

Iconography & Ethnozoology of Spider Monkeys



On exhibit at MUNAE

**Museo Nacional de Arte Maya
- Arqueología y Etnología**

Iconography of Spider Monkey



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**FLAAR Reports for MUNAE
FLAAR (USA) and FLAAR Mesoamerica (Guatemala)**

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Caption for front cover photograph:

Handsome ceramic effigy container showing a spider monkey with great head and simplified body and limbs. MUNAE exhibit.

Caption for title page photograph:

That there are two spider monkeys on exhibit, in the treasures selected by MUNAE Director/Administrator Christopher Martínez, suggests that more may be available to study. The normal spider monkeys are painted on the sides of Late Classic Maya vases and bowls or lid handles of Early Classic basal flange bowls.

Introduction to Spider Monkeys in Classic Maya Art

Monkeys are considered a friendly animal to see in Classic Maya art and to study its iconography and ethnozoology. On many Late Classic vases the monkey often has deer ears and deer antlers (and deer nearby have monkey tail). But the monkeys in MUNAE exhibits are 3-dimensional (not painted on vases) so have no deer features.



This is the nicest simplified monkey, in the MUNAE exhibits selected by Director/Administrator Chrisopher Martínez. Resting in a mammiform tetrapod.

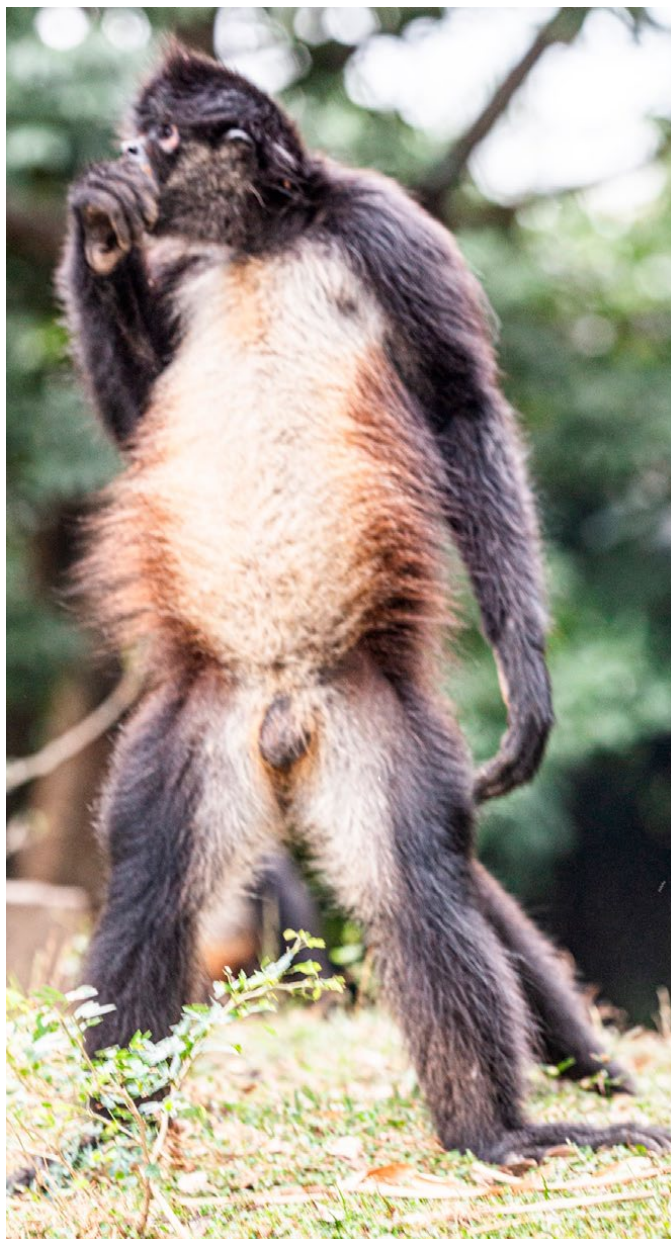
Spider Monkey Abilities:


Swinging through the Trees but also walking on the Ground



Spider monkeys are best known for swinging through the trees. But they can also walk on the ground, either on all four feet, or they can also walk upright just on their hind feet. If you find a place that the monkeys like to be on the ground, you can see this. But in the rain forest, obviously you will see them just perched in a tree or swinging from one tree to another.

Guatemalan spider monkey standing on his two feet, on the ground, Auto Safari Chapin, December 17, 2015. This is an island with lots of trees but also lots of open space on the ground. The monkeys here prefer to be on the ground, seated, or, rarely, standing (and walking).



A photograph of a Spider monkey (Ateles geoffroyi) resting on a tree branch. The monkey has black fur on its head, face, and limbs, with a prominent white patch on its chest and belly. It is looking directly at the camera with large, dark eyes. Its long tail is curled around the branch. The background is a lush green forest with out-of-focus foliage.

Spider monkey, *Ateles geoffroyi*,
resting in a tree.



Spider monkey, *Ateles geoffroyi*, hiking through the treetops, Auto Safari Chapin, December 17, 2015

The advantage of having FLAAR Reports on MUNAE treasures is because FLAAR has photos of each animal, reptile, and insect that is exhibited at MUNAE. So we can show iconographers, zoologists and ethnozoologists the actual creatures in addition to masterful photography of the artifacts. The photos so far are just with an iPhone 15 Pro Max; the actual project will have professional portable studio lighting (Westcott LED technology), and camera on a tripod to capture pristine photos. The exhibits at MUNAE deserve professional lighting and cameras and both regular camera lens and also macro close-up lenses to capture details.

Unexpected Spider Monkeys

on a polychrome Late Classic Maya plate from Uaxactun, Peten



Two easy to see jaguars leap down to grab the bleeding body of a sacrificed victim. There are several vases and plates that show trained jaguars assisting in Maya human sacrifice ceremonies; this plate from Uaxactun is one. There are also two black spider monkeys in the upper left. Their role in this scene needs to be researched.

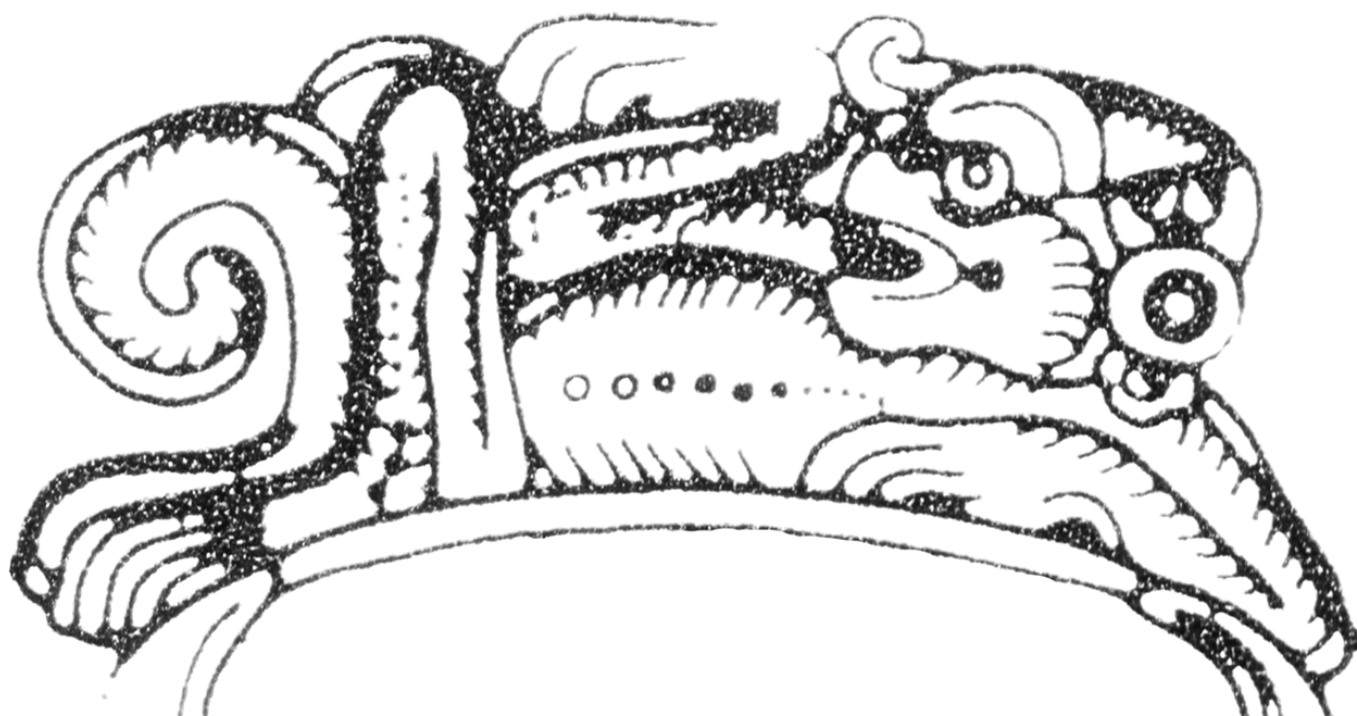
The bottom ring of the plate has jaguar pelage spot designs. Of hundreds of available plates, this one is excellent choice to feature on exhibit.

Two black spider monkeys in the upper left. This plate from Uaxactun is on exhibit at MUNAE, selected by Director/Administrator Christopher Martínez.

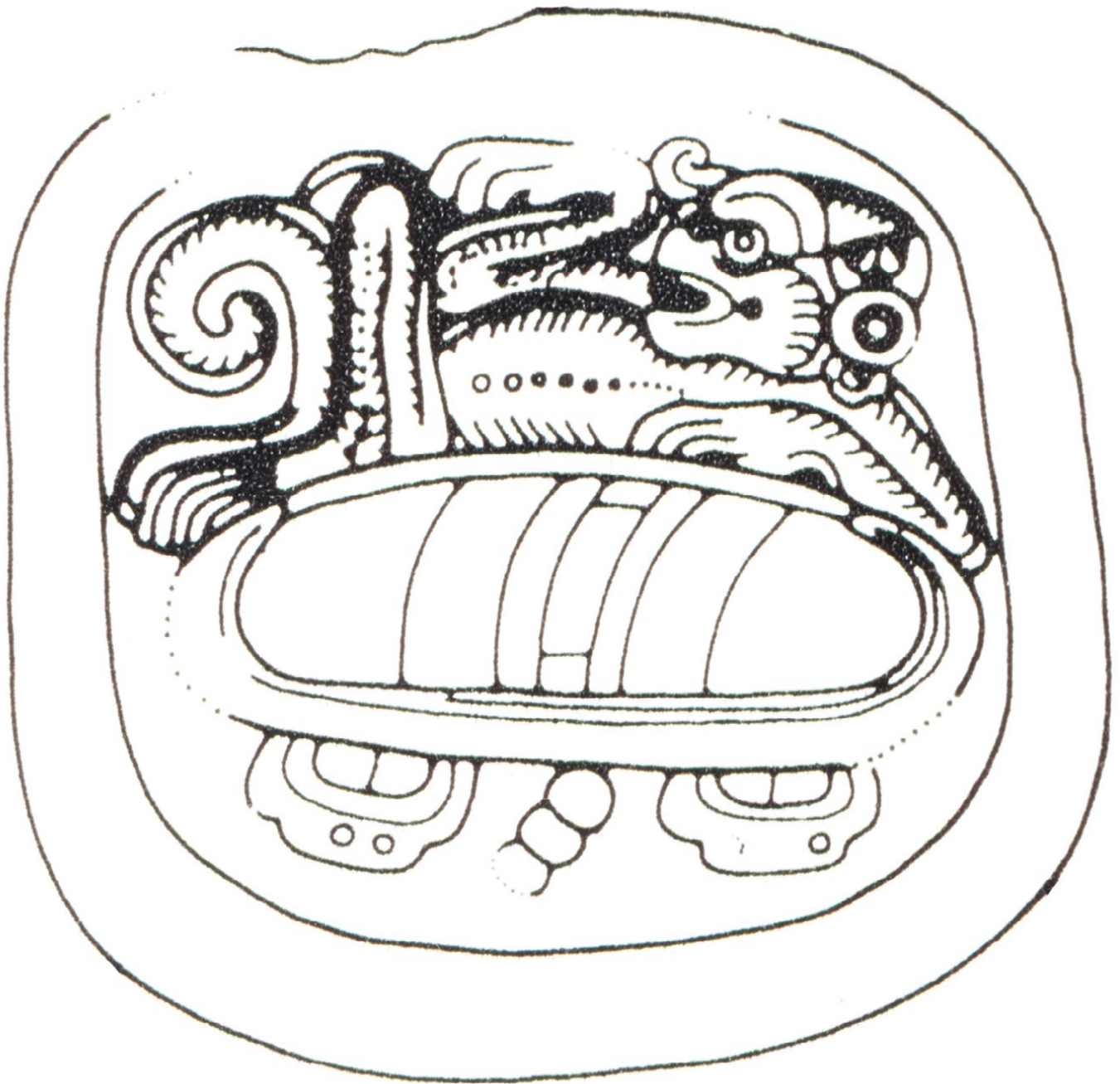


Spider Monkeys are present as Maya Hieroglyphs, sometimes as Full-Figure Personified Hieroglyphs

Spider monkey as full-figure hieroglyph inside cartouche on Palenque palace tablet. Drawing by Linda Schele, SD-121, AAatLACMA



Close-up view of monkey full-figure hieroglyph in atypical position, Copan Stela 63, drawing by Barbara Fash in William Fash 2001: Fig. 37.

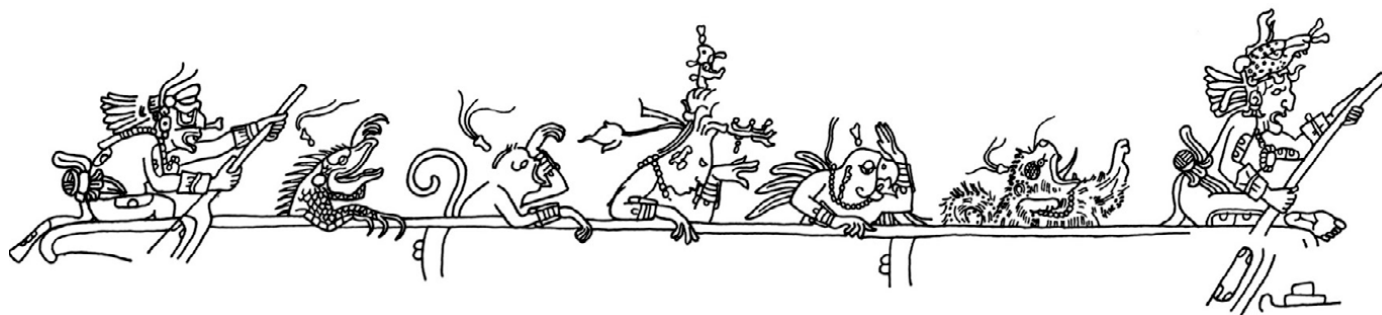


Monkey full-figure hieroglyph in atypical position, Copan Stela 63, drawing by Barbara Fash in William Fash 2001: Fig. 37.

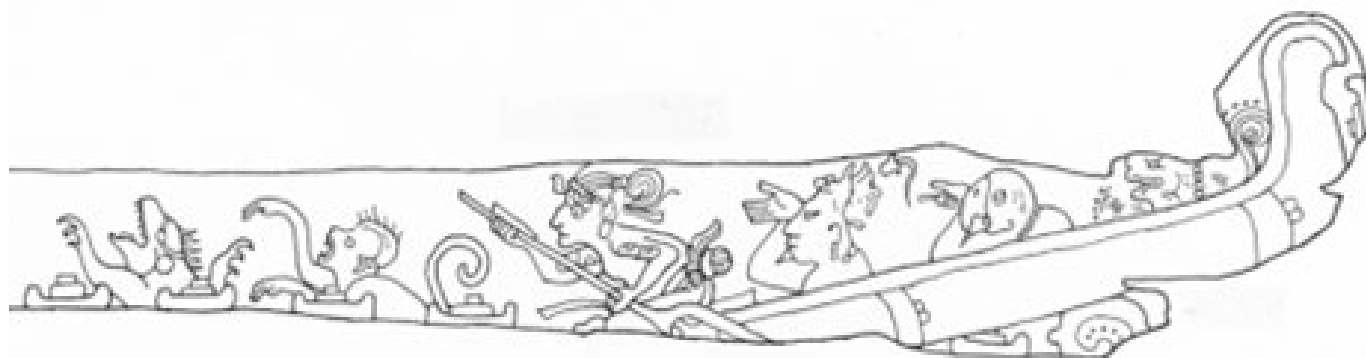
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Spider Monkey as one of four creatures In Paddler God canoe heading for Xibalba

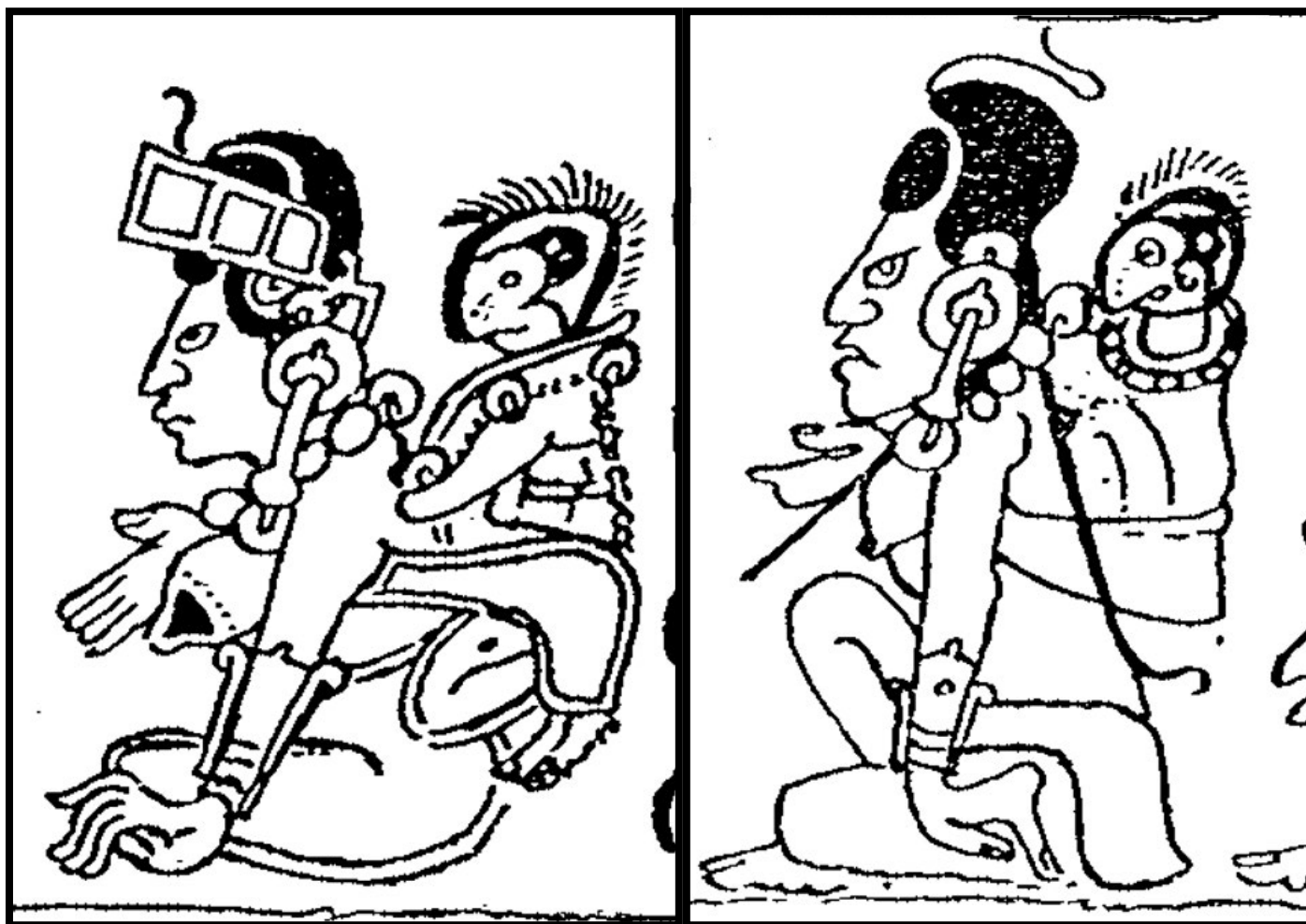


Stingray Spine Paddler God, iguana, spider monkey, Maize God, bird (does not have macaw decoration area around eye), furry animal (more hair than I would expect on a Maya dog). JGU Paddler God at the front. Tikal Burial 116, incised bone. Drawing by Linda Schele, SD-2014.



Iguana, spider monkey, Paddler God, Maize God, bird, incomplete animal, all in canoe sinking into the Surface of the Underwaterworld, Xibalba. Tikal Burial 116, incised bone. Drawing by Linda Schele, SD-2014.

Spider Monkeys are also available to study in the Maya Codices



Several spider monkeys are shown in the Codex Dresden, best seen in the drawings by Villacorta. (Dresden XVIII, Villacorta page 46 and Dresden XIX, Villacorta page 48).

Books, Articles, Theses on Spider Monkeys of Mesoamerica: Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica

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Web pages with fresh information and photos on Spider Monkeys of Mesoamerica

<https://www.maya-ethnzoology.org/where-to-photograph-sacred-mayan-animals-mayan-guatemala-mexico-belize-honduras/spider-monkey-ateles-geoffroyi-guatemala-fauna-autosafari-chapin.php>

Photos of spider monkeys at Auto Safari Chapin, Costa Sur, Guatemala. These monkeys are not in cages.