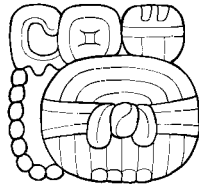


III

TIKAL UNPAIRED ALTARS



Ten carved altars that were found in primary or only slightly disturbed locational association with carved stelae have been described with those stelae in the preceding section:

- Alt. 1: paired with St. 4
- Alt. 2: paired with St. 5
- Alt. 5: paired with St. 16
- Alt. 6: paired with St. 19
- Alt. 7: paired with St. 24
- Alt. 8: paired with St. 20
- Alt. 9: paired with St. 21
- Alt. 10: paired with St. 22
- Alt. 11: paired with St. 11
- Alt. 14: paired with St. 30

The designation Alt. 17 has been voided; the piece is now labeled Frag. 4 of Alt. 19.

Although each of the eight carved altars described in this section probably stood before a carved stela originally, that association has been lost as the monuments were broken up, moved, discarded, or buried. In some cases, related secondary locations coupled with stylistic affiliations suggest additional stela/altar pairings (i.e., St. 6/Alt. 12, St. 29/Alt. 13, and St. 31/Alt. 19). Although Alt. 3, 4, and 15 were found in front of plain stelae in the Great Plaza, that association is probably secondary.

TIKAL ALTAR 3

ILLUSTRATIONS: Fig. 57a-b (drawings); Fig. 108a-b (photographs). **LOCATION:** in front of and against St.

P7, S of Str. 5D-33-1st (TR. 14). **DEDICATORY DATE:** no text. **STYLE DATE:** "most probably transitional (9.5.0.0.0-9.8.0.0.0) or of the early period" (Proskouriakoff 1950:108). **CARVED SURFACES:** top and periphery. **NUMBER OF GLYPHS:** none. **MATERIAL:** limestone, compact. **DIMENSIONS:** Diam 1.01 m, T 0.48 m, relief 1.6 cm (top), 0.5 cm (periphery). **PHOTOGRAPHS:** Morley 1937-38, V:Pl. 71d. **DRAWINGS:** Bailey 1972: Figs. 120, 121. **REFERENCES:** Maler 1911:74; Morley 1937-38, I:373; Proskouriakoff 1950:108; Coe 1967:38, 95; Bailey 1972:163-77.

GENERAL REMARKS

Altar 3 was found with a plain stela (P7) in front of Str. 5D-33-1st. Coe (TR. 14) suggests that the altar was moved from an association with a carved monument during construction turmoil, and points to St. 3 and 7 as possible candidates.

The altar is made of compact stone with considerable pock-marking of the surface. The center of the top is especially worn as if by use (or abuse). It belongs to a group of similarly designed altars (3, 4, 12, 13, 16, 19) that can be placed by resemblances to epigraphically and stylistically dated stelae in the Early Classic period, probably in the last quarter of Baktun 8 or in the first of Baktun 9.

The drawing of the altar periphery (a roll-out controlled by photographs of the stone encircled by a tape measure) shows how it is divided into quarters, which are numbered in the drawing from the front axis as determined by the orientation of the top design. On Alt. 3 and others, each quarter consists of two parts: a

TIKAL UNPAIRED ALTARS

knot or mat pattern flanked by heart-shaped objects and a glyphic panel. A thick rope passes horizontally in front of the hearts, behind the mats and behind the glyphic panels, which are shown as if they were cloth, fastened at the top of the periphery and hanging loose at the bottom. The mat pattern appears later at Tikal on seats or thrones for the principal human figures in scenes carved on the wooden lintels of Temples I, III, and IV. The realistic periphery designs suggest that the stones are replicas of seats made traditionally of other materials and perhaps especially decorated for ceremonies (Bailey 1972:173-74).

TIKAL ALTAR 4

ILLUSTRATIONS: Fig. 58a-b (drawings); Fig. 108c (photograph). **LOCATION:** paired with St. P8 (presumably secondarily) as the most westerly pair in front of Str. 5D-32-1st (TR. 14). **DEDICATORY DATE:** no text. **STYLE DATE:** "most probably transitional (9.5.0.0-9.8.0.0) or of the early period" (Proskouriakoff 1950:108). **CARVED SURFACES:** top and periphery. **NUMBER OF GLYPHS:** none. **MATERIAL:** limestone, compact. **DIMENSIONS:** Diam 1.27 m, T 0.48 m, relief 0.9 cm. **PHOTOGRAPHS:** Bailey 1972:Figs. 122,124; Greene, Rands, and Graham 1972:Pl.139 (rubbing, periphery). **DRAWINGS:** Bailey 1972:Figs. 123,125. **REFERENCES:** Maler 1911:74; Morley 1937-38, I:373; V:Pl.71d,e; Proskouriakoff 1950:108; Coe 1967:95; Bailey 1972:163-77.

GENERAL REMARKS

Locational pairing of Alt. 4 with a plain stela (P8) leads us to surmise, as in the case of Alt. 3, that the discovered position is secondary. The stela itself, lacking its basal part, was evidently reset where found. Furthermore, both stones were installed after the construction of Str. 5D-32-1st, which surely postdates the stylistically early altar. Coe (TR. 14) suspects that the two stones were positioned considerably after the completion of this structure. He points out that in size and shape Alt. 4 resembles most Alt. 19, but in carved design is like Alt. 20 (both unpaired). He argues that the altar's size might link it to St. 10 or 12, standing nearby (without altars) on the plaza level.

Since none of the early Tikal altars are securely dated by association with carved stelae, it is difficult to place Alt. 4 chronologically by means of stylistic comparisons. The firmest clue might lie in the use of the scalloped yax glyph in the periphery design. This

Tikal trait is restricted to St. 6 at 9.4.0.0, St. 12 at 9.4.13.0.0, St. 10 at 9.4.13.0.0?, and St. 17 around 9.7.0.0.0.

The top composition shows faintly a seated figure surrounded by scrolls and curved lines and by a border similar to those on Alt. 3 and MS. 81. On the periphery, four large serpent-head designs separate quatrefoils out of which emerge nearly identical deity figures partly enclosed in shells. The figures hold upward bowls containing different objects. Bailey (1972:177-78) observes that the awkward and skinny arms of these figures are like those on the left-side figure of St. 23 and suggests a pairing with that stela.

TIKAL ALTAR 12

ILLUSTRATIONS: Fig. 59a-b (drawings); Fig. 108d (photograph). **LOCATION:** in front of Str. 5D-32-1st; possibly once positioned with St. 6 (TR. 14). **DEDICATORY DATE:** no text. **STYLE DATE:** Early Classic. **CARVED SURFACES:** top and periphery. **NUMBER OF GLYPHS:** none. **MATERIAL:** limestone, compact. **DIMENSIONS:** Diam 0.97 m, T 0.40 m, relief 0.9 cm. **PHOTOGRAPHS:** Coe 1959:11; 1965b:34; 1967:93; Bailey 1972:Fig. 126; Greene, Rands, and Graham 1972:Pl. 141 (rubbing, top). **DRAWINGS:** Bailey 1972:Figs. 127,128. **REFERENCES:** Coe 1959:11; 1965b:34; 1967:38; Bailey 1972:163-177.

GENERAL REMARKS

Altar 12, discovered in Project clearing operations, was almost completely buried in the collapse debris of Str. 5D-32-1st, 2.60 m southeast of where Morley had found the upright butt of St. 6. Both these monuments are of compact "early" stone, and the St. 6 date (9.4.0.0) precedes the estimated date of the structure. From this and from stratigraphic excavations, Coe concludes that the stela and altar had been moved together from another location at the time of construction (TR. 14). Thus original pairing with St. 6 is suggested even though it cannot be taken as proved.

The altar top carving, while worn at the center as if from use, is otherwise well preserved. Remarkable for its skillful fitting of elements to the circular field, it shows a large open-mouthed serpent with entwined body, in the mouth of which sits a human figure holding a glyph with coefficient 7. The seated figure in a serpent mouth is a common motif in early Tikal sculpture, the most comparable example being in the upper left corner of St. 2 (Bailey 1972:269). Flame-like twisted scrolls atop the head at left near the figure's

THE MONUMENTS AND INSCRIPTIONS OF TIKAL: THE CARVED MONUMENTS

knee resemble those on St. 31 (9.0.10.0.0), Alt. 3 and 19, and MS. 109.

The peripheral relief is divided into quarters, each of which shows a single hieroglyph and three heart-shaped objects like those seen in a better state of preservation on Alt. 3, 13, and 19. On those altars, the central horizontal lines across the hearts have rope markings and can be seen to bind the objects to the periphery, passing behind the intervening glyphic panels. On Alt. 3 and 19, the panels appear to be hanging as if they were fabric.

TIKAL ALTAR 13

ILLUSTRATIONS: Fig. 60a-c (drawings); Fig. 109a,c (photographs). **LOCATION:** about 12 m E of Str. 5D-9 on surface near St. 29 (TR. 23F). **DEDICATORY DATE:** no text. **STYLE DATE:** Early Classic. **CARVED SURFACES:** top and periphery. **NUMBER OF GLYPHS:** none. **MATERIAL:** limestone, compact. **DIMENSIONS:** Diam 0.97 m,* T 0.41 m, relief 0.9 cm (top), 0.5 cm (periphery). **PHOTOGRAPHS:** Bailey 1972:Fig. 129. **DRAWINGS:** Bailey 1972:Fig. 130. **REFERENCES:** Bailey 1972:163-77.

*Reconstructed.

GENERAL REMARKS

Altar 13 was found in 1959 lying on the ground near St. 29. Since the two monuments were informally placed in relationship with each other, far removed from any structure or platform, they surely had been transported to their discovered location. It is possible that they were moved together and had originally formed a monument pair: both are represented by large single fragments comprising about half of their original mass, and both have suffered considerable breakage and erosion as well as secondary resmoothing of fractured surfaces. Furthermore, the relief carving shows similarity in details such as the fat hook-shaped scrolls and the complex eyebrows of the serpent heads.

Although the periphery resembles most those of Alt. 3 and 19, the upper and lower borders have small disks not seen on any other Tikal altar side except that of MS. 70.

The surviving portion of the top composition delineates a large serpent head, which Bailey (1972:169) interprets as one end of a serpent bar held in the hands of a lost seated figure. This, we think, is probably correct. She notes that the scene is remarkably like that of Alt. 19, in which the seated figure (without a

serpent bar) is better preserved. An element common to both monuments is a head at lower right, topped by a glyph with cartouche, three-part suffix, and T-shaped postfix.

Both altars have the axis of the top carving oriented to one of the knot elements of the periphery—in contrast to the orientation to a glyphic panel on Alt. 3, 12, and the later Alt. 6, 7, and 10. This strengthens the hypothesis that they belonged respectively to St. 29 and 31 (which also resemble each other in detail) and that, therefore, Alt. 13 is possibly the earliest of the Tikal altars.

TIKAL ALTAR 15

When this squared stone with incised borders was turned over in 1959 and carving seen on the bottom, it was realized that the stone was the missing lower fragment of St. 2 (Coe 1962c:486). We illustrate it as part of St. 2 (Fig. 2) and also present a drawing of its form after secondary reshaping and incision (Fig. 3). Normally we would have voided the number assigned to the altar when we realized that it was merely a fragment of a known stela, but in this case we felt that the secondary reworking had created a new monument out of the fragment. Thus Alt. 15 equals St. 2:Frag. 2 with minor modifications.

TIKAL ALTAR 16

ILLUSTRATIONS: Fig. 60d (drawing). **LOCATION:** (formerly MS. 8, possibly part of Alt. 19) Str. 5D-34-1st, rear room (TR. 14). **DEDICATORY DATE:** no text. **STYLE DATE:** Early Classic. **CARVED SURFACES:** periphery; top unknown. **NUMBER OF GLYPHS:** none. **MATERIAL:** limestone, compact. **DIMENSIONS:** Diam 1.30 m,* T more than 0.35 m. **PHOTOGRAPHS:** none published. **DRAWINGS:** Bailey 1972:Fig. 131. **REFERENCES:** Bailey 1972:163-77.

*Reconstructed

GENERAL REMARKS

Altar 16 is represented only by a relatively small fragment of the periphery, found within the debris inside Str. 5D-34-1st, east of a masonry bench in the rear room where the many fragments of St. 26 were also discovered. The stela had apparently been broken up on the spot, while no other fragments of the altar were found in the room: consequently the two must have had very different depositional histories and not belong together as a stela/altar pair.

TIKAL UNPAIRED ALTARS

Recently we have recognized a strong similarity between the Alt. 16 fragment and the periphery of Alt. 19. Details of the central binding rope, the size and arrangement of the mat design, the trace of a curved side of a heart-shaped element, and the single-line incision style are almost identical with analogous features of Alt. 19, as is the top-to-bottom curvature. Altar 19 lacks so much of its bulk around the area of the one missing mat-design element that it is unlikely a fit can be achieved. Nevertheless, we think it probable that, like former Alt. 17, Alt. 16 is another fragment of Alt. 19.

TIKAL ALTAR 18

ILLUSTRATIONS: Fig. 60e (drawing). **LOCATION:** (formerly MS. 21) Str. 5D-35, on the slope of the NW corner; exposed in structural talus, possibly weathered out of fill (TR. 14). **DEDICATORY DATE:** no text. **STYLE DATE:** Classic. **CARVED SURFACES:** periphery, top unknown. **NUMBER OF GLYPHS:** none. **MATERIAL:** limestone, compact. **DIMENSIONS:** max. Dim 0.60 m, Diam 0.90 m,* relief 0.5 cm. **PHOTOGRAPHS:** none published. **DRAWINGS:** Bailey 1972:Fig. 131. **REFERENCES:** Bailey 1972:163-77.

*Reconstructed

GENERAL REMARKS

Altar 18 is represented by only one fragment from the periphery. This was found on the surface of the debris slope off the rear of Str. 5D-35, close to the West Plaza level. Whether the fragment weathered out of the structure fill or was moved to the area sometime after construction is not known.

First labeled MS. 21, the fragment became Alt. 18 in 1960 when details unique to Tikal altars were recognized. Certain elements set it apart from all other known early altars: its mat element has two incised filler lines rather than one, small disks are attached to the outer points of the mat, and the strands of the mat terminate just beyond the interlacing. Later, similar disks are seen on Alt. 7 (with St. 24 at 9.19.0.0.0), and short mat strands on Alt. 10 (with St. 22 at 9.17.0.0.0). While the material is the compact limestone typical of early monuments, the cited design features, plus the sharp break between the periphery and the underside, might date the stone to the late period of Tikal, after 9.13.0.0.0.

In the drawing, the element to the far right has straight vertical lines, but these appear curved because the drawing did not attempt a roll-out presentation.

TIKAL ALTAR 19

ILLUSTRATIONS: Fig. 61a-e (drawings); Fig. 109b,d (photographs). **LOCATION:** Frag. 1, 2, 3 along S base of Str. 5D-33-2nd, W of stairwall, sealed by fill of Str. 5D-33-1st (Plat. 5D-4:TS. 5); Frag. 4 (formerly MS. 7, later Alt. 17) from the pit of St. P6 (TR. 14). **DEDICATORY DATE:** no text. **STYLE DATE:** Early Classic. **CARVED SURFACES:** top and periphery. **NUMBER OF GLYPHS:** none. **MATERIAL:** limestone, compact. **DIMENSIONS:** Diam 1.26 m, T 0.48 m, relief 1.0 cm. **PHOTOGRAPHS:** Coe 1965b:35; 1967:95; Bailey 1972:Figs. 132,133. **DRAWINGS:** Bailey 1972:Figs. 134,135. **REFERENCES:** Coe 1964:412; 1965:35; Bailey 1972:163-77.

GENERAL REMARKS

Altar 19 was first assembled from three large fragments discovered within the construction fills of Str. 5D-33-1st, lying upon a thick lens of debris at the base of the 33-2nd substructure. Since additional, smaller fragments were not discovered in the area, the break-up of the altar seems not to have occurred there. Coe, in TR. 14, suggests that the three fragments were dropped from the top of the structure terraces, where the altar and St. 31 might once have stood.

In 1976 it was noticed that the partially destroyed peripheral carving of Alt. 17 (formerly MS. 7) resembled that of Alt. 19 in all its details: the central rope, an upper border, an overlapping panel, and remains of one of the heart-shaped elements in its proper position. Photographs subsequently indicated to us that a physical fit to Alt. 19 was possible, and Orrego fitted the fragment to the altar at the Tikal Museum. With this confirmation, we voided the label Alt. 17 and now call the stone Frag. 4 of Alt. 19. The fragment had been peculiarly used as a wedge stone against the west side of St. P6, a plain monument of bedded "late" limestone set up (possibly secondarily) at the base of Str. 5D-33-1st. Other possible fragments of the altar are Alt. 16 and MS. 130 (from the room of Str. 5D-34-1st and from the Str. 5D-33-1st fills respectively); both resemble Alt. 19 in details and quality of carving.

The altar top displays finely carved and elaborate composition, apparently of a figure seated cross-legged and facing front. Bailey (1972:169) observed that the lower right portion is basically similar to the corresponding area on Alt. 13, both showing remains of a head topped by a glyph with T-shaped postfix. Preserved above this element on Alt. 13 is what

appears to be the head of a horizontal serpent bar that was held in the arms of a missing figure supplied by analogy with Alt. 19. On this altar, however, we can make out nothing to verify the existence of a similar bar.

The altar periphery is carved with the best-preserved example of a composition common to several early Tikal altars (3, 12, 13). Each quarter of the periphery shows a mat element flanked by heart-shaped objects bound by a horizontal rope. Four glyphic panels overlie the rope and appear to represent cloths attached only at the upper ends. In all, the composition might represent the periphery of a real non-lithic seat or throne such as can be seen on the Tikal wooden lintels (Figs. 70,72,73).

Certain features of the altar suggest an early date. The loop element at upper left on the new Frag. 4 (Fig. 61c) might be part of a grotesque-head throne like those under seated figures on St. 4 and 18, around 8.18.0.0. The eyes and buccal plate of the seated figure itself resemble those of Tlaloc faces on St. 32 (undated) and St. 31, dated 9.0.10.0.0. Two scrolls at the left of the composition have inner lines of tiny droplets like those on St. 1, 2, and 28, which probably date to the first two katuns of Baktun 9.

A specific connective to St. 31 and other possible monuments of Stormy Sky is his name glyph on a head at the left of the seated figure. Altar 19 and St. 31 had a similar depositional history within the fills of Str. 5D-33-1st and were, in addition, distinguished by their relatively large size and particularly fine and elaborate carving. Furthermore, the likeness of design between Alt. 19 and Alt. 13 parallels the similarity

between St. 29 (Jaguar Paw?) and St. 31 (Stormy Sky), which exists in spite of a 156-year difference in inscribed dates. Having posited St. 31 as a deliberate copy of the older monument, St. 29, we suggest that Alt. 19 was likewise carved in imitation of Alt. 13.

TIKAL ALTAR 20

ILLUSTRATIONS: Fig. 62a (drawing); Fig. 109e (photograph). **LOCATION:** surface of large platform E of Str. 5D-32; W side near top (TR. 16). **DEDICATORY DATE:** no text. **STYLE DATE:** Early Classic. **CARVED SURFACES:** periphery; top unknown. **NUMBER OF GLYPHS:** none surviving. **MATERIAL:** limestone, compact. **DIMENSIONS:** max. Dim 0.85 m, Diam 0.94 m,* surviving T 0.35 m, T 0.40 m* (based on curvature); relief 0.8 cm (periphery). **PHOTOGRAPHS:** none published. **DRAWINGS:** Bailey 1972:Fig. 136. **REFERENCES:** Bailey 1972:163-77.

*Reconstructed

GENERAL REMARKS

A large piece of carved altar periphery is the only known fragment of Alt. 20; the top is completely missing. What remains of the periphery is similar to that of Alt. 4, showing bottom scales like a serpent's and perhaps the eye, snout, and scroll-shaped elements of a diagonally-set serpent head. (The scrolls, however, seem to turn the opposite way.) At the extreme left of the drawing can perhaps be seen the edge of a seated-figure panel like the ones that accompany the serpent heads on that altar.