

DUMBARTON OAKS

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Pre-Columbian Studies
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Rulers from the West: Teotihuacan in Maya History and Politics David Stuart, The University of Texas at Austin

Tom Cummins:

Good evening, and it's wonderful to see a room so full of people anxious to hear what promises to be, and I know will be a fabulous talk. I've known Dave Stewart for a long time, and he has never failed to deliver, and it is my pleasure as director of Dumbarton Oaks to welcome you all here, and to welcome Dave back to where he once belonged. He has done a lot of work here, and still working. We are awaiting, the final draft of a wonderful book to come, that I think this is a pronouncement of what we will be reading in the future, but I won't take up much time, except that this is one of Dumbarton Oaks' really public events that brings scholars of great renown to Dumbarton Oaks in one of our three fields, to really present their new work before an audience that is both willing to hear but knows a lot about what they're hearing. So, it's always that kind of anticipation of a lecture, and then the comments that come afterwards, and questions that make this always a really great intellectual event. With that I want to introduce the Director of Pre-Columbian Studies, who then will introduce Dave, and this will be a much more elegant and much more intelligent introduction than mine. So, Frauke.

Frauke Sachse:

Thank you very much, Tom. It's my great pleasure to welcome you all, both onsite, and I would also like to welcome the virtual audience, and I've just seen in the Webinar we have over two hundred and fifty people, and I think also a few watch parties on the other side of the virtual realm. I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are in the territory of many indigenous peoples to have known the Potomac valley and its lands and waters as their homeland, for thousands of years, mostly Piscataway and Algonquian peoples. The community of Dumbarton Oaks, and all those with whom we are working respect the long history of this territory, and we recognize and honor the resilience and a perseverance of indigenous communities across the Americas. And we specifically thank the descendants of the Mesoamerican people whose ancestors we will be hearing about today. Acknowledging the colonial foundations of our field of study, we are looking forward to engaging with native communities, to learn, explore, and to understand the ancient and recent past, and to build and shape a better future.

Our speaker today has been instrumental in making the native voices from the past heard in the present. With his many significant contributions to the decipherment of ancient Maya writing, he makes the inscriptions speak and brings back to life what the Maya recorded in their own words and in their own language, about the events that happened in their lives and in their lands.

David Stewart makes the world of the Classic Maya known. He reveals the identities of their political and religious leaders and gives them a new place in world history. And with his talk today he will once more reveal a new chapter of the Mesoamerican past. So, David, it's our greatest pleasure to have you here with us tonight.

David Stewart is the David and Linda Schele Professor of Mesoamerican Art in the Art History Department at the University of Texas in Austin, and he's also the Director of the Mesoamerica Center, at UT where he's running the annual Maya meetings, now Mesoamerica meetings, since 2005. His interests regard all aspects of ancient Maya and Mesoamerican culture. But David Stewart is first and foremost recognized and celebrated for his many breakthroughs in deciphering Maya hieroglyphs, and for his contributions to understanding Maya arts and texts. It is widely known that David started studying Maya writing at an early age, reading his first scholarly paper at the Palenque Mesa Redonda, in 1978 at the age of 12, and receiving a MacArthur Fellowship at the age of eighteen, for his groundbreaking work on the decipherment. And I am happy to tell you that Dumbarton Oaks had a place in his impressive early career. David first came to DO when his father, archaeologist, George Stuart, attended scholarly events here. And significant advances in the decipherment of Maya writing had been made here at Dumbarton Oaks in the mid-seventies. So, it was a good place to be for

someone interested in that very subject. And it was the place where David met first, Linda Schele, who then became his mentor. David went to high school up the road in Silver Spring, and after school would take the bus down to Georgetown to volunteer in Pre-Columbian studies and catalogue slides, or to participate in Tertulia's on Maya glyphs organized by Director of Studies, Elizabeth Boone. After graduating from high school, David did not go straight to university, he went straight to Dumbarton Oaks. Yeah, as a Junior Fellow in Pre-Columbian Studies in 1983-84. And he said once that Dumbarton Oaks provided a refuge for him during the time of high media attention, after he received the MacArthur, and it was the place where he could fully concentrate on the decipherment, and it was during this time at DO that his understanding of Maya glyphs rapidly evolved. These are your own words Dave, so correct me if I'm wrong. His academic career took him first to Princeton and then to Vanderbilt, and finally to our mothership up there in Boston, Harvard, where he took up a position at the Peabody Muse, with the corpus of Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions, working with the great Ian Graham, while engaging in intensive research and teaching at the Department of Anthropology.

The consistency with which David Stewart has advanced the understanding of Maya writing, art, and culture is remarkable. He has worked with so many projects at so many sites, with so many colleagues generating so much research and so much insight for which he deservedly received a UNESCO lifetime achievement award in 2012. David Stuart created the field of Maya epigraphy, as we know it. His first book publication, *Ten Phonetic Syllables* from 1987, laid out the groundwork for methodology of decipherment now widely accepted, and it triggered many new readings by him and by others. Decipherments were often circulated in letters and communicated during personal meetings, and a lot of his ideas were absorbed by the field. Without people ever recognizing that it was him who deciphered or laid the ground for understanding a particular glyph. And some of his ideas even ended up being falsely attributed to others. My hope is that one day a future database project would set that record straight and give us an exact percentage of the number of signs deciphered by David Stuart. It will be many.

David Stuart continues to drive the field forward with his ever-evolving understanding of Mesoamerican art and writing, and colleagues like to express their amazement at the intuition with which he keeps on finding the critical details, the missing links in a huge corpus of thousands of texts he seems to know by heart, turning them into new lines of evidence. The list of his scholarly publications is incessantly growing, and David's blog, *Maya Decipherment*, has become a pillar in the information structure of the field of Maya writing. He's been instrumental also in building a Maya cluster at the University of Texas, which will surely become a hub for Maya studies in years to come. More recently he has been actively expanding his interests to Central Mexico and the study of Aztec art and hieroglyphs with his latest publication, *King and Cosmos: A New Interpretation of the Aztec Calendar Stone*, that came out last year. And I'm particularly delighted that David, after so many years is reconnecting with Dumbarton Oaks. He's currently working with us on a new book project that Tom just mentioned, about the relationship between Teotihuacan and the Maya area, and he's here with us tonight to speak about the very topic of this forthcoming publication, *Rulers from the West: Teotihuacan in Maya History and Politics*. David. It's a pleasure to have you here.

David Stuart thanks your audience.

Frauke, thank you so much. Tom, thank you so much, and it's, it's a great pleasure to be here in front of all of you. This is one of the few times, maybe the second time I've given a talk, in front of a group of people with COVID and everything. So, it's really a wonderful experience, and as Frauke mentioned, and as Tom, to be back in in the DC area where I was born. I'm a native Washingtonian, so it's great to kind of be back in my old stomping grounds. I am going to be sharing with you this evening. Well, some old ideas, with some new ideas about a topic that may be familiar to many of you. And this is this old, old question in Mesoamerican studies. It goes back decades, which is the fundamental relationship between the Maya in the Classic period and the great city of Teotihuacan up in Central Mexico. This is a question that goes back about one hundred years in Mesoamerican archaeology, and what I want to try to do is bring it out of Mesoamerican archaeology and bring it into Mesoamerican history. And aspects of this have been known now for a couple of decades. Although we're making steady advances all of the time, Simon Martin, many others alongside of myself have been working on this material, so we have new things to say, and what I want to try to do tonight is, make this history a bit more transparent, a bit more visible than it has been buried in some rather esoteric academic outlets. Up until the near future, I hope, and to show that I think there may be a dimension of history that we can apply directly to Teotihuacan, which is a city, a massive urban area in Mesoamerica that until now I believe, has not had any kind of historical dimension ascribed to it. But I think we can change that.

So much of what I'm going to be talking about this evening has to do with the historical source materials that we have in the Maya area specifically at Tikal, but not exclusively at Tikal. Tikal, of course, as many of you know, is one of the largest of ancient Maya kingdoms from the Classic period. It has roots in the Preclassic, and it was the hub of a great deal of political intrigue and machinations, and all sorts of interpolity goings on during the Classic period. I'm going to be focusing mostly on what we call the Early Classic, right. And this is the time period when we see this interaction with Central Mexico really, the strongest. So, looking at Tikal, I'm going to be showing you a good number of drawings and photographs of some of the inscriptions and artworks that we know from Tikal, and from some surrounding sites also.

The other part of this kind of two-sided narrative is Teotihuacan, the great city in a very different environment, right in the rather arid Highlands of Central Mexico. And again, trying to bridge these two very different sites. Teotihuacan and the Maya have, despite their known connections, archaeologically and now I think historically, I think many Mesoamerican specialists have really featured the differences between these places. There are tremendous differences.

But Teotihuacan is kind of sometimes described as a place that is so unlike let's say the Classic Maya, right? No dynastic monuments, no long texts or writing system, no history that's visible right? And I think that this contrast, while real in terms of the evidence, we have might mask some important overlaps and correspondences, right, that I think we can see best through some of the Maya source materials.

So just to orient us in case you don't quite know where we're talking about Tikal is right here in the heart of the Maya Lowlands, in what's now northern Guatemala, and about a thousand kilometers, or about 600 miles away, is Teotihuacan up here just north of Mexico City, it's a big distance, right? 600 miles is not an easy communication route. It's a long way. Communication was real. We know that archaeologically. So it's not really a question of whether they were in contact, right? The question is what that contact meant, right? We know that they were trading between the Maya area and Central Mexico. There's a really wonderful new article that just came out. It was in the press recently about the spider monkey that was discovered by my colleague, Nawa Sugiyama, in Teotihuacan. Cached as an offering, and it was a spider monkey that probably came from the Maya region, right? So, we're always getting really good evidence of contact and trade and communication. But what is the underlying narrative behind that? That's something that we can partially, not completely, but partially reconstruct.

Now, here at Dumbarton Oaks, probably the most recent and most important, look at this particular issue or part of it certainly is this volume that came out just to two or three years ago. Barbara Arroyo, one of the co-editors, is here at DO. *Teotihuacan: The world Beyond the City*. Looking at this idea of Teotihuacan as more than just a single urban center, but it's regional influences. It's regional contacts and communications, it's a treasure trove of material in this book. One of the things that I frankly wanted to see reflected in the book, though more was this historical dimension, and I think part of the issue here is that we've been looking- by we, I mean, maybe some Maya epigraphers. We've been looking at the history of Tikal, right, the history of Copan and other sites in a lot of detail. We haven't published everything we've published a lot of it, but there's still more to say, and one of the motivations I had for this new publication that I'm doing for Dumbarton Oaks was to kind of catch us up on more evidence about the history of the interaction between these two areas which I'll be sharing with you, and to flesh this out, right? So, the world beyond the city of Teotihuacan really does, I think, involve, very much, a historical process. The historical relationship that has to be looked at in terms of the archaeology and all these other larger theoretical questions that people have been asking for a very long time. History is a new kind of thing, right, in Mesoamerican studies, even for the Maya, and it certainly is for Teotihuacan.

The archaeology of Tikal really began in the 1950's, through the excavations of the University of Pennsylvania, and subsequent projects have consistently revealed a lot of fascinating material evidence of connections with Teotihuacan, mostly in the form of ceramics, architectural styles, things like that. So, for example, this well-known ceramic vessel, you see it rolled out here in this drawing. Nowadays it's sometimes called the "entrada pot," *entrada* meaning "the journey", the entrance of foreigners into the Maya area. And here you see this line of warriors, distinctively dressed in the form of Teotihuacan warriors here approaching buildings that may be Maya. This is really an intriguing scene that we can't really assign any historical event to, right. But it's, symbolic and indicative of this connection. It's a very nice visual reference to the tightness of these two places, these two regions. So this is just an example of how, the connections with between the Maya and Teotihuacan, have kind of been on the minds of archaeologists, art historians, for a very long time. My own thinking about this really began in

earnest in the mid-nineties. And this is this was a time when you know we were reevaluating a lot of inscriptions, and we were reading them with fresh eyes. And a pattern kind of emerge that I'll describe to you, which I think specifically refer to perhaps the event we see here, but at least to this intrusion from the West into the central Maya lowlands.

So, more material evidence from the Tikal project here this particular monument, I believe it's Stela 30. Is that right? Or like 32, thank you Simon. I should know these things by now. This is a wonderful, a kind of literally glaring example of a Teotihuacan style sculpture found at Tikal, right not a very large, imposing monument, a fragment. But you see here a Teotihuacan warrior with a distinctive goggles the so-called tassel headdress and a very kind of ghostly representation you might see here of a bird with a crest. You see his eye here and a beak. We're going to come back to that a little bit later. So the one of the questions that I really want to ask here is a fundamental one, and it's probably way too broad to go into in a lot of detail. But I want to try to flush it out a bit is what was the political connection here because it was a political connection, also economic, also demographic. I'm sure this connection existed on a lot of different levels and in a lot of different ways, but we can only access through the narratives, the written evidence, the political nature of this connection, and we have quite a bit of detail about it. The other thing is as I kind of mentioned before, is that for Teotihuacan itself, I think there's a really important question that I'd like to put out there, which is, is there a history that's recoverable for Teotihuacan? And I believe the answer is yes, and this is, I think, one of the more exciting parts of this work with the Maya histories, which is, they're talking about Teotihuacan and they're talking about the people who came to Tikal from Central Mexico. They're talking about them by name by title. They're describing them in certain ways, and this opens up a very small, very narrow window, I think, into some old questions about the nature of Teotihuacan as a urban area, it's political organization, and so forth. It doesn't answer all the questions. We are always going to be debating. What was Teotihuacan, right? It's a very mysterious place, and it probably always will be, but I think through a Maya lens we can begin to understand a little bit about it.

I also want to point out that recent work at Teotihuacan has really added an important new dimension to all of this, which is the clear, clear evidence that there were Maya, elite Maya, living in Teotihuacan in the Early Classic period. What you see here is just a few sherds of very beautiful, beautifully carved elite ceramics that were found by the project at the temple of the of the columns directed by Nawa Sugiyama and her colleagues.

Hundreds and hundreds of sherds in Maya style, not necessarily made in the Maya area, but with carving that is, I think, made by Maya artisans, in addition to paintings, wall paintings that were broken in a Maya style, I think, painted by Maya artisans again, who were in Teotihuacan, now what's interesting here is that these ceramics and the painting fragments, and so forth that they're recovering, come from the fourth century, but probably before some of the history I'm going to be talking about with you today, right. So there's a year that we can pin down that some of you probably know about kind of the flashpoint of this relationship, which was the year 378 AD. That we know from the Tikal records, as I'll describe. But before this we have clear evidence of elite Maya in Highland Mexico, and we have clear evidence, I think, of Teotihuacan connections in the Maya region as well, so it's not- it's a long relationship, and it's a very long and complicated relationship. The history that's written down is a little smidgen of a much larger, complicated connection between these areas.

Now, the scholarship in this, just to give a little bit more background, it goes back again to the Penn project, and one, I think, important discovery in all of this was a particular stela, Stela 31, very famous monument from Tikal, here shown in situ, in the North Acropolis of Tikal, it's one large fragment the base of it's never been found yet, but it's been prominently displayed in the Museum in Tikal for years, and it's been published over and over again. You'll probably recognize it in some of these images, and on the sides the Penn archaeologists, William Coe and others, were intrigued to find representations again of Teotihuacan style warriors. These are the two sides of Stela 31. The front shows a Maya ruler, Sihyaj Chan K'awiil, and these are these so-called attendant figures. They're hieroglyphic captions not illustrated here that are above each of these figures. I'll come back to them later. But you'll notice the rectangular shield. you can see the color here with spondylus shells. He's holding an atlatl, or a spear thrower, and darts over here. This kind of tail-like features on the back is also kind of distinctive for these foreign warriors that that are Maya representations of warriors from Central Mexico. Notice, the shield has the same image we saw on that stela just now. Oh, I think I pressed the wrong button there. But you see that there it is very similar to that stela that I just showed from Tikal.

The back of Stela 31 had a very long inscription, and back in the sixties and seventies, and into the eighties, not much of it could be read. The dates could be read, some of the rulers names could be identified, but the narrative itself was very hard to tease out. And this as it turns out, is really a an important lynchpin in our understanding of the story of Teotihuacan in the Maya world. I'm going to be showing you in later slides a couple of names that are important actually more than two, but there are a couple that are here. One of them is a fellow who's named this hieroglyph, and his name was SihyajK'ahk', perhaps meaning something like fire is born, and another fellow who's very important, and who I really want to actually feature tonight is this hieroglyph, which turns out to be a personal name as well for someone we use a nickname for, we call him Spearthrower Owl, and I'll show you many more examples of that fellow's name and variance of it. There are other people named here as well, including a Tikal Ruler, ChakToklch'aak, who, unfortunately dies on the day of the arrival of Teotihuacanos into Tikal on the very day, according to this text.

Let's get into some of the details. Well, the first person who really teased out some of this was Tatiana Proskouriakoff, really the person who brought Maya history to us in the first place. Her book, *Maya History*, published in 1993, posthumously outlined some of the ideas that she was playing around with using this Tikal evidence that was quite new to her at the time. Most of this book was, in fact, written, I think, in the sixties and seventies, even though it was published much later. But she was looking at these names. She was looking at these dates and she came up with a really interesting theory.

One of the names that she singled out was this one here. In fact, it's the same one I just showed you in Stela 31, right here, and she recognized that, there's a spear thrower element here, or an atlatl with a circular design, and she reasoned that this was a reference to foreigners. She said well, this is very likely some sort of term of reference for what she called the "The Atlatl Shield People." Right, the spear thrower shield people. So, a term of for referring to the armaments right of a foreign Teotihuacano. Another well, a bit later on kind of building on her ideas in the 1980's, in fact, Linda Schele and others suggested that this glyph also was some sort of title referring to warfare, and specifically to central Mexican kind of modes of warfare. So, kind of rather vague interpretations of it, right.

I'll come back to this in a second. The thing that Proskouriakoff, though really focused on in her 1993 publication, and of course she was writing before this, was a particular date. This is that 378 date I was talking about, which is written on several monuments. It's written at Tikal on Stela 31, it's written here on this another famous stela from the site of Uaxactun, very close to Tikal.

And this image here of a striding figure also with a spear thrower a particular weapon here, which is, well known for Central Mexico. Here's the tail-like device, all of the elements here really signal someone who's, not a lowland Maya military type. Proskouriakoff reasoned, given the pattern here. That this date featured on this stela referred to the arrival of strangers, as she called it. Now I'm going to be arguing they weren't strangers at all. The arrival of familiars, maybe in a very literal way, is the way I look at it. But she was right. And what's interesting, this is kind of amusing. One of the things that got me kind of on this back in the nineties was realizing that the hieroglyphs on the side of this particular stela, there are many more than this. There's the date, but after the date, you might even recognize a few of these, if any of you know some Maya hieroglyphs there's the Tikal emblem, right? There's a verb here. This is the event itself. And what was interesting was this says *huliiy* "he arrived." Proskouriakoff didn't know that, yet she called this the "arrival event" just extraordinary! That's actually what it says, and who arrives. Well, it's this person SihyajK'ahk', who arrives to Tikal. This is a Uaxactun monument referring to an event that's taking place nearby, just down the road at Tikal. January the 16, 378.

We have a couple of portraits Sihyaj K'ahk', Proskouriakoff didn't know this. Here's another example of his name, but cleaner and easier to see. One of them comes from a site again, not too far from Tikal called, El Peru (Waka'), and this is another figure here with the shell collar. There's the spear thrower, the goggles, the tassel headdress, all of those elements are there. And here, just barely discernible, is the name of SihyajK'ahk' as Stan Guenter pointed out to me a number of years ago. Really, I think, compelling evidence that this is a portrait of him, and we do have others that really show that he is, at least depicted as a Central Mexican.

Now the texts, again Proskouriakoff couldn't really read them, but, in the last twenty-five years or so we have been able to. This is a reference here, a passage from Stela 31 that features, the same date, and it's the arrival of our friend, there he is, right. And he has an interesting title that I show the photograph of it here. *Ochk'in K'awiil*, I mean something like the Western K'awiil. And you're going to ask me, what does K'awiil mean? Well, I'll tell you in a minute. This is a, I think, an interesting and rather new

development the West thing that was very interesting. That reference for him, that would make sense. But the other thing I wanted to mention to you is, we have the death here of ChakToklch'aak, right? The arrival of a person, and the death of the Tikal King implies some sort of pretty rapid, and maybe even disruptive political event at Tikal. And this was kind of laid out in a paper I wrote in the late nineties, published in 2000. And Simon is also about this. We were all kind of talking about this back in those days right and kind of coming to very similar conclusions about it. So, that article published in 2000, a lot of people read it, and it was debated, it was controversial in fact, you know. Is this some sort of conquest? Right? What? What's going on here? You know what is Stuart really saying, you know, and a lot going back and forth in the literature about it that you know sometimes it's a little frustrating to read it, because I was trying to be really cautious about this, and say, no, I don't think it was necessarily a conquest, I wasn't sure, you know, but people would read into it. I think it's a conquest actually now, now that we read this stuff, as I'll show you. But, you know, bit by bit, we're just teasing more out of this. Now, this term *k'awiil*, it's really interesting. What does that mean? You may recognize that name or that word from a lot of Maya inscriptions. It's part of a lot of royal names, at Tikal, and a lot of other places. It's the name of an important deity as well, as I'll show you.

Now after 2000, just a few years after in fact, a remarkable thing was discovered at a site, in the Petén of Guatemala, at a site called La Sufricaya, the project run by Francisco Estrada Belli, a painting, a painted text on a palace wall, hieroglyphs, along with lots of other figures around it in nearby rooms. And there's a dedication record to this particular building, that's written here, giving the date of when it's built, and then it says, well, one year and four days ago, almost exactly a year, it says, *huliiy mutul k'awiil* "arrived to Tikal, the *k'awiil*." So, there's that same word again. All right, it's not saying "Western *k'awiil*." It's just saying *k'awiil*. So what's going on here?

In nearby, in this particular complex at La Sufricaya, Francisco and his project also uncovered a number of really interesting and bizarre images of Teotihuacan style warriors lined up in rows holding weaponry. This was one of the pieces of evidence that really, I think, brought home to me that this was more than just some sort of benign intrusion, but something much more powerful, and with regional ramifications, because it's not just about Tikal. It's not just about Uaxactun. It's about a lot of other places in that Central Maya zone.

K'awiil, here's *K'awiil*. He used to be known as God K. So, another kind of jargon term in Maya Studies. God K. It's a coincidence that God K and *k'awiil*, you know that that that's just you know a convergence. We don't call him God K because his name was *k'awiil*. That was the old Schellhas-designation for him from around the turn of the century. But here you have *k'awiil* with the tall forehead, a usually a torch or an axe in the forehead, and we can track him back in iconography to understand that he was the animate acts of the Rain God, Chahk. That's really his essential identity. Now *k'awiil* as a term we know from even more recent discoveries of political texts having to do with other places besides Tikal. I think, and perhaps others, and there may be a little bit of discussion still to be done about this. But it really does seem to mean something a bit more abstract, not a name of a God, but it's really this idea of power. *K'awiil* really encapsulates this idea of royal authority, and it can be animated as the acts of the storm god right.

When an inscription says something about the arrival of *K'awiil* to Tikal, I think what they're talking about is the arrival of a foreign authority, the arrival of a new power structure. And going back even further, Stela 31 is specific about it being a Western power structure or at least in its origin.

There are other characters in this narrative. In fact, there's more than I have time to even go into here but one of the main players in the story of the late fourth century at Tikal is this fellow who used to be called Curl Nose in the literature of Maya history, but we now know his name was something like Yax Nuun Ayiin, also a king of Tikal. He was the subsequent king of Tikal. And he was installed in the year 379. Kind of interesting that's right after the arrival, isn't it? Not, you know there's a little bit of time there, not exactly after, but a bit after. This is recorded in a couple of places, including here on Stela 4, and also on Stela 31. Here's his name, and here's his portrait. There's a nice *k'awiil* looking down on him, right, from the heavens. So, you have authority kind of overbearing, overbearingly looking down on him.

He is the fellow on the side of Stela 31. And there's another interesting passage that has to do with his crowning here on Stela 31 that says, I think something along the lines of "taking the 28 provinces." They're using the word *peten*, actually, *pet* for "province or territory," and *ukuch* "it is his burden." Most important here, I think, is this idea that it is the crowning takes place under the auspices, or by the act

of so SihyajK'ahk. So Sihyaj K'ahkis not a king. He's a very powerful lord who arrives. He installs a new king to Tikal.

And it gets even more interesting. Pearl nose or Yax Nuun Ayiin, here he is. His name is above in the caption, was the son of this guy. This determines now that This is a personal name. It is not a title of war. It is not some sort of reference to the "Atlatl Shield people" as Proskouriakoff proposed. Rather this is a reference to an individual. The father of Yax Nuun Ayiin is this guy, the father of a Tikal King. Who is this? This is the big question, right?

And we have many references to him, and I'm going to spend the rest of my talk really flushing him out. The name, Spearthrower Owl, goes back really to the 1980's to variants of his name. These are all equivalent, right, where you see this bird substituting for this circular shield-like element. And here's the bird here. So typically, in Maya writing, you do get a lot of visual elaboration. You have simple forms, elaborate forms, animate forms, inanimate forms, right? You just have to know these equivalences if you're studying or reading a Mayan text. These are Maya variants of the name, and I think they're non-Maya variants of his names. I'll show you, and what I proposed, kind of as a working hypothesis back in 2000 was that this is a reference to foreigners, but it's a reference to one foreigner who was a ruler of Teotihuacan, and this was again not universally accepted. Ah, there was a lot of debate about this, and there still is a lot of debate about this. But the more I've looked at this information over the years. And most recently the more I've just convinced myself that there's really no alternative but to see this as the name of a ruler of Teotihuacan, and we know more about him.

We know his reign, because again the inscriptions of Tikal talk about this. He reigned for 65 years. We have his crowning recorded on this text right here. This is another reference to him, written a little bit differently on May the 5th of 374, four years before the intrusion into Paten, into Guatemala. And we have his death date recorded here on Stela 31 in the year 439. We don't have his birth date, but he must have been fairly young when he was crowned. Crowned where? Right? He's not part of the Tikal dynasty. We know this right. We know that from other sources. So, this is what led us to look beyond Tikal, beyond the Maya area. And to kind of bridge this historical specificity with the general ideas the Proskouriakoff long ago was proposing, right, that he may well be a foreigner.

The discovery in 1982 of another monument at Tikal really helped us understand much more in fact. This is where his accession date is recorded. A very strange stone, right as far as sculptures go. , it has this rosette at the top. It's kind of columnar shape to it, tiny hieroglyphs inscribed on two sides of the column, it's been called a ball court marker, but it was not a ball court marker that name kind of stuck. That's why we call it the Marcador. But it was erected in the patio of an elite residential area in the southern part of Tikal. It may represent a dart or spear with a shield thrust into the ground. It's a symbol I think, of conquest, and you might notice at the very top there who's featured in that circular design. That's our friend Spearthrower Owl.

Here is a LiDAR image showing the area of Tikal just a small portion of where this was found. Group C-16 is actually right here, and this was all excavated in the 1980's by Juan Pedro Laporte and the Proyecto Nacional Tikal. And so much important data ceramically sculpturally came out of Laporte's excavations. Now, just recently, this area is being reinvestigated for it's really intriguing architectural connections to Teotihuacan. Steve Houston has proposed that this may well be an architectural kind of copy of the area called the Ciudadella at Teotihuacan, and sure enough, excavations just in the last few years have revealed massive amounts of Teotihuacan-style braziers and ceramics cached in offerings in the front of that pyramid. There's a lot going on here right that I can't go into. But here's the Marcador, and here is that special kind of highlighted reference in the center.

Now, one of the things that came up again after my initial publication on all of this was a better understanding of this difficult inscription. It refers to the arrival of SihyajK'ahk', again, there's the whole date, January the 16th, 378, yet another reference to it. He arrives *huliy Sihyaj K'ahk'*, the *kaloomte'*, being a very important title of authority and power used by hegemonic Maya rulers, as Simon is most recently written about. A later part of this text, which is pretty difficult to read, also talks about Spearthrower Owl and SihyajK'ahk, but then there is a new event that's brought into the mix very clearly readable as *och ch'e'en*, which means "to enter a town, to enter a community" literally to enter a cave. And we know this from many, many other examples in Maya texts. This is a reference to conquest. It's used at Palenque. It's used at Dzibanché. It's used in a lot of different sites as a term for military conquest, and this was to me the icing on the cake, as they say, in terms of interpreting the nature of this event. There's just no way around it.

Now going back to Spearthrower Owl, I showed you some Maya versions of his name, but those aren't the only ones. We have also here a couple more added on that show the bird and show different weapons. In this case it's a hand holding a spear or a dart along with a shield. It might be a little hard to see here, but there's a dart right here, a round shield, and there's the fletching's of the arrow overlaying the body of this raptorial bird, just as you see here, these are just variants. I believe that these particular forms, which are a little bit different, are actually tapping Teotihuacan conventions for writing the name of this particular person, a weapon with a raptorial bird. I don't believe they're all owls. I think lots of these may be eagles, and the way that they also write this name phonetically in some of the Maya sources suggests to me that it means something like , the striking of an eagle, or one who strikes an eagle, one who wounds an eagle. *Jatz'oom* is the first part of the name in Maya. We're not quite sure what the bird is, but these are clearly the same guy, and more than just at Tikal we have these really intriguing references to local lords at places like Río Azul, another Maya kingdom, Naranjo perhaps, a nearby kingdom, calling themselves the vassals of Spearthrower Owl, or in this case another version of the name, there's the atlatl, or the spearthrower, with the *kaloomte'* title. In fact, here he is called the *ochk'in kaloomte'*, the Western Ruler. *Kaloomte'*, a little tricky to translate, but it is not just ruler, but something even more than that, right, someone who really has a hegemonic control. And he's called here the Western *kaloomte'*. So local lords in the Maya lowlands, not just at Tikal, were calling themselves vassals of this person.

Now this opens up into some new visual territory here, because once you start identifying the bird and the weapons motif. I guess you call it motif. I call it a hieroglyph. It it's more than just an emblem or a design. It's a name it starts cropping up in lots of places, and these were actually studied as long as the 1940's right in the ceramics of Teotihuacan. This is a vessel in in Teotihuacan style in so called cylinder tripods, right, often with lids. These are founded at Teotihuacan, some are found in the Pacific coastal area of Guatemala, as well, with many of them with this, this repeating design of a warrior, his head popping up here, but in front of him, as highlighted in blue, is the bird, the shield, and there's the arrow, right? It's exactly the same as that. Why would you have this particular combination? Well, I think here it's the name of this person, right? This is following the conventions of Teotihuacan art where you have personal names accompanying portraits without long text right they're kind of emblematic names. Name hieroglyphs. And these are all examples here from Teotihuacan of the same design. It was called the *lechuza y armas*-motif, the "owl and weapons"-motif, mostly on ceramics, sometimes on figurines, and here's a warrior with it emblazoned on the chest. Now this has been interpreted understandably as a quote-unquote war emblem, an eagle right, weapons. Yeah, it sounds pretty war-like, but that kind of interpretation doesn't sit well with me in the sense that those kinds of generic, broadly conceived designs don't really have much of a role in Mesoamerican visual culture. Right, there's iconography, and there's writing. But there aren't really kind of broad emblems of things right that that are just sort of detached from language or detached from very specific kinds of meanings. I don't think you need something like to identify him as a warrior in other words, right. It's not just a title for a warrior. I would interpret this as a personal name.

And again, this follows many conventions we know of, and that others have studied. At Tikal we have other examples, too, of the eagle. Here's the weapons and the shield right exactly as here. And this is another example from Teotihuacan that that's on a ceramic disc. But you see that it's the same. One is frontal, the other ones are side. This understanding has been informed by the work that the Karl Taube did on the writing system of Teotihuacan back around 2000. And what Karl really showed is that Teotihuacan did have a writing system, but it's nearly always confined to the representation of proper names of places or people, not unlike the Central Mexican writing system that we know from later cultures. And I think it's pretty much spot on. Now the same design again appears, and again this may be pushing the edges of this a bit right, because you start seeing these things everywhere. I'm happy to pull back, but I do believe that connections that others have made as well may turn out to be true, which is, that the same emblem of war quote unquote shows up at Palenque. Here's the raptorial bird with the dart through it. There's the point. There's the fletching's, a wounded bird. And here, this is Simon's drawing from a plate in the Tikal area of a bird that has blood gushing out of its midsection here, and it also has kind of weapons integrated into the feather work of its wings, with goggles, and so forth, too. So really, I think the same kind of idea that's being used emblematically in much later Maya art. These examples are here are from the 8th century, and this has been a point of kind of a counter argument. Why would they be referring to this person hundreds of years later? Right? I think there's a good reason which I'll talk about.

But this is the kind of emblematic writing that Taube and Christophe Helmke and Christopher Nielsen have written about, right. The Maya are well aware of Teotihuacan conventions, and are sometimes even using them in the ways that they write the name of this particular powerful person. Again, this is a Tikal variant of the name using Teotihuacan styles, and elements.

Again, in the 8th century on ceramic plates we find these fantastic designs of, in this case a seated warrior with a weapon that is here animate as a what we call the Teotihuacan war serpent. He's standing on or not sitting on, I'm sorry, a seat here with this serpent and a large kind of goggle-like feature, and this happens to be a Teotihuacan sign for blood. The elements here and I don't have all of the connections to show you, are very suggestive to me that we are looking at a Maya artisans' interpretation of Teotihuacan imagery and writing not exactly Teotihuacan writing but a Maya kind of take on it. We know this from Copan and other places too, where we have the weapon and kind of abbreviated forms of elements. The eye of an eagle or an owl, is now this circular form, right? I believe this is also him. In other words, this is a Late Classic Maya ceramic portrait of Spearthrower Owl, that is not unlike this one in terms of its composition, but just using much more Maya forms. I know this is a bit pushing it. But I do think that this is the right kind of interpretation of it.

As it turns out, a lot of later Maya art that was studied by Linda Schele and others, especially in the eighties and nineties that references Teotihuacan styles and motifs and militarism. What Linda called the "Tlaloc Complex", call it referencing the Central Mexican God, not kind of a misnomer. Right? Because that's a Nahuatl Postclassic name. She also used the term "Venus Warfare" to refer to this visual complex of militarism referencing Central Mexico. I think she was on to something here, but what I think she wasn't, and couldn't be aware of, none of us were at the time, is that a lot of this imagery, not all of it, but a lot of it is grounded in specific historical memory. The 378 conquest of the Peten was a seminal event in establishing an ideology of warfare that later Maya kings constantly referenced. Even after the fall of Teotihuacan, we see this at Copan, we see this certainly at Tikal, and it's sites that are related to the Tikal dynasty. This is, I think, something that really has changed my thinking about it, really that it's it, that it's a historically grounded thing. These references, even at Yaxchilan or Palenque, right? All of these sites had something to do with this story or referenced it.

So, beginning to wrap things up here, Spearthrower Owl, he was the ruler of Teotihuacan. I'm convinced more than ever. One inscription at Tikal notes that he was the fourth ruler, that doesn't make sense for Tikal. But it would make sense for wherever he's from. Now, if he came to power in 374, that's interesting. There were three predecessors of some sort in a political arrangement. I'll come back to that before I end. What I propose is that Tikal was not part of some grand empire, right? I think Teotihuacan probably had an empire that was restricted to Central Mexico. But I don't want to give you the picture that Tikal was some sort of conquered province that was just absorbed into some imperial structure. That's not really how Mesoamerican geopolitics worked. Rather, my sense of this is that we're looking at a flashpoint, again in a long relationship, but that it was really focused on individual family connections. A patron-client kind of relationship may be the best way to describe this, that is referring to a mutually beneficial arrangement between a powerful person and a not so powerful person where it's not really, well, an imperial arrangement, I could be swayed that it's maybe something stronger than this. I'm sure Simon has very specific ideas about this. He knows Maya politics better than anyone, but I just want to push back on this characterization that the Teotihuacan had an empire in the Maya world. I just don't believe that's the case. Family ties, I know among these elite dynasties were very, very strong. I think we have good material evidence of this. We have good historical evidence of this. He was the father of a Tikal king. And you're probably not going to be the father of a Tikal king, unless you have some pre-existing connections to that world. And the other thing that I've kind of outlined here is that he had a very long-lived legacy in Classic Maya ideology. The ideology of warfare, I think, was largely spurred by this particular situation in the fourth century.

A parallel that I can think of, right, this is a, maybe a terrible one, but later Maya kingdoms I think were specifically referencing Spearthrower Owl on pottery, in warrior regalia, on shields at Piedras Negras and other places, because he's almost like a Julius Caesar-figure right, a specific individual who becomes abstracted as a symbol of military might and power to the point where he does become a military title. "Kaiser." Right? So maybe we've come full circle, maybe Spearthrower Owl was in a sense that kind of idea of foreign military power, I don't think Proskouriakoff was wrong, or Schele, or others. I just think those were incomplete understandings of it.

The last thing I think I'll say here is that I think we see this history in the archaeology of Teotihuacan, when I mentioned that Spearthrower Owl comes to power in 374, and he seems to be the fourth ruler

in some sort of sequence. Doesn't mean he's the fourth ruler of Teotihuacan in all of its history, but of a new political arrangement of some sort. He's the fourth in the sequence. Well, what's really interesting is that we've long known at Teotihuacan that there is a pretty abrupt change in the ceramics, in architectural complexes, and so forth around the year 350.

So, this is the transition between what's called the Talmimilopa, and the Xolalpan phases. It just intrigues me that this era, described by a many Teotihuacan archaeologist as coming after a period of increased centralization and expansion, in wide areas of Mesoamerica, and militarism, that it comes right here in the dates of Spearthrower Owl. That particular phase, most of it is covered by his actual reign. So, I would like to propose that there is an archaeological correlate to the history that we can read in the Maya sources. This is something that will be maybe controversial, because we don't have the records at Teotihuacan, we're reading it from a distance. But there is a preponderance of evidence again from written history that I think allows us to start to see this in place.

So, Spearthrower Owl, or Eagle Striker, as he probably was more accurately named, was a badass of Mesoamerica, and it's exciting for me to think that he maybe the thin end of a wedge I hope that can grow in the understanding of a history at Teotihuacan, and of this long-standing connection with the Maya world. Thank you.

Frauke Sachse:

Thank you. Thank you very much, Dave. This was fascinating, and I'm sure we have questions from the audience.

Question #1:

Oh, well, well, thank you. That was that was fascinating, and I really appreciate you sharing all your insights with us. One thing that was interesting to me is you demonstrated the great youth of Eagle Striker, Spearthrower Owl, right around the time of this *entrada*, and knowing that he installed his son, Yax Nuun Ayiin, would his son have been, you know, a child at that point. Is there any indications that there was a regent or something?

David Stuart:

Yeah, so excellent question and this is something that we've also noticed there. They, they're parameters here that strongly suggests, well, I don't know how you can argue otherwise. But yes, I do think that Yax Nuun Ayiin was probably a child when he was installed as the ruler of Tikal and the regent was Sihyaj K'ahk, so the one who arrives in 378, who has this *kaloomte'* title, right, he was a political authority in his own right, is not claiming the throne of Tikal, but I think his job is to oversee this new political order in the Peten. And with Tikal installing his overlord's son in in in kind of a new arrangement. But I also don't believe that it was a complete break with the past with Tikal. I think there had to have been these close connections over a long period of time, probably with Tikal that led up to this right. What would motivate something like this? Probably some inner family strife, for example. So, it also suggests the very strong possibility that the mother of Yax Nuun Ayiin was perhaps of the of Tikal right of the Peten herself. We don't have any firm historical evidence of her, maybe on one monument at Tikal, but it's very dicey. But that's just the implication. But to bring a young child from Teotihuacan to the Maya lowlands, you know, in in 378-379, it's extraordinary to think about that story. I mean, it's in the inner dynastic politics that would have led up to that.

Question #2:

How's that? Yeah, oh that sounds much better. Okay. So, two things, one, one's a question, a comment, and then and then a question. I'm intrigued by the idea of a shift at Teotihuacan, and between the two phases and the four rulership or whatever, and it just it just it strikes me that of course, you know Rome started out as one kind of political system until you know kind of arguably internal stresses of having this large, at the time hegemonic empire, which then collapsed into an imperial system, as a way of you know, kind of stabilizing that. So, I just think there's an interesting analogy, especially in light of the you know the kind of Latin texts. The other one is actually relating exactly to that point about family connections. And, if we think that a bride was Maya, and maybe had traveled from Tikal to reside at Teotihuacan for a while, maybe it was a whole harem of brides, of Spearthrower Owl, but that of course, you know, relates potentially to the nature of Burial 10 at Tikal and the bones of Yax Nuun Ayiin, and that of course, throws up that little extra problem of the isotopic analysis all these bones. Have you had any more thoughts about that, and also the possibility that these people were actually bouncing back and forth?

David Stuart:

Yeah, no, right, so glad you asked that, Simon. Yes. So, what Simon was referring to was an important study of the bones from the tomb in Tikal's North Acropolis in Burial 10 that were identified early on as the likely burial of Yax Nuun Ayiiin. Not based on any kind of written label on the tomb, but, based on the ceramics, there's a little alligator, jade I think that was found in there. Circumstantial evidence very strongly suggests that it's his tomb. The analysis, by Lori Wright of the teeth of the burial, and I think there were just, was there just one or two? Just one tooth indicated that that person in the tomb was not from Teotihuacan. You know the strontium analysis of teeth which I'm no expert on strongly indicated that this person grew up locally in the Tikal region or the Peten region, and I remember at the time going, ah rats, you know. But at the time I mean, it may have been clear to others, and not to me. But you know, once I kind of looked at all of this logical argument about you know, ages of people and movement I was like well, that actually might agree with what Lori was seeing in the strontium signatures. That's not something for me to judge. That's for other people to evaluate. But, if you, if he came to, if Yax Nuun Ayiiin came to the Peten when he was a very young child, an infant or a toddler, that might help explain it. The movement back and forth, Simon, I think exactly if we're getting these hints of movement from the Highlands down to the Maya area, you know there was more, and we have historical evidence of movement in the other direction, which I never had time to get into right. The founder of the Copan dynasty, the famous K'ichich Yax K'uk Mo' claimed authority from Teotihuacan. We see this visually in his in the portraits of him and in the texts, he's called an *ochk'in kaloomte'*, himself. He claims that Western connection, and sure enough, the narrative of his story is that he walked for 152 days from a place where he received K'awiil, literally, before he arrived at Copan in the Early Classic, this was in the 420's, I think, 426, during the reign of Spearthrower Owl, by the way, right? So, there were people going back and forth all the time, and the other thing that this reminds me of Simon is we have this great evidence at Tikal, because we have the sources that are preserved that have been excavated, right. Think if we didn't have Stela 31 or the Marcador, where would we be? It just goes to show that there are probably other Maya sites that probably had similar kinds of narratives. When you mentioned a possible Maya harem up in the court of Teotihuacan or something like that, you know I could see lots of Maya elites from lots of different kingdoms having royal households up there for these connections, right? It was the place to be. Teotihuacan was the place to be in Mesoamerica and the Maya knew that. Yeah.

Frauke Sachse:

We have one question from the gentleman in the back.

Question #3:

David, many, many, many questions. But I'll try one specific thing that I find really interesting, and it's about language, you know. First, a comment, Teotihuacan has been understood to be a unique, extremely cosmopolitan place for a very long time. It certainly had founders about 150-200 BCE. There's been a question about what language that might have been, okay of the founders. So that's just sticking out question one. Now let's go to the fourth century. Do you have a thought about the dominant language of rulership at that point, you know, ethnic group, linguistic group, at Teotihuacan at that time. And finally, third part, I've been told by every linguist, everybody in this business that Nahuatl was not spoken at Teotihuacan. What do you think?

David Stuart:

I don't have a strong opinion. My thinking has evolved a little bit. I remember in the Nineties again being intrigued by some clues of possible Nahuatl words written in Maya on Stela 31 of Tikal, you know. I'm not so sure anymore. I kind of I don't know if I- It was a kind of a throw out idea of the time I remember. But I would guess if I had to guess it would be that it was not Nahuatl spoken at Teotihuacan. I think they are better candidates. Totonacan has been proposed of course, there have been others as well, and I'm fine with that. I don't think glottochronology is going to help us necessarily determine this. I don't know borrowing patterns of words you know from one Mesoamerican language into Mayan is going to tell us that either. Right? It's going to take something else. In other words, I think it's a question where we may not know, and the writing system may not allow us to really get a good handle on that. I know there's some people playing around with some ideas about it. But ... [inaudible comment from the audience] yeah, there could be. You know I've learned over the years not to say "Oh, we'll never know" you know, but I do think it'll be a question always. And it does seem that we are looking at a logographic script at Teotihuacan, it's going to take us a lot more material to really get some insight into it. I know there are folks who know more about it than I do. And you know Nahuatl, I don't know it just doesn't really seem to be a good fit in my mind right now.

Question #4:

Dave, wonderful talk, and I have one comment and then two questions. The one comment is that has to do with the analogy that you brought up with Rome, but really has to do with the Habsburgs. You know, Charles II, Charles V is the same person, and it depends upon what historical genealogy you're tracing, so you can be the same person. But tracing back, depending upon the historical position you want to take. And so, the Habsburgs see themselves in line with Aeneas and they're always dressing as Hercules. So, you know your point about the fact that you know three hundred years later you're referencing Spearthrower doesn't seem odd at all. If you see that kind of relationship, you can be both, a descendant of, and your own person at the same time. At least, that's the analogy I would draw that we know historically to be the case for the Habsburgs. But this has nothing to do with the Habsburgs, but it is an analogy. But the two questions I have one has to do with Teotihuacan, which is, as I understand, that the Palace of Pillars was actually destroyed and intentionally destroyed, violently destroyed. And so where does that fit in? And the other question I have is, when I was looking at Stela 31 and I immediately saw the Spearthrower itself, I thought I saw an owl. Is that right at the end of the Spearthrower?

David Stuart:

There are! There are Spearthrowers that have birds on the ends of them. I've seen them.

Tom Cummins:

But it looks like that on Stela 31.

David Stuart:

There was that really cruddy stela that I illustrated from El Peru showed a better example with a looks like an eagle's head or an owls' head. So yeah, exactly. I mean an emblematic weapon. I'm so glad you brought up the Plaza of the Columns. What I didn't mention, you know, because this is very, very new work from Nawa Sugiyama, Saburo Sugiyama, and that team working there. It's extraordinary, I mean. They just scratch the surface. But what they've come across is a destroyed wall of a complex that was covered in Maya art and painted by Maya artists. I saw these a few months ago in February when I was down there, and Nawa showed me the fragments. Unbelievable! No text. No, you know inscriptions that explain anything. But these are early Classic, Maya painters who are working at Teotihuacan with it with a Teotihuacan pallet of coloring. It's really interesting. Intentionally destroyed ceramics, some of the sherds, many, many more thrown about and shattered. And, if I remember right, a number of bodies, and these were executed Maya, associated with this find. Nawa dates it to around 350AD. And it's not the *Entrada*. It's probably before the *Entrada*. But I think it helps explain this dynamic and it's really fascinating. I think that's where so much of this larger narrative is going to be really coming into focus is through the work up into the Teotihuacan region.

Frauke Sachse:

We do, before I take more questions from the live audience, we do have a few people on the virtual audience who are asking questions as well. There are two questions regarding architectural features, both at Tikal and at Teotihuacan, and the first one writes that apparently the early faces of the Mundo Perdido complex at Tikal predate the *Entrada*, and whether you think that this might have been something like a Teotihuacan embassy or a trade delegation. And the other question/comment from # who thinks that Eagle Striker could be referenced as an ancestor at the Quetzal Papalotl-complex at Teotihuacan, given that the complex was built after his potential reign at the center, what do you think about that?

David Stuart:

Okay, two really good questions. Tikal architecture, yes, the Mundo Perdido complex, which was excavated by the national project under Juan Pedro Laporte, studied the entire development of the architecture there, and Juan Pedro found *talud tablero*, so-called Teotihuacan style on a lot of buildings there, and it was clearly before 378, and I remember this was actually one of these points of debate, you know, oh, you have this stuff in the glyphs about this arrival but we have, you know, archaeological evidence of you know, as if these were mutually exclusive ideas, right? And there is really good archaeological evidence in the architecture, and I think in other data sets, that Teotihuacan was very present on the minds of Tikaleños, and other Maya, and the more recent excavations in the area of what's called the Ciudadella have confirmed that *talud tablero* platforms are still being found. I just, a new one was found a couple of weeks ago at Tikal which is kind of exciting. So, there's generations of development leading up to the history I was talking about tonight the other question about the Quetzal Papalotl Palace, there are motifs there in the palace, on some of the columns, that look like rectangular

shields, with eagles and obsidian blades, with hearts attached to them. I illustrated in my upcoming book, proposing that it could well be a reference to Spearthrower Owl. There are other motifs in that palace. This is much later right. This is not contemporaneous with Spearthrower Owl, the Quetzal Papalotl Palace is one of the later features of Teotihuacan. How to interpret that? I don't know. But we were just talking about this idea of memory and the memory of political power. I do see evidence that at Teotihuacan like with the Classic Maya, they are referencing him after his death, generations after his death in the official art. Again, it doesn't surprise me and it's a dynamic that I think we can understand better through the Maya and how they were looking at it. But they're hints of it. But more than hints. There, there's really good evidence too I think at Teotihuacan.

Frauke Sachse:

There was a question there.

Question #5:

Yeah, Dave, how has your thinking evolved regarding the value function and use of writing in Mesoamerica in general, I mean given, given what appears to be the evidence that a syllabic writing system did not pass to, or was it not adopted by Teotihuacan? And do you have history for Teo being written through the through the Classic Maya. How has this changed your thinking regarding function use value of writing, especially in the context of thinking about variations and differences in political structures and ideologies.

David Stuart:

Yeah. So, do you mean, like the use of writing at Teotihuacan versus in the Maya area and kind of its limitations, or?

Audience Member:

Well, I think there's I think there's a suggestion, I think you make this as well, that the writing system of the Classic Maya was more evolved.

David Stuart:

Yeah, well there's a different culture of writing in in these two areas, and there are lots of different cultures of script in Mesoamerica. You know, the Maya are gradually developing these long texts, but it comes out of a much more reduced use of writing in the Preclassic where it's just names, and there's really no verbs and grammar. You know it's really limited. It kind of goes off on its own, you know, for its own purposes, right in terms of narrative constructions and the, it may have something to do, too, with the phonetics of these different languages, and maybe also, as many have suggested in Central Mexico we have an area with a lot of languages coexisting on the landscape in close proximity, where maybe syllabic writing wasn't that helpful in terms of conveying information and logographic scripts had a lot more flexibility, right?

Audience Member:

How could you see that being manifested?

David Stuart:

Well, I'm not sure I understand the question.

Audience Member:

It's okay. I'll talk to you about it later.

Frauke Sachse:

I think that's a good idea because we are running over time, and I will now close this question-and-answer session and would like you to join me in a round of applause for our speaker again. Thank you so much, David. This was a terrific talk and a terrific Q&A following it, and I know there are many more questions, and there are lots of questions from the virtual audience that we can't even get to. We will make sure to save those and get them to you so that you get these comments. So, thanks to the virtual audience for engaging here. I know you are always the ones who are missing out, and everyone who's here onsite there are refreshments in the back of the room. Join us for a round of drinks and conversations with our speaker. Thank you very much for coming. Thank you very much, David.

David Stuart:

Thank you, Frauke. Thank you, Tom.