



# The PARI Journal

A quarterly publication of the Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute  
Volume VI, No.4, Spring 2006

## In This Issue:

**The Queen's Mirrors :  
Interpreting the  
Iconography of Two  
Teotihuacan Style  
Mirrors from the  
Early Classic  
Margarita Tomb  
at Copan**

by **Jesper Nielsen**

PAGES 1-8

•

**A Selection of  
Rubblings, Part Two**

by **Merle Greene  
Robertson**

PAGES 9-16

Joel Skidmore  
Editor

joel@mesoweb.com

The PARI Journal  
202 Edgewood Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94117  
415-664-8889  
journal@mesoweb.com

Electronic version  
available at:  
www.mesoweb.com/  
pari/journal/0604

The PARI Journal is made  
possible by a grant from  
Mesoweb

ISSN 1531-5398

## The Queen's Mirrors Interpreting the Iconography of Two Teotihuacan Style Mirrors from the Early Classic Margarita Tomb at Copan

JESPER NIELSEN

*University of Copenhagen*

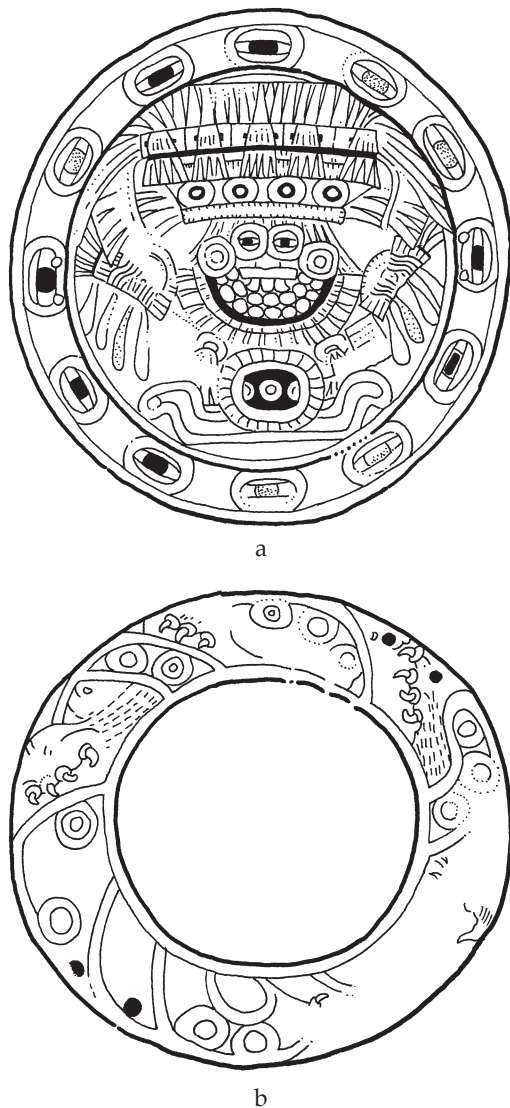
One of the most hotly debated topics in Mesoamerican archaeology the past decades has been the role played by Teotihuacan outside central Mexico in the Early Classic period, and specifically Teotihuacan's influence in the Maya region (e.g., Braswell 2003; C. Millon 1988; Nielsen 2003; Stuart 2000). Much of this debate has focused on two great sites in Guatemala, Tikal in the lowlands and Kaminaljuyú in the eastern highlands. Another important Early Classic Maya city showing a number of intriguing references to Teotihuacan is Copan in present-day western Honduras (e.g., Sharer 2004; Stuart 2004; Taube 2004). Recent extensive tunneling and excavations in the Copan Acropolis have led to a series of new insights into the history of the city's founding and the life of the first ruler in the early fifth century. Thus, there are now several lines of evidence that suggest that the dynastic founder, K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', whose bones reveal him as a foreigner to the Copan Valley, had close relations with the Petén area as well as Kaminaljuyú and apparently also the imperial capital of Teotihuacan (Bell et al. 2004a; Sharer et al. 2005; Andrews and Fash 2005).

The present article focuses on two specific objects that were found in the tomb of a high ranking woman placed in a temple structure named Margarita. The woman most probably was the wife of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', and the objects in question are two Teotihuacan-style iron pyrite mirrors, both of which display characteristic Teo-

tihuacan iconography on their stuccoed and painted backings. What does this little-studied imagery represent, and what significance can be attributed to the iconography? Does the presence of the mirrors and the iconography in any way offer new perspectives on the possible contacts between Copan and Teotihuacan? These are the questions of primary concern, but I will also briefly explore how the mirror iconography may help us to refine our understanding of the mural chronology of Teotihuacan.

### The Founding Events: K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' and Hunal

Before taking a closer look at the mirror iconography a short reiteration of the current knowledge of the archaeological and historical context of the Margarita structure and its predecessors is necessary. As a result of the excavations beneath Temple 16 in the Copan Acropolis, archaeologists have located what is believed to have been the first royal temple complex at Copan (e.g., Sharer et al. 1999; Bell et al. 2004b). This includes a unique temple structure designated Hunal, built in *talud-tablero* style (the predominant architectural style of Teotihuacan), which in all likelihood holds the tomb of the dynastic founder K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' (e.g., Bell et al. 2004b:132-136; Sharer 2004; Stuart 2004:232). Hunal was to become one of the most sacred locations in the Copan kingdom, and for centuries new temples



**Figure 1.** Examples of Early Classic mirrors from the Maya area showing Teotihuacan-style iconography: a) Kaminaljuyu, Tomb B-V; b) Tikal, Group 6C-XVI, Burial PNT-174 (redrawn from Kidder et al. 1946:Fig.175a and Laporte 1989:Fig.83).

would be built on top of it, most of them decorated with images as well as texts that recalled the great founder and his apparent affiliation with the central Mexican superpower of Teotihuacan (Taube 2004).

The combination of the Hunal material and the rich hieroglyphic record of Copan provides us with a detailed view of the historical events surrounding the founding of the city and its dynasty. Thus, the famous Altar Q (erected in front of Temple 16 by the last ruler of Copan, Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat, in AD 776) recounts how, "On 5 September 426 the founder...K'uk' Mo' Ajaw...took the snake-footed *k'awiil* sceptre and rose to kingly status" (Martin and Grube 2000:192). Three days later, he "set out from" a so-called *wi'te'naah* structure.<sup>1</sup> This, as Martin and Grube point out, was "a structure

especially associated with dynastic genesis and seemingly of Mexican origin [and] the location seems to have been a distant one. It was 153 days before Yax K'uk' Mo' and his party reached Copan itself [...] expressed as an 'arrival here'" (2000:192-193). It is still debated whether Yax K'uk' Mo' made the journey to Copan from Teotihuacan or Tikal, but the reported duration of his trip does not seem to rule out the possibility that he had received his "right to rule" and insignia in Teotihuacan (Martin and Grube 2000; Sharer 2003a; 2003b; 2004; Stuart 2005).

What, then, happened when Yax K'uk' Mo' arrived in the Copan Valley? Robert Sharer has recently presented what seems to be a likely scenario:

Assuming that the Copan take-over was accomplished by force of arms, and in keeping with what little we know about Early Classic warfare, whatever force K'uk' Mo' brought with him to Copan was probably small and mobile. If a battle for Copan took place, it may have been limited in scope and the issue settled rather quickly. There is no evidence for fortifications at Copan, so that an armed strike aimed specifically at the local ruler and the heart of his capital could have been decisive. Advantages of speed and surprise, along with the same Teotihuacan-inspired militarism that propelled Tikal's expansionism, could have insured the success of the invaders. (Sharer 2003a:323)

Apart from replacing the old dynasty, the arrival of Yax K'uk' Mo' and his followers also changed what had previously been a village center near the Copan River, perhaps the seat of a local lord, into a fast-growing royal city with close ties to other parts of Mesoamerica. There is evidence of a series of smaller, competing chiefdoms in the valley before the arrival of Yax K'uk' Mo', and most of these chiefdoms were subjugated by the intruders. One of them, however, seems to have entered some kind of forced alliance with the arriving party. It may have been from the ruling lineage of this chiefdom that Yax K'uk' Mo' chose a wife, since we know that the woman buried in Margarita was of local descent (Fash and Fash 2000:447-448; Bell 2002; Bell et al. 2004b:137; Buikstra et al. 2004). Such a combined strategy of military threat and conquest as well as elite intermarriage is identical to what is suspected to have happened at Tikal some thirty-eight years earlier at the time of the Teotihuacan *entrada* led by Siyaj K'ak' (e.g., Martin and Grube 2000; Stuart 2000). From Late Classic retrospective inscriptions from nearby Quirigua we know that in AD 426, Yax K'uk' Mo' also played the leading role

<sup>1</sup> References to *wi'te'naah* structures are found in glyphic inscriptions in Copan, Tikal, and elsewhere. While the term can best be translated as "Tree-root House," the *wi'te'naah* buildings seem to have been conceived of as "houses of origin" (Stuart 2000; 2004:235-239; 2005:377). In the Copan area structures named as *wi'te'naahs* are often embellished with overt Teotihuacan symbolism (Taube 2004:273-274; see also Nielsen 2003:89-90, 223-226, in press).

in establishing a (new) dynasty at the site that was strategically situated on the banks of the Motagua River. According to Martin and Grube, "Quirigua's first king [...] was crowned 'under the supervision' of Yax K'uk' Mo'" and there are "strong echoes here of Siyaj K'ak's New Order and the installation of a new political elite at a number of centres in the Petén" (Martin and Grube 2000:216).

### Margarita and the Queen's Tomb

Some time after Yax K'uk' Mo's death in about AD 437 Hunal was completely covered by a new temple structure designated Yehnal (Sharer et al. 1999). This building stood only for about a decade before it was buried beneath a new and larger temple, today nicknamed Margarita. The iconography of the well-preserved stucco facade of Margarita surely holds important clues to the origins of the Copan dynasty and its self-perception,<sup>2</sup> but for now let us consider the interior of the temple and the tomb chamber beneath the summit floor of the temple. Placed on a burial slab similar to that of the Hunal tomb were the skeletal remains of a high status woman. In fact, the lowest courses of this burial chamber were laid at the same time as the Hunal tomb, and apparently the chamber was held "open and unused until it was was modified during the construction of the Yehnal and Margarita substructures" (Bell 2002:95). Even though no known hieroglyphic text from Copan mentions a royal woman, it is currently believed that the woman buried here was the wife of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' (e.g., Bell et al. 2004b:141). Her tomb is by far the richest female burial yet found in the Maya region, and among the offerings in the tomb were more than 9,000 jade beads and a number of ceramic vessels that can be traced to the Guatemalan highlands, the Petén region, and Central Mexico (Bell et al. 2004b:137-140). Detailed descriptions of many of the burial goods have recently appeared in print (e.g., Bell 2002, Bell et al. 2004b). This, however, does not hold true for what are arguably the most unusual objects recovered from the tomb: the two decorated iron pyrite mirrors. (A full description of the contents of the Margarita Tomb will be included in the forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation by Ellen E. Bell.)

### The Iconography of the Mirrors

The two mirrors were found together inside a basket with a stuccoed and painted lid. According to the excavators the lid displayed a "fine-line polychrome design depicting a figure in profile wearing a decorated turban" (Bell et al. 2004:140). The mirrors seemed to have been wrapped in a "finely woven textile," and the offering was placed in the central area of the tomb together with a host of other offerings, including carved

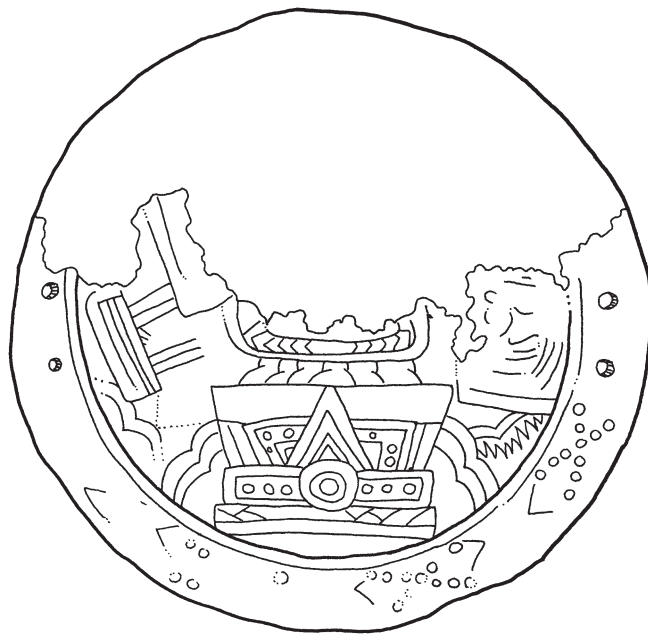


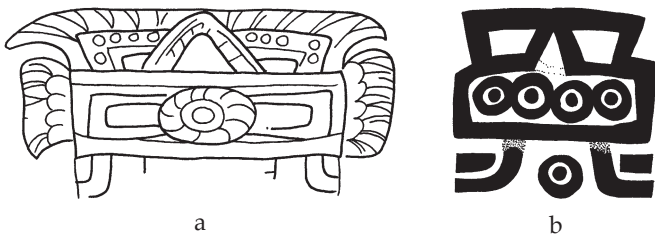
Figure 2. Mirror 1 from the Margarita Tomb, Copan (drawing by Jesper Nielsen).

shell rings and bone needles. Each mirror is made of iron pyrite mosaic adhering to a stuccoed and painted slate backing, showing what has been described as "Teotihuacan-style designs." Such Teotihuacan-style mirrors have been found at several other sites that are believed to have been in more or less direct contact with Teotihuacan in the Early Classic period, and mirrors appear to have been closely associated with specific aspects of Teotihuacan culture in this period (Nielsen 2003; Taube 1992a) (Figure 1). So far, two different sets of preliminary drawings of the Copan mirrors have been published (Bell et al. 2004:Fig.8.5; Sharer 2000: Figs.6a-b). For the purpose of a detailed iconographic analysis, however, I have found it necessary to produce a new set of drawings based on digital photos of the mirrors in combination with the previously published drawings. I begin with the mirror that is now known as Mirror or Disk 1.

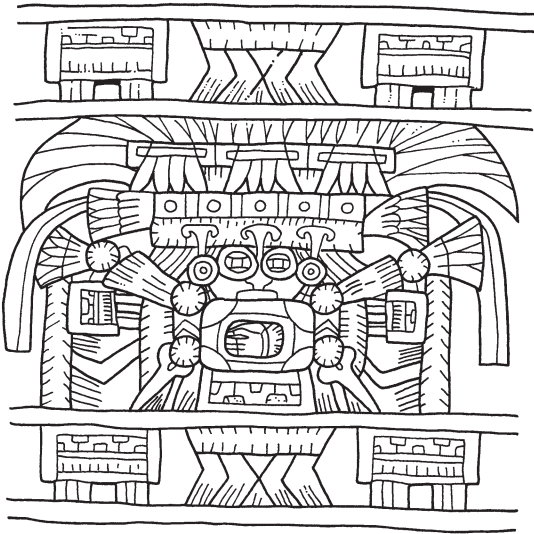
The back of this Mirror 1 is badly damaged, and the upper part of the central portion of the painting has weathered away almost completely (Figure 2). Previous descriptions of the iconography simply state that

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the facade is dominated by a large and very unusual glyphic variant of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's name. Its emblematic character and close resemblance to Teotihuacan writing has been noted by Taube who sees it as "an intentional allusion to the Teotihuacan style of mural texts" (Taube 2000:29). The knowledge of and reference to a different "font" of writing at Teotihuacan by the Copan scribes is also evident in the famous and much later Late Classic Temple Inscription that formed part of the interior design of the temple atop Structure 10L-26 (Stuart 2005:387-390).

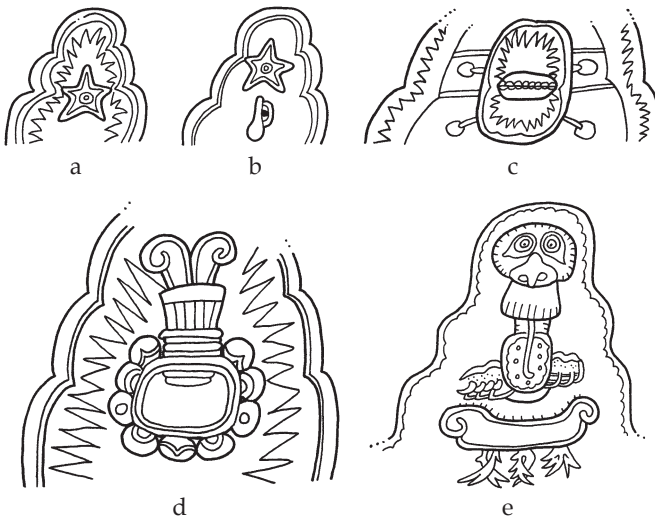




**Figure 3.** The “Mexican Year Sign”. Two examples from Teotihuacan (redrawn from Langley 1986:Figs.41f & 41c).



**Figure 4.** Possible iconographic reference to a “House of Darts” on a plano-relief vessel from Teotihuacan. Note the small house structures seen just below the butts of the two darts (redrawn from Séjourné 1966: Fig.87).



**Figure 5.** Possible place names in Teotihuacan mural art consisting of a standardized hill sign and variable specifiers, e.g. “Torch-mountain” or “Torch-place” in (d): a) Zacuala (Corridor 2, Mural 4); b) Zacuala (Room 2, Mural 5); c) Zacuala (Platform 5, Mural 1); d) Tetitla (Room 16, Mural 3) and e) Atetelco (Patio 3, Murals 2-3) (drawings by Jesper Nielsen).

the mirror has yellow dots and stars on the border and “a geometric design that may represent a Teotihuacan-style headdress” (Sharer 2000:6; see also Bell 2002:99; Bell et al. 2004:139-140). Despite the damage I believe it is possible to give a more accurate and detailed description of the surviving imagery. Thus, the central motif consists of the so-called Mexican Year Sign placed on top of a reed mat. The Mexican Year Sign is a common element in Teotihuacan iconography, and it appears to have associations beyond its basic calendrical meaning. Janet Berlo suggested that “it is as an element of warrior iconography that the sign was carried to southern Mesoamerica [...] Along with the RE-glyph, it is one of Teotihuacan’s most important glyphic emblems. They prominently displayed it abroad, and it may have been one of the emblems that identified them as Teotihuacanos” (Berlo 1984:112). In at least one example the Year Sign also forms part of a toponym. On a Teotihuacan-style stela from Acatempa, Guerrero, a Teotihuacano warrior stands on top of the Mexican Year Sign which has the “twisted root” locative attached to its base (Taube 2000:9, Fig.6d). Apparently the warrior was associated with or came from this “Mexican Year Sign Place.” On the Copan mirror the Year Sign is combined with a reed mat, a well known and widespread symbol of rulership throughout most parts of Mesoamerica (Figure 3). As seen elsewhere in Teotihuacan iconography mats are often depicted in combination with other glyph-like elements that together seem to represent a personal name or group affiliation (e.g., Nielsen 2003: Fig.C75). Above the Year Sign is a combination of elements that most unfortunately are very damaged, and it is difficult to identify any of them with certainty. Immediately above the Year Sign is an element that may be an example of what James Langley called “Object F” and which has been identified as the fringe of a tasseled shield (Langley 1986:313). On the extreme left is what seems to be a stylised “house.” Similar small and highly stylised houses placed around a central motif are known in other examples of Teotihuacan iconography, for example on a plano-relief vessel with a probable iconographic reference to a “House of Darts” (Garcia-des-Lauriers 2000:107, 141, Fig.3.3.) (Figure 4). Most importantly, on Copan Mirror 1 the Year Sign is placed inside and above a Teotihuacan-style mountain sign, and the adjoining edges of additional mountains can be traced on either side of the central sign. On the mountain edge to the right a sawtooth design marking the inner rim of the mountain can still be seen. Several examples of such sawtooth-marked mountains are seen in the corpus of Teotihuacan iconography, and they occur with highly variable elements, or glyphs, in the center (e.g., flaming bundle, star, water-drop, a mouth or, as in the most complex known example from Atetelco, a combination of several elements) (Figure 5; see also Cabrera Castro 1995:Fig.18.18). Mountain



Figure 6. Mirror 2 from the Margarita Tomb, Copan (drawing by Jesper Nielsen).

signs form a common part of toponymic references in Mesoamerican writing systems, and Teotihuacan is no exception in this regard (e.g., Angulo 1995; Nielsen n.d.; Taube 2000:8-10). Karl Taube prefers to see these elements as bodies of water rather than mountains (personal communication, February 2005), but I believe there are a number of good reasons to interpret them as representing stylized mountains, i.e. their tendency to contain variable elements, and the fact that similar mountain shapes occur in the North Patio of Atetelco (Murals 2-3) where they clearly form part of a larger landscape scene that in several respects is comparable to those found in indigenous documents and maps from the colonial period (Cabrera Castro 1995:Fig.18.18; Boone 2000; Mundy 1996; see also Nielsen n.d.). The aforementioned sawtooth design, however, does seem to denote "water" and often appears together with aquatic motifs, i.e., Tetitla Room 17 and the mural of Room 18, Zone 5A (Miller 1973:Figs.296, 128). This presence of "water" in mountains suggests a concept similar to that of the Aztec *altepetl*, literally meaning "water-hill," but carrying the extended metaphorical meaning of "town." The mountain signs with variable specifiers may thus well refer either to mythic place names or actual, historic locations within Teotihuacan or elsewhere in central Mexico. I therefore suggest that the "Year-Sign-Shield-House-Mountain" place shown on Copan Mirror 1, too, is a toponym. Whether it refers to a mythical place or an actual locale or building in Teotihuacan, Copan, or elsewhere, however, is impossible to say at the moment.

The second mirror, Mirror 2 (Figure 6), shows a person rendered in pure Teotihuacan style and according to Teotihuacan iconographic conventions. The male figure, rendered short and squat, wears an elaborate Serpent Headdress, a tri-paneled cape, a mirror on the hip, a feathered backrack, and tufted sandals, all of which are basic identifying markers of Teotihuacanos (Garcia-des-Lauriers 2000:67-68). In the right hand the person holds a bag and not a trophy head as has previously been suggested (Bell 2002:99; Sharer 2000:6). The bag is most likely to be an incense pouch similar to those frequently represented in Teotihuacan iconography, where we find the same characteristic handle with a mat-like design. Presumably the Copan example, like its Teotihuacan counterparts, was decorated with a rattler and/or a small animal head (Figure 7). Looking closer at the head of the individual, we find nearly identical figures with the same facial features and similar Serpent Headdresses in the murals of Tlacuilapaxco and Tepantitla in Teotihuacan (Figure 8). The similarities between these figures and Mirror 2 are striking even in minor details, i.e. the way the feathers of the headdress and backrack overlap and the way the earflares are depicted. The characteristic speech scroll with attached flowers emanating from the mouth of the person is encountered throughout the corpus of Teotihuacan iconography. Below one of the individual's legs is an almost completely eroded, squarish element that remains unidentified. Nevertheless, it could well have served as a name or titular glyph since these are often placed in front of or below the named individual (Taube 2000; Nielsen 2004). Finally, the two Feathered Serpents that encircle the central scene of the mirror have identical twins in the mural art of Teotihuacan. We find the exact same heads, water bands (marked by eyes) that flow from the mouths, and rattles on serpents in the murals of Tlacuilapaxco and Tepantitla (Berrin 1988: Fig.VI.25; Miller 1973:Fig.173). The Tepantitla example is particularly interesting since the Feathered Serpent here serves as a border encompassing a scene with

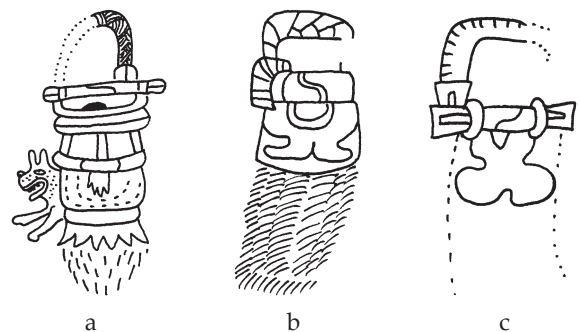
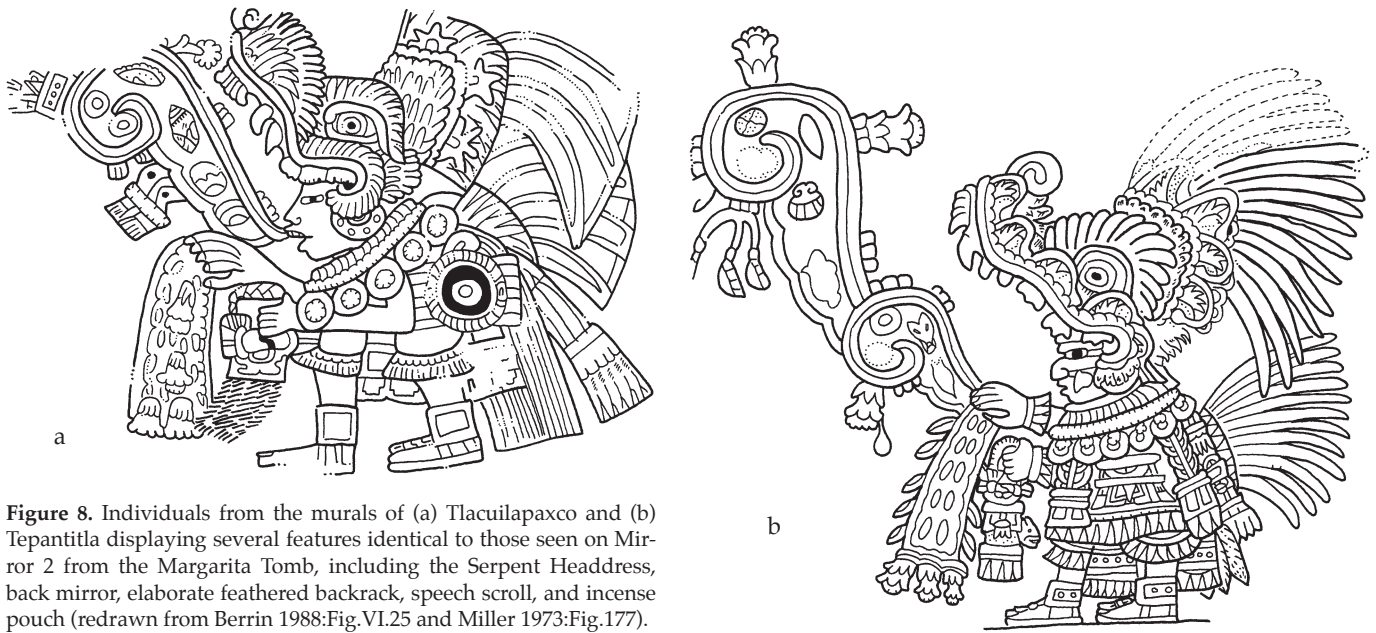


Figure 7. Examples of incense pouches in Teotihuacan iconography: a) Tepantitla; b) Tlacuilapaxco; c) Mural in Zone 11 (Room 2, Mural 2). Note the mat-like design on the handles (redrawn from Miller 1973: Fig.183, Berrin 1988:Fig.VI.25 and Miller 1973:Fig.149).



**Figure 8.** Individuals from the murals of (a) Tlacuilapaxco and (b) Tepantitla displaying several features identical to those seen on Mirror 2 from the Margarita Tomb, including the Serpent Headdress, back mirror, elaborate feathered backrack, speech scroll, and incense pouch (redrawn from Berrin 1988:Fig.VI.25 and Miller 1973:Fig.177).

figures similar to the one on Copan Mirror 2. Thus, we find identical combinations of elements in Teotihuacan and Copan. But who, then, is the person depicted on the mirror? If we follow Garcia-des-Lauriers' assessment that the cape is a diagnostic part of high-ranking warriors' costume there seems to be little doubt that he represents a Teotihuacan warrior (Garcia-des-Lauriers 2000). Supporting this view is the Serpent Headdress which represents the Teotihuacan War Serpent first identified by Taube (1992b). Interestingly, in her recent study of the warrior costume of Teotihuacan, Claudia Garcia-des-Lauriers points out that mirrors (aside from the multiple symbolic associations they carried) were also used as markers of rank and as identifying "emblems" among the military (2000:85; see also Taube 1992a). Mirrors worn on the hip or close to the back indeed form one of the standard elements of the dress worn by Teotihuacanos outside the central Mexican area, and these mirrors were probably considered status objects closely linked with the powerful central Mexican capital (Taube 1992a:198).

### Possible Implications for Teotihuacan Mural Chronology

Identifying close similarities between the iconography of the mirrors from the Margarita tomb and Teotihuacan murals may also have implications for our understanding of the chronology of mural art in Teotihuacan and Teotihuacan history in a broader perspective. Previous datings of most Teotihuacan murals have been made mainly on the basis of stylis-

tic rather than stratigraphic analyses, and the majority of murals are grouped in the large time span ranging between AD 450-700 (Lombardo de Ruiz 1995:34-35; see also C. Millon 1972), that is, in the last centuries of the city's history. As for the two Copan mirrors, both displaying Teotihuacan iconographic themes executed in pure Teotihuacan style, we know that they were made no later than about AD 450. The murals of Tlacuilapaxco and Tepantitla, with which the mirror iconography shares so many minute details, however, are dated to ca. AD 600-750 (see Berrin 1988:202-203). This chronological gap either points to an exceptional degree of conservatism in Teotihuacan mural art (which is not unthinkable), or it may force us to reevaluate the suggested dates for the murals in question. Recently, Taube has shown that the murals of Tetitla date to ca. AD 450 (Taube 2003:285-287), and Cabrera Castro has argued that the Atetelco murals were made somewhere between AD 300-400 (Cabrera Castro 1995:203). Taken together, these studies not only call for a renewed attempt to place Teotihuacan's mural art in a chronological sequence, but they also change our view of Teotihuacan's history in Late Tlamimilolpa and Early Xolalpan times. It has been assumed that so-called secular and militaristic themes only entered Teotihuacan mural art at a late date, but this was not the case, as the walls of Atetelco clearly attest (Headrick 1995). Such themes, rather, seem to have entered mural art when Teotihuacan consolidated its position as a superpower in central Mexico, and iconographic references to the military power of Teotihuacan were also represented on a host of other



media, including mirrors, some of which followed the Teotihuacanos on their way to a number of regions throughout Early Classic Mesoamerica (e.g., Berlo 1984; Nielsen in press).

### Concluding Remarks

To conclude this preliminary analysis of the mirror iconography an obvious question comes to mind: Why and how did the mirrors find their way to the queen's tomb? First of all, both Copan mirrors could well have been manufactured in central Mexico, and it is tempting to hypothesize that K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' brought them along from Teotihuacan, which he may have visited as part of his preparations to become a new dynastic ruler, before his so-called *entrada* into Copan. It is possible that it is there that he received his personal set of royal and military insignia, including a War Serpent helmet (remnants of which were found in the Hunal tomb, see Bell et al. 2004b:133) as well as the two mirrors and some of the ceramics discovered in his tomb (Reents-Budet et al. 2004:169-174). It was probably not accidental that one mirror featured a high-ranking military leader wearing a mirror, and the mirrors certainly underscore K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's affiliation (whether actual or nominal) with Teotihuacan. Perhaps the two mirrors were presented to his new, local Copanec wife as part of the ritual gift-giving that was also a standard element of marriage alliance-building in Mesoamerica, or perhaps they were only handed over to the widow queen after K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' had died. At present we cannot know with certainty which scenario is most probable, but there can be little doubt that the mirrors signal a real and important contact with Teotihuacan, relations that may, however, have come via Tikal and its "bi-cultural" Teotihuacan-Maya ruling elite (Nielsen in press; Sharer 2004).

### Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the symposium "New Perspectives on the Classic Maya City of Copan: Discoveries and Interpretations in Archaeology, Iconography and Language" (University of Copenhagen, December 14, 2004). I greatly appreciate the comments from the audience and especially from two of the other speakers, Loa Traxler and Robert Sharer. I also wish to thank Karl Taube for exchanging views on the mirrors and Teotihuacan iconography in general, and Christophe Helmke and Stephen Houston for several good suggestions and important corrections. Any errors, though, are my sole responsibility.

### References

- Andrews, E. Wyllys, and William L. Fash  
2005 Issues in Copán Archaeology. In *Copán: The History of an Ancient Maya Kingdom*, edited by E. Wyllys Andrews & William L. Fash, pp. 395-425. School of American Research Press & James Currey, Santa Fe & Oxford.
- Angulo, Jorge V  
1995 Teotihuacán – Aspectos de la cultura a través de su expresión pictórica. In *Pintura mural Prehispánica en México, Teotihuacán, Tomo II*, edited by Beatriz de la Fuente, pp. 65-186. UNAM, México, D.F.
- Bell, Ellen E  
2002 Engendering a Dynasty: A Royal Woman in the Margarita Tomb, Copan. In *Ancient Maya Women*, edited by Traci Ardren, pp. 89-104. Alta Mira Press, Walnut Creek.
- Bell, Ellen E., Marcello A. Canuto, and Robert J. Sharer (eds.)  
2004a *Understanding Early Classic Copan*. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia.
- Bell, Ellen E., Robert J. Sharer, Loa P. Traxler, David W. Sedat, Christine W. Carrelli, and Lynn A. Grant.  
2004b Tombs and Burials in the Early Classic Acropolis at Copan. In *Understanding Early Classic Copan*, edited by Ellen E. Bell, Marcello A. Canuto, and Robert J. Sharer, pp. 131-157. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia.
- Berlo, Janet C  
1984 *Teotihuacan Art Abroad: A Study of Metropolitan Style and Provincial Transformations in Incensario Workshops, Vols. I-II*. BAR International Series 1999, Oxford.
- Berrin, Kathleen (ed.)  
1988 *Feathered Serpents and Flowering Trees – Reconstructing the Murals of Teotihuacan*. The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, San Francisco.
- Boone, Elizabeth H.  
2000 *Stories in Red and Black: Pictorial Histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs*. University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Braswell, Geoffrey E. (ed.)  
2003 *The Maya and Teotihuacan: Reinterpreting Early Classic Interaction*. University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Buikstra, Jane E., T. Douglas Price, Lori E. Wright, and James A. Burton  
2004 Tombs from the Copan Acropolis: A Life History Approach. In *Understanding Early Classic Copan*, edited by Ellen E. Bell, Marcello A. Canuto, and Robert J. Sharer, pp. 191-212. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia.
- Cabrera Castro, Rubén  
1995 Atetelco. In *La Pintura Mural Prehispánica en México I, Teotihuacán, Tomo I*, edited by Beatriz de la Fuente, pp.203-258. UNAM, México, D.F.
- Fash, William F., and Barbara W. Fash  
2000 Teotihuacan and the Maya. In *Mesoamerica's Classic Heritage: From Teotihuacan to the Aztecs*, edited by David Carrasco, Lindsay Jones & Scott Sessions, pp. 433-463. University Press of Colorado, Boulder.
- Garcia-Des-Lauriers, Claudia  
2000 *Trappings of Sacred War: The Warrior Costume of Teotihuacan*. Unpublished MA. thesis, University of Riverside at California.

- Headrick, Annabeth  
1995 *The Teotihuacan Trinity: UnMASKing the Political Structure*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin.
- Kidder, Alfred V., Jesse D. Jennings, and Edwin M. Shook  
1946 *Excavations at Kaminaljuyú, Guatemala*. Carnegie Institution of Washington, Publ. 561, Washington, D.C.
- Langley, James C  
1986 *Symbolic Notation of Teotihuacan: Elements of Writing in a Mesoamerican Culture of the Classic Period*. BAR International Series 313, Oxford.
- Laporte, Juan Pedro  
1989 *Alternativas del Clásico Temprano en la Relación desde Mundo Perdido, Tikal: Una Reevaluación*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, UNAM, México, D.F.
- Lombardo de Ruiz, Sonia  
1995 El estilo teotihuacano en la pintura mural. In *La Pintura Mural Prehispánica en México I, Teotihuacán, Tomo II*, edited by Beatriz de la Fuente, pp. 3-64. UNAM, México, D.F.
- Martin, Simon, and Nikolai Grube  
2000 *Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens*. Thames and Hudson, London.
- Miller, Arthur G.  
1973 *The Mural Painting of Teotihuacán*. Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, D.C.
- Millon, Clara  
1988 A Reexamination of the Teotihuacan Tassel Headdress Insignia. In *Feathered Serpents and Flowering Trees*, edited by Kathleen Berrin et al., pp.114-134. The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, San Francisco.
- Mundy, Barbara E  
1996 *The Mapping of New Spain – Indigenous Cartography and the Maps of the Relaciones Geográficas*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Nielsen, Jesper  
2003 *Art of the Empire: Teotihuacan Iconography and Style in Early Classic Maya Society (A.D. 380-500)*. 2 vols. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen.
- Nielsen, Jesper  
2004 The Coyote and the Tasseled Shield: A Possible Titular Glyph on a Late Xolalpan Teotihuacan Tripod. *Mexicon* 26(3):61-64. Verlag Anton Saurwein, Markt Schwaben.
- Nielsen, Jesper  
In press The Coming of the Torch: Observations on Teotihuacan Iconography in Early Classic Tikal. In *Maya Ethnicity – The Construction of Ethnic Identity from the Preclassic to Modern Times*, edited by Frauke Sachse. Saurwein Verlag, Markt Schwaben.
- Nielsen, Jesper  
n.d. Mountains of Water, Mountains of Stars: On Placenames in Teotihuacan Writing and Iconography.
- Reents-Budet, Dorie & Ellen E. Bell, Loa P. Traxler, Ronald L. Bishop  
2004 Early Classic Ceramic Offerings at Copan: A Comparison of the Hunal, Margarita, and Sub-Jaguar Tombs. In *Understanding Early Classic Copan*, edited by Ellen E. Bell, Marcello A. Canuto, and Robert J. Sharer, pp. 159-190. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia.
- Séjourné, Laurette  
1966 *Arqueología de Teotihuacán – La cerámica*. Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, D.F.
- Sharer, Robert J.  
2000 Results of Materials Analyses Thus Far. In *Early Copan Acropolis Program 2000 Field Season*. Report posted at [www.famsi.org](http://www.famsi.org).
- Sharer, Robert J.  
2003a Tikal and the Copan Dynastic Founding. In *Tikal: Dynasties, Foreigners, & Affairs of State – Advancing Maya Archaeology*, edited by Jeremy Sabloff, pp. 319-355. School of American Research Press & James Currey, Santa Fe & Oxford.
- Sharer, Robert J.  
2003b Founding Events and Teotihuacan Connections at Copan, Honduras. In *The Maya and Teotihuacan: Reinterpreting Early Classic Interaction*, edited by Geoffrey E. Braswell, pp. 143-165. University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Sharer, Robert J.  
2004 External Interaction at Early Classic Copan. In *Understanding Early Classic Copan*, edited by Ellen E. Bell, Marcello A. Canuto, and Robert J. Sharer, pp. 297-317. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia.
- Sharer, Robert J., Loa P. Traxler, David W Sedat, Ellen E. Bell, Marcello A. Canuto, and Christopher Powell.  
1999 Early Classic Architecture Beneath the Copan Acropolis – A Research Update. *Ancient Mesoamerica* 10:3-23.
- Stuart, David  
2000 "The Arrival of Strangers": Teotihuacan and Tollan in Classic Maya History. In *Mesoamerica's Classic Heritage: From Teotihuacan to the Aztecs*, edited by David Carrasco, Lindsay Jones, and Scott Sessions, pp. 465-513. University Press of Colorado, Boulder.
- Stuart, David  
2004 The Beginnings of the Copan Dynasty: A Review of the Hieroglyphic and Historical Evidence. In *Understanding Early Classic Copan*, edited by Ellen E. Bell, Marcello A. Canuto, and Robert J. Sharer, pp. 215-247. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia.
- Stuart, David  
2005 A Foreign Past: The Writing and Representation of History on a Royal Ancestral Shrine at Copan. In *Copán: The History of an Ancient Maya Kingdom*, edited by E. Wyllys Andrews, and William L. Fash, pp. 373-394. School of American Research Press & James Currey, Santa Fe & Oxford.
- Taube, Karl  
1992a The Iconography of Mirrors at Teotihuacan. In *Art, Ideology, and the City of Teotihuacan*, edited by Janet C. Berlo, pp. 169-204. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, D.C.
- Taube, Karl  
1992b The Temple of Quetzalcoatl and the Cult of Sacred War at Teotihuacan. In *RES*, Spring issue, pp. 54-87
- Taube, Karl  
2000 The Writing System of Ancient Teotihuacan. In *Ancient America*, No. 1.
- Taube, Karl  
2003 Tetitla and the Maya Presence at Teotihuacan. In *The Maya and Teotihuacan: Reinterpreting Early Classic Interaction*, edited by Geoffrey Braswell, pp. 274-314. University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Taube, Karl  
2004 Structure 10L-16 and its Early Classic Antecedents: Fire and the Evocation and Resurrection of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'. In *Understanding Early Classic Copan*, edited by Ellen E. Bell, Marcello A. Canuto & Robert J. Sharer, pp. 265-295. University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia.



# A Selection of Rubbings, Part Two

MERLE GREENE ROBERTSON

## *Editor's note*

*This continues the selection of rubbings that began with an introduction by Merle Greene Robertson in The PARI Journal Vol. VI, No. 1.*

## **Palenque Temple XVII Tablet**

On this tablet (Figure 1) Palenque ruler Butz'aj Sak Chiik (formerly known as Manik) is portrayed in military costume standing before a kneeling prisoner. The date is AD 490. The text tells about the accession of the next king, Ahkal Mo' Nahb' I.

Two glyptic captions refer to battles and captures that took place in AD 695 and possibly 739, the latter involving Tonina. It is possible, according to Peter Mathews, that this tablet represents Palenque's revenge

on Tonina for the capture and death, 28 years earlier, of K'inich K'an Joy Chitam (also known as Kan Xul).

Butz'aj Sak Chiik is dressed in a beaded collar with three huge medallions which are reminiscent of Thompson's glyph T771 with two balls in a crescent. These balls are actually part of the large bead necklace the ruler wears. His headdress is a heavily beaded bird with the mat symbol of royalty to the rear. He holds a staff with a long serrated blade in his right hand and his left holds a large cloth mantle.

The prisoner sitting on his haunches beside him with pieces of cloth or paper pulled through his ear holes is reminiscent of tied prisoners at Tonina, so possibly this piece does indeed refer to revenge against that site. Such retribution would have been exacted by



Figure 1. Palenque Temple XVII Tablet (rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson).

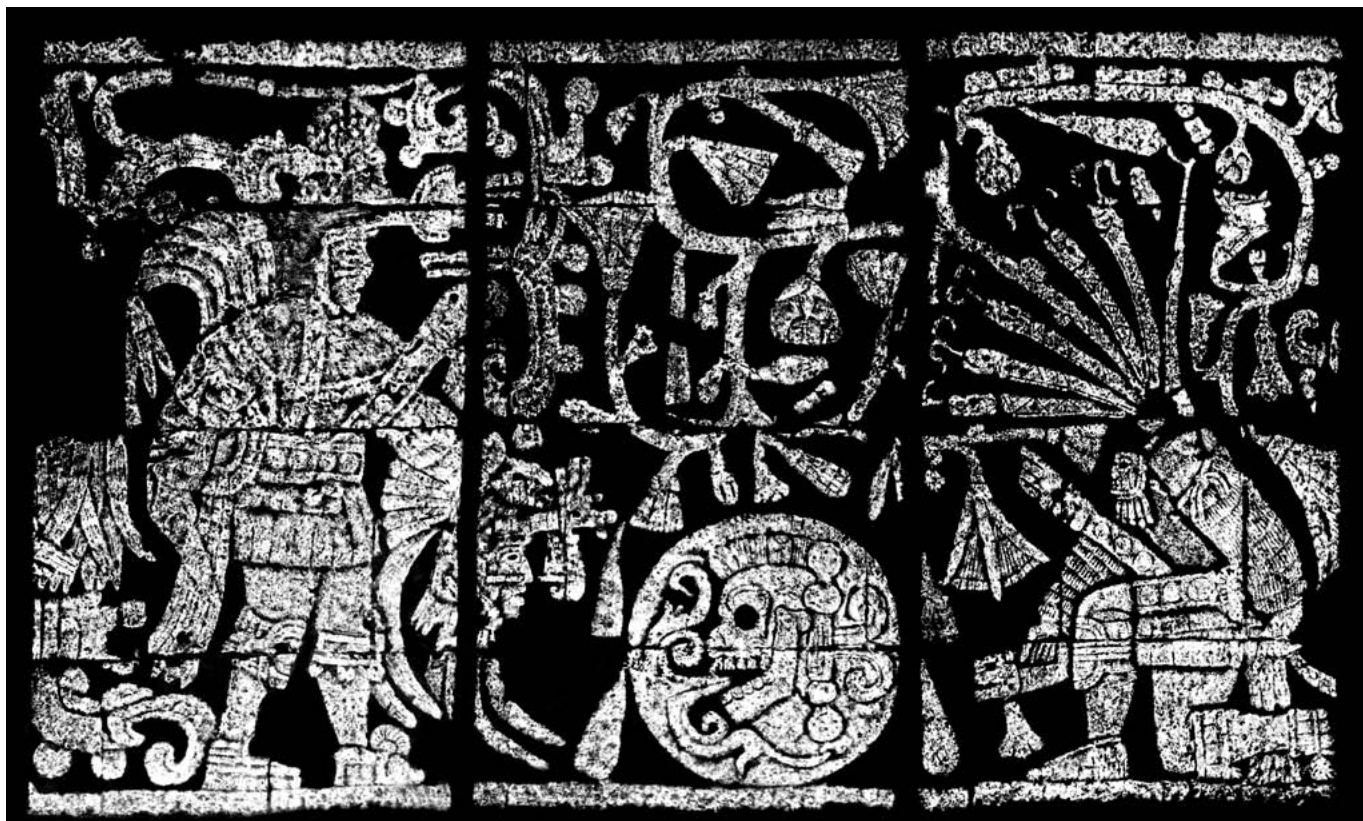


Figure 2. Chichen Itza: The Great Ballcourt (rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson).

Palenque ruler K'inich Kan Bahlam, so the possibility should be borne in mind that he is depicted here rather than Butz'aj Sak Chiik.

### Chichen Itza: The Great Ballcourt

The Great Ballcourt, one of thirteen at Chichen Itza and the largest in all Mesoamerica, is an I-shaped court 167 meters long and 70 meters wide. On its sloping bench are stone panels carved in bas relief on which six ballgames are being played, three on the west side and three on the east.

The wall of the court is set back three meters from the bench, and the 1.5-meter-diameter ring is set up ten meters on the wall, making it very difficult, if not impossible to get a ball through it. The game was played many different ways over Mesoamerica, and the way it was played at Chichen was very different from the highlands or the southern lowlands, as shown in the iconography on these sloping walls.

This one section (Figure 2) depicts the captain of the winning team on the left holding the decapitated head of the losing captain with blood dripping from his severed head, the ball (much enlarged) in the center, and the captain of the losing team kneeling on the right with blood spurting from his neck in the form of serpents.

All of the players wear padded sleeves on both arms and one regular sandal on one foot and a padded shoe on the other, to kick the ball with. It was originally thought that the ball had to be propelled through the ring by using only the hips and shoulders. However here, as also in Tepantitla in Teotihuacan, they used one foot. They also used a bat, also shown being used in the Tepantitla murals. The bat here can be seen thrust in the belt of both players.

It is possible that the game was not played in this court and instead it was used as a grand ceremonial center to be seen by everyone in the peninsula, a symbol for all Yucatecans of the supremacy of this great city. The enactment of the game carved in stone for all time would have conveyed its purpose, as related in the *Popol Vuh*.

### Chichen Itza: Wooden Lintel

The zapote wood lintel in the Upper Temple of the Jaguars was remarkably well preserved at the time these rubbings (Figure 3) were made. The lintel is over the doorway into the inner room of the temple with wall murals. These two rubbings are details from two of the three sides of the lintel. (The three sides face east, west and downward.) They portray K'ak'upakal and K'uk'ulkan, the names or titles of the twin rulers of



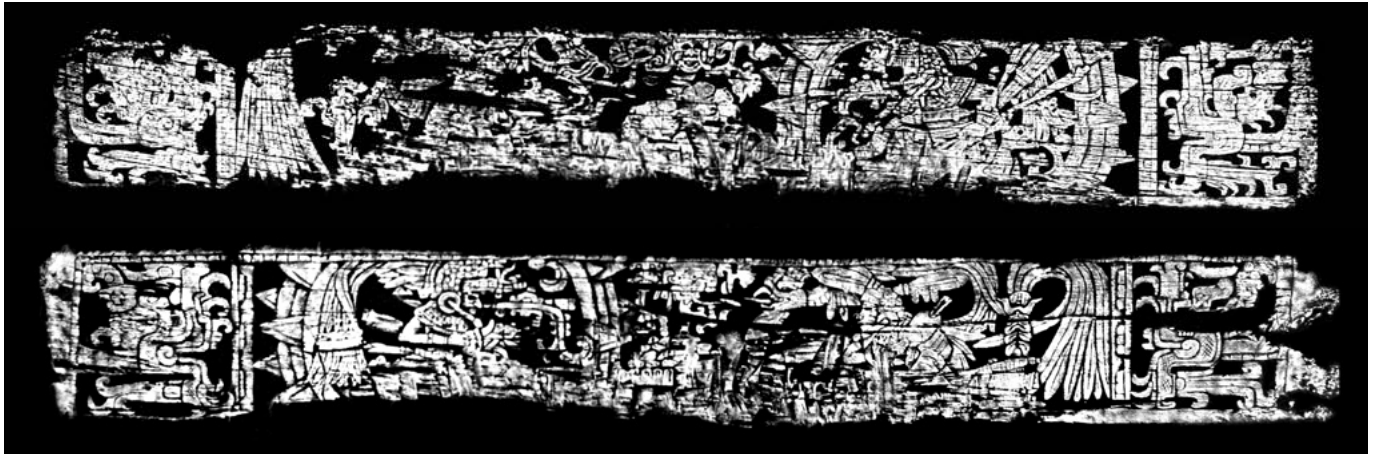


Figure 3. Chichen Itza: Wooden Lintel (rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson).

Chichen Itza. These represent the Chichen Itza dual kingship which manifests itself in the paired icons of Sun Disk and Feathered Serpent. They are also shown in the Lower Temple of the Jaguars on the west wall and explain the double symbolism in the Castillo. K'ak'upakal or, in full, *K'ak' u Pakal K'awiil*, "Fire is the Shield of K'awiil," is the Sun Warrior king, and K'uk'ulkan is the Feathered Serpent king represented throughout the site.

The icon on the left in the upper rubbing is K'uk'ulkan the Feathered Serpent, and the icon on the right, surrounded by the rays of the sun, is K'ak'upakal the Sun Disk.

The lower rubbing is another detail of K'ak'upakal, the Sun Warrior king. The Sun Disk and Feathered Serpent mythologically and structurally equate with the Hero Twins *Hunahpu* and *Xbalanque* of the *Popol Vuh*.

### Chichen Itza: Platform of the Jaguars and Eagles

This jaguar is one of six carved on the Platform of Jaguars and Eagles in the Great Plaza of Chichen Itza. All are holding human hearts in their paws and smacking their lips over the meal to be. This jaguar (Figure 4) has only three regular jaguar spots on his body, the rest of the spots being just large round dots. Artistic license was taken with the tail, which has evenly spaced lines on the outside with serpent markings on the inner side. Scrolls emit from the jaguar's mouth, curve over his head, then terminate in a human head wearing a mask that stretches far beyond its nose.

On this same platform, along with the jaguars, are sixteen carved eagles, most of which are smaller in width than the sculptured jaguars. This platform is a statement of the presence of the two powerful warrior groups at Chichen Itza, the Jaguar Warriors and the Eagle Warriors.

### Chichen Itza: Los Caracoles, Detail of Frieze

The entire upper frieze of the Casa de los Caracoles, nearly nineteen meters long, was uncovered and assembled by Dr. Peter Schmidt, Director of the Chichen Itza Project, a truly momentous task. It is covered with scenes depicting "fertilizing the earth" and "rebirth," with flowers and water plants sprouting from the roots of the earth. Birds are seen diving into the flowers sucking the pollen from them.

Some sections portray a bird-masked figure or deity fertilizing the earth, a large bulbous tuber from which roots emit on either side and extend up, across, and down in the pattern of a volute from which the flowers



Figure 4. Chichen Itza: Platform of the Jaguars and Eagles (rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson).



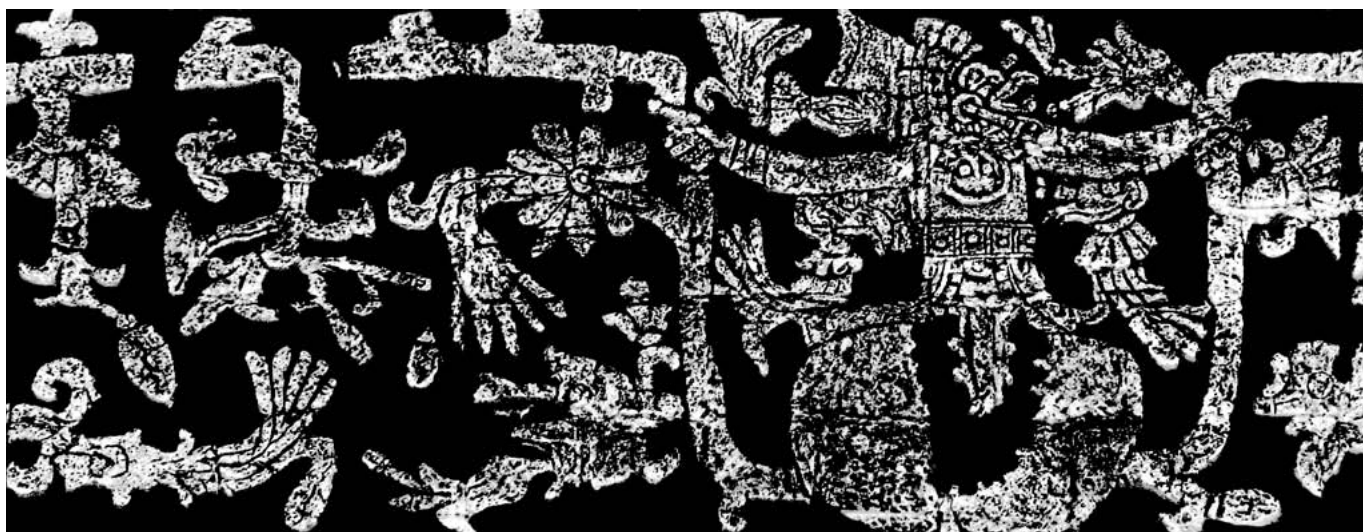


Figure 5. Chichen Itza: Los Caracoles, Detail of Frieze (rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson).

and plants grow. Other scenes portray the rebirth of this figure, springing from the bulbous "earth."

The figure on this particular rubbing (Figure 5) wears a bird beak mask, a hat with layers of flat feathers next to his face, and a stiff rolled headpiece. His pectoral has two dots in it, similar to other pectorals at Chichen Itza. He wears a belt of four sections, each with a large bead in the center. With outstretched hands the figure is holding onto the roots of the earth from which the flowers grow. This is probably the only narrative scene with this story in all of the Maya repertory.

### Chichen Itza: Casa de los Falos, Chaak with Bee Bakab

There are over 276 bakabs or their associates at Chichen Itza. They are the supernaturals who hold up the sky, frequently focus on dance, and most often take on the semblance, either in costume or other attributes, of conch and other shells, monkeys, turtles, spiders, opossums, or bees. On the east side of the Casa de Los Falos in Old Chichen (Figure 6), we saw for the first time one of these, a bee bakab, interacting with the rain god

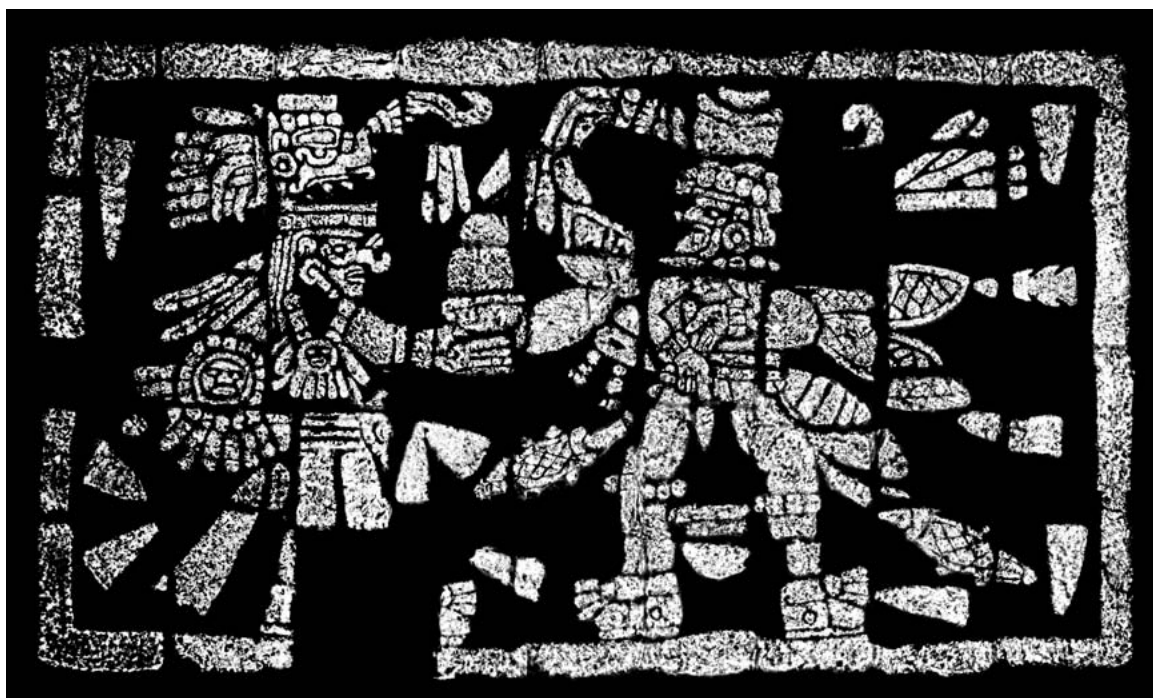


Figure 6. Chichen Itza: Casa de los Falos, Chaak with Bee Bakab (rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson).



Figure 7. Yaxchilan Lintel 24 (rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson).

Chaak. The Chaak god on the left with his upturned nose is offering or being offered a bowl of supposedly sacrificial fluid by the bee bakab on the right. There is a bowl on the floor beneath the bee bakab which will hold the sacrificial fluid which he is emitting. As the section of the panel beneath the Chaak god is missing, we do not know if there was another bowl there, but his wide-spread legs lead us to believe that there may have been one.

Chaak wears a large round wrist shield with a head in the center on his right arm and a pectoral with the same motif. His headdress is another manifestation of the Chaak god.

The bee bakab on the right is one of very few and the most beautiful representation of this god that I have ever seen. Four crosshatched bee wings can be seen to the side, and an exquisite bee body is attached to the right of his belt. He also wears bee dangles, seen so often on bakabs.

The scene being portrayed here seems to be recalling the "birth and rebirth" scenes that are all along the entire side of the Casa de los Caracoles.

#### Yaxchilan Lintel 24

Many have called the three lintels from Temple 23, known as as the House of Lady K'abal Xook (Lady Xoc), the most beautiful in all the Maya realm. Lintel 24 (Figure 7) dated AD 709 depicts Lady K'abal Xook in a blood-sacrifice ritual of pulling a thorn-embedded rope through her tongue, with blood falling into a basket containing blood-spattered paper strips and blood-letting paraphernalia. Her husband Itzamnaaj Bahlam III (Shield Jaguar the Great), the longest-reigning king in Yaxchilan's history, is holding a flaming torch over her head and celebrating the twenty-eighth solar anniversary of his accession to the throne.

Lintels 24 and 25 enable us to see the designs on



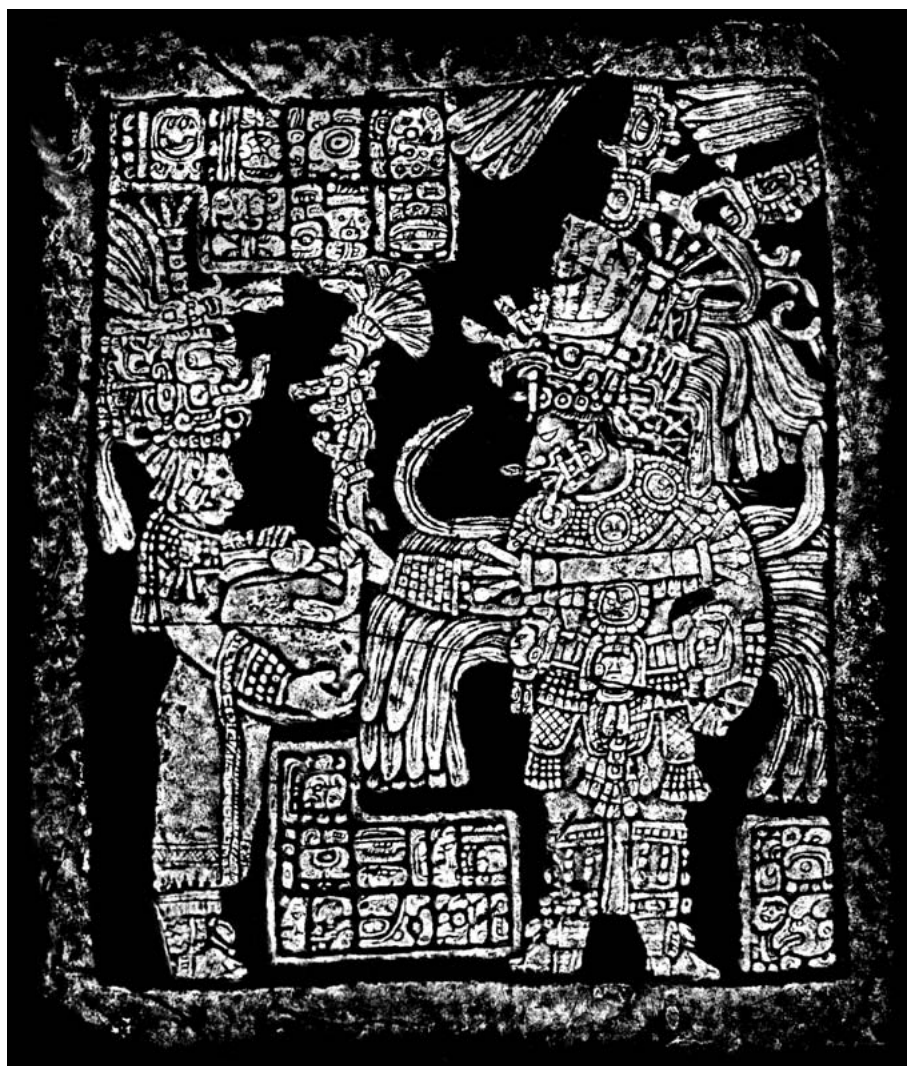


Figure 8. Yaxchilan Lintel 53 (rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson).

the cloth from which the woman's gown was woven. She wears wristlets of six rows of tiny beads, a collar of many tiers of these same beads, and elaborate ear spools. Her headdress bears the Mexican year sign. Carolyn Tate points out the unique manner in which three-dimensionality is indicated by the way her hand is made, and the inner and outer edges of her garment. She has shown that at least two artists in a sculptural workshop collaborated on Lintel 24, one who rendered the 3D aspects of the figure and the energetic composition, and one who excelled in textile and knot details.

Itzamnaaj Bahlam wears a shirt of intricate embroidery and a necklace of large beads which supports a medallion of a human head with a nose bone, a very short loincloth, tasseled knee gaiters, and high-backed boots that tie with a bow in front. His headdress, worn at the rear of his head, is attached to his long pulled-up hair while another human head is at the front of the band that holds the whole contraption in place.

### Yaxchilan Lintel 53

The date on this lintel (Figure 8) is one day after the sacrificial ritual shown on Lintel 24, in AD 709. The accession bundle carried by the woman probably contains the paraphernalia needed for the sacred ritual of self-sacrifice—the bowl, a stingray spine, bark paper to catch the blood, and a hallucinogen, possibly the sacred mushroom *Psilocybe cubensis* or *Panaeolus venenosus*, both of which are found in the area and are shown on stone monuments along the Usumacinta River.

She is dressed in elite clothing, a long gown with embroidered edge, a waist-length beaded cape with a medallion containing a human head, and multiple bead wristlets. Her headdress is composed of an elaborate long-nosed god embellished with feathers and numerous motifs. Her bundle is of some weight, as can be seen by the way she supports it with her right hand.

The king is in the elaborate costume worn for Pe-



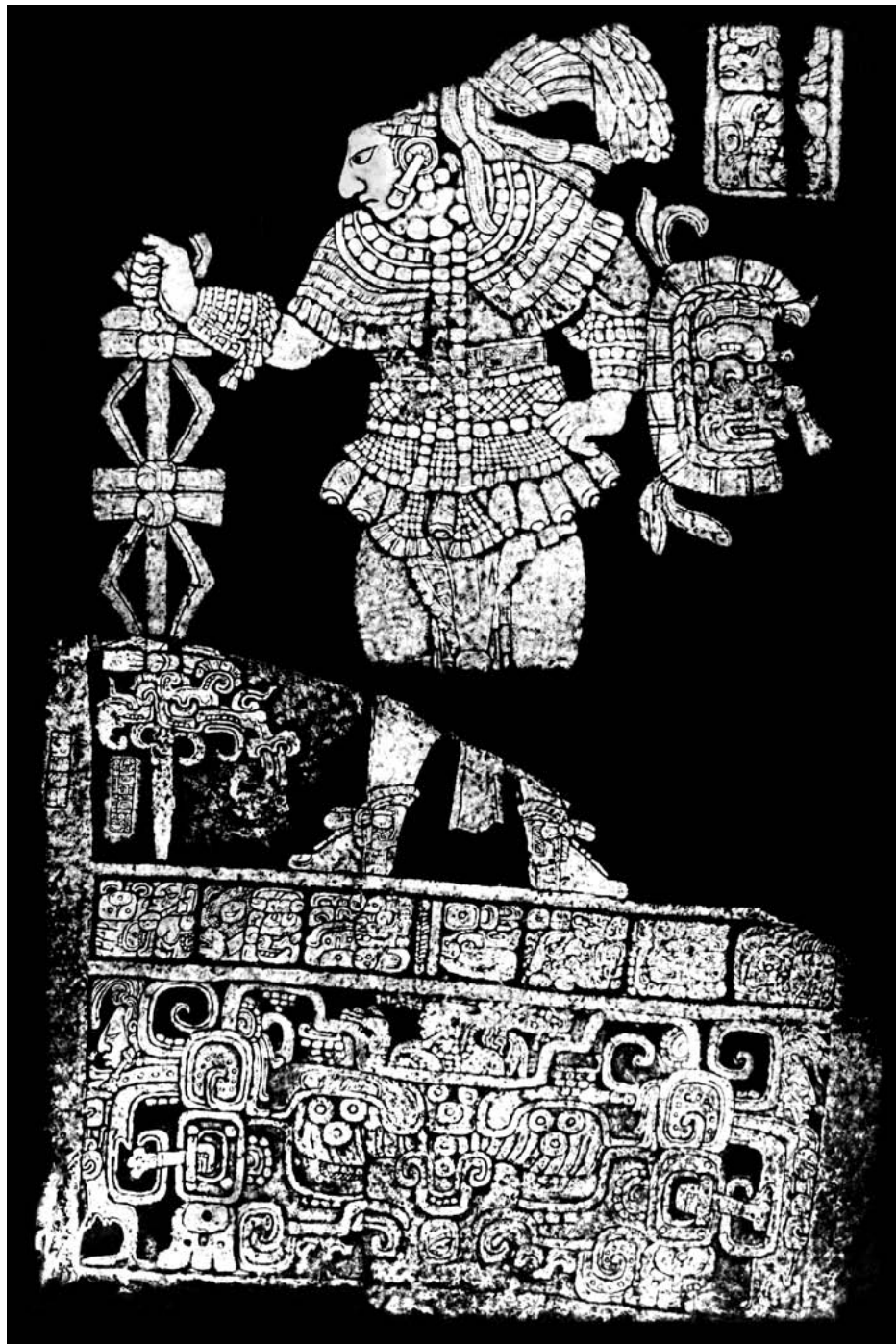


Figure 9. Bonampak Stela 1 (rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson).

riod Endings and anniversaries, completely covered with medallions of a human head and belt-heads. The drummajor headdress he wears is balanced on top of a long-nosed god with mirrors, jade medallions, and feathers splaying from the rear and on top. A ceremonial bar is shown across his chest. He holds a God K manikin scepter with its right leg a serpent instead of a foot.

### Bonampak Stela 1

This immense stela (Figure 9) records the hotun ending in AD 781 in the reign of Yajaw Chan Muwaan (Lord of the Sky Hawk), the ruler shown on this immense stela. His mother and father are depicted on Stela 2, standing on the stairs close by. When we look at this monument, we are immediately drawn to his face with the large

tear-drop eye.

His costume, completely covered with different kinds of beads, has its finishing touch in the ballet-type skirt fringed with oliva shells. His wristlets, also covered with beads, are not identical. The one worn on his right wrist is made up of five rows of small beads finished with long rows of even smaller beads threaded on strings which act as tassels. His left wristlet is made of two rows of beads set between three bands, and then another beaded band holds the long-nosed-god wrist shield in place. This shield, shown in profile, is undoubtedly round.

The staff that the king carries is almost exactly like that carried by the elite personage on the stela that is in the Reitberg Museum in Zurich. Interestingly enough, the treatment of the eye is the same in this stela also.

One of the unique aspects of Bonampak Stela 1 is the treatment of the loincloth. In almost every other instance, the loincloth is attached to the belt and then hangs on top of the skirt. In this case, the elaborate skirt covers the top of the loincloth so we do not know whether there was a typical head at the belt or not.

Every possible space on the *witz* monster at the base is covered with beads and scrolls.

### Bonampak Sculptured Stone 1

This scene (Figure 10) shows a new ruler seated on a throne, being presented with a Jester God head by one of three persons seated before him. The Jester God, usually a head ornament, would probably have been tied on the young ruler's head by the long cloth that is held in the hand of the person making the presentation.

The young king is simply dressed in a plain loincloth, simple wristlets but no anklets or footwear, a pectoral with a human head, and the remaining portion of a headdress that looks like it may be a saurian creature of some kind.

The three attendants are dressed identically—simple loincloths, unadorned short skirts, transparent mantels draped over their shoulders, plain ear spools, and high hats made of some stiff material, possibly starched cloth or very thin bark paper. The two delegates behind the presenter hold their hands across their chests clutching the opposite arm, a position of submission. All three are slouched slightly forward and not sitting in upright positions.

The composition of this beautiful stone is remarkable. The delicate incised lines, as well as the pictorial view of the personages recalls Palenque style in the Creation Tablet and the Tablet of the 96 Hieroglyphs.



Figure 10. Bonampak Sculptured Stone 1 (rubbing by Merle Greene Robertson).