

Costume and Name in Mesoamerica

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It was the practice in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica to wear costume elements, especially head-dresses, which gave the name of the individual wearing the particular costume. However, headdresses were also worn for other purposes, and it is often difficult to determine whether a costume element marked a name or some other characteristic of an individual. Nonetheless, the custom does sometimes enable us to recognize individuals in varied contexts.

In ancient Mesoamerica (from southern Mexico to northern Honduras), individuals were often identified by the incorporation in their costumes of various kinds of appellative glyphs. The principal classes of appellative glyphs that seem to be involved are personal names, including calendar names, family names, and personal or dynastic titles. Although it is often possible to recognize a particular individual by characteristics of his clothing, it is sometimes impossible to tell which class of appellative glyphs is being incorporated in the dress. Hence, although the emphasis in this paper is on the incorporation of personal names in dress, some examples may be doubtful.

A minor question which cannot yet be answered with certainty is whether representations in the codices and on the monuments should be understood as representing actual costumes worn (as seems likely) or whether they should be understood as merely graphic devices.

The most ample Mesoamerican source showing this practice is the *Bodleian* codex, written in the Mixtec area, probably after 1500 but before the arrival of the Spaniards. This codex often shows individuals wearing costumes on one page and gives genealogical cross-references to them on other pages. Often a costume of one page is found as a separate name glyph on another.

A few examples will suffice and will also illustrate some problems and difficulties of interpretation. The famous Eight Deer, ruler of Tilantongo, is often shown wearing a jaguar costume. When his name appears separately, it is simply written as a jaguar claw; we cannot be certain whether the jaguar costume is a marker of this or not. By a wife from Tula, he left descendants associated with Tula, including, according to the interpretation of Caso (1960), a granddaughter named One

Flower who married another Eight Deer, of Tula. The latter Eight Deer is represented wearing a headdress composed of a serpent head and feathers (Figure 1a). As a separate name, this appears as a serpent with wing and tail feathers (Figure 1b)—in short, a Quetzalcoatl. It is virtually identical to the headdress of the human figure seated with the giant Feathered Serpent on the famed pyramid of Xochicalco (Toscano, 1970). It should be emphasized that this Eight Deer's costume, which apparently represents the name Quetzalcoatl, is very different from the costume of the god Quetzalcoatl, where the characteristics seem rather to be attributes of the god.

Caso thought that two of the children of Eight Deer of Tilantongo, Ten Earthquake Flaming Grey Eagle and his sister-wife, Two Twisted, had two daughters, Thirteen Rain (F), who married Seven Flint Mixcoatl, and One Flower (F), who married Eight Deer Quetzalcoatl. However, the *Bodleian* could better be interpreted as indicating that One Flower was a daughter of Seven Flint Mixcoatl (Figure 2). Given the prevalence of brother-sister marriage in this family and other references to Quetzalcoatl as a son of Mixcoatl, it is probable that Eight Deer Quetzalcoatl was also a child of Seven Flint Mixcoatl. Either interpretation is chronologically possible, and the two rulers would have been living about 1080-1100.

At Tula there is a column showing a bearded warrior with a bird headdress. The upright head plumes suggest that the bird may be a quetzal. Behind this, but apparently not part of the costume, is a repre-

Figure 1a. Eight Deer, King of Tula, wearing Quetzalcoatl (Feathered Serpent) name-headdress (*Bodleian*, p. 13e). Drawings for Figures 1, 2, and 6-8 are by Peter Mathews and Persis B. Clarkson.



Figure 1b. Written name of Eight Deer Feathered Serpent (*Bodleian*, p. 13d).

sensation of a snake. At Chichen Itza a younger warrior appears with the same bird headdress and a large feathered serpent behind him (Tozzer, 1957, 11). It seems clear that the latter is a name glyph of Quetzalcoatl and the quetzal-bird headdress may partially re-enforce this, but it does not completely give the name. Paintings on the Temple of the Jaguars, which show Toltec warriors fighting Mayas, include repeated representations of two kinds of giant snakes among the warriors. One of these is a typical feathered serpent (Figure 3), while the other has scrolls along its back (Figures 4 and 5). I believe that the latter represents a cloud serpent and that these are name glyphs of the Toltec rulers, Quetzalcoatl and Mixcoatl. The fact that they recur repeatedly probably indicates a different artistic convention than our own, showing important leaders at different stages of the battle. These may be the same two individuals mentioned in the Mixtec codices at about 1100 (Molloy and Kelley, 1981). It is a striking fact that in the Lower Temple of the Jaguars, warriors in Maya costume, with associated name hieroglyphs, are shown wearing feathered serpent costumes (Tozzer, 1957, 11, figs. 194, 634); here it is possible, but unlikely, that the feathered serpent is an additional name.

The difficulty of distinguishing whether a particular costume is or is not a name may be seen clearly in the Mixtec codices. A common Mixtec name seems to have been composed of the name of the Rain God (Mixtec Dzahui; Aztec Tlaloc) and an incomplete sun disk. As a separate name, the entire head of the Rain God is shown with the sun disk.

Figure 2. Seven Flint wearing Mixcoatl (Cloud Snake) headdress (*Bodleian*, p. 13e).

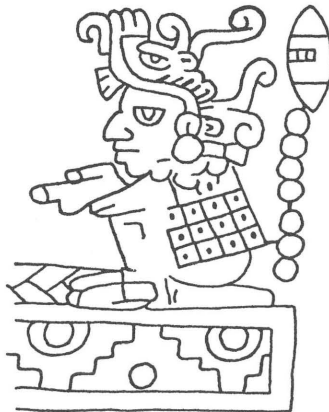




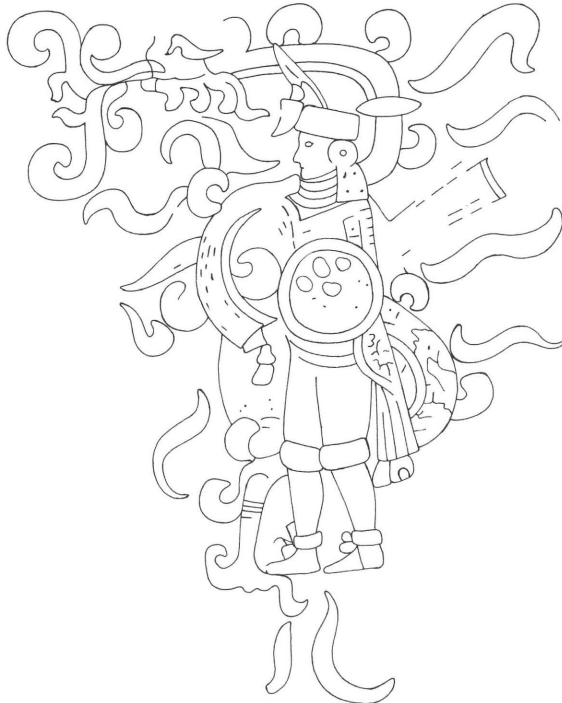
Figure 3. Quetzalcoatl with giant name hieroglyph, Structure 2D1 (Great Ballcourt, Upper Temple of the Jaguars), west wall, south section, Chichen Itza (ff. Tozzer, 1957, fig. 60).

However, when an individual with this name is shown, he is often represented wearing a Tlaloc mask with a sun disk behind him. At other times people seem to wear Tlaloc masks as an indication of status, perhaps as priests of the Rain God. Thus, the *Bodleian* (p. 7c) shows the marriage of Five Crocodile, wearing a Tlaloc mask and with a half-sun disk behind him, to Eleven Water Quetzal-Jewel (Figure 6a). On page 35c no human figures are shown, but Five Crocodile's personal name is shown by the head of Tlaloc, accompanied by a half-sun disk (Figure 6b). Clearly, in this case, the mask was worn as part of the name. On the other hand, the *Bodleian* (pp. 39b-40b) shows the early Mixtec ancestor, Five Wind, wearing a Tlaloc mask and accompanied by footsteps coming from a sky band (Figure 7). The latter give his name. His wife also wears a Tlaloc mask, but a bird-headed snake (apparently a Quetzal-snake, but depicted differently from those which accompany masculine names) appears as her personal name. Caso (1960, p. 53) points out that Five Wind's son, Five Reed; the latter's wife, Three Snake; their daughter, Thirteen Eagle, and her husband, Five Crocodile, all wear Tlaloc masks. In all cases, they have additional personal



Figure 4. Mixcoatl, with giant name hieroglyph, Structure 2 D1 (North Temple of the Great Ballcourt) (ff. Tozzer, 1957, fig. 272).

Figure 5. Mixcoatl, with giant name hieroglyph, Structure 2 D1 (Great Ballcourt, Upper Temple of the Jaguars), west wall, south section, Chichen Itza (ff. Tozzer, 1957, fig. 60).



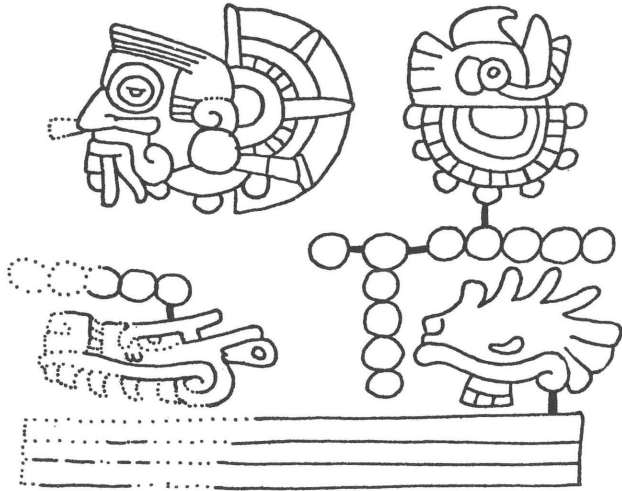
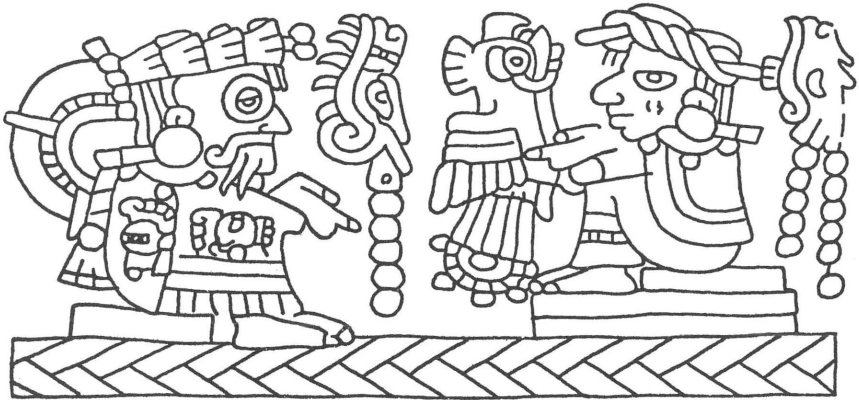


Figure 7a. Marriage of Five Crocodile Tlaloc-Sun (wearing Tlaloc mask as name) and Eleven Water Quetzal-jewel (*Bodleian*, p. 7c).

Figure 7b. Name hieroglyphs of Five Crocodile Tlaloc-sun and his wife, Eleven Water Quetzal-jewel (*Bodleian*, p. 35c).

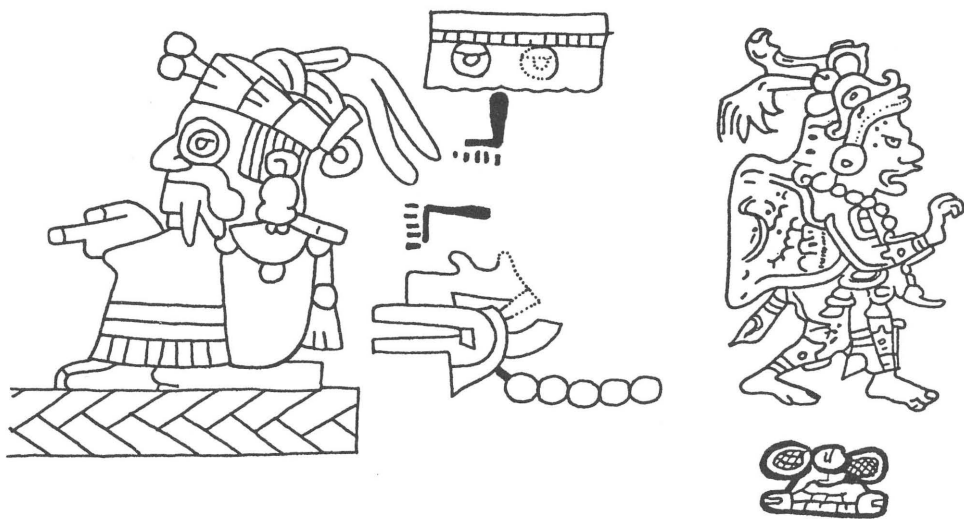
Figure 6. Five Wind Comes-from-Heaven wearing Tlaloc mask (*Bodleian*, p. 39c).

Figure 8. God N wearing turtle-shell on his back and net-bag on his head. Name hieroglyph composed of net-bag and turtle-shell below (*Dresden*, p. 60a).

name glyphs, and it seems likely that they represent a partially hereditary sequence of priests of the Rain God or mythical figures identified with him.

The same personal name, Tlaloc-Sun, furnishes a good example of another curious Mixtec practice, for the *Bodleian* and the *Selden* codices both mention rulers named Tlaloc-Sun with the calendar name One Monkey. Their genealogical connections prove that these are two different individuals about four generations apart. Apparently, in at least some cases, it was customary for people to be given personal names taken from prominent ancestors or predecessors with the same calendar name. In the case of the two One Monkeys, nothing in the costume seems to differentiate them.

This practice led Spinden (1933, p. 445) into an important chronological error. The paternal grandfather of Eight Deer of Tilantongo was a certain Thirteen Dog Eagle Star. Spinden identified him with another Thirteen Dog Eagle Star, whom we now know was Eight Deer's grandson and the ruler of Teozacoalco. The repetition of calendar name and surname together seemed, at that time, convincing evidence of identity; only the publication of the list of rulers in the *Mapa de Teozacoalco* (Caso, 1949) showed its falsity. However, adequate understanding of one item of costume would have prevented the error. Eight Deer went to Tula and was given, as a special mark of honor, a nose plug. This was inherited, presumably with the indicated rank, by his son, Four Dog, of Teozacoalco. It is Four Dog's son who is the Thirteen Dog Eagle Star under discussion and he, too, wears the nose plug. If its importance had



been recognized, this alone would have been enough to indicate that he could not have been Eight Deer's grandfather, Thirteen Dog Eagle Star, who is shown without a nose plug.

In the Maya area we have less evidence of the practice of "wearing one's name," but enough to indicate that it was sometimes done. In the *Dresden* codex (p. 60a) (Figure 8) God N is represented in a turtle shell, wearing a net on his head; his name glyphs appear as "net-turtle-shell." In the *Paris* codex (p. 6) the same glyphs appear, but the god is wearing a seashell. Finally, in the *Dresden* (p. 41) the god is shown wearing a seashell, and his glyph shows a seashell rather than a turtle shell. This is quite different from most of the other gods, whose name glyphs seldom seem to be associated with their characteristics. Representations at Chichen Itza likewise show the net and turtle shell on the body of the god, and he is frequently shown on Classic Period pottery.

The headdresses and other items worn by Mayas of the Classic Period seem more often to be associated with particular ceremonies rather than with their personal names. However, Proskouriakoff (1961, p. 83) has pointed out one clear example of a "name-headress" on Stela 1 at Piedras Negras. Here the text shows a *katun* glyph associated with a female head, and the monument shows a woman wearing a *katun* glyph in her headdress. There is nothing to indicate certainly whether this appellative glyph should be understood as a personal name in a strict sense or as some sort of title or family name. From the way the name clause compares with other known names, I think it is a personal name. Even in this case, it is worth pointing out that the same woman, identified in the text by the same glyphs, recurs on Stela 3 without the *katun* glyph in her headdress.

It is obvious that the majority of Maya rulers do *not* wear their names (or, at least, wear them only on some occasions). A glance at the variety of headdresses worn by Shield Jaguar and Bird Jaguar, on the lintels of Yaxchilan, is enough by itself to indicate that costume, during the Maya Classic Period, tends to mark other features than personal identity. To be sure, Bird Jaguar is sometimes depicted wearing a jaguar headdress (as on Yaxchilan Lintels 6 and 43), but considering the general importance of jaguars in Mesoamerica, many other explanations are possible for these depictions. Shield Jaguar is also shown with an impressive jaguar headdress (Yaxchilan Stela 20), but the "shield" element is not recognizably present in the costume (for Yaxchilan monuments, see Maler, 1903).

At Tikal, Lintel 3 of Temple IV (Coe and Shook, 1961) and Stela 16 (Maler, 1911) show a man wearing a headdress which contains, with other representations, a skull (apparently of an animal) followed by a

“star” glyph. The associated appellative glyphs of both monuments refer to a man who has been called “moon sign ruler.” The date on which I think this man was born is a significant date of the Maya Venus cycle, and both monuments are at or near significant dates of the Venus cycle. Hence it is not clear whether the headdress gives an alternate personal name (given because of Venus associations at birth and different from that in the glyphs) or whether it represents a costume worn for particular ceremonies associated with the planet Venus.

In discussion with Floyd Lounsbury, Linda Schele, and Peter Mathews (at a conference in 1974 at Dumbarton Oaks, arranged by Elizabeth Benson), we noted that at least three of the individuals whose portraits are shown on the sarcophagus of the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque are wearing their names as headdresses. Lady Zac Kuk, “White Quetzal,” a name also known among the Mixtecs, is shown wearing a Quetzal headdress; Lord Jaguar is shown wearing a jaguar headdress; and an individual whose name glyph is the head of an animal with a snakelike mouth and jaguar spots and ears (a Snake-Jaguar, in Chol Maya Chan Bahlum) wears this curious head as a headdress. This, again, emphasizes the importance of the context in which names are used, for these same individuals appear in other portraits at Palenque in which they do not wear these headdresses. Moreover, Lady Zac Kuk’s name seems to be written both ideographically and phonetically. In the latter case, no obvious connection between the name and the headdress could have been recognized if the phonetic glyphs had not been identifiable from other contexts.

It was later determined that all of the individuals depicted on the sarcophagus are shown with name headdresses, and I subsequently noted that the figures on the slabs flanking the Hieroglyphic Stairway in the Palace at Palenque also wear name headdresses.

Among the Zapotecs there are some examples of what seem to be calendar names worn as headdresses as early as Monte Alban II. A good example is the ceramic sculpture of Thirteen Water, with the glyphs incised on his headdress (Toscano, 1970, pl. 245), and with the glyph Thirteen Flint Knife on the breast; the meaning of the latter is unclear, but gods often had more than one calendar name. In other calendar systems one might have suspected that it indicated the year of birth, but Flint Knife was not a year-namer among the Zapotecs.

A possible Totonac example is the Laughing Head which has a monkey with a circle above it (Kelemen, 1956, p. 117d). The circle is probably intended as the number *one* and gives the calendar name One Monkey. The composition is very similar to the Zapotec piece, although the other elements of the style are very different.

There are a considerable number of cases where the nature of headdresses strongly suggests the possibility that they represent names, but any sort of supporting evidence is lacking. A noteworthy example may be found among the distinctive headdresses of the conflicting warriors shown at Bonampak. Other likely examples are to be found in the Temple of the Bas-Relief at Chichen Itza. However, as long as headdresses played multiple roles, and we have no other kinds of evidence, we cannot use the headdresses to give names to people. We are still dependent upon other data to distinguish "name" costumes from other types.

This is a slightly modified version of a paper presented at a 1973 meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in San Francisco.

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