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The Monuments Speaks: Piedras Negras Stela 14 and the Development of the Discourses on the Maya Hieroglyphic Texts as Academic and Cultural Commodities

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THE MONUMENTS SPEAKS:

PIEDRAS NEGRAS STELA 14 AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
DISCOURSES ON THE MAYA HIEROGLYPHIC TEXTS AS ACADEMIC
AND CULTURAL COMMODITIES

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of History and Anthropology

by

Elizabeth Rebecca Tabas

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

2001
“Interrogation By Ancestors”
in *Sculpted Stones* by Victor Montejo

How it pains me,
the silence of my ancestors,
who little by little
were stilled,
their traces disappearing
like the distant wind
of the unknowable
stars.

Their voices extinguished
as the fire
hidden by night
only to be
put out
by the rains
and their steps
almost erased like obscure
pages of ancient codices.

We, their descendants,
sleepwalkers,
have been duped
so many times
by foreigners
who’ve specialized
in confounding
unbelievably
and jumbling up our histories.

We can neither take it lightly
nor accept it
because we,
the native peoples,
are the ones they disfigure.
Just think:
what can we say
to the ancients
when they return
with thunder and lightning
and ask about the fire
they left with us
in the cone of the great volcano?

They’ll say:
“May all our children gather,
bringing the sacred book
we’ve charged you
to care for, and interpret.”

“Oh fathers!” we’ll reply,
“the sacred books
were all burned
when the Kaxhlanés, the Wesl
 came from the East
crossing the sea
to plunder our riches.
Our books were burned
by the damned friars
who robbed us blind
just like the conquistadora."

And they’ll say:
“Sad, sleepwalking children,
our dishonor,
didn’t we teach you
to conquer the darkest
of nights like jaguars
by lighting together
your bundles of torchpine?”
“We tried,
O great and wise fathers!
But as always
we were betrayed.”

“Sad, humiliated,
and abandoned children,
why haven’t you studied
the lessons we chiseled
on the stelae,
and on the wheels of katuns
in front of our temples?”
“Oh great and wise fathers!
Our stelae
were also taken
from their sites
and dispersed throughout
the great museums
of the world.”

Sad, sleepwalking, duped
children,
why have you ignored our truths
inscribed on those stones
indecipherable to foreign eyes?”
“Oh great and wise fathers!
our stelae were not sold
but stolen from their sites.
Those thieves again...”

“Sad, sleepwalking, dispossessed
children,
what’s happened to the books
of the annual cycles
with the painted symbols
interpreted day and night

---

1 Ladinos or non-Maya
by the Ah Be?"²

"Oh great and wise fathers!
the foreigners
took them as well,
those codices of ours,
and carried them across the sea."

And they will say:
"Sad, plaintive, and buffeted
children,
why are the sacred books
in the hands of foreigners
like trinkets?
Do they presume to read
and interpret
our ancient wisdom?"

"Oh great and wise fathers!
no one today
can read them as you did.
The wisdoms of the past
have been vanishing
little by little."

"And you our children,
can you uncover
the cyclic teachings
that lie hidden
in our hieroglyphs?"³

"No, we can't, O great ones!
Our villages have been silenced,
and we live to far
from those centers
where once, centuries ago
with marvel
you erected the great walls
of our temples
and our cities."

"Then who can read to signs
and the shining roads
of the stars
and the 'Glacial Way'
that wind like serpents
across the blue sky?"

"Oh great and wise fathers!
Some Mayanists say
they have the keys
to read them
and that only they
can interpret
their hidden mysteries."

² Mayan priest and diviners
³ Mayanists, meaning researchers who specialize in the study of the Mayas.
And our ancestors
will burst out laughing
when they hear
this lamentation of their children,
because it will take a long time to read
and not imagine
the stories written on those stones.

Then our brave ancestors
will again call their children
and proudly tell them:
“Sad, humiliated,
plundered children,
you should revive now
with abundant kindling
the single tiny coal
still glowing
in the scented copal
of the incense burner
that is still offered us
in the heart
of the hill by the sea.

“Once again
you’ll be our subjects,
our visionary children
who future katunes
will no longer be humiliated.
But you still have
the dark night to conquer,
Light, then, your torches,
all together, the people,
so that your steps in unison
break today
the seal to the future.”
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When I began this project, I naively believed that through an examination of the international legislation standards on the ownership of cultural property I'd be able to prove that the University Museum had become the owner of Stela 14 of Piedras Negras, Guatemala. I believed that my research would provide important insight for the specific case of Stela 14. When Robert Sharer, the curator of the University of Pennsylvania Museum’s Mesoamerican Section, explained to me the legal history of Stela 14, I was certain that I could prove that the museum’s possession of the artifact was not only necessary, but appropriate. It seemed simple. First, I would show how the Stela was brought to the University Museum as part of a long-term exchange loan with the Guatemalan government in the 1930’s. Then, I would present documentation showing that in return for Stela 14, the Guatemalan Museo Nacional had received a shipment of excavated Panamanian gold artifacts. Finally, I planned to reveal that since the Guatemalan Museo Nacional could no longer account for the gold that had been borrowed Stela 14 should legally become a possession of the University Museum collection.

It seemed simple. However, what I failed to identify is that this crisis of ownership is much more complex than simply a case of missing gold. Stela 14 does not simply represent a piece of exchanged artwork, but it also represents language, and the intellectual legacies of many scholars of the present and the ancient past. In this revelation, the object enters an entirely different realm of contest and controversy. The struggle that will become known in the following chapters has little to do with logistics,
and has more to do with the discourse on power in general that the inscribed Maya monuments have come to represent. The current importance of Stela 14 has little to do with the monument’s fine preservation, or artistic quality. These characteristics are the ones that originally made the monument important enough to transport from its location deep in the jungles of the Guatemalan Peten. However, in this thesis these qualities only play a minor role. This paper will focus on the process of interpreting Stela 14 and the role that these interpretations play in defining the Mayan identity.

In the following chapters, I will consider the reading of Stela 14 as marking the moment of the modern politicization of the Maya hieroglyphic text, examining the development of the interpretations of the Mayan script an academic commodity, and as a source of indigenous identity. The unique status of the artifact was the unforeseen consequence of a chance observation by Tatiana Proskouriakoff that created a “memory link” into the public history of the ancient Maya world (Proskouriakoff, 1960). For this reason, the object represents an important moment in the history of American academic achievement. However, in the past two decades, the appropriateness of such displays in Western academic institutions has entered into question because the indigenous activists worry that the new American-led hieroglyphic literacy will deny the Maya a voice, and instead reenact the moment of colonial disenfranchisement.

The aforementioned ownership controversy is not unique to Stela 14, but its relationship to the rediscovery of the Maya written language is. The question of ownership for objects like Stela 14 is complicated by vague legal definitions of what actually constitutes claim to a piece of cultural property. For example the formal
definition of cultural property provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) states:

‘cultural property’ shall be taken to mean items which are the expression and testimony of human creation and of the evolution of nature which, in the opinion of the competent bodies in individual States, are or may be, of historical, artistic, scientific or technical value and interest, including items in the following categories:

(a) Zoological, botanical and geological specimens;

(b) Archaeological objects;

(c) Objects and documentation of ethnological interest;

(d) Works of fine art and the applied arts;

(e) Literary, musical, photographic and cinematographic works;

(f) Archives and documents (UNESCO 1976, 2-3).

Piedras Negras Stela 14 clearly fits this definition of cultural property. It is: (1) an "archaeological object"; (2) "an expression and testimony of human creation," and (3) "of historical, artistic, scientific or technical value and interest." However, by this definition the Stela would be the cultural property of both the University of Pennsylvania Museum, the Guatemalan Government and the Indigenous Mayas of Guatemala. I write this because: (1) the monument was uncovered in the Guatemalan Peten by the University of Pennsylvania Museum working to uncover ancient Maya artifacts that once excavated would become legal possessions of the Guatemalan Government and also
displays at the University Museum (Pennsylvania 1933); (2) the monument’s fine
carvings are a testimony to the achievement of Mayan civilization, and the reading of the
texts represents a moment of Western academic achievement; and (3) the interpretation of
the relevance of the monument is of historic, and scientific interest to the modern Maya
nationalists groups and Western academics.

The Indigenous Rights Accord, approved by the Guatemalan Government in
1995, gives the indigenous organizations right to govern access to archaeological objects
or sites (Accord, 7), yet at the same time, the monuments are not in their control. They
remain in Philadelphia, and the legal standards provided by UNESCO offer no simple
prescription by which to remedy this situation of multicultural legal claim to the Mayan
artifacts, and to the Mayan text. The legal recommendation, provided by Section 10 of
the 1979 UNESCO Study on the Principles, Conditions, and Means for the Restitution or
Return of Cultural Property in View of Reconstituting Dispersed Heritages, is: “Only
those objects that are indispensable to people in understanding...should be subject for
request for restitution.” (UNESCO 1979, 80).

I do not mean to imply that if a return of the object did in fact occur there would
be resolution to this question of ownership. My claim is quite contrary in fact to my
original expectation of providing a case for right or wrong placement. Instead, a legal
prescription provides only circular logic that further obscures the possibility of this
struggle coming to any definitive resolution. Therefore, instead of attempting to provide
my own solution to the problem, I will consider the development of the controversy, and
the discourses forming its rhetoric. The multiple representations circulate each defining
their own social space in different ways that often conflict with each other. This paper
will look at cultural property not as a naturally existing entity, but as a contrived abstract thing that in reality has dire consequences.
The Monument Speaks and The Rhetoric of its Meaning

Stela 14 of Piedras Negras, Guatemala sits at the center of the University of Pennsylvania Museum Maya Gallery, like a stoic giant. Its scene depicts a figure sitting cross-legged on a stone bench, while below a woman stares up from below. The back of the stela is uncarved, while on the sides remain the last remnants of a hieroglyphic inscription that rains, wars and centuries have not been able to erode.

The inscription reads:

\[9 \text{ bak'uns 16 k'atuns 6 tuns 17 winals 1 k'in 7 imix} \ldots k'al hun...huliah...u ck'ok k'aba...19 Wo hok'ah ti ahaw u mo'nik na-...chak...yokibnal k'al hun k'aba yal k'ul Ix--}\;^1; The haab\(^1\) was counted. It was 9 bak'tuns, 16 k'atuns, 6 tuns, 17 winals and 1 k'in (since the current era began) on the day 7 imix [the ? headband was closed, 26 days in the current lunation had elapsed, 2 lunations (in the current group of six) had ended, ? was the youth name of the 29 day lunation] 19 Wo (March 14, 758) was seated ruler, Black House Great ? Turtle (Ruler 5); these were his accession names. He was the child of Divine Lady---" (Harris 2001, 34; Harris 23/1/ 2001, 5)\(^1\).

For over 500 years, this monumental inscription and the rest of the Mayan texts were rendered silent, but in 1960, Tatiana Proskouriakoff helped the ancient Maya to speak once again. As the informational label at the monument’s base explains her insight
into the text and iconography of this stela helped her to recognize the more general trend that the Maya inscriptions spoke of history. In the 1961 article “The Lords of the Maya Realm”, she wrote the following about Stela 14:

The young lord sits in an elevated doorway or “niche” ascended by a ladder draped with a cloth or carpet with footprints that symbolize his ascent. Above the curtained doorway is a band of astronomical symbols, and at the very top, a bird with serpent-heads on its wings, wearing a grotesque mask and holding a serpent in its mouth. On the jambs are masks of the sun god, and just below, the two heads of the double-headed celestial dragon. In front stands a woman wearing a jaguar headdress and holding a feathered objects of unknown significance. At the lower right is a somewhat eroded representation of human sacrifice.

This lord acceded in A.D. 761, just after the Bat-Jaguar of Lintel 3, and ruled less than five years...The correction of the date on this monument led to the discovery of the significance of its motif and to the formulation of the “dynastic hypothesis,” which sees the figures on Maya stelae as portraits of reigning lords (Proskouriakoff 1961, 15).

This message, Proskouriakoff’s translation is not only her immortal contribution to the history of the Maya, but also the moment of the re-politicization of the Maya text. This insight created the off-white label that sits at base of the monument. This new inscription speaks in a voice for museum visitors today can understand, however, it is this Western
authoritorial voice that sowed the seeds of controversy that characterize the problematic placement of inscribed Maya monuments in museum’s galleries today.

Proskouriakoff’s words enter the gallery like a haunting echo, once more the monument speaks, its power has been renewed, and its voice has been changed. The passage invites the museum visitor to view an interaction, a display of power, a voice that records the accession of a Piedras Negras Lord. This voice, although written in an old script, reveals a new message that has sparked the imaginations of academics in the universities of the United States and of Europe and the passions of activists in Guatemala. Proskouriakoff’s 1960 insight took Stela 14 and the rest of the inscribed Mayan monuments from quiet isolation in museum galleries to center stage as part of a constantly evolving debate on cultural patrimony and identity. It was also this moment of academic revelation that made the Maya stelae become symbols of repression, revitalization, and resistance- contested monuments.

Museum visitors now witness sculpted stones, speaking in foreign tongues of power and politics of the present and of the past. Monuments including Piedras Negras Stela 14 were once thought to be above moral and political scrutiny since they had been legally excavated, officially exchanged and legally brought to the United States. However, in the current era their placement in foreign institutions has become a point of contention since these ancient symbols have come to represent tourism dollars to developing governments and identity politics to developing peoples.

This controversy is in many ways an unforeseen consequence of Proskouriakoff’s discovery. The texts of these monuments, by virtue of being able to be read, have become a mode by which to express, or reveal one’s authenticity and claim to the Maya identity.
The language in which the historical texts were written is clearly linked to the multitude of indigenous languages spoken in Guatemala today, and for this reason, the monuments have become loci for identity creation and delineation. In each textual interpretation, there is a type of “political linguistics” informing the discovery process and therefore allowing for only certain types of scholarly analysis to circulate (Fischer, 44). Edward Fischer, in his dissertation *The Pan-Maya Movement in Global and Local Context*, points out that in Guatemala:

Linguistic issues have been a focal point for cultural activists because speaking a Maya language is the predominant marker of Maya ethnicity and one which has been relatively conservative during the last 500 years of Spanish contact; it thus represents the antithesis of the dominant Spanish-speaking ladino culture. (Fischer, 45).

For this reason, the findings of scholarship on the ancient Maya hieroglyphic texts (post 1960) has begun to take on an increasing politically motivated role. Language, because of its ability to provide data on the pre-contact Maya society, has been used to certify the splendor and literacy of the early culture, from which the modern ethnic groups were born (Fischer, 71).

The modern Guatemalan Maya, as they identify themselves, are made up of the more than 5 million speakers of Mayan languages (Raxche, 76). Relying on Raxché’s definition it does not seem that the Maya speakers necessarily involved in a political movement. However, documents such as the *Indigenous Rights Accord* reflect that there
is in fact consensus on the need for certain agreements on Rights for the Maya as a
people (Accord 1995). The does movement does not have an easily identifiable center,
and as a result an important part of the *Indigenous Rights Accord* and of Indian activism
in general is to construct solidarity in literary, and artistic productions (Gossen 531). As
Jack David Eller points out in *American Anthropologist’s* forum on “Anti-anti-
Multiculturalism”;

Culture becomes both a field of struggle and a means, an asset in that
struggle. Culture is a group’s seal of authenticity and its warranty of
worth, serving as a gloss, a badge, and a weapon for a party in the war of
identity politics…Injecting culture into a political debate give it a moral
tone on both sides, pitting fundamental realities and unimpeachable truths
against another. And since there is no “cross-cultural truth” or standard,
there is no way to verify- or falsify- a group’s claims. Further culture is an
indefinitely expandable tool: almost any behavior or symbol or memory
can be held up or promoted as culture. (Eller, 252).

This creates research models, which define the unique ethnic boundaries that allow for
Maya self-definition as representing unique cultural interests.

Regarding this self-identification, an influential Pan-Maya activist, Demetrio
Cojti Cuxil, wrote, “Maya people exist because they have and speak their own
languages” (Cojti Cuxil 1990, 12). The Maya identity becomes relationally defined in
terms of characteristics of “us” and “them” (Fischer, 15). The definitions of race,
language, and culture continue to take on different meanings, thus constantly redefining the Guatemalan ethno-cultural boundaries. Fischer claims that this process of assigning new meanings to traditional symbols is an essential step in the process of constructing and defining a Pan-Maya identity (Fischer, 46). Gary Gossen further supports this argument, writing:

Expressions of Maya collective identity, such as community membership and ethnic affirmation, depend heavily on concrete and symbolic acknowledgement, even inclusion of, other identities, in order to situate themselves in an ever-evolving present. (Gossen, 535).

By manipulating identity Maya organizations have begun to carve out a niche within Guatemalan bureaucracy, a necessary precondition to their petitioning for international recognition and national legal change (Fischer, 83). The Maya groups, although generally diverse in terms of ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds, have become publicly unified in pursuit of common political and social goals (Gossen, 536). The Pan-Maya organizations extend into many areas of activity, ranging from intellectual, educational and religious organizations to craft guilds that cater to tourists and the international export market (Gossen, 536).

Gossen claims that the broad-spectrum interests of the Maya organizations made it impossible for the Guatemalan government to ignore the Pan-Maya voice. He writes that:
The governments of Mexico and Guatemala now realize that the Pan-Indian voice in these de facto multicultural nations is here to stay. Governments can no longer crush this voice with military action or buy it off with conciliatory “things” alone. They must enter into dialogue with it and add the contemporary Indian voice to that national idea. (Gossen, 537).

Growing awareness of this political reality led to the legal legitimization of Mayan demands in the 1985 Constitution of Guatemala. Article 58 of this legal document ensures the right of individual customs and languages to Maya individuals and communities (Raxche, 86). This edition of the constitution laid the legal groundwork for the protection of the native ethnic groups. Emerging from this preliminary document were more explicit forms of legislation, such as the 1988 adoption of the unified Maya orthography, designed by the Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala (ALMG), and the 1990 Bill that granted ALMG five million quetzales in annual governmental support for the purpose of promoting programs for cultural preservation (Fischer 81). Through the work of the ALMG, Organizaciones Mayas de Guatemala (COMG), Coordinadora de Organizaciones y Naciones de Continente (CONIC), Proyecto Linguistico Francisco Marroquin (PLFM), and many other community-based alliances, the Maya population has begun to organize to revive and strengthen their claims to their cultural heritage (Fischer, 80-85). According to Fischer, this culture-based revitalization concentrates on the re-appropriation of Maya research from Western academia. He explains: “Maya
leaders are using the information they gather to develop an ideology which emphasizes self-determination, cultural pride, and Pan-Maya unity” (Fischer, 68).

This shift in domestic power relations has had its impact also on the Guatemalan position towards Maya cultural heritage in the custody of international institutions. The Western institutions traditionally focused on creating stable categories around which scholars could classify and arrange the indigenous peoples and cultures into a Foucaltian “order of things” (Jones, 285). The museum displays, like the one in the University of Pennsylvania Museum, attempted to reflect on the awkward issue of “how natives think” (Jones, 286). It is this metanarrative underlying the display that informs the Pan-Mayan interest in “self-refashioning” through object ownership. Their interests in the extends beyond simply changing white-Indian political or economic relations into a more esoteric argument concerning the convergence of different attitudes, ethnicities, and lifestyles in other historical contexts (Jones, 287).

The 1985 Guatemalan Constitution granted the Maya activists formal legal pathways by which to question the generic categorization that the museum depictions of the Mayan culture’s ruins represents. The ideology of the Pan-Maya movement rejects the Western tradition and attempts to re-appropriate elements of history in order to create a cultural identity that is uniquely theirs (Fischer 1996, 69). Maya research organizations, such as the Centro de Documentación e Investigacion Maya (CEDIM) and ALMG, have become part of the formal political dialogue with the Guatemalan government. The rights granted by the 1985 Constitution and subsequent legislation has allowed the Maya voice in decisions on the excavated past (Fischer 1996, 69). This voice is important to the process of development in Guatemala. The Indigenous Rights Accord ranks the
development of the voice to be of "vital" importance in the present and the future (Accord, 1). As Rexché, a prominent speaker for the Comunidad Linguística Kaqchikel wrote that Maya control of cultural resources is necessary because "Maya cultural resources represent the independence and personality of the Maya community" (Raxché, 78). To this end numerous writers and artists are working to create a corpus of literature and images that depict a blending of traditional and contemporary Maya themes in order to actively fight for the formal recognition of their culture (Gossen, 536; Menchu, xiii).

The testimony of Rigoberta Menchú, a Quiché Maya woman, explains that for Menchú, "Words are her only weapon" (Menchu, xi). The Maya became patently aware that it was necessary to appropriate parts of the Western culture in order to gain an audience and therefore legitimacy (Menchú, xiii). As Menchú's testimony explains in the introduction:

Rigoberta learned the language of her oppressors in order to use it against them. For her, appropriating the Spanish language is an act which can change the course of history because it is the result of a decision: Spanish was a language which was forced upon her, but it has become a weapon in her struggle. She decided to speak in order to tell of the oppression her people have been suffering for almost 500 years (Menchú, xii-xiii).

In telling the story of her life, Menchú issued a manifesto on behalf of an ethnic group. Her testimony fights for the recognition of her culture, and for acceptance of the fact that
it is different and for her people’s rightful share of power (Menchú, xii-xiii). When Menchú was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for this testimony in 1993, it became obvious that Maya protest literature had gained a global audience. Referring to this moment of triumph, Mayan poet Humberto Ak’abal wrote, “your sandals traversed/ the roads of the earth / and now the world knows the truth; / the Indian sees, hears and thinks…” (Ak’abal, 335).

Menchú’s voice has come to represent the most charged and politically important words of this movement to redefine the image of the indigenous Maya. While still retaining their traditional forms of poetry and testimony as their modes of communication, the Maya have begun to make their protest heard in the traditional literary pathways of Western academia (Zimmerman, 22-26). This style of activism is representative of the newly emerging class of the exiled Maya intellectual who, while war ravaged the Guatemalan countryside in the 1970’s and 1980’s, was educated on the scholarships and grants of American and European universities. On exile, Arturo Arias, a member of this class of Guatemalan activist authors, wrote

On the one hand, exile permitted contact with other writers, with other views regarding literature; it allowed them to experience other cultural spheres. On the other hand, . . . they could understand their countries’ problems in a more comprehensive manner, consider the social difficulties in an objective, rather than emotional way, and deepen their theoretical knowledge so as to portray the situation from within a broader perspective. On the thematic level, they sharpened their vision and understanding of
their people. As writers they honed their talents of expression. As people, they enriched their human sensibility. They were ready, then, to produce mature works (Arias, 99).

As Arias makes clear, this exile allowed the literature of Guatemalan indigenous rebellion to develop an air of authority and legitimacy.

This experience of exile has led several critics of the Pan-Maya movement to question the claims of these authors as representative of the true Maya voice. The critics suggest that there is likely a greater convergence of interest between the Maya intellectual and the Western academic, than between the educated, urban-based leaders and harsh realities of the rural Maya’s everyday life. (Warren 1998; Fischer, preface; Poniewozik, 1). In response Cojí Cuxil asserts “Cultural blending...is not an indicator of spiritual communion...A Maya can dress and behave like a Ladino without renouncing his loyalty to the Maya people” (Cojí Cuxil, 24). This education has allowed the Maya to break out of linguistic isolation, and by virtue of the education process learn the rhetoric of Marxist and Post-Structural literary theory, thus acquiring the tools to overthrow the paralyzing condition of internal colonialism (Menchú, xiii). It was in this way that the Maya became aware of the political implications of language on identity. Thus, the Mayanist began to reason, as Ak’abal does when he wrote “we write in our languages,...because they’re the base and reason for the existence of our people and part of our identity...I think in Quiché, I write in Quiché...” (Akbal, 334). This simple connection between language and the Mayan identity has been championed by the Pan-Mayanists as the source of revitalization, and survival for the indigenous identity.
Part of this Maya language revitalization movement includes the use of the Mayan hieroglyphic writing system (Fischer 1996; 65). There is an imagined purity to the historical mode of expression; however, in reality there can be no complete and unfiltered expression of the ancient Mayas' sentiments (Fischer 1996; 65). Instead, the case is as Circe Sturm points out in “Old Writing and New Messages: The Role of Hieroglyphic Literacy in Maya Cultural Activism” that these messages are newly constructed messages. These are messages written by non-Indians since trained Maya\textsuperscript{iii} epigraphers are almost non-existent (Sturm 127).

This new hieroglyphic literacy is a relatively limited phenomena, and the task of decipherment is left to a few leading epigraphers in the universities of the United States, Europe, Canada, Mexico, Japan, and Guatemala. These foreign scholars, in a real way, define and control the voice of the Maya. In general, the indigenous Maya population is excluded from the discussion defining what they consider to be their own cultural heritage.

Their concerns come as a reaction to many optimistic Western researchers who have claimed that Proskouriakoff's insight has allowed previously unanswerable questions about who these people were, and how they lived, to come seemingly within the reach of the persistent scholar. Proskouriakoff's work made possible the publication of popular histories, including Linda Schele's and David Freidel's *A Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya*. The authors asserted: “these texts and images are a map of the ancient Maya mind and history, of the world as they understood it...It lets us utter their names once again-and for a moment see the world as they saw it.” (Schele
Friedel, 63). As a consequence of this claim the emergence of a new hieroglyphic literacy has been both applauded and criticized by the living indigenous Maya communities.

American archaeologist Jeffry Chouinard explains the implications in his book *Mouths of Stone: Stories of the Ancient Maya from Newly Deciphered Inscriptions and Recent Archaeological Discoveries*. In the introductory chapter, "A Brand New Ancient History" Chouinard points out that this new historical discourse comes, not through the efforts of the living Maya, but "through the wizardry of epigraphers like David Kelley, Floyd Lounsbury, Linda Schele, Peter Matthews, Nikolai Grube, Stephen Houston, David Stuart and others" (Chouinard, Preface). In short, North American and European epigraphers that have expanded on Proskouriakoff’s historical approach to interpreting the hieroglyphic texts are writing this Maya tale.

The Maya intellectuals claim that they have purposely been excluded from the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphics as a way to keep the Maya politically and economically marginalized in the tradition of the colonialism. The restriction of access to the text has been likened to the moment of Spanish conquest. Enrique Sam Colop, a prominent Maya linguist, advocate and member of the Maya Education Foundation, claims that these works represent a "usurpation of symbols". He elaborates on his criticism of Western translations using a passage from *The Conquest of America*, which reads "'We have deprived [the Indians] of even their past, exploiting it as our past, and on ending my sentence I discover that I am speaking as a mestizo'." (Colop, 109). He explains that this modern appropriation of the hieroglyphic texts by Western scholars once again creates the colonial situation, writing: "At an ideological level, colonialism is
manifested through...discourse”; “In this colonialism, the other is interpreted, imagined, represented, and his future is prescribed” (Colop, 107,112).

The Maya activists like Colop claim that the Maya entity defined by the Western researchers often reflects negative biases or the conscious intention of the Westerner to exclude the living Maya from the history of cultural accomplishment. The Pan-Maya writings challenge the claim that American epigraphers can and should be able to speak exclusively for the ancient Maya. Victor Montejo, a prominent Maya writer in exile in the United States, challenges the right of the Western researchers to speak exclusively on the true meanings of hieroglyphs. In Sculpted Stones, a collection of his poetry, he explicitly criticizes the practices of Western academics. In the first poem of the collection, “Interrogation by the Ancestors,” he belittles the work of epigraphers, writing:

 algunos Mayanistas

dicen que tienen la clave

 para leerlos;

 y que sólo ellos creen

 poder interpretar

 los misterios escondidos...

 Y se reirán

 a carcajadas los ancestros

 cuando escuchen

 a sus hijos lamentarse,

 pues tomará mucho tiempo leer
y no sólo imaginar
las historias escritas
en las piedras labradas.

Some Mayanists say
they have the keys
to read them
and that only they
can interpret
their hidden mysteries...

And our ancestors
will burst out laughing
when they hear
this lamentation of their children,
because it will take a long time to read
and not just imagine
the stories written on those stones (Montejo, 16,17).

He suggests that this dominant Western academic voice is not truly authoritative or scientific, but instead “imagined” or fictitious. Montejo’s poetry is very deliberate in its trivialization of Western research. He expresses the archaeologist’s ideas as creative fictions, exaggerating the ridiculous manner in which Western academic publications have traditionally generalized the Mayan culture.
The current debate circulating on the politics and poetics of the Maya hieroglyphic monuments began with Proskouriakoff's reading of Stela 14. This discovery has become the basis for Western academic production and the political vehicle for the establishment of the modern Maya identity. The value of Stela 14 as a "moral object" or "interpretive chronicle" are not natural relationships, but instead exist as an extension of power of linguistic events surrounding the object. These subjective discourses define the social reality of what this object is. The manipulations of language that make Stela 14 valuable. The claims for the necessity of Stela 14 to be displayed in another place, by another group, is, as the following chapters will show, more about controlling the metahistory and metadiscourses that surround the question of what it means to be Maya, than about the object itself. Mastery of the object has become a way to redefine the public sphere's perception of legitimacy. Its translation is seen as an opportunity to write history, rather than become an imperfect sidebar to the experience of history.

The following chapters look at the development of this antagonistic relationship that has made Stela 14's placement in the University Museum a political statement, examining the politics of the monument's presentation and the use of texts related to the monuments as modes of transmitting or creating a new history. The texts of this thesis carefully deconstruct the events that have allowed a seemingly mundane dead script to be manipulated into the baseline for a modern political voice.

\footnote{9 bak'tuns 16 k'atuns 6 tuns 17 winols 1 k'in 7 imix" is the stela's "Long Count" or date in the Mayan calendric system. These are distance numbers and generally are found as the introduction to a hieroglyphic}
text. \textit{Imix} refers to the day, such as in our calendar Wednesday would stand for a specific day. \textit{Bak'tuns}, \textit{k'atuns}, \textit{tuns}, \textit{winals}, and \textit{k'ins} are the units that the Maya used to quantify time, such as we might quantify time passage in terms of centuries, decades, years, months, and days. The units are in progression sequences of twenty, what I mean by this is 1 \textit{kin} equals 1 day, and 1 \textit{winal} equals 20 \textit{k'ins} or 20 days. The rest numerical values of the rest are: 18 \textit{winals} equals 1 \textit{tun} or 360 days; 20 \textit{tuns} equals 1 \textit{k'atan} or 7,200 days; 20 \textit{k'atuns} equals 1 \textit{bak'tun} or 144,000 days. These cycles were important to the ancient Maya, and their ways of understanding the universe. As Archaeologist, Robert Sharer explains: “The ancient Maya may have believed that the world came to an end, and was created afresh, at the close of the great cycle of thirteen \textit{bak'tuns}, a period of approximately 5,128 solar years, and they reckoned the chronology of their current world from a fixed point corresponding to the end of the preceding great cycle.” (Sharer, 568). The dates, like the one on Stela 14, seem to refer to cyclical antecedents used by lords to legitimize their royal ancestry and their right to rule (Sharer, 560, 571).

\footnote{I use the annotation [...] to refer to the glyphs in which: (1) have an identified iconography meaning, but do not yet have a phonetic translation; or (2) are not currently translated.}

\footnote{Haab is another name for the Long Count date, or 365-day calendar.}

A Mayan indigenous language that is fairly widely spoken in Guatemala at present.

Meaning indigenous Maya

Colop is an indigenous Maya living in Guatemala, and one of the most notable voices in the Pan-Maya movement.

Someone of mixed blood, or speaking in a Spanish/Indigenous voice.

He further directs his attack against the intentions of Western research in the poem “The Maya Depart”\footnote{He further directs his attack against the intentions of Western research in the poem “The Maya Depart”\footnote{The Maya are a great mystery, an unsuspecting archaeologist will say one day in years to come when he uncovers in a remote cemetery like hundreds of other clandestine cemeteries in Guatemala, El Salvador, Latin America, a single pit with dozens or hundreds of corpses, some without arms, others without legs and many others with their heads chopped off. Then the scholar will explain that these were victims of a sacrifice to placate the wrath of the gods. Once again doubts will surface regarding the nature of the Maya and there will be assertions that these Maya were cannibals like their ancestors because they ate portions of their victims or because it was part of a bloody ritual to dismember the sorry creatures and then bury them all in a common pit. No doubt this hypothesis will be the accepted one as long as the engrossed Mayanists omit from their records that these uncoun ted dead were products of the great massacres committed by the kabibiles and the Atlacatl Brigade.}}.
which cynically adopted and profaned
the names of the heroic caciques
who bravely fought
in hand to hand combat
against the greedy invaders,
falsely named conquistadors
and not with Israeli Galils, either,
or with M-16's, gringos,
but with indigenous weapons:
their own blood, their own arrows,
and their hand to hand battle
to repel the invading forces.
This is what a future archaeologist will say
whose contemporaries
happily measure ancient skulls
and rejoice in uncovering a new tomb
while the same day, nearby,
new graves are opened by the hundreds,
filled with poor campesinos, Maya
who have fallen on top of the hieroglyphs.
But many will say that's not important.
They'll be ample time
in the future
to go on digging for clues, excavating
and weaving hypotheses
to explain why the Maya "disappeared"
and where the "Indians" went
with their gods, their multi-colored dress,
their languages, their traditions
and all the weighty baggage
of their millennial wisdom. (Montejo, 45-47).
Beyond the Usamacinta: The Commodification of Piedras Negras Stela 14

...the essential mystery of the cultural past, which like Tiresias drinking the blood, is momentarily returned to life and warmth and allowed once more to speak, and deliver its long-forgotten message in surroundings utterly alien to it.

~Frederick Jameson~

No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of society. These continue to bear on what he does professionally, even though his research and its fruits do attempt to reach a level of relative freedom from the inhibitions and the restrictions of brute, everyday reality.

~Edward Said~

Piedras Negras Stela 14 was originally “rescued from the jungle” by the University of Pennsylvania Museum in the 1930’s. In recent years, however, the display of Stela 14 in the museum’s galleries has taken on a distinctly political dimension. The object’s display has a distinctly political side as a result of both present legal trends and historical legacies with which it is associated. At this moment, the artifact seems to have many rightful owners, the University Museum, the Guatemalan Government and the Maya people. The predicament offers a perfect enactment of the question, “who owns the past?”

Does the object belong to the nearest descendants of this buried culture, or to the institutions and people who have added knowledge, or in a sense, transformed the art object from a mere curiosity into a cultural commodity? The development of this dilemma in the last century is a result of a interpretive shift towards seeing art as both a measure and a critique of culture. These questions of ownership and value are of central importance to this paper. The interpretations and representations of cultural property and
the ethics of collecting have created an antagonistic relationship with indigenous groups and developing countries on the one hand, and the traditional consumers of archaeological objects, the western museum and other academic institutions, on the other.

In this chapter I will look at the process by which the importance of Stela 14 was transformed from an art piece that served to lend completeness to a collection to an object of primary value in and for itself. First, I will examine the trends that led to the era of museum building, archaeological research, and motivated the University’s collection of objects. Later, I will examine the way in which this traditional attitude towards collection has been undermined by the evaluation of Stela 14 as a *pointe de entree* into the hieroglyphic language of the Maya. In this discovery the Stela, itself, became valued as both an art object and a codex. The commodification and the realization that the control of knowledge is power made the object an important national symbol for Guatemala and its indigenous Maya groups. The artifact has come to represent a political discourse in power rather than a purely scientific or academic one.

**The Origins of Collections**

In a sense the museum or the act of collecting objects has always been a display of the dominant group’s power. A conqueror would receive tribute in the form of gold, fine pottery and sculpture from vassal nations, and from the subsequent act of assembling and displaying the foreign objects the word *museum* originated (Pearce, 1). Hence, the amassing of collections became a symbolic representation of national power.

In the European palaces and churches of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, the displays developed an elementary scientific approach in that the spatial relationship between objects represented in the collection became a visual explanation of knowledge.
The ordering of colonial museums worldwide revealed a physical manifestation of Carl Linnaeus’ *Systema Naturae*. The exhibition’s design was intended to articulate the divine natural hierarchy that supplied an inherent structure to all things. The political dimension of this style of organization was a rather unconscious development. It was not necessarily consciously understood that the person who controlled the process of ordering, defining and representing the collection also had the power to define how the world should be interpreted. The design was believed to articulate a series of naturally existing relationships rather than division created by the curator’s biases (Prösler, 22).

In this era the natural history museum and the anthropological museum were born. The anthropological museum applied the same structural organization to the material objects that represented cultures and people of the present and of the buried past. The displays often created and reinforced the notion of “us” and “them” as natural and inherently existing divisions. At the same time, the ornate displays of antiquities attempted link the contemporary powers with the great legacies of the past. In a conscious way, the ownership of objects from ancient empires represented a transfer of authority and power from the great civilizations of the past to the rulers of the present.

The public fascination with these strange civilizations and a desire to understand the natural relationships between cultures led to an era of museum building in late nineteenth century. The University Museum, and others, became storehouses for the collections amassed by the wealthy, and centers of research in the development and historical evolution of man. Phillips’ *Unpacking Culture*, a text on the philosophy and historical trends leading to the American obsession with the accumulation of indigenous art, explains the scientific rationale for the amassing of large collections, saying:
men saw in the 'primitive' peoples...a great laboratory for the investigation of human cultural evolution. Art assumed prominence within their larger project because it constituted, for Westerners, the ultimate level of human achievement. The presence or absence of "true art"...could be used as a kind of litmus test of the level of civilization a group of people had supposedly achieved (Phillips, 7).

The presentation of artifacts, ordering the objects from the most primitive to the most complex, was intended to illustrate the natural hierarchical development of the artifacts, and the civilizations from which they came. Curators attempted to reveal the natural evolutionary relationship that rationalized the characteristic relationship of colonialism, the duality of the conquered and the conqueror.

An intense curiosity and desire to understand this complex relationship led to an enthusiasm for research and exploration on a previously unprecedented scale. This excitement led to the popularization of the robust explorer and the treasure hunt type searches displayed in the Indiana Jones films. At the turn of the century, crude and pseudo-scientific methods characterized the field research techniques used by the Museum’s excavators. For example, in 1912 the University Museum paid Robert Burkitt one hundred dollars per month plus expenses to acquire antiquities from Guatemala for the University Museum. The idea of scientific archaeological excavation had not yet fully developed. This concern not only with what can be removed, but also with what remains and what those structures and artifacts can add to the previously existing corpus of
knowledge about the objects represents an early incarnation of archaeology as it is understood today. A fact evidenced when he said, “I've never been quite clear in my mind whether you attach more importance to the study of ruins or to getting things that you carry away.” (Winegrad, 131). Burkitt’s remark reveals the emergence of the study of archaeology as scientific endeavor.

THE CREATION OF THE PIEDRAS NEGRAS COLLECTION

The pursuit of knowledge and artifacts led to a contractual agreement between the Museo Nacional de Guatemala and the University Museum on the site of Piedras Negras in 1930. The archaeological project was considered by both museums as a way to build up the collections, or in a sense, the power of the institutions. The accumulation of the Piedras Negras artifacts and other antiquities was considered essential in facilitating the display culture to the masses. The project director and procurer of the work permit for Piedras Negras, J. Alden Mason, estimated that not over five archaeologist ever made the difficult journey to Piedras Negras to see the stelae (Mason 1934, 2). In his proposal, he suggests that an urgency for action exists at Piedras Negras, writing: “How much better that they should be preserved under cover and seen by more persons in one day than would ever see them before their complete destruction at Piedras Negras!” (Mason 1934, 2).

Both sides considered the transportation and subsequent preservation of the artifacts to be extraordinarily important. The reconnaissance operation was viewed by all sides as important to preserving artifacts for future researchers. This feeling of necessity is reflected in Mason’s description, when he said:
Piedras Negras lay for a thousand years deep in the tropical forest, far from any route of travel. Not one [stela] stood erect, and the majority had broken in falling. Those that fell with the carved face up had their sculptures completely destroyed by the action of moss and rains before they were discovered thirty-nine years ago, and most of those that fell face down were turned up in that time, and have suffered considerably in this short time period. Passing chicle gatherers and lumbermen hit them with their machetes or carved initials upon them (Mason 1934, 2).

Mason continues “all persons and organizations are highly pleased at the rescue of these unique art objects from certain ultimate destruction in the deep jungles and have no feeling that their removal was an act of vandalism.” (Mason 1934, 2). The excavation and subsequent removal of the stelae was seen as a way to preserve beautiful carvings and valuable data on the Mayan civilization. Over time, the simple rationale claiming the museums’ work is motivated by the rescue of the monuments, has been questioned. However, this remark by Mason reflects the typical attitude regarding artifact treatment (meaning removal) for his time.

For both the museums, the archaeology presented an opportunity for display and to increase the importance and the depth of the collection within their galleries. Legal contract gave Guatemalan title for all objects found, but only half of the items would be sent the National Museum in Guatemala City, the other half would be shipped to Philadelphia on long-term loan (Mason 1934, 2). The cooperation was viewed by both
sides as amicable and indispensable. In September 1932, the *Revista del Museo Nacional de Guatemala* called the agreements *contratos celebrados*, and the Museum praised the relationship as "a cordial cooperation" (Villacorta *Revista* 3, 37; and Mason, *Rescued*, 2). For both sides, the operation represented a welcome transformation from the earlier "clandestine" archaeological expeditions.

In the first two years, 1931 and 1932, the excavators succeeded in removing eight monuments; of these, four were shipped to Guatemala City, and four were shipped to Philadelphia. Included in this second group was Stela 14, the artifact of primary interest in this paper. The success of this preliminary action motivated a spirit of cooperation between the Guatemalan government and the University Museum throughout the 1930s. A relationship that appeared to be quite fruitful, considering that at the time the amassing of museum collections was of utmost importance. Both sides realized that they stood to benefit from cooperation in the cataloging and the interpretation of the treasure being unearthed at Piedras Negras.

For the University of Pennsylvania, it was a rare chance to enhance their Pre-Columbian collection in a way that would rival the collections found in the British Museum and in Harvard’s Peabody Museum. The University Museum was fully aware of the unique opportunity presented to them. In Mason’s 1938 funding request in which he wrote:

> The University Museum is hopeful that patrons of culture and learning may be found at once who will regard this project as an unusual opportunity to accomplish great ends at a relatively modest cost. Its
accomplishment means saving for America the results of many years of arduous endeavor in which the groundwork has been laid, and saving for the world the artistic treasure and historical record (Mason 1938, 10).

The University Museum, as a reward for their project’s work in Piedras Negras, would become one of the few places outside the actual archaeological sites where visitors could view a Maya stela. Mason felt that cooperative effort might convince “the Guatemalan authorities...to extend the loan of the monuments...indefinitely, in consideration of its [Guatemala’s] share in the additional monuments moved” (Mason 1938, 8).

The new acquisitions from Piedras Negras’ remote jungle were also making the Guatemalan Museo Nacional collections rich and important thus greatly pleasing the Guatemalan government. In a sense, this accumulation of cultural artifacts was even more important for the Guatemalans than it was for the University Museum. For the Guatemalans the beautiful artifacts signified, through their linkage to pre-Conquest grandeur, a legitimization of the newly empowered government. The ornate hieroglyphic carvings represented:

el climax intelectual de todas las civilizaciones...digno de compararse con los gráficos primitivos del Antiguo Continente; the intellectual climax of all the civilizations...deserving of comparison with the primitive graphics of the Old Continent” (Arqueología Guatemalteca, 222).
As this quote suggests, the stelae represented civilization in its highest form, and was being used to erase the colonial stigma "de la barbarie" or the misconception that the pre-colonial indigenous cultures were those of primitive savages. The existence of the complex monuments in the galleries of the Museo Nacional in Guatemala City became a "proof of culture" or civilization for the Guatemalans. The logic being that the display would verify the Guatemalan society's rightful place at top of the natural intellectual hierarchy being determined by the research of Western scientists.

The styling of the Guatemalan collection also served to articulate the young state's desire to be atop the hierarchy of nations in power. An important facet of this pursuit was the development of a national museum to reflect the artistic cultivation, or high level of civilization of the Guatemalan people. To this end, the University of Pennsylvania's project would prove to be quite fruitful in helping to refurbish the galleries of the new Museo Nacional de Guatemala. As Carlos A. Villacorta, the Inspector of Archaeology, Ethnology, and History for Guatemala at the time of the Piedras Negras excavations, said,

"da al Salón el aspecto típico de los Museos norteamericanos, y en ellos se exhiben actualmente las respectivas piezas; it gives to the Salon an aspect typical of the North American Museums, and in those they actually exhibit the respective pieces" (Villacorta Revista 3, 37).

This emulation of the North American or Western style was also important because the display represented an acceptance of the power the Americans had over knowledge. The
Guatemalan emulation of the American museum was an attempt to affiliate themselves with the prestigious intellectual legacy that it represented. The creation of a rich museum in Guatemala attempted to visually display the transformation of the state from its colony status to a power in its own right. Villacorta hints at this process of symbolic authorization of governmental power in his speech from the June 1931 inauguration of the *Solón de Arqueología del Museo Nacional del Guatemala*, where he said:

> la República con una institución en la que se coleccionen, clasifiquen y estudien los monumentos arqueológicos de nuestros antepasados; acciones que contribuirán a fortalecer el espíritu de nacionalidad en nuestra Patria; the Republic with an institution that collects, classifies and studies the archaeological monuments of our ancestors; actions that will contribute to the fortifying of the spirit of nationalism in our country (Villacorta *Revista* 2, 20).

In a real sense, the addition of the Piedras Negras collection to the Museo Naccional served to substantiate and legitimize the rule of the newly independent government. From a collection of important cultural artifacts the museum hoped to help fertilize a rich national identity and secure the power of the emerging government. The new post-colonial government believed that Guatemala could justify its rightful place among the great powers of the North through creating a visual association with the objects from the glorious pre-Columbian past.
When the Piedras Negras excavations ended in 1939, both the Guatemalan Museo Nacional and the University Museum were extremely content with their newly expanded collections. The impressive quality, size and variety of ornate Mayan objects brought students, enthusiasts, and scholars to the museums. Generally, the visitors came to see a microcosm of the Mayan civilization, not individual objects in the collection. The Project’s staff published pictures, interpretations and drawings of their work at Piedras Negras for popular consumption IV. The abundance of artifacts and quality of data marked an accomplishment and an opportunity for the development of the academic and the scientific study of archaeology.

Study collections like those at the University Museum’s and the Museo Nacional, became invaluable resources for scholars because they afforded enthusiasts the opportunity to study important monuments without making long and difficult trips into the jungle. It was in this context that the hieroglyphs and iconography found on the stelae and altars of Piedras Negras became accessible. In a single day, a much larger group of individuals could acquaint themselves with the objects than transportation could have ever hoped to visit the actual site. The museum displays enabled scholars to work directly with the Piedras Negras monuments on a daily basis.

At the time of the Piedras Negras excavations, the only part of the Mayan hieroglyphic writing system that was interpreted significantly was the long count, or the “bar and dot” nomenclature that represented the basics of the Mayan counting system and the day signs V. The researchers of the time believed that the monumental texts represented dates chosen specifically for their astronomical and calendrical significance. J.E.S. Thompson, an important Mayan epigrapher of the early twentieth century,
proposed that the monumental inscriptions excluded historical data and that the long count dates related to esoteric prophesies (Thompson 1950; Proskouriakoff 1960, 454).

Thompson's view of the Maya as "excelling in the impractical" was the prevailing view on the texts of the stone monuments until as late as 1950 (Sharer, 597). As a consequence, the majority of research focused on dating and redating the stelae. It was during this process of redating Stela 14 that Tatiana Proskouriakoff came to a novel insight. In the fall 1961 edition of the University of Pennsylvania Museum's *Expedition* magazine, she reflected back on the process of that discovery, writing:

When in 1943, J.E.S. Thompson changed the date of Stela 14 of Piedras Negras, Guatemala...the correction seemed purely of academic interest. The stela was on loan at the University Museum since 1933, and Satterthwaite, by use of the studio-quality photographs was able to substantiate the new readings. Epigraphers made a note of them in their notebooks for future reference, and there the matter rested.

Thompson had described the stela and others like it as showing "gods seated in niches formed by bodies of celestial dragons", and remarked in passing, without ascribing any special importance to the fact, that the correction of the date made Stela 14 the first monument to be erected in front of Temple O-13. One day, several years later, while wondering what the niche might mean, I noticed that Stela 33, though it has no niche, presents a similar scene, and realized for the first time that the new reading of Stela 14 made all monuments of this type the first to be
erected in a given location...My first thought was that the “niche” motif represented the dedication of a new temple...What I found instead started an entirely new train of thought and led to surprising conclusions (Proskouriakoff 1961, 14).

What Proskouriakoff had found contrasted distinctly with Thompson’s mundane view of the carvings as showing esoteric scenes of “‘gods seated in niches formed by the bodies of celestial dragons.’” She realized that the iconography denoted a type of power relationship between two real people, in short they depicted historic events (Proskouriakoff, 1961) vi.

In 1960, Proskouriakoff first published her revelation in the *American Antiquity* article “Historical Implications of a Pattern of Dates at Piedras Negras, Guatemala”. She wrote:

Inscriptions at Piedras Negras are shown to form a pattern of discrete sets of records, each inscribed on a group of consecutive monuments beginning with a stela depicting the “accession motif.” The earliest date in a series, identified by the upended frog glyph and called an “initial date” precedes the first dedicatory date by a number of years, falling within the span of an earlier series. The intervals between these dates are such that no single series exceeds the span of a reasonable lifetime, and it is suggested that the initial date represents something in the nature of a birth or name day of a ruler who accedes to power on the
inaugural date, and that each set of monuments records the history of a
reign (Proskouriakoff, 1960).

These words initiated a paradigm shift in the method of studying and interpreting
Mayan epigraphy. What Proskouriakoff had done was to provide the groundwork for the
interpretation of a Maya history. She had reasoned that “the representations on the
monuments are...portraits of rulers and their families.” (Proskouriakoff 1960, 454). Thus,
she reinterpreted the stelae as invaluable sources of Mayan history, rather than simply
decorative curiosities representing a long forgotten past.

Proskouriakoff had changed permanently the way in which the Mayan
monuments and civilization could be understood. She had identified the iconography on
Stela 14 as an illustration of the ascent to rule of a Piedras Negras lord. From this
discovery she identified two important Mayan verbs, which had previously been
humorously been dubbed by Thompson as the “toothache” glyph and the “upended frog”
glyph. These verbs, later read as “ti ahau-le” and “siyah”, she demonstrated to be the
glyphs representing “the accession to power of a lord” and “the birth date glyph”
(Proskouriakoff 1960; Proskouriakoff 1961). These two words are found with frequency
in the corpus of Mayan hieroglyphic inscriptions, and are the pointe de entre into the
history, culture, and world of the Maya.

Proskouriakoff realized the importance of her breakthrough, in her 1961 narrative
in Expedition, she wrote:
We Mayanists spend an inordinate amount of time deciphering half obliterated hieroglyphic texts. Often it seems that our results are not worth all that effort; but now and again some minor fact that hardly seems worth mentioning at the time can be used to pry open a chink in the wall of obscurity that surrounds the past, and suddenly we get a new and exciting glimpse of the events that have left their traces on the old stones of Maya sites (Proskouriakoff 1961, 14).

Her sentiments are shared commonly in the academic community. This article is often cited as the source from which the direction of modern Maya studies emerged. As Ian Graham, a former graduate student of Proskouriakoff’s and one of the most respected modern epigraphers, wrote: “At one blow, this short paper freed the study of Maya writing from a lengthy stagnation” (Graham, 8).

In 1990, epigraphers Linda Schele and David Friedel, wrote:

Proskouriakoff’s accomplishment was truly monumental. Her carefully constructed logic convinced the field instantly and irrevocably that the contents of the inscriptions concerned the deeds of rulers and nobles...in a barrage of papers published between 1960 and 1964, Proskouriakoff...changed the filters before our eyes and altered forever the way we think about the Maya and who they were. Before her work the conclusion was not self-evident (Schele Friedel 48).
They further elaborate writing, “no single researcher has ever equaled Proskouriakoff’s central and revolutionary contribution” (Schele Friedel, 49).

Gordon R. Willey, an emeritus professor at Harvard University and one of Proskouriakoff’s peers, wrote “Tatiana Proskouriakoff will surely be remembered as one of the outstanding Mayanists of all times.” (Willey 1993, forward). As her peers and students compliments reveal, it was this contribution that began with a redating of Stela 14 that have immortalized Proskouriakoff and transformed the nature of scholarship on the Maya.

In this breakthrough transformed Piedras Negras Stela 14 from a Mayan object to, in a sense, the Maya object. The object by virtue of being the first monument to be deciphered became tremendously important. In a meaningful sense her words had become a voice for the long voiceless. As Winegrad explains:

This...decipherment has helped transform conceptions of the Maya civilization: the culture has been removed once and for all from the realm of the ‘mysterious’-of interest only to archaeologists, romantics, and believers in Atlantis- into the ranks of a ‘world-class civilization’ whose great kings are known by name, portrait, and dates ...the Maya have ceased to be regarded as an esoteric, incomprehensible society of astronomer priests, becoming instead real people with births and deaths, accessions, reigns, victories and intermarriages-and even names such as “Curlnose”, “Jaguar Paw” and “Stormy Sky” (Winegrad, 127-28).
Proskouriakoff’s enlightened insight into the text of Stela 14 marked the commencement of a new era of interest and a rapid growth in the study and understanding of the Maya as real people. This novel deduction transformed Stela 14 from an object in the University Museum’s Mayan gallery to the gallery’s primary focus.

Through Proskouriakoff’s work the object had been transformed from one of many antiquities removed from the jungle in the 1930s to one of the most influential artifacts in the search for the history of the Mayan people. The reading of the stela, itself, marks the moment of the politicization of hieroglyphic text because it was then that the text could first be interpreted (or reinterpreted).

As a consequence of its symbolic role in the development of our understanding of the written word of the ancient Maya the object rose to a seemingly powerful status in the eyes of many political groups. Within Guatemala, the long marginalized Mayan groups began to reevaluate the importance of the object, coming to the realization that control of this object, in a sense is control of the knowledge it represents- is power.

With the popularization of the Pan-Mayan movement in the 1980’s, the Maya artifacts came to be understood as a relevant part of the turbulent political discourse in power, rather than pertaining to an esoteric purely scientific or academic concern. The Pan-Mayan Movement seeks to unify indigenous Guatemalans in a type of grassroots Leftist movement. The movement seeks “recognition of cultural diversity within the nation-state, a greater role for indigenous politics in national culture, a reconsideration of economic inequalities, and a wider distribution of cultural resources” (Warren 1998, 166). This concern for indigenous control over their own history is illustrated in a popular
slogan of the Pan-Mayan movement that said “Un pueblo que desconoce su pasado no tiene un futuro; A people that does not know their past has no future.” (Warren 1998, 169). The Mayan scholars, associated with the movement, asserted “that there is a Mayan way of knowing” (Warren 1998, 169). Their goal was and is to “undermine the authoritativeness of kaxlan (non-Mayan) accounts- put forward by...foreigners- which until their recent activism and resistance had monopolized the representation of Mayan culture and national history” (Warren 1998, 169).

This new history came from an understanding that arose from the literature of post-colonial, or Marxist-Deconstructionist studies. Texts including Michel Foucault’s *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Frederick Jameson’s *Political Unconscious* and Edward Said’s *Orientalism* informed the rhetoric of the movement arguing that the science of the Other is a form of racism. The logic follows that by controlling the literature, or in this case the object, the dominant class can recreate, or represent history in its own image for the purpose of repressing the weaker class, in this case the Maya. 

In this way, Stela 14 and its place in the University of Pennsylvania Museum gallery has become a political and controversial representation. As illustrated in Montejo’s writing, when he states:

```
y abandonos,
¿Por qué no han repito
nuestra historia
y la rueda de karuntes
grabada en las estelas```
frente a los templos?"

"¡Oh sabios y grandes padres!

nuestras estelas
también fueron removidas
de sus lugares
y se han dispersado
en los grandes museos
del mundo.");

and abandoned children,

why haven’t you studied

the lessons were chiseled

on the stelae,

and on the wheels of katuns

in front of our great temples?"

“Oh great and wise fathers!

Our stelae

were also taken

from their sites

and dispersed throughout

the great museums

of the world.” (Montejo, 12-13)
As Montejo illustrates the museum display has come to be viewed by the Guatemalan
Indigenous groups as the Western museum usurping the Maya objects, and then forcing a
certain understanding of history upon the weak. This view of history was originally
popularized in Jameson’s *Political Unconscious*, when he wrote:

> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles;
> freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild-master and
> journeyman- in a word, oppressor and oppressed-stood in constant
> opposition to one another, carried on...uninterrupted (Jameson, 35).

As the above Jameson’s passage illustrates, the issue central to Mayan people’s
repatriation of Stela 14 (or any other Maya monument) is not control of the large stone
monolith itself, but instead the struggle for the right of historical display by the Maya. In
this way the demand for the object reifies the claim that the museum institution is and has
always been a public display of power. The owner or the empowerer of the historical
object or the cultural commodity, controls the past, and therefore has the ability to define
the structure of power in the present.

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1 Carl von Linné (or Linneaus) was a Swedish biologist who lived from 1707-1778. He collected plants and
animals from throughout the world. He devised a system to name and label most of the then known living
organisms. His famous book *Systema Naturae* (1735) structured a natural hierarchy based on anatomical
similarities and differences. His Latin system of nomenclature is still the basis for our classification system
today. His system was not evolutionary but instead what he felt to be the design of god. He included in this
the existence of four subgroups of man, which he believed to be static and unchanging. He did not use the
term “race”; that term was originated by Comte de Buffon to explain the diversity he documented within
the human species. Buffon said variation was a result of (1) climate, (2) diet, and (3) the evils of slavery.

2 The trends in museum curation mimicked larger scientific trends. As a result, the nature of collection
began to provide evidence for the hierarchical relationship between men. Susan Pearce, a historian of
museum studies at the University of Leicester, explains the developing relationship in her book *Museums, Objects, and Collections*. In the section called “Museums: the Intellectual Rationale”, she says:

The mid-nineteenth century intellectual revolution associated conspicuously with Charles Lyell, whose *Principles of Geology* (1830-33) established the idea of chronological stratigraphy, and Charles Darwin, whose ideas about evolution drew together classification and chronological depth in natural history to show how types changed, inspired Augustus Henry Pitt Rivers to form the first thoroughgoing theory of material culture interpretation, which offered a way of understanding the mass of archaeological and historical objects. As we have seen he believed that, like animals and plants, artefact types developed one from another by a process of selection and diffusio which modified their forms according to natural laws. Artefact development sequences can, therefore, be built to show progression from simple to complex, and this reflects a similar truth about social development (Pearce, 104-105).

This new element to collecting both advanced the museum and revealed many prejudicial biases of the museum curators. The display was related to the development of Darwin's evolution theory natural selection in a way that was often informed by distinctly racist undertones. To show man's place in nature, and the natural human variation between peoples of different regions mean that the curator also had the ability to provide evidence for where they felt the groups place was on the chain of evolutionary hierarchy. In a sense the exhibit attempted to reify the popular scientific theories and social prejudices.

The rationale of display was particularly concerned with such publications as Johan Bloemenbach’s 1775 work that conceived of race as representing the degree of one’s humanity.

Bloemenbach, a mesogenist, believed that all humans arose from one group originating in the Caucasian Mountains (hence the term Caucasian) and that all other groups were degenerated from this race. The four other groups he identified were (1) American, (2) Maylay, (3) Mongolians, and (4) Africans. Although, the idea of degeneration was not fixed in his mind, the concept became part of eugenics arguments made by later scholars. Both human remains and art were collected to show scientific evidence for the natural existence of the European (or Caucasian) dominance, hence the condition of the colonial and slave states.

To this end many displays, in the name of science, revealed distinctly racist elements. Rooted in the education and biases of their excavators or researchers the displays revealed what would now be considered distinctly bigoted elements. This type of prejudice can be seen in many of the early collections of the University of Pennsylvania Museum. The most famous being: the extensive collection of skulls amassed during Samuel Moron's research. He claimed his measurements of "Crana Americana" and "Crana Egyptica" supported the hierarchical division of races; however, his results have never been duplicated. Instead, it seems that his biased data was motivated by his fear of races in the large and heterogeneous industrial cities of the North.

It appears that the same type of racially motivated misconceptions also existed in the study of Central American archaeology. J. Alden Mason, the Piedras Negras project director during the 1930s, said when classifying the nature of the ancient Maya, “their carvings showed ‘cruel people given to torture and violence’” (Winegrad, 125). Mason's statement was not atypical, but instead seemed to build on the stereotypes of the indians as savage and primitive people. An image that had been created during the original conquest of the region to explain the rationale behind the Spanish colonization efforts. Mason's statement in the 1930's resembles the statement of Diego Durán, a Dominican and sympathizer of Hernan Cortés, when he described the Mexicans as: "the cruelest and most devilish people that can be conceived." (Todorov, 59).

I use the word "clandestine" here to describe the earlier excavation efforts in which the archaeologists, or treasure hunters worked without any concern for governmental contracts. Occasionally, these efforts involved contracts with individual landowners. However, these efforts did not consider the Guatemalan government, and the treasures once excavated became the property of its finders.

\[\text{iv INCLUDE A COPY OF THE ARTICLE IN CARNEGIE PUBLICATION WHICH INCLUDED THE PRICING, ETC, IN APPENDIX}\]
The reason for the limited amount of knowledge of the hieroglyphic system was a result of the efforts to eliminate the pagan Maya texts during the Spanish conquest. It appears that the Maya groups during the time of the Conquest had a highly developed written language, but many of these texts were burned, lost and destroyed. There are a few codices that remain, and have been helpful in the translation of the Mayan language. In general the Maya texts were eliminated or Christianized. As in the case of the Popol Vuh the majority of ancient stories were rewritten in the Castellan style, rather than the traditional hieroglyphs.

There was a limited groundwork for the decipherment of glyphs in the Franciscan Friar Diego de Landa's Relación de las cosas de Yucatán. He included interviews from Maya informants; his most important contribution was his account of the Maya calendar. He recorded the Maya signs as a phonetic alphabet, which was later proved wrong by Brasseur de Bourbourg, whom after a comparison between Landa's signs and the Madrid Codex decided that phonetic signs were almost completely in error. In the early part of the twentieth century interpretation of the glyphs focused almost entirely on the calendrics and astronomical decipherment since very little else of the system could be understood. (From: Sharer, Robert. The Ancient Maya, 5th ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

SEE APPENDIX FOR PROSKOURIAKOFF'S 1960 PUBLICATION AND IN DEPTH MONUMENT TRANSLATIONS BY JOHN HARRIS

Foucault's, Jameson's and Said's works have attacked the notion that one can ever get at the truth of the other, since by the virtue of idea of the "the other" being an artificial construction by the dominant group. The discourse of science reifies the differences as opposed to illuminating them. The discourse of power, thus creating the science of the other in order to subdue the group, make their actions seem less strange, and in a sense colonize their thoughts to be in the European style. The idea behind post-structural theory being that you can never get to the truth. This rationale has been supported by the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, who cites a type of paranoia in the history of text, and its translations. He reveals that the problem is an alienation in the mind of the sign and the signifier. In a real way these theorists have asserted that every utterance must be understood as a political and historical utterance. Thus in this Maxist-Deconstructionalist corpus of literature, cultural capital or interpretations become a sort of commodity of privileged knowledge in the word and style of the dominant Western power (the Museum) imposed on the weaker Maya class.
Mayan Identity, Language, and Knowledge

"Pan-Mayanist resented (and resent) their commodification and folklorization in national popular culture, the admiration of their civilization as Maya 'ruins', and the transformation of their culture into a timeless tradition of brilliant hand woven fabrics."

~Kay Warren~

"I have but one language—yet that language is not mine."

~Jacques Derrida~

Piedras Negras Stela 14 represents a mosaic history of human cultural and intellectual achievement, having been interpreted to have the power to clearly communicate in and for itself. Unfortunately, this assertion is a problematic reality because the meaning represents a multitude of richly politically motivated discourses. On this multivocal narrative, C.M. Hinsley writes: "The history of archaeology emerges as a metanarrative. It is the story of storytellers, seen in a variety of time, place, method and motive, and both institutional and personal power." (Hinsley, 285). Suggesting that the placement of archaeological remains in foreign museums, symbolically represents what literary theorists, including Foucault and Said, have defined as colonialism (Jones, 285; Cotjé Cuxil, 21). In this way the act of displaying Stela 14 comes to represent a metaphor for identity defined in terms of present politics.

The museum display takes control away from the indigenous groups, and ignores their claims that the objects represent their voice and their property. The claim is that the Museum exhibit marks a legitimization and glorification of the history of racism and violence perpetrated against Guatemalan indigenous Maya populations by Westerners.
The museum display takes the right of representation from the indigenous groups. The desire for Maya objects like Stela 14 to be repatriated is a demand for the living Maya to control the process of defining their own culture in terms of the past and the present (Cotjí Cuxíl, 21). As Menchú explains, “at the end of the twentieth century... We are not myths of the past, ruins in the jungle or zoos. We are people and we want to be respected” (Menchú 1992, 2). Since the time of the Spanish conquest, Western researchers have dominated the study of historical materials and controlled their display in hierarchical cultural representations. Thus, the claiming of both the monument and its interpretations become political actions. Proskouriakoff’s historical reading of the monument allows for the monument’s expression of biographical data to take on not only an academic importance, but also the publications on the text to be seen as a exploitation or appropriation of the Maya culture. As a result, the struggle for legitimate ownership of Maya monuments since the reading of Piedras Negras Stela 14 has become not simply an issue of place, but also an issue of voice, identity and power.

The ethical consideration, when considering the demand for the object’s repatriation, is how closely knit is this piece of cultural property to the Pan-Maya crusade for Mayan cultural identity, rights and representation. This is important because the Stela is currently understood to represent the triumphs of human intellectual activity, not simply the work of the Maya. This condition is not unique to the Mayan monuments. Cases of similar nature, such as the Elgin Marbles, or Kennewick Man are better known, but as I will reveal in this chapter the consequences in this case are deep-rooted historically and therefore particularly emotionally charged. One document that is particularly relevant to the concerns and issues involved in this present case is The
Declaration of San Antonio. Created during the March 1996 InterAmerican Symposium on Authenticity in the Conservation and Management of the Cultural Heritage, the Native American peoples issued the following statement on Authenticity and Identity:

The authenticity our cultural heritage is directly related to our cultural identity. The cultures and the heritage of the Americas are distinct from those of other continents because of their unique development and influences. Our languages, out societal structures, our economic means, and our spiritual beliefs vary within our continent, and yet, there are strong common threads in the Americas. Among these is our autochthonous heritage, which has not been entirely destroyed in spite of the violence of the Conquest Era and a persistent process of acculturation; the heritage from the European colonizers...have helped build our nations...

Because cultural identity is at the core of community and national life, it is the foundation of our cultural heritage and its conservation...The authenticity of our cultural resources lies in the identification, evaluation and interpretation of their true values as perceived by our ancestors in the past and by ourselves now as an evolving and diverse community. As such, the Americas must recognize the values of the majorities and minorities without imposing the hierarchical predominance of any one culture and its values over those others.
This statement illuminates the pluricultural reality that is the only legitimate language in which Stela 14 can communicate. As an incidental byproduct, a complex and conflicting state of identity arises. The tension between Western scholarship and Pan-Mayan activism is unavoidable. The Pan-Maya movement in Guatemala relies on language as a key to revitalization, advocating that there is a distinctly Maya entity linked to the Mayan language and that the rediscovery of this language was made by an American researcher (Warren 1998, 175). The present desire for Mayan control of their objects is an conscientious rejection of the encroachment of Western ideas on the circulating images of the last remaining relics of the “true” Maya civilization (Raxché, 78-80).

As I pointed out in the previous chapter, the current moment of crisis is a result of Tatiana Proskourakoff’s 1960 rediscovery of ancient Maya history. Her academic achievement changed understanding of Maya stelae, and made Stela 14 a uniquely important monument of the Maya language and its modern scholarship. This has created a living-dead Maya identity, for which the question “who speaks for whom” becomes especially unclear. Chouinard identifies this unique problem in his book *Mouths of Stone: Stories of the Ancient Maya from the Newly Deciphered Inscriptions and Recent Archaeological Discoveries*, when he writes:

> Recent breakthroughs in the decipherment of Maya script are enabling these ancient royals to communicate directly with our generation.

Through the wizardry of epigraphers like David Kelly, Floyd Lounsbury, Linda Schele, Peter Mathews, Nikolai Grube, Stephen Houston, David
Stuart and others, we are hearing the sounds of ancient names and deeds, pronounced as the Maya pronounced them. Like shamans, these scholars are calling the spirits of the lords long dead back to life. Through them, the inscriptions are speaking—ancient words from mouths of stone (Chouinard, preface).

As Chouinard points out the modern scholarship creates and reinforces images of the enduring Maya presence through the words of non-Indian scholars. This is not a bad thing, but does complicate the claims of the Maya political activism since the revitalization of a Maya cultural identity relies on Maya language and hieroglyphic literacy training (Warren 1998, 179). Hieroglyphic language workshops are run for the Maya by foreign linguists and epigraphers. These scholars, who by virtue of their own experiences have developed their own set of beliefs, ideas, and preconceptions cannot avoid imprinting their own cultural beliefs in their teachings. Their opinions on how the ancient Maya voice should sound may be quite different than an indigenous interpretation. Thus in their word choices, is born a certain level of interpretation, thus making it impossible for the Mayan language to be apolitically transmitted to students as the “true” Mayan language.

As Warren points out, the Western academic's interpretation can be potentially dangerous to the process of creating a unified Maya identity. A frequently cited example of this potential danger is the case of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), an organization, run by a group known as the Wycliffe Bible Translators, that studies Maya languages, hieroglyphic writings and culture with the goal of the conversion of the Maya
to evangelical Protestantism (Warren, 81). As Cojtí Cuxil elaborates "the institute's purpose has been to plant and promote divisions in Maya communities." (Cojtí Cuxil, 38). He explicitly requests the "expulsion of the Summer Institute of Linguistics" in his list of "Immediate Demands of the Nations of the Maya People" complaining that:

Institute members interpret Maya art and dances as manifestations of devil worship. In Guatemala the SIL did all it could to block the creation of the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala and the unification of the alphabets used to write the Mayan languages...their literacy training program in Mayan languages persists in using an alphabet based on Spanish orthography (Cojtí Cuxil, 38-39).

It is obvious that current system Cojtí Cuxil speaks of politicizes the text in a way that the Maya may not have intended. The language, under the current system represents a discourse filtered (or controlled) by the Western researcher and cannot hope to illuminate something uniquely Maya (Raxché, 83-84). Thus, the goal of repatriating Stela 14 and other pieces of cultural property is to force a revision in the basic structure of the political system, allowing the Maya to distribute their own interpretations of Maya culture.

The current mode of transmission alienates the native speakers of the Maya languages from their texts. In a sense the rebirth of the Mayan text through the work of non-Mayan scholars reenacts the events of the Spanish conquest which originally led to the forceful abandonment of the hieroglyphic writing system. In order to explain this
claim, I will briefly revisit the historical moment of colonization that began with
Christopher Columbus’ discovery of the new world.

Colonialism and the Birth of The Savage Indian

The original alienation from the text came as a consequence of colonization, for it
was at this point that the Mayan intellectual pursuits were brutally interrupted, and the
written language fell into disuse as the Mayan hieroglyphic text was forcefully replaced
by the Spanish writing system. This substitution was believed to allow the Spanish to
colonize not only the words, but also the minds of the troublesome natives. The moment
of conquest was formalized by the abandonment of hieroglyphic writing. The moment the
Maya became alienated from their texts they lost control of communication, and
consequentially their ability to define the norms of social interaction. Todorov’s *The
Conquest of America* cites this phenomena as the reason for Spanish “victory” or success
in colonization; claiming that: “The testimony of the Indian accounts…asserts that
everything happened because the… language of the gods has become unintelligible, or
else these gods fell silent.” (Todorov, 61). Explaining the strategy behind this tactic
Todorov uses passages from the frequently referenced Mayan myth-history to his own
ends. From *El Libro de Chilam Balam de Chumayel* he cites: “Understanding is lost,
wisdom is lost…There was no longer any great teacher, any great orator, any supreme
priest, when the change of rulers occurred upon their rival” (*Chilam Balam*, 62).
Todorov’s argument reveals the mode by which this restructuring of expression brought
on an identity crisis in the structure of power, that successfully undermined the leadership
hierarchy, and that ultimately had the effect of destroying the previously existing unity
across the Maya communities.
This crafty manipulation allowed colonizers to blur the relationship between Maya groups. A formal communication barrier between groups was created by isolating the Maya communities from each other thus limiting the possibility of a successful indigenous attempt to resurrect the pre-conquest structures of power. Many distinct Mayan lingual groups emerged creating chaos that allowed for the divisions within the Maya groups to be magnified. The Maya could profit from an alliance with the Spanish government than the other Maya groups. In this way the natives were internally colonized and brought closer to Europe. Said claims that this transformation of social ideology and alliance structures was a necessary component of the colonial empire; for it was in this way that the colonizer began to absorb the native culture and appropriate its intellectual legacies in his own image (Said, 109). The colonial policies created a state of historical amnesia for the Maya. Spanish transcription of texts, and book burning physically distanced the living communities from the Mayan remains. Since the Maya could no longer read, not therefore understand these monuments they could no longer give any tangible evidence that these artifacts once belonged to their ancestors. The Maya could not prove their right to rule, since the legitimacy of their claims could no longer be inferred from a text. The stelae and monuments, which were once propaganda for the power of kings and the dominance of the Maya, were no longer accessible. The monumental texts had been powerful political symbols, even a short hieroglyphic inscription like the one on Piedras Negras Stela 14, made a bold statement about the powerful nature of the Maya, however these monuments were no longer accessible\textsuperscript{iii}.

This separation allowed the colonizers, while suggesting- that these objects were relics of a great civilization that had long since disappeared- to gain legitimacy. The task
of the European missionary therefore became to systematically deny the Maya cultural inheritance. Their work successfully created an image of the indigenous people not as different, but as uncivilized and intellectually inferior. In order to convert the native, the missionaries weakened the Maya faith in the pre-existing system of beliefs. For this reason it became necessary to stigmatize the indigenous identity and glorify the European identity. The Church accounts circulated the image of the Indian as “primitive” and “savage” beast in need of moral and physical change. Dominican Tomás Ortiz’s description to the Council of the Indics cited below is typical of these testimonies, he wrote:

On the mainland they eat human flesh. They are more given to sodomy than any other nation. There is no justice among them. They go naked. They have no respect for love or virginity. They are stupid and silly. They have no respect for truth, save when it is to their advantage. They are unstable. They have no knowledge of what foresight means. They are ungrateful and changeable...They are brutal. They delight in exaggerating their defects. There is no obedience among them, or deference on the part of the young for the old, nor of the son for the father. They are incapable of learning. Punishments have no effect upon them...They eat fleas, spiders and worms raw, whenever they find them. They exercise none of the human arts or industries. When taught the mysteries of our religion, they say that these things may suit Castelains, but not them, and they do not wish to change their customs...about the age of ten or twelve years,
they seem to have some civilization, but later they become like real brute beasts. I may therefore affirm that God has never created a race more full of vice and composed without the least mixture of kindness or culture...The Indians are more stupid than asses and refuse to improve in anything. (Todorov, 151).

The creatures Ortiz describes barely seem human. To this end anthropologist David Maybury-Lewis writes that it was believed “that the indigenous peoples were not fully human. Since they lacked the essential attributes of humanity- souls or a belief in Christianity.” Claiming that, as a result, “they were not entitled to what we nowadays call ‘human rights’” (Maybury-Lewis, 30).

Through this perversion of the image of the native it became socially and legally acceptable to do almost anything in the guise of morality. On this condition, anthropologist Peter Elsas, claims that the circulation of such ideologies was essential to colonial rule, explaining that: “The eradication of the Indian cultures was the basis for European rebirth in Latin America...the Indians took on the roles of the evil devils who were to be eradicated or converted” (Eliass, 3). Maybury-Lewis further clarifies this claim by elaborating on the means by which the government justified their behavior. He writes:

Once it was accepted as scientific truth that colonists...represented societies which were on the higher rungs of the evolutionary ladder than the savages they confronted, then this provided moral justification for
almost anything that the former might do to the ladder...then it followed
that they could be severely treated by the bearers of civilization who came
to take their lands and, if necessary, their lives (Maybury-Lewis, 14-15).

Even today this stigmatization of the Maya identity continues. As Menchú pointed out
when she said “Five hundred years of butchery. Five hundred years of extermination and
complete marginalization” (Menchú 1992, 2). As recently as the 1970’s and 1980’s the
Guatemalan military carried out active campaigns of genocidal terror against the
indigenous Maya. This vast majority of victims in this Guatemalan civil war were
indigenous peasants (Menchú 1992, 3). Testimonies like Menchu’s express the saga of
the indigenous people, whose entire communities were slaughtered during this genocidal
violence (Warren 1998, 172). Warren estimates the rate of attrition from these military
campaigns to have “left eighty thousand dead, one fifth of the national population
displaced from their homes and hundreds of thousands of refugees outside of the

In the aftermath of the 1980’s campaign of genocide there was an identified
necessity for a group to protect indigenous rights. During the mid-1980s, the de-
escalation of warfare made the emergence of a popular movement protesting this
condition and the state’s legacy of human rights abuses possible. The discontent of the
living Maya with the condition at present has truly been the motivating force behind
much Pan-Maya activism. Guatemalan writer Carlos René García Escobar’s La Llama
del Retorno illustrates this point. On the Maya Indians he sarcastically writes:
‘What are Indians good for in Guatemala? Who are they? Well, they’re good for nothing more than to sow and harvest the lands of the great landowners on the southern coast and in the highlands. Than to go and send them by force in their towns or communities and post them in the garrison so they can be taught to kill their own kind. It may be the Indians are no one, or, rather, they are the cultural patrimony of the Conquest, that they are “marginals”…’ (Garcia Escobar, 60)

The image and violence that Garcia Escobar alludes to echoes in a real sense the testimonies and campaigns for Spanish conquest since in both cases being Mayan meant being poor and lacking education and opportunity.

**The Re-Emergence of The Modern Maya**

This negative image complicates Mayan emergence from their current state. As Michael Coe points out in *The Maya*:

Hispanic or hispanicized citizens...occupied all the lucrative and politically powerful positions in largely Maya territories; they were the shopkeepers, the labor majordomos, the schoolteachers, the judiciary, the Catholic priests. They spoke Spanish rather than the Indian “dialects” (as the Maya languages were pejoratively thought of), they dressed in Western clothes, and they generally held themselves to be superior to the native peoples (Coe, 230).
It is this condition that the work of the Pan-Mayan movement seeks to reverse. As Menchú points out: “We are people and we want to be respected” (Menchú 1992, 2). The desire for control, economically, intellectually, and politically; has been projected onto the important monuments of cultural and intellectual history but in reality reflects the greater desire of the indigenous to be respected as human beings (Menchú 1992, 6). It is this desire to react against those who, as Menchú writes, “caused and tolerated the death of our people, those responsible for the plundering of the third world” (Menchú 1992, 9). It is this general desire that has motivated requests for the repatriation of the Maya objects including Piedras Negras Stela 14. The monuments symbolize the Maya desire to regain control and thereby remove the shackles of the last five hundred years of repression.

A new Maya identity has become more plausible (Menchú 1992, 6). The mission of the Pan-Maya activism is to “seek recognition, greater cultural autonomy and political influence” for this new identity control of monuments like Stela 14 represent access to this new social role (Warren 199). Since the monument’s text is believed to serve as a type of “memory link” that allows interpreters to demystify and harness the power of the ancient past. Guatemalan writer Miguel Ángel Asturias describes this experience, writing:

I’ll find my father through words. I’ll bring him back to life with words. I will build...with my words. I’ll create a country with my words. In my words I’ll find the universe, and I’ll understand the eternal present through
my words. In my words, I will find, I will end, I will become the words themselves. (Asturias, 163).

Montejo extends this claim explicitly to hieroglyphic writing and the monuments in his poem “Interrogation by the Ancestors” writing:

"Y ustedes hijos nuestros,
¿Pueden arrancar
las cíclicas enseñanzas
que se esconden
en nuestros jeroglíficos?"

"¡Tampoco, padres!

nuestros pueblos han sido silenciados;

"And you our children,
can you uncover
the cyclic teachings
that lie hidden
in our hieroglyphs?"

"No, we cant, O great ones!

Our villages have been silenced, (Montejo 14, 15).

Montejo’s poetry pleads for control of hieroglyphic literacy as a means by which to control the language, thus ending the silence that has characterized the indigenous Maya
culture since the time of the Spanish conquest. The literature of Mayan activist writers, including Menchú, García Escobar, Asturias, and Montejo, expresses resentment for the silence imposed by Western scholars who claim their research represents the sole reality or definitive truth. However, that “truth” expresses only the Western point of view, therefore ignoring or denying all other counter-discourses, as Menchú explains “We don’t have a means of communication in our hands. The media and politics have never allowed out people to speak through them” (Menchú 1992, 8). For this reason the desire for control of the written language also represents a manifestation of the Maya’s desire to control their own fate through reclaiming a role in writing their history (Warren 1998, 173).

Maya scholars in producing their own decipherments or discourses act as public figures thus helping to carve out a new sphere of social legitimacy for the Maya voice. Reclaiming an artifact of cultural property is a powerful public representation of the Maya political goals, and at the same time seeks to increase access to resources, opportunities and education, all commodities from which the Maya have been traditionally alienated.

Warren suggests that:

Mayanists\(^{iv}\) assert that there is a culturally specific way of knowing: a position no one else can occupy and political interests no one else has to defend. The essentialism is tactical and situational: they advance this position to claim unique authority as social critics. Their goal is clear: to undermine the authoritativeness of non-Maya, or kaxlan,
accounts—be they Guatemalan Lados or foreigners—which, until the recent indigenous activism and resistance surface, monopolized the representation of Maya culture and national history (Warren 37).

The rationale behind this essentialist statement is to force a multi-cultural view of national history. Thus forcing the admission by Westerners that the Mayan cultural identity is a integral part of a social ideology that can no longer be ignored (Gossen, 536). This type of framework, in a sense, further confuses the legal issue of ownership for monuments of cultural property including Stela 14. Such a conditional structure asserts that the Mayan identity is a political construction in which history, writing and language become the modes of political display.

The Literature of Access

Stela 14 offers the Maya groups access to the power immortalized in the monument’s inscriptions. By virtue of the fact that Stela 14 was the first monument to be “read,” it holds a unique historical significance for the Western scholar. This perceived power of the object reified the indigenous interest and claims that the objects are important to understandings of the Maya voice. Reclaiming control of the physical monuments of this record, forces their opinions to assume a central role in the representations of the Maya social history. The desire for the Indian voice to be encountered in the historical texts of Guatemala comes as a logical reaction to five centuries of subordination of the Maya by Westerners.

Currently, Maya groups are not responsible for the circulation and interpretation of hieroglyphic texts. However, with formal governmental aid to agencies like ALMG
and PLFM a class of linguistically trained Maya scholars is emerging. These scholars are beginning to question the authority of the seemingly definitive statements given by Western researchers (Cotjí Cuxil, 36-38). Epigraphic research, since Proskouriakoff’s breakthrough reading of Stela 14, has become the pathway by which to define what being Maya essentially means. Yoffee explains:

Breakthroughs into the nature of writing, the meaning of artistic representation, and the interrelations of the sites have reshaped the understanding of this Maya cultural entity. The gist of these studies is to demonstrate how a common fund of linguistic and artistic expressions is drawn upon to reinforce local political power throughout the Maya territory. Thus, for Schele and Miller “public art and architecture...define the nature of political power...for J. Marcus writing “legitimizes each ruler’s right to accede to the throne”; for Justeson...the original use of the writing system borrowed from the Olmec was to “reinforce power and prestige” by depicting: elite males in ritual contexts,” presumably to demonstrate their fitness to rule- their appropriate place in the cosmos (Yoffee, 292).

However, for the Pan-Mayanists, this body of scholarship is problematic because it generally excludes the voice of Mayan scholars, and instead, is the result of the work of American epigraphers and art historians building upon Proskouriakoff’s legacy.
Joyce Marcus, Stephen Houston, Linda Schele, Mary Miller, and David Stuart are some of the people responsible for the translation of the Mayan hieroglyphic language. From the work of Western academia it was demonstrated that the erection of a Classic Maya period stela was a public form of political demonstration (Sharer, 491-512). It was American intuition that revealed that the hieroglyphic monuments recorded the political alliances and war events of the Maya, and the site names or emblem glyphs represented on the monuments appear to reveal the importance of the site. It was Joyce Marcus, an American, who began the study of the hierarchical relationship between Classic Maya sites based on studies of foreign emblem glyphs on monuments, and subsequently, the writing of a political history for the Classic Maya states (Yoffee, 248-9). It was she who witnessed that the name of a powerful site will appear with frequency on the monuments of weaker neighboring states. The archaeological evidence for these claims came from the excavations of American researchers. At sites like Piedras Negras, it was these non-Indian excavators noticed that the smashing and defacing of old monuments appeared to have been a consequence of military loss, this illuminating the different power cycles. Thus revealing archaeologically that a cycle of loss of power in the Classic Maya world is easily identifiable and recoverable, since the state of defeat was characterized by an inability to create new monuments. The scholarship on preserved monuments has helped to detail a Western vision of Maya culture and society. Learning about these traditional modes of communication has become a pathway to illuminating what being Maya essentially means.

However, for the Pan-Mayanist this legacy of scholarship is disconcerting because it presents a history via Western scholars, thus necessarily alienating the living
Maya. Their fear is a denial of Mayan claim to Mayan cultural heritage. The activists are suspicious of Western researchers whose aims have often, historically, represented conflicting duties, interests, and expectation from those of the Maya. They are distrustful of the intentions of the Western academics, the people who are responsible for the majority of the current scholarly literature on the Mayan language. As anthropologist Nancy Lurie points out “Linguistic research has been criticized as ‘stealing our languages too’ for scholarly purposes that have no benefit to the Indians.” (Lurie, 555).

The Mayan voice has been excluded from the process of defining language. It is not that Western academics should not be able to interpret hieroglyphics. But they are concerned with Westerners producing exclusive claims that: “Breakthroughs into the nature of writing, the meaning of artistic representation, and the interrelations of the sites have reshaped the understanding of this Maya cultural entity” (Yoffee 292). The indigenous academics center their argument on the claim that there is an autochthonous language based identity that the Western researchers can never know and will work to deny, thus creating knowledge that serves no other purpose but to promote the colonial condition (Colop, 107).

The Maya activists politicize Colop’s claim asserting that the findings of Western research intentionally alienate the living Maya people from hieroglyphic writing and monumental record. For example, Montejo writes:

\begin{verbatim}
nuestros pueblos han sido silenciados
y además,
 vivimos muy distanciados
\end{verbatim}
This passage by Montejo is relevant because it alludes to the way in which Western research on the Maya has traditionally separated the modern Maya, who live in the Highlands of Guatemala, from the Classic Lowland civilization found in the archaeological record.

The trends presented in the archaeological record lead to the formal Highland-Lowland distinction. The archaeological record suggests that at the end of the ninth century A.D. the classic Maya centers of the southern and central lowlands suffered a dramatic decline that led to the slowdown then cessation of intellectual and cultural activities (Sharer, 338). This collapse, marked the abandonment of major monument and stelae construction projects at lowland sites like Piedras Negras, has been explained by multiple theories centered on a mixture of internal and external, political, economic and environmental factors (Sharer, 342). However, it does not appear that this collapse completely destroyed the entirety of Mayan civilization (a fact which may seem rather
obvious considering that there are still people speaking Maya languages and claiming
Maya identity today).

In the Postclassic era (900-1500 AD) the Mayan sites in the Yucatan and the
Guatemalan Highlands continued to grow, but were exposed to a very different set of
cultural influences than their predeccessors. Sharer writes:

These peoples were heavily influenced by the Mexican cultures across the
isthmus, along the Gulf coast and beyond...There were important cultural
continuities as well-in technology, agriculture, economy, social
organization, language, religion and cosmology-but aspects of almost all
these areas were also changed.” (Sharer 385)

These changes include a shift from rule by one godly king, to what appears to have been,
rule by collective council (Sharer, 434). According to Sharer, this innovation is of
primary importance because it is likely to have led to the demise of the stela cult, since
the primary function of such hieroglyphic texts was to record the acts, deed and life of the
site’s ruler (Sharer, 434). This change, reflected by a lack of such monuments in the
archaeological record, has not only reduced the information available to researchers, but
has also allowed Western researcher to question the claim the living Highland Maya
should have on the lowland legacy. It is this lack of data that has allowed the Western
researchers to distinguish the living Highland Maya and historic Lowland Maya as two
different cultural entities. (Tozzer, 63).
This academic creation of a culture barrier allowed Western academics to utilize racist, evolutionary-rank terminology when referring to the Highland and Lowland Maya culture. An excellent example of this hierarchical structure can be found in the 1941 Bulletin of the Museum of Art from the Rhode Island School of Design. The bulletin includes two articles on Middle American Archaeology: The first, written by Alfred M. Tozzer²⁵, titled The Greater Cultures and includes a section on Lowland Guatemala; the second, written by Samuel K. Lothrop, is titled The Lesser Cultures and includes the Highland Maya cultures. Unsurprisingly The Lesser Cultures includes the claim that the Highland cultures “could not hope to rival the...triumphs of the latter” (Tozzer, Lothrop, 61). Lothrop cites the fact that the forms of art and architecture differ, explicitly referring to the absence of the stela cult in the Highlands varies significantly from the omnipresent stela cult in the Peten sites, like Piedras Negras.

Reacting against this traditional academic claim, Montejo emphasizes in “The Maya Depart” the absurdity of this distinction, writing:

*seguir husmeanando, excavando,*

*y de seguir tejiendo hipótesis*

*del por qué desaparecieron los Mayas*

*y a donde se fueron los “indios”...;*

*go on digging for clues, excavating*

*and weaving hypotheses*

*to explain why the Maya “disappeared”*

*and where the “Indians” went...(Montejo, 46,47).*
Montejo's sarcasm in the above passage questions the hypotheses illuminated in the archaeological record. He instead suggests that this distinction between the Maya and the Indian has allowed the researchers to exploit their racist preconceptions of the living Maya by "scientifically" denying the legitimacy of the Highland Indian's claim to great Lowland Mayan legacy.

Montejo's claim regarding the arbitrary nature of the findings of archaeological data makes a lot of sense considering the amount of interpretation necessary for explaining negative or missing evidence due to post depositional destruction and the shifts in the political culture explained by Sharer above. As Sharer pointed out in the passage above there does seem to be a level of cultural continuity which generalizations like Lothrop's classification of the "lesser culture" discount. Although the Maya had abandoned the production of stelae, the colonial ethno-historical accounts, like the ones by Bishop Landa, provide eyewitness descriptions of the production of hieroglyphic writing by early colonial period Maya (Sharer, 598). The fact that the written Maya language was still in use in the Maya highlands at the time of the Spanish conquest provides evidence for the Maya claim of cultural continuity.

These same accounts also provide evidence for the physical destruction of the Maya cultural "memory-links" by the colonial officials. For example, Landa wrote:

We found a large number of books in these characters and, as they contained nothing in which they were not to be seen as superstition and
lies of the devil, we burned them all, which they regretted to an amazing degree, and which caused them much affliction (Landa, 599).

It is this colonial process which began and has continued to allow the unchecked use of terms such as “lesser culture” in the Western academic vocabulary. For the Pan-Mayanists it is a claim against this manipulation of the Maya languages into words of heathens or devils that they demand.

The desire for the monument to be placed in a “Maya” setting reflects what the Mayanists ask of Western researchers: “What are you doing here in Guatemala? What benefit does your work have for the Maya?”. Warren points out that one of the major aims of Pan-Maya activism is to force ethical and political self-consciousness on the part of foreign researchers (Warren 70). Considering the legacy of the West in Guatemala this demand seems legitimate and natural. It is reasonable that the Pan-Mayanists suspect Western research of attempting to erase them from the legacy of the great Mayan civilization.

As it becomes apparent, the desire for the return of Maya objects does not reflect the objects themselves, but instead, the larger problem of history. The Maya fear that the legacy of Western academic domination has “stolen” their ability to define the language of their “own” texts. For this reason the placement of Maya monuments, like Stela 14 in the University of Pennsylvania Museum gallery, is problematic. The Maya activists claim that the current placement legitimizes and propagates that condition in which the American scholars are information rich, and the Maya are resource poor; having the monument, as part of the museum’s collection, reifies their claim that anthropology’s
association with the living Indian people is insensitive and self-serving (Lurie, 552). This placement substantiates the accusation that the academic interests of anthropologists are inseparable from their own personal agendas, and have little concern for the interests of the indigenous communities. However, as Said points out, this condition is inevitable, since:

No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of society. These continue to bear on what he does professionally, even though his research and its fruits do attempt to reach a level of relative freedom from the inhibitions and the restrictions of brute, everyday reality (Said, 76).

A denial of this natural condition undermines both the accomplishments and biases that deserve to be recognized in the historical record. The belief that the Western or Mayan translations can represent a true history of the Maya culture is dangerous. The work of academics, Western or Maya is inextricably linked to their own needs, purposes, and desires.

The reading of Stela 14 (or of any other hieroglyphic text) cannot be understood as a pure expression of the intentions and ideology of its original sculptors. The language of the monument itself can only be understood through the meanings implied by society
at present. Foucault reasoned, "All languages must therefore be renewed...and readjusted if necessary" (Foucault, 87). On the phenomena of monuments speaking, he explained: "What civilizations and peoples leave us as the monuments of their thought is not so much their texts as their vocabularies, their syntaxes, the sounds of their languages rather than the words they spoke...the old relation to the text...has now been transformed" (Foucault, 87-88). The implication of this hypothesis is that the words and meanings of the hieroglyphic monument can only be understood as political statements. Each word that is interpreted is instantaneously political, in that, the word choice may have the effect of unintentionally expressing meanings that the writer did not intend to imply.

This realization is important because it brings us conceptually to the present moment of stalemate on the issue of ownership and custody of Stela 14. It is obvious that the monument and the translation of the Maya language today, cannot be construed as possessing an inherent ability to define that entity which is essentially Maya. It is impossible to return to the understanding of the language that the Maya once used because the ideological foundations for understanding those associations no longer exist. They have been buried in the amorphous construction of cultural identity. It is the unavoidable condition of language that Derrida coined as "The Prosthesis of Origin". The reality that language, as much as one group would like to possess it, is not theirs- as Derrida explains "This language I am speaking to you, 'my mother tongue.' These words do not come from my mouth; they do not come out of my mouth...the words...they speak." (Derrida, 34). In understanding the Mayan hieroglyphic language represented on Stela 14 there is unavoidably the imprint of the ancient Mayan, the modern Mayan, and
the Westerner. These associations each claim part of the value of Stela 14, they are in a tangible way the material elements of Mayan culture and its legacy.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{i}}\text{For additional background on this ownership question one might want to research important cases of contested cultural property including the debates on the Elgin Marbles, Kennewick man, and the Maya Collection at the Boston Museum of Art. In recent years there has been a great amount of attention paid to this question of the stewardship of antiquities in general. As a result, UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in its nineteenth session, that met from October 26-November 30, 1978, issued the following statement defining cultural property:}

\begin{quote}
'cultural property' shall be taken to mean items which are the expression and testimony of human creation and of the evolution of nature which, in the opinion of the competent bodies in individual States, are or may be, of historical, artistic, scientific or technical value and interest, including items in the following categories:

(a) zoological, botanical and geological specimens;
(b) archaeological objects;
(c) objects and documentation of ethnological interest;
(d) works of fine art and the applied arts;
(e) literary, musical, photographic and cinematographic works;
(f) archives and documents (UNESCO, 2-3).
\end{quote}

\[\text{The conference participants made the following recommendation concerning the international exchange of cultural property:}

\begin{quote}
Bearing in mind that all cultural property forms part of the common cultural heritage of mankind and that every State has a responsibility in this respect, not only towards its own nationals but also towards the international community as a whole, Member States should adopt within the sphere of their competence, the following measures to develop the circulation of cultural property among cultural institutions in different (UNESCO, 3).
\end{quote}

\[\text{This statement has been followed other extremely emotionally charged declarations dealing with the issue of the management and ownership of cultural heritage.}

\[\text{\textsuperscript{a}Considered to be one of the last remaining true Mayan texts. This book of stories was translated from hieroglyphs during the period of Spanish conquest.}

\[\text{\textsuperscript{ii}See Appendix (?) for full translation of the monument's text.}

\[\text{\textsuperscript{iii}In this instance Warren's use of Mayanists refers to Pan-Mayanists, not the Western researchers who specialize in the studies of the ancient Mayans.}

\[\text{\textsuperscript{iv}The Post-Structuralist literary theorists have popularized this type of theoretical ideology. For a basic introduction to such a theoretical basis examine Post-Structuralist literature including: Michel Foucault's The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences; Jacques Derrida's Monolingualism of the Other OR The Prosthesis of Origin; Edward Said's Orientalism; and Fredrick Jameson's Political Unconscious.}


\[\text{\textsuperscript{viii}Evidence for this claim can be seen in the archaeological record of the site of Tikal. The site has often considered the most powerful of all the Classic Maya sites due to its tremendous sphere of influence as}
reflected in the widespread distribution of Tikal style pottery, and the widespread emulation of the Tikal building method at many of the Lowland Maya sites. Its tall temples and large geographic area reflect the wealth and power that the Tikal rulers of the Classic Maya Period must have commanded. In the site impressive archaeological record there is evidence for the intentional defacing of the early monuments. Culbert and others have attributed the destruction phases, as material evidence reflecting the realignment of power resulting from the site’s constant warfare with Caracol, Dos Pilas, Naranjo and Calakmul. The victors of different war events recorded their accomplishments on the new stelae being built at their site. In addition, the inability to build monuments also reflects a group’s relative power because the building of a monument requires control of labor and resources. For example, the cycle of war between Tikal and its neighbors lead to a type of power drain or “hiatus” in rule from 534 to 593 AD (Culbert, 134). This time is the peak of the “Star wars”, but there appears to be no building or erecting of monuments at Tikal. It appears that the constant costs of maintaining the war with the neighboring states of Caracol, Calakmul, Dos Pilas and Naranjo drained the site’s funds and power to obtain laborers to build new edifices, and monuments.

ix The Harvard University anthropology library is named in his honor.
Blurred Manipulations

"What is a lexicon? It is a portion of the symbolic level (of language) which corresponds to a body of practices and techniques; this is certainly the case for different readings of the image: each sign corresponds to a body of 'attitudes': tourism, housekeeping, knowledge of art, some of which can obviously be missing on the level of any one individual...
The image, in its connotation, would thus be constituted..."

—Roland Barthes—

The reading of Stela 14 has allowed images and commands of long-dead kings to transcend into the politics and ideology of modern society. The value of Stela 14 is the value added. This monument has become a physical representation of the beliefs about the Maya identity as they are circulated in the public sphere. The claim for the monument is mode of controlling its connotations, positive or negative, that define what it means to be Maya, what it means to understand the Maya.

The Western scholars and the Maya activists are really fighting two distinct battles for definition. Their discourses hope to elucidate the "truth" for different reasons that have nothing to do with each other on a scientific level, but have everything to do with each other on a symbolic level. The texts that they create are political, the words in a real way define how the monument will find its voice. This struggle is compelling, and each history of it represents an interpretive chronicle, a shade of the truth.

This question of ownership of the monument, the piece of artwork, is not a concern of the physical, but instead a concern of the audible. The participants in this controversy seek to install their own image at the juncture of the sign and its representations, thus defining its meaning and its materiality. As I suggested in the
preface of this paper this definition of cultural property, this right to ownership, is a contrived abstract thing. If this monument were not thought to play an important role in the transformation of social ideology, then this same desire would be manifested in another object. The reality of a representation is defined by the social recognition of that representation as a legitimate one.

In the case of Piedras Negras Stela 14 there is no clear-cut ethical choice as to whose culture and whose intellectual property it represents. The letter of the law provided by UNESCO is unspecific and problematic. Its prescription of a legal remedy in fact creates the unresolveable question of ownership, since it offers no solution as to where the accomplishments of mankind should be stored. The problematic state of cultural property is born in its formal definition. The legal standards create and continue to develop the discourses of the Westerner and Maya that fill these pages- creating and politicizing the reality of Stela 14.
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Preface


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**Introduction**


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Chapter 1


**Chapter 2**


Conclusion

APPENDIX I:
INSCRIBED MAYA MONUMENTS IN THE MESOAMERICAN GALLERY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND
ANTHROPOLOGY I: PIEDRAS NEGRAS STELA 14

John F. Harris

This paper is the first of a series in which the inscribed Maya monuments housed in the Mesoamerican Gallery of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology will be discussed. While the emphasis will be on the hieroglyphic texts inscribed on these monuments, the iconography will also be considered. The gallery houses monuments from two major sites, Piedras Negras and Caracol, both of which were subjects of important investigations by the Museum in the 1930s (Piedras Negras) and the 1940s (Caracol). This article begins a discussion of the gallery texts from Piedras Negras.

There are four objects from Piedras Negras with hieroglyphic inscriptions currently on display in the Mesoamerican Gallery: two inscribed shell plaques; Stela 14; and one of the four supporting legs from Altar 4. The inscribed shell plaques are two of four that were found associated with the adult male occupant of a tomb at Piedras Negras, designated as Burial 5 (Coe, 1959). The glyphs on these four plaques form a continuous text which relates events in the life of Lady K’atun Ahaw, wife of Piedras Negras Ruler 3. The text on these four plaques was discussed in an article entitled, “Some Women from Piedras Negras,” in the previous issue of The Codex (Harris, 1998). The discussion included the texts on Piedras Negras Stelae 1, 3, & 8 that also tell of important events in Lady K’atun Ahaw’s life. These monuments are housed in the Guatemala National Museum in Guatemala City, as are the other two shell plaques which go with the two in the Mesoamerican Gallery. For a discussion of the text on all four plaques, the reader should consult the previous issue of the Codex.

Piedras Negras Stela 14

The major monument from Piedras Negras in the Mesoamerican Gallery is Stela 14; in fact this stela currently on loan from the Guatemalan government forms the centerpiece of the Mesoamerican Gallery collection. The beige stone stela measures about 2.9 m. in height, 84 cm. in width at the top and 78 cm. at the bottom, and about 41 cm. in thickness. It was found broken in two pieces by Maler in 1899 (Maler, 1901); it was apparently associated with Structure 013. The front consists of an elaborate carving depicting a ruler seated on a bench in a niche; in fact this stela celebrates the seating of the ruler. The back of the stela is plain; there is a column of glyphs on the left side, and there had been a similar glyph column on the right side, but severe erosion has left that side essentially plain - what had been inscribed there is completely unreadable.

The front of the stela is expertly carved, and the deeply incised portion depicts the seated ruler (Fig. 1a). Niche scenes occur on at least four other stelae at Piedras Negras - these are known as the "niche" stelae.1 The front-facing figure is portrayed with his legs crossed, his hands are on his knees, and above him is a skyband containing celestial symbols including the Venus sign. Atop the skyband is positioned the Principal Bird Deity complete with feathered wings each containing a serpent’s head. The ruler is wearing an elaborate headdress consisting of a Celestial Monster head mask with saurian nose and mouth and half closed eyes framed by a plethora of feathers, probably quetzal. At the top of the monster mask is a medallion featuring a folded hand with crossbands in the palm - a symbol for the syllable yo, a component of the Piedras Negras Emblem Glyph. The ruler wears a beaded pectoral
Figure 1. (a) Front of Piedras Negras Stela 14 (Drawn by John Montgomery); (b) Reconstructed Detail of Figure at Lower Right (Morley and Brainerd, 1956).
(probably jade), beaded wristbands, and a decorated loincloth. On each side of the niche in which the ruler sits are mirror signs, probably representing portals to the other world.

Leading up to the bench on which the ruler sits is a ladder/scaffold covered with a hanging cloth containing footprints suggestive of the ruler's ascent. These footprints are darkened, probably signifying blood, and they lead from a badly eroded figure in the lower right corner of the scene. This eroded figure, shown reconstructed in Figure 1b, is of a sacrificed person whose death was no doubt an important part of the accession ritual. At the lower left of the scene is a prominently portrayed standing woman who is gazing at the seated figure; her image is much less deeply incised than the figure in the niche. This is no doubt the mother of the just acceded ruler. She is wearing a decorated huipil, a necklace and beaded bracelets, and her headdress of feathers features a skull mask. She is barefooted. She holds a whisk-like object with feathers like those in the ruler's headdress. This object is similar to one held by a figure portrayed on another object in the Mesoamerican Gallery, Caracol Altar 13. Although we know virtually nothing about this woman, she must have been highly important at Piedras Negras to be so prominently pictured. Even her name isn't known since that portion of the stela which would have contained her name is completely eroded. The lower portion of the scene is framed by a Bicephalic Celestial Monster with a downpointing front head on the left and the rear head pointing down on the right. In summary, the overall scene displayed on Stela 14 is of a recently seated ruler surrounded by a niche with cosmological iconography. Nearby is a sacrificed victim and the ruler's mother is looking on.

Scattered throughout the scene on the front of Stela 14 are six small groups of lightly inscribed hieroglyphs (Figs. 1,2). One group is comprised of six hieroglyphs; the others consist of four each. Beginning each group is a collocation whose mainsign is the head of a leaf nose bat, phonetic $xu$, with an internal element diagnostic of the syllable $lu$. The combination of these two elements led in previous years to the designation of "$lu$ bat" for this glyph (Stuart, 1986). It has been recognized for many years that these short "$lu$ bat" statements, which occur widely on carved monuments throughout the Classic Maya world, refer in some way to the artists or sculptors who created the monuments. In all cases but one on Stela 14, the bat head is affixed with a symbol for the syllable $yu$. $Yu$ combined with the other two elements, $xu$ and $lu$, lead to the reading, $yxuxu$; it thus appears that the whole collocation is derived from a verbal root, $ux-$, the initial $y$ serving as a 3rd person pronoun. Recently, Nikolai Grube cited an entry in a colonial Tzeltal dictionary which gave a reading of "to scratch or scrape as on bricks" for the verbal root, $ux$ (cited in Montgomery, 1995); based on this reading he proposed that $yxuxu$ could be read as "his carving." What follows then are the names/titles of the sculptor who executed the monument. Since there are six such statements on Stela 14, the design and carving of this monument was obviously a multiperson effort. Some of the names of the sculptors can be read, for example, the name of the artist designated in Figure 2a was, at least in part, $Kotol Sz'ib$. Sz'ib, of course, refers to "writing." Several other elements in the names of the artists given in Figure 2 can also be read; however, there are some symbols in that group for which no readings are known.

The niche stela that most closely resembles Stela 14 is Stela 11, the inauguration stela of Ruler 4, the ruler who preceded Ruler 5, and who may have been his father (Fig. 3). As on Stela 14, a front facing ruler is seated on a bench surrounded by a niche decorated with skyband iconography. There is a curtain gathered at the top of the niche, and at the top of the whole assembly is a figure of the Principal Bird Deity as on Stela 14. The bench is accessed by a scaffold with attached cloth embellished with bloody footprints also as on Stela 14. At the bottom of the scaffold is a sacrificed
victim with a feather-containing sack on his stomach. There is no woman in the Stela 11 scene, and there are apparently no sculptors' signatures on the front.

In deciphering the text on the left side of Stela 14, three drawings have been helpful (Fig. 4a,b,c). The text begins with Ruler 5's accession; although there is considerable erosion, the Initial Series date is certain (Fig. 5). A1-B1 is clearly the Initial Series Introductory Glyph (ISIG), but the intended haab patron is a rather nondescript head. As we will see, it should be the patron of Wo. The coefficients of all of the time units are head numerals. The bak'tun coefficient (A2) is severely eroded, but obviously it must have been 9. The k'atun coefficient (A3) has a skeletal jaw, and in the Beetz drawing, there is one element of an axe in the eye. These suggest 16 for the coefficient. The tun coefficient (A4) has to be 6, as we will see, but it does not look at all like the expected axe-in-eye head. The winal coefficient (A5) has a skeletal jaw, an element on the forehead, and a large half closed eye, consistent with 17. The k'ìn coefficient (A6) must be 1 since the day sign at A7 is clearly Imix. Thus the Long Count coefficients for the bak'tun, the k'atun, the winal, and the k'ìn are
Figure 3. The Front of Piedras Negras Stela 11 (Drawn by Linda Schele).
Figure 4. Drawings of the Inscribed Text on the Left Side of Piedras Negras Stela 14: (a) by Carl Beetz; (b) by John Montgomery; (c) by Sylvanus Morley (1937-38).
fairly certain. These Long Count values, coupled with a tzolk'in of 7 Imix, give only two possibilities for the complete date: 9.16.6.17.1, 7 Imix 19 Wo; and 9.16.19.17.1, 7 Imix 19 K'ayab. The second of these is obviously not possible on at least two counts: the haab at A11 cannot be K'ayab, and the tun coefficient (A4) cannot possibly be 19. Thus the Initial Series date must be 9.16.6.17.1, 7 Imix 19 Wo (March 14, 758), and indeed the haab at A11 looks very much like 19 Wo. As mentioned above, this is the accession date of Ruler 5. It is 104 days after the death of the previous ruler (Ruler 4) recorded on Piedras Negras Lintel 3.

The Supplementary Series (B7 - B10) begins with Glyph G (B7a) and Glyph F (B7b) in a single block. B7a is clearly G8 (probably the name of a headband) as it should be. The sign on top of the main sign of B7b (Glyph F) is TI28, a sign representing k'a, a word meaning "to end" or "to
close." The main sign is a *hun* head, "headband," with a *na* phonetic complement; thus B7 says "the headband was closed." A8 is the coefficient 26 (Glyph E), and B8 is Glyph D, a form of the *huil* verb, "to arrive"; the two together say, "26 (days in the current lunation) have arrived" (26 is correct). A9 is Glyph C; there is some disagreement concerning the coefficient in the drawings in Figure 4 - it seems to vary from 2 to 4. The main portion of A9 consists of a head in the *k'ak'ab* hand, "completion/ended." If we assume that a coefficient of 2 was intended, A9 says "two (lunations in a cycle of 6) were completed" (the calculated number is 1). The head in the hand should be a female head, and it looks like it is. B9 is Glyph X, the name of the lunation, and B10 is a version of the name closure phrase, *u ch'ok k'aba,"is its youth name." B10 is Glyph 9A; the left symbol is a sign for 20, and the head on the right, although somewhat eroded, is a version of the head variant of the number 9. This glyph is telling us that the lunation is a 29 day lunation.

After 19 *Wo* at A11, comes the verb at B11; it's an example of the so-called "toothache" glyph. Thus the main sign consists of an element, whose diagnostic interior is completely eroded, tied with a vertical band ending in a knot at the top. The band and knot constitute a logograph for *hok',* a word that can mean "to come out" or "to tie." Either is appropriate in the context of accession, and the glyph is a metaphor for the seating of a ruler. To the right of the main sign is a symbol for *ha,* which when combined with *hok' gives hok'ah. To the left of *hok' is a sign for *ti,* a preposition meaning "as," and above the main sign is the "ahpo" sign, a logograph for *Ahaw, "Lord" or "Ruler." Altogether, the collocation at B11 reads, *hok'ah ti Ahaa, "he came out as Ruler."

The glyphs at A12 - B14 are names and titles for Ruler 5, who is pictured seated on the front of the stela. The first name/title at A12 is *U Mo' Nik, "His Macaw Flower." The next unit (B12) consists of a *na* sign affixed to a god's head, the reading of which has not yet been deciphered. Then follows a badly eroded collocation (A13) which contains an unknown element on the left and a head on the right with a small element on the forehead, all surmounted with a *chak* sign. This name/title reads, *? Chak ?. This is a crucial part of Ruler 5's name since it also occurs on Stela 16, previously designated by Tatiana Proskouriakoff as belonging to Ruler 6 (Proskouriakoff, 1960, 1961, Houston, 1983)' (Fig. 6). On Stela 16, Ruler 5 is associated with the Period Ending 9.16.15.0.0. The next collocation, B13, is one of the forms of the Piedras Negras Emblem Glyph. The affix on the left is phonetic *yo,* and it is attached to a head serving as a logograph for *kib to give yokib, "valley." On the top is a logograph for *nal, "place;" thus the whole complex reads, *Yokibnal, or "Valley Place." This version of the Piedras Negras place name occurs in several other Piedras Negras texts. Finally in the name/title string are two glyphs which are not often found in such a context. The first, A14, combines the *k'af* head, "to end" or "to close," with a knot representing *hun, "headband." The next element is a version of the typical name closure phrase, *k'aba, "name." Thus A14 and B14 say

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**Figure 6. Name Glyphs for Ruler 5:** (a) Piedras Negras Stela 14 (Drawn by John Montgomery, modified by J. Harris); (b) Piedras Negras Stela 16; (b) Drawn by John Montgomery.
Figure 7. The Front of Piedras Negras Stela 13: (a) Portrait of Ruler 5 Scattering; (b) Inscribed Name of One of the Artists (Drawn by John Montgomery).
"headband closing name," or "accession name," and they are referring to the names/titles at A12-B13 as the accession name for Ruler 5.

The last two glyphs, A15-B15, begin a parentage statement for Ruler 5. A15, yal, is an often used child-of-mother term. The last glyph is composed of two elements, Thompson's so-called "water group," which is now known to read k'ul, "divine" or "holy," and the female head main sign, probably reading Ax, "Lady." These two glyphs thus read, "child of Divine Lady." The name phrase for the mother was no doubt continued on the right side of the monument, but severe erosion has essentially completely obliterated the text, and thus we do not actually know her name. She is of course the woman prominently portrayed on the front of the monument. The text on the right side probably continued with the father's name following the mother's, and it no doubt finished with the Period Ending, 9.16.10.0.0, 1 Ahau 3 Sip (March 17, 761).

Translation. "The haab was counted. It was 9 bak'tuns, 16 k'atuns, 6 tun's, 17 winals, and 1 k'in (since the current era began) on the day 7 Imix [the ? headband was closed, 26 days in the current lunation had elapsed, 2 lunations (in the current group of 6) had ended, ? was the youth name of the 29 day lunation] 19 Wo was seated as ruler, Macaw Flower, (Title), ? Great ? of the Valley Place; these were his accession names. He was the child of Divine Lady ----.

There are several other monuments associated with Ruler 5. These were previously assigned to Proskouriakoff's "Ruler 6" who probably does not exist. Ruler 5 celebrated three additional Period Endings after the one that had presumably been recorded on the eroded right side of Stela 14. These were on Stela 16, 6.16.15.0.0 (Feb. 19, 766), on Stela 13, 9.17.0.0.0 (Jan. 24, 771), and on Stela 18, 9.17.5.0.0 (Dec. 29, 775). Some of these monuments are badly eroded or broken, but the front of Stela 13 contains a well preserved image of Ruler 5 portrayed in a scattering ritual (Fig. 7a). One of the three sculptors whose names appear on the front of Stela 13 is the same as one of those on Stela 14 (Fig. 7b). Ruler 5 is also mentioned on El Cayo Lintel 1, as accompanying Kan Panak, a future Sahal of that site, in a dedication ritual carried out on 9.16.12.2.6 (April 22, 763) (Fig. 8). During Ruler 5's reign, and the reigns of earlier rulers, El Cayo was a subsidiary of Piedras Negras.

![Figure 8. Part of the El Cayo Lintel 1 Text which Mentions Ruler 5 of Piedras Negras (Drawn by John Montgomery).](image)

There is one other possible image of Ruler 5 on Piedras Negras monuments, and this is on Lintel 3 (Fig. 9a). Although commissioned by Ruler 7, this monument deals primarily with events pertaining to Ruler 4, including his death, and he is pictured holding court before an audience which includes people from other sites especially Yaxchilan. On the seated ruler's left is a group of four figures, two of whom are small. As Linda Schele and others have pointed out, one of these youth figures may be the heir apparent to Ruler 4, i.e., Ruler 5 (Fig. 9b). The glyphs associated with the
Figure 9. (a) Piedras Negras Lintel 3; (b) Possible Images of Rulers 5 & 7 as Youths on Piedras Negras Lintel 3; (c) Presumed Names/Titles of Youthful Rulers 5 & 7 (Drawn by Linda Schele).
two small figures include the title Ch'ok, "Sprout" or "Unripe One," a title often carried by the heir apparent (Fig. 9c). Possibly the other youth image is of the future Ruler 7.

There is no death date known for Ruler 5, but since the accession date for the next ruler, Ruler 7, is known (9.17.10.9.4), we can estimate that the reign of Ruler 5 lasted about 23 years.

ENDNOTES

1. The five niche stelae at Piedras Negras in chronological order are, Stela 25 (9.8.15.0.0, Ruler 1), Stela 33 (9.10.10.0.0, Ruler 2), Stela 6 (9.12.15.0.0, Ruler 3), Stela 11 (9.15.0.0.0, Ruler 4), and Stela 14 (probably 9.16.10.0.0, Ruler 5). These were the first stelae erected by the rulers after their inaugurations. So far none is known for Ruler 7.

2. In John Montgomery's reference to N. Grube's citation, a colonial Ara-Guzman Tzeltal dictionary was mentioned, but no definite reference was given. Page 414 of Fr. Domingo de Ara's Tzeltal Vocabulary (1986) lists a reading of "raspar como ladrillos," "to scrape as on brick," for ux.

3. The half closed eye seen in the Beetz and Montgomery drawings (Fig. 4 a,b) has been taken as significant element for the 17 head numeral, and one example shown in the Thompson Table (Thompson, 1950) is from Piedras Negras Stela 14.

4. Proskouriakoff (1960) assumed that Stela 16 belonged to Ruler 6 since it's text mentioned an accession that was on a date later than the accession for Ruler 5 on Stela 14. However, Stela 16 is not a niche stela, like the accession stelae for most other Piedras Negras rulers, and as pointed out by Stephen Houston (1983), the name associated with the dedication date, 9.16.15.0.0, is really the same as that of Ruler 5 on Stela 14 (compare (a) and (b) in Figure 6). Thus there is no Ruler 6. The accession on Stela 16 must be for someone else, probably a lord of a site subservient to Piedras Negras.

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Figure 1. (a) Front of Piedras Negras Stela 14 (Drawn by John Montgomery); (b) Reconstructed Detail of Figure at Lower Right (Morley and Brainerd, 1956).
Figure 2. Drawing of the Inscribed Text on the Left Side of Piedras Negras Stela 14 (Drawn by John Montgomery).
Figure 3. Six Sculptors' Signatures on the Front of Piedras Negras Stela 14 (Drawn by John Montgomery).
Complete Translation

"The haab was counted. It was 9 bak'tuns, 16 katuns, 6 tuns, 17 winals, and 1 k'in (since the current era began) on the day 7 Imix [the headband was closed, 26 days in the current lunation had elapsed, 2 lunations in the current group of 6) had ended, 7 was the youth name of the 29 day lunation] 19 Wo (9.16.6.17.1, March 14, 758) was seated as ruler, Black House Great? Turtle (Ruler 5); these were his accession names. He was the child of Divine Lady ------"

Abbreviated Translation

"On March 14, 758, Black House Great? Turtle (Ruler 5) was seated as ruler. He was the child of Divine Lady ------"

Comments (Inscription)

The name of Ruler 5 is based in part on the version that occurs in the text on Stela 16, another of Ruler 5's monuments. The name phrase for the mother was no doubt continued on the right side of the monument, but severe erosion has essentially completely obliterated the text, and thus we do not actually know her name. The text on the right side probably continued the parentage statement with the father's name following the mother's. The text no doubt finished with the Period Ending, 9.16.10.0.0, 1 Ahaw 3 Sip (March 17, 761).

Comments (General)

Piedras Negras Stela 14 is the center piece of the Mesoamerican Gallery. It was found broken in two pieces by Maler in 1899 (Maler, 1901), and had apparently been associated with Structure 013. The front contains an elaborate carving depicting a ruler seated on a bench in a niche; this is the monument celebrating the accession/seating of Ruler 5 of Piedras Negras. There are several of these "niche" stelae at Piedras Negras and each celebrates the accession of a different Piedras Negras ruler. The back of the stela is plain. There is a column of glyphs on the left side (translate above), and there had been a similar glyph column on the right side, but severe erosion has left that side essentially plain and unreadable.

The front-facing seated figure of Ruler 5 on the stela's face is portrayed with his legs crossed, his hands are on his knees, and above him is a skyband and the Principal Bird Deity. The ruler is wearing an elaborate headdress featuring a Celestial Monster head mask with saurian nose and mouth. He is simply garbed, wearing a beaded pectoral, beaded wristbands, and a decorated loincloth; his attire is not nearly as sumptuous as several of the Caracol rulers portrayed on other stelae in the gallery. Leading up to the bench on which the ruler sits is a ladder/scaffold covered with a hanging cloth containing footprints suggestive of the ruler's ascent. These footprints are darkened, probably signifying blood, and they lead from a badly eroded figure in the lower right corner of the scene. This eroded figure, shown reconstructed in Figure 1b, is of a sacrificed person whose death was no doubt an important part of the accession ritual. At the lower left of the scene is a prominently portrayed standing woman who is gazing at the seated figure. This is certainly the mother of Ruler 5. She holds a whisklike object with feathers similar to those in the ruler's headdress. This object resembles one held by a figure portrayed on Caracol Altar 13, also in this gallery. Although we know virtually nothing about this woman, she must have been highly important at Piedras Negras to be so prominently pictured. Stela 14 is unique among the niche stele of Piedras Negras in portraying the mother of the recently acceded ruler.
Scattered throughout the scene on the front of Stela 14 are six small groups of lightly inscribed hieroglyphs (Figs. 1, 3). These are the so-called "lu bat" statements (Stuart, 1986). Beginning each group is a hieroglyph whose main sign is the head of a leaf nose bat, a symbol representing the syllable xu, with an internal element diagnostic of the syllable lu, hence the name "lu bat." Affixed to the bat head is a symbol which represents the syllable, xu. This grouping has been read by Nikolai Grube as yu\textit{xu}\textit{li}, "his carving" (cited in Montgomery, 1995). What follows are the names/titles of the sculptor who executed the monument. Since there are six such statements on the face of Stela 14, the design and carving of this monument was obviously a multiperson effort. Some of the names of the sculptors can be read, for example, the name of the artist designated in Figure 2a was, at least in part, K\textit{otol Tz'ib}. Tz'ib, of course, refers to "writing." Several other elements in the names of the artists given in Figure 3 can also be read; however, there are some symbols in that group for which no readings are known (for further discussion of Piedras Negras Stela 14, see Harris, 1999).

Stela 14 and its text are especially important since they were part of a breakthrough study by Tatiana Proskouriakoff which proved beyond doubt that Maya monumental inscriptions did indeed contain history (1960, 1961). Prior to her work, Maya inscriptions were thought to consist essentially of only calendrical notations and rituals connected with calendrical phenomena. Careful analysis by Proskouriakoff, which began during her work with the Penn team excavating at Piedras Negras in 1936-37, showed that each of several groups of monuments contained a sequence of dates that were spaced at such intervals that they could correspond to the births and accessions of a sequence of rulers. From her analysis Proskouriakoff proposed a 7-ruler dynasty for Piedras Negras that is still largely accepted by epigraphers today. Much of epigraphic research subsequent to Proskouriakoff's work has consisted of the filling out the histories of sites based upon analyses of inscriptions much in the manner used by Proskouriakoff.

Acknowledgements

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