

THE EMERGENCE OF THE MAYA TLALOC:  
A LATE CLASSIC RELIGIOUS ICON

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Iconography has the capability to memorialize and guarantee one's place in history; iconography can also provide powerful insight into human culture, and explore social and cultural values in a visual manner. Iconography can incorporate information about group identities, allegiances, religious affiliations, propaganda, and acceptance within both modern and ancient societies. By studying a specific iconographic figure, the Central Mexican god Tlaloc, as a visual representation of a belief or identity, we can glean a greater understanding of the cultural transmission of iconographic symbols. The substantial use of this icon, in both Central Mexico and the Maya region, reveals iconography as capable of being catalogued and traced over space and time to interpret meaning. With these goals in mind, this research project focuses on the iconographic representations of the Central Mexican god Tlaloc in the Maya region. It was during the Early Classic Period (A.D. 250-550) that Tlaloc transcended the boundaries of Central Mexico and was adopted into Maya ideology. During the Late Classic Period (A.D.550-900), a 'Maya Tlaloc' was established and used to express ideologies depicting warfare and ritual activity. The adoption of Tlaloc imagery among the ancient Maya ultimately holds significant value to understanding Maya ideology and religion as well as facilitates an understanding of wide-scale interactions with Central Mexico.

Dedicated to Toyie V. Groff Frost,  
my loving mother and friend

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Iconography played an important role in the expression of culture and religion among the ancient civilizations of Mesoamerica. With its ability to communicate religious, social, and cultural values, iconography has intrigued generations of Mesoamerican archaeologists. Deity veneration, political propaganda, and the supernatural world are the most common iconographic themes among these ancient societies (Schele and Freidel 1990, Stone 1989).

In common with other Mesoamerican civilizations, the ancient Maya believed that the physical world was intertwined with the supernatural. The mosaic of beliefs that surrounded their conceptions of human existence and the material world were expressed through an intricate pantheon of gods, goddesses, and animal deities. Within this complex Maya pantheon, one god in particular -Tlaloc- transcended the boundaries of Central Mexico and was adopted throughout the Maya region. During the Late Classic Period (A.D. 550-900), a 'Maya Tlaloc' was established and used to express ideologies depicting warfare and ritual activity. The adoption of Tlaloc imagery among the ancient Maya ultimately holds significant value for understanding the cultural transmission of iconographic symbols.

### *Iconography and Propaganda*

Archaeologists understand the importance of landscape and geography. Landscape, as defined by Anschuetz, Wilshusenm, and Scheick (2001:160-161), is a process of four interrelated paradigms. (1) Landscapes are not synonymous with natural



environments; they are synthetic. (2) Landscapes are worlds of cultural product. (3) Landscapes are the arena for all of a community's activities. And, (4) landscapes are dynamic constructions, with each community and each generation imposing its own cognitive map on an anthropogenic world of interconnected morphology, arrangement, and coherent meaning. Together, landscape and geography are linked to form the human concept of space, meaning that human ideals are expressed through the manipulation of the land. As such, this manipulation conceptualizes and identifies space, giving it significance. Landscape and geography exert a strong influence on human behavior today, and archaeologists are conscious of the implications of this influence in the past. The understanding of past concepts of landscape, geography, and space provide a theoretical window into the mind frame of an ancient culture. Just as geography and landscape have influenced human behavior, human behavior has expressed and communicated thought through the manipulation of the environment and landscape. This *built environment* refers to the physical alteration of the natural environment through construction by humans (Lawrence and Low 1990). It is this built environment that defines and characterizes human patterns of subsistence, as well as social and political institutions. With the formation of complex political and religious organizations, rules for the way in which a landscape can express human thoughts were altered and re-arranged.

Population surges modified the organization of human thought by creating a need for formal political structure. The erection of large-scale public structures in response to this population increase fundamentally changed the built environment. Some of these alterations occurred under the guise of propaganda and governmental control. Propaganda, as defined by Marcus (1992:11, following Ellul 1973), is a special type of

speech, art, or writing whose goal is to influence the attitude of specific groups of people. Propaganda provided the platform for higher authority to gain control of the masses. With change in the meaning of landscape from small-localized order to large organized control, the built environment became a billboard for the expression of political agendas.

With the initiation of organized politics, spatial boundaries of sovereignty and influence were established. Every place became defined and identified by its boundaries, names, and alliances with other states or group organizations. Ana María Alonso supports these limitations in her article 'The Politics of Space, Time and Substance: State Formation, Nationalism, and Ethnicity.' Alonso (1994:383-384) states that:

The enclosure, measurement, and commodification of space have been key for the production of the modern notion of a national territory bounded by frontiers that sharply distinguish inside from outside: Baptized with a proper name, space becomes national property, a sovereign patrimony fusing place, property, and heritage, whose perpetuation is secured by the state.

Administrative and legal structures are often infused with memories and events important to that particular place in history, and are expressed through important symbols and images (Brunn 2002). These symbols are often expressed as iconography. These same symbols can provide identities, allegiances, and acceptance within a nation (Brunn and Yanarella 1987).

As defined by George Kubler (1975:16), iconography is the study, identification, description, classification, and interpretation of symbols, themes, and subject matter in the visual arts. Many iconographic symbols provide the basis for nationalism, cultural identity, religious affiliation, and, potentially, even political segregation, corruption, and conflict (Hooson 1994). Iconography is information that can be used to promote nationalism, regionalism, religion, and education. The appearance of iconography in

public spaces such as buildings and streets demonstrates the significance of symbols or icons in maintaining cultural identities (Brunn 2002). Gottman (1952:516; 1973) has discusses the importance of iconography to the formation of territories, boundaries, and iconography. He describes iconography as:

the whole system of symbols in which a people believe. These symbols are many and varied. A national 'iconography' in our sense encompasses the national flag, the proud memories of past history as well as the principles of the prevailing religion, the generally accepted roles of economics, the established social hierarchy, the heroes in the schools, the classic authors, and so forth and so on.

These same images that communicate human expression can also be used by the state to manipulate public opinion through targeted commemorations. Early Egyptian texts record the names of rulers in sequences, termed 'king lists' (Marcus 1992:10 following Wilson 1951, Emery 1961). These lists (and other various inscriptions) record the accomplishments of these rulers and chronicle their connection to the 'gods.' However, most of these monuments convey a narrow range of subject matter, and were a form of public coercion (Marcus 1992:10); that is, they reinforced the legitimacy of the pharaonic throne through iconography and convinced the masses that their king was of divine descent. This, in turn, legitimized his control of the people. Basically, myth or legend becomes integrated within history; in turn, history is then manipulated for the propagation of status or declaration to the throne (Marcus 1974: 84). This false advertisement serves to manipulate public opinion, and can alter the state of the built environment through religious propaganda (Brunn 2002).

Other cultural groups, like the ancient Egyptians, made extensive use of iconography as a form of communication in an effort to establish, preserve, and maintain aligned religious beliefs as well as popularize specific rulers. Andrea Stone (1989)

discusses this subject using the terms “connection” versus “disconnection.” Connection is described as motifs that are adopted from an outside group in order for elite individuals to form a link with lower classes. Using iconography, rulers symbolically align themselves with important common interests of the lower class, such as farming and hunting strategies, or fertility and natural cycles. Disconnection occurs because the ruler or ruling body strives to create distance between the ruler and the ruled. This is often tied to iconography depicting warfare, and justifies the implementation of a specific dynastic line. Stone (1989:153-154) states that connection occurs at the beginning of a reign, while disconnection occurs well into rule.

Thus, iconography is able to illustrate, visually, both the adoption of external ideas and propaganda gained through contact with foreign social groups, and the internal process involved in the implementation of such iconographic elements. As a visual representation of a belief or identity, iconography has the ability to be catalogued and traced. This accessibility provides practical information on societal development, influences, and change. However, it is important that attention be brought to the danger of making assumptions about the cognitive state or thoughts of an ancient culture. In his study of ancient religious ritual propaganda, termed “the archaeology of ritual,” Robert McCauley (2007:3) focuses on the relations between ritual and artifacts as public representations of culture. These cultural artifacts provide evidence and help to explain the cognitive state of that specific group. McCauley (2007:3) argues that cognitive approaches to archaeology, ritual, and culture, generally:

exploit, among other things, the theoretical, substantive, and methodological resources of the cognitive sciences in order to gain insights about underlying psychological and cognitive constraints that shape these public representations and their connections.

Therefore, when approaching iconography of an ancient group, one must be aware that the mental depictions and states of mind pertaining to artifacts are tied up with various practices associated with those objects (McCauley 2007:4). Hence, iconography should be taken in association with other archaeological data, and interpreted holistically. With that in mind, specific iconic representations, such as the Egyptian pharaohs or Maya gods, can be associated to specific spaces both geographically and chronologically. Tracing such icons allows one to gain ideological and political knowledge on a much larger scale.

To understand how people in the past expressed ideas or beliefs in different ways across space and time, it is preferable to examine a culture with an extensive history of recorded iconography. The ancient Maya of Central America provide a vast amount of iconographic resources and historical documentation. Among other things, the iconography of the ancient Maya of Mexico, Belize, Honduras, and Guatemala has been interpreted as being representative of god worship (Schele and Mathews 1998), religious/political propaganda (Demarest et al. 2004; Marcus 1992), and outside cultural influence (Braswell 2003). Therefore, defining the difference between what constitutes “Maya territory” and “Central Mexican territory” is very important to understanding process and meaning. The outside influence, in this case, is the Central Mexican primate center of Teotihuacán. Teotihuacán is identified as a localized territory, near present day Mexico City. Teotihuacán, the city, covered ten square miles (Millon 1964:345) and was believed to have an enormous military and numerous polities under its control (Coe 1994:20). The ancient Maya, on the other hand, inhabited the present-day Yucatán Peninsula and parts of Highland Guatemala and Mexico. This geographic spread

encompasses a vast variety of natural landscapes, including high mountain ranges and low riverine basins. As such, Maya sites are typically divided into the Maya highlands and the Maya lowlands (Sharer 1994: 20). While Maya art styles were fairly uniform over a broad area, this style is very different from that found in Central Mexico. There is a clear cultural divide between the Maya and Central Mexico. As these two cultural expressions are a part of a broader shared Mesoamerican cultural tradition, it can be argued that the ancient Maya were influenced by, and in turn influenced, their neighbors' culture (Sharer 1994: 20).

One Mesoamerican god in particular, Tlaloc, a Central Mexican deity commonly associated with Teotihuacán, temporally and spatially transcended the boundaries of Central Mexico and extended into the Maya region. Imagery pertaining to Tlaloc first appeared on pottery vessels at the Central Mexican city of Tlapacoya, dating back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. (Miller and Taube 1993: 166). Through contact and trade, Tlaloc also appeared in the Maya region, initially during the Early Classic Period (A.D. 250-550) at the Maya site of Tikal (Grube 1986). It wasn't until the Late Classic period (A.D. 550-950), however, that Tlaloc emerged dominantly in both religious and political aspects of Maya art and architecture. Two specific versions of Tlaloc are found in the Maya region: "warfare" Tlaloc, and a non-warfare "ritual" Tlaloc. The latter appears at almost every Maya archaeological site, potentially representing mass adoption of an outside icon. Tlaloc imagery appeared on numerous stelae and pottery vessels in the Maya region during the Classic Period, mostly in the epicenters of large cities (Schmidt et al. 1998).

The following data demonstrates the scale of contact between Teotihuacán and the Maya region during the Classic era, and shows that the Maya were capable of

adopting outside ideologies and using them for their own religious agendas. In particular it is argued that during the Early Classic (A.D. 200-550) the image of Tlaloc was worn and used to establish power among Maya warriors and rulers. Furthermore, during the transition to the Late Classic Period Tlaloc was absorbed into the Maya pantheon and regarded as an internal religious icon and protector. It was in this time frame that the “Central Mexican Storm God” Tlaloc became the “Maya” Tlaloc. This assertion is supported by the appearance of Tlaloc in ritual activity and in the way that the Late Classic Maya portray Tlaloc’s image. In this regard, Tlaloc is depicted as a wide-scale social phenomenon that transcended cultural boundaries to become a focal point of religious worship and veneration. These claims are documented by analyzing specific sites for the contexts in which Tlaloc occurs, whether depicted in warfare activities or in non-warfare activities, such as bloodletting. Specific media such as stelae and pottery are also examined for evidence of Tlaloc imagery. This study furthers the understanding of Maya political boundaries and interactions, and documents the wide-scale influence and adoption of artistic traditions and religious propaganda from Central Mexico. How this important icon was manipulated and contextualized in the Maya area is important for understanding the cultural transmission of iconographic symbols.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE CENTRAL MEXICAN TLALOC

Understanding the characteristics of the Central Mexican Tlaloc is key to defining Tlaloc in the Maya region. Many large centers in the Central Mexican region were dominated by elites and were the focus of social and political life. One of these foremost centers was Teotihuacán (A.D.50-750), located 25 miles north of present day Mexico City. At its height in A.D. 650, Teotihuacán was one of the world's largest cities with a population of approximately 200,000 people (Pohl 1999:12). This center housed an array of symbolically structured pyramids and a pantheon of gods. The complexity of religion at Teotihuacán was expressed through a sudden increase of iconography during the early 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. (Miller and Taube 1993:18). This iconography contains images of deities that ruled over life, such as the Feathered Serpent (Quetzalcoatl), the Sun God, the Moon Goddess, Xipe Totec (the Flayed god), and the Storm God, Tlaloc. The veneration of these deities was intimately connected to the welfare of maize (the staple of life) and water (M. Coe 1994: 100-101).

Tlaloc, the Mexican god of rain and lightning, is one of the most common deities found at Teotihuacán, Mexico. Tlaloc first appears on ceramic vases from Tlapacoya dating back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. (Miller and Taube 1993: 166). One of Tlaloc's earliest roles at Teotihuacán was in association with the celebration of the solar year, in which the conjuring of rain took place (Coggins 1980:735). Later, in Postclassic Mexico (A.D. 900 to 1521), Tlaloc was believed to live in the mountain caves that were believed to bring luck, wealth, and prosperity. Tlaloc became known as the "provider," bringing the rains, which helped to nourish the land. Tlaloc's association with the Central Mexican goddess of lakes and streams, *Chalchiuhtlicue* or 'She of the Jade Skirt,' strongly indicates that he



of a male gender (Miller and Taube 1993:60,166; Ishihara et al. 2006:214). Tlaloc is also recognized as the patron of the day Mazatl, and presided over the third sun or world, 4 Quiahuitl, the sun of rain that was destroyed by fire (Miller and Taube 1993: 166).

Near Tenochtitlán, Mexico, there was a special mountain temple dedicated to Tlaloc. Contained within its walls were many offerings to Tlaloc as well as carved stone images of the deity. Within the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán, especially at the Templo Mayor, a great many stone carvings of Tlaloc occur. Two chacmools uncovered at Tenochtitlán make clear reference to Tlaloc. In these depictions, the god is set anthropomorphically among aquatic symbols. He appears with goggle-eyes and a fanged mask (Miller 1985:15). As a god, he has been described as having a face painted with black liquid rubber into which seeds were encrusted, wearing a net jacket, and having a crown constructed of heron feathers astride his head (Nicholson 1967: 96-98). In the more recognized, stylized, versions, Tlaloc often appears with lightning, maize, water, and, on occasion, holding a serpent-like lightning bolt. The features that most often distinguish Tlaloc are his goggle-eyes, large jaguar teeth, and blood scrolls next to the mouth (Miller and Taube 1993:166) ([Figure 1](#)).

Excavations at Teotihuacán near the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries uncovered many vestiges of the goggled-eyed god. Twentieth century archaeologists Eduard Seler and Hermann Beyer both concluded that the Aztec deity Tlaloc was worshipped and venerated at Teotihuacán (Beyer 1922, Seler 1912). Based on numerous findings, Tlaloc was identified as a predominant member of the Teotihuacán pantheon. In the 1940s, archaeologist Pedro Armillas undertook the first intensive analysis of imagery of the Storm God, Tlaloc. Armillas attributed many

characteristics to Tlaloc, including the jaguar, serpent, owl, quetzal, butterfly, bifurcated tongue, water lily, triple-shell symbol, spider, cross, and the Mexican year sign (Pasztory 1974:4). Since the Armillas analysis, the process of identifying Tlaloc has become more refined. With the discovery of hundreds of Teotihuacán murals and sculptures, many of the Armillas characteristics are no longer associated with Tlaloc.

Recent analysis of Tlaloc imagery at Teotihuacán has discovered specific associations with the deity. Late Teotihuacán art shows a correlation of star shapes frequently accompanying figures dressed in war attire or practicing sacrifice amid aquatic designs (Baird 1989:111). The star design has a long history at Teotihuacán originating during early time periods (A.D. 150), and was found frequently associated with aquatic motifs. During the transition into later Teotihuacán, the meaning of the star changed, frequently appearing in death, war and sacrifice scenes (Baird 1989: 105). Described as a starfish when whole and as a section of a conch shell when halved (Kubler 1967: 6, 9), the star has five points with a circle in the middle and is typically found on murals and ceramics (Baird 1989: 108, 110) ([Figure 2](#)). The strongest association of these stars is with birds (owls), jaguars, and the stylistic elements of the Storm God Tlaloc (Baird 1989:111). However, John B. Carlson (1993) associates this “star” with a Venus warfare cult and not Tlaloc. Carlson’s research focuses on the Pan-Mesoamerican practice of sacred warfare and ritual regulated by the motions of Venus. This Teotihuacán Venus warfare cult was primarily concerned with military conquest as well as water and fertility. Events, such as sacred war and human sacrifice, were timed by the position of Venus. Iconography associated with this cult contains images of Quetzalcoatl, the goggle-eyes of Tlaloc, the Great Goddess, and the glyph for Venus. This Venus glyph, represented by a

five-pointed star, is often located among imagery of water, warfare, sacrifice, and warriors (Carlson 1993: 61-64).

In her paper “the Iconography of the Teotihuacán Tlaloc,” author Ester Pasztory (1974) differentiates the images of the Postclassic Tlaloc from the other deities in Teotihuacán iconography. She illustrates Tlaloc as an anthropomorphic figure with goggle-eyes, curving upper lips with fangs, an effigy vessel in one hand, and an adze and serpent in the other. This representation of Tlaloc, she argues, is the typical Postclassic example of his image. In some depictions, Tlaloc is seen pouring water from the effigy vessel. She argues that this depiction represents homage to him. The adze and the serpent are thought to be representative of lightning (Pasztory 1974: 7).

Pasztory’s descriptions of Tlaloc are similar to those found on murals at Tetitla ([Figure 3](#)) and Tepantitla ([Figure 4](#)), Teotihuacán. At Tetitla, in addition to the typical facial features of Tlaloc, the figure carries an effigy vessel in one hand, which is painted blue, indicating that it contains water, and in the other hand a wavy spear/staff (Sejourne 1966a,b:95-98). A similar representation was also found at Tepantitla with one difference; instead of carrying a spear or staff in one hand, Tlaloc carries effigy vessels in both hands; also there is a lack of structure and scale (Pasztory 1976:94-98).

The Tetitla and Tepantitla Tlalocs are only frontal half-figure depictions, but there are examples of full-figure anthropomorphic Tlalocs comparable to the Postclassic depictions at Teotihuacán. A mural fragment illustrates a full view of Tlaloc pouring water from an effigy vessel and carrying a lightening serpent surrounded by sparks and flames (Pasztory 1974: 7). The effigy vessels and spears/staff appear to be typical of Teotihuacán Tlaloc imagery. Pasztory, through her extensive research, divides the

elements assigned to Tlaloc into two categories: Tlaloc A and Tlaloc B. Pasztory (1974:7) describes features that are associated with Tlaloc A:

all have concentric rings representing eyes, an upper lip turned up at the corners with two long fangs in the corners and three short ones in the middle, a headdress tied in five knots at the forehead, and two out of three have a water lily emerging from the mouth. The Tlalocs on the effigy vessels usually have a stylized (Mexican) year sign in their headdress; this consists of a rectangular panel topped by a triangle between two volutes. (See Figures 4, 7)

Most of the Teotihuacán Tlaloc imagery contains a combination or all of these characteristics. Tlaloc imagery is represented on an array of contexts from murals and vessels to figurines at Teotihuacán. It should be noted that many of the representations of Teotihuacán Tlalocs have the Mexican year sign in the headdress ([Figures 5](#) , [Figure 6](#)), which is a distinctive trait (Pasztory 1974:7).

Besides the anthropomorphic representation of Tlaloc, a second depiction of Tlaloc appears at Teotihuacán ([Figure 7](#)), referred by Pasztory as Tlaloc B. This depiction is represented by a group of goggle-eyed figures that are distinguished by a bifurcated tongue and distinctive mouth. Pasztory (1974:9) states that in some cases this second depiction retains the typical Tlaloc mouth; however, certain features are exaggerated, such as:

the corner of the upper lip, instead of turning under the fangs, curls up at the two corners in volutes; instead of the five fangs, these figures have three or four fangs at the same size; and, of course, they all have a bifurcated tongue.

Examples of Tlaloc B at Teotihuacán are found at the Palace of the Jaguars, on the border of the east porch of Atetelco, and on some ceramic vessels. None of the representations carry an effigy vessel or staff, have a water lily hanging from its mouth, wear the characteristic five-knot headdress, or contain the Mexican year sign (Pasztory 1974: 10).

Instead, in this representation, the headdress contains “a lower band with a zigzag ornament and an upper band with three pendant elements, sometimes tied on with knots” (ibid. 10).

There is indisputable evidence for two versions of Tlaloc at Teotihuacán as evidenced in the archaeological record, and originally pointed out by Pasztory. Despite the different, specialized traits, these two versions of Tlaloc are related because of their similar facial features and associations with water (Pasztory 1974:10). There is no evidence found thus far to indicate a combination of Tlaloc A and Tlaloc B at Teotihuacán. By these traits, the two versions of Tlaloc have been differentiated and identified for the purposes of this paper. Using Pasztory’s Tlaloc A and Tlaloc B as a guideline, these two versions of Tlaloc will be analyzed throughout the Maya region. The Tlaloc A ([Figure 6](#)) is denoted by a five-knot headdress, water lily in the mouth, Mexican Year-Sign headdress, and a staff and effigy vessel; the Tlaloc B ([Figure 7](#)) is defined by a long bifurcated tongue, three or four small fangs, and a headdress with a zigzag band and three pendant elements.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE MAYA TLALOC

At its peak, Teotihuacán is believed to have held sway over most of the central highlands of Mexico, and perhaps over much of Mesoamerica (Coe 1994:105). The Teotihuacán military was commanding, but the degree of its domination throughout Mesoamerica is under debate. Large-scale military conflicts between the major centers of the Classic era probably took place, but little is known about the extent to which conquest influenced the adoption of elite cultural traditions (Pohl 1999: 12-13). Teotihuacán may have depended on long distance trade and, as a consequence, contact may have become a major contributing factor to the presence of Teotihuacáno traditions on the Gulf Coast of Mexico, the Valley of Oaxaca, and the Maya region (Coe 1994:105). These trade networks were not only a means for transporting goods but were also a conduit for the spread of ideas and propaganda. The Classic period (A.D.250-900) witnessed two important developments that greatly affected long distance trade in Mesoamerica (Sharer 1994:460). The first was the shift in the bulk of east-west commerce from the ancient Preclassic trade routes along the Pacific coastal plain, to central-Maya routes through the highlands and along the rivers that flowed through the lowlands. The second was the rise of Teotihuacán, which by A.D.400 was able to incorporate and gain control over much of the long-distance trade between the Maya area and Central Mexico. With the Maya site of Tikal as a crossroads for most trade routes, the image of Tlaloc moved through the region, from Copán, Honduras to Jaina, Mexico (Braswell 2003).

The “internalist perspective,” originally proposed by Linda Schele and outlined by Geoffrey Braswell (2003:11), does not depict the Maya as “passive recipients of Teotihuacán influence”; rather, they are seen as “active manipulators of foreign

symbols.” Using this perspective, Teotihuacáno traditions at Maya sites were appropriated by the Maya elites and transformed for their own purposes. Specifically, these traditions occur in Maya art and architecture, and typically depict warfare, bloodletting, and sacrifice (Braswell 2003:12).

Linda Schele and David Friedel, in their book *The Forest of Kings* (1990), further discuss this perspective. They expand upon Peter Mathews’ (1985) reevaluation of the 11 Eb’ 15 Mak event discussed by Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1993). They dispute that Tikal carried out a new kind of conquest against Uaxactún on that date and that this conquest was symbolized, in iconography, through the use of foreign elements. These foreign elements consisted of Mexican Year signs, owls, atlats, and the rain god Tlaloc, presenting evidence of an active manipulation of foreign symbols (Braswell 2003:12). Karl Taube (1992b:53) studied imagery from the Temple of Quetzalcoatl at Teotihuacán. He found that the Feathered War Serpent of Teotihuacán, recognized for its distinct Tlaloc goggle-eyes and association with warfare, is represented throughout the Maya region. He concluded that the War Serpent of the Maya was derived from imagery from the Temple of Quetzalcoatl. From Lamanai, Uaxactun, Tikal, Piedras Negras, Copan, and Bonampak, representations of the War Serpent and use of Tlaloc imagery appear to be a conscious identification with the war complex of Teotihuacán and the Temple of Quetzalcoatl (Taube 1992b:81-82). Therefore, an important aspect of interactions between the Maya and Teotihuacán was the adoption and transformation of a possible Tlaloc related warrior cult throughout southern Mesoamerica (Braswell 2003:12, Taube 1992b).

In 1999, archaeologists William Ringle, Tomas Negron, and George Bey proposed that a world religion spread throughout Mesoamerica at the end of the Late Classic Period (A.D. 550-950). They suggested that a religious cult transcended the political boundaries of Central Mexico and spread into the Maya region. This group was termed “the Quetzalcoatl cult” and was identified by the occurrence of specific Central Mexican traits in Maya sites. According to Ringle, Negron, and Bey (1999:183), the cult “expanded militarily with messianic vigor.” These authors claim that the use of Central Mexican calendrical symbolism in the construction of Maya pyramids may be construed as evidence of this cult. For example, calendrical symbolism is evident in the quadripartite radial plan of the Castillo at Chichén Itzá ([Figure 8](#)) and at the later Maya site of Mayapán (Ringle et al. 1999:183). This theory has been supported by other research into solar cycles or calendric cycles seen at Teotihuacán. A study by Clemency Coggins has also shown that variation on quartered concentric circles served as a kind of measuring device among the Maya and do not necessarily correspond solely with cardinal directions. Instead they can refer to the four-place cycles within the annual path of the sun (Coggins 1980:728). It has been further suggested that in the Early Classic Period, Teotihuacáanos introduced a new type of celebration of the solar cycles to the Maya region. This new ritual was quickly absorbed and reinvented as the Maya celebration of katuns (20 year periods of time). The initial iconography of the katun celebration emphasizes quadrapartition and Central Mexican symbolism that incorporates Tlaloc (Coggins 1980:733-736). Along with Chichén Itzá and Mayapán, quadripartite architectural forms and katun celebration iconography are also found at Uaxactún and Tikal at a much earlier temporal horizon (ibid).



Other associations such as friezes, sculpted panels, and serpentine motifs at various other Maya sites all also suggest Quetzalcoatl associations (Ringle et al. 1999: 194). Warfare and human sacrifice are perhaps harsher themes found associated with this cult. Linda Schele supports this theme as well, citing that “battle and sacrifice are the exclusive domain of this Tlaloc costume” (Schele 1984). Evidence for this is found at major Late Classic pyramids, or “war temples,” in the form of serpent imagery. The serpent balustrades of El Castillo and other structures at Chichén Itzá symbolically refer to Quetzalcoatl (Ringle et al. 1999: 195). The pan-Mesoamerican meanings of the serpent symbols can be seen as far away as Central Mexico, as can be seen in the Temple of the Plumed Serpent at Xochicalco (Hirth 1989).

The pairing of Quetzalcoatl and Tlaloc imagery appears often and so consistently in the Late Classic that Ringle et al. (1999:195) suggest “that it is something of a misnomer to refer only to a Quetzalcoatl cult.” This pairing also reflects what Schele and Friedel (1990:130) refer to as “Tlaloc-Venus” warfare. Schele (1986:6) strongly associates Tlaloc imagery within the Maya symbol system as representative of warfare, especially in connection to the stations of the planet Venus. This alludes to the existence of a Tlaloc war cult or what Schele (1986:7) refers to as a Venus-Warfare cult that was widespread among the Maya during the Late Classic.

Linda Schele attributes the adoption of Tlaloc imagery by the Maya as a result of the Tikal-Uaxactún war in an effort to claim rights to Teotihuacán goods circulating in the area (Schele 1991:9). However, Juan Pedro Laporte (1995, 2003) questions the existence of this postulated event, based on archaeological evidence. Both Laporte (with Fialko 1995: 58, Laporte 2003:199) and María Joséfa Iglesias Ponce de León (2003:167)

argue that there is excessive emphasis on the presence of Central Mexico in the Maya region, and that interaction models tend to exaggerate the significance of Teotihuacán in the growth of the Early Classic Maya. For example, overwhelming evidence for use of talud-tablero architecture at Tikal has led many archaeologists to maintain that Teotihuacán was the basis from which this style originated. However, with a better understanding of the dates associated with this feature and its evolution at Tikal, the possibility of just a single influence is eliminated (Laporte 2003:204). In fact, the talud-tablero structures at Tikal have been found to predate the era of important contact with Teotihuacán (Iglesias 2003:168). This implies that there could have been a pan-Mesoamerican development of architecture that included talud-tablero structures as well as possibly quadripartite constructions. Thus, this exchange would have been more reciprocal, rather than one group exerting sole influence over the other. Nevertheless, contact between the Maya and Teotihuacán resulted in an exchange of ideas and adoption of elemental styles.

Tlaloc imagery first appears in the Maya region during the Early Classic, with a strong war-like resurgence in the Late Classic (Stone 1989:168). It was during this Late Classic period that a Maya Tlaloc became a prominent religious figure present in various religious iconography. His overwhelming presence among the Late Classic Maya perhaps represents his importance as a deity. In the Maya region, Tlaloc imagery appeared on a variety of media, including ceramics, stelae, building murals, and building facades all mostly in the epicenters of large cities (Schmidt et al. 1998). It was during this Late Classic resurrection that Tlaloc emerged as a prominent figure in the Maya pantheon.

Among the many Maya representations of Tlaloc, images of Tlaloc typically coincided with wartime events, sacrifice and bloodletting. On occasion, distinct Teotihuacánoid elements are found associated with Tlaloc. For instance, in the Early Classic the atlatl or spearthrower, as well as owl imagery (Stuart 1998: 8), and in the Late Classic, a star design (Baird 1989:105), are found associated with Tlaloc imagery in the Maya region. These designs are typically found associated with certain Tlaloc-oriented elements worn by Maya warriors and rulers (Schele and Miller 1986:213). Tlaloc is often represented by a jawless head, large goggle-eyes, and blood scrolls that issue from the mouth (Schele and Freidel 1990) ([Figure 9](#)). Maya Tlaloc imagery during the Early Classic Period depicts the god in an anthropomorphic view that is clearly representative of “Tlaloc A.” As the Maya moved into the Late Classic Period, a change occurred. The Late Classic Maya Tlaloc became less anthropomorphic, and more stylized, representing a synthesis of both Tlaloc A and Tlaloc B elements. This morphing of characteristics suggests that the Maya created their own uses and interpretation of Tlaloc, once again supporting an internalist perspective.

The non-warfare oriented association of the Maya Tlaloc becomes evident when his effigy appears as a deity presiding over bloodletting and other ritualized events in Maya artwork. Here, bloodletting is symbolic. The blood, which is extracted and sacrificed, is a metaphor for rain. Tlaloc, the god of rain and lightning, is present when these events occur. It is possible that bloodletting is a symbolic way of embodying the spirit of Tlaloc to help bring nourishment.

The following sections will examine Tlaloc imagery in a site-by-site analysis. The sites chosen for this analysis had accessible provenienced archaeological data.

## CHAPTER FOUR: SITE ANALYSIS

### *Tikal, Guatemala*

The Classic Maya site of Tikal rests as an imposing force in the jungle canopy of Guatemala. To date, excavations at Tikal have revealed over 3,000 structures, including temples, palaces, ceremonial platforms, shrines, ballcourts, terraces, and sweatshouses. Located near the ceremonial centers of the city are nearly 200 stone monuments depicting various scenes of dynastic and militaristic propaganda (W. Coe 1988:21). Monuments and burials reveal a strong relationship with Teotihuacán (W. Coe 1966:2). Tikal's artistic traditions, represented in stelae and pottery, talud-tablero style of architecture, and most importantly Burial 10, reveal close ties to the Central Mexican polity (Schele and Freidel 1990). The appearance of Xipe Totec, the Mexican "flayed" god, and the goggle-eyed Tlaloc show a deep and personal relationship with Teotihuacán (Montgomery 2001: 63-64).

One of the most important religious concepts believed to have been brought to Tikal through contact with Teotihuacán was the Tlaloc cult and the celebration of the solar year. Led by *Yax Nuun Ayiin* or "Curl-Snout," this revolution introduced a new dynamic to the ritual of Tikal, and helped to undermine and erase the control of the ruling lineages (Coggins 1980: 736). Using Tlaloc in this way promoted his ideological power and prowess at Tikal. Among the many images of Tlaloc at Tikal are two of the most famous depictions, located on Stelae 31 and 32. Stelae 31 and 32 are attributed to the reigns of *Siyaj Chan K' Awil II* (the son of Curl-Snout) and *Siyaj K'ak'*, respectively (Simon and Grube 2000: 31-35). The reign of these rulers over Tikal spanned the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries of the Maya Early Classic Period (A.D. 250-550) (Culbert 1993:4).

Stela 31 ([Figure 10](#)) depicts *Siyaj Chan K' Awil II* flanked by two portraits of his father Curl-Snout as the Spearthrower Warrior. Here Curl-Snout carries on his arm a shield containing the face of Tlaloc wearing a Mexicanized tasseled headdress (Schele and Freidel 1990:161). Various other Teotihuacáno elements are also present on this stela; for example, the rectangular shield and the spearthrower/atlatl are distinct Central Mexican weapons. Also visible on the front of Stela 31 is the owl motif, which is strongly associated with military themes at Teotihuacán (Stuart 1998:8). Schele and Friedel (1990: 163-164) note that there is a Teotihuacán connection for the spearthrower and owl motif, making a direct link to the Tlaloc-Venus iconography complex, which revolves around warfare and sacrifice.

Stela 32 ([Figure 11](#)) is also a famous example of Mexican style at Tikal. It shows an individual wearing again a tasseled Teotihuacán-style headdress and the Tlaloc goggle-eyes (Martin and Grube 2000). Note that both Stela 31 and 32 are attributed to the Early Classic Period and contain highly anthropomorphic views of Tlaloc. In similar fashion to Stela 31 and 32 at Tikal, Stela 11 from the nearby city of Yaxha ([Figure 12](#)) portrays a front-facing Tlaloc warrior in distinct Teotihuacáno attire (Coe 1966:3). Likewise, other sites, such as El Zapote, Tres Islas, and Uaxactún all display Teotihuacáno imagery containing Tlaloc (Schele 1986:16). The consistent Early Classic warfare Tlaloc imagery at both Tikal and Yaxha demonstrates that Maya rulers adopted Tlaloc's image in an effort to establish their power and further their political agendas through the use of foreign propaganda.

In addition to the stela representations, most important to the examination of Tlaloc imagery is the study of the ceramic traditions at Tikal. The Tikal ceramic

sequence is made up of ten ceramic complexes dating between 800 B.C. and 1200 A.D. (Cublert 1993:1). Of the ten complexes at Tikal, the Manik and Imix complexes are of particular interest for this research. The Manik Complex, A.D. 250-550, represents an Early Classic ceramic tradition and the Imix Complex, A.D. 700-850, represents the Late Classic ceramic tradition (Cublert 1993: 4). Both of these ceramic complexes contain interesting expressions of Tlaloc imagery at Tikal.

Ceramics associated with the Manik Complex depict Tlaloc in an anthropomorphic view very similar to Early Classic Stelae 31 and 32. Specifically, Manik Complex ceramics depict Tlaloc in human form, i.e., there is a presence of eyeballs, nose, arms, and hands. Also present on some of the images is the Mexican year sign in the headdress, an obviously distinct characteristic of the Tlaloc A. [Figure 13](#) and [Figure 14](#) are recovered Tikal Manik Complex ceramics from Burial 10 that depict Tlaloc.

During the transition from the Early Classic to the Late Classic period, a change in Tlaloc imagery occurred. The Imix Ceramic Complex at Tikal documents this change. The Imix Complex depicts Tlaloc in a highly stylized non-anthropomorphic fashion. In particular, Imix Complex ceramics depict Tlaloc with non-human characteristics, i.e., a distinctive bifurcated tongue, and no distinctive eyeballs, nose, or arms. Also present in the Imix Complex is Tlaloc imagery with a Mexican Year Sign headdress. [Figure 15](#) from Tikal Burial 116 represents this stylized, later version of Tlaloc.

The architecture at Tikal also depicts Tlaloc as an important character in the Maya pantheon. Structure 5D-43, located near the Central Acropolis and Great Plaza, is a square, relatively low platform with three or four stairways, and platform facades constructed in a talud-tablero style (W. Coe 1966:11). While talud-tablero styles are

common at Tikal, the sides of East Plaza Structure 5D-43 ([Figure 16](#)) display the goggle-eyes of Tlaloc in combination with a star design (Baird 1989:112). Structure 5D-43 visually demonstrates the ritual importance of Tlaloc to the Late Classic Maya.

The transition from anthropomorphic to non-anthropomorphic Tlaloc imagery at Tikal documents a transformation of religious iconography. This transformation propelled Tlaloc into the forefront of iconic veneration among the Maya. Tlaloc was to be feared in war but also was to be revered as a protector and overseer. Many other Maya sites, including Caracol and Yaxchilán, took Tlaloc and utilized his image not only for warfare activity but also for sacrificial or bloodletting ritual.

## *Caracol, Belize*

Located in the mountains of Belize, the Maya site of Caracol is a vast metropolis rich in hieroglyphic writing, causeways, and monumental architecture. Estimates of Caracol's Late Classic population place the site among the largest known Classic Maya and Mesoamerican centers, having once housed greater than 115,000 people (A. Chase and D. Chase 1994:4). As a large center, Caracol had many relations with other outlying centers, including the Maya city of Tikal. Altar 21 from Caracol describes war with, and the ultimate defeat of, Tikal (A. Chase 1991:33). As a result of the Tikal and Naranjo wars, Caracol immediately grew and prospered (D. Chase and A. Chase 2003:171) during the Late Classic period. As a part of this growth, the exchange of practices and propaganda took place. At Caracol, the use of Tlaloc imagery was introduced in the iconography, with his image appearing in variety of contexts including carvings, ceramics, and jewelry.

Caracol provides a tremendous body of ceramic data that spans 1,400 years from the Late Preclassic through the Terminal Classic Periods (Chase 1994:157). Of particular focus here are the ceramics of the Early, Late and Terminal Classic Periods at Caracol. Located in the epicenter of Caracol, Structures B4, B5, and B6 provide extensive evidence of Tlaloc imagery. Palace Structures B4 and B6 were originally added to Structure B5, a temple, during the Early Classic; extensive modifications were made to the buildings during the Late Classic (Chase and Chase 2001:116-117). A crypt from within Structure B5 revealed a Terminal Classic polychrome bowl depicting Tlaloc ([Figure 17](#)). The image of Tlaloc contains the Mexican year sign, the goggle-eyes, as well as the bifurcated tongue. Similar to this image, on the façade of the Late-Terminal



Classic Structure B5 are stucco models of Tlaloc mirrored on both sides of the structure's main staircase ([Figure 18](#)). In these identical stucco decorations, Tlaloc contains the usual Central Mexican Tlaloc attributes of the goggle-eyes (Ishihara et al. 2006:218) and the tasseled Mexicanized headdress. Of note is the lack of the bifurcated tongue and the Mexican year sign. The top portions of both stucco decorations are eroded, but at one point could have contained diminutive Mexican year sign elements. The use of this decoration suggests that the building plays a particular role given its use of Tlaloc imagery. Identified by Chase and Chase (2001:117), Structure B5 itself is a temple built in similar form to the 'temple residences' at Tikal. Likewise, Tlaloc imagery has been recovered from the summit of Caracol's most elaborate palace, Caana (Chase and Chase 2001:110). A partial ceramic vessel containing the image of Tlaloc was recovered in association with Late Classic tomb B19 (Chase and Chase 2001Season Report) ([Figure 19](#)). This vessel portrays a combination of Tlaloc A and Tlaloc B characteristics, i.e., the Mexican Year Sign and the highly stylized mouth of Tlaloc B. The proximity of this vessel to a burial tomb points toward the ritual use of Tlaloc image at Caracol. The presence of Tlaloc imagery possibly indicates that Caracol adopted foreign elements at the end of the Late Classic era. The presence of these Central Mexican motifs at Caracol do not appear in militaristic fashion- i.e., Tlaloc is not assigned to any ruler in particular nor does he appear anywhere in warfare activity. Instead, the iconography represents a distinct movement away from Tlaloc depicted only as a god present in warfare iconography. At Caracol, he is not portrayed as an element used in an effort to assign 'exotic qualities' to a new ruler; rather, his presence signifies the use of broader pan-Mesoamerican ritual elements.

Recent excavations at Structure I2 at Caracol have revealed more ceramic Tlaloc imagery, as well as a piece of “Tlaloc” jewelry. This jewelry is made of conch shell and was worked to create the mouth/bifurcated tongue of Tlaloc ([Figure 20](#)). At the ends of the piece are two drilled holes, indicating that it was used as a necklace or adornment for a costume. Near the same locus, various late Classic to Terminal Classic ceramic fragments containing the image of Tlaloc were also recovered from the adjacent Structure I1, in the construction core of a bench addition ([Figure 21](#)). Both of these Structures are near the epicenter and in relatively close proximity to Structure B5. These materials help demonstrate that Tlaloc was a key element in ritual, and probably overseer of religious ceremony during the Late to Terminal Classic Period.

As at Tikal, Caracol also experiences a profound change in ceramics during the transition from the Early Classic to the Late Classic Period. But unlike Tikal, all of Caracol’s Tlaloc imagery is Late-Terminal Classic in date, both on ceramics and in other media. All Late Classic representations of Tlaloc at Tikal are similar to the Late – Terminal Classic images of Tlaloc at Caracol. It is argued that sometime between Tlaloc’s first appearance iconographically in the Early Classic and its more standard abstract Late Classic depictions that the Maya devised their own use and interpretation for this storm god. Like Tikal and Caracol, the Maya site of Yaxchilán revered Tlaloc as an overseer of ritual and a needed ally in war. The lintels of Yaxchilán provide a gleaming example of the Late Classic use of Tlaloc imagery in the Maya region.

## *Yaxchilán, Guatemala*

On the shores of the Usumacinta River lies the Maya waterfront city of Yaxchilán. During the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Yaxchilán experienced a florescence represented by the placement of epigraphic texts in many buildings. In particular, Yaxchilán displayed a specialty for carved stone lintels (Martin and Grube 2000:117). Among the various 58 carved lintels so far recovered at Yaxchilán, there are a handful that depict the Mexican god Tlaloc. These representations of Tlaloc at Yaxchilán encompass both warfare and ritual activities.

Lintels 41 and 8 ([Figure 22](#) and [Figure 23](#)) from Yaxchilán depict Tlaloc on the headdress of Bird Jaguar as he prepares and fights in a war (Tate 1992:106). Lintel 41 portrays Bird Jaguar dressed for battle. Lady Ik accompanies and assists him in his final preparations for war. Bird Jaguar is in full war regalia including a headdress containing the image of Tlaloc. The goggle-eyes of the headdress contain a pattern that reflects a star (or “Venus”) or what Schele (1986:7) refers to as a “shell-star” event. This star design, an analogue to that found in Teotihuacán war imagery, is often associated with Tlaloc and elements of warfare (Schele and Miller 1986: 211-214). Despite the visual and some contextual similarities of the Maya star or “Venus,” there is a distinction from the Teotihuacán star. The difference lies in that the Teotihuacán star glyph represented fertility and water, whereas among the Maya, the star indicates warfare activity (Schele 1986:7).

Lintel 8 takes place during the war for which the Lintel 41 preparations are made by Bird Jaguar. This Lintel shows Bird Jaguar and an underlord, Jeweled Skull, capturing enemies and stripping them of their glory (Tate 1992: 106). The clothing Bird

Jaguar wears is identical to that on Lintel 41, and includes the image of Tlaloc in the headdress. The only difference is the lack of the “star shape” in Tlaloc’s goggle-eyes. This difference possibly can be attributed to artistic expression, as both lintels were created by different artists (Schele and Miller 1986: 212-213).

Lintel 24 from Structure 23 ([Figure 24](#)) at Yaxchilán depicts a bloodletting ritual. Shield Jaguar, holding a torch, is found standing above his kneeling wife, Lady Xoc. Lady Xoc is pulling a thorn-lined rope through her tongue. The rope falls to a woven basket, which holds blood-spotted paper and a stingray spine. The tasseled headdress she is wearing is very Mexicanized and contains the face of Tlaloc. This scene portrays the significance that Tlaloc holds during bloodletting (Tate 1992: 44). Likewise, Lintel 25 ([Figure 25](#)) from Yaxchilán depicts Lady Xoc as she experiences a vision. Lady Xoc is shown alone kneeling in front of the vision serpent after bloodletting. A warrior is seen emerging from the vision serpent. An “x-ray” mask of Tlaloc can be seen in front of the face of the warrior. In this case, the x-ray mask of Tlaloc is an attempt to relate this individual coming out of the vision serpent as someone godly or worthy of veneration. The goggle-eyes and blood scrolls are distinctly visible (Tate 1992: 44-45). Also, a Tlaloc image emerges from the lower mouth of the vision serpent, and includes a Mexicanized headdress that contains the Mexican Year sign and a portion of Tlaloc B, i.e., the bifurcated tongue.

What is important about the images of Tlaloc at Yaxchilán is that they depict a change in Tlaloc imagery, from warfare to non-warfare associations, occurring between the Early Classic and Late Classic Period. No longer is Tlaloc’s image only used as a mask worn by warriors, but rather as an image also commonly found at ritual events.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The diffusion of iconographic symbols from Central Mexico into the Maya culture demonstrates the close scale of contact amid these distant neighbors. This cultural contact and ultimate exchange of ideas, beliefs, and iconography represents the emergence of an interrelated Pan-Mesoamerican relationship. This relationship was not established upon dominance; rather, it was a reciprocal exchange. With consistent interaction during the Early Classic, the Maya came to understand the strength and complexity of the Teotihuacán iconographic system, and used it with purpose (Stone 1989:156). The Maya recognized Teotihuacán motifs as culturally foreign, and their appearance in Maya art during the Late Classic reflects an internal contextualization rather than the assumption of a constant Teotihuacán presence in the region (Stone 1989:154). Stone (1989:164) states that this Late Classic Teotihuacáno resurgence or ‘Teotihuacán revival’ began as a political maneuver by Ruler A of Tikal trying to reconnect dynastic ties with the earlier Stormy Sky lineage. This type of affiliation with an outside power is used to romanticize power and can appear to uphold legitimacy through iconography and propaganda. Continuing after the time of Ruler A, various other elites legitimized their power through ‘disconnection’ propaganda, often in the form of the Central Mexican god Tlaloc.

Evidence for an interaction between Teotihuacán and the Maya is equally present among both Lowland and Highland Maya sites. Stela and artifacts from various Maya sites, including Chichén Itzá (Schele and Freidel 1990), Balamcanche (Schmidt et al 1998), Copán (Andrews and Fash 2005, Fash 2001, Martin and Grube 2000), Palenque, Piedras Negras, Kaminaljuyu, Cancuén, Uaxactún, and Uxmal (Schmidt et al. 1998), all

support the dominance of a Tlaloc cult in the Late Classic to Terminal Classic Period. The strong association with warfare and use of Tlaloc as a form of propaganda is prevalent these and other various Maya sites. For example, Stela 16 ([Figure 26](#)) from Dos Pilas depicts Ruler 3 in full warrior attire. In front of the ruler's face is an x-ray view of a mask portraying the Mexican God Tlaloc. The donut-shaped disk and what look like 3 threes represent the goggle-eyes, mouth, and nose of Tlaloc. The hip cloth and apron of Ruler 3 also contain the face of Tlaloc (Schele and Miller 1986:213). Likewise, Ruler 5 of Aguateca, Guatemala, Stela 2 ([Figure 27](#)), a Ruler of Cancuén Stela 2, and Ruler 2 from Piedras Negras Stela 35 are depicted in similar fashion to that of Ruler 3 from Dos Pilas (Schele 1986: 6-9). The elements of a shield, crossed spears, and the militant dress of all these figures indicate that the Maya associated Tlaloc with weapons and war (Prasztory 1974: 14). Tlaloc's image is of obvious importance to warfare during both the Early Classic and Late Classic, but what distinguishes these Early and Late Classic images of Tlaloc is the subsequent strong association with ritual activity and the non-anthropomorphic representations of this icon.

Early Classic Tlaloc imagery from Tikal, as indicated by the Manik Ceramic Complex and Stelas 31 and 32, shows a direct correlation to the Teotihuacán Tlaloc. The presence of human characteristics and the heavy use of Teotihuacáno warfare elements, i.e. spearthrower, demonstrate that the time between the introduction of Tlaloc and the Maya Early Classic Period was relatively close. Thus his image retains many of the same elements as the Teotihuacán Tlaloc. It was between the Early Classic Period and Late Classic Period that the Maya associated Tlaloc with a different meaning. From the many Late Classic images of Tlaloc one characteristic predominates: a highly non-

anthropomorphic representation of the god. The lack of human characteristics (i.e., eyes, nose, and arms) identifies a new version and use of Tlaloc. What also is evident is a morphing of the two versions of Tlaloc A and Tlaloc B from Teotihuacán. The combination of Tlaloc A and Tlaloc B into a single image characterizes the Maya Tlaloc of the Late Classic period. The transformation from Early Classic anthropomorphic to Late Classic non-anthropomorphic Tlaloc imagery reveals a change in meaning of Tlaloc in the Maya region. No longer is Tlaloc only associated with warfare, but he is of great importance to ritual activity. At Yaxchilán, his image is used in both warfare and non-warfare events, such as bloodletting. At Caracol, there is no direct association of his image with warfare; instead, Tlaloc imagery is found on pottery, artifacts, and stucco, in ritualized representations. The lack of warfare oriented Tlaloc imagery at Caracol, and the Late to Terminal Classic time frame in which his image is found indicates that Tlaloc imagery was moving further away from warfare to a strictly ritual representation. This transition in the meaning of Tlaloc might be indicative of ritual diffusion or possibly even a Late Classic elite imposing targeted propaganda to the public.

Late Classic emergence of the Maya Tlaloc indicates that the Maya were not passive recipients of outside influence as once believed; rather, they were active participants in the adoption of Teotihuacán iconography. Tlaloc imagery is representative of an internal religious movement in which Tlaloc was elevated to the status of a religious icon and protector. The manipulation and contextualization of Tlaloc among the Maya demonstrates the cultural transmission, and ultimate religious transformation, of iconographic symbols.

The study of an iconographic image, such as Tlaloc, offers us the ability to illustrate in a visual form the diffusion of ideas and propaganda through contact with outside influences. As a visual representation of a belief or identity, iconography has the ability to be catalogued and traced. This accessibility provides practical information on societal development, influences, and change. As such, specific iconic representations, like the Storm God Tlaloc, can be tied to specific spaces both geographically and chronologically. For Mayanists, this information can serve to further understand the interactions of Central Mexico and the Maya. During the Early Classic period (A.D. 250-950) interactions between the Maya and Teotihuacán were at its strongest. As a result of these relations imagery of Tlaloc was borrowed by the Maya directly from Teotihuacán. The symbolic meaning and connection with Tlaloc may have been the same or similar during this time period, but by the Late Classic (A.D.550-950), the Maya had taken Tlaloc symbolism and transformed its use and meaning to conform to their own needs. Thus the Maya use of Tlaloc no longer represents interactions with Teotihuacán; it shows a transformation of ideology. Therefore, not only does iconography have the ability to be catalogued and traced, but it also has the power to provide insight into human culture as well as explore social and cultural ideologies through visual representations. The study of iconography can provide information on group identities, allegiances, religious affiliations, propaganda, and acceptance within any society, including ancient societies like the Maya. Therefore, it can be concluded that Tlaloc is not only important to understanding ancient Mesoamerican interactions, but that his presence also is representative of human belief expressed and communicated through the manipulation of the built environment.



## **APPENDIX: IMAGES AND DRAWINGS**

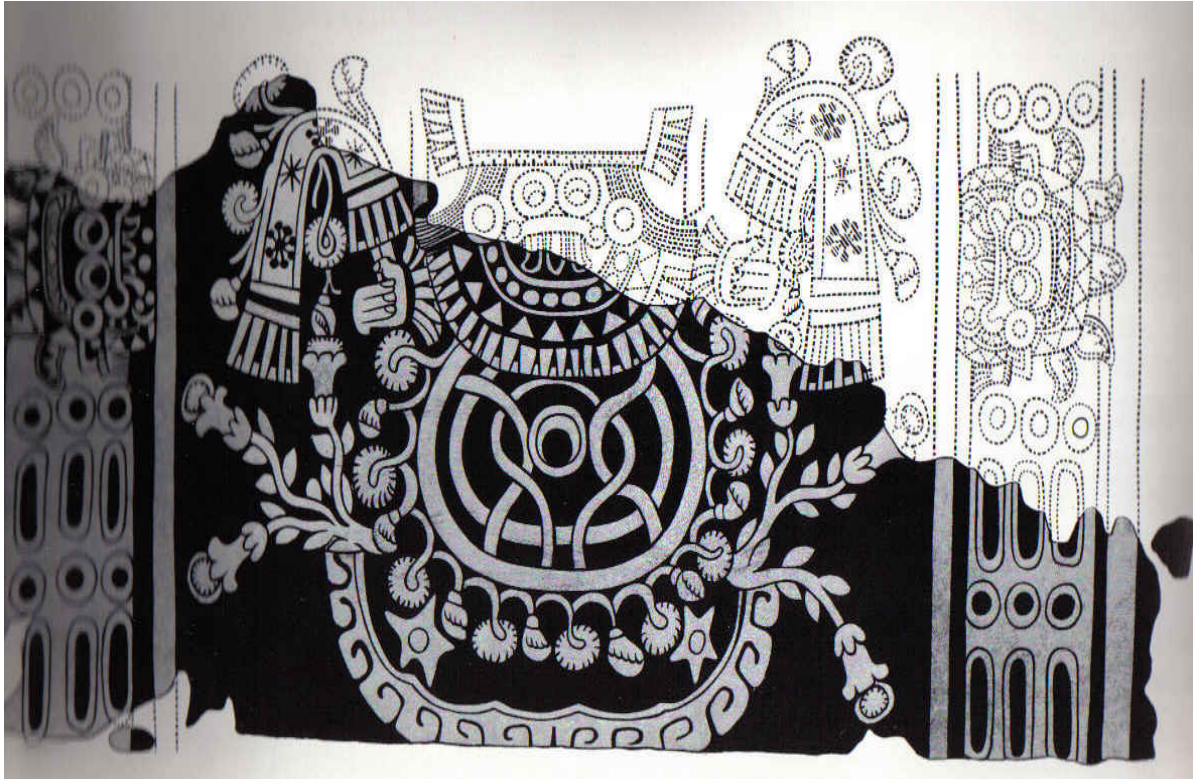
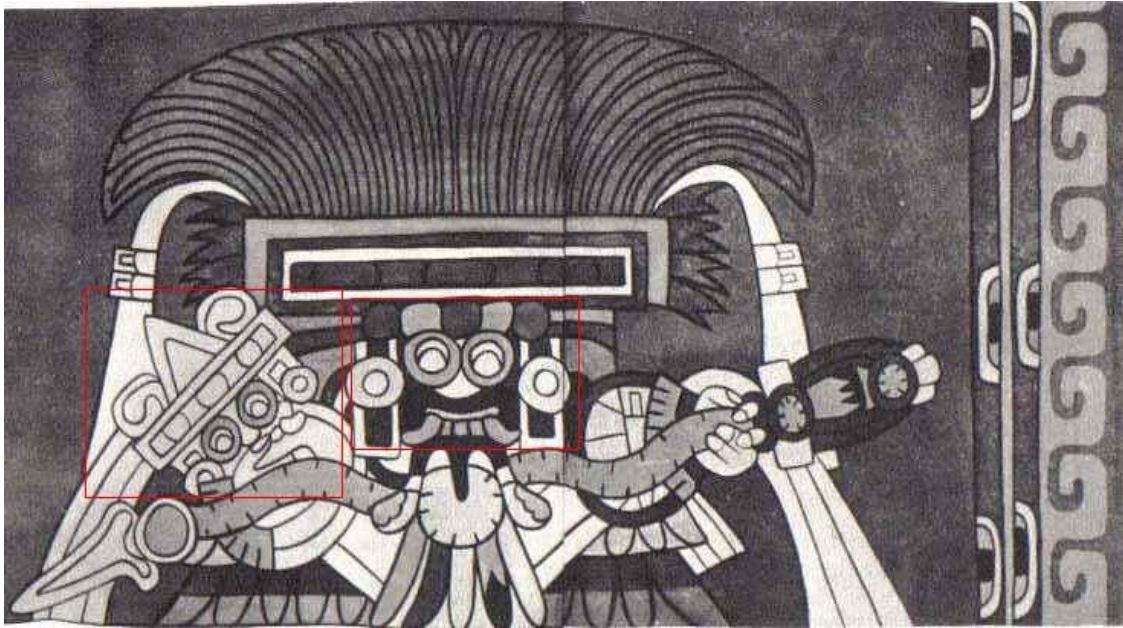


Figure 1: Mural 1 from Zone 3. Image shows common attributes on Tlaloc at Teotihuacán. (after Felipe Davalos in A. Miller 1973: 68).



Figure 2. Zacuala mural of Tlaloc, 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Teotihuacán, Mexico. Note the Star Motif. (after A. Miller 1973: 110).



Tetitla. Tlaloc (after Sejourne 1966: Figure 160)



Figure 3. Tetitla. Photograph of Tlaloc (A.Miller 1973: 126)



Figure 4: Tepantitla Tlaloc (after Sejourne 1956: Figure 14).



Figure 5. Mexican Year sign design from a Teotihuacán vessel. Note the interlocking triangles, the signature of this symbol (after Sejourne 1966b: 165 Fig 147).



Figure 6. 'Tlaloc A' figurine from Zacuala (after Sejourne 1959: Figure 76)

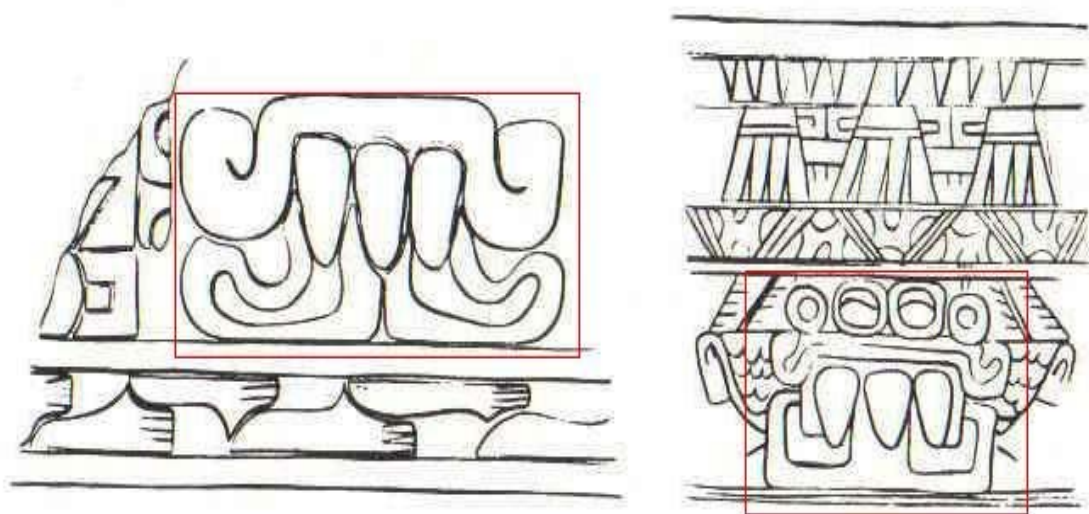


Figure 7. Vessels with plano-relief designs of Tlaloc B (after Sejourne 1966b: Figure 41)



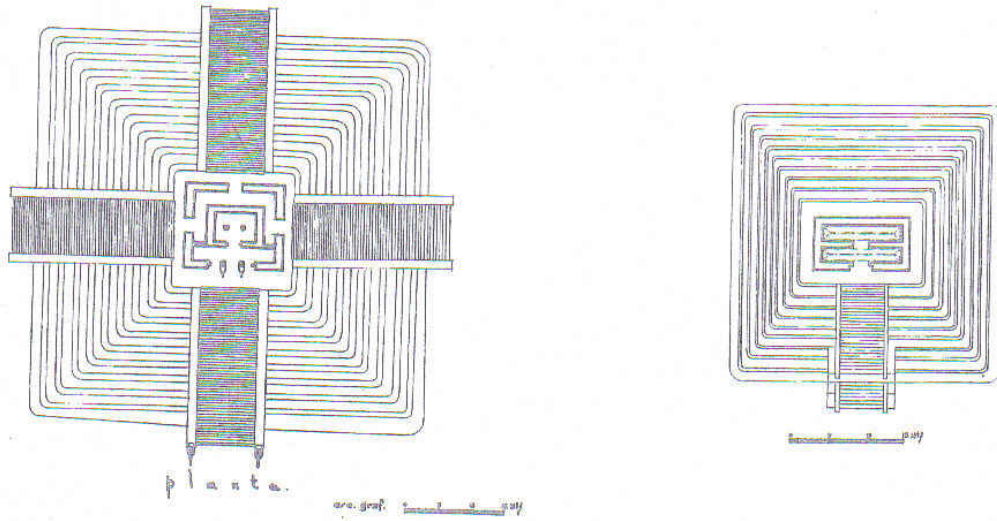


Figure 8. The different building phases of Castillo at Chichén Itzá, representative of calendrical symbolism (after Marquina 1964:263)

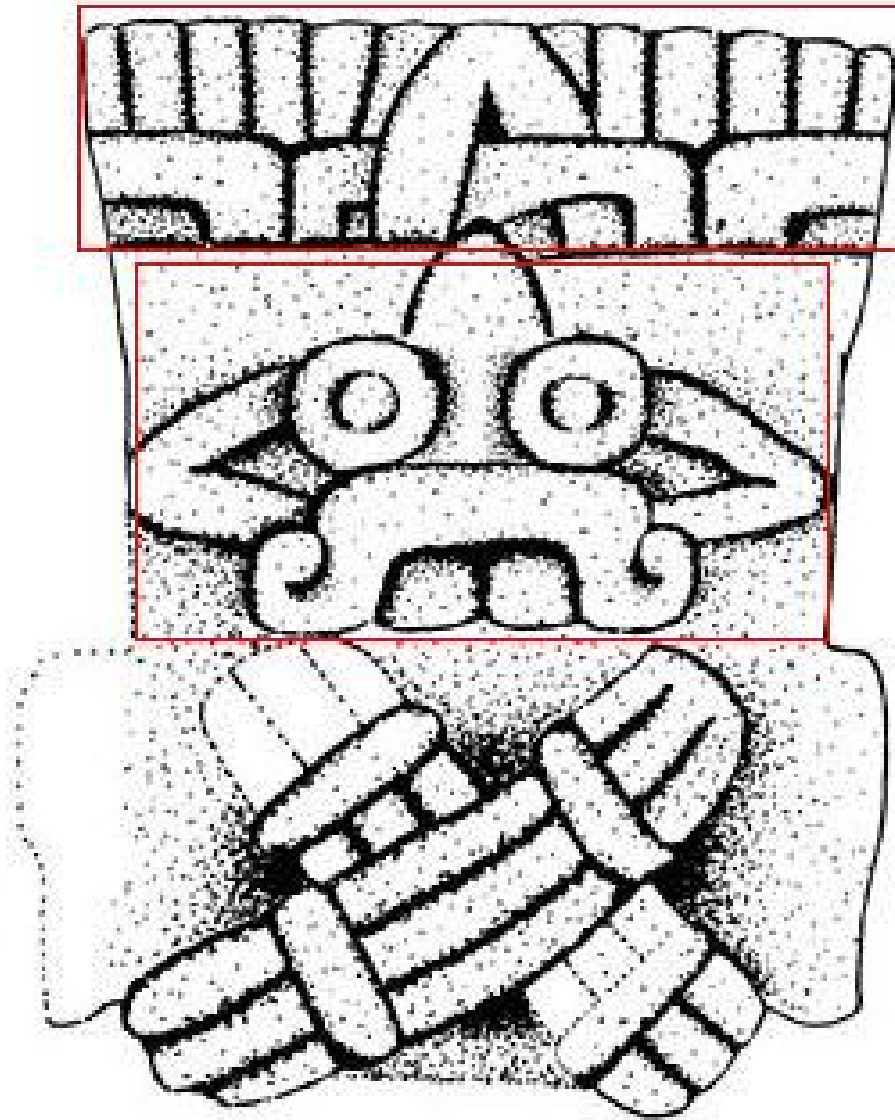


Figure 9. Copán, Honduras. Tlaloc Figure. Notice goggle-eyes and lack of jaw. This figure also contains, very importantly, the Mexican Year sign glyph. This image is representative of the Late Classic Maya Tlaloc (after José Espinoza in Ramos 2004).

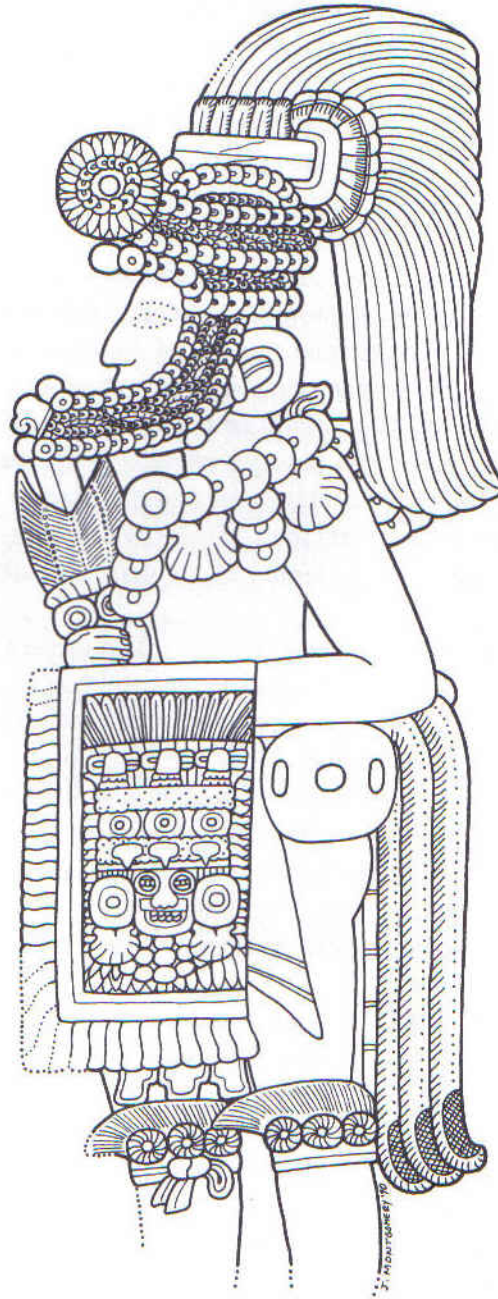


Figure 10: Stela 31 from Tikal, Early Classic (after Montgomery 2001:70)



Figure 11: Stela 32 from Tikal, Early Classic (after Martin and Grube 2000:31).

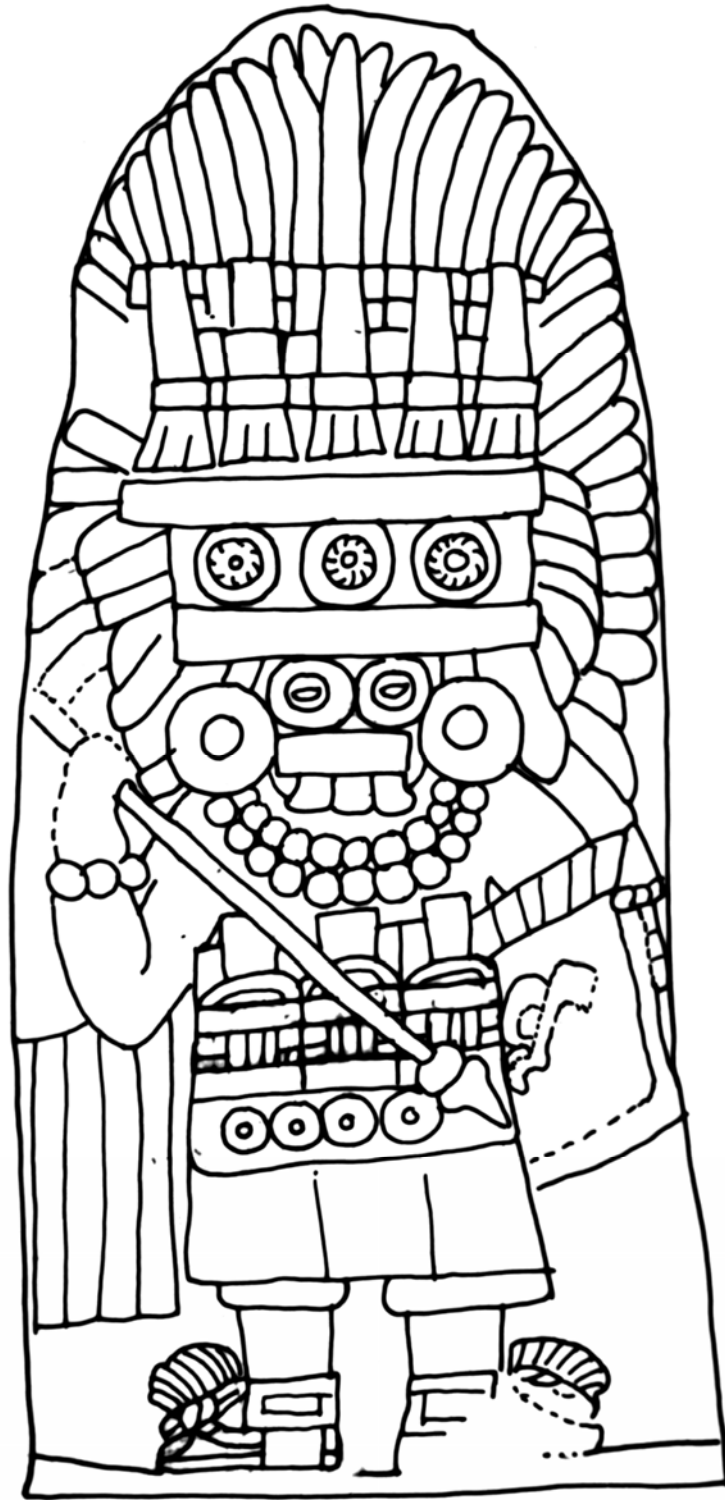


Figure 12: Stela 11 from Yaxha (after Schele 1995:112, Fig. 22d)

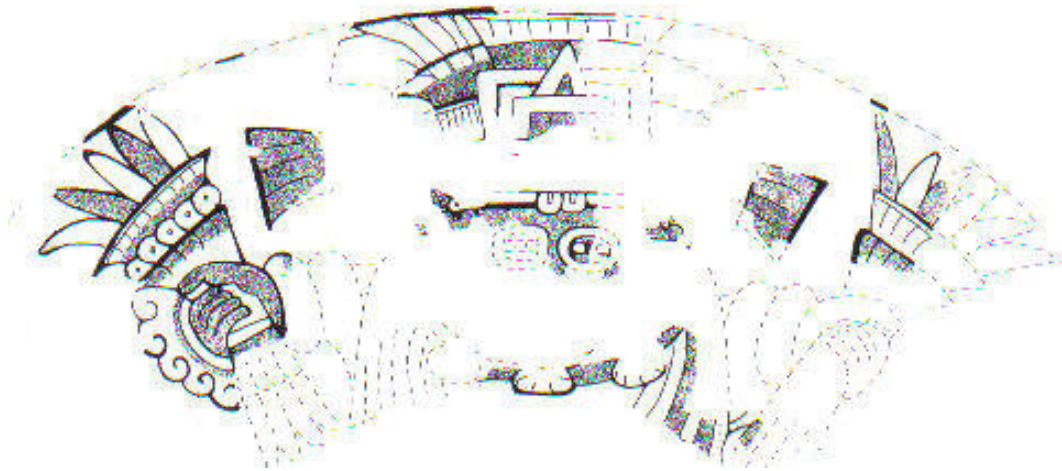


Figure 13: Manik Complex Ceramic from Tikal Burial 10 (after Culbert 1993: Figure 15).

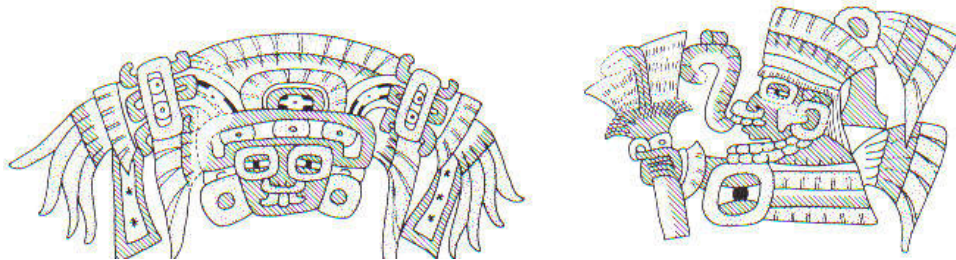
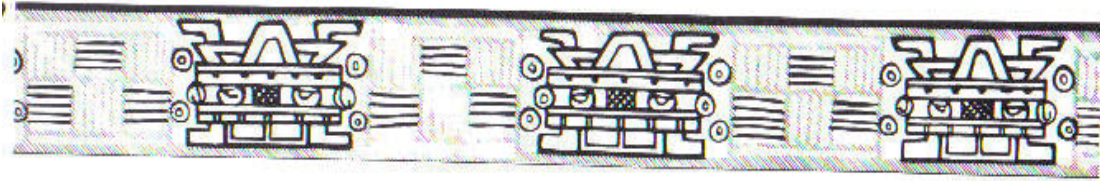
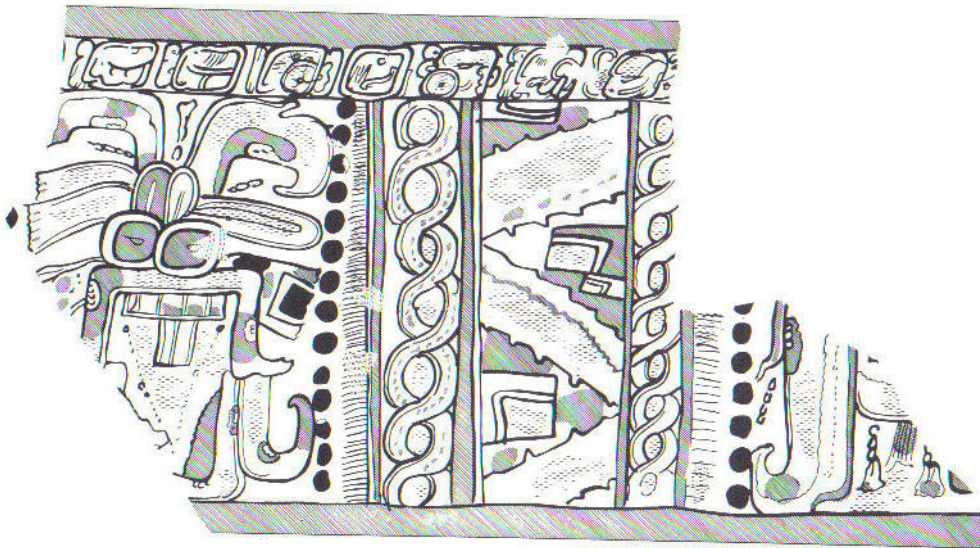


Figure 14: Manik Complex Ceramic from Tikal Burial 10 (after Culbert 1993: Figure 17).



Burial 105



Burial 116

Figure 15: Imix Complex Ceramic from Tikal. Notice the knot in the headdress, reminiscent of Tlaloc A (after Culbert 1993: Figure 64).



Figure 16: Tikal Structure 5D-43. Note the goggle-eyes aligning the building. Photo courtesy of James M. Crandall



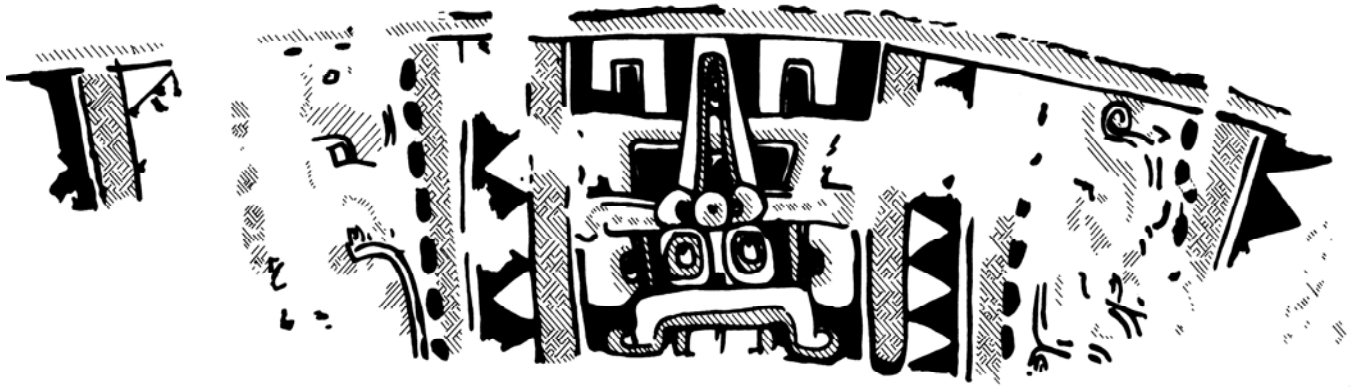


Figure 17: Late Classic polychrome cylinder depicting Tlaloc from Structure B5 at Caracol. Drawing courtesy of the Caracol Archaeological Project.



Figure 18: Stucco carving on Structure B5 at Caracol, Belize. Note Tlaloc at the upper portion on the image. Photo courtesy of Andrew P. Tetlow.

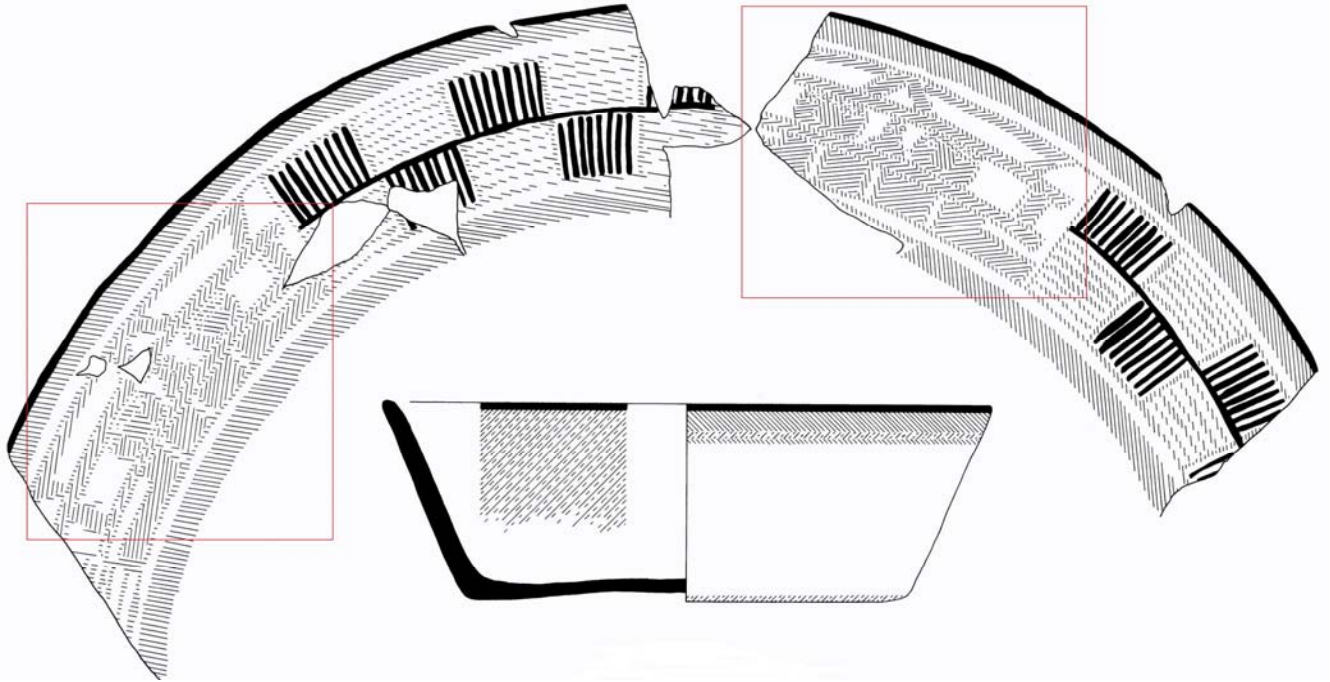


Figure 19. Ceramic vessel recovered in association with basal west Structure B19 tomb, Caracol, Belize. Drawing courtesy of the Caracol Archaeological Project



Figure 20. Conch Shell ornament representing Tlaloc mouth, Caracol Belize. Photo courtesy of the Caracol Archaeological Project.

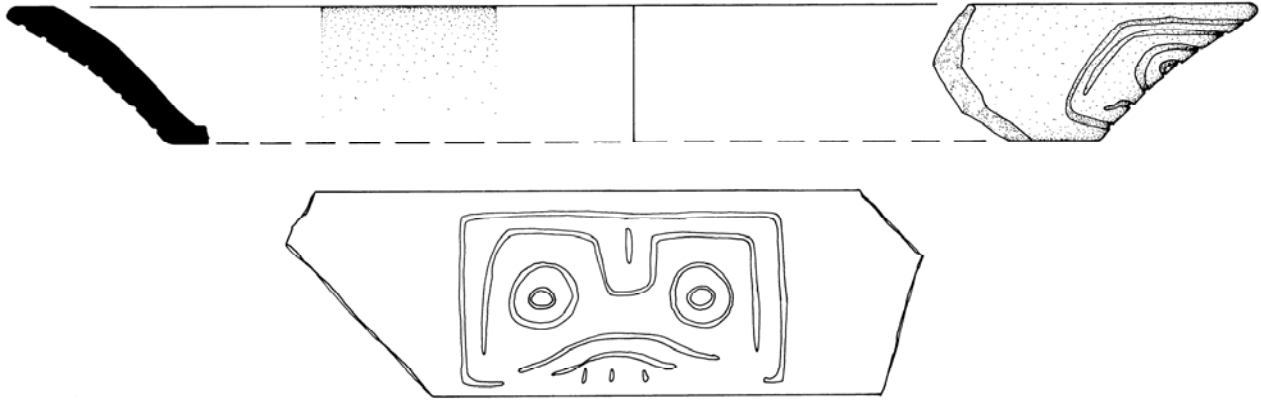


Figure 21: Ceramic fragments from Structure I2 at Caracol containing images of Tlaloc.  
Drawing courtesy of Caracol Archaeological Project.

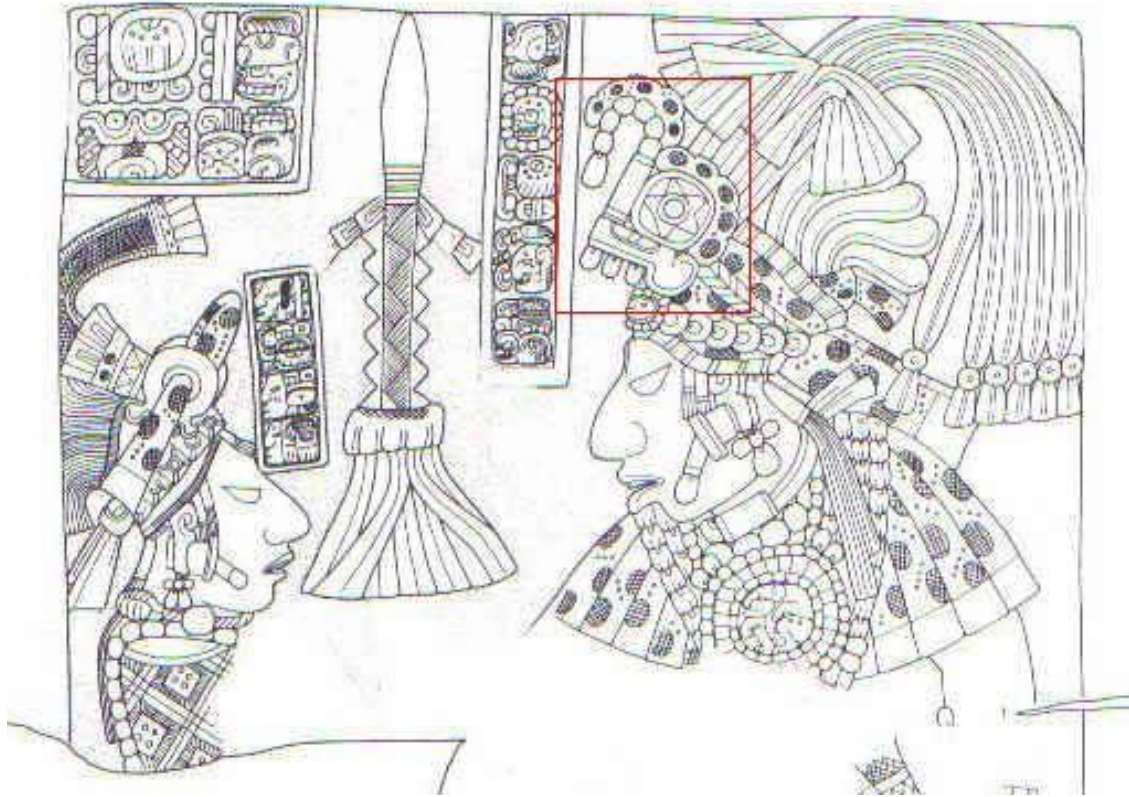


Figure 22. Yaxchilán, Chiapas, Mexico. Lintel 41, Late Classic period, A.D.760, limestone (after Graham 1979:91).

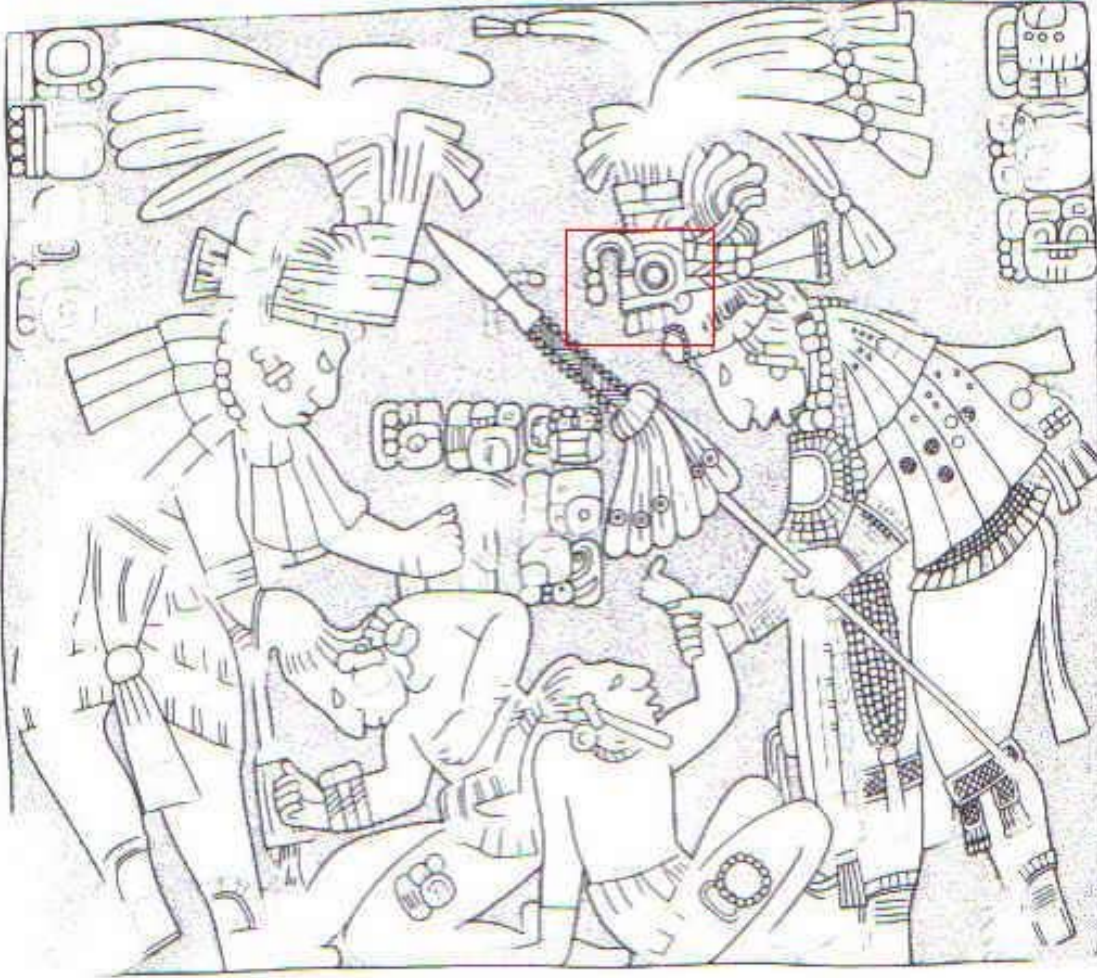


Figure 23. Yaxchilán, Chiapas, Mexico. Lintel 8,  
Late Classic period, limestone (after Graham 1979:21).



Figure 24. Yaxchilán, Chiapas, Mexico. Lintel 24, Late Classic period, limestone, (after Graham 1977:53).



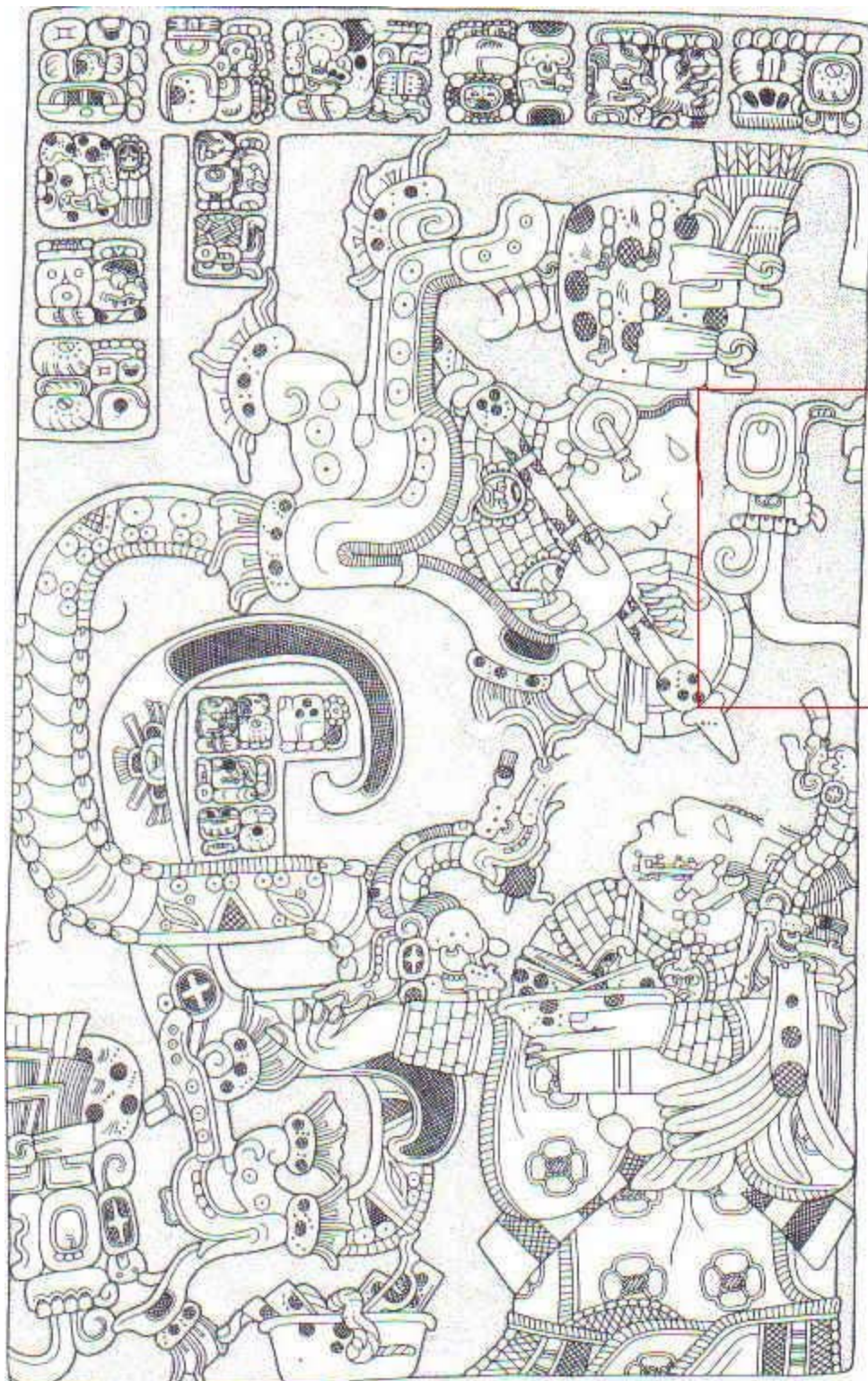


Figure 25. Yaxchilán, Chiapas, Mexico. Lintel 25,  
Late Classic period, limestone, (after Graham 1977:55).

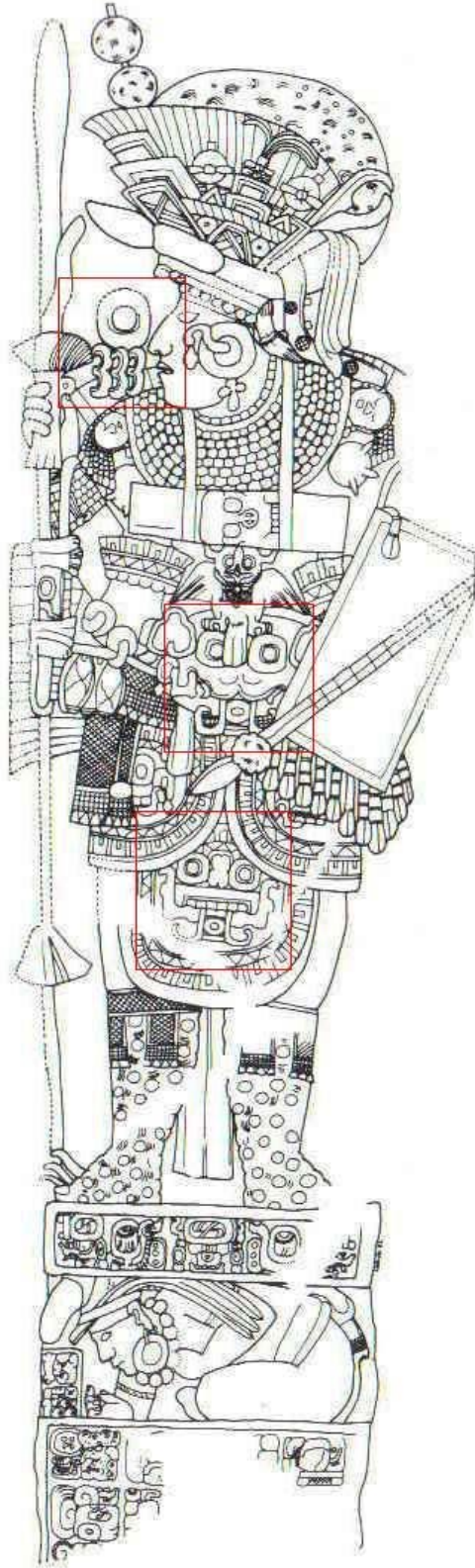


Figure 26. Dos Pilas, Guatemala. Stela 16, Late Classic period A.D. 735 (after Schele and Miller 1986:213, Fig. V.4).

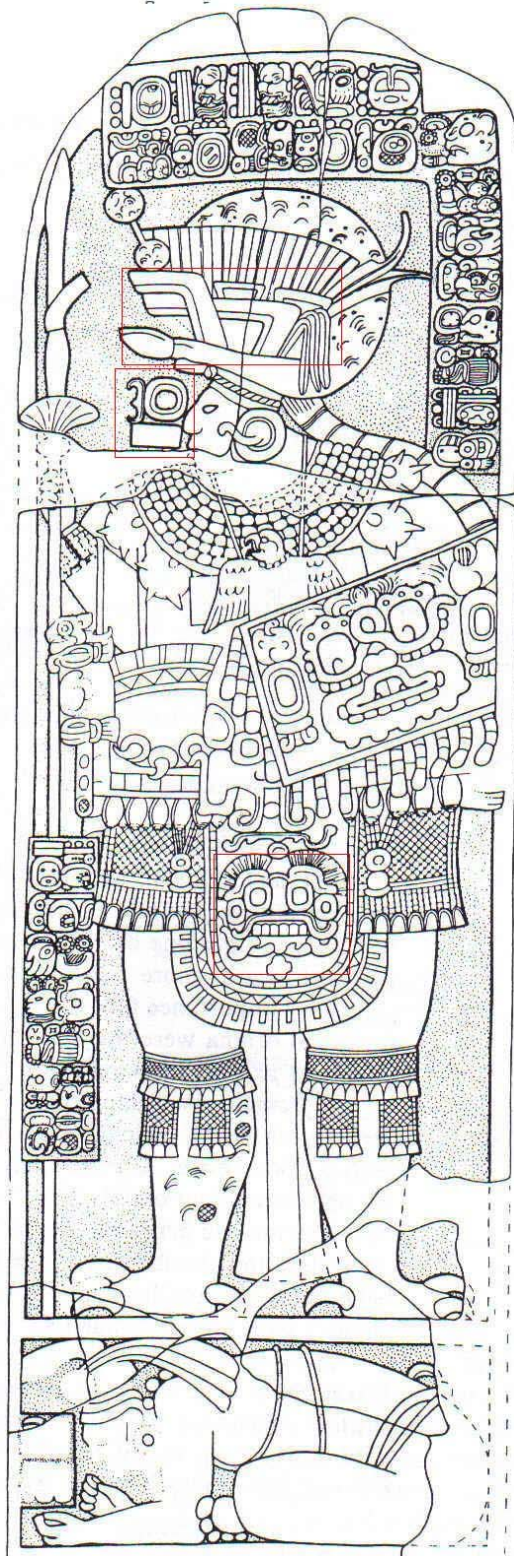


Figure 27. Aguateca, Guatemala, Stela 2 (After Schele 1986: Appendix).

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