

A Possible Explanation of the Origin of the Form of the “WAY” glyph by Justin Kerr

In 1989, Steve Houston and David Stuart published a paper, “Way Glyph: Evidence for Co-essences among the Classic Maya”. At almost the same time Nikolai Grube circulated a letter with almost the same interpretation.

In these papers they examined a glyph that had been known as the half-spotted ajaw .
(Figure 1.)



Figure 1.

The form of the glyph itself is of interest. On the codex style vases, it is rather simple, an ajaw glyph with a patch of jaguar skin inserted on half of the glyph. However in examining some other versions of the glyph the form is somewhat different using the same components. (Figure 2.) On some polychrome vases the jaguar half of the glyph has extensions or loops.



Figure 2.



These loops also appear on a number of throne cushions. (Figure 3.) If there is an image from which the glyph is derived, I suspect that it is from this type of throne cushion and these cushions or throne backs may serve a function other than comfort, that is, as a sacred bundle. The loops in the jaguar skin served as anchors for the ties that held and shaped the skin around the bundle or cushion to hold it in place.

Figure 3. Tikal Bural 116.



Figure 4.

This bundle would have held the rulers' magical objects, (Figure 4.) perhaps crystals, trophies, and possibly tobacco, cacao beans, and incense. In fact we can see this bundle being carried in a ruler's funeral procession (Figure 5.) to be included as part of the grave goods. This sacred bundle may then be the magical form that suggested the construction of the way glyph.

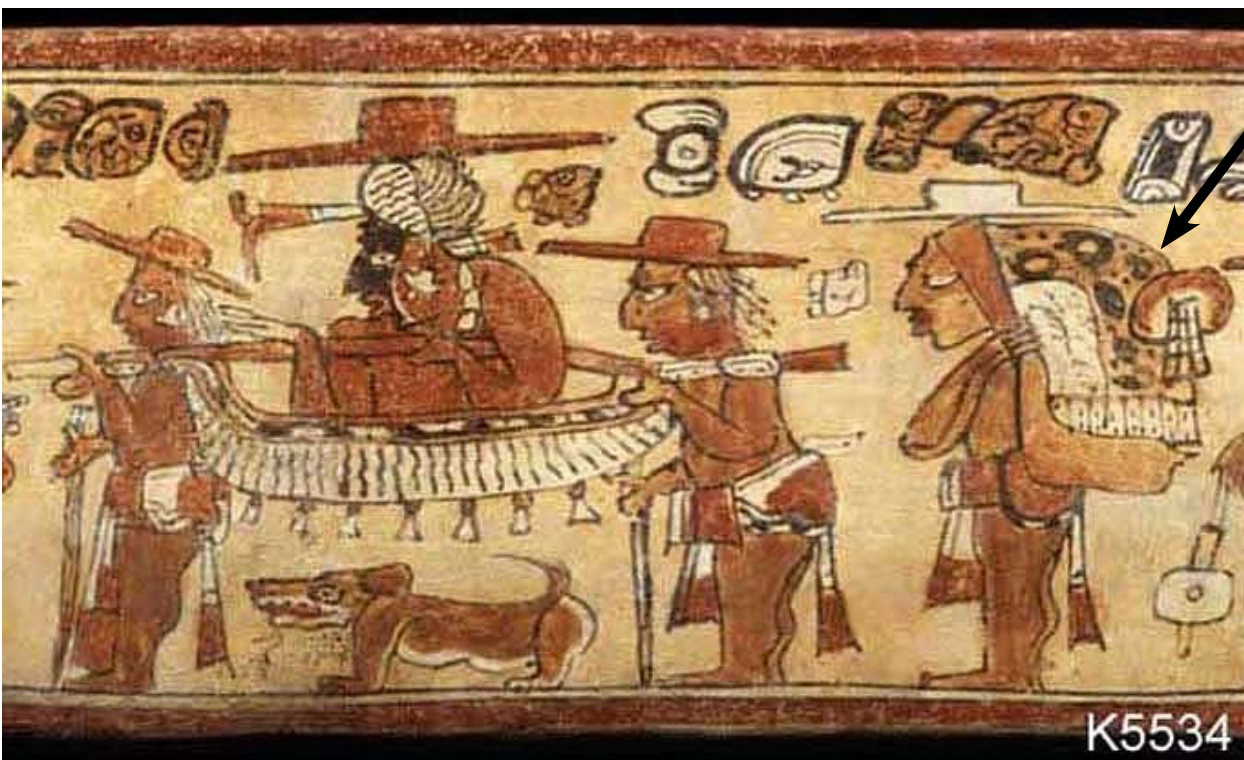


Figure 5.

For Further Reading.

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Lords of the Underworld; Masterpieces of Classic Maya Ceramics, Princeton University, Art Museum. 142 p.,
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- 1996 Coe, Michael D. and Justin Kerr
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- 2001 Houston, Stephen D, Stuart, David S.
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- 2005 Kerr, Barbara and Justin Kerr
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