

# Essay

P1

Some twenty five years ago, in the spring of nineteen sixty nine, I happened to pick up a small Maya vase that had been in our collection for several years ~~and~~ was in the process of admiring a ~~plastic~~ small panel painting of a Chanting priest on one of its sides when suddenly I was struck by what appeared to be the influence of geometry in the organization of its composition and drawing.

Nod I not just spent several years previously studying the functions of geometric systems in the evolution of European painting I doubtless would never have noticed it. But there it was simple, direct and unmistakable. <sup>Considerably excited</sup> In my considerable excitement I went ~~immediately~~ to <sup>our</sup> ~~my~~ library and pulled out every book I owned on the Maya, <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ carefully examined each <sup>page</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>some</sup> mention of the existence of such a system, but could find nothing not even a suspicion of it. There were however many ~~carefully~~ detailed drawings taken from sculptured stelae and carved glyphs <sup>which</sup> and these proved to be a rich, <sup>study some</sup> ~~rich~~, <sup>rich</sup> ~~source~~, for <sup>example</sup> ~~for example~~ I could see geometry at work.

Later I ~~then~~ made a ~~copy~~ tracing of the Chanting priest ~~from~~ our small vase and transferred it to a flat piece of paper. Cleaned it up and ~~inking~~ <sup>careful</sup> inked in the ~~thin~~ lines paying ~~careful~~ attention to the ~~typical~~ changes in ~~their various thickness~~ to accuracy.

$$\begin{array}{r} 32 \\ 32 \\ \hline 164 \\ 96 \\ \hline 10.24 \end{array}$$

I now had something from which I could work out the scheme ~~with~~ transparent overlays without ~~damage to the original~~ <sup>out</sup> & the scheme

I could now work with tracing paper without ~~damage~~ damage to the original drawing.

After a few false starts <sup>a</sup> ~~the scheme~~ system emerged. It was <sup>clear</sup> simple and pleasing and I could see at once that it influenced every line in the composition. I could see as well that I had drawn only a preliminary phase of <sup>process of further</sup> ~~that by a~~ further ~~process of~~ subdivision more ~~after~~ would be ~~established~~

the one shown in the accompanying drawing <sup>five manifestations</sup>

From that beginning I went on to study <sup>this</sup> ~~of this~~ important aspect of Maya art in some depth over the following years and made what I believe were some significant <sup>observations</sup> ~~discoveries~~ of its use in many media.

~~Yet~~ Two and a half decades have passed since that day and we find ourselves in the middle ~~of a golden~~ of what could be called a golden age of Maya scholarship. The small library I had to work with then is almost lost in all of the books which have appeared since and yet as far as I know <sup>on</sup> the subject of geometry in ancient Maya art, the record ~~is still~~ <sup>on</sup> ~~mate~~ remains silent.

Clearly it is time to lift the veil if only for a moment for perhaps a bit more than just a glimpse