

## DALLAS MUSEUM OF ART

### *The Art of Maya Royal Sacrifice*

David Freidel

February 17, 2006

Carol Robbins: ...Harry S. Parker III, Curator of the Arts of the Americas and the Pacific, and it is my pleasure to introduce our speaker for this evening, David Freidel, who is University Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at Southern Methodist University.

David holds a PhD in anthropology from Harvard University. He has taught at SMU since 1974. As a dirt archaeologist, he directed long-term work at Cerros in Belize, and Yaxuna in Yucatan, Mexico, and he is currently making exciting discoveries at the site of El Perú-Waka', in Guatemala's Petén department.

He is the author of several books, including *A Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya*, 1990, and *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman's Path*, 1993, and numerous scholarly articles.

The Dallas Museum of Art has long benefited from David's knowledge through his frequent lectures; and during 1992 and 1993 through his role as adjunct curator of Mesoamerican Art during the planning of the installation in the Hamon wing.

During the past year, David has been enormously helpful as we worked toward the Dallas showing of *Lords of Creation: The Origins of Sacred Maya Kingship*. Not only was he the member of the Advisory Committee during the organization of the show by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, but he suggested the title and contributed an article to the accompanying catalog.

Here in Dallas, in addition to serving as a member of our Maya task force, he enabled us, with the help of his colleagues, Stanley Guenter and Sarah Sage, to produce two illustrative text panels that feature their work at El Perú-Waka', something special for the Dallas venue.

David is a primary source in the interpretation of Maya works in the DMA collection.

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When he learned several years ago that we were refurbishing the Mesoamerican gallery, he asked if he could revise the label copy for the Maya Tablet with two royal women and a Jaguarian beast [*Royal throne effigy*, 1988.15.McD].

What he wrote with epigrapher Guenter became an article for Archaeology Online. He has seemed rather excited by the sacrificial scene on our recent Maya

acquisition [*Cylindrical vessel with sacrificial scene*, 2005.26] and I can't wait to hear what he has to say about it. Thank you David, and welcome.

David Freidel:

Good evening. Thank you all for coming tonight, what a great crowd. I hope you have been through the *Lords of Creation* exhibit. If you haven't, please go and see it; and if you have, please go and tell your friends how wonderful it is, because these masterworks of art rarely travel and it's a great privilege to have them here in Dallas. It's a great privilege for me to be able to talk to you tonight about another great work of art, which is on the fourth floor of the Hamon wing, which is in the middle of the Maya Collection. I recommend that you go and look at this beautiful vase, which I am going to talk about tonight.

This is a roll-out photograph of the sacrifice vase. I think the reason it's called the "sacrifice vase" should be apparent by the end of the evening, but this individual right here is being sacrificed by this individual here, and it's a remarkable front forward gaze that the sacrificial victim is giving to us, the witnesses.

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I am going to talk about sacrifice tonight, because the vase inspires me to talk about sacrifice. Sacrifice is a worldwide phenomenon. When Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son, he was prepared to do so, to slit his throat. This is ritual sacrifice of a kind that we find in other parts of the world. He did not sacrifice his son but the theme of sacrifice remains important in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, even though people are not actively sacrificed any longer in that part of the world, at least they don't call it "sacrifice."

The people of Egypt also practiced human sacrifice in antiquity. Here is an image of an individual about to be sacrificed. There is a girl who is facing towards an elite noble warrior from the Thirteenth Dynasty and we have every reason to believe that she was sacrificed to accompany that person.

Sacrificing people to accompany important other people into the world of the gods and ancestors is a practice of the Maya world and also of other parts of the world.

The Celts practiced human sacrifice, much to the horror of the Romans, but of course the Romans practiced human sacrifice when they presented Christians to animals that tore them to pieces because the animals represented Roman gods.

This sacrificed man, only his head was preserved in a bog in Denmark about 21 centuries ago. He is a famous bog person.

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This is probably one of many scapegoat sacrifices, people who were killed in order to propitiate the spirits, the gods on behalf of whole communities.

In South America, many peoples sacrificed in antiquity. The Moche sacrificed

quite spectacularly as described by art historian and anthropologist, Christopher Donnan and Steven Bourget, now at the University of Texas, Austin. They would prepare people by feeding them, evidently, plants that contained anticoagulants and then they would slit their throats, pour their blood into steaming golden goblets, some of which we have in our collections upstairs. You can see these goblets.

The Aztec are famous for their sacrifice. They were reputed to have sacrificed thousands upon thousands of people, not only war captives who are the most common form of sacrificial victim, but people purchased as slaves and given over to the gods, donated to the gods to have their hearts torn out on the great Templo Mayor in the middle of Tenochtitlan, what is presently Mexico City.

Sacrifice among the Aztec gave them, however, a bad reputation for barbarism. I think it's really important that you know that people practiced sacrifice in high civilizations and the Aztec civilization is a great civilization.

I was telling somebody before tonight's talk that the Aztecs have left us more classical poetry than the ancient Greeks, much of which has been in fact translated and is available now in English.

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So the Aztecs were not a cruel and barbaric people any more than other civilized people who practiced sacrifice or who practiced and prosecute war or any number of other forms of state-sanctioned violence.

Well, back to our vessel. This beautiful vessel is a looted vessel and as a result we have to calculate what it is from itself. As an object it is a masterwork that will be studied for years and will be famous in the art history of the Maya world as it is studied and written about.

What is it? Well, my colleagues and I, especially Stanley Guenter, who is an iconographer and epigrapher of the Maya working with me now, we think that it dates to the 8<sup>th</sup> century, which is the peak of the late classic Maya world, especially in what we call the Southern Lowlands. That area was an area in which the Maya wrote hieroglyphic inscriptions on carved stone monuments.

This image has the sacrificial victim on an altar, which is in front of a raised up stone--we call it *stela*, which is the Greek word for free-standing stone. The Maya called these stones, *lakam tuun*, bannerstones or great stones.

So this is an individual being sacrificed on an altar in front of a carved stone stela and there are glyphs on it; and I will be talking to you about what those glyphs say and mean.

The 8<sup>th</sup> century saw a kind of royal helmet. This is a ruler wearing a helmet of a god, and here is a ruler, a historical ruler, wearing a very similar helmet.

This king here, Itzamnaaj K'awiil. Itzamnaaj K'awiil is the king of a city now called Dos Pilas, or the two wells in the Petexbatún region of southwestern Petén.

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It's more than likely that this vessel was painted somewhere west of the Great Lakes at the center of the Department of Petén in Guatemala.

This is an altar very similar in style to that found on the painted vase. This is a reconstruction of the altar at the site of El Perú-Waka' where I am excavating with my graduate students, many of whom are here today in the audience.

These pillars that are holding up the altar, which has some hieroglyphics, represent world bearers called in Maya, *Pawathuns*. They are old beams that hold up the sky in the four corners of the world. So normally there would be four of these supports.

This is another clue that the vase comes from western Petén, because this way of raising up an altar on Pawatuns is a characteristic feature of only a few excavated sites; one of which is the site I am working, and another is Piedras Negras on the Usumacinta at the far western edge of Guatemala.

Back to the glyphs. The glyphic texts are unreadable. They are pseudo-glyphs. This is a very intriguing practice in the Late Classic period. Why would people who were literate in the hieroglyphic notation, which these people undoubtedly were, why would they write glyphs that were gibberish? Well, possibly because there were sumptuary rules.

Sumptuary rules are rules such as, "You can only wear certain kinds of jewelry if you are of noble status."

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Or in the case of the Maya, you could only wear an embroidered loincloth as a man if you were a nobleman at the time that the Spanish arrived. All kinds of sumptuary rules apply to people who live in civilizations. Sometimes they are relatively casual. So that if you drive a BMW, that says something about you in our culture, for example. If you don't, that says something else about you in our culture. But we don't have rules that are exact about this. In some cultures there are very precise rules.

Evidently there were precise rules about who could own a vessel that had real hieroglyphic writing on it. If you couldn't own a vessel that had real hieroglyphic writing on it, well, maybe you could own a vessel that had fake hieroglyphic writing on it like this one. Which didn't make you necessarily much lower in the nobility than the ones who could own the real hieroglyphic writing.

But this is an issue that needs to be explored scientifically. We haven't really got a lot of handle on who gets to own real glyph vessels and who gets to own

pseudo-glyph vessels. We are still in the preliminary stages of thinking this through.

But here, for example, is a vase, also a black background vase like the one we have. This is a real historical hieroglyphic inscription which is even dated. So we can say that this is a vessel showing a king of Tikal, the last great King, Yax Nuun Ayiin--right at the end of the 8th century, right before the city of Tikal experienced catastrophe, I believe, around 815 AD in the new book that I am revising for publication.

Here's a text where you have a single glyph along the rim, and as Stanley pointed out to me today when we were discussing this phenomenon, it has a little tiny tree curling over on it. That glyph, with a stone glyph next to it, could read, *lakam tuun*, which means stela.

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Well, here is a hieroglyphically inscribed panel, maybe that is a stela that's presumably readable as a text. All of these are artists. This artist is carving a face over here. This artist is studying a book. This artist has his paint pot out and is writing in the book. This is the date of a great turning of the cycle, 8 Ahaw. This is a very important date in the Maya calendrical cycle. This is a bundle over in here.

So this could in fact be a portrait of a group of artists who carved and painted a stela, and so this was given in the dedication of a stela, as a gift, as a souvenir to one of the nobility who came at the celebration of the dedication of the stela; that's a speculation, but it's possible.

Here is pseudo-glyphs along the rim and then historical text in the little panels. So you have pure pseudo-glyphs, you have pure historical glyphs, and you have mixed glyphs. So here you have different statuses of people, perhaps, who could own these vessels, which incidentally were principally made to hold chocolate beverages. If you want to have a chocolate beverage, go and buy it in the store. It is made by Mark Sciscenti. I guarantee its efficacy. This is a legal drug of very great potency and I would certainly encourage you all to get it.

What people painted on these vases pertain to courtly life in the Late Classic especially, and they showed here, for example, a ruler being presented with a severed head from a sacrifice, and here are three more victims for sacrifice being prepared for him.

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This vase, although it is in very poor condition, is exceptionally precious because its from archaeological context. We know that it is an historical vessel, from the Ik community, which made these beautiful vases; most of which have been excavated illegally. But this one, pertaining to King K'awill Chan K'inich, a king of the Ik site, which is probably a big ceremonial center on the western end of the

Lakes District of Petén, is pertaining to this individual here, who is presenting battle banners to him. Another person back here is called an *itz'at*, which means a person who can read and write Maya hieroglyphics.

This vessel was not found by looters, so it was not found in this kind of informal trench. We have well over 100 trenches like that in the Ceremonial Center that I am excavating presently, where people, if they found a vessel, poor people would sell it and eventually it would make somebody a great deal of money. It didn't make very much money for the people who actually dug up these vessels in the Petén.

My collaborator, Héctor Escobedo, is a great and distinguished Guatemalan archaeologist and a specialist in Maya hieroglyphic writing as well as archaeology. Here he is talking to Keith Eppich who excavated that vessel which is an Ik-style pot. Keith excavated it in this group over here, which is next to the ceremonial center on a high promontory hill. I lose 20 pounds if I stay in this site long enough, walking up and down the hills there. It's a very good place for me health-wise.

This building is the home in which Keith found that vessel, in a back room that had been sealed and covered with white marl after an important nobleman had been buried in that section of the building.

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He found slabs of stone over the cist burial, and then underneath. Here is the head of the individual with pots at his head and other pots at his feet, and here is the Ik style vase which he received as a gift from K'awill Chan K'inich, and here it is put back together again.

So this vessel was a gift to a nobleman. That's the kind of burial that the Dallas Museum vase probably came from. It could have come from a bigger pyramid, but it may have come from just a house mound like this. This is the assemblage of vessels that this nobleman had with him, including his tobacco flask for powdered tobacco. Tobacco was used for purposes of inducing a kind of trance so you could see the spirit world clearly. So it's a nice set of vessels.

We can tell, then, a great deal more if we have a vessel in place than we can if the vessel is looted. This is going to remind me to turn off my phone because my daughter, who is an actress in Chicago, will call me otherwise, so now she won't call me.

Who is portrayed on our vase? Well, this is a collection of people. Here is probably a human being, but there are lots of spooks and weird people here around this sacrificial victim who is on an altar with a woman down here being prepared for sacrifice as well, and a goblin-like character dancing over here.

We call these spiritual co-essences or spooks, *wayob*, which means companion,

spiritual companion or spiritual alter-ego. Because the Maya nobility were capable of going into trances and communicating directly with the spirit world. So they were magical beings. They were sorcerers, shaman, and magicians.

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Here is a ruler seated on the jaguar throne and in front of him over here are two dancing ghoulish creatures who represent *wayob*, in all probability, over this corpse of a sacrificial victim. The head has been removed from this being and here is the stela behind him. So this scene is very related to the stela that we have -- I mean, the scene that we have on our vase. But it is a slightly different pose.

Here is another version of this sacrifice. Here is a ruler who is making an offering gesture. Here are some individuals, here's an individual with him. And this individual is dancing with a severed head, and is dressed as another of these spooks.

Up here on top is a jaguar with quetzal feathers in a bundle. As Stanley told me today, jaguar with quetzal feathers represents a kind of tribute, a kind of bundle of tribute. From hieroglyphic inscriptions on a stela at a site called Naranjo, we know that people gave such tribute to kings, sometimes perhaps on the occasion of the dedication of stela, because they discuss it right on the stela.

So here is a stela with the tribute on the top. Here is the sacrificial victim with his body cut open, and here is a little helper to the king, probably the person doing the sacrificing and here is his spook back here with the severed head of a different victim.

So sacrificial rituals took place in the context of a lot of other activities. There is pageantry going on. There is feasting going on.

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These vessels are holding brimming, frothing chocolate, which you are slurping down while you watch all of these activities going on. And the more chocolate you drink, the better you feel. Everybody is having a very good time, except of course the people who are being sacrificed.

Here are a group of *wayob*, of spooks. Here is one in the form of a jaguar. Here is a second one that's half human. He has got little cuffs on his arms, so he shows he is half human. This one is a macaw over here. So these are the three spooks.

Here is the sacrificer, a royal person. This royal person wears a macaw headdress. This one wears a very special headdress worn by high nobility and rulers, especially women who are queens and men who were kings.

Up on the fourth floor, we have a queen from a site in Mexico wearing this

headdress. This one here is holding a skull. They are all dancing. This is a dancing pose. It looks like they are leaping in the air, but in fact it's a toe shuffle. It's a very dignified back and forth rocking motion, toe shuffle, which they still do among the Maya people today.

*Wayob*, the spirit companions here, floating above two Lords seated on little thrones. These are portable thrones. That one has little heads underneath it. But these are spooks. There's a skeleton dancing around with the severed head here. All of these characters are *wayob*, these are named *wayob*.

An important thing to know about these *wayob* is that they are the spirit companions of kings or queens of kingdoms. So you inherit them when you become a king or a queen. So these are people who can implement these supernaturals on behalf of their kingdoms, which they did in battle and they did in casting spells upon their enemies evidently.

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So this is a rogue's gallery of the spooks belonging to different kings from different kingdoms. The Kingdom of Tikal is mentioned, the Kingdom of Calakmul is mentioned. There are several kingdoms mentioned, specifically associated with these *wayob*.

This one here is one of my favorite guys. This is the drunken death god, his name is Akan Hobnil. The drunken death god gets so drunk that he cuts his own head off. Well, if you are familiar with the Jewish festival of Purim, then you know that that can happen to you. You can get really drunk.

So that individual happens to be one of the war gods of the site we are working. So I am very, very attached to Akan Hobnil.

These two vessels show different ways of killing people, literally. So they are playing drums here and musical instruments, flutes and rattles. This gentleman here, wearing bloody bundles on his back, which I will get to in a minute, has a big spear and he is eviscerating this man who is standing on a scaffold. So his entrails will fall out and he will die very, very slowly. This is a form of sacrifice which doesn't leave any marks on the bones. So when we find individuals who are sacrificed, perhaps this is one of the ways that they are sacrificed, if we don't find any other evidence of them being butchered on their bones.

This king is getting off of his palanquin here. He is wearing a mask of a spook. He is about to take an ax. This man over here is bound on to the scaffold so his head can be cut off his body by this man who is the king. Incidentally, he has been scalped so that he represents a god called K'awil.

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Who got killed? Well, principally war captives, high nobles and kings were prized

as sacrificial victims, which is often the case incidentally worldwide in human sacrifice. People were honored with human sacrifice by being captured in war, and then presented and then sacrificed. So here's a group of sacrificial victims getting ready.

Here's another group in front of the King of the Ik site. You can see this guy is the same guy here. This is not the same vessel, but they are very strongly related scenes. So they are making two scenes.

They are also presenting bundles of tribute. So there's a lot going on here: They are presenting tribute; they are presenting war captives; they are going to sacrifice people; they are going to have a party; they are going to get drunk and they are going to have a very good time.

They also killed women. They sacrificed royal women. This is a noble woman from the site of Tonina, prepared for sacrifice.

This woman is stripped nude, which is normal for sacrificial victims in some cases. You can tell that she is not just a beautiful young woman, because she has sagging belly folds, which says she has had babies. So this is an elite woman, a noble woman who is being prepared for sacrifice. Hence, the very sad cast of her expression.

Back to the vase: heart extraction sacrifice. This is a kind of sacrifice. This instrument here is an eccentric flint. We find eccentric flints in caches underneath stela, usually small ones, but you find them elsewhere, and there's a beautiful example in the exhibit.

Francis Robicsek was a great heart surgeon who did free open heart surgery in Guatemala for many years, and also collected Maya art, and was an expert in Maya iconography. So he wrote a great article in 1984, published it, on heart excision sacrifice, comparing modern instruments to ancient instruments.

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So he got his illustrator, a good medical illustrator, to show what it's like to open up the chest cavity of a victim with one of these instruments. What happens incidentally when you open up somebody's body with this is that their lungs collapse, which means they can't breathe anymore. Which means they are actually going to be asphyxiated. They are going to die from not breathing.

But because they can't breathe, they can't call out. So there is no sound that will come out of a person's mouth after this chest cavity has been opened up. You can reach down underneath the flaccid lung and get the heart, even while it's beating, and quickly cut it out.

So you really have two instruments; you have the saw for cutting out the heart, and then you have the knife. So you have the saw and the knife. We are going to

see both of those instruments in a minute, but here is an example of a set of them.

This is a decapitation ax. This is a knife for cutting out hearts in this. You could use several different ways. But these are eccentric flints.

Where did they kill people? Well, on altars. Here's an altar in stela at Tikal that's relevant to this, Late Classic, from the general time period, slightly earlier. But Tikal has a series of altars that show presentation of captives getting ready for sacrifice. This one is on a scaffold. You have seen several people killed on scaffolds tonight. These guys are laid belly down, but they will be flipped over to take out their hearts.

This one is a king from a site called Naranjo. This one may be a king, but he is from the site of Calakmul. Here are excised hearts, to show you what they do, and here is the flint inside of a bowl of paper in which the heart will be burned.

On this altar here though, you don't see a scene of actual cutting up of anybody, but here's the saw for cutting the person open and here's the knife for taking out the heart.

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But they are actually celebrating the reburial of the bones of an ancestress to this man, who is Jasaw Chan K'awiil, the King of Tikal who has gone down to the Lakes District, rescued the bones of an ancestress, and is burying them under his stela, where they were found by archaeologist Chris Jones of the University of Pennsylvania project.

So this is ritual activity associated with the sacrifice, but their peak event here is the burial of the bones, and not the taking out of the heart of the victim. Terry Rutledge--an artist who is drawing lots of scenes of sacrifice for my new book so you will get to see lots of examples of this--Terry has taken this scene and drawn it out realistically, showing what it would look like.

They are dressed as gods, as spooks, and these are like this individual here. This executioner is wearing cufflets, which represent a different form of sacrifice--penitential bloodletting.

Penitential bloodletting is in fact practiced today. So here is a reality check. I will show you in a minute a reality check. Penitential bloodletting. These are blood spots on white cotton cloth, bundles of bloody cloth on these individuals, because they have let blood from their genitals, especially from their penises, because they are men. Women let blood from their tongues. So that's how it was done.

This is Ashura. Ashura is the mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, in the Shiite branch of Islam. All over the Shiite world people will let blood onto

white cotton cloth, which shows off the blood perfectly well. So if you want to see what blood spots look like, there they are.

But of course, we have penitentials in Christianity as well.

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So these are individuals who have flayed their backs in penitence as Christians. Of course back in Spain, in the good old 16<sup>th</sup> century, if you were really lucky as a woman, during penitential rights you could get really up close with your beautiful gown on and be blood-splattered by the men who were flaying their backs as they went past you.

So letting blood from your body like this, penitential bloodletting, is a long-time tradition. All of these individuals have such penitential bloodletting on them. They may be spooks or they may be real.

Here is that altar again on its little stand. This vessel is from the area of Uaxactun, but it has an historical text so it is a higher grade of vessel than ours. But it's not as well preserved, but it also shows penitential bloodletting in the garb of the individual, all over him.

How did you get blood like this? Well, first, these are three pictures of the same individual. One, you take a stingray spine or other sharp rasping object and you put it through the soft folded skin of your penis very, very carefully. Then you rasp it out so blood starts to flow from the capillaries onto the cotton cloth. Finally, you dance in a swirling motion to bring the blood out and to saturate the loincloth. That's how you do it.

And no, I am not going to do it tonight. I am saying that mostly for my students. But in case you don't believe they actually did it, Linda Schiele and Mary Miller put this object in *The Blood of Kings* show, and there it is, he is quite explicitly doing that to himself.

This was on the cover of the *New York Times*, in color. Well, it was below the fold but it was in the *New York Times*, front page. I thought, wow, this is really amazing, what we can now show in the United States on the front cover.

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I mean, look at the size of the object he is putting through his penis, and all the blood pouring out there. This is from the first century B.C., so they were doing it for a very long time indeed.

These individuals, also from the same set of murals, there is the cotton bundles, not blood splattered, and there are the stingray spines that they are going to use on themselves. So these are penitential images five centuries before the earliest ones of the Early Classic, eight centuries before the object we have upstairs.

This is a king from the Late Classic period who is letting blood from his penis, while his wife pierces her tongue and draws a cord through it. The best way to draw a cord is if it has thorns on it so it really tears the tongue as you pull it through.

Okay. So where are the bodies? Well, I found some bodies. You can find sacrificial victims. At the site of Yaxuna we found a tomb full of sacrificed people. This collection of people here, this is how it looked. There are eleven dead people in here. All of them sacrificed. In the center is a severed headed king. They tossed his head in last after they had arranged all the people. Two young women, murdered-- this woman with the blunt blow to the back of the head with a blunt instrument.

This woman, we don't know how she was killed, but her body was butchered, so that she was created into a dancing skeleton; all the ligament tissues were in place, and you could dance her around as a death goddess, before you laid her down inside there.

This woman was buried with this doll, which is in our exhibit, and this doll represents her baby, and also the great goddess of Teotihuacan. I have a slightly different interpretation of what she is doing there, which is to say that she is not being -- she was not going to be the next king and she was deposed, rather her father was killed.

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So that she -- her bones were laid in with her father. She was killed to represent the resurrection of the great goddess of Teotihuacan in this building because the people who conquered them and murdered all the royal people were allied with Teotihuacan.

So the person -- she was not going to be the next ruler, but she was in fact defleshed as the resurrection of the great goddess, that's my interpretation. But her father was killed, so that this man over here, dressed in a full scarlet macaw outfit representing royal power, he could come to power as the usurper king over the bones of the man he killed here.

So he killed this man, and then he resurrected as him. Why? Because the cycle of the Maize God as given in the *Lords of Creation* show is about the death, the sacrifice of the Maize God and his resurrection as a beautiful young lord. They burned the crown of that old king, and this king had a new crown jewel, which is in another part of the same building. But this is the crown worn by the defleshed woman who was killed. I think her baby was taken out of her stomach and put on this young girl's body over here.

The reason these girls are there, flanking their father, is that he was to resurrect magically as the young Maize God. So here are young girls flanking the

resurrected Maize God on this vessel.

Here is the baby that was on the lap of this girl who was so young we could hardly tell from her pelvis that she was female, so I don't think it's her baby. I think this women's baby, put on this girl's lap.

But why have a baby in there at all? Well, baby sacrifice was practiced by the Maya.

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Here is Akan Hobnil, the drunken death god holding a baby sacrifice. These little babies are all on the San Bartolo monument. They are being sacrificed. This one is being chopped by the executioner in the form of the Lightning God, to bring about the resurrection of the Maize God coming out of this gourd. So baby sacrifice is a kind of substitution in Maya called *Lo K'ex*, for the king.

Here is a sacrifice who substituted for the king, who rises in majesty into the sky, on this carved stone monument from the site of Piedras Negras. You see it has been severed in the middle too, like our guys.

You not only have women inside of sacrifices, but men. Here are the ancestral Hero Twins, the children of the Maize God, who is being reborn out of his own severed head. There's a skull here, as a beautiful young lord named Maize, not surprisingly. These guys are represented by two adolescents in the tomb of this king at Tikal, Siyaj Chan K'awiil II. So you sacrifice men as well as women.

Well, all of this is relevant to our current work at the site of Waka', where Michelle Rich found some sacrificial victims up here.

Catalino, our excavator, removed the capstones from a royal tomb. Michelle Rich went down into the tomb. This is a 13 foot hole and she is going to be suspended on a rope to go down inside of it, and come up out of it, and go back down inside of it for two weeks. She is here. She can tell you all about it.

She found these vessels at the foot of the interment; these three vessels representing the three hearthstones of creation. They are the three hearthstones of creation she found, along with Jen Piehl, who excavated these individuals and then drew them.

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Two people, one on top of the other, two sacrificed women, very healthy.

These royal women had not even maize, because they have no dental caries. They were extremely healthy, they were very fit, and they didn't die by accident, so that they could be put inside of this royal tomb, they were killed somehow. I don't know how, because it didn't show up on their bones. But this one has her

hands in a dancing position; one hand down and one hand up. This one does not. But I believe that they were sacrificed the way the women at Yaxuna were, except that at Yaxuna, we have a dead king and here we don't have a dead king yet. We don't know where the dead king is yet, but we hope to find him.

Where else is the king? We are not really quite sure, but my guess is that he is right up here, next to the tomb that we have already excavated and we will look for him.

Why do I think that? Because a related building has a series of tombs in it, in Highland Guatemala, under Guatemala City where they found this seated king, with another sacrificial accompaniment, and this lovely decorated carved skull.

So this is a skull that was kept by the king as a souvenir, and when he had a sacrificial accompaniment come with him, he was his official skull keeper. So we had two sacrifices.

Well, the skulls figure into our pot, because here is one of the four participants carrying such a skull in his arms, cradling it, standing on another monstrous skull, as he dances, witnessing the heart excision sacrifice. So the bones, the bundling of bones, the bearing of bones, the commemorating of ancestors through bones, the resurrecting of people through sacrifice, all of these are ideas floating around in our vessel here.

It is a masterwork, and it will take us years to keep arguing about it and coming up with new interpretations of it.

[00:42:07.07]

But I think that's probably enough for one night, and I am going to open the floor now to questions. We have about 20 minutes in which to ask questions. Thanks very much.

Audience Speaker: What is the significance of the [inaudible] discovery?

David Freidel: What is the significance of the discovery, of our discovery, the royal tomb? The significance is really untold. We know that in the period of the time of these sacrificed women at El Perú-Waka', that the kingdom was alive with a very great lord for Mexico named Siyaj K'ahk', which means Fire is Born.

You can read about Fire is Born, this man, in the main exhibit in the *Lords Creation* show. If you go into the side room with the computers, on the wall are replicas of his name taken from two stela at the site of El Perú-Waka'.

This man, Siyaj K'ahk', arrived at the site of Waka' in January of 378 AD. He knighted our king, brought him into power, and did a ceremony in the fire shrine of the Wi Te' Nah, and then marched on Tikal, hopefully with our king in tow and all of our gods. Where he conquered Tikal, brought about the death of the

reigning king; his name was Tok Chak Ich'aak.

[00:44:02.23]

And put into power 11 months later another king, named Nun Yax Ayin whose father was a Teotihuacano and whose mother was probably a Mayan woman of Tikal.

This man, Siyaj K'ahk', is the most important historical figure of the Maya in the Early Classic period because he accomplished this feat. He not only conquered Tikal, but consolidated the alliance of Maya kingdoms with Tikal and with Teotihuacan, that included Copan. Many vessels in the show are from the period of this alliance at Copan. He had consolidated this hegemony, something like an empire, that lasted for more than a century. This is a very important historical episode in the Maya world.

We have the privilege of excavating royal tombs in this period of time, in the kingdom, which first became his most important vessel. We hope to find a tomb of the King K'inich Balam, who created this man, and we are going to find another tomb, but I don't know if it's going to be K'inich Balam. But if it is, it's going to be really exciting and we will talk about it next September.

Audience Member: Were there sacrifices in most of the major cities, and would they sacrifice victims like [inaudible]?

David Freidel: Yes, they did. In fact, at the cenote at Chichen Itza which was dredged by EH Thompson, American Council to Mexico, in Yucatan, who owned Chichen at that time, and in fact, owned it into the 1930s when it was appropriated by the Mexican government and sold for 35 golden pesos to the Barbachano family, which still owns Chichen Itza.

[00:46:01.29]

Anyway, he dredged the cenote, found bones of sacrificial victims, and no, they are not like those gorgeous calendars that you see in every good mechanic shop in Mexico.

Note: Audio ends abruptly.

Duration: 46 Minutes  
Audio file: ArtMayaRoyalSacrifice\_01.mp3