his accession (although he was 49 when House E was dedicated) and at this point his mother had been dead for 14 years (Stuart and Stuart 2008:157)

In the Cross Group, K'inich Kan B'alam II is shown receiving the flint-shield, headband, bloodletter, and K'awiil scepter from his father K'inich Janaab' Pakal I, who is clad in a funerary loincloth because his breath had been extinguished about four months prior. These scenes fit well into an idealized type. There is an orderly patrilineal succession from illustrious royal father to first-born son; the deceased but ever potent predecessor serving as guide for the forthcoming ruler (Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004:103).

Piedras Negras

Accession at Piedras Negras likewise had a decidedly local flavor. The only verb used to denote accession at Piedras Negras was T684, *joy*. This stands in marked contrast to Palenque, Piedras Negras' major rival in the lower Usumacinta region (Martin and Grube 2008:143), where the T684 expression is completely unknown. Piedras Negras stands unique in its regular use of niche stelae to depict enthronement scenes. Piedras Negras' dynastic founder, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, appears to have created this accession template

for his polity, and over the following century and a half, five of his successors emulated his innovative Stela 25 (Figure 3.12).[31] On these monuments, the rulers are seated on an elevated scaffold that symbolically placed them in the celestial realm, and their posture upon the throne mimics the posture of kingly gods who sit upon skybands (Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004:102). In the Late Postclassic Yucatan, we see gods themselves engaged in scaffold accession rites strikingly similar to those from San Bartolo and the Dallas incised bone, for example on Mayapan Stela 1 and on Page 6 of the Paris Codex (Taube 1987:8-9, Footnote 4; Taube et al. 2010 Figure 41).[32]

The scaffold accession scene from San Bartolo (Figure 3.13) demonstrates the practice had considerable time depth (Saturno et al. 2005), but Piedras Negras appears to be the only Classic Period polity that fully embraced the tradition, although it is found to a much lesser degree at Naranjo and Quirigua.[33] The Piedras Negras thrones are typically depicted as the cosmic caiman or Starry-Deer-Alligator topped by a jaguar cushion, and the ruler is surrounded a sky-band canopy upon which sits the Principal Bird Deity. Significantly, the scaffold is marked with *kab* or 'earth' signs, and the combination of 'sky' and 'earth' creates an iconographic couplet that forms a *difrasismo* that designates 'everywhere' or 'the whole world', essentially placing the ruler at the center of the

[31] Stelae 6, 11, 14, 25, and 33 each depict a different ruler seated within a niche, each bordered on the sides and top by a bicephalic skyband upon which is perched the Principle Bird Deity (Bardawil 1976:12).

[32] Morley (1920:575-576) was the first to note the similarity between the supernatural accession scenes on Mayapan Stela 1 (then called Stela 9) and those in the Paris Codex.

[33] The incised bone from the Dallas Museum of Art also depicts a scaffold accession scene, but unfortunately lacks provenience.

cosmos (Tokovinine 2008:141).[34] The iconography explicitly mimics the images of gods seated upon their thrones in the celestial realm (Taube 1988c), and the incised bone from the Dallas Museum of Art (Figure 3.14) explicitly shows a god seated upon a scaffold receiving the headdress of rulership (Tokovinine and Fialko 2007:6; Fig. 8). The scenes from Piedras Negras typically show a sacrificial victim lying at its base, and the king's bloody footprints lead up the cloth-draped ladder that grants access to the throne (Martin and Grube 2008:142; Taube 1988c). Taube (1988c) has demonstrated that heart sacrifice in connection with accession upon a scaffold is associated with concepts of agricultural fertility. The footprinted cloth iconographic convention and associated ideology can also be traced to San Bartolo; the Maize God accession scene on the southern-most scaffold on the West Wall has a strip hanging down from the platform that is marked with a footprint (Taube et al. 2010:58).

Not all scholars agree that the niche stelae were focused on enthroment rituals, however. Rather than accession, the focus of the niche stelae may instead have been on commemorating Period Endings (Stephen Houston, personal communication, 2011). Regardless of the specific message they were intended to convey, the meta-message is that a unique type of monument was created to commemorate some ideologically important event (be it accession or Period Endings), and Piedras Negras' emphasis on the "niche" convention set them apart from their neighbors, serving to create an identity unique to their polity.

[34] This couplet continued to be used into the Colonial period among the Quiche *caj*/*ulew* (D. Tedlock 1985:148; Christenson 2003) and is still maintained today, for example among the Ch'orti' who use the Spanish loan words *mundo*/*syelo* (Hull 2003:80).

Copan

Copan lies at the eastern fringe of the Maya area, and its Late and Terminal Preclassic foundations reflect the local cultural traditions of the Southeastern Maya rather than those of the Peten, which seems to have had little influence there (Sharer et al. 2005:149). They maintained a distinctive architectural and monumental style throughout their history.

There are no known contemporary accession statements from the first centuries of Copan's dynastic rulers. The earliest surviving accession date provided by a living ruler to record his own accession comes from Moon Jaguar. He acceded on 9.5.19.3.0 8 Ajaw 3 Mak (24 May 553) and recorded his accession several months later on Stela 9 (F3) (Figure 3.15), a monument commemorating the period ending 9.6.10.0.0. He used the T684 *joy* expression, which is only used in a contemporary context by one later ruler, Yax Pasaj, who acceded on 9.16.12.5.17 (2 July 763) and recorded his accession when he dedicated both the Temple 11 NE Panel (D2) and Bench (A2) on 9.17.0.0.0 (24 January 771).

The next contemporary record comes nearly a century later with K'ahk' Uti' Witz' K'awiil. Although he acceded on 9.9.14.17.5 6 Chikchan 18 K'ayab (5 February 628), we have no record of his accession until nearly forty years later, 9.11.15.0.0 4 Ajaw 13 Mol (28 July 667). He seems to have established something of a new accession template at Copan. He used the T644 "seating" verb, which would be used by all subsequent rulers, both to record their own accessions and to retrospectively commemorate the accessions of their predecessors. This accession expression was literally used until the very end of the Copanec dynasty, as the T644 seating verb is the last known glyph ever inscribed at

Copan, found on the unfinished Altar L (Figure 3.16), dated 3 Chikchan 3 Uo 9.19.11.14.5 (10 February 822). Although early contemporary accession statements are few at Copan, we nevertheless have a consistent record of accession dates beginning with that of Bahlam Nehn in AD 524 and lasting until the final accession of the dynasty in 822, thanks in large measure to the hieroglyphic stairway begun by Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil around 710 (9.13.18.17.9 12 Muluk 7 Muwaan) and rejuvenated by K'ahk' Joplaj Chan K'awiil on 9.16.4.1.0 6 Ajaw 13 Tzek.

Copan stands out for the devotion it pays to its dynastic founder, K'inich Yax K'uk Mo. The template for rulership that was attributed to him was held up as a standard until the end of the dynasty. The focal narrative on the top of Altar Q (Figure 2.6) details the events of Yax K'uk' Mo's accession, dedicated about 350 years after the fact, and the four sides celebrate the unbroken chain of fifteen rulers that succeeded him.[35] Most of the rulers are depicted sitting upon their name glyphs, but Yax K'uk' Mo' sits upon an ajaw glyph. Stuart (2004c:228) observed, "When later kings are seated in office 'as the *ajaw*,' one gets the clear impression that K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' served as a social and political role model for the position."

Quirigua

The only clear references to the accession of a ruler from Quirigua during the first three centuries of its existence come from retrospective monuments at both Quirigua and Copan. Quirigua's first ruler, Tok Casper, acceded to the throne on 8 September 426

[35] Berthold Riese (1988) was the first to show that Altar Q was a historical representation of Copan's dynasty, and he further identified Yax K'uk' Mo' as the founder.

(8.19.10.11.0), but the earliest record we have of it comes nearly three and a half centuries later. Quirigua Zoomorph P, erected on 15 September 795 (9.18.5.0.0) and Altar Q from Copan, dedicated 29 December 775 (9.17.5.0.0) both record Tok Casper's accession (Colas 2003:274; Stuart 2004c:232).[36] As recorded on Altar Q of Copan, immediately after K'uk Mo' Ajaw of Copan ascended to the throne at the *wite' naah* and became K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo, he oversaw the accession of Tok Casper of Quirigua.

Wite' naah literally translates to "root tree house" but is to be understood as an "Origin House" that has strong associations with Teotihuacan (Stuart 2000a).[37] In essence, then, Quirigua may have influenced by Copan's hegemony as Copan is influenced by the hegemony of Teotihuacan (Martin and Grube 2008:216). Whether the apparent Teotihuacan hegemony in Copan and Motagua region was real or was merely a reimagining of the past is subject to debate, but the hearkening to Teotihuacan imagery was powerful nevertheless.

Although we have no glyphic record of accessions at Quirigua between 426 and 724, Altar L (Figure 2.29) provides us with an image of an enthroned ruler dating to 9.11.0.11.11 9 Chuwen 14 Tzek (2 June 653) (Satterthwaite 1979). Iconographically, K'awiil Yopaat is depicted sitting cross-legged on the glyphs that contain the account of his dance, as if they were his throne. He is arrayed in typical royal attire: a jade pectoral, bracelets, earflares, anklets, waistband, and headdress, and his left hand extends and

[36] There may be another reference to Tok Casper's accession in 426 on the Hieroglyphic Stairway at Copan (Martin and Grube 2008:217).

[37] Schele and Freidel (1990) describe to the *wite' naah* compound as the "founder's glyph."

touches the Quirigua royal title.[38] The text of the monument celebrates the period ending 9.11.0.0.0 in 652 and records that the ruler K'awiil Yopaat *ak'otaj ti nep* ("danced with a *nep*") 231 days later (Schele and Looper 1996:120).[39] Stylistically, Altar L falls into the "Giant Ajaw" category of altars common at Caracol (Chase et al 1991:2) and Tonina, and the ruler himself substitutes for the day sign Ajaw. However, Altar L mentions K'ahk' Uti' Witz' K'awiil, the 12th ruler of Copan (although the context of why he was mentioned is not entirely clear) (Martin and Grube 2008:217). The reference to the Copanec ruler strongly suggests that Quirigua is still under Copan's hegemony.

Our first contemporary reference to accession at Quirigua does not appear until 724. Stela E (Figure 3.17) informs us that K'ahk Tiliw Chan Yopaat acceded *ukabjiiy* (under the supervision of) Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil of Copan on 9.14.13.4.17 12 Kaban 5 K'ayab (29 December 724) (Martin and Grube 2008:219; Stuart 1992:175), just as Quirigua's dynastic founder Tok Casper had done under K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo. He is named on several monuments as an *Ek' Xukpi Ajaw*, "Black Copan Lord" (Looper 1999:268), which seems to be a title held by provincial lords operating under Copan's hegemony (Schele 1989).[40] Glyphically, his accession was marked by his receiving of the K'awiil scepter, *cham k'awiil*, which is not in and of itself an accession statement as it is often taken in other contexts as well, but was the favored expression used by K'ahk' Tiliw to mark his accession; he was the first to do so at Quirigua (Le Fort 1994:19). Stela

[38] This is the earliest example of the Quirigua royal title (Martin and Grube 2008:217).

[39] It is unclear what a *nep* is, and the iconography gives no clues (Schele and Looper 1996:120).

[40] This title is also found on Stela 2 from Nim Li Punit in southern Belize in seeming reference to a lord from Quirigua. Interestingly, there is evidence that the tributary provinces within Copan's hegemony were formally numbered (Wanyerka 2004:48).

J (Figure 3.18) also records his accession, but uses the T713 *k'al* headband binding compound, rendering *k'alaj b'olon tzakaj k'ahk' xook juun tu b'aaj*, "the Nine-Conjured-Fire-Shark headband was tied upon his head," which, curiously, is the name of a headdress used in accession rituals at Yaxchilán on HS 3 (Schele and Looper 1996:124).

K'ahk Tiliw Chan Yopaat is perhaps most well known for his rebellion against the very man who placed him into power, Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil, the "13th in the line" of rulers from Copan. In 738, he captured and decapited his overlord, and named himself the "14th in the line" (Riese 1986) which may suggest he fancied himself usurper of the entire Copanec dynasty (Martin and Grube 2008:219).[41] There is circumstantial evidence that Calakmul played a background role in K'ahk Tiliw Chan Yopaat's rebellion (Looper 1999:270-271). A ruler from *Chik Nab* – a toponym associated with Calakmul – played some role in the dedication of Quirigua Stela I (Figure 3.19) on 9.15.5.0.0, less than two years before K'ahk Tiliw's betrayal. If Quirigua were indeed supported by Calakmul, it would have given them the courage to throw off the centuries of dominion by Copan, who in turn had a long-standing alliance with Tikal, Calakmul's primary enemy (Martin and Grube 2008:219).

Despite this likely alliance, Quirigua does not appropriate the iconographic stylistic heritage of Calakmul. Rather, they emulate their former oppressors, Copan. Not just emulation, but rather appropriation. K'ahk' Tiliw remodeled Quirigua on a grand scale, funded by their newly-gained control over the Motagua trade route (Martin and Grube 2008:219). The acropolis, ballcourt, and ceremonial plaza were all rebuilt in a way that

[41] The other possibility is that K'ahk Tiliw Chan Yopaat was the 14th successor in the Quirigua line; the dearth of texts from Quirigua's early history make it difficult to know for sure

both reflected and overshadowed Copan (ibid.:220). Applying Taussig's concept of mimesis, Quirigua seems to have appropriated Copan's stylistic tradition in effort to both harness Copan's prestige and assert their superiority over them. Recalling Harrison (2003:350-351):

> Borrowing of this sort is neither pure imitation, nor pure differentiation of Self from Other, but something in between. It is imitation intimately involved in the production of difference. It is a kind of mimetic appropriation, an attempt to re-enact the identity-myths of others so deeply as to make them completely, and genuinely, one's own.

On a similar note, Martin and Grube (2008:221) argue that "Quirigua's physical transformation was essentially functional, as it remodeled itself into a capital worthy of commanding its own hegemony and assuming the ceremonial role once performed by Copan."

Jade Sky's accession is not recorded glyphically, but may be alluded to on the east face of Stela I (Figure 3.20), which bears iconographic similarities to the niche scenes used to denote accession at Naranjo and Piedras Negras (Sharer 1990:48) where a ruler is sitting cross-legged, wearing a headdress, and surrounded by sky symbols. However, the individual seated within the niche on Stela I has god-markings on his arms, and may not represent Jade Sky himself (Le Fort 1994:64), but rather may be a cosmological prototype idealizing rulership (or perhaps, more speculatively, Jade Sky is making a bold claim to divinity for himself). The lack of the T684 verb also calls into that this is an accession monument to Jade Sky, which is always used in association with niche-accession scenes at Piedras Negras and Naranjo (Le Fort 1994:104).

Tikal

The earliest contemporaneously recorded accession at Tikal is that of Yax Nuun Ahiin I, dated to 8.17.2.16.17 (12 September 379), recorded on Stela 4. In the inscriptions on the back, we find his accession expressed through the taking of the Jester God (Taube 1998:457). His regalia are not typical Maya, but rather reflects central-Mexican attire (Borowicz 2004:223). He is depicted frontally rather than the typical profile view, wears a shell necklace, a feline-headdress, and holds an atlatl in his left arm, all of which have a distinctive Teotihuacan flavor (Coe 2005:96).[42] It is unclear whether this foreign iconography is intended to portray Yax Nuun Ahiin I as a transplanted ruler from Teotihuacan or if it is intended to add prestige and legitimacy to a local ruler who merely hearkens to their military prowess (Brasswell 2004; Stone 1989). The inscriptions tell us that Yax Nuun Ahiin I was the *y-ajaw*, or "lord of" Sihyaj K'ahk', meaning Yax Nuun Ahiin was somehow subordinate to Sihyaj K'ahk' (Stuart 2000a:479). Yax Nuun Ahiin's son and successor to the throne, Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II likewise incorporated Teotihuacan imagery into his accession monument, Stela 31 (Figure 3.21) while heavily borrowing the pure Maya-style iconography of Stela 29 (Figure 3.22) which is the earliest known depiction of a Tikal lord, perhaps Foliated Jaguar, whose royal regalia would serve as a template for Tikal's rulers for the next six centuries (Martin and Grube 2008:26). By mixing the iconography of the Maya and Teotihuacan, Stela 31 mimetically hearkened to Teotihuacan's power but made it uniquely their own. As Martin and Grube

[42] The *atlatl* or spear thrower may be a precursor to the K'awiil scepter commonly taken at accession and wielded by rulers (Sharer and Traxler 2006:739)

(2008:34) state, “Stela 31 proclaims the rebirth of orthodox kingship, neither sullied nor diluted by its foreign blood, but reinvigorated.”

Schele and Villela (1992:3-4) likened the iconography of Stela 31 to accession scenes at Palenque where parents (living or dead) flank their acceding son and present him with the accoutrements of power, typically the “drum-major” headdress. Stela 31 depicts Sihyaj Chan K’awiil holding aloft a headdress and flanked by images of his father Yax Nuun Ahiin, who is dressed as a Teotihuacan warrior. However, the epigraphy and iconography agree that Sihyaj Chan K’awiil does not receive the headband of rulership from his parents (as did K’inich K’an Joy Chitam) or even from a high priest (as did K’inich Janab Pakal); rather, he boldly takes it upon himself. Although the accession verb is the same on Stela 31 as it is in the accession scenes from Palenque (T713), it is not followed by the benefactive particle (T757), which means the action was not done for him; he did it for himself (Le Fort 1994:50; Schele and Villela 1992:4). Clearly the specifics of the ritual being performed are not identical at Tikal and Palenque, although the background similarities are there. The differences stand out in high relief and help the rulers of Tikal create a unique identity vis-à-vis those at Palenque and vice-versa.

One of the most striking aspects of accession at Tikal is the fact that its rulers could be seated in *kalomte’el*, or “kalomte’-ship.” Although the *kaloomte’* title is attested to at other major polities such as Palenque, Yaxchilán, and Copan, Tikal stands virtually alone in its use as a title taken at accession, the only known exception coming from the wooden lintel at Dzibanche, which may have been a seat of the Snake Kingdom at the time with Sky Witness as ruler (Martin 2005b:7 fn.16). The Early Classic rulers at Tikal, such as

Yax Nuun Ayiin and Sihyaj Chan K'awiil did not take the *kaloomte'* title but rather were vassals to a foreign *kaloomte'*, namely Spearthrower Owl of Teotihuacan. The earliest known rulers at Tikal to take the title were the Lady of Tikal and Kaloomte Bahlam in the early 6th century, which corresponds to the decline of Teotihuacan. It would appear that as Teotihuacan's hegemonic influence over Tikal began to wane, Tikal began declaring its independence through its use of the exalted title. It is not until the beginning of the Late Classic that rulers begin to accede as *kaloomte'* (as opposed to taking the title at some point after accession). Jasaw Kaan K'awiil appears to be the first to take the *kaloomte'* title at his accession on 9.12.9.17.16 (AD 682) (Jones 1977:32).

As discussed previously, if differences are to be made apparent, it must be done against "background similarities." One of the background similarities concerning accession is the "seating" into office; the difference is expressed through unique titulary, such as *kaloomté'*-ship, *ajaw*-ship, and *sajal*-ship. While these titles are typically used to differentiate between the offices of paramount kings and lesser rulers, Tikal's nearly exclusive use of the *kaloomté'* title in accession suggests an attempt to elevate the office of its paramount rulers above those of the paramount rulers of other powerful polities.[43] Stuart (1995:208) hypothesizes that the appearance of this title taken at accession corresponds to the time that Tikal was attempting to reassert its supremacy after a recent series of defeats by Bajlaj Chan K'awiil of Dos Pilas under the sponsorship of Calakmul. In contrast to Tikal's frequent use of the *kaloomte'* title, it only appears once at Dos Pilas, on Hieroglyphic Stairway 3 (ibid.).

[43] Mathews and Justeson (1984:227-228) have argued that the abstractive suffix (-il, -(i)l-el) are markers of office or role rather than social rank or class.

Tonina

Tonina stands out for having the youngest ruler ever known to accede to the throne.[44] Ruler 4 (K'inich-? K'ahk') was only two years old when he was enthroned. Clearly such a young king would not be able to rule effectively, so until he came of age the affairs of the kingdom were administered by K'elen Hix and Aj Ch'anaah, two nobles bearing the title *aj k'uhuun* (Martin and Grube 2008:183). Obviously such a young king would have never have had the opportunity to partake in pre-accession rituals or prove himself on the fields of battle. He is further anomalous in that he does not appear to be the offspring of his predecessor, K'inich Baaknal Chaak, nor does he attempt to create a genealogy to connect himself to an illustrious predecessor. The only hint of his ancestry comes from Monument 144 (Figure 3.23), an altar dated to 722 (ostensibly during Ruler 4's reign) that commemorates the death of Lady K'awiil Chan, an otherwise unknown woman who is distinguished with the local Emblem Glyph. Although the years of his reign were full of triumph, the credit belonged to his handlers, and after his death he immediately faded into obscurity. His successor, K'inich Ich'aak Chapaat, did not pay homage to him but rather performed a fire-entering ritual in the tomb of Ruler 4's immediate predecessor, the illustrious K'inich Baaknal Chaak (Fitzsimmons 2002:134).

As for the accession ritual itself, Eberl and Graña-Behrens (2004:103-104) have argued that the monuments of Tonina provide strong evidence that it was a multi-step process, each step being recorded on distinct monuments spread across the main plaza. Monuments 29 and 134 state that K'inich B'aaknal Chaak "sat down in rulership"

[44] The next youngest ruler known to have taken office was K'ahk Tiliw Chan Chaak of Naranjo, who acceded a few months after his fifth birthday (Martin and Grube 2008:74).

(*chumlaaj ta ajawlel*, the predominant accession statement at Tonina) on 9.12.16.3.12 (14 June 688) and Monument 111 (Figure 3.24) informs us that he scattered blood that same day (but curiously does not mention the fact that it was his accession day). The authors argue that a walk through the plaza would serve as a re-creation of the ceremonial procession that occurred on the ruler's accession day (ibid.).

Yaxchilán

There is evidence that accession rituals at Yaxchilán may have spanned several days. Not a few monuments inform us that Bird Jaguar IV was formally inaugurated on 9.16.1.0.0, when he was *joyaj ti ajawlel*, "tied/encircled in lordship." Lintel 21 (Figure 3.25) states that six days later he was "seated." However, the inscription lacks the prepositional phrase "in lordship," so it is possible that this event referred to his ritual seating within a specific structure (the "Four Bat Place") rather than his placement in office (Stuart 1995:201). Aztec sources similarly suggest that the rites of passage associated with rulership could last several days. The *huey tlatoani* would fast and perform penance in seclusion for four days and likely received instruction on the duties of rulership during that period (Townsend 1987:393).

Rituals and Accoutrements of Accession

Accessions among the Classic Maya were essentially rites of passage that transitioned a human prince into a sacred ruler (Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004:105; Taube 1988a:10-11), called *k'uhul ajaw*, or "divine lord" (Houston and Stuart 1996:295-297). According

to Van Gennep (1960), rites of passage have three essential stages: (1) separation from the previous social status; (2) the period of liminality, essentially without status; and (3) reincorporation into society with a new status.[45] These transitions are accomplished according to culturally specific beliefs and practices, and among the various Classic Maya polities, they would have been followed according to locally significant cosmologies.

Dance

Somewhat surprisingly, dance does not seem to have been a major part of the accession ceremony proper, although dances were used as both precursors to accession and later in a ruler's reign to commemorate accession anniversaries (as discussed in Chapter 2). Yaxchilán Lintel 1 (Figure 3.26) contains the only known record of a dance being performed on the day of a ruler's accession. In this instance, Bird Jaguar IV danced with the K'awiil scepter. While receiving the God K scepter can be part of accession at some sites (to be discussed below), this is the only known instance where it is danced with on the day of accession, or indeed, of any dance being performed in conjunction with enthronement (Mathew Looper, personal communication, 2009).

Thrones

The use of thrones to denote rulership in Mesoamerica dates back at least to Early Formative San Lorenzo (Taube 2004c:8), continued through the Middle Formative at

[45] There is debate as to the duration of the liminal period experienced by acceding rulers. Among the Aztec, this period could last for four days (Townsend 1987), but evidence for such a lengthy period is lacking for the Maya (cf. Eberl and Graña-Behrens 2004; LeFort 2000:19; Taube 1994:672).

Oxtotitlan, spread to the Protoclassic Guatemalan highlands by 300 BC and diffused to the lowland region by the Preclassic (Clark and Hansen 2001:32). As discussed earlier, the most common accession expression found in the glyphic corpus (though noticeably absent from Piedras Negras and Naranjo) is *chum* (T644), 'to be seated'.[46] The logogram *chum* represents an abstracted human torso and thigh, as if viewing someone from the side who was seated cross-legged. Iconographically, accession monuments often depict the ruler seated upon a throne while taking or receiving royal insignia. The 'seating' glyph used in association with accession dates back to the Late Preclassic. The earliest example may be found on the Dumbarton Oaks flanged quartzite pectoral (Figure 3.30), which was an Olmec pectoral that was repurposed by the Late Preclassic Maya. The crown worn by the Maya ruler on the back of the pectoral is virtually identical to the crown that is being presented to the ruler in the West Wall mural, which may indicate they correspond geographically and temporally (Boot 2008:35). The incision depicts the profile of a ruler sitting cross-legged, and the *chum* glyph is found in the accompanying text at A5 (Schele and Miller 1986:120-121). *Chum* is often spelled with the phonetic complement –*mu* suffix, as on the Leiden Plaque (Figure 3.27; Bricker 2007:29-30), which retrospectively records the accession of Chanal Chak Chapaat ("Celestial Red Centipede") at the Moon-Zero-Bird location at the "*chi*-altar" place in 320 AD.[47]

[46] Lounsbury was the first to recognize an equivalent expression in Colonial Chontal in reference to accession, *chumvanihix ta auule* (Lounsbury 1989:228)

[47] The Leiden Plaque has long been erroneously associated with Tikal, however it was not found near Tikal, it has no Tikal emblem glyphs, and it contains no known names from Tikal. Stanley Guenter speculates that the *chi*-altar place may have been at El Mirador (personal communication). Proskouriakoff (1950:105) notes that while the date inscribed on the Leiden Plaque is early (8.14.3.1.12, or September 17 AD 320),

There is an astonishing amount of temporal and spatial variation in throne types, from richly carved and decorated celestial thrones to simple, unadorned benches. Some of the variation is merely functional; different thrones would have been used for different occasions. Indeed, the only common feature that unites 'thrones' as a category is that they were something upon which rulers sat in order to literally and metaphorically elevate themselves above their subordinates (Bardsley 1996:4; Harrison 2001:78). Bardsley (1996:4) summarized some of the known variations in throne types:

> Whether the benches are plain uncarved stone slabs, cantilevered assemblages in stone or painted of same, designed to represent zoomorphs (jaguars or reptilians), carved from stone with glyphic messages, or representations of inscribed stones in ceramic or in mural painting, they are all seats of authority, the authority of whomever is seated upon them. They are validations of one's having been seated or appointed at some level of authority, royal or non-royal.

Peter Harrison (2001:79) demonstrated that these distinct types of thrones were found across the lowlands according to local patterns. Tikal stands out for having had the plainest thrones in the region, typically with little or no iconographic or epigraphic details. It is unsurprising that its near neighbor and eventual rival Dos Pilas sought to differentiate itself by creating thrones that were elaborately carved, such as one that featured pseudo-Atlantean figures supporting a seat with Sun God armrests (ibid.:79). Harrison has shown that thrones whose seats are rimmed by a sky-band are most commonly found at Copan (such as the one found in Structure 66C), which are unknown at Tikal but are found at Palenque (ibid.). Sitting atop a sky-banded throne would have

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the iconographic conventions of the carving itself suggest a later date for its creation. Karl Taube believes the carving may date to the mid 5th century A.D. (personal communication).

had cosmological implications as it placed the ruler in a position normally reserved for gods and deified ancestors.

Karl Taube (2005:28) has demonstrated the conceptual overlap between thrones, jade, and cosmic centrality. Rulers would often wear costume elements around their waists that represented thrones (as on Tikal Stela 22; see Figure 2.17), essentially carrying a portable throne with them wherever they went (Houston et al. 2006:274). The costume elements included jade beads with woven mat designs incised into them, feline pelts, and mirrors (ibid.). As Taube (2005:30) states "Wearing jaguar-pelt kilts and elaborate jade-belt assemblages, Maya kings may have been considered living embodiments of royal thrones in ritual performances." David Stuart (2003:17) suggested that thrones conceptually represented the surface of the sky, thus placing rulers in a cosmological setting when they were seated upon them.

Headbands, Headdresses and Helmets

A distinction needs to be drawn between headbands, headdresses, and helmets. Glyphically, *hu'n* can refer to either a headband or a headdress, and *ko'haw* refers a shell-mosiac helmet, sometimes referred to as the "drum major" headdress. Headbands are typically indicative of rulership. In general, masks and/or headdresses were the principal emblems that served as seats of spiritual power for those that donned them (Looper 2003:28). The head was the marker of individuality, and headdresses typical emphasized or directly identified its wearer. The ruler's body was sacred and at times likened unto a temple (and vice versa), and a headdress was essentially a "roof comb" to a his body

(Houston et al. 2006:273). A ruler donning a headdress would thus become part of the architectural landscape, literally a "living embodiment of the temple and its divine occupants" (Taube 1998:466).

The presentation of the headband or headdress was the key inaugural motif at Palenque. House A-D was dedicated as the "headband binding house" in 720 AD under K'inich K'an Joy Chitam (Stuart and Stuart 2008:218), but was likely used for the installation of subordinate officers to their positions (since House E of the Palace seems to have been the place where rulers acceded to the throne) (ibid.,19). We find the presentation headdresses depicted both iconographically and in the accompanying text on the Palace Tablet and the Tablet of the Slaves (Figure 3.28). On the Temple XIX platform (Figure 2.34), K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb receives both the headband and the drum-major headdress, both adorned with the Jester God (Stuart 2005). The Oval Palace Tablet and a fragment found in the bodega also depict the presentation iconographically, but lack textual reference to the event (Le Fort 1994:41). In general, accession scenes at Palenque depict the new ruler atop his throne receiving the "drum-major" headdress of sacred warfare from his parents (whether living or dead) (Stuart and Stuart 2008:157).

Jester God

Perhaps the most common headdress across the Maya area is the *sak hu'n*, or "white headband," which typically has a "Jester God" diadem attached to it (Figure 3.29). The cloth headband was the principal symbol of the status of *ajaw* (Stuart 2004b:263). As discussed earlier, the T713/757 compound makes reference to the tying of a headband

upon the ruler's head as part of the accession ceremony, and this phrase is most commonly found in the Western Maya region. Although the glyphic phrase is the same and the iconography is similar, it should be noted that the headdress itself differs at each site, although they almost all share some form of the Jester God as a component (Le Fort 1994:50). The taking of a headdress at accession has considerable time depth, with presentation scenes appearing among the Late Preclassic Maya at San Bartolo and the wearing of trefoil headbands by rulers extending back to the Middle Formative period among the Gulf Coast Olmec (Figure 3.31) (Fields 1991) and continuing into Preclassic Nakbe (Hansen 1994:30).

The earliest example of the Jester God in the Maya area comes from a burial found at the site of K'o, Guatemala (in the Holmul region) that may date to the transition between the Late Middle Preclassic and the Late Preclassic (350-300 BC). A modeled ceramic censer was recovered that prominently features a face donning a trefoil Jester God motif, similar to the one on the West Wall at San Bartolo (Skidmore 2011:6). Several variants of the Jester God exist and it was represented with a wide range of traits, such as being foliated, trefoil, avian, reptilian, or even showing shark-like characteristics (Taube et al. 2010; Miller and Martin 2004:68). Some of these traits could be combined, such as the "foliated avian Jester God" worn by the ruler on the Dumbarton Oaks plaque (Taube et al. 2010:66). Le Fort (1994:50) suggested the variations in headdresses may have been intended to reinforce local identities, but as multiple types of Jester Gods can be found at a single site, and even within a single representation (as on the Dumbarton Oaks plaque, where the ruler wears the trefoil Jester God on his brow and the foliated Jester God atop

his head), it is likely that the differences were intended to be cosmological (Taube 2004c:35). The foliated jade "Jester God" of the Classic Maya is clearly emblematic of the trefoil maize symbolism associated with the Olmec Maize God (Fields 1991) and represents the animate spirit of maize (Stuart and Stuart 2008:197), but the full suite of ideas associated with the variant forms of the Jester God are still not completely understood (Miller and Martin 2004:68).

Iconographically, when a ruler is depicted in the act of receiving the headband, he is typically seated, wearing a simple garment and turns to the left to receive the headband from whoever is presenting it to him. This is true of both human and divine agents, as the incised bone from the Dallas Museum of Art demonstrates (Le Fort 1994:49). Sihyaj Chan K'awiil is a striking exception to this rule; as discussed earlier, rather than being presented with the headdress, both the glyphs and the iconography testify that he boldly took the headband upon himself (Figure 3.24).

Early rulers in several Maya polities are depicted receiving and wearing a trefoil crown, the precursor to the Late Classic Jester God diadem (Fields 1991). The crown itself was actually a cloth headband with a central trefoil icon flanked by bifurcated ornaments. The trefoil icon was derived from Olmec representations of foliating maize (Taube 2005:28). By wearing such a crown, the ruler ideologically established himself as the source of maize fertility. They were sometimes portrayed with a maize cob for a crown, the yellow maize silk serving as hair and the sprouting leaves forming a trefoil (Fields and Reents-Budet 2005:26). Furthermore, the central maize motif on the headband was typically flanked by four jewels recalling the world tree, which positioned

the ruler as an *axis mundi* as he wore it.[48] Interestingly, Jester Gods are typically adorned with three circles or spheres, which is likely an allusion to the three stone hearths associated with conceptual center of the Maya home (Taube 1998:454-462).

Turbans

Unlike Palenque and other sites, when rulers of Copan "received the headband," it likely did not refer to the *sak hu'n* or Jester God (which is comparatively rare at Copan) but rather to the distinctive woven cloth turbans that were a marker of Copanec identity (Schele and Newsome 1991:5). If later iconography is to be believed, Copan's founder Yax K'uk' Mo' was the first to don the royal turban (Figure 3.32), effectively creating a unique template for his successors. Waxaklajun Ubah K'awiil appears to have re-enacted Yax K'uk' Mo's receiving of the headband (ibid., 6). Although the specific style of the turban may be unique to Copan, its function was identical to the headbands and headdresses of other polities. It could act as both as an indicator of Copancec identity as well as to identify individuals, as evidenced by the name glyphs found in the turban of Yax K'uk Mo.

Ko'haw Helmet

The *ko'haw* or "drum major headdress" (Schele and Miller 1986:69) was an appropriated version of the Teotihuacanoid war helmet (Martin and Grube 2008:143), depicted iconographically and epigraphically as a shell mosaic headdress (Macri and

[48] Marc Zender (2004:70-72) has questioned the notion that jade jewels mark the ruler as the world tree.

Looper 2003:290).[49] It makes its first iconographic appearance in the Early Classic at Tikal on Sihyaj Chan K'awiil's accession monument, Stela 31, but the T678 grapheme that specifically names the helmet does not appear until centuries later. Its epigraphic usage appears first at Piedras Negras and later at Palenque (Macri and Looper 2003:290), and it is limited to those two sites.

The Early Classic iconographic hearkening to the *ko'haw* at Tikal makes sense in light of the heavy Teotihuacan influence on the site beginning with the *entrada* of 378 (Stuart 2000a). Tikal was intentionally hearkening to Teotihuacan in order to bolster its own prestige. Interestingly, we see Itzamnaaj K'awiil of Dos Pilas donning the *ko'haw* at on his Stela 1 (Figure 3.33), which commemorates the defeat of a Tikal lord during his reign in 705. Its first appearance at Piedras Negras is in AD 667 on Panel 2, which commemorates Ruler 2's re-enactment of Turtle Tooth's taking of the *ko'haw* in AD 510 (9.3.16.0.5) under the supervision of an *ochk'in kaloomte'* named Tahom Uk'ab Tun, who may have had some connection to Calakmul (Martin 1997:860). The scene itself depicts six youths from Yaxchilán, Bonampak and Lacanha (all vassal to Piedras Negras at the time) kneeling in submission to Turtle Tooth and his supposed heir Joy Chitam Ahk (who is never heard from again; Fitzsimmons 2002:84). The youths all wear *ko'haw* helmets as well.

The presentation of the *ko'haw* became one of the key rituals of accession at Palenque. It is always presented to the acceding ruler at the center of the scene by his parents seated to his left, and the main text uses the presentation of the headdress as the accession

[49] *Ko'haw* is likely a loan-word from the Nahuatl root *cua:(i)-tl* (Macri and Looper 2003:290), which refers to the crown of the head (López Austin 1988:2:143)

phrase (Le Fort 1994:44-45). It typically has a Jester God affixed to the front (ibid.:46). But rulers were not the only ones to receive *ko'haw* helmets at Palenque. The first mention of the *ko'haw* at Palenque comes from the Temple of the Inscriptions in 683, where it occurs six times on the central panel (Figure 3.34) (Macri and Looper 2003:290). Here we read that K'inich Janab Pakal offered individualized *ko'haw* helmets to various gods (Guenter 2007:34). For example, he offered the Chaahk *ko'haw* to Unen K'awiil (GII), the Quadripartite Badge *ko'haw* to GI-Chaak (GI), and the *Sak? Hu'n ko'haw* to K'inich Ajaw (ibid.,29-30). This supports the view that the gods were cared for by the rulers as a child is cared for by its parents, more specifically by its mother. Linda Schele (1978) first suggested the glyphic phrase that comprised a parentage statement linking mother to child (Figure 3.35), now read *huntan* and translated as "cherished one" (Stuart 1997:8) or "precious thing" (Houston and Stuart 1996:294). This same glyph is used to denote the relationship between rulers and their gods, although Houston and Stuart (1996:294) reject the suggestion that rulers would thus be considered 'mothers' of the gods (Schele 1978:8; Schele and Freidel 1990:475).

K'awiil Scepter

K'awiil is the Classic period name of God K (Stuart 1987:15), and though he is essentially a pan-Maya deity he is also "among the most puzzling of Maya gods" (Houston and Inomata 2009:207). K'awiil may simply be an expression for "effigy" (the word *kauil* means 'idol, false god' in Poqom and Kaqchikel) or a generic physical expression of godhood, much as God C seems to express the "invisible, immanent quality of 'godhood'" (Houston et al. 2006:67-68). Unlike other characters from Maya

mythology, K'awiil is never shown actively participating in mythological scenes, but much more passively emerges from serpents or is held statically by rulers. The taking of the scepter mimicked the actions of the gods and blurred the lines between myth and history (Martin 1997:863).

Proskouriakoff (1973:168) presciently understood that the taking of K'awiil could be used as an accession statement, but it is not limited to those occasions. Unlike the ceremonial bar, which could only be wielded by rulers, the K'awiil scepter was taken at times by non-royalty. It could also be taken by rulers on occasions before or after their accessions. The first K'awiil taking was prefixed with *yax*, literally "unripe" or "young." At Yaxchilán, the K'awiil scepter was held on various occasions and at diverse times of the year (Le Fort 2002:3). At Palenque, Kan Bahlam II takes the K'awiil when he is approximately 18 years old, three decades prior to his accession. Furthermore, an already established ruler could take K'awiil to indicate some fundamental shift in the nature of their own rulership. For example, after K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Yopaat of Quirigua removed the head of his overlord Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil (Copan's 13th successor) he took the K'awiil and dubbed himself the "14th successor" (Riese 1986).

K'awiil was heavily emphasized at some polities while virtually ignored at others. K'uk' Mo's grasping of K'awiil on 9.0.0.0.0 was celebrated for generations on the most prominent public monuments at Copan (Fash 1991:83).[50] Likewise at Yaxchilán, the K'awiil scepter is a frequent accoutrement held on various occasions at diverse times of

[50] K'uk' Mo's accession is commemorated on K'inich Popol Hol's Stela 63, Bahlam Nehn's Stela 15, Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil's Stela J and Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat's Altar Q (Fash 1991:83), however not all of them make direct reference to his taking of K'awiil.

the year wielded by both rulers and non-elites (Le Fort 2002:3), and the god K'awiil himself was summoned regularly. Significantly, at the site of their neighbor and rival Piedras Negras, the rulers not only fail to take K'awiil at accession, they all but ignore the god, preferring instead to highlight Chahk in their ritual actions (Houston and Inomata 2009:207). Eschewing one of Yaxchilán's favorite gods and rejecting the specific accession ritual associated with that particular god enabled Piedras Negras to reinforce their unique identity vis-à-vis their neighboring rivals.

The Burial and Deification of the King's Predecessor

Chapter 4 will discuss the ultimate fate of deceased kings and the anniversary rituals performed on their behalf; our purpose here is to examine the immediate demands of burial and deification of a predecessor as an integral aspect of an incoming ruler's own accession. It was essentially his first order of business, necessarily performed before he could be seated upon his throne. As discussed above, accession was a liminal period for the ruler, but death was likewise a liminal period for the recently deceased king. It was a transition from his status as a dead ruler to his rebirth as an ancestor, or even elevated to the status of a god. The ruler's soul did not immediately ascend or descend to the Otherworld, but rather it would linger on earth for several days. Among modern Maya groups, the soul is believed to linger for at least two or three days after death (Vogt 1969:222), and as long as seven (LaFarge 1965:44) or even nine days (Guiteras-Holmes 1961:139-140; Bunzel 1952:150). This liminal period is dangerous for the living because the dead seek to return (Fitzsimmons 2009:44), and since the souls of rulers were

considered to be the most potent it would therefore have been a very precarious interlude. One of the souls possessed by Classic Maya rulers, the *wahy*, could interact with or even kill the *wahy* of other rulers, as on K791 (Figure 3.36; ibid., 46). We may speculate that the lingering *wahy* of a deceased ruler could have been perceived as a legitimate threat to the well-being of an acceding ruler. It would have been imperative for the acceding king to perform the proper death rites for his predecessor to minimize the danger inherent in this liminal period.

As is expected, there is a great deal of variation across the Lowlands regarding the amount of time between a ruler's death and the rites performed on his behalf (Fitzsimmons 2009:7). Likewise, there is great variety in the rites performed, mode of burial, grave goods, and the symbolism used, to the point that we cannot profitably construct an "ideal type" of burial among the Classic Maya. As James Fitzsimmons (ibid., 64) noted, "the Classic Maya had no such overarching models, and they produced burials whose characteristics varied over space and time, even from one king to the next." In only the most general of ways, however, it appears that burials and their associated symbolism shared a fundamental concern with concepts of descent into the underworld, rebirth as a god, and entry into the flowery paradise (ibid., 11).

The Maya equated humans with maize, and the burying of a ruler's body was likened unto planting a seed that would lead to rebirth as an ancestor (Taube 2001b:270-271). The incoming ruler, then, was acting as sower as he carved into the surface of the earth to create a tomb and buried his predecessor (ibid.). Grave goods were provided to aid the deceased in their journey through the Otherworld. By and large, Classic Maya royal

burials contain some, if not many, of the following items: worked jadeite accessories (jewelry, ear-flares, masks, pendants, tinklers, etc), bloodletting implements (jade, obsidian, stingray spine), ceramic vessels (bowls, plates, tripod vessels, etc), red pigments (cinnabar or hematite), precious maritime goods (shells, pearls), and the remains of codices and textiles (A. Chase 1992:37; Fitzsimmons 2009:83-84). But as would be expected in groups seeking to define themselves in contrast to their neighbors, "we find both items shared with other sites and local innovations" (Fitzsimmons 2009:83).

Palenque and Piedras Negras are notable for their paucity of grave ceramics. These two sites, along with Copan and Tonina, rarely have bowl-over-skull burials. Tonina and Palenque tend to reuse graves for successive interments, and the heads are predominantly oriented to the north as they are at Piedras Negras, Tikal, and Uaxactun. This contrasts with the predominantly eastern head orientation found in elite burials at Dzibilchaltun, Seibal, Altar de Sacrificios, Copan, and Altun Ha (Ruz Lhullier 1968 and Welsh 1988). There was a marked shift in the types of burial goods found in the Central Peten and at Copan around the time of the *entrada* in AD 378. The new types of ceramics and jade, shell, and bone artifacts all reflected heavy influence by Teotihuacan (Fitzsimmons 2009:87). Tikal stands out for typically placing a single bowl beneath the head of the deceased ruler. In perhaps a case of one-up-manship, Calakmul may have been appropriating this practice and making it uniquely their own in the burials of Structures III and VII, where the rulers were placed on an entire bed of dishes (ibid.).

The notable variation in burial practices was not limited to the Maya but rather seems to have been a pan-Mesoamerican phenomenon. In the ancient West Mexican polities "this rivalry and tendency toward one-upmanship also resulted in the heterogeneous set of tomb forms and practices that we are just beginning to plot out today… but the dominant theme at this point appears to be the individual expression of power at the local level" (Beekman 2000:393).

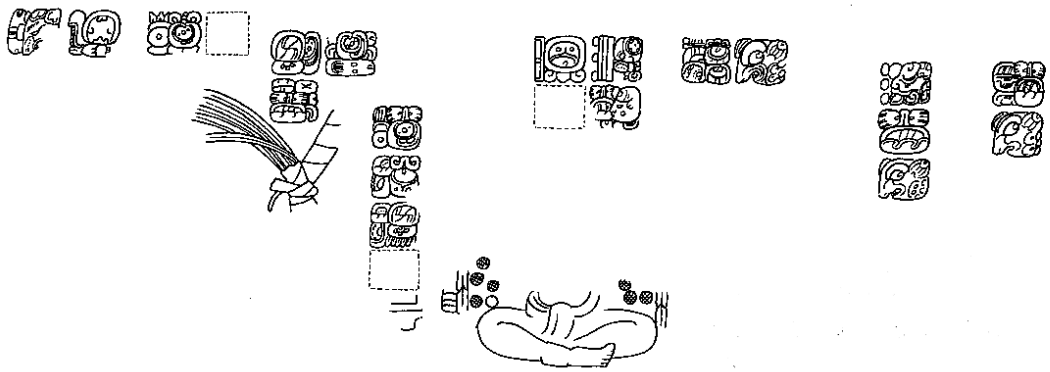
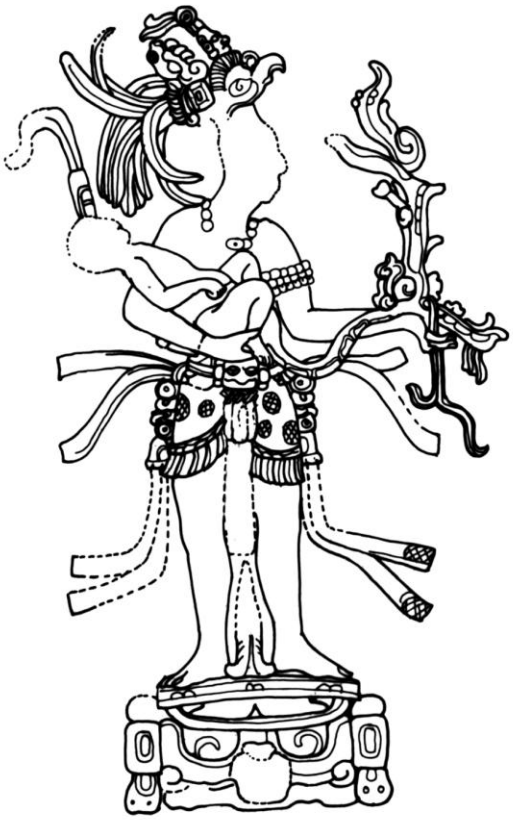


Figure 3.1. The “placing in order” of Pakal’s heirs as recorded on the stucco sculpture on the rear wall of Temple XVIII (Drawing by D. Stuart from Stuart and Stuart 2008:163 Figure 51).



a.

b.

Figure 3.2. (a) K'an Bahlam II as the god Unen K'awiil (GII of the Palenque Triad), detail of Pier B (drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI). (b) Stuart's drawing (2007), based on Maudslay's original photographs, shows it is K'an Joy Chitam that bears K'an Bahlam II in his arms, not K'uk Bahlam as suggested by Schele and Mathews (1998:99).

Figure 3.3. Palenque Pier C (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

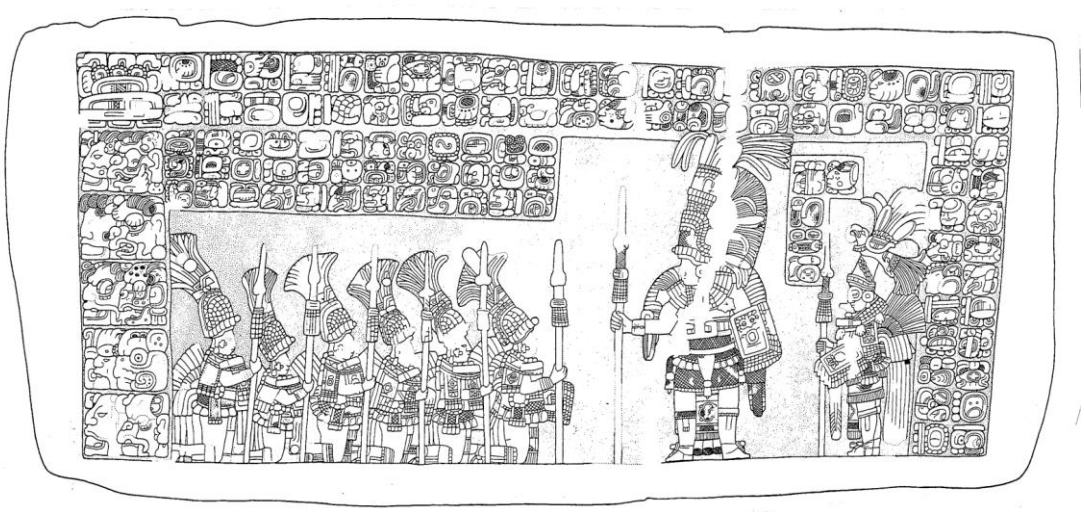
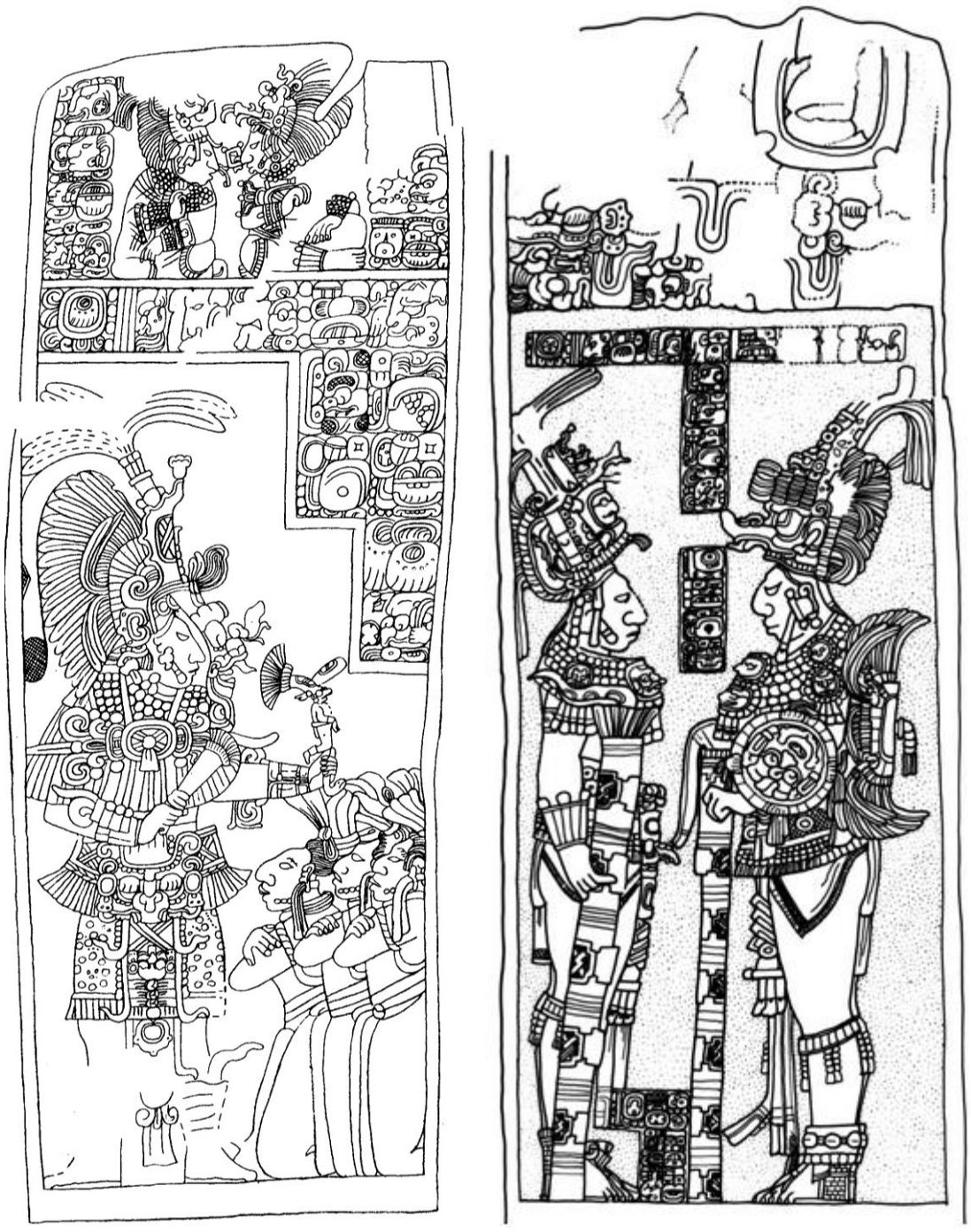


Figure 3.4. Piedras Negras Lintel 2 (Drawing by D. Stuart, courtesy of CMHI).

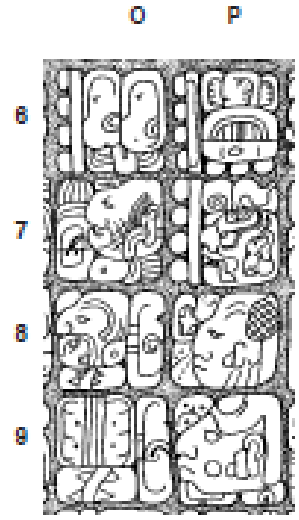


a. b.

Figure 3.5. Yaxchilán Stela 11. (a) Temple side (drawing by J. Montgomery, courtesy of FAMSI). (b) River side (drawing by L. Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

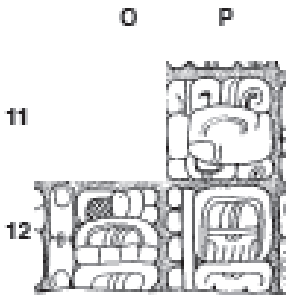
a. b. c. d.

Figure 3.6. Accession Phrases. (a)T684 *joy/hoy* “encircle” (b)T644 *chum* “seating” (c)T713/757 *k’al sak hu’n* “tie the white headband” (d)T670 *ch’am k’awiil* “grasp K’awiil” (drawings by J. Montgomery, courtesy of FAMSI)



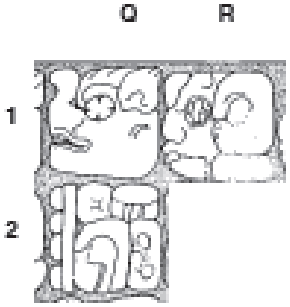
Passage 12a

O6: **9-PIK**	*balu´n pik*
P6: **9-WINIKHAAB**	*balu´n winikhaab*
O7: **tilil-pa-ti**	*ti´ pat*
P7: **9-?**	*Balu´n ...*
O8: **sa-ta-yi**	*sataay*
P8: **K'UH-IXIK**	*k´uh(ul) ixik*
O9: **sa-ta-yi**	*sataay*
P9: **AJAW-wa**	*ajaw*



Passage 12c

P11: **ma-ya-k'a-wa**	*ma yak´aw*
O12: **u-tu-ta-li**	*u tutaal*
P12: **9-CHAN-na**	*Balu´n Chan*



Q1: **YOON(?)**	*Yoon?*
R1: **WAKLAJU'N-YOON(?)**	*Waklaju´n Yoon?*
Q2: **9-AJAW-TZ'AK-bu**	*Balu´n Tz´akbu Ajaw*

Figure 3.7. East Tablet of the Temple of the Inscriptions. (from Guenter 2007:20-21)

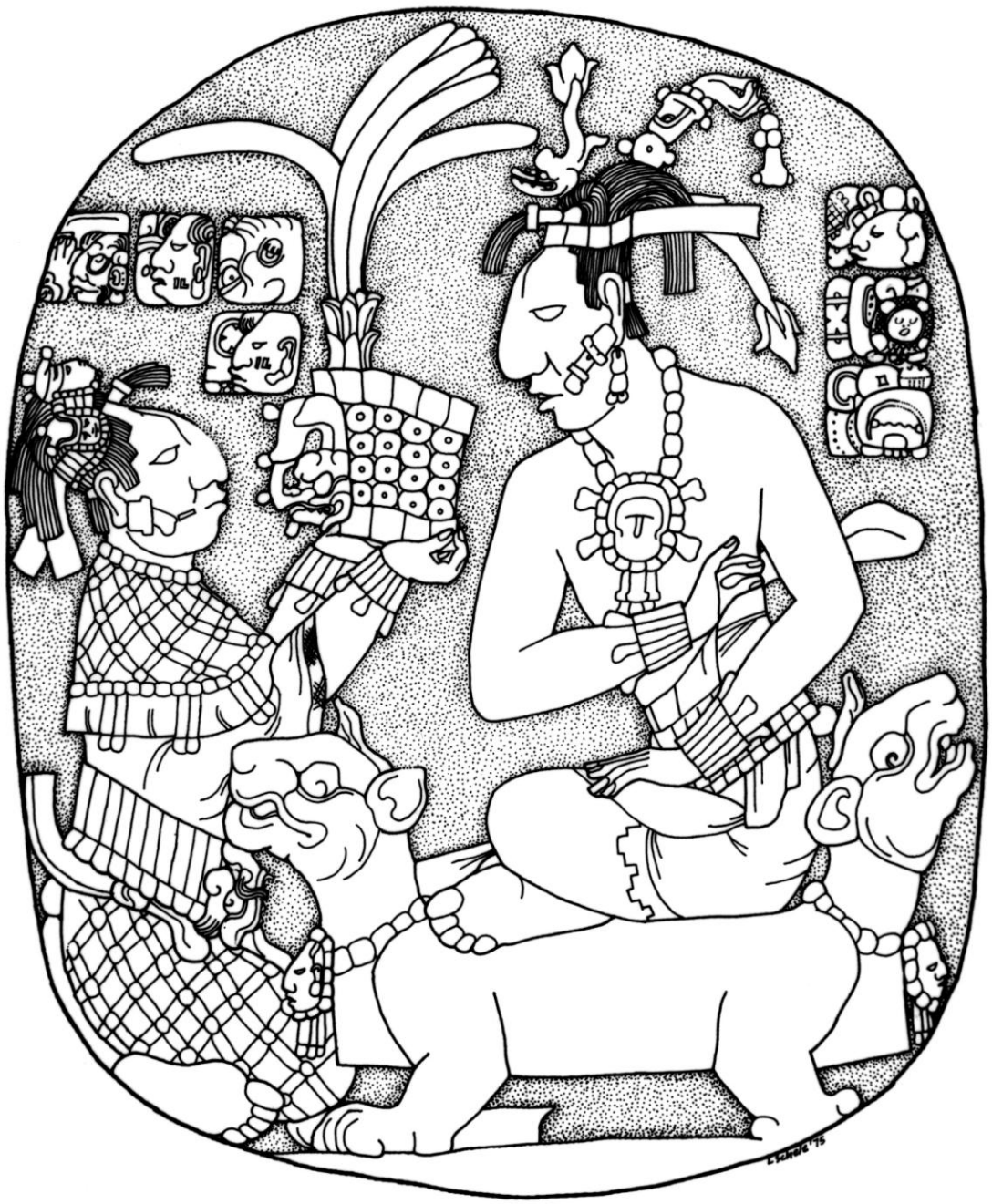


Figure 3.8. The Oval Palace Tablet (drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI)

a.

b.

Figure 3.9. Detail from The Tablet of the Cross. "Headband-tying" accession phrase used for supernaturals/mythological founders. (a) Muwaan Mat (F7-F8) (b) U "Kix" Chan (P1-P2). (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

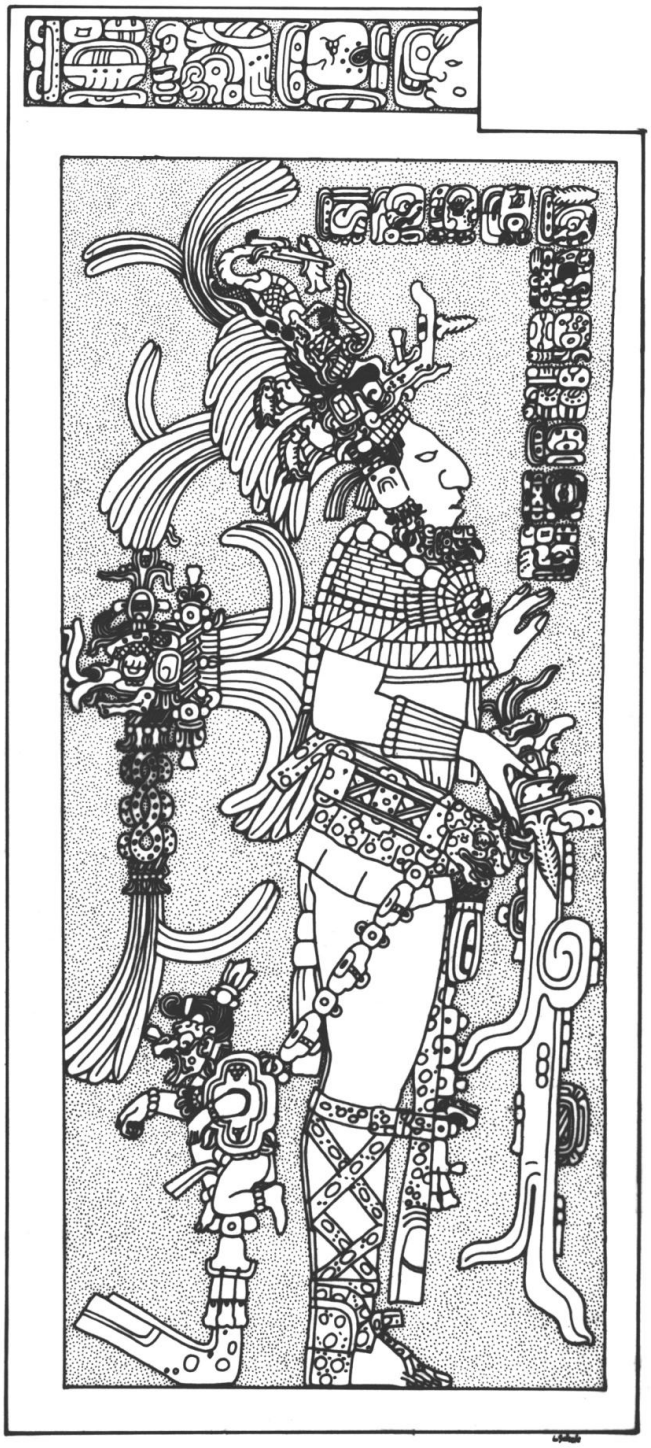


Figure 3.10. K’inich Kan Bahlam II wearing the headdress of U Kokan Chan (U “K’ix” Chan). West sanctuary jamb from the Temple of the Cross (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

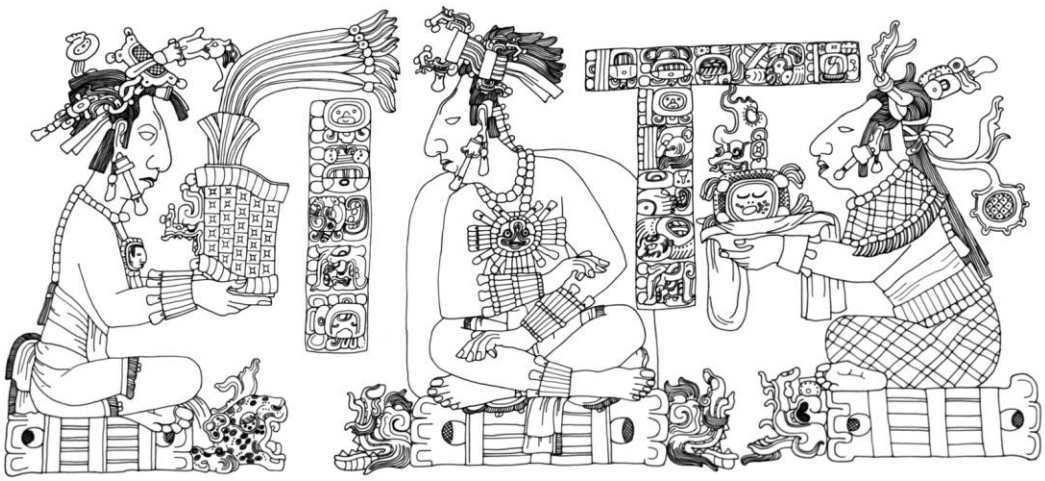


Figure 3.11. The Palace Tablet (without main text). (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

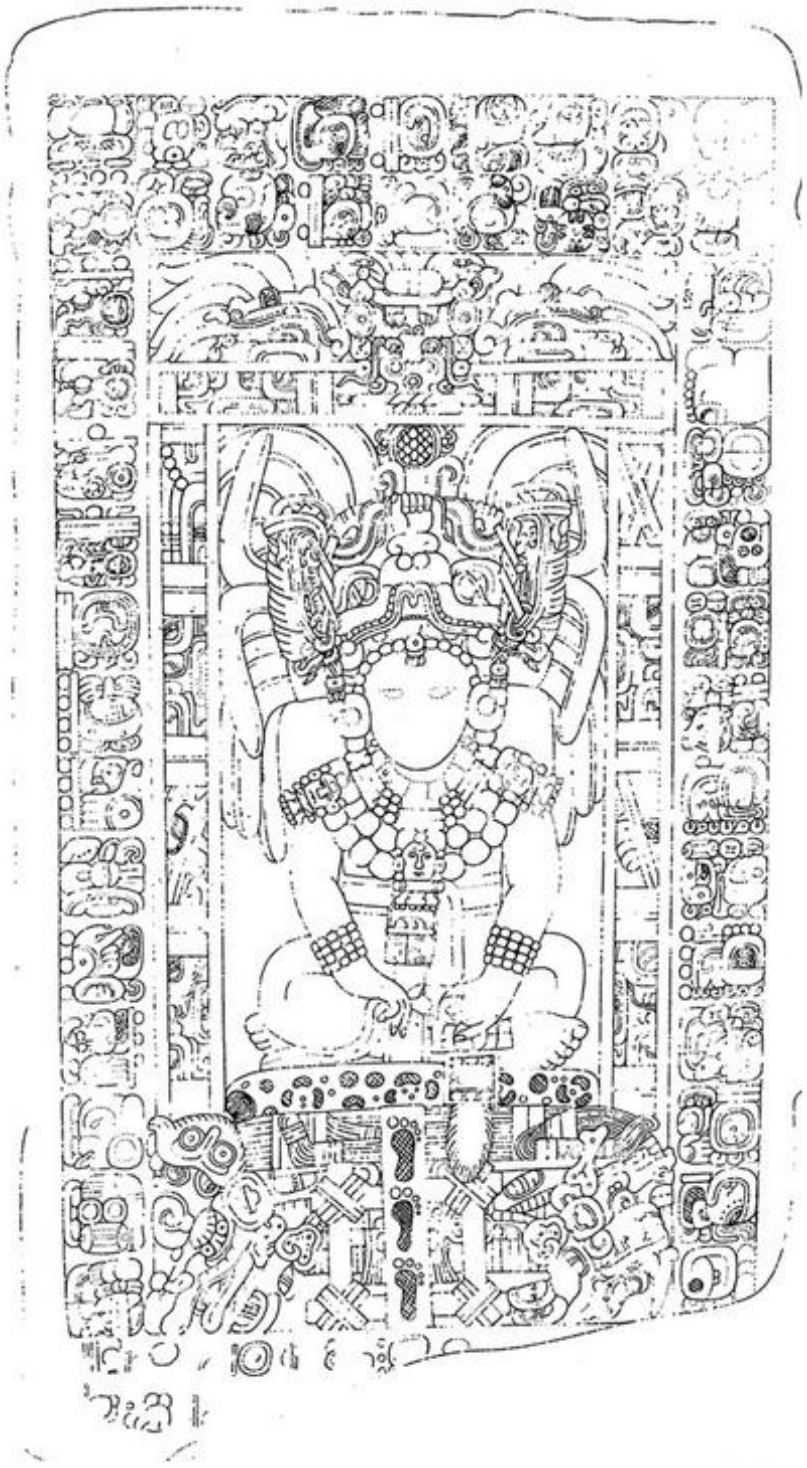


Figure 3.12. Piedras Negras Stela 25 (drawing by John Montgomery, courtesy of FAMSI)

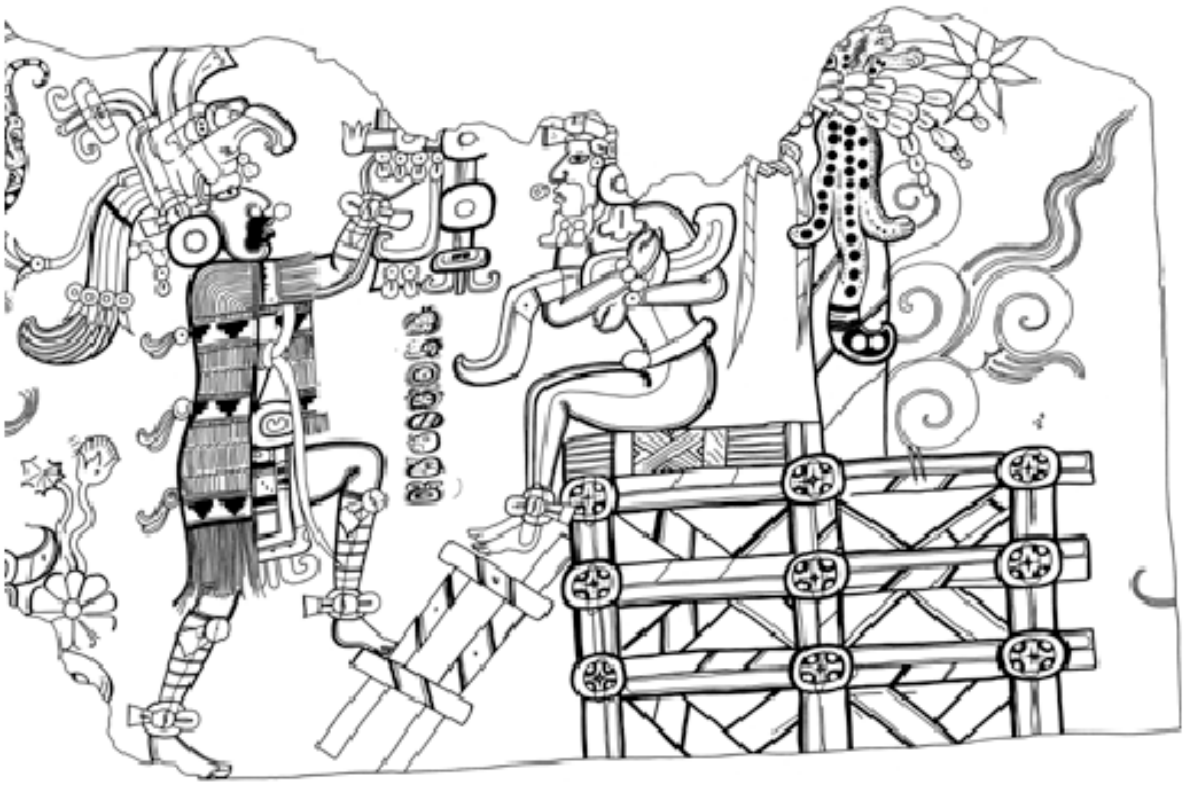


Figure 3.13. San Bartolo scaffold accession scene. (Drawing by Heather Hurst, in Taube et al 2010:11 Figure 7)

Figure 3.14.Scaffold accession scene, incised bone, Dallas Museum of Art. (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

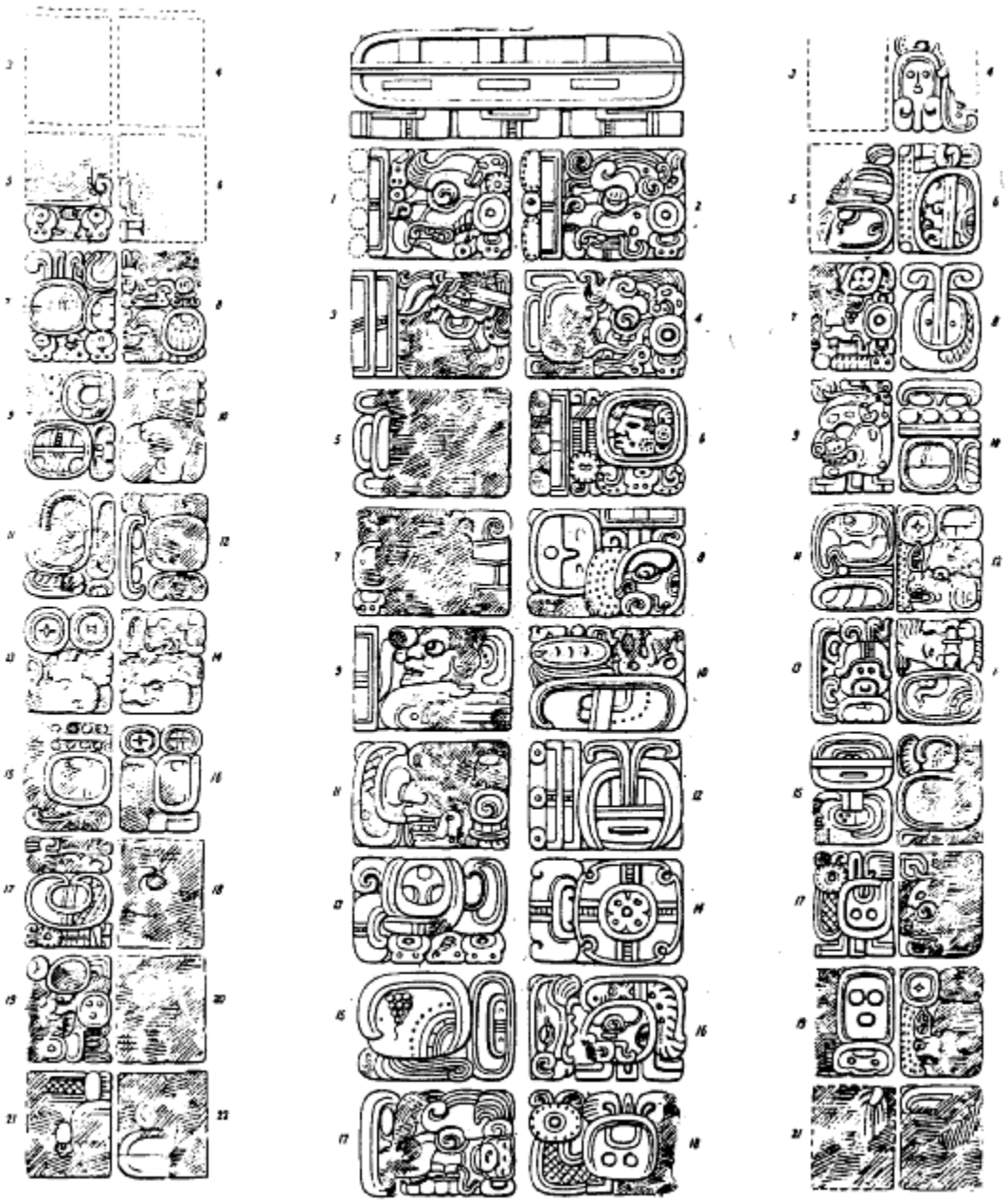


Figure 3.15. Copan Stela 9. (Drawing in Schele and Looper 1996:155)

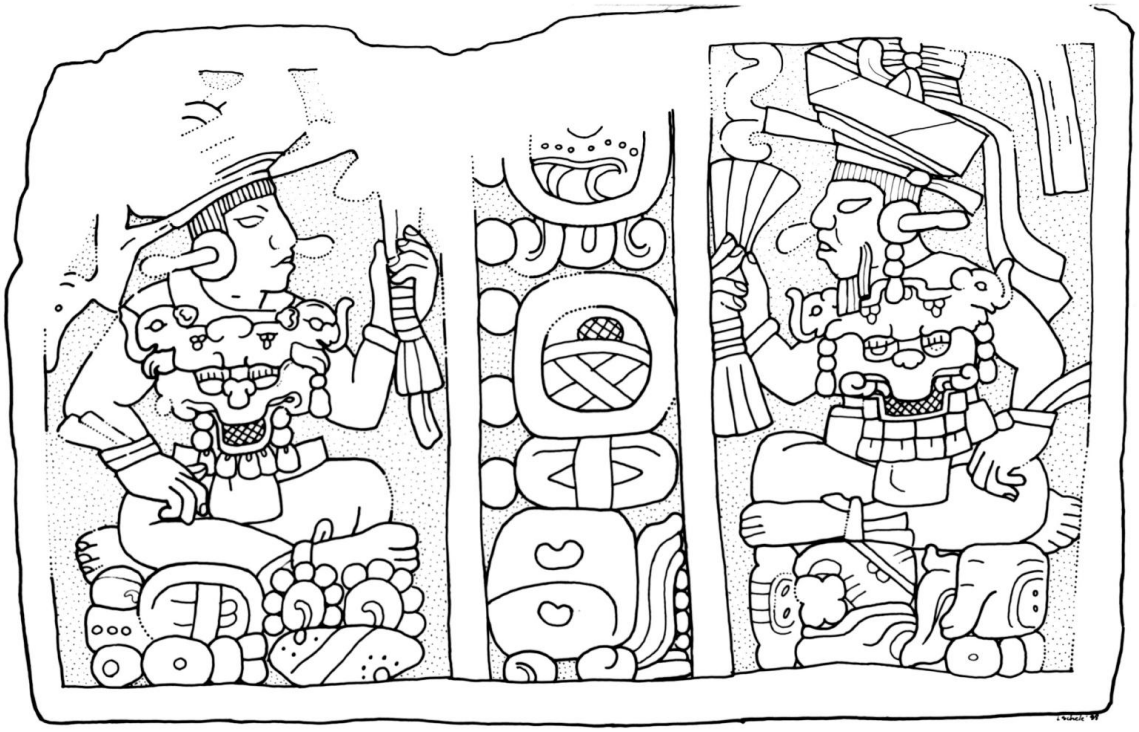


Figure 3.16. Copan Altar L. (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

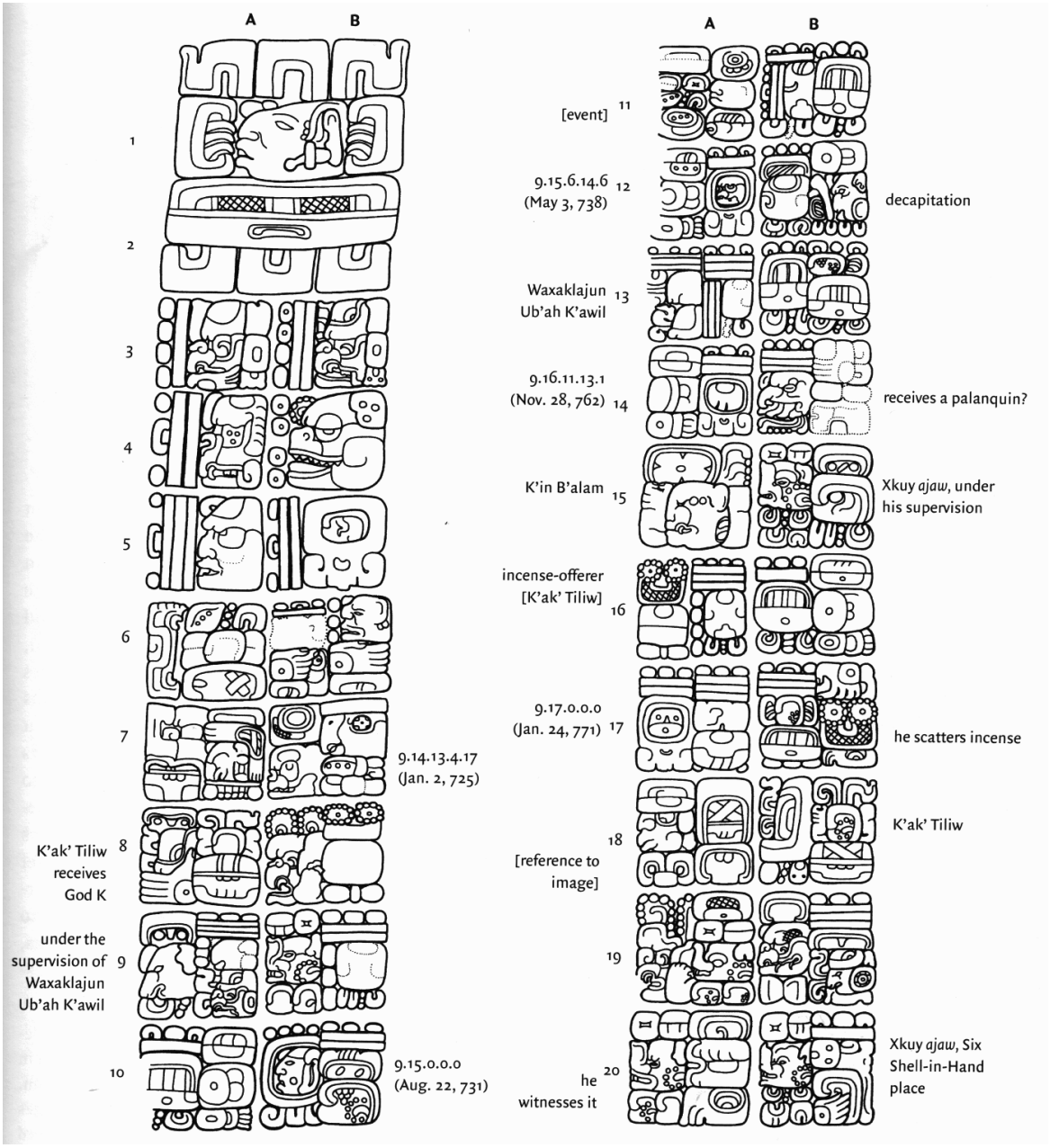


Figure 3.17. Quirigua Stela E. (Drawing by Matthew Looper 2003:153)

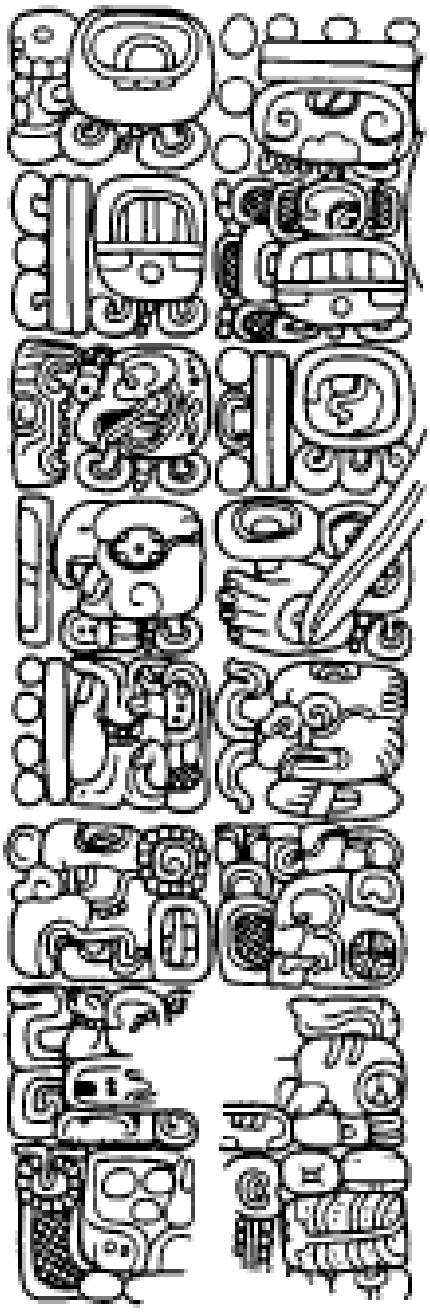


Figure 3.18. Quirigua Stela J records the headband was bound upon K'ahk' Tiliw's head. (Drawing by Matthew Looper 2003:103)

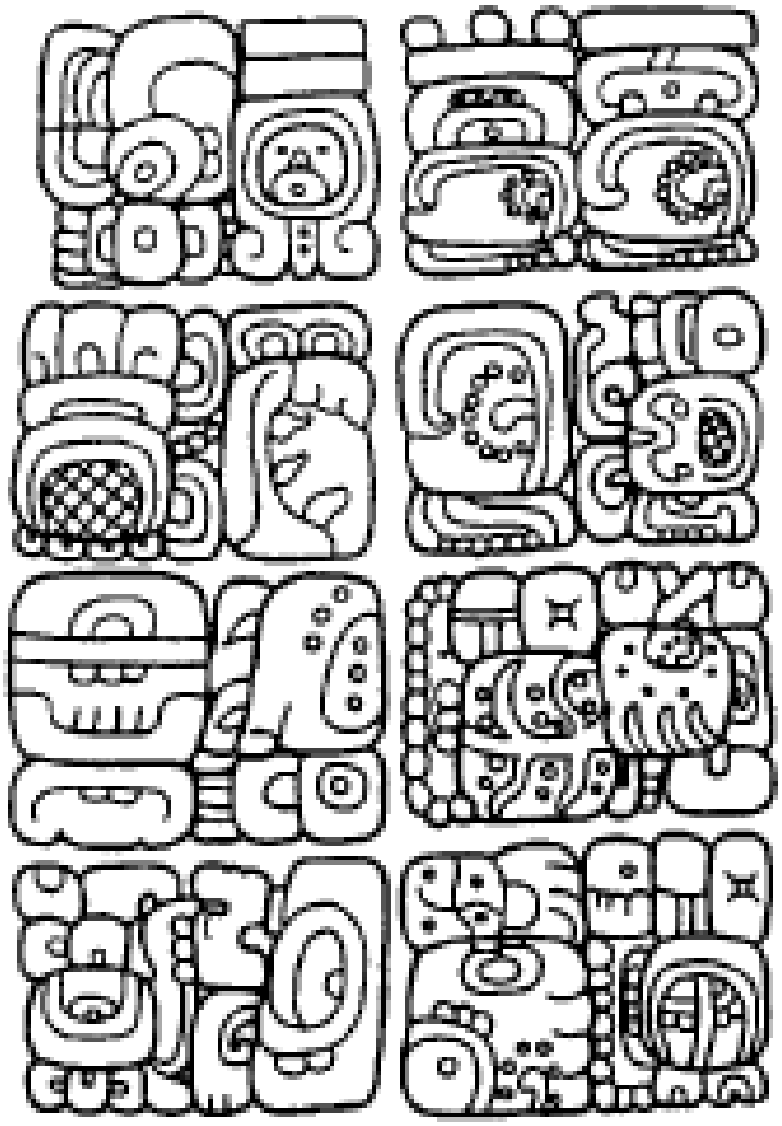


Figure 3.19. Quirigua Stela I records that a ruler from Chik Nab played some role in the accession of K'ahk Tiliw. (Drawing from Schele and Looper 1996:127)

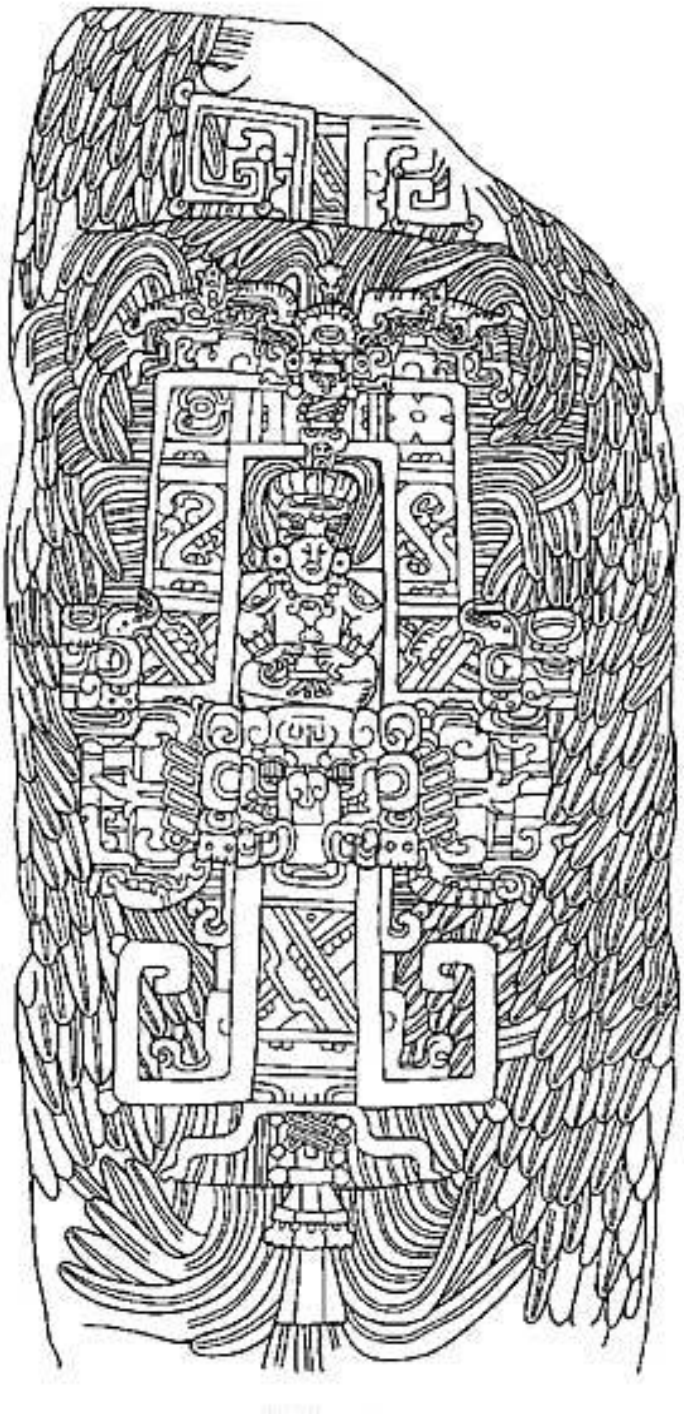


Figure 3.20. Quirigua Stela I east face. Possible niche accession scene. (Drawing by Matthew Looper 2003:194)

Figure 3.21. Tikal Stela 31. Iconographic mixture of Teotihuacan and Maya symbolism. (Drawing by John Montgomery, courtesy of FAMSI).

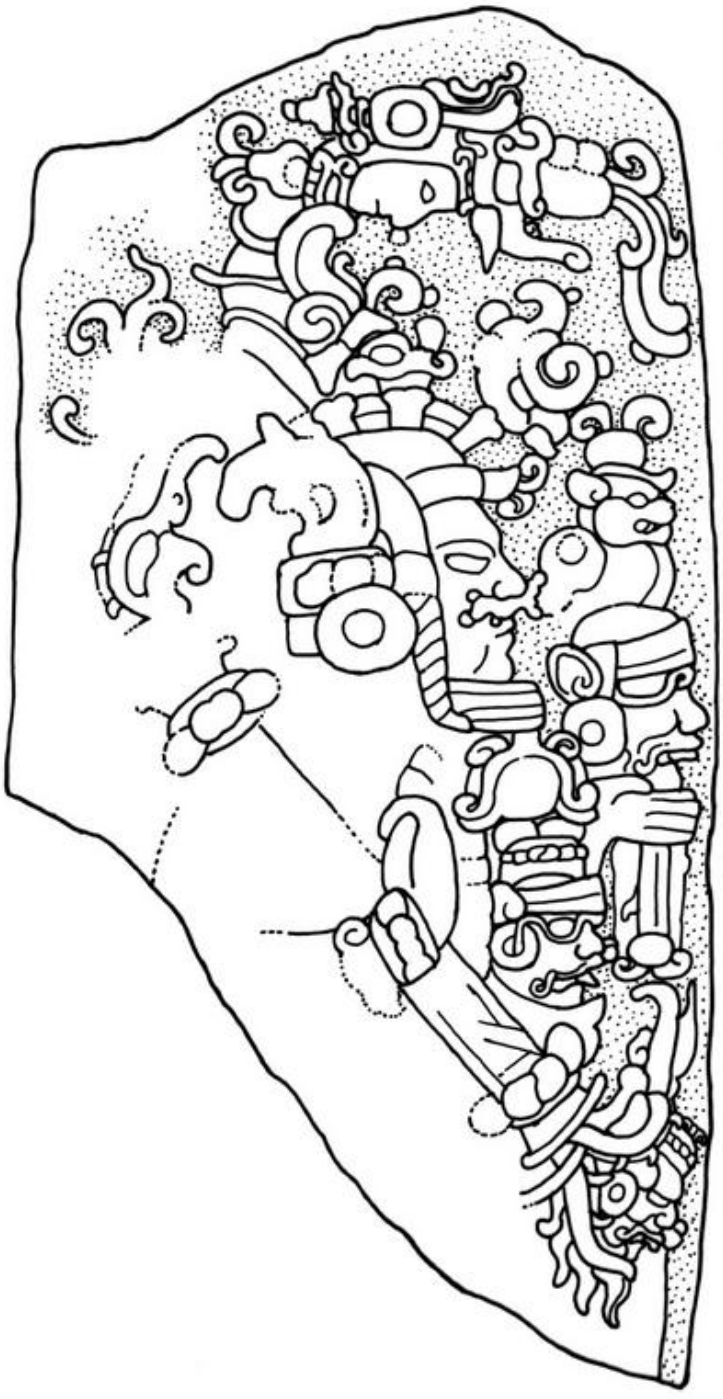


Figure 3.22. Tikal Stela 29. The earliest depiction of a ruler from Tikal, AD 292. (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

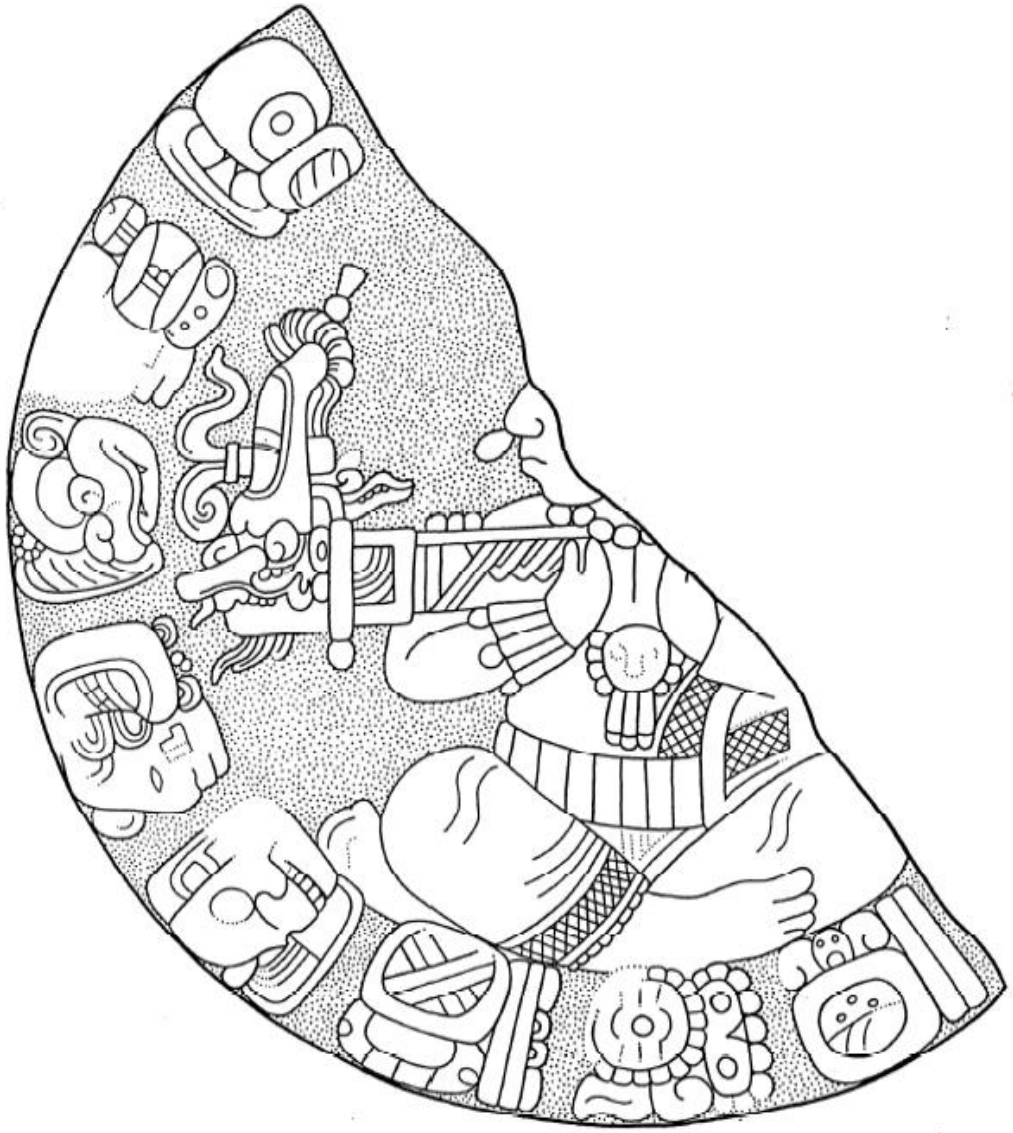


Figure 3.23. Tonina Monument 144. (Drawing by Lucia Henderson, courtesy of CMHI)

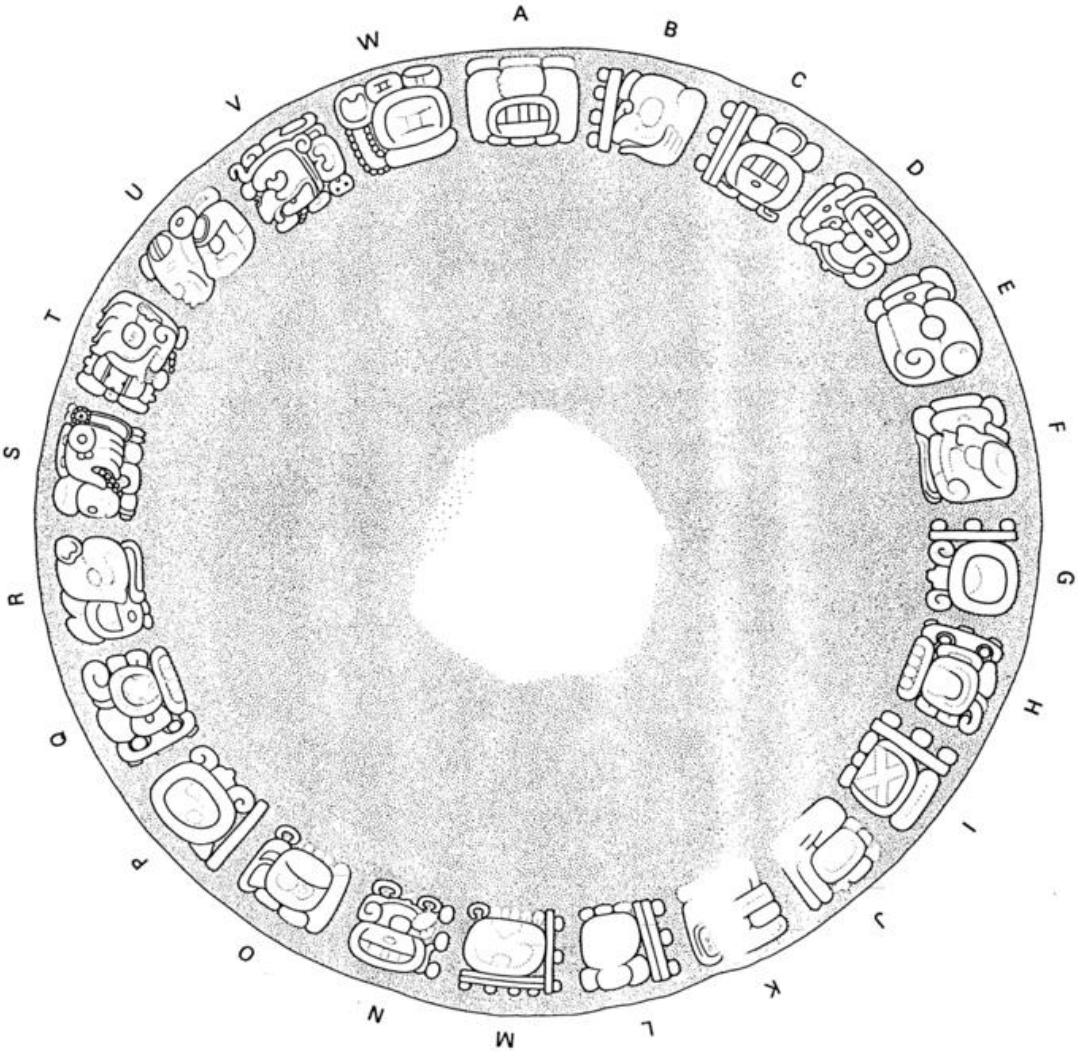


Figure 3.24. Tonina Monument 111. K'inich B'aaknal Chaak scatters blood on the day of his accession (at S). (Drawing by Ian Graham, 1999, 6:3, courtesy of CMHI).

Figure 3.25. Yaxchilán Lintel 21. Bird Jaguar IV's "seating" six days after his accession date. (Drawing by von Euw, 3:49, courtesy of CMHI)

Figure 3.26. Yaxchilán Lintel 1. The only recorded instance of a ruler performing a dance on his day of accession. (Drawing by Ian Graham, 3:31, courtesy of CMHI)

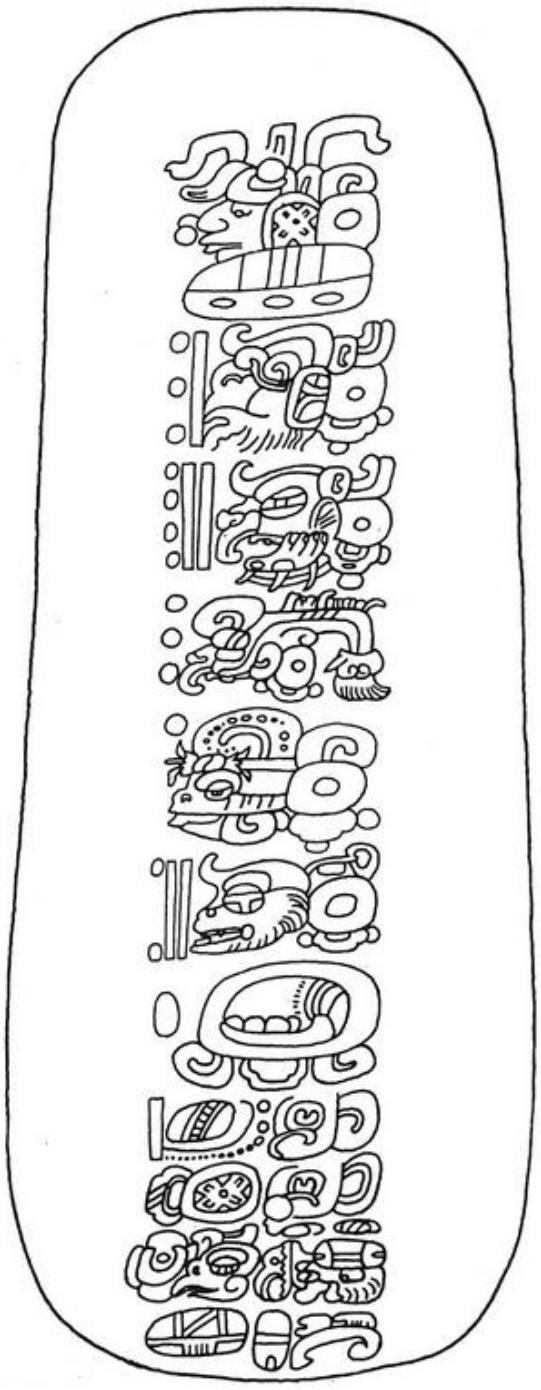


Figure 3.27. The Leiden Plaque. Chanal Chak Chapaat is seated at the *chi*-altar place. (Drawing by John Montgomery, courtesy of FAMSI).

Figure 3.28. The Tablet of the Slaves. Presentation of the "drum-major" headdress with Jester God diadem. (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

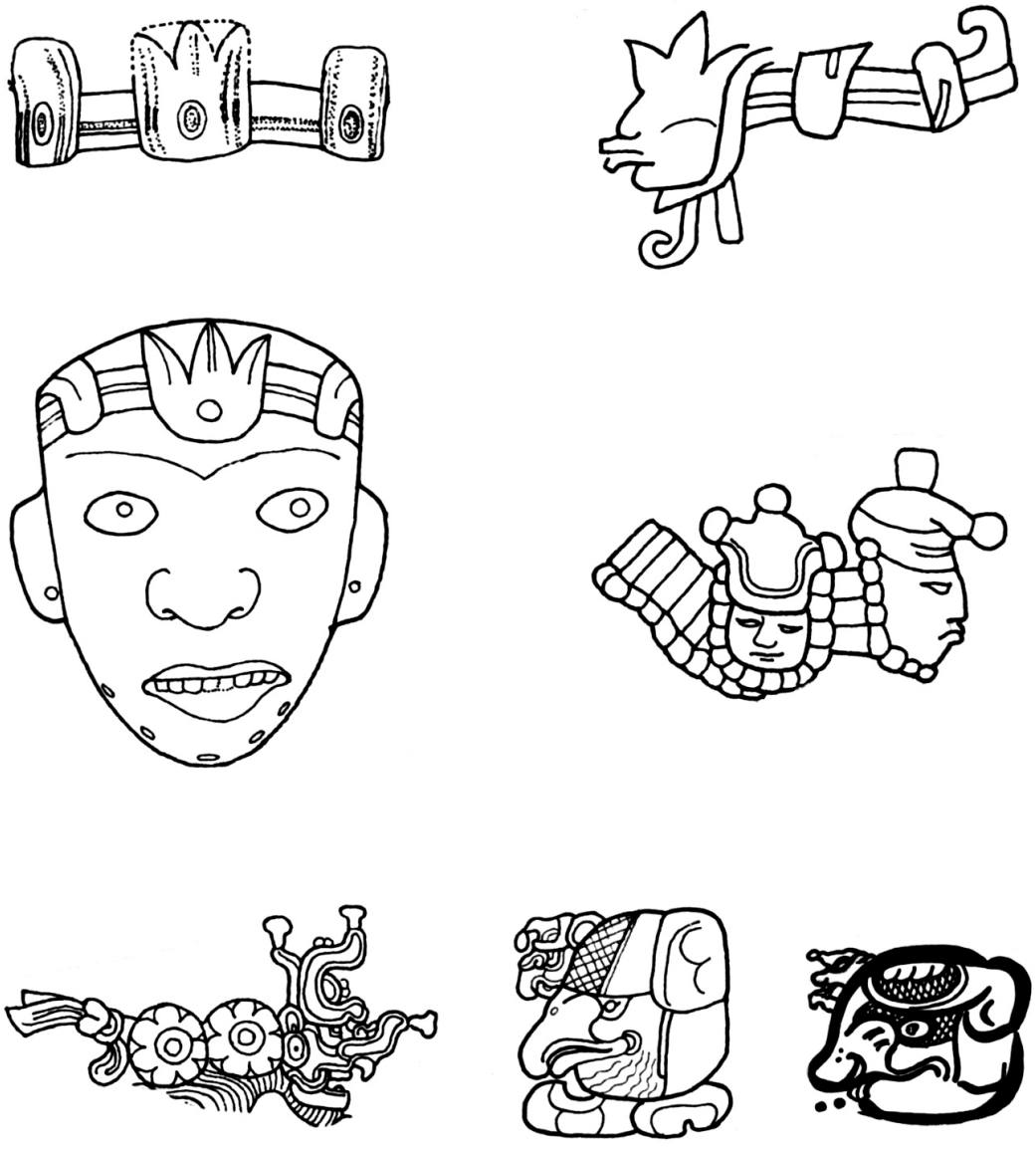


Figure 3.29. Variety of Jester God headbands. Drawing by Linda Schele (in Schele and Freidel 1990:115)

Figure 3.30. Olmec pectoral reused by Late Preclassic Maya. Text contains earliest known example of *chum* (“seating”) glyph (at A5). Drawing by Harri Kettunen (in Kettunen and Helmke 2009:10, Figure 5)

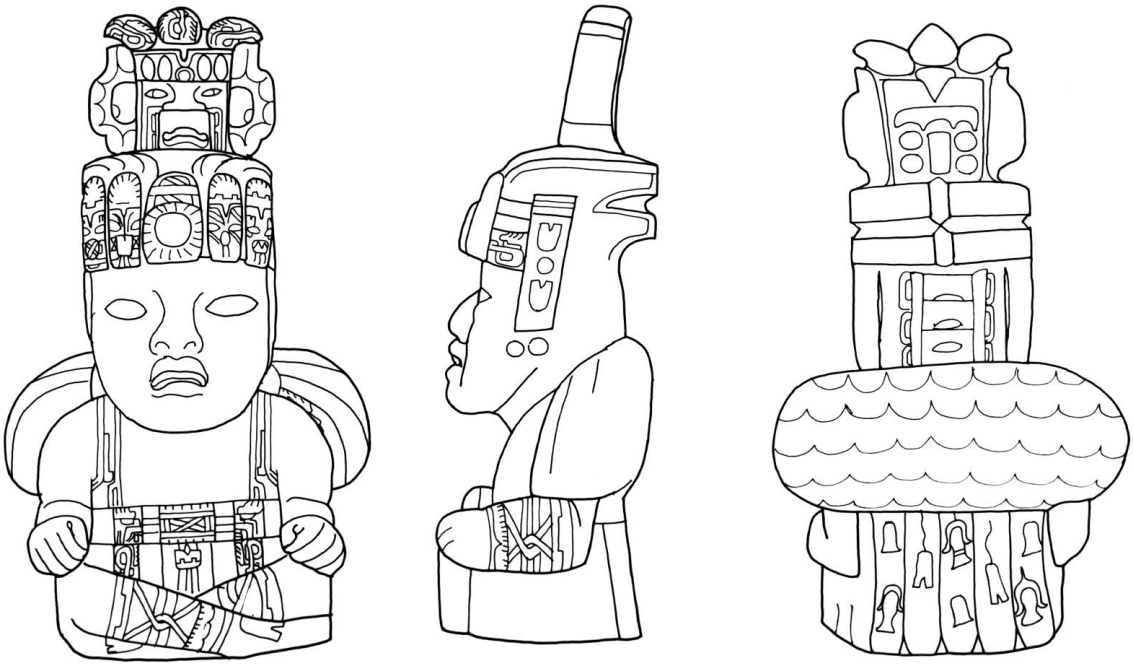


Figure 3.31. Formative period example of trefoil headband. (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI)

Figure 3.32. Detail of Copan Altar Q. K'inich Yax K'uk Mo' wearing a turban, a marker of Copanec identity, holding a burning dart, which alludes to his glorious resurrection as the Sun God. (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI)

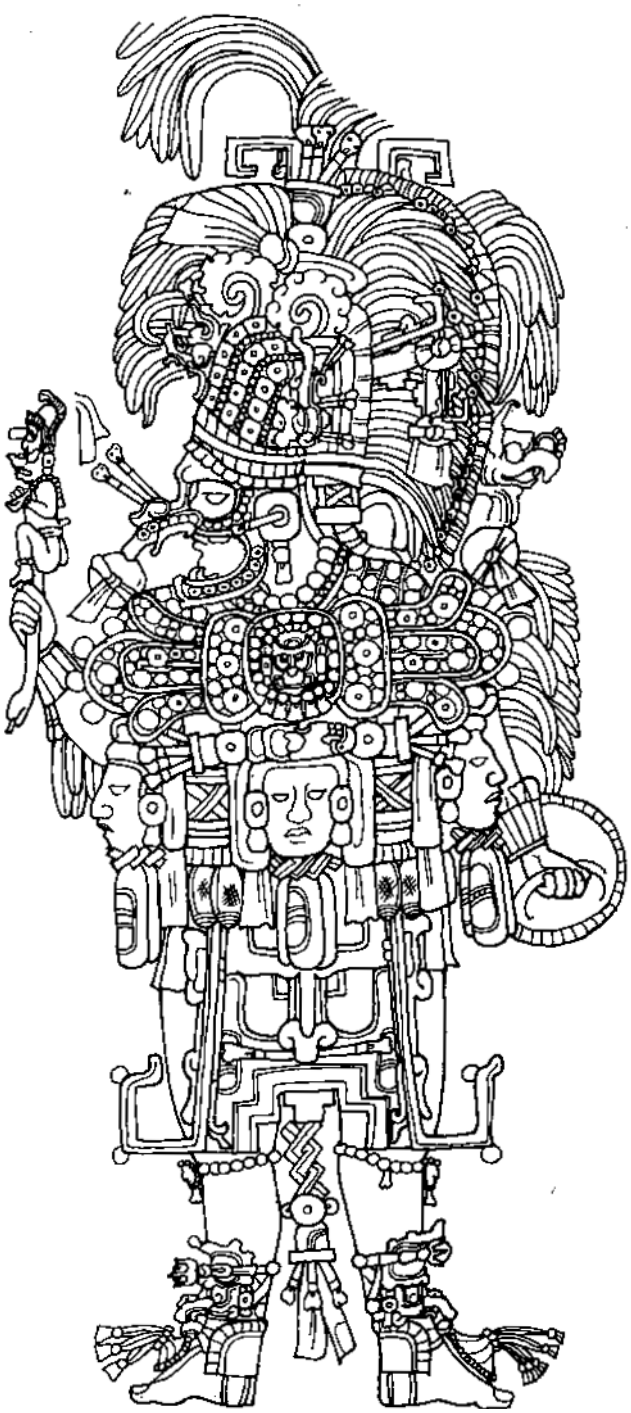


Figure 3.33. Dos Pilas Stela 1. Itzamnaaaj K'awiil dons the *ko'haw* after Dos Pilas' defeat of Tikal in 705. (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI)

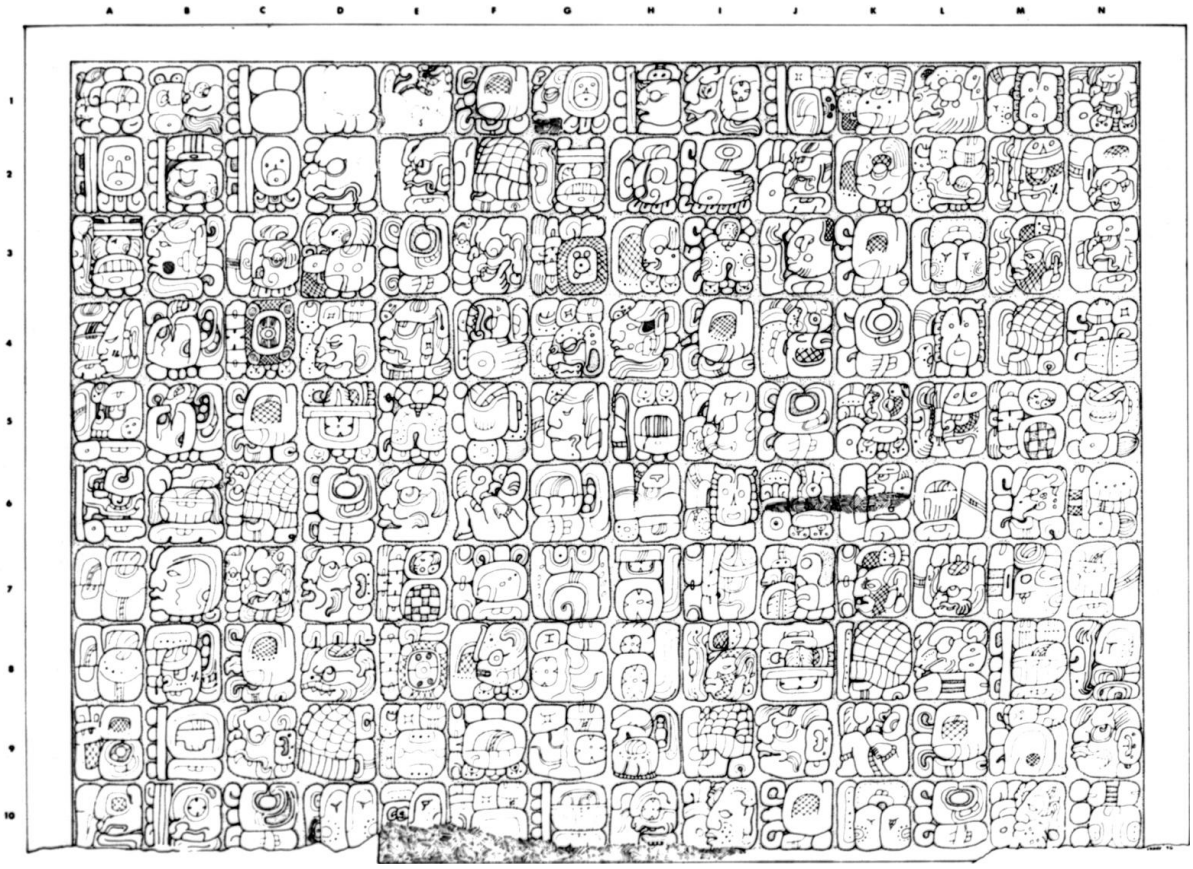


Figure 3.34. Temple of the Inscriptions central panel, mentions the *ko'haw* helmet six times (C6, D9, F2, I9,K8, and M4). (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI)

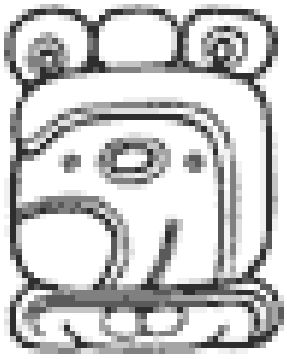


Figure 3.35. Parentage statement typically linking mother to child, but sometimes denoted relationship between rulers and their gods. *juntan/huntan*. Lit. “cherished one”. (Drawing by John Montgomery, courtesy of FAMSI).

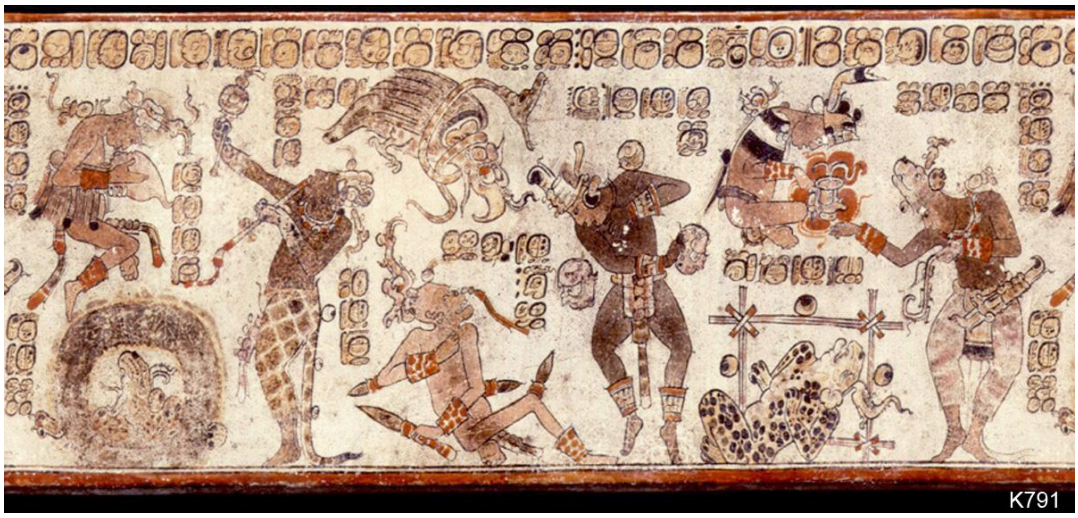


Figure 3.36. K791. (Photo courtesy of Justin Kerr).

Chapter 4

Maya Gods and Ancestors

There does not appear to have been a general concept of 'religion' in ancient Mesoamerica (Pharo 2007:62), nor was there a sharp division between the natural and the supernatural realms. Rather, it has been characterized as a monistic system, which views natural and supernatural forces as a "unified whole" (Sachse 2004:11). Yet gods were not merely abstract concepts, but rather tangible (or at least perceptible) beings that could be touched when in the form of masks or effigies, or seen in dreams, visions, or whisps of smoke from sacred offerings (ibid.). Although we lack a Classic Mayan term that refers generally to physical representations of their gods, they likely had a concept analogous to the Nahuatl term *ixiptla*, which is usually translated as "representation" or "substitute" (Stuart 1996b:162). The *ixiptlas* were imbued with sacred power or divine energy known as *teotl*, which enabled humans to physically interact with the supernatural realm (Boone 1989:4; Houston and Stuart 1996:297; Stuart 1996b:162; Hvidtfelt 1958).

As discussed previously, living rulers could blur the distinction between humans and gods through impersonation rituals, but there is still some debate as to whether living Maya rulers were considered perpetually god-like or merely 'holy' during their lifetimes. In English we label rulers as "sacred" or "holy" and use nuanced understanding to distinguish them from the pure "divinity" of gods, but the Classic Maya had but a single qualifier that encompassed all of these concepts: *k'uh*. This word is used to label gods, and it is used as a root in the title for supreme lords, *k'uhul ajaw*, which may call into

question whether there was a qualitative difference between living rulers and gods from an emic perspective (Sacshe 2004:11).

What is clear, however, is that after death some rulers were elevated to the status of a god. In the literature the process is variously referred to as deification, apotheosis, or euhemerism, but there are subtle differences in the terms. Deification generally refers to the concept of becoming god-like, apotheosis means to be elevated to the status of a god, and euhemerismis a more specific concept wherein deified heroes were incorporated into the official cultic pantheon after their deaths (Proskouriakoff 1978:116-117; Selz 2008:21). [51] Maya rulers expected to be euhemerized, but in order to fully understand the afterlife they expected as gods, we must first seek to understand the nature of Maya deities.

The Ideology of Gods and Ancestors

Paul Schellhas attempted the first in-depth study of Late Postclassic Maya deities over a century ago in his classic work *Representations of Deities of the Maya Manuscripts* (1904). Schellhas created a classification system for identifying the deities that were represented in the Late Postclassic codices from Yucatan, which continues to be used today. Karl Taube's important volume *The Major Gods of Ancient Yucatan* (1992) updated Schellhas' study and discussed the defining characteristics of each major god and the symbolism embodied in each.

[51] Named in honor of the ancient Greek philosopher Euhemerus, who claimed gods were deified historical figures.

The study of Maya gods is an admittedly tricky task, to the point where even defining what a god is can be daunting. Despite remarkable advancements in the field of epigraphy, our understanding of Classic period gods is still "gravely opaque" (Grube 2004:59). Houston and Stuart (1996) lamented the scholarly ethnocentrism that has hindered understanding of Classic Maya deities, since a western conception of gods as perfect, immortal, and discrete beings is not applicable to the Mesoamerican pantheon. Miller and Martin (2004:145) note that Maya gods resist neatly defined categorization because they often merge with other gods, similar to many Egyptian deities.

Although a great deal of change occurred between the Classic and Late Postclassic periods concerning the identities of specific gods and their attributes, Vail's (2000) assessment of the nature of Postclassic gods can perhaps usefully be applied to the earlier Classic Period. She states, "The picture that emerges is one of a series of deity complexes or clusters, composed of a small number of underlying divinities, each having various aspects, or manifestations" (Vail 2000:123). Grube (2004:74) suggests that different manifestations of a single god may be functionally equivalent to the Avatars of Vishnu which do not contain the full essence of the god but rather contain only certain aspects or attributes of the god necessary for specific purposes. Taube (1992:8) broadly defines Maya gods as "supernatural sentient beings that appear in sacred narrative," and I will adhere to that definition throughout.

Another possibility, perhaps, is that some of these "manifestations" merely represent different episodes stemming from a particular god's mythology. Looper (2003:29) notes that the names, ages, appearances, attributes and even the gender of Maya divinities are

fluid, as are their domains of influence. The modern Ch'orti' conceptualize one of their principal deities as a maize spirit in the rainy season but as a solar being during the dry season. But even in the course of a single day the solar deity shifts identities:

> They say that the Sun has not just one name. The one by which he is best known by people continues to be Jesus Christ. They say that when it is just getting light its name is Child Redeemer of the world. One name is San Gregorio the Illuminator. One name is San Antonio of Judgment. One name is Child Guardian. One is Child Refuge. One is Child San Pascual. One is Child Succor. One is Child Creator. They say that at each hour, one of these is its name. (Fought 1972:485)

Each of the above manifestations has distinctive individual attributes for the Ch'orti'. For example, San Antonio is the fire god, San Gregorio emits beams of light, and San Pascual is Venus as morning star (ibid, cited in Carrasco 2005:260). Interestingly, San Pascaul is also the patron saint of death and is skeletal (Christenson 2001:208), and is therefore analogous to the Aztec god Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, the skeletal Lord of the Dawn and Venus as Morning Star (Taube 1993:15; Beirhorst 1992). As Morning Star, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli "battled the rising sun at the first dawning at Teotihuacan" (Taube 1993:15). In the case of the Ch'orti' mythology surrounding San Pascual, then, it may seem contradictory to the Western mind that he is both Venus as Morning Star (an enemy of the sun) and a manifestation of the sun during a particular hour of the day, but such is the fluid nature of Maya conceptions of divinity.

But in many instances, ethnohistoric and ethnographic sources may obfuscate rather than clarify, since only a scant few of the hundreds of theonyms that are recorded can be clearly identified anciently. And those few whose names can be identified seem to have functioned in far different capacities anciently. This is not to suggest that all aspects of Maya religion changed over time, but diachronic variation has led to discontinuity

between some aspects of Classic period religion and the beliefs and practices attested to in the 16th-17th centuries.

The Eminence of Maya Gods

Maya gods were not just of a different order than humans; they were considered superior beings that could control the forces of nature and played an active role in human destiny, for good or bad (Sabourin 1973:11-12). Although the specific motives are not spelled out in the ancient inscriptions, the importance of proper worship is highlighted in the creation narrative of the Popol Vuh. After failing to create beings that could make acceptable offerings, the creator gods said "Let's try to make a giver of praise, giver of respect, provider, nurturer" (Tedlock 1996:68). They wanted beings that could "keep our days," "glorify us," and "invoke" and "remember us" (ibid). Unlike the previous unsuccessful attempts, it appears that modern humans were allowed to survive because they properly repaid their debt to the gods (Spenard 2006).

Humans worshiped and petitioned the gods through offerings but they could not force the gods into action (Zender 2004:46), although there was a sense of 'negotiation' with the gods (Monaghan 1995:215-216). The rulers were thus intercessors between humans and the gods, but were not believed to directly control the supernatural. The gods were expected to respond to properly offered sacrifices in a type of *quid pro quo* contractual relationship (Houston and Stuart 1996:292; Thompson 1970:170).

Our purpose here is not to categorically define every Classic period god – an impossible task – but rather to discuss the gods that were most highly favored by certain

rulers from some of the major polities. More specifically, we will discuss which gods were called upon to sanction the ritual actions of rulers during their lifetimes, and examine which gods were most relevant in the context of a ruler's resurrection and apotheosis.

Local Variation in the Maya Pantheon

While there are certainly pan-Maya deities that are known across the Lowland region, euhemerized ancestors and tutelary gods are typically specific to particular polities or even dynasties within a polity (Sachse 2004:8). Because of these particularities, it is futile to attempt to encompass Maya religion within a single conceptual framework (ibid.:20). As Houston (1999:51) noted, Maya theology was conceptualized "in local ways that expressed local needs" (see also Monaghan 2008:28; Miller and Martin 2004:20). Houston and Stuart (1996:302) similarly inform us:

> There is no one set of gods codified and venerated by all Classic Maya. Rather, there are localized cults. A god revered at one site may partly share the name of a god at another, but we cannot presume an identity of ritual roles, meanings, or history of development. A 'creation' event at Dos Pilas, Guatemala, indicates the participation of local gods at an event usually interpreted in pan-Maya terms (cf. Freidel et al. 1993: 64-75 and Houston 1993). Future studies of Classic religion must take this variety into account and avoid using one site, especially Palenque, as a paradigmatic model for beliefs elsewhere in the Yucatan peninsula.

Grube advocates creating a "microhistory" of Maya supernaturals by carefully examining local traditions, attributes, and naming patterns to better understand local variation (Grube 2004:75; Gillespie and Joyce 1998). Yet even within a single site we are faced with the possibility that different belief systems were held both diachronically and synchronically. Early in Copan's history, for example, rulers appear to have emphasized

pan-Maya gods, but as time progressed they began placing more emphasis on local gods and ancestors (Alexandre Tokovinine, personal communication, 2008). Evidence for synchronic variation within a site can perhaps be inferred from ethnographic examples, where it is not uncommon for religious specialists of a single community to provide divergent explanations for the same phenomenon . Among modern Atitecos, for example, there are multiple levels of initiation within the cofradía system, each with increasing access to esoteric knowledge (Carlsen and Prechtel 1991:26).

We are thus faced with the discouraging thought that it is unlikely we will ever be able to reconstruct a precise mythology for even a single site, since we appear to be dealing with "various synchronic states of Maya mythology" between and even within individual polities (Sachse 2004:13). A king's personal gods accompanied the ruler throughout his life. In some instances the ruler and his gods were both "seated" in rulership on the same day (Houston and Inomata 2009:200). Each time a new ruler was enthroned, an adjustment to the local pantheon would be necessary (Monaghan 1995: 307–55). It may seem curious to us that the mythology of a site can change so rapidly, apparently from one ruler to the next, but as Carlsen (1997:181 Footnote 6) has observed among modern Maya groups, "myth can take root very quickly."

Local Patron Gods

Local patron gods were held in equal if not greater esteem than pan-Maya gods. Although many of their names have resisted decipherment, they are frequently listed in the inscriptions. Hamann (2002:354) noted that "the social lives of objects and locations,

the supernatural forces they house, and the social identity of communities are all closely linked." For example, Chimalteco group identity stems from local mountain deities and the images of saints housed on the local church that hold particular significance to the local people (Watanabe 1992:79). Group identity in Mesoamerica is often "spatially exclusive," meaning the traditions of a people are inseparable from the place where they dwell. Monaghan (1995:9) went so far as to suggest that Mesoamerican communities might be better understood as "congregations" because of the power that local deities had in the maintenance of group identity. Local narratives would have served as mythic templates that guided royal ritual and performance (Houston and Stuart 1996:292).

A number of Classic Maya cities appear to have emphasized triadic groupings of gods that were of elevated prominence within the local pantheon (Stuart 2005:160). The individual gods within each triad may have been worshiped outside of a particular polity's borders, but collectively each triad created a diacritical marker of local identity and provided a unique mythological template for each city. We find triads at Caracol (Stela 16), Tikal (Stela 26), Naranjo (HS1 Step II C2b-D2) and throughout Palenque (Staurt 2005:160). These triadic groupings are typically prefixed with an epithet that Mark Van Stone suggests is read *ox-lu-ti-k'uh*, the "Three-Born-Together-Gods" (Fig. 4.1), but Stephen Houston (personal communication, 2011) notes that all of the known examples of the epithet lack isoloble syllables and therefore cannot be confidently deciphered.

La Mar Stela 1 may itemize three gods, 'Ahku'l Muuch, 'Ahk'u'l Xukab', and B'olo'n 'Okte' (Lopes and Davletshin 2004:3), but they lack the qualifying epithet. It is

also possible that this is actually only naming two deities, as there may be a single deity named Ahkul Muuch Ahkul Xukab. The inscription on the Sotheby's Panel describes the dedication of a *waybil* for Ahkul Muuch Ahkul Xukab (ibid), which may indicate the name represents a single deity. Interestingly, La Mar and Sak Tz'i appear to have shared the patronage of Akul Muuch Akul Xukuub' (Biro 2004:19).

Not all sites emphasized triads, however. Many sites appear to have had two primary patron deities, or at least they would pair up particular sets of gods from their larger local pantheons on specific occasions. Yaxchilán emphasizes a local variant of the rain god, Ah K'ahk' O' Chaak, as well as the Jaguar God of the Underworld. A fascinating passage from Yaxchilán Lintel 35 (C5-D8) claims a war captive became the "eating" (*u-we'-iiy?*) of these two principal patron gods (Houston et al.2006:123). Tortuguero's two principal patron gods appear to be Ihk' K'ahk'-Ti' Hix and Yax Suutz' (Gronemeyer and MacLeod 2010:59). [52] On Monument 6, they "awaken the hearts" of other supernaturals, such as eight turtle Bakabs(?) and four raccoons who appear to have had some role in Tortuguero's local creation mythology. [53] Dos Pilas and Aguateca similarly appear to have had two principal gods. The Paddler Gods can be found across the Lowlands, but Tonina appears to have given them more attention than any of the other sites (Mathews 1977). The Paddlers appear on Ixlu Stela 2 where they oversee a scattering event (Fig. 4.2; Stuart et al 1999:169).

[52] Yax Suutz' may also be mentioned on the East Tablet from the Temple of the Inscriptions in conjunction with a "giving" ritual (Guenter 2007:13).

[53] The raccoons may be conceptual cognates with the four opossums found in the New Year Pages of the Dresden Codex (Gronemeyer and MacLeod 2010:56 Footnote 63; see also Stuart 2003:3-4).

At Piedras Negras, we have the names of several of their patron gods listed in conjunction with temple dedication festivities that occurred in 518, although the narrative begins four years earlier, perhaps with the accession of a new king, Ruler C (Martin and Grube 2008:141).

Some gods are attested from multiple sites, but are not necessarily pan-Maya. Bolon Yokte' K'uh, for example, is a god (or perhaps a set of gods) known from Classic period Tortuguero (Monument 6), Palenque, and La Mar, and interestingly, from the Chilam Balam of Chumayel. Palenque and Naranjo both commemorated the accession of the "Zip Monster," but unsurprisingly, they differ on the details such as the accession date. This likely reflects variation in the local mythologies between the two sites, although it is possible that the Zip Monster's history is somewhat akin to that of GI at Palenque, who appears to have had accession events both before and after he was "born" (Guenter 2007:43).

Texts from Copan and Quirigua confirm that rulers had exclusive claim on certain gods, a practice that continued at least into the Terminal Classic, as evidenced by single story masonry rooms that housed the personal gods of the rulers of Chichen Itza (Houston and Inomata 2009:200). At Copan, the local patron gods are sometimes referred to as *koknoom*, which means "guardians" or "those who watch, attend," which suggest they served as protectors of the ruler and his dominion (ibid:204). Modern Highland groups consider deified ancestors to be protectors of their community. Among the Cakchiquel, for example, images or effigies of deified ancestors are referred to as *chajal*, which literally means "guard" or "guardian" (Orellana 1984:96).

Euhemerized Ancestors

The term "euhemerism" refers to the process by which dead kings, heroes and ancestors are transformed into deities (Marcus 1992:301). Powerful individuals maintain their authority after death, and the living continue to accept the authority of the deceased (Weeks 2001:21). Among contemporary Maya, there does not appear to be a significant distinction between major gods and local deified ancestors; they are not second class citizens of the divine realm. Ancestors are equally prominent, if not more so, than major gods. Colonial and contemporary offerings to ancestors mirror the sacrifices the K'iche made to Tojil (Sachse 2004:8).[54]

There is abundant evidence for ancestor worship in the Classic period as well. Offerings were burned in order to feed and conjure the gods and ancestors, as attested to in the iconography. Ancient ancestor shrines known as *waybil* – places of sleeping or dreaming for the ancestors – were fairly common as well (Grube and Schele 1990; Houston and Stuart 1989). Structure 10L-29 at Copan may be an example of a *waybil*. It is an L-shaped vaulted building, and the upper façade was adorned with a series of rectangular panels, each depicting serpent heads emerging from the corners, similar to ancestor cartouches found on panels at Palenque and Yaxchilán (Harrison and Andrews 2004:132). There are eight or nine large wall niches inside its two rooms, which Harrison and Andrews (ibid.) speculate may have held ancestral effigies (though no effigies were actually found within the niches). Burn marks are evident on the floor at the entryways

[54] Tojil is a major creator god that brings rain, fire and sustenance, and is also associated with the Sun God (Sachse and Christenson 2005:15).

and in the corners of the room, which may indicate that burnt offerings were regularly made to the ancestors (ibid).

Not all dead relatives from whom one claims descent are ancestors. An ancestor is a culturally constructed product of a selective process (McAnany 1995:60). Ancestors represent "a select subgroup of a population who are venerated by name because particular resource rights and obligations were inherited through them by their descendants" (ibid: 161), and Maya rulers were certainly not the only ones with prominent ancestors that were venerated. "Commoners" buried their ancestors—but not all their predecessors—within their houses and residential compounds to lay claim to their resource rights and as a marker of inheritance (ibid). Over time, domestic structures that housed the remains of ancestors were often recontextualized into a ritual shrine or temple throughout the lowland area (ibid). McAnany (1995:161-162) argues that these interments created a "text-free genealogy" that would have been known and recognized as valid by the ancient Maya but have proven difficult for modern archaeologists to interpret. Ancestor worship likely began as a familial practice that linked lineages to specific landholdings, but Classic period elites modified the ideology of ancestor worship in order to validate royal claims of divinity, which could then be used to legitimize systems of taxation and tribute (ibid:125).

Worship was not limited to an individual's own ancestors, however. Colby (1976:75) has shown that the modern Ixil Maya pray to the departed souls of town leaders (*b'o7q'ol tenam*), native town priests (*b'o7q'ol b'aal watz tiix*), calendar priests (*7ahq'ih*), and curers (*b'aal wat tiix*) in addition to their own lineal forebears. Bunzel (1952:270)

similarly demonstrated that deceased public office-holders were invoked along with an individual's own ancestors in the church at Chichicastenango because they are believed to now hold positions of authority in the world of the spirits. Landa (Tozzer 1941) confirms that, during the Colonial period, lineage heads and people of position were venerated after their deaths and their remains were given preferential treatment beyond those of the general public.

At certain Classic period sites, dynastic founders served as culture heroes and were celebrated and worshiped for generations, while at other sites, the founders are virtually forgotten by their successors. The inscriptions at Palenque attribute K'uk' Bahlam I with being their dynastic founder in AD 431. However, the first mention we ever get of him is from late 7th century retrospective texts recounting the founding of Palenque (Martin and Grube 2008:156). Unlike the mythological births of the Triad, which were back in deep time, or even the quasi-mythological dates associated with Ukokan Chan in 967 BC, the texts give K'uk' Bahlam's birth date as a believable 8.18.0.13.6 5 Kimi 14 K'ayab (30 March 397). A stone censer from Palenque portrays K'uk' Bahlam, who is identified by elements in his headdress that convey his name (Fig. 4.3). These stone censers were typically used for ancestor veneration (Miller and Martin 2004:230). The dearth of evidence indicating K'uk' Bahlam was worshiped prior to the late 7th century may suggest they took a revisionist approach to their own past in regards to their founder. Although K'uk' Bahlam eventually came to some prominence, his importance to the dynasty is dwarfed by the significance that Late Classic rulers placed on their purely mythological founders. In contrast, K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' was not only the founder of

the Copanec dynasty, but a revered culture hero as well. From the moment of his death, a cult of veneration began and was consistently maintained for nearly four hundred years (Martin and Grube 2008:194).

The Actions of Gods and Ancestors

Having discussed what gods and ancestors are, we now turn to what it is they actually do. One of their primary responsibilities was to be present at royal rituals, whether through ethereal smoke or in a more tangible form such as a statue, effigy censer, or mortuary bundle. Rice (1999:41) argued that modeled image centers were believed to be living representations of deceased ancestors that functioned as "material implements of power" for rulers who claimed to interact with or receive divine inspiration from the dead.

As Fitzsimmons (2009:15) notes, deified kings were still involved in "consultations, oversight committees (albeit supernatural ones), and other forms of episodic contact." Although typically depicted as peering down from the heavens, they were understood to be present and co-participants in the rituals (Looper 2006:827). While their presence was an integral aspect of rituals, their *yilaj* or "seeing" role was not on par with the *ukabjiiy* or authorizing role associated a superordinate ruler's presence. The gods and ancestors role was to "see," as on Caracol Stela 6 when a deified ancestor "sees" the censing ritual performed by Yajaw Te' K'inich II (Fig. 4.4; Houston 2006:142).

In some instances, the presence of the "Principal Bird Deity" (PBD) appears to have provided supernatural sanction for important ritual events, such as accessions (Bardawil

1976:15-16) and sacrificial offerings (Taube et al. 2010). The PBD may have originated with the Olmec (Taube et al. 2010:35), but depictions of it are found most commonly in the Preclassic and Early Classic (Cortez 1986). It is common on monuments from Kaminaljuyu (ex. Altar 10, Stela 11), Takalik Abaj (ex. Altars 13, 20 and 113, Stela 2) and ubiquitous on Izapan monuments (Guernsey 2006). The West Wall murals from San Bartolo depict it atop the four directional world trees (Taube et al. 2010:37). In the Preclassic period, the PBD appears to have had strong solar associations and may have been a particular aspect of the sun, but it was also associated with maize, agricultural fertility and wealth (Taube et al. 2010:31-41). In the Classic period, however, the PBD seems to have been the avian aspect or avatar of Itzamnaaj, and is even directly called *Muut Itzamnaaj* ("The Itzamnaaj Bird") in Classic period texts from Tonina (Miller and Martin 2004:145, Plate 75) and Xcalumkin (Guernesy 2006:169 Note 32).[55] But it is also identified with Vucub Caquix of the Popol Vuh, the arrogant bird with solar associations (Bardawil 1976; Taube et al. 2010). Its presence can be found in the Classic period at Piedras Negras, where it appears on the accession monuments of several rulers (see Chapter 3), but it is not as dominant as it was in the Preclassic or Early Classic. Yet it continued to be depicted in the Late Postclassic and it appears in the Paris Codex (Taube 1987). Beyond its temporal longevity, the Principal Bird Deity even transcended cultural boundaries and extended into the Zapotec area, where it is referred to as the *Ave de Pico Ancho* (ibid.:4).

[55] David Stuart first proposed the reading *Mut Itzamnah* in a personal letter to Linda Schele in 1994.

Overseeing of Rituals

A common trope denoting a god or ancestor was a "floating" figure in relation to a living individual, often appearing in S-shaped scrolls to mark their divine status (Stuart 1984:11; Houston 2006:142). The Classic period "floater" convention has its origins in the Formative period (McAnany 1995:161). For example, La Venta Stela 2 (Fig. 2.15) shows a ruler surrounded by floating supernaturals, who all wield ritual objects identical to the one he holds in his hands (Newsome 2001:17-18). Stuart (1988:221) suggested the six floating supernaturals on La Venta Stela 2 were royal ancestors that were invoked to pass sacred regalia to the ruler, which established his divinely sanctioned right to rule. More recently, however, Taube (2004:15) suggested they are forms of the Olmec rain god who don ballplayer regalia (as does the ruler) and the objects they wield are shinny sticks for playing stickball. Both gods and ancestors frequently bear sacred objects that we may conclude are being offered to the king, and the very presence of these supernatural beings suggest that the ruler is qualitatively different; he is the one with visionary and cosmological powers that only he can control (Newsome 2001:17).

In the Preclassic and Early Classic periods, ancestors were commonly depicted as down-gazing deified heads that appear directly over the head of the living ruler, such as Kaminaljuyu Stela 11 (Fig. 4.5) and Takalik Abaj Stelae 2 and 3 (Marcus 1976; Tokovinine and Fialko 2007:4). Marcus (1976:43) suggests these may have been symbolic or abstract ancestors rather than lineal forebears, but the purpose they served was to legitimize the king's right to rule. Unlike the Middle Formative Olmec depictions of supernaturals who seem to pass ritual objects to the ruler, the Late Preclassic and Early

Classic period "floaters" appear to have had a more passive role as witnesses of the events whose mere presence served to sanction them. For example, the front of Naranjo Stela 45 (Fig. 4.6) depicts a little known deceased ruler named Tzik'in Bahlam as one of these disembodied ancestral heads floating directly above the protagonist, the ruler Naatz Chan Ahk (Tokovinine and Fialko 2007:4). Interestingly, Naatz Chan Ahk himself appears to have become a deified ancestor, depicted as one of several ancestors on Naranjo Stela 43 (late sixth century) about two hundred years after his death, where he floats above the protagonist, Aj Wosaj Chan K'inich (Martin 2005a:8). Interestingly, one of the other ancestors is identified by the glyphs in his headdress as Chak Tok Ich'aak II, who may have been an ancestor to Aj Wosaj Chan K'inich (Houston 2009:162). Floaters could appear alone or in groups. Naranjo Stela 43 depicts several gods and ancestors floating above Aj Wosaaj Chan K'inich (Martin 2005:8).

By the Classic period there is a shift away from disembodied floating heads to full-bodied ancestors who sit above the ruler in solar cartouches or in clearly demarcated upper registers of scenes (Tokovinine and Fialko 2007:4). The solar cartouches that the ancestors sit in are elaborated glyphs for *yaxk'in* ('first sun'), demonstrating a growing conceptual linkage between ancestors and the sun in the Classic period (Martin 2006:158; Tate 1992:59-62; Taube 2004b:286-287). At Yaxchilán, for example, deceased male rulers are typically in solar cartouches and their deified consorts are within lunar cartouches (Tate 1992; Fig. 4.7). Ancestors at times display the "Zip monster" squared snout, which appears to denote solar heat or "hot breath" and is sometimes used as a diagnostic feature of the Sun God (Stuart 2005:23; Houston et al. 2006:156), suggesting

equivalency between ancestors and the Sun God and carrying connotations of the post-mortal paradise of Flower Mountain (Taube 2004a). Curiously, the mortuary bundle on Stela 40 from Piedras Negras emanates this hot breath from a burial vault (indicated by a partial quatrefoil) that rises up above the skyband and then descends upon the supplicant who offers incense. The supplicant is Ruler 4, and the mortuary bundle may be that of his mother or perhaps another prominent female ancestor (Hammond 1981). Her exaggerated size denotes her "supranormal status" (Stone 1989:168) and her Teotihuacan-style headdress was likely used to imply dynastic ties. Interestingly, she emanates hot, solar breath, which may be an intentional contrast to the deified women of Yaxchilán (a rival of Piedras Negras), who typically have lunar rather than solar associations.

There is another class of "floater" that may not represent ancestors. At first glance, the Late Classic Ucanal Stela 4 (10.1.0.0.0) and Jimbal Stela 1 (10.2.10.0.0; Fig. 4.8) appear to depict floating ancestors (cf. Marcus 1976:42), but the figures lack any kind of ancestral referent and are likely some other class of being (McAnany 1998:284). Wilson-Mosley et al. (2010) suggests they are supernatural "travelers" that bridge the natural and supernatural realms in transitional or liminal periods. They are typically depicted riding or clinging to objects that traverse the three levels of the universe, such as trees, twisted ropes, umbilical cords, clouds, and smoke. The Hauberg Stela may depict both a floating ancestor and these types of "travelers" (Fig. 4.9).

Ancestors are not limited to the "floater" form. They are sometimes embodied in jade jewelry and worn as pectorals or hanging from belts (Houston 2006:142). These ancestral portraits could visually depict a ruler's name in their headdress or on their forehead, as on

the belt ornament from Caracol Stela 6 that depicts K'ahk Ujol K'inich (Houston and Stuart 1998:86 Figure 11). As a ruler walked or danced, the suspended slats of jade would emit loud, distinctive clinking sounds, essentially giving voice to the dead ancestors (Taube 2005:32).

The presence of ancestors during rituals is common at Palenque, though they typically do not use the "floater" trope. Instead, deceased ancestors are depicted interacting with their descendants as if they had never died. The Palace Tablet, for example, shows an adult K'an Joy Chitam II engaged in a ritual while his long-dead father and mother (Pakal the Great and Lady Tz'akbu Ajaw) flank him as if they were alive and well (Fig. 2.38; Schele and Miller 1986: 114). Death did little to prevent Pakal from participating in the ritual activities of his descendants. We again see him, seemingly alive as ever, on the Temple XXI Platform commissioned by Ahkal Mo' Nahb. In one scene, Pakal is shown impersonating a quasi-historical ruler that supposedly ruled Palenque in 252 B.C. In an adjacent scene, a fully grown Ahkal Mo' Nahb sits in the company of Pakal, which is clearly contrived since Ahkal Mo' Nahb was just a child when Pakal passed away (Miller and Martin 2004:232). The whole composition is intended to link Ahkal Mo' Nahb back to the beginning of Palenque's dynasty, thus legitimizing his right to rule (Fig. 2.8).

Naranjo Stela 45 presents a nice case study that brings together several concepts introduced up to this point (Fig. 4.8). It highlights the importance of dynastic founders, both mythical and historical, and it demonstrates the way major gods, local gods, and even deified ancestors could be merged into one. The monument depicts Naranjo's living ruler, Naatz Chan Ahk, apparently holding a ceremonial bar while Naranjo's founder,

Tzik'in Bahlam, looks down as a floating ancestor. Tzik'in Bahlam is merged with the mythological founder of Naranjo's dynasty, a deity of local prominence known as the "Square-Nosed Beastie." This hybrid of Tzik'in Bahlam and the Square-Nosed Beastie is further merged with the Sun God, as indicated by the mirrored eyes (Tokovinine and Fialko 2007:10). Although the "fret-nosed serpent" motif associated with this god is often used metaphorically to denote the heat of the sun or the warmth of living breath (Taube 2005:37), in this instance the entire compound denoting the name of Naranjo's mythological founder is present, perhaps suggesting it is intended to identify a specific entity rather than merely denoting the metaphorical concept.

Gods as "Owners"

Classic Maya deities were often considered active participants within a community, and as such, they could own property or objects. Ownership of an object was marked by the possessive *u-*. Palenque's gods were presented with *u-pik* ("its skirt, dressings") (Stuart 2005:166). The 3rd person possessive ergative *u-* attributes ownership of these objects to the gods. They could also own specific buildings at Palenque, such as the *pib naah*[56] or inner sanctuary atop the Temple of the Foliated Cross, which was "owned" by GII according to the *alfarda* tablet (Stuart 2005:19). Small house models from Copan were anciently designated as *u-waybil k'uh*, "the sleeping place of [ie. owned by] god" (Grube and Schele 1990:3). Divine ownership of larger structures was extremely common during the Postclassic. At Chichen Itza, for example, Lintels 2 and 6 both name

[56] *Pib naah* or "pit-oven structure" may have originally been a term for sweat bath (Stuart 2005:102; Houston 1996)

the gods Yax ?-che Kan and Yax Uk'uk'um K'awiil as the owners of the house (Grube et al. 2003:65). Interestingly, on the Casa Colorada Hieroglyphic Band text the god Yax Uk'uku'm K'awiil is also said to be the "owner" of the first fire-drilling, suggesting ritual actions were also possessed.

The Morphology of Maya Gods

Maya gods are commonly depicted in fully human form, to the point where they are virtually indistinguishable from humans. The Temple 11 bench is a prime example, where patron gods, deceased rulers, and foreign dignitaries are all virtually identical (Fig. 2.7). There are no god markings, no large eyes, and no divine epithets. The Maize God is similarly quite human; ideally so. The Sun God can at times appear fully human, other than his large eyes. Humans and gods were essentially of the same species.

Others gods took the form of animals, while others were animated versions of features of the natural landscape, like mountains or caves. Whatever the form, they were all considered living entities in need of sustenance. Among modern Atitecos, the Flowering Mountain Earth can literally be fed through a hole in their land that is called *r'muxux* "umbilicus," or symbolically through prayer, the burning of copal incense, or dancing the sacred bundle (Carlsen and Prechtel 1991:27-28).

The Classic Maya appear to have had an emic distinction between gods and other classes of supernatural beings. The epithet *k'uh* is always used in reference to personalities that could be called gods (Houston and Inomata 2009:198), which included major gods such as the Sun God and the Maize God, as well as local gods that were

confined to specific sites. Perhaps the most common type of supernatural entities not classified as gods from the Classic period are a fantastical and often terrifying class of beings called *wahy* (Calvin 1997). They are never assigned the divine epithet *k'uh* nor do they ever directly interact with beings that are labeled *k'uh* (Grube 2004:74). Although not completely understood, some Classic period *wahy* may have been personifications of disease, illnesses or spells (Houston and Inomata 2009:208; Zender 2004:72-77). Both humans and gods could have *wahy* spirit companions, but in some instances the *wahy* appear to have been linked to a particular dynasty rather than with an individual ruler. Similar to gods, some *wahyoob'* also appear to have had multiple manifestations. The Classic period *wahy* Akan, for example, has distinctive manifestations where he is specifically given different names, such as Ux Pik Akan, Ch'ak Ubaah Akan ("self-decapitating Akan"), and Stone-throwing Akan.[57]

The Materialization of Gods and Ancestors

Ancestral representations (or even their remains) were particularly prized by communities and were used as validation for genealogical claims (McAnany 1995:27). Gods and deified ancestors could be embodied in a variety of media, such as stone stelae (Stuart 1996; Newsome 1998), ceramic effigy censers (Price 1999), wooden statuary (Tozzer 1941), and stucco friezes (Robertson 1985), among others. De Landa (Tozzer 1941:161) informs us that ritual specialists were charged with carving effigies out of cedar wood, which is still referred to as *k'uche'* or "god tree" by the Yucatec Maya

[57] In the Postclassic, Akan is not divided into manifestations and appears to have been elevated to the status of a god (Grube 2004:74).

(Tozzer 1941:159-160). The priests were expected to fast and be sexually abstinent while engaged in the work of carving lest some unspecified danger befall them (ibid.:161). After the carving was done, incense was fed to the statue and prayers were offered to animate the effigies; in Nahuatl terminology, the *teotl* was put into the *ixiptla*. These "activated" images were then delivered to those who commissioned them. The work of carving was also attributed to the gods themselves in the Late Postclassic Yucatan, as evidenced by the gods that carve masks in the Madrid Codex 96d and 99d.

Following such a mythical template, rulers would likewise create their gods, imbue them with life force, and sustain and care for them with tenderness. Gods could be conceptually "born" in ritual structures known as *pibnaah* (literally "sweatbath"). Houston (1996) noted that sweatbaths were connected to pregnancy and childbirth, and were used to restore the "heat" or energy that women lost during childbirth. Each of the Cross Group temples are named as a *pibnaah* for each corresponding member of the Triad, but this appears to have been purely symbolic as there is no evidence that any type of heating apparatus was present (Moyes 2005).

Effigy Censers and Censer Stands

Censers (and at times even their stands) were integral to the worship of gods and ancestors in the Maya area for generations. Taube (1999:427) notes that censers served as the symbolic hearth of a temple and they functioned as *axis mundis*, portals between the human and divine planes. Although they were produced in a wide array of shapes and sizes, they are broadly lumped as either effigy (image) censers or non-effigy (non-image)

censers, and as is expected, there is a great deal of local and regional variation in their production and distribution (Rice 1999:32). For example, spiked censers are extremely common in the Peten, the southeastern periphery, and in Belize, but are virtually unknown at Palenque (ibid). Non-effigy *incensarios* are typically either bowl shaped or take the form of a pedestal (often biconical) and usually have some type of decorative elements such as fillets or spikes, which were representative of the thorny trunk of the ceiba tree (Freidel et al. 1993:454). Effigy censers or censer stands also take a variety of shapes and sizes, but are unified as a type by being anthropomorphic or zoomorphic representations of supernatural beings and ancestors.

Beyond geographical variation, chronological variation in censer types within a single site was also common. At Palenque, for example, distinct groupings of interred censers and stands demonstrate temporal variation in their local iconographic and stylistic conventions (Cuevas Garcia 2004:255). The most well known type of censer stand from Palenque is of the large, flanged effigy variety, however, this specific form did not appear there until the Late Classic. It makes a rather sudden appearance after the inauguration of Kan Bahlam II, which seems to have been a "time of intensive ceremonial innovation and redirection" (Rands et al. 1979:4). The use of this new style was so drastic that Rands et al. (1979:22) suggested "it is as if, with a new royal administration, a group of ceramic specialists were commissioned to produce a new set of 'appropriate' ritual paraphernalia." Glyphically, effigy censers were referred to as *ox p'uluut k'uh*, literally "god censers" (Cuevas Garcia 2004:254). The Lacandon continued to use "god pots" until about 1970. Unlike the Classic period effigy censers from Palenque that depicted

identifiable individuals (be they gods or ancestors), the Lacandon god pots served as abstracted mediums through which their offerings were transmitted to the gods for consumption. At Palenque, these effigy censers literally had lives of their own. They were effectually "born," and after the span of a typical human lifespan they would be interred (Cuevas Garcia 2004:234). The Lacandon similarly buried their censers (ibid: 255).

Censer stands buried in the Cross Group complex depict the faces of important gods, such as GI or the Jaguar God of the Underworld (Fig. 4.10), but they also take the form of realistic human portraits (Fig. 4.11), which almost certainly represented deified ancestors (Stuart and Stuart 2008:196). That these human figures would be intermixed with those of GI and the JGU suggests an equivalency between the deified ancestors and the "major" gods. The Cross Group was a conceptual entrance to the Underworld, so the effigy censers interred there would have been conceptualized as seeds and were planted in anticipation of their eventual regeneration. The cycle of death, burial, and rebirth associated with these censers and the gods they represented would have been exemplars for the living rulers who commissioned them.

Royal Treatment of Godly Images

The manner in which gods were cared for by the rulers has been compared to the way a child is cared for by its parents, more specifically by its mother. Linda Schele (1978:46-47) noted that in the *Popol Vuh*, the word used to indicate offerings or sacrifices to the gods is *tzuqul*, a word that also means "to nurse a child." Schele (1978) was the first to

recognize the glyphic phrase that comprised a parentage statement linking mother to child, now read *huntan* and translated as "cherished one" (Stuart 1997:8) or "precious thing" (Houston and Stuart 1996:294). Although the *huntan* glyph is used to denote the tender relationship between rulers and their gods, Houston and Stuart (1996:294) reject the suggestion that rulers would thus be considered 'mothers' of the gods (cf. Schele 1978:8; Schele and Freidel 1990:475). We frequently find this expression at Palenque, such as on the panel of the Foliated Cross which notes that several gods, including the Sun God, are the *huntan* of K'an B'alam II (Freidel et al. 2002:75). The Cross Group is full of references to the Palenque Triad being the "cherished ones" of the rulers (Staurt and Stuart 2008:191).

The inscriptions at Palenque generally give us the most explicit textual references to the way gods were propitiated. The West Panel (A7-A8) suggests the offerings of K'inich Janaab' Pakal *utimiw yo'l uk'uhil*, "appeased the hearts of his gods" (Carrasco 2005:78). The most vivid depiction of the symbiotic relationship between rulers and their sacred ancestors comes from Piedras Negras Stela 40 (Fig. 4.12), which depicts the living Ruler 4 offering incense through a psychoduct into the quatrefoil shaped burial chamber of a female ancestor, likely his mother, who is dressed in Teotihuacano garb (Martin and Grube 2008:148). The incense feeds the ancestor through a knotted breath cord that passes through the nose of the ancestor (Martin and Grube 2008:148), and in return the ancestor emits "hot energies" (Houston and Inomata 2009:213). Houston (2004:275) describes the ritual as "loving or pious," and it gives us a rare personal glimpse into ancient ancestor worship.

The personal gods of the rulers appear to have had preeminence at their respective sites. A Chontal chronicle suggests the principal temple of a town was typically a house for the ruler's god (Scholes and Roys 1968:56). It notes that in 1550, in effort to eradicate idolatry, Frey Diego de Béjar invited the rulers of several cities to Tamactun Acalan in southern Campeche (where he was residing) and encouraged them to bring forth their "devils" (*cizin*). Once they had gathered, he "began to remove their devils: Cukulchan, the devil of the ruler, the devil of Tadzunun, that of Tachabt, that of Atapan, [that of] Taçacto, and the other devils. All these they carried before Fray Diego de Béjar and he burned them" (ibid.). The K'iche likewise built temples for their gods, each with a designated priest from one of the prominent founding lineages who would collect tribute for their patron god (Carmack 1981:264-281; Tedlock 1985:208-209). The gods would be brought out from their shrines and ritually paraded through town on calendrically significant dates. In contemporary Santiago Atitlán, the god Maximón is carried by his personal shaman (*aj'kun*). The *aj'kun* also bears the title *telinel,* derived from the root *telek*, "shoulder," as one of his most significant responsibilities is to carry Maximón on his shoulder during Semana Santa (Carlsen 1997:152).

Properly caring for and propitiating the gods was vital for the well-being of their society (McAnany 2001:142). One of the ritual responsibilities of rulers was the "dressing" of their patron gods. The richest body of data from the Classic Period concerning this ritual comes from the Central Tablet of the Temple of the Inscriptions (Stuart and Stuart 2008:191). The inscriptions inform us that K'an Joy Chitam and K'inich Janaab' Pakal gave vestments to the Palenque Triad to commemorate the turning

of each K'atun (ibid), which included headbands, helmets, earflares, necklaces, the "Quadripartite Badge" and the Jester God (Macri 1988:117-120, 1997:91-92; Stuart 2005:166-167). Some of these objects were given the qualifier *k'uhul*, which denotes their sacrality.

This practice of dressing the gods continued through the Colonial period and is still attested among contemporary Maya groups. Landa (Tozzer 1941:148) describes the manner in which idols were dressed and adorned with headdresses and jades. Among modern Mesoamerican communities, rather than their native gods, they dress images of Catholic saints in ceremonial huipiles and adorn them with necklaces of gold coins (Stuart and Stuart 2008:191).

Capture and Sacrifice of Gods

Images of gods, be they wooden effigies, stone monuments, or ceramic censers, were more than mere depictions. They *were* the gods (Monaghan 2000:26-27), or at least receptacles of godly essence (Houston et al. 2006). David Stuart (1996b:158-159) noted that Stela 3 from the Early Classic site of El Zapote, Guatemala bears the portrait of the rain god Yaxhal Chahk and the inscription indicates that Yaxhal Chahk was the "owner" of the monument. However, the glyphs also indicate that monument itself *is* Yaxhal Chahk and provide the date when he was "erected" (Fig. 4.13). To capture or destroy one of these images was conceptually equivalent to killing that god. There are a number of ancient references to the capture and/or destruction of gods during episodes of warfare. Quirigua Stela I recounts the capture and fire-drilling (which has connotations of sacrifice

per Miller and Taube 1993:87) of Chante Ajaw and K'uy Nik Ajaw, the patron gods of Waxaklajuun Ub'ah K'awil of Copan (Fig. 4.14; Looper 2003:78). This caused great mourning at Copan, and a portion of the text on the Hieroglyphic Staircase that records the aftermath of that event laments that there were "no altars, no pyramids, no places" (Stuart 1996a). The burning of idols was similarly described in the Colonial era (Scholes and Roys 1968:56). On 7 August 659 AD, Nuun Ujol Chak captured the war god of the prince and heir of Yaxchilán, Itzam Balam. Tikal Temple IV Lintel 2 depicts the capture of Naranjo's patron god, who takes the form of a battle palanquin (Fig. 4.15; Martin 1996:7). According to the House C Hieroglyphic Stairway, the Palenque Triad was *yalej*, "thrown down" (Grube 1996) during the reign of Lady Yohl Ik'nal on 21 April 599 by a "*chi*-throne" vassal of Sky Witness of Calakmul (Martin and Grube 2000:159-160). At the Postclassic Yucatecan site of Mayapan, we find evidence that three carved and seven plain stelae – which were vessels of supernatural energy – were literally thrown down from temple Q126 during the Mayapán revolt around 1440 AD (Shook 1955:269-271), which may suggest the literalness of the expression *yalej*.[58]

Foreign gods were not always destroyed, however. At Comalcalco, one of the inscribed stingray spines found within a burial urn seems to indicate that a *tz'ulba*, "stranger-image," was seized and subsequently cared for by a noble (Houston and Inomata 2009:174). Among the Aztec, the effigies of an enemy's gods would be captured and then housed within a temple at Tenochtitlan (Sahagún 1950-1982, Book 2:168). In

[58] It is possible that "plain" stelae were originally painted (Inomata 2006:834).

addition, when warriors conquered their enemy in pre-Hispanic times, they sometimes adopted the god of the vanquished people (Schele and Grube 1995:31).

Becoming a Deified Ancestor

Unlike the Egyptian Book of the Dead, there are no overtly eschatological texts that have survived from the Classic Maya, so we are left to reconstruct it from obscure clues in the epigraphy and iconography. Ethnohistoric and ethnographic data must be treated cautiously. Although many aspects of modern Maya beliefs and ritual practice have demonstrable continuity from earlier periods (B. Tedlock 1982; Hill and Monaghan 1987), others may be intrusions from Catholicism. Although a rich body of ethnohistoric and ethnographic literature exists that discusses native conceptions of the afterlife, it is sometimes difficult to disentangle Christian influence on beliefs or Colonial period interpretations of native beliefs that have been filtered through the lens of Christianity.

Virtually all modern Maya societies conflate Jesus Christ with the Maize God. The mythology of a dying and resurrecting Maize God is fairly well fleshed out (as it were) in ancient iconography. It appears to have both great time depth and remarkable continuity from the Formative to the Late Postclassic, and many elements of it appear to have survived until the present day. The Maize God was a pan-Maya deity, who stands as one of the common denominators that served as a baseline similarity against which contrasts with others could be made (Harrison 2003:345).

According to modern tradition, Christ rises to the heavens after his crucifixion and transforms into the sun and travels along “his road” in the sky accompanied by the souls

of ancestors (Sosa 1985:429-430). The soul is a vital essence that is indestructible and transcended temporal, spatial, and material concerns (Westheim 1957:59). The assurance that new life would follow death came not only from observing the sun in its daily journey, but also from maize in its seasons of planting and harvesting.

The belief in deification of deceased rulers continued in Mesoamerica through the Late Postclassic period. According to Sahagún (1950-1982), "The old men used to say that when men died they didn't perish, but they once again began to live. . . They turned into spirits or gods" (translation in Westheim 1957:59). Landa records that after Kukulcan had departed the Yucatan, "there were among the Indians some who said that he had gone to heaven with the gods, and on this account they regarded him as a god" (Tozzer 1941:157). The Histoire du Mechique records that Quetzalcoatl "shot an arrow into a tree and entered it, and died there, and his servants lit the tree on fire, in the custom of burning dead bodies. From the smoke that came from his body, they say that a great star was made that is called Hesper [Venus]" (Aldana 2003:36-37). Quetzalcoatl's soul dwelt in Mictlan for eight days, and afterwards it appeared as a star in the heavens (Carrasco 1982:148). The Quiché Maya likewise believe their ancestors become stars after death (Graulich 1997:111).

There is a common misconception that the only afterlife expected by ancient Mesoamericans was the dark Underworld, known by names such as Metnal or Xibalba (which means Place of Fright). [59] Recent scholarship (Taube 2004a, 2006) has shown

[59] Although there is no shortage of Underworld imagery on Classic period ceramics and monuments, there is no known glyph for Xibalba or the Underworld (Fitzsimmons 2009:15).

that there was clearly a belief in a solar paradise as well, reserved for those who could overcome the gods of the Underworld. Evidence from the Classic period Maya suggests that only those who were kings or other high nobles could look forward to resurrection and a return to this diurnal paradise and dwelling place of the gods and euhemerized ancestors, called 'Flower World' or 'Flower Mountain' (Taube 2004a).

Flower Mountain is depicted in Maya art not only as the desired destination after a ruler's death, where he would be deified as the Sun God, but also as the paradisiacal place of creation and origin. Taube (2004:70) notes that, "although the notion of a floral paradise recalls Christian ideals of the original Garden of Eden and the afterlife, the solar component is wholly Mesoamerican." Evidence for the belief in Flower Mountain dates to the Middle Formative Olmec (900-400 B.C.) and is also attested to among the Late Preclassic and Classic Maya as well, from about 300 B.C. – A.D. 900. Jane Hill (1992) demonstrated the tradition concerning this "Flower World" has been maintained through the centuries and continues be found among modern Native American groups in American southwest.

Out of the hundreds of known depictions of rulers found on a wide variety of media, it is indeed curious how rarely kings were represented as having been apotheosized (Fitzsimmons 2009:53). Only about a dozen such monuments have survived from a mere six polities: Palenque, Yaxchilán, Tikal, Copan, Caracol, and Ek' Balam. Between the six polities, and spanning nearly five centuries, only eleven rulers commissioned monuments that clearly depict apotheosized ancestors, with a total of about 25 identifiable individuals (Fitzsimmons 2009:55). Thirteen of these depictions come from Palenque, and of those,

ten appear on a single monument. Notably, K'inich Kan B'alam II and his successor K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II were the only rulers to create such depictions at their site. After a discussion about the process of resurrection and deification, we will take a closer look at each of the monuments from these five sites.

The Cycles of Death and Rebirth

The rebirth of maize was a metaphor for human rebirth. As Rafael Girard (1995:191) noted among the Ch'orti' Maya, "Agriculture and eschatology are intimately associated." The iconography associated with the rebirth of the Maize God appears to emulate the stages of growth of a maize seed (Taube 1985), which requires heat, water, and darkness (Carrasco 2010:620). These elements are all common in the iconography related to the rebirth of the Maize God. The seed planted in the earth is likened unto a child in the womb or an entombed body, who must fight their way out to be (re)born (Girard 1995:191). Among the modern Tzutujil Maya, the maize cycle is explicitly likened unto human change throughout an individual's life and regeneration after one's life is over. The concept is expressed with the phrase *jaloj-k'exoj* , which can be roughly understood as "transformation and renewal" (Carlsen and Prechtel 1991:30). *Jal* refers to the observable transformations that occur throughout the life cycle of something; the "husk," as it were. *K'ex* is more concerned with generational change, yet carries with it implications of continuity and renewal from one generation to the next. It also carries connotations that from one comes many, just as a single seed can produce countless

offspring (ibid). Among the K'iche', *k'ex* is invoked when giving a child the name of its grandparent; it is a vehicle for immortalizing them (Mondloch 1980; cf Warren 1989:57).

Although some attempts to link the narrative contained in the Popul Vuh to the Classic period may be strained, the basic Maize God narrative is abundantly attested to (Martin 2006; Taube 1985, 1986). Relying on iconographic data found on a variety of media from across the Lowlands, Quenon and Le Fort (1997) have created a meta-narrative of the Maize God resurrection cycle. They break it down into four principal "episodes": rebirth of the unadorned Maize God in the watery Underworld, his dressing and adorning by beautiful young maidens, his transit out of the watery Underworld (typically in a canoe), and culminating with his glorious resurrection bedecked in his finery.[60] Although often used synonymously, they distinguish between the terms "rebirth" and "resurrection" in this cycle; "rebirth" refers to the animation that occurs while the Maize God is still in the Underworld, whereas "resurrection" refers to the moment when he emerges from the Underworld by bursting through the surface of the earth from a crack or other opening (Quenon and Le Fort 1997:898). Martin (2006:178) similarly outlined a pan-Mesoamerican Maize God narrative that begins with death, followed by burial in a cave or in Sustenance Mountain.[61] A portion of his soul or spirit then leaves his body and rises to the heavens. Trees spring from his buried corpse, which produce edible fruits and seeds. His triumph from beyond the grave is that his offspring partake of his fruit and seeds and go on to perform heroic deeds.

[60] A fifth episode, the death and sacrifice of the Maize God, is also briefly discussed, but ancient scenes depicting this event are not as frequently depicted (Quenon and Le Fort 1997:885).

[61] Funerary pyramids were conceptual recreations of Sustenance Mountain (Martin 2006:160).

Although some aspects of the Maize God narrative are subject to regional variation, his beaded or net skirt and the belt assembly made with a *xok*-fish spondylus shell that he receives in the "dressing" scenes are remarkably consistent throughout the Maya area (Quenon and Le Fort 1997:884). The net skirt is emblematic of the turtle carapace from which the Maize God emerges. Unsurprisingly, post-resurrection depictions of the Maize God typically show him without the skirt, since the process had already been completed (ibid). When rulers don a *xok*-fish head during Maize God impersonation rituals, it specifically hearkens to the "dressing" scenes wherein the Maize God receives his adornments in preparation for resurrection. To wear the *xok*-fish head was to assert one's impending rebirth (Quenon and Le Fort 1997:890).

The Lightning God played an instrumental role in the Maize God's resurrection (Taube 1993:67). With his lightning ax he would crack open the earth, which was conceptualized as a giant turtle carapace. Many Classic polychrome vessels depict this moment, such as K731 (Fig. 4.16). [62] To be clear, the Maize God cycle metaphorically represented all agricultural fertility, not just that of maize (Martin 2006). He is sometimes depicted bearing large "burdens" (*kuch*) of grains and riches (Stuart and Staurt 2008:179).

In some instances of Classic period mythology, cacao was believed to be the first food grown from the body of the Maize God (Martin 2006). There is a conceptual overlap with maize plants and trees. Like the maize plant, trees were powerful symbols of resurrection and seem to have constituted a bridge between death and rebirth (Martin 2006:178). At

[62] Curiously, on K731 the lightning is named Yo'at/Yo'pat (Looper 2003:5)

Late Classic Copan, tree-like ceramic vessels (found under the floor of Structure 10L-41a) depict human faces floating on their surfaces (Fig. 4.17), suggesting the ancestors were literally reborn as (or through the aid of) trees (McNeil 2010:309). These vessels may have been used as mediums through which the living could communicate with the dead. When the Maize God resurrects as the World Tree, he not only brings new life to humanity but he essentially centers the cosmos and brings order to the chaos (Martin 2006:179), an action emulated by human rulers (as discussed in Chapter 2).

Like the Maize God, the Sun God was also a symbol of rebirth and resurrection. The inscriptions on Stela H from Copan, for example, appear to refer to the death and apotheosis of Butz' Chan. Iconographically, he is depicted in the guise of the Maize God (Stuart 2005:183). The solar imagery associated with Stela A (Fig. 4.18), which is linked to Stela H by a distance number, suggests Butz' Chan was also apotheosized as the Sun God (Newsome 2001:132). Similarly, Ek' Balam Stela 1 depicts the site's fourth ruler, *K'uh…Nal*, donning the paraphernalia of rulership. Above him, an apotheosized figure surrounded by a solar cartouche is seated on a throne comprised of the celestial sky band (Fig. 4.19). The text directly informs us *ub'aah K'uhul Kalo'mte Ukit Kan Le'k*, "it is the image of the Holy *Kaloomté,* Ukit Kan Le'k" (Grube et al. 2003:67-68). Notably, this is the same individual discussed earlier that is depicted as the Maize God on Capstone 15 (ibid:47).

Maya rulers explicitly linked themselves with the Sun God, both in life and in death (Cohodas 1976:162ff). Conversely, Stuart (1996b:166) notes that "the Maya sun god himself often wears the accouterments of rulership, including the cloth headband,

suggesting that he was considered the ruler of the heavens." Merged with the Sun God, deified kings would continue to rule in the heavens. Contemporary Ch'orti Maya associate the cardinal direction west not only with the dying sun, but as the entrance to the Underworld and the abode of the dead (Girard 1949:641; Wisdom 1961:482). Dynastic succession was likened to the cycle of the sun; the inauguration of a new ruler was the dawning of a new sun on a polity, and his death was conceptualized as the sun's descent into the Underworld (Bardsley 1994:4). Death was metaphorically expressed as *och ha'* "enters the water," implying a descent into the Underworld. But after death, a resurrected ruler was expected to *och b'ih*, "enter the road," likely a reference to the celestial road of the sun associated with resurrection and rebirth (Taube 2005:42).

Solar and lunar cartouches were sometimes used to indicate the deification of ancestors. The cartouche was emblematic of the Sun God at Palenque and Yaxchilán. The cartouche is oftentimes occupied by the Sun God himself, such as on Heiroglyphic Stair 3 Step III (Fig. 4.20), where it is found within the belly of the Starry Deer Crocodile (Stuart 2005:167).

GIII of the Palenque Triad has solar associations (Schele and Miller 1986:50), and his standard identifying glyph is sometimes substituted with the compound K'inich Ajaw, "Sun Lord" (Stuart 2005:175). His name glyph is typically prefixed by the *k'inich* honorific, followed by a cartouche containing a face in profile. Stuart (2005:176) suggests GIII may have been Palenque's localized version of the Sun God. GI of the Palenque Triad had strong solar associations, and his profile closely resembles the pan-Maya Sun God and is even portrayed with a small *k'in* sign on his cheek on an Early

Classic cache vessel (Staurt 2005:167). At the Temple of the Cross, GI "served to animate the larger theme of ancestral resurrection through the sun's eastern ascent" (Stuart and Stuart 2008:198). According to Stuart and Stuart (ibid:173), the body and lid of Pakal's sarcophagus "convey a visual and textual metaphor of the king as the rising sun."

At Copan, the Sun God played a prominent role in conceptions of the afterlife from its earliest days. The Yehnal funerary pyramid, built atop the vaulted crypt dubbed Hunal that served as K'inich Yax K'uk Mo's tomb, featured a depiction of K'inich Tajal Wayib', "heated torch sorcerer," an aspect of the Sun God also associated with GIII of the Palenque Triad who also appears on Quirigua Stela C (Carrasco 2010:613; Stuart 2004:225). [63]

The most well-known scene of apotheosis from the ancient Maya world comes from Pakal's sarcophagus lid at Palenque (Fig. 4.21). Previous interpretations of the iconography described Pakal's descent into the Underworld, but more recent scholarship suggests he is not falling into but rather rising out of the earth, likened unto the dawning sun or sprouting maize. Indeed, he rises from a solar bowl, which epigraphically denotes "exit, rise" and is most commonly found in the inscriptions when it designates the direction east as *el k'in*, "exiting sun" (Stuart and Stuart 2008:175). Furthermore, Pakal is framed by the gaping, skeletal maw of the Underworld, but such maws are typically used to represent cosmic emergence, but are not necessarily indicative of a two-way portal

[63] Although the context is poorly understood, a name similar to K'inich Tajal Wayib' has been found inscribed on cache vessels from the Tikal region dating to the Early Classic (Stuart 2004:225). A very similar name, Taj Wayil, appears on Yaxchilán Lintel 10 but may be toponymic.

(Taube 1994:674). Pakal here invokes the two most powerful symbols of death and resurrection known to the ancient Maya: maize and the sun (Stuart and Stuart 2008:177). He strikes the pose of a newborn infant, *unen*, suggesting this was literally a rebirth (Martin 2002; Taube 1994). Along with the Maize God and Sun God imagery, Pakal also fuses with K'awiil, as indicated by the smoking tube emerging from his forehead. K'awiil had the power to penetrate different worlds, so Pakal's fusion with both the Maize God and with K'awiil might be intended to convey his self-contained power to both crack the earth and spring forth from it with new life (Martin 2006:179). Stela 11 from Copan similarly depicts Yax Pasaj emerging from the Underworld as both the Maize God and K'awiil (Fig. 4.22), suggestive of his innate ability to resurrect (Miller and Martin 2004:57).

We often politicize the art of the Classic Maya (Marcus 1992), but here we should note that unlike the stelae or other monuments that publicly celebrated the ruler in life and death, Pakal's sarcophagus was not on display for the public to see (Stuart and Stuart 2008:177). Its rich iconography was not intended to legitimize the dynasty in the eyes of the larger population, but rather it seems to testify of the deeply held religious conviction of the rulers. This was not propaganda; it was worship.

Known Depictions of Apotheosized Ancestors in Monumental Art

Despite the considerable ink that has been spilt concerning deification and the afterlife, often using Palenque as an ideal type, it may come as a surprise that only two of Palenque's rulers ever commissioned monuments that depicted unequivocally deified

ancestors: K'inich Kan B'alam II and his successor K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II. And of the two dozen or so monuments that depict deified ancestors from across the Lowlands, about half are attributable to these two rulers. The most explicit depictions of deceased rulers resurrecting as the Maize God are found at Palenque. Most famously, K'inich Janaab Pakal is dressed as the Maize God as he resurrects from the maw of the Underworld. The deceased K'inich Kan B'alam II and K'inich Kan Joy Chitam II appear in scenes where they are being adorned, likely a hearkening to the Maize God resurrection cycle discussed above.

At Yaxchilán, male and female ancestors are often depicted within solar and lunar cartouches, respectively, as on Stelae 1 (Fig. 4.9), 4, 10, and likely 6 (Fig. 4.24). As celestial bodies, they emanate light (Fitzsimmons 2009:53, citing personal communication from Stephen Houston). At other times, ancestors are merely depicted seated in the upper register, implying a celestial abode, as on the temple side of Stela 11, which features a deified Itzamnaah Balaam II and his wife Lady Ik' Skull (Fig. 3.5a). Like Yaxchilán, Palenque also depicts ancestors within solar cartouches (though not always). Uniquely, however, rather than a fixed merging with a solar deity, some of Palenque's ancestors engage in "impersonation" events as the Jaguar God of the Underworld and Chak Xib Chaak (Fitzsimmons 2009:53). Also unique to Palenque is the portrayal of ancestors sprouting as fruit trees (Fig. 4.23).

Tikal holds the distinction of having both the earliest and the latest depictions of deified ancestors to have survived in all of the Maya lowlands. There are only three total; Chak Tok Ich'aak (Stela 29, 292; Fig. 3.22), Yax Ehb' Xook (Stela 31, 445; Fig. 3.21)

and an unknown ancestor depicted by Yax Nuun Ayiin II on Stela 22 (Fig. 4.25; James Fitzsimmons, personal communication 2011). The "floater" style of deified ancestor on Stelae 22 and 31 intentionally hearkens to the iconographic style of Stela 29. Yax Nuun Ahiin is depicted as the Sun God K'inich Ajaw, but this appears to be more than a deified ruler engaged in a celestial impersonation event. On Stela 31, Yax Nuun Ahiin is not depicted wearing the regalia of the Sun God; rather, the face of the Sun God is wearing the regalia of Yax Nuun Ahiin. In a curious case of role-reversal, it is as if the Sun God is impersonating Yax Nuun Ayiin. A similar scene appears on the Early Classic Stela 2 from Takalik Abaj (Karl Taube, personal communication 2011).

The only ancestor who is clearly apotheosized as the Sun God at Copan is K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'. The Central Mexican-style *talud-tablero* platform nicknamed Hunal was his original royal compound, which was later transformed into a tomb, most likely to house his remains (Sharer et al. 1999:7; Fash 2002:17). Yax K'uk' Mo's son and successor K'inich Popol Hol erected the Yehnal temple directly on top of Hunal as a memorial to his father (c. A.D. 437-45). The stucco relief panels of Yehnal depict the sun god, K'inich Ajaw, which may be an allusion to Yax K'uk' Mo's apotheosis or perhaps simply the K'inich title he bore (Sharer 2004:152). Yehnal was topped by Margarita (c. A.D. 445-460), whose façade shows K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' merged with the Sun God. Margarita was covered by Chilan, which was then subsumed by Rosalila (A.D. 571), which similarly depicts Yax K'uk' Mo' merged with the Sun God. All of these construction phases were encompassed by Temple 16 (also known as Structure 10L-16) which depicts the founder within a feathered solar portal, clearly denoting his apotheosis

(Fig. 2.36; Taube 2006:166). Altar Q, which sits at the base of Str. 10L-16, shows K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' holding a burning dart, which alludes to his fiery immolation and resurrection as the Sun God (Fig. 3.32; Taube 2004b:266-268), but it also celebrates the continuity of the dynasty from the founder to the sixteenth dynast as he passes the torch toYax Pahsaj.

Although not an explicit depiction of deification, the bench from Temple 11 suggests equivalency between deceased rulers and deities (Fig. 2.7). Similar in style to Altar Q, the bench depicts Yax Pahsaj Chan Yopaat's accession as Copan's 16th ruler (9.16.12.5.17 6 Kaban 10 Mol, 28 June 763), which was witnessed by nineteen individuals who are seated upon stylized thrones comprised of their name glyphs or toponyms. Only four of the individuals are easily identifiable as previous rulers of Copan: Yax K'uk' Mo, Bahlam Nehn, Butz' Chan, and K'ahk' Uti' Witz' K'awiil (Martin and Grube 2008:209), while some others appear to be from neighboring polities (Wanyerka 2009:347). Included in the line-up are K'uy Nik? Ajaw, Tukun Ajaw, Mo' Wits Ajaw, and Bolon K'awiil[64], the four *koknoom* ("guardians") of *Hux Wintik*, a name that appears to reference the entire site of Copan and possibly the lands around it (Tokovinine 2008:206). Chante Ajaw, another of Copan's principal patron gods, is also sitting upon his name glyph. Some of the other witnesses appear to be contemporaneous rulers of other polities, so it may simply be a reflection of the porous nature of the veil that divided the human and divine realms with both natural and supernatural individuals standing as

[64] At first glance it may appear that the name is "14 K'awiil," but the "bar" adjacent to the K'awiil's glyph is actually the seated individual's loincloth that is draping down.

witnesses to Yax Pahsaj's accession.[65] However, the pectorals worn by the patron gods are similar to those worn by the deceased Copanec rulers (Viel 1999), which may suggest that there is a conceptual equivalency between them, unlike the other witnesses who don distinctive pectorals. [66]

Caracol Stela 5, dating to A.D. 613, is the only monument at that site to clearly depict an apotheosized ancestor (Fig. 4.26). It features archaic iconographic conventions, so it was either a conscious attempt to hearken back to bygone iconographic conventions or they were simply being very conservative (Martin and Grube 2008:90). It depicts Knot Ajaw[67] in anachronistic regalia and wielding a rigid double-headed serpent bar in his arms. Above him floats a solar deified ancestor, perhaps his father Yajaw Te' Kinich II. At his feet is a pair of miniature figures or dwarves who hold K'awiil scepters. It is an iconographically dense monument, and it originally bore well over 200 glyphs, most of which are tragically completely illegible due to erosion (Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981:28).

Although Classic period depictions of deified ancestors in the form of the Maize God and Sun god are comparatively (and curiously) few, the time depth and geographical distribution of such representations suggest the ideology was deeply ingrained and not merely a site-specific or regionally limited belief. The iconography of the 'Death Vase' demonstrates that by the Early Classic, both the Maize God and the Sun God had already

[65] Wanyerka (2009:347) has argued that the toponym upon which the seventh figure to Yax Pasaj's right is seated is Tz'am Witz ("Throne Mountain"), a location at or near Pusilha's main stela plaza group.

[66] Viel's interpretation of the bench fails to recognize that some of the figures are gods.

[67] Also known as Ruler IV, Ahau Serpent and Flaming Ahau.

been established as the primary figures associated with resurrection and apotheosis (Taube 2004a:79).

a.

b.

c.

d.

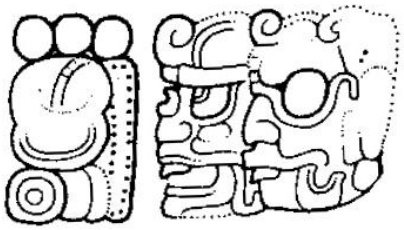


Figure 4.1. Triadic groupings of gods from (a) Palenque Temple XIX (drawing by David Stuart 2005 Figure 123) (b) Caracol Stela 16 (drawing by Linda Schele) (c) Tikal (from Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Figure 44a) (d) Naranjo, Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, Step II, C2b-D2 (drawing by Ian Graham from Graham 1978:108). (After Stuart 2005 Figures 123-124).

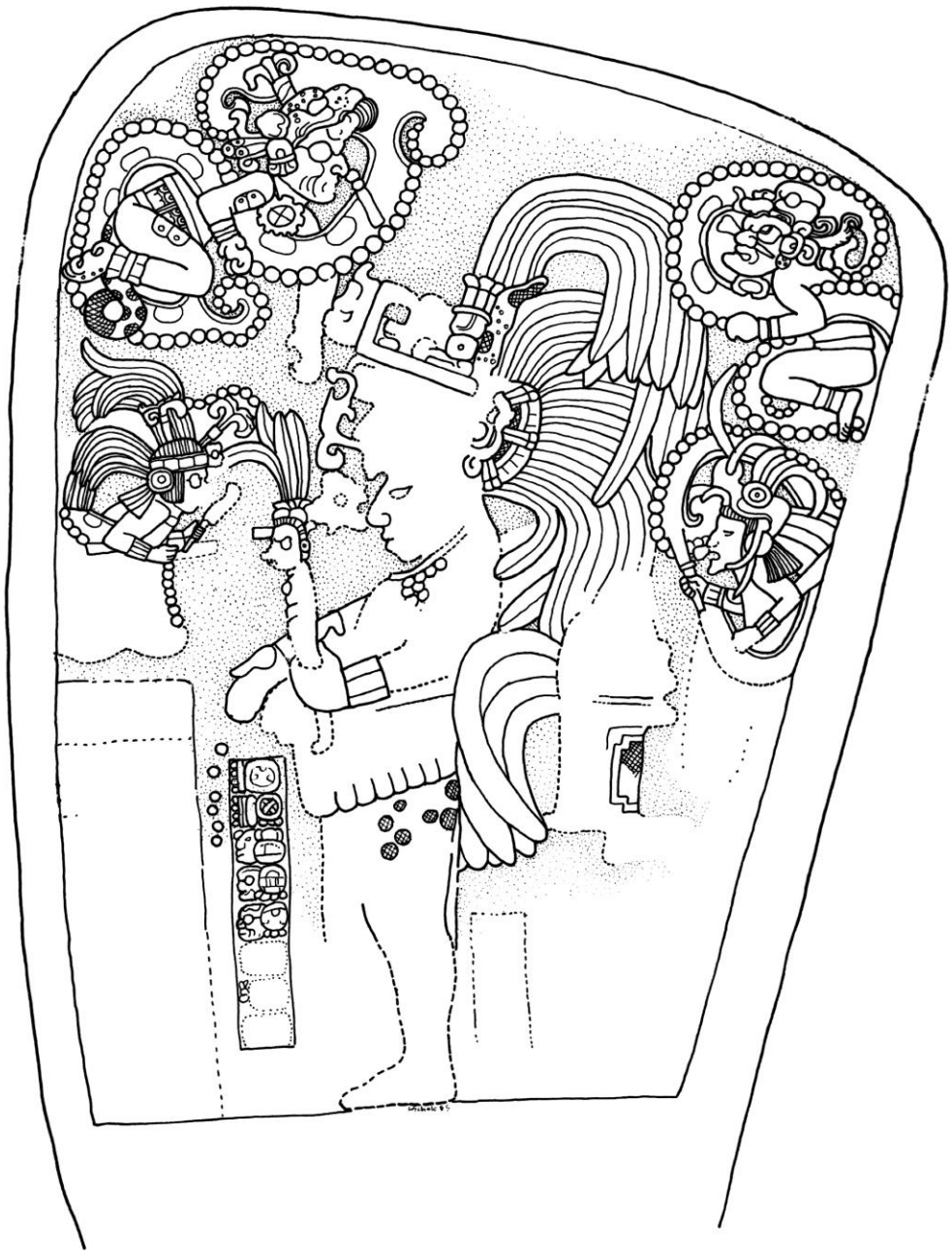


Figure 4.2. The Paddler Gods oversee a scattering event. Ixlu Stela 2 (drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

Figure 4.3. Censer stand portraying Palenque's founder, K'uk' Bahlam I (photo by Javier Hinojosa, in Miller and Martin 2004:230 Plate 127).

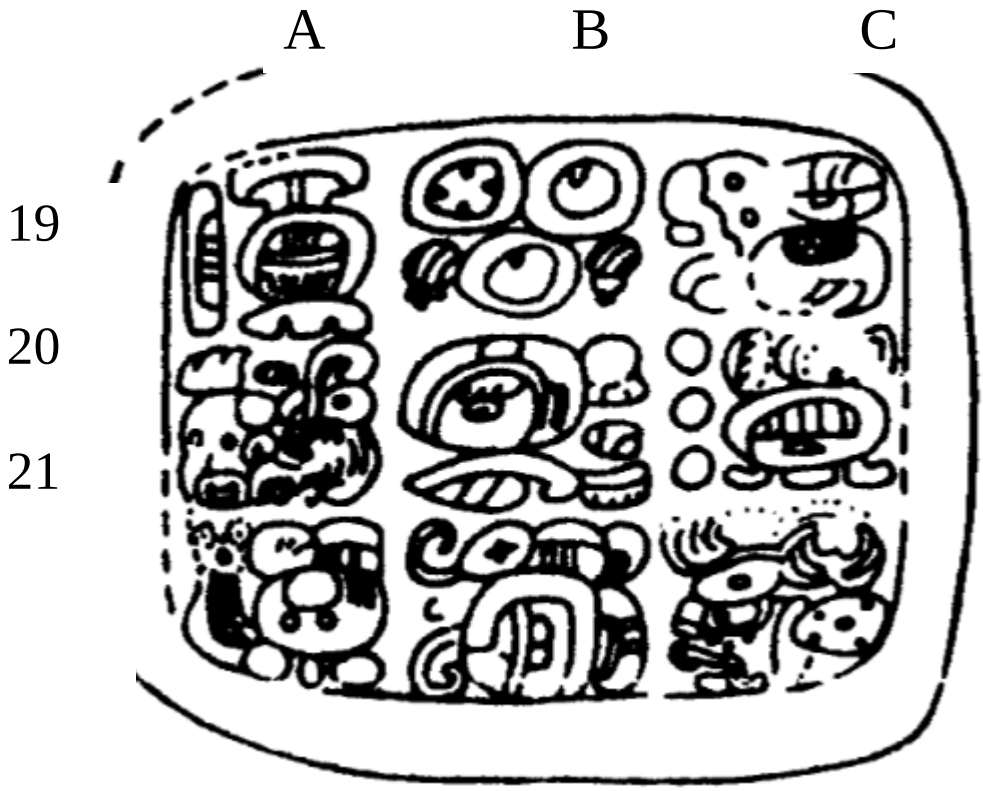


Figure 4.4. A deified ancestor *yilaj* "oversaw" (at B20) a censing ritual performed by Yajaw Te' Kinich II. Caracol Stela 6 (detail of drawing by Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981 Figure 7b).

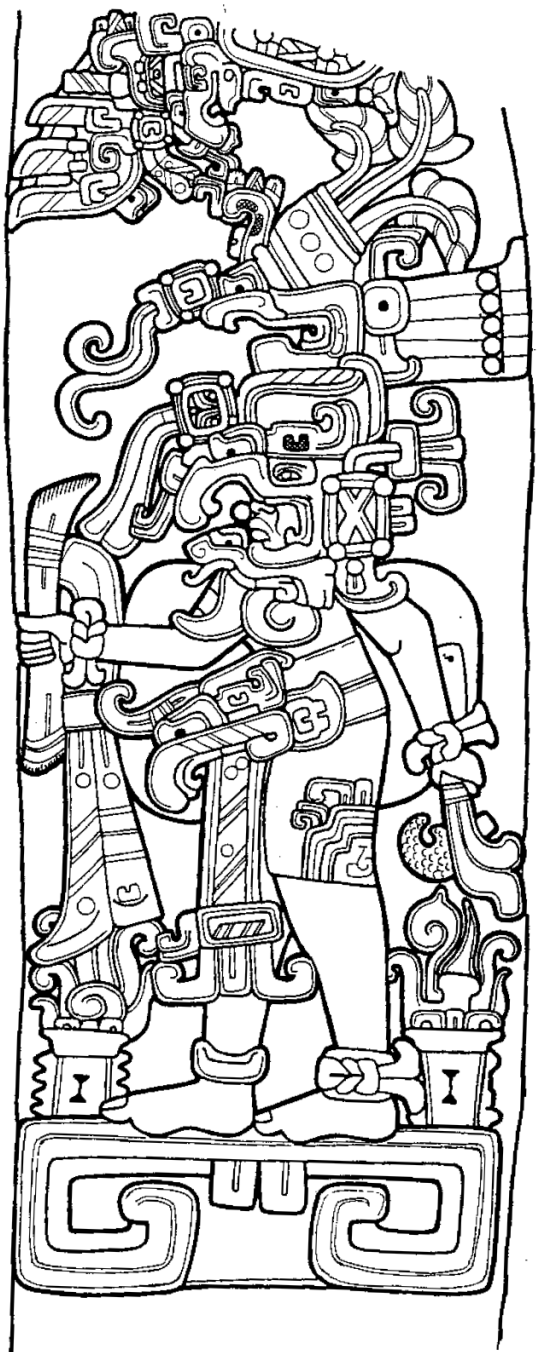


Figure 4.5. Down-gazing deified head. Kaminaljuyu Stela 11 (drawing by Ayax Moreno, Courtesy of the New World Archaeological Foundation).

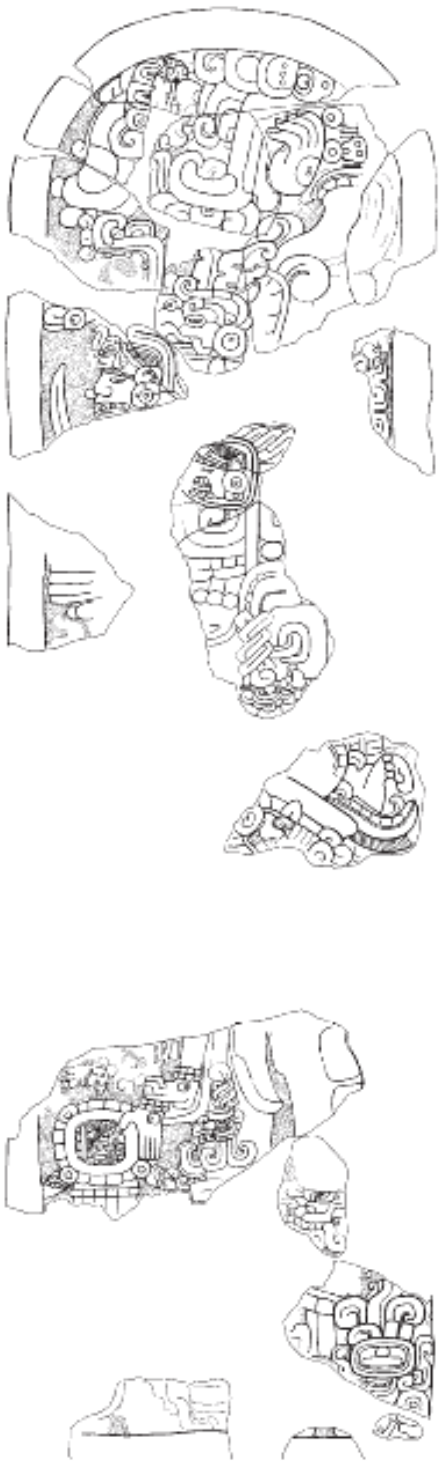


Figure 4.6. Reconstructed Naranjo Stela 45 depicts Tziki'in Bahlam as a deified, down gazing ancestral head (drawing by Tokovinine and Fialko 2007 Figure 4).

Figure 4.7. Solar and lunar cartouches commonly used to denote deified ancestors at Yaxchilán. Upper register of Yaxchilán Stela 1 (detail of drawing by Tate 1992 Figure 124)

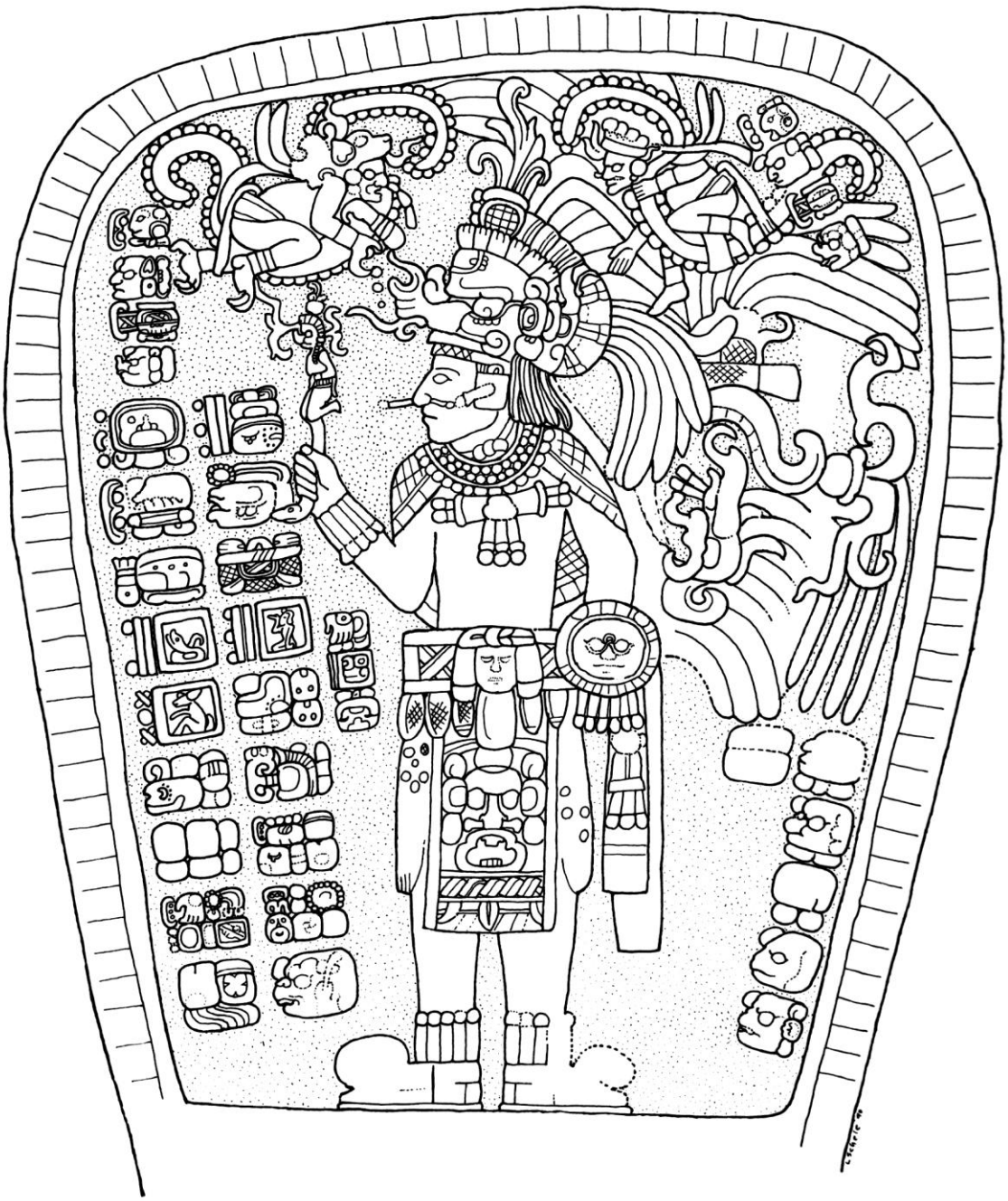


Figure 4.8. Non-ancestral supernatural beings overseeing ritual activities. Jimbal Stela 1 (drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

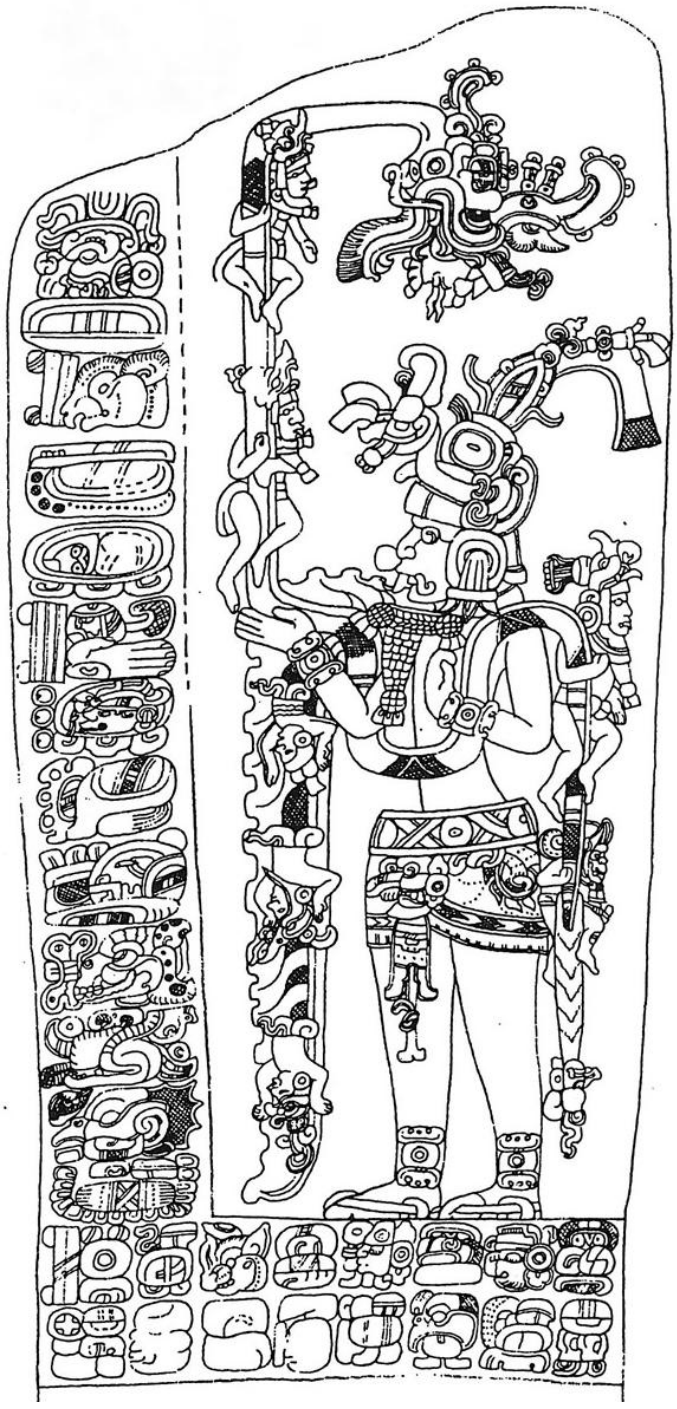


Figure 4.9. Supernatural “travelers” and a possible deified ancestor accompany a ruler. Hauberg Stela (drawing by John Montgomery, courtesy of FAMSI).

Figure 4.10. Censer stand from Palenque depicting the Jaguar God of the Underworld (photo by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI)

Figure 4.11. Realistic human portrait on an incensario at Palenque. (Photo by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

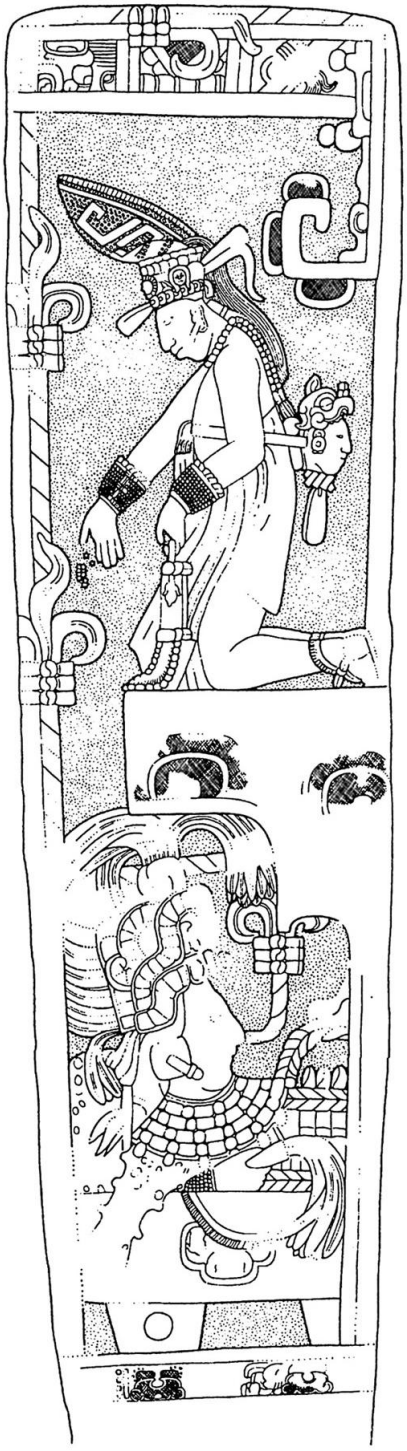


Figure 4.12. Ruler 4 making an offering to an ancestor. Piedras Negras Stela 40. (Drawing by John Montgomery, courtesy of FAMSI).

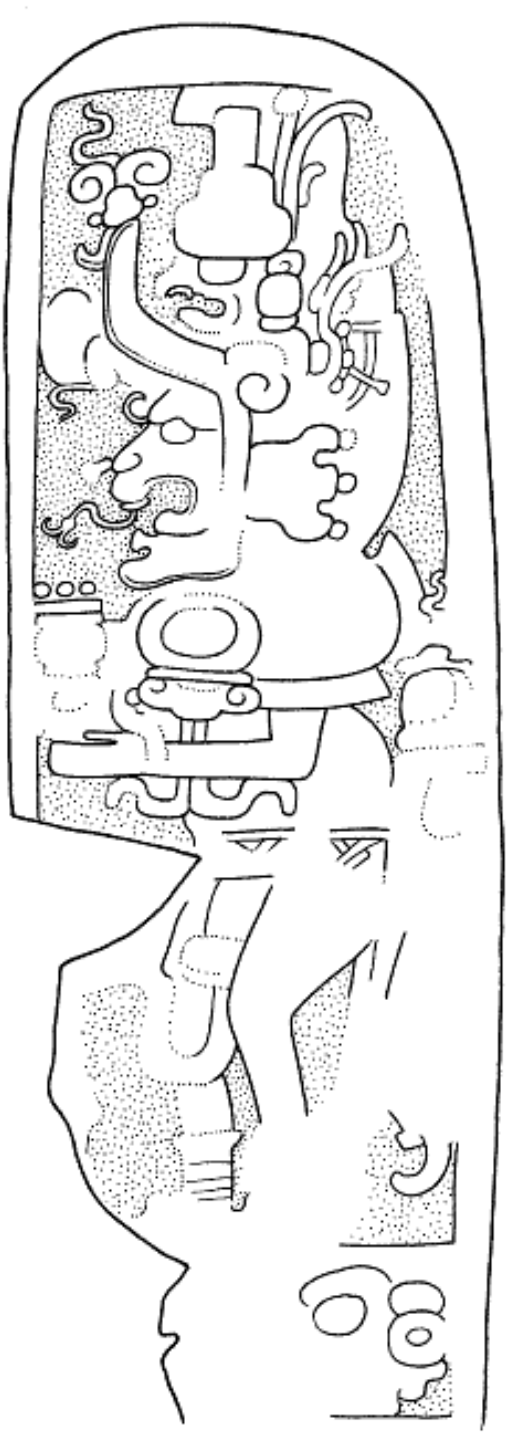


Figure 4.13. The god Yaxhal Chaak is depicted on the front on El Zapote Stela 1, and the text on the back name him as the "owner" of the monument. (Drawing by David Stuart 1996 Figure 14).

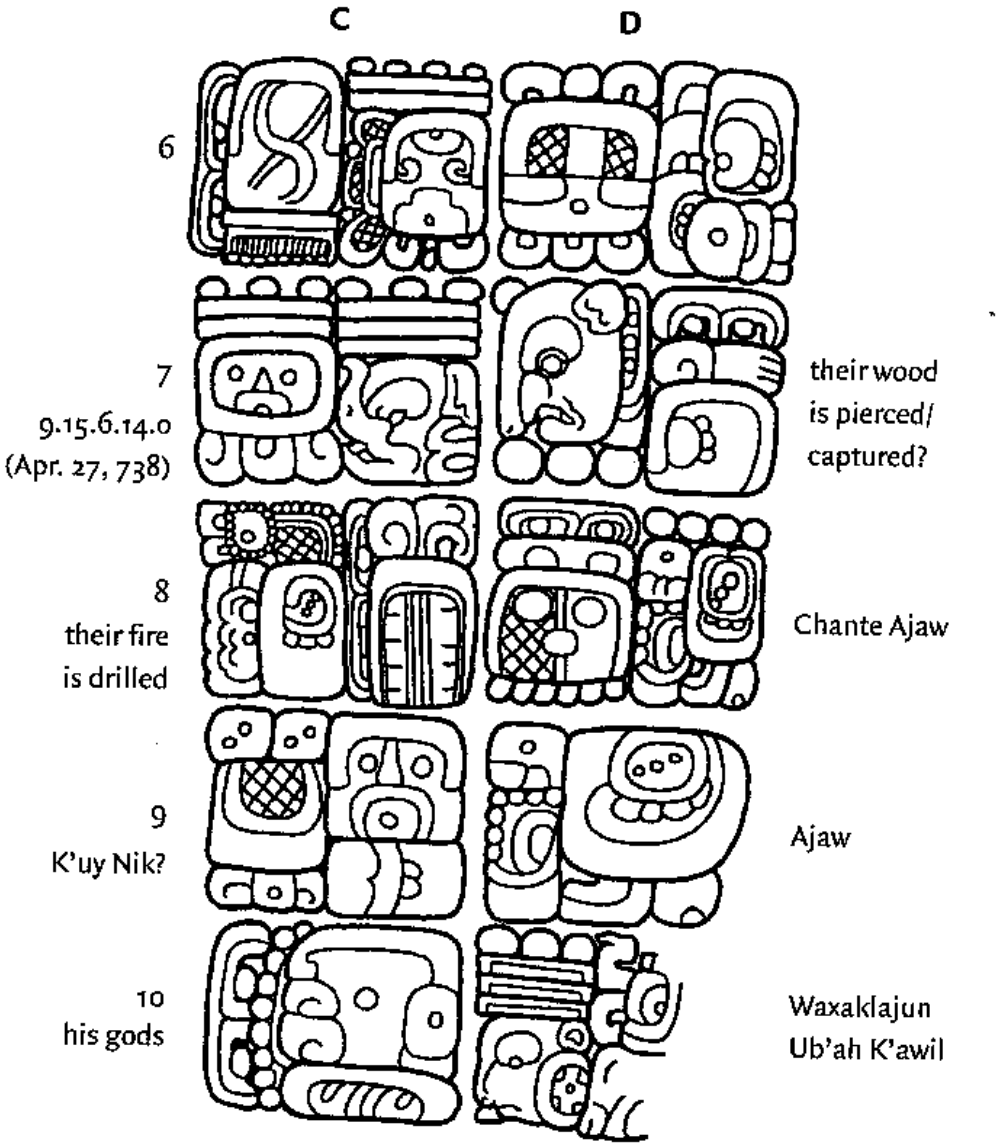


Figure 4.14. Quirigua Stela I recounts the capture and fire-drilling of Copan's patron gods Chante Ajaw and K'uy Nik? Ajaw (drawing and translation by Mathew Looper 2003:79 Figure 3.4)

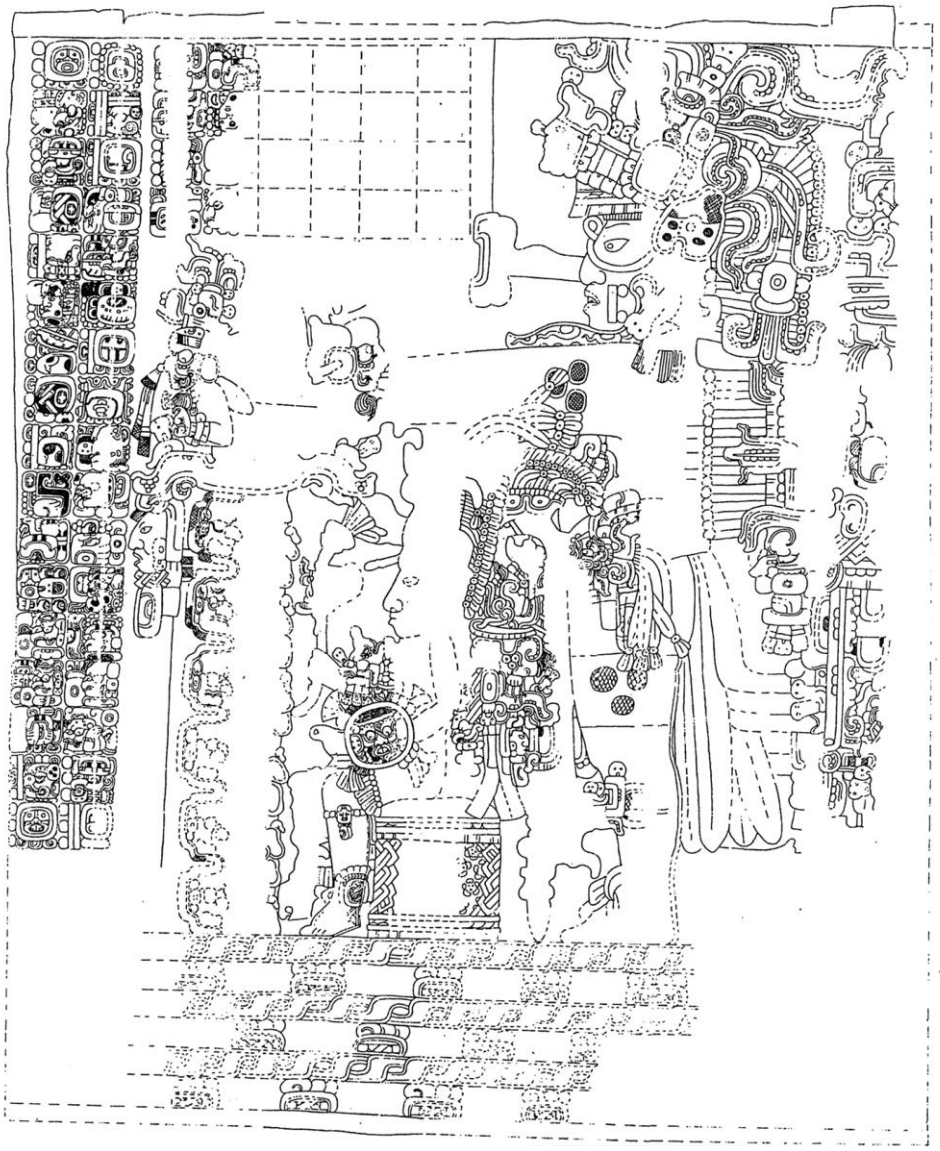
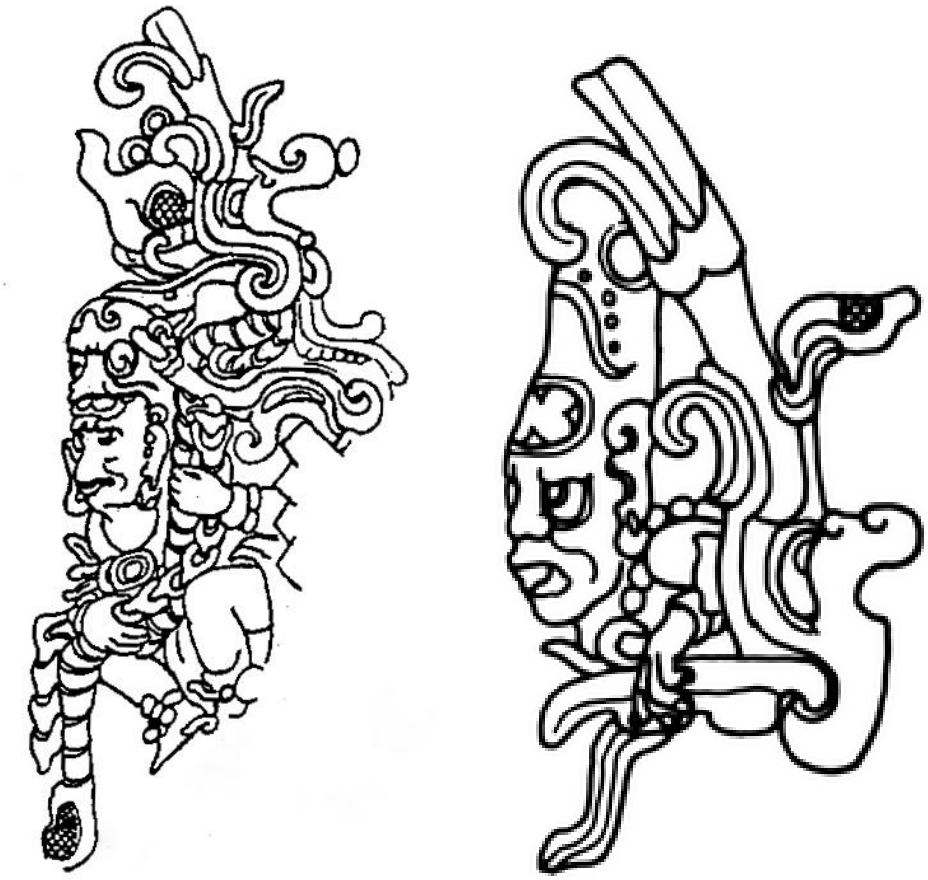


Figure 4.15. Yik'in Chan K'awiil of Tikal proudly displays the captured battle palanquin representing Naranjo's patron god. Tikal Temple IV Lintel 2 (drawing by John Montgomery, courtesy of FAMSI).

Figure 4.16. Maize God resurrecting out of the earth, represented by a turtle carapace. Detail of K731 (drawing by Marc Zender 2006:9 Figure 10c).

4.17. Censers from Copan depicting deified ancestors as cacao trees. (Detail of photo by Cameron McNeil, in McNeil 2010 Figure 11).



a. b.

Figure 4.18. Detail of solar imagery from Copan Stela A. (a) Vision serpent and solar zoomorph that appear in Waxaklahuun Ubah K'awiil's headdress, upper south side (drawing by Elizabeth Newsome 2001 Figure 3.35b). (b) Sun God emerging from double-headed serpent bar on north side (drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

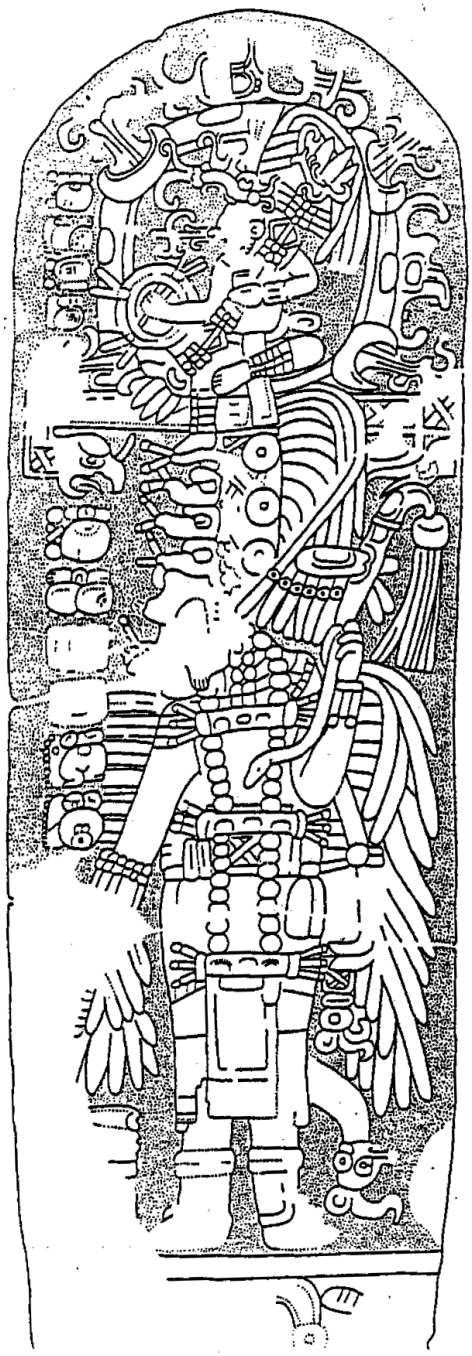


Figure 4.19. Uk’it K’an Le’k sits deified within a solar cartouche on Ek’ Balam Stela 1. (Drawing by Alfonso Lacadena, from Grube et al 2003 Figure 55).

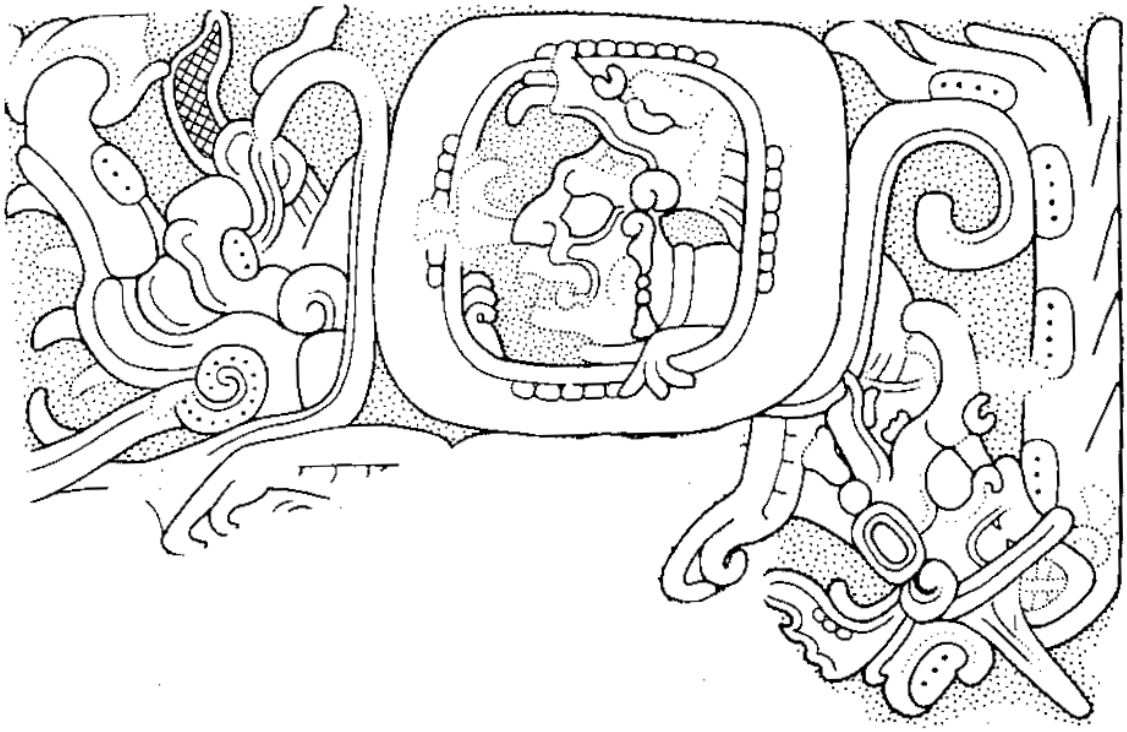


Figure 4.20. The Sun God within the belly of the Starry Deer Crocodile. Yaxchilan Hieroglyphic Stairway 3 Step III. (Drawing by Ian Graham 1982:169, courtesy of CMHI)

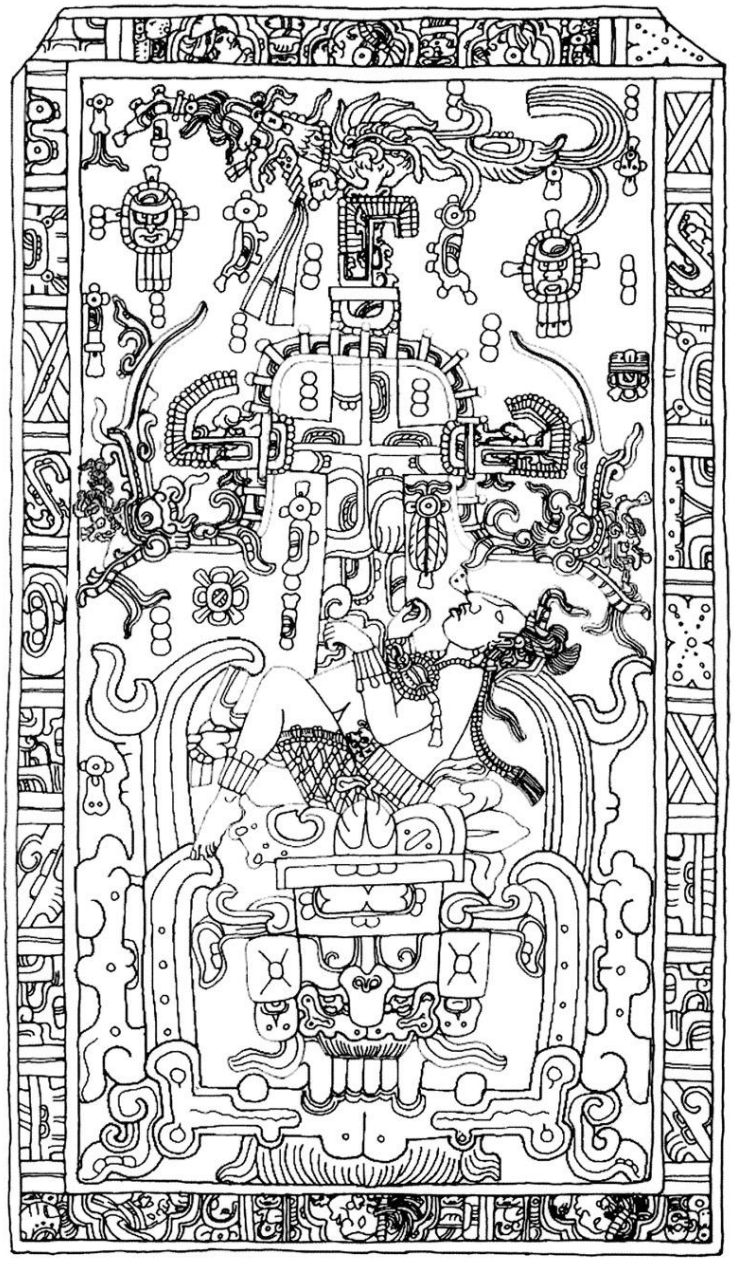


Figure 4.21. Pakal resurrecting as the Maize God from the maw of the Underworld. (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

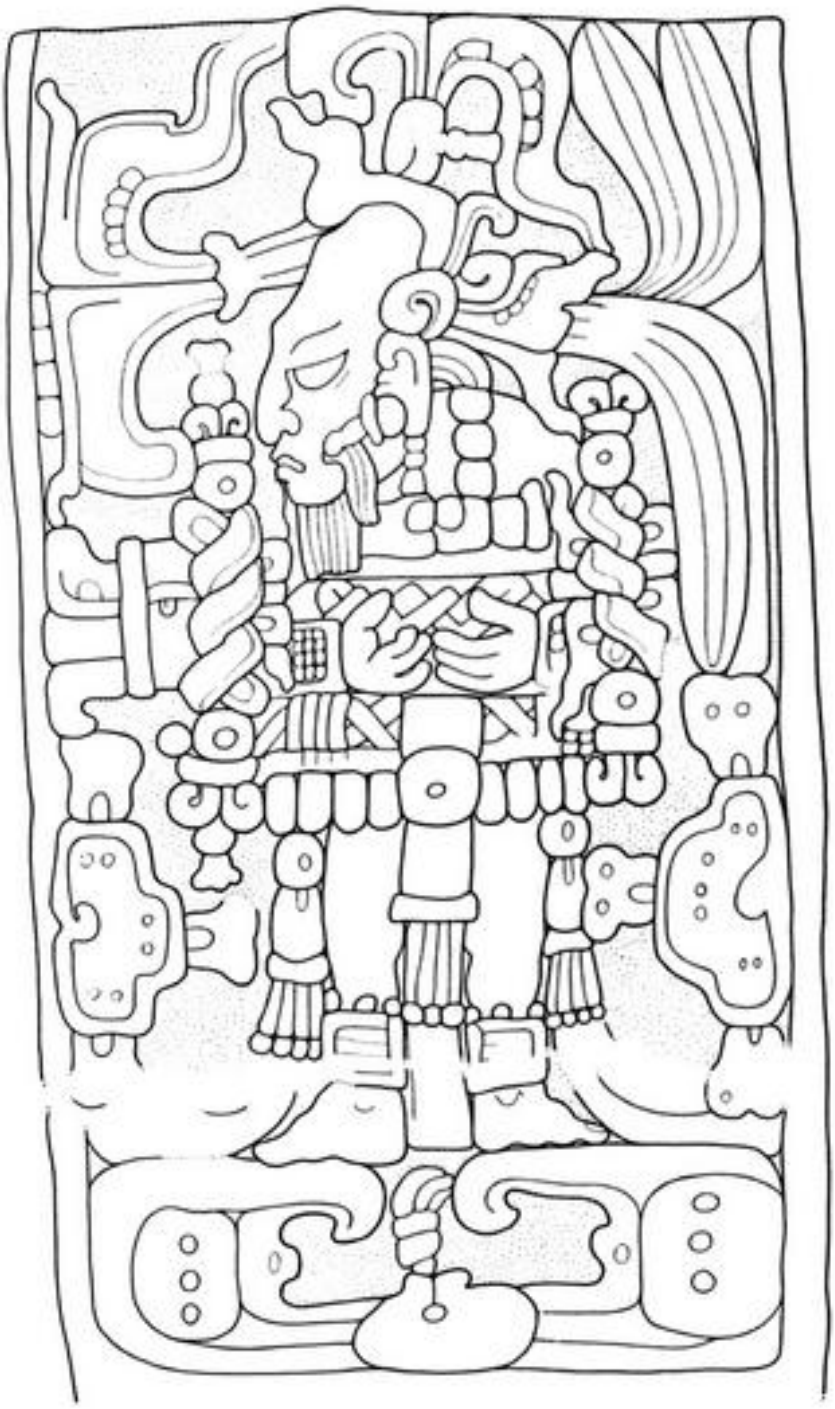


Figure 4.22. Yax Pasaj emerging from the Underworld as both the Maize God and K'awiil. Copan Stela 11. (Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of FAMSI).

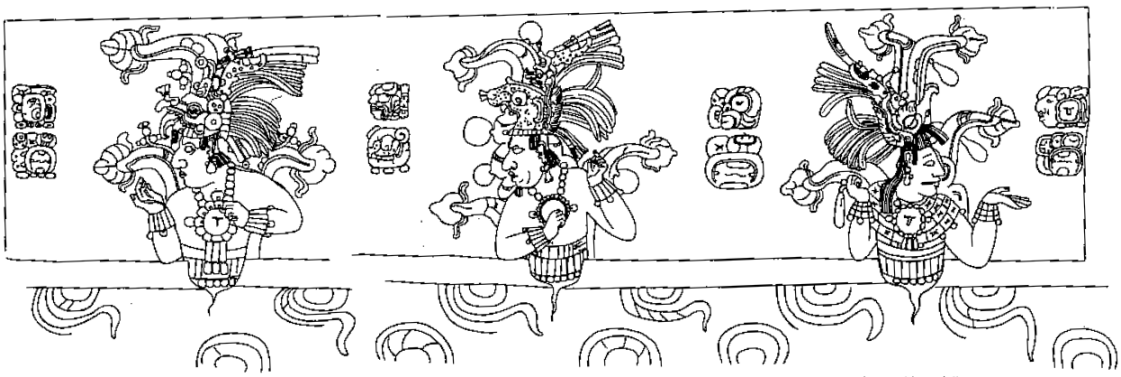
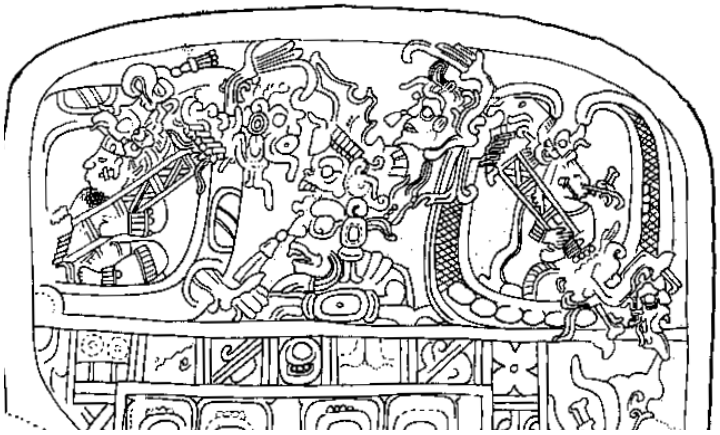
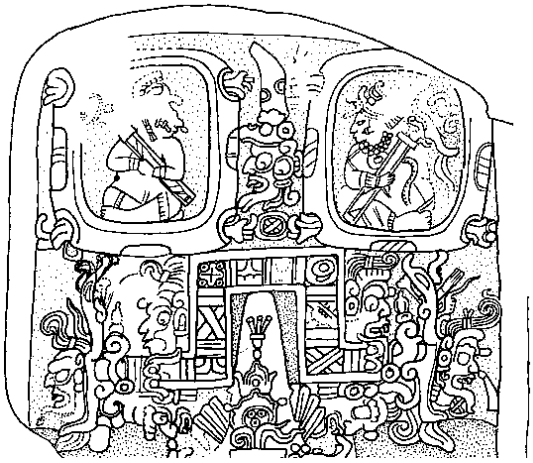


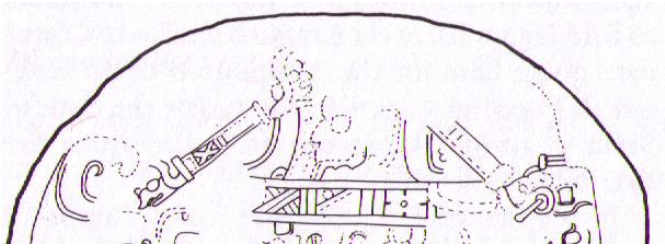
Figure 4.23. Ancestors sprouting as trees. Detail of sarcophagus lid, Temple of the Inscriptions (from Schele and Miller 1986:284 Plate 111e)



a.



b.



c.

Figure 4.24. Deified ancestors in solar and lunar cartouches at Yaxchilán. (a) Detail of upper register, Stela 4 (Drawing by C. Tate 1992:192 Figure 86). (b) Detail of upper register, Stela 10 (drawing by C. Tate 1992:232 Figure 130b). (c) Detail of upper register, Stela 6 (drawing by C. Tate 1992:193 Figure 88a)

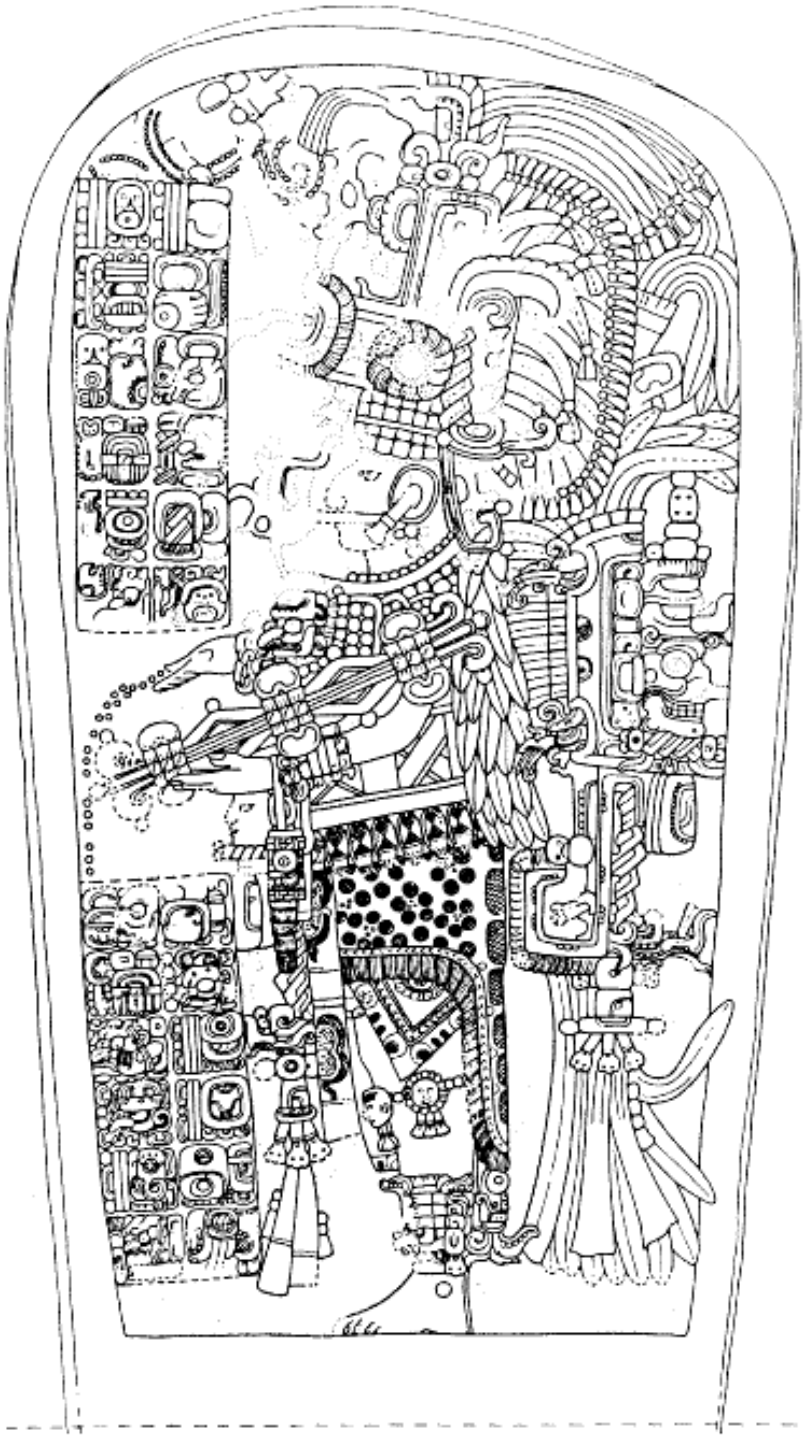


Figure 4.25. Deified solar ancestor floats above the ruler's head on Tikal Stela 22. (Drawing by Jones and Satterthwaite 1982 Figure 33)

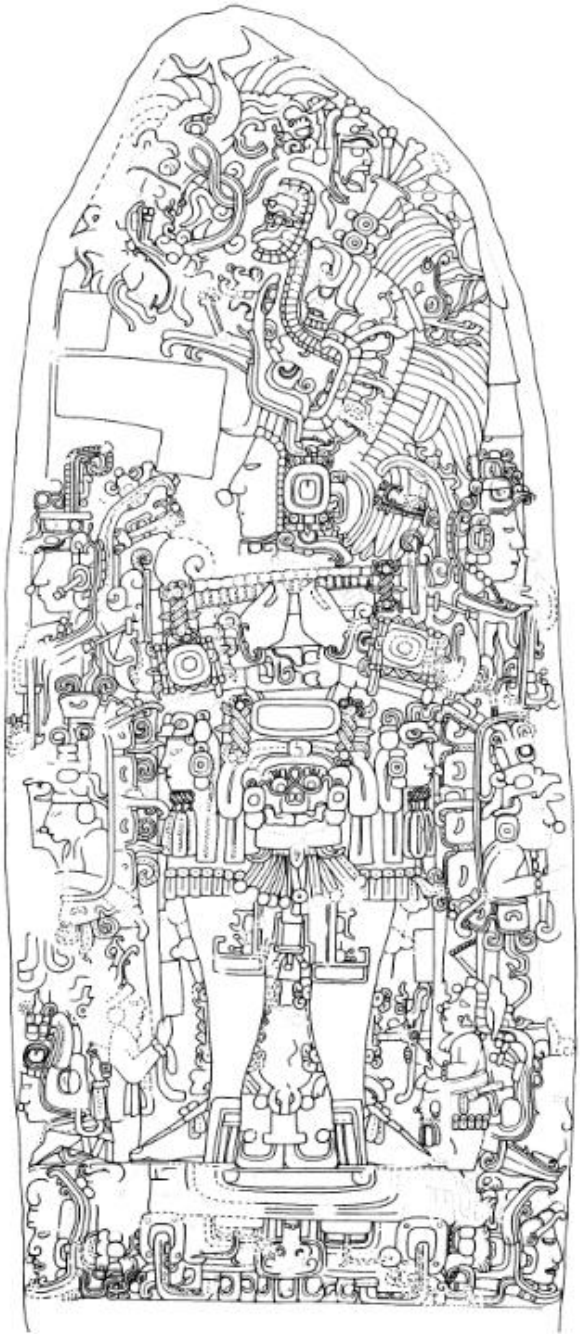


Figure 4.26. The only depiction of a deified ancestor at Caracol. Stela 5. (Drawing by Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981 Figure 6)

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusions

Overview

We began with an exploration of the concept of "ideal types" with regards to kingdom and king, and the ways in which that ideal type was departed from. Site planning principles and architectural styles generally reflected the divine realm, but could also draw from powerful distant polities or reject those of neighboring polities. Rulers were both supreme leaders at their sites but also players on a larger field. They imbued themselves with divinity by the rituals they performed and the names and titles they bore, and they reinforced that divinity through their artistic programs and exploitation of sacred spaces (both natural and man-made). The ruler stood at the center of space and time, and brought order to the chaos through ritual warfare and ballplaying. We then examined the process of becoming a sacred king and rejected the hypothesis that there was a "precise ritual" that was observed from site to site. The rituals, accession phrases, and regalia differed according to local ideologies. We ended with a discussion concerning the nature of gods, how rulers were to interact with them, and ultimately the expectation that rulers had of becoming gods themselves.

Discussion

The initial question that drove this dissertation was "What was the relationship between Maya rulers and their gods?" Unsurprisingly, that question opened the floodgate to more questions. Which "Maya" are we talking about? How did the Classic Maya conceptualize divinity? How were the gods worshiped? Why does each polity have a unique set of gods? Was there a difference in the roles played by 'major' gods and deified ancestors? How did rulers become deified ancestors? This line of inquiry ultimately led to the following overarching question; What effect did having local variants of pan-Maya gods and local deified ancestors in each city's pantheon have on regional and pan-Maya socio-political relations? It is that question that this dissertation ultimately addresses. In a very literal sense, an answer to that question is an exercise in infinite regression, for virtually every aspect of Classic Maya society was affected by the way individual polities saw fit to worship the gods of their polity. Religion and politics were not discreet institutions, and there was no conceptual distinction between the rituals of those two domains (Colas 1998:10; Pharo 2007:34). An unexpected finding of this research was how deeply the relationship between rulers and their gods influenced the cultural identity of each polity and how fundamentally it affected the heterogeneity of the Maya political landscape.

Of relevance to the question concerning the relationship between rulers and their gods is the issue concerning the divinity of kings. Were rulers literally gods on earth, self-possessed of divinity? Or were they perhaps avatars of particular gods? Or were they merely intermediaries between commoners and gods? We remain unable to answer that

question with full confidence, but I believe the evidence suggests that rulers were "functionally divine" but not "ontologically divine." In other words, they were plenipotentiaries of the gods, imbued with their powers, but they were not self-possessed of divinity. Their divinity came piecemeal through ritual activity and by bearing the names, titulary, and regalia of different gods. They did not embody any particular god for the entirety of their lives, but rather summoned the powers of a number of different gods, which varied according to ritual circumstances and local traditions. That said, the debate about how divine the kings really were is perhaps moot due to the variations in local ideology. It is possible that some rulers may have attempted to elevate themselves to ontologically divine status, whereas others were content to present themselves as functionally divine (Sachse 2004:10-11).

Maya rulers had the power to create new gods and modify pre-existing gods, and they subsequently defined themselves in relation to those very gods. As we have seen throughout this study, every aspect of their lives was colored by the gods they worshiped, from the mundane to the magnificent: the houses they slept in, the food they ate, the garb they donned, the names and titles they bore, the buildings and monuments they erected, the rituals they performed, the places they traveled to, the people they battled, the calendar they kept, the games they played, the regalia they displayed, the manner of burial they would receive, and the afterlife they expected. We have seen that some rulers drastically re-invented the ritual and material culture of kingship at their polities. At times the changes were quickly instituted after the death of an ineffective ruler in hopes of getting a fresh start, as in the case at Palenque. Conversely, it could be done in the midst

of a ruler's reign after defeating an oppressive enemy to boldly proclaim a re-ordering of the regional hierarchy, as was the case with Quirigua.

Although the fundamental question driving this dissertation concerned the relationship between rulers and their gods, I've spilt a good amount of ink concerning the relationships between polities. Superficially, this may seem to be an unrelated issue, but at its core it is cosmologically motivated. The concepts of duality (or more specifically, complementary opposition) and concentricity (center vs. periphery) are fundamental principles in Mesoamerican religions (Gossen 1986). Although the concept of duality requires the existence of two opposing forces or concepts to create a whole, it does not assume they are equally powerful. To the contrary, one force is frequently considered superior to the other, which lends cosmological support for human hierarchies. Complementary opposition is a creative act, both cosmologically and politically (Grove and Gillespie 2009:57-58). At its core, then, this has been a study of contrasts; human/god, past/present, commoner/ruler, self /other. The "other" always varies, depending on the context. Grove and Gillespie (2009:28) note, "One's center is one's house, neighborhood, community, even polity." The periphery can be as close as one's own home garden or as distant as the heavens.

Noble Women

Although the focus of this study has been on male rulers, it is important to note that a few women did attain to the throne during the 6th through 8th centuries, either as ruling queens or regents. Palenque had two female rulers, Lady Yohl Ik'nal (583-604) and

Muwaan Mat (612-615). Yaxchilán, Naranjo, and Tikal had one each; Lady Ik' Skull (?-751), Lady Six Sky (682-741), and Lady of Tikal (511-527), respectively. Miller and Martin (2004:93) suggest the appearance of female nobles in monumental iconography was a response to the increasingly crowded landscape of the era and the concomitant rise in conflict. Marriage alliances were used as alternatives to war, but by the 9th century, noble women became absent from the monuments and depictions of armed men predominate (ibid:94). It should be noted, however, that even when absent iconographically, elite women are named as frequently as men when rulers declare their parentage in the inscriptions (ibid.). The emphasis on male rulers throughout this study was not intended to be a slight, but rather was informed by the available data from the archaeological record, which is comprised mostly of male rulers.

Commoners

Commoners are likewise underrepresented in this study. Our focus has been on Classic Maya rulers and the identities they created for themselves and their polities, but it must be noted that commoners similarly used their agency to create and maintain their own identities through household ritual and material culture (Lucero 2010). As noted earlier, royal ritual was rooted in commoner ritual, albeit performed on a grander scale. Despite royal efforts to appropriate or even monopolize ritual activity, evidence from non-elite residential compounds demonstrates that there was resistance to local hegemonies (Hendon 1999). The broad strokes I used in discussing them throughout this study have unfortunately served to homogenize them as a group within their polities. In

defense of this approach, however, it is safe to say that the rulers of Tikal exerted great influence over the commoners at Tikal, yet they had little to no direct effect on the daily life of commoners at other sites such as Copán or Sayil (Lohse and Valdez 2004:5).

Recommendations for Further Research

Although focused studies of Maya gods have been undertaken in the past (Schellhas 1904; Taube 1992), the gods of the Classic period merit continued systematic research. A good number of Classic period deities, especially those that are unique to a region or a site, remain nameless due to undeciphered (and perhaps undecipherable) glyphs. As polities are defined in large measure by their gods, and events like warfare are often couched in beliefs that it is the gods themselves that are engaging in war, it might be worthwhile to systematically catalog the events, dates and locations associated with specific Classic period gods, and assign them unique identifying names when necessary. Patterns may or may not emerge, but until the work is done it remains uncertain.

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