

**MESOAMERICA'S
CLASSIC HERITAGE**



**FROM TEOTIHUACAN TO
THE AZTECS**

EDITED BY

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AND SCOTT SESSIONS

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"THE ARRIVAL OF STRANGERS"

TEOTIHUACAN AND TOLLAN IN CLASSIC MAYA HISTORY

DAVID STUART

This chapter revisits a much-debated topic in Mesoamerican archaeology—the nature and scope of the political interaction between the highlands of Central Mexico and the Maya lowlands during the Classic period (ca. 250–850 c.e.). Beginning in the middle years of the twentieth century, scholars of Mesoamerican culture have pondered the archaeological evidence of intensive contact between these two regions, most clearly suggested by the presence of Teotihuacan ceramic styles and figural imagery at several Maya sites in the central Petén region of present-day Guatemala. The existence of some sort of close interaction is not questioned. Yet for some years now Mesoamericanists have offered very different explanations for this culture contact.

In general, the scholarship has polarized around two different propositions. The first posits an overt and disruptive Teotihuacan presence in the Maya lowlands in the late fourth century c.e., associated with military incursions if not political domination (Coggin 1975, 1979a, 1983; Proskouriakoff 1993). The second and more recently developed viewpoint suggests that Teotihuacan styles and material remains in the Maya area might better be seen as a local appropriation of prestigious or legitimating symbolism and its associated militaristic ideology. This has been advanced in varied ways by several scholars working in the Maya area (Berlo 1983; Schele 1986; Stone 1989; Schele and Freidel 1990; Demarest and Foias 1993). In this latter view, the evidence of Teotihuacan influence in the Maya area says very little about what actual power relations might have existed between the Mexican highlands and the Maya lowlands. Such characterizations of the two main schools of thought are simply drawn, to be sure, but I believe accurate in their essentials.¹

Different assessments of Teotihuacan-Maya contact have proved difficult to resolve, due in part no doubt to the pitfalls of deriving specific cultural-historical

interpretations from the sometimes ambiguous archaeological and stylistic evidence at hand. To complicate matters even more, the political and economic ties that existed between Teotihuacan and Maya polities, however we characterize them, presumably changed over the centuries as fortunes and societies on both ends shifted in their own localized way. At least on the basis of Postclassic patterns and lowland Classic Maya geo-political history, we know that Mesoamerican political interactions, alliances, and hierarchies could shift and realign themselves with surprising speed, sometimes within the course of a generation or two. Rather than insist on a dichotomous either-or model, it is possible that both the "externalist" and "internalist" models outlined above have merit and explanatory power when applied at different times in Classic history.

Where, then, does this leave our debate? In my view, traditional lines of archaeological evidence are limited in their capacity to provide an explanatory context for the sort of intensive culture contact so evident at Tikal and Copán. Advancing the discussion and debate requires a more detailed historical context that can only be provided from an analysis of the preserved hieroglyphic texts at Tikal, Copán, and other Maya centers. The potential importance of the hieroglyphic texts is clear, but it is surprising how seldom they have been used to clarify the history underlying Teotihuacan-Maya interactions. With the exception of Proskouriakoff (1993), most epigraphic work on central Petén history has assumed a more "internalist" perspective, often ignoring the Teotihuacan issue altogether (e.g., Mathews 1985). I offer a very different perspective in this essay, arguing that hieroglyphic texts at Tikal, Copán, and other Maya sites offer insights into Maya perceptions of a dynamic and often changing relationship with central Mexico. As we shall see, such sources strongly support a more "externalist" view that Teotihuacan played a very direct and even disruptive role in the political history of Maya kingdoms.

In addition to the historical details surrounding this highland-lowland encounter, Classic Maya inscriptions and iconography allow us to perceive how the Maya consciousness of Teotihuacan changed and developed over the course of four centuries, melding the formidable power and memory of that foreign city with their own political symbolism and ideology. It is therefore in the latter part of the Classic period, after the collapse of Teotihuacan, that the less direct "internalist" model comes into play. I will argue that Maya rulers kept open a claim to this earlier history, evoking Teotihuacan as both a place and an idea of political origin. This discussion will be based in large part on my earlier decipherment (Stuart 1994, 1996) of the Classic Maya name for Teotihuacan, "Place of Cattails" (equivalent to the Nahuatl name "Tollan"), and the implications that this has presented for Mesoamerican studies. Through the perspective of Classic Maya documents, I will confirm and elaborate on the antiquity of what might be called the "Tollan paradigm" of Mesoamerican political power and self-representation. Although this concept would later pervade Mesoamerica through many so-called Tollans (Carrasco 1982), I will suggest that Teotihuacan was the archetype, having played a direct and active role in founding political orders within the Maya area.

PART I: TEOTIHUACAN IN PETÉN HISTORY

A Teotihuacan presence in the Maya lowlands was evident from an early date, when archaeology in the region was just coming of age. The excavations at Uaxactún, Guatemala, conducted by the Carnegie Institution of Washington between 1926 and 1931, produced a wealth of information and an intellectual legacy that continues to be felt, perhaps most strongly through its establishment of a base-line ceramic chronology (Smith 1955). The Early Classic of Uaxactún was defined by Smith through the "Tzakol sphere," where certain trends in form and typology continue from the Late Preclassic but differ with the appearance of polychrome decoration and, during the Tzakol 3 phase in particular, a distinctive subcomplex of forms with clear Teotihuacan affiliations. Elite wares such as cylinder vessels with apron lids and slab-footed tripods were hallmarks of Central Mexican influence at Uaxactún. Some years later, excavations at Kaminaljuyú, in the distant Guatemalan highlands, revealed a ceramic assemblage with more pronounced Teotihuacan styles and decorative motifs, associated with the so-called Esperanza phase (Kidder, Jennings, and Shook 1946). *Talud-tablero* architectural platforms and a wide array of artifact remains indicated a strong

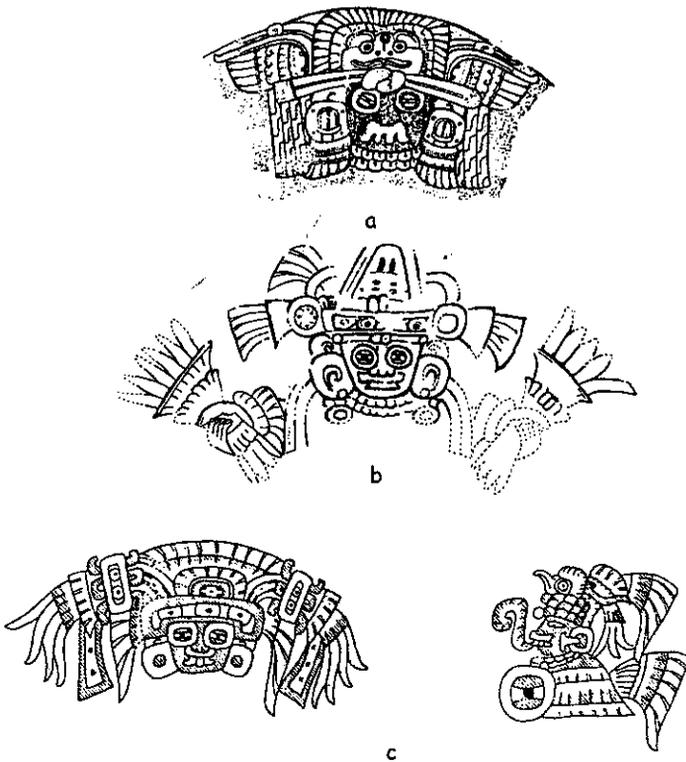


Fig. 15.1. Teotihuacan-style paintings from Tikal ceramics (from Culbert 1993b).

and very intimate connection between Kaminaljuyú and Teotihuacan during the Early Classic, the nature of which continued to be discussed and debated for many years (Sanders and Michels 1977).

Extensive excavations in the North Acropolis at Tikal between 1956 and 1970 further revealed a tremendous wealth of archaeological evidence of Teotihuacan contact in the central Petén, a pattern that has continued to be borne out by more recent excavations in other areas of the site during the 1980s (LaPorte and Fialco 1990). Highland ceramic forms and decorative modes similar to those encountered at Kaminaljuyú helped to define the Manik Complex at Tikal, which is generally affiliated with Tzakol phases of Uaxactún (Culbert 1993b; Coggins 1975). In the North Acropolis, several elite tombs contained varieties of Teotihuacan-style vessels, some locally manufactured and others probably imports. The painted decoration on numerous vessels combine Maya and highland elements, while several are largely indistinguishable from the Teotihuacan tradition (Figure 15.1).

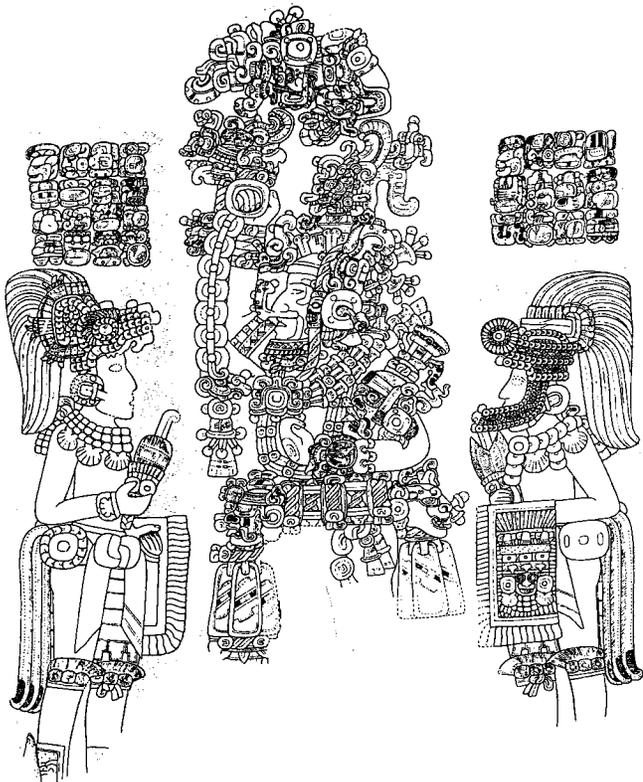


Fig. 15.2. The figures from Stela 31 of Tikal. The ruler Siyah Chan K'awil is in the center, flanked by images of a "Teotihuacan" personage. The text captions name both as portraits of Nun Yax Ayin, father of the Tikal king. Drawing by W. R. Coe.

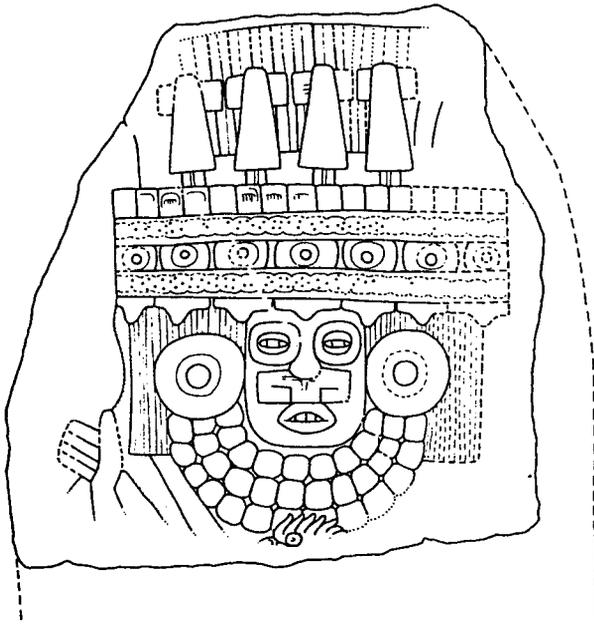


Fig. 15.3. Tikal Stela 32. Drawing by W. R. Coe (from Jones and Satterthwaite 1982: fig.55a).

Most striking of all, perhaps, was the discovery of sculpted monuments bearing portraits of "Mexican" individuals, such as the well-preserved Stela 31 with its image of a warrior in Teotihuacan dress grasping a rectangular shield and an *atlatl* ("spear-thrower") (Figure 15.2). Stela 32, also found in the North Acropolis, shows a highland warrior wearing a so-called tassel headdress and is in even a more direct Teotihuacan style (Figure 15.3). Taken together with an assortment of other material evidence, it was clear by the mid-1960s that Teotihuacan played a very important and highly visible role in Early Classic Tikal's political and ceremonial life.²

Coggins's study of painting styles and ceramics at Tikal integrated numerous aspects of this evidence. She combined the archaeological data with the known historical rulers of the dynasty, working with the consultation of Tatiana Proskouriakoff (Coggins 1975: 140; Proskouriakoff 1993). Since then, work on the early facet of the Tikal dynasty has been expanded and refined by a number of scholars, among Schele (1976), Jones and Satterthwaite (1982), Mathews (1985), Fahsen (1987), Schele and Freidel (1990), Culbert (1993a), and Valdés, Fahsen, and Cosme (1997). Generally these all agree on the essential details of the ruler sequence and their associated dates. One significant development of late has been the decipherment of the specific name glyphs of Tikal kings. Previously, these figures have had only nicknames, such as "Stormy Sky," "Curl Nose," and so forth, but in the discussions below I prefer to employ their Maya names as I have deciphered them. These readings will be noted in the course of discussions below.

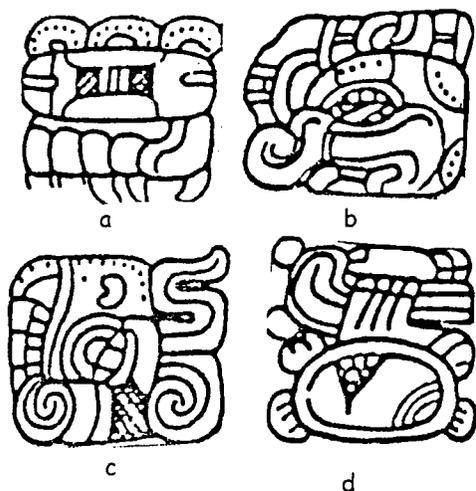


Fig. 15.4. Four prominent name glyphs in Early Classic Tikal history: a. Chak Tok 'Ich'ak; b. Nun Yax Ayin; c. Siyah K'ak'; d. "Spear-Thrower Owl" (variant). All are taken from the text of Stela 31.

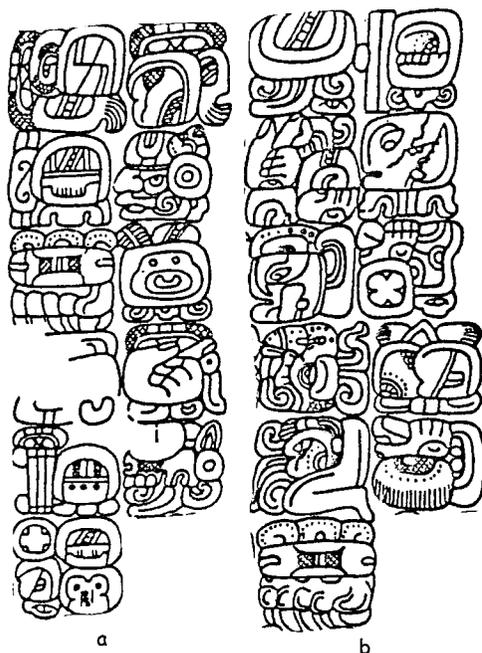


Fig. 15.5. Two sequential passages from Tikal Stela 31: a. Blocks C12–C17, recording the Period Ending 8.17.0.0.0 in connection with Chak Tok Ich'ak; b. Blocks C19–C24, recording the "11 Eb" date and an event involving Siyah K'ak' over one year later.

Proskouriakoff's 1993 treatment of early Tikal history remains one of the most compelling, despite being originally conceived nearly thirty years ago. In that work, she notes that the early Tikal king Great Paw (or Jaguar Paw, as he is called in more current literature) was among the earliest documented rulers of the Early Classic (Figure 15.4 [a]), and associates him with the Long Count date 8.14.0.0.0 (317 C.E.) as recorded on the back of Stela 31, the single most important text for studying early Tikal history.³ I differ from her assessment, however, in suggesting that Jaguar Paw actually reigned somewhat later. On Stela 31 and possibly Stela 39, this ruler seems to be linked with the *k'atun* ending 8.17.0.0.0 (376 C.E.) (Figure 15.5 [a]). It is on this calendar station that he "fastens the stone," or performs the period-ending ritual (Stuart 1996). His accession date is unknown, but may be recorded on the early stela from the nearby secondary site of El Temblor, located to the east of Tikal.⁴

The next date recorded on Stela 31 (Figure 15.5 [b]) is written simply as "11 Eb," equivalent to 8.17.1.4.12 11 Eb 15 Mac, or January 16, 378 C.E. (a distance number in the text establishes its Long Count placement). This date is one of the most significant—and debated—in early Maya history, for reasons that will soon become clear. Less than a year later a new king assumes power, named Nun Yax Ayin (customarily known by the nicknames "Curl Nose" or "Curl Snout") (Figure

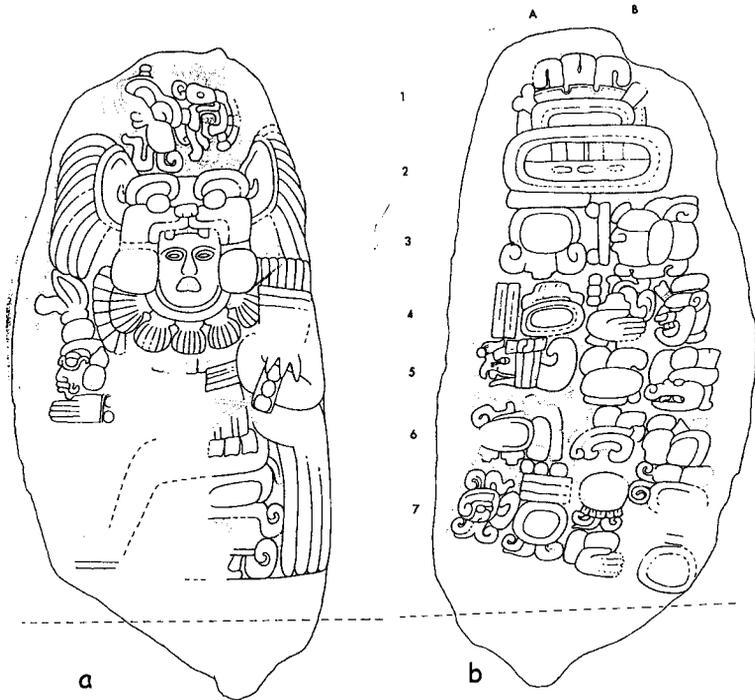


Fig. 15.6. Tikal Stela 4, front and back. Drawings by W. R. Coe (from Jones and Satterthaithe 1982: fig. 5).

15.4 [b]). He is the individual most likely interred within Burial 10 in the North Acropolis, accompanied as we have seen by large numbers of Teotihuacan-style ceramics and artifacts (Coggins 1975). The archaeological record exemplified by this and other rich burials of about the same period suggested to Proskouriakoff and Coggins that such Mexican traits occurred around the time of Nun Yax Ayin's ascendancy to the throne.⁵

In support of this association, the diminutive Teotihuacan "warrior" shown twice on the sides of Stela 31 is named in the accompanying captions as Nun Yax Ayin himself. Stela 4 bears another portrait of him, again in Teotihuacan costume, and commemorates the *k'atun* ending 8.18.0.0.0 (396 C.E.) (Figure 15.6). On the basis of such strong archaeological and visual evidence, Nun Yax Ayin has been called a foreign king, or at least "one who consorted closely with highland people" (Proskouriakoff 1993: 11). That much seems clear, but the circumstances surrounding his sudden appearance at Tikal have heretofore been cloudy at best. A better understanding of just what happened requires a revisit to the 11 Eb event that occurred a year before his accession, commemorated in several inscriptions at Tikal and Uaxactún.

THE 11 EB EPISODE: A REEXAMINATION

In her important overview of Maya history, Proskouriakoff (1993) devoted one chapter to what she called "the arrival of strangers" in the Maya lowlands in the late fourth century C.E. The "strangers" were from the highlands and included the Tikal ruler Nun Yax Ayin (Proskouriakoff's "Curl Snout"), displayed in his three known portraits as having strong affinities to Teotihuacan. As Proskouriakoff noted, other names seemed to be recorded in the inscriptions of this time as well, and it is their respective roles in this history that are very illuminating.

Proskouriakoff recognized that the 11 Eb date falling shortly before the accession of Nun Yax Ayin was a pivotal event of some sort. It was recorded on Stela 31 of Tikal as well as on Stelae 5 and 22 of Uaxactún (one of the few historical dates repeated at different sites) (Figures 15.7 and 15.8). Subsequent to her death in 1984, a fourth reference to the 11 Eb date (as it will henceforth be referred to) came to light on the so-called Marcador stone from Tikal (Figure 15.9), bringing the total number of records to four. Its appearance on Uaxactún Stela 5 in particular caught Proskouriakoff's attention, for it was the one inscribed date on a sculpture depicting a striding warrior in Teotihuacan dress, holding an *atlatl*. There is no evidence that this is Nun Yax Ayin of Tikal; in fact the accompanying glyphs suggest it is someone else entirely. Yet it was immediately apparent to her that a foreigner with Central Mexican associations appeared in direct association with the 11 Eb date. No such association could be found before this date and within the reign of Jaguar Paw, suggesting to Proskouriakoff that this prominently commemorated day was somehow connected with the arrival of foreigners into the central Petén, perhaps specifically at Uaxactún. It must be stressed, however, that Proskouriakoff made no claims to read the inscriptions found with records of the 11 Eb date, leaving the matter somewhat open to question. She nonetheless summarized the importance of the date in this way:

Many questions remain unresolved in regard to this crucial incident of Maya history. Who were these strangers who appeared at this time in the Petén, bringing with them weapons originating in the Mexican highlands? How long had they been in the country, and from what direction did they come? Were any other Maya sites involved in the conflict that appears to have been instigated by Uaxactún? What really happened on this day to perpetuate it in the memory of the Uaxactún rulers? We are not yet equipped to answer such questions, for the undeciphered inscriptions give us only the barest of hints that something momentous was happening at this time, which can only be clarified by efforts of future archaeologists and epigraphers" (Proskouriakoff 1993: 8-9).

According to Tikal's Stela 31, Nun Yax Ayin was the son of an individual whose name glyph is written with two signs, one a hand grasping an *atlatl*, the other a *cauac* element with "tufts" at its four corners (Figure 15.10). "Atlatl Cauac" or "Spear-Thrower Owl" will be a focus of discussion later in this essay, but for now we can remark on the fact that he was *not* the king who preceded Nun Yax Ayin, whom we know to have been Jaguar Paw. Clearly we are faced with an unusual break in the customary father-to-son pattern succession to office. The

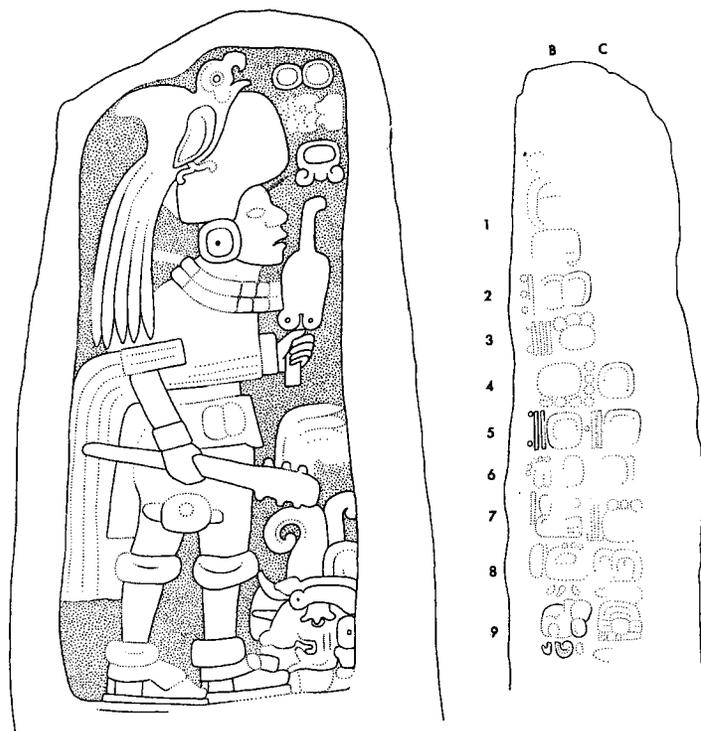


Fig. 15.7. Uaxactún Stela 5, front and side. The texts records the 11 Eb date and its associated event. Drawings by I. Graham (from Graham 1986: 143,145).

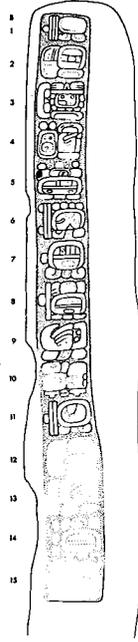


Fig. 15.8. Uaxactún Stela 22, side, recording the 11 Eb date and event. Drawing by I. Graham (from Graham 1986: 191).

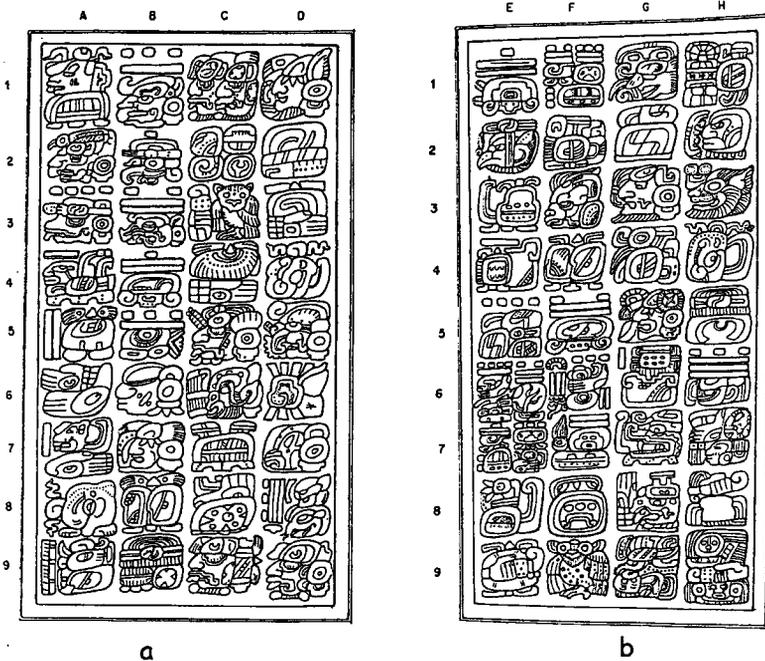


Fig. 15.9. Tikal "Marcador" inscriptions, recording the 11 Eb date and event. Drawing by P. Morales.



Fig. 15.10. Parentage statements from Tikal Stela 31, naming "Spear-Thrower Owl" as the father of Nun Yax Ayin: a. Blocks N2-N3; b. Blocks I3-J3 and K4-L4. Drawings by the author.

11 Eb event, with all of its indirect connections to Teotihuacan influence, stands directly at the time of this disruption, within a year before the accession of the "foreign king."

The four extant records of the 11 Eb episode at Uaxactún and Tikal are all very different in presentation, and thus present a number of difficulties to epigraphers. While they purport to record events occurring on the same day, they are not glyph-for-glyph restatements of the same information. The variation evident in these four records is potentially illuminating, since each text might contribute different pieces to the overall historical puzzle. One "constant" in

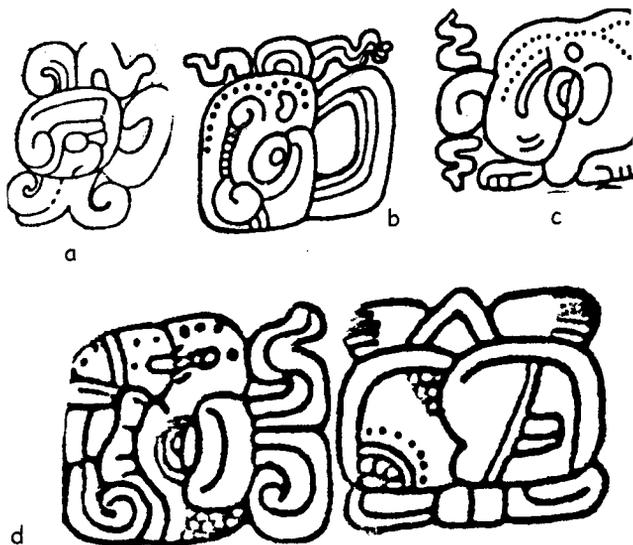


Fig. 15.11. Name variants of Siyah K'ak'; a. Tikal Stela 4, A7; b and c. Tikal "Marcador," D4 and H4; d. Tikal Stela 31, C22, D22 (with *Kalomte'* title).

these passages is the personal name of yet another figure called Smoke Frog or Smoking Frog in the recent literature, and who was first discussed in detail by Mathews (1985). In my view, his name glyph (Figure 15.11) is most likely to be read *Siyah K'ak'*, or "Fire is Born," and as protagonist of the 11 Eb event in all four inscriptions, it stands to reason that he is a pivotal figure in understanding the nature of Maya-Teotihuacan relations in the late fourth century.⁶

After Proskouriakoff's perceptive first steps, the first concerted attempt to grapple with the difficult 11 Eb passages was by Mathews (1985), soon followed by Schele and Freidel (1990). Mathews saw two significant aspects of these records. First, the mutual appearance of the date at Uaxactún and Tikal suggested to him that it recorded a major interactive event between these sites. Second, with Stela 5 at Uaxactún apparently depicting a warrior, Mathews posited

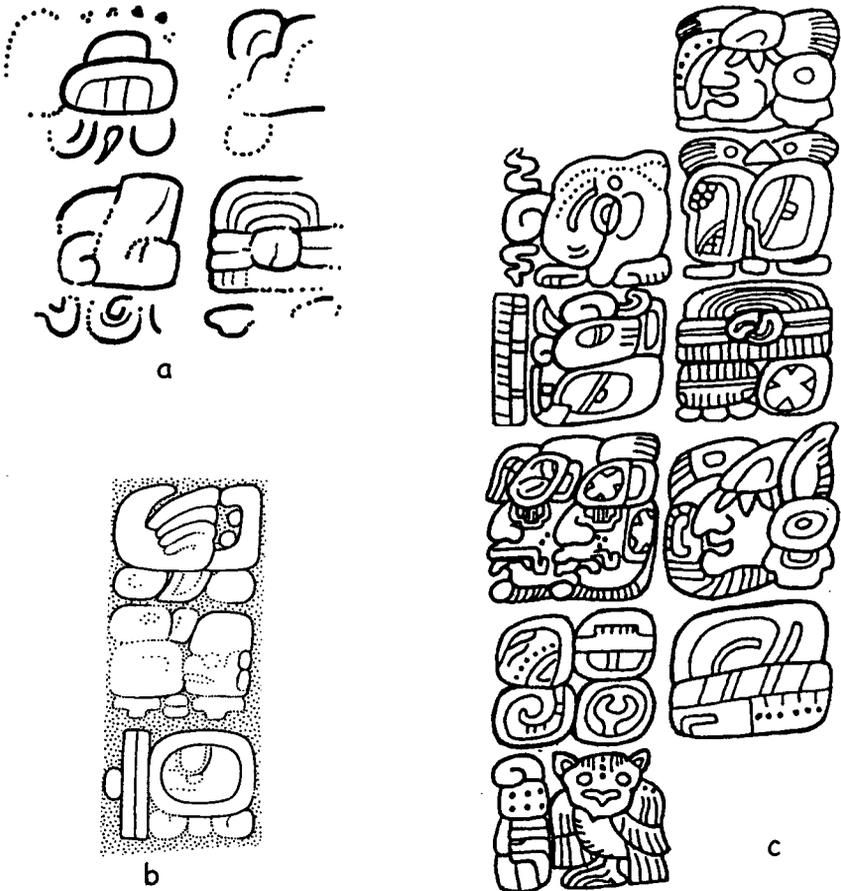


Fig. 15.12. Arrival records at Uaxactún and Tikal: a. Uaxactún Stela 5, redrawing by the author of side text, blocks B8–C9; b. Uaxactún Stela 22, B9–B11; and c. Tikal "Marcador" inscription, B8–C3.

that a war between the two centers was the event associated with the 11 Eb date. Noting the presence of the Tikal emblem with Siyah K'ak's name glyph on this same monument (see Figure 15.12 [a]), he suggested that Tikal was the more dominant site of the two. Mathews's work brought Schele and Freidel (1990) to the conclusion that Tikal's proposed war against Uaxactún was one of outright conquest, thus establishing Tikal as the center of political power in the central lowlands. In their reconstruction of events, Siyah K'ak' (Smoking Frog) was seen as a Tikal warrior who conquered and ruled over Uaxactún. These theories suggested by Mathews, Schele, and Freidel proposed that Tikal and Uaxactún were exclusive players in the localized historical scene. They therefore represent the "internalist" reaction of Mayanist scholarship in the mid-1980s to perceived overstatements of Teotihuacan's more direct and active role in the Maya area. Indeed, Mathews's 1985 work makes virtually no mention of Teotihuacan or "foreigners" in Tikal's history.

It is vital to note, however, that in reviewing the readable glyphs associated with 11 Eb and Siyah K'ak', I have concluded that the posited Tikal-Uaxactún war never actually happened, at least in connection with the date in question. The four relevant texts at Tikal and Uaxactún contain no known "war" glyph, several of which are found in later Maya inscriptions. Moreover, there is no firm evidence that Siyah K'ak' was from Tikal; his name glyph on Uaxactún Stela 5 is followed by the Tikal emblem sign, but without any accompanying title such as *ahaw*. It could well have a different role in that inscription, even specifying the location of the event itself. I raised similar doubts in an earlier treatment (Stuart 1995), confining my remarks to stating that the relevant inscriptions remained too opaque to allow any sort of firm alternative interpretation of the evidence. Now, however, more of the glyphs can be read, producing interesting historical results.

On Stelae 5 and 22 at Uaxactún, the event glyphs found with the 11 Eb date are clearly *hul-iy*, or "he, she, it arrived" (Figure 15.12 [a and b]). On Stela 5 this is more difficult to see due to the eroded state of the inscription, yet I believe the *hu*, *li*, and *ya* signs used to spell *hul-iy* are readily discernible. As confirmation of this, we find in the far better preserved text of Stela 22 that the verb is spelled *hul-li-ya*, an alternative form with the addition of the "hand-and-moon" *hul* sign in place of the syllabic spelling. Interestingly, Stela 22 is a much later monument dating to 495 C.E., and commemorates the earlier 11 Eb event in 378 as something of great historical importance.

The glyph for "to arrive" was brilliantly deciphered by Barbara Macleod (1990) in contexts where it is used to record moon ages within a twenty-nine or thirty-day lunar month. The moon age is expressed as a certain number of days since the moon "arrived," and the glyph on these Uaxactún inscriptions is precisely the same. Furthermore, Macleod also noticed that "arrive" verbs are used in connection with foreign women who marry into distant polities. The most famous example is the Lady of Dos Pilas who is said to have "arrived" at Naranjo in 682 C.E. Her arrival at Naranjo had a profound effect on the political fortunes of the local kingdom, apparently being the initial step in Naranjo's resurrection as an independent polity, years after its defeat at the hands of Caracol (see Schele and

Freidel 1990). Importantly, other similar “arrival” events documented in the royal histories revolve around the appearance of “outsiders” who bring with them significant political change.

Tikal’s records of the 11 Eb “arrival” are more difficult to read than those at Uaxactún. As noted, it appears on the unusual Marcador stone excavated at Group 6C-XVI in Tikal (Fialko 1987) (Figures 15.9 and 15.12 [c]). This perfectly preserved monument bears two inscribed panels of Maya glyphs, yet in form it is little different from so-called ball-court markers at Teotihuacan. Iconographic decorations on the stone are also highland in origin. Significantly, the opening Long Count date in the inscription (A1-A5) is our familiar “arrival” date, 8.17.1.4.12 11 Eb 15 Mac, with Siyah K’ak’ clearly named as the protagonist (A8-A9). It is difficult to find the glyph for “arrive.” In the position where we would expect the “arrive” verb (B7) we instead find a head glyph that could conceivably be a variant form (suggested, perhaps, by a *hu*-sign prefixed to the face), though there is no firm confirmation of this. Regardless, the association of Siyah K’ak’ and the 11 Eb date with a Teotihuacan monument is highly suggestive.

Of all the records of this pivotal event, that on Tikal Stela 31 is the most important and informative (Figure 15.5 [b]). The 11 Eb date is clearly written after the record of the 8.17.0.0.0 *k’atun* ending overseen by Jaguar Paw. The verb is not *hul*, but rather a complicated phrase introduced by the statement *tsuts-uy*, “it ended.” This is followed by an unknown place glyph and two enigmatic glyphs that include, at least once, the sign *ok*, “foot, leg.” In many Mayan languages, *ok* serves as a verb root for “walk” or “journey” (ex. Yucatec *ok-il*). Although no “arrive” statement is made explicit here, it is worth noting that the same sequence of glyphs appears in a completely different text on Lintel 3 of Temple IV at Tikal (D6-D7) where it is grouped with the statement “he arrived” (E1); clearly the statements must be at least thematically related. The protagonist on Stela 31 is Siyah K’ak’, named in the next glyph and accompanied by a the title Och-K’in K’awil, or “West K’awil.” A second sentence then follows, naming Jaguar Paw as its subject. The verb before his name is *och-ha’*, “enter the water,” known from other contexts to be associated with death.⁷ The inscription seems to be saying that on the very day Siyah K’ak’ arrived, the king of Tikal died. It would be hard not to view Jaguar Paw’s death as the result an episode of aggression, and a signal of great political change.

This detailed examination of a few inscriptions at Tikal and Uaxactún reveals that Proskouriakoff was, in typical fashion, very close to the truth when she posited that the 11 Eb date recorded the “arrival” of outsiders into the central Petén. Remarkably, she had no knowledge of the phonetic reading of the *hul* (“arrive”) glyph identified by MacLeod, and made her supposition based on circumstantial but strong evidence. There seems every reason to believe, therefore, that the inscriptions make direct reference to the appearance of Teotihuacanos in the central Petén.

WHO WAS SIYAH K’AK’?

Judging by the importance accorded to the event by the scribes of Tikal and Uaxactún, the arrival of Siyah K’ak’ on January 16, 378 C.E., was highly significant.

But the texts say almost nothing about the circumstances surrounding it. The only indication of the event's character is provided by Stela 31's mention of Jaguar Paw's death on the very same day (Figure 15.5 [b]). As aforementioned, I would interpret this as fairly clear evidence that the arrival was more than a simple visitation by outsiders. It may well have been accompanied by violence and the execution of the reigning Tikal lord, but it should be cautioned that the language of these texts is seldom so explicit.

Siyah K'ak' is named in other inscriptions at Tikal, including Stela 4 (See Schele and Freidel 1990: 153–155) (Figure 15.6 above). This stone bears the accession date of Nun Yax Ayin (379 C.E.), who is named as the protagonist of the monument and presumably the figure portrayed on the front. Following the record of the ruler's accession, we find the glyph *y-ahaw*, "the lord of," and then the name of Siyah K'ak'. The relationship expressed between the two names is highly significant, for we know of similar "lord of" statements from more easily understood periods of Maya history. First identified by Houston and Mathews (1985), the "lord of" glyph apparently expresses a hierarchical relationship of some sort between two rulers, where the second-named person (Siyah K'ak' in this case) is in some way superior to the first (Nun Yax Ayin). The same relationship would later exist between Ruler 1 of Dos Pilas and the overlord of Calakmul. Houston (1993: 139) notes that such statements constitute the best Maya evidence of "panregional organization," where high kings could reign under the patronage of others. We are forced to conclude from Stela 4 that Siyah K'ak' in some way dominated or sponsored Nun Yax Ayin at the time of the latter accession. Interestingly, the same relationship seems to be implied by the portion of Stela 31's text, which records Nun Yax Ayin's inauguration. The statement there is accompanied by the sentence (in blocks F13, E14) *u-chab-hi Siyah K'ak'*, or "Siyah K'ak' oversees it." When such language is used in other inscriptions, the implication is that one ruler "installs" another into office.⁸

It is likely that Siyah K'ak's name also appears on a stela from the small site of Bejucal, located some 20 kilometers northwest of Tikal. The date on this monument is 8.17.17.0.0 11 Ahau 3 Tzec, corresponding to 393 C.E., and the remaining inscription records the stela's dedication by a local lord possibly named Yune' Balam, (literally, "Jaguar's Tail"). Although a bit eroded, a specified time interval of at least twelve years reckons back to an earlier date, possibly this ruler's accession to office (no accession glyph is legible, but such a structure is typical of texts of the period). Here Yune' Balam is called the "lord of" someone whose name glyph is partially effaced, but which includes the K'ak' sign and the title *Kalomte'*. Both are suggestive clues, since the important *Kalomte'* title is found with Siyah K'ak's name on Tikal Stelae 4, 31, as well as on the Marcador. It is reasonable to suppose that this designates Siyah K'ak' as Yune' Balam's sponsor, like his contemporary Nun Yax Ayin at Tikal.

Moving further afield from Tikal, we find another reference to Siyah K'ak' on the inscription of Stela 15 from El Perú, a site located some 75 kilometers west of Tikal (Figure 15.13). This mention of Siyah K'ak' is in some ways the most fascinating of all, for it is found with the date 8.17.1.4.4 3 Kan 7 Mac, or January 8, 378 C.E., only eight days before his recorded "arrival" in the Tikal and Uaxactún

texts. The El Perú inscription is missing several important fragments, including one that may state just what took place on this day. But later in the inscription, in what may be a back reference to the same date, there are remains of a verb that could be read as “arrive.” If so, it suggests that Siyah K’ak’ passed through El Perú on his way to the Tikal and Uaxactún area, moving from west to east. The length of his stay at El Perú is unknown, but could have been no more than a few days, of course. Stela 13 was erected nearly forty years later by a local El Perú ruler named K’inich Balam (“Great-Sun Jaguar”) on 8.19.0.0.0.

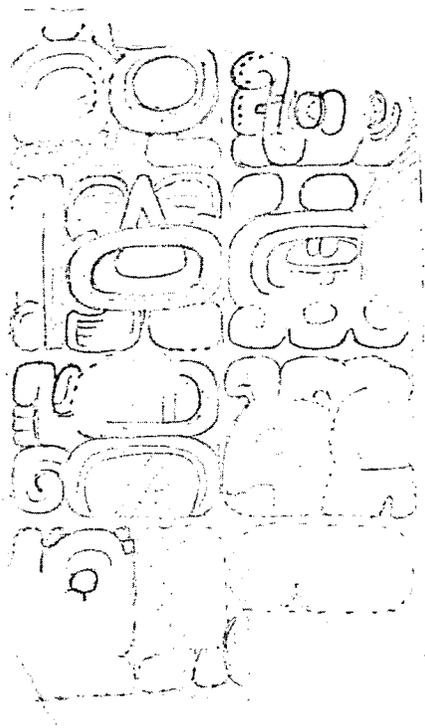


Fig. 15.13. A passage from a stela at El Perú, Guatemala. Drawing by I. Graham.

The western origin of Siyah K’ak’ seems to be indicated by the common usage of the “west” glyph (*ochk’in*) with his name, as found on Stela 31 at Tikal and Stela 22 of Uaxactún. Directional titles are common for Maya rulers, with east, west, and south glyphs sometimes encountered in combination with honorifics such as Kalomte’. I therefore hesitate to assign much conclusive significance to Siyah K’ak’s “west” title, but taken together with his apparent movement across the central lowlands from El Perú towards Tikal and Uaxactún, it seems reasonable to suggest that it relates to the starting point of his journey. In discussions below, we shall discuss more examples of the very same “west” title in connection with other highland-related names at both Tikal and Copán.

On the face of the present evidence, I think that there is no choice but to conclude that Siyah K’ak’ is a foreigner, and that he may well be instigator of the Teotihuacan presence in the region of Tikal. If allowed to speculate, I would go so far as to view him as leader of a military force that overthrew Tikal’s dynasty in 378, killing its ruler Jaguar Paw and installing a new ruler, Nun Yax Ayin, in his place. It is perhaps significant that no monuments predating the arrival event were kept for veneration in Tikal’s plazas as far as is known; the earliest remaining stela is Nun Yax Ayin’s own accession monument, Stela 4. We shall never know the specific circumstances, but we can now be fairly certain that Siyah K’ak’ was a significant vehicle by which considerable political and cultural changes occurred in the central Petén.⁹

“SPEAR-THROWER OWL”: A TEOTIHUACAN RULER?

We have seen that another mysterious participant in early Tikal history was “Spear-Thrower Owl,” who in other sources has been dubbed “Atlatl Shield” or “Atlatl Cauac.”¹⁰ To reiterate, on Stela 31 Spear-Thrower Owl is named as the father of the newly installed Tikal ruler Nun Yax Ayin (Figure 15.10), and is thus

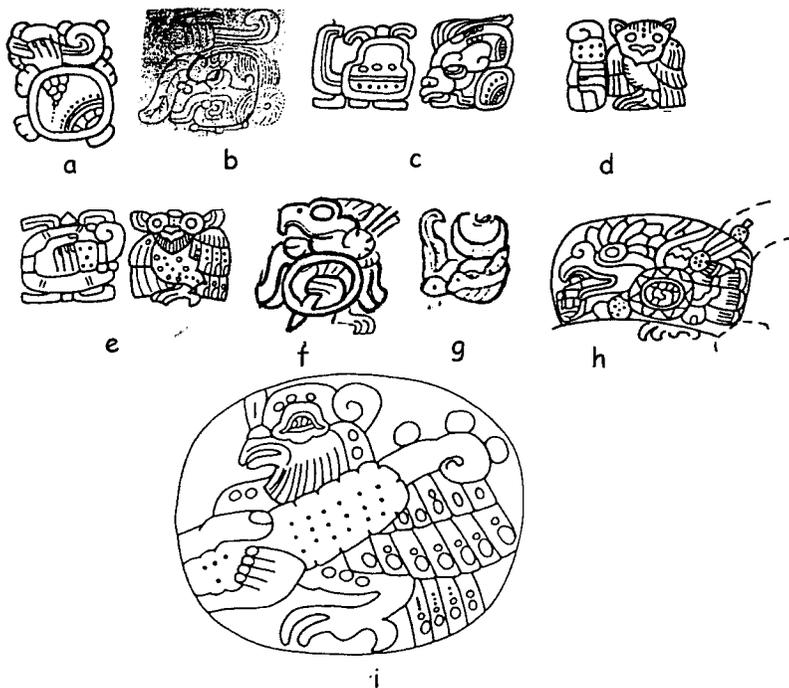


Fig. 15.14. Variants of the name “Spear-Thrower Owl” from Maya texts: a. Tikal Stela 31; b. Unprovenienced vessel K; c, d, and e. Tikal “Marcador” inscription; f. unprovenienced jade ear-spool; g. Tikal MT 32; h. Tikal Stela 31, in headdress held by ruler; i. In central medallion of Tikal “Marcador.”

the grandfather of the later ruler Siyah Chan K'awil. Significantly, there is no evidence that Spear-Thrower Owl was ever crowned as ruler of Tikal. He therefore stands out as something of a disruptive element in the expected sequence of dynastic succession, as noted earlier.

Again, the foreign associations with this personage are very suggestive, as Proskouriakoff originally recognized (1993: 11; see also Jones 1991: 112). The components of his name glyph are a case in point (Figure 15.14). The spear-thrower or *atlatl* is a distinctively highland weapon, and the owl is strongly associated with militaristic themes in Teotihuacan iconography. Indeed, it is tempting to link the two components of the name to a frequent icon in Teotihuacan imagery known as the *lechuza y armas*, to be discussed momentarily (von Winning 1987; Berrin 1988). Some variants of the Spear-Thrower Owl name on the Marcador of Tikal and on a looted ear-spool are very similar to this Teotihuacan motif (Figure 15.14). The visual and historical link of this name to highland Mexico is inescapable, and I think generally agreed upon.¹¹

In proposing that the Spear-Thrower Owl glyph at Tikal serves as a personal name, I go against previous interpretations by Proskouriakoff (1993) and Schele and Freidel (1990), who all viewed it as a general label or title, shared by more than one person. Proskouriakoff saw it as a glyph "designating the foreigners" (1993: 11). Schele and Freidel (1990: 156–157, 449–450) agreed with a Teotihuacan connection for the Spear-Thrower Owl glyph, and linked it to the larger highland-derived Tlaloc-Venus iconographic complex revolving around themes of conquest warfare and sacrifice. In their interpretation, this "atlatl shield" functioned as a war title of highland origin, and could be assumed by any one of several individuals in this period of Tikal history. They further suggested that this glyph appeared in conjunction with a new type of conquest warfare introduced from the highlands and employed by Tikal against neighboring Uaxactún in 378, the day of our 11 Eb "arrival" event. Later Grube and Schele (1994) posited a phonetic reading of the owl sign as *kuy*, "owl, omen," and reiterated the role of the Spear-Thrower Owl glyph as a war title.

Several key points cast doubt on the function of the Spear-Thrower Owl glyph as a title or general label, and suggest instead that it was the personal name of a politically important individual. On Stela 31 of Tikal, the Spear-Thrower Owl glyph (its "Atlatl Cauac" variant) occupies the position where Nun Yax Ayin's father must be named (Figure 15.10). Elsewhere on Stela 31, Spear-Thrower Owl bears the now-familiar title *Kalomte'*, found with personal names throughout the entire body of Maya inscriptions. Moreover, Stela 31 mentions near the end of its text a death event (*och bih*), followed by the Spear-Thrower Owl glyph (Figure 15.15). Only a true personal name could serve in such a context. What is more, on the front of Stela 31 the Tikal ruler Siyah Chan K'awil holds aloft a headdress adorned with a Spear-Thrower Owl "medallion" at its top (Figure 15.16 [a]). The glyph is shown within a cartouche that is part of a maize-plant motif. In Early Classic Maya portraiture, such maize plants in the headdress contain personal names, precisely as shown in the Stela 31 example (Figure 15.16 [b]). Here the headdress is labeled with the name of its intended wearer, Spear-Thrower Owl, revealing that, contrary to other interpretations

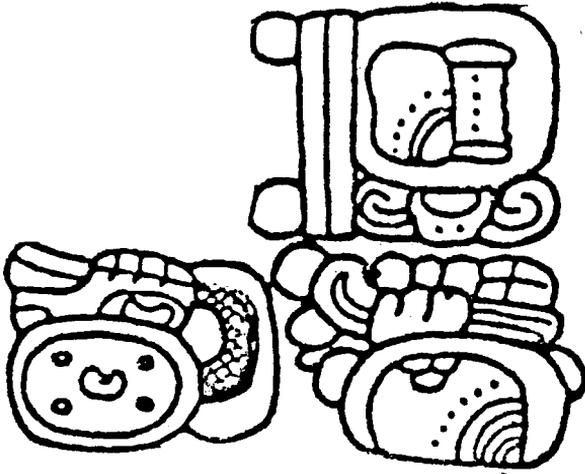


Fig. 15.15. Passage from Tikal Stela 31, recording the death (*och-bih*, "road-entering") of "Spear-Thrower Owl."

(Schele and Freidel 1990: 156), it is about to be worn by Siyah Chan K'awil. Just why Spear-Thrower Owl's headdress is shown with no sign of the Spear-Thrower Owl himself is something of a mystery; as with Siyah K'ak', no known portraits of him exist.

Spear-Thrower Owl is associated with only a few events in Tikal's historical records. We first encounter him on the Marcador of Tikal, where he is named three times. According to the text, Spear-Thrower Owl sees or in some way sanctions the arrival of Siyah K'ak' in 378 C.E.¹² This might be construed as evidence that Spear-Thrower Owl was at Tikal or Uaxactún at the time of the arrival, but this is not necessarily the case. Parallel examples in other inscriptions describe the same sort of action (*y-ita-hi*), and convey the notion that the subject in some way "looks on" the principal event, either figuratively or literally. Although he is somehow involved in the arrival episode, the first date associated with him actually falls a few years earlier and also is recorded on the Marcador (Figure 15.17). This is 8.16.17.9.0 11 Ahau 3 Uayeb (374 C.E.), which is clearly given as an accession date. Spear-Thrower Owl is therefore seated in office as ruler, but where? To reiterate, Jaguar Paw was almost certainly ruler at Tikal at this time, leading up to the arrival of Siyah K'ak'. In fact, Spear-Thrower Owl lives on for a considerable amount of time. He is named in association with the dedication of the Marcador monument at Tikal on 8.18.17.14.9, a date within the reign of his son at Tikal, Nun Yax Ayin. Finally, his death is recorded on Stela 31 as occurring on 9.0.3.9.18., well into the reign of his grandson, Siyah Chan K'awil (Stormy Sky). In sum, Spear-Thrower Owl, father of a Tikal ruler, was himself a king, and reigned *somewhere* for over six decades (374–439 C.E.).

Although difficult to prove, one very real possibility to consider is that Spear-Thrower Owl was ruler of Teotihuacan. Unlike the other characters in our plot such as Siyah K'ak' and Nun Yax Ayin, Spear-Thrower Owl's name, however it

may eventually be read, is probably not Mayan. Visually, at least, it evokes a “foreignness” unlike any other personal name in Maya history, and is likely a variation on the common Teotihuacan emblematic device known as the *lechuza y armas* (Figure 15.18). But most suggestive of all is the established fact that Spear-Thrower Owl is father to Nun Yax Ayin, the one king at Tikal who is singled out for his highland style of costume. Is it far-fetched to believe that the father of Nun Yax Ayin, the one supposed “foreigner,” was himself of the highlands? I think not.

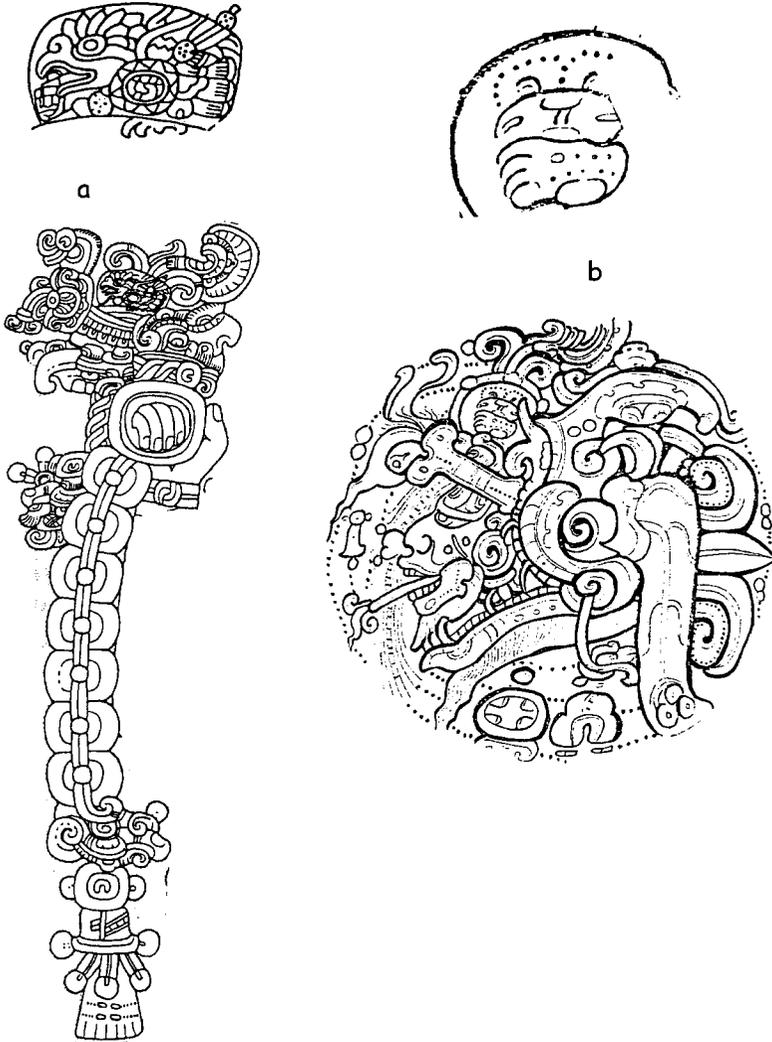


Fig. 15.16. Royal names in headdresses: a. Tikal Stela 31, front; b. On unprovenienced ceramic cache vessel from Tikal area (from Berjonneau, Deletaille, and Somnery 1985: fig. 354).



Fig. 15.17. Passage from the Tikal "Marcador" inscription, recording inauguration of "Spear-Thrower Owl" as a ruler.

Considering that Spear-Thrower Owl was a high ruler, the idea of his being a Teotihuacan king has a certain appeal.

As noted, the *lechuza y armas* symbol so common in Teotihuacan iconography is clearly related to the Spear-Thrower Owl name. It appears both on ceramic vessels and as circular medallions worn on the collars of warrior figurines (Figure 15.18). Von Winning (1987, 1: 90) cites these as evidence for it being a heraldic symbol of some sort, or else the designation of a militaristic order within Teotihuacan, comparable to the Jaguar or Eagle Knights of the Mexica Aztec. On the basis of the controlled Tikal evidence, I suggest instead that the distinctive *lechuza y armas* emblem may be a personal name glyph even in Teotihuacan, serving to label the figures with which they are found. If Spear-Thrower Owl was a Teotihuacan ruler, the presence of his "name tag" would allow us to identify such figures as portraits of the warrior-king.¹³ On one cylindrical tripod illustrated by von Winning, the *lechuza y armas* motif is shown as the body or person of a helmeted warrior (Figure 15.18 [b]), suggesting strongly that his identity is somehow conveyed by the icon. If these and other examples in Teotihuacan art are indeed personal name glyphs, as the Maya evidence would

strongly suggest, our view of writing and its uses at Teotihuacan would change dramatically, as would our notion of the “impersonality” of political rule at that site. Other names might conceivably exist, now recognized solely as categories of repeating “motifs.” But speculations are best left for another time.

Returning to our Maya evidence at Tikal, the image on Stela 31, with its depiction of Siyah Chan K’awil lifting up the headdress of Spear-Thrower Owl, might now be interpreted as a scene of headdress presentation not unlike others encountered in Maya art. As Khris Vilela notes (personal communication, 1998), Maya accession rites that involve the presentation of headbands and headdresses by allied lords are similar to Sahagún’s accounts of accession rites among the Mexica Aztec, where rulers of outlying provinces were active participants in the crowning ceremony. Although I speculate, Siyah Chan K’awil may hold Spear-Thrower Owl’s headdress aloft as a sign of his political alliance, or perhaps subservience, to the foreign ruler.

A common title of Spear-Thrower Owl is Kalomte’, also used by Siyah K’ak’ on occasion. In later Maya history, this title conveys a supreme status within a political hierarchy. It is the office for high kings of Late Classic Tikal and possibly Calakmul, and Simon Martin has suggested that it serves to mark

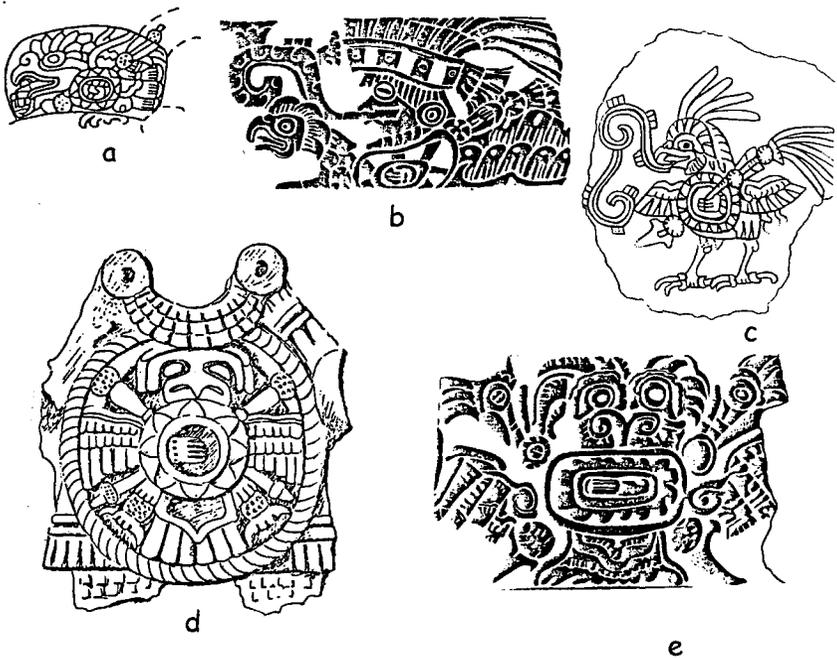


Fig. 15.18. Teotihuacan *lechuza y armas* emblems: A ruler’s name?: a. Tikal, Stela 31 headdress; b through e. From various Teotihuacan sources (from von Winning 1987).

overlords or "emperors" of conquered territories (personal communication, 1995). Lacking a decipherment of the term *kalomte*, it is difficult to be precise about the literal meaning of the glyph, yet the pattern of its use is clear enough in the later sources. It would suggest that both Spear-Thrower Owl and Siyah K'ak' both held considerable political power, perhaps involving the control of distant locales. This interpretation is in keeping with my proposal that Spear-Thrower Owl is the name of the Teotihuacan ruler. Siyah K'ak', in turn, having arrived at Tikal, may have been the local representative of Mexican control in the central Petén, a role that would agree with his being named as an overlord in historical texts in the central Petén region, such as at Bejucal.

Spear-Thrower Owl's birth date is not known. A few years after his accession to office in 374 C.E., the closely affiliated character Siyah K'ak' arrives at Tikal and assumes a powerful role there, possibly as some sort of regional political leader (*Kalomte*). Siyah K'ak', as we have seen, had an important "overseeing" role in the inauguration of Spear-Thrower Owl's son at Tikal. Now, if we are to believe that Spear-Thrower Owl acceded to his throne in 374 and died in 439 (sixty-five years later), then logic would dictate that the son, Nun Yax Ayin, must have been very young at the time of his own inauguration at Tikal in 379.¹⁴ There is support for this from both written and artistic evidence. On the right side of Stela 31, the caption accompanying Nun Yax Ayin's portrait states that he was a " *k'atun* lord," or that he was less than twenty years old as depicted. Significant, I think, is the diminutive size of this portrait relative to that of Siyah Chan K'awil, the later ruler (Figure 15.2). Comparable arrangements of figural portraits on Tikal stelae show that adult body size is both naturalistic and consistent. Stela 40, for example, is startlingly similar to Stela 31 in its design and execution, and was arguably carved by the same hand (Valdés, Fahsen, and Cosme 1997). The parents of the ruler, shown also on the sides, are full-sized. Not so on Stela 31, where the diminutive Nun Yax Ayin looks as though he may indeed be a "child warrior," depicted as he looked at the time of his own inauguration.¹⁵ Siyah K'ak's own role as an "overseer" of the Nun Yax Ayin's accession and ruler over local satellite centers suggests that Siyah K'ak' served as a sort of regent for the child-king from Teotihuacan. Spear-Thrower Owl may have sent his son to rule once Siyah K'ak' laid the groundwork at Tikal and consolidated much of the power within his own hands.

The history I have discussed up to this point is certainly a detailed one, combining both firm facts and speculative assertions. In order to clarify my overall interpretation and present the more solidly grounded facts as I understand them, a few points of summary are here offered, with events arranged in chronological order (specific sources are given in italics):

- In 374 C.E., an individual named Spear-Thrower Owl assumes the throne, though the location is unspecified (*Tikal Marcador*).
- Another figure named Siyah K'ak' arrives at Tikal and/or Uaxactún on January 14, 378 C.E., apparently with the direct or indirect sanction of Spear-Thrower Owl (*Tikal Marcador, Stela 31; Uaxactún Stelae 5, 22*).
- On the very same day of the "arrival," the Tikal ruler Jaguar Paw dies, or

“enters water” (*Tikal Stela 31*).

Siyah K’ak’s arrival is from the west, having days earlier arrived (?) at El Perú (*El Perú Stela 15*). This may relate to the common use of the “west” glyph in his glyphic name phrase.

Within a year after Siyah K’ak’s arrival, Nun Yax Ayin (“Curl Nose”) assumes the rulership of Tikal, introducing overt Teotihuacan imagery into the monumental art (*Tikal Stelae 4, 31*). His father is Spear-Thrower Owl, and not the previous Tikal king Jaguar Paw (*Stela 31, side texts*).

Nun Yax Ayin may have been a boy at the time of his inauguration (*Stela 31*). Siyah K’ak’ in some way oversees his inauguration (*Stela 31*), and may have also been dominant over the local ruler of Bejucal, a small site on Tikal’s periphery (*Bejucal Stela 1*).

Spear-Thrower Owl has very strong Teotihuacan associations, and his name is depicted as a so-called heraldic emblem in much Teotihuacan iconogra-

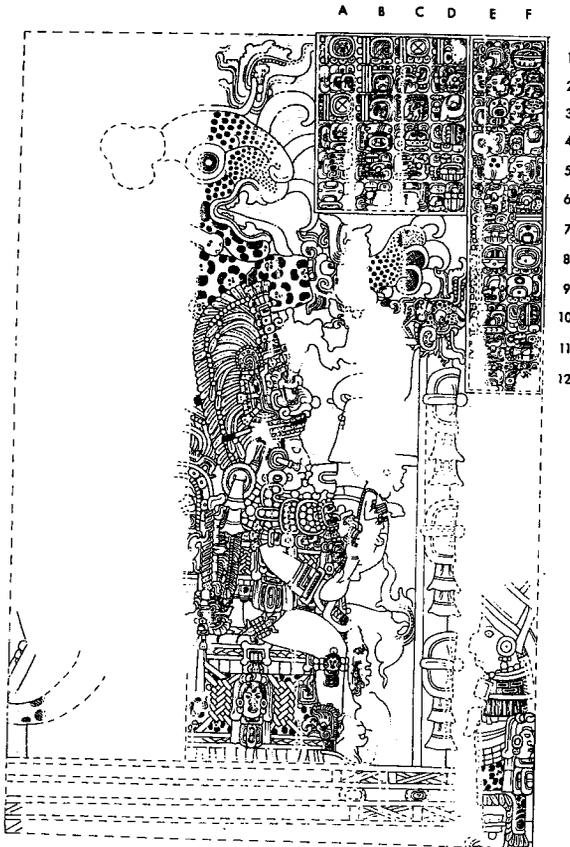


Fig. 15.19. Tikal, Temple I, Lintel 3. Drawing by W. R. Coe (from Jones and Satterthwaite 1982: fig. 70).

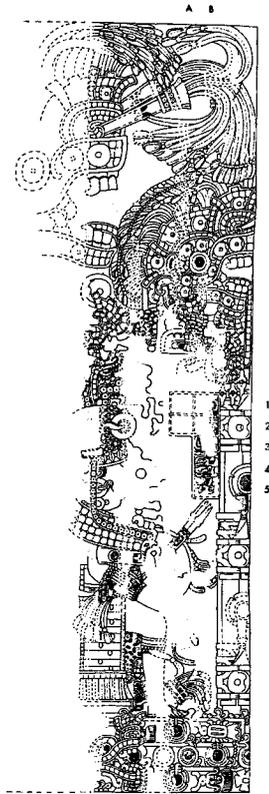


Fig. 15.20. Tikal, Temple I, Lintel 2. Drawing by W. R. Coe (from Jones and Satterthwaite 1982: fig. 69).

phy. Evidence suggests that he was perhaps ruler of that site. He dies in 439 C.E. (*Tikal Stela 31*), during the reign at Tikal of his grandson, Siyah Chan K'awil (Stormy Sky).

I posit this sketch of history with some hesitation, since it would be impossible in this essay to discuss all of the relevant details of the Early Classic Tikal inscriptions; this will be done in another study now under preparation.

That said, much of what is presented here stands in contrast to previous studies of Tikal's history. Most important perhaps is the revision of the nature of the 11 Eb event as "arrival," much as Proskouriakoff originally reasoned. If this is true, it is difficult to reconcile with the supposed Tikal-Uaxactún war posited by Mathews (1985) and Schele and Freidel (1990). Rather, I view this as the single most important political or military episode of early Classic Maya history, when Teotihuacan established itself as a dominant force in the politics and elite culture of the central Petén. There is now ample evidence, I believe, to support the interpretation that the arrival was a highly disruptive occasion, if not a violent

one. The direct instrument of this change was Siyah K'ak', who seems to have wielded considerable influence and power at Tikal and Uaxactún in the years subsequent to his arrival. His placement at Tikal allowed for the installation of Nun Yax Ayin, the son of the possible Teotihuacan ruler Spear-Thrower Owl. This new dynasty of Tikal, as far as we know, continues unbroken for many years, through the reigns of Siyah Chan K'awil and Kan Boar, after which we come to the opaque history surrounding the so-called hiatus and the Early-to-Late Classic transition.

Later still, in the midst of the Tikal's Late Classic rivalry against Calakmul and its allies, the early history rooted in Teotihuacan would continue to be recalled and commemorated. Ruler C, first identified by Jones (1977), was named Nun Yax Ayin, in remembrance of the intrusive king of centuries past. Most interesting also are the surviving wooden door lintels of Temple 1, dedicated by the king Hasaw Chan K'awil (Ruler A). Lintel 3 records the thirteen *k'atun* anniversary (in 695 C.E.) of Spear-Thrower Owl's death (Figure 15.19), stating that on this day Hasaw Chan K'awil "conjured the Holy One." The adjacent door lintel of this temple, Lintel 2 (Figure 15.20), depicts a seated Teotihuacan warrior above a toponymic register of cacti and cattails (Taube 1992; Stuart 1994). Given the anniversary celebrated in the temple, it is tempting to see this as a portrait of Spear-Thrower Owl himself, but this again is conjecture.

PART II: TEOTIHUACAN IN COPÁN HISTORY

Whereas Tikal and Uaxactún were the first Classic Maya sites to receive much attention on the question of Teotihuacan influence, Copán, on the southeast frontier of the Maya area, has recently emerged as an additional vantage point for studying Teotihuacan associations (Fash and Fash, chapter 14 of this volume). As with Tikal, Copán is a well-excavated site with extensive ceramic, artifactual, iconographic, and architectural allusions to Central Mexico. This begins in the Early Classic period, as recently revealed by excavations of the Early Copán Acropolis Project under the general direction of Robert Sharer of the University of Pennsylvania. Late Classic references to central Mexico are almost as numerous, though of a very different character. The dynastic history of Copán is now well understood (W. Fash 1991; Stuart 1992), providing much of the context we need to understand the nature of these foreign references. As we shall see, Copán exhibits both important similarities and differences with the situation as described in the central lowlands.

The pivotal figure of Copán's history was K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' ("Great Sun Green Quetzal-Macaw"), an Early Classic ruler who is represented by later kings as the first in the dynastic sequence. A few tantalizing references exist here and there to "pre-dynastic" names in Copán's history, but these are far too fragmentary to be of much use (Stuart 1992). They do suggest that K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' was not the first ruler of the place we know of as Copán, but he was apparently considered the "founder" of the institution of Copán kingship as defined throughout the Late Classic. He is consistently mentioned in the later texts as a divine ancestor, evoked as a source of political power up to the reign of the sixteenth and very last known king, Yax Pasah (Stuart 1992; Schele 1992).

K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's portraits, while rare, often depict him in Central

Mexican costume (Coggins 1988; Schele 1992; Stuart 1994; Fash and Fash, chapter 13 of this volume). Altar Q has one of the most explicit of these images (See Fash and Fash, this volume: fig. 14.4), showing him with goggles and a square shield bearing the War Serpent. No other king's portrait has such features, which can be traced to a number of other retrospective images associated with Structure 10L-16 and possibly 26. A ceramic effigy burner used and ritually destroyed during the dedication of the tomb of Ruler 12, discovered within Structure 10L-26, also has his goggled portrait; eleven other effigy censers also show similar portraits, but none with the goggles we associate with the founder. The costume itself led Coggins (1988) to surmise that he was indeed an outsider, originating either from Kaminaljuyú, Tikal, or Teotihuacan.

In a startling parallel to early Petén history, the text on Copán's Altar Q mentions the "arrival" of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' in 426 C.E., specifically 8.19.10.11.0 8 Ahau 18 Yaxk'in (Figure 15.21 [a]). Actually this is the second of two closely placed dates on the altar, the other falling three days before on 8.19.10.10.17 5 Caban 15 Yaxk'in.¹⁶ On this earlier day, K'uk' Mo' Ahaw ("Quetzal Macaw Lord") is said to have "taken the K'awil"—a phrase used else-

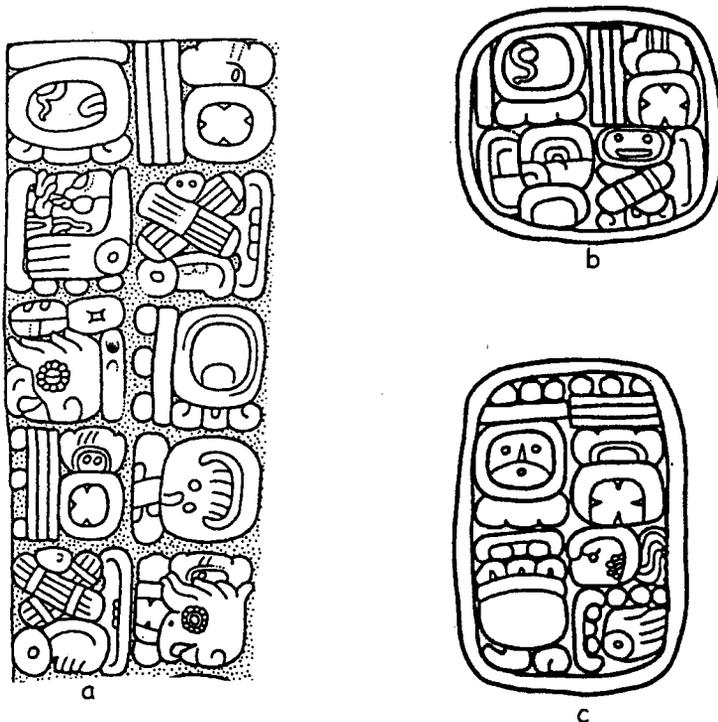


Fig. 15.21. Copán and Quiriguá records of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's "arrival": a. Copán, Altar Q (drawing by the author); b. Quiriguá, Zoomorph P. (drawing by N. Grube).

where for accession to office. (I assume that K'uk' Mo' Ahaw is an alternative name for K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', perhaps used before his becoming a ruler.) Both events are said to have taken place in a certain building or structure labeled by a distinctive crossed-bundles element (Figure 15.22), of which more will be said below. Purely on the basis of the textual material, the implication is that K'inich

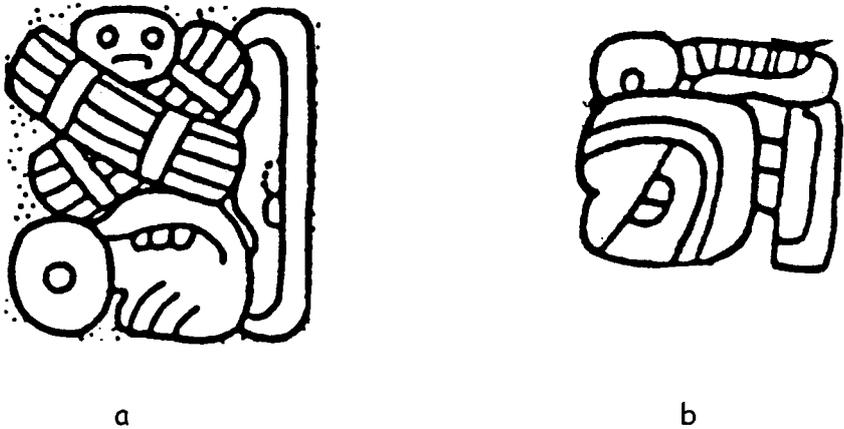


Fig. 15.22. A house name (?) with Teotihuacan associations: a. Copán, Altar Q; b. Tikal, Stela 31.

Yax K'uk Mo' was somehow an outsider. In light of the similar conclusions drawn from the iconographic evidence already described, there seems every reason to believe that he was not native to the local political scene, at least as the Late Classic Copanecs describe him.

These same two dates in 426 C.E. are mentioned on Zoomorph P at Quiriguá, but with a different twist (Figure 15.21 [b and c]). There, we read that on 5 Caban 15 Yaxk'in "he came" to the same "crossed-bundles building" mentioned on Altar Q (I use this name as a convenient term of reference only; it is an undeciphered glyph). Three days later on 8 Ahau 18 Yaxk'in, a local Quiriguá ruler dedicated a stone monument, an act that was overseen and sanctioned by K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', who is called a "Lord of Copán." One wonders if we are reading of a journey here, not unlike Siyah K'ak's eastward trek through the Petén many years before. K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' "came" to Quiriguá on September 5 of 426, then three days later "came" to Copán. Such a scenario is tempting but may be difficult to support, since the place name associated with both arrivals specifies a building, not a community.

The "crossed-bundles building" was a place of major importance for K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' and itself carries strong Teotihuacan associations. In working with this glyph a number of years ago, Schele and I noted its almost constant appearance with K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's name in the Copán texts, and called it the "founder's glyph" (see Schele 1992), though this is a bit misleading. Later

kings also make use of the glyph with their names, stating that they are the "*n*th of the house" after K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', the number specifying their place in the dynastic sequence. In one text, K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' is named as "lord" of this house, presumably because he was the first to be associated with it. One of the enigmatic aspects of the glyph, however, is that it is found in the inscriptions of a great many sites, including Copán, Quiriguá, Tikal, Machaquila, and Yaxchilán. It is clear that the glyph is a proper name for a building of some sort, since its last element is always *-nah*, or "structure," found with architectural names throughout the Maya inscriptions (Stuart and Houston 1994: fig. 104). The other elements of the glyph, including the crossed-torch bundles element and *te'*, give the proper name.¹⁷ But what building or buildings does it name? Altar Q's inscription prominently features the glyph, and its placement before the stairway of Structure 10L-16 suggests that it might refer to this structure. This would be a fitting association, given that Structure 10L-16 and its antecedents were temples associated with the veneration of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' (see Fash and Fash, chapter 14 of this volume). If true, then the glyph might be the name for an important type of ancestral shrine found at many sites.

The Teotihuacan connections of this building name are fairly consistent even outside of its intimate link to K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' at Copán. At Río Amarillo, an important satellite of Copán during Late Classic times, Structure 5 was decorated with large stone mosaic panels of this very same glyph, along with *wits* "mountain" masks and Tlaloc heads (William Saturno, personal communication, 1997). Its placement on the exterior walls of the building emphasize its true use as a building name, and the association with Tlalocs repeats similar connections found at Copán with Structures 10L-16 and 10L-33 (Schele 1992). Mexican "year signs" also appear in association with it in Copán's architecture. At distant Yaxchilán, Lintel 25 names the same house as the location of Itsamnah Balam I's (Shield Jaguar I) accession and its associated "conjuring" ceremony. The Teotihuacan War Serpent is the dominant image in the accompanying ritual scene. Furthermore, at Tikal, the "crossed-bundles building" is named on MT 35 as the place where the "foreign" ruler Nun Yax Ayin does something a number of months before his accession to office. I would suggest that this association with Teotihuacan symbolism is an important clue to the overarching significance of the building name, which appears to be central to many rituals involving rulership and political foundation.¹⁸

K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' often carries the title Ochk'in Kalomte' ("West Kalomte'") identical to the honorifics we have seen associated with Siyah K'ak' and Spear-Thrower Owl at Tikal (Figure 15.23). These prominent figures are all "outsiders" who would seem to have western or highland origins, and I believe the pattern can not be coincidental. Significantly, one other name that is a West Kalomte' is not a historical person at all, but rather a god or supernatural known as the War Serpent. A version of this character appears on the square shield held by K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' on the side of Altar Q, and is seen on Yaxchilán, Lintel 25, mentioned briefly above. The War Serpent is indeed prominent in Teotihuacan-related art and inscriptions throughout the Maya area. Karl Taube (chapter 10 of this volume) has written extensively on the War Serpent, and makes a compelling

case that it is a direct iconographic allusion to Teotihuacan, or more precisely to a cult of sacred warfare associated with that metropolis in the Early Classic period. The War Serpent appears in a variety of artistic contexts, but is perhaps most common in Maya sources as the helmet or headdress of warriors. He is distinguished usually by a shell platelet “skin,” a curved brow-ridge, and a prominent row of front teeth. He may in fact combine serpent and coyote characteristics, although Taube has suggested serpent and jaguar associations in his analyses. His hieroglyphic name in Maya was recognized some years ago in independent work by the author and by Schele (cited in Schele and Freidel 1990), among others. It appears in several inscriptions, but two noteworthy cases are found on the Marcador of Tikal and Stela 6 of Copán—two monuments with strong Teotihuacan associations.¹⁹ The name is Waxaklahun U-bah Chan, or “Eighteen Are the Snake’s Heads.” While certainly obscure to us in meaning, it is intriguing to consider the possibility that this relates in some way to the eighteen heads of the very same War Serpent on the terraces of the Temple of Quetzalcoatl at Teotihuacan.

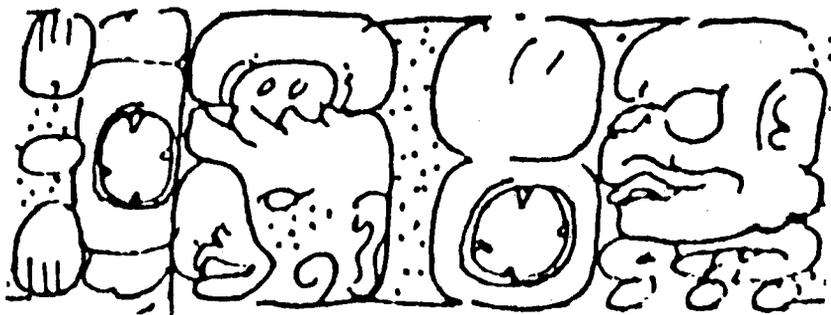


Fig. 15.23. The name of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' with the title “west Kalomte’,” Copán, Hieroglyphic Stairway. Drawing after B. Fash.

K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' remains an enigmatic character for us, viewing him as we do through the distant and removed lens of later Copán art and inscriptions. This stands in contrast to the situation at Tikal, where the history and characters I sketched were for the most part contemporary with the sources. Little can be said of his personal or political history, except that the Period Ending 9.0.0.0 8 Aha' 13 Ceh features heavily in later references to him (on Stela 63, among a few other texts). On this date, the beginning of the current *bak'tun* was a cosmic founding or renewal event, and its association of the “founder” K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' seems more than coincidental. The end result produces for us, perhaps as it did for the later Classic Maya, a vaguely defined, almost “primordial” persona. When coupled with his non-Maya “otherness,” K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' becomes a symbolic figure that fuses temporal, geographical, and ethnic distance, when at the same time he stands as the focal point for the entire dynastic history of the polity. Paradoxically, he seems a culture-hero of another culture.

THE TEMPLE OF THE HIEROGLYPHIC STAIRWAY

By now it should be clear that Copán makes frequent use of Teotihuacan-derived iconographic motifs on its Late Classic architectural façades. Several buildings carry such symbolism, among them Structures 10L-16, 21, 26, and 29 (B. Fash 1992), and present variations on a single complex of repeating motifs and icons, including Tlaloc masks, isolated goggles, highland-costumed warriors, coiled ropes, and Kan crosses, among other symbols. Structure 10L-16 already has been mentioned as a centrally placed ritual structure evoking the memory of the dynastic founder, but Structure 10L-26 is equally imposing a structure, famous for its ornate Hieroglyphic Stairway. Its general design is different from that of Structure 10L-16, but it clearly served as a shrine devoted to an evocation of the historical past (Stuart 1994; W. Fash et al. 1992).



Fig. 15.24. Restored left section of the Temple Inscription from Copán. Drawing by the author.

The stairway inscription is the longest known from the Maya area and presents a detailed account of the dynastic history of Copán, including mentions of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo.' It was originally built by Ruler 13 of Copán and conceived as a funerary monument for the twelfth ruler. Ruler 15 later expanded on his predecessors structure, rebuilding portions of the steps and the temple above (Stuart 1994). Unfortunately little was preserved of the upper temple when first investigated by Maudslay in the nineteenth century, and the only clear vestiges of its existence were a very large assortment of sculptured stone from its outer façade (B. Fash 1992: fig. 16) and interior walls. Whereas the exterior of the temple displayed explicit Teotihuacan iconography, the interior decoration incorporated the same visual sensibility and symbolic vocabulary into a highly ornate full-figure hieroglyphic inscription (Figure 15.24). Called simply the "Temple Inscription," this text constitutes one of the finest examples of Maya scribal art, and is perhaps one of the most intriguing Maya inscriptions ever discovered. Its significance lies not so much in its content, but in the way Teotihuacan-derived symbols were uniquely manipulated to form a type of "writing" not seen anywhere else in the Mesoamerica.

Portions of the Temple Inscription were taken to the Peabody Museum at Harvard shortly after Structure 10L-26 was first excavated, with numerous other blocks left at Copán. Still others were identified during surface excavations on Structure 10L-26 in 1987. The numerous fragments of the inscription remained unarticulated until 1992, when Barbara Fash and I made a renewed effort to reconstruct the text as much as possible, using those pieces still at Copán and photographs of the blocks stored at the Peabody Museum. Work continued intermittently until 1996, when the inscribed wall was rearticulated and placed within the Museo de Escultura Maya at Copán.²⁰ The wall originally stood at the back of the inner temple and held a wide, shallow niche. The glyphs run down the sides and across the top of this niche, which originally may have held a painted or sculpted image of some sort.

Nearly all the glyphs of the Temple Inscription are full-figure, making their decipherment difficult. What is more, many of the glyphs are in a highly unusual style exhibiting a blend of Teotihuacan and Maya forms. Some of the signs are completely unrecognizable as "proper" Maya glyphs, containing Teotihuacan-style elements and figures, and are unique in the corpus of Maya inscriptions. Other glyphs are conventional and legible as Maya. While unusual, the inscriptions visual style does conform to the visual program of the temple's outer iconography, which was very heavily decorated with Tlaloc masks, goggles, and seated Teotihuacan-style warriors. Many of these same elements appear in the full-figure glyphs, giving them a very strange appearance indeed.

In the course of drawing the individual fragments, it soon became apparent that the Teotihuacan-style glyphs and the more conventional Maya glyphs were equal in number and were placed in alternating columns. What is more, these columns are read individually, not in the conventional double-column format of most Maya texts. The resulting format presents two separate but parallel texts that are visually interwoven, one "Teotihuacan" and one Maya. Most surprising of all, further close inspection shows that the two inscriptions are presented as

individual pairs of blocks, giving a single text written in two very different-looking scripts.

An examination of the horizontal portion of the inscription (Figure 15.24) demonstrates this highly unusual format. Column pE of the horizontal band shows two "Teotihuacan" glyphs, the first composed of the number 18 and a small Tlaloc figure, the second a hybrid Tlaloc and God K (K'awil) figure. The column immediately to the right, pF, displays two standard Maya glyphs: a full-figure number 18 and, below, a "jog" gopher (ba) and God K. From the Maya signs it is abundantly clear that this is the name of Waxaklahun Ubah K'awil (18-[u]ba-K'awil). Jumping ahead to column pI, we find a frontal-view Tlaloc with a numerical coefficient of 2 above a second glyph representing a seated figure with a staff and a coefficient of 11. The column to the right, pJ, displays the Maya head variant of 2 above a *k'atun* glyph, and below, a clearly recognizable full-figure version of "11 tuns." I would posit, then, that the frontal-view Tlaloc functions as an equivalent in some manner to the *k'atun* (7,200-day) period, and that the seated figure with the staff serves as a *tun* equivalent. In column pK, the combination of 8 and a goggled-eyed figure in a cartouche is placed next to "8 Ahau" in pL, and similarly in pM, an 8 attached to an incomplete zoomorphic creature appears next to "8 Zotz." When combined, these calendrical glyphs give the date 9.16.5.0.0 8 Ahau 8 Zotz, the dedication date of the temple and also of Stela M, placed at the foot of the Hieroglyphic Stairway.

The pattern holds remarkably well for many of the glyphs, yet for other juxtaposed pairs the equivalencies are not so evident. In column pG, for example, two Teotihuacan-style glyphs seem to have no clear relationship to the name of Ruler 14 that appears to their side in column pH. Despite some ambiguous pairings, however, there can be little doubt that the Temple Inscription is made of two roughly parallel texts, one in a "Teotihuacan" script, apparently to be read first, and a "translation," if you will, in standard Maya. Because of its clear affinities to Maya conventions, one might consider the Teotihuacan glyphs as an elaborate "type-face" or "font" that was deemed visually and thematically appropriate to the temple and its Teotihuacan flavor. As mentioned, this inscription is unique in its visual presentation and structure, and stands as one of the most fascinating Maya texts in existence. Much work remains to be done on the full implications of this exciting inscription.

An important aspect of the Temple Inscription is its obvious dichotomous structure, wherein the Teotihuacan and Maya glyphs are viewed as completely separate, with their own repertoire of signs and aesthetic qualities. There is an almost alien sense to these glyphs that was acknowledged by the ancient scribe who composed it, and appreciated by the audience that read it (or tried to!). This tends to confirm that the Teotihuacan style was considered distinct in some manner from that of the ordinary Maya canon. Like K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', the temple evokes the idea of ethnic otherness, of another place.

The interpretation of this temple as an ancestral dynastic shrine seems incapable, given the textual record of the stairway leading up to it. The inscription recounts the events in the lives of all of the known Copán kings, beginning with K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'. Significantly, the earliest dates and historical events of

the stairway inscription were inscribed on the upper steps, where the text began. As Houston has argued, the architectural settings of hieroglyphic stairways take advantage of this temporal aspect, taking the reader back in time as he or she nears the temple above. The ascent of the pyramid constitutes a sort of "time travel," with the summit being an origin point. In the case of Structure 10L-26, an ascent to the summit would involve not only a journey to a previous era, but to a place cloaked in the imagery of highland Mexico. In the case of the histories of Copán and Tikal, the past was a foreign country.

MAYA IMAGES OF POLITICAL FOUNDATION AND PRIMORDIAL HISTORY

Much of this Copán evidence agrees with Stone's (1989) powerful interpretations of Late Classic warrior stelae from Piedras Negras, where Teotihuacan-like symbolism and dress are a constant theme. She suggests that such symbolism was seen by the Classic Maya as decidedly foreign, consciously appropriated within certain artistic contexts to emphasize their own ranked "disconnection" from society at large. The two parallel inscriptions from the temple of Structure 10L-26, however difficult they may be to read and interpret, perhaps best illustrate this inherent "otherness" of Teotihuacan symbolism in the Maya world, but I would argue that there is a strong temporal dimension to such evocations as well. By the Late Classic, Teotihuacan was no longer the dominant force it once was in Mesoamerica, or at least in the Maya area, and may even have "collapsed" at or before the time the Copán buildings were constructed. The evocation of Teotihuacan by a Maya artist or ruler therefore cannot help but call to mind the historical past and Teotihuacan's place in it.

Such nuanced symbolism is suggested further, I believe, by the drastic differences we find between references to Teotihuacan in Maya art and writing from Early Classic and Late Classic times. Tikal's direct use of Teotihuacan icons and imagery in the Early Classic certainly reveals its close (I argue) political association with the highlands, but it is important here to emphasize that this is a contemporary association. Teotihuacan costumes and religious iconography are often indistinguishable from the imagery produced at Teotihuacan itself. The Late Classic Maya uses of Teotihuacan symbols become progressively more distant from their Central Mexican origins. Elements such as the "year sign" device and visages of Tlaloc are more hybrid in form, making use of very Maya aesthetic conventions, as the architectural decorations at Copán demonstrate. As the interactions between the central highlands and the Maya area changed throughout the Classic period, becoming less intimate and direct, the manner in which Maya artisans and rulers represented Central Mexican visual forms changed as well, becoming more infused local Maya conventions, while at the same time emphasizing notions of distance and disconnection.

Maya images of historical events and people from the distant past lend weight to this interpretation, for they regularly use Teotihuacan-derived symbolism to lend them what might be called an "aged look." Panel 2 from Piedras Negras is one example (Figure 15.25). Its scene depicts several warriors all dressed in a Teotihuacan mode, as shown by the trapeze-and-ray helmet devices, square shields, and a standing goggled figure. The inscription of this panel records the

Long Count date in the year 658 C.E. and an anniversary ceremony that year celebrated by Ruler 2 of Piedras Negras. The text next goes on to recall the same ceremony involving an Early Classic ruler in 510 C.E. There is no way to be sure which date goes with the scene depicted, but it is significant that the many named figures on the scene, including several individuals from Yaxchilán and Bonampak as well as a "young lord" from Piedras Negras, are nowhere recorded in other Late Classic inscriptions. I believe that the scene probably depicts the earlier of the two featured ceremonies—a "historical" scene in the distant past.



Fig. 15.25. Piedras Negras Panel 2. Drawing by the author.

Another Piedras Negras monument, Stela 40, bears a highly unusual scene of a scattering ruler above what appears to be a large ancestral "bust" figure inside an open tomb (Figure 15.26). "Earth" markings on the ground where the ruler kneels indicates that the lower image is in some subterranean structure or crypt. In any event, the ancestral image wears a mosaic Teotihuacan War Serpent headdress (Stone 1989). I would not claim that this marks the figure as being from Teotihuacan, but would think that at the very least it shows the entombed figure to be one of the past, in contrast to the living king who is shown above. Similarly, a recently excavated panel from Palenque dates to the Late Classic, probably to the reign of Kan Balam II in the late seventh or early eighth century C.E., yet bears a date falling on 490 C.E., firmly in the Early Classic. It is difficult to determine what happened on this day, but it may have been the historical foundation of what we today call Palenque, whose ancient name was Lakamha' (Stuart and Houston 1994). According to the inscription, the scene is of the Early Classic ruler Akul Anab, who wears a War Serpent headdress and other Teotihuacan imagery in his costume.

Finally, returning to Copán, the Fashes (chapter 14 of this volume) point out something altogether striking about how the image of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' changed in Copán art. We have seen that he is overtly connected with Mexican imagery in the Late Classic art, as Coggins (1988) has pointed out. However, the

more recent discovery of an Early Classic disc altar beneath the Hieroglyphic Stairway—the so called Motmot marker—shows us the most contemporary portrait of this founder king. It was presumably created by the second ruler, K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's son, who is shown on the right-hand side, facing his father. There is nothing in the founder's portrait to suggest any connection at all to Teotihuacan or a foreign association. Based on the quantity of Teotihuacan-derived artifacts found in the excavations of the early acropolis, I feel Copán's historical connections with the highlands were real but somehow "played down" in the contemporary portraits of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'. By the Late Classic, centuries later, the founder is consistently shown in a Teotihuacan mode, communicating a definite ethnic otherness for the founder. However, the contrast with the Early Classic portrait suggests also that his Mexican dress and style may be used to evoke the related notion of the primordial past, the time of "foundation."

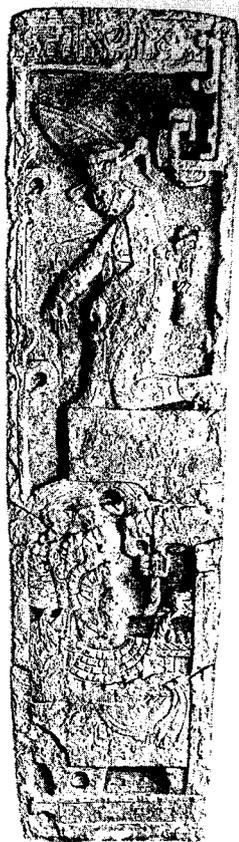


Fig. 15.26. Piedras Negras Stela 40. Photograph courtesy of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania.

These examples suggest that Maya representations of the past may have consciously tapped into an archaistic Teotihuacan "look." Yet not all instances of Teotihuacan-style costumery in the later Maya art are so explicitly connected to early historical events. The elaborate butterfly-jaguar warrior costumes of Dos Pilas Stela 2 and Yaxchilán Lintel 25 are worn by contemporary rulers who stand above captives, yet it is possible that these too allude to the past in some way as conscious historical "reenactments" of a time when the warrior culture of highland Mexico was a more visible force in the Maya area. The reasons militaristic images are so central to the hybrid Teotihuacan-Maya style are complex and beyond the scope of this study (Stone 1989), yet I believe that their significance at Copán and many other sites is sometimes secondary to the greater archaistic effect of lending age and remoteness to portraits and architecture. Significantly, Copán's texts all but ignore military themes and subjects, making the militaristic imagery of Temples 26 and 16 all the more unusual and remote. It was probably quite intentional there as a means of expressing the temporal distance of the founding father and his possible non-Maya ethnicity.

PLACE OF CATTAILS: THE MAYA NAME FOR TEOTIHUACAN

Thus far we have examined the different characterizations of Teotihuacan as found in two important Maya cities. Both present in their official histories and political art a strong connection to the Mexican highlands that is rooted in specific historical events concerning the establishment of new political orders.

In her perceptive study of Teotihuacan imagery in the Piedras Negras monuments, Stone (1989) makes an important point that the "disconnection" evident in their use of non-Maya symbolism is strikingly similar to a pattern widely seen in Postclassic Mesoamerican sources, where "foreigners" are repeatedly mentioned as major players in politics and in mythologies of origin. Among the Postclassic Maya, we need look no further than the powerful Itzá, who are identified as arriving in Yucatán from the land of Zuyuyá, located to the west. Even the mere claim to a foreign affiliation was important for elites who wished to identify themselves as something apart from society at large. As Stone notes, "Claims for foreign affiliation were a favored form of propping up elite hierarchies in Yucatan from at least the Terminal Classic" (1989: 167). She posits that the Late Classic stelae at Piedras Negras do much the same thing, infusing a "Mexican-ness" into the Maya representations of political and military authority. Stone is convincing in showing the time-depth of these ideas, and sees them as being based on "ideological manipulation rather than historical events." As the above discussions make clear, I agree with her important observations, but would differ in assessing the origins of such powerful symbolism. For the Classic Maya, I would argue that claims of foreign descent *were* based on historical realities of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, when intrusions and arrivals from the highlands occurred with some frequency.

The cultural intersections presented in the Classic texts and iconography therefore reflect some important themes that would repeat themselves in Mesoamerican mythic histories. An origin from some removed locale, a journey with stops along the way, the arrival at the new settlement where order is established and the world

renewed—all these elements can be found to some degree or another in a number of historical chronicles from the Postclassic era. I suggest that the inklings of history that we read of at Tikal and Copán represent precursors of this paradigm, but would insist again on its basis in certain historical realities, particularly as seen in the central Petén histories.

In the Postclassic and colonial histories throughout Mesoamerica, an elemental concept that exerts a powerful historical and cultural presence was Tollan or Tula, the “Place of Cattails.” It represented a place of origin and foundation for a great many political powers, ranging from the Mexica Aztec imperial dynasty to the comparatively diminutive kingdom of the Cakchiquel Maya. It is cited throughout Yucatán and Oaxaca, as well, as a paradigmatic place of beginnings for political, social, and cultural institutions. The people of Tollan, the Toltec, represented for the Mexica Aztec all that was cultured and civilized, a model to be emulated by all rulers and elites. The subject of Tollan and its historical and mythic dimensions have been explored elsewhere many times (e.g., Carrasco 1982), and it is generally considered to be a Postclassic phenomenon in Mesoamerica. The identity of the historical Tollan has been debated for decades, but the general consensus now holds that the present-day archaeological site of Tula, Hidalgo, is likely to be “the” Tollan. In fact, the written sources speak of many Tollans, suggesting that the name might best be considered an alternative term for “city” (Carrasco 1982).

Surprisingly, perhaps, Classic Maya sources present important evidence concerning the original identity of the Place of Cattails. Several iconographic scenes from the Maya region use the Maya “cattail, reed” sign as a toponym, in each case in direct association with Teotihuacan-derived symbolism.

Lintel 2 of Temple I at Tikal (Figure 15.20) was earlier mentioned as a possible portrait of Spear-Thrower Owl, who I conjecture to have been a Teotihuacan ruler. Aside from this particular speculation, Taube (1992) pointed out the toponymic band at the base of the scene displays images of plants native to the central highlands. These he identifies as the barrel cactus and grass (Figure 15.27 [a]). The scene on the lintel is dominated by the Teotihuacan War Serpent, who stands behind and above a seated ruler with the accouterments of a highland warrior. According to Taube, the intent is to show the Maya ruler, literally or figuratively, as in the arid highlands where such plants are native. I wholeheartedly agree with Taube’s interpretation, but there is one slight modification to offer. The plant motif he identifies as grass is more precisely a representation of a cattail or reed. The Maya form of this sign (Figure 15.27 [b]) is visually related to the Aztec day-sign “Reed.” As a Maya hieroglyph it functions as the syllable *pu* (Stuart 1987). In several Mayan languages, *pu* or *puh* means “reed, cattail,” or “bulrush.”

This Maya cattail glyph, abstracted in some cases to an unnaturalistic design, occurs in close association with other examples of Teotihuacan-style iconography. On the stucco façade of Acanceh, Yucatán, this sign alternates with highly unusual representations of animals outfitted in Teotihuacan-like costume and associated symbols (Figure 15.28). The cattail glyphs here may have a

locational function, much as Taube suggested on the Tikal lintel. In a similar way, large stacked cattail signs decorate the background of another Maya sculpture from the Palenque region (Figure 15.29). The fragmentary tablet depicts seated figures who flank a standing individual in the center. The objects held in the hands of the two kneeling men are bowls containing large Teotihuacan Tlaloc heads. The standing figure, though incomplete, is dressed in Teotihuacan-style costume replete with War Serpent sandals.

Finally, I point out the presence of the cattail glyph as part of the name phrases of two prominent historical figures mentioned in this paper. At Copán, the name K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' is accompanied by a Copán emblem glyph, standard in all respects save for the inclusion of the *pu* sign along with the ever-present bat

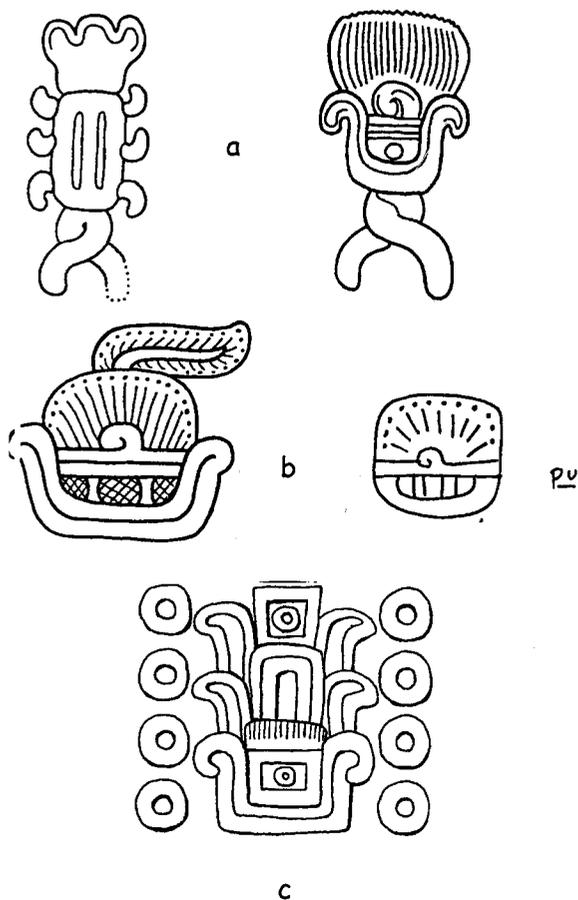


Fig. 15.27. "Reed" glyphs: a. A barrel cactus and a reed, from the toponymic register of Tikal, Temple I, Lintel 2; b. Reed glyph from stucco frieze at Acanceh, Yucatán, compared with *pu* hieroglyph; c. Mexica day sign Acatl.

head (Figure 15.30 [a]). This may have a purely phonetic role in the spelling of the Copán polity name, but it is possible that it labels the dynastic founder as of the “cattail place.” Similarly, we find the *pu* sign in a title of Nun Yax Ayin of Tikal, on the side of Stela 31 (Figure 15.30 [b]). The same ambiguity exists as to the function of the sign, for it may be present to represent solely the sound *pu* in combination with other signs.

Taken together, the evidence shows that the cattail glyph is noticeably placed in scenes evoking Teotihuacan styles and associations. Arguably, it specifies the location of such scenes as occurring in the Place of the Cattails, or Tollan. It follows that Copán and other Maya sites of the Classic period presented their stories of ancestral origin and political foundation in much the same way as later Maya groups in Yucatán and Guatemala, who in the ethnohistoric sources make reference to Central Mexico and Tula as places where elite authority was derived. The well-known legends and representations of Tollan as a place of origin have up to now been associated with Postclassic sources almost exclusively, but I

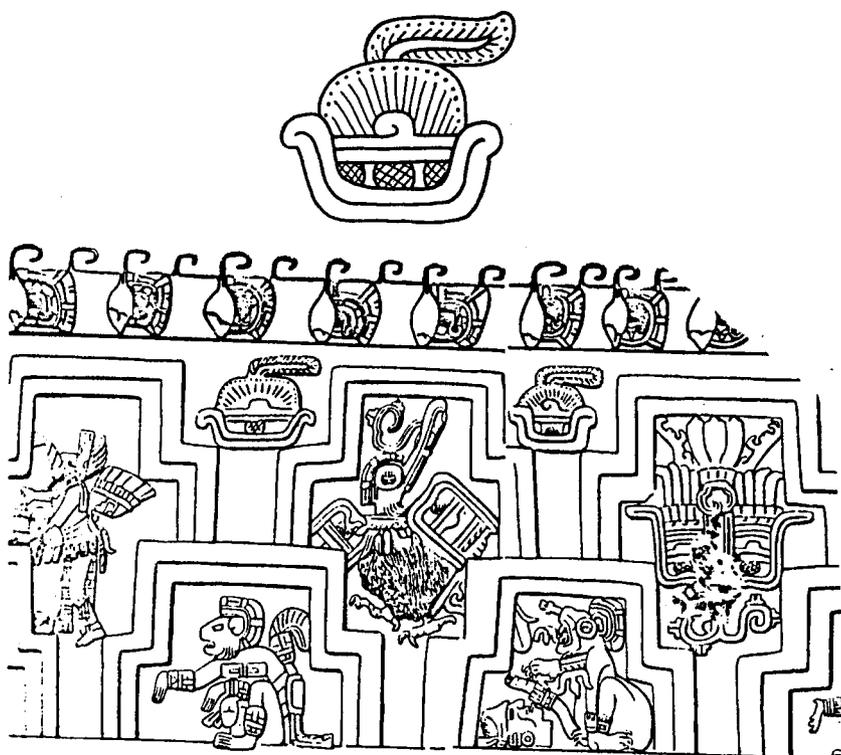


Fig. 15.28. Portion of the stucco frieze from Acanceh, Yucatán (from Seler 1902–23: plate 11).

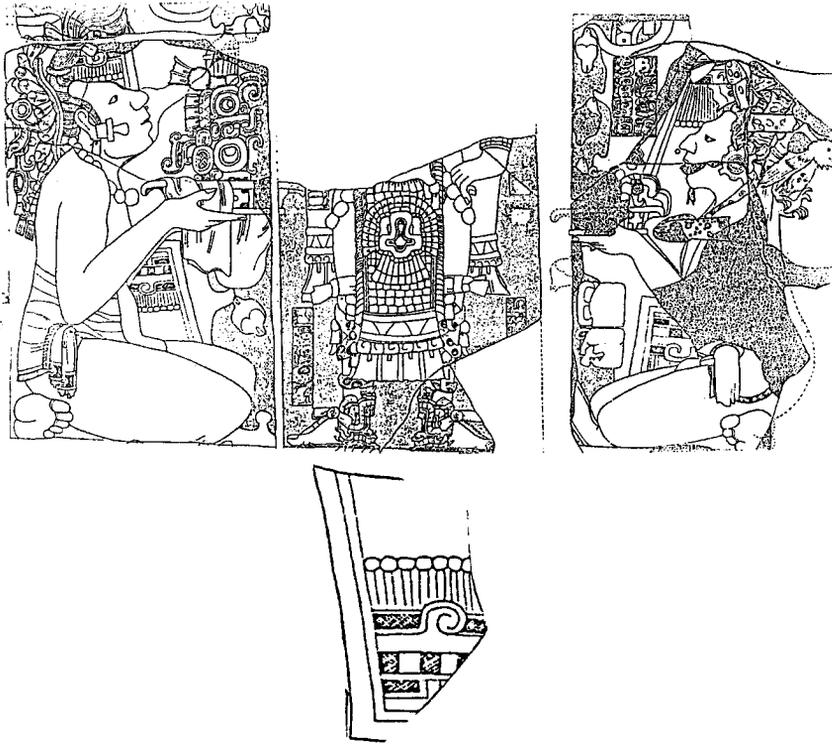


Fig. 15.29. The "Jonuta Panel" from Palenque, with detail of "reed" design.

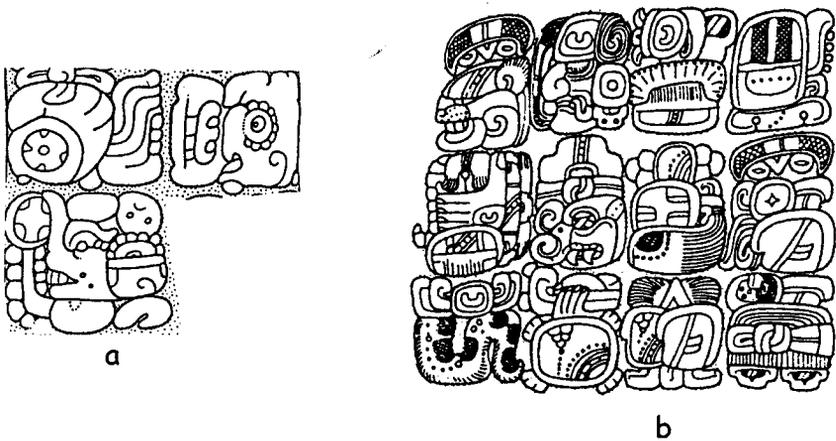


Fig. 15.30. "Reed" glyphs in with the names of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' of Copán and Nun Yax Ayin of Tikal: a. Copán, Stela 11, drawing by B. Fash; b. Tikal, Stela 31, drawing by W. R. Coe.

would like to entertain the likelihood that such ideas and conceptualizations have considerable more time-depth in the Maya area and probably other areas of Mesoamerica. Many "Tulas" are known from later Mesoamerica, but my own Maya perspective leads me to agree that Teotihuacan was held as the first ideal city, the primordial Tollan.

CONCLUSIONS

The notion that that Classic Maya political centers such as Copán and Tikal claimed a certain "Toltec" heritage based on historical events challenges a number of strongly held assumptions about Maya culture history. We can no longer be satisfied with simply viewing the Maya use of Teotihuacan symbolism as the appropriation of foreign visual forms that communicate aspects of elite ideology and militarism. These ideas are true enough, but I sense much more lies behind the artistic and archaeological evidence of this interaction. Here I have used written sources from the Classic period to suggest that the Teotihuacan presence in the Maya lowlands was intense and sometimes disruptive during the Early Classic period, with profound political changes at Tikal. My interpretations are based on relatively recent decipherments, but agree with the overall picture presented earlier by Proskouriakoff (1993) and Coggins (1979a). If Teotihuacan was in some manner politically dominant in this region during the Early Classic, as I believe it was, Maya kings would nonetheless continue to refer to the great highland center for centuries to come in their own political and ritual texts, even long after Teotihuacan declined. It became an idealized concept more than anything else, a place from which people and forces came to leave their mark on the Maya world. It represented a paradigm through which Maya rulers could define themselves and their historical pedigree. From a wider Mesoamerican perspective, such a pattern strikes a familiar cord, and in its structure much of what I have presented reflects long-established understandings of indigenous history and its conceptualization. What is novel, I hope, is the demonstration that the Classic Maya were participants in this long-lived paradigm of historicism, where highlands and lowlands participated in ancient patterns of contact and movement, and of mutual influence and awareness. Late Classic Maya dynasties and the elite communities that surrounded them defined themselves at least in part through the remembrance of the old and distant "Place of Cattails," what the later Nahua would know as Tollan-Teotihuacan.

NOTES

1. These varied interpretations of the lowland Maya evidence strikingly recall a similar debate that followed the excavations of Mounds A and B at Kaminaljuyú (Kidder, Jennings, and Shook 1946), where evidence of Mexican contact during the Esperanza phase was strong and seemingly pervasive. Kidder et al. suggested a military conquest of Kaminaljuyú by Teotihuacan warrior-merchants, whereas Borhegyi (1956) later emphasized the absorption of a Teotihuacan "cosmopolitan" fashion by local elites. Borhegyi (1965) would later reject this alternative in favor of the conquest scenario. Economic dimensions of the relationship between highland Guatemala and Teotihuacan were emphasized by Sanders and Price (1968), and subsequent work at Kaminaljuyu advanced such theories in more detail (Sanders and Michels 1977).

2. Even with the excavations of numerous other central Petén sites, the concentration at Tikal of Teotihuacan styles remains striking and simply unparalleled. In their studies of Altar de Sacrificios and Seibal, for example, Adams (1971) and Sabloff (1975) noted relatively little evidence of Teotihuacan-associated ceramics during the Early Classic. Rather, such material seems spatially grouped around the central and northern Petén region, including sites such as Tikal, Uaxactún, as well as Río Azul. Lincoln (1985) offers a reassessment of Early Classic ceramic chronology, suggesting that the Tzakol 3 phase of the central Petén was perhaps a localized "elite/ceremonial subcomplex" that overlapped significantly with both Tzakol 1 and 2. This chronological revision remains to be confirmed, but it is safe to say that the northern Petén, and Tikal and Uaxactún in particular, constituted the lowland focus of this highland contact. It was not very widespread.

3. As noted, the names "Great Paw" or "Jaguar Paw" are only convenient labels and do not purport to be true translations of the original Mayan name. It is difficult to say what the original name might have been, but three elements are consistent: *chak*, *to* or *tok* (?), and the "paw" element. The paw can be replaced by a head variant showing a skull, with the jaguar paw protruding as its nose. In other contexts, the simple paw can have the value *ich'ak*, or "claw," but the odd head variant here may indicate something different. If I were to offer a tentative hieroglyphic transcription of the name, it would be Chak-Tok-Ich' Ak. This may be a member of a distinctive class of personal names where colors such as *chak* ("red") pair with *tok* ("cloud?") and a variable final sign. Due to the ambiguities, however, I prefer for the time being to retain the nickname "Jaguar Paw."

4. The El Temblor stela was recorded some years ago by Ian Graham, and photographs and drawings are now on file in the archive of the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions Program at the Peabody Museum. The monument was damaged by looters and is incomplete, but bears parts of an inscription on its two narrow sides. One side gives a Long Count date that is difficult to reconstruct with much assurance, followed by a verb for "accession." On the other side, records of other events include the accession of Jaguar Paw of Tikal, but unfortunately again the date is too damaged to read. Whatever the date, it would have to fall some time before the Period Ending 8.17.0.0.0. recorded on Tikal Stela 31.

5. The more recent excavations at the Mundo Perdido area of Tikal suggest a Teotihuacan influence in Manik-phase ceramics before this date in the late fourth century (LaPorte and Fialko 1990). This does not run counter to Proskouriakoff's supposition that the 11 Eb date was important to this phenomenon, however, for the greatest concentration of such highland material still appears at around this time, tied into dynastic history through the North Acropolis excavations (Coggins 1975). I should caution, also, that the internal seriation of Tzakol-Manik ceramics may eventually be reworked, as Lincoln (1985) has called into question the exclusivity of its subphases. The dating revisions of Teotihuacan influence as proposed at the Mundo Perdido seem to rely on the original seriations, and should be evaluated anew once the chronology is more refined.

6. In its simplest form, his name glyph contains two signs, the "birth frog" and "fire." Their order varies, but more complex examples of the name reveal the actual reading. On Stela 4 at Tikal, the birth frog is expanded into a full birth glyph, *SIH-ya-ha*, showing the spelling of the verbal suffix *-ah* after the root *sih*, "be born." Other names at Tikal are known to use this verb, such as Siyah Chan K'awil, where the verb endings can drop off on occasion. Given these parallels, I opt to read the name in full as Siyah K'ak', or "Fire Is Born."

7. The death associations for the *och-ha'* or "enters water" glyph derive from the significance of the underworld as a watery place of death and resurrection (e.g., Schele and Miller 1986: 267; Hellmuth 1987). Significantly, this glyph is the one event written in the short text painted on the wall of a tomb at Río Azul, Guatemala, apparently referring to the demise of the tomb's occupant.

8. Stela 18 of Tikal also names Siyah K'ak', but the inscription is almost completely gone. The date is 8.18.0.0.0 (396 C.E.), when Nun Yax Ayin was ruler. The text closes in much the same way as Stela 4, stating that the king is "the lord of" Siyah K'ak'.

9. Mention should be made of another probable reference to Siyah K'ak' in a much later Tikal text (MT34) inscribed on a Late Classic bone "hairpin" excavated in Burial 116, illustrated by Jones (1987: fig. 6). This was one of a set of six such needles, all bearing short statements with dates, names, and events revolving around this early period of Tikal's history. Nun Yax Ayin is named on one (MT35) as is perhaps also Spear-Thrower Owl (MT32). The date associated with Siyah K'ak' on MT34 is probably 8.17.0.15.7.9 Manik 10 Xul, or 145 days before his arrival as recorded at Tikal and Uaxactún. If so, this would be the earliest known event to be associated with him. The event is unclear, but I wonder in speculation if it may refer to his "departure" toward the Petén. I will discuss these interesting texts at length in another study.

10. I can not offer a literal translation of the name, but prefer to use the label "Spear-Thrower Owl" used by Schele and Freidel (1990), at least for the time being. The other nicknames cited here are less accurate descriptions of the name glyph, since "shield" and "cauac" are both problematic identifications. Mathews (cited in Schele and Freidel 1990: 450) has proposed that the "cauac" element is phonetic *ku* used to spell the documented word for owl, variously *ku*, *kuh*, or *kuy*. Grube and Schele greatly expand on Mathews's reading. In the case of this Tikal name, however, I hesitate to accept the *ku* reading, since the form of the "cauac" sign is so different from other *ku* syllables. Rather, I think this sign after the spear-thrower element remains to be deciphered, although it is clearly in free substitution for the owl, as Schele originally demonstrated.

11. Very recently Justin Kerr kindly shared with me his photographs of an Early Classic Tzakol 3 lidded tripod bearing an important reference to Spear-Thrower Owl (Kerr no. 7528). There the name is written with the standard spear-thrower and the head variant of "cauac," similar in some ways to the head used in the name on the Tikal Marcador stone, and thus strengthening the identification of that name as equivalent. Simon Martin noted the same connection when studying the vessel (Martin, personal communication 1997).

12. This interpretation of the Marcador passage, while tentative, is based upon the verb *yi-ta-(hi)* that precedes the name of Spear-Thrower Owl, after the record of the arrival. I once considered that this served as a relationship expression for "sibling," but this now seems unlikely. Despite the revision, the older reading has gained a strong foothold in the literature, and was even used to posit specific kin relations between some of these actors in Tikal history (Schele and Freidel 1990). There is no doubt in my view, however, that it is a verb with no "sibling" connection whatsoever. This verb is found in many inscriptions where it gives the sense that the subject is witnessing or overseeing the action stated previously. It is just possible that the root of the verb is *ita* < *il-ta*, "look at" (cf. colonial Tzotzil, *it-o*, "look here!"). This reading will be explored further in a paper now under preparation.

13. Stela 32 of Tikal (Figure 15.3) shows the small but recognizable remains of a crested owl on the chest of the warrior, precisely where the *lechuza y armas* medallions are found on the ceramic figurines illustrated. Virginia Fields (cited in Schele and Freidel 1990: 449-450) has linked this to the Spear-Thrower Owl glyph, leading me to suggest, albeit tentatively, that this likewise is a portrait of Nun Yax Ayin's father.

14. A fact pointed out to me by Bridget Hodder Stuart.

15. Lest this sound too far-fetched, I would point out that a similar "disjunction" of figural time frames is found on the panels of the Cross Group at Palenque. There each panel shows two facing views of the ruler Kan Balam II. One portrait is of him on the day of his accession, the other smaller one as a six-year-old child. Again, the scale of the figures is highly naturalistic, as I suggest might be the case on Stela 31.

16. The similarity of this Calendar Round date to 5 Caban 10 Yaxk'in, the accession date of Nun Yax Ayin of Tikal, is interesting but likely coincidental.

17. The building name is probably found in Early Classic inscriptions at Tikal, Tres Islas, and Río Azul as *wi-te-nah*. The equivalence is based on the common Teotihuacan associations of both glyphs, the apparent fact that they are building names, and that *wi*-occurs with the crossed-bundles version on Lintel 25 of Yaxchilán. Interestingly, in a possible parallel to its Copán occurrence with K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', the *wi-te-nah* house name appears on Stela 31 of Tikal in connection with the inauguration statement of Yax Nun Ayin.

18. The sign representing the crossed torch bundles is not yet deciphered in my view, but may point to the structure serving as a place of ritual fire and burning. Such an interpretation needs to be considered further, but it is in agreement with the fire-related themes Taube suggests for Structure 10L-16 at Copán (personal communication, 1996) and in Taube's chapter in the present volume.

19. The War Serpent is also named twice on the set of bones from Tikal Burial 116, which appear to relate episodes of Early Classic Tikal history around the time of the "arrival event" (see note 8).

20. Karl Taube and Barbara Fash were important contributors to the reconstruction work in 1996. I would like to thank James Fitzsimmons of Harvard University and Jennifer Smit of the University of Michigan for their help in the recording and photography of the assembled text.

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