

## PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF THE FIRST SEASON AT ZAPOTE BOBAL, TOWNSHIP OF LA LIBERTAD, PETÉN

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We are here presenting the preliminary results of the first field season completed at the site of Zapote Bobal, in the *municipio* of La Libertad, Petén, as part of CEMCA's Northwestern Petén Project conducted at Guatemala during the months of June and July, 2004 and aimed at defining the basis of the second phase of this project, whose major goal is to gain knowledge about the Hixwitz cities.

Recent investigations at La Joyanca and its surrounding areas revealed a dense and extended prehispanic occupation throughout the regions of rivers and lagoons south of the San Pedro Mártir River, in the northwestern area of Petén. La Joyanca, a mid-upper ranked center of the Late Classic period, had an occupation that extended along two thousand years between the Preclassic and the Terminal Classic periods. The influence and domination of this city by the governing center of El Perú-*Waka'*, located approximately 20 km to the east, seemed only natural in the political Classic scene.

However, in the year 2001, the Hixwitz Emblem Glyph was identified at both El Pajalar and Zapote Bobal (Figure 1: Stuart 2003). Moreover, the *Chan A'hk* glyphs, the name used by the kings and lords of Hixwitz, previously known from other western inscriptions particularly from Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan, were also deciphered at La Joyanca. Until that time, Hixwitz was considered to be a city, though it would actually be designating a "kingdom". The other references about the *Jaguar Hill* made it possible to document warfare actions as well as matrimonial and strategic alliances (Simon and Grube 2000; Stuart 2003); surrounded by large capital cities –Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan at west, El Perú-*Waka'* at north, and Motul de San José at the northeast- Hixwitz would be in fact an independent political entity, probably submerged under the constant pressure of its powerful neighbors.

The reconnaissance conducted by the Northwestern Petén-La Joyanca Project (PNO) recorded between 1999 and 2002 a remarkable density of structural groups in the region, reflecting a settlement pattern where the habitat was relatively dispersed throughout extended areas of fertile lands. The civic-ceremonial centers integrated by a Main Plaza and a residential sector abound, though their dimensions are limited. The Classic settlements include those of El Florido-Naranjo located at the northwestern end, and El Pajalar and Zapote Bobal at south, characterized by

monumental architecture and glyphic texts. San Diego, in turn, presents a heavy populational density, but the center of this settlement has not yet been discovered. Finally, La Reina and Pie de Gallo represent sites of smaller dimensions (Figure 1).

Thus, the region with lakes and affluents, south of the San Pedro River, experienced a strong prehispanic occupation with, apparently, no major governing center, but with several cities grouped in a territory known as Hixwitz, according to the epigraphic information.



Figure 1. Location map of the region and sites mentioned throughout text.

This area has been poorly explored from the point of view of archaeology; therefore, the present investigations of the PNO project are now pursuing the overall goal of achieving a greater knowledge of its cultural history, its socio-political organization during the Classic period, and the relationships maintained with other entities; this will be accomplished through the study of Zapote Bobal and El Pajjaral, identified as the major centers of the region. In 2004, Zapote Bobal was the focus of our efforts.

## THE SITE OF ZAPOTE BOBAL

Zapote Bobal is located about 20 km south of the San Pedro Mártir River, in two natural water divides of the sierra La Gloria, halfway between the Tamarís River and the Peje Lagarto brook (UTM Coordinates 0786422-1882282). Specific interventions have taken place at the site since the 1960's, when Ian Graham (1970, 1982) completed the first wide survey of the center and the record of monuments, further complemented with the regional survey program of the PNO-La Joyanca project (Breuil *et al.* 2001). The epigraphic analysis was initiated in 2002 by Stuart (2003). Because of its sculpted monuments and archaeological abundance, Zapote Bobal has been heavily plundered. As of the year 2001, the PNO-La Joyanca project, jointly with IDAEH's authorities, enforced the first measures of protection to create an archaeological site, and on September, 2004, the separation of the central sector of the nuclear area of the site became effective.

Prior to this season, there was a record of 65 structures at the site center, 16 monuments preserved *in situ*, and some knowledge about the presence of many residential groups distributed on the nearby hills.

One of the objectives of the preliminary investigations in 2004 was to refine the map of the nuclear area of the site –leaving aside the Acropolis palace group- by conducting a systematic reconnaissance of the central sector and the corresponding survey using a Total Station. As a result, 28 structures were recorded and described, while others, of monumental proportions, were found once more (Figure 2). The residential sector was explored at random, with the purpose of preliminary defining the settlement pattern of the site and confirming that Zapote Bobal once had two clearly delimited sectors: the Center and the Residential Sector.

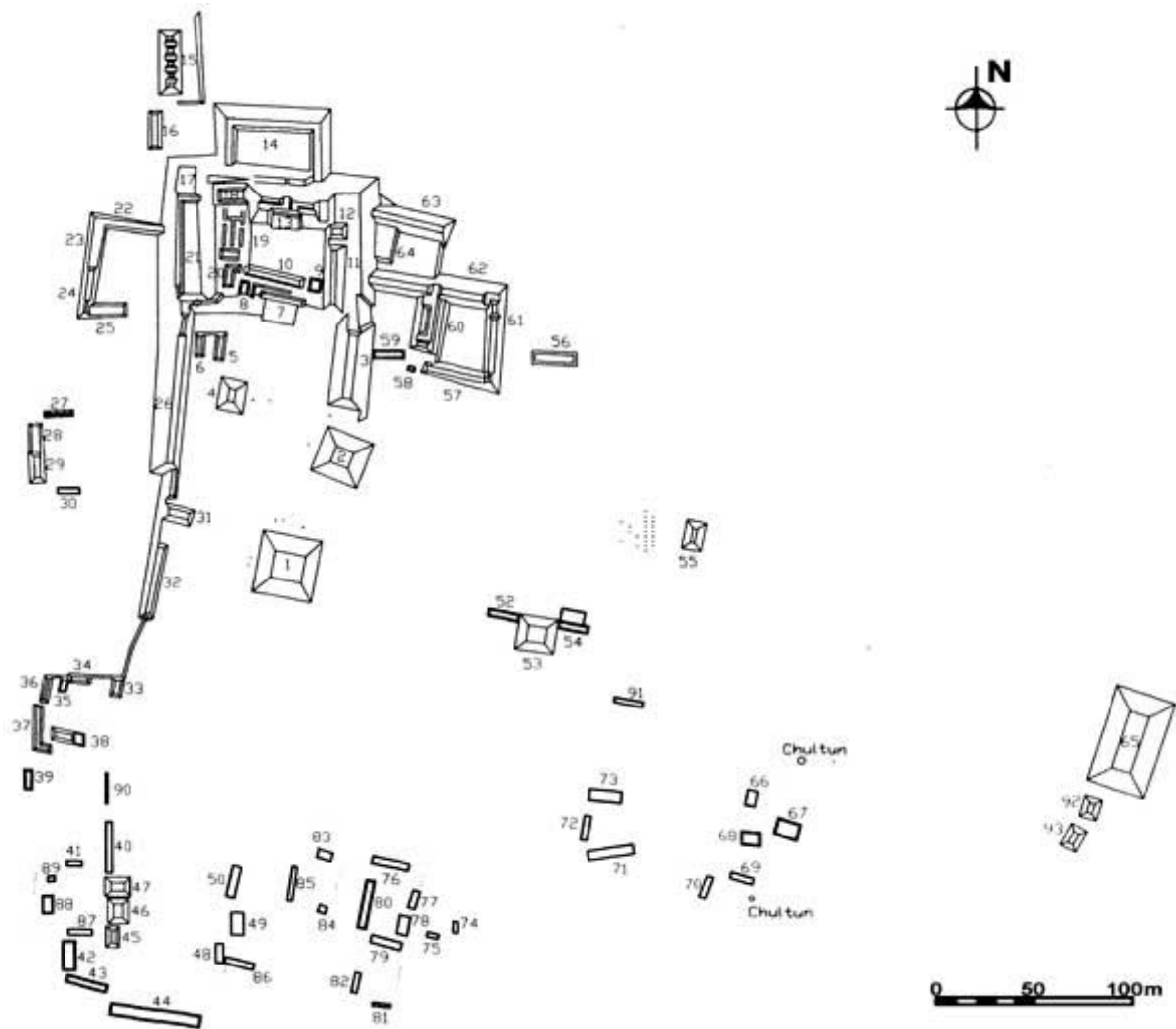
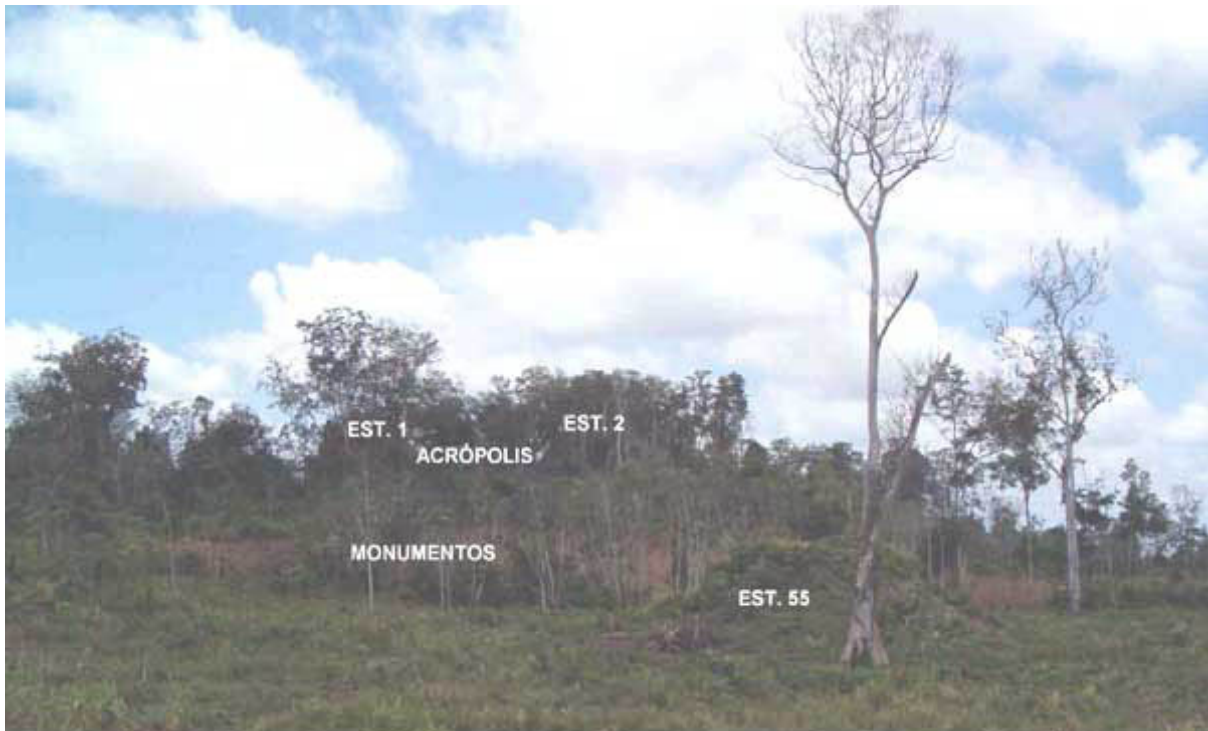


Figure 2. Map of the site center based on Ian Graham (1972), and Leal and López (in Breuil et al. 2001): 2004 version (Edy Barrios and UTJ-Protierra).

## THE CENTER

The center of Zapote Bobal (Figures 3 to 6) was built on the upper portion of a relatively humid sector, taking advantage of a natural elevation of the ground which formed a table approximately 1 km long and 700 m wide; the builders of this city flattened and elevated a sector of over seven hectares, where the Main Plaza – which extended from north to south (five hectares)- was located, as well as the southern and eastern groups (two hectares), building wide terraces that delimited the entire southeast sector of the Main Plaza –this latter was devoid of structures- as well as the different patios of the southern groups and the East Group of Pyramid 65.



**Figure 3. Center of Zapote Bobal: a) West Sector, Acropolis, Main Plaza, Structure 55 and monuments sector.**

The empty spaces that separate the Main Plaza from the ritual central group (Group B; Breuil *et al.* 2002), and in turn, Group E from Structure 65, correspond to portions of low and possibly floodable grounds, as the water level was recorded 40 cm below the level of the present surface early in the rainy season, this year. It should be noted that the two pyramid structures of Group B (Structure 53 and associated ones, such as Structure 55), as well as the plaza of that group where several alignments of stelae and altars were placed, were not raised with tall platforms and so, several monuments were partially flooded when they were recorded this year.

The urban center is characterized by its monumental architecture, with the Main Plaza standing out on the west sector, with three pyramid structures; at north, a group of palaces, and at east, along an east-west axis, two ritual sectors: a central one with two pyramids and a cluster of monuments in Group B (Breuil *et al.* 2001); at east, a tall platform 10 m high that supports Pyramid Structure 65 and two range structures at south. Today, there is an *aguada* at east of Structure 65. At south of the central ritual group, 19 range structures delimiting four patios form Groups C and D, with functions that are still uncertain. Preliminary vestiges and testimonies of ancient plots suggest the presence of a possible elevated causeway connecting the Main Plaza, from Structures 1 and 2, with Group D.





**Figure 3b. The center of Zapote Bobal: b) East Sector: South Group and East Group with Structure 65.**

## **RESIDENTIAL SECTOR**

It extends in a radius of 2 km, 2.5 km around the Center. It is characterized by the presence of groups always located on top of the small hills that surround the Center, at a distance of 100 m to 300 m from one another and adjusted to the topographic variations. These groups consist of range structures which may be 30 m long –with occasional masonry vaults in the sector close to the south limit of the Main Plaza– built on low leveling platforms creating one or several quadrangular, open or enclosed patios. The preliminary investigations conducted in 2004 have not made it possible, so far, to define the boundaries between the residential and the peripheral sectors; it has been recorded, however, that beyond a distance of 2.5 km from the Center, the density of the hill groups declines remarkably.

## **CLASSIC MONUMENTAL ARCHITECTURE**

The documentation and backfilling of looting trenches and tunnels at the site center made the preliminary study of four razed pyramidal foundations possible (Structures 2, 4, 53 and its associated ones, and 55), as well as the observation of two additional structures: Structures 1 and 65. Two different construction techniques stood out, perhaps illustrating two construction moments at the site:

The pyramid structures with a very firm foundation and a very solid refill correspond to the tallest structures (Structure 1, with a 9 m height; Structure 2, with an 11 m height; Structure 65, with 25 m), located on the much elevated leveling platforms of the Main Plaza and the East Group, of which at least two present substructures or

several construction stages. The pyramid structures with a foundation built with a very weak refill, typical of the “low” pyramids with heights that vary from 5 to 7 m (Structures 4, 53 and 55), present in Group B and at the Main Plaza.

The tall pyramidal structures (Structures 1, 2, and 65), are characterized by the construction technique of platforms, that include a top quality refill. It mainly consists of slabs (of a medium to large size, 30 to 60 cm long, and representing 70 to 80% of the stones), placed horizontally, in a rather tight manner, and carefully cemented with a clayish mix of gravel and small brown, yellowish and gray stones, depending on the sectors observed. Refills are remarkably firm, compact, with no gaps and solid. Although these refills were observed in the three structures mentioned above, the best known example is that of Structure 2, widely documented during the 2004 season.

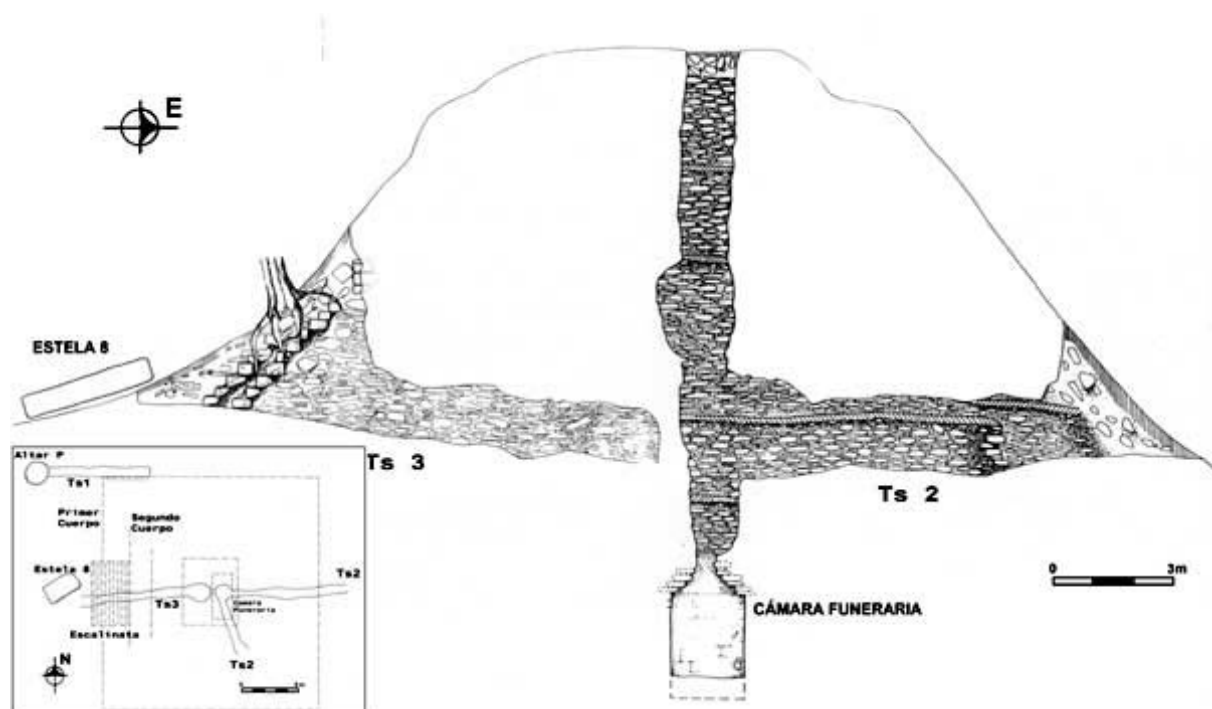


Figure 4. Structure 2, ground plan and profiles (drawing by Véronique Breuil-Martínez).

## TALL PYRAMID STRUCTURES WITH COMPACT REFILLS

Structure 2 is located in the central section, at the northeast side of the Main Plaza, while Structure 1 –with similar proportions and dimensions- was built at the south of Structure 2. The pyramidal foundation of Structure 2 is 22 m long and 21 m wide, with a height of 11 m above the current surface of the Plaza, and 19 m including the east platform. Stela 8 is facing the axis of the west façade, while Altar P is located on the northwest corner. Altar U, placed equidistant from pyramids 1 and 2 may have been associated to any of these structures.

Pyramid 2 shows several construction and/or modification stages illustrated by the two levels of the front stairway and the seven stucco floor levels recorded in the three ramifications of looting 2. Two of the floors were covering the landings

corresponding to the modifications of the second and third bodies; however, the remaining ones extended towards the center of the platform, suggesting the presence of five construction stages. Taking into account a possible already lost upper floor, the remodeling works of the structure would add up to six. The architecture of the final stage of construction consisted of a platform with at least four sloping bodies, on top of which there was probably a complementary platform. On the main façade, a landing is visible between the second and the third bodies.

In the upper part of the structure, the morphology was altered both by the vegetation and the lootings, and therefore, no trace of a super-structure could be observed on the surface. The walls of the platform bodies are lost in almost the entire mound. However, its surface still shows the refill slabs of the different bodies and of the now projecting corners. Nevertheless, under the case of the stairway, a portion of the wall seems to be well preserved; this portion shows a fine masonry with rectangular ashlar stones of varied sizes, with and without tenons, carefully joined together with narrow cuts covered with a stucco dressing.

Access to the middle section of the platform was accomplished through an outset stairway approximately 4.25 m wide, consisting of at least 12 steps visible on the surface and built with square blocks and tenoned ashlar stones finely cut and covered with a stucco layer 6 to 15 cm thick, which still appears well preserved in the west looting cut.

Besides, the vertical branching of looting 2 communicates with a chamber located at the heart of the structure, 4 m below the present plaza level. A looted burial chamber 4.15 m long and 1.80 m wide presents a north-south orientation similar to that of the longitudinal axis of the structure, and is located inside the refill of the first stage of construction. The walls were covered with a well preserved stucco layer, on which two red hand prints were stamped; the full height of the room is unknown, as it still contains a sediment layer that has not been removed. The vault springs at a height of 2 m above the current surface, and is closed at a height of 2.55 m; it was built with the same slabs that formed the refill (8 to 12 courses) and sealed with finely cut ashlar stones.

On the floor of the east -or lower- looting 2, one dozen long flint flakes were found, close to the chamber's access, likely associated with the placement of the latter. The nature of the refills in Structure 2, with a significant amount of slabs and proportionally scarce mortar, unfortunately implies scarcity of ceramic material to date the different construction stages. The few sherds collected in the lootings of Structure 2, Structure 1, and Structure 65, are diagnostic of the Late Classic period.

## **LOW PYRAMID STRUCTURES WITH A WEAK REFILL**

Low pyramid structures are characterized by weak refills and the use of different types of stones of variable sizes, amorphous, cut and reused (grinding stones, a chultun lid, and large blocks from previous constructions, among others). The stones were placed in a disorderly manner with gaps in-between; some sectors showed them bound together with mortar and others merely with sandy earth, therefore resulting in unstable refills. Three examples of this type have been examined:



Structures 4 and 55, and the expansions of Structure 53 and Platforms 52 and 54 (the pyramidal foundation of Structure 53 was not excavated this season).

## **STRUCTURE 4**

Structure 4 (Figure 5) was located at the northwestern sector of the Main Plaza, facing Structure 2. The mound was very poorly preserved and showed two looting tunnels that crossed the structure from side to side along both of its axis as well as its northeast and northwest corners. The approximate measures at the base were 10 m per 10 m. It consisted of a razed pyramidal base composed of two *talud* bodies with multiple modifications, as evidenced by the wall remains found inside the platform. On the east façade, a narrow chamber with a width of 0.60 m was habilitated, and its access sealed with a masonry wall in the shape of a niche. No access stairway was recorded. However, the main façade seems to be placed on the east side, where the narrow chamber was documented. In the upper part of the mound, three sections of wall foundations suggest the presence of a super-structure built with walls and a perishable roof.

In regard to the function of the building, it should be noted that 40% of all the pottery analyzed this season came from the refill and from the super-structure of Structure 4. In the humus layer of the super-structure, a large number of fragments of cylindrical censers modeled with anthropomorphic representations attest the ceremonial activities that used to take place there. The materials found in the refill point to two different origins: on one side, there is a regular amount of sherds mixed with loose earth, and on the other, it is possible to observe between two levels of stucco floors and at the base of the upper floor, a layer of light brown mix with a large amount of sherds mixed with gravel and charcoal, a possible vestige of a construction ritual. An identical stratigraphical association was detected in small Structure 6 located north of Structure 4.

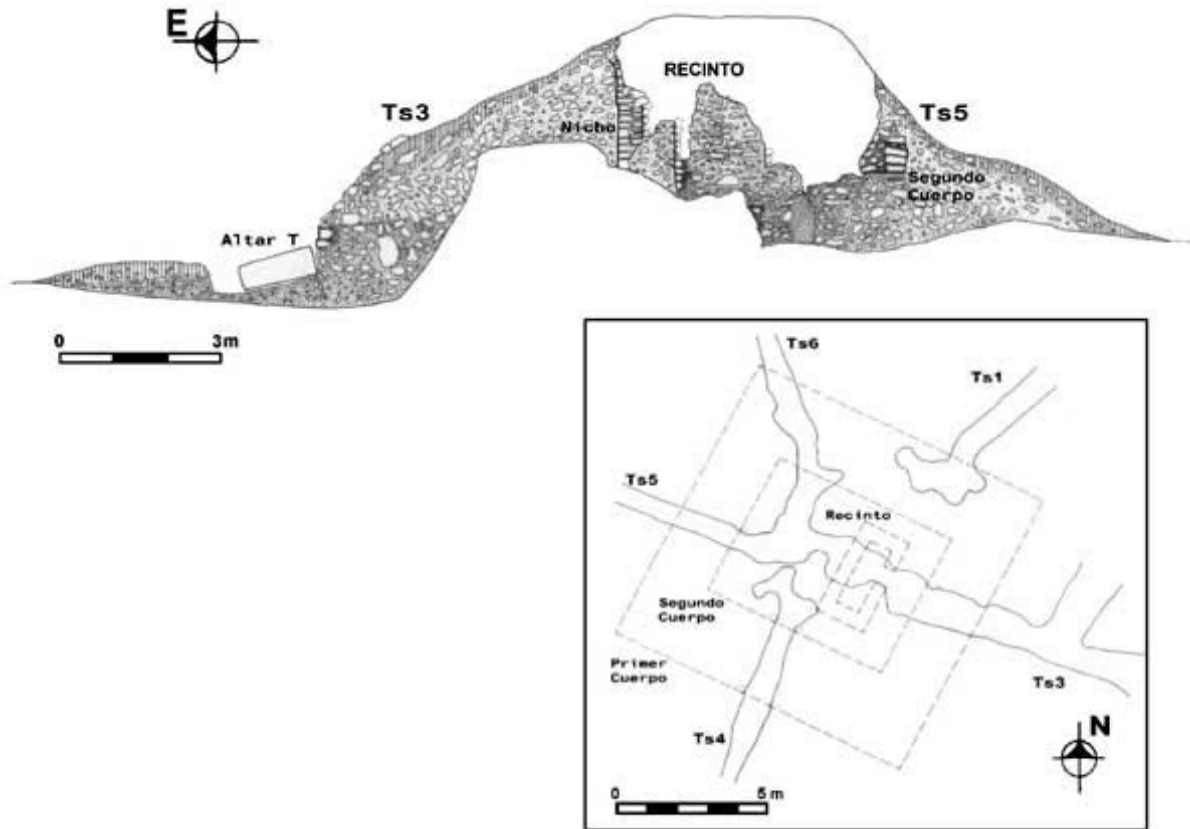


Figure 5. Structure 4, ground plan and profiles (drawing by Edy Barrios and Véronique Breuil-Martínez).

## STRUCTURE 55

Structure 55, on the east side of Group B and associated with several rows of monuments, represents an additional example of a low structure. It consists of a razed pyramid with a height of approximately 5.50 m, a base of at least 15 m (north-south axis) per 12 m (east-west axis), and an orientation of some 13° Azimuth (Figure 6).

It was possible to define that the structure presents a first sloping body with at least 2 m in height, and based on the dimensions of the mound, the construction most likely had a second body with similar characteristics and an upper platform, lower than the latter ones. There is indication of possible inset corners which differentiate from the *talud* of the façade because of their greater verticality. Besides, the presence of a central stairway located on the west façade of the building was established, composed of steps with treads and risers measuring 20 cm to 25 cm, respectively, defining in this way the main façade of the west side, associated with the monuments.

Notwithstanding the observed traces of a possible sub-structure, these were only identified on the east façade, where some portions of walls exposed in looting tunnels probably are part of a sub-structure or a partial architectural modification. In any case, the oldest construction is mutilated and shows the same refill present in the subsequent one.

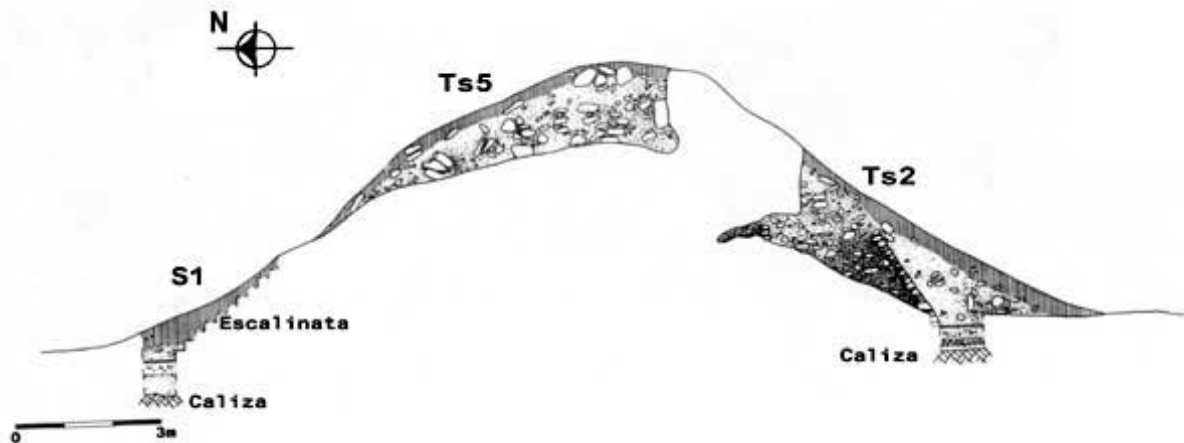


Figure 6. Structure 55, ground plan and profiles (drawing by Laura Gámez).

### LATERAL PLATFORMS OF STRUCTURE 53

Located on the south side of Group B, Structure 53 represents the third example of a low pyramid. It consists of a truncated pyramid approximately 6.50 m tall, with a base 20 m long (east-west axis), and 17 m wide, with an orientation of 100°. It differs from the previous one for the presence of two lower rectangular structures placed against this one, on the east and west sides (Structures 52 and 54). With a length of 11 m each, they consist of platforms with vertical façades that support an upper enclosure of undefined characteristics.

### PRELIMINARY CERAMIC ANALYSIS

The ceramic material analyzed so far, less than two weeks after the end of the season, consists of a small sample of 2033 sherds recovered from 36 surface lots and from looting records. Around 30 local and imported types were identified: six types correspond to the Cambio group, six to the Tinaja group, three to the Infierno group, and there are as well cream monochromes (1), brown (1), bi-chromes on cream, orange and red, and polychromes that correspond to the Saxche/Palmar, Zacatal and Chambote groups, among others.

As part of a preliminary dating attempt, it is worth outlining that all the types identified were attributed to the Late Classic period. Much more varied than the collection of the Abril Complex from La Joyanca, though sharing many modes and types with the latter, as it was to be expected, the sample presents great similarities with materials of the Tepeu 2 Complex from Uaxactun and some resemblances with the Yace Complex from Piedras Negras.

### FIRST ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATING

In the sample collected in five of the six pyramid structures of the site, there is a remarkable absence of Preclassic ceramic types and modes and of Early Classic

Aguila Orange vessels, as also of Fine Gray and Orange Gray materials dated to the Late Classic and Terminal Classic periods. This tends to suggest that probably the moment when the greatest construction effort took place at the site, when the more recent versions of Structures 1 and 2 were erected and Structures 4, 53, and 55 were built, may have corresponded to the time span between the early VII century AD (disappearance of Aguila Orange and Early Classic polychromes) and the mid-VIII century AD (approximate date of arrival of the Fine Gray pottery in the region).

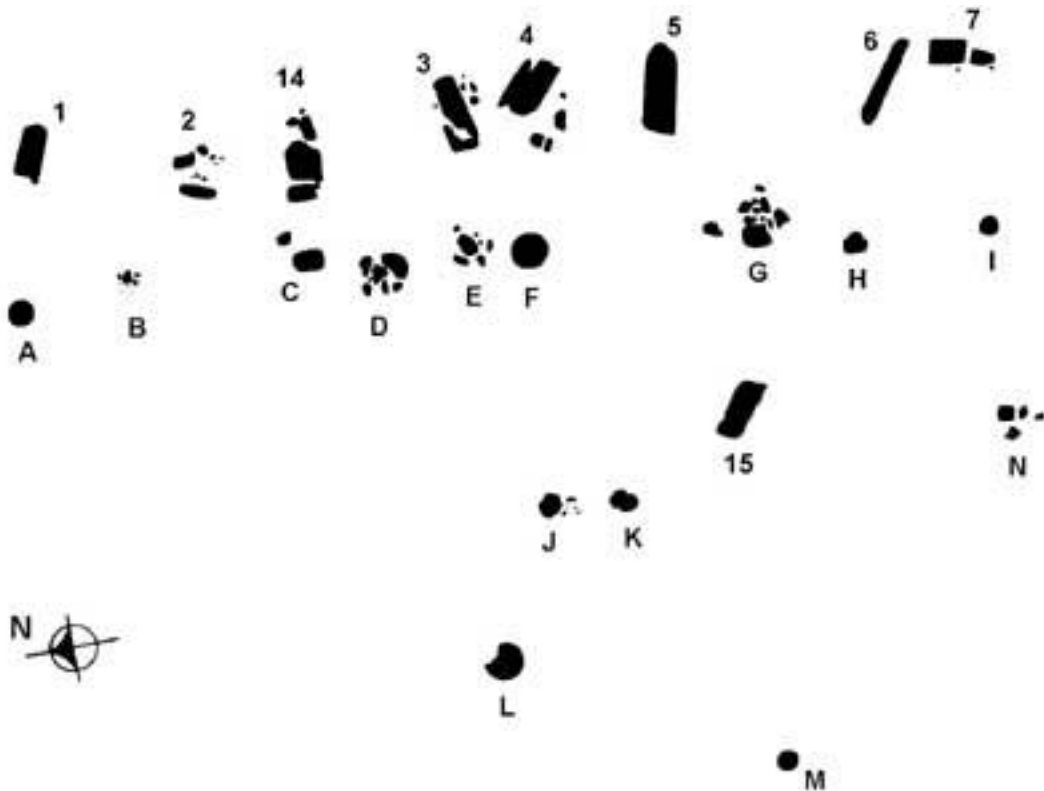
The pyramidal structures 1, 2 and 65, located on the east side of the Main Plaza and on top of the East Group platform, are the result of several construction efforts stepped throughout time, and the subsequent variations are most likely associated to different evolutionary stages of both the Main Plaza and the East Platform, whose stratigraphies are, so far, unknown.

On the contrary, Structures 4, 53 and 55 do not seem to integrate an ancient architectural complex. Structures 53 and 55 were not built on a platform, which might have protected them of possible floods, but instead, right on the bedrock. In turn, Pyramid 4 was superimposed to the Main Plaza, where all the other buildings occupy, with no exception, the edge of the leveling platform.

The construction technique of the three buildings might suggest haste, on the side of builders, to have their work finished (the stones of the refill were disorderly placed and refills were uneven), or either, a shortage of raw materials or man power (reused stones, absence of mortar), or perhaps a combination of several such factors. This construction technique is present at La Joyanca in its Terminal Classic architecture. At Zapote Bobal it appears to be earlier, perhaps responding to the efforts of one or several rulers of the second half of the Late Classic period, concerned about preserving their power at an unstable time. Only future investigations will confirm or deny this hypothesis.

## **EPIGRAPHIC HISTORY**

During the season 2004, 35 stelae and altars were recorded at the site of Zapote Bobal. The major goal of operation 130 was to record all the monuments discovered, both by Ian Graham in the 70's and by the project (Breuil *et al.* 2003; Graham 1970; Graham and Von Euw 1982; Kaufman *et al.* 1988; Leal and López 1993). By the end of the season there were 14 stelae and 21 altars altogether –the majority of the stelae were associated to altars-, as is customary in Central Petén.



**Figure 7. “The Cemetery”, in front of Structure 55 (drawing by James Fitzsimmons).**

The number and location of each stela and altar was recorded on the site map, while photographs and measurements were taken of all cut stones to produce the first systematic archive of the monuments known at the site. All monuments with visible iconography or glyphs were buried at the end of the season, for protection. Local testimonies agree about the disappearance of several monuments in the past twenty years. Among the remaining ones, many are eroded, among other reasons because some of them were exposed to repeated annual fires as a part of the agricultural activities in the area, prior to the recent investigations of the project at the site.

The largest concentration of monuments at Zapote Bobal was located in front of Structure 55, on the west side, in a plaza appropriately nicknamed “The Cemetery” by local neighbors (Figure 7). Due to the thick weeds and the large number of monuments that needed to be recorded, it was not possible to investigate the full extension of the area; however, it is clear by now that the rulers of Zapote Bobal erected at least two rows of altars and stelae after the orientation of Structure 55. The discovery of Stela 15 and of five altars west of the axis of the monument alignments suggests the possible presence of three or four additional rows of monuments; this raises questions about the function of the nearby structure, a very small mound east of the site and relatively far from the Acropolis.

The presence of two or three names of different rulers and separated dates on these monuments creates as well an interesting situation. In future seasons, hopefully, we shall define whether the monuments were relocated there in prehispanic times by an ambitious individual after they were first created in different moments of the Classic, or whether this was the result of a gradual process.

Stela 12 is the best known monument at Zapote Bobal (Figure 8). It was recorded by the Project during the 2000 season in the area comprised between Structure 65 and “The Cemetery”. Stela 12 depicts a ruler holding a *k’awil* scepter and attired with a serpent headdress. The text at left reads: *ak’otaj ti? Chan ahk ux winikhaab’ hixwitz ajaw*, that is, “the dance at [a dark place]?”, *Chan Ahk*, lord of Hixwitz on his third *katun* (when he was over 40 years of age).

Even though his name appears eroded in the text, it was probably *To’ Chan Ahk*, as printed in his costume: the symbols *to’* and *chan* are visible in his headdress, while his costume has the shape of a turtle, or *ahk*. This is not the only character from Hixwitz that includes *Chan Ahk* in his name (Stuart 2003); a number of nobles mentioned at Yaxchilan, La Joyanca, and Piedras Negras have used it as well. A captive of Hixwitz at Yaxchilan, for example, features a deer horn (or something of the kind) preceding the name *Chan Ahk*. Like Stuart (2003) has suggested, *Chan Ahk* was probably the last name or name of a specific family of the region.

We should not disregard the presence of the name *Chan Ahk* in other contexts of the Lowlands; for instance, there are several references to a ruler from Cancuen around the end of the VIII century, called *Taj Chan Ahk* (Federico Fahsen, personal communication 2004). Stela 15 at Zapote Bobal, dated to the year 683 AD, mentions the name *Ta Chan Ahk*, possibly the title of a local ruler. There is another text in an altar at the site of El Cayo, sculpted in the year 731 AD by an individual named *Siyaj Chan Ahk*, who was a young *k’in ajaw* at the service of Ruler 4 of Piedras Negras (Martin and Grube 2000). Whether these individuals belonged to the same dynasty of Zapote Bobal or to other sites in the region, such as El Pajaral, remains unknown, though there is epigraphic evidence of abundant connections between the Usumacinta region –and possibly the region of Petexbatun as well- with the lords of Hixwitz.

A large number of this kind of connections in the inscriptions refers to military conflicts, particularly between Hixwitz and Yaxchilan (Stuart 2003). Up to now, it seems that Hixwitz was the defeated part during the Late Classic period. Several Yaxchilan rulers celebrated the capture of five Hixwitz lords during this period; the humiliation continued in Piedras Negras, where Ruler 4 was buried with the image – on a pyrite mirror- of his decapitated captive, an *ajaw* from Hixwitz. As Stuart (2003) has noted, the lords of Hixwitz did not use the title *k’uhul ajaw* to state their power; it is possible that these captives were the rulers or at least some high ranking officers of the region.



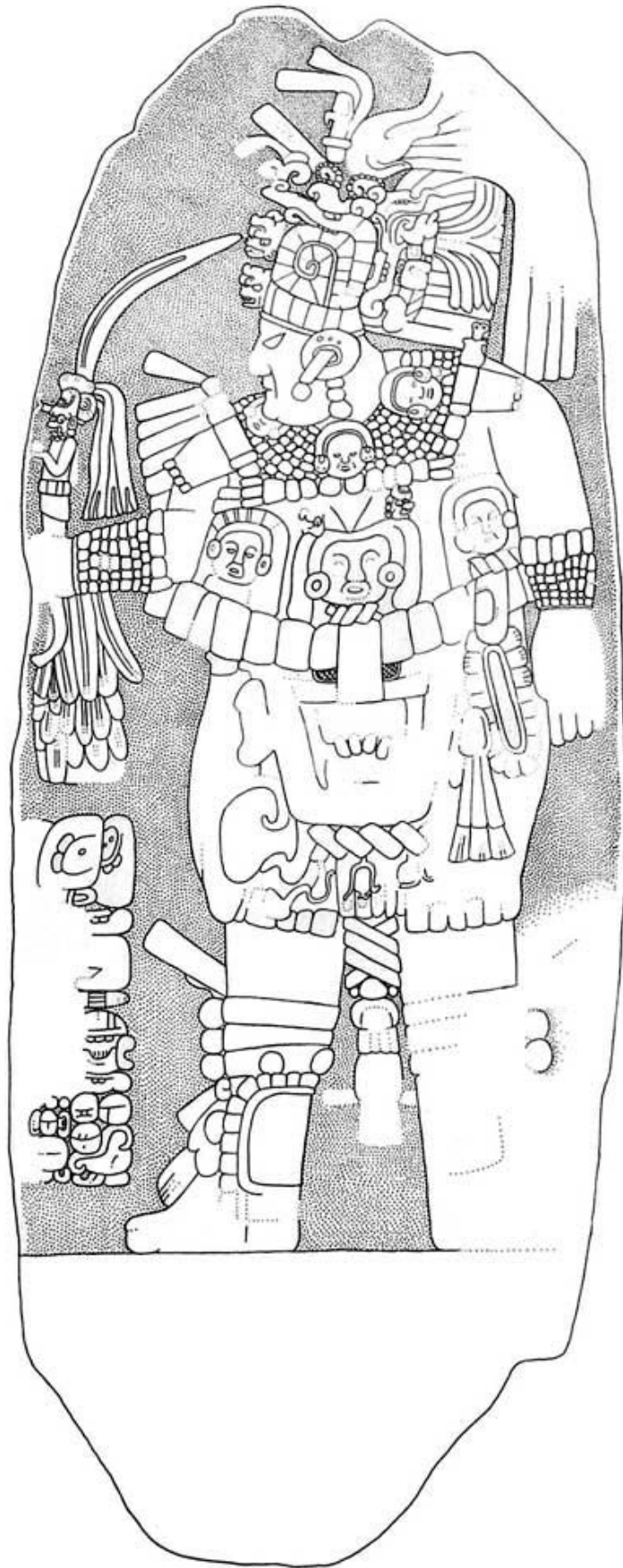


Figure 8. Stela 12 (drawing by James Fitzsimmons).

Like Martin and Grube have argued, there is a connection between warfare and marriage, where females were taken from the defeated cities to reinforce a new peace; for example: a woman from Hixwitz was one of the queens of *Jaguar Bird IV* of Yaxchilan, a rare event, considering that there is epigraphic evidence of violence between the two areas, particularly during the ruling of the father and of the grandfather of that ruler. There is a very similar case in Piedras Negras, where a woman from Ixwitz was depicted in a monument illustrating how the Hixwitz lords pay tribute to Ruler 2 (Martin and Grube 2000).

The relationships between Hixwitz and other sites still remain obscure. Several looted vessels, probably from Hixqitz, make reference to *ajaw* in the region who are so far unknown. There is a partially eroded monument at the site of Itzimte which suggests some kind of relationship between Hixwitz and that site. A tempting hint of relationships with the region of Petexbatun appears recorded on Hieroglyphic Stairway 3 of Yaxchilan. Stuart (2003) has argued that the name of one of the Hixwitz lords is very similar to the name of Ruler 3 of Dos Pilas, a contemporary of *Itzamnaaj B'alam III* of Yaxchilan, architect of the stairway referred to.

Likewise, as Federico Fahsen has suggested, it is possible that a stronger connection existed between the lords of Hixwitz and *B'alaj Chan K'awil* of Dos Pilas, who also mentions the name of Hixwitz in the Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 of that city.

However, and up to now, the strongest link found in the texts of Zapote Bobal is with El Perú-*Waka'*. New texts at Zapote Bobal, specifically on Stela 15, show two references to El Perú-*Waka'* and its rulers. At the right side of the stela, apparently a ruler of El Perú-*Waka'* is participating in a *Hotun* anniversary at the site. The name *Waka'* is not present in the first reference, while on the opposite side of the stela, the name *Waka'* is separated from the first part of the emblem glyph of the site. The tentative date of this stela is 9.12.10.0.0.9 *Ajaw 18 Zotz*, in other words, the 8 of May of 682 AD (Gregorian), although parts of the stela have not been yet excavated and the date will probably be refined in the seasons to come.

Anyway, it is clear that both El Perú-*Waka'* and Piedras Negras, Yaxchilan, and probably Dos Pilas as well, had interests in the region of Hixwitz and its lords. For what reason?, is the question that remains to be answered, and as additional information continues to be revealed by the archaeological and epigraphic investigations conducted at Zapote Bobal and other contemporary sites from Northwestern Petén, the more information will become available about the relationships, warfare and problems of the local lords.

The full record of the two carved faces of Stela 6 illustrates this potential (Figure 9a and b). This stela was partially exposed by a looting, and found during the preliminary reconnaissance conducted in previous years; during the 2004 season, the dirt around the stela was removed, to expose two well preserved figures on its two sides. The analysis of the figure at the rear revealed an individual wearing a type of costume relatively common in other stelae of the site: it consisted of some sort of cloak or garment decorated with a design similar to a *huipil*. The front side of the stela represented a male in an almost identical position, wearing a costume similar to that of *Chan Ahk* in Stela 12. Dates and texts are present on both sides of Stela 6,

but it seems that an important portion of these texts still lie under, or near, Stela 7, visible towards the southwest. Originally, the two upper sides featured large texts above the headdresses of the figures, and one of those texts also seems to refer to some character named *Chan Ahk*.



**Figure 9. a) Stela 6, rear.**

The discovery of texts longer than those present in Stela 15 or other known texts from the monuments of the Acropolis which document events in the lives of the lords of Hixwitz, open the possibility to revise our notions about the region, its history and its dynasty.



**Figure 9. b) Stela 6, front.**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Figure 1 Map showing location of the region and the sites mentioned in the text
- Figure 2 Map of site center based on Ian Graham (1972), and Leal y López (in Breuil *Et al.* 2001): version 2004 (Edy Barrios and UTJ-Protierra).
- Figure 3a Center of Zapote Bobal: a) West Sector: Acrópolis, Main Plaza, Structure 55 and monuments sector
- Figure 3b Center of Zapote Bobal: b) East Sector: South Group and East Group, with Structure 65
- Figure 4 Structure 2, ground plan and profiles (drawing by Véronique Breuil-Martínez)
- Figure 5 Structure 4, ground plan and profiles (drawing by Edy Barrios and Vénique Breuil-Martínez)
- Figure 6 Structure 55, ground plan and profiles (drawing by Laura Gámez)
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- Figure 9a a) Stela 6, rear
- Figure 9b b) Stela 6, front