

WITH THE PROTECTION OF THE GODS: AN INTERPRETATION
OF THE PROTECTOR FIGURE IN CLASSIC MAYA
ICONOGRAPHY

by

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ABSTRACT

Iconography encapsulates the cultural knowledge of a civilization. The ancient Maya of Mesoamerica utilized iconography to express ideological beliefs, as well as political events and histories. An ideology heavily based on the presence of an Otherworld is visible in elaborate Maya iconography. Motifs and themes can be manipulated to convey different meanings based on context. An example of this mutability can be witnessed in the depiction of Otherworld gods. Maya gods were not like Old World pantheons; gods were fluid and could function in multiple roles. Protector gods are an example of the fluidity of Maya deities. Scenes of protector gods are closely related, indicative of a specific theme and meaning. This thesis aims to define a specific iconographic theme, centered around a “protector,” based on the similarities of the composition of each scene in the sample set of images found on monuments. In conjunction with archaeological evidence and epigraphy, I suggest the protector theme depicts deities in the role of a protector.

DEDICATION

For my parents, Hollis and Kim, my brother, Chris, and my sister, Shelby.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The ancient Maya civilization shared cultural and political knowledge via elaborate iconography adorning free standing monuments, architecture, and ceramics. Maya iconography provides a visual representation of the ideological beliefs of the civilization, in addition to depicting political and dynastic histories. Through the examination of iconographic themes, Mayanists can gather pertinent information that can aid in the reconstructing of this past civilization. Iconography is a crucial tool in the understanding of a culture because it conveys conventional meanings (Kubler 1969: 48). Many of the scenes drawn on ceramics and carved into monuments would have been recognizable not only to elites but to commoners as well; the meaning or symbolism would have been widely understood, not only by residents of a particular city, but by residents of the entire Maya region.

Throughout the Maya region there were specific artistic motifs and themes that appeared at numerous sites, indicating that iconography was not merely art to the Maya but also functioned as narratives of their worldview. Some of the most common themes of the Classic Period (A.D. 250-900) were related to warfare and the gods (Tate 1992). Warfare may have been a definition of kingship (LeFort 1998:14), meaning a successful king must also have success on the battlefield. The importance of war is reflected in the iconography of the Maya through the display of warrior-kings and the capture of defeated enemies. Another significant theme in iconography is the Otherworld. Often images depict the rulers interacting with the gods, representing the dual roles of the ruler, as king and shaman (Freidel 1992:116). Images of the Otherworld were utilized to perpetuate the ideological beliefs of the Maya and to reinforce

the role of the ruler. It was necessary for the ruler to demonstrate his ability to interact with the Otherworld, which was an incredible influence on the lives of the ancient Maya.

Most Maya monuments are a combination of detailed iconographic images and textual information, which may or may not refer directly to the scene. The hieroglyphic text included on monuments is a key source of knowledge that must be considered when making an interpretation of the images. However, debate surrounds the discussion of epigraphy among Mayanists. While it is important to consider the hieroglyphic text, one must also scrutinize old translations that may be outdated or even new translations that may not make sense (A. Chase, D. Chase, and Cobos 2008). When careful examination of epigraphy is used in conjunction with iconographic analysis, a more solid interpretation can be made.

The Maya iconographic corpus contains numerous images, motifs, and themes, but many scenes can be related to the ideological beliefs and, most importantly, the Otherworld (Schele and Miller 1986). Most civilizations believe in otherworld or supernatural presences, such as saints and spirits, who protect and watch over the people. The Maya also had a belief in otherworldly beings who watched over elites and commoners alike. When placed in a specific theme, these gods have been named protector gods (Jones and Spetzler 1992:106; Kubler 1976:172; Martin 1993:227). These gods can be seen in the protector theme, in which the Otherworldly entities stand protectively over rulers. I propose protector figures occur in a specific iconographic theme that can be identified based on specific attributes. These attributes consists of a protector, ruler, platform, throne, and staff. When combined, these motifs create a theme that conveys a message of godly protection during official events. Previously the protector theme has been thought to represent captured war palanquins (Harrison 1999:155).

However, after analysis of the iconography and epigraphy, as well as inclusion of archaeological data, I propose the palanquins in the protector theme are not depictions of captured palanquins.

The second chapter for this thesis provides background on the Classic Period Maya, specifically relating to the role of ideology and the Otherworld in significant events, such as warfare. Chapter three gives a detailed analysis of each known example of the protector theme. In chapter four, the identification of this iconographic theme and its interpretation will be examined. This chapter will also discuss the significance of the protector theme and demonstrate that the theme was not a representation of captured war palanquins, but instead a visual representation of ancient Maya ideology and the ruler's ability to mediate between the Otherworld and the mortal world.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Methodology

In art history, iconography is defined as the identification and classification of meaning and subject matter within a work of art (Panofsky 1955:26). Although archaeologists and art historians undoubtedly interpret prehistoric art in differing manners, this definition can be applied to the analysis of Maya monuments. Analysis of the images inscribed on monuments provides an understanding of the culture, including ideology and political events. Structural analysis, as defined by Panofsky (1955:28-30), provides a thorough and universal process by which to examine Maya iconography. This methodology enables the observer to break down an artistic work by examining form, iconography, and iconology and then correlating the imagery to the ideological and sociopolitical nature of a culture.

The most basic level of structural analysis, form, identifies colors and compositions. Panofsky (1955:28) calls this level the natural subject matter because the observer is identifying pure forms within the work of art. This level facilitates in the identification of motifs. The second level, conventional subject matter, pieces together information about the form and correlates that information with themes and concepts. Iconography is born out of this level. Through iconography the observer gains knowledge of the meanings and allegories present in the image(s). The final level of structural analysis, intrinsic meaning, examines the iconology of the art. Panofsky (1955:32) makes a distinction between iconology and iconography, in that iconology gives an interpretation of the symbols found in the imagery and iconography identifies and describes the symbols. Through iconology, the observer analyzes the symbols found in art and uses those symbols as a way to interpret any meaning that the artist may have conveyed in

the work. Iconography, however, identifies the symbols that the observer uses in order to make interpretations. Iconography also utilizes other resources, such as material culture and ethnographies. Although Panofsky calls for the use of the term iconology in the interpretation of art, in Maya studies the commonly accepted term is iconography and this is the designation used in the present examination of ancient Maya art. Kubler (1969) discusses Panofsky's structural analysis specifically in relation to Maya iconography and uses the terms "motif," "theme," and "symbols" to describe the three levels. Kubler's terms are more appropriate when discussing Maya art and, thus, will be the terms used and referenced in this thesis. Additionally, it is important to note that Panofsky was referring specifically to art history in his discussion of structural analysis, whereas Kubler was focused on the combination of art history and archaeology. This thesis aims to identify and describe a specific theme that is composed of multiple motifs; therefore, Kubler's terms are more applicable than the terms put forth by Panofsky.

Ideology and Worldview

The apogee of the ancient Maya civilization was during the Classic Period (A.D. 250-900). The Maya region includes modern-day Guatemala, Belize, the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, Honduras, and El Salvador (Figure 1). For the Classic Maya, ideology was central to political authority and economic success, as well as social behaviors and attitudes. Ancient Maya ideology is defined by Freidel (1992:116) as

"...the interconnected, fundamental ideas held by elites and commoners alike about the order of the cosmos and everything it contains. Through these ideas, Mayas explained to each other existing patterns and dynamics in the natural and supernatural worlds by means of causal relationships between

phenomena. Maya ideology was further a guide to ritual practice, in which people participated in these causal relationships between phenomena—people, things, spiritual forces, natural forces—to achieve certain ends.”

The significance of astronomy and the cosmos can be witnessed in architecture and art and can be read in the hieroglyphic texts carved into stela and other monuments. Due to the extensive way in which the gods and sacred spirits participated in both everyday and ritual activities among the Maya, the otherworld was also a main component of ancient Maya ideology. While ideology cannot explain every aspect of Maya existence, it is hard to argue that the Maya were not heavily influenced by and reacted to their ideology.

The Maya believed in two interweaving planes of existence, the physical plane, in which they lived, and the Otherworlds, in which dwelt the gods, ancestors, and spirits. This dichotomous view was hinged on the cosmological model of the ancient Maya discussed at length by other scholars (D. Chase and A. Chase 1998; Demarest 2004; Freidel et al. 1993; Mathews and Garber 2004; Schele and Freidel 1990). This model held that the world has a quadripartite division, four directions and a very important center—a great ceiba tree, called the *Wacah Chan*. The axis spanned the three realms with its roots deep in the Underworld and its trunk rising through the human earth until its leaves sprouted in the sky, or celestial, realm. The world tree created an axis that existed in all realms, yet does not have a physical location, and creates three vertical layers.

Every aspect of Maya life was subject to interference by the gods, from daily social interactions to political events orchestrated by kings. In addition to a pantheon of gods, the Maya sanctified other creatures and objects, both tangible and intangible, including animals,

directions, and numbers (Sharer and Traxler 2006:735). These spirits, or sacred forces, were an everyday reminder of the Otherworld and its ability to dictate all aspects of life. The frequent appearance of gods and cosmic imagery in iconography indicates the importance of the Otherworld to the Maya. Furthermore, the images may have been commissioned by nobility in order to reinforce ideological beliefs.

Similar to the pharaohs of ancient Egypt, Maya kings were believed to have unrivaled access to the Otherworld. While the Egyptian pharaohs were considered to *be* gods, Maya kings could conjure gods and through a spirit co-essence, or *way*, take on the characteristics and consciousness of a god for a short period of time (Freidel 1992: 116; Houston and Stuart 1989). Although they were not gods, kings were still considered to be divine, or *k'ul ahau*. The king was not only the political leader of his kingdom but the religious leader also, taking on the role of shaman (Freidel et al. 1993; Schele and Freidel 1990:65). The king, as shaman, was able to bring the gods into the realm of men and mediate between the sacred and secular worlds. The ritual bloodletting of the king was one way the manifestation of the gods was accomplished. A typical bloodletting ritual consisted of the king lacerating his penis, allowing the blood to freely flow onto strips of paper, which were then burned (D. Chase 1991; Schele and Miller 1986). During the ritual the king would become the conduit for Otherworld spirits and undergo trances, which enabled the king to commune with the gods (Freidel et al. 1993: 207). Ritual scenes, such as bloodletting, are common in the corpus of Maya iconography. Through iconography the ruler and elites were able to reaffirm their own positions by displaying an unparalleled knowledge of the gods and cosmos. Images of the Otherworld on monuments and ceramic vessels were

utilized as a means to reassert the authority of the ruler, or *ahau*, as both a political and ritual leader.

Iconography not only created a visual representation of Maya ideology, it helped maintain that ideology. Through iconography the elite Maya were able to produce political propaganda in the form of elaborate carvings, inscriptions, and paintings. However, the term propaganda has been discredited by Stephen Houston (2000:169) as “anachronistic when applied to the ancient Maya” because all Maya shared a collective worldview. While both the ruling class and commoners more than likely shared the same worldview, elites still controlled what information was published as history on monuments. This can be considered propaganda. Joyce Marcus (1992) discusses Maya writing based on two types of propaganda, vertical and horizontal. Rulers and elites created vertical propaganda as a means to influence and control the commoners, who were socially and economically on a lower level than rulers, nobles, and other elites. This type of propaganda can be found on stelae and other public monuments, typically portraying scenes of accession, warfare, and public ritual activities. These scenes typically depict the ruler, or *ahau*, as a person closely associated with the Otherworld, thereby legitimizing his right to rule. Horizontal propaganda occurs within the same social or economic level, such as among a group of elites, and is not meant to influence or change the attitudes of people within the group but instead to maintain the beliefs that are already in place. Examples of horizontal propaganda in the Maya region are seen on lintels and interior paintings, private places which were only accessible to a select few. Propaganda serves to reinforce the beliefs and actions of the ruling class; among the Maya the most efficient way to achieve this was through iconography on monuments in both public and semi-public spaces. The protector theme is an example of how

the Maya utilized iconographic images to maintain widely held beliefs. The protector theme is located in both public and private space and therefore may have been both vertical and horizontal propaganda.

Warfare

Throughout the Maya region one of the most common themes in iconography was warfare-related. Due to the immense volume of war-related imagery, it can be ascertained that warfare was a significant event for the Maya (Schele and Miller 1986:210). Although the old notion of the peaceful, gentle Maya has been wholly dispelled (Webster 2000), the nature of Classic Maya warfare is still not fully understood. Maya warfare consisted not only of small hand-to-hand conflicts and raids with the goal of gaining resources and captives, but also larger battles that led to the destruction of monuments and killing of elites, resulting in tribute and domination (Freidel and Schele 1990:178; Sharer and Traxler 2006). Wars of conquest resulted in the death of the defeated ruler and perhaps the installing of new individuals loyal to the victors. During the Classic, and especially the Late Classic, warfare among the Maya increased in scale and intensity, probably due to competition for resources and power (Sharer and Traxler 2006:701-702).

Epigraphic evidence gives some insight into the different war events that occurred. The hieroglyphic corpus contains four glyphs that can be confidently related to war: *chuc'ah* (capture), *hubi* (destruction), *ch'ak* (axe), and “star war” events (A. Chase and D. Chase 1998:18; D. Chase and A. Chase 2003). The appearance of the *hubi* glyph preceding a place name and star war event on monuments possibly indicate battles that were decisively won. The ‘capture’ glyph is interesting because the interpretation is unclear. This glyph may refer to the

capture of an individual with little effect on the entire population. However it could also be interpreted as the individual representing the capture of an entire city (D. Chase and A. Chase 2003:175; Marcus 1992:419).

Most Classic Period sites were built with open plans, as if the citizens were not concerned with an attack. However, recent archaeological evidence suggests that some polities may have been preparing for war. Fortifications dating to the Classic Period have recently been uncovered in the jungle between Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan (Zorich 2011). At Dos Pilas, a defensive systems research project was undertaken by Arthur Demarest and proved that this site had an extensive system of defense features, including walls and moats (Demarest 2006:108-110). Other identified military architecture has been found at Los Naranjos and Becan (Preclassic), Chacchob and Cuca (Classic), and Mayapan (Postclassic) (Webster 1976).

Warfare may have been a substantial factor that defined kingship. Frequently, Maya warfare was conducted to increase the power and prestige of the ruling elite, which in turn reinforced the central political authority. In fact, military success may have been the factor which allowed rulers to remain in their royal position (Sharer and Traxler 2006:90). Through the defeat of enemies the ruling elite were able to expand access to resources, a goal even in modern warfare. With access to a bevy of resources, rulers and nobles could influence the rest of the population. One such resource was captives. The taking of captives was a significant goal in many conflicts and was celebrated in carvings and inscriptions on stelae. Rulers were commonly referred to as “he of XXX captives” and shown standing on, or in front of, bound men in the iconographic record (Stuart 1985:98). Captives could be used as a labor force to contribute to

the building efforts of the ruler, but more commonly they were sacrificed, especially if they were high ranking within their own polity.

While there were obvious material gains from Maya conflicts, warfare was heavily influenced by the ideology of its participants. The needs of Maya ritual life justified the acts of war on neighboring polities (Brown and Garber 2003:92; Freidel et al. 1993:307; Reilly and Garber 2003:130). Rituals and dedications conducted by the ruler required sacrifice and, in order to fulfill this need, rulers would not only auto-sacrifice in the form of bloodletting but also kill a captive of war. The sacrifice of a captive nourished the gods and in turn opened the portals to the Otherworld. The manifestation of the sacred forces allowed the rulers to make requests of the gods, such as protection during battle. For the Maya these events were physical actions worthy of permanent display on monuments and ceramics.

Participation of gods in warfare and ritual events

“Military defeat on the savannas of Maya country was the consequence of a king’s spiritual failure to hold the covenant and alliance of the gods against the rival supplications and magic of the king across the field” (Freidel et al. 1993:316).

The gods were not merely symbolic bystanders in the execution of war events; they participated in every aspect of warfare. To engage a rival ruler in war was synonymous with taking the gods to war. During a battle, war was occurring in both the physical and supernatural domains (Schele and Grube 1994:32). For all Maya there were specific gods who represented warfare and sacrifice and helped to decide the victor of each battle. One of which is Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan, also known as the Maya War Serpent. This war beast has an uncertain origin, although a mosaic tile appearance suggests a Teotihuacan influence. The figure was

probably adopted by the Maya from Teotihuacan during the Early Classic interactions between the two civilizations (Freidel et al. 1993:296; Kubler 1976:172). Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan appears frequently in war related iconography across the Maya region and is also used as a royal name at a few sites, such as at Copan. Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan is depicted as a protector on Tikal Temple 1 Lintel 2 and Site Q Altar 1.

A common god found in Classic Maya iconography is referred to as GIII, or the Jaguar God of the Underworld. This god has multiple forms and belongs to a trio of gods named the Palenque Triad (Schele and Miller 1986:50). There are two variations of GIII found in association with Classic period war imagery and texts. The Jaguar God of the Underworld is frequently found carved or painted throughout the Maya region in relation to war or aggression. This god has traditionally been associated with the night and underworld, although his image also appears in the celestial realm on multiple monuments (Milbrath 1999:124). The Jaguar God of the Underworld appears on Tikal Temple 4 Lintel 2 as a protector. Another god who appears as a protector is the Water Lily Jaguar. However, this figure is poorly understood due to the varying contexts in which it has been found (Clancy 2009:123; Milbrath 1999:120-123; Schele and Miller 1986:50). Water Lily Jaguar is identified by a water-lily head ornament and is associated with the moon and water. There are only a few occurrences of the Water Lily Jaguar on Classic Period monuments, but two of these occurrences are as protectors on Tikal Temple 1 Lintel 3 and on Piedras Negras Stela 10.

Another otherworldly creature that must be addressed is the Cosmic Monster. Cosmic Monsters are characterized as having two zoomorphic heads, one at the front and one at the rear of the body. The front head of the creature is ophidian and wholly animalistic, while the rear

head is an animal-human composite (Cohodas 1982:107-108). The body is always reptilian and typically decorated with sky bands, scrolls, or net markings. Cosmic Monsters are frequently shown in relation to rebirth and creation imagery, such as at Quirigua, Piedras Negras, Yaxchilan, Palenque, and Copan (Cohodas 1982:106). When the Cosmic Monster has the body of a serpent, it is also accompanied by the Principle Bird Deity (Bardawil 1976:13; Stone 1985:40). This variation of the Comic Monster can be found on Tikal Temple 4 Lintel 3.

Various sacred forces, such as patron deities, were invoked to protect and guide the *ahau*, warriors, and commoners during significant events. Patron deities belonged to the city and the polity for which a warrior fought, but were not limited to war. The most identifiable patron deities are those from Palenque, which are called the Palenque Triad, and feature prominently in the iconographic corpus at that site. Lineages could also have claimed specific patron gods as their own. The practice of ancestor worship may have led to the deifying of certain ancestors which in turn became patrons for the entire lineage. Lineage patrons for Classic Period Copan nobility have been proposed by Fash (1986) based on ancestor worship and architectural iconography at that site. Patron gods were probably housed in sacred locations, which Schele and Mathews (1998:415) referred to as *Pib Nah* and *Kun*. A glyph reading *pib nah* is located on a secondary text on a tablet in the Temple of the Foliated Cross at Palenque (Freidel et al 1993:223). This glyph, found in many Palenque inscriptions, may refer to the inner sanctuaries of temples or a building that belongs to a god or person named later in the text (Stuart 1987). Gods were also housed in *u waybill ch'ul*, or “the sleeping place of the god,” which, at Copan, refers to a group of small stone houses located near residential groups (Freidel et al. 1993:188). Freidel et al. (1993:190) suggest the *waybil* structures and altars are the prototypes for modern

K'iche' lineage shrines. Assuming that there is some continuity from pre-Spanish Contact to contemporary times, the *waybil* would have been home to each site's patron deities. However, patron gods would not have been imprisoned in temples; instead they would have participated in multiple ritual functions. The Maya constructed large effigies of protector gods and carried them into battle along with war banners and standards (Freidel et al. 1993:310; Schele and Grube 1994:32; Sharer and Traxler 2006:300). However protector gods were not the only deities manufactured into effigies. War gods, such as Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan and the Jaguar God of the Underworld, also offered protection and may have become the subject of elaborate war effigies (LeFort 1998:15). In addition to participation in war, protector gods were probably employed during political activities and celebrations, such as the seating of a vassal lord or the accession of a ruler.

Maya rulers could invoke the sacred forces of the Otherworld when war was looming, resulting in the protection of gods or, maybe, the ruler would assume the characteristics of the god he manifested. Although the Maya may have believed that humans shared consciousness with a spiritual co-essence called a *way*, only rulers and other powerful people had a bond with gods (Freidel et al. 1993:190; Houston and Stuart 1989). This resulted in certain gods becoming the *way* of those prestigious humans. Although it has been suggested (Freidel et al. 1993:192) that rulers, or even warriors, went to battle in the guise of their *ways*, there has been no material or iconographic evidence to corroborate this suggestion. Rulers probably impersonated gods or manifested their *way* during pre- and post-war rituals. These rituals, visible in Classic Period iconography, could have occurred at any time before or after battle (LeFort 1998:14). Because

there is no evidence that rulers or other elites transformed into their *way* during battle, the protectors seen on war palanquins are probably not rulers in the guise of their co-essence.

The nature of the Maya pantheon must be considered when examining the relationship of gods and warfare. Maya gods were not limited to one specific identity, but instead were “fluid, ever-changing entities that take on various aspects” (Miller 1982:90). Gods, like GIII, were known by various names and had several functioning identities. It would be more appropriate to identify gods by context rather than appearance. The gods who take on the role of protectors are a good example of the fluidity of Maya deities.

Palanquins and Protectors

When marching into battle, warriors typically brought with them items that symbolically represented the city, country, or ideal for which they fought. Flags, battle standards, and other war related insignia are carried and worn onto the battlefield among almost all armies that gathered for war throughout history. The people of Mesoamerica were not exempt from this military tradition. The Mexica carried battle banners onto the battlefield and may have used them to signal troop position during battle (Koontz 2002:109; LeFort 1998:19). Along with battle banners, the Maya carried large palanquins into war (Freidel et al. 1993:310; Schele and Grube 1994:32; Sharer and Traxler 2006:300). These palanquins were great litters with a cushioned throne that was strapped to poles to allow carrying. Although images show rulers being carried on these litters, it is unknown whether this occurred during actual battle. Rulers may have only been carried in the palanquins around the city prior to the military confrontation and not onto the battlefield.

During battle, the capture of the rival's battle standard was a symbolic victory and could have been just as significant as the capture of the highest ranking man on the battlefield. The Maya used large palanquins as a type of battle standard on which giant god effigies resided. These effigies were representations of protector gods. Protector gods were deities who functioned as the Otherworld protector of a ruler, who in return became the protector of the people he governed. The effigies found on the palanquins and in the iconographic record have been so named due to the protective space in which they enclose the ruler (Martin 1993:227). The capture of a palanquin was equivalent to the capture of the protector god, and thus a sign of victory. Once a palanquin was captured it was partially destroyed before being taken to the victor's city where it was paraded through the streets with the celebratory ruler inside (Schele and Grube 1994:33). The purpose of the destruction is not fully understood, but I propose, following Schele and Grube (1994:35), the damage was necessary to release any power that may have resided within the object. The destruction of the palanquin was similar to ritual termination, a common practice in the Maya region. In keeping with the ideology of the Maya, structures and other inorganic objects were considered to be imbued with sacredness. Prior to abandonment, structures often were destroyed, burned, and had material objects smashed and left on their floor (Stanton et al. 2008:235). This ritual behavior occurred throughout the Classic period during times of conflict, both internal and external. The destruction of a structure or palanquin was a symbolic death to the object and the spirit it housed. The protectors on the palanquins were not only instilled with the supernatural power that all material objects possessed, but they were also a conduit for the sacred power the ruler manifested during pre-war rituals.

Iconographic images show Maya rulers seated in elaborate palanquins with giant god effigies at their back (Schele and Grube 1994:32). These palanquins were tangible objects that channeled the power of the Otherworld for rituals and battles (Freidel et al. 1993:314). Graffiti inside Caracol Structure B20 also displays a palanquin in what looks like a negotiated meeting, indicating palanquins were carried during a variety of events (A. Chase, personal communication 2011; A. Chase and D. Chase 1987:12). The presence of the giant protectors may have been necessary to harness the power of the Otherworld. Pictorial representations of these palanquins with protector figures are seen at Tikal, Piedras Negras, and Site Q (now thought to be La Corona) all dating to the Classic Period. In addition to images of protectors, a proposed protector god glyph is carved on El Zapote Stela 5 (Schele and Grube 1994:68). Interestingly, the palanquins seen on the Site Q altar and Piedras Negras stela are not war litters, indicating that the protectors were not restricted to war appearances. Palanquins were more than likely used during a variety of official activities and not only in relation to warfare.

CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE SET

This chapter will analyze the sample set of protector figures in Classic Maya iconography by examining the images and accompanying hieroglyphs. The sample set comes from Tikal, Piedras Negras, and Site Q.

Tikal was a dominant player among the Classic Period Maya polities, with far-reaching influence and the ability to call on its large population in order to defend or attack during times of war (Martin and Grube 2008:44). Within Temple 1 and Temple 4 the Tikal rulers commissioned 4 lintels (two in each temple) to be carved depicting themselves with a protector (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982: 54,64). Interestingly, on each lintel a different protector is portrayed. All four known variations of protectors can be seen at Tikal. In addition to the images of protectors on four carved lintels, the protectors appear as graffiti on the interior walls of three other buildings (Triak and Kampen 1983:Figs.71-73,81,82). Because Tikal was a large and powerful polity during the Late Classic, iconographic themes witnessed here could have influenced outside rulers or artists. However, due to the private space in which the lintels and graffiti occupy the images may depict widely held beliefs that were shared by all or most lowland Maya.

Tikal Temple 1 Lintel 3

Temple 1 of Tikal is located on the east side of the Great Plaza and lies opposite of Temple 2 (Martin and Grube 2008:45). This temple was commissioned as the mortuary temple for Ruler A, Jasaw Chan K'awiil, and its interior was dedicated to recording the successes of this individual. High in the ceiling spanning the doorway of this funerary temple are two ornately

carved wooden lintels, each depicting a similar idea but in different artistic styles. Both of these lintels face the entrance and would have been seen as an individual entered the interior (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:65).

Lintel 3 of Temple 1 (Figure 1) depicts Jasaw Chan K'awiil seated on a stepped platform with a looming jaguar behind him. This jaguar is named as a protector in the glyphic text at D2 (Milbrath 1999:121). This is probably one of the protectors of either Tikal or Jasaw Chan K'awiil. The text on this lintel describes the defeat of a Calakmul lord by Tikal in A.D. 695 and connects the date with the thirteenth k'atun (256 years) anniversary of the death of Spearthrower Owl, the father of former ruler Yax Nuun Ahin I, also known as Curl Snout (Martin and Grube 2008:45; Sharer and Traxler 2006:393).

The first portion of the text on this lintel documents the destruction of a flint and shield of a Site Q ruler; the Tikal lord sits in a palanquin; the jaguar protector appears behind the Tikal lord. The text begins by recording a Calendar Round date of 9 Ahau 13 Pop (March 3, 695) and then describes an event which occurred 158 days later (A2-B2) on 11 Etz'nab 11 Ch'en (Aug. 8, 695) (A3-B3). Glyph A4 is the verb *hubi* "to throw or tear down" and, as described in chapter two, can confidently be associated with warfare. This glyph is also seen in texts related to accession where it is used as "bringing down;" however in a war context the translation is a more forceful "to throw or tear down" (Harris and Stearns 1997:59; Schele and Grube 1994:179). The next glyph at B4 reads *u tok' pakal* "his flint-shield", which could refer to a war banner. Glyphs A5-B5 name the fallen enemy *Yich'aak K'ahk*, 'Claw of Fire', divine lord of Calakmul. The main sign for A6 is *baak*, which can represent 'bone' or 'captive' and the suffix is *-na* which translates as 'first,' thus making this glyph *bakna* or "first captive." The reading of B6 is slightly

more difficult due to erosion of half the glyph. The prefix and superfix appear to be *ya-* and *ajaw*, respectively. The main sign is slightly eroded and there have been multiple suggested readings of this glyph. Initial thoughts were that the glyph simply meant ‘of the *ajaw*’ (Schele and Freidel 1990:207), however further scrutiny has led to other theories. Schele and Grube (1994:178) propose that B6 could represent the glyph for palanquin, based on the similarities with the palanquin glyph found on a looted panel from Cancuen. More recently Martin and Grube (2008:45) imply this glyph reads *yajaw maan*, which, supposedly, is the name of one of Calakmul’s foremost patron deities. The A6-B6 couplet would then read ‘first captive *yahaw maan*’. The capture of a god from Calakmul rather than the capture of Calakmul’s ruler, Yich’aak K’ahk, correlates with archaeological evidence. Archaeological evidence suggests Yich’aak K’ahk was not captured and sacrificed following the Tikal triumph, but instead buried in a royal tomb at Calakmul (Vargas et al. 1999:49). This couplet (A6-B6) could also state the capture of a high ranking official, not necessarily the ruler. However due to the partial erosion of the glyph, any interpretation cannot be guaranteed.

The next event on the lintel takes place on 12 Etz’nab 11 Sak (Sept. 17, 695 A.D.). The glyph at C2 is a verb with the sign *kuch*, possibly implying the act of being carried (Schele and Grube 1994:180). Schele and Grube (1994:180) think D2 is the name of the palanquin, Nu Balam Chaknal; it may simply be the name of the jaguar protector. The next passage clearly shows conjuring (C3) and bloodletting from the tongue (D3-C4), followed by the naming of Jasaw Chan K’awiil, the divine *ahau* of Tikal (D4-D5). C6 is slightly eroded but it appears to be *patwan* ‘to make or form.’ The last glyph in this event reads as *Tan Kun Mutul*, which translates to “in the center of the seat of Tikal.” This section of the lintel is describing the conjuring of an

otherworldly essence, most likely the jaguar protector, by Jasaw Chan K'awiil through bloodletting. The parading of the battle banner and effigy, along with the ritual event associated with the public display, occurred in the center of the Tikal.

The remaining text asserts the legitimate rulership of Jasaw Chan K'awiil through his royal relationships and ends with his accession.

Tikal Temple 1 Lintel 2

Lintel 2 of Temple 1 (Figure 2) portrays a seated figure, Jasaw Chan K'awiil, atop a jaguar pelt covered throne. Behind the ruler stands a large protector, identified by the glyph at B2, which has been interpreted as Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan, the name of this giant War Serpent (Grube and Schele 1994:195). There are few readable glyphs on this lintel, including B2 which is mostly eroded. While the glyph is heavily damaged, B2 can confidently be read as Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan due to the convincing image of the beast. Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan is a mosaic monster-serpent who may have been used in Maya warfare as a device carried onto the battlefield (Grube et al. 1999:23). Even without supplemental textual evidence, the identification of the War Serpent is possible through the image alone.

On Lintel 2, Jasaw Chan K'awiil sits on a throne with his feet resting on platform constructed of three bands containing water lilies. The ruler wears the balloon headdress associated with the Tlaloc war complex and a deity mask. He also holds spearthrower darts and a shield (Schele and Freidel 1990:209). Jasaw Chan K'awiil is wearing the war costume of his ancestors, most notably seen on Curl Snout on Tikal Stela 31 and Smoking Frog on Uaxactun Stela 5 (Schele and Freidel 1990:210).

The imagery on this lintel is reminiscent of Teotihuacan iconography, with the mosaic tile pattern of the War Serpent and Tlaloc associated costume. By drawing a comparison to the Mexican-derived dynasty that built Tikal in the Early Classic, Jasaw Chan K'awiil used reminders of past greatness to symbolize a revitalization of the city (Martin and Grube 2008:45; Sharer and Traxler 2006:393).

Tikal Temple 4 Lintel 2

Temple 4, the tallest pyramid at Tikal, was constructed by the son and heir of Jasaw Chan K'awiil, Yik'in Chan K'awiil. Within this temple are two wooden lintels that display protector gods, almost identical in format to the lintels of Temple 1. Lintel 2 (Figure 3) portrays a large figure in Jaguar God of the Underworld regalia with an outstretched arm standing behind a seated man. Identification of this figure as the Jaguar God of the Underworld is based on the jaguar ear, number seven affixed to the cheek, and cruller nose ornament (Milbrath 1999:124). The outstretched arm appears to hold a staff that is stacked with multiple god heads, but due to damage the identification of the god, or gods, is not possible. The throne on which Yik'in Chan K'awiil sits rests on a stepped platform that is decorated in a pattern containing the main sign of the Naranjo emblem glyph. On this identification alone, it has been assumed that this is a captured palanquin from Naranjo, something supported in the accompanying text.

There is a significant amount of legible text from this lintel that describes a war and possible capture of a protector deity. The portion of text starting at B7 gives a Calendar Round date of 7 Ben 1 Pop (Feb. 4, 744 A.D.) and then an event occurs at B8 involving a “star over x” glyph. The following passage states the war was at *Wak-kab-nal* (A9), or 6 Earth Place, the seat of (B9 *tu kun*) the sacred serpent (A10), a deity also seen at Naranjo but possibly occurring at

other sites as well. B10 appears to have the sign for *baak*, translated as captive or death, included but the decipherment of the entire glyph has yet to be established. The proposed palanquin glyph can be seen at B11; the T174 superfix is also on Tikal Lintel 2 of Temple 1; this glyph would read as *kuchiy*. Like on Lintel 2 of Temple 1, following this glyph is the name of the protector, *Nik Pili Kin Hix Ek Hun* (A12-A13). This is probably the name of the supernatural protector. This accompanying text from Lintel 2 may describe the capture of a protector deity of Naranjo, not the ruler.

Tikal Temple 4 Lintel 3

The companion of Lintel 2 from Temple 4 displays noticeable differences from the other Tikal lintels. The most notable difference of Lintel 3 (Figure 4) is the frontal style of the image versus the profile view on the other monuments portraying protectors. This lintel is the most complete of all the Tikal lintels, with a large image and a significant amount of legible glyphs. The intricately carved image is characterized by a seated ruler with an arching Cosmic Monster outlining the throne. Above the zoomorph perches the Principle Bird Deity. The Cosmic Monster arches around the ruler creating sacred space, much like the protective space formed by the standing protectors. The Tikal ruler is dressed as God A' in this scene, known by the shield affixed with the percentage sign; also there are two God A' figures below the feet of the ruler. Schele and Grube (1994:185) suggest this scene depicts the captured God A' palanquin of El Peru.

The text from this lintel opens with the Calendar Round date 3 Ahau 3 Mol (Jun. 30, 741 A.D.). A star war event occurred two tuns, two uinals, and two kuns later on the date 11 Ik' 15 Ch'en (Aug. 1, 743 A.D.) (A3-B4). Initially glyphs B4-A5 were thought to represent a battle

against the nearby site Yaxha. Schele and Grube (1994:184) have suggested that the second half contains an El Peru toponym. If this reading is correct the glyph could be referring to Yaxa', or Blue Water, which is a satellite city to the west of the El Peru polity (Martin and Grube 2008:49; Schele and Grube 1994:184; Sharer and Traxler 2006:400). However, the first half of the glyph A5 reads lak'kin, or east; therefore, a translation of Yaxa' is not logical. The cessation of construction after A.D. 743 at El Peru could be evidence that the city was subordinate to Tikal or another kingdom, however there is no other archaeological data to support this claim.

The next pertinent section of text occurs on the right side of the lintel and is designated E1- F9. This section begins with a Calendar Round date that is 3 years after the first event on the lintel. This portion of glyphs does not have an accepted translation yet, but a few of the glyphs do shed light on the meaning of the lintel's image. The first half of the glyph at E3 appears to read *mayich* and the second part of the glyph reads *ti kan*; there is no translation for either of these glyphs. At F3 the glyph reads *tzab chan tzuk*; the proposed translation for *tzab chan* is rattlesnake (Schele and Grube 1994:191). The *tzuk* suffix has multiple decipherments, one of which is "constellation." Schele and Grube (1994:190; see also Schele and Grube 1995:46) suggest this compound could correlate with the rattlesnake constellation or another cosmic meaning. I agree the first half of the glyph reads *tzab chan*, but I am not certain on the *tzuk* reading. Not only does the glyph not appear to be *tzuk*, the surrounding epigraphy does not correlate with that reading. A possible explanation could be that glyphs E3 and F3 are read together to form a name or something else appearing in the lintel's imagery. The glyph at position F4 may instead relate to the serpent seen surrounding the seated ruler in the image. The glyphs may also be the name of the protector.

The glyph at E4 has 4 distinguishable signs- *ma*, *ba*, *ajaw*, and a hand sign- but a clear reading of the entire glyph is not yet known. The next glyph reads *u natal ch'ahom* or “for the first scatterer” which indicates bloodletting. A proposed reading for E5 is *u bah an*, or “he goes carving” (Schele and Grube 1994:190). This could mean the captured palanquin is being repaired, as suggested by Schele and Grube (1994:190). However, Schele and Grube base this reading on their suggestion that this lintel describes a captured palanquin from El Peru. As I have previously stated, there is no evidence that El Peru and Tikal were engaged in a conflict. The following glyphs from positions F5-E7 name an unknown god and God A'. Next F7-E8 reads, *u kuch tah* or “he was carried.” This glyph is seen on the other Tikal lintels and in association with the carrying of protector mounted palanquins. An undeciphered glyph (F8) is probably part of Ruler B's name, which follows in glyphs E9-F9. While there is still much ambiguity regarding this portion of text, I believe, along with Schele and Grube (1994:193) it can be interpreted as a ritual conducted by Ruler B, however I do not believe the ritual was celebrating the capture of a protector and palanquin from an El Peru polity.

Tikal Graffiti

An interesting illustration of protectors comes from graffiti etched on the interior walls of Tikal buildings. There are several examples located on three buildings in the Central Acropolis (Structure 5D-65) and the Plaza of the Seven Temples (Structure 5D-91 and Structure 5D-95) (Triak and Kampen 1983: Figs. 71-73, 81, 82). The appearance of graffiti is not uncommon at Tikal, or even in the Maya region, so the protector etchings would not have been considered unique or out of the ordinary among the residents of Tikal (Haviland and Haviland 1995; Webster 1963).

The majority of graffiti images come from Structure 5D-65 (Figures 5-7), also known as Maler's Palace, and can be found incised on the north, south, and east walls of Room 9. There is one relatively detailed scene carved on the north wall (Figure 5). The protector can be seen standing behind a seated figure with an outstretched arm grasping a staff. This image includes all aspects of the protector theme: a protector, ruler, platform, throne, and staff. The protector has irregular spots covering the body, arguably representing jaguar spots. Sprouting from the top of its head is some type of headdress similar to the one worn by the Jaguar God of the Underworld on Lintel 2 of Temple 4. Based on these similarities, I propose that these crude images carved on the walls are images of the same figures seen on Lintel 2 of Temple 4. The remaining graffiti scenes in this structure are quite similar to the north wall scene, with the same type of headdress and jaguar characteristics. In one example on the east wall (Figure 6), there are two figures that appear to be carrying the palanquin on which the protector resides, indicative of the portable nature of these palanquins. Mobility would have been necessary for these palanquins in order to parade around the city.

In Structure 5D-91, there is one example of protector graffiti (Figure 8) carved on the south wall of Room 1C. The image appears to be incomplete, with only the standing protector grasping a staff on a stepped platform. The protector was created in a different artistic style than the Structure 5D-65 graffiti. Here the protector is stippled and has a smaller headdress. Differences could be attributed to a different artist or, perhaps, this image depicts a different protector. It has large rounded ears, which could suggest a jaguar. However there is not enough evidence from this image to support any claim.

The final case of graffiti (Figure 9) comes from the east wall of Room 1C in Structure 5D-95 and it depicts a large, detailed image of a protector and an almost complete palanquin. This protector is almost certainly a rendering of the great war serpent, Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan, found on Lintel 2 of Temple 1. The figure is crosshatched, reminiscent of the mosaic pattern of Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan, and the palanquin pillar ends in a snake head. The mouth is open and displaying its teeth, again like the Lintel 2 protector.

Piedras Negras Stela 10

Ruler 4 of Piedras Negras led the city during the Late Classic (A.D. 729-757) and had a flair for unique monuments (Clancy 2009:113; Martin and Grube 2008:148). One such monument is Stela 10, which displays a giant protector not found anywhere else at Piedras Negras. Maybe Ruler 4 was inspired by the lintels at Tikal or perhaps protector adorned monuments were more commonplace in the region and other examples have yet to be found.

Stela 10 was found in two pieces by Teobert Maler, with an eroded top section (Figure 10) and a nicely preserved bottom half (Figure 11). The profiled image includes a large jaguar protector hovering behind a human figure, presumably Ruler 4, seated on a cushion. An arm of the jaguar reaches in front to grasp a staff, creating a protective space which encloses the seated ruler. Even though the stela is worn by natural erosion, the protector appears to be a Water Lily Jaguar. Underneath the main image are two cosmic bands.

Unfortunately Stela 10 does not contain many glyphs, probably due to damage, leaving the interpretation almost solely to the modern observer. The few glyphs express the Initial Series with a Long Count date of 9.15.10.0.0 3 Ahau 3 Mol (June 30, 741 A.D.) followed by a Supplementary Series.

Even though there is not a significant amount of accompanying text and a large portion of the stela is damaged or missing, there are still clues to the meaning of this stela. This stela was dedicated by Ruler 4 during the Late Classic, contemporary with the Tikal lintels. Unlike the suggestions made for the Tikal lintels, Stela 10 does not depict a captured protector. This suggests the protector here is a protector deity of Piedras Negras. It would be unwise to propose Stela 10 represents a captured protector because there were no military campaigns undertaken during this time at Piedras Negras. However, it is conceivable-but not probable- that Ruler 4 could have borrowed the imagery and theme from the Tikal lintels.

Site Q Altar 1

The intangible Site Q has caused many debates among Mayanists regarding its actual location, but the site is currently thought to be La Corona. Site Q Altar 1 (Figure 12), also known as the Dallas Altar, is an unprovenanced tablet with beveled edges and smooth back, indicative of an object meant to be in place against or in a wall (Freidel and Guenter 2003). According to the glyphic text, this altar came from Sak Nikte, or “White Flower.” Sak Nikte, referenced on numerous monuments of La Corona, has been determined to be the ancient name of that site. Thus La Corona is the probable location of Site Q (Guenter 2005).

The main image of the Site Q altar displays a protector and two other standing figures, each standing within a different palanquin. This example is unique among the sample set for three reasons: 1) in addition to the protector there is more than one main figure; 2) the figures are not seated; and 3) the figures are women. The woman on the left stands in a palanquin held up by two old gods and the woman on the right stands in a palanquin guarded by a giant protector. The protector is identified as a variant of the Jaguar God of the Underworld by David Freidel and

Stanley Guenter (2003) and I agree. The body of the beast is reminiscent of the Jaguar God of the Underworld found on Tikal Lintel 3 of Temple 4, but the head is covered by a Mexican influenced headdress. The headdress appears to represent the war serpent, Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan, which stands guard over a ruler on Tikal Lintel 2 of Temple 1.

The accompanying text is extensive and as it is not crucial to the understanding of the protector it will not be discussed at length here (See Martin 2008 for detailed description of text). There are three dates on the altar, the latest being 9.14.9.9.14 (A.D. 721), placing this altar in the Late Classic and contemporary with the other examples. The remaining text is largely devoted to the relationships of three women from the “Snake” kingdom.

Other Monuments

Simon Martin (1993) has proposed that Naranjo Stela 32 (Figure 13) and Uaxatun Stela 14 (Figure 14) are frontal views of protector figures. A close inspection of the bottom half of the Naranjo stela shows platform steps leading to of a ceremonial throne. However due to the massive amount of damage to the middle section, an accurate interpretation is not possible. Like the damaged Naranjo stela, Uaxactun Stela 14 is incredibly eroded and any interpretation would be pure speculation.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

Previous chapters have outlined ancient Maya worldview as well as the nature of warfare and Maya gods. The data set has also been analyzed in an attempt to provide the necessary information for the argument advanced in this chapter. This chapter identifies and discusses a specific theme for the appearance of palanquins with giant protector figures. This theme, which I call the protector theme, refers to the specific group of images that includes the protector figure and other identifying attributes. This chapter also aims to negate previous theories of the significance and purpose of protectors as misinterpretations. Finally, this chapter discusses the dispersal and implications of the protector theme for the Classic Period.

Protector Gods

Protectors have rarely been discussed at length; typically the figures are referenced in passing, with one notable example in Flora Clancy's (2009:120-125) discussion of the Piedras Negras stela depicting a protector. Clancy (2009:123) proposed an interesting theory regarding the interpretation and significance of Piedras Negras Stela 10 and additionally has applied this theory to the contemporaneous Tikal lintels. Clancy (2009:123) holds that the scene on Piedras Negras Stela 10 depicts a pre-accession quest that justifies the accession of Ruler IV, depicted and described on Stela 11. During this pre-accession quest, the ruler enters a separate realm and then is reborn after the ascension of a sky scaffold (Clancy 2009:123). Stela 11 displays Ruler IV of Piedras Negras seated on a throne and framed by celestial bands, much like the bands found in the lower register of Stela 10. Stela 11 also depicts a Cosmic Monster, like the protector found on Tikal Temple 4 Lintel 3. I am hesitant to call the Cosmic Monster on Stela 11

a protector, but this monument is certainly matched with Stela 10. Clancy's argument is interesting, even though she disregards the possibility that the Water Lily Jaguar on Stela 10 is a protector. This omission, however, does not alter the overall analysis of the iconography. In order to assess Clancy's argument, its basic foundation must be understood.

The basis of Clancy's argument rests on the theory that Piedras Negras Stela 10 and Stela 11 are a linked pair which express a single thought. The literary device of pairing two metaphors to express a single idea is called a diphrastic kenning (Knowlton 2002:9). Diphrastic kennings were commonly used in colonial Nahuatl literature and have also been found in colonial and contemporary literature from three other Mayan languages: Yucatec, Tzotzil, and Quiche (Knowlton 2002). Identifying diphrastic kennings in Classic Maya hieroglyphs proves difficult due to the nature of hieroglyphic writing and the expanse of compound words in the corpus. However, the application of a diphrastic kenning to two separate monuments is a difficult task. Regarding the Piedras Negras stela pair, Clancy makes the assertion that both stelae relate to the accession of Ruler IV. The evidence Clancy provides is the staff held by the Water Lily Jaguar; unfortunately, the given explanation becomes convoluted when she begins to relate the staff to a completely separate pair of Piedras Negras stelae (Clancy 2009:123). Considering their close proximity and the accession iconography of Stela 11, I do believe Stela 10 and 11 are related and perhaps depict a diphrastic kenning. The assertion that Tikal Temple 1 lintels and Temple 4 lintels are diphrastic kennings simply because they are placed adjacent to one another ignores the hieroglyphic text and archaeological evidence. An argument could be possibly be made that the Tikal Temple 1 lintels are the closest to expressing a diphrastic kenning, due to the relation of both lintels to Spearthrower Owl. However in order for these lintels to express a diphrastic

kenning they would have to signify the same idea, which they do not. The lintels share a theme, but portray two separate ideas.

The scenes portrayed on the Tikal Temple 1 lintels depict different, albeit similar, scenes. The main similarity is the appearance of protectors; contrary to Clancy however, the protectors are not the same creature. Lintel 2 depicts Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan, a creature frequently associated with war. Clancy (2009:125) claims this creature “clearly displays a ‘Mexicanized’ version of the Maya Water Lily Jaguar”. While the construction of the two creatures from these lintels is similar, they do not represent the same entity. Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan may have been adopted from Teotihuacanos and transformed into a Maya entity but it does not represent a version of the Water Lily Jaguar. In the Temple 1 lintels both protectors have something sprouting from their head, but the protector from Temple 4 Lintel 2 also has some type of head tassel. Also similar is the staff topped with a small version of the protector’s head propped in front of the seated ruler. I argue that these similarities can be attributed to the protector theme and not evidence of multiple versions of the same scene.

As discussed in chapter two, palanquins displaying the protector theme were carried into battle, perhaps carrying the ruler, and acted as war standards. The capture and subsequent partial destruction was very important for the Maya because housed inside the palanquin was the sacred spirit of the protector (Freidel et al. 1993:295). However not all images with the protector theme signify a battle palanquin. On Piedras Negras Stela 10 most of the accompanying text has been destroyed, but evidence from all monuments erected during the reign of Ruler 4 indicate that at this time Piedras Negras was not the victim, nor the aggressor, of any military actions. Similar to the Piedras Negras stela, the text of Site Q Altar 1 does not suggest military aggression. The

scene has been described by Freidel and Guenter (2003) has a message of creation and war. The left side of the altar depicts imagery of rebirth and symbolizes the fertility of the woman standing within this sacred space (Freidel and Guenter 2003). Freidel and Guenter (2003) suggest the image on the right side refers to the war gods being evoked by the women of the Site Q lineage. However, the text does not provide evidence for this suggestion; in fact, the text largely relates to the relationship of several women over several years of Site Q and does not seem to relate directly to the carved scene. The protector on this altar is a combination of Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan and Jaguar God of the Underworld. Based on the similarities with the other examples of the protector theme I suggest that the large anthropomorphic figure standing in this scene is not a war god but a protector that can be evoked at any ritual event.

The protectors identified within the protector theme have been referred to as both patron deities and war gods. As evidenced in chapter two, differences separate a patron deity from a war god. The protectors on the Tikal lintels have been referred to as captured patron deities by multiple Mayanists (Martin 1993:228; Schele and Grube 1994:185; Sharer and Traxler 2006:300). While this is quite plausible, I propose a different argument- that these gods functioned solely as protectors during political or ritual events. The concept of patron deities in the Maya region is a topic that needs to be better understood before we begin to assign gods as the patron deities of specific sites. On Tikal Temple 4 Lintel 2 the supposedly captured palanquin from Naranjo depicts a human in the guise of the Jaguar God of the Underworld. Martin (1993) noted that the creature found on the lintel must have an important or symbolic relationship to Naranjo, due to the multiple occurrences of this god on Naranjo monuments. However, the Jaguar God of the Underworld appears frequently in the iconographic corpus, on

monuments and ceramics at numerous Classic Period cities in addition to Naranjo (Milbrath 1999:124; Schele and Miller 1986:50). Although different cities could have shared the same patron deity, designating a god as patron deity based on its appearance on a few monuments and no epigraphic evidence could be a mistake. Gods became patrons of months and days, thus patron deities of each particular site likely occurred throughout the region. Perhaps the best way to identify patron deities for each site is through the hieroglyphic corpus and many references in the monumental inscriptions may have been misinterpreted or destroyed.

Maya deities were fluid and functioned in many different roles and thus protector gods must not be interpreted solely as war gods. The Jaguar God of the Underworld and Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan without a doubt can be related to warfare, but these are not the only gods that function as protectors. The most compelling evidence to dispute protectors as war gods comes from Piedras Negras Stela 10. This monument does not commemorate a war victory nor does it relate to battle. In an attempt to distinguish between war gods and protectors LeFort (1998) calls Jaguar God of the Underworld and Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan war protectors. This distinction is attractive because it separates the deities from gods of war and still omits the protectors from the Piedras Negras stela and Site Q altar. However, the protector depicted on Tikal Temple 1 Lintel 3 is a Water Lily Jaguar and this lintel commemorates the military defeat related to Site Q/Calakmul; yet, the Water Lily Jaguar also appears on Piedras Negras Stela 10. The epigraphy of the Tikal lintel clearly shows the relation to warfare, even though the Piedras Negras stela is not war-related. Therefore, LeFort's designation cannot apply.

Along with war gods, another misidentification has been labeling the protectors as companion spirits of the humans in the images. Since the translation of the *way* glyph by

Houston and Stuart (1989), Mayanists have been able to identify anthropomorphic figures previously thought to be gods as companion spirits to the ruling class. However the protector gods are not the *ways* of rulers, although the idea has been suggested for at least one of these beasts (D. Chase and A. Chase 2009:221). The uniformity of the protector theme discourages the theory that the creatures could be *ways*; if one image represents a *way*, then all of the images represent a *way*. Additionally, there are no *way* hieroglyphs on any of the monuments and without epigraphic evidence the interpretation of the protectors as *ways* is unstable. Furthermore, the presence of graffiti indicates that the protectors were tangible entities. The etchings indicate the amateur artists witnessed the display of the protectors' effigies in the same manner they are depicted on the monuments. Images of men carrying the palanquins can be seen in a few examples, indicating the scenes depict physical actions, such as the parading of a "captured" palanquin. With the supplement of the Tikal graffiti and lack of epigraphic support, to interpret the protectors as *ways* would be incorrect.

In some instances iconography can be construed as propaganda, but the protector theme probably does not function in this way. The lintels of Tikal are placed in a private context which disputes any claim that they were used as propaganda for the commoners. However elites could have had access to Temple 1 and, therefore, would have seen the lintels. The lintels depicted highly celebrated and public Tikal victories but were placed in private locales- the funerary temples of separate rulers. The lintels would not have been seen unless the observer was standing inside the room. Interestingly, the Tikal graffiti containing the protector theme inscribed on interior walls is also located in semi-private locations. The location of the graffiti does not identify the social status of the artists; therefore, either elites or commoners could have

produced the images. The graffiti could be elite propaganda meant to control the beliefs of their own social group. However, the graffiti indicated the artists illustrated something they witnessed. This could have been the parading of captured palanquins around a city as suggested by Schele and Grube (1994:33). If the artists are only illustrating an event they observed, then this may not be propaganda but simply a remembrance of the event witnessed. At Piedras Negras, Stela 10 is placed in a public context but this does not necessarily mean this stela is propaganda. Ruler 4 had a relatively tame reign and would not have required propaganda to legitimize his rulership or any other political actions. Although provenance is unknown, the Site Q altar would have been affixed to a wall and therefore possibly viewed by multiple people. Any public monument may be able to be construed as propaganda but I believe the protector theme was more like an acknowledgement of the gods' presence rather than a statement of power to the public.

Composition of the Protector Theme

The protector theme is characterized iconographically by the presence of a large anthropomorphic protector figure, but additionally has other identifying attributes. There are four identifiable protectors from the Classic Period: Waxaklahun-Ubah-Kan, Water Lily Jaguar, Jaguar God of the Underworld, and the Cosmic Monster. The most unique delivery of the protector theme appears on Tikal Temple 4 Lintel 3, where the scene is a frontal view and shows the only occurrence of the Cosmic Monster as a protector. Previously this protector has been named a Vision Serpent (Schele 1985) and a generic Celestial Serpent (Martin 1993; Sharer and Traxler 2006). Some scholars (Cohodas 1982; Milbrath 1999; Stuart 1988) refer to this protector as a Cosmic Monster and I agree with this designation. Cosmic Monsters, also known as

Bicephalic and Celestial Monsters, do not generally function as protectors but are common in Classic Period iconography. The composition of the Cosmic Monster found on Lintel 3 is unusual due mainly to its avian features; however, this characteristic distinguishes the Cosmic Monster from other types of otherworldly entities. Despite its irregularities, this Cosmic Monster functions as a protector. The body arches around the ruler creating a protective space and the remaining aspects of the scene parallel other images with the protector theme. All of these figures are not limited to the protector theme and are seen in additional contexts where they function as gods, but not protectors (Milbrath 1999:121,125,275; Schele and Miller 1986:50-51; Stone 1985).

In addition to the protector figures, the theme also includes a throne on which the ruler frequently sits, a platform, and a staff held by the protector. The appearance of portable thrones, or palanquins, is neither unusual nor unique to the protector theme; they are frequently found associated with rulers throughout Maya iconography. The scene separates in three registers, a common technique among Classic Maya artists (D. Chase and A. Chase 2009:225). An essential part of the protector theme is the lower level consisting of basal bands that form a platform and elevate the scene from the ground level. The lower imagery represents the base of the platform, which I believe may be symbolic of the distinction between the Otherworld and natural world. By placing the ruler and protector on an elevated platform, the artist conveys that this event occurred in the natural world. This is significant because it has the potential to show that these were actual objects, as well as demonstrating the ruler's power to garner the protection of a supernatural and bring them into the physical realm.

Significance of the Protector Theme

The protector theme is limited temporally, with the exception of the unprovenanced Site Q altar, the examples occur within a short time of one another. The Tikal lintels appeared in the iconographic corpus first followed by the Piedras Negras Stela and Tikal graffiti. There is no dedicatory date on the Site Q altar; therefore there is no way of knowing the exact time of the carving of the altar. This theme is very specific and because of its limited appearance probably had a universal meaning. The theme probably depicts widely shared ideological beliefs of the ancient Maya. After the analysis of each example I suggest the theme does not portray captured palanquins, as has been previously proposed by other scholars (Freidel et al 1993:310-314; Harrison 1999:155; Martin 1993:228; Martin and Grube 2008:43,49; Schele and Grube 1994:33), but instead represents the shared belief of a ruler's power and authority to bring forth the protection of the Otherworld. The epigraphy of the Tikal lintels demonstrates that the giant protectors shown standing behind the seated ruler were conjured by the ruler. Lintel 3 of Temple 1 and Lintel 3 of Temple 4 clearly display the glyphs for bloodletting and conjuring. The images of the protectors are visual representations of the deities which the ruler has conjured. The Piedras Negras Stela 10 and the Site Q altar are not war-related and therefore cannot be captured palanquins from some type of conflict.

An important aspect of the protector theme is the representation of the ruler located within sacred, or liminal, space. Vertical layering and quadripartite division have been applied to caches, tombs, and other structures as well as being seen in contemporary Maya rituals (Ashmore 1991; Brown 2004; D. Chase and A. Chase 1998; Hanks 1984; Joyce 1992; Mathews and Garber 2004). The Maya concept of sacred space also applies to iconography. The staff,

protector, and platform create a boundary enveloping the ruler in sacred space. In the protector theme, the space in which the ruler rests is bounded by the supernatural, and thus can be interpreted as sacred. The delineation of sacred space gives the ruler the ability to conduct business in both the sacred and profane worlds. The ruler is located in the symbolic center, bounded by four directions. If the ruler is in the center of a symbolic quinquex universe, then he represents the center of the world. As the center of the world, the ruler becomes omnipotent and can interact with mortals and sacred forces. Sacred space, or liminal space, was incorporated as a means to demonstrate the “ritual integration of community and cosmos” (D. Chase and A. Chase 2009:221). This iconographic theme evinces the supernatural protection that the ruler can conjure from the sacred realm through the display of the ruler as a central actor in the universe.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Classic Maya iconography contains visual narratives that express both political events and ideological beliefs and, through the use of common themes, nobles could disseminate information to the populace. A major component of ancient Maya ideology dealt with the Otherworld and the deities associated with this separate realm. Maya iconography depicts the extensive nature in which the Otherworld influenced Maya life. Nobles commissioned specific art themes for monuments in order to display their close association with the Otherworld. Maya rulers, in dual roles as shaman and king, acted as mediators between the natural and supernatural world. The protector theme was a reiteration of the ruler's dual role as political and spiritual leader. These images prove that, when needed, the ruler can traverse the Otherworld and gain the protection of gods for himself and his domain. The epigraphy found on the Tikal lintels, shows that the ruler was conjuring the protectors through bloodletting. Although the epigraphy has been damaged or is missing completely from some of the examples, such as the Piedras Negras stela, the appearance of almost identical iconography does support this proposal of the ruler conjuring the Otherworld deity for protection. This was a critical message that the ruler wanted to convey, especially during the Late Classic. At this time, polities in the Maya region were experiencing internal conflict and, as a result, tension was building among the elites. The region was experiencing a shift in political dominance and once powerful polities that had fallen out of favor were beginning to reassert their authority, as seen at Tikal.

Warfare may have been one of the defining roles of rulership and thus there is no surprise that one of the dominant themes in Maya iconography was warfare. Large palanquins were constructed with effigies of protector gods and paraded into battle, but were not limited to war

events. The protector gods fulfill a specific niche in Maya iconography and perform at least one duty- they aid in the protection of a ruler who in return protects the domain. Maya gods were fluid in nature and therefore a god, such as Jaguar God of the Underworld, could perform multiple functions, depending on the context in which the god is found. The figures in the protector theme act solely as protectors and are not patron deities, war gods, or *wayob*.

For the Maya, protector gods were not simply conceptual beings who existed only in the Otherworld, but instead these were tangible and functioning deities. Palanquins with effigies of protector gods appear to have been publically paraded through the city. These processions were probably witnessed by multiple people, both commoners and elites, who were responsible for the graffiti incised on the interior walls of buildings. Additionally, the graffiti on the Tikal buildings indicates palanquins carrying protector effigies were not only physically visible, but were visible for long periods of time. The buildings were constructed years after the conquests recorded in the hieroglyphic record found on the Tikal lintels. These portable thrones demonstrated the ability of the ruler to elicit security from the protector gods. Going into battle with the protection of the gods could have proved frightful or daunting to the enemy, thus lowering their morale and confidence and making a weaker army. The capture of a protector would result in a symbolic victory on the battlefield because that ruler no longer had protection. In a non-war related event, the presence of a protector provided a sense of peace to the inhabitants of the city. Also the presence of protector gods in the iconography was a reiteration of the authority belonging to the ruler. Due to the ruler's position as a ritual leader, as well as a political leader, he had access to the Otherworld in ways that commoners and other elites did not. Through the conjuring of a

protector, the ruler was displaying the cultural knowledge necessary for someone in the role of shaman, or ritual specialist.

The protector theme comprises a specific group of motifs that, when combined, form an exclusive iconographic theme. The presence of a protector god, throne, ruler, staff, and platform comprise the protector theme which can be viewed on at least six monuments. Any of these motifs could be pictured alone and would carry a different meaning, but combined there is a specific metaphor that is being expressed. The monuments and portrayals were visual representations of cultural knowledge. Metaphors were the main way to convey knowledge via monuments (Stone and Zender 2011:22). Artistic themes were used by the Maya to convey stories and allegories to the viewer who may or may not have been aware of the symbolic meaning of the monuments.

The protector theme was an artistic theme that depicted shared ideological beliefs. When employed, this theme visualized the king's ability to conjure protection from the Otherworld during important events. The protector theme reassured the populace that during significant times, such as war and rebuilding and the legitimization of a king, they were supported with the protection of the gods.

APPENDIX A: FIGURES

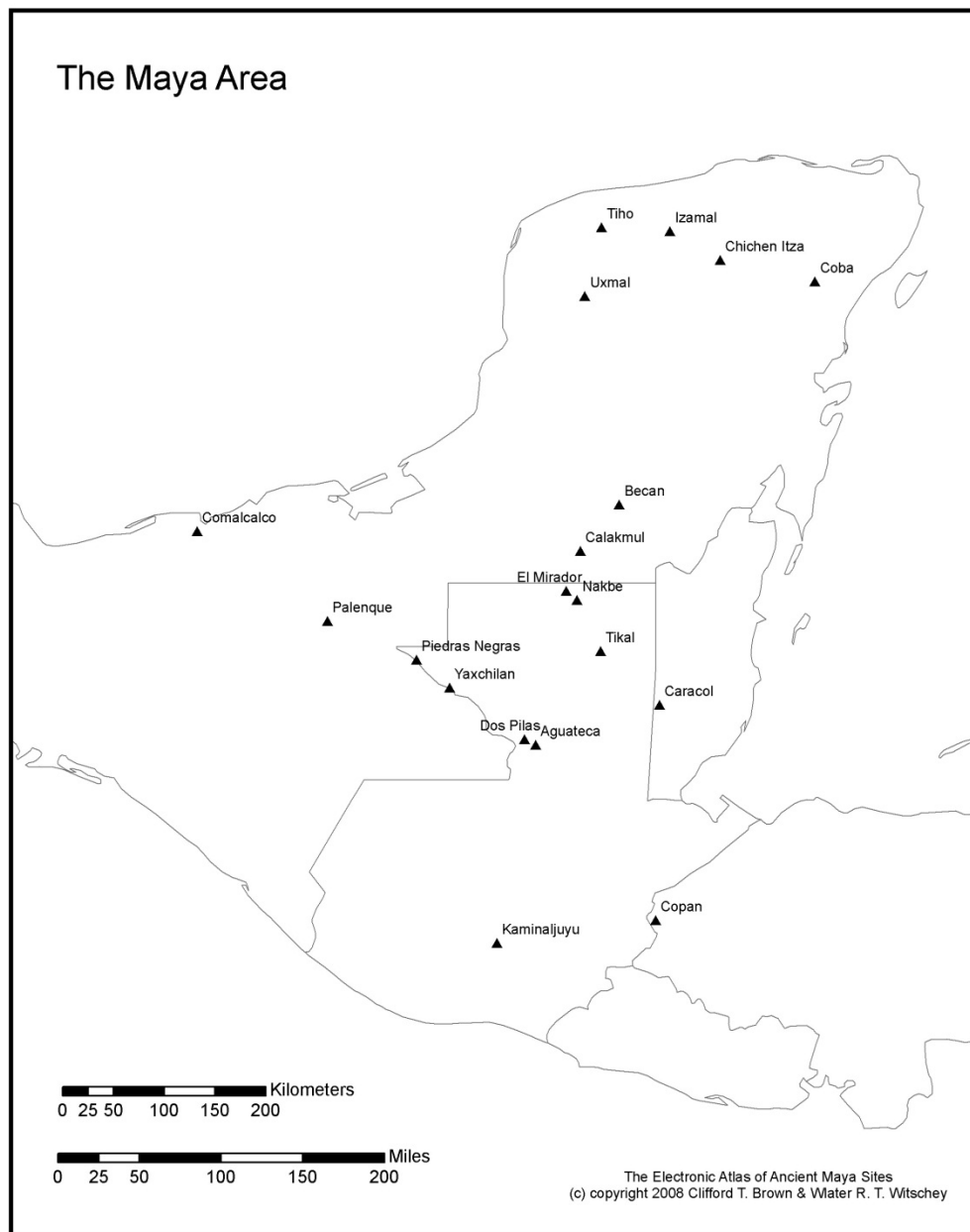


Figure 1: Map of the Maya Area

Courtesy of Brown, Clifford T. and Walter R. T. Witschey. Electronic Atlas of Ancient Maya Sites.

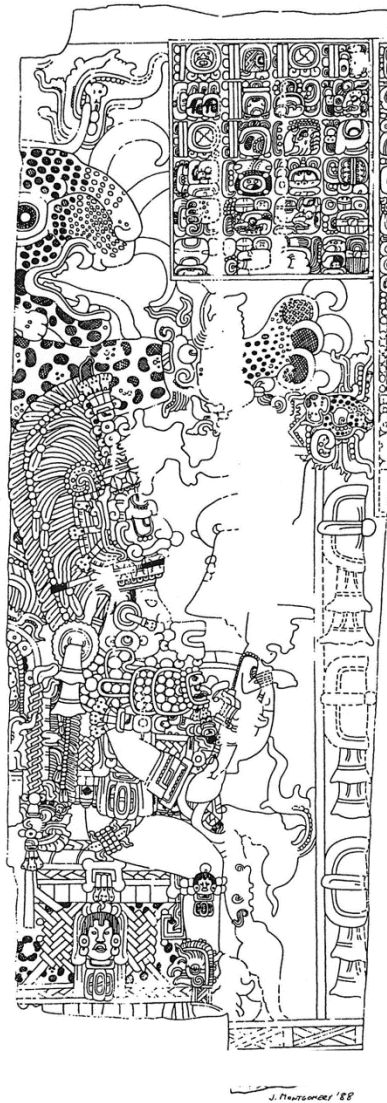


Figure 2: Tikal Temple 1 Lintel 3.

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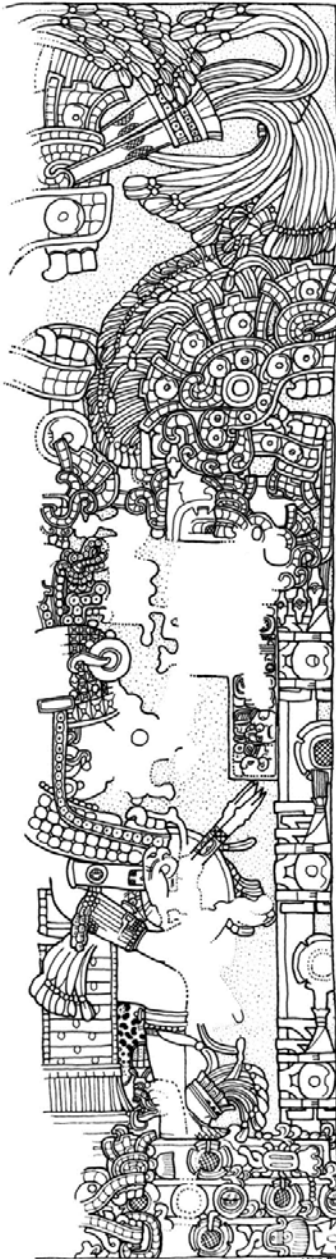


Figure 3: Tikal Temple 1 Lintel 2.

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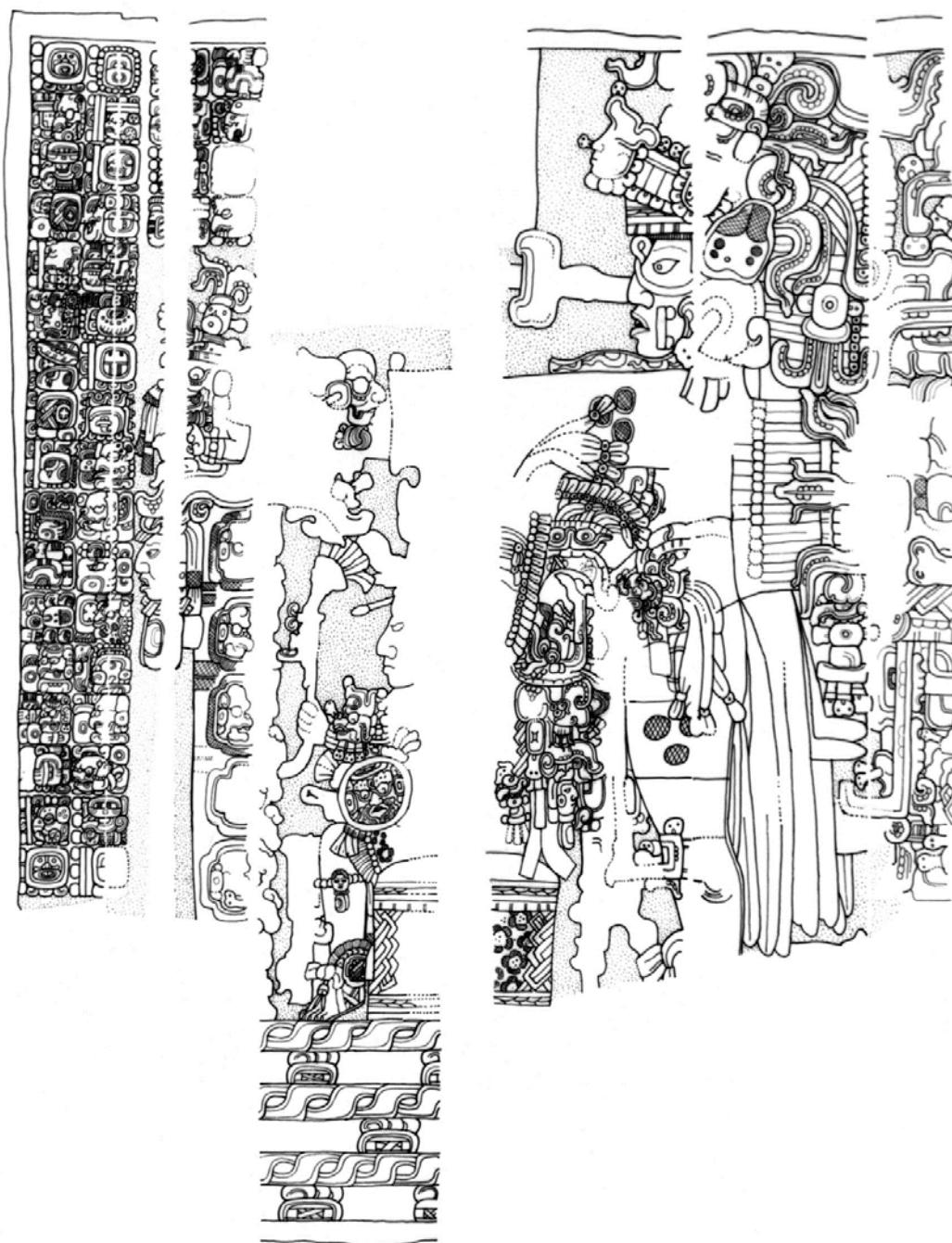
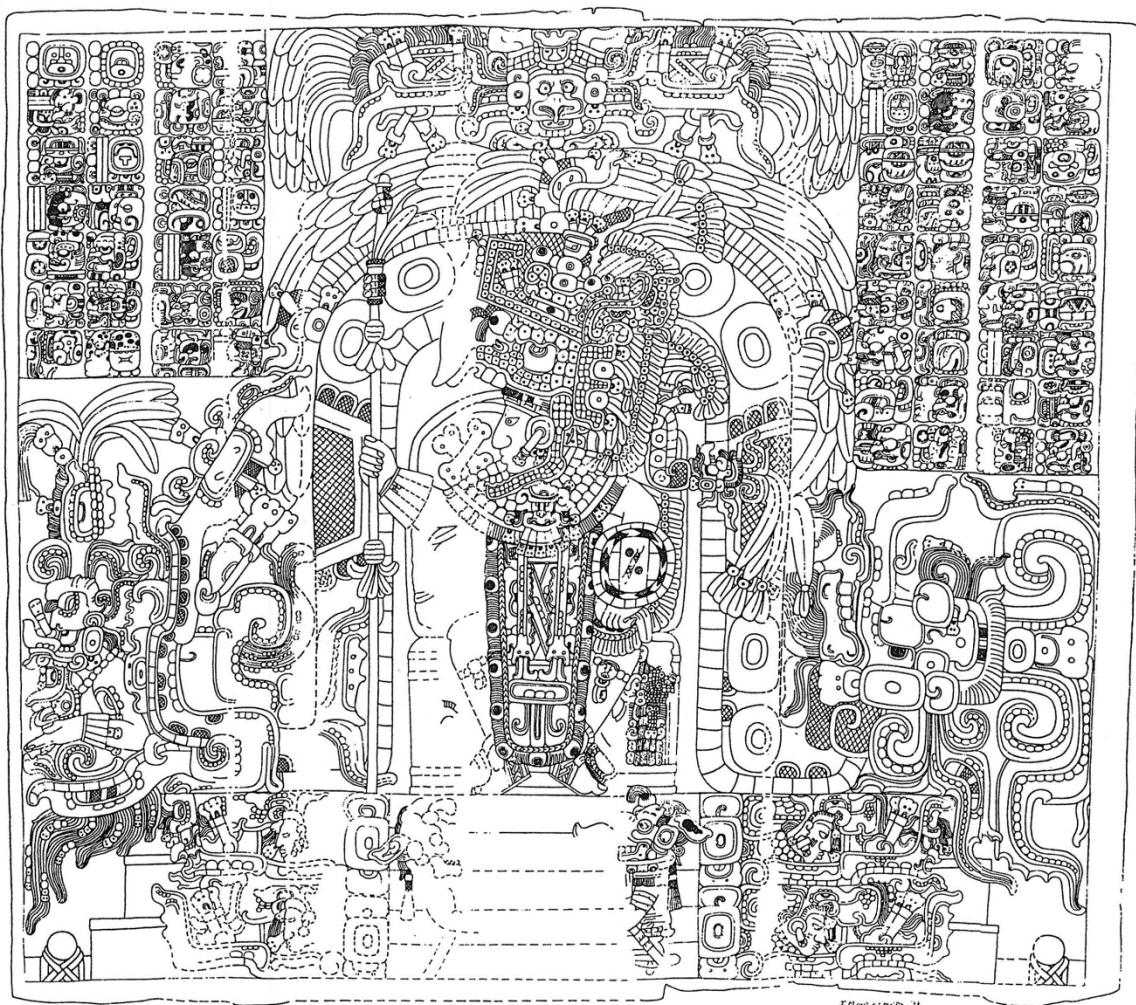


Figure 4: Tikal Temple 4 Lintel 2.

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Figure 5: Tikal Temple 4 Lintel 3.

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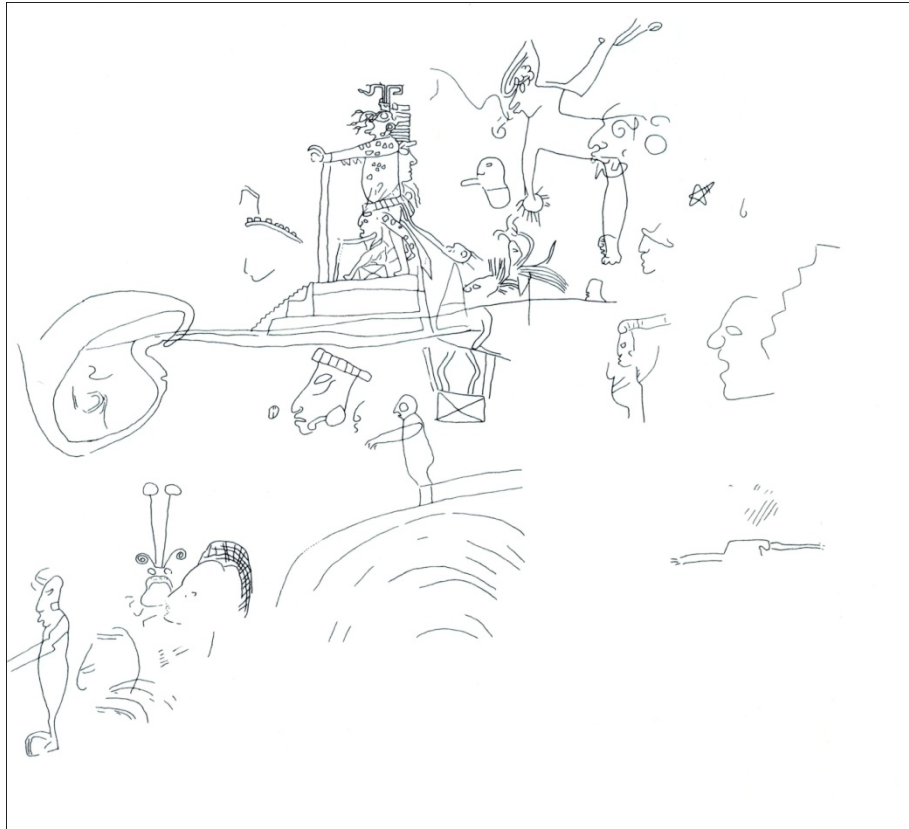


Figure 6: Tikal Graffiti from Str. 5D-65, Rm. 9, N wall

Courtesy of the Penn Museum

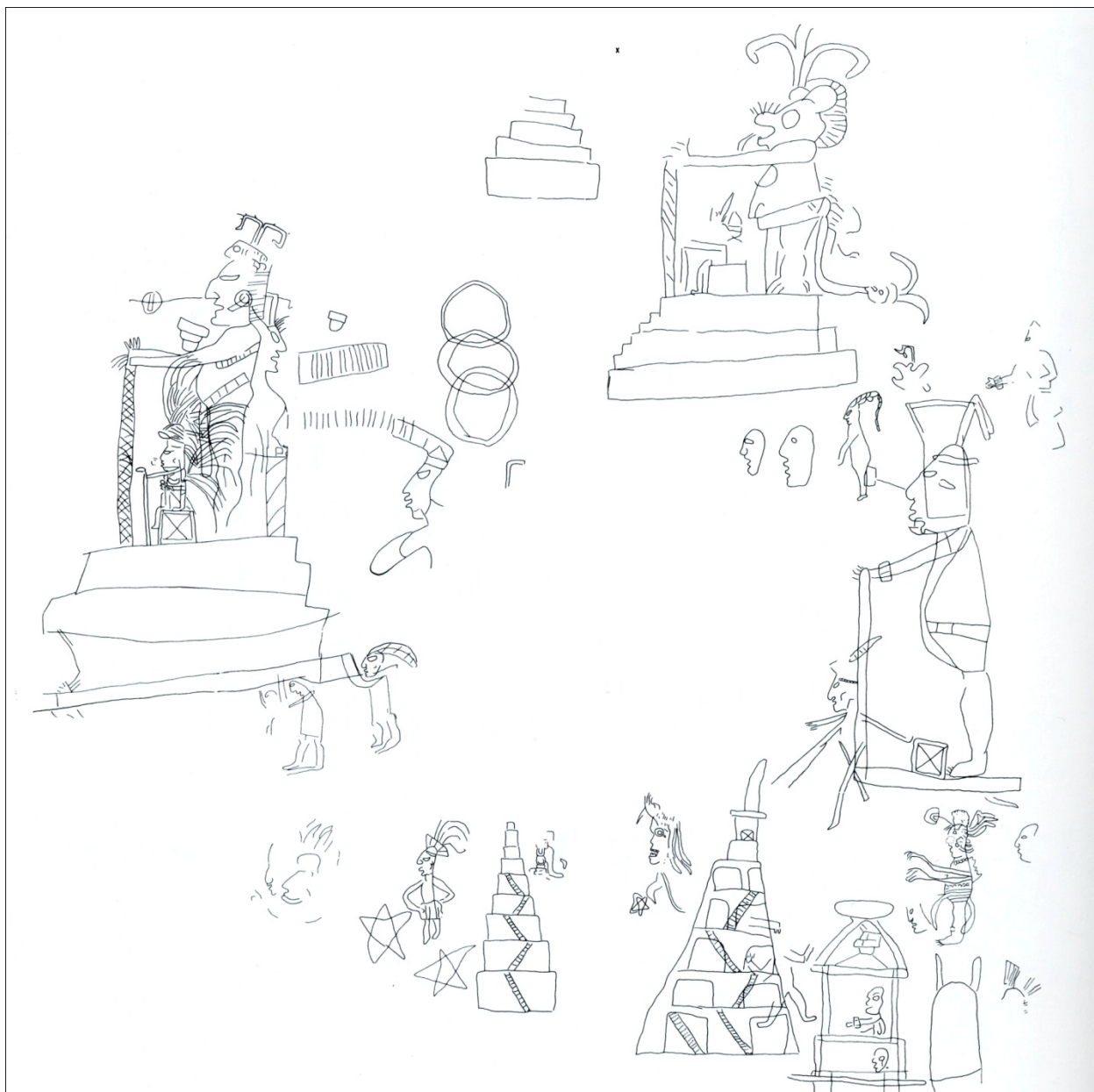


Figure 7: Tikal Graffiti from Str. 5D-65, Rm. 9, E wall

Courtesy of the Penn Museum

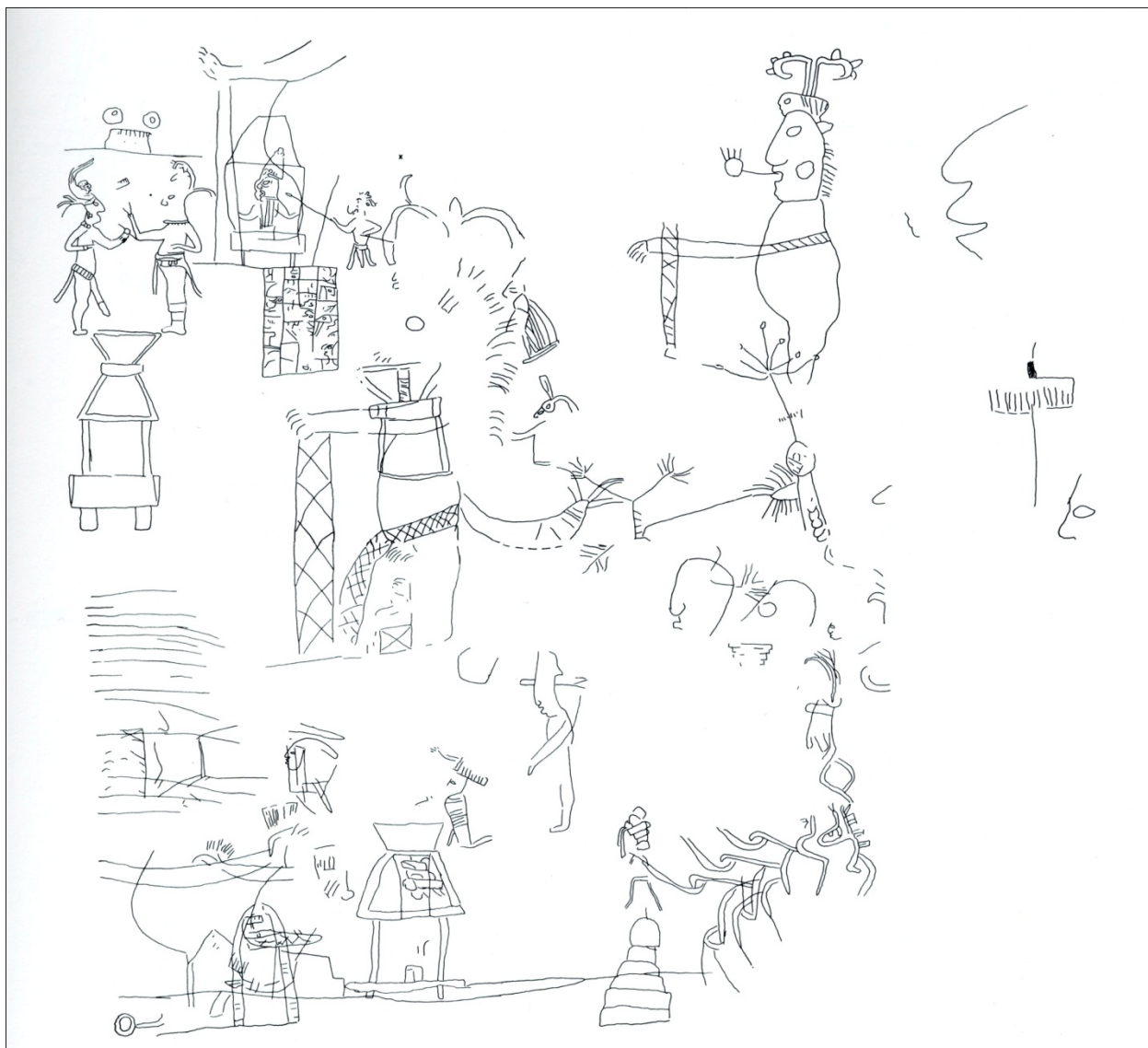


Figure 8: Tikal Graffiti from Str. 5D-65, Rm. 9, S wall

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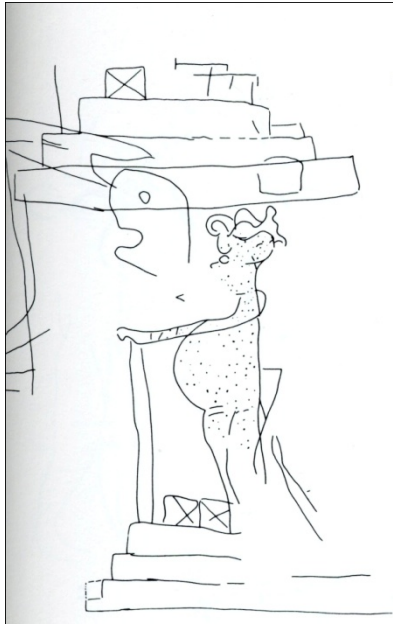


Figure 9: Tikal Graffiti from Str. 5D-91, Rm. 1C, S wall

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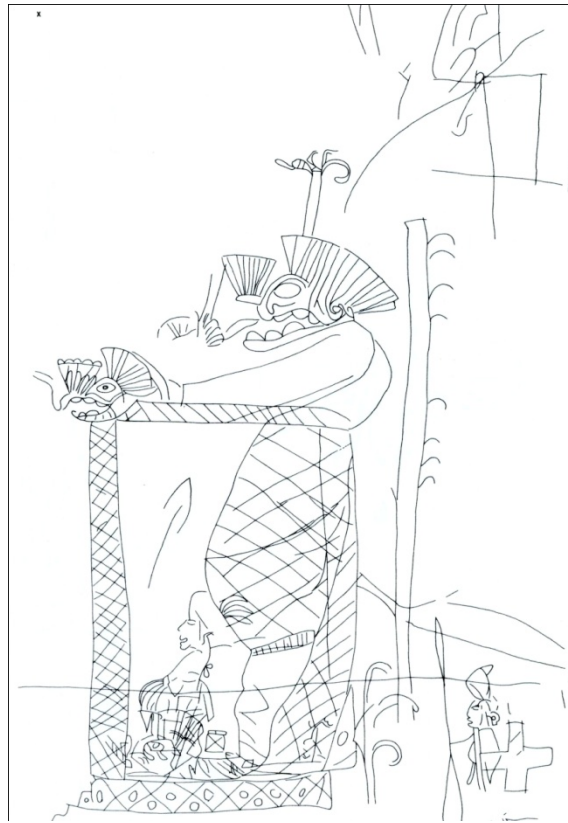


Figure 10: Tikal Graffiti from Str. 5D-95, Rm. 1C, E wall

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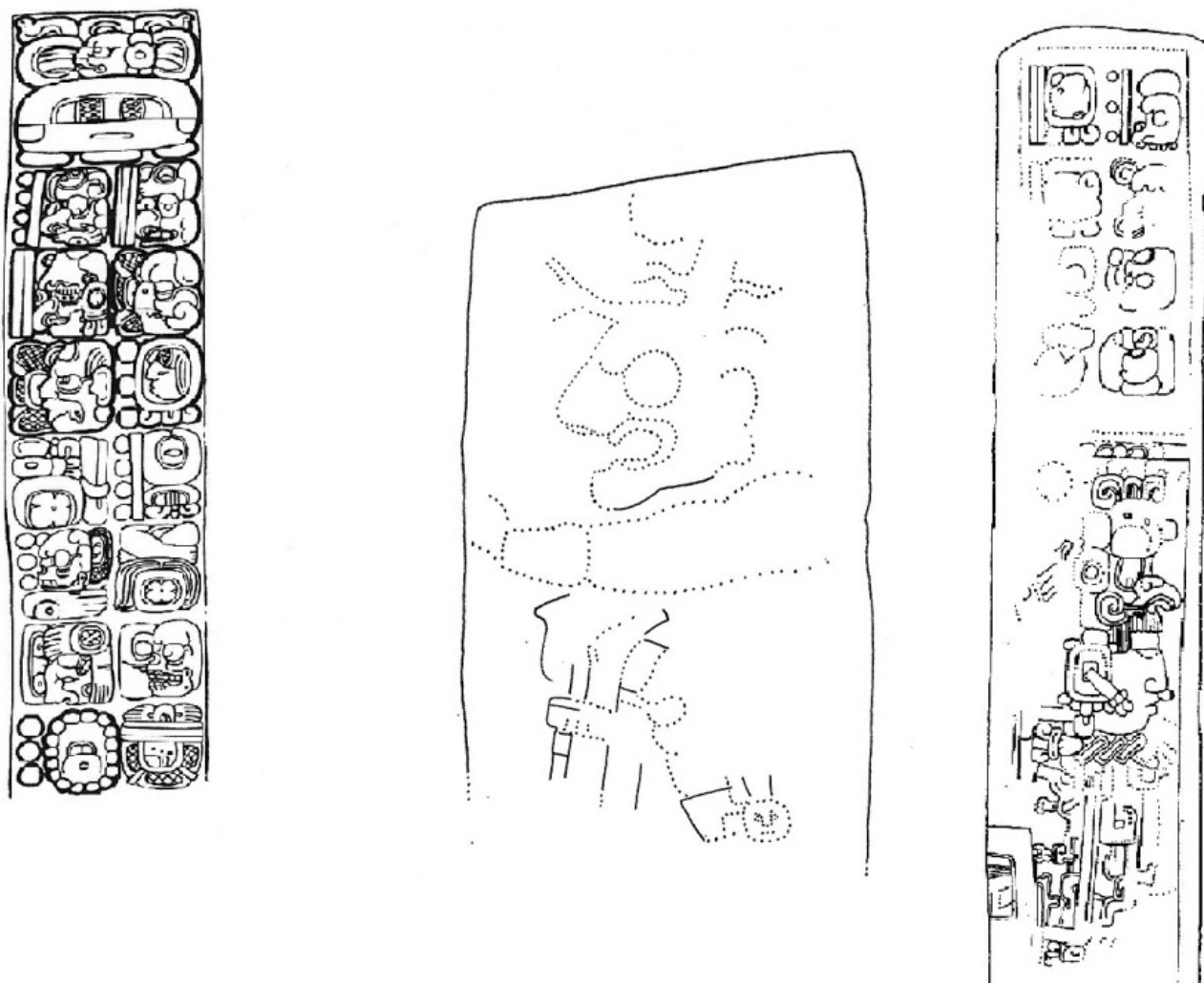


Figure 11: Piedras Negras Stela 10 top fragment with left and right text fragments.

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Figure 12: Piedras Negras Stela 10 bottom fragment.

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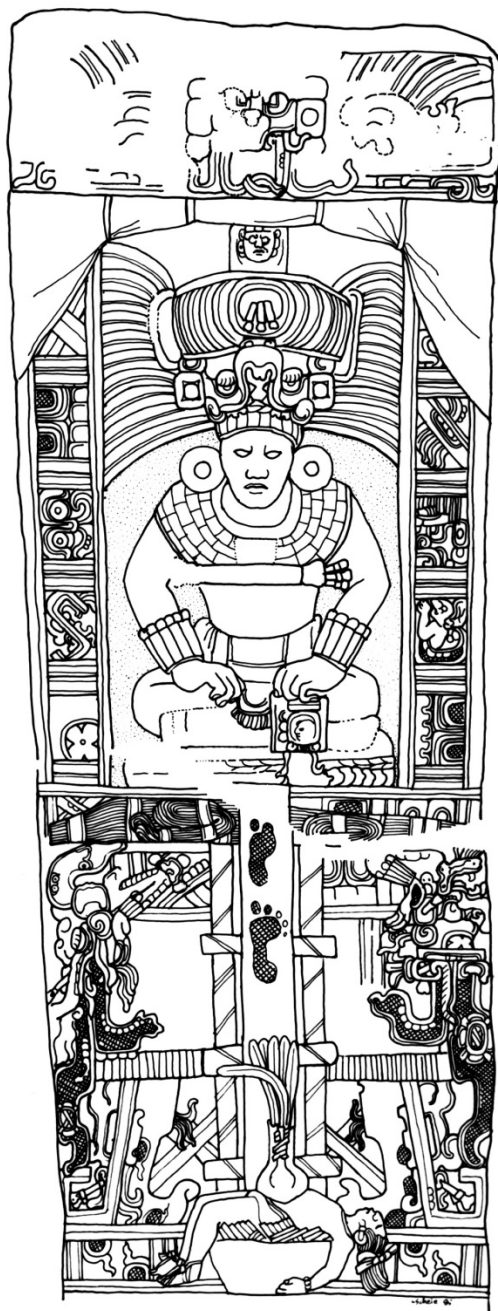


Figure 13: Piedras Negras Stela 11

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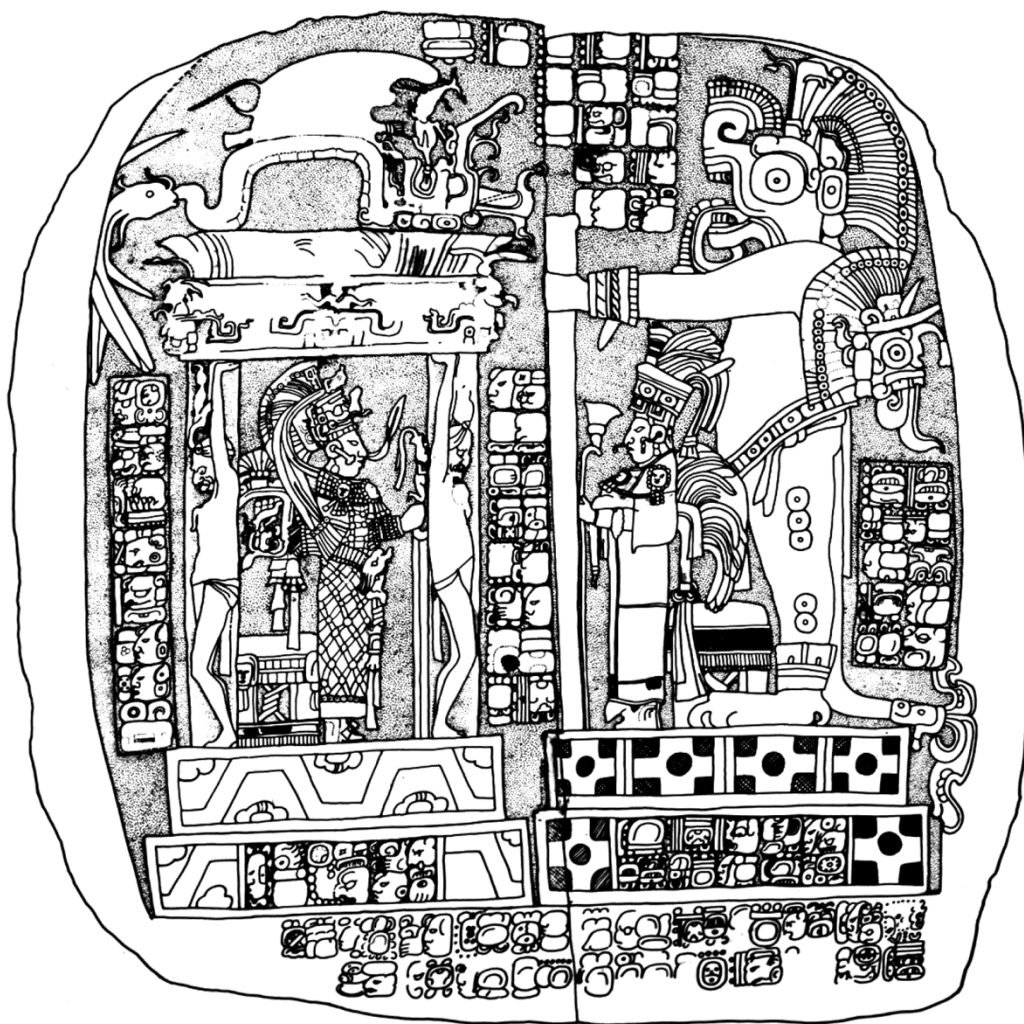


Figure 14: Site Q Altar 1.

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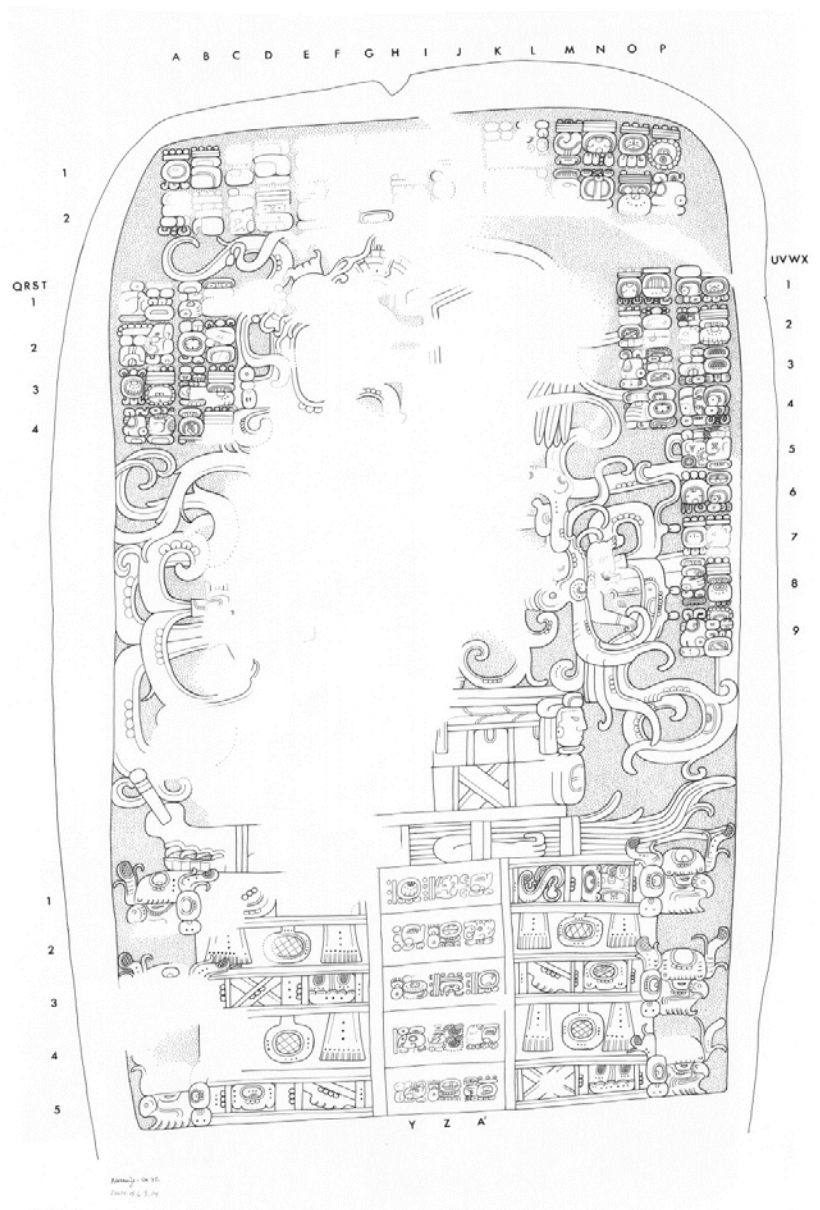


Figure 15: Naranjo Stela 32.

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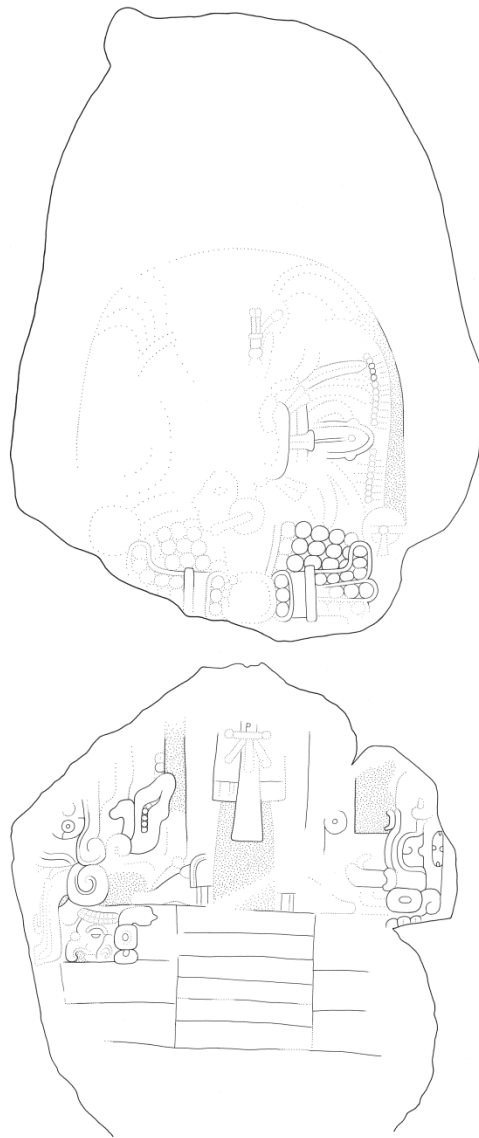


Figure 16: Uaxactun Stela 14.

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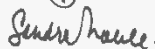
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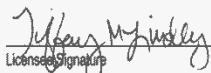
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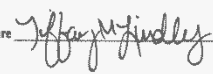
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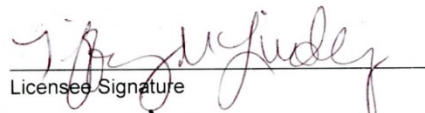
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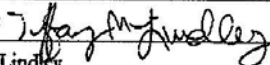
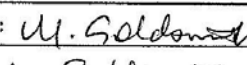
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