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## Flaying, Dismemberment, and Ritual Human Sacrifice on the Pacific Coast of Guatemala

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Human sacrifice was fundamental to religious ritual in Mesoamerica, prominent in artistic representations from the earliest times. In particular, decapitation was a recurrent theme in Preclassic sculptures from the Pacific coast of Guatemala, at such sites as Izapa, El Jobo, El Baúl, and Kaminaljuyu. During the Early Classic it reappeared on Teotihuacan-style tripod cylinders from the coastal plain of Escuintla (Hellmuth 1975). Not surprisingly, human sacrifice continued to be a focus in the Late Classic art of Cotzumalguapa. In this study I will describe a series of stone sculptures and ceramic objects that represent two practices of postmortem treatment associated with human sacrifice: flaying and dismemberment.

Numerous works describe sacrificial practices and postmortem treatments of human remains in Mesoamerica (Boone 1984; González Torres 1985; Graulich 2005; López Austin 1984:432-439; López Luján and Olivier 2009; Tiesler and Cucina 2007). While no skeletal remains suitable for the analysis of such practices have been found at Cotzumalguapa, explicit evidence is found in ceramic and stone sculptures. In this study I analyze two objects of special interest for this topic: (a) a ceramic effigy found in archaeological excavations at Cotzumalguapa, near the El Baúl acropolis, which exemplifies the practice of flaying, and (b) the recently discovered Monument 93 of Bilbao, which clearly illustrates the practice of dismemberment.

### Flaying

The Cotzumalguapa sculptures feature

multiple forms of human sacrifice, including decapitation, heart extraction, and dismemberment. However, images of flaying, a common practice in ancient Mesoamerica, have not been identified until now. In 2006, fragments of a ceramic effigy were recovered in the course of excavations undertaken by Erika Gómez, under the direction of the author, in an architectural complex located approximately 200 m north of the El Baúl acropolis. The excavations in this complex began in 2002, as part of the investigation of an adjacent obsidian workshop (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2011). They were expanded in 2006 and 2007, revealing a group of platforms built around two patios on an artificially leveled platform circumscribed by a stone retaining wall. The complex may have had a residential function, but there are indications that it had an important ritual and religious component. The evidence consists of (a) the relatively large scale of the complex and the labor investment evident in the leveling of the site and the construction of the buildings; (b) the discovery of numerous cache offerings, especially in the East Patio; and (c) the presence of two specialized structures that probably served as sweatbaths. The flayed effigy reinforces the idea that this compound had important ritual functions.

The remains of the effigy were found at a shallow depth, dispersed in the rubble in the southern part of the complex. While broken, the greater part of the body fragments were found together, while the head turned up in another excavation unit approximately 1.5 m east. A



Figure 1. Ceramic effigy of a figure wearing a mask of human skin. Height 39.5 cm. Photo: Jorge Pérez de Lara.





Figure 2. Front and side views of the of the ceramic effigy. Drawing: Hiro Iwamoto.

mushroom stone fragment was found near the head. Only upon studying the fragments in the laboratory could it be confirmed that all went together as part of the same object. The effigy was restored in the Popol Vuh Museum, Francisco Marroquín University, by Carlos Gonzáles (Figure 1). Hiro Iwamoto's drawing (Figure 2) illustrates what could be assembled as well as the missing parts, which include a large part of the torso and limbs.

The effigy is modeled in clay. The head and limbs are solid, while the body is a vertical cylinder with a large hole in the back. Its fugitive orange color is commonly found on ceramic figurines and effigies at Cotzumalguapa. The face is finely modeled and polished while the rest of the body and limbs are relatively coarse. It represents a seated individual with the right arm and leg bent and the elbow resting on the knee. The left limbs are missing completely, as well as the hands and feet of both sides. The only garment is a striated belt, combined with bracelets and anklets of the same material.

The face is partially blackened, perhaps as the result of rituals that involved the burning of offerings in front of the effigy. The flayed skin is realistically portrayed, with with five deep vertical wrinkles, caused by the desiccation and contraction of flayed human skin (Figure 3). Such wrinkles are characteristic of flayed figures in Mesoamerican art. The partially burned mouth is stretched open to reveal the lips of the person wearing the flayed skin as a mask. The empty eyes and nostrils realistically convey the officiant's horrific appearance.

Twisted cords curve around the neck and extend toward the back. They may have served to hold the flayed skin in place. Similar cords are commonly associated with the wearers of flayed skins in Mesoamerican



Figure 3. Head of the ceramic effigy. Photo: Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos.

art. An intriguing detail is the animal figure that projects behind the head, forming a sort of crest. Its simplicity contrasts with the detailed quality and realism of the face. There are no indications of flayed skin covering the body or limbs.

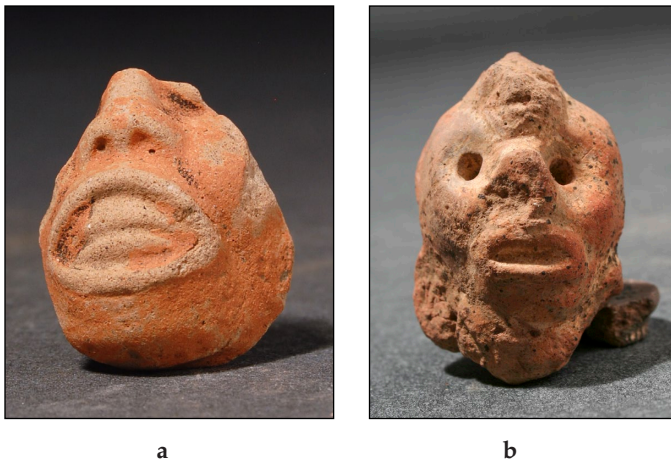
The effigy is unique in the archaeological record of Cotzumalguapa, but there are other fragments that depict officiants wearing flayed skins. Figure 4a is a sherd executed in the same ceramic type, with fugitive orange painting and the remains of black lines. Another fragment was recovered in 2011, from an excavation located 750 m northwest of the El Baúl acropolis (Figure 4b; Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012:34). This figurine with round eyes and open mouth is very crude but may represent a character wearing a flayed skin. This interpretation is reinforced by a comparison with a group of rattles and whistles that belong to the genre of Tiquisate figurines found in abundance throughout the Pacific coast of Guatemala (Castillo 2008:70-72). These unprovenanced objects form a well-defined group of figures characterized by the smooth and taut aspect of the face and head, slanted eyes, open mouth, and projecting crest on top of the head (Figure 5). Some also have cords around the neck. In a study of Tiquisate figurines, Castillo (2008:70-72) noted that the bodily proportions suggest dwarfism, and one of the known examples is a hunchback.

The comparison of these objects with the El Baúl effigy supports their identification as individuals wearing flayed human skins over the face. All feature a crest projecting from behind the head. In some cases it is conical; in others it takes animal shape, as is the case with the effigy from El Baúl. One possible explanation is that the crest was shaped from excess human skin gathered

behind the head. The form varies but its presence is constant, suggesting that the animal depicted was less relevant than the simple presence of the projection. Of great interest is the possible relationship of these projections to the conical caps that are often associated with figures of gods and men wearing flayed skin in other regions of Mesoamerica.

The theme is rare in stone sculptures but is found with some frequency in stone *hachas* from southern Guatemala and El Salvador (Shook and Marquis 1996:189-196). The only known example in a large sculpture is a horizontally-tenoned head from Finca El Portal in the Antigua Guatemala valley (Figure 6). Thompson (1943:Plate 10, f) published a photograph but did not identify it as a depiction of a person with flayed skin. Its current location is unknown, but there are photographs in the archives of the Carnegie Institution of Washington (<http://via.lib.harvard.edu>, 58-34-20/35682, 35683). The form of the mouth, nose, and eyes are distinguishing features of an officiant wearing a mask of human skin, with the head covered by a turban.

The most numerous comparisons are found in depictions of Mexica *xipeme* figures, dressed in the flayed skin of victims sacrificed in honor of the god Xipe Totec. In contrast to the Pacific coastal examples, their entire bodies are covered with flayed skin. However, there are specific parallels that include the vertical facial striations and the cords that, on occasion, wrap around the neck and torso of the Aztec *xipeme*. Moreover, the *xipeme* often wear conical hats. It is worth asking whether this feature bears any relation to the conical or animal projections of the Pacific coastal effigies. It should be noted that among the Mexica, flaying and the use of human skin by officiants was not limited to the cult of Xipe Totec. Written and pictorial documents describe similar practices during the feasts dedicated to Toci, Tlazolteotl, Chicomecoatl, Xochiquetzal, and other deities. Elsewhere in Mesoamerica, the evidence of complete or partial flaying of sacrificial victims, and the practice of dressing in their skins or parts of them, may go back to the Preclassic period (Nicholson 1972). Iconographic and osteological evidence shows indications of such practices among the Classic Lowland Maya (Mock 1998; Taube 1992:105-110). Massey and Steele (1997) reported traces of the removal of soft tissues and skin in a deposit of thirty skulls found at Colha, Belize. Postclassic ceramic effigies from El Salvador portray individuals wearing human skin, closely related to effigies found at Teotihuacan and elsewhere in the Mexican highlands (Amaroli and Bruhns 2003; Boggs 1944; Scott 1993). However, the objects described in this paper show that the practice of flaying was not introduced to southern Mesoamerica as the result of Postclassic contacts or migrations, but had been part of a local religious tradition since the Classic period.



**Figure 4.** Fragments of ceramic objects from El Baúl, Cotzumalguapa: (a) effigy fragment representing the mouth and nose of a person wearing a mask of flayed human skin (photo: Oswaldo Chinchilla); (b) head of a figurine possibly depicting a person wearing a flayed-skin mask.





**Figure 5.** Tiquisate ceramic objects from the Pacific Coast, depicting characters wearing masks of flayed human skin: (a) rattle, Colección Fundación La Ruta Maya; (b) whistle, Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín; (c) rattle, Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquín; (d) rattle fragment, Museo de Arqueología de la Costa Sur, Universidad del Valle de Guatemala. Photos: Oswaldo Chinchilla.

### Dismemberment

Dismemberment of sacrificial victims was a common practice in Mesoamerica. The evidence derived from the analysis of skeletal remains is fairly plentiful (Medina Martín and Sánchez Vargas 2007; Pijoán Aguadé and Mansilla Lory 2010), but artistic representations are rare before the Postclassic period. Teotihuacan-style incensarios provide an Early Classic precedent on the Pacific Coast. Two unprovenanced examples represent temples with rows of severed arms hanging from the roof. Large birds loom over the roof of the temples, suggesting that this form of sacrifice was related to their cult. In previous work, I related this to an ancient version of the myth of Seven Macaw, the avian being who severed the arm of a hero, according to the sixteenth-century Popol Vuh (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2010).

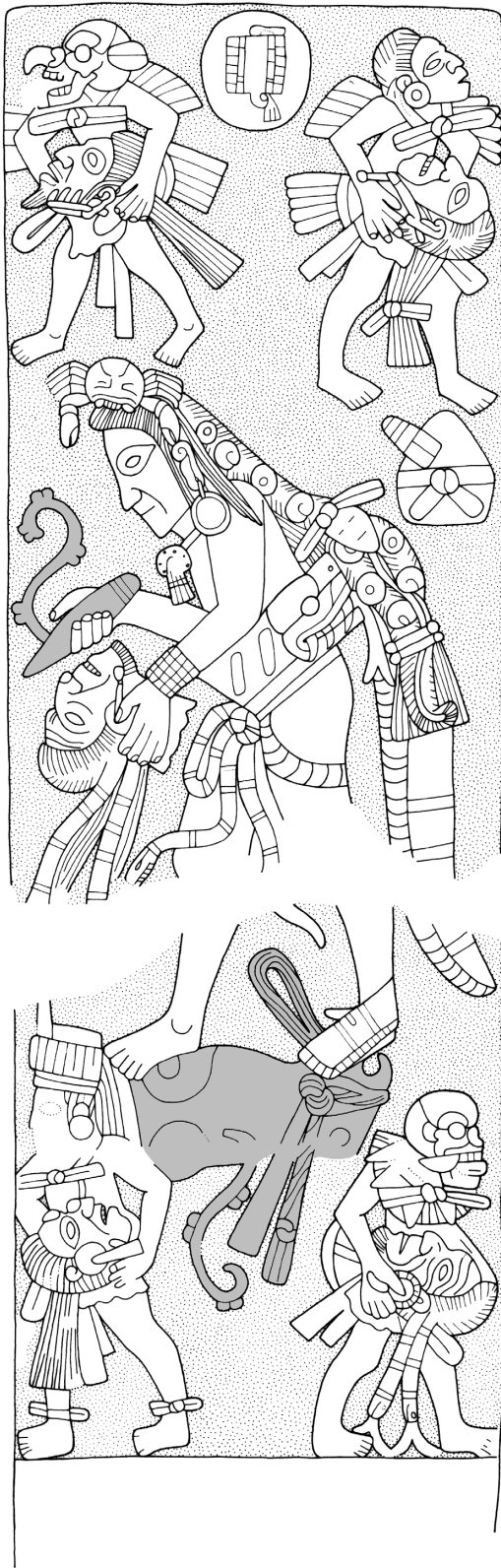
Representations of dismemberment are not numerous elsewhere in Mesoamerica, but there are some examples in stone *palmas* of Classic Veracruz style. Parsons (1969:Plate 61b, c) illustrated one that displays a large stone knife between dismembered body parts. During the Postclassic the theme became important in Mexica sculptures. Hernández Pons and Navarrete (1997) described a series of stone tablets depicting severed limbs, found in the ceremonial precinct of Tenochtitlan. Dismemberment in Mexica art is related to the myth of the goddess Coyolxauhqui, who was dismembered during her fight with her brother Huitzilopochtli. The images of Coyolxauhqui allude to this mythological theme

and do not necessarily correspond to the post-mortem treatment of sacrificial victims. However, dismemberment has been well documented in Mexica archaeological contexts (Pijoán Aguadé and Mansilla Lory 2010).

The depictions of dismemberment in Cotzumalguapa sculpture are markedly different, because they do not appear to focus on specific mythological characters. The best known is Bilbao Monument 1 (Figure 7), a stela whose central character is standing on a human torso



**Figure 6.** Stone head with horizontal tenon, Finca El Portal, Antigua Guatemala. Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM# 58-34-20/35682 (digital file# CI610414).



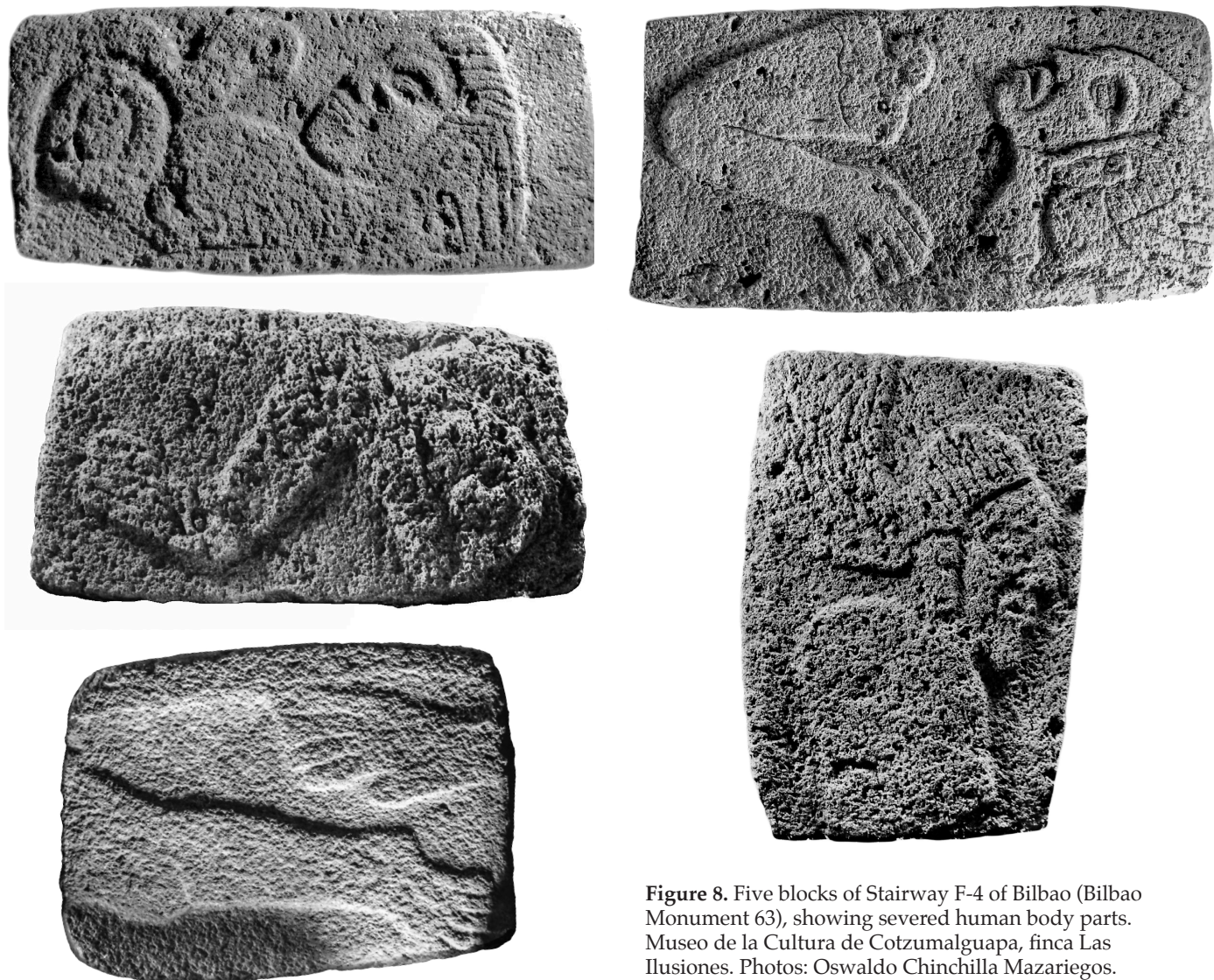
**Figure 7.** Monument 1 from Bilbao, Cotzumalguapa. The central character is standing on a dismembered and decapitated human torso that still wears its loincloth. Drawing: Oswaldo Chinchilla.

that has lost its arms, legs, and head, but still wears its loincloth. The officiant holds a severed head, perhaps of the same victim, and in the right hand wields the knife with which he has cut it off. Particularly interesting are the small vines that sprout from the knife and the victim's torso, which thus take the role of seeds. These short vines may allude to the Flower World, a mythological place characterized by abundant vegetation, full of flowers and fruit, which is an important theme in Cotzumalguapa art. Bilbao Monument 1 is part of a sculptural complex whose essential theme was the evocation of ancestors or gods living in Flower World, by means of songs, dances, offerings, and human sacrifices (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2011c, 2012; cf. Taube 2004). The vines represent the songs of the officiants in these rituals, while at the same time they depict the vegetation of Flower World. On Monument 1, it may be supposed that the dismembered torso and the sacrificial knife were conceived of as capable of uttering their own songs, thus participating actively in the evocation of Flower World.

The links between dismembered body parts and flowers reappear in the sculptured blocks that formed Stairway F-4 (Bilbao Monument 63), discovered by Parsons at the Bilbao Monument Plaza (Figure 8; Parsons 1969:48-49, 121). The stairway included 18 blocks depicting severed limbs and flowering plants. Parsons (1969:121) suggested that these blocks were cut from one or more larger sculptures that combined the same themes. Some blocks juxtapose human body parts and fruits, while others show flowering vegetation. These motifs were likely related to each other, although Parsons noted that they were placed together on the stairway with little regard for meaning, since some of the blocks were turned face down. Be that as it may, the blocks of Monument 63 reiterate the role of human sacrifice, particularly ritual dismemberment, as a component of the complex of religious concepts associated with Flower World at Cotzumalguapa. The reliefs include severed heads, arms, and legs, as well as torsos with heads but without extremities. The stumps from which the arms and legs have been detached are rendered as concentric circles or semicircles. Some of the dismembered arms and legs show the protruding condyles of the humerus or femur.

The importance of dismemberment at Cotzumalguapa became even more obvious after the discovery of Bilbao Monument 93 (Figures 9-11). This boulder was uncovered in early 2010 by residents of Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa, who noticed the sculpture's ridge protruding above the surface and dug down far enough to reveal the entire carved surface. According to their account, the relief was found in pristine condition but suffered damage a short time later, either from vandalism or agricultural machinery. Monument 93 lies on the southeast corner of the platform of Bilbao Group A. The





**Figure 8.** Five blocks of Stairway F-4 of Bilbao (Bilbao Monument 63), showing severed human body parts. Museo de la Cultura de Cotzumalguapa, finca Las Ilusiones. Photos: Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos.

entire site is currently cultivated with sugar cane. With the objective of recording the monument and documenting its archaeological context, I undertook a two-week excavation in April 2010, with the assistance of Luis Méndez Salinas. The excavation revealed that the monument was carved on an enormous rock that stood at this location since the beginnings of human occupation at the site. There was evidence of early activity at this location dating to the Terminal Preclassic Colojate phase (AD 150-400; Chinchilla et al. 2009). The stone was gradually buried by construction fill over the centuries. The excavations revealed a sequence of six tamped earth floors, of which the first two (floors 5 and 6) correspond to the Colojate phase. Previous work by Parsons (1967) had revealed mixed Preclassic materials at Bilbao, but this excavation was the first to reveal a stratigraphic sequence of construction floors going back to the Preclassic period. The most superficial layers

also contained Postclassic materials, which are widely distributed at Cotzumalguapa. The construction sequence culminated in the Late Classic, when only the upper part of the rock protruded above the floor of the acropolis. It was then carved with reliefs that covered an area 2.60 by 1.80 meters. Due to the fact that the rock protruded above the surface of the earth before it was uncovered, the higher parts have suffered considerable damage caused by passing vehicles and plows over course of decades. The surface presents various facets separated by blunt ridges, and the observer must walk around the monument in order to see all the reliefs. On the south end there is a deep depression that may have existed before the figures were carved around it. Naturally this depression fills with water, and it was provided with a rough drain. There are also two large cupulate depressions that may have been created before





Figure 9. Monument 93 from Bilbao, Cotzumalguapa. Photo: Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos.





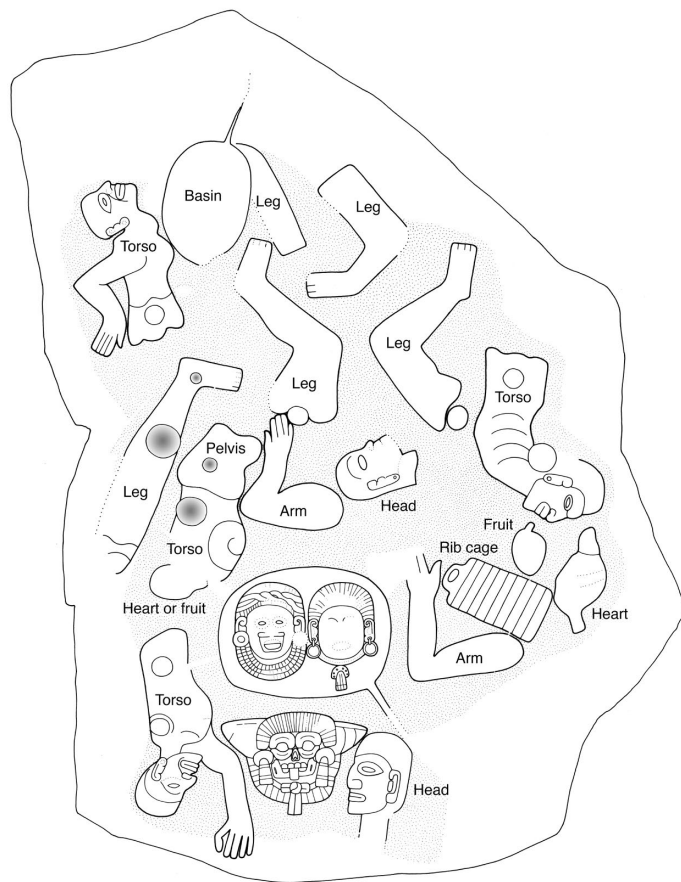
Figure 10. Details of Monument 93 from Bilbao, Cotzumalguapa. Photos: Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos.

or after the carving of the reliefs. Two smaller depressions may pertain to anatomical elements in the reliefs. In any case, these features suggest the use of the rock for ritual purposes, perhaps related to water, even before

the carving of more complex designs.

The oval niche on the north side is much more elaborate and deep, but it probably also relates in some way to water. Like the niche on the north side, it was





**Figure 11.** Bilbao Monument 93. Drawing: Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos.

provided with a drain, taking advantage of a crevice in the rock. There are two human heads carved in high relief inside the niche. This is probably a male-female human pair, judging from the hairstyle of the face on the left, which sports a braided diadem. This accessory appears most often in portraits of women and goddesses in Mesoamerican art, who sometimes wear one or more intertwined serpents around the head. A close example is found at Cotzumalguapa on Bilbao Monument 21, which likely represents an aged goddess (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2012b). Intertwined serpents reappear on figures in the upper register of Bilbao Stelae 2, 4, 5, and 8, but their gender is unclear. Circular earflares and a wide necklace complete the woman's attire on Monument 93. Her companion has the hair combed toward the back, wears circular earflares, and a necklace comprised of a string and pendant. His aspect is entirely human. Judging from their respective size and shape both characters seem to be of equal importance.

Below the niche there is a carving of the Death God, distinguished by his skeletal aspect, abundant hair, rectangular tongue protruding from between clenched teeth, necktie, and earflares. Further distinctive features include the conical projections on either side of the

head. The Death God is clearly aligned with the faces in the niche. His face is flanked by a severed head and a dismembered body retaining the head and right arm. The victims' faces are oriented toward the Death God as if framing him. Other human body parts are scattered through the carved surface. There are three more torsos, one with its head and right arm, one with its head but no arms, and a third that has no limbs or head but is still attached to the pelvis. Completing the picture there are five legs, two arms, a head, a heart, and a schematic rib cage. Besides the human body parts, there are two fruits with short stalks. Altogether, the monument seems to represent a pile of human remains, in the midst of which are the niche with the couple and the Death God.

The presence of two fruits among the human remains is significant. Oval fruits are frequently found in the art of Cotzumalguapa, and they frequently have human faces. These fruits are part of the characteristic vegetation of Flower World. On Bilbao Monument 21, the central figure harvests them with a knife, an action that clearly alludes to human sacrifice by decapitation. The fruits belong in the same category as the human body parts depicted on Monument 93. Their presence can be interpreted as an allusion to the Flower World, a place that was strongly related to human sacrifice in Cotzumalguapa.

The niche of Monument 93 finds a close parallel on Bilbao Monument 34, which originally stood by the edge of a small stream that flows east of the acropolis. This sculpture has a niche provided with an ample drainage on its lower portion. Within the niche there are two identical heads with the features of Tlaloc. In its original location, Monument 34 was partially submerged for a large part of the year, hence its clear association with water. While there is no water near Monument 93, the basins, drains, and cupulate depressions suggest water associations.

The couple of Monument 93 may relate to another couple, represented on Monument 19, a rock carving located a short distance away, south of Bilbao Group A. The relief on this monument portrays a male and female pair face to face. In a previous work I suggested that this could represent a marital alliance (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2002). Indeed, the two sculptures may allude to related themes.

### Final Comments

The two forms of postmortem treatment of human sacrificial victims documented in this study were part of religious rituals that we can barely glimpse from artistic representations. The contexts in which they appear are quite distinct. Flaying was represented preferentially in ceramic effigies, while dismemberment is an important theme on monumental sculptures. The depictions of individuals with flayed skin offer few clues about the religious context in which this practice flourished. By



contrast, the representations of dismemberment are associated with the complex of religious ideas and ritual practices associated with the evocation of the Flower World. They are also related to the cult of the Death God and possibly the celebration of marital alliances. Significantly, all known depictions of dismemberment at Cotzumalguapa appear in the Bilbao sculptures. In previous works I have suggested that the Bilbao acropolis was a religious compound. The Bilbao sculptures consistently depict ritual activities, related to the evocation of gods and ancestors in the Flower World. Archaeological investigations suggest that Bilbao was the main center in the area during the Preclassic period. Its ancestral ties may explain why the Late Classic Cotzumalguapa lords turned it into an important ritual center (Chinchilla Mazariegos 2011b:51-54).

Rituals of flaying and dismemberment in Cotzumalguapa are related to similar practices among the Mexica and other Mesoamerican peoples. However, there are no grounds for supposing that they were dedicated to the same deities. It would be incorrect to relate the Cotzumalguapa representations of flaying to the cult of Xipe Totec, considering that Mexica flaying rituals were not exclusive to that god. The descriptions offered in this work are intended as contributions for comparative studies on these practices of postmortem ritual body treatment in Mesoamerica.

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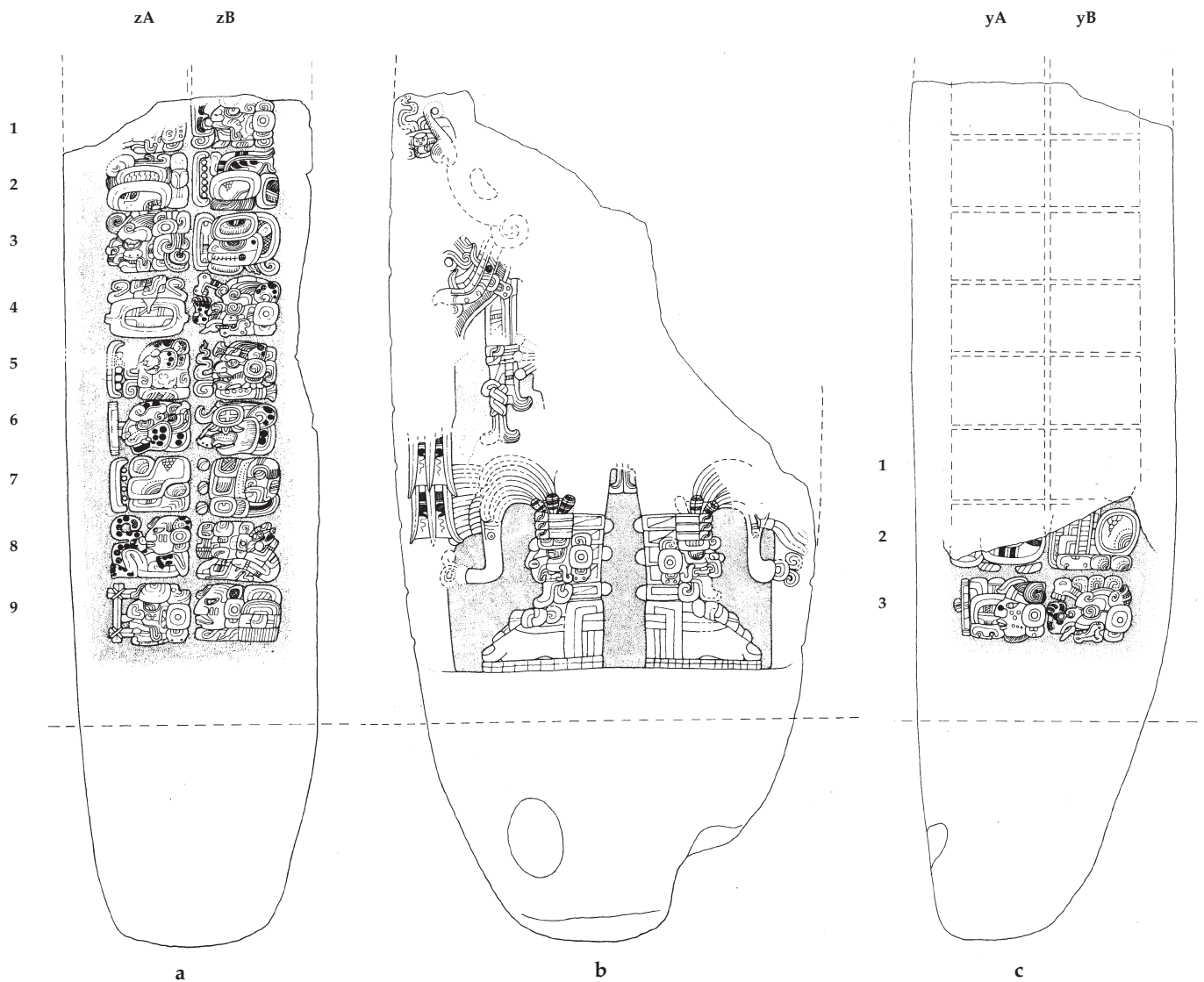
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# Dating Stela 26 of Tikal

STANLEY PAUL GUENTER



**Figure 1.** Tikal Stela 26: (a) left side; (b) front of monument; (c) right side. Drawing by William R. Coe © The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig. 44b). Courtesy of the Penn Museum.

Stela 26 of Tikal (Figure 1) was discovered in 1958 by members of the University of Pennsylvania Museum archaeological team while excavating Structure 5D-34-1<sup>st</sup>, in the North Acropolis of the site (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:58; Shook 1958). Known as the “Red Stela” due to the considerable amount of red pigment still adhering to the monument when first found, the

fragments of this stela had been deposited and buried within a masonry bench in the back room of this temple that had been dug into and despoiled apparently during the Terminal Classic period (Coe 1990:475-476; Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:58; Shook 1958). Only approximately half of the original surface of the monument was found intact, with its uppermost part entirely missing, as is the

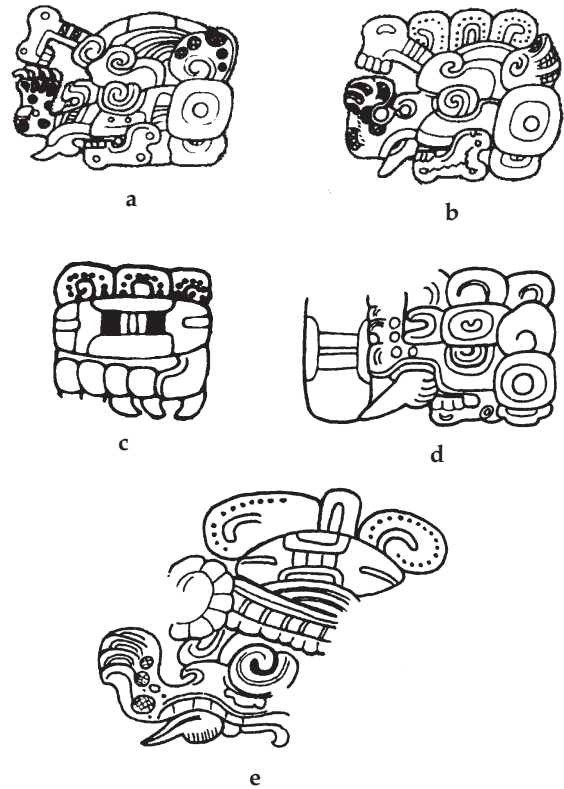
vast majority of the right side of the stela as well. Due to this damage no recognizable date was found on the monument and the question of the date of this stela has long bedeviled scholars.

Tatiana Proskouriakoff provided a provisional style-date of 9.7.10.0.0  $\pm$  2 ½ katuns (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:58).

The fragmentary inscription on Stela 26 has no date, and only the legs of the figure below the knees and a small fragment of a serpent head of a bar now remain. The feet of the figure point outward, in the Late Classic manner, but the heels of the sandals are of a transitional type, high and square, with a rectangular opening for the strap that ties them on the ankle, a type that occurs at Yaxha after 9.9.0.0.0, but here may appear earlier. On the other hand, the high ankle guards with feather ornaments flowing from them are shared with Stela 1, which also has no date, but which appears to be Early Classic. ... I may be placing it here too late, but its remarkable inscription, with its handsome glyphs, carefully organized and squared, does not fit with other Early Classic inscriptions at Tikal. (Proskouriakoff 1993:37)

Joyce Bailey (1972:72-83) thought this estimate too late and considered that Stela 26 compared most favorably with Caracol Stela 16, which bears a Long Count dedicatory date of 9.5.0.0.0 (AD 534). Christopher Jones and Linton Satterthwaite noted that Stela 26, with its figure carved on the front and hieroglyphic texts on the sides, but not on the back, “follows the tradition of the Tikal segmented-staff stelae” (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:58). These segmented-staff stelae, it should be noted, include Stelae 3, 6–9, 13, 15, and 27, which bear dedicatory dates from 9.2.0.0.0 (AD 475) to 9.4.0.0.0 (AD 514) (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:23).

In addition to the style of costume and design elements on the monument, the dating of Stela 26 to the early sixth century was based on the presence of a number of royal names in the surviving text of the stela. The name of “Jaguar Paw Skull” (now read phonetically as Chak Tok Ich’aak) is found twice on the monument, at yB3 and zB4, while that of “Stormy Sky” (now read phonetically as Sihyaj Chan K’awiil) is found at zA4. The name of “Kan Boar” (read as K’an Chitam in Martin and Grube 2000:37, although evidence for the phonetic reading of this name has not yet been discovered) shows up in glyph zB6. Jaguar Paw Skull’s name appears on Stela 3, which was dedicated in 488, as well as on Stelae 7, 15, and 27, which were dedicated collectively in 495. Stormy Sky dedicated the famous Stela 31 in 445, while Kan Boar’s name is found on Stelae 9 and 13, with the former bearing a dedicatory date of 475. Given the state of decipherment and epigraphic knowledge of the dynastic history of Tikal that was current at the time, the



**Figure 2.** David Stuart’s (1987:Fig. 1) compilation of the different forms of the names “Jaguar Paw Skull” and “Great Jaguar Paw”: (a) Tikal Stela 26, left side, zB4 (after drawing by William R. Coe in Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig. 44); (b) Tikal Stela 26, right side, yB3 (after drawing by William R. Coe in Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig. 45); (c) Tikal Stela 31, C14 (after drawing by William R. Coe in Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig. 31b); (d) Tikal Stela 39, Ap2 (drawing by David Stuart from photograph provided by the Instituto de Antropología e Historia de Guatemala); (e) detail of carved cache vessel (after drawing by Ian Crocker-Deletaille in Berjonneau et al. 1985:231).

presence of these names on Stela 26 indicated to scholars of the 1980s and 1990s that this monument, while not able to be specifically dated, could be generally dated to the period around or just after AD 500.

A radical reinterpretation of the date of Stela 26 became possible with the observation by David Stuart that the names of Jaguar Paw Skull, who ruled around AD 500, and Great Jaguar Paw, who ruled prior to AD 378, were one and the same (Stuart 1987). These names (Figure 2) can now both be read phonetically as Chak Tok Ich’aak, and Stuart’s observation was itself only possible due to the discovery of Tikal Stela 39 by Juan Pedro Laporte and the Proyecto Nacional Tikal (Laporte and Fialco 1995:64). This stela (Figure 3), or at least its bottom half (as the upper half of the monument has never been found), had been cached within Structure 5D-86 and bore upon its front an intricate and detailed



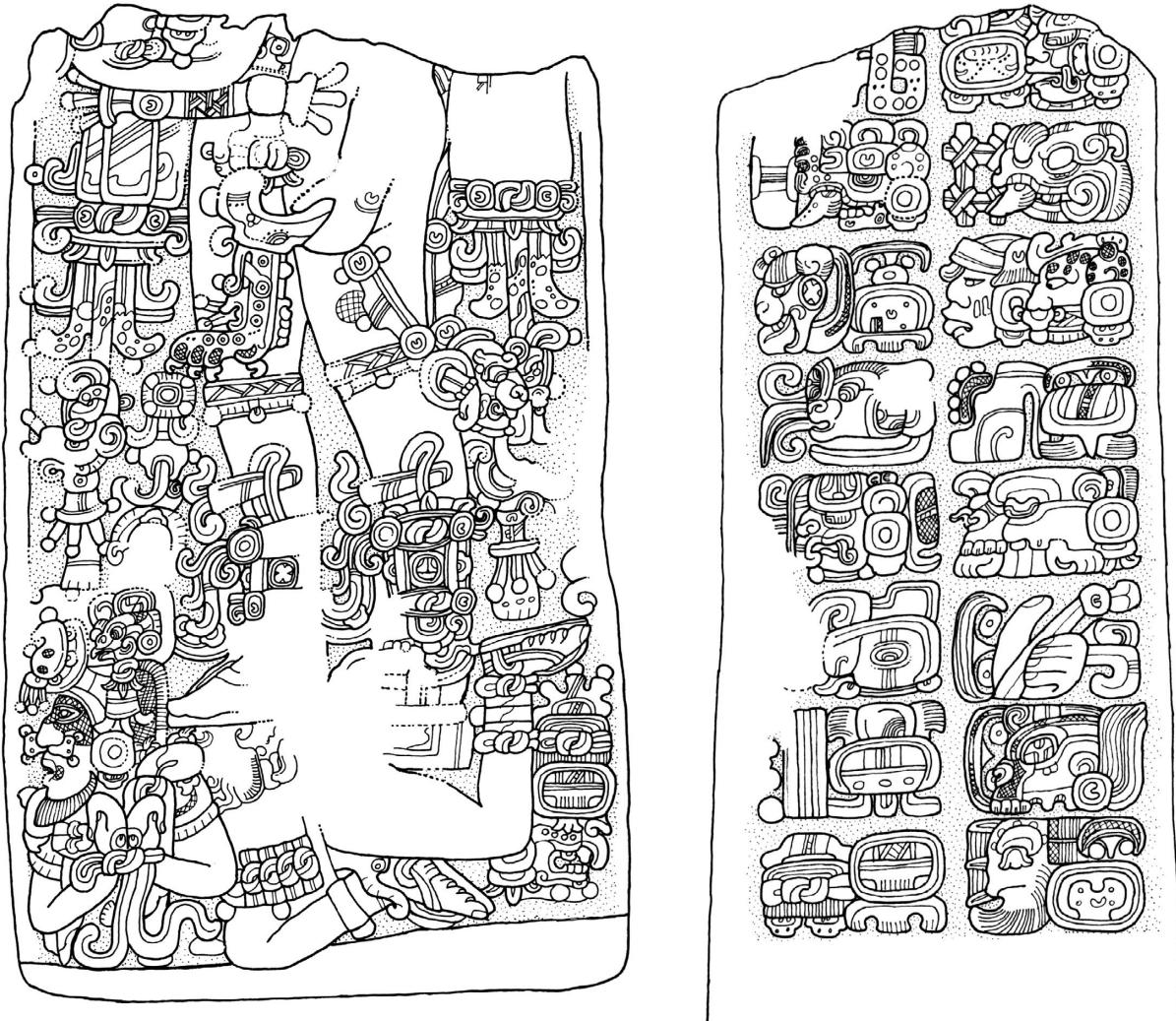


Figure 3. Tikal Stela 39 of Tikal: (left) front; (b) back. Drawing by Linda Schele, courtesy of David Schele.

carving of a king standing atop a captive, with a well preserved glyphic text carved upon its back. In having hieroglyphic texts restricted to only the rear of the monument, Stela 39 matches the earliest stelae of Tikal, including Stelae 29 (AD 292), 4 and 18 (AD 396), and 1 and 2 (early fifth century).

Stela 39 bears a Period Ending reference but damage has meant that what is recorded, the end of either 17 or 19 katuns (glyphs Bz6-Az7), can be read as indicating a date of either 8.17.0.0 (Ayala Falcón 1987) or 8.19.0.0.0 (Schele and Freidel 1990). Today the date is accepted as 8.17.0.0.0, which corresponds to AD 376 (Martin 2003:10; Martin and Grube 2008:28; Montgomery 2001:44-46). The name of Chak Tok Ich'aak I is found in glyph Az2 and is a unique spelling as it includes the T109 **CHAK** logograph in front of the "Jaguar Paw Skull" deity head that is otherwise only found in spellings of the name of the later Tikal king of the late fifth and early sixth centuries. While the name of Great Jaguar Paw, without

exception, always includes the T109 form of *chak*, the name of Jaguar Paw Skull never does. Instead, the later king always has the *chak* part of his name spelled with an inverted jawbone that David Stuart (1987) noted had to be simply another *chak* allograph.

The carving on Stela 39 is very fine, with large and very finely detailed hieroglyphs, which stylistically bear a certain affinity with those on Stela 26. As Grube and Martin (2000:II-18) observe of Stela 26, "Although this monument does not bear a date, stylistically it resembles other fine carvings from the reign of Chak Tok Ich'aak I." This observation led Martin and Grube to include Stela 26 in their discussion of the reign of Chak Tok Ich'aak I in their *Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens* (Martin and Grube 2000). With reference to Chak Tok Ich'aak I they observe, "His name appears on a second fragment, Stela 26, found in the North Acropolis' Temple 34." However, in the second edition of this volume, the authors retreat from such a firm identification of Stela 26 with Chak

Tok Ich'aak I: "His name appears on a fragment of Stela 26—found in the North Acropolis' Temple 34—but since it has no surviving date it could yet prove to be the work of a successor" (Martin and Grube 2008:28).

In fact, I believe that the sum total of all of this evidence clearly connects Stela 26 with Chak Tok Ich'aak II, and not his earlier namesake. Chak Tok Ich'aak I's name, as noted above, always includes the T109 **CHAK** logogram, while Chak Tok Ich'aak II's name never does. The Chak Tok Ich'aak glyphs on Stela 26 both include the inverted jawbone, and thus clearly match the glyphs of the second king of this name. Stela 26 is carved with hieroglyphs on its sides, which is a feature of Tikal monuments starting only in the mid-fifth century. Earlier monuments, including Stela 39 of Chak Tok Ich'aak I, never have carved sides, but only carry texts on the stela's rear surface, a feature absent on Stela 26. As noted by Tatiana Proskouriakoff, the feet on Stela 26 are splayed out, in Late Classic form, a feature not found on Tikal monuments until Stela 10, which while not bearing a clear dedicatory date, is roughly contemporaneous with stylistically similar Stela 12, which does bear a dedicatory date of 9.4.13.0.0, or AD 527 (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:25-29, 31-33).

There are also other, paleographic, indications that Stela 26 is a later monument than Stela 39. The **u** allograph seen in glyphs zB2, zA5, and zA7 on Stela 26 have more than the standard three circles, and qualify as examples of Thompson's T11, in place of the T1 variant seen on Stela 39 at Az3b, Bz4b, Bz6, Bz7, and Bz8b. The T23 **na** suffix seen on Stela 39, at Az3b and Az8b, is an early form, featuring small vertical slashes on the lower protuberances, with no small double loop hanging from the internal framing line within the sign. This contrasts with the later version of T23 **na** seen on Stela 26, at yB2a. It is also notable that the T24 **li** sign on Stela 39, seen at glyph Az5b, is carved in an Early Classic style, with a hook at one end, while the same sign on Stela 26, seen at zB3, is in later style, with no hook.

There is thus considerable evidence, in terms of style, paleography, as well as format, which indicates quite clearly that Stela 26 is a late fifth or early sixth century monument, and almost certainly dates to the reign of Chak Tok Ich'aak II. However, I believe there is just enough evidence surviving to achieve a more precise date for this stela. In 2004, David Stuart published a brief note on glyphs zB1-zB2 of Tikal Stela 26, in which he suggested that glyph zA2 was actually a unique logograph for **TZ'AP**, a verb deciphered by Nikolai Grube (1990) and meaning "to plant" or "to erect." The thing planted on Stela 26 is the stela itself, referenced as *ulakamtuunil*, "his stela," in glyph zB2. According to Stuart (2004:1):

In this case it might be better understood as "their stela," since the string of glyphs that follows seems to

name different gods and historical ancestors, including Chak Bay Kan, Siyaj Chan K'awiil, and Chak Tok Ich'aak.<sup>1</sup>

It is likely that the front of the stela portrayed Chak Tok Ich'aak II carrying a double-headed serpent bar, from whose mouths emerged ancestral portraits. It is also highly likely that Stela 26 was erected on a Period Ending, as almost all Tikal monuments were dedicated on Period Endings (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982).

As noted by Stuart, glyph zB1 is the variant of the PSSIG that features the head of GI, and reads *alay*, a demonstrative focus marker deciphered independently by Barbara MacLeod and Yuriy Polyukhovych (2005). The *alay* glyph is found on a number of Early Classic monuments at Tikal, including Stelae 3 (glyph B7), 31 (glyphs A12, C19, and G15), and 40 (glyphs B9 and D11). In all cases a Calendar Round date either immediately precedes or follows the *alay* glyph. As the glyphs after the *alay* on Stela 26 refer to the planting of the stela, the glyph immediately preceding it, glyph zA1, must have been the *haab* part of a Calendar Round date. Only a small amount of this glyph survives on the monument, but there is enough to see that it is the head of the Rain God Chahk, with his shell earflare and fanged mouth. Chahk's earflare is a rare but not unknown addition to the *cauac* sign in the color months, Ch'en, Yax, Zac, and Ceh. If we look at the list of Period Endings during the reign of Chak Tok Ich'aak II, which spanned the period between 486 and 508, we find that no *tun* endings fell on color months during this period except 9.3.12.0.0 6 Ahau 18 Ceh, and 9.3.13.0.0 2 Ahau 13 Ceh. Twelve *tuns* is not a known Period Ending that was commemorated at Tikal, but 13 *tuns* was, and Stelae 3, 5, 12, and 40 were all dedicated on 13-*tun* Period Endings.

While it is impossible to prove due to the extensive damage to the monument, a good case can thus be made that Tikal Stela 26 was dedicated on the 9.3.13.0.0 2 Ahau 13 Ceh Period Ending of November 20, 507.<sup>2</sup> This would make this stela almost certainly the last monument from the reign of Chak Tok Ich'aak II, who died on 9.3.13.12.5

<sup>1</sup> With regard to Chak Bay Kan, Nikolai Grube and Simon Martin (2000:II-11) compare this deity name on Stela 26, actually a reference to a Vision Serpent, to one on Yaxchilan Lintel 14. In the latter text the name is actually Chanal Chak Bay Kaan, which can be translated as "Celestial Great/Red Net/Basket Snake." I believe the avian head in glyph zA3 on Stela 26, immediately preceding the Chak Bay Kaan portion of this text, is merely the avian bird version of the sky sign, thus also providing a full Chanal Chak Bay Kaan name on this monument too.

<sup>2</sup> To forestall a potential objection to this proposed date for Stela 26, it should be noted that while there is clearly not enough space in front of Chahk's head in glyph zA1 for the two bars and three dots of the coefficient of 13, it was common in this era to place the numeral on top of the glyph, rather than on the left side. See Stelae 3, 12, 17, and 27 for examples.



13 Chicchan 13 Xul (Martin and Grube 2008:37), a mere 245 days later. Stela 26 must have been an impressive memorial for this king, as it included both archaic and innovative features, all carried out by some of Tikal's most accomplished sculptors of the Early Classic period. The reverence shown the fragments of the monument that were cached in Temple 34 a century and a half later is quite understandable in this light.

### Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Francisco Castañeda, Richard Hansen, Kevin Johnston, and Dave and Ken Hitz for assistance in visiting Tikal and checking Stela 26 in person, as well as reviewing an earlier draft of this paper. As always, I credit to myself all errors and omissions this paper may contain.

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# The Further Adventures of Merle (continued)

MERLE GREENE ROBERTSON



**Figure 1.** Tamarindito Prisoner Stairs, from cover of *Maya Sculpture from the Southern Lowlands, Highlands and Pacific Piedmont, Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras*, by Merle Greene, Robert L. Rands, and John A. Graham (Lederer, Street and Zeus, Berkeley, CA, 1972).

## Tamarindito

When I had finished doing the rubbings of the Dos Pilas Prisoner Stairs, I then went to the not-too-far-away site of Tamarindito where I had been before but had not done rubbings of the Prisoner Stairs there. This time I did those beautiful stairs. A picture in color is on the front of my book *Maya Sculpture* (Figure 1). When I finished, it was so beautiful and peaceful that I stood there thinking, "Now this is where I would like to build a small retreat." Just then Tranquil and Jesus grabbed me and yanked me backwards. With that a huge mahogany tree came crashing down, just missing me—hit by lightning.

I could have been hit also, or at least crushed under the huge tree. End of "Retreat" idea.

## Aguateca

When Bob and I went to Aguateca, Carl Landegger and his ten-year-old son Cary went with us. The jungle was nothing new to Carl, as he had discovered an ancient site in Bolivia a few years before. His company sold paper-making machinery worldwide, so he was intrigued by the process of doing rubbings on rice paper. Later, I did original rubbings of Palenque sculpture (the Tablet of the Cross, the Tablet of the Sun), that covered



two whole walls in his New York office. I didn't think Aguateca would be any place for a ten-year-old boy, but Cary did his part by keeping our fire going all the time and getting water that I needed to wet the paper before a rubbing could be done. The water came from the *lanai* vines, and that was something new to Cary.

Just to get to Aguateca we had to climb, climb, up muddy steep banks, and then we had to cross a chasm so deep, we couldn't see the bottom but could tell it was

full of water and decaying brush (Figure 2). To get across this chasm, we had to crawl over a two-foot-wide bridge that was very slippery with piles of decaying leaves and brush. One slip and down we would go, with no way of getting back up. Working at Aguateca was very cramped by forest. We couldn't cut the whole forest down, so we had to somehow manage to work in very tight quarters. Doing the rubbing of Stela 2 was such fun, and as interesting as Stela 2 at Dos Pilas. Almost as



Figure 2. The chasm at Aguateca.





Figure 3. Aguateca Stela 2.

tall, and very similar, it also showed the figure wearing a down headdress, again with the Mexican year-sign in it (Figure 3). And again this royal figure wore an owl pectoral from his neck. This figure was a jaguar impersonator having jaguar feet. He also carries a baby jaguar head in a bag slung over his shoulder. Seeing each element come to light as the ink was applied was most exciting.

Takeshi Inomata, the archaeologist in charge of the site, recently reported that a noble residential compound was found in which the residents suddenly evacuated when struck by an enemy. As things were left as they were, it is possible to see a Maya household—a bolt of oliva shells carved into skulls, and a human skull re-shaped into a bowl. But on the negative side, Stela 1, of which I did a rubbing in 1970 (Figure 4), had a portion of the glyphic text sawed off with power saws in 1993. It is not known where the stela is now.



Figure 4. Detail of Aguateca Stela 1.