

The Language of Maya

In Maya religion there is striking continuity and symbolic unity in the preoccupation with lineage, and the related iconography developed and was modified while its expressive function was changed throughout time. This symbolism is the common thread in the history of the Maya, which was a true religion.

THE MANIKIN SCEPTER: EMBLEM OF LINEAGE

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In official Maya portraiture the manikin scepter was one of the most important insignia of the male rulers. As a central icon it carried great symbolic weight, and expressed a cluster of closely interrelated cultural concepts. In this paper it is suggested these concepts may be revealed in several punning or loosely homophonous words that probably also include Mayan names for the scepter. Recent work in the decipherment of Mayan hieroglyphic writing has been particularly successful in identifying the ancient uses of phoneticism in Mayan epigraphy (Justeson and Campbell, editors, 1984). This approach includes recognition of the inherent polysemy of Mayan languages, which may have many meanings for a single word, and that in the hieroglyphic writing system "signs may have more than one canonical value" (Fox and Justeson, 1984, p. 17). This polyvalence of Mayan epigraphy is assumed here to be equally inherent in the iconography, or visual symbols, of Maya imagery. Although several closely related languages were spoken during the millenium and in the places where the symbols considered here were employed, a conceptual continuity is apparent in their use; in the following interpretation of an important aspect of Maya ideology only the language of the latest examples of the iconographic cluster, Yucatecan, has been consulted,¹ and hypotheses about the use of "wordplay" to convey a cluster of inter-related meanings are made without regard to the distinction between plain and glottalized consonants.

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¹ All Yucatec Mayan words referred to in this paper were verified in the *Diccionario Cordemex Maya* (Barrera Vasquez, 1980).

The Language of Zuyua

In Maya religion there is striking continuity and symbolic integrity in the elite preoccupation with lineage, and the related iconography developed and was modified while its expressive ritual was enacted throughout time. This symbolism is the concern of this paper. During the Colonial period it persisted in oral tradition, in literary form and was made explicit in the deliberately mystifying "Interrogation of the Chiefs", in the *Chilam Balam of Chumayel* (Roys, 1933, pp. 88-98), which was a test administered to rulers to determine their eligibility to govern through knowledge of the ancient language, and religion. Similar information about earlier Classic Maya lineage and ritual was encoded visually within iconography and hieroglyphic writing, and orally within the speech of the educated ruling elite who preserved and communicated this body of esoteric knowledge in the highly metaphorical medium called, in Colonial times at least, the Language of *Zuyua*. *Zuyua*, or *Suyua*, was used to refer to the Mexican origins of the Xiu family, probably to the *Nahuatl* language, and to the west (Roys, 1933, p. 192; 1954, p. 49, n. 76). It apparently implied both a region and language(s) in the west. To the west of Yucatan there was water, but to the west of the high and low lands to the south there were non-Maya speaking people. The Language of *Zuyua* was probably originally spoken by a foreign elite which had moved into the southern Maya realms in Early Classic times; it may have been the language of Teotihuacan-whatever that was (Justeson, *et al.*, 1985, p. 68).

In two recent papers I have suggested, as have many others, that Teotihuacan was the original Tula, and that all people of Teotihuacan ancestry were thus called Toltec-wherever and whenever they may have settled away from Teotihuacan (Coggins, in press a,b). Thus the Language of *Zuyua* probably evolved in the southern Maya regions as the intrusive Toltec elite intermarried with the Maya ruling dynasties. This "language" was probably in part the results of a bilingualism that sensitized the speakers to wordplay, thus stimulating the conscious use of metaphor, of homophony (different words with one pronunciation), of synonymy (different words with one meaning), and especially of polysemy (one word with many meanings)-to insure that the esoteric knowledge of the rulers remain inaccessible to the uninitiated. In Co-

lonial time the Language of *Zuyua* was understood to be "figurative language", whereas *zuyua* simply meant "confusion".

Indigenous American languages have been described as characteristically polysynthetic, or grouping many ideas within a single word (Campbell and Mithun, 1979, p. 5). Such a characteristic naturally entails metaphorical language, and when the possibilities of class restricted multilingualism and of the many devices of word-play are added, a secret "language" like the Language of *Zuyua* may well develop. Recent decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic writing reveals increasingly the extent to which the educated Classic Maya employed such polysemy (Fox and Justeson, 1984), as the Colonial scribes also routinely used it (Roys, 1965, pp. 19, 20; Brotherston, 1983, pp. 249-258). In the "Interrogation of the Chiefs" the Language of *Zuyua* is used to present questions or riddles to rulers in order to test their qualifications. After presenting the "questions" the "correct answers" are given, but these must be only one of many possible sets of correct answers, representing the most superficial level of symbolic interpretation.

For instance the first question (Roys, 1933, pp. 89, 90) was administered at the start of the Katun One Ahau which had particular significance as a beginning Katun at Toltec Terminal Classic Chichen Itza (Coggins, in press b), whereas the Katun Eleven Ahau was more important for beginnings in the Colonial period (Roys, 1933, p. 133). This question may actually describe the periodic drilling of the New Fire on the "Fire shield" with its golden pyrite center, followed by heart sacrifice, rather than speaking of the sun pierced by a lance, with a jaguar to drink its blood—or, as the "answer" explains it, describing a fried egg pierced by a benediction, and supervised by a blood-thirsty green chile pepper. The fire-drilling ritual at Chichen Itza inaugurated the New Sun, and inaugurated the ruler who was associated with the sun—symbolism which was surely ancient, but hallowed, history to the seventeenth Century Maya. The purpose of recording the "Interrogation of the Chiefs" was perhaps to preserve its form and ambiguity while still withholding its content—or it is possible the original meanings may really have been forgotten.

The Manikin Scepter

Among the thousands of artifacts dredged from the Sacred Cenote at Chichen Itza by Edward H. Thompson perhaps the most

interesting for Maya iconographic analysis are four wooden scepters with small male figures (figs. 1-4). Such scepters are well known elements in the regalia of Maya rulers of the Classic period, but since they were made of a perishable material, in this case preserved in the water of the Cenote, these four are the only ones known to have survived.² However, three of these Postclassic scepters differ from the Classic examples in having diving (or descending) figures, and in order to understand their role and meaning it will be helpful to review the history of these ceremonial objects and their significance.

Although they are of Middle Postclassic date these effigy staffs are certainly manikin scepters like the well known Late Classic Maya ones which are ordinarily held by elaborately costumed men depicted on carved monuments-emblems of the ruler's legitimacy.³ Once this form was established in the Late Classic period such scepters usually consisted of small, long-nosed male figures with a serpentine "leg" that served as handle for the scepter and terminated at the bottom in an upturned serpent head (see figs. 5, 10). The manikins often have reflective cartouches on their limbs with another on the forehead in which a smoking axe or tube is hafted (fig. 5; Schele and Miller, 1983, pp. 9-20). These cartouches, mirroring either the sky or the blackness of the underworld, are thought to be a sign of divinity and the manikin is usually called God K (Robiscek, 1978, summarizes this material), although it is probably a personification of royal lineage, and only one aspect of the deified reptilian creator god, in Yucatan called *Itsamna*; for this reason I prefer to use its Postclassic name *Bolon Ts'akab* which means "many generations" or "eternal" (Seler, 1902, Vol. I, p. 377; J. E. S. Thompson, 1950, pp. 54, 124; 1970, p. 226). Linda Schele and Jeffrey Miller show that the head glyph for *Bolon Ts'akab* signifies the accession of a ruler (1983, pp. 16-18).

At Tikal

The earliest monumental Classic appearance of *Bolon Ts'akab* is in the sky, in ancestor (or lineal predecessor) position, on the

² These four scepters have been published and described in detail in Coggin, 1984b (nos. 123, 125-127), and will be published again in the final report on wood artifacts from the Cenote of Sacrifice at Chichen Itza (Coggin and Ladd, n.d.).

³ Evon Vogt points out that this is still the case in Chiapas: "Each staff is believed to possess a "soul" placed in it by the ancestral gods in the mountains". (Vogt, 1969, p. 283).

Early Classic Stela 4 at Tikal, where a smoking axe is hafted in its forehead (Jones and Satterthwaite, 1982) includes all Tikal carved monuments referred to in this paper). Next, on Tikal Stela 31, this manikin figure appears in the headdress as his proper name—translated as Stormy Sky (fig. 6). He was the successor to the ruler on Stela 4, who appears, in turn, in the sky above as the ancestor/predecessor (Coggins, 1979a, pp. 255, 256; b, p. 40).⁴

Throughout the Classic period this manikin with its long-nosed head and its smoking axe identifies Tikal's ruling lineage— and ruling lineages elsewhere (Coggins, n.d.a.). The first serpent "legged" manikins are found on Stormy Sky's later stela 1. There complete manikin figures emerge from the open jaws at either end of the ruler's bicephalic serpent bar, and as on many later scepters the serpent "legs" appear from behind the near leg which is drawn up; these are serpentine phalluses, not legs. The (ruler's) right hand manikin on this monument also has an axe hafted in its forehead, but even though the symbolic form is thus complete in this Early Classic example, the orthodox manikin *scepter* which is held in the right hand of the ruler, does not occur at Tikal until Late Classic times with the lineal descendant of Stormy Sky, *Ah Cacau*.⁵

In its earliest Early Classic appearance the long-nosed manikin in the sky has a characteristically Maya axe hafted in its forehead. This imagery associates the Maya death-dealing weapon that also denotes lightning with a land-clearing and agricultural implement—thus evoking both malevolent storm and benevolent rain, contrasting attributes of the Maya rain deity with a pendulous nose, later called Chac, or *chaak*, in Yucatec Maya. It is significant that the related *ch'ak* can mean literally "*cortar con golpe, con hacha u otro instrumento*", since the *hacha*, or axe is an important attri-

⁴ On the early manikin figure on Tikal Stela 31 (fig. 6) it can be seen clearly that the broad axe blade, with its celestial(?) reflective surface, penetrates through and emerges at the back of the manikin's head, which is also reflective, but of blackness. As elsewhere on this monument, the nose of the long-nosed head is shown as a thumb. This is probably an example of the Maya predilection for polysemy and visual punning. As a glyphic sign (T329) a thumb denotes the number "one", and *hun* (one or single) might be understood to refer to the solitary nose located axially at the center of the bilaterally symmetrical body. *Hunab Itzamna* is also a Yucatecan name for the serpentine creator god of which this manikin is an aspect, furthermore there probably is, or doubtless was, a word for thumb that might be applied to nose.

⁵ Once designated Ruler A by Christopher Jones, this Late Classic ruler is now called *Ah Cacau* (*Ah Kahaw*) by Jones (Jones and Satterthwaite, 1982, fig. 70, p. 129).

bute of this Chac. When, at Tikal, this personified axe with its long nose is shown as Stormy Sky's name, it emerges from the cleft sky (sign) which, as lightning, it has split (fig. 6).⁶

For Postclassic Maya in the southern highlands the creator God, Heart of Sky (called *Huraqan* or One Leg), was a tripartite being, with three different lightning personae (Edmonson, 1971, pp. 11, 12). The Tikal rulers, Stormy Sky and his foreign predecessor, who expressed their lineage on their monuments with axe/lightning symbolism apparently had dynastic roots in the southern highlands (Coggins, 1979a, 259-67; 1984a, pp. 55, 56), whence both southern Maya and some Teotihuacan traits were transferred to Early Classic Tikal. At Classic period Teotihuacan and in later Central Mexico the rain and storm deity, Tlaloc, also hurled lightning bolts, but with the characteristic Mexican weapon, the *atlatl*, or darts-thrower. These culturally distinct but symbolically similar concepts came together at Early Classic Tikal, as may be seen on Stela 31 where the ruler, identified by a personified Maya lightning-axe, is flanked by two Teotihuacan-clothed individuals who conspicuously carry *atlatls*, and (Tlaloc) shields (Coggins, 1979a, pp. 256-259). Central Mexicans are portrayed carrying such weapons in Maya territory from the late fourth century (Uaxactun, Stela 5) well into Postclassic times (at Chichen Itza); while *atlatls* were clearly the Mexican weapon of choice these portraits may, however, depict "dress" weapons held by non-combatants for cultural reason—just as manikin scepters are unlikely to have been functional axes.⁷

The Late Classic Tikal ruler, *Ah Cacau*, legitimized himself by reference to Stormy Sky, and by adopting some of the Mexican heraldry associated with that famous ancestor (Coggins, 1975, pp. 400-402). Like the Teotihuacan figures on Stela 31 *Ah Cacau* is portrayed carrying a shield with darts in his left hand and with the personification of rain and storm and of his divine lineage in his right—except that while the Mexicans carried the *atlatl* he carries the manikin scepter, which was the personified smoking axe.

Elsewhere during the Late Classic period such manikin scepters

⁶ Mercedes De la Garza notes these same iconographic relationships (1984, pp. 248-50); see Fox and Justeson (1984, p. 71-72) for the Proto-Mayan etymology that relates sky, lightning, rain and stone.

⁷ Valeri Guliaev also stresses the association of Manikin scepters with weapons as attributes of royal power (1984).

are commonly held by rulers depicted on monuments; sometimes the manikins have true serpentine legs, sometimes they have smoking tubes instead of axes, and at Palenque there are also seated manikins (Schele, 1974, fig. 11). But whatever the regional or chronological variation in form, this manikin figure, *Bolon Ts'akab*, apparently connotes divine lineage.

On Capstones

An aspect of *Itsamna*, *Bolon Ts'akab* appears in a Late-Terminal Classic form which is geographically intermediate between its southern lowland role and the much later Postclassic one. This is as the long-nosed figure painted on capstones at Maya sites in Campeche (Jones, 1975; Mayer, 1983). Although it seldom has a serpent leg this figure does have serpentine body markings and the smoking forehead tube of *Bolon Ts'akab*. Its location at the peak of a Maya vault identifies the figure with the sky and with the Early and Terminal Classic celestial ancestor figures. However these figures often make offerings and some of them seem to be "casting", or spilling seed (Mayer, 1983, figs. 36, 37, 50), while three have bags overflowing with seeds in what is probably a variation on the "hand-scattering" symbolism that will be discussed below. In postclassic times this same act may be evoked in the *Book of Chilam Balam of Tizimin* where the seeds of *Bolon ts'akab* are described as bursting forth in the highest heaven (Edmonson, 1982, lines 887-890).

At Chichen Itza

At Terminal Classic Chichen Itza the Mexican convention is followed for the Toltec warriors who are shown carved on walls and columns (Tozer, 1957, figs. 534-571, *passim*). They carry *atlats* of a single style in their right hand, and darts and defensive weapons in the left, whereas the more Mayoid dignitaries represented carry an array of individualized weapons including spears, knives, clubs, flint eccentrics, axes and *atlats* of varying types (*Ibid*, figs. 611-654). However, the seated Mayoid Lords painted on the walls of the sanctuary of the Chac Mool Temple, themselves painted with serpentine markings, hold serpent-handled scepters that are hafted with axe blades, in a recombination of the essential virile, serpentine and weapon symbols found on the Clas-

sic period scepters (fig. 7; A. A. Morris, 1931, pp. 455-456). The hook end of the *atlatl* which engaged the dart is here transformed into an up-turned serpent head as on the Classic manikin scepters; the shaft is the serpent body, and the Maya axes are hafted into the "head" of the scepter. Only the manikin itself is missing.

These symbolic components of the Classic Maya manikin scepter were thus present at Terminal Classic and Postclassic Chichen Itza, but scepters with manikins apparently were not. The four manikin scepters from the Cenote (figs. 1-4) are of Middle Postclassic date, and three of them differ remarkably from Classic ones in having diving figures.

The Descent Motif

Terminal Classic Period

The theme of descent from the sky is an important symbolic concept that was introduced to Terminal Classic Chichen Itza during the period of Central Mexican domination. The sky was not directly depicted at Teotihuacan, and the celestial realm was deleted from Maya imagery at most sites in Early Classic times, perhaps in emulation of Teotihuacan convention (Coggins, 1979b, pp. 43, 44). While ancestor veneration may have been important at Teotihuacan, there is little remaining evidence for it; individuals are rarely, if ever, shown and both architectural and funerary iconography appears to illustrate generalized ritual rather than particular lineage ceremony. This is in marked contrast with the southern lowland Maya. At the end of the Classic period the Maya resumed depicting the sky on stelae, and this imagery was introduced contemporaneously at Chichen Itza where it is found on the gold discs that had been thrown into the Cenote, in the wall paintings in the Upper Temple of the Jaguars (Coggins, 1984b, nos. 14, 25, pp. 161, 165), and later in the "capitals" of more than eighty portrait columns (Tozzer 1957, fig. 274, Table 11). In most of these cases this celestial motif shows a "diving" warrior figure who hurls darts with an *atlatl* from a celestial location (whether the sun, a star, a planet, or within the coils of a serpent) down upon the scene or figure below. These many celestial warrior figures seem to empower their earthly targets, rather than legitimizing individual rulers, as did the solitary Early Classic Maya

ancestors in the sky. The important element in this iconography is, however, descent, or the depiction of a direct relationship between a sky figure and men. This relationship is also specifically embodied at Chichen Itza in the descending feathered rattlesnakes that flank the portals of the principal temples. Above these doorways, at the lintels, the serpent rattles (*tsab*) connote the Pleiades constellation, while their open jaws rest on the terraced pyramidal platforms below —joining the sky and earth.

Middle Postclassic Period

The Mexican capital at Tula fell into decline about A. D. 1150 after having been in contact with Chichen Itza for two or more centuries. Then, if it is possible to judge from the evidence of objects found in the Sacred Cenote (Coggins, 1984b, pp. 28, 111), Chichen Itza was virtually abandoned for the next century before Cenote offering ritual was resumed, with a different character, after the foundation of Mayapan. Mayapan was the capital and residence of a league of Maya rulers, and this new order represented a return to Classic Maya religion in the resumption of stela erection (Proskouriakoff, 1962, p. 134), and in the veneration of ancestors and the legitimation of Maya rulership through them. However, as successor capital Mayapan also adopted some of the religious imagery and architectural forms of Chichen Itza. These included a copy of the Castillo with its descending serpent columns that was constructed near a centrally located cenote, although this accessible cenote was apparently used more as a source of water than for making offerings (R. E. Smith, 1954) while the Sacred Cenote at Chichen Itza retained its preeminent religious role. In keeping with the decline and withdrawal of the Mexican warrior cult, there was no Temple of the Warriors at Mayapan, instead the imagery of descent was dedicated to the revived indigenous Maya dynastic preoccupations and to validation through lineage.

Diving Figures and Descent Imagery

The "diving gods" of Tulum, stucco descending figures on the upper facades of temples, are the best known diving figures (fig. 8). Even though they fly downward these have been described as Venus as the rising morning star in its *Xux Ek* or wasp star form (Miller, 1982, pp. 87, 89, 97), and they have also been called *Ah*

Muzen Kab, the "bee God", since they resemble diving bees shown in the *Madrid Codex* (Roys, 1933, p. 63). The Colonial name of Tulum was *Zama*, translated by S. K. Lothrop as City of Dawn (1924, p. 65), and the eastern location of Tulum certainly evokes the rising of the sun, rather than the descent of heavenly bodies. It was, however, stated by Lizana that the east was called *ts'e emel*, the little descent (Roys, 1933, p. 139, f. n. 3), apparently because some of the early inhabitants of Yucatan came from there.

Emel or *emal*, meaning descent, is the key word. *Emel* also means to flow downward, like tears or blood, and when coupled with "man", *emel winik*, it means to masturbate or to abort a birth, which is presumably what masturbation, or the biblical onanism, ultimately does. The descending stucco facade figures of Tulum and three of the manikin scepters from the Cenote depict *emel winik* or descending men, as well as sharing the Classic serpentine phallic symbolism. The scepters have serpent/*atlal* handles which in the case of the kneeling figure (the one that most closely resembles the Classic ones) clearly emerges from between his legs (fig. 1). On Classic Manikin scepters it is often difficult to tell if the serpent handle is a leg or a penis; this deliberate ambiguity is reflected in the Maya words *t'on*, leg and *ton*, penis.⁸

Arthur Miller, in an analysis of Tulum iconography (1974, pp. 177, 178) suggested that the diving figure with twisted cords emanating from its midsection might be trailing umbilical cords and thus emblematic of lineage (fig. 8; 1974, pp. 177, 178), but he later dropped this argument in favor of the wasp star, *Xux Ek*, explanation. In another variation on the star imagery Yuri Knorosov has noted that the Late Postclassic Maya believed women were impregnated by "mystic fathers" who accomplished this by descending as *nok ek*, shooting stars (1982, p. 24). In the consistently polysemous imagery used by the Maya, stars, stinging insect, serpent, and lineage bearer interpretations may all be possible—especially since this diving figure from Structure 25 also has intertwined serpents that emerge from between his legs.

The "diving gods" of Tulum, some diving figures in the *Madrid Codex* (p. 35; Villacorta and Villacorta, 1930) and two of the Cenote scepter figures (figs. 3, 4) have feathered arms, or

⁸ *Ton* can also mean scrotum, and bag for cacao. These references to the source of valued "seed" are illustrated in the Campeche capstone scenes noted above which show *Bolon Ts'akab* spilling seed from a bag.

"wings". According to the *Chilam Balam of Chumayel* (Roys, 1933, p. 67, n° 5) the scepters of the rulers were called *kanhel*, which translates as *serpiente*, *dragon*, and as the *Diccionario Maya Cordemex* goes on to note "*Kanhel o ángel son palabras casi homófonas... es posible que kanhel fuese representado como un ente alado a la vez que serpentino... los kanhele(s) ik' traduce como los 'ángeles del aire'*" (p. 296). An angel that descends from the heaven to impregnate a chosen woman is a concept familiar to western civilization as well. For the Classic period Maya, however, the *kanhel* scepter, and the *kanhel* ("water group", T. 36-39) title both had this same significance, without benefit of descending angels, as will be discussed below.

The Meaning of the Manikin Scepter

The symbolism of the architectural Tulum "diving gods" was transmission of a divine trait or substance from heaven to earth, while the related manikin scepters from the Cenote retained the accumulated significance of the Classic period scepters in a new descending figure form. The basic functional and symbolic context of the scepters was always lineage and descent, and the manikin scepter was, in certain ceremonial contexts, always an allegory of onanism. Such meanings are as encapsulated in allusive Mayan language as they are in the form of these ceremonial objects. Yucatec Mayan provides an array of clues to the symbolic clusters, and to the various words that, in addition to *emel winik*, may have referred to manikin scepters. But particularly compelling is a punning trio that seems to include much of the meaning postulated here:

ch'ibal - linaje, genealogía por línea directa

ch'ibal tun chaak - ... considerado como el chaak
de todas las generaciones

Ah Ch'ibal - (un) noble, por linaje o fama

ch'ibal - mordedura, picada como de culebra

Ah ch'ibal - Cosa que muerde o pica

xibal - hombre fuerte, masculino, hijo varón

xibil - pene

xibah - desvanecerse como el humo

Although there is abundant evidence for punning in hieroglyphic writing, the rules governing such use in inscriptions may have been more rigorous than those operating in speech where, as these examples suggest, loose homophony might include a cluster of evocatively related concepts. Lineage, or *ch'ibal*, is the root concept here, and I suggest the manikin and its scepter were referred to as "*Ah Ch'ibal*", which is essentially synonymous with *Bolon Ts'akab*. In *ch'ibal tun chaak* this concept is specifically applied to the long-nosed rain deity on the scepter, with the addition of *tun*, which may mean precious stone, testicle or bone; while *t'un* means little drops, or to extract water bit by bit, trickle.

The biting, stinging connotations of *ch'ibal* refer to the serpent form itself, and probably also to the original weapon from which the scepter derived, and to the wound it could make; the post-classic stinging insect may make this same reference. The male personification of patrilineage is implied in *xibal*, male, and *xibil*, penis, while *xibah* suggests the smoke that emanates from these allegorical figures, throughout their history. The four manikin scepters from the Cenote all had containers in which copal was apparently burned (figs. 1-4).

Maya Lineage Ceremony and "Hand-scattering"

The ruling Maya were overwhelmingly preoccupied with lineage, as their monuments, tombs and inscriptions make clear, so it is not surprising to find their royal symbolism weighted with emblems of generation and legitimacy. It is abundantly documented that at every epoch noble Maya men, and women, bled themselves in auto-sacrificial ceremonies dedicated to their ancestors. Recently David Stuart has suggested that the Classic period ceremonies identified by the "hand-scattering" glyph, as on stela 1 at Yaxchilan (fig. 9:B3, and see fig. 10:B2), depict genital auto-sacrifice and the casting of the drawn blood (1984a; 1984b). Stuart extends this identification of blood to most depictions of flowing liquid and scrolls with small circlelets outlining them, as in the cloud scrolls over a doorway in Str. 22, Copan, or on several Terminal Classic stelae (fig. 10). His strongest argument for the blood interpretation is the presence of a "penis perforator", the blood-letting tool, worn (but not used) by the ruler in the Yaxchilan scenes. Certainly it is difficult to demonstrate what liquid is shown, but to extrapolate blood to all such depictions seems unnecessarily

reductive. It is generally agreed that at Yaxchilan the stelae with the liquid cascading on to a bound object depict a lineage ceremony. I suggest this probably involved a ritual onanism, or the periodic dedication of the sacred semen, although blood sacrifice may have also have been performed, and not shown. In Yucatec Mayan *hoy* is one word that means *semen viril*, and also *derramar licor espeso*; *hoyol menas vaciar cualquier licor espeso y salirse el humo ... o el huevo*. *K'ik*, the principal word for blood, has no such connotations. Although *k'ik el*, blood egg, does mean semen. There are at least ten different words for semen in the *Diccionario Maya Cordemex* and really only one for blood. This disparity suggests a relative cultural importance for the two substances which underlines the centrality of the seminal generational concept. In this connection *tun* and *t'un*, noted above, are probably relevant, since between them they mean both precious stone, testicle and egg, and bone (*tun*), and drops of liquid, and to trickle (*t'un*).

Another line of evidence points to the particular importance of semen in Maya symbolism. In the Quiche epic the *Popol Vuh* after Hun-Hunahpu was beheaded in Xibalba his head was placed in a barren tree where it turned into a growing calabash; the tree was then perceived as miraculous and became famous.

"... a maiden heard of it, the daughter of a lord. Blood Gatherer is the name of her father, and Blood Woman is the name of the maiden..."

Next she went all alone and arrived where the tree stood...
 "What? Well! What's the fruit of this tree? Shouldn't this tree bear something sweet? They shouldn't die, they shouldn't be wasted. Should I pick one?" said the maiden.

And then the bone spoke; it was here in the fork of the tree:
 "Why do you want a mere bone, a round thing in the branches of a tree?" said the head of One Hunahpu when it spoke to the maiden.
 "You don't want it she was told".

"I do want it", said the maiden.

"Very well. Stretch out your right hand here, so I can see it", said the bone.

And then the bone spit out its saliva, which landed squarely in the hand of the maiden.

And then she looked in her hand, she inspected it right away, but the bone's saliva wasn't in her hand.

"It is just a sign I have given you, my saliva, my spittle. This, my head, has nothing on it just bone, nothing of meat. It's just the same with the head of a great lord; it's just the flesh that makes

his face look good. And when he dies, people get frightened by his bones. After that, his son is like his saliva, his spittle, in his being, whether it be the son of a lord or the son of a craftsman, an orator. The father does not disappear, but goes on being fulfilled.

Neither dimmed nor destroyed is the face of a lord, a warrior, craftsman, orator. Rather he will leave his daughters and sons. So it is that I have done likewise through you. Now go up there on the face of the earth; you will not die. Keep the word. So be it", said the head of One Hunahpu...

This was the word Hurricane, Newborn Thunderbolt, Raw thunderbolt had given them. In the same way, by the time the maiden returned to her home, she had been given many instructions. Right away something was generated in her belly, from the saliva alone..." (Tedlock, 1985, pp. 113-115).

In this excerpt from the *Popol Vuh* semen, in the guise of spittle, is explicitly described as the medium of continuity, lineage and immortality, and specifically in conjunction with the word of the primordial sky, storm and lightning gods.⁹

David Stuart, following several scholars (1984a, p. 307), reads the "hand-scattering" glyph (T 710) which accompanies the pouring liquid images at Yaxchilan as *mal*, to scatter in Quiche and to sprinkle in Tzeltal; this is surely related to the Yucatec *emal*, and *emel*, which mean both descent and flow of liquid (including blood), and which, it is postulated above, refer directly to the descending action of the diving figures on the Postclassic scepters. Stuart does not attempt to read the circlets that drop from the hand and which may serve as a prefix (Fig. 10, glyph B:2). If these are semen the prefix might be *he'*, egg, or the closely related *yel* and *eel*, egg. Thus the whole word might be read as *yelmal*, which means essence. The hand-scattering glyph is usually prefixed by the possessive *u* (T1), and thus may refer to "his (the ruler's) essence".

The Kanhel Title

If the drops of the "hand-scattering" glyph are to be read as the prefix *he*, *yel* or *eel*, the same may be true of the similar drops of the water group" prefix or "emblem glyphs" (Kelley, 1976, pp. 213-215). I submit that these are to be read as *hel*, and

⁹ Throughout time and world-wide there has been a belief that the head, the skull and brains are the source of semen as has recently been documented by Weston LA Barre, who nevertheless missed this example, 1984.

that four of the glyphic elements that ordinarily precede them are to be read as *K'an*. These are a Kan Cross, a shell, a *mol* sign (or jade disc), and a *yax* sign. *K'an* means both precious stone and shell, and *Yaxil tun* means pearl (both a precious stone and a shell), so that the "water group" drops might also be read as both *t'un* and *tun* as noted above, and still have the same meaning as the synonymous *k'an* prefatory elements (Coggins, n. d.c.). The emblem glyph prefix is thus the Maya title *Kanhel* and it refers to the periodic spilling of the seed of the lineage—both as prefix to emblem glyphs and, when referring to the manikin Scepters themselves.

Semen and blood, the precious bodily fluids, or essence, of the ruler were analogous and symbolically interchangeable for ancient mesoamericans as is clear from a Mexican myth of regeneration in the *Leyenda de los Soles*. In this account Quetzalcoatl bled his penis on ancestral bones that had been ground and placed in a jadestone vessel by the earth goddess *Cihuacoatl*, and thus created life (Velazquez, 1945, p. 121).

In view of the central Mexican influences on western Maya sites this myth may well figure in Yaxchilan imagery, but it is clear that the blood in this myth symbolizes semen and that the sacred vessel is the goddess' womb. While elements of Mexican culture were introduced at Tikal in Early Classic times the Maya preoccupation with a closed system of lineage and with its imagery was as fundamentally different from the Mexican culture hero mythology as the difference between the manikin scepter and the *atlatl*. In Late Classic times these systems came together especially in the Western Maya sites, and at Tikal, and the "hand scattering" ritual may be an example of this fusion. It is particularly significant that the earliest known Classic representations of the manikin scepter figure (Tikal Stelae 4 and 31) included ancestor, or lineal predecessor figures in the sky, since this is true of the Late Classic Yaxchilan "hand-scattering" scenes as well (fig. 9), and it is also true of the archaizing Terminal Classic examples (fig. 10) in which there is a return to the Early Classic (and Preclassic) ancestor-in-the-sky convention (Coggins, 1975, pp. 76, 126-128).¹⁰

¹⁰ David Stuart (1984b, pp. 11-16) emphasizes that two of the figures "floating" in the celestial scrolls of some of the Terminal Classic stelae are "Jaguar and 'Fish' Gods". These he notes may be identified by an *akbal* and a *kin* glyph in inscriptions below. It seems to me unlikely that these figures are gods. Their identifying glyphs, *akbal*, night or darkness and *kin* day or light, indicate contrasting characteristics and they are probably personifications of the matri-

These all show the relationship between the legitimizing predecessors above and the current ruler below to whom the sacred semen has descended, and from whom at Yaxchilan it is shown literally to descend through the body of the ruler.

Itsamna

If there is a single word that refers, in Yucatec, to all the liquid and vaporous forms that are outlined by circlets on the Classic period monuments, it is more likely to have been *its* or *yits* which means *leche*, *lágrima*, *sudor*, *resina*, as well as *hechicería*, than *kik*, blood. *Its* also serves as a component of the name of the reptilian creator deity *Itsamna* which, J. Eric S. Thompson points out, was "a god of the hierarchy... and completely absent from present day peasant rites in Yucatan" (1970, pp. 210-211). Although the Classic Maya personified many natural forces, what few high gods they portrayed were all celestial. During the Classic period the principal one was the serpent/saurian supernatural that for convenience may be called by its sixteenth century name *Itsamna*; this was a sky (earth), storm, rain and generation deity with many aspects, including all of the phallic long-nosed head creatures—and most important among these was the manikin scepter which actually personified lineage, and its perpetuation.

God C

Maya rulers identified themselves with the deified sun, the supreme celestial body, and adopted its kingly titles, but these apparently had little to do with the mechanics of lineage; instead it was the simian "God C", who had solar attributes, that was probably the patron of noble marriage, and under the name *Chuen*, monkey, patron of the arts as well (J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, p. 80). In Late Classic portraiture the face of "God C" forms the royal loincloth which hangs from a wide belt (figs. 5, 10) with celestial crossed bands that probably connote sexual union (Kelley,

lineage and patrilineage of the ruler. Modern highland Mayan (Quiche) speech habitually uses such dualism in couplets which together mean ancestors, as for instance: "our grandmothers, our grandfathers", or "ancient ones mothers, ancient ones fathers". In using these as illustrations Helen Neuswander (n.d.) points out that these contrast pairs "cannot be reduced to a single term (ie. ancestor) (since they are) two irreducible elements".

1976, p. 152). At Yaxchilan, on the "hand-scattering" Stela 1 (fig. 9) the loin cloth is not visible, since the ruler is in profile, but the frontal "God C" is instead shown full figure in the basal panel below. He is marked with solar *k'in* emblems, wears a crossed-band pectoral, and carries a serpent bar that is centrally marked with crossed-bands as well. "God C" was also patron of the direction north, and since, in addition to indicating the place between east and west, north was conceptually the same for the Maya as the direction up (Brotherston, 1976: 57; Coggins, 1980: 730; n.d.b.; Bricker, 1983), God C represented the part of the sky where the ancestors lived; this was the zenith.

God C, like the sun, may have had many titles but one of them was probably *Ma'ax Kin*, Monkey Sun and as *Ma'ax Ahau*, his role was as substitute for and mimic of the king, or sun. The ordinary glyph that denotes the day *Ahau* has a frontal monkey face, and at Yaxchilan a full figure monkey substitutes for the glyph for the day, or *k'in*, in an Initial Series inscriptions (J. E. S. Thompson, 1960, fig. 29:10, 27:53-57). While Maya rulers identified their ancestry with the sun, it is God C, the Monkey Sun, who frequently presides over this kinship, perhaps because of its carnal aspects. His is the profile crested monkey head that represents the direction north and the zenith in the codices where this crest is indicated by a barred strip that outlines the top and back of his head.

This ("mohawk") head crest may be the same as one that is characteristic of some Late Pre-classic jade heads that apparently represent the sun (Hammond, n.d.; Coggins, 1984b, nos. 162, 164). The Yucatec name for such a crest of hair is *tsuk*, a word that has many meanings, but two others are "forked", and the tassels that appear above an ear of corn. Another example of the clustering of these *tsuk* associations is found in the Temple of the Cross at Palenque (Maudslay, 1889-1902, IV, pl. 81) where the central "cross" has three God C heads on its trunk; the top central one has a (sideways) crest of hair, whereas the crest of the two profile God C heads bifurcate into tasseled "ears of corn", which thus make the fork, or bifurcation, of the cross, and associate the cross or tree with the symbolism of the God C loincloth. Another interesting instance of the mesoamerican validity of these associations is found in the *Nahuatl* word for loincloth: *maxtlatl*. Like *tsuk*, the *max* root signifies bifurcation, of the forked part of the body. (J. R. Andrews, 1975, p. 452) —a logical reference for a

loincloth; whereas the homonophony with the maya word *ma'ax* for monkey, may be coincidental.

Crossed Bands (T552) and God C (T565) are commonly associated with both the belt and loincloth, and both may be read as *tan* in Yucatecan (Fox and Justeson, 1984, pp. 54, 55; Justeson, 1984, pp. 342, 344). The following meanings for *tan* and *t'an* suggest these words were also used in designating both this "God C" loincloth, and the royal marriage that it symbolized:

Tan - delantera de alguna cosa

presencia

en frente

el medio de alguna cosa

listas que echan en medio de las mantas

auxiliar verbal para el futuro

T'an - creencia, persuasión

causa o razón

fuerza, poder y duración

coire

grande, grueso

The "God C" loin cloth, *tan*, is both in front of, and at the middle of the body, and in the sixteenth century it still referred to a piece of clothing, centuries after such loin clothes were worn. As the North Star, or more likely the Zenith, "God C" was also in the middle of the sky, a position that is indicated by the Crossed Bands which are usually celestial locators; while *t'an* which connotes his size and primal importance as well as coitus, power and duration all imply God C's *Ma'ax Kin*, Monkey Sun, characteristics. In view of the Palenque God C "cross" which may represent a world tree that connects the earth and sky, and of the presence of God C on all the axial loincloths, as well as seated in the underworld on Yaxchilan Stela 1 (figs. 5, 9, 10) —with the true sun in the sky above him at the zenith— God C probably represents the whole central axis, reaching from top to bottom. Thus when he is shown at the center of the underworld he represents the nadir.

The manikin scepter and "hand-scattering" both signify a symbolically male kind of succession, whereas God C and the loincloth represent dynastic continuity and fecundity as effected through the marital relationship —or by contact with women.¹¹

¹¹ Women were considered impure by the Maya (Thompson, 1970, p. 173), and so it is not surprising to find the marital sexual relationship identified

The Ritual

The seed spilling ritual was celebrated at period endings when the ruler might be depicted holding the manikin scepter while performing "hand-scattering" (fig. 10), although this act is more often indicated by the glyph (T710) alone. When neither the glyph nor the action is present, as on Machaquila Stela 3 (fig. 5), the manikin scepter may simply signify noble lineage. At Yaxchilan, however, the ruler apparently enacted the symbolism of the hand-held phallic lineage emblem, or *Ah ch'ibal*, thus objectifying his legitimacy and his relationship to the ancestors by an act of onanism, in which he produced and exhibited the sacred semen that had descended to him from above (fig. 9). Such "public" display would, without question, have been unacceptable to the Spanish friars. It is, however, possible, the Maya considered masturbation an estimable activity, since no woman was directly involved. Women represented sin, and were avoided in ritual purification activities. It was believed that "a man has not sinned until he has known a woman" (Thompson, 1970, p. 173), so no onus may have attached to masturbation. But it was only at Yaxchilan and its satellite, La Pasadita, that the act was so explicitly documented; most Maya sites employed various degrees of euphemism, relying on the "hand-scattering" glyph for identification. Probably only in the sixteenth century did such practises really have to be hidden, and it is likely that the "Interrogation of the Chiefs" deliberately employs its polyvalent questions and homophonous innuendo to mask such secret practises (Roys, 1933, pp. 88-98).

In view of the loincloth symbolism and the *Popol Vuh* story another more socially acceptable and straightforward explanation of what is going on in "hand-scattering" events must however, be considered. They may signify noble, and sanctified, matrimonial sexual intercourse. Women are present in some of these images, and women are sometimes named in the accompanying inscriptions, although they are not necessarily wives. These ceremonies were, however, carried out periodically at times that with very few

with the monkey. Monkeys must have been considered immodest. *Ma ex*, a pun for *ma'ax*, monkey, means "without a loincloth". It is furthermore interesting that this theme of immodesty is also reflected in the *Nahuatl maxauhtinem*, closely related to *maxtlatl* (loincloth), and meaning "to go about with one's crotch exposed" (Karttunen, 1983).

exceptions were set by the Long Count, not the lunar calendar, and female involvement is so rare that the solitary and misogynistic onanistic interpretation seems more likely for "hand-scattering", while the God C loincloth signified coitus and the productive continuity of the lineage.

The Manikin Scepters from the Sacred Cenote

Like Tulum Mayapan had descending serpent columns, and perhaps also diving stucco figures on the facades above them, since stone and ceramic diving figures were found associated with axial altars at residential shrines near the center of the site (J. E. S. Thompson, 1954, pp. 74, 75; Proskouriakoff, 1962, p. 333). These were probably ancestor-veneration shrines since the ruling lineages of the League of Mayapan were gathered together in their palaces within the walls of Mayapan (Tozzer, 1941, pp. 24, 25). The heads of these lineages received wands of office (Roys, 1933, p. 92), and in the katun prophecies it is stated that at one time there "were four lineages from heaven, the substance of heaven, the moisture of heaven, the head-chiefs, the rulers of the land..." (ibid, p. 147). The moisture of heaven (s) is written *itz caanob* (*its ka'anob*) and thus may be referring to the kind of reptilian wetness discussed above and shown in the serpentine cloud elements of Terminal Classic Stelae (fig. 10).

It is reasonable to suggest that the four manikin scepters found in the Cenote at Chichen Itza may have belonged to four contemporary ruling lineages, if not necessarily to the four described in the *Chilam Balam*. The scepters represent four variations on the manikin scepter theme, both iconographically and stylistically, and they might have been offered to the Cenote on a single occasion, perhaps in a ceremony that originated at Mayapan. In view of the significance of the scepters postulated here, and the likelihood that they were passed from one generation to the next, it is clear that an occasion on which they were broken and discarded, even as offerings, would have been a cataclysmic event for a ruler. One such occasion was the defeat of the ruler of Chichen Itza by Hunaac Ceel who despoiled Chac-xib-chac (ruler of Chichen Itza) and his two brothers of their insignia (Roys, 1933, pp. 67, 68). While it is certainly possible that this was the very occasion, sometime between A.D. 1200 and 1450, on which these scepters were thrown into the Cenote, the significant stylistic

differences between them make it less likely that they were the contemporary possessions of the brothers in a single family.

Manikin scepters were an essential component of a cluster of integrated signs and symbols that was used to proclaim and enact the legitimacy and continuity of the ruler. These included the synonymous "hand-scattering" ceremony and scepter, and the symbolically complementary God C loin cloth. The Manikin scepter was originally the personification of the ruler-warrior's weapon, the personification of royal lineage and of the phallus of the ruler which perpetuated that lineage as exemplified by an onanistic ritual that demonstrated his masculine bond with the ancestor in the sky.

In the Early Classic period the ancestor in the sky and the personified smoking axe were the same image, and lightning was the metaphor for the connection between the ancestor and the ruler, and for the descent. Then at Tikal the personified axe became a personal name. Next it became the title for a dynasty, and finally the principal insignia of office. All of these concepts were acted out in the ceremony of "hand-scattering", and they continued to be so in the postclassic period (*Madrid Codex*, p. 35, Villacorta and Villacorta, 1930), but by then the metaphor of the manikin scepter had become more literal with a new imagery of descent. The scepters from the Cenote represent the serpentine diving figures who took the divine seed to their noble descendants below. Unlike the many empty-handed diving deities shown in the Maya codices these Postclassic scepter figures carried their offerings downward, as the smoke from the copal burning between their legs rose to the sky in continuing communion.

Postscript:

Recent work on Tikal has led me to the conclusion that "God K's" true name was "*Tohil*", although he was later called *Bolon Ts'akab* and he stood for the concept of *chibal*. *Tohil* was the Quiche sky god of storm and lineage and an important Maya deity in sixteenth century Yucatan.

I am informed that Thomas Barthel has come to this same conclusion (1984, *Tohil das Feuerbringer*, *Indiana*, 9:207-219), as has Floyd Lounsbury, although he has not published on the subject. My reasons will be discussed in a forthcoming paper.

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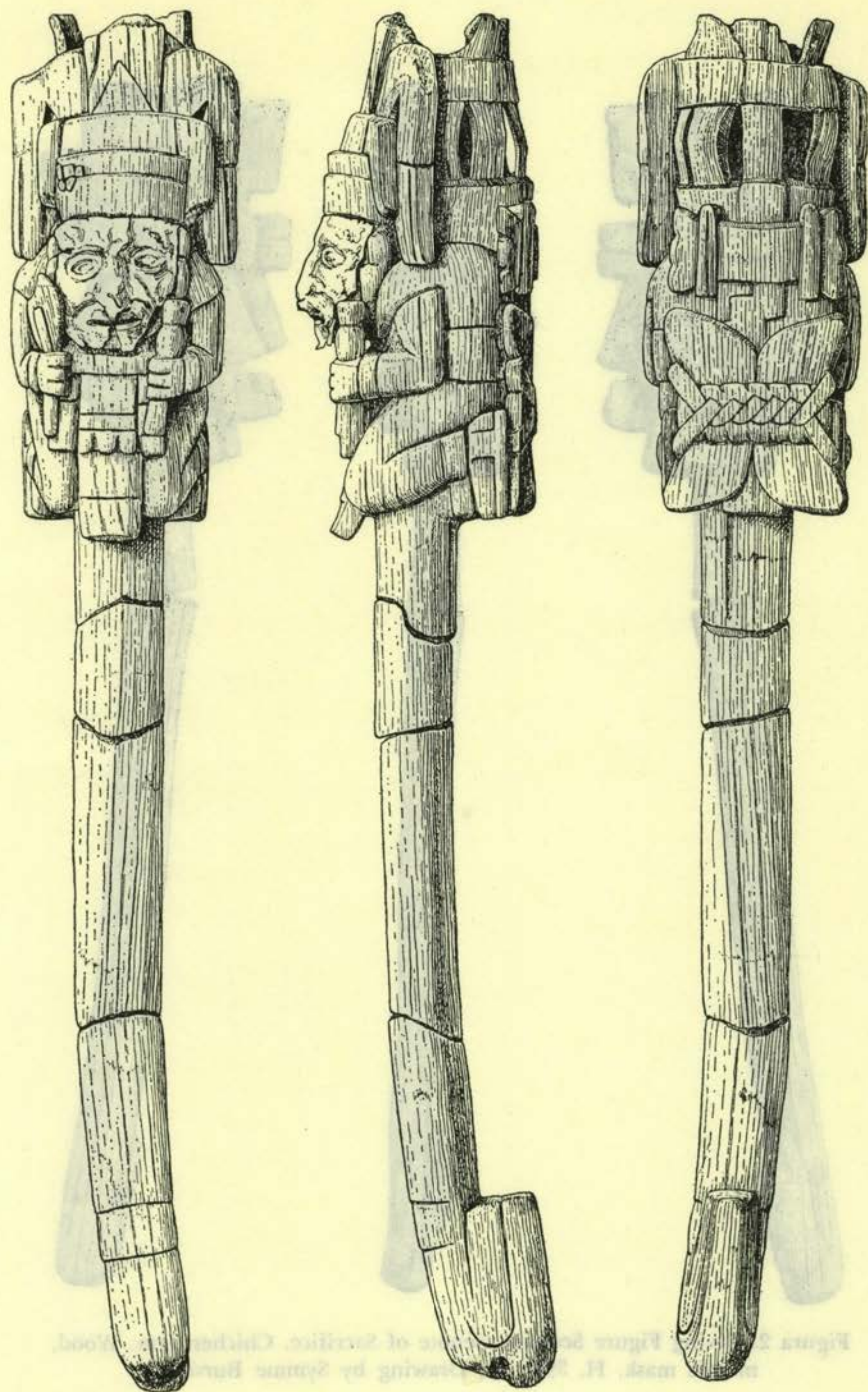


Figura 1. Kneeling Figure Scepter. Cenote of Sacrifice, Chichen Itza.
Wood, sheet gold mask. H. 28.8 cm. Drawing by Syme Burstein.

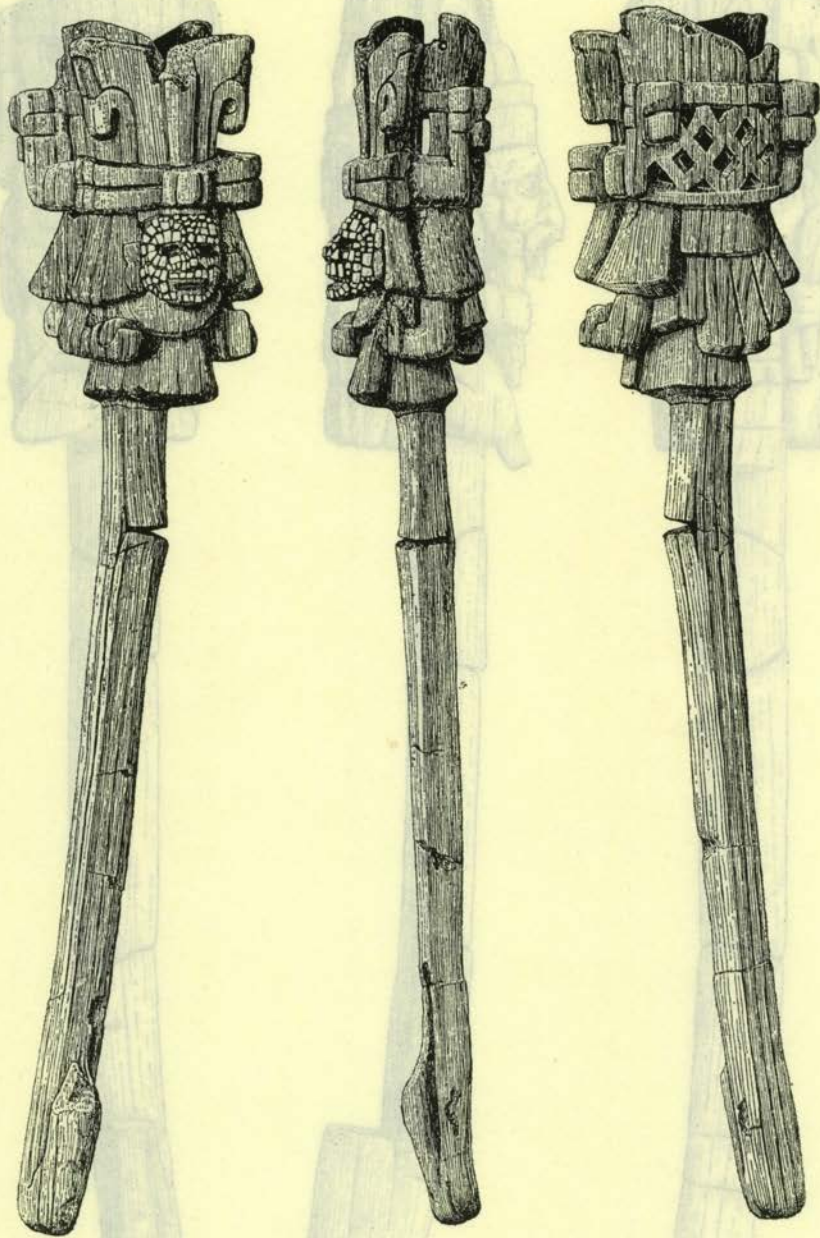


Figura 2. Diving Figure Scepter. Cenote of Sacrifice, Chichen Itza. Wood, mosaic mask. H. 39.0 cm. Drawing by Symme Burstein.

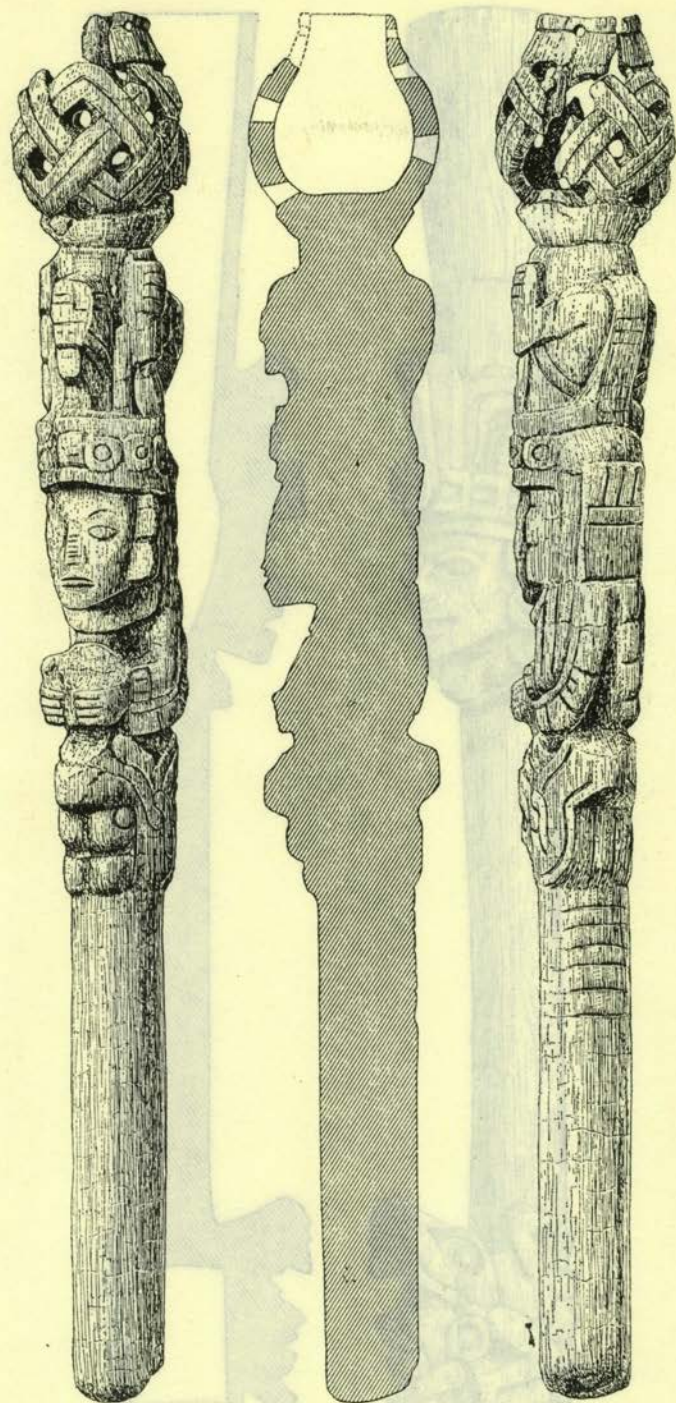


Figura 3. Diving Figure Scepter. Cenote of Sacrifice, Chichen Itza. Wood.
H. 35.0 cm. Drawing by Symme Burstein.



Figura 4. Diving Figures Scepter. Cenote of Sacrifice, Chichen Itza. Wood.

H: 28.0 cm. Drawing by Symme Burstein.

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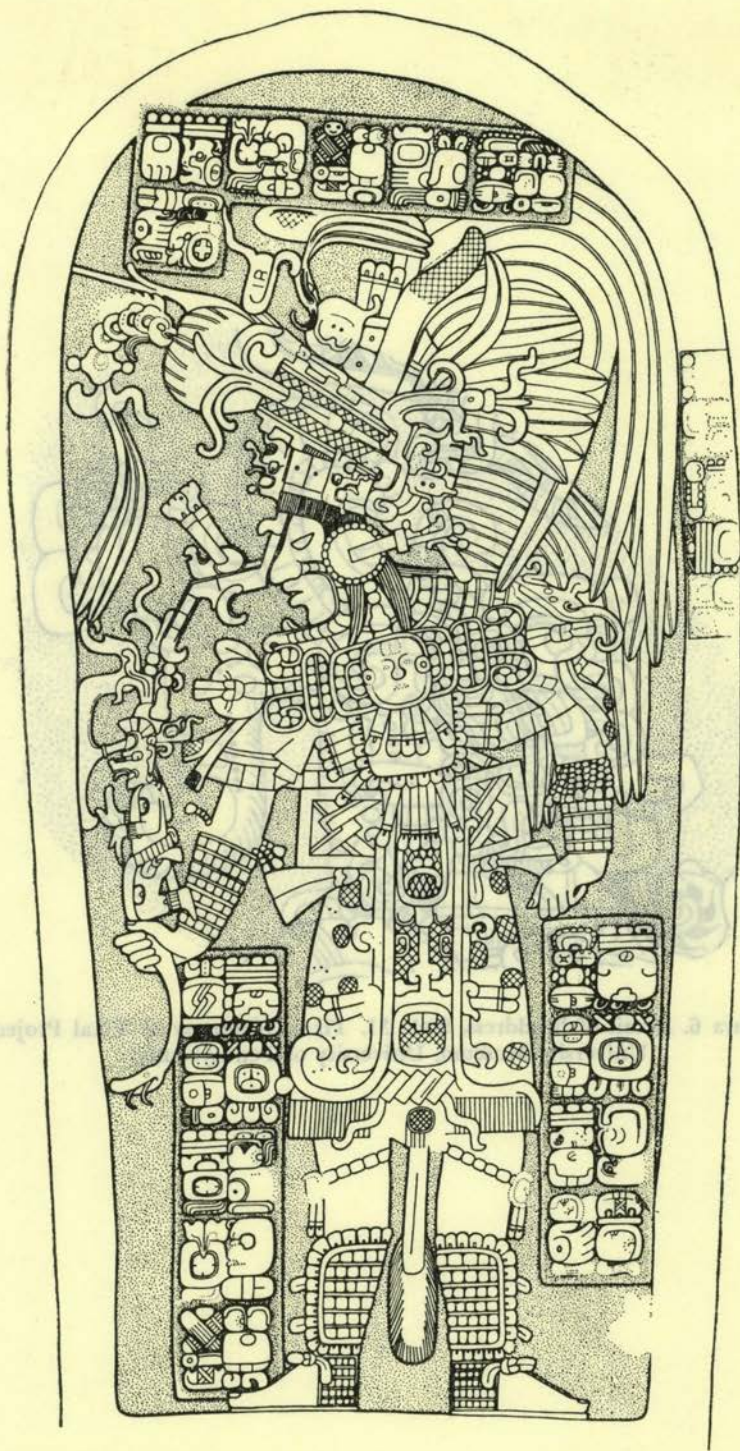


Figura 5. Stela 3, Machaquila. (From Graham, 1967, fig. 49).

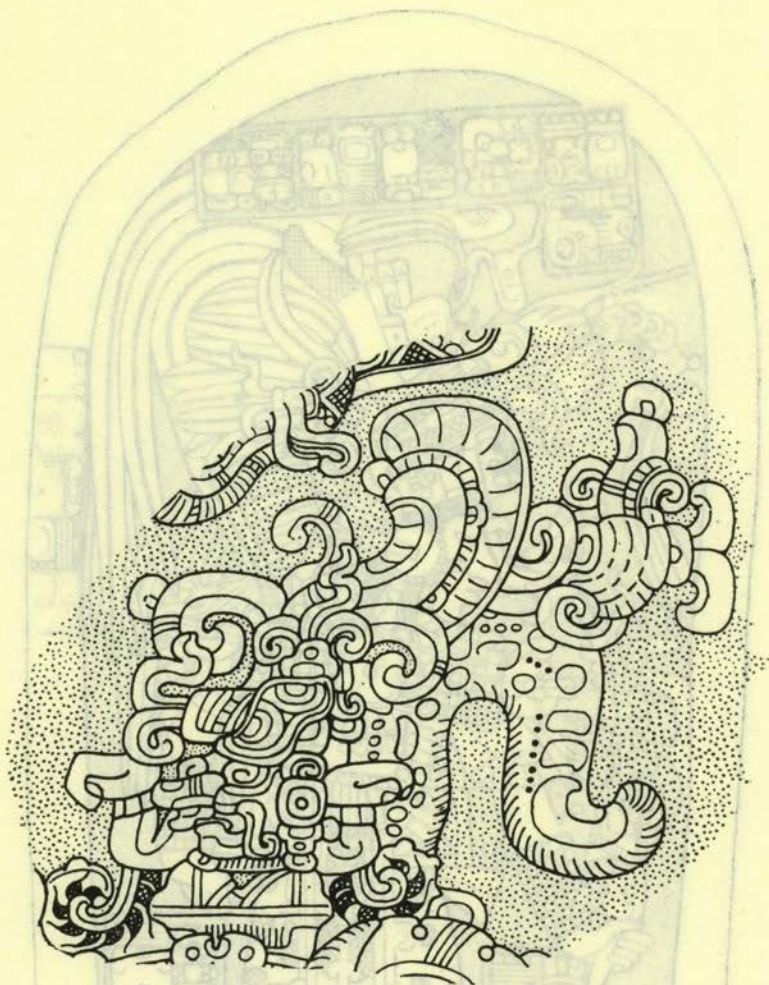


Figura 6. Detail of headdress, Stela 31, Tikal. (Courtesy of Tikal Project, University Museum, University of Pennsylvania).



Figura 7. Seated Figure, wall painting, Chac Mool Temple, Chichen Itza.
(From Roys, 1933, fig. 2).

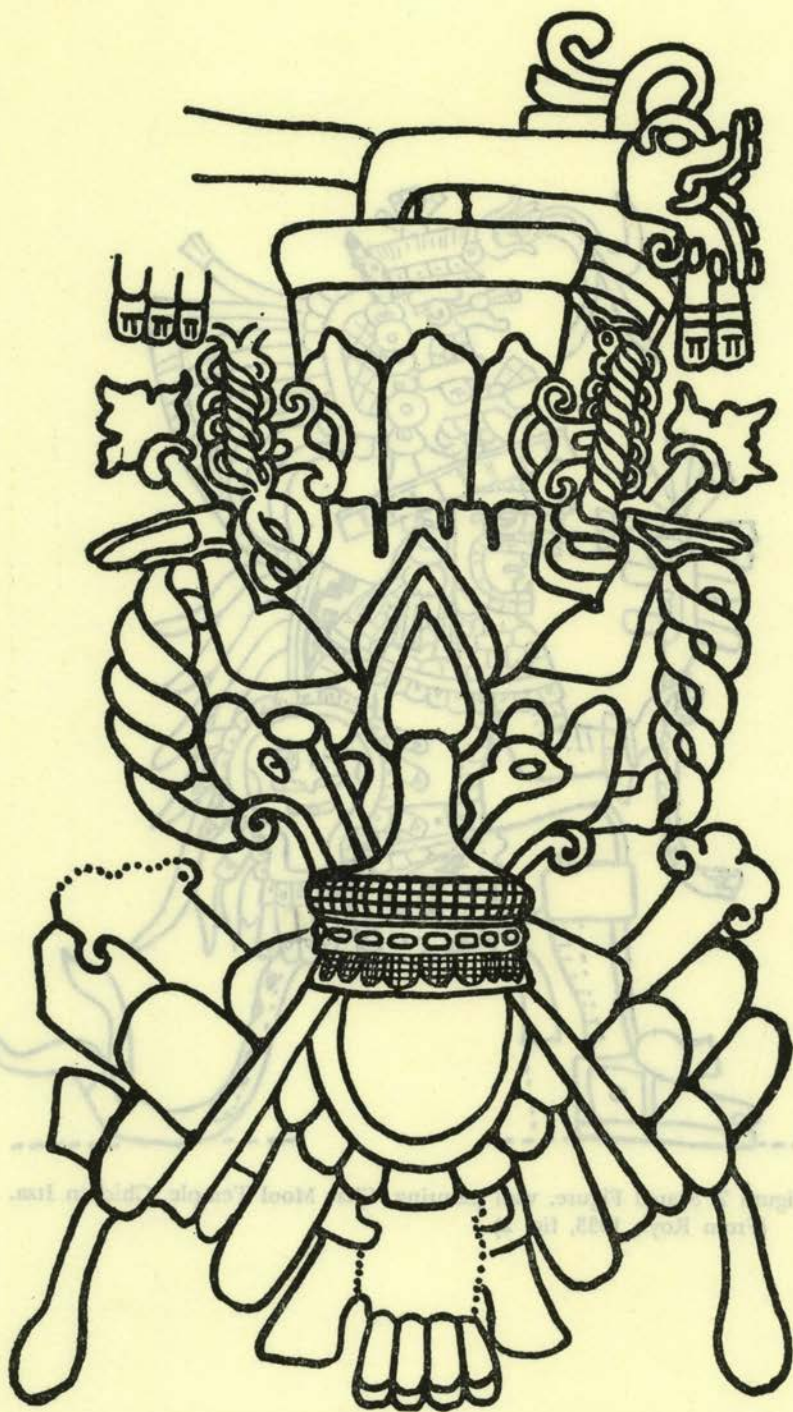


Figura 8. Stucco Diving Figure, Structure 25, Tulum. (After Roys, 1933, fig. 1*; in this rendering in Roys the twisted elements were deliberately and inaccurately underemphasized).

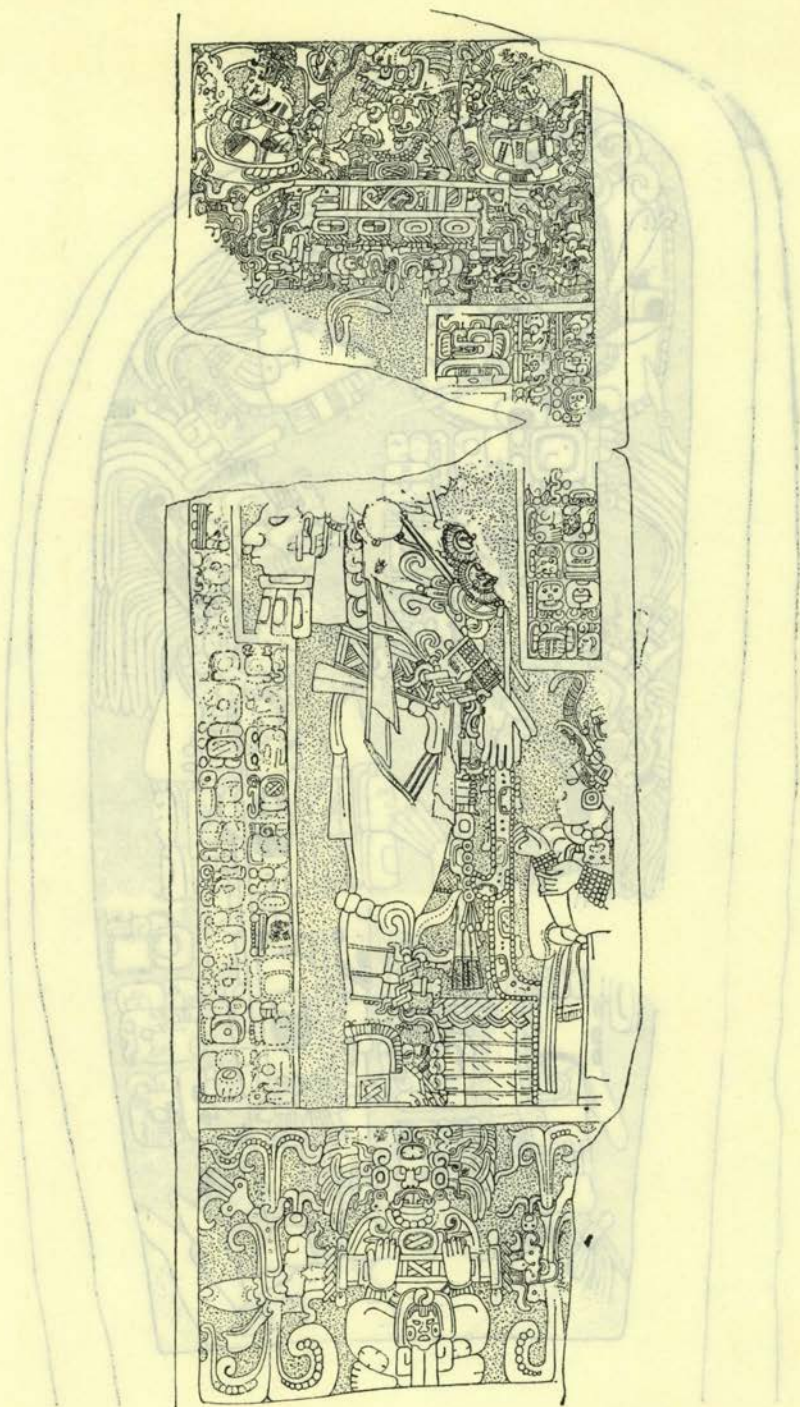


Figura 9. Stela 1, Yaxchilan. (Field drawing courtesy of Ian Graham, Peabody Museum, Harvard University).

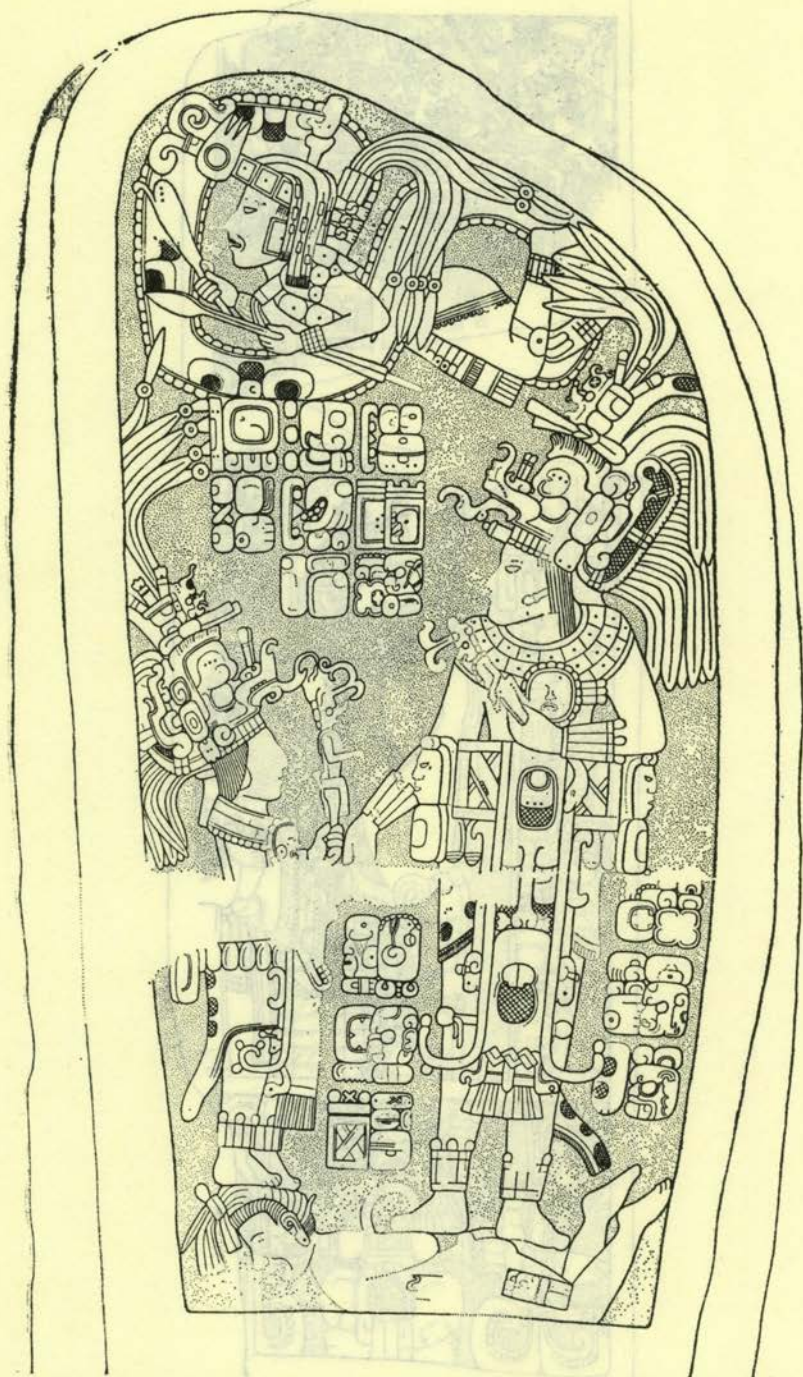


Figura 10. Stela 4, Ucanal. (From Graham, 1980).

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