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The Jade Hearth: Centrality, Rulership, and the Classic Maya Temple

With their massive platforms and frequently elaborate superstructures, temple pyramids are among the most striking and resonant images of the ancient Maya. Whether to house the gods or the honored dead, these imposing structures form the core and center of Maya sites, serving as pivotal links between the living and the divine. In addition, temple buildings are not only some of the earliest public architecture known for the ancient Maya but also the initial focus of complex art, whether in the form of massive platform masks or stone monuments directly oriented to the buildings. But despite the central role of the temple in ancient Maya society and culture, there has been relatively little interest in its underlying function and meaning. The basic metaphoric theme explored in this study is the temple as a house, both as a dwelling place of gods and as a model of the universe. The symbolism of the three-stone hearth constitutes an essential theme of temple ritual and imagery. As symbols of the *axis mundi*, hearths in the form of temple censers served as a means of conjuring and communicating with the divine. It will be seen that the Classic Maya elite elevated the humble domestic hearth into a precious symbol of royal power. The jade Jester God, a major emblem of Maya kings, evoked the concepts of the hearth and world center. At sites such as Tonina, Quirigua, and Copan, Maya rulers portrayed themselves in terms of temples and their attendant urns—that is, as sacred, pivotal intermediaries between supernatural beings and the mortal plane.

The Temple as a House

Since the nineteenth-century dawning of Maya archaeology, scholars have noted the similarity of recent Maya houses to Classic monumental architecture. In 1844, the artist Frederick Catherwood (cited in Wauchope 1938:149-150) first suggested that Maya masonry temples derived from the pole-and-thatch Maya house, a basic feature of Maya life to this day. In the early twentieth century, Edward Thompson (1911) argued that many traits seen in Classic monumental architecture represent conservative survivals of original wood-and-thatch houses. In his classic analysis of modern Maya houses, Robert Wauchope (1938:150-151) also acknowledged the presence of commoner domestic traits in elite Classic architecture. However, to Wauchope, these features do not derive from a conservative, unconscious bowing to tradition. Instead, he considered them to be intentionally adopted for purposes of style

and decoration. But, although deliberate, the translation of everyday domestic architecture into stone and stucco is not only decorative but has important symbolic value as well. The evocation of the basic Maya house defines the temple as a dwelling place, albeit of gods rather than mortals. The four-sided house also serves as a model for perceiving and structuring the universe. By adopting the cosmic house metaphor, the Classic Maya temple embodied and channeled some of the most essential and powerful principles of the cosmos.

The concept of the temple as a deity house is by no means limited to the ancient Maya. Bruce Trigger (1990:121) notes that ancient temples were commonly regarded as god houses in many regions of the world:

the temples of the early civilizations were usually designed to be the earthly dwellings of gods rather than assembly places for communal worship. Much of the cult was conducted in seclusion inside these buildings, which in many cultures were called literally "gods' houses." (Trigger 1990:121)

This is precisely the case for the ancient Maya; in colonial Yucatec, the common term for temple is *k'u na*, meaning "god house" (Barrera Vásquez 1980:423), and similar meanings can be readily found in early colonial dictionaries of other Mayan languages (e.g., Coto [c. 1656]1983:544; Laughlin 1988:373). Following initial epigraphic insights by David Kelley (1976:133), David Stuart (1987:33-39) notes that in both the Post-Classic codices and Classic Maya monuments, temples are referred to as *otoch* or *otot*, a term meaning "house" in Mayan languages. In ancient Maya temple scenes, gods frequently appear in their thatched houses, and the representations of thatched buildings on Maya structures probably denote them as dwelling places of gods (e.g., see Figure 2b). At Late Classic Copan, there are in-the-round forms of this motif, here as rectangular temple models containing a seated God C figure (see Houston 1998). Grube and Schele (1990) note that accompanying texts describe these temple models as *u waybil k'u*, signifying "the sleeping place of god." Just as humans require privacy and rest, so too is it with gods in their temple houses.

For at least one of the Copan temple models, a pair of curtain holes occurs on the roof above the central doorway (see Andrews and Fash 1992:Fig. 17). Commonly found in palace and temple structures, these holes supported cloth or mat hangings that served as the Maya version of doors (Figure 1a-e; see Anderson 1985). Such curtains were the principal means to secure privacy within domiciles and temples alike. In Early Post-Classic murals at Chichen Itza, doorway curtains occur in both temples and domestic structures (Figure 1a-b). Just as a covered household doorway could signal for privacy, the temple curtains probably were also used to indicate states of the god housed within. In terms of the Copan temple models, a curtain-covered doorway probably indicated that the god was asleep in his resting place, or *waybil*.

At times, actual Maya temples are represented with false, curtain-covered doorways. The earliest instance occurs on the Late Pre-Classic Structure H-X at Uaxactun. Both sides of the real doorway are flanked by niches marked with mat designs, denoting curtain-closed doorways (Figure 2a). A similar situation occurs on Structure 2 at the Terminal Classic Chenes site of Hochob. Elongated representations of thatched houses frame the sides of the central zoomorphic doorway, and, in both cases, the false house doorways are covered by hanging mats (Figure 2b). Flanking false doorways also occur with roughly contemporaneous Río Bec structures (see Gendrop 1983:Figs. 12d, 31a-b, 35, 45b). Here the doorway niches are covered by checkered patterns representing woven cloth or matting (Figure 2c). The false-curtained

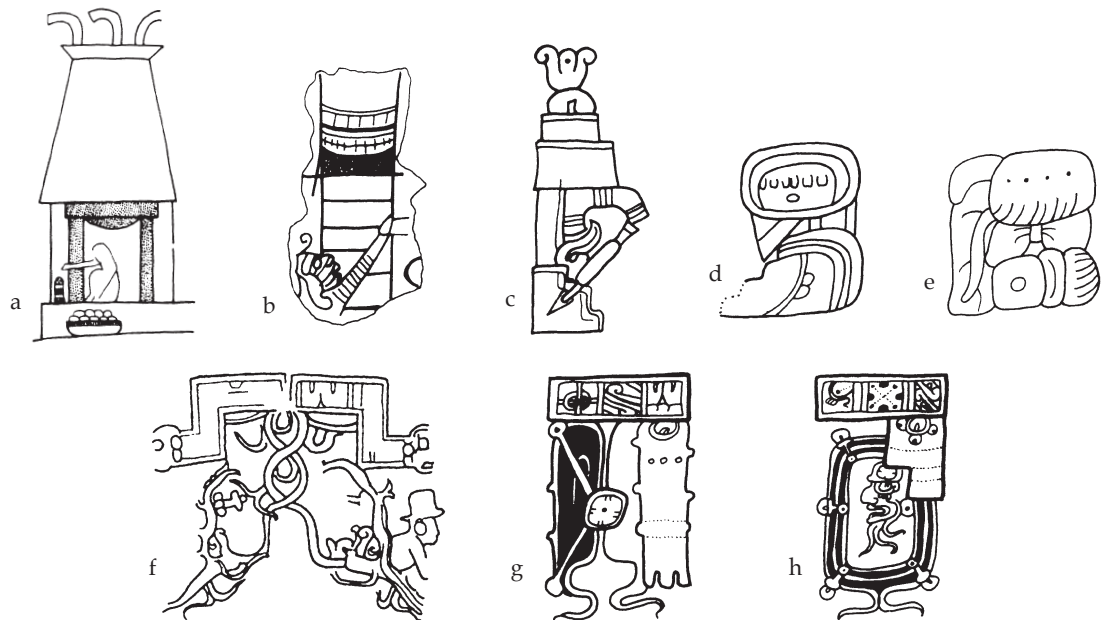


Figure 1. Doorway curtains in ancient Maya domestic and sacred architecture: (a) curtain suspended in doorway of Early Post-Classic Maya house, detail of mural from Upper Temple of the Jaguars, Chichen Itza (after Coggins and Shane 1984:Fig. 17); (b) temple doorway covered by curtain, detail of mural from Temple of the Warriors, Chichen Itza (after Morris et al. 1931:Pl. 168d); (c) curtain in temple doorway (Codex Grolier: 5); (d) Early Classic temple logograph with triangular curtain element (after Mayer 1984:Pls. 26-27); (e) Late Classic temple logograph with bound doorway curtain, Tablet of the Cross, Palenque; (f) curtain and serpentine birth rope suspended from sky band, Caracol Stela 3 (from Taube 1994a:Fig. 3b); (g-h) Post-Classic depictions of eclipses, sky curtains covering the sun (Codex Dresden: 54b, 55a).

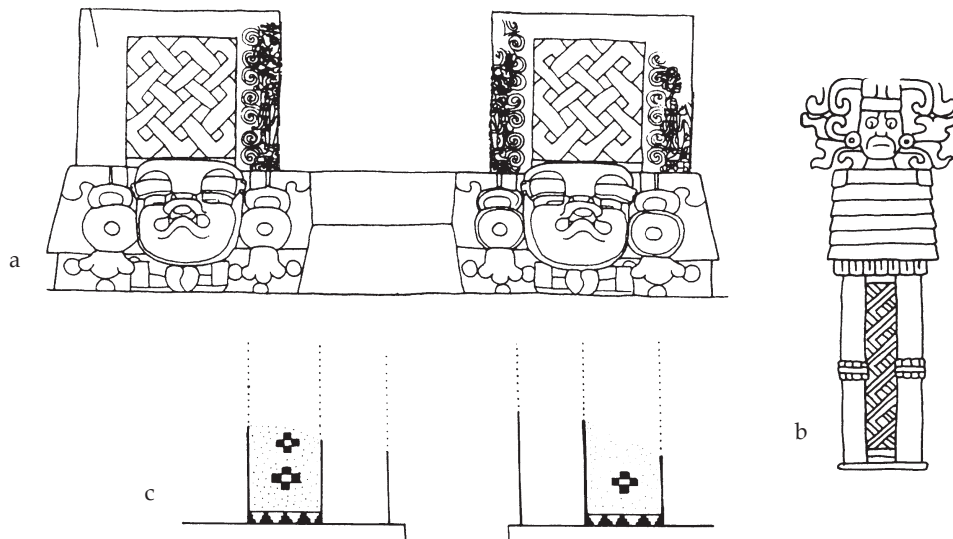


Figure 2. False-curtained doorways in ancient Maya architecture: (a) false curtains marked with mat designs, Structure H-X, Uaxactun, Late Pre-Classic period (drawing by Linda Schele); (b) one of two false structures flanking central doorway of Hochob Structure 2 (after Gendrop 1983:Fig. 73c-d); (c) false-curtained doorways flanking actual entrance, Structure IV, Becan (after Gendrop 1983:Fig. 12d).

temple doorways may have denoted divine occupancy, signaling to the observer the proper decorum of caution and respect, much as if one were approaching a palace.

Aside from serving as god houses, temples were also models of the cosmos. The house metaphor for the world is well-attested in contemporary Maya lore. In the *ch'a ch'aac* ceremonies of contemporary Yucatan, the four-legged wooden altar represents the world, with the altar surface being the earth and the overarching crossed saplings representing the heavens (Sosa 1985:346). The modern Chorti believe the world to be supported by four corner posts. Fought (1972:377-379) notes that the Chorti term for the cosmic corner post is *oi*, "one of the tree trunks set in the ground to support the roof and walls of a house." According to one Zinacanteco Tzotzil informant, the universe is "like a house, like a table" (Vogt 1976:11). Both the Tzotzil and Tojolabal Maya consider the universe to be a quadrangular structure supported at its corners by supernatural beings (see Holland 1963:92; Ruz 1982:55; Vogt 1976:15-16). Among the Tzotzil of San Andrés, the immortal world bearers are termed *yoyal balumil*, with *yoyal* signifying the vertical house beam, or *horcón* (Delgaty and Sánchez 1978:234).

The contemporary Maya concept of four corner posts supporting a cosmic structure can be readily traced to the colonial and pre-Hispanic periods. In the colonial Yucatec Books of the Chilam Balam of Chumayel, Mani, and Tizimin, one of the world trees erected after the flood is termed the *yocmal caan*, or the "housepost (*horcon*) of the sky" (Craine and Reindorp 1979:119; Edmonson 1982:48; Roys 1933:100). In these Yucatec accounts, these world trees are not grown, but "stood up" (*ualhi*), much like raising the corner posts of a house. Similarly, the four columnar world trees in the Dresden New Year pages are accompanied by a verb that Nikolai Grube (1990) reads as *ts'apah*, or "is erected." The contemporary highland Maya concept of supernatural beings supporting the world derives from the pre-Hispanic Pawahtuns, the four aged beings supporting the corners of the universe (see Taube 1992b:94). Like the four world trees, the Pawahtuns serve as the corner beams supporting the cosmic house (see Figure 20e). This theme of the cosmic world bearers supporting a temple roof also appears on actual temples at Copan and Chichen Itza (see Schele and Miller 1986:122; Taube 1994b:214-216).

Whether as growing trees or aged men, the corner posts of the cosmic house support the heavenly roof. Many of the horizontal sky bands in the upper portion of Maya scenes probably represent the roof of the world house. The sky band on Caracol Stela 3 displays a doorway curtain, thereby denoting the sky band as the roof and ceiling (Figure 1f). When unfurled over the door, the hanging curtain of the cosmic house could well refer to darkness and the night. On pages 54b and 55a of the Dresden codex eclipse pages, eclipses are depicted as hanging sky curtains covering the sun within the house (Figure 1g-h).

The Three Hearthstones

In the cosmic house model, the four corner posts represent directional trees supporting the heavens. However, traditional Maya houses lack a central post for the *axis mundi* from which the directions radiate. Instead, the middle place is represented by the three-stone hearth, known as *k'oben* in Yucatec; *yoket* in Chol, Tojolabal, and Tzeltalan languages; and *xkub* in Quiche (Wauchope 1938:119; Barrera Vásquez 1980:406; Attinasi 1973:342; Lenkersdorf

1979:1:421; Delgaty and Sánchez 1978:233; Laughlin 1975:451; Coto [c. 1656]1983:241, 275).¹ As the first central place, the simple three-stone hearth may well constitute the original construction of creation, antedating even the erection of the four corner posts.

In a cross-cultural discussion of architecture and world view, Pearson and Richards (1994:12) note that the domestic hearth commonly represents the world center. In comparison to the four-cornered house model, the hearth more closely reflects a circular plan and thus serves as a more appropriate model for concepts of concentricity and centrality. According to Post-Classic Central Mexican thought, the old fire god Xiuhtecuhtli-Huehuetēotl resides in a hearth at the world center. The *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* explicitly defines this place as three sacred hearthstones, each personified by a specific god (Bierhorst 1992:23).² The Florentine Codex describes this locus as the circular earth navel, or *tlalxicco*: “mother of the gods, father of the gods, who resideth in the navel of the earth, who is set in the turquoise enclosure, [enclosed] with the waters of the lovely cotinga, enclosed with clouds—Ueuetēotl, he of Ayamictlan, Xiuhtecuhtli” (Sahagún 1950-1982:Book 6:88-89). In this account, the earth navel is a place of duality, embodying both the male and female creative principles. In addition, it is a place of clouds and water, hardly what one would expect in an actual fiery hearth. This evocation of dualistic principles seems to describe the hearth as a place of creation. However, as the *axis mundi*, the hearth is also a conduit between the levels of earth, sky, and underworld. Similarly, it will be seen that, for the Classic Maya, the sacred hearth is also portrayed as a watery place and frequently fuses with the verdant ceiba, or *yax che*, also marking the world center. Some of the curious anomalies to be discussed—such as tree censers, caiman mouth hearths, jade hearthstones, and vegetal smoke—probably derive from this profound grafting of tree and hearth.

¹ The etymology of the Mayan terms for hearthstones is varied. Quite possibly, the Yucatec term *k'oben* is related to the word *k'oba*, which signifies “lake or river stone” (Barrera Vásquez 1980:406). Water-tumbled rocks would be especially suited for the gently rounded contours of hearthstones. Whereas the Tzeltalan term *yoquet* probably derives from the term for leg or foot (*oq*), the Quichean *xkub* may well be a contraction of *ox kub*, or three *kub*, with *kub* signifying “stone” (Edmonson 1965:62). In the colonial Choltil Moran dictionary, the hearth (*tenamaste*) is glossed as *chubentun* (Morán 1935:64). At present, there is still no phonetic reading for the Classic three hearthstone sign.

² It appears that the three hearthstones constituted an important part of Mixtec creation mythology. Linda Schele (personal communication, 1994) notes that the tree birth scene on Selden page 2 illustrates the three stones in profile. An even more striking scene occurs on page 17 of the Nuttall Codex, which, according to John Pohl (personal communication, 1994), concerns the gods creating the first new fire. The three stones occur twice: first, as seats for three gods petitioned by Lady 3 Flint, and second, in the scene illustrating the fire ceremony. Two appear on mountains flanking the central pyre, and a third occurs in the structure above. Painted with the black facial markings of Central Mexicans, the two individuals seated on the mountains are named 4 Motion and 7 Reed. It will be recalled that at the sacrificial pyre at Teotihuacan, Nanahuatzin was transformed into the fifth sun, Nahui Ollin, or 4 Motion. Moreover, according to the *Historia de los reinos de Culhuacan*, 7 Reed was a name for the moon (Caso 1959:91). Nanahuatzin and the cowardly Tecuciztecatl did penance on two hills, the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon (see Sahagún 1950-1982:Book 7:4-5, 44-46). The pyre lies within a low, crenelated U-shaped enclosure of light blue color, recalling one of the Aztec terms for the sacrificial pyre at Teotihuacan, *xiuhtetzaqualco*, meaning “turquoise enclosure” (Sahagún 1950-1982:Book 1:84). I believe that this scene represents a Mixtec interpretation of the creation of the fifth sun, with the two gods seated on their mountains on either side of the sacrificial pyre. It will be subsequently seen that, for the Classic Maya, the jade hearth was also identified with rebirth and apotheosis.

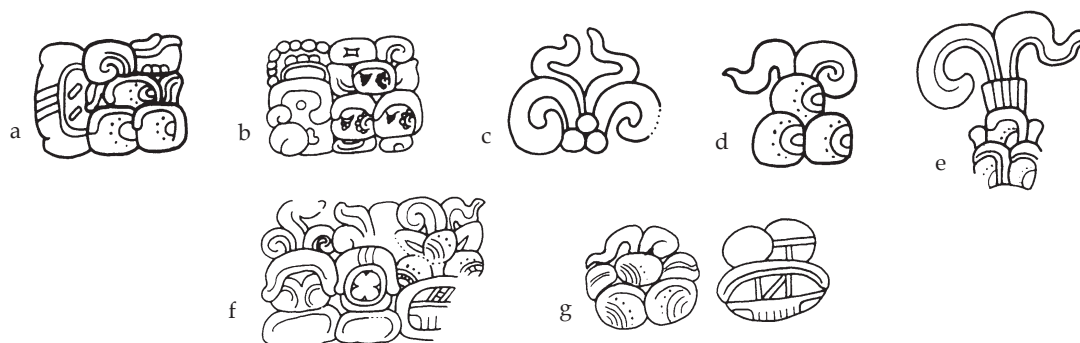


Figure 3. The three hearthstones in Classic Maya epigraphy and art: (a) the green hearthstone place, Quirigua Stela C; (b) the Seibal emblem glyph, Tablet 4 of Hieroglyphic Stairway, Seibal; (c) three smoking hearthstones, Monument 74, Tonina; (d) one of a series of smoking hearthstones on headdress of ruler, detail of recently excavated stela, Tonina; (e) three stones with burning wood, Naranjo Stela 30; (f) smoking sky hearthstones with glyphs for Tikal Paddlers, Stela 16, Copan; (g) smoking hearthstones with sky *ahau* glyph, Stela 1, Salinas de los Nueve Cerros.

Recent pioneering investigations by Freidel, Schele, and Parker (1993:65-71) have revealed that the placing of the hearthstones constitutes a major mythological act at the creation of the current Maya Baktun cycle—that is, the 13.0.0.0.0 4 Ahau 8 Cumku event of 3114 BC.³ In their work, entitled *Maya Cosmos*, the authors note that Quirigua Stela C provides a detailed account of the 4 Ahau 8 Cumku setting of this three-stone hearth, here qualified by the sign *yax*, meaning green, first, and by extension, center. Each stone is identified with a specific god, recalling the Central Mexican *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* account. Far from being restricted to Quirigua, the 4 Ahau 8 Cumku event also appears on Late Classic monuments from Copan, Palenque, Dos Pilas, and Piedras Negras (Schele 1992a:121). But although Freidel, Schele, and Parker seem to have defined one of the fundamental acts of Maya creation mythology, a great deal of the argument hinges on the identification of the three-stone glyph (Figure 3a). Also the main sign of the Seibal emblem glyph, this sign looks suspiciously like a pile of rocks. Nonetheless, in examples from Tonina, Naranjo, Copan, and Salinas de los Nueve Cerros, the three stones emit smoking volutes, lending considerable support for the hearth identification (Figure 3c–g).

The widespread appearance of the three-stone hearth in Maya inscriptions suggests that it was a basic feature of Classic Maya households. However, although three-stone hearths are widely documented for contemporary Maya peoples, there is surprisingly little evidence for their presence during the Classic period.⁴ As Pyburn (1989:334) notes, pre-Hispanic hearths are not only rare but tend to be poorly documented in the archaeological literature.⁵

³ Although not presented in the published volume *Maya Cosmos*, Linda Schele (personal communication, 1994) has independently noticed several of the observations mentioned in this paper, most notably the three-stone place at Izapa and the hearthstone jade cache at Seibal.

⁴ Edward H. Thompson (1892:262) reports the widespread occurrence of three-stone hearths during his archaeological research in the vicinity of Labna, Yucatan. However, the presence of pre-Hispanic *k'oben* hearths in the Puuc region has not been corroborated by later researchers.

⁵ For excavated Post-Classical hearths from highland Guatemala, including a three-stone example, see Fauvet-Berthelot (1986:126-127, 195-198).

According to Wauchope (1938:117), contemporary Maya commonly reuse hearthstones from abandoned houses. Rounded and relatively large, averaging some 30 cm in diameter (Wauchope 1938:117), such stones are fairly rare and valued objects and were probably reused in antiquity as well. It is noteworthy that one of the few archaeological instances of the three-stone hearth occurs at the site of Ceren (Sheets 1992:55, Fig. 4.6). Here, stone retrieval and reuse was precluded by the cataclysmic eruption of the Laguna Caldera volcano and the resulting deposition of ash.

Aside from actual hearths, three-pronged *incensarios* probably also indicate the widespread occurrence of three-stone hearths by at least Late Formative times (see Figure 10a–b). Occurring at such early sites as Chiapa de Corzo, Izapa, and Kaminaljuyu (Lowe 1965), these censers function much like portable three-stone hearths. Like the stones supporting the cooking vessel, the three prongs hold the incense bowl above the central fire. The placement of three stones in bowls, reported for such sites as Uaxactun, Zaculeu, Copan, and K'axob, probably constitutes an intermediate form, with actual stones serving as supports for the fire offering (for examples, see Fash 1991:90–92; Ricketson and Ricketson 1937:72; Woodbury and Trik 1953:27, 113).⁶

Although Ceren provides the only well-documented Classic three-stone kitchen hearth in situ, large, worked stone spheres have been found over much of the Maya area, including Kohunlich (Romano Pacheco et al. 1981:Pl. 206), Tonina (Becquelin and Baudez 1979–1982:1:37), and Zaculeu (Woodbury and Trik 1953:224–225), and in the southern piedmont region at Tonalá (Ferdon 1953:91, Pl. 23), Izapa (Norman 1976:262–265), Bilbao, and El Castillo (Parsons 1969:79).⁷ Dating from the Late Pre-Classic to the Terminal Classic periods, these stones probably marked actual or symbolic hearths. During the excavation of Tonina Structure E5-5, Becquelin and Baudez (1979–1982:1:37) uncovered a stairway shrine containing a single sandstone ball approximately 70 cm in diameter (Figure 4a–b). Set into the center of the shrine chamber, the stone protruded some 15 cm above the stucco floor. The shrine façade portrays an elaborate *wits* monster, or zoomorphic mountain, with the interior chamber constituting its open gullet. On each side of the open mouth, a rounded *tun* stone is carefully delineated in stucco (Figure 4b). Together, the two flanking stucco representations and the actual stone ball represent the triangularly arranged hearth in the mouth of the zoomorphic mountain. Becquelin and Baudez (1979–1982:1:37) report that the shrine chamber bears evidence of soot, and it will be noted later that such axial stairway shrines are important places for fire offerings.

⁶ David Webster (personal communication, 1994) called my attention to the three-stone vessel from the Early Classic Burial VIII-36 and further suggested that another badly fragmented vessel also may have contained three stones, but because of its placement at the extreme eastern edge of the burial, only two were retrieved. Patricia McAnany (personal communication, 1994) notes that a lip-to-lip vessel cache containing three stones was recently excavated at K'axob, Belize.

⁷ At times, the stone spheres are decorated with the face of the Fat God (e.g., Parsons 1986:Fig. 133; Ekholm 1970:94–95). I suspect that the Fat God, the same entity commonly appearing on Piedmont “potbelly” sculptures, is the god of the kitchen hearth. In a number of instances, he appears in groups of three, not only as stone sculpture but also as the tripod feet of food vessels (see Parsons 1986:92; Brainerd 1958:Fig. 88). For a possible Late Classic Seibal example of three Fat Gods supporting an altar, see Figure 7b).

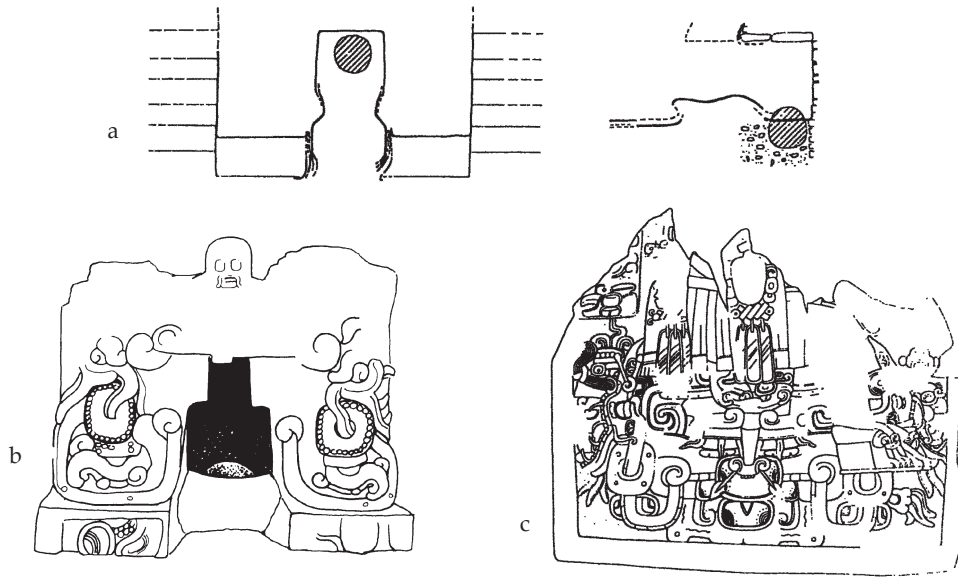


Figure 4. The hearthstone stairway shrine at Tonina: (a) plans of stairway shrine, with stone represented by hachure (after Becquelin and Baudez 1979-1982:1:Fig. 38); (b) drawing of front of shrine with stone in gullet of *wits* monster; note two representations of stones at lower left and right (after Becquelin and Baudez 1979-1982:1:Fig. 40c); (c) lower portion of Tonina Monument 106; three stones in *wits* monster mouth (after Becquelin and Baudez 1979-1982:3:Fig. 175).

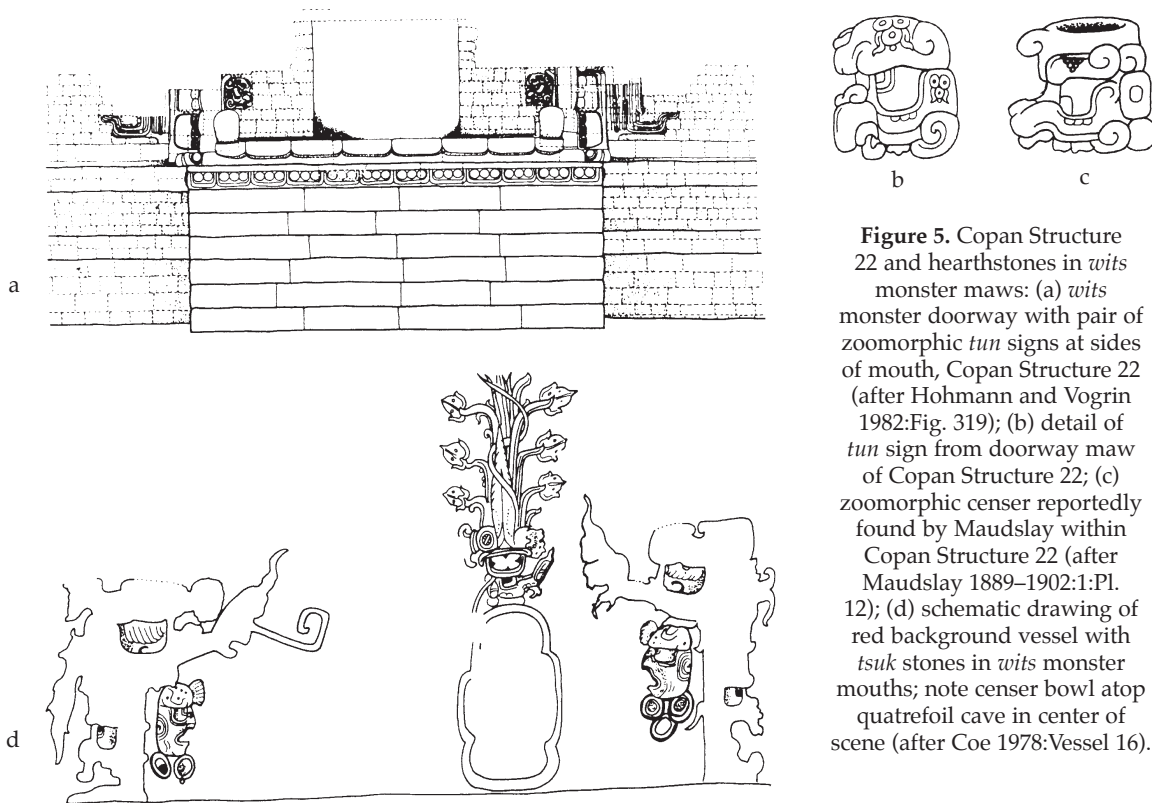


Figure 5. Copan Structure 22 and hearthstones in *wits* monster maws: (a) *wits* monster doorway with pair of zoomorphic *tun* signs at sides of mouth, Copan Structure 22 (after Hohmann and Vogrin 1982:Fig. 319); (b) detail of *tun* sign from doorway maw of Copan Structure 22; (c) zoomorphic censer reportedly found by Maudslay within Copan Structure 22 (after Maudslay 1889-1902:1:Pl. 12); (d) schematic drawing of red background vessel with *tsuk* stones in *wits* monster mouths; note censer bowl atop quatrefoil cave in center of scene (after Coe 1978:Vessel 16).

At the side of Structure E5-5 stands Monument 106, an Early Classic stela displaying a *wits* monster virtually identical to that appearing on the adjacent shrine (Figure 4c). In addition to displaying a similar pair of serpents projecting through earspools, the stela example has three triangularly placed stones in its open maw. This stela probably portrays the ruler sitting atop the neighboring stairway shrine.

During the Classic period, *wits* monsters often display round stones in their mouths, and it could be argued that the Tonina stela simply illustrates the stony quality of *wits* monster teeth. However, Copan Structure 22 indicates that the placement of *tun* stones in *wits* monster mouths was neither casual nor fortuitous (Figure 5a). Two large zoomorphic *tun* signs are prominently placed on the sides of the *wits* monster maw serving as the temple doorway (Figure 5b). But if this pair of *tun* signs constitute flanking stones, where is the third and central stone? Maudslay (1889-1902:1:29) reports finding two zoomorphic stone censers within Structure 22. The example illustrated by Maudslay is simply a zoomorphic *tun*, comparable in scale to the *tun* profiles in the doorway mouth (Figure 5c). Axially oriented to the doorway during fire offerings, such a censer would serve as the third central stone, here containing the burning offering. A Late Classic vessel illustrates the use of such a censer as the central stone (Figure 5d). In this case, a pair of inwardly facing *wits* monsters hold the flanking stones in their mouths. The stones are forms of the *tzuk* head defined by Grube and Schele (1991), who interpret it as a symbol of cosmic world partitions. I suggest that the *tzuk* head defines and ultimately represents the center, whether it is placed equidistantly in groups of four, three, or simply a single head as the *axis mundi*. Between the two *tzuk* stones stands the zoomorphic censer.⁸ Containing a world tree and situated directly above a quatrefoil cave, the censer constitutes an *axis mundi* offering access to both the heavens and the underworld.

The caiman, the *axis mundi* creature *par excellence*, also appears with the hearth in its mouth. The early colonial Yucatec *Ritual of the Bacabs* describes the head of the earth caiman, Itzam Cab, as the three stone *k'oben*, with the flames being its tongue (Roys 1965:50). In another passage, the *pib* sweatbath serves as the mouth of this being (Roys 1965:61).⁹ A stucco relief from Copan apparently illustrates an Early Classic form of this concept. The sculpture portrays a caiman with a series of round stones in its teeth, quite possibly the three-stone hearth (see Fash 1991:Fig. 40). Similarly, the Late Classic Copan Altar T depicts a splayed caiman with three *tzuk* stones projecting from its mouth (see Maudslay 1889-1902:1:Pls. 95, 96).

One of the most ambitious monumental programs dedicated to the three-stone hearth occurs at the Late Pre-Classic site of Izapa. On the central axis of Mound Group B, three massive stone balls were placed on pillars (Figure 6a). Known as Miscellaneous Monuments 6, 8, and 10, the spheres average some 65 cm in diameter. The slightly larger central stone and pillar project south of the flanking monuments, creating a triangle. Thus, like the Structure E-5

⁸ A kin-marked bowl constitutes the top of this censer; Stephen Houston (personal communication, 1994) notes that, epigraphically, the kin-marked bowl may be read *el* or *elel*, signifying "to burn" in Mayan languages.

⁹ Although Roys (1965) interprets this incantation as a reference to a *pib* earth oven rather than the sweatbath, the text explicitly describes the creation of steam through water striking a stone referred to as a *zintunil*. In the early colonial Motul and San Francisco dictionaries, *sin tun* is glossed as "piedra de baño" (Barrera Vásquez 1980:730).

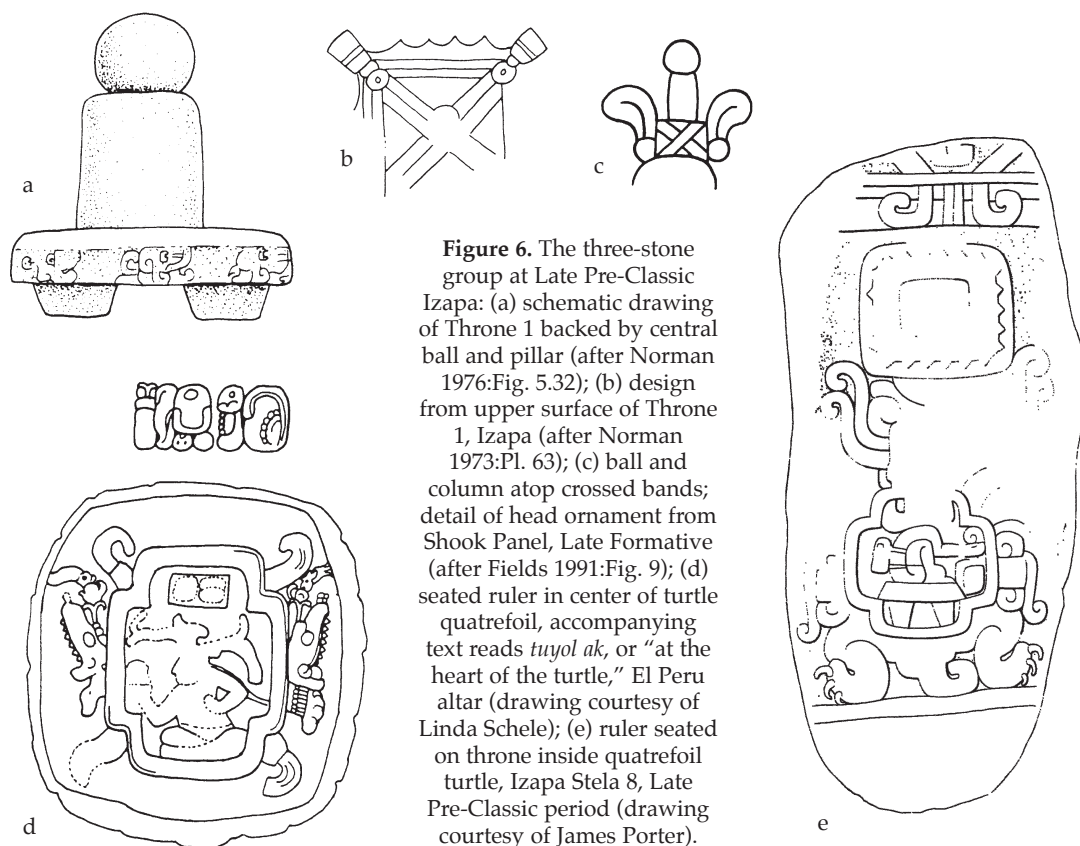


Figure 6. The three-stone group at Late Pre-Classic Izapa: (a) schematic drawing of Throne 1 backed by central ball and pillar (after Norman 1976:Fig. 5.32); (b) design from upper surface of Throne 1, Izapa (after Norman 1973:Pl. 63); (c) ball and column atop crossed bands; detail of head ornament from Shook Panel, Late Formative (after Fields 1991:Fig. 9); (d) seated ruler in center of turtle quatrefoil, accompanying text reads *tuyol ak*, or “at the heart of the turtle,” El Peru altar (drawing courtesy of Linda Schele); (e) ruler seated on throne inside quatrefoil turtle, Izapa Stela 8, Late Pre-Classic period (drawing courtesy of James Porter).

shrine at Tonina, this monumental group represents the three-stone place in the center of the primary temple stairway. Directly south of the central stone and pillar lies Throne 1, the top of which displays a crossed band sign within a crenelated cartouche (Figure 6a–b). A similar juxtapositioning of crossed bands with the column and ball occurs on the Late Formative Shook Panel, here capping the head of the central figure (Figure 6c). It will be subsequently noted that, for the Late Pre-Classic and Classic Maya, certain jade ornaments worn in this position denoted the *axis mundi*. When seated atop the crossed bands directly in front of the three raised hearthstones, the Izapa ruler was enthroned in the center of the cosmos.

A possible portrayal of Throne 1 occurs on Stela 8, one of the three stelae directly behind the raised stone spheres of Group B (Figure 6e). Noting the similarity of this profile rendering to Throne 1, Norman (1976:105) points out that the Stela 8 scene also displays a crenelated device closely resembling the upper surface of the actual throne. In a quatrefoil on the back of a turtle, the Stela 8 throne is strikingly similar to Machaquila Altar 1, which portrays a Late Classic ruler seated in another quatrefoil turtle (Figure 6d). Stephen Houston (personal communication, 1991) notes that the accompanying text describes the scene as *tuyol ak*, or “at the heart of the turtle.” Citing an identification by MattLooper, Freidel, Schele, and Parker (1993:82) note that on Madrid page 71a, the three hearthstones appear on the back of a turtle. The authors interpret this scene as representing stellar constellations and in support note that the contemporary Quiche place a three-hearthstone constellation near another star group denoted as a turtle. Although identification of a turtle with the hearth may well be

illustrated in the night sky, the association probably derives from their shared meaning of centrality. As a circular model of the earth (see Taube 1988a), the turtle embodies the same concepts of concentricity and centrality found with the three-stone hearth. At Izapa Mound Group B, the throne of kingship appears with crossed bands, three stones, and the turtle, all signifying the pivotal *axis mundi*.

As a sign of the middle place, the three hearthstones appear with radial stairway pyramids, structures that in their very design refer to the axis and center. During the burial of the Late Pre-Classic E-VII-Sub at Uaxactun, a lip-to-lip vessel cache was placed on the stucco floor near the top of the principal stairway. The sole contents were three simple stones, possibly a three-stone censer (see Ricketson and Ricketson 1937:72, Fig. 33). Among the most striking examples of a radial stairway pyramid is Structure A-3 at Seibal, the site epigraphically labeled as the three-stone place (Figure 3b). The interior temple floors bore considerable evidence of burning, particularly in association with Stela 21, placed in the very center of the structure (Smith 1982:24). This monument represents a figure dressed as the Jaguar God of the Underworld, or JGU, a deity that David Stuart (personal communication, 1993) suggests may be the Classic Maya god of fire.¹⁰ The cache directly below this pivotal monument contained three jade boulders weighing from 6.25 to 10 pounds (Smith 1982:Fig. 18, 241; Willey 1978:100). For Terminal Classic Seibal, these three boulders constituted the central three-stone place, a hearth of green jade.

Structure D5-1, one of the most imposing buildings at Tonina, is another example of a radial stairway building.¹¹ Like Seibal Structure A-3, a carved stela stood in the temple interior. This Early Classic stela, Monument 74, depicts a ruler with three smoking hearthstones in his headdress (Figure 3c). The wooden staff and costume of knotted and hanging paper of this figure recalls Late Classic monuments from Naranjo (e.g., Naranjo Stelae 11, 30, and 33). Dressed as the JGU, the Naranjo ruler also wears knotted paper and wields the wooden staff. One of these monuments, Naranjo Stela 30, displays the three hearthstones in the headdress, in this case supplied with burning ocote wood (Figure 3e). David Stuart (personal communication, 1993) suggests that the staff wielded by the Tonina and Naranjo lords represents a symbolic fire-making stick. In view of the abundant fire iconography and identification with the three-stone hearth, Classic Maya radial stairway structures were clearly important loci for fire-making rituals.

According to Coggins (1987:476), Seibal Temple A-3 and the Castillo at Chichen Itza were radial pyramids used for new fire ceremonies. At the time of its discovery, the jade jaguar throne within the inner Castillo bore a burned turquoise mirror with three large jade pendants and smaller beads on its back (Erosa Peniche 1947). Both Coggins (1987) and I (Taube 1992a:184-187) note the identification of mirrors with fire and hearths in Mesoamerican thought. On Codex Borgia page 63, a petaled turquoise mirror—quite similar to the actual El Castillo example—serves as the fiery hearth for a cooking vessel. Like the radial pyramids at Uaxactun, Seibal, and Tonina, the Castillo is probably also identified with hearths and fire.

¹⁰ The strange twisted “cruller” atop the nose of the JGU probably refers to fire making. In Teotihuacan and later Aztec iconography, similarly twisted elements appear in depictions of fire drilling, evidently alluding to the tightly twisted rope of the pump drill.

¹¹ I am indebted to Stephen Houston for calling my attention to Tonina Structure D5-1 as an example of a radial stairway pyramid.

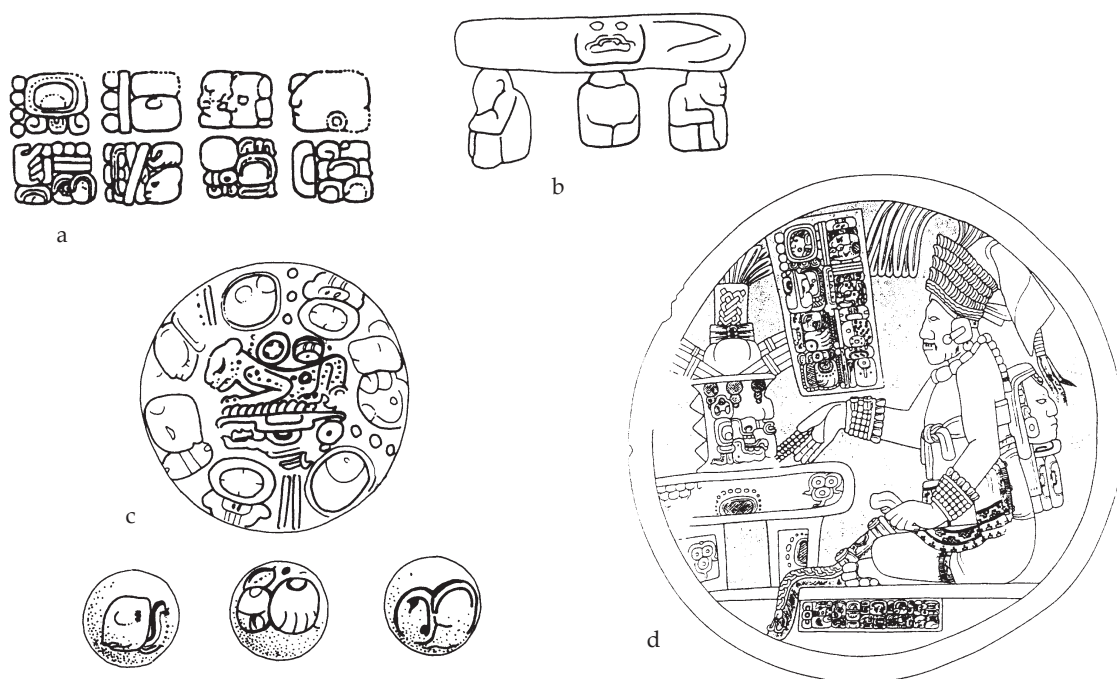


Figure 7. Three-legged altars and hearth symbolism: (a) detail of Piedras Negras Altar 1 text, referring to the green hearthstones and the 4 Ahau 8 Cumku event (drawing courtesy of Linda Schele); (b) Seibal Altar 1, jaguar altar supported by three seated figures (after Smith 1982:Fig. 140b); (c) painted and incised stone altar model with three spherical supports; note jaguar atop censer in center of altar scene (after Robicsek and Hales 1981:Fig. 62b); (d) altar fire offering represented atop actual three-legged altar, El Cayo Altar 1 (drawing courtesy of Peter Mathews).

Aside from radial structures, certain round altars were also identified with fire-making rites and the three-stone hearth. In Maya inscriptions, the glyph for altar frequently accompanies the logographic sign for temple pyramid (see Chase et al. 1991:Fig. 5). Composed of three stones, the altar glyph is notably similar to the three-stone hearth sign, save that the upper stone tends to be larger, denoting the altar surface supported by smaller stone supports. It appears that circular altars supported with three feet denoted the hearth, much like a flat griddle on three cooking stones. One such monument is Piedras Negras Altar 1, which contains an epigraphic reference to the 4 Ahau 8 Cumku event and the green hearthstones (Figure 7a). The recently discovered El Cayo Altar 4 is another example of a three-legged altar (Figure 7d). The top of this remarkable monument represents such a legged altar in use; rendered in profile, a large spiked censer occupies the center of the depicted altar. A miniature model of a three-stone altar represents the stone disk with three spherical supports, much like the spheres serving as Classic hearthstones (Figure 7c). A prone jaguar atop a censer occupies the center of the altar, again reinforcing the theme of jaguars, fire, and centrality. Seibal Altar 1 depicts a similarly positioned jaguar supported by three seated human figures (Figure 7b).

Two Late Classic vessels epigraphically label a particular water jaguar, *ha hix*, as the way of the *ahau* three-stone place, that is, the hearth of kings (Figure 8a–b). In both scenes, the roaring jaguar is surrounded by a cartouche marked with the “stacked canoes” water sign. A

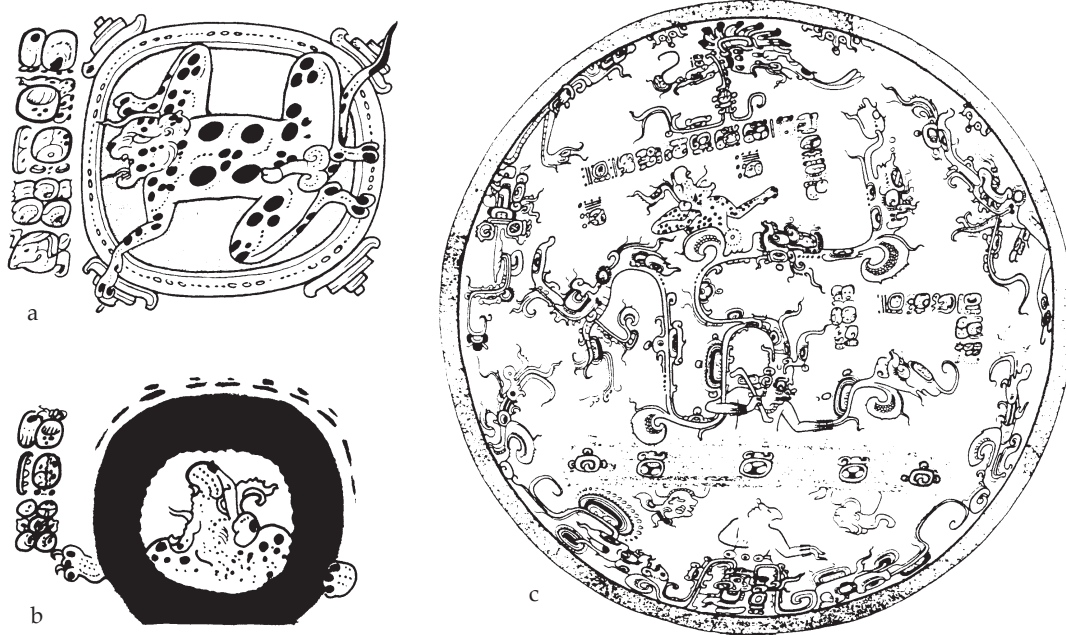


Figure 8. The roaring water jaguar and the Ahau hearthstone place: (a) water jaguar epigraphically labeled as *way* of Ahau hearthstones, detail of codex-style vase (from Houston and Stuart 1989:Fig. 3); (b) water jaguar as *way* of Ahau hearthstones, detail of polychrome vessel (after Reents-Budet 1994:Fig. 5.10); (c) interior of Cosmic Plate, roaring jaguar at upper center of scene with three hearthstones in profile at base of scene (drawing courtesy of James Porter).

similar roaring jaguar appears on the Late Classic codex-style “Cosmic Plate” (see Figure 8c). Although the qualifying term accompanying the *hix* compound is eroded, it may well be the Imix water sign, again referring to the water jaguar *way*. Below the jaguar lies a horizontal band of water marked with the “stacked canoes” sign. In addition to the roaring jaguar and standing water, the three hearthstones are also present. Rendered in profile, they appear at the base of the scene (Figures 8c and 9a). Both of the flanking heads are stony *tzuk* heads, marking the central head as the middle place.

A codex-style vase portrays a very similar profile rendering of the three stones; in this case, the flanking heads face outward, thereby framing the central head in a symmetrical arrangement (Figure 9b). In both scenes, the central head displays a profile God C face on its brow. This particular entity commonly appears on the ends of serpent tails, a curious convention originating in Late Pre-Classic Maya iconography (Figure 9c–h). Smoke, frequently with jade beads, exudes from the top of the head, identifying this element as a fire-related object, quite possibly a zoomorphic censer. The pair of curling smoke volutes is frequently serrated and beaded, thereby bearing a close resemblance to plant growth, such as the *nal* maize signs sprouting out of earspool assemblages (e.g., Figure 9e, g). At times the God C brow is represented face on, revealing that it is essentially the T533 stylized Ahau face (Figure 9c, h). The smoking capped Ahau sign commonly appearing in male parentage statements and on the ends of jaguar tails is probably a simplified form of this device. The tops of Late Pre-Classic three-pronged *incensarios* are depicted with volutes strikingly similar to those appearing with the capped Ahau (Figure 10a–b). In terms of the two vessel scenes, the central

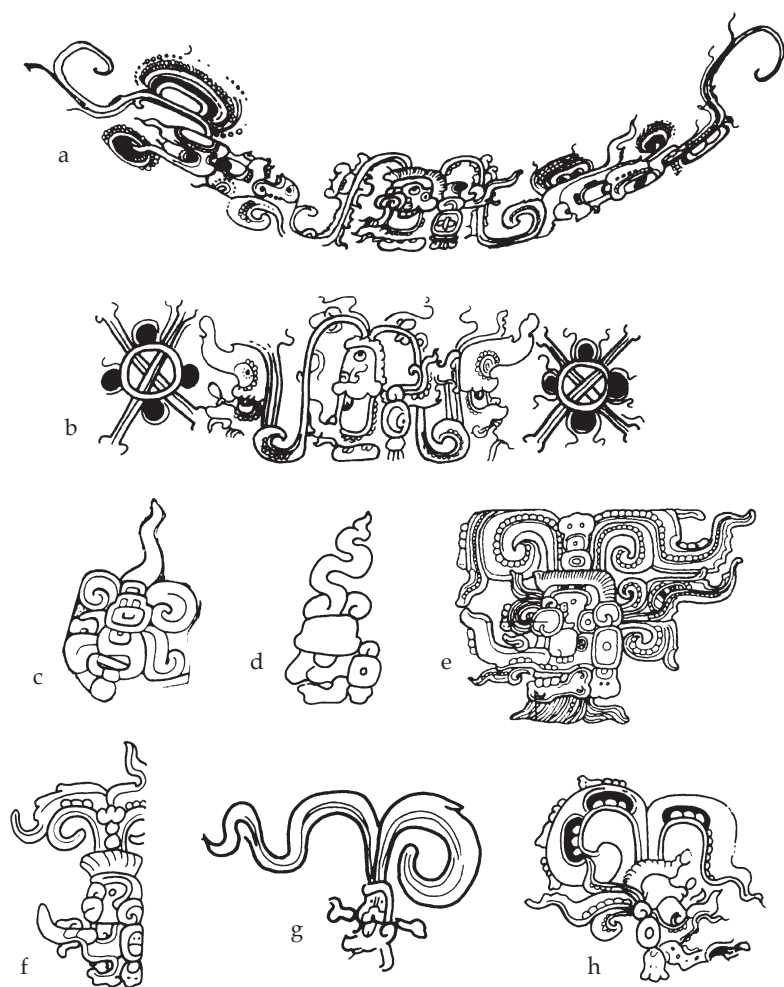


Figure 9. Hearthstone and fire iconography: (a) detail of three hearthstones at base of Cosmic Plate scene, note God C on forehead of central stone (see Figure 8c); (b) hearthstones in profile, crossed bands and Caban curl element possibly referring to *tan yol kab*, the world center (after Robicsek and Hales 1981:Table 3a); (c) smoking head at tip of serpent tail, Abaj Takalik Stela 5, Late Pre-Classic (detail of drawing courtesy of James Porter); (d) Early Classic smoking head on serpent tail, Altar 12, Tikal (after Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig. 59a); (e) smoking head on serpent tail, Lintel 3 of Temple IV, Tikal (drawing courtesy of Linda Schele); (f) smoking head on serpent tail, Lintel 14, Yaxchilan (after Graham and von Euw 1977:37); (g-h) smoking heads on serpent tails, details from codex-style vases (after Kerr 1992a:389, 1990:224).

heads seem to represent smoking censers, with the pair of outpouring volutes simultaneously referring to both vinelike growth and roiling smoke. In Late Classic Maya iconography, censers frequently exude similar symmetrical coils of plantlike smoke (Figure 10d-g).

Urns of the Temple

As the essential means of burning offerings or “food” for divine beings, censers form an obvious thematic link to the three-stone kitchen hearth. Simply put, incense burners are the kitchen hearths of the gods and ancestors.¹² In *Maya Cosmos*, the authors note that Classic offering vessels—namely, censers and the related cache vessels—denote the central place

¹² In contemporary Maya belief, fire offerings constitute the cooked maize sustenance or *wah* of divine beings (see Taube 1989d:38). The Kekchi, who describe *pom* incense as *x'wa Qaawa*, or “tortilla of our father,” use incense as a means of communication with the supernatural: “Pom carries the prayers upwards into the mouth of the Tzuultaq’a who consumes the smoke and the messages with it” (Wilson 1990:91). Whereas contemporary highland Maya copal commonly appears as small disks, resembling miniature tortillas, the ancient Maya typically offered copal balls, the same form as the favored Classic maize food, the tamale.

and serve as portals between the human plane and the divine (Freidel et al. 1993:214–218, 241). According to Freidel, Schele, and Parker (1993:454) spiked censers allude to the thorny ceiba trunk and, by extension, represent the *axis mundi*. In addition, Copan cache censers often display cacao pods on their sides as if they are growing trees laden with cacao (see Strömsvik 1941:Figs. 15d, 17a–b, 20c). However, aside from representing the central world tree, censers and cache vessels are also inextricably tied to temple architecture and iconography.

During the Classic period, Maya offering vessels frequently display the same iconographic formats found on stucco temple façades, that is, frontal faces framed by elaborate earspool assemblages with outwardly facing zoomorphic profiles. Although the similarities are particularly striking in Early Classic Maya art (see Hellmuth 1987a), certain Late Pre-Classic censers also resemble temple façades. One censer in the collections of the Denver Art Museum bears a visage strikingly similar to Late Pre-Classic stucco façades from Uaxactun and El Mirador (Figures 2a and 11a). The frontally facing mask of El Mirador Stela 18 probably denotes such a censer, here placed below an ancestral face with volutes of clouds or smoke (Figure 11b).

The prevalence of static, frontally facing masks on Classic censers and cache vessels is not because the early Maya were incapable of narrative art. Highly anecdotal scenes can be readily found in the Late Pre-Classic and Early Classic periods as well as in Late Classic Maya art. Instead, these masks mark censers and cache vessels as ritual urns of the temple. However, the vessels resemble temple façades for yet another reason. During particular ritual acts, these urns essentially became miniature temples, the seat and dwelling place of gods. I have recently noted that for the Classic Maya, lidded four-sided vessels frequently denote

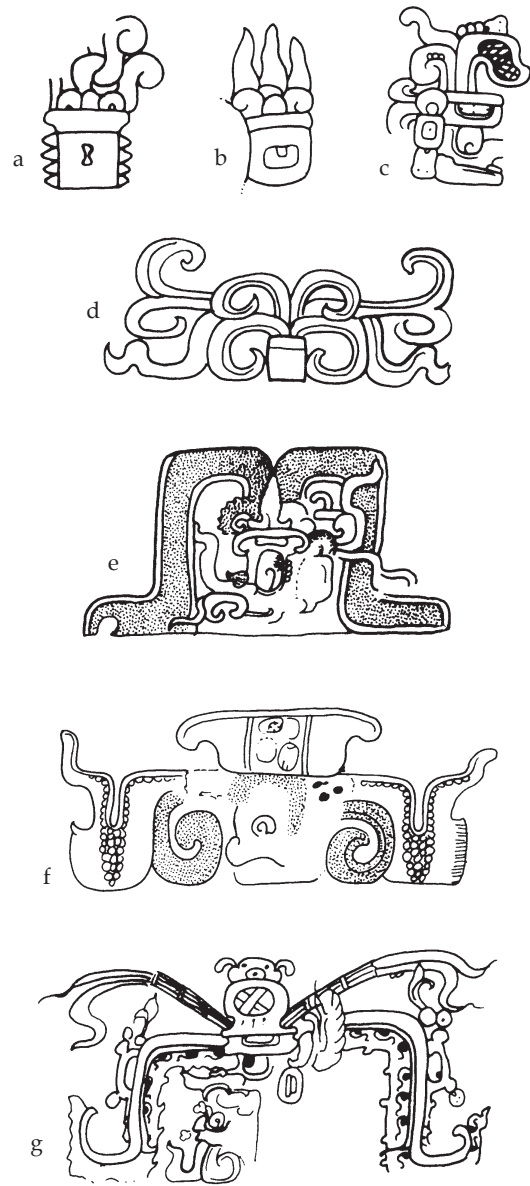
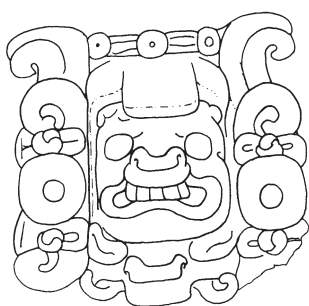
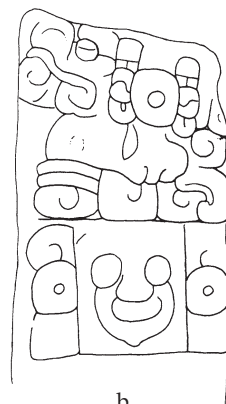


Figure 10. Censers in Late Pre-Classic and Classic Maya iconography: (a) three-pronged censer with burning offering, Izapa Stela 24 (after Norman 1973:Pl. 29); (b) burning three-pronged censer, Abaj Takalik Monument 62 (after Orrego Corzo 1990:Pl. 29); (c) burning zoomorphic censer with *k'in* bowl on brow, Yaxha Stela 31 (after drawing by Ian Graham); (d) burning vessel with symmetrical coils of smoke (after Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessel 18); (e) burning zoomorphic censer (after Kerr 1989:54); (f) zoomorphic censer with flanking plantlike coils (after Kerr 1992a:415); (g) zoomorphic censer with burning torches and inverted vessel (after Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessel 168).



a

Figure 11. Late Pre-Classic Maya censers: (a) early ceramic censer in Peten style, Denver Art Museum (after photograph in the Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research [FLAAR] slide archive, Dumbarton Oaks, slide EC-cc4-46/1); (b) descending ancestor consuming offering from burning censer, detail of El Mirador Stela 18 (after drawing by Stephen Houston).



b

houses, with the sloping lid representing the thatch roof (Taube 1994a:652; see Houston 1998). Although I focused my discussion on cache vessels, this is also true for four-sided censers. One Late Classic censer lid is clearly portrayed as a temple roof topped by three burning heads (Labbé 1982:24). A similar censer, here with the rectangular lower portion still intact, was discovered in the Cueva de los Andasolos, Chiapas. Like the previous example, the lid is topped with three heads, quite possibly the three stones in profile (Navarrete and Martínez 1977:Figs. 18-21). For those familiar with Teotihuacan art, the identification of censers with temples should come as no surprise. As early as 1922, Manuel Gamio (1922:29) noted that Teotihuacan censers appear to represent miniature temples.

Fire offerings were a central component of Classic Maya temple ritual. David Stuart notes that a primary event recorded in Classic dedication rites was *och k'ak'*, meaning "the fire entered" (Stuart 1998). Fire was the medium by which individuals conjured the gods through the offering of blood, copal, and other precious substances. These fire rites involved a ritual process that could be best described as focusing, a term derived from the Latin *focus*, meaning "hearth." During the ceremony, there was a focusing of scale and attention from the temple to the place of fire itself, which became the specific point of communication with the divine. In this context, censers became the concentrated embodiment of the temple and served as the house and seat of the conjured being. This ritual process of focusing continues in contemporary Lacandon censer rites, the primary means by which the Lacandon communicate with their gods. Contained within the temple god house, or *yatoch k'u*, the anthropomorphized god pot censers sleep until awakened for offerings of food and incense. When burning, the god pot and the precious jade stone inside become the *nah k'uh* or house of the god, and it is through this vessel that the ritual participants communicate with the deity (Davis 1978:22, 72-74, 77, 223).¹³

For ancient Maya temples, axial stairway altars were used for fire offerings, the same region as the three stone shrines of Tonina Structure E5-5 and Izapa Group B. Another Izapa

¹³ Tozzer (1907:87-88) notes that the Lacandon place a highly prized jade or other stone in the censers below the copal offering. The placement of jade in braziers is clearly pre-Hispanic in origin. At the highland site of Zaculeu, a Late Classic stone effigy censer contained a rounded jade cobble (Woodbury and Trik 1953:218, Fig. 178a-b). An Early Classic cache at Tikal contained a burned jade boulder with copal incense adhering to its upper surface (Coe 1990:355). In this ritual deposit, the boulder seems to have functioned as a jade hearth.

Group B structure, Mound 30i, displays a probable Late Pre-Classic form of the *wits* monster in the center of the stairway. Near this monument were the remains of two ceramic incense burners, indicating that this area was a locus of fire offerings (Lowe 1965:57). Writing of Late Pre-Classic Tikal, Ferree (1972:13-14) notes that censers were primarily at the front and base of temples. For all of the Classic phases of Zaculeu Structure 1, major fire offerings were centered at the base of the upper stairway (Woodbury and Trik 1953:28-30). At Late Classic Seibal, a four-sided stone slab hearth was placed at the base of the Structure 79 stairway (Smith 1982:165).

Aside from material evidence of burning, the texts and iconography associated with stairway shrines also provide important clues regarding their use and significance. At Chichen Itza, a tenoned stone disk was discovered in the stairway shrine of the Terminal Classic Caracol temple. The monument clearly portrays a fire ritual, with a brazier occupying the center of the scene (see Ruppert 1935:Fig. 169). Similarly, a Late Classic vessel depicts a burning censer atop a skull-shaped stairway block (see Figure 13a).

Many of the epigraphic references to fire ceremonies occur on square or rectangular panels, and many of these probably served as facings for stairway blocks placed on the central axis of temples (see Stuart 1998). This is certainly the case for the so-called Lintel 5 of Piedras Negras, which was found on the stairway slope of a temple lacking a vaulted superstructure (Satterthwaite 1936). Depicting a standing figure holding a spear, this monument is notably similar to a panel in the collections of Dumbarton Oaks (Figure 12a-b). On both panels, the long glyphic texts are stepped above the figure, creating a vaulted effect to suggest that the individual is standing within a chamber. As facings on projecting stairway blocks, these panels probably were shrines for the honored dead, who would be conjured during fire rituals atop these miniature houses. On the temple towers of the Río Bec-style Structure

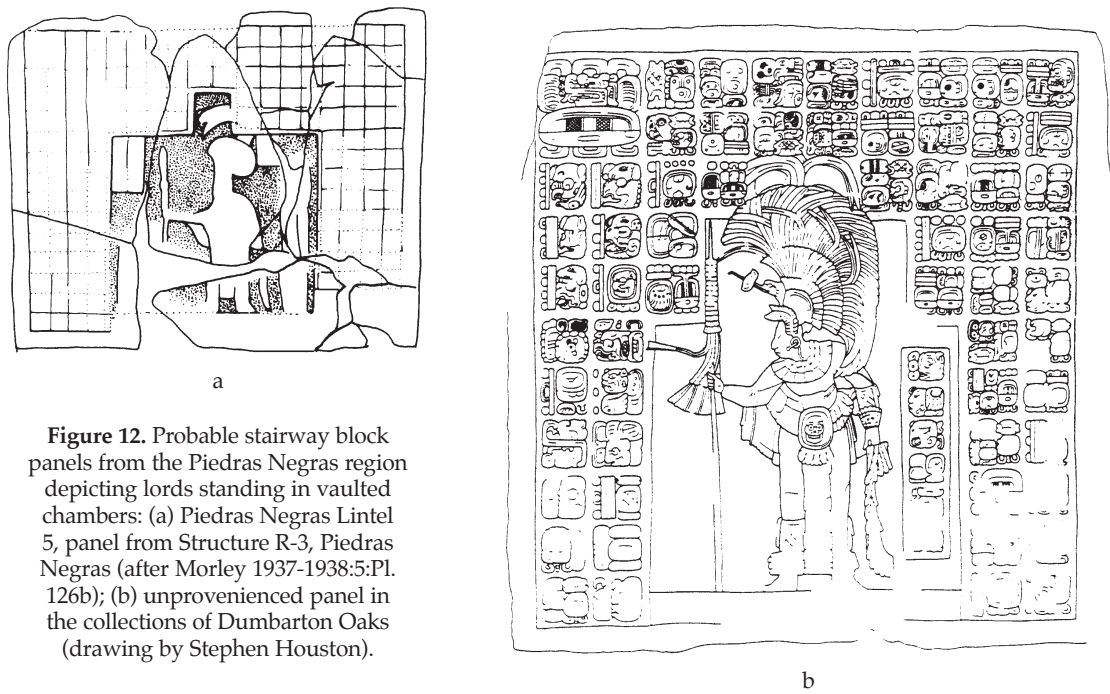


Figure 12. Probable stairway block panels from the Piedras Negras region depicting lords standing in vaulted chambers: (a) Piedras Negras Lintel 5, panel from Structure R-3, Piedras Negras (after Morley 1937-1938:5:Pl. 126b); (b) unprovenienced panel in the collections of Dumbarton Oaks (drawing by Stephen Houston).

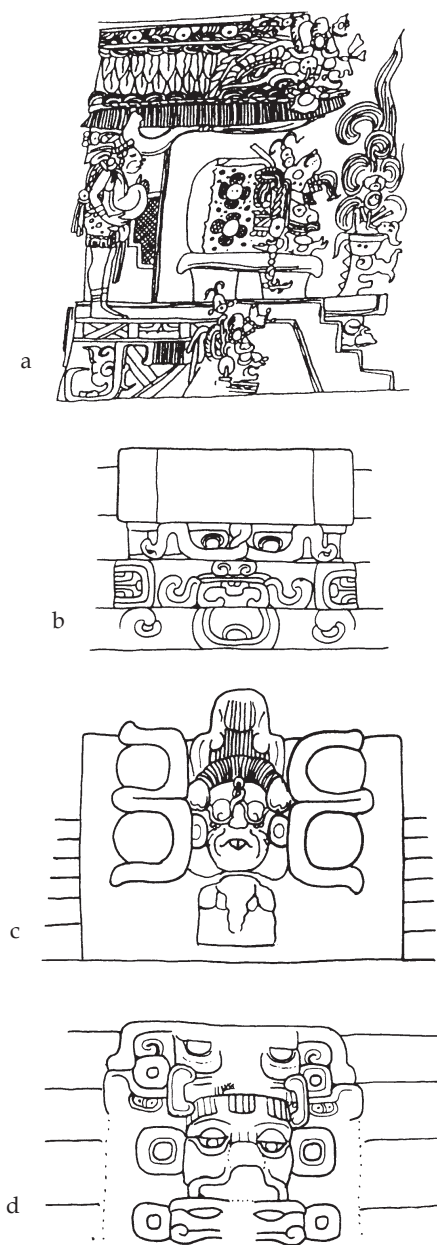


Figure 13. Stairway blocks in Maya art and architecture: (a) stairway block supporting burning censer, detail of incised vase (from drawing courtesy of Linda Schele); (b) Early Classic stairway block with face of Jaguar God of the Underworld, Structure 5D-22-3rd (after Coe 1990:Fig. 97a); (c) Late Classic Jaguar God of the Underworld stairway block from the Jaguar Stairway, Copan (after Anton 1970:Pl. 36); (d) sculptured stucco stairway block, Temple VI, Comalcalco (after Andrews 1989:Fig. 89).

II at Hormiguero, the false stairway blocks are rendered as miniature houses, quite possibly with thatched roofs (see Gendrop 1983:Fig. 40a-b). The *wits* monster stairway shrine of Tonina Structure E5-5 is simply a more developed form of this concept, with the open mouth representing the interior of the pyramidal mass (Figure 4).

In the modern Quiché town of Chichicastenango, a stone slab stairway block occurs at the base of the Santo Tomás church (see Robicsek 1978:Pl. 4). Used by Quiché day keepers for fire offerings and prayer, this stairway altar is much like a glorified public version of the semiprivate ancestral shrines. Known as *warabalja* or “sleeping houses,” the rectangular stone slab ancestral shrines are like houses for the dead, who are awakened and seated in the shrine with prayer and incense (see Tedlock 1992:76-77).

At times, Classic stairway blocks display frontal masks that closely resemble actual incense burners. An excellent Early Classic example from Tikal portrays the JGU, the probable Classic Maya god of fire (Figure 13b). William Coe (1990:352) notes that this sculpture was clearly used in fire rituals: “The entire surface of stairblock U. 29, found practically calcified, obviously became a special stage for burning.” The Jaguar Stairway at Copan portrays a Late Classic version of a JGU stairway block, and it is likely that this example was also used in fire offerings (Figure 13c). Another axial stairway block mask occurs at Comalcalco, a sculpture that strongly suggests a ceramic incense burner translated into stucco (Figure 13d).

If the large masks on stairway blocks represent censers, then what of the many stucco masks that emblazon the sides of temple platforms? There is evidence that censers were lined along the edges of temple platforms. A fragmentary mural from Chichen Itza depicts such a series of ceramic braziers on a temple platform (Morris et al. 1931:Fig. 168c). Excavations at the Palenque Temple of the Cross have revealed that elaborate flanged Palenquano censers were ranged along the temple terraces (González 1993). In both

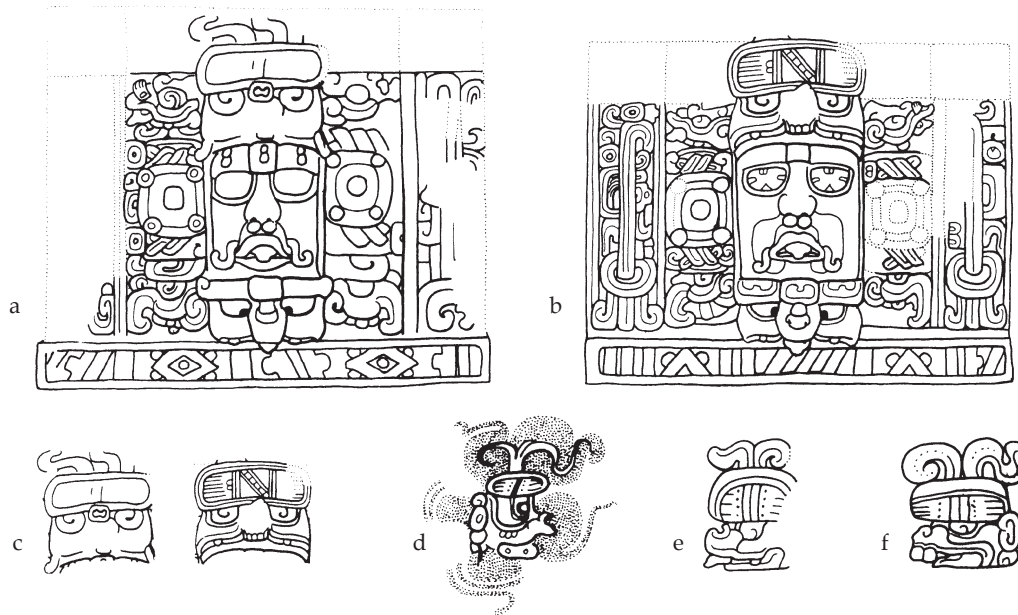


Figure 14. The Early Classic façades from Kohunlich and fire iconography: (a–b) two of the Kohunlich panels depicting Sun Gods wearing skeletal fire headdress—note smoke emanating from example at left (after Romano Pacheco et al. 1981); (c) detail of two skeletal fire sign headdresses; (d) burning skeletal fire sign, probably a censer, detail from Late Classic vessel (after Reents-Budet 1994:Fig. 5.10); (e–f) skeletal fire glyphs, Copan Altar K, Seibal Stela 9.

appearance and iconographic meaning, the great platform masks at Early Classic Kohunlich are very much like the Late Classic Palencano censers (Figure 14a–b). In addition, the Kohunlich masks wear skeletal headdresses topped by smoking fire signs (Figure 14c). In one Late Classic scene, this same skeletal head serves as a burning brazier and is identical to zoomorphic examples of the fire logograph (Figure 14d–f). The Kohunlich masks are representations of burning censers placed on the temple platforms.

The Jester God and the Jade Hearth

Recent iconographic research by Kent Reilly (1990) and Freidel, Schele, and Parker (1993:132–139) has established that Formative Olmec and Classic Maya rulership was closely tied to the concept of the world center—that is, the kings were frequently portrayed as the living embodiment of the *axis mundi*. This theme of centrality was graphically portrayed by the jewelry and costume worn on the royal body. For the Maya, an item of jade placed at the central crown of the head symbolized the world axis. Coined the Jester God by Schele (1974:49), this device commonly displays the themes of the world tree and the jade hearth.

Richard Hansen (1992:147–148) notes that the Classic Maya Jester God frequently bears the visage of the Principal Bird Deity, the pre-Hispanic form of Vucub Caquix. In support, Hansen cites a Late Classic Jester God displaying both avian and vegetal imagery (Figure 15i). The conflation of the monster bird with growing trees can be readily traced to the Late Pre-Classic Kaminaljuyu Stela 11 and the Dumbarton Oaks plaque, which portray rulers wearing Principal Bird Deity trees atop their heads. Both examples display three circles, quite probably the hearthstones in profile (Figure 15b–c). Schele and Miller (1986:120) identify

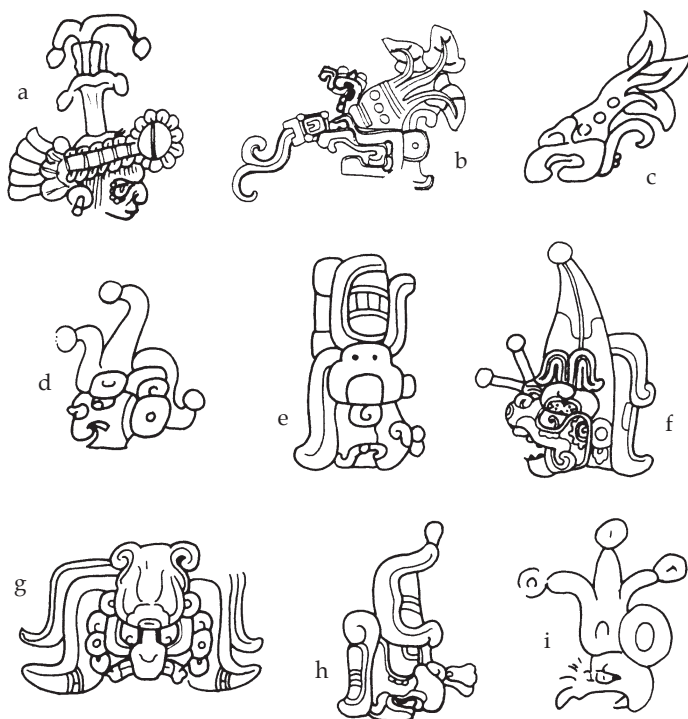


Figure 15. The aviform jade Jester God as the world axis: (a) anthropomorphic form of the Principal Bird Deity wearing world tree at crown of head (after Hellmuth 1987a:Fig. 719); (b) Jester God world tree with three balls on trunk, Stela 11, Kaminaljuyu (from Schele and Miller 1986:Pl. 32a); (c) Jester God world tree with three balls on trunk, Dumbarton Oaks plaque (after Coe 1966:Figs. 2, 7); (d) Jester God world tree with three balls on branches, Leiden Plaque (after Schele and Miller 1986:Pl. 33b); (e) Early Classic avian Jester God (after Miller 1986:Pl. 20); (f) smoking Jester God, Lamanai Stela 9 (after Reents-Budet 1988:Fig. 1); (g) avian Jester God with flanking foliage, Copan Stela P (after Fash 1991:Fig. 50); (h) Late Classic aviform Jester God, Temple of the Inscriptions sarcophagus, Palenque (after Schele and Miller 1986:Fig. 1.3i); (i) aviform Jester God as world tree (after Hansen 1992:Fig. 117g).

these headdress elements as personified forms of the *axis mundi*. However, foliated Jester Gods frequently appear in identical contexts in Classic Maya art. In addition to crowning the tops of heads, they often display the face of the Principal Bird Deity (Figure 15d-i). On the Leiden Plaque, the tree above the bird head supports three balls, probably the same three spheres appearing on the trunk of the cited Late Pre-Classic examples (Figure 15d). The blending of the monster bird and tree to represent the *axis mundi* is entirely apt, because this creature is the archetypal denizen of the world tree. Pre-Hispanic scenes of the bird being shot out of the tree are well-known and can be traced back to as early as the Late Pre-Classic period (see Coe 1989a). In one Late Classic vessel scene illustrating this episode, a growing tree tops the head of the monster bird (Figure 15a). Once severed from the defeated bird, this head would constitute the same form of the Jester God, a bird head sprouting a verdant tree.

The Jester God not only occurs as a single jade atop the head but also as a set of three encircling the brow. In this context, the three jades denote the *axis mundi* hearth. Richard Hansen (1992:146, 148) notes that La Mojarra Stela 1 depicts a Late Pre-Classic version of the triple-stone headband, here as flaming Principal Bird Deity heads (Figure 16e). Hansen (1992:146, 148) compares this headband to a Late Classic example from the Oval Palace Tablet at Palenque (Figure 16f). In fact, the triple Jester God headband is very common in Classic Maya iconography and appears in the monumental art of such sites as Machaquila, Seibal, Xultun, Yaxchilan, and Naranjo (Figure 16g-i).¹⁴ In addition, epigraphic references to the triple Jester God occur in texts from Early Classic Tikal and Yaxchilan as well as Late Classic

¹⁴ For examples aside from those illustrated, see Naranjo Stelae 12 and 14; Yaxchilan Lintel 58; Xultun Stelae 10 and 23; and Machaquila Stelae 3, 4, and 8. An Early Classic censer provides an in-the-round view of a triple Jester God headband worn by a monkey scribe (see Berjonneau et al. 1985:Pl. 365).

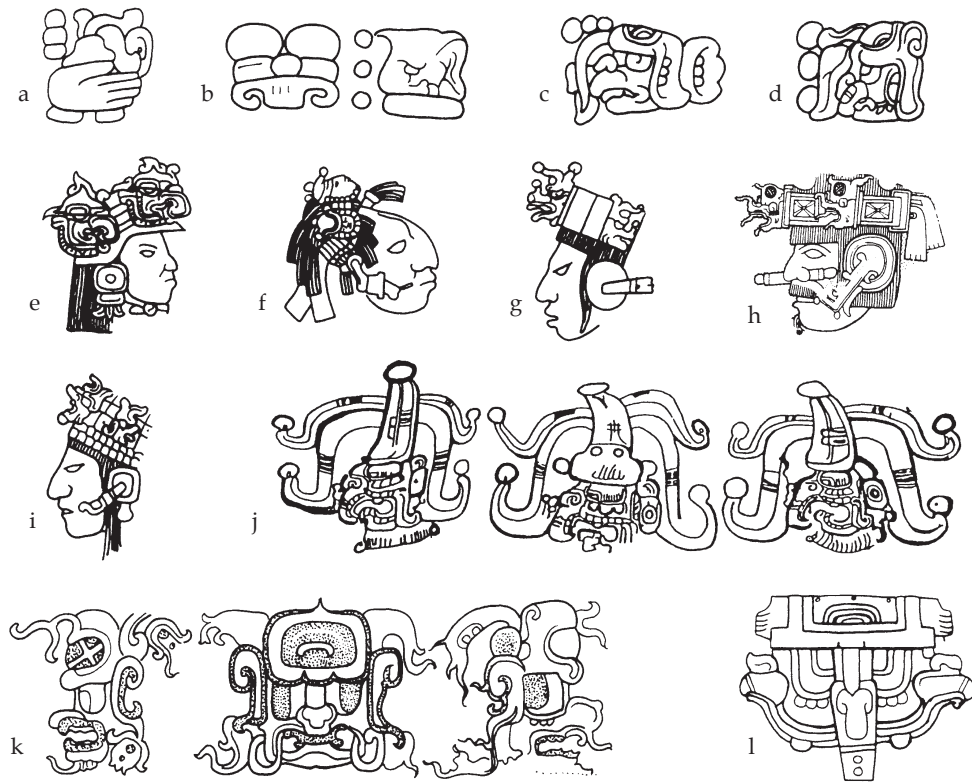


Figure 16. The triple Jester God in Maya epigraphy and art: (a) triple Jester God in accession expression, Tikal Stela 4 (after Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig. 5b); (b) triple Jester God preceded by *hun ahau* compound, Yaxchilan Lintel 20 (after Graham and von Euw 1977:47); (c) triple Jester God, possibly read *ox hun*, Copan Stela J (after field drawing by Barbara Fash); (d) Lord “Xoc” appellative, Palace Tablet, Palenque (after Schele 1979:Fig. 10); (e) Proto-Classic ruler with triple Jester God headdress, La Mojarra Stela 1 (after Winfield Capitaine 1988:Fig. 7); (f) triple Jester God headdress, Oval Palace Tablet, Palenque (after Schele 1979:Fig. 8); (g) triple Jester God headdress, Machaquila Stela 7 (after Graham 1967:Fig. 57); (h) triple Jester God headdress, Seibal Stela 10 (detail of drawing by James Porter); (i) triple Jester God headdress, Xultun Stela 3 (after von Euw 1978:15); (j) three Jester Gods painted on walls of Tomb 19, Río Azul (after Hall 1989:Fig. 15); (k) three Jester Gods in sky band of Room 1, Bonampak (after Miller 1986:Pl. 1); (l) conflated triple Jester God (after Berjonneau et al. 1985:Pl. 397).

Copan and Palenque (Figure 16a–d). One Late Classic Palenque ruler, Lord Xoc, adopted the triple Jester God as his name (Figure 16d). In the Palace Tablet scene illustrating this accession and naming, the protagonists are seated on three thrones marked with the heads of a jaguar, fish, and serpent (see Schele 1979:52). In the Quirigua Stela C account of the 4 Ahau 8 Cumku creation event, the three stones are described as jaguar, water, and serpent thrones (see Freidel et al. 1993:Fig. 2:5), a series virtually identical to the Palenque scene. The three Palenque thrones probably allude to the three precious stones embodied in the name of this king.

Rather than being limited to royal headbands, the triple Jester God also occurs in scenes to delineate the middle place. Three Early Classic Jester Gods appear on the walls of Tomb 19 of Río Azul (Figure 16j). The heads are that of the Principal Bird Deity topped by a tree. Each of the central tree trunks supports a large bead, much like the ball and columns from the three-stone group at Izapa. Whereas Río Azul Tomb 12 concerns the four directional sides of the cosmic house, Tomb 19 depicts the jade hearth and the middle place. In the Late

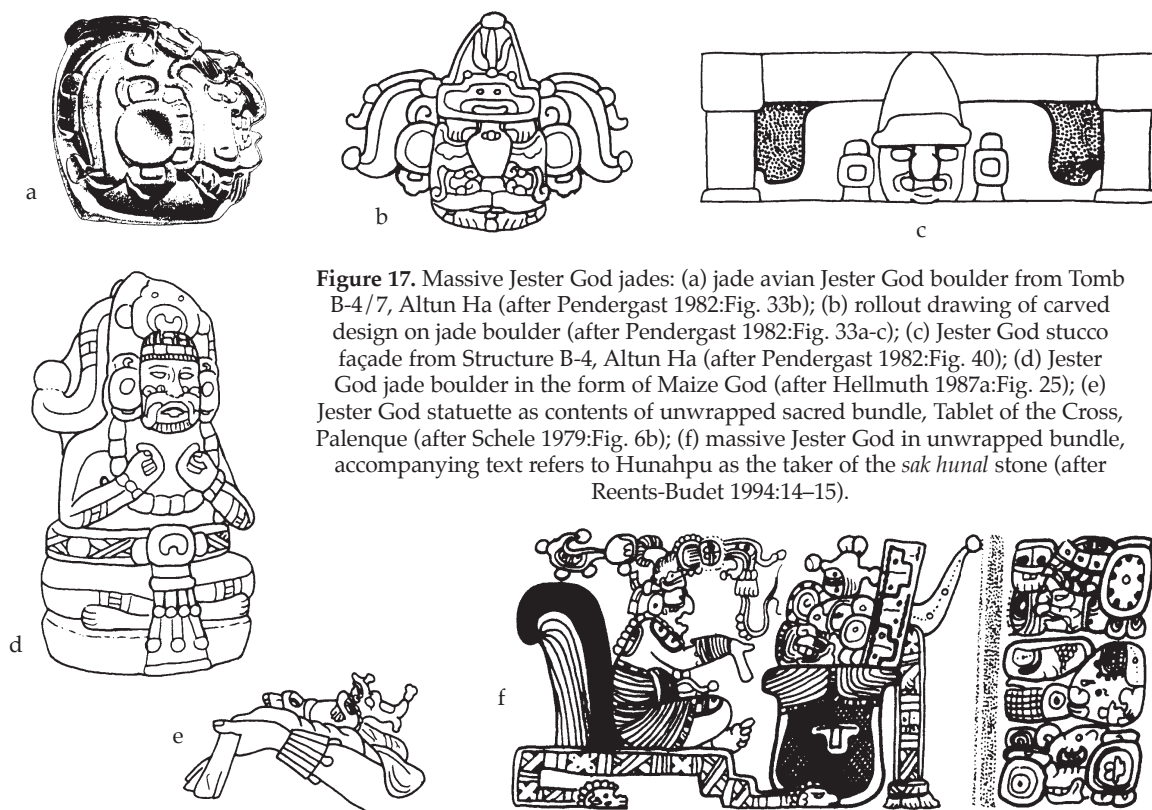


Figure 17. Massive Jester God jades: (a) jade avian Jester God boulder from Tomb B-4/7, Altun Ha (after Pendergast 1982:Fig. 33b); (b) rollout drawing of carved design on jade boulder (after Pendergast 1982:Fig. 33a-c); (c) Jester God stucco façade from Structure B-4, Altun Ha (after Pendergast 1982:Fig. 40); (d) Jester God jade boulder in the form of Maize God (after Hellmuth 1987a:Fig. 25); (e) Jester God statuette as contents of unwrapped sacred bundle, Tablet of the Cross, Palenque (after Schele 1979:Fig. 6b); (f) massive Jester God in unwrapped bundle, accompanying text refers to Hunahpu as the taker of the *sak hunal* stone (after Reents-Budet 1994:14–15).

Classic murals of Bonampak Structure 1, the triple Jester God hovers in the sky above the Room 1 accession and coronation (Figure 16k). At times, the triple Jester God can be united as a single stone representing both the flanking profiles and the middle frontal face (Figure 16l). This convention reveals that the zoomorphic *yaxhal wits nal* or “greening maize mountain” depicted on the Tablet of the Foliated Cross at Palenque is actually the three-stone place from which the Maize God emerges.

Although Jester God images tend to be relatively small articles of adornment, massive examples do exist. Carved from jade boulders, these may well have served as the sacred, precious hearthstones of the community. Stephen Houston (personal communication, 1989) notes that the massive, round jade boulder from the Sun God’s tomb at Altun Ha is actually a Jester God (Figure 17a). If spread out, the design can be identified readily as the head of the Principal Bird Deity topped by the world tree (Figure 17b). As Pendergast (1982:48, 73) notes, this same entity appears as stucco masks on the sides of Structure B-4, the temple containing the tomb (Figure 17c). Projecting out from the upper stairway of Structure B-4, the Sun God’s tomb is a massive stairway block, much like the aforementioned stairway blocks used in fire offerings. Both the tomb roof and the adjacent round altar on the open temple summit bear evidence of burning, and clearly fire was an important ritual focus of Structure B-4 (Pendergast 1982:46, 72, 110, 117). Although it is not known whether the Jester God boulder was actually used in fire rituals, this spherical jade carving probably represented a sacred hearthstone.

Aside from the Altun Ha boulder, other massive carved jades can be cited as probable sacred hearthstones. An Early Classic jade statuette depicting the Maize God with a Jester

God headdress may also be a symbolic hearthstone (Figure 17d). This large jade—as well as similar examples from Copan and other sites (e.g., Fash 1991:Pls. 8, 9; Kelemen 1969:Pl. 242a-b)—was probably the prized contents of a sacred bundle. The Tablets of the Cross and Foliated Cross at Palenque portray images of large Jester Gods in the center of unwrapped cloth bundles (Figure 17e). A Late Classic polychrome represents another unwrapped Jester God bundle, here placed before God D, the anthropomorphic counterpart of the Principal Bird Deity (Figure 17f). Portrayed as a rounded skull, the bundle image is capped with the same jeweled tree commonly found with Jester Gods, including the Altun Ha example. In the accompanying text, the head is qualified with the *sak* or “white” prefix, in probable reference to *sak hunal*, a Classic term for the Jester God (Schele 1991).

In early colonial Quiche accounts, the sacred bundle carried and cared for by the temple priests is explicitly described as a fire (*gagal*) bundle. The *El título de los señores de Totonicapán* describes the contents of the *Giron-Gagal* bundle as a sacred stone (Recinos 1950:205, n. 3).¹⁵ In the Late Classic Vase of the Seven Gods scene illustrating the 4 Ahau 8 Cumku event, God L sits on a jaguar throne surrounded by three bundles, quite probably containing the three stones of the 4 Ahau 8 Cumku creation event (see Freidel et al. 1993:Fig. 2:6). Another Late Classic polychrome portrays an actual king seated on a throne above two large bundles; next to the throne, there is a rotund stone image of approximately the same rounded shape and dimensions as the nearby bundles (see Kerr 1992a:370).¹⁶ Like the Izapa three-stone group and the Vase of the Seven Gods, this scene probably illustrates the throne accompanied by the three sacred stones of rulership, here with one unwrapped from its enclosing bundle. It is quite likely that such sacred hearthstones were passed through generations of kings as statements of sovereignty and territory, in terms not of a simple house but of an entire political domain.

The aforementioned scene illustrating God D with the unwrapped Jester God bundle is a mythical corollary of elite dynastic behavior (Figure 17f). The accompanying text states that the spotted headband twin, Hunahpu, is the taker of this stone, and both Hunahpu and his father, the Maize God, also appear on this vessel (see Reents-Budet 1994:14-15). Along with serving as the personified form of the day name Ahau, meaning “king” or “lord,” Hunahpu embodies the proper roles and behavior of Maya kings (Coe 1989a). One of the major mythical tasks performed by this god is carrying and placement of the sacred hearthstones (Kerr 1994:549; Taube 1988d:Figs. 72, 74).¹⁷ A large and finely carved Early Classic

¹⁵ The identification of bundles with fire ritual and the three hearthstones is not restricted to the Maya. John Pohl (personal communication, 1994) notes that the Mixtec sacred bundles typically appear with the fire drill and stick. As part of the nose-piercing accession rite illustrated on Codex Nuttall page 52, the Mixtec king 8 Deer stands before a sacred bundle. Byland and Pohl (1994:140-148) note that the accompanying priest 4 Jaguar is portrayed as a Chichimec and suggest that the nose-piercing scene concerns ritual ties to peoples of Central Mexico. Along with the nose-piercing rite of accession, the sacred bundle was an essential ritual component of Chichimec rulership. In the *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*, after Itzpapalotl introduces the Chichimec to the three sacred hearthstones, her body is burned and a sacred bundle is made from her remains (Bierhorst 1992:23). In the immediately preceding scene on Nuttall pages 51 and 52, 8 Deer appears with three stones placed on mountains. It appears that, like the Chichimec *Anales de Cuauhtitlan* episode of the Itzpapalotl bundle, 8 Deer is shown gathering the three sacred stones used in the sacred bundle ceremony.

¹⁶ In another Late Classic vessel scene, an enthroned king is portrayed with three bundles. As in the previous example, the scene concerns the arraignment of captives (see Kerr 1994:550).

¹⁷ One particular Classic *way* illustrated on the Altar de Sacrificios vase appears as Hunahpu carrying a large, rounded stone. The same *way* character occurs on a stylistically very similar vase surrounded by three stones (see Reents-Budet 1994:174).

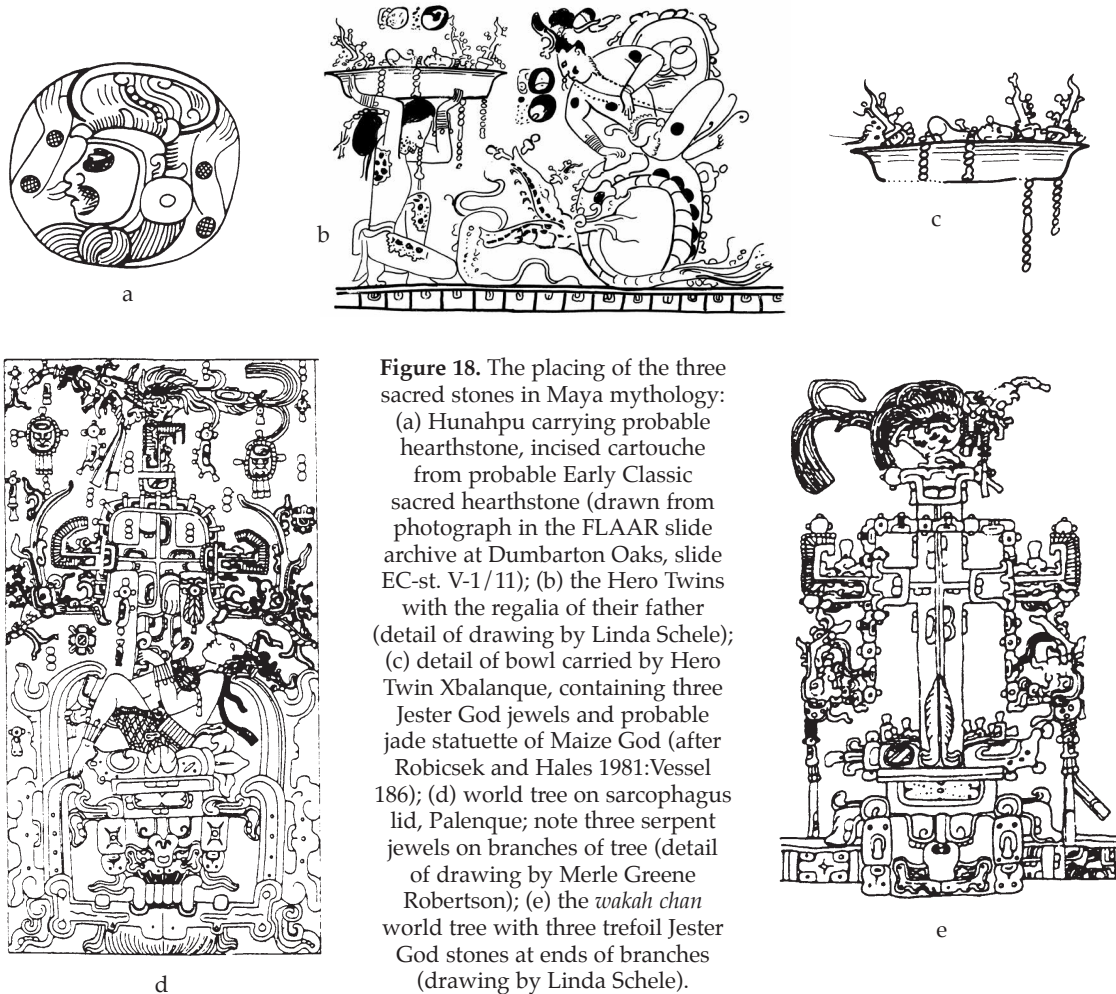


Figure 18. The placing of the three sacred stones in Maya mythology: (a) Hunahpu carrying probable hearthstone, incised cartouche from probable Early Classic sacred hearthstone (drawn from photograph in the FLAAR slide archive at Dumbarton Oaks, slide EC-st. V-1/11); (b) the Hero Twins with the regalia of their father (detail of drawing by Linda Schele); (c) detail of bowl carried by Hero Twin Xbalanque, containing three Jester God jewels and probable jade statuette of Maize God (after Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessel 186); (d) world tree on sarcophagus lid, Palenque; note three serpent jewels on branches of tree (detail of drawing by Merle Greene Robertson); (e) the *wakah chan* world tree with three trefoil Jester God stones at ends of branches (drawing by Linda Schele).

limestone sphere—quite probably a sacred hearthstone—portrays Hunahpu carrying such a stone above his head (Figure 18a) (see Hellmuth 1987a:Fig. 29).

The carrying and setting of the hearthstones by the Hero Twins introduces the apparent climax of the Classic Popol Vuh epic, the resurrection of their father, the Maize God. In one now well-known resurrection scene, the Maize God rises out of the middle of a turtle shell marked by a burning skull hearth (see Taube 1993a:Cover, 77). Much like the accession scene in Bonampak Room 1, Hunahpu seems to be dressing his father in his jade finery. Another Late Classic codex-style vessel represents the Hero Twins carrying the sacred bundle and a bowl filled with the jade of their father (Figure 18b–c). The contents are three beaded serpent jewels—the form of the Jester God worn by the Maize God—and a seated image, quite probably one of the aforementioned Maize God jade statuettes (Figure 18b). Whereas the accompanying text mentions the Maize God entering the water (*och ha*) as the *wak ahau* or raised-up lord, a closely related bundle and jade dressing scene describes him as entering a road, or *och bil* (see Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessel 82). The same reference to entering the road occurs on the sarcophagus text of Pacal, who in the accompanying scene is portrayed as the Maize God at the base of the world tree (Figure 18d) (Freidel et al. 1993:76–77). The tree

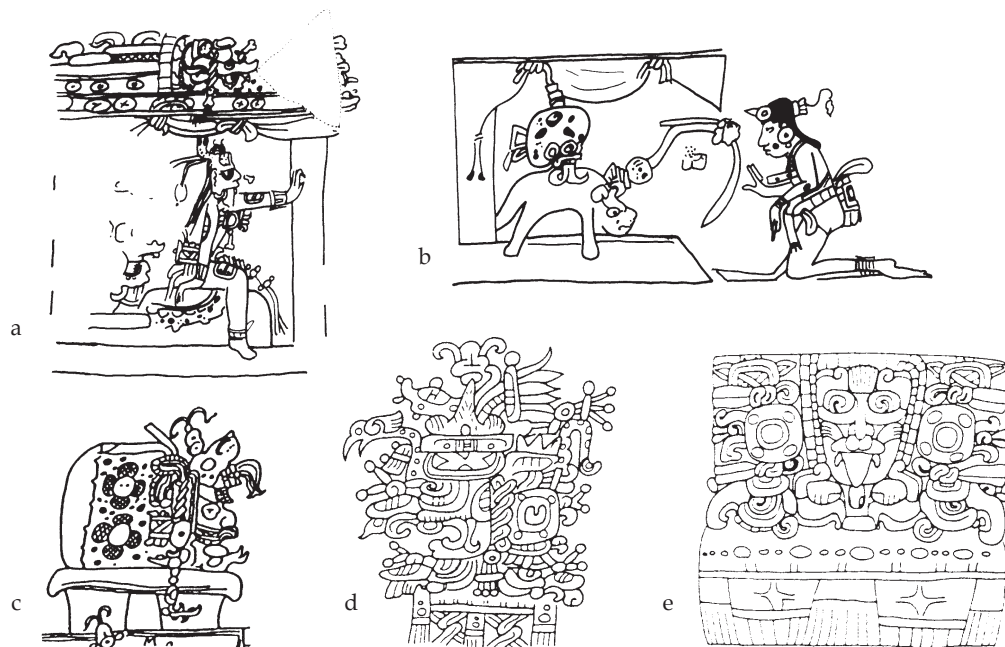


Figure 19. Enthroned headdresses in Classic Maya art: (a) detail of Late Classic vessel scene illustrating probable headdress behind enthroned Pax God (after Kerr 1992a:378); (b) Hunahpu facing Tlaloc headdress on jaguar throne (after Kerr 1990:192); (c) enthroned headdress (see Figure 13a); (d) Early Classic representation of headdress atop jaguar cushion throne with Pop signs (from Hellmuth 1987a:Fig. 82); (e) Early Classic depiction of GI face and headdress atop jaguar cushion throne with *po* signs (after Hellmuth 1987a:Fig. 115).

branches are tipped by the same three serpent Jester God jewels carried by Xbalanque in the aforementioned scene (Figure 18b–c).

The authors of *Maya Cosmos* note that the world tree on the Palenque sarcophagus lid is the same *wakah chan* or “raised-up sky” tree depicted on the Tablet of the Cross (Freidel et al. 1993:71, 77–78). In addition to the serpent jewels on the two lower branches, the ends of all three tree limbs are tipped by a trefoil device (Figure 18e). This form is commonly found with Jester Gods and, in the case of the Late Pre-Classic Dumbarton Oaks plaque, serves as the glyph for the Jester God headband (Coe 1966:Fig. 11, B3). Moreover, as jeweled world trees rising out of avian censers, the two Palenque trees are strikingly similar to examples of Jester Gods (Figure 15d–i). The texts of both the Palenque Temple of the Cross and Quirigua Stela C state that the three green hearthstones were lifted into the sky by the *wakah chan* tree (Freidel et al. 1993:67, 71–72). It appears that the *wak chan ahau*, or lord of this tree, was the Maize God (Freidel et al. 1993:73). Freidel, Schele, and Parker (1993:418, n. 21) note that, in this context of resurrection, the Maize God is a personified version of the world tree.¹⁸ By wearing the three jade jewels, the resurrected Maize God became the world tree supporting the three green hearthstones. When the king placed the triple Jester God on his head, he reenacted this basic creation event, the raising of the green hearth and the *axis mundi* into the sky.

¹⁸ Virginia Fields (1991) makes a compelling case that a great deal of the Jester God imagery concerns maize and can be traced back to Middle Formative Olmec iconography. However, in her study, Fields focuses specifically on maize rather than the broader significance of the Jester God as the world axis.

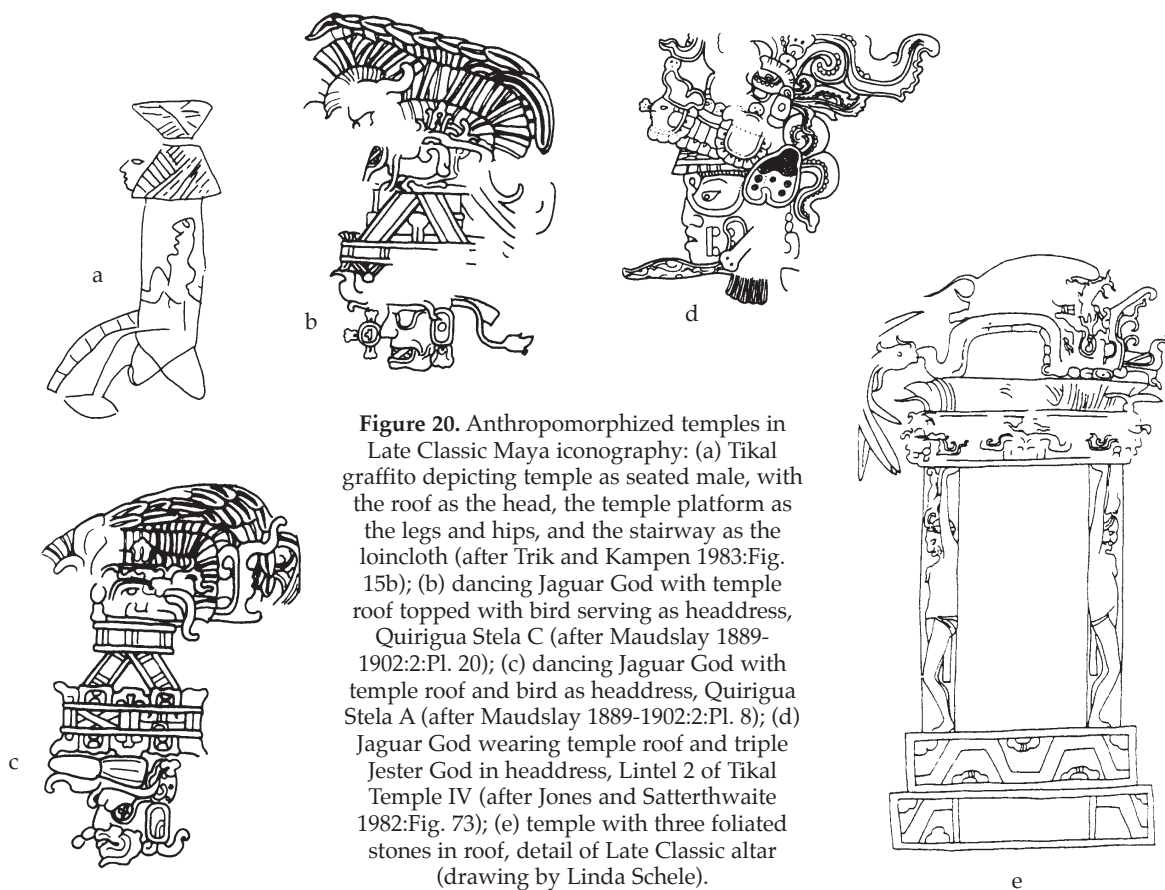


Figure 20. Anthropomorphized temples in Late Classic Maya iconography: (a) Tikal graffito depicting temple as seated male, with the roof as the head, the temple platform as the legs and hips, and the stairway as the loincloth (after Trik and Kampen 1983:Fig. 15b); (b) dancing Jaguar God with temple roof topped with bird serving as headdress, Quirigua Stela C (after Maudslay 1889-1902:2:Pl. 20); (c) dancing Jaguar God with temple roof and bird as headdress, Quirigua Stela A (after Maudslay 1889-1902:2:Pl. 8); (d) Jaguar God wearing temple roof and triple Jester God in headdress, Lintel 2 of Tikal Temple IV (after Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig. 73); (e) temple with three foliated stones in roof, detail of Late Classic altar (drawing by Linda Schele).

The Temple and the King

Classic Maya temples were by no means aloof and impersonal objects divorced from the human plane. Not only are rulers portrayed on temples, but they were directly involved with the temple rites; the vast majority of stelae and other Classic Maya monuments are oriented to temples, not palace structures. One of the most common themes on Classic monuments is ritual impersonation and dance, an essential component of temple worship. Certain headdresses used in these dances were prized and sacred articles of the temple. In Late Classic vessel scenes, headdresses appear on thrones within temples, as if sentient embodiments of the divine being (Figure 19a–c). In one revealing scene, the spotted twin Hunahpu approaches such an enthroned headdress as if greeting an omnipotent lord (Figure 19b). This convention of placing headdresses on thrones is not limited to Late Classic art; it also occurs on Early Classic censers and cache vessels (Figure 19d–e).

In Classic Maya art, it is often difficult to distinguish between temple headdresses and censers (e.g., Figure 19a and c–e). The similarity partly serves to group both as temple items, but the relationship between censers and headdresses goes further. Classic vessel scenes show headdresses with burning censers, as if they were part of fire-conjuring rites (e.g., Figure 13a) (Coe 1973:82; Kerr 1990:192; Kerr 1992a:378). Like censers, headdresses become the seat or house of the divine being during ritual impersonation. As symbolic homes and mediums for the divine, dance headdresses are much like “censers in motion,” and possibly for this reason

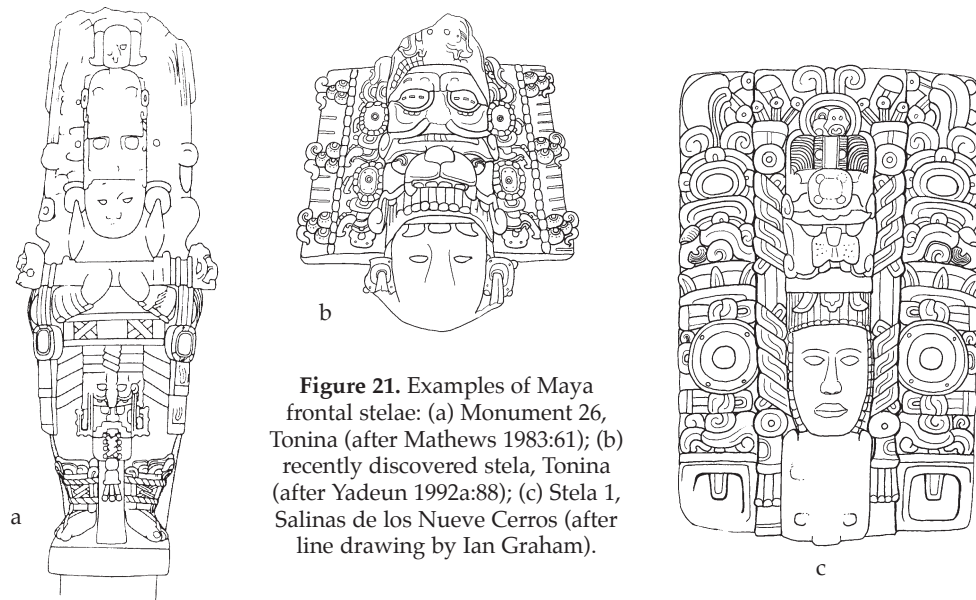


Figure 21. Examples of Maya frontal stelae: (a) Monument 26, Tonina (after Mathews 1983:61); (b) recently discovered stela, Tonina (after Yadeun 1992a:88); (c) Stela 1, Salinas de los Nueve Cerros (after line drawing by Ian Graham).

the Maya elite—especially women—often wear symbolic “Quadripartite Badge” censers as headdresses (e.g., Tikal Stela 2, Yaxchilan Lintels 14 and 32, Naranjo Stela 24).

As a form of reciprocal metaphor (see Houston 1998), headdresses are not only compared to miniature temples or god houses, but temples themselves frequently evoke the qualities of ritual headdresses. As repositories of divine spirit, temples were considered much like living beings. In one remarkable Tikal graffito, a temple is personified as a seated man, with the roof serving as its head, the supporting platform as the lower legs and body, and the stairway as the loincloth (Figure 20a). Among the Maya, the temple roof constitutes the symbolic headdress of the building. This same concept can be observed in Teotihuacan-style *incensarios*. Although Gamio (1922:29) suggested that the composite ceramic censer represents a miniature temple, the interior space contains not an entire figure but, rather, a large single face, creating an architectonic headdress out of the surrounding assemblage (see Berlo 1984). On the aforementioned Quirigua Stela C and the closely related Stela A, jaguar figures wear temple roofs and surmounting birds as headdresses, as if they are dancing personified temples (Figure 20b–c). Stephen Houston (personal communication, 1994) notes that the great jaguar litter figure of Lintel 2 of Tikal Temple IV wears a thatched temple roof on its head, much as if it were a headdress (Figure 20d). The roof element is partially obscured by a triple Jester God headband. The three *wits* monster heads frequently ranged along the lower front portions of temple roofs are probably architectonic versions of the triple Jester God headband (Figure 20e).¹⁹

The overlapping themes of temple, censer, and headdress are frequently portrayed on Classic Maya frontal stelae (Figure 21a–b). The frontal stelae of Copan, Quirigua, and Tonina display an elaborate concern with headdresses, frequently formed of stacked heads

¹⁹ Other examples of three *wits* heads on the lower front of temple façades occur on Tikal Temples I and II, Yaxchilan Structures 20 and 33, and Bonampak Structure 1. Although additional *wits* heads tend to continue on the flanking sides, the consistent appearance of three heads on the frontal façades suggests that the triadic grouping constitutes the central and essential message.

and earspool assemblages accompanied by outwardly facing profiles. When wearing these headdresses in ritual, the kings would appear as animated versions of temple and censer iconography. At certain sites, there are stone monuments depicting only the head and head-dress, intermediate forms between stelae and censers. Although major stone monuments, the “stelae” of Salinas de los Nueve Cerros are strikingly like flanged censers (Figure 21c). Moreover, elaborate texts cover the sides and backs of Palenque stone censer supports, as if these monuments constituted the Palenque version of stelae (see Schele and Mathews 1979:Nos. 281, 282, 303, 391). But perhaps the most striking example of the ambiguity between frontal stelae, temples, and censers is Structure 1 at the Chenes site of Nocuchich. Some 5 m in height, it is a solid masonry tower displaying a massive frontal face (Pollock 1970:43-44). Originally supplied with broad flanges on its sides, Structure 1 is a unique blending of censer, stela, and temple.

Schele and Freidel (1990:90-91) note that Classic stelae frequently portray kings as the world tree to denote the *axis mundi*. However, aside from tree imagery, frontal stelae also evoke the concepts of temples and their censers to describe the middle place. In terms of Maya cities, this use of temple imagery in costume is especially evocative, as it not only places the king in the world axis but also unites him to the sacred architectural landscape. Flora Clancy (1988:209) contrasts the static quality of the full-frontal stelae of Copan and Quirigua with profile representations of rulers: “the full-frontal figures may be understood as representing the godlike or herolike qualities of Maya rulership, and the asymmetrical representations narrate the ruler’s actions and deeds.” The same can be said of the great frontal masks and figures displayed on temple buildings. By wearing temple costume and motifs, the king becomes the living embodiment of the temple and its divine occupants.

Conclusions

In their seminal identification of the three hearthstones in Classic Maya inscriptions, Freidel, Schele, and Parker (1993) have opened up entirely new vistas for interpreting Maya architecture and cosmology. In this study, I have stressed that the hearth is a central motif of temple architecture, ritual, and iconography. As the vitalizing centers of temples, censers symbolized the basic three-stone hearth of the Maya household. Through the ritual process of focusing, censers constituted the house and seat of conjured gods. In addition to actual censers, temple stairway block shrines and three-legged altars also evoked the three-stone hearth. As plans of the *axis mundi*, radial stairway temples were closely identified with the central hearth and appear to have been important places for fire-making rituals.

The recognition of the three hearthstones in profile has intriguing implications for the interpretation of Maya architecture and iconography. When the hearthstones are in profile, the central stone represents the middle place, flanked and framed by the other two stones. Freidel, Schele, and Parker (1993:140) note that the plan of certain triadic architectural groupings reflects the three stones as if seen from above. However, it is quite possible that series of three linearly oriented temples, such as found with Classic E-Groups, also allude to the three stones, albeit not in plan but in profile. In this regard, David Stuart (personal communication, 1994) has called my attention to such a grouping at Dos Pilas Structure L5-49. The middle structure of this three-temple platform contained Panel 18, which mentions the 4 Ahau 8 Cumku event and the green hearthstones (see Houston 1993a:23, Fig. 4-4). Stuart notes that this monument is epigraphically labeled as a “fire stone” and suggests that it may

have been used in fire-making rituals.

In this study, I have stressed that the frontal mask panels and profile earspool assemblages constitute references to temples and related objects, whether these be censers, headdresses, or even the body of the king. Along with the temple, they also served as symbolic *axes mundi*—conduits and temporary “homes” for conjured beings. With the outwardly facing profile heads, the frontal masks themselves embody the concept of centrality. Much like the hearthstones in profile, the flanking profile heads on the headdress and earspool assemblages frame the central frontal face (Figure 21a–c). In the Classic frontal representations, the smaller profile masks qualify the central face, which serves as the active and dominant image. A similar pattern can be discerned for many of the temple façades discussed in this study. Here the sculptures on the sides of the central axis frame and qualify the “real” events and players. Thus, at Late Pre-Classic Uaxactun and Late Classic Hochob, false doorways flank the actual central passage. For the Tonina stairway shrine, false stucco hearthstones frame an actual central hearthstone, whereas at Copan, zoomorphic *tun* stones may have flanked a similarly appearing *tun* censer placed on the central axis. A similar case could be made for the great masks on the sides of the central stairway, which serve to qualify and frame the burning censers and costumed impersonators moving along the stairway and central axis of the building.

As localized embodiments of the sacred world axis, both rulers and temples are frequently portrayed with similar accoutrements and iconography. As early as Late Pre-Classic Izapa, the throne of kingship was identified with both the world axis and the temple. The three raised hearthstones behind this throne were also worn as precious jades on the brow of the king. When wearing the triple Jester God headband, the king was a living embodiment of the *axis mundi*, as both a verdant tree and a jade hearth. The three *wits* forms commonly found on the lower front of temple façades are probably architectonic versions of this triple-stone headband. But, although striking, the many symbolic parallels between the living kings and temples fade in comparison to funerary temples, which serve as the homes and embodiment of the deceased king. Much as Clancy suggests for frontal stelae, the static and archaic nature of temple façades serves to portray what is enduring and constant in Maya kingship and religion, linking the generations of the living to the honored dead.

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