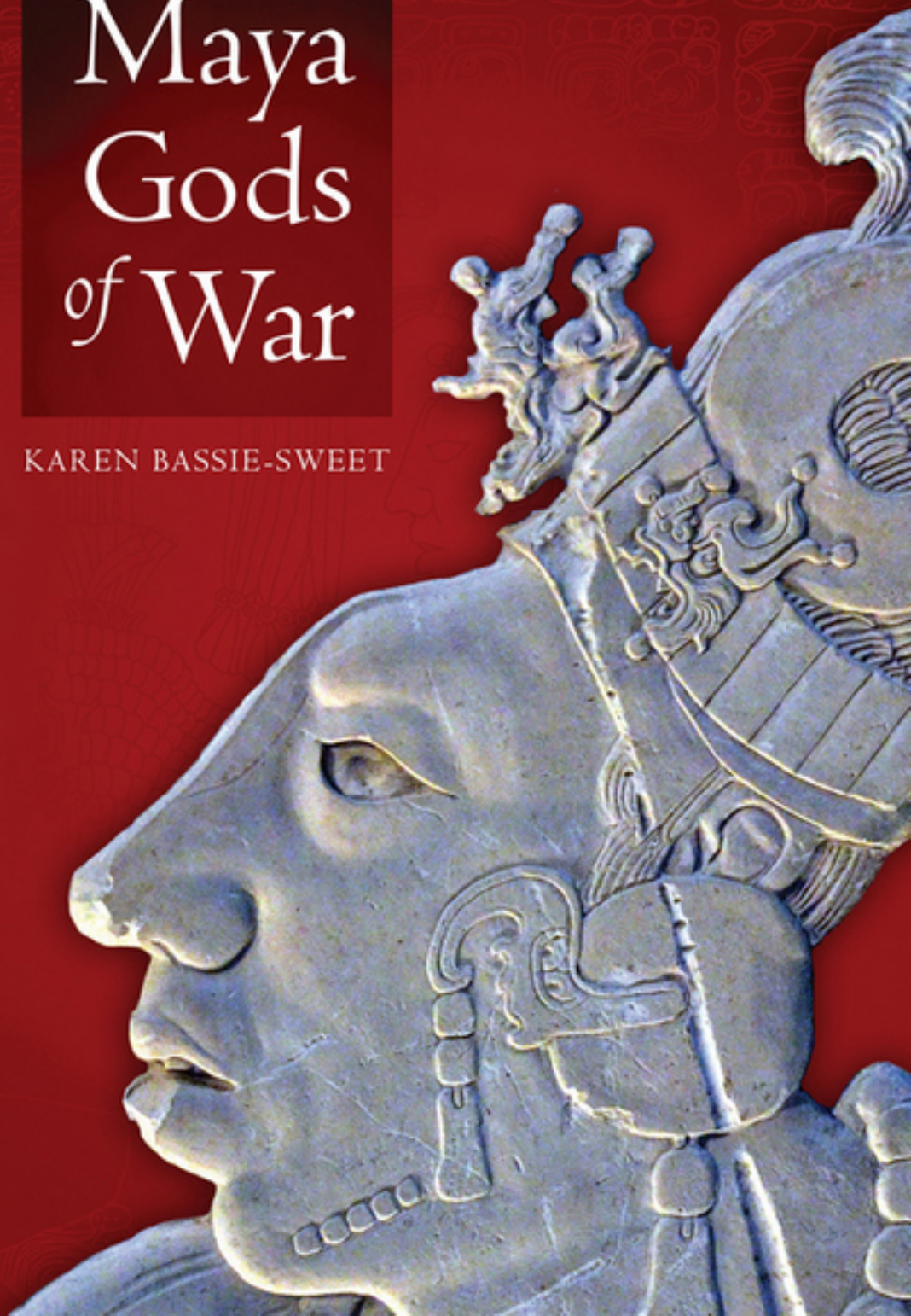


Maya Gods of War

KAREN BASSIE-SWEET



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For Rick and Nick, my yin and yang

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Maya Gods of War

This study focuses on the Classic period deities of the Maya region that were associated with weapons of war and sacrifice, as well as the flint and obsidian from which those implements were made. The Classic period terms for flint and obsidian were *tok'* and *taj* (Proto-Mayan **tyooq'* and **tyaab*), respectively (Kaufman 2003:442).¹ These two types of stones were the most common material used to make axes, hammers, lancets, knives, spears, darts, and arrows as well as utilitarian tools. Flint and obsidian were also knapped into exotic shapes nicknamed “eccentrics” that had ritual purposes. The use of flint and obsidian debitage in caches and elite burial contexts was common, and this speaks to the sacred nature of these stones (Ricketson and Ricketson 1937; Coe 1959; Moholy-Nagy 2008). The Maya area has four broad geographic zones: the Pacific coastal region, the highlands, the Maya Mountains of Belize, and the lowlands. The highlands consist of a volcanic southern region and a metamorphic northern region. A karst platform dominated by limestone bedrock forms the lowlands. Flint (a sedimentary cryptocrystalline form of quartz) is found in limestone formations, while obsidian (volcanic glass) only occurs in the volcanic regions of the highlands of Guatemala and Mexico. During the Classic period (AD 250–900), the three primary obsidian sources of Guatemala in descending order of importance were El Chayal, Ixtepeque, and San Martín Jilotepeque. Obsidian from these sites has been recovered across the Maya lowlands and attests

Introduction

to the importance of this highland trade commodity. Though in small quantities, Central Mexican obsidian, particularly the superior green obsidian from the Pachuca sources that were controlled by Teotihuacán in the Early Classic period, was also present in the Maya lowlands and even appeared at highland Guatemalan sites that had easy access to local sources.

Teotihuacán cultural traits appeared across the Maya region beginning in the Early Classic period and continued well beyond the demise of that great metropolis. The assimilation of Teotihuacán gods and symbols into Maya culture has been extensively documented (Coggins 1975; Hellmuth 1975; Berlo 1983, 1984; Schele and Miller 1986; Stone 1989; Schele and Freidel 1990; Taube 1992b, 2000; Proskouriakoff 1993; Laporte and Fialko 1990; Spence 1996; Stuart 1998a, 2000a; Braswell 2003; Nielsen 2003, 2006). In the Early Classic period, the major city of the central Maya region was Tikal. A momentous event in the history of this city and the region under its influence was the death of its king Chak Tok Ich'aaik I in AD 378, apparently at the hands of a lord called Sihyaj K'ahk' who arrived at Tikal from the west. The narratives referring to Sihyaj K'ahk' indicate that he held the title of Kaloomte' and that he brought with him an effigy of a Teotihuacán deity. While phonetic substitutions for the term indicate that it is read *kaloomte'*, the etymology of the word is uncertain. Various texts refer to certain kings as the vassals of a Kaloomte'. In light of these ranked statements, it has been suggested that the office of Kaloomte' refers to an overlord of conquered territories who had the supreme status within a political hierarchy, and it has been translated as "high king" or "emperor" (Stuart 2000a; Martin 2003; Martin and Grube 2008).

The following year a new king named Yax Nuun Ahiin I was placed on the Tikal throne under the authority of Sihyaj K'ahk'. Yax Nuun Ahiin I's father was another Kaloomte' lord named Spearthrower Owl. The weapons and military accoutrements of both Spearthrower Owl and Yax Nuun Ahiin I depicted in Tikal art are in the style of Teotihuacán, and this has led to the reasonable conclusion that the political coup at Tikal was orchestrated by Teotihuacán. A primary goal of this study is to analyze the attributes and nature of the Teotihuacán deities found in the Maya region and to explore how these gods were introduced into the Maya region and then incorporated into Maya worldview.

The most prominent of these Teotihuacán deities is depicted as a skeletal being with goggle-like eyes. In a few scenes, he is seen wielding a snake-like spear that is thought to represent a thunderbolt (see the Tetitla murals). He is visually similar to the Postclassic Aztec storm and thunderbolt god named Tlaloc whose main characteristic was also goggle-like eyes (Sahagún

1959–1963:1:2; Durán 1971:154). It is unknown what language was spoken at Teotihuacán, much less what they called their goggled-eye god. I retain the name Tlaloc for this Teotihuacán deity for lack of a better alternative. Like many of the primary Maya deities, Tlaloc had a variety of manifestations including feline, owl, moth, and caterpillar-serpent forms.

In contrast to the Central Mexican thunderbolt god Tlaloc, the Maya identified lightning and thunderbolts with a category of deities called Chahks, and they believed thunderbolts were the flint axes thrown by these gods. As Carlos Trenary (1987–1988) has noted, the classification of meteors as a type of lightning is found throughout the world, and this classification was based on the natural observation that both phenomena flash across the sky and can create fire and a booming sound. Mayan terms used for both lightning and meteors reflect this close association. For example, the Tzotzil, Tzeltal, and Tojolabal terms used for meteors (*sanselaw*, *chamtzelaw*, *k'antzewelaw*, *k'antzewel*, *sansewel*, *tzantzewel*) are also employed to describe lightning flashes and sheet lightning as well as lights that appear in the mountains at night (Lenkersdorf 1979; Slocum and Gerdel 1965:193; Pitarch 2010:44). In Ch'ol, the borrowed term *tzantzewel* means lightning flash (Stoll 1938:67). Across Mesoamerica, meteors were thought to be the obsidian weapons of the gods (Taube 2000). It is my contention that the Teotihuacán Tlaloc was incorporated into the Maya pantheon as a type of “lightning” deity that was specifically identified with obsidian and meteors (Bassie-Sweet 2011, 2019; Bassie-Sweet et al. 2015). As such, he was one of the primary gods of war for the Maya. I also argue that a principal duty of the Kaloomte' lords and ladies was to act as high priests and priestess for Tlaloc and to initiate others into the cult.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Some of the monuments and pottery scenes discussed in this volume are not illustrated due to limited space and funding. Excellent online access to all these works of art can be found at the Harvard Corpus Project website (<https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/about.php>) and the former Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc. website now maintained by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which provides access to the drawings of Linda Schele (<http://research.famsi.org/schele.html>) and John Montgomery (<http://www.famsi.org/research/montgomery/index.html>). Justin Kerr's remarkable database of photographs can be accessed at <http://research.mayavase.com/kerrmaya.html>. Images of the codices are available at <http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/codices/marhenke.html>.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

The first chapter of this study discusses the various depictions of lightning and thunderbolts in Maya art and examines the semantic markers used to distinguish flint from other types of stone. It presents an overview of the various types of Chahk thunderbolt deities and their relationship to flint weapons. It explores how lightning was believed to be not only controlled by the ruling elite but an intrinsic part of their person. Other deities associated with flint were the fire deity known as GIII and the Sun God. The second chapter reviews these fiery deities and their roles in Maya warfare. The next four chapters examine the nature of Tlaloc and his various manifestations, his identification with meteors and obsidian weapons, and the spread of the Tlaloc cult after the so-called Tikal entrada. The discussion focuses on the regalia of the Tlaloc cult and the religious duties of the various Tlaloc-related offices. The final chapter addresses the characteristics of the deity God L who was the maternal grandfather of the Hero Twins and the patron god for long-distance traders. It details his role as an obsidian merchant god and his close identification with the ancient land route between the highland Guatemalan obsidian sources and the lowlands. Before beginning these discussions, a brief overview of the calendars, deities, war themes, and nomenclature is necessary.

THE MAYA CALENDARS

The Maya used a vigesimal system of counting, and they divided the solar calendar (the *haab*) into eighteen “months” of twenty days each plus a five-day period called the Wayeb. Certain gods were thought to control various time cycles. Each of the eighteen months and the Wayeb period was thought to be under the control of a specific god. The Maya had a religious calendar called the *tzolk'in* that was composed of two interconnected cycles of thirteen days and twenty days. Each day in the thirteen-day cycle was ruled by a particular god (the number gods), as was each day in the twenty-day cycle (the day lords). The *tzolk'in* and *haab* ran concurrently and had the same synchronization throughout the Classic period. Simply because of the mathematics, the same combination of *tzolk'in* date and *haab* date would not recur for fifty-two years. This greater cycle was called the calendar round.

The *tzolk'in* date of an individual's birth was thought to dictate their fate in life. The same was true for time periods. The *tzolk'in* day that began a solar year dictated the nature of that year. Again, simply because of the mathematical relationship between 20 and 365, only four *tzolk'in* day names could begin the year, and they were referred to as the Yearbearers. It is my opinion

that the Classic period Yearbearers were Ak'bal-Lamat-Ben-Etz'nab (Bassie-Sweet DC).

Most narratives on Classic period monumental art include a calendar notation that has been nicknamed the Long Count. In essence, the Long Count records the number of days (*k'ins*) since a zero base date, and it places the calendar round date in linear time. This base date is often referred to as the “era event,” and it occurred on the calendar round date of 4 Ajaw 8 Kumk'u. The era event corresponds to the Gregorian date of August 13, 3114 BC according to the Thompson correlation of 584,285 (the Julian Day number corresponding to the Maya date 13.0.0.0.0). A typical Long Count date is arranged in units of 400 *tuns* (one *bak'tun*), 20 *tuns* (one *k'atun*), 360 days (one *tun*), 20 days (one *winal*), and single days (*k'in*).

The Maya performed ceremonies at the end of each *tun* period, but the end of the *k'atun* was a particularly important ritual occasion in which the patron of the ending *k'atun* period was replaced with the patron of the upcoming *k'atun*. The mathematics of the Long Count and the *tzolk'in* dictate that all *tun* endings occurred on Ajaw dates. It takes thirteen *k'atun* cycles before the same *tzolk'in* day number and day name recur on a *k'atun* ending.

MAYA DEITIES

It has long been recognized that the colonial period K'iche' document known as the Popol Vuh contains a core creation myth with Classic period antecedents (Coe 1973, 1977, 1989; Taube 1985, 1992a; Bassie-Sweet 1996, 2002, 2008; Zender 2004b). This narrative explains how a family of primordial deities and a trio of thunderbolt gods created the world, established its structure and order, and created humans to inhabit it and worship them. The Popol Vuh relates the deeds of three generations of deities: the creator grandparents called Xpiyacoc and Xmucane; their sons, One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu; and One Hunahpu's sons, named One Chouen, One Batz, Hunahpu, and Xbalanque. Classic period lowland parallels for all of these gods, their spouses, and their in-laws have been identified (figure 0.1).

The Maya as well as other Mesoamerican cultures often categorize, organize, and structure their world using complementary oppositions, such as male/female, right/left, and senior/junior (see Bassie-Sweet 2008:3–4 for an overview). This concept was a fundamental principle in ancient Maya worldview, and it was reflected in all aspects of life. The creator deities were the embodiment of complementary opposition and represented the ideal state for humans to achieve. The creator deities were role models for humans, in particular, for

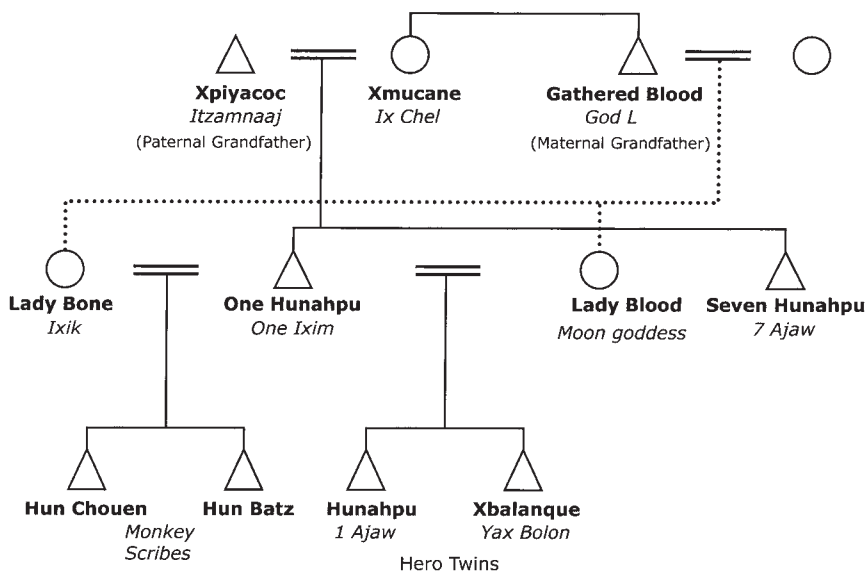


FIGURE 0.1. *Genealogy chart*

the ruling elite. Hunahpu and Xbalanque (the Hero Twins) inherited the most exemplary qualities of their father and paternal grandfather and became the quintessential role models for young lords.

PATRON GODS

While there was a shared core mythology among the lowland Maya, evidence from art, hieroglyphic inscriptions, and architecture indicates that the ruling elite of each community had specific patron gods, and a number of war inscriptions refer to the destruction of patron gods and icons. For example, the Palenque narratives indicate that the three deities nicknamed GI, GII, and GIII were considered to be the primary patron gods of its ruling elite. In AD 599, the Kaanul dynasty “axed” Palenque and “threw down” its three gods. Various Classic period images illustrate a ruler seated on a palanquin with an image of a god towering over him. As Simon Martin (1996) has demonstrated, Tikal Temple IV Lintel 2 illustrates the Tikal king on such a palanquin, but the deity behind him is the patron god of the Naranjo king, his recently conquered adversary. The palanquin scene represents the victor’s capture of his rival’s patron god. Whether this was a Naranjo effigy brought to the battlefield or an effigy that had resided in a Naranjo temple is not known. The capture of

a patron deity effigy prevented the enemy lineage from accessing the supernatural power and protection of its deities. The ability to acquire or destroy a foe's patron effigy was a powerful symbol of conquest.

The Popol Vuh provides critical information about the nature of the patron gods of the first four lineage heads of the K'iche'. After acknowledging the primacy of the creator deities in the supernatural hierarchy and demonstrating their obedience to them, each of the first K'iche' lineage heads obtained a patron god. These patrons were thought to be the *k'exwach* "replacement" and *natab'al* "remembrance" for the creator deities (Christenson 2007:215). In other words, patron deities were thought to be not separate gods but alternative manifestations of the creator deities. The patron god became inextricably linked to the elite of the lineage, and the lineage head took on the role of high priest of the patron god. The Popol Vuh narrative focuses on how the K'iche' protected their patron god effigies and forced defeated foes to make offerings to these gods.

SACRED BUNDLES

ACROSS Mesoamerica, deities and ancestors were represented not only by effigies of stone, ceramic, and wood but also by sacred bundles. Both types of objects were thought to embody the essence of the deity or ancestor. In Central Mexico mythology, various deities underwent an auto-sacrificial death or were killed; and their remains, costumes, and objects related to their divinity were placed in sacred bundles. A prime example is the goddess Itzpapalotl whose burned body produced five colored flints. Mixcoatl chose the white flint representing the spirit power of Itzpapalotl and carried this sacred bundle on his back during his successful war events. Sacred bundles representing deities were housed within temples, protected, and worshipped. The outer skin of the bundle was often composed of deer or jaguar skin (both more durable and moisture-proof than cloth), and the bundle was frequently kept in a wooden box in the temple. Wooden boxes found by Spanish soldiers at Cabo Catoche may have been such sacred bundle boxes (see below). As will be discussed in later chapters, the deity Tlaloc is depicted in Maya art as either a deerskin or a jaguar-skin bundle.

The Popol Vuh narrative describes a deerskin bundle representing one of their patron deities (Christenson 2006:228, 2007:234–235). The first four K'iche' lineage heads each received patron gods at the citadel of Tulan. On their journey to a new homeland and beginning, they each carried their respective patron god on their back. At the first rising of the morning star and sun, these

patron gods were transformed into stone effigies to which the K'iche' made offerings. The deities instructed the K'iche' to also create deerskin bundles that would represent them. Although the deities still appeared at times in the landscape as living beings, it was to these stone effigies and deerskin bundles that the K'iche' and other groups subservient to them made offerings. After the deaths of the first lineage heads, they were represented by a sacred bundle. The veneration of ancestral remains, whether in the form of cremated ashes or bones, was a common Mesoamerican tradition (McAnany 1995). Relic bundles, in essence, are portable representations of the sacred remains of a deity or ancestor.

THE TITLES AND OFFICES OF AJAW, KALOOMTE', AND BAKAB

The status of being an Ajaw "lord" was hereditary. The nominal phrases of many lords and ladies include a phrase referring to their age in *k'atuns*. A *k'atun* was a period of time composed of 20 units of 360 days known as *tuns*. A *k'atun* was thus equal to 19 solar years plus 265 days. As an example, the Palenque lord K'inich Janaab Pakal I was born on March 26, AD 603, and died on August 31, 683, at age eighty. In retrospective texts, he is referred to as a five *k'atun* Ajaw because he had moved into the fifth *k'atun* of his life. These titles can also refer to the length of time a lord was ruler. In some examples such as the Palace Tablet, K'inich Janaab Pakal I is retrospectively named as a four *k'atun* Ajaw and four *k'atun* Kaloomte', indicating that he attained this latter office when he became king. When females are named in hieroglyphic texts, their names and titles are most often prefixed with the term *ixik* "lady." For instance, the mother of the Yaxchilán ruler Bird Jaguar IV is called a five *k'atun ixik ajaw* "five *k'atun* Lady Ajaw" on Dos Caobas Stela 2. The tradition of counting age in units of *k'atuns* rather than solar years reflects the importance of the ruling elite in performing the *tun* Period Ending ceremonies that were the primary focus of most public monuments.

The Maya practiced a patrilineal descent system (Hopkins 1988, 1991).² When an *ajaw* became the supreme Ajaw (king) of his community, he acquired a *sak huun* "white headband" as the symbol of his office that was tied onto his head with a large knot in the back (*k'ablaj* "fasten, enclose, bind, or tie"; *sak huun* "white headband") (Grube cited in Schele 1992:39–40; Schele 1992:22–24; Stuart 1996:155). The Ajaw headdress was constructed of bark paper, and it replicated the headdress of the Hero Twin known by the calendar name One Ajaw. One Ajaw was the son of the deity One Ixim and the grandson of the creator grandparents Itzamnaaj and Ix Chel. By taking on the guise

of One Ajaw, the ruler became identified with this family of primary deities. One Ajaw's Popol Vuh counterpart was Hunahpu whose final destiny was to become the sun. Rulers often incorporated the title *K'inich* in their regal name. Researchers have translated *K'inich* as "hot," "essence of the sun," "radiant," "great," or "sun-like" (Wichmann 2004; Houston et. al 2006:169; Stuart 2005b:105, 2006; Martin and Grube 2008; Stone and Zender 2011:153). I prefer the latter term, sun-like.

Some kings attained the office of Kaloomte'. The headdress representing the office of Kaloomte' is discussed in chapter 5. The majority of Kaloomte' titles are either without directional affiliation or preceded by the direction West. There are, however, East, North, and South Kaloomte' mentioned in the hieroglyphic texts (Tokovinine 2008). It has been proposed that the West Kaloomte' title refers to lords and ladies who were specifically associated with Teotihuacán (1,000 km west of Tikal as the bird flies). While the vassal contexts of the Kaloomte' title may indicate its conquest nature, this study focuses on the religious aspects of the office. There is evidence that Kaloomte' lords and ladies were high priests and priestesses of Tlaloc who functioned as oracles for Tlaloc.

A widely distributed Classic period title called Bakab occurs in the nominal phrases of many kings and some of their queens. It is often paired with the Kaloomte' office. A number of Classic period titles are prefaced with term *b'aah* "head" to indicate that the title holder is the principal or first member of a particular category of person, like the B'aah Ch'ok and B'aah Sajal titles (Schele 1992:45–46; Houston and Stuart 1998:79). It has been suggested that the etymology of the term *Bakab* is *b'aah kab* "head earth" and that it might signify that the ruler had some kind of control or authority over agricultural terrain (Houston et al. 2006:63). The distribution of the term indicates that its function had a direct relationship to the role of rulers and their wives as the head officiants of Period Ending ceremonies. Period Ending ceremonies were acts of reverence to the calendar gods that maintained the order and stability of the community and the world as a whole. The honored deities also included the patron gods of a community. Major Period Endings were ultimately acts of renewal in which the calendar gods of the concluding *k'atun* period were venerated and a new set of gods were ushered into power.

OFFERINGS OF INCENSE AND THE CH'AJOM TITLE

Many colonial sources refer to the offering of incense and blood to the deities and ancestors (Tozzer 1941). The Popol Vuh describes the mourning of the

creator grandmother when her grandsons were killed in the underworld and her rejoicing when she was given a sign that they had been resurrected (Christenson 2007:188). She then burned incense as a memorial to her grandsons, which deified them. This episode demonstrates the divine origins of offering incense.

Incense bags were a pan-Mesoamerican insignia that reflected the priestly duty of offering incense to the deities and ancestors. Bernardino de Sahagún, the illustrious chronicler of Central Mexico, described a hierarchy of priests in Aztec culture who used incense bags called *copalxiqujpilli* “copal pouch” that were made from jaguar skin or decorated to look like jaguar skin (1959–1963, II:76n25, 79–81, 87). In addition to copal, these bags also contain powdered *Tagetes lucida* that was also burned with the copal. *Tagetes lucida* (Spanish *pericón*) is a type of marigold with tiny yellow flowers known as *yauhtli* in Nahuatl and *iya’* in K’iche’. In the Popol Vuh, the offerings burned for the patron god Tohil after the first rising of the sun consisted of pine resin incense and *Tagetes lucida* (Christenson 2007:233). This flower is still burned as offerings in modern K’iche’ ceremonies. Today, the flower plays a major role in the Day of the Dead and All Souls Day celebration in Mexico. As discussed in later chapters, *Tagetes lucida* flowers are part of Tlaloc’s headdress, and one has to wonder whether the Day of the Dead practice was rooted in the ancient association of this plant with the warrior cult of Tlaloc.

The remains of a Classic period incense bag recovered from a burial at Comalcalco indicate that the contents of Maya incense bags could also include bloodletters of obsidian, flint, and stingray spine and their bone handles as well as divination stones (Zender 2004b:253). The bag constitutes a toolkit for priestly activities. Small wooden boxes were also used to store bloodletting implements, in particular stingray spines used for personal bloodletting.

In the Maya region, the niche scenes on Piedras Negras Stela 6, Stela 11, Stela 14, and Stela 25 that illustrate the ruler during Period Ending ceremonies depict him holding an incense bag in his left hand and demonstrate the obligation of the king to provide incense and blood to the deities on these occasions (Bassie-Sweet 1991). In the art of Teotihuacán, warriors carrying incense bags are common. There are also many Classic period scenes in the Maya region in which a warrior carries a weapon and an incense bag, such as Ruler 3 of Dos Pilas-Aguateca Houston (1993:figs. 3.26, 4.20). Another example is seen on Piedras Negras Panel 15 where the ruler is flanked by five cowering captives and two attendants (Houston et al. 2000). He holds his spear in an upright position in his right hand and an incense bag in his left. On Yaxchilán Stela 18, the ruler Shield Jaguar III stands before his captive holding a spear in one hand and an incense bag in the other (Tate 1992:fig. 145).

The decorations on Maya incense bags vary. On Piedras Negras Stela 11, Ruler 4 holds an incense bag during his Period Ending ceremony that is inscribed with the *tzolk'in* date of the Period Ending (Bassie-Sweet 1991:50). On the other hand, a great many Maya incense bags are decorated with Tlaloc images and motifs. Tlaloc incense bags are seen on Tikal Stela 16, Tikal Stela 22, Dos Pilas Stela 2, and La Mar Stela 1. The incense bags on Pomoná Jamb 2 and Tzendales Stela 1 are topped with a Tlaloc face that is trimmed with a Lepidoptera wing. The Tikal Structure 10 lintel shows a lord carrying an incense bag decorated with a Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan (a caterpillar-serpent that was an avatar of Tlaloc). The Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan incense bag on Bonampak Stela 3 also features the rattlesnake tail of the beast as a tassel (see figure 5.7). Such rattlesnake tassels are also seen on Bonampak Stela 2, Tikal Stela 5, Yaxchilán Stela 18, El Cayo Altar 4, and Piedras Negras Stela 13 (Proskouriakoff 1950:96). An illustration of the priest Aj Pakal Tahn of Comalcalco is carved on two stingray spines found in his burial (Zender 2004b:fig. 71). In one depiction, he carries a jaguar-skin incense bag with a rattlesnake tail tassel. The rulers on Tikal Stela 5 and Naranjo Stela 2 and the banded-bird officials on the Palenque Temple XIX platform have bags decorated with Teotihuacán-style motifs (see below for discussion of the office of banded-bird). An obvious reason for such decoration is that the incense was intended for offerings to Tlaloc. It might also signal that the bag contained *Tagetes lucida*.

The title of Ch'ajom refers to a person who has been ordained to make *ch'aj* “incense” offerings to the gods and ancestors (Love 1987; Scherer and Houston 2015). An important incense used by the Maya was produced from the sap of the *Portium copal* tree known in Nahuatl as *copal* and in Mayan languages as *pom*. It is likely that one of the duties of the Ch'ajom was also to make and distribute the appropriate amount of incense offerings among the participants in a ceremony.

A number of references to the length of time a person had been a Ch'ajom indicate that they attained their status at an early age. For instance, the Yaxchilán king Shield Jaguar III is referred to in retrospective narratives as both a five *k'atun* Ajaw and a five *k'atun* Ch'ajom. This numbered Ch'ajom title indicates that Shield Jaguar III held this title for at least eighty years. Given that his reign spanned only sixty-one years, it is apparent that his Ch'ajom title was acquired before his accession. The same is true for his son Bird Jaguar IV who is said to have been a three *k'atun* Ajaw and a three *k'atun* Ch'ajom. The notion that the Ch'ajom office is an initial religious office has a parallel with modern K'iche' practices where the first station obtained in

the religious-political hierarchy is that of *poronel* “burner” (Tedlock 1992:59; Bassie-Sweet 2008:99). The novice *poronel* is taught to invoke the deities with prayers and the burning of incense offerings.

The act of making offerings is frequently depicted in Maya with a gesture nicknamed “hand-scattering.” In many examples, the individual’s hands are held in a downward position with liquid falling from them. In other instances, only one hand is held in this position with balls of incense falling from it, and often the other hand holds a small incense pouch. In Maya hieroglyphic writing, the logograph sign representing hand-scattering has been deciphered as *chok* “to scatter, throw, cast” (Grube cited in Schele and Grube 1995:40). Such gestures are also found in the art of Teotihuacán as seen in the Techinantitla compound murals (Berrin and Pasztory 1993:figs. 43–45). In these scenes, a figure dressed as Tlaloc is pictured holding an incense bag in one hand with liquid flowing from the other. A flowery speech scroll emits from the figure’s mouth, suggesting that the figure is reciting or singing the prayers that always accompany offerings.

Portrait glyphs of the Ch’ajom title on Yaxchilán Throne 2, the Copán Structure 9N-8-82 bench, and Quiriguá Stela J (D13) (T1073c) depict the costume elements of a Ch’ajom in detail (Scherer and Houston 2015) (figure 0.2a, 0.2b). The headdress of a Ch’ajom was composed of a simple scroll and curl element tied to the forehead. Most often, the scroll and curl motif resembles the fire sign, although in an inverted position so as to imitate the downward hand-scattering gesture. The hair of a Ch’ajom included short cropped hair and long tresses gathered into a ponytail. The ponytail was bound by a cloth or threaded through beads. The Ch’ajom wore a leafy cape that may have been made from the foliage of the *Portium copal* tree. In the full-figure rendering of the Ch’ajom title on the Copán Structure 9N-8-82 bench, the figure sits before an incensario with a sign for *pom* “copal incense” partially inside it. The left hand of the figure is juxtaposed in front of the incense in the hand-scattering gesture. Vessel K1440 illustrates a mythological scene of a Ch’ajom kneeling before two elderly gods (figure 0.02c) (http://research.mayavase.com/kerrmaya_hires.php?vase=1440). The Ch’ajom has the bound ponytail and wears the leafy cape. The elderly gods hold a tasseled object over the head of the Ch’ajom.

Three very obvious examples of the Ch’ajom insignia are worn by K’inich Janaab Pakal I and his two descendants, K’inich Ahkal Mo’ Nahb III and Upakal K’inich, on the Palenque Temple XXI bench (figure 0.3). This extraordinary monument illustrates two separate but parallel actions that occurred on the 9.13.17.9.0 3 Ajaw 3 Yaxk’in Period Ending (AD 709) during the reign of K’inich K’an Joy Chitam II (see Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017 for an



FIGURE 0.2. *Ch'ajom* titles: a. *Yaxchilán Throne 2*, b. *Quiriguá Stela J*, c. *K1440*

overview). Each figure in the scene is identified by an adjacent caption text. On the left side of the monument, a banded-bird official named *Xak'al Miht Tu-Muuy Ti-Ch'o* is pictured extending a tasseled object toward the young *K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III* who reaches out and touches it. *K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III* wears the *Ch'ajom* headdress. His grandfather *K'inich Janaab Pakal I* sits on a throne to his left extending a stingray spine bloodletter (see below for a discussion of this bloodletter as an heirloom). He wears the *Ch'ajom* headdress as well as another headdress that will be discussed below. On the right side of the scene, *Xak'al Miht Tu-Muuy Ti-Ch'o* is now pictured sitting before the young *Upakal K'inich* extending the tasseled object toward him. *Upakal K'inich* wears not only the *Ch'ajom* headdress but also the bound ponytail of a *Ch'ajom*.

The bloodletter offered by *K'inich Janaab Pakal I* indicates that personal bloodletting was an important part of this Period Ending ceremony. One of the bloodletter's feathers is separate from the other feathers and is highlighted with a circular motif. This feather is positioned over *K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III*'s loincloth, emphasizing the purpose of this bloodletter as a penis perforator. The juxtaposing of bloodletting and incense burning is not mutually exclusive; rather, the two are intimately connected. There are numerous examples of blood and incense being offered together to the gods (Love 1987). On *Dos Pilas Panel 19*, Ruler 3, his wife, and other court members witness the first bloodletting of a *ch'ok mutal ajarw* "youth of *Dos Pilas*" (Houston 1993:115; Stuart 2005b:136; Martin and Grube 2008:60–61). His short stature indicates that he is not just a youth but a child. Blood pours from his penis while a banded-bird official named *Sakjal Hix* kneels before him holding the stingray spine that was used to perforate the child's penis. The child wears the leafy

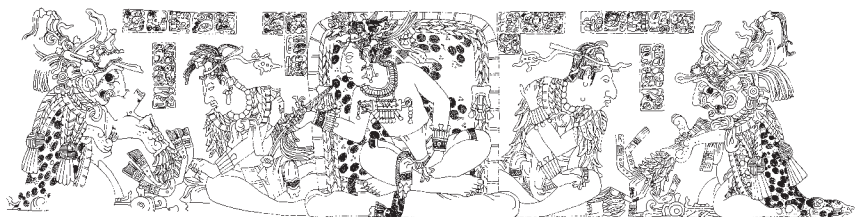


FIGURE 0.3. *Palenque Temple XXI bench (drawing after David Stuart)*

cape of a Ch’ajom. This Dos Pilas scene demonstrates that lords attained their status as Ch’ajom with their first bloodletting ceremony.

The main text of the Palenque Palace Tablet relates another example of a child undergoing a first bloodletting rite. The text begins with the birth of K’inich K’an Joy Chitam II in AD 644 and then describes his first bloodletting event and *k’al mayij* “binding of the sacrifice” at age seven (Carrasco 2004:452; Stuart 2005b:154). This ceremony was done in the presence of a series of deities, including the triad of thunderbolt gods GI, GII, and GIII, and it is likely that K’inich K’an Joy Chitam II made blood and incense offerings specifically to these gods. The narrative then links this first bloodletting to his father’s 9.11.0.0.0 Period Ending ceremony and his own minor Period Ending rite thirteen *tuns* later, again performed in the company of GI, GII, and GIII where he again would have made blood and incense offerings to the gods. The scene that accompanies this narrative illustrates K’inich Janaab Pakal I handing his nine-year-old son an *ux yop huun* (“three leaf headdress”) in AD 654 (Bassie-Sweet et al. 2012; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). K’inich K’an Joy Chitam II wears the Ch’ajom ponytail. Although the reference to K’inich K’an Joy Chitam II’s first bloodletting at age seven in the main text does not specifically mention his attainment of the Ch’ajom office, he is depicted as a Ch’ajom two years later in the scene.

In numerous scenes, the Ch’ajom insignia is placed at the base of a more elaborate headdress, and only the curls are visible on the forehead of the individual. Such is the case on a stela from the Usumacinta region that depicts a lord wearing a headdress composed of the avian form of the creator grandfather Itzamnaaj (figure 0.4). Other examples are seen on La Corona Panel 1 and Yaxchilán Lintel 43, where the ruler’s elaborate headdress includes the Ch’ajom insignia (figure 0.5).

There are examples where the Ch’ajom attributes are subtle. El Cayo Altar 4 documents the 9.15.0.0.0 Period Ending ceremony of a Sajal lord named Aj Chak Wayib’ K’utiim (figure 0.6). Sajals were rulers of secondary sites

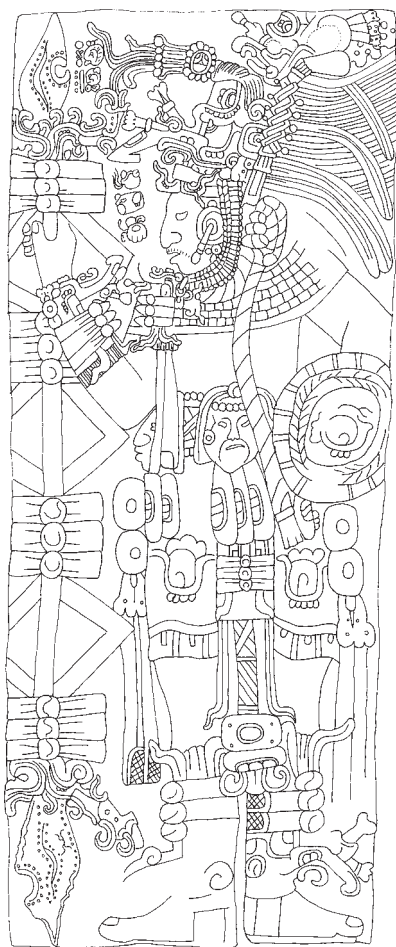


FIGURE 0.4. *Usumacinta stela (drawing after Christian Prager)*

Aj Sak Teles is illustrated wearing his hair in long tresses decorated with beads that are closely gathered together by a cloth, but he does not wear the Ch'ajom headdress (see figure 1.20). These examples demonstrate that Maya artists often chose to highlight certain office insignia while merely hinting at others.

The tomb of the Tikal king Jasaw Chan K'awiil (Burial 116) contained a cache of carved bones (Coe 1967). Bone MT-39 illustrates the grandson of a Kaanul king as a captive (Stuart et al. 2015a) (figure 0.9). He has been stripped down to a mere loincloth; and his wrists, upper arms, and knees are bound by

who had formed allegiances with rulers of primary sites. Aj Chak Wayib' K'utiim's nominal phrase includes the statement that he was a four *k'atun* Sajal. He is depicted sitting in front of an altar with a deified incensario placed on it. His right hand is held in the hand-scattering gesture with incense falling from it while he grasps an incense bag in his left. He wears a headdress of short, cropped feathers and a miter-like folded cloth that Marc Zender (2004b) has associated with secondary lords with priestly functions. Although the Ch'ajom insignia does not appear on Aj Chak Wayib' K'utiim's forehead, his bound ponytail hair emerges from his miter-like headdress.

Incense bags are also held by Ruler 3 on Dos Pilas Stela 2 and Aguateca Stela 2 (figures 0.7, 0.8). Ruler 3 does not wear the Ch'ajom insignia, but he does have the bound ponytail of the Ch'ajom. The same is true for the lords illustrated on the piers of Palenque House A (Robertson 1985:figs. 24, 38, 70, 87). These men all have the bound ponytail of the Ch'ajom office and hold incense bags in their hands. On Lacanhá Panel 1, the Ch'ajom named

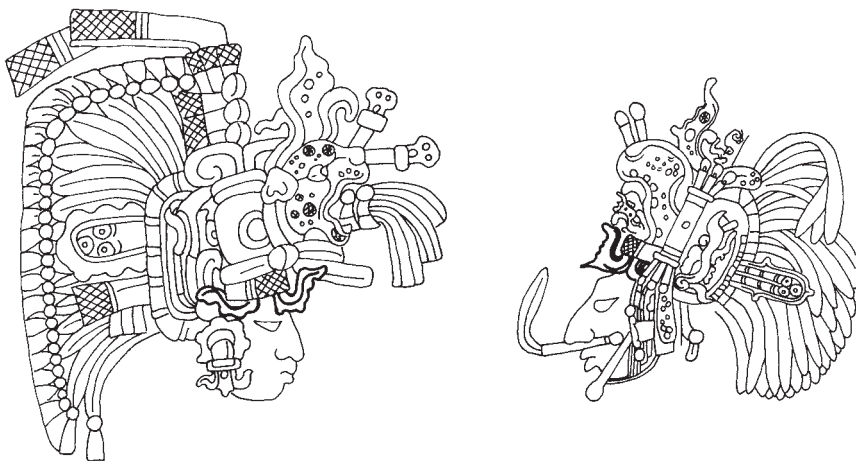


FIGURE 0.5. *Ch'ajom* headdress: a. *La Corona* Panel 1, b. *Yaxchilán Lintel* 43



FIGURE 0.6. *El Cayo Altar* 4
(drawing after Peter Mathews)

rope. While some of his hair is cut in a short crop, he has three long tresses that are decorated with beads similar to the *Ch'ajom* hairdo on *Lacanhá* Panel 1. The tresses hang loose from his head. This young *Ch'ajom* has been robbed of not only his headdress and clothing but also his bound hairdo.

The *Ch'ajom* insignia is often worn in conjunction with *Tlaloc* headdresses. A few *Ch'ajoms* are designated as a *Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom*. The wives and

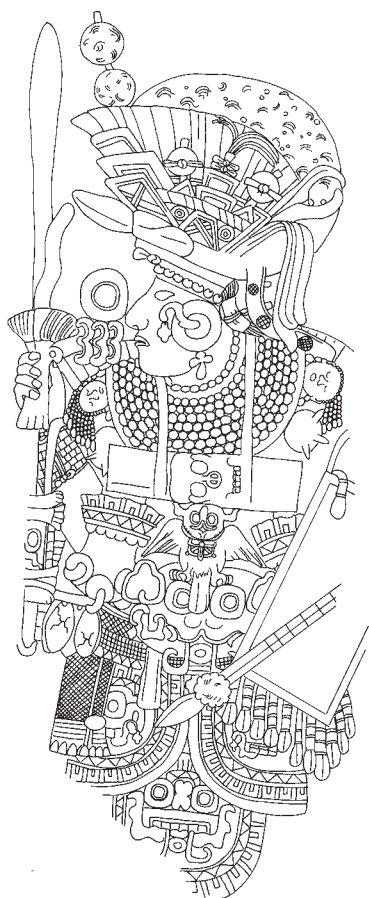


FIGURE 0.7. *Dos Pilas Stela 2*
(drawing after Ian Graham)

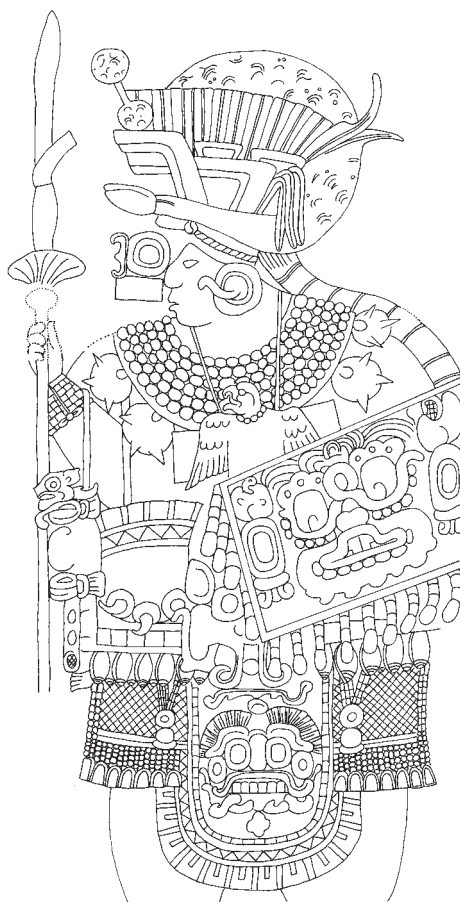


FIGURE 0.8. *Aguateca Stela 2* (drawing after
Ian Graham)

mothers of various rulers also carry the Ch'ajom and Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom designations. As will be discussed in chapter 4, Wiinte'naah structures were Tlaloc temples, and the title refers to priests and priestesses of Tlaloc who made offerings specifically to this god.

THE BANDED-BIRD OFFICE OF SECONDARY LORDS

One of the offices of secondary lords is represented by a supernatural bird wearing a headband (Zender 2004b; Stuart 2005b:133–136).³ The bird has the

hooked beak of a bird of prey and has a black patch over its eye. The title has been nicknamed the banded-bird office because it has yet to be deciphered. There is evidence that the holder of this office was in charge of the king's *sak huun* headdress of rulership. As an example, it is the banded-bird official Janaab Ajaw who hands this crown to the king K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III on the Temple XIX platform (figure 0.11). The Tablet of the Cross caption text describes a banded-bird official who was responsible for tying the headband on K'inich Kan Bahlam II (Stuart 2006a). Banded-bird officials were also custodians of the king's stingray spines used for bloodletting.

The ritual use of stingray spines for bloodletting is well documented. Bishop Diego de Landa (Tozzer 1941: 191) described how the Postclassic Maya hunted for stingrays on the coast of Yucatán and noted that the spine of the stingray was used as a perforator in bloodletting ceremonies. He also commented that it was the duty of the priests to maintain these spines and that the priests kept large numbers of them. Stingray spine perforators are often depicted in Classic period art (Joralemon 1974). A feature of various bloodletting perforators made from stingray spines or obsidian is a handle represented by a zoomorph and a three-knot motif. The three-knot zoomorph motif is also frequently depicted on the loincloths of rulers and in this context appears to allude to a king's obligation to let blood from his penis.

Stingray spines are common artifacts found in Classic period caches and elite tombs. Effigy stingray spines are also well-known from burial contexts

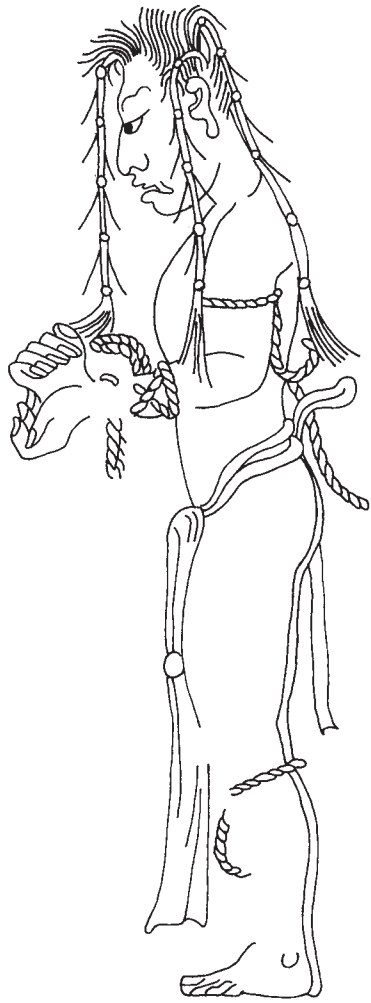


FIGURE 0.9. *Tikal Bone MT-39*
(drawing after Andy Seuffert)

(Borhegyi 1961; Moholy-Nagy 1994, 2008; Stuart et al. 1999:137). Along with stingray spines, bone handles have been recovered from the Piedras Negras tombs of Ruler 3 (Burial 5) and a Piedras Negras prince (Burial 82) (Fitzsimmons et al. 2003:fig. 11). These two bones feature an avian head with a forehead feather, indicating it is likely an owl. Many tombs have concentrations of stingray spines and other bloodletting paraphernalia adjacent to the body that suggest that these objects were buried in some type of container, such as an incense bag, wooden box, or cloth bundle that decomposed over time. Such a grouping was found in Yaxchilán Structure 23 Tomb 2 that contained the remains of a Yaxchilán lord who has been identified as the ruler Shield Jaguar III (García Moll 2004:270). Near his feet was a cluster of bloodletting objects including five flint knives, three prismatic blades, eighteen bone awls, and an astonishing number of stingray spines (eighty-six in all).

Inscribed stingray spines have been found in a number of tombs. Tikal Burial 196 contained two such examples (Moholy-Nagy 2008). Several Piedras Negras tombs contained engraved stingray spines that identified their owner (Coe 1959; Houston et al. 2000). As noted above, two stingray spines from the burial of Aj Pakal Tahn of Comalcalco were carved with his image while six other spines were inscribed with events related to his accomplishments (Zender 2004b). These inscriptions indicate that bloodletters were identified with a specific person and events.

The Palenque Temple XXI bench illustrates a stingray spine bloodletter that was owned by the king K'inich Janaab Pakal I and demonstrates that not all of a lord's bloodletters were buried with him. The Temple XXI scene depicts the Period Ending rituals of the young lords K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III and Upakal K'inich in AD 709 during the reign of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II (figure 0.3). Although the focus of the action is the interaction between the banded-bird official Xak'al Miht Tu-Muuy Ti-Ch'o and these two young lords, great emphasis is placed on the action of K'inich Janaab Pakal I handing the bloodletter to his grandson K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III. K'inich Janaab Pakal I not only occupies the central space of the scene, but both K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III and Upakal K'inich are seated slightly behind his throne. Unlike the other caption texts on the monument that are a single row or column of text, K'inich Janaab Pakal I's nominal phrase is divided into two L-shaped blocks of text that frame his throne. This text states that he is in the guise of an early Palenque king. To read the first block of text, the viewer is brought directly to the headdress representing this Early Classic king that K'inich Janaab Pakal I is wearing and then down to the bloodletter in his

hand. What is strange is that K'inich Janaab Pakal I had been dead for almost twenty-six years at the time of this event. So what was the message the artist intended to convey by including K'inich Janaab Pakal I in the scene? The simplest and most obvious answer is that K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III used his grandfather's stingray spine during this Period Ending ritual. Presumably, the bloodletting of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III would have been followed by Upakal K'inich's bloodletting. This is a powerful image of inherited status and prestige where the two descendants of this great king display their connection to him and his successful Period Ending events. They are depicted carrying on the obligation of lords to placate the gods with their blood. The fact that K'inich Janaab Pakal I has taken on the guise of an early Palenque king suggests that the bloodletter may have been an even older heirloom.

In the context of bloodletting rituals, some lords are illustrated holding small wooden boxes that likely held bloodletting implements (David Stuart, personal communication 2000). For example, Yaxchilán Lintel 6 depicts the ruler Bird Jaguar IV holding a GII scepter in his left hand and a jaguar bone perforator in his right (<https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=6&site=Yaxchilan&type=Lintel>). He is flanked by his B'aah Sajal named K'an Tok Wayib who holds a jaguar bone perforator in his left hand and a small wooden box in his right. The same date is recorded on Lintel 43, but in this scene it is Bird Jaguar who clutches the wooden box, and he is now flanked by his wife, who holds a sacrificial bowl and cord (<https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=43&site=Yaxchilan&type=Lintel#>). David Pendergast and Elizabeth Luther (1974) documented a similar wooden box (21.3 cm × 6.5 cm × 4.2 cm) found in the Actun Polbilche cave in Belize that contained a stingray spine and an obsidian blade. An inscribed wooden box in a private collection almost certainly functioned in the same way, given its similar size and construction (Zender and Bassie 2002). The text makes reference to the site of Tortuguero, and the box was likely looted from a dry cave in that vicinity. The narrative identifies the owner of the box as Aj K'ax Bahlam, a banded-bird official of the Tortuguero king Ik' Muyil Muwaan II. The inscription refers to the death of the Tortuguero ruler Bahlam Ajaw and the accession of his successor Ik' Muyil Muwaan II in AD 679 and the accession of Aj K'ax Bahlam into the office of the banded-bird the following year. The inscription ends with a statement that links Ik' Muyil Muwaan II's accession to the dedication of the box in AD 680. The implication of this narrative structure is that the ruler Ik' Muyil Muwaan II not only conferred the banded-bird office on Aj K'ax Bahlam but subsequently also presented him with this ritual toolbox.

Some evidence from the scenes that depict the interactions between royals and their banded-bird officials suggests that the stingray spines that were stored in these wooden boxes may have been those of the king and not his banded-bird official. The presence of banded-bird officials during the act of royal bloodletting is well attested. On Yaxchilán Stela 7, the king Shield Jaguar IV is depicted performing his Period Ending bloodletting duties while a secondary lord kneels before him. The lord holds his hands up in front of the king's groin. The nominal phrase in the caption text above his head specifically names him not just as a banded-bird official but as the banded-bird official of Shield Jaguar IV. Similar Yaxchilán scenes of secondary lords kneeling before the king while he lets blood are depicted on Stela 1 and Stela 4 (figure 0.10). Although these two monuments lack caption texts to name these lords, they wear the same costume as the banded-bird official on Stela 7. The kneeling pose is strikingly similar to the scene on Dos Pilas Panel 19 that shows the young prince performing his first penis bloodletting with a banded-bird official kneeling before him. The banded-bird official holds the prince's perforator. The implication is that the banded-bird officials not only played a recurring role in the physical act of royal penis perforation but were in charge of the bloodletter. It is reminiscent of Landa's statement that it was the duty of the priests to maintain the stingray spine perforators.

Evidence that there was a primary banded-bird official associated with the king is found on the Temple XIX platform and the Temple XVI Tablet. The right side of the Temple XIX platform depicts three secondary lords facing K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III (figure 0.11). Each lord is named in the adjacent caption text as a banded-bird official, but Janaab Ajaw (the lord who hands the king his royal headdress) has the term *ajaw* added to his banded-bird title. This elevated status of a banded-bird official is also seen on the Palenque Temple XVI Tablet that relates the accessions of at least nine banded-bird officials under the auspices of various Palenque kings. The panel is badly damaged, but enough remains to show a pattern with the first accession happening during the reign of K'inich K'uk' Bahlam I (circa AD 431), followed by accessions under Casper, Lady Yohl Ik'nal, K'inich Janaab Pakal I, K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II, U K'inich Pakal, and K'inich K'uk' Bahlam II (Bernal Romero 2002; Stuart 2005b:134). The banded-bird official anointed during K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II's reign was Janaab Ajaw, and he was clearly still functioning in that role at the time of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III's accession. Given that the other two banded-bird officials on the Temple XIX platform are not part of the Temple XVI narrative, it can be inferred that there were a number of banded-bird officials at any given time, but only one was

in the elevated position of directly assisting royals.

As noted by David Stuart (2005b), the main text of the Palenque Temple XIX platform relates the mythological accession of the deity GI under the auspices of the creator grandfather Itzamnaaj. K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III's accession is portrayed as a reenactment of that event with K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III and Janaab Ajaw taking on guises of GI and Itzamnaaj, respectively. In addition to the headdress representing Itzamnaaj, Janaab Ajaw wears another type of headdress composed of flowered medallions. The Period Ending ceremony of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III and Upakal K'inich in AD 709, which is illustrated on the Temple XXI bench, predates Janaab Ajaw's accession into banded-bird office, so we should not expect his participation in this scene. The banded-bird official Xak'al Miht Tu-Muuy Ti-Ch'o, who does fulfill this role, wears the same flower medallion headdress elements, but in this case they take on human form. While Xak'al Miht Tu-Muuy Ti-Ch'o's banded-bird title does not include the *ajaw* element, his headdress suggests he held this position. It does not seem like a great leap of faith to conclude that Xak'al Miht Tu-Muuy Ti-Ch'o was the caretaker of K'inich Janaab Pakal I's

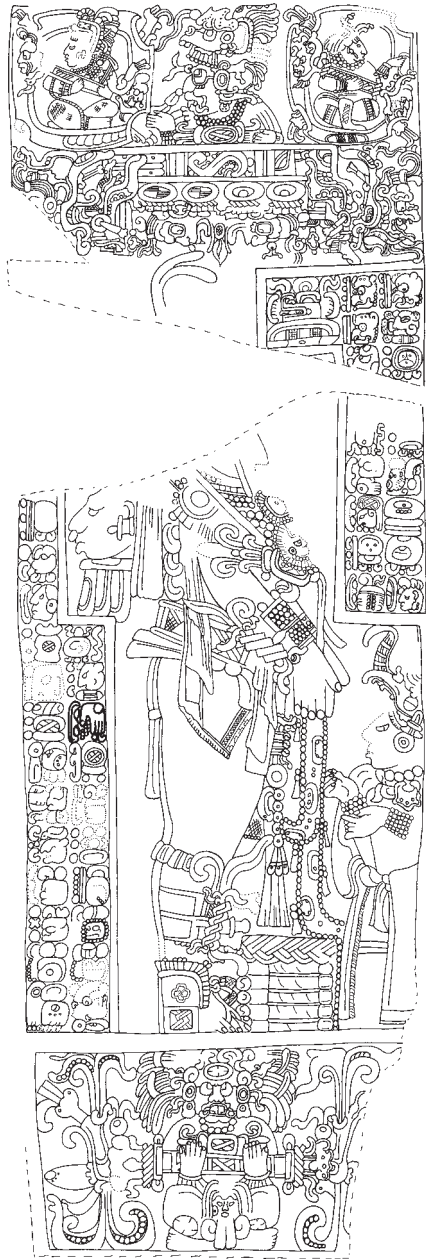


FIGURE 0.10. *Yaxchilán Stela 1* (drawing after Ian Graham)

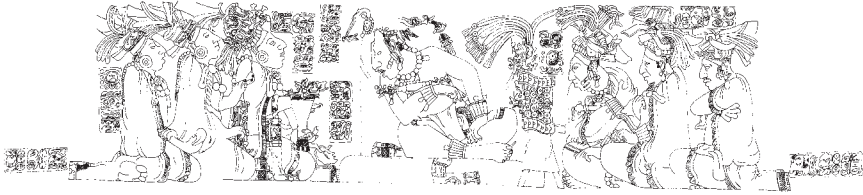


FIGURE 0.II. Palenque Temple XIX platform (drawing after David Stuart)

bloodletter that was used in this ceremony and that this bloodletter was likely stored in a wooden box.

OTHER SECONDARY OFFICES

The wives and mothers of kings carry titles related to secondary offices not held by their husbands. One such position is that of *Ajk'uhuun*. An examination of the royal ladies and secondary lords who carry this title suggests that they had a priestly function related to scribal arts, although their exact duties are still unclear (Coe and Kerr 1997; Jackson and Stuart 2001; Zender 2004b). Secondary lords also carried other non-regal titles related to the offices of *Sajal*, *Yajawk'ak'*, *Ti'sakhuun*, *Taaj*, and *Anaab* (Zender 2004b; Stuart 2005b:133–136; Rossi 2015; Rossi et al. 2015; Saturno et al. 2017). Secondary lords frequently carried more than one of these titles. Some of the offices are prefixed with *b'aah* “head” to indicate that the lord was the leading member of his class. Various attempts have been made to identify the duties and attributes of each type of office and their hierarchy, but their specific natures are still somewhat opaque. Many of the accoutrements of secondary lords echo those of the deities who populate the celestial palace of the creator grandfather *Itzamnaaj*, indicating that this supernatural court was the role model for humans (Boot 2008). Given that the deity *One Ajaw* was the grandson of *Itzamnaaj*, this should not come as a surprise.

The rank of *Ebeet* “messenger” was held by a number of secondary lords who acted on the behalf of their king at foreign courts (Houston et al. 2006:241). The regalia of an *Ebeet* consisted of a white floor-length cape decorated with *Spondylus* shells. Alexandre Tokovinine and Dmitri Beliaev (2013) noted that *Ebeet* lords traveled long distances to pass messages and gifts between royal courts, and their distinctive costume was likely an “international dress code for emissaries” that visually identified them as royal messengers when they were traveling through hostile territory. The long capes also speak to the need

for warm clothing when making long journeys requiring overnight stays in rural areas. It is reasonable to suggest that the *Ebeet* lords traveled the same routes used by merchants and that each would have benefited from the other's knowledge.

HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS OF WAR DURING THE SPANISH CONQUEST

In AD 1517, a Spanish expedition under Francisco Hernández de Córdova sailed from Cuba ostensibly in search of new lands but also with the goal of obtaining slaves for use in Cuban plantations (Maudslay 1908). After enduring a violent storm, the expedition sighted the northeast coast of Yucatán, which they mistakenly believed was an island. They were surprised to find towns with stone buildings and large populations. Their first landing near Cabo Catoche began well, with an invitation from a local Maya lord to visit his town, but ended in an ambush by Maya warriors who showered the Spanish party with a hail of arrows, wounding fifteen men. The warriors then rushed the Spaniards, attacking them with lances. Due to the superior weaponry of their crossbows and muskets, the Spanish killed fifteen Maya and were able to make the others withdraw long enough for the Spanish to retreat with their wounded comrades. On their route back to their landing boats, the Spanish came across a plaza with three stone temples containing god effigies and wooden boxes containing more idols and religious artifacts. The Spanish noted that some of these objects were fashioned from gold, and they took the opportunity to loot them (the objects were likely made of *tumbaga*, a gold-copper alloy that had widespread distribution in Late Postclassic Mesoamerica).

From Cabo Catoche, the expedition sailed west and then south, following the coastline all the way to Campeche. Running low on fresh water and with no rivers in sight, the Spanish were forced to land to replenish their supply near a large town. A group of what appeared to be community leaders invited them into the town, where they were presented with an ultimatum to leave or be attacked. Backing up this challenge was an impressive display by two squadrons of warriors, each led by a captain. The warriors were outfitted with bows, arrows, lances, shields, slings, and stones. To enhance their menacing appearance, they whistled, beat on drums, and blew trumpets. The Spanish wisely beat a hasty retreat with their water.

The expedition continued south along the coast for another six days before encountering another storm that lasted four days. Again in desperate need of water, they attempted to find a source. They came ashore further south near the town of Potonchan. Before the landing party led by Córdova was able to load

its water caskets and depart, the first contingents of Potonchan warriors, who were armed with shields, bows, lances, swords, slings, and stones, surrounded them. The Spanish waited through the night in anticipation of an attack. At dawn, more Potonchan warriors arrived with raised banners, feathered crests, and drums. They formed squadrons, surrounded the Spanish, and set forth a barrage of arrows, lances, and stones before engaging the Spanish in close-quarter combat. Diaz del Castillo noted that the warriors shouted to each other to kill the Spanish leader, and some directed their attack at Córdoba who suffered multiple arrow wounds. The Spanish, who were drastically outnumbered, struggled to retreat to their boats, which capsized in their haste to retreat. A vessel from the main ship finally rescued them, although they continued to be pursued by the Maya in canoes. Fifty Spanish soldiers died, including two who were initially taken captive, and all save one of the group were wounded multiple times. Five men later succumbed to their wounds, as did Córdoba.

Another description of Maya war traditions is found in a Spanish account regarding the pacification of the Itzaj of the central Petén circa AD 1695. The Itzaj had war gods and carried effigies of them into battle: “They had two other idols which they adored as gods of battle: one they called Pakoc, and the other Hexchunchán. They carried them when they went to fight the Chinamitas, their mortal frontier enemies, and when they were going into battle they burned copal, and when they performed some valiant action their idols, whom they consulted, gave them answers, and in the mitotes or dances they spoke to them and danced with them” (Villagutierre Soto-Mayor 1983:303).

What is apparent from these Spanish battle accounts is that the Postclassic Maya had a sophisticated strategy to attack their enemy, used multiple war weapons, targeted leaders, and took war captives. They also relied on the counsel and supernatural power of their deities in warfare. As will be discussed in later chapters, information gleaned from Classic period art and hieroglyphic writing indicates that these various traditions had a long history.

THE CLASSIC PERIOD CONFLICTS

A great many depictions of Classic Maya rulers and secondary lords highlight the military nature of the king and his court while others merely allude to this role. The purpose of Classic period warfare to obtain sacrificial victims for commemorations of Period Endings and other important events of the royal court is well-known; but territorial domination, economic advantage, acquisition of slaves, shifting alliances, retribution, long-standing animosities,

and other typical human conflicts were also at play. The spoils of war are a universal motivation, and the payment of tribute is documented in the inscriptions (Stuart 1995).

In the mid-sixth century, the region to the north of Tikal was inhabited by the Kaanul polity that was first centered at the site of Dzibanché (180 km northeast of Tikal) but then moved to Calakmul (100 km north and slightly west of Tikal) in the early seventh century. Many of the military actions of the Classic period were the result of the rivalry between Tikal and the Kaanul kingdom to establish and retain control over the southern trade routes and the lesser polities of the region (Martin and Grube 1995, 2008). The Kaanul polity defeated Tikal by first attacking its more vulnerable allies and putting them under its dependency. In AD 562, Tikal suffered a direct loss at the hands of the Kaanul polity, and the son of the Kaanul king (K'inich Waw, also known as Animal Skull) was placed on the Tikal throne (Grube 2016). Subsequently, the prosperity of Tikal declined while that of Kaanul grew. In the mid-seventh century, Tikal under its king Nuun Ujol Chaak attempted to regain its prominence and came into military conflict with the powerful Kaanul king Yuknoom Ch'een and the Dos Pilas king Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, who was likely Nuun Ujol Chaak's half-brother. Ultimately, Nuun Ujol Chaak was defeated, but his son Jasaw Chan K'awiil I succeeded with a decisive victory over the Kaanul polity in AD 695. The political machinations and military conflicts of Tikal and Kaanul involved numerous other sites, such as Caracol and Naranjo in the east; Dos Pilas, Seibal, and Cancuén in the south; and Palenque, Toniná, Yaxchilán, and Piedras Negras in the west. The western conflicts involving the control of the Río Usumacinta and Río San Pedro corridors spawned additional struggles between the western sites and their subsidiaries. As will be discussed more fully in later chapters, what is pertinent to this study is the role the cult of Tlaloc played in these endeavors. As an example, Jasaw Chan K'awiil I is named in a number of texts as the holy king of Tikal. Yet the narrative relating his defeat of the Kaanul polity specifically refers to his accession as a *Kaloomte'*, which links the importance of this office to his successes. The stucco frieze of Structure 5D-57 depicts him holding a captured Kaanul lord by a rope, and he is dressed in a Tlaloc costume.

THE WORDS OF WAR

Classic period narratives that refer to war and war-related acts are well-known. A wide range of verbs describe events of war and its aftermath, like *chuk* “to capture, to seize,” *chok* “chop,” *yaleb* “throw down,” and the infamous

“star wars” verbs. It was initially thought that there was a connection between war events and the planet Venus; consequently, Tlaloc imagery was dubbed the Tlaloc-Venus war complex or “star wars” (Schele and Miller 1986; Schele and Freidel 1990; Carlson 1993; Freidel et al. 1993; Schele and Grube 1994). Arguments were made that the Maya timed their war events according to important stations in the Venus cycle. While prognostications likely played a role in determining suitable dates for warfare, the connection with Venus has been disproven (Aldana 2005). The so-called star wars glyph is composed of a star sign with water falling from it. It has been suggested that it is a reference to a meteor or meteor shower (Stuart 1995:310–311, 2011:298) or that it refers to storms (Houston 2012:172).

The nominal phrases of protagonists invariably include references to their many offices and titles. In the case of secondary lords, there is often a statement indicating their relationship to the king and his court. Nominal phrases also include declarations that the protagonist was the captor of a particular individual or a generic reference that the protagonist was the captor of a multitude of war prisoners. The inference is that the king’s military prowess was important, not a surprising state of affairs. While most scenes of warfare feature the ruler, secondary lords are also well represented, particularly in the western sites vying for control of the Río Usumacinta and Río San Pedro corridors.

On public monuments, the protagonist of the narrative is often portrayed standing on a motif that represents a place name (Stuart and Houston 1994). In other cases, the person stands above a captive. Some captives are specifically named with caption texts or glyphs inscribed on their bodies (Proskouriakoff 1963). While some nominal phrases of captives are simply their personal names, many phrases include statements naming their office or their relationship to their overlord, suggesting that their value as a captive was linked to their status within the hierarchy of their home community. High-status captives are not named with their complete titles, and this seems to be a deliberate strategy to diminish them. As an example, the Palenque ruler K’inich K’an Joy Chitam II is displayed as a prisoner on Toniná Monument 122 (Mathews 2001; Stuart 2004b). Although he still wears a jade headband implying high status, his nominal phrase that is inscribed on his leg lacks his *K’inich* “sun-like” title, and he is named not as the holy lord of Palenque but just as a lord of Palenque.

As would be expected, the fate of captives varied. Many were sacrificed outright, while others were likely turned into slaves or ransomed. There are a number of cases where high-status captives, such as K’inich K’an Joy Chitam II, survived their captures and continued to function at their home

sites, although probably in a somewhat diminished capacity (Stuart 2004b). The Seibal ruler Yich'aak Bahlam was seized during an attack by Dos Pilas-Aguateca forces in AD 735 (Houston 1993). The narratives on Dos Pilas Stela 2 and Aguateca Stela 2 recount these events and their aftermath. Dos Pilas Stela 2 illustrates Yich'aak Bahlam at Dos Pilas seven days after the war event (Bassie-Sweet 1991:53–54). He is depicted as a bound captive at the feet of Dos Pilas-Aguateca Ruler 3. Aguateca Stela 2 depicts the 9.15.15.0.0 Period Ending ceremony that occurred seven months later at Aguateca, and Yich'aak Bahlam is again depicted under Ruler 3's feet. Later inscriptions at Seibal indicate that its king returned to the site, but as a vassal of Ruler 3 (Houston 1993). While Yich'aak Bahlam was not sacrificed by Ruler 3, it is still highly likely that other captives taken during this war were. Human sacrifices during commemorations of calendar cycles are well-documented.

THE SCENES OF WAR

Scenes featuring war prisoners are common in Classic period Maya art, and with very few exceptions the captives are males. Prisoners are invariably positioned in the lower register of a scene kneeling in submission or sprawled under the feet of a lord. Often they are bloodied and bound by a rope. Some wear minimal clothing or are naked, with exposed genitals. In all cases, these depictions are intended to highlight their humiliation and subjugation.

Scenes of large-scale combat are rare. The best-known example is the Late Classic mural in Room 2 of Bonampak Structure 1 that illustrates dozens of warriors engaged in a heated, close-quarter battle (Ruppert et al. 1955; Miller and Brittenham 2013). Many warriors are armed with spears and shields as they attack their foes and grasp them by the hair. The visual focus of the battle is the Bonampak ruler Yajaw Chan Muwaan and the large adjacent caption text that identifies him and his captive (Houston 2012:160–163). Yajaw Chan Muwaan brandishes a spear while grabbing the hair of his hapless captive. Grasping the hair of a captive is a frequently depicted action in Maya art, and it is a visual representation of the verb *chuk* “to capture, to seize, to grab” (Proto-Mayan **chuq*) that often accompanies such scenes (Proskouriakoff 1963; Kaufman 2003:904). In contrast to the frenzied motion of the mural battle scene, each of the three lintels of Structure 1 focuses on a single lord seizing his foe on dates that differ from the mural battle (Mathews 1980; Houston 2012; Miller and Brittenham 2013).⁴ Each lord holds his spear in his right hand and grasps the hair of his opponent in his left. An expanded version of this single capture theme is seen on Yaxchilán Lintel 8, which illustrates the ruler

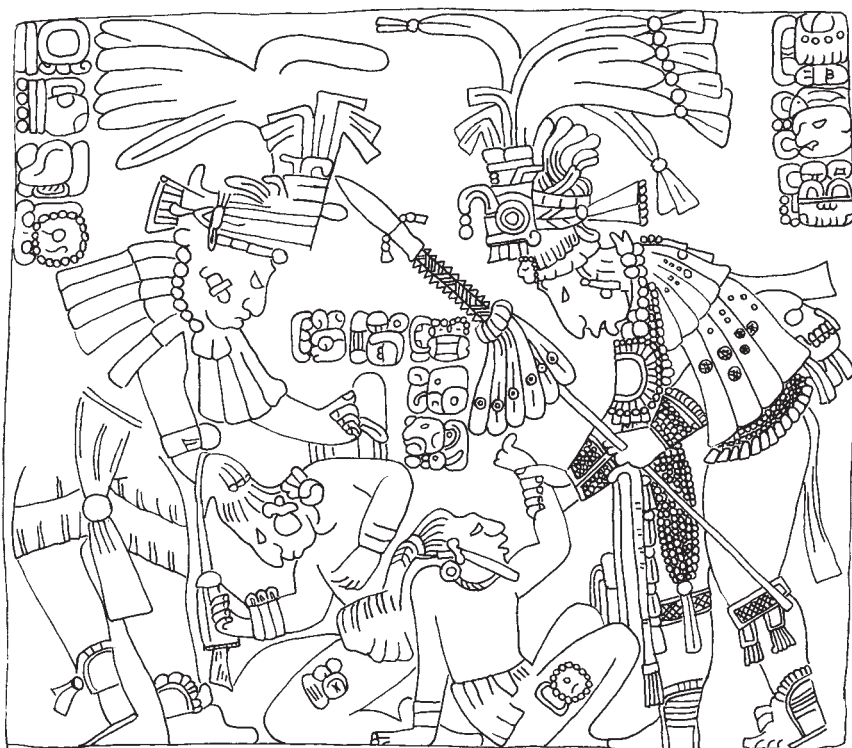


FIGURE 0.12. *Yaxchilán Lintel 8 (drawing after Ian Graham)*

Bird Jaguar IV and the secondary lord K'an Tok Wayib each capturing a foe (figure 0.12). While Bird Jaguar IV pulls on the arm of his captive, K'an Tok Wayib grasps the hair of his foe. These two actions form a narrative couplet (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). Pottery scenes also feature captives, like the one on Grolier 26 (Coe 1973:62–63). This composition begins with four warriors engaged in armed conflict. Behind the right figure, a warrior holds a captive in a neck lock while grasping his hair. Behind him are two more men presenting captives to a lord. They each hold their captive by the hair.

The Bonampak battle mural has an adjacent scene in which tortured, bleeding, and sacrificed captives are positioned on the steps below Yajaw Chan Muwaan, who stands with his spear in an upright position (Miller and Brittenham 2013:fig. 190). The captive seated before Yajaw Chan Muwaan reaches out with bleeding hands that touch the shaft of his spear. Overlapping the base of the spear is a dead prisoner sprawled across the steps. His head is

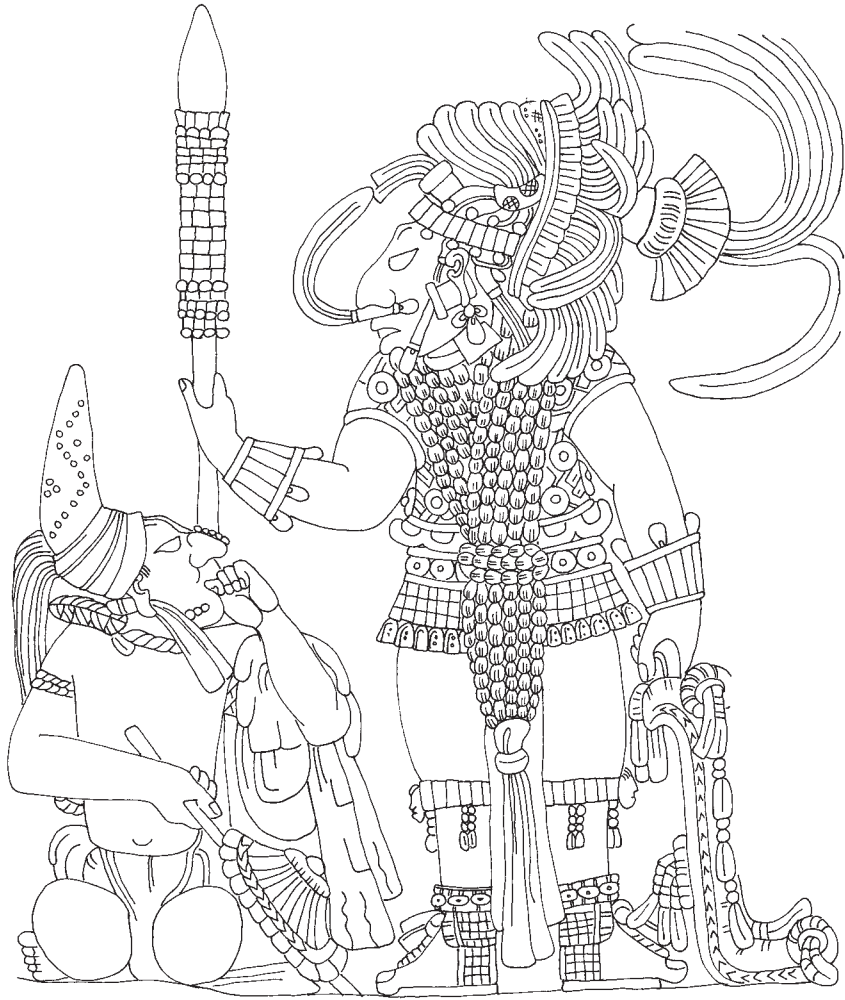


FIGURE 0.13. *Yaxchilán Lintel 16 (drawing after Ian Graham)*

tilted back as though looking up at the seated captive and his action, which places visual emphasis on the submission of the seated captive. The juxtaposing of Yajaw Chan Muwaan's spear and the dead prisoner's head is a powerful message of conquest. The juxtaposing of a victor's spear with a captive is also seen on Yaxchilán Lintel 16, which depicts a bloodied captive kneeling before the ruler Bird Jaguar IV (figure 0.13). The captive's head is tilted back and juxtaposed with the bottom of the king's spear. The juxtaposing of the king's spear



FIGURE 0.14. *Yaxchilán Lintel 12 (drawing after Ian Graham)*

with the head of a captive is also illustrated on Yaxchilán Lintel 12. In this scene, four bound captives crouch in submission at the feet of Shield Jaguar IV while one of his secondary lords stands guard. Shield Jaguar IV's spear is aligned with the head of the captive who kneels before him (figure 0.14). A similar composition is found on Stela 10 (figure 0.15). On this monument, Bird Jaguar IV stands in an identical pose with his spear again juxtaposed with his captive, but now he is joined by his wife on the left and another warrior on the right who also carries a spear and shield. The role of women in military endeavors will be discussed in later chapters.

The frontal pose of the dead prisoner sprawled at the feet of Yajaw Chan Muwaan places great emphasis on this figure. At the foot of his extended right leg is a decapitated head, a grim reference to the fate of many captives. Decapitation scenes are quite rare in public art, but Pier F of Palenque House D depicts such an action. Although the stucco of the pier is badly eroded in

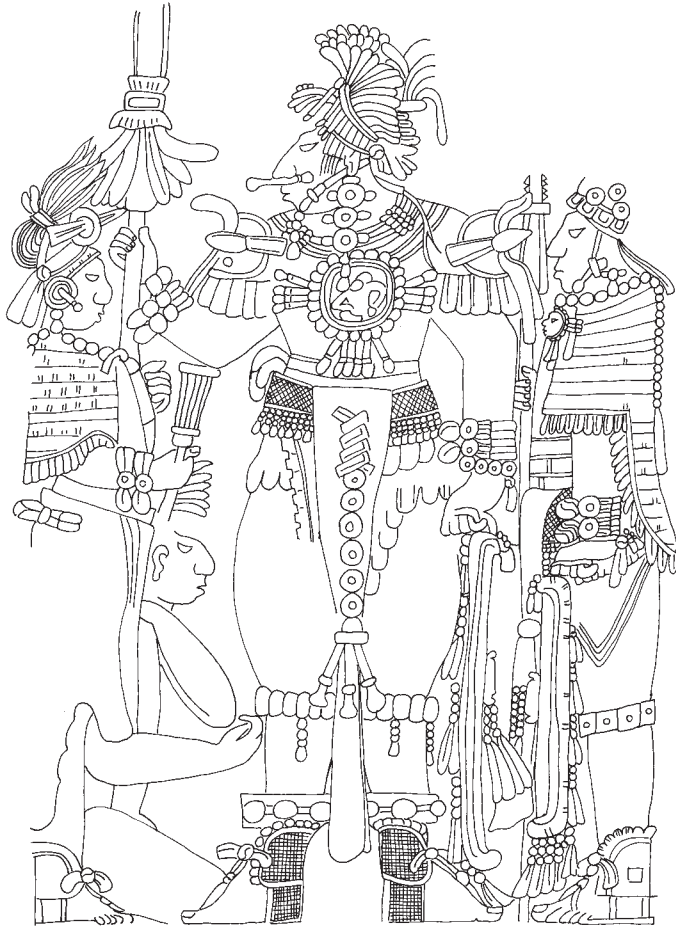


FIGURE 0.15. *Yaxchilán Stela 10* (drawing after Ian Graham)

places, it depicts a lord standing in front of a victim perched on a dais. The lord grasps his victim's hair in his left hand while swinging an axe to decapitate him with his right (Robertson 1985:44). Decapitating with a stone axe was not an easy feat, even using two hands and a constrained victim. Maya art usually does not represent a snapshot of a moment in time but rather a stylized view.

A number of monuments illustrate lords presenting captives to a superior. As an example, a Laxtunich wall panel depicts the Yaxchilán ruler Shield Jaguar IV sitting on a bench with three prisoners positioned beneath him (Mayer 1980:28–30; Schele and Miller 1986:226; Martin and Grube 2008:135)

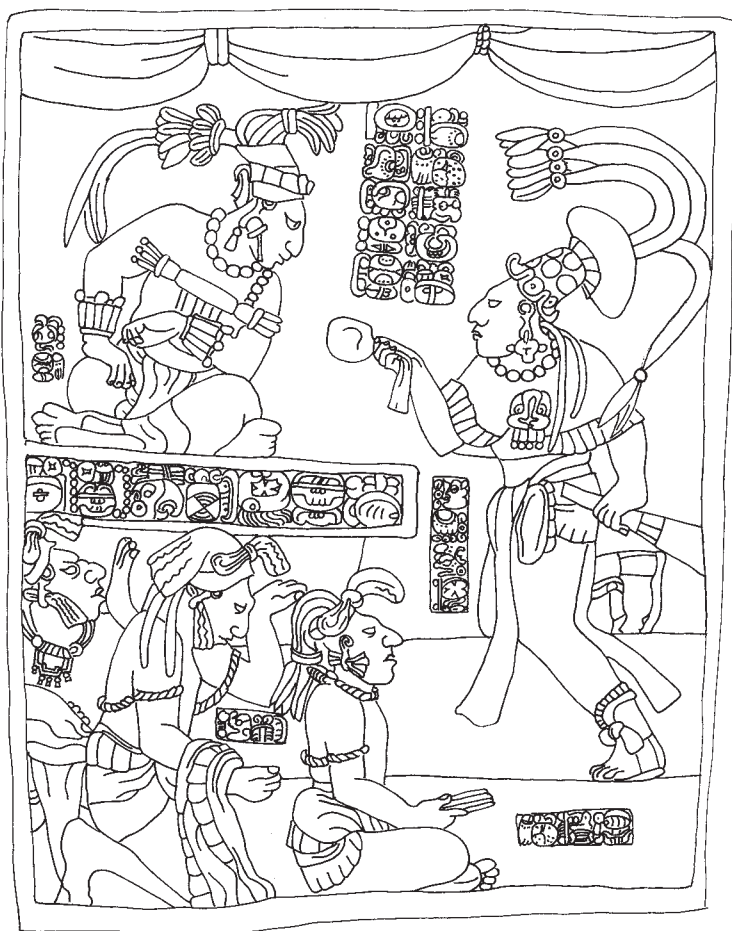


FIGURE 0.16. *Laxtunich wall panel (drawing after Linda Schele)*

(figure 0.16). The first two prisoners are bound with rope. A secondary lord named Aj Chak Maax kneels on the step adjacent to the throne and extends an object to his king. The adjacent caption text positioned between Shield Jaguar IV and Aj Chak Maax states that Aj Chak Maax was the captor of these prisoners and that three days after the capture they were “adorned.” This block of text ends with the statement that the captives of Aj Chak Maax were for Shield Jaguar IV (*u baak ti yajarw* “his captives for his lord”).

Another captive scene is seen on Piedras Negras Stela 12 and features the La Mar ruler Parrot Chahk and a cohort presenting their captives to Piedras

Negras Ruler 7 following a war with Pomoná (Schele 1984; Schele and Miller 1986:219; Schele and Grube 1994; Martin and Grube 2008:153) (figure 0.17). This monument, which is thematically parallel to the captive scene in the Bonampak murals, illustrates Ruler 7 seated on a bench above a flight of stairs. Only the body of Ruler 7 is pictured in a frontal pose, and this convention places emphasis on him (Schele 1984:20). He leans forward clutching his spear and gazing down at nine captives from Pomoná who are seated on the steps below him. The visually highest-ranking captive is positioned immediately below Ruler 7's spear and his right foot, and his caption text names him as a Sajal, a title held by secondary lords.⁵ The captive wears jewelry and the headdress of a Yajawk'ak' lord. Many secondary lords had dual titles. Although seated in profile, the Sajal-Yajawk'ak' captive's torso is shown from the back, and his left hand holds his right shoulder. He is flanked on the left of the scene by a standing Parrot Chahk and another standing lord on the right. Regrettably, this right lord's caption text is eroded, so he cannot be securely identified.

The next tier of captives at the feet of Parrot Chahk is composed of two prisoners facing each other, and both are named as Sajals. The right Sajal has more status because he is pictured from the back, while the body of the left Sajal is in profile. The remaining six captives that form the lowest tier and baseline of the stela are bound together by rope. Although the monument is eroded, enough remains to show that the faces of the prisoners are bloodied. While the highest-ranking Sajal-Yajawk'ak' lord still wears his jewelry and

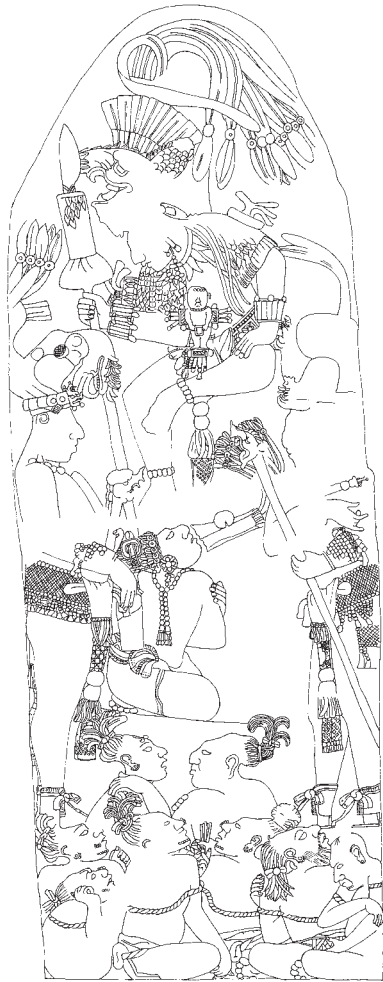


FIGURE 0.17. *Piedras Negras Stela 12*
(drawing after David Stuart)

headdress, the hair of the other captives is gathered and tied into a configuration that mimics the way the hair of a captive is grasped to indicate capture. Monuments at La Mar indicate that the right prisoner in the second tier and the bearded prisoner in the lowest tier were personally captured by Parrot Chahk.

This brief overview of Classic period deities, offices, and war themes provides a framework for the discussions in the following chapters regarding the Chahk deities and Tlaloc.

I

The Chahk Thunderbolt Deities and Flint Weapons

The Chahk thunderbolt deities obviously had rain and agricultural roles, but it is their war traits and their association with flint that are the focus of my study. This chapter is an overview of how stone, flint, lightning, and thunderbolts were represented in Maya art and how the Chahk deities were thought to be the embodiment of flint. Evidence will be presented to demonstrate that the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign that has long been interpreted as a semantic marker for jade, shininess, or reflectiveness is, in fact, a reference to the intense flash of sheet lightning and thunderbolts. The chapter also explores the identification of Maya lords and their ancestors with lightning and thunderbolts and examines the *tok'-pakal* “flint-shield” war icon as a sacred bundle representing the supernatural power of the Chahk deities. It is my contention that lightning was a fundamental quality of the creator deities and held a primary position in the symbolism of Classic period rulership.

THE CHAHK DEITIES

In Maya belief, lightning (Spanish *relámpago*), thunderbolts (*rayo*), and thunder (*trueno*) are associated with a group of male gods that are specifically named in hieroglyphic texts as Chahk “thunderbolt” deities (Proto-Maya **kaboq*) (Thompson 1970:251–269; Spero 1987, 1991; Stuart 1987:23, 1990, 1995; Taube 1992a:17–27, 69–79; Grube 2002; Lacadena 2004; Bassie-Sweet 2008:102–124; García Barrios 2008; Bassie-Sweet et al.

2015). Classic period Chahk deities are usually depicted as zoomorphic beings with serpents emanating from their mouths (Taube 1992a). The notion that thunderbolts can take the form of serpents is a pan-Mesoamerican concept that is likely based on the fact that both can kill with deadly speed.¹ A beautiful example of this equivalency is found in a Tzotzil prayer for rain that describes a thunderbolt in a couplet as a holy thunderbolt (*ch'ul chawk*) and a holy snake (*ch'ul chon*) (Breedlove and Laughlin 1993:589).

A portrait of a zoomorphic Chahk deity wearing a *Spondylus* shell earring was used to represent the word *chahk* “thunderbolt” in hieroglyphic texts. In many examples, the Chahk portrait glyph includes a *ki* phonetic complement to indicate its pronunciation (Fox and Justeson 1984:29). Chahk’s shell earring was often employed as the *pars pro toto* representation of the word *Chahk*. A clear example of this substitution is found in the name of the thunderbolt deity nicknamed GI. GI is a Roman-nosed deity who is often pictured wearing a Chahk shell earring (figure 1.1). His headdress consists of the so-called Quadripartite Badge that can also include a heron (figure 1.1a, 1.1b). In most forms of GI’s nominal phrase, his name is represented by his portrait wearing the shell earring (figure 1.1c). However, in one example the scribe expanded this name and used a portrait of GI wearing his heron headdress followed by a portrait of Chahk (figure 1.1d). While it is not known what name the GI portrait represents, it can be irrefutably concluded from this example that it was followed by the word *Chahk* (Bassie-Sweet 2008:111).

Some of the Chahk deities were identified with the directions and their respective colors. In Maya worldview, the surface of the earth contained a quadrilateral space, with the rise and set points of the solstice sun defining its corners (for an overview, see Bassie-Sweet 1996:21–29, 195–199, 2008:58–78). The zenith passage of the sun directly overhead defined not only the center of the sky but also the center of the world beneath it. Each quadrant was identified with a specific color (red/east, white/north, black/west, and yellow/south), while the center was identified with the color *yax* “blue-green.” In the Postclassic codices, there are four thunderbolt deities (God B in the Schellhas system) that are identified with the four quadrants of the quadrilateral world and their associated colors (red/east, white/north, black/west, and yellow/south) (Thompson 1972). Bishop Diego de Landa noted that the Postclassic Wayeb rituals were in honor of these four colored, directional thunderbolt deities and that they were identified with the four Yearbearers (Tozzer 1941). He also recorded that each directional thunderbolt god had a personal name in addition to the titles Bakab, Xib Chahk, and Pauhtun. The Dresden Codex (pages 29a–30a) appears to illustrate a fifth Chahk that



FIGURE 1.1. Portraits and nominal glyphs for the deity GI: a. stone mask, b. Early Classic incensario, c. portrait glyph, d. nominal phrase

was identified with the center of the quadrilateral world and the color *yax* “blue-green.”

The association of thunderbolt gods with the four quadrants of the world and their respective colors is also found in the Classic period. There is a type of thunderbolt god called K’awiil (also known by the nickname GII and as God K in the Schellhas system) (Stuart 1987). The 819 Day Count indicates that K’awiil had four manifestations, each associated with a color and quadrant of the world (Berlin and Kelley 1961). In addition, the nominal phrases of some Classic period Chahk deities also include colors, such as K’an Tun Chahk (yellow), Chak Xib Chahk, Chak Wayaab’ Chahk (red), Ik’ Wayaab’ Chahk (black), Yax Wayaab’ Chahk, and Yax Ha’al Chahk (blue-green or first) (see Garcíá Barrios 2008 for an overview of colored Chahks). Today, colored thunderbolt spirits (red, yellow, and *yax* “blue-green”) are

well-known in highland Chiapas among the Tzeltal, Tojolabal, and Ch'ol (Bassie-Sweet et al. 2015:144–148).

THE THREE THUNDERBOLT GODS

The Popol Vuh indicates that there were three primary thunderbolt deities known as Thunderbolt Huracan (Kaqulja'Juraqan), Youngest Thunderbolt (Ch'i'pi Kaqulja'), and Sudden [blue-green] Thunderbolt (Raxa Kaqulja') (Christenson 2007:69–70). They are always named in this order, and they were collectively called Heart of Sky, indicating an association with the center of the sky. In conjunction with the creator grandparents, these sky gods played a central role in the creation of the earth and the first humans. The Heart of Sky thunderbolt gods also performed such deeds as flooding the world, destroying the wooden people, and dimming the eyesight of the first human lineage heads so they would not be as powerful as the creator deities. They also directed the two grandsons of the creator grandparents to defeat the deity Seven Macaw and his family and assisted the grandsons in various endeavors that established the dominance of the creator deities and their family over other gods.

Heinrich Berlin (1963) identified a triad of Classic period deities that he nicknamed GI, GII, and GIII. What is unusual about the three Palenque gods is that the Cross Group narrative indicates that their birth order was GI, GIII, GII; but when they are named together it is always in the order GI, GII, and GIII. Not only was GII the youngest-born of the triad, but he also carries the Ch'ok “youth” title. This is similar to Youngest Thunderbolt, who is also always named as the second thunderbolt in the Heart of Sky triad. While these three deities clearly functioned as patron gods at Palenque, all three also appear at other Maya sites, indicating that they were members of the primary pantheon of Maya deities. I have presented evidence that GI, GII, and GIII were the antecedents for the three Heart of Sky thunderbolt deities of the Popol Vuh (Bassie-Sweet 2008).

I have further argued that the three hearthstones that define the center of the quadrilateral world were thought to be manifestations of these three primary deities. As such, these three thunderbolts gods were identified with the center of the quadrilateral world. The Dumbarton Oaks Tablet contains a diphrastric expression (3–9-CHAHK-ki) that refers to three Chahk deities and nine Chahk deities (Zender 2015). This phrase indicates that the Chahk deities were categorized into a group of three and a group of nine. Given that nine is also used in Mayan languages to refer to the concept of many, the three

Chahk deities and nine Chahk deities may be a reference the three primary Chahk gods and the many other thunderbolt deities.

THUNDERBOLT AXES

The association of the Chahk thunderbolt gods with flint axes has long been known (Sapper 1897; Thompson 1930; Wisdom 1940). Chahk deities are portrayed thirty-five times in the Dresden Codex swinging their axes, and numerous Classic period depictions of Chahk deities also illustrate this action, such as the Chahk depicted on vessel K2068 who wields a flint axe (http://research.mayavase.com/kerrmaya_hires.php?vase=2068). Ethnographic sources indicate that the Maya believed the axes of the Chahk deities were thunderbolts. The linguists John Justeson, William Norman, Lyle Campbell, and Terrence Kaufman (1985:43) remarked that worked flint and obsidian were referred to as *pedra de rayo* “thunderbolts” in the communities where they have worked throughout the Maya area. While some modern ethnographic reports identify obsidian with thunderbolts, particularly in the highlands where obsidian is more abundant than flint (Redfield 1945; Woods 1968:129; Brown 2015), the predominant association of obsidian in Mesoamerica is with meteors (see chapter 3).

Daniel Brinton (1881, 1883) recorded a number of stories from northern Yucatán regarding the thunderbolt deities who were thought to guard the town and the milpas of the community. In one story, the thunderbolt deity strikes flint to light his cigar and in doing so, creates lightning and thunder. The intimate relationship between flint and lightning was noted by Robert Redfield (1945:216) during his fieldwork in the village of Agua Escondida on the eastern shore of Lake Atitlán. The ancient flint knives found by the villagers are thought to have fallen from the sky when lightning flashes. Carl Sapper (1897) recorded the Q'eqchi' concept that the mountain/valley gods own lightning and that their stone axes are thunderbolts. They also believe the ancient stone axe heads they find in the ground are the remnants of these thunderbolt axes. The mountain/valley gods punish men for crimes by striking them dead with their thunderbolt axes. In S. Guillermo Sedat's Q'eqchi' dictionary (1955:104), he recorded the term *xmal cak*, which literally means axe of thunder (see also Wilson 1972:204). He noted the belief that axe heads were thought to have been thrown to earth by lightning (cited in Robicsek 1978:61). The Mopán refer to ancient stone celts as *baatchac* “the axes of Chahk” and believe them to be thunderbolts that were thrown to earth by the Chahks during storms (Thompson 1950:270, 1970:253). In Yucatec, a term for flint is *bat chaak* “the axe of the god Chahk” (Barrera Vásquez 1980:39). When a thunderbolt hits a tree,

it is said that a Chahk has struck it with his stone axe (Thompson 1930:61).

There are similar beliefs among the Ch'orti'. Charles Wisdom (1940:396) stated, "Wherever lightning strikes, a stone ax is believed to be buried in the ground, as the lightning was caused by the swift passage of the axe through the air." Ancient axe heads the Ch'orti' find in their fields are revered as the discarded lightning axes of their thunderbolt gods (Wisdom 1940:382).² Wisdom also noted that the gods strike lightning from flint. Pieces of flint and old flint arrowheads are kept on their altars alongside the axe heads as sacred relics. The inference is that the Maya believed flint contained the spiritual power of the thunderbolt.

The Classic period Chahk deity named K'awiil (GII) takes the form of a thunderbolt axe (Coggins 1988; Taube 1989, 1992a; Stuart 1987) (figure 1.2). His forehead is often perforated with an axe head, and one of his legs takes the shape of a serpent. Some examples of ancient flint eccentrics recovered from Classic period caches take the form of K'awiil or a sinuous serpent (Fash 2001:102, 147; Miller and Martin 2004: 150–151; Moholy-Nagy 2008; Agurcia et al. 2016), which supports the notion that flint embodied the power of the thunderbolt.

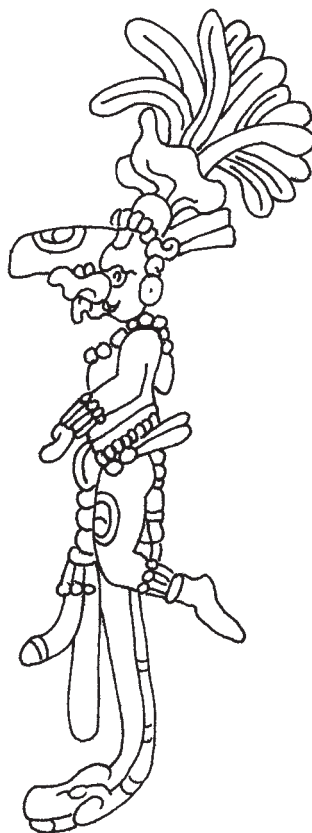


FIGURE 1.2. *K'awiil in the form of thunderbolt axe*

CATEGORIES OF LITHIC MATERIALS

The generic term for stone is *tun* (Western Mayan **toonh*) (Kaufman 2003:436). Adjectives are used to designate certain kinds of stone. For example, the use of color as a type designation is seen in colonial Pokom terms for certain gems like jade (*raxcual* "blue-green precious stone"), jasper (*kakcual* "red precious stone"), and pearls (*sakcual* "white precious stone") (Feldman 1973). In the *Annals of the Cakchiquels*, the Kaqchikel term *raxa ab'aj* "blue-green

stone” refers to jade (Akkeren 2000:159). A Classic period caption text on a vessel from Tikal Burial 195 contains the term *yax tun* “blue-green stone” for jade (Stuart cited in Houston et al. 2009). The word for flint is *tok’* (Proto-Mayan **tyooq’*; Kaufman 2003:442). In contrast to stones that are named after their natural properties, a number of colonial sources, such as the Chilam Balam of Chumayel and the Ritual of the Bacabs, refer to four colored flints (red, white, black, and yellow) that are clearly identified with the world quadrants and the Chahk deities who presided over these regions (Roys 1933:64, 1965). Kaqchikel sources refer to blue-green flint in addition to red and white (Feldman 1985:72), and, as noted above, blue-green was identified with the center of the quadrilateral world. Flint blades were a common component of Classic period cache offerings; in one such example, consisting of nine flint knives and projectile points, four of the flints were painted with a blue pigment (Zralka et al. 2010).

In Mesoamerica, flint knives were used for human sacrifice. The Madrid Codex (pages 75–76) illustrates a model of the quadrilateral world with pairs of deities performing actions on each side. On the north side, which is associated with the color white, the two deities flank a sacrificial altar with a victim draped over it. The victim’s abdomen is split open by a flint knife, with blood spurting from the wound. It is a reference to the well-known act of heart sacrifice (Tozzer 1941:119, 221). In the Popol Vuh, the lords of the underworld instruct their owl messengers to sacrifice the goddess Lady Blood and bring them her heart (Christenson 2007:132). Although she persuaded them not to do so, their implement of heart sacrifice was the *saqi toq’* (white flint) knife.

The *saqi toq’* also played a central role in the acquisition of power by the Kaqchikel leader Q’aq’awitz, as described in the *Annals of the Cakchiquels* (Brinton 1885:99; Akkeren 2000:158–159; Maxwell and Hill 2006:84–89; Bassie-Sweet 2008:248–251). The volcano now known as Santa María was erupting and causing havoc. Q’aq’awitz and his assistant Zakitzunun climbed the volcano to capture its fire (extinguish it) and obtain the white flint of its crater that represented the “heart” of the volcano and its fire. While Q’aq’awitz entered the crater, Zakitzunun poured water on the fire from the rim. From the centipede that resided in the crater, Q’aq’awitz took the white flint knife (*saqi toq’*). Many Classic period images of flint blades illustrate them emerging from the mouth of a centipede. Flint is not naturally found on volcanoes. The association of flint with exploding volcanoes is surely based on the fact that such eruptions are frequently accompanied by dramatic displays of lightning. Q’aq’awitz was capturing not just the fire of the volcano but also its

thunderbolts in the form of flint. In doing so, Q'aq'awitz obtained a primary weapon and the supernatural force associated with that weapon.

Ruud van Akkeren (2000:158–159) insightfully compared this Kaqchikel story to the mythology regarding the Central Mexican goddess Itzpapalotl. In the Aztec Legends of the Sun, the burned body of Itzpapalotl produced five colored flint knives (white, blue, yellow, red, and black) (Bierhorst 1992:152). Mixcoatl took the white flint knife as his spirit power, wrapped it in a sacred bundle, and used its power to overcome his enemies. In the Codex Borgia and Codex Telleriano-Remensis, the body of Itzpapalotl is decorated with white flint knives covered in blood, indicating her identification with this type of sacrificial flint.

REPRESENTATIONS OF LITHIC MATERIAL IN ART AND HIEROGLYPHIC WRITING

A variety of signs and motifs represent stone, flint, and obsidian, as well as objects made from these materials. The word *tuun* “stone” is represented by the logographic T528 sign (Justeson and Mathews 1983; Stuart 1996) (figure 1.3a). A common feature of the karst topography that dominates the Maya lowlands is underground drainage that forms cenotes and caves with speleothems (cave formations like stalagmites, stalactite, flowstones, and others). The *tuun* sign is composed of a profile view of a limestone cave mouth with stylized stalactites hanging from the ceiling (Bassie-Sweet 1991:108–109). Given that limestone was the primary stone of the Maya lowland region, it is not surprising that the Maya would use a major feature of their karst landscape to represent the generic word for stone. A second element composed of a circle surrounded by dots appears on the cave wall of the *tuun* sign, but its meaning is uncertain. It may refer to a nodule of flint, a pool of water beneath the stalactite (the Maya were known to collect such water for religious ceremonies), or a cache of corn seeds the Maya believed was hidden in a primordial mountain cave and later used to create the first humans.

Chahk deities and lords appear in ritual combat scenes using round, hand-size stones as striking weapons, and the verb *jatz'* “to strike” is represented by a logograph of a hand holding such a stone marked with *tuun* elements (Zender 2004b; Taube and Zender 2009). Illustrations of stone objects such as altars and stelae are often marked with the *tuun* “stone” elements as well. For example, a scene on a carved peccary skull from Copán shows two lords flanking a stela and an altar that are both marked with *tuun* elements (Fash 2001:fig. 24). Such semantic markers are common in Maya art (Hopkins 1994; Mora Martin 2008; Stone and Zender 2011:13–15).

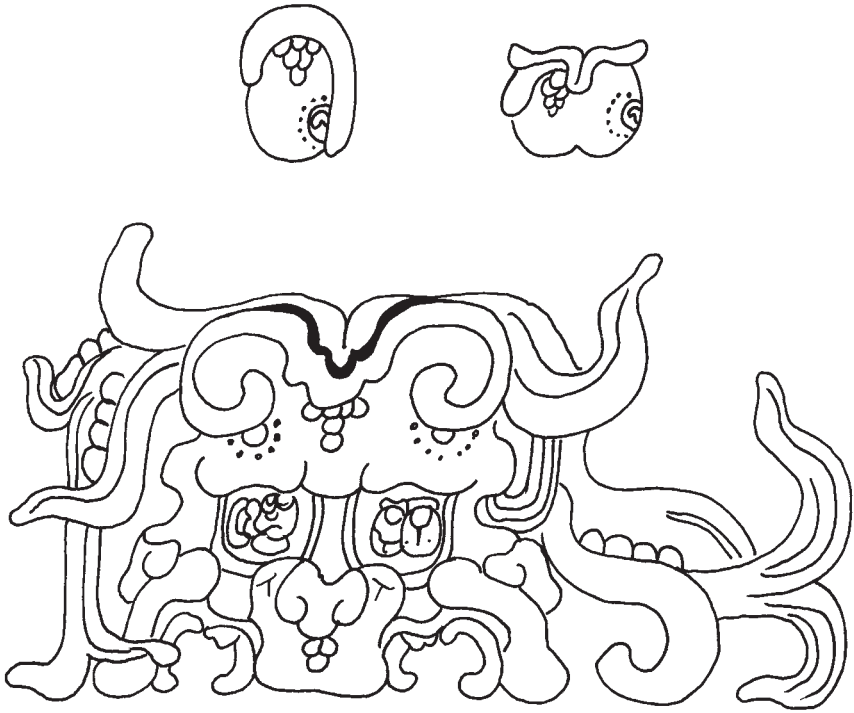


FIGURE 1.3. a. T528 tuun sign, b. witz sign, c. witz motif

The word *witz* “mountain” is represented by a logograph or a zoomorph that incorporates the *tuun* “stone” elements and a split element (Stuart 1987) (figure 1.3b). The juxtaposing of *tuun* elements with the *witz* sign is expected, given that mountains are made of stone. The split is formed by a bilateral scroll, and it references the myth that a lightning god had to split open the primordial corn mountain with a thunderbolt to obtain its seeds. When this god broke open the mountain, his lightning bolt scorched the seeds and created the four colors of corn (white, yellow, red, and black). According to the *Popol Vuh*, the white and yellow seeds of this lightning-infused corn were used by the creator deities to form the flesh of the first humans.

The primordial corn mountain was the quintessential mountain, hence its use as the model for the generic *witz* sign. In Maya art and hieroglyphic writing, additional signs are often attached to the generic *witz* sign to specify a particular mountain. As an example, the Palenque Tablet of the Foliated Cross illustrates the ruler K’inich Kan Bahlam standing on a zoomorphic *witz* sign

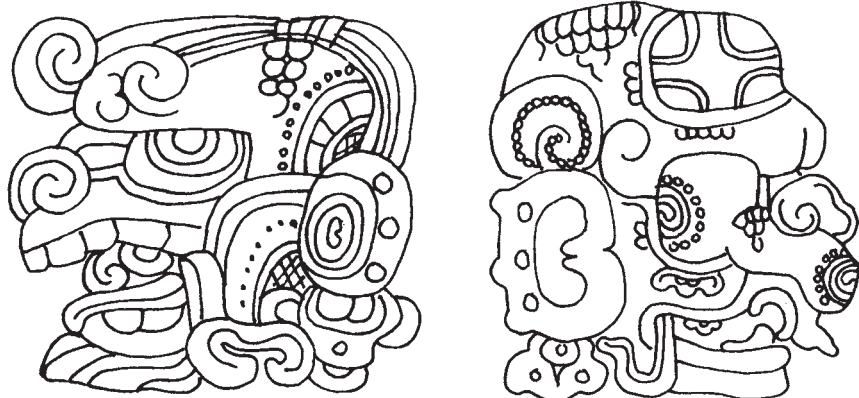


FIGURE 1.4. a. *hi* sign, b. *k'an tuun* motif

that functions to indicate his location (figure 1.3c). Glyphs representing the place name Yax Haal Witz are infixed over the eyes of the zoomorphic creature. In a similar fashion, there is a Mo'Witz “macaw mountain” documented at Copán and a Chan Mo' Witz “four macaw mountain” at Tres Isla (Stuart 1987; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017).

There is an intimate relationship between Chahk deities and stone that is seen in the head variant of the phonetic *hi* sign on Early Classic Copán Stela 63. The sign is part of the phonetic spelling of the term *mih* “zero” in the Long Count notation of the monument and is composed of a Chahk deity with its typical tied hair and shell earring (Grube and Nahm cited in Stuart et al. 1989) (figure 1.4a). However, *tuun* elements decorate the Chahk's forehead. This same Chahk deity marked with stone elements is part of the logograph for the *haab* position of the date as well. Another example of this visual merging of Chahk with stone is seen on the Emiliano Zapata panel (figure 1.4b). The text on this monument refers to a *k'an tuun* “yellow stone,” and the scene illustrates a personified stone with a *k'an* sign infixed in its forehead and wearing the diagnostic shell earring of Chahk (Stuart 1990). Stephen Houston (2014:89) explains this merging of Chahk and stone in terms of Chahk's thunderbolt axe. He suggests that when the axe hits the earth it “engenders, it seems, a dispersion of Chahk's identity, a jolt of godly essence into solid rock.” To take this concept one step further, it is possible that the Maya thought the deposits of flint and metamorphic rock they used to make their own axes were created when Chahk's thunderbolt axe hit the earth.

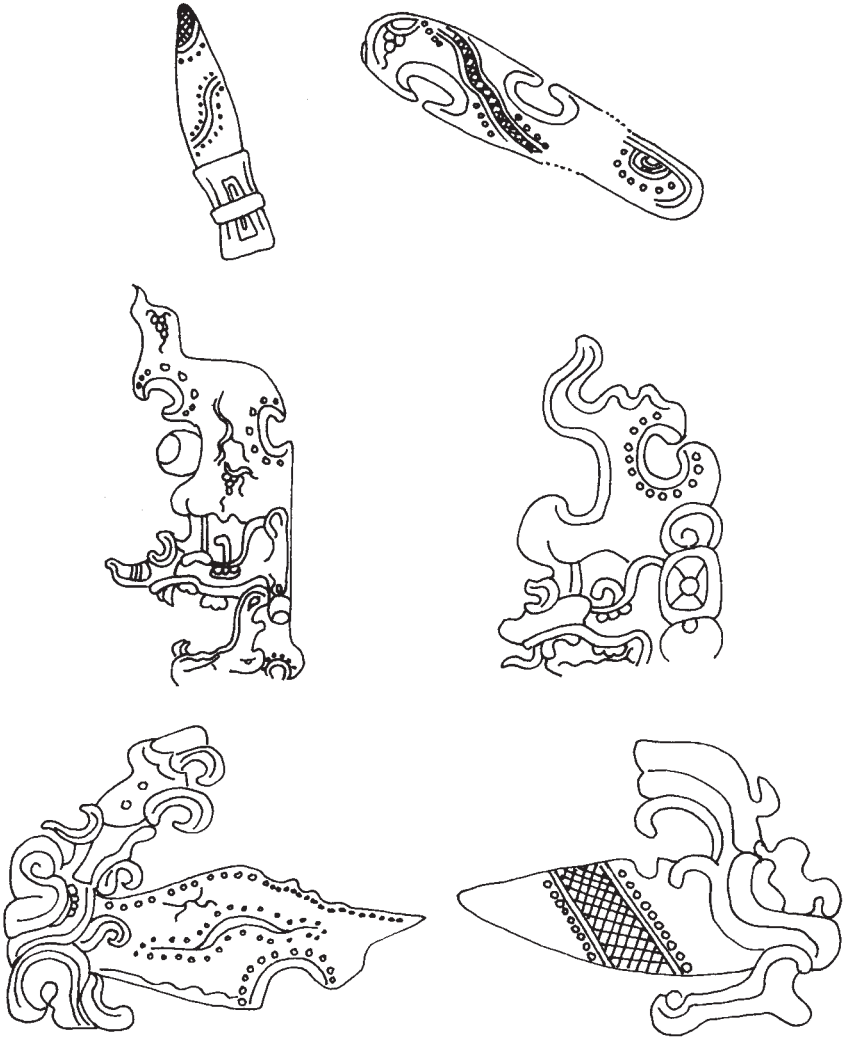


FIGURE 1.5. *a. flint signs, b. personified flint signs, c. flint centipede*

REPRESENTATIONS OF FLINT

Some types of flint can have banded lines, and knapped flint is textured with wavy lines. Illustrations of objects like axes, bifacial knives, and eccentrics are often marked with such lines to indicate that they are made of flint (Houston 1983; Schele and Miller 1986:46) (figure 1.5a). As would be expected, the various



FIGURE 1.6. *Yaxchilán Lintel 45 (drawing after Ian Graham)*

logographs that represent flint and flint objects (T112, T245b, T257, T786) also include *tuun* elements. In parallel texts at Machaquilá, one of the logographic signs representing a flint blade (T112) substitutes for the phonetic rendering of the word *tok* “flint” (Houston 1983). Flint can also be represented by a skeletal, personified form that has the chipped outline of eccentric flints (figure 1.5b).

In Maya art, a wide range of weapons and implements of sacrifice are illustrated as flint objects (Follet 1932). As discussed above, the Madrid Codex (page 76) depicts a bloody sacrifice with a flint knife and spurting blood. The Madrid Codex (page 54b) portrays God M carrying a flint spear that is tipped with red, presumably to indicate blood. The Dresden Codex shows Chahk deities carrying flint spears and shields (pages 66a, 67a, 69a). Yaxchilán Lintel 45 depicts the ruler Shield Jaguar III grasping a flint spearhead and shield, while a flint spear and shield is held by K'inich Kan Bahlam II on the Palenque Temple XVII Tablet (figures 1.6, 1.7). Many Classic period lords are portrayed holding ceremonial double-headed flint spears. Flint blades emerging from



FIGURE 1.7. *Palenque Temple XVII*

the mouth of a centipede-serpent are well-known in Maya art (figure 1.5c). Given the stinging bite of centipedes and serpents, it is not surprising that these creatures would be associated with flint weapons.

Flint objects also appear in hieroglyphic texts. A *tuun* and flint marked eccentric (T297) is used to represent the word *b'ax* “quartz,” and it appears in a Xultun place name *B'ax Witz* “quartz mountain” (Prager et al. 2010). The verb *ch'ak* “to cut or to chop” is represented by a logograph of a flint axe (T190, T333) (Orejel 1990), while the verb *baj* “to hammer” is represented by a hammerstone marked with *tuun* and flint elements (Zender 2010). In the Madrid Codex (page 54c), God Q attacks God M with a stone held in one hand and a flint knife in the other. A similar dual action is illustrated in the Madrid Codex (page 50a), but in this case God M's chest is gashed open by the knife, and blood spurts from it. God M holds his left hand to his forehead in a typical gesture of woe. As noted in the introduction, there are Classic period examples of sacrificial scenes where an axe is used to decapitate a victim. A Postclassic example is depicted in the Dresden Codex (page 42c) where a Chahk deity

swings an axe over the head of a victim who cowers before him. The victim holds his left hand over his forehead in the woe gesture.

THE THUNDERBOLT AUTHORITY OF MAYA LORDS

The narrative on the Palenque Temple XIX platform relates the mythological template for the accession of the ruler K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III and indicates that he took on the guise of the thunderbolt deity GI on this occasion (Stuart 2005b:60–77). The main text begins in 3309 BC with the seating of GI in lordship under the authority of the creator grandfather Itzamnaaj. The time line then moves forward eleven years to the sacrifice of a crocodile deity by GI. The verb used to describe this action is the *ch'ak* “to cut or to chop” logograph of a flint axe, suggesting that GI dispensed with this crocodile with a thunderbolt axe. David Stuart (2003a, 2005b:72) nicknamed the crocodile entity the Starry Deer Crocodile and suggested that it represented the Milky Way, an interpretation also held by others (Freidel et al. 1993:85; Milbrath 1999). I prefer the designation Milky Way Crocodile. Ethnographic evidence indicates that the Maya viewed the Milky Way as a misty, celestial river with a crocodile swimming in it, indicating that this crocodile did not represent the Milky Way per se but rather that it inhabited this river and represented a section of it (see Bassie-Sweet 2008:36–38 for an overview).³ It is highly likely that the mouth of the crocodile was identified with the black rift of the Milky Way, which looks remarkably like the open jaw of a crocodile. In Maya art, the Quadripartite Badge headdress of GI is most frequently illustrated on the tail or rear head of the crocodile. Images of the Milky Way Crocodile arching over a scene are well-known in Maya art, such as the stucco panel on the facade of the Copán Margarita Structure (figure 1.8). In this Early Classic example, the rear head of the Milky Way Crocodile includes a Chahk deity swinging a thunderbolt axe, surely a reflection of the intimate relationship of the thunderbolt gods with this celestial river.

After the *ch'ak* event of the Milky Way Crocodile, the next episode of the Palenque Temple XIX story restates GI's accession and joins it to the birth of GI at Matwiil (1.18.5.3.2 9 Ik' 15 Keh, October 21, 2360 BC). The fact that GI participated in events prior to this birth date means that his birth did not represent the concept of a human birth, which is a once-in-a-lifetime event, but appears to refer to a newly manifested form of GI at Matwiil (Stuart 2005b). The narrative then continues with the subsequent births of the Gods GIII (October 25) and GII (November 8) at Matwiil and indicates that these births were the creation of a lord of Matwiil named Muwaan Mat. The time frame again moves forward

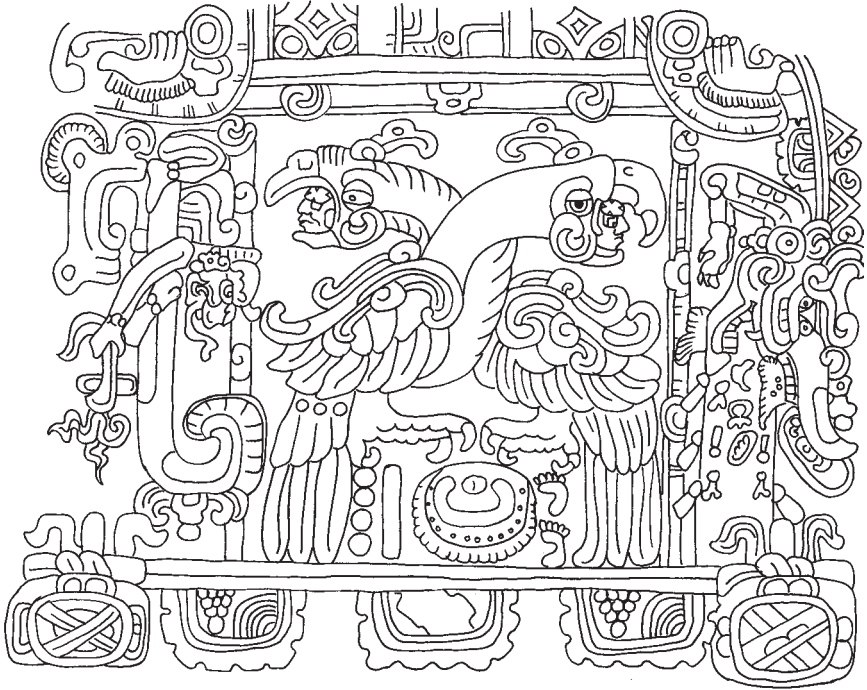


FIGURE 1.8. *Copán Margarita Structure panel (drawing after John Carlson)*

to the accession of Muwaan Mat thirty-five years later. From this accession, the narrative passes into historical time and relates the accession of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III in AD 722 and his subsequent 9.14.13.0.0 Period Ending event two years later in the company of GI, GII, and GIII. The scene of the Temple XIX platform illustrates K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III's accession. He is dressed as the deity GI, and a banded-bird official dressed as Itzamnaaj hands him the *sak huun* headdress of rulership. What is relevant to this discussion is that K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III has taken on the guise of a thunderbolt deity as part of his accession ceremony. There are many other examples of Maya rulers and their queens wearing the headdress of GI on a variety of occasions, such as on Tikal Stela 6, Tikal Stela 25, Naachtún Stela 26, Caracol Stela 1, Yaxchilán Lintel 14, and Xultun Stela 24. On Copán Stela I, the ruler not only wears GI's headdress but also a mask in the likeness of GI complete with *Spondylus* shell earrings. The Maya believed that when humans dressed in the costume of a deity, they became the embodiment of that deity, and many scenes show lords dressed in the mask and/or costume of Chahk gods (Houston and Stuart 1996, 1998).



FIGURE 1.9. *Dumbarton Oaks Tablet* (drawing by Linda Schele)

A commonly cited example of a Maya lord dressed as a Chahk deity is pictured on the looted Palenque wall panel known as the Dumbarton Oaks Tablet (figure 1.9). This scene illustrates the young lord K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II performing a dance in the guise of a Chahk deity. He wears the *Spondylus* shell earring of the Chahk gods as well as a cut shell headdress frequently worn by the Chahks (Schele and Miller 1986:275). K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II swings a thunderbolt axe. The axe head is marked with flint and *tuun* elements, while the handle takes the shape of a serpent. This lightning serpent has a lock of tied hair that is associated with the Chahk deities.⁴ When someone grasped the thunderbolt axe, they also became a Chahk. Rulers and secondary lords are frequently depicted holding a scepter in the form of the axe god K'awiil. They are, in effect, seizing a thunderbolt and the

power the thunderbolt contains. The identification of leaders with lightning was recorded at the time of the Spanish conquest in the Postclassic Lacandon Ch'ol community of Sac Bahlán. The community leaders were said to transform into lightning during the Wayeb rituals (Tozzer 1912:504).

There is another aspect to supernatural power that involves the nature of the individual's soul. Numerous sources indicate that there was an ancient pan-Mesoamerican belief that humans were thought to have co-essences (often referred to as companion spirits) (Foster 1944; López Austin 1988; Houston and Stuart 1989; Grube and Nahm 1994; Furst 1995). These co-essences could take the form of animals or natural phenomena like thunderbolts, whirlwinds, and meteors. A person's co-essences gave them the strength to overcome opponents, and many accounts of Mesoamerican warfare indicate that the indigenous population believed the warrior's spiritual strength dictated his success in battle. There are numerous stories of indigenous leaders who used their thunderbolt and meteor co-essences to protect their communities. As an example, it was widely believed that an earthquake-generated landslide that blocked the Spanish advance during the 1712 rebellion was created by certain Tzeltal military leaders using their thunderbolt co-essences (Gosner 1984:131). Kevin Gosner noted that the alleged power of such leaders to mobilize natural forces like wind, rain, and lightning was especially valued during periods of war. It is highly likely that Classic period rulers and other elite members were thought to have thunderbolt co-essences, given that they are often named after various Chahk deities. Anyone could have used flint weapons, but I speculate that only those with thunderbolt co-essences were thought to be able to command the power of the thunderbolt that resided in flint.

THE BAKAB TITLE

As discussed in the introduction, the title Bakab is found in the nominal phrases of many Classic period kings and queens and alludes to their role as head officiants of Period Ending ceremonies. The nature of the Bakab title may be ascertained by examining its use as a title for directional thunderbolt deities during the Postclassic period. Simply because of the mathematics of the calendar, the first day of the year can only occur on four *tzolk'in* day names, and these are known as the Yearbearers. The *tzolk'in* calendar day on which a person was born established the person's fate. In the same regard, the *tzolk'in* day on which the year began established that year's fate. Landa described the Wayeb and New Year rituals conducted by the Yucatec Maya just prior to the Spanish conquest, and he noted that each of the four

different Yearbearers had specific omens, colors, and directions associated with it (Tozzer 1941:136–149). He also recorded that the annual Wayeb rituals that marked the transition from one Yearbearer to the next were in honor of a set of four directional gods, known by the names Hobnil (south), Can Sical (east), Sac Cimi (north), and Hozan Ek (west), who were specifically identified with their respective Yearbearer. These four gods were also known by the titles Bacab, Xib Chac, and Pauah Tun (Bakab, Xib Chahk, Pauah Tun). Xib Chahk “youth Chahk” deities have been identified in the Classic period (Stuart 1987), and they are illustrated as typical Chahk deities wielding thunderbolt axes. The Dresden Codex illustrates mythological Wayeb rituals in which a Chahk deity is the focus of offerings, indicating that the four Wayeb deities were indeed thunderbolt gods. The inference is that the Classic period rulers and queens, who carry the Bakab title, were identified with thunderbolt gods.

THE THUNDERBOLT AUTHORITY OF ANCESTORS

There is ample evidence for ancestor veneration during the Classic period, and ancestral relics related to thunderbolts are documented in Classic Maya art and hieroglyphic texts (McAnany 1995; Stuart 2010; Bassie-Sweet et al. 2015). Historical and ethnographic sources indicate that the Maya believed that leaders (and their co-essences) lived on in the afterlife and continued their protective roles as guardians of the community. The relationship between the ancestors and the living community leaders was noted by Calixta Guiteras-Holmes (1961:78) in the highland Tzotzil region: “The authorities do not act in their own name: each one represents or is the personification of all those who preceded him back to the ‘beginning of the world’: they personify the gods, they are sacred. Their authority is supported by the belief in their supernatural power.”

The role of the ancestors in meting out punishment is seen in the Tzotzil community of Zinacantán, where it is thought that the ancestors direct thunderbolts at people who transgress social norms (Vogt 1969:301). The thunderbolt is thought to cause fright and soul loss in the individual, leading to illness.

The tomb of the Palenque ruler K'inich Janaab Pakal I (circa AD 683) features his ancestors on the sides of his sarcophagus box and on the tomb walls. Although the nine portraits on the walls are badly damaged, enough remains to indicate that each ancestor is dressed as a warrior, holding a K'awiil axe and war shield (Robertson 1983; Schele and Mathews 1998). An Early Classic tomb in Temple XX also has similar ancestral figures carrying K'awiil axes

and war shields (http://www.mesoweb.com/palenque/dig/report/hilites_tomb.html). The belief in the supernatural power of lightning is a fundamental hallmark of Maya culture and was a central charter of Maya rulership.

**LIGHTNING
LUMINOSITY AND THE
T24/T1017 CELT SIGN**

Discarded axe heads of both flint and polished stone are occasionally found in agricultural fields, and such axe heads are also well-known from archaeological excavations. For instance, twenty-two polished stone celts (twenty-one of metamorphic greenstone and one of jade), used for carving stone, were recovered from Aguateca Structure M8-8 (Aoyama 2011: 49). The T24 sign and its personified form T1017 represent an axe head (Stuart 2010) (figure 1.10).⁵ The surface of the T24 celt is marked with two parallel lines often enclosed by an oval element. Many axe blades in Maya art are not depicted as flint blades but as the T24 celt sign. As an example, numerous Chahk deities wield T24 celts, such as those on vessel K4013 or K8608 (figures 1.11, 1.12). While some examples of K'awiil's axe are marked with flint or stone semantic markers, the majority are T24 celts. In addition to these axe head contexts, T24/T1017 also appears in sky bands and marking the bodies of a

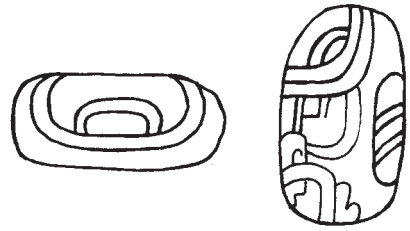


FIGURE 1.10. a. T24 sign, b. T1017 sign, c. K'awiil gods

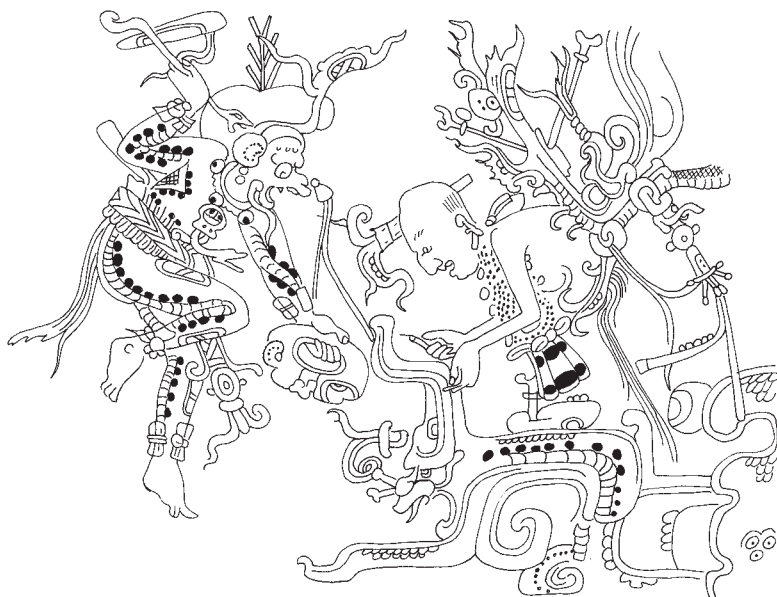


FIGURE I.II. *K4013 (after Justin Kerr)*

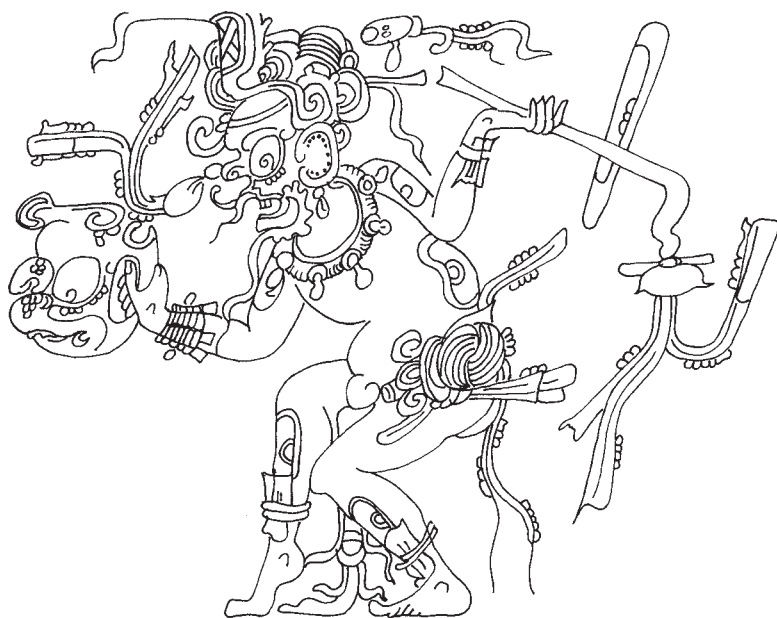


FIGURE I.I2. *K8608 (after Justin Kerr)*

variety of deities. The following discussion presents the evidence that the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign is a semantic marker for a brilliant flash of lightning.

Many researchers incorrectly refer to the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ glyph as a mirror sign because it was initially interpreted to be a mirror and to be a semantic marker for reflectiveness (Schele and Miller 1983; Schele and Miller 1986:43). However, round mirrors (*nehn*) made from pyrite are well-known from archaeological contexts, and such mirrors have been identified in Maya art and hieroglyphic writing (Taube 1988; Miller and Martin 2004:24, 45; Stone and Zender 2011:73). The difference between a mirror and the T₂₄ celt is well demonstrated by the stucco and wood K'awiil effigies recovered from Tikal Burial 116 (Coe 1967:57). These full-figure portraits illustrate K'awiil with the lozenge-shaped T₂₄ celt protruding from his head while holding a mirror in front of his chest. There are a number of scenes where attendants hold such round mirrors in front of their chests to allow the lord or deity to gaze into it (DC, K530, K1453, K4338, K8220, K8926). None of these round mirrors are infixed with T₂₄ signs, suggesting that the T₂₄ sign does not refer to either a mirror or reflectiveness.

Some examples of effigy stone axes are much thinner versions of an actual stone celt, such as the famous Leiden plaque and two examples that were apparently looted from Río Azul. Similar effigy celts are seen in Maya art as part of a motif nicknamed the “belt-head assemblage” or “mask-and-celt assemblage” that is frequently attached to the belt of a ruler (Proskouriakoff 1950:fig. 23; Schele and Miller 1983:15; Schele and Miller 1986:120; Mora Marin 2001; Martin and Grube 2008:120). Similar assemblages have been recovered from archaeological contexts as well.⁶ While many effigy celts are made of jade, there are some examples made from limestone, like those excavated from an Early Classic tomb in Palenque Temple XVIII-a (Couoh 2015; Delgado Robles et al. 2015). In its fullest form, the assemblage is composed of an ancestor image set upon a *jal* “braid” motif with three celts hanging from it. Given that they represent ancestors, I prefer the name “ancestral effigy assemblages.” As an aside, the *jal* sign represents two strips of material that have been braided together. It is a metaphorical reference for the descent line where the kings are like strands replacing each other over and over (Nicholas A. Hopkins, personal communication, 2015).

The ancestor can be represented by a portrait glyph, glyphs representing their name, or the skull of the ancestor.⁷ As an example, Tikal Stela 31 illustrates the ruler Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II, and the assemblage positioned on the front of his belt spells the name of his mother while the rear assemblage spells the name of another ancestor named Unen Bahlam (Martin 2002:60) (see figure 4.2). Another example of an ancestral effigy assemblage is seen on La

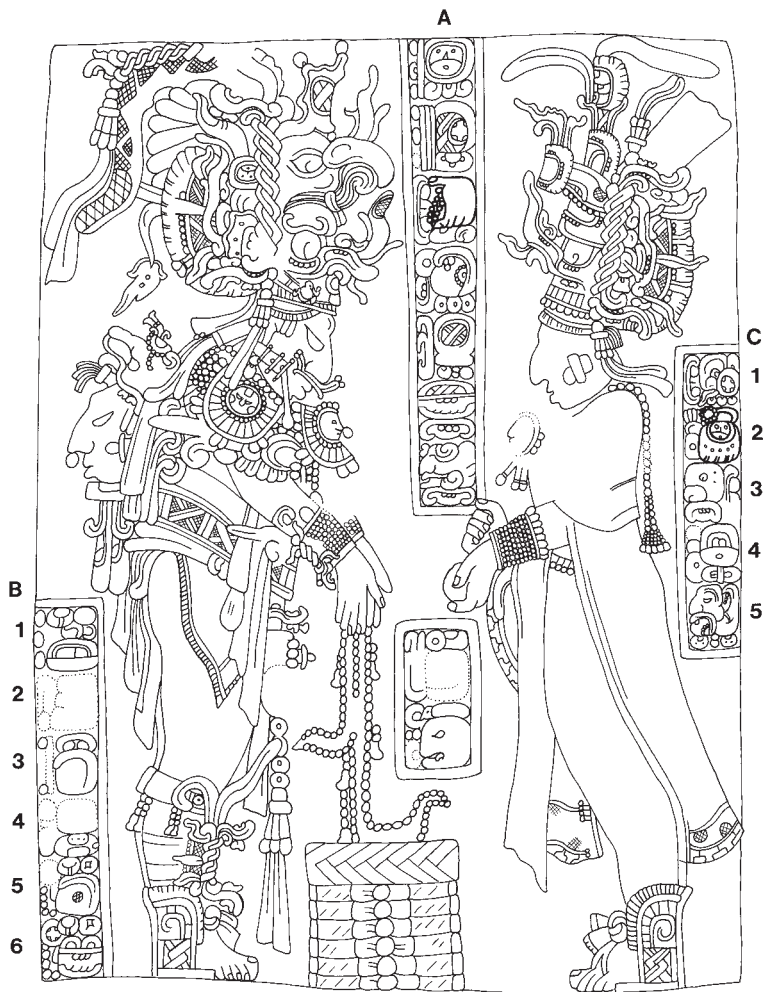


FIGURE 1.13. *La Pasadita Lintel 2* (drawing after Ian Graham)

Pasadita Lintel 2, which illustrates the Yaxchilán ruler Bird Jaguar IV performing a Period Ending rite with his secondary lord from La Pasadita. On Bird Jaguar IV's belt is a human head wearing a headdress that spells the name of his father, Shield Jaguar III (Schele and Miller 1986:196) (figure 1.13). In a similar manner, on Yaxchilán Stela 27 the ruler Knot-eye Jaguar II sports a belt head whose headdress spells the name of his father, Bird Jaguar II (Martin and Grube 2008:120).

In Maya art, ancestral effigy assemblages are not restricted to belts. They also appear in the so-called back racks worn by Maya lords on such monuments as Tikal Stela 21, Stela 22, and Stela 30. Such assemblages are also attached to thrones on Piedras Negras Stela 10, Piedras Negras Stela 33, Naranjo Stela 32, Tikal Temple I Lintel 3, Tikal Temple III Lintel 2, Ek' Balam Capstone I, Palenque Museo De Sitio bodega number 211, and K3057, to name a few. The juxtaposing of the ancestor with a throne implies that a throne was identified not just with the current ruler but also with the previous rulers.

Piedras Negras Stela 40 portrays Ruler 4 kneeling over his mother's tomb making an offering. He wears an ancestral effigy assemblage on his back that is tied in place above the belt (see figure 5.5). A similarly tied ancestral effigy assemblage is seen on El Cayo Altar 4 where the Sajal lord Aj Chak Wayib' K'utiim is pictured with a cloth belt securing the assemblage (see figure 0.6). The knot is tied at chest level. Caracol Stela 5 illustrates a dwarf attendant standing beside the ruler while holding a K'awiil scepter in one hand and an ancestral effigy assemblage in the other. These images indicate that the ancestral effigy assemblages were not a permanent part of the belt. Many ancestral effigy assemblages feature a knotted cloth draped over the top of the ancestor, which suggests that ancestral effigy assemblages might have been stored in bundles when not being worn. The tradition of wrapping objects and effigies in tied bundles is widespread in Mesoamerica.⁸

The belts from which ancestral effigy assemblages hang are frequently composed of sky signs. Given this context, Stuart (2010:293) suggested that the celts on ancestral effigy assemblages “may have been likened in some way to lightning flashes descending from the heavens.” In other words, these effigy celts represent thunderbolts. The fact that there are usually three celts in the assemblage suggests that these celts may specifically represent the primary triad of thunderbolt gods. Ancestral effigy assemblages are ubiquitous in Maya monumental art and speak to the universal belief in the importance of the ancestors. They specifically juxtapose an ancestor with thunderbolts and highlight the importance of lightning as the spiritual power of the ancestors.⁹

Most axe heads recovered from archaeological contexts are not made from jade. However, because most of the effigy celts *are* made from jade, it has been assumed that all of the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ celts that are illustrated in Maya art were also made of jade and that the oval element of the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign is a semantic marker that references jade, the reflectiveness or shininess of jade, or the hardness of jade (Stuart 2006a, 2010; Houston et al. 2006; Stone and Zender 2011:71; Martin 2016). However, simply because an effigy is made from a precious material such as jade, it cannot automatically be concluded that

the original object was made from the same material. For example, Christ's crucifix is often rendered in gold, but his crucifixion cross was made of wood. The most famous ancestral effigy assemblages were found resting on the lid of K'inich Janaab Pakal's sarcophagus (Ruz 1973). While the ancestral portraits were executed in jade, the celts were constructed from slate. The inference is that it was the celt form that was important, not the material from which it was made. The primary context of the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ celt axe in Maya art is as the thunderbolt axe of the Chahks. This implies that the semantic value of the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign rests in the lightning nature of this axe.

While early interpretations of the semantic value of the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign focused on the mirror-like reflectiveness of a polished stone celt, information gleaned from the Popol Vuh narrative and ethnographic sources provides evidence that suggests its semantic value is directly related to the luminous quality of lightning rather than the shiny surface of polished stone or as a marker for jade. The Popol Vuh story begins with a description of the place of duality before the earth and human beings were created (Christenson 2007:67–69). It is described as a great pool of tranquil water existing in darkness. Within this water resided the creator grandparents Xpiyacoc and Xmucane who were great sages, great possessors of knowledge, and the embodiment of complementary opposition (duality). The creator grandparents were joined by the three thunderbolt gods from the sky known as Heart of Sky, and together they envisioned a world inhabited by human beings who would honor them with offerings. Following this collaborative consultation, they formed the earth and created the first human beings. The creator grandparents are described within the waters of the place of duality as luminous beings wrapped in iridescent quetzal (green) and cotinga (blue) feathers. The adjective used to describe their luminous quality is *zaketoh*, which is defined as “the brightness that enters through cracks” (Christenson 2007:68). In the K'iche' region, diviners are thought to have a soul that allows them to interpret messages from the gods (Tedlock 1992:53). This soul takes the form of sheet lightning in their blood. Sheet lightning refers to lightning reflected in clouds that appears as a silent flash of luminosity rather than a thunderous bolt. It is this luminous quality of sheet lightning that the creator grandparents possessed.

The generative power of lightning is reflected in the Tz'utujil belief that when thunderbolts strike the earth, they “charge the earth with life-giving powers so that whatever is buried within it can rise from the dead” (Christenson 2001:75). In the highland creation stories, the corn seed used to create the flesh of the first humans was struck by a thunderbolt hurled by a thunderbolt god (see Bassie-Sweet 2008:8 for an overview of these myths). In a K'iche' origins myth,

a red dwarf thunderbolt god strikes lightning into the blood of the K'iche' by hitting them on their bodies with his stone axe (Tedlock 1992:147–148). This lightning in the blood is what allows them to communicate with the gods. In light of these fundamental indigenous beliefs regarding lightning and given the primary context of the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign as the thunderbolt axe of the Chahk deities, I suggest that the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign was used as a semantic marker for the luminous quality of lightning. In addition, the sign also likely refers to the generative power of lightning and that of the creator deities. Dual portraits of the lowland creator grandparents known as Itzamnaaj and Ix Chel are rare, but on the vessel K₅₀₁ they are both featured with T₂₄ signs marking their bodies. The avian manifestation of Itzamnaaj also often has T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ signs on its body.

There are a few depictions of trees in Maya art in which the gourd-like fruit hanging from the trunk of the tree looks like the T₂₄ sign (see K₁₂₂₆, K₁₂₄₇, K₄₅₄₆). The T₂₄ sign also appears in a variety of hieroglyphic contexts that suggest it might represent the word *hut* “fruit, seed, face” or *win* “eye, face, surface” (Houston and Stuart 1998:82; Carrasco 2004; Stuart 2005b:67; Stone and Zender 2011; Mora Marin 2012). These readings fail to account for the fact that the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign is a pictograph of an axe head and that its primary context is as the thunderbolt axe of the Chahk deities. David Stuart (2010) recently proposed a possible reading for the T₂₄ sign as *lem*, which has the meaning of bright, shiny, flashing in Cholan languages (Kaufman and Norman 1984:124). A colonial Ch'olti' dictionary defines *v lem chabac* as the flash of a thunderbolt (Robertson et al. 2010:344), while the contemporary Yucatec Maya refer to the thunderbolt machete of the Chahks (a modern version of a flint axe) as *le-lem* “flash” (Thompson 1970:254). Stephen Houston and Simon Martin (2012) presented a number of cases where the glyph used to represent a generic word is a mythical prototype. Given that the most intense flash of light in nature is a lightning flash, it is logical that the word *lem* “flash” would be represented by the Chahk deities' axe.

A review of some of the contexts of the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign suggests that Stuart's *lem* “flash” reading is very appropriate and that it specifically refers to a lightning flash. As an example, the logographic T₅₆₁ *chan* “sky” sign is typically composed of crossed bands and avian wing-like elements (Stone and Zender 2011:149). However, some variations of the T₅₆₁ sign incorporate the T₂₄ sign as an infix. On the pedestal of Copán Stela N, the sky glyph in the nominal phrase of the Copán ruler K'ak Joplaj Chan K'awiil is represented by a head variant of the sky glyph with a T₂₄ sign infixed on the cheek. The sky is not made of jade and it is not hard, reflective, or shiny; but it frequently flashes

with luminous thunderbolts. The Palenque Temple XIX platform states that the accession of the deity GI that was overseen by the creator grandfather Itzamnaaj occurred at a location composed of a T₂₄ sign and a *chan* “sky” sign (Stuart 2005b:67). It seems highly appropriate that the accession of this thunderbolt deity would occur in the context of a lightning-filled sky. Furthermore, the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign is one of the most common signs found in “sky bands,” which are bands of glyphs that represent celestial pathways across the sky or the horizon borders of the quadrilateral world (Carlson and Landis 1985). In addition to T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ signs and sky signs, the glyphs in sky bands often include complementary opposites found in other metaphorical expressions, such as sun and moon or sun and night or star and moon. The famous niche scenes on Piedras Negras Stela 6 and Stela 11 that frame the seated ruler are formed by sky bands that include the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign. On Piedras Negras Stela 25, alternating sky signs and T₁₀₁₇ signs form the sky band of the niche, while the sides of the niche on Stela 14 are simply formed by oversized T₁₀₁₇ signs. The obvious conclusion is that T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ signs function as flashes of lightning in these celestial contexts.

A direct association of the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign with Chahk deities is seen on a number of portrait glyphs of the thunderbolt deity GI where he is shown with a T₂₄ sign over his ear rather than his typical shell earring. In a similar fashion, portrait glyphs representing the lightning deity Yopaat have T₂₄ signs on his arm, while the thunderbolt K’awiil and other Chahk deities have signs on their arms and legs, indicating their luminous nature. The head of the thunderbolt serpent that emanates from K’awiil’s leg is also often marked with T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ signs. The forehead of K’awiil is often infixed with the T₂₄ sign and the T₁₂₂ *k’ak’* “fire” sign (see below for a discussion of fire signs). The diagnostic trait of the Central Mexican god Tezcatlipoca (smoking mirror) is a circular black mirror with smoke emanating from it that is worn either in his headdress or replacing one of his feet. The initial interpretation that the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign represented a mirror was based on Michael Coe’s (1973) contention that Tezcatlipoca and K’awiil were parallel deities. Given that T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ is not a mirror and that K’awiil is a thunderbolt axe and not a mirror, it seems rather obvious that K’awiil’s forehead and body are infixed with the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign as a reference to his luminosity.

There is a specific Chahk deity named in a number of scenes as Yax Ha’al Chahk “first (or blue-green) rain Chahk,” who was likely identified with the first rains of the planting season and the dramatic thunderstorms at that time of year (Coe 1973:98, 1978:34; Robicsek and Hales 1981; Spero 1991:191–192; Taube 1992a:19; Martin 2002; Lacadena 2004:93). The anthropomorphic body

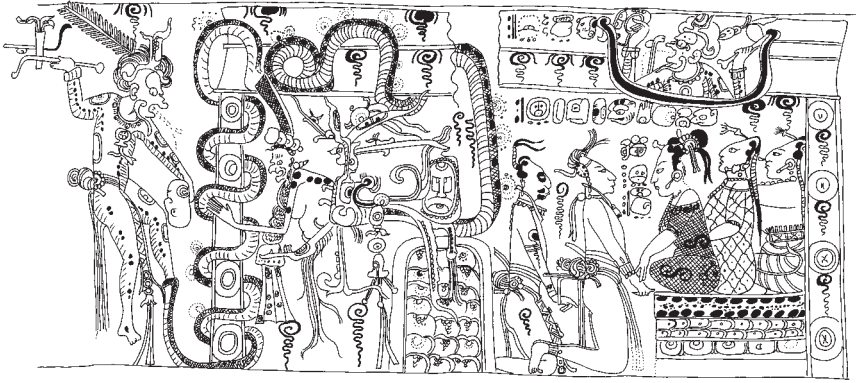


FIGURE 1.14. K2772 (after Justin Kerr)

of Yax Ha'al Chahk is often marked with the T₂₄ sign and serpent scales that emphasize his connection with lightning (see K2208, K2772, K3201, K4011, K4013, K8608) (figure 1.12). On K2772, Yax Ha'al Chahk's left leg turns into a thunderbolt serpent in a manner similar to the thunderbolt leg of K'awiil, and the head of the serpent is marked with T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ signs (figure 1.14). Yax Ha'al Chahk most frequently carries an axe with a T₂₄ celt head and a stone manoplas (Taube and Zender 2009). His arm is often depicted drawn back behind his body, ready to throw the axe or to strike something with it. In other cases, the axe is shown over his head in the forward motion of the throw or strike. The manoplas is held in his other hand and is always positioned in front of him. In Mesoamerica, manoplas were stone objects often used to deflect blows and were referred to as shields (Taube and Zender 2009:180). Yax Ha'al Chahk's axe and manoplas represent offensive and defensive weapons, respectively. In some examples, Yax Ha'al Chahk's manoplas is marked with the T₁₀₁₇ sign, the personified form of T₂₄. The implication is that both his axe and his manoplas have the luminous quality of lightning and contain the power of lightning.

A series of Classic period vessels illustrate an episode from a mythological story in which a naked infant anthropomorphic deity with jaguar characteristics is flanked by Yax Ha'al Chahk and a skeletal god (K521, K1003, K1152, K1199, K1370, K1644, K1768, K1815, K1973, K3201, K4011, K4013, K4056, K4385). Some examples of this interaction specify the location by placing the baby jaguar deity on top of or above the snout of a zoomorphic motif representing a *witz* "mountain" that is surrounded by water. The snout of the zoomorphic *witz* is personified with a T₁₀₁₇ face, such as on K4013 (figure 1.11).¹⁰ Many of

the zoomorphic *witz* signs include the T₂₄ sign as seen the walls of Río Azul Tomb 6 and Tomb 25 (Adams 1999:figs. 3.7, 3.39). Even the logographic *witz* glyph is occasionally prefixed with a T₂₄ sign. As noted above, the quintessential *witz* mountain was struck by a thunderbolt, so it should not be surprising that mountain motifs incorporate this sign. Furthermore, the primary habitat of Chahk deities on the surface of the earth is mountains.

THE LIGHTNING LUMINOSITY OF MAYA LORDS

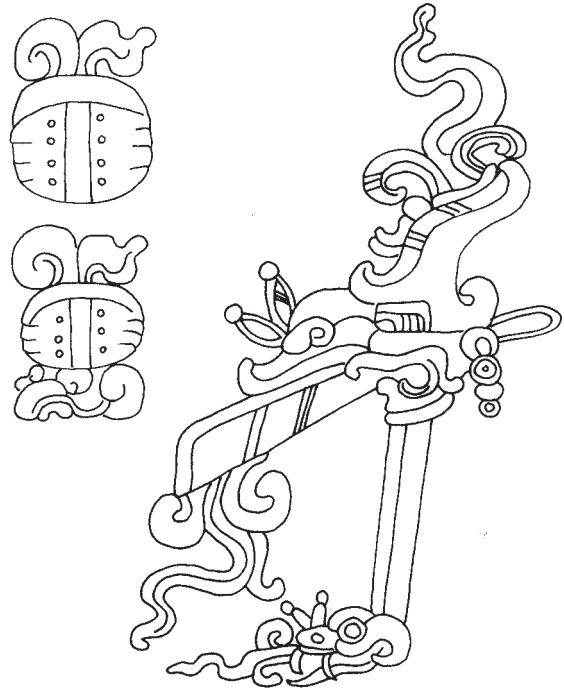
The primary contexts of the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign as the lightning axe of the Chahk deities and as an element of the sky demonstrate that it refers to lightning and specifically to the intense light of the lightning flash, whether in the form of a thunderbolt or sheet lightning. One of the most common occurrences of the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign is on the loincloth apron of Maya lords (Proskouriakoff 1950:figs. 24–26). The vast majority of these loincloths illustrate the T₁₀₁₇ head variant with the face looking directly at the viewer. The sign is used in this context at virtually every site in the Maya realm and must reference some fundamental quality shared by all these Maya rulers. I suggest that this is a direct reference to the luminous nature of the king and his role as the embodiment of lightning.

In addition to this costume element, the *sak huun* headdress of rulership also incorporates the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign. As noted in the introduction, the *sak huun* headdress of an Ajaw is a bark paper headdress that replicates the headdress of the deity One Ajaw. Accession statements frequently express the term *sak huun* by using the personified form of paper for the word *huun*. This personified paper is composed of an avian form with foliage growing from its head in reference to the fig tree from which paper was made (Stuart 2012).¹¹ Depictions of the *sak huun* headdress are often simple bark headbands, but they frequently also include a jewel element in the form of the *huun* god, such as the headdress on the Palenque Temple XIX platform (figure 0.12).¹² In addition, effigies of the *huun* god are often held by various rulers and their family members, as seen on the Dumbarton Oaks Tablet, the Tablet of the Cross, and the Tablet of the Foliated Cross; these, too, are marked with T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ signs. It seems apparent that the luminosity of lightning was an essential feature of this headdress.

THE SPARK AND FIRE OF LIGHTNING

In addition to intense light, thunderbolts are a natural source of fire. When a thunderbolt hits a tree or other combustible material, the electrical charge

FIGURE 1.15. a. T122 sign
 k'ak' fire sign, T1035 k'ak' fire
 sign, b. Early Classic axe



often causes smoke, sparks, and fire. In Maya art, smoke (*b'utz'*) and fire (*k'ak'*) can be depicted in a realistic way or by a stylized scroll (T122) that has been characterized as a swirl of smoke and a tongue of flame (Stone and Zender 2011:157). The antiquity of depicting fire as both smoke and flame is seen in the Preclassic San Bartolo West Mural, where offering fires are illustrated as black and red swirls (Taube et al. 2010:color insert). In hieroglyphic writing, the full form of the smoke-flame scroll is T122:563 and its personified form is T1035 (figure 1.15a). The T122 smoke-flame scroll is merely the *pars pro toto* representation for these signs, and in most contexts, the T122 sign represents the word *k'ak'* “fire” (Stuart 1998b).¹³

Some examples of Chahk's axe emphasize its fiery nature. For instance, an Early Classic version of Chahk's thunderbolt axe is featured on K1285 (figure 1.15b). The axe head has been personified as a long-lipped deity with the axe blade emerging from its mouth and fire scrolls emanating from its head. The end of the axe blade is also decorated with fire scrolls. The handle of the axe takes the form of a serpent that has fire scrolls discharging from its mouth. The names of some Classic period kings reflect Chahk's association with fire,

such as the Naranjo rulers K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak (Chahk who burns the sky with fire) and K'ak'Yipiyaj Chan Chahk (Chahk who fills the sky with fire) (Martin and Grube 2008).

As noted, when someone dons the costume or wears a headdress of a deity, they become that deity. In many instances, the headdress elements literally spell the name of the deity as opposed to being a portrait of a deity. Such is the case with the Chahk deity headdresses worn by Lady Tz'akbu Ajaw and K'inich Janaab Pakal I, who flank their son K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II on the Dumbarton Oaks Tablet (figure 1.9). The glyphic names for these two Chahk deities are positioned above their heads like headdresses. The name of Lady Tz'akbu Ajaw's Chahk is 6 Tok K'ak', while K'inich Janaab Pakal I's deity is called 6 Yuh K'ak'.¹⁴ What is interesting about these two depictions is that the hair of each Chahk is tied into a lock that mimics the shape of the *k'ak'* fire scroll in the nominal phrase adjacent to it. This appears to be a visual device used to place emphasis on the fiery nature of these two Chahk deities.¹⁵

The T₄₄ sign is composed of scrolls decorated with dots that represent the word *tok* "to burn." Many serpents including the serpent leg of K'awiil are decorated with T₄₄ *tok* signs. Andrea Stone and Marc Zender (2011:159) interpreted the sign as "a type of flashing or sparking fire associated with lightning." The T₄₄ sign's close association with Chahk deities is seen in the portraits of the Chahk deity named Yopaat, whose diagnostic trait is a *tok* sign on his head and a round stone or manoplas weapon held in a throwing or striking pose over his head (Taube and Zender 2009:195) (figure 1.16). This is in contrast to Yax Ha'al Chahk, who wields the thunderbolt axe over his head and holds the stone manoplas in front of him. The interpretation of the T₄₄ sign as sparks suggests that Yopaat was specifically identified with the smoldering material of a fire started from a lightning strike. The T₄₄ sign may also be an auditory reference to the crackle of a fire that is accompanied by sparks. The stone weapons of Yopaat and Yax Ha'al Chahk would make such a cracking sound when struck. In the context of serpents, the T₄₄ *tok* sign would indicate these serpents' identification with the fire of the thunderbolt.

THE TORCH OF THE CHAHK DEITIES

While the blade of Yax Ha'al Chahk's axe is most often illustrated as a T₂₄ celt, it is also depicted as flint with fire scrolls emanating from it. On vessels K2208 and K2772, the head of his axe takes the form of a burning torch (figure 1.14). This substitution between torches and stone axe heads indicates that the Maya thought thunderbolts could take the form of either object. The use of a



FIGURE 1.16. *T44* tok “spark” sign on Yopaat portrait glyph

torch in the context of Chahk’s axe emphasizes his association with the fire of the thunderbolt.

The identification of the thunderbolt axe with a torch is most readily seen in illustrations of the K’awiil scepter, where the body of the deity K’awiil is presented as the personification of the axe handle. K’awiil’s forehead is occasionally perforated not with a T₂₄ celt or a flint axe but with a flaming torch (for example, K₇₁₉, K₁₀₈₁, K₁₁₉₈, K₁₈₁₃, K₁₈₈₂, K₃₇₁₆, K₄₁₁₄, K₅₂₃₀). Some illustrations of K’awiil show a fire scroll emanating from the axe blade or torch in reference to the smoke and flame caused by a lightning strike. Effigies of K’awiil also have torch and fire elements. On the Dumbarton Oaks Tablet from the Palenque region, Lady Tz’akbu Ajaw holds a K’awiil effigy whose forehead, arm, and leg are marked with the T₂₄ sign and whose right foot is portrayed as a serpent. His forehead element is a torch, with the fire scroll representing its fire (figure 1.9).

CORN DEITIES AND THE TORCH OF K’AWIIL

Karl Taube (1985, 1992a) identified two types of corn gods he nicknamed the Tonsured Maize God and Foliated Maize God that represented different stages in the development of the corn plant. The torch form of K’awiil is linked to both of these deities.

The Maya metaphorically refer to corn seed as bone (see Bassie-Sweet 2008 for an overview). It is thought that the seed must be ritually “heated” through a series of ceremonies before and after it is planted for it to germinate. When a corn plant approaches its maximum height, a tassel appears at the top of its stock, and shortly thereafter an ear emerges from a node on its side. The ear produces silk, and the pollen from the tassel falls on the silk, fertilizing the ear. When the kernels are fully formed but still tender, the ear is called *ajan* (Kaufman 2003:1159). This green corn is considered a delicacy, and the Maya harvest a small amount of *ajan* ears for immediate consumption. A common method of cooking *ajan* is to roast it, hence the term *roasting corn*. During the next stage of growth, the ear of corn undergoes internal ripening and hardening. This mature corn is called *ixim* (Kaufman 2003:1034). During the harvesting of *ixim*, the farmer selects and safely stores a number of large ears so the seeds can be used for planting the next year’s crop. These seed *ixim* are chosen from plants that have produced only one ear of corn because such plants produce better-quality seed.

The nominal phrase of the Tonsured Maize God appears in a number of pottery scenes. Although the second component of his name has not been deciphered, the first part is composed of the number one and a portrait glyph of the Tonsured Maize God. Phonetic complements indicate that the portrait glyph represents the term *ixim* (Stuart 2005b:182). As noted by Taube and others, One Ixim was identified with the male quetzal whose brilliant green tail feathers were equated with corn foliage. One of the diagnostic traits of One Ixim is a jade flower on his forehead that is a metaphorical representation of the tassel of the corn plant. He is frequently illustrated wearing a jade-decorated skirt that represents the surface of the world covered in cornfields. One Ixim represented not just a mature corn plant but the quintessential plant that produced the seed corn for future plantings.¹⁶

Despite the fact that the portrait of the male deity One Ixim was used to represent the word *ixim*, the vast majority of ethnographic documentation indicates that the Maya identify corn seed as female (Bassie-Sweet 2002, 2008). This discrepancy can be reconciled if the concept of complementary opposition is taken into account. In Maya thought, a human is both male and female. The right side is male while the left is female. However, to become a complete person, adults must be married. Husbands and wives complement each other, just as the right side complements the left. A mature corn plant is incomplete without its female ear of corn, just as a man is incomplete without his wife. One Ixim’s parallel in the Popol Vuh narrative is the deity One Hunahpu, whose first wife, Lady Bone Water, was likely a corn goddess (the

Maya metaphorically refer to corn seed as bone). I have argued that the goddess Ixik was parallel to Lady Bone Water and that she was the first wife of One Ixim. Ixik's diagnostic trait is long, flowing hair that surely represents the darkened silk of the maturing ear. The portrait glyph of Ixik is prefixed to the names of royal women, and she was their role model.¹⁷

In addition to being identified with the mature corn plant, One Ixim—One Hunahpu was also associated with the gourds of the calabash tree (*Crescentia cujete*) that were hollowed out and used as containers for corn-based drinks and gruel. In Classic period imagery, One Ixim has a semi-bald, gourd-shaped head. The aftermath of One Hunahpu's sacrificial death explains why One Ixim has a gourd-shaped head. When One Hunahpu and his brother were sacrificed by the underworld lords, One Hunahpu's decapitated head was placed in a tree and it magically changed into a gourd, creating the first calabash tree:

The head of One Hunahpu was cut off, while the rest of his body was buried with his younger brother. "Place his head in the midst of the tree that is planted by the road," said One Death and Seven Death. Now when they went to place his head in the midst of the tree, the tree bore fruit. The tree had never borne fruit until the head of One Hunahpu was placed in it. This was the tree that we now call the calabash. It is said to be the head of One Hunahpu. (Christenson 2007:125–126)

The diversity of One Ixim's traits conforms to other Maya gods that had multiple qualities and identifications.

In contrast to the gourd-headed One Ixim, the Foliated Maize God has maize foliage growing from his head. He appears as the god of the number eight (*waxak*), and in other contexts his portrait glyph represents the word *ajan* (Zender 2014). In the codices, Ajan has the designation God E. While it is likely that Ajan was the youthful manifestation of One Ixim (Taube 1992b; Zender 2014), the Hero Twin sons of One Hunahpu were also identified with this young stage of corn, and there is considerable evidence that twin ears of corn were thought to be manifestations of them (Bassie-Sweet 2008:20–22, 115, 204–206, 222). The Popol Vuh narrative describes how the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque were summoned to the underworld by the death lords, but before they left, they each planted an ear of *ajan* in the center of their house to act as omens of their fate:

"SURELY we must go, our grandmother. But first we will advise you. This is the sign of our word that we will leave behind. Each of us shall first plant an ear of unripe maize in the center of the house. If they dry up, this is a sign of

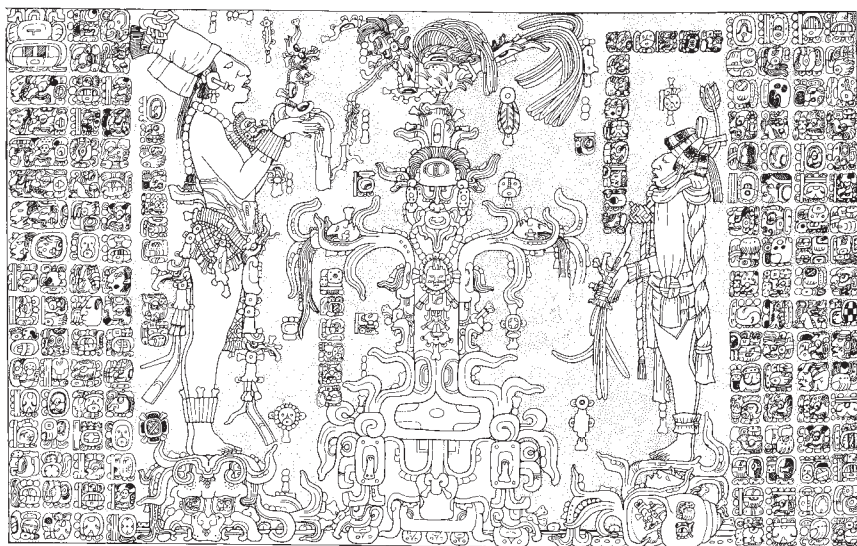


FIGURE 1.17. *Palenque Tablet of the Foliated Cross (drawing by Linda Schele)*

our death. ‘They have died,’ you will say when they dry up. If then they sprout again, ‘They are alive,’ you will say, our grandmother and our mother. This is the sign of our word that is left with you,” they said. Thus Hunahpu planted one, and Xbalanque planted another in the house. They did not plant them in the mountains or in fertile ground. It was merely in dry ground, in the middle of the interior of their home, that they planted them. Then they left, each with his blowgun, and descended to Xibalba. (Christenson 2007:160)

Xmucane, the grandmother of the Hero Twins, deified these twin *ajan* ears by burning incense and praying to them. A corn plant typically has one ear of corn, but, rarely, some plants produce twin ears. Twin ears are believed to be particularly powerful, and they are placed with stored corn and with seed corn to protect its spirit. Such corn is often stored in the rafters of the house. The twin *ajan* ears planted by the Hero Twins in their house were the role model for this custom.

The sanctuary wall panel in the Palenque Temple of the Foliated Cross illustrates a deified corn plant with twin ears of corn (figure 1.17). The tassel and the stalk are represented by the T1017 sign (the personified form of lightning luminosity). The two nodes on the sides of the stalk are also represented by T1017 signs, and the leaves that grow from these nodes enclose an ear of

corn. The twin ears of corn are represented by youthful male heads that surely represent the Hero Twins. This twin-eared corn plant is infused with the spirit of lightning.

In some rare examples, One Ixim is pictured with the torch of K'awiil in his forehead, such as on vessels K5126 and K8714 and a vessel found at the Alta Verapaz site of Seacal (Smith 1952:fig. 25) (figure 1.18).¹⁸ In the latter example, the K'awiil version of One Ixim is paired with the standard form of One Ixim, who is pictured in his typical dance pose. On the Temple of the Inscriptions sarcophagus lid, the deceased K'inich Janaab Pakal I is illustrated in the process of his apotheosis in the guise of One Ixim, and he has the torch of K'awiil protruding from his forehead (figure 1.19). In a similar fashion, Copán Stela 11 depicts the ruler Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat dressed as One Ixim with K'awiil's torch jutting from his forehead.

The name Ajan K'awiil appears in a number of limited contexts (Boot 2009:13; Tokovinine 2012). Alexandre Tokovinine and others equate this name with the portraits of K'inich Janaab Pakal I and Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat. Lacanhá Panel 1 provides information related to the identity of the deity Ajan K'awiil and indicates that the name refers to the torch form of K'awiil (figure 1.20). In this scene, a lord is portrayed conjuring K'awiil deities from a double-headed ceremonial bar. A burning torch is embedded in the forehead of each K'awiil, and corn foliage grows from their earring assemblages. The narrative begins on the left side with the 9.15.15.0.0 (AD 746) Period Ending ceremony conducted by a lord named Aj Sak Teles. His name phrase includes Anaab and Ch'ajom titles as well as the statement that he was the Sajal of a ruler Knot-eye Jaguar. Knot-eye Jaguar is named as a lord of Bonampak and Lacanhá, but his royal residence was the site nicknamed Tied-Hair. The location of Tied-Hair has not been identified, but possibilities are El Cedro, Nuevo Jalisco, or Plan de Ayutla to the north and northwest of Lacanhá-Bonampak (Biró 2005; Tokovinine 2012:66). The name phrase of Aj Sak Teles ends with a parentage statement that indicates that his father had also been an Anaab, Ch'ajom, and Sajal and that his mother, too, was a Sajal. The time frame of the story then backs up to AD 743 and recounts the accession of Aj Sak Teles into the office of Sajal. His nominal phrase repeats his Anaab and Ch'ajom titles and adds that he was from Lacanhá. The narrative thus provides key background information that explains why Aj Sak Teles was qualified to perform the Period Ending ceremony for Lacanhá.

The end of Aj Sak Teles's nominal phrase in the Period Ending statement is strategically placed to frame the body of the lord holding the double-headed ceremonial bar (D6-J4). By reading this text, the viewer is drawn from the



FIGURE I.18. *Seacal vessel*

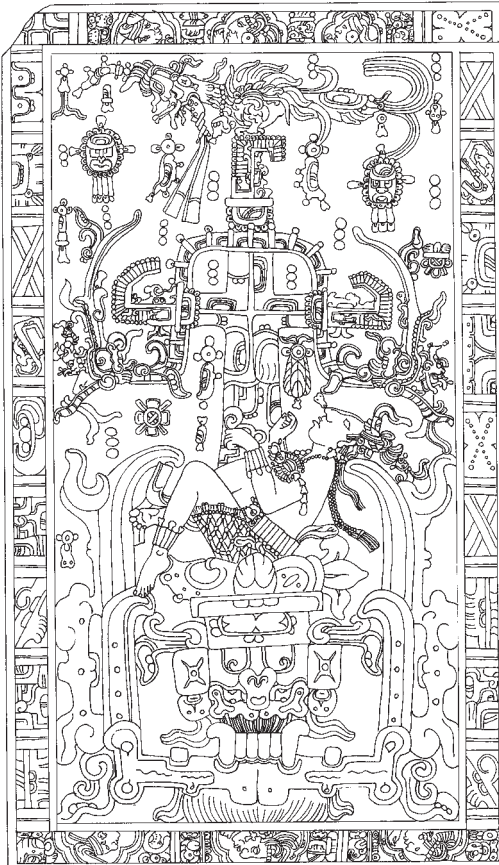


FIGURE I.19. *Temple of
Inscriptions sarcophagus lid
(drawing after Merle Greene
Robertson)*

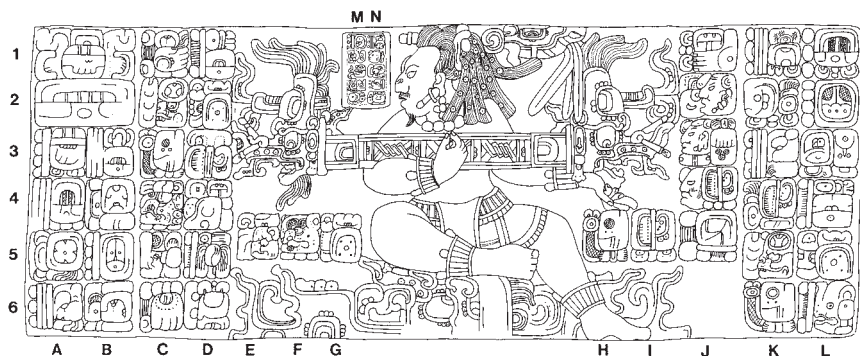


FIGURE 1.20. *Lacanha Panel 1 (drawing after David Stuart)*

left side of the monument across the body of the lord to the right side. This common framing convention indicates that the scene represents the Period Ending and that the lord is Aj Sak Teles (Bassie-Sweet 1991:168–169). The conjuring of deities from a double-headed ceremonial bar or serpent is a very frequently depicted Period Ending action.

An incised text within a scene invariably provides some kind of background information. There is a small glyph block of incised text positioned in front of Aj Sak Teles's face. It recounts the birth of Ajan K'awiil on 13 Men 18 Yaxk'in and indicates that this birth took place at a site known from other inscriptions to be a mythological location (Stuart and Houston 1994:72–77). It is not possible to unequivocally assign a Long Count position for this calendar round date because it likely refers to mythological time.¹⁹ The logical connection between the incised text and Aj Sak Teles conjuring the torch form of K'awiil on the Period Ending is that his action was the reenactment of the mythological birth of Ajan K'awiil. The corn foliage growing from the ear assemblage of the left K'awiil overlaps the incised glyph block, suggesting that the incised text does in fact relate to the K'awiil deities Aj Sak Teles is conjuring. I conclude from this juxtapositioning that the name Ajan K'awiil specifically refers to the torch form of K'awiil.

What can be concluded from this evidence is that when One Ixim is illustrated wearing the torch of K'awiil, he has taken on the identity of Ajan K'awiil, that is, the torch form of K'awiil. The depictions of the apotheosis of K'inich Janaab Pakal I and Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat where they are pictured in the guise of both One Ixim and Ajan K'awiil suggest that the heat of lightning played an important role in the regeneration of One Ixim. The

agricultural connection between corn and lightning is obvious. The first rains of the planting season are accompanied by intense thunderstorms. There is also a belief that the thunderbolts that hit the milpas infuse the earth with life and germinate the seed.

ITZAMNAAJ K'AWIIL AND FIERY THUNDERBOLTS

The creator grandfather (One Ixim's father) was also identified with K'awiil. In the Postclassic period, the Maya made offerings to a deity named Itzamnaaj K'awiil (Tozzer 1941:143). This aspect of Itzamnaaj is also mentioned in the Chilam Balam of Chumayel (Roys 1933:153, 168) and by Andrés Avendaño y Loyola (1987) in his account of the Postclassic Petén Itzá Maya. Classic Maya rulers frequently incorporated the names of deities in their nominal phrases, and kings from Dos Pilas and Naranjo were named after Itzamnaaj K'awiil (Martin and Grube 2008). There are numerous examples in pottery scenes where K'awiil or Yax Ha'al Chahk is illustrated with his leg extending into a sinuous thunderbolt serpent with an open mouth, and some examples depict the creator grandfather Itzamnaaj emerging from the mouth (figure 1.14). On vessels K719, K1006, K1198, and K4013, Itzamnaaj materializes from the serpent wearing K'awiil's burning torch in his forehead. These portraits, in effect, represent the name Itzamnaaj K'awiil. Itzamnaaj's association with thunder is well-known, and it has been suggested that in these K'awiil contexts, Itzamnaaj represents the booming thunder of the lightning bolt strike (Bassie-Sweet 2002, 2008:146; Stone and Zender 2011:159). The torch attribute of Itzamnaaj K'awiil suggests that this aspect of the creator grandfather had a fire association as well.

The role of fire as a transformation agent is well-known. On the most fundamental level, fire is used to transform the weeds and debris of the cornfield into a fertile ground for planting corn, while grains of dried corn must be boiled over the household fire to be turned into food or drink. The Popol Vuh indicates that after the formation of the surface of the earth, the creator grandparents established a household for themselves at its center. This terrestrial place of duality was the principal role model for human households. The hearth fire with its three stones was the spiritual center of the house. Elderly creator deities identified with fire and with the household hearth are found across Mesoamerica (Miller and Taube 1993:87). Given the creator grandfather's identification as the ultimate owner of the hearth fire, it is reasonable to suggest that Itzamnaaj was thought to be not only the thunder of the lightning bolt but the source of its fire (Bassie-Sweet 2008:65–67).

TORCHES AS WEAPONS OF DESTRUCTION

The Chahk deities and other supernaturals are illustrated in the codices holding burning torches that have been interpreted as metaphorical references to drought (Thompson 1972). There is also evidence for the use of torches as weapons. The word *taj* (Proto-Mayan **tyaj*) (Kaufman 2003:1090) refers to both torches and pine because the combustible material used in most ancient Maya torches was pine. The resin in pine burns well, even in moist conditions. In hieroglyphic writing, a flaming bundle of pine kindling was used to represent the word *taj* “torch.” Without a handle, such a torch was designed to be disposable. More permanent torches were created by placing pine splinters into a narrow ceramic cylinder closed on the bottom and open on top. Illustrations of torches and archaeologically recovered examples indicate that ceramic torch holders had a flared rim to contain the falling embers and protect the hand. Once the torch was lit, additional splinters could be added to the cylinder to keep the torch burning or increase its brightness. A ceramic torch could be handheld or inserted into a wall niche or placed in the ground. Such a torch also allowed for the safe transportation of fire from one location to another. In the Wayeb–New Year ceremonies performed by the Postclassic Lacandón Ch’ol, all the fires of the community were extinguished at the beginning of the Wayeb period, and new fire was provided by the community leaders from the temple fire at the end of the period (Tozzer 1912). One assumes that this new fire was transported to each household by torch. During the Postclassic period, the Maya performed fire ceremonies linked to agricultural success that were timed according to the 260-day *tzolk’in* calendar (Long 1923).

Fire was an important weapon in Mesoamerican warfare, and the burning of towns and crops is well documented. In the Maya region, the typical thatched-roof homes were easily destroyed by fire. In the Madrid Codex (page 86c), a warrior deity stands before a thatched house. In his right hand, he holds a flint spear that he thrusts in a downward motion toward the house while he sets the house on fire with a torch he holds in his left hand. In Maya art, two sequential actions are often illustrated in a stylized manner, with each hand of the protagonist representing a separate action. For example, one of the mythological Wayeb rituals illustrated in the Dresden Codex depicts the deity K’awiil making offerings to a tree effigy representing the Bakab god (figure 1.21). K’awiil scatters incense into a burning incensario with his left hand while holding up a headless turkey in his right hand. Bishop Diego de Landa’s description of Postclassic Wayeb rituals indicates that a priest took on the role of K’awiil and performed these same actions during historical reenactments (Tozzer 1941:140). Landa specifically stated that the priest burned incense in



FIGURE 1.21. *Dresden Codex page 26 (drawing after J. Antonio Villacorta and Carlos A. Villacorta)*

the Bakab's honor and then cut off the head of the turkey and made an offering of the head to the Bakab. The Dresden Codex scene is thus not a snapshot of one moment frozen in time but a stylized depiction of the two essential actions of the ceremony: the burning of incense and the beheading of the turkey (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017).²⁰ Each hand action of K'awiil, in effect, functions like a separate verb.²¹ The action of the Madrid Codex warrior deity is a powerful visual metonym representing the actions of conquest (the spear) and destruction (the torch).

THE TOK'-PAKAL

While scenes of Maya warfare illustrate many types of offensive weapons, they also depicted defensive weapons in the form of shields. The pairing of a flint weapon and a shield is common in Maya monumental art. Numerous stelae illustrate a lord holding a GII axe scepter or other type of flint weapon in one hand and a shield in the other. In her seminal study of Maya sculpture, Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1950) cataloged a variety of shields of different shapes

and sizes that are decorated with various deity portraits and motifs. Some depictions of war shields indicate that they were held by straps across the back (K4651), but many shields are illustrated facing the viewer, which replicates what a foe would have seen during an attack. The generic term for shield is *pakal*, and the logograph representing this word is a depiction of a round shield with a stylized face. Regrettably, J. Eric S. Thompson (1962) did not assign one of his glyph catalog numbers to this logograph, but William Ringle and Thomas C. Smith-Stark (1996) assigned it the designation T932. Some elite incorporate the term *pakal* in their name phrases, such as the Yaxchilán queen Lady Pakal and the Palenque lords Janaab Pakal, K'inich Janaab Pakal I, and U Pakal K'inich.

In 1934, Jean Genet (2001) identified glyphs composed of a flint and shield in the three Postclassic Maya codices that he argued represented the concept of war, based on analogies with Central Mexican metonyms that contrast arrow and shield.²² A metonym is a term in which two typical members of a class are juxtaposed to stand for the whole domain (Hull 1993, 2003; Hopkins 1996; Knowlton 2012). They are often complementary or contrasting opposites. The phrase arrow/shield is a metonym that refers to all weapons. Classic period forms of the flint/shield metonym that are composed of *tok'* "flint" and *pakal* "shield" signs have been noted (Houston 1983). *Tok'-pakal* contrasts an offensive weapon (flint) with a defensive weapon (shield) and at the same time refers to all types of shields and weapons, including those made of obsidian and other types of stones.

There is also an actual object composed of a flint and shield that is illustrated in Maya art. Such objects were acquired by Palenque lords, such as K'inich Kan Bahlam II as depicted on the Tablet of the Sun, K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II on the Palace Tablet, and K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III on the Tablet of the Slaves (see figures 2.13, 5.1, 5.9). K'inich Kan Bahlam II and K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II received a *tok'-pakal* during pre-accession ceremonies when they were ages six and nine, respectively, while the ruler K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb received one on the day of his accession at age forty-four (Bassie-Sweet 1991:207, 1996:228; Bassie-Sweet et al. 2012; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). The depiction of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II's *tok'-pakal* on the Palace Tablet includes a cloth the object was apparently wrapped in when not on display.

Some hieroglyphic narratives refer to war events that involved the "throwing down" of a lord's *tok'-pakal*. There has been some discussion about whether this action was a metaphorical reference to the defeat of the lord and his troops or whether the *tok'-pakal* object was actually carried into battle and subject to capture or destruction by the opposition (Freidel et al.

1993:293–336; Stuart 1995:311–313). The concepts are not necessarily mutually exclusive. What is pertinent to this discussion is the notion that success in Mesoamerican warfare was linked not only to the spiritual strength of the combatant but also to that of his weapons. In downing an enemy's *tok'-pakal*, the winning forces were symbolically defeating the supernatural power of their opponents and their opponents' weapons. The fact that the offensive weapon used in this metonym was thought to contain the spirit and power of the thunderbolt gods implies that the victor was able to better harness this force than was his foe. It also suggests that thunderbolts were thought to be the ultimate weapon.

There is evidence that some *tok'-pakal* objects were heirloom objects associated with particular ancestors. At Yaxchilán, the narratives of Structure 44 recount the military exploits of Shield Jaguar III and an earlier Yaxchilán king Knot-eye Jaguar II (Tate 1992; Martin and Grube 2008). These texts indicate that Shield Jaguar III was in possession of Knot-eye Jaguar II's *tok'-pakal* at the time of his conquest. Although significantly damaged, each of the three Structure 44 lintels illustrates Shield Jaguar III with a different captive. Lintel 46 records Shield Jaguar III's capture of the lord Aj K'an Usja of Buktuun in AD 713 and the statement that Shield Jaguar III was the successor of the *tok'-pakal* of Knot-eye Jaguar II (Freidel et al. 1993:305; Stuart 1995:303; Martin and Grube 2008:123–126). Knot-eye Jaguar's *tok'-pakal* would have been at least a hundred years old at this point. The inference is that living lords drew on the spiritual power of their ancestors through the acquisition of heirloom objects.

The Lintel 45 text parallels the Lintel 46 narrative but refers to Shield Jaguar III's earlier capture in AD 681 of Aj Nik, who was a secondary lord of the La Florida king. This war event occurred eight months before Shield Jaguar III's accession. The text repeats the successor of the *tok'-pakal* phrase, but the glyph blocks that would have registered Knot-eye Jaguar II's name are regrettably eroded. Nevertheless, the parallel nature of the two caption texts makes it virtually certain that it was Knot-eye Jaguar II's *tok'-pakal* that was referenced here.

The scene on Yaxchilán Lintel 45 provides some evidence about how an ancestral *tok'-pakal* was used. Shield Jaguar III wears an ancestral effigy belt assemblage composed of a skull. The skull is juxtaposed with the text referring to the *tok'-pakal*, suggesting that this skull represents Knot-eye Jaguar II. Although Shield Jaguar III's hand is eroded, enough remains of it to indicate that he is holding his captive Aj Nik by the hair with his right hand. This is a typical gesture of capture. In his left hand, Shield Jaguar III holds a spearhead

and a flexible shield. Aj Nik kneels in submission and holds a tassel of the shield in his right hand and the end of Shield Jaguar III's garment in his left. The preferred weapon of war is a long spear, and numerous scenes depict warriors stabbing their victims with their weapons. Shield Jaguar III is not holding a spear but instead a spearhead, that is, a *tok'*. The obvious reason why the Lintel 45 narrative relates the information about Knot-eye Jaguar's *tok'-pakal* is that the scene is the aftermath of the battle when Aj Nik is submitting to the *tok'-pakal* of Knot-eye II.

The notion that lords acquired heirloom objects may explain the appearance of the ancestor K'an Joy Chitam I in the Palenque Cross Group narrative. Unlike the narratives at Yaxchilán that are contained within a single building, the Palenque narrative is found within the three temples of the Cross Group. The story begins in the Temple of the Cross and then moves in a counterclockwise direction to the Temple of the Sun and Temple of the Foliated Cross (Bassie-Sweet 1991; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). The main text of the Tablet of the Sun narrative focuses on the pre-accession events of the six-year-old K'inich Kan Bahlam II in AD 641. The left side of the scene illustrates K'inich Kan Bahlam II's acquisition of a *tok'-pakal* on this date. The main text directly links this event to a similar pre-accession event performed by K'inich Kan Bahlam II's ancestor K'an Joy Chitam I in AD 496 when that lord was five years old. There has never been a satisfactory explanation of why this particular ancestor of K'inich Kan Bahlam II was singled out in the Tablet of the Sun narrative. The reason may have been that K'inich Kan Bahlam II was acquiring K'inich K'an Joy Chitam I's *tok'-pakal*. In a similar manner, K'inich Kan Bahlam II's brother K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II is illustrated on the Palace Tablet acquiring a headdress and a *tok'-pakal* in AD 654 when he was nine years old. This narrative focuses on the headdress and indicates that it was an heirloom object (Bassie-Sweet et al. 2012; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017).

SUMMARY

In the Maya region, the annual change from the dry to the rainy season that heralds the start of the agricultural cycle is announced by distant thunder. As the wet season begins, powerful rainstorms blanket the region with dramatic displays of sheet lightning and thunderbolts. These thunderbolts, which are capable of splitting trees when they strike, are characterized by the Maya as the flint axes of their Chahk deities. The luminosity of lightning was an important quality of the creator deities, and the Maya incorporated a sign for

this property in their art in the form of the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign. Rulers and other elite members not only took on the guise of a Chahk deity but also had co-essences that took the form of lightning. Thunderbolts are a natural source of fire, and various Chahk deities were specifically identified with torches.

Lightning was a powerful force that was thought to animate deities and humans. Highland stories regarding the first creation of humans indicate that their flesh and blood were created by corn seed and water that had been struck with a bolt of lightning. The belief in the engendering qualities of lightning survives to the present in highland Maya beliefs that the souls of powerful individuals can take the form of a thunderbolt. Classic Maya lords who wear the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign on their person are declaring their affiliation with this force.

As an object representing the military power and authority of the lord, the *tok'-pakal* falls into the category of an inalienable object that has been cosmologically authenticated through its identification with the Chahk deities (Weiner 1992; Mills 2004; Kovacevich and Callaghan 2013). Such objects are well-known in Mesoamerica.

The *tok'-pakal* “flint-shield” metonym that refers to war pairs the flint of the Chahk deities with a generic sign for shield. Classic period war scenes frequently show warriors with a variety of different types of spears and shields. Although rarely seen in these battle depictions, the war shield most frequently held by rulers on public monuments is decorated with the face of the deity GIII, indicating GIII’s intimate relationship with warfare, in particular, royal warfare. It is my position that GIII was specifically identified with the flint blades used as weapons of war in contrast to the thunderbolt deity GII, who was identified with flint axes. Chapter 2 explores the nature of the deity GIII and his solar and fire qualities.

2

The Flint and Fire Deity GIII

The deity GIII was one of the hearthstone gods and one of three patron gods of Palenque. He also had numerous roles in the calendar system. He was the patron of the month *Wo* in the solar *haab* calendar (Thompson 1950). As noted, the *tzolk'in* calendar is composed of a thirteen-day cycle and a twenty-day cycle. Each day in the thirteen-day cycle was ruled by a particular god (the number gods), as was each day in the twenty-day cycle (the day lords). GIII was the god of the seventh day in the thirteen-day cycle and the day lord for the sixteenth day (*Kib*) in the twenty-day cycle. GIII was also a lunar patron god. In the lunar calendar, the lunar synodic month was grouped into periods of six lunations. Each six lunar month cycle was thought to be ruled by one of three patron gods: GIII, One *Ixim*, and a skeletal deity.

The widespread worship of GIII is demonstrated not only by his usage in the calendar system but also by the numerous portraits of him on incensarios and war shields across the Maya realm (figure 2.1). Rulers also took on the guise of GIII during battles. As noted in the introduction, *Yaxchilán Lintel 12* illustrates the ruler *Shield Jaguar IV* with four bound captives kneeling in submission at his feet (see figure 0.14). He is dressed in the guise of GIII.

GIII is depicted as an anthropomorphic deity with jaguar features and a cord used to drill fire looped over his nose (Taube 1998:441; Stuart 1998b). In Maya art, jaguars are often marked with *ak'bal* “night, darkness”



FIGURE 2.1. *War shield portrait of GIII, Palenque Tablet of the Sun*

signs to indicate their nocturnal nature, and GIII's cheek is often so marked. GIII's nominal phrase includes the adjective *k'inich* "sun-like," and in one example in the Temple of the Inscriptions narrative he is named K'inich Ajaw "sun-like lord" (middle tablet E4). This name was not exclusive to GIII but was also held by the Sun God and Itzamnaaj (Tozzer 1941:147). Based on GIII's feline and solar features, J. Eric S. Thompson (1950: 134) coined the term *Jaguar God of the Underworld*, and he speculated that GIII represented the night sun in its journey through the underworld (also see Coe 1973). Despite the fact that there is absolutely no evidence that the Maya thought the sun transformed into a jaguar after sunset, this conjecture is ingrained in the literature. How the Maya perceived the sun, its daily and annual cycle, and the relationship between the ruler and this solar force is a complex subject. This chapter is an attempt to sort through the prior assumptions and interpretations regarding these topics to arrive at a clearer understanding of the role of the deity GIII and his relationship to flint, fire, and the sun.

SOLAR MODELS AND MYTHS

For the Maya, the sun defined both space and the agricultural cycle. The solstice sun rose and set at the corners of the quadrilateral world model, and the sun hovered above its center at noon on the two annual zenith passages. The east-west axis of the quadrilateral world represented the daily path of the

sun, while the north-south axis encompassed the variation in its annual path. The colored quadrants of the world (red-east, black-west, white-north, and yellow-south) were also tied to the sun's path, with red associated with the rising sun and black with the setting sun. When the sun first enters the northern section of the sun after the late April-early May solar zenith passage in the lowlands, it is a sign that it is time to burn the cornfields and plant. The burning of the cornfields not only turns the landscape white with ash, but the sky is filled with white smoke that often obliterates the sun, hence the association of white with the north. When the sun returns to its zenith position in late August and moves into the southern sky, the corn plants begin to mature, and the green fields slowly turn to yellow.

Although the Maya directional terms *el k'in* and *och k'in* are usually translated as east and west, they literally mean "sun exits" and "sun enters," respectively, and do not carry the same connotation as English terms that are centered on cardinal directions (Hopkins and Kaufman cited in Josserand and Hopkins 1991; Bassie-Sweet 1996:195; Hopkins and Josserand 2011). *El k'in* refers to the eastern horizon from the point where the summer solstice sun rises in the northeast to the point where the winter solstice sun rises in the southeast. Likewise, *och k'in* refers to the western horizon between the setting points of the summer solstice and winter solstice suns. In Classic period hieroglyphic writing, the directional term *el k'in* is spelled using two signs: the T183 *el* "exit" verb and T544 *k'in* "sun" sign (Houston cited in Stuart 1998b). Similarly, *och k'in* is spelled with the T221 *och* "enter" verb and the T544 *k'in* "sign" sign (Stuart cited in Schele 1992; Stuart 1998b; Stuart and Stuart 2008:175).

The terms *sun exits* and *sun enters* beg the question—from where did the Maya believe the sun was exiting when it rose into the sky and to where was it entering when it set? Researchers often make the assumption that the Maya believed that everything beneath the surface of the earth was the underworld of the death gods and that the setting sun had to transverse the underworld to rise the next morning. Evidence that the underworld played a role in the passage of the sun from its sunset location to its sunrise location is seen in the Popol Vuh where the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque underwent a series of trials in the underworld before being able to kill the two underworld rulers and subjugate its remaining population. They then adorned their father, One Hunahpu, who had previously been killed by the underworld rulers, and promised him that he would be the first to be honored by the humans waiting on the surface of the earth for the first rising of the sun (Christenson 2007:191). The Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque then rose up as sun and full moon. The subjugation of the underworld established not only the hierarchy of the

twins over the underworld but their future safe passage through this territory. The Hero Twins were the quintessential conquerors who used their many skills to defeat their foe.

THE HEAT OF THE SUN

One of the trials the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque endured in the underworld was an immolation event (Christenson 2007:191). The rulers of the underworld planned to kill the Hero Twins by forcing them into a pit oven. Anticipating this fiery end, Hunahpu and Xbalanque devised a plan where they would voluntarily jump into the pit and then be resurrected from their bones. This Popol Vuh episode was reenacted during a ritual dance used to commemorate the inauguration of a San Juan Chamelco indigenous ruler and the establishment of this town under Spanish rule (Estrada Monroy 1979:168–174). In this dance, two young men were symbolically burned along with incense offerings and then resurrected to mark the beginning of the new era for this town.

A number of Mesoamerican myths concerning the creation of the sun indicate that the Sun God obtained his fiery heat from a primordial immolation event. In Postclassic Central Mexican mythology, the world was created, destroyed, and re-created a number of times. During each new era, a different god took on the role of the sun (Sahagún 1959–1963:7:4–7; Bierhorst 1992:147–148). In one version of the myth, the current era began when the deities gathered at Teotihuacán and created a great sacrificial fire. The god Nanauatzin jumped into this pyre and through his fiery act of self-sacrifice was transformed into the sun, while the god Tecuciztecatl who followed him into the dying fire became the moon. Nanauatzin did not move after rising into the sky until the wind god Ehecatl blew on him. Ehecatl was an aspect of the morning star god Quetzalcoatl. The rising of the morning star Venus heralds the coming dawn and is featured in many Mesoamerican myths.

In his newly acquired role as the sun, Nanauatzin shot arrows that were said to be like shafts of fire. The notion that the Sun God was a warrior is found consistently across Postclassic Mesoamerica, with the most dramatic example the Aztec patron god Huitzilopochtli. A golden eagle and jaguar also entered the primordial Teotihuacán fire and became the co-essences of the sun. These creatures were role models for the Aztec eagle-jaguar warriors (*cuaubtli ocelotl*), who were the most accomplished and highest-ranked soldiers. The Nahuatl term *eagle-jaguar* is a metonym that contrasts a powerful predator of the sky with a powerful predator of the land. The Aztec eagle-jaguar soldiers were the

best examples of the warrior class. The throne of Moctezuma was composed of an eagle seat and a jaguar back rest, suggesting that the ruler was the quintessential eagle-jaguar warrior (Sahagún 1959–1963:2:123).

THE MORNING STAR AND THE SUN

In the Popol Vuh, the episode that describes the rising of the sun from the perspective of the humans on the surface of the earth begins with the tribes gathered on the tops of their sacred mountains searching the eastern sky for the morning star (Christenson 2007:225–232). The first four K'iche' lineage heads rejoiced when they saw Venus rise, and they then burned three kinds of incense in its honor. In view of the fact that the Hero Twins promised their father that he would be the first to be revered by humans, it is apparent that Hun Hunahpu was this morning star (Bassie-Sweet 2008:298–300). The Venus Table of the Dresden Codex indicates that the first rising of the morning star occurred on the day 1 Ajaw, and One Hunahpu is the K'iche' equivalent of this day name. In Mesoamerica, individuals were frequently named for the *tzolk'in* day name of their birth or transformation. Obviously, One Hunahpu and his son Hunahpu were both so named because they both rose for the first time on this date. Given that the Maya plant at full moon, the primordial rising of the morning star, the sun, and the full moon specifically established the first planting cycle.

The Classic period antecedents for One Hunahpu and the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque are the deities One Ixim, One Ajaw, and Yax Bolon, respectively (Mathews cited in Coe 1978:58–60, 1989; Taube 1985). The Late Classic vessel K1892 depicts a cosmogram of the world (figure 2.2). The earth is illustrated as a turtle floating on the waters of the place of duality, with the deity One Ixim standing at the center and the Hero Twins One Ajaw and Yax Bolon flanking him on the edges of the world. The twins face each other on opposite sides of the world, just as sun and full moon stand in opposition in nature (Bassie-Sweet 2008:222). Yax Bolon, who is parallel to the moon deity Xbalanque, is seen emptying a water jar; such actions are identified with moon. It seems apparent that One Ajaw has the role of sun in this scene, just as his Popol Vuh parallel Hunahpu was the sun.

The headdress of One Ajaw was the *sak huun* headband. When lords were crowned king, they acquired the *sak huun* headband and took on the guise of One Ajaw (Stuart 1995).¹ Given that One Ajaw was identified with the sun, lords also became identified with the sun when they became king. The accession names of numerous rulers begin with the *k'inich* “sun-like” appellative,



FIGURE 2.2. *K1892* (drawing after Justin Kerr)

such as K'inich Janaab Pakal I and his sons K'inich Kan Bahlam II and K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II and his grandson K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III. The term *k'inich* also appears as a noun in some nominal phrases of lords, such as Upakal K'inich, K'awiil Chan K'inich, Nuun Ujol K'inich, Aj Wosal Chan K'inich, K'ahk' Ujol K'inich, Yajaw Te' K'inich, Tum Yohl K'inich, and Wi' Yohl K'inich. These examples demonstrate that lords were closely identified with solar qualities.

There are many examples of a Classic period solar god that doesn't look anything like One Ajaw. The simplest explanation is that this Sun God represents One Ajaw after his transformation into the sun. Before pursuing this topic further, a review of the Sun God, solar imagery, and the celestial place of duality is in order.

THE SUN GOD

The T₅₄₄ *k'in* “sun, day” sign represents a red flower with four petals in a plain cartouche (Thompson 1932, 1950:88, 142) (figure 2.3a).² In the codices, Paul

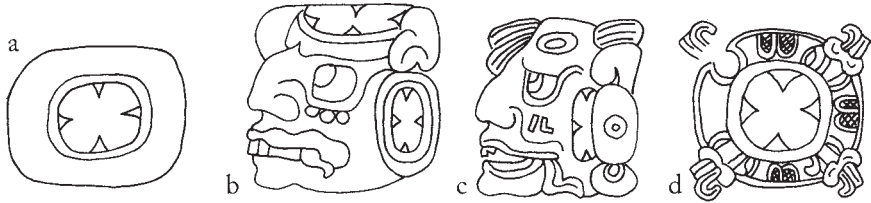


FIGURE 2.3. a. T544 sun glyph, b, c. Sun God, d. k'in cartouche

Schellhas (1904) identified an anthropomorphic deity with T544 *k'in* cartouches on his body as a sun god (God G in his alphabetic designation). Bishop Diego de Landa noted that a god named K'inich Ajaw was one of the deities worshiped during the Wayeb ceremonies, and the Dresden Codex Wayeb pages illustrate God G in this context (Tozzer 1941). The adjacent caption text names him using a *k'in* cartouche and an *ajaw* sign that appears to be an abbreviated form of the title K'inich Ajaw “sun-like lord.” As will be discussed more fully below, the Classic period Sun God was also called K'inich Ajaw.

The Sun God was the god of the number four in the thirteen-day cycle of the *tzolk'in* and the patron of the month Yaxk'in. The Sun God's portrait was employed to represent the unit of one day (twenty-four hours) in the Long Count, and it was incorporated in logographs representing the rising sun (see below). In all of these contexts, the T544 sign substitutes for the Sun God's portrait, indicating that the T544 *k'in* sign is the *pars pro toto* sign for the Sun God (figure 2.3b, 2.3c).

In more elaborate depictions of the *k'in* sign, the cartouche has the form of flint or shell with the maw of a skeletal centipede extending from each corner (figure 2.3d). Some researchers believe the centipedes are metaphors for rays of sunlight (Boot 1999; Taube 2003a; Houston et al. 2017). Following the work of Karl Taube (2004a, 2006), Andrea Stone and Marc Zender (2011:153) noted that the four petals of the T544 *k'in* sign invoke the four world directions and stated that “the four-petaled flower stood for the bright heavens of the diurnal sun, conceived as a flower- and bird-filled paradise.” Their observation can be extended to the full form of the *k'in* cartouche with its centipede corners. The Maya believed that the sun rose from the horizon through a cave and that the mouth of that cave took the form of a skeletal centipede mouth (Bassie-Sweet 1996:90–91; Taube 2003a:411–413). In terms of the *k'in* cartouche, each centipede corner represents the cave from which the sun was thought to rise and set on the solstices. The *k'in* cartouche is a solar-celestial cosmogram, with the center of the flower representing the position of the sun

on zenith passage. The implication of the *k'in* flower cosmogram is that the red flower of the T₅₄₄ sign was both the quintessential flower and a metaphor for all flowers.

The specific species of red flower that was employed in the T₅₄₄ *k'in* sign has not been identified, but its red color suggests an intimate association with hummingbirds. Known by the onomatopoeic term *tz'unun* (the noise of fluttering hummingbird wings), hummingbirds are primary pollinators of red flowers. Hummingbirds sucking nectar from a red flower are illustrated on a number of vessels, and elite headdresses often include a red flower with a hummingbird hovering before it (K1186, K1549, K5166, K5421, K7268). Hummingbirds also appear in Maya art with the red four-petal flower stuck on their long, slender bills (K2803, 5975, K8008). In these examples, the red flower functions as a semantic marker, indicating that these long-billed birds are hummingbirds. The inference is that the celestial paradise was inhabited by hummingbirds. While the image of hummingbirds feeding on a field of flowers suggests an idyllic paradise, the Mesoamerican association of hummingbirds with warriors is well-known and is based on these birds' aggressive territorial behavior.

As an aside, it must be kept in mind that the solar paradise was not the only mythological location identified with flowers. A series of Classic period pottery scenes illustrate the deity One Ixim's adornment in the underworld at the hands of the Hero Twins and a group of underworld goddesses who wear red flowers in their headdresses (see K4479, 7268). The Popol Vuh relates an interesting episode that indicates that the underworld rulers One Death and Seven Death had a garden filled with flowers (Christenson 2007). These death lords challenged the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque to a ballgame at their underworld court. One Death and Seven Death decided that the prize for winning the game would be four bowls of flowers, and they specified that the first bowl would be of red petals, the second one of white petals, the third one of yellow petals, and the last one of large flowers. The four bowls were metaphors for all flowers. When the Hero Twins lost the game, they were required to produce the flowers by the following morning. The death lords knew that the only source of flowers was their own garden, so they instructed the garden guards (the nocturnal whippoorwills) to spend the night in the garden trees watching for intruders. The Hero Twins were forced to spend the night in the House of Blades, but they called on the leafcutter ants to steal the flowers for them. The ants diligently gathered the flowers without the whippoorwills noticing, and by dawn they delivered them to the Hero Twins, much to the death lords' annoyance. As punishment for their lapse of duty, the death lords split open the whippoorwills' beaks.

THE CELESTIAL PLACE OF DUALITY

In the Popol Vuh story of the creation of the earth and human beings, the deities Xpiyacoc and Xmucane were the embodiment of complementary opposition and the paternal grandparents of the Hero Twins. These grandparents resided in a great pool of water, with the three Heart of Sky thunderbolt gods living above them in the sky. In consultation with these three thunderbolt gods, they made the earth rise up from the waters of the place of duality and created humans to reside on its surface. The creator grandparents also had a house at the center of the newly formed earth that was the role model for human houses and specifically for the court of the king. A number of Classic period scenes indicate that a celestial counterpart to this earthly primordial household of the creator grandparents was located at the center of the sky, directly overhead. In these celestial court scenes, Itzamnaaj is seated on a sky band throne (K504, K1183, K3049, K3056).

Numerous monuments illustrate the deceased parents of the current ruler as inhabitants of the celestial place of duality. For example, Yaxchilán Stela 1 depicts the ruler Bird Jaguar IV performing a Period Ending event with an elaborate sky band above his head. A patron god of Yaxchilán is pictured above the sky band, and two flint cartouches flank him (see figure 0.10). The right cartouche that portrays his father is marked with T24 *lem* “lightning luminescence” signs, while the left cartouche that is marked with a lunar element features his mother. Although many of the Yaxchilán stelae are in fragments or badly eroded, the top portions of Stela 3, Stela 4, Stela 6, Stela 8, Stela 10, and Stela 11 all have this double cartouche motif (Tate 1992:59–63). On Stela 4, the father’s flint cartouche is marked with *lem* signs, while the mother sits in a moon cartouche. These parents are the epitome of complementary opposition.

A Late Classic vessel first published by Eric Boot (2008) illustrates Itzamnaaj sitting inside his palace at his celestial court. Seated behind Itzamnaaj is his avian manifestation that is based on a laughing falcon, a messenger bird who forecasts the rains (Bassie-Sweet 2002, 2008:140–144; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins in press).³ The Itzamnaaj bird perches on a glyphic place name that is composed of the number six, an undeciphered sign, and a *chan* “sky” sign. I will refer to it simply as the Six Sky place. In many examples of this place name, the sky sign has a T24/T1017 *lem* sign as a postfix. While this sign is merely part of the logographic sky sign and was not intended to be read, it indicates that the celestial place of duality was identified with the luminous nature of lightning. The association of lightning with the creator deities is well documented by Preclassic portraits of the Itzamnaaj bird that feature the T24 lightning luminosity sign on its wings (Taube et al. 2010:fig. 58).⁴

The base of Itzamnaaj's house is formed by a sky band of alternating flint signs and *k'in* signs, and three members of Itzamnaaj's court sit beneath him on this sky band.⁵ They have the form of a dog, an opossum, and a vulture; and they represent the offices of orator, diviner/scribe, and bookkeeper, respectively. These court officials appear individually in other Itzamnaaj court scenes, but this is the only vessel where they are pictured together in a hierarchical display. They were the role models for the secondary lords of royal courts. Itzamnaaj addresses two tiers of gods seated in front of him. The upper tier is composed of the deities GI, the Sun God, and a Chahk, who sit on another flint and *k'in* sky band. Beneath them are four artisan gods who sit on the ground line of the scene, suggesting they have a lower status than Itzamnaaj's three primary court officials who are seated across from them.

The so-called Deletaille tripod illustrates another location at the celestial place of duality that is named by a caption text as the Six Wind sky/cave (Taube 2004a). This landscape is filled with different types of flowers, a hummingbird with a red flower on its bill, a heron, a curassow, a pair of male quetzals, and a host of supernatural creatures participating in a ritual dance. While a wind god plays a pair of gourd rattles, other anthropomorphic gods perform acrobatic feats. The Milky Way was viewed by the Maya as a celestial river with a crocodile floating in it (see Bassie-Sweet 2008:36–38 for an overview). This crocodile is frequently depicted in Maya art arching across the sky of a scene or bordering a scene. The Milky Way Crocodile is one of the creatures featured on the Deletaille tripod. The implication is that this celestial river was thought to flow through or past the celestial place of duality.

A series of monuments at Piedras Negras illustrated Period Ending scenes in which the ruler sits in a raised niche framed by sky bands and the Milky Way Crocodile (Stelae 6, 11, 14, 25). Given that these Period Endings occurred at different times in the solar year, it is apparent that the setting was intended to represent an idealized landscape that replicated the celestial place of duality rather than what the sky looked like on these occasions.

THE K'INICH TITLE AND THE K'INICH AJAW TITLE

In a number of contexts, a T₅₄₄ *k'in* cartouche, a syllabic T₆₇₁ *chi* sign, and a syllabic T₁₁₆ *ni* sign are combined in one glyph block to spell the word *k'inich* (*k'in-ni-chi*) (Stuart 1995). The T₁₈₄ sign is the logographic form of *k'inich*, and it is composed of an elongated *k'in* cartouche with T₂₃ signs attached to two sides. In many examples, the cartouche also has a T₇₄ sign on one of its sides. As David Stuart noted, the T₇₄ and T₂₃ elements do not function as

phonetic complements as they do in other contexts but are merely elements of the elongated *k'inich* cartouche. Some examples of the T184 *k'inich* logograph are elaborated with the T1010 portrait glyph of the Sun God. For instance, the Palace Tablet narrative records the *k'inich* title nine times. Five times it is spelled using the T184 *k'inich* logogram (C12, E12, M12, P18, and R17) and four times with the T184 *k'inich* logograph with a Sun God portrait prefixed to it (G6, J12, K9, and O9).

In the corpus of Maya art, there are over a dozen references to the impersonation of the Sun God, and the title K'inich Ajaw "sun-like lord" appears in his nominal phrase in all of these examples (Knub et al. 2009). The word *ajaw* "lord" is often represented either by the logographic T168:518 sign or a portrait of the deity One Ajaw. The K'inich Ajaw title is written in a number of ways using either syllabic or logographic signs for the terms *k'inich* and *ajaw*. The most interesting variation is a conflated form where the portrait glyph of the Sun God wears the headdress of One Ajaw. Such confluations are common in hieroglyphic writing. Vessel K1398 illustrates the Sun God (figure 2.4). While his arms and legs are marked with T544 *k'in* signs, he wears the *sak huun* headband of One Ajaw. This depiction is the embodiment of his K'inich Ajaw title.

As noted above, many rulers acquired the title K'inich when they became king. There is an interesting variation of the K'inich title in K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II's name on the Dumbarton Oaks Tablet. In this example, the term *k'inich* is represented by a portrait of the Sun God wearing the *sak huun* headdress. This nominal phrase was clearly not intended to be read K'inich Ajaw K'an Joy Chitam, but the scribe included the *ajaw* reference nevertheless. In a similar fashion, a Pomoy stela refers to a secondary lord as four *k'atun* Ahk'uhuun (Mayer 1995:cat. 5). The logograph used for the number four is a portrait of the Sun God. While most examples of the Sun God in his role as the god of the number four are simply his portrait glyph, the Pomoy example also includes the T671 *chi* sign of the term *K'inich*. These examples indicate the Sun God's intimate relationship with both the K'inich and K'inich Ajaw titles.

SEVENTH CENTIPEDE RAPTORIAL BIRD

The Sun God's full nominal phrase begins with an appellation composed of *ubuk* "seventh," *chapat* "centipede," and a raptorial bird wearing the headband of One Ajaw, followed by K'inich Ajaw and the title Bolon Yokte' K'uh "nine Yokte' gods" (Boot 2005, 2008). Stuart has observed that a number of

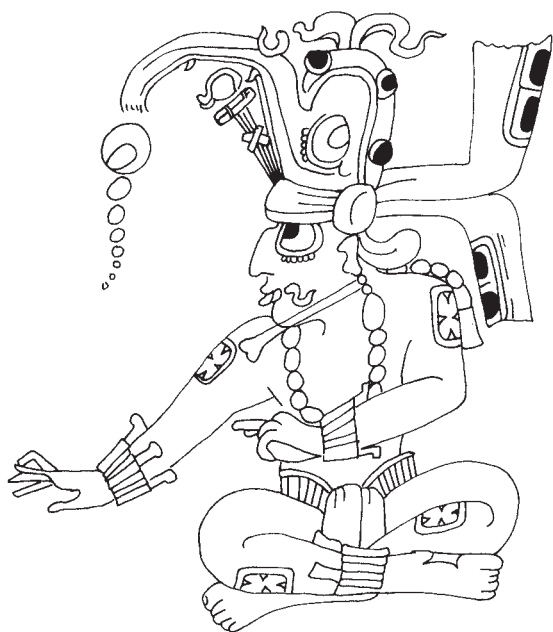


FIGURE 2.4. Sun God K'398
(drawing after Justin Kerr)

narratives refer to categories of deities, and Bolon Yokte' K'uh was one such grouping (Stuart et al. 1999; Stuart 2017). Although the nature of this category is opaque, Stuart noted that both the Sun God and Itzamnaaj were members.⁶ The Palenque Temple XIV Tablet narrative indicates that GII (K'awiil) was also identified as one of the Bolon Yokte' K'uh gods. In the Popol Vuh, there are nine major creator deities: the three Heart of Sky thunderbolt gods, the creator grandparents Xpiyacoc and Xmucane, their two sons One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu, and their grandsons Hunahpu and Xbalanque. It may be that Bolon Yokte' K'uh refers to the Classic period antecedents of these nine primary deities.

The raptorial bird employed in the Sun God's nominal phrase is also the god of the fifteenth day of the *tzolk'in* calendar. In Yucatec lists, the fifteenth day is Men, while in the calendars of the eastern Mayan languages and in the Tzeltal-Tzotzil calendars it is Tz'ikin, a Proto-Mayan word for bird (Thompson 1950:82; Kaufman 2003:618). Some researchers have assumed that Tz'ikin was the name used in the lowlands and have translated the name as Uhuk Chapat Tz'ikin. There are no recorded Ch'olan day name lists, but day names do occur as personal names in Lacandón Ch'ol and Tila-Tumbalá Ch'ol regions, and Men is one of these names. This suggests the possibility that the

fifteenth day in the Classic period inscriptions may have been called Men, not Tz'ikin (Campbell 1984:179, 1988:373–386). Some researchers have identified the Seventh Centipede raptorial bird and, by extension, the Sun God's avian form as an eagle. I have in the past accepted this identification, but recently I have had significant doubts (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins in press).

A characteristic of the most common raptorial birds found in the Maya region is their proclivity to soar. The migratory hawks and vultures that ride the thermal currents across the central Maya highlands are indicators of the coming change in season and predicators of rainfall (Tedlock 1985). Whatever avian species the Seventh Centipede raptorial bird was based on, it seems likely that it was directly related to the zenith passage of the sun that marks the beginning of the rainy season and the agricultural cycle.

Despite this Seventh Centipede raptorial bird name, the Sun God is not portrayed wearing an avian headdress or having an avian form, but there are numerous examples of him in a centipede headdress such as on vessel K1398, where he wears a centipede headdress with fire exuding from its head in addition to One Ajaw's headband (figure 2.4). He also wears a centipede headdress on a number of other vessels where he interacts with supernatural beings and in his portraits as the god of the number four. Rulers imitating the Sun God also wear centipede headdresses.

THE DAWNING SUN

The logograph that represents the sunrise is composed of juxtaposed sky and earth signs with the T₅₄₄ *k'in* sign emerging from between them. On a Copán bench from Structure 66c of 8N-II, the concept of dawn is portrayed as the head and torso of the Sun God emerging from a flint cartouche (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017) (figure 2.5). The bench is a beautiful example of complementary opposition and couplet structure. Beginning on the left, the sky band is composed of an avian sky sign, a T₁₀₁₇ sign, a patron of the lunar cycle, a personified *ak'bal* “night” god, another T₁₀₁₇ sign, a personified day sign in the form of the Sun God, a patron deity of Venus, another T₁₀₁₇ sign, and finally another avian sky sign. The Sun God is pictured in the act of emerging from his centipede cartouche, which refers to the dawn when the sun is rising. Similarly, the *ak'bal* god is seen in the reclining pose that is specifically identified with birth. So these two gods contrast not day and night per se but the birth of the day and the birth of the night, that is, dawn and sunset. The poses of these deities are symmetrical, with the dawn and sunset gods facing each other and the moon and Venus patrons facing away from each other.



FIGURE 2.5. Dawn glyph, Copán Structure 66c bench (drawing after Barbara Fash)

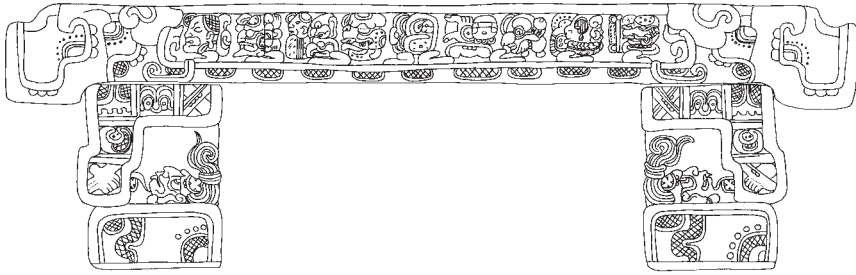


FIGURE 2.6. Dawn glyph, Copán Group 10K-4 (drawing after Barbara Fash)

The central axis of this bilateral symmetry is the T1017 lightning luminosity sign positioned between the dawn and sunset gods. I think it is likely that the use of three T1017 signs in this composition is related to the three primary thunderbolt gods.

More complex versions of the dawn sign are depicted on the legs of a Copán bench from Group 10K-4 (figure 2.6). This bench forms a cosmogram of the eastern horizon, with the legs representing the rise points of the summer solstice sun and the winter solstice sun. These two solstice dawn signs are composed of the head and torso of the Sun God lying on an earth sign with a sky band arching over him. Reclining poses are often used in Maya art and hieroglyphic writing to indicate birth or emergence (Martin 2002).

The narrative on La Corona Element 55 uses an interesting variation of the *el k'in* east glyph that includes the Milky Way Crocodile. The mouth of the Milky Way Crocodile was identified with the black rift of the Milky Way, which looks like the open mouth of a crocodile (Stuart 1984, 2003a; Schele 1992:136; Freidel et al. 1993:151). La Corona Element 55 illustrates the Kaanul king Took' K'awiil performing the 9.13.10.0.0 Period Ending ceremony on January 26, AD 702 (Stuart et al. 2015b). His nominal phrase includes the title East Kaloomte'. Rather than use the standard form of the *el k'in* "east" glyph, the scribe employed a sign composed of a Sun God emerging from the mouth of the Milky Way Crocodile. It does not seem to be a coincidence that in nature the celestial juxtaposing of the black rift and the rising sun at dawn occurs in January when Took' K'awiil's Period Ending ritual occurred.

THE T183 K'IN BOWL

As noted above, the logogram for east (*el k'in* “the exit of the sun”) is composed of the T183 *el* “exit” verb and T544 *k'in* “sun” sign (Houston cited in Stuart 1998b). The meaning of *el* as “exit” is attested in a number of Mayan languages, but it also has the meaning “to burn” in Yucatec, Mopán, and Lacandón Maya. The T183 *el* logograph represents a bowl decorated with a *k'in* sign, and such *k'in* bowls are seen in Maya art as receptacles for burning offerings. Some examples of the T183 sign even have fire scrolls above the bowl. The T183 *k'in* bowl is frequently depicted as a zoomorphic creature. The T183 *el* verb is used to describe house dedication rituals, and Stuart (1998b) interprets this action as the censuring of the structure. Sanctifying a ritual space through the burning of incense is a well-attested Maya ritual.

Based on its *k'in* infix, a number of researchers have speculated that the *k'in* bowl was the vessel from which the sun was transformed or that it held heart and blood offerings necessary for the sun's transformation (Schele 1976:18; Freidel et al. 1993:216–217; Taube 1994, 2003a, 2009; Stuart 1998b, 2005b). Karl Taube (2009) drew a parallel between the *k'in* infixed bowl and the bowls used by the Aztec for heart offerings directed at the sun. Because the *k'in* bowl also appears on the tail of the Milky Way Crocodile, more convoluted explanations about the relationship between the Milky Way and the transformation of the sun have been proposed. Before addressing these interpretations, an overview of the *k'in* bowl and its primary context as an element in the headdress of the deity GI is necessary.

THE DEITY GI AND HIS QUADRIPARTITE BADGE HEADDRESS

The portrait glyph of GI illustrates an anthropomorphic deity with swirl-shaped irises, a perforator-like front tooth, and facial scrolls that have been characterized as fish barbels. He often wears the shell earring that designates Chahk deities, and his nominal phrase includes the word *Chahk* (Bassie-Sweet 2008:111) (see figure 1.1). In a previous publication, I highlighted the attributes of GI that connect him to wind, the hurricanes of the wet season, and the northern storms that regularly descend on the Maya lowlands during the dry season. I proposed that he was the paramount Chahk deity related to storms and that he was parallel to Huracan, the most powerful of the three Heart of Sky thunderbolt gods in the Popol Vuh (Bassie-Sweet 2008). The north Temple of the Cross (GI's shrine in the Palenque Cross Group) is called the Six Sky place, and GI is named as a lord of Six Sky (Stuart 2005b). As noted above, he is depicted at the Six Sky celestial court of Itzamnaaj on the Boot vessel.

The narrative on the Palenque Temple of the Inscriptions tablets specifically names the headdresses of the gods GI, GII, and GIII. GI's headdress is represented by a logograph of a motif that was nicknamed the Quadripartite Badge by Merle Greene Robertson (1974). It consists of a *k'in* bowl containing a stingray spine, a *Spondylus* shell, and a cross-band foliage element. Numerous examples of Early Classic stone masks and cache vessels feature GI wearing his Quadripartite Badge headdress and attest to his importance in the Classic period pantheon (Hellmuth 1987) (see figure 1.1a). As noted above, the bowl of the Quadripartite Badge is frequently animated as a zoomorphic creature. While the cross-band element is of undetermined meaning, the stingray spine was used in Maya bloodletting rituals as a perforator, and it is a common artifact found in caches and tombs, as are *Spondylus* shells. The name for this Quadripartite Badge bowl is unknown because there are no syllabic spellings of this logograph.

In Palenque and Seibal examples of his nominal phrase, GI is pictured wearing a fish-eating heron as a headdress, and the ruler K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III wears such a headdress heron while in the guise of GI (Stuart 2005b) (see figure 0.11). The heron also appears as a headdress element on Early Classic cache vessels depicting GI in his Quadripartite Badge headdress, and it is likely that this heron is the avian avatar of GI (Hellmuth 1987). The association of GI with the north and with the northern storms that descend on the Maya region during the dry season may explain GI's identification with the fish-eating water bird. The Maya observe that when the north wind begins to blow, the waterfowl return (Escobar 1841:91).

Many kings and queens wear the Quadripartite Badge headdress when taking on the guise of GI (Caracol Stela 1, Yaxchilán Lintel 14; Xultun Stela 24, to name a few). Copán Stela I illustrates the lord wearing not only this insignia of GI but also a mask in the form of GI's face. There are a number of examples where the Quadripartite Badge bowl is held by deities and humans (for example, K2715). The association of the Quadripartite Badge motif with bloodletting is seen on the Palenque Temple of the Cross Tablet and west jamb where K'inich Kan Bahlam II holds a bloodletter in the form of GI's Quadripartite Badge bowl with liquid pouring from the mouth of the *k'in* bowl zoomorph. A Quadripartite Badge bloodletter is illustrated on Piedras Negras Stela 1 with a lithic blade protruding from the zoomorph's mouth. Whether this means that these humans were imitating a mythological bloodletting by GI or that such blood offerings were destined for GI is unknown.

The Tablet of the Cross narrative recounts the mythological events related to GI and the historical rituals the ruler K'inich Kan Bahlam II performed for

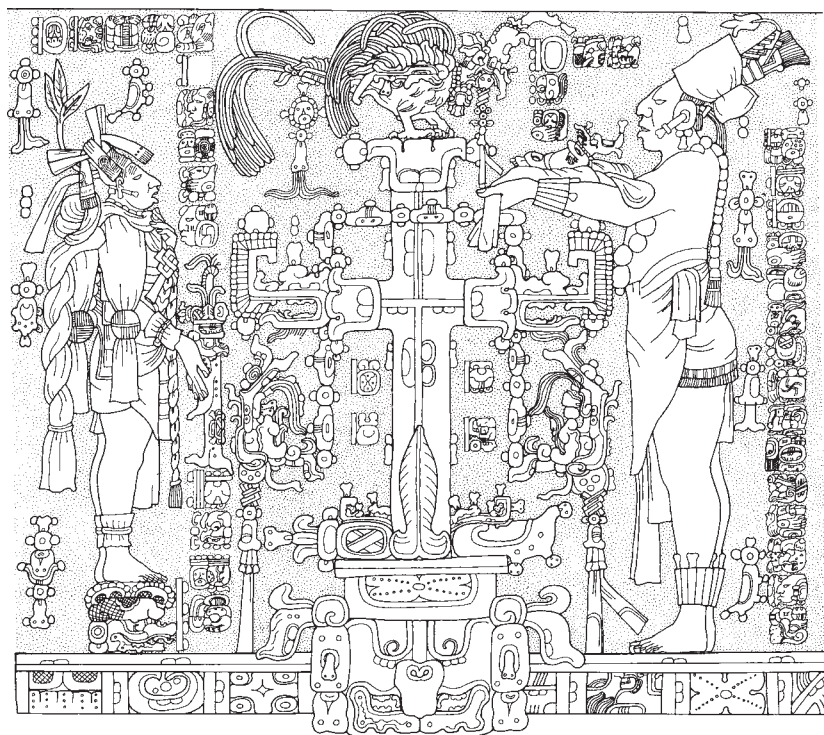


FIGURE 2.7. *Palenque Tablet of the Cross* (drawing by Linda Schele)

him. The central icon of the scene is composed of GI's Quadripartite Badge bowl juxtaposed with a stylized flowering tree (figure 2.7). A supernatural bird is perched on its upper branch, and a double-headed serpent hangs around its trunk and lower branches. The ground line of the scene is formed by a sky band composed of cartouches in complementary opposition (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). On the left side, the cartouches are night, moon, and star (nocturnal) while those on the right are lightning, sun, and an undeciphered sky sign (diurnal). It is a place of duality. The scene represents a location at the Six Sky Place and the location in the local landscape that represented this place where K'inich Kan Bahlam II made his offerings to this god. The tree and bowl icon also appears on the Temple of the Inscriptions sarcophagus lid that depicts K'inich Janaab Pakal I's apotheosis. K'inich Janaab Pakal I is juxtaposed in a reclining position between the headdress and the tree. K'inich Janaab Pakal I and the Quadripartite Badge bowl are placed in the jaws of a centipede bordering the bottom of the scene.

GI's Quadripartite Badge bowl is frequently depicted on the tail of the Milky Way Crocodile.⁷ Given that the mouth of the Milky Way Crocodile has been identified with the black rift of the Milky Way, the tail of the crocodile and, by extension, GI's bowl must be identified with some section of this celestial river that rises into the sky after the black rift. While various arguments have been made regarding this placement, there is no consensus as to what this section might be. Nevertheless, the twofold implication of these Milky Way images is that some section of this celestial river was thought to flow through or pass by the Six Sky Place (the court of Itzamnaaj) and that the apotheosis of K'inich Janaab Pakal I was connected with this location.

Stuart (2005b:168) suggested a direct relationship between GI's Quadripartite Badge bowl on the tail of the Milky Way Crocodile and the rising sun: "One can naturally wonder, therefore, if perhaps the *k'in* bowl itself was somehow considered a 'vessel' for the rising sun in the east. As Tate (1992:66) notes, representations of the crocodile regularly orient the rear end with the *k'in* bowl toward the east." Based on the fact that some illustrations of the Milky Way Crocodile's body are juxtaposed with a solar cartouche, Stuart further argued that GI's bowl was the anus of the Milky Way Crocodile and that "the sun was consumed by the crocodile during its nightly course beneath the earth and defecated or reborn each morning" (Stuart 2005b:168).

It is highly unlikely that the juxtaposing of the solar cartouche on the body of the Milky Way Crocodile means that this beast had swallowed the sun. For instance, the narrative on the Yaxchilán Structure 44 hieroglyphic staircase (center riser, Step IV) refers to the dedication of Structure 44 and names it as the Four Crocodile House. In this house name, the number four is represented by four dots, while the word *crocodile* is represented by a portrait of the front head of the Milky Way Crocodile (Plank 2004:58). The scene on the adjacent Step III illustrates a captive lord kneeling on this house name (figure 2.8). In this version, the crocodile head has been replaced with a full-figure rendering of the beast, and the number four is represented by a cartouche containing a bust of the Sun God, who was the god of the number four. The cartouche is superimposed over the body of the crocodile. This is a very common convention in hieroglyphic writing, where one sign is reduced in size and placed in front of (superimposed on) another. It does not indicate that the Sun God resides in the belly of the crocodile, much less that the Sun God is excreted out of the crocodile's anus each morning. Furthermore, this same Four Crocodile place name is painted on the eastern wall of Río Azul Tomb 1, where it is composed of a portrait glyph of the Sun God stacked on top of the head of the Milky Way Crocodile.

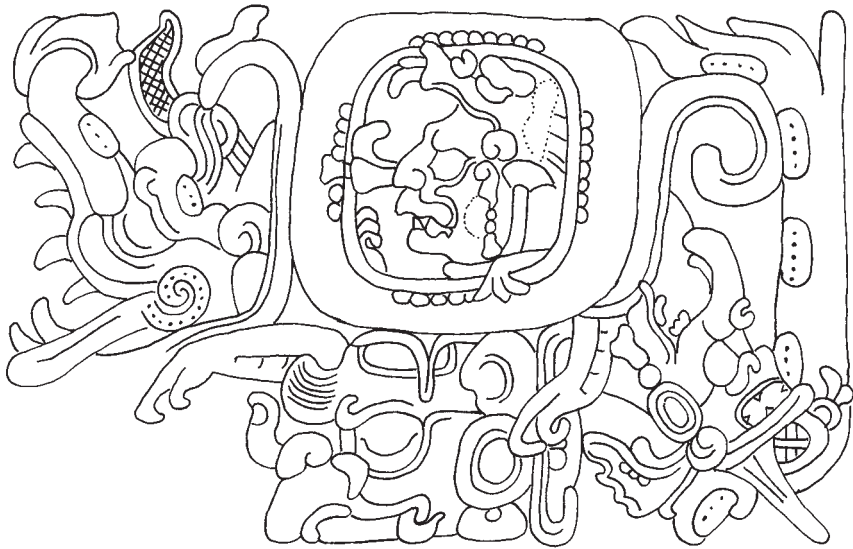


FIGURE 2.8. *Yaxchilán Four Crocodile House (drawing after Ian Graham)*

Despite the signs and motifs that illustrate the sun rising from the earth, some researchers have argued that the Maya thought the sun rose and set from water, based on the fact that the Yucatán peninsula is bordered on the east by the Caribbean Sea and on the north and west by the Gulf of Mexico (Finamore and Houston 2010; Taube and Houston 2015). While they follow the Thompson identification of GIII as the “night sun,” they view GI as an aquatic form of the sun as it rises from the Caribbean Sea at dawn. Although they do not explicitly state it, their model would have GI transforming into the Sun God for the day and then transforming into GIII at sunset before transforming back into GI at dawn. They presumably make this identification of GI with the dawn because GI has aquatic features and shares the same anthropomorphic face as the Sun God and because they identify GI’s brazier headdress as the pyre used in mythological times to transform a god into the sun.⁸ In an example of circular reasoning, they assert that the swirl eyes of GI and GIII indicate night while the square eye of the Sun God indicates day, based solely on their identification of GIII as the night sun and GI as the dawn. There is no evidence that the shape of supernatural pupils indicates day or night.

Karl Taube and Stephen Houston (2015:214) proposed that the GIII portrait on a stairway of the Copán East Court may have been paired with a portrait of the Sun God on the opposite side of the court and thus would

have represented the complementary opposition of the night sun and the day sun. There is little evidence that such a pairing actually even existed. In fact, the Copán Structure 66c bench, where there is a clear contrasting of day and night, does not employ a portrait of GIII to represent night (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). Furthermore, the rising sun on this bench is a standard form of the Sun God, not GI. As discussed above, the Copán Structure 10K-4 bench also illustrates the rising sun, not as GI but as the standard Sun God.

I do not dispute the notion that the *k'in* bowl may have been related to offerings directed at the sun or related to its cyclical renewal, but it does not follow that GI therefore had to be some form of the sun. As the insignia of GI, the Quadripartite Badge motif might just as easily be related to GI's role as one of the gods who participated in solar fire and bloodletting ceremonies. In fact, his role as one of the hearthstone gods points to that function.

THE NAMES AND TITLES OF THE DEITY GIII

Like many of the primary gods, GIII's name can be represented simply by his portrait, as it is in his calendar contexts (figure 2.9a). However, in the context of his role as a patron god in the Palenque inscriptions, GIII is named using a phrase composed of a *k'inich* "sun-like" sign, an undeciphered T239 sign that illustrates a youthful male in a cartouche, and an undeciphered T594 checkerboard sign (figure 2.9b).⁹ The checkerboard pattern of T594 is often found on war shields, suggesting that the name may be related to GIII's war shield (Bassie-Sweet 2008:117). There are no contexts where this Palenque nominal phrase directly substitutes for GIII's portrait glyph, so it is unclear whether this nominal phrase represents GIII's portrait name or is an additional moniker.

The term *k'inich* "sun-like" also appears in several other contexts related to GIII. As noted above, GIII is named as K'inich Ajaw on the central tablet of the Temple of the Inscriptions. The Tablet of the Sun describes the location of GIII's birth as the K'inich Taj Wayib "sun-like torch structure." The narratives on the Palenque Temple XIX west platform and the Temple XXI bench refer to a shrine dedicated to GIII in 9.15.4.15.17 6 Kaban 5 Yaxk'in (June 13, AD 736) that was called K'inich O Naah "sun-like owl house" (Stuart 2005b:105).

One of GIII's titles has been deciphered as K'in Tahn K'ewel "sun-chested pelt," with the pelt sign appropriately represented by a headless jaguar (Zender et al. 2016). K'in Tahn K'ewel is also used to name a *way* co-essence character that is illustrated as a standing jaguar with a *k'in* sign on its chest (Stuart 2005b:176). Marc Zender and his collaborators (2016) propose that the K'in Tahn K'ewel title may indicate that animal skins had some special relevance

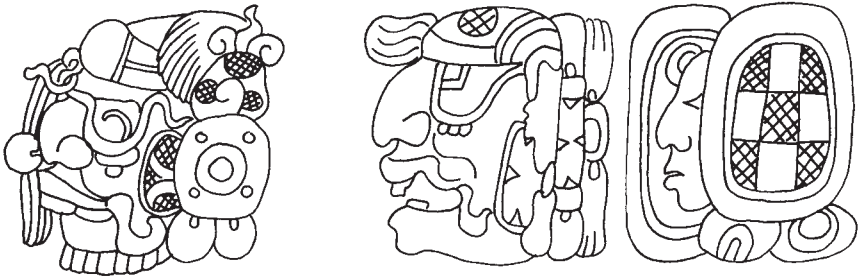


FIGURE 2.9. a. *GIII portrait glyph*, b. *GIII nominal phrase*

to GIII as an item of clothing or a select tribute offering. The title may be directly related to the jaguar pelt that was used to construct GIII's shield. While Bishop Diego de Landa noted that Postclassic shields were constructed from deerskin, a number of depictions of GIII's shield, such as the one on the Tablet of the Sun, indicate that they were also made from jaguar skin (Tozzer 1941:121). This should be expected given GIII's jaguar form.

In the Temple of the Inscriptions narrative, GIII is named by the title *Yajawk'ak'* "vassal of fire" (middle tablet N4) (Stuart 1998b, 2004a:225, 2005b: 123–125, 2006a; López Bravo 2000, 2004; Zender 2004b:195–209). *Yajawk'ak'* is usually translated as fire lord, but Zender (2004) noted that the term *ajaw* "lord" actually means "vassal" when it is stated in a possessed form such as *y-ajaw-k'ak'*, and thus this title means "the vassal of fire." It is a subtle but important difference that suggests that GIII is subordinate to whatever entity was identified with fire. I have argued that the owner of the first primordial fire was the creator grandfather Itzamnaaj (Bassie-Sweet 2008).

The office of *Yajawk'ak'* was also held by a number of secondary lords, and GIII was clearly their role model. The warrior aspect of a *Yajawk'ak'* is well documented in the illustrations and citations of these secondary lords being captured in battle or being buried with trophy bones taken from their victims (Zender 2004b). A headdress worn by GIII on a Palenque Group B incensario has been identified as the headdress of the *Yajawk'ak'* office (López Bravo 2000, 2004) (figure 2.10). The Tablet of the Slaves main text (C2a) specifically names the headdress of a *Yajawk'ak'* as a *k'ak' huun* "fire headdress" using the standard T24 fire sign (see figure 5.9).¹⁰ A discussion of the military nature of this headdress is deferred until chapter 5, but suffice it to say for the moment that these fire attributes have suggested to researchers that the *Yajawk'ak'* office was related to making incense offerings to the gods as well as maintaining temple fires and elaborate effigy censers (Zender 2004b).



FIGURE 2.10. *Palenque Group B incensario*

THE FIRE AND FLINT TRAITS OF GIII AND THE JAGUAR PADDLER GOD

GIII is consistently depicted with a looped fire cord over his nose. The importance of the fire cord as his primary diagnostic trait is seen in some examples of his name where just his eye with its twisted cord is used as the *pars pro toto* sign. This abbreviated form of his name is found in hieroglyphic texts and on war shields. Based on his fire cord feature and his Yajawk'ak' "the vassal of fire" title, Stuart (1998b) identified GIII as a fire deity. GIII's classification as a fire deity fits with his role as one of the three hearthstone gods. The center of the world was defined by the hearth of the creator deities, and the drilling of new fire at the beginning of important time periods replicated



FIGURE 2.II. Tikal canoe scene (drawing after Andy Seuffert)

the initial creation of fire by the gods. New fire rites were thematically parallel to the burning of the milpa at the beginning of the planting season at zenith passage that inaugurated the annual renewal of life. GIII was obviously identified with these primordial and primary fires.

There is another deity that shares fire characteristics with GIII. This elderly deity is most often paired with another old god, and together they are known as the Paddler Gods. A number of inscriptions name the Paddler Gods as Chahk deities and as lords of the mythological location named Na Ho Chan “first five sky.” On Copán Stela 2 they have the title *mam k’uh* “grandfather gods,” which clearly reflects their aged nature. The Paddler Gods acquired their nickname from a scene on a carved bone (MT-38a) from Tikal Burial 116 that illustrates them as elderly oarsmen transporting a canoe containing One Ixim and a group of other supernatural passengers down a turbulent river (Stuart 1988:189; Freidel et al. 1993:90) (figure 2.11). The bow oarsman is depicted wearing a jaguar headdress, while the stern oarsman has a stingray spine piercing his septum.¹¹ The Paddler Gods are named together in many hieroglyphic texts using portrait glyphs, and in these contexts the Jaguar Paddler is consistently named first. In his portrait glyph on Copán Stela P, the Jaguar Paddler wears GIII’s twisted fire cord in addition to his jaguar headdress. In contrast, the Stingray Spine Paddler wears a Xok headdress. The close association of this Paddler God with stingray spines is seen on an effigy stingray spine that is inscribed with a text indicating that it was thought to belong to him (Stuart et al. 1999:II:46) (see chapter 7 for a further discussion of the canoe association of these deities). It has been suggested that the Jaguar Paddler is an elderly manifestation of GIII, although this is by no means certain. It is possible that when the Jaguar Paddler dons the twisted fire cord of GIII, he is merely taking on the guise of GIII.

The juxtaposing of the fire cord with the faces of GIII and the Jaguar Paddler implies that their bodies were thought to be a fire stick (Bassie-Sweet 2008:119). In a few scenes, GIII and Jaguar Paddler impersonators carry

staffs that have been identified as stylized fire drilling sticks, such as the rulers featured on Sacul Stela 9, Naranjo Stela 11, and Naranjo Stela 30 (Houston and Stuart 1996; Stuart 1998b) (figure 2.12).¹² These ceremonial fire staffs are often adorned with a knotted motif, similar to the knots found on bloodletters. In Late Classic examples, the main rod of the staff is flanked by stiff material bent at right angles (for examples, see Tikal Stela 11, Stela 21, Stela 22, and Stela 30). A looted vessel currently housed in the Honolulu Museum of Art illustrates GIII sitting on a sky band throne in his role as a lunar patron (he has the moon sign attached to his body that identifies lunar patrons) (Robicsek and Hales 1981:fig. 9b). He carries such a staff that terminates in a centipede head. This same type of centipede staff is also carried by rulers who take on the guise of GIII and the Jaguar Paddler God, and it appears as a headdress element across the Maya region at such sites as Copán, Naranjo,

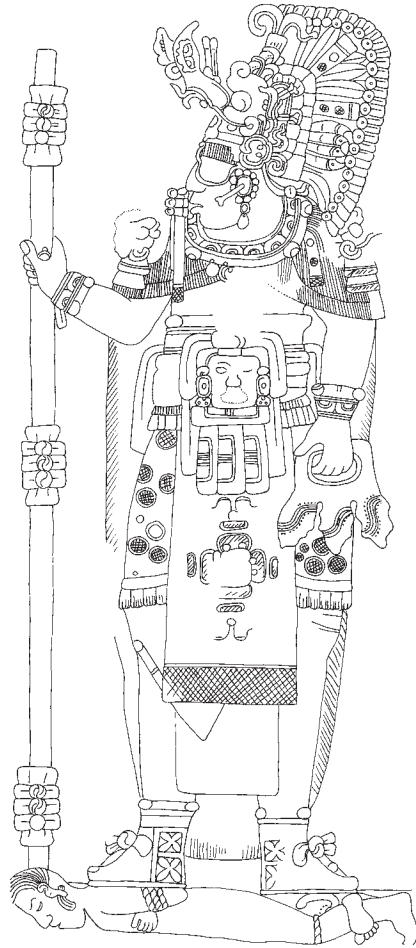


FIGURE 2.12. *Naranjo Stela 30 (drawing after Ian Graham)*

Quiriguá, Palenque, Yaxchilán, and Bonampak (for example, see Naranjo Stela 8).¹³ In some of these instances, a flint blade emerges from the mouth of the centipede, such as on Yaxchilán Stela 5. In other examples, the staff has centipede-flints at either end (see figure 0.4). They are, in effect, double-headed flint spears much like the double-headed spear carried by Lady Ohl on Yaxchilán Lintel 25 (see figure 6.3) (see chapter 6 for a discussion of this lintel).

The association of GIII with flint blades is also seen on the Palenque Tablet of the Sun, which focuses on the mythological events related to GIII

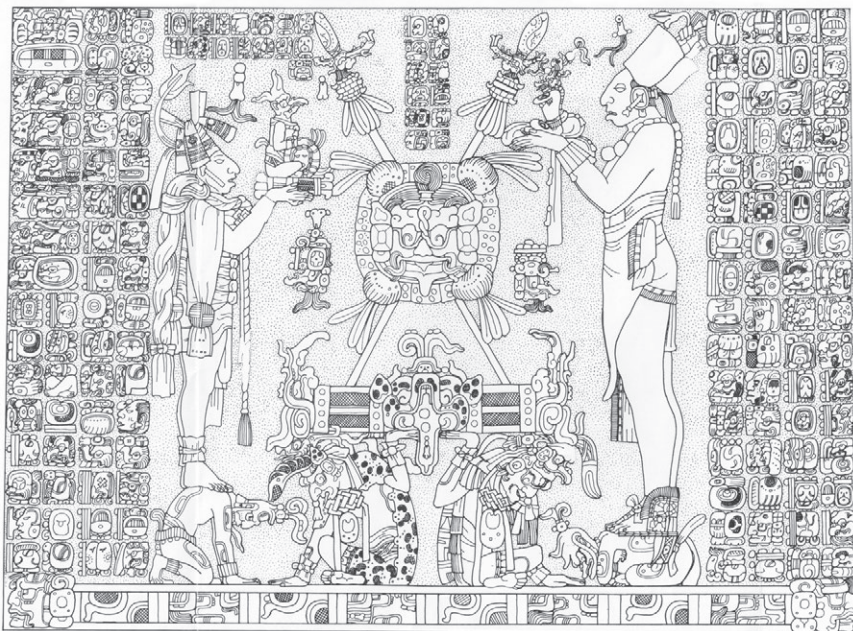


FIGURE 2.13. Palenque Tablet of the Sun (drawing by Linda Schele)

and the historical ceremonies performed by the ruler K'inich Kan Bahlam II in honor of this god. The central icon of the panel to which K'inich Kan Bahlam II directs his ritual actions is placed on a femur ceremonial bar decorated with a jaguar (see figure 2.13). The icon is composed of two crossed spears and a war shield emblazoned with GIII's face. The flint blade of each spear emerges from the mouth of a centipede. The centipede-flint spears and shield are the *tok'-pakal* of GIII, and this motif demonstrates his direct identification not only with the war shield but with flint spears. Numerous war scenes depicted on public monuments and pottery vessels indicate that spears were the primary weapon of choice used by the Classic Maya. I propose that GIII was specifically identified with the flint blades used for warfare.

On the left side of the Tablet of the Sun, the six-year-old prince K'inich Kan Bahlam II holds his *tok'-pakal*, which he has just acquired during his heir designation ceremony. His *tok'-pakal* touches the feathers of GIII's effigy. On the right side, the king K'inich Kan Bahlam II is illustrated performing a ceremony on the occasion of his accession. He wears the royal *sak huun* headdress.

The king K'inich Kan Bahlam II holds an effigy of the deity GII, who was the personification of a thunderbolt axe. Lords were frequently depicted holding GII effigies, which represented the belief that they had the ability to manipulate this supernatural force. K'inich Kan Bahlam II's effigy touches GIII's flint spear. These actions of K'inich Kan Bahlam II appear to sanctify his effigies or imbue them with the power of GIII.

FLINT BLADES AND JAGUAR CLAWS

Jaguar claws (*ich'aak*) were important symbols of power and are frequently found as grave goods. On Yaxchilán Lintel 6, both Bird Jaguar IV and his assistant Sajal hold jaguar claw objects (<https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=6&site=Yaxchilan&type=Lintel>). The name of the Seibal ruler Yich'aak Bahlam literally means “the claw of the jaguar.” The names of the Kaanul ruler Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' (the claw of fire) and the Tikal king Chak Tok Ich'aak (great burning claw) evoke the fiercely painful result of an encounter with a jaguar claw. In some rare examples of the centipede-flint staff, three blades protrude from the centipede's mouth (see Ek' Balam Stela 1 and Yaxha Stela 31). On Naranjo Stela 30, the ruler K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak, who is in the guise of the Jaguar Paddler God, clutches in his left hand an unusual object in the form of a trident flint (see figure 2.12). Such instruments are held by impersonators on Tikal Temple III Lintel 2, Tikal Altar 5, Naranjo Stela 33, and Caracol Stela 6. A looted example of this type of flint object was offered for sale at the Merrin Gallery in New York (<http://merringallery.com/photo-archive/pre-columbian/>). Francis Robicsek and Donald Hales (1984:73) suggested that the intent of the trident flint was to inflict jaguar claw-like wounds, which would certainly fit with the jaguar nature of GIII and the Jaguar Paddler God. Evidence that this might be the case is seen on Dos Pilas Stela 2 and Aguateca Stela 2, which illustrate the ruler wearing a necklace of jaguar feet composed of three claws, and on Tikal Temple I Lintel 2, where the standing jaguar has three prominent claws (see figures 0.7, 0.8).

FLINT, CENTIPEDES, AND VOLCANIC FIRE

One of the reasons the Maya associated fire with flint was the belief that lightning (a natural source of fire) was created by the flint weapons of the thunderbolt gods. Erupting volcanoes are also a natural source of fire, and they are closely related to lightning because in addition to spewing fire, smoke, and ash, they create dramatic lightning displays. In fact, it is likely that the

Maya believed the fire of the lightning bolt originated from the fire of a volcano (Bassie-Sweet 2008:251). Volcanic fires were also the role model for the primordial fires of the creator gods.

Despite the fact that flint is not found in volcanic rock formations, flint was associated with volcanic fire in highland mythology. Volcán Santa María is located beside a major trade route between the Pacific coast and the Guatemalan highlands. The mountain has an extremely long history of volcanic activity and is still considered by the modern Maya to be a sacred location. The *Annals of the Cakchiquels* relates a myth concerning the erupting volcano, centipedes, and flint (Brinton 1885:99; Akkeren 2000:158–159). In this story, a centipede resided in the Santa María crater. The maw of a centipede is often used to represent an earth portal, such as a cave or cenote (Grube and Nahm 1994; Boot 1999; Carrasco and Hull 2002; Taube 2003a; Hull and Carrasco 2004; Kettunen and Davis 2004). I have proposed that centipede mouths were also specifically identified with volcanic craters and their fire (Bassie-Sweet 2008:249). The association is a natural one, for centipedes have poisonous glands and can inflict painful bites. Stepping on a centipede or stepping into the crater of an active volcano creates a burning sensation on the feet. The *Annals* narrative states that thirteen colored stones were contained in the Santa María crater, and the white flint stone (*saqchoq*) was thought to be the heart of the volcano and the source of its fire.

According to the *Annals*, all the warriors of the highland groups gathered at the base of the volcano in an attempt to put out its destructive eruption, but only the Kaqchikel warrior Q'aq'awitz and his assistant Zakitzunun were brave enough to climb the mountain and enter the crater. While Zakitzunun poured water on the inferno, Q'aq'awitz descended into the fire and retrieved the white flint.¹⁴ Q'aq'awitz's name literally means "fire mountain," and it surely reflects his role in this event. There is a thematic parallel between the cultural heroes Q'aq'awitz and Zakitzunun entering the volcanic fire and the Aztec myth concerning the creation of the sun and moon from the primordial fire at Teotihuacán. Q'aq'awitz and Zakitzunun were emulating these immolation actions with their descent into the crater. In Mesoamerican mythology, sun and moon are viewed as a complementary pair, with sun having the senior role and moon being junior, as in the case of the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque, who became the sun and full moon of the new era after succeeding at their trials in the underworld (Christenson 2007:191). The moon is consistently associated with water and is often viewed as a jug of water that is tipped over to create rain. These lunar beliefs suggest that the water-pouring assistant Zakitzunun was identified with the moon. Q'aq'awitz's fiery flint is

analogous to Nanauatzin's flaming arrow and suggests that he was identified with the sun.

The *Annals of the Cakchiquels* indicates that the descent of Q'aq'awitz into the crater fire was immortalized in the Dance of the Centipedes. The association of fire with the Dance of the Centipedes is also found in the *Popol Vuh*, where it was one of the dances performed by the Hero Twins after they had been resurrected from the pit oven. While little is known about this Postclassic dance performance, a colonial dictionary indicates that the participants (presumably dressed as centipedes) placed daggers in their mouths (Christenson 2007:180). While this is evocative of the white flint stone in the centipede crater of Volcán Santa María, it is also reminiscent of GIII's staff and spear that have a flint blade protruding from a centipede mouth.

CENTIPEDES AND FIERY TRANSFORMATIONS

The association of a centipede with fire is reminiscent of the Sun God's Seventh Centipede raptorial bird name and his portraits that feature a fiery centipede headdress. It may be that his centipede imagery refers to the fiery crater from which he emerged as a raptorial bird. A fiery transformation into an avian form was not restricted to the sun. In the *Annals of Cuauhtitlan*, the cultural hero Quetzalcoatl, who was identified with the morning star, jumped into a funeral pyre: "And as soon as his ashes had been consumed, they saw the heart of a quetzal rising upward. And so they knew he had gone to the sky, had entered the sky" (Bierhorst 1992:36).

The transformation of entities into other forms is key to understanding the scene on the Temple of the Inscriptions sarcophagus lid that illustrates K'inich Janaab Pakal I emerging from the jaws of a centipede (see figure 1.19). The reclining K'inich Janaab Pakal I is dressed in the jade skirt of One Ixim, and a number of Late Classic vessels illustrated the apotheosis of the deity One Ixim in a similar reclining pose (K2723). What celestial identity K'inich Janaab Pakal I acquired after his death has long been debated. Many researchers compare his apotheosis to the rising sun. Given that One Ixim was the antecedent for One Hunahpu of the *Popol Vuh*, I am partial to the notion that One Ixim and by extension K'inich Janaab I became the morning star after their resurrections (Bassie-Sweet 2008:113; Bassie-Sweet et al. 2015:113).

A key element of K'inich Janaab Pakal I's portrait is that he has the celt of K'awiil in his forehead, and he is clearly depicted as a thunderbolt. There are a number of illustrations that show One Ixim with this same motif in his forehead. The fact that rulers retained their association with lightning in the

afterlife matches the ethnographic evidence that ancestors had thunderbolt forms. The nominal phrases of several Pusilhá rulers contain the title Uhuk Chapat Chan K'awiil "seventh centipede sky K'awiil" (Prager 2013). This suggests that the term *Uhuk Chapat* might have been a reference to a specific centipede location where these various supernatural transformations took place.

SUMMARY

In the Popol Vuh, the deity Hunahpu and his brother were transformed into new beings after their immolation in the underworld oven, and the underworld rulers did not recognize the twins when they next encountered them. After defeating these underworld lords, Hunahpu rose up and became the sun of the new era. There is significant evidence that this first rising occurred on the day One Ajaw and that it inaugurated the first planting season of the new era. Hunahpu's Classic period antecedent was One Ajaw, and this deity appears in contexts that indicate that he, too, was identified with the sun. While Classic period lords took on the guise of a variety of deities during their lifetimes, they received One Ajaw's *sak huun* headdress when they became king and acquired his persona. They also became identified with the Sun God, and this suggests that the Sun God was the transformed One Ajaw in his role as the sun of the new era. The *sak huun* headdress is another example of a cosmologically authenticated object (Kovacevich and Callaghan 2013).

GIII had martial qualities that match the powerful predatory nature of the jaguar and a direct identification with flint weapons. GIII has been identified as a god who created fire through drilling (Houston and Stuart 1996; Stuart 1998b:408; Taube 1998:441). This function is reminiscent of the principal K'iche' patron god named Tohil (a thunder deity) who provided fire for the first K'iche' lords by pivoting in his shoe like a drill stick (Christenson 2007:211–214). GIII's direct relationship to flint suggests that he was thought to be a type of thunderbolt god, and in the Palenque inscriptions, he was grouped together with the thunderbolt deities GI and GII as the third member of the hearthstone gods. Based on GIII's role as a hearthstone and fire deity, it could easily be argued that he was the deity who drilled the first fire of the current era and from whom the Sun God obtained his heat and flint weapons.

Alternatively, GIII might have been an avatar of the Sun God. The Temple of the Inscriptions details the rituals performed in honor of GI, GII, and GIII on three major Period Endings (9.10.0.0.0, 9.11.0.0.0, and 9.12.0.0.0).

Although GIII is consistently named using his K'inich T_{239:594} moniker, he is named as K'inich Ajaw in one instance in the passage referring to the 9.11.0.0.0 Period Ending. This name is expressed using a portrait of the Sun God wearing One Ajaw's headdress. In light of his K'inich Ajaw title and GIII's obvious war associations, it could be argued that GIII was the Sun God in a jaguar warrior manifestation. There is, however, no evidence to support Thompson's notion that the Sun God transformed into GIII at sunset to traverse the underworld and then transformed back again at sunrise, and I think the term *Jaguar God of the Underworld* should be permanently retired.

A prominent deity associated with warfare in the Maya region is the deity Tlaloc. Rulers carrying GIII's war shield are often dressed in the costume of Tlaloc, carry obsidian weapons identified with Tlaloc, or both. In a previous publication (Bassie-Sweet 2008:119), I argued that GIII was associated with meteors, a phenomenon the Maya identify as a type of thunderbolt, but there is better evidence that it was Tlaloc who was identified with meteors and by extension obsidian weapons. The following chapters explore the nature of Tlaloc and his role as an obsidian and meteor deity.

3

Classic Maya Tlaloc Deities and Their Obsidian Meteor Weapons

This chapter explores the nature and characteristics of the deity Tlaloc in the Maya region and reviews his various avatars, including his feline, caterpillar-serpent, moth, and owl forms. As noted in the introduction, meteors share visual similarities with lightning, and the Mayan terms used to describe meteors were also used to describe lightning. There is significant evidence that the Maya incorporated the Central Mexican Tlaloc deity and his various avatars into their pantheon as types of lightning deities specifically identified with meteors and obsidian (Bassie-Sweet 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2013b; Bassie-Sweet et al. 2015).

METEORS, METEORITES, AND COMETS

Meteoroids are small rocky or metallic debris traveling through space. When meteoroids enter the earth's atmosphere, they catch fire and burn, creating a flash of light called meteors (also known as falling stars or shooting stars). Meteors are most often white, but they can also be blue, green, yellow, or red. Meteor showers are simply numerous meteors that appear to radiate from the same point in the sky. In modern nomenclature, they are usually named after the closest constellation to the radiant point, like the Perseid meteor showers that now occur in mid-August in the vicinity of Perseus. Meteors are most frequently seen at night, but large, bright meteors called fireballs or bolides are visible even during the day. Very large fireballs are

called superbolides and can be accompanied by sonic booms. Large meteors can leave a smoky streak in the sky that can last up to thirty minutes. From a visual perspective, meteors and comets are completely different. Comets are asteroid-like objects that look like white smudges. They remain in the sky for long periods of time and move slowly in relation to the background of stars. Unlike meteors, comets are exceedingly rare.

In Mesoamerica, meteors and comets are described in multiple ways. Most often they are characterized as fiery arrows, torches, cigar butts, worms, caterpillars, snakes, supernatural beings with malevolent qualities, and omens of doom. Comets are visually associated with smoke and fire, as seen in the Q'eqchi' term for comet *butz' chahim* "smoke star" and the Yucatec terms such as *budzal ek* "smoky star" and *kak nob ek* "fire big star" (Sedat 1955:198; Lamb 1981; Köhler 1989, 2002). Welden Lamb (1981:238) noted that the Yucatec term *halal ek* "arrow star" is glossed as "comet that runs," while *u halal dzutan* "arrow of the warlock" is explained as an ignited comet. He insightfully noted that both terms suggest the speed of a meteor, not a comet. The Lacandón Maya believe comets are the discarded cigar butts of the rain gods (Tozzer 1907:158). In a similar fashion, the Ch'orti' characterize meteors as the cigar butt of a god, as do the Yucatec Maya (Brinton 1881, 1883; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:206; Girard 1966:74). In nineteenth-century Yucatán, Daniel Brinton (1883:252) noted that meteors were thought to be stumps of huge cigars thrown down from the sky by thunderbolt deities called Balams. In his description of the Yucatec of Quintana Roo, Alfonso Villa Rojas (1945:102) described a mythical place in the East where all the various Chahk gods gather at the start of the rainy season "to receive orders and arrive at understandings before going out to water the world." The first thunders heard at this time of year are said to be the signal for this meeting. The meteors seen in the East are thought to be the cigarette butts of these Chahks.

As streaks of light, meteors are naturally associated with fire and smoke. This is reflected in the use of the Tzotzil term *ch'ob* "torch" to describe both meteors and St. Elmo's Fire (Laughlin 1975:137). In the Tzotzil and Tzeltal areas, the co-essence called *poslom* is identified as a meteor and a fire (Laughlin 1975:284, 513). In Postclassic highland Chiapas, it was thought that ritual specialists could transform into thunderbolts and balls of fire (meteors) (Núñez de la Vega 1988:133; Calnek 1988:46). Francisco Núñez de la Vega noted that one of the co-essences of ritual specialists could take the form of *tzibuizin*, which he identified as cognate with the Postclassic Aztec deity Xiucoatl (Brinton 1894:20). Karl Taube (2000) has identified a number of Mesoamerican deities including Xiucoatl as meteors, and these will be discussed below. The identification of leaders with thunderbolts and meteors is still found in highland Chiapas

(Guiteras-Holmes 1961; Vogt 1969; Hermitte 1964; Nash 1970; Laughlin 1977; Spero 1987; Pitarch 2010:44). The leaders of the community are thought to use their thunderbolt and meteor co-essences to protect the community. After death, the souls of these same leaders are thought to live on in the mountains surrounding the community and continue their guardian roles.¹ Edwin Braakhuis (2010:31–32) noted the Q'eqchi' and Ixil beliefs that mountain gods take the form of meteors or send each other messages in the form of meteors.

THE MYTHOLOGY OF METEORS AND OBSIDIAN

As noted in the introduction, the so-called star wars logograph includes a star sign with water falling from it. Citing a number of ethnographic sources that relate meteors to war, David Stuart (1995, 2011) has suggested that the star refers to a meteor, that is, a falling star. However, across Mesoamerica, meteors and meteorites are not associated with water but are thought to be the obsidian arrows, darts, and spears of certain deities (Tozzer 1907:157; Laughlin 1975:513, 1988:423; Köhler 1989, 2002; Tedlock 1992:180–181; Milbrath 1999; Taube 2000, 2000b:292, 330). A colonial period K'iche' term for a meteor is *ch'olanic ch'umil* “star that makes war” (Tedlock 1992:180). While the Lacandón Maya and Tzotzil refer to meteors as arrows, the K'iche' specifically call them flaming arrows, and they believe the ancient obsidian points and blades they encounter in their fields are the remnants of a meteor.² The identification of meteors with obsidian is also reflected in the characterization of meteorites and obsidian as the feces of stars. As noted by Carlos Trenary (1987–1988) and Ulrich Köhler (1989), such terms are found in Central Mexico languages as well as in Ch'ol, Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal, K'iche', Kaqchiquel, and Yucatec. The description of obsidian as excrement of stars can be compared to the Mayan terms for charcoal and embers that literally mean the “shit of fire” (Kaufman 2003:504–505). In this context, charcoal and embers are what remain after the firewood is spent. In a similar fashion, coffee grounds are referred to as coffee shit (Laughlin 1975:93). Obsidian is not being compared to feces per se but rather metaphorically as the remnants of a shooting star.³

There are four general categories of animals in Maya taxonomies—mammals, reptiles/amphibians, birds, and fish—that are effectively defined by their modes of locomotion: walkers, crawlers, fliers, and swimmers, respectively (Hopkins 1980). Snakes, caterpillars, and worms are thus classified together. This is reflected in the Ch'ol term *lukum* “worm,” which also can be used to refer to snakes (Hopkins et al. 2010), and the Tzotzil term *chon* “snake” that also describes caterpillars (Acheson 1962:4; Laughlin 1988:192). It is thought

that when meteors hit the ground, they can take the form of snakes, caterpillars, worms, or maggots. The Tojolabal characterize *sansewal* as lightning or meteors that take the form of little worms of fire or small black snakes (Lenkersdorf 1979:13, 312, 325, 370). The Codex Telleriano-Remensis illustrates a meteor as a red, yellow, and blue striped caterpillar with spines along its back (Köhler 2002:4). A similarity between these stinging animals and obsidian is that both can inflict painful wounds just from handling them. Many obsidian eccentrics resemble such creatures.

Charles Wagley (1949:65) recorded several myths regarding the co-essences of the Mam of Santiago Chimaltenango in northwestern highland Guatemala. There is a common belief that whatever happens to a person's co-essence will happen simultaneously to the person. Numerous stories tell of a hunter killing a puma or jaguar in the mountains, only to find out later that someone in the village died at the same time. The explanation is that the prey was actually the co-essence of the deceased. In Wagley's story, a hunter killed a puma with his machete, and at the same time a young man in the village was struck by a ball of fire and subsequently died. The wounds on the puma and the man were on the same parts of the body, and there was consensus that the hunter had killed the man's co-essence. The interesting part of this story is that a machete, the modern equivalent of ancient stone weapons, was equated with a ball of fire. It is reminiscent of obsidian and flint weapons that were identified with fiery meteors and thunderbolts, respectively.

Given the association of meteors with weapons of war, it is not surprising that meteors were viewed as omens of illness, death, and destruction throughout Mesoamerica (Alcorn 1984:143; Tedlock 1992:181). As an example, a flu epidemic in the village of Chan Kom was believed to be caused by the Geminid meteor shower that had been particularly impressive that year (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:276). Oliver La Farge and Douglas Byers (1931:129) noted the Jacalteca belief that if a falling star (*tabuwi'*) bursts over a house, someone in the house will die. A meteor falling near a house is a sign of impending illness. The Tzotzil believe the *poslom* co-essence, which takes the form of meteors, causes illness (Laughlin 1975:284). The Ch'orti' think a meteor has the ability to destroy crops and is a sign that someone has died or will die (Metz 2006:130, personal communication 2017).

REPRESENTATIONS OF OBSIDIAN

Some depictions of Classic period spears incorporated both flint and obsidian, like the one on Yaxchilán Lintel 41 (figure 3.1). The spearhead itself was

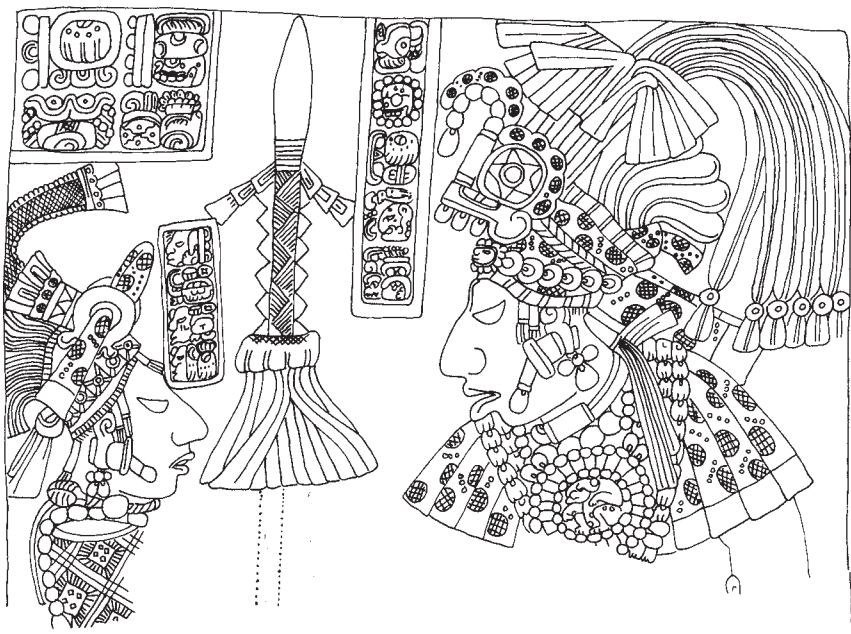


FIGURE 3.1. *Yaxchilán Lintel 41* (drawing after Ian Graham)

made from flint, but obsidian points were imbedded into the shaft and form a zigzag-like pattern. While flint is more durable, obsidian makes a sharper tool for cutting and slicing. For example, it has been noted that during the twentieth century, when the Lacandón Maya were still frequently hunting with bows and arrows, they preferred obsidian arrowheads over those of flint because they were more effective at killing prey (Nations and Clark 1983). The Dominican priest Francisco Ximénez (1967:328) commented on the superiority of obsidian battle weapons used by the Postclassic K'iche' over the metal swords of the Spanish. Quoting the conquistador Bernal Diaz, he stated that they were so sharp they could cut off a horse's head.

The manner in which obsidian is depicted in Mesoamerican art is varied. At Teotihuacán, obsidian blades are illustrated with a hooked shape that is decorated with a zigzag motif (Séjourné 1956:122) (figure 3.2). In some examples, the blade has blood dripping from the end, a bloody heart impaled on it, or both. These obsidian blades are found in many contexts ranging from handheld objects to elements of place names. Such blades are often seen decorating the headdresses of Tlaloc warriors. The obsidian zigzag motif is also



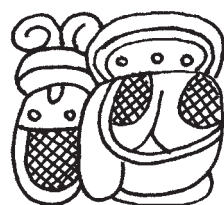
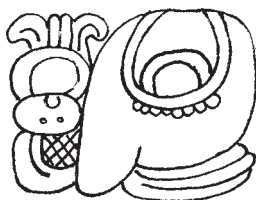
FIGURE 3.2.
*Teotihuacán warrior
with obsidian blade
headdress and
obsidian weapon*

found in Postclassic Central Mexican codices. As an example, the name of the ruler Itzcoatl “obsidian serpent” was represented by a serpent with either obsidian points along its back (Matrícula de Tributos folio 2r) or the zigzag design (Codex Telleriano-Remensis folio 29r). As will be discussed below, the Maya frequently incorporated the Teotihuacán obsidian zigzag design into their portrayals of Tlaloc, but their semantic markers for obsidian itself are quite different.

Illustrations of obsidian objects with hooked shapes are quite common in Maya art (Schele 1984; Schele and Miller 1986; Nielsen and Helmke 2008). As an example, the curved shape of a prismatic blade is found on a personified obsidian bloodletter used for penis perforation (Joralemon 1974). In hieroglyphic texts, the T712 *ch’ab* “penance/creation” sign is represented by a hook-shaped obsidian lancet that resembles a stylized fist (Schele 1984:27–38; Houston et al. 2006:130–132; Stone and Zender 2011:75).⁴ The lancet is marked with the T24 lightning luminosity sign, which is consistent with the notion that the Maya categorized meteors as a type of lighting (figure 3.3a).

Bowls containing the T712 obsidian bloodletter as well as prismatic blades, stingray spines, and cords used in bloodletting are illustrated on a number of Yaxchilán lintels, such as Lintels 13, 14, 15, 17, 24, and 25. On Lintel 25, the

FIGURE 3.3. a. T₇₁₂ ch'ab sign,
 b. u ch'ab u ak'ab couplet, c. u
 ch'ab u ak'ab conflated signs



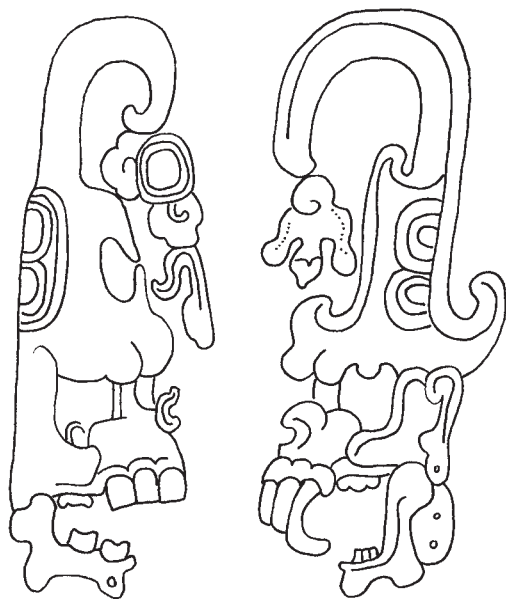
T₂₄ sign infixed on the T₇₁₂ obsidian bloodletter has been replaced with a T₅₀₄ *ak'ab* “night, darkness” sign (see figure 6.3). In many hieroglyphic texts, the T₇₁₂ sign appears in the metaphoric couplet *u ch'ab* (T₇₁₂) *u ak'ab* (T₅₀₄) “his creation, his darkness” that is associated with acts of creation and devotion involving bloodletting (MacLeod and Houston cited in Stuart 1995:231; Stuart 2005a; Knowlton 2012) (figure 3.3b). Stuart (2005a:283) commented that the *ch'ab-ak'ab* couplet “is so pervasive in the Classic texts that it can be rightly regarded as one of the principal operating forces of kinship and its ritual duties.” In some examples of the *ch'ab-ak'ab* couplet, the T₇₁₂ and T₅₀₄ signs are conflated and the T₅₀₄ sign takes the place of the T₂₄ infix, just as it does in the Yaxchilán example (figure 3.3c). Conflation of signs is a common convention. There are many examples in Maya art of obsidian eccentrics, axes, spearheads, sacrificial blades, and scepters that are infixed with the T₅₀₄ *ak'ab* “night, darkness” sign. Marc Zender has noted that the *ak'ab* “night, darkness” sign is used as a semantic marker on some animals to indicate their nocturnal

nature, and it has long been thought that the T₅₀₄ sign appears in these obsidian contexts as a semantic marker to indicate the black translucent nature of obsidian (Zender cited in Houston et al. 2006:13; Stone and Zender 2011:145). However, given the pervasiveness of the *ch'ab-ak'ab* couplet and its conflated form, it is apparent that the appearance of the *ak'ab* “night, darkness” sign on obsidian bloodletters in Maya art is a clear example of how hieroglyphic text is directly incorporated into imagery (Bassie-Sweet 2019; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins in press).

Objects in Maya art can be presented in personified forms. The handles on obsidian bloodletters and stingray spine bloodletters that were used to perforate the penis were depicted as a jaw-less zoomorphic creature wearing a headdress composed of three knots and long feathers (Joralemon 1974). Either a stingray spine or an obsidian blade marked with T₂₄ or T₅₀₄ signs protrudes out of the mouth like a tongue, such as the bloodletter held by the young K'inich Kan Bahlam II on the Tablet of the Foliated Cross (see figure 1.17). This zoomorph with its three-knot motif is also found decorating costume elements, like the ends of loin cloths positioned over the groin (see figure 0.10).⁵ Just the feathers and knots can function as the *pars pro toto* form of the bloodletter. For instance, a number of parentage statements employ the T₇₁₂ *ch'ab* sign to express the relationship between a father and son. On Naranjo Stela 8 (F7), the knotted headdress of the bloodletter zoomorph substitutes for the T₇₁₂ sign.

The obsidian blade itself is personified in many images. On Piedras Negras Stela 7 and Stela 8, the ruler is depicted dressed in Teotihuacán-style costumes while holding a spear in his right hand. The hook-shaped obsidian spearhead is marked with the T₅₀₄ *ak'ab* sign and takes the form of a skeletal being (figure 3.4). Hanging from the distal point of the spear is a Teotihuacán-style symbol for a bloody heart. Direct analogies can be made to the numerous images of hearts impaled on obsidian knives that are found in the art of Teotihuacán (figure 3.2). Many illustrations of hook-shaped obsidian eccentrics are tipped with the sacrificed heart motif, such as those found on Dos Pilas Stela 2 and Aguateca Stela 2 (see figures 0.7, 0.8). Both of these monuments depict Dos Pilas Ruler 3 with obsidian eccentrics decorating his costume elements. His loin cloth and hip cloth display Tlaloc's face with obsidian bloodletters curling out from the mouth and tipped with the sacrificed heart symbol. The sacrificed heart symbolizes the lethal nature of these obsidian objects and their direct association with human sacrifice. The sacrificed heart is distinct from the T₅₀₆ sign that represents the Mayan word *ohl* “heart.”

FIGURE 3.4. *Personified obsidian spearheads, Piedras Negras Stela 7 and Stela 8*



Another example of Teotihuacán sacrificed heart symbolism is featured in the Teotihuacán-style costume of the Copán ruler K'ahk' Uti' Witz' K'awiil depicted on Copán Stela 6 (figure 3.5). The apron and shoes of K'ahk' Uti' Witz' K'awiil are decorated with the sacrificed heart motif. In Teotihuacán art, fire is illustrated as a swirl of flame that is quite distinct from the T122 smoke-flame scroll of Maya art. Beneath the sacrificed heart motif on the apron are three Teotihuacán fire signs. The implication of this juxtaposing is that sacrificial hearts were destined not only to be consumed directly by a god but also to be burned as an offering to him. Such sacrificial burned offerings were a pan-Mesoamerican tradition. The fact that the Copán artist chose to use the Teotihuacán fire symbols is significant.

THE TRAITS OF TLALOC

Tlaloc is most often illustrated as a skeletal head that lacks a mandible (figure 3.6). His nose is often represented by a tri-lobed element that resembles the number three or the capital letter E. Obsidian eccentrics in this shape have been recovered from archaeological contexts. Tlaloc's most obvious diagnostic trait is his goggle-like eyes.⁶ It has long been recognized that these eyes represent the finger holes of an atlatl (Nuttall 1891), and the implication of

this identification is that Tlaloc was specifically equated with this type of weapon. This is certainly apparent in the weapons held by Maya lords who are dressed in the costume of Tlaloc and carry *atlatls*, such as Ruler 3 of Dos Pilas-Aguateca (see figures 0.7, 0.8).

While Tlaloc consistently wears earrings marked with a *k'an* “yellow” sign, the primary element of his headdress is the so-called Central Mexican year sign. Darts and fire torches are also frequently seen in his headdress, as are bundles of *Tagetes lucida* (yellow marigold) flowers that were used as incense offerings (Taube 2000; Christenson 2007:233; Nielsen 2006). Some Tlaloc headdresses also have a rectangular base decorated with tassels. What the tassels represent is uncertain, but it is a common form found in the art of Teotihuacán (see the Atetelco murals).

In many Tlaloc depictions, his effigy, his headdress, or both are placed on a jaguarhide bundle, such as the Tlaloc pictured on vessel K1905, the Yaxchilán Structure 21 murals, Lintel 25, and Stela 35 (figures 3.5, 6.3, 6.4).⁷ Other Tlaloc bundles are made from deerskin, like the Tlaloc headdresses featured on Dos Pilas Stela 2 and Aguateca Stela 2 that are worn by Dos Pilas-Aguateca Ruler 3 (see figures 0.7, 0.8). The headdress is attached to a deerskin bundle in the form of a deer haunch, which includes the hoof of the deer as a semantic marker to distinguish it from jaguar skin. As will be discussed below, the owl and moth manifestations of Tlaloc are also presented as sacred bundles in a number of contexts.

The Tlaloc headdress often also includes the headdress and accoutrements that represent the office of a Ch'ajom. An example is found on

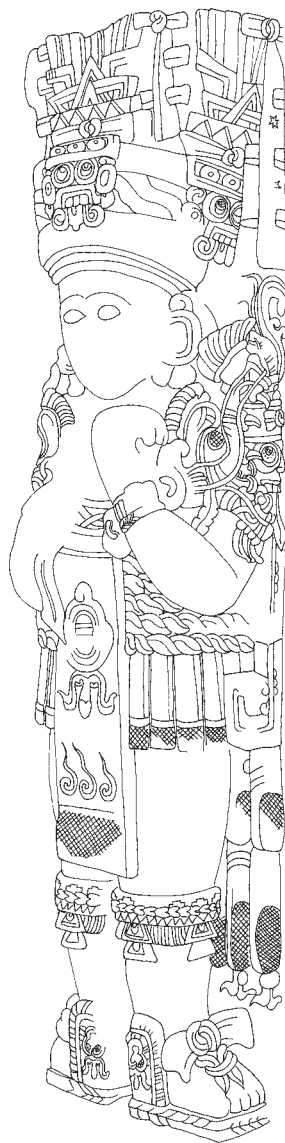


FIGURE 3.5. *Copán Stela 6*
(drawing after Barbara Fash)

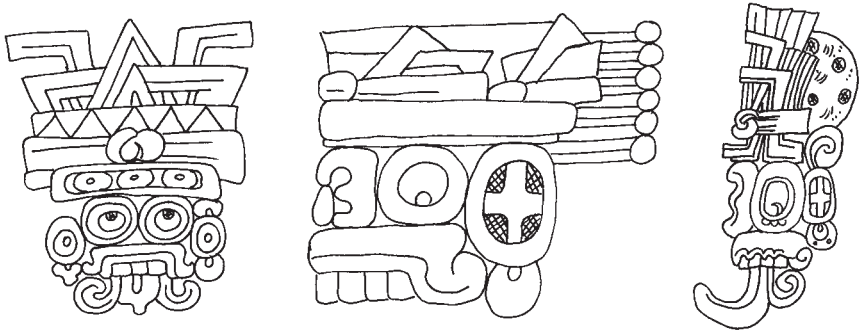


FIGURE 3.6. *Tlaloc portraits*

Yaxchilán Lintel 25 that illustrates a double-headed caterpillar-serpent (the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan, see below) with a Tlaloc emerging from the jaws of the lower head (see figure 6.3). The Ch'ajom insignia is placed over Tlaloc's forehead at the base of the year sign and jaguar bundle headdress. The upper head of the Lintel 25 serpent disgorges a female named Lady Ohl who is carrying a shield and a double-headed flint spear. She wears a face mask in the form of Tlaloc as well as Tlaloc's jaguar-skin bundle and year sign headdress. Like the lower Tlaloc, a Ch'ajom insignia is pictured at the base of the year sign. However, there is also a second Ch'ajom insignia above Lady Ohl's forehead, indicating that she is a Ch'ajom. She has the bound ponytail of a Ch'ajom, which confirms this identification. Kneeling before Lady Ohl is Lady K'abal Xook, the wife of the Yaxchilán king Shield Jaguar III. She too wears a Ch'ajom insignia on her forehead and has the bound ponytail. On Yaxchilán Stela 35, another Yaxchilán queen also wears a Tlaloc headdress, Ch'ajom insignia, and ponytail (figure 3.7).

WAXAKLAJUUN UB'AAH KAN AS A MANIFESTATION OF TLALOC

In Maya mythology, deities had various manifestations. As an example, the creator grandfather Itzamnaaj had turtle, laughing falcon, opossum, and conch shell forms (Taube 1992a; Bassie-Sweet 2000, 2008). Like these deities, Tlaloc had a number of manifestations that included creatures with caterpillar-serpent, feline, moth, and owl features that will be discussed below. In Maya art, Tlaloc is frequently seen emerging from the mouth of a double-headed serpent that is named in hieroglyphic texts as Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan, roughly translated as "18 are the faces of the snake" (Schele and Freidel

1990; Houston and Stuart 1996:299; Stuart 2000a:493). As noted in chapter 2, the Chahk deity K'awiil is often portrayed with a leg that takes the form of a thunderbolt serpent. In the Copán Structure 26 temple inscription, Tlaloc's leg takes the form of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan in a manner thematically parallel to the depictions of the leg of the K'awiil as a thunderbolt serpent (figure 3.8). In other words, the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan was a manifestation of Tlaloc (Bassie-Sweet et al. 2015; Bassie-Sweet 2019).

An examination of the attributes of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan indicates that it has a snake-like body (hence his name includes the word *kan* “snake”). While most frequently illustrated as a double-headed serpent, the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan is occasionally depicted with the tail of a rattlesnake, such as on Piedras Negras Stela 9 (figure 3.27). A stucco building facade at Acanceh illustrates a series of mountain toponyms with each place represented by a different animal (Miller 1991). One such place name is the rattlesnake form of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan (figure 3.9a). The Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan cradles a hooked obsidian eccentric with its body. The body is shown with the underbelly of a snake, but it is also marked with Teotihuacán-style Lepidoptera signs.

Lepidoptera include butterflies and moths, and the Maya employ the same term for both of these insects.

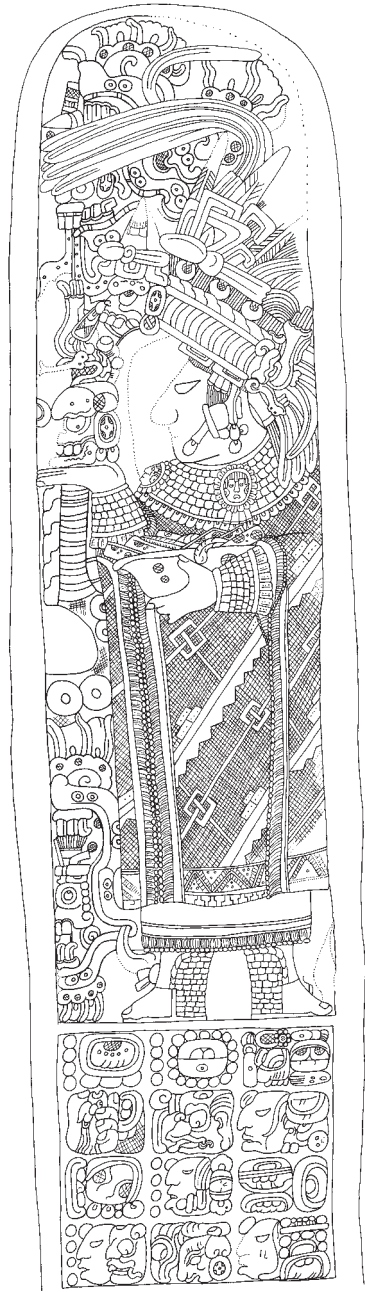
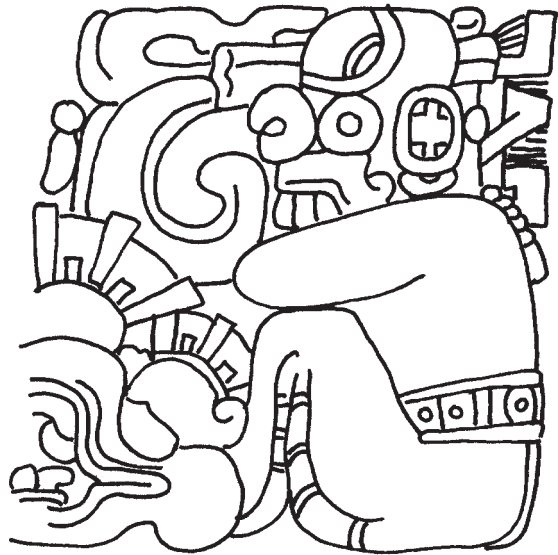


FIGURE 3.7. *Yaxchilán Stela 35 front*

FIGURE 3.8. *Tlaloc with Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan leg, Copán Structure 26*



As an example, large moths and butterflies are called *pejpem* (Ch'ol) and *pehpen* (Tzeltal), while smaller ones are *sulup* (Ch'ol) and *supul* (Tzeltal) (Hunn 1977:280–285; Juan Jesús Vásquez, personal communication 2004). This same lack of distinction is found in Nahuatl, where *papalotl* refers to both butterflies and moths. As Taube (2000) has demonstrated, a primary diagnostic trait of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan is stylized Lepidoptera wings and antennae that suggest it is a type of caterpillar (the larval form of Lepidoptera) (vessels K1350, K1351, K1810, K1899, K3057, K3072, K4993, K5621, K8266). Caterpillars were seen as a kind of serpent, as reflected in the entry in a late sixteenth-century Tzotzil dictionary where the term *chon* refers to both snakes and caterpillars (Laughlin 1988:192). On Yaxchilán Lintel 25, the double-headed Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan has a body like a caterpillar.

There is a series of pottery vessels that depict just the head of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan caterpillar-serpent (Robicsek and Hales 1981:table 15, table 16). In these examples, the Lepidoptera wings decorate the eyebrow and snout of the beast. The superior molding of the Acanceh stucco facade is adorned with a series of Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan eyes, with their eyebrows decorated with Lepidoptera wings. The pupils are illustrated as cross-hatched circles. In Maya art, cross-hatching is a convention used to indicate the color black.⁸ The obsidian zigzag design forms the base of the Lepidoptera wings and indicates the close association of obsidian with such wings. Another example of the

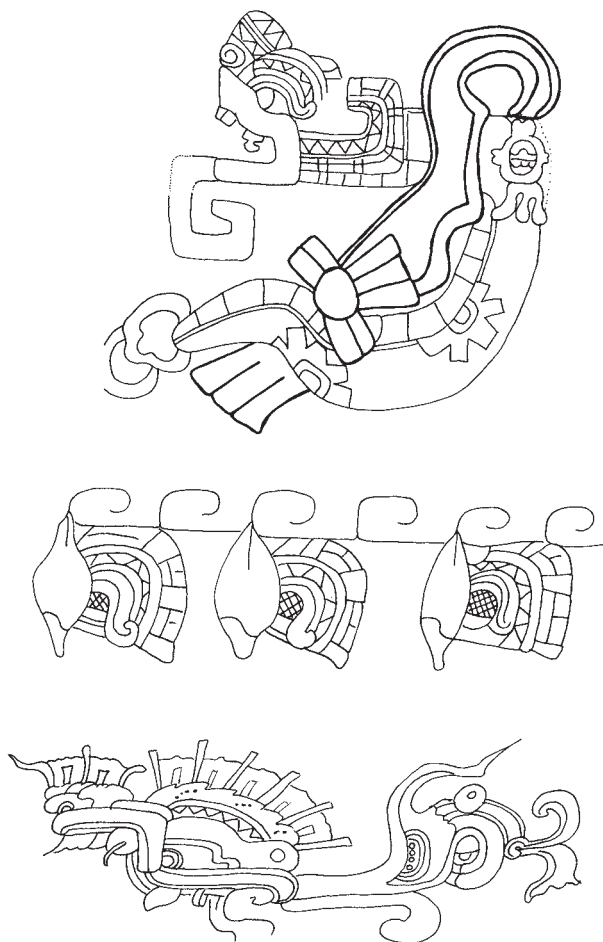


FIGURE 3.9.
*a. Acanceh
 Waxaklajuun Ub'aah
 Kan, b. Acanceh
 stucco facade, c. K1350
 Waxaklajuun Ub'aah
 Kan*

zigzag design is found on the eye of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan in the place name below the molding (figure 3.9b). Similar motifs are seen on vessel K1350 and BOD table 15b; each illustrates two Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan heads decorated with Lepidoptera wings and the zigzag motif (figure 3.9c). This same juxtaposing of Lepidoptera wings and the zigzag design is found on the border of the hipcloth and apron worn by Dos Pilas-Aguateca Ruler 3 (see figures 0.7, 0.8). The Lepidoptera wings on the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan are semantic markers to indicate it is a caterpillar. Although the Lepidoptera wing elements of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan have been identified as those of a butterfly (Taube 2000:282–285), there is clear evidence that Tlaloc was

identified with the Black Witch Moth (Bassie-Sweet 2011, 2019; Bassie-Sweet et al. 2015:136–138) (see discussion below).

As Taube (1992b) has cogently argued, the prototype for the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan is the Teotihuacán serpent illustrated on the facade of the Temple of the Feathered Serpent that he has nicknamed “the Teotihuacán war serpent.” As noted by a number of authors, there were eighteen of these beings on each side of the staircase. The skin of this serpent is formed by shell-like platelets or spangles, and it wears a Tlaloc headdress. In Maya art, many illustrations of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan have this platelet surface, particularly when worn as a headdress, as on Piedras Negras Stela 7, Piedras Negras Stela 8, and Bonampak Stela 3 (figures 3.18, 3.31, 5.7). The remains of such platelet headdresses have been found in royal tombs (Stone 1989; Bell et al. 2004). On Naranjo Stela 2, the ruler K'ahk'Tiliw Chan wears a Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan headdress, and the rattlesnake tail of the beast appears between the ruler's legs (figure 3.10). The loincloth apron and shield of K'ahk'Tiliw Chan are also decorated with images of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan.

Taube (1992b, 2000) noted that the Teotihuacán war serpent Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan was the precursor for the Postclassic Xiuhcoatl serpent of Central Mexico that has similar Lepidoptera wings and often takes the form of a serpent or a caterpillar. As noted by Taube, the Xiuhcoatl is the personification of an atlatl and a spear. Taube observed that the snout of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan has a back-curved shape that is reminiscent of the hooked end of an atlatl and that ceremonial atlatls are often depicted as the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan, such as on Bonampak Stela 3 (figure 5.7). Taube also noted that meteors were characterized as obsidian spear darts or arrows and were thought to be manifestations of Xiuhcoatl (one of the meanings of the word *xiuh* is meteor). The back-curved snouts of these beasts are often decorated with numerous round star signs that likely refer to a meteor shower. Given that there were eighteen images of the Teotihuacán war serpent on the Temple of the Feathered Serpent, it is possible that the name Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan “18 the faces of the snake” refers to a meteor shower (Bassie-Sweet 2011; Bassie-Sweet et al. 2015:132).⁹

Meteor showers were associated with the drilling of fire, and a reed dart or arrow frequently served as the vertical drill in Central Mexican new fire ceremonies (Seler 1990–2000:3:213, Taube 2000). The role of the Xiuhcoatl as a fire drill was noted by Sahagún, and a number of scenes illustrate fire being drilled on the back of a Xiuhcoatl (Seler 1990–2000:3:215; Taube 2000). Flames were frequently illustrated as feathers in Central Mexican art, and atlatls are often shown with fire-like feathers in place of the round star signs (Taube 2000:274). Many examples of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan headdress include a burning

dart or torch in reference to the fire nature of this deity (Nielson 2003).

The Yaxchilán ruler Bird Jaguar IV is illustrated on Lintel 8 in the midst of a battle, while Lintel 41 shows him either preparing for this battle or returning from it (see figures 0.12, 3.1). In both scenes, he carries a long spear. The caterpillar body of the Xiuhcoatl represents an obsidian dart (Taube 2000), and illustrations of this beast depict its body as trapezoid segments (figure 3.11). Below the spearhead on Lintel 41, two such trapezoid segments flare out from the spear shaft. Below this pair of stylized caterpillar bodies is a series of obsidian chips embedded in the staff. The chips form the zigzag pattern that is used at Teotihuacán to represent obsidian. Long spears were the preferred weapon in the Classic period for close-contact warfare (Aoyama and Graham 2015:14). On Copán Stela 6 and Naranjo Stela 2, the leg ornaments of the ruler are decorated with the obsidian zigzag pattern and the trapezoid segments (figures 3.5, 3.10). Similar trapezoid segments appear on the leg ornaments of a ruler illustrated on Naranjo Stela 19 and Copán Structure 26 (figures 3.12, 3.19). The implication of this imagery is that the legs of the ruler were thought to be like obsidian spears. In other words, the ruler did not just throw Tlaloc's meteor spear, he was equated with it. Such a concept fits with the many examples of lords dressed as the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan. As noted by Stephen Houston and David Stuart (1998), donning the costume of a deity transforms the individual into that god.

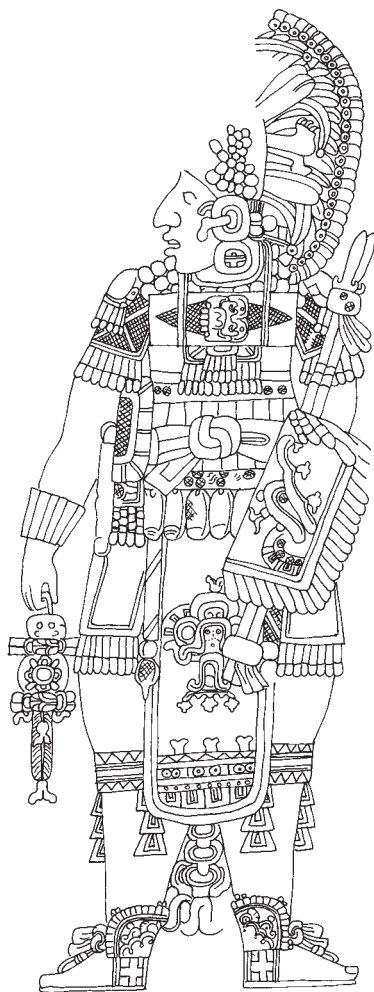


FIGURE 3.10. *Naranjo Stela 2 (drawing after Ian Graham)*

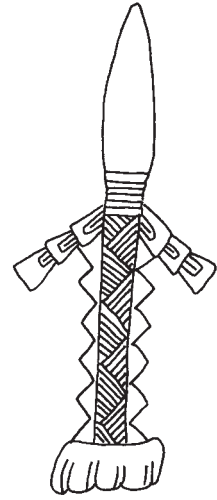
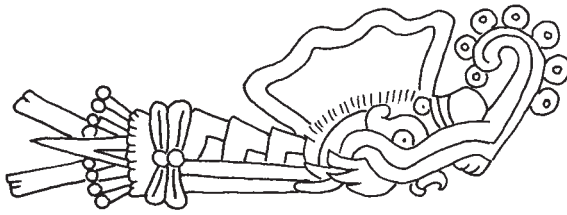


FIGURE 3.II. *Yaxchilán Lintel 41 spear, Xiuhcoatl*



FIGURE 3.I2. *Trapezoid motif, Copán Structure 26*

FELINES

Tlaloc appears to have had both jaguar and puma manifestations. Before addressing these avatars, a brief discussion about the nature of felines and their portrayal in Maya art is necessary. Jaguars (*Panthera onca*) (Proto-Mayan **b'ahlam*) and pumas (*Puma concolor*) (Proto-Mayan **koj*, Kaufman 2003:582) have ranges that are quite similar and that extend across the Maya region. Both of these predators stalk and pounce on their quarry. The preferred method of killing is to grab the head of their prey and pierce it with their powerful jaws. This is thematically similar to the standard convention used in Maya art to represent the capture of a foe where the victor grabs the hair of the victim. The obvious visual difference between jaguars and pumas is that jaguars are spotted with a black rosette pattern, while pumas are born with black spots but lose them as adults. In comparison to pumas, jaguars have bigger heads and are much larger, stockier, and heavier. Jaguars also differ from pumas in that they are powerful swimmers, and they often have territory adjacent to water sources. Although the term *koj* “puma” has a wide distribution in Mayan languages, a sixteenth-century Tzotzil dictionary refers to pumas as *tzajal bolom* “reddish jaguar,” while the Ch'ol refer to pumas as *chäk b'ajlum* “red jaguar” in reference to their fur, which can range from yellow-brown to deep reddish (Laughlin 1988:504; Hopkins et al. 2010:19). These terms indicate that pumas are thought to be a type of jaguar and imply that spotted jaguars are the dominant category.

There is a jaguar logograph (T751) that highlights its fangs and short pointed ears (figure 3.13a). Phonetic substitution patterns indicate that the T751 sign represents the word *b'ahlam* “jaguar.” The *b'ahlam* sign frequently, but not always, features the spotted coat of the jaguar, and it often has *ak'ab* “night, darkness” signs on its cheek to mark it as an animal of the night. The sign used to represent water is a logograph of a water lily. In some instances of jaguar portraiture, the jaguar has a water lily on its forehead that is likely a reference to this feline’s love of water. The *b'ahlam* logograph is a very common sign in the hieroglyphic corpus and is often found in the nominal phrases of Maya lords. As an example, the name of the Seibal king Yich'aak Bahlam “the claw of the jaguar” is composed of a logograph of a jaguar paw and the *b'ahlam* sign (Stuart 1987:27) (figure 3.13b). The jaguar paw logograph is used as the generic sign for “claw.” The same is true for the logographs composed of a jaguar’s tail that were used to represent the word *neh* “tail” and a headless jaguar (T832) that was used to represent the word *k'ew* “pelt” (Stone and Zender 2011:205; Zender et al. 2016). These are cases where the prime example of a category is used to represent the entire category, and they demonstrate the high status of the jaguar.

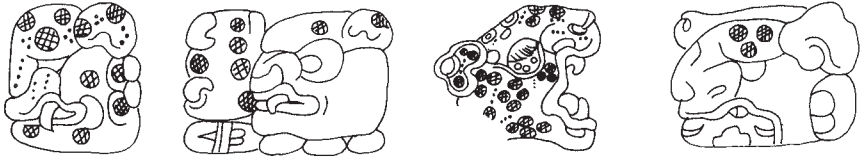


FIGURE 3.13. *a. jaguar glyph, b. jaguar claw and jaguar glyph, c. hix, d. puma*

In Classic and Postclassic period inscriptions, the fourteenth day name of the *tzolk'in* calendar is represented by a logograph of a feline's eye with three black spots (the T₅₂₄ sign), and it occasionally has phonetic complements that indicate it represents the word *hix* (Stuart 1987:19; Stuart and Houston 1994:21). The fourteenth *tzolk'in* day name is also *Hix* in the Postclassic–early colonial period calendar of Yucatán and in the surviving highland calendars (Akateko, Chuj, Ixil, Kaqchikel, K'iche', Pokomchi, Q'anjob'al, Mam, and Tzeltal) (some sources write the word as *ix*). In Q'eqchi', *hix* refers to a jaguar, although the term does not appear in other Mayan languages outside of the calendar context (Sedat 1955:264; Wilson 1972:399). Evidence that *Hix* represents a jaguar is found in an AD 1722 record of K'iche' day names where the fourteenth day name is not *Hix* but rather *Balam* “jaguar,” suggesting an equivalency between the terms *hix* and *balam* (Weeks et al. 2009:77). In a colonial period Yucatec document regarding day names, *Hix* is described as “The fierce jaguar. Bloody his mouth; bloody his claws. Devourer of flesh. Killer of men” (Thompson 1950:82). As Thompson noted, the day name *Hix* is parallel to the Central Mexican calendar day name Ocelotl “jaguar.”¹⁰

Not all day signs retain the same value outside of a calendar context, but the T₅₂₄ *hix* sign does. In some of these instances, *hix* is represented by a jaguar that is distinguished from the *b'ahlam* jaguar by its T₅₂₄ eye (figure 3.13c). Portraits of felines marked with the T₅₂₄ *hix* sign or named as such in an adjacent caption text are common in Maya art. For instance, vessel K₇₇₁ depicts a *way* animal co-essence that takes the form of a roaring male feline sprawled across a cartouche that represents a pool of water (figure 3.14). The personal name of this feline in the adjacent caption text is composed of a water lily blossom (water), a cartouche representing the pool of water, and the T₅₂₄ *hix* sign (Stuart and Houston 1994:21; Grube and Nahm 1994:690). The illustration of this water pool feline is a full-figure depiction of his glyphic name (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins in press). Vessel K₇₉₁ illustrates another water pool *hix*, and in this case the feline head is tilted backward and his mouth is wide open in the process of an exaggerated roar. Yet another *hix* co-essence is

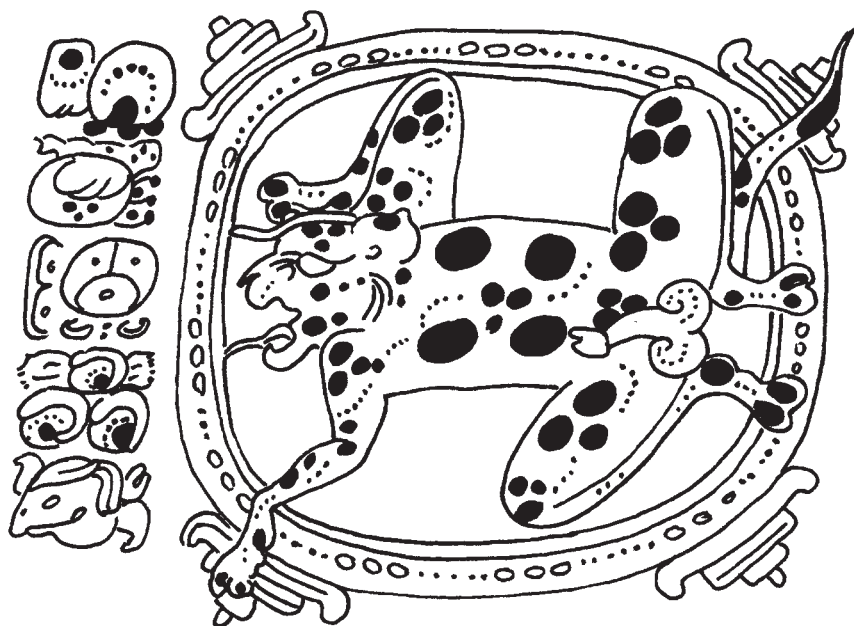


FIGURE 3.14. *Hix jaguar, vessel K771 (drawing after Justin Kerr)*

seen on vessel K792, and he, too, is illustrated roaring. In the Bonampak battle mural, the ruler Yajaw Chan Muwaan is decked out in a tunic of feline skin (Miller and Brittenham 2013:fig. 119). He wears a headdress that features a huge feline head with the *hix* sign in its eye. The mouth of the *hix* is wide open in a ferocious roar. On the Palenque Palace Tablet, the king K'inich Janaab Pakal I sits on a throne decorated with a *hix* feline with a roaring mouth (figure 5.1). Although jaguars, pumas, and ocelots scream and growl, only jaguars roar. Some researchers have concluded that the *hix* feline is an ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*) (Spanish *tigrilla*) (Helmke et al. 2015).¹¹ Given that the *hix* feline is illustrated roaring, I find this identification unconvincing. Furthermore, the Kaua description of a killer feline hardly fits the timid nature of the ocelot.

The identification of the *hix* feline as a jaguar raises the question, why did the Maya have two terms for jaguars? Imitating the territorial and mating vocalizations of game animals to attract them is a common hunting technique used all over the world. In the past, Maya hunters lured jaguars by re-creating their roar using a string and gourd instrument that imitates this sound (Emmons 1996:73; Nations 2006:56). Male jaguars roar as a warning to other territorial and mating competitors and also during coupling with the female (the

courtship sequence involves a fairly intense physical struggle). The fact that the K771 *bix* displays not only testicles but a prominent penis suggests that he is in mating mode. Jaguars are the supreme predators of the forest, and warriors were naturally identified with this feline across Mesoamerica. I suggest that the *bix* feline represents a roaring male jaguar defending his territory, and as such, he makes a quintessential role model for Maya lords. A jaguar roar sounds like a cross between a low-pitched grunt and a cough. It is possible that *bix* is an onomatopoeic word that imitates the jaguar's roar.

The jaguar is ubiquitous in Maya art. Numerous Maya lords include *b'alam* and *bix* in their name phrases, and Maya lords are often depicted dressed as jaguars or wearing jaguar-skin elements.¹² Prime examples of this attire are seen in the Bonampak murals, where various warriors sport jaguar-skin capes, tunics, sandals, and headdresses in both court and battle scenes (Miller and Brittenham 2013). Jaguar skin frequently decorates the base of spears. Jaguar skin was also incorporated into thrones as a symbol of high status, and it was used to cover codices. Jaguars and jaguar skins are particularly well rendered on Ik site pottery that often features the distinctive rosette pattern, the orange of the fur, and the creamy tones of the underbelly. The remains of jaguars are a frequent component in tombs and caches (Pohl 1983). For instance, Yaxchilán Structure 23 Tomb 3 contained twenty-seven jaguar claws (García Moll 2004:268), while jaguar teeth have been recovered at Uaxactún (Smith 1950:tables 6, 90). The placement of ungula phalanges on either side of the Uaxactún Burial A31 occupant indicated that the body had been covered by a jaguar skin. Jaguar bone was frequently carved, as in an ulna found in Piedras Negras Burial 82.

Nikolai Grube and Werner Nahm (1994) cataloged thirteen different co-essences that have jaguar characteristics, and even today, jaguar co-essences are believed to be among the strongest. Copán Altar Q documents a series of sixteen Copán rulers beginning with K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'. The dedicatory cache of the altar contained the remains of fifteen jaguars and pumas. It has been suggested that these felids may have symbolized the co-essences of the Copán rulers (Fash 2001; Fash et al. 2004:70; Sugiyama et al. 2018). Highland funerary urns frequently feature portraits of jaguars.

In contrast to the jaguar, the puma is not prominently featured in Maya art and hieroglyphic writing, but there are clear examples of this feline. It has long been recognized that the reddish-colored feline illustrated on page 47c in the Dresden Codex is a puma (Tozzer and Allen 1910:358), and the adjacent caption text names this puma as *chak bablam* "red jaguar," an attested name for a puma.¹³ Although quite rare, there is a Classic period logograph representing the word *koj* "puma." It is a portrait glyph of a feline with a

T521 *winik* “human being” sign in its mouth (Grube et al. 2003:II:8; Martin and Grube 2008:145) (figure 3.13d). Pumas are known to be more aggressive than jaguars in their interaction with humans (Atran 1999:172), and the puma logograph appears to incorporate this behavior to distinguish a puma from a jaguar. This eating convention is similar to the logograph of a youthful man with a water glyph in his mouth to indicate the action of drinking (Stuart 1995:39, 67; Stuart et al. 1999; Zender 1999:63–65). The pre-accession name for the Piedras Negras ruler K’inich Yo’nal Ahk II was Koj “puma” (Martin and Grube 2008:145), and a prominent youth featured in the Bonampak murals was also named Koj (Chooj) (Houston 2012).¹⁴ A number of Classic period vessels illustrate secondary lords wearing a headdress in the form of a puma head (K2781, K5062), and a secondary lord in the Bonampak murals wears a puma-skin cape (Miller and Brittenham 2013:136). Burials at Uaxactún and Copán contained puma skeletal remains and teeth, further attesting to their high esteem in the Classic period (Smith 1950:table 6; Pohl 1983:73; Fash et al. 2004). Some of the highland funerary urns feature red felines without spots that could also represent pumas.

In sixteenth-century Yucatán, Bishop Diego de Landa described a temple dedicated to the deity Cit Chac Coh “father red puma.” During the month Pax, the war captain called Nacom was feted in this temple and treated like a deity (Tozzer 1941:165). Landa also stated that warriors dressed in jaguar and puma skins when they went to war (Tozzer 1941:122). Ralph Roys (1933:197) noted that head chiefs were referred to as pumas and jaguars in Yucatán. In the Popol Vuh, the second generation of K’iche’ lords were given puma and jaguar claws as symbols of their authority (Christenson 2007:258). The seventeenth-century bishop of Chiapas, Francisco Núñez de la Vega (1988), noted that pumas were thought to be the strongest co-essences, and even today, among the Tzotzil of San Andrés Larráinzar, pumas are believed to be among the most powerful of the co-essences along with the jaguar and the coyote (Holland 1961:142). In the Chuj region, powerful men have both puma and whirlwind co-essences (Hopkins 2012:43).¹⁵ Still, the fact that young lords were named after pumas but Maya kings were named after jaguars indicates that jaguars were higher ranked by the Classic Maya.

THE FELINE TLALOC

Many deities have jaguar traits, like GIII, the Jaguar Paddler God, the Hero Twin Yax Bolon, and the maternal grandfather of the Hero Twins, God L. In previous publications, I reviewed the jaguar manifestations of Tlaloc

(Bassie-Sweet et al. 2015; Bassie-Sweet 2019). Examples of feline Tlalocs are seen on two medallions from Palenque Group B; each illustrates a jaguar head with cross-hatched circles representing its spotted fur (figures 3.15, 3.16). Lepidoptera wings decorate its eyes, and a figure wearing a Tlaloc mask emerges from its mouth. Dos Pilas Stela 2 and Aguateca Stela 2 illustrate Ruler 3 wearing a face mask of Tlaloc, indicating that he has taken on the guise of this deity (see figures 0.7, 0.8). On both monuments, Ruler 3 wears spotted jaguar leggings complete with claws, indicating that he is also a jaguar. Vessel K7749 illustrates two combatants engaged in a fierce struggle; each is flanked by an attendant (Taube and Zender 2009). On his back, the left attendant wears a motif composed of a spotted jaguar paw with a stylized Lepidoptera wing and zigzag design cuff. The claw of the jaguar is marked with smoke-fire curls. Vessel K8266 illustrates two depictions of Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'an that have jaguar skin decorating their snouts and eyes (figure 3.17). The bases of many Lepidoptera wings are formed by jaguar skin, like those on the Yaxchilán Lintel 25, BOD table 16c, and K1350. There are also jaguar-skin effigy bundles representing Tlaloc, such as the ones seen in the Tlaloc headdresses on Yaxchilán Lintel 25 (see figure 6.1).

The juxtaposing of felines with Tlaloc traits is widespread, although none of the following felines exhibit the spotted fur of the jaguar. On the Dos Pilas and Aguateca stelae, Ruler 3 wears a feline head with Tlaloc eyes at his waist, while the front paws of the feline hang on either side. Obsidian eccentrics curl from the mouth, while the cuffs of the paws are decorated with Lepidoptera wings that are trimmed with the obsidian zigzag design (see figures 0.7, 0.8). Piedras Negras Stela 8 depicts a similar feline with Tlaloc eyes in the headdress of the ruler (figure 3.18). The sacrificed heart motif drips from his mouth. The paws of the feline appear on either side. On Naranjo Stela 19, the ruler's headdress has the form of a feline that has the long snout of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan and Lepidoptera wings (figure 3.19). This feline also wears Tlaloc's year sign. The Palenque ruler K'inich Kan Bahlam wears a similar feline headdress with Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan attributes on the Temple XVII Tablet (see figure 1.7). The head of the feline is framed by the obsidian zigzag design. On La Corona Panel 6, a large effigy figure has feline ears, tail, and feet, Tlaloc's goggle eye, the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan's upturned snout, and the arm, torso, and legs of a human (figure 3.20). He wears cuffs on his wrists and ankles decorated with the zigzag motif and Lepidoptera wings. These various examples demonstrate that Tlaloc had a feline form without spots. I have assumed in the past that these are also jaguar Tlalocs, but a recently reconstructed facade on Structure 10 of the Rastrojón complex at Copán suggests that Tlaloc also had a puma avatar.



FIGURE 3.15. *Tlaloc jaguar, Palenque Group B medallions*



FIGURE 3.16. *Tlaloc jaguar, Palenque Group B medallions*

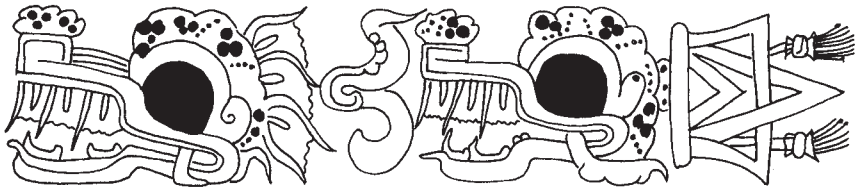


FIGURE 3.17. *Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan, K8266 (drawing after Justin Kerr)*

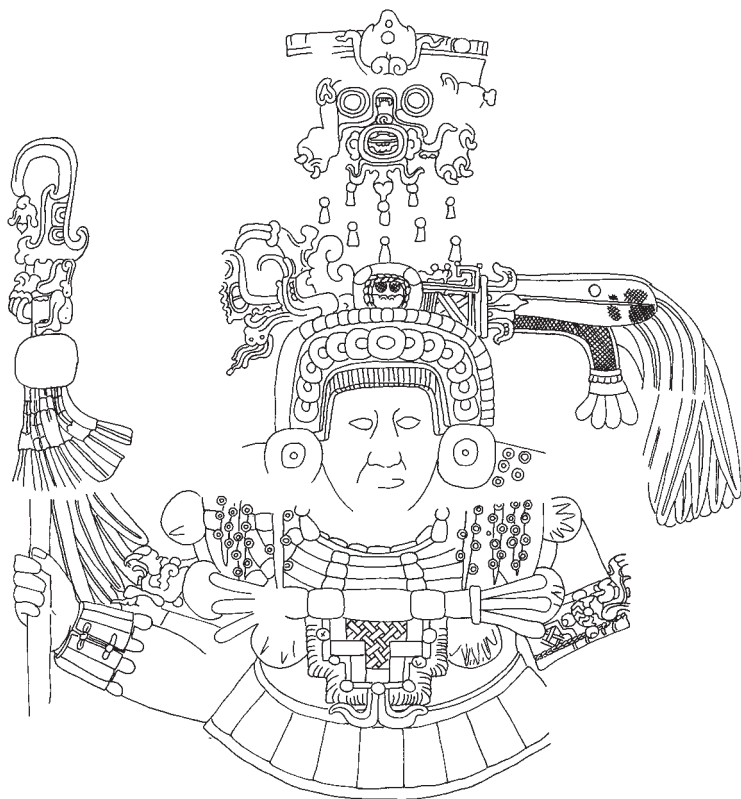


FIGURE 3.18. *Piedras Negras Stela 8 (drawing after David Stuart)*

The facade of this building illustrates felines without the spots of a jaguar, and as such they have been identified as pumas (Fash et al. 2016) (figure 3.21). The Rastrojón pumas have Lepidoptera wings on their snouts and ears, and they wear cuffs on their paws that are decorated with Lepidoptera wings. The carouches in which these pumas sit are also marked with Lepidoptera wings. This raises the possibility that the Dos Pilas, Aguateca, Piedras Negras, Palenque, and La Corona felines that lack jaguar spots are actually pumas as well.

THE BLACK WITCH MOTH TLALOC

Numerous types of natural-looking Lepidoptera are illustrated in the art of Teotihuacán, and many of these are clearly butterflies, such as those seen in the Tepantitla murals frolicking among flowering plants (Pasztor 1976;

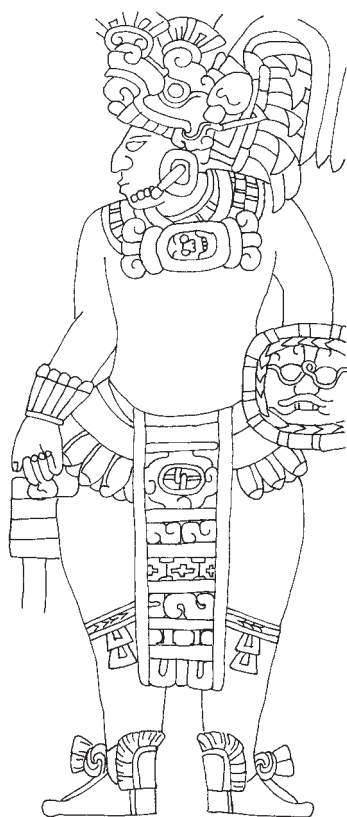


FIGURE 3.19. *Naranjo Stela 19*
(drawing after Ian Graham)

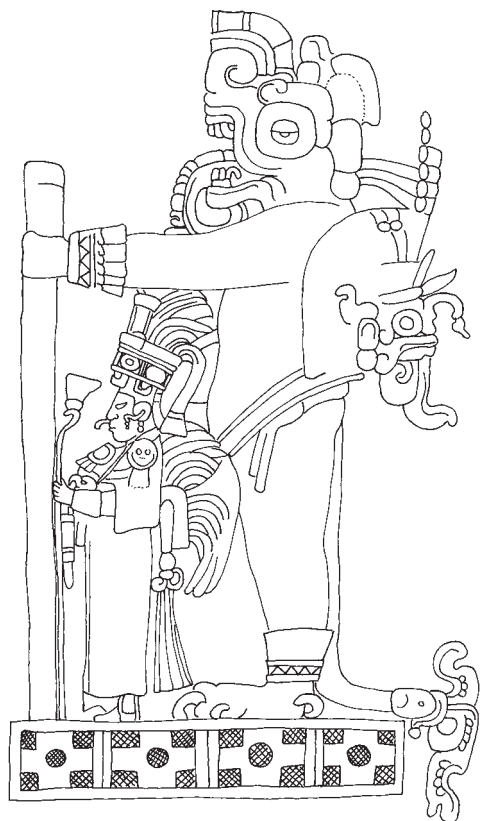


FIGURE 3.20. *La Corona Panel 6* (drawing after
David Stuart)

see Headrick 2003, 2007 for an overview). Lepidoptera forms of Tlaloc are also common in Teotihuacán art. For example, such a being is depicted on a Teotihuacán vessel with scalloped wings marked with the obsidian zigzag design (figure 3.22a). The backs of mirrors are frequently decorated with figures dressed in Teotihuacán-style costume. Such a mirror back now housed in the Cleveland Museum of Art depicts a figure wearing a Lepidoptera headdress (Berrin and Pasztory 1993:126, 274). The wings of the Lepidoptera feature the obsidian zigzag lines (figure 3.22b). In Maya art, a number of Tlaloc images feature the hooked proboscis of a Lepidoptera, like a headdress illustrated on a looted panel from the Palenque region and the headdresses worn by the Yaxchilán ruler Bird Jaguar IV on Lintel 8 and Lintel 41 (figures 3.23, o.12, 3.1). A



FIGURE 3.21. *Copán Rastrojón puma*

proboscis is the long tubular mouth part used by *Lepidoptera* to suck nectar and decaying fruit. In its coiled position, a proboscis has the hook shape of obsidian eccentrics and atlatls (Berlo 1983:83, Headrick 2003:151). In some examples of the *Lepidoptera* form of Tlaloc, the antennae are represented by the feathered end of an obsidian dart or by the torch that is also found in Tlaloc's year sign. The feline Tlaloc illustrated on La Corona Panel 6 carries a *Lepidoptera* form of Tlaloc on his back (figure 3.20). On the Palenque panel, *Lepidoptera* wings decorate the proboscis and wings, with the zigzag motif framing the eye (figure 3.23). *Lepidoptera* forms of Tlaloc are seen on vessels K1497, K3229, K4644, K5180, K5424, and K5877; the proboscises and eyes in all these examples are festooned with *Lepidoptera* wings (figure 3.24a). In addition, a Tlaloc head-dress is juxtaposed with the beast on K4644 and K3046. A Dzibilnocac plate illustrates another *Lepidoptera* form of Tlaloc with the obsidian nose element of Tlaloc juxtaposed with the proboscis (figure 3.24b). *Lepidoptera* are rarely represented in Classic Maya art outside of the Tlaloc complex. As discussed above, the meteor deity Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan is a caterpillar-serpent decorated with *Lepidoptera* wings. It is highly likely, then, that the *Lepidoptera* form of Tlaloc is specifically the adult *Lepidoptera* form of the Waxaklajuun

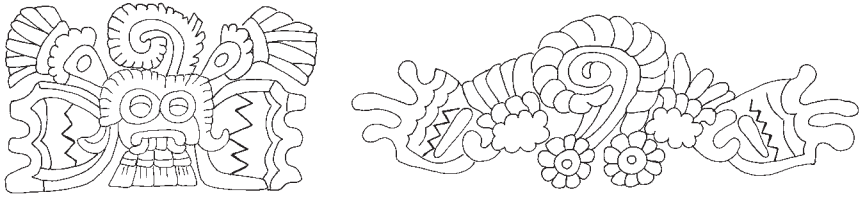


FIGURE 3.22. *a, b, Teotihuacán Lepidoptera, Cleveland Museum of Art mirror*

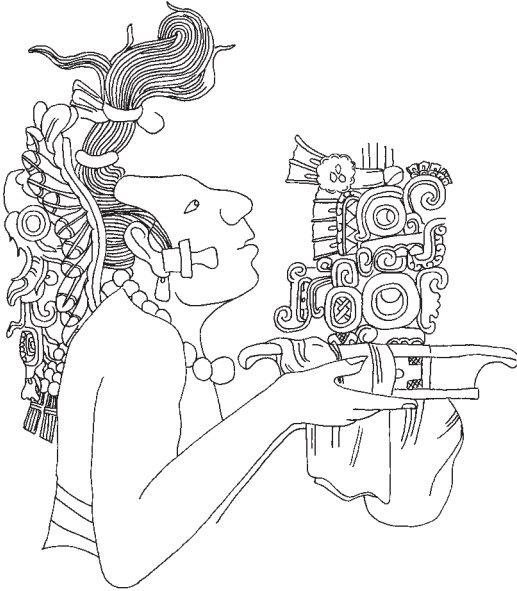


FIGURE 3.23. *Palenque looted panel (drawing after Donald Hales)*

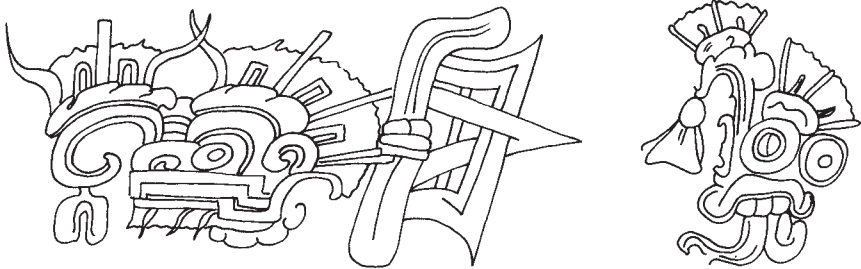


FIGURE 3.24. *a, Lepidoptera Tlaloc, K4644, and b, Dzibilnocac plate*

Ub'ah Kan (Bassie-Sweet 2011, 2019; Bassie-Sweet et al. 2015:136). However, the question remains, what species of Lepidoptera was Tlaloc?

Ever since its identification as a Lepidoptera, it has been argued that this form of Tlaloc was a butterfly and that these Lepidoptera represent the soul of death warriors (Seler 1990–2000:5:313–322; Berlo 1983, 1984; Taube 1998, 2000; Headrick 2007). This was primarily based on the important role butterflies played in the myth concerning the afterlife of Aztec warriors. As noted by Sahagún (1959–1963:3:49), the souls of dead Aztec warriors could take the form of five different species of birds and three different species of butterflies. Evidence that the souls of dead Classic Maya warriors were thought to take butterfly form is, however, completely lacking.¹⁶ There is significant evidence that the Lepidoptera form of Tlaloc was specifically based on a moth. Certainly, the fire and meteor characteristics of Tlaloc are more suitable for moths than for butterflies, given the nocturnal nature of moths and their habit of hovering around fire sources, such as hearths and torches. Furthermore, the obsidian goddess Itzpapalotl had a Lepidoptera form that was based on the *Rothschildia orizaba*, a moth (Beutelspacher 1994).¹⁷

As discussed above, the Maya identified Tlaloc with meteors. Ethnographic evidence supports the identification of moths with meteors. The meteor co-essence of the Tzotzil known as *poslom* is associated with moths. A Tzotzil shaman can perform witchcraft by sending *poslom* to cause disease and illness in his enemies, and this *poslom* can take the form of *yashal* “blue-green, gray” and yellow *pehpen* (Holland 1961:190–192). When the source of an illness is suspected to be the witchcraft of a shaman, the sick person hires another shaman to perform a curing (Vogt 1969:410). The witching shaman sends agents to the site of the curing to spy for him. Like the *poslom*, these agents are thought to take the form of moths that are attracted to the flames of the curing candles (Robert Laughlin, personal communication 2011). They are killed to prevent them from returning to the witching shaman. In Chenalhó, moths are thought to belong to the nocturnal evil spirit Pukuh and are called *pehpen* of death (Guiteras-Holmes 1961:293, 301). When Pukuh enters a home, a person becomes sick and cannot recover unless they move away. Moths are also associated with death in the Huastec region (Alcorn 1984:908). In a Tzotzil myth concerning warfare, four Zinacantán leaders are described using their co-essence forms of thunderbolt, rainbow, wind, and a really big moth (Laughlin 1977:134). They are able to use their co-essence forms to destroy the enemy.

There is strong ethnographic evidence that the Lepidoptera form of Tlaloc was specifically based on the species *Ascalapha odorata* (Black Witch Moth). Black Witch Moths are one of the largest of the Lepidoptera species, and the

wings can reach an astonishing 7 inches. Because of their size, they are often confused with bats (another nocturnal being associated with death). As discussed above, meteors (the nocturnal celestial manifestations of Tlaloc) were seen as signs of impending illness and death. Given his role as an obsidian and war god, Tlaloc was naturally associated with death. One of the most ubiquitous beliefs found across Mesoamerica is that the appearance of a Black Witch Moth inside a house is an omen that a member of the household will become ill or die (Hoffmann 1918; Hogue 1993; Beutelspacher 1994; Joljá Project field notes).¹⁸ The near-universal fear of the Black Witch Moth is reflected in its Aztec name *micpapalotl* or *miquipapalotl* “death moth” (Beutelspacher 1994:22, 29, 83–84) and its Ch’ol name *pejpej xib’aj* “moth demon” (Joljá Project field notes; Juan Jesus Vásquez, personal communication 2004). The Ch’ol kill these moths when they enter their houses because of their death association (Joljá Project field notes).¹⁹

There is also convincing visual evidence for the identification of the Lepidoptera form of Tlaloc as a Black Witch Moth. The wings of a Black Witch Moth have scalloped edges like the wings of the Lepidoptera form of Tlaloc and zigzag patterns like the zigzag design that represents obsidian (figure 3.25). Most interesting, the tip of its hind wing is decorated with tri-lobed motifs that are similar to Tlaloc’s tri-lobed nose element. The hook-shaped motif on the forewing resembles the T712 obsidian bloodletter. The base of a Black Witch Moth wing has a furry texture similar to the jaguar skin often pictured at the base of the Lepidoptera Tlaloc. These ethnographic associations and physical attributes make it clear that the Black Witch Moth was the role model for the Lepidoptera Tlaloc.

A feature on many illustrations of warriors is a stylized Lepidoptera worn under the nose and over the mouth (von Winning 1987). Given that some of these are depicted with colorful wings, it is likely that these nose plaques represent a variety of different species of Lepidoptera. In the context of Tlaloc warriors, I suggest that the nose plaque specifically represents the Black Witch Moth. I believe these nose plaques explain Tlaloc’s tri-lobed element located over the nose area of the god. The tri-lobed element is an abbreviated reference to the wing of the Black Witch Moth. It is an example of the *pars pro toto* convention of Maya art and hieroglyphic writing in which depictions can be reduced down to just their diagnostic traits. When such a Tlaloc is seen emerging from the Waxaklajuun Ub’aah Kan as on Yaxchilán Lintel 25, it mimics the metamorphosis of the Black Witch Moth from its larval form to its adult moth form.

Yaxchilán Lintel 8 illustrates the ruler Bird Jaguar IV and his subordinate Sajal in the heat of battle subduing their respective enemies (see figure 0.12).



FIGURE 3.25. *Black Witch Moth*

The sentence stating the capture of Jeweled Skull by Bird Jaguar begins on the upper left of the scene and concludes on the upper right. By reading this capture text, the viewer is brought to the image of Bird Jaguar grasping the arm of Jeweled Skull, who is further identified by his name glyph inscribed on his thigh. Bird Jaguar IV wears a Tlaloc headdress in the form of the Black Witch Moth and holds an obsidian-encrusted spear over Jeweled Skull's body. The message conveyed to Jeweled Skull by Bird Jaguar IV's Black Witch costume was surely one of impending death.

In many illustrations, Teotihuacán warriors wear a nose plaque that has the form of a stylized Lepidoptera, and a number of scholars have noted that *talud-tablero* architecture has the visual form of the Lepidoptera nose plaque (von Winning 1947, 1987; Headrick 2003). It may be that the *talud-tablero* buildings in the Maya region that were decorated with Tlaloc imagery were intended to represent the Black Witch form of Tlaloc. Certainly, a Tlaloc temple decorated with moths where human sacrifice was performed would dramatically reinforce the death association of moths.

THE OMINOUS NATURE OF OWLS

Before discussing the owl form of Tlaloc, a review of the literature regarding owls is in order. Like the Black Witch Moth, various species of owls were viewed as omens of illness, death, and war across Mesoamerica. In the sixteenth century, Bishop Diego de Landa (Tozzer 1941:202) briefly commented that owls were viewed as omens that caused the Maya a great deal of worry. A sixteenth-century Kaqchikel dictionary notes that an owl that lands on a house at night is an omen of death and sickness for the occupants (Coto 1983:443). Sahagún (1959–1963;5:161–163, 11:42, 46) gave more detailed descriptions of the owls known by the Aztec as *chiquatli* and *teculutl* (*tecolotl*). He noted that the *chiquatli* was an ashen-colored owl with eyes like spindle whorls and a call that was a screech. These are the characteristics of the barn owl (*Tyto alba*) (Martín del Campo 1940). The *chiquatli* was thought to be the messenger of the underworld couple Mictlantecutli and Mictecaciuatl, and its screech from a roof terrace indicated that someone from the household would die. If someone was already sick, they would not recover. The hoot of the *tecolotl* portended death from illness or war for an individual and the members of his entire household (Sahagún 1959–1963;5:161). In the end it was thought that only the walls of the house compound would remain standing, and it would be used as a toilet and garbage dump by others. Clearly, the *tecolotl* was the ultimate sign of destruction and humiliation. Sahagún characterized the *tecolotl* as a horned owl with a deep voice that says tecolo-tecolo-o-o. No owl has a call that sounds like tecolo, but a deep o-o does correspond to the low hoot of the great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*) (Kendall 1992:113). In the hierarchy of owls, the great horned owl is the largest and most impressive, with a wing span that can reach 5 feet. It is the quintessential owl of Mesoamerica. Today, the Spanish term *tecolote*, a loan from Nahuatl, survives as a generic term for horned owls.

Ethnographic studies in the Maya region attest to the widespread view of owls as harbingers of doom. In nineteenth-century Yucatán, Daniel Brinton noted (1883:248) that “the owl is looked upon as an uncanny bird, presaging death or disease, if it alights on or even flies over a house.” Robert Redfield and Alfonso Villa Rojas (1934:210) reported that the Yucatec Maya of Chan Kom view the owl as an evil omen. The Itzaj of the central Petén believe owls are omens of death (Atran 1999:172). The call of the barn owl indicates the death of a foreigner, while the pygmy owl’s diminutive appearance portends widowhood. A violent end is indicated by the horned screech owl. For the Mopán, the owl called *wo’ ch’iich’* announces death at night, while the screech owl *ajch’aaw* is a sign of death and bad things and is thought to be the spirit companion of a sorcerer (Hofling 2011:85, 459). A great horned owl entering a

house indicates that someone in the house will become ill (Hull and Fergus 2009:27). The call of a Vermiculated Screech Owl indicates that a neighbor's child will become ill or die.²⁰

The Chuj believe that if an owl hoots near a sick man, he will die (La Farge and Byers 1931:225), while the Mam believe the owl's hoot signals misfortune for one's family (Oakes 1951:46). In the Akatek town of San Miguel Acatán, an owl flying near a house is a bad omen, and if it begins to sing, a family member will die (Grollig 1959:176, 183). For the Q'eqchi', an owl that lands on a house or flies inside is seen as an omen of disease, and a hooting owl is a death omen (Wilson 1972:415–416). Redfield (1945:32) recorded bird names and stories in the Kaqchikel town of San Antonio Palopó on the east side of Lake Atitlán. He identified two types of owls based on size. The small owl is thought to be a messenger of the devil, and his appearance at a house announces the death of an occupant. The large owl is called the scribe of the devil. The small owl provides him with the names of those destined to die, and he writes them down. The large owl does not stop near a house but just flies over it. This is an indication that some great sickness is coming.

Tzotzil witches are community members who use their supernatural skills for evil. In his study of Tzotzil birds, Nicholas Acheson (1962:35–36, A17, A20, A22, A24) ascertained that certain birds are thought to be sent by witches to inflict illness or deliver a warning of sickness and death to come. The most powerful of these messenger birds are the great horned owl, screech owl, and pygmy owl. When the great horned owl sings in a tree next to a house, death or sickness will follow. When it sings in Zinacantán (a major Tzotzil town), there will be many deaths. The call of all owls is an omen of sickness and death. Robert Laughlin (1975:54) recorded similar Tzotzil beliefs. He noted that the great horned owl is thought to call out the name of a person, who is doomed to certain death. Pygmy owls and bearded screech owls are thought to be messengers for witches, and they announce one's death or that of a family member (Laughlin 1975:183). Like moths, owls are identified with the *poslom* in Tzotzil Chenalhó and are omens of warning (Guiteras-Holmes 1961:173, 249, 282). The Tzeltal term for the great horned owl is *tubkulum* (Kaufman 2003:610), but it is also referred to as *tubkulum pukub* (Hunn 1977:161). As noted above, the evil spirit Pukuh enters houses and causes illness.

The intimate relationship between witches and owls is seen in Ch'ol myths where owls are thought to be witches' companions (Josserand et al. 2003). There is also a widespread belief that witches can take the form of owls or that their co-essences are owls (Maynard 1963:98; Acheson 1962:43; Woods 1968:95; Hull and Fergus 2011:48). Charles Wisdom (1940:339, 389, 1950:1028) recorded

the Ch'orti' belief that the *p'urem xooch'* (black owl) is a bird of ill omen, and its presence near a home for several days portends the death of a family member. The female black owl is thought to be a sorceress in disguise. In the K'iche' region, Ruth Bunzel (1952:91, 139, 272, 282, 344) noted that owls were thought to be the messengers of the ancestors, who send the owls to perch on the family home. Such an owl is an evil portent.

A prime example of supernatural owls as messengers and omens of death is found in the Popol Vuh episodes that relate to the conflict between the creator deities and the lords of the underworld. The two rulers of the underworld (One Death and Seven Death) had four war councilors under their command who took the form of owls (Arrow Owl, One Leg Owl, Macaw Owl, and Skull Owl) (Christenson 2007:119, 132). The duties of these owl lords included conducting heart sacrifices and delivering messages. One Death and Seven Death instructed the four owl councilors to deliver a message to One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu, commanding them to come to the underworld to play ball against them. The end result of that confrontation was the death of One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu. When the owl councilors later arrived at One Hunahpu's home to deliver a similar message to One Hunahpu's sons, their grandmother Xmucane was distraught because she recognized them as omens of death.

The four owl councilors were involved in another episode where they were supposed to sacrifice Lady Blood, who was pregnant with the Hero Twins, and return her heart to One Death and Seven Death (Christenson 2007:131–134). A direct association between owls and heart sacrifice is illustrated in an owl headdress found in the Teotihuacán Tetitla Portico 11 Mural 3 (Miller 1973:fig. 301). Juxtaposed on the outstretched wings of the owl is a motif of an open human chest with an exposed heart. Protruding from the heart is a bloody obsidian blade.

REPRESENTATIONS OF OWLS

Owls have several unique features that set them apart from most other birds. Typically, an owl will sit motionless in a tree, watching and listening for prey. Its keen hearing is enhanced by its facial ruff, a concave surface of stiff dark-tipped feathers. The ruff functions as a reflector, channeling sounds into the ears. The owl's large forward-facing eyes provide it with stereoscopic vision. Without moving its body, an owl can turn its head 270 degrees to follow the movement it sees or the direction of a sound. No matter what direction an owl faces, it will swivel its head to look directly at approaching prey or foe.

In Mesoamerican art, owls are most often illustrated in a frontal pose that reflects this natural behavior.

In the art of Teotihuacán, front-facing birds have long been identified as owls (von Winning 1948, 1985; Miller 1973; Seler 1990–2000:5:252–256; Kendall 1992). The murals of Tetitla Portico 25 illustrate owls with large round eyes, facial ruffs, and dark-tipped feathers. The motif of an owl, spear thrower, and shield is also well-known (von Winning 1948, 1985; Berrin and Pasztory 1993:247; Stuart 2000a). It has been suggested that the motif functions as the insignia for a military order (von Winning 1987; Berrin and Pasztory 1993). The spear thrower owl motif is also combined with a mountain sign in a place name found in the Atetelco murals at Teotihuacán (Nielsen and Helmke 2008). David Stuart (2000a) identified an individual in Maya inscriptions whose nominal phrase is composed of the Teotihuacán-style spear thrower and an owl motif, and he proposed that “Spearthrower Owl” was a ruler of Teotihuacán (see chapter 4 for a discussion of this individual). This owl is depicted on the Tikal Marcador sculpture as a horned owl.

Postclassic Central Mexican codices illustrate many owls. As an example, a number of codices illustrate a series of 13 avian creatures that are thought to refer to the 13 day numbers of the 260-day calendar. In the Codex Tudela, each illustration is accompanied by a Nahuatl gloss. On page 99r, there are two forward-facing birds. The first is hornless with a prominent facial ruff and is labeled *chicuatlī*, while the other is horned and labeled *tecolotl* (Kendall 1992:113). As discussed above, these are the barn owl and the great horned owl, respectively. In the Códice de Santa María Asunción, the logograph of an owl with horns often has a *te* phonetic complement to indicate it is a *tecolotl* (Lacadena 2008:7, 11).

Birds that are clearly based on owls are also illustrated in Codex Borgia, and these avian creatures feature horns, facial ruffs, and black-tipped feathers (pages 7, 12, 52). Two types of owls are illustrated on Borgia page 71. The first has a skeletal face with horns, while the second has an exaggerated facial ruff. The tips of the facial ruff feathers are tipped with lithic blades, as are this owl’s wing feathers. Similar owls are seen in the Codex Laud, Codex Fejérváry-Mayer, Codex Vaticanus, Codex Borbonicus, Codex Tonalamatl Aubin, and Codex Nuttall.

Owls with and without ear tufts are well represented in Maya pottery figurines and whistles (Berlin 1960:fig. 10e; Bernatz 2006:213–214; Eberl 2007; Halperin 2007:213; Triadan 2007). Owl whistles may have been used to reproduce the call of these birds. The identification of owls in Maya art is facilitated by caption texts. In Yucatec Maya, a word for owl is *kuy*, and illustrations of

some forward-facing birds are named in the accompanying text as *kuy*, which unequivocally confirms this identification (Grube and Nahm 1994; Grube and Schele 1994; Stuart 2000a:508). These *kuy* owls are portrayed with round eyes, ear tufts, and black-tipped feathers. In pottery scenes, Nikolai Grube and Werner Nahm (1994:703–704) identified an avian co-essence that is named in the adjacent caption text as a *kuy* “owl.” Although shown in profile view, this owl is depicted with a black-tipped feather over his ear. An owl and a head-dress full of black-tipped owl feathers are the diagnostic traits of the maternal grandfather God L. Grube and Linda Schele (1994) summarized the evidence that God L’s owl was specifically named Uhxlujuun Chan Nal Kuy “thirteen sky-place owl” (see chapter 7 for further discussion of God L). Uhxlujuun Chan Nal Kuy’s standard depiction is in profile view, and its ear tufts are often represented by a single black-tipped feather.

In hieroglyphic writing, an owl with black-tipped ear feathers or its *pars pro toto* black-tipped feather is used to represent the syllable *ò* (glottal stope + o) in the spelling of various words (Stuart 1998b:387, 2005b:105, 2013c) (figure 3.26a). Although Stuart reads the sign as *o*, the glottal stop is initial, not final, and the glyph is a CV syllable sign *’ò* (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017:190). By convention, when not specifying phonetics, initial glottal stops are not written. The faces of some *ò* owls are infixed with an *ak’ab* “night, darkness” sign that functions on animals as a sematic marker to indicate their nocturnal nature (Zender cited in Houston et al. 2006:13; Stone and Zender 2011:145). Examples of the *ò* owl are seen in the spellings of the main sign of the Toniná emblem glyph or in a variation of the *och* “enter” verb. Like many syllabic glyphs, the *ò* sign appears in contexts where it cannot function as part of the spelling of a word but must itself represent a logographic word (Stuart 2005b:105, 2013c; Martin and Reents-Budet 2010). Stuart concluded that in these contexts the *ò* owl was an onomatopoeic bird name, and he compared it to the *oo* bird that is found in several incantations in the Ritual of the Bacabs (Roys 1965:138; Stuart 2005a:105). The *ò* owl appears in the name of a Hix Witz ruler (Janaab Ti’O), the name of the deity GIII’s shrine (K’inich O Naah), and the name of a Yaxchilán god (Aj K’ahk’O Chahk).

Owls with black-tipped feathers are employed in Maya art in many other contexts. The personified sky glyph and cave sign are represented by an owl with the black-tipped ear tufts and feathers (figure 3.26b, 3.26c).²¹ The head variants and full-figure variants for the *bak’tun*, *k’atun*, and *tun* periods are represented by a number of avian forms, one of which is an owl with black-tipped feathers (figure 3.26d). The emphasis on these avians’ ear tufts suggests that they are based on a great horned owl or a screech owl. The fact that the



FIGURE 3.26. a. owl, b. sky glyph, c. cave glyph, d. k'atun glyph, e. Muwaan glyph

Maya did not adhere to a strict convention of owls being portrayed in a frontal pose leaves open the possibility that some of the Teotihuacán predatory birds illustrated in profile may also be owls.

WHEN AN OWL IS NOT AN OWL

In the Maya *haab* calendar, the fifteenth month is called Muwaan, and this term appears in other contexts as well—as in the nominal phrases Muwaan Mat, K'inich Muwaan Jol, and Yajaw Chan Muwaan (Thompson 1950:114; Schele and Grube 1994; Martin and Grube 2008). There are Proto-Mayan names for hawks, like **t'iiw* and **xik* (Kaufman 2003:606–607), and a *sak i'* “white hawk” has been identified in Maya art and hieroglyphic writing (Stone and Zender 2011:124–125). The term *muwaan* and its cognates are found as generic words for hawks, falcons, and kites in Mopán, Itzaj, Ch'olti', and Ch'orti' (Grube and Schele 1994; Hofling and Tesucún 1997:76; Hofling 2011:312; Robertson et al. 2010:323). The term is often combined with adjectives to describe specific kinds of hawks. Wisdom's (1950:1032, 1034) Ch'orti' bird list includes the entries *six muahan* “vulture hawk” for a large black hawk, *sut's muahan* “bat hawk” for a small white-breasted hawk that has a bat-like face and eats insects, and *tcaktcak muahan* “dark hawk” for a large reddish hawk. In a similar fashion, the Itzaj term *noj muwan* “big hawk” refers to the large black hawk-eagle, and *ajsäk mujan* “white hawk” describes the white hawk *Leucopternis albicollis* (Hofling and Tesucún 1997:122, 128). Mopán also has the term *säk mujan* for a white hawk as well as *ya'ax mujan* for a green hawk, and *b'ox mujan* for a black hawk (Hofling 2011:80, 105, 114, 136, 197, 475).

The word *muwaan* itself is specifically used to name the collared forest falcon (*Micrastur semitorquatus*) in Yucatec Maya and Itzaj (Steggerda 1943:237; Atran 1999:191). Both Frank Smythe and George Stutton describe part of the collared forest falcon's call as sounding like a human moan. It is interesting that the English word *moan* is itself an onomatopoeic word. Smythe (1966:42) states that the call of the collared forest falcon falls off “toward the end into a

quavering, human-like moan.” Sutton (1951:125, 140) characterizes this part of the forest falcon’s call as “an astonishingly human cry, almost a moan”; “how startlingly human were those loud, slightly quavering moans.” It is highly likely, then, that the collared forest falcon’s *murwaan* name is another onomatopoeic bird term.

The logographic sign for *murwaan* illustrates an owl in a profile view with black-tipped feathers marking its ear tufts. However, in contrast to the other horned owls discussed above, the *murwaan* bird is always illustrated in the act of swallowing another bird. Sometimes the bird is only visible as feathers in the mouth of the *murwaan*, but in detailed depictions the feet of its avian prey stick out of its mouth. The size of the prey’s feet suggests that the prey is bigger than the *murwaan* (figure 3.26e). Semantic markers are common in Maya art and hieroglyphic writing. So it is extremely likely that the depiction of the *murwaan* bird eating a large avian functions as a semantic marker to qualify the nature of the *murwaan* bird. In fact, this dietary behavior is consistent with the collared forest falcon, for its primary diet is birds, and often the birds are much larger than it is—such as Crested Guans, Great Curassows, Ocellated Turkeys, and owls (Whitacre 2012:252). However, the central conundrum remains—why was a bird-eating horned owl used to represent a word for hawk?

The answer lies in the collared forest falcon’s nature. The large eyes of the collared forest falcon are an adaptation to its preferred territory of dense, dark forest. George Lowery and Walter Dalquest (1951:556) recorded that the natives of Veracruz “consider it to be a kind of owl because of its large eyes and shade-haunting habits.” It also has a facial ruff or disk that David Whitacre (2012) noted “lends an owl-like appearance” to the bird. Although mostly diurnal, the collared forest falcon is also known to hunt in the twilight like an owl. Despite the fact that it does not have horns, the Q’eqchi’ referred to it as *xukub k’uch* “horned hawk” (Hull n.d.). It seems apparent that this name is the result of its owl-like nature. In summary, the *murwaan* hawk is illustrated as an owl because it has qualities that place it in this category of predatory birds.

THE OWL TLALOC

The association of Tlaloc with owls has long been noted (Arroyo de Anda 1963:235). Given the owl’s identification with death and with the night, it is not surprising that the meteor deity Tlaloc would have an owl avatar. A prime example of the Owl Tlaloc is illustrated on Piedras Negras Stela 9 (figure 3.27). The surviving narrative on this monument relates the 9.15.5.0.0 to Ajaw 8 Ch’en (July 26, AD 736) Period Ending of Ruler 4 and the seventh *tun* anniversary

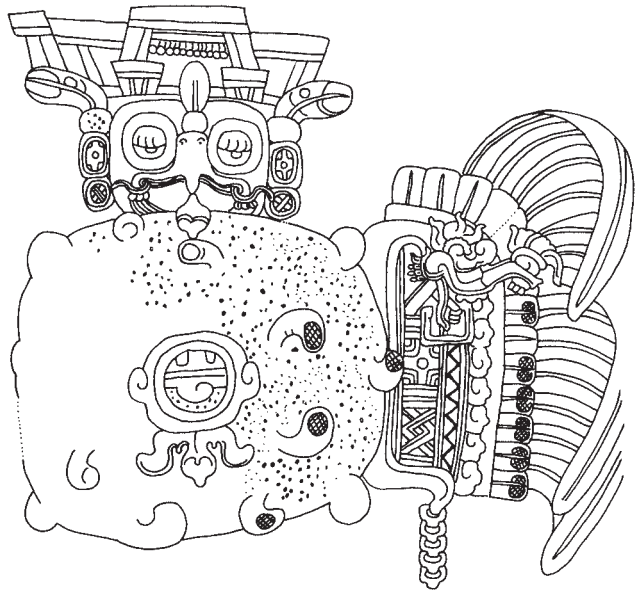


FIGURE 3.27.
*Piedras Negras Stela
 9 bundle (drawing
 after David Stuart)*

of his accession. Although significantly damaged, the scene on Stela 9 depicts Ruler 4 in a frontal pose with a captive kneeling beside him. He holds a spear in his right hand and a Teotihuacán square shield and incense bag in his left. His headdress contains a bundle decorated with black-tipped owl feathers and what is likely owl down. In the center of the bundle is a cartouche trimmed with the Teotihuacán blood symbol. The cartouche is the *pub* “reed” sign that Stuart (2000a:501–506) has identified with Teotihuacán. On top of the bundle is the head of the owl with Tlaloc’s goggle eyes, and it holds a sacrificed heart in its beak. This Owl Tlaloc has an upright feather on its brow and a feather protruding from each of his *k’an* cross earrings. He wears Tlaloc’s year sign headdress. On each side of the bundle are the wings of this Owl Tlaloc.

Jesper Nielsen and Christophe Helmke (2008:463) noted that the name of an obsidian mountain featured in the Teotihuacán Atetelco murals is composed of a conflation of an owl and a spear thrower and suggested that such spear throwers “were believed to imbue the flight of darts with the same killing speed and precision as a raptorial bird pursuing its prey.” Although not noted by Nielsen and Helmke, the Atetelco owl lacks feet and its body is represented as a round bundle with wings attached. It is an owl bundle. In Maya art, supernatural bird wings are typically composed of a serpent’s head with short secondary feathers and long primary feathers extending out from

the serpent's mouth (Bardawil 1976). Instead of regular serpent wings, the Piedras Negras Stela 9 wings are conflated with the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan (figure 3.27). In short, these owl wings are marked with symbols for meteors and, by extension, obsidian. The base of the wing is decorated with a sky band and with the obsidian zigzag design that reinforce this identification.²² While almost all birds make noise when they fly, owls are almost soundless. The silent flight of an owl is visually similar to the silent flash of meteors across the night sky.

When owls are defending their kill or their territory from an intruder, they puff up their bodies and spread their wings in a threatening pose. The composition of the Owl Tlaloc bundle on Stela 9 replicates this threat display of owls. Consequently, this owl bundle takes on a more ferocious appearance than a simple effigy bundle. On Dos Pilas Stela 2, the feline Tlaloc worn by Ruler 3 has an Owl Tlaloc perched on its goggle eyes in the threat pose (see figure 0.7). The juxtaposing of an owl and a feline is also seen on Los Horcones Stela 4, where the owl perches on a jaguar's head (Navarrete 1986:fig. 9). The Tzotzil believe a large lowland owl called *mut bolom* (literally, jaguar's bird) guides jaguars to their prey (Laughlin 1975:245).²³ The Tzeltal terms *mutil balam* "jaguar's bird" and *mutil coh* "puma's bird" refer to an owl (likely the Mottled Owl), who anticipates the appearance of a jaguar or puma (Hunn 1977:23). The owl/jaguar motif is reminiscent of these highland owls.

There are a number of examples of the Owl Tlaloc in pottery scenes, such as the two Owl Tlaloc heads illustrated on vessel K8504 (figure 3.28a). Each owl wears a Tlaloc year sign headdress and a Lepidoptera wing with jaguar skin and obsidian zigzag motif at its base. A black-tipped feather decorates the beak of the bird, which is opened wide. Two full-figure owls with Tlaloc's goggle eyes and *k'an* cross earrings are depicted on vessel K6809 (figure 3.29). The better-preserved example has a Lepidoptera wing with the zigzag motif at its base positioned over its eye. Below this motif is a Tlaloc headdress with a single black-tipped feather as its central element. The bird's tail feathers are also black-tipped. Perched on its beak is a Moth Tlaloc wearing a headdress composed of a bundle, black-tipped feather, and year sign motif. The bundle is marked with the same dots and short feathers as the body of the Owl Tlaloc, which suggests that it is an owl bundle.²⁴ Unlike real owls, the mouth of the Owl Tlaloc has pointed teeth. In its mouth is the sacrificed heart motif. As noted above, this symbol appears on obsidian objects, where it symbolizes the lethal nature of these objects and their direct association with human sacrifice. The K6809 owl perches on a toponym composed of two sky signs with smoke billowing from them. In front of its raised right

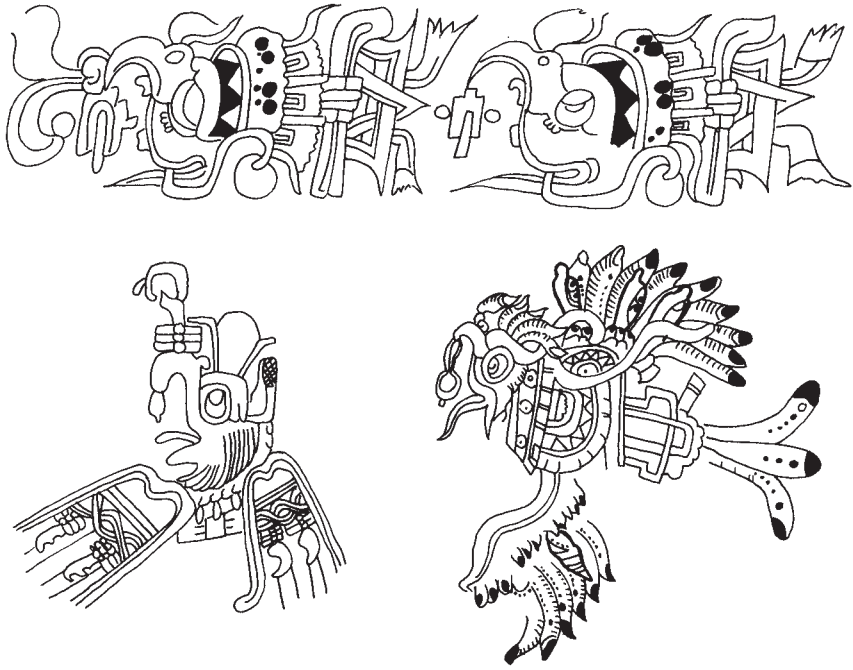


FIGURE 3.28. *Lepidoptera Tlaloc*: a. vessel K8504, b. Acanceh owl, c. K8121

talon is a star sign, surely a reference to the smoking star nature of this beast. The Owl Tlaloc is framed on either side by Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan meteor caterpillars that also have star signs attached to the smoke curls that bellow from their mouths.

Another Owl Tlaloc with a wide-open mouth is featured on the Acanceh building facade (figure 3.28b). The tip of the beak is marked with a Teotihuacán sacrificed heart motif, while obsidian eccentrics are positioned on top of the beak and on his wings. Yet another full-figure Owl Tlaloc with outstretched wings is featured on the Late Classic plate K8121 (Martin 2003:23; Martin and Grube 2008:39) (figure 3.28c). The rim of the vessel is composed of a band of the zigzag obsidian pattern and a text that refers to the 9.6.0.0.0 9 Ajaw 3 Wayeb (March 22, AD 554) Period Ending of the Tikal ruler Wak Chan K'awiil and his father's earlier 9.3.0.0.0 2 Ajaw 18 Muwan (January 30, AD 495) Period Ending. The breast of the Owl Tlaloc is a stylized Tlaloc headdress that includes the obsidian zigzag design. A blood symbol hangs from the owl's mouth, and a black-tipped feather decorates its brow. Its wide-open mouth and outstretched tongue are positioned immediately under the

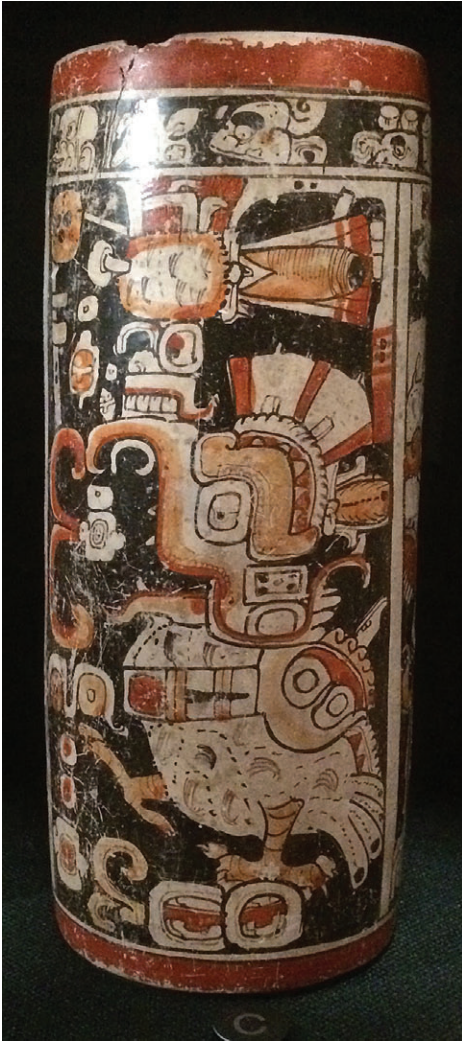


FIGURE 3.29. *Lepidoptera Tlaloc*, vessel K6809

from the top of the Atetelco owl mountain are visually parallel to the three feathers of the Owl Tlaloc (figure 3.30b). The importance of the motif of three owl feathers on the head of the Owl Tlaloc is seen on vessel K1463, which illustrates a Motul de San José lord wearing a Tlaloc god as a necklace (http://research.mayavase.com/kerrmaya_hires.php?vase=1463). The lord's headdress is composed of the head of an owl with three single black-tipped feathers

3 Wayeb Period Ending date. The five days of Wayeb were considered to be an unlucky period. One has to wonder if the owl's open mouth implies that he is in the process of calling out a death portent.²⁵ The wings of the K8121 Owl Tlaloc are composed of black-tipped feathers and blades of obsidian and flint. These examples of juxtaposing make it abundantly clear that black-tipped owl feathers were metaphors for lithic blades. The identification of predatory bird feathers with lithic weapons is found across Mesoamerica (Taube et al. 2010: 31–32).²⁶

As noted above, obsidian-related owls that function as place names are illustrated in the Teotihuacán Atetelco murals (Nielson and Helmke 2008) (figure 3.30a). These Atetelco owls are juxtaposed with a symbol for a mountain that is decorated with obsidian blades. When compared to the Owl Tlaloc on Piedras Negras Stela 9, the three obsidian blades that protrude



FIGURE 3.30. *a. Atetelco mountain place name, b. Piedras Negras Stela 9 Owl Tlaloc*

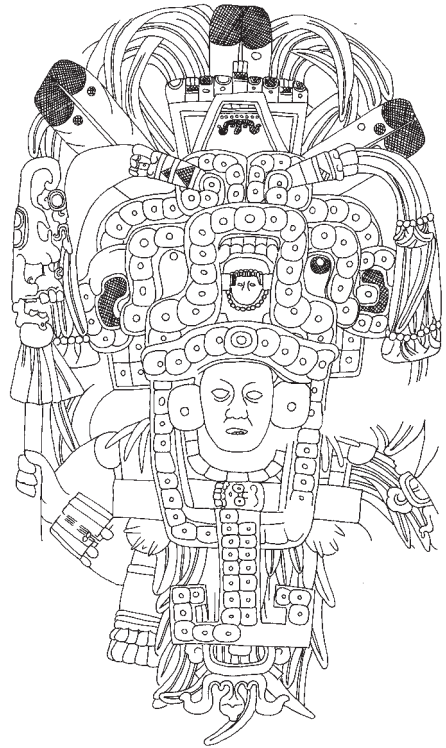


FIGURE 3.31. *Piedras Negras Stela 7*
(drawing after David Stuart)

protruding from it. The association of an owl with the three-feather motif is also seen in the headdress of God L on K5II. In this scene, the wing of Uxlajuun Chan Nal Kuy is depicted as just three feathers (see figure 7.2). Other examples of headdresses composed of three black-tipped feathers are found in the war scene on page 60a of the Dresden Codex. The central figure, who wears the three-feather headdress, brandishes an atlatl while holding two spears in his other hand. Behind him is a second warrior bedecked in the same headdress. He holds an atlatl and spears in one hand and carries an incense bag in the other.

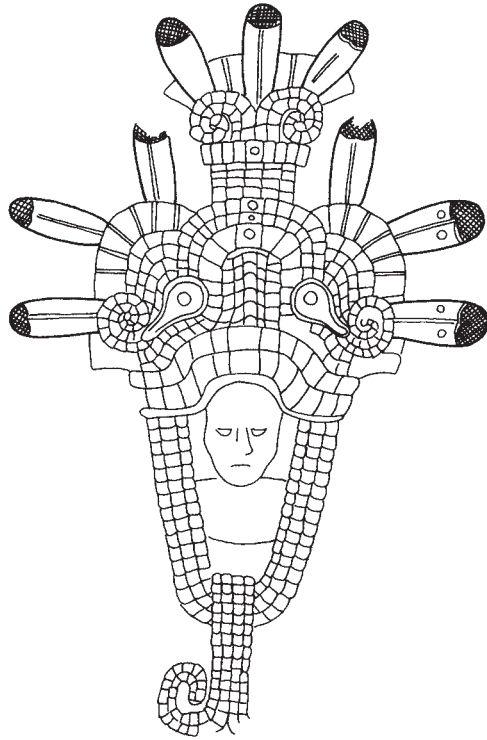


FIGURE 3.32. *Piedras Negras Stela 26 (drawing after John Montgomery)*

Even in scenes where the Owl Tlaloc itself is not visible, its black-tipped feathers decorate Tlaloc headdresses. This is seen on Piedras Negras Stela 7 and Stela 26, where black-tipped owl feathers are included among the long quetzal feathers of the ruler's headdress (figures 3.31, 3.32). The composition of the three feathers on the head of the Owl Tlaloc is also reminiscent of the three obsidian blades found in the headdresses of a Teotihuacán warrior (figure 3.2). It is likely that the three-owl feather motif originates from this Teotihuacán headdress.

The close association between obsidian and the Owl Tlaloc is seen on the staircase of Copán Structure 26, which is decorated with sculptures of obsidian eccentrics that are infixed with the eyes of the Owl Tlaloc (Fash 2001:110). On Structure 21, the Owl Tlaloc's eyes formed a band across the building's facade. The pupils of these eyes were inlaid with obsidian, as were the eyes of the Tlaloc heads that decorated this building (Fash 2001:130).



FIGURE 3.33. a. T583 sign, b. janaab owl, c. and d. T932 pakal sign, e. T583–T932 conflation (T624), f. Janaab Ti’ O glyph

THE JANAAB OWL

There is a type of incense bag and shield associated with Tlaloc that is marked with the logographic sign T583. The T583 glyph is a circle motif with four circular elements marking its corners, and it is usually set within a dotted cartouche (figure 3.33a). Phonetic substitution patterns (*ja-na-bi*) indicate that this propeller-like logograph represents the word *janaab*, although the etymology of the word is unclear (Stuart and Houston 1994:81). Early research suggested that the T583 *janaab* sign was either a reference to a flower because

it shares a cartouche shaped like floral motifs or a reference to a *jan* “corn tassel,” based on the fact that a colonial Ch’orti’ dictionary lists the word *han* (*jan*) as a term for a corn tassel.²⁷ On the other hand, David Stuart (cited in Guenter 2007) noted that the full form of the T583 sign was a bird with this sign in its eye. In other words, T583 is simply the *pars pro toto* form of this bird. Several examples of the bird in the name phrase of K’inich Janaab Pakal I illustrate it with the black-tipped feathers of an owl (figure 3.33b).

There is iconographic evidence that the *janaab* owl was identified with the Tlaloc cult. The Palenque Temple XIX pier illustrates two secondary lords dressing the king K’inich Ahkal Mo’ Nahb III in an elaborate bird costume (Stuart 2005b:49). The lord on the right wears a Yajawk’ak’ headdress (see chapter 5 for a description of this type of headdress). He is framed by two blocks of caption text that name him. The first block, located adjacent to his headdress, gives his personal name Yok Ch’ich Tal and his Yajawk’ak’ title. The second block, below his right elbow, states that he was also the Ajk’uhuun of K’inich Ahkal Mo’ Nahb III, the holy lord of Palenque. Many lords carry both titles, such as the secondary lords of Comalcalco (Zender 2004b:151). Yok Ch’ich Tal holds up an incense bag in his left hand that he is likely going to give to his king. The strap of the bag is made from jaguar hide, while the bag itself is decorated with an Owl Tlaloc that wears Tlaloc’s *k’an* cross earring (figure 3.34). Although the lower tassel of the bag is damaged, enough remains to indicate that it was decorated with fire scrolls. On the Tablet of the Slaves that pictures K’inich Ahkal Mo’ Nahb III accepting the *ux yop huun* headdress, he clutches in his left hand a similar owl incense bag with a jaguar strap and fire scrolls that cascade down its tassel (figure 5.9). This owl has the typical sacrificed heart motif in its mouth, and it sports a black-tipped owl feather and a dart juxtaposed with its wing. Although its eye has the goggle shape of Tlaloc, it also has four circles, indicating that it represents the T583 *janaab* sign. A number of lords incorporated the term *janaab* in their nominal phrases, like the Palenque ruler K’inich Janaab Pakal I and his maternal grandfather, Janaab Pakal, for whom he was named. We are fortunate to have over forty examples of K’inich Janaab Pakal I’s nominal phrase in the Palenque corpus for comparison, and seven of these employ the owl with the T583 sign infixed in its eye to represent the word *janaab* (figure 3.33b). As discussed above, the T524 *bix* sign is inserted in the eye of a jaguar to qualify the type of jaguar. The T583 *janaab* sign functions in the same manner. That is, the T583 sign names this owl as a *janaab* owl as opposed to an *o* owl or *kuy* owl.

In the context of the *Janaab Pakal* nominal phrases, *janaab* qualifies the kind of shield for which K’inich Janaab Pakal I and his grandfather were



FIGURE 3.34. Owl incense bag, Palenque Temple XIX jamb

named, that is, a type of owl shield. In its fullest form, the T932 *pakal* “shield” logograph is composed of a round shield with a border of cross-hatching and tassels demarcating its four corners. A flayed face decorates the center of the shield. In three examples of K’inich Janaab Pakal I’s name, this logographic *pakal* sign is preceded by the T583 sign rendering the phrase *janaab pakal* (figure 3.33c, 3.33d). K’inich Janaab Pakal I’s name is most often written using a conflation of the T583 sign and the T932 *pakal* sign, with the T583 sign placed on the face of the shield (figure 3.33e). Thompson gave this conflated

janaab-pakal sign the designation T624. In essence, the conflated T624 sign is an image of what a *janaab* shield might look like. When the *pakal* sign is rendered using phonetic syllables, *janaab* is represented by either the T583 *janaab* sign or the conflated T624 *janaab-pakal* sign. In this latter context, the scribe obviously did not intend the compound to be read *janaab pakal pakal*; rather, he retained the conflated form because it was intrinsic to the meaning of the name phrase.

K'inich Janaab Pakal I's name literally means "owl shield." In Maya art, the shields of the Tlaloc cult often feature the avatars of Tlaloc, and some of these are decorated with the Owl Tlaloc (Proskouriakoff 1950:fig. 32). None of the Mayan dictionaries or ethnographic studies records the term *janaab* as the name of an owl, and it is not onomatopoeic (Kettunen 2017). This raises the possibility that the term refers to some specific aspect of the Owl Tlaloc.

The name Janaab is not restricted to Palenque nominal phrases. It is incorporated into rulers' names at such sites as Hix Witz, La Corona, Caracol, Nim li Punit, Seibal, and Sacul (Martin 2008; Martin and Reents-Budet 2010; Carter 2015; Prager and Braswell 2016). Janaab Ti' O was the name of a Hix Witz lord, and *ti'* has the value of mouth in this context (Martin and Reents-Budet 2010). In one conflated example of the name, the T583 *janaab* sign is placed in the mouth of the *o* owl, suggesting that the name means "*janaab*-mouthed *o* owl" (figure 33.3f). Owl-mouthed owl doesn't make much sense, but the placement of the T583 sign in the mouth is highly reminiscent of the sacrificed heart motif that is a main feature of the mouth of the Tlaloc Owl. This suggests that the term *janaab* was the name of the Teotihuacán sacrificed heart. It is also conceivable that the term *janaab* was not a Mayan word for this motif but a Teotihuacán loan word.²⁸ At the very least, it can be concluded that the term *janaab* was intimately associated with the heart-sacrificing owl of the Tlaloc cult.²⁹

Spearthrower Owl's nominal phrase is written in a variety of forms. Based on syllabic substitution, the name has been read as *jatz'ò'm kuh* "striker owl or owl that strikes" (Nielsen and Helmke 2008). Stuart (2019) has argued that the full name is "striker heart owl," based on a nominal glyph on Tikal Burial 116 bone 336 that includes a T506 *ohl* "heart" glyph. He believes the juxtapositioning of heart symbolism with owls doesn't indicate the owl's role in heart sacrifice but rather that the owl was the one being sacrificed. Given the overwhelming evidence that owls were viewed as messengers of death and that the heart-sacrificing lords of the Popol Vuh had owl forms, I find this interpretation unconvincing. I retain the moniker Spearthrower Owl with the caveat that it is a nickname.

ANCESTORS AS METEORS

Given the belief that ancestors could take the form of meteors, it is possible that some of the depictions of Tlaloc warriors were intended to represent ancestors as meteors. On BOD 107, a Tlaloc warrior sits on a flaming Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan while holding a flaming Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan scepter. The motif floats in the scene, suggesting it is in the sky. Similar motifs occur on vessels K1552 and K1647, which originated in the Mirador basin under the Kaanul polity's influence. In these two abridged examples, the motif is reduced to just the bust of the figure and the Lepidoptera wing and flame of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan. Stuart (2013a) noted that these motifs have the added element of a flaming jaguar paw and argued that it was a reference to the Kaanul king Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk', whose name "claw of fire" is represented in his nominal phrases by a flaming jaguar claw. I would extend that interpretation and argue that the motifs represent Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' as a flaming meteor. I suspect it is a reference to him as an ancestor who takes the form of a meteor.

One example of a Mirador basin vessel depicts the head of an Owl Tlaloc with a star sign at its base, suggesting that these motifs are celestial (Robicsek and Hales 1981:table 121). A large number of Mirador basin ceramics depict either Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan heads or Black Witch Moth heads, and in some examples, the motif is reduced to Tlaloc's *k'an* cross earring (Robicsek and Hales 1981:208–209, 216–217). The *k'an* cross is one of the signs found on sky bands. I suspect in this sky context that the *k'an* sign may be a *pars pro toto* sign for Tlaloc and, by extension, meteors.

SUMMARY

This overview of the deity Tlaloc indicates that Tlaloc had caterpillar-serpent, moth, feline, and owl forms and that these various avatars had strong associations with war, death, obsidian weapons, and meteors. Depictions of these individual avatars often incorporate the attributes of the other avatars. At Teotihuacán, many images of an Owl Tlaloc appear to be conflated with a Lepidoptera Tlaloc (von Winning 1987; Headrick 2003). In these examples, the head and eye are those of the owl, but the proboscis, antennae, and wings of the Lepidoptera also appear. These avatars are not hybrid beasts per se; the artist has simply combined the features of these two Tlaloc manifestations into one composition. This is similar to the illustrations in Maya art that combine the Feline Tlaloc and Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan. In contrast, the appearance of Lepidoptera attributes on the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah

Kan and Black Witch Moth forms of Tlaloc suggests that the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan was the caterpillar form of Tlaloc and the Black Witch Moth its adult form.

The identification of Tlaloc with obsidian and, by extension, meteors in Maya imagery indicates that the Maya incorporated Tlaloc into their pantheon of deities as a type of thunderbolt god. Chapter 4 discusses the Kaloomte' lords who headed the Tlaloc cult and installed others into the sect.

4

The Kaloomte' Lords

Numerous hieroglyphic texts indicate that Kaloomte' lords had regional control over larger territories than a typical Ajaw. The political nature of the Kaloomte' title as a designation of a high king with vassal states under his control is well established. A number of narratives refer to the violent means by which rulers and their communities were brought under the authority of a Kaloomte'. The implication is that these vassal states had to provide some form of tribute or access to resources or trade routes. This chapter is an overview of the first Kaloomte' lords and their priestly and military attributes related to Tlaloc.

The Kaloomte' title was phonetically deciphered by David Stuart and his collaborators (1989) based on a syllabic rendering of the title on Copán Stela 19. The logograph of the title incorporates the axe of Chahk (figure 4.1a), and Late Classic examples feature an actual portrait of Chahk holding a flint axe over his ear while in the act of throwing this weapon (figure 4.1b, 4.1c). There has been much discussion about the value of the root *kal* and its possible meanings related to the function of Chahk's axe, from splitting trees to clearing weeds. Simply because a portrait of Chahk is used to represent the word *kal* in Late Classic examples, it does not necessarily follow that the title identifies the holder of the title as an axe-throwing thunderbolt god. Given that the etymology of the name is still unclear (as is the case with most titles), it is necessary to examine the contexts in which the title occurs and the men and

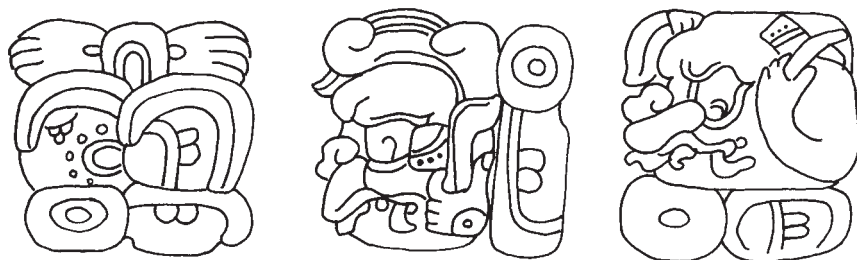


FIGURE 4.1. *Kaloomte' logographs*

women who held this office to better understand its nature. It is my contention that a defining feature of the Kaloomte' lords and ladies was their role as high priests and priestesses of the Tlaloc cult.

THE FIRST KALOOMTE' LORD OF THE KANUL POLITY

A great deal of information about Early Classic history is gleaned from retrospective texts written in the Late Classic. Such examples are seen at Palenque and Yaxchilán, where several Late Classic narratives on temple panels and lintels provide Early Classic king lists. Some of Tikal's history has been recovered from king lists painted on pottery vessels (Martin and Grube 2008; Grube 2016). The histories of smaller sites where monumental sculptures are limited have also been recovered from painted texts, such as Motul de San José. The retrospective narratives on monuments we rely on to reconstruct Early Classic histories are very limited for the Kaanul polity that was first centered at Dzibanché and then at Calakmul, in part because their monuments were made of soft limestone and are badly eroded (Martin and Grube 2008). Fortunately, twelve Late Classic vessels refer to a series of early Kaanul kings (Robicsek and Hales 1981:97–100; Martin 1997, 2017; Martin and Beliaev 2017). Although there are issues with some of the dates and syntax, the order of rulers remains the same on all the vessels. Ruler 2 was the first Kaanul lord to carry the Kaloomte' title, and he is consistently named with this title on ten of the vessels. Despite lacking Long Count dates for most of these kings, tentatively reconstructed dates between AD 128 and AD 232 have been established for this first Kaloomte' king based on average life spans for rulers (Martin 2017). Evidence for such an early period contact with Teotihuacán is seen at Altun Ha, where the third-century royal Tomb F-8/1 included 23 pieces of Teotihuacán-style pottery and 248 Pachuca obsidian objects, including projectile points and

figurines, in addition to a massive offering of chert debitage (8,100 pieces), chert tools, a jade pendant, jade beads, *Spondylus* shells, five puma teeth, and two dog teeth (Pendergast 2003).

The most complete narrative concerning Kaanul rulers (K6751) refers to a sequence of nineteen kings. While Ruler 2 is named as a holy lord of Kaanul and a Kaloomte' on this vessel, the next sixteen rulers are only named as holy Kaanul lords. The dynastic list then ends with Ruler 19, who like Ruler 2 is named as both a holy lord of Kaanul and a Kaloomte'. While it is possible that the intervening kings between Ruler 2 and Ruler 19 were not Kaloomte' lords, it is far more likely that the scribe of the narrative simply named the first king to have the Kaloomte' title and then included the title in the name of Ruler 19 to indicate that all the intervening kings were also Kaloomte' lords. Evidence that these Early Classic Kaanul kings were Kaloomte' lords is seen on Dzibanché Lintel 3, which records the accession of Ruler 16 (K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich') into the office of Kaloomte' in AD 550 (Martin 2005, 2017; Martin and Beliaev 2017). In addition to these Early Classic kings, references to later Kaanul kings with this title, such as Yuknoom Ch'een (accession AD 636), are found in many secondary sites like La Corona, Uxul, and Cancuén (Martin 2005; Martin and Velásquez 2016). There are no data to indicate when the Kaanul lords were first initiated into the Tlaloc cult or how Ruler 2 attained the status of Kaloomte'. As will be discussed below, the Copán ruler K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' attained his status in the Tlaloc cult through a pilgrimage to Teotihuacán; therefore it is possible that Ruler 2 also made such a journey. It is conceivable that the Altun Ha ruler of Tomb F-8/1 journeyed to Teotihuacán for a similar validation and that the Pachuca obsidian from his interment was part of the insignia he received.

The first noted involvement of Kaanul polity females in the Tlaloc cult is documented on La Corona Panel 6. La Corona was a small site 200 km southwest of Dzibanché that had a long history of close interaction with the Kaloomte' lords of the Kaanul polity. Simon Martin (2008) noted that the looted panel documents the arrival of Kaanul females at the La Corona court in AD 520, AD 679, and AD 721. Each woman was the daughter of the reigning Kaanul king, and each had been sent to La Corona to become the wife of its ruling lord. The scene on the panel illustrates two palanquins. The left palanquin takes the form of a temple decorated with the Waterlily Serpent. Within its enclosure stands a female holding a K'awiil scepter. The text that frames her indicates that she is Lady Ix Ti'kanal Ajaw, the third of the Kaanul polity princesses. The enclosure of the right palanquin is formed by a giant feline with Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan traits (see figure 3.20). The feline carries

a Black Witch Moth Tlaloc on its back. The female on this palanquin holds an incense bag and the hooked scepter associated with Tlaloc. She wears a Tlaloc headdress with the Ch'ajom element and the Ch'ajom ponytail. She also wears an owl-like pendant and an obsidian earring with the sacrificed heart motif at its tip. The text that frames this Tlaloc priestess identifies her as the first Kaanul princess Lady Nah Ek, who was the daughter of the Kaanul king Tuun K'ab Hix. Who initiated Lady Nah Ek into the Tlaloc cult is unknown, but in all likelihood it was her father.

TIKAL AND THE KALOOMTE' FOLIATED JAGUAR

Tikal Stela 31 is an Early Classic monument that was found broken and cached in Structure 5D-33-2nd. The stela is missing its lower section; consequently, portions of its narrative are incomplete, but what remains is in pristine condition. Stela 31 records important events in the life of the Tikal king Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II, who acceded to the throne on 8.18.15.11.0 3 Ajaw 13 Sak (November 27, AD 411) and who was the sixteenth king in the Tikal succession. The front of the stela illustrates Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II wearing an elaborate costume (figure 4.2). The narrative begins on the back of the monument with the 9.0.10.0.0 Period Ending (October 19, AD 445) and recites a long list of Maya deities who were honored by Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II on this occasion. It is likely that this is the event depicted on the front of the stela. The narrative then moves back in time to relate the Period Endings of three earlier Tikal rulers. Each of these three Period Ending statements begins with an introductory phrase and ends with a reference to where the Period Ending occurred (Stuart and Houston 1994). The section of the text that refers to the first Period Ending is damaged, but the second and third Period Endings are complete. They give the introductory phrase, the name of the Tikal ruler, the *tzolk'in* date of the Period Ending, the verb of the Period Ending, a phrase indicating what Period Ending it was, and the place name. These are the 8.14.0.0.0 Period Ending (AD 317) of the ruler Unen Bahlam (the twelfth Tikal ruler) and the 8.17.0.0.0 Period Ending (AD 376) of the ruler Chak Tok Ich'aak I (the fourteenth Tikal ruler).

Regarding the first Period Ending statement, the introductory phrase is intact, but the name of the ruler and the Period Ending information is completely damaged. The next section contains a nominal phrase composed of the name Foliated Jaguar, the Kaloomte' title, and the location of the Period Ending event. Foliated Jaguar is merely a nickname. His nominal phrase is composed of a jaguar wearing a headdress that is intimately related to the

Tlaloc cult (this type of headdress and its relationship to the Tlaloc cult will be discussed below and in chapter 5). Despite the fact that the Kaloomte' Foliated Jaguar does not appear anywhere else in the Tikal corpus, some researchers have concluded that he was a Tikal ruler who performed this Period Ending. This seems very unlikely, given that the names of the other two rulers appear right after the introductory phrase and not at the end of the Period Ending statements. Who, then, might have performed this first Period Ending? The logical answer is the eleventh Tikal king, who preceded Unen Bahlam. That happens to be Sihyaj Chan K'awiil I. The importance of this ruler to the Stela 31 narrative is demonstrated on the front of Stela 31, where Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II wears a headdress that spells out Sihyaj Chan K'awiil I's name. In other words, he has taken on the guise of his namesake. Further evidence that Sihyaj Chan K'awiil I was a particularly important Early Classic king is demonstrated on the Late Classic vessel K4679, where he begins a list of three Early Classic kings. Other references to Sihyaj Chan K'awiil I are rare, but he is featured on a small stela from El Encanto. Although the monument is badly eroded, it records an event by Sihyaj Chan K'awiil I that occurred sometime between AD 305 and AD 308 (Martin 2000). This time frame strongly suggests that the first Period Ending on Stela 31 was 8.13.0.0.0 9 Ajaw 3 Sak (December 14, AD 297) and that it was performed by Sihyaj Chan K'awiil I.

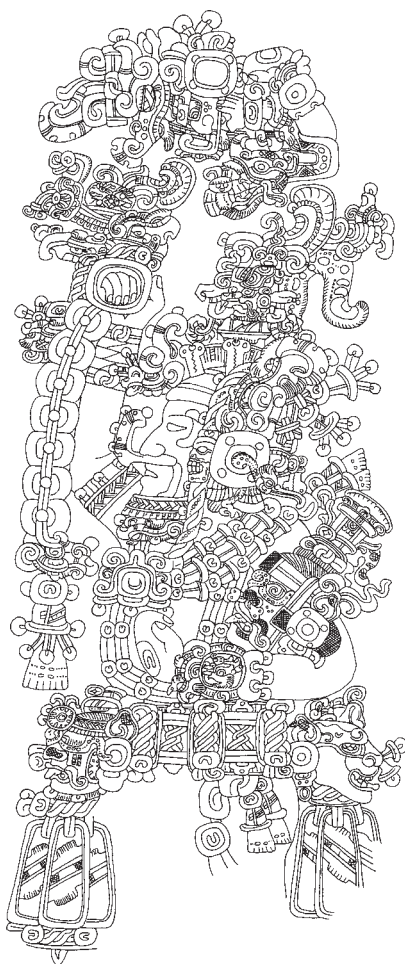


FIGURE 4.2. *Tikal Stela 31 front (drawing after Christopher Jones)*

Several Late Classic narratives at Palenque, Yaxchilán, and Piedras Negras focus on the Early Classic king who was first initiated into the Tlaloc cult (see below and chapter 5). It is highly probable that Sihyaj Chan K'awiil I was the first ruler at Tikal to acquire this status and that the Kaloomte' who initiated him was Foliated Jaguar. I suspect that the missing glyphs that preceded Foliated Jaguar's name detailed this initiation or alluded to it, and that is why he is mentioned in this Period Ending text.

TIKAL AND THE KALOOMTE' SIHYAJ K'AHK'

Competition between Tikal and the Kaanul polity has been identified as a key factor in many of the military conflicts of the Classic period, but the first major Tikal war event involving a Kaloomte' that is documented in surviving texts was not with the Kaanul polity but rather with a foreigner named Sihyaj K'ahk' who carried this title (Stuart 2000a). Following the 8.17.0.0.0 Period Ending of Chak Tok Ich'aak I, the Stela 31 narrative moves forward to the arrival of Sihyaj K'ahk' at Tikal on January 16, AD 378, and the death of Chak Tok Ich'aak I on the same day. Most researchers have concurred with Stuart's conclusion that Chak Tok Ich'aak I was killed by Sihyaj K'ahk'. At this point in time, Chak Tok Ich'aak I had been on the Tikal throne for eighteen years. Other hieroglyphic inscriptions at Tikal, El Perú, Uaxactún, Bejucal, Naachtún, and Homul-La Sufricaya also record historical events concerning Sihyaj K'ahk' and another Kaloomte' by the name of Spearthrower Owl, who was Sihyaj K'ahk's apparent ally (Stuart 2000a, 2004a, 2004b, 2014; Martin 2003; Braswell 2003; Estrada-Belli et al. 2009).

The nominal phrase of Sihyaj K'ahk' is composed of a T₇₄₀ birth sign (*sihyaj*) and a T₁₂₂ fire sign (*k'ahk'*) that can be loosely translated as “born from fire.” His Kaloomte' title is only prefixed with west in one retrospective text from the Late Classic period (Tikal Burial 116, MT. 34). On Stela 31, he is also called a west K'awiil. It has been proposed that Uaxactún Stela 5 and El Perú Stela 16 are depictions of Sihyaj K'ahk' (Freidel et al. 2007), but the badly eroded condition of these stelae precludes such an identification. Sihyaj K'ahk' is named and illustrated on a Late Classic stucco vessel of unknown provenance from the Museo VICAL de Arte Precolombino y Vidrio Moderno in Guatemala City although which of the two figures on this vessel is Sihyaj K'ahk' is debatable (Beliaev et al. 2017) (figure 4.3). In a format commonly found on Late Classic vessels, two figures are depicted in profile view, and they are separated from one other by caption texts that name them. Both are dressed in Tlaloc regalia. One of the figures is dressed as a warrior carrying a spear, shield, and

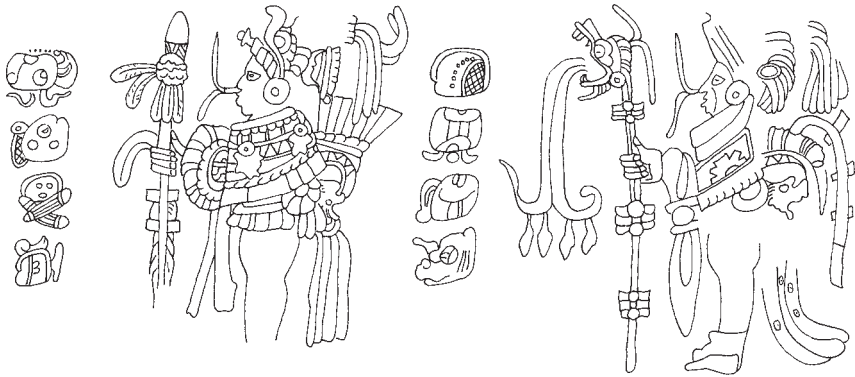


FIGURE 4.3. Museo VICAL vessel (drawing after Philipp Galeev)

incense bag. He wears a bird of prey headdress that I think is likely an owl. The caption text in front of this warrior is composed of the name Sihyaj K'ahk', the title Ch'ajom, and the toponym Wiinte'naah. It is curious that this nominal phrase does not include Sihyaj K'ahk's Kaloomte' title. Although eroded, the second figure wears what seems to be a Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan headdress.¹ He carries an incense bag and a Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan scepter with dramatic fiery scrolls emitting from its mouth. When lords wear Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmets, they often also carry a scepter in the form of this fire and meteor caterpillar-serpent, such as Piedras Negras Ruler 1 and the Bonampak lord Chan Muwaan.² This second figure on the VICAL vessel occupies more space than the warrior figure because of the large size of his scepter scrolls, and this is a common convention used in Maya art to emphasize a figure. The caption text in front of him is a nominal phrase that Dmitri Beliaev and his collaborators (2017) have deciphered as either Kuko'm Yohl Ahiin "the heart of the crocodile will be rolled up" or Kupo'm Yohl Ahiin "the heart of the crocodile will be cut." Such an individual is not known from other inscriptions, but Beliaev and collaborators think Yohl Ahiin may have been the founder of a new Petén lineage under the auspices of Sihyaj K'ahk'.

In standard reading order, the caption text in front of an individual's face usually names that person, but Beliaev and collaborators (2017) believe that in the case of the Museo VICAL vessel, it is the caption text behind each figure's back that refers to them. They base their interpretation on the close proximity of the caption texts to the back of the figures. Although their proposal is not unreasonable, their drawing of the scene is somewhat deceptive in that the front fire scroll of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan scepter is the same distance

from Yohl Ahiin's caption text as the back of the warrior figure in the original.³ I believe the vessel follows standard convention and that Yohl Ahiin is the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan figure and Sihyaj K'ahk' is the warrior. This topic will be further explored in chapter 5, but for now it is sufficient to say that no matter which figure on the Museo VICAL vessel is Sihyaj K'ahk', he was depicted dressed in Tlaloc regalia.

The various narratives referring to Sihyaj K'ahk' do not contain any genealogical information that would shed light on his identity or ethnicity. Most researchers have characterized him as a Teotihuacano or an ethnic Maya with strong Teotihuacán connections. The first chronological event concerning Sihyaj K'ahk' is recorded on the inscribed bone from Burial 116 (MT₃₄), the tomb of the Late Classic Tikal king Jasaw Chan K'awiil I. It cryptically states that on 9 Manik 10 Xul (8.17.0.15.7 August 24, AD 377) Sihyaj K'ahk', the West Kaloomte', descended. Although it does not state from where he descended, a parallel text on another inscribed bone from the tomb (MT₃₅) refers to the descent from a structure known as Wiinte'naah, so it is likely that Sihyaj K'ahk' also descended from such a structure (see below for a discussion of this kind of structure). The act of descending from a structure clearly does not relate to the simple act of exiting a building but likely refers to the conclusion of whatever ceremony the individual underwent within the structure. It is highly probable that this Wiinte'naah descent refers to either Sihyaj K'ahk's initiation into the Tlaloc cult or his accession as Kaloomte'.

The next recorded event of Sihyaj K'ahk' is found on El Perú Stela 15. El Perú is a small site that is located 80 km west of Tikal and 8 km north of the San Pedro Mártir River. This river was a major route into the central Petén from the west.⁴ Although Stela 15 celebrates the 8.19.0.0.0 11 Ajaw 13 Kayab (March 25, AD 416) Period Ending event of the El Perú king, its narrative also records that thirty-eight years earlier, on 8.17.1.4.4 3 Kan 7 Mak (January 8, AD 378), Sihyaj K'ahk' arrived at El Perú (Stuart 2000a:479–480; Freidel et al. 2007). Monuments at Tikal, Uaxactún, and La Sufricaya indicate that eight days later, on 8.17.1.4.12 11 Eb 15 Mak (January 16), Sihyaj K'ahk' arrived at Tikal (Stuart 2000a, 2014; Estrada-Belli et al. 2009). The narratives indicate that he brought with him a number of deities, including a west Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan deity. Presumably, Sihyaj K'ahk' transported effigies of these gods to Tikal, and it is likely that these deities were thought to have facilitated Sihyaj K'ahk's subsequent victory over the Tikal king. The texts referring to Sihyaj K'ahk' are succinct and give no indication of who accompanied him on his trek to Tikal, but it has been assumed that he was accompanied by warriors with the intent of overthrowing the Tikal king.

A badly eroded monument (Stela 24) recently found at Naachtún (65 km north of Tikal) also documents the arrival of Sihyaj K'ahk' at Tikal:

As the project epigraphers Alfonso Lacadena and Ignacio Cases note, Stela 24 names a local ruler of Naachtun who is said to be the *y-ajaw* or *y-ajawte'* (“vassal,” roughly) of Sihyaj K'ahk' himself. The inscription references the dates 8.17.1.4.10 9 Ok 13 Mak and 8.17.1.4.11 10 Chuen 14 Mac—two sequential days before the stated arrival of Sihyaj K'ahk' to Tikal on 8.17.1.4.12 11 Eb 15 Mac. One might surmise that this indicates Sihyaj K'ahk's actual presence at Naachtún as he was making his way to Tikal, but it should be cautioned that the text merely states a political relationship, not an itinerary. This is itself important, for the inscription might well imply that Sihyaj K'ahk' had some sort of political infrastructure in place in the Petén *before* his arrival at Tikal. (Stuart 2014)

While it is difficult to know what local Petén lords were supporters of Sihyaj K'ahk' prior to his arrival at Tikal, Stuart makes an excellent point. It is likely that there was a good deal of political machinations and collusions beforehand. In addition, the presence of Teotihuacán influence in the Petén prior to Sihyaj K'ahk' actions is well documented.

According to the narrative on Tikal Stela 31, a year and ten months after the death of Chak Tok Ich'aak I, a new king named Yax Nuun Ahiin I took the Tikal throne under the authority of Sihyaj K'ahk'. Yax Nuun Ahiin I is specifically referred to as the son of Spearthrower Owl and the vassal of Sihyaj K'ahk'. The Tikal Marcador text also notes that a secondary Tikal lord was also a vassal of Sihyaj K'ahk'. References to Sihyaj K'ahk' were not limited to Tikal, Naachtún, and El Perú. A Bejucal stela documents the 8.17.4.16.18 11 Etz'nab 1 Yaxk'in (September 3, AD 381) accession and the 8.17.17.0.0 11 Ajaw 3 Sek (July 24, AD 393) minor Period Ending event of an El Zotz/Bejucal lord and notes that he was a vassal of Sihyaj K'ahk' (Schele and Grube 1994; Houston 2008). El Zotz is 20 km due west of Tikal, on the route between El Perú and Tikal. Sihyaj K'ahk's presence is also recorded at Uaxactún, where he performed a Period Ending on 8.18.0.0.0 12 Ajaw 8 Zotz (July 8, AD 396) with the Uaxactún ruler. Uaxactún is located 20 km north of Tikal. The vassal statements referring to Sihyaj K'ahk' suggest that the Kaloomte' title designates a politically superior lord, and he has been characterized as the high king of the region (Stuart 2000a, 2004b; Martin 2003; Martin and Grube 2008). The corpus of hieroglyphic texts records no activities for Sihyaj K'ahk' after the AD 396 Period Ending, and no death date for him has survived. Whether he remained in the Petén region or withdrew is not known.

THE KALOOMTE' SPEARTHROWER OWL

A number of Early Classic inscriptions refer to an individual nicknamed Spearthrower Owl (Stuart 2000a:483; Martin and Grube 2008:31; Nielsen 2003; Nielsen and Helmke 2008). Although no illustrations of Spearthrower Owl have been positively identified, there are several possibilities, like a stucco head that was cached with the Tikal Marcador sculpture. On Tikal Stela 18, Yax Nuun Ahiin I wears an ancestral effigy belt assemblage that may be a portrait of his father. He also carries a rectangular shield emblazoned with the portrait of an individual dressed as Tlaloc on Stela 31. It is conceivable that this Tlaloc impersonator is Spearthrower Owl.

Chronologically, the first noted event related to Spearthrower Owl is his accession into rulership on 8.16.17.9.0 11 Ajaw 3 Wayeb (May 5, 374 AD). He is said to be a Jo'Tinam Witz Kaloomte' and the fourth ruler in the succession. His accession as ruler is in contrast to Sihyaj K'ahk', who is only ever named as a Kaloomte'. The narratives concerning Spearthrower Owl do not relate his birth date, his parentage, the name of his wife, or the birth date of his son Yax Nuun Ahiin I, much less where these events occurred. The narrative on Tikal Stela 31 indicates that Yax Nuun Ayiin I took the throne on September 13, AD 379, and was subsequently succeeded by his son Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II on November 27, AD 411. Tikal Stela 31 records the death of Spearthrower Owl on 9.0.3.9.18 12 Etz'nab 11 Sip (June 11, AD 439), sixty-five years after his own accession and well into the Tikal reign of his grandson. An inscription on a looted earring possibly from Río Azul names a Maya lord as the vassal of Spearthrower Owl, as does the Early Classic stucco vessel K7538.

A primary source of information on Spearthrower Owl is the narrative on the Tikal Marcador sculpture, an Early Classic limestone monument that was recovered from a *talud-tablero* platform known as Structure Sub-4B, Group 6C-XVI (Fialko 1988; Laporte and Fialko 1990). Although carved from one piece of stone, the monument can be divided into four sections: a disc decorated with a feathered medallion, a sphere, feathers, and a column base (figure 4.4). A similar type of stone sculpture was found in the La Ventilla group at Teotihuacán, but this sculpture is composed of four separate pieces of stone fitted together (Arroyo de Anda 1963). Such an object is also illustrated in a Teotihuacán mural depicting a ball game. Fragments of murals within Tikal Group 6C-XVI also feature ball games; thus, the Marcador has been characterized as a ballcourt marker (Fialko 1988). It has also been interpreted to be an effigy of a war banner (Freidel et al. 1993:299; Schele and Grube 1994). Its specific function is discussed below.

The narrative of the Marcador begins on the column base with an Initial Series Long Count date and a Supplementary Series that refers to the arrival of Sihyaj K'ahk' at Tikal (AD 378), and it notes that this event was “witnessed” (*yitab*) by Spearthrower Owl (Stuart 2000a:483, 508). It is argued that the action of *yitab* refers not to the viewing of an event but rather to sanctioning or endorsing it. Although the meaning of some of the glyphs is opaque, the text indicates that Sihyaj K'ahk' arrived with a number of gods, including a west Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan. The narrative continues on the rear of the column and moves back in time to the accession of Spearthrower Owl (AD 374), then joins this event to the dedication of the Marcador sculpture on 8.18.17.14. 9 12 Muluk 12 K'ank'in (January 24, AD 414). This dedication occurred during the reign of Spearthrower Owl's

grandson Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II. The text specifically states that the Marcador was the property of Spearthrower Owl and that the dedication happened under the supervision of a lord named Ch'amak, who was both the caretaker of the Marcador and a vassal of Sihyaj K'ahk'. Ch'amak may have been a Yajawk'ak' lord (see chapter 5 for a discussion of this office).

In the dedication phrase, the hieroglyphic sign representing the Marcador sculpture is a stylized version of Tlaloc's face set in a round cartouche followed by Spearthrower Owl's name (figure 4.5a). The feathered medallion on the front of the Marcador is inscribed with this same Tlaloc cartouche, so it is apparent that the Maya scribe used this feature of the Marcador as the *pars pro toto* representation for the sculpture and that this feature was its key



FIGURE 4.4. *Tikal Marcador*



FIGURE 4.5. a. *Tikal Marcador glyphs*, b. *Tikal Marcador medallion*, c. *Tikal Marcador medallion*

characteristic (figure 4.5b). Such abbreviations are common conventions in Mayan hieroglyphic writing. Many objects are inscribed with the name of the object followed by the name of the owner (Mathews 1979; Stuart 1995). While the front medallion of the Marcador disk features the Tlaloc face, the medallion on the back is a rendering of Spearthrower Owl's name (figure 4.5c). The glyphs of the medallions thus function as a name tag that reiterates the information from the column text that the Marcador was the property of Spearthrower Owl (Nielsen 2003).

As discussed in chapter 1, *tok'-pakal* was the term for an object composed of a flint and a shield. In Postclassic Mesoamerica where bows and arrows were an important weapon, a parallel metonym for the flint-shield couplet was arrow-shield. At Teotihuacán, where the spear thrower was the dominant weapon, the metonym was dart-shield. A Teotihuacán motif composed of an owl, two crossed darts, and a shield was nicknamed the "*lechuzza y armas*" (owl and weapons) by Hasso von Winning (1948, 1987) (figure 4.6a). He argued that it was an emblem for war and a symbol for warriors. The juxtaposing of the owl

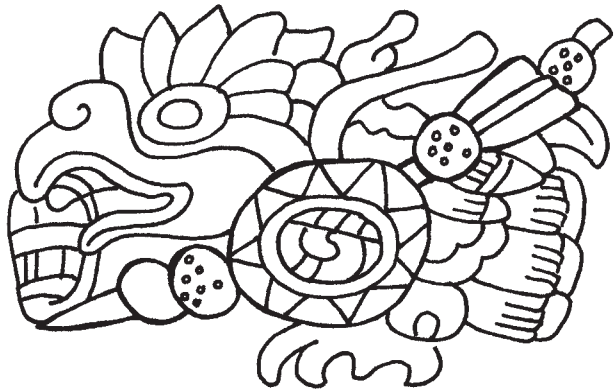


FIGURE 4.6.
*a. Teotihuacán lechuza
y armas, b. Tikal Stela
31 lechuza y armas
medallion*

with the dart-shield is, in essence, a Teotihuacán version of GIII's *tok'-pakal*, that is, it does not represent a generic dart-shield but one that belonged to a specific individual, in this case an owl. In several cases, the shield of the *lechuza y armas* is decorated with a hand or a hand grasping a dart. Such motifs beg to be read as the dart-shield of someone called Striker Owl. As stated earlier, the Tikal ruler Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II was the grandson of Spearthrower Owl. On the front of Tikal Stela 31, Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II holds an assemblage in his right hand, which is composed of the Itzamnaaj bird (the avian manifestation of the creator grandfather Itzamnaaj), an earring in the form of the ancestor Yax Eb Xook, and a *lechuza y armas* medallion (figure 4.6b). The assemblage has been characterized as a headdress, but this is by no means certain. The medallion is composed of an owl juxtaposed with a dart and a shield fringed with the Teotihuacán zigzag pattern used to denote obsidian. It is not a reference to Spearthrower Owl per se but to his dart-shield.

I suggest that the Marcador represents Spearthrower Owl's dart-shield in which the sculptor has merged these two weapons. The Marcador medallion is a feathered shield. Darts have fletching on their shafts. In many illustrations, there is a circular-shaped fletching below the dart blade. Long spears that are handheld are also decorated with this blade fletching, and prime examples are GIII's spears on the Tablet of the Sun and the Piedras Negras spears (spears were the preferred weapon in the Maya region). When we compare the Marcador sculpture to the various types of blade fletching, it is apparent that the sphere and feathers of the Marcador replicate the blade fletching while the column base is the shaft of the weapon. The Marcador is just a different type of juxtaposing of a dart and shield. The sculpture is a stone replica of Spearthrower Owl's dart-shield. As noted in chapter 1, Yaxchilán Lintel 45 illustrates Shield Jaguar III's captive making his submission to the *tok'-pakal* of the ancestor Knot-eye Jaguar. It is believed that the Tikal Marcador was originally placed on Structure Sub-4B, Group 6C-XVI. One has to wonder if captives were forced to make public submission in front of Spearthrower Owl's dart-shield effigy before their ritual deaths. The Palenque Tablet of the Sun indicates that the six-year-old K'inich Kan Bahlam II performed a ritual during his heir designation that involved the acquisition of his *tok'-pakal*. He is pictured holding his *tok'-pakal* before the *tok'-pakal* effigy of the deity GIII. It would not be surprising if the young lords of Tikal performed similar rituals before the dart-shield effigy of Spearthrower Owl.

In its logographic configuration, the nominal phrase Spearthrower Owl is composed of a hand holding an atlatl (spear thrower) and an owl (figure

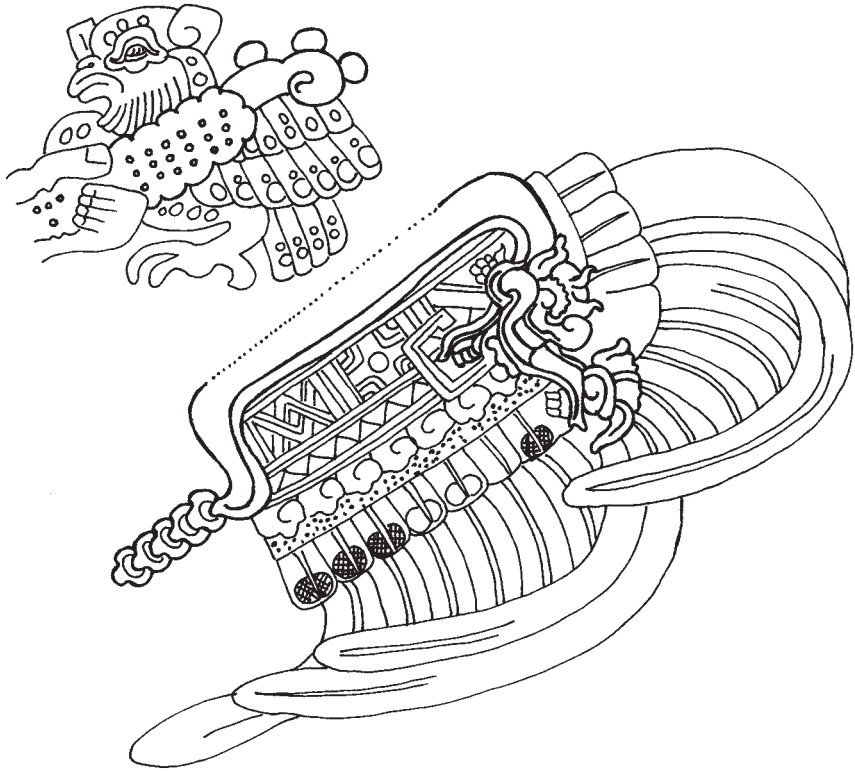


FIGURE 4.7. *Spearthrower Owl name and Piedras Negras Stela 9 Tlaloc Owl wing*

4.5a, 4.5c). In one example, the owl has the goggle eyes of Tlaloc. Unlike the instances of Spearthrower Owl's name from the Marcador column narrative where the two components of his name are depicted side by side, the medallion nominal phrase shows the spear thrower positioned over the wing of the owl. This foregrounding of the spear thrower highlights Spearthrower Owl's identification with the primary weapon of Tlaloc. It is visually reminiscent of the juxtaposing of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan meteor serpent and the Tlaloc Owl wing on Piedras Negras Stela 9 (figure 4.7). This is a powerful image of the deadly force of the owl, but it also emphasizes the fact that Spearthrower Owl was identified with these weapons and avatars of Tlaloc. In other words, Spearthrower Owl was named after the qualities of Tlaloc, just like many Maya rulers were named after the qualities of the Chahk thunderbolt gods.

THE TIKAL KING YAX NUUN AHIIN I

Yax Nuun Ahiin I (“first-?-crocodile”) is featured in the narratives of Tikal Stelae 4, 18, and 31. As noted above, he became the new Tikal king a year and ten months after the death of Chak Tok Ich’aak I (8.17.2.16.17 10 Kaban 10 Yaxk’in, September 13, AD 379). Two events related to Yax Nuun Ahiin I during this long interim period are recorded on Tikal Stela 31 and MT 35 from Tikal Burial 116. Although the Stela 31 passage is more difficult to translate because of missing portions, it refers to the ascent of Yax Nuun Ahiin I into a Wiinte’naah building on an 8 Men date (either February 8 or October 26 of AD 378). The Tikal Burial 116 text indicates that Yax Nuun Ahiin I came down from a Wiinte’naah structure on 8.17.2.3.16 4 Kib 14 Keh (December 26, AD 378), just 261 days before his accession (Stuart 2000a:493). The implication is that Yax Nuun Ahiin I was sequestered at this temple for a period of time.

Following the Wiinte’naah passage on Stela 31, the narrative moves forward to the accession of Yax Nuun Ahiin I on 8.17.2.16.17 10 Kaban 10 Yaxk’in (September 13, AD 379). His accession is highlighted by the use of a Supplementary Series. The story specifically states that his accession occurred at the Wiinte’naah structure, that the throne came with the acquisition of twenty-eight “provinces,” and that it was accomplished under the authority of Sihyaj K’ahk’ (Tokovinine 2008:266). The time frame then moves forward sixteen years to the 8.18.0.0.0 12 Ajaw 8 Zotz (July 8, AD 396) Period Ending at Tikal, which is said to have been conducted under the authority of Yax Nuun Ahiin I. As noted above, Sihyaj K’ahk’ was at Uaxactún during this Period Ending.

The Stela 31 narrative notes that Yax Nuun Ahiin I’s Period Ending happened specifically at a location called the Seven Place Fire Mountain. The Seven Place location is frequently paired with another mountain called the Nine Place (Kubler 1977). These two place names appear to refer to mythological locations that were replicated in the local landscape and used for pre-accession, accession, and Period Ending ceremonies.⁵ Although very fragmentary, Tikal Stela 18 also refers to Yax Nuun Ahiin I’s Period Ending event, as well as his vassal relationship with Sihyaj K’ahk’. What remains of Yax Nuun Ahiin I’s portrait on this monument shows him holding a Teotihuacan-style object. He sits on a motif that represents the Seven Place Fire Mountain.

Moving forward from the 8.18.0.0.0 Period Ending, the Stela 31 narrative discusses more events in the life of Yax Nuun Ahiin I, including what may be a reference to his death on 8.18.8.1.2 2 Ik’ 10 Sip (June 18, AD 404). The Stela 31 narrative next recounts the Period Ending on 8.18.10.0.0 11 Ajaw 18 Pop (May 17, AD 406), followed by the accession to the Tikal throne of Yax Nuun

Ahiin I's son Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II on 8.18.15.11.0 3 Ajaw 13 Sak (November 27, AD 411). Unlike Yax Nuun Ahiin I's accession at the Wiinte'naah, the accession of Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II is said to have occurred at the sky/cave of the deity GIII. This is parallel to the Late Classic Palenque texts that indicate that the king K'inich Kan Bahlam II underwent an accession ritual at a GIII shrine as well (Bassie-Sweet 1991; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017).⁶ The Stela 31 narrative then relates the 8.19.10.0.0 9 Ajaw 3 Muwan (February 1, AD 426) Period Ending of Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II before arriving at what are clearly the climactic events of the story. This section is greatly highlighted by the use of a Long Count date notation that includes an Initial Series Introductory Glyph and a Supplementary Series. It records the all-important *k'atun* Period Ending of 9.0.0.0.0 8 Ajaw 13 Keh (December 11, AD 435), conducted under the authority of Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II, that heralded the start of the ninth *bak'tun*. The time frame then moves forward from the Period Ending to the 9.0.3.9.18 12 Etz'nab 11 Zip (June 11, AD 439) death of Spearthrower Owl (Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II's grandfather). It seems reasonable to suggest that the story would have ended with a restatement of the 9.0.10.0.0. Period Ending that began the narrative, but all that is left at the bottom of the monument is the eroded remains of a distance number. Nevertheless, the fact that Spearthrower Owl is featured near the end of this long narrative as well as in the caption texts on the sides is significant, and it indicates his importance in this Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II narrative. Despite his genealogical descent from Spearthrower Owl, Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II is said to have been the sixteenth ruler of Tikal in a count that begins with the Tikal founder Yax Ehb Xook (Martin and Grube 2008; Martin 2003).

As noted, the front of Stela 31 is an elaborate portrait of Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II, and it is likely that the event portrayed is the 9.0.10.0.0 Period Ending that begins the narrative on the back of the monument. The visual focus of his portrait is the assemblage he holds in his right hand. Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II wears a large earring with a water bird draped through its center hole. Above the earring is a motif representing the name of the Tikal founder Yax Ehb Xook (Martin 2003:15). It may function in this context as a label naming Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II's earring as an heirloom owned by Yax Ehb Xook.

Hovering above Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II is a motif composed of a square-eyed god with the Sun God attributes, although it lacks the diagnostic *k'in* element trait of that deity. Unlike the Sun God, this Stela 31 god has a hand over his mouth (figure 4.2). The god holds a serpent that disgorges a small owl representing the name of an early Tikal king (Stuart 2007b), and he wears a headdress that represents the name Yax Nuun Ahiin I. This "sun god" has been interpreted to be a deified portrait of Yax Nuun Ahiin I.



FIGURE 4.8. *Tikal Stela 31 back*
(drawing after Christopher Jones)

Both sides of Stela 31 illustrate a full-figure portrait of Yax Nuun Ahiin I in a naturalistic form, with a caption text above his head identifying him (figure 4.8). On the left side, the sixteen blocks of caption text state that Yax Nuun Ahiin I was a one *k'atun* lord of Tikal, the vassal of the Kaloomte' (Sihyaj K'ahk'), and the son of Spearthrower Owl. The twelve glyph blocks of the right caption text repeat some of this basic information, but in a briefer form and in reverse order. The text first states that Yax Nuun Ahiin I was the child of Spearthrower Owl and then says he was a vassal of the Kaloomte' and a

lord of Tikal. These two caption texts form a couplet in chiasmus form, a common literary device found in Mayan hieroglyphic inscriptions and formal language (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). Yax Nuun Ahiin I is illustrated as a significantly shorter figure than the depiction of his son on the front of the monument. In fact, he only reaches the height of his son's shoulder. As argued by Stuart (2000a:487), Yax Nuun Ahiin I's title of one *k'atun* lord in the caption text indicates that he was under the age of twenty in these illustrations and that he came to the Tikal throne as a youth.

In both of his portraits, Yax Nuun Ahiin I is dressed in Teotihuacán-style costumes. On the left side of the stela, he is shown in profile view with the right side of his body facing the viewer. He carries a square shield and a spear thrower. A motif composed of a mirror and three long black-tipped tails hangs from his belt. These tails have been identified as coyote tails (Stone 1989; Nielsen 2003, 2004), but given that a large number of wolves have been found in Teotihuacán burials, I think it is more likely that they are wolf tails (Sugiyama and Cabrera 2000; Sugiyama 2005).⁷ Yax Nuun Ahiin I's headdress is in the form of what is likely a stylized wolf, given its long muzzle. In other words, Yax Nuun Ahiin I is illustrated as a wolf warrior. Why he has three such tails is a mystery, but the three-tail motif is a common costume element in Teotihuacán murals (Miller 1973:figs. 149, 173, 176, 177). Yax Nuun Ahiin I's headdress also has three flaming torches stuck in it, with the flames depicted in Teotihuacán fashion.

The right portrait of Yax Nuun Ahiin I is again in a profile view, but now the left side of his body is featured. Although he wears the same gaiters and three wolf tails, his headdress, necklace, mirror, and spear thrower take different forms, and his rectangular shield faces the viewer. The helmet-like headdress he sports is a well-known type seen in numerous scenes that are closely associated with war and Teotihuacán imagery. The base of the fan of feathers above the helmet is decorated with the obsidian zigzag design.

Given that the main text refers to two events in the life of the young Yax Nuun Ahiin I (his sequestering at a Wiinte'naah building, followed some time later by his accession), the simplest answer as to why he is portrayed twice on this monument is that they are illustrations of him on these two occasions. A clear argument can be made for this interpretation based on Yax Nuun Ahiin I's accession statement from Tikal Stela 4. A slight digression is in order to discuss this topic.

As noted in the introduction, the headdress of kingship is a flexible headband of bark paper known as the *sak huun* "white headband." The Palenque Temple XIX platform depicts the ruler K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III in the

process of accepting the *sak huun* headband (see figure 0.11). In hieroglyphic writing, the T678 logograph of the war helmet worn by Yax Nuun Ayiin I has phonetic substitutions that indicate it is read *ko'harw*. In a sixteenth-century Tzotzil dictionary, the Spanish terms *quijote* (armor that covers the thigh) and *armadura* (suit of armor) are described using the Tzotzil term *kovov tak'in* (Laughlin 1988:224; 1051). *Kovov* is a cognate of *ko'harw*, and *tak'in* refers to metal. Robert Laughlin translated *kovov* as helmet rather than armor because headdresses were the primary regalia of Tzotzil warriors. Although cognates of *ko'harw* are only found in Tzotzil, this example confirms the military nature of the *ko'harw* helmet. A *ko'harw* helmet sits on a stand beside K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III. Although the Temple XIX platform illustrates the moment K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III received his *sak huun* headdress of rulership, the placement of the *ko'harw* helmet next to him implies that he will receive this object next. The Tablet of the Slaves indicates that this was the case. This monument illustrates K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III receiving a *ko'harw* helmet on the day of his accession, but the text that describes this action refers to the *ko'harw* helmet merely as a *huun* “headdress” (Wald 1997; Bassie-Sweet et al. 2012) (see chapter 5 for a further discussion of this monument). The juxtaposing of the *sak huun* headdress and *ko'harw* helmet on the Temple XIX platform monument clearly indicates that the *ko'harw* helmet represents a different office than that of king.

The scene on the Palace Tablet illustrates K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II flanked by his father and mother, who hand him a similar *ko'harw* helmet headdress as well as a *tok'-pakal* (see figure 5.1). The focus of the scene is on the action of his father. The episode of the caption text that frames this action states that the name of this helmet headdress was *ux yop huun* (“three leaf headdress”) (Bassie-Sweet et al. 2012; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017).⁸ The main text of Tikal Stela 31 describes the accession of Yax Nuun Ayiin I on 8.17.2.16.17 10 Kaban 10 Yaxk'in (September 13, AD 379). This same date appears in the narrative on Tikal Stela 4, but here the action is stated to be the taking of an *ux yop huun* headdress by Yax Nuun Ayiin I (Stuart 2012:128). So what can be concluded from this Stela 4 statement is that Yax Nuun Ayiin I received the *ko'harw* helmet called *ux yop huun* on the day of his accession, just like K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III. I believe it is safe to conclude that the right side of Stela 31 that depicts Yax Nuun Ayiin I wearing the *ko'harw* headdress represents a portrait of Yax Nuun Ayiin I on the day of accession after he has donned his *ux yop huun* headdress. By default, the left side of Stela 31 should illustrate his regalia on the day of his Wiinte'naah ceremony.

In summary, Sihyaj Chan K'awiil II's monument stresses his relationship with his father, Yax Nuun Ayiin I, and his grandfather, Spearthrower Owl. Yax

Nuun Ayiin I is specifically depicted on the occasion of his Wiinte'naah ceremony and accession wearing the Tlaloc-related costumes he acquired during these events. During the interim between Chak Tok Ich'aak I's death and Yax Nuun Ayiin I's accession, Sihyaj K'ak' actively consolidated control over the region that had been under Chak Tok Ich'aak I's sway in the eastern Petén (the twenty-eight provinces). A fragment of the stela unearthed at the site of El Achiotal (30 km northeast of El Perú) indicates that he was also operating in the western Petén (Canuto et al. 2017). Meanwhile, the young Yax Nuun Ayiin I was being initiated into the Tlaloc cult and prepared for his future role as king.

The motivation for Sihyaj K'ahk's actions against Chak Tok Ich'aak I is not known. At a recent Dumbarton Oaks conference on Teotihuacán, there was some consensus among researchers that his actions may have been in retaliation for something the Tikal polity had done rather than a simple act of conquest. There are also no inscriptions that indicate what the Kaanul polity was doing during this period or whether they played a role in these events. It is highly unlikely that they were passive observers.

THE COPÁN KING K'INICH YAX K'UK' MO'

During the later part of Sihyaj Chan K'awiil's reign at Tikal and Spearthrower Owl's reign at Jo' Tinam Witz, a lord named K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', whose identity and prestige were also centered on the Tlaloc cult, founded a new dynasty at Copán (Stuart 2004a). In the narratives of his successors, he is called a West Kaloomte' lord, and he is portrayed three times wearing the goggle eyes of Tlaloc. The pre-accession name of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' was K'uk' Mo' Ajaw (Stuart 2004a). The *k'uk'* (quetzal) and *mo'* (macaw) components of these nominal phrases are represented by a logograph of a bird head that is a conflation of the features of a quetzal (crest of feathers) and the eye and beak of a macaw.

The first phase of Copán Structure 16 (nicknamed Hunal) was a modest construction in the *talud-tablero* style of Teotihuacán, and it was used to house the tomb of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' (Burial 92-2) (Bell et al. 2004.). His burial included many objects with Teotihuacán traits that further demonstrate his close association with this culture. Nevertheless, strontium isotope analysis of his remains indicates that he was raised in the Petén (Buikstra et al. 2004). Uxwitza' "Three Mountain Water" is a Caracol place name, and K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' is named on Copán Stela J and Stela 63 as an Uxwitza' Ch'ajom and a Uxwitza' Lord (Stuart 2007a). From this evidence, Stuart has concluded that K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's place of origin in the Petén was Caracol.

K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's accession name as well as his pre-accession name of K'uk' Mo' Ajaw ("quetzal macaw lord") is a curious pairing of a quetzal and a macaw. Quetzal-macaw conflation is seen in the murals of Teotihuacán Zona 5-A (Conjunto del Sol, Palace of the Sun), which illustrate a series of men dressed in bird costumes (Taube 2003b, 2006; Chinchilla 2010; Nielsen and Helmke 2015). The bird-men in the murals are presented in a diving position with outstretched arms. They have human faces, hands, and legs. Their costume consists of a bird worn like a cape over the head and shoulders, with the wings of the bird decorating the men's outstretched arms. Four juvenile quetzal-macaw heads in profile view decorate each wing of the birds. On each of their human legs, the bird-men wear a similar juvenile quetzal-macaw head like a gaiter, and a bird in frontal pose decorates the tail. Similar supernatural birds are found on sculpture from the Copán ballcourt (Taube 2003b:fig. II.3). It is thought that K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' was named after these bird-men. If viewed from the perspective of a metonym related to trade feathers, the name quetzal-macaw represents a combination of the most highly prized mountain bird (the quetzal) and the most valued lowland bird (the macaw). Given that Copán is just 50 km from the prime quetzal habitat of the Alta Verapaz and that its valley location is suitable for macaw rearing, it is possible that it was the bird and feather trade that initially brought K'uk' Mo' Ajaw from the Petén to the Copán region.

As was the custom across the Maya region, the Hunal structure was eventually filled in and another building was constructed on top of it. Known as Yehnal, this structure was, in turn, covered by yet another, known as Margarita, and so forth. In the Late Classic period, the Copán ruler Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat placed an altar at the base of the Structure 16 staircase commemorating his role as the sixteenth successor of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'. The narrative on this altar begins with the date 8.19.10.10.17 5 Kaban 15 Yaxk'in (September 6, AD 426) and states that K'uk' Mo' Ajaw received a K'awiil at a Wiinte'naah building (Stuart 2004a). The holding of a K'awiil scepter on the date of accession ceremonies is well-known at other sites, and Stuart has suggested that this Wiinte'naah event represents K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's accession. Three days later he left the Wiinte'naah as the newly named K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' and journeyed for 152 days before arriving at Copán on 8.19.11.0.13 5 Ben 11 Muwan (February 9, AD 427). The narrative then moves forward to the Copán ruler Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat's Period Ending on 9.17.5.0.0 6 Ajaw 13 K'ayab (December 22, AD 775) and the 9.17.5.3.4 5 Kan 12 Wo (March 2, AD 776) dedication of Altar Q, which is said to be an altar stone for K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'.

The sides of Altar Q illustrate all sixteen of the Copán rulers in sequential order, four on each side. The narrative on the sides begins on the west with the

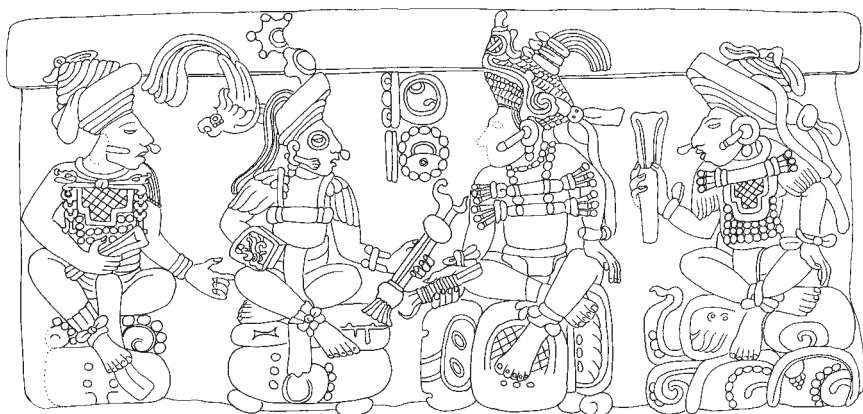


FIGURE 4.9. *Copán Altar Q (drawing after Annie Hunter)*

calendar round date of Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat's accession. The second Copán ruler and K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' sit on the left facing the calendar round date, while Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat and the fifteenth Copán ruler sit facing the date on the right. K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' is depicted wearing the goggle eyes of Tlaloc. He also wears a small square shield over his right hand while extending to Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat what Karl Taube (2004b) interprets to be a burning dart (figure 4.9). All the other kings on this monument appear to hold what Taube believes are fire bundles. If a viewer moved to the right around the monument to the south, east, and north sides, they would see illustrations of the other Copán kings in descending order of succession. Conversely, if they moved to the left, they would see the succession of kings in ascending order. What is most interesting about this monument is that Structure 16 retained its association with the Kaloomte' K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' throughout the centuries and that he continued to be identified as a manifestation of Tlaloc into the eighth century.

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS JO'TINAM WITZ?

The Marcador text indicates that Spearthrower Owl was a Jo'Tinam Witz Kaloomte', and later in the narrative, there is a reference to a Jo'Tinam Witz Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan. *Witz* means mountain, and there are many examples of mountain place names in Teotihuacán art and in the Maya corpus. The place name Jo'Tinam Witz does not occur in any other Maya inscriptions known to date. It has been proposed that Jo'Tinam Witz is the Mayan name for Teotihuacán and that Spearthrower Owl was its king (Stuart 2000a,

2004b; Martin 2003; Nielson 2003, 2006; Nielsen and Helmke 2008; Stuart and Houston 2018). In this hypothesis, Spearthrower Owl was both the king and Kaloomte' of Teotihuacán, while Sihyaj K'ahk' became the Kaloomte' of the central Petén region presumably after his successful campaign there. It has been further suggested that Spearthrower Owl sent Sihyaj K'ahk' to defeat Tikal and subsequently had his own young son Yax Nuun Ahiin I installed there as the new king (Stuart 2000a). In such a scenario, the Kaloomte' lords Spearthrower Owl and Sihyaj K'ahk' would not have been equals; rather, Sihyaj K'ahk' would have been a "general" of Spearthrower Owl who was simply doing Spearthrower Owl's bidding. One of the issues with the interpretation of Spearthrower Owl as the monarch of Teotihuacán is the fact that there is little evidence that Teotihuacán was ever ruled by a single king (Fash 2017). There is, however, ample evidence of a bellicose merchant-warrior class. This raises the possibility that Spearthrower Owl and Sihyaj K'ahk' were leaders of Teotihuacán merchant-warriors, who participated in that city's Tlaloc cult and traded with the Maya region. Jo'Tinam Witz may refer to a neighborhood or even a Teotihuacán hinterland controlled by Spearthrower Owl, such as the Pachuca obsidian deposits.

Another issue with Stuart's hypothesis and acknowledged by him in his later publications is that strontium isotope testing of Yax Nuun Ahiin I's teeth indicates that he spent the first years of his life in the Petén region (Wright 2005). There are many scenarios that could explain why Spearthrower Owl's son was born at Tikal. For example, Spearthrower Owl could have been part of a trading venture to Tikal prior to his accession, formed a marriage alliance with a Tikal lineage, and fathered a child before returning alone to Teotihuacán. Such a scenario makes one wonder if Yax Nuun Ahiin I's presence at Tikal precipitated Sihyaj K'ahk's killing of the Tikal king Chak Tok Ich'aak I or was at least part of the strategy for defeating him. While we can speculate at length, we may never know the answers to these fundamental questions unless more inscriptions pertaining to this time period are uncovered. However, the identification of Spearthrower Owl, Sihyaj K'ahk', and Yax Nuun Ahiin I with Teotihuacán-style warfare imagery is indisputable.

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS THE WIINTE'NAAH?

Although the etymology of the term is unclear, the Wiinte'naah logograph incorporates two bundles of firewood that are placed in a crossed formation ready for burning (Stuart 2000a, 2004a; Taube 2004b; Fash et al. 2009; Estrada-Belli and Tokovinine 2016) (figure 4.10). It has been argued that Wiinte'naah structures were locales of new fire ceremonies related to



FIGURE 4.10. *Wiinte'naah* place name

solar mythology and the rebirth of the sun (Taube 2004b; Fash et al. 2009). Nevertheless, *Wiinte'naah* buildings were intimately associated with Tlaloc. As an example, there is a structure at the site of Río Amarillo that is labeled as a *Wiinte'naah*, and it is decorated with Tlaloc motifs (Saturno 2000; Stuart 2000a:493; Taube 2004b:273). In addition, some examples of the *Wiinte'naah* place name actually incorporate Tlaloc's face, goggle eyes, or headdress. Copán Structure 16 has been identified as a *Wiinte'naah*, and its final form is swathed in Tlaloc imagery (Fash et al. 2009).

As discussed above, *Sihyaj K'ahk'*, *Yax Nuun Ayiin I*, and *K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'* were involved in events at a *Wiinte'naah*. Various texts refer to *Spearthrower Owl*, *Sihyaj K'ahk'*, and *Yax K'uk' Mo'* as *Wiinte'naah Ajaws*, and *K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'* is also called a *Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom*. A reference

to another Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom is found in a caption text on Yaxchilán Lintel 25 of Structure 23 (see chapter 6). The juxtaposing of Ch'ajom insignia and Tlaloc headdresses was discussed in chapter 3. The obvious conclusion is that the individuals wearing both the Tlaloc and Ch'ajom headdresses were Wiinte'naah Ch'ajoms and that these individuals specifically attended to the incense offerings made to the ancestors and Tlaloc deities associated with Wiinte'naah structures. Given that *Tagetes lucida* was an element of the Tlaloc headdress, it is likely that the incense offered by a Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom was *Tagetes lucida* or this flower combined with copal.

Based on the association of Wiinte'naah structures with Teotihuacán imagery, it has been reasonably suggested that the prototype or prototypes for the Wiinte'naah structures found in the Maya area were buildings at Teotihuacán (Fash et al. 2009). The Copán Altar Q narrative indicates that the journey of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' from the Wiinte'naah structure of his accession to Copán took over five months. Pilgrimages to a foreign center for political and religious validation have a long history in Mesoamerica, and this lengthy journey by K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' suggested to William Fash and his collaborators (2009) that his accession event happened at Teotihuacán. Although the distance between Teotihuacán and Copán is over 1,100 km as the crow flies, it would not have taken five months for such a journey. In fact, there is no location in Mesoamerica that would have taken five months to reach unless significant battles or stops had to be made along the way. As an example, it took the Spanish expedition led by the conquistador Pedro Alvarado a mere two months to travel from Tenochtitlan to Guatemala in the quest to subjugate the southern kingdoms of the highland Maya.

Noting the function of the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacán as a fire and solar temple, Fash and his collaborators (2009) have proposed that the Wiinte'naah structure where K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' was invested as king was the Pyramid of the Sun. The Conjunto del Sol structures containing the quetzal-macaw bird-men for whom K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' was named are located at the foot of the Pyramid of the Sun. These scholars further argued that Copán Temple 16 and its numerous renovations replicate the Pyramid of the Sun. In their interpretation, K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' built a modest replica of the Pyramid of the Sun at Copán and was later buried in this structure. They also argued that the Wiinte'naah events of Spearthrower Owl, Sihyaj K'ahk', and Yax Nuun Ayiin I occurred at Teotihuacán.

While their interpretation is very appealing, Teotihuacán-style architecture and cultural artifacts predate the AD 378 arrival of Sihyaj K'ahk' at Tikal, so it is not impossible that there was a Wiinte'naah building at Tikal even before

this time and that this is where at least some of the various Wiinte'naah events occurred. The Tikal Stela 31 narrative specifically states that Yax Nuun Ayiin I took the Tikal throne under the authority not of his father, Spearthrower Owl, but of Sihyaj K'ahk', who was situated in the Petén region at the time. It is also curious that although Spearthrower Owl was allegedly a ruler of Teotihuacán at the time of the accession of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', he is not mentioned in the Copán narratives.

THE LATER KALOOMTE' LORDS

There is a considerable time gap between the events of Spearthrower Owl, Sihyaj K'ahk', and K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' in the late fourth century to early fifth century and the next records concerning Kaloomte' lords. As noted above, the Kaanul ruler K'ahk'Ti' Ch'ich' attained the office of Kaloomte' in AD 550. Another early Kaloomte' lord is mentioned on Piedras Negras Panel 2 and an inscribed wooden box that detail the AD 510 induction of the Early Classic Piedras Negras ruler Turtle Tooth into the Tlaloc cult (see chapter 5 for further discussion of the box). The ceremony was overseen by a West Kaloomte' lord named Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun at a Wiinte'naah structure. The identity of this Kaloomte' is somewhat of a mystery. Based on his West Kaloomte' title, it has been proposed that Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun was a Teotihuacano (Anaya et. al 2003). Given Piedras Negras's latter affiliation with the Kaanul polity, it is not impossible that Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun was affiliated with that site.

In the sixth century, the Kaanul polity embarked on an enterprise to control trade routes to the southern highlands that were under Tikal's sway. Their strategy was to establish domination of the sites to the east, south, and west of Tikal that had traditionally had alliances with Tikal. In doing so, they weakened Tikal's economic position and made it vulnerable to direct military attack from all sides. Their efforts culminated in AD 562 when the Kaanul king Sky Witness defeated the Tikal king Wak Chan K'awiil and then placed his own son K'inich Waw on the Tikal throne (Grube 2016). While the Kaanul polity prospered, Tikal suffered a long period of foreign control (the so-called hiatus). Tikal lords began to reassert themselves during the reign of the Tikal king Nuun Ujol Chaak, and the narratives of his three successors (his son, grandson, and great-grandson) emphasize their accessions into the office of Kaloomte' rather than that of Ajaw: Jasaw Chan K'awiil I (AD 682), Yik'in Chan K'awiil (AD 734), and Yax Nuun Ahiin II (AD 768).

Jasaw Chan K'awiil I's most illustrious accomplishment was the defeat of the Kaanul king Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' and the capture of one of the Kaanul

patron gods in AD 695 (Stuart 2000a:490; Martin and Grube 2008:110–111).⁹ Lintel 3 of Jasaw Chan K'awiil I's burial temple details this triumph and illustrates the Kaanul patron god on a palanquin. The caption text also refers to a conjuring performed by Jasaw Chan K'awiil I forty days later on the thirteenth *k'atun* anniversary of Spearthrower Owl's death and then backs up in time to recount Jasaw Chan K'awiil I's accession as Kaloomte'. Although the caption text on Lintel 2 is destroyed, the image illustrates another palanquin, but this one is festooned with images of Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan caterpillar-serpents. The tomb of Jasaw Chan K'awiil I contained a cache of inscribed bones that celebrate the ceremonies of Sihyaj K'ahk' and Yax Nuun Ayiin I and the conjuring of a Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan that further reinforce his connection to this Tlaloc cult. In short, regaining the status of Kaloomte' brought with it the power of the Tlaloc gods and subsequent military victories.

The capturing of an enemy's patron god is a feature of many war narratives, as seen on Tikal Temple IV Lintel 2 (Martin 1996; Martin and Grube 2008:49, 78–79). This lintel details the “star war” event conducted by the Tikal king Yik'in Chan K'awiil against the Naranjo king Yax Mayuy Chan Chaahk and the capture of the latter's patron god in AD 744. The lintel displays this captured patron god. Like those of his father, Jasaw Chan K'awiil I, the monuments of Yik'in Chan K'awiil emphasize his accession into the office of Kaloomte', and his nominal phrases consistently name him as a Kaloomte' lord. The implication is that the Tlaloc god of the Kaloomte' was stronger than the patron god of Naranjo. The Kaloomte' was not only the supreme warrior, but his Tlaloc god was the supreme war god. In other words, in the hierarchy of war gods, Tlaloc was thought to ultimately trump patron gods.

During the Late Classic period, the Kaloomte' title appears in the nominal phrases of the rulers of Dos Pilas-Aguateca, Palenque, Yaxchilán, Quiriguá, Machaquilá, Lamanai, Ucanal, Motul de San José, Seibal, Pusilhá, Dzibilchaltún, and Ek' Balam. The wives and daughters of Kaloomte' lords also held this office.

SUMMARY

The narratives concerning the Kaloomte' Sihyaj K'ahk' indicate that he arrived at Tikal with Tlaloc deities. The religious nature of the office is clearly tied to the worship of Tlaloc as a war god and the military advantages associated with that deity complex. As is discussed more fully in chapter 5, the Kaloomte' functioned as a high priest or priestess of the Tlaloc cult, given that it was the Kaloomte' who initiated others into the cult and provided

their regalia. What additional qualities and duties set the Kaloomte' lords and ladies apart from others who took on the guise of Tlaloc are not obvious but may rest in their ability to conjure this god and the ancestors associated with this cult in times of war. The Spanish chroniclers Torquemada and Durán both noted that Aztec kings studied the heavens for omens, and across Mesoamerica meteors were omens of death and war (Aveni 1980:14–15). In the Maya region, Tlaloc was specifically identified with meteors, so it is likely that one of duties of the Kaloomte' was to interpret these celestial omens as messages from this god and from the ancestors who took on this guise in the afterlife. This overview of Kaloomte' lords and their activities provides a framework for a discussion about Tlaloc regalia and the other offices associated with the cult in chapters 5 and 6.

Tlaloc insignia that includes headdresses, incense bags, weapons, and shields is featured on monumental sculpture, architecture, ceramic scenes, and pottery figurines.¹ This chapter reviews the headdress of the Kaloomte' and two types of war helmets worn by members of the Tlaloc cult: the *ux yop huun* and Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan headdress. It also explores the beginning of the Tlaloc cults at Palenque and Piedras Negras and the role these two war helmets played at these sites. There is evidence that these helmets were passed down through later generations of lords as heirloom pieces. The roles of the Yajawk'ak' lords and Tlaloc executioners are also reviewed.

THE HEADDRESS OF A KALOOMTE'

With the exception of the three Late Classic Tikal kings Jasaw Chan K'awiil I (AD 682), Yik'in Chan K'awiil (AD 734), and Yax Nuun Ahiin II (AD 768), accession statements for the office of Kaloomte' were rarely noted on public monuments. As discussed in chapter 4, the earliest recorded accession was that of the Kaanul king K'ahk'Ti' Ch'ich' in AD 550 (Martin 2005, 2017; Martin and Beliaev 2017). It is expected that there would have been a headdress that represented the office of Kaloomte'. One overlooked example of an accession into the office of Kaloomte' is recorded in the main text of the Palenque Palace Tablet, and it provides the name of this headdress. The scene on the Palace Tablet illustrates K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II

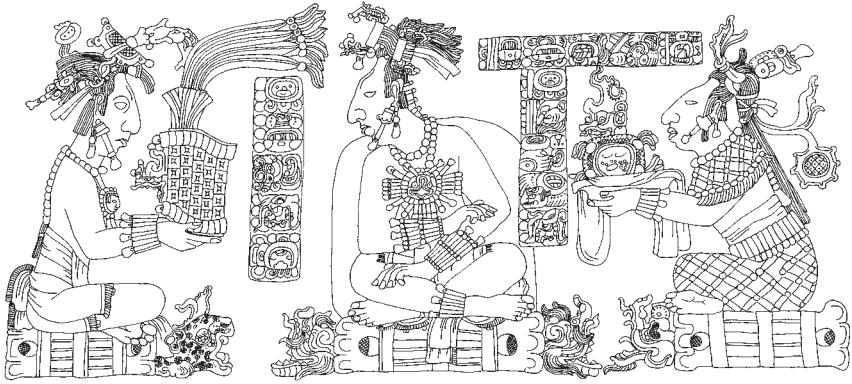


FIGURE 5.1. Palenque Palace Tablet scene (drawing after Linda Schele)

receiving an *ux yop huun* helmet and *tok'-pakal* from his parents (Bassie-Sweet et al. 2015; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017) (figure 5.1). The focus of the scene is the acquisition of the *ux yop huun*, and the episode of the caption text that frames this action states that it happened when K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II was nine years old. It is his initiation into the Tlaloc cult. The main text begins with the birth of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II in AD 644 and states that he was the child of K'inich Janaab Pakal I and Lady Tz'akbu Ajaw (figure 5.2). The time frame then moves forward seven years to his first bloodletting event and *k'al mayij* "binding of the sacrifice" in honor of the triad of patron gods and other deities (Carrasco 2004:452; Stuart 2005b:154). The narrative then links his first bloodletting to his father's 9.11.0.0.0 Period Ending ceremony. The text states in couplet form that K'inich Janaab Pakal I performed the two essential action of a *k'atun* Period Ending: he tied a commemorative stone and made a blood offering (Hull 2003:144). The story next relates the 9.11.13.0.0 Period Ending and specifies that K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II made a blood offering to the triad of patron gods on this minor Period Ending. The story continues with the death of his father (AD 683), who is said to have been a four *k'atun* Kaloomte'. The time frame then advances from the death of K'inich Janaab Pakal I to the accession (AD 684) of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II's older brother K'inich Kan Bahlam II (AD 702). It also states that on this date K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II, who was thirty-nine years old at the time, was named heir apparent. The story moves forward to K'inich Kan Bahlam II's death and then to the date of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II's accession (AD 702). This date is greatly highlighted by a Supplementary Series notation, but instead of the expected reference to the *sak huun* headdress of kingship, the text refers to the

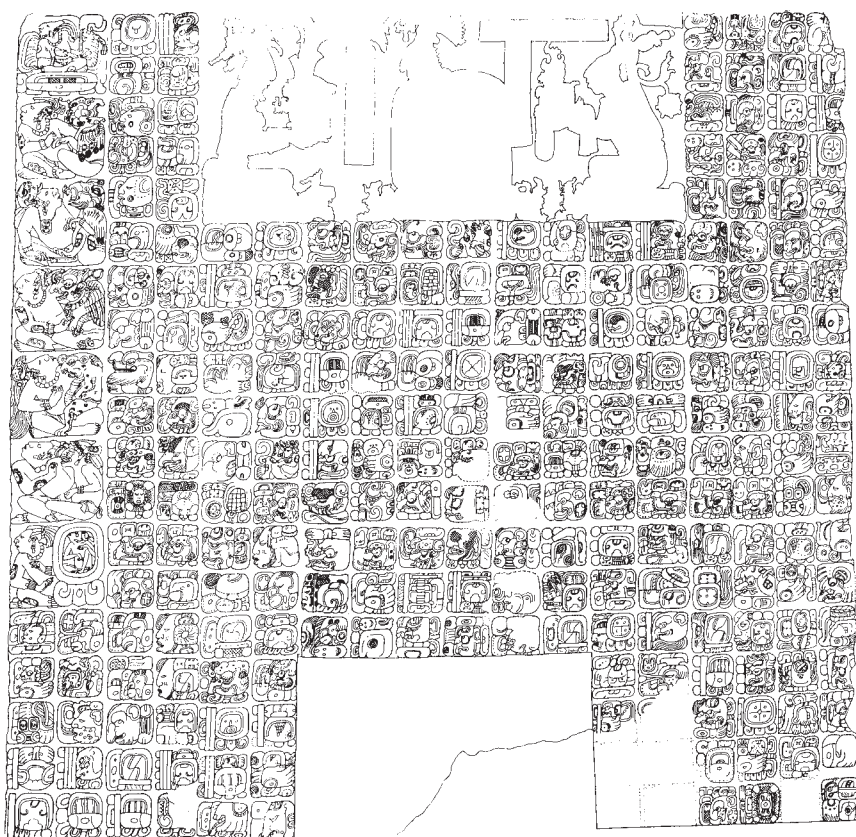


FIGURE 5.2. Palenque Palace Tablet text (drawing by Linda Schele)

tying of another type of *huun* headdress. The signs naming this headdress are undeciphered, but the first element is a variant of the “capped” ajaw sign that may be related to flowers (P₁). The episode ends with a reference to the second change in the office of the West Kaloomte’.

The implication of this statement is that K’inich Janaab Pakal I was the first Palenque Kaloomte’ and that his eldest son, K’inich Kan Bahlam II, was the first successor to this office and his younger son, K’inich K’an Joy Chitam II, was the second. This parallels the situation at Yaxchilán, where the ruler Bird Jaguar III is named as a Kaloomte’ and his son is called the first successor of the Kaloomte’ (see chapter 6 for a further discussion of these Yaxchilán kings). With the exception of the Subterranean Tableritos and the Temple of the Inscriptions cornice, the two notations of K’inich Janaab Pakal I’s Kaloomte’

status in the Palace Tablet narrative are the only references in the over forty examples of K'inich Janaab Pakal I's nominal phrase in the Palenque corpus. It is obviously an important point of the Palace Tablet narrative.

The next episode of the Palace Tablet story backs up in time to AD 615 and states that K'inich Janaab Pakal I took the *sak huun* headdress of kingship on this date. His nominal phrase again refers to him as a Kaloomte'. The narrative then returns to the accession date of his son K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II and states that he, too, took the *sak huun* headdress of kingship. K'inich K'an Joy Chitam's accession as king is then tied to the climax of the story, which is the dedication of the building that housed this monument. While the narrative structure of this episode draws a direct parallel between the acquisitions of the *sak huun* headdress of kingship by K'inich Janaab Pakal I and his son K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II, it is the acquisition of the "flower" headdress that is highlighted by the Supplementary Series, and the taking of the "flower" headdress is referred to as the second succession of the West Kaloomte'. The obvious conclusion is that this headdress represents the office of Kaloomte'.

Regrettably, the name of the "flower" headdress has not been deciphered. Some evidence on the monuments of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II's older brother K'inich Kan Bahlam II suggests that the headdress of a Kaloomte' is the Tlaloc headdress consisting of the Mexican year sign and *Tagetes lucida* flowers.² K'inich Kan Bahlam II's accession as king is described in the narratives of the three Cross Group tablets. The scene on all three Cross tablets illustrates two moments in K'inich Kan Bahlam II's life: his designation as heir apparent at age six and his accession at age forty-eight (Bassie-Sweet 1991). In all three illustrations of his accession, the caption text that frames him refers to the acquisition of the *sak huun* headdress of kingship. In each depiction, he wears a broad cloth headdress tied around his head. However, protruding out of the top of the cloth are the Mexican year sign and bundle of *Tagetes lucida* plants found in Tlaloc headdresses. Although K'inich Kan Bahlam II's accession texts focus on the *sak huun* headdress of kingship, these elements of his headdress appear to be a subtle reference to his Kaloomte' status. This suggests that the undeciphered "flower" headdress sign refers to these Tlaloc elements. Might it be that the "flower" of this headdress is a direct reference to the *Tagetes lucida* flower?

THE UX YOP HUUN HEADDRESS

The T678 *ko'haw* headdress identified with Tlaloc warriors was discussed in previous chapters. Although the T678 logograph of the *ko'haw* headdress

illustrates a specific kind of helmet-like headgear made from platelets, the narrative on the Palenque Temple of the Inscription tablets employs the T678 helmet to describe the headdresses of the three Palenque thunderbolt deities known as GI, GII, and GIII (Macri 1988). Given that none of their headdresses take the helmet form of T678, this category of headgear must have been more inclusive than just the helmet form. The following discussion focuses on the T678 *ko'haw* helmet that is named *ux yop huun*.

As noted in chapter 4, the narrative on Tikal Stela 4 indicates that the young Tikal king Yax Nuun Ayiin I acquired his *ux yop huun* helmet on the day of his accession. The illustration of this event on Stela 31 depicts his helmet with a feathered diadem and a sweeping panache of feathers (see figure 4.8). The base of the feathers includes a row of shorter feathers and is decorated with the obsidian zigzag design. The Palace Tablet provides crucial information about the history of this type of headdress at Palenque and indicates that it was an heirloom that had been passed down through at least three generations (Bassie-Sweet et al. 2012; Bassie-Sweet 2017; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017) (figure 5.1). The monument illustrates the fifty-one-year-old K'inich Janaab Pakal I handing an *ux yop huun* helmet to his nine-year-old son K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II in AD 654. The caption text that frames this action begins by stating that the *ux yop huun* was created in AD 598. The caption text is succinct and does not indicate who originally owned the headdress, but the regent at the time was K'inich Janaab Pakal I's maternal grandmother, Lady Yohl Ik'nal, who reigned from AD 583 to AD 604.

Lady Yohl Ik'nal's reign was highly unusual in that it is one of only two documented cases of a female acceding to the throne. It has been assumed that she was the daughter of the previous ruler K'inich Kan Bahlam I and that she was placed on the throne because he had no appropriate male heirs. Although obviously not in the descent line for rulership, her husband, Janaab Pakal, still must have been a member of the ruling dynasty, for he is called a holy Palenque lord in the Temple of the Inscriptions narrative. Following the death of Lady Yohl Ik'nal, the throne passed to her grandson Ajen Yohl Mat, who was the offspring of her daughter Lady Sak K'uk' and son-in-law K'an Mo'Hix. Although no birth record exists for Ajen Yohl Mat, there is clear evidence that he came to the throne as a child or youth and that his grandfather Janaab Pakal acted as a regent.³ A text on a stone incensario from Palenque Structure J-1 (also known as Group IV) states that during the reign of Ajen Yohl Mat, his maternal grandfather Janaab Pakal oversaw the accessions of a Ti'sakhuun (AD 608) and a series of Yajaw'ak' lords in AD 610 (Zender 2004b:159). This function was usually the prerogative of a king, which suggests

that Janaab Pakal was serving as regent. The text links these events to the successful war against Santa Elena three days later, suggesting that Janaab Pakal organized and led this invasion of Tlalo warriors. I speculate that the *ux yop huun* was likely created for and first owned by Janaab Pakal. This does not preclude the possibility that the headdress was created from an early version of an *ux yop huun*.

Following the death of Ajen Yohl Mat in AD 612, a lord named Muwaan Mat took the throne. His relationship to Ajen Yohl Mat is unclear, but given that Ajen Yohl Mat's twelve-year-old brother K'inich Janaab Pakal I then took the throne, it is possible that Muwaan Mat was also his brother. The Oval Palace Tablet illustrates K'inich Janaab Pakal I receiving an *ux yop huun* headdress from his mother, Lady Sak K'uk' (figure 5.3). Although the Oval Palace Tablet inscription lacks a date, the adjacent texts to the monument suggest that he received the helmet on the occasion of his accession in AD 615. During K'inich Janaab Pakal I's reign, Palenque's fortunes increased, and by the time K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II received the *ux yop huun* from his father in AD 654, Palenque was enjoying a period of prosperity.

What is interesting about this acquisition is that K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II was not the heir apparent when he received the *ux yop huun* helmet. That role fell to his older brother K'inich Kan Bahlam II, who had been named heir in AD 641 and undergone another type of ritual just before K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II's *ux yop huun* ceremony.⁴ These two brothers also had a younger sibling named Tiwol (Bassie-Sweet 1991; Ringle 1996; Stuart 2005b:152–153). The three brothers were pictured together prior to the death of their father on a stucco panel in Temple XVIII (Stuart 2005b:152–153). Without a doubt, all three brothers would have engaged in ritual activities during their youth to prepare them for their adult roles either as king or as part of the royal court, although only the early rituals of K'inich Kan Bahlam II and K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II were documented in the art of Palenque. While there is no record regarding the wives and children of his two older brothers, Tiwol married Lady Kinuw and had offspring. Although the reason for his demise is not known, Tiwol died in AD 680 at the relatively young age of thirty-two, three years before the death of his father.

After K'inich Janaab Pakal I's death, his eldest son, K'inich Kan Bahlam II, took the throne. Because of his father's advanced age, K'inich Kan Bahlam II was already forty-eight years old. The Palace Tablet narrative indicates that his brother K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II was then named heir apparent, one assumes because K'inich Kan Bahlam II had no offspring to designate. Following the death of K'inich Kan Bahlam II in AD 702, the fifty-seven-year-old K'inich



FIGURE 5.3. *Palenque
Oval Palace Tablet
(drawing after Merle
Greene Robertson)*

K'an Joy Chitam II became king. He apparently also had no heirs, for the next ruler was the forty-four-year-old K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III, the son of Tiwol. K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III was just two years old when his father died. The household in which K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III was raised is unknown. However, the Temple XVIII stuccos and Temple XXI bench describe his first bloodletting event at the age of fourteen and his participation in Period Ending rituals during the reign of his uncle K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II in AD 694 and AD 709. Although there is no surviving death date for his uncle, it is assumed that he died just prior to K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III's accession in AD 722. The Temple XIX and Tablet of the Slaves depict K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III receiving the *ux yop huun* headdress on the date of his accession as king.

In short, the *ux yop huun* headdress of Palenque was created in AD 598, likely for Janaab Pakal. K'inich Janaab Pakal I received it in AD 615 and passed it to his son K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II; finally, it was given to his grandson

K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III. The acquisition of heirloom objects is found in virtually all cultures. It would be expected that headdresses would be passed down through the generations, particularly if they represented the accumulated spiritual powers of particular forebears.⁵ In Tzotzil Zinacantán, tools and clothing assume their owner's soul (Breedlove and Laughlin 1993:105).

THE ORIGINS OF THE TLALOC CULT AT PALENQUE

The presence of the *ux yop huun* at Palenque in AD 598 indicates that Palenque had been incorporated into the Tlaloc cult at least by this time. A depiction of Tlaloc on the stucco facade on an Early Classic substructure in the North Group suggests that it was earlier than this date (Tovalín Ahumada and Ceja Manrique 1994). This sculpture is composed of a bust of a male wearing Tlaloc's goggle-like eyes and carrying a spear thrower. Although the area above his head is damaged, the shell platelets of the headdress encase the face. The torso has the form of a bundle that is decorated with feathers and the obsidian zigzag design. The motif likely represents an effigy of an ancestor identified with Tlaloc.

The war narratives concerning the Kaloomte' K'inich Kan Bahlam II suggest that the Tlaloc cult was part of the founding of the site in AD 490. The Tablet of the Sun focuses on his heir designation (AD 641) and accession events (AD 684) that were related to the deity GIII, who had clear associations with war as discussed in chapter 2. The right door jamb of the Temple of the Sun was shattered. A drawing made by a visitor to Palenque in AD 1787 prior to its destruction and the fragments that were subsequently recovered allow for a partial reconstruction (Mathews cited in Stuart 2006a:157). The jamb illustrated K'inich Kan Bahlam II standing in profile. It is uncertain what kind of headdress he was wearing, but the surviving fragments show him holding a spear and a Tlaloc incense bag. The caption text refers to a successful war against Toniná on 9.12.15.7.11 10 Chuwen 4 Sak (September 12, AD 687). It is the only reference to a war event in the Cross Group narratives; as such, it must have been a particularly important exploit for K'inich Kan Bahlam II.⁶ The Cross Group was completed in January AD 692, and K'inich Kan Bahlam II celebrated the important 9.13.0.0.0 Period Ending in March of that year.

The Temple XVII Tablet, which was created sometime after AD 695, illustrates K'inich Kan Bahlam II dressed in a Tlaloc warrior costume while standing before a kneeling captive (see figure 1.7). The scene contains two caption texts. The text on the right next to K'inich Kan Bahlam II's headdress refers to the AD 687 war event conducted by K'inich Kan Bahlam II against Toniná

(Mathews 2001). It is likely that K'inich Kan Bahlam II not only succeeded in attacking Toniná but actually killed its ruler (Martin and Grube 2008:181). According to monuments at Toniná, a new Toniná king named K'inich Baaknal Chaak took the throne the next year. He was thirty-six years old at the time of his accession and had surely participated in the earlier war with Palenque. His nominal phrase on Toniná Monument 171 indicates that he held the office of Kaloomte' (Stuart 2013b). On October 7, AD 692, K'inich Baaknal Chaak retaliated against K'inich Kan Bahlam II (Zender 2004b:313; Martin and Grube 2008:18). He successfully captured the Yajawk'ak' lord K'awiil Mo', who was a vassal of K'inich Kan Bahlam II, as well as another Palenque-affiliated lord. More vassals of K'inich Kan Bahlam II from the region of the Usumacinta were captured the next year. Returning to the Temple XVII Tablet narrative, the caption text above the head of K'inich Kan Bahlam II's prisoner names him as Bolon Yooj Ch'ok Aj "Rodent Head" and refers to his capture in AD 695. This event is clearly what is depicted in the scene. The implication is that K'inich Kan Bahlam II successfully struck back at Toniná and did so in the guise of Tlaloc.

No death date for the K'inich B'aaknal Chaak has survived, but his successor Ruler 4 was placed on the Toniná throne in November AD 708. Strangely enough, Ruler 4 was only two years old at the time (Martin and Grube 2008:183). What extraordinary circumstances would have led to such a situation is unknown. However, an examination of K'inich Kan Bahlam II's captive Bolon Yooj Ch'ok Aj "Rodent Head" may clarify this situation. His nominal phase includes the title *ch'ok* "youth" (Stuart 1987; Ringle 1988), and such labels are commonly used to designate young princes. I speculate that Bolon Yooj Ch'ok Aj "Rodent Head" may have been the Toniná heir apparent for K'inich B'aaknal Chaak. Such a captive would certainly have been a coup for K'inich Kan Bahlam II and a significant loss for K'inich B'aaknal Chaak.⁷

While the scene on Temple XVII is concerned with the historical events of K'inich Kan Bahlam II, the main text that flanks the image begins with the Long Count date 9.2.15. 9.2 9 Ik' *ti'* Yaxk'in (AD 490) and the founding of Lakamhá by the Early Classic ruler Butz'aj Sak Chiik and his younger brother K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb I. These lords were thirty-one and twenty-five years old, respectively. Lakamhá appears to refer specifically to the central zone of Palenque adjacent to the Río Otulum (Stuart and Houston 1994). Where these two lords were situated prior to this time is unknown, but other texts refer to a location called Toktan associated with earlier rulers. Palenque already had a significant population at this point in time. The narrative proceeds from the founding of Lakamhá to the AD 501 accession as king of Ahkal

Mo' Nahb I and calls him a holy Palenque lord. The time frame then backs up to the AD 490 founding event and emphasizes an action by K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb I at this time and joins this to an event conducted by him one *tzolk'in* (260 days) later, in AD 491. Part of the concluding passage is destroyed, but what remains of it mentions K'inich Kan Bahlam II. While the meaning of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb I's actions is opaque, the juxtaposing of these Early Classic events and those of K'inich Kan Bahlam II's implies that K'inich Kan Bahlam II's success as a Tlaloc warrior was somehow linked to these earlier events. This is not the only monument that highlights the Early Classic king K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb I. The mortuary shrine of K'inich Janaab Pakal I contains two narratives about his life and death: one in the temple and one in the tomb itself. Both narratives begin with events pertaining to K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb I. I suspect that Ahkal Mo' Nahb I may have been not only the first lord to be seated as king at Palenque but also the first to be inducted into the Tlaloc cult, and this is why he was particularly revered on the Temple XVII Tablet. It is also possible that the headdress K'inich Kan Bahlam II wears in the Temple XVII scene was an heirloom headdress that first belonged to K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb I.

Temple XVII is a building of modest size situated on the east side of the plaza that is south of the Cross Group. The plaza is dominated by the large Temple XX on its south side. The size of the temple-pyramid is deceptive because the earliest structure at this location was built during the Picota Phase (AD 200–AD 350) on a natural hillock. Temple XX contains an impressive Cascada Phase (AD 500 to AD 620) tomb consisting of a burial chamber with a vestibule and two side rooms (González Cruz and Balcells González 2015). Its size and sumptuous grave goods, including two jade masks, indicate its status as a royal burial. Regrettably, only fragments of bones were recovered, so little can be said about the nature of the body. Although badly deteriorated in places, the walls of the burial chamber were painted with at least nine figures. The best-preserved examples indicate that they were holding GII scepters and shields. The composition is clearly the role model for the better-preserved stucco reliefs found on the walls of the Temple of the Inscriptions tomb of K'inich Janaab Pakal I that also feature figures holding GII scepters and shields. Given the importance of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb I in the Temple of the Inscriptions narratives and the fact that K'inich Janaab Pakal I modeled his tomb after Temple XX, it is possible that Temple XX was the burial monument of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb I.

What is intriguing about the Temple XX tomb is that the eastern chamber contained three amazonite earplugs and an astonishing number (1,320) of

amazonite beads (González Cruz and Balcells González 2015). The only known Mesoamerican sources of amazonite are in northern Mexico. Amazonite artifacts have been found in the tunnel under the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent, which is the major shrine related to the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan cult at Teotihuacán. Amazonite objects are relatively rare in the Maya region, but the tomb of Piedras Negras Ruler 3, who was intimately connected with the Tlaloc cult, contained 66 amazonite beads (Coe 1959:53, 124). The burial of the Tikal king Yax Nuun Ahiin I contained a pair of earrings depicting Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan serpents that were made from amazonite, jade, and shell (Moholy-Nagy 2008:fig. 85).⁸ The hoard of amazonite jewelry in Temple XX may indicate a relationship with Teotihuacán and, by extension, the Tlaloc cult.

THE ORIGINS OF THE TLALOC CULT AT PIEDRAS NEGRAS

Although the Piedras Negras rulers never carry the Kaloomte' title in their nominal phrases, the acquisition of an ancestral *ko'haw*-type helmet in the form of a Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan headdress is documented on Piedras Negras Panel 2 (Schele and Miller 1986:149; Stuart 2000a:498–499; Martin and Grube 2008:144) (figure 5.4). The scene illustrates a central figure standing in a frontal pose, wearing this headdress and carrying a spear and rectangular shield decorated with an Owl Tlaloc. On the left side of the scene, six armed lords kneel before the central figure. Their small size indicates that they are youths, and they wear *ko'haw* helmets that are topped with Tlaloc year sign headdresses that have the obsidian zigzag design at the base. The caption text above each one provides his name and place of origin. The first youth is named as a Lacanhá lord, the second is from Bonampak, the third and fourth lords are from Lacanhá, the fifth lord is a very young lord from Yaxchilán (he is considerably smaller than the other youths), and the sixth lord is again from Lacanhá. The central figure is flanked on the right by a standing youth, who is named in the adjacent caption text as Joy Chitam Ahk, a *ch'ok* “youth” and lord of Piedras Negras. Joy Chitam Ahk wears the goggle eyes of Tlaloc, and he is armed with a spear and a shield decorated with a Tlaloc headdress.

There is no caption text adjacent to the central figure, so we must look to the main text to understand what event is illustrated and who this character is. The protagonist of the narrative is Piedras Negras Ruler 2, who was born in AD 626 and took the throne at the tender age of twelve (Martin and Grube 2008:142). The main text narrative begins with Ruler 2 receiving a *ko'haw* helmet on 9.II.6.2.1 3 Imix 19 Keh (AD 658), 20 years after his accession. The



FIGURE 5.4. *Piedras Negras Panel 2 (drawing after David Stuart)*

narrative then moves back in time 147 years to AD 510 and relates a similar *ko'haw* helmet acquisition event that happened to the Piedras Negras ruler Turtle Tooth. Turtle Tooth is said to have received his *ko'haw* helmet from a Kaloomte' lord named Tajoom UK'ab Tuun. The final episode of the Panel 2 narrative moves back into contemporary time and relates Ruler 2's accession on 9.10.6.5.9 (AD 639) and his Period Ending on 9.11.15.0.0 (AD 667). We know that Ruler 2 retained the *ko'haw* helmet for the remainder of his reign because a narrative on a panel from the Piedras Negras region indicates that his helmet underwent an adornment ceremony the year before his death, 28 years after he acquired it (Martin and Grube 2008). The fact that Ruler 2's *ko'haw* helmet warranted such documentation indicates the vital importance of this particular headdress.

The part of the main text referring to Turtle Tooth's *ko'haw* event frames the central figure. This is a well-known convention employed in Maya art to indicate what event from a narrative is illustrated in the scene (Bassie-Sweet 1991; Wald 1997; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). It is a clear indication that the scene is a retrospective depiction of Turtle Tooth's acquisition of his *ko'haw* helmet and the actions that followed this acquisition. In addition, the feathers of the central figure's Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet touch the *ko'haw* glyph and Turtle Tooth's name, further emphasizing that the figure is Turtle Tooth. This overlapping of text and image also confirms the fact that the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet was considered to be a type of *ko'haw* headdress.

Turtle Tooth's acquisition of a *ko'haw* helmet under the supervision of Tajoom UK'ab Tuun is also noted on a Late Classic wooden box recovered

from a cave in the Piedras Negras region near the modern village of Álvaro Obregón (Anaya et al. 2003; Anaya 2005). The carved inscription on the box indicates that the event happened at a Wiinte'naah structure. The action parallels Yax Nuun Ayiin receiving his Tlaloc cult regalia from the Kaloomte' lord Sihyaj K'ahk' at a Wiinte'naah.

The acquisition of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet by Turtle Tooth under the authority of a Kaloomte' lord provides insight regarding the scene on the Museo VICAL vessel discussed in chapter 4. The vessel illustrates two figures named in the caption texts as Sihyaj K'ahk' (the Kaloomte' lord who defeated the Tikal king) and a lord named Yohl Ahiin (see figure 4.3). One figure carries a spear, shield, and incense bag identifying him as a warrior-priest, while the other is dressed in a Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet and carries an incense bag and a scepter in the form of this fire and meteor serpent. The simplest explanation of the Museo VICAL vessel scene is that the caption text in front of each figure names that individual. In other words, the warrior-priest is the Kaloomte' Sihyaj K'ahk' and the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan figure is Yohl Ahiin. It is an abbreviated reference to the induction ceremony of Yohl Ahiin into the Tlaloc cult by Sihyaj K'ahk', and it is thematically parallel to Turtle Tooth's induction and acquisition of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet under the Kaloomte'Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun.

The roles of the youths who flank Turtle Tooth on Panel 2 are not readily apparent. It is possible that they were initiated into the Tlaloc cult by Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun at the same time as Turtle Tooth's induction.⁹ It is also conceivable that Turtle Tooth was placed in charge of the youths and their education in the cult. It is of some note that both Turtle Tooth and Joy Chitam Ahk carry incense bags in addition to their weapons, while the foreign youths do not. The implication is that they, unlike the kneeling youths, have the status of Ch'ajom.

The young Joy Chitam Ahk is somewhat of an enigma because he is not featured in other narratives. Based on his position adjacent to Turtle Tooth and his *ch'òk* title, Joy Chitam Ahk has been identified as Turtle Tooth's heir (Martin and Grube 2008:144; Fitzsimmons 2009:147). His placement on Panel 2 in relationship to the main text may provide a clue to why he is so prominently featured on this monument. While Joy Chitam Ahk's spear overlaps his nominal phrase in the caption text positioned in front of his face, his headdress overlaps the main text behind him that relates the accession of Ruler 2. I think it is safe to assume that prior to his accession, the twelve-year-old Ruler 2 had been properly prepared to become king. I suspect that the juxtapositioning of the young Joy Chitam Ahk with Ruler 2's accession is a

subtle reference indicating that Ruler 2 had been inducted into the Tlaloc cult prior to his accession, just as Joy Chitam Ahk had.

THE HEREDITARY HEADDRESS OF TURTLE TOOTH

While the main text of Panel 2 is obviously drawing a direct analogy between Turtle Tooth's *ko'haw* event and that of Ruler 2, it is curious that the scene depicts Turtle Tooth's *ko'haw* event rather than that of the protagonist Ruler 2. What can account for this focus on Turtle Tooth? In light of the fact that a *ko'haw* helmet was passed down through the generations at Palenque, the simplest explanation is that Turtle Tooth's *ko'haw* event is highlighted because Ruler 2 specifically acquired Turtle Tooth's *ko'haw* and the spiritual power that came with that headdress.

A review of the Piedras Negras monuments that feature Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan headdresses supports such an interpretation. The narratives of Piedras Negras and its rival Yaxchilán very briefly mention a number of Early Classic Piedras Negras kings who ruled before Turtle Tooth (Ruler A and Ruler B) and after (Ruler C and Ruler D), but there is a long gap before new monuments appear at Piedras Negras. The revitalization of Piedras Negras began under the auspices of Ruler 2's father, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I (AD 603–AD 639), who erected an innovative Period Ending stela of great artistic merit (Stela 25) just five years after his accession. K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I is also known as Ruler 1, and for ease of discussion I will refer to him as such. On Stela 26 and Stela 31, Ruler 1 is featured wearing the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet during war-related events twenty years later (<http://research.famsi.org/uploads/montgomery/536/image/JMo5430.jpg>, <http://research.famsi.org/uploads/montgomery/541/image/JMo5442.jpg>). Stela 26 portrays secondary lords from Palenque and Sak Tz'i' kneeling in submission before him. Ruler 1 was clearly a successful warrior. Let us assume for the moment that this is the same Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet his son acquired in AD 658 nearly twenty years after Ruler 1's death. Where would this helmet have been during the early years of Ruler 2's reign? A number of examples of shell platelet helmets have been documented in Maya tombs, indicating that lords were occasionally buried with these headdresses. There is strong circumstantial evidence on Panel 4 that Ruler 2 obtained his father's helmet by opening his tomb and taking it. Panel 4 describes some of the military exploits of Ruler 1, then climaxes with the reopening and censuring of his tomb in AD 658, just a mere thirteen days before Ruler 2 acquired the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet. In view of the close time frame of these two events, James Fitzsimmons (2009:149) suggested

it was highly likely that the *ko'harw* helmet acquired by Ruler 2 was taken from his father's tomb. In other words, Ruler 2 did not go to the great effort of opening his father's tomb just to venerate him; rather, he sought his father's Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet and the spiritual power it represented.

In short, the narratives on these Piedras Negras monuments suggest that Ruler 1 obtained Turtle Tooth's Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet and successfully wore it while battling his foes from Palenque and Sak Tz'i'. I would venture to say that he got this ancestral Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet from the Early Classic tomb of Turtle Tooth. After his death, Ruler 1 was buried with this prestigious headdress. Subsequently, when his son Ruler 2 was in need of this powerful object in the later part of his reign, he opened his father's tomb and took it.

So, what became of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet after the death of Ruler 2? Just a few months after Ruler 2's demise, his son Ruler 3 (K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II) took the throne in AD 687. Unlike his father, who was placed on the throne at the tender age of twelve, Ruler 3 was twenty-two years old at the time of his accession and was likely already an accomplished warrior. On Stela 7, Ruler 3 is illustrated wearing the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet with a war captive crouched beside him (see figure 3.31). In the maw of the caterpillar-serpent is a human portrait. I suspect that it represents Turtle Tooth, the original owner of this helmet.

The next Piedras Negras king was Ruler 4, who acceded to the throne in AD 729. None of his inscriptions state his paternal parentage, so it is unclear what genealogical relationship he had with Ruler 3. While Stela 9 depicts Ruler 4 dressed in Teotihuacán-style war regalia in AD 736, he does not sport the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet; rather, he wears an Owl Tlaloc headdress (see figure 3.27). However, in AD 745 he is pictured on Stela 40 kneeling before his mother's grave, dropping incense into her tomb (figure 5.5). Her body is illustrated on her funeral bier wearing a *ko'harw* headdress in the form of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan (figure 5.6). The art of Piedras Negras rarely depicts women. However, females are well documented in the surrounding communities playing vital roles in the Tlaloc cult as priestesses, and the women of Piedras Negras likely had this function. While the scene on Stela 40 may depict Ruler 4's mother as the final recipient of Turtle Tooth's *ko'harw* helmet, I think it is more likely that Ruler 4 did not open his mother's grave just to venerate her but rather to obtain the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet for his own use, just as Ruler 2 opened the tomb of Ruler 1.

As noted above, Panel 2 documents Turtle Tooth's initial acquisition of the *ko'harw*-type helmet and the aftermath of that acquisition. While the original

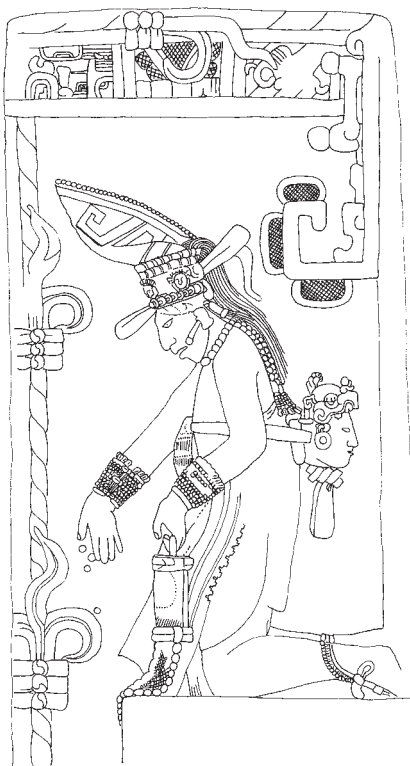


FIGURE 5.5. *Piedras Negras Stela 40 top (drawing after John Montgomery and David Stuart)*

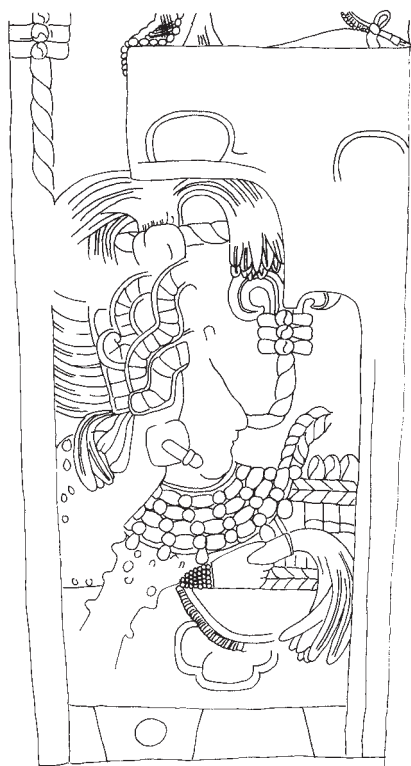


FIGURE 5.6. *Piedras Negras Stela 40 bottom (drawing after John Montgomery)*

location of the panel is unknown, one of the later rulers (probably Ruler 7) reset Panel 2 in the mortuary shrine above Ruler 4's burial. The implication is that Turtle Tooth's Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet was indeed of great importance to Ruler 4 and his descendants. The long-standing importance of Turtle Tooth at Piedras Negras is reflected in the fact that Ruler 7, the last of the great Piedras Negras rulers, was named after him. It is possible that the ancestral effigy belt assemblage worn by Ruler 4 on Stela 40 represents Turtle Tooth.

Panel 3 was also set in the building above Ruler 4's burial. Its main text begins with the first *k'atun* anniversary celebration of Ruler 4's accession on July 13, AD 749 and the culmination of that event two days later, when Ruler 4 performed a macaw-themed dance and drank cacao as the sun set. The time

frame then advances to his death and burial in AD 757. The narrative climaxes with the opening and censing of Ruler 4's tomb in AD 782 under the supervision of Ruler 7, who had taken the throne just the year before. I speculate that it was likely that Ruler 4 was buried with Turtle Tooth's Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet and that Ruler 7 opened his tomb to obtain it. If so, it did not seem to do him much good in the end. After enjoying a series of military successes against Santa Elena and Pomoná, he met his demise at the hands of the Yaxchilán king K'inich Tatbu Skull IV in AD 808.

In summary, the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet of Turtle Tooth played an important role in the public monuments related to four Late Classic Piedras Negras rulers. On Panel 2, Turtle Tooth is said to have received his *ko'haw* helmet from a Kaloomte' lord named Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun. The Panel 2 and wooden box narratives demonstrate how important Turtle Tooth and his induction into the Tlaloc cult were to the rulers who succeeded him. The validation by the Kaloomte' lord Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun was an essential act of legitimacy in the Tlaloc cult, and Turtle Tooth's Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan helmet was the symbol of that legitimacy and power. Indeed, there appears to be a direct relationship between the wearing of Turtle Tooth's headdress and success in warfare. The headdress represents not only the spiritual power of Tlaloc but that of an ancestor, making it that much more potent. Piedras Negras kings do not carry the Kaloomte' title, so this Early Classic validation by the Kaloomte' Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun was obviously very important.

HEREDITARY BLOODLETTERS AND WOODEN BOXES

There is some evidence that the wooden box referring to Turtle Tooth may have contained stingray spine bloodletters that were originally owned by him. The box was found in a cave on the *ejido* of Álvaro Obregón, located in a valley about 13 km northeast of Piedras Negras (Anaya et al. 2003; Anaya 2005). Community members removed the box, the remains of another uncarved box, and some ceramic pieces from the cave for safekeeping. Regrettably, the cave has never been surveyed, much less excavated, so the original context of the box is unknown; but Arnando Anaya (2005) noted that regional ceramics point to the conclusion that the valley was under the control of Piedras Negras during the Late Classic period. This is not surprising, given that the valley is a natural access corridor to the coast. The size and construction of the box strongly indicate that it was used for the storage of bloodletting tools. The wood of the box is eroded, and the narrative carved on its surfaces is consequently incomplete. A portion of the side of the box that begins the narrative is missing entirely.

The first surviving glyph refers to a Wiinte'naah structure, and then there is a distance number of 155 days leading to the date of Turtle Tooth's acquisition of the *ko'haw* helmet and the statement that it was done in the presence of Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun, the Wiinte'naah lord. The time frame moves forward 6 days to an undeciphered event under the auspices of Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun. Despite the references to Early Classic events, the style of the glyphs on the box indicates that it was carved in the Late Classic period.

Anaya and his collaborators (2003) suggested that Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun was a lord of Teotihuacán and that the box was owned by a descendant of Turtle Tooth. They speculated that the narrative of the box commemorated "what was probably the most important event in the history of his family: a royal audience with a lord of Teotihuacan." While the ethnic identity of Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun as a Teotihuacán king is uncertain, I concur with the observation that the box was likely owned by one of Turtle Tooth's descendants or a banded-bird official associated with that descendant. The more pertinent question is, how do the Early Classic events of Turtle Tooth relate to the function of the box as a storage container for bloodletting tools? The fact that the narrative focuses on Turtle Tooth suggests that the contents were directly related to him and his acquisition of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan headdress. I suspect that the box contained an heirloom bloodletter related to Turtle Tooth's Tlaloc cult duties. Perhaps it would have included a perforator handle like those recovered from the aforementioned Piedras Negras tombs. The notion that there were specific bloodletters used in Tlaloc ceremonies is well attested at Tikal. The burial chamber of the Tikal king Jasaw Chan K'awiil I included inscribed bloodletting bones. MT 33 and MT 36 describe the conjuring of a Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan (Moholy-Nagy 2008:fig. 195).

HOW TO BECOME A KALOOMTE'

As noted, the rulers of Piedras Negras are not named as Kaloomte' lords despite being immersed in the Tlaloc cult. How the kings of other sites, such as Yaxchilán, Toniná, and Palenque, were able to first achieve their Kaloomte' status is undocumented. It is not impossible that they were self-proclaimed Kaloomte'. On the other hand, the Dos Pilas narratives indicate that the Dos Pilas king Bajlaj Chan K'awiil was the vassal of the Kaanul Kaloomte'Yuknoom Ch'een, yet he attained the title of Kaloomte'. It is likely that Yuknoom Ch'een bestowed this title on him. Evidence from the Yaxchilán and Lacanhá-Bonampak regions suggests the possibility that a Kaloomte' could confer the Kaloomte' title on the ruler of another site or at least endorse that achievement.

During the Late Classic, Yaxchilán was ruled by the Kaloomte' kings Shield Jaguar III (681–742), his son Bird Jaguar IV (752–circa 768), and his grandson Shield Jaguar IV (circa 769–800) (Martin and Grube 2008:122–137).¹⁰ Narratives related to the history of the area along the Río Lacanjá watershed southwest of Yaxchilán are limited, but a very general understanding of the region can be gleaned from regional narratives (Mathews 1980; Miller and Martin 2004:80; Biró 2005, 2007, 2011; Safronov 2005; Tokovinine 2008, 2013; Miller and Brittenham 2013:160). During the second quarter of the eighth century, the Lacanhá–Bonampak region was under the rule of Knot-eye Jaguar of the Tied-Hair site (the location of the Tied-Hair site is unknown). A leading antagonist in the region was the site of Sak Tz'i' located somewhere to the north, perhaps at Lacanjá-Tzeltal (Golden et al. 2015). As discussed in chapter 1, Aj Sak Teles of Lacanhá became Knot-eye Jaguar's Sajal in AD 743. Despite his apparent allegiance and subservient role to Knot-eye Jaguar, Aj Sak Teles captured a vassal of Knot-eye Jaguar just five years later, as documented on Bonampak Structure 1 Lintel 3. At some point after this war event, Aj Sak Teles became an Ajaw and a Bakab and apparently relocated to Bonampak. Lacanhá and Bonampak are just 5 km apart, with Bonampak the far more defensible location, on higher ground at the western base of the Sierra La Cojolita. A place name for Bonampak is Usij Witz “vulture mountain” (Stuart 2006b), and this name appears to allude to the site's defensive nature.

It seems likely that Aj Sak Teles's upward mobility was made possible through an alliance with Yaxchilán, his more powerful neighbor located 23 km to the northeast. Aj Sak Teles's son Yajaw Chan Muwaan was married to a woman from Yaxchilán who held the rank of Bakab and participated in the Tlaloc cult. Her genealogy is unknown, but she was surely of royal status, perhaps a daughter of Bird Jaguar IV and a sister of Shield Jaguar IV. In AD 776, Yajaw Chan Muwaan acceded to the Bonampak throne, presumably after the death of his father. Yajaw Chan Muwaan was a close confederate of Shield Jaguar IV. Bonampak Lintel 2 of Structure 1 illustrates Shield Jaguar IV capturing a lord from Sak Tz'i' on January 12, AD 787, while Lintel 1 depicts Yajaw Chan Muwaan seizing another Sak Tz'i' lord four days later.

In the Room 2 murals of Structure 1, Yajaw Chan Muwaan engages in a fierce battle on the south wall and stands with war prisoners in submission beneath him on the north wall. The date of this battle is most likely 9.17.15.12.15 13 Men 13 Ch'en (July 19, AD 786). Yajaw Chan Muwaan's nominal phrase on the north wall ends with a Bakab title and an eroded designation. Given that emblem glyphs usually precede Bakab titles in other Bonampak inscriptions, it seems likely that the eroded title is that of Kaloomte'. Although both Lintel

1 and the Room 2 battle scene feature Yajaw Chan Muwaan in combat, he does not wear Tlaloc regalia. In fact, Structure 1 contains no overt Tlaloc imagery at all. Nevertheless, the portraiture on Bonampak Stela 2 and Stela 3 indicates that both Yajaw Chan Muwaan and his wife participated in the Tlaloc cult. Yajaw Chan Muwaan is illustrated on Bonampak Stela 3 circa AD 785 wearing the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan headdress and carrying Tlaloc regalia (figure 5.7).

A prisoner kneels before him, but the adjacent caption text that likely identifies this captive is eroded (Mathews 1980). Yajaw Chan Muwaan is again pictured with Tlaloc imagery four years later on Stela 2 (Mathews 1980:fig. 2). In this scene, he holds an incense bag decorated with a Tlaloc motif (a front-facing feline that is likely a puma) while the dress of his wife, who assists him in his ritual, is decorated with Tlaloc images. It

will be remembered that young lords from Lacanhá and Bonampak are pictured on Piedras Negras Panel 2 participating in the Tlaloc cult in AD 510. Lacanhá Stela 1 displays a lord performing the 9.8.0.0.0 Period Ending (AD 593) while dressed in Tlaloc regalia, so there is a long history of cult involvement in this region (O'Neil 2012:fig. E.6).

Three young Bonampak *ch'ok* lords are prominently featured performing rituals in the Structure 1 murals (Houston 2012; Miller and Brittenham 2013:70). The eldest of these young princes was named Chooj (puma). He fights beside Yajaw Chan Muwaan in the Room 2 battle and stands adjacent to him in the prisoner scene. Logic dictates that Chooj was Yajaw Chan

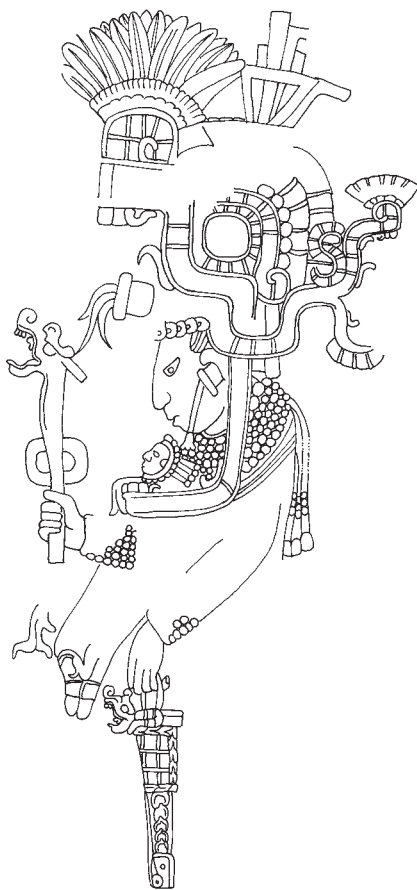


FIGURE 5.7. *Bonampak Stela 3 (drawing after Peter Mathews)*

Muwaan's son and heir apparent. An Initial Series text in the Room 1 mural documents the accession of the next Bonampak king in AD 790, most likely Yajaw Chan Muwaan's son Chooj (regrettably, the regnal name glyph of the new king is eroded). What is intriguing about the accession statement is that the new king is named as both a Bakab and a Kaloomte', and his accession was said to have happened in the presence of Shield Jaguar IV (Miller and Brittenham 2013:70). Shield Jaguar IV's participation validated not only the change of rulership from Yajaw Chan Muwaan to the new king but the new king's status as Kaloomte'. Shield Jaguar IV certainly had a vested interest in a smooth transition and in maintaining the status quo at Bonampak. With the Lacanhá-Bonampak polity on his southwest frontier as a stable ally, Shield Jaguar IV was in a stronger position to deal with threats from other quarters.

THE OFFICE OF YAJAWK'AK'

The lords who held the office of Yajawk'ak' were in charge of war-related paraphernalia, in particular the *ux yop huun* headdress of the Tlaloc cult (Zender 2004b; Stuart 2005b; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). The Yajawk'ak' title is carried by a number of secondary lords with both priestly and military duties. The role model for these lords was the fire and flint deity GIII. A headdress worn by GIII on a Palenque Group B incensario has been identified as the headdress of the Yajawk'ak' office (López Bravo 2000, 2004; Zender 2004b:195–209; Stuart 2005b:123–125). It is composed of a portrait of Tlaloc juxtaposed with an unusual coronet of long and short feathers that Marc Zender has characterized as “torch-like” (see figure 2.10). The headdresses worn by Yajawk'ak' lords are a more abbreviated version of GIII's headdress. As an example, the Yajawk'ak' lord Yok Ch'ich Tal who sits adjacent to K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb's *ux yop huun* headdress on the Temple XIX platform is also illustrated on a pier of the building dressing his king. In the pier scene, the coronet of long and short feathers is decorated with huge Tlaloc eyes, which clearly stand as the *pars pro toto* for Tlaloc's face (figure 5.8). Yok Ch'ich Tal also wears an obsidian earring that reflects his close identification with Tlaloc. In addition to naming Yok Ch'ich Tal as a Yajawk'ak', the caption text adjacent to him calls him the Ajk'uhuun of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III. On the Temple XIX platform, Yok Ch'ich Tal also wears the Yajawk'ak' headdress with large Tlaloc eyes, but it is obscured by another headdress tied over the top of it that may refer to his role as an Ajk'uhuun (see figure 0.11). Yajawk'ak' headdresses are also worn by pottery figurines (Halperin 2014:fig. 4.28).



FIGURE 5.8. Palenque Temple XIX pier Yajawk'ak headdress

As noted in the introduction, the headdress of the Yajawk'ak' Chak Suutz' is called a *k'ak' huun* “fire headdress” using the standard T₂₄ fire sign. It is predictable that an individual holding the office “the vassal of fire” would have a headdress related to fire. The translation of the Yajawk'ak' title “vassal of fire” and the fire name of the Yajawk'ak's headdress have suggested to researchers that this office was related to making incense offerings to the gods as well as maintaining temple fires and elaborate effigy censers (Zender 2004b). Be that as it may, the Tlaloc goggle element of the Yajawk'ak's headdress indicates that

these lords were specifically also involved in the Tlaloc cult and the propagation of its deities (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). It is not surprising, then, that they were involved with the *ux yop huun* headdress of the Tlaloc cult.

The narrative on the Palenque Structure J-I incensario (AD 605–AD 612) demonstrates that the office of Yajawk'ak' was not held by just one lord at a time (Zender 2004b). The text begins with the AD 608 accession of a Ti'sakhuun named K'ab'is Uchich Aj Sik'ab' under the auspices of the ruler Ajen Yohl Mat's grandfather Janaab Pakal. This accession is followed two years later by the accessions into the office of Yajawk'ak' of four if not five other individuals, again under the auspices of Janaab Pakal. These men are also said to be the Sajals of K'ab'is Uchich Aj Sik'ab'. Three days later there is a military attack against Santa Elena, presumably by these men. The time frame then moves forward forty years to events during the reign of K'inich Janaab Pakal I. While this narrative links the office of Yajawk'ak' with military exploits and demonstrates that many lords could hold the office at the same time, it also indicates that Yajawk'ak' lords held multiple offices.

A review of the Palenque Tablet of the Slaves provides some interesting details regarding the office of Yajawk'ak' and its relationship to the *ux yop huun* headdress (figure 5.9). The scene is compositionally and thematically parallel to the Palace Tablet. It illustrates a central figure sitting on a throne, flanked by a male and a female who hand him the *ux yop huun* headdress and *tok'-pakal*. The left caption text names the male as Tiwol Mat and the right caption text names the female as Lady Kinuw, the father and mother, respectively, of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III. There is no caption text naming the central figure, so once again this information must be ascertained from the main text.

The main text begins with a reference to the accession of the ruler K'inich Janaab Pakal I (AD 615) and his subsequent Period Endings (9.10, 9.11, and 9.12) and those of his sons K'inich Kan Bahlam II (9.13) and K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II (9.14). The narrative then moves back in time to the birth of the secondary lord Chak Suutz' (AD 671) during the reign of K'inich Janaab Pakal I and links his birth to the acquisition of a *huun* headdress by K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III on the date of his accession (AD 722). The main text then relates the accession of the fifty-two-year-old Chak Suutz' into the office of Yajawk'ak' the following year and his appointment as B'aah Ajaw "first lord." The story continues with a series of successful military captures and attacks under the auspices of Chak Suutz'. The climax of the story is the dedication of a building and the celebration of Chak Suutz's three *k'atun* anniversary of birth nine days later (AD 730). In the clause relating K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III's acquisition of the *huun* headdress, his name overlaps the feathers of the



FIGURE 5.9. Palenque Tablet of the Slaves (drawing after Merle Greene Robertson)

ux yop huun headdress illustrated in the scene. This visual device indicates that the central figure is K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III (Wald 1997).

Although the scene features K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III, the protagonist of the narrative is Chak Suutz', who is named as both a *Yajawk'ak'* and a *Sajal*. Part of Chak Suutz's duties as *Yajawk'ak'* was the maintenance of his lord's war regalia, including his *ux yop huun* headdress (Zender 2004b; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). Hence the scene on the Tablet of the Slaves depicts K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb's acquisition of this headdress, and the main text connects

this acquisition to Chak Suutz's accession as Yajawk'ak'. It is likely that the building referred to in the narrative was used to house this object.

As discussed in chapter 4, the Temple XIX platform illustrates the moment K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III received his *sak huun* headdress of rulership (see figure 0.11). Sitting beside him is the *ux yop huun* he will receive next. Juxtaposed with this headdress is the Yajawk'ak' lord Yok Ch'ich Tal. He was clearly the presiding Yajawk'ak' lord in charge of the *ux yop huun* at the time of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III's accession in AD 722. It can be deduced from the Tablet of the Slaves narrative that he was replaced by Chak Suutz', hence Chak Suutz's additional title of "first lord." The artist of the Tablet of the Slaves used a clever strategy in the depiction of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III's acceptance of the *ux yop huun*. Instead of featuring Yok Ch'ich Tal handing the headdress to K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III, which was surely the historical reality, he illustrated K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III's deceased father, Tiwol Mat. Tiwol Mat was the third son of K'inich Janaab Pakal I, and he would have been in line to inherit the throne after his brothers if not for the fact that he died in AD 680. By portraying Tiwol Mat on this monument, the artist eliminated the role of Yok Ch'ich Tal. This does not necessarily mean that Yok Ch'ich Tal was demoted after K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III's accession. He may have simply moved on to a more prestigious office or even died.

THE YAJAWK'AK' LORD OF THE PALENQUE KING K'INICH KAN BAHLAM II

As discussed above, Palenque and Toniná engaged in military actions against each other during the reign of K'inich Kan Bahlam II. The AD 692 conflict is recorded on several Toniná monuments, and the Toniná perspective on this event reveals the close association of the Yajawk'ak' with war. Monument 27 portrays a lord in a fallen pose with his head tipped backward and his arms tied behind his back. He wears the Yajawk'ak' headdress (figure 5.10a). The caption text adjacent to the headdress names him as K'awiil Mo', while the right caption text indicates that he was a captive of K'inich Baaknal Chaak (Miller and Martin 2004:185). K'awiil Mo' is also depicted on Monument Mp49 (figure 5.10b). In this scene, he kneels with his arms bound behind him. Instead of his Yajawk'ak' headdress, he wears the elements of his name. The text that flanks him begins with the 3 Ak'bal 11 Keh date of the AD 692 war and includes a Supplementary Series to highlight its importance. The verb is the so-called star wars event denoting a military attack. The war verb is followed by the phrase "the *t'ok-pakal* of the *Aj pitzlal ohl* lord of Palenque." *Aj pitzlal ohl* is a

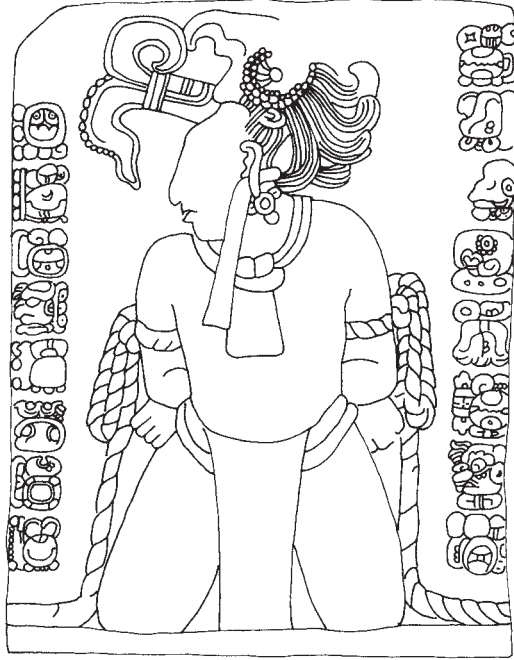


FIGURE 5.10. *a. Toniná Monument 27, b. Panel Mp49 (drawing after Simon Martin)*

well-known title of K'inich Kan Bahlam II. The narrative then relates the capture of K'awiil Mo' by K'inich B'aaknal Chaak. K'awiil Mo' is not documented in the monuments of Palenque, but this Toniná depiction clearly indicates that he was a Yajawk'ak' of K'inich Kan Bahlam II.

The rope holding K'awiil Mo' extends off both sides of the panel, suggesting that he is tied to other captives. Such a display is seen on Piedras Negras Stela 12, which documents the aftermath of a prolonged conflict between Piedras Negras and Pomoná (see figure 0.17). As discussed in the introduction, the stela depicts the Piedras Negras king Ruler 7 seated on a throne (Martin and Grube 2008:153). Below him, two of his vassals present him with their Pomoná captives. The most prominent prisoner sits on a step between the two lords with his arms behind his back and his head tilted back. His nominal phrase

indicates that he was a Sajal, but he wears the Yajawk'ak' headdress just like K'awiil Mo' on Monument 27. On the ground beneath him are eight more captives, three of whom also carry the Sajal title. Clearly, the Yajawk'ak' was the prize captive. The five captives seated on the baseline of the scene are tied together.

An argument could be made that the use of the phrase “the *tok'-pakal* of K'inich Kan Bahlam II” on Monument Mp49 was simply a metaphor for war against the forces of K'inich Kan Bahlam II. On the other hand, the Tablet of the Sun illustrates the six-year-old K'inich Kan Bahlam II obtaining a *tok'-pakal* on the occasion of his heir designation ceremony in AD 641 (see figure 2.13). It seems more likely that one of K'inich B'aaknal Chaak's goals was to capture this object and the power it represented. I speculate that the great focus on K'awiil Mo' rests in the fact that this Yajawk'ak' was in charge of his lord's *tok'-pakal*. K'inich B'aaknal Chaak may not have succeeded in capturing K'inich Kan Bahlam II or his *tok'-pakal*, but he apparently got the next best thing.

THE YAJAWK'AK' LORD OF THE PALENQUE KING K'INICH K'AN JOY CHITAM II

K'inich Kan Bahlam II died in AD 702 at age sixty-seven and was succeeded by his fifty-seven-year-old brother K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II. There is no documentation in the Palenque corpus of a Yajawk'ak' lord directly identified with K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II, but the Temple XVI narrative indicates that Janaab Ajaw became his banded-bird official in either AD 712 or AD 718 (the month position for this event is eroded, but the two possibilities are either AD 712 or AD 718). Janaab Ajaw continued in his role after K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II's death, and he is pictured on the Temple XIX platform officiating at K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III's subsequent accession as king in AD 722 (see figure 0.11). In this scene, he is paired with the Yajawk'ak' lord Yok Ch'ich Tal, who oversees the *ux yop huun* headdress. A logical conclusion to draw from this pairing is that Yok Ch'ich Tal had originally been the Yajawk'ak' lord of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II and that he continued his role into the reign of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III. These secondary lords brought a measure of continuity during the transition from one king to the next.

The Palenque inscriptions provide little insight regarding events during the reign of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II (AD 702–AD 722). Temple XXI illustrates the 9.13.17.9.0 Period Ending (AD 709) where the princes K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III (age thirty-one) and Upakal K'inich performed bloodlettings with

their grandfather's stingray spine (see figure 0.3). A stucco inscription from Temple XIX indicates that Upakal K'inich performed a similar ceremony on the 9.14.2.9.0 Period Ending (AD 714). Other than these two events, the Palenque record is silent on the early years of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II's reign. The same is not true at Toniná. Toniná Monument 122 relates a war event on 9.13.19.13.3 (August 30, AD 711), just three months before the 9.14.0.0.0 Period Ending, and it depicts K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II as a bound prisoner (Mathews 2001; Stuart 2004b). Toniná Ruler 4 was a five-year-old child at the time, so it is highly likely that the secondary lords of Toniná named K'elen Hix and Aj Ch'anaah, who were recorded on other Toniná monuments acting as regents for Ruler 4, were involved in this turn of events. It is not known where K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II was captured or whether he or Toniná instigated the conflict. Period Ending ceremonies required sacrificial victims, so it may have been the result of a raid for the upcoming Period Ending.

In spite of this Toniná depiction of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II as a humiliated prisoner, he survived his capture and returned to Palenque, as documented on the Temple XVI Tablet that places him at Palenque overseeing the accession of Janaab Ajaw. The circumstances of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II's return to Palenque are not known. Escape, rescue, or ransom are possibilities, as are tribute payments. It is even possible that he was exchanged for the Toniná lord Bolon Yooj Ch'ok Aj "Rodent Head," who his brother had captured in AD 694. K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II might have been released on the condition of Palenque withdrawing from areas in the Middle Usumacinta coveted by Toniná. It has been suggested that his capture may have resulted in Palenque becoming a vassal of Toniná for a period of time, as was the case of the Seibal king Yich'aak Bahlam, who became the vassal of Dos Pilas-Aguateca Ruler 3 after being captured (Stuart 2004b).¹¹

The capture of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II may explain the lack of information about his tenure in the Palenque Palace Tablet narrative. As previously discussed, the narrative relates K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II's early life and his AD 702 accession as king and Kaloomte' but then moves forward in time to the dedication in AD 720 of a new building on the north end of the palace to house the *ux yop huun* (House A-D). No mention is made of the events in the intervening years between his accession and the house dedication. While K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II seems to have returned to Palenque relatively soon after his capture, it is possible that his capture resulted in the loss of his *ux yop huun* and that this object was not recovered until AD 720. If this were the case, its return to Palenque might have been the impetus for the construction of House A-D and the carving of the Palace Tablet.

TLALOC EXECUTIONERS

Bishop Diego de Landa describes a hierarchy of offices in Postclassic Yucatán with priestly functions: Ah K'in, Chilan, Chac, and Nacom. (Tozzer 1941:111–113, 122). The Nacom lords were war captains and executioners, and there were two categories:

The Nacoms were two officers; the first was perpetual and did not bring much honor with it, since it was he who opened the breasts of the human victims whom they sacrificed. The second was a choice made of a captain for war and for other feasts. His duties lasted three years, and he was held in high honor . . . The captains were always two in number, one whose office was perpetual and hereditary, and the other elected with many ceremonies for three years in order to conduct the festival, which was held in their month Pax, falling on the twelfth of May, and to be the captain of the other division in war . . . The two captains discussed the affairs of war. (Tozzer 1941:112–113, 122–123)

Landa described the method by which the Nacom removed the heart of a sacrificial victim:

If the heart of a victim was to be taken out, they led him with a great show and company of people into the court of the temple, and having smeared him with blue and put on a *coroza*, they brought him up to the round altar, which was the place of sacrifice, and after the priest and his officials had anointed the stone with a blue color, and by purifying the temple drove out the evil spirit, the *Chacs* seized the poor victim, and placed him very quickly on his back upon that stone, and all four held him by the legs and arms, so that they divided him in the middle. At this came the executioner, the *Nacom*, with a knife of stone, and struck him with great skill and cruelty a blow between the ribs of his left side under the nipple, and he at once plunged his hand in there and seized the heart like a raging tiger and snatched it out alive and, having placed it upon a plate, he gave it to the priest, who went very quickly and anointed the faces of the idols with that fresh blood. (Tozzer 1941:118–119)

A number of colonial documents indicate that Postclassic executioners often used flint knives to extract hearts, and one such flint knife sacrifice conducted in the presence of two deities is illustrated in the Madrid Codex (page 76) (Tozzer 1941:113, 119, 122–123). On the other hand, the juxtaposing of obsidian knives and hearts is well documented in Classic period Tlaloc imagery and in the art of Teotihuacán, which suggests that sacrifices

conducted in honor of this god were done with obsidian knives. Obsidian knives suitable for heart extraction have been found in the archaeological record, like the knife buried with the Yaxchilán Kaloonte' Shield Jaguar III (García Moll 2004).

Some Tlaloc impersonators wear a long rectangular object in a horizontal position over their chests. The object is suspended from the neck by cords. On Naranjo Stela 2, the ruler K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak wears such an object that is decorated with an obsidian knife and a skull, both depicted in a horizontal position (see figure 2.10).¹² Similar rectangular objects are worn by other kings dressed as Tlaloc warriors on the Copán hieroglyphic staircase and Structure 26 facade, Dos Pilas Stela 2, Piedras Negras Stela 7, and Piedras Negras Stela 9. In these cases, only the horizontal skull decorates the object. The rectangular object worn by Lady K'abal Xook on Lintel 25 is undecorated, as are those worn by the youthful warriors on Piedras Negras Panel 2. It would seem that the object's rectangular shape is enough to identify what it is. On Piedras Negras Stela 8 and Stela 35, the rulers are also dressed as Tlaloc impersonators, but they do not wear the rectangular object. In contrast to the other Tlaloc impersonators, they wear an obsidian knife in their headdresses. This suggests the possibility that the rectangular object may be a reference to the role of the Tlaloc impersonator as an executioner. If so, the rectangular object might actually represent the box that held such a knife; hence, it is marked with an obsidian knife on Naranjo Stela 2. As discussed, there is significant evidence that wooden boxes were used to store other types of bloodletting implements.

A number of ranked individuals are illustrated on a Xultun mural, and some of these men carry titles that have been deciphered as Sakun Taaj "senior obsidian" and Itz'in Taaj "junior obsidian" (Rossi 2015; Rossi et al. 2015; Saturno et al. 2017). It has been argued that these Taaj lords belonged to an order of scribal priests versed in astronomical and calendrical knowledge whose duties included the creation of murals and codices. They have been compared to the Ah K'in Mai priests of the Postclassic period. Taaj lords have been identified in a very limited number of contexts outside of Xultun. Such a depiction is seen on a looted panel from La Corona that illustrates a lord playing ball at Calakmul (figure 5.11). He is named in the caption text as an Itz'in Taaj and as the Ti'sakhuun of the Kaloonte' (the Kaanul king). He is dressed in a costume laden with Tlaloc imagery, including the rectangular object decorated with a skull. One has to wonder whether the senior and junior Taaj lords were more like the Nacoms than the Ah K'in Mai and that one of their duties was the execution of war prisoners using obsidian knives.

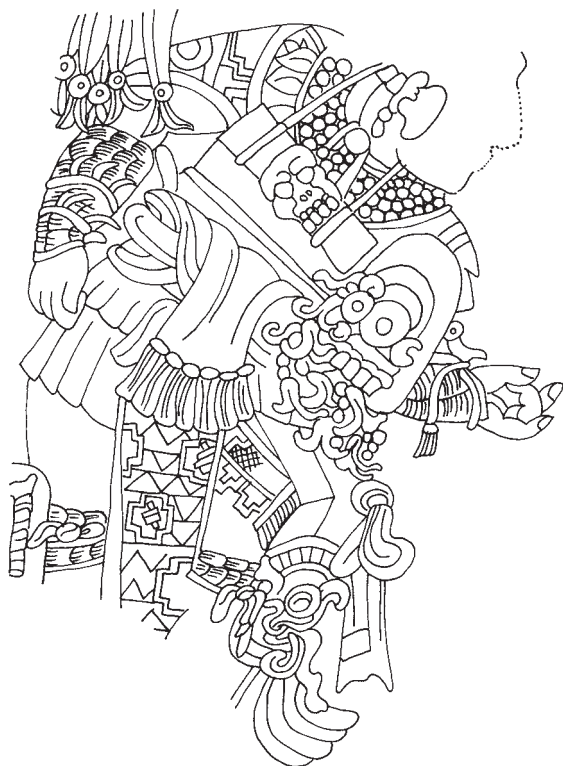


FIGURE 5.II. *La Corona* ballplayer (drawing after Linda Schele)

THE JUXTAPOSING OF THE DEITY GIII AND TLALOC

As discussed in previous chapters, both GIII and Tlaloc were closely tied to jaguars and owls, animals with clear military associations. An early example of the juxtaposing of GIII and Tlaloc imagery occurs on Tikal Stela 4, which illustrates Yax Nuun Ahiin I dressed in Tlaloc regalia while holding a GIII icon. Rulers taking on the guise of Tlaloc frequently also hold the war shield embellished with GIII's portrait. Further evidence for an intimate relationship between GIII and Tlaloc is seen in GIII's Yajawk'ak' title that incorporates the eyes of Tlaloc. I believe the juxtaposing of GIII and Tlaloc represents the amalgamation of flint and obsidian deities for the purpose of successful warfare. The Maya elite's long-term willingness to embrace the obsidian deity Tlaloc may have been partly motivated by a desire to acquire proprietary rights to this imported commodity. Control of a foreign product that everyone needs or desires is a source of both wealth and power.

SUMMARY

The Tlaloc cult in the Maya region spawned at least three types of offices: Kaloomte', Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom, and Yajawk'ak'. There is evidence that the Kaloomte' office was represented by the basic Tlaloc year sign headdress with its *Tagetes lucida* flowers. These flowers were one of the offerings made to Tlaloc and may allude to the role of the Kaloomte' as a high priest/priestess of the Tlaloc cult. One of the duties of the Kaloomte' office was to initiate others into this sect. The fact that Tlaloc regalia was passed down through time implies that these early initiations and validations carried high esteem and were greatly valued by later generations. The Wiinte'naah structures were dedicated to Tlaloc; hence, the Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom title likely specifies that these kinds of Ch'ajoms were in charge of the offerings made in these structures.

Beneath the Kaloomte' kings in the Tlaloc cult were the Yajawk'ak' lords. The war-related activities of the Yajawk'ak' lords included curating the Tlaloc regalia of the king. The mothers and wives of rulers also appear to have played a significant role in the presentation and maintenance of Tlaloc regalia. On the Palenque Oval Palace, the Palace Tablet, and the Tablet of the Slaves, the mother of the king holds either the *ux yop huun* headdress or the *tok'-pakal* during investiture ceremonies. As discussed in chapter 6, women at Yaxchilán and Naranjo were also involved in the Tlaloc cult and carried the Kaloomte' title.

A number of women who carry the Kaloomte' title are illustrated in the guise of Tlaloc or performing rituals directed at him. While some of these women were married to Kaloomte' lords and may have attained their status from their husbands, several of these female Kaloomte' were not and must have attained their status by some other means. This chapter explores the Tlaloc cult at Yaxchilán and Naranjo and the Kaloomte' women associated with it.

THE TLALOC CULT AT YAXCHILÁN

The most abundant illustrations of both male and female Kaloomte' activities are found in the art of Yaxchilán. The early history of the site has been reconstructed from a retrospective narrative found on the lintels of Structure 12 (Mathews 1975; Martin and Grube 2008). It begins with the accession of K'inich Tatbu Skull II in AD 526 and then backs up in time to relate a list of the nine previous Yaxchilán kings, beginning with the founder, Yopaat Bahlam I (circa AD 359). The narrative also gives what appear to be the most prominent foreign lords captured during the reign of each of these ten Yaxchilán rulers. The Yaxchilán tradition of naming an important captive of a ruler is well documented in the name phrases of Late Classic kings like Shield Jaguar III, who is consistently named as the captor of Aj Nik, and his son Bird Jaguar IV, whose name phrases routinely specify his capture of Aj Uk.

The next four kings in the succession are less well-known, but the fifteenth ruler, Bird Jaguar III, acceded to the throne in AD 629 and was succeeded by his son Shield Jaguar III in AD 681. The narrative on Stela 12 states that Shield Jaguar III was the first change in the Kaloomte' office, and it can be inferred from this that his father, Bird Jaguar III, was the first Yaxchilán lord to attain this status. Shield Jaguar III's parentage statements note that his father was both a four *k'atun* Ajaw and a four *k'atun* Kaloomte' and that his mother, Lady Pakal, was a six *k'atun* Lady Kaloomte'. Shield Jaguar III is also named as a Kaloomte' lord in various narratives. Retrospective inscriptions refer to him as a five *k'atun* Ajaw, five *k'atun* Ch'ajom, and five *k'atun* Kaloomte'.

Shield Jaguar III had two wives (Lady K'abal Xook and Lady Ik' Skull) who carried the Kaloomte' title. Lady K'abal Xook was the daughter of a Sajal, while Lady Ik' Skull was originally from the Kaanul polity. Lady Ik' Skull is named specifically as an Ajk'uhuun, a Bakab, and an East Kaloomte'. Both women played prominent roles in the Tlaloc cult at Yaxchilán. Bird Jaguar IV (the son of Shield Jaguar III and Lady Ik' Skull) acceded to the throne in AD 752 at age forty-three. In the Yaxchilán record, there is a ten-year interim between the time of Shield Jaguar III's death and Bird Jaguar IV's succession. There is evidence from the site of Piedras Negras that a lord named Yopaat Bahlam II ruled during this period (Stuart cited in Martin and Grube 2008:127), and he may have been a son of Lady K'abal Xok.¹ The narratives concerning Bird Jaguar IV indicate that he was a three *k'atun* Ajaw, a three *k'atun* Kaloomte', and a West Kaloomte'.

Bird Jaguar IV had four wives. Chronologically, the first mentioned wife was Lady Great Skull, the mother of his successor, Shield Jaguar IV. The next wives were Lady Mut Bahlam, who was originally from Hix Witz, and Lady Wak Jalam Chan Ajaw from Motul de San José. Both wives were ritually active around the same time and are illustrated in Tlaloc costumes. The fourth wife was Lady Wak Tuun of Motul de San José, who appears in later scenes. She is the only wife of Bird Jaguar IV to carry the Kaloomte' title in her nominal phrases, and she is called an East Kaloomte' on Lintel 38.²

There is some evidence that the Yaxchilán kings were first inducted into the Tlaloc cult during the Early Classic reign of the seventh king, nicknamed named Moon Skull. Moon Skull is given special prominence in the Structure 12 narrative, for he is the first Yaxchilán king to be named with two captives (Piedras Negras Ruler A and another lord not known from other inscriptions). The only other surviving reference to Moon Skull is found on Lintel 21.³ This Late Classic lintel spans the central doorway of Structure 22, while four reset Early Classic lintels adorn its other entrances. Lintel 21 begins with the

dedication of the building in AD 454 and names it as the house of Moon Skull, the seventh king in the descent line from Yopaat Bahlam I and the holy lord of Yaxchilán (Stuart 1998b). The time frame then moves forward to May 12, AD 752, when the reigning king Bird Jaguar IV is said have been “seated” in Moon Skull’s house. This seating is not his accession as king, for that event is clearly stated on numerous other monuments to have occurred on May 3, nine days earlier. The notion that the king resided in a new building after his accession is recorded at Tikal, where Ruler B took up residence after his accession in a new building that was said to be owned by a deity (Zender 2005; Tokovinine 2013:29–30). It is from this place that he left Tikal to war against Naranjo, presumably under the protection of this god. Another example of a king and a building associated with war is seen on Tortuguero Monument 6. The narrative begins with the birth and accession of the Tortuguero king Bahlam Ajaw and then moves forward 105 days from his accession to a war event against the site of Uxte’k’uh. The text states that Bahlam Ajaw left for this war from the house of his flint and shield. One assumes this means from the structure that contained his *tok’-pakal*.

It is evident from the Yaxchilán Lintel 21 narrative that Moon Skull’s house had survived at this location and retained its association with him for nearly 300 years. The Early Classic lintels of Structure 22 are eroded and difficult to translate, but Lintel 18 includes a list of four youths who had some kind of relationship with a lord who carries the Kaloomte’ title. Given the fact that Bird Jaguar III was the first Kaloomte’ lord of Yaxchilán (accession date AD 629), it seems likely that the Lintel 18 Kaloomte’ was a foreigner who first initiated the Early Classic Yaxchilán lords into the Tlaloc cult. The Late Classic Structure 21 and Structure 23 were built adjacent to Structure 22. As will be discussed below, the art of Structure 23 depicts Tlaloc-themed rituals that were conducted by Shield Jaguar III and his wife Lady Kabal Xook, while Structure 21 featured similar ceremonies conducted by his wife Lady Ik’ Skull, their son Bird Jaguar IV, and his wives. The clustering of these three Tlaloc-related structures does not appear to be random. I speculate that the first initiation of a Yaxchilán lord into the Tlaloc cult happened during Moon Skull I’s reign, and that is why his building and their early lintels were preserved at Yaxchilán.⁴ The focus on a particular Early Classic ruler is also seen at Piedras Negras, where the ruler Turtle Tooth was held in great esteem because he was the first Piedras Negras ruler to be validated by a Kaloomte’ and inducted into the Tlaloc cult (AD 510), as noted in chapter 5. It is likely that the Early Classic Palenque ruler Ahkal Mo’ Nahb I (accession AD 501) was also revered for this same reason.

THE TLALOC EVENTS OF YAXCHILÁN STRUCTURE 23

The main plaza of Yaxchilán is on a strip of land that runs parallel to the Usumacinta River. Structure 23 is located on a low terrace on the south side of the plaza. The lintels spanning the three front doors of Structure 23 illustrate the king Shield Jaguar III and his wife Lady K'abal Xook performing joint ceremonies in AD 681, AD 709, and AD 724 (Lintel 24, Lintel 25, and Lintel 26). Their nominal phrases describe Shield Jaguar III as a four *k'atun* Ajaw (reflecting his age at the time of the building's dedication), captor of Aj Nik, a Bakab, and holy lord of Yaxchilán, while Lady K'abal Xook is characterized as a Lady Kaloomte'. The dedication and fire rituals of AD 723 and AD 726 that are recorded in the lintel narratives specifically state that Lady K'abal Xook was the owner of the building, although these events were carried out under the auspices of Shield Jaguar III (Stuart 1998a; McAnany and Plank 2001). The inscribed artifacts found in two of the burials under the floor of the structure belonged to this couple, and this has suggested that they are the graves of Shield Jaguar III (Tomb 2) and Lady K'abal Xook (Tomb 3), who died in AD 742 and AD 749, respectively (García Moll 2004; Hernández and Márquez 2006). There is some evidence that Tomb 2 might have been that of Lady K'abal Xook's son (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017).

Unfortunately, the inscription on the outer edge of Lintel 24 was destroyed, but the narrative on the underside begins in AD 709 and illustrates a standing Shield Jaguar III holding a burning torch that is referenced in the text above his head as his penance with a fiery spear (figure 6.1). Lady K'abal Xook kneels in a frontal pose beside him. She wears a tasseled Tlaloc headdress with a Ch'ajom insignia at its base, and she sports the ponytail of a Ch'ajom. A Black Witch Moth Tlaloc adorns the top of the headdress. Lady K'abal Xook holds a cord that she draws through a hole in her tongue. The cord has hook-shaped objects embedded in it that are thought to be either thorns or shards of obsidian. In either case, her act of bloodletting must have been extremely painful. Between Shield Jaguar III and Lady K'abal Xook is a woven bowl that contains two obsidian blades, one of which was probably used to cut her tongue. The fact that there are two blades hints at the likelihood that Shield Jaguar III had just performed a penis perforation or was about to do so. Such joint bloodletting is seen on Lintel 17, which depicts a kneeling Lady Mut Bahlam of Hix Witz (a wife of Bird Jaguar IV) (figure 6.2). She wears a Tlaloc headdress with the Ch'ajom insignia on her forehead while pulling a cord through her tongue. The main text, which runs across the bottom of the lintel, names her. Although badly eroded, the smaller caption text in the middle of the scene names the right figure as Bird Jaguar IV. He holds an object in his



FIGURE 6.1. *Yaxchilán Lintel 24 (drawing after Ian Graham)*



FIGURE 6.2. *Yaxchilán Lintel 17 (drawing after Ian Graham)*

hands that appears to be a bloodletter, and he sits in a position that suggests penile bloodletting.

The outer edge of Lintel 25 begins with a distance number that links an AD 681 conjuring event at the *tahn ha' pa'chan* “the waterfront of Yaxchilán” to the dedication of the carving in AD 723 at the same location. The dedication phrase indicates that the building was owned by Lady K'abal Xook and names her as a Kaloomte'. It also states that the ceremony was under the auspices of Shield Jaguar III. The underside of the lintel illustrates Lady K'abal Xook at a climactic moment of the conjuring ritual, with a figure emerging from the upper head of a double-headed Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan (AD 681) (figure 6.3). The figure wears a Tlaloc mask and headdress. The kneeling Lady K'abal Xook again wears the Ch'ajom insignia and has the tied hair of a Ch'ajom. The text is in mirror image, which is a chiasmus device used to place emphasis on an event (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). Consequentially, the narrative begins in the upper right corner and moves to the left, in reverse of a normal reading pattern. The text states the calendar round date of Shield Jaguar III's accession but does not refer to this event. Instead, it relates the conjuring of the *tok'-pakal*

of the deity Aj K'ahk' O Chahk and the holy spear of Shield Jaguar III.

The smaller caption text in the scene is divided into two glyph blocks strategically placed to lead the reader past the Tlaloc figure emerging from the upper Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan head to Lady K'abal Xook. It consists of a standard impersonation phrase that first states the name of the impersonated deity or ancestor and then the name of the person doing the impersonation (Houston and Stuart 1996). In this case, it begins with the name Lady Ohl and the title Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom, followed by Lady K'abal Xook's name. It ends with a title for Lady K'abal Xook (*u yokte'el tahn ha' pa'chan* "the pillar of the waterfront of Yaxchilán"). Although I characterized Lady Ohl as a warrior goddess in an earlier analysis (Bassie-Sweet 2008:208), her Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom title indicates that she was human, although with some legendary status.

Most impersonation scenes illustrate the impersonator wearing a headdress that represents the name of the individual being impersonated. As an example, the ruler K'inich Janaab Pakal I is depicted as the central figure on the Palenque Temple XXI bench (see figure 0.3). The caption text that frames his head states that he is impersonating an ancestral figure (González Cruz and Bernal Romero 2004, 2012). K'inich Janaab Pakal I wears the Ch'ajom insignia, but he also sports a double-headed centipede headdress. The lower head is a typical centipede head, but the upper head is represented by the glyphic name of the ancestor he is impersonating. On

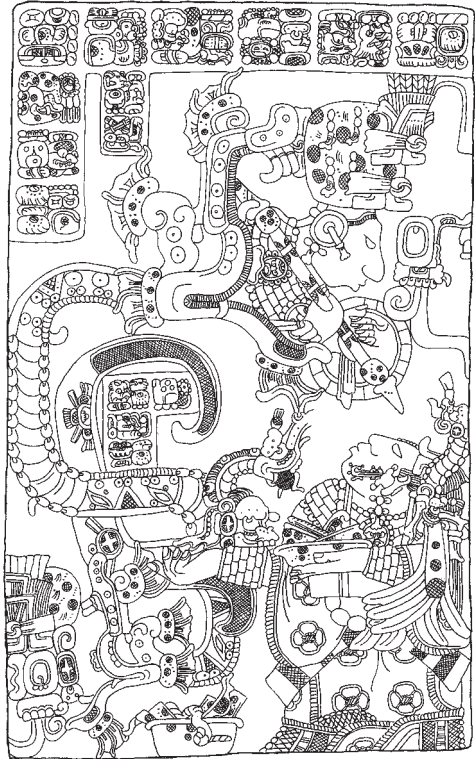


FIGURE 6.3. *Yaxchilán Lintel 25* (drawing after Ian Graham)

Lintel 25, Lady K'abal Xook wears a similar double-headed centipede, but its upper head is represented by a skull wearing Tlaloc's *k'an* cross earring. The same centipede skull with *k'an* cross earring is positioned on her right forearm, strategically overlapping the body of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan serpent and the entwined smoke curl. Given the parallels with other impersonation scenes, the skull with *k'an* cross earring must somehow represent Lady Ohl (Bassie-Sweet 2008:208–210, 2010). Given that this skull is not a representation of the word *ohl* “heart,” it seems highly likely that it represents the skull of Lady Ohl.

Evidence that ancestors were portrayed as skulls is seen in some examples of the ancestral effigy assemblage. On Yaxchilán Lintel 8, Bird Jaguar IV is shown in the heat of a battle, and the ancestor figure of his assemblage takes the form of a skull (see figure 0.12). A similar skull is seen on the belt of Shield Jaguar III in the Lintel 45 scene illustrating his capture of Aj Nik (see figure 1.6). Given these parallels where a skull can take the place of an ancestor's name, it seems reasonable to conclude that Lady K'abal Xook is not only impersonating Lady Ohl in the Lintel 25 scene but that she also holds Lady Ohl's skull in her hand (Bassie-Sweet 2008:208–210, 2010).

Whether it is Lady Ohl's actual skull or an effigy of her skull is unclear, but I think it may be her actual skull because the veneration of female ancestral remains is well documented, as on Piedras Negras Stela 40, discussed in chapter 5. Excavations at El Perú indicate that the tomb of a royal woman was reentered sometime after her corpse had decomposed, and her cranium and femora were removed (Piehl et al. 2014).⁵ The conjuring of deities and ancestors from bones is depicted in a number of scenes where the ceremonial bar held by the conjurer takes the form of a femur with centipedes emerging from it. A beautiful example is on a looted monument now in the de Young Museum (Miller and Martin 2004:fig. 35).

The figure emerging from the upper head of the Lintel 25 Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan carries a shield and an unusual double-headed spear and wears the Tlaloc bundle headdress and the Ch'ajom insignia and ponytail. It is likely that this double-headed spear and shield are the *tok'-pakal* of the deity Aj K'ahk' O Chahk that was mentioned in the main text. The figure also wears a Tlaloc mask that has the proboscis of the Black Witch Moth Tlaloc. In other words, this conjured Ch'ajom figure has taken on the guise of Tlaloc. Given that the caption text referring to the impersonation of Lady Ohl frames the figure and that the skull of Lady Ohl is juxtaposed with the body of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan, I have concluded that the figure represents Lady Ohl (Bassie-Sweet 2008:208–210, 2010). The figure has most often been

characterized as a warrior, but the role of women as curators of war-related objects brings such identification into question.

A curious feature of Lintel 25 is that the scene depicts two bloodletting vessels, one held by Lady K'abal Xook and one positioned on the ground beside her. The upper bowl contains a stingray spine bloodletter and an obsidian bloodletter, while the lower one has a bloodletting cord and an obsidian bloodletter. The presence of the cord may allude to a tongue sacrifice to be performed by Lady K'abal Xook after this conjuring, similar to the one she is illustrated performing on Lintel 24. Given the juxtaposing of the upper bowl with the skull of Lady Ohl, it is possible that the bloodletting objects in this bowl originally belonged to Lady Ohl.

The third lintel of Structure 23 has an Initial Series date and Supplementary Series on its front edge that refers to a fire event that occurred in the building on June 26, AD 726 (Stuart 1998b; <https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=26&site=Yaxchilan&type=Lintel>). The scene on the underside of Lintel 26 illustrates Shield Jaguar III dressed in a stole-like vestment that is frequently worn in war scenes. A female stands adjacent to him, handing him a jaguar headdress and a flexible shield. The high-relief caption text that frames this action lacks a date but refers to the acquisition of the jaguar headdress by Shield Jaguar III (Tokovinine 2005). There is an incised text between the legs of the two figures that may have named the female, but it is eroded beyond recognition.⁶ Still, there is little doubt that the female is Lady K'abal Xook. The most obvious date for this dressing scene is either the Initial Series date of its front edge or Shield Jaguar III's accession, that is, the same time frame as the previous Lintel 25. If the latter, this scene would be another example of a king receiving a military headdress related to warfare on the occasion of his accession.

The use of the jaguar headdress by Shield Jaguar III after his accession is seen on Stela 20 and Lintel 46. The narrative on Stela 20 relates Shield Jaguar III's capture of Aj K'an Usja in AD 713. He is depicted wearing the jaguar headdress while Aj K'an Usja kneels before him in submission (Tate 1992:fig. 146). Lintel 46 also documents this capture event. Although the area around Shield Jaguar III's head is damaged, enough remains to suggest that he was wearing the jaguar headdress in this scene as well (<https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=46&site=Yaxchilan&type=Lintel>). This is in contrast to his depiction on Lintel 45 that illustrates his pre-accession capture of Aj Nik in AD 681 (see figure 1.6). In this scene, he wears a wide-rimmed headdress. It is important to note that the Lintel 26 scene does not contain any Tlaloc imagery. Lady K'abal Xook is no longer in the guise of Tlaloc or Lady Ohl

as she is depicted on Lintel 24 and Lintel 25. This jaguar headdress does not appear to be directly related to the Tlaloc cult.

Lintel 23, the fourth lintel of Structure 23, occurs over the doorway on the west side of the building. Its outer edge relates a dedication event in AD 724 and names Lady K'abal Xook, including her parentage statements and her relationship to other kinsmen. Unlike the undersides of the front lintels, the underside of Lintel 23 contains only text. The time frame moves forward to the 45th *tun* anniversary of Shield Jaguar III's accession on March 2, AD 726, and then relates the June 26 fire event that was recorded on Lintel 26. Although part of the text is eroded, it ends by naming Lady K'abal Xook and Shield Jaguar III. Lady K'abal Xook's nominal phrase includes the statement that she was a West Kaloomte'.

A final reference to Lady K'abal Xook is found in the three lintels of Structure 24, a building constructed on the west side of Structure 23. The three lintels of this house form a continuous text. Lintel 27 begins with the death of Lady Pakal in AD 705 and states that she was a Bakab and a six *k'atun* Kaloomte'. The time frame moves forward to the AD 742 death of her son Shield Jaguar III, who is also named as a Bakab. The lintel text ends with a distance number, indicating that the text continues on the next lintel over the central doorway of the building. Lintel 57 relates the death of Lady K'abal Xok in AD 749. Her nominal phrase extends onto the third lintel. Lintel 28 moves forward in time to the AD 751 death of Lady Ik' Skull (the second wife of Shield Jaguar III and the mother of his heir, Bird Jaguar IV). Lady Ik' Skull is named with her Lady Ajk'uhuun title. The narrative ends with the censuring of the tomb of Lady K'abal Xok in AD 755 but does not state who performed this action or why it was necessary to perform it. Given that the reigning king at the time was Bird Jaguar IV and that his mother, Lady Ik' Skull, was included in the narrative, it is likely that he oversaw this event.

At Yaxchilán, the lintel in the central doorway of a structure is invariably the focus of the narrative. Lady K'abal Xok is the only subject of the central lintel of Structure 24. Given that the story climaxes with the censuring of her tomb, she is clearly the focus of the story. The narrative attests to the importance of Lady K'abal Xok well after her death. The central lintel of Structure 23 is the impersonation of Lady Ohl by Lady K'abal Xok on the day of Shield Jaguar III's accession in AD 681. The mirror image of Lintel 25 places great visual focus on this ritual, indicating that it is the key event of the Structure 23 narrative. It is interesting that Lady K'abal Xok's tomb was constructed just inside this doorway.⁷

THE TLALOC EVENTS OF YAXCHILÁN STRUCTURE 21

Lady K'abal Xok was not the only Kaloomte' to have impersonated Lady Ohl at Yaxchilán. Her husband, Shield Jaguar III, Lady Ik' Skull, and Bird Jaguar IV are also illustrated in the guise of this Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom. The latter two depictions are found in Structure 21 located on the terrace to the east of Structure 23.

During excavations of Structure 21, it was discovered that the back wall of the central room was covered with a stucco mural. The upper section was destroyed when the building collapsed in antiquity, but enough remains to indicate that the scene featured five humans sitting on a bench in frontal pose (figure 6.4). The central figure is flanked on the left by a female and a male and on the right by two females. There were likely caption texts in the destroyed part of the mural that identified who they were. Given that the central lintel of the building depicts Bird Jaguar IV, the central figure of the mural is probably a portrait of him as well.

The bench below the central figure is decorated with a Tlaloc god in frontal pose wearing the typical *k'an* sign earrings and the jaguar bundle headdress decorated with the Mexican year sign. Two Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan serpents emerge above the headdress and arch across the base of the bench. The body of the right serpent is decorated in a similar fashion to the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan on Lintel 25, while the left serpent is decorated with *k'an* signs. The reason for this contrast is not known. The head of the right Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan disgorges a Tlaloc in profile view. The left Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan head is mostly destroyed, and the area around its mouth is entirely gone. Whether it featured an image of Lady Ohl is unknown. Nevertheless, the Structure 21 mural clearly indicates that this building was also identified with Tlaloc-related events.

Stela 35 was discovered on the floor of the central room (figure 6.4). The front of this small stela features a scene that is thematically parallel to that on Lintel 25 and provides more information about this type of event. The narrative begins with a text at the bottom of the monument that describes the conjuring of K'awiil under the authority of four women and the creation/penance of Lady Ik' Skull on 9.15.10.0.1 4 Imix 4 Mol (July 1, AD 741), one day after the Period Ending. This date is just a year before the death of her husband, Shield Jaguar III, and eight years before Lady K'abal Xok's demise. Who these four women were is not clear. Lintel 14 of Structure 20 depicts Bird Jaguar IV's wife Lady Great Skull performing a ritual on this date, while the lintels of Structure 21 feature two other wives (Lady Wak Tuun and Lady Mut Bahlam, see below), albeit on different dates.

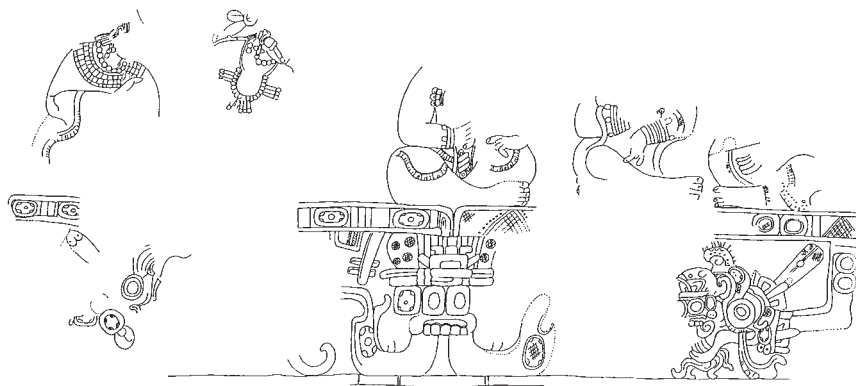


FIGURE 6.4. *Yaxchilán Structure 21 mural*

In the Stela 35 scene, Lady Ik' Skull holds up Lady Ohl's skull in her right hand while cradling a bowl with a bloodletting cord and stingray spine in her left arm. Her headgear is composed of a Tlaloc year sign headdress, Ch'ajom insignia, and the centipede-skull of Lady Ohl. The skull also wears a Tlaloc year sign headdress, indicating that Lady Ohl took on the guise of this deity (this headdress supports the interpretation that the conjured warrior figure who takes on the guise of Tlaloc on Lintel 25 is Lady Ohl). The double-headed Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan serpent rears up behind Lady Ik' Skull. Although the upper head is blocked by the feathers of Lady Ik' Skull's headdress, it appears to have only a Tlaloc emerging from it. This seems to represent a moment in the ritual sequence just before the appearance of Lady Ohl.

The narrative continues on the back of Stela 35 with an image of Lady Ik' Skull performing a tongue sacrifice with a burning incensario positioned beside her (figure 6.5). She is no longer wearing the Tlaloc headdress. The adjacent text states that the action is the *mayil* "sacrifice" of Lady Ik' Skull. Her nominal phrase includes her title as a Lady Ajk'uhuun and the statement that she is the mother of Bird Jaguar IV. This text does not include a date; hence, Lady Ik' Skull's impersonation of Lady Ohl and her tongue sacrifice were sequential acts that occurred on the same day (Bassie-Sweet 1991). Lady Ik' Skull's husband, Shield Jaguar III, is neither illustrated nor mentioned in the text on Stela 35. However, Lintel 39 illustrates their son Bird Jaguar IV performing a conjuring of K'awiil on the same day his mother took on the guise of Lady Ohl during a conjuring of K'awiil.⁸ It seems that Lady Ik' Skull's ritual was not in support of her husband but rather of her son.

The three doorways leading into the mural room had carved lintels. The left doorway is spanned by Lintel 15. The text refers to the conjuring of a deity called Yax Chit Noh Chan in AD 768, while the scene illustrates Bird Jaguar IV's wife Lady Wak Tuun kneeling before a serpent that disgorges a human figure (Stuart et al. 1999) (<https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=15&site=Yaxchilan&type=Lintel>). The center lintel (Lintel 16) illustrates the capture of a secondary lord of Santa Elena by Bird Jaguar IV in AD 752 (see figure 6.13). Lintel 17 spans the right doorway. While the text provides no date, the scene depicts Bird Jaguar IV and his wife Lady Mut Bahlam performing bloodletting rites with a sacrificial bowl at their feet (figure 6.2). Lady Mut Bahlam is dressed in a Tlaloc headdress as she draws a cord through her tongue. Bird Jaguar IV wears the centipede-skull headdress that represents the name of Lady Ohl. He has taken on her guise.

Lintel 17 and Lintel 24 illustrate events by Lady Mut Bahlam and Lady K'abal Xook and their respective husbands, Bird Jaguar IV and Shield Jaguar III, that are thematically parallel. Both women wear the Tlaloc tassell headdress while pulling cords through their tongues. However, in contrast to Lady Ohl's centipede-skull headdress worn by Bird Jaguar IV, Lady K'abal Xook's husband, Shield Jaguar III, wears a simple band with the head of a female attached to it (figure 6.1). The female has the bound ponytail of a Ch'ajom. The positioning of this head in a reclining orientation is highly



FIGURE 6.5. *Yaxchilán Stela 35 back*

unusual, as are her closed eyes, which are often used in iconography to indicate death. Surely, this is a representation of the deceased Lady Ohl.⁹ In brief, both Bird Jaguar IV and Shield Jaguar III have taken on the guise of Lady Ohl in these scenes.

THE MYSTERIOUS LADY OHL

Lady Ohl is an enigma. While she might have been a very ancient ancestor like the one K'inich Janaab Pakal I is illustrated impersonating on the Palenque Temple XXI bench, Lady Ohl is named as a Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom, which indicates her close association with the structure where Maya lords were initiated into the Tlaloc cult and where offerings to this god were made. If Moon Skull was the first Yaxchilán lord to be initiated into the Tlaloc cult and if Lady Ohl was from his time period, it is possible that she was his wife who had also been inducted into this cult. The importance of a wife in the Tlaloc cult is seen at Copán. The king Yax K'uk' Mo', who is the only other person known to carry the Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom title, was buried in the first phase of Structure 16, a *talud-tablero*-style building nicknamed Hunal (Bell et al. 2004). A female was subsequently buried in a double-chamber tomb in the structures built over Hunal. The two chambers were joined by a staircase that provided access to the mortuary room for a period of time after her interment, and both chambers were lavishly filled with grave goods, many of which were in Teotihuacán style. While no portraits or written references to K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's wife exist, it has been assumed that this rich tomb was hers. Her tomb demonstrates her close association with the Tlaloc cult and her revered status. Regrettably, unless other Yaxchilán inscriptions come to light related to Lady Ohl or her tomb is found, Lady Ohl's identity will remain a mystery.

What, if any, earlier phases of Structure 23 were discovered when the building was excavated by Roberto García Moll in the 1980s is unknown because, regrettably, he did not publish a detailed report. If no earlier structure was in place at the time of Lady K'abal Xook's impersonation of Lady Ohl in AD 681 (Lintel 25) and her husband's impersonation in AD 709 (Lintel 24), then we must obviously entertain the possibility that these events happened elsewhere. I suggest that Moon Skull's house would have been the likely location. In either case, I think the rituals illustrated in the art of Structures 21 and 23 are indicative of the types of ceremonies that were performed in these buildings. It is reasonable to suggest that the paraphernalia associated with these rituals was stored in these houses.

THE KALOOMTE' WOMEN OF YAXCHILÁN

Offices like Sajal and Ajk'uhuun were held by both queens and secondary lords, while the offices of Kaloomte' and Bakab were restricted to kings, heirs apparent, and queens. Queens appear to have attained their status in the latter two offices as the consorts and ritual assistants of the king. That is, when a lord became a Kaloomte' or a Bakab, so did his wife. Women who outlived their husbands retained their status in these offices. As an example, Lady Pakal survived her husband, Bird Jaguar III, by twenty-eight years, and her nominal phrase includes the title six *k'atun* Kaloomte'. Lady Pakal's role as a Kaloomte' during the reign of her son Shield Jaguar III is unknown, but two of his wives (Lady K'abal Xook and Lady Ik' Skull) were also afforded this title. Both wives survived Shield Jaguar III, who died in AD 742. Lady K'abal Xook's death in AD 749 was followed by Lady Ik' Skull's in AD 751. It would seem, then, that these women did not hold this office sequentially but held it in common. It may be significant that Lady K'abal Xook held the West Kaloomte' office while Lady Ik' Skull was designated an East Kaloomte'. Both women are also named with the Bakab title.

Lady K'abal Xook appears to have been the daughter of a local Sajal, but Lady Ik' Skull originated from the Kaanul polity, as noted on Yaxchilán Stela 10. The La Corona Panel 6 illustrates the daughter of the Kaanul king Tuun K'ab Hix arriving at La Corona to marry the La Corona king in AD 520 (Martin 2008). Lady Nah Ek is dressed in a Tlaloc costume atop a Tlaloc palanquin (see figure 3.20). The inference is that some royal women entered the Tlaloc cult prior to their marriages. It is possible, then, that Lady Ik' Skull received her initiation into the Tlaloc cult at her home site.¹⁰ A Tlaloc priestess would certainly be a more valuable bride and a more suitable wife for a Kaloomte'.

As discussed earlier, Lady Ik' Skull's son Bird Jaguar IV had four wives: Lady Great Skull, Lady Wak Tuun, Lady Mut Bahlam, and Lady Wak Jalam Chan Ajaw. Understanding their roles in the Tlaloc cult is more complicated. Lady Great Skull was the mother of Bird Jaguar IV's son and successor Shield Jaguar IV. There are significantly more depictions of this woman than of the other wives because her son illustrated her more often in his retrospective monuments. She is shown either conducting a conjuring or holding a bundle while her husband performs a ritual, and she is consistently named as a Lady Sajal. While we may not understand the nature of the Sajal office, it is one of very high status within the local hierarchy. Her nominal phrases never include the Kaloomte' title, and she is not depicted in Tlaloc-related scenes or dressed in Tlaloc costume.

In contrast, Lady Wak Tuun is named as an East Kaloomte', although her two portraits do not include Tlaloc imagery (Lintel 15 and Lintel 38). As

reviewed above, Lady Mut Bahlam wears the Tlaloc headdress on Lintel 17 (figure 6.2). On Lintel 8, Bird Jaguar IV is illustrated apprehending his most important war captive while dressed in the costume of the Black Witch Moth Tlaloc. The narrative on Lintel 41 refers to the same event. This scene shows Bird Jaguar IV dressed in the same costume and holding the same spear (see figure 3.1). His wife Lady Wak Jalam Chan Ajaw stands before him. She was likely holding a shield, but, regrettably, the lower portion of her portrait is damaged. The scene is thematically parallel to that of Lintel 26 and represents the dressing of the lord prior to battle. In addition to having the tied ponytail of a Ch'ajom, Lady Wak Jalam Chan Ajaw wears an interesting headdress. The main feature is similar to the Yajawk'ak' headdress worn by the captive on Piedras Negras Stela 12 (see figure 0.17). Above this element is a stylized Black Witch Moth wing with the obsidian zigzag design at its base. As discussed in chapter 5, Yajawk'ak' lords were in charge of the king's Tlaloc paraphernalia. It is possible that the wives of the Yaxchilán lords assumed the custodial duties of Yajawk'ak' lords. At the very least, Lintel 41 indicates that Tlaloc priestesses were intimately connected to their husbands' Tlaloc war regalia.¹¹

THE KALOOMTE' LADY SIX SKY OF DOS PILAS AND NARANJO

An example of a royal woman who held the office of Kaloomte' but whose husband was not a Kaloomte' was Lady Six Sky.¹² Her life is one of extraordinary circumstances. Lady Six Sky's father was the Tikal lord Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, who founded a new kingdom at Dos Pilas and broke with Tikal (Houston 1993; Martin and Grube 2008:56–58). Bajlaj Chan K'awiil warred with the Kaanul king Yuknoom Ch'een and with the Tikal king Nuun Ujol Chaak, who was likely his half-brother and who was also warring with Yuknoom Ch'een. At various points in the conflicts, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil was forced to flee Dos Pilas before returning and reestablishing himself. Eventually, he became aligned with Yuknoom Ch'een, and monuments at Dos Pilas refer to him as Yuknoom Ch'een's vassal. According to Dos Pilas Stela 9, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil then journeyed to Calakmul (almost 200 km north of Dos Pilas as the bird flies) to participate in its 9.12.10.0.0 Period Ending ceremonies (May 10, AD 682). After Yuknoom Ch'een's passing, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil returned to Calakmul in AD 686 to attend the accession of its new king Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'. While no death date is recorded for Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, he was succeeded by his son Itzamnaaj K'awiil in AD 698, who, in turn, was succeeded by Ruler 3 in AD 727. Itzamnaaj K'awiil's parentage statement indicates that his mother was a woman from Itzan, but no parentage

statement exists for Ruler 3. Ruler 3 was militarily active during the reign of Itzamnaaj K'awiil, taking a Tikal lord as captive in AD 705. I think it is likely that he was Itzamnaaj K'awiil's brother.

Bajlaj Chan K'awiil and another one of his wives called Lady Bulu had a daughter named Lady Six Sky. Just three months after Bajlaj Chan K'awiil's AD 682 journey to Calakmul, Lady Six Sky arrived at Naranjo, presumably to marry into that lineage. Naranjo is located 125 km northeast of Dos Pilas. The history of Naranjo was complex. Its earliest known kings had a close association with Tikal (just 40 km to the northwest), but the Kaanul polity was intent on controlling the region east of Tikal. Naranjo came under its direct influence during the reign of Aj Wosal, who was placed on the Naranjo throne at the age of twelve under the auspices of the Kaanul king K'altuun Hix (AD 546) and ruled for almost seventy years (Martin and Grube 2008:71–72). The next Naranjo rulers came into conflict with the Kaanul polity and with Caracol, which was under the sway of the Kaanul king. At the time of Lady Six Sky's arrival, Naranjo's ruling dynasty appears to have been decimated. It has been proposed that Lady Six Sky was sent to Naranjo to marry a local Naranjo lord, reboot its lineage, and restore Kaanul control in the region (Houston 1993:108). She played a prominent role in the public monuments of Naranjo long after her son (K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak) was placed on the Naranjo throne at the age of five in AD 693.¹³ Despite researchers often characterizing Lady Six Sky as a queen, there is no evidence that her unnamed husband was ever a king of Naranjo or that she herself was ever seated in the office of Ajaw. She carries the Bakab title that indicates that she officiated at Period Ending ceremonies. What is curious is that Lady Six Sky is also named as a West Kaloomte' on Naranjo Stela 18.

In the early years of K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak's reign, control was reasserted over the region around Naranjo through a series of military attacks. The narrative on Stela 22 relates these successes. It begins with the birth of K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak in AD 688 and his accession in AD 693. The story then proceeds to a series of burning events against K'inchil Kab (693), Tuubal (693), and Bital (693), then the capture of a Tikal lord at Yellow Rabbit (695) and more burnings at Komkom (696), Bahlam Jol (697), and K'inchil Kab again (698). These military exploits end with the burning of Ucanal in AD 698 and the statement that they were done under the auspices of K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak. He is illustrated on the front of the monument performing the 9.13.10.0.0 Period Ending of AD 702, with the Ucanal ruler kneeling in submission before him. Given that K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak was only seven years old at the time of the Tikal lord's capture and fourteen at the time of Ucanal's burning, it

is unlikely that he was personally responsible for these acts. These military attacks were surely instigated by the Kaanul polity and Lady Six Sky's relatives from Dos Pilas and carried out with their support. It is interesting that Naranjo continued on with its military campaign despite the fact that the Tikal king Jasaw Chan K'awiil I had delivered a decisive blow against the Kaanul king Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk', capturing his patron god and forcing him to flee to La Corona in August AD 695 (Stuart et al. 2015b).

Naranjo Stela 24 also refers to the 9.13.10.0.0 Period Ending, but in contrast to Stela 22, the Stela 24 narrative is framed around the actions of Lady Six Sky. The narrative begins with her arrival at Naranjo in August AD 682 and the statement that she was a holy Ajaw of Dos Pilas. The time frame then moves forward to the AD 688 birth of K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak, who is named as a holy Naranjo lord and the 38th ruler in the Naranjo descent line. His birth is then joined to a deity impersonation that Lady Six Sky performed in AD 699. She is named as the daughter of Bajlaj Chan K'awiil of Dos Pilas and the West Kaloomte' Lady Bulu. The narrative ends with the wrapping of the Period Ending stone by Lady Six Sky on the 9.13.10.0.0 Period Ending.

Stela 29 is another monument focused on Lady Six Sky. It also begins with her arrival in AD 682 but provides more details about this event before proceeding to the AD 688 birth of her son. The time frame then moves forward to two Period Ending events in 9.13.3.0.0 (February 28, AD 695) and 9.14.3.0.0 (AD 714). At the time of this latter Period Ending event, Lady Six Sky's father had passed away, and her half-brother had taken the Dos Pilas throne. The narrative continues on the front of the monument, but, unfortunately, the carving is badly eroded. What is still legible is Lady Six Sky's parentage statement that states that her father was the three *k'atun* Ch'ajom, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, holy lord of Dos Pilas, West Kaloomte'. Her father is also named on Dos Pilas Hieroglyphic Staircase 3 as a Kaloomte'. The narratives on Lady Six Sky's other two monuments (Stela 18 and Stela 31) are too eroded to completely reconstruct, but Stela 31 illustrates her performing the 9.14.10.0.0 Period Ending event (AD 721), while Stela 18 refers to the 9.14.15.0.0 Period Ending (AD 726). This Period Ending is the last recorded event at Naranjo for both Lady Six Sky and K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak. The latter's three *k'atun* title indicates that he lived until at least June 11, AD 727.

A hieroglyphic bench at Dos Pilas sheds light on Lady Six Sky's demise. The bench was found in Structure L4-41 of a building group that has been characterized as a palace for Lady GI-K'awiil, who was the wife of Dos Pilas Ruler 3 (Demarest 2006:58–59). Lady GI-K'awiil's tomb was found in the central room of this building in a similar manner to that of Lady K'abal Xook's

burial in Yaxchilán Structure 23. While the bench narrative focuses on Lady GI-K'awiil, it notes the death of Lady Six Sky in AD 741. This means that Lady Six Sky outlived her half-brother, the Dos Pilas king Itzamnaaj K'awiil, who died in AD 726, and that she died around the same time as his successor Ruler 3, whose death is recorded on Aguateca Stela 1 as June 1, AD 741. The fact that no inscriptions related to Lady Six Sky were recorded at Naranjo for the last fifteen years of her life but her death was noted on a Dos Pilas bench raises the possibility that Lady Six Sky spent the last years of her life back at Dos Pilas, specifically at the compound of Lady GI-K'awiil. If so, Lady Six Sky might have been in residency during Ruler 3's war against Seibal in AD 735, when the Seibal ruler was brought to Dos Pilas and adorned. Ruler 3 fought this war in the guise of Tlaloc, as demonstrated on Dos Pilas Stela 2, and Lady Six Sky may have supported him in this endeavour through her role as a Tlaloc priestess.

Dos Pilas Structure L5-49 dominates the central plaza, and it is probably the burial monument for Lady Six Sky's father, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil. There is a possible reference to Lady Six Sky on the very badly eroded Panel 18 that was found in the central temple of Structure L5-49 (Houston 1993:101). I believe Panel 10 of the structure likely illustrates Lady Six Sky. The origins of the panel are not known, but the fine grain quality of the limestone indicates that it was imported. The remains of an earlier carving are evident at the base of the monument. It has been speculated that the panel may have been brought from the nearby sites of Arroyo de Piedra or Tamarindito as a war trophy and re-carved at Dos Pilas (Houston 1993:72; Escobedo 2006). The re-carving illustrates a figure dressed in the jade costume of the deity One Ixim while cradling a double-headed serpent bar. The figure has the tied hair of a Ch'ajom. The panel lacks any hieroglyphic text, so the identity of the figure is open to debate. Marc Zender (2010) and Héctor Escobedo (2006) assumed that the figure was a male ruler, but the short stature and long skirt are more indicative of a female. Furthermore, the Panel 10 costume is the same one worn by Lady Six Sky on Naranjo Stelae 24, 29, and 31. The conjuring of a deity or an ancestor from a serpent bar is not seen on any other Dos Pilas monument, but such actions are common at Naranjo (Stelae 6, 7, 9, 12, 14, 20, 22, 25, and 31). On Panel 10, the upper entity emerging from the serpent bar is a K'awiil god, but a closer examination indicates that it represents the name Bajlaj Chan K'awiil (Zender 2010). I think that, in all likelihood, Panel 10 illustrates Lady Six Sky conjuring her father.

If the Kaloomte' office refers to political control over a region, then Lady Six Sky's father, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, must have been afforded the Kaloomte' title

based on his hegemonic control over the Petexbatún region, despite the fact that he was a vassal of the Kaanul polity. In a similar fashion, Lady Six Sky may have been called a Kaloomte' if she had been responsible for the establishment of control over the Naranjo region in the early years of her son's rule. Although researchers have characterized Lady Six Sky as a warrior queen, she is not depicted carrying spears and shields like her son and other Naranjo rulers. While captives do appear at Lady Six Sky's feet on Stela 24 and Stela 29, her narratives are couched in terms of Period Ending events. In other words, she may have been presented with captives destined for the sacrifices of the Period Ending ceremonies, but she may not have been personally responsible for their capture. There are other examples of captives being handed over to an authority, such as the scene on Piedras Negras Stela 12 (see figure 0.17). Lady Six Sky's depicted actions involve conjuring and sacrifice. Although eroded, Naranjo Stela 24 illustrates her wearing a Tlaloc and a Ch'ajom headdress and cradling a bowl of sacrificial implements, much like the women of Yaxchilán (<https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=24&site=Naranjo&type=Stela>).

In addition to Stela 24, the presence of the Tlaloc cult at Naranjo is evident on several monuments. Stela 2 depicts Lady Six Sky's son K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak as a Tlaloc warrior circa AD 713, and Stela 19 illustrates K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak's son K'ahk' Ukalaw Chan Chaak (accession date AD 755) dressed in a feline headdress with Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan traits (see figures 3.10, 3.19).¹⁴ While these two Naranjo kings are not named as Kaloomte' lords, they most certainly participated in the Tlaloc cult of their mother and grandmother. I think it is likely that the Kaloomte' who inducted them into this cult was Lady Six Sky. Given the role of women in the curating of Tlaloc regalia, it is possible that Lady Six Sky was in charge of maintaining K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak's Tlaloc insignia and that this paraphernalia was passed down to his son.

One has to wonder when Lady Six Sky herself was first inducted into the Tlaloc cult. It is not impossible that the young princess journeyed to Calakmul with her father in AD 682 and was initiated there. Whether she was inducted by the Kaanul king at Calakmul or her father, she likely arrived at Naranjo with effigies of Tlaloc, much like the Kaanul princess Lady Nah Ek, who arrived at La Corona as a Tlaloc priestess.

SUMMARY

The active role females played in the Tlaloc cult is well demonstrated in Maya art. In many of the Yaxchilán narratives, Lady Ohl is accorded a

privileged position as a venerated ancestor. Her depiction as a Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom holding weapons of war while in the guise of Tlaloc suggests that she played a major role in some earlier undocumented conflicts. At Yaxchilán, the Tlaloc cult appears to be centered on the three buildings situated on the south side of the main plaza (Structures 21, 22, and 23). Structure 23 is clearly labeled as the house of Lady K'abal Xook, and its artwork features this Kaloomte' queen performing Tlaloc rituals with her husband. The murals of Structure 22 continue this Tlaloc theme and illustrate a palace scene where the royal bench is adorned with Tlalocs being conjured from Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan caterpillar-serpents. In addition, Stela 35, which was found in this building, depicts another conjuring of Tlaloc from a Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan. It is not a great leap of faith to conclude that one of the activities conducted in these buildings was the conjuring and veneration of Tlaloc. I would venture to say that these Yaxchilán buildings were Wiinte'naah structures, even though they do not have the typical *talud-tablero* style of architecture.

The deeds of the Kaloomte' women of Yaxchilán are set within the narrative framework of either their husbands or their sons. The depictions celebrate these women's ability to conjure Tlaloc avatars and assist their husbands or their sons in their role as powerful warriors. The Naranjo monuments referencing Lady Six Sky are similar in that they consistently refer to her as the mother of the reigning king K'ahk'Tiliw Chan. These Kaloomte' women appear to have gained significant status from their Tlaloc cult duties.

La Corona Panel 6 indicates that as early as AD 520, Kaanul princesses were indoctrinated into the cult of Tlaloc as priestesses and sent to secondary sites to become the wives of local lords. The fact that Lady Nah Ek's arrival at La Corona was celebrated on a monument 200 years after the event indicates her enduring importance. One has to wonder if Lady Ohl of Yaxchilán might have originally been a Kaanul princess as well.

Andrea Stone (1989) argued that Maya rulers took on the guise of Tlaloc to demonstrate their validation and identification with a foreign power, specifically the great metropolis of Teotihuacán. The underlying assumption is that the Maya accepted and incorporated Tlaloc into their pantheon of deities. In this volume, I have argued that the lowland Maya specifically identified the highland god Tlaloc with the obsidian that was only procurable from highland sources while maintaining their association of flint with their local Chahk deities. The Maya believed that flint and obsidian were not inert stone but sacred substances implanted with the lightning and meteor essences of the Chahk deities and Tlaloc, respectively. By participating in the Tlaloc cult, the Maya elite claimed the ability to harness the supernatural power thought to

be inherent in these stones and owned by these gods. The fact that the Tlaloc cult endured long after the demise of Teotihuacán indicates how potent this concept was.

Despite the fact that the Maya identified the Teotihuacán god Tlaloc with obsidian, they obtained the majority of their obsidian not from Teotihuacán but from locations in highland Guatemala. Chapter 7 reviews the merchant deity God L and his association with the land between those sources and the lowlands.

God L
An Obsidian and
Mercantile Deity

This chapter is a review of the obsidian and merchant deity God L and two river deities (the Paddler Gods) who were closely associated with him. God L was the antecedent for the underworld lord Gathered Blood of the Popol Vuh, who was the maternal grandfather of the Hero Twins (Bassie-Sweet 2008:226–238). It is my contention that God L–Gathered Blood was specifically identified with Xucaneb Mountain on the Cobán plateau.

The political dynamics of the lowlands were dominated by the conflicts between Tikal in the Central Petén and the Kaanul polity to its north. Over the course of the Classic period, these two polities and their respective surrogates and allies fought for control of resources and markets. A component of this competition was access to three highland commodities sought by the lowland Maya elite: obsidian, jade, and quetzal feathers. The Motagua fault of eastern highland Guatemala is the only known source of the jade coveted by the Classic Maya, and the Alta Verapaz region just north of the Motagua River had the highest concentration of quetzal habitat in Mesoamerica.¹ Even the Aztecs obtained quetzal feathers from this region at the time of the Spanish conquest. The major source of the obsidian used in the Petén during the Classic period was El Chayal, located just 13 km south of the Motagua River. The main land route for transporting these three products followed the Salamá valley north to the Cobán plateau before descending the

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piedmont of Alta Verapaz into the lowlands (Sharer and Sedat 1987). Goods were then transported by water down the Chixoy and Pasión River systems. This route has been nicknamed the Great Western Trade Route, in contrast to the marine trade route that ran along the east coast of Belize (Demarest 2006; Demarest et al. 2014).

The Cobán plateau has primary and secondary sites, with occupation ranging from the Preclassic to the Spanish conquest period, that attest to both its strategic significance and long-term importance on the trade corridor between the highlands and lowlands (Dieseldorff 1926–1933; Sedat and Sharer 1972; Arnauld 1986; Sharer and Sedat 1987; Pérez Galindo 2006). The Popol Vuh relates a number of mythological events that were thought to have happened at specific locations in highland Guatemala, like the discovery of the corn used to create the flesh of the first humans on Paxil Mountain in north-western Guatemala and the defeat of the crocodile deity Zipacna by the Hero Twins on the Chixoy River at Meauan Mountain. According to the Popol Vuh and other colonial documents, the cave route to the underworld taken by One Hunahpu, Seven Hunahpu, and the Hero Twins was located on the Cobán plateau (Recinos 1950:113–114; Recinos and Goetz 1953:64; Las Casas 1967; Tedlock 1996).

The Xucaneb massif defines the southern border of the Cobán plateau. The western end of the massif features Chich'en Mountain (2,200 meters), and the most important plateau site, which was also named Chichén, was located at the northern base of the mountain (Arnauld 1986). The eastern end of the massif is marked by the grand Xucaneb Mountain, the highest elevation in Alta Verapaz (2,648 meters). Xucaneb is a prominent landmark that can be seen from many vantage points, and it was undoubtedly used by travelers to mark the location of the plateau. The Maya believe mountains are manifestations of deities. The colonial period veneration of Xucaneb was noted by the priest Dioniso Zúñiga (1580–1636), who stated that the mountain was thought to be a powerful *mam* (grandfather mountain-god) identified with underground “thunder” during earthquakes (Feldman 2004:234, 239). The contemporary Q'eqchi' and Poqomchi' identify thirteen primary mountain deities, and Xucaneb is considered to be the most important (Sapper 1897; Burkitt 1902; Thompson 1930:58–59; Dieseldorff 1966; Carlson and Eachus 1977; Schackt 1984, 1986; Wilson 1990; Sieber 1999:85). They believe the elderly god Xucaneb lives in a cave on the north side of Xucaneb Mountain, and pilgrimages are made to this location to petition him for good harvests and health.

THE DIAGNOSTIC TRAITS AND NATURE OF GOD L

God L was an elderly god of the underworld, a mercantile god, and a patron god for long-distance traders (Coe 1973, 1978; Taube 1992a:79–88). On K1398, the Sun God refers to him as *nimam* “my grandfather” (Wald and Carrasco 2004). God L is often shown carrying a walking stick and a merchant backpack and wearing a long string of jade beads in reference to his wealth. In some examples, God L’s loincloth is untied and flows from his body. The loincloth is marked with footprints that are used in Mesoamerican imagery to depict trade and pilgrimage routes. God L’s primary diagnostic trait is a wide-brimmed hat decorated with an owl and a nest-like cluster of black-tipped owl feathers. A wide-brimmed hat is a common form of headwear for travelers, as it affords protection from both the sun and the rain.

God L’s owl often wears a headdress that spells out the name Uhxlajuun Chan Nal “thirteen sky-place,” or the bird is named Uhxlajuun Chan Nal Kuy “thirteen sky-place owl” in adjacent caption texts (Grube and Schele 1994). Uhxlajuun Chan Nal Kuy has been interpreted to be God L’s avian avatar. God L has been identified as a deity of tobacco because he is occasionally seen smoking a cigar and as a deity of cacao because cacao was an important trade commodity often used as currency (Taube 1992a; Miller and Martin 2004; Martin 2010:161, 2016). As discussed in previous chapters, owl feathers were metaphors for obsidian blades, and I have argued that God L was first and foremost an obsidian deity and the patron god for long-distance obsidian merchants (Bassie-Sweet 2011, 2012, 2013b).

God L is depicted with jaguar or armadillo features. His feline traits are apparent on the Palenque Tablet of the Sun, where he and the Jaguar Paddler God are shown in a crouching pose holding up GIII’s *tok’-pakal* effigy. In addition to his owl headdress, God L has a jaguar ear and wears a jaguar-skin cape and hipcloth. His depiction on the Temple of the Cross right jamb shows him wearing a jaguar-skin cape complete with its tail (figure 7.1). On vessels K2796 and K7750, God L’s throne is decorated with a skinned jaguar.

God L is occasionally illustrated wearing an armadillo shell or a cape in the form of an armadillo, indicating his identification with this nocturnal mammal (Kerr and Kerr 2005; Bassie-Sweet 2008:232–233). The image of a merchant carrying his backpack is similar to that of an armadillo with its shell. The most prominent characteristic of an armadillo is its ability to burrow into the earth and create elaborate tunnels. This is an appropriate attribute for an underworld deity who lives beneath the earth. As the maternal grandfather of the Hero Twins and lord of the underworld, God L was the complementary opposite of the paternal grandfather Itzamnaaj. This contrast is best seen in

the avian forms of these two grandfather deities. Both birds are messengers. God L's owl is a bird intimately associated with death omens, while Itzamnaaj's avian manifestation is the laughing falcon whose call predicts the life-giving rain (Bassie-Sweet 2008:235–236).

When a merchant stops to rest, he often uses his walking stick to prop up his backpack to keep it vertical, and a Cacaxtla mural shows God L's stick and backpack in such a configuration. The stick can also be used as a weapon if the merchant is attacked by thieves, and God L's walking stick is occasionally depicted with the hooked form of a fiery spear thrower or fire serpent (Wald and Carrasco 2004). As an obsidian trade deity, it would be expected that God L was closely associated with the obsidian deity Tlaloc. A looted panel from the Palenque region features a secondary lord dressed in God L's headdress (see figure 3.23). His Uhxlujuun Chan Nal Kuy owl has Tlaloc's goggle eyes. On K8740, another lord wears God L's headdress, and the upper portion has Tlaloc eyes. In the Dresden Codex (page 74), God L is depicted as a warrior wielding an atlatl and darts. His wrists and ankles are decorated with Tlaloc's moth wings, and he is painted black, the color of obsidian.

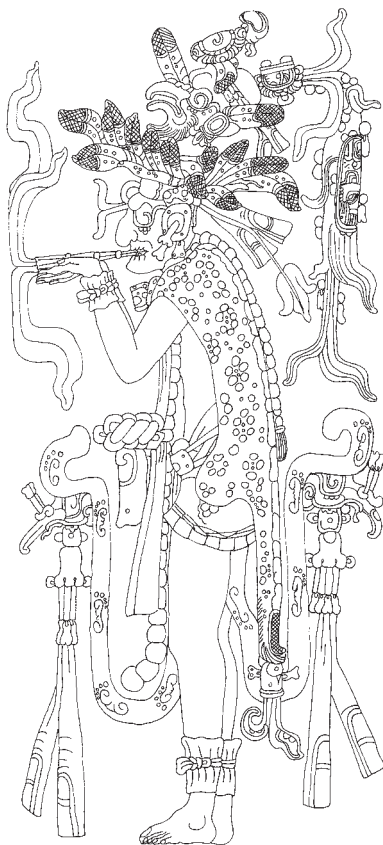


FIGURE 7.1. *God L Temple of the Cross right jamb (drawing after Merle Greene Robertson)*

THE HOME OF GOD L

A number of scenes feature the domicile of God L. On K511, his home is depicted as a typical palace structure similar to those belonging to human rulers (figure 7.2). He sits on a throne surrounded by corn goddesses, one

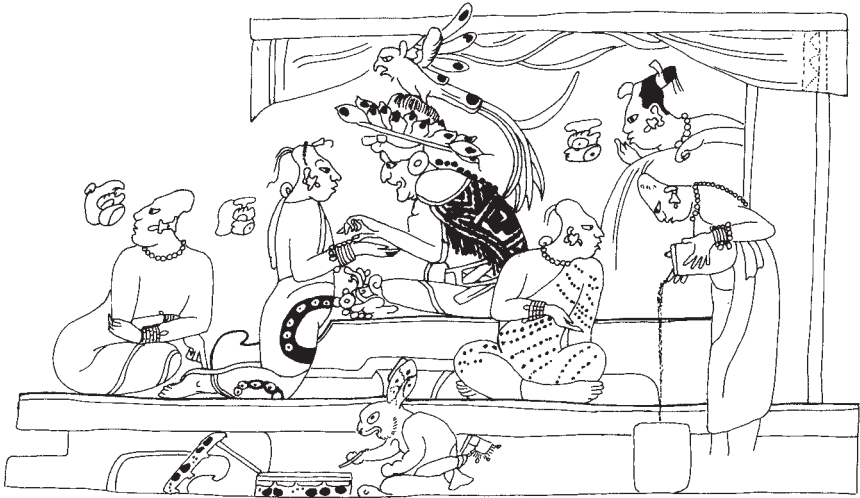


FIGURE 7.2. *K511* (drawing after Justin Kerr)

of whom prepares his cacao drink. I have interpreted these goddesses to be his daughters (Bassie-Sweet 2008:234). Another depiction of God L's palace illustrates him sitting on a throne draped with a jaguar skin (figure 7.3). The throne is further decorated with stylized Lepidoptera wings. The floor of the palace is defined by a *witz* "mountain" zoomorphic head, while the back wall is composed of stacked *witz* heads. A menacing animal, death eyes, and crossed bones decorate the roof. The implication is that God L's palace was located inside a mountain cave associated with death imagery. It is logical to conclude that this mountain was also the Uxlajuun Chan Nal "thirteen sky-place" from which God L's owl originated. The specific location of God L's mountain cave may be ascertained from the role of Gathered Blood in the *Popol Vuh* and the ethnographic stories regarding Xucaneb.

GATHERED BLOOD: THE MATERNAL GRANDFATHER OF THE HERO TWINS

The *Popol Vuh* narrative relates a series of events that occurred after Xpiyacoc and Xmucane and the Heart of the Sky thunderbolt gods created the earth. These episodes indicate that the creator grandparents had two sons named One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu and that they had a household on the surface of the earth. One Hunahpu and his brother established a ballcourt

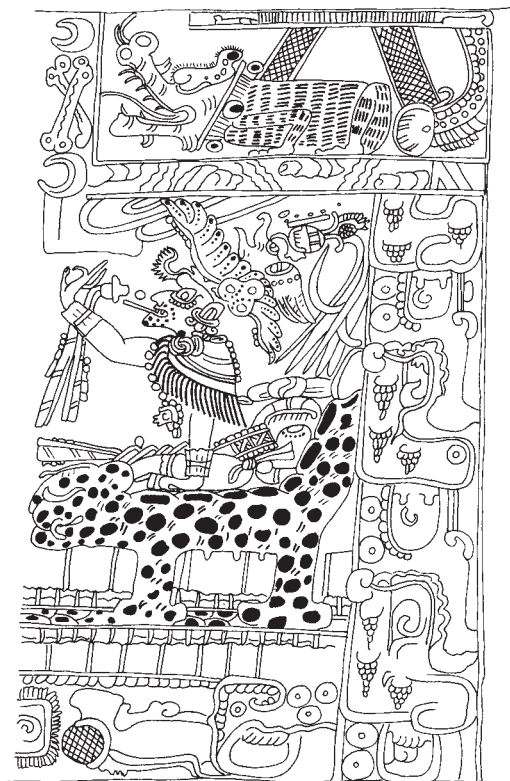


FIGURE 7.3. K2796 (drawing after Justin Kerr)

a great distance from their household on the frontier with the underworld. While the younger Seven Hunahpu remained a bachelor, One Hunahpu married a corn goddess named Lady Bone Water. They had two sons named One Batz and One Chouen, but Lady Bone Water died, and One Hunahpu was left to raise his sons with the help of his mother, Xmucane. The parentage of Lady Bone Water, her nuptials with One Hunahpu, and the cause of her death are not detailed. Later in the *Popol Vuh* story, One Hunahpu takes another wife who was a daughter of the underworld lord Gathered Blood. The leading cause of death for women was complications from childbirth. In the event that a wife died prematurely, it was customary for the widower to marry one of his wife's sisters. I have argued that Lady Bone Water was the eldest daughter of Gathered Blood and that she died in childbirth (Bassie-Sweet 2008).

The *Popol Vuh* narrative states that One Hunahpu's ballcourt was located on the path of the underworld (*b'e'al Xib'alb'a*). Xibalba was ruled by One

Death and Seven Death, who governed a council of secondary lords who were named in pairs (Flying Scab–Gathered Blood, Pus Demon–Jaundice Demon, Bone Staff–Skull Staff, Sweepings Demon–Stabbings Demon, and Lord Wing–Packstrap). Each pair was responsible for a particular kind of death. A third tier of lords held the office of *Raj Pop Achij*, “he of the mat of warriors.” In addition to their obvious war duties, they also functioned as messengers and executioners (Christenson 2007:119). There were four *Raj Pop Achij* called Arrow Owl, One Leg Owl, Macaw Owl, and Skull Owl, who were not only named after owls but took owl form. The intrusion of the ballcourt on the frontier of their territory enraged One Death and Seven Death, and they sent the four owl messengers to demand that One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu come to the Xibalba court to play ball and account for their actions. One Hunahpu and his brother descended from their ballcourt through a cave into the underworld, where they were subsequently sacrificed by the death lords after failing their first trials.

Although the body of One Hunahpu was buried at the underworld ballcourt along with that of his brother, the underworld lords commanded that One Hunahpu’s head be placed in a lifeless tree on the road. This was the beginning of the ultimate defeat of One Death and Seven Death, for the skull miraculously turned into a gourd and the tree then grew other gourds.² Lady Blood, who was a daughter of Gathered Blood, approached the tree, and One Hunahpu’s gourd-like skull spit in her right hand and impregnated her with the Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque. One Hunahpu told her to leave the underworld and go to the surface of the earth, that is, to his household. Upon discovering that his daughter was pregnant, Gathered Blood demanded to know the name of the father, but Lady Blood denied having had sexual relations with anyone. Not believing her, Gathered Blood then ordered the four *Raj Pop Achij* lords to kill Lady Blood for her inappropriate behavior by removing her heart with a flint blade. Death by the violent removal of the victim’s heart is well documented across Mesoamerica. She avoided this sacrificial punishment by making a deal with these owl lords and fleeing the underworld. Once at the household of the creator deities, Lady Blood had to convince Xmucane that she was pregnant with Xmucane’s grandchildren and therefore was her daughter-in-law. Lady Blood was required to produce a bag full of corn ears from a single corn plant in the milpa of One Batz and One Chouen. She did so by petitioning four corn goddesses named Lady Toh, Lady Canil, Lady Cacao, and Lady Tzi (Toh, Canil, and Tzi are day names). These four goddesses were likely the quadripartite forms of her older sister the corn goddess Lady Bone Water (Bassie-Sweet 2008).

After their birth, the Hero Twins acquired the skills of their father and grandfather. With the assistance of the Heart of Sky thunderbolt gods and their grandparents, the Hero Twins subordinated a number of gods living on the surface of the earth and then dealt with the rulers of the underworld who had killed their father and uncle. In this final conflict, Hunahpu and Xbalanque refurbished their father's ballcourt and began to play ball. Predictably, the Xibalba rulers were again infuriated by this territorial intrusion and sent their owl messengers with the same challenge. The Hero Twins followed their father and uncle's path into the underworld, but through a series of strategic moves they were able to outwit and execute One Death and Seven Death and subordinate the other Xibalba lords. As the maternal grandfather of the Hero Twins, it is highly likely that Gathered Blood was elevated to the role of principal underworld god after the demise of One Death and Seven Death.

The place names associated with One Hunahpu's ballcourt indicate that it was located on the Cobán plateau (Recinos 1950:113–14; Recinos and Goetz 1953:64; Tedlock 1996). Furthermore, the sixteenth-century bishop Bartolomé de Las Casas (1967:506) noted the belief that the Maya gained access to the underworld through certain cave openings that he called *bocas de infierno* “mouths of hell,” and he mentioned that one such cave opening specifically associated with one of the Hero Twins was located near Cobán. The fact that One Hunahpu's ballcourt was located on the Cobán plateau and that he, his brother, and his sons used a plateau cave to enter the underworld indicates how central the landscape of the plateau was to Maya cosmology.

XUCANEB AND THE COBÁN PLATEAU TRADE ROUTE

An 1889 map by Teodoro Paschke and various accounts by travelers indicate that there were two main trails from the Salamá valley to the Cobán plateau during the late nineteenth century.³ The first trail left Salamá and followed the general direction of the modern No. 5 Highway. This pathway climbed the ridge north of Salamá to the Cumbre de Cachil (Cachil pass) and descended down along the valley of the headwaters of the Río Quililá before crossing the valley of Santa Rosa and two smaller ridges. From there, the road followed the Río Cahabón valley northwest to Tactic. A major Pre-Columbian site called Chican is adjacent to Tactic, and this location was clearly an important resting place on the ancient trade route, just as Tactic was in the nineteenth century. North of Chican is the Xucaneb massif that forms the south side of the plateau. Today, Highway 5 follows the old mule trail that proceeded west of Tactic, following the Río Cahabón as it skirts around the Xucaneb massive, and it finally heads

north along the western end of the plateau. However, the ancient footpath was directly north of Chican, and it crossed over the La Cumbre pass between Xucaneb Mountain and Chich'en Mountain before arriving at the major site of Chich'en on the other side. From Chich'en, the footpath continued north across the plateau to Cobán before descending down the piedmont. After arriving at the head of navigation on either the Río Pasión or the Río Chixoy, highland goods would then be transferred into canoes for distribution into the Petén.

As an aside, there has been very little research into the specific way stations used by the ancient Maya merchants as they moved across the landscape into the lowlands, but colonial-era documents and old maps indicate the ancient footpaths that were still in use well into the twentieth century. The pathways between the Cobán plateau and the lowlands were situated to avoid the numerous steep ridges of the piedmont that run parallel to the highlands. A number of different trails were employed depending on the ultimate destination and the time of year.

The official land route during the colonial era left Cobán and headed northeast to Cahabon, then went north to Chimuchuch, Campamac, Bolonco, Tuila, Tzunkul, and San Luis. From San Luis, the route followed the same general direction north as the modern Highway CA13 before heading northwest to Flores (Morelet 1871). This was the same general route used by the Spanish in AD 1695 to conquer the Petén Itza (Feldman 2000).

Travelers journeying to northeastern Petén from Cobán via the Río Pasión took a route east of Cobán through San Pedro Carcha, Cauton, Chiriquiche, Tzibal, Candelaria, San Antoni6, Yalpemech, and Cancuén. John W. Boddam-Whetham (1877) went from Cobán to Cancuén on this route, then took a canoe down the Río Pasión from Cancuén to Sayaxché. His description indicates that the land portion of the trip was very arduous.

The journey north of Cobán was physically much easier. Travelers passed between Montaña Chicoj in the northeast and Montaña Sacranix in the northwest and made their descent through Sacanchaj and Chitocan to Cubilhuitz. From Cubilhuitz, the path split at least three ways. Travelers heading to the Río Chixoy-Salinas would proceed northwest of Cubilhuitz and follow the Río Icbolay to its confluence with the Río Salinas. The Paschke map indicates that the northeast route from Cubilhuitz proceeded to the Río Icbolay and crossed the river at Dolores, proceeded to Sibicte and Chisec, and then passed through the breaks in the ridges to the north along the Río San Roman. Continuing northward through the lowlands via Petex Batun, it eventually ended at Sayaxché. The 1832 Rivera Maestre map also shows this route. Alternatively, travelers could continue northeast from Chisec, make their way

over or around the southern base of the Chinajá range to the Río Pasión, and take the river downstream.

The Maya have a long tradition of making offerings to the mountain god whenever they passed by his mountain or crossed over his pass. During the colonial period, the Dominican priests of Alta Verapaz were dismayed to learn that their native carriers continued to perform such ceremonies even after their conversion to Catholicism (Feldman 2000:172–173). In the nineteenth century, Carl Sapper (1897) noted that the Q'eqchi' burned copal incense and placed a stone, flowers, and pine boughs at mountain passes as offerings. At particularly important summits, they also performed ceremonial dances. In their 1971–1973 investigations of the Salamá valley, Robert Sharer and David Sedat (1987:450) noted that these customs were still practiced by indigenous traders transporting Salamá pottery by footpath to the market at Cobán:

The trail used in this pottery trade passes over three major ridges between Salama and Coban. In each case, every merchant in a trading party carries a stone from the base to the ridge top, where it is deposited, adding to his heavy burden during the climb to the summit. This behavior is explained by the merchants as demonstrating their humility and the respect for the mountain. The large accumulations of stone on each ridge top testify to the antiquity of both this custom and this traditional commerce.

The Cobán plateau was a significant station on the Classic period route between the highland sources of obsidian, jade, and quetzal feathers and their lowland destinations. It is inconceivable that Classic period traders would not have made offerings to Xucaneb Mountain when they crossed La Cumbre pass.⁴

XUCANEB, GATHERED BLOOD, AND GOD L

Raxon Mountain, which is located 60 km southeast of Xucaneb on the Sierra de la Minas range, is the southernmost of the thirteen sacred mountains. In a general sense, Xucaneb Mountain and Raxon Mountain define the northern and southern borders of the quetzal habitat of eastern Guatemala. In addition, Raxon Mountain is the highest mountain of the Motagua fault, and jade sources skirt its base. Raxon Mountain is thought to be the manifestation of a young mountain god named Thorn Broom. Thorn Broom is a parallel to One Ixim, whose primary diagnostic traits were quetzal feathers and jade jewelry. A widespread myth concerning Thorn Broom and Xucaneb's daughter is found in various forms across the Guatemalan highlands (see Bassie-Sweet 2008:181–184 for an overview). According to these stories, Xucaneb was

a powerful deity living in his home on Xucaneb Mountain. He had a throne made from an armadillo shell, and his dogs took the form of a puma and a jaguar. His daughter Basket Grass was a corn goddess with great weaving skills. In Maya culture, marriage negotiations are expensive affairs in which the prospective groom must provide a series of payments to the bride's family. One day, Thorn Broom was hunting deer near Xucaneb's abode and saw Basket Grass weaving on the porch. He was immediately infatuated and set out to woo her without the customary marriage negotiations with her father. Thorn Broom's first attempts were failures, but he finally seduced Basket Grass and convinced her to elope. In anger over not being paid his bride payments, Xucaneb had his daughter killed, but she was revived after Thorn Broom made amends. Nevertheless, she subsequently died again in childbirth, and her bones were transformed into corn seed. The moral of the story is that there are serious consequences even for the deities when traditions are not followed.

I have presented evidence that Gathered Blood, One Hunahpu, and his first wife, Lady Bone Water, were antecedents for Xucaneb, Thorn Broom, and Basket Grass, respectively (Bassie-Sweet 2008). In addition, God L shares numerous characteristics with Gathered Blood and Xucaneb, such as their underworld origins, their armadillo attributes, their owl messengers, and their corn goddess daughters—all of which indicate that God L was the precursor of these two gods. These parallels, coupled with the importance of Xucaneb Mountain on the trade route, leave little doubt that the mountain was thought to be the manifestation of God L.

God L's portrait on the Temple of the Cross jamb includes a stylized loincloth extending out from his body in the front and back (figure 7.1). The loincloth is marked with footprints that refer to the path taken by this mercantile god. In light of God L's identification with Xucaneb Mountain on the Cobán plateau, I have argued that this motif is not just a general reference to a footpath but that it specifically represents the pathway between the lowlands and the highland sources of obsidian, jade, and quetzal feathers that crossed over the Cobán plateau.

In Maya art, most scenes focus on royal court activities or the actions of deities that reinforce the power and prestige of the royal court. There is little documentation regarding mercantile operations, but what is certain is that all goods moved overland had to be transported on the backs of porters because the Maya lacked beasts of burden. The most efficient way to make such systems profitable is through the use of slave labor. One of the common features of Maya mountain gods is their desire to enslave people and force them to work. Ethnographic accounts are filled with such stories.

Nawa Sugiyama and collaborators (2018) reexamined the felid remains in Copán burials and caches, and they concluded that Copán was importing complete jaguar skins, including claws, for ritual purposes. Jaguar habitat was limited during the Classic period. The rugged terrain and low population density of the Alta Verapaz made it one of the few areas with a significant jaguar population (today, the Sierra de la Minas in Alta Verapaz still has a significant jaguar population). God L has jaguar features and wears jaguar pelts. Unlike royal thrones that often have jaguar-skin pillows or take the form of animated jaguars, God L's throne is decorated with a skinned jaguar that includes the head and tail. Its slit eyes and serrated edge emphasize that it is a skinned jaguar. Given the jaguar imagery of God L, I think it is highly likely that he was viewed as a jaguar pelt merchant as well.

THE RIVER GODS

The Popol Vuh describes an elderly pair of river gods named Xulu (Descended) and Paqam (Ascended) who carried the title of *eta'manel*, "sage." The underworld rulers consulted Xulu and Paqam regarding how they should dispose of the bone remains of the Hero Twins after the twins leaped into the pit oven and were burned to death. Anticipating that this would happen, the twins had instructed the two sages to have their remains thrown into a river that "winds among the small and great mountains" so they could be resurrected (Christenson 2007:177–178). Like the other major gods, there are Classic period parallels to Xulu and Paqam in the form of the two elderly river deities nicknamed the Paddler Gods (Bassie-Sweet 2008).

In a number of examples at Toniná and Copán, the portrait glyphs of the Paddler Gods are replaced by two cartouches that represent the ends of their paddles and that reference their role as oarsmen. Unlike their paddles in the Tikal scenes that are infixed with *k'an* signs, these paddles are infixed with *k'in* and *ak'bal* signs. This pairing of day and night signs has been interpreted to mean that the Paddler Gods represent the opposition of day and night, that they are a metaphor for a day and a night, or that they represent twilight (MacLeod cited in Schele 1992:257–258; Schele and Mathews 1998:414; Wichmann 2004). In the context of the *tz'ak* completion sign, day and night signs are paired to convey the concept of complementary opposition (Stuart 2003b), and it is likely that the *k'in* and *ak'bal* signs in the paddle cartouches have a similar function, indicating that the Paddler Gods are complementary opposites. This complementary opposition is reminiscent of the paired names Xulu (Descended) and Paqam (Ascended). The paddle cartouches indicate

the close association the two Paddler Gods had with their canoe and, by extension, the river.

The depiction of deities and ancestors in the space above a ruler's head during Period Ending ceremonies is a common feature in monumental art, and the Paddler Gods appear in that context on Jimbal Stela 1, Ixlu Stela 1, and Ixlu Stela 2. In these scenes, the Paddler Gods cling to cloud-like scrolls similar to those used to represent the misty Milky Way river on Copán Temple 22. Rivers in the Maya region are frequently engulfed in mist even when the adjacent landscape is clear, and the Paddler Gods' scrolls appear to refer to their misty river environment.

A number of pottery scenes illustrate a myth concerning God L and his subordination at the hands of One Ixim and his sons (Stuart 1993; Miller and Martin 2004:59–61; Wald and Carrasco 2004; Martin 2010, 2016). A key element of the scene is that God L loses his regalia. One depiction (K1560) shows a more expanded version of the story in which One Ixim subordinates the Paddler Gods and takes away their headdresses as well. Whether these actions predate or postdate One Ixim's river journey with the Paddler Gods is unclear. What is apparent is that God L and the Paddler Gods are cohorts. This is further confirmed by the fact that all three deities are named in these subordination scenes by the same title, possibly read *itzam aat* (Martin 2016). Regrettably, the meaning of this title has not been ascertained. Nevertheless, what these three deities have in common is their identification with trade routes. God L was a land-based merchant, while the Paddler Gods were identified with the river canoes used to transport products to market.

The use of lowland canoes to bring products to and from the piedmont of the highlands was noted during the early colonial period. The lower piedmont area of Alta Verapaz was an important region for the inhabitants of the plateau to obtain the lowland products of achiote, cacao, cotton, and chile. In 1676, the indigenous population of the plateau was under Spanish control, but the piedmont and lowlands were not. The Dominican priest Francisco Gallego stated that there was a piedmont town at the confluence of a small river and the Chixoy that was the departure point for downstream canoe travel on the Chixoy (cited in Feldman 2000:176–177). Each year, Lacandón Chol, Itzaj, and other groups from the central Petén came by canoe up the Chixoy to trade their achiote at a fair conducted at this town. The logical location of the achiote fair is the site that is now known as Rocnimá. It is near the head of dry-season navigation on the Chixoy, and it is adjacent to the junction of the Chixoy and its tributary, the Río Copalá. Regrettably, no surveys or excavations have ever been carried out at Rocnimá. However, its history extends back

at least to the Classic period because both Dieseldorff and Burkitt acquired a number of beautiful objects of Late Classic manufacture from the site. The achiote fair indicates that lowland agricultural products were one type of commodity that highland people desired. Regrettably, Gallego did not indicate what the lowland Maya received in exchange for their achiote, but given that they still coveted obsidian and quetzal feathers, those items would likely have been part of the transaction.

SUMMARY

It is expected that the landscape along the major land route from the highland sources of obsidian, jade, and quetzal feathers to the lowland markets would feature in the core mythology of the Maya. The Xucaneb Mountain is visible from great distances and acts like a beacon marking the Cobán plateau as the gateway between the highlands and the lowlands. The identification of deities with landscape features and specifically with mountains is well documented in Mesoamerica. The mountain deity Xucaneb's long history of veneration and his role in contemporary stories supports the interpretation that the Classic period antecedent for Xucaneb was God L—Gathered Blood, the maternal grandfather of the Hero Twins. While God L has been associated with tobacco and cacao, the iconography of his owl regalia strongly indicates that his primary role was as the patron god for long-distance obsidian merchants. It is likely that these same merchants also transported highland jade and quetzal feathers destined for royal courts. Long-distance merchants faced the dangerous challenge of traveling through foreign and often sparsely inhabited territory, where attack and robbery were likely common occurrences. The terrain and weather also presented enormous obstacles to overcome. It is not surprising that such individuals would seek powerful supernatural help and that the landscape of their travels would be incorporated into these beliefs.

Summary and Conclusion

My study has focused on Tlaloc imagery found in the lowland Maya region, and I have attempted to explain how this foreign deity was integrated into Maya cosmology as a type of thunderbolt god. The importance of lightning as a source of power and prestige is evident in the earliest forms of Maya art, and its prominence continued throughout history, even to current times. Perhaps the most obvious case is the creation of humans as related in the Popol Vuh. It was in consultation with the three Heart of Sky thunderbolt gods that the creator grandparents conceived and formed the first humans and conjured a place for them to live. The flesh and blood of humans were thought to have been made from corn and water that had been struck by lightning. Classic period rulers not only often assumed the names of lightning gods, but they were thought to have had lightning as a spiritual co-essence. The most common costume element worn by Maya rulers is a loincloth decorated with the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign representing lightning's luminous quality. Classic period head-dresses that were intimately associated with the identity of the owner frequently also incorporate the T₂₄/T₁₀₁₇ sign, attesting to lightning's importance to these lords' identity.

Lightning bolts were envisioned to be the flint weapons of the thunderbolt deities. They were often depicted with serpentine form, for like deadly snakes, lightning kills with a swift strike. The thunderbolt deity GII took the form of a serpentine flint axe. One

of the most commonly depicted acts on Classic period monuments is the ruler holding a GII scepter or conjuring this god from a serpent bar. Public rituals reinforced the legitimacy of the ruling elite, while art and architecture were permanent displays that documented that authority. Clearly, the ability to command lightning was at the heart of elite power and prestige.

The deity GIII was identified with flint blades and defensive shields. Maya art frequently highlights GIII's role as a war god for the ruling elite. The *tok'-pakal* "flint-shield" represented the lord's war abilities, and its use as a metonym for war indicates the importance of flint as the most powerful and durable of weapons.

The goggle eyes of the deity Tlaloc represent the finger holes of a spear thrower, and they indicate that this specific weapon was thought to be a material manifestation of the god. It is well established that Maya deities could have multiple manifestations based on both animal and natural phenomena. The caterpillar-serpent, moth, feline, and owl forms of Tlaloc were closely identified with death, obsidian weapons, and meteors, as would be expected for a god of war in Mesoamerica. The recognition that the Lepidoptera form of Tlaloc was based on an *Ascalapha odorata* (Black Witch Moth) rather than just a generic butterfly suggests that the caterpillar-serpent form of the deity was also based on the *Ascalapha odorata*. The Black Witch Moth avatar of Tlaloc explains the widespread belief still evident today across Mesoamerica that the *Ascalapha odorata* is a harbinger of death. Tlaloc's identification with meteors also explains the commonly held Mesoamerican belief that meteors are death omens. The other nocturnal manifestation of Tlaloc that was also an omen of death is the horned owl. The identification of owls with obsidian is further seen in the owl manifestation of the obsidian merchant deity known as God L.

Foreign influences at Tikal began at a relatively early date (circa AD 250), but David Stuart's recognition in the hieroglyphic record that there was an AD 378 military incursion led by the Kaloomte' Sihyaj K'ahk' changed our perspective regarding the influx of Teotihuacán-style elements in Maya art and architecture from one based on trade exchanges to a more hostile and invasive interaction. The monumental event of Sihyaj K'ahk' dispatching the Tikal king and placing Spearthrower Owl's son on the Tikal throne dramatically changed the political landscape of the lowlands. The regalia of these conquering men highlighted their identification with Tlaloc and with obsidian. Stuart suggested that Spearthrower Owl was the ruler of Teotihuacán. His name obviously invokes military references, but there is also a direct association with obsidian, given the use of owl feathers as metaphors for obsidian blades. It is

likely that Sihyaj K'ahk' and Spearthrower Owl were intimately involved in the obsidian trade or, more to the point, with the disruption of Tikal's access to its highland obsidian sources.

The narratives indicate that the Kaloomte' Sihyaj K'ahk' arrived at Tikal with Tlaloc deities. While we may never know the full economic impetus and political intrigue behind the Tikal coup, the ruling lowland Maya soon adopted Teotihuacán military insignia and embraced the Tlaloc cult as another source of power and prestige. The Teotihuacán Tlaloc god did not displace or supersede the local thunderbolt Chahks; rather, he was incorporated into Maya cosmology as a meteor deity (a type of thunderbolt) identified with obsidian weaponry. Anyone could use flint and obsidian weapons and tools, but harnessing the supernatural power that was thought to be inherent in these substances was the prerogative of the elite. At the top of the Tlaloc cult hierarchy were the rulers and their wives in their role as Kaloomte'. In addition to their duties of appeasing Tlaloc with offerings of incense and blood, these high priests and priestesses of Tlaloc had oracle functions that involved communication not only with the deity but with their ancestors who had been associated with the cult. The Kaloomte' also inducted others into the cult. At Copán, the lineage founder K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' was so closely identified with the Tlaloc cult that he was portrayed wearing the goggle eyes of Tlaloc on Altar Q.

The Tlaloc-decorated buildings labeled as Wiinte'naah in hieroglyphic texts were focal points for the worship of this deity. Karl Taube (2003b, 2004b) recognized the importance of fire ceremonies in relationship to the Wiinte'naah. The creation of new fire was a fundamental action by the ruling elite during ritual events. The most common form of fire creation was drilling, and this act was metaphorically related to the meteor showers associated with Tlaloc. Objects that were pertinent to Tlaloc veneration, including fire drilling paraphernalia, were likely stored in Wiinte'naah structures. War captains known as Yajawk'ak' "vassal of fire" had curating obligations for the maintenance of Tlaloc paraphernalia and office regalia. While the Kaloomte' Spearthrower Owl's name is clearly connected to Tlaloc's owl manifestation, the name Sihyaj K'ahk' (fire born) is likely related to the fire of Tlaloc. The birth or transformation of deities from fire is a common theme in Mesoamerica.

All cultures place high value on heirloom objects. They symbolize the emotional and spiritual connections to predecessors and provide tangible evidence of those relationships. The possession of heirlooms can also create and enhance prestige and status. Heirlooms that represent important offices or titles legitimize their new owners, and the public displays of those heirlooms persuasively

reinforce that legitimization. Such was the case with the heirloom headdresses and objects of the Tlaloc cult. The high regard placed on the *ux yop huun* headdress at Palenque is a case in point. The acquisition of the *ux yop huun* headdress is portrayed on four different monuments, and its visible prominence led early researchers to wrongly assume that it was the royal headdress. In fact, most literature still refers to the *ux yop huun* as such despite the clear evidence to the contrary on the Temple XIX platform, where it is displayed alongside the royal *sak huun* headdress.

While the Oval Palace Tablet, Palace Tablet, and Tablet of the Slaves portray only members of the immediate royal family participating in the acquisition scenes, the Temple XIX platform expands the narrative to include the banded-bird officials who were custodians of the *sak huun* and the Yajawk'ak' lord in charge of the *ux yop huun*. The narrative on the Tablet of the Slaves alludes to the role of the Yajawk'ak' Chak Suutz' as a new custodian of the *ux yop huun* but does not illustrate him in that role. Epigraphic evidence indicates that Yajawk'ak' lords could move up the hierarchy of secondary offices and also become banded-bird officials. The Temple XIX platform illustrates banded-bird officials holding Tlaloc-decorated incense bags that appear to allude to their concurrent functions in the Tlaloc cult.

On the Oval Palace Tablet, Lady Sak K'uk' hands her son K'inich Janaab Pakal I the *ux yop huun*. Lady Sak K'uk' was never a ruler, but she was the daughter of the Palenque ruler Lady Yohl Ik'nal, and K'inich Janaab Pakal I acquired his right to rule through her. While Lady Sak K'uk' may have had a custodial role related to this headdress, it is also likely that her appearance in the scene is a declaration of K'inich Janaab Pakal I's legitimate right to possess this headdress. The scene on the Tablet of the Slaves supports such an interpretation. This monument illustrates the lord Tiwol handing the *ux yop huun* to his son K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III. Tiwol was the son of the ruler K'inich Janaab Pakal I, but he died before he had the opportunity to inherit the throne. K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III received his right to rule through his father, Tiwol. What is curious about the Tablet of the Slaves scene is that Tiwol had been dead for forty-two years at the time of this pictured event. So his role in the scene is not historically accurate, but it is one of legitimizing K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III as a royal who was entitled to inherit the *ux yop huun*.

The role of women in the Tlaloc cult is well illustrated in Maya art, although ascertaining their exact duties and responsibilities is more elusive. At Yaxchilán, Structure 21 and Structure 23 contain predominately Tlaloc-related iconography, and they are identified with the Kaloomte' women Lady Ik' Skull and

Lady K'abal Xook, respectively. Structure 23 is actually labeled as the house of Lady K'abal Xook, but the narrative states that its location is within the territory and authority of her husband, Shield Jaguar III (Tokovinine 2008:153). The Structure 23 lintels illustrate her in her role as a Tlaloc priestess performing blood sacrifices with her husband, conjuring the ancestral Lady Ohl, who appears in a Tlaloc warrior costume dressing Shield Jaguar III for war. On Stela 35 in Structure 21, Lady Ik' Skull is also portrayed conjuring Lady Ohl, and like Lady K'abal Xook she takes on the guise of this enigmatic figure. In contrast, Lady Ik' Skull's narrative highlights her role as the mother of Shield Jaguar III's son Bird Jaguar IV.

Lady Ik' Skull is identified as a royal woman originally from the Kaanul polity. The badly eroded monuments of this great polity prevent us from fully appreciating the importance of the Tlaloc cult in its affairs, but surviving inscriptions suggest that they participated in that veneration starting at an early date. Kaanul royal women with training as Tlaloc priestesses were married to a number of foreign allies, most notably lords at La Corona and El Perú. The bride price paid to the Kaanul king for these extraordinary women must have been steep.

A similar strategy appears to have been employed by the Dos Pilas king Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, who is named in Dos Pilas narratives as the vassal of the Kaanul king Yuknoom Ch'een. Bajlaj Chan K'awiil's daughter Lady Six Sky was a Tlaloc priestess who moved to Naranjo presumably to wed a local lord; subsequently, their son became the Naranjo king. Lady Six Sky may have been a powerful figure, but like Lady Ik' Skull of Yaxchilán, her status was consistently linked to the fact that she was the mother of the Naranjo king.

A major conflict between Kaanul and its rival Tikal was based on access to the highly esteemed goods of obsidian, quetzal feathers, and jade procured from the eastern highlands of Guatemala. The overland route for these long-distance imports passed over the Cobán plateau before descending down the two major river systems of the lowlands (the Pasión and the Chixoy). During the Early Classic, Tikal controlled the Río Pasión section of the trade route and became quite rich from doing so (Woodfill and Andrieu 2012; Demarest et al. 2014). Kaanul attempted to isolate Tikal by dominating the sites on the periphery of Tikal's central territory and cutting off its access to this trade route (Martin and Grube 2008). The ebb and flow of the Kaanul-Tikal competition dominated the Classic period conflicts, and the fortunes of their allies shifted up and down as these two great city-states vied for power.

During the height of Kaanul's power, both Cancuén and Dos Pilas–Aguateca were under its sway (Martin and Grube 2008:109; Demarest et al. 2014). After

Kaanul was defeated by Tikal in AD 695, Kaanul's power in the south lessened. Cancuén was strategically located near the head of navigation on the Río Pasión and was a port city where obsidian and jade were funneled into the lowlands. After Dos Pilas–Aguateca Ruler 3 took the throne in AD 727, he moved to maintain his access to highland goods by forming an alliance with Cancuén, as indicated by his marriage to Lady GI-K'awiil of Cancuén. The narratives on Dos Pilas Stela 2 and Aguateca Stela 2 detail Ruler 3's military victory against the Seibal king Yich'aak Bahlam in AD 735, and Yich'aak Bahlam subsequently became the vassal of Ruler 3. Seibal is located just 15 km northeast of Dos Pilas–Aguateca, and it was a key port on the Río Pasión trade route. The patron god of Dos Pilas–Aguateca was a deity with the attributes of GI and GII, but Ruler 3 is illustrated on his two monuments in the guise of Tlaloc and wearing full Tlaloc regalia, including spear thrower and darts. These monuments were a visual assertion by Ruler 3 that he was spiritually in control of obsidian and physically in control of the obsidian trade route in the region.

The trade route across the Cobán plateau is adjacent to Cerro Xucaneb, the highest mountain of Alta Verapaz. The Maya believed mountains were manifestations of their deities. I have marshaled evidence from epigraphic, iconographic, ethnohistorical, and ethnographic sources that indicates that Cerro Xucaneb was identified with God L, the patron god of long-distance merchants and the maternal grandfather of the Hero Twins.

There are numerous examples of royal court life illustrated in Maya art that feature rulers, their families, and their courtiers. Unfortunately, there are no depictions that have been securely identified as long-distance merchants and their entourages. Nevertheless, considering that the creator grandfather Itzamnaaj, his son One Ixim, and the Hero Twin grandsons One Ajaw and Yax Bolon were role models for royals, it is logical to assume that God L was not only the patron god for long-distance merchants but also the supernatural paradigm for them. The fact that God L was the maternal grandfather of the Hero Twins suggests that there was a tradition of long-distance merchants cementing their mercantile alliances with local dynasties through marriage. Perhaps that is how Spearthrower Owl ended up with a wife and son at Tikal.

Artisans of the royal court transformed the jade and quetzal feathers brought by long-distance merchants into elite insignia. The Popol Vuh provides some insight regarding the lineage of these regal artisans. One Ixim and God L were the antecedent for One Hunahpu and the underworld deity Gathered Blood, respectively. One Hunahpu mated with Gathered Blood's daughters and produced four sons to carry on his legacy (One Batz and One Chouen

with Lady Bone Water and Hunahpu and Xbalanque with Lady Blood). The Hero Twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque inherited the power and wisdom of their father and grandfather, and they were the ideal role models for young royal heirs. They created a supernatural hierarchy by subordinating One Batz and One Chouen and then designating their brothers as patrons for elite artisans. Two simian artisan deities have been identified in Classic Period art as the antecedents for One Batz and One Chouen (Coe 1973). On the Boot vessel, these two monkey gods sit on the lowest tier of Itzamnaaj's court.

While the relationship between the ruling elite and long-distance merchants was mutually advantageous, it was also adversarial. As noted, a series of pottery scenes illustrate One Ixim subordinating God L and the Paddler Gods. It is another example of the mythic establishment of supernatural hierarchy on which Classic period society was modeled. Maya merchants may have brought the privileged status markers of quetzal feather and jade to the ruling elite, but these scenes declare it was the ruler who was the most powerful.

In Mesoamerica, warfare was consistently intertwined with religious beliefs. While Maya lords wear a variety of regalia in war scenes, this study has concentrated on the gods identified with flint and obsidian weapons. It has explored the nature of the foreign god Tlaloc and how his cult was integrated into the Maya pantheon of deities during the Classic period. While the initial acceptance of the Tlaloc cult may have been instigated by the desire of local Maya lords to align themselves with powerful foreign elites, the cult soon became an integral part of the hierarchical structure of rulership. Being an Ajaw and a Bakab had significant status, but attaining the rank of Kaloomte' placed the lord and his community at a higher level. The martial nature of the Kaloomte' office indicates that the role of the lord as a military commander was at the forefront of Classic period power, not a surprising situation. The importance of obsidian as a much valued highland commodity suggests that the role of the Kaloomte' also involved the control of obsidian distribution both at a domestic level and to allies.

INTRODUCTION

1. I use the name *flint* instead of the more technically accurate term *chert* because flint is the established name for this stone in Mayan ethnographic and iconographic studies.

2. Bricker (2002) suggests that Mayan kinship systems were not just patrilineal but that at some times and in some areas they may have been more complex. I do not find her evidence convincing.

3. On the Palenque Temple XIX platform, the three secondary lords on the left side of the monument are named in their caption texts as banded-bird officials. The banded-bird title is the final glyph in each caption.

4. The scenes of Lintels 1 and 2 took place a year after the mural battle and illustrate Yajaw Chan Muwaan and Shield Jaguar IV of Yaxchilán capturing foes from the site of Sak Tz'i' on January 12 and January 8 AD 787, respectively. Yajaw Chan Muwaan's father, Aj Sak Teles, is depicted on Lintel 3 capturing a foe on July 16, 748.

5. Each prisoner is identified by a caption text placed on his body or adjacent to him. The caption texts are very small and are not included in the drawing. The reader is referred to Stuart and Graham (2003) for illustrations of these caption texts.

CHAPTER 1. CHAHK DEITIES AND FLINT WEAPONS

1. Sapper (1897) recorded that the Q'eqchi' mountain/valley gods were thought to own lightning and to have snakes

Notes

as servants. These gods punished people by killing them with a thunderbolt or having their snakes bite them. The most dreaded snake of the mountain/valley gods was the *ic bolay* (*Bothrops asper*) that is known for its lightning-like movements.

2. Ch'orti' beliefs recorded by Metz reiterate this connection: When the chijchans emerge and cause damage, it is the job of angels (*ángeles, ajpatna'r winikob'*) to chase them away by hurling jade axe heads (found occasionally in cultivated fields) at them, thus causing lightning. (Metz 2006:106) Metz (personal communication 2017) noted that he referred to these polished axe heads as jade simply because they were greenish in color. It is unlikely that they were actually made from jade.

3. The crocodile has been given a variety of nicknames, like the Two-Headed Dragon, Celestial Monster, Cosmic Monster, Bicephalic Monster, and Starry Deer Alligator (Spinden 1913; Schele 1976; Stuart 2003a; Stuart and Stuart 2008).

4. The Tzotzil believe that "lightning deposits a treasure in the form of a ball of hair where it strikes" (Laughlin 1975:98). It is possible that this belief is related to the bundled hair of Chahk.

5. The T₂₄ affix sign also appears as a main sign under the designation T617.

6. Examples of such celts were recovered from a Cahal Pech tomb (Reents-Budet 1994:349).

7. The Leiden plaque is engraved with a portrait of an Early Classic king on one side and a hieroglyphic text that documents his accession on the other. The two Río Azul effigy celts are also inscribed with illustrations of rulers and with hieroglyphic texts explaining who these rulers are and what they are doing. It is likely that the portraits and hieroglyphic texts on these celts referred to an ancestor rather than the ruler who wore the assemblage.

8. Aj Chak Wayib' K'utiim's nominal phrase on the side of El Cayo Altar 4 includes a parentage statement. Given that no other male is named in this narrative, it seems likely that the figure Aj Chak Wayib' K'utiim carries is an effigy of his father. What is interesting is that Aj Chak Wayib' K'utiim's ponytail, which designates him as a Ch'ajom, hangs in front of his father's face. This juxtapositioning might be a subtle reference to the fact that his father was also a Ch'ajom.

9. While there are examples of a single ancestral effigy assemblage worn on a lord's belt, many depictions indicate that four assemblages were worn: one at the navel, one at the small of the back, and one on each hip. Thematically, this arrangement echoes the depiction of ancestors surrounding the sarcophagus of K'inich Janaab Pakal I.

10. Yax Ha'al Chahk brandishes his axe in one hand and his stone manoplas in the other. The baby jaguar deity is depicted tumbling through the air or lying on his back, while the skeletal god stands with outstretched arms in front of him. The verb in the caption text adjacent to the jaguar deity and skeletal god is *yal* "to fall" and appears to refer to the action of the skeletal god's outstretched arms and the somersaulting pose

of the jaguar deity. Although the baby jaguar shows no obvious signs of harm, most researchers have interpreted these scenes as the sacrifice of the infant jaguar deity at the hands of Yax Ha'al Chahk and the skeletal god or Yax Ha'al Chahk splitting the mountain open and the death god throwing the baby deity into the chasm. Be that as it may, another aspect of lightning needs to be taken into account when interpreting mythological scenes involving thunderbolts. As noted, a red dwarf thunderbolt god strikes lightning into the blood of the K'iche' by hitting them on their bodies with his stone axe. It is possible that Yax Ha'al Chahk is not sacrificing the baby jaguar but empowering him with a lightning soul.

11. It was first nicknamed the jester god because it resembled images of the pointed caps worn by medieval court jesters.

12. One of the traits of One Ajaw is black spots on his body, and such a spot is frequently depicted on his headband. Such a marking may refer to dark birthmarks that the Maya believe are created by solar and lunar eclipses (Bassie-Sweet 2008:204).

13. What the sign T563 represents is not clear, but it seems likely that it derives from some object used in the new fire ceremony.

14. In Houston and Taube's (2012:46) discussion of these names, they noted the *k'ak'* signs but strangely did not view them as part of the name phrases.

15. Above the portrait of K'inich Janaab Pakal I is a caption text that names him. Preceding his personal name is the title K'ak' ? Maan Chahk. How this Chahk title relates to the Chahk deity 6 Yuh K'ak', who K'inich Janaab Pakal I impersonates in the scene, is unknown, but it surely cannot be a coincidence that both K'ak' ? Maan Chahk and 6 Yuh K'ak' are related to fire.

16. One Ixim's name literally means "one corn seed." The Maya used the 260-day cycle of the *tzolk'in* for prognostication by lots. In this method, the diviner threw down a handful of corn seeds and then sorted and counted these seeds using the units of the *tzolk'in* (see Bassie-Sweet 2008:92–93 for an overview). As noted, each day in the 13-day cycle of the *tzolk'in* was ruled by a different god, and One Ixim was the god of the number one.

17. In her review of my 2008 *Maya Sacred Geography and the Creator Deities*, Stone (2009) stated that I had "invented" the goddess Ixik. However, there is a goddess in the codices whose name consists solely of the portrait glyph of a youthful female. Phonetic complements indicate that this portrait glyph is read *ixik* "woman," but it is usually translated as the title "lady" when it is prefixed to the nominal glyphs of females (Stuart 2005b:181). Houston and Martin (2012) noted that portraits of supernatural entities were often employed to represent the word for the class of being to which the entity belongs. For example, the Milky Way Crocodile is used to represent the word *ayiin* "crocodile." The same is true for Ixik. There is a gender-biased practice in Maya studies where male supernatural entities are referred to as gods, but female entities are simply

called women or maidens. Hence, the portrait glyph of Ixik is viewed by many epigraphers not as the quintessential young goddess but just as a generic sign for a woman.

18. Taube (1992a:fig 21) identified this vessel as coming from Chipoc (a site on the western outskirts of Cobán), but it is from Seacal, which is 46 km east of Cobán as the crow flies.

19. If the 13 Men 18 Yaxk'in date was in historical time, it would have to be either 29 years before the Period Ending on 9.14.5.11.15 (July 1, AD 717) or 23 years after, on 9.16.18.6.15 (June 18, 769). In his analysis of this monument, Tokovinine (2012) ignored the framing convention and the placement of the Period Ending text (which he characterized as merely the dedication of the monument itself) and concluded that the 13 Men 18 Yaxk'in event of the incised text is the illustrated event. He suggested the earlier Long Count position of 9.14.5.11.15 for the date and speculated that the pictured lord is some unnamed predecessor of Knot-eye Jaguar. The notion that the individual depicted in the scene would go unnamed is highly unlikely.

20. In the parallel scene on Dresden Codex page 25, the headless turkey held by the deity priest still has blood spurting from its neck.

21. In light of this narrative convention, it is quite possible that the grasping of the victim's hair on Palenque Pier F in concert with the swinging of the axe is a subtle reference to the prior capture of this victim by the lord.

22. The *Annals of the Cakchiquels* narrative states that Q'aq'awitz and his assistant took "no arrows" and "no shields" with them when they climbed Volcán Santa Mariá but adorned themselves with cattail reeds. The phrase "no arrows" and "no shields" is a statement that Q'aq'awitz and Zakitzunun took no weapons with them.

CHAPTER 2. THE FLINT AND FIRE DEITY GIII

1. Portraits of One Ajaw are used to represent the term *ajaw* "lord." A portrait of a vulture wearing the *sak huun* headband substitutes for One Ajaw's portrait in accession statements and in the *tzolk'in* calendar, where the portrait of One Ajaw represents the day name Ajaw. The portrait glyph of an elderly male and a portrait glyph of a vulture with the attributes of the elderly man have been identified as the terms *grandfather* and *grandson (mam)* (Stuart 2000b). One has to wonder whether the use of the vulture for the *ajaw* glyph is a subtle reference to the fact that One Ajaw, as the grandson of Itzamnaaj, was the quintessential grandson.

2. Thompson (1962) assigned two numbers to the *k'in* sign: T183 and T546.

3. The Popol Vuh describes two birds that are shot by the Hero Twins. One is Seven Macaw, the false deity the Hero Twins defeated by shooting him and taking away his insignia. The second one was the omen bird Wak, who brought the Hero Twins a message. Unlike Seven Macaw, who eventually died from his encounter with

the Hero Twins, the brothers healed Wak and in doing so demonstrated their ability as great healers in the tradition of their grandfather Xpiyacoc (Itzamnaaj's parallel). Wak is the indigenous name for the laughing falcon (a snake-eating bird of prey). In Pre-classic and Classic period imagery, the Itzamnaaj bird is illustrated as a snake-eating bird of prey, and several Classic period scenes illustrate the Hero Twins shooting the Itzamnaaj bird with their blowguns.

4. The Itzamnaaj bird is illustrated five times in the San Bartolo mural. In one example, the wings of the bird are infixed with *k'in* and *ak'ab* signs, indicating that the bird represented the ideal state of complementary opposition.

5. The alternating flint and sun signs on this sky band form a metonym representing the heat of lightning and the heat of the sun. In other words, the essential heat of the world.

6. On the Usumacinta stela, the lord wears a headdress in the form of the Itzamnaaj bird, and the adjacent caption text names him as Bolon Yokte'.

7. In many examples, the mouths of both the Milky Way Crocodile and the zomorphic bowl are illustrated with liquid pouring from them. While some researchers interpret this to be blood, the Milky Way is viewed not only as a river but as a source of water. In the Dresden Codex flood page, blue liquid flows from the Milky Way Crocodile's mouth and the creator grandmother's overturned water jar, flooding the world and thereby confirming that this liquid is water. On Piedras Negras Stela 11, the liquid is marked with cross-hatching used in Maya art to include dark colors, surely a reference to the dark nature of storms.

8. Quiriguá Stela D employs full-figure glyphs for its Initial Series. The mathematics of the Long Count dictates that the number of winals of this calendar date (A9) is four; therefore, the god representing this number should be the Sun God. The illustrated god has a centipede protruding from his nose, as do a number of other illustrations of the Sun God, but his cheek and forehead area is too eroded to see the *k'in* sign that one would expect there. He also appears to wear the shell earring of the Chahk deities. The Sun God also appears to wear a Chahk earring in his role as the patron of Yaxk'in at A1.

9. The T594 sign has a *wa* phonetic complement, indicating that the term ends in "w." The sign also appears as part of a title found in nominal phrases at Cahal Pech and Nim li Punit that is composed of *k'an bix* (yellow jaguar) and the T594 sign (Awe and Zender 2016).

10. On the Palenque Temple of the Inscriptions panels, the narrative twice describes the accoutrements of the three gods GI, GII, and GIII, including the names for their headdresses. It would be expected that GIII's headdress would be named as a *k'ak' huun*, but instead its name is composed of an undeciphered sign and the *huun* "headdress" sign. The same undeciphered sign is seen attached to the Quadripartite Badge headdress of

GI. While the meaning of this sign is unknown, it must describe some quality shared by both GI's Quadripartite Badge headdress and GIII's Yajawk'ak'headdress.

11. On bones MT-38C and MT-38D, the bow of the canoe is shown sinking below the water as though going through rapids. The stingray god has moved to the center of the canoe, and the order of the passengers has changed.

12. The text on Stela 30 specifically states that the ruler is in the guise of the Jaguar Paddler, and as Martin (1996) has noted, the Jaguar Paddler was a patron god of Naranjo.

13. GIII's staff also takes on the form of a ceremonial bar. Such objects are commonly held in a horizontal position by Maya rulers and are conduits from which various deities and ancestors are conjured. Some ceremonial bars are clearly stylized femurs, such as the one held by the Caracol ruler on Caracol Stela 6, and allude to the fact that deities and ancestors can be resurrected from their bones.

14. The indigenous names for Volcán Santa María (Xcanul and Q'aq'xanul) indicate that it was considered to be a female mountain. A white flint identified with a female is also found in an episode of the Central Mexican *Leyenda de los soles* (Bierhorst 1992:152). In this story, the goddess Itz'papatl was defeated, and her burned body produced five colored flints (presumably one for each direction and one for the center). Mixcoatl (cloud serpent), a god of the north, chose the white flint, and it became his spirit power. Q'aq'awitz's capture of the white flint stone from Volcán Santa María has been compared to the Itz'papatl and Mixcoatl episode (Akkeren 2000:160, 165). Akkeren pointed out a direct relationship between Q'aq'awitz and Mixcoatl. He noted that in a later episode of the *Annals of the Cakchiquels*, Q'aq'awitz entered the waters of Lake Atitlán and was transformed into Sutz'ukumatz, which translates as "cloud serpent" in Kaqchikel.

CHAPTER 3. CLASSIC MAYA TLALOC DEITIES AND THEIR OBSIDIAN METEOR WEAPONS

1. Wagley (1949:67) noted that Mam co-essences could take the form of comets. However, his description of the comet shooting through the sky indicates that it is likely a meteor.

2. The Chuj term for obsidian is *wa cha'anb* "sky chips" because the stones are believed to be flakes of the sky, similar to enamel flakes that chip off pots (Hopkins 2012:372).

3. The association of meteors with stone is seen in the Tzeltal term for shooting stars *k'anchixalton* "yellow stretched out stone" (Pitarch 2010:44).

4. It is possible that the fist-like shape of the T712 sign is a subtle reference to the position the hand is held in when knapping obsidian.

5. Although unverifiable, it is possible that the three knots refer to strips of cloth used to stem the flow of blood once the bloodletting act was completed.

6. Remnants of Tlaloc masks have been recovered during excavations of tombs, and the goggles have been constructed of either white shell or obsidian (Bell et al. 2004).

7. Earlier studies described the Tlaloc bundle as a balloon-like turban (Schele and Miller 1986; Stone 1989; Schele and Freidel 1990:146).

8. Each set of these Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan eyes and Lepidoptera wings is attached to an oval shape that has been identified as a drop of water (von Winning 1985; Taube 2000). However, the oval shapes have diagonal lines that do not resemble other depictions of water drops. The juxtaposing of the oval shapes with the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan eyes is surely an indication that these are chrysalises (the pupa form of Lepidoptera), which have the same kind of diagonal lines on their surfaces.

9. Burial 6 of the Teotihuacán Pyramid of the Moon contained an interesting offering of a pyrite slate mirror and two anthropomorphic figures (López Luján and Sugiyama 2017). Radiating out from this offering like the spokes on a wheel were nine pairs of obsidian eccentrics. Each pair consisted of an undulating obsidian blade and a serpent with a rattlesnake tail. The layout is reminiscent of a meteor shower that radiates from one particular area of the sky.

10. The word *ocelot* was coined by the French naturalist Georges Louise Leclerc from the Nahuatl term *ocelotl*. Regrettably, his choice has caused a great deal of confusion because *ocelotl* refers to jaguars. This is clearly seen in Sahagún's descriptions of Nahuatl four-footed animals, where he begins with the *ocelutl* (*ocelotl*) and explains that it is a fierce feline that roars "like the blowing of trumpets" and was thought to be "the lord, the ruler of the animals" (Sahagún 1959–1963:11:1–2). In their translation of Sahagún, Anderson and Dibble's glossed *ocelotl* as ocelot despite the fact that the biologist they consulted thought the description clearly indicated a jaguar. They also translated the other occurrences of *ocelotl* in the manuscript as ocelot; hence, the famed pairing of eagle and jaguar warriors became eagle-ocelot warriors. Numerous researchers have incorrectly referred to *ocelotl* as ocelot. I am guilty myself of falling into this trap. In my 2008 volume, I followed Anderson and Dibble and referred to eagle-ocelot warriors. See Saunders (1994) for an overview of researchers who have mistakenly identified the *ocelotl* as an ocelot.

11. While a jaguar's maximum body weight is about 100 kg., the diminutive ocelot reaches just 15 kg. Unlike jaguars, ocelots have elongated spots that run together and form parallel black stripes on the nape and oblique stripes near the shoulders. They have white fur around the eyes and bordering the ears, as well as white inner ears. Some Mayan terms for the ocelot are descriptive and indicate that it was viewed as a type of jaguar or puma. As an example, the Tzotzil term *tz'ib bolom* "striped jaguar"

refers to the striped pattern of the ocelot's fur (Laughlin 1975:475, personal communication 2019), while the Yucatec and Itzaj term *ajsäk xikin* "white ear" refers to the white color of the ocelot ears (Thompson 1930:35; Hoftling and Tesucún 1997:80, 129). Redfield (1945:54) recorded the Kaqchikel term *saq ba'lom* "white jaguar" for a *tigrilla* that likely also relates to its white eye and ear color. The term in Chuj for an ocelot is *tel choj* "forest puma," while Achi has *ch'ut balam* "small jaguar" (Hopkins 2012:311).

12. For example, Shield Jaguar III, Kan Bahlam, K'in Bahlam, Unen Bahlam, K'inich Bahlam, Bahlam Chapaat, Bird Jaguar, K'uk' Bahlam, Yich'aak Bahlam, Yopaat Bahlam, K'ahk' Hix Muut, K'an Mo' Hix, K'altuun Hix, K'elen Hix, and Sak Hix Owl.

13. On Dresden page 8, there is a jaguar complete with spots and water lily motif. The adjacent caption text names this jaguar. The nominal phrase is composed of *chak* "red" and a portrait glyph that does not resemble a jaguar. What this might represent is unclear, but it does not look anything like the jaguar glyph used to represent the puma on Dresden page 47.

14. It is highly probable that an inscribed jade effigy head that was recovered from the Chichen Itza cenote was the ancestor component of a belt assemblage (Proskouriakoff 1972). The piece, which originated from Piedras Negras, illustrates a male wearing a feline headdress. The surviving inscription on the piece refers to the thirteenth *tuun* anniversary of the Piedras Negras ruler K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's accession and the future *k'atun* anniversary that would occur 7 *tuuns* later (Grube et al. 2003:II:8; Martin and Grube 2008:145). It names him using his pre-accession name of Koj (pre-accession names for Maya rulers are well attested, and Piedras Negras Stela 8 relates the birth of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II using this pre-accession name). Given the future tense of the *k'atun* anniversary, it seems certain that the piece was inscribed on the occasion of the thirteenth *tuun* accession anniversary. It has been suggested that the jade portrait is that of Koj-K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II (Grube et al. 2003:II:8; Finamore and Houston 2010:275). I think that is unlikely to be the case, given that these ancestral effigy belt assemblages typically portray deceased ancestors. In view of the fact that young lords were frequently named after ancestors, it is more likely that this jade head illustrates the ancestor for whom the young Koj was named.

15. The Akatek of San Miguel Acatán believe a puma near a house is an omen of death (Grollig 1959:184). Among the contemporary K'iche', puma dancers perform in mythic dances, and there is a constellation near Orion called *saq koj* "brilliant puma" (Christenson 2003).

16. At the time of the Spanish conquest, the Tzotzil of Zinacantán were merchants, with close interaction with the Aztec empire (Vogt 1969). Like many of the highland Maya groups, they adopted Central Mexican culture traits. Today, there is a belief that the first six Tzotzil ancestors took the form of fog, lightning, whirlwinds, a hawk, a fly, and a butterfly, respectively. Lepidoptera also appear in the Mam area of highland

Guatemala, where the soul of the deceased is thought to take the form of a moth (Oakes 1951:49).

17. The Nahuatl term *itzpapalotl* is most often translated as “obsidian butterfly” despite the fact that this goddess has been identified with a moth. However, the word *papalotl* refers to both butterflies and moths.

18. Redfield and Villa Rojas (1934:209, 211) and Villa Rojas (1945:158) identify the *x manban nai* “house borrower” as a black butterfly that is thought to hide in the house to escape the rain, and it is viewed as a sign of rain. Hogue (1993) gives the term *x-mahanail* “house borrower” for the Black Witch Moth and noted the Black Witch Moth’s inclination to enter the dark interiors of Maya houses at dawn to roost on the walls during the day. Anderson and Tzuc (2005:191) recorded that the term *mabannajij* is sometimes applied to other large dark moths as well and that the Black Witch Moth does not appear to have ominous connotations among the Yucatec Maya as it does in other parts of Mexico. It is unclear whether this is true or whether it is a result of inadequate ethnographic documentation. Until our fieldwork on the Jolja’ Cave Project, we were not aware of any published accounts of ominous omens related to the Black Witch Moth in the Ch’ol or Tzetzal areas. On the other hand, moths as positive omens are seen in the Yucatec Maya area of Campeche, where large black moths are thought to announce the rain (Faust 1998:5).

19. Not all large moths are associated with death and illness. As an example, the Giant Silk Moth (*Arsenura armada*), which is of comparable size to the Black Witch, is gathered for food (its caterpillar form is also roasted and eaten) (Beutelspacher 1994; Marceal Mendez and Robert Anderson, personal communication 2010).

20. The Mopán believe there is a supernatural nocturnal bird called a *jooch’* that is an omen of death. When it flies over a house and whistles, it is a sign that it will carry away someone’s soul. Sorcerers collaborate with the *jooch’* to kill someone. These are the cultural characteristics of an owl. Given that the Proto-Mayan word for a screech owl is **xooch’* and is likely onomatopoeic (Kaufman 2003:613), it is possible that *jooch’* is as well and derives from *xooch’* “owl.”

21. Some authors have identified the sky variant as an eagle, but some examples are marked with the *ak’ab* “night, darkness” sign, indicating that it is a nocturnal bird.

22. The identification of owl wings with atlatls is seen on a Teotihuacán-style owl figure housed in the Peabody Museum (T1497, 21-35-20/C9697) (Berrin and Pasztory 1993:cat. 100). The wings of this mold-made figure take the hooked form of the spear thrower.

23. Hull and Fergus (2009:23) noted that Mopán hunters believe the presence of a great horned owl signals that game is in the neighborhood, while the Q’eqchi’ of Belize view its call as an indication that an *Agouti paca* (a large rodent prized for its meat) is near.

24. It is interesting that the Yucatec term *kuy* “owl” is also used to denote a moth in the nineteenth-century Pío Pérez dictionary (Barrera Vásquez 1980:357).

25. Two years after this Period Ending, Wak Chan K’awiil successfully defeated the Kaanul polity, but just four years later he was defeated by them and a Kaanul prince was placed on the Tikal throne, beginning the so-called hiatus at Tikal (Martin and Grube 2008; Grube 2016). The new *k’atun* period was clearly a disaster for Wak Chan K’awiil.

26. Such associations are seen in the Preclassic San Bartolo murals, where the wings of the laughing falcon form of Itzamnaaj are marked with three triangular dart points. In Classic period imagery, there is a nasty-looking *way* creature that takes the form of a raptor with wing feathers composed of flint and obsidian blades (K1080, K2716).

27. The Proto-Mayan word for a corn tassel (flor de milpa) is **tz’utuj* (Kaufman 2003:1153). A colonial Ch’orti’ dictionary lists not only *tzutu* but also the term *han* (*jan*) for the corn tassel (Robertson et al. 2010:320). A Ch’ol dictionary also lists the term *jan* for the *flor de maíz* (corn tassel) (Aulie and Aulie 1978:40). However, *jan* in Ch’ol refers to the tassels of many types of grasses, not just corn, and is more accurately translated as spike or tassel (Hopkins et al. 2010).

28. The sign T583 and its owl form also appear in the Supplementary Series as the third variant of Glyph G. In this context, it appears to name a particular type of headdress.

29. The name of the Sacul king has been translated by Carter (2015) as K’iyel Janaab and is composed of the syllabic signs T77, T710 (*ye*), and T188 (*le*) followed by the *janaab* owl. There is some debate about the phonetic value of T77 as *k’i* or *ch’u* (Mora Marin 2000; Stuart 2002; Hopkins 2014). In most contexts, the T77 sign is a single bird wing, but fuller forms show either a small bird or a pair of outstretched wings (Stuart 2002). What is interesting in the context of K’iyel Janaab’s nominal phrase is that the T77 sign is represented by a single bird wing composed of three black-tipped owl feathers. The association of three black-tipped owl feathers with obsidian and Tlaloc has been discussed. It seems plausible that the scribe chose to replace the standard bird wing with these three owl feathers to emphasize the fact that *janaab* was a type of owl associated with Tlaloc and obsidian. Another example of the name *janaab* appears at Piedras Negras. Structure O-13 was built on the slope of a large hill. Panel 3 of the building names the burial location of Piedras Negras Ruler 4 that was situated in front of Structure O-13 as Five Janaab Witz “five *janaab* mountain” (Stuart and Houston 1994). Whether this mountain name refers to the hill or Structure O-13 or both is unclear. Ruler 4 was intimately associated with the Owl Tlaloc, for he wears this manifestation of Tlaloc on Stela 9.

CHAPTER 4. THE KALOOMTE' LORDS

1. The back rack of this second figure is decorated with three wolf tails, while the back rack of the Tlaloc figure has four strips of plain white material with black ends. These Museo VICAL figures can be compared to a lidded bowl from Tikal Burial 10 of Structure 34 (the tomb of Yax Nuun Ayiin I). The lid of the vessel depicts two individuals wearing Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan headdresses (Coggins 1975; Martin and Grube 2008:33). One individual wears the goggle eyes of Tlaloc, while the other wears striped face paint. The Tlaloc impersonator has three wolf tails hanging from each side of his headdresses, while the striped-face person simply has strips. The bowl of the vessel also depicts two figures. Both men wear Tlaloc's goggle eyes and an animal headdress. One figure has the three wolf tails motif hanging from his headdress, while the other has decorated strips.

2. On vessel K3092, a lord dressed as a Black Witch Moth Tlaloc is depicted holding a Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan scepter.

3. The reader is directed to the Mexican publication where photographs of the vessel are published.

4. In AD 1573 and 1580, Ch'ol Maya led the Spanish expeditions of Feliciano Bravo and Fray Pedro Lorenzo de la Nada into the central Petén using this river route (Bassie-Sweet et al. 2015:18–19).

5. In its fullest form, the 9 Place sign is composed of a zoomorphic head, the glyph for blood, and two footprints, and it is prefixed with the number nine (Kubler 1977). I will refer to it by the nickname “the Nine Place” because of the uncertainty of its decipherment. The Nine Place is often associated with Period Ending events, as on the Copán Margarita panel. The Nine Place is often paired with a second place name that incorporates *chiit*, *k'an*, and *nal* signs and is prefixed with the number seven. This Nine Place and Seven Place couplet likely represents a pair of complementary opposites that function to name either two aspects of one location or two separate locations within a specific larger space. Grube and Stuart (Stuart 2009) have suggested that the Nine Place and Seven Place might refer to the sunrise location of the winter and summer solstice sun; however, the evidence for such an interpretation is at best weak (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017).

6. K'inich Kan Bahlam II also performed rituals at shrines associated with GI and GII.

7. Such tails also appear on Copán Stela 6 circa AD 682. On this monument, the ruler K'ahk' Uti' Witz' K'awiil is dressed in a Tlaloc costume while conjuring the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan (see figure 3.5).

8. Stuart (2012) dismissed our evidence that the Palace Tablet caption text that refers to *ux yop huun* was related to the helmet in the scene, but we have refuted each of his claims (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017).

9. Inscriptions at La Corona indicate that the Kaanul king was not killed in this exchange (Stuart et al. 2015a).

CHAPTER 5. THE OFFICES AND REGALIA OF THE TLALOC CULT

1. Numerous male and female pottery figurines wear the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Chan headdress, and an Early Classic vessel from Kaminaljuyú Burial II illustrates a female wearing a Moth Tlaloc headdress and a Tlaloc pendant (Kidder et al. 1946:fig. 207; Berlin 1960:fig. 10b; Berlo 1983; Halperin 2007). Dieseldorff (1926–1933) excavated pottery figurines at his Chajar finca east of Cobán that feature Tlaloc headdresses.

2. A looted tri-figure panel in the style of Palenque names K'inich Kan Bahlam II as a Kaloomte' lord. Linda Schele and Donald Hales were able to show that various pieces of Palenque-style sculpture now found in different museums and private collections were part of a tri-figural panel that had been hacked up by looters and sold separately (Schaffer 1987). The panel portrays a standing central figure flanked by two kneeling secondary lords. The left figure is dressed as the deity God L and holds a dish that contains a Tlaloc effigy wearing a Moth Tlaloc headdress. The right figure also holds a bowl, but the area above it is too damaged to ascertain what it contained. Only the lower portion of the central figure has been located. It shows a lord dressed in a Tlaloc costume with loincloth and sandals decorated with Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan serpents. The borders of his garment are trimmed with the obsidian zigzag design and Moth Tlaloc wings. One of the remaining caption texts makes a reference to the palanquin of K'inich Kan Bahlam II, and the background iconography of scenes suggests it would have a Tlaloc theme. A larger text in the upper right corner of the panel again refers to K'inich Kan Bahlam II and names him as a Kaloomte'. This is the only known example of a K'inich Kan Bahlam II nominal phrase that refers to this title. Given that the central figure is smaller than the flanking figures, this may represent the young K'inich Kan Bahlam II during his induction into the Tlaloc cult.

3. The placement of a very young prince on the throne is documented at Naranjo, where the king K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak took the throne at the tender age of five. K'inich Janaab Pakal I took the Palenque throne at the age of twelve.

4. The Palenque Temple XIV panel records K'inich Kan Bahlam II performing a ritual just 220 days before K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II received his *ux yop huun* headdress.

5. The *ko'haw* helmet is featured on the outside stucco piers of Palenque House A (Robertson 1985). The first pier begins the narrative with the date 9.11.15.15.0 5 Ajaw 8 Tzek (May 23, AD 668) and likely refers to the dedication of the building. The next four piers illustrate a standing lord with the tied hair of a Ch'ajom and wearing the *ko'haw* helmet with a *k'inich* glyph attached to it. The meaning of this is unknown. Each lord

carries a GII scepter and incense bag, and they are flanked by two figures who sit at their feet. Regrettably, the caption texts that would have identified these individuals have fallen off the sculpture, although the last figure is considerably shorter than the other three and must illustrate a youth. Robertson (1985:21) attempted to identify the figures based on portraiture, but this has not proven to be an effective method. She identified Pier D as K'inich Kan Bahlam II because the figure has six digits on his hand, which she asserted was an attribute of this ruler, yet his portraits on the Cross Group monuments lack such a deformity.

6. On the Temple of the Sun jamb, K'inich Kan Bahlam II's nominal phrase includes a parentage statement naming his father as the five *k'atun* Ajaw K'inich Janaab Pakal I and his mother as Lady Tz'akbu Ajaw. It also states that his maternal grandfather was Yax Itzam Aat from the site of Uxte'k'uh (Stuart 2005b:94). It is highly unusual for genealogical statements to refer to a maternal grandfather, and its appearance in this narrative suggests that Uxte'k'uh lords may have been allies in the defeat of Toniná.

7. The appearance of Ch'ok lords in various narratives is revealing. The Palenque Temple XVIII jambs refer to the birth, first bleeding, Period Ending ceremony, and accession of K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III and state that he was the son of Tiwol. Although it is almost completely destroyed, the temple scene illustrated an event in AD 679, just four months after K'inich Ahkal Mo' Nahb III's birth. The seventy-six-year-old ruler K'inich Janaab Pakal I was flanked by his three sons: K'inich Kan Bahlam II (age 44), K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II (35), and Tiwol (31) (Stuart 2005b:152–153). All three sons are named as Ch'ok lords in the surviving caption texts. Their portraits represented the Palenque descent line of rulership. The capture of a number of foreign Ch'ok lords is recorded on Palenque House C. The east side of House C records the successful war events of K'inich Janaab Pakal I when the Santa Elena ruler Nuun Ujol Chaak and six other lords, including his ally from Pipa'-Pomoná, were captured and brought to Palenque in AD 659. Just three years later, Piedras Negras Stela 35 states that Piedras Negras, in alliance with the Kaanul polity, warred against Santa Elena. The implication is that Palenque lost its control of Santa Elena. On the west side of Palenque House C is a series of seven inscriptions. The right inscription relates the death of a Pipa' lord in AD 663. The other six inscriptions are the nominal phrases for five lords from Santa Elena and a lord who is named as the Sakun Taaj of one of the lords (Rossi 2015:138–139). The juxtaposing of these names with the death of the Pipa' lord has been interpreted to mean that the Sakun Taaj and these five lords were also killed. This suggests that the purpose of the west House C narrative was to assert that K'inich Janaab Pakal I was once again in control of Santa Elena. Each of the five lords is specifically named as a Santa Elena Ch'ok. I think they were likely Nuun Ujol Chaak's direct descendants, that is, the potential heirs to his throne. Commemorating

the capture of high-status foreign Ch'oks suggests that disrupting or controlling the descent line of an enemy lineage was an objective of the war.

8. Tikal Burial 24 of the North Acropolis contained an individual whose teeth were inlaid with jade and amazonite disks, but his identity is unknown (Coe 1990:844).

9. Lacanhá Stela 1 sheds light on the continuation of the Tlaloc cult at Lacanhá. This monument relates the accession of a Lacanhá lord in AD 554 and his subsequent celebration of the 9.8.0.0.0 Period Ending (AD 593) and his second *k'atun* in office (AD 594). He is thus likely just one generation removed from the Panel 2 Lacanhá youths. The stela illustrates the Period Ending, and the ruler is dressed in Tlaloc regalia (O'Neil 2012:fig. E.6). He holds a rectangular shield emblazoned with a Teotihuacán-style figure. The lord's *ko'haw* headdress includes an interesting cartouche that portrays an individual wearing a Teotihuacan-style feline headdress. It is tempting to see these portraits as a reference to his predecessor who may have been one of the Panel 2 youths.

10. During the ten-year interim period (742–752) between the death of Shield Jaguar III and the accession of Bird Jaguar IV, Yaxchilán may have been ruled by a lord named Yopaat Bahlam, who is documented on Piedras Negras Panel 3 (Martin and Grube 2008:127).

11. Both Dos Pilas Stela 2 and Aguateca Stela 2 related a star war event against Seibal in AD 735. Dos Pilas Stela 2 illustrates Ruler 3 standing over the crouching Yich'aak Bahlam, and the text that frames this action refers to an event Yich'aak Bahlam underwent at Dos Pilas six days after his defeat (Bassie-Sweet 1991). Yich'aak Bahlam is again illustrated crouched beneath Ruler 3 on Aguateca Stela 2, but here the text that frames this action refers to the 9.15.5.0.0 Period Ending the following year at Aguateca. It could easily be assumed from this depiction that Yich'aak Bahlam met his end on the Period Ending altar, but inscriptions at Seibal indicate that Yich'aak Bahlam survived both of these ceremonies, and he is named as a vassal of the Dos Pilas–Aguateca polity well into the reign of its next king (Martin and Grube 2008:63).

12. The black cross-hatching on the knife indicates that it is a black stone, that is, obsidian.

CHAPTER 6. WOMEN IN THE TLALOC CULT

1. According to the lintels of Yaxchilán Structure 11, the building was owned by Lady Sak B'iyaaan and was dedicated in AD 738 under the auspices of Shield Jaguar III just four years before his death. It has been suggested that Lady Sak B'iyaaan might have been his daughter, but it is equally possible that she was the wife of the interim ruler.

2. It is curious that Bird Jaguar IV had two wives from Motul de San José. The last recorded event for Lady Wak Jalam Chan Ajaw was AD 755, and the first event of Lady Wak Tuun was AD 763. Marriage negotiations were time-consuming and costly

affairs but often necessary to form political and economic ties with foreign states. The death of the wife weakens those bonds. A common practice in Maya communities that practice traditional marriage customs is that if a wife dies, the husband marries one of her sisters. This may have been the case with these two women of Motul de San José.

3. Moon Skull is likely mentioned on Hieroglyphic Stairway I, but the section is too badly eroded to provide any information.

4. The name of Moon Skull's house is composed of the number four and a bat head (Lintel 21 B7a and C6b, respectively). At the time of Moon Skull's building dedication in AD 454, Calakmul was ruled by a lineage that used a bat head emblem glyph (Martin 2005). It is possible that the name of Moon Skull's building was related to this polity and that the Kaloomte' was associated with Calakmul.

5. The Tikal ruler Sihyaj Chan K'awill II was placed in Burial 48, a tomb dedicated a year after his death. The bundled corpse was missing its head and hands. While it is not impossible that he died in battle and the opposing faction made off with his head and hands, it is just as likely that these body parts were retained for conjuring rites.

6. In the upper corner of the scene is another, much smaller incised text giving the date 12 Eb, seating of Pop (AD 724), and naming the carver of the lintel.

7. Following the death of Shield Jaguar III in AD 742, a lord named Yopaat Bahlam II, who is thought to have been the son of Lady K'abal Xook and Shield Jaguar III, ruled Yaxchilán (Martin and Grube 2008:127). Bird Jaguar IV assumed the throne in AD 752, presumably after this lord's death. A smaller tomb (Tomb 2) was located in the western room of Structure 23 and contained a male (García Moll 2004:270; Miller and Martin 2004:113). The remains of a bundle containing stingray spines and carved bones that are inscribed with the names of either Lady K'abal Xook or her husband, Shield Jaguar III, were discovered in the tomb. Based on these artifacts, Tomb 2 was identified as that of Shield Jaguar III. Lintel 26, which spans the doorway to the western room, focuses on Shield Jaguar III (he is depicted in a frontal pose). Still, it is odd that this great king would have been buried here off to the side in this rather small structure. It is possible that Tomb 2 is actually that of Yopaat Bahlam II (Nicholas Hopkins, personal communication 2015). If this was the case, he was buried with a bundle containing heirloom tools from his parents. On the other hand, if the Tomb 2 occupant was Shield Jaguar III, then he was buried with implements that belonged to his wife. It is possible that these were the specific bloodletters used by Lady K'abal Xook during the death rituals for her husband.

8. Bird Jaguar IV's wife Lady Great Skull and her brother are seen on Lintel 14 performing conjuring events related to a different type of serpent on this date.

9. The placement of Lady Ohl's head immediately below and touching the glyph block referring to the fiery spear-torch suggests there is a direct relationship between Lady Ohl and the fiery spear-torch.

10. There is little data to indicate the kind of training royal women undertook to become *Kaloomte'*. In a unique scene in the Bonampak murals, a young girl hands a bloodletting instrument to a royal woman while adjacent women pull cords through their tongues, much like Lady K'abal Xook on Lintel 24. Using young novices as ritual assistants is a common method of instruction and indoctrination. It is also possible that the training of Maya priestesses was similar to that of the Aztec maidens who served the temple compound of Huitzilopochtli. These young girls (ages 12–13) swept the temples, prepared the foodstuffs used in temple ceremonies, and created the textiles that adorned the idols. They were trained in songs, dances, ceremonial rites, healing, midwifery, divination, and sorcery. After they finished their year of service, they were free to marry.

11. It is likely that one of Bird Jaguar IV's daughters was married to the king of Bonampak (Martin and Grube 2008:135). This Yaxchilán woman, named Lady Yax Chit Jun Witz' Nah Kan, appears on Bonampak Stela 2 participating in a bloodletting ritual with her husband and mother-in-law in AD 789. She wears a dress decorated with a quatrefoil and mat motif. On Yaxchilán Lintel 25, Lady K'abal Xook's dress has the same design. Although Lady Yax Chit Jun Witz' Nah Kan does not wear a Tlaloc headdress like Lady K'abal Xook, Tlaloc heads decorate the borders of her garment. The implication is that she, too, was a Tlaloc priestess.

12. Lady K'abel was another *Kaloomte'* woman whose father was a *Kaloomte'* but whose husband was not. The monuments of El Perú indicate that she was a Kaanul polity princess who was married to the El Perú king K'inich Bahlam (Martin and Grube 2008:109).

13. Given that the Naranjo narratives link Lady Six Sky's arrival with the birth of K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak five years later, there is little doubt that he was her son.

14. A rattlesnake tail appears between the ruler's legs. It has been characterized as that of a scorpion (Saturno et al. 2017), but it is nothing like the hooked, segmented tails of scorpions that are illustrated in Maya art.

CHAPTER 7. GOD L: AN OBSIDIAN AND MERCANTILE DEITY

1. Quetzals only inhabit cloud forest with elevations between 1,200 and 3,000 meters. Although such forests existed from southern Mexico to Panama, these birds were particularly abundant in the cloud forests of the Alta Verapaz as far south as the Los Minas region. Quetzal hunters trapped male quetzals when their long tails were at their prime, at the beginning of the mating season in March. After removing the tail feathers, the birds were released to be harvested again the next season. The French naturalist Arthur Morelet (1871:338), who visited the Cobán plateau in 1847, noted that quetzal specimens were highly desired by European collectors and that up to 300 birds

a year were shot and shipped to Guatemala City at that time. In 1875, the adventurer John Boddam-Whetham (1877) noted that fortunately, the demand had diminished. Morelet described the ease with which his Q'eqchi' guide summoned two male quetzals by imitating the quetzal mating call. A number of tourist facilities in the quetzal sanctuary of Alta Verapaz have planted the fruit trees most favored by the quetzal to attract these birds. It is highly likely that the ancient Maya were adept at these practices as well.

2. There are many mythological stories that explain how a plant or an object first came into being. This first gourd tree is of great importance because the Maya used such gourds as containers for the many types of corn and cacao drinks they consumed. One Hunahpu's gourd head finds its antecedent in the Classic period One Ixim, who is illustrated with a gourd-shaped head.

3. The second trail left the town of Salamá and proceeded northwest through San Francisco, then climbed the Santa Apolonia ridge and followed that ridge to Santa Ana, at the confluence of the Río Carchelá on the Chixoy. The Pre-Columbian sites at this location (Los Encuentros and Pueblo Viejo-Chixoy) formed one settlement known as Rax Ch'ich' during the Postclassic. From there the path followed the south side of the Chixoy River and then ascended to San Cristobal Verapaz and the Cobán plateau. Prior to its flooding by the Chixoy dam, merchants traveling by foot between Baja Verapaz and Alta Verapaz still used this route through Rax Ch'ich' (Akkeren 2000:95–96).

4. The Río Mestelá flows west along the northern base of Xucaneb Mountain but makes an abrupt turn north when it reaches the northeastern slope of Cerro Chich'en and the La Cumbre footpath. The river then descends underground for about 700 meters before emerging out onto the plateau near the site of Chich'en. The name Chich'en refers to a cave, and it is highly likely that the mountain and the adjacent site acquired their name from this dramatic feature. Given that temple pyramids were symbolic mountains, I have argued that Maya ballcourts that feature two parallel sloped walls were likely fashioned after canyons like the Río Mestelá canyon (Bassie-Sweet 2008:229).

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