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The Crossed Bands Motif: What does it mean?

Brittany Luther
University of Central Florida

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THE CROSSED BANDS MOTIF: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

by

BRITTANY KNOTT LUTHER
B.A. Archaeology, Baylor University 2010
B.A. Classics, Baylor University 2010

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ABSTRACT

The crossed bands motif is an iconographic symbol that appears among many Mesoamerican cultures' art including Olmec, Izapan and Maya spanning from the Early Pre-Classic to the Classic periods in Mesoamerica. Pierce explains in his theory on signs that icons, symbols and indices all contain meaning. This meaning was given to the signs by the one who commissioned the medium on which the sign is placed; therefore it is important to understand the meaning of these signs to learn more about the person or people who built them. The crossed bands motif has previously been studied based on individual pieces but never looked at as a symbol throughout geographical space and temporal existence. In this paper, I catalogue pieces of art in Olmec, Izapan and Maya sites that show the crossed bands motif. I delineated them based on what they represented, where the icon was present on the piece of art and when it was made. I found that in the Early Preclassic sites, the icon represented the existence of a deity and the sacred essence that the deity depicted on the stone monuments held. It transitioned in the Middle to Late Preclassic sites to signify the a connection between the deity and the human as a sort of transference of divinity. In the Classic Period, among Maya iconography, the meaning shifted again to represent the legitimacy of a ruler. The results of this research allow us to better understand the importance and relevance that these cultures placed on their deities not only in ritual life but in the legitimacy of their rulers and their right to rule. It allows us to understand that it was necessary for the rulership at these sites to publically state and

show the ritual acts or the proof that their rule was sacred and had been legitimized by a deity.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND THEORY

Introduction

The crossed-bands motif, also referred to as the St. Andrew's cross, is a motif present in Olmec, Izapan and Maya art. There are multiple interpretations surrounding this motif including those of Quirarte (1981), who makes a connection with serpents; Reilly, (2000) who connects it with celestial associations as a symbol of the crossing point of the eclipse and the Milky Way; and Julia Guernsey (2001), who discusses it as a portal to the other world. The issue with the current interpretations of this motif is that these theories are each isolated to a specific corpus of iconography. There are no interpretations based on a more comprehensive look at the motif with an expansive temporal and geographical context. In this paper, I will look at the crossed-bands motif on a wider scope to answer the questions of what the motif represented, why it was used, and the transition of the meaning of the motif among the Olmec, Izapan and Maya throughout time and cultural transitions. What I found was, that in the Early Preclassic to the Middle Preclassic among the Olmec, the crossed bands represented the presence of a deity and the sacred essence symbolized by the motif. In the Late Preclassic among Izapan iconography, the motif transitioned to indicate the deity in the presence of a ruler leading to an allocation of this sacred essence thus legitimizing his rulership. In the Classic period among the iconography of the Maya, the crossed bands motif evolves again to denote kings and rulers, likely indicating their inherently legitimized or deified rulership.

Theoretical Approach

In Peirce's (1991) writings on semiotics, he proposes that one cannot think without signs. He states, "The only thought that can possibly be cognized is thought in signs." This theory places great importance on signs, which he classifies into three categories: icon, index and symbol. The aim of semiotics is to study the ability of humans to both produce and understand the meaning of those signs (Preucel 2006). Based on his theory, any thought must be manifest in a sign of some sort; therefore any symbol, icon or index is the manifestation of conscious thought (Pierce 1991). Signs can include "ideas, words, images, sounds, and objects that are multiply implicated in the communicative process," (Preucel 2006). In other words, signs can be anything that one can manifest to convey meaning to another person. The importance of understanding ancient art such as the meaning of icons and symbols is necessary to understanding the thoughts and consciousness of the people who left those signs behind. The theory that current interpretation can give definitive ideas regarding the understanding of the signs at the time of construction or commission is idealistic and has its challenges. These challenges are especially prevalent when there is no written description present. However, the frequency of the appearance of the crossed-bands motif throughout Olmec, Izapan and Maya art from the Preclassic to the Classic, is evidence that this symbol held importance in the iconography and assumedly importance to the people interpreting and commissioning the iconography.

Semiotics began in the 19th century with two paths; the first was linguistic and the second was influenced by Peirce's writings and has a more philosophical approach (Preucel 2006). The recent trend in semiotics has moved toward the study of the modes of production of signs and meanings as they are used in social practice and away from signs and their classifications (Preucel 2006). Thibault (1991) discusses the idea that the construction of meaning is done so by a semiotic relationship among meaning relations, social practices, and the physical-material process that are brought about by social practices. Thibault's theory explains that the meaning given to anything, including signs is not done so singularly. The significance placed upon signs coincides with different and important physical and social practices among a culture. Signs can be meant to represent rituals, celebrations, and traditions, among other cultural practices by either mimicking or recording them. For example many of the Izapan stelae depict rituals. Thibault's theory suggests signs have significance, which enable us identify cultural practices from the signs that were left behind.

Pierce's theory on signs simply explains that a sign is something that stands for something else to someone in some capacity (Preucel 2006). In order for the relationship between the sign and the meaning it is portraying to be effective, the transaction must include the sign, the object, and the interpretant. The sign is the symbol, icon or index which holds meaning and the object is the entity that the sign is intended to represent. The interpretant is the person or people who determine the meaning that the person who commissioned or created the sign is attempting to make. Pierce then divides the sign-

object relationship into icons, indexes and symbols. Icons mimic the object by its character alone; for example, a portrait of someone displays a direct embodiment of what it is representing. An index is associated with the object by being affected by it directly; for example a clock both displays the time and has a direct relationship with time itself. Thirdly, a symbol is a sign that is associated with the object based on a general idea such as the alphanumeric system (Pruecel 2006). Andre Leroi-Gourha (1965) and Annette Laming-Emperaire (1962) were the first to bring the theory of semiotics to archaeology in France with their work on prehistoric cave paintings. James Deetz (1967) was the first to bring linguistic structuralism to the study of archaeology in material culture in the United States.

In Arthur Burkes' (1949) critique of Peirce's theory on semiotics, he discusses Pierce's classifications of signs as symbols, icons and indices. He reiterates Pierce's definition that a sign is something that represents an object or idea for someone to interpret. He defines a symbol as a sign that is associated with the object by a conventional rule, i.e. words, letters and numbers are symbols. He refers to an index as a sign by having relation with the object but not representing the object such as the clock discussed above, and an icon representing the object to the interpretant, such as a portrait. These definitions are the same as those that Pierce gave to signs as was discussed above. Burkes, however disagrees with Pierce's suggestion that a symbol is an icon if it possesses the quality or relation it signifies. Burkes' (1949) argues that this would contradict the definition that infers that a sign is not iconic unless the one interpreting recognizes it as a sign. In this argument, Pierce proposes that if the symbol in some way evidently

symbolizes the idea or object that it represents, then the symbol can be an icon. Burkes however believes that if this were so, it would dispute the separate classifications of symbol and icon and negate the direct definition that a sign, which directly portrays the object, is defined as an icon.

This paper is written on the theory that a symbol is an icon when the direct audience knows its symbolic meaning. If the direct or intended observer understands the meaning of the symbol, then it directly represents the meaning of the object, which would allow it to be defined as an icon as well. For the purpose of this paper I will use symbol and icon interchangeably. The crossed bands motif is not a diagram of the thought or object it is portraying as would fit with the definition of an icon; however, the intended viewer knew the meaning of the symbol. Therefore, the symbol was also used as an icon because to the assumed interpretant, the symbol was a direct representation of the object or the idea that the crossed bands represented. The direct audience included people who would witness the piece of artwork on which the icon appeared by walking through the plazas or near the temples where they were located. It is unclear whether non-elites would be able to interpret the icon as well as the elites and commissioners of the artwork.

Mesoamerican cultures did not create public art and iconography for solely aesthetic pleasures. It was created for a purpose; to share a message or event. Panofsky (1955) sectioned three levels of meaning in every work of art, 1) artistic motifs: primary or natural subject matter 2) images, stories and allegories: secondary or conventional subject matter and 3) symbolic values: intrinsic meaning or content. The crossed-bands motif

appears in art with both primary and secondary subject matter and appears as a symbol of intrinsic meaning on each piece of iconography (Quirarte 1981). Thus it is necessary to interpret this intrinsic meaning in order to gain a holistic understanding of the message and thoughts that the artists and/or commissioners were attempting to portray.

Kubler (1961) states that although content can survive in new forms, old forms can also survive without the original content having acquired new meanings. This paper is written under the assumption that the meaning of the crossed bands motif may have transformed throughout time and over geographical space and may hold different meaning among different sites at different times. Although the meaning of the crossed bands may have evolved, the importance of the symbol remained. This weight makes understanding what the Mesoamerican people were communicating through their pieces of art significant.

In chapter two of this thesis, I discuss previous research and theories on the crossed bands that have been formerly argued. The difficulty with these theories is that many of them contradict each other and only interpret the symbol based on a constricted time and geographical region. In chapter three, I discuss the background of the sites that I have looked at, and where artwork portraying the crossed-bands motif is found. I also review the significance, timeline and importance of each site. I have then laid out two tables and two graphs delineating the appearance of the crossed bands that I discuss in this paper. These tables and graphs include where they are located, when they were commissioned as well as where the crossed bands appears on the stela. Followed by the analysis of the data stated in the chart, in chapter four, I discuss the meaning of the crossed bands motif

beginning with the Olmec and its gradual transition in purpose throughout time and across geographical space. In chapter five I conclude by discussing the transition of the meaning that I have found from the representation of the deity in the Early Preclassic to the legitimization of a ruler during a ritual in the Middle Preclassic to appearing on rulers in the Classic Period.

CHAPTER 2: PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The crossed bands motif is used in multiple contexts, including on the wings of the Principle Bird Deity, which is a prevalent avian deity in Izapan art. It is also commonly on feathered serpents, in the mouths of earth monsters, on the headdresses or navels of rulers and even on a fish monster and in the eyes of creatures. There are multiple interpretations as to what the crossed-bands motif represents, but each interpretation is different. Joralemon (1971) associates it with multiple Olmec Gods including the Jaguar Monster and God IV, the were-jaguar. Quirarte (1981) correlates it with saurian images representing a bifurcated tongue. Aveni (1980) suggest the four arms refer to the inter-cardinal directions and later Rice (2007) equates it to the extreme positions of the sun. Taube (2004) correlates it to the cycle of corn and the maize god. Julia Guernsey (2001) sees it as a portal to the otherworld and Virginia Fields (1989) suggests it represents something borrowed from the otherworld and is used by human rulers to express divine sanction of their power. The trend that each interpretation shares is that each deals with the otherworld, whether it is correlated to a deity, a ritual or celestial event. There are multiple isolated interpretations of the crossed-bands motif, but in this paper I will define a comprehensive theory of the motif based on a wider overview of the monuments and figures on which it appears.

Joralemon (1971) notes the appearance of the crossed bands on depictions of God I or the Jaguar Monster in his Olmec deity classification, which is slightly different than Taube's interpretation, using Joralemon's classifications, which I will discuss below. The crossed-bands motif does however show up frequently on depictions of God IV, which is represented as an anthropomorphic dwarf or infant (Joralemon 1971). For example Monument 52 from San Lorenzo represents the infant God IV with crossed bands on his chest that was originally placed at the head of one of the ritual drainage systems at the site (Joralemon 1971). Joralemon (1971) also discusses the appearance of the crossed bands on God VII on a relief from Chalcatzingo, which is a serpent deity portrayed with avian attributes that coincides with Quirarte's argument of the crossed bands representing the serpent (Quirarte 1973). Joralemon's correlations between the crossed-bands motif and deities coincide with the interpretation that the crossed bands denote the presence of a deity.

Quirarte (1973) relates the crossed bands motif to the bifurcated tongue when it is present within a cartouche, similar to one of Joralemon's interpretations of the crossed bands representing a serpent. He uses the examples of the opposed diagonals and diagonal bands representing the serpent as seen in Izapa Stela 11 (Figure 18) (Quirarte 1973). He suggests the diagonals on the top-line design represent the serpents' bodies. He discusses the crossed bands motif in reference to La Venta Altar 4 as well, suggesting that the crossed-bands element in the mouth of the jaguar is a reference to the serpent as it also has double opposed diagonal bands on the second register of the ledge of the altar (Quirarte

1973). Quirarte's interpretation only looks at two isolated pieces, Izapa Stela 11, which already has a bifurcated tongue of the serpent and La Venta Altar 4 (Figure 1) (Quirarte 1973). His isolated examples are relevant but do not explain the motif as a whole.



Figure 1: La Venta Altar 4

Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks (1981)

Rice (2007) correlates the crossed bands in Izapa with saurians and celestial birds. However, similar to Aveni's (1980) interpretation, Rice (2007) suggests that the crossed bands motif could refer to the extreme positions of the sun at the solstice positions. He summarizes a multitude of occurrences, including the felines in the jaguar/earth-monster mouth of La Venta Altar 4, the sun in the Underworld in the later Maya Jaguar Sun God of

the Underworld, along with humans as an identifier in the headdress or as a chest or belt ornament. Though Rice discusses its occurrence in reference to many different depictions, he does not continue to discuss or interpret its meaning as a comprehensive symbol. He fails to connect his celestial interpretation with those associated with the avian deity and saurians. His interpretations do however agree with the crossed bands connection with deities and or events taking place outside the terrestrial realm.

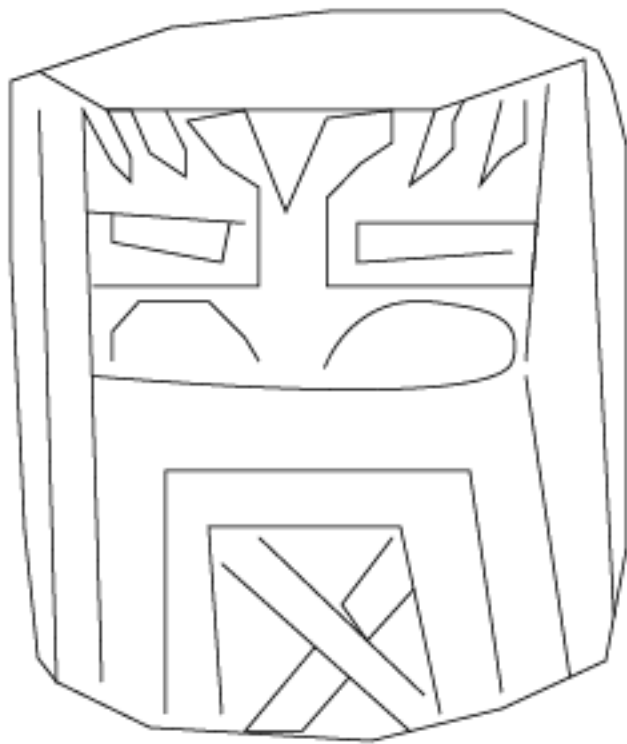


Figure 2: Tlapacoya Vessel

Estrada-Belli (2006) also correlates the crossed bands symbol to a deity. He discusses the crossed bands in the mouth of the Tlapacoya Vase (Figure 2) representing God I as defined in Joralemon's (1971) classifications. He argues that when the crossed bands motif is placed on the eyelids or the chest of a figure, it references the celestial nature of those figures (Estrada-Belli 2006). In his interpretation, he not only connects the symbol to a deity but also suggests that the crossed-bands motif itself has iconographic power to denote the presence of a deity. He also discusses that when it is in conjunction with a *lamat* sign, made by a lozenge and four dots, it indicates the day and night aspects of the sky (2006). In the Tlapacoya Vessel specifically, he suggests that the placement of the crossed bands in the mouth shows the celestial location in the maw of the sky monster and the center of the sky as a portal. This theory coincides with Guernsey's argument that the crossed bands could suggest some interpretation of a portal into the otherworld (Estrada-Belli 2006).

Guernsey (2010) discusses the crossed bands on the appearance of two specific pieces; the Oxtotitlan Mural 1 in Guerrero, Mexico and La Venta Altar 4 (Figure 1). The throne on the mural at Oxtotitlan has a partial quatrefoil with zoomorphic faces. The eyes of this face as well as two adjacent masks are marked with crossed bands (Guernsey 2010). She associates this throne with the zoomorphic faces with crossed bands for eyes, as a metaphorical portal to the otherworld as the mural is above the cave entrance (Guernsey 2010). In the second piece that she discusses, La Venta Altar 4, the ruler is wearing an avian headdress and there is a crossed bands above the ruler who is seated in the niche

below (Grove 1970). Guernsey also relates the niche to a portal to the otherworld as the figure is coming out of the niche, which Guernsey states is a symbol of the mouth of the cave entrance to the otherworld. Guernsey also discusses Izapa Throne 1 as a portal to another world, with scalloped edges and centrally infixed crossed bands (Guernsey 2002). She states that when a ruler is seated on Throne 1, the ruler is literally entering another world that is evidenced by Stela 8. This stela depicts a ruler sitting on the throne where a quatrefoil cartouche marks the back of an enormous zoomorph which itself is an opening to another realm (Guernsey 2002). Matthew Looper (2013) also suggests that the crossed bands serve as a portal when looking at the turtle shell from Cerro de las Mesas. He proposes that the crossed bands that make it the double-headed serpent both wrap and serve as a portal through which the figure emerges (Looper 2013). Guernsey's interpretation of the crossed bands marking a portal to the other world is isolated to a few stelae including the aforementioned; however, these portals connect the terrestrial world to the otherworld and the human world to the realm in which deities reside. These interpretations therefore exemplify the presence of a deity, which agrees with the overarching theme of other interpretations.

Kaufman and Justeson (2001) discuss the crossed bands in the context of epi-Olmec and Mayan writing, which is a different context than every other interpretation. They discuss the similarities of the epi-Olmec sign for ko and the early Mayan ka (Kaufman and Justeson 2001). These are the signs for the day Reed and the Olmec version displays a crossed bands across the front. This element is present on the Humboldt Celt as well as on

a Chalcatzingo vase that has a crossed-bands motif on it, which they interpret as being the sign for the day reed on each instance. This is the same sign with the crossed bands in it that Taube (2004) identified with corn, however Kaufman and Justeson (2001) suggest that neither the kernels nor the husked cob are present on these depictions, which instead correlate them with the day reed. This interpretation does not follow the trend of the crossed bands correlating with a deity or ritual event, however this is an interpretation of a possible epi-Olmec logograph and is not looking at the crossed-bands motif as a iconographic symbol.

The Rio Pesquero headband has four faces, which Taube (2004) suggests are the four phases of the growth cycle of corn. On the first two phases, the seed and growing the plant have crossed bands on their mouth and cheeks respectively. Taube (2004) states that the crossed bands motif often appears as the central medallion of the five-piece headband. The crossed bands also commonly appear with a dot and brow piece that represents seeds of corn. Taube suggests that because the appearance of the crossed bands on the headband as well as the dot and brow piece is so frequent, the crossed bands are related to the maize seed. Using the Joralemon (1971) system of deity classification, Taube accounts the crossed-bands motif as relating to God IV, God II and the mature Olmec Maize God (Taube 1996). Taube suggests that the first face in the headband is related to Olmec God IV, which is represented by an infant being that Taube regards as the deified aspect of the maize seed. Crossed bands are one of the traits of this deity commonly occurring on its headband, pectoral and belt. An example of this occurs on Monument 77 (Figure 3) at La Venta. There

is a celt and feathered maize ear fetish at La Venta with crossed bands on his headband. The cleft head figure with dots on the sides of his face and crossed bands in his mouth appear on the pottery vessel from Tlapacoya (Figure 2) that most likely represents the maize god. San Lorenzo Monument 30 also portrays the foliated corn god with dots on an undulating body and a crossed band in his eye (Taube 2004).

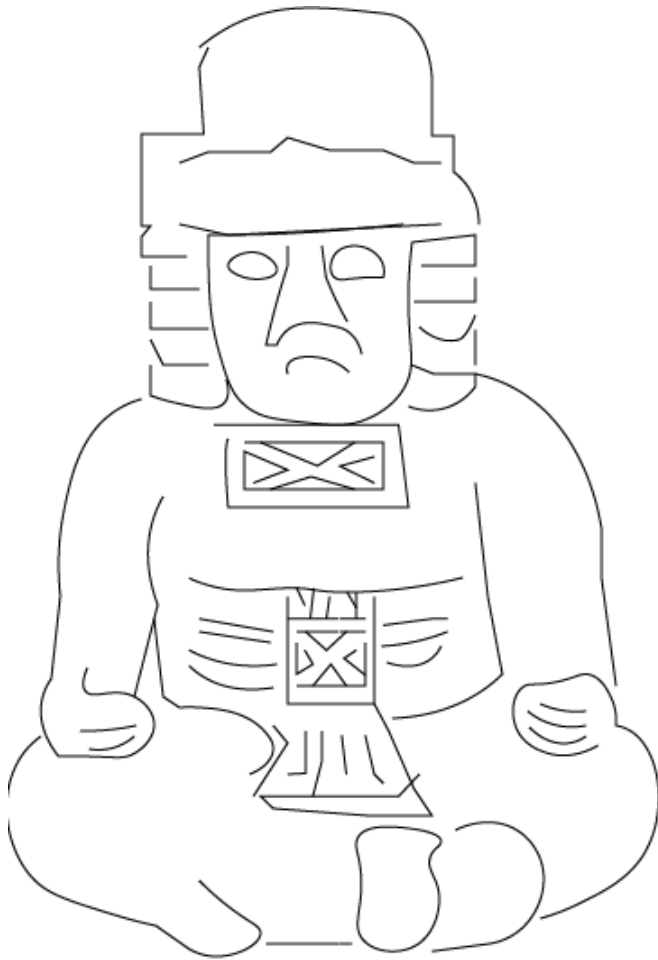


Figure 3: La Venta Monument 77

Based on the mentioned examples of the crossed bands in correlation with the maize god, Taube (2004) suggests that the crossed bands motif is related to the maize god exclusively. Taube discusses a seated jadeite figure that wears a four-celt headband; the first of the four bears a crossed band. Taube suggests the first celt could be the seed that develops into the next figure, which is a cleft celt for growing corn (Taube 1996). Taube also discusses the sunken courtyard at Teopantecuanitlan, which displays the four heads each with crossed bands on their headbands (Taube 1996). He discusses that they display the four-celt headband of God II, the crossed-bands pectoral of God IV and also traits of God VI equating them with the Olmec Maize god based on these traits (Taube 1996).

Tate (2012) suggests that Monument 52 at San Lorenzo with the crossed bands symbol on his chest is an embryo/human seed representation function as a rain barer due to rain inseminating the earth and the embryo is the seed of the womb. However, Pool (2007) discusses Monument 52 as an example of the were-jaguar or God IV, which connects it to the maize god similar to Monument 77 at La Venta.

There are numerous interpretations of what the crossed bands represent, each one logical and supported by evidence. However, each study is different and separate from one another creating an inconsistent interpretation of the symbolic representation as a whole. The correlating trend in each analysis of the crossed bands as an icon is that it always represents the presence of a deity, the deity himself, or an occurrence involving the otherworld or celestial event. In the next chapter I will discuss the background of each site

as well as how I gathered data to analyze the meaning of the symbol as a whole throughout time and geographical space.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS & BACKGROUND

I began my research by searching and documenting monuments and figures that bear the crossed-bands motif. I looked through each source listed below for discussion of or images containing the crossed-bands motif and pulled and cataloged the data from these sources. For the Olmec, Izapan, and Maya sites I began with the following sources:

- Papers of the New World Archaeological Foundation number thirty: Izapa Sculpture (Norman 1973).
- A Study of Olmec Sculptural Chronology Issue 23 (Milbrath 1979)
- Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphs (Graham 1976)
- Chronicle of the Kings and Queens: Deciphering the Dynasties of the Ancient Maya (Martin & Grube 2000)
- Ancient Maya Art at Dumbarton Oaks (Pillsbury 2012)
- Study of Maya Art (Spinden 1913)

From these sources, I searched other sites including but not limited to Takalik Abaj, El Baul, Tres Zapotes, Cerro de las Mesas, Chiapa de Corzo, Kaminaljuyu and Quirigua that had Izapa or Olmec style art and sculpture as identified by Norman (1973). In each of the following sites, representations of the crossed bands were found on one or more of their iconographic pieces, namely on stelae.

I then categorized the stelae based on what the carvings on the stelae represented and where the crossed bands appeared on the stelae. I then delineated each group based

on where the monument was located on the site and what it was used for if that information was known. I also noted its temporal and geographical location on the table. I then analyzed each piece based on the elements that were noted on the chart. Once each cataloged piece had been analyzed, I looked for patterns in each temporal section and then patterns among them as a whole.

For purposes of this paper, I looked solely at stone monuments. The corpus of stone monuments on which the crossed bands motif appeared was extensive in itself. I did not add samples from pottery, wall paintings and other iconographic sources in this paper in order to focus on the existence of crossed bands on stone monuments alone. The samples I have chosen to discuss were chosen because they represented the data as a whole that I found. I did not discuss every piece found in each site in this paper, however the samples that I used were representative of monuments as a whole on which the crossed bands motif is present.

With this analysis I came to the conclusion that in the Preclassic sites, the symbol appears on and demarcates the presents of a deity, in the Middle Preclassic it appears on scenes depicting a ruler in the midst of a ritual or some sort of contact with a deity, and in the Classic period it graduates in to denoting the deified ruler. In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the sites that I focused on and their background.



Figure 4: Map of Sites

Early Preclassic (1400 to 1150 B.C.)

Gulf: Olmec Heartland

The earliest appearances of the crossed bands motif are present in the Early Preclassic located in the Olmec heartland along the Gulf Coast. The major sites throughout the Early Preclassic in this area were San Lorenzo and Tres Zapotes and these are the sites I will focus on in this area for the purpose of this paper.

San Lorenzo is located along the Coatzacoalcos River on a salt dome, safe from flooding (Cyphers 1996). Data from Ortiz indicates that two branches of the river surrounded the site during the Formative period (Cyphers 1996). Cyphers suggests that Tres Zapotes and Laguna de los Cerros may have been connected to the lower Coatzacoalcos drainage by fluvial courses as well creating a network along the river.

Stirling was first to visit the site in 1945 with The National Geographic Society and the Smithsonian Institution (Stirling 1947). He traveled most of the terrain and theorized that the river passed closer to the site in ancient times than it does today. He mainly created detailed reports of twenty-two stone monuments along with their location and description (Cyphers 1996). Ten of these are Colossal Heads, each of which are different with distinct features (De La Fuente 1996). He proposed that the colossal heads were portraits of important people and observed that the art was mostly that of human and anthropomorphic figures.

Coe and Diehl visited the site in 1966-68, developing a chronological sequence of the site as well as a topographical map (Coe and Diehl 1980). The earliest occupation dated to 1500-1350 BC, a period that Coe and Diehl named the Ojochi phase. The site was interpreted as a developed society with chiefdom-level organization, possibly even statehood. The majority of interpretations agree with Stirling's, in which he states that the colossal heads represent a secular leadership with power founded in lineage (Coe 1972). This is supported by the arguments that the heads seem to be of similar cultural and physical structure suggesting it is a hierarchical lineage. The stateliness of the portraits also suggest they are commemorative of the ruler (De la Fuente 1996).

Trade networks traveled up and down the rivers by canoes and rafts and aided in access to food and materials. They had control of the river levee lands and produced grain crop as well as trade in basalt, greenstone, hematite, magnetite, limonite and obsidian with specialized craft production on site (Coe and Diehl 1980). San Lorenzo emerged as a powerful center when economic and administrative dealings became more formal. The site became the capital of the region by 1200 BC (Coe and Diehl 1980). Palaces and elite residences were found at the upper part of the site, which is where most of the sculptures were found. One palace called the "Red Palace," even has columns, aqueducts and basalt step coverings (Cyphers 1996). Habitation areas with wattle-and-daub structures were found below terraced ridges of the plateau. Obsidian working was conducted at the household level. Their obsidian was derived from Guadalupe Victoria in Puebla, Otumba in Central Mexico and El Chayal in Guatemala (Cyphers 1996).

There are building groups at San Lorenzo which were excavated in 1967 by Michael Coe and have been designated the Northwest, Group D, Group C, Southwest, South Central and Southeast Ridges (Stirling 1981). These ridges were excavated to recover monuments. Monument 30 in the center of the ridge, which bears the crossed-bands motif being one of the earliest appearances of the motif, was excavated by Coe on Group D. The soils under the Monument 30 dated to the Bajio Phase and the carbon14 sample dated to 1310 +/- 120 BC (Stirling 1981). Strata of Chicharras ceramics covered these monuments and the upper floor had an in situ hearth, which had carbon-14 samples dating to 1140 +/- 80 BC. These dates place it within the Early Preclassic period agreeing with the ceramics found with in the same strata.

Most of the monuments were found on the banks of ravines or other places outside of the archeological context (Cyphers 1996). Cyphers' excavations reveled that other monuments found on the ridge at group D were unaligned and stored there for re-carving (Cyphers 1996). Cyphers suggest that these sculptures were not just commemorative figures but had utilitarian purposes as they may have been used in ritual to reenact mythical or historical events.

Middle Preclassic (1150 to 500 B.C.)

Gulf: La Venta

Gillespie (2011, p. 4) states that La Venta was the most important regional capital during the Middle Preclassic in non-Maya Mesoamerica due to its political and cultural influence and development of other political centers. La Venta is located to the northeast of San Lorenzo and has three architectural complexes that have been defined: Complex A, Complex B and Complex C (Stirling 1981). La Venta is an island on the Coatzacoalcos River system on which the archaeological site is in the center (Gillespie 2011). The major growth of La Venta occurred in the Middle Preclassic (Rust 1988). There was a salt dome near the site that served as a religious sanctuary, which was surrounded by the households of the priestly elite (Rust 1988).

The four building stages at La Venta are thought to have each lasted about one century spanning 1000-600 BC, placing the peak of occupation of this site a few hundred years after San Lorenzo (Grove 1999). Complex C is a fluted cone shape earthen pyramid that possibly has a tomb near the summit based on a magnetometer survey (Grove 1999). Complex B located south of complex C has nine square and rectangular mounds, two of which are big enough to be considered platforms for multiple superstructures (Grove 1999). These platforms may have been used for ritual purposes using the surrounding monuments and stelae found within the plaza. The occupation covered Phases I-IV of the site and there were numerous monuments on the surface. For example, complex A located

to the north of complex C has two courtyards surrounded by earth mounds. The north courtyard structures contained evidence of construction in each of the four building phases as well. The majority of the 80 monuments known at La Venta are in and around the mound-plaza groups A to the north and B to the south of Mound C (Grove 1999). This plaza was meant to display these monuments and stelae as well as incorporate them into ritual practices.

Tres Zapotes

Tres Zapotes is located in the southern part of Veracruz in Mexico. Pool's (2010) 2003 excavations uncovered a stratigraphic context that was evidence of occupation of the site during the Early Formative Period although, Pool suggests that the monumental construction did not begin until the Middle Formative. The site is set up with Group 2 in the center, Group 1 to the west of Group 2 and Group 3 to the north and the Nestepe group to the east (Pool 2010). Two Colossal heads have been found at Group 1 and the Nestepe group in the site of which are stylistically separate from those at San Lorenzo and La Venta. In comparing artifacts such as pottery, figurines and obsidian at Tres Zapotes with those at San Lorenzo, Pool (2010) found that Tres Zapotes interacted with populations with the eastern Olman culture but had their own economic and social ties to central Veracruz and the Mexican highlands (Pool 2010). Stirling attempted to develop a chronological sequence for the forty stone monuments found at the site, however the monuments themselves were reused creating difficulty establishing a chronological sequence (Pool 2010).

Laguna de los Cerros

Laguna de los Cerros is located just south of Tres Zapotes in the upland plains (Grove 1993). Multiple long parallel mounds ran across the site, defining rectangular plazas. There were also larger mounds that held residential platforms (Cyphers 1997). The site was settled between 1400-1200 BC and was at its architectural peak by around 1000 BC (Pool 2007). Llano del Jicaro and La Isla are two small Olmec sites in the hinterland of Laguna de los Cerros. Llano del Jicaro is a monument workshop site and is the only known quarry workshop. Basalt from this site is not only found at Laguna de los Cerros but also at San Lorenzo (Grove 1993) La Isla is a small site with mound architecture. Five major monuments were found at the main site of Laguna de los Cerros during the 1991 excavation, all of which stylistically dated to the Middle Preclassic (Grove 1993).

Teopantecuanitlan

Teopantecuanitlan is located in the highlands of central Guerrero (Don Juan 2010). The name of the site means “place of the jaguar temple” in Nahuatl. The site covers 280 ha and has three mound groups as well as residential areas and was a regional center in the Middle Preclassic. Four stone monuments, carvings of were-jaguar gods, dating from 1000-900 BC were placed on top of the walls of a sunken court in the main plaza. There is

evidence of communication and trade with Chlcatzingo, Zacatla and La Venta (Don Juan 2010). The trade is evident by the presence of Olmec designs on sculptures and ceramics.

Coastal Plain: Takalik Abaj

Takalik Abaj was a site present in the Early to Middle Preclassic and was located in the Pacific coastal plain of Guatemala (Demarest 1993). The site extends over nine man-made terraces oriented from south to north over nine square kilometers (de Lavarreda 1994). A cluster of Olmec style monuments dated to the Middle Preclassic indicate that there was significant political power and organization at this site. The presence of Olmec influence in the site's monuments also suggest that there was contact and/or trade leading to shared ideals among the elite; however, the ceramics are of local styles indicating that there was not Olmec dominance of site (Demarest 1993). In the Middle Preclassic, they had developed hydraulic engineering including drainage channels and ceremonial architecture suggesting a high degree of political organization (de Laverrada 1994). There are 326 stone monuments at the site of Takalik Abaj, 124 of which were carved (Doering 2011). This extensive amount of stone monuments exhibits the change in social complexity and political interaction and development throughout the site (Doering 2011).

Chalcatzingo

Chalcatzingo is located in the Valley of Morelos and dates to the Middle Preclassic (Grove 2008). There is a central plaza area located at the base of the hill where the elite residences were built. There are many relief carvings and monumental structures on the site. Monument 1 is a group of reliefs found on the hillside of Cerro Chalcatzingo. There is another group of bas-reliefs on large stone slabs mainly depicting human figures (Grove 2008).

The monuments at this site have been catalogued in two separate ways (Grove and Angulo 1987). The first was begun by Guzman as a sequential list of monuments listed by when they were found. The second was started by David Angulo who separated the site into 8 separate areas based on topographical features. The monuments in each group are identified based on area. There are a total of 23 monuments, 12 in area 1, 3 in area 2, 3 in area 3, 4 in area 4 and 1 in area 7 (Grove and Angulo 1987).

Late Preclassic (500 BC-200 AD)

Izapa

Izapa is said to be an important connection between Olmec and Maya cultures (Guernsey 2010). Both Izapa and Takalik Abaj were located in advantageous geographic locations along communication routes and trade routes from the Mayan speakers in the east to the Mixe-Zoquean speakers in the west (Guernsey 2010). Izapa was located on the

Rio Izapa with access to salt, aquatic foods, fruits and vegetables and palm leaves. In the Middle Preclassic, the ceramics at Izapa were related to those at the Olmec site of San Lorenzo (Guernsey 2010).

Izapa is located on the Pacific slope of Chiapas near Mexico's border with Guatemala, and was developed by the Late Preclassic acting as a major center (Rice 2007). Philip Drucker first excavated the site in 1948 and later by the New World Archaeological Foundation in the 1960s (Rosenwig 2013). The initial construction at Izapa is said to have been contemporary with La Venta, the Gulf Coast Olmec center (Rosenwig 2013). In the Middle Preclassic, monumental mounds defined formal plazas and by the Late Preclassic, a dozen plazas had been created (Rosenwig 2013).

There are six major plaza groups plus one to the north with a linear layout north and south that deviates 21 degrees east of north (Rice 2007). The known stone monuments have been separated into three categories. The first are upright stelae, of which 89 have been found both carved and plain; altars, of which 90 have been found and thrones of which there are three (Lowe, Lee and Espinosa 1982). Rice (2007) believes that Mounds 25 and 60 of Group H, are set aligned with a cosmological significance. These mounds were laid out in a way that the summer solstice sunrise is marked by the Tajumulco volcano to the north-east and the axis of the winter-solstice sunrise and summer solstice sunset lies at an approximate right angle to the north-south alignment. Coggins (1996) also suggests that Group B celebrates emergence along with the celestial cycles in

part due to Stela 11 (Figure 17) found here. It depicts the ascent of a flaming sun from the jaws of the crocodile earth (Coggins 1996).

Barbara Voorhies (1989) believes it may have been the political center of the Soconusco due to its role in cacao production and trade and it may have controlled distribution of obsidian from a nearby source, Tajumulco (Rice 2007).

Chalchuapa

Chalchuapa was occupied in the Late Preclassic (Sharer 1969). The site is located in the southeastern Maya highlands southeast of the site of Kaminaljuyu and southwest of Copan (Sharer 1974). There are six temple platforms that make up the center of the site. There are 58 large ceremonial structures and 87 smaller house mounds found in the site core (Sharer 1974). Three stone monuments were found at the bottom of Mound 1 along with a multitude of pottery caches (Sharer 1969).

Kaminaljuyu

Kaminaljuyu is another site whose artistic styles are associated with Izapan style and shows a crossed bands motif on both Stela 11 (Figure 16) and 65 (Figure 22) (Rice 2007). The site itself is east of the boundary for the Isthmian region, and therefore located in the Maya Highlands. It was occupied during the Middle to Late Pre-classic. This city was a series of large sites on the coastal plain. It was a center for ceremonial economic and

political activities (Sharer 2006). The foundation for the site's prosperity lay in its position on trade networks. The city controlled the acquisition and exportation of certain minerals (jade, obsidian, mica, hematite, and cinnabar) connecting trade routes from the northern highlands to the lowlands as it was in a strategic geographical position (Sharer 2006). The site peaked in the Late Preclassic as measured by the size and number of construction projects, carved monuments and elaborate burials (Sharer 2006). The site had over 200 monumental structures and was arranged in a parallel, linear structure as well as having 12 ballcourts. The population in the Late Preclassic, contemporary with Izapa was estimated at forty-five hundred people (Rice 2007).

Classic (200-1000 AD)

Classic Maya

The sites prevalent in the Classic Maya period are located in three separate regions. The Pacific Coastal Plain ranges from Chiapas in Mexico through southern Guatemala and into El Salvador (Sharer 2006). The Highlands are north of the coastal plain including the valley of Guatemala and the Motagua Valley. Lastly the lowlands include northern Guatemala, Belize and the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico. The political organization of the classic Maya has been described by Demarest (1992) as a system of galactic polities in which dynastic sequence is based on religion and ritual. It is difficult to assess a particular organization as the capital cities' populations varied from 10,000 people to 100,000 people

(Chase and Chase 1996). Matthews (1981) argue that there were central polities represented by emblem glyphs as independent city-states. Martin and Grube (1995) argue that polity sizes varied over time as specific polities gained control over other areas. Chase and Chase (1996) discuss that the Classic-period Maya's polities were based on more than kinship and the ideological role of kings but that they were large, centralized and differentiated. The Maya cities at which the crossed bands were identified are described briefly on the following pages. These cities varied in their political significance, including major centers with large populations like Caracol and Tikal as well as smaller, possible secondary sites, like Quirigua.

Dos Pilas

Dos Pilas dates to the Late Classic period and sits between the Pasion and Salinas rivers in the Petexbatun. The kingdom had two major cities including Tamarindito and Arroyo de Piedra before Dos Pilas became the major city (Houston 1987). The site is laid out with three major complexes. The largest is the Main Group to the west, organized around a central plaza with multiple structures including temple pyramids, a palace for the ruling elite and a ball court (Houston and Mathews 1985). The second is the El Duende group, with the largest pyramid on the site built in the 8th century AD. The third is the Bat Palace, which lies between the previous two groups (Houston and Mathews 1985). This is assumed to be where the elite resided and is surrounded by shrines and temples. The first

ruler of Dos Pilas claimed to be a part of the Tikal royal line, which gave him legitimacy for his rule. Dos Pilas went to war with Tikal in 679 A.D., taking their king as prisoner. The fourth ruler of the city was K'awiil Chaan K'inich who erected a stela at Aguateca that has the crossed-bands motif on his belt. The fall of his rule coincided with the fall of the city as a major site as well (Houston and Mathews 1985).

Naranjo

Naranjo is located between the Holmul and Mopan rivers in modern day Belize (Closs 1984). The city consists of two palace compounds, two ball courts and one E-group, which is an archaeological complex constructed to align with astronomical observances (Closs 1884). There are also six triadic complexes, which include three structures, two inward facing buildings flanking a larger one (Closs 1984). The city was known for its success in warfare, painted ceramics and the multitude of stelae that tell the narrative of its dynastic development. The origin story of the site claims that the first king was the founding god of the site, the 'Square-nosed Beastie', and is told as if in mythological time (Closs 1984). There is little known about the earliest rulers but the rule of Aj Wosal began in 546 AD (Closs 1984). The majority of the city's narrative is told on the hieroglyphic stairway. Two of the rulers, K'ak' Ukalaw and Itzamnaaj K'awil erected Stela 6 and 8, respectively, with the crossed bands motif appearing on the rulers' belts (Martin 2000).

Piedras Negras

The site of Piedras Negras is the largest along the Usumacinta River (Houston 1983). The ancient name of the city was 'entrance' due to either the steep canyons or the sinkhole nearby that could be connected with portals to the Maya underworld (Houston 1983). The site was excavated by the University Museum at the University of Pennsylvania overseen by Linton Satterthwaite from 1930-1939 (Stuart 2003). Much of the stelae were stolen and are in private collections whose whereabouts are unknown still today (Stuart 2003). Stephen D. Houston and Hector L Escobedo then again excavated the site in 1997 producing new inscriptions. The site is dominated by two main architectural structures; the South Group and the West Group (Stuart 2003). The site has a series of monuments that tell the narrative of its relations between satellite cities and the capital. The sculptured panels are unique in their size and presentation similar to lintels. There are 46 known stelae at the site (Stuart 2003). Many of the stelae are constructed to represent the rulers as a representation of their legitimized rulership (Houston 1983).

Palenque

Palenque lies at the northern edge of the Chiapas Highlands (Grube 1996). The site is known for its complex sculptural style, architecture and the tomb of king K'inich Janaab Pakaal. Rather than a multitude of monolithic stela, the site focused on architecture. The temple of the Inscriptions is the funerary monument of Hanab-Pakal known from the

glyphic texts found on the temple (Schele and Mathews 1998). There are also a group of temples that include the Temple of the Cross, the Temple of the Sun, and the Temple of the Foliated crosses (Bassie 1991).

Copan

The site of Copan is located in western Honduras near the border of Guatemala (Sharer 1990). The dynastic rulership of Copan spanned from around 450 to 850 AD (Sharer 1999). It is known for its three-dimensional sculptures, which are only present in this valley. These sculptures are also a source on the foundation of the dynasties and relationship between the Maya and Teotihuacan (Sharer 1999). The Acropolis was built over the reign of 16 kings, creating a large man-made hill. Stela 11 on the doorway of Temple 18 depicts the narrative of 8 Ajaw. The ruler depicted on this column has the crossed bands motif on his belt.

Quirigua

Quirigua is located in eastern Guatemala on the alluvial flood plain of the lower Motagua River (Sharer 1978). The Acropolis has a record of construction and occupation from the Middle Classic through the Terminal Classic periods. The trend of building materials suggests an increase in material sources from distant locations. The acquisition of materials from sources from a greater distance, would suggest an increase in political

power and economic influence as they gained greater access to more sources of raw materials and a greater expanse in trade (Sharer 1978). There are 115 sites within the 95 sq. m. periphery to the city center suggesting political control over a number of periphery sites. However its settlement population is relatively small in scale, with a low density based on its contemporary sites of Copan or Tikal. The stelae at Quirigua explain the dynastic history of the site. Kelley's (1962) original study found 3 documented rulers and 2 possible rulers of the site. Cauac Sky is said to be their first influential ruler. Little is known about him other than he is the supposed son or nephew of a ruler of Copan, which is heavily debated (Sharer 1978). This fact along with his receipt of the manikin scepter, which is a signifier of power on the scene of a stela, gave him the power to rule.

Tonina

The site of Tonina is located on the northern edge of the Ocosingo Valley at the base of a range of hills that run through the state of Chiapas and into Guatemala (Matthews 1985). The site was excavated in 1972-1980 by both the Mission Archeologique et Ethnologique Francaise au Mexique and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique of France (Mathews 1985). The ruins major ruins of the site are compiled of the artificially modified hillside and the plaza where most of the structures were build. Smaller house mounds surround the central plaza to the east of the main group. Nearly 250 sculptures have been found at Tonina, however less than half have inscriptions (Matthews 1985).

Seibal

The site of Seibal is located along the Rio Salinas in the Usumacinta (Graham 1995). It was excavated by by Sylvanus G. Morely in 1914 and again in 1961 by Gordon R. Willey who discovered Cuaseways I-III and Stela 14-18 locating the central area of Group A (Graham 1985). Ian Graham then excavated in 1962 and 1964 examining the stela. The main sections of the site were built on three pieces of high ground; Group A, The North Plaza and the Central Plaza (Graham 1995). There are 21 known stelae at the site registered with inscriptions (Graham 1995).

Having discussed the background of the sites ranging from the pre-classic to the classic and cultures from the Olmec to the Maya, I will further discuss the iconography in each site and region. I will discuss the important iconographic features of the sites as well as the presence of the crossed bands motif at each site.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data Set

The data set I have compiled contains 40 examples of the crossed bands motif carved in stone. The data spans from the Early Preclassic through the Classic Period. Twenty percent of the data is from the Early Preclassic, 15% from the Middle Preclassic, 28% from the late Preclassic and 37% from the Classic Period. They are found on five different types of stone monuments; 55% on stone stelae, 7.5% on altars, 15% on free standing figures, 7.5% on Monoliths and 15% on reliefs carved on larger structures such as the side of buildings.

The following two tables (Table 1; Table 2) display the data based on what type of iconographic theme the crossed bands appear on as well as where the crossed bands is located on each figure or scene. Table 1 displays a noticeable transition over time from the crossed bands appearing on zoomorphic or anthropomorphic deity figures to a trend towards the crossed bands located on human figures. This is further recognized as shown on figure 1 below.

In the remainder of this section, I will continue to discuss the data that I have collected and analyze it based on what the iconography that the crossed bands appear on portrays. I have separated the data based on the most prevalent and inclusive themes: Zoomorph, Anthropomorph, Underworld, and Rulers.

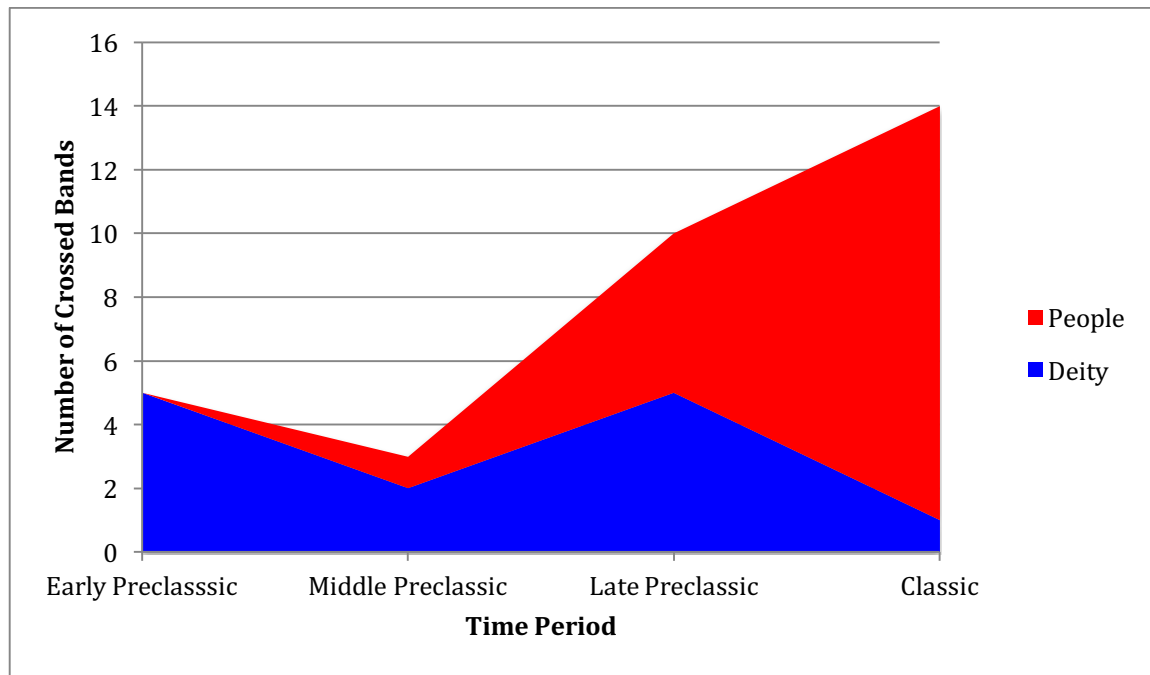


Figure 5: Crossed Bands on People vs. Deities

Table 1: Crossed Bands Themes

| | Anthropomorph | Zoomorph | Ruler | Costume | Underworld | Portal | Ritual | Sky | |
|--------------------------|---------------|----------|-------|---------|------------|--------|--------|-----|--|
| San Lorenzo | | | | | | | | | |
| Monument 30 | | x | | | | | | | |
| Monument 17 | x | | | | | | | | |
| Monument 52 | | x | | | | | | | |
| Monument 53 | | x | | | | | | | |
| Chalcatzingo | | | | | | | | | |
| Monument 5 | | x | | | | | | | |
| La Venta | | | | | | | | | |
| Altar 4 | | | | | x | x | x | | |
| Altar 5 | | | | | x | x | x | | |
| Monument 52 | x | | | | | | | | |
| Teopantecuanitlan | | | | | | | | | |
| Monoliths 1-4 | x | | | | | x | x | | |
| Chalchuapa | | | | | | | | | |
| Monument 1 | | | x | | | | x | | |
| Izapa | | | | | | | | | |
| Stela 2 | x | | | x | | | x | | |
| Stela 4 | x | | x | x | x | | x | | |
| Stela 11 | x | | | | x | | x | | |
| Stela 22 | | x | | | x | | x | | |
| Stela 67 | x | | | | x | | x | | |
| Stela 8 | | | x | | x | x | x | | |
| Stela 18 | | | | | | | x | x | |
| Kaminaljuyu | | | | | | | | | |
| Stela 11 | | | x | x | | | | | |

| | Anthropomorph | Zoomorph | Ruler | Costume | Underworld | Portal | Ritual | Sky | |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------|-------|---------|------------|--------|--------|-----|--|
| Stela 65 | | | x | | | | | | |
| Takalik Abaj | | | | | | | | | |
| Stela 2 | X | | | x | | | | | |
| Altar 30 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Copan | | | | | | | | | |
| Structure 10L-29 | | | | | x | | x | | |
| Quirigua | | | | | | | | | |
| Zoomorph B | | x | | | x | | x | | |
| Dos Pilas | | | | | | | | | |
| Stela 1 | | | x | x | | | x | | |
| Stela 6 | | | x | x | | | x | | |
| Stela 8 | | | x | x | | | x | | |
| Caracol | | | | | | | | | |
| Stela 21 | | | x | x | | | x | | |
| Stela 15 | | | x | x | | | x | | |
| Palenque | | | | | | | | | |
| Carved Panel | | | x | x | x | | x | | |
| Piedras Negras | | | | | | | | | |
| Mortuary Slab | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Chiapas | | | | | | | | | |
| Stone Panel | | | x | x | | | x | | |
| Tzedales River Stela | | | X | x | | | x | | |
| Maya Lowland | | | | | | | | | |
| Hauberg Stela | | | x | x | x | | x | | |
| Naranjo | | | | | | | | | |
| Stela 12 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Stela 13 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Stela 14 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Stela 20 | | | x | x | | | | | |

| | Anthropomorph | Zoomorph | Ruler | Costume | Underworld | Portal | Ritual | Sky | |
|---------------|---------------|----------|-------|---------|------------|--------|--------|-----|--|
| Stela 28 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Stela 38 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Stela 41 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Tonina | | | | | | | | | |
| Monument 3 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Monument 5 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Monument 8 | | | | | x | x | | | |
| Monument 14 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Monument 26 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Monument 36 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Monument 40 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Monument 45 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Monument 47 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Seibal | | | | | | | | | |
| Stela 1 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Stela 11 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Stela 19 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| Stela 21 | | | x | x | | | | | |

Table 1

Table 2: Crossed Bands Placement

| Temporal | Site | Chest | Head | Wings of PBD | On or below waist | Other | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------|--|----------------|
| Early Preclassic | San Lorenzo | Monument 30: Zoo. | Monument 17: Anth. | | | | | |
| | | Monument 58: Zoo. | | | | | | |
| | | Monument 52: Anth | | | | | | |
| | Chalchuapa | | Monument 1: Ruler | | | | | |
| | Chalcatzingo | Monument 5: Zoo. | | | | | | |
| Middle Preclassic | La Venta | Monument 77: Anth | Altar 4: Ruler | | Monument 77: Anth | | | |
| | | Monument 52: Anth | Altar 5: Ruler | | | | | |
| | Teopantecuanitlan | Mon 1-4: Anth | Mon 1-4: Anth | | | | | |
| Late Preclassic | Izapa | | | Stela 2: Ruler | Stela 11: Zoo. | | | |
| | | | Stela 50: Anth | | | | | |
| | | | Stela 22: Anth | | | | | |
| | | | Stela 67: Anth | | | | | Stela 18: Band |
| | Kaminaljuyu | | Stela 11: Ruler | | | | | |

| Temporal | Site | Chest | Head | Wings of PBD | On or below waist | Other | | |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|--|---------------------------------|
| | Takalik Abaj | | Stela 2: Ruler | Stela 2 | | | | |
| | | | | Altar 30 | | | | |
| Classic | Copan | | | | | | | Structure 10L-29: Band |
| | Quirigua | | Stela K | | | | | Zoomorph B: Zoo |
| | San Bartolo | | | | Hauberg Stela plate 66b: Ruler | | | |
| | Dos Pilas | | | | Stela 1: Ruler | | | |
| | Caracol | | | | Stela 21: Ruler | | | |
| | Palenque | | Carved Panel | | | | | |
| | Piedras Negras | | | | Mortuary Panel: Lord | | | |
| | Chiapas | | Chancala Stela | | Stela at Tzendales: Ruler | | | |
| | Tikal | | | | | | | Manika Sceptar & Ceremonial Bar |
| | Yaxchilan | | Stela 11 | | | | | Ceremonial Bar |

Early Preclassic

Olmec Iconography

One of the fundamental themes of Olmec iconography is a composite zoomorph with a lizard-like body and serrated brows (Benson 1996). A multitude of motifs appear on these zoomorphs, including the crossed bands motif. There are crossed bands motifs on the chests of figures, including were-jaguar babies on San Lorenzo Monument 30 in the Early Preclassic (Stirling 1981). According to Benson (1996), a properly attired Olmec composite anthropomorph is depicted wearing a headdress with a single or cross-shaped rear cleft, a headdress band, earbars and a pendant depicting the crossed bands motif or the motif on the navel, which is optional (Benson 1996). Many of the crossed bands motifs depicted in Olmec iconography are on anthropomorphs or zoomorphs in reference to a deity or on a figure of a deity.

Joralemon (1976) classified Olmec Gods and created a catalog of their features. God I, was identified by a flame eyebrow, cleft head and crossed bands (Joralemon 1976). God I was the god of earth, maize, agriculture, fertility, clouds, rain, water, fire and kingship. The god was zoomorphic, represented with a crocodilian body (Joralemon 1976). The crossed bands' appearance on this god exhibits the association of the crossed bands motif with a deity, specifically one related to fertility and rulership.

Early Preclassic: Data

Table 3: Early Preclassic

| | Stelae | Figure | Monolith | Reliefs |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| San Lorenzo | Monument 30 | Monument 52 | Monument 17 | |
| | | Monument 1 | | |
| | | Monument 58 | | |
| Chalcatzingo | | Monument 9 | | Monument 1 |
| | | | | Monument 5 |

The data I gathered from the Early Preclassic sites is from San Lorenzo (n=5) and Chalcatzingo (n=3). Of the monuments containing the crossed bands motif at these sites, 12.5% appear on stelae, 50% on freestanding figures, 12% on monoliths in the form of a colossal head and 25% appear on reliefs. The majority of the crossed bands motifs in the Early Preclassic appear on freestanding figures representing deities with a small percentage carved on reliefs. The majority of the crossed bands included in my data set in this period are found on anthropomorphic or zoomorphic representations. The examples in Chalcatzingo also represent a portal or a connection to the otherworld in the eyes of the earth monster.

Zoomorphs

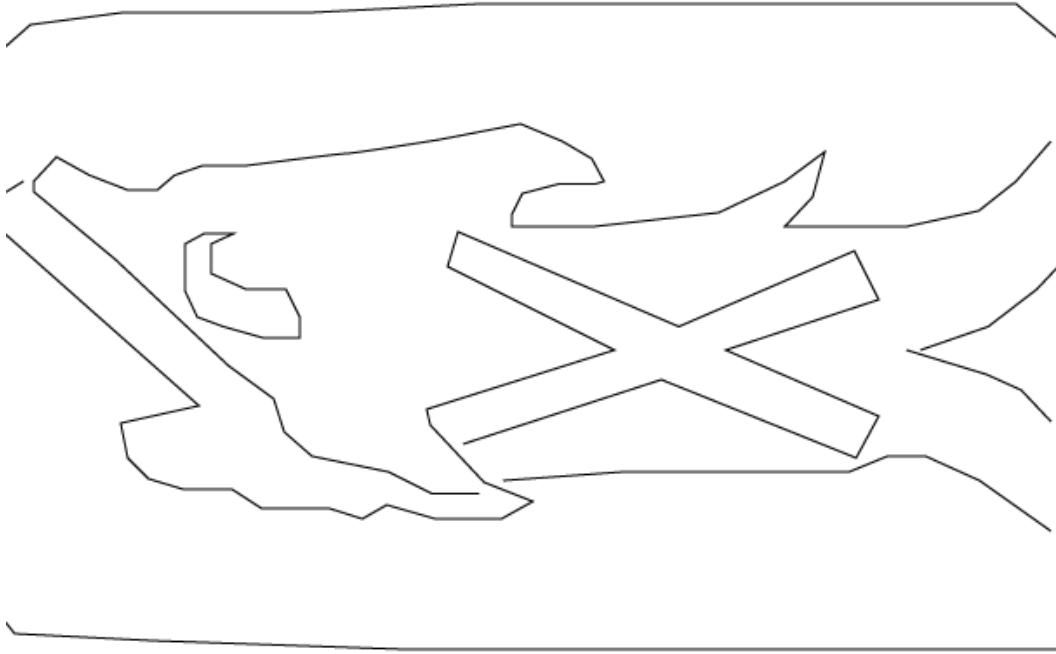


Figure 6: San Lorenzo Monument 58

Olmec style monuments first appear in San Lorenzo around 1250-1150 BC (Milbrath 1979). San Lorenzo monuments, 30 and 58 (Figure 6) each depict the crossed band motif in the context of a deity. Monument 52 bears the crossed bands motif on the chest of a were-figure (Stirling 1981). All three are depicted on zoomorphic figures suggesting the relationship of the crossed bands to a deity among Early Preclassic iconography. On monument 30 the crossed bands appears in the eye of a zoomorphic deity with a reptilian body. Monument 58 is a fish monster with a crossed bands motif on its

belly. Monument 52 is a were-jaguar figure with crossed bands on his chest. Each depiction is found on a figure with zoomorphic traits, however these zoomorphic traits are not the same. The similarities reside in their deified attributes. The crossed bands found at the site of Chalcatzingo are also on zoomorphic deities.



Figure 7: Chalcatzingo Monument 5

Chalcatzingo Monument 5 is the body of a celestial dragon or feathered serpent with a crossed bands prominently depicted on his mid-section (Reilly 1986). The zoomorphic figure depicted is swallowing a human figure in this monument. This feathered serpent shows another depiction of the crossed bands in the Classic period on a zoomorphic figure representing a deity.



Figure 8: San Lorenzo Monument 52

Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks (1981)

San Lorenzo Monument 52 is part of a thematic group in Olmec iconography that contains single figures incorporating animal features into their human aspects (De la Fuente 1981). Monument 52 is a jaguar-monster in the image of a child with slanting almond-shaped eyes and a large, thick upper lip showing toothless gums. There is also a

crossed-bands motif on the chest of the monument of this were-jaguar baby. This were-jaguar is also associated with God IV, the Olmec maize god (Taube 2004).

Underworld

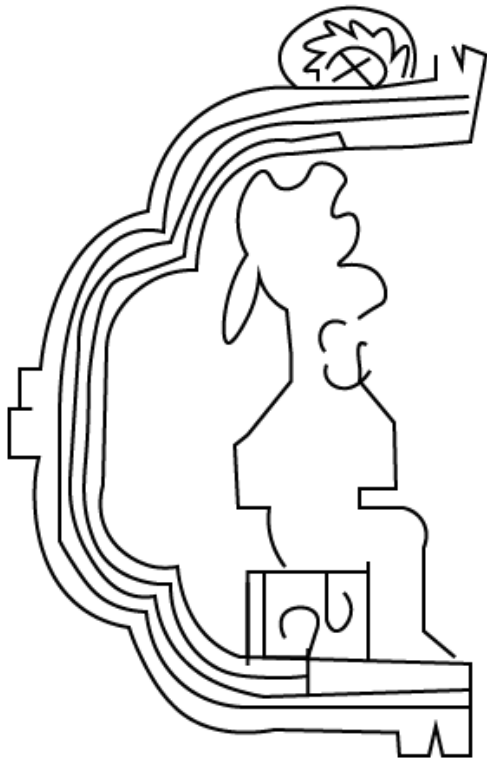


Figure 9: Chalcatzingo Monument 1

Monument 1 from Chalcatzingo depicts a figure seated in the mouth of a cave or some sort of earth monster. On top of the cave there is an eye with a crossed band in it. Monument 9 also depicts an earth monster with his mouth open in a quatrefoil and crossed

bands in his eyes. Monuments 1 and 9 support Guernsey's (2010) argument that the crossed bands represent a portal to another world, however Monument 5 does not support that argument. The trend that follows each monument is evidence that the crossed bands-motif is depicted directly on an image of a deity. There is not a specific deity, ritual or event that is consistently present in each representation, but the presence of a deity alone is the common factor.

Anthropomorph

San Lorenzo Monument 17 is a colossal head on which the crossed bands appear on the head of the figure rather than the chest of the figure. This is one of the only early examples of the crossed bands on the head as the majority of Early Preclassic examples carry the crossed bands on the chest. The depictions in the Middle Preclassic however begin to represent the crossed bands on the head of the figures (Stirling 1981). Based on the data I collected, in the Early Preclassic, 33% of the crossed bands appeared on the head and 66% appear on the chest. In the Middle Preclassic, 60% appear on the head and 60% on the chest with 30% appearing on both the chest and the head. This shows a transition of not only the representation of the crossed bands to the head but also a transition to its representation on anthropomorphic figures as well as zoomorphic figures.

The patterns that are noted with the crossed bands motif in the Early Preclassic period include their presence directly on a deity whether it is on their chest, head or belly. The largest percentage also appears on figures, which depict the deity itself not in

connection with any supernatural scene or ritual. The exception however is with Monuments 1 and 5 at Chalcatzingo, of which the narrative iconography is more similar to the Middle Preclassic to Late Preclassic iconographic styles.

Middle Preclassic

Table 4: Middle Preclassic

| | Stelae | Altar | Figure | Monolith |
|-------------------|------------|---------|-------------|---------------|
| Chalchuapa | Monument 1 | | | |
| La Venta | | Altar 4 | Monument 77 | |
| | | Altar 5 | | |
| Teopantecuanitlan | | | | Monoliths 1-4 |

The Middle Preclassic sites that are included in my data acquisition are Chalchuapa (1), La Venta (4) and Teopantecuanitlan (1). Seventeen percent of the Middle Preclassic data are stelae, 33% are altars, 33% are figures and 17% are monoliths.

Zoomorphs

Monument 77 (Figure 3) at La Venta is a massive Olmec figure with a crossed bands motif on both his chest and his belt. The crossed bands again appear in connection to a deity and are similar to and possibly an earlier example of the connection of the crossed bands to the Principle Bird Deity (PBD), which is prevalent in multiple Izapan stelae.

Underworld

La Venta Altars 4 (Figure 1) and 5 (Figure 10) are in a set of narrative altars; La Venta Altar 4 depicts a figure seated in the niche of a large block of stone, holding a heavy rope, on the other side of which smaller relief figures are attached indicating kinship ties (Grove 1981). Grove (1981) suggests that this and Monument 14 at San Lorenzo are “captive” altars. Captive altars were a way of displaying scenes of political domination over captors in times of warfare (Pool 2007). Above the figure’s head on La Venta Altar 4 is a crossed bands motif in the mouth of a monster. Grove states that the iconography of the altars symbolizes the ruler’s emergence from the underworld cave mouth, and shows their divine origins solidifying their right to rulership (Grove 1981). These symbols depict an origin myth incorporating the terrestrial cave and the ancestral womb. The presence of the crossed bands on the cave in these altars is similar also to the depictions at Chalcatzingo that have the crossed bands on the eyes of the cave monster leading to the otherworld.

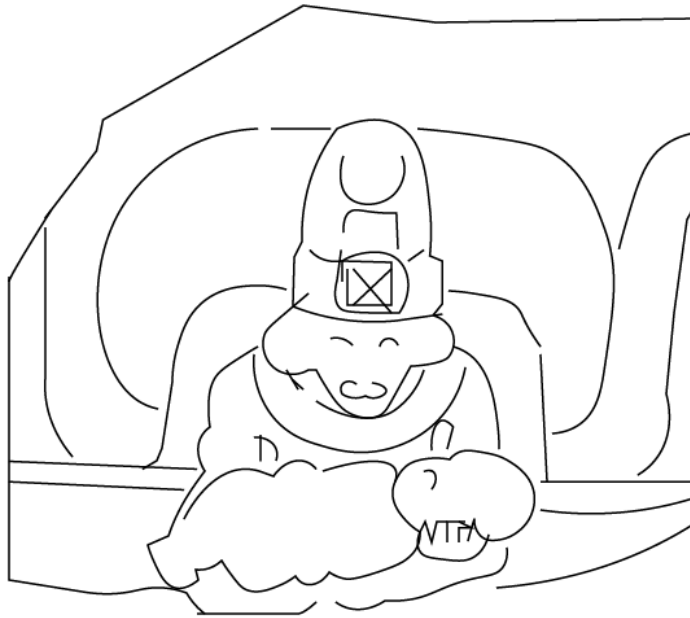


Figure 9: La Venta Altar 5

La Venta Altar 5 is paired with Altar 4. Altar 5 however shows crossed bands on the front of a figure coming out of the niche as well. Altar 5 is a Type B altar at La Venta, which depicts figures holding babies facing towards the plaza. These two altars are on opposite sides of Mound D-8 at La Venta. Altars 4 and 5 as well as 1, 7, and 8 also appear on Plaza B at La Venta. The spacing between these various altars are done in a way that they could only be viewed individually reflecting a purposeful processional arrangement (Guernsey and Clark 2010). Altars 2 and 3 on the same plaza are severely damaged but have the same basic iconography as 4 and 5. The presence of the crossed-bands motif on these altars in the Middle Classic at La Venta suggest that there is a connection between the crossed bands

and the otherworld or with the crossed bands and rulership or a connection between them both.

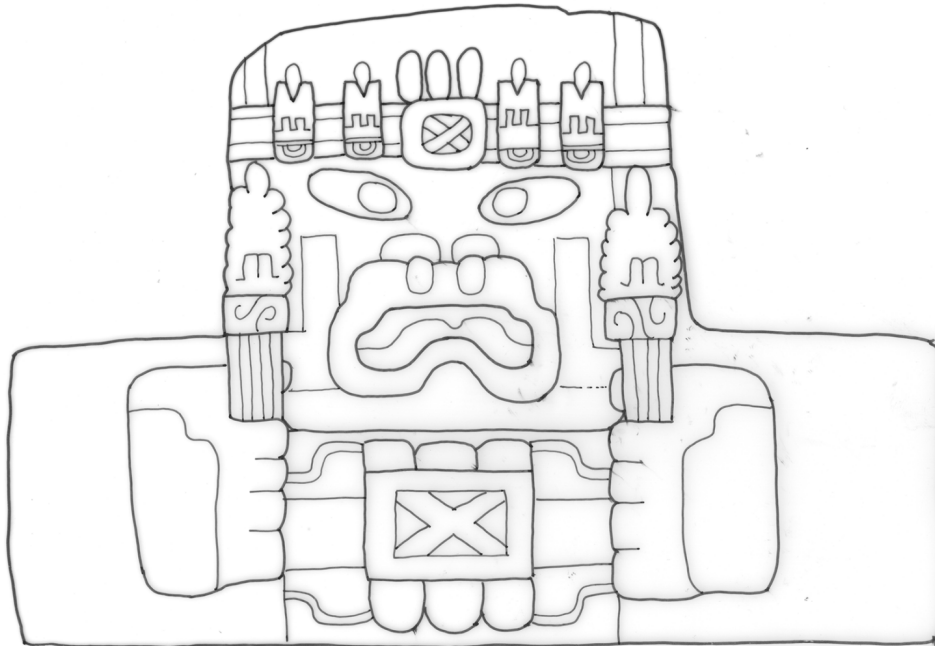


Figure 10: Teopantecuanitlan Monolith 1

Source: Courtesy of Frank K. Reilly

Monoliths 1-4 at Teopantecuanitlan are other examples of the crossed bands motif appearing in connection to the otherworld in a ritualistic manner. Julia Guernsey (2010) suggests that the monuments at Teopantecuanitlan relate to the shape, size, and orientations of buildings, the landscape and the sky. This implies that the placement of the monuments at these sites has meaning and function within the make up of the entire site. The four monoliths bear four crossed bands on each monument; one is on the head of the were-jaguar, one on the chest, and two on the sides of the headbands making a total of

sixteen crossed bands in this sunken patio alone. This at least suggests the importance of the crossed bands at the site on the sunken patio for it to have appeared so frequently.

The faces of each Monoliths 1-4, faced each other so people on the patio could only see them from close range. Donjuan (2010) states that it was used for small ceremonies due to its small size and restricted access. The were-jaguars depicted were presumable gods carved with an inverted T-shape, set in the patio for ceremonial purposes. Donjuan (2010) purposes that the ideological functions of these gods were linked to their inverted T-shape, complex iconography and exact positions on the walls of the Sunken Patios aligned with the equinoxes and solstices. This may suggest a ceremonial function of this patio, due to the placement of the were-jaguars. The concurrence of the two equinox diagonal shadows supplements the crossed band motifs in that a shadow of crossed bands intersects in the middle of the symbolic ballcourt on the floor of the patio. The connection of the crossed bands to the cosmological event and the otherworld shows an association with a cycle linking the human world with the otherworld, by way of the crossed bands appearing on their costumes. There is a slow transition beginning to occur in the Middle Preclassic, which equates the crossed bands not only with a deity but with a ritual connected to the deity.

Ruler

Chalchuapa was settled at the end of the Early Preclassic and has Olmec-style carvings and monumental construction projects (Morely 1994). One sculpture (Sculpture

12) can be related to the Middle Preclassic Olmec style; however, at least seven of them can be dated to the Late Preclassic with similarities to monuments at Izapa and Kaminaljuyu (Sharer 2006).

Monument 1 at Chalchuapa (Figure 12) is what remains of a carved stela.

Monument 1 depicts a seated ruler with an elaborate headdress holding a trophy head below the eighth column of the hieroglyphic text. On the cheek of the ruler there is a crossed bands motif. Traces of hieroglyphic writing with recognizable Maya calendric symbols are visible on the stela. This early site's iconography correlates the crossed bands with the ruler and or his legitimacy similar to the later Izapan depictions of associating the crossed bands with the deification and legitimization of rulership (Morely 1994). This is one of the earlier depictions of the crossed bands appearing on a human ruler and not just a deity. This may suggest that the crossed bands may have begun to transition into being a symbol of the presence of deities or the approval of a rule or ritual by the deities.

Late Preclassic

Table 5: Late Preclassic

| | Stelae | Altar |
|-------|-----------|-------|
| Izapa | Stelae 2 | |
| | Stelae 4 | |
| | Stelae 8 | |
| | Stelae 11 | |
| | Stelae 22 | |
| | Stelae 18 | |
| | Stelae 67 | |

| | | |
|--------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| Kaminaljuyu | Stelae 11 | |
| | Stelae 65 | |
| Takalik Abaj | Stela 2 | Monument 30 (Santa Margarita Throne) |

The majority of the data from the Late Preclassic comes from stelae (90%) with 10% on an altar. There are seven stelae at Izapa in my data with the crossed bands, 2 stelae from Kaminaljiyu and one from Takalik Abaj. The majority of the stelae are depictions of deities or deified rulers on the scene of a ritual.

Iconography

There are 253 known worked stone monuments in Izapa, however there are no dates or historical inscriptions attached to these monuments which make it more difficult to identify exactly when and why these stelae were created (Coggins 1996). The scenes on the Izapan stelae depict narratives, unlike the Olmec iconography that mainly focused on rulers and deities (Rice 2007). Many of the scenes that appear on the carved monuments can also be compared to narratives later shown recorded in the Maya Popol Vuh. Newsome (2001) and Miles (1965) both discuss the meaning of the stone monuments and their lack of date or identifiers. Newsome (2001) suggests that they are meant to be “outside historical time” and Miles (1965) suggests they were a part of ritual processions due to the sequence of some of the stelae. The compositions of most of the Izapa stelae have top-line

designs with different scrolls, horizontal and diagonal bands, brackets and U-shaped elements (Quirarte 1973).

The motifs, themes and symbols centered in Izapan iconography include scroll-eyed heads, compound figures with anthropomorphic and zoomorphic attributes, human figures and diagonals, U shapes and crossed bands (Quirarte 1973). The U shapes are derivative of the Olmec earth-monster imagery, particularly the feline snout or a serpent (Rice 2007). In Maya iconography, the U appears in early versions of the Ajaw glyph and other Early Classic monuments representing objects of shiny stone, disappearing by the Late Classic. The cross bands are another motif known from Olmec monuments. In Izapa art, the crossed bands motif is prevalent in many different circumstances including on the Principle Bird Deity, on figures of rulers and on iconography associated with felines. Guernsey (2010) relates this symbol as a portal in ritual scenes however, Rice (2007) mentions it to be some sort of identifier symbol. Rice believes that it may refer to the extreme positions of the sun at the solstice positions and/or the inter-cardinal directions. It often occurs in reference to felines, which Rice relates to the Maya Jaguar Sun God of the Underworld. It also occurs with humans on the headdress, chest or belt, which Rice (2007) presumes to be some sort of insignia.

The specific stela sculpture tradition at Izapa began in the Middle to Late Preclassic transition (Guernsey 2010). The Olmec heads at San Lorenzo introduced a low relief carving that allowed for a more complex narrative to be displayed. Guernsey suggests these Olmec forms may have been precedents to the Izapan narrative stela. In Izapan

stelae, avian imagery is one of the most prevalent scenes displayed. The crossed bands show up on the majority of these motifs on the wings of the Principle Bird Deity (PBD), which show the importance and prevalence of the crossed bands in Izapan art.

Takalik Abaj was in a strategic location between the major sites in Mexico and Guatemala (Stone 2002). The hieroglyphic texts at the site, specifically on Stela 5, suggest that the residents were Maya by the Late Preclassic period. Regardless of the linguistic difference between Takalik Abaj and its neighbor Izapa, the iconographic and symbol systems present on their monuments are similar (Stone 2002). Similar narrative patterns were used on the stela at both sites. Some of the shared imagery includes figures emerging from niches, portals, twisting conduits and a watery basal band bound by zoomorphic masks (Stone 2002).

Quirarte (1973) discusses the similarity of Olmec, Izapa and Maya art sharing elements, but not necessarily sharing the meaning of those elements. The site of Takalik Abaj is to the southeast of Izapa and shares traits with the Olmec and the Maya. Takalik Abaj is a major center of stone monuments. There are 326 known stone monuments and 124 of those are carved (Collins 2011). The carved stone monuments produce a record of social, political and ideological practices ranging from the Middle Formative to the Classic Periods. Many of the monuments found at the site were discovered out of context, causing a confusion of the chronological record of the stone monuments of Takalik Abaj (Collins 2011). The dating of the monuments has thus been done by stylistic comparisons. The

Preclassic monuments were narrative sculptures meant to be seen in the round extending around sides to the top and bottom of a piece (Collins 2011).

Principle Bird Deity



Figure 12: Izapa Stela 2

Source: Courtesy of New World Archaeology Foundation Norman (1973)

Mythologically, the Principle Bird Deity or PBD has been identified as the companion spirit of the primary Classic Maya creator deity, Itzamnaaj (Quirarte 1977). The death of the PBD by one of the Hero Twins is a theme seen at the ballcourt in Copan, and on Izapa Stela 25. Quirarte (1977) links components of Olmec, Izapan and Maya art and elements of each of their costumes with the PBD showing an importance and relevance of this deity across the time periods. Lee and Espinosa (1982) suggest the PBD in Izapan art may be a predecessor for Seven Macaw of the K'che' Maya Popol Vuh, which is a body of mytho-historical narratives in the Post Classic western highlands (Christenson 2007). In the story of Seven Macaw, as stated before, one of the Hero Twins killed him for his arrogance (Guernsey 2004).

Izapa Stela 2 (Fig. 13) shows human figures near the top of a calabash tree with an avian deity descending from above. The winged deity has a crossed band depicted on each wing (Norman 1973). The events in Stela 2 are reenacting the events of creation where the ruler is substituted for the Principal Bird Deity who transforms into the bird (Guernsey 2010). In this scene the crossed bands appears on the figure that is the direct representation of the Principle Bird Deity. The ruler is becoming the manifestation of the deity himself to his people and bears the crossed bands.



Figure 13: Izapa Stela 4

Source: Courtesy of The New World Archeology Foundation Norman (1973)



Figure 14: Izapa Stela 16

Source: Courtesy of New World Archaeology Foundation Norman (1973)

Izapa Stela 4 (Figure 14) is also a scene depicting a ritual transformation with the principle bird deity mirrored in a vision (Guernsey 2004). The ruler is in a bird costume standing on a terrestrial band, while the ruler's avian counterpart is descending from a celestial band above. The crossed bands appear on the wings of the PBD as well as on the costume of the ruler. This stela, unlike Stela 2, which depicts the creation story, depicts a

ritual transformation of the ruler in a bird costume in to the PBD himself. Rice (2007) suggests that the paraphernalia resembles ballgame objects, a cued stick in the right arm and a cup in the left arm. Stela 60 at Izapa also bears the crossed bands on the wings of the PBD, however it depicts the actions performed once he is in the otherworld (Guernsey 2004). Each of these images connects the ruler with the PBD. The crossed bands depict either a ritual of the ruler with the PBD or some connection of the ruler and the deity in each piece of iconography.

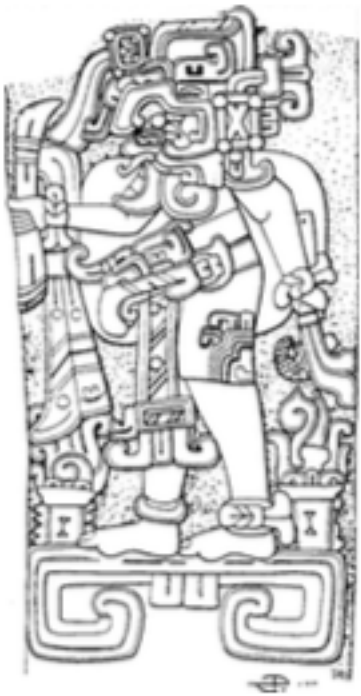


Figure 15: Kaminaljuyu Stela 11

Courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks

Stela 11 at Kaminaljuyu is also a representation of the Principle Bird Deity with the crossed bands motif on it. Rice (2007) discusses the debates around whether the stylistic

ties of Kaminaljuyu are closer to lowland Maya or Izapan culture. The themes of the art at Kaminaljuyu center on rulership rather than narratives, which is more similar to Maya iconography. However, certain motifs such as earth basal panels, incense burners, long lipped heads and headdresses tie the iconography to Izapa (Rice 2007).

Kaminaljuyu Stela 11 (Figure 16) dates to the Late Preclassic and shows imagery of the bird-costumed ruler (Guernsey 2004). This stela is very similar to Izapa Stela 4 (Figure 14) in the imagery and the avian headdress that the figure is wearing. The depiction of the figure in the Kaminaljuyu stela suggests that it is representing a more stagnant figure, or one that is not depicted in the midst of an action rather than those at Izapa, which portray an active ritual seen on the Izapa stela. The iconography of the Kaminaljuyu stela suggests a sanctioning of the ruler by the PBD rather than the transformation of the ruler in to the PBD due to the crossed bands appearing on the wings of the celestial PBD above and on the headdress of the figure, but not on the wings of the costume of the figure, suggesting the crossed bands may represent a deity. The crossed bands on this stela connect the deity with the ruler, legitimizing the figure's rule.

Stela 2 at the site of Takalik Abaj shows the Sun God wearing the headdress of the Principal Bird Deity (Taube 2010). There is a crossed bands motif in front of the ear of the god. On this same scene, there is a PBD with crossed bands on his wings on top of a tree with the fruit and leaves of a Calabash tree. Quirarte (1973) writes that the crossed bands motif is associated with U shaped elements whose context is varied.

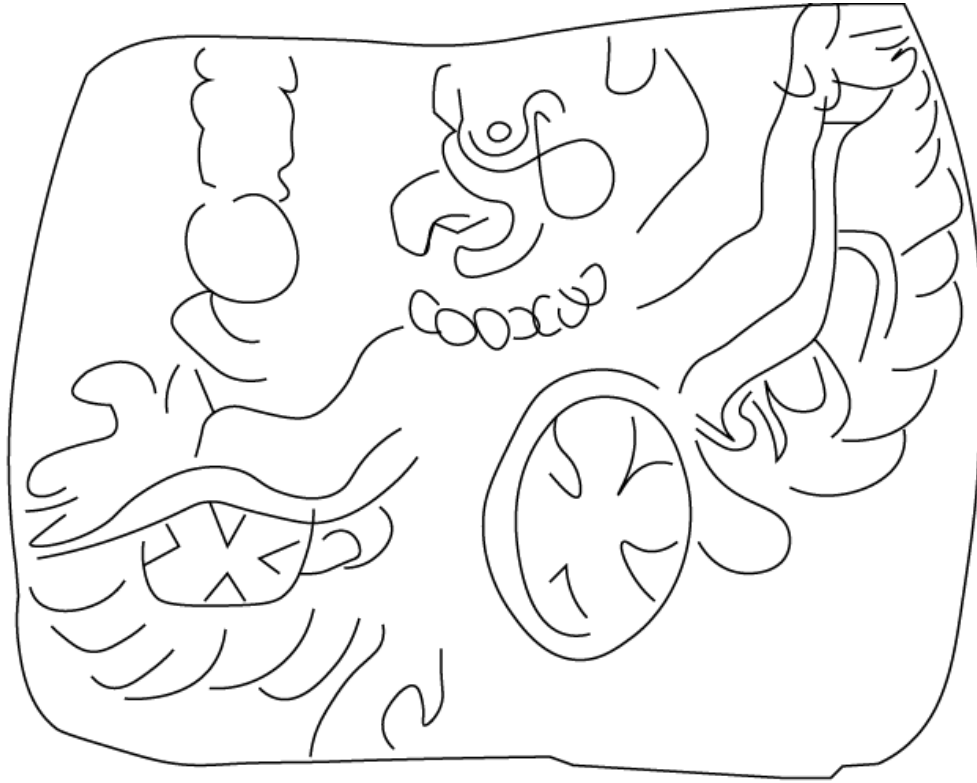


Figure 16: Takalik Abaj Altar 30

Altar 30 or the "Santa Margarita Throne" at Takalik Abaj also bears an avian-costumed figure with cross bands on the wings and on the side. Schieber and de Lavarreda (1994) suggest that the origin of the throne was a stela, however its use as a throne indicates that the bird deity is connected to rulership at this site as well as at Izapa. This throne is compared to the Sarcophagus Lid from the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque. Schele (1974) notes that the avian was part of a myriad of motifs associated with ruler ship at Palenque. The crossed bands are still present on the avian figure on the

thrown; they are however not on his wings, rather on his belt. They are nonetheless associated with an avian deity.



Figure 17: Izapa Stela 11

Source: Courtesy of New World Archaeology Foundation Norman (1973)

There are other stelae in Izapa on which the crossed bands appear in reference to deities other than the PBD. Izapa Stela 11 depicts an anthropomorphic sky deity in the mouth of a figure impersonating a deity sitting on a double-headed-U earth serpent (Norman 1973). Scholars have interpreted Stela 11 in a multitude of ways. Milbrath (1979) states that it is a bearded god positioned in the jaws of the earth monster. Laughten (1997) believes it is the sun setting in to the mouth of a toad/earth monster. Coggins (1996) believes it represents the ascent of the sun from the jaws of the crocodilian earth. Rice (2007) relates it to dawn and the bird of the sun as described in the Popol Vuh, in which an old man makes four streaks standing for four-year bearers. In each interpretation, the crossed bands are at the beginning or the end of the cycle connecting the other world to our world (Rice 2007).



Figure 18: Izapa Stela 22

Source: Courtesy of New World Archaeology Foundation Norman (1973)

Izapa Stela 22 (Figure 19) shows an eroded human figure seated on a boat with a jaguar crouched on a stepped element above its head. There are rope-like serpents extending skyward from the boat. One of the serpents is intertwined with a smaller figure

wearing a deity mask that is standing on top of the profile of a zoomorph with a crossed-bands motif on its head (Norman 1973). The crossed bands on the head of this deity are similar to the crossed bands on the heads of deities in Olmec figures in San Lorenzo and La Venta discussed above. The two zoomorphic heads are skeletal and Stone (2002) has related this image to the death of the Maize God. This image is similar to Stela 67, which depicts a figure with arms outstretched holding scepters. On either side of the boat are zoomorphic heads each with a crossed bands on the top of the head similar to Stela 22 (Norman 1973). Both of these stelae connect the ruler depicted to the underworld through a ritual of the ruler descending to the underworld on a canoe.



Figure19: Izapa Stela 67

Source: Courtesy of New World Archaeology Foundation Norman (1973)



Figure 20: Izapa Stela 18

Source: Courtesy of New World Archaeology Foundation Norman 1973

There are also stelae that bear the crossed bands motif on representations of rulership during definite ritual settings. Stela 18 at Izapa depicts priests or nobles along with their attendants behind them performing a rite around an incense burner. There is a crossed band on the left corner of the upper band. A majority of this stela is worn away, but assumedly the smoke from the incense is floating up to the otherworld above the upper band or sky band and the crossed bands is on one side of the sky. Suzanne Miles (1965) believes that the stelae at Izapa were constructed in a comprehensive sequence. She groups Stela 18 in sequence with Stelae 2, 21, 22, 7, 12 and 5 and that they were viewed as a part of a ritual procession. The crossed bands motif in Stela 18 is not attached to a particular figure or deity, however it seems to be connected with the upperworld. This would suggest that there is a connection between the otherworld, deities and legitimacy of ritual or rulership and the crossed-bands motif.

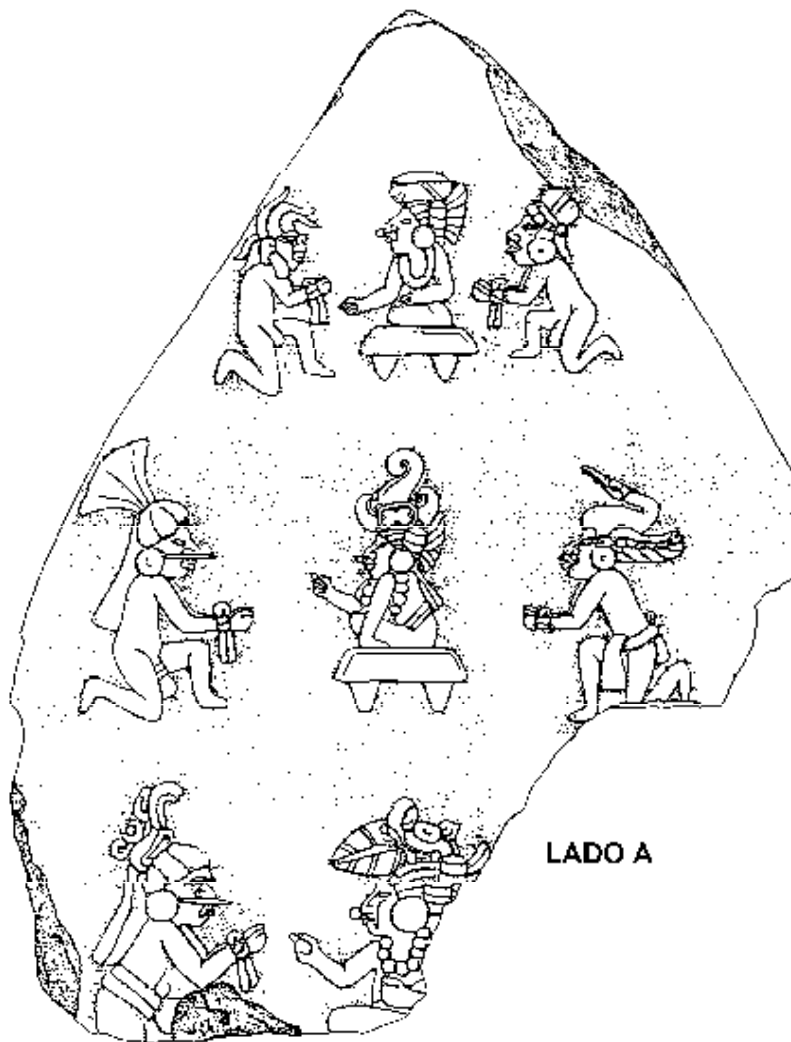


Figure 21: Kaminaljuyu Stela 65

Source: Courtesy of Jonathan Kaplan

Kaminaljuyu Stela 65 (Figure 22) shows a political scene with eight seated figures in three tiers. The figure in the center column and center row has a crossed bands motif on his headdress (Rice 2007). The three figures in the middle column are each facing left

seated crossed legged wearing large ornate headdresses. They are each gesturing with their index finger. On either side, captives face the central individuals naked with outstretched arms. The central figure has an infixed k'in sign, which is a sign for day, while the lower figure has a leaf in the mouth of a profile dragon (Rice 2007). Rice (2007) states that the central figures may show the importance of being seated in office in the Classic times, where the captives may be foreign elites and their headdresses may be predecessors of emblem glyphs. This may suggest that the headdress in the center with the crossed bands motif may be an emblem indicating who or where this figure was from, or it may be a symbol of their legitimacy as a ruler surrounded by captives.

Classic

Table 6: Classic

| | Stelae | Monolith | Reliefs |
|----------------|--|------------|------------------|
| Seibal | Stela 1,11,19,21 | | |
| Dos Pilas | Stela 1 | | |
| | Stela 6 | | |
| | Stela 8 | | |
| Tzedales River | Stela | | |
| Hauberg Stela | Hauberg Stela | | |
| Copan | Stela N (South Face) | | |
| | Stela A | | |
| | Stela B | | |
| | | | Structure 10L-29 |
| Quirigua | | Zoomorph B | |
| Palenque | | | Carved Panel |
| Chiapas | | | Stone Panel |
| Piedras Negras | | | Mortuary Slab |
| Naranjo | Stela 12-14, 20, 22, 28, 38, 41 | | |
| Tonina | Monument 3, 5, 8, 14, 26, 36, 40, 45, 56, 85, 158, 150 | | |

The majority of the crossed bands found at the Classic sites are on stelae (86%) as well as 3% on monoliths and 11% on reliefs. They are mostly related to rulers and placed on a piece of a costume.

Maya Iconography

Maya art is depicted through stone sculpture on stelae, lintels, altars, zoomorphs, ballcourt markers, stairs, thrones and sculpture in the round (Miller 1999). The stelae are free-standing monuments rounded at the top normally depicted rulers of the cities they were located in in the guise of a god (Miller 1999). They usually have a record of the passage of time with hieroglyphic inscriptions (Kubler 1993). Lintels span the doorways and show mainly lines of ancestry. Altars normally have a relief image on the top and zoomorphs are large boulders that have been sculpted to resemble animals (Miller 1999). Thrones have broad seats and large backs that show human figures and sometimes, cosmological associations. (Miller 1999).

Coe (1977) interprets the crossed bands motif as being associated with a sky symbol. This interpretation is based on page 68a of the Dresden Codex, in which the crossed bands symbol is contained within the sky band on which the two Chacs sit (Reilly 2000). Reilly states that the crossed bands motif is almost always featured in Classic Maya sky bands as well as being frequently placed on the body of the celestial dragon.

Underworld

The crossed-bands motif is found on two stone structures, one at Copan and one at Quirigua. The structure at Copan is in association with the veneration of ancestors and the one at Quirigua is on a zoomorph that can be associated with a ritual connecting to the otherworld.

Gordan Willey led excavations at Copan of selected residences in which he divided the Valley into hierarchical types based on size of the structure (Willey, Leventhal, and Fash 1978). Type 3 and 4 were the larger types with vaulted masonry structures, stone monuments and tombs (Fash 1992). Type 3 even held hieroglyphic inscription with a day and the name of the ruling king. Type 1 and 2 were the smaller residences of the common people. This has allowed the socioeconomic status to be evident based on the architectural developments in the Classic period (250-900 AD) (Fash 1992). On a Late Classic structure 10L-29, there is a crossed bands on the façade, which appear to be held or on the heads of three squatting figures, surrounded by Lazy-S-shapes (Reilly 2006). The temple has been identified as a temple to venerate ancestors (Fash 1992). This association is based on the decoration on the façade including ancestral cartouches, inverted niches, death masks, and multiple T632/muyal symbols, which Stone argues has ancestral associations (Reilly 2006). The presence of the crossed-bands motif on this possible burial associates the motif at Copan with the veneration of the ancestors and their contact with the otherworld.

Zoomorph



Figure 22: Quirigua Zoomorph B

Source: Courtesy of University of Texas Press Looper (2003)

The sculptures at Quirigua were commissioned of a sixty-year period between 746 AD and 805 AD (Looper 2001). Zoomorph B at Quirigua depicts a supernatural crocodilian, the Cosmic Monster (Looper 2009). The front head of the Cosmic Monster has eyes that are represented with crossed bands. Footprints are carved at the jaw, marking a royal path. The crossed bands symbol and a flower emerge from the stingray spine. Looper (2009) suggests this is an allusion to the cosmic umbilicus manifested through bloodletting. Because of this bloodletting ritual, Looper purposes that Zoomorph B depicts the ruler

connected with powers of transformation, death, and rebirth seen from the mouth of the Cosmic Monster.

Ruler

The majority of the iconography that the crossed bands appear on in the Classic period are on depictions of rulers. They are usually in costume depicted either standing over a captive or on a portrayal of a ritual of some sort. Eighty percent of the motifs in the Classic period in my data set are connected to rulers. The crossed bands are not strictly located to one piece of the ruler's costume but in multiple places including the belt, chest, wristbands and headpiece.

Copan has three stelae with crossed bands appearing on their belt and or chest. Stela B was commissioned by Uaxaclajuun Ub'aah K'awiil (18 Rabbit) and dates to 731 AD (Heyworth 2014). The king holds a serpent bar of divine kingship and was made to show the power of Chac to renew the cosmos based on the images of the tree of life and the base plant. The crossed-bands motif appears on the chest of his costume (Heyworth 2014). Stela N was commissioned in 761 AD by Smoke Shell and placed at the bottom of the stairs between the Main Plaza to the East Court. The side of the stela is associated with the Maize God as well as figures wearing turbans like those worn by Uaxaclajuun Ub'aah K'awiil on Stela B (Heyworth 2014). Stela A at Copan was constructed toward the end of the reign of

Uaxaklajuun U'baah K'awiil and was erected in 731 AD (Newsome 2001). The ruler has a crossed bands on the belt of his costume.

Stela 1 at Dos Pilas of K'awiil Chan K'inich is located on an elite compound outside the main plaza. The script focuses on the recent deaths of the leading figures Ruler 3, his Cuncuen wife and the queen of Naranjo born in Dos Pilas (Martin 2000). The crossed bands are located on the sheath of his belt. Stela 6 in Naranjo depicts K'ak' ukalaw at his inauguration. He bears the crossed bands motif on his chest. The stela depicting his inauguration in 755 AD however, was not commissioned until 780 AD. The following king Itzamnaaj K'awiil erected a similar stela in 800 AD, Stela 8, which has the crossed-bands motif on the belt, the wristbands and also on the headpiece that he is wearing.

In Caracol, Stela 21 dated to 702 AD depicts an unknown Caracol ruler with a dwarf and a kneeling captive at his side. The kneeling captive is identified by a caption as a k'uhul ajaw or 'divine lord' and has the crossed bands motif around his belt (Martin 2000). In Piedras Negras, Ruler 7 erected stelae that were set on a high platform. Stela 15 was the first of these constructed in 785 AD and is an innovated sculpture as it is almost fully-rounded. The figure, Ruler 7 on this stela has crossed bands motif on his belt.

There is a Carved Panel at Palenque in which K'inich K'an Joy Chitam II is portrayed, flanked by his parents (Pillsbury 2012). The headdress and costume he is wearing indicates that he is impersonating Chac, the rain god and the headdress he is wearing, bears a crossed bands on the front.

A Classic Maya mortuary slab from Piedras Negras shows a probable nobleman Chak Tuun Ahk Chamay in the costume of a warrior. He is wearing the headdress full of plumage above a hummingbird and skull. The armband of the figure bears a crossed bands which is similar to the crossed bands which appear on the wings of the Principle Bird Deity images in Izapan art. The major difference between the two however is that it is presence on the ruler's armband instead of wings.

Dumbarton Oaks has acquired a stone panel that they believe most likely came from Chancala, Chiapas from the Late Classic Period (Pillsbury 2012). The figure has a shield in his right hand and his left hand holds a ceremonial bar that ends in serpents' heads on both sides. God K emerges from the left serpent (Looper 2003). The chest and belt piece of this costume have crossed bands flanking them. There are a total of seven visible crossed bands on this costume. According to the text, the ritual took place in the presence God K (Pillsbury 2012). The presence of the gods in this scene could possibly associate the figure on the panel with being legitimized or in favor of a god or at least reaffirm that this ritual is being done in the presence of a deity or deities.

A stela along the Tzedales River in Chiapas was found in a relatively good state of preservation (Spinden 1913:197). The figure is dressed similarly to those at Yaxchilan and Palenque, holds a Manikan Sceptor as well as a crossed bands on his belt and on his headdress.

Stela 11 at Yaxchilan depicts a standing human figure, wearing the mask of a god (Spinden 1913). The themes on this stelae are militaristic with scenes of a prisoner and a

period ending ritual where the ruler spreads liquid (Bardsley 2004). Unlike most stelae, which document the ceremonies during the reigns of rulers, Stela 11 depicts pre-inaugural rituals leading to Bird Jaguar's accession (Bradsley 2004). The front of the headdress depicted on the stelae portrays the crossed bands motif. The figure threatens bound captives with his baton, showing his power over them. I would argue that the crossed bands' presence on the mask exemplifies the presence or the approval of the deity in this ruler's endeavors over his captives (Spinden 1913).

The Hauberg Stela plate 66b from the Maya Lowlands (provenience is unknown) depicts a ruler in a posture that is standard in the Classic period though the stela is dated to around AD 197. The figure is holding a serpent, alluding to the Maya scepter of authority (Guernsey 2010). The glyphs on the stela state only the ruler's name, polity, and official ritual act that the imagery reveals. The ruler represented on this stela is depicted as an individual who had power in the natural world as well as the otherworld. There are two cross bands on the ruler's belt and captives surrounding hip.

The majority of the crossed bands that appear on the costumes of rulers in the Classic period appear on the belt at 60%. Crossed bands on the chest include 26% of the database, 13% on wristbands and 26% on headbands. The crossed bands motif appears on multiple positions in 20% of the data set. In each instance that it appears on multiple places on one figure, it always appears on the belt, which would suggest that the belt is the most common or the most prevalent position to wear the crossed bands.

Table 7: Placement of Crossed Bands on Ruler Figures

| | Belt | Chest | Wristband | Headpiece |
|---------------------------------|------|-------|-----------|-----------|
| Dos Pilas | | | | |
| Stela 1 | x | | | |
| Stela 6 | | x | | |
| Stela 8 | x | | x | x |
| Caracol | | | | |
| Stela 21 | x | | | |
| Stela 15 | x | | | |
| Palenque Carved Panel | | | | x |
| Piedras Negras Mortuary Slab | | | x | |
| Chiapas Stone Panel | x | x | | |
| Tzedales River Stela | x | | | x |
| Yaxchilan | | | | |
| Stela 11 | | | | x |
| Hauberg Stela | x | | | |
| Copan | | | | |
| Stela A | x | | | |
| Stela B | | x | | |
| Stela N | x | x | | |

Placement of Crossed Bands

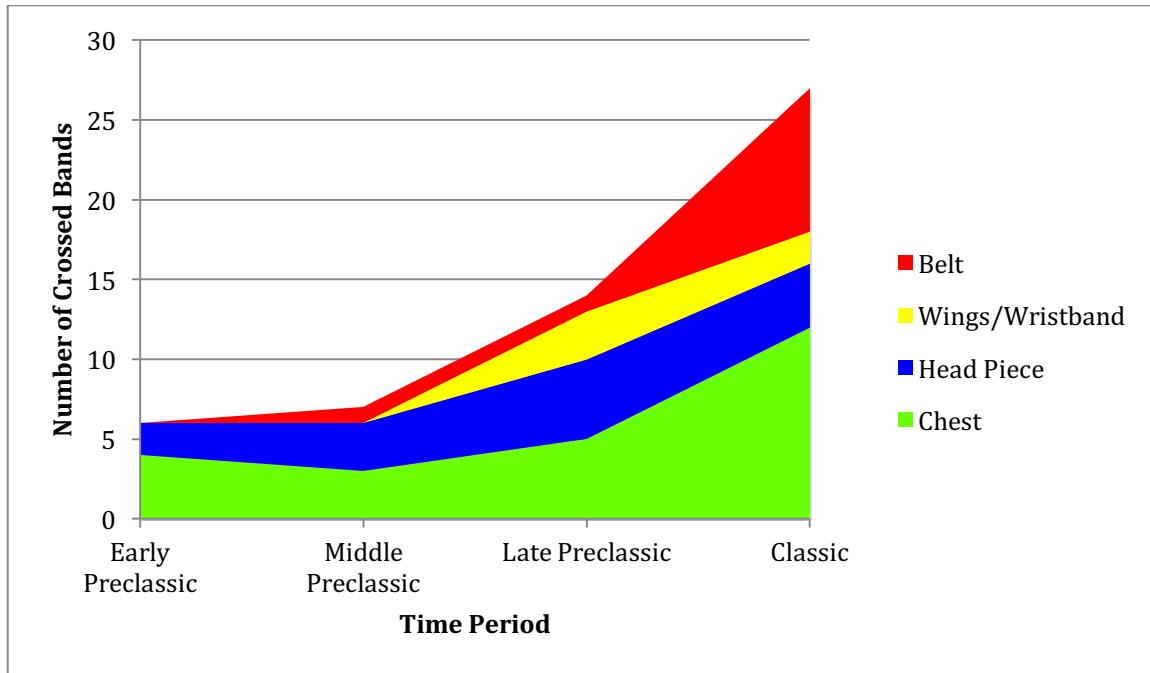


Figure 23: Placement of Crossed Bands

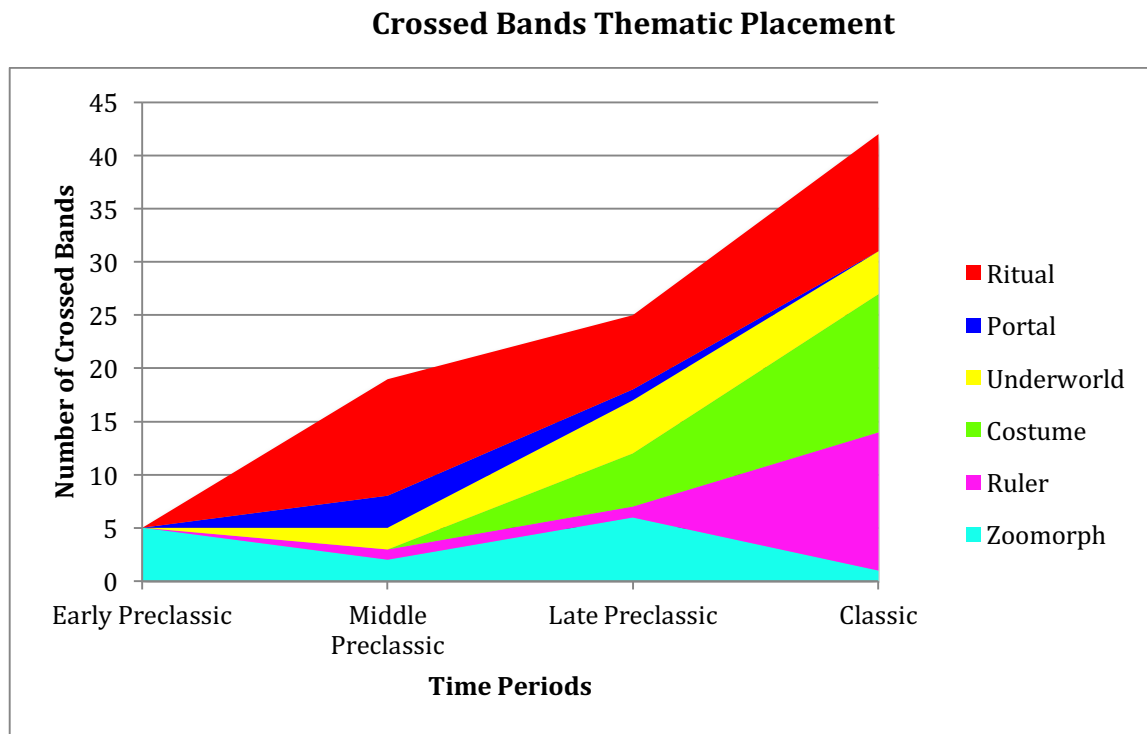


Figure 24: Crossed Bands Thematic Placement

The figures above show the transition of the thematic representations of the crossed bands motif over time (Figure 25) and the transition of where the crossed bands motif is placed on the figure or deity through time (Figure 24). The presence of the crossed bands on zoomorphs, in connection to portals and rituals increases from the Early Preclassic to the Late Preclassic until we see a decline in the Late Classic. The Late Classic still sees a significant amount of crossed bands in connection to rulers. Simultaneously, the crossed bands transitioned from appearing on the chest of the zoomorphs and anthropomorphs in the Early to Late Preclassic to appearing on the headpiece and most significantly on the belt

of the rulers in the Classic period. These figures indicate a pattern of transition through time

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

I will discuss the analysis of the crossed bands motif based on chronology and geographic region, where the crossed-bands motif is present on each piece, and who or what it is represented on. I will begin with an interpretation of the iconography of the Early Preclassic sites, then the Middle to Late Preclassic sites, and then the Classic Maya cites. Izapa is both chronologically and geographically a link from the Olmec to Maya culture, which is evident in the iconographic influences and evolution between the cultures.

In every context from the Early Preclassic to the Classic, the crossed bands motif is connected with the sacred and the divine. The change that takes place over time occurs on the thing or being that the crossed bands is identifying as sacred. In the Early Preclassic, the crossed bands appears directly on the bodies of the deities both on the chest and on the head. This suggest that the crossed bands renders the actual divine essence and sacredness of the deity that the monument is portraying. At times, the monuments on which the crossed bands occurs, are within contexts that would suggest they were utilized for ritual purposes. The use of these among rituals indicates that the crossed bands becomes not only a signifier of sacredness but a link between the sacred deity it is placed on and humans. In the Middle Preclassic, the crossed-bands motif appears on monuments in which the divine beings are interacting directly with humans. There is then an allocation of this sacredness from the divine being with the humans in these scenes. This would indicate that the crossed bands themselves hold the essence of sacredness. In the Classic

period, the crossed bands appears on the costumes of the rulers indicating that the rulers themselves are inherently sacred no matter what they have interacted with.

Divine Essence

The data discussed above shows that a significant amount of the crossed bands in my data set in the Early to Middle Preclassic are found on freestanding figures of deities as well as monoliths and relief carvings. The appearance of the crossed bands on figures of deities suggests that in the Early to Middle Preclassic the crossed-bands motif was an icon to represent the presence of a deity. I argue that the crossed-bands motif was an indicator of the divine essence of the deity.

The monuments on which the crossed bands occur, in some instances, appear in ritual contexts. The ritual purpose and power of these monuments indicate that they connected the divine world with the human world. The crossed bands role as a signifier of divinity is then linked to the humans enacting the rituals in the presence of these stone monuments. This ritual context of the crossed bands correlates to the scenes on which the crossed bands are depicted in the Late Preclassic where it appears in reference to rituals connecting this world to the otherworld, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

As discussed earlier, the monuments at San Lorenzo appear to have been commissioned not just as mere idols but also for ritual purpose for ensembles to act out historical or mythical events. The use of these monuments in ritual events allows them to be reworked for future purposes, which is likely why they were grouped at Group D

according to Cyphers (1996). The four great monoliths at Teopantecuanitlan that bear the crossed bands on their heads surrounding the plaza create an interesting meaning to the crossed bands motif itself. Not only do the crossed bands appear on the headbands and on the chest of the deities, the monoliths are placed around the plaza in such a way that at the concurrence of the two equinox diagonal shadows, the crossed bands motif intersects in shadows in the middle of the patio floor. This suggests that at least in Teopantecuantlan, the crossed bands motif has some cosmological significance connecting it to rituals, deities and the otherworld. The were-jaguar heads were deities and they most likely had some sort of ritual importance based on the way they were arranged around the patio with cosmological significance. I would argue that at this site, the crossed bands motif represented more than just the existence of a deity. With these monoliths, the motif connects the human or terrestrial world with the otherworld in a physical ceremonial context on the platform. The motif began to express significance to ritual and ceremonial events in a celestial context due to the intentional appearance of the crossed bands symbol at the solstice and the equinox.

Divine Essence and Living People

In the Middle to Late Preclassic, the crossed bands appear on scenes on which the sacred being, identified with the crossed bands, is interacting with people. There is a transition from people interacting with stone monuments with the essence of divinity to

images of people interacting with sacred beings on stone. Ultimately the deity shares the divinity or sacred essence with the people in these narratives.

In some of these instances, the monuments do not just take place in contexts of a ritual but present a liminal or portal connection supporting Guernsey's (2012) argument. Altar 4 at La Venta also has the crossed bands motif above a captive figure indicating an emergence from the underworld depicting the transitional space that is present at Teopantecuanitlan as discussed earlier. Altar 5, which is paired with Altar 4, also depicts a crossed band on the headdress of the figure that is emerging from the niche holding a child (Guernsey 2006).

Whether or not the crossed bands on Altar 4 at La Venta represent the portal into the other world, I propose they do show a connection to rulership and more specifically to the legitimization or deification of the rulership, connecting the ruler to the otherworld and the sacredness of the deity. Grove (1999) states that the altar represents the ruler emerging from the underworld through the cave, thus legitimizing his rule through deification and contact with the deity. The presence of the crossed bands on the head of Altar 5 may suggest in this altar the legitimization of the rulership or the rulership of the future ruler, as well as that of Altar 4.

The transition discussed above is seen more clearly moving in to the Late Preclassic among the Izapan stelae. There are multiple scenes depicting rituals in which the rulers become the manifestation of the deity on earth. The iconography depicting these rituals bears the crossed bands motif and connects the earthly rulership to the otherworld, deifying the ruler and legitimizing his rule.

Izapa Stelae 2, 4, and 60 all bear the crossed bands motif on the wings of the PBD. Contact with the otherworld, rulership, and their connection with each other are major themes of the art from the Middle Preclassic and in to the Classic Maya period (Guernsey 2010). The avian transformation imagery is common, displaying humans in bird costumes as well as anthropomorphic avian deities (Guernsey 2004). In Classic Maya art, the kings communicate with the otherworld using vision serpents. The rulers in bird costumes portray the same message of the ruler's contact with the otherworld (Guernsey 2004).

Stone (2002) compares Stelae 67 to Izapa Throne 1 with scalloped edges and infixed crossed bands, which allowed the ruler, when seated, to enter a portal to communicate with the supernatural realm. Stela 8 at Izapa depicts this process by showing a ruler sitting on a throne that looks like Throne 1, on a cosmic journey (Stone 2002). Stelae 22 and 67 together show the sacrifice and the rebirth of the Maize god and depict the relationship between death and creation. The crossed bands depicted on these two stelae are dealing with the otherworld, the stela itself is depicting the ruler acting out the story of the Maize god; however, the zoomorphic heads seem to depict the underworld itself.

Izapa Stela 2 depicts the PBD descending from the skybands towards a calabash tree with the two crossed bands on each wing of the PBD below the tree. Stela 4 depicts a ruler in a bird costume with the crossed bands on his wing as well as the PBD descending from the sky band on top of the rulers' head with a crossed band on his wing. In this case, the crossed band is associated with not only the deity himself but also the ruler in the bird costume performing the ritual. I argue that these are depictions of the ruler's ascending to their thrones being deified by the PBD. Stela 60 depicts the PBD below human faces with

the crossed band on his wings (Guernsey 2004). This depiction would suggest that the crossed bands are associated with the ritual of the divine king and his transformation into a deified, legitimized ruler. There is also a PBD figure on Altar 30 at Takalik Abaj, which was used as a throne. The crossed bands on this figure are not on his wings but on his belt. The throne has been said to connect rulership with this site, again connecting the legitimization of the ruler represented with the crossed bands.

Stela 11 depicts the ruler ascending out of the mouth of the reptilian creature with the crossed bands on his belly. Stela 22 has crossed bands placed on the skeletal zoomorphic heads below the boat similar to Stela 67 with crossed bands atop the fleshy heads. These depict the death and the rebirth of the maize god respectively. The crossed bands in these two motifs seem to be placed on the portal to and from the underworld both in death and in rebirth.

The crossed band motif on stela 18 could also be interpreted as being an indication of a portal as it is placed on the corner of the sky band as two priests are sitting around an incense burner with the smoke rising to the skyband. Miles (1965) suggests that this stela is a part of a sequence with six other stela. The first is Stela 2 which depicts the PBD descending with crossed bands; 21 depicts a ruler holding the head of a captive with his decapitated body laying below and his spirit being carried away, there are no crossed bands in this piece; 22 with the crossed bands motif on the top of the skeletal head as the maize god in the boat travels to the underworld; 7 depicts a deity mask overlooking a double-headed earth serpent touching the sky serpent on the left and supporting a human figure on the right, there is no crossed bands motif present or visible on this stela; 12

depicts two priests around an incense burner with a limp jaguar suspended above, there is no crossed bands motif present or visible on this stela; 5 depicts the tree of life in the center of the cosmological myth, there is no crossed bands motif present. In this sequence alone, the crossed bands motifs are present in the depictions of the PBD descending, on the skeletal head in the scene depicting the maize god's death, and one of the scene of the priests around the incense burner.

There seems to be no pattern as stela 12 is a similar scene to stela 18, however the priests in stela 18 are wearing ornate headdress whereas the figures in stela 23 are not wearing anything. Stela 18 with the crossed band in the skyband is present where the priests are impersonating the gods with their headdresses and have no sacrifice sent up. The nobles in stela 12 are sending the sacrifice of a jaguar to the gods. However the ends of the stela where the edge of the band would be are eroded, there is no crossed bands motif present but the place it would be is eroded so it is possible that there could have been one present but no way to be sure. Otherwise, based on this sequence of stelae, the presence of the crossed bands motif occurs when there is an actual deity present or a ruler dressed in a deity mask in a ritual with a deity. However stela 7 does have a deity mask and a double headed serpent but the stela is so eroded in the center it is hard to tell what is going on in the center of the stela and what other iconography and symbology is incorporated in the stela.

Whether the stela is portraying the legitimization of rulership or his journey to and from the underworld, the crossed bands in The Middle to Late Preclassic appear

representative of the ruler in association with a deity receiving sacredness through the contact with this deity.

The Divinity of Rulers

I argue that in the Classic Maya iconography, the appearance of the crossed bands represents the ruler, legitimized by a deity as well as the specific deity that legitimizes rule. The crossed bands appear on the costume of the ruler without any contact or connection with a deity indicating that the ruler is innately sacred or divine. The crossed bands continues to transition from the Middle Preclassic icon representing a ritual legitimizing rulership to representing the innately deified ruler. Stela 11 at Kaminaljuyu is the only stela with the crossed bands in a Maya site that shows the ruler in the costume of the PBD. This stela was constructed in Izapan style, which is most likely why it is similar in content and symbols to the Izapa stela. The figure in this stela is different than those at Izapa as it is the ruler dressed in the avian costume without representation of connection to the deity through ritual. Kaminaljuyu Stela 11 exemplifies a transition from the crossed bands connection to deity and human ritual to representing the ruler, innately deified.

The zoomorph at Quirigua of the cosmic monster with cross bands for his eyes is suggested to be an allusion to the cosmic umbilicus manifested through bloodletting (Looper 2009). This zoomorph depicts the ruler and his connection to the otherworld through transformation, death and rebirth. This is similar to Izapa Stela 60 with the winged deity connected to the umbilicus of the skeletal deity in a rebirth. The majority of the remaining stela from the Classic that have the crossed bands motif depict it on the belt

of the ruler. This would suggest that the crossed band was an symbol that rulers wore. The stela specifically at Caracol would suggest that it was worn by or depicted to show divine rulership.

The Hauberg Stela depicts a ruler standing over captives with crossed bands on his belt, which may suggest an indicator of his legitimized rule. At Dos Pilas as well, there is the depiction on Stela 1 of the ruler bearing crossed bands on his chest and on Stela 8 with the crossed bands appearing on the belt, wristbands and headpiece of the ruler. Stela 11's depiction of the ruler with the crossed bands on his head shows his deified rulership and approval from deities over their captives as the ruler is standing over captives. Each of these monuments supports the argument that the crossed bands in Classic Maya stone sculpture represents the legitimized ruler. The only exception is the Copan Monument 10L-29, which is more similar to the connection to the otherworld as in Izapan representations.

The significant increase of the crossed bands on rulers and specifically on the belt of the costumes of the rulers suggests that the crossed bands motif was worn by and used to identify the ruler in the Classic period. The crossed bands having been worn conventionally among rulers would suggests that it was a symbol that was known to the interpretant or the intended viewer of the monuments or sculptures it is present on. Since the interpretant or intended audience understands the meaning of the symbol, it is also used as an icon (Thibault 1991). As an icon it directly correlates the crossed bands to what it represents which in this case is sacredness suggesting the inherent divinity of the rulership.

Conclusion

Based on the presence of the crossed bands motif on the pieces ranging from the Preclassic to the Classic, there is an evolution of meaning and importance of the crossed-bands motif. As I have shown in the preceding chapters, in the Preclassic period, the crossed bands motif appears almost exclusively on figures of deities. La Venta, San Lorenzo, Laguna de los Cerros and Teopantecanitlan all have pieces with the crossed bands motif on either the head or the chest of a deity. In the Preclassic and mainly Olmec sites, the crossed bands motif appears to denote or represent the essence of sacredness of the deity. Throughout 2000 years, the symbol holds a relatively similar meaning with a slight evolution, suggesting that the meaning of the crossed bands motif was known to the direct audience and carried meaning through time and across geographical space.

In the Middle Preclassic, especially at Izapa, the crossed bands motif appeared on scenes depicting a ruler in some sort of ritual or contact with a deity. The stelae at Izapa in the Middle to Late Preclassic, mainly display narratives that tell stories of rulership. The stelae on which the crossed bands motif appears tell the narrative of rulers either descending to the otherworld or contacting the upperworld to legitimize their rulership and gain the essence of the divinity from the divine.

In Classic period representations of the crossed bands motif, the icon appears mostly on the belt or clothes of a ruler. This suggests that by the Classic period, the motif transformed into representing the legitimacy of rulership. The clearest representation of

this is on Stela 21 at Caracol. The captive on the stela is clearly demarcated as a divine ruler having been captured as the text speaks of him as being a “divine ruler” and the crossed bands is on his belt.

In this paper, I collected data compiling the stone sculptures on which the crossed-bands motif is represented in the Early Preclassic through the Classic periods among Olmec, Izapa and Maya sites. In previous research, the appearance of the crossed bands has only been analyzed within the individual relief and not in comparison to other reliefs on which the motif appears. After collecting the data, I constructed a table to analyze where the crossed bands appear and what they are represented on. I found that in the Early Preclassic Olmec sites, the crossed bands denote the presence of a deity. In the Middle Preclassic Izapan reliefs, the motif represents the legitimization of a rulership and their connection to the otherworld through ceremonies or rituals. In the Classic period Maya, the meaning of the motif evolves into a sign of a legitimized and deified ruler as shown on their clothes, whether it is their belt or headband. The crossed bands motif, while keeping the base of its meaning, evolved through time and geographic regions. It remained a representation of sacredness and divinity here on earth, but the specifics of what or who it represented transformed from the Early Preclassic to the Middle to Late Preclassic and on to the Classic Period.

The evolution of the crossed bands motif from a symbol of divinity, to the distribution of its divinity to people then to being a symbol of divinity on those in power is a symbol of the evolution of the political structure from the Early Preclassic to the Classic period. In the Early Preclassic, the power of rulership was in the hands of the deity himself.

The crossed bands motif shift of divinity from the deity to the ruler exemplifies the transition of power from the characterization of authority as deriving from deities to deriving from the ruler himself . By the Classic period, the divinity or power to rule and or make ultimate decisions was in the power of the divine ruler himself as is marked by the crossed bands motif appearing on his belt or his staff. This shows that over time, the ruler usurped this divine power symbolized by the crossed bands for himself, giving himself the divinity to rule. By the Classic period, the symbol was used as political propaganda demonstrating the legitimacy and divinity of the ruler.

The consistency of the crossed bands motif as a symbol of divine essence also shows a similarity in religious beliefs and practices from the Preclassic Period Olmec to the Classic Period Maya. The symbol appears directly on the deity in the Early Preclassic examples and transitions to appearing in narratives with both deities and people. However, the crossed bands remained a symbol of divinity. In the Classic period, it is a symbol of the divine essence of the ruler himself. The presence of this symbol shows a consistency and relationship of religion, and religious symbols that were carried from the Early Preclassic into the Classic Period.

Further research is needed to assemble the appearance of the crossed bands on other mediums such as ceramic vessels and wall paintings. This further research would give an even more inclusive picture of what the crossed bands is representative of in other mediums whether it is similar or holds different meaning all together on wall paintings or ceramic vessels. There is more data to be compiled to include a more expansive representation of the pieces on which the crossed bands appears on. In this paper I

focused only on stone sculptures, however the crossed bands appear on multiple other mediums. Research could also be expanded by looking where the crossed bands appears on hieroglyphs and if the etymology of any of the hieroglyphs can be connected to the iconic representation found on stone monuments, ceramic vessels and wall paintings.

APPENDIX: PERMISSIONS LETTERS

DUMBARTON OAKS 75
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Publications

Brittany Knott
Anthropology Graduate Student
University of Central Florida

14 March 2016

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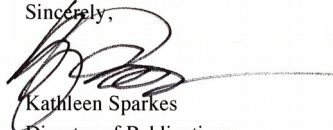
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Brittany Knott
Anthropology Graduate Student
University of Central Florida

14 March 2016

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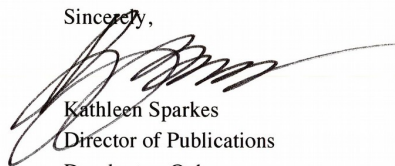
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17 February 2016

Brittany Luther
University of Central Florida

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