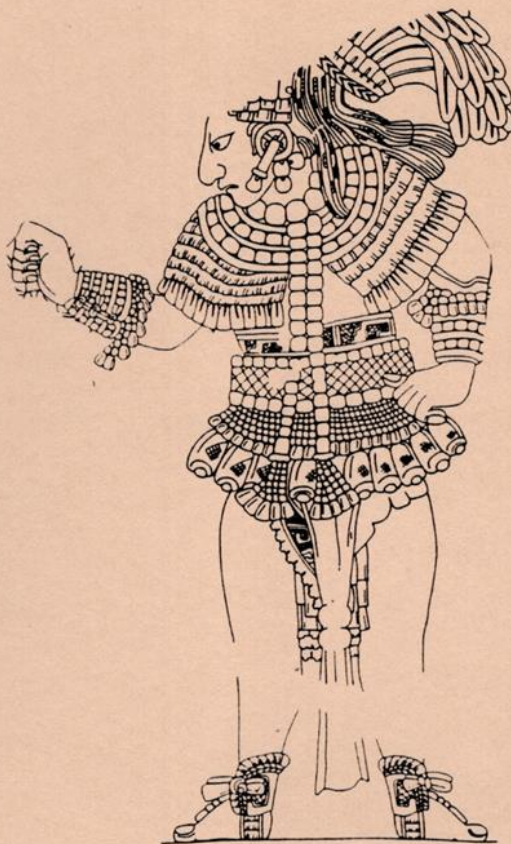


# The Pseudo-God L Headdress



on warriors and on ballplayers

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**Nicholas M. Hellmuth**

**1996**

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# The Pseudo-God L Headdress

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# THE PSEUDO-GOD L HEADDRESSES

## Part I: THE HEADDRESS ON SCULPTURE

Over a thousand Maya headdresses are available to study on stelae, murals, and pottery scenes. Understandably no dissertation or monograph has attempted to catalog and organize this immense mass of material. Yet we should realize that the headdress is often as diagnostic as facial characteristics in differentiating among supernaturals. Earlier generations of iconographers used eye size and teeth shape to attempt to distinguish among gods. But God D, God L, and God N can all have essentially the same aged faces, as can also the Jaguar God of the Underworld and others. Tau-shaped teeth and large round "god eyes" can be generic, or at least shared by several gods. In these cases, the easiest way to distinguish among them is by developing headdress recognition.

Headdresses are equally crucial in recognizing warriors, hunters, and ballplayers. This chapter introduces one particular headdress that is often worn by God L and by warriors. This same headdress is also seen on several ballplayers, so we need to understand its origins and implications. Since there is no established system of nomenclature for headdresses, I have named it the "pseudo-God L headdress." It could also have been designated as a "God L headdress without the perching bird," or, a "God L headdress usually emphasizing a central dome but without the perching bird." Over the next ten years enough additional examples of this headdress will become available to study that our categories of 1996 will seem rather primitive, but we have to start somewhere.

### God L

God L is a well-known deity who is easy to recognize (see Appendix A). Indeed, he has even been found far away from the Maya heartland at Cacaxtla, Tlaxcala. The fully developed God L headdress of the Peten style consists of:

a, the wide brim. This brim can be straight (flat), rounded at the ends, or floppy.

b, the wide brim tends to support a lower row of short feathers. This preliminary row is occasionally not present. Whether or not this row of feathers is present does not seem to alter the meaning of the overall headdress.

c, a mass of long feathers. These may be,

i, all one length

ii, neatly arranged,

iii, blowing in the wind (out of order, unarranged)

iv, of varying length

d, a central dome. This may be

i, flat on top

ii, rounded on top

iii, with crossed bands structure in the middle,

iv, may be so tall it stands well above the brim, or it may be so short that it is not even visible behind the taller feathers.<sup>1</sup>

e, an oval or semicircular ruff, usually with a small set of feathers may top the central portion of the hat.

f, a bird or head of a bird may be in the center of the hat, sometimes perching on the dome.

In some cases, the feathers around the hat almost look as though they serve as a nest for the bird. The bird, when present, probably rests on top of the central dome of the headdress. If you took all the feathers away you would probably see a basic hunter's sombrero of the large

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<sup>1</sup>. When the central dome is not visible it is hard to judge whether the dome is present or not since plumes hide the actual core which holds the headdress together. In some respects, the basic (core) headdress is a sombrero, the dome being the center of the sombrero, the row of shortest feathers running around the brim.

variety, such as worn on the chevron-less Chama vase which shows a hunter's parade.<sup>2</sup> Dennis Puleston suggested that the muan bird plates from Tikal (plates with the "Dress Shirt" design from Burial 116 and Burial 196) mimicked the row of identical feathers of a God L headdress.<sup>3</sup>

I tentatively call any such headdress that lacks the bird a pseudo-God L headdress if an actual God L is not present under the headdress. An "actual God L" is not easy to define precisely, but it usually means an individual with aged face, often aged sagging physique, and a shawl. There are other diagnostic traits, but the shawl and aged physique are the key ones.<sup>4</sup> In some instances the context indicates that God L is definitely intended even though a bird is missing. The best case would be Yaxchilan Stela 20, pictured several times but not recognized as God L (Maler 1903:pl. LXXVIII; Tate 1992: fig. 146, right). The subjected captive has the headdress with no bird present but he is wearing the jaguar hide as a shawl. A feline shawl is sufficiently rare that in this case it can be cited as a specific God L trait, especially since the god impersonator has his hair tied up as a bound hank. In other words, this individual is a fully acceptable God L impersonator. There are also plenty of actual aged God L's who lack the bird in their headdress (Taube 1992: fig. 41, b; 43, c).

Other instances of this birdless God L headdress are also at Yaxchilan:

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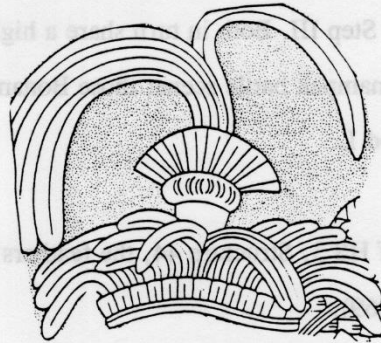
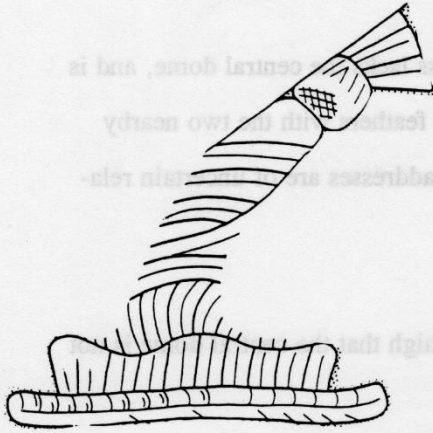
<sup>2</sup>. What the underneath, inside, portion of a God L headdress looks like (with all the feathers removed) may be similar to the "naked" sombreros in an unusual scene, Kerr 1992, 3: 420, File No. 3464.

<sup>3</sup>. Puleston made this observation at the Palenque Mesa Redonda when I gave my paper on God L.

<sup>4</sup>. Among the internal catalogs of the photographs of the F.L.A.A.R. Photo Archive are large volumes on each of the major deities. Each volume lists, and describes, every artifact in all Mesoamerica where the selected deity appears. There is then a list of traits, with a discussion. These volumes exist for God D, God L, God N, the JGU, the Shell Wing Deity, the Lily Pad Headdress Monster, the Sea Anemone Monster, and a few others. There are comparable volumes for the most common ceramic styles as well: Chama, Pabellon Modeled Carved, etc. Over all there must be at least 2,000 pages. These catalogs are available for any institution that shares in the cataloging project of the F. L. A. A. R. archive. At present this would be the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan. We hope other institutions become interested in working with us on cataloging the archive as well.







Lintel 16



Stela 19 (Maler 1903:pl. LXXVII,2), this headdress lacks the central dome, and is thus similar to that of Step III. Both in turn share a high set of feathers with the two nearby headdresses in the Bonampak battle scene; those Bonampak headdresses are of uncertain relationship to pseudo-God L.

Step III of HS 3, Structure 44, the feathers are so high that the central dome is not visible (Graham 3,3:169).

Lintel 16 (Graham 3,1:41). Here you have to subtract his other headdress, namely the part directly on his head. The pseudo-God L headdress is at 90-degrees to the head and with all the other headdress it is not immediately recognizable. Perhaps this is why no one ever cites any of these headdresses; actually no one cited God L for Stela 20 either (at least not during the 1970's and 1980's), but then again, the pseudo-God L headdress for Bonampak Stela 1 and Bonampak Lintel 1 were never recognized either. Mary Miller said the God L feature at Bonampak was not earlier known (personal communication circa 1980-1985). There is a potential pseudo-God L headdress at Bonampak in the actual battle scene, Room 2, figure 61. It also never got cited, tabulated, or described for what it might be.

The relevance of the pseudo-God L headdress has actually been available to all of us for several decades, since the principal player on the Dallas Ballplayer Vase wears an exaggerated example of this headdress. This Dallas vase has been published countless times (Hellmuth 1975a: front and back cover; Scheie and Miller 1986: fig. 260) but the problematic relationship of this headdress to God L was only listed once, Hellmuth 1987b:366. A battle scene known also for two decades shows a warrior in a version of the same generic class of headdress (Hellmuth 1987bFig. 106, a). By taking all such headdresses available in the complete corpus the pattern is clear. Most pseudo-God L headdresses are worn by warriors. Perhaps 10 % and potentially 15 % of the ballplayers as seen on Maya pottery wear a pseudo-God L headdress. It

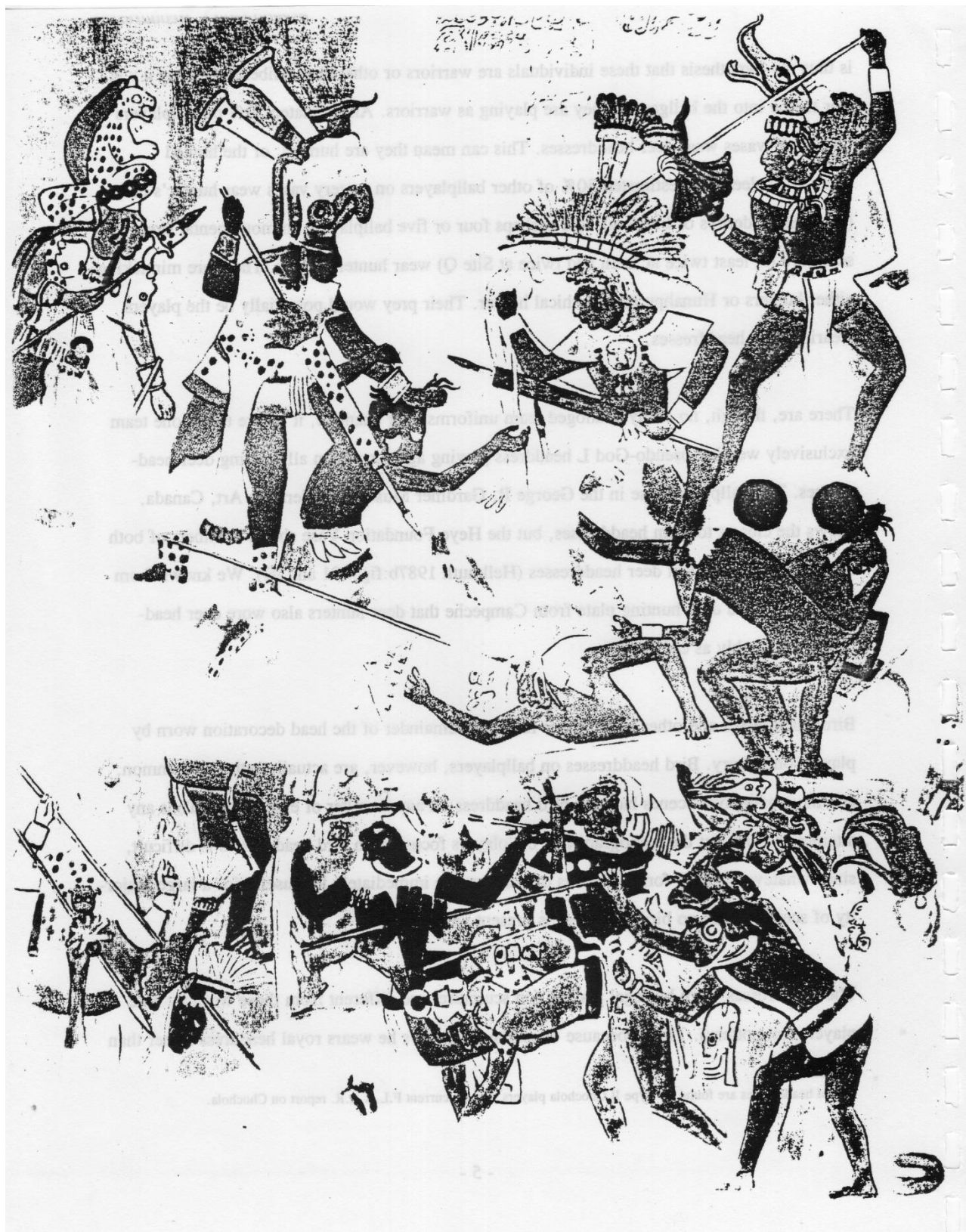
is thus my hypothesis that these individuals are warriors or otherwise deliberately bring a warrior theme into the ballgame. They are playing as warriors. An estimated 30 % of ballplayers on pottery vases wear deer headdresses. This can mean they are hunters, or the hunted (dressed as deer). An estimated 30% of other ballplayers on pottery vases wear hunter's hats (sombros, derby hats or bowlers), and perhaps four or five ballplayers on monumental stone sculpture (at least twice at Itzan and twice at Site Q) wear hunter's skirts. These are mimicking either hunters or Hunahpu as a mythical hunter. Their prey would potentially be the players wearing deer headdresses.

There are, though, no easily cataloged team uniforms. For example, it is rare to get one team exclusively wearing pseudo-God L headdress playing against a team all wearing deer headdresses. The ballplayer vase in the George R. Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art, Canada, shows the closest to team headdresses, but the Heye Foundation Vase shows members of both teams wearing identical deer headdresses (Hellmuth 1987b: figs. 91 and 93). We know from an oft-published deer hunting plate from Campeche that deer hunters also wore deer headdresses, probably as camouflage.

Bird headdresses and other headdresses form the remainder of the head decoration worn by players on pottery. Bird headdresses on ballplayers, however, are actually rather uncommon, and most ballplayer scenes have no bird headdress on any member of either team. Thus, any attempt to work out the iconography of ballplayers focusing on bird headdresses is difficult, since whatever "rules" form the basis of a theory are immediately less useful for a large majority of scenes where no bird headdress is present whatsoever.<sup>5</sup>

The headdresses worn by regal players (on sculpture) are different from those worn by elite players (on pottery). This is because when the king plays, he wears royal headdress rather than

<sup>5</sup>. Bird headdresses are found on Type II Chochola players, see concurrent F.L.A.A.R. report on Chochola.



specifically an athlete's headdress. I have discussed this in various reports on ballplayers as seen on stone sculptures in Mexico (Hellmuth 1996d) and in Guatemala (Hellmuth 1996b).

#### Pseudo-God L Headdress in Battle Scene, Bonampak Murals

One candidate for analysis as a potential pseudo-God L headdress can be spotted in the main battle scene of Room 2. The exotic headdress is worn by the warrior (fig. 61 in Miller's numeration) who may possibly be an important member of the losing army, since that is presumably the king of Bonampak in feline outfit engaged in capturing someone just in front of him. Miller describes her interpretation of the scene on her p. 97 and 101. Since the Villagra drawing is a modern interpretation and not the original we cannot trust every detail. We can presume that the actual brim went all the way across with a row of clipped feathers immediately above it. The central dome rises up quite high (as on the Dallas Museum ballgame vase). Now that Miller is reanalyzing the murals, perhaps additional physical details will come to light. It will also be interesting to see how Miller's interpretations change if the pseudo-God L identification is accepted, since a pseudo-God L headdress is something distinct from a headdress with just lots of feathers.

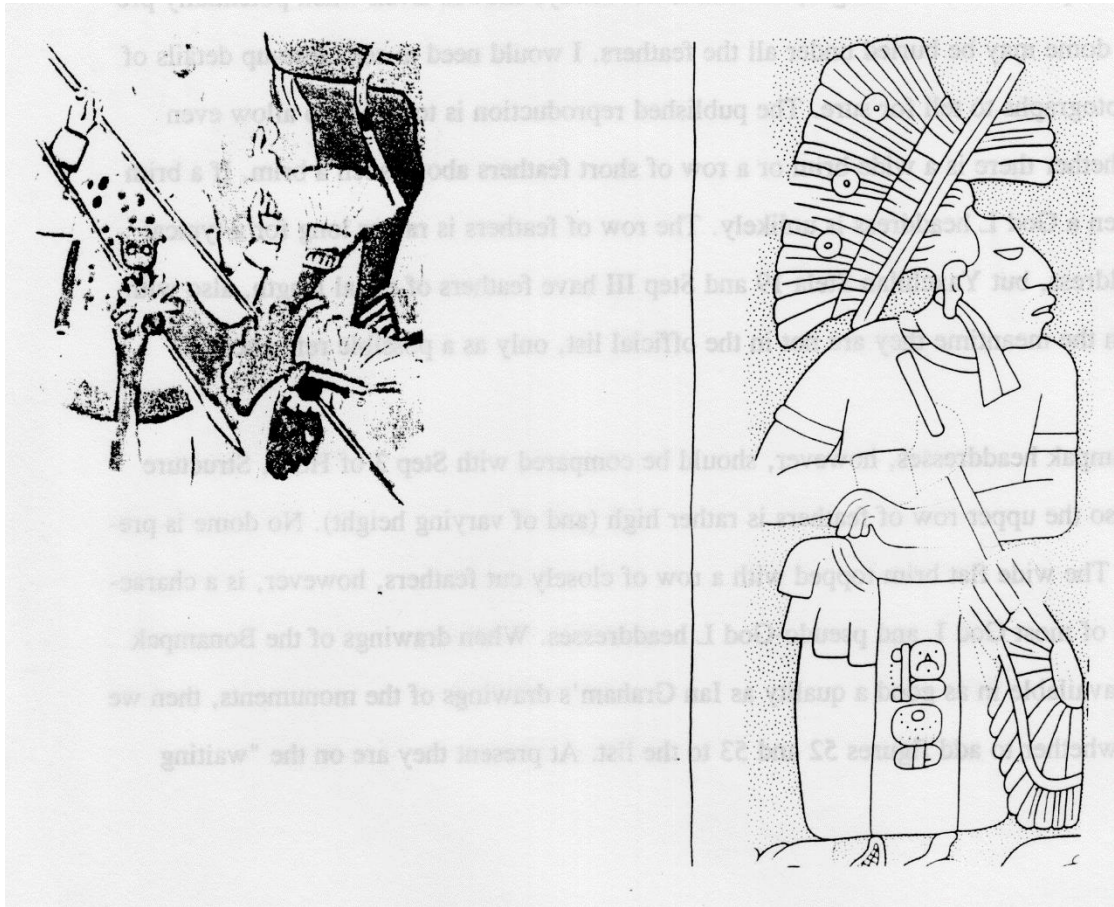
The natural question is how can a headdress of a major deity go undetected. The polite answer is in part because the original painting is rather fuzzy, in part because the adjacent hieroglyphic inscription keeps the full outline from standing out, and in part because it is rather an aberrant specimen. Since the headdress of figure 61 looks like a mass of typical Maya feathers rather than the organized arrangement by layers of feathers of specific different lengths, how was it possible to detect the pseudo-God L-ness out of the hundreds of swirling headdresses in the intense battle scene? Once you "see" the pseudo-God L headdress through the swirl of feathers on Bonampak Lintel 1, once your visual computer automatically reconstructs an entire God L headdress from the fragments on Bonampak Stela 1, and once your data bank is absolutely complete, then the God L features stand out.

First I will say that this Bonampak specimen is about as far away from a normal God L headdress as I could possibly imagine, and is such a fringe example that I am somewhat nervous about tagging it as a pseudo-God L specimen when no one else has, but, after all, that is the value of the adjective "pseudo," this means precisely that it evokes an image of God L, it reminds us of God L, and perhaps it puns God L--without having, itself, to really be God L (although in point of fact all the examples listed in this report are fully acceptable as full-fledged bird-less God L headdresses). This caveat is a way of saying why figure 61 did not get a God L tag before. Nonetheless, applying some rigor, we note Kerr 1994,4:550, File No. 4549, the warriors on either side of an enthroned ruler. Although the crest at the tip top is not expected for God L<sup>6</sup> the row of bird feathers and the dome are all acceptable. The dome has crossed bands, either a decoration or a structural form. Another example of the crossed bands within the dome is on a Chama vase, the armadillo drummer (Kerr 1992,3:407, File No. 3332). Still another specimen with crossed bands within the dome is on a ballplayer (Hellmuth 1987b: fig. 78, b). The most interesting specimen is one with all the feathers removed, Kerr 1992,3:420, File No. 3464).

It is on the basis of the crossed-bands inside a dome, which rises from a mass of feathers, that leads me to nominate Bonampak figure 61 as wearing a probable pseudo-God L headdress, especially since he is an important warrior.

Two other headdresses lower down in the same Bonampak battle scene need to be re-checked when better illustrations are available. These are in the middle of the intense battle scene in the middle of the same wall, on the lower register (figures 52 and probably 53, the outlines are incomplete in this area). Two individuals each have a wide brim and also a row of feathers, here yellow in color. I can see no internal dome, which is why I am not positive these were

<sup>6</sup>. A warrior with a comparable headdress also has an upper crest, Hellmuth 1987b: fig. 106, a.



Bonampak, murals (left). Right: Yaxchilan Step III, Str. 44, Ian Graham, copyright President and Fellows of Harvard College, all rights reserved.



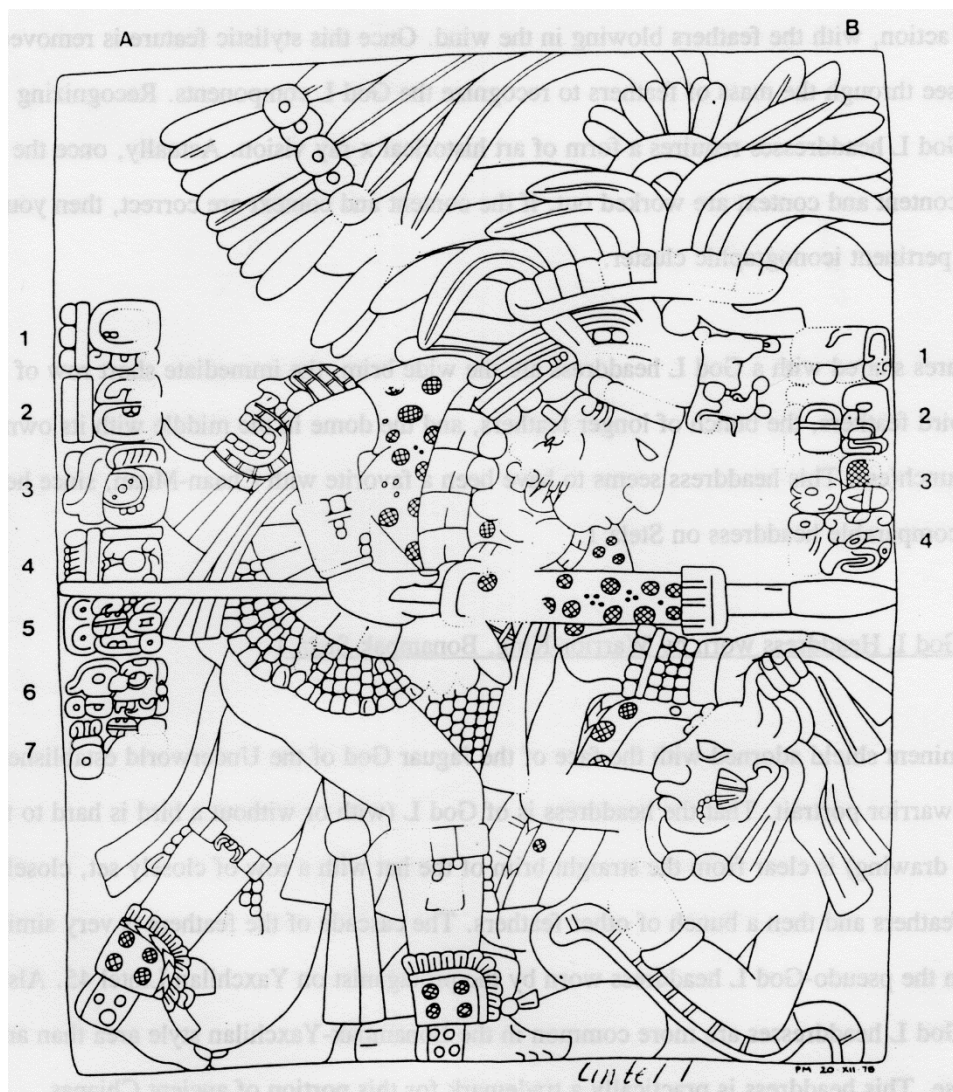
intended to be pseudo-God L images, but that is not always shown. Even when potentially present such a dome may be buried under all the feathers. I would need to see close-up details of original photographs to tell for sure. The published reproduction is too poor to allow even knowing whether there is a wide brim or a row of short feathers above such a brim. If a brim is absent then a God L headdress is unlikely. The row of feathers is rather long for a typical God L headdress, but Yaxchilan Stela 19 and Step III have feathers of equal length, also with no dome. In the meantime, they are not in the official list, only as a possible reference.

These Bonampak headdresses, however, should be compared with Step 3 of HS 3, Structure 44. Here also the upper row of feathers is rather high (and of varying height). No dome is present either. The wide flat brim topped with a row of closely cut feathers, however, is a characteristic trait of most God L and pseudo-God L headdresses. When drawings of the Bonampak figures are available in as good a quality as Ian Graham's drawings of the monuments, then we can decide whether to add figures 52 and 53 to the list. At present they are on the "waiting list" only.

Once the murals are redrawn, and when each individual figure from the entire mural is isolated and at a size where the details are visible, then it would be interesting to see if any other pseudo-God L headdresses occur. I have already noticed several bowler-like (hunter' s) headdresses.

#### Pseudo-God L Headdress in Battle Scene. Bonampak Lintel 1

Bonampak Lintel 1 shows the capture of a fallen warrior. The victorious protagonist, Chaan-Muan, wears a pseudo-God L headdress. This has probably not earlier been noticed due to the mass of feathers-which thoroughly hide the details of an actual pseudo-God L headdress. When worn by God L himself this headdress is rather subdued and the feathers are neatly



Bonampak Lintel 1, Drawing by Peter Mathews.

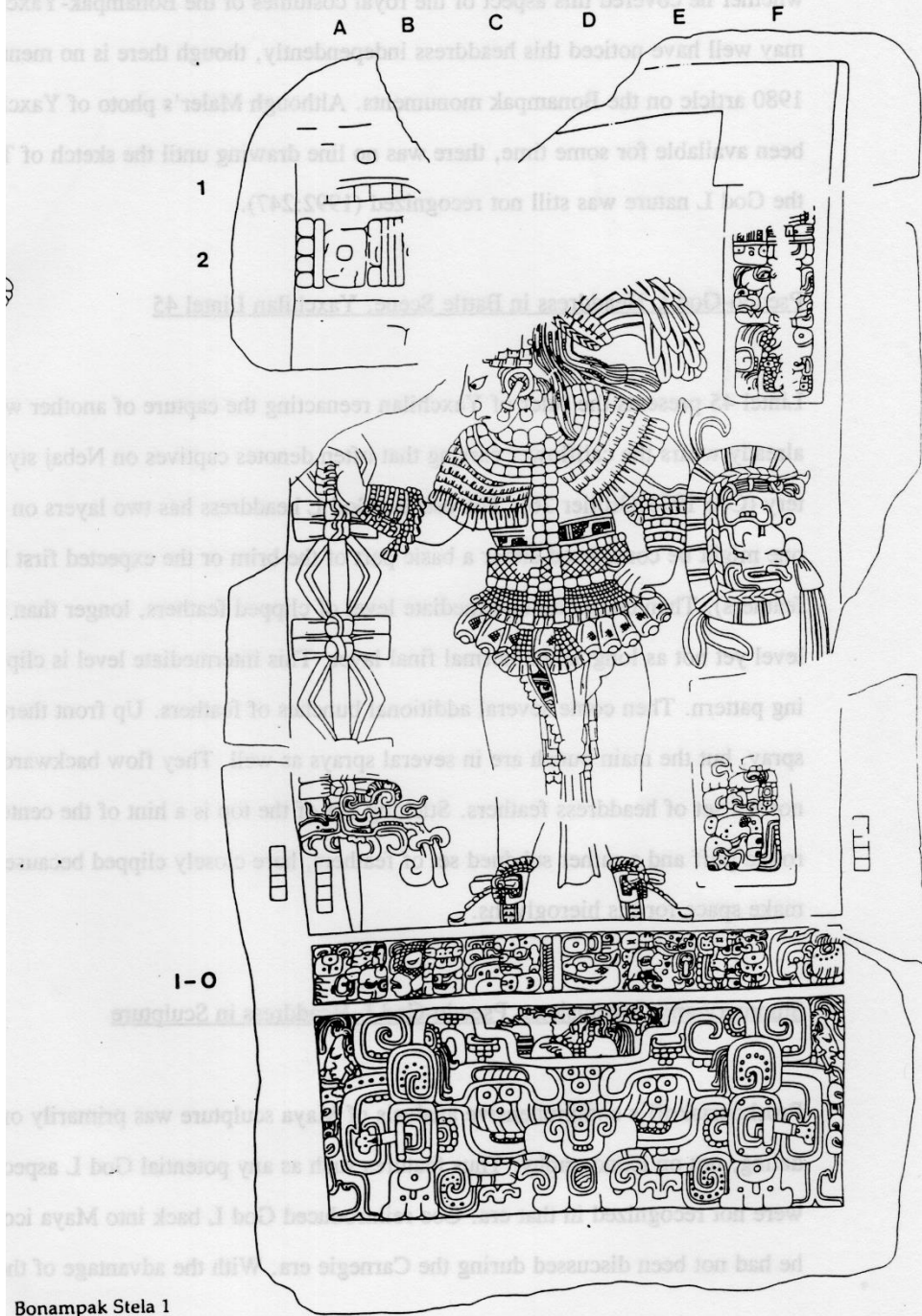
organized. But when portraying a king the artist wants to add the component of valiant movement, of action, with the feathers blowing in the wind. Once this stylistic feature is removed you can see through the mass of feathers to recognize the God L components. Recognizing pseudo-God L headdresses requires a form of art historical x-ray vision. Actually, once the rules of content and context are worked out, if the content and context are correct, then you have the pertinent iconographic cluster.

The features shared with a God L headdress are the wide brim, the immediate short row of clipped bird feathers, the bunch of longer feathers, and the dome in the middle with its own feather bunch(es). This headdress seems to have been a favorite with Chaan-Muan, since he wears a comparable headdress on Stela 1.

Pseudo-God L Headdress worn by Warrior-King. Bonampak Stela 1

The prominent shield adorned with the face of the Jaguar God of the Underworld establishes this as a warrior portrait. That the headdress is of God L (with or without a bird is hard to tell from the drawing) is clear from the straight brim of the hat with a row of closely set, closely clipped feathers and then a bunch of other feathers. The cascade of the feathers is very similar to that on the pseudo-God L headdress worn by the protagonist on Yaxchilan Lintel 45. Also, pseudo-God L headdresses are more common in the Bonampak-Yaxchilan style area than anywhere else. This headdress is practically a trademark for this portion of ancient Chiapas.

I first noticed that the Bonampak king was wearing a headdress related to God L in the 1970's while making my initial inventory of God L headdresses on Maya sculpture. It was Yaxchilan Stela 20 that demonstrated God L was well entrenched in the greater Bonampak-Yaxchilan military scene. Discussing this with Mary Miller (at the time I had a research appointment at Yale University) indicated that the God L associations had not yet been widely recognized, and



Bonampak Stela 1

certainly not in print. I do not have a copy of Peter Mathews' Ph.D. dissertation to know whether he covered this aspect of the royal costumes of the Bonampak-Yaxchilan area. He may well have noticed this headdress independently, though there is no mention of it in his 1980 article on the Bonampak monuments. Although Maler's photo of Yaxchilan Stela 20 had been available for some time, there was no line drawing until the sketch of Tate, and even then the God L nature was still not recognized (1992:247).

#### Pseudo-God L Headdress in Battle Scene. Yaxchilan Lintel 45

Lintel 45 presents the ruler of Yaxchilan reenacting the capture of another warrior. The captive already wears the cauliflower earring that often denotes captives on Nebaj style polychrome pottery (Coe 1973: Grolier 26). The pseudo-God L headdress has two layers on the brim (the top one might be considered either a basic part of the brim or the expected first level of clipped feathers). Then comes an intermediate level of clipped feathers, longer than the expected first level yet not as long as the normal final layer. This intermediate level is clipped in an undulating pattern. Then come several additional bunches of feathers. Up front there is a tremendous spray, but the main bunch are in several sprays as well. They flow backwards, as would a normal set of headdress feathers. Sticking out of the top is a hint of the center dome, with its round puff and a rather subdued set of feathers, here closely clipped because the artist had to make space for his hieroglyphs.

#### Summary and Conclusions: Pseudo-God L Headdress in Sculpture

Proskouriakoff's comprehensive analysis of Maya sculpture was primarily on style and style-dating, not on iconography. Thus features such as any potential God L aspect of headdresses were not recognized in that era. Coe reintroduced God L back into Maya iconography, since he had not been discussed during the Carnegie era. With the advantage of the F.L.A.A.R.

Photo Archive, plus a large library, I was able to recognize a bird-less phase of God L. This led to recognizing God L in the art of Bonampak and Yaxchilan almost two decades ago. Ruler Chaan-Muan of Bonampak loved to portray himself as a mighty warrior. In Lintel 1 he subdues an enemy. On Stela 1 he stands high above the plaza displaying his JGU war shield.

When we take the knowledge about the pseudo-God L headdress from sculpture, and apply our roving iconographic eye to polychrome pottery, we quickly note that the pseudo-God L headdress is worn primarily by warriors--and ballplayers. For the latter reason this theme becomes pertinent to the concurrent F.L.A.A.R. research and publication program on the ancient Maya ballgames.





## Part II

### PSEUDO-GOD L HEADDRESS

#### IN BATTLE OR WARRIOR SCENES

#### ON POTTERY

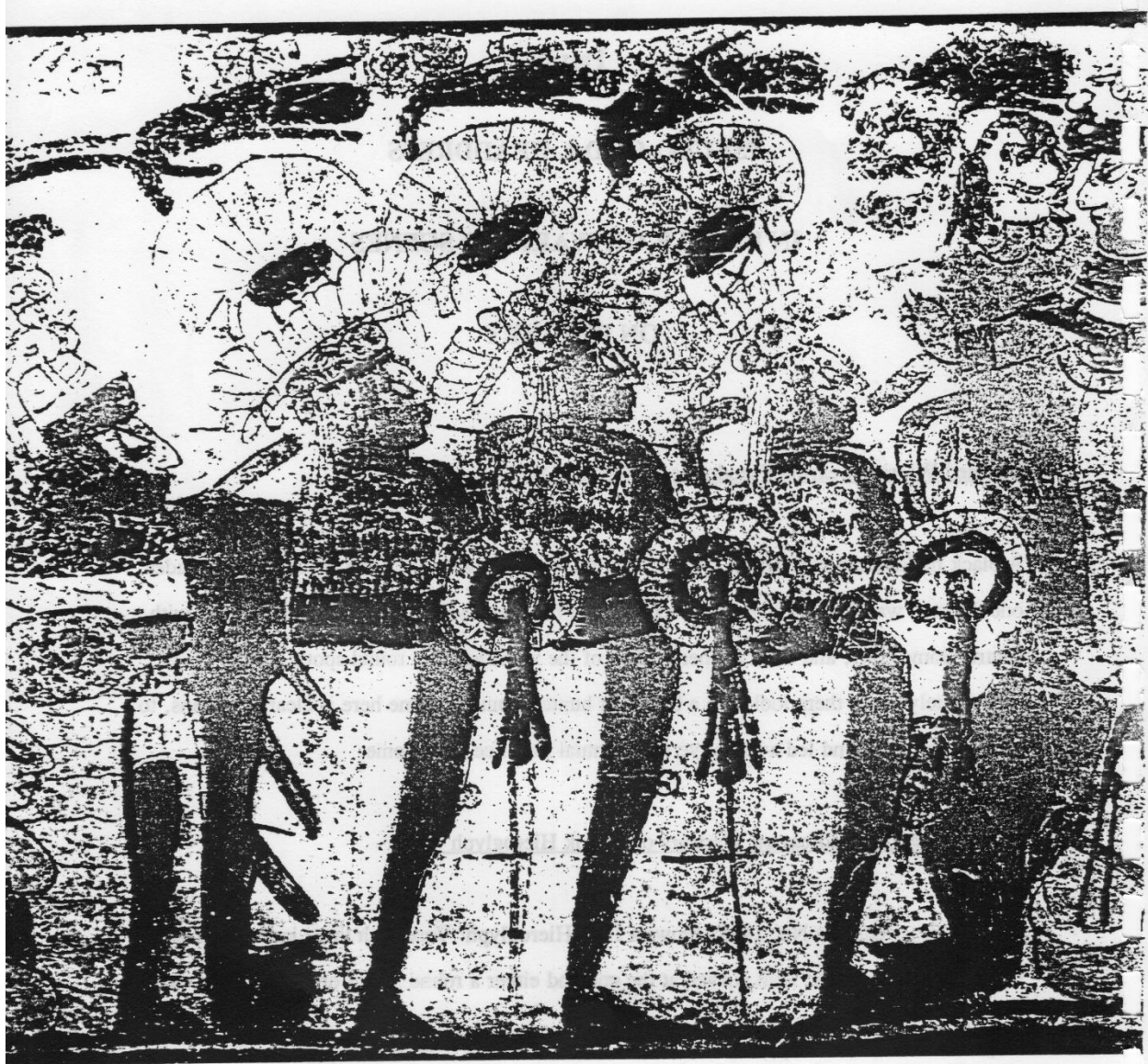
##### Downed Warrior wearing Pseudo-God L Headdress

A black mold-made vase (Kerr 1989,1:14, File No. 503) with an active battle scene includes one downed warrior wearing a clear example of the pseudo-God L headdress, complete with central dome, ruff, and final feathers. Most of the warriors have round spots, which immediately make them look like a bunch of hunters, but the game here is clearly humans, to be captured alive and led away alive for eventual sacrifice back home.

##### Pseudo-God L Headdress on Warriors on a Pink Hieroglyph Vase

Kerr (1989,1:92, File No. 1498) shows a Pink Hieroglyph<sup>7</sup> Vase with three individuals who carry a thick enigmatic item curved at the end and either a round shield or a fan. These three

<sup>7</sup>. I gave the name of Pink Hieroglyph style to vases of this class in the 1970's in correspondence with Coe, Quirarte, and others. This name was used in print by Persis Clarkson who based her MA thesis entirely on F.L.A.A. R. material. This tag was also widely diffused at the F.L.A.A.R. symposium in Guatemala City, circa 1977. The main protagonist of many vases of this series was named the Fat Cacique by Justin Kerr. Since the pink color of the hieroglyphs are an obvious feature. It is possible that the designation "Pink Hieroglyph Style" was independently developed by others as well, though it was introduced to virtually all Maya iconographers at that F.L.A.A.R. Guatemala City meeting.



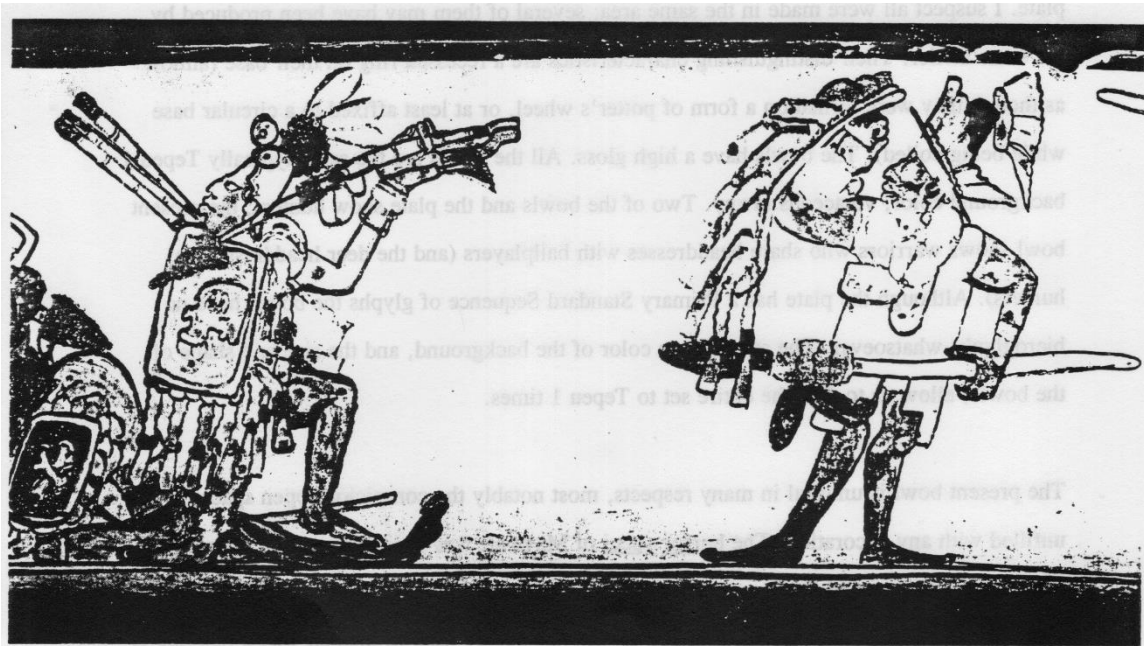
personages each wear pseudo-God L headdresses. The brim, row of feathers of approximately the same size, the center dome, the oval ruff, and the final bunch of feathers are all typical. In this setting it looks like a uniform. The dome includes a crossed-bands (as for Bonampak, murals, figure 61), and a crest of feathers on top of the dome.

Peten, Tepeu 1 Battle Scene which includes one Pseudo-God L Headdress

Hellmuth 1987b: fig. 106a shows a bowl which is part of a series with two other bowls and a plate. I suspect all were made in the same area; several of them may have been produced by the same atelier. Their distinguishing characteristics are a recessed ring on their base (almost as though they were turned on a form of potter's wheel, or at least affixed to a circular base while being coiled). The bowls have a high gloss. All the bowls are the same typically Tepeu 1 background color, vinaceous tawny. Two of the bowls and the plate show hunters; the present bowl shows warriors who share headdresses with ballplayers (and the deer headdress with hunters). Although the plate has a Primary Standard Sequence of glyphs the bowls have no hieroglyphs whatsoever. The specific tan color of the background, and the size and shape of the bowls, allow us to date the entire set to Tepeu 1 times.

The present bowl is unusual in many respects, most notably the conspicuous open space, unfilled with any decoration. The horror vacui of Maya art was apparently not a concern to this painter. The second feature of this bowl is the extremely fine condition of the slip, and of the painting overall. Such condition is sometimes mistakenly used to indicate that a painting is a modern forgery. In the case of this bowl, it is easy to attest that the bowl is not only absolutely authentic and clearly more than one thousand years ago, but that it has suffered no modern restoration, not even any clever repainting.

THE MAYA VASE BOOK VOL. 2



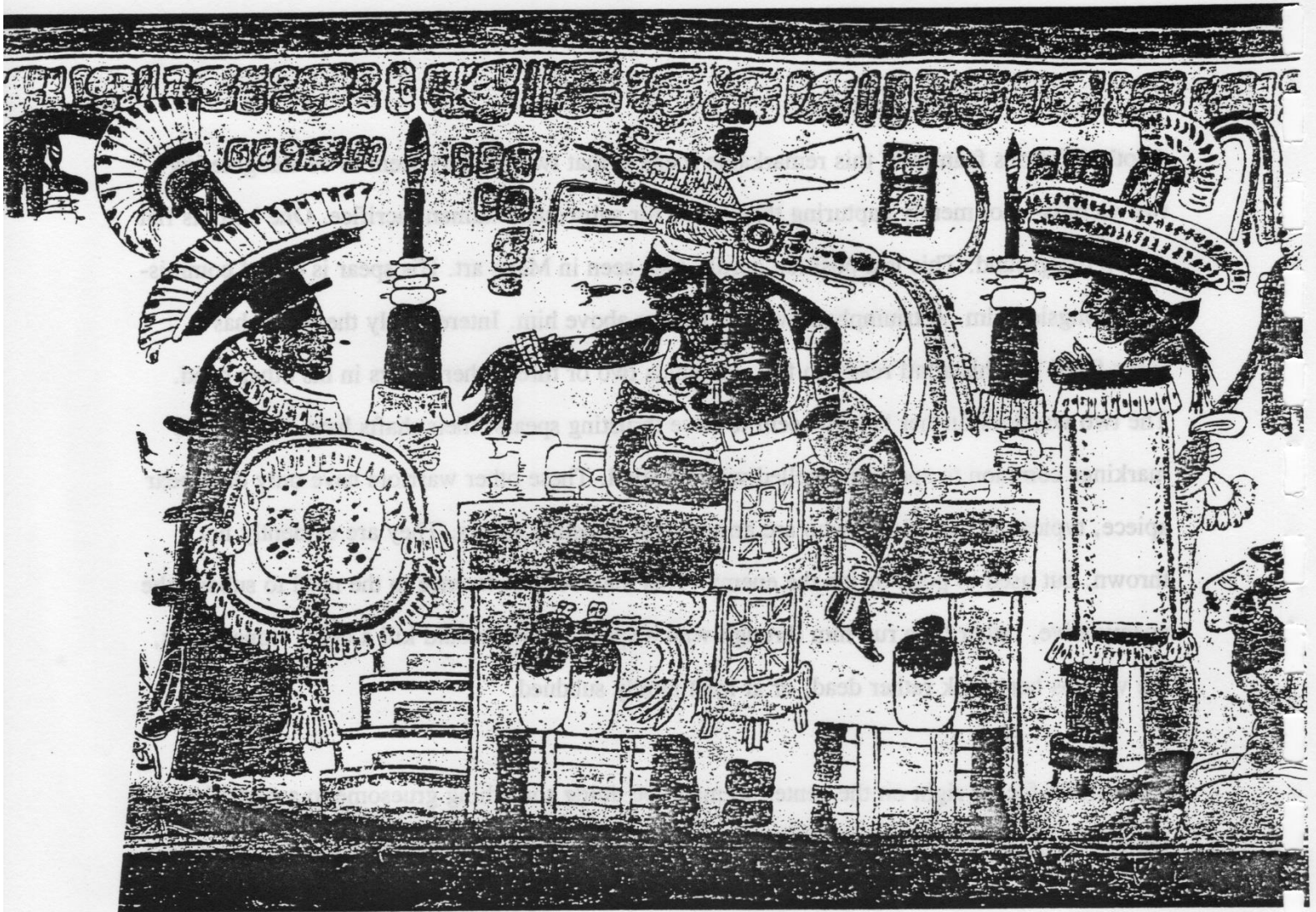
File No. 2036

Another curious feature of this remarkable scene is that two soldiers seem to be slaughtering two victims--not merely capturing them alive for subsequent human sacrifice. One body is flat out on the ground. This is a position hardly ever seen in Maya art. His spear is out of commission alongside him. A triumphant warrior dances above him. Interestingly the victor has a spear fixed into his atlatl ready to fire. He holds two or three other spears in his other hand. The two warriors further behind seem to have thrusting spears; their shafts have none of the markings common to spears propelled with an atlatl. These other warriors have only one spear apiece, typical of the soldiers who are armed with thrusting spears. They are evidently not thrown, but used to poke or jab the enemy. This may be in deference to the need to subdue the enemy alive, rather than run him through with a spear, as one would kill a deer. Nonetheless, the victims here look rather dead, or at least totally subdued.

The soldier facing right on the center seems to be doing something gruesome to a partially fallen person slightly above the person already dead and sprawled on the ground.

The soldier on the right (with upraised flexible rectangular shield) wears a special tunic which is probably thick cotton body armor. This soldier on the right is the one with the pseudo-God L headdress. This is not at first recognizable because the brim lacks the parallel row of closely cut feathers, the main row is not all of same length, and the feathers off the dome are clipped and closely joined. But when you look at the entire corpus you can see that all of these features are allowed on other pseudo-God L headdresses. The uneven row of feathers is even a dominant feature on the kneeling player of the Dallas Museum Ballplayer Vase. This Dallas player also has a brim wider than the adjacent row of feathers. A rollout of this Tepeu 1 warrior

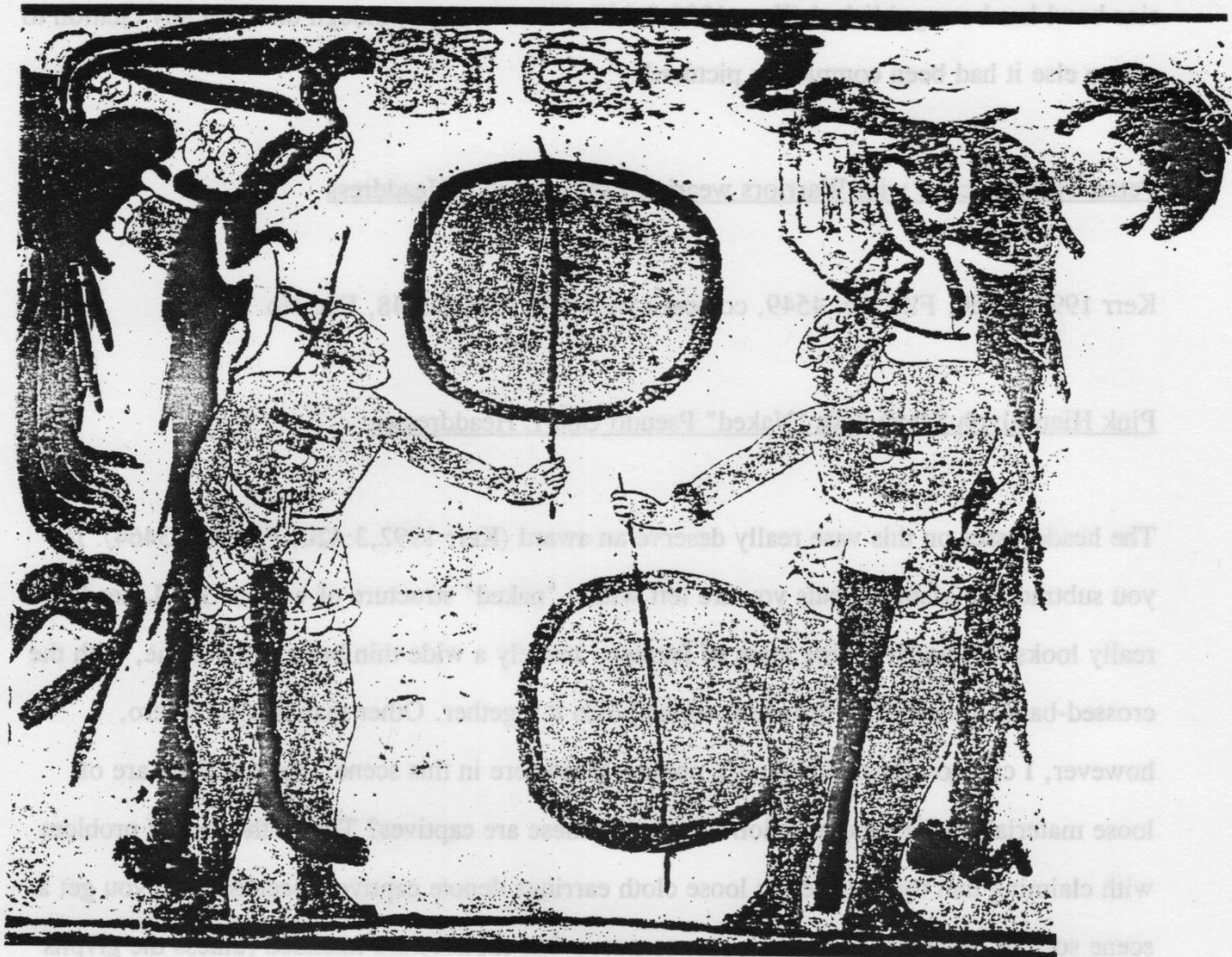




The soldier on the right (with upraised flexible rectangular shield) wears a special tunic which is probably thick cotton body armor. This soldier on the right is the one with the pseudo-God

File No. 4549

THE MAYA VASE BOOK VOL. 3



© Kerr 1987  
Ht. 23.3 Dia. 10.3 Cir. 37.5 cm PY Ik site

bowl has been published (Kerr 1990,2:207, File No. 207), though omitting any citation to where else it had been completely pictured.

Peten Throne Scene with Warriors wearing Pseudo-God L Headdress

Kerr 1994,4:550, File No. 4549, compare with Kerr 1992,3:448, File No. 3984.

Pink Hieroglyph Scene with "Naked" Pseudo-God L Headdresses

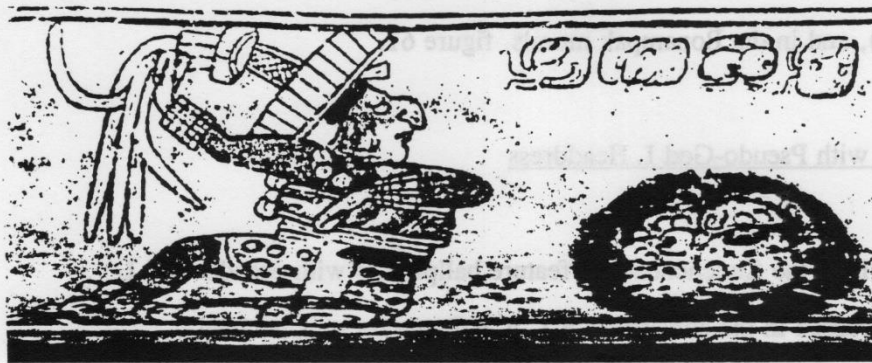
The headdresses on this vase really deserve an award (Kerr 1992,3:420, File No. 3464). If you subtract the giant animals you are left with a "naked" structure of what a God L headdress really looks like under all the mass of feathers, namely a wide thin brim and a dome, with the crossed-bands forming the structure which holds it together. Other than this sombrero, however, I cannot detect any God L context elsewhere in this scene. The earrings are of loose material, raising the question of whether these are captives? This is the sort of problem with claiming that loose paper or loose cloth earrings denote captives, because then you get a scene such as this were there is no way to prove that captives are intended (unless the glyphs say something to this effect).

Chama Animal Procession with Pseudo-God L Headdress

Published only in Kerr 1992,3:407, File No. 3332. This headdress would be easy to miss, and pass over, because the brim is so long and thin, and the dome's flower is cut off by the top of the pot. Also, pseudo-God L headdresses are seldom found on Chama pots, the following ballplayer entry being the only one known so far.



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 Ht. 15.8 Dia. 18 Cir. 56.1 cm PY



Top left, Bonampak murals. Top right, Chama drummer, polychrome vase, rollout copyright Justin Kerr. Bottom, Chama area ballplayer vase, rollout copyright Justin Kerr.

Chama Style Ballplayer with Pseudo-God L headdress

Previously published so far only in Kerr 1992,3:442, File No. 3842. I do not know if this scene was in Quirarte's 1985 report or not, since I have not seen a copy of that for ten years.

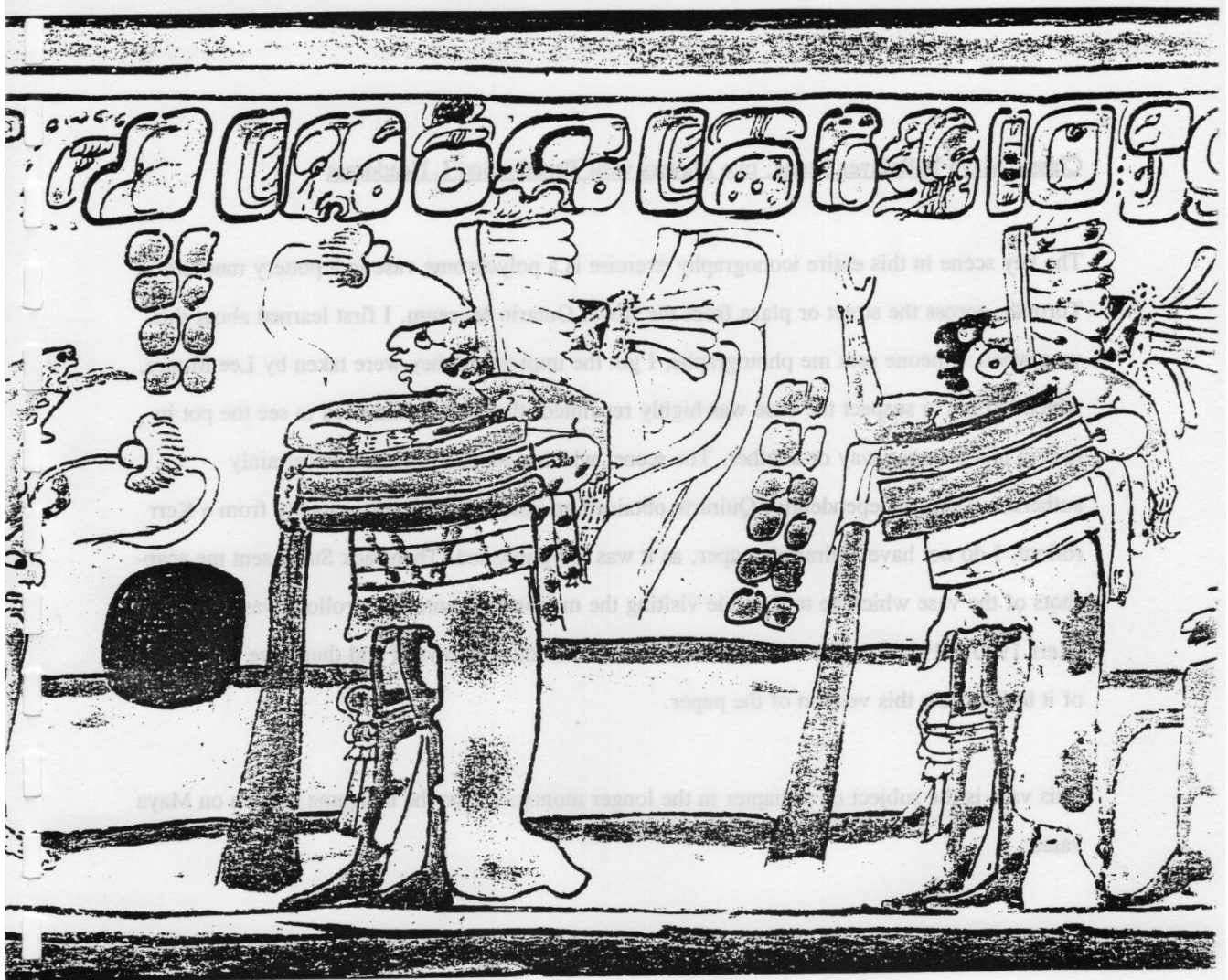
Although I have never seen this vase in color it appears to share certain features of Chama pottery of the highlands of Guatemala, even though it lacks the row of chevrons which are so typical for Chama pottery. The scene pictures one player backed by one attendant; a player-attendant pair is on each side of a giant ball. One player wears a deer headdress, the other wears a pseudo-God L headdress. The dome is done in wickerwork or plaiting.

A similar pseudo-God L headdress also from the Chama area and also with a crossed plait on the dome is known from the headdress of an armadillo musician. The diagonal cross motif is also present on the domes of a row of warriors on a Pink Hieroglyph warrior vase (Ken. 1989,1:92; File No. 1498), and in the Bonampak murals, figure 61.

Chochola Style Ballplayer with Pseudo-God L Headdress

Several carved brown bowls of the Chochola styles feature ballplayers with pseudo-God L headdresses. These are discussed in the concurrent F.L.A.A.R. report on Chochola ballplayers.





The ballgame vase in Canada. Rollout copyright Justin Kerr.



Classic Maya Ballplayer Scene: two Players wear Pseudo-God L Headdress

The key scene in this entire iconography exercise is a polychrome vase in a pottery museum in Toronto, across the street or plaza from the Royal Ontario Museum. I first learned about this vase when someone sent me photographs; I got the impression they were taken by Lee Moore, which led me to suspect the vase was highly repainted, though I would need to see the pot in person to know one way or another. The scene, whether repainted or not, is certainly authentic. Then, independently, Quirarte obtained an image of the vase, possibly from a Kerr rollout, I do not have Quirarte's paper, as it was not published. Then Jack Sulak sent me snapshots of the vase which he took while visiting the museum. Eventually a rollout was published (Kerr 1990,2:193, File No. 1921). I have never seen the vase myself and thus have no views of it to illustrate this version of the paper.

This vase is the subject of a chapter in the longer monograph on the ballgame as seen on Maya vases.

Dallas Ballgame Vase

I first noticed this headdress was a pseudo-God L headdress in the 1980's. In my 1987 report I mention the vague relationship of this headdress to God L, but I evidently had not fully developed my pseudo-God L hypothesis, or if so, it was buried in my longer God L report which I cited in footnote 38 (1987b:366). I do not have Quirarte's paper so do not know whether he spotted that this Dallas headdress is really a variant of the same headdress as worn

on the Canadian vase. The caption to the Dallas Vase in *The Blood of Kings* catalog does not make any mention of God L whatsoever.

Today I would classify this Dallas ballplayer headdress as a variant of the pseudo-God L class. The dome is rather thin, the brim sticks out rather wide with no feathers towards its edge, and the bird is certainly not a "God L bird." But if you compare this headdress with those of Yaxchilan the wavering undulation of the length of feathers is perfectly acceptable for a pseudo-God L headdress. Besides, now we have the Chama ballplayer and all the Canadian ballplayers who definitely demonstrate that a pseudo-God L headdress pertains to ballplayers. The Dallas opponent has a "helmet" as well, so the military context is appropriate.<sup>8</sup> The reason I wavered in 1987 is for the same reason that all of us did not notice the God L feature "buried" underneath. The bird is the "wrong" species and the row of headdress feathers are not all the same height. Our mind's eye was trained to see God L only when he was in a conservative guise. But we must train our eyes to see the aberrant examples as well. The pseudo-God L headdress has been a good training subject for visual acuity. There are probably still other headdresses that I have missed.

#### Tepeu 1 Ballplayer Vase in Japan: two Players wear Pseudo-God L Headdress

A Tepeu 1 ballgame vase in Japan includes two players with a pseudo-God L headdresses (Hellmuth 1987bTigs. 78, b and d) and two other players wearing hunter's bowlers. This vase is described in the separate concurrent F. L.A.A.R. monograph on ballgame vases. Since Quirarte's set of F.L.A.A.R. slides did not include this vase he was unable to include it in his

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<sup>8</sup>. The bird who is perched on top of the Dallas player has a yearsign as part of its tail. At Teotihuacan the yearsign is also associated with the tail of complex avian images.

1985 report. I had one set of slides for F.L.A.A.R. since about 1983 (sent by the owner who knew I was interested in the ballgame). I did not get a chance to add additional duplicate slides of it to the archive until 1991.

### Uncertain Headdress

One Lubaantun ballcourt marker includes a headdress that should be included as a potential reference (player at the left). All three markers are eroded to the point that, other than the horizontal ball deflectors worn by all six players (two for each marker), and aside from the clearly delimited seven steps behind the players, no specific details can be identified. The headdress of one player features a horizontal band, barely high enough to be a God L brim with low set of evenly cropped feathers, then a tall center dome topped with a possible flower, then a feather bunch. Once all other ballgame headdresses on markers are photographed, drawn, and published perhaps it will be possible to identify the Lubaantun headdress better based on comparative evidence.

### Summary and Conclusions

Actually, only two surveys of God L have been undertaken, my unpublished report of the 1970's presented at Palenque and then Taube's chapter in *The Major Gods of Ancient Yucatan*. Outside of internal F.L.A.A.R. iconography catalogs, the pseudo-God L headdress has not previously been singled out, in print, as a special category. Evidently when the bird is absent the headdress has often simply been missed in any event. Tate, though, mentioned the God L relationship of the headdress of the Chochola ballplayers (1985:130).

All the God L and pseudo-God L headdresses come into focus best when the entire corpus is brought together. Then the Chochola ballplayers can be compared with the ballplayers on the Tepeu 1 vase, the vase in Canada, and the Chama area bowl to demonstrate a special sub-class of pseudo-God L ballplayer headdress. The next step is, if you are familiar with all God L headdresses elsewhere, to recognize that this is a warrior headdress. King Sky-Muan of Bonampak is the best advertisement of this bellicose feature.

The tricky situations are headdresses such as that of Bonampak Stela 3, the cowering captive. His headdress has a brim, a row of short stubby feathers, and then a row of longer neatly clipped feathers. The "dome," however, is not the expected round shape at the top, perhaps the crest covers its true shape. I would not tend to list Stela 3, indeed I did not recognize its potential until this paper was already in press. But the posture of the captive is comparable to that of the captives on Yaxchilan Stela 19 and Stela 20. Stela 20 has a definite God L (even though the bird is not present). And Yaxchilan Stela 19 has a potential pseudo-God L headdress. On these grounds Bonampak Stela 3 can be nominated as a possible case. Once we know more about Classic Maya headdresses we can decide whether to classify it as a definite case, or remove it from the list.

In the general framework of Maya iconography, I personally prefer to track down all examples of selected iconographic clusters and see where this leads me, rather than setting up a theory and then seeking evidence to bolster that concept. Taube has demonstrated in article after article that if you master the complete inventory of Mesoamerican motifs then you can spot the deity clusters without the need of any fancy theory. Hasso von Winning is a leading practitioner of basic cataloging produces who has demonstrated for half a century that sound data results from this form of research. The illustrations in all the books by Graham, Mayer, Coe,

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Bonampak Stela 3

## *Summary and Conclusions*

and Robicsek will serve students for the next century. Miller' s dedication to Bonampak will produce a basic inventory of costume details which should last forever. This class of work is true scholarship.

Thus, I have no theory for God L, just the facts and artifacts. In mythology his headdress is favored by merchants; in the imposition of mythology into everyday elite life, his headdress is featured by warriors and ballplayers.

## APPENDIX A

### THE ICONOGRAPHY OF GOD L

The basic appearance of God L was initially worked out by Paul Schellhas from images in the Dresden Codex. Schellhas' s work of the late 1800' s first became available internationally when it was translated into English and published by Harvard' s Peabody Museum (1904). God L did not receive much attention from Spinden, Proskouriakoff, or Thompson. The first modern resurrection of interest in God L iconography came in Michael Coe' s 1973 *The Maya Scribe and his World*, since Coe correctly detected God L on painted Maya vases from the Peten area. The first complete inventory and survey of God L iconography was presented at the Tercera Mesa Redonda de Palenque, 1978, but I did not submit a copy for publication. This was the first review of the mythical episode of God L, the Moon Goddess, and her Rabbit Companion.

The first published review of God L iconography was Taube (1992:79-88). He found several obscure God L's which I had missed (fig. 40, d). His fig. 40, c, and e are, for example, both based on slides originally from the F.L.A.A.R. Photo Archive (fig. 40, c via Hales to Tate; fig. 40, e via Robicsek). There are, as one might expect, many additional God L images known to both of us, and several in the F.L.A.A.R. Photo Archive that are not known outside this source.<sup>9</sup> In 1985, for the ballgame conference of that year at Tucson, Jacinto Quirarte dis-

<sup>9</sup>. Several Mayanists (not Taube, though) have told me that they presumed that searching the F.L.A.A.R. slides at Dumbarton Oaks will turn up anything needed from the F.L.A.A.R. Photo Archive, but actually Dumbarton Oaks is missing over 60 % of the slides; they are missing 100% of all slides taken since 1990, for example.



cussed the headdresses on a ballgame vase at a Canadian museum. This important paper remains unpublished. These headdresses were what today would be designated as a pseudo-God L headdress.

God L came back into the Mesoamerican headlines when the lower portion of the Cacaxtla murals were uncovered. Because he has a walking staff and trade goods there it has been suggested he represents a merchant god. An earlier generation of scholars, especially J. Eric S. Thompson, conceived of God M as the Merchant God. This concept became so engrained that many Mayanists have not completely realized that it is God L who carries the merchant's pack in Classic Period Maya art. God M is known primarily for the codices, and virtually never appears in ceramic art of Peten.<sup>10</sup> God L's bundle was first noticed in the 1970's, on a Chochola bowl,<sup>11</sup> in the *Dresden Codex*, and a polychrome Peten vase known for years but only first published in 1987 (Hellmuth 1987d: fig. 658). The merchant god of Cacaxtla became known about that time but his identification as God L did not get into print until a few years later. In the meantime, Taube had gathered together additional portraits of God L with his bundle (1992: fig. 40; 43, a). Recently Vincent Philips noticed another God L with his bundle somewhat abandoned under the arches of the Baluarte de la Soledad, Campeche. Antonio Benavides indicates this little known sculpture came from the Puuc site of Kanki (personal communication 1993); Pollock does not show this in his section on Kanki and I was unable to

<sup>10</sup> . It is dangerous to use the word "never" in describing the lack of any particular feature or assemblage of Maya iconography. It is quite possible that God M exists where we have not noticed him, or perhaps he is in a different format in the Classic period. So far virtually all the Post Classic characters of the codices have turned up on Maya pots; I found God D as early as the 1970's. At that point God D had still not been recognized on Maya vases, although he had often appeared in illustrations, captioned under other (incorrect) names, such as N'. Perhaps it is best to say that God M is rare, and that the merchant's pack is routinely used by God L during the Classic period of both Peten and also of Yucatan and Campeche.

<sup>11</sup> . Several of the Chochola bowls published by Tate, and cited by her to Hales, were actually from slides probably out of the F.L.A. A.R. Photo Archive, loaned to Hales. Tate evidently was unaware of the origin of these slides.

find it in Proskouriakoff either. This is the class of little known and "unpublished" iconographic treasure that tends to be in the F.L.A.A.R. archive, and when it is sculpture, then it tends to be in one of the volumes of Karl Mayer.<sup>12</sup>

The recognition that several Yucatec area ballplayers wore a wide-brimmed hat similar to that of God L--except that the ballplayer version almost never included the bird--is present in my original 1978 Palenque paper, in Tate's subsequent Palenque paper, and is independently recognized by most Mayanists who are familiar with details of deity iconography. However no one of us, myself included, faced the issue of whether these "incomplete" hats were really of a full scale God L. After all, the player lacked all the other diagnostic features of a God L, the shawl, the aged face, and especially the bird. In addition, the center portion of these Yucatec hats usually stood up as a dome, something that no one had noticed on a regular God L headdress.

But a review of God L's on polychrome Peten vases turned up one remarkable vase that turned out to be a clue, the key to recognition of the role of the central dome, as this one feature was needed to recognize God L even without the bird. This vase was first published by Robicsek (1978: Plates 256-258).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup>. I do not have the volumes of Mayer in Japan where I finish this chapter.

<sup>13</sup>. Paintings such as this are understandably immediately considered as modern forgeries by many field archaeologists. The scene is fresh looking with little evidence of any age or wear. The scene is without precedent--and the white character with his rooster-like crest is rather difficult to accept as a Maya personage. Nonetheless the scene is most likely not only entirely authentic, Tepeu 2 Peten Maya, but also one of the more important such scenes that has come down to us. The white-crested character's feather back-piece could be found on the several parading-warriors scenes from Yucatan. The black-white-black banding together with red-spotted cloth is a feature of the Dance after Decapitation Sacrifice, known to scholars since I disseminated notes on this relationship to iconographers in the 1970's but a relationship not known to forgers. Overall, I do not yet see any reason why this vase is modern--far more likely it is one of hundreds of scenes from the bizarre repertory of the ancient Maya that we will need to accommodate in our "picture" of Maya ceremonialism.

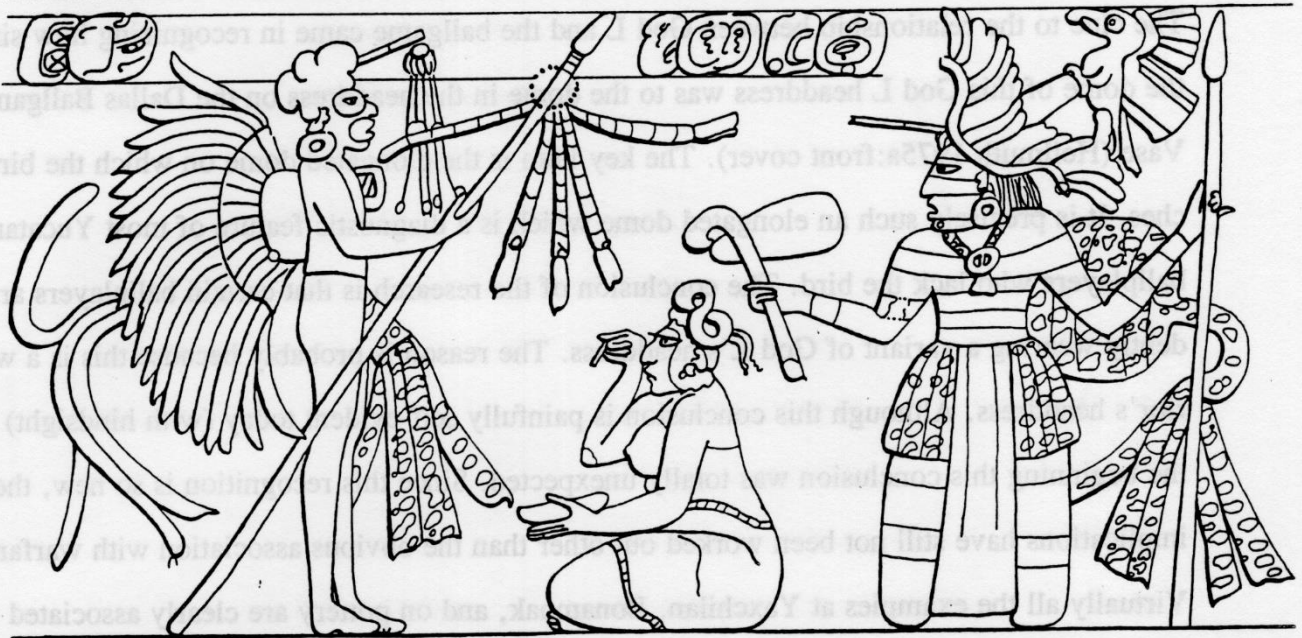


Figure 230. Vase of God L, the Attendant, and the Lady (E-2)

The clue to the relationship between God L and the ballgame came in recognizing how similar the dome of this God L headdress was to the dome in the headdress on the Dallas Ballgame Vase (Hellmuth 1975a: front cover). The key item is the elongated dome on which the bird perches. It is precisely such an elongated dome which is a diagnostic feature of most Yucatan ballplayers who lack the bird. The conclusion of the research is that certain ballplayers are evidently wearing a variant of God L's headdress. The reason is probably because this is a warrior's headdress. Although this conclusion is painfully self-evident today (with hindsight) in the beginning this conclusion was totally unexpected. Since this recognition is so new, the implications have still not been worked out other than the obvious association with warfare. Virtually all the examples at Yaxchilan, Bonampak, and on pottery are clearly associated with elite warriors.

The relationship between the Maya ballgame and war attire can also be investigated on two Tenam Rosario, Chiapas ballcourt markers. Here the characters wear the goggled eyes of Tlaloc. One of the Tlalocs holds (in addition to a spear and shield) what looks like the bird-less headdress of a pseudo-God L (though the iconography of this peripheral area is so bizarre I am not absolutely positive of this classification as a pseudo-God L headdress). In this connection it should be pointed out that the bird which perches on the pseudo-God L headdress of the Dallas Ballplayer has a Teotihuacan-related "years sign" on its body; the design in the second Tenam Rosario marker may likewise be a years sign, as a headdress for the bird on Tlaloc's head. The data have been available all along, it was just a matter of having at hand a photo archive large enough so that when all the individual illustrations were laid out that the patterns became self-evident.

The Other Key Scenes

Two or three representations of pseudo-God L headdresses were especially helpful in demonstrating the relationship between the bird-less God L and actual God L, then between generic God L and the ballgame, and between the bird-less God L headdress and warrior headdresses.

A connection between the ballgame and warriors is based on the Tepeu 1 Peten ballplayer vase (Hellmuth 1987: fig. 78a) and a Tepeu 1 Peten battle scene (ibid.: fig. 106a). This Tepeu 1 vase has now been extensively photographed and thoroughly published in a concurrent F.L.A.A.R. Workbook title on vases which picture the ballgames.

The ultimate demonstration that a bird is not needed for God L's headdress is Yaxchilan Stela 20 (Maler 1903: pl. LXXVIII). The diminutive and cowering person is attired as God L; with a feline cloak over his shoulder, poor posture (of an aged person), the probably bound hank of hair issuing from under the hat, and the headdress with a single feather row--all these features are demonstrably part of a God L costume. This does not automatically imply that God L himself is present; it could well be a captive attired as God L. If there was ever any doubt that God L was some form of a mascot for the Yaxchilan-Bonampak area, this should be dispelled by the definite God L on the panel found by INAH excavations at Bonampak over a decade ago, which, rather than being published, has languished in the site warehouse.



