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**Palatial Soundscapes:
Music in Maya Court Societies**

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**Palatial Soundscapes:
Music in Maya Court Societies**

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Dedication

And now I sing! So let there be
flowers! So let there be songs!
I drill my songs as though they
were jades. I smelt them as
gold. I mount these songs of
mine as though they were jades.

- Bierhorst 1985, 207

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Brian M. Stross. Without his kind encouragement, patience, and enthusiasm, this work may never have been.

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Abstract

Palatial Soundscapes: Music in Maya Court Societies

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Music is a powerful force. It highlights social hierarchies and relationships. It is a means by which the ordinary everyday can be transformed into the sacred. It has the ability to change our daily routine. How though, was music used, and in what ways did it function in the courtly society of the ancient Maya? In Classic Maya iconography we frequently find scenes of dance performance, ritual, or palace scenes depicted with musicians. Rarely however, are musicians the central focus of the action taking place. Were Maya musicians simply a background ‘soundtrack’ to the primary action unfolding or were they an integral part of Maya courtly life? This thesis conducts an iconographical analysis of the representations of music, musical instruments, and musicians among the Maya along with the consideration of archaeological evidence. The evidence considered comes primarily from the iconography of musicians and musical instruments depicted on several painted ceramic vessels but also takes into consideration iconography found in the murals of Bonampak and the paintings at Naj Tunich Cave, as well as archaeological evidence that appears in the form of preserved instruments at sites such as Pacbitun and the Copan Valley.

For the ancient Maya, music was segmented. This is seen in the types of instruments and their groupings as portrayed in Maya iconography. These groupings denote differing categories of musical forms and functions which pertain to particular settings, such as interior palace settings as compared to exterior public settings. In exploring these images, many characteristics common to the depiction of musicians in interior palace settings become apparent that are not seen in depictions of musicians in exterior public settings. First, the musicians are depicted kneeling, seated, or standing still. Second, they are located furthest from the most prominent figure. Third, acoustics do not affect instrument choice. Fourth, the form of attire varies more greatly in interior settings than in exterior settings. Finally, the order of instruments remains as standard as those in exterior settings. These scenes provide further evidence of instrument specialization and musical segmentation in Maya music and emphasize the significance music held in Ancient Maya culture.

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Introduction

The ruler was greatly concerned with the dance, the rejoicing in order to hearten and console all the peers, the noblemen, the lords and brave warriors, and all the common folk and vassals. First the ruler announced what song should be intoned. He commanded the singers to rehearse and practice the song. . . All was first arranged, so that nothing would be left out. . . And if the singers did something amiss-perchance a two-toned drum was out of tune, or a ground drum; or he who intoned, marred the song; or the leader marred the dance- then the ruler commanded that they place in jail whoever had done the wrong; they imprisoned him, and he died.

- Fray Bernardino de Sahagún¹

This account from Sahagún's observations on music in Aztec society exemplifies the significance that Mesoamerican music could possess. Music is a powerful force. Music highlights social hierarchies and relationships. It is a means by which ordinary everyday life can be transformed into the sacred. Music has the ability to change our daily routine, our perceptions of the world around us, and can solidify our place within that world. Music is more than sound. It has multiple social, political, and religious functions. Yet it does not necessarily function the same way in different settings. The various groupings of Maya instruments depicted in Maya art, in conjunction with evidence from archaeological records and colonial accounts, demonstrates that the ancient Maya possessed different forms of music and that we can begin to define these

¹ Sahagún, 1981, vol. VIII: 51

different forms through imagery in order to better understand the role of music in ancient Maya culture.

Music clearly played an integral role in many aspects of Maya society. In Classic Maya imagery, we frequently find scenes of dance performance, processions, sacrificial scenes, ball games, or palace scenes that incorporate musicians. In addition, painted ceramic vessels document music in association with feasting and mirror-gazing (Fig.1) as well as with battle as seen on K2781, K8738, and Bonampak Room 2 (Fig.2).² Maya deities are often depicted in the company of musicians or playing musical instruments themselves, and at times, they do so in the same context as humans.³

In many of these images, music appears to have supported the dance or ceremony taking place, as instruments are generally depicted as being played by secondary figures.⁴ The public activity of musicians is well established and the imagery suggests that music was used in these circumstances to enhance the performance and the power of the elite. However, in many cases the scenes musicians are portrayed in are private, palatial settings. Music used in private settings did not have the same function as music used in public settings. One of the ways this is evidenced is through the instruments employed in each scene.

The types of instruments and their groupings in Maya art generally vary depending on their associations. In interior palace settings, we most often see a triad of trumpets alone or a drum with rattles, turtle carapaces, or rascas. We rarely see depictions

² Miller, *The Murals of Bonampak*, 1986:100

³ Lopper, *To Be Like Gods: Dance in Ancient Maya Civilization*, 2009: 58

⁴ Lopper, *To Be Like Gods: Dance in Ancient Maya Civilization*, 2009:58

of flutes or whistles. This is surprising as they are the most numerous types of instruments found in the archaeological record. My initial assessment is that these instrument groupings denote differing categories of musical forms and functions that pertain to particular activities or settings.

These variations could be partially attributed to the acoustical differences between instruments and the varying settings in which they are used. In public spaces, louder instruments could be necessary for the sound to carry over large distances, or over the noise of a crowd, whereas in an enclosed space such loud instruments could be too overpowering. While this provides a practical explanation, I believe there is more to these specific instrument choices than acoustical attributes. These choices were more likely to have been based on the function music held in Maya society.

The choice of instrument for particular performances can reveal a breadth of information about the ways a society relates to music. In Islamic societies, music occupies a fringe space of uncertainty: what is allowed of it and what is not; what is considered acceptable, and what is not. One of the questions in the debate on music's acceptability concerns the use of musical instruments. Instruments themselves have never been allowed to participate in the Islamic prayer ritual, either as accompaniment or alone. Instruments have, however, been approved for military music and other secular genres.⁵ It is the context in which the instrument is used that is important. In addition, the context (time, location, audience, and content) of any musical performance, be it instrumental, vocal, or a combination of the two, is an important factor in determining its suitability.

⁵ Faruqi, "Music, Musicians and Muslim Law" *Asian Music* (1985), 24.

The scenes that will be the prime focus of this study are those in interior palace settings. These depictions are evidence that music and musicians held a specialized role in Maya court society, one that differed from the role of music and musicians in other settings. To investigate how music functioned and the ways it was used in Maya court society, I analyze the representations of music, musical instruments, and musicians among the Maya and consider of archaeological evidence and musicological theories. Critical questions posed are: in what settings do musicians and instruments appear? Which instruments are played in which settings? Who is playing the instruments and who are they playing to?

Though musicians in Maya society held a semi-elite status, they are rarely the central focus of visual compositions.⁶ In one composition, the musicians are merely alluded to as their instruments peek out from the side. The mediums primarily used to depict musicians and musical instruments were murals, codices, and polychrome vessels. The evidence I will be looking at comes primarily from images of musicians and musical instruments depicted on several Maya polychrome ceramic vessels. The majority of the images of the ceramic vessels come from the rollout photographs taken by Justin Kerr.⁷ I will also discuss imagery found in the murals of Bonampak, Uaxactun, and the paintings at Naj Tunich Cave.

⁶ Inomata, Takeshi and Laura R. Stiver. "Floor Assemblages from Burned Structures at Aguateca, Guatemala: A Study of Classic Maya Households." *Journal of Field Archaeology*. 1998.

⁷ A vessel photographed by Kerr is referenced with a 'K' followed by three to four numbers. All of Kerr's photographs may be found in a searchable online database at: <http://www.mayavase.com/>

My approach will incorporate methods from archaeology, musicology, and art history. The archaeological approach is focused primarily on the context in which the instruments are found, their material composition, as well as the physical spatial considerations of where the instruments may have been played. I also incorporate archaeological evidence that appears in the form of preserved instruments at sites such as Pacbitun, Lubantuun, and Uaxactun. The archaeological record is replete with instruments. They have been found in a variety of contexts such as tombs, palace rooms, temple platforms, causeways, and trash middens.⁸ This distribution elucidates how integral instruments were to Maya courts and palaces.

In art historical terms, I am primarily concerned with analyzing the imagery depicted on the vessels and murals. I focus on the context in which the musicians appear in addition to other pertinent details such as what the attire of the musicians tells us about their status, where the musicians are physically positioned in the scenes, what the primary action taking place in the scenes appears to be, and what types of instrument groupings appear in which scenes. My art historical approach also incorporates information gleaned from hieroglyphs found on the vessels.

The main purpose of the musicological approach is to focus on the social function of music in Maya court society, taking into consideration concerns such as the ways in which musicians were viewed, interacted with, and used by the elites as well as considering the ways in which music can shape place and space and highlight social hierarchies. Similar studies have been conducted both by the author and other scholars on

⁸ Looper, *To Be Like Gods: Dance in Ancient Maya Civilization*, 2009:152.

these aspects of music in Aztec society. While Maya and Aztec societies had many differences, they also had many similarities. This makes it possible to correlate some aspects of Aztec society with that of the Maya. It is useful, then, to incorporate some of what we know of Aztec music in this study.

Music was an integral part of the daily and ceremonial lives of the Aztecs. There is much evidence in the archaeological record and iconography of the Aztec that shows they had a well established musical practice which was both public and secular. Music was played in rituals and ceremonies as well as for entertainment. Musical instruments were carefully constructed and at times revered. Musicians were educated in schools and possessed a system of musical notation. Musical instruments and musicians served various important functions in the daily lives of the Aztec. In addition, they were imbued with significant religious symbolism.

Music was not only part of ritual and ceremony, but was a part of everyday public life. Sebastián Ramírez de Fuenleal, president of the Audiencia at Mexico City, wrote a letter to Charles V, dated November 1531, in which he specified an exemption in Aztec law given to singers and painters from paying tribute “because of their service to the community in preserving the memories of past glories”.⁹ The Aztecs had a high degree of musical practice but they had no term for ‘music’ or ‘musician’. Instead, all instrumental music was known as the ‘art of song’ (*cuica tlamatiliztli*), and all musicians were considered to be singers (*cuicanimeh*).¹⁰ With this, it is plain that musicians held a very

⁹ Stevenson, Robert. *Music in Aztec and Inca Territory*, 1968: 8

¹⁰ Both 2007:94

respectable role in Aztec society. They were essential in both the conservation and transmission of culturally significant historical events in the same manner as were painters who documented such happenings.

Music was also used as entertainment in the court. A high-ranking group of musicians was responsible for the composition and instrumentation of new chants and dances attributed to new rulers. Sacred hymns recounted historical events such as battle victories, dynastic marriages, or mythologies and performed an integral role in the oral tradition of cultural knowledge.¹¹ A musician must have reached a certain degree of accomplishment before being thought of as skilled enough to play before the rulers and nobility or to be charged with such important tasks as constructing the histories of such important events.

The Aztec also had a formalized system of educating musicians. There was a ‘song house’, *cuicacalli*, in a section of the court. It was here that the ‘master of song’, *tlapitzcatzin*, and other masters of youths and leaders of ceremony lived. Their function was not only the mediation of chants and dances, but it was also to ensure their correct ceremonial performance. One of the most important functions of the institution was the careful instruction of children and young adults in music and dance practices.¹² Their education, which was independent of sex and social rank and obligatory for all inhabitants of Tenochtitlan, underlines the great importance of music and dance practices

¹¹ Both, “Aztec Music Culture” *Papers from the 1st meeting of the Music Archaeology Study Group of them ICTM 25-27 April, 2003*, 2007:100

¹² Duran, *The History of the Indies of New Spain*, 1984, vol. I: 194-195

in Aztec society.¹³ Dancing was viewed as a form of art and was integrated with both music and physical exercise. The importance of education in these skills was such that failure in them was considered a crime.¹⁴

We therefore know much about music in the lives of the Aztec. Scholars such as Matthias Stöckli and Cameron Hideo Bourg have shown that the role and function of music in Maya society was very similar to Aztec society even though the evidence is somewhat different. For the Aztecs, we are able to cross reference accounts of ceremonies involving music observed and written by the Spaniards with codices painted by the Aztec that depict the use of an instrument or the role of the musician in the ceremony, along with archaeological evidence of the type of instrument itself. In addition, the period and geographic area of the Aztecs was smaller and, generally speaking, more homogenous than that of the Maya. These factors make a comprehensive study of Aztec music less complicated than one of Maya music. What we lack in regards to Aztec music, however, is documentation of private uses of music, which the Maya give us glimpses of through painted ceramics.

For the ancient Maya, the appearance of musicians and musical instruments is extensive throughout the archaeological record and imagery of the Maya region as a whole. Yet there has not been a single comprehensive study of the role and function of music among the Maya that is equivocal with the studies of musical practices and the role

¹³ Both, "Aztec Music Culture" *Papers from the 1st meeting of the Music Archaeology Study Group of them ICTM 25-27 April, 2003*, 2007:100

¹⁴ Aguilar, Beatriz, Barry Lumsden, and Darhyl Ramsey. "The Aztec Empire and Spanish Missions: Early Music Education in North America." *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* XXIV.1: 62-82. 2002: 66

of music in Aztec society. While Stöckli and Bourg have done great work beginning the task, one of the largest obstacles to this is the sheer enormity such an undertaking would entail. The body of evidence spans hundreds of years and thousands of miles.

The largest bodies of work conducted on Maya music primarily involves the identification and classification of the various types of instruments they employed as exemplified by Hammond's 1972 series on Classic Maya music and Mary Miller's work on the Bonampak band. This has led scholars such as Both (2004), Halperin (2009), Hendon (2003), Barber et. al. (2009), Desai (2001), and Bézy (2006), to conduct research which focuses on specific instrument types such as the marine shell trumpet and ceramic figurine-whistles. Organological studies have also been conducted on Maya instruments to attempt to recreate their sound, such as Cabrera's 2001 attempt to recreate the sound of a certain type of whistle and his 2002 work on recreating the long wooden trumpets.¹⁵ These studies elucidate the complexity of music in Maya society and give insight into aspects of ritual, cosmology, and social hierarchies. One critique that could be made here, however, is that when one studies a single instrument type by itself, one takes away its context as it relates to other instruments it was played with.

While I incorporate archaeological evidence and musicological theories in my work, this thesis primarily focuses on visual representations of musicians and musical instruments. It provides a better understanding of the ways instruments were played as ensembles, the status of musicians in Maya society, and which instruments were played in which circumstances. It elucidates how the Maya possessed categorized music in ways

¹⁵ Cabrera, *Virtual Analysis of Mayan Whistles*, 2001. *Virtual Analysis of Mayan Trumpets*, 2002

that can be difficult to see in strictly archaeological contexts. Focusing on one of these categories allows a more critical examination of the corpus of evidence and makes it more manageable in the confines of a thesis. The category I will focus on is the music of court society.

The first chapter briefly discusses instruments commonly used by the ancient Maya. As mentioned above, there have been numerous scholarly works devoted to the classification and description of Maya musical instruments. Therefore, this chapter will not delve into copious details pertaining to each type of instrument created by the Maya. It will instead give a brief overview of the instruments depicted in the various vessels, murals, paintings, and codices examined in this study. Chapter 1 will also give preliminary conclusions as to the types of instruments generally found, or not found, in various activities and settings. One of the most common activities they are found in is providing accompaniment to dance.

Among the Classic Maya, music held a close relationship to dance. While the relationship between music and dance may seem fairly obvious in the sense that dance is most often conducted with musical accompaniment, in Maya society this relationship is more complex. The degree of importance held by the musician was determined in part by the degree to which he participated in the dance itself as well as his relationship to the dancers.

One example of this is the use of the small pottery hand drum. K3463, K1549, and K3051 all depict dances accompanied by these distinctive drums (Fig.3, 4). Of these three vessels, K1549 and K3463 are the most similar. They each depict a male and

female dancing while two musicians accompany them. In each scene, one musician plays a pottery hand drum, while another plays a rasca. For K3051 we have only a drawing of one part of the vessel. The dance figures remain, but the group of musicians is absent. Instead, the male dance participant plays a pottery hand drum with one arm and shakes a rattle with the other. What this exemplifies is that while similar instruments are used in similar dances, the figures that play them have different roles in the performance. This signifies differing functions of the same instruments in various settings.

Chapter 2 delves into the imagery surrounding music in Maya art and explores artistic conventions employed as a means to elucidate the musicians' roles and functions in the scenes in which they appear. It takes into consideration architectural features, furnishings, and other objects depicted in the scenes as well as how the figures physically relate to each other in the compositions. It ends with an analysis of forms of dress frequently worn by Maya musicians and what this tells us about their social status. The attire worn by musicians is particularly interesting. Several of the musicians depicted in the various vessels, murals, and codices are similarly attired.

The attire worn by the pottery hand drummers depicted on K1549, K3463, Template 34a of the Dresden Codex, and Naj Tunich Drawings 40 and 27 as well as the wooden horn players on K4120, K 6984, and the North Wall of Room 3 at Bonampak are all markedly similar (Fig.5). Andrea Stone notes that Maya art in general tends to lavish great attention on the costumes and regalia worn by represented figures.¹⁶ In these

¹⁶ Stone, Andrea Joyce. *Images from the Underworld: Naj Tunich and the Tradition of Maya Cave Painting*, 1995: 131

circumstances however, the musicians' attire is relatively plain. We can describe the typical musician in these images as wearing an undecorated loin cloth and hip cloth, a cloth headwrap with long flaps which is tied with a band, circular ear flares, and being unshod. This shows that dress among Maya musicians was semi-uniform and held specific meanings.

Information on the types of scenes musicians are portrayed in, and the vessels they are found on, will be discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 discusses the general characteristics of music in Maya court society more in depth as well as the implications they have for Maya music in general.

Chapter 1: Instruments and Settings:

They have little drums which they play with the hand, and another drum made of hollow wood with a heavy and sad sound. They beat it with rather a long stick with a certain gum from a tree at the end of it, and they have long thin trumpets of hollow wood with long twisted gourds at the ends. And they have another instrument made of a whole tortoise with its shells, and having taken out the flesh, they strike it with the palm of the hand. The sound is doleful and sad. They have whistles made of the leg of bones of deer; great conch shells and flutes made of reeds, and with these instruments they make music for the dancers.

-Fray Diego de Landa¹⁷

The above account from Diego de Landa illustrates the variety of musical instruments used by the Post-Classic Maya. There were aerophones such as ceramic flutes, ocarinas, whistles, shell trumpets, and trumpets made from wood and gourds. Their membranophones consisted of drums in a multitude of styles made from hollowed wooden logs or clay. The Maya also constructed an array of idiophones including ceramic rattles, tortoise shells, slit drums or *tunkul*, gourd rattles, and rasps.¹⁸

Though many of these Maya instruments have not survived to present day, we also know of their existence through visual representations. When examining the corpus of Maya art, however, one notices that certain instruments are depicted with greater frequency than others. The most numerous instruments depicted in Maya art are rattles

¹⁷ Landa, *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatan*. Trans. Tozzer, Cambridge: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1941: 93

¹⁸ Hammond, "Classic Maya Music: Part I" *Archaeology* v. 25, 1972a; Hammond, "Classic Maya Music: Part II" *Archaeology* v. 26, 1972b; Bourg, *Ancient Maya Music now with Sound*, 2005:8-28

and wooden trumpets. Other commonly depicted instruments are pottery hand drums, shell trumpets, turtle carapaces, gourd rattles, small drums, and the *pax*. Tubular ceramic flutes appear in a handful of scenes. A friction drum and trapezoidal-shaped drum are depicted, but only in one instance each. Prominent Maya instruments missing from this list are ceramic effigy flutes, whistles, and ocarinas. This is because while the later may be the most numerous to have been discovered in the archaeological record, they are not depicted on vessels, murals, or codices. Though ceramic effigy flutes, whistles, and ocarinas are not depicted in Maya art, they deserve at least a brief discussion here to illustrate the specific associations these instruments have.

Twenty ceramic figurine flutes were excavated at Motel de San José, many of which had effigy attachments.¹⁹ Over one hundred whistles and figurine whistles were discovered at Lubaantun. T. A. Joyce describes finding at Lubaantun, “an extraordinary abundance of pottery mould-made figurines and plaques each with a whistle at the back. The whistle portion was, invariably, furnished with two finger-holes, so that three notes could be produced. Probably ‘ocarina’ would be a better term than ‘whistle,’ but I use the latter as being the simpler.”²⁰ Hundreds of mould-made ceramic figurine whistles have also been found in the Copan Valley.²¹ These were found in connection with larger residential compounds, in trash middens, or occasionally in burials. Excavations of the

¹⁹ Halperin, “Honduran Figurines and Whistles in Social Context: Production, Use, and Meaning in the Ulúa Valley” *Mesoamerican Figurines: Small-Scale Indices of Large-Scale Social Phenomena*, 2009:10

²⁰ Joyce, “Presidential Address. The Pottery Whistle-Figurines of Lubaantun” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol.6, 1933:xv

²¹ Hendon, “In the House: Maya Nobility and their Figurine Whistles”, *Expedition*, 2003:30

surrounding rural farmsteads recovered almost none.²² This suggests that these objects were most commonly personal items belonging to members of the elite. Whistles also appear at Uaxactun and there is a plethora in the Jaina Island region. Whistles then, were not an uncommon instrument among the elite Maya and they frequently occurred in household contexts.²³

Pacbitun, Belize had some particularly interesting finds. Burial 2-1 of Structure 2 (BU 2-1) possibly constitutes the largest cache of musical instruments ever found at a Maya site.²⁴ This Late-Classic burial was discovered beneath a plastered floor in Structure 2, the second largest pyramidal construction at Pacbitun. The burial is of a Maya noble woman. Arranged about her feet and head were more than twenty painted ceramic vessels, carved jade jewelry, a chipped ceremonial flint blade as well as fourteen musical instruments. Healy et. al. describe the instruments as “five tubular air-spring flutes with two finger-holes each, eight anthropomorphic and zoomorphic effigy flutes and fragments thereof, and a second polyorganic sound artifact flute-rattle.”²⁵ The discovery of these flute-rattles is especially fascinating. Not only are they the only known specimens of such instruments in the Maya realm, but in addition, when we see depictions of musicians playing a flute, they most frequently do so with one hand, while playing a rattle in the other hand.

²² Hendon, “In the House: Maya Nobility and their Figurine Whistles”, *Expedition*, 2003:29

²³ Healy, “Music of the Mayas” *Archaeology*, Vol. 41, No. 1 January/February 1988:27

²⁴ Healy, Rodens, and Downe, “Ancient Maya Sound Artifacts of Pacbitun, Belize” *Orient-Archäologie Band 22*, 2008: 25

²⁵ Healy, Rodens, and Downe, “Ancient Maya Sound Artifacts of Pacbitun, Belize” *Orient-Archäologie Band 22*, 2008: 25

It is also interesting to note that the largest cache of musical instruments discovered for the Maya was in the burial of a female. This states that in some manner females were involved in musical practices in Late Classic Maya society. The aerophones at Pacbitun themselves appear to have gendered qualities, particularly effigy ocarinas. The pitches of instruments vary depending on the subject of the effigy ocarina. The male-figure ocarinas have a distinctly lower pitch than the female-figure ocarinas.²⁶ This clear illustration of feminine musical associations contradicts previous notions that all musical practices of the Late Classic Maya were male dominated. The imagery, however, strongly suggests that the public performance of music was a male dominated role. In the various depictions of musicians in Maya art, the musician is always male.

As frequently as these instruments have been found in the archaeological record as compared to other instruments, it is strange that they are not seen in the corpus of Maya art. This paradox is noted by several scholars including Matthias Stöckli. In his work on musical iconography he concludes that when compared to organological information available through field archaeology, the disparity between the corpus of imagery and the archaeological record is testimony to a wide range of instruments which have not physically survived.²⁷ Stöckli suggests that the lack of depictions of ceramic flutes and similar instruments points us towards a field of musical and cultural activities that “obviously were not considered worth representing.”²⁸ In the rare instance that ceramic flutes are depicted, they are most often found in supernatural connotations.

²⁶ Healy, “Music of the Mayas” *Archaeology*, Vol. 41, No. 1 January/February 1988:30

²⁷ Stöckli, 2

²⁸ Stöckli, 2

Hendon suggests that this disparity is evidence that ceramic whistle figurines were a simple way of providing music for families' smaller-scale ritual events.²⁹

Many explanations could be offered as to why representations of these instruments are largely absent when they are found so frequently in the archaeological record. This discussion will have to wait for future research, but at the very least it reveals that for the Maya, music was *segmented*. That is, specific forms of music were used in specific settings, for specific purposes, and there existed set rules that regulated these specifications.

The differentiation of instruments was likely one of the dividing lines.³⁰ This distinction is important for this study of varying classifications of Maya music as it clearly indicates specific associations of the use of particular instruments with particular activities. To further explore this notion, the following section discusses each instrument type individually with regard to the scenes in which they are depicted and their archaeological associations.

SHELL TRUMPETS:

Archaeological evidence shows that conch shell trumpets were in use in Mesoamerica from the Pre-Classic period all the way through the Post-Classic period.³¹ They appear in paintings at Naj Tunich Cave and on several painted ceramic vessels.

²⁹ Hendon, 2003: 30

³⁰ Stöckli, 2

³¹ Both. "Shell Trumpets in Mesoamerica: Musicarchaeological Evidence and Living Tradition" *Studien zur Musikarchäologie*, 2004:261. Bézy, *Maya Shell Trumpets: A Musical Instrument as Ritual Implement*. University of Texas At Austin, 2006:13-25

Shell trumpets were also carved onto objects made of various materials including sculpted stone and were incised on bone.³² The functional use of the conch shell as a trumpet is multi-faceted. One of the reasons for this is that conch shells themselves had many associations.

In Aztec society, the conch shell's main association was with water, particularly the sea, as both were considered to be the origin of life. It was also strongly associated with the aquatic underworld in which it was used to create humankind. The shell trumpet held a function in numerous priestly duties, was considered a form of audible communication with the supernatural realm, and had the ability to call deities or ancestral spirits.³³

In his thesis, Bézy analyzes iconographic themes of shell trumpets and identifies six basic types where shell trumpets are depicted. These six scene categories are Supernatural, the Hunt, Pageantry, Procession, the Ballgame, and Dwarves. He writes that, "A study of such varied iconography offers an emic view into the contexts in which shell trumpets were used. The representations indicate that shell trumpets were used both by humans, supernaturals, and supernatural impersonators".³⁴

The vase K1453 has the only scene which depicts a shell trumpet being played in a palace setting (Fig. 1). Reents-Budet describes this scene as showing a divination

³² Bézy, *Maya Shell Trumpets: A Musical Instrument as Ritual Implement*, University of Texas At Austin, 2006:31-32

³³ Both. "Shell Trumpets in Mesoamerica: Musicarchaeological Evidence and Living Tradition" *Studien zur Musikarchäologie*, 2004

³⁴ Bézy, *Maya Shell Trumpets: A Musical Instrument as Ritual Implement*, University of Texas At Austin, 2006:31-32

ritual.³⁵ Seven individuals are portrayed in the throne scene. Honey ferments in pots as a seated lord gazes into a mirror. It is being held by a dwarf who is completely covered in blue paint while another dwarf drinks from a gourd.³⁶ Four other attendants are also depicted. On the left side of the composition, just barely peeking into the scene from behind an architectural feature, are three trumpets.

Two of the trumpets are wooden horns while the lowest is a shell trumpet. The only parts of the musicians that are visible are the hands of the shell trumpet player holding his instrument. Of particular note here is that the musician playing the shell trumpet has one hand inserted into the shell, acting as what Bézy refers to as a *hand in mute* technique.³⁷ Typically, a shell trumpet produces one prominent note. However, by adjusting one's embouchure or placing the hands or fingers into the shell, differing notes can be achieved with such variety as to allow multi-tone songs to be played.

There are several other scenes depicting shell trumpets in various settings. K0791 is a complex dance scene in which a musician playing a shell trumpet appears to dance or float above a jaguar. Next to them, another musician plays a flute and a rattle. K2731 depicts a ballgame scene in which a musician is seen blowing a shell trumpet. A shell trumpet also appears during a funerary procession on K6317. In K8738 we see a warrior with a captive seated at his feet. In front of them two painted musicians play the shell trumpet. It is obvious then that shell trumpets appear in a variety of settings.

³⁵ Reens-Budet, *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period*, 1994:213

³⁶ Bézy, *Maya Shell Trumpets: A Musical Instrument as Ritual Implement*, University of Texas At Austin, 2006:56

³⁷ Bézy, *Maya Shell Trumpets: A Musical Instrument as Ritual Implement*. MA Thesis. University of Texas At Austin, 2006:56

This is not an exhaustive list of all the depictions of shell trumpets but is a large enough sample from which to draw some basic conclusions. Shell trumpets are most frequently depicted singularly, that is, one shell trumpet per scene, though there are exceptions. It is also worth noting that the types of activities they are involved in are, for the most part, largely public ones or those with great importance attached to them. Only once is a shell trumpet depicted in an interior palatial setting.

WOODEN AND GOURD TRUMPETS:

Along with the shell trumpet in K1453 are two long wooden trumpets. These are a variant of the “long thin trumpets of hollow wood with long twisted gourds at the ends” attested to by de Landa and Herrera.³⁸ These trumpets are most frequently encountered in court scenes.³⁹ It has been suggested that the gourds used to make the ends of these trumpets were grown on the vine to achieve their desired shape.⁴⁰ Wooden trumpets appear in scenes of ballgames, associated with ancestor bundles, captive/sacrifice scenes, dancing, dwarves, funerary processions, and are associated with aspects of warfare. They are most often depicted as a triad.

The wooden trumpet is the most frequently depicted musical instrument in the Maya corpus of art; however, no archaeological example has been discovered. This is mostly attributable to the materials used to construct these instruments, namely wood and

³⁸ Herrera, Tozzer, 218

³⁹ Stone and Zender, *Reading Maya Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Maya Painting and Sculpture*, 2011:91

⁴⁰ Houston, Stuart, and Taube, *The Memory of Bones*. 2006:258; Stuart, personal communication, Nov. 2013

gourds, which would not preserve well. However, both musicologists and Mayanists have been encouraged to reproduce their musical apparatuses and assess their functions based on their frequent depictions in frescoes and on numerous vessels, as well as their descriptions in missionary accounts.⁴¹ In his description of the sound the wooden horn produces, Cabrera writes that they “could produce complex signals, some of them very well related with biological sounds like from people and animals from the Maya jungle”.⁴² Cabrera relates the variety of sounds these trumpets were able to produce as being similar to that of the didgeridoo found in Australia.

K4120 portrays the Dance of a God K impersonator before an enthroned lord named Yajawte' K'inich who is dressed for dance (Fig. 5).⁴³ Loooper writes that both the lord and the dancer before him are wearing half face masks and that they, “gesture towards each other as if taking part in a joint dance”.⁴⁴ On this vessel are three wooden trumpet players, two of whom are seated, or kneeling, and one who is standing. They are joined by a musician playing rattles and another on a large trapezoidal instrument believed to be a type of large drum. The members of the band are depicted on the far left facing towards the dancer. The drummer is shown twice in the rollout photograph. On the far left he is shown with his back to the rest of the band. He is also depicted on the far right of the composition facing the attendants behind the lord. This is a complex artistic

⁴¹ See Miller 1986; Miller and Martin 2004; Velázquez Cabrera 2000, Bourg, 2006

⁴² Cabrera, “Virtual Analysis of Maya Trumpets Case 1. Hom-Tahs of Bonampak”, *La Pintura Mural Prehispánica en México*, 2002:19

⁴³ Loooper, *To Be Like Gods: Dance in Ancient Maya Civilization*, 2009:146

⁴⁴ Loooper, *To Be Like Gods: Dance in Ancient Maya Civilization*, 2009:146

convention used by the artist to illustrate the rank and role of this drummer and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

K6984 also depicts a triad of wooden horns (Fig. 6). The musicians kneel in a row at the far left of the composition. In front of them is a figure in a dancing pose. On the right of the composition, an enthroned ruler observes someone who is being pointed at. Another example of the wooden trumpet is found on a column housed by the Centro INAH Campeche which is believed to be from Tunkuyí. On this column five persons focus on an enthroned lord who is facing to the right. Below him are two musicians who kneel while playing wooden trumpets. Also shown is a dance performed by a dwarf who faces, and extends his arms towards, the enthroned lord. A profile figure on the right also faces the lord while holding a shield and axe. Matthew Looper describes the work as being “conceived as a sculptural version of a dance scene from a southern lowlands polychrome vase”.⁴⁵

Wooden trumpets held a prominent role in processions. Four vessels (K5534, K0594, K6317, and K7613) show a figure borne on a litter. In each scene they are accompanied by musicians carrying wooden horns. In K5534, K6317, and K7613, a musician either carrying or playing a shell trumpet is also apparent. Another common association with wooden trumpets is scenes involving aspects of warfare. K6294 depicts two warriors being carried in a procession. A dancer leads the procession while a band consisting of three wooden trumpets, a *pax* drum, and a turtle carapace play. Between the carried warriors is a fourth wooden trumpet player.

⁴⁵ Looper, *To Be Like Gods: Dance in Ancient Maya Civilization*, 2009:178-179

Wooden trumpets appear in a wide variety of contexts, are associated with various activities, and are grouped with several different types of instruments. They are depicted equally in interior and exterior settings. When we look at wooden trumpets as part of an ensemble, however, we begin to see a more clearly defined prescription of use. This will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

RATTLES:

Much like wooden trumpets, rattles are seen in a wide array of contexts. They are the second most frequently depicted Maya instrument. They are depicted on the murals of Bonampak, Santa Rita, and Uaxactun. They appear in the Dresden Codex, are painted on several vessels, and are carved into stone monuments.⁴⁶ Some rattles were constructed from a gourd which was then mounted on a stick with copal gum, while others were made exclusively from gourd. They may have had their own dried seeds inside or may have been split and filled with other objects.⁴⁷

Rattles are referenced in the Post-Classic in the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel.⁴⁸ They were widespread throughout the Maya area and their spiritual role is often understood through their depictions in the Dresden Codex. Other examples of rattles include the Copán Reviewing Stand on which a simian figure holds a rattle with the Ik' symbol on it.⁴⁹ They are also found on the sculpted outer piers on the Lower

⁴⁶ Hammond, "Classic Maya Music: Part I: Maya Drums." *Archaeology* v. 25, 1972b:222

⁴⁷ Hammond, "Classic Maya Music: Part I: Maya Drums." *Archaeology* v. 25, 1972b:222

⁴⁸ Roys, 1933

⁴⁹ Loooper, *To Be Like Gods: Dance in Ancient Maya Civilization*, 2009: 159 Fig 5.10

Temple of the Jaguars at Chichén Itzá where at least one figure holds a rattle. Steala 3 at Seibal depicts both a drum and rattle.⁵⁰

K3842 and K5435 each clearly depict rattles being played in ballgames scenes. In K2781 they are part of a large band that plays while a prisoner is tied to a scaffold. The band consists of a rattle player, a *pax*, a turtle carapace, and four wooden trumpet players. Three Maya vessels which clearly depict rattles used in palace settings are K8947, K4120, and K1563. Both K8947 and K4120 have been discussed previously as regards other instruments depicted with them.

K1563 depicts nine figures sitting or kneeling in various positions on the same surface plane. Two musicians are seated at the far left of the rollout image. One plays elaborately decorated rattles, while the other plays a large ceramic drum similar in shape to the lamp-glass style pottery hand drum. To the far right of the composition is a dwarf. The two central figures face each other and draw the attention of all other participants in the scene. Ceramic vessels are held in the hands or placed on the floor in front of several of the figures.

The above examples are by no means exhaustive, but they do provide evidence for the widespread depictions of rattles in Maya art and the variety in which they are found.

THE RASCA:

A rasca is an instrument unique to Mesoamerica. The rasca is less frequently

⁵⁰ Looper, *To Be Like Gods: Dance in Ancient Maya Civilization*, 2009: 171 Fig 5.28 and 60

depicted than many Maya instruments. Its appearances are mostly limited to private, or semi-private, activities and settings. In John A. Donahue's work on experimental archaeology, he describes the rasca as a friction idiophone. That is, "an instrument which is percussed while attached to a larger resonating chamber." He notes that these instruments can be seen in many parts of Mesoamerica such as an armadillo-shell rasp attached to a gourd from Colima in West Mexico and depictions in the Mixtec Codex Vindobonensis.⁵¹ Justin Kerr coined the term 'rasca' in his description of K5233, which will be discussed below. It is a problematic term because in Spanish, the word 'rasca' refers to a 'rasper,' which is a different type of instrument. Yet due to the wide variety of gourd instruments and rattles among the Maya, it is less confusing to call this instrument a rasca than other names such as a rattle gourd.

The rasca appears most often associated with dance, but is also found in scenes pertaining to deity offerings and bundled ancestors. K1549 and K3463 are prominent examples of this instrument used in dance (Fig. 4). In these scenes a male and 'female' dance accompanied by a rattle gourd and pottery hand drums.

K6316 is a palace scene in which a ruler readies himself to dance (Fig. 7). A musician plays a rattle gourd while a woman carries a cache vessel containing either a severed head or a mask. The text on this vessel includes the glyph for accession to office which strongly suggests that this dance is part of the inaugural ceremony. The rattle gourd also appears on vessels K1549 and K3463 which will be discussed further in regards to the small pottery hand drums depicted on them.

⁵¹ Donahue, "Applying Experimental Archaeology to Ethnomusicology", 5

THE FRICTION DRUM:

According to Hammond, the friction drum is currently used in the Peten to lure unsuspecting jaguars within gunshot range.⁵² This instrument is quite a peculiar one. No chordophones or friction drums are known to have existed in Pre-Columbian America.⁵³ K5233 clearly shows an example of a friction drum however (Fig. 8). The instrument sits on the ground just in front of the center figure and is portrayed as having a bulbous body covered by a membrane and bearing the Ik' symbol on its side. The Ik' symbol has been identified as comprising part of the logograph for drum.⁵⁴ Attached to the top of the drum's membrane is a string which runs vertically up to, and is tied to, a long and curved rod which is held in the musician's left hand. In the musician's right hand is a long, corrugated implement with a curve on the end. This was presumably used to strike or 'bow' the string in some manner to produce a sound.⁵⁵ Taking into consideration the similarity in sound of this instrument to that of a jaguar in combination with the jaguar costumes worn by the three figures, I suspect the friction drum was a highly specialized instrument used for only very specific dance ceremonies.

THE TURTLE CARAPACE:

The use of this instrument is attested to by Cogolludo (1867-8, 2, Ch. 6), Diego de

⁵² Hammond, "Classic Maya Music: Part I: Maya Drums." *Archaeology* v. 25, 1972b:131

⁵³ Donahue, "Applying Experimental Archaeology to Ethnomusicology", 2

⁵⁴ Stone and Zender, *Reading Maya Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Maya Painting and Sculpture*, 2011:18

⁵⁵ For a more detailed description of this instrument see Donahue, "Applying Experimental Archaeology to Ethnomusicology"

Landa (1941, 93), and Herrera (1941, Ch4). In his writings on Mesoamerican music Seler writes that, “Among the Mexicans the tortoise shell was a commonly used instrument. It was beaten at the death feast, at the feast in honor of the rain gods on the Etzalqualiztli, at the feast to the mountain gods in the Atemoztli, at the dance of the women, the ‘leaps’ at the feast of Toxcatl, and on other occasions” (Seler, 1898: 77). It was generally beaten with a deer antler though occasionally by hand and was reported to have had a sad sound.⁵⁶ The turtle carapace was one of the main percussion instruments of Classic Maya orchestras. Reens-Budet has suggested that the loud staccato sound produced by hitting the turtle carapace with a deer antler may have been “replicative of, and therefore symbolic of, the sound of heavy tropical rains and thunder.”⁵⁷

In palace scenes depicted on Maya vessels, the turtle carapace appears on K8947 and K1645. On K8947 there is an enthroned ruler who is being entertained by a dancer on stilts while three musicians play (Fig. 9). One plays the *pax*, another plays a turtle carapace, and the third a pair of decorated rattles. This vessel contains a supernatural component in addition to the dance. Also appearing in the scene is God C, as well as a tribute bundle, a cache, and an offering to either humans or gods

The scene on K1645 appears to be a scene of mythological sacrifice (Fig. 10). On the right side of the rollout composition are two ancestral bundle Gods, the Patron of Pax, and God 1 (from the Palenque triad) rest on a throne. In front of them, an infant lays in a cache vessel that rests on a tripod. Decorating the dish the infant rests in are mat symbols

⁵⁶ Hammond, “Classic Maya Music: Part I: Maya Drums.” *Archaeology* v. 25, 1972a:131

⁵⁷ Reens-Budet, *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period*, 1994:244

denoting high authority and placed under the tripod is a large deity brazier. Behind the infant, we see two musicians resting and sleeping. The instruments associated with the musicians are a turtle carapace and a jaguar skin covered drum.⁵⁸ From the head of the drummer raises a water-lily sprout often seen on the heads of jaguars.⁵⁹

Turtle carapaces also appear in scenes showing captives/sacrifice, ceremonial preparations, offerings to deities, and aspects of warfare. Similar to the wooden trumpet and rattles, the turtle carapace appears in a wide variety of contexts and is grouped with several different types of instruments. This suggests that these three instruments in particular were used for multiple functions and were used for more general purposes than instruments with more specific associations.

THE *PAX* DRUM:

The *pax* drum is one of the largest Maya drums. While no known Maya specimen survives, several Classic and Post-Classic depictions of it exist.⁶⁰ The most detailed and exact representation of the *pax* drum is found in Room 1 of Structure 1 at Bonampak (Fig.11). As Hammond describes it, the *pax* possesses a cylindrical body”with triple moldings just over halfway down of a form found in Chenes and Puuc architectural decoration.”⁶¹ No cords or pegs are shown at the top of the drum so it is suspected that the skin was glued on top. The drum stands at about chest height of the player. If the

⁵⁸ Robicsek and Hales, *Maya Ceramic Vases from the Late Classic Period*, 1981:39

⁵⁹ Robicsek and Hales, *Maya Ceramic Vases from the Late Classic Period*, 1981:40

⁶⁰ Hammond, “Classic Maya Music: Part I: Maya Drums.” *Archaeology* v. 25, 1972a: 127

⁶¹ Hammond, “Classic Maya Music: Part I: Maya Drums.” *Archaeology* v. 25, 1972b:127

depiction is an accurate one, this drum must have been about 112cm high and 40cm in diameter.⁶²

The *pax* is also depicted on a Chama vase (K3040) in which an armadillo ‘animal impersonator’ beats it with two hands (Fig. 12). The skin on this *pax* may have been snake skin due to the reticulate pattern it possesses. If the same standard of stature of the Bonampak murals is applied here, the drum would stand 130cm high and 37 cm in diameter.⁶³ The Grolier vase is another example of a depicted *pax*. It is portrayed accompanied by several aerophone players (Miller 1986). An iconic depiction of a *pax* drum is found on K8947(Fig.9). Here the *pax* is portrayed with a sculpted and spotted membrane stretched over the top, triple molding toward its base, and having an inverse Ik’ symbol at its base. A *pax* is also found on K3009. On this vessel, four men are being dressed for dance by attendants to the accompaniment of a solitary musician playing a *pax*.⁶⁴

POTTERY HAND DRUM:

One instrument which has clear associations to particular practices is the pottery hand drum (Fig. 13). It is most frequently depicted in dance scenes but is also shown in scenes involving sacrifice or torture. Because its associations are clearer than those of many Maya percussion instruments, it will be discussed here in greater detail.

The frescoes at Uaxactun and plates from the *Dresden Codex* give iconographic examples

⁶² Hammond, “Classic Maya Music: Part I: Maya Drums.” *Archaeology* v. 25, 1972b:127

⁶³ Hammond, “Classic Maya Music: Part I: Maya Drums.” *Archaeology* v. 25, 1972b:127

⁶⁴Looper, *To Be Like Gods: Dancein Ancient Maya Civilization*, 2009:58

of ceramic miniature drums classified as ‘lamp-glass’ and ‘pedestal-vase’ varieties. A monochrome ‘lamp-glass’ drum dating from 550-700 AD was found at Barton Ramie while polychrome examples have come from Uaxactun and Lubaantuun.⁶⁵ Houston et.al. note that, “At Piedras Negras, the Maya labeled these *lajab*, ‘things for striking with the hands,’ and, according to nametags that declare possession, they seem to have belonged to royalty.”⁶⁶

The ‘pedestal-vase’ variety is recognized more widely in the archaeological record. Whole or fragmentary examples have been found at Uaxactun, Barton Ramie, Benque Viejo, Tecolpan, Piedras Negras, and Jaina. All are monochrome, contain glyphic inscriptions, and date to the early Late Classic. Polychrome variants have also been found at Uaxactun⁶⁷ Yalloch, Nakum, Cueva de los Quetzales,⁶⁸ and Flores⁶⁹ in Guatemala while still more have been found at Lubaantun⁷⁰ and San Jose⁷¹ in Belize.

These drums have been found in pristine condition in burials. Fragmentary remains have been found in ceremonial caves, trash deposits, and inside collapsed buildings.⁷² In addition to their depictions on pottery vessels, stone monuments also show musicians and dancers playing these drums.⁷³

⁶⁵ Hammond, “Classic Maya Music: Part I: Maya Drums.” *Archaeology* v. 25, 1972a: 127; See also Willey, Bullard, Glass, and Gifford, 1965, fig. 225a

⁶⁶ Houston, Stuart, and Taube, *The Memory of Bones*. 2006:261

⁶⁷ Smith, 1955, fig. 41, b, 1 and 49, b, 7

⁶⁸ James Brady, 1993

⁶⁹ Hammond, 1972: 5

⁷⁰ Hammond, 1975:322, Figure 114a

⁷¹ J.E.S. Thompson, 1939: Plate 22, b2

⁷² Reens-Budet, *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period*, 1994:85

⁷³ Reens-Budet, *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period*, 1994:85

K3463, K1549, and K3051, portray similar scenes though there are marked differences between them. The main figures on all of these vessels are a man and a woman in dancing poses. The women typically wear long tunics which are generally painted black or adorned with vertical lines or circles similar to the skirt worn by the goddess Chak Chel.⁷⁴ Of these three vessels, K1549 and K3463 are the most similar. K1549 shows a depiction of the 'Long Nose Dance' with the male participant dressed as the God Ek Chuah who is acting out the impregnation of Lady Xquic (Fig.4). K3463, from Dos Pilas, depicts a satirical dance scene (Fig. 14).

The women on both vessels wear the same hummingbird back piece, a similar headdress, and strike the same pose. The male participants are in similar poses to each other and are each leaning towards the women. In addition, the two males carry fans. In both scenes the dancers are accompanied by musicians. In K1549 one is playing a miniature pottery hand drum of the lamp-glass style and the other plays a rasca. K3463 portrays three musicians. Two play pottery hand drums, one lamp-glass style and the other pedestal-vase style, while the third musician plays a rasca. The lamp-glass style drums the musicians play are depicted nearly identically.

Vessel K3051 is quite different. When discussing this vessel, it is important to note that we are looking at a drawing of only one part of the image. The only figures preserved in the drawing are of the male and female dancers. The woman is depicted without a backrack, with different attire, and strikes a different pose. The male participant is markedly older than the figures in the other two images and is himself playing a larger

⁷⁴ See Taube 1992: figs 50. 51. SeeLooper, 2009:142.

pottery hand drum as well as a rattle.

Andrea Stone has noted that this type of scene, portraying a young beautiful girl and a withered or grotesque man dancing, is not just a ritual performance, but is a form of bawdy public entertainment. This is partially evidenced by a closer examination of the females in these scenes. These figures are clearly depicted as females by their attire. Loose hanging locks of hair allude to their sexual availability. However, their chest is bare and lacks depictions of breasts. This is anomalous in Maya art, where women's bare breasts are typically depicted when women are portrayed with bare chests. It is however, characteristic of Maya public performances where men often play the role of a female.⁷⁵ The type of satirical dance seen on these vessels is similar to some of the paintings found in Naj Tunich Cave.

In describing the corpus of imagery at Naj Tunich Andrea Stone writes that, "The cave paintings portray facets of ceremonial life in Naj Tunich during the Late Classic period. They include (with varying degrees of certainty) burning copal, blood sacrifice, onanism, solo dance performance, group musical performance, singing, ritual decapitation, and satirical dance performance."⁷⁶ Drawing 18 is of a couple in an amorous embrace. The male is nude and ithyphallic as he presses his erect penis against his partner's genital area. The female appears to be wearing a hip cloth. In Stone's description of these two figures she writes that:

There is a stark contrast in the persona of the two figures. Through her

⁷⁵ Stone, *Images from the Underworld*, 1995:144-145.

⁷⁶ Stone, *Images from the Underworld*, 1995:146

idealization and more elaborate costuming, she exudes a noble bearing. He, on the other hand, is slump-shouldered, hump-backed, pot-bellied and frail, as can be seen in his thin leg. Her body suggests strength and grace, his, weakness and clumsiness.⁷⁷

It appears then that this is the same type of dance portrayed on K1549 and K3463. There are two drawings of musicians at Naj Tunich, Drawing 27, and Drawing 40 (Fig.16, 17). Both drawings consist of a group of three musicians. In Drawing 40 the central figure holds a small ceramic drum. Stone describes it as having the, “bulbous body of the ‘lamp-glass’ type and the long, narrow base of the ‘pedestal vase’ type”.⁷⁸ The musician behind him appears to be playing a drum that looks like a gourd, or *olla*.⁷⁹ In Drawing 27 the rear figure holds a rattle while the central figure beats a *boxel ak*, a drum made from a turtle carapace. The figure in the front is much larger. Stone postulates that this person might be a *hol pop*, an expert in public performance, instructor of song and dance, and a guardian of musical instruments.⁸⁰

Stone also points out that cave drawings can easily be compared to paintings on ceramic vessels in terms of their content and composition. Drawing 68 is a painting which depicts a dwarf and lord. While there is no musician depicted in this drawing, it is still important to our discussion. In this image a seated lord balances an object similar to a gourd cup in his right hand. In front of him a dwarf kneels with his held out towards the lord with his palms facing upwards. Between the two figures is text which ends with the

⁷⁷ Stone, *Images from the Underworld*, 1995:196

⁷⁸ Stone, *Images from the Underworld*, 1995:140

⁷⁹ Stone, *Images from the Underworld*, 1995:140

⁸⁰ Stone, Andrea Joyce. *Images from the Underworld*, 1995:140

Ixtutz Emblem Glyph. This drawing is similar to K1453 where a seated dwarf drinks from a hemispherical vessel while a lord looks on. In both scenes the dwarves wear cloth headwraps while the lords wear long-eared zoomorphic headdresses. On K1453 we can clearly see that the headdress is a rabbit. When rendering an object being passed between two figures, the Maya show the object held in the hand of the figure who is offering the object. It is likely then that Drawing 68 depicts the lord handing the vessel to the dwarf while K1453 shows a similar scene after the vessel as been transferred.

This painting, as well as others like it, demonstrates that the images in Naj Tunich have thematic correspondences with depictions on Maya vases.⁸¹ Stone writes that the images depicted in Naj Tunich “resonate with the pictorial repertory of vase painters. . . The caves’ figurative paintings are largely concerned with ritual performance, not as pomp and circumstance but as lived experience.”⁸² When we compare the satirical dances scenes on K1549 and K3463 with those of Naj Tunich, it is interesting to note that all of them occur within proximity to pottery hand drums and contain bawdy content.

Another vessel depicting a pottery hand drum is K206. In this scene a prisoner is tied to a scaffold while another figure prods either his groin or lower abdomen. Directly behind this figure is a musician playing a flute and a pottery hand drum. There are four other musicians in this scene. One plays a flute and rattle, one plays a *pax*, and two play flutes.

⁸¹ Stone, Andrea Joyce. *Images from the Underworld*, 1995:154

⁸² Stone, Andrea Joyce. *Images from the Underworld*, 1995:154

Additionally, if the pottery hand drum is understood to be primarily used in private interior settings, then when it is depicted as played in public as part of a bawdy and entertaining dance between a couple, we can imagine the audience to perceive that the action is actually taking place in such a more private setting. That is to say, instead of building an elaborate set for the dancers to dance in, the music itself could set the scene. Once again, we see a specific instrument used in a specific setting, for a specific purpose. Future research will show whether the pottery hand drum has more associations than those listed above.

CERAMIC DRUM:

These drums are nearly identical to the pottery hand drum and are often categorized as larger versions of them, but they contain marked organological differences. The most apparent of these is that ceramic drums possess a thick, accentuated lip at the head of the drum whereas pottery hand drum possess a thin lip. In addition, the settings ceramic drums are found in vary from settings featuring the pottery hand drum. K1563 is one of these scenes that we have already discussed shows nine figures seated or kneeling in various positions. K1082 is the other scene (Figure 18). It depicts four pairs of figures. The pair on the far left are musicians. One plays a flute and rattle while the other plays a flute and ceramic drum. To their right, a musician plays a shell trumpet as a warrior stands. The four remaining figures are all warriors. Each figure is elaborately attired or painted and the bodies and body parts of captives litter the composition. These are complex scenes involving warfare and ritual ceremonies and are

among the few to depict a ceramic drum.

CERAMIC FLUTE:

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the archaeological record contains several ceramic flutes. They do not appear with as great of frequency as do ceramic whistles and ocarinas, but they have been more frequently found than the majority of instruments discussed in this chapter (with the possible exception of the pottery hand drum). Despite their frequency in the archaeological record, they are rarely depicted. Three vessels, however, do clearly show ceramic flutes.

One is K206, mentioned above. The other two are K4628 and K4629. These are both tripod vessels from Honduras and portray very similar scenes. On K4628, two pairs of jaguar-masked performers dance before an enthroned ruler while playing a flute in one hand and elaborately decorated rattles in the other. K4629 portrays one pair of musicians wearing jaguar headdresses playing flutes and rattles in front of a seated lord. They play while leaning over an offering. The other scene on K4629 shows another seated ruler. In front of him a jaguar-masked musician holds a flute and rattle as he too leans over an offering. Capping both compositions is an alternating mat band denoting authority and the four enthroned lords are strikingly similar. The main difference between the scenes on the two vessels is what the flute players hold in their off hands; some hold rattles while others hold fans.

Another vessel that depicts flutes is in the Chama style. K6995 shows two identical figures wearing armadillo masks and posing in a manner most often associated

with ball players. In their right hands they play flutes while their left hands play rattles. With the exception of this last vessel, all of the scenes involving ceramic flutes contain elements of a ritual involving the giving of offerings or of self-sacrifice. Since these scenes do not explicitly occur in interior settings they will not be emphasized in this work. It is interesting, however, to note the depictions of these activities as occurring in front of an elite building. In the archaeological record, these instruments are primarily found in connection with elite households. Perhaps what is shown, then, is a private ritual performed by lesser elites in front of a higher-ranking elite.

CHAMA STYLE VESSELS:

This study will not closely examine the Chama style vessels but there are some interesting features worth noting. The Chama style vases are known for their anthropomorphic, or masked, figures. Several of them also contain musicians. What is interesting is that in each scene, the same figure is shown to play the same instrument and they appear in the same order regardless of whether or not other figures are present.

K3040 can be considered to be the most basic of these scenes (Fig.12). From left to right in the rollout photograph we see an armadillo playing a *pax*, a rabbit playing a turtle carapace, and a deer playing a pair of rattles. Their attire is similar with only slight differences. This is the pattern seen on all other Chama vessels containing musicians with little variation. K3041 shows the same three figures while a fourth is between the rabbit and deer. While the fourth plays no instrument, it appears to be clapping its hands.

K3332 shows what appears to be a dance line. At the front is the *pax* playing armadillo

while the rear is taking up again by the deer with rattles. Between the two are five other anthropomorphic figures in various poses suggesting dance.

K5104 combines the elements of the previous vessels. There is an armadillo with a *pax* in front. Directly behind it is the rabbit playing a turtle carapace while, once again, the deer is on the far right with the rattles. Between the rabbit and deer are four other figures, including a jaguar. These figures are again in poses suggesting dance. In these scenes, the order these musicians appear in ties them to depictions of bands found in other vessels as well as in murals such as those at Bonampak. I will discuss this standardized order of musicians further in Chapter 2.

CONCLUSION:

The above mentioned instruments by no means constitute an exhaustive list of the various instruments possessed by the Maya. They only touch on those depicted in painted scenes - yet from these initial observations we begin to see a pattern in the combinations of instruments portrayed in various scenes, what activities different instruments are generally associated with, and the tendency for depicting particular instruments more often than others. While instruments such as rattles and wooden trumpets prove to have been used in a wide array of circumstances, others like flutes, turtle carapaces, and rascas are more limited in their associations.

The following chapters will further examine the various contexts in which instruments are portrayed in palatial settings. The wooden trumpet, shell trumpet, turtle carapace, rattles, rattle gourd, small drum, *pax*, ceramic drum, and friction drum are the

only instruments portrayed in interior palace settings with three of them, the shell trumpet, ceramic drum, and friction drum, occurring only once. The multitude of ceramic flutes, whistles, and ocarinas as well as pottery hand drums do not appear in interior settings at all.

Chapter 2: Setting the Palatial Stage:

Maya art is largely homogeneous despite differences owing to different times and places.⁸³ Maya art consisted of a complex symbolic language that held important social functions. Mostly commissioned by the ruling elite, it communicated their messages and furthered their social and political functions.⁸⁴ While individual artists are identifiable due to variations in style, they employed similar artistic forms in the interest of communicating cultural information. Schele and Miller write that,

If, in order to express personal choice or aesthetic judgment, an artist changed the form of a temple so that it looked like a residential building; or altered the way a god was drawn so that its attributes could no longer be discerned; or invented new emblems to mark the rank of a king or lineage head, then the purpose of this art would have been lost. Because of its social function, Maya iconography was of necessity conservative.⁸⁵

This semi-uniformity gives the modern scholar a breadth of contextual associations with which to interpret Maya art. When examining scenes on polychrome vessels, it aids in identifying where the scene is taking place, who the participants are, and what type of activity is occurring. Architectural features, furnishings, and other objects depicted not only illustrate a physical setting, but can also give clues as to what is happening. The positions of figures within a scene and their relationship to other figures, as well as how

⁸³ Spinden, *A Study of Maya Art*, 1975: 16

⁸⁴ Schele and Miller, *The Blood of Kings*, 1986: 41

⁸⁵ Schele and Miller, *The Blood of Kings*, 1986: 41

they are attired, can tell us about their role in the scene or their social rank. This chapter explores these conventions as they relate to palace settings and musicians in general while chapter three will consist of a more in depth analysis of the particular vessels examined in this study.

THE PALACE SETTING:

Classic Maya court society was sophisticated and complex. Palace structures were the administrative center for Maya cities. They were the setting for many rituals of courtly life including the reception of visiting nobles, installing new rulers, presenting tribute, displaying captives, and ritual bloodletting.⁸⁶ Reents-Budet writes that these social and political events and religious rites were “essential to the maintenance of Classic-period society and its administrative structure and ideological foundations.”⁸⁷

The majority of historical scenes painted on ceramic vessels pertain to activities related to the royal court and nobility. Archaeological data confirms that these events took place in and around palaces. Palatial structures are visually represented through a combination of supporting platforms, the building’s floor, medial molding, upper zone, interior curtains, benches or thrones, and large cushions. These representations correspond to actual architectural elements found at various archaeological sites with the exception of elements that are perishable.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Schele and Miller, *The Blood of Kings*, 1986: 133

⁸⁷ Reents-Budet, “Classic Maya Concepts of the Royal Court”, 2001: 213

⁸⁸ Reents-Budet, *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period*, 1994:199

The furnishing of interior spaces can also give clues as to what type of event is taking place. Reents-Budet describes three different kinds of seats represented in palace interiors: an attached bench, a freestanding bench, and a cushion. The attached bench is a stone-and-stucco architectural element that is permanently connected to the building's floor and wall. It is a common feature of court buildings at most sites and many were painted red or red and white (Fig. 1).⁸⁹ The freestanding bench is most often depicted with flanged edges and carved legs and were painted a dark color. They were most likely made of wood and other perishable materials. These portable seats could be used both indoors and outdoors.⁹⁰ The third type of seat was a large cushion covered in jaguar pelt, cloth, and other decorations. These were portable and were set directly on the floor or served as backrests.⁹¹ The distinction between these types of seats is important to this study because it may shed light on the events taking place in these images. In discussing these forms of seats, Reents-Budet writes that:

Mayanists have conjectured that different kinds of regal seats convey sociopolitical messages; however, the present analysis suggests that they relate instead to the type of event or rite being recorded and not necessarily to the social composition or political structure of the royal court. Except for a few instances, these benches do not correlate with the architectural style at the site where the vessel was created or with the locus of the painted scene.⁹²

⁸⁹ Reents-Budet, "Classic Maya Concepts of the Royal Court", 2001: 203-204

⁹⁰ Reents-Budet, "Classic Maya Concepts of the Royal Court", 2001: 203-204

⁹¹ Reents-Budet, "Classic Maya Concepts of the Royal Court", 2001: 203-204

⁹² Reents-Budet, "Classic Maya Concepts of the Royal Court", 2001: 204

Some scholars consider the meaning of these visual elements in terms of socio-political power while others relate them to the more general social scripts of ritual and rite.

Royal seats are not the only clue as to what event may be occurring. Iconic elements shown on architectural piers also provide insight.⁹³ Motifs such as skybands and quatrefoils on architectural features can denote that the supernatural quality of an activity was being emphasized over its historical context, particularly in images that had both religious and political implications. Skybands mimic iconic signs found on accession houses such as House E of the Palace at Palenque, the Castillo at Xunantunich, as well as some stelae recording royal accession at such as Piedras Negras stelae 25.⁹⁴

The quatrefoil, like those found on the piers in K8947, is the most common example. During the Early Preclassic the quatrefoil was associated with caves, portals, and the open maws of animals (Fig. 9). Caves were seen as entrances to the realm of the supernatural and were often depicted as quatrefoils. An image of a ruler seated within the open maw cave, for instance, signifies his relationship between the supernatural and natural realms.⁹⁵ The quatrefoil is an artistic motif that symbolizes the ‘portal’ into the supernatural realm through which ritual specialists must travel. It is also a means by which gods and deified ancestors can be brought into the human realm.⁹⁶

Another crucial element to consider are objects such as gourds filled with fermented beverages (K1453), cache vessels (K1645), war banners (K4120), tribute

⁹³ Reents-Budet, “Classic Maya Concepts of the Royal Court”, 2001: 205

⁹⁴ Reents-Budet, “Classic Maya Concepts of the Royal Court”, 2001: 208

⁹⁵ Guernsey, “A consideration of the quatrefoil motif in Preclassic Mesoamerica.” *Quatrefoils*, RES 57/58 Spring/Autumn 2010: 76

⁹⁶ Reents-Budet, “ Classic Maya Concepts of the Royal Court”, 2001: 209

bundles (K5233), offerings (K6316), and enema apparatuses (K530). These objects, along with architectural features, furnishings, and iconic motifs play significant roles in the scenes they in which they are depicted and will be further discussed along with the particular vessels in question, as we will see shortly.

POSITION OF MUSICIANS:

A common aspect in many court societies is the restricted access to a ruling individual. Social hierarchies are made apparent by the proximity of an individual to a ruler. Houston and Stuart refer to this concept as, ‘hierarchical space’.⁹⁷ They define it as, “relative proximity to the holy lord” and write that it, “clearly existed among the Classic Maya-at least insofar as we can extract evidence from Maya art”.⁹⁸ One may infer a figure’s function in, and importance to, a particular scene through their proximity to the dominant figure and other individuals in the composition.⁹⁹ The scenes depicted on Maya polychrome vessels show musicians alongside essential members of court society indicating their degree of influence. The function and importance of musicians in Maya court society emerges from their physical relationships with other represented figures.

When depicted in palace scenes, musicians are most often represented as the furthest figures from the throne, ruler, or primary figure. Dancers, tribute bearers, captives, visiting elite, and other court attendants are always positioned closer than musicians are (K530, K1210, K1453, K1563, and K6984). There are examples of

⁹⁷ Houston and Stuart, “Peopling the Classic Maya Court”, 2001: 63

⁹⁸ Houston and Stuart, “Peopling the Classic Maya Court”, 2001: 63

⁹⁹ Reents-Budet, “ Classic Maya Concepts of the Royal Court”, 2001:213

musicians placed directly next to dancing figures (K6984, and K8947) but not when the dancer is a member of the ruling elite. A musician is rarely, if ever, directly next to a ruling figure. This is true even when the scene's primary participants are a ruler and accompanying musicians. K6313 depicts a ruler preparing to dance (Fig. 19). A musician playing a rattle gourd stands in front of him. In between them, however, is a vertical band of glyphs and an offering bowl. This compositional technique makes a clear dividing line separating the ruler from the musician.

Other vessels also show a similar use of objects and text as a means of separation. In K5233 there are three figures: a dancing noble and two musicians (Fig. 8). The rod of the friction drum player visually interacts with the feathers from the noble's headdress, but the musician is not directly next to him; a mirror rests on the floor between them and a single glyph hangs in the air between them. In K1645, the infant in the basket separates the two resting musicians from the enthroned figures (Fig. 10).

K3046 focuses on two figures; one holds an offering bowl. The other dances in front of the bowl. The two figures are separated by vertical lines of text (Fig.20). Behind the dancer are several rattle players. The lower part of the composition is broken up into two ground lines reminiscent of a stair. The dancer is on the upper ground line. One rattle player kneels directly behind the dancer but is spatially separated by his position on the lower ground line. The rattle player behind him is on the upper ground line with the dancer but is separated by two glyphs.

It appears that the only exceptions to this rule of separation are the dance scenes on K1549 and K3463 (Fig.4, Fig. 14). As discussed in chapter one, these scenes depict a

very particular type of bawdy satirical dance intended as public entertainment, not as part of a ritual ceremony.¹⁰⁰ In addition, the figures on these vessels are not members of the ruling elite but are performers.¹⁰¹ This raises an interesting question: are the musicians allowed to be directly next to the primary figures because they are not rulers, or because they are not participating in a ritual ceremony? The answer to this question may also explain why musicians are separated from primary figures in ritual ceremonies in general. I will return to this question in Chapter 4.

Hierarchical space not only occurs between musicians and other members of court society, but also occurs between musicians. Musicians appear in fixed sequences according to the instrument they play. Miller first observed this in relation to the Bonampak murals. She writes that,

An examination of all the known processions (of musicians) argues that the order of the musical band shown in the Bonampak murals is in fact the standard that all other bands meet. Two principles of the musical band emerge. First, the trumpets are independent, often appearing alone or separated. More important, the procession has a constant order: rattles, *huehuetl* (*pax*), turtleshells, trumpets. It is possible that the positioning of musicians was as standard among the Maya as formal orchestral order today.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Stone. *Images from the Underworld*, 1995:144-145

¹⁰¹ Stone. *Images from the Underworld*, 1995:144-145

¹⁰² Miller, *The Murals of Bonampak*, 1986: 85

Miller also points out that trumpets are frequently separated from the rest of an ensemble or are played independently.¹⁰³ Trumpets are also sometimes depicted with their backs to the rest of the band to show their independence (Fig. 2). Other times, only the trumpet is represented in a scene while the musician is not depicted at all such as in K6294. Only one other musician is shown with his back to the rest of the band, the musician who plays the strange trapezoidal drum on K4120 (Fig. 5).

Miller points out that processional scenes on Chama style vases repeat this order.¹⁰⁴ The rollout photographs done by Kerr make it appear as though the *pax* leads the ensembles, but in fact it does not (Fig. 12). Since these images were painted on round vessels, the break between an image's beginning and end is not always clear cut. By adjusting this boundary, the procession of musicians could begin instead with the rattle players, followed by the *pax*, and turtle carapace. This is more likely as the vast majority of musical ensembles follow this order.

There are three main explanations for this standardized positioning of musicians: it denotes that a hierarchy of instruments was prevalent in Maya society, for practical acoustical purposes, or a combination of the two. I will come back to this point in further detail in Chapter 4.

¹⁰³ Miller, *The Murals of Bonampak*, 1986: 85

¹⁰⁴ Miller, *The Murals of Bonampak*, 1986: 85

GLYPHIC ASSOCIATIONS:

A number of titles attributed to musicians systematically appear in the Bonampak murals.¹⁰⁵ Houston and Taube identified the logograph *k'a-yo-ma*, 'singer' as one of these. They describe it as a youthful head whose mouth is open. From his mouth comes a speech scroll which ends in a flower. This title accompanies musicians, often those shaking rattles.¹⁰⁶ This title also has associations with high-ranking members of the elite. Houston and Taube write that, "At Bonampak this is a title of subsidiary figures at court, but an interesting detail emerges from an example at Tikal. This title clearly refers to a Late Classic ruler of the city, suggesting that singing counted as an important accomplishment of royalty".¹⁰⁷

In Room 1 the title *ah na:ab* occurs twice in relation to the trumpet players. This is a courtly title frequently associated with painting, daubing, or dressing.¹⁰⁸ Most commonly, it refers to the dressing of the king.¹⁰⁹ In their description of this title, Schele and Miller write that,

The title *ah na:ab* attached to several of the musicians, attendants, and performers in the Bonampak murals is occasionally carried by kings and is common among lesser nobility. . . Reading the components of the glyph literally, *ah na:ab* also means "he of the water-lily". The water lily headdress worn by some of the

¹⁰⁵ Houston and Stuart, 2011: 68

¹⁰⁶ Houston, Steve and Karl Taube. "An Archaeology of the Senses: Perception and Cultural Expression in Ancient Mesoamerica" *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* Vol. 10 (2), April 2000: 276

¹⁰⁷ Houston, Steve and Karl Taube. "An Archaeology of the Senses: Perception and Cultural Expression in Ancient Mesoamerica" *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* Vol. 10 (2), April 2000: 276

¹⁰⁸ Miller, "The Boys of the Bonampak Band", 1988: 319

¹⁰⁹ Stuart, personal communication, 2013

musicians and performers may be a costume element that indicates their title. The relatively greater numbers of the *ah na:ab* title may indicate that it held lower status.¹¹⁰

Another title found in Room 1 is *baah tz'am*.¹¹¹ This title, identified by Zender, refers to someone who is in front of the throne both physically and metaphorically; more specifically, it refers to a jester or court performer.¹¹² The musician last in the procession is named by three glyphs (Fig. 22). The first glyph is a T586 compound, the third is a T601 compound, and the second is illegible. T601 appears in two other places in the Bonampak murals, leading Miller to suspect it is a patronymic in the Bonampak area.¹¹³ If it is a patronymic, its association with this figure is particularly telling and this figure deserves a more detailed discussion.

There is debate as to the role of this individual in the Bonampak Band. Miller puts forth two possibilities: either he is a time keeper, or he is playing a musical instrument. Looper writes that this final individual plays a pottery hand drum, though I find this unlikely. In addition to the object in question, the figure holds two other objects, one in each hand. In every image where a pottery hand drummer plays a second instrument, it is only with one hand while the other is used for playing the drum. In addition, although the object is held in a similar fashion to a pottery hand drum, the shape of the object is inconsistent with archaeological specimens or other depictions of pottery hand drums.

¹¹⁰ Schele and Miller, *The Blood of Kings*, 1986: 138

¹¹¹ Miller, Mary and Claudia Brittenham. *The Spectacle of the Late Maya Court: Reflections on the Murals of Bonampak*, 2013:79

¹¹² Stuart, personal communication, 2013

¹¹³ Miller, *The Murals of Bonampak*, 1986: 43

This would also place an instrumentalist behind the trumpet players, which is incongruent with the standard order of musicians in Maya bands noted by Miller. Finally, pottery hand drums are uncommon as part of larger ensembles. When we do see them, they are played with one hand while the other plays a flute or rattle. In addition, they are positioned in front of the ensemble with the rattle players (Fig.18, Fig. 21).

A third theory, and the one that I find most likely, is that this figure is a *holpop* or, ‘head of the mat’. They were the head singers and the keepers of musical instruments.¹¹⁴ In Tozzer’s discussion of titles of rank among the Maya, he quotes Cogolludo as writing, They have one principal singer who sets the key and teaches what is necessary to sing. This man they venerate and respect and give him a special place in the church and at the feasts and assemblies. He is called *holpop*, and it is to his care that the drums or *tunkuls* are entrusted as well as the other musical instruments, such as trumpets, sea conch shells, and other such things which they use.¹¹⁵

Bourg argues that the *holpop* in this scene is the musician who plays the *pax* but I disagree (Fig. 11).¹¹⁶ Bourg comes to this conclusion in three ways: that the *pax* is the most audible instrument in the group, that he is separate from the rest of the musicians, and that his headdress is the most elaborate.¹¹⁷ He asserts that the final figure cannot be the *hol pop* because this figure plays a hand drum that could not compete in volume with the *pax*. As I have shown however, the final figure is not playing a hand drum.

¹¹⁴ Roys, *The Titels of Ebtun*, 1939:46

¹¹⁵ Tozzer, *Landa’s Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatan*, 1941:93

¹¹⁶ Bourg, *Ancient Maya Music now with Sound*, 2005: 36

¹¹⁷ Bourg, *Ancient Maya Music now with Sound*, 2005: 37

While the *pax* player is depicted as separate from the rest of the ensemble, it is only because he is not processing. I attribute this to the difficulties involved in porting around such a large instrument. Miller argues that the *pax* player has already traveled as far as he is going to and has set up a stationary position towards the procession's final destination.¹¹⁸ The two trumpet players and the final figure are also separated from the rest of the ensemble. Therefore the separate nature of the *pax* player cannot denote his role as the *hol pop*.

The third reason for Bourg's identification of the *pax* player as *hol pop* is that Bourg views his headdress as the most elaborate, as it features a fish biting a water lily. This is a good argument. However, the final figure also wears an elaborate headdress and his loin cloth is decorated with completion signs.¹¹⁹ To bring us back to our original discussion, he is also marked by a title that may be a patronymic of the Bonampak area. Roys describes the office of the *hol pop* as the head of the most important lineage of a town.¹²⁰ Therefore, marking the final figure with a patronymic title could be a reference to his lineage and by extension his role as *hol pop*. A definitive account of the role and function of this final figure waits future research. This demonstrates however, that determining social ranks of musicians is a difficult task that must take into consideration a multitude of factors.

Hol pop is not the only title associated with musicians that confers a high social status. In Room 2 of the Bonampak murals, Miller identifies a chubby man standing on

¹¹⁸ Miller, *The Murals of Bonampak*, 1986: 83

¹¹⁹ Miller, *The Murals of Bonampak*, 1986: 84

¹²⁰ Roys, *The Titels of Ebtun*, 1939:7

the top step playing a shell trumpet (Fig. 23).¹²¹ He is marked with the T1004b glyph. This is also the final glyph in the title of the woman directly in front of him. Schele and Miller refer to this as a *sajal* glyph. *Sajal* is a title designating governors and war chiefs. Schele and Miller state that the figure's "Simple dress suggests that he is a servant".¹²² We will see in the next section however, that this style of dress was common among musicians.

ATTIRE OF MUSICIANS:

As that a figure's social status or function may be drawn in part from their positional proximity to the ruler. Another way to interpret social rank and/or function is through attire. There were a multitude of designs and motifs, some of which had specific meanings associated with them. When one examines images of musicians, certain commonalities of dress become apparent. The majority of musicians depicted in Maya art may be categorized as wearing one of two styles of dress. I have termed these the White Standard Style and the Chama Procession Style.

This section will describe the basic forms these two styles take, as well as discuss images where the musicians' attire falls outside of one of these two categories. The purpose of this investigation is to determine if the attire a musician wears is an indication of the role the musician plays in a given event, or, if certain attire is attributed to specific

¹²¹ Miller, *The Murals of Bonampak*, 1986: 56

¹²² Schele and Miller, *The Blood of Kings*, 1986: 138

activities or locations. This information will broaden our understanding of the ways in which the Maya incorporated music into their ceremonies.

WHITE STANDARD STYLE:

The white standard style is the most common style of dress seen on musicians. It is seen on musicians in paintings on vessels and murals as well as cave drawings. The musicians wearing this style are depicted in a variety of contexts such as dance, processions, taking part in the presentation of tribute, ballgames, and scenes involving sacrifice. While many musicians wear a variation of this style, the basic features remain the same. The basic form of the style consists of a white hip and loin cloth, a white cloth headdress, being unshod, and wearing little to no jewelry. The majority of musicians who wear this are pottery hand drum players and wooden trumpet players.

The attire worn by the pottery hand drummers depicted on K1549, K3463, and Naj Tunich Drawings 40 and 27 as well as the wooden horn players on K4120, K6984, K8818, K2781, and the North Wall of Room 3 at Bonampak are all similarly attired (Fig.24). Also similarly dressed are all of the musicians in the ballgame scene on K5435. Andrea Stone notes that Maya art in general tends to lavish great attention on the costumes and regalia worn by represented figures (Stone, 1995; 131). In these circumstances however, the musicians' attire is relatively plain.

The regalia of the figures at Naj Tunich are very uniform. They are all barefoot and none of them wear anklets. Their garments are mostly limited to white loincloths and hipcloths. This uniformity also extends to their headdresses. The upper end of their

headwraps hangs down in one or more long flaps. It is more difficult to make out the attire of the musicians depicted in Drawing 27. It appears as though the front figure wears only a loincloth and has a headdress similar to those in Drawing 40 while the middle figure appears to have a tasseled headdress similar to those in Drawings 11 and 28.

The jewelry of the Naj Tunich figures is modest with circular ear flares being the most common adornment though a few wear necklaces. Many fine pieces of jewelry left for offerings have been found in the cave (Stone, 1995; 132-134). Based on this evidence we can describe the typical musician at Naj Tunich as wearing an undecorated loin cloth and hip cloth, a cloth headwrap with long flaps which is tied with a band, circular ear flares, and being unshod. According to Stone, the slight variation in costumes amongst these figures shows little evidence of rank distinction. The exception may be in Drawing 27 where the front figure in a group of three is larger, which suggests status distinctions within the group.¹²³

While the cloth headwrap may convey information about social status, as it does with other contemporary Maya groups, at Naj Tunich they appear to be a more generalized form of ritual attire and to be aligned with ritual performance. Stone compares the headwrap and earflares to a group of opossum musicians depicted by Taube.¹²⁴ Stone also points out that this attire is often the same attire worn by God N in his role as world bearer.

¹²³ Stone. *Images from the Underworld*, 1995:134

¹²⁴ Stone. *Images from the Underworld*, 1995: 134-135

Continuing this uniform dress on Kerr vessels are the pottery hand drummers depicted on K1549 and K3463, all five musicians on K4120, the three musicians on K6984 (Fig.4, Fig14, Fig.5, Fig.6.). The drummer on K1549 wears a white loin cloth and hip cloth, white cloth head wrap, circular ear flares, necklace, bracelet, and is unshod. The two drummers on K3463 also wear white loin and hip cloths, circular ear flares, a necklace, anklets, and are also unshod. Their attire varies slightly, however, from the musicians in the previous example. The musician playing the lamp-glass style drum has a red and adorned cloth head wrap and wears a bracelet.

The musician playing the pedestal-vase style drum on K3463 wears no bracelet and his red head wrap is unadorned. In the previous discussion on instrument types and scene categories it was noticed that the attire of the musicians on K4120 and K6984 are very similar. The dress of the musician in K3051 varies greatly, however, from the other musicians even though he too plays a pottery hand drum. The explanation for this appears straightforward. In this scene, the musician is also the primary male dancer of the scene. His role as a dancer is his accentuated attribute in this scene and may account for why he is dressed dissimilarly. The musician who plays the *pax* drum on K3009 again is depicted wearing a white loincloth, circular ear flares, a necklace, and is unshod. He is also adorned with a white hip cloth but it is decorated as is his head wrap. His head wrap appears more complex as compared to musicians mentioned previously, yet his basic dress remains the same. He wears no bracelet or anklet.

Pottery hand drummers are not the only ones to be dressed in this manner. Musicians who play wooden trumpets are also frequently depicted in the White Standard

style of dress. There are three wooden trumpet players on K4120 who are dressed this way. What is visible of all of the other musicians suggests they are as well (Fig.5). The hip cloth of the trumpet player in K1210 is also white, he is unshod, and wears little jewelry. The main difference in his dress is his adorned black headdress. His companion trumpet player, however, dons a red hip cloth and wears a headdress similar to those found on the anthropomorphic figures on the Chama style vessels. K3092 also depicts a wooden trumpet player with a white hip cloth and an adorned black headdress. On K6984 three wooden trumpet players kneel and play. Like so many other musicians, they wear white loin and hip cloths, white cloth headwraps, are unshod, and their jewelry is plain; though this may be an issue of preservation and not how the jewelry originally appeared.

Another scene in which musicians wear the white standard style is the ballgame on K5435 (Fig.25). In this scene a possible orator or singer, a musician playing the rattles, and a third musician playing an uncertain instrument all wear the white standard dress. K8818 is an interesting image. In this scene we see two wooden trumpet players dressed nearly identically to each other but not in the white standard dress. However, behind them is a third figure who is dressed exactly the same as so many other musicians. However, he holds no instrument, nor is there any indication of oration or singing from him. He stands with his arms firmly crossed about his chest. But from his head wrap there springs a flower. This, combined with his attire, clearly associate him as a musician even though his instrument and musical purpose in this scene are uncertain. If we follow Miller's standard order of musicians, we may conclude that this figure may have functioned as a timekeeper due to his positioning behind the trumpet players.

Perhaps the most famous depictions of wooden trumpets are found in the murals of Bonampak. In Room 3, the musical ensemble is depicted in two parts. The first is on the upper register of the north wall. This group is lead by a rattle player. Behind him is a figure, possibly a dwarf, born on a litter and playing a *pax*. The ensemble continues on the lower register of the north wall. Here we see five musicians. The first four have wooden trumpets, two play their trumpets, while the other two hold theirs. One of them turns to look back towards the fifth musician who may be playing a pair of rattles or who may be a time keeper.

The attire the wooden trumpet players wear shares the same basic form as the musicians above, with only slight variations. They wear white hip and loin cloths, white cloth headwraps with flaps that hang down, are unshod, and wear little to no jewelry. The exception is the musician bringing up the rear. His headdress is tall and red and he wears circular ear flares. This may denote this figure as a *hol pop*. In contrast, none of the twelve musicians in Room 1 wear the white standard style or even the same clothes as each other, nor do the trumpet players in the midst of the battle scene.

CHAMA PROCESSION STYLE:

Not every musician who plays the wooden trumpet is dressed in the white standard style. Examples of wooden trumpet players dressed differently are found in processions on a series of vessels that depict funeral processions as well as vessels painted in the Chama style. K0594, K5534, K6317, and K7613 are all variations on a theme but they all share the same basic template (Fig. 27, Fig.28, Fig. 29, Fig. 30). In

each scene we see a figure borne on a litter while a dog follows underneath. The figure is accompanied by a retinue, including a group of musicians. In three of the scenes there is a shell trumpet. In K7613 and K5534, the shell trumpet is carried on the back of the musician, while in 6317 it is being played. K7613, K5534, both depict figures carrying a jaguar-covered cushion throne. The number of wooden trumpets in each varies from one, to three, to four, with four being the more common. Though the dress of the trumpet players differs slightly from scene to scene, they are shown to be wearing almost identical outfits.

In all four of these images the hip and loin clothes are white and red, or orange, and are bordered either with fringe, or an alternating black and white pattern similar to the chevrons common to the Chama style. On vessels K5534 the musicians wear hats similar to the hunting hat that resembles a sombrero. The musicians on K0594 wear the same headgear that is found on the Chama anthropomorphic figures. This comes as no surprise as the vessel is bound top and bottom with Chama chevrons. The head wear on K7613 and K6317 are more interesting (Fig. 29, Fig. 30). They combine the styles from the above mentioned vessels. They wear the Chama style hat with a small hunting hat on top of it.

The anthropomorphic figures in the Chama vessels bear a marked resemblance to the previous group. When they are clothed, they all wear the same headdress. Their hip and loin cloths vary, but the basic form remains the same. This is most clearly seen in K3040 (Fig. 12). The armadillo *pax* player wears only a loin cloth with white and orange designs. The rabbit with the turtle carapace and deer with rattles both wear loin and hip

cloths in the same colors as the armadillo. On vessel K3041, the armadillo again wears only a loin cloth while the rabbit and deer wear both loin and hip cloths. These figures all wear only white. However, the cloth is marked with black bands and alternating black and white bands similar to those on found on the clothes of the musicians in the processions.

K3332 is unique in that the anthropomorphic figures are only depicted wearing hats. The armadillo wears a sombrero style hat, while the deer wears the hat found on the other Chama style vessels. K5104 also has differences from the previous scenes. While the armadillo still does not wear a loin cloth, he does wear a form of belt with jaguar spots on it (Fig. 31). Here too, the rabbit and deer are also devoid of hip cloths and possess jaguar spots on their loincloths. In addition, the deer wears a belt similar to the armadillo's; it is orange, with a single black spot on each section. The same form of belt worn by the armadillo is found on the flute players in ball pose depicted on K6995. This vessel is also a Chama style vessel and the flute players wear armadillo masks. The jaguar spots that appear on the musicians' clothes on K5104 are most likely attributed to the fact that this scene includes a dancing anthropomorphic jaguar.

A problem with analyzing dress by color on Chama vessels is that the Chama style vessels are primarily painted with only three colors to begin with. It is important because it is not only in these particular vessels that we see this color scheme or this scheme combined with jaguar spots and fringe. This same triad of colors is seen on musicians depicted in vessels outside of the Chama style.

K2781 is a scaffold sacrifice scene in which a band performs. There is a *pax* player, a rattle player, a musician playing the turtle carapace, and four wooden trumpet players (Fig. 2). What is visible of their attire clearly shows that they are wearing a variation of the white standard style combined with the chama procession style. Their headdresses are difficult to discern but at least the musician playing the turtle carapace wears a white cloth headwrap. Each musician dons a white spotted hip cloth with fringe and a white loin cloth with tips colored a red or orange. In addition, the wooden trumpet player furthest from the scaffold wears a Chama style hat.

The basic form of dress for the Chama procession style then is a white loin/and or hip cloth painted with red (or orange), that is bordered either by fringe, black and white designs or both, and that they wear one of three forms of hats: the hunting hat, a chama style hat, or the two together.

OUTLIERS:

As previously mentioned there are some musicians whose dress does not match either of the white standard style nor the Chama procession style. Generally in each case, they bear some form of resemblance to one or the other, diverge too significantly to warrant being placed into a category proper.

The first of these is K1563 (Fig. 32). In this scene the ceramic drummer and rattle player both wear white loin and hip cloths which are decorated similarly to those on the Chama procession style K3041, but their headdresses are vastly different from any other depiction of a musician (Fig.33). They are dressed identically to each other however, and

the headdresses match the rattles. The second example is the resting drummer and turtle carapace players in K1645 (Fig.10). The vessel itself is black and white save for red bands along the top and bottom so we have no color to judge from. The style of dress these two are wearing bears no resemblance to the previously mentioned musicians. The turtle carapace player wears a loincloth and girdle and appears to be wearing a form of a cowl or short cape. The drummer is likewise dressed in a loincloth but wears a long feather 'necklace' that reaches almost to the floor as he bends forward.

Another example is that of the musicians in both groups on K3007 (Fig. 34). Though we again have no color to judge from, it is obvious from the patterns on the hip and loin cloths that the four musicians seated on the bottom left are not dressed alike. Their ear-spools seem to be the only thing they have in common. The two musicians above and to their right do have some similarities to each other in terms of their capes, headdresses, and ear-spools but their necklaces and hip clothes are different.

In Room 1, Structure 1, at Bonampak, twelve musicians are arranged along the north, east, and south walls. They form a processional line which begins with five rattle players. Positioned behind them, and apparently stationary, is a *pax*-drummer. Next come three musicians playing turtle carapaces, followed by two wooden trumpet players (Fig.35).¹²⁵ Separating the two trumpet players from the rest of the band is a group of six figures in exotic costumes.¹²⁶ Behind the trumpet players is one last individual. Miller

¹²⁵ Looper, *To Be Like Gods*, 2009:67

¹²⁶ Miller, *The Murals of Bonampak*, 1986: 84

refers to the group of musicians in Room 1 as the 'Bonampak Band'. She describes their dress as follows:

The Bonampak Band is led by five rattle players, followed by a drum player, and then three turtle shell players. These nine musicians wear similar costumes, variations on a single theme, like the white robes of the fourteen large lords of the upper register. No two figures wear identical costumes, but together they form a group. The basic outfit includes a hide skirt, painted with designs that resemble those of polychrome vases, and a rolled hip cloth, draped like a sausage around the waist. Each of these musicians also wears a stiff white headdress, perhaps made of woven palm fiber or white straw. . . . (The two trumpet players) wear hip and loin cloths of almost identical coloration. . . . Behind the trumpeters is a single individual. . . . His green loincloth is decorated with glyphic completion signs, as if to describe his position in the procession.¹²⁷

Though the color of the first nine musicians' hat may be white, they are not the same form of white cloth headwrap worn by the musicians in the white standard style. Again, none of the musicians are wearing identical outfits.

K8947 and K530 are very interesting vessels. In each vessel there are three musicians, a rattle player, a *pax* player, and a turtle carapace player (Fig.9, Fig.36). In K530 they are at the far right of the composition and are depicted as rain beasts. They appear to be wearing skirts of jaguar hide, or made to look like jaguar hide, with fringed

¹²⁷ Miller, "Boys of the Bonampak Band", *Maya Iconography*, 1988: 320

edges and topped with a belt consisting of a skyband motif. This same motif marks the tail, or back of an earth monster in whose maws sits another rain beast wearing an identical skirt.

This same skirt is depicted on two individuals in K8947. This time, they are not musicians or rain beasts but are a costumed lord seated on a throne and his ‘attendant’ behind him. His attendant bears resemblances to God N and holds a dish with what appears to be a mask inside. The throne, which is decorated with quatrefoils, is resting on the back, or tail, of an earth monster. This time it is the group of musicians who find themselves within the maw. These musicians wear earrings similar to the Chama hats. They have loincloths which are adorned both front and back. These vessels will be discussed in greater detail in following chapters. Yet through the examples in this section we can see a variety of examples where musicians’ attire does not conform to either the white standard or Chama procession styles.

It is obvious then that not all musicians wear a standard form of dress, nor do musicians in the same band, or who play the same instruments, always wear identical outfits. In the case of the Bonampak murals, the difference in dress between groups is because the groups are performing in different circumstances. In Room 3, the band is stationary. They appear to be standing on a palatial terrace and playing as accompaniment to ceremonial dance.¹²⁸ The musicians in Room 1, however, are mobile; they are taking part in a grand procession.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Looper, *To Be Like Gods*, 2009:72

¹²⁹ Miller, *The Murals of Bonampak*, 1986:82.

When we take into consideration all of the examples of musicians wearing similar dress we can draw some basic conclusions. In settings related to the palace, whether interior or exterior, wooden trumpet players wear the same standard dress that pottery hand drummers do. On the other hand, when they are portrayed in a processional context, their dress becomes more elaborate. We can imagine, then, that a wooden trumpet player would choose the appropriate clothes for the performance they were to be involved.

There are other possible explanations for such a frequency of similar dress among so many vessels and murals. According to Stone, the costumes shown on the figures in Naj Tunich downplay rank distinctions.¹³⁰ She postulates that this is in part due to the liminal nature of ritual participants:

It seems likely that the cloth head wrap marks an individual as a co-participant in ritual activity and has the dual connotations of ritual performance and group membership. Cloth head wraps unite individuals as equal members of a group, facilitating the temporary breakdown of rank that divided people in the normal course of community life. This uniform condition, a shedding of everyday social status, characterizes the liminal state in rites of passage. Indeed, cloth headwraps seem to be associated with liminality.¹³¹

Not only does this form of attire reference liminal states, as we shall see in the following chapter, the differences in attire also have important social functions.

Throughout this chapter we have seen various artistic conventions employed by ancient

¹³⁰ Stone. *Images from the Underworld*, 1995:146

¹³¹ Stone. *Images from the Underworld*, 1995:135

Maya artists and what those conventions can tell us about the activities of a particular scene as well as who the figures represented are and what their individual roles are. In the next chapter we will look more closely at palatial scenes involving musicians with these conventions in mind.

Chapter 3: Characteristics of Palatial Music

Maya art depicts musicians engaging in, or providing accompaniment to, a multitude of public activities. Musicians partake in dance performances, processions, sacrificial scenes, and ball games. Images depicting musicians in interior palace settings are equally varied. Musicians appear in dance performances, accession rituals, divination rites, and tribute offerings, as well as scenes involving supernaturals and dwarfs. To more closely compare these scenes I have broken them up into four categories: Dance, Supernatural, Dwarf, and Bundle/Tribute/Cache. This categorization is for ease of comparison and does not imply rigid borders between these types of scenes. Attempting to rigidly categorize these scenes would be an arduous task as many activities, especially dance, overlap categories. Nevertheless, some sort of classification aids in understanding various ways musicians function inside the palace.

DANCE:

For the ancient Maya, the relationship between dance and music was complex. Both dance and the musical performances that accompanied it were integral parts of Maya cultural history.¹³² Performers of ritual dance are often, though not always, depicted in the company of musicians.¹³³ In his study of dance in Maya society, Matthew Looer writes that, “The ancient Maya saw dance as a mirror of society, structured

¹³² Looer, “Ritual Dance and Music in Ancient Maya Society”. 2012: 103

¹³³ Stone, *Images from the Underworld* 1995; 144

according to class, age, and gender. Dances involving distinct supernatural human beings symbolized the ideals of civilized humanity”.¹³⁴ Looper states that the Maya possessed certain protocols that governed musical accompaniment to dance. He observes that the playing of musical instruments was typically a male gender role and that often ceramic drums and rattles were played by dancers while larger, more cumbersome instruments such as trumpets and large drums were played by individuals accompanying the dancers.¹³⁵

Though dance performances are most often imagined as public affairs, they were also performed in more intimate, interior settings. While scenes of dance performances are found in almost all of the categories in this chapter, there are three vessels that most distinctly focus on dance performance; K4120, K6984, and K8947.

K4120 depicts a large ensemble of musicians including three wooden trumpets and at least one rattle player (Fig. 5). The large trapezoidal vessel near the musicians has been identified as a type of drum. War banners are interspersed throughout the scene and one is included in the band of glyphs at the top of the vessel. Looper describes this scene as the dance of a God K impersonator before the enthroned lord named Yajawte' K'inich. Yajawte' K'inich is dressed for dance and his posture, leaning forwards towards the dancer, suggest that he is taking part in the dance.

This combination of instruments was capable of producing quite a large volume, especially considering the affects stone architecture has on amplifying sound. One could

¹³⁴ Looper, *To Be Like Gods*, 2009: 226

¹³⁵ Looper, *To be Like Gods*, 2009; 59

assume from the description of the instruments that the band would have played outdoors. This is not the case. The composition possesses curtains draped across the top denoting an interior palace setting. This shows that the choice of instrumentation for palatial settings was not decided on acoustical considerations alone. The particular combination of instruments shown here was chosen to fulfill a specific function and is seen in only one other scene. Wooden trumpets, rattles, and a large drum, in this case a *pax*, were the instruments that accompanied the dancers and standard-bearers in the murals of Bonampak Room 3. Though large drums, rattles, and wooden trumpets are seen together with additional instruments, to the author's knowledge, these are the only two depictions of a group of musicians playing solely these three instruments.

Looking more closely at these two scenes we see more similarities. In both scenes, the musicians are accompanied by at least one dancer and have battle standards displayed prominently among them. In both scenes the band is split in two parts. This is obvious in the Bonampak mural where the *pax* and rattler players are on a separate level from the trumpet players. It is less obvious in K4120. The band appears to be one group; however, the drummer turns away from the rest of the musicians leaving his back to them and thus denoting his separateness from them. Additionally, all of the musicians in both scenes are dressed in the White Standard Style and are positioned among the furthest away from the enthroned ruler.

What we see then is that although K4120 is in an interior setting and the Bonampak Room 3 mural takes place in an exterior setting, very similar scenes are depicted. It is likely then that this particular grouping of instruments was chosen for one

particular use alone. That is, the combination of a large drum, rattle, and wooden trumpets were only played together while accompanying a dance performance while battle standards were also present. To further illustrate this point we can compare these scenes to one other scene with musicians and battle standards.

K1082 also shows both musicians and war banners (Fig.18). This is quite a different scene however. Here we see four pairs of figures. Two pairs are comprised of warriors who wear elaborate backracks and headdresses and who carry battle standards. A third pair consists of one warrior and a musician painted in red, black, and white stripes with a long and detailed headdress. He plays a shell trumpet as he sacrifices blood from his genitals. The fourth pair are both musicians. Each plays a flute in one hand. In the other hand, one plays a large ceramic drum and the second plays a rattle. This is not a dance performance carried out before an enthroned ruler, however. This suggests that the combination of large drum, rattle, and wooden trumpets are reserved solely for such a performance.

Wooden trumpets themselves were played in a number of dance performances. K6984 depicts another scene involving Yajawte' K'inich (Fig.6). In this scene, we see three trumpeters who kneel as they play in accompaniment to the action of other figures. Dressed in the White Standard Style, they are positioned on the far left of the rollout photo, furthest from the throne. In front of them, a dancer performs. On the right of the composition, a woman holds a large basin as she stands behind the enthroned lord. He is seated on a throne with his gaze and hand gesture directed at two nobles. A large jar is set on the floor in front of him. The two nobles in front of him take up the middle of the

composition. The one directly in front of Yajawte' K'inich kneels with his head bowed. The noble behind him stands and points down towards him while looking at Yajawte' K'inich. The dancer dances behind the pointing noble and in front of the musicians.

Looper has suggested that this scene is part of a larger group of scenes that depict rituals attributed with accession celebrations. These rituals involve blood auto-sacrifice in combination with the ingestion of mind-altering substances through drinking, taking enemas, and/or smoking. Looper writes that this scene may record the gifting or dedication of a fermented liquid to be consumed later.¹³⁶ If this scene is part of a group of scenes depicting accession celebrations, interesting correlations could again be made with the Bonampak Murals. If we take into consideration the accession aspects of the Bonampak murals together with this vessel and with the dance performances of Room 3 and K4120 a similar narrative between these scenes emerges. However, at this point, the differences surpass the similarities and any such overarching correlations require more evidence.

The third scene in this dance category is quite different from the previous two. K8947 depicts a dancer on stilts performing before an enthroned ruler (Fig.9). The attire and hand gestures of the ruler suggest that he too is partaking in the dance. God C stands behind him next to the throne and extends a vessel containing a mask towards the ruler. Below the throne is a tribute bundle. Three musicians stand behind the stilted dancer. They play a pair of rattles, a *pax*, and a turtle carapace. As discussed in the previous chapter, their attire is strikingly different from musicians depicted elsewhere. On the

¹³⁶ Looper, *To Be Like Gods*, 2009: 142

column behind the throne are two quatrefoil motifs, marking this as a supernatural scene, though it could also be viewed as a completion glyph. In addition, the throne itself rests upon the body of a serpent marked with sky cave symbols. The serpent wraps around the composition behind the musicians who are depicted inside its open maw. The same serpent head is found on the headdress of the leading musician who plays the rattles, the stilted dancer, the enthroned ruler, and God C.

Depictions like the one above blur the line between history and the supernatural scene. This boundary is hard to distinguish in Maya art particularly where dance is involved. Looper writes that dance performances, “transformed participants into images of gods or spirits or allowed them to achieve altered states of consciousness. Thus representations often obscure the distinction between dancing humans and gods or other spirits”.¹³⁷ In addition, dance may have functioned as an invocation to the deities to witness the ritual taking place with accouterments such as music, costume, and movement, serving to draw and focus the gaze and hearing of the deities.¹³⁸

Looper also notes that musical instruments and other handheld objects signaled the significance of a performance and served to associate the dancers with celestial powers.¹³⁹ While many dance performances may be imbued with supernatural significance, some do more so than others. The next section explores them in more detail.

¹³⁷ Looper, “Ritual Dance and Music in Ancient Maya Society”, 2012: 90

¹³⁸ Looper, “Ritual Dance and Music in Ancient Maya Society”, 2012: 90

¹³⁹ Looper, “Ritual Dance and Music in Ancient Maya Society”, 2012: 90

SUPERNATURAL:

Supernatural scenes in Maya art are complex and can be difficult to interpret. For the purposes of this investigation, it can be difficult to determine if the scene is actually taking place in a palace setting at all. K0530 is one such scene yet due to some striking similarities with K8947 it is included here.

The bottom of the composition of K0530 is banded by sky band. On the left side of the rollout, this sky band culminates into the head of a cave maw in a similar fashion as K8947 (Fig. 36). Seated within the maw is a Chak figure. He wears the same fringed jaguar pelt hip cloth belted with a sky band as do the ruler and God C in K8947. In front of the main figure are thirteen other figures arranged in two registers, six on top, and seven on the bottom. To the far right are three musicians also depicted as Chaks.¹⁴⁰ All three are dressed with fringed jaguar pelt hip cloths with sky band belts. The musician in the upper register plays a pair of rattles. On the bottom register is one playing a small drum while the third plays a turtle carapace. The remaining ten figures are depicted in a series of pairs who are preparing for an enema ritual. If you read the scene from top to bottom, the musicians appear in the same order as they do elsewhere, rattle, drum, turtle shell.¹⁴¹

Comparing this scene to K8947 we see the same grouping of instruments used for different purposes, played by both human and supernatural. It is interesting to note though that these two scenes are the only two to show this grouping in conjunction with a

¹⁴⁰ Stuart, personal communication

¹⁴¹ Miller, 1988: 329, in *Maya Iconography*

cave maw and these particular hip-cloths. This particular grouping is common in the Chama procession scenes that also possess elements of the supernatural. The author has found no scene containing the combination of rattle, turtle carapace, and *pax* that is not a supernatural scene. At first it may appear then that we have another triad grouping denoting particular activity; however, we do see supernatural scenes involving musicians which do not contain this triad.

One of these scenes is K3007 (Fig. 34). It is a complex scene that depicts Gods performing to musical accompaniment.¹⁴² On the right side of the composition are two trees. Hun Batz and Hun Chuen climb in one of the trees while a snake perches on the other. A bat and a bird appear to hover in the air. Baby Jaguar, the Principal Bird deity, God 3, and God N also appear in the scene. A sky band with star glyphs caps much of the composition under a band of glyphs. Among the activity taking place is self sacrifice. The musicians on this vessel are divided into different groups.

In the bottom left corner of the roll-out is a group of three musicians. One plays the rattles, one a small drum, and the third plays a tunkal. Above and to the right is a fourth musician who plays a rattle with his left hand and a small drum with his right. (more information needed as to the activities of this scene) Unlike other scenes, the musicians here are the closest figures to the enthroned individual though they remain separated by architectural features.

K1645 is another supernatural scene which does not include the turtle carapace, drum, and rattle (Fig. 10). In this scene we see four figures positioned between two

¹⁴² Looper, *To be Like Gods*, 2009: 59

columns. Between the columns and capping the composition hang jaguar curtains. On the right of the rollout photo is a throne. Resting atop the throne are two bundled figures, the Patron of Pax, and G1 of the Palenque triad. On the left are two resting musicians. Associated with one is a turtle carapace, while the other is associated with a jaguar skin covered drum. Between the bundled figures and musicians is an infant in a cache vessel that rests on a tripod. The vessel the infant rests in is decorated with mat symbols denoting high authority. Below the tripod is a large deity brazier.

While it is difficult to tell the exact nature of the event depicted in this scene, it is clear that it has strong supernatural overtones. Robicsek and Hales describe it as being part of a series of vessels which depict the sacrifice of the Jaguar God. There are three groups of glyphs on this vessel. Commenting on the glyphs, Robicsek and Hales write:

The vertical text begins with the date 7 Cib 8 Kayab (which cannot occur). The third glyph is the verb for birth. The last two may denote the subject of the birth event. The group of two is ‘shell-fist’ and marks the event as occurring during the night. The third clause is a single glyph which could be the name of the infant.¹⁴³

The musicians are again depicted on the far side of the vessel from the enthroned figures. Like other musicians in supernatural scenes, they are not dressed in either the White Standard Style, or the Chama Procession Style.

¹⁴³ Robicsek and Hales, *The Maya Book of the Dead*, 1981:40

DWARF SCENES:

Dwarves in Maya art abound with liminal, supernatural associations. Despite these associations, the next two scenes contain more distinctly human or historical connotations than supernatural ones. This again shows the blurring of lines in Maya art that makes it so difficult to categorize.

In his discussion of Dwarf scene categories associated with shell trumpets, Bézy notes that Dwarves are viewed by the Maya as having a liminal nature, that they could serve as 'middle men' between the Maya Underworld and the world of the living.¹⁴⁴ In his description of K1453 he observes that,

K1453 provides an example of the manipulation of a lord's mirror. This representation depicts that mirror gazing (scrying or catoptromancy), takes place in the material world. This practice can be considered liminal and one of the means the Maya employed to cross the divide between the material and the supernatural worlds. In this example the presence of a played shell trumpet further strengthens its use as ritual.¹⁴⁵

To revisit this vessel's description from Chapter One, K1453 is the only scene that depicts a shell trumpet being played in a palace setting (Fig. 1). Reents-Budet

¹⁴⁴ Bézy, *Maya Shell Trumpets: A Musical Instrument as Ritual Implement*. MA Thesis. University of Texas At Austin, 2006:57

¹⁴⁵ Bézy, *Maya Shell Trumpets: A Musical Instrument as Ritual Implement*. MA Thesis. University of Texas At Austin, 2006:58

describes this scene as containing a divination ritual.¹⁴⁶ Seven individuals are portrayed in this scene. Honey ferments in pots as a seated lord gazes into a mirror. It is being held by a dwarf who is completely covered in blue paint while another dwarf drinks from a gourd.¹⁴⁷ Four other attendants are also depicted. On the left side of the composition, just barely peeking into the scene from behind an architectural feature, are three trumpets. One is a shell trumpet while the other two are wooden trumpets. Since we cannot see the musicians, we can say nothing of their attire but we may note that once more they are the furthest from the enthroned individual.

The other Dwarf scene is K1563 (Fig. 32). This vessel depicts nine seated and kneeling figures between a pair of columns. The figures all face towards a center pair of figures who face each other. In the center, a hunchback offers a vessel to an individual with a deer headdress. It appears as though he is about to take an enema. Behind him is the largest figure in the scene who gestures towards him. To the far right is a dwarf with an armadillo headdress. On the far left of the composition are two musicians. The first plays a pair of elaborately decorated rattles. The second plays a large ceramic drum similar in shape to the lamp-vase ceramic hand drum. Their attire neither is the White Standard Style, the Chama Procession Style, nor are they dressed similarly to any other figure in the scene but are nearly identical to each other. The musicians are also the figures positioned furthest away from the dominated figures in the scene.

¹⁴⁶ Reens-Budet, *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period*, 1994:213

¹⁴⁷ Bézy, *Maya Shell Trumpets: A Musical Instrument as Ritual Implement*, University of Texas At Austin, 2006:56

This scene is particularly interesting for several reasons. First, it is the only scene in an interior palace setting that obviously shows a ceramic drum. The *pax*, or miniature *pax*, is typically the drum we see in interior settings with the exception of K4120, which shows an unusual trapezoidal-shaped drum. Second, it is the only palace scene that shows a drum and rattles played in the absence of other instruments. But on the Chama Procession vessels it is the armadillo who plays a drum and the deer who plays the rattles. Here we have a drum and rattle while elsewhere in the scene we see a deer and armadillo. Since it is not the musicians donning the animal headdresses however, this appears to be more of a coincidence than anything else, though future research may prove otherwise.

The shape of this vessel is also markedly different from the majority of these vessels. The other ten vessels in this study are generally tall and cylindrical with a flat base. This vessel is shorter and has a serrated bottom. Most notably, it is a tripod vessel which may have had a rattle bottom. In addition to the row of text capping the composition, every figure except the musicians appears to have associated glyphs.

BUNDLE/TRIBUTE/CACHE:

K5233 is another unusual scene as it contains the only depiction of a friction drum in ancient Maya art and refutes the notion that the Maya did not possess chordophones (Fig. 8).¹⁴⁸ There are only three figures in this scene. On the far left, a ruler in an elaborate costume dances in front of a mirror. His loincloth and belt are covered in jaguar spots, as are the belts of the two musicians. The musician playing the *rasca* even

¹⁴⁸ Donahue, "Applying Experimental Archaeology to Ethnomusicology", 2

has the head of a jaguar on the back of his belt. Each of the three also has a water lily extending from their headdresses. Between the two musicians is a tribute bundle. A tribute bundle also appears on the top of each of the columns framing the scene.

The significance of jaguar motifs in conjunction with the friction drum cannot be overlooked. Hammond likens the sound of the friction drum with that of the roar of the jaguar.¹⁴⁹ This instrument is decorated with a large *ik'* symbol displayed prominently on its body. This symbol is commonly found on drums and rattles. It is one of the components of the glyph for drum, along with a jaguar hide, and often denotes sound. In this case, I believe that its primary function is to call attention to the sound of the instrument. The rascal also bears a symbol that indicates sound.¹⁵⁰ In addition, from the mouth of the dancer comes a sound emanation. It is clear then that sound is emphasized in this scene more so than any other interior palace scene.

What we have here then, is a scene in which all figures are similarly dressed in jaguar motif attire emphasizing sound related to the jaguar. This highly specialized performance utilizes specific costumes and instruments that aren't found in any other scene in the images sampled for this study. Yet even though the three figures are so closely related to each other, separation remains between the main figure and the musicians.

K6316 is another scene that involves a tribute bundle (Fig. 7). A ruler prepares himself to dance to the accompaniment of a *rasca* player. Behind him, a woman holds a

¹⁴⁹ Hammond, "Classic Maya Music: Part I: Maya Drums." *Archaeology* v. 25, 1972b:131

¹⁵⁰ Stuart, personal communication

vessel with either a mask or a decapitated head. In front of him is a tribute vessel on a raised platform that extends the entire length of the composition. A glyph denoting a tribute bundle is depicted clearly in the column of text separating the ruler and musician. Once more, the musician's attire does not match either the White Standard Style or the Chama Procession Style.

In both of these bundle/tribute scenes, we see a ruler preparing to dance or in the act of dancing and a rasca accompanies both. It would be easy to associate the rasca with a dance involving tribute or bundles, however we also see scenes of dance accompanied by rascas which have nothing to do with tribute or bundles. The two most prominent examples are K1549 and K3463 that were discussed at length in Chapter One.

While K1549 and K3463 have no features denoting the setting in which the dance takes place, K6316 and K5233 are distinctly in an interior palace setting and while the first two depict a satirical dance between a couple, a single ruler is the only dancer in the later pair. These are also the only times we see a rasca depicted. What we see then are two very different, yet very specific uses of this instrument. In other terms, based on the evidence we have thus far, we have a clear case for instrument specialization. The rasca is only played as accompaniment to a couple's satirical dance, or when a single ruler dances in connection with a tribute or bundle.

The final vessel in this category is K1728 (Fig. 37). A band of glyphs caps the composition with a curtain hanging just beneath them. An enthroned lord sits on the far right gesturing at the figures before him. Behind him is an attendant in a dance pose holding a smoking object. In front of the lord are two seated figures that speak and

gesture towards him. Behind these two figures is another figure attired similarly to the attendant behind the lord who also holds a smoking object. Finally, on the far left of the image is a musician standing still. He holds a wooden trumpet in one hand, while in the other he holds what appears to be a litter. His head is lowered and he gazes towards the bundles on the ground in front of him.

The text informs the reader that the seated figures are visiting dignitaries who have brought tribute to the enthroned lord. There are two glyphs touching the trumpet that also identifies where the visitors are from. We see a similar text and image layout on K5534 (Fig 28). K5534 is a Chama procession scene in which a glyph touching the lead trumpet denotes where the depicted procession is from. As discussed in Chapter One, wooden trumpets accompany all of the elite who are borne on litters in the Chama procession scenes. Having such a trumpet player with the associated glyphs depicted inside the palace denotes that the importance of the trumpet player went beyond accompanying the elite to their destination. They were considered an integral part of the retinue and gave additional prestige to the elite they accompanied.

K1210 is the last scene depicting musicians in an interior palace setting and it does not fit neatly within any of the above categories (Fig. 38). It contains four figures. On the left are two musicians playing wooden trumpets with twisted gourds on the ends similar to Landa's account.¹⁵¹ The gourds are decorated with flowers and feathers. On the far right is a ruler seated on a platform leaning and extending a hand towards the figure in

¹⁵¹ Landa, *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatan*. Trans. Tozzer, Cambridge: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1941: 93

front of him. This figure offers a vessel to the seated ruler. This vessel is similar to the one held by the dwarf in K1453 and the two central figures in K3007 both of which are connected with a ceremonial drinking ritual. In this scene we also see that the musicians are the furthest away from the main figure and again do not wear either the White Standard Style or the Chama Procession Style. Banding the vessel on top and on bottom are repeating water lily symbols.

CONCLUSION:

Through the exploration of these scenes many characteristics common to the depiction of musicians in interior palace settings become apparent that are not seen in depictions of musicians in exterior public settings. First, the musicians are depicted either kneeling, seated, or standing still. Second, they are located furthest from the most prominent figure. Third, acoustics do not affect instrument choice. Fourth, the form of attire varies more greatly in interior settings than in exterior settings. Finally, the order of instruments remains standard in exterior settings. These scenes provide further evidence of instrument specialization and musical segmentation in Maya music in general. The above characteristics and observations are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Conclusion

The majority of objects portraying musicians viewed in this study are private objects. Though they are private objects, the images depicted on them are just as carefully planned and executed as are images on public monuments. An equal amount of careful planning and attention to detail is necessary for the creation of these small ceramic vessels as is necessary for the planning and creation of larger public monuments, such as stelae or architectural façades, in terms of the messages conveyed through their images. In his article, “The Power and Ideology of Artistic Creation”, Takeshi Inomata writes that;

For the Classic Maya, the manufacture of art objects was an act of creation loaded with symbolic meaning. Skilled crafting, along with the privileged knowledge encoded in the products, formed an important part of the high culture that served to distinguish the elite from the rest of society. The cultural and symbolic capital resulting from artistic creation also had critical meaning and consequences for competition among elites.¹⁵²

The creation of these objects then, held social and political importance. They were a commodity used to express status and propaganda amongst members of the elite.

Polychrome vessels (such as those examined in this work) functioned as service ware during elite Maya rituals. There is evidence indicating that some of the vessels were

¹⁵² Inomata, “The Power and Ideology of Artistic Creation”, *Current Anthropology*. 2001: 321

transferred to other sites as part of ritual gift giving.¹⁵³ These would be especially valuable objects when used during both private and public events as well as rituals due to the broad recognition by the participants of the art work, its creator, and its owner.¹⁵⁴ This was made possible in part by elite craft specialist.

Evidence for elite craft specialist in Classic Maya society has been discussed by several scholars.¹⁵⁵ Epigraphic studies have demonstrated that some glyphic texts written on ceramic objects record the names of the owners or commissioners of the objects indicating that some of these objects were the result of attached production.¹⁵⁶ Other studies have shown that some of the texts on ceramic vessels record the name of the artists. In addition, it has been shown that some stelae record the signature of the carvers.¹⁵⁷ The images on polychrome ceramic vessels must then be considered as equally as constructed as larger, more public, monuments. Reens-Budet compares the information presented on painted vessels with information presented on public monuments in some length. She observes that:

In contrast to vessels painted with cosmological and funerary imagery are those embellished with scenes taking place inside Maya buildings and whose depicted human participants are named in the accompanying hieroglyphic texts. Some of these same individuals appear on the carved stone monuments found at the most

¹⁵³ Reens-Budet, Dorie. *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period*, 1994: 92

¹⁵⁴ Reens-Budet, Dorie. *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period*, 1994: 92

¹⁵⁵ See Coe 1977; Stuart 1989; Webster 1989; Ball 1993; McAnany 1993; Reents-Budet 1994, 1998; Coe and Kerr 1997; Houston 2000.

¹⁵⁶ Inomata, "The Power and Ideology of Artistic Creation", *Current Anthropology*. 2001: 324-325

¹⁵⁷ See Stuart 1987, 1989

important Maya sites; these public monuments record historical and ideological facts about the site and its rulers. The scenes painted on the more private pottery, too, are immutable pictorial and hieroglyphic records of specific moments in the pageant of Maya history, although these rituals' details rarely are found on the public stone monuments. Therefore, the pictorial pottery provides unique details of Classic Maya historical rituals.¹⁵⁸

But public monuments and painted vessels are not the only means by which political messages are conveyed. A performance involving music also conveys carefully constructed messages.

It should be noted that there is a difference between performances of music versus depictions of music. Performances are art forms whose aesthetic qualities set them apart from everyday life.¹⁵⁹ They are also an important factor in the propagation of political messages and myths. As Robertson writes, it is through performances that “performers and their audience collapse time and become one with the ancestors and spirits. The performance of myth also serves to legitimize the power structures that bind and define a society.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Reens-Budet, *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period*, 1994:4

¹⁵⁹ Johnson, “Performance-Centered Approaches to Folklore Studies” *Text, Practice, Performance*, No.1 1999:2

¹⁶⁰ Robertson, “Myth, Cosmology, and Performance” *Music in Latin America and the Carribean* , vol. 1, 2004: 20

During a performance, only those present at the time are capable of receiving the carefully constructed message and taking part in the reconstruction of myth. Once the performance is depicted, however, anyone who views the image may receive the message. Herein lays the main difference between performances of music versus depictions of music. The first is temporally and physically locked while the later is not. Images of musical performances have the ability disseminate the message of the performance to a broader audience both temporally and spatially, especially within the confines of court society.

In recent decades there has been a great deal of scholarly work which has focused on court society, not only in terms of politics, economics, or social hierarchies, but also as it relates to the arts. Felicia Hughes-Freeland describes this phenomenon as art used for cultural politics. She writes that:

'Art' is not a cultural given. Rather, it is used in the processes of cultural production to define appropriateness, and entails struggles for power and identity . . . the making and appreciation of art are stakes which vary in significance historically; it is not the beautiful and the true which are at issue, but the appropriate. . . The power to define appropriateness must be struggled for".¹⁶¹

Art pertaining to court societies is carefully constructed according to the desires of those in power and how they choose to depict themselves. Early Islamic court music was

¹⁶¹ Hughes-Freeland, "Art and Politics: From Javanese Court Dance to Indonesian Art", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, (1997), 474.

inundated with religious overtones and palatial settings were perceived as a reflection of paradise itself. In Islamic tradition, paradise is viewed as a vibrant garden with running water, flowering trees, and lush vegetation. It is a place where beautiful angelic inhabitants reside. The Qu'ran does not include music in its description of paradise; however, the art of the court was a reflection of a popular religious association of music with this heavenly garden. This is clear in the numerous works of art depicting angelic musicians.

In Priscilla Soucek's work on Persian painting she notes that, "There would appear to be a close connection between the forms of pomp favored by rulers and the pictorial conventions employed in paintings of similar subjects. . . The manner in which the patron of manuscript affected the process of illustrating the text must have varied considerably with the personality of the patron and the significance of the text".¹⁶² This is true not only of what was chosen to be depicted, but also as to how the image was then perceived.

The ancient Maya perceived images of rulers to be "continuous with the royal person rather than separate, inanimate objects."¹⁶³ How a ruler's image was displayed then would be carefully considered. In portraying musicians in palatial settings with the royal person, specific artistic conventions were employed. These conventions aid in disseminating specific messages and give modern scholars clues as to the function of music in ancient Maya court society.

¹⁶² Soucek, "Comments on Persian Paintings" *Iranian Studies*, (1974), 76-77.

¹⁶³ Houston, Stuart, Taube, *The Memory of Bones, Body, Being, and Experience among the Classic Maya* 2006:78

There are several characteristics common to depictions of musicians in palatial settings. Among these are the stationary nature of the musicians, their position in the compositions, the form of attire the musicians wear, and the order in which instruments appear. The explanations of these characteristics do not appear individually but intertwine with one another. They work together to create a broader view of the function of music and the role of musicians in ancient Maya society in general.

Musicians involved in interior palace settings are depicted as kneeling, seated, or standing still. Although they are active participants in the events depicted, their postures connote that their primary agency was to provide musical accompaniment to the action occurring. Yet, much like musicians' involvement in dance, there are significant exceptions. To be sure, when a musician plays music for dancers, he is providing accompaniment. However, not all accompaniment functions the same. In some instances the function of the music is at least as significant as, if not more significant than, the dance taking place. Aztec musical practices provide a clear example.

In Duran's account of the *Toxcatl* ceremony and the playing of the flower flute he recalls that:

Turning to the east, the priest played the flute, and turning respectfully to the west, north, and south, he did the same. After he had played the flute in the direction of the four parts of the world, all those present and those who were absent but who could hear him, placed a finger on the ground, smearing it with earth which had stuck to his finger and placed it within their mouths. . . On hearing the notes of the flute, thieves, fornicators, murderers, and all other sinners

were filled with fear and sadness. . . . On hearing the flute that day, brave and courageous men, all the old soldiers, implored the gods, in rare anguish and devotion, to be given victory against their enemies and strength to bring back many captives from war.¹⁶⁴

The priest referenced is the *Tezcatlipoca* impersonator who is making an appearance at the top of a temple. It is made clear in this account that it was the *sound* of the flute that signified to those who could hear that a particular action should follow. The sound of the flute was not just preceding the actions. It was a factor in creating the space necessary for such action to take place. Playing to the four directions evokes cosmogonic notions. It draws the ‘there’ of the gods to the ‘here’ of man. It focuses the gaze and hearing of the gods to the actions of man taking place during the ceremony. The playing of the flower flute in this ceremony is not inactive accompaniment. Instead, it is an active participant and is essential to the ceremony’s positive outcome.

On the other hand, music sometimes does function as inactive accompaniment. This does not mean that in these instances music serves no purpose. It signifies that its primary function is to provide support for participants that are more active. This dichotomy is seen in Classic Maya society. The pottery hand drummers on K3463 and K1549 are active participants in the dance occurring (Fig. 14, Fig. 4). Their lifted heel poses denotes that they too are engaged in the dance. They frame the dance. They draw

¹⁶⁴ Duran, 1962; 101

the gaze of the viewers in towards the central two dancing figures, regardless of whether the viewer is a mortal holding the vessel, or possibly a supernatural observing the dance.

The instruments played in the above examples are small and portable, light weight and easily carried. This makes elaborate movements such as those required in dance performances more possible than when holding larger, more cumbersome instruments, such as a *pax*, or instruments where movement makes it more difficult to play, such as a trumpet. Yet in exterior settings all instruments are shown in movement. This is evident in the Bonampak murals where *pax* players are carried on litters and trumpeters are part of a procession. In interior palace settings, we see both large cumbersome instruments and smaller, more portable instruments all without movement. This tells us that the choice for a musician to remain still was a deliberate decision associated with the role the musician played and was not related to the instruments themselves. This makes it clear that musicians in interior palatial settings performed more of a secondary, supportive role, to the main action occurring in the scenes than did musicians in exterior settings. This does not mean that their function was less important, only that it was different.

The second characteristic of palatial music is that musicians are depicted as the furthest figures away from the primary figures. This separation could stem from their function of a supportive role as discussed above or due to their rank and social status. Musicians among the ancient Maya, like other Mesoamerican cultures, enjoyed considerable social prestige due to the importance of music to a ritual's positive outcome. An extreme amount of rigid training was necessary because, as Stevenson writes, "Imperfectly executed rituals were thought to offend rather than to appease the gods, and

therefore errors in the performance of ritual music, such as missed drumbeats, carried the death penalty".¹⁶⁵ Therefore, only the mostly highly trained and prestigious musicians could take part in elite rituals.¹⁶⁶ The musicians who would perform in these rituals were also high-status nobles. Their representations in art demonstrate that their roles were highly valued.¹⁶⁷

In his discussion of rank and status in Maya dance, Loper describes general characteristics that denote the rank and status of a particular figure:

Rank and status were indicated in Maya dance by a variety of iconographic, textual, and compositional devices. These include the use of titles in text captions, distinctions in the dancers' sizes, asymmetries in quantities of jewelry, and varying size and complexity of headdresses. . . . Sometimes superior status is expressed through a frontal versus profile pose or placement on the right-hand side of the image. However, rank distinction is also conveyed by elevating more important figures on platforms. A well known example of this is Bonampak Room 3, where the highest ranking dancers are shown on the top terrace of a platform and the secondary dancers are arrayed on lower terraces.¹⁶⁸

Through the placement and attire of the musicians, it is evident that while musicians possessed a great amount of social prestige, they were portrayed as generally possessing

¹⁶⁵Stevenson, Robert. *Music in Aztec and Inca Territory*.1968:89-91

¹⁶⁶ Stevenson, Robert. *Music in Aztec and Inca Territory*.1968:89-91

¹⁶⁷ Sanchez, Julia. "Procession and Performance: Recreating Ritual Soundscapes Among the Ancient Maya", *The World of Music*, 49(2)-2007: 42

¹⁶⁸ Loper, Matthew. *To Be Like Gods-Dance in Ancient Maya Civilization*, 2009:98

lower status and prestige than the other figures they are depicted with. The musicians are depicted on the left side of the composition and are more plainly dressed than the other figures, captive figures not included. Their placement then as the furthest figures away from the primary figures and the fact that there is always something separating the musicians from the other figures denotes that while they are vital to the scene, they are not viewed as the main focus.

The exceptions of this are K5233 and K530 (Fig. 8, Fig. 36). Yet both of these scenes possess many unique qualities that make the reading of the role of the musicians more difficult. In both scenes, the musicians appear on the right. In K5233, they are dressed only slightly less elaborately than the dancing lord and it is obvious the three work together as a coherent group. On K530 the musicians are dressed the same as the enthroned figure including the depiction of them as Chaks. From this it can be said that in these particular scenes, the musicians were a more integral part of the action occurring.

A third observation of music in palatial settings is that the attire of musicians in interior settings varied more so than musicians depicted in exterior settings. As discussed in Chapter 2, in exterior settings musicians typically wear either the White Standard Style or the Chama Procession Style. In interior palace settings however, we see no Chama Procession Style and only two instances where musicians wear the White Standard Style, K6984 and K4120 (Fig. 6, Fig. 5). This carries massive significance when their relation to the supernatural aspect of ritual is considered.

The instruments themselves also played a role in rituals. Musical instruments manufactured by the ancient Maya were part of rituals and performances alongside elaborate and exotic costume and adornment further emphasizing a link between sound and costume.¹⁶⁹ It has been argued that sound and music were essential components for supplication of ancient Maya deities.¹⁷⁰

Both of these scenes involved the enthroned lord named Yajawte' K'inich and depict parts of an ascension ritual similar to scenes found in the Bonampak murals. As we recall from Chapter 2, Stone notes that the cloth head wraps these musicians wear aid in emphasizing their liminal nature.¹⁷¹ It was common to evoke the ancestors of a ruler in stone inscriptions commemorating their accession. Evoking ancestors required communication with the supernatural realm, an act that would require liminal aspects. Music could provide this liminality.

Music was a key component in creating a liminal space in which ceremonies and rituals could be properly conducted.¹⁷² When we look at Aztec musical performance as part of ritual, we see that musicians and instruments functioned to temporarily create a liminal space in which ritual acts could take place. Music demarcates and tears down the boundaries between the physical and non-physical. It creates a ceremonial space. Music draws the 'there' of the gods to the 'here' of man. It focuses the gaze and hearing of the

¹⁶⁹ Healy, Rodens, and Downe, "Ancient Maya Sound Artifacts of Pacbitun, Belize", 2006:23

¹⁷⁰ Houston, Stuart, and Taube, *The Memory of Bones, Body, Being, and Experience among the Classic Maya* 2006:255

¹⁷¹ Stone, *Images from the Underworld: Naj Tunich and the Tradition of Maya Cave Painting* 1995:135

¹⁷² Duke, "Hearing the Ephemeral Landscape: Tezcatlipoca and the Toxcatl Ceremony", SEM Southern Plains Chapter Conference, April 2013

gods to the actions of man taking place during the ceremony.¹⁷³ In interior palace settings, the majority of musicians do not wear the cloth head wrap. This illustrates that in these circumstances, the liminal nature of music was not being evoked.

Another characteristic seen in palatial music is the order in which the instruments appear. In interior settings, the order remains standard with the order depicted in exterior settings. While there are certainly differences between the roles of musicians in interior settings as compared to those in exterior settings, there remains a formal aspect of music that surpasses these boundary restrictions. A standardized order of instrument portrayal illustrates that the ancient Maya had strict musical regulations that were expected to be maintained. This is perhaps more evident in the specialized groupings of specific instruments that were employed for particular functions. These groupings are presented in the scenes discussed in Chapter 3 and provide further examples of instrument specialization and musical segmentation in Maya music in general.

A comparative visual analysis of images containing musicians in exterior setting versus those in interior settings shows that the function of music was variable dependent upon the type of activity taking place. We see the same groupings of instruments used in the same type of activity in interior settings as in exterior settings. There are two groups of instruments that only occur in specific circumstances. The first of these groups is the wooden trumpet, rattle, and large drum. This particular grouping only occurs while accompanying a dance performance before an enthroned lord with figures carrying battle

¹⁷³ Duke, "Hearing the Ephemeral Landscape: Tezcatlipoca and the Toxcatl Ceremony", SEM Southern Plains Chapter Conference, April 2013

standards intermixed with the musicians. A second triad of specialized instruments are the rattle, turtle carapace, and drum. This grouping is only found in two scenes, both of which contain supernatural contexts.

It should be noted that large amounts of the Maya corpus of art has been lost. It is possible that these groupings did occur in other settings but that their depictions have been lost. The similarities of the scenes involving these instrument groupings across varying mediums, however, suggest to the author that these are in fact specialized groupings. This is further evidenced by the fact that acoustics did not affect instrument choice. In interior scenes, we see instruments that would be very loud as well as instruments that would be much quieter. The same instrument groupings are used both in interior and exterior settings. This confirms the initial assessment that there was more to specific instrument choices than their acoustical attributes. The ancient Maya choose specific instruments to fulfill specific functions.

Archaeological evidence from sites such as Pacbitun, Lubaantun, Uaxactun, and the Copan valley further illustrate this. Musical instruments are largely found in association with elite housing structures, plaza floors, and elite burials while surrounding rural areas shows a distinct lack of musical instruments. This leads to the conclusion that the level of musical activity among the elite was higher than in the general population. The sites of Lubaantun and Motel de San José show that ceramic whistles and effigy flutes are most commonly found in elite household contexts.¹⁷⁴ This suggests that these

¹⁷⁴ Halperin, "Honduran Figurines and Whistles in Social Context: Production, Use, and Meaning in the Ulúa Valley" *Mesoamerican Figurines: Small-Scale Indices of Large-Scale Social Phenomena*, 2009:10.

instruments were primarily used for personal or household rituals as opposed to more public activities. The lack of depictions of whistles and flutes in public ceremonies and rituals further corroborates this notion.

In addition, archaeological evidence suggests that music among the ancient Maya was a gendered activity. Although the imagery surrounding music lends the idea that music was a predominately male-gendered role, the burials at Pacbitun combined with organological acoustical analysis of instruments denotes that females also engaged in musical activities. While this is an important observation, the exact nature and function of gender roles in ancient Maya music needs more research.

This study has made clear that music among the ancient Maya was segmented. Specific instruments were used in particular settings in order to fulfill carefully prescribed functions. Through depictions of musicians in various works of art it can be determined that musicians held a significant and specialized role in ceremonies and rituals conducted by the elite. Archaeological evidence shows that the elite played music at the household level as well as in private and public performances. The similarities of dress and a standard sequence for positioning musicians elucidates that the ancient Maya held strict rules of musical conventions that were expected to be adhered to at all times. While at times the musicians may be seen as periphery characters, they were in fact essential in the continuation of political power and the conservation of cultural history and myth. While this is a step forward in researching music in Maya society, a large

Joyce, "Presidential Address. The Pottery Whistle-Figurines of Lubaantun" *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol.6, 1933:xv

amount of research remains. This work has only scratched the surface of the multitude of intricate associations music poses in ancient Maya society. Nonetheless, we end here with a broader understanding of the role and function of music in ancient Maya court society than we had at the beginning.

Images



Figure 1. Enthroned elite gazing into mirror held by Dwarf. Polychrome ceramic vessel, Australian National Museum 82.22.92. Photograph © Justin Kerr K1453.

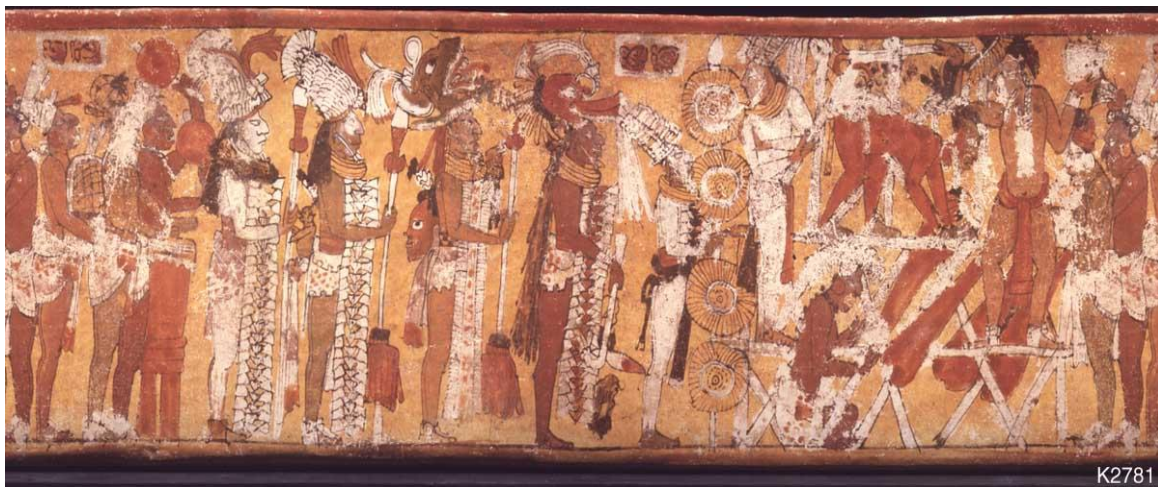


Figure 2. Musicians in scaffold sacrifice scene. Polychrome ceramic vessel, Dumbarton Oaks Washington DC PC.B. 594. Photograph © Justin Kerr K2781.



Figure 3. Satirical dance. Polychrome ceramic vessel. Mint Museum of Art Charlotte NC. MS1463. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K3463.



Figure 4. Satirical dance. Polychrome ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K1549.



Figure 5. Dance of a God K impersonator before the enthroned lord Yajawte' K'inich. Polychrome ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr K4120.



Figure 6. Kneeling trumpeters. Polychrome ceramic vessel, Hudson Museum Orono ME Museum number HM 533. Photograph © Justin Kerr K6984



Figure 7. Ruler preparing to dance. Polychrome ceramic vessel. (MS 50.2)
Photograph © Justin Kerr K6316



Figure 8. Ruler dances to the accompaniment of a friction drum and rasca.
Polychrome ceramic vessel. (MS 1720) Photograph © Justin Kerr K5233.

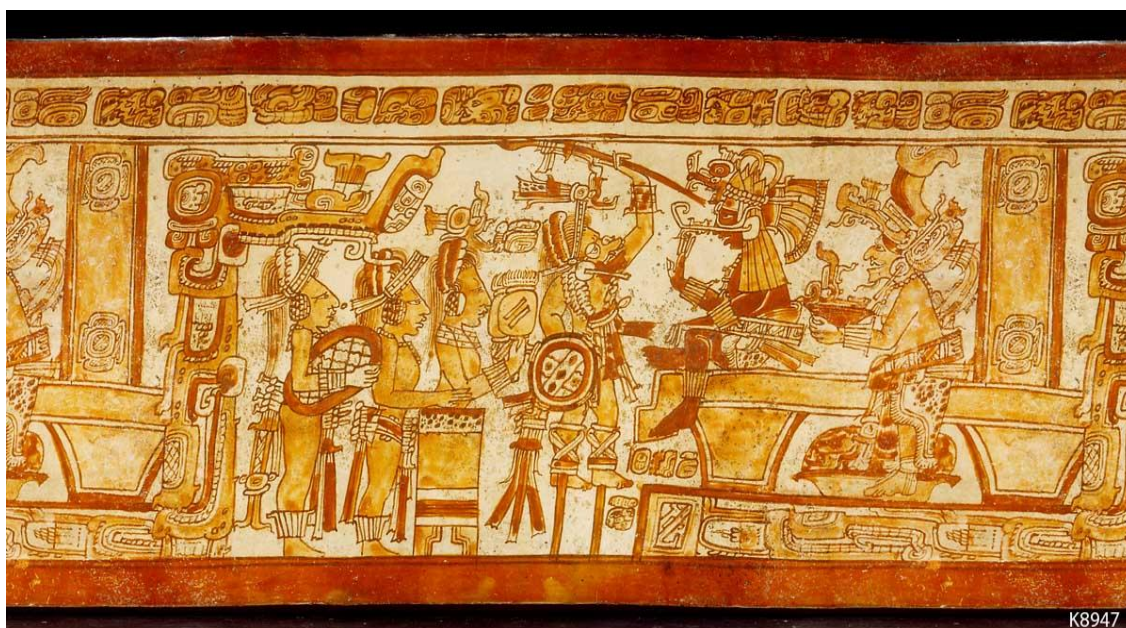


Figure 9. Musicians accompany dancer on stilts. Polychrome ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr K8947



Figure 10. Two musicians rest. Polychrome ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr K1645



Figure 11. *Pax* Drum in musical procession. Wall painting, East wall, Room 1, Structure 1, Bonampak. University of California, San Diego, <http://library.artstor.org/library/iv2.html?parent=true#>



Figure 12. Procession of Anthropomorphic Musicians. Polychrome ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K3040.

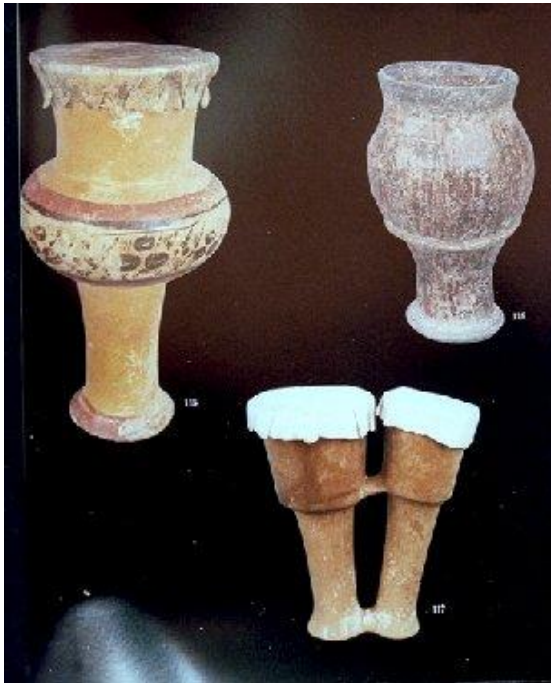


Figure 13. Ceramic drums for Lowlands and Highlands Maya region. Polychrome lamp-glass style, Black slip pedestal vase style, and red slip double drum. Photograph © G&T Foundation.



Figure 14. Two figures engage in a satirical dance scene. Polychrome Ceramic Vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K3463

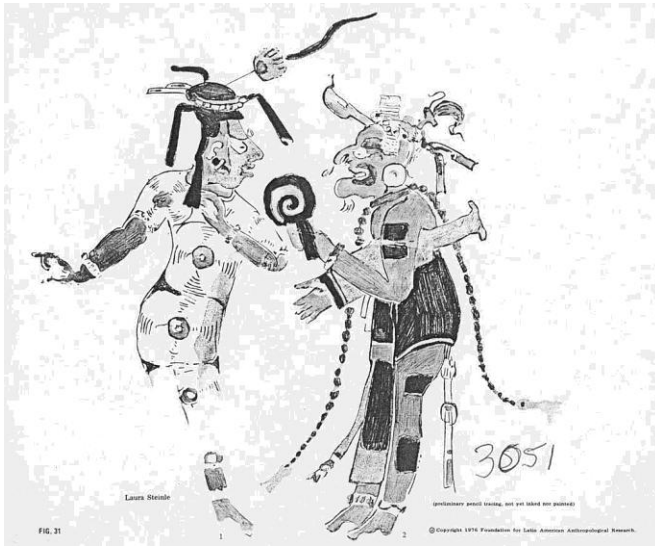


Figure 15. Drawing of a portion of K3051



Figure 16. Drawing of Naj Tunich Cave Drawing 27, Andrea Stone

Figure 17. Drawing of Naj Tunich Cave Drawing 40

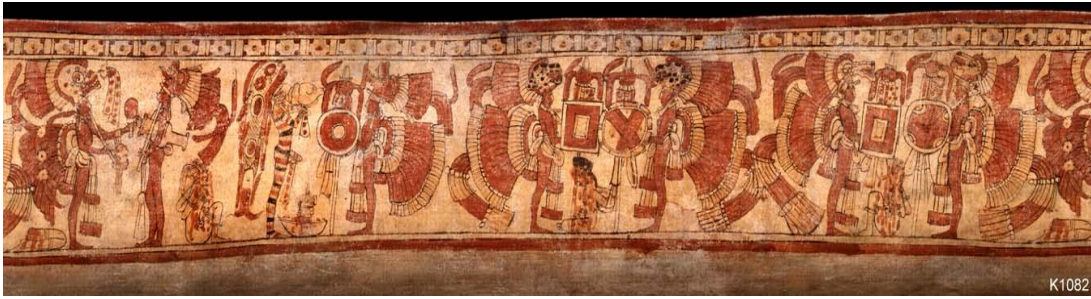


Figure 18. Warrior and Musician Pairs. Polychrome Ceramic Vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr K1082



Figure 19. Lord prepares to dance. Polychrome ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K6316.



Figure 20. Elite dances in front of musicians. Drawing by Barbara Van Heusen. c FLAAR 1976. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K3046.



Figure 21. Scaffold torture scene. Polychrome ceramic vessel. Art Institute of Chicago, Photograph © Justin Kerr, K206.



Figure 22. Musicians and Dancers, Bonampak, Structure 1, Room 1, North Wall. Mary Miller and Caberera.



Figure 23. Detail of Bonampak Structure 1, Room 3, North Wall.



Figure 24. Examples of musicians wearing the White Standard Style. A. Detail from K4120, B. Detail from K2781, C. Detail from K6984, D. Detail from K1549



Figure 25. Musicians play at a ball game. Polychrome ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K5435.



Figure 26. Musicians and Dancers. Bonampak, Structure 1, Room 3, North Wall. Wall Painting. Miller.



Figure 27. Elite carried on litter in procession with trumpet players. Polychrome Ceramic Vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K0594



Figure 28. Elite carried on litter in procession led by trumpet player. Polychrome Ceramic Vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K5534



Figure 29. Elite carried on a litter in a procession with trumpet players. Polychrome Ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K6317.



Figure 30. Elite carried on litter in procession with trumpet players. Polychrome Ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K7613



Figure 31. Anthropomorphic figures and musicians dance in procession. Polychrome Ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K5104.



Figure 32. Palace scene with enema ritual and musicians. Polychrome Ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K1563



Figure 33. Anthropomorphic musicians in dance procession. Polychrome Ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K3041.

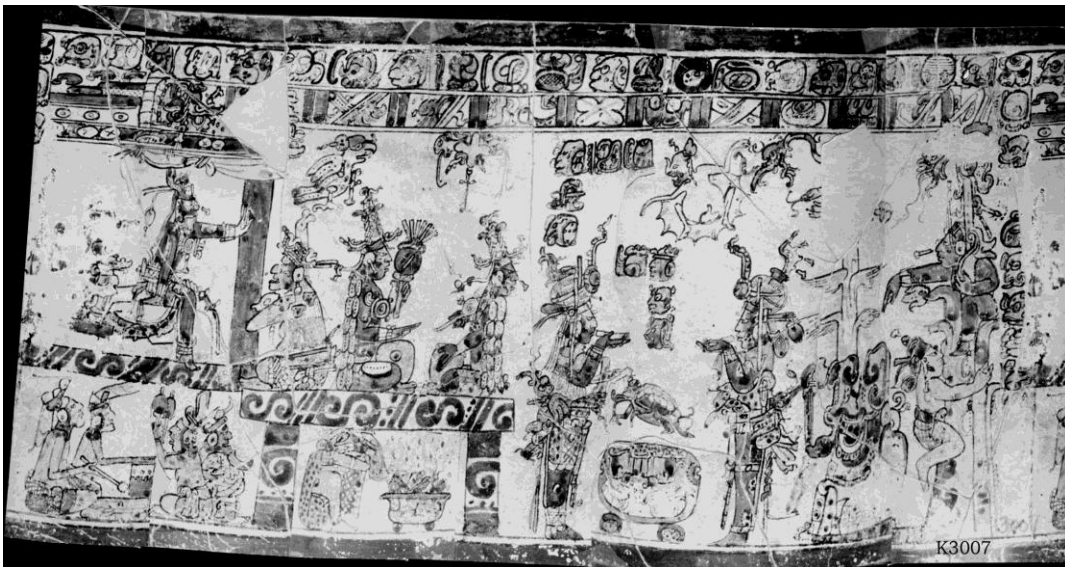


Figure 34. Supernatural scene. Polychrome Ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K3007.

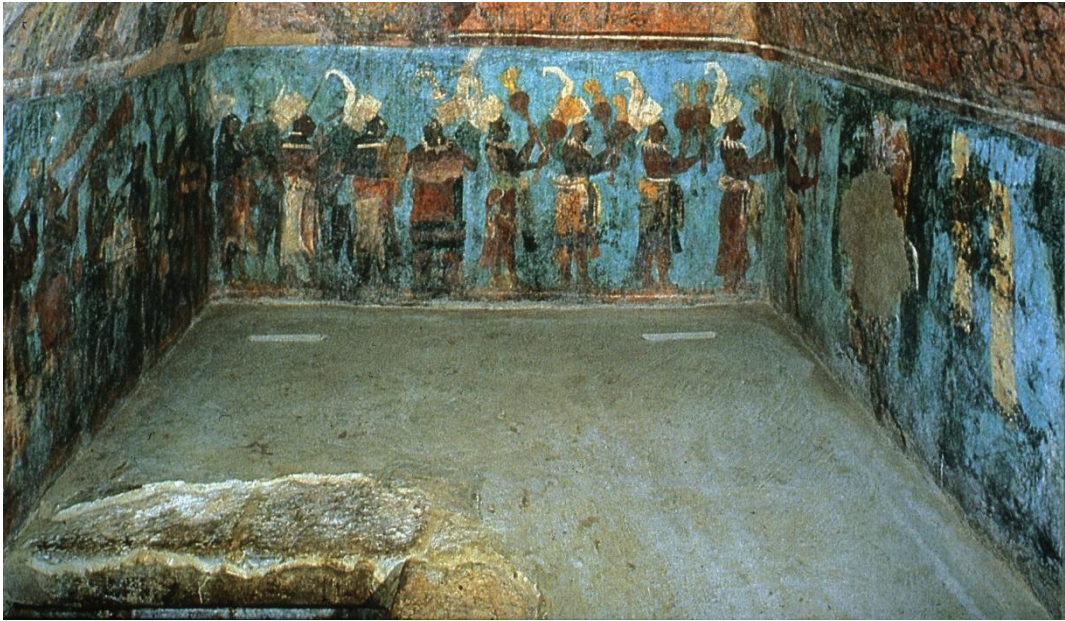
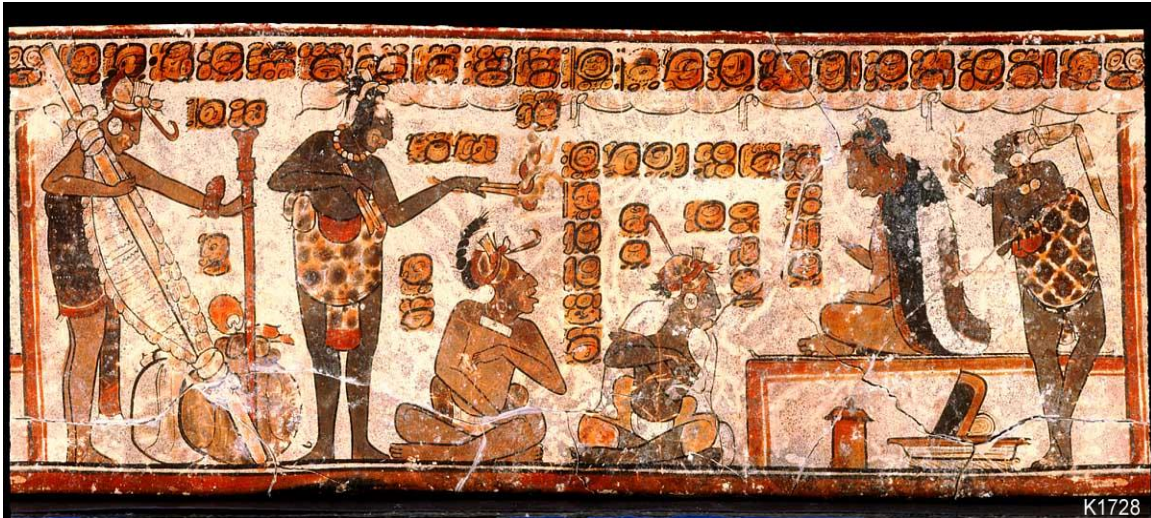


Figure 35. Procession of musicians. Wall painting. Bonampak, Structure 1, Room 1, North, East, and South walls.



Figure 36. Supernatural scene involving enema ritual with musicians. Polychrome Ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K530.



K1728

Figure 37. Palace scene with trumpet player bearing a litter. Polychrome Ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K1728



K1210

Figure 38. Palace scene with trumpet players. Polychrome Ceramic vessel. Photograph © Justin Kerr, K1210

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Vita

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