"Off with his head!" A Heretofore Unknown Monument of Tonina, Chiapas

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In 2013, the Institute for Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies at the University of Copenhagen moved from its earlier location to become part of a large new campus for the entire Faculty of Humanities on the island of Amager in the southern part of Copenhagen. As part of the moving process, various archives containing personal papers, photos, slides, and publications pertaining to the Department of American Indian Languages and Cultures and its former employees were reorganized. During this task a collection of black-and-white and color photographs surfaced, and our initial research made clear that they were taken in 1966 (although the extant copies were probably printed a few decades later). These photographs document the production process of two documentary films, wherein some were used as stills. One of these was a film recording the visits of the then heir apparent to the Danish throne, Her Highness Crown Princess Margrethe (Queen since 1972) to Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina from February to April, 1966. During her time in Mexico (February 17–24), the Crown Princess, who herself had studied archaeology and art history, visited several archaeological sites, including Teotihuacan, Monte Alban, Uxmal, Chichen Itza, and Tulum, and some of the photos show her touring

Figure 1. Her Highness, Crown Princess Margrethe at Uxmal with her entourage and the filmmakers during her visit to Mexico in 1966 (photograph by Rolf Rønne).

the latter three sites (Figure 1). The film, directed by Ole Gammeltoft and Ole Roos, and filmed by Rolf Rønne (1926–1997), premiered in late 1966.

Another set of photographs derive from the shooting of another documentary the same year (and presumably in continuation of the first). Here Rønne once again served as the lead cinematographer, but the directors were Børge Høst (1926–2010), an acknowledged movie director, and Arild Hvidtfeldt (1915–1999). Known for his

Figure 2. Tzotzil Maya couple shelling maize (Zinacantan, Chiapas), photographed by Rolf Rønne in 1966.

study of Aztec impersonation rituals *Teotl and *Ixiptlatli* (Hvidtfeldt 1958), Hvidtfeldt was a historian of religions and in 1970 was one of the leading forces in establishing the Department of American Indian Languages and Cultures at the University of Copenhagen (Nielsen and Fritz Hansen 2008:35-37; Nielsen 2019). The resulting

film, *Mellem to kulturer* (Between Two Cultures)—centered on highland Chiapas Tzotzil communities such as Zinacantan and San Juan Chamula—sought to document and explore how indigenous groups came to respond to and engage with foreign development aid projects. The film was released in 1967. Presumably Hvidtfeldt's role was to provide the necessary historical and ethnographic background to the region, and he undoubtedly took notes on religious traditions during the film recordings although he never published any of this research. Several of Rønne's photos from Chiapas are excellent, sometimes evocative images of daily Tzotzil life (Figure 2) from a period when the Harvard Chiapas Project, led by Evon Z. Vogt, was already well underway in its documentation of how Maya culture changed in those pivotal decades (see Vogt 1994).

What immediately caught our attention, however, was a sequence of photographs showing ancient Maya archaeological sites and monuments in Chiapas. In one photo Hvidtfeldt is standing in front of a structure at Tonina, and others show several sculpture and stela fragments lying scattered about the Great Plaza at the base of the towering Acropolis (Figure 3). From these photos it is possible to identify Monuments 12 and 20 and a sculpture representing a decapitated individual (Monument 33) replete with circular spots on his arms and upper thighs, possibly as an emulation of the mythic hero Juun Ajaw—now on display in the Sala Maya of the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City (Blom and Duby 1957:81, Fig. 25; Becquelin and Baudez 1982:2:654-658, 663-664, 835-836, 3:1258, Fig. 71, 1351,

Figure 3. Monuments and sculptures in the Great Plaza at Tonina, 1966. The lower part of the Pestac Stela can be seen in the photograph on the left and Monument 12 in foreground of the photograph on the right (photographs by Rolf Rønne).
(photographs by Rolf Rønne).

Figure 4. Arild Hvidtfeldt (kneeling) and Børge Høst (standing) examine the newly discovered stela fragment at Tonina, 1966 (photographs by Rolf Rønne). Note the damaged upper left corner of the stela.

Fig. 163). Also visible is the lower half of the Pestac stela, which had been moved to Tonina—sometime between 1928 and 1948—from the eponymous site, located less than 2 km away (see Blom 1935; Blom and Duby 1957:84; Becquelin and Baudez 1982:646-648).[1]

What was unexpected were the two following photos showing Hvidtfeldt (kneeling) and Børge Høst (standing) on either side of a carved stela, lying exposed and on its back, presumably in the uncleared bush in the vicinity of the other sculptures (Figure 4). Another surprise was the stela's relatively early style, since even a quick perusal of the monument's sculpture suggests that it was raised sometime between AD 500 and 550. The well-preserved stela fragment does not appear in any of the more recent publications documenting or describing the inscribed monuments of Tonina (Becquelin and Baudez 1982-1984; Mathews 1983; Yadeun 1992, 1993; Graham and Mathews 1996, 1999; Graham et al. 2006; Martin and Grube 2008:176-189), and although it must have been present when Frans Blom visited the site in 1922, 1925, and 1948 (Blom 1923:169-172; Blom and La Farge 1927:259-306; Blom and Duby 1957:71-84;

see also Leifer et al. 2017:81-83, 132-133), there is nothing to suggest that he saw it, just as we know that Ian Graham fails to mention this monument despite his two-day visit to the site in 1959 (Graham 2010:469-470). Yet photographs taken during Graham's visit show the same area as that examined by the Danish visitors a decade later, giving us a sense of the site's appearance at the time (Figure 5).

In fact, a possible explanation for the Danish explorers' interest in this particular monument and for the taking of photographs at this location, and not any of the other parts of the plaza, could be that the monument had only just been discovered by the local residents and guides. When the French Mission Archéologique et Ethnologique Française au Mexique carried out their long-term project at the site from 1972 to 1980 there is no mention of the fragmentary monument, and it appears to have been removed before the project was initiated. Consequently, the fragment is also absent in the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions publications of the Peabody Museum (Mathews 1983; Graham and Mathews 1996, 1999; Graham et al. 2006). We therefore conclude that the fragmentary stela must have been illegally removed from its findspot sometime between 1966 and 1972 and possibly very soon after it had been presented to Hvidtfeldt and his travel companions.

We were delighted that a more thorough search among unprovenienced Maya monuments revealed that the fragment is now part of the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia, to which it was donated by a "group of friends of the

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[1] According to Blom, Pestac is situated 2 km north of Tonina (Blom 1935:191), but in the map published by Becquelin and Baudez, the two small sites of Pestac Bajo and Pestac Alto are located roughly 1 km to the southwest of Tonina (Becquelin and Baudez 1982-1984:1:Fig. 3; see also Taladoire 2014:Map 1) and in the information that accompanies this monument in the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions, Ian Graham indicates that Pestac is 1.5 km south of Tonina (Graham and Mathews 1999:181).

Figure 5. The appearance of the plaza in 1959 (photograph by Ian Graham; gift of Ian Graham, 2004 © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archæology and Ethnology, PM# 2004.15.1.774.1).

Gallery" in 1980 (Mayer 1984:Pl. 44). Today the stela fragment is not on display, but the museum's online archive reiterates the sparse information provided by Karl Herbert Mayer (National Gallery of Victoria 2017). According to Mayer, the monument allegedly originated from the Yucatan, something that we can now say with certainty is not the case.

Description

When found in 1966, the stela was discovered lying on its back in one large fragment, which constitutes the upper half of the monument. This large fragment measures c. 63.5 cm wide by 119.4 cm high (see Mayer 1984:Pl. 44; National Gallery of Victoria 2017) (Figure 6). The original thickness of the monument is unclear as its carved face has been spalled or sawn off. The upper left hand corner was already broken at that time, possibly from the collapse or the fall of the monument, but it remained articulated in position, as is made clear in Rønne's photographs (Figure 4). Since then, the upper portion of the monument has been sawn into two halves by the looters to ease transport and expedite movement onto the illicit antiquities market. As part of the looting, the upper left corner of the stela was not recovered, and we presume that it was left behind on site or was lost in transit. At some juncture the upper left corner was restored, presumably to enhance the value of the piece for sale. In so doing what once were two glyphic

medallions were rendered as an awkward approximation of a single elongated glyph and the leftmost part of the headdress was also restored in a slightly more convincing manner.

In addition to the four glyphs once sculpted across the top of the monument, the iconography depicts a standing figure, presumably a ruler of Tonina, rendered frontally and gazing sternly at his onlookers. He is shown wearing large circular earspools, embellished above and below by personification heads (the upper set of which were damaged when the monument was sawn during the looting). The ruler also wears an elaborate headdress commensurate with his rank and social station. The central element at the top represents the head of the personification of paper (Stuart 2012) that is mounted atop a skeletal serpentine creature. This entity

Figure 6. The fragmentary stela as curated in the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne (photograph © National Gallery of Victoria).

is lying on its side, its maw opened over the king's right shoulder, a large obsidian blade emerging from the oral cavity, as though the tongue of this creature. The tail is fashioned as a spray of long feathers attached to a circular mirror that denotes the creature's body. Together this may represent a supernatural entity related to fire serpents (Taube 2000:270-291). The whole headdress is bound under the chin of the king in a large bow that is embellished by the head of another creature.

The subject also wears a large necklace of squared beads, but this is partly concealed by his right hand, which clenches a large stone implement. Due to its form, this and other comparable objects are known as eccentrics and they are typically made of chert, although smaller ones made of recycled obsidian cores are also well known (see Iannone 1992; Agurcia Fasquelle et al. 2016). This particular eccentric has a large circular handle, wide enough to accommodate the width of the fist, and extends into three large pointed prongs. On account of its shape, this implement can be compared to a particular type of eccentric that is frequently referred to, in rather jocular terms, as a "knuckle duster." Yet despite this threatening name there is no evidence that such eccentrics were ever used as such, and for the most part they appear to have been used as objects that were paraded around and were also specifically made as offertory objects deposited within ritual caches (Coe 1959; Moholy-Nagy 2008:21-24, Figs. 1-54). Nevertheless, the stern gaze of the king and the large and pointed eccentric that he brandishes give him a formidable and ominous countenance. Other examples of such "trident flints" include that found with the depiction of K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk, the king of Naranjo, on Stela 30 (Stuart 1998:404-407, Fig. 23). There we can see the king in a nocturnal fire ritual, bearing attributes of the Jaguar God of the Underworld, holding a large fire staff in his right hand and significantly this same type of lithic implement in his left. This connection between fire rituals and supernatural feline entities is not entirely coincidental and makes one wonder if these trident knives were not meant to be figurative jaguar claws for cutting and slicing.

Designated as p7 and p32 are two additional and conjoining fragments of the same monument that have been discovered at Tonina and which conclusively confirm the provenience of what might be called the Melbourne stela. Of these, the larger of the two (p32) has been documented by Mathews (1995) and both have been photographed by Ian Graham as part of the CMHI work at the site (PM#2004.15.1.4250.4 and 2004.15.1.4254.2). Since then, a third fragment of the lower right base has been relocated by Ángel A. Sánchez Gamboa as part of the ongoing conservation project at Tonina (Figure 7). These fragments all exhibit the same depth of relief and the same plain band along the exterior edge. The small and stylized shark's head along the border of p32 is also contemporaneous in style to the Melbourne stela.

Figure 7. Fragments of the Melbourne stela discovered at Tonina (photographs by Jorge Pérez de Lara, reproduced with permission of the Coordinación Nacional de Conservación del Patrimonio Cultural, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia).

Whereas the two lateral fragments each depict a glyph, much like the Melbourne stela they are rendered as a circular medallion, of comparable size and placement. As such, it is clear that these are lower fragments of the same stela. Unfortunately, they do not directly conjoin with the Melbourne stela, making it clear that several more fragments of the same monument await discovery at Tonina. Assuming that this monument had similar proportions to those represented by other early stelae of Tonina (i.e., Mons. 106 and 168) we can suggest that the original stela had a height of circa 1.85 m (although it may have been slightly taller). Based on the surface area of the extant fragments (excluding the lost upper left corner) we can thus say that a little less than 70% of the stela has been discovered.

What is all the more startling is the iconography of the basal fragments, since we can see a decapitated human head along the right margin. The way the hair is pulled upwards suggests that the king depicted on the stela grasps this decapitated head by the hair in his left hand, completing his grim appearance, embodying one of the more noxious death deities. Together, this confirms the use of trident eccentrics as instruments of sacrifice and makes for a very menacing depiction of a king who was not to be trifled with.

It bears mention that representations of decapitated heads are virtually non-existent in Maya sculpture, making this stela all the more exceptional. Before this monument, the one salient example is that depicted, in a very similar way, on the large stucco frieze decorating

the acropolis of Tonina. There, in an underworld scene a nefarious and skeletal *wahy* creature, or ghoulish companion spirit, named Ahk Ook Kamay ("turtle foot death"), holds a decapitated human head by the hair, tongue lolling from the open mouth (Yadeun 1993:114-115). It cannot be ascertained with certainty by any means, but these examples are so similar that one might be tempted to suggest that this particular detail of the Late Classic stucco was in fact inspired by the iconography of what is now the Melbourne stela. In contrast, it also remains possible that such overt, grisly imagery of decapitation on public monuments is more a local and long-standing defining feature of Tonina's iconography.

Historical Context

In terms of style and dating some general comments can be made regarding the Melbourne stela in light of its historical context (Figure 8). For one, it is clearly carved in a more traditional format, as a square slab and in relatively low relief as is the standard across much of the Maya lowlands. The earliest known monument of Tonina to be carved in the site's hallmark three-dimensional style and high relief is Mon. 168 (Graham 2006:111-113) (Figure 9). This monument prominently features a lord whose name has only been partly read to date (Martin and Grube 2000:178). Part of the name includes the head of a tapir. As such, some have suggested that the lord's name should be read Bahlam Yaxuun Tihl (Martin and Grube 2008:178, 179). Yet, a closer inspection reveals that we are looking at a bipartite animal name, wherein the first part is written **K'INICH?** (B1) **sa-na-wa** (B2) **BALAM** (B3) for K'inich Sanaw Bahlam and the second is written **ya-YAXUN** (B4) **TIL-la** (B5) for Yaxuun Tihl (Figure 10). Thus his name would, in the first instance, qualify a particular type of resplendent jaguar that may be said to be "crouching" or "stretching,"[2] whereas the second name focuses on a tapir that is qualified by a cotinga. For the sake of simplicity, we will refer to this ruler by the second of his names.

The dating of this monument also requires some commentary, since it only bears a Calendar Round at the onset. This date is written 7 Ik' (A1) end of Muwan (A2–A3) (Figure 10). Via a distance number (A4–A6) this date goes on to refer to an accession (A7) and provides the names of Yaxuun Tihl. As a result, it is generally thought that this is the accession monument of Yaxuun Tihl (Martin and Grube 2000:179). With these parameters we can thereby either go forward or backward from the Calendar Round specified at the onset, by the temporal interval provided by the distance number, which in
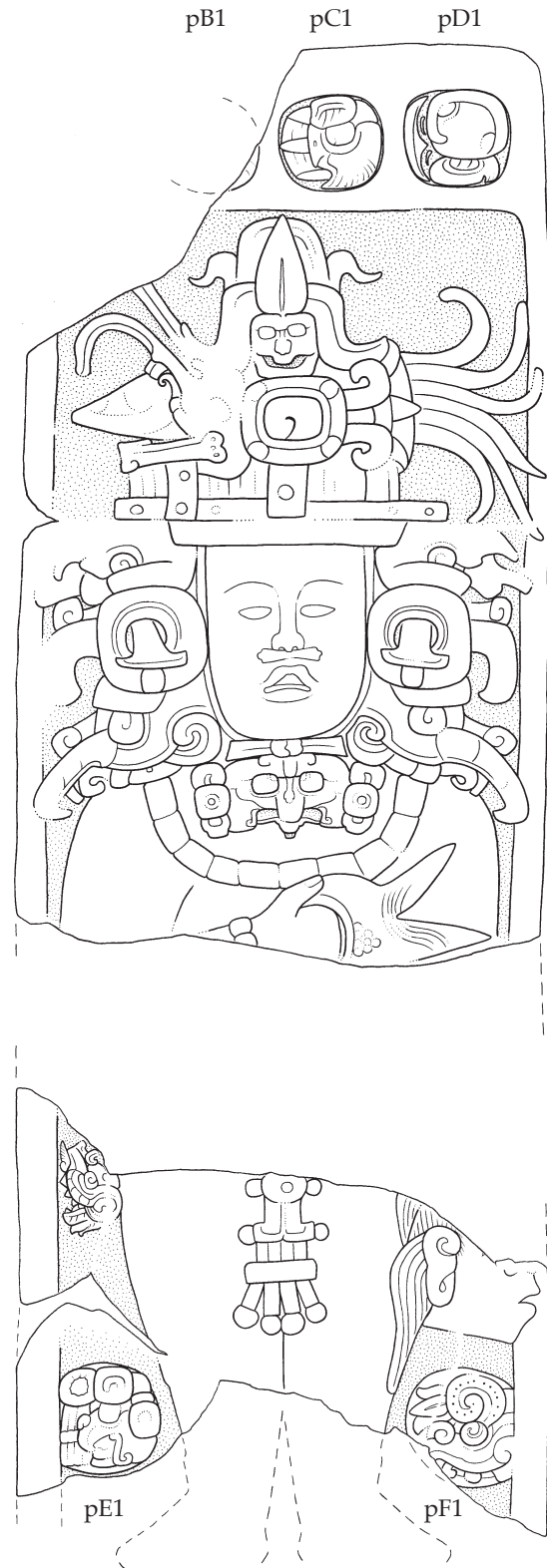
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[2] Based on Ch'orti' *sanar* "acostado estirado; lying down stretched out" (Hull 2016:360) and *sani* "to stretch" (Wisdom 1950:627).

Figure 8. New drawing of the Tonina monument, reuniting the Melbourne fragment with those encountered in excavations at Tonina (drawing by Christophe Helmke).
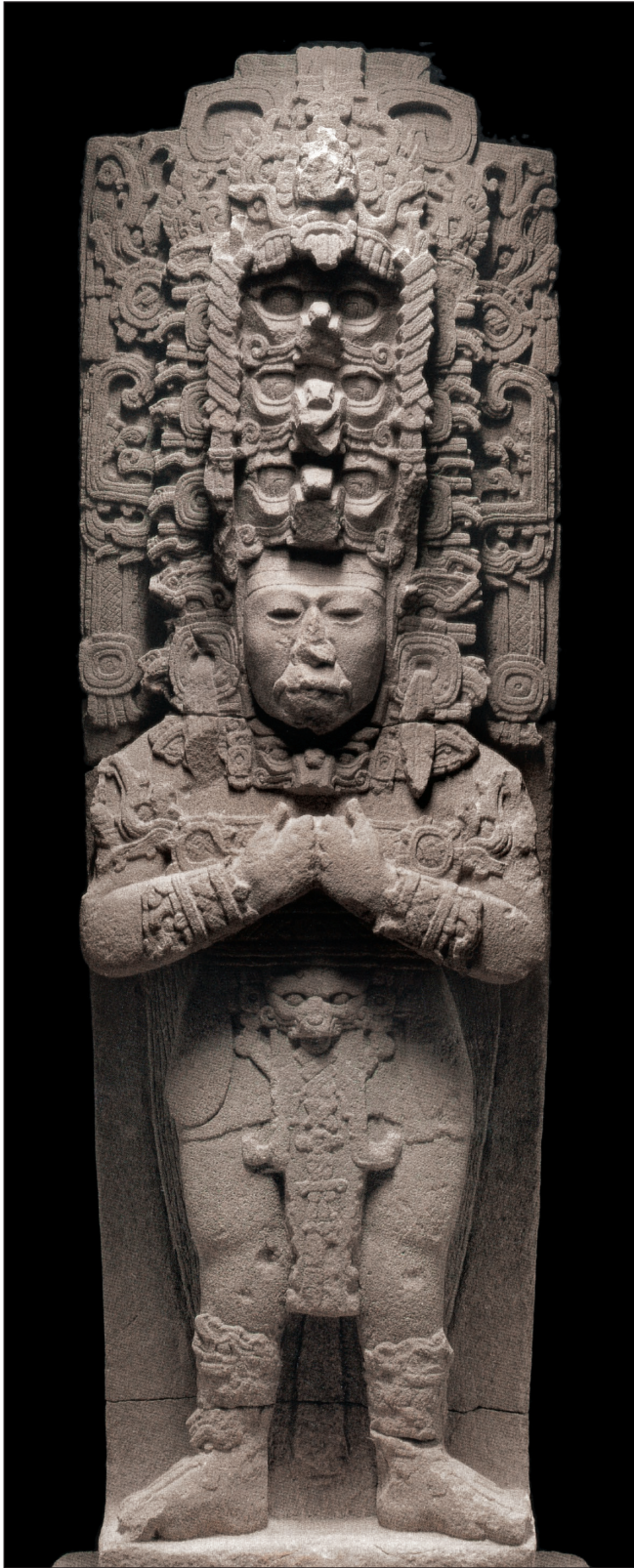
Figure 9. Monument 168, the possible funerary monument of Yaxuun Tihl (photograph © Michel Zabé, after Miller and Martin 2004:Pl. 20).
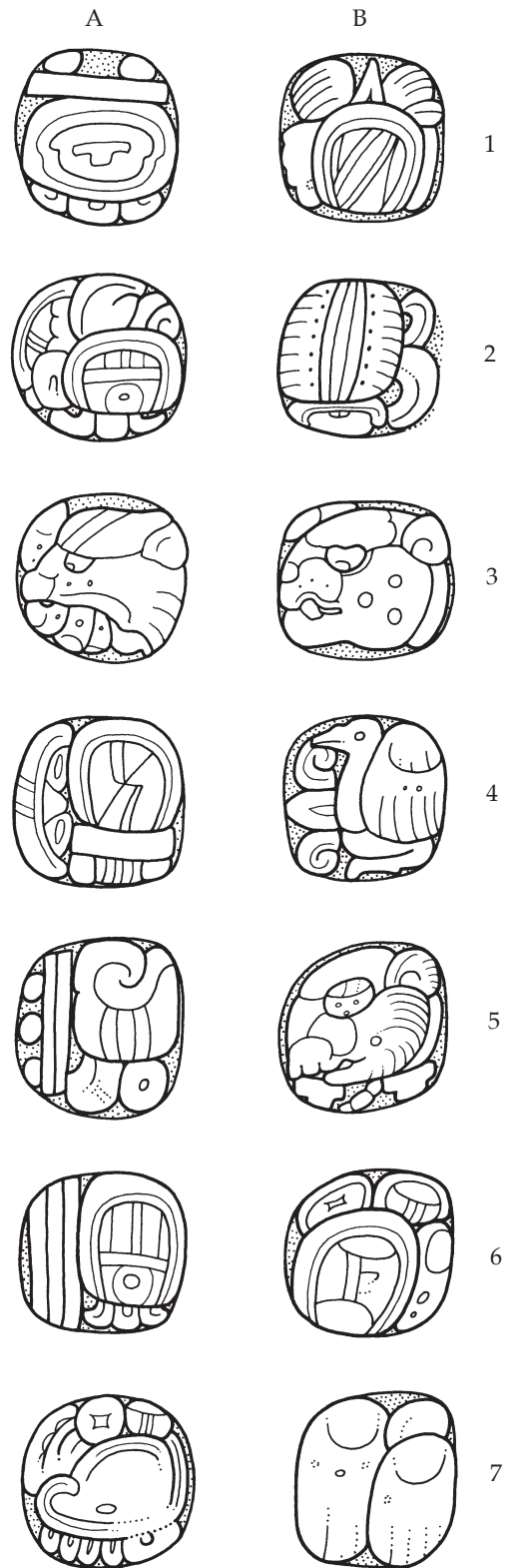

Figure 10. The circular glyphic medallions of the sides of Monument 168. These represent a continuity with the earlier monuments of Tonina (drawings by Simon Martin, after Miller and Martin 2004:Pl. 20).

this case amounts to 15 haab (360-day 'years'), 0 winal (twenty-day "months"), and 13 k'in ("days"). It is unclear from context which of these two dates corresponds to the accession, leaving the other event as unspecified and implicit. Based on the presence of a temporal marker below the accession statement we are inclined to think that it is the accession that ties into the distance number, leaving the 7 Ik' date as the unspecified event. Possible anchors to the Long Count for this Calendar Round include 9.6.8.17.2 7 Ik' 0 Pax (January 16, AD 563) and 9.9.1.12.2 (January 4, AD 615). The latter is more than a little interesting, since it falls tantalizingly short of the accession of K'inich Bahlam Chapaaht just 29 days later, on 9.9.1.13.11. We may therefore have a reference to the death of Yaxuun Tihl on the date 7 Ik', an event tied to his accession fifteen years earlier on 9.8.6.11.9 2 Muluk 2 Wayeb (March 10, AD 600). At present, this remains rather speculative and would have us recast Mon. 168 as a funerary sculpture, but it helps to flesh out some details and to reconcile the features observed in the text. With this revised chronology we can see that the earliest of the monuments of the site, those raised during the sixth century, were sculpted in the more traditional format as rectangular stelae in low-relief. It is with the passing of Yaxuun Tihl and the accession of K'inich Bahlam Chapaaht in AD 615 that we see a decisive rupture, with the appearance of high-relief sculpture. Prominent examples of the more traditional format include the very earliest stela yet known at the site, designated as Mon. 106 (Graham and Mathews 1999:135). The rich iconography of this stela undoubtedly represents the accession of the earliest known monarch, whom Peter Mathews designated as Ruler 1 (Becquelin and Baudez 1982:895). This ruler is best known from the lengthy text of the circular altar designated as Mon. 160 (Graham 2006:95-101). The dates of the narrative presented on Mon. 160 span from AD 501 until its own dedication in 514. Most of the dates refer to the deaths of rulers of foreign royal houses (Grube et al. 2002:8; Martin and Grube 2008:178) and may also mention the king's own accession in one of the more eroded segments. The date of Mon. 106 has not been satisfactorily resolved, but a partial 5 Ajaw date is preserved in the accompanying text (Grube et al. 2002:9), referring to the imagery and stating that the ruler is seated on a mountain on this date. Assuming that this is an allegory of the accession and that this transpired on an uneven, or historical date, a series of five candidate dates emerges in the chronological framework provided by Mon. 160.

Mention is made on the unprovenienced Emiliano Zapata panel of a tomb ritual conducted in AD 589 at the final resting place of one Chak Baluun Chaahk (Martin and Grube 2000:179; Grube et al. 2002:13). The title carried by Chak Baluun Chaahk in that text makes it clear that he was a ruler of Tonina, although he is at present unknown from the glyphic corpus at the site itself. The text specifically records this event as *huli tu muknal Chak Baluun Chaahk*, or "he arrived to the tomb of Chak Baluun Chaahk," suggesting some sort of pilgrimage to a sacrosanct locality, probably a structure within Tonina itself.

A recently documented altar of Tonina, examined by Ángel A. Sánchez Gamboa and Dmitri Beliaev as part of the documentation project headed by Martha Cuevas, demonstrates that this monument was commissioned by a heretofore little known and early ruler possibly named K'inich "Muk"[3] (Sánchez Gamboa and Beliaev 2018). The monument records the commemoration of the Period Ending of AD 591 and traces back to the previous anchor in the 819-day calendar, closing by mentioning the erection of a stela by the same king two years later. Interestingly, the 591 Period Ending occurs precisely between the two events recorded on the Emiliano Zapata panel (Table 1). Thus, if Chak Baluun Chaahk and K'inich "Muk" were sequential successors, it may well be that it was the latter who performed the tomb ritual at the final resting place of his predecessor. Sometime later, Mon. 74 was raised at a prominent location, within the sanctuary of Str. 5D-1 at the summit of the acropolis (Becquelin and Baudez 1984:29-30, Fig. 26, 1982:642-645). This monument represents a continuation of the tradition of low relief monuments and depicts a seated ruler, also replicating in part the motif of Mon. 106. Only one side of Mon. 74 was inscribed with a glyphic text, which is thought to self-referentially commemorate its erection by the king of Tonina, who is referred to not only by his title, as Popo' Ajaw (Martin and Grube 2008:178), but also by his name (Sánchez Gamboa and Beliaev 2018). Interestingly, the text is rendered in circular medallions in much the same way as the Melbourne stela. The text on Mon. 74 is initiated by a Calendar Round that was initially unclear on account of erosion. Although Peter Mathews (personal communication 2011; Becquelin and Baudez 1982:644) has suggested that the Haab date should be read as 11 Mol, this provides too many possible matches to properly establish the matching Long Count date. More recently, Dmitri Beliaev and his colleagues have re-examined the monument and identified the Calendar Round as 2 Ben 11 Mol and proposed that this corresponds to the Long Count station of 9.8.9.1.13, or August 11, AD 602, given the anchors provided by the "new" altar.

Although the date may be correctly placed, we should not necessarily conclude that the text of Mon. 74 is a contemporaneous record of the actual stela erection in AD 602. In fact, a close reading of the text makes

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[3] The last segment of the name is not entirely clear and although it broadly resembles a **MUK** logogram it may prove to be another sign, which is why we provisionally present this segment in quotation marks.

Monument	Latest Date	Gregorian	Event Date	Gregorian	Event
Mon. 160	9.4.0.0.0	514	9.3.6.1.15	501	Unknown
Mon. 106	??	c. 514?	5 Ajaw	501-513	Accession of Ruler 1
Mon. 160	9.4.0.0.0	514	9.4.0.0.0	514	Period Ending of Ruler 1
Emiliano Zapata Panel	9.7.19.0.0	592	9.7.16.4.4	589	Tomb ritual
New Altar	9.8.0.0.0	593	9.7.18.0.0	591	Period Ending of K'inich "Muk"
Emiliano Zapata Panel	9.7.19.0.0	592	9.7.19.0.0	592	Fire ritual
New Altar	9.8.0.0.0	593	9.8.0.0.0	593	Stela erection by K'inich "Muk"
Mon. 168	9.9.1.12.2	615	9.8.6.11.9	600	Accession of Yaxuun Tihl?
Mon. 74	9.8.9.1.13	602	9.8.9.1.13	602	Raising the stela of K'inich "Muk"
Pestac Stela 1	9.11.12.9.0	665	9.8.12.14.17	606	Birth of K'inich Bahlam Chapaaht
Mon. 173	9.9.0.0.0	613	9.8.19.8.17	612	Subsidiary installed
Mon. 168	9.9.1.12.2	615	9.9.1.12.2	615	Death of Yaxuun Tihl?
Mon. 175	9.9.1.13.11	615	9.9.1.13.11	615	Accession of K'inich Bahlam Chapaaht

Table 1. Summary of the early history of Tonina, according to its monuments, arranged in chronological order by dated events.

it clear that the stela is not *tz'ahpaj* "erected," using the more traditional phraseology, but is instead *wa'laj* "raised." Also interesting is the reference to the stela as *u-lakamtuun k'inich muk?*, "it is the stela of K'inich "Muk," suggesting perhaps that this is a reference to a re-erection of the monument of an earlier ruler by a later king. This is entirely plausible, given that the successor appears to have acceded in AD 600, which is to say two years before the ostensible re-erection of Mon. 74 (Table 1).[4]

It is with the accession Yaxuun Tihl in AD 600 that we are once more on solid footing. As we have already noted, this is the first well-dated monument to show what would become the hallmark style of Tonina's royal portraiture. A continuity with the past, however, is the use of the circular medallions for the glyphs that were rendered in intaglio on the sides of the monument (Figure 10). This is a clear continuity with Mon. 74 and, importantly, also with the Melbourne stela, indicating that these monuments are broadly contemporaneous,

with the latter dated to sometime before the end of the sixth century. Supporting this temporal assignment is Mon. 173, which commemorates the accession of a subsidiary figure, a ritual specialist to be precise, bearing the title of *ajk'uhu'n* (lit. "worshipper") (Jackson and Stuart 2001; Zender 2004:156-157, 342, Fig. 35). The same monument also records the witnessing of the 9.9.0.0.0 Period Ending of AD 613. What is noteworthy is the format of the stela, raised as a square slab of fine sandstone and rendered in low relief (Miller and Martin 2004:188-189). Once more this is a direct continuity with the earlier monuments and one that persists until the accession of the subsequent king, K'inich Bahlam Chapaaht in AD 615. After the passing of Yaxuun Tihl, the majority of monuments would be raised in the round, in the style that would come to identify Tonina for the three centuries to follow. This is made plain by the inaugural portrait of K'inich Bahlam Chapaaht (Mon. 28), which is rendered in the round and thereby follows the precedent set by Yaxuun Tihl with his presumed funerary statue (Mon. 168). And yet, despite this clear affirmation of style, the accession of K'inich Bahlam Chapaaht is also recorded on the unique Teotihuacan-inspired and trapezoidal frame (Mon. 175), which significantly is also rendered in low relief. Also the latest monument of his reign, the Pestac stela, is a deliberate attempt at archaism since the front bears a simple record of a dedicatory date, rendered exclusively in horizontal bars and dots, and thereby mimicking early models (such as Stela C of Tres Zapotes, Takalik Abaj Stela 5, or even

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[4] This scenario allows us to account for the placement of K'inich "Muk" in relation to his successor Yaxuun Tihl. If we assume that the AD 602 reference on Mon. 74 is a contemporaneous reference to the dedication of a stela, presumably Mon. 74 itself, we are left with a two-year overlap in the reigns of these two kings, which seems implausible. As such, Mon. 74 either depicts K'inich Muk and the text was added at a later date to account for its re-erection, or alternatively it is Yaxuun Tihl that is depicted and the text records a good deed towards his predecessor.

Blackman Eddy Stela 1). The relatively late date of the monument is betrayed by the text that it bears on its back, which is presented in typical seventh century style and records the birth of K'inich Bahlam Chapaaht and other ambiguous events.

Putting it all Together

Based on the above historical review we can see that the Melbourne stela is one of the earliest monuments of Tonina and depicts one of its initial rulers. This is also made clear by what remains of the glyphic text (Figure 8). Whereas the first two glyphic medallions are now missing (pA1 and pB1), what remains is the head-variant of the logogram **CH'EN** (pC1), read *ch'een*, (lit. "cave," but also "settlement" by extension) here represented as the head of an owl, paired with what may be an unlit torch (Vogt and Stuart 2005:157-160; Helmke 2009:543-551). This is followed by the agency expression **u-KAB-ji** (pD1), read *ukabij*, "it is his doing" (Grube and Martin 1998). Based on syntax we can see that the end of an initial clause is preserved, which is followed by a sub-clause that is initiated by the agency expression. Typically, the initial clause provides a record of an action, whose subject is frequently the patient of the verb. The sub-clause that follows is a means of introducing the agent of the verb, the actual protagonist of the account, or at least the individual to whom credit is given for an action. Based on these syntactical parameters we surmise that the end of the initial clause records either the name of a human subject, whose name ends with …*Ch'een*, or the name of a locality that was affected by a presumably adverse action (to judge from the iconography). Assuming that an anthroponym was originally recorded in the initial clause, we can think of comparable regal names such as We'om Yohl Ch'een "the devourer of settlements" of Xultun and Yuhkno'm Ch'een "the uniter/shaker of settlements" of Calakmul (see Martin and Grube 2000; Colas 2004; Esparza Olguín and Velásquez García 2013), but perhaps most relevant is the mention made of a figure named … Muyal Ch'een on Mon. 160, the early altar of Tonina (see Grube et al. 2002:10). Whether this is an even earlier namesake or the same individual referred to on the Melbourne stela is unknown.

Most interesting to the case at hand are the two glyphs that follow *ukabij* in the base of the scene, framing the standing figure on either side of his knees (Figure 8). The first (pE1) records part of the regnal name of the early Tonina king, since this figure is the syntactical agent of the glyphic text. Although the glyph in question has suffered some erosion the outlines of an avian head can be made out, which is preceded by a distinctive diadem. Together these are the defining characteristics of the great avian deity, referred to in the literature as the Principal Bird Deity (see Bardawil 1976; Nielsen and

Helmke 2015). The second part of the name is provided in the last glyph (pF1), representing the head variant of the so-called Water Lily Serpent, the personification of turbulent waters, known as *witz'* in the Classic period (see Schele and Miller 1986:46; Stuart 2007). As such, we see a typical western Ch'olan regnal name (see Colas 2006), juxtaposing two supernatural entities, namely the great bird deity and the personification of running water.

Fascinatingly, a close inspection of the early altar raised by Ruler 1 (Mon. 160) records his name with two portrait glyphs, the first being the head of the Principal Bird Deity, atop another head (Figure 11). Although this second glyph resembles a so-called personification head, it may in fact record part of the logogram **WITZ'** (see Schele and Miller 1986:44, Fig. 21; Graham 2006:100; Martin and Grube 2008:178). Likewise, the *witz'* portion of the name may precede the Emblem Glyph that closes the glyphic caption on Mon. 106 (see Ap1–Ap2)
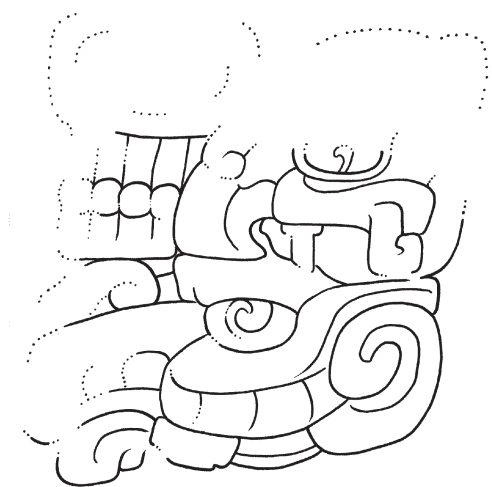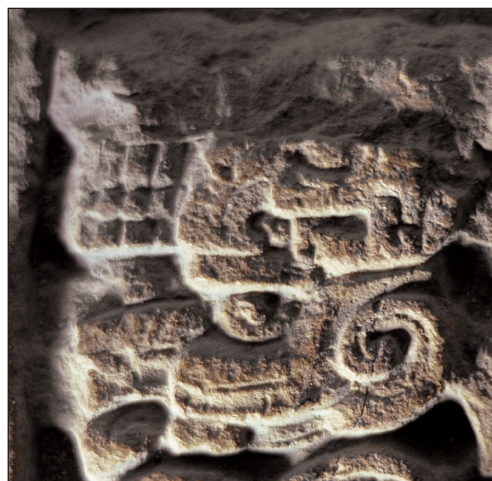

Figure 11. The name of Ruler 1 as it appears on Monument 160 (photograph by Ángel A. Sánchez Gamboa, drawing by Christophe Helmke).

Figure 12. Monument 159 raised by Ruler 8 and commemorating a tomb re-entry ritual in AD 799 (drawing by Marc Zender).

(Graham and Mathews 1999:135). As such, it is now clear that the regnal name of Ruler 1 includes both the Water Lily Serpent and the Principal Bird Deity—whose original name in the Classic period, unfortunately, remains none too clear (Boot 2008; Martin 2015:197-199). These uncertainties aside, the inclusion of the Principal Bird Deity in regnal names is an onomastic pattern that is attested at other sites and dynasties, including Dos Pilas (Ruler 2), Naranjo (Shield God K), and particularly Yaxchilan (Shield Jaguar I through IV), in much the same way as the Water Lily Serpent is attested in royal names at Copan (Ruler 12) and Calakmul (Great Serpent) (Martin and Grube 2000; Colas 2004; Stuart 2008).

It is all the more noteworthy then that the enthroned ruler, bracing the bicephalic scepter on Mon. 160, should also wear a headdress that includes the head of the Principal Bird Deity, replete with the diagnostic diadem at its brow (see Graham 2006:96-97). This, however, cannot be used as conclusive evidence for the depiction of Ruler 1, as many if not most royal headdresses include the head of the Principal Bird Deity, echoing the deeds of mythic heroes who defeated and decapitated this supernatural bird to fashion the first royal headdress (Helmke and Nielsen 2015:36-38; Nielsen and Helmke 2015:6-9; Nielsen et al. in press). What this evidence does suggest, however, is that the agent of record on the

Melbourne stela may be none other than Ruler 1, and as such may be a triumphant depiction of him.

Having clarified the identify of Ruler 1 we are now in a better position to understand the text raised by Tonina's Ruler 8 on Monument 159 (see Martin and Grube 2000:188; Graham 2006:94) (Figure 12). On that monument, Ruler 8 commemorates a ritual re-entry into the tomb of a king, who bears the name of the Principal Bird Deity, in AD 799 (i.e., 9.18.9.3.7). This event is recorded as *u-cha'-paat-aal och-k'ahk' t-u-muhk-il* or "it is the second fire-entry into his tomb" (see Stuart 1998:396-399, 2005:70, Fig. 41). We interpret this as a reverential tomb entry ritual, wherein Ruler 8 entered the tomb of Ruler 1 to consecrate it anew. The use of the ordinal construction in this case is not entirely clear, but may have been intended to underline that Ruler 8's ritual was the first of its kind since the original dedication of the tomb. The close affinity between Ruler 8 and Ruler 1 is made all the clearer when we consider that Str. E5-5 (sixth century in date) was renovated during the reign of the later king and Ruler 1's Mon. 106 was reset in front of this structure (Becquelin and Baudez 1984:42). This makes it all the more probable that it is Ruler 1 that is referred to on Mon. 159 and that Str. E5-5 may even house his tomb. Based on the known parameters and acknowledging the gaps in the dynastic sequence, we conclude that the Melbourne stela must have been erected sometime after

the early monuments of Ruler 1 (Mon. 106 and 160) and before those raised by his successors, K'inich "Muk" and Yaxuun Tihl. As such, we surmise that the stela must have been raised sometime after AD 514 and before 591. This then raises the question of how this early ruler was related to Chak Baluun Chaahk. On stylistic grounds alone we have been able to posit that Mon. 74 is later than the Melbourne stela and as such must date to the gap after the latest monument of Ruler 1 and before the accession of Yaxuun Tihl (Martin and Grube 2008:178). This is now confirmed with the identification of K'inich "Muk" as an intervening king (Sánchez Gamboa and Beliaev 2018). This in turn leaves a gap in the first half of the sixth century as the most likely placement for the Melbourne stela, a span that perfectly fits the style of the stela and the known dates of Ruler 1. Whereas much remains open to scrutiny, based on present evidence we conclude by suggesting that the king depicted and referred to on the Melbourne stela may well be Ruler 1, who raised this stela later in his reign close to the mid-sixth century.

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