



# What is the Origin of the Guatemalan Tomb Writing?

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图一

图二



图三

图四

It is becoming increasingly clear that the Olmec played a prominent role in the rise of Mayan civilization. In Guatemala, we find jaguar stucco masks on the pyramids of El Mirador Structure 34, Cerros Structure 5C-2nd, E-VII Sub at Takalik Uxaxatun, and Structure 5D 22-2nd at Tikal. These jaguar masks are identical to Olmec jaguar masks: Stela C Tres Zapotes, the La Venta Sarcophagus, and Monument 15 La Venta. In this presentation, we test the hypothesis that there is a correlation between the pre-Classic Guatemalan writing and the (Epi)Olmec writing of Mexico. The purpose of this project is to compare these symbols to fully decipher the inscriptions of Guatemala, and to learn more about the religious and political system of the pre-Classic Guatemalans.

- To test this hypothesis, we discuss the inscriptions associated with the San Bartolo mural. The San Bartolo mural is identical to the faces on the Chalchuapa, El Salvador Olmec Maize God (Clark & Pye [2000] 312), and the figure wearing the maize god mask of La Venta Monument 44 (Clark & Pye [2000] 302). The results of the research indicate that the hieroglyphics associated with Guatemalan ancient tombs and the monuments from El Baul, Abaj Takalik, Chiapa de Corzo, and Tres Zapotes have Maya type glyphs and are different from Classic Mayan writing but identical to the (Epi)Olmec signs on the side panel of the Mojara monument.

The San Bartolo, Guatemala murals are very beautiful they were discovered by William Saturno of the University of New Hampshire. These murals were found in an unexcavated pyramid. Entering a looter's trench Dr. Saturno dug into the pyramid and discovered the murals. Much of the mural was destroyed when the Maya built another pyramid over the original structure.

Most researchers have assumed that this pyramid was built by the Maya. Although this is the popular view, this pyramid was probably built by the Olmec. And the Maya probably built a new pyramid over the original Olmec pyramid.

Under many pyramids found in Guatemala and Belize we find stucco-modeled jaguar pyramids. These pyramids with jaguar mask and large earrings predate all the Mayan pyramids. They are found at Uaxactun, Tikal and Cerros.



Fig. 3.29. Late Preclassic Str. 5C-2nd, Cerros, Belize: (above) excavation of the elaborately decorated, terraced platform; (below) one of the painted, stucco-modeled masks flanking the axial stairway.



**Uaxactun, Guatemala**

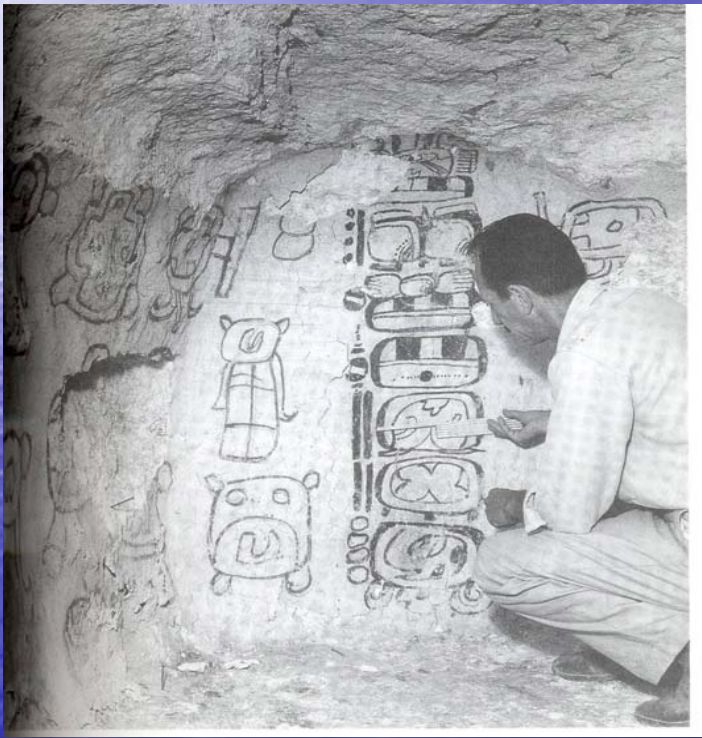


**Cerros, Belize**

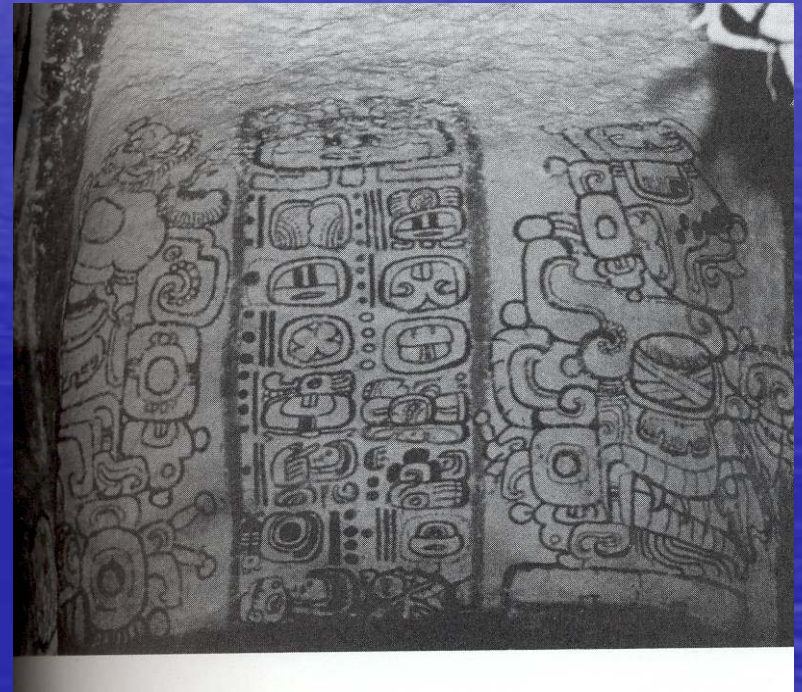


**Tikal, Guatemala**

Under these pyramids there are many interesting inscriptions. These inscriptions are believed to be written in the Mayan language but they have not been deciphered and usually do not have the common day signs associated with Mayan inscriptions. They have not been deciphered because they are written in Olmec, not Mayan. These inscriptions are phonemic signs and often appear frequently across inscriptions.

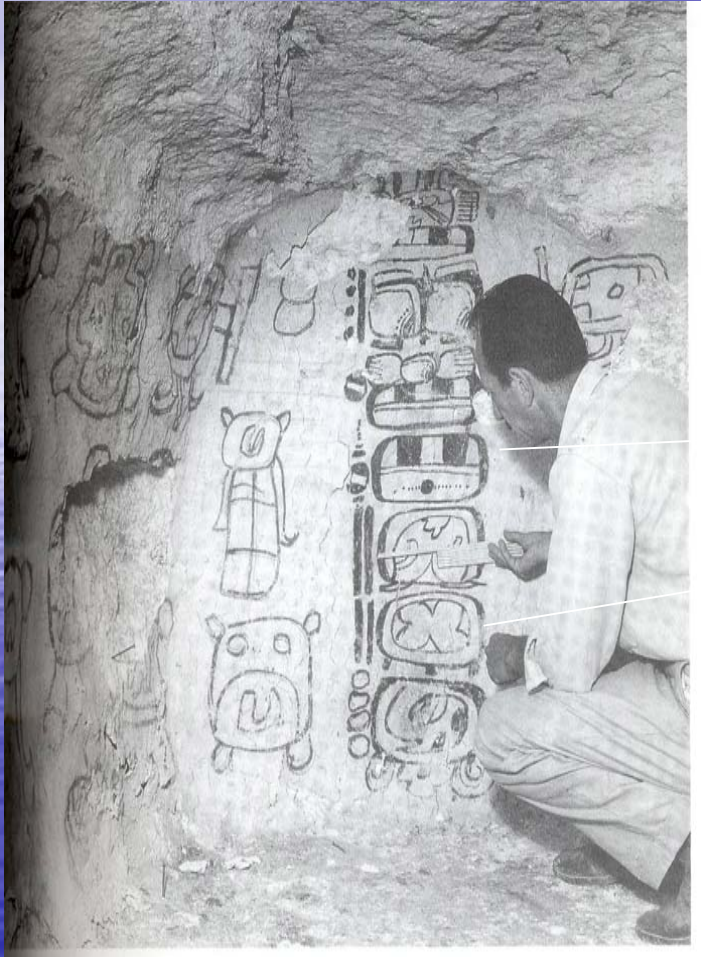


**Inscription  
from Tikal**



**Inscription from Rio Azul**

# The Tikal and Rio Azul Inscription shares many signs that have similar meaning



Inscription  
from Tikal



Inscription from Rio Azul



The San Bartolo pyramid has two murals. One of the murals is of a procession of people on a boat . The other mural is of King Tali, sitting on his pyramid.

On the boat there are a number of figures. Moving from right to left we see four standing figures nearest the end of the boat. These figures are carrying bundles raised above their heads.

In front of these figures we see several symbols. These symbols provide context to the procession.

There are a number of female figures on the boat. The woman near the Corn God has writing symbols on their faces. The kneeling figure holding the vase on the far left side toward the end has the words qyo ti "righteous cult specialist" on her cheek.

The standing female figure in front of the last three symbols placed in front of the person carrying gifts has the words ti i "she is righteous" written on her cheek.

Read Right to Left

Li yo ta

"Indeed, the vivid image  
of the race-here".

Inscription is read top to bottom

(1) Ta gbe (2) Ku (3) fa

"Preserve the mystic order. The  
Governor (and the mystic  
order) are one".

Inscription is read top to bottom

(1) Lai (2) Tali (3) Ku (4) Fe ta fe

This artisan, thou Tali, the  
Governor desires to be (made)  
sacred and breathing".



The next mural depicts a royal, sitting on a pyramid. The inscription tells us that the name of the Governor was Tali. Tali was probably the King of San Bartolo, but because he was probably appointed by the Emperor, he is referred to as a Governor: *Ku* in the inscriptions.



***The Mural of King Tali sitting on his pyramid.***

*This stand is placed in front of King Tali  
as he sits on the steps of the pyramid*



- It reads as follows:
- *Ta li Po Ta li Po*
- **Holy Tali**
- **Holy Tali**
- *Thou (art) a  
righteous Ruler*



There is an inscription in Front of King Tali. It reads as follows:

- *"He is to realize propriety like the rising of a star. The ruler [Tali] exist as a sacred object. The tomb of Tali; [he] desires it support righteousness. [Tali] an object of respect, is [this] Artisan. Existing in a unique state is Tali's soul. Put to bed the Governor. Hold upright the Governor, (he is) a sacred object of respect.*



*There are a number of symbols with phonetic meaning on the pyramid and steps where Governor Tali sits.*

- King Tali of Bartolo, Mexico





Po gbe  
"He is sanctified".

Here we have interesting iconography. These two figures relate to identifying King Tali as a powerful ruler.

Ta gbe gbe  
"[Tali] Preserves Virtue  
and Propriety".



Statuette from San Bartolo tomb



- In conclusion, the San Bartolo mural concerns the coronation of King Kali. It provides detailed information on the Epi-Olmec religion and gives important examples of the cultural relics of the Olmec that the Maya later incorporated into their own belief system and culture.

- **Aknowledgement:** The pictures in this presentation come from the national Geographic site or pictures from newspaper articles on the discovery of the San Bartolo artifacts.

# Books on Olmecs

- John E. Clark (Editor), Mary E. Pye (Editor). **Olmec Art and Archaeology in Mesoamerica (Studies in the History of Art Series)**.
- Clyde Winters, Atlantis in Mexico. Order at:
- [http:// www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)

