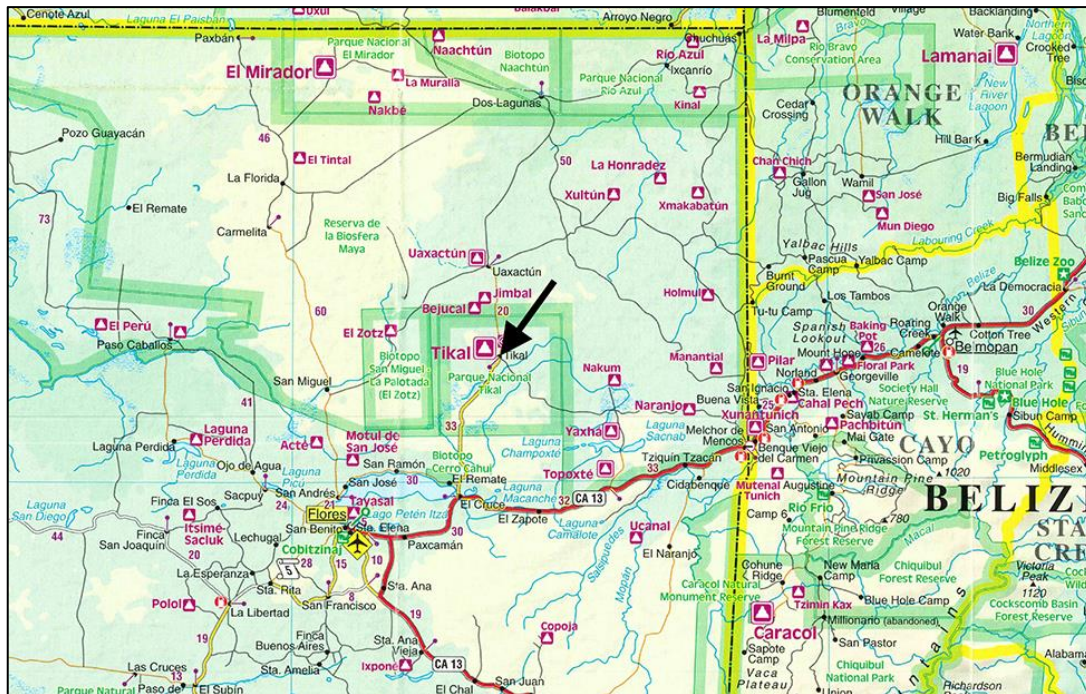


Hombre de Tikal, Petén, Guatemala



Vicinity Map: Location of Tikal, Petén, Guatemala.

Introduction

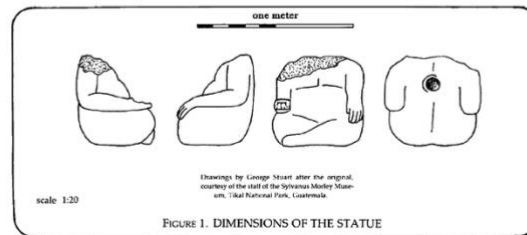
The Hombre de Tikal sculpture is a masterpiece housed today in the so-called Lithics Museum at the Tikal visitors' center. It was first published by Federico Fahsen in 1988 in George Stuart's Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing.

A New Early Classic Text from Tikal

FEDERICO FAHSEN
Universidad del Valle de Guatemala

EXCAVATION OF STRUCTURE 3D-43 of Group H in the northern section of Tikal under the direction of archaeologist Jorge Mario de León of the *Proyecto Nacional Tikal*, resulted in the discovery of a magnificent sculpture now on exhibit at the museum in Tikal National Park (Fig. 1). Publication of the results of that investigation by the Institute of Anthropology and History of Guatemala will provide the appropriately detailed treatment of the archaeological context of the sculpture. In the meantime, a brief description of the piece, including a drawing and analysis of the hieroglyphic text on its back, is presented here.

The sculpture, in the full round, is that of a somewhat corpulent male seated cross-legged in a Buddha-like position, with hands resting near the knees, left palm down, right palm up (Fig. 2). It is close to life size and, unfortunately, headless. The material from which the statue is made is a dense fine-grained stone, reddish in color, and this, along with the general character of the piece, renders it unique by comparison to other Tikal monuments. A text, deeply incised so as to maintain the calligraphic character of the hieroglyphs, occupies virtually the entire back of the figure (Figs. 3 & 4), and each of the upper arms of the figure bears a glyphic cartouche (Fig. 4b,c). The decapitation of the piece, whether deliberate or accidental, resulted in the loss of the upper portion of the text on the back and most of the cartouche on the right arm.



Page from Federico Fahsen's A New Early Classic Text from Tikal.

The material is very hard, granite-like, and pink with a polished surface; extremely rare in Maya stone sculpture.

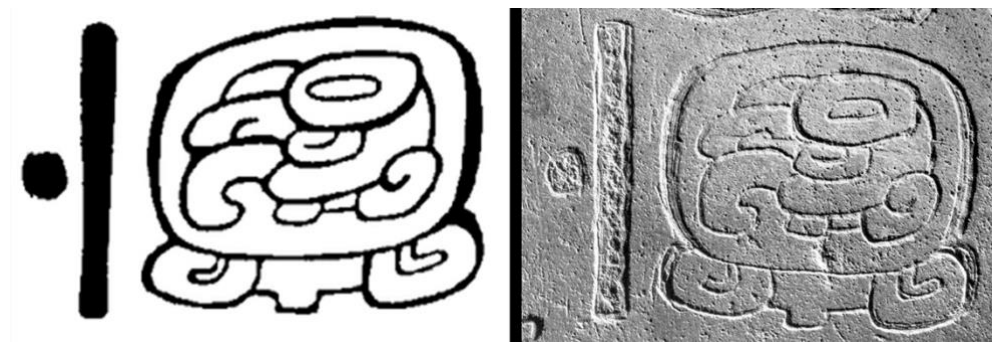


Front view of the Hombre de Tikal.

In March, 2025, I photographed it, taking shots of the whole piece as well as closeups of the glyphs, which show exquisite detail. The carver (or carvers) dug deep into the rock

and left wide rough bottoms on many lines. Were these spaces once filled with pigment, now lost? Or was the rough-hewn deep surface meant to represent black such as with crosshatching in Maya drawings?

The illustrators for Fahsen's article carefully and accurately represented the deep and rough-carved lines with black ink, as shown in this thumbnail, clearly seen in the number 6 but also in the wide margins of the day sign cartouche.



Sample of an illustration from Fahsen's article next to Love's photo.

Preparing these photos and comparing them with the drawing in Fahsen's article, I can attest to the drawing's accuracy and vouch for its correctness. New drawings do not need to be made. Congratulations to Rene Ozaeta, Rafael Pinedo, and Rolando Caal for the glyph drawings.

The only place I would quibble would be with Fahsen's column I on the back of Hombre's right shoulder. Knowing the Maya penchant for symmetry, I'm pretty sure that glyph columns G and H are counterparts to A and B on the back of his left shoulder, and the glyph fragment under Fahsen's column I would be the lower right glyph in a collocation under H; thus I have labeled it so in my photographs.

Enjoy this early classic masterpiece!

-Bruce Love

Fahsen, Federico

1988. A New Early Classic Text from Tikal. Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing 17. Center for Maya Research, Washington, D.C.

Photographs by Bruce Love. Drawing by Rene Ozaeta, Rafael Pinedo, and Rolando Caal.

Hombre de Tikal

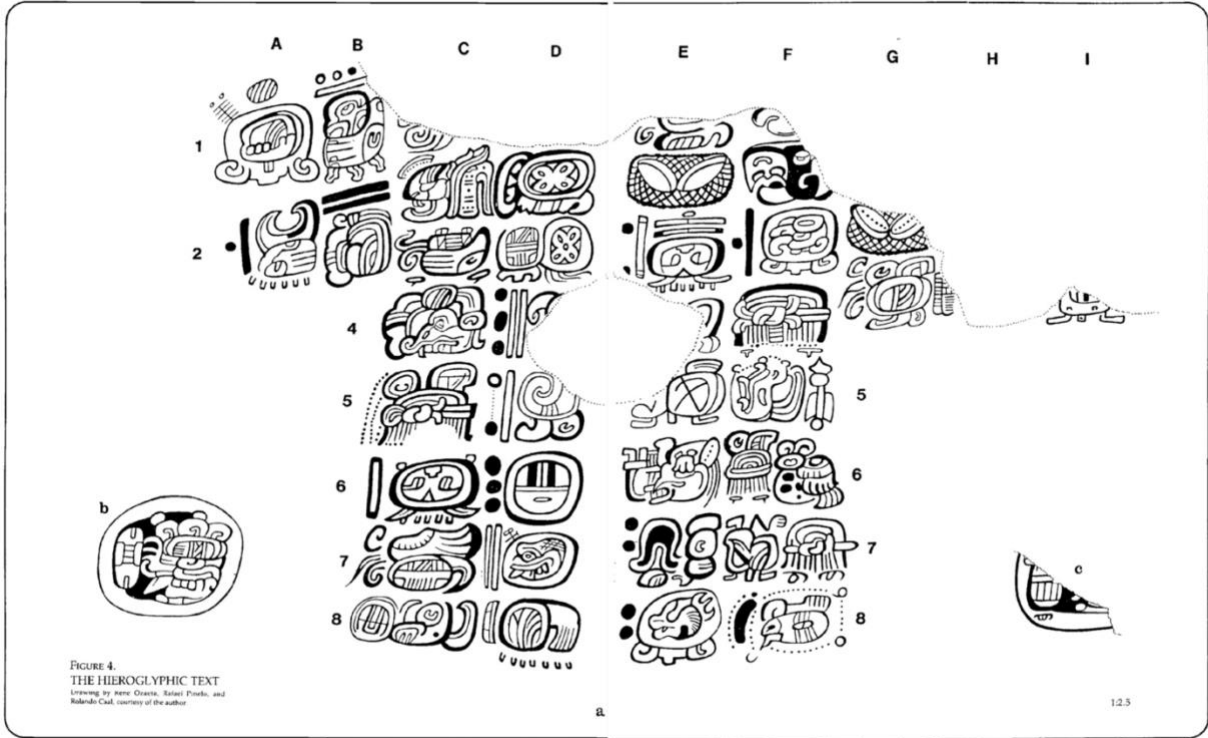


Approximate measurements

Front to back: 48 cm

Width at the shoulders: 58 cm

Height: 56 cm



Drawing of the Hieroglyphic Text
Fahsen 1988 (Figure 4)



Hombre de Tikal, A1-B2



Hombre de Tikal, C1-D2



Hombre de Tikal, C3-D4



Hombre de Tikal, C5-D6



Hombre de Tikal, C7-D8



Hombre de Tikal, E1-F2



Hombre de Tikal, E3-F4



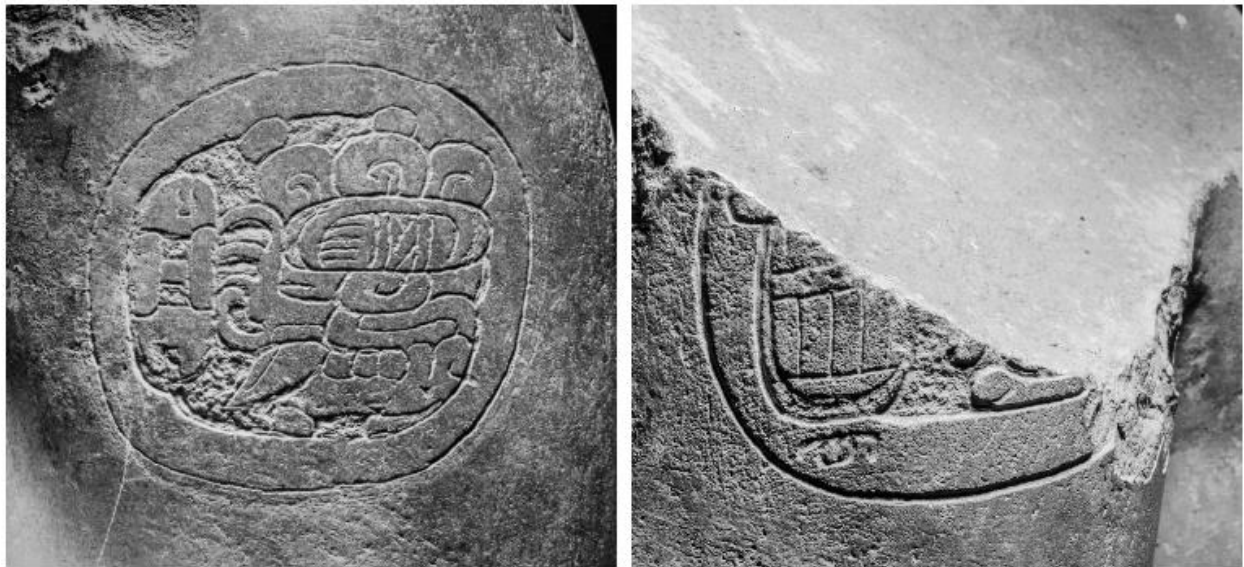
Hombre de Tikal, E5-F6



Hombre de Tikal, E7-F8



Hombre de Tikal, G1-H2



Hombre de Tikal, b (left shoulder) and c (right shoulder)

Suggested Citation: Love, Bruce. "Corpus Volume 18: Hombre de Tikal." Contributions to Mesoamerican Studies, March 20, 2026. <https://brucelove.com/corpus/corpus-volume-018>.



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