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*Cover illustration:*

GI 'Hunahpu

Birth: 1.18.5.3.2 9 Ik 15 Ceh 2697 B.C.

Drawing by Linda Schele

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# The Classic Maya Maize God: A Reappraisal

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## *Introduction*

Academic interest in the Classic Maya maize god has undergone three general phases of growth and decay. The most vigorous period of research occurred during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Due to contributions by Seler (1902-1923, 1963, 1976), Schellhas (1897, 1904b), Spinden (1913), and others (e.g., Dieseldorff 1922; Goodman 1897), Classic and Postclassic forms of the maize god were delineated and analyzed. Hieroglyphs pertaining to maize and the agricultural cycle were also identified, commonly with the use of early post-Conquest colonial sources. Frequent and often fruitful comparisons were made with agricultural deities and rituals of Central Mexico. This was clearly the time in which most of the iconographic data concerned with maize was discovered and described.

During the following period of study, extending from the early 1920's to the mid-1960's, there was comparatively little concern with semantic particulars. Identifications of the deity seem often to have been based less on symbolic features than on general good looks. The Classic deity was used as a subjective means of supporting the then current assumptions concerning Classic Maya society and culture. His presence suggested the importance of slash-and-burn maize agriculture. The god's refined features and graceful bearing evoked the Apollonian qualities for which the Maya were so admired. Passivity, generosity, and self-sacrifice were traits which could be seen both for the maize god and the supposedly peaceful Classic Maya. His continual death and rebirth reinforced the famed Maya concept of cyclical time, which was devoid of personal interests or linear historical development. In short, until recently the maize god has served as a convenient symbol for perceiving the Classic Maya.

In the third and present period of study, the maize god has been virtually ignored. There is now something essentially dated about the entity, as if he embodies the previous assumptions discarded over the last several decades. Recent studies concerned with Classic Maya subsistence have demonstrated that the Maya were not simply slash-and-burn agriculturalists, but also engaged in such intensive farming methods as soil improvement, terracing,

irrigation canals, and raised fields. Instead of being incorporated into the new data concerned with intensive agriculture, the maize god seems to have died with the supposed preeminence of swidden farming. Beginning with the epigraphic work of Berlin (1958), Proskouriakoff (1960, 1961b), and Kelley (1962), it has become increasingly apparent that such historic details as dynastic descent, accession to office, and intersite marriage and warfare formed the central subject of Classic Maya inscriptions. It has been found that the principal figures carved upon monuments are neither gods nor temple priests but rulers in positions of personal aggrandizement. In consequence, most recent iconographic work has been far more concerned with political sanctification than with agricultural fertility and the seasonal cycle. The recognition of widespread warfare and sacrifice has set a far more violent tone for the Classic Maya, one in which the refined and even somewhat effeminate maize god seems to no longer belong. In the following study it will be argued that the Classic maize god is not an outmoded concept. The deity's present unimportance is due to a lack of subsequent study, not because he has nothing more to reveal.

## *The Tonsured Maize God:*

In his description of the codical God E, Schellhas (1897, 1904b:24-25) was the first to isolate the attributes and nominal glyph of the Postclassic maize god. Schellhas correctly identified the god as male, although his fine features first caused Förstemann (1906:60) to consider him female. The Postclassic deity is usually portrayed with maize foliation emerging from the top of his head; Schellhas noted that this foliation converts the youthful head into a maize cob. The Kan glyph, previously identified by Thomas (1882:80) as a maize grain, is frequently infixed into the foliated head. Seler (1902-1923, III:593) first noted that the nominal glyph of God E is markedly similar to the Classic numeral eight head variant identified by Goodman (1897:46). Seler mentioned that both the Classic head variant and the Postclassic nominal glyphs have a forehead spiral and a maize cob curling down from the back of the head.<sup>1</sup> Because

of these parallels, Seler stated that the numeral eight head variant also represents the maize god.

A number of Classic maize deity identifications were made by Spinden (1913). Following Schellhas and Seler, Spinden based his identifications primarily on cranial foliation. Among his examples are the vegetal figures upon the Tablet of the Foliated Cross at Palenque, the so-called “singing girls” from Copan Structure 22, and the four males emerging from basal Cauac heads upon Lintel 3 of Temple IV at Tikal. In addition, Spinden (*ibid.*:Fig. 123a,f) illustrates several figures which differ slightly from his other Classic maize god examples. These two variants, found upon the side of Quirigua Stela H and the western subterranean vault of the Palenque Palace, have distinct types of coiffured heads. For both, hair has been removed, either by shaving or plucking, to accentuate the extremely flattened and elongated skull. The coiffure of the Quirigua figure is created by completely removing the brow hair; only the uppermost cranial hair is allowed to grow (Figure 1b, f). The Palenque example has a less developed but more diagnostic form of tonsure. A horizontal strip of hair is left on the lower brow, thereby accentuating the hairless portion of the head (Figure 1c-e,g). Although Spinden mistakenly interprets the capping tassel of the Palenque archway figure as maize leaves, neither of these examples have the cranial foliation of God E. In a discussion of the archway figure, Seler (1976:69) stated that its tonsured and elongated head is characteristic of the maize god. Seler (1902-1923, III:595) also identified several identical tonsured individuals upon a Chama vase as the maize deity, and equated them with the number eight head variant. Dieseldorff (1922:48-49) subsequently identified other Classic examples of the youthful entity as the maize god.

In November of 1982, Nicolas Hellmuth gave a presentation in the Department of Art History at Yale University. Entitled “The Young Lord in Maya Art,” it involved the identification of a mythical character found frequently on Classic Maya ceramic vessels. Hellmuth noted that this entity is entirely distinct from the Headband Twins, possible Classic counterparts of the *Popol Vuh* Xbalanque and Hunahpu. According to Hellmuth, the character is portrayed as a youthful male having an especially elongated and flattened head. The hair is usually separated into a brow fringe and capping tuft by a tonsured horizontal zone, giving the head a “double-domed” appearance. The entity wears a series of distinctive costume elements, among them: a frequent tassel projecting from the back of the head, a long-snouted brow piece resembling the Palencano Jester God, and above, at the top of the head, another long-nosed face commonly supplied with beaded elements (Figure 1). Hellmuth also noted that the young lord often wears a complex beaded belt assemblage. The belt is usually composed of a series of vertical tubular beads with a Xoc Monster and spondylus medallion placed above the hanging loincloth assemblage (e.g., Coe 1973:Vase 21). Other beaded elements commonly depend from other areas of the belt.

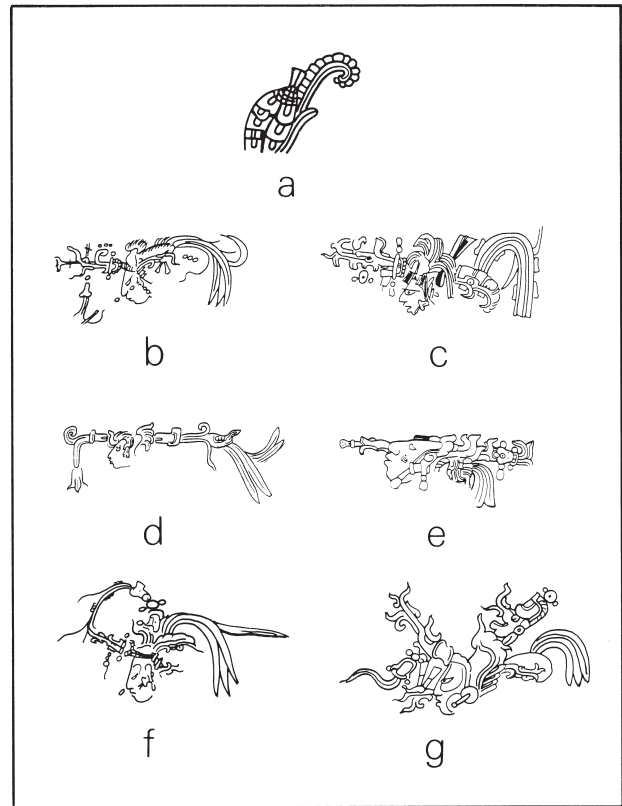


Fig. 1 The head of the tonsured young lord. (a) Central Mexican representation of corn as anthropomorphic head; note corn silk hair and backcurving tassel (after Codex Borgia, p. 24). Figs. b,c,f, and g have saurian headpiece; all but (d) have backcurving tassel. Examples e,f, and g have capping, beaded head ornament. (b, after Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessel 69; c, after Coe 1973:Vase 25; d, after Lothrop 1936:Plate 1a; e, Stela 1, Bonampak; f, after Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessel 117; g, after Coe 1978:Vase 14.)

In his talk, Hellmuth convincingly demonstrated that the Holmul Dancer is the same young lord supplied with an elaborate back-rack (e.g., Coe 1978:Vases 14, 15). Hellmuth also noted that the character appears in a number of other contexts. He is frequently found in canoe scenes, such as the incised bones of Tikal Burial 116. The figure also occurs with nude young women in standing bodies of water (e.g., Coe 1973:Vase 25). In yet another scene, the young lord rises out of a turtle carapace (Figure 6a). The “double-domed” and youthful entity, which Hellmuth has termed the Principal Young Lord, is the same tonsured figure identified as the maize god by Spinden, Seler, and Dieseldorff. In light of new epigraphic and iconographic data, it appears that their early assertions are in fact correct.

The most striking physical attribute of the youthful entity is the extremely elongated head (Figure 1). The “double-domed,” or tonsured coiffure, seen in Figures 1c, d, e, and g, is especially suggestive of the maize

cob, as the lower hair resembles the pulled-back husk, and the capping tuft, the maize silk.<sup>2</sup> Two other Classic deities, God K and God D, commonly have the tonsured coiffure. It has been noted by Schellhas (1904b) and Seler (1963, I:67) that God D and the maize god are frequently paired in the Postclassic codices. It will be subsequently demonstrated that among the Classic Maya, God K was also identified with maize. In the Central Mexican Codex Borgia, maize cobs are at times represented as a head in profile, complete with eyes, teeth, and corn silk hair (Figure 1a). The Mexican cob shares another feature with many of the Classic youthful heads – the element curling off the back of the head. For the Mexican example, it is the pollen-filled maize tassel affixed to the cob. The Maya form may also represent the maize tassel.

Small circular elements are occasionally placed against, or infixed into, the young lord's head. On one fragmentary Teotihuacan mural, an Early Classic form of the Maya entity has two spiraling elements upon his head, one of which sprouts maize foliage (Figure 2a). The numeral eight head variant commonly has the same curling element upon the forehead. Termed the "maize spiral" by Thompson (1971:280) and "corn curl" by Schele (1976:21), the device probably represents a corn grain, as maize foliation commonly emerges from the curl (Figure 2g). On one Late Classic sherd from Lubaantun, the element is seen being ground upon a metate (Hammond 1975:Fig. 116c). Another circular device also occurs with the deity head; rather than spiraling, it has a symmetric "U"-shaped feature at one side (Figure 2c). At times, this element is equivalent to the corn curl. In G9 of the Supplementary Series, affix T86, the glyphic form of the foliated corn curl, occurs in free variation with the symmetric globular device, affix T135 (Figure 2d-f). It is probable that both circular elements represent maize seed.

The usual nominal glyph accompanying the tonsured young lord is a youthful male head having a corn curl infixed to the back of the cranium (Figure 3a-c). In a discussion of the calendrics of Bonampak Sculptured Stone 1, Mathews (1980:71-72) suggested that the glyphs at C2a and D1a are variants of the personified numeral eight glyph, that is, the foliated maize head. The Sculptured Stone 1 variant is identical to the young lord nominal glyph, being a corn curl-infixed head (Figure 3d). The use of the corn curl-infixed head as a numeral eight head variant is not limited to Bonampak. Thompson (1971:Fig. 24) illustrates two examples from Quirigua and Copan; neither glyph has explicit cranial foliation (Figure 3e). Stephen Houston (pers. comm.) has mentioned an interesting substitution for one of the hieroglyphs in the Primary Standard Sequence. Termed the Young Lord by Coe (1973:21), its conventional form is the youthful corn curl head preceded by a *ti* or *ta* locative (Figure 3f, upper). Houston noted that the main sign may be substituted by another youthful head, this one having a maize cob curling down the back (Figure 3f, lower).

The foliated variant closely resembles both the God E nominal glyph and the conventional personified glyph of the number eight. Because of the direct substitutions in the numeral eight head variant and the Primary Standard glyph, it is probable that the foliated and corn curl heads represent a similar entity, a maize-headed young lord.

The maize-headed tonsured deity is usually found as a richly costumed dancer. Even in canoeing scenes, where dancing is impossible, he holds his arms in dancing pose. The codical God E is also a dancer, as can be seen on pages 20 of the Codex Paris and 33 of the Madrid. The Classic deity is usually covered by an abundant array of

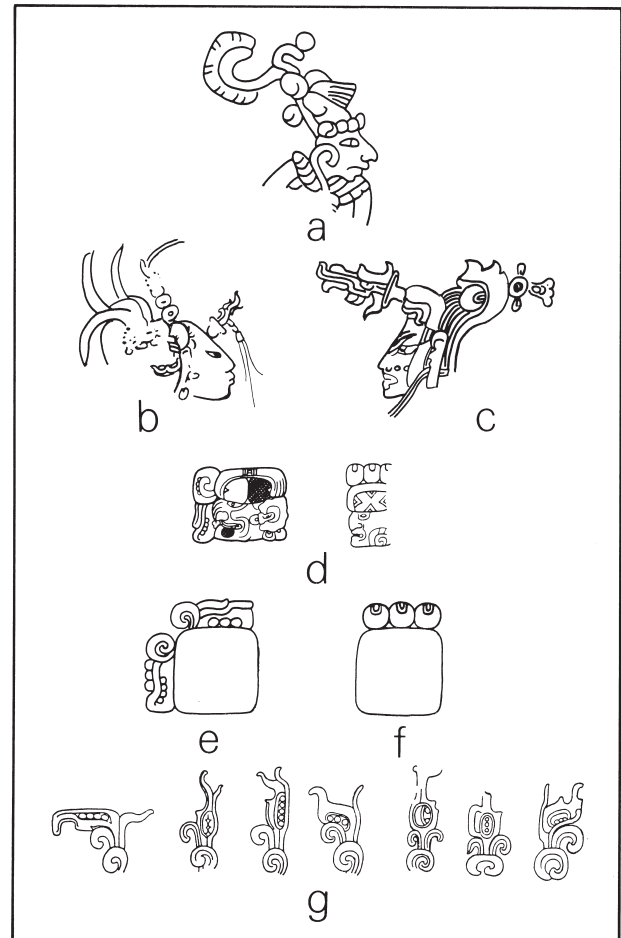


Fig. 2 Forms of maize grain found with tonsured young lord. (a) Early Classic example of tonsured deity from Tetitla, Teotihuacan. Two corn curl grains on head, one sprouting maize foliage (after Foncerrada de Molina 1980:Fig. 20). (b) Young lord with corn seed infixed in back of head (after Coe 1978:Vase 2). (c) Head of young lord with corn grain (after Hellmuth 1978:frontispiece). (d) Examples of glyph G9 of Supplementary Series showing substitution of T86 with T135 (left, Hieroglyphic Stairway, Naranjo; right, Stela E, Quirigua). (e) Affix T86. (f) Affix T135. (g) Examples of corn curls sprouting maize foliation, Copan Stela B.



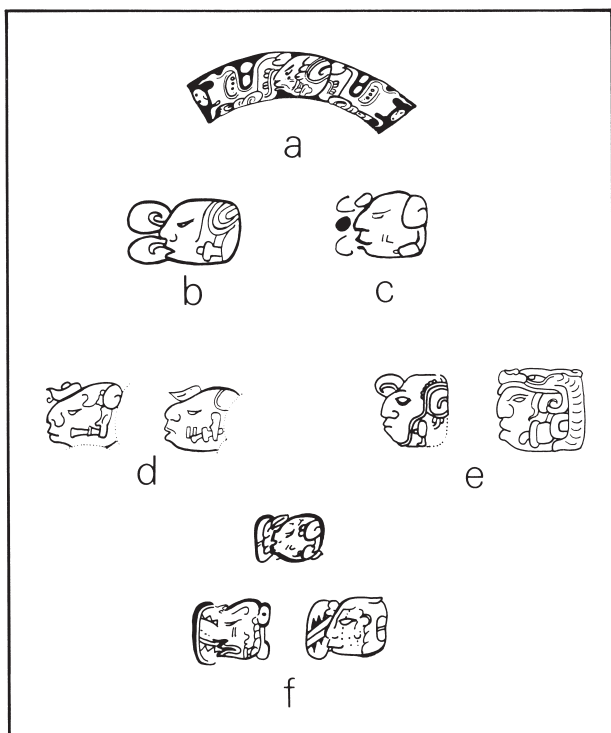


Fig. 3 The nominal glyph of the tonsured young lord. (a) Glyph supplied with foliation, from rim of Late Classic plate representing young lord as a scribe (after Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessel 72). (b) Nominal glyph from plate depicting tonsured young lord; note corn curl grains in front of face (after The Arts Club of Chicago 1982:Plate 46). (c) Nominal glyph of young lord occurring in tortoise shell resurrection scene (after Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessel 117). (d) Examples of nominal glyph upon Bonampak Sculptured Stone 1; according to Mathews, glyphs serve as variants of the numeral eight personified glyph. (e) Examples of numeral eight head variant illustrated by Thompson 1971; note corn curl infixed in parietal region of head (left, Quirigua Stela J; right, Copan Temple 11). (f) Forms of Young Lord Primary Standard glyph (upper, Coe 1973:Vase 42; lower left, *ibid.*:Vase 53; lower right, Kidder and Samayoa Chinchilla 1959:Plate 24).

jade beads, pendants, and diadems; the precious stone may refer to the green and vital qualities of the living plant. The most elaborate costume worn by the young lord is that of the Holmul Dancer. On one vase (Coe 1978:Vase 14), the Holmul Dancer is glyphically named by the corn curl-infixed head in each of the supplementary texts. Coe (*ibid.*:96) mentions that the following glyph refers to the particular figure carried in each of the three backracks. Although the main sign varies according to the particular burden, the superfix, the T86 maize affix, is constant. Coe (*ibid.*:95) notes the following features of the Holmul dancer backrack: a serpent-winged bird at top; a sky band niche containing the principal burden, a

quadruped of some sort seated upon a Cauac throne; and finally, a complex pendant train. In his November talk, Hellmuth noted that along with the beaded belt and the Xoc Monster and spondylus medallion, the Principal Young Lord can also wear a beaded skirt. Anne Dowd has pointed out to me that upon the back of Stela H there is a face-on view of a backrack notably similar to that of the Holmul Dancer (Maudslay 1889-1902, I:Plate 56). Here the serpent-winged bird stands upon a sky band niche containing the burden, in this case a skeletal head of the sun god capped by the Quadripartite Badge (*ibid.*: Plate 61).<sup>3</sup> Below, in the hanging train, there is a small, rotund individual wearing a large loincloth. I suspect he is a Copanec version of the Holmul Dancer's dwarf assistant. The entire back assemblage is surrounded by a panoply of feathers, a feature also found on the Holmul Dancer.

The sides of Stela H contain four individuals with cranial maize foliation (Maudslay, 1889-1902, I:Plate 59), who Spinden (1913:89) identified as maize gods. Eighteen-Jog is clearly identified with these flanking individuals, as maize sprouts from the top of his head-dress. Spinden (*ibid.*:90) also called attention to two carved slabs excavated by Gordon (1896:2) east of the Great Plaza at Copan. Both carvings portray a youthful dancing figure wearing the beaded belt, here with pendant Yax signs, and the Xoc Monster-spondylus medallion (Figure 9b). The flanges projecting from the sides of the hips are also found with the Holmul Dancer (e.g., Coe 1978:Vases 14, 15). Because of the explicit foliage growing from the top of the crania, Spinden identified the carvings as representations of the maize god. Thus, upon both Stela H and the carved slabs, dancers with cranial maize foliation are dressed in the costume of the tonsured young lord.

During his presentation, Hellmuth mentioned that upon the Palenque Tablet of the Foliated Cross, Chan-Bahlum is dressed in much of the costume of the Principal Young Lord (Maudslay, 1889-1902, IV:Plate 81). Thus he has the beaded belt, pendant elements, and the Xoc Monster-spondylus medallion; in addition, he wears the beaded skirt. It appears that here Chan-Bahlum personifies the sprouting maize, as he stands upon corn growing out of a cleft Cauac head. In the basal register of Bonampak Stela 1, an individual can be seen in the cleft of a Cauac Monster (see Mathews 1980:Fig. 3). The figure is clearly Hellmuth's Principal Young Lord, complete with the tonsured, elongated head, backcurving tassel, and the capping, beaded saurian creature (Figure 1e). The human profiles present in the corn curl foliation at the sides of the Cauac head are probably representations of the same youthful entity.

In a second variation of the emergence theme, the tonsured youth rises out of a cracked tortoise carapace (Figure 6a). On one codex-style plate, the Headband Twin with jaguar skin markings holds a downturned jug over the emergent youth (Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessel 117). Robicsek and Hales (*ibid.*:150) note that the

Headband Twin appears to be watering the rising figure. In another carapace scene (*ibid.*:Fig.59), three deity boatmen hold articles suggesting successive stages in the maize agricultural cycle. The figure farthest from the emergent lord wields a pointed paddle notably similar to the *koa* (digging stick). The middle boatman holds the aforementioned jug, possibly representing the watering of the planted maize. The bestial form of GI, the boatman closest to the carapace, holds an eccentric flint as if to strike the neck of the young lord. The consequence of this act would be the decapitation of the elongated maize cob head, that is, the harvest.

If the tortoise shell emergence scene concerns the growth of maize, one would expect the carapace to represent the enclosing earth. Although Isimté Altar 1 is badly battered, it is possible to reconstruct its original form (see Morley 1937, V:Plate 156; Robicsek 1978:Fig. 81a). The upper surface was a great tortoise shell having figures emerging from either end. God K, who is found frequently in one of the carapace openings, lies within the right side of the shell. In the better preserved portion of the monument, it can be seen that the carapace was marked with large Caban curls, a well-known symbol of the earth.

The examples of the tortoise shell emergence theme, discussed above, have all been from the Guatemalan Peten. However, similar scenes can be found in Yucatan. On the carved columns of Chamber E, adjoining the Great Ball Court at Chichen-Itza, there is an important variant form (see Seler 1902-1923, V:317). Three individuals can be seen within a large, monstrous head marked with crossed bands. In the Maya codices, crossed bands are used as Cauac markings, and it is probable that the head is that of a Cauac Monster. However, in all of the column examples, the two lower figures appear to lie in the fore and aft openings of the carapace. Although squash sprouts from their heads, the head of the central, rising young lord contains unequivocal representations of corn.

In the most recent and thorough discussion of the carapace emergence theme, Robicsek and Hales (1981:150) state that in the past, it would be interpreted as the youthful maize god rising out of the earth. However, they dismiss this possibility on the basis of the corn curl-infix nominal glyph. Instead of considering it as a reference to maize, they regard it as a personified Ahau glyph. Because the nominal glyph can occur with the coefficient of one, they interpret it as 1 Ahau, or in Quiche, Hun-Hunahpu, the *Popol Vuh* father of the Hero Twins. However, the head of the spotted Headband Twin serves as the conventional personified Ahau glyph, not the youthful corn curl glyph (Thompson 1971:Fig. 11). Moreover, in the canoe scenes of Tikal Burial 116 (Triak 1963:Figs. 3 and 4), the corn curl head is supplied with the coefficient of six rather than one. Although the deity does not appear to have been named as Hun-Hunahpu, he probably is a Classic form of the Quichean character.

In the *Popol Vuh*, Hun-Hunahpu is described as the

father of Hunbatz and Hunchouen, the singers and artisans who were turned into monkeys by their half-brothers, Hunahpu and Xbalanque (Recinos, Goetz, & Morley 1950:108-109). Coe (1977) has demonstrated that the monkey brothers occur as Howler Monkey scribes in Classic Maya iconography. As well as being a dancer, the tonsured young lord is commonly portrayed as a scribe and artisan (e.g., Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessels 60, 61, 62, 69, 71, 72). Coe (1977:328) notes that the Central Mexican monkey day sign Ozomatli, equivalent to the Quichean day of Batz, was presided over by Xochipilli, the Flower Prince. A god of dance, music, and the arts, Xochipilli was also identified with maize. On page 35 of the Codex Magliabechiano, Xochipilli is carried in a maize-covered litter. Xochipilli is closely related to the corn god Centeotl, a deity born on *ce xochitl* (Sahagun 1950-1969, II:212), equivalent to the Quichean date of Hun-Hunahpu. Nicholson (1971:416-419) placed the two gods under a single category in his Centeotl-Xochipilli Complex, "the cult which revolved around the cultivation of the staple food plant, maize." On pages 47 and 48 of the Magliabechiano, it is stated that major festivals dedicated to Xochipilli were held on 1 Xochitl and 7 Xochitl. These dates correspond to the Quichean calendric names of Hun-Hunahpu and his brother, Vucub-Hunahpu.

Both Hun-Hunahpu and the tonsured young lord suffer the act of decapitation. On one vessel in the Museo Popol Vuh, the young lord's head is in a cacao tree (Figure 4c), much like the *Popol Vuh* incident when Hun-Hunahpu's head is placed in a gourd tree. It is probable that the specific species of tree mentioned in the *Popol Vuh* is a product of the Quichean language as it functions through punning to connect two parallel episodes in the *Popol Vuh*. Just as Xquic, or Blood Girl, goes to the lone gourd tree in the underworld, upon arriving on the earth's surface she visits another single standing plant, a corn stalk. By pulling off the silk from the single cob, she magically produces a great load of corn. In so doing, she proves to be the spouse of Hun-Hunahpu. Whereas the Quichean word for gourd tree is *tzimah*, that for corn silk is *tzimiy* (Edmonson 1965:134-135). Such a word play, *tzimah* to *tzimiy*, serves to link the head of Hun-Hunahpu to the lone maize cob.

Among certain contemporary Maya groups, the cobs of maize specifically used for planting seed are placed in actual or symbolic trees. In Yucatan, there is the granary termed the *cuumche*, or vase tree.<sup>4</sup> A tree with three branches emerging equidistant from the trunk is cut and trimmed. Vine is wrapped around the upper limb section, making a sort of large basket. The cobs used for planting are placed within the raised container. Among Highland Maya groups, cobs saved for planting seed are usually placed in the house rafters. However, once the seed has been removed, the Tzotzil Zinacantecos place the spent cobs in the forks of trees (Vogt 1969:45). Girard (1962: 109, 311) has recorded several Chorti ceremonies involving the consecration of the planting seed. In this case an

altar is densely covered with vegetation that suggests, according to Girard, a great tree laden with fruit. The corn and fruit hanging from the ceiling are to be used in the planting. Girard (*ibid.*:109,219) suggests that the verdant, fruit-laden altar is a Chorti ritual form of the tree containing the head of Hun-Hunahpu.

Following a suggestion by Dr. Pearlman, Coe (1978: 83; 1982:92) has mentioned that the disembodied head frequently found in the center of Late Classic plates may

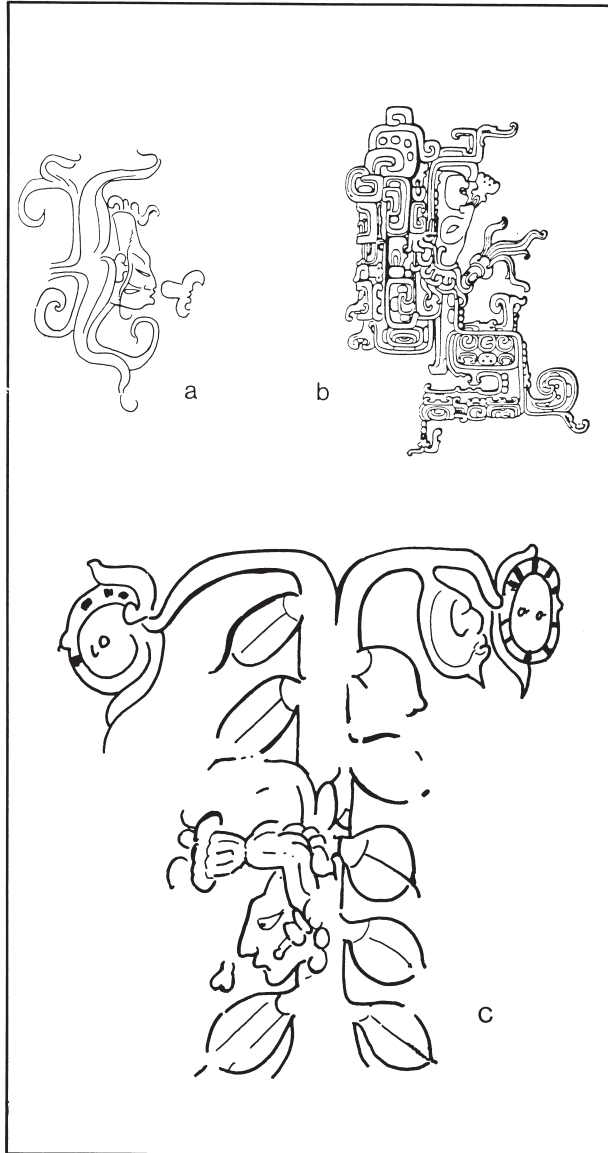


Fig. 4 Disembodied heads with foliation. (a) Tonsured head in center of foliage (after Robicsek 1978:Plate 191). (b) Inverted head with maize foliation, from Zoomorph P. Note facial markings and cartouche containing corn curl grains and inverted ahau (from Spinden 1913:Fig. 33). (c) Head of tonsured lord placed in flowering cacao tree, drawn from vessel in Museo Popol Vuh, Guatemala City.

represent the severed head of Hun-Hunahpu. The head is undoubtedly that of the tonsured young lord. At times, it has the corn curl infixed to the back of the skull (Figure 6c, e). All three of the plates shown in Figure 5 have Kan Cross rims. The Kan Cross can be greatly varying length; that of Figure 5e encircles over half of the rim. The frequency of the Kan Cross upon these plates is surely not coincidental. Stephen Houston (pers. comm.) has noted that the Chama Vase (Coe 1978:Vase 9: A1, E1, J1) provides direct substitutional evidence that the Kan Cross carried the phonetic value of *kan* in the Classic script. Thompson (1971:75) notes that in contemporary Maya languages, forms of this word denote yellow, ripeness, and by extension, maize.

Severed heads of God E are present on pages 34a of the Codex Dresden and 35b of the Madrid (Figure 5a, b). Both are clearly dead; the Madrid example is surrounded by a pool of blood, and the eyes of the Dresden head are shut. These Postclassic examples of the maize



Fig. 5 Severed heads of the Postclassic God E and Classic vessels depicting the disembodied head of the tonsured lord; note Kan crosses on plate rims. (a) Severed head of God E surrounded by red pool of blood; note necklace (after Codex Madrid, p. 35b). (b) Head of God E on Caban earth sign, has bell-shaped nose piece (after Codex Dresden, p. 34a). (c) Head with corn curl infix in center of bowl, repetitive series of nominal glyphs and maize grains inside two Kan crosses (after The Arts Club of Chicago 1982:Plate 46). (d) Disembodied head with backcurving tassel (after Coe 1982:No. 48). (e) Head with corn curl infix (after Coe 1973:No. 11).



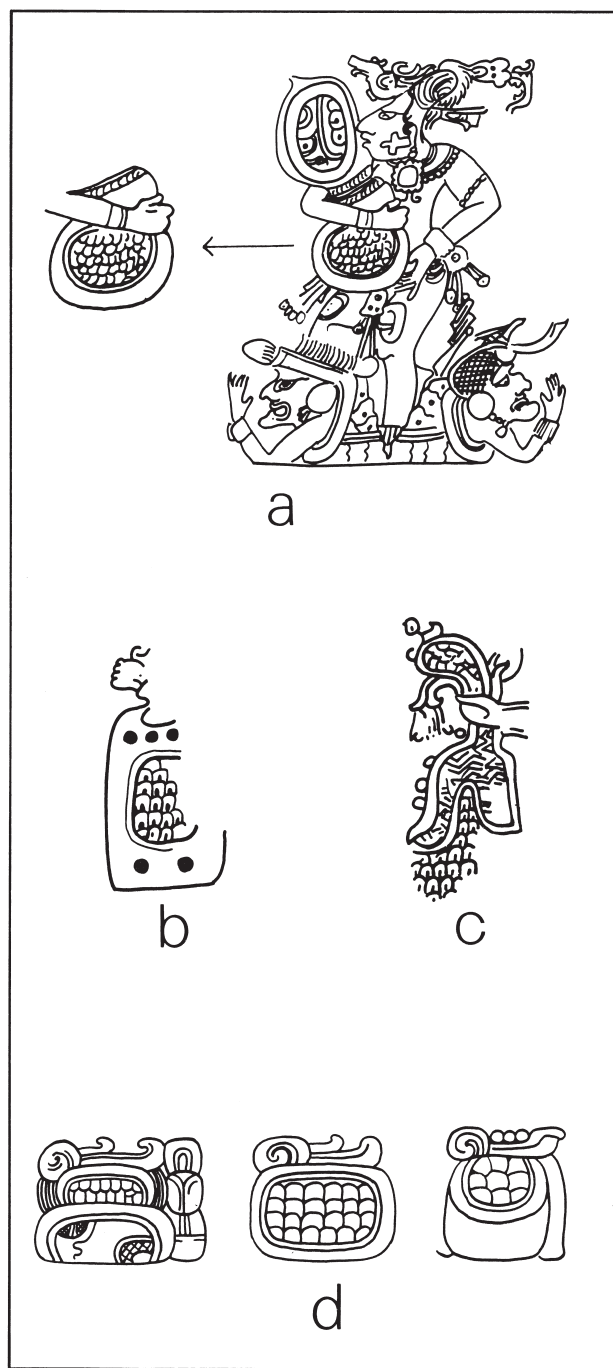


Fig. 6 Depictions of maize sacks and grains. (a) Detail of vessel representing carapace emergence theme; tonsured lord holds maize-filled sack, detail at left (after Robicsek and Hales 1981:Fig. 59). (b) Representation of maize-filled sack upon Chenes capstone from Xnucbec, Campeche, drawn from exhibited piece in Museo de Antropología, Merida. (c) Detail of capstone depicting God K pouring maize grain from sack, from Dzibilnecoc, Campeche (after Bolz 1975:Plate 36). (d) Hieroglyphs of maize grain with the T86 affix (left, Stela 26, Tikal; center, Stela 31, Tikal; right, Stela 10, Copan).

god share specific features with the tonsured head found in the center of Late Classic plates. Terming it the Disembodied Head, Coe (1978:83) notes that the Classic entity usually has a necklace at the base of the neck and a bell-shaped nose ornament. Whereas the beaded necklace is prominent at the base of the Madrid head, the Dresden example has the nose ornament. Although none of the Classic plates illustrated have the bell-shaped nose ornament, it can be seen in other depictions of the disembodied head (Figure 5a-c). Coe (*ibid.*) also mentions that the Late Classic head frequently has red swirling facial paint (Figure 5c, d). Each of the inverted severed heads upon Quirigua Zoomorph P has similar facial patterning and the bell-shaped nose ornament (Figure 4b). At the base of the neck are beaded swirls, probably a reference to blood. Two streams of foliation grow from the cranium; one contains a corn curl cartouche, denoting it as a maize cob. The foliated severed heads clearly symbolize the cob cut from the stalk. It is probable that the disembodied, tonsured head also represents the harvested maize.

Hellmuth (pers. comm.) has mentioned that the Uaxactun Dancer is the full figure counterpart of the disembodied head found on Classic vessels. As with the Holmul Dancer, the Uaxactun Dancer is named after the first reported site from which vessels bearing his form were found. Occurring in dance form in the center of Late Classic bowls and plates, he is undoubtedly the same tonsured individual known as the Holmul Dancer and the Disembodied Head. Globular maize grains are frequently depicted on the interior of Uaxactun Dancer plates (see Smith 1955:Fig. 73a; Coe 1982:No. 44). Kan Cross rims are also common on Uaxactun Dancer vessels (e.g., Coggin 1975:Figs. 88a, 106d). The simple reason why so many Late Classic plates and shallow bowls contain severed maize heads, the dancing young lord, Kan Crosses, and maize grains, is that such plates most likely contained corn. Maize grain is frequently seen placed in similar bowls in Late Classic vessel scenes (e.g., Adams 1971:Figs. 77-80; Coe 1973:Vases 13, 30; Coe 1978:Vase 7).

The tonsured young lord frequently carries a large sack across his shoulder; the article is probably a grain sack containing maize. In one vessel scene, his sack is shown in a cutaway view, exposing the grain inside (Figure 6a). On one Chenes painted capstone from Xnucbec, Campeche, God K stands in front of a sack represented with a similar "X-ray" view (Figure 6b). In a Chenes capstone from Dzibilnecoc, God K pours maize grain out of a woven sack (Figure 6c).<sup>5</sup> Masses of maize grain can also be found in the Classic script, complete with the T86 maize affix (Figure 6d).

The Headband Twins, frequently found with the tonsured young lord, at times also carry the maize sack. In one vessel scene, the twins are seen seated behind the young lord (Coe 1973:Vase 43). One of the twins (*ibid.*:Figure 2) holds the sack with both hands. In a vase scene showing the young lord receiving or bestowing his

regalia, the spotted Headband Twin holds the sack (Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessel 82). In yet another scene depicting the tonsured young lord with the Headband Twins, the twin with the jaguar pelt markings holds a great bowl or basket containing the young lord's jewelry; the other twin holds the sack (*ibid.*:Vessel 186). Although the bag has the typical cloth strap, it is also supplied with the bundle topknot and a glyphic compound (Figure 7a) composed of a Spotted Kan main sign (T507), affixed by T679a and T25, Landa's *i* and *ca*. The same compound is found in the inscriptions at Palenque and upon Classic bundles. Examples of such bundles occur upon Classic vases and several Yaxchilan lintels (Figure 7d-f). The meaning of this compound is unknown, save that it appears, at least tangentially, to concern maize. This is in part suggested by the Spotted Kan, which in form is simply a Kan sign supplied with a series of dots. However, the bundle's iconographic context presently supplies the strongest evidence for maize. Thus, in the aforementioned vase scene, the bundle is conflated with the young lord's grain sack. Moreover, bundles marked with simple Kan signs are also found in Classic iconography (e.g., Coe 1973:No. 32; Parsons 1980:Plate 312; Robicsek 1978:Plate 137).

I am not suggesting that bundles found in dynastic scenes simply contained maize. Maize was probably used as a metaphor for other valued substances, such as jade and blood. From the Early Classic to the Late Postclassic, maize and bloodletting were closely identified among the

Maya (Figure 8). Jeffrey Miller (1974:154) noted that the Xoc Monster and spondylus belt serve as symbols of women; however, this assemblage is also commonly worn by the tonsured young lord. Schele (1979a:46) interprets its presence on males as a reference to bloodletting; much like suckling a child, the rulers nourish the gods with their blood. In support of this interpretation, Schele cites the *Popol Vuh* episode when men were created to nourish the gods. It should be noted that this was the race of men fashioned from maize (Recinos, Goetz, & Morley 1950:167). The tonsured young lord at times has a decidedly feminine caste, which parallels the female, life-giving quality of maize. Among Highland Maya groups, corn is commonly identified with the blood of parturition. Ximénez recorded that the seventeenth century Pokomam cut the child's umbilical cord over a corn cob; the bloodied seed was saved for the planting (cited in Edmonson 1971:108). A similar custom continues among contemporary Tzotzil. The small crop, termed the "child's blood", is shared within the family (Guiteras Holmes 1960:6). Vogt (1969:63) mentions that among the Zinacanteco Tzotzil, two maize cobs are placed on the woman's abdomen immediately after birth.

It is possible that three of the Classic female parentage statement glyphs identified by Schele, Mathews, and Lounsbury (1977) represent hand-held maize grain (Figure 9c-e). One of the hieroglyphs is a hand holding the corn curl grain. The hand can also hold a Ben sign; in his study of the *ahpo* affix, Lounsbury (1973) provided the phonetic value of *ah* for the Ben sign. In a number of Highland Maya languages, *ah* is a term for maize (Lounsbury, pers. comm.). For the third variant under discussion, an inverted Ahau is held. It is possible that the inverted Ahau is purely phonetic, and signifies *al*, a term for mother's child in a number of Maya languages. However, the inverted Ahau is often paired with the corn

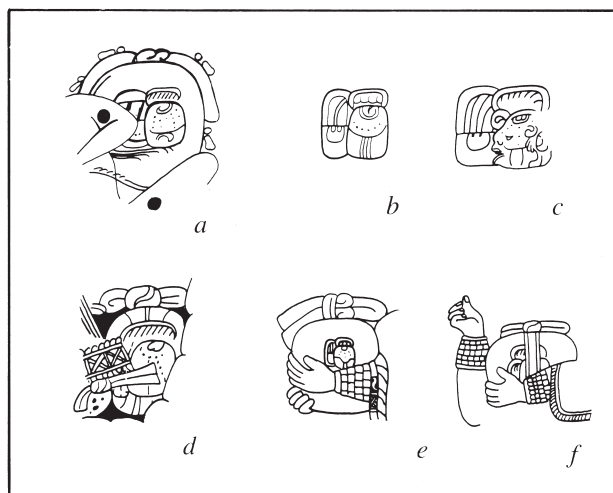


Fig. 7 Hieroglyphs on Late Classic bundles. (a) Bundle-sack carried by spotted Headband Twin; note glyphic compound with Spotted Kan main sign, same as on examples d, e, and f (after Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessel 186). (b) Spotted Kan compound from Temple of the Inscriptions, Palenque. (c) Stucco compound from Palenque. (d) Bundle with Spotted Kan compound placed on throne behind God L (after Coe 1973:Vase 49). (e) Bundle with Spotted Kan compound, Yaxchilan Lintel 1. (f) Bundle with partially obscured glyphic compound, Yaxchilan Lintel 5.

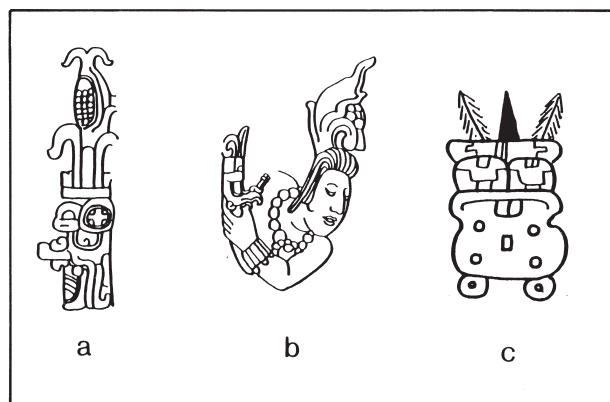


Fig. 8 Depictions of maize in association with bloodletters. (a) Figure at base of Yaxha Stela 2, Early Classic; note maize cob in forehead and shining lancet in mouth. (b) Late Classic Foliated Maize God holding bloodletter, Copan Stela H. (c) Postclassic representation of bowl containing Kan sign grains and stone and stingray spine perforators, Codex Madrid, p. 37.

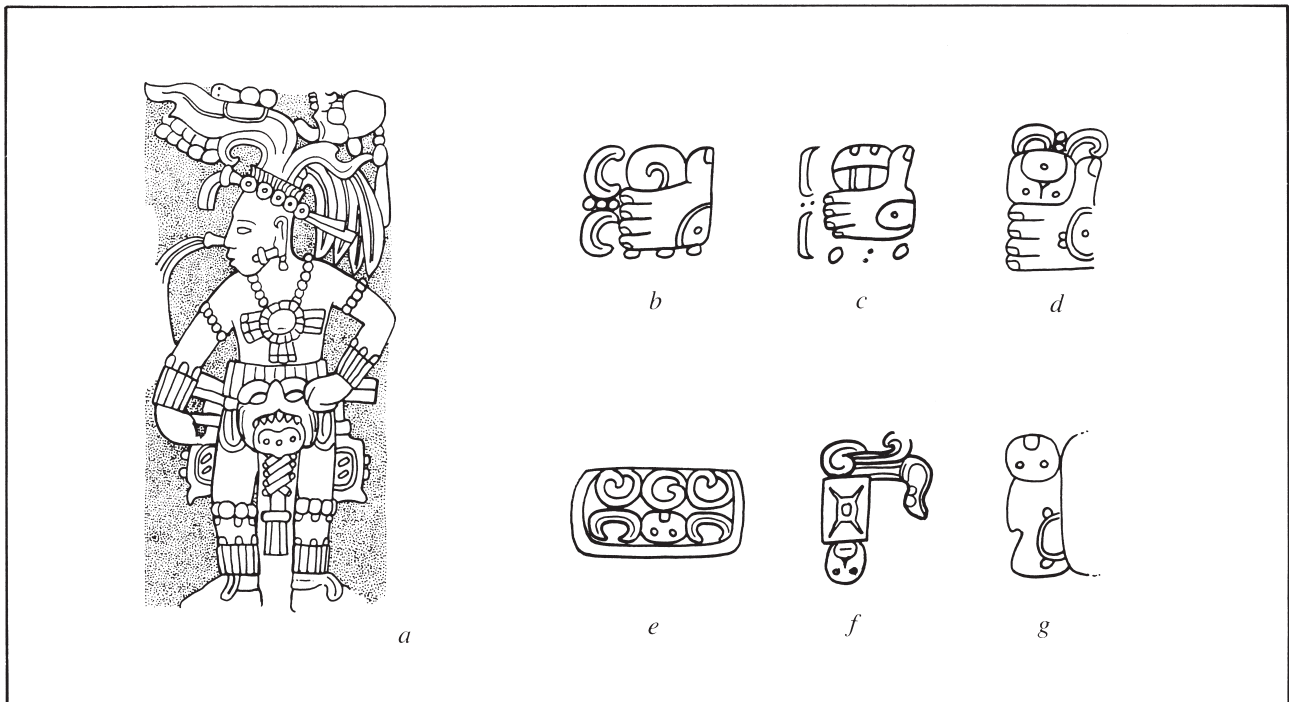


Fig. 9 Classic iconography and hieroglyphs pertaining to maize and women. (a) One of two carved slabs found east of Great Plaza at Copan. Foliated Maize God in dancing position; note beaded belt and Xoc Monster spondylus medallion (drawn from photograph, courtesy of Peabody Museum, Harvard University). (b-d) Three forms of female parentage indicator glyph, identified by

Schele, Mathews, and Lounsbury. (e) Inverted Ahau placed in corn curl cartouche, from Quirigua Zoomorph P (see Figure 4b). (f) Inverted Ahau and corn curl grain on opposite sides of ear spool, from sarcophagus lid, Temple of the Inscriptions, Palenque. (g) Postclassic codical form of affix T84.

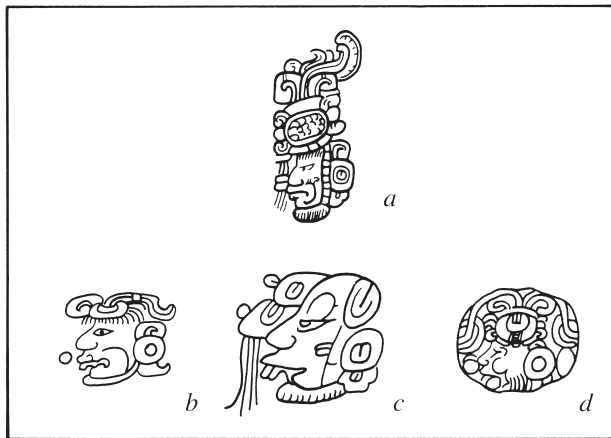


Fig. 10 Early Classic examples of bearded, maize-headed figures. (a) Detail of Tikal incised vessel representing bearded male holding serpent from which Tikal Rowers emerge; note maize foliation and corn grain cartouche in headdress. (b-d) Glyphic examples of Early Classic maize-headed youths with beards (b, Pomona Flare; c, after Coe 1973:No. 50; d, after Bolz 1975:Plate 52).

curl in Classic iconography (Figure 9f, g). Moreover, a similar element forms the seed of affix T84 (Figure 9h), an affix identified as representing maize (Knorozov 1967:83).

During a recent Princeton conference devoted to early Maya art, David Stuart (1982) presented a paper concerning the Classic symbolism of dynastic blood. He mentioned that the Tikal rowers appear to be closely identified with dynastic bloodletting. The rowers are best known from a number of the carved bones found in Burial 116 at Tikal. The principal passenger in these scenes is the tonsured young lord (see Trik 1963:Figs. 3, 4, and 5). It is interesting that although Kelley (1976:236) does not interpret the tonsured deity as a maize god, he suggests, on the basis of the animal passengers, that these scenes concern the mythical theft of corn. On an Early Classic Tikal ceramic vessel, the rowers emerge from the heads of a bicephalic serpent (see Coe 1965). The head of the central figure holding the serpent has a corn seed cartouche sprouting maize foliation (Figure 10b). The beard is found in other Early Classic examples of the young lord (Figure 10c-e). Example c, from the Pomona Flare, has been previously identified by John Justeson (pers. comm.) as a representation of the maize god.



An identifying feature of Classic emblem glyphs is the so-called water group prefix (Figure 11a). Both Seler (1902-1923, III:649) and Barthel (1968a:168) have mentioned that the prefix may represent blood; Barthel favored lineage blood in particular. Stuart (1982) also considers the water group to be a reference to dynastic blood. He compares the prefix to similar streams found issuing from the hands of Yaxchilan rulers (Figure 11d). Stuart notes that the perforator god, identified by Joralemon (1974), usually hangs inverted next to the ruler's groin. The spondylus shell, another probable reference to bloodletting (Schele 1979a), commonly depends below the perforator. Stuart notes that cartouches found in the Yaxchilan streams also occur in the water group affixes. Thus the Yax and Kan signs present in the Stela 1 bloodstream are also found in water group affixes T36 and T37. The Stela 1 stream has yet another cartouche, this one containing a cluster of maize grains (Figure 11d). Both the Yax sign, a sign for green, and the aforementioned Kan Cross also appear to refer to maize. The other water group signs allude to previously discussed maize imagery. Thus the spondylus of T38 is commonly worn by the tonsured young lord. It has been suggested that the inverted Ahau, present in T40, refers to maize grain. Finally, affixes T14 and T39 contain the globular and corn curl elements (Figure 11a). Barthel (1968a: 165-166) notes that these function as water group affixes in the Postclassic codices.

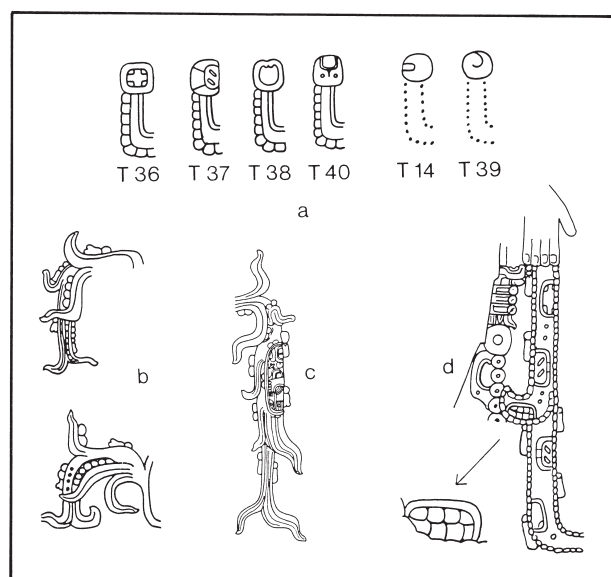


Fig. 11 Glyphic and iconographic imagery concerned with bloodletting and maize. (a) Classic and Postclassic examples of water group prefix. (b) Representations of corn upon Temple of the Foliated Cross, Palenque. (c) Detail of inverted maize cob, from East Jamb of Temple of the Foliated Cross, Palenque. (d) Detail of Stela 1, Yaxchilan. Beaded stream falls from hand of ruler, contains Kan cross, Yax sign, and corn grain cartouches; detail of grain cartouche at lower left.

The beaded streams found in the Yaxchilan bloodletting depictions and the water group prefix are notably similar to Classic representations of maize. The corn plants carved upon the Palenque Tablet of the Foliated Cross contain lines of seed very much like the beaded edges of the water group (Figure 11b). In Tzotzil, the words for hanging seed corn are *čohi* or *čohol*; the term for the dripping down of juice or blood is *čohlahet* (Laughlin 1975:122). Fought (1972:498) has recorded a modern Chorti account explicitly identifying maize seed with blood:

People when they are dying, save their corn which has beautiful grains. They look for those with beautiful white grains, with black corn, with red corn. Because they say that that is the blood of Jesus Christ.

I suspect that blood was considered as dynastic seed, the vital material which linked the generations of the living and the dead.

The Classic act of phallus perforation parallels a basic Mesoamerican agricultural practice, the dehusking of the cob. Steggerda (1941:Plate 21d) has illustrated a number of husking pins collected among contemporary Yucatec Maya. Made of antler, sharpened bone, and wood, they are used to pierce and separate the husk, thus exposing the seed. If these instruments were found in the context of a Classic elite tomb, they would probably be identified as bloodletters, such as were used in rites of penis perforation. Boos (1968:2, 3) has illustrated two examples of a rare type of Zapotec urn. Following Caso and Bernal (1952:99), Boos (*ibid.*:7) noted that the urn figure has a corn cob phallus and a vaginal plaque upon the waist. However, neither Boos nor Caso and Bernal mention the significance of the large twisted cord held in both hands and passing under the phallus. In Mesoamerica, such cords were commonly passed through the wounds inflicted during penitential bloodletting (e.g., Yaxchilan Lintels 15, 17, and 24; Codex Madrid: pp. 19, 82). The figure thus appears to be an individual wearing a female symbol on his waist as he engages in bloodletting from his cob phallus. In this sense, the Zapotec entity closely resembles the tonsured young lord, who is identified both with maize and blood and wears the female Xoc Monster-spondylus medallion upon his waist.

It has been mentioned that the young lord's elongated and tonsured head is commonly found with the Classic God K, a deity closely identified with elite lineages and dynastic descent (Schele 1979a). At times, the young lord can be found with the forehead torch of God K, such as upon Copan Stela 11 (Maudslay 1889-1902, I:Plate 112) and a Late Classic incised vessel (Smith 1952). Kelley (1965:108) has demonstrated that the Palenque Tablet of the Foliated Cross concerns the birth of God K, or GII, on 1 Ahau 13 Mac. In the Temple of the Foliated Cross, representations of maize and bloodletting are explicit. On one side of the tablet, Pacal holds the perforator while standing upon a maize plant; on the flanking door jambs, both Chan-Bahlum and Pacal hold



bloodletters (Joralemon 1974). Considering his strong association with both blood and dynastic descent, it is possible that the tonsured young lord was considered as the founding mythical ancestor of the Maya elite. The *Popal Vuh* states that mankind originated from maize, a material personified as the Classic tonsured young lord.

### Conclusions

The entity isolated and identified by Hellmuth as the Principal Young Lord appears to be a Classic god of maize. His elongated, tonsured head mimics the long tasseled cob. Maize grain, at times infixed into his head, is an identifying feature of his personified nominal glyph. His jade ornaments evoke verdant, precious qualities of the living plant. The god's delicate features and Xoc Monster-spondylus medallion suggest the feminine nurturing qualities of corn; among contemporary Mam: Maya, maize is termed "Our Mother" (Valladares 1957:196). The sack which he carries appears to contain maize grain. He is frequently found in canoes or wading in standing bodies of water among fish and water lilies, all of which suggest Puleston's (1977) iconography of raised field agriculture.

In many respects, the long-headed tonsured deity overlaps with the Classic individual having cranial maize foliation. At Copan, this latter figure occurs in dancing posture wearing the beaded belt and Xoc monster-spondylus medallion. Both the tonsured and foliated figures can appear as disembodied heads, a probable reference to harvesting the cob. Much like the Bonampak Stela 1 depiction of the tonsured deity, the foliated figure is also found emerging from Cauac heads (e.g., Lintel 3, Temple IV, Tikal). Most importantly, with the Young Lord glyph of the primary Standard Sequence and the personified glyph of the number eight, there are cases of direct substitution between the foliated maize head and the tonsured lord nominal glyph. However, although the tonsured and foliated characters are perhaps aspects of the same entity, it is doubtful that they are entirely equivalent. The glyphic substitutions, although noteworthy, are rare. Moreover, whereas the tonsured lord is one of the principal characters depicted on Late Classic vessels, there is apparently no representation of the foliated character in any of the ceramic scenes. It is possible to discuss something of the mythology surrounding the tonsured lord. For example, one can note the canoe journey, his watery exchange with nude young women, the emergence from the carapace, and also the particular characters he is involved

with, such as the Headband Twins, the howler monkey artisans, and the Tikal Rowers. In contrast, the foliated entity is represented in a far less narrative manner; he usually appears in isolation, without the rich contextual associations found with the tonsured character. Although the foliated figure continued into the Postclassic as God E, the tonsured entity seems to have largely ended with the Classic collapse. An interesting exception occurs on page 36b of the Codex Dresden. Here God B canoes a tonsured individual supplied with a horizontal strip of dark hair; the verbal compound at A1 contains the nominal glyph of God Ē. There are Kin and Akbal glyphs at A2, signs frequently paired with the Tikal Rowers. It is noteworthy that in this scene, which so strongly suggests the Classic canoe episode, the passenger is not the conventional God E, but a rare Postclassic form of the tonsured lord. Because they are not entirely equivalent, the two Classic entities should have separate names. Suitable terms would be the Tonsured Maize God (TMG) and the Foliated Maize God (FMG). It will take considerably more research to determine how and to what degree these two categories are distinct.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Classic and Postclassic forehead spirals are not entirely the same. Whereas the Postclassic form is an integral part of the foliation curling off the head, the Classic feature is a separate element affixed to the brow. In the present study, it will be seen that this Classic curl represents maize grain, not foliation.

<sup>2</sup> The Aztecs compared a type of tonsured head to a maize cob. Duran (1971:82) describes a Nahuatl term for certain Aztec youths:

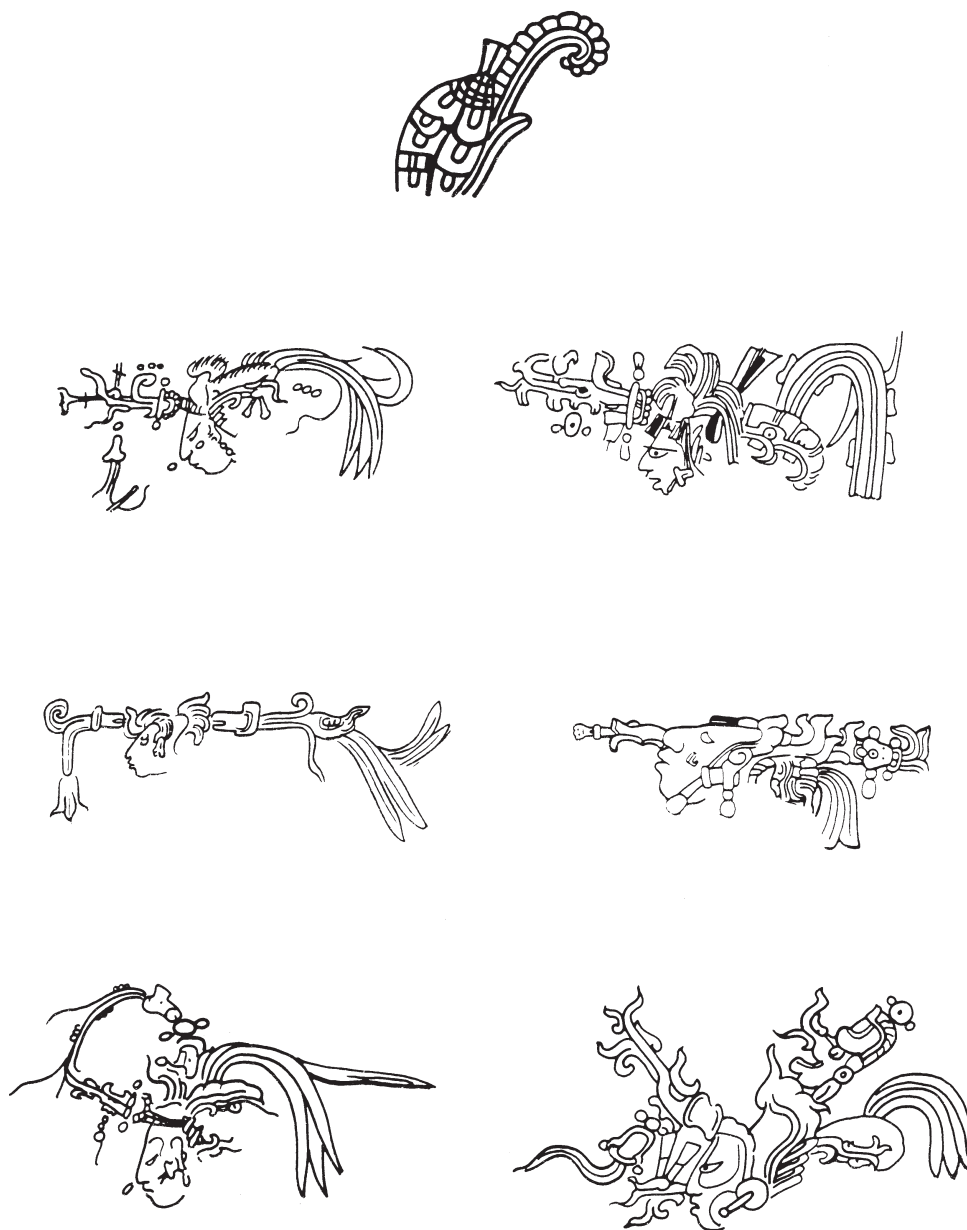
These youths who lived in seclusion were called *elocuatecomame*. When this name is described in our language, it almost sounds nonsensical [since it refers to] the *tecomate*, which is smooth and was used in referring to their shaved heads. And to indicate that their heads were tonsured, to the word *elotl* ["ear of corn"] was employed. People called this tonsure "a smooth head like a gourd with a round rim like that of an ear of corn."

<sup>3</sup> Hellmuth (pers. comm.) notes that the Stela H backrack is not entirely identical to the Holmul Dancer type. Thus, there is no known Holmul Dancer having the Quadripartite Badge or the sun god head burden. However, this does not discount the fact that 18-Jog is dressed as the tonsured young lord. This deity occurs with other dancing apparel; the Uaxactun Dancer is such an example. Of the various representations of the deity with a backrack, that upon Copan Stela H is most similar to the Holmul Dancer.

<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to Rufino Vargiez of Telchaquillo, Yucatan, for describing the structure to me.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Herbert Meyer (pers. comm.) kindly provided me with information regarding the provenience of the two capstones.

As an additional resource for the reader, the original Figure 1 is reproduced on the following page in larger dimensions.



**Fig. 1.** The head of the tonsured young lord. (a) Central Mexican representation of corn as anthropomorphic head; note corn silk hair and backcurving tassel (after Codex Borgia, p. 24). Figs. b, c, f, and g have saurian headpiece; all but (d) have backcurving tassel. Examples e, f, and g have capping, beaded head ornament. (b, after Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessel 69; c, after Coe 1973:Vase 25; d, after Lothrop 1936:Plate 1a; e, Stela 1, Bonampak; f, after Robicsek and Hales 1981:Vessel 117; g, after Coe 1978:Vase 14.)

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