

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEOTIHUACAN AND
TIKAL

By

KRISTIN KEIR HOFFMEISTER

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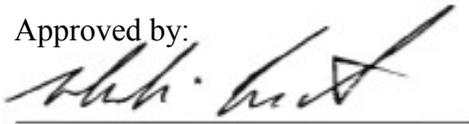
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Takeshi Inomata', is written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Takeshi Inomata
Department of Anthropology

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Abstract

The extent and nature of the contact between the Central Mexican city of Teotihuacán and the Maya center of Tikal has been the subject of debate for years. Recent archaeological finds at both centers have added new information to this discussion. The purpose of the present analysis is to evaluate the past arguments and draw new conclusions based on the available evidence. Based on the present study, it appears that a group of Teotihuacanos, led by Siyaj K'ak, entered and gained control of Tikal by killing the local leader and installing a Yax Nuun Ayiin in his place. This takeover was most likely motivated by economic and religious reasons; however, it wasn't unprecedented in the history of the two sites due to the significant contact between them in the years prior to the arrival of Siyaj K'ak. By the time of Siyaj Chan K'awiil's reign, the relationship with Teotihuacán was no longer important at Tikal and evidence of interaction with Central Mexico disappears from the archaeological record.

Introduction

The ancient cultures of Latin America were some of the most advanced civilizations of their time. This region is peppered with archaeological sites that were originally constructed by groups such as the Maya, Olmec, and Aztecs. The Maya, located throughout Central America, were among the most impressive of these cultures. By the arrival of European powers in the 16th century, the peoples of this region had produced a detailed world view, a comprehensive writing system, monumental architecture, and many other sophisticated cultural developments that demonstrated the complex nature of their society (Tickell and Tickell 1991). It was originally hypothesized that these achievements developed independently in the Maya region without significant influence from abroad. However, it is now clear that a variety of other cultures had a substantial impact on the Maya, including the Olmec and various cultures from Central Mexico, including that of Teotihuacán.

It is widely acknowledged that during the Early Classic period, many Maya sites adopted various aspects of Teotihuacán culture, including the *talud-tablero* architectural style and other artistic conventions. These traits are seen at a wide range of Maya sites, including the major center of Tikal. However, how and why these aspects of Teotihuacán society were adopted in the Petén is the subject of intense debate.

The purpose of this study is to review the independent histories of Teotihuacán and Tikal and the evidence for interaction between the two cities. The theories about this contact will also be evaluated in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the current debates in order to potentially draw new conclusions based on the available data.

The Rise of Tikal

In order to fully evaluate the possible penetration of Teotihuacán into the city of Tikal, the early development of this Maya city must first be discussed. The city of Tikal, located in the modern Petén region of Guatemala, has been the hub of archaeological study for generations. At its height, Tikal boasted an area of over 60 sq. km. and somewhere over 100,000 inhabitants (Harrison 1999). Prior to the comparatively late emergence of this great center around 800 B.C., not much is known about the peoples living in the Maya region. It has been suggested that during the Archaic Period and into the Early Preclassic, the inhabitants of Central America moved frequently and didn't settle in the Maya lowlands until the Middle Preclassic. The origin of these peoples and the group archaeologists call 'Maya' is a point of contention among Mesoamerican archaeologists that has been hotly debated for years. One of the key problems with determining the identity of the earliest settlers in the Maya lowlands is the lack of specific archaeological evidence that dates to this time period.

Recent investigations in the Petén region have provided increasingly earlier evidence of sedentary occupation. Some of the earliest evidence of inhabitants in this area stems from the Eb ceramic sequence, which begins appearing around 800 B.C. (Culbert 2003). Dating to the Middle Preclassic, the Eb complex predates the later Mamom ceramics that proliferated throughout the Maya Lowlands. Early ceramics that are roughly contemporaneous with the early Eb assemblage are also found in Belize and the Pasión River area. Interestingly, there is a large amount of diversity in these early ceramic assemblages, perhaps suggesting early movements of peoples into the Maya region from elsewhere (Culbert 2003).

As is suggested by these debates, the exact origins of the Maya, and therefore the origins of the peoples that developed Tikal, is uncertain. What is known about these early peoples is that they eventually began to settle in the Petén and produce Eb ceramics during the Middle Preclassic. Several theories have been proposed to explain why the exact site of Tikal was chosen as the location of settlement. As Harrison (1999) states, “Investigations at Tikal have shown that the site possessed no special or rare natural commodity to suggest settlement based on the presence of a tradable source material” (pp.14-15). While the existing resources, such as chert and stone, were clearly utilized by the inhabitants of Tikal, there is little evidence that these products were manufactured explicitly for export. However, the settlement of Tikal was located on an important trade route at this time, perhaps providing impetus to settle at such a strategic point (Harrison 1999).

Thus far, Eb ceramics have been found in only a few deposits that are spread out, suggesting that Tikal consisted of separate villages at this time (Harrison 1999). Eb ceramics have been found around the North Acropolis, Mundo Perdido, and Chultun 5G-15 (Culbert 2003; Harrison 1999). Some chert debris associated with the Eb ceramics was found underneath the North Acropolis, supporting the idea that the resources near Tikal were factors in the decision to settle in this part of the Petén region. Due to the scarcity of materials and the limited architecture that has been found in association with the Eb ceramic complex, it is difficult to hypothesize much about the society at this time.

The ceramic phase that followed the Eb complex, called the Tzec phase, is demonstrated in the archaeological record by only one ‘pure’ deposit that was discovered roughly 1 kilometer to the east of the site core. Dating to approximately 600-350 B.C., this ceramic phase is largely

viewed as a transitory complex (Culbert 2003). Although there is only one unmixed deposit, it demonstrates several interesting traits, including the sudden increase in the number of plates, perhaps suggesting the emergence of feasting as an important social event; however this hypothesis is tenuous at best (Culbert 2003).

With the transition to the Late Preclassic, Tikal, as well as many other sites in the Maya region, began expanding exponentially. Prior to recent research in the area, it was widely believed that the monumental architecture and many other impressive developments at Tikal were products of the Classic Period; however, it is now becoming clearer that these achievements had their roots in the Late Preclassic. During this time, Tikal was expanding along its east-west axis and the North Acropolis and Mundo Perdido, also known as the Lost World, were important areas of development (Harrison 1999). The first ceramic phase of the Late Preclassic, the Chuen phase, was prevalent at Tikal from approximately 350 B.C. to A.D. 1 (Harrison 1999). This phase is more widespread than any of the complexes that preceded it, indicating an expansion of Tikal (Culbert 2003). The Chuen phase is additionally part of the Chicanel horizon that spread throughout the Maya Lowlands, possibly suggesting increased contact with neighboring sites during this time. It was also during this time that individuals began to be buried in vaulted tombs in the North Acropolis. While this data would normally suggest the beginnings of a social elite, there isn't much associated evidence from grave goods that would confirm the presence of rulers at this time. During the following Cauac and Cimi ceramic phases, the architectural style and patterns of burial that define Tikal during the later Classic times became prevalent, setting the stage for widespread development during the Classic period (Harrison 1999).

Traditionally, the transition from the Preclassic to the Classic period is marked by the introduction of written texts in the form of carved stelae. During this transitional period, there is a definite shift in the importance of the ruling elite. While it would be misleading to say that the Preclassic was “predynastic”, it is clear that the individuals of this earlier time period didn’t emphasize individual rulership in the same manner as those living in Classic times (Martin 2003). In reality, the transition between the Classic and Preclassic in the Maya region isn’t well understood. The date that separates the two periods is also largely arbitrary and doesn’t necessarily reflect a large-scale change in the social organization of the region.

It is during the Early Classic that evidence of Teotihuacán influence began appearing throughout the Maya region. Various attributes that are traditionally associated with this city have been found at many sites in the area, including Tikal, Kaminaljuyu, and Altun Ha. At Tikal, physical evidence of interaction with central Mexico is found in the glyphic record, architectural elements, and artistic style. As stated previously, the origins and extent of this influence isn’t certain, although it has been suggested that Teotihuacán perhaps even staged a political takeover in A.D. 378 (Martin 2003). However, the Mexican traits disappeared soon after their introduction in the Maya region and more traditional characteristics dominated once again. The evidence for this interaction will be evaluated later.

The Middle Classic is clearly a period of political upheaval at Tikal (Martin 2003). Many of the monuments that have been found from this period exhibit signs of deliberate destruction. Reconstruction and careful analysis of several monuments additionally seems to indicate that a woman held significant political power during this time and possibly was even queen at Tikal (Martin 2003). The identity of this individual isn’t clear, nor is it certain if she was a sovereign

ruler or held the throne in association with a man. At the end of the Middle Classic, Tikal was defeated in a war and thus entered a period of hiatus in which no new monuments were erected.

The hiatus period at Tikal has been problematic for archaeologists due to the marked lack of data. It cannot be said with certainty that no new monuments were being produced at this time because it is entirely possible that monuments had simply been moved or destroyed before the arrival of professional archaeologists (Martin 2003). During the hiatus period at Tikal, the site of Dos Pilas emerged nearby. The emblem glyph of this site is identical to that of Tikal; however, the two sites had separate dynastic sequences. Archaeologists have suggested that the Dos Pilas rulers, who eventually enjoyed the endorsement and protection of Calakmul, were a branch of the Tikal dynasty that left and established themselves at another site (Martin 2003). Tikal, led by the foreign Nuun Ujol Chaak, conducted a series of attacks on Dos Pilas with the intention of subjugating the local populations and ejecting Calakmul's influence from the area. While Nuun Ujol Chaak enjoyed success at first, he was eventually defeated by Calakmul. His son, Jasaw Chan K'awiil I ascended to the position of leadership and erected a monument in 692 A.D., thereby ending the hiatus at Tikal (Martin 2003). Tikal formally reemerged as the predominant power in the region with its defeat of Calakmul in A.D. 695 (Schele and Freidel 1990).

Interestingly, there is a return to the imagery of Teotihuacán immediately after the hiatus period. There are two images of Jasaw Chan K'awiil wearing Mexican dress in the Central Acropolis (Martin 2003). Jasaw and his successors focused on reasserting Tikal's military dominance in the region. By the time of the Late Classic at Tikal, there had been a succession of impressive victories that were most likely correlated with the sudden explosion of construction at the site (Martin 2003). However, during the ninth century, the central authority in Tikal was

crumbling and the power of the city itself was waning. Tikal fell into a decline that appears to be characteristic of many of its contemporary cities in the Maya region. Around 900 A.D., the major powers in this area, including Tikal, fell into a decline and essentially collapsed.

The Rise of Teotihuacán

While individuals in the Maya region were gradually adopting sedentism and constructing the earliest buildings at Tikal, Teotihuacán was developing in Central Mexico. Teotihuacán eventually became one of the most powerful polities in Mesoamerica and had a population of at least 100,000 individuals at its height (Cowgill 2000). The construction of Teotihuacán was a monumental achievement. This site follows a clear plan and entails some of the first ‘apartments’, or multi-family compounds, in history (Manzanilla 1996). However, much like Tikal, the origins of this city and of the peoples that founded it are uncertain. Prior to 150 B.C., there isn’t much information about the individuals living in the Basin of Mexico (Millon 1960). The Ticoman phase of ceramics dominated this region from approximately 500 B.C. to around 150 B.C. During this phase, there were settlements in Puebla-Tlaxcala and some other villages elsewhere in the Basin. However, there weren’t any significant developments in the northern part of this region where Teotihuacán would eventually develop (Cowgill 2000).

The next two ceramic phases in the Basin of Mexico, the Patlachique and Tzacualli phases, lasted from around 150 B.C. until about A.D. 150. During these phases, Teotihuacán began to develop in the northern portion of the Basin of Mexico. By the earliest years A.D., many of the smaller settlements in the Basin of Mexico were abandoned and their populations most likely moved into Teotihuacán or Cuicuilco, a site in the south of the Basin that had additionally expanded into a major city that rivaled Teotihuacán (Cowgill 2000). During the

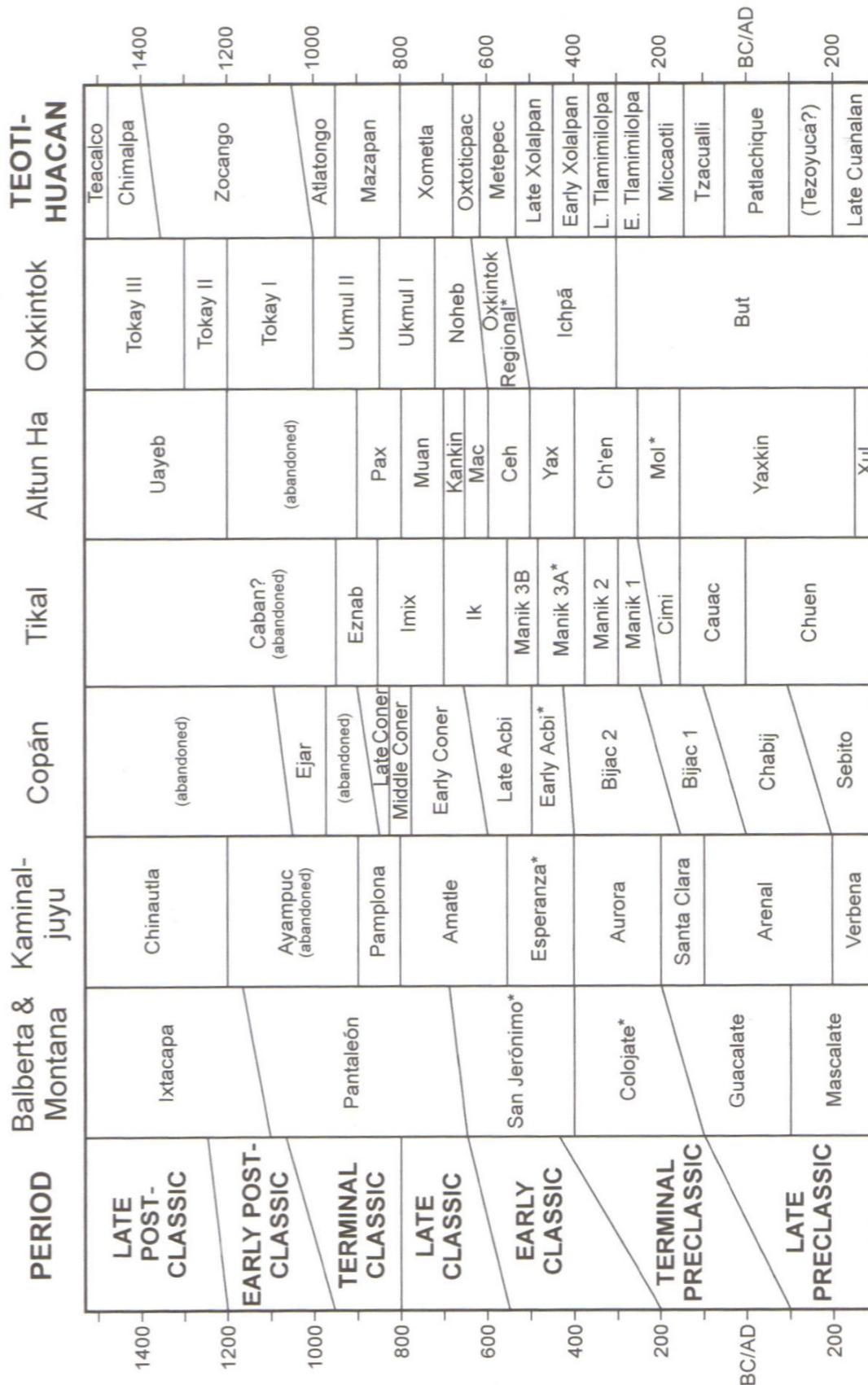


Figure 1
Time line of the Maya Region and Teotihuacán
After Braswell (2003)

Patlachique phase, Teotihuacán was predominantly rural and didn't contain the impressive architectural features that are characteristic of the site during the Classic times (Rattray 2001). At this time, the ceramics found at Teotihuacán are very similar to those of Cuicuilco. Based on the prevalence of hilltop settlements during this time period, it is probable that warfare was a key component of intra-site interaction (Sanders et al. 1979). Eventually Cuicuilco declined and Teotihuacán became the dominant power in the Basin of Mexico. One of the predominant theories that explains this shift in power during the Tzacualli Phase (1-150 A.D.) is the eruption of Xitle, a volcano situated next to the settlement of Cuicuilco (Rattray 2001). It is widely believed that Xitle erupted during this time period and at least partially destroyed Cuicuilco (Pasztor 1997). Any remaining populations in the immediate area of Cuicuilco most likely

After the destruction of Cuicuilco, Teotihuacán rapidly expanded. The settlement was moved to a different center than that of the Cuanalan phase for unknown reasons. It has been hypothesized that this relocation was directly correlated to the numerous caves around the new center. At this new location, the city grew until it “covered about 20 square kilometers (8 square miles)” (Cowgill 2000, pp. 262). By early in the first millennium A.D., much of the population of the Basin of Mexico had moved into Teotihuacán. While the city had many attractions, it is likely that some degree of coercion or force was used in order to move groups of people away from good farming land. It has been argued that the motive for moving large populations into the urban area was the construction of the Pyramid of the Sun (Cowgill 2000). Alternative explanations involve the natural disaster at Cuicuilco, religion, defense, and economics (Rattray 2001). The Pyramid of the Sun was gradually built in stages during the Tzacualli phase (1-150 A.D.) at the end of the Late Preclassic (Coe and Koontz 2002). This pyramid most likely held an intensely symbolic meaning due to its location over a cave. Construction of the Pyramid of the

Moon was also in progress during the Tzacualli phase. The introduction of large-scale architecture during the Tzacualli phase is very impressive, especially when considering the distinct lack of evidence for a powerful elite at Teotihuacán during this time (Rattray 2001). Teotihuacán also enjoyed trade relationships with other nearby polities, as evidenced by the presence of Thin Orange Ware ceramics that were produced in southern Puebla. At this time, the characteristic *talud-tablero* architectural style hadn't yet emerged; however, it was present at Puebla (Cowgill 2000). By the end of the Preclassic, Teotihuacán was a very impressive city that most likely controlled the entire Basin of Mexico.

The Classic Period began around A.D. 150 in the Basin of Mexico, a period that encompasses the height of Teotihuacán. The first ceramic phase of this time period, the Miccaotli Phase (A.D. 150-200), demonstrated a continuity from the Tzacualli phase; however, during this time, several typical Teotihuacán-style ceramic types were introduced such as the outcurving bowl with supports, Tlaloc jar forms, and black bowls (Rattray 2001). Some of these ceramic types are important because similar style vessels have been found in the Maya region, including the site of Tikal. The large-scale construction was also continuing at Teotihuacán. It has been suggested that the majority of the Pyramid of the Moon was completed during the Miccaotli Phase in addition to the Ciudadela and Temple of the Feathered Serpent (Cowgill 2000; Rattray 2001). Over 100 individual remains have been discovered in association with the Feathered Serpent Pyramid that imply the presence of a strong, central government at this time that had the power to organize such an arrangement (Cowgill 2000).

During the subsequent Tlamimilolpa Phase (200-350 A.D.) at Teotihuacán, additional important ceramic types were introduced, such as the censer and tripod vessels. The expansion of the city continued with the addition of several 'barrios' containing apartment complexes

positioned around the periphery of the city (Rattray 2001). These apartment compounds were quite large and could often house several families (Cowgill 2000). By the late Tlamimilolpa Phase, these barrios had very distinct appearances and contents, suggesting that each housed a particular segment of the population, such as priests or artists. Other barrios probably accommodated certain immigrant groups, such as individuals from Oaxaca. At this time, the elite of Teotihuacán were living in complexes that lined the central Avenue of the Dead (Rattray 2001). Evidence indicates that Teotihuacán's influence abroad hadn't been significant up to this point. There is evidence of Teotihuacán in the Tula region and Puebla; however, it is during the Tlamimilolpa period that Teotihuacán began to extend its power. Sites such as those in the Calpulalpan and Morelos regions, show evidence of Teotihuacán expansion. It is probable that this growth was motivated by the need for large quantities of food and other staples required to support a continuously growing population within the city (Rattray 2001). It is also during this time that evidence of Teotihuacán begins appearing in the Maya region, including the sites of Tikal and Kaminaljuyu in Guatemala.

The subsequent Xolalpan Phase (A.D. 350-550) represents a continuation of the ceramic and architectural trends begun in the earlier Tlamimilolpa Phase. This phase is characterized by increasing specialization of crafts and an associated increase in the standardization of forms (Rattray 2001). Much like the earlier phases during the Classic period, the city of Teotihuacán was expanding in terms of population size and architecture. New apartment complexes and temples were being constructed throughout the site and older structures were constantly being renovated and updated. During the later portion of the Xolalpan Phase, population growth and ceramic quality slowed and then entered a period of decline with the beginning of the following Metepec phase (A.D. 550-650). Architecturally, this phase appears to be very similar to the

Xolalpan phase due to the lack of new construction at the site (Rattray 2001). Much of the city continued to be occupied during this time; however, it is clear that the city was in a state of declining power. During this period, other centers within Central Mexico began expanding, such as Xochicalco and Cacaxtla, further marking Teotihuacán's shift away from prominence in the region (Cowgill 2000).

The collapse of Teotihuacán has been the subject of intense debate for years. By approximately A.D. 650, the site of Teotihuacán was abandoned and many of the major temples and residences were destroyed. It is uncertain whether Teotihuacanos destroyed the city themselves or if an outside invading force ordered the demolition. Regardless, it is clear that the city was effectively incapacitated as a result of these attacks (Cowgill 2000). Not only was Teotihuacán physically destroyed, much of the cultural traditions and ideology were also wiped out. Aside from a potential enclave in Cholula, the majority of the distinct Teotihuacán elements disappear from the archaeological record after the site was abandoned. Among the elements that vanished once the city was ravaged are the *talud-tablero* architectural style, apartment compounds, composite censers, and Thin Orange Ware (Cowgill 2000). Surprisingly, the center wasn't abandoned for long. A plethora of ceramic sherds have been found at the site that date to the Xometla phase, suggesting the arrival of an ethnically distinct population, possibly Nahua speakers or Coyotlatelco peoples (Cowgill 2000; Rattray 2001).

Evidence of Interaction

Evidence of significant interaction between Teotihuacán and the Maya was first discovered at the site of Kaminaljuyú in Guatemala in the early 20th century (Fash and Fash 2000). These artifacts informed archaeologists in the Maya region that additional evidence could be encountered in other parts of Central America. The first artifacts from Tikal that suggest some kind of relationship with Teotihuacán were discovered by William Coe in the 1970s. Many archaeologists have discussed the potential presence of Teotihuacán lords at Tikal over the past few decades. Before evaluating the theories regarding the interaction between these two sites, it is first necessary to evaluate the archaeological evidence for this possible relationship. These artifacts at Tikal essentially fall into four main categories: stelae, architecture, obsidian, and ceramics.

Several of the aforementioned artifacts found at Tikal detail an important event at the site during the Early Classic. Although the focus of this paper is on Tikal, additional evidence about this important event has been recovered from other sites in the Maya region, such as Uaxactun. This evidence is additionally analyzed within the current study. As previously suggested, the 378 A.D. event possibly had a significant impact on society at Tikal. During the reign of the Tikal ruler Chak Tok Ich'aak, or Jaguar Paw, an individual named "Siyaj K'ak" (also known as Smoking Frog or "Fire-Born") arrived at Tikal. Siyaj K'ak's approach to Tikal is documented on a stela found at the site of El Perú, a site that is located to the west of Tikal. He is depicted on the El Perú stela eight days prior to his appearance at Tikal, suggesting a western point of entry (Stuart 2000; Martin 2003). However, this stela was erected many years after the arrival of Siyaj K'ak at Tikal and could potentially be historical fiction. Siyaj K'ak's eventual arrival at Tikal on the long count date 8.17.1.4.12 (A.D. 378) is depicted on the Tikal Marcador stela, Uaxactun Stela 5, and Uaxactun Stela 22 (Martin 2003).

The Uaxactun Stela 5 (Figure 2) depicts a male individual, thought to be Siyaj K'ak, carrying an atlatl and a club, both of which are considered to be weapons of Central Mexico during the Early Classic (Coggins 1980). Whenever Siyaj K'ak is mentioned, it is implied that he holds a higher social position than the indigenous leaders of the Petén region (Martin 2003). Tikal Stela 31 (Figure 4) additionally records the arrival of Siyaj K'ak. On the same day that he appeared at Tikal, the local ruler, Chak Tok Ich'aak, is described as “water-entering” (Martin 2003; Stuart 2000). This phrase has been interpreted to mean that Chak Tok Ich'aak died on the same day as the arrival of Siyaj K'ak. The cause of Chak Tok Ich'aak's death is currently unknown; however, it seems possible that Siyaj K'ak killed the local ruler upon his arrival at Tikal (Stuart 2000).



Figure 2

Uaxactun Stela 5 after Stuart (1998)

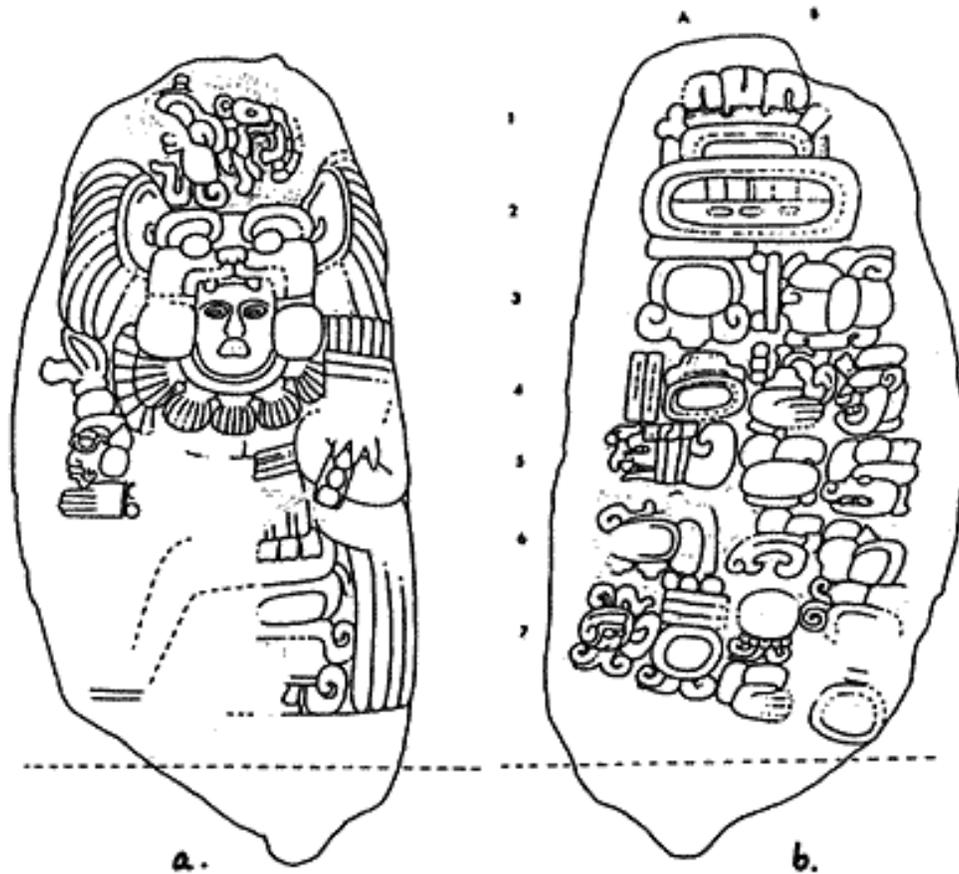
Siyaj K'ak's arrival in Tikal is additionally depicted on the Tikal Marcador stela. This stela, which is very similar in form to those found at Teotihuacán, also introduces another

important individual in this story: Spearthrower Owl (Martin 2003). In earlier studies, “Spearthrower Owl” has been interpreted as a generic title of prestige rather than the name of an individual; however it has recently been suggested Spearthrower Owl was a prominent individual from Teotihuacán, if not its ruler (Stuart 2000). Spearthrower Owl’s identity is clearly a subject of debate. The glyphs that make up his name bear Teotihuacán elements, most notably the inclusion of an atlatl, which is commonly used in Teotihuacán iconography (Stuart 2000). However, traditional interpretations of this event indicate that Spearthrower Owl is a significant individual in the 378 A.D. event because he is the father of the Yax Nuun Ayiin, also known as Curl Snout, who would become the ruler of Tikal upon Chak Tok Ich’aak’s death.

According to the Tikal Marcador stela, Spearthrower Owl sanctions the travel of Siyaj K’ak to Teotihuacán (Stuart 2000). He is additionally listed as a ruler, but not at Tikal (at this time, Chak Tok Ich’aak is the ruler of Tikal). Spearthrower Owl eventually dies during the reign of his grandson, Siyaj Chan K’awiil (recorded on Tikal Stela 31). Stuart (2000) suggests that Spearthrower Owl was the ruler of Teotihuacán during this period; however, he admits that this hypothesis would be very difficult to prove, especially given the lack of individual recognition of rulers at Teotihuacán.

Tikal Stela 4 (Figure 3) additionally records the accession date of Yax Nuun Ayiin in 379 A.D., shortly after the death of Chak Tok Ich’aak. This path of inheritance differs significantly from the traditional father-son pattern. Yax Nuun Ayiin is not the son of Chak Tok Ich’aak. As previously mentioned, he isn’t even the son of Siyaj K’ak, the individual who may have deposed Chak Tok Ich’aak. The person depicted on Tikal Stela 4 is Yax Nuun Ayiin himself. The placement of glyphs on this stela implies that Yax Nuun Ayiin is of inferior rank than Siyaj K’ak, who, for unknown reasons, installed Spearthrower Owl’s son as the ruler of Tikal rather

than taking the throne for himself (Stuart 2000). This stela additionally bears significant iconography reminiscent of Teotihuacán, such as the feline headdress and the cattails off to the right side of the individual (Borowicz 2003).



Tikal Stela 3 after Stuart (1998)

Tikal Stela 31 (Figure 4) contains the most information about the events surrounding the arrival of Siyaj K'ak and the events that followed. The central figure in this stela is Siyaj Chan K'awiil II (Stormy Sky), who is flanked by two warriors. These warriors are typically Maya in form and figure; however, their dress displays many traits that are characteristic of Teotihuacán. For example, the rightmost individual is carrying an atlatl and a shield that bears the image of

Tlaloc, a Teotihuacán god. Furthermore, both flanking individuals are wearing tassel headdresses and tails, both of which are garments traditionally found at Teotihuacán. These two peripheral warriors have widely been interpreted as the same individual depicted from different angles (Pasztory 1993). The identity of this individual is uncertain; however, many scholars believe that he is the deceased father of Siyaj Chan K'awil, Yax Nuun Ayiin. On both Stela 4 and Stela 31, Yax Nuun Ayiin appears wearing Teotihuacán garb, suggesting that this individual is either from Teotihuacán proper or has been deeply influenced by this Central Mexican power (Martin 2003). Stela 31 additionally details Yax Nuun Ayiin's heir, Siyaj Chan K'awil II. Compared to the flanking individuals on the stela (presumably depictions of his father), Siyaj Chan K'awil's clothing is more representative of the Maya Lowlands region. Part of his elaborate headdress may also pay homage to Yax Ehb' Xook, the first documented ruler of Tikal. (Martin 2003).

A final stela at Uaxactun depicts this event. Uaxactun Stela 22 mentions the date of Siyaj K'ak's arrival and additionally displays some Teotihuacanoid traits. The feathers depicted on this stela aren't typically Maya. Instead, the treatment of the feathers is reminiscent of Teotihuacán style (Proskouriakoff 1950). Interestingly, this stela dates to approximately 495 A.D., over 100 years after the 378 event (Stuart 2000). This may indicate that the stela is a work of fiction or Maya propaganda

In addition to the stelae from Uaxactun and Tikal detailed above, there is additional evidence of potential Teotihuacán influence at Tikal in the form of architecture. The main source of architectural evidence at Tikal is the *talud-tablero* architecture and the specialized contexts in which it has been found (Laporte 2003). The *talud-tablero* style typically consists of horizontal

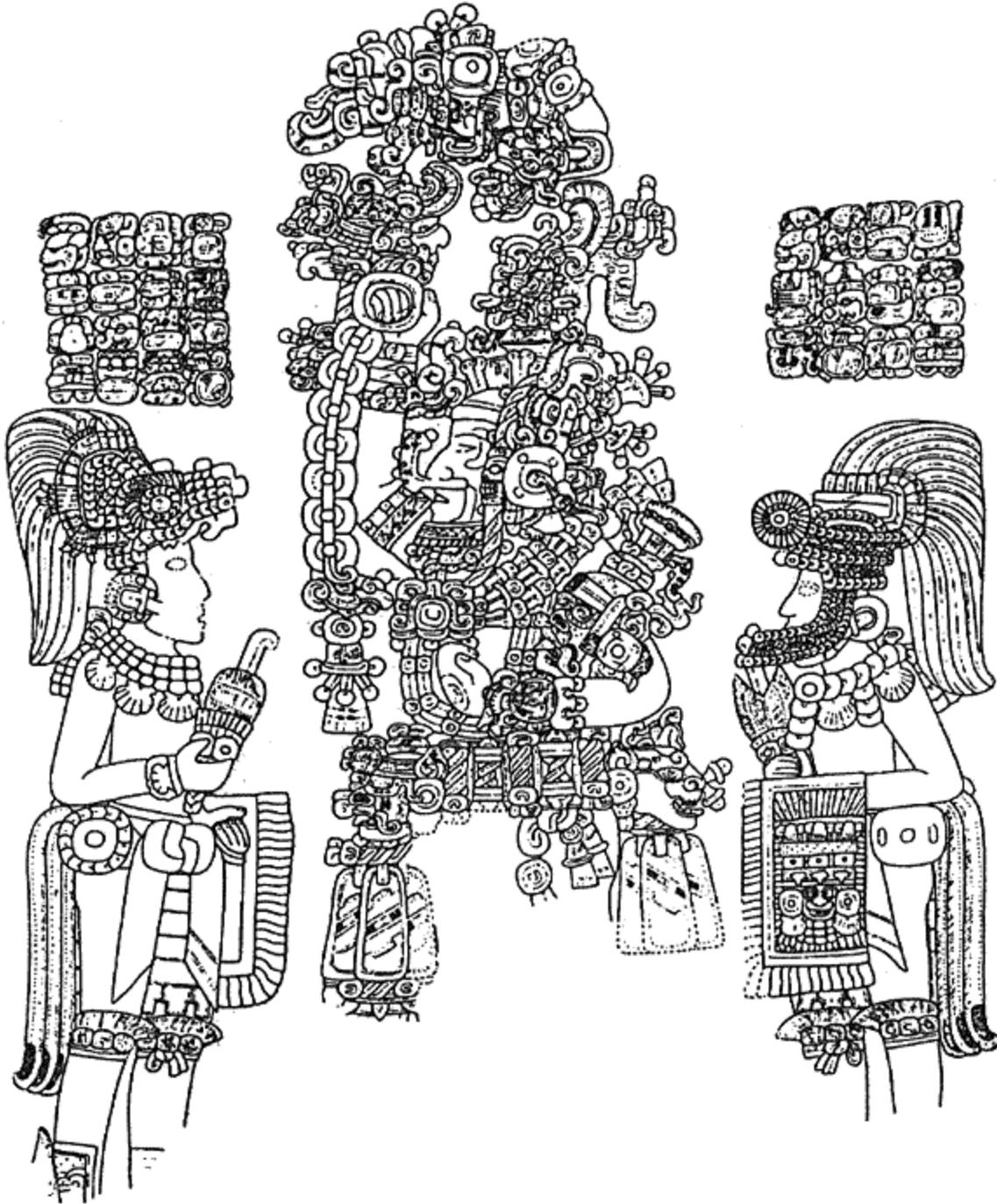


Figure 4

Tikal Stela 31 after Stuart (1998)

tableros and diagonal or vertical *taludes* that surround a platform and are often interspersed with staircases leading to the platform. The earliest *talud-tablero* architecture appeared in the Puebla region (Cowgill 2000). At Tikal, the first *tableros* have been found in the Mundo Perdido complex during the third century A.D. (Laporte 2003). Several structures in this complex demonstrate the *talud-tablero* style during the fifth century A.D., roughly corresponding to the Late Preclassic and into the Early Classic. However, the incorporation of *talud-tablero* architecture wasn't limited to the Mundo Perdido complex at Tikal.

Group 6C-XVI at Tikal includes four platforms that exhibit the *talud-tablero* style (this is also where the Tikal Marcador stela was found). One of these platforms, Sub-26, is the only structure at Tikal that bears “all the stylistic elements of the complete architectural form that developed at Teotihuacán” (Laporte 2003, pp. 203). This adoption of the *talud-tablero* style also corresponds chronologically to a wider use of Teotihuacán-like elements at Tikal (Laporte 2003). Although these locations are the only two well-documented examples of Early Classic *talud-tablero* architecture at Tikal, it is probable that there are many more structures that exhibit this style that haven't yet been excavated. Interestingly, there are also examples of *talud-tablero* architecture at Tikal that date to the Late Classic, after the fall of Teotihuacán. As described by Laporte, “these are Str. 5D-43 in the East Plaza, Str. 5C-53 in Mundo Perdido, and Str. 6e-144 in a minor group southeast of the site epicenter” (2003, pp.203).

In addition to the *talud-tablero* architecture, some archaeologists have argued that specialized residential groups at Tikal are reminiscent of the apartment complexes of Teotihuacán. Again, Group 6C-XVI is the best example of this architectural evidence that dates to the Early Classic at Tikal. The structures that comprise this group were all situated around five patios (Laporte 2003). Thus far, additional similar groups have not been discovered at Tikal.

Another line of evidence for Teotihuacán influence at Tikal are certain ceramics from the Manik 3A phase at Tikal. During this time, some traits of Teotihuacán ceramics were incorporated into the ceramics of Tikal (Moholy-Nagy 2003). These characteristics were implemented for use on pottery vessels and figurines of the elite. Teotihuacán-like ceramics found at Tikal include censers with *adornos*, cylindrical tripod vessels, *floreros*, *incensarios*, Thin Orange ware and some figurines (Demarest and Foias 1993). Many of these ceramics include Teotihuacanoid stylistic elements, including “quadripartite designs painted in the style found at Teotihuacán and depicting the goggle-eye, fangs, Kan Crosses, year signs, chalchihuitls, and dart-throwers of the Teotihuacán patron rain deity, Tlaloc [...]” (Coggins 1983; pp. 50). In addition to the introduction of Teotihuacán-like ceramic motifs, it has been suggested that the increasing number of vessels created with molds at Tikal is due to contact with Central Mexico and the subsequent import of ceramic mold technology (Moholy-Nagy 2003). Many of these ceramic objects have been found in burial-like contexts in Mundo Perdido (Culbert 2003).

A final source of evidence for possible Teotihuacán influence at Tikal is obsidian. Obsidian sources are relatively limited in Mesoamerica and each source produces a unique form of obsidian that can be traced by experts. During the Early Classic, Teotihuacán most likely controlled several Central Mexican sources of obsidian, such as that of Cerro de las Navajas, a site located near Pachuca (Moholy-Nagy 1999). The obsidian found at the Pachuca source is one of the highest-quality forms in Mesoamerica and has a distinctive green color (Santley 1983). Archaeologists have found many artifacts at Tikal that were produced from central Mexican obsidian, including prismatic blades, bifaces and other stone tools. Obsidian from these sources was utilized at Tikal from the Late Preclassic until the site was deserted (Moholy-Nagy 1999). Dating the Mexican obsidian at Tikal has been problematic due to the fact that it hasn't

frequently been found in association with ceramics (which usually provides more accurate dates). Instead, the majority of the obsidian artifacts from the Early Classic have been found in construction fill or “burial-like problematical deposits” (Moholy-Nagy 1999; pp. 307).

Interestingly, artifacts constructed out of Mexican obsidian have been found in a variety of structures at Tikal, suggesting that the use of these objects wasn’t limited to the elite.

Additionally, there was a distinct increase in the amount of Mexican obsidian at Tikal during the Early Classic period, the time suggested for the intrusion of Teotihuacán officials (namely, Siyaj K’ak) into Tikal society (Moholy-Nagy 1999).

Additional evidence from other sites in the Maya region suggest Teotihuacán influence in Central America. For example, much of the artifacts and architectural structures that date to the Esperanza phase at Kaminaljuyú reflect many Teotihuacán stylistic traits (Fash and Fash 2000). Other evidence comes from Altun Ha in Belize and the site of Copán in Honduras.

Theories of Interaction

It is clear that many types of artifacts at Tikal portray certain Teotihuacán stylistic attributes. It is additionally certain that some of these artifacts, such as obsidian from Pachuca, originated in Central Mexico. Many scholars argue that the archaeological data supports the hypothesis that one or many Teotihuacán natives arrived at Tikal and other Maya cities during the Early Classic period. The possibility and intensity of this interaction between the two sites have been debated for years. Some archaeologists believe that Teotihuacán had direct control of Tikal during the Early Classic. Coggins (1983) argues that the introduction of Tlaloc imagery at Tikal suggests that Teotihuacán sought to control this Maya site in part through religious and

astronomical means. She states that the modification of observatory structures at Tikal during this time to reflect certain Teotihuacanoid standards suggests that Teotihuacán was involved with astronomy and the calendrical system at Tikal, possibly using this as a method of subjugation (Coggins 1983). Coggins (1983) also claims that the Mexican foreigners introduced the celebration of *katuns* into the Maya region and used this as another means of control. Stuart (2000) additionally argues for a more intense relationship between Teotihuacán and Tikal. He argues that Siyaj K'ak most likely killed Jaguar Paw and then installed the son of his lord (Spearthrower Owl) as the leader of Tikal. Stuart (2000) believes that the Maya utilization of Teotihuacán artistic styles cannot be viewed as the cultural adoption of “foreign visual forms that communicate aspects of elite ideology and militarism” (pp. 506). According to Stuart (2000), the changes imposed by Siyaj K'ak, Yax Nuun Ayiin and his descendents drastically altered the political atmosphere at Tikal and disrupted the social organization of the site. Long after the abandonment of Teotihuacán, lords at Tikal continued to pay homage to this great city, perhaps further suggesting that Tikal was dominated by Teotihuacán lords during the Early Classic. Sanders and Price (1983) take these hypotheses a step further and argue that the development of complex social organization in the Maya region was initiated through contact with Teotihuacán.

While many scholars have argued for a strong Teotihuacán presence in the Maya region, some archaeologists have offered a variety of alternative explanations. As stated by Fash and Fash (2000), “Many scholars believed that the Maya simply borrowed some useful Teotihuacán ideas and technology and re-cast them in their own way, all the while remaining completely independent of any hegemonic intentions, bellicose incursions, or long-distance diplomatic initiatives from the great capital of Central Mexico [...]” (pp. 435).

One alternative theory regarding the ethnic identity of Siyaj K'ak and his role at Tikal (and to some degree, Uaxactun) has been proposed by Schele and Freidel (1990). They argue that Tikal warred Uaxactun around the time of Siyaj K'ak's hypothesized arrival at Tikal. Tikal then used borrowed war imagery from Central Mexico in order to depict this conflict (Schele and Freidel 1990). However, Stuart (2000) has argued that this war never occurred during this time period. His detailed analysis of the iconography did not reveal any information about a war. In fact, he argues that these stela don't mention the war at all (Stuart 2000). Interestingly, war imagery is seen on both stelae from Uaxactun and Tikal in the form of atlatls and traditional warrior clothing. Thus, rather than signifying a foreign intrusion, Schele and Freidel (1990) argue that the stelae record the Maya adoption of Central Mexican iconographic motifs.

Demarest and Foias (1993) have proposed an additional theory for the nature and extent of the relationship between Teotihuacán and Tikal. Throughout the decades of debate concerning this topic, the spread of Teotihuacán stylistic elements has consistently been referred to as a horizon. It is true that many lines of evidence exist for the dispersion of various goods and stylistic traits from Teotihuacán to elsewhere in Mesoamerica, such as the site of Tikal. However, Demarest and Foias (1993) have argued that the use of the horizon concept shouldn't be applied to the spread of Teotihuacanoid artifacts. Previous scholars have cited examples from Tikal, Kaminaljuyu, Altun Ha, and elsewhere as evidence for a Teotihuacán horizon during the Early to Middle Classic. However, Demarest and Foias (1993) argue that the use of the term "horizon" to describe the spread of these artifacts may be misleading. Recent studies have illustrated that the Maya region had a long and sustained relationship with Teotihuacán that was multidimensional—it wasn't simply defined by the export of goods and ideas from Central Mexico to the Maya area. Demarest and Foias (1993) suggest that this sustained contact occurred

between the upper echelons of the two societies. The somewhat specialized contexts in which Teotihuacán artifacts have been found elsewhere in the Maya region suggests that only certain portions of the population—probably the elite portions—had access to these goods. They argue that these individuals most likely used the foreign goods and the social implications of a relationship with foreign powers in order to reinforce social status and accrue power. Demarest and Foias (1993) conclude their argument by stating that the relationship between Teotihuacán and Tikal, and indeed the rest of the Maya region, was more symbolic than actual and didn't actually involve a military takeover, political control, or economic endeavors.

Demarest and Foias (1993) also suggest that recent analysis of the chronology in the Maya region, which pushed the development of complex society in the lowlands back to the Late Preclassic, has undermined the hypothesis that contact with Teotihuacán was the major motivation for such advanced development. By the time Teotihuacanoid artifacts appear at Tikal, a substantial amount of social development had already occurred, suggesting that Tikal's social evolution was approximately coeval with that of Teotihuacán. However, Demarest and Foias (1993) acknowledge that “the later Teotihuacán contacts [...] may have been critical to aspects of later Classic Maya culture” (pp. 154).

There are additionally contending theories regarding the quality and quantity of evidence for extensive interaction between the two sites. The mixed iconography of the stelae found at Tikal and Uaxactun has additionally been the subject of debate for years. Tikal Stela 31 in particular has given rise to different interpretations. Stuart (2000) argues that this stela contains ample Teotihuacanoid imagery. However, Borowicz (2003) argues that this stela is surprisingly devoid of references to Teotihuacán given the fact that these individuals have been hypothesized to have originated in Central Mexico. While the two peripheral figures in this stela are wearing a

traditional Teotihuacán outfit, they are depicted in a Maya form. The proportions of these individuals adheres to Maya artistic traditions and they are depicted in traditional Maya poses (Borowicz 2003). Although Borowicz (2003) differs in his interpretation of some aspects of this stela, he doesn't deny the idea that Yax Nuun Ayiin may have come from Teotihuacán. Instead he suggests that by this time, the foreign identity of Yax Nuun Ayiin was no longer important and his son, Siyaj Chan K'awiil, was possibly trying to marginalize the importance of his father's ethnic identity. This theory is further supported by the fact that Siyaj Chan K'awiil initiated a distinct return to traditional Maya artistic forms. The identity of Spearthrower Owl is also a point of contention amongst archaeologists. This name was originally interpreted as an honorific or prestigious title; however, Stuart (2000) and others argue that Spearthrower Owl was an individual. Blaswell (2003) suggests that Chak Tok Ich'aak may have died without a son, leaving the Tikal throne vacant upon his demise. Yax Nuun Ayiin was then installed as the ruler, possibly with Siyaj K'ak as a regent. Spearthrower Owl then “may have been an abstraction to which fatherhood was ascribed in order to strengthen a new king's claim to leadership” (Blaswell 2003; pp. 24).

Another such line of evidence that has raised questions is the *talud-tablero* architectural style found at Tikal. Many archaeologists have suggested that the quantity of *talud-tablero* architecture found at Tikal points to Teotihuacán as a very powerful entity in the region. However, Laporte (2003) points out several possible problems with this interpretation. He argues that the earliest occurrence of *talud-tablero* architecture at Tikal predates any other evidence of contact between the two sites, suggesting the spread of this style was a much wider pattern of distribution than originally hypothesized. Furthermore, the *talud-tablero* style was adopted in many other Mayan sites and never in the same exact form—the various uses of the *talud-tablero*

style in the Maya region vary drastically both between and within individual sites (Laporte 2003). Because the *talud-tablero* architectural style has been found at a variety of sites and due to the fact that it was used in a very different manner at Tikal than at Teotihuacán, Laporte suggests that its use at Tikal wasn't the direct result of Teotihuacán influence (2003). If *talud-tablero* architecture was installed at Tikal in order to pay tribute to Teotihuacán or demonstrate its subordinate position to the Central Mexican city, it would be expected that the *talud-tablero* style would be incorporated into the architecture of Tikal in a nearly identical fashion to that of Teotihuacán; however, this is clearly not the case.

Laporte additionally suggests that the similarities between the Early Classic arrangement of structures of Group 6C-XVI and Teotihuacán are all superficial in nature. He argues that the introduction of residential compounds cannot be ascribed to Teotihuacán or any other individual site. While the earliest apartment compounds have been found at Teotihuacán, it would be fallacious to immediately imply that these are a direct import from Teotihuacán. Laporte (2003) mentions that there could be contemporaneous similar residential compounds elsewhere in Mesoamerica that simply haven't been discovered yet. At Teotihuacán the apartment complexes were critical to the *barrio* organization of the site, a concept that is not seen at Tikal. Laporte (2003) also argues that the complexes at Teotihuacán were carefully planned and constructed, whereas Group 6C-XVI was frequently remodeled and expanded throughout its history of occupation. The most notable difference between Group 6C-XVI and the apartment compounds of Teotihuacán is that the Tikal group simply doesn't display the apartment characteristics of those found in Mexico (Laporte 2003). He concludes his arguments by stressing that the influence between Tikal and Teotihuacán wasn't unidirectional. Instead, an intensely complex exchange of ideas and artistic styles occurred between the two great cities. Laporte (2003)

additionally references the Ciudadela at Teotihuacán as being a type of E-group that is characteristic of many sites in the Maya region, further suggesting that the relationship between Tikal and Teotihuacán was multidirectional. Demarest and Foias (1993) also suggest that the *talud-tablero* architecture found throughout the Maya region may not be the direct result of contact with Teotihuacán. They suggest that this technology could have been transmitted via contact with the Gulf Coast or other indirect means.

Finally, there have been debates surrounding the significance of the Pachuca obsidian found at Tikal. Moholy-Nagy (1999) argues that there isn't sufficient evidence to substantiate the claim that Teotihuacán had direct control over the Pachuca source of obsidian. However, Santley (1983) has suggested that not only did Teotihuacán control all of the obsidian sources in Central Mexico, but that this great city also enjoyed a monopoly of the obsidian trade in the Maya region as well. He believes that Teotihuacán established an outpost at Kaminaljuyu in order to further control obsidian procurement and trade within the region, a claim that Moholy-Nagy (1999) and others refute. Moholy-Nagy (1999) additionally acknowledges that Pachuca obsidian increased during the Early Classic during the supposed introduction of Teotihuacanos at Tikal; however, she suggests that this isn't surprising given the fact that imports of all types of obsidian into Tikal increased during this period. Moholy-Nagy (1999) concludes that the spread of Central Mexican obsidian and Teotihuacanoid artifacts into Tikal and several other sites in the Maya region is the result of a "short-lived diffusion of aspects of Teotihuacán material culture, art style, and ritual behavior" (1999; pp. 311). Green obsidian has additionally been found at a variety of other locations in Central Mexico. Demarest and Foias (1993) have suggested that the Pachuca obsidian in the Maya region could have come through one of these intermediary sites. Demarest and Foias (1993) additionally disagree with Santley's (1983) hypothesis regarding a

colony at Kaminaljuyu. They point out that some obsidian sources, such as Ixtepeque in the southern Maya highlands, have never been associated with Teotihuacán. Just as they suggested for the transmission of *talud-tablero* architecture, Demarest and Foias (1993) argue that the Pachuca obsidian may have been transported to Tikal via other sites in intervening area.

Discussion

These arguments address many of the important questions surrounding the interaction between Teotihuacán and Tikal during the Early Classic period. On one side, there are many prominent archaeologists who believe Teotihuacán had a substantial role at Tikal and the greater Maya region. A plethora of artifacts have been found at Tikal that appear to have originated at Teotihuacán or have been directly influenced by that Central Mexican metropolis, all of which support this theory. However, recent analyses have demonstrated that many of the artifacts that had previously been considered Teotihuacán imports were actually made locally in the Maya region (Pasztor 1993). While this information is relevant to the argument, it doesn't immediately negate the idea that Teotihuacán had a substantial role at Tikal. The fact that artisans at Tikal were perhaps imitating a foreign style is still a very significant development. Coggins (1983), Stuart (2000), Sanders and Price (1968) and many others believe that Teotihuacán did indeed exert some form of control over Tikal. Based on the available evidence, it seems very unlikely that Teotihuacán conquered Tikal in a traditional military sense. There is no record of a large-scale invasion of the Maya region, nor any extended war between Teotihuacán and Tikal. The presence of the atlatl and traditional Teotihuacán warrior clothing on a few stelae were probably used to indicate ethnic identity rather than military force. However, it

does seem likely that Siyaj K'ak killed Jaguar Paw upon his arrival at Tikal due to the exact alignment of dates. Just as Siyaj K'ak is recorded to have appeared at Tikal, Jaguar Paw dies. The two events are often recorded on the same stela and therefore seem to be related in some way. Rather than exerting force on Tikal via militaristic means, it has been suggested that Teotihuacán used religious and/or astronomical innovations to control the Maya region (Coggins 1983). The extent to which these methods would be successful is debatable; however, it seems likely that something more would have been needed in order to convince the indigenous population that the imported ideas had any credence. There is additionally little evidence to support the idea that the religion of Teotihuacán was actively practiced at Tikal (Braswell 2003).

Other scholars, including Demarest and Foias (1993), have argued that Teotihuacán didn't significantly control or influence the Maya region. Recent excavations have led archaeologists to suggest that Tikal and other sites in the Maya region developed earlier than had previously been thought. This reevaluation of the chronology of the region has caused something of a temporal disconnect. Many individuals have argued that Teotihuacán motivated complex development at Tikal and that the population of Tikal eagerly adapted various aspects of Teotihuacán society because they were more advanced. However, it is now known that by the time Tikal and Teotihuacán began interacting, Tikal had already experienced a substantial amount of development and expansion. Opponents of the idea that Teotihuacán controlled Tikal also point to the lack of evidence for this domination. The amount of archaeological data to support the theory of Teotihuacán as the driving force behind Tikal isn't substantial. Following Ponce de León (2003), I suggest that it has even been exaggerated in some cases. Compared to the vast amounts of archaeological data from Tikal during this time period, the artifacts that are reminiscent of Teotihuacán aren't very many. If Teotihuacán did indeed install rulers at Tikal,

wouldn't their artistic style and other social conventions have been recorded on a larger amount of artifacts and have lasted for much longer in the Maya region? Interestingly, Teotihuacanoid elements do reappear much later in the chronology of Tikal, following the hiatus period. The ruler Jasaw Chan K'awiil reintroduced various Teotihuacán-like elements, perhaps suggesting that the influence of Teotihuacán endured for much longer than is traditionally considered.

Based on the archaeological evidence, it appears that Tikal and Teotihuacán were interacting for much longer than the 378 A.D. event and the years immediately following it. The *talud-tablero* architectural style appears much earlier than had previously been thought. Furthermore, Tikal was importing Pachuca obsidian throughout the occupation of the site. The iconographic evidence also supports the idea that Siyaj K'ak, a servant of the Teotihuacán ruler Spearthrower Owl, infiltrated the society of Tikal and installed Yax Nuun Ayiin as its ruler. Wright (2005) recently reevaluated the individuals found in Burial 10 at Tikal. One of these individuals is believed to be Yax Nuun Ayiin. Based on the strontium isotope ratio of the bones found within this burial, these individuals were not native to Central Mexico. Furthermore, the contents of these burials, although seemingly Central Mexican in design, were most likely manufactured in the Maya area (Wright 2005). It is difficult to confirm that the bones in question are actually those of Yax Nuun Ayiin. Even if Yax Nuun Ayiin was born locally, he still may have been a puppet of Teotihuacán (Braswell 2003).

It is difficult to determine the long-term effects on Tikal as a result of interaction with Teotihuacán. Gordon Willey has suggested that the hiatus period at Tikal may be directly correlated to this site's relationship with Teotihuacán. Around the time of the hiatus (534-593 A.D.), Teotihuacán was entering a period of decline that culminated in its collapse. Willey argues that Teotihuacán withdrew from the Maya region as its power declined, taking its power

and trade connections with it. This left a power and economical gap in the Maya region that precipitated a hiatus in monument building (Willey 1974). Alternative theories have since been proposed about the hiatus, including Chase and Chase's argument that the hiatus was the direct result of Tikal's defeat by Caracol (1987). Ponce de León (2003) additionally argues that the impact of the interaction between Tikal and Teotihuacán has been grossly overstated in previous studies. She also cites the small amount of Teotihuacán-like artifacts compared to the great quantity of locally produced objects found at Tikal (2003).

Conclusions

The debate about Teotihuacán's influence in the Maya region has been the subject of an intense and often emotional debate for decades. When it was first proposed that Teotihuacán had a significant role in the development of the Maya civilization, many Mayanists reacted with criticism and scorn. The idea that the Maya civilization was secondary to Teotihuacán seemed absurd at first; however, as more evidence for extensive contact between the Maya region and Teotihuacán was discovered, scholars were forced to reevaluate their theories about the sequence of development in Mesoamerica as a whole. Many archaeologists proceeded to hypothesize that Teotihuacán was the main motivator for complex development in the Maya region. However, recent finds have indicated that the Maya region was already expanding by the time of first contact with Teotihuacán.

The nature and extent of the relationship between Teotihuacán and Tikal is difficult to determine. At first, there was most likely economic impetus for contact between the two cities. As the relationship progressed, the spread of ideology became an important concept at

Teotihuacán and it is clear that in the later portions of the Classic Period, the Maya adopted various aspects of the Teotihuacán state. Based on the archaeological evidence, I suggest that Siyaj K'ak, an individual probably native to Teotihuacán, arrived at Tikal in 378 A.D. Upon his arrival, he installed Yax Nuun Ayiin as the ruler. Yax Nuun Ayiin may have been a native of Tikal that Siyaj K'ak (and by extension, Teotihuacán) controlled, or he may have been the son of Spearthrower Owl, a reigning lord of another site, perhaps even Teotihuacán itself. The introduction of Teotihuacán power most likely did motivate an increase in the import of many Teotihuacán goods, such as ceramics and obsidian; however, this increase wasn't unprecedented. By the time Siyaj K'ak arrived in the Maya region, Tikal and Teotihuacán had most likely been interacting for many years. These foreign goods probably further inspired local artisans to produce local copies that were used by the elite to accrue power. The Teotihuacán-style artifacts weren't in style for very long. By the time Yax Nuun Ayiin's successor, Siyaj Chan K'awiil II, took the throne, he initiated a return to traditional Maya forms, as evidenced by Tikal Stela 31. The potentially foreign Teotihuacán rulers at Tikal were quickly absorbed into the local culture and Teotihuacán "influence" wasn't highly visible again until much later in the Classic period with Jasaw Chan K'awiil.

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