

CLASSIC MAYA POLITICAL ORGANIZATION: EPIGRAPHIC
EVIDENCE OF HIERARCHICAL ORGANIZATION IN THE
SOUTHERN MAYA MOUNTAINS REGION OF BELIZE

By
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A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Anthropology
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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

PHILLIP JULIUS WANYERKA, for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in ANTHROPOLOGY, presented on 8, April 2009, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: CLASSIC MAYA POLITICAL ORGANIZATION: EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE OF HIERARCHICAL ORGANIZATION IN THE SOUTHERN MAYA MOUNTAINS REGION OF BELIZE

MAJOR PROFESSORS: Dr. Charles A. Hofling and Dr. Don S. Rice

This project investigates the nature of Classic Maya (A.D. 300-900) political organization from the hieroglyphic inscriptions of sites located in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize, Central America. Using recent models of political integration as suggested by Grube and Martin (1994, 1995, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c), as well as by Rice (2004), I have sought to understand and define the basic political principles that operated during the Classic Period. In my view, Classic Maya political organization was structured by a combination of hegemonic practice informed by Maya calendrical science, namely the 256-year cycle known as the *may*.

Scholars have struggled in their attempts to define and reconstruct Classic Maya political organization. Most of the previous approaches to this issue have been derived from anthropological theory based on various social, geographic, economic, and political factors observed or deduced from the archaeological record or from ethnographic analogies to pre-industrial peoples far-removed from Mesoamerican cultural tradition. Both Martin and Grube, and Rice's political models are based on the ethnohistoric descriptions and analogies to Postclassic and early Colonial Period Maya, the Mixtecs, and the Aztecs as well as the decipherment of several key hieroglyphic expressions that indicate agency, alliance, subordination, and warfare. This approach may explain how

Classic Maya polities operated intra-regionally and how they interacted inter-regionally using the Maya's own written inscriptions as the basis for interpretation. The strength of this approach is its ability to illuminate possible avenues of archaeological research by revealing epigraphic relationships that can then be tested. By combining the methods of epigraphy, archaeology, and a direct historical approach to the hieroglyphic inscriptions of this region, I have not only been able to reconstruct the dynastic history of sites in the region, but I have also been able to reconstruct the political affiliations and hierarchies that existed among sites in this poorly understood region of the southern Maya Lowlands. The data presented here are restricted to the four major emblem-glyph-bearing sites in the region that recorded hieroglyphic texts: Lubaantún, Nim Li Punit, Pusilhá, and Uxbenká.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation and all of the years of research that it represents to my mother, Helen Lilian Wanyerka (1929-2002) and to my wife Nancy Wanyerka for their love, support, patience, sacrifice, and constant encouragement. Their passion for life serves as an inspiration for me everyday. And lastly, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my new son, Hayden Christopher Wanyerka, who has taught me the certainty of unconditional love and how to be best father that I can. Thank you!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
ABSTRACT.....	i
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xv
CHAPTERS	
CHAPTER 1 – Introduction to the Question of Classic Maya Political	
Organization.....	1
Orthography and Dates.....	11
Goals	12
The Use of a Multidisciplinary Approach.....	14
The Study Area.....	19
Methodology.....	23
Outline of Chapters.....	27
CHAPTER 2 – Previous Descriptions and Models of Classic Maya Political	
Organization.....	35
Early Thoughts and Descriptions.....	36
The Era of Morley, Gann, and Thompson.....	38
Sixteenth Century Lowland Maya Political	
Organization.....	43
Sixteenth Century Highland Maya Political	
Organization.....	54

Site Size and Site-Based Hierarchical Models.....	61
Early Epigraphic Models.....	71
Other Regional State or Centralized Political Models.....	81
Weak State or Decentralized Political Models.....	86
The Segmentary State Model.....	89
Performance, Ritual and Theater States.....	90
The Peer Polity Interaction Model.....	91
Summary.....	92
CHAPTER 3 – Recent Models of Hierarchic Political Organization.....	95
Elite Royal Titles	97
Explicit Statements of Subordination.....	100
Local Accessions Under the Aegis of Non-Local Kings.....	102
The <i>Yichnal</i> Expression.....	110
Other Forms of Diplomatic Interactions.....	111
The <i>Hul</i> Verb.....	114
The <i>Yitah</i> Expression.....	115
The <i>Ilaj</i> or Witness Verb.....	117
Antagonistic Interactions Among Polities	118
The Hegemonic Model.....	124
Maya Calendrical Science: The <i>May</i> Model	136
CHAPTER 4 – Geographic Setting and Project Background.....	146
The Geology and Geography of the Southern Maya	
Mountains Region.....	152
Climate and Vegetation of the Southern Maya Mountains	

Region.....	164
The Prehistory of the Southern Maya Mountains	
Region.....	164
Early Historical Accounts of the Southern Maya Mountains	
Region.....	169
The Mopan Maya.....	178
The Manche Ch'ol	179
The Q'eqchi' Maya.....	183
Archaeological Explorations in the Southern Maya	
Mountains Region.....	185
CHAPTER 5 – Methodology.....	195
Maya Hieroglyphic Writing.....	201
Maya Hieroglyphic Decipherment.....	202
Iconography and Iconology.....	207
Epigraphic Investigations.....	210
CHAPTER 6 – Epigraphic Evidence of Early Classic Political Organization in the	
Rio Blanco Valley	213
The Discovery of Uxbenká.....	215
Epigraphic Evidence of Political Organization at	
Uxbenká.....	222
Late Classic Epigraphic Investigations in the Rio Blanco	
Valley.....	259
Recent Discoveries by the Uxbenká Archaeological	
Project (UAP).....	277

Synthesis and Discussion	280
CHAPTER 7 – Epigraphic Evidence of Late Classic Political Organization in the Poité-Pusilhá Valley.....	294
Investigations at Pusilhá.....	294
The Discovery of Pusilhá.....	296
Epigraphic Evidence of Political Organization at Pusilhá.....	313
Synthesis and Discussion.....	374
CHAPTER 8 – Epigraphic Evidence of Late Classic Political Organization in the Rio Grande Valley.....	397
Investigations at Lubaantún.....	397
The Discovery of Lubaantún.....	399
Epigraphic Evidence of Political Organization at Lubaantún.....	405
Synthesis and Discussion.....	428
CHAPTER 9 – Epigraphic Evidence of Late Classic Political Organization in the Golden Stream Valley.....	437
Investigations at Nim Li Punit.....	437
The Discovery of Nim Li Punit.....	439
Epigraphic Evidence of Political Organization at Nim Li Punit.....	446
Investigations at Xnaheb’ Ahse Enel.....	507
Synthesis and Discussion.....	514

CHAPTER 10 – Synthesis and Conclusion: Classic Maya Political Organization	
in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize	531
Classic Maya Politics in the Southern Maya Mountains	
Region	534
Classic Maya Politics and the Role of Territoriality	554
REFERENCES.....	562
APPENDIX A.....	661
APPENDIX B.....	759
VITA.....	797

LIST OF TABLES

<u>TABLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Table 1.1. Sites with Texts or Images in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize	26
Table 3.1. Schematic of Rice's <i>May</i> Capitals and their Dependencies.....	144
Table 6.1. AMS Radiocarbon Dates from Uxbenká.....	227
Table 6.2. The 28 <i>Winik</i> Epithet in Chronological Order.	273
Table 6.3. Period-Ending Dates in the Hieroglyphic Inscriptions of Uxbenká	287
Table 7.1. Period-Ending Dates in the Hieroglyphic Inscriptions of Pusilhá	388
Table 9.1. Period-Ending Dates in the Hieroglyphic Inscriptions of the Golden Stream Valley.....	526
Table 10.1. Period-Ending Dates in the Southern Maya Mountains Region.....	552

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>FIGURE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Figure 1.1. Map of the Maya Area.....	2
Figure 1.2. Map of the Study Area.....	25
Figure 2.1. Roy's Early Colonial Map Showing Maya Polities	46
Figure 2.2. 16 th Century Map of the Maní Province	49
Figure 2.3. Flannery's Application of Central Place Theory.....	68
Figure 2.4. Hammond's Territorial Realms as Identified by Thiessen Polygons.....	68
Figure 2.5. Adams' Regional State Map.....	69
Figure 2.6. The Constituent Parts of an Emblem Glyph.....	74
Figure 2.7. Berlin's Eight Original Emblem Glyphs.....	74
Figure 2.8. The Quadripartite Emblem Glyphs	76
Figure 2.9. Marcus' Four-Tiered Political Hierarchy Based on EG Distribution.....	78
Figure 2.10. Mathews' Late Classic Territorial Divisions	80
Figure 2.11. Classic Maya Emblem Glyphs.....	82
Figure 3.1. The <i>Ajaw</i> and <i>K'uhul Ajaw</i> Title.....	99
Figure 3.2. The <i>Kaloomté</i> Title.....	99
Figure 3.3. Unpossessed and Possessed Royal Titles.....	103
Figure 3.4. Examples of Possessed Titles.....	103
Figure 3.5. The <i>Yajaw</i> Title	105
Figure 3.6. Examples of <i>Yajaw</i> Statements of Subordination.....	105
Figure 3.7. The <i>Ukab'jiiy</i> Agency Expression.....	107
Figure 3.8. Examples of <i>Sajals</i> Acceding into Office	107
Figure 3.9. Accession of Local Kings Under the Supervision of Superordinate	

Patrons.....	108
Figure 3.10. The <i>Yichnal</i> Expression	112
Figure 3.11. <i>Yichnal</i> Accessions.....	112
Figure 3.12. Variants of the <i>Hul</i> Verb.....	116
Figure 3.13. The <i>Hul</i> Arrival Event as Recorded on Tikal Stela 31.....	116
Figure 3.14. The <i>Yitaj</i> Glyph.....	119
Figure 3.15. The <i>Yitaj</i> Glyph on Nim Li Punit Stela 2.....	119
Figure 3.16. The <i>Ilaj</i> Verb.....	121
Figure 3.17. The <i>Yilaj</i> Verb as Recorded on Dos Pilas, Panel 7.....	121
Figure 3.18. Warfare Expressions	125
Figure 3.19. Martin and Grube’s Interpretation of the Classic Maya Political	
Landscape.....	127
Figure 4.1. Map of the Southern Maya Mountains Region.....	148
Figure 4.2. Inter-Community Exchange Along the Bladen Branch.....	151
Figure 4.3. Hammond’s Maya Realm Based on Environmental Zones	151
Figure 4.4. Map Showing the Environmental Zones of Southern Belize	158
Figure 4.5. The “Owen-Lewis” Projectile Point.....	167
Figure 4.6. Map Showing Locations Where Hieroglyphic Inscriptions are Found in the	
SMMR.....	170
Figure 4.7. Map Showing Maya Language Distribution of the Yucatan Peninsula for the	
16 th -17 th Centuries	180
Figure 5.1. Tikal Stela 31.....	209
Figure 6.1. Map of the Río Blanco Drainage	214
Figure 6.2. Plan Map of Stela Plaza Group.....	216

Figure 6.3. Leventhal's Map Map of the Uxbenká's North Group.....	219
Figure 6.4. Uxbenká Stela 11.....	221
Figure 6.5. Map Showing Sites Subject to Early Classic Tikal Control.....	223
Figure 6.6. The <i>Chak Tok Ich'aak</i> Motif..	234
Figure 6.7. The <i>Chak Tok Ich'aak</i> I Name Phrase.....	234
Figure 6.8. The 'Dynastic Pot' (K4679).....	237
Figure 6.9. Blackened-Ware Ceramic Cache Pot (MT 140).....	237
Figure 6.10. Tikal Stela 26.....	238
Figure 6.11. Tikal Stela 39.....	238
Figure 6.12. The Name Phrase of <i>Siyaj K'ahk'</i>	241
Figure 6.13. Map Showing Probable Route of Teotihuacanos to Tikal	242
Figure 6.14. The Arrival of <i>Siyaj K'ahk'</i> as Recorded at Uaxactun and Tikal.....	243
Figure 6.15. Important Historical Names as Recorded on Uxbenká Stela	247
Figure 6.16. The <i>Sak Hix Mut</i> Name Glyph	249
Figure 6.17. The <i>Sak Hix</i> Bird as Seen on Uxbenká Stela 11 and Tikal Stela 31	251
Figure 6.18 The Text of Uxbenká Stela 11.....	252
Figure 6.19. Uxbenká Stela 21.....	254
Figure 6.20. Uxbenká Stela 18.....	256
Figure 6.21. Uxbenká Stela 23.....	258
Figure 6.22. Uxbenká Miscellaneous Text 1.....	258
Figure 6.23. Uxbenká Miscellaneous Sculptures 1-10.....	260
Figure 6.24. Uxbenká Stela 14	262
Figure 6.25. Uxbenká Stela 19	264
Figure 6.26. Uxbenká Stela 22.....	266

Figure 6.27. Uxbenká Stela 15.....	269
Figure 6.28. The 28 <i>Winik</i> Title.....	272
Figure 6.29. Uxbenká Stela 3.....	278
Figure 6.30. Uxbenká Stela 5.....	278
Figure 6.31. Uxbenká Stela 6.....	279
Figure 7.1. Map of the Poité/Pusilhá Drainage	295
Figure 7.2. Plan Map of Pusilhá Stela Plaza Group.....	300
Figure 7.3. Plan Map of Pusilhá.....	302
Figure 7.4. Plan Map of Ballcourt 1.....	303
Figure 7.5. Plan Map of Machaca Plaza.....	304
Figure 7.6. Pusilhá Ballcourt Markers 1,2, and 3.....	306
Figure 7.7. Pusilhá Hieroglyphic Stairway 1.....	307
Figure 7.8. The Pusilhá Emblem Glyph.....	314
Figure 7.9. Pusilhá Stela P, G6-H11.....	319
Figure 7.10. The <i>Chi</i> -Altar Toponym.....	319
Figure 7.11. References at Copan to the 8.6.0.0.0 Period Ending	321
Figure 7.12. Context for <i>Chi</i> -Altar Toponym.....	323
Figure 7.13. Pusilhá Stela K.....	324
Figure 7.14. The Foliated <i>Ajaw</i> Name	324
Figure 7.15. Pusilhá Stela P, D1-C9.....	328
Figure 7.16. Pusilhá Stela P, A1-C1.....	330
Figure 7.17. Pusilhá Stela O.....	331
Figure 7.18. Pusilhá Stela H, E7-F16.....	332
Figure 7.19. Pusilhá Stela D, A1-D7.....	334

Figure 7.20. Pusilhá Stela Q.....	335
Figure 7.21. The 3-11 <i>Pih</i> Title.....	337
Figure 7.22. Pusilhá Stela D, C8-F9.....	340
Figure 7.23. Pusilhá Stela C.....	343
Figure 7.24. The <i>Kan Ch'ok</i> Title.....	344
Figure 7.25. Pusilhá Stela D, E10-H14.....	346
Figure 7.26. Copan Sculpted Bench Panel from Str.10L-11.....	349
Figure 7.27. The Similarity of Name Phrases between Pusilhá and Copan.....	350
Figure 7.28. Pusilhá Stela P, Front.....	352
Figure 7.29. Pusilhá Stela P, E1-G6.....	353
Figure 7.30. The <i>Witenaah</i> Glyph	354
Figure 7.31. Pusilhá Stela H, A1-D4.....	356
Figure 7.32. Pusilhá Stela K.....	358
Figure 7.33. Pusilhá Stela M.....	359
Figure 7.34. Pusilhá Stela U.....	361
Figure 7.35. Pusilhá Stela E, Front.....	363
Figure 7.36. Pusilhá Stela E, Text.....	364
Figure 7.37. Pusilhá Stela R.....	367
Figure 7.38. Pusilhá Stela F.....	367
Figure 7.39. Pusilhá Stela N.....	369
Figure 7.40. Slate Scepter, Left Side (K3409).....	371
Figure 7.41. Slate Scepter, Right Side (K3409).....	372
Figure 7.42. Slate Scepter, Edge Text (3409).....	373
Figure 7.43. K8089.....	375

Figure 7.44. Plan Maps of the Three Special Function Groups at Pusilhá.....	391
Figure 8.1. Map of the Río Grande Drainage	398
Figure 8.2. Hammond's Reconstruction of Lubaantún's Realm.....	402
Figure 8.3. Hammond's Lubaantún Ceramic Typology.....	402
Figure 8.4. Hammond's Plan Map of Lubaantún.....	404
Figure 8.5. Reconstruction of Lubaantún Site Core.....	406
Figure 8.6. Lubaantún Ballcourt Marker 1.....	411
Figure 8.7. Lubaantún Ballcourt Marker 2.....	413
Figure 8.8. Glyphs for 'Handspan' and 'To Strike'	414
Figure 8.9. Piedras Negras Sculptured Stone 10.....	414
Figure 8.10. Lubaantún Ballcourt Marker III.....	417
Figure 8.11. A Possible Lubaantún Emblem Glyph.....	418
Figure 8.12. Lubaantún Figural Plaque #3.....	421
Figure 8.13. Lubaantún Figural Plaque #4.....	421
Figure 8.14. Lubaantún Figural Plaque #5.....	422
Figure 8.15. Lubaantún Figural Plaque #6.....	422
Figure 8.16. Lubaantún, The "Pocket Stela" Plaque.....	425
Figure 8.17. Caterino's Site Monument 1.....	427
Figure 8.18. Choco I, Monument 1	427
Figure 8.19. Map Showing the Major Trade Routes in the Maya Area	434
Figure 9.1. Map of the Golden Stream Drainage	438
Figure 9.2. Nim Li Punit, Plan Map of Stela Plaza Group.....	443
Figure 9.3. Nim Li Punit, Plan Map of Site Core.....	445
Figure 9.4. K1440.....	448

Figure 9.5. K1440, A1-L5.....	450
Figure 9.6. Nim Li Punit Stela 15, Passage X1-Y8.....	453
Figure 9.7. The Nim Li Punit Emblem Glyph.....	453
Figure 9.8. K1440, Passage L5-V1.....	455
Figure 9.9. K1440, Passage W1-F'5.....	459
Figure 9.10. Nim Li Punit Stela 15.....	461
Figure 9.11. Copan Altar Q.....	463
Figure 9.12. Reading Order for Nim Li Punit Stela 15.....	464
Figure 9.13. Nim Li Punit Stela 15, Secondary Texts.....	467
Figure 9.14. Nim Li Punit Stela 2.....	469
Figure 9.15. Figural Scenes.....	470
Figure 9.16. Nim Li Punit Stela 2, Main Text.....	471
Figure 9.17. The “Water-Scroll” Emblem Glyph.....	475
Figure 9.18. Nim Li Punit Stela 2, F3-I4.....	475
Figure 9.19. The <i>Ek'Xukpi</i> Title.....	477
Figure 9.20. Copan Structure 22A.....	478
Figure 9.21. The <i>Tzuk</i> Title, Nim Li Punit Stela 2.....	481
Figure 9.22. Altar de los Reyes Altar 3.....	485
Figure 9.23. The Numbered <i>Tzuk</i> Title.....	487
Figure 9.24. Nim Li Punit Stela 2, Passage I4-L4.....	491
Figure 9.25. Nim Li Punit Stela 2, Dedicatory Text.....	491
Figure 9.26. Nim Li Punit Stela 15, Passage K1-T1.....	493
Figure 9.27. Nim Li Punit Stela 1.....	493
Figure 9.28. Nim Li Punit Stela 14.....	496

Figure 9.29. Nim Li Punit Stela 14 Text	497
Figure 9.30. Pusilhá Sculptural Fragment 17.....	500
Figure 9.31. Nim Li Punit Stela 21.....	501
Figure 9.32. Nim Li Punit Stela 21, Text.....	503
Figure 9.33. Nim Li Punit Stela 7.....	505
Figure 9.34. Nim Li Punit Stela 7 Text	506
Figure 9.35. The <i>Ajaw</i> Stelae of Southern Belize.....	508
Figure 9.36. Plan Map of Tzimín Ché.....	509
Figure 9.37. Nim Li Punit Stela 4.....	511
Figure 9.38. Plan Map of Xnaheb'	512
Figure 9.39. Xnaheb' Stela 1.....	515
Figure 9.40. Xnaheb' Stela 2.....	515
Figure 9.41. Copan Sculpted Bench Panel from Str. 10L-11	523
Figure 10.1. Map Showing Probable Geopolitical Divisions Based on the Numbered <i>Tzuk</i> Title	537
Figure 10.2 Map Showing Possible Ethno-Linguistic Boundaries in the SMMR...	542
Figure 10.3. Chart Showing Diplomatic Relations Among Sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region	546
Figure 10.4. Chart Showing the Antagonistic Relations Among Sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region	549

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE QUESTION OF CLASSIC MAYA

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

For decades Mayanists have struggled in their attempts to define and reconstruct the political organization of the Classic Period Maya (A.D. 199-900) of eastern Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and the northwestern corner of El Salvador (Figure 1.1). Virtually all of the proposed models to date were derived in large part from anthropological theories based on social, geographic, economic, and political factors observed in or deduced from the archaeological data, the epigraphic record, or from ethnohistoric analogies of complex societies far-removed from Mesoamerica (Grube 2000a: 547; Houston 1992b).

Rather than defining how the Classic Maya political system was structured, maintained, and perpetuated throughout the Maya area both temporally and spatially, scholars have tended to approach the subject from a typological perspective (Feinman and Neitzel 1984). Thus, previous scholars have attempted to classify Classic Maya political organization according to some “idealized” type (i.e. complex chiefdoms, ranked societies, city-states, segmentary states, galactic polities, theater states, etc.) in an attempt to place the Maya within a broader universal or evolutionary schema (Cohen 1978; Fried 1967; Service 1962, 1975; Steward 1955). To compound this problem, there is a lack of consensus as to what criteria should be used as the basis for understanding Classic Maya political organization. There are still more questions than answers concerning our understanding of many Classic Maya cultural systems. Some major topics still defying

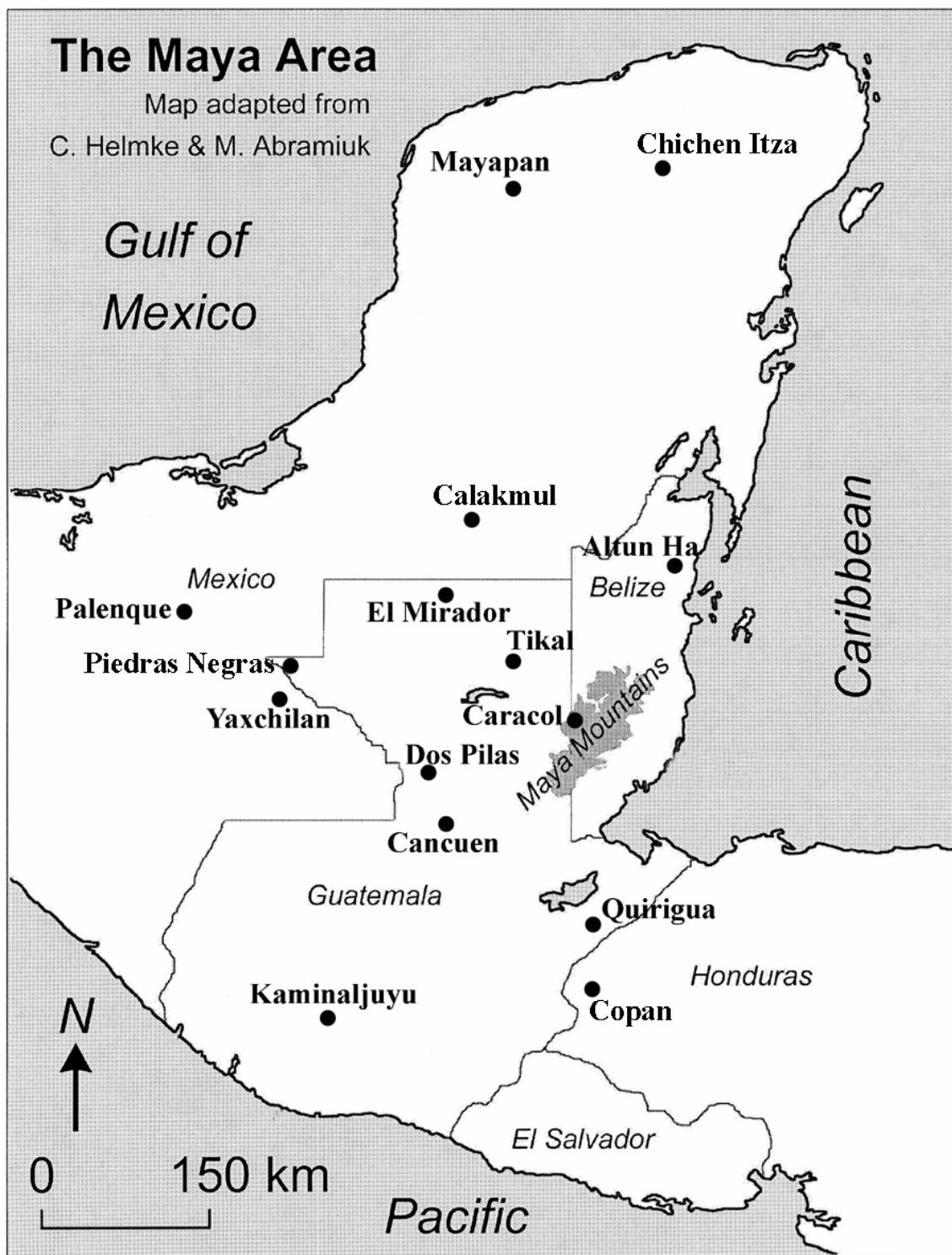


Figure 1.1. Map of the Maya Region (Map courtesy of Helmke and Abramiuk, modified by author)

complete explication include Maya kinship and lineage practices, the extent of elite control in the exchange of prestige goods, the role of trade and tribute, land ownership, and the degree of governmental or bureaucratic centralization. Besides the inherent definitional problems concerning the preceding topics, many disagreements stem from different theoretical backgrounds and interpretations of the data (Chase and Chase 1996: 804). Cultural practices are highly complex and variable from society to society and they tend to fluctuate both temporally and spatially from community to community. Thus, models using analogies from political and economic institutions of complex societies distant from Mesoamerica are not necessarily useful for understanding Classic Maya political organization.

On one side of the debate about Classic Maya political organization are those scholars who view large-scale, multi-centered polities as evidence for the existence of large, overarching regional or centralized states with powerful bureaucracies (Adams 1981; Chase and Chase 1992; Gann and Thompson 1931; Marcus 1973, 1976, 1993; Morley 1946). On the other side are those scholars who view Maya polities as being limited in size with a kinship-based theocracy in self-sustaining weak or decentralized city-states (Demarest 1992; Dunham 1992; Fox 1987, 1989; Mathews 1991). While most scholars now accept the view that political hierarchies existed during Classic times, there is little agreement regarding levels of autonomy or the degree of political centralization among Maya polities on the whole.

I believe that the Classic Maya represented a state-level system of organization but since there is no consensus by scholars on what to call individual Classic Maya political entities (ie. state, city-state, kingdom, etc.), I will simply use the word ‘polity’ as a neutral term to denote a sociopolitical or territorial unit ruled by a *k’ul ajaw*, ‘divine

lord.’ In addition, I use the term “politics” to refer to the “practices of agents who either operate within political structures and systems or are somehow related to them” (Kurtz 2001: 9). This definition suggests that the material and ideological sources or means of political process largely involve agency. Thus, politics is about power and how political agents (mainly political leaders) engage in various strategies to acquire power to increase their authority, to provide or enhance their legitimacy, to defeat a competitor, to retain the right to govern, and to bend others to their will for the public good of the political community (Kurtz 2001: 10). These goals appear to be for the benefit of the political community; however, political power can often be self-sustaining, aimed not only at the political survival of the agents involved, but also to enhance their social and economic well-being (Kurtz 2001: 21). Political organization can be described as the “combination and interplay of relations of authority and power in the regulation of public affairs” (Smith 1968: 194). Thus, political organization refers to the political resources (human, material, ideological) that regulate and dictate the terms of internal and external public policy on behalf of a political community (Smith 1968: 194; Rice 2004: 6). The regulation of political systems is based on the integration of authority and power whereby authoritative power resides in a hierarchically-structured administration while competition for power resides among the elite who occupy the administrative offices in the political system (Smith 1968: 194).

As will be discussed in this dissertation, I believe that Classic Maya political organization was structured by hegemonic practices (see Martin and Grube 1994, 1995, 2000; Grube and Martin 1998a, 1998b, 1998c) informed by Maya calendrical science (see Rice 2004). The evidence for this practice can be seen in the Classic Maya’s own hieroglyphic inscriptions. In 1994, Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube proposed a model

for interpreting Classic Maya political organization based on epigraphy that reconciles some of the problems associated with the lack of clear archaeological evidence in support of other organizational models. Martin and Grube's model is based in part on Hassig's (1988) hegemonic interpretation of the Aztec Empire. Martin and Grube have argued that for most of the Classic Period a small number of Maya polities, (i.e. Calakmul and Tikal, two of the largest sites in the Maya Lowlands in terms of large-scale architecture and the number of carved monuments), were able to achieve a greater level of economic wealth and political dominance than other sites in the region. In this system, hegemonic states indirectly ruled or held sway over a series of constituent dependencies thereby creating larger pan-regional states or larger "political spheres" (Martin and Grube 1994: 2). According to Martin and Grube (1994: 2) the hegemonic system was uniquely different from the "earlier projections of integrated regional states" and from later "reconstructions of more dispersed authority" as favored by proponents of the weak state models.

Martin and Grube's hegemonic model is based largely on the notion of over kingship and the decipherment of several key glyphic terms that express agency, alliance, and subordination. Specifically, their argument is based on instances of agency-marked accessions, direct statements of subordination, and references to warfare or inter-site conflict (Martin and Grube 1995: 45). Often these statements were followed by references to other elite interactions including royal visits and joint ritual activities, which probably served to solidify the formal ties and relationships between the subjugated polity and its overlord. According to Martin and Grube (1994: 19), the ties between overlords and their subordinates were long-lived and did not fluctuate as much as some other scholars had suggested (see Marcus 1998). Polities that were connected diplomatically shared the same enemies (Martin and Grube 1994: 23).

Methodologically, Martin and Grube utilized the Maya's own extensive written corpus, ethnohistoric descriptions, and analogies to the Postclassic and early Colonial Period Mayas, Mixtecs, and Aztecs as the basis for their interpretations. Martin and Grube's findings suggest that the Classic Maya were neither a centralized confederacy of regional states nor a political system of weak city-states. Rather, the hieroglyphic inscriptions point to a political system where power and wealth were unequally distributed among polities. This meant that a few powerful polities, because of their economic and political circumstances, were able to dominate the social, economic, and political affairs of lesser polities in a hegemonic system not unlike those described in other areas of Mesoamerica (Grube and Martin 2001: 150). Martin and Grube's notion of hegemony is similar to the traditional Gramscian view of hegemony where cultural, political, and intellectual processes are used to acquire, exercise and maintain economic power and activities within a given society whereby one class (the elite class) dominates the others using non-coercive measures such as controlling forms of institutionalized knowledge by limiting access to education, the legal system, or other forms of ideology (Kim 2001: 6645; Kurtz, 2001: 6642; Wolfreys 2004: 81). However, Martin and Grube's view of Classic Maya hegemony does include the use of physical force as a means by which one polity may dominate another. The use of physical force is supported by inscriptions that describe conflict. Although wars between subordinate polities allied to the same political patron do occur, most political allies shared the same adversaries. These findings would seem to confirm that there were groupings of allied polities during Classic times that were headed by larger more powerful polities like Calakmul and Tikal (Grube 2000a: 550). Arguably, Calakmul and Tikal never achieved a centralized bureaucracy comparable to that of the Aztecs, but they did have a considerable degree of

political control over subordinate sites. According to Martin and Grube (1994: 136) sites defeated in warfare became vassal or subjugated states, but were never completely integrated territorially into the victor's state. Rather, conquest was often followed by the re-establishment of local sovereignty, which could include elements of the old order or even leave the administration unchanged.

A key characteristic of the hegemonic system was the creation of new subordinate clients that had certain economic and political obligations to their conquerors. Through the mechanisms of inter-dynastic marriages, exchange, and tribute, the local elite of subjugated polities were united by means of consanguinity and allegiance to their conquerors (Grube and Martin 1998a: 136; 2001: 149). In the Aztec system, submission and cooperation were ensured by means of coercive intimidation with the threat that any revolt would be met by military retaliation. Grube and Martin argue that similar coercive measures were likely utilized by the Classic Maya as well (1998: 137). Since subjugated states appear to have maintained their own royal lineages, patron-gods, and ideological sources of legitimacy, outwardly they tend to look autonomous (Grube and Martin 1998a: 137). The fact that some centers were greater in size than others is a common characteristic of hegemonic states (Grube and Martin 1998: 138). In this case, dominant centers reflect their economic well-being with greater control over human and natural resources by creating monumental architecture at the site core surrounded by a dense population base.

The economic motivation for a hegemonic system likely centered on resource exploitation and exchange and the collection of tribute. Unfortunately, few monumental inscriptions refer to tribute. Scholars should not take this apparent lack of tribute references on monumental sculpture as evidence against a formal system of tribute, since

the purpose, function, and subject matter of Classic Maya monumental art in general focused more on other important themes such as the glorification of rulers, warfare, rituals honoring deities or ancestors, cosmic origins of power, the ballgame, and the fundamental commemoration of cyclical time (Tate 2001: 47). Most of the textual references that describe tribute are featured on Classic Maya painted ceramic vessels. Most tribute scenes depict one or more scribes inspecting or inventorying tribute being presented. During Classic times it is likely that tribute and other economic transactions were recorded on perishable media such as bark-paper books that have simply not survived. Both tribute and taxation were integral features of Aztec hegemonic practice (Hodge 1996: 41).

One of the major problems in understanding the nature of Classic Maya political organization has been the lack of archaeological evidence. Without written texts, it is extremely difficult to detect archaeological evidence of a hegemonic system in the material remains of the Classic Maya. Unlike other complex societies (i.e., the Roman Empire) where hegemonic intrusion brought a whole host of new cultural traditions to the local subjugated state, the cultural traditions of the Maya (including ceramic types and styles) remained localized and relatively unchanged for most of the Classic Period. In the absence of clear archaeological data, epigraphic data can be integrated into archaeology as a useful method for identifying potential inter- and intra-regional hegemonic relationships. The importance of Martin and Grube's hegemonic model is its ability to suggest possible avenues of archaeological research by revealing epigraphic relationships that can then be tested archaeologically. This is especially important in places like the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize, an area that historically has received little archaeological attention, but contains numerous hieroglyphic inscriptions.

Rice (2004: 51) has recently argued that previous models of Classic Maya political organization have failed to adequately incorporate process (to explain how Lowland Maya political organization functioned in terms of strategies for negotiating power) and time (the fact that Maya kings were both ‘rulers of time’ but were also ruled by time). Based on ethnohistoric analogies drawn from Postclassic Lowland Maya practices, Rice believes that Classic Maya political organization was structured in large part by Maya calendrical science, especially a 256-year cycle known as the *may* (2004: 55). In her view, socio-political and ritual power were expressed through the *may* system.

Our understanding of the *may* system comes largely from the work of Munro Edmonson (1979). According to Edmonson, the *may* was a “uniquely Yucatecan” organizational system that was widely utilized in Postclassic and Colonial Yucatan, as attested by references to said system in the Books of the *Chilam B’alams* (1979: 11). In this system, power rotated and shifted every *k’atun* (roughly 20 years) among the most important allied cities within a specified unified territory for a period of 13 *k’atuns* or 256 years (Edmonson 1979: 10-11; Rice 2004: 55). At the center of this system was the capital city of the region known as the *may ku*, ‘cycle seat’ whose *k’ul ajawob’*, ‘divine lords’ were responsible for overseeing the major social, religious, economic, and political events for the region for the duration of the 256 year *may* cycle (Rice 2004: 78). The task of ritually seating each of the thirteen constituent *k’atuns* was one of the responsibilities of the *k’ul ajawob’*. As each *k’atun* ended, a new *k’atun* was ritually seated in another town or city (*jetz’ k’atun*, ‘*k’atun* seat’) within the realm of the *may ku*, ‘cycle seat’ (Rice 2004: 78). Although the *may ku* was the dynastic and ritual religious center of this system, competition to become a *jetz’ k’atun* was fierce, since each *k’atun* seat controlled “tribute rights, land titles, and appointments to public office in the realm for the twenty-

year duration” (Edmonson 1979: 11; Rice 2004: 78). For simple economic reasons, competition to become a future *k’atun* seat often led to conflict among cities allied to the same *may ku* as individual cities vied for the opportunity to host the *k’atun* (Rice 2004: 78).

While I do not believe that Classic Maya political organization was based solely on cosmic or calendrical cycling to the extent argued by Rice (2004), I think Rice’s findings do reflect an underlying socio-religious or ideological system that was shared among the allied dependent polities of a superordinate power. This ideological system and the rituals associated with it are what likely bound the subordinate polities to their sovereigns. Evidence of the *may* system may also be detected epigraphically in the written inscriptions of the Classic Period by the appearance and use of numbered *tzuk* titles. During the Classic Period, the Maya area appears to have been conceived as a territory divided into thirteen regional *tzukob’*, ‘partitions’ or ‘provinces.’ Each province was referred to and identified by one of thirteen numerical coefficients (1-13). Thus far, I have been able to identify and match six numbered *tzuk* titles to the geo-political-territorial realms they likely represented as part of this system. It would appear that numbered *tzuk* titles were shared regionally by secondary polities beholden to larger hegemonic powers. As will be discussed in this dissertation, my findings on the nature of Classic Maya territoriality and their implications for political organization are quite different from that advocated by Martin and Grube. Though Martin and Grube (2008: 20) do not believe that territoriality played a major role in the creation or establishment of a hegemonic system in the Southern Maya Lowlands, my work with these numbered *tzuk* titles would seem to indicate the opposite. According to Adam Smith (2003: 151), a polity can be defined as “a bounded territory within which a sovereign regime rules the

community of subjects integrated by a shared sense of identity that binds them together in place.” This definition is particularly well-suited for the Classic Maya within the framework of the *tzuk* title. During the Classic Period, the Maya defined themselves through an interpretative matrix that involved collective memory and identity based on the concept of *ch'en* (literally meaning ‘cave or well, but metaphorically meaning ‘built place’) and *ajaw/ajawil* (‘shouter, proclaimer’ or “a descent of lines of *ajaw* into which somebody can insert him/herself”) (Biro 2007: 96-97). The notion of *ch'en* as a metaphor for ‘built or enclosed place’ was initially proposed by Stuart and Houston (1994: 12-13) based on glyphic examples of the derived noun *ochch'en* meaning ‘place-entering’ (Biro 2007: 96). According to Peter Biro (2007: 96), the Classic Maya defined their landscape using these two concepts to connect a “ruler and the ruled.” While no one has thus far been able to convincingly describe the Classic Maya concept of territory, the appearance of the numbered *tzuk* title in the inscriptions of Classic Period may ultimately identify such constructions within a larger framework of regional identities. In addition to regional titles like the numbered *tzuk* title or site-specific emblem glyphs, other tangible aspects of the *may* system that may be detected archaeologically include the erection of Period-Ending stelae, the creation of E-Astronomical Groups, and the creation of Twin-Pyramid Groups, all used to commemorate the passing of particular *k'atuns* (Rice 2004: 115-116).

Orthography and Dates

In general, I used the orthography for Maya words that has been accepted by the Academia de Lenguas Mayas in Guatemala, though I have also chosen to employ

Colonial Yukatek, Modern Yukatek, and Ch'olan Mayan transcriptions. Although Maya orthographies have changed in the intervening years since the Conquest, I have chosen to retain the original orthography and spellings of certain Maya words and phrases as they appear in the publications cited in order to retain their integrity and avoid further orthographic confusion. In addition, given the fact that the Classic Maya of the southern lowlands were likely bilingual speakers of Yukatekan and Ch'olan languages I have chosen to use both Yukatekan and Ch'olan spellings based on explicit glyphic collocations as recorded in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize. Finally, all Maya words are italicized in this dissertation and plurals are expressed using either an English *s* or the Yukatekan plural *ob'* (i.e. *k'atuns* or *k'atunob'*).

For the most part, all of the dates recorded in this dissertation have been converted and correlated to the Julian calendar using the Goodman-Martínez-Thompson (GMT) 584,285 correlation.

Goals

This dissertation is intended to accomplish three specific and interrelated goals. The first goal is to analyze the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region using the methods of modern linguistics and epigraphy (along with the archaeological data) to test whether the hegemonic characteristics described by Martin and Grube for the central Petén and *may* characteristics described by Rice can be found here. The implications of such a study could demonstrate whether peripheral regions participated in a hegemonic system during the Classic Period and would strengthen the validity of Martin and Grube's model of Classic Maya political organization. The criteria

used in testing the hegemonic model were the following. 1) The use of elite royal titles (*K'uhul Ajaw* and *Kaloomte'*) reserved for the most prestigious of Classic Maya kings. 2) The use of direct statements of subordination including possessed royal titles (i.e. *y-ajaw*) and other explicit statements of hierarchy including the accession of local kings under the aegis of foreign kings by use of the *u-kab'jiiy*, *yichnal*, *hul*, *yitah*, or *ilaj* expressions. 3) The use of explicit epigraphic statements to indicate friendly inter/intra-regional marriage or lineage ties. 4) The use of explicit references to warfare or inter-site conflict (i.e. *chuhk*, 'Star War' verb, *ch'ak*, *pul*, *jub'uy u-took' pakal*, or *k'as*). If epigraphic evidence does not support the hegemonic system in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region, then Martin and Grube's view of Classic Maya political organization would have to be reevaluated.

Since Rice (2004: 283) believes that the hegemonic model advocated by Martin and Grube is complementary to her *may* model in so far that the basic tenets of either model do not negate the other, the *may* model will also be tested in this dissertation. The criteria used in testing the *may* model were the following. 1) Period-Ending stelae (in particular *K'atun*-Ending stelae). 2) E-Astronomical Groups. 3) Twin-Pyramid Groups. 4) The use of elite royal titles including *K'uhul Ajaw* and *Kaloomte'*. 5) The patterning of significant events at either 128 or 256-year intervals, which may include those events at the end of the *may* cycle resulting in the destruction of the city, its roads, and its idols. 6) Lastly, that cycle seats within a typical *may* sphere will share similar ceramic, architectural, and iconographic programs.

The second goal is to develop and reconstruct a regional chronology and dynastic history of the emblem glyph-bearing sites located within the Southern Maya Mountains Region.

Finally, the third goal is to examine and define the cultural, geographic, economic, ideological, and political processes that may have contributed to the growth and prosperity of this region. This study will attempt to provide a clear diachronic view of Classic Maya political history and interaction within a peripheral zone and demonstrate how political/economic power and authority may have been established and maintained across fluctuating political spheres as suggested by Martin and Grube (1994, 1995, 2000).

The Use of a Multidisciplinary Approach

Ideally, the means for investigating Classic Maya political organization should come from the Maya themselves. The study of Classic Maya political history has been made easier by the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic writing. As one of the major hallmarks of Classic Maya civilization, no other invention had a longer or greater impact on Maya civilization than the development and utilization of a logo-syllabic writing system. Much of the Classic Maya's success was derived from the power of writing and its ability and flexibility to express cultural meanings, both mundane and profound. For more than a millennium (100 B.C. to A.D. 910), Maya hieroglyphic writing was used extensively by the ruling elite in political discourse as a means of immortalizing the dynastic exploits of their rulers and to record the dynastic histories of their kingdoms. Political discourse organizes human experience. It establishes and constructs levels of meaning by the recounting and interpreting of specific events (Apter 2001: 11644). Political discourse can be extremely useful in linking levels of meaning to power and authority in Classic Maya society, for political discourse often includes specific

indigenous information regarding the principles of hierarchy, representation, and accountability (Apter 2001: 11644). Due to recent advancements in Maya hieroglyphic decipherment, the monumental inscriptions found throughout the Maya Lowlands provide scholars with an indigenous means to explore and investigate the social, economic, political, religious, and ideological constructs of Classic Maya culture. With a written corpus containing more than 34,000 hieroglyphic texts spanning more than 300 archaeological sites (Macri et al. 2007), epigraphers can now date, interpret, and reconstruct precise historical details of the Classic Maya like never before. Therefore, any discussion concerning the use of theoretical models for exploring the question of Classic Maya political organization should include a consideration of the hieroglyphic texts.

Discourse analyses of Classic Maya narrative texts have revealed that the syntax of the script closely mirrors the grammatical structures and canons of modern Mayan discourse (Josserand 1997). Each text contains a formal opening and closing. All of the events described within these narratives are structurally patterned within a precise chronological framework. However, the use of historical texts can raise some fundamental issues as to their usefulness and veracity in the reconstruction of past complex societies, like the Classic Maya. The science of epigraphy, described by some as “truth-seeking”, searches for historical facts in two ways (Houston et al. 2001: 15). The first examines the narrative text from a literal point of view. The hieroglyphic inscriptions convey clear and accurate details of past historical events that may be accepted at face value (Houston et al. 2001: 15). For example, many Classic Period texts describe the accessions and deaths of specific Maya rulers. Epigraphers usually take these statements on faith since it seems unlikely that the Maya would intentionally create fictional historical figures, given the time and expense in creating monumental art, though dates

may have been manipulated. On the other hand, epigraphers must constantly keep in mind the fundamental issues associated with historiography. The indigenous accounts must be weighed and scrutinized by the researcher because written accounts, whether they are ancient or whether they are contemporary historical commentary, all contain some degree of cultural “baggage.” This means that the accounts may be slanted, self-serving propaganda obscuring the “truth” to some degree (Houston et al. 2001: 15-16).

I believe that the best approach to understanding Classic Maya political organization is to examine the hieroglyphic narrative texts from several vantage points, including the use of a direct-historical approach (see Gould and Watson 1982; Lyman and O’Brien 2001; Rice 2004). Analogy is an integral part of all archaeological interpretation. Analogy “is a form of reasoning that produces an inference about an unknown and invisible property of a subject phenomena. The unknown property is inferred based on the fact that it is observable among source phenomena that are visibly similar in at least some respects to the subject” (Lyman and O’Brien 2001: 303-304). Because of the complexities of understanding past human behavior, some scholars question the use and validity of analogy in archaeology, even though analogical reasoning is a fundamental precept in nearly all archaeological interpretations and investigations (Anderson 1969; Ascher 1961; Binford 1967; Crawford 1982; Gould and Watson 1982; Wylie 1988). Although the past is never directly observable, aspects of past cultural behavior can be inferred from the material remains found in the archaeological record. Archaeologists use these material remains in forming hypotheses for investigating or inferring past cultural behaviors based on ethnohistoric evidence and on cultural observations made in the present.

Crucial aspects of past cultural behavior can be acquired from ethnographic and

from ethnohistoric accounts in geographic regions where there is a strong degree of cultural continuity. Scholars working in Mesoamerica, where there is a high degree of cultural continuity, are able to test local analogies to explain behaviors in the region, as opposed to a more general comparative approach that seeks analogies to cultural groups wherever they can find them (Gould and Watson 1982: 359). “The descriptions of the physical and cultural activities, institutions, and materials of the descendants of the people whose remains are being excavated are more likely to be analogous to the past activities, institutions, and materials in multiple (often linked) ways than are analogies derived from anywhere else” (Gould and Watson 1982: 359). As a contiguous geographic and cultural region, the complex societies that make up Mesoamerica share a unique set of cultural and technological traits that separate this culture area from others. Kirchhoff (1968: 24-25) was among the first to create a list of shared cultural traits exclusive to Mesoamerican societies. These traits included: step pyramids, ballcourts with rings, hieroglyphic writing, screen-style folded books, a 260 day calendar, festivals at the end of certain periods, good and bad omen days, certain forms of human sacrifice, and certain forms of self-sacrifice to name just a few. Gary Gossen (1986: 5-8) replaced this list of simple traits with the more complex notion of ideology that reflected five basic themes over time and space:

- 1) The overarching theme of cyclical time as a sacred entity.
- 2) A tripartite view of the cosmos (Sky, Earth, and Underworld) whose realms can be contacted as places of intellectual, political, and religious activity.
- 3) The notion of natural vs. supernatural conflict as a creative and life-sustaining force.
- 4) The principal of complementary dualism and syncretism.

- 5) The extraordinary power of speech and text as symbolic entities in and amongst themselves.

Because of copious written historical accounts from both the Classic Period Maya and from the later Spanish and Maya accounts of the Colonial Period (c.1521-1821), the use of a direct historical approach can be a highly productive means for investigating the nature of Classic Maya political organization. First and foremost, the thousands of (dated) indigenous Classic Maya texts provide direct historical data that can be used to help reconstruct Classic Period political organization. Next are the native Colonial Period texts including the Yucatekan prophetic histories known collectively as the *Ch'ilam B'alam*s (see Roys 1933), the Chontal *Paxbolon-Maldonado* Papers of Acalan-Tixchel (see Scholes and Roys 1968), and the famed K'ichee' book of council and creation, the *Popol Vuh* (see Tedlock 1996; Christenson 2007). In addition, there are numerous Spanish Colonial accounts that chronicle their observations and experiences in Mesoamerica. Perhaps the most important of these historical accounts is Bishop Diego de Landa's 1566 *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* (see Tozzer 1941). The Landa account chronicles many aspects of 16th century Yucatek Maya life including detailed information on everything from religion, to calendrics, to Maya writing, and to Maya political history, including data on the nature of pre-contact political organization. Another valuable source for information concerning Maya political organization comes from the numerous dictionaries and vocabularies compiled both in the early Colonial Period (see Hernandez [1595]1930) and in the 19th and 20th centuries (see Aulie and Aulie 1978; Barrera Vasquez 1980; Bricker et al. 1998; Hofling and Tesucún 1997). These dictionaries contain a treasure trove of critical linguistic data on native Classic Period politics and

political discourse. Since many of these entries can be traced back to Classic Period inscriptions, these dictionaries have become an invaluable source of indigenous information and terminology.

The Study Area

The Southern Maya Mountains Region (see Figure 1.2) was once considered by most archeologists to be unimportant in the overall development of Classic Maya civilization (Hammond 1975: 105). However, recent archaeological investigations have mapped more than 200 sites in this region, many of which appear to be tied to resource exploitation and exchange (Dunham et al. 1989; Graham 1983, 1987; Hammond 1975; Laporte 1992; Laporte and Mejía 2000; Leventhal 1990a, 1992; MacKinnon 1989; McKillop and Heally 1989; Prufer and Wanyerka 2001). Archaeological evidence now suggests that the Southern Maya Mountains Region was heavily occupied during the Classic Period.

The Maya Mountains are sources of a variety of raw materials used by the ancient Maya, many of which were believed previously to have come from far distant locations, primarily the Guatemalan Highlands. The Maya Mountains are the only significant mountain range in the southeastern Maya lowlands and they sit above an ancient uplifted geological fault composed of Late Paleozoic sedimentary and volcanic rocks belonging to the Santa Rosa Group (Abramiuk 2002: 1). Among other resources, there are huge deposits of granite, volcanics, volcanoclastics, mudstone, siltstone, and limestone used for grinding stones; pyrites, slate, and hematite for mirrors; high quality clays for ceramics; and a host of other minerals for pigments. Given the resource diversity of the Maya

Mountains region, the area would have been of great economic interest to the ruling elite in and around the region. Petrographic analysis has revealed that a large number of grinding stones found at the sites of Tikal, Seibal, Xunantunich and Uaxactún can be traced back to the Southern Maya Mountains Region and sourced to known deposits in the Bladen River Drainage (Abramiuk 2002; Shipley and Graham 1987). High quality chert and obsidian are two resources noticeably absent from the geological record of the southern Maya Mountains. Both of these resources had to be imported into the region. Nearly all of the obsidian found at sites throughout the Maya Mountains have been sourced through either neutron activation or x-ray fluorescence to three distinct sources (El Chayal, San Martin Jilotepeque, and Ixtepeque) located in the Highlands of Guatemala (Graham 1994: 90; McKillop and Jackson 1989: 62). Both inter- and intra-regional trade appears to have been an important economic and political mechanism for the rise and prosperity of sites in this region. The variation in the distribution and appearance of both local and non-local natural resources in this region suggests that resource procurement and exchange may have been the economic stimuli for the development and growth of polities and trade routes in the Southern Maya Mountains Region.

Using epigraphic and direct-historical approaches to the question of Classic Maya political organization allows one to better explain how Classic Maya polities operated internally (intra-regionally) and how they interacted externally (inter-regionally), using the Maya's own written inscriptions and Colonial Period accounts as the basis for interpretation. Although the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the central Petén and adjoining Petexbatún regions of Guatemala have been the primary focus of Martin and Grube's epigraphic analysis, they acknowledge that in order to properly understand the impetus

and development of a macro-political or hegemonic system, further epigraphic research is warranted in the lesser-known peripheral regions of the Maya lowlands (Martin and Grube 1994: 27). Nowhere is this more important than in the Southern Maya Mountains Region where there at least four emblem glyph-bearing polities with hieroglyphic inscriptions that appear to chronicle the same sorts of hierarchical features characteristic of the polities described by Martin and Grube in the central Petén. This dissertation will investigate and ascertain whether the same types of political relationships and hierarchies, now thought to exemplify the Classic Maya of the central Petén can be found in a lesser-known, peripheral area, the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Rather than looking at Classic Maya political organization from a superordinate's (top-down) perspective, the dissertation research presented here is aimed at investigating this question from the (bottom-up) perspective of sites located in the lesser-known Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize. The original emphasis of this research was to look for and identify examples of superordinate involvement by foreign hegemonies in the inscriptions of sites located within the Southern Maya Mountains Region. If examples of foreign involvement or oversight could be found in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region, they could then be used as evidence in support of Martin and Grube's model.

The hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region may also provide crucial insights as to the identities of the linguistic groups who lived in the region during Classic times. An underlying cause for much of the internal and external antagonistic tensions among polities during the Classic Period may have centered on issues dealing with identity. The hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region are laced with numerous instances of unusual syntax, unique spelling, and unique grammatical conventions. These anomalies include seemingly incorrect

calendar round dates, unusual lunar series arrangements, incorrect moon ages, distance numbers that feature no anterior or posterior date indicators or calendar rounds to connect events, the use of two initial series dates with supporting lunar series within the same inscription, and unusual reading orders (Wanyerka n.d.). While most scholars agree that Maya hieroglyphic writing reflects features of both Yukatekan and Ch'olan languages (Bricker 1992; Hofling 1998; Kaufman and Norman 1984; Lacadena and Wichmann 2002), linguistic boundaries may have been in flux. Undoubtedly, borrowing played a key role in the creation of new lexical items for both language groups as they interacted over time (Justeson et al. 1985). Therefore, one must be clear as to the nature of these borrowings, since differences in the hieroglyphic script may reflect differences in the languages of its speakers. It is vital to examine the lexicon and verbal morphology of these Classic Maya texts since they contain diagnostic features of language differences. It is my belief that during Classic times, the Maya Mountains may have served as a formidable geographic barrier dividing Yukatekan and Ch'olan speakers. Evidence of this lies in the numerous syntactic anomalies found in the texts of this region and from early Colonial Period documents that describe the identity of the first historically documented inhabitants of this region as being Ch'olti' (Thompson 1972: 20). My research suggests that the Southern Maya Mountains Region may have contained at least three different linguistic groups during Classic times.

The data presented here were collected while serving as project epigrapher for the Maya Mountains Archaeological Project (MMAP); a multiyear/multidisciplinary research project exploring ancient Maya resource exploitation and exchange in the southern Maya Mountains (Peter S. Dunham, Director). In addition, I received a research grant from the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies Inc. (FAMSI) in 2001 to

direct the Southern Belize Epigraphic Project (SBEP), an epigraphic project aimed at professionally documenting the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize. And finally, research was also conducted as co-principal investigator and project epigrapher for the Uxbenká Archaeological Project (UAP), a project that was supported with grants from FAMSI and the National Science Foundation.

Methodology

This research is the culmination of 18 years of extensive archaeological and epigraphic investigation of more than 50 Classic Maya surface sites located within a 160 kilometer radius of Nim Li Punit, the center point for this study. The radius was determined and based on three specific conditions: 1) the archaeological site was located in or near the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize; 2) the presence of iconography or hieroglyphic texts at said archaeological site; and 3) the appearance and distribution of shared epigraphic titles, toponymic expressions, emblem glyphs, and personal names unique to the hieroglyphic inscriptions of sites located within the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Contained within this vast study region are more than 900 Classic Maya iconographic or hieroglyphic inscriptions spanning a range of dates from the Late Preclassic to the Terminal Classic Periods. All 900 iconographic or hieroglyphic texts were analyzed according to the conventions of modern epigraphic transliteration and translation (Fox and Justeson 1984: 363-366; G. Stuart 1988: 7-12). However, only a small fraction of these 900 texts will be discussed here. Most texts will be considered only when they pertain directly to specific issues pertinent to the present

study. The inscriptions located in the following geographic areas are critical to understanding the dynastic history of the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize: portions of north-central Belize (Altun Há and Lamanaí); portions of the central Petén (Tikal and its immediate environs); portions of southeastern Guatemala (Quiriguá); and a portion of northwestern Honduras (Copan). This analysis was conducted as part of the overall research plan designed to investigate and define the regional developmental and chronological history of Classic Maya sites located in the southeastern Maya Lowlands. The inscriptions appear on a wide range of different media including: monumental architecture, stone or wooden lintels, tombs, caves, stairways/steps, stelae, altars, ceramic vessels, jades, shells, and bones.

The present research is primarily restricted to those sites recording iconographic or hieroglyphic texts located within the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize (Figure 1.2). As defined here, the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize is comprised of the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts. Thirty-two major surface sites are located within this diverse, geographically circumscribed region, ten of which contain readable hieroglyphic inscriptions suitable for detailed epigraphic analysis (see Table 1.1). Together, these ten archaeological sites contain a written hieroglyphic corpus totaling 75 texts. This dissertation will focus on the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the five major monument-bearing sites located in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize (Uxbenká, Pusilhá, Lubaantún, Nim Li Punit, and Xnaheb').

The hieroglyphic inscriptions on monuments of the Southern Maya Mountains Region are best known because of their unusual style of hieroglyphic syntax and iconographic themes (see Grube et al. 1999; Wanyerka nd, 1996, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000, 2003). The earliest dedicatory date in this region is 9.1.0.0.0 (27, August 455),

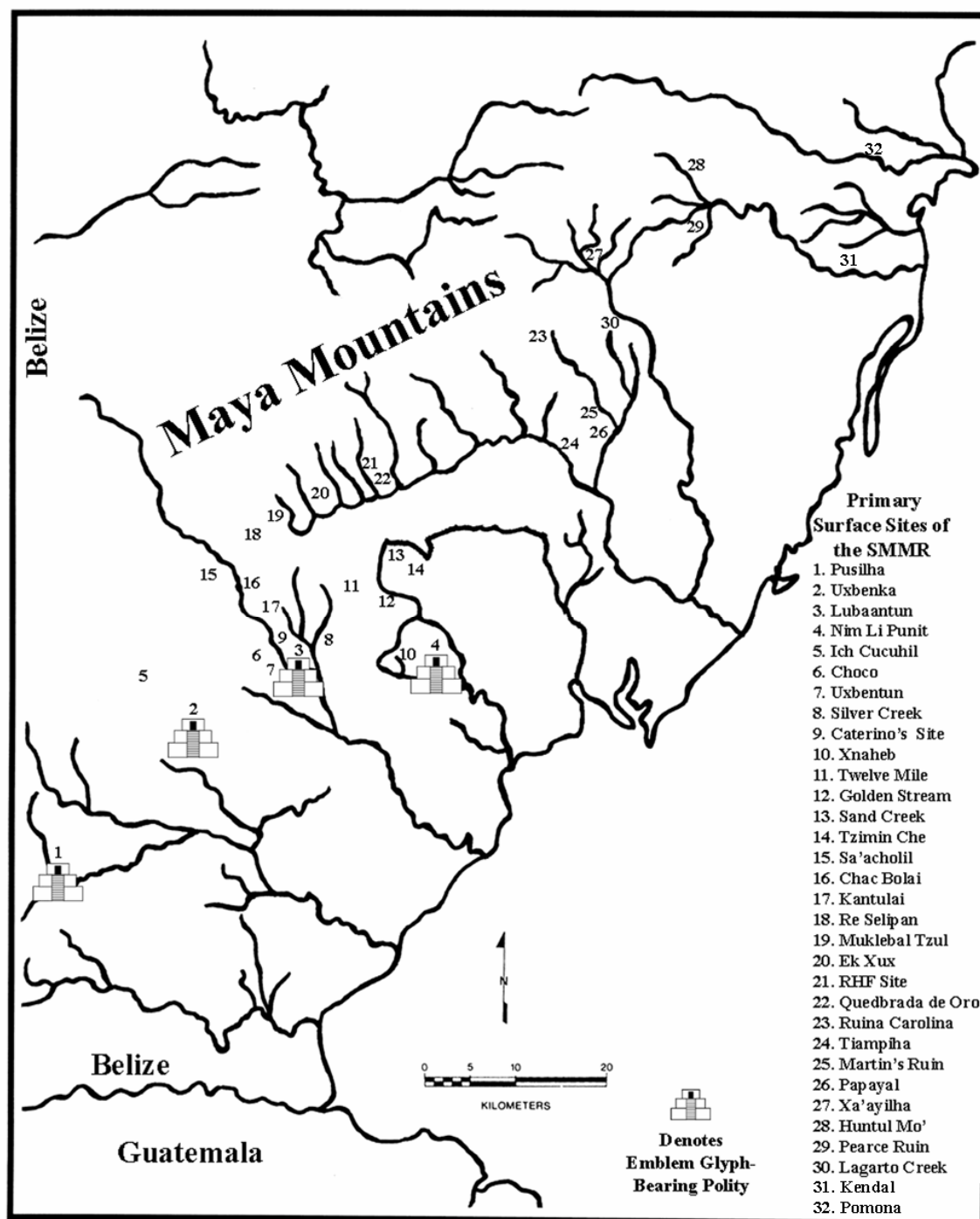


Figure 1.2. Map of the Study Area

Table 1.1 Sites with Texts or Images in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize

Site	District	Drainage	Number of Fig. Mon. Only	Number of Mon. Glyphic Texts	Number of Ceramic Texts	Number of Other Texts
Caterino's Site	Toledo	Rio Grande		1		
Choco 1	Toledo	Rio Grande	1			
Lubaantún	Toledo	Rio Grande		3	1	16
Nim Li Punit	Toledo	Golden Stream		8	1	
Pusilhá	Toledo	Rio Poite/Pusilha	10	26	1	2
Uxbenká	Toledo	Rio Blanco	19	10		
Xnaheb'	Toledo	Golden Stream	2	1		
Kendal	Stann Creek	Sittee River				2
Lagarto Ruins	Stann Creek	Swasey River	4			
Mukleb'al Tzul	Stann Creek	Monkey River			1	
Pearce Ruin	Stann Creek	Sittee River	1			
Pomona	Stann Creek	N. Stann Creek				1
Tzimín Ché	Stann Creek	Deep River		1		

recorded at Uxbenká on Stela 23, and the latest dedicatory date is 10.4.0.0.0 (15, January 909), recorded on Tzimín Ché Stela 1. Based on stylistic and iconographic evidence, there are even earlier monuments at Uxbenká, located approximately 10 kilometers east of the Guatemala/Belize border in the southern foothills of the Maya Mountains.

Uxbenká Stela 11, stylistically dated between 8.16.3.10.2 and 8.17.1.4.12 (A.D. 360-378), is not only one of the earliest carved monuments in Belize, but one of the earliest monuments in the entire Southern Maya Lowlands. The date assigned to Stela 11 is based on the appearance of the name of a well-known Early Classic ruler at Tikal, *Chaak Tok Ich'aak I* ('Great Fiery Claw'). *Chaak Tok Ich'aak I* was the fourteenth king of Tikal and died on 8.17.1.4.12 11 *Eb'* 15 *Mak* (15, January 378), the same day a contingent of Teotihuacanos arrived at Tikal according to Tikal Stela 31 (Stuart 2000). The hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region record dynastic histories spanning more than five centuries (8.16.3.10.2 to 10.4.0.0.0) and provide an excellent data set to test the validity of the hegemonic and *may* models.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2, "Previous Descriptions and Models of Classic Maya Political Organization," provides a historical overview and examination of previously proposed theoretical models of Classic Maya political organization. Historically, much of the debate in understanding Classic Maya political organization has centered on definitional issues, the basic criteria or the appropriate use of data, and the comparison of Lowland Maya organizational practices to other complex societies around the world. Surprisingly

few scholars have approached the subject from a Mesoamerican point of view. Cultural continuity has not been fully integrated into many previously proposed theoretical models of Classic Maya political organization.

Chapter 3, “Recent Models of Hierarchic Political Organization” summarizes and discusses Martin and Grube’s Hegemonic Model as well as Rice’s *May* Model for interpreting Classic Maya political organization. Both models are epigraphically based and both use a direct historical approach that incorporates written historical accounts from both the Classic Period Maya and from the later Spanish and Maya accounts from the early Colonial Period. I believe that the epigraphic and ethnohistoric data suggest that Classic Maya political organization was structured by macro-political or hegemonic practices informed by Maya calendrical science (Rice 2004). The hegemonic and *may* models are based largely on the decipherment of several key glyphic expressions that indicate agency, alliance, and subordination. The strength of both approaches has been in identifying political affiliations and hierarchies that existed among sites in perhaps two of the best studied regions of the Maya Lowlands: the central Petén and the Petexbatún regions of Guatemala. Political power and control were established and maintained through the installation of subordinate seats of power (Martin and Grube 1994, 1995; Rice 2004). Through the creation of a hegemonic system, dissention was met militarily and subjugated states were obligated to their conquerors both economically and politically. Epigraphic discussions concerning the decipherment of the key glyphic expressions that describe the hierarchical nature of Classic Maya society, subordination statements, the accessions of local rulers under the aegis of non-local rulers, other explicit forms of interactions between polities, and finally, warfare expressions are central to this chapter. Recent findings by Rice (2004) suggest that a 256-year cycle, known from early

Colonial Period sources as the *may* may have served as a socio-religious/ideological structure underlying the hegemonic system binding subordinate polities to their sovereign.

Chapter 4, “Geographic Setting and Project Background,” provides a comprehensive historical and chronological overview of the development and growth of sites located in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Once considered to be unimportant in the overall development of Classic Maya civilization, the Southern Maya Mountains Region, one of the last regions of the southern Maya Lowlands to be systematically explored, has been the recent focus of several major archaeological projects. Archaeological evidence suggests that the Southern Maya Mountains Region was heavily occupied during Classic times and that many of the sites in the region appear to be the loci for production and exchange of specialized resources. This chapter will examine the diversity and complexity of Maya settlement patterns in this region based on epigraphy and archaeology in order to define their role and importance in the overall social, economic, and political dynamics of Classic Maya civilization.

Chapter 5, “Methodology,” presents an overview of how epigraphic and archaeological work was conducted as a means for identifying evidence of a hegemonic system at the surface sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Survey, mapping, excavation, data analysis, and the techniques for the professional documentation of new or existing sculpture or hieroglyphic inscriptions are discussed.

Chapter 6, “Epigraphic Evidence of Early Classic Hegemonic Control in the Río Blanco Valley,” describes and discusses the earliest epigraphic evidence of hegemonic control in the Southern Maya Mountains Region via the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Uxbenká, an important Early Classic emblem-glyph-bearing site located in the Río

Blanco Valley with epigraphic ties to the fourteenth king of Tikal *Chak Tok' Ich'aak I*. The hieroglyphic inscriptions suggest that the rulers of this region participated in a hegemonic system employing the same strategies as those documented by Martin and Grube in the central Petén and Petexbatún regions of the southern Maya Lowlands. As will be discussed in the following chapters, the strategies used to cement allegiance and alliance between foreign superordinate patrons and their subordinate subjects include such measures as accessions of local rulers under the aegis of foreign or non-local rulers, the use of inter-dynastic marriages, elite royal visitations, and episodes involving warfare. Special epigraphic attention is also given to the hieroglyphic inscriptions and dynastic histories of those sites mentioned that are located outside the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Thus, the hieroglyphic inscriptions and the developmental histories of the sites Altun Há, Copan, Quiriguá, and Tikal, which have explicit ties to sites in this region, will be discussed. By looking for examples of hegemonic intrusion in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region, it may be possible to integrate the epigraphic data with archaeology as a useful method for identifying possible intra- and inter-regional relationships. By understanding the nature and complexities of these regional ties to the more powerful political entities surrounding the Southern Maya Mountains Region, it may be possible to examine how the economies of less-powerful peripheral communities were integrated into the realms of hegemonic states and how that affects our basic understanding of the political system of Classic Maya civilization.

Chapter 7, “Epigraphic Evidence of Late Classic Hegemonic Control in the Poité-Pusilhá Valley,” describes and discusses the epigraphic evidence of Late Classic hegemonic control in the Southern Maya Mountains Region via the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Pusilhá, one of the largest Classic Maya sites in southern Belize. The

epigraphic evidence presented will attempt to show that Pusilhá was politically connected to the southeastern Maya kingdoms of Quiriguá and Copan during the Late Classic Period. The political connection between these two regions appears to date back to the Late Preclassic as texts recorded at Pusilhá discuss a well-known pre-dynastic ruler of Copan, nicknamed the Foliated *Ajaw*, who is prominently featured in the early dynastic history of Copan. In addition, there are references at Pusilhá to a toponym known as the *Chi'*-Altar Place. This location may have served a similar function as that of the great Postclassic city of Tollan based on other examples of this toponym in texts across the southern Maya lowlands. Tollan was that legendary city to which kings from across Mesoamerica traveled in order to receive official emblems of office and to have their rights to rule legitimized or “officially” sanctioned. I argue that rulers of this place may have also authorized early hegemonic power. In addition, I will discuss the importance of several other site-specific toponyms recorded in the inscriptions at Pusilhá including the *Tz'am Witz*, ‘Throne Mountain’ collocation and the important *Witenaah*, ‘Tree Root House,’ which are also described and recorded in the inscriptions of neighboring Copan. The close relationship between Pusilhá and the southeastern Maya Lowlands is also reflected by the use of similar personal names and the use of exclusive royal titles and epithets at both sites.

Chapter 8, “Epigraphic Evidence of Late Classic Hegemonic Control in the Río Grande Valley” describes and discusses the epigraphic evidence of Late Classic hegemonic control via the inscriptions of Lubaantún, a large Late Classic site best known for its fascination with the Classic Maya ballgame and supposed home to the famous Crystal Skull. Founded at the start of the 8th century, Lubaantún may owe its existence to migrants coming from neighboring Pusilhá enticed by the diversity of

resources found in the region. The site features four ballcourts along with numerous ceramic figurines that feature unusual portraits of ballplayers and images of everyday life. These images suggest that the ballgame was of great social, religious, and political importance to the inhabitants of Lubaantún. The lack of carved stelae at Lubaantún makes it difficult to assess the degree of hegemonic intrusion in the Río Grande Valley. However, the possible identification of two secure Long Count dates recorded on a ballcourt marker and on a small ceramic figural plaque suggest that Lubaantún was an emblem glyph-bearing polity in its own right. As will be discussed in this chapter, there is other epigraphic evidence that hints at a larger intra-regional interaction with an explicit reference to Copan. Finally, I will discuss the importance and possible purpose for the numerous (mold-made) figural plaques that contain readable hieroglyphic inscriptions.

Chapter 9, “Epigraphic Evidence of Late Classic Hegemonic Control in the Golden Stream Valley,” describes and discusses the epigraphic evidence of Late Classic hegemonic control via the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Nim Li Punit and Xnaheb’. The hieroglyphic inscriptions of this region provide some of the best evidence to date for southeastern hegemonic control in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. One of the more interesting facets of this chapter is the realization that an unprovenanced ceramic vase, known as K1440 or the “Vase of the Eighty-Eight Glyphs,” describes historical events relating to the Late Classic dynastic history of Nim Li Punit. The events described on this vessel highlight the accession of a Nim Li Punit ruler named *B’ahlam Te’* involving the “Royal House of Copan.” As the hieroglyphic inscriptions at both Nim Li Punit and Copan attest, the relationship between these two sites was more than mutual acknowledgment. Exclusive site-specific toponyms found at both sites indicate that Nim

Li Punit was likely a dependency of Copan. Some of the best epigraphic proof that this was the case comes from the architecture at the site of Copan itself. As will be discussed in this chapter, the main sign of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph is prominently featured as a specific foreign toponym on the facade of Structure 22A, the famous *Popol Naah*, ‘Council House’ at Copan. The famed Copan location *Ox Witik*, ‘Three Root or Origin House,’ a sacred place from which *K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo* was said to have founded the royal dynasty of Copan is also mentioned at Nim Li Punit. The *Ek’ Xupki Ajaw* or ‘Black Copan Lord’ title in several inscriptions at Nim Li Punit also suggests Copan hegemonic intrusion or influence at Nim Li Punit. As will be discussed, the individual who carries this title is a foreign lord who is said to be supervising a series of Period Ending events at Nim Li Punit. Also discussed are several other exclusive site-specific titles found in the inscriptions of Nim Li Punit, including a numbered *tzuk* title and the 28 *Winik* title, both of which have implications as to how the Classic Maya may have interpreted the territorial realm of their world especially in light of Rice’s (2004) *may* hypothesis.

Chapter 10, “Discussion and Conclusions,” synthesizes and interprets the epigraphic and archaeological data from the five main monument-erecting sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region and compares those findings to the current theoretical understanding of Classic Maya political organization. Multiple lines of evidence now suggest that a far-reaching hegemonic system was in place and was widely utilized by the ancient inhabitants of the Southern Maya Mountains Regional Sphere during Classic times. These findings provide further support to Martin and Grube’s claim that the hegemonic model was the organizational model employed at sites across the Classic Maya Lowlands, while at the same time demonstrate that the hegemonic system was structured in part by Maya calendrical science whereby socio-religious/ideational power

rotated among allied cities within a region every twenty years for a period of 256 years.

The data presented will further illuminate some of the major social, economic, and political processes that may have contributed to the developmental growth and complexity of sites within this region and define their role in the overall theoretical constructs of Classic Maya civilization.

CHAPTER 2

PREVIOUS DESCRIPTIONS AND MODELS OF CLASSIC MAYA POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

“The lesson I learned is that no one, however powerful a mathematical model he borrows from geography, can really make sense out of the Maya site hierarchy unless he can read their hieroglyphs” (Flannery 1977: 661).

Questions concerning how Classic Maya polities were organized and the ability of archaeology to test organizational hypotheses have been at the forefront of Maya studies. By definition, a theory is a “proposition or set of propositions designed to explain something with reference to data or interrelations not directly observed or not otherwise manifest” (Brecht 1968: 307) while a model can be described as “any set of entities or a structure that satisfies the axioms of the theory” (Maki 2001: 9932). Numerous theoretical models have been proposed that generally approach the question of Classic Maya political organization from the position of polity size and complexity, site-based hierarchies, the degree of bureaucratic centralization and autonomy, and the relative stability of the system through time (see reviews by Becker 1971; Culbert 1991; Iannone 2002; Lacadena and Ruiz 1998; Lucero 1999; Marcus 1993; Rice 2004; Willey 1986). A fundamental point of these theoretical models is that in order to understand the nature of Classic Maya political organization, the social and economic interactions must be considered.

Numerous archaeological investigations reveal that large-scale monumental architectural remains were the loci of large urban population centers (Adams and Adams 2003). An array of secondary sites ranging in size and complexity from smaller centers to remote rural hamlets were grouped around these central loci. While settlement pattern and distributional analyses have provided crucial insights as to the hierarchical nature and structure of the Classic Maya political system, archaeologists have been at a loss in understanding how the major population centers were organized in relation to one another (Martin and Grube 1994: 2).

Early Thoughts and Descriptions

Early discussions concerning the nature of Classic Maya political organization can be traced back to the mid-19th century with the appearance of the first written descriptions of the exploration and discovery of ancient Maya ruins. In 1841, famed American explorer, John Lloyd Stephens, published his narrative account entitled, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, in which he comments: “The tablets probably contain the history of the king or hero delineated, and the particular circumstances or actions which constituted his greatness” (1841[1969: 158]).

Research into Maya epigraphy and linguistics began shortly after Stephen’s publication appeared. Linguists began to examine previously published grammatical sketches and lexicons of various Mayan languages recorded in the Yucatan Peninsula and southern Maya lowlands during the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. Some of the first linguistic research included Pedro Morán’s *Arte Y Diccionario En Lengua Choltí* (1695[Gates 1935], Pedro Beltran’s *Arte Del Idioma Maya Reducido A Sucintas Reglas Y*

Semilexicon Yucateco (1742[2001]), Juan Pío Pérez' *Diccionario De La Lengua Maya* (1866-1877), and Hernández' *Diccionario De Motul: Maya Español* (1930). Besides providing scholars with a wealth of information concerning the grammatical systems of Ch'olti' and Colonial Yucatek, these works contain indigenous terms for various economic and political aspects of Maya culture and continue to serve as a primary resource for Maya epigraphic decipherment today.

The earliest ethnohistoric accounts and descriptions of Maya culture come from the Spanish Colonial Period (c.1521-1821). Diego de Landa is one of the most important Spanish historical chroniclers and his famous *Relación de las cosas de Yucatan* was written in about 1566 and published in 1864 (Tozzer 1941: viii). Much of what we know about Yucatek Maya daily life, cultural and religious beliefs, social practices, political organization, the calendar, and writing comes from Landa and other Spanish eyewitness accounts (see Restall 1997, 1998). Landa stated that the country was divided into separate provinces each with its own governor (Tozzer 1941: 17 and 215).

Still in its infancy by the end of the 19th century, research into the topic of Classic Maya political organization was limited. Most of the early scholarly work centered on producing broad descriptions of the social, economic, and political behaviors as reported in the early historical accounts and through modern ethnographic analogy (see Maudslay 1886; Thompson 1892; Bowditch 1901; Maler 1901-1903; and Tozzer 1911).

In 1913, Herbert J. Spinden, in his introduction to *The Study of Maya Art* was among the first to argue for cultural continuity of the ethnohistoric descriptions of Contact Period Maya sites with those of the Classic Period (1913: 11). Spinden suggested that the Contact Period Maya were living in small tribes under the direction of hereditary chiefs (1913: 11). Scholars hypothesized that the Classic Maya were organized as a

peaceful and united theocratic society living in grandiose cities under the rule of chiefly priests. Analogies were also commonly drawn during this period comparing aspects of Classic Maya civilization to that of the ancient Greeks (Morley 1915; Spinden 1913; Stephens 1841).

The Era of Morley, Gann, and Thompson

Sylvanus G. Morley, Thomas Gann, and Sir J. Eric Thompson attempted to discuss Classic Maya political organization in terms of larger theoretical models. Morley's *An Introduction to the Study of Maya Hieroglyphs* was published in 1915. As part of his introduction, Morley provided a brief historical description of the organization of Classic Maya civilization. Morley referred to the interval between the second and sixth centuries A.D. as the "Golden Age of the Maya" during which all of the great cities of the southern lowlands flourished (1915: 3). Morley argued that the "Golden Age of the Maya" represented the greatest era of their cultural achievements, manifested both sculpturally and architecturally. Morley went on to compare these to the ethnohistorical descriptions of the Maya living in the northern Yucatan Peninsula at the time of the Spanish arrival. He suggested that the Maya living in the northern lowlands at the time of the Spanish arrival closely resembled "a system not unlike a modified form of [European] feudalism" (Morley 1915: 15).

Morley was the first Maya scholar to utilize a multidisciplinary approach in the study of Classic Maya political organization. He based his approach on the development of a regional chronology that integrated primary data obtained from archaeological excavations, ceramic styles, architecture and architectural design features, dated

hieroglyphic inscriptions, and from sculptural styles and themes (Morley 1915: 15; 1946: 51). All of these data were then analyzed and compared to the northern lowland ethnohistoric data of the early Colonial Period. Morley argued that many of the cities of the southern lowlands were contemporaneous and that only a few sites (specifically Tikal, Naranjón, Palenque, and Copán) ever “attained considerable size” or achieved occupation lasting more than 200 years (1915: 15; 1920: 54). Morley suggested that the southern lowland sites were analogous to the later northern sites of Chichén Itzá and Mayapán in that they were “seats of *halach uincil*, or ‘overlords’ to whom all the surrounding chiefs were tributary” (Morley 1915: 15).

Morley’s holistic approach led him to propose a two-phase “evolutionary” model based on cultural continuity reflected in Maya language, thought, customs, religion, and art that he called the Old Empire and the New Empire (1917; 1946). The Old Empire, dated from the earliest inscriptions to 10.2.0.0.0 (corresponding roughly to the Classic Period), comprised all of the southern lowland sites, while the New Empire, dating from about 9.14.0.0.0 to the Spanish Conquest, comprised all of the later northern lowland sites (Morley 1920: 54). Of the Old Empire, Morley writes:

This first florescence of the Maya culture I have called the Old Empire. It was the highest civilization, judged both by its intellectual and aesthetic achievements, ever produced by the American Indian. The Old Empire was probably not so much a political entity as a cultural unit, like the ancient city-states of Greece, Athens, Sparta, and Corinth, or the city-states of Italy in the Renaissance, Venice, Genoa, and Florence. The Maya probably did not constitute a political unit at all, strictly speaking, but rather a loosely

associated group of powerful communities enjoying a common and exceedingly homogeneous culture. (Morley 1936: 598).

Morley was the first scholar to discuss Classic Maya sites in terms of a larger geographic or territorial landscape. He proposed that during Classic times the southern Maya Lowlands were “apportioned” among the following cities: Tikal dominated the north, Palenque dominated the west, and Copán dominated the south (Morley 1915: 15). This notion of a regional hierarchy would later be expanded upon and discussed in Morley’s important works, *The Inscriptions of the Petén* (1937-1938), and *The Ancient Maya* (1946). He was among the first to systematically rank or classify Maya sites according to their “supposed degrees of relative importance” (1946: 316). Utilizing a four-tiered scale, Morley based his classificatory scheme on three criteria: location, architectural extent and elaborateness, and the number of carved monuments present at each site (1937-1938: Vol. 4: 247-250; 1946: 316-319). From this classificatory scheme Morley suggested that during the Classic Period the southern Maya Lowlands were divided into at least four principal political entities or “archaeological subprovinces” that corresponded “roughly to a politically independent city-state” (1946: 160). According to Morley (1946: 160-161), each of these four political entities controlled a different geographic portion of the empire: the central and northern Petén, including parts of southern Campeche, and all of Belize was controlled by Tikal; the Usumacinta region was controlled by either Palenque, Piedras Negras, or Yaxchilan, or by all three during different periods; the southeastern Maya Lowlands was controlled by Copan; and finally, the southwestern Maya Lowlands was controlled by Tonina. Morley’s ideas concerning the distribution of regional cities or metropolises across a larger geographic landscape

would later be expanded upon by other Maya scholars (see Adams 1986; Barthel 1968; Berlin 1958; and Marcus 1973, 1976).

Thomas Gann, perhaps best known for his archaeological investigations of Lubaantún and Pusilhá, questioned Morley's use of the terms "Old and New Empire" in describing the developmental stages of Maya civilization. Gann and Thompson (1931: 53) noted this scheme was misleading and inaccurate since both the Yucatan Peninsula and the southern lowlands were occupied simultaneously from very early times. Nevertheless, the terms "Old and New Empire" would continue to be used in describing the developmental stages of Maya civilization for another twenty years until scholars began using the nomenclature used today (i.e., Formative, Classic, Post-Classic, etc.).

Gann and Thompson later hypothesized that many of the peripheral sites located throughout the southern Maya Lowlands were directly "colonized" or "founded" by the larger Maya "capitals" (Gann and Thompson 1931: 32 and 54). They were the first scholars to suggest that Pusilhá and Quiriguá were "most certainly colonized" from Copan; that Hatzcap Ceel, Ucanal, and Xunatunich were founded by "emigrants" from Naranjó; and that El Cayo and La Mar were founded by Yaxchilán (Gann and Thompson 1931: 54). Gann and Thompson's hypotheses would eventually lead to Morley's (1946) classification of Maya centers.

As the preeminent scholar of Maya studies in his time, Sir J. Eric S. Thompson had a profound and lasting impact on our understanding of the ancient Maya. Thompson agreed with both Morley and Gann that Classic Maya political organization could be characterized as both peaceful and theocratic, ruled by calendrical and religious priests. Thompson believed that during the Classic Period the Maya lowlands could be thought of

as a “loose federation of autonomous city states, the government of which was largely in the hands of a small caste of priests and nobles, related by blood and dominated by religious motifs” (1954: 97). Thompson supported his view of Maya society by noting the following features: the use of a common written language, the absence of large-scale warfare as observed in the monumental arts and through the lack of defensive fortifications, a seemingly uninterrupted sequence of building construction, and evidence of peaceful relations between sites based on shared architectural and sculptural styles and programs (1954: 94-96).

Thompson disliked the use of the term “city” for Maya sites, calling it a “misnomer” (1942: 12). Instead, Thompson preferred to call them “vacant religious centers” since he believed that the permanent population was probably restricted to a handful of religious priests or civil leaders. Thompson noted that the majority of the peasant population lived in small clusters of agricultural settlements or hamlets scattered in zones surrounding the religious center. Each zone had its own minor ceremonial center and these zones coalesced to form larger districts that maintained the major ceremonial or religious center (Thompson 1942: 12, 1954: 88-89). Thompson believed that this pattern of Maya settlement was similar to the pattern observed in the ethnohistoric descriptions of the great Aztec capital Tenochtitlán. It was reported that some twenty districts or provinces surrounded the central ceremonial center of Tenochtitlán, each occupied by a different lineage or clan (*calpulli*). The descriptions also suggest that each lineage or clan had its own internal bureaucratic administration, its own lands, and its own smaller religious center (Thompson 1954: 90). Thompson believed that the same held true for the Classic Maya based on early Colonial Period descriptions that indicated that the Yucatan Peninsula was divided up into sixteen provinces following the collapse of Mayapán.

Sixteenth Century Lowland Maya Political Organization

The first serious ethnohistoric discussion aimed at describing Maya political organization based on analogies to the early sixteenth century Colonial descriptions of the northern lowlands appears in Ralph L. Roys' 1957 monograph entitled, *The Political Geography of the Yucatan Maya*. Roys' meticulous use of early Spanish ethnohistoric documents, including dozens of previously unknown *relaciones* from both the *Archivo General de Indias* in Sevilla and the *Archivo General De La Nacion* in Mexico, allowed him to chronicle, province-by-province, the sixteen native states that existed in the Yucatan Peninsula at the time of the Spanish conquest. The *relaciones* recount a range of topics including political and social organization, laws, customs, wars, and economic issues, especially as they relate to tribute under the Spanish imposed *encomienda* system (Roys 1962: 28). The *encomienda* system gave the Spanish the right to demand labor and goods from whole Maya communities (Restall 1998: 9). Roys also integrated the historical descriptions of native informant sources including the Books of the *Chilam B'alam*. These indigenous manuscripts, written in Yukatek Maya using the Spanish script, date to the 18th century and appear to be copies of earlier manuscripts (Roys 1962: 30). Named after the cities where they were found (Chan Cah, Chumayel, Ixil, Káua, Maní, Nah, Tekax, Tizimín, Tusik), the *Chilam B'alam* manuscripts chronicle, *k'atun-by-k'atun*, a number of historical events dating back to well before the 10th century (see Paxton 2001: 190). Of critical importance, the authors of the *Chilam B'alams* correlated their historical accounts to known dates in their native calendrical system. All of the historical events are tied to the *k'atun* (a period of 20 years of 360 days) in which the events are said to have occurred. The *Chilam B'alams* discuss

the defeat of Chichén Itzá (apparently in the early 12th century) and the founding of Mayapán and its subsequent history leading up to and including descriptions of the Spanish arrival (Roys 1962: 29-30). Collectively, the *Chilam B'alam*s provide the most complete indigenous accounts and descriptions of historical events prior to the Spanish arrival.

According to Roys (1957: 3; 1962: 32), the Maya living in the Yucatan Peninsula at the time of the Spanish conquest considered themselves to be a single people united by a common language ('*Mayathan*'). However, Restall (2004: 64) has recently argued that during the early Colonial Period there is little evidence that the indigenous inhabitants of the Yucatan Peninsula referred to themselves as "Maya." Restall (2004: 73) argues that the original inhabitants of the Yucatan referred to themselves via two basic units of social organization, the *cah* and the *chibal*, which served as the basis for group and individual identity. The *cah* refers to the 'municipal community' from which a person hails and *chibal* refers to the 'patronymic group' of which an individual belongs (Restall 2004: 73). According to numerous Spanish and indigenous accounts, the inhabitants of the Yucatan Peninsula were united in a single empire subject to one supreme lord or king twice, and twice, due to the "disloyalty of some of the vassals" the empire would break up into separate 'provinces' or *kuchkab'als* (Roys 1957: 3). According to Roys, near the start of the 10th century, Chichén Itzá was the principal capital of the first united empire. The *Chilam B'alam*s state that Chichén Itzá fell by the hands of the supreme ruler of Mayapán during *K'atun 4 Ajaw* (A.D. 1224-1244). The second united empire began shortly following the fall of Chichén Itzá, with the founding of the fortified city of Mayapán in *K'atun 13 Ajaw* (A.D. 1263-1283) (Roys 1957: 3; 1962: 39). However, the *Chilam B'alam*s identify and describe Mayapán as having a joint form of government known as a

multepal which resulted from an agreement between the two most important elite lineages of the Yucatan Peninsula: the *Itza* and the *Xiw* (Edmonson 1982: 7; Roys 1962: 46-48). This form of joint rule at Mayapán was relatively short-lived. The *relaciones* and the *Chilam B'alam*s describe a *Xiw*-led uprising and revolt that began shortly after 1382 and resulted in the complete overthrow of the *Kokom* lineage. Landa describes the fall of Mayapán in *K'atun 8 Ajaw* (A.D. 1441-1461) as the result of deep-seated resentment and hatred of the *Kokom* by the *Xiw* (Roys 1962: 59). The *Xiw* despised the *Kokom* for controlling the best land (some 22 of the best *pueblos*), their continued practice of bringing militaristic Toltecs into the city, and their tyrannical oppression and treatment of the poor turning them into slaves (Roys 1962: 47; Jones 1998: 18; Tozzer 1941: 32-35, 215). Following the disintegration of joint rule at Mayapán, the Yucatan Peninsula was divided into the sixteen provinces as observed by the first Spanish conquistadors some 60 to 70 years later (Figure 2.1).

The early historical accounts suggest the presence of three distinct social classes: nobles, commoners, and slaves (Roys 1957: 5). The noble class or the *almehen* ('of renowned noble descent') consisted of a hereditary aristocracy and monopolized positions of power and authority. The Spanish also described the *almehen* as being "lords or principals of a town" and as such they were considered *caciques*. The majority of the population consisted of commoners. Persons belonging to this class in Maya society were called *yalba uinic* ('small man') or *pizil cah* ('commoner') (Roys 1957: 5). According to Roys, there may have been an upper level of this class because the term *azmen uinic* ('medium man') also commonly appears in the early Colonial accounts (1957: 5). The *azmen uinic* appear to be a class of Maya society falling somewhere between the noble and commoner class and refers to the sons of a noble father and a commoner mother

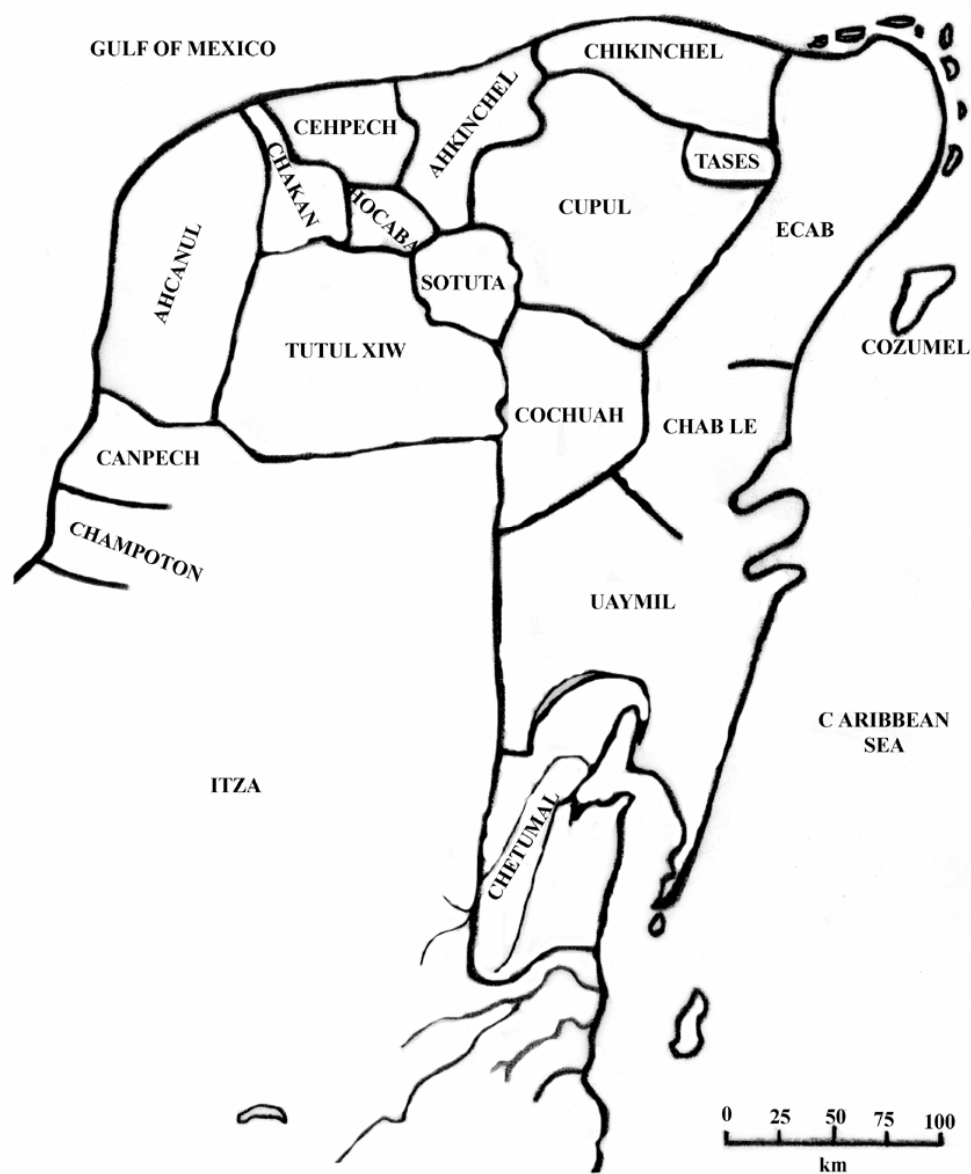


Figure 2.1. Roys' Early Colonial Period Map Showing Maya Polities (Redrawn by the author after Roys 1957: Map 1)

(Roys 1957: 6). At the bottom of the social hierarchy were the slaves (*ppentac* ‘male slave’ and *munach* ‘female slave’). The slave class consisted of those captured in war or enslaved for some criminal offense (Roys 1957: 6).

Roys (1957: 6-7; 1972: 57-64) and later Marcus (1993: 118-120) discussed the variability and complexity of the territorial and administrative organization of the sixteen provinces that existed in the Yucatan following the fall of Mayapán in terms of three distinct types:

Type A. Political organization of this type consisted of *cuchkab’alob’*, ‘territorial provinces’ governed under the auspices of a supreme and centralized hereditary ruler called *halach uinic*, ‘real man’ who also carried the royal title *ajaw*, ‘lord’ or ‘ruler’. The *halach uinic* presided over the affairs of their provinces from regal palaces located within a provincial capital or *jolkakab’* or *jol cah*, ‘head town’ (Marcus 1993: 118). In addition to being the ruler of their provinces, *jalach uinicob’* were also *b’atab’ob’*, ‘local heads’ of the town where they resided. Presiding below the *jalach winik* were a number of other *b’atab’ob’*, many of whom were directly related to him, who ruled and governed each of the dependent towns (*kajob*), jurisdictions (*cuchteelob*), and smaller polities (*chan kajob*) within that province (Roys 1972: 60). While the office of the *halach uinic* was hereditary and for life, upon death, the office could be passed down to his younger brother before being inherited by the eldest son (Roys 1957: 6).

The territorial extent of a province belonging to the *Xiw* lineage is illustrated in a map in a document known as the *Land Treaty of Maní*, dating to 1557 (Marcus 1993: Figure 5) (Figure 2.2). Located at its center is the provincial capital of Maní. Maní’s dependencies are also included as indicated by the connecting lines leading from the capital. Located around the outer edge of the map are the border markers or geographical

landmarks used to define the territorial limits of the province; they included the names of various towns, cenotes, and natural springs.

Roys (1972: 61) notes that the *halach winik* had the right to exact tribute from all of the towns in his province. Tribute included maize, beans, chili peppers, poultry, honey, cotton cloth, salt, fish, and game. During times of war, the *halach uinic* had the power to summon the entire male population for military service (Roys 1957: 6). As the judicial head of his province, the *jalach winik* also received compensation in the form of “customary gifts” from both litigants and petitioners (Roys 1972: 61). The office of the *halach uinic* was restricted to specific lineages within each province. This type of organizational structure was observed in the following provinces (the lineal affinities, if known, are in parentheses): *Cehpech (Pech)*, *Cochuah (Cochuah)*, *Champoton*, *Cozumel*, *Hocab’a*, *Maní (Xiw)*, *Sotutu (Kokom)*, and probably included *Ah K’in Chel (Chel)*, *Tazes*, and *Tayasal* (Roys 1972: 59) and corresponds to Marcus’ description of a “maximal chiefdom” (1993: 157).

Type B. Political organizations of this type consisted of territorial provinces that lacked a single supreme ruler (*halach uinic*) but had a centralized administrative council consisting of numerous *b’atab’ob’*, ‘local lords’ who belonged to the same lineage (Roys 1957: 6). Though this system was based on kinship ties, it is apparent from Roys’ descriptions that there was considerable competition and numerous power struggles occurred among the various local lords. Roys states (1957: 6) that most of the *b’atab’ob’* of the *Ah Canul* province were of the same lineage. However, some local lords allied themselves with the Spanish upon their arrival to the Yucatan, while others did not. In the case of the *Cupul*’s province, it is clear that some of the *b’atab’ob’* were in almost constant conflict with their neighboring *b’atab’ob’* and their subject

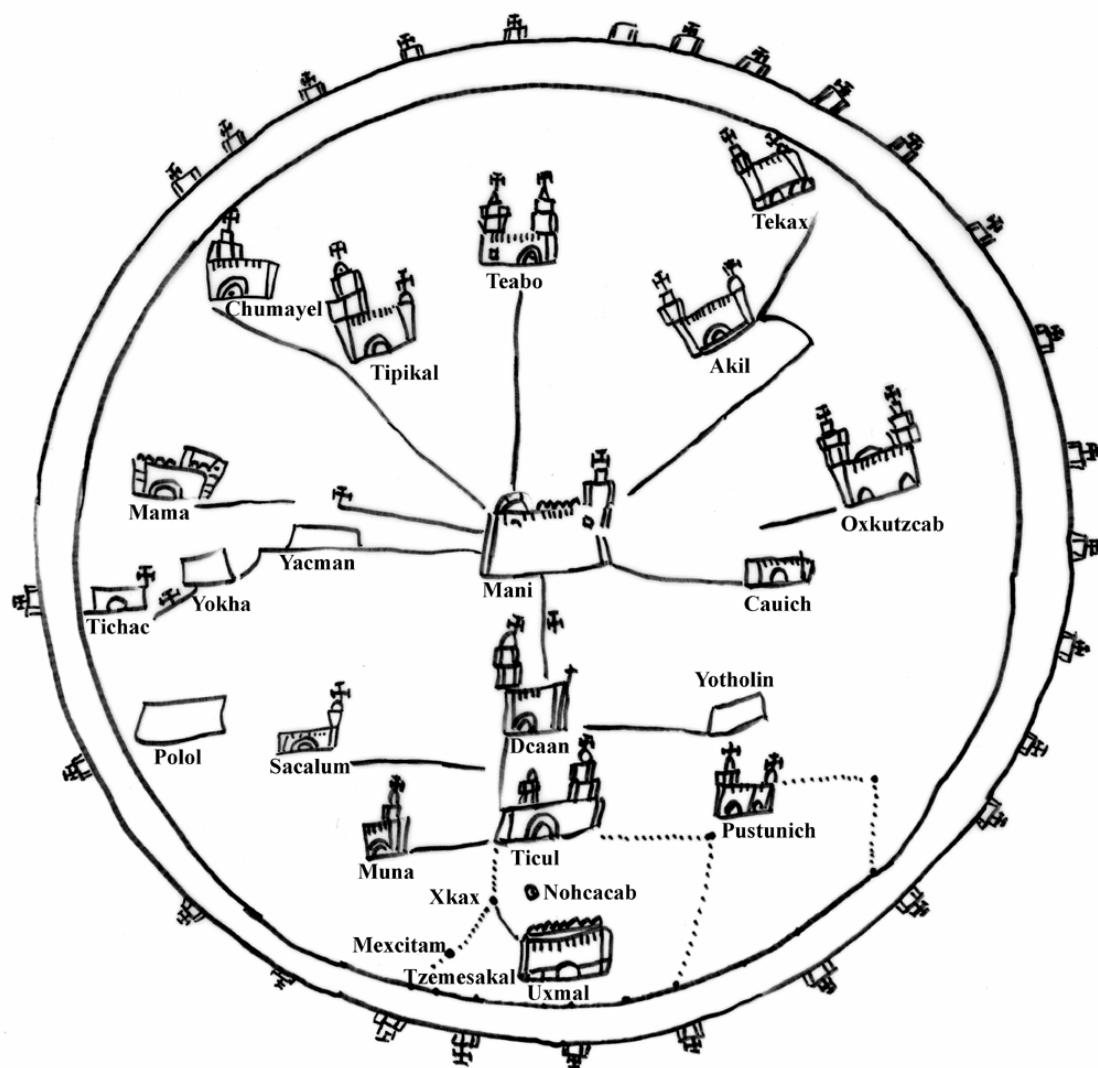


Figure 2.2. 16th Century Map of the Maní Province (Redrawn by author after Roys 1943:

Fig.1)

dependencies (Roys 1957: 6). This type of organizational structure corresponds to Marcus' description of a "minimal chiefdom" (1993: 157).

Type C. Political organization of this type consisted of loosely allied groups of towns that remained independent of the larger more centralized provinces (Roys 1957: 6). Most of the provinces with this type of organizational structure were located in peripheral regions along the outskirts of the larger Yukatekan provinces (Marcus 1993: 120). It is very likely that given time, this type of loosely allied organizational unit would have been swallowed up by more powerful territorial units. Examples with this type of organizational structure include *Ecab*, *Uaymil*, *Chakan*, and *Chikinchel* (Roys 1957: 6). Based on the lack of explicit administrative and hierarchical control, Marcus was hesitant to state that this type of organizational structure could be considered a chiefdom (Marcus 1993: 157).

It is unclear from Roys whether there was an administrative council or group of advisors to the *halach uinic* in those provinces that had them. It seems likely that the *b'atab'ob* fulfilled that role in light of the fact that many of these 'local leaders' were directly related to the *halach uinic*. The office of *b'atab'* was an appointed position that included executive, judicial, and military responsibilities (Roys 1957: 6-7). As local heads of the towns under a *halach uinic's* rule, the *b'atab'ob* were responsible for ensuring that all of the provincial policies of the *halach uinic* were carried out correctly. They reported directly to the *halach uinic* and presided over the local town councils within the province. The *b'atab'ob's* duties included hearing petitioners' complaints, overseeing building repairs, and the planting of agricultural fields. In times of war, their duties included overseeing military planning. The duty of conducting the actual military engagement or operation was left to a special war chief known as a *nakom* (Roys 1957:

7). *B'atab'ob'* often called upon their deputies (*Aj Kulels*) to help carry out executive orders (Roys 1972: 62).

In provinces where a *halach uinic* presided, it is clear that the *b'atab'ob'* did not earn the right to collect their own tribute. Rather, obligatory support came from those within his town in the form of communal field cultivation, home repairs, and domestic service (Roys 1972: 62). The *b'atab'ob'* also received token gifts (food and small cotton mantles) from the petitioners and litigants in their capacity as local magistrates. In provinces lacking *halach uinics* it is clear that *b'atab'ob'* exacted considerable amounts of tribute from their towns including grain, poultry, cacao, cotton mantles, and strings of red shell and green stone beads (Roys 1972: 63). In recognition of their esteemed position within Maya society, the *b'atab'ob'* were treated with great pomp and circumstance whenever they traveled. Roys states that whenever a *b'atab'* traveled he was always greeted and accompanied by a great many people. In addition to bowing before him, the populace would often spread their mantles in front of his path (Roys 1972: 63).

Other important administrative offices within Maya society prior to the arrival of the Spanish included the *Aj Kuch Kab'*, the *Jolpop*, and the *Tupil*. As members of a town council, the *Aj Kuch Kab'ob'* were in direct charge of the various wards or *barrios* within the township. Similar 'subdivisions' or *calpullis* have been described at Tenochitlán (Roys 1972: 63). Although their exact duties are unclear, Roys states (1957: 7) that nothing could be done in their wards without their consent. Another important title that shows up in the early Colonial descriptions of Yucatan is that of the *Jolpop*, 'Head of the Mat' (Roys 1957: 7). The Spanish chroniclers refer to the person who carries this title as an overseer and in some cases, as a *cacique* because of his close association with the mat symbol, a Maya emblem of power and authority. It is said that the *jolpop* "were like

regidors or captains and through them the people negotiated with the lord [the *halach uinic* and/or the *b'atab'*] for whatever they desired" (Roys 1972: 64). Finally, the lowest official in the administrative hierarchy appears to be that of the *tupil*. The *tupil* were the towns' 'minor peace officers' and the positions appear to have been filled by non-noble members of Maya society (Roys 1972: 64).

Although most of the descriptions of sixteenth century Maya political organization were based on observations of the Yucatek Maya living in the northern Yucatan Peninsula, it is also important to understand political organization in other areas of the Maya region during this time. According to Scholes and Roys (1968: 3-5, 50), Cortés was the first Spaniard to encounter and describe both the people and the Chontal province of Acalán in the present state of Tabasco, Mexico in 1525. Situated in a strategic position along the Candelaria River Valley, the province of Acalán dominated and controlled the flow of trade between the Gulf Coast and the Caribbean across the lower base of the Yucatan Peninsula. According to Cortés, the Chontal of Acalán at this time were under the dominion of a single supreme ruler named *Paxbolonacha* (Scholes and Roys 1968: 4). He ruled his territory from the central capital city, Itzamkanac, which was described by Cortés as containing many temples and as many as 900 or 1000 "good houses of stone" that were the residences of the "principal men" (Scholes and Roys 1968: 53). In addition, Acalán's dominion was said to have included some 76 towns and the population in each was considerable (Scholes and Roys 1968: 4).

Most of what is known about the history of Acalán comes from a series of documents known collectively as the *Paxbolon-Maldonado* Papers. These documents were written by Pablo Paxbolon, the grandson of the Acalán ruler whom Cortés first met and a son-in-law to Francisco Maldonado (Scholes and Roys 1968: 8). Dating between

1565 and 1628 these documents chronicle the history of Acalán from some six generations prior to the Spanish conquest. The Acalán were new to the Tabasco region. The documents indicate that the ruling family of Acalán was driven out of its native homeland of Cozumel sometime during the late fourteenth century (Scholes and Roys 1968: 78-79). No date or explanation was provided for this migration, but given the political conditions, antagonistic relations among the various Yucatek and Itzá groups and lineages during the twelfth through fifteenth centuries probably contributed to their forced relocation in the Tabasco region.

Known as the ‘Place of the Canoes’, most of the Acalán towns were adjacent to or located near navigable waters (Scholes and Roys 1968: 50). The principal commodities exported to their Mexican neighbors included cacao, cotton cloth, body-paints, pitch pine, incense, finely tanned jaguar and cougar pelts, carved tortoise shells, red shell beads, and a variety of precious stones and minerals (Scholes and Roys 1968: 29 and 58). There was an extensive trade network between Acalán and the Yucatan Peninsula. *Acalán* residents imported salt, cotton cloth, chert, and slaves from the Yucatan (Scholes and Roys 1968: 29-30). The capital city of Acalán, Itzamkanac, appears to have been divided into four wards or subdivisions called *tzuculs* (Scholes and Roys 1968: 54). Each of the four *tzuculob*’ were governed by ‘principal men’ (*nucalob*’ or *nuc winikob*’) appointed to their positions by the ruler (*Ajaw*) of the Acalán. However, the ruler’s power was limited: “power was by no means absolute, for he could take no action without consulting his principal men” (Scholes and Roys 1968: 55). Data from the Acalán documents concerning the details of the political and social hierarchy are sketchy, but the documents seem to indicate that a town council existed that was likely composed of the *nuc uinicob*, ‘principal men’ (Scholes and Roys 1968: 55). No terms are known to exist for the Acalán

nobility, but the reference to *nuc uinicob* suggests the presence of an elite class. The Acalán documents make reference to Acalán commoners as *meya uinicob*, ‘working men’, and to slaves, both male (*pentac*) and female (*mun*) (Scholes and Roys 1968: 56). Acalán rulers also demanded and exacted tribute from their subordinates. In passages of the *Paxbolon* Papers relating to the fifth Acalán ruler, Pachimalahix, there is a brief statement that “he imposed tribute upon them” in a reference to a polity known as Bakhalal.

Sixteenth Century Highland Maya Political Organization

The Maya Highlands, which includes the Mexican state of Chiapas, southern Guatemala, and the western portions of Honduras and El Salvador, were inhabited by many different Maya groups during the millennia prior to the arrival of the Spanish in 1523. Political integration appears to have been weak in the Maya Highlands with a few notable exceptions including the Late-Preclassic center of Kaminaljuyú, centered in the Valley of Guatemala, the early fifteenth century K’ichee’ Maya, whose regional capital of Uatatlán was centered in a valley located in the heart of the Cuchumatanes Mountains, and the Kaqchikel, whose capital city was Iximché. The focus for the following discussion will be restricted to the political organization of the K’ichee’.

Most of the details and descriptions concerning K’ichee’ Maya political organization come directly from numerous sixteenth century K’ichee’ and Kaqchikel chronicles. One of the most important ethnohistoric sources for political information is the *Popol Vuj*, the ‘Council Books’ of the K’ichee’ Maya written between 1554 and 1558. The *Popol Vuj* chronicles the sacred history of the K’ichee’ nation from their

mythological creation to their thirteenth century legendary migration from the Gulf Coast to the Maya Highlands and their subsequent conquests of the local groups along the way (Christenson 2007; Tedlock 1996). The historical information contained within the *Popol Vuj* provides an inside view of “official” K’ichee’ history from the perspective of its leading officials.

Other important native sources for information concerning sixteenth century Highland Maya political organization include the *Tamub Titulo* (Recinos 1957) and the *Annals of the Cakchiquels* (Villacorta 1934; Maxwell and Hill 2006). The *Tamub Titulo* was written by the K’ichee’ in the mid-1560s and contains more accurate descriptions of K’ichee’ political geography than any other document (Carmack 1981: 8). The *Annals of the Kaqchikels*, written around the same time as the *Tamub Titulo*, record the history of K’ichee’ society from the Kaqchikel perspective.

Questions concerning the nature of Highland Maya political organization has been an issue at the forefront of Maya studies ever since the first Spaniards arrived in this region during the early part of the sixteenth century. Much of the debate has focused on whether the K’ichee’ had a centralized or decentralized political system (Carmack 1981: 168). According to Las Casas (1909: 615-616), the K’ichee’ political system was highly centralized and reflected the social hierarchy of the kingdom. He proclaimed that the K’ichee’ system was a “monarchy” based on the precepts of an elite four-tiered sociopolitical hierarchy consisting of the offices of the king, the king elect, the major captain, and the minor captain (Carmack 1981: 168). In this system, all of the positions of power and authority were restricted to a noble class based entirely upon kinship and lineal ties to the king. However, using the same data, Franciscan friar Pedro de Betanzos argued that the K’ichee’ political system was highly decentralized and represented an

oligarchy rather than a monarchy. Betanzos insisted that the evidence of a four-tiered sociopolitical system actually represented a quadripartite political system of joint-rule comprised of the four principal lineage-heads of Uatlán (*Kaweq, Nijayib, Ajaw K'iche'*, and *Saqik* (Carmack 1981: 168).

Carmack (1981: 169) argues against Betanzos' claim, stating that the basic sociopolitical unit of most Highland Maya groups were the territorial divisions known as *chinamits* meaning 'fenced in place' in Nahuatl (Carmack 1981: 164). For years scholars interpreted *chinamits* and larger territorial divisions, the *calpullis*, as being characteristic of a kin-based political system based on lineage or clan ties (Hill 2001: 190). Recent research suggests that the basic principal of organization in K'ichee' society was not kin-based. Rather, membership into a *chinamit* meant residing within a well-defined common territory that was ruled under the auspices of a single aristocratic family (Hill 2001: 190). Much of the previous confusion about Highland Maya political organization was because the *chinamit* system was dominated by a kin-based or lineage-based system, and the ruling aristocratic families belonged to a specific lineage or *amaq'* ('a group of people related through descent and living within a defined territory'). However, these families did not claim kinship to or marry commoners within their own *chinamit*. Rather, the ruling families negotiated marriage contracts with other ruling aristocratic families outside their own *chinamit*. The practice of inter-marriage not only helped to solidify the creation of new political alliances, but also led to the creation of larger political entities (Hill 2001: 190).

Using early K'ichee' chronicles that listed the names and occupations of some 64 lineage heads, Carmack was able to chart the overall sociopolitical hierarchy of Pre-Conquest K'ichee' society. At the top of the hierarchy was the ruler or *ajpop*, who

symbolized and represented the power and authority of the K'ichee' people (Carmack 1981: 170). He could only be succeeded by members of his own lineage, specifically his eldest son or brother, who occupied the second highest military office in K'ichee' society, the office of the *nim rajpop achij*, 'great military captain' (Carmack 1981: 170-171). The *ajpop* laid claim to belonging to the most prestigious dynastic line whose legitimacy and history were well defined and meticulously recorded. He served as the head of the K'ichee' army, a position he specifically trained for while occupying the office of major captain or *nima rajpop achij* prior to becoming king. The chronicles record that the *ajpop* commonly went into battle with his troops and that he was always surrounded by elite guards who carried battle banners featuring the portraits of the kingdom's patron gods (Carmack 1981: 171). This description is reminiscent of the many Late Classic figural scenes that depict rulers in battle in huge palanquins accompanied with battle banners featuring fantastic portraits of ancestral deities or patron gods. Lastly, in addition to being the ultimate voice in all policy decisions for the K'ichee' kingdom, the *ajpop* appointed men to the various political offices under his jurisdiction (Carmack 1981: 171). Under his direct authority a 'confederacy' or 'nation' was comprised of three distinct *winak*, 'lineages' (the *Nima K'iche'*, the *Tamub*, and the *Ilocab*) with numerous tributary *chinamitiles*, 'small territorial divisions' (Carmack 1981: 164, 176). Each of the three *winak* occupied its own capital center (*Q'umarkáj*, *Pismachi*, and *Mukwitz Pilocab* respectively), but collectively the three centers were united as a single community referred to by John Fox (1978) as belonging to Greater Utiatlán. The *Nima K'ichee'* *Winak* provided the leadership for the confederacy, the *Tamub Winak* provided the trade and communication for the confederacy, while the *Ilocab Winak* provided the outer defense for the confederacy (Carmack 1981: 74). Under the authority of a single ruler and

acting together as a ‘conquest state’ or *ajawarem*, the K’ichee’ confederacy was powerful enough to subdue the political systems of its surrounding neighbors including the Caqchikels, the Tzutujils, the Mams, the Ixils, the Pokomams, and the Pipils (Carmack 1981: 3).

The second highest office or position in the K’ichee’ political hierarchy belonged to the king elect or the *ajpop c’amja* (‘receiving house lord’) (Carmack 1981: 171). As the title suggests, the *ajpop c’amja* was the individual responsible for receiving official visitors and guests on behalf of the *ajpop*. The *ajpop c’amja* was also the king elect and stood in place for the king in various official contexts (Carmack 1981: 171).

The *k’alel* or ‘chief courtier’ or ‘chief judge,’ whose duties appeared more judicial than anything else (Carmack 1981: 171), occupied the rank below the *ajpop c’amja* and the *nima rajpop achij*. As a courtier, his role was to “explain, question, witness, denounce, and assist the *ajpop*” in all matters pertaining to official policy decisions. Finally, in some ethnohistoric accounts there appears to be another upper-level office known as the *atzij winak* meaning ‘chief spokesman’ or ‘chief speaker.’ His role appears to be more legislative than judicial in matters pertaining to the official policy and his chief duty was to act as a consultant to the *ajpop* (Carmack 1981: 171).

The political administrative hierarchy below the K’ichee’ king and his three assistants was comprised of a council of ‘principal men’ or *ajawob* who specialized in the duties each was required to perform as a member of the king’s council according to Las Casas (1909: 622-623). This second tier of administrative authority below the king consisted of judges, priests, tribute collectors, and military chiefs (Carmack 1981: 174). The ‘council judges’ or *k’alel* were responsible for hearing the most important legal cases, all of which were recorded in writing according to the early Spanish accounts,

though the language in which they were written is not clear. The judges as well as all of the ‘principal men’ received formal tribute from their vassals because of their esteemed status as noble members of the king’s administrative council. All of the judges received their first meal of each day in communal kitchens within the royal court (Carmack 1981: 174). All ritual and religious matters were left in the hands of a highly specialized division of priests known as *Ajcqjb*, ‘sacrificers’ (Carmack 1981: 174). The *Ajcqjb* were responsible for maintaining and interpreting the religious precepts and ritual divination calendars pertaining to matters of the state. A war council was made up of the most experienced warriors (Carmack 1981: 174). The office of military chiefs had two parts one headed by the ‘major captain’ *nima rajop achij* and the other by the ‘minor captain’ *ch’uti rajop achij*, who were assisted by other military advisors. Ultimate military authority rested in the hands of the *ajpop*. As Carmack (1981: 174 and 193) notes, the evidence of the king’s supreme authority over the military was that all of the warriors received their weapons directly from the king in the royal palace (‘*cochoch*’) and he participated in many of the battles. Other second-level administrative offices of the king’s “principal men” included: ‘tribute collectors’ (*lolmet*), ‘official court spokesmen’ (*nim ch’ocoj*), ‘special counselors for the ballgame’ (*popol winak*), ‘banquet directors’ (*yacolatam*), and other ‘administrative assistants’ (*uchuch c’amja* and *nima c’amja*) (Carmack 1981: 175-176).

While the upper two tiers of administrative authority consisted of specialized officers of the state, independent of any lineage function, a third tier of administration governed the internal affairs of the lineages and all the ‘tributary provinces’ or *chinamital* of the K’ichee’ kingdom (Carmack 1981: 177). The *utzam chinamital*, ‘head of all the *chinamital* members,’ and the *ajtz’alam*, ‘he the wall official,’ referring to the walls of

the *chinamit* were responsible for the collection of tribute, were the keepers of justice, military recruiters, oversaw land disputes, and oversaw all religious rituals within their respective territorial jurisdictions (Carmack 1981: 177). The third tier of the K'ichee' administrative hierarchy served as intermediaries between the state officials and the 'commoners' (*nimak achi*) who lived within the various *chinamital*. It is also interesting to note that many of the tertiary leaders were members of the *achij*, 'military council.' Military titles associated with members of this tier are also of interest. For example, Carmack (1981: 177) reports that some of these tertiary leaders were known as *ajpocob*, 'shield-bearers,' *tzununche*, 'lancers,' *ajch'ab*, 'bowmen,' and *tz'olaj*, 'hand-to-hand warriors.' Thus, it would appear that the third tier consisted of a military grade that was highly coordinated and regimented with its own hierarchy.

The political organization of the K'ichee' of Greater Utlán closely resembles that of a large conquest state. It had 64 tributary provinces that were subject to the supreme ruler who headed a tripartite confederacy of three major political groups whose centers comprised the Greater Utlán sphere. Power and authority were established and maintained through a system of patrilineal ties to the most prestigious aristocratic lineages of the kingdom. The ruler had the final say in all matters pertaining to the state. The ruler controlled both the legal and economic systems and conducted military action in provinces under his jurisdiction from his ruling capital. Much of the K'ichee' ruler's power derived from military conquests and the practice of exogamous dynastic marriage, which led to the creation of new and important political alliances. These new political alliances enabled the K'ichee' kingdom to expand. Tributary towns or colonies with fortified defensive walls around both their political centers and territorial jurisdictions were established to support both the ruling aristocracy and their own lineal administrative

units. The K'ichee' aristocracy was able to transform the overall political system from a kin-based system of close lineal ties to a complex and hierarchical system that included the creation of specific administrative offices of the state. Lineage ties remained an important feature throughout the history of K'ichee' society. The once dispersed rural population living in the outskirts of the three principal centers was drawn to urbanized centers and was under state control.

Site Size and Site-Based Hierarchical Models

By the 1960s, archaeologists began to examine Classic Maya sociopolitical organization using settlement patterns analyses. Inspired by Gordon Willey's groundbreaking analysis of settlement patterns in the Virú Valley of Peru (1953), Willey attempted to define Andean social organization based on the disposition of ruins across a regional landscape and the spatial arrangement of specific features within sites. The challenges facing archaeologists today are the questions of how and why changes in settlement systems occurred. Archaeologists must examine the sociopolitical functions of the settlement systems to establish a diachronic or chronological framework for the site or region to answer these questions. These data can then be used (for comparative purposes) to infer possible social, economic, and political reasons that certain changes took place at particular times (Willey 2001: 661).

During the 1960's, the general consensus among Maya scholars concerning the function of the great Classic Maya center was that it served as "the religious, political, and probably, commercial nucleus of Maya society and that these nuclei held some sort of sovereignty over specified territories" (Willey et al. 1965: 13). Scholars continued to

support Thompson's original "ceremonial center" hypothesis that Maya social organization was based on a highly dichotomized priest-peasant relationship. However, as Willey and Bullard (1965: 360) stated, the great ceremonial centers that served as the capitals for a theocratic leadership represented only one segment of Maya society. In order to understand the social complexity of Maya society archaeologists must also investigate the relationship between the domestic dwellings in a community to the ceremonial centers.

Bullard was among the first scholars to investigate Classic Maya sociopolitical organization of the northeastern Petén using settlement pattern data. Bullard's (1960) study examined the nature of Maya residential settlements and discussed their relationship to the various ceremonial centers. Bullard investigated the size of rural or residential settlements across a larger regional landscape to infer population densities, the degree of political centralization, and to outline the hierarchical nature of Maya settlements, based on the assumption that greater site size meant greater political power (Martin 2003: 15). Archaeologists continued to examine site size using data derived from population estimates, the territorial limits of Maya settlements, the number of courtyards, and through volumetric assessments of temple constructions (see Abrams 1994; Adams 1981, 1986; Adams and Adams 2003; Adams and Smith 1981; Culbert and Rice 1990; Turner et al. 1981).

As part of Bullard's regional surface survey, he identified and distinguished three types of architectural remains: house ruins, minor ceremonial centers, and major ceremonial centers (1960: 357). The simplest and greatest number of architectural remains belonged to the type known as house ruins, the residential dwellings of Maya commoners. According to Bullard (1960: 370; 1964: 281) houses tended to occur in

clusters or hamlets ranging from five to twelve homes and may have included one specialized civic building, probably a communal shrine for the members of that cluster. Based on the relative size of these clusters Bullard (1960: 367) suggested that they were probably occupied by a kin group. These clusters could also be grouped into larger aggregates or “zones of settlements” ranging in number from fifty to one hundred houses with a minor ceremonial center. Bullard equates the term “zone” with that of “community” and minor ceremonial centers were generally referred to as “dispersed towns” that served as religious and civic centers for the community (1960: 368). Lastly, Bullard (1960: 370) noted that there were zonal aggregates comprising larger territorial divisions or districts, each with its own major ceremonial center. Major ceremonial centers are appreciably larger in size than the minor ceremonial centers and they often contain carved stelae, a feature often absent in minor ceremonial centers (Bullard 1960: 370). Bullard argued for the existence of a site hierarchy based on his identification of some fourteen major ceremonial centers, each controlling its own geographically-defined territory and each surrounded by numerous minor centers, in the northeastern Petén.

Bullard returned to the problems associated with reconstructing lowland Maya sociopolitical organization in his 1964 article titled *Settlement Pattern and Social Structure in the Southern Maya Lowlands During the Classic Period*. Bullard concluded that based on his typology of Maya settlements one could infer that “cities were ruled by divine or near-divine kings” who were “supported by a priestly nobility and a corps of craft specialists and minor functionaries” (1964: 280). He also suggested that a social-grade hierarchy must have existed among the peasantry. Bullard (1964: 280) argued that more attention needed to be given to the sustaining regions surrounding the major ceremonial centers in order to understand the social hierarchy of Maya society.

Archaeologists should consider the size of the sustaining regions, the settlement distributions within those regions, the internal organization of the individual settlements, and estimate the population size of the sustaining regions (Bullard 1964: 280). Estimating prehistoric population sizes and territorial boundaries are difficult to ascertain. According to Rice and Culbert (1990: 7, 13-20), estimating population size is based on a host of variable factors including the nature of Maya agricultural systems, their associated carrying capacities, the count of architectural structures, numbers of residents per household (based on comparisons to ethnohistoric or ethnographic data), and the determination of site boundaries. The problem becomes even more complex when considered over time and space. Combined with the problems of identifying “hidden” or unmapped structures, along with the issues of “contemporaneity” and “disuse” (the abandonment of structures), the problems of determining population size are even more difficult. Because of these issues there is no single answer to the question “How large was Tikal during Classic times?” In order to answer that question, one would have to clearly state which region of Tikal was considered to: the central core (some 63 square kilometers), the region or territory enclosed by the earthworks and *bajos* (some 120 square kilometers), the territory that incorporates all of the sites closer to Tikal than to any other major center (approximately 596 square kilometers), or to the territorial sphere of Tikal’s influence based on the distribution of the Tikal emblem glyph (roughly 26,000 square kilometers (Bray 1983: 173). Carr and Hazard (1961:10) systematically mapped settlement at Tikal and discovered a relatively dense population extending in all areas of what they call “Greater Tikal,” averaging some 275 individual structures per square kilometer. Thompson’s widely held belief of a “vacant ceremonial center” was largely disproved with the recognition of greater population densities than previously believed.

By the 1970's archaeologists began producing better site maps and they also began plotting settlement distributions across a wider regional landscape. Mayanists also began to take notice of various mathematical models used by geographers. Perhaps the most important of these mathematical models was Christaller's (1933) Central Place Theory, which examined how large cities (central places) influenced the distribution of the dependent centers surrounding them (see Haggert 1966; Loesch 1954). The settlements of the surrounding dependent centers tend to form a hexagonal lattice pattern reflecting the optimum efficiency in administrative and economic control, travel time, and communication between the main center and its subject polities (Bray 1983: 170-171).

In 1972, Kent Flannery applied the methods of central place theory to two regions surrounding the major centers of Uaxactún and Calakmul (Figure 2.3). According to Flannery (1972: 418), the hexagonal spacing between centers can inform archaeologists of the possible "service functions" of a set of sites and whether they were economic, administrative, or religious in nature. The appearance of differentiated dependent centers within the overall lattice framework can indicate the existence of a tiered settlement hierarchy.

At the same time, Norman Hammond (1974) used settlement distributions along with a polity's resource base to reconstruct the territorial region of control or "realm" of Lubaantun using Theissen polygons to plot idealized political boundaries. The use of Theissen polygons is a technique borrowed from geography that plots and delineates the territorial boundaries equidistant between centers (Hammond 1974: 321-322). Hammond plotted the distribution of some 83 sites located across the eastern Maya Lowlands (Figure 2.4) and his results suggested a wide range of settlement densities. The region

with the widest spacing between centers appears to be the core area south of Tikal, while the region with the closest spacing between centers appears to be the peripheral area just east of Tikal or the northwestern Maya Mountains region. While Hammond's findings suggest a denser settlement distribution and higher population for the eastern Maya Lowlands, a major problem associated with "idealized" boundaries is the "assumption that centers are in a coequal rather than a hierarchical relationship" (Hammond 1974: 322). In addition, Hammond did not discuss the political significance of these territorial units nor did he discuss the enormous disparity in the size and scale of their corresponding major centers.

Building upon the work of Bullard, Flannery, and Hammond, Richard Adams and other collaborators turned their attention to the quantitative ranking of Maya sites across a larger geopolitical landscape (Adams 1981, 1986; Adams and Jones 1981; Adams and Smith 1981; Turner, Turner and Adams 1981). Rank was established using data derived from volumetric assessments of formal architecture around courtyards, plazas, ballcourts, fortifications, tombs, carved monuments, and other features (Turner, Turner and Adams 1981: 73). Using previously published site maps, along with excavation data obtained from archaeological reports, they devised a mathematical formula for calculating the architectural mass of various city cores by estimating the total amount of material resources required to build them. Using a three-dimensional geometric form (the parallelepipedon), Adams and his collaborators applied their model to Maya architecture in order to quantitatively and qualitatively assess the spatial plots that delineate the organization, environmental conditioning, and material usage of certain architectural features (Turner, Turner, and Adams 1981: 73). In the end, the volumetric assessments came down to estimating courtyard size as a means of determining relative site size. As

with volumetric assessments in general, a problem has always been the reliability and accuracy of the various maps used by the authors. Grube and Martin (1998c: 27) note that sites such as Caracol were initially mapped in the 1930's and 1940's. Archaeologists had no idea just how large Caracol really was until a new systematic settlement survey was conducted by Diane and Arlen Chase in the late 1980's, which showed that Caracol was much larger than previously believed (1987). Turner, Turner, and Adams (1981: 82) ranked the site cores of some fifteen sites across the northern Petén. Adams and Jones (1981: 310) then devised a four-tiered schema or site hierarchy based upon the number of visible courtyards. Later, Adams (1986: 436-437) proposed that the Maya Lowlands were divided into eight "regional states" (Palenque, Yaxchilán, Calakmul, Puuc-Chenes, Cobá, Río Bec, Tikal, and Copan) each controlling a territory covering about 30,000 square kilometers (Figure 2.5).

While spatial analyses and site distributions can provide important insights concerning site hierarchies, they cannot be used as theoretical models for defining Classic Maya political organization itself. Rice (2004: 51) observes that many archaeologists have commented on and have used these kinds of analyses to discuss their implications for Classic Maya political organization. Differences in both size and complexity support the notion that some Maya sites exerted political control over others. In addition, the average distance between the major sites throughout the southern Maya Lowlands generally ranges from 20-30 kilometers, roughly equivalent to the distance one can walk in a day (Adams 1978: 27; Morley and Brainerd 1983: 211). Johnson (1982: 415) and others favor a more limited territorial radius of approximately 20 kilometers between major centers in order for them to retain "effective control." This is the spatial pattern among sites in both the Petexbatún and the Southern Maya Mountains Region.

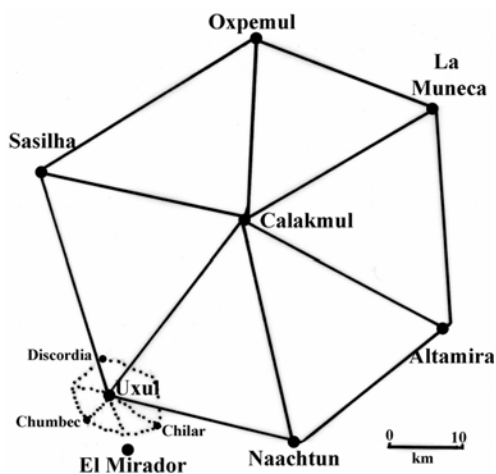


Figure 2.3. Flannery's Application of Central Place Theory to the Region Surrounding Calakmul (Redrawn by author after Flannery 1972: 422)

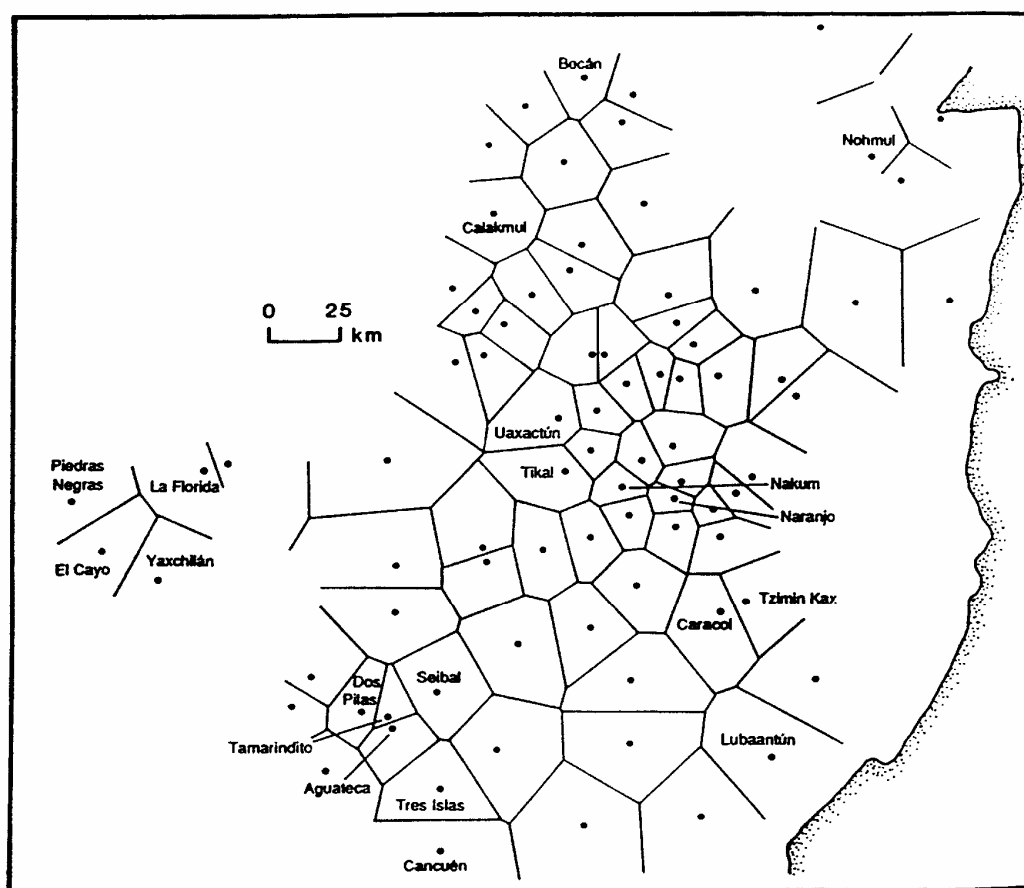


Figure 2.4. Hammond's Territorial Realms as Identified by Thiessen Polygons (Courtesy of Norman Hammond, used with Permission, Hammond 1974: Figure 3)

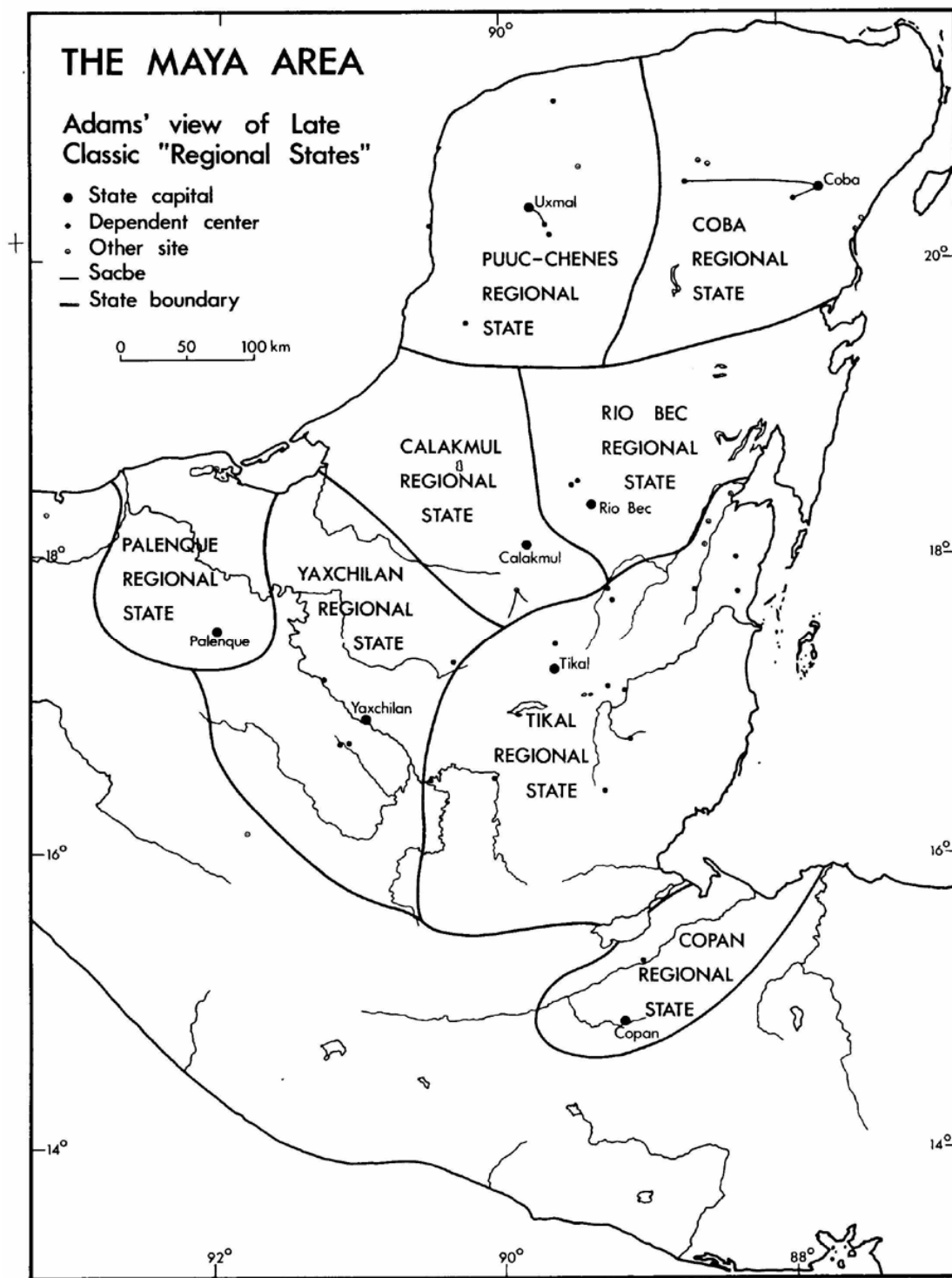


Figure 2.5. Adams' Regional State Map (Map courtesy of Peter Mathews, used with permission, Mathews 1991: Figure 2.5)

Distance and travel time between centers probably restricted the overall size and effective administrative control of at least some Classic Maya polities (Houston 1992b: 68).

Epigraphic evidence also suggests that some Maya polities had extended their economic and political control well beyond their territorial borders. It appears that Maya polities participated in wars against polities or territories located up to several hundred kilometers away from each other based on written references to warfare in the Classic Maya inscriptions. A good example of one such long-distance battle appears in a passage on the Hieroglyphic Stairway at Palenque. According to the text, in A.D. 599, the reigning king of Calakmul, 'Sky Witness,' oversaw the physical destruction of Palenque's ceremonial precinct known as *Lakam Ha'* (Grube, Martin, and Zender 2002: 25-26). The distance between Calakmul and Palenque is some 240 kilometers and Calakmul must have maintained effective control of the site long enough for them to commemorate this victory on the Hieroglyphic Stairway at Palenque. Failure in warfare, especially at places such as Tikal and Dos Pilas, may have contributed significantly to their subsequent downfalls. Diane and Arlen Chase (1998: 14) have argued in favor of Hassig's optimum Maya polity size based on limits of effective territorial control by delineating a "military marching distance" of some 60 kilometers (Hassig 1992). Thus, according to the Chases (1998: 14), the maximum territorial size of Maya polities that could be properly defended was probably restricted to an area comprising no more than 11,333 square kilometers ($\pi r^2 = 3.14159 \times 60 \times 60$).

These approaches did not take into consideration certain problems associated with reconstructing site boundaries in areas not well documented or with fluctuating political spheres (see Houston 1993: 2-4). Furthermore, using relative size or volumetric assessments based on the number of courtyards is not a reliable method for determining

political control, since physical size and political power are just two of the factors that must be considered. Access to land, resources, and manpower are other key factors that must be considered and analyzed as well (Grube 2000a: 552). Political importance and autonomy do not necessarily correspond to site size. Greater economic power or greater length of occupation may also play fundamental roles in the size and complexity of Maya sites (Houston 1993: 3).

Early Epigraphic Models

Besides providing a concise means for absolute dating and aiding in the reconstruction of the Classic Maya geopolitical landscape, the hieroglyphic inscriptions also provide data concerning the political domains of power, legitimization, and authority authored by the elite who were likely involved in decision-making policies. Great strides have been made in the decipherment of the Maya hieroglyphic script since the mid-1950s (see Coe 1992, 1999; G. Stuart 1992 for a more complete history). As decipherments flourished from the 1960s to the present, so too did our knowledge and understanding of Classic Maya political systems. While great strides have been made in our understanding of Classic Maya political organization, there is by no means a general consensus.

Ever since Tatiana Proskouriakoff's (1960) groundbreaking analysis revealing that the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Classic Maya contain narrative dynastic history, scholars have turned to these texts in order to understand the nature of Maya political organization. Heinrich Berlin (1958) noted the repeated appearances of a certain category of hieroglyph that were "emblematic" of particular Maya sites and referred to them as emblem glyphs. Berlin noticed that emblem glyphs had a fairly standardized form and

occurred near the end of passages in most Maya texts.

Emblem glyphs are comprised of three diagnostic elements: a prefix, a superfix, and a main sign that varied from site to site (Figure 2.6). The prefix, originally dubbed the “water group” sign by Eric Thompson (1960: 276) was later read by William Ringle (1988: 11) as *k’u* meaning ‘god’ or *k’ul* meaning ‘sacred thing, sacred, divinity, holy’ in Yukatek Maya. The two-part superfix, originally dubbed the “*ben-ich*” sign by Floyd Lounsbury (1973: 99), is read as *ajaw*, ‘lord or ruler.’ The variable main sign is different from site to site and in some cases, the main emblem may consist of a combination of one or more syllabic or logographic signs representing the ancient name of a Maya polity. Together, the emblem glyph reads *k’ujul x ajaw* or ‘the divine x lord’ (here the x represents the name of the individual kingdom) and it appears to be used as a personal title reserved exclusively for Maya kings.

Berlin illustrated the emblem glyphs of eight Classic Maya sites including Palenque, Yaxchilán, Copan, Naranjó, Machaquilá, Piedras Negras, Seibal, and Tikal (Figure 2.7). Berlin was uncertain as to whether emblem glyphs referred to the ancient names of the polities, toponyms, the names of particular patron deities, or to the ruling lineages or dynasties of the city (1958: 113). Proskouriakoff used the identification of emblem glyphs as evidence that the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Classic Maya contained historical information. Proskouriakoff believed that emblem glyphs functioned as either lineage or dynastic names (1960: 471). David Kelley (1962: 323) was the first scholar to argue that emblem glyphs referred to specific toponyms or place names. Expanding upon Berlin’s work, Thomas Barthel (1968: 172), argued that the prefixes and superfixes of emblem glyphs may have a titular function and that the main signs may indicate membership in a specific patrilineage or polity. Barthel also recognized that the

distribution of emblem glyphs could provide important insights regarding the sociopolitical organization of Maya polities (1968: 193). Barthel examined two monuments, Copan Stela A (erected in A.D. 731) and Seibal Stela 10 (erected in A.D. 849), that featured passages containing four different emblem glyphs in succession (Figure 2.8). At Copan, the local emblem was followed by the emblem glyphs of Tikal, Calakmul (not identified as such at this time), and Palenque. In addition, Barthel realized that each of the four emblem glyphs appeared to be associated with glyphs denoting particular cardinal directions and other glyphic expressions that included the number four and the “sky” sign (1968: 185-186). At Seibal, a similar, but less complex pattern was observed that featured the emblem glyphs of Seibal, Tikal, Calakmul, and the Ik’ Site (Barthel 1968: 189-190).

On the basis of these patterns, Barthel suggested that the emblem glyphs in these two passages might represent a cosmogram involving the heads of four different political capitals or regional states associated with glyphs representing the four cardinal directions (1968: 191-192). However, Barthel was unclear about how the emblem glyphs corresponded with the cardinal directions. According to the text of Copan Stela A, the direction north was associated with Palenque and the direction south was associated with Calakmul. This seems incorrect since Calakmul is geographically located far to the north and Palenque is located geographically to the west. According to the rest of the inscription, the direction east was associated with Copan which was plausible; however, the direction west was associated with Tikal and Tikal is not located to the west. Therefore, Barthel noted that a problem existed with the arrangement of these direction-specific emblem glyphs and he used this evidence to suggest that the directions were only symbolic. Based on numerous ethnohistoric and ethnographic descriptions of a

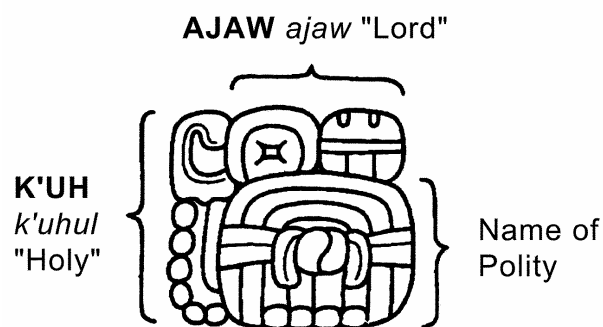


Figure 2.6. The Constituent Parts of an Emblem Glyph (Courtesy of Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube, 1998: Figure 22)

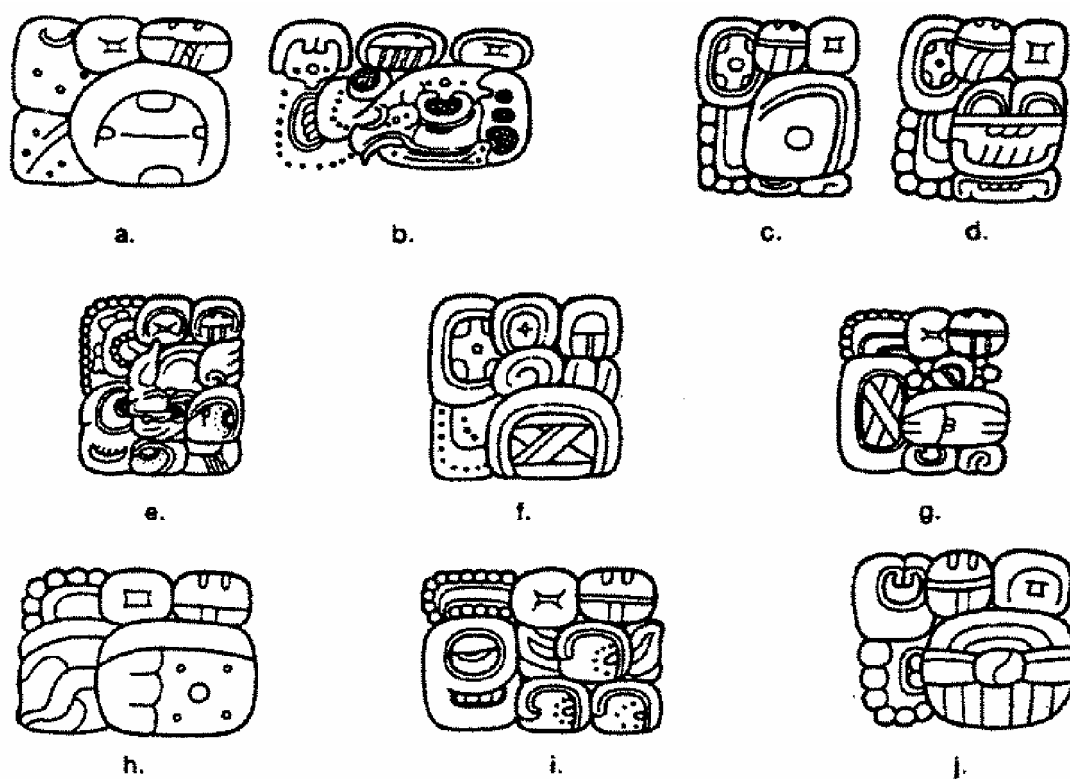


Figure 2.7. Berlin's Eight Original Emblem Glyphs (Drawing by John Montgomery)

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------|
| A) Palenque EG | D) Yaxchilán EG | G) Machaquilá EG | J) Tikal EG |
| B) Palenque EG | E) Copan EG | H) Piedras Negras EG | |
| C) Yaxchilán EG | F) Naranjó EG | I) Seibal EG | |

quadripartite or four-way cosmological division of space, Barthel and others suggested that this arrangement reflected the basic organizational model of Maya society (Roys 1933: 170-171; Tozzer 1941: 135-137; Coe 1965).

A major issue left unanswered by Barthel was how the other Maya cities fitted into his quadripartite model of Classic Maya political organization. Joyce Marcus took up this challenge during the 1970's. Marcus (1973, 1976, 1983b) was the first Mayanist to try to link the distribution of Maya sites to a larger political landscape based on the use of epigraphy and archaeology. As first noted by Barthel, the appearance of non-local emblem glyphs at certain sites could serve as a valuable indirect indicator of a political hierarchy among Maya sites. Marcus (1973: 913) believed that emblem glyphs not only referred to specific sites, but also to the territories they controlled. She also suggested that sites with emblem glyphs were politically more important than those without (1976: 11). Based on the distribution and contexts in which emblem glyphs appeared Marcus argued that the dependent polities would mention the superordinate polities, but not vice-versa. By combining the relative scale of Maya polities along with their spatial arrangements and emblem glyph distributions, Marcus argued that a four-tiered political hierarchy existed among various Lowland Maya sites and included four regional capitals (Figure 2.9).

Four primary centers or regional capitals (Tikal, Yaxchilán, Copán, and Palenque) are at the top of the site hierarchy (Marcus, 1976: 46-47). Often these sites were the first to acquire emblem glyphs in each of their respective regions. The regional capitals may refer to one another and be referred to by their own political dependencies. Regional capitals may have more than one emblem glyph and tend to have more carved stelae and monuments than other centers in their respective regions (Marcus 1976: 46). Secondary

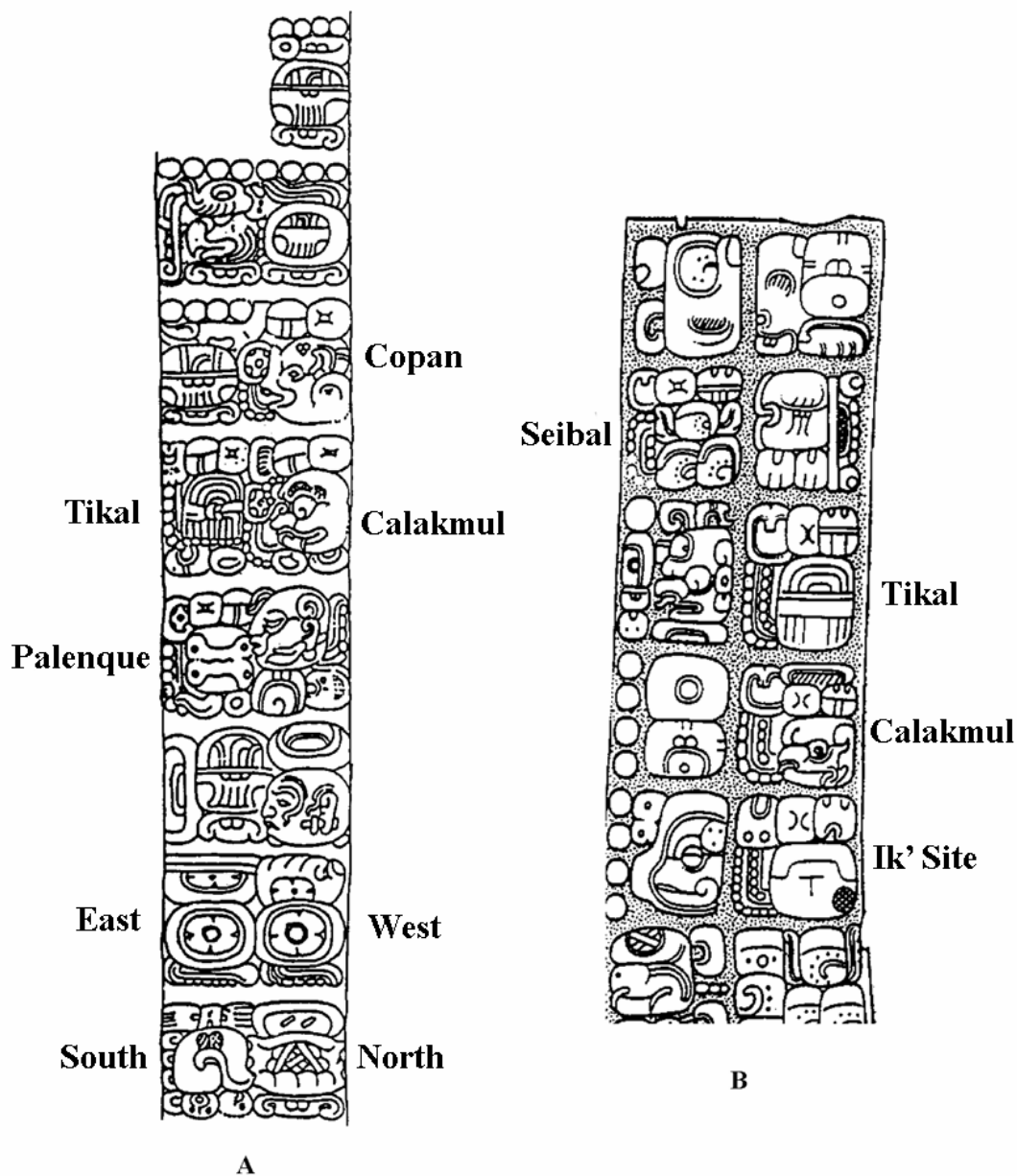


Figure 2.8. The Quadripartite Arrangement of Emblem Glyphs

A) Copan Stela A (Drawing by John Montgomery)

B) Seibal Stela 10 (Drawing by John Montgomery)

centers are located at regular intervals and form hexagonal lattices around primary centers (Marcus 1976: 46). Secondary centers also have their own emblem glyph. They are rarely mentioned by regional capitals, but may be mentioned by tertiary centers. The political importance of secondary centers may be related to dynastic ties to the ruling elite in the regional capitals, most likely through inter-dynastic marriages (Marcus 1976: 46). Tertiary centers are sites located along principal communication or trade routes between regional capitals or between primary and secondary centers and have no emblem glyphs of their own. They may refer to both the regional capitals and to secondary centers of their respective regions (Marcus 1976: 46). Finally, the quaternary centers are sites located near secondary and tertiary centers and also lack their own emblem glyphs according to Marcus' hierarchy. Quaternary centers do not refer to regional capitals and contain relatively few carved monuments (Marcus 1976: 47).

Marcus' hierarchical model was more sophisticated than any previously proposed organizational model. She later argued that six regional states or confederacies (Palenque, Yaxchilán, Calakmul, Tikal, Petexbatún, and Copan) controlled large geographic regions containing tiers of dependent polities (Marcus 1983). Marcus' data and conclusions led to debates between centralists, who viewed multi-tiered hierarchies as evidence of a centralized regional state bureaucracy, and decentralists, who considered Maya polities to be autonomous and limited in size and political power. A number of problems were associated with Marcus' model. For example, many of the archaeological sites Marcus described as being tertiary and quaternary centers had not been fully explored by the early 1970's and were not known to contain emblem glyphs. Subsequent archaeological and epigraphic projects have revealed numerous examples of local emblem glyphs at sites such as Uaxactún, Bonampak, Morales, Pusilhá, Tortuguero, and Xultún, which forced

Primary Centers (may display own and other primary centers' EG's)	Tikal	Yaxchilán	Copán	Palenque
Secondary Centers (possess EG; display EG of primary center)	Naranjo Aguateca Machaquilá	Piedras Negras	Quiriguá	Pomoná
Tertiary Centers (no EG; display EG of primary or secondary center)	Jimbal Ixlu Uaxactún	El Cayo Bonampak	Pusilhá	Tortuguero Jonuta Miraflores El Retiro
Quaternary Centers (no EG; no EG display)	El Encanto Xultún Nakum	La Mar La Florida Morales	Los Higos Río Amarillo Santa Rita	Tila Chuctiepa Chinikihá

Figure 2.9. Marcus' Four-Tiered Political Hierarchy Based on EG Distribution (after Marcus 1976: Table 4)

revisions in Marcus' original site hierarchy. Based on numerous archaeological excavations and large-scale mapping projects, it appears that some sites are much larger than previously believed. Piedras Negras, once thought to be a secondary center, is now recognized to be much larger in size than neighboring Yaxchilán (Grube and Martin 1998c: 22).

Some of the most influential work on emblem glyphs has been done by Peter Mathews. Unlike Marcus, Mathews presented a highly decentralized view of Classic Maya political organization. He argued that emblem glyphs were hereditary titles that appeared in the name phrases of rulers and that their appearance did not imply a differential status in rank of either the rulers who carried them or of the cities where they were found (Mathews 1991: 29). Mathews suggested that the *ajaw* superfix on all standard emblem glyphs referred to noble individuals of the same status (*k'ujul ajawob'*) at different sites (1989: 8). He suggested that sites using emblem glyphs were both independent and politically autonomous. Mathews reconstructed and plotted the geopolitical territories of some 63 autonomous Classic Maya polities using Theissen polygons based on the appearance and distribution of site-specific emblem glyphs (Figure 2.10). According to Mathews (1989: 9), the average size of a Maya polity was approximately 2,500 square kilometers, which is appreciably smaller than the 30,000 square kilometers advocated by Adams.

Today, most scholars believe that emblem glyphs refer to the territory or polity controlled by a particular ruler or *k'ujul ajaw* and that the appearance of the title itself is not necessarily a sign indicating political autonomy (Martin and Grube 1994, 2000). Stuart and Houston (1994) have further refined the description of the political landscape through the identification of numerous toponyms that record the names of locations

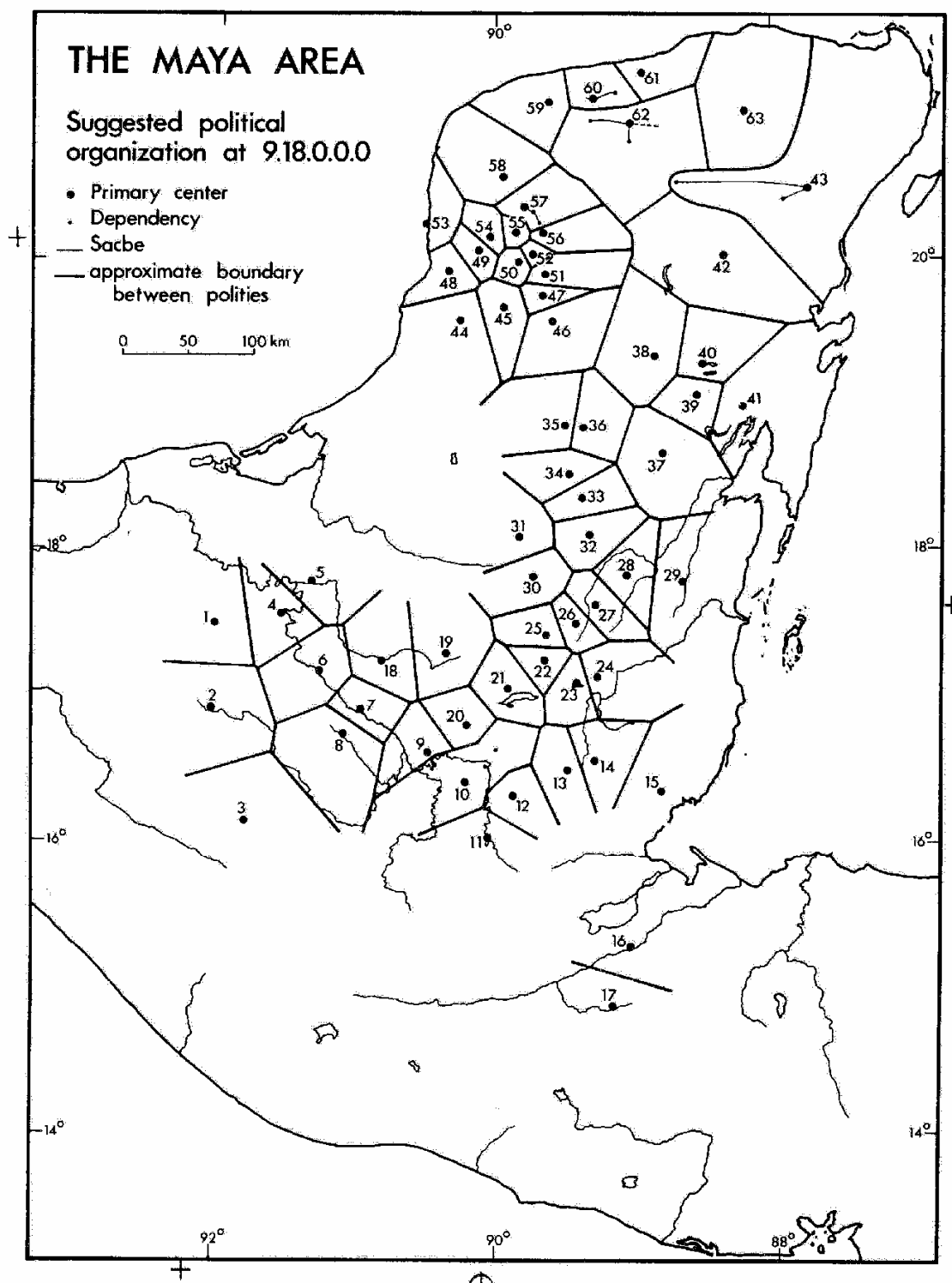


Figure 2.10. Mathews' Late Classic Territorial Divisions Based on the Distribution of Emblem Glyphs (Courtesy of Peter Mathews, used with permission, Mathews 1991: Figure 2.6)

within a given polity. Toponyms can also provide valuable insights concerning Maya sociopolitical organization. According to Zender (1998: 71) the main sign of a polity's emblem glyph refers not to the name of the capital itself, but rather to the name of the territorial kingdom of which it is the center. In many cases, the capital center may use a different toponymic emblem than that of the overall polity. For example, the emblem glyph of the territory known as Palenque is read *B'akal* meaning 'Bone Province' but the toponym of the central capital or downtown precinct of Palenque was known in Classic times as *Lakam Há* (Zender 1998: 71). To date, epigraphers have identified some 67 different emblem glyphs (Figure 2.11). Houston (1992a: 68) cautions that some Classic Maya polities include more than one large center with carved hieroglyphic texts erected by a single ruling dynasty and therefore "sites and polities are by no means synonymous."

Other Regional State or Centralized Political Models

In contrast to Mathews' decentralists' view of Classic Maya political organization, some scholars continued to argue that strong centralized administrative bureaucracies were in place during Classic times (Adams 1981, 1986; Adams and Jones 1981; Culbert 1988, 1991; Chase and Chase 1992; Marcus 1973, 1976). According to them, evidence for the centralization of Classic Maya political organization is found in the appearance of large-scale monumental architecture, the extensive network of *sakbeob* ('roads'), intensive agricultural and irrigation systems (involving irrigation canals, agricultural terracing, and *aguadas*), and the enormous size and territorial extent of some Maya polities (i.e. Caracol, Tikal, Calakmul, and Copan) (Fox et al. 1996: 803).

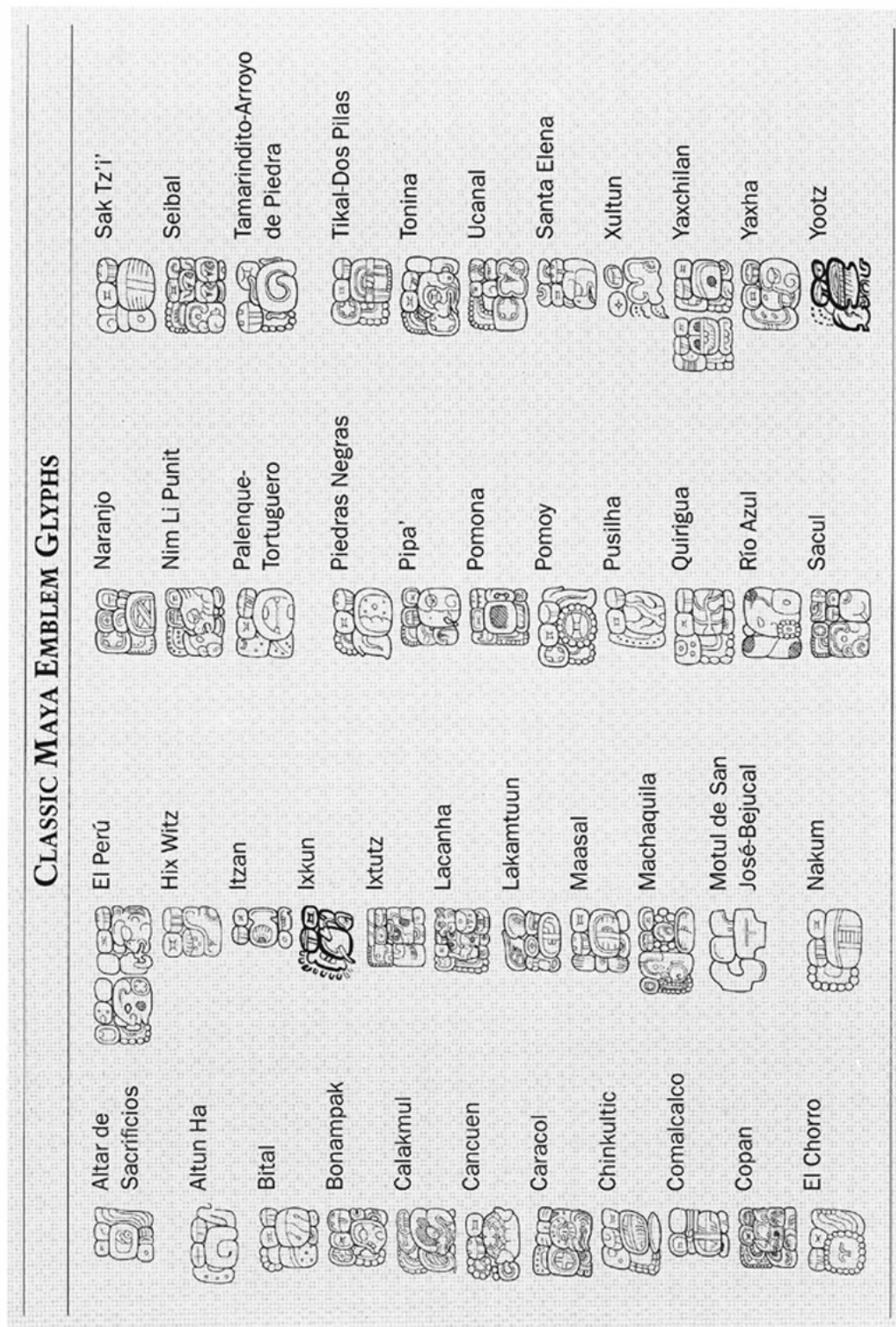


Figure 2.11. Classic Maya Emblem Glyphs (Courtesy of Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube, used with permission, Martin and Grube 2008: 19)

They argue that these types of labor-intensive monumental constructions would have required a centralized managerial state-level bureaucracy to coordinate the various activities associated with their design and planning and to oversee their actual construction and maintenance (Wittfogel 1957; Folan 1992; Abrams 1994; Abrams and Bolland 1999; Scarborough 1998).

The 1980's marked a major theoretical shift by scholars in the reconstruction of Classic Maya political organization. Building upon her earlier work, Marcus (1983b) was among the first Mayanists to apply modern concepts of historical process and state theory to the question of the Classic Maya political organization. Marcus refined her 1973 regional state model by incorporating it into Henry Wright's "archaic state" model (Wright 1977; Wright and Johnson 1975). According to Wright's archaic state model, the minimum requirements for ancient statehood include a fixed four-tiered site hierarchy, major forms of secular architecture (including palaces, and other buildings), a stratified social hierarchy, and the existence of a centralized administrative bureaucracy (1977: 389-390). Marcus believed that all of these features appeared in the southern Maya Lowlands by A.D. 534. According to Marcus (1983b: 461), the key diagnostic feature signaling the arrival and establishment of archaic states in the Maya Lowlands was the development of a multi-level administrative hierarchy among those elite personnel involved in the actual decision-making policies of the state. Marcus distinguished political, military, and religious personnel based on both epigraphic and sixteenth century ethnohistoric evidence and suggested that internal hierarchies existed among them (1993: 116).

Marcus's "Dynamic Model" was a holistic approach meant to define and chart changes in the developmental history of Classic Maya civilization based on numerous

political and territorial oscillations known to have occurred historically throughout the Maya area over time. Marcus suggested that during the Preclassic Period the political landscape of the Maya Lowlands consisted of small complex chiefdoms which became increasingly more complex and more centralized during the Classic Period (1993: 137-138). Over time, these chiefdoms coalesced into larger archaic states. By the onset of the Maya collapse, during the end of the Late Classic to the beginning of the Terminal Classic Periods, the process reversed resulting in the break-up of the archaic states along the fractured political divisions of their previous chiefdom boundaries (see Demarest et al. 2004) and a series of new and autonomous polities (Marcus 1993: 138-139). This systemic oscillation between centralization (“peaks”) and fragmentation (“troughs”) throughout the history of the Maya Lowlands was thought to mirror a similar developmental sequence of the territorial units of the Yucatan Peninsula as described by numerous sixteenth century accounts. An example of this process can best be seen following the fall of Chichén Itzá and the subsequent rise and fall of Mayapán that resulted in the fragmentation or division of the Yucatan Peninsula into the sixteen autonomous chiefly provinces encountered by the first Spaniards.

Other scholars, such as Adams and Smith (1977, 1981) and Sanders (1981) advocated a comparative modeling approach to Classic Maya political organization that included the use of analogies and case studies from Europe, Japan, and Africa. Adams and Smith (1981: 336-338) proposed a feudal model for Classic Maya political organization based on analogies to different forms of feudalism from around the world. Using data derived from architectural analysis, settlement patterns, and from intensive agricultural practices, Adams and Smith (1981: 336-338) suggested the following three characteristics were typical of Maya feudalism: 1) That political power and authority

were highly centralized and religiously sanctioned and maintained through suzerainty control (differential and hereditary power in the hands of a single ruler or family); 2) That political power, status, and economic wealth were tied to land ownership; and 3) That political relations were centered around a complex system of elite class connections and obligations.

William Sanders (1981) compared Classic Maya political organization to the “patron-client” states of Sub-Saharan Africa. According to Faller (1965) and Apter (1961), the African patron-client system is comprised of a series of ranked stewardships. Stewardships were ranked according to their access to the means of production (agricultural lands), but not to the actual ownership of the land (Sanders 1981: 367). Technically, the ruler was the owner of the land and overseer of all the population under his authority, but ownership of the land was actually vested in the local lineage group. Under this system, tribute or taxes in the form of surplus goods and services were exacted from the population by the ruler. In order to effectively coordinate and control the administrative activities associated with agricultural production, the ruler would select clients as stewards who oversaw the actual production within specific geographically-defined districts (Sanders 1981: 367). To prevent clients from accumulating too much power, most were people not related directly to the king. The disparity in the territorial sizes of these districts also correlated with a client’s overall economic and political power. Therefore, a ruler’s power rested squarely on his ability to attract new clients to the system, who in turn would provide support to the ruler with surplus food production in exchange for land rights. Sanders (1981: 367-369) equated the structure and function of Sub-Saharan patron-client states to that of the sixteenth century Maya and by extension the Classic Maya, based on similarities between the “familiar structure, nature

and function of unilinear descent groups, economic institutions, and political leadership” of all three groups. Today, patron-client states are typically characterized as having relatively weak centralized bureaucracies and highly stratified internal compositions. However, the issue of land ownership among the Classic Maya is still not clearly understood.

According to the Centralists, Maya states were characterized as having large urban centers with relatively dense populations, several levels of social stratification and hierarchy, strong institutionalized bureaucracies, and differential economic activities (Fox et al. 1996: 797). Maya states contained a socioeconomic hierarchy with specialized occupational roles that benefited from the workings of the state in a “market-like” economy. Those advocating regional state models claim that the sheer size alone of some Maya cities suggests their great political power. This is especially true among archaeologists involved in studies of the largest sites, such as Arlen and Diane Chase working at Caracol (1992, 1994), T. Patrick Culbert who worked at Tikal (1973, 1988, 1993), or William Folan who worked at Calakmul (1985, 1992). They make the key point that the organizational features of Maya states went beyond ideology, ritual, and kinship to include substantial administrative and economic power and control, similar to that found in unitary states of Mesopotamia or China (Fox et al. 1996: 797).

Weak State or Decentralized Political Models

Many archaeologists and epigraphers argued that Maya polities were smaller territorially than previously believed, based on emblem glyphs. As mentioned above, Maya polities appeared to be structurally autonomous, since each ruler claimed to be a

k'ujul ajaw, “divine lord” of his or her polity (Mathews 1985). During the 1980’s and 1990’s this notion of a “fractured” landscape (a neutral term used to avoid the issue of whether Maya polities represented chiefdoms or states) of small autonomous polities increasingly gained ground among Mayanists (Ball 1993; Ball and Taschek 1991; de Montmollin 1989; Dunham 1988a, 1990, 1992; Dunning 1992; Fox 1987; Freidel 1986; Houston 1992b; Leventhal and Dunham 1989; Stuart 1993). Referred to as weak states, Maya polities were characterized as frail structures with weak social, economic, and political control over both people and territory. Their success depended on charismatic kings who used close kinship ties, rather than formal bureaucracies, to administer their power and authority (Houston 1992b). In this paradigm, Maya kings played a figure-head role, whose power was severely limited and based almost entirely upon support from provincial leaders and an elite upper class. While strong rulers were able to extend their territorial boundaries and political influence, weak rulers could endanger the survival of the polity, resulting in provincial lords switching allegiance to other neighboring kings or leading to the creation of a new independent territorial state (Grube and Martin 1998b: 15). Questions remained as to how this political landscape evolved in the first place and whether its development represented a form of political sovereignty (centralized rule where kingly power and authority remained within the central domain or polity) or a form of political suzerainty (where a dominant state controls the foreign relations of a vassal polity, but allows the vassal to control its own internal affairs) (Southall 1985: 64-65, 1991: 80).

In order to answer these questions, Mayanists turned their attention to the “weak state” models of social and political organization drawn from ethnohistoric and modern ethnographic analogies in Africa (Southall 1956) and Southeast Asia (Stein 1979; Fritz,

Michell and Rao 1984). Here the emphasis on sociopolitical organization was centered on kinship ties rather than bureaucratic institutions (Grube and Martin 1998b: 14).

According to Fox et al. (1996: 798), the major theoretical emphasis among advocates of the weak state models was the tenuous relationship between kingship and kinship (see McAnany 1995; Iannone 2002). McAnany (1995: 131) specifically linked the “kinship versus kingship” dialectic as the defining cause of the episodic patterns of centralization and fragmentation throughout the history of Classic Maya states, as first postulated by Marcus in her “dynamic model.” McAnany argued that kinship was inherently a decentralizing and long-lasting force, while kingship represented a centralizing and relatively short-lived or episodic force (1995: 131). Therefore, “kinship structures serve to disperse authority and power across the social landscape, whereas kingship structures serve to concentrate power and authority in certain key locales” (McAnany 1995: 126).

A basic premise of these models is that weak states “arise when lineages (some of which can be ranked) begin to form enduring linkages, usually cemented through marriage, in political environments with continually threatening foes outside the alliance within the state” and “authority is duplicated as smaller versions of the same pattern throughout the segmented state” (Fox et al. 1996: 799). Therefore, strong rulers exude political and ritual (cosmological) influence while weak rulers cannot prevent the disintegration of their polity or sustain territorial expansion over long periods of time, due to the lack of an internal centralized bureaucracy (Houston 1992b: 3). Unfortunately, the role of lineages in Classic Maya society remains unclear.

The Segmentary State Model

Using Aidan Southall's (1956) "segmentary state" model of complexity and segmentation of Ulur Society, Ball and Taschek (1991), Dunham (1990, 1992), Fox (1987, 1989), and Houston (1992b, 1994) each applied the model to Classic Maya political organization. According to Southall (1956: 248-249), a segmentary state is defined by the following characteristics: 1) Territorial sovereignty is limited and greatest near the capital center. 2) A centralized administrative bureaucracy may be present, but overall power is weak and is delegated or administered through the creation of numerous dependent centers located in the peripheries. 3) A specialized administrative staff exists at the core that is replicated on a smaller or reduced scale at all the peripheral centers. 4) The monopolistic use of force is greatest at the center and is reduced and restricted as one moves towards the periphery. 5) A strict settlement and political hierarchy exists between the center and its peripheral dependencies and among the dependencies themselves. 6) Peripheral centers may segment and switch allegiance from one power to another.

Although Southall himself did not believe that segmentary states were representative of a state-level society (1956: 248; 1991: 91), Mayanists continued to use and cite his model as if they were. The segmentary state could better be described as a description of a ranked tribal society. Sahlins (1961: 323) argues that a segmentary lineage is really "a social means of intrusion and competition" and that it is a "predatory organization." Ronald Cohen (1981: 92-93) argued that if a society fissions as a typical part of its political process it simply is not a state. Thus, by Cohen's definition, a segmentary state would be impossible; "a society is either segmentary or a state, not both" (Marcus and Feinman 1998: 8).

Performance, Ritual and Theater States

Other decentralists, such as Arthur Demarest (1992), turned their attention to comparisons of political models proposed for the polities of Southeast Asia. Drawing heavily upon Stanley Tambiah's (1976, 1977) concept of a "galactic polity" in his analysis of Thai kingdoms, and Clifford Geertz's concept of a "theater state" for nineteenth century Bali, Demarest saw striking similarities between these polities and the Classic Maya. The main ideological construct of both organizational systems was the institution of divine kingship, which served as a cognitive cosmological model of their universe. The structure of these polities and the physical characteristics of their centers were carefully designed to reflect and reinforce a cosmological model of their world. This pattern resembles Michael Coe's (1965) idealized model of the Lowland Maya community structure, in that political leadership and ritual circuits were rotated through the four cosmic quadrants of the town as part of the *Wayeb'* year-ending rites. At its center was the all-powerful divine ruler who represented the secular, religious, and ideological manifestation of the state (Demarest 1992: 150). To reinforce the cosmological and ideological nature reflecting both the power of the state and the institution of divine kingship, great emphasis was placed on ritual performances that were conducted at the ceremonial centers of each polity as a formal means of exhibiting this power to the populous (Geertz 1980; Tambiah 1976, 1977; Fritz 1986).

According to Demarest (1992: 150), the features shared by both the Southeast Asian polities and the Classic Maya include the following: 1) The cosmological and ideological arrangement of states and their "galaxies" of dependent centers. 2) A redundancy and replication of both structure and function between the capital and its

dependencies. 3) Weak decentralized economic and territorial control of the dependent centers by the ruler. 4) The great importance of the ruler in ritual performance, in warfare, and in marriage alliances and finally 5) The dynamic tendencies of states to territorially expand or contract due to shifting allegiances, strife, or as a result of a dependency's attempt to centralize. Because of the replication in the overall structure of weak states in general, these political systems are often described as "a nested hierarchy of functionally undifferentiated units" (Bentley 1986: 292).

The Peer Polity Interaction Model

Another model popular among some decentralists (Freidel 1986; Sabloff 1986) during the 1980's was the "peer polity interaction" model, based on the development of emergent state societies in the Aegean (Renfrew 1986). Renfrew (1986: 2) noted that many of these early state configurations often contained more than a dozen smaller, closely clustered, autonomous polities, each of the same approximate size and constitution. Because each polity was equal in stature (thus, the name "peer"), all freely participated in a wide-range of interactions within the overall state that included imitation and emulation, competition, warfare, and the exchange of material goods and/or information (Renfrew 1986: 2). Renfrew suggested that the "peers" likely shared a number of common features like language, political governance, writing system, and religious beliefs (1986: 2). However, the tension and competition was extremely high among the "peers" as each sought to achieve political dominance over the others.

Both Freidel (1986) and Sabloff (1986) applied the peer polity interaction model to the case of the Lowland Maya. They believed that the shared ideological, political, and

religious beliefs and structures of Classic Maya society, as manifested and reflected in the material symbolism replicated and displayed at each center, created a mosaic charter thereby binding all of the polities together (Freidel 1986: 93). Additional evidence for the existence of a peer polity landscape in the Maya Lowlands could also be seen by the increasing rate of warfare during the history of the Classic Maya as polities competed over land. The increased tensions and escalation of warfare throughout the Late Classic Period directly threatened the territorial sovereignty and power of each individual peer.

According to Martin and Grube (1998b: 34) one of the fundamental problems with the peer polity model, and by extension other decentralized models, is the assumption that territorial size can be equated with power. If all states could be thought of as equal, as proponents of weak state models advocate, then polities like Tikal, which we know from the inscriptions of the Classic Period influenced a number of geographic regions and controlled more than a dozen subordinate sites, would have likely controlled the same geographic territory as that of any other emblem glyph-bearing polity. However, this was clearly not the case for Tikal since its power and influence was widely felt across the southern Maya Lowlands.

Summary

By the beginning of the 1990's, it was obvious that scholars and their resulting theories were somewhat polarized concerning the nature of Classic Maya political organization. While some scholars continued to view large-scale, multi-centered polities as evidence of overarching regional states with strong centralized bureaucracies, there were just as many scholars who considered Maya polities to be so limited in both power

and size that they were incapable of sustaining territorial expansion. Neither the centralists' nor the decentralists' views drew much inspiration from behaviors noted in other parts of Mesoamerica. Most models were derived from analogies and comparisons to pre-industrial societies far removed both culturally and geographically from Mesoamerica. While scholars universally acknowledge a pan-Mesoamerican sphere of shared interaction or worldview based on similar cosmological and ideological concepts and constructs, relatively few models have actually incorporated aspects of political organization found in Mesoamerica.

This chapter has discussed the myriad of organizational models and complexities involved with defining Classic Maya political organization. There has been a lack of consensus among scholars as to the nature of Classic Maya political organization and the function and nature of Maya cities has been debated (Vacant Ceremonial Centers –vs– Centralized Administrative Bureaucratic Capitals). This in turn led to the question of whether polities were centralized or decentralized, stable or unstable; whether the form of governance represented a theocratic complex chiefdom, an all-encompassing state or a sprawling empire; and whether settlement hierarchies existed among Maya sites and if so, could they be identified, ranked, and defined according to volumetric size, courtyard counts, or from “idealized” political boundaries. Scholars have compared the Classic Maya to the city-states of ancient Greece and Italy, to the feudal states of Medieval Europe and Asia, to the patron-client states of Sub-Saharan Africa, to the segmentary states of Africa and Southeast Asia, to the galactic polities of Thailand, to the theater states of Bali, and finally, to the peer polities of Mesopotamia, Japan, and Anglo-Saxon England. Virtually none of these models include a direct historical approach that incorporates data from the Classic and Postclassic Maya themselves or from other areas

of Mesoamerica where we have extensive knowledge of political systems that may resemble those of the Classic Maya. The following chapter examines, discusses, and synthesizes a new model of Classic Maya political organization that integrates hegemonic practice with Maya calendrical science. By employing a more “emic” approach to Classic Maya political organization it may be possible to explain how Maya polities operated internally (intra-regionally) and how they interacted externally (inter-regionally) using the Maya’s own hieroglyphic inscriptions as the basis for interpretation.

CHAPTER 3

RECENT MODELS OF HIERARCHIC POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

“I don’t see too much bullying of a small city state by a big one” (Thompson 1954: 98).

By the 1990’s it became increasingly clear to scholars that most of the previously proposed models for Classic Maya political organization were largely idealized types, based on ethnohistoric analogies and comparisons to pre-industrial societies both culturally and geographically removed from the Maya area. Recent advancements in Maya hieroglyphic decipherment provide a new source of textual data with diachronic controls needed to understand political organization from the Classic Maya’s own perspective. The hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Classic Period provide evidence of political organization similar to cases documented in other Mesoamerican societies. The inter-regional and intra-regional political relationships of the Classic Maya can now be examined and interpreted over time and space via a Pan-Mesoamerican perspective. Data from both Aztec (Berdan et al. 1996; Bray 1972; Calnek 1978) and Postclassic Maya ethnohistoric sources (Carmack 1981; Edmonson 1979; Fox 1987; Jones 1998; Restall 1997; Roys 1957; Scholes and Roys 1968) suggest that strong centralized bureaucracies existed in several areas of Mesoamerica. However, there seems to be a general reluctance by scholars today to compare the political organization of other Mesoamerican societies, especially those of the better-known Postclassic Period, to the Classic Maya. Maya

polities are often considered to be relatively small in size, lacking a centralized administrative bureaucracy, and Maya rulers are viewed as being unable to exercise political power and authority over other polities (Grube and Martin 1998b: 15-16). The success of each Maya polity was argued to be based primarily on the charismatic and ideological powers of the kings of weak states (Grube and Martin 1998b: 15-16). However, Martin and Grube (1994: 2) have argued that throughout the history of Mesoamerica there have been a few polities that reached a higher degree of centralized administrative control that allowed some polities to grow larger and stronger both politically and militarily than others through the creation of hegemonic networks. This conclusion was also noted by Rice (2004) who believes that Classic Maya political organization was structured by Maya calendrical science and the 256-year *may* cycle. Using the same epigraphic data as Martin and Grube, Rice shares the view that during the Classic Period a system of politico-religious hegemony existed in regions across the southern Maya lowlands which involved the rotation of social, religious, and political power amongst dependent sites within a circumscribed territory or region that was controlled by a sacred primate city known as a *may ku* (Rice 2004: 55, 78). Rice's model includes archaeological correlates that can be used to help identify the various *may* seats and their dependencies including the erection of period-ending stelae and the use of shared architectural complexes including T-shaped or triadic platforms, E-astronomical groups, twin-pyramid groups, and four-sided radial pyramids (Rice 2004: 86-89).

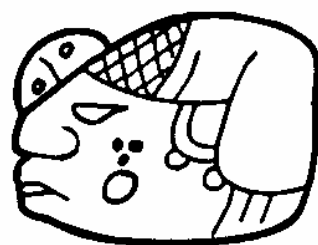
Martin and Grube advocate a new way of interpreting Classic Maya political organization based on epigraphy that has close correlates elsewhere in Mesoamerica. The macro-political or hegemonic model first outlined by Martin and Grube in an unpublished paper (1994) is based on a system of over kingship and hierarchical inter-site relations

that gave shape to nearly every facet of Classic Maya civilization (2000:19). Their model attempts to reconcile the most compelling features of both the strong centralist and the weak decentralist views of Classic Maya political organization, that being the “overwhelming evidence for multiple small kingdoms and the great disparities in the size of their capitals” (Martin and Grube 2000: 19). Martin and Grube suggested that for most of the Classic Period a small number of Maya states dominated the social, political, and economic affairs of other states through the creation of a hegemonic network involving subordinate seats of power. The epigraphic data suggest that a “rigid system of political control” was in place and was maintained through the principles of patronage, alliance, and subordination “for which precedents exist within Mesoamerica itself” (Martin and Grube 1994: 2). One strength of a hegemonic model is that it draws on the Classic Maya’s own extensive textual corpus for validation.

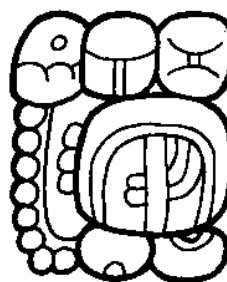
Elite Royal Titles

Martin and Grube’s approach is based on multiple lines of epigraphic evidence that have a direct bearing on understanding Classic Maya political organization. There are a number of glyphic expressions that describe interactions between Classic Maya states (Martin and Grube 1994: 3). One line of epigraphic evidence involves hieroglyphs featuring elite royal titles. The highest office in Maya society at the beginning of the Classic period was the title *ajaw*, ‘lord’ or ‘ruler’ (Figure 3.1). However, by the end of the 4th century, paramount rulers began to distinguish themselves from the rulers of smaller sites by referring to themselves as *k’uhul ajaw*, ‘divine lords.’ This elite title combined with the emblem glyph marked Maya rulers as divinely sanctioned.

Kaloomte' was another elite title, with clear associations to warfare that appeared in the Maya area shortly after the arrival of the Teotihuacanos to the central Petén in A.D. 378 (Figure 3.2). This title was restricted to the most powerful Maya kings and royal dynasties, and it initially appeared to occur only with rulers who controlled or conquered multiple kingdoms (Guenter 2002: 20). This title is still not fully understood, but it appears that a person who carried this title was not simply a lord, but someone of supreme status within a larger political hierarchy. Simon Martin has suggested that the title may have been used to denote 'overlords' or may have been a rough equivalent to the notion of 'emperors of conquered territories,' though the use of the term 'emperor' is problematic (Simon Martin, personal communication 1995 in Stuart 2000: 487). The root of the word appears to be *kal* followed by an agentive suffix *-oom* followed by *té*, the word for 'tree/wood' or 'family/lineage.' Unfortunately, no satisfactory interpretation has been offered for the meaning of *kal* and the word itself is likely of non-local origin. Interestingly, the *Kaloomte'* title is often prefixed with a cardinal direction, with west (*ochk'in*) being the most common during the Late Classic Period in the area of the central Petén. This title would become common for some Maya kings shortly after the start of the sixth century. The earliest reference to any king with the title *Kaloomte'* was not to a Maya king, but to *Siyaj K'ahk'* and Spearthrower Owl, two historically important people from Teotihuacan (Guenter 2002: 20). Prior to the start of the 6th century, Tikal kings were referred to as *yajaw* or subordinate lords of the Teotihuacan *Kaloomte'* (Martin and Grube 2000: 17). Because the West *Kaloomte'* title was the earliest of these heraldic titles, appearing at Tikal on Stela 31 in association with the 8.17.1.4.12 (15, Jan. 378) "Arrival" date, it has been suggested that the title's origin is from Teotihuacan, some 1000 kms to the west of the Maya region (Martin and Grube 2000: 17). It is not until the



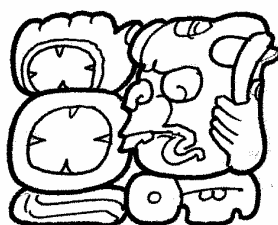
Ajaw



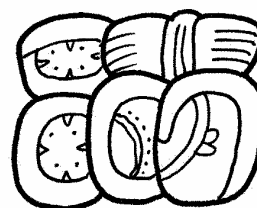
K'uhul Ajaw

Figure 3.1. The *Ajaw* and *K'uhul Ajaw* Title (Drawings courtesy of Simon Martin)

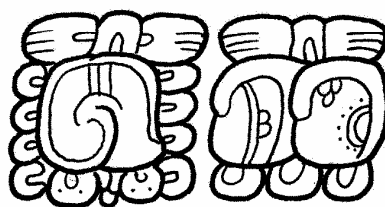
NORTH



WEST

Kaloomte'

EAST



SOUTH

Figure 3.2. The *Kaloomte'* Title (Drawings courtesy of Simon Martin)

start of the sixth century, immediately following the cessation of Teotihuacan involvement in the central Petén, that rulers at sites other than Tikal begin to carry the *Kaloomte*’ title for themselves (Guenter 2002: 20).

While the West *Kaloomte*’ title was the earliest and most common collocation, there are examples with the other three cardinal directions during the Late Classic Period. There are examples of *Xaman* or ‘North’ *Kaloomte*’ recorded in the northern Yucatan Peninsula at Ek’ Balam and Chichen Itzá. *Elk’in* or ‘East’ *Kaloomte*’ was recorded at the site of Lamanai in the eastern Maya lowlands and *Nohol* or ‘South’ *Kaloomte*’ was recorded at Copan and Quiriguá (Martin 2003b: 63-64). These titles appear to correspond directly to the four directions of the Maya world. Accession statements are written as *chumwan ti kaloomte*’ (‘was seated in *kaloomte*’-ship’) as opposed to the more common *chumwan ti ajawle* (‘was seated in lordship’) at Tikal, Dzibanché, and Calakmul (Martin 2003b: 66). It would appear that these three sites are former *may k’atun* seats, which may provide additional epigraphic evidence to support Rice’s *May* model (2004).

Explicit Statements of Subordination

Another line of epigraphic evidence that has become integral in delineating hierarchical relations among rulers and polities is the use of possessed titles. There were a series of lesser lords who performed various administrative duties as an official part of the Maya royal court. For example, in numerous palace scenes on Classic Period pottery, there are images and titles of people including *Ajaw* (‘Lord’), *Sajal* (‘Secondary Lord’), *Aj K’uhun* (‘Courtier’), *Aj Tz’ib* (‘Scribe’), and *Aj B’ak* (‘Prisoner’), etc. (Grube and Martin 1998c: 39-40) (Left Column, Figure 3.3). In addition to these important royal

titles, the inscriptions refer to the relationships of these lesser lords to their kings or overlords. This was accomplished by the use of possessive markers that were used to identify and define the internal hierarchy between these lesser lords and the ones they served, and were used to link the rulers of one polity to those of another. By adding the possessive ergative person marker *y-* or *u-* to any title, the relationship of the lesser lord to his or her overlord was indicated. For example, *ajaw*, as an unpossessed title means ‘lord.’ However, adding the third person possessive person marker *y-* to *ajaw*, indicates the possessive form *yajaw* meaning ‘the lord of’ or ‘the vassal of’ (Grube and Martin 1998c: 39) (Right Column, Figure 3.3). The same can be said for each of the other examples in Figure 3.3. *Sajal* becomes *usajal* when it’s possessed and it means that this person was the *sajal* or ‘subordinate lord of’ someone else (Grube and Martin 1998c: 39). *aj k’uhun* becomes *yaj k’uhun* when this title is possessed. *Aj tz’ib’* becomes *yaj tz’ib’* and so on (Right Column, Figure 3.3). Thus, the use of possessive titles allows us to examine the internal hierarchy that existed within a typical Maya royal court (Grube and Martin 1998c: 39).

Additional examples of possessive titles appear in Figure 3.4. In Example A, from a looted sculpture from the Piedras Negras region, the passage begins with the personal name of the subordinate lord (Grube and Martin 1998c: 41). This is immediately followed by this person’s royal title and here the text states that he was the *yaj k’uhun*, ‘courtier’ of Ruler 2 of the site of Piedras Negras. Example B, recorded on a text from the small site of Mira Flores, records the personal name of the subordinate lord followed by *usajal*, ‘the subordinate lord of’ *K’inich Janab’ Pakal*, the Divine Lord of Palenque.

Examples of inter-polity subordination are indicated when the king of one polity is represented as the subordinate of a king of another polity. Although rare, there are

about a dozen examples where a ruler from one site is said to be the *yajaw* or ‘lord of’ (Figure 3.5) a ruler from another. Both individuals carry their own emblem glyphs and in many cases the kings being named and the kingdoms they are subordinate to are major Maya polities (Grube and Martin 1998c: 42-43) (Figure 3.6). In Example A, an inscription from Bejucal (Stela 2) that dates to A.D. 393 begins with the name of a lord from the Ik’ site followed by *yajaw* and though broken, the outlines suggest the name of the contemporary lord of Tikal *Siyaj K’ahk’*. In Example B, as recorded on Step IV from Hieroglyphic Stairway 4 from the site of Dos Pilas, there is the personal name of Ruler 1, *B’alaj Chan K’awiil*, who is said to be the *yajaw* of *Yuknoom Ch’een*, the contemporary king of Calakmul. Example C features a passage recorded on a Column Altar from the site of Bonampak (now housed in the St. Louis Art Museum) that refers to the king of Bonampak as a subordinate lord of the king of Toniná *B’aknal Chaak*. Finally, Example D, recorded on Arroyo de Piedra Stela 2, records the name of the local Arroyo de Piedra lord, who is said to be the subordinate lord of Ruler 2, *Itzamnaaj K’awiil*, from Dos Pilas (Grube and Martin 1998b: 27).

Local Accessions Under the Aegis of Non-Local Kings

Another type of expression found in the hieroglyphic inscriptions also denotes hierarchical relations. The *ukab’jiy* glyph was a key to Martin and Grube’s Hegemonic Model and is featured in passages that link the actor of an event to the sponsor or initiator of that event (Figure 3.7) (Grube and Martin 1998b: 29-30). Houston proposed the reading for this expression as *uchab’ji* based on the Tzeltalan root *chab’* meaning ‘to supervise’ and it functions as a relational noun meaning ‘under the supervision of’



Figure 3.3. Unpossessed and Possessed Royal Titles (Drawing by Simon Martin)

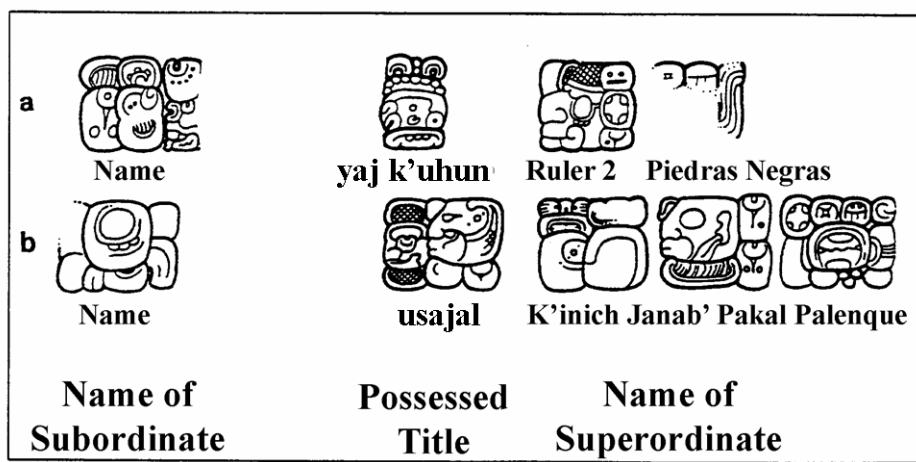


Figure 3.4. Examples of Possessed Titles (Drawing by Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube)

(personal communication, Stephen Houston 1996, cited in Martin and Grube 2000: 231).

The contexts associated with this expression included period-ending rituals, building and monument dedications, bloodletting rituals, burial events, and all types of warfare activities (Grube and Martin 1998b: 29).

Grube and Martin (1998b: 30-31) also noted that the *ukab'jiiy* expression appeared in another important context, in the accession statements of various Maya lords. There are several dozen examples where the *ukab'jiiy* glyph is tied to statements describing royal accessions. Subordinate lords (*sajals*) accede to political office under the aegis or supervision of superordinate lords (Figure 3.8). *Sajal*, which can be interpreted as 'One Who Fears' or 'One Who Brings Fear' is a title for subordinate lords who govern secondary centers (Guenter 2002: xiii). In Example A (from El Cayo, Panel 1), the passage begins with *jok' ti' sajalil*, 'he accedes into *sajal*-ship' followed by the personal name of the *sajal*, *Aj Chak Sutz*, followed by the *ukab'jiiy* agency expression and the name of the superordinate lord who was supervising the accession. In this case the supervising lord hails from the site of *Sak Tz'i*. In Example B, the accession of a *sajal* is recorded on a Dumbarton Oaks panel from the El Cayo-Bonampak region, under the aegis of a lord from *Yokib'* 'Piedras Negras.'

Martin and Grube (1994: 6-8) expanded their examination of Classic Maya texts to gain a larger regional and pan-regional perspective. They found examples that featured the inauguration of *k'ujul ajawob'*, 'holy rulers' of major polities under the auspices or supervision of kings from foreign states that could be separated by hundreds of kilometers and many intervening polities. Martin and Grube's findings revolutionized the way epigraphers interpret and reconstruct the ancient geo-political landscape.

Several examples describing the accession of important kings under the



Figure 3.5. The *Yajaw* Title (Drawing by Simon Martin)













Name of Local Ruler	Yajaw	Name of Superordinate Ruler
A  Name Ik' Site	 yajaw	 Siyaj K'ahk'
B  B'alaj Chan K'awiil Dos Pilas	 yajaw	 Yuknoom Ch'een Calakmul
C  Name Bonampak	 yajaw	 Name Tonina
D  Name Arroyo de Piedra	 yajaw	 Ruler 2 Dos Pilas

Figure 3.6. Examples of *Yajaw* Statements of Subordination (Drawings by Simon Martin)

A) Bejucal Stela 2

C) Bonampak Column Altar

B) Dos Pilas HS 4, Step IV

D) Arroyo de Piedra Stela 2

supervision of superordinate lords appear in Figure 3.9 (Grube and Martin 1998b: 31). One of the earliest examples of this type of local inauguration taking place under the supervision of a superordinate lord is featured on Naranjo Stela 25 (Example A). This passage dates to the 21st of November 546 and refers to the accession of Naranjó's Ruler 1, *Aj Wosal*, who accedes into the office of *k'ujul ajaw* 'holy lord' *ukab'jiiy* 'under the supervision of' *Tuun K'ab' Hix*, who was the contemporary king of Calakmul (Grube and Martin 1998c: 51). Example B, recorded on Stela 6 at Caracol states *chumlaj ti ajaw* 'he was seated as *ajaw Yajaw Te' K'inich* II of Caracol,' followed by *ukab'jiiy* and the name of the superordinate lord, *Wak Chan K'awiil*, the contemporary king of Tikal (Grube and Martin 1998c: 51). Example C is a passage from a long retrospective inscription recorded at Cancuen on Panel 1. The text records the local accession of a Cancuen lord, written as *chumwan ti ajawel* 'was seated in *ajaw*-ship.' The accession statement is followed by the name of the local Cancuen lord, *Chan Ahk Wí Taak Kay*. The text then states that his accession was supervised by *Yuknoom Ch'een* a lord from Calakmul (Grube and Martin 1998c: 51). Finally, Example D is a passage from Quiriguá Stela E that describes the local accession of *K'ak' Tiliw Chan Yoaat* under the supervision of *Waxaklajun U'b'aah K'awiil*, the current king of neighboring Copan. These examples indicate how useful *ukab'jiiy* statements can be in defining political hierarchies between kings and their polities during the Classic Period. This expression can also be particularly useful for identifying possible dependencies of a *may ku*, 'may seat.'

When Martin and Grube's research suggested that there were many examples where the supervising lord ruled a polity many kilometers away, possibly with many intervening polities, they began to think of Classic Maya political organization in terms

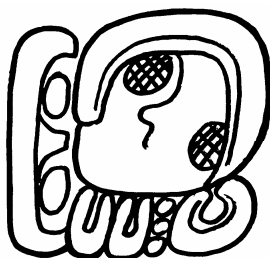


Figure 3.7. The *Ukab'jiy* Agency Expression (Drawing by Simon Martin)

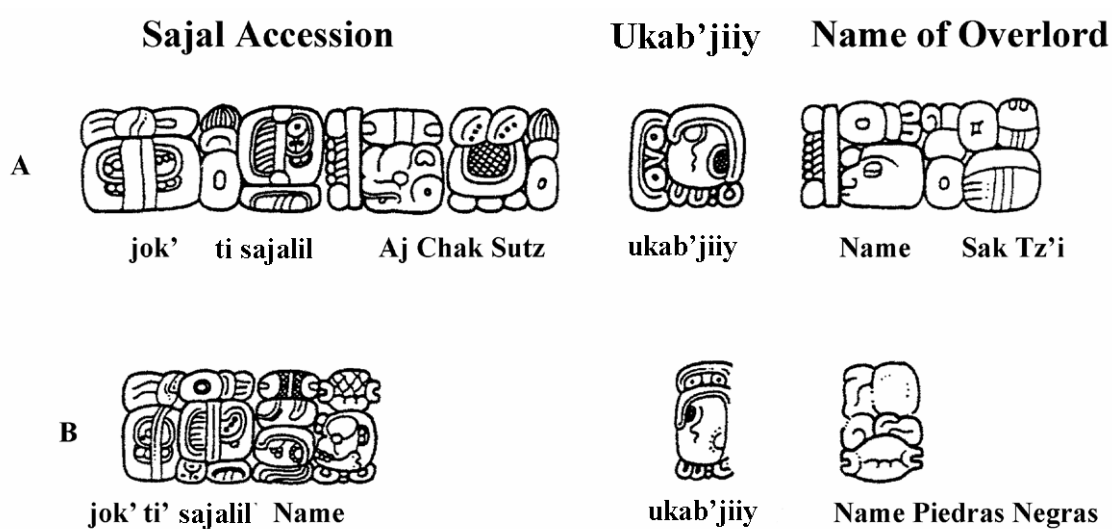


Figure 3.8. Examples of *Sajals* Acceding into Office under Aegis of Superordinate Kings

(Courtesy of Nikolai Grube and Simon Martin 1998b: 30)

A) El Cayo Panel 1

B) Dumbarton Oaks Panel

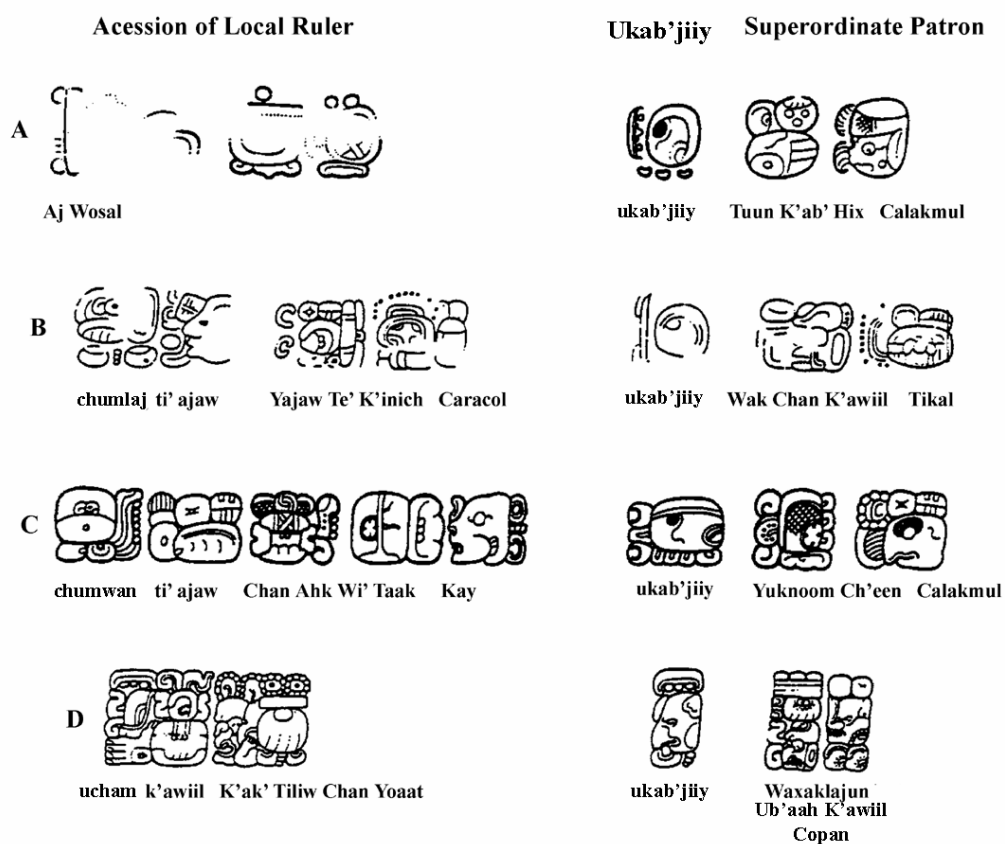


Figure 3.9. Accession of Local Kings Under the Supervision of Superordinate Patrons

(Courtesy of Nikolai Grube and Simon Martin 1998b: 31).

A) Naranjo Stela 25

B) Caracol Stela 6

C) Cancuen Panel 1

D) Quirigua Stela E

of hegemonic principles that could extend across regional or macro-regional levels. The practice of overlordship or supervised inaugurations is well documented across ancient Mesoamerica, not only among the Classic Maya, but also among the Postclassic Maya (Farriss 1984; Jones 1998), the Highland Maya (Carmack 1981; Miles 1957), the Mixtec (Spores 1993), and the Aztec (Berdan 1996; Hodge 1984). Among the Aztec these references to various lords of conquered polities are “set down as rulers” (Chimalpahin 1963: 122-123). Similar practices occurred in fifteenth century K’icheé society where the ruler of Utlán placed, confirmed, approved, and authorized all of the lords, rulers, and jurisdictions of the provinces and neighboring kingdoms, such as Tecuciztlán (Rabinal), Guatemala (Cakchiquel), and Atitlán (Tzutzujil) (Las Casas 1909: 616).

According to Grube and Martin (1998b: 17), the risks involved with such investiture endeavors, whether they were localized or intra-regional, would require cultural resource systems beyond ideological prestige or religious authority. Grube and Martin suggest that belief in ancient Tollan as a mythological place of origin could be used to explain Classic Maya religious and political order in part (1998c: 65). Tracing roots to Tollan endorses local legitimacy and authority but may not always be sufficient, since Maya polities were active military powers in direct competition with one another and needed to be strong materially if they were to succeed or even survive. In later Aztec society, success relied heavily upon a local ruler’s ability to seek the endorsement of a superordinate authority. Local rulers, including those of hostile polities, traveled great distances to foreign centers to take part in joint ritual activities. Those who attended these ritual activities would often receive some benedictive token as a gift to take back to their respective kingdoms (Grube and Martin 1998b: 17). While systems of ideological prestige linked to origins in Tollan may have been an important underpinning of local

ideological power and religious authority, the competitive and military nature of Maya polities also forced polities to make alliances in order to survive. Otherwise polities might fail or fall victim to another polity, as recent epigraphic evidence attests with the dramatic rise in incidents of warfare during the Late Classic Period (Demarest et al. 2004: 550-553). Epigraphic data suggest that the system of supervised inaugurations ranged from macro-political or inter-polity contexts down to the local intra-polity domains. Inaugural oversight, whether between sites possessing their own individual emblem glyphs or among smaller centers that do not, reflect Classic Maya political hierarchy.

The *Yichnal* Expression

Another glyphic compound that appears in the same context as the *ukab'jiiy* expression and indicates the joint participation of non-local patrons in the accession of local client rulers is the *yichnal* expression (Figure 3.10) (Grube and Martin 1998c: 63-64). First read by David Stuart, this expression was translated as 'with' or 'in the company of' (1989: 15). Today the translation of this expression has been slightly refined to mean 'together with', 'in the sight or presence of,' 'facing' or 'in front of' (Bricker et al. 1998: 316). One of the most common contexts where the *yichnal* glyph occurs is in reference to events involving the joint participation of non-local patrons and their clients. Like the pattern of the *ukab'jiiy* agency expression, the individual named first in *yichnal* contexts is subordinate to the person whose name follows. The *yichnal* expression provides an implicit indication of hierarchy, since the person named after this expression is viewed as the overseer and supervisor (Houston 1989: 34).

Some examples that feature the *yichnal* expression in the accession phrases of

local kings appear in Figure 3.11 (Grube and Martin 1998c: 64). Example A, a passage from El Peru Stela 33, describes the accession (*ch'am k'awiil*) of *K'inich B'alam*, the local lord of El Peru, as taking place *yichnal* 'in the presence of' *Yuknoom Ch'een* II of Calakmul. Example B, a passage from Sacul Stela 1, features the "grasping" of various ritual objects associated with the accession of the local Sacul lord. The text states that this event took place *yichnal* 'in the presence of' *Itzamnaaj B'alam* of Ucanal. Finally, Example C features a passage from the famous murals at Bonampak (Str. 1, Room 1) where *Yajaw Chan Muwaan*, the local lord of Bonampak, is said to be acceding *yichnal* 'in the presence of', *Chel Te' Chan K'inich*, better known as Shield Jaguar II of Yaxchilán.

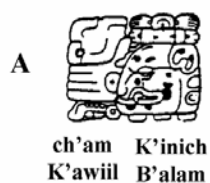
Other Forms of Diplomatic Interactions

Using the Maya's statements of agency, subordination, intermarriage, tribute, royal visitation, and warfare, Martin and Grube (1994, 1995, 2000; Grube and Martin 1998a, 1998b, 1998c) have attempted to reconstruct the macro-political history and hierarchical relations among Classic Maya polities on an unprecedented scale. Epigraphic analysis suggests that the Maya were involved in a much wider range of political activities than previously believed. Initially there was little discussion regarding whether superordinate or subordinate relationships could be used to infer geographic divisions based on the Classic Maya's notion of territoriality. Martin and Grube later argued that one could obtain this kind of information by charting incidents of warfare, both temporally and spatially across the Maya Lowlands, to show which states were in conflict. By charting all of the *yajaw*, *ukab'jiiy*, and *yichnal* references in the central



Figure 3.10. The *Yichnal* Expression (Drawing by Simon Martin)

Accession of Local Ruler



Yichnal



Foreign Overlord

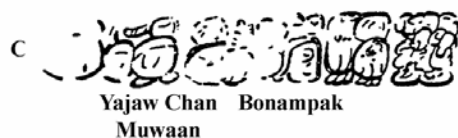
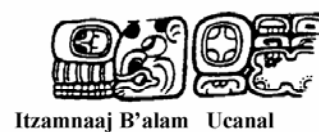


Figure 3.11. *Yichnal* Accessions (Drawings by Simon Martin)

A) El Peru Stela 33

B) Sacul Stela 1

C) Bonampak Room 1 Mural

Maya Lowlands, Grube and Martin (1998c: 65-66) discovered interesting patterns. From an epigraphic perspective, the site having the biggest influence on others was Calakmul, followed by Tikal, though Grube and Martin admit that most of their data came from the Middle Classic to early Late Classic Periods (1998c: 65). Because Maya polities were fluid, dynamic, and subject to the ups and downs of its ruling elite, it is important to keep in mind the importance of temporal and spatial sequencing, as well as Classic Maya historiography. There are far more hieroglyphic inscriptions from the Late Classic Period than the Early Classic Period and there is also a big difference in the kinds of inscriptions recorded between these two epochs.

Grube and Martin (1998c: 67) reasoned that there should be other types of diplomatic interactions taking place between rulers. Further epigraphic evidence for the identification of diplomatic interactions between Maya polities is found in the glyphic expressions *hul* 'to arrive', *yitah* 'with' or 'and', and *il* 'to witness' which suggest that kings were visiting each other and participating in joint ritual activities. Diplomatic interactions between Calakmul and Dos Pilas, and between Calakmul and Caracol were frequent. According to Martin and Grube (2000: 20), the Maya did not view or define their polities in terms of territoriality. Rather, the Maya viewed their own ruling capitals as dynastic seats of power that served as the ceremonial, political, and economic center of the kingdom. However, as I will argue later in this dissertation, there is epigraphic evidence (the numbered *tzuk* titles) to suggest that Classic Maya did view their world in terms of regional territories and that these regional territories were numbered from 1-13. Martin and Grube (2000: 20) have argued that whenever political expansion occurred in the Maya Lowlands, it was not about territorial acquisition. Rather, political expansion was based on elite diplomatic relations and networks, some of which were far reaching

and outside a polity's immediate territory. An example of this can be seen in the patron-client relationship between the rulers of Calakmul and Cancuen in A.D. 656. *Yuknoom Ch'een* II of Calakmul was patron to three different Cancuen kings. This relationship enabled Calakmul to extend its political influence to a site more than 245 kms away (Martin and Grube 2000: 109). The relationship between Calakmul and Cancuen was indicated in an agency-marked accession statement between a superordinate lord and a subordinate one. If this were a system of political territoriality, then one might expect to see problems in the relationship between Calakmul lords and Cancuen lords because of the great distance involved. However, the epigraphic record on Cancuen Panel 1 indicates that the ties between these two sites remained strong for at least 150 years judging from the agency-marked accession in A.D. 656 and the later retrospective reference to the same event in A.D. 799.

The *Hul* Verb

The founding of royal dynasties (Grube and Martin 1998c: 72) may be indicated by the verbal expression *hul* (Figure 3.12), which means 'to arrive here' in many Mayan languages (Kaufman 1972: 103; Kaufman 2003: 1298; Kaufman and Norman 1984: Jossierand and Hopkins 1988: 120; Smailus 1975: 144). While this glyphic expression appears in contexts that refer to the literal movements of people, such as the arrival of foreign brides-to-be, royal emissaries or royal visits, the return of individuals from battle, and in contexts that feature the movement of monuments, we also see it used in specialized contexts that describe the establishment or founding of royal dynasties (Martin and Grube 2000: 29).

On Tikal Stela 31, a passage which dates to 8.17.1.4.12 (15, January, 378), describes the end of a long journey and the “arrival” of a high-ranking foreigner (*Siyaj K’ahk’*) at Tikal (Grube and Martin 1998c: 77-78) (Figure 3.13). The text on Tikal Stela 31 states that on the day of this arrival, the contemporary king of Tikal, *Chak Tok Ich’aak* I died. The timing of *Chak Tok Ich’aak* I’s death on the very day that *Siyaj K’ahk’* arrived at Tikal does not appear to be a coincidence. The *hul* expression used in this passage implies something more than the physical movement of people from one site to another. In the Books of the *Chilam B’alam* of Chumayel (Roys 1933: 18) and in the Chronicle of Chicxulub (Brinton 1882: 199) the *hul* expression is used to indicate the arrival of individuals of major political importance and purpose (Grube and Martin 1998c: 73-74). Following the death of *Chak Tok Ich’aak* I the person who accedes to office is not his son as one would expect. Instead, a non-local foreigner (*Yax Nuun Ayiin* I) is inaugurated into office and initiates a new dynastic patriline at Tikal with ties to the Founding House of Teotihuacan (Martin and Grube 2000: 29). A major correlate of this action is that all of Tikal’s pre-A.D. 378 monuments were broken, destroyed, or buried in construction fill (Martin 2000: 58-59). It is also possible that *hul*-oriented events may signal the beginning phase of a new *may* cycle.

The *Yitah* Expression

Yitah expressions seem to refer to another important type of political interaction, though its exact meaning remains unclear. The basic root of the word is *it*, based on its normal glyphic collocation of *yi-ta-ji* or *yitaj* (Figure 3.14). It seems to behave as a relational construction much like the *ukab’jiiy* and *yichnal* expressions, where it



Figure 3.12. Variants of the *Hul* Verb (Drawings by J. Montgomery)

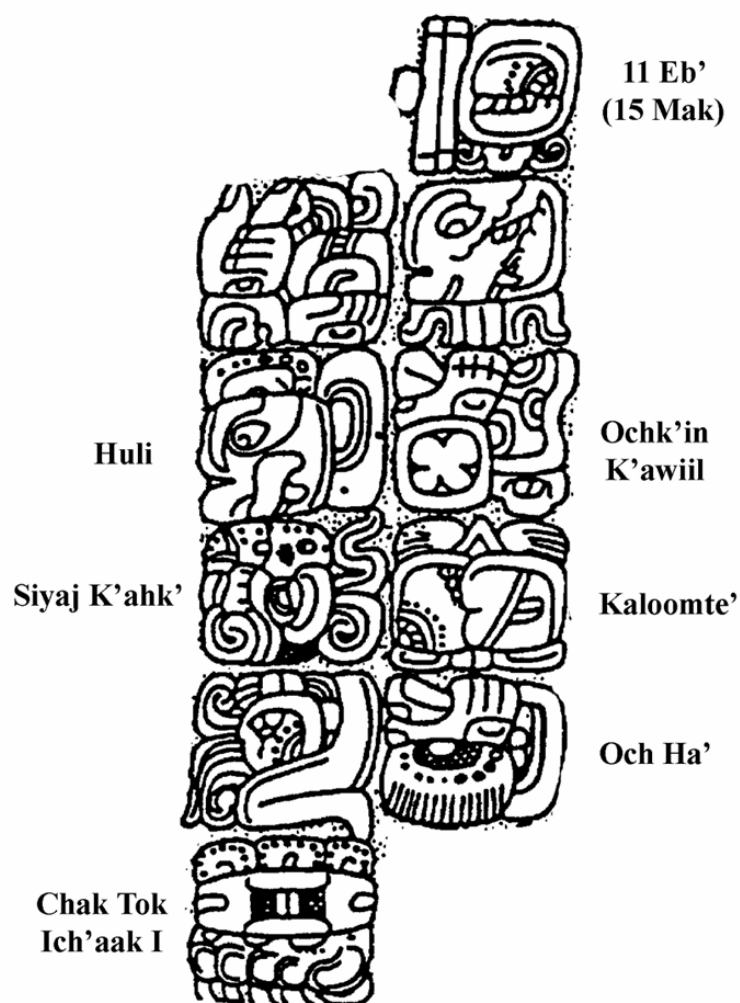


Figure 3.13. The *Hul* Arrival Event as Recorded on Tikal Stela 31 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

generally appears in secondary statements relating to the joint participation of (local and non-local) individuals who are in non-antagonistic relationships (Grube and Martin 1998b: 42). Wisdom (1950: 476 and 756) cites two possibly relevant entries in Chortí: *ih̄ta'n* meaning 'sibling, one's sibling, or relative' or *wet* meaning 'companion', 'fellow', or 'neighbor' and both interpretations have been used in discussions concerning the meaning of the *yitaj* expression. In the Colonial documents of Acalan, *yithoc* has the general sense of 'with' or 'companion' and this too seems to fit the glyphic context in which this collocation appears. An example of this expression is found on Nim Li Punit Stela 2 (Figure 3.15). In this passage dated to the Period Ending 9.15.0.0.0 we have a statement that describes the planting of a stela (written as *utz'apaj lakam tuun*). According to the text, this monument-raising ritual took place *yitaj* 'with' a person named the *Ek' Xukpi Ajaw*. Like the *ukab'jiiy* and *yichnal* expressions, the person named after the *yitaj* expression seems to be the patron responsible for supervising the event. Here at Nim Li Punit, the figural scene carved on Stela 2 seems to confirm the notion that *yitaj* in some way denotes joint participation since it features two individuals standing either side a central figure. The figure who stands to the right of the main protagonist has his hand grasping his upper forearm in a classic gesture of submission (see Miller 1981, 1983), suggesting that *yitaj* may also imply a sense of superordination.

The *Ilaj* or Witness Verb

The last form of political interaction to be discussed is indicated by the *ilaj* verb (Figure 3.16). Steve Houston and David Stuart (1996: 297) were the first to decipher this glyph based on the root *il* 'to see', 'to observe', or 'to witness'. Often this verb

appears in contexts that feature descriptions of royal visitations, joint participations, or superordinate-sanctioned inaugurations. An example of this verb occurs on Panel 7 from the site of Dos Pilas (Grube and Martin 1998c: 126-127) (Figure 3.17). Although the upper portion of the panel is badly eroded, the calendar round date can be reconstructed as 6 *Manik'* 5 *Sip* or 9.12.13.17.7 (3, April 686), based on a parallel text from the site of El Peru (Stela 34). The main theme of Panel 7 is the formal enthronement and witnessing of the accession of a Calakmul lord by a lord from Dos Pilas. The verb is written as *hok'aj ti ajawil* 'he was tied into *ajaw*-ship' and the person acceding into office was *Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ak'* of Calakmul (Grube and Martin 1998c: 126). This accession was 'seen' or 'witnessed' by at least two other important kings: one from El Peru, named *K'inich B'alam*, and one from Dos Pilas, named *B'alaj Chan K'awiil*. Both kings likely traveled to Calakmul to observe the accession of the Calakmul lord because the last glyphs recorded on Panel 7 state that *utiy* 'it happened at' *Chik Naab* which is probably the ancient name of the larger region surrounding Calakmul (Martin and Grube 2000: 104). These sorts of accession or coronation events are well documented throughout Postclassic Mesoamerica. For example, among the Kicheés and Aztecs the accessions of rulers were accompanied by great feasts or other ritual celebrations to which all of a ruler's clients or provincial leaders would be invited (Carmack 1981: 68; Duran 1967: 172; Tozzer 1941: 92).

Antagonistic Interactions Among Polities

According to Martin and Grube (1994: 19), antagonistic encounters between polities can also provide valuable insights into the relationships among Classic Maya



Figure 3.14. The *Yitaj* Glyph (Drawings by J. Montgomery)



Figure 3.15. The *Yitaj* Glyph as Recorded on Nim Li Punit Stela 2 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

states from an inter-regional perspective (Chase and Chase 1989, 1998; Demarest 1993; Demarest et al. 1997; Hassig 1992; Houston 1983, 1993; Martin 1994; Webster 1999). Five decades worth of research has uncovered a wide range of glyphic terms that refer to conflict or warfare since Proskouriakoff's (1963, 1964) early observations of antagonistic encounters in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Yaxchilan (Houston 1983; Martin 2001a, 2001b; Martin and Grube 2000; Riese 1982; Schele and Miller 1986; Schele and Grube 1994a, 1994b, 1995b). Grube and Martin (1998c: 161) hoped to find a pattern of antagonistic encounters that was complementary to their findings of the diplomatic ties between polities. They sought evidence that those sites that maintained diplomatic ties did not display aggressive or antagonistic behavior towards one another and that this information could provide valuable clues in identifying hegemonic relationships between sites. However, as Rice notes (2007: 156), not all of the indigenous terms that have been interpreted as being related to conflict or warfare imply major military engagements. In order to better understand the nature and role of warfare in Classic Maya society one needs to examine the context of specific written references to antagonistic events, since the role of warfare during the Classic Period has tended to be exaggerated by modern scholars. Certain indigenous terms for conflict could be interpreted in less violent terminology. With that said, I do believe that conflict and warfare played a significant role in the establishment of a hegemonic political system during the Classic Period.

One of the most commonly recognized expressions associated with conflict is the *chuhk* 'capture' verb (Figure 3.18A). Knorosov was the first to read and interpret this glyph based on his work with the Maya codices. The root of the verb is *chuhk*, 'to seize' or 'to capture' in most Maya languages (Barrera Vasquez 1980: 111; Josserand and Hopkins 1988: 6; Perez Martinez et al. 1996: 49; Smailus 1975: 138). The use of this

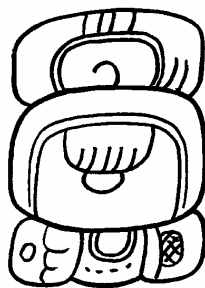


Figure 3.16. The *Ilaj* Verb (Drawing by S. Martin)

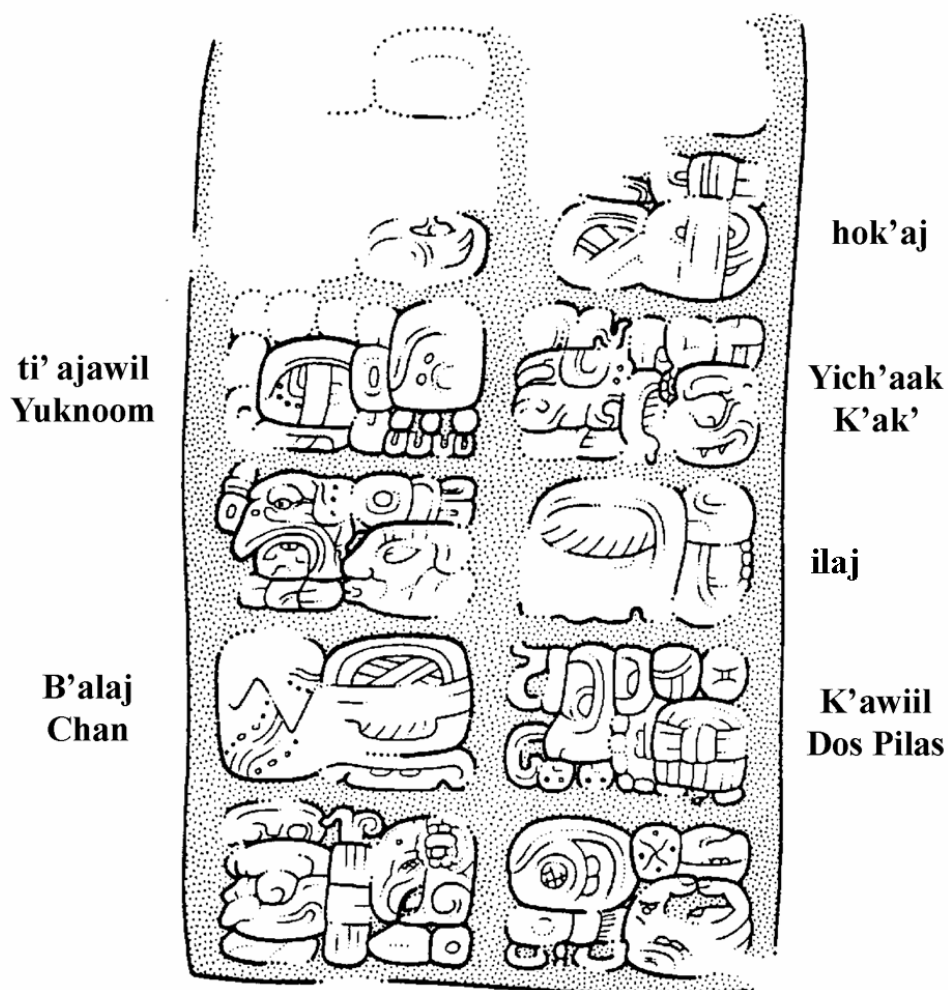


Figure 3.17. The *Ilaj* Verb as Recorded on Dos Pilas, Panel 7 (Drawing by S. Houston)

term indicates the personal nature of Maya conflict, for one of the most important aspects of kingship involved the capture of noble captives (Miller and Martin 2004: 166). The personal name of the individual captured follows the *chuhk* verb.

Another common expression to conflict is the enigmatic Star War verb (Figure 3.18B). Marc Zender (personal communication, 2004) has suggested a possible reading of the Star War verb based on the Colonial Tzotzil root intransitive verb *CH'AY* 'to lose', 'to be destroyed', 'to be devastated', or 'to be depopulated in war' (Laughlin 1988: 196). The diagnostic element of the Star War verb is the star sign *EK'* with droplets cascading down from the sides, representing either blood or water, as a metaphorical reference to the dropping or scattering of blood from the sky (Miller and Martin 2004: 171). Often the Star War glyph include the sign for 'earth' (*kab'*) or some other toponym that serves to name the location where the battle took place. There are about two dozen examples in the written corpus that appear to describe the destruction of cities and the defeat of royal dynasties as a result of Star War-initiated action.

Another common expression involving conflict is the verb *ch'ak* (Figure 3.18C) 'to axe', 'to hack', 'to wound', 'to decapitate' (Wisdom 1950: 715). This glyphic expression features a stone hand-axe that is often paired with a *ka* syllabic sign as a phonetic complement and commonly appears in two contexts. In mythological contexts the decapitation or execution, including self-decapitation, of individuals by supernatural beings is described (Grube and Martin 1998b: 55). Another context includes *ch'ak* events at specific locations, implying that these places were attacked, as first noted byLooper and Schele (1991: 2).

Pul (Figure 3.18D) meaning 'to burn' in both Ch'ol and Chontal (Josserand and Hopkins 1988: 9; Smailus 1975: 164) is another conflict expression generally found only

in the inscriptions of the greater Petén. This verb is often combined with *ch'en* meaning 'cave' or 'well.' However, recent reinterpretations of the *ch'en* glyph by David Stuart (Vogt and Stuart 2005: 162), Alfonso Lacadena (as cited in Grube and Martin 2004: 122), and Simon Martin (Grube and Martin 2000: 62), suggest that the Classic Maya referred to major population settlements or polity capitals as *Ka'an Ch'en* ('Sky Caves') or even simply abbreviated as *Ch'en* meaning 'city'. Lacadena has noted that there are many cities in the northern Yucatan that include the term *ch'en* as part of their names, but in actuality, many of these cities do not have wells, cenotes, or caves. Thus, the *ch'en* glyph may be a general term for 'settlement' or 'city' (Lacadena as cited in Grube and Martin 2004: 123).

Another glyphic expression referring to conflict is *jub'uy* (Figure 3.18E) 'to destroy/to ruin', 'to bring down/to bring down like buildings' (Josserand and Hopkins 1988: 9; Michielon 1976: 150). Grube and Martin (1998b: 65), argue that this collocation refers to conflicts that took place at foreign locations. The *jub'uy* verb is often paired with *utook' upakal*. *Took'* is the word for 'flint' and *pakal* is the word for 'shield' (Barrera Vasquez 1980: 805, 620). Together, *utook' upakal* literally means 'his flints and his shields' and represents a metaphoric reference to emblems or insignia of war. Simon Martin (2003b: 73) proposed that the flint and shield collocation may be a reference to an army, since this expression is often followed by the personal name or emblem glyph of the person defeated in battle. David Stuart (2005: 49) reached a similar conclusion though he thinks a better translation might be something like 'his war.' Martin (2001b: 4) found a reference to a warrior in the battle murals of Bonampak (Room 2, Caption 39) who carried the *B'a Took'* 'Head Flint' title. The *utook' upakal* collocation, used in contexts immediately following the *jub'uy* verb, may have been used as a metaphor for a

military specialist or a warrior. If so, the ‘warriors’ or ‘army’ of a specific person were brought down.

The last reference to conflict to be discussed here involves the *k’as* verb (Figure 3.18F). In Ch’ol, *k’as* means ‘to break’, ‘to smash’ (Aulie and Aulie 1978: 46) and in Yukatek, *k’as* means ‘to cut’, ‘to separate into parts’ (Barrera Vasquez 1980: 380). Two references to the ‘breaking’ or ‘smashing in half’ of stelae are recorded at Pusilhá on Stela D. References to conflict, along with explicit statements of subordination (y-*ajaw/ukab’jiy*), provide insights for understanding the relationships and hierarchies that existed among Maya polities.

The Hegemonic Model

Based on epigraphy, Martin (1994: 5-6) and Grube (2000: 550) argue that the data regarding antagonistic and non-antagonistic interactions between Maya polities are complementary and that polities who wage war against each other generally do not have or share diplomatic ties, while politically allied polities tend to share the same enemies (Figure 3.19). Unfortunately, Martin and Grube’s flowchart does not accurately represent those findings since their chart lacks a temporal dimension. Therefore, the data presented in their flowchart is skewed and does not accurately reflect the dynamic nature of the political relationships or interactions between rulers and/or polities over both time and space. However, they have shown that nearly all of the major conflicts that occurred in the central Petén involved Tikal (Martin 1994: 5). The surrounding states were in almost constant conflict with Tikal and, to Martin, they appeared to constitute an allied grouping of polities (1994: 6). Both Martin and Grube (2000: 20-21) and Rice (2004: 75-76) argue

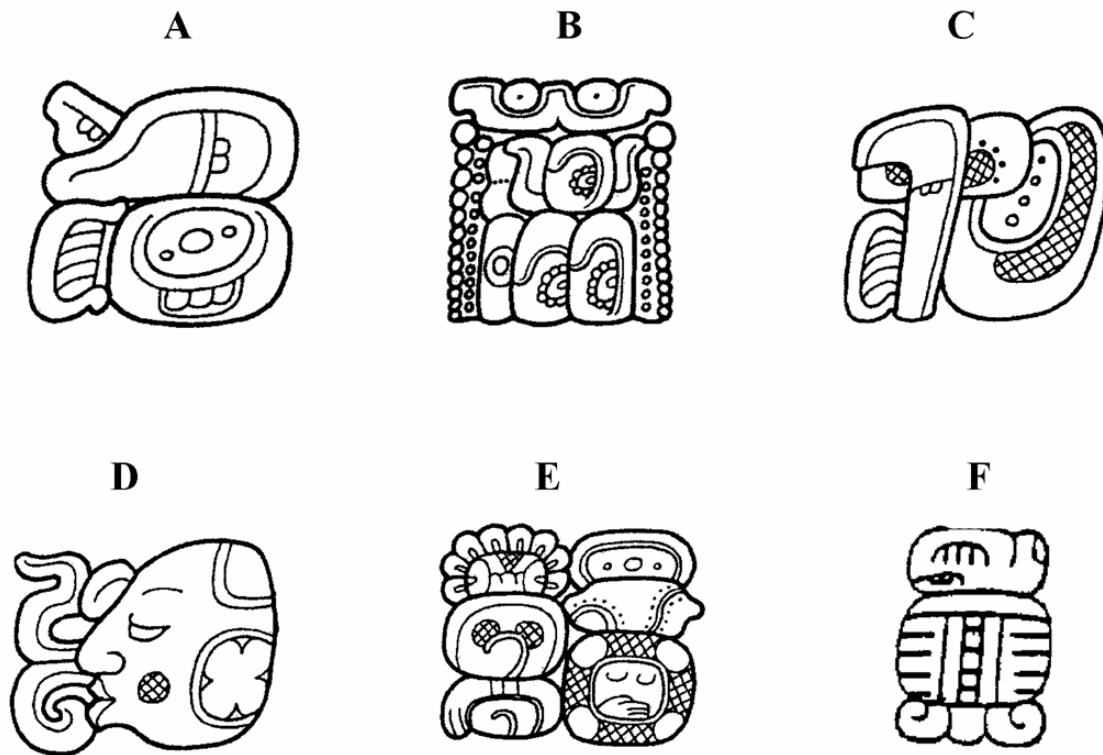


Figure 3.18. Warfare Expressions

A) *Chuhk* Glyph (Drawing by S. Martin)

B) “Star War” Verb (Drawing by S. Martin)

C) *Ch’ak* Glyph (Drawing by S. Martin)

D) *Pul* Glyph (Drawing by S. Martin)

E) *Jub’uy Utook’ Pakal* Collocation (Drawing by S. Martin)

F) *K’as* Glyph (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

that these groupings of allied polities are the defining feature of Classic Maya politics and that the epigraphic evidence supports their claim that a politico-religious hegemonic system was in place. They contend that the leaders of a few primary centers controlled the political spheres of numerous other polities throughout the central Petén, creating a complex system of political overlordship and vassalship (Martin and Grube 2000: 19).

Martin and Grube believe that these networks were rigidly hierarchical, with a single dominant polity exercising influence over the affairs of distant kingdoms and employing coercive threats amongst other means to control them (Martin 1994: 6). They have argued that the central Petén was controlled by just two major hegemonic powers: Calakmul and its many subject allies that encircled Tikal (which include Los Alacranes, Cancuen, El Perú, Naranjó, Pomoy, Moral-Reforma, Dos Pilas, Caracol, Dzibanché, El Mirador, and Resbolon to name just a few) and Tikal itself (with Uaxactún, Bejucal, Uoalantún, Corozal, El Temblor, El Encanto, El Zapoté, El Zotz, and Motul de San Jose) (Martin and Grube 2000: 21). Because of their enormous size, both Tikal and Calakmul have prominently been featured in earlier discussions involving the regional state model. Tikal appears to have been the preeminent power of the Early Classic Period while Calakmul was the preeminent power of the Late Classic Period (Martin and Grube 2000: 26, 101). The reversal of fortune for Tikal occurred toward the end of the Middle Classic Period when Tikal was defeated by Caracol in A.D. 562. As a result of Caracol's victory, no further monuments were erected at Tikal for nearly 130 years or half of a *may* cycle. Rice (2004: 115) has argued that the Middle Classic Hiatus at Tikal likely represents the intentional and anticipated shift in power as another site (likely Caracol) assumed the role of *may* seat. Inscriptions at other sites suggest that Tikal was diplomatically isolated and at war with every one of its major neighbors, all of whom were allies of Calakmul

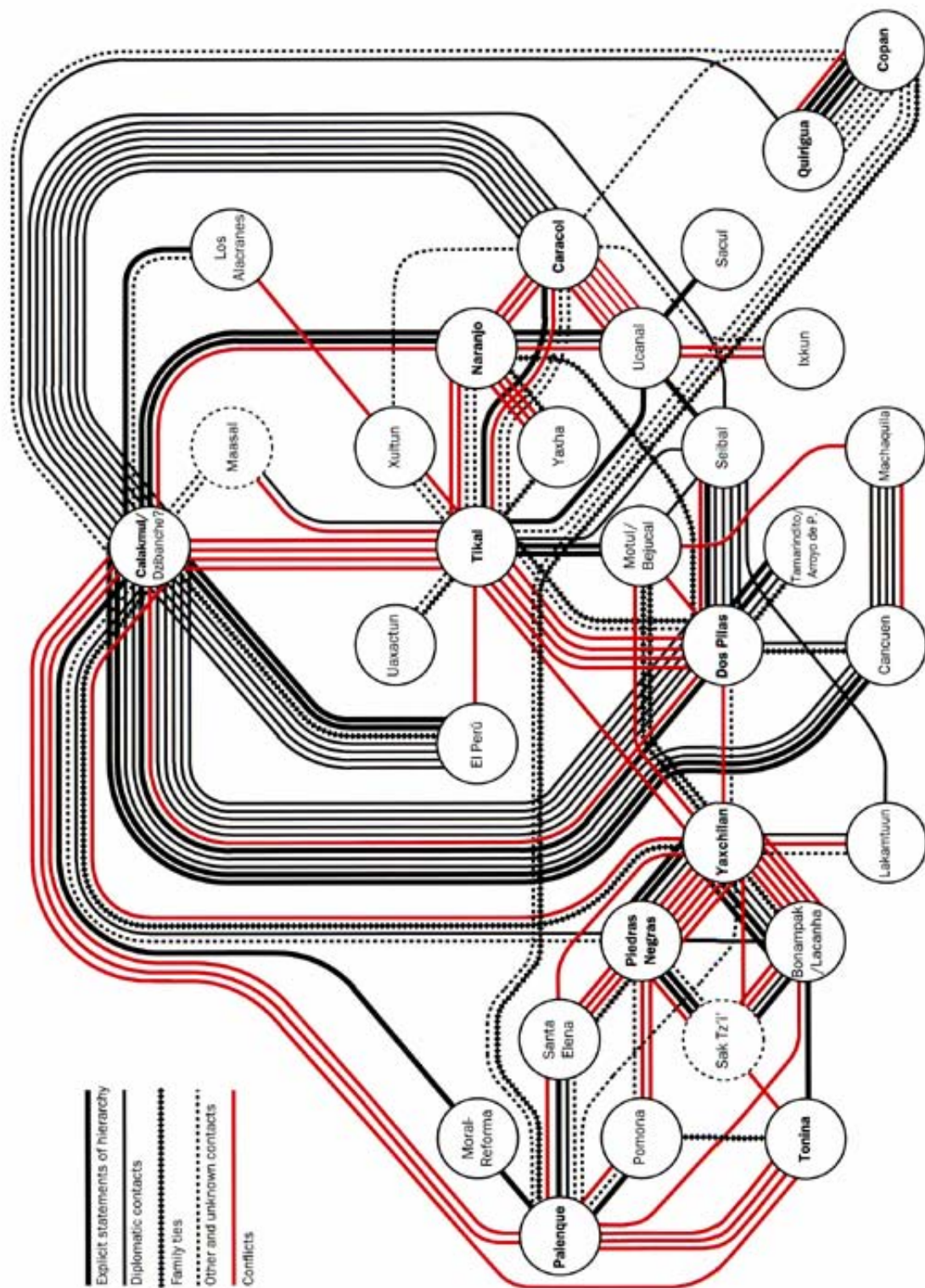


Figure 3.19. Martin and Grube's Interpretation of the Classic Maya Political Landscape

(Courtesy of Simon and Nikolai Grube 2008: 21)

(Martin and Grube 1995: 44). The hegemonic networks that Martin and Grube describe are not the shifting alliances typical of the Segmentary State Model, where expansive polities fragment as quickly as they are formed, but are similar to hegemonic networks of Postclassic Central Mexico (Martin 1994: 8).

Martin and Grube believe that 15th and 16th century Aztec political organization and imperial strategies offer interesting comparisons (Grube 2000a: 552-553). The Aztec Empire was a loose confederation of subjugated polities and conquered states with a centralized administrative and integrated economic system whose purpose was to extract resources, labor, and goods from subject polities (Adams 1979: 59). The system was based on the threat or use of military power (Adams 1979: 59). Aztec imperial strategies involved the creation of semi-independent client states located along the boundaries of enemy states. According to Smith (1996: 137), these client states shouldered most of the responsibility for maintaining and protecting the border from attack. Local leadership was typically reinstalled and solidified after conquest via marriage alliances, gift exchanges, or by joint participation in important religious ceremonies and other political events (Berdan 1996: 122). These practices are similar to the kind of diplomatic interactions recorded in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Classic Maya. The accession of local lords under the supervision of superordinate overlords was a common feature in the Aztec Empire (Hodge 1996: 34). Martin and Grube believe that Classic Maya politics were similar to the Aztec Empire which involved a series of personal relationships between overlords and their dependencies, genealogical-kinship ties and obligations, royal marriages, and references to conflict in a complex and dynamic macro-political system where the strong came to dominate the weak (Martin and Grube 1995: 46). With nearly 200 references to conflict recorded in the inscriptions of the Classic Period, the

context in most cases is clear enough to identify the winner and loser. According to Martin and Grube (1995: 44), warfare rarely took place between states that shared the same political ties and the states that shared the same political ties shared the same adversaries. Thus, references to conflict in the written inscriptions could be useful for identifying friendly and hostile polities and provide crucial insights for identifying patrons and their clients.

Martin and Grube view the political system of the Classic Maya as one that stretched from the northern Yucatan to Honduras with one noticeable exception. There are few texts from the Early Classic Period that describe the political events of this era (Martin and Grube 1994: 28). Part of this problem is due to the lack of readable and datable texts. Archaeologists have simply not found many long Early Classic narrative texts. Overall, the inscriptions of the Early Classic Period are rare and they tend not to feature lengthy discussions on political issues like those commonly featured in the inscriptions of the Late Classic Period. Political discourse appears to have been a more critical function and feature of the Late Classic Period (Martin 2003b: 50).

Superordinate polities do not generally name their subordinate clients. Rather, in nearly every case, the rulers of subordinate sites are the ones claiming allegiance to their superordinate patrons (Marcus 1976: 46; Martin 2003b: 50). The reason for this may be simple historiography. The rulers of subordinate sites appear to be using the hieroglyphic inscriptions to explain, often retrospectively and often by suppressing contemporary historical events themselves, the motivation behind key historical events (Martin 2003: 50-51). Often times the Maya did not record certain key historical events (like a loss in battle, etc.) especially those that may cast an unfavorable light on either the polity or its aristocracy. Therefore, much of what is understood concerning inter- and intra-polity

relationships comes to light via later retrospective passages when things seemed to have changed for the better at the home city. An example of this can be seen in the interactions between Tikal, Caracol, and Calakmul. Initially, Caracol does not acknowledge that its own king, *Yajaw Te' K'inich*, acceded to the throne in A.D. 553 under the supervision of the Tikal king *Wak Chan K'awiil* (Martin 2003b: 50). This fact only comes to light three years later (A.D. 556) when the son of *Yajaw Te' K'inich* talks about the defeat of Tikal by his father on Altar 21 and the ultimate switch in allegiance to Calakmul. This attack served as the impetus for an attack six years later in A.D. 562 in which Calakmul defeats Tikal (Martin 2003b: 51). For the next 100 years, Caracol and Calakmul would be close political allies.

As previously mentioned, Martin and Grube's Hegemonic Model was partly based on ideas generated by both Ross Hassig's (1985; 1988) and Michael Smith's (1996) studies of the Aztec Empire (Hassig 1985; 1988) and of Nicholas Higham's studies on Early Anglo-Saxon England (1992a; 1992b; 1995; 1997). The strength of Martin and Grube's political model is that it is situated in the context of Mesoamerica cultural history while at the same time it borrows key aspects and notes similar features found in other pre-industrial cultures.

According to Hassig (1985: 92), the Aztecs employed a comparable system of hegemonic expansionism much like that in the early Julio-Claudian system of Classic Rome. This hegemonic system was based on a combination of diplomacy, direct force, and fixed infrastructures reflective of the Roman worldview (Luttwak 1976: 4). Under this system, we see a series of unequal relationships form between the autocracy ('*principate*') and its dependent clients. Features of Aztec hegemonic expansionism include: 1) the expansion of political dominance and control without direct territorial

control, 2) a focus on the internal security of the empire by exercising a show of force to the client states, and 3) retaining influence over the client states as local lords were retained in office (Hassig 1985: 93). For a fuller discussion of Aztec hegemonic strategies see Berdan et al. (1996), Hassig (1985) or Hodge and Smith (1994). There was a greater sense of power in the center core that diminished in varying degrees the further one moved away and, in fact, many of the client states required constant management and diplomatic measures ranging from subsidies to punitive warfare to keep them in line (Luttwak 1976: 21). If problems persisted or if tribute trailed off from a client state, the army could be called to coerce the client into compliance through a show of force or by armed conquest. Unlike territorial empires where the greatest threat to centralized control are problems dealing with periphery, hegemonic systems are not generally concerned with territoriality (Hassig 1985: 99), though as will be later argued, I believe that territoriality played an important role in Classic Maya society. In Aztec society as in other hegemonic empires, it was common to have an army drawn from both noble and commoner ranks. The presence of various military ranks, grades, and offices clearly indicated that a military infrastructure existed in Aztec society (Hassig 1985: 95). Based on recent epigraphic evidence such as the *Sajal* and *B'a Te* titles, it is widely believed that the Classic Maya also had grades of military specialists. Landa made reference to several military offices like the *Batab* 'head of a town in charge of executive, judicial, and military affairs', the *Nacom* 'war captain', the *Aj Kulels* 'deputy *batabs*', and the *Holcans* 'common soldiers' (Tozzer 1941: 122-123). Aztec military operations were highly complex and placed enormous stress on the military system because unlike the Romans, the Aztecs lacked a permanent standing army and did not have beasts of burden to supply large numbers of men in the field. To address these problems the Aztecs relied

heavily on resources obtained via local tribute or via royal granaries spread throughout the realm (Hassig 1985: 97). Food, weapons, and land for growing that food were set aside for military use under a tribute system that allowed the army to move quickly and unencumbered. In addition, local troops could also be recruited from areas the army was passing through at the time.

Increasing territory was not a primary goal in hegemonic societies. The Aztecs were more interested in controlling both the local population and the potential economic benefit generated by the addition of new client states. While territorial empires emphasize the need to incorporate new territories, hegemonic systems emphasize the exploitation of new territories (Hassig 1985: 101). All of this was tied to the cost of managing or overseeing dominated areas. For example, if exploitation is low, administrative costs are also low; however, in areas where exploitation is high, so too are the administrative costs for these areas require greater coercive control (involving taxes, tribute, and labor) which raises the overall political-administrative costs (Hassig 1985: 100). By maintaining a controlling influence over the cities in the periphery rather than controlling the territory itself, the Aztecs were able to maximize their exploitation of the local economy with little administrative control. Thus, tribute demands were moderate and could be backed by military threat rather than the presence of a garrisoned force.

Tribute has yet to be fully defined or explained in Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica (Hassig 1985: 103). Since territorial control was not a major consideration in Aztec imperial strategy, conquest was restricted to individual political centers and their dependencies. Tribute could easily be obtained from an entire region based on subjugating a major center (Hassig 1985: 104). The patron-client relationships resulted in an unequal series of exchanges or rewards (*beneficia*) from the patron for services

(*officia*) performed by the client. In fact, in Roman society client kings were often given the honorific title *amicus populi Romani* meaning “friend of the Roman people” without the connotation of subservience (Luttwak 1976: 21). One wonders whether the *yichnal* and *ukab’jiy* expressions functioned in a similar manner in Classic Maya society. This could explain why some polities appear to be autonomous, while at the same time they are subordinate polities. In Roman society, the client states for the most part shouldered the responsibility for safeguarding the periphery from problems such as border squabbles, infiltration or from some other low-intensity threats (Luttwak 1976: 24). In Classic Maya society incidents that involved warfare could be interpreted as cases where client states reconciled these types of threats. The client states not only provided internal security for themselves, but also provided a reasonable perimeter defense for the patron. The client states not only assumed the responsibility of policing themselves, they also policed the empire, which effectively absolved the patron from this responsibility. According to Luttwak (1976: 30-31), hegemonic systems like the Roman model were inherently dynamic and unstable, and client states required constant management and diplomatic oversight since client rulers often had their own military forces and their own ambitions. This practice may also be relevant for Classic Maya kings who were often making royal visits to client states in order to participate in some joint ritual activities. Internal dynastic rivalries were also problematic for they threatened the complete stability of the whole system. Most Roman kings were personally charismatic and well-suited to the task of controlling clients simply by their perceived use of power and strength (Luttwak 1976: 31).

To Martin and Grube (2000: 20), political expansion was not the result of actual territorial acquisition. Rather it was the result of expanding hegemonic networks. As the

hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Classic Maya demonstrate, these hegemonic networks were often highly dynamic and far-reaching. Often the relationships forged between patrons and their client dependencies were long-lasting, existing well past the death of either party. Though some of these relationships may have been forged out of friendly loyalty or via marriage alliances, it is also likely that they were the result of coercion or threat of force as suggested by the high number of epigraphic references to conflict or warfare in the inscriptions of the Classic Period. According to Martin and Grube (2008: 20), the threat of force or actual victory in warfare encouraged new clients to enter into patron-client relationships in exchange for protection, while other clients remained loyal simply out of fear of being attacked. Thus, the threat of military force was often sufficient to be a useful deterrent against insurrection or for other clients to simply acquiesce, though Martin and Grube offer no real evidence from the Classic Maya to support this notion. To Martin and Grube, the political landscape of the Classic Maya not only resembled that of the Aztec Empire, but it also resembled those found in the Old World, especially Classic Greece and Rome, Anglo-Saxon England, and Renaissance Italy where power, authority, and kingship were tied to similar patron-client allegiances and relationships (2000: 21).

The hieroglyphic inscriptions point to a political system where power and wealth were unequally distributed between states and a few powerful polities dominated the economic, dynastic, and political affairs of lesser ones in a hegemonic system not unlike those described in other areas of Mesoamerica. As argued by Rice (2004), some of the more powerful (hegemonic) Classic Maya polities included the *may ku* sites of Tikal, Calakmul, Copan, Caracol, and Palenque to name a few. It is also possible that the *ukab'jiiy*-supervised accessions of local Maya rulers by superordinate patrons may also

represent this same phenomenon. The *ukab'jiiy*-initiated accessions and later joint ritual activities conducted by subordinate lords in the presence of their patrons, may be some of the best epigraphic evidence to support Rice's contention that the *may* system was in use during the Classic Period.

Martin and Grube contend that Maya regional states did not exist and they favor a modification of Peter Mathews' (1991) mosaic model of organization, which featured between 60 and 70 smaller emblem glyph-bearing polities spread out across the Maya area (Martin 2003b: 69). On the surface, all of these polities exuded a sense of individuality and autonomy, and all derived their legitimacy based on a shared system of cultural belief and understanding. However, because of increased competition, greed, the quest for power, wealth, and resources, some Maya kings wanted more and the fundamental feature that fueled the creation of a hegemonic system was the creation of a system of overkingship (Martin 2003b: 69). The success of this system and the success of the individual polity appear to be directly tied to a ruler's ability to create binding ties with new allies. Power often vacillated between hegemonies, though hegemony was never about complete territorial control. Rather power was reflected through personal relationships, charisma, and tribute. Arguably, it was tribute and the collection of economic resources that contributed to the unequal size and wealth of some polities. The greater the tribute the greater the wealth and from an architectural standpoint, the greater the polity size the larger the center.

If we look at Classic Maya culture in terms of large-scale architecture and complexity, we see that two of the largest cities to ever develop in the Maya area were Tikal and Calakmul. We are limited in our understanding of the Classic Maya economic system by the almost complete lack of tribute references in the hieroglyphic inscriptions,

though more references to tribute are being discovered. We are also missing whole subsets of internal dynastic history at many secondary, tertiary, and quaternary level sites, that fail to record even the briefest reference to internal dynastic history. To date, very few of these smaller sites have been explored or studied by archaeologists.

This model suggests possible avenues of archaeological research by revealing epigraphic relationships that can then be tested archaeologically, one of the goals of this dissertation. This dissertation will examine the strength, validity, and usefulness of the hegemonic model from the perspective of smaller secondary, emblem glyph-bearing sites found in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize. In the Southern Maya Mountains Region even some of small polities were using hieroglyphic inscriptions to record both internal and external dynastic history, making these sites the perfect laboratory in which to test the hegemonic and *may* models from a bottom-up perspective.

Maya Calendrical Science: The *May* Model

Recently, Prudence Rice (1999, 2004) has argued that Classic Maya political organization was structured by Maya calendrical science, based on direct ethnohistoric analogies to Postclassic and early Colonial Period accounts, epigraphy, and archaeology. Rice argues that the politico/religious organization of the Classic Maya was based on the cyclical system known as the *may*, a system where political power rotated among allied dependent polities or seats in intervals of approximately 20 years each (a *k'atun*) and comprising a 256-year period consisting of 13 divisions of 20 years each (2004: 13).

As outlined in *Maya Political Science*, Rice (2004: 14) suggests that the ideological constructs of “cosmic cycling and quadripartition” represent the underlying

“deep structure” or the “operational principles” of Classic Maya society. Thus, according to Rice, the cyclical nature of recurring events at regular intervals, as demonstrated throughout the history of Mesoamerica, “entangled political power, time, space, and kingly duty.” Therefore, Maya rulers were not simply rulers of time “they were also ruled by it” (Rice 2004: 52). According to Rice (2008: 276), time not only represented cosmic order, it also provided the cosmic and divine sanction for Classic Maya social order and political power. The king’s control of time became the most important instrument of political/religious power (Rice 2008: 276).

Using ethnohistoric evidence obtained through a systematic examination of the indigenous books of the *Chilam B’alams*, Edmonson (1979) described the *may* cycle and identified certain Maya cities as possible *k’atun* seats. According to Edmonson (1979: 11, 1982: xvii), during the Late Postclassic Period, the Maya of the northern Yucatán practiced a calendrically-based, geo-political organizational model based on the 256 (Gregorian) year cycle known as the *may*. In actuality, this cycle was really 260 *tuns* since a *tun* represented a 360-day year (Rice 2008: 289). Each *may* cycle was comprised of 13 *k’atuns* (of 20 *tuns* each). For a period of 260 *tuns*, the *may* was “seated” in a particular Maya city and every 20 years power was ritually rotated from one dependent town within this realm to the next resulting in the seating of 13 new *jetz’ k’atun*, ‘*k’atun* seats’. Each seat had the right to control and receive tribute, land titles, and political appointments to public office within their respective regions for a period of 20 years (Edmonson 1979: 11, 1982: xvii). According to Rice (2004: 114), the full *may* cycle consisted of three 128-year (128 Gregorian years or 130 *tuns*) periods. During the first 128-year period, a new incoming *may* seat would be identified as an ascending guest and would share the burden (i.e. socio-religious-politico rituals, duties, and responsibilities,

etc.) with the existing seat. During the second 128-year period, the existing seat would now be retired and the former ascending guest would now be seated as the sole host of the *may* and would oversee the system for the next 128 years. And finally, during the third 128-year period, a new *may* seat would again be selected and would share power and the burden with the outgoing seat (Rice 2004: 114).

Rice's *may* model incorporates a more centralized view of Classic Maya political organization since only the most important Maya sites could claim the privilege of hosting the *may* and the responsibility for ritually seating each of the subsequent 13 *k'atuns* and become a sacred or holy city with the right to call itself *siyaj kaan* 'heaven-born' (2004: 78). Edmonson states that the *may* seats held "dynastic and religious primacy over the whole country" for the entire 256 year period (1982: xvi). Once the seat was finished hosting the *may* it was symbolically destroyed and abandoned (Edmonson 1986: 4-5). Conflict, as often recorded in the inscriptions of the Classic Period, is seen as a reflection of the increased level of competition between potential *k'atun* seat rivals as they vie for the rights "to gain access to the political and economic power" associated with becoming a *k'atun* seat (Rice 1999: 12). Rice (2004: 260) reminds us that during the Postclassic Period there was considerable inter-ethnic conflict between the *Xiw* and *Itza* concerning specific calendrical issues in addition to increased competition between towns for the right to seat the *may* and its *k'atuns*. Rice further underscores the importance of this issue by examining other potential meanings for the word *k'atun*. Besides referring to a period of 7,200 days, *k'atun* can also mean 'fight, combat, battle, war, or warrior' and thus these definitions suggest a "deep and inextricable association" between conflict or warfare and these calendrical periods (Rice 2004: 260).

According to Rice (2004: xvii) the archaeological and epigraphic evidence for

the *may* system and the various *k'atun* seats can be found in the large number of carved stelae (some 11,000) dedicated exclusively to commemorating specific period-ending dates and in the distinctive architectural complexes associated with these *k'atun*-ending commemorations that include radial temple complexes, E-Groups, and twin-pyramid groups (see Jones 1969). Rice (2008: 290) believes that the institution of Classic Maya divine kingship began around 500 B.C. with the creation of the first east-west site orientations in stark contrast to the earlier north-south layouts. In association with this east-west orientation was a new type of architectural construction known as the E-Group which paired structures whose function commemorated sight lines to solstitial and equinoctial sunrises (Rice 2008: 290). In addition, the *Chilam B'alam*s describe the end of a *may* and the beginning of another as momentous occasions that were celebrated with great reverence. As described in the *Chilam B'alam of Chumayel*, these celebrations were said to be ritually structured ceremonies that included music, incense and fire, ceremonial insignia, masks and costumes, processions, feasting, speeches and recitations, sacrifice and penance, the erection of a cross or pole [and in Classic times, stelae], and other activities; all of which can be seen in the archaeological and epigraphic record of sites across the Maya area (Edmonson 1986: 21; Rice 2004: 79).

According to Rice (2008: 290), the most persuasive piece of evidence that the *may* system was in place during the Classic Period comes from the numerous carved and dated stelae placed in precise locations, (i.e. often in E-Groups), throughout Maya cities. Edmonson (1986: 23) notes that the erection of *k'atun*-ending stelae during the Classic Period can be equated to the period ending ceremonies of the early Colonial Period in which crosses were erected to commemorate the ancestors. In addition, Landa reports that at Mayapán large stones (or stelae) were erected at the site every 20 years and that 13

stelae have been found at Mayapán (Rice 2008: 291; Tozzer 1941: 38-39). Though many of these stelae found at Classic Maya sites lack carving or hieroglyphic inscriptions, those that do contain carving usually contain site-specific emblem glyphs which proclaim that both its king and city are regarded as ‘divine or holy’ (as in “heaven-born”) by use of the *k’ujul* prefix (Rice 2008: 290). In addition, many of these stelae feature calendrical dates that correspond to the completion of major time periods or subdivisions within a particular period including the commemorations of *jotun*-endings, *lajuntun*-endings, and *k’atun*-endings (roughly every five years within a 20 year period of time). In the Maya calendar, all period endings are presided over by the day name *Ajaw* (Rice 2008: 291). In Classic Maya inscriptions, the word *ajaw* is widely recognized as the word for ‘lord’ or ‘king’; however, the root of the word is *aw* meaning ‘to shout’ and when combined with the agentive prefix *aj* the word *ajaw* can be read as ‘he who shouts or proclaims’ (Rice 2004: 38; Stuart 1995: 190-191). This aspect is particularly important for many of the iconographic themes or programs on period ending stelae feature rulers and other important figures performing scattering rituals involving the sprinkling or burning of blood or incense. Often the names and titles of these other important figures are included in the text and many are from neighboring polities who are present at the host site to either take part in or witness the various period-ending celebrations. Arguably, it can be inferred that great speeches and other types of oratory were commonplace during these types of ritual commemorations. Therefore, it is likely that these types of events served as the underlying politico-religious or ideological framework that bound the *may* and its corresponding *k’atun* seats together. Thus, as a royal title the *k’ujul ajaw* or ‘divine lord’ designation appears to refer to the divine aspect of the office of king which served to link both the political office and the polity represented by that designation within the

parameters of time itself (Rice 2008: 291).

To illustrate her model, Rice examined the dynastic history of the central Petén, namely Tikal, to demonstrate how her model could be used to explain process (how lowland Maya political organization functioned, the role of individual or institutional agency in the decision process, how power and succession were affected and negotiated, how resources were deployed, and how polities interacted) and the notion of cyclical time, two critical elements missing from previous models, as they relate to Classic Maya political organization (2004: 51). According to Rice (2004: 83), “modeling political rotations on cosmic cycles allowed power to be shared predictably, minimizing the potential chaos of political succession and disruption of the social order.” Rice argues that Tikal may have hosted the *may* at least four times: during the Late Preclassic, Early-Middle Classic, Late Classic, and Terminal Classic Periods (2004: 91, 106, 121, 151). In addition, Rice argues that the *may* model can be used to help explain two important events in Tikal’s dynastic history: the arrival of the Teotihuacanoes to Tikal in A.D. 378 and Tikal’s Middle Classic hiatus (2004: 103, 115). Rice considers both of these events as predictable outcomes associated with the cyclical rise and fall, or shift of power, among those sites allied to a particular *may* seat as power transfers from guest *may* seat to outgoing *may* seat (2004: 114).

Rice’s findings suggest that the *may* likely served as the underlying politico/religious system that bound hegemonies to their dependencies by way of cosmic order and sanction. Evidence for the *may* system can be seen in the similar architectural programs, site plans, sculptural themes, regional dress, and in joint *ukab’jiiy*-initiated activities as recorded in the Classic Period inscriptions. Because the context of the *ukab’jiiy* expression indicates oversight or supervision by a more powerful superordinate patron,

the *ukab'jiiy* expression may also be used as further evidence to support Rice's *may* model. *Ukab'jiiy*-instigated events may simply be interpreted as those important social, religious, economic, and political events typically associated with a *may ku*, 'cycle seat' and its *jetz' k'atunob'* or '*k'atun* seats.'

Rice (2004: xviii) has argued that cosmic cycling and quardripartition (the *may* cycle) may have underlain political hierarchy and served as the "deep structure" for organizing the Maya material world. Rice's approach predicts that political power will shift and that investitures could be explained in terms of a rotating temporal system where power shifted among allies subject to the same superordinate patron every twenty *tuuns* as dictated by Maya calendrical science. Therefore, the context of the *ukab'jiiy* expression and the types of major events that this title links between supervising patrons and their clients, including supervised inaugurations, period-ending rituals, building and monument dedications, bloodletting rites, burial or mortuary events, and warfare, suggest that this expression can be used as an epigraphic indicator of the existence of a *may* system during Classic times. It is likely that these *ukab'jiiy*-initiated events were the kind of events that bound allied subordinate polities together in the type of hegemonic system advocated by Martin and Grube.

The use of the *Kaloomte* title by the rulers of certain *may* seats may have initially signified inclusion in the *may* system. However, as time passed, it would seem that the *Kaloomte* title or the status it represented, was bestowed upon certain subordinate rulers of a *may ku* upon becoming a *k'atun* seat. Patron gods appear to have been shared among allied polities of a given *may*. This system served to control and unite the subjugated polities under a superordinate patron. It is likely that agency, especially a king's quest for power, prestige, and wealth under a system of political hegemony aimed at keeping and

expanding these ideals backed by the threat of coercive force if necessary, played a role in the system as well.

As a politico-religious organizational system, the *may* model does not necessarily conflict with Martin and Grube's hegemonic model. The *may* model may be seen as the underlying organizational means for integrating the shared socio-religious beliefs and understandings that unite and bind allies to their sovereign in a hegemonic system. Like the hegemonic system advocated by Martin and Grube, the *may* model can be used to explain why there is a high degree of cultural and regional uniformity in the architectural and sculptural themes in areas throughout the Maya lowlands. Rice argues that one of the other major strengths of the *may* model is its ability to incorporate dynamism, the ability to accommodate all of the many oscillations associated with agency and political power that is often lacking in other political models. Using the *may* model as the basis of interpretation, Rice outlines her view of the developmental history of the Maya Lowlands and identifies the principal *may* centers, as well as their constituent *k'atun* seats, for the Early Classic through Terminal Classic Periods (see Table 3.1).

This chapter reviewed the basic principles of Martin and Grube's hegemonic model for Classic Maya political organization and Rice's *may* model. It is likely that Classic Maya political organization was structured by a combination of macro-political practice informed by Maya calendrical science. Chapter 4 will discuss the geographic setting and background for the present study.

Table 3.1 Schematic of Rice's *May* Capitals and their Dependencies (2004)

Possible <i>K'atun</i> Seats in Tikal's Preclassic <i>May</i> Seating (Based on Rice 2004: 166)	Uaxactún, El Perú, Bejucal, Nakbé, and several sites in Petén lakes region. Based on similar ceramic complexes
Possible <i>K'atun</i> Seats in Tikal's Early-Middle Classic <i>May</i> Seating (Based on Rice 2004: 166)	Uaxactún (EM), Yaxhá (EM), Xultún (EM), El Zapote (M), Uolantún (M), El Perú (M). Based on Presence of E-Groups (E) and Period-Ending Monuments (M).
May also include	Ucanal, Nakum, Ixtinto, Chalpaté, Holtún, La Tractorada, Cenoté, Paxcamán, Tayasal, (El Encanto, Corozal, El Temblor)
Possible <i>K'atun</i> Seats in Tikal's Late Classic <i>May</i> Seating (Based on Rice 2004: 166-167)	Uaxactún (M), Motul de San José (M), Ixlú (TM), Zacpetén (TM), Chalpaté (T), Uolantún (T), Tayasal (M), Yaxhá (T), Nakum (M), Ucanal (M). Based on Twin-Pyramid Groups (T) and Period-Ending Monuments (M).
Possible <i>K'atun</i> Seats in Tikal's Terminal Classic <i>May</i> Seating (Based on Rice 2004: 167)	Uaxactún, Jimbal, Ixlú, Zacpetén, El Perú, Motul de San José.
May also include	Yaxhá/Topoxté, Nakum
Possible <i>K'atun</i> Seats in Calakmul's Early Classic <i>May</i> Seating (Based on Rice 2004: 184)	Balakbal, El Mirador, El Tintal, Nakbé.
Possible <i>K'atun</i> Seats in Calakmul's Middle Classic <i>May</i> Seating (Based on Rice 2004: 186)	Dzibanché, El Resbalón.
Possible <i>K'atun</i> Seats in Calakmul's Late Classic <i>May</i> Seating (Based on Rice 2004: 188, 190)	El Perú, Oxpemul, La Muñeca, Altamirá, Naachtún, Uxul, Sasilhá, Los Alacranes, La Corona, Nadzcaan, Xamantún, Xultún (?).

Continuation of Table 3.1

Possible <i>K'atun</i> Seats in Copan's <i>May</i> Seating (Based on Rice 2004: 80-181)	Quiriguá, Santa Rita, Los Higos, Uxbenká, Pusilhá, Nim Li Punit, Tzimin Ché.
Possible <i>K'atun</i> Seats in Caracol's <i>May</i> Seating (Based on Rice 2004: 191-193)	La Rejollá, Mountain Cow, Hatzcab Ceel, Sacul, Naj Tunich, Ixtutz, Ixkun, Bitul, Cahal Pichik, Retiro, Ucanal (?), Nakum (?).
Possible <i>K'atun</i> Seats in Palenque's <i>May</i> Seating (Based on Rice 2004: 194-196)	Toniná, Tortuguero, Comalcalco, Amayté, La Mar, Yaxchilan, Piedras Negras (?).

CHAPTER 4

GEOGRAPHIC SETTING AND PROJECT BACKGROUND

After two leagues of smooth going the next day, they began the ascent of an extremely rough range, eight leagues, which took them a week to cross, and seventy-eight horses died from falling off precipices or from foundering, and those that survived were so battered that they did not recover for three months. During this whole time it rained continuously, day and night, and it was remarkable how the men suffered from thirst in the midst of so much water. A nephew of Cortés broke his leg in three or four places in a fall, and they had a very difficult time bringing him out of the mountains. This was not the end of their troubles, for they were soon confronted with a very big river [the Polochic?], swollen by the rains, and so swift that it filled the Spaniards with dismay, for there were no canoes, and even if there had been they would not have served. To build a bridge was impossible; to turn back, death. Cortés sent several men up the river to see whether it narrowed and could be forded, and they returned very joyful, having found a passage. I cannot describe to you the tears of joy shed by our Spaniards at this piece of good news. They embraced each other, gave many thanks to Our Lord God, who had succored them in their need.... (López de Gómara 1552 [1964: 362-363]).

This quote from Francisco López de Gómara, a Spanish chronicler who accompanied Hernán Cortés on his trek across Mesoamerica in 1524, is one of the

earliest written descriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. This 16th century description can still be used to describe this region today. The Southern Maya Mountains Region is located within the Toledo and Stann Creek Districts of southern Belize (Figure 4.1). Until recently most archaeologists considered this region to be unimportant in the overall cultural development of Classic Maya civilization. Yet, this region contains a multitude of important natural resources found nowhere else in the southern Maya lowlands. To date, archaeologists have identified more than 200 surface sites and at least that many cave sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region, suggesting that it was heavily occupied during the Classic Period. This region includes 23 major archaeological sites that contain readable hieroglyphic inscriptions (cf. Table 1.1). The highly restricted distribution of particular resources in this area and the range of complexity at sites within the Southern Maya Mountains Region strongly suggest that resource procurement and exchange were the primary socio-economic and political stimulus for the development and growth of polities and trade routes in southern Belize (Dunham et al. 1989; Graham 1987, 1994; Hammond 1975; Laporte and Mejía 2000; Leventhal 1990a, 1992; MacKinnon 1989; McKillop and Heally 1989). Numerous sites feature elite groups with specialized activity areas or workshops that appear to be the loci for intensive resource processing for the manufacture of trade products (Laporte and Mejía 2005; Prufer and Wanyerka 2001).

Research conducted by Marc Abramiuk, of the Maya Mountains Archaeological Project (MMAAP), suggests that Lubaantún may have been a central distributor of vesicular basalt artifacts for the region, based on macroscopic examination of ground stone tools (*manos* and *metates*) from numerous sites throughout Belize (2004: 65). Abramiuk (2004) has also proposed that a flourishing network of both intra- and inter-

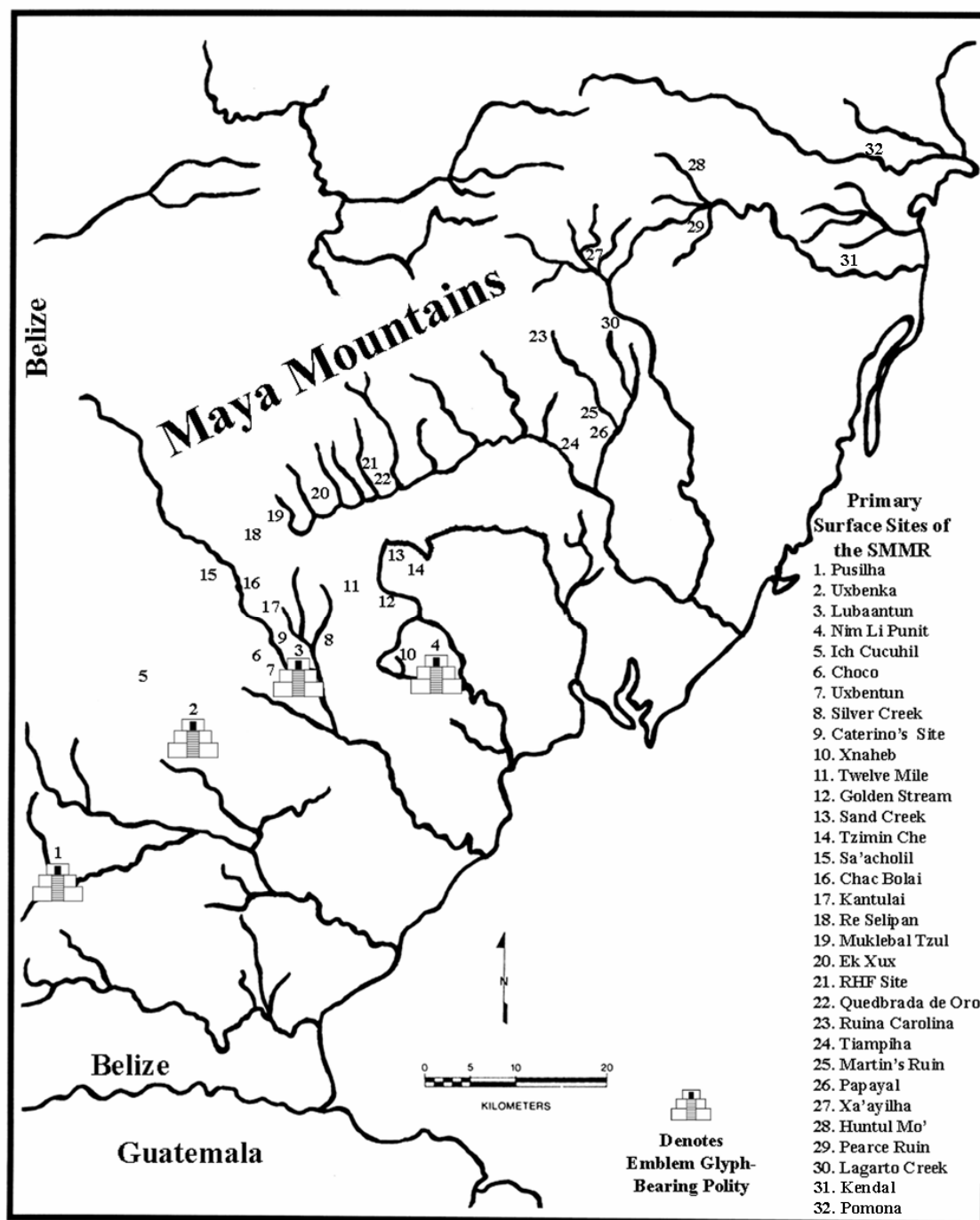


Figure 4.1. Map of the Southern Maya Mountains Region

regional exchange was taking place in the Bladen Drainage involving the manufacture and exportation of volcanoclastic artifacts (Figure 4.2). It appears that the sites of Quebrada de Oro, Ramos Quebrada, and the RHF Site were likely responsible for the exportation of volcanic artifacts coming out of the Bladen region. Abramiuk also argued that volcanic artifacts found outside the Bladen region likely came from the Ek Xux Valley, suggesting that Ek Xux was also an exporter of volcanic goods (Abramiuk 2004: 66). Abramiuk's petrographic analysis of dozens of ground stone tools from Altun Há, Baking Pot, Caledonia, Lubaantún, Seibal, Tikal, and Xunantunich confirm that many of the ground stone tools originated in the Bladen Drainage. These findings confirm Shipley and Graham's (1987) earlier contention that the upper and lower Bladen communities of the Southern Maya Mountains Region were actively engaged in both inter and intra-regional resource exploitation and exchange during the Late and Terminal Classic Periods (Abramiuk 2004: 67).

Trade and exchange appears to have been an important economic and political mechanism for the rise and prosperity of sites in this region. The hieroglyphic inscriptions of this region are filled with references to larger, non-local superordinate powers suggesting that an active hegemonic network existed in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. I have argued that a hegemonic presence existed here since Early Classic times based on a reference to the 14th king of the Tikal (*Chak Tok Ich'aak I*) dynasty in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Uxbenká (Wanyerka 2005a: 179). Hammond (1975, 1981) was the first to refer to southern Belize as a unified cultural region by calling this area a 'Maya realm.' Hammond based his notion of a Maya realm on Bullard's (1960, 1964) interpretation of site hierarchy and region of control. According to Hammond (1975: 97), a realm could be defined as "the area within which the major

center was the sole member of the top rank of a hierarchy of sites” and in addition, this definition would also apply to “the smaller region of control of a minor center” (Figure 4.3). This definition calls to mind Rice’s definition of a *may* seat. Hammond’s ‘realm’ was based on settlement pattern analysis with a special emphasis on linking specific ecological and geographical features within a range of varying environmental zones that included such factors as proximity to river and river valley zones, proximity to productive upland or foothill soils, and proximity to the coastal plain, all of which would facilitate the rise of a complex communication network and a highly productive resource procurement and exchange zone (1975: 116-117). Hammond was attempting to describe how major Maya centers, like Lubaantún, drew upon the natural resources of the region to create an integrated economic power base. This concept would later be revised and expanded upon by Leventhal (1992: 145), who referred to southern Belize as a “Maya cultural sphere” that was geographically circumscribed to the north and west by the Maya Mountains, to the east by the Caribbean Sea, and to the south by the swampland region between the Sarstoon and Temash River systems. Leventhal based his notion of a bound “Maya cultural sphere” on the following characteristics common to sites in this region: walled ballcourts, the use of natural terrain in major architectural constructions to create the illusion of massive labor-intensive structures, the sequential use of tombs, and the absence of corbelled arches (1990a: 138-139; Leventhal and Dunham 1989: 12). These characteristics would later be expanded to include other interesting features such as hieroglyphic inscriptions with unusual style and syntax, the use of petroglyphic inscriptions, the use of *Ajaw* stelae with Short-Round dates, and the abundant use of plain and needle-shaped monuments (Wanyerka 2000).

Recent epigraphic and archaeological evidence indicates that the Southern Maya

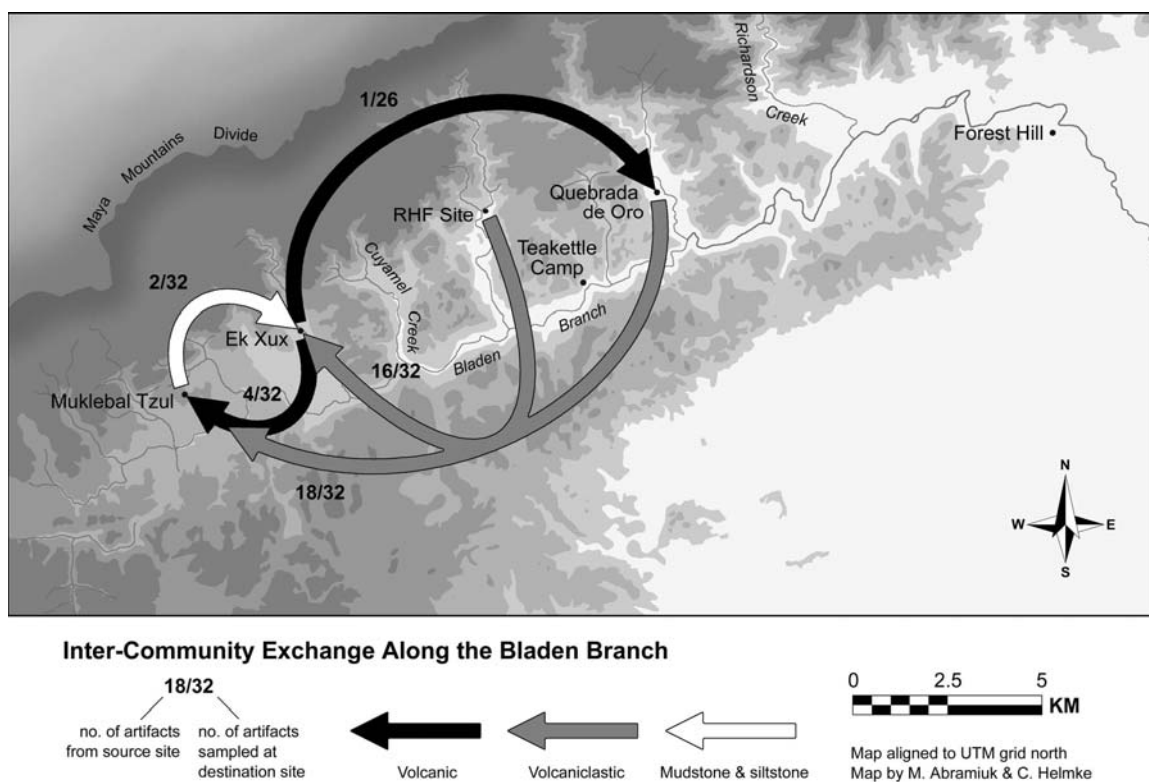


Figure 4.2. Inter-Community Exchange Along the Bladen Branch (Figure courtesy of Abramiuk and Meurer 2006: Figure 4)

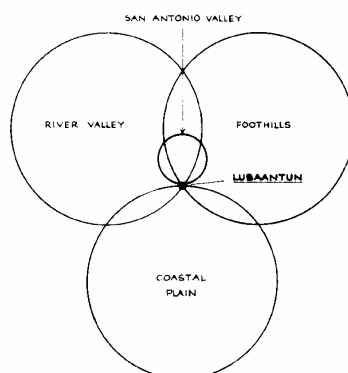


Figure 4.3. Hammond's Maya Realm Based on Environmental Zones (Courtesy of Norman Hammond, 1975: Figure 48)

Mountains Region was deeply influenced by both the Central Petén and the Pasi6n during Classic times. In fact, there are still strong cultural and economic ties between the modern communities living in the Southern Maya Mountains Region and those living in both the southern Petén and Pasi6n regions. Modern Q'eqchi' Cobáneros still use some of the old foot trails and mountain passes in the Río Blanco Valley to bypass the southwestern flank of the Maya Mountains to trade with communities located in both the southern Petén and the Pasi6n regions (see Hammond 1978).

We are now in a position to better understand the cultural development of the Southern Maya Mountains Region based on recent archaeological and epigraphic investigations. Work conducted in this region by the Atlas Arqueol6gico de Guatemala (AAG), Louisiana State University Maya Archaeology Program, Maya Mountains Archaeological Project (MMAAP), Point Placencia Archaeological Project (PPAP), Pusilhá Archaeological Project (PUSAP), Southern Belize Archaeological Project (SBAP), and the Uxbenká Archaeological Project (UAP) has confirmed that indigenous populations have been living in this region since the Paleo-Indian times (Dunham et al. 1993).

The focus of this chapter is to discuss the local geologic and geographic environment of the Southern Maya Mountains Region and highlight the cultural development and prehistory of the region in order to place the archaeological sites within the larger matrix of Classic Maya civilization.

The Geology and Geography of the Southern Maya Mountains Region

The Maya Mountains are perhaps the most defining and dominant feature of the

Southern Maya Mountains Region. As the only major mountain range in the entire southern Maya Lowlands, the Maya Mountains bisect the country of Belize, running southwest to northeast across south-central Belize, and running unimpeded into eastern Guatemala. The Maya Mountains are approximately 100 km long by 60 km wide and they are classified as a typical low mountain range, rising just over 1,100 m above sea level.

The study area for this project is located south of the main divide of the Maya Mountains and includes the Chiquibul Valley, Richardson Peak, and the Palmasito Plateau. The easternmost terminus is the Northern Coastal Plain that includes the Governor, Toledo, and Puletan Floodplains to the Caribbean Sea, while the westernmost terminus is the area that includes both the Toledo Foothills and Southern Coastal Plain including the Mopán, the Machaquilá, and Pusilhá River Drainages of eastern Guatemala. The project area terminates to the south in the swamplands of the Southern Coastal Plain region of the Temash and Sarstoon Rivers. Included in this study are sites located along the following major west to east drainages which include the South Stann Creek, the Sitee, the Swasey, the Trio, the Bladen, the Deep River, the Golden Stream, the Rio Grande, and the Moho River Drainages (see King et al. 1986).

One of the earliest geological studies of the Southern Maya Mountains Region is C.H. Wilson's 1886 geological survey of the North Stann Creek. Wilson not only collected numerous rock and mineral specimens from the Monkey, Bladen, Trio, Mullen's, and the North Stann Creek River Drainages, but he also made careful notes on what he observed, which would be used as a guide for later geological and archaeological projects like the MMAP. Other early efforts include the work of Carl Sapper (1899) and Leslie Ower (1927, 1928) both of whom focused their research on identifying the

geological formations of British Honduras. The first major geological study of the Southern Maya Mountains Region was conducted by C.G. Dixon from 1950-1955. In his final report, Dixon (1956) published the first concise stratigraphic record for British Honduras from Pennsylvanian to Recent times. In that report, Dixon argued that the Maya Mountains consisted of two major sedimentary groups (a younger Macal Series and an older Maya Series) that were separated by an interval upon which granites were intruded, along with widespread erosion (Dixon 1956: 13-17). During the late 1950's Wright et al. (1959) published a massive volume on land use in British Honduras. This landmark volume combined geology and geography to provide a thorough overview, description, and assessment of all of the soils in the country, including detailed soil maps that showed vegetation and land use potential. In the 1970's geologists J. H. Bateson and I. H. Hall reexamined the geology of the Maya Mountains for themselves and determined that Dixon's two major groups could be correlated as a single series with the Santa Rosa Group of Guatemala (1977: iv). Bateson and Hall's volume is one of the best geological studies to date of the region presenting some of the first structural, palaeontological, and radiometric data for the Maya Mountains. More recent geological studies of the area by Muncaster (1976), Shipley (1976), Druecker (1978), Flanders (1978), Brooks (1996), and Miller (1996) have tended to focus more on resource identification, assessment and potential. Additional information about Belize's geology is also coming directly from intensive cave explorations conducted throughout Belize over the past 30-40 years (Miller 1986, 1996; Prufer 2002).

The geological structure of the Southern Maya Mountains Region is composed of two distinct landforms: the first and the oldest deposit consists of Paleozoic metasedimentary and Triassic intrusive rocks, mainly underlying carbonates of the Santa

Rosa Group strewn with younger volcanics and volcaniclastics that date to the Pennsylvanian and Middle Permian age including granites, porphyrites, and quartzites (Hammond 1975: 10). The second major landform overlying the Maya Mountains themselves consists of a Cretaceous limestone and dolomite massif or strata that has folded and faulted to form the Toledo Series.

The Southern Maya Mountains Region is bound by two major east-west faults: a northern fault, known as the Boundary Fault Karst, that extends from the southern Vaca Plateau eastward to the Caves Branch region and a southern fault, known as the K-T Fault Ridges, that extends from the La Cumbre Formation, beginning in eastern Guatemala and extending northeastward across Belize to the Caribbean (Miller 1996: 103). The K-T Fault Ridge is unusual in that this fault consists of a series of sharp, isolated, and long narrow ridges, with the largest being some 20 km long, that forms isolated “islands” which rise above the Toledo Series and include a variety of Quaternary shale, mudstone, and sandstone deposits (Miller 1996: 115). These sedimentary deposits heavily influenced the regional architectural styles of sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Not only did the ancient Maya use these local deposits to their advantage in the creation of their cities, they also made excellent use of the larger cleaved pieces of mudstone and sandstone to create some of the largest stelae ever erected in the entire Maya Lowlands. Surface sites located along some of these ridges, such as Nim Li Punit, contain huge deposits of cleaved mudstone strata. The stone masons and sculptors at Nim Li Punit had easy local access to large quantities of finished monument or stelae “blanks” that facilitated the creation of extremely tall stelae with very little manufacturing effort. The average stela size at Nim Li Punit (without taking the buried stela base into consideration) is just under 4 meters in height (3.97m). Nim Li Punit Stela

14, measuring a staggering 9.29 meters in height, is the second tallest stela ever carved by the ancient Maya. Quiriguá Stela E is the tallest at 10.6 meters in height (Sharer 1990: 36). Even today, this region is known across the southern Maya lowlands for its various Quaternary mudstones and sandstones.

An integrated fluviokarst or integrated dry dendritic valley of fluvial origin with lots of sharply rising hills, hanging valleys, plateaus, and karst mountainous deposits, the area is home to a complex hydrologic network of sinking allogenic streams and easterly flowing river systems that eventually drain into the Caribbean (Dixon 1956: 9; Miller 1996: 103; Ower 1928: 496). In addition, this region is honeycombed with hundreds of caves and cave systems due to the erosional effects of massive amounts of rainfall.

The area between the northern and southern faults contains at least five different environmental zones: the Maya Mountains, the Northern Foothills, the Toledo Foothills, the Northern Coastal Plains, and the Southern Coastal Plains (King et al. 1986: Map 1A and 1B) (Figure 4.4). An unusual concentration of important geologic and mineralogical resources that were widely exploited by the ancient Maya are located within each of these five environmental zones. As an area containing the only uplifted igneous and metamorphic deposits in the southern Maya lowlands, both Elizabeth Graham and Peter Dunham have referred to this region as the “Highlands of the Lowlands” and many of the mineralogical resources found here were widely believed to have originated in more distant locations, primarily the highlands of Guatemala (Dunham 1996: 320; Graham 1983, 1994). Geologic and mineralogical analyses in this area by Dixon (1956), Bateson and Hall (1977), and more recently by the MMAP (see Abramiuk 2004, Abramiuk and Meurer 2006, Dunham 1991, 1996; Dunham et al. 1993a, 1993b, 1994) have now demonstrated that the Southern Maya Mountains Region was an important resource

procurement zone and that a thriving network of inter/intra-regional exchange took place during Classic times.

The Maya Mountains environmental zone is comprised of the Chiquibul Valley, the Richardson Peak Area, and the Palmasito Plateau, an area encompassing some 389 km². The Cockscomb Basin is located within the eastern-most extent of this environmental zone where at least four surface sites of substantial size and complexity were found by the MMAP including Ruina Carolina, located in the Upper Trio Drainage, Huntul Mo', the Pearce Ruin, and Xa'ayilha, located in the South Stann Creek Drainage (refer to Figure 4.1). Ballcourts, reservoirs, and plain monuments have been found at all four surface sites and the remains of a possible monument workshop were identified at the Pearce Ruin based on the presence of numerous broken monuments, finished blanks, and waste pieces in close proximity to a large granite outcrop adjacent to the ruin (Dunham et al. 1995: 4). This region contains densely dissected, steep sloping mountains and stony undulating plateaus with shallow soils that include Late Paleozoic shales, lavas, tephra, volcanic sediments, and limited amounts of sandstone and quartzite (King et al. 1986: 42). Mineral resources found in this environmental zone include a variety of iron oxides like hematite, manganese oxide, magnetite, and muscovite all of which were used as pigments by the Classic Maya (Dunham et al. 1995: 3). A variety of different types of both Triassic and Cretaceous Cockscomb granites are located in this zone including resistant granite, porphyritic biotite granite, biotite granite, and white granite, which were used for grinding stones (Dunham et al. 1995: 10). High-quality meta argillite (mafic phyllite) and micritic limestone have also been identified in this region and were used during Classic times for building material and cm-sized pyrite cubes are often found within the matrix of this phyllite which can be used for both mirrors and dental inlays

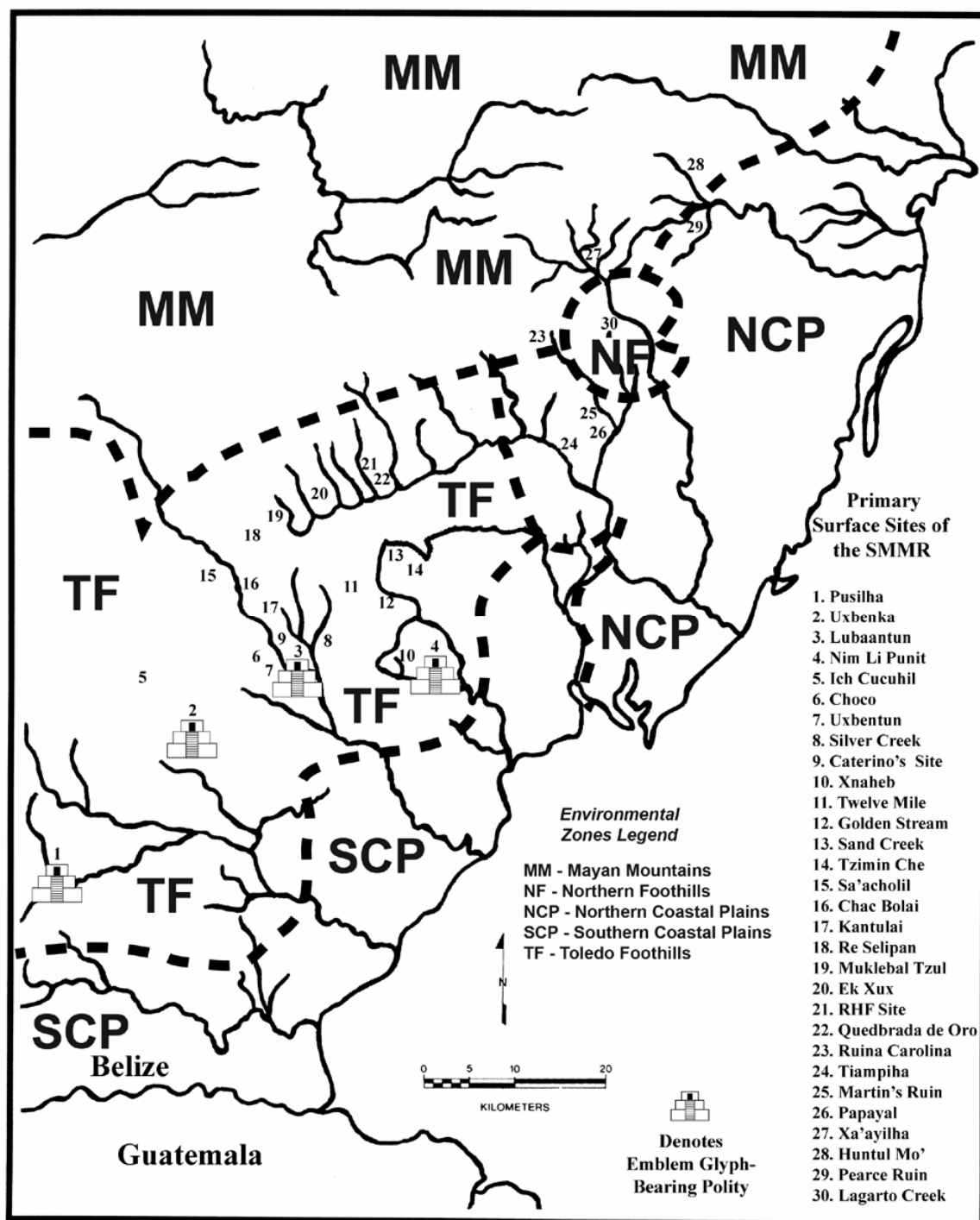


Figure 4.4. Map Showing the Environmental Zones of Southern Belize.

(Dunham et al. 1995: 4, 11). The MMAP identified several sources of high-quality kaolinitic clay, silicified and unsilicified volcanic ash, and mica, all of which appear to have been used in ceramic tempers (Dunham et al. 1995: 4). In addition, both pagoclase ash-flow tuff and vitroic crystal-rich ash-flow tuff have been identified in this zone, which appear to have also been used in the manufacture of grinding stones (Dunham et al 1995: 14). Veins of different colored quartz and quartzite were also identified by the MMAP including the rare bluish-black varieties (Dunham et al 1995: 14).

The Northern Foothill environmental zone is comprised of the stopper escarpment, plains, and footslopes of the Swasey Drainage and features a coarsely dissected and steeply sloping undulating terrain that encompasses an area of only 28 km². The Lagarto Ruins, a small diminutive site first reported by MacKinnon (1989), are located within this zone, situated strategically near the confluence of where the Lagarto Creek empties into the Swasey. The site likely controlled traffic in and out of the upper Swasey Drainage (Dunham 1996: 330). Though small in size, the site is most notable for its unusual pecked cross and three patolli board monuments (see Wanyerka 1999b). Several massive outcrops of porphyritic granite and alluvium float that the inhabitants of the Lagarto Ruins likely controlled during Classic times are located near the mouth of Danto Creek (Dunham et al. 1996: 330; King et al. 1986: 45). MacKinnon (1989) reported another site in Danto Drainage, the Danto Site, but due to a major illegal drug operation in the area we were unable to revisit the site. However, the presence of numerous pyrite crystals, along with Late Classic ceramics, along the bottom of Sapote Creek would suggest that the Danto Site likely exploited this valuable resource.

The Toledo Foothill environmental zone is comprised of the Xpicilha Hills, the Pesoro Plain, and the Toledo Upland region consisting of an area of about 794 km². This

area is densely dissected with steep-sloping hills and undulating plains. Most of this area consists of karst limestone with limited shallow and gravelly soils that contain lots of calcareous clays and cabro (King et al. 1986: 47 and 49). However, this area is perhaps best known for its distinctive dark red or brown soil representing one of the best agricultural zones in southern Belize (Dunham *et al.* 1989: 270). Twenty-two surface sites are located within the Toledo Foothill region including four primary, emblem glyph-bearing centers (Pusilhá, Uxbenká, Lubaantun, and Nim Li Punit). The importation of ground stone tools from Highland Guatemala and the presence of marine resources from the coastal region of Belize suggest that a thriving exchange network existed in this region during Classic times. This environmental zone features the largest concentration of archaeological sites in all of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Moving southwest to northeast across this environmental zone are the following major drainage systems. First, located just east of the Guatemalan/Belize border is the Poité/Pusilhá Drainage which features the emblem glyph-bearing site of Pusilhá. Surprisingly, little information has been published concerning the types of mineral resources found within this drainage. Dunham et al. (1989: 271) report that the region is rich in Toledo Beds sandstone, Xpicilha Hills limestone, and conglomerate all of which can be used for building constructions or as a source of lime for plaster. Braswell (2008: 8) reports that local varieties of chert were widely available in this drainage, though sourcing chert by means of visual or chemical analysis remains problematic.

Moving northeast, the second major drainage system of this environmental zone is the Río Blanco Drainage, which features two major surface sites: Ich Cucuñil and the earliest emblem glyph-bearing center in the region, Uxbenká. Resources common to this drainage system also include Toledo Bed Sandstone, Xpicilha Hills limestone, and

bituminous dolomite used in construction or as a source of lime for plaster or for fertilizer (Dunham et al. 1989: 271; Hammond 1975: 14). The third major drainage of the Toledo Foothills environmental zone is the Río Grande Drainage which features seven major surface sites (Silver Creek, Caterino's Ruin, Uxbentun, Choco, Sa'acholil, Chac Bolai, and K'antulai) and one possible emblem glyph-bearing site (Lubaantún). Mineral resources found within this drainage system include Toledo Bed Sandstone, Xpencilha Hills limestone, and bituminous dolomite (Dunham et al. 1989: 271; Hammond 1975: 14). Both tabular and nodular chert along with pyrite crystals, are found in quantity in the vicinity of Jacinto Creek (Hammond 1975: 15). Located near the headwaters of the Río Grande are the Snake Creek and Esperanza Valleys, home to three of the most remote sites (Sa'acholil, Chac Bolai, and K'antulai) within the interior of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Resources found in these two regions include shale, mudstone, calcareous limestone, Toledo Bed sandstone, quartz, hypabyssal volcanics that feature euhedral K-feldspar and blue quartz, coarse-grained conglomerates, hematite, and limonite (Dunham et al. 1994: 11). In addition, the MMAP noted the presence of high-quality phytic and silicified volcanic ash and other volcanoclastic materials which would be suitable for ceramic tempers (Dunham et al 1994: Appendix 4).

The fourth major drainage system of this environmental zone is the Golden Stream Drainage which includes five major surface sites (Golden Stream, Sand Creek, Tzimín Ché, Twelve Mile, and Xnaheb') and one emblem glyph-bearing site (Nim Li Punit). Important mineral resources found in this drainage and in the adjoining Deep River Drainage include hematite, limonite, goethite, and black manganese, all of which could be used for pigments; travertine, phyllite, silicified mudstone, pyrite, milky hydrothermal quartz, fine-to-medium grained arkose, and recrystallized limestone

(Dunham et al. 1993b: 32-33, 47).

The last major drainage system to be discussed in the Toledo Foothill environmental zone is the Bladen Drainage which features five major surface sites (Re Selipan, Muklebal Tzul, Ek Xux, RHF Site, and Quebrada de Oro). Radio carbon dates indicate that Ek Xux is the second oldest surface site in the region behind Uxbenká (Prufer 2007: 3; Prufer et al. 2006: 259). Ek Xux is the largest and most complex site in the interior of the Maya Mountains (see Kindon 2002). The mineral resources found in the Bladen Drainage are the most diverse of any area in the entire Southern Maya Mountains Region. Given the high-degree of resource diversity in this area, it is curious that none of these sites are emblem glyph-bearing ones. The most commonly exploited and exchanged resource of the Bladen Drainage were materials used in the manufacturing of groundstone tools (see Abramiuk and Meurer 2006; Shipley and Graham 1987). Raw materials used in the manufacture of groundstone tools included fine, medium, and coarse-grained volcanoclastic rock, pale green volcanoclastic rock, red volcanoclastic rock, green felsic rhyolite, quartz rhyolite, hypabyssal intrusive granite, sandstone with either quartz or ferruginous cement, white limestone, pink limestone, black mudstone, black argillite, vesicular basalt, volcanic welded tuff, plagioclase ash-flow tuff with pyrite, and vitric crystal-rich ash-flow tuff (Abramiuk 2004: 393; Abramiuk and Meurer 2006: 342-345; Dunham et al. 1993: 46; Dunham et al. 1994: Appendix 4; Dunham et al. 1995: 12). Other resources found in this area include mylonite, hematite, limonite, goethite, black manganese, pyrite, white chert, and travertine (Dunham et al. 1993b: 33-34, 38, 46).

The Northern Coastal Plain environmental zone is comprised of the Governor Plain, the Toledo Floodplain, and the Puletan Plain with an area encompassing some 704 km². Located within this zone are three major surface sites (Papayal and Martin's Ruin

located in the lower Trio Drainage and Tiampiha, located in the lower Bladen Drainage). This area is generally characterized as being coarsely dissected alluvial fans that form a flat plain. The soils range from generally poor to excellent based on the nature of the subsoils of this region. The Governor Plain contains compacted soils in which forest fauna cannot take hold, resulting in an area of low forest and pine reserves. On the other hand, the Toledo Floodplain containing all of the major river systems in the Southern Coastal Plain has some of the richest and best-drained soils in the region. Next is the Puletan Plain region consisting of flat alluvial fans with poor soils interlaced with pine savanna and low secondary bush (King et al. 1986: 52-54). Some of the important mineral resources found in this region include granodiorite porphyry, granite porphyry, andesite porphyry, fine-grained white limestone, lithic sandstone, lithic siltstone, mafic phyllite, quartzite, greenstone, greenschist, felsite, hematite, and phyrlic silicified volcanic ash (Dunham et al. 1993a: 26-27; Dunham et al. 1994: Appendix 4).

The last environmental zone to be discussed here is the Southern Coastal Plain consisting of the Toledo Swamps, the Toledo Strand Plains, the Machaca Plain, and Temash Plain, an area encompassing some 1696 km². Most of the archaeological sites located in this zone are found along the southern coast of Belize or on one of the many cays located in the Gulf of Honduras (see McKillop (1982, 1984, 1989, 2005). This area is a combination of scattered swamps and densely dissected undulating marine bars and plains. Nearly 70% of this region, between the Sarstoon and Temash rivers is swamp and mangrove forest. The Machaca Plain is a densely dissected undulating coastal plain consisting of the Toledo Beds that contain a variety of differing mudstones, sandstones, limestone, and conglomerates. The soils in this area are extremely rich and fertile because of past volcanic activity (King et al. 1986: 57-61).

Climate and Vegetation of the Southern Maya Mountains Region

The climate of the Southern Maya Mountains Region is diverse, giving rise to one of the most complex and highly dynamic ecological systems in all of Central America. The northern expanse of this region has been classified as a Moist Tropical and Moist Sub-Tropical Forest, while the southern part of the region has been described as a Wet Tropical and Wet Sub-Tropical Forest (Wright et al. 1959: 28). All four classificatory types are based on elevation, soil type, soil moisture, temperature, and vegetal types and formations. A variety of broadleaf trees including mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla* King), sapote (*Achras sapote*), ramon (*Brosimum alicastrum*), cohune palm (*Orbignya cohune*), chiquebul (*Achras chicle* Pittier), and bullhoof (*Celtis Hottlei* Standl) are common in this region (Wright et al. 1959: 287, 289). This area receives the highest annual rainfall in Belize, averaging around 5 meters (Wright et al. 1959: 27). Relative humidity in the Southern Maya Mountains Region fluctuates between 80% and 88% depending on elevation. There are two major seasons in the Southern Maya Mountains Region: a rainy season that runs from approximately late May to December, and a dry season that runs from late December to early May. Annual temperatures range from between 50° F and 100° F depending on location and time of year, though the mean annual average is 79° (Wright et al. 1959: 26). Up in the interior of the Maya Mountains temperatures can drop as low as 40° under certain conditions.

The Prehistory of the Southern Maya Mountains Region

Our overall understanding of the cultural development and prehistory of the

Southern Maya Mountains Region is relatively poor and undefined despite nearly one hundred years of archaeological investigations. The carved monuments of this area represented one of the least understood corpuses in the entire Maya lowlands until this study. The primary reason for the lack of interest in this region may be based on its remoteness and on the long-held belief by some scholars that the Maya Mountains themselves were an uninhabited backwater region. The consensus among many scholars was that no one lived in this region in the past because few people live in this area today. However, this area has been receiving growing attention from Mayanists for the past 30 or so years. Archaeological and epigraphic evidence now suggests that the Southern Maya Mountains Region played a crucial role in the overall cultural development and growth of Classic Maya civilization. Contrary to the view of the Maya Mountains as an uninhabited backwater, archaeological projects in the region have now confirmed that this region was heavily occupied and was an important zone for resource procurement and exchange during the Classic Period.

Today the Southern Maya Mountains Region is home to two major indigenous Maya groups: the Q'eqchi's and the Mopans, both of whom migrated to the region from the Guatemalan Highlands and central Petén, respectively, beginning before the 16th century or earlier and continuing up to the present (Thompson 1972; Wilk 1997). Besides the Q'eqchís and Mopans, the region is also home to a rather large Garifuna (Black Carib) population that lives along the coastal regions of Belize, East Indians who live in areas along the Southern Highway, and a mixture of Ladino natives, British expatriates and Belizean Creole.

Recent archaeological findings suggest that people were living in the Southern Maya Mountains Region since the Paleo-Indian Period (10,000-13,000 years B.P.). The

evidence for this early population comes by way of a serendipitous find made by the Maya Mountains Archaeological Project in 1993. While looking through a collection of miscellaneous artifacts collected by long-time Toledo District resident Don Owen-Lewis, the former MMAP geologist Daniel Gall, noticed an unusual fluted-stemmed projectile point with a fishtail base (Figure 4.5). The combination of a fluted stem along with the fishtail base are diagnostic features of two distinct New World Paleo-Indian traditions: the fluted stem representing the North American Clovis tradition while the fishtail base represents the early South American Fishtail tradition (Dunham et al. 1993: 21). Mr. Lewis recovered the projectile point some 30 years ago from a small garden plot located on his property (known as Missouri Farm) in the village of Big Falls, close to the remains of a small Classic Maya household group identified by Hammond in 1975 as Site 7 (Hammond 1975: 274-275). The “Owen-Lewis” Point, as it is now known, measures 3.8 cms long by 2.8 cms wide at its greatest extent (Dunham et al. 1993: 21). It represents the first clear Paleo-Indian evidence thus far noted in Southern Belize and represents one of only a handful of known Paleo-Indian projectile points thus far uncovered in the southern Maya lowlands.

Based on C14 dates from recent archaeological investigations in the Maya Mountains we can now say that the Southern Maya Mountains Region was occupied from at least the Middle Preclassic to Terminal Classic Periods with a remnant population living there up into the early Historic Period (Prufer 2002: 425). Unfortunately, the developmental sequence for the region remains largely incomplete and unsubstantiated. Archaeological data confirm a Middle Preclassic to Early Classic population living in the northeastern region of the Stann Creek District, at Kendal and Pomona (Graham 1983, 1994), with another living in the Ek Xux Valley (Prufer 2002), and a third living at

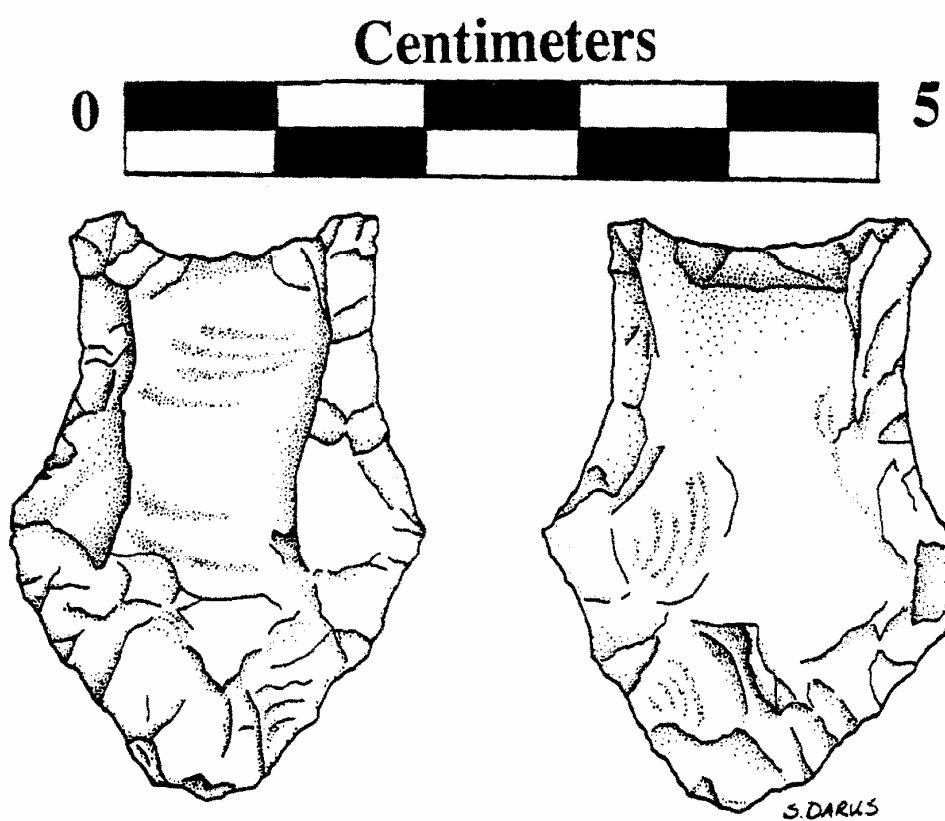


Figure 4.5. The "Owen-Lewis" Projectile Point (Drawing by S. Darus, courtesy of Peter Dunham and the Maya Mountains Archaeological Project)

Uxbenká in the extreme southwestern corner of the Toledo District (Prufer 2007).

Epigraphic evidence from the major surface sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region shows that the earliest monument-erecting sites were Uxbenká and Pusilhá, located in the southwestern region of the Toledo District. The earliest dated reference in the region is found in a retrospective passage commemorating the Period Ending 8.2.0.0.0 (11, February 81), recorded at Pusilhá on Stela P, while the earliest dated contemporary text in the region can be found at Uxbenká on Stela 23, which commemorates the Period Ending 9.1.0.0.0 (27, August 455). However, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, there is additional epigraphic evidence to suggest that a well-known Early Classic king from Tikal (*Chak Tok Ich'aak I*) is prominently featured on a monument (Stela 11) at Uxbenká. Though the date for this passage does not survive, the reference to *Chak Tok Ich'aak I* appears to be contemporary, suggesting that Stela 11 likely dates to between 8.16.2.10.2 (13, August 359) and 8.17.1.4.12 (15, January 378) or shortly thereafter based on the known dates for *Chak Tok Ich'aak I*. Thus, Uxbenká is the earliest monument-erecting site in the entire Southern Maya Mountains Region based on current archaeological and epigraphic investigations. Early Classic texts along with Late Preclassic-Early Classic artifacts, namely ceramics types (including Sierra Red slips and Barton Creek phase) suggest close regional ties between the Southern Maya Mountains Region, the Belize Valley, and the Central Petén during this time (Moyes 2007: 7).

By the start of the Late Classic Period, both archaeological and epigraphic evidence suggest that Central Petén influence in the Southern Maya Mountains Region began to wane and there was a dramatic shift in hegemonic influence from the Central Petén to both the Pasi6n and Petexbat6n regions as well as to the southeastern Maya lowlands. Sites such as Pusilhá, Lubaant6n, Nim Li Punit, Xnaheb', and Tzimín Ché in

Belize and Sacul, Ixtontón, Ixkún, Ixtutz, Machaquilá, and Xutilhá in southeastern Guatemala begin to appear in the southern foothill region during this time (Figure 4.6). The latest monument-erecting site in the entire region is Tzimín Ché, a small Classic Maya site located in the headwaters of the Deep River Drainage. An unusual short-count calendrical date featuring a giant *Ajaw* glyph which corresponds to the Period Ending date of 10.4.0.0.0 (15, January 909) is recorded at Tzimín Ché on Stela 1. Together, the epigraphic record for the Southern Maya Mountains Region spans more than 800 years. Much of the region except for the coastal areas was in rapid decline and had become sparsely populated by the start of the Terminal Classic Period. Little is known of the Postclassic population in this region, though the populations appear to have remained small and sparse right on up into the early Historic Period.

Early Historical Accounts of the Southern Maya Mountains Region

Little is known of the ancient inhabitants of the Southern Maya Mountains Region prior to the start of the 16th century. The famous Spanish conquistador don Hernándo Cortés led the first Spanish expedition through this region during his 1524-1525 *entrada* from the Valley of Mexico to Higueiras (Honduras) in order to reassert his authority over his former Spanish lieutenant Cristoval de Olid (Means 1917: 26). Olid, originally a close friend to Cortés, was given orders to return to Havana to gather troops and supplies in order to create a settlement along the east coast of Honduras. However, Olid imprisoned one of Cortés's close friends, Gil González de Avila. Cortés viewed Olid's actions as mutinous and so he mounted an expedition to restore his authority and explore the possibility of extending Spanish jurisdiction from Mexico to the Caribbean Coast

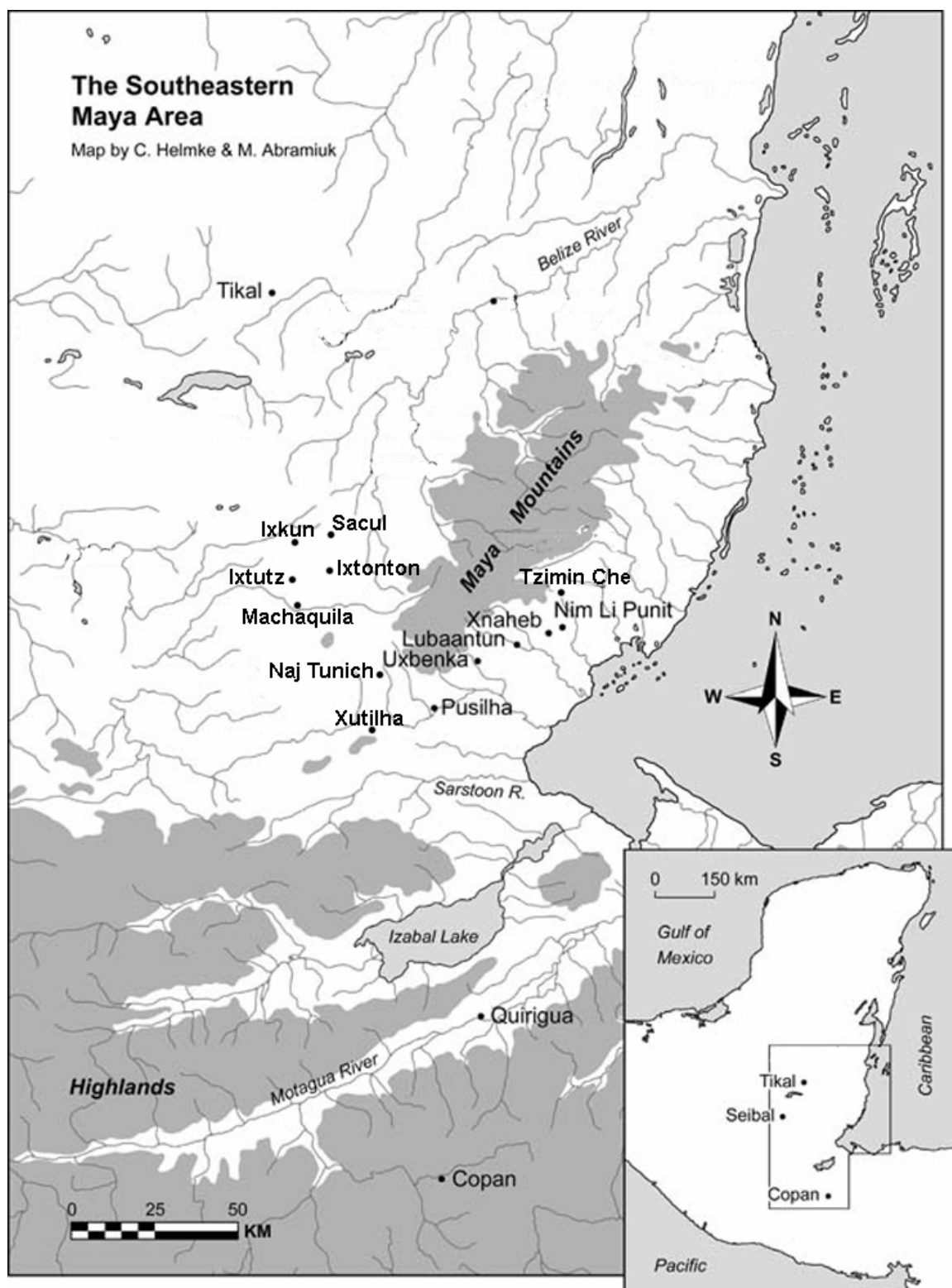


Figure 4.6. Map showing locations where Hieroglyphic Inscriptions are found in the SMMR (Map Courtesy of Helmke and Abramiuk, modified by author).

(Means 1917: 26-27; Scholes and Roys: 1968: 430).

Much of what we know concerning Cortés' expedition to Honduras comes from Cortés himself, whose own words were later published in a volume entitled *Five Letters from Mexico* (1998[1519-1526]). Other chroniclers who provided detailed accounts of this expedition include Don Juan de Villagutierre Soto-Mayor, a lawyer and clerk of the Royal Chancery of Valladolid (Spain) and of the Royal Council of the Indies (Seville) (Comparato 1983: xi); Bernal Díaz del Castillo of Medina del Campo of Spain (Garcia 1956: xii); and a former chaplain of Cortés, Francisco López de Gómara (1964). All four sources provide interesting details of Cortés' journey to Honduras. Of special interest here, are the descriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region as the expedition traveled through the southwest corner of the Maya Mountains.

The most explicit account of Cortés' Honduran Expedition appears in his *Fifth Letter* to Charles V dated September 3, 1526 (Cortés 1998[1519-1526]: 287). This letter states that the month-long expedition to Honduras began in Tenochtitlán on October 12, 1524. Villagutierre states that the expedition originally began with some 400 Spaniards and some 30 horses (1983: 32), though these numbers would increase as Cortés' entourage made its way to Honduras to the sites of Naco and Nito near the mouth of the Río Dulce. The chronicles describe in detail the route Cortés took across Mesoamerica, including the stops in Vera Cruz, Tabasco, in the region known as Acalán (Southern Campeche), Mazatán, Tayasal (Central Petén), Tezulutlán (Southern Petén/Northern Alta Verapaz), and finally the Río Dulce region of northwestern Honduras. Both Villagutierre (1983: 41) and Díaz del Castillo (1927: 454) describe the expedition crossing an extremely rugged mountain range "whose flint stones cut like knives" hence the name *La Sierra de los Pedernales* or "The Mountains of Flint."

Comparato (1983: 41), in his annotated notes to the Villagutierre translation, suggests that given the physical description, the Cortés Expedition likely crossed the southern portion of the Cockscomb Range of the Maya Mountains. López de Gómara (1964: 362-363) states that after leaving a village called Taxaitel near the present day Guatemala-Belize border, the expedition began a harrowing ascent into an extremely rough range, some 8 leagues across, which took them 12 days to traverse. According to Sapper (1936: 9) one league was the equivalent to 4.175 km and so the area traversed by Cortés and his men equaled roughly 33 kms. All four accounts describe the harshness of the Maya Mountains as encountered by Cortés and his expedition. Following their crossing of the Maya Mountains, the expedition was stopped by a very large river swollen by recent rains that made it impassible. The chronicles describe Cortés' men cutting down large trees to create a makeshift ford or bridge across a section of river known locally as *Gracias á Dios* Falls, a part of the Sarstoon River (Stone 1932: 227; Morley 1938: Vol. 1: 18). This section of river contained more than 20 channels that needed to be crossed. Together more than 200 wooden posts were required for the bridge and it took two days to build (López de Gómara 1964: 363). Given the approximate location of Cortés' route from the Central Petén through the southwest corner of the Maya Mountains, it seems likely that Cortés and his men had traveled through a well-known mountain pass located in the western corner of the Rio Blanco Drainage. If Cortés traveled through this drainage system then he probably traveled within eyesight of the nearby ruins of Uxbenká. The mountain pass in question is located midway between San Luís (in present day Guatemala) and Santa Elena (in present day Belize) and this route appears to have been used continually to the ethnographic present by *Cobanero* traders. Throughout his expedition to Honduras, Cortés was constantly receiving information concerning the

lands through which he would pass en route to the Caribbean (Scholes and Roys 1968: 430). He was given cloth maps that included the names of most of the villages along the way.

Discussions of overland routes through the Southern Maya Mountains Region commonly appear in the early historic chronicles. Padré Joseph Delgado, a Dominican priest, was one of the first to discuss overland trade routes between the Southern Maya Mountains Region and the Central Petén. Delgado traveled extensively through the region in four separate expeditions mounted in 1674, 1675, 1676, and in 1677 (Bunting 1932: 114). Delgado described two main overland routes between Central Petén and Cobán (located in adjoining Alta Verapaz). The first route, just to the west of the Southern Maya Mountains Region, was one that extended due south thru the Petén past Lake Petexbatún, through the double-ridge of the Sierra Chinajá Mountains and down to the cities of Chisec and Cobán (Bunting 1932: 115). If the weather was good, the trip was said to take just ten days; however, if it rained the trip could take more than a month to complete. The second route, closer to the Southern Maya Mountains Region, began in Cahabón, located along the Río Cahabón north and west of the Sierra de Santa Cruz. From Cahabón, the route extended northward to Dolores and then north to Lake Petén Itzá (Bunting 1932: 115). According to Delgado, each of these routes had well-defined trails that were in constant use by Indian merchants, whom the Itzas of Noj Petén depended upon for most of their outside communications prior to the Conquest (Bunting 1932: 115).

Delgado chronicles another trip made in 1677 from Cahabón, Guatemala to Bacalar, Mexico just north of modern Chetumal. In this trip, Delgado described an overland route through the Southern Maya Mountains Region to Bacalar with a full

account of the *ranchos*, the rivers, and the distances traveled upon leaving the town of San Miguel Manché (a city near Cahobón). Delgado also provided the local names for most of the major river systems in the region. The Delgado account provides evidence that travel across the Southern Maya Mountains Region was possible via well-known land routes and that a significant population was living in this region. Delgado included a brief discussion of the languages spoken by the local indigenous population that he and his party encountered while on their way to Bacalar. The route to Bacalar took Delgado and his party through Chol, Itza, and Mopan territory. However, Delgado specifically stated that in the community known as Cantelac, a settlement located near the confluence of Aguacate Creek and the Moho River, a language was spoken that was neither Itza, Mopan, nor Chol. Rather, it was a language known as *Omon* spoken locally by Indians known as the Chicuy (Stone 1932: 267; Sapper 1936: 33). Thompson (1991: 39) suggests that Omon could be a term for an eastern Mopan-speaking people or perhaps a dialect of Manché Chol. Delgado's descriptions are interesting for their information on the linguistic makeup and linguistic borders for the Southern Maya Mountains Region.

In addition, to the overland routes thus far discussed, Scholes and Roys (1968: 60) also described an overland route recorded in the Colonial documents of Acalan-Tixchel. These accounts describe a route from Acalan territory, in southern Campeche, Mexico to the mouth of Rio Dulce in southeastern Guatemala. The route stretched due south from Acalan to the Rio Pasión. From the Rio Pasión one then traveled downstream to the Rio Cancuen, eastward into the Maya Mountains and into the headwaters of the Sarstoon River. From there the Sarstoon River drains directly into the Gulf of Honduras.

The Acalan and Cortés accounts both claim that resources found just to the south of the Southern Maya Mountains Region in the area around Lake Izabal were highly

prized and valued by the nobility of Acalan (Chamberlain 1966: 71; Scholes and Roys 1968: 60), Tayasal (Jones 1983: 73), and even by the nobility of northern Yucatan, especially those of Maní (Roys 1943: 52, 1957: 164). These resources included cacao, cotton cloth, dyestuffs, body paint, pitch pine for torches, pine resin for incense, and red shell beads (Scholes and Roys 1968: 58). In 1524, upon leaving the Itza capital of Tayasal on his journey to Honduras, Cortés noted that all of the lands they crossed from Tayasal to the Rio Sarstoon were said to be part of the Province of Itza and that they belonged to the Itza ruler *Kan Ek'* (Díaz del Castillo 1904: Vol. II: 302; Morley 1938: Vol. 1: 18; Jones 1998: 7). It was also reported that a number of buildings located within a particular quarter of Nito, Honduras, were said to have personally belonged to either *Kan Ek'* of Tayasal or to the Acalan Ruler, *Paxbolonacha*, whose brother, *Apaspolon*, was said to be the one who oversaw Acalan merchant interest and commerce in this region (Chamberlain 1966: 125; Feldman 1975: 13; Scholes and Roys 1968: 58). Trade between northern Honduras and the rest of the Maya region, whether coastal or via overland routes, was not restricted to either the Late Postclassic or Early Historic Periods. Chichén Itzá and Mayapán were both trading with northern Honduras during the Terminal Classic Period (Ciudad Real 1873: 408; Tozzer 1941: 39). Coastal trade was also occurring as early as the Late Preclassic Period at sites like Cerros, located in northern Belize, which has been described as an early Maya seaport that facilitated trade between northern Yucatan and Belize and between Belize and the southeastern Maya Lowlands (McKillop and Healy 1989).

Grant Jones (1982: 290) notes that the economic basis for political alliance and interregional trade during the Colonial Period appears to have been based on local economic specialization and systems of exchange involving mutual economic and

political interest. This interpretation can be pushed back much earlier in time to describe trading networks in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. It would appear that certain resources were so valuable to some Maya rulers, such as *Kan Ek'* and *Paxbolonacha*, that they established and maintained individual merchant trading quarters within the city of Nito, Honduras, to ensure proper oversight of local commerce. Cacao (*Theobroma cacao* L.), a small, 15-25' tall, understory tree that produces pods containing between 20-40 seeds, each of which grow directly from the trunk, was one of the most important resources (McNeil 2006: 4). Cacao is one of the most sacred and ritually important substances in Mesoamerican society. Cacao not only served as a status marker and as an elite consumable used in ritual contexts, but it also functioned as a form of currency for the Classic Maya (Martin 2006: 154). Charred wooden fragments of *Theobroma* have been recovered archaeologically from the site of Cuello, located in northern Belize, whose AMS dates indicate the remains date back to between 1,000-900 B.C. (McNeil 2006: 10).

The Cortés's Expedition to Honduras provided the first Spanish description of the resources that were commonly being traded in the town of Nito, Honduras. In Cortés's *Fifth Letter* he describes the trading of cacao, cotton cloth, paints for dyeing, *ocote* for lighting, pine resin (copal) for use in fire rituals, and strings of colored shells which were highly valued as personal adornments (Cortés [MacNault] 1908: 307). Cortés also mentioned that the entire province was laced with numerous streams, all of which ran into the Bay of Endings (present day Lake Izabal). On the Bay one could see large numbers of Maya trading canoes moving into and out of the region (Cortés [MacNault] 1908: 307). The Alonso Davilla Expedition of 1531-1533 also noted the presence of an extensive trading network that extended from coastal Yucatan down to the Río de Ulua (Chamberlain 1966: 124).

Other sixteenth and seventeenth century accounts noted that the Manche Chol traded a variety of resources made from materials obtained from the Southern Maya Mountains Region which included annatto, hammocks, blowguns, bows and arrows, *mano* and *metates*, pottery, calabash, cane, beautifully worked axes of dark green stone, and cacao to sites across the southern Maya lowlands (Thompson 1938: 598). Antonio de Leon Pinelo, a 17th century court reporter and chronicler for the Spanish Crown in Guatemala, noted that fruit, maize, cacao, honey, wax, and salt were also obtained from the extreme southwestern portion of the Southern Maya Mountains Region in the east of Verapáz (Pinelo [1639] 1986: 15). Don Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán, a 17th century Guatemalan chronicler, noted that there was great variation of resources in the region north of the Río Dulce, which was filled with huge quantities of highly prized resources including *zarzaparilla* ‘blackberry’, *cortezas aromaticas* ‘aromatic barks’, *gomas* ‘rubber’, *resinas olorosas* ‘aromatic resins’, *piedra azufre* ‘sulfur’, and other unknown *piedras minerales de metales* ‘metals’, as well, as animals including *tigres* ‘jaguars’, *dantas* ‘tapirs’, *monos* ‘monkeys’, and a multitude of *aves* ‘birds’ (1932-33: 290).

White cotton is another major resource found in the Southern Maya Mountains Region and renowned throughout Mesoamerica as being the finest of its kind anywhere. Father Alonso de Escobar provided an early 17th century description of the area of northern Verapaz where he wrote that the white cotton produced in the mountains of this region was said to be the softest and of the finest quality produced in the whole kingdom (1841: 96). According to this account, cotton was spun in enormous quantities by the local Indian women of the region. Another account recorded by Agustín Cano in 1697 described the Mopan living in the provinces of Manche and southern Petén as producers

of some of the finest cotton cloth (*mantas*) (Cano 1697: 9). *Mantas* were the most common form of tribute exacted of the native population by the Spanish. There are Classic Period equivalents. A tribute scene painted on a vase (K8089) from the region surrounding Pusilhá features four individuals presenting bolts of folded white cloth to a seated lord (see Chapter 7). Three other courtiers who appear to be inspecting or measuring the bolts of cloth are located below the seated lord, perhaps to verify their quality and length.

The Mopan Maya

The Mopan Maya occupied the geographic area known historically as *Aycal* (Thompson 1977:5), which was located in southeastern Petén and Belize, immediately north of the Manche Chol region, and southeast of Lake Petén Itzá (Figure 4.7). As a Yukatekan-speaking group, the Mopan may have once lived further north (Jones 1998: 19). In the seventeenth century, the Spanish found a large concentration of Mopan living in the region around the modern city of San Luís located south of Poptún, Petén. The Mopan, also known as the *Chinamita* or *Tulumki* (Jones 1998: 19-22) were widely referred by the Itzá as *ma uinicob*, ‘not men’ (Thompson 1977: 12) and by the Chol as being “warlike, ferocious, and heathen –who were, they said, in fact, responsible for all of their trouble” (Stone [Velasco: 1697]: 278). It was said that the Mopan were almost constantly waging war with their Itza and Chol neighbors (Cano 1697: 9).

Jones (1998: 22), along with Rice and Rice (2005: 153), agree that historically, the seventeenth century Mopan who resided in the Mopan Valley of eastern Petén and adjacent western Belize were likely direct descendants of the Mopan who had begun

living in this region during the Late Classic Period. However, by the end of the seventeenth century, the Mopan were political dependents of the Itza and the Cano account claims that the *Mopan Itza* were subjects of the Itzá lord who resided at Tayasal (1697: 9). In 1524, Cortés stated that Itzá territorial control extended from Tayasal down to the cacao orchards of the Sarstoon River in southern Belize (Rice and Rice 2005: 153). It is likely that Mopan relations with the Itza fluctuated over time between bouts of armed conflict and dependency.

Based on appearance of seventeenth century surnames, Jones suggests that the Mopans were also living inland along the major rivers of southeastern Belize, and in the area of the Belize River east of Tipuj (1998: 22). Some of the Mopans living in the area of the Sittee (north of present day Stann Creek) were removed in 1754 and forced to resettle in the area of Dolores, Guatemala (Thompson 1977: 5). According to the Fuensalida account, the Mopan lived in small, scattered or dispersed settlements. In 1701, Sánchez de Berrospe observed numerous *Mopanga* (Mopan) house clusters, ranging in number up to 30 houses with as many as 40 or more people living within each settlement in the area north of Lake Izabal (Feldman 1975: 3). The Fuensalida account also described a large fortified Mopan town, known as *Tulumci* (or *Tulunqui*) said to contain more than 8,000 inhabitants, indicating that some Mopan lived in larger (fortified) communities that may have served as the political capitals for larger centralized territories (Thompson 1977: 13; Jones 1998: 22).

The Manche Ch'ol

The Southern Maya Mountains Region was home to another Maya group known

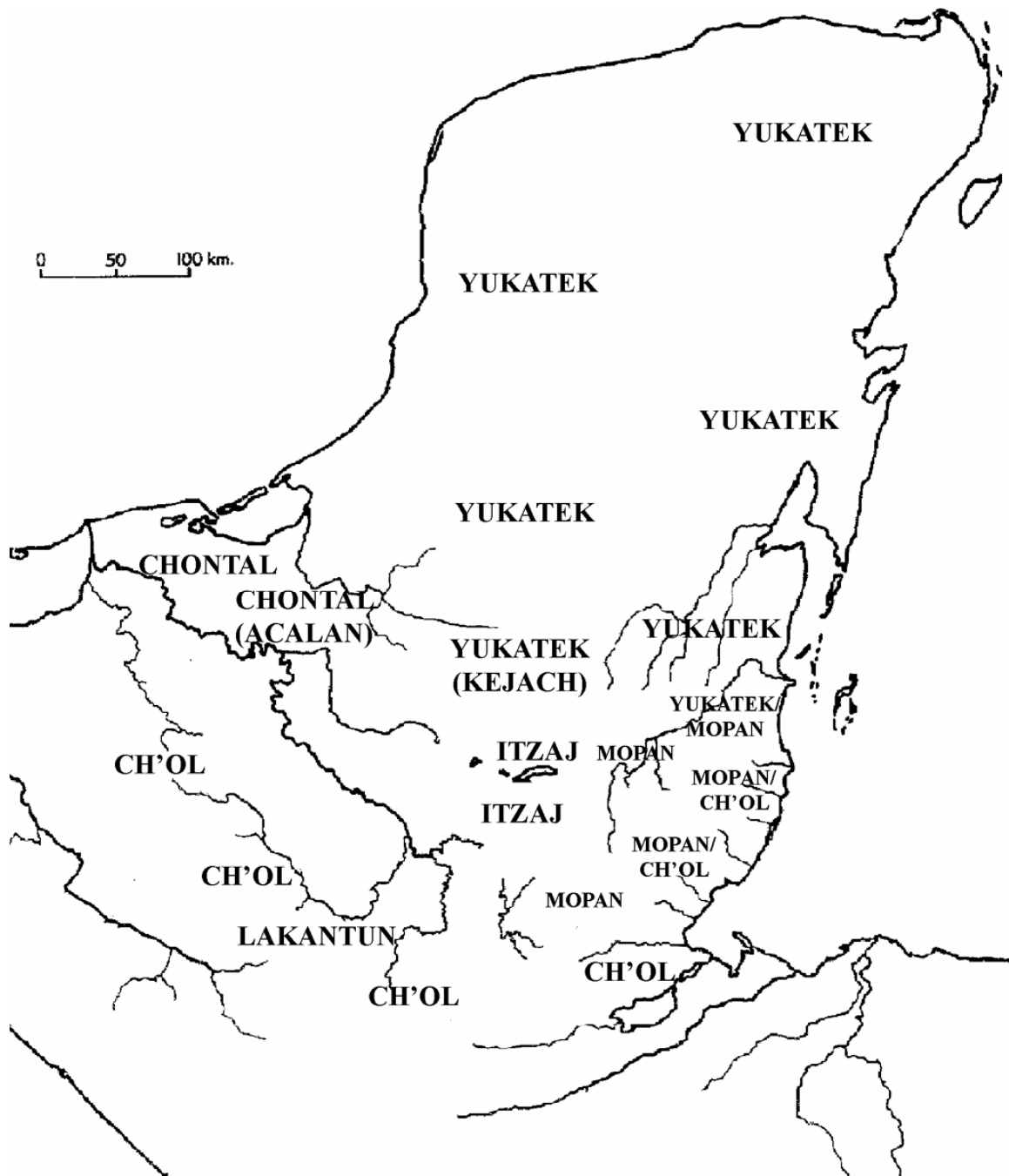


Figure. 4.7. Map showing Maya Language Distribution of the Yucatan Peninsula for the 16th –17th centuries (Redrawn by author after Rice and Rice 2005: Figure 9.4)

as the Manche Ch'ol (or Menche Ch'ol), *men* meaning 'artisan' and *che* meaning 'tree' or 'tribe' (Pinelo 1639 [1986: 1]). Ch'ol was the term used by the Spanish to refer to those Maya language-speaking groups located near the base of the Yucatan Peninsula from southeastern Chiapas to the Bay of Honduras (Thompson 1991: 33). Historically, there were four major divisions of the Ch'olan Family: Ch'orti', Chontal, and Ch'ol which are still spoken and Ch'olti' which became extinct in the seventeenth century (see Kaufman and Norman 1984: 82-83; Houston, Roberston, and Stuart 2000: 322). The Manche Ch'ol were a Ch'ol-speaking people that were probably Ch'olti'an speakers who lived in southeastern Guatemala and northwestern Honduras, from Cahabón in northeastern Alta Verapaz, to the area around the Río Dulce in the lower Motagua Valley, and up into southern Belize, to the area around the Sarstoon River up to the Monkey River and out to the Caribbean Coast (Thompson 1938: 590; 1991: 33). The Manche Ch'ol take their name based on a large village roughly ten miles south of San Luís, Petén, known as San Miguel Manche (Sapper 1936: 16; Thompson 1991: 33). The Cortés expedition to Honduras described scattered settlements of Manche Ch'ols living in the southwestern corner of the Southern Maya Mountains Region (Bolland 1986: 12). Beginning in the early seventeenth century, Dominican friars began operations in the region aimed at pacifying and converting the Manche Ch'ol to Christianity. However, Spanish diseases soon wiped out much of the indigenous population of the region. Following the Spanish defeat of the Itza in 1697 many of the remaining Manche Ch'ols were shipped off to *reducciones* (Indian communities) in Highland Guatemala, while others simply fled into the relative safety of the forest. Thompson (1991: 33-34) reports that a sizeable Manche Ch'ol population was living at the village *San Lucas Tz'alac*, located near the *Gracias á Dios* Rapids on the Sarstoon River, and another, named *Santa Catarina Puzilha*, was

located near the present archaeological site of Pusilhá between the Joventud and Moho Rivers. One of the most important of the Manche Ch'ol cities was Campin, located on the Monkey River. A Franciscan friar, Father Martin Tejero, described the settlement of Campin in 1575 and mentioned that the indigenous population living there spoke a different language (Ch'orti') than those living just ten kms north in the Sittee River region, a Yukatek Maya-speaking area (Thompson 1991: 34).

Delgado reported that the Manche Ch'ol lived in small settlements and that they lacked any real political cohesion. Petty chiefs ruled over a few homesteads with no allegiance or tribute to anyone other than themselves (Thompson 1991: 45). The Manche Ch'ol paid homage to a variety of idols and deities representing nature, most notably, mountains, dangerous mountain passes, rivers, whirlpools, and crossroads. An important Mountain God, *Escurruchan* or *Xcarruchan*, was said to have lived on top of a mountain north of the Sarstoon River and close to *Gracias á Dios* Falls (Thompson 1991: 45-46). This location, south of the Rio Blanco Drainage, is visible from nearly every point in the Toledo District and may explain why there are so many portraits of *Witz* Monsters in the monumental corpus of southern Belize.

Manche Ch'ol men were normally naked or wore breech-cloths while women wore fine cotton skirts and some covered their heads and chests with a fine white cloth (Thompson 1991: 46). As will be discussed in Chapter 9, during the Classic Period the turban headdress was a unique cultural marker of identity to the people living in both the Southern Maya Mountains Region and Southeastern Maya Lowlands. The descriptions of fine woven cloth suggest that the Manche Ch'ols were descendants of people living in the region during Classic times. Early Colonial accounts suggest that some Manche Ch'ols also spoke Mopan, the language of adjoining groups to the north, and that they served as

interpreters for the Spanish trying to reach the Central Petén from points south (Rice and Rice 2005: 153). Bilingualism may have been long-standing in the Southern Maya Mountains Region as a result of close cultural contact, trade, and interaction between speakers of this region and those of adjoining regions. Though Ch'olti' is now extinct, a rudimentary grammar and vocabulary of the language was compiled by Fray Francisco Morán in 1695 ([1935]) at *San Lucas Tz'alac*, located just south of the Sarstoon River along the southern Belize/Guatemalan border (Scholes and Roys 1968: 17). *San Lucas Tz'alac* was an old Ch'olti' settlement and was mentioned in the Delgado *Entradas* of 1674-1675 (Stone 1932: 256). Finally, Thompson (1991: 34, 45) believed that the Ch'olti' living in the southeastern Petén and Belize were the original inhabitants of the Toledo District and direct ancestors to those Classic Period peoples who built the great sites of Pusilhá, Quiriguá, and Copan.

The Q'eqchi' Maya

The Q'eqchi' Maya are probably a more recent addition to the Southern Maya Mountains Region, having arrived in southern Belize during the late 19th century or earlier. The Q'eqchi' refer to themselves as *Aj Ral Ch'och'* meaning "Children of the Earth" (Wilson 1995: 26). Linguistic evidence suggests that Q'eqchi' speakers have occupied the Alta Verapaz region since Late Preclassic times (ca. 100 B.C.) (Campbell 1977: 2, 92) and that they maintained close cultural ties to all of their neighbors (Weeks 1997: 61). At the time of the Spanish conquest, the Q'eqchi' were confined to a small region around the upper reaches of the Rio Cahabón located in the northeastern highlands of Guatemala. Bordering the Q'eqchi' to the north and to the east were the Acalan

Chontal and Manche Ch'ol, to the west were the Ch'ol, Ixil, and K'ichee', and to the south were the Poqomchi' (Sapper 1985: 16-17). Today, the Q'eqchi' heartland is centered between Cobán, San Pedro Carcha, and San Juan Chamelco, and extends north into most of northeastern Guatemala and into the adjacent southwestern corner of the Toledo District, Belize. San Pedro Carcha was an important center to both the K'ichee' and Q'eqchi' and was widely believed to be the mythological place where both *Jun Junajpu* and *Wuqub' Junajpu* and later *Junajpu* and *Xbalanque*, played ball before descending into the Underworld as described in the Popol Vuj (Christenson 2007: 120).

Though little is known concerning the Q'eqchi' during pre-Hispanic times, it is clear that their traditional homeland, Alta Verapaz, was an important strategic economic zone. Alta Verapaz is located between the lowland tropical forests to the north and to the east, and the temperate highlands to the south and west. Early ethnohistoric accounts state that the Q'eqchi' actively engaged in trade and commerce from at least the Late Preclassic and Early Classic Periods (Dillon 1985: iii-iv) continuing well into Colonial times (Villagutierre Soto-Mayor 1983: 106-107; King 1974: 25; Weeks 1997: 86).

The Q'eqchi' of southern Belize are largely the remnants of a splinter group that moved from Highland Guatemala to the Toledo District sometime after 1850 as a result of rising social and economic conditions brought on by German, English, and Ladino coffee planters (Howard 1977: 25, Wilk 1987: 34). During the mid-nineteenth century, the German coffee planters forcibly removed the Q'eqchi's from their land and placed them into positions of debt peonage where the Indians were forced to work under harsh conditions for little or no pay. In 1871, a new liberal regime came to power in Guatemala that openly served the economic interests of the foreign investors (Wilk 1987: 34).

Though the economic opportunities in southern Belize were not much better at this time,

the overall social situation was a vast improvement over the social conditions in Guatemala (Howard 1977: 25). With the reinstatement of the *mandamiento* (laws aimed at organizing unpaid labor groups to work on huge public projects, plantations, and *haciendas* to jumpstart Guatemalan modernity) in 1877, large numbers of Q'eqchi's fled from the area around Cobán to the remote forest areas of the Petén, Izabál, and southern Belize (Wilk 1997: 48).

Archaeological Explorations in the Southern Maya Mountains Region

The first archaeological investigations of the Southern Maya Mountains Region were the explorations of Thomas Gann between 1893 and 1937 (1903, 1904-05, 1905, 1911, 1918, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928; Gann and Thompson 1931). Gann, an English physician, colonial officer, and amateur archaeologist, spent nearly four decades exploring British Honduras. Gann was responsible for the discovery of many important sites including Dzibanché, Ichpaatun, Santa Rita, and Lubaantún (Carmichael 1973: 34). Gann's explorations of the Toledo District began in 1903 after reports of a large archaeological site, known locally as the Rio Grande Ruins, in the vicinity of the Columbia Branch came to the Governor of Belize. The Governor sent Gann to investigate the site and from 1903-1905 Gann excavated several structures within the main architectural group (Gann 1904-05). Dynamite was a common method of excavation for Gann in those early days of exploration (Hammond 1975: 31).

The next archaeological exploration of the Southern Maya Mountains Region was conducted in 1915 by R.E Merwin for the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University. Merwin visited the ruins of Lubaantún in May of

1915 as leader of the Twelfth Peabody Museum Central American Expedition (Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 6). Merwin excavated the southern ballcourt at Lubaantún where he uncovered the only known carved monuments at Lubaantún, three small ballcourt markers (Merwin 1915).

As a result of the earlier Gann and Hedges expedition to British Honduras, the British Museum agreed to sponsor six expeditions to sites in southern Belize beginning in 1925 (Morley 1938: Vol. 1: 97). Gann led the first three British Museum Expeditions to British Honduras exploring the sites of Lubaantún and Pusilhá from 1926-1928 while Thomas Athol Joyce, along with E. L. Gruning, led the Fourth British Museum Expedition to British Honduras in 1929 (Joyce 1929).

The excavations carried out at both Lubaantún and Pusilhá from 1926-1930 were the most extensive conducted in the Toledo District. Excavations of that scale would not resume until the 1970s. However, during the late 1920s several other noted Mayanists, including Sylvanus Morley of the Carnegie Institute of Washington, visited the ruins of Pusilhá (Morley 1938: Vol. 1: 90-91). J. Eric Thompson excavated at Lubaantún in 1927, as a member of the Second British Museum Expedition to British Honduras (Joyce et al. 1927). Later that year Thompson would visit the ruins of Pusilhá on behalf of the Field Museum of Chicago (Thompson 1928a: 215, 1928b: 95). During the winter of 1950 Alfred Kidder and Gordon Ekholm, accompanied by Gustav Strömsvik, conducted a brief archaeological reconnaissance at the Stann Creek site of Pomona. They examined artifacts recovered from two tombs that were removed from a large circular mound. The contents of Tomb I included several carved jadeite beads, pendants, and a 18 cm wide jadeite earflare, the largest ever recovered in the Maya area (Kidder and Ekholm 1951: 130). The earflare discovered at Pomona is Late Preclassic in origin and represents one of

the earliest hieroglyphic texts in the entire Maya Lowlands (Justeson et al. 1988: 95).

Archaeological investigations in the Southern Maya Mountains Region resumed in January of 1970 with the onset of the Lubaantún Excavation Project directed by Norman Hammond (1970, 1971a, 1971b, 1972a, 1972b, 1974, 1975, 1977; Hammond et al. 1975a, 1975b; Hammond et al. 1976; Saul and Hammond 1974). The goal of the Lubaantún Excavation Project was to understand Lubaantún as a Classic “Maya Realm” based on an examination of all of the possible social, economic, and political factors that may have played a role in determining why the site was built in the area that it was and how its location indicated a symbiotic relationship between the center and the surrounding environment (1975: vii). The project, lasting just five months, involved the mapping of more than 100,000 square meters of tropical forest that included more than 100 structures and platforms grouped around 20 or more plazas (Hammond 1975: 35). To date, Hammond’s ceramic typology remains the only published typology of any site in the Toledo District. Between 1970 and 1971 Hammond also surveyed and mapped 33 other sites located in the Toledo District (Hammond 1975: 258-292).

Elizabeth Graham’s Stann Creek Archaeological Project, which ran from 1975 to 1977, was the next major archaeological project to work in the Southern Maya Mountains Region (1976, 1978, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1994). Graham was interested in working regionally in an area of the Maya world that few people had explored (Graham 1994: 2). Graham’s archaeological reconnaissance and investigations of the Stann Creek District resulted in the discovery of more than 15 major Classic Maya sites and in the most comprehensive survey and extensive excavations thus far conducted in the Stann Creek District.

In 1979 Richard Leventhal created the Southern Belize Archaeological Project to

investigate the nature of regional interaction in southern Belize, most notably at sites located within the Toledo District (1990a, 1990b, 1992; Dunham 1990; Dunham et al. 1989; Jamison 1993; Jamison et al. 1991; Leventhal and Dunham 1989). These investigations resulted in a comprehensive program of mapping and survey work along with archaeological excavations at five major sites in the Toledo District: Pusilhá (1979-1980), Nim Li Punit, Xnaheb', Uxbenká, and Lubaantún (1983-1987). Numerous other secondary sites were discovered as part of Leventhal's regional investigations. The 1984 discovery of Uxbenká and its main stela plaza was perhaps the most important find of the Southern Belize Archaeological Project (Leventhal and Schele n.d.). More than 22 stelae (at least ten carved) were identified in the stela plaza at Uxbenká including three of Early Classic origin dating to the late fourth century. Limited excavations were conducted at Uxbenká by the Southern Belize Archaeological Project in 1984, 1989, and in 1990, when the project was forced to leave Uxbenká due to civil unrest in the local village of Santa Cruz.

The Point Placencia Archaeological Project conducted by J. Jefferson MacKinnon was another archaeological project in the Southern Maya Mountains Region between 1983 and 1989 (1985, 1986, 1989, 1990, 1991a, 1991b; MacKinnon and May 1991). MacKinnon's research focused on a regional survey of the coastal and inland areas of the southern Stann Creek District in order to determine the ways in which the coastal areas of southern Belize were utilized or influenced by inland Maya sites (1989: 1). MacKinnon's research provided a new synthesis and understanding of coastal area trade and resource procurement and utilization. In addition, MacKinnon's work provided a better understanding of the developmental history of coastal southern Belize.

Closely paralleling the coastal archaeological work of MacKinnon, Heather

McKillop began work on the coast of the Southern Maya Mountains Region (1982, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1994, 1996, 2002, 2004, 2005; McKillop and Healy: 1989). For more than 25 years, McKillop has been conducting archaeological research along the coast of Belize. Her past projects have included the Wild Cane Cay Archaeological Project and the Maya Coastal Traders Project, both of which have greatly contributed to our understanding and knowledge of Maya coastal trade and marine exploitation.

The largest, longest, and most comprehensive archaeological project in the Southern Maya Mountains Region today is Juan Pedro Laporte's *Atlas Arqueológico de Guatemala* (AAG). The AAG is a regional program of archaeological reconnaissance and survey aimed at exploring Classic Maya settlement in the southeastern Petén region of Guatemala, specifically in the municipios of San Luís, Poptún and Dolores, and the adjoining areas of Santa Ana and Melchor de Mencos (Escobedo 1991, 1993; Laporte 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 2001; Laporte and Torres 1987, 1992). Laporte has divided the 5,000 km² southeastern Petén into 13 subregions based on the river valley systems that crisscross the area. To date, the AAG has identified and mapped more than 200 surface sites on the Guatemala side of the Southern Maya Mountains Region that date from the Late Preclassic to Terminal Classic times (see AAG Reporte 14, 2000). As a result of more than 20 years of archaeological investigations, Laporte has published one of the most comprehensive ceramic sequences to date for the entire region (Laporte 2007). Epigraphically, the Guatemalan side of the Southern Maya Mountains Region is much richer in the number of readable hieroglyphic inscriptions. More than 175 hieroglyphic inscriptions are known from sites located on the Guatemalan side of the Maya Mountains. The largest corpus of texts and images in the entire Southern Maya Mountains Region is found at Naj Tunich, a cave site located in the vicinity of the Rio

Pusilhá near the Guatemalan/Belize border. Some 94 calligraphic drawings including portraits of finely dressed ballplayers and naked captives, and 28 hieroglyphic inscriptions from the Late Classic Period are painted directly on the walls, stalagmites, and stalactites (Stone 1995). There are mentions of at least a dozen different emblem glyphs and site-specific toponyms recorded in the cave, including references to Aguacatal, Altun Há, Caracol, Calakmul, Ixkún, Ixtutz, Lubaantún, Naranjo, Sacul, and Xultún.

The Maya Mountains Archaeological Project (MMAp), directed by Peter Dunham, was formed in 1991. The MMAp is a multiyear/multidisciplinary regional research program aimed at illuminating resource exploitation and exchange among the Classic Maya of southern Belize (Dunham 1991, 1995, 1996, 1997; Dunham and Pesek 2000; Dunham and Prufer 1998; Dunham et al. 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999; Kindon 2002; Prufer and Wanyerka 2001). In terms of both scale and breadth, the MMAp parallels the archaeological investigations of the AAG. The Southern Maya Mountains Region was likely an area of great importance to the Classic Maya because of the unique geological nature of southern Belize and given the diversity of resource found therein. This region contains geological materials found nowhere else in the southern Maya lowlands. Mineral resources found in this region include various volcanics/volcaniclastics for grinding stones; the minerals hematite, limonite, goethite, and manganese oxide used for pigments; travertine or flow stone for stone vessels; high quality clays used for ceramic production; and pyrite used for mirrors. As the only major mountain range in the entire southern Maya lowlands, the Maya Mountains is home to a variety of unique micro-environments. With the highest rainfall and coolest temperatures in the Maya lowlands, the Southern Maya Mountains Region is also home to a unique

variety of flora and fauna. In particular, a thriving population of domesticated aboriginal cacao (*Theobroma cacao*) has been documented in both the Columbia Forest Reserve and at two Classic Maya sites, Mukleb'al and Ek Xux, located in the Upper Bladen Drainage (Dunham et al. 1996: 3-4; Prufer and Hurst 2007). Cacao groves growing in the Bladen Drainage were located in direct association with residential groups and can be identified as domesticated since they are reproducing via root-shoots from existing aboriginal plants rather than through traditional seed falls (Dunham et al. 1996: 4). Dunham (1996: 319) suggested that resource procurement and exchange may have been the major impetus for the rapid expansion and growth of sites in this region during the Late Classic Period.

To date the MMAP has identified 16 new Classic Maya surface sites and more than 100 cave sites in both the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts. Most of the sites were located on the valley floors along the little-explored river systems that drain the Maya Mountains including the Swasey, Trio, and Bladen Branches of the Monkey River, the Deep River, the Rio Grande, Esperanza, the Snake Creek Drainages, and the Cockscomb Basin. As a result of more than a decade's worth of extensive ground reconnaissance and exploration, the MMAP has demonstrated that the Southern Maya Mountains Region supported a considerable population during Classic times. Sourcing of groundstone tools, mainly *mano* and *metate* fragments, conducted by Abramiuk (2002, 2004, 2005a, 2005b) and by Abramiuk and Meuer (2006) have concluded that communities located within the Bladen Drainage were directly involved with the inter-regional exchange of groundstone and groundstone tools. Inter-regional exchange appears to be the major economic stimulus for the growth of sites in this region as demand increased for Bladen rock resources across the southern Maya Lowlands (Abramiuk and Meuer 2006: 351).

The MMAP is also actively involved in the exploration and mapping of caves and

rockshelters. Following the early pioneering work of cavers like Logan McNatt (1996), Barbara MacLeod (1974, 1978; MacLeod and Puleston 1978) and Gary Rex Walters' Maya Ceremonial Caves Project (1988), Keith Prufer and others began a systematic exploration of caves across the Southern Maya Mountains Region to better understand how the residents living near caves were using the caves for religious purposes (1994, 1995, 1999, 2002, 2005a; Brady and Prufer 1999; Brady and Prufer 2005; Prufer and Kindon 2005; Saul et al. 2005). Prufer's dissertation, published in 2002, represents the most comprehensive study of caves and cave rituals in the Southern Maya Mountains Region to date.

From 1995 to the present, Jeffrey Stomper has led the Mayflower Archaeology Project in the Stann Creek District (2002; Stomper et al. 2004). The project takes its name after a series of three small sites (Mayflower, Maintzunún, and T'au Witz) that are collectively known as Mayflower. These sites were initially discovered and explored by Graham nearly 20 years earlier (see Graham 1994), and later by MacKinnon (1989). Stomper's investigations now suggest that these three ruins are not separate sites, but rather, they are components of a single large site whose center is the Mayflower plaza group (Stomper et al. 2004: 323). The Mayflower Project is also interested in understanding and exploring how the Mayflower site was integrated both economically and politically into the regional and coastal trade networks (Stomper 2002: 1).

Since 2001, Geoffrey Braswell has been directing the Pusilhá Archaeological Project in the far-western region of the Toledo District, near the modern village of San Benito Poité along the Belize/Guatemala border (Bill and Braswell 2005; Bill et al. 2005; Braswell 2001a, 2001b, 2002; Braswell and Gibbs 2006; Braswell and Prager 2003; Braswell et al. 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Maguire et al. 2003). Braswell's archaeological and

epigraphic investigations at Pusilhá are aimed at determining how economic and political change affected the local economies of peripheral sites like Pusilhá, located within or near the territorial boundaries of larger political hegemonies such as Copán or Quiriguá (Braswell 2008: 1). Braswell is investigating how secondary state formation and state-level political organization developed in small polities located in peripheral zones.

To date, the Pusilhá Archaeological Project has mapped more than 500 structures within a 2 km² area of the central core (Braswell et al. 2005: 74). In addition, Braswell's work at the Gateway Hill Acropolis has revealed an interesting and impressive architectural complex that was created by modifying the natural features of the hill itself. During Classic Times, Gateway Hill was modified with the addition of eight distinctive terraces that give the illusion of a massive labor-intensive construction that rises nearly 79 meters in height (Braswell et al. 2005: 78). The entrance to the Gateway Acropolis is just south of an ancient bridge abutment where two parallel staircases rise nearly 30 meters to reach the first terrace. A *sacbé* extending from the first terrace to Ballcourt 2 is one of four thus far discovered at the site (Braswell et al. 2005: 78-79). Recent epigraphic research by project epigrapher Christian Prager (2002, 2003) has identified the names of some 40 individuals, including the names of at least ten Pusilhá rulers spanning more than 220 years of dynastic history in the hieroglyphic inscriptions at Pusilhá (Braswell et al. 2005: 69).

The final archaeological project to be discussed here is the Uxbenká Archaeological Project (UAP), which began in 2005. The UAP is co-directed by two friends and former colleagues of the MMAP: Keith Prufer (University of New Mexico) and Andrew Kindon (West Valley College), and me. The UAP is exploring the little known Classic Maya site of Uxbenká, located in the Río Blanco Valley near the modern

village of Santa Cruz in the southern foothills of the Maya Mountains (Kindon and Prufer 2007; Myers and Prufer 2006; Prufer 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2006, 2007; Prufer et al. 2006; Prufer and Wanyerka 2005; Wanyerka 2005a, 2005b). The site had drawn the early attention of epigraphers including Schele (Leventhal and Schele n.d.) and me (Wanyerka 1996, 2003), who have identified the names of several important Early Classic historical figures from Tikal in the inscriptions of Uxbenká. Of particular interest is the name of the 14th king of Tikal, *Chak Tok Ch'aak* I, and the discovery of an Uxbenká emblem glyph. The epigraphic data now suggest that a close political relationship existed between the rulership of Tikal and Uxbenká as early as the late fourth century. Information uncovered as part of the UAP will enable archaeologists to reconstruct the internal dynastic and developmental history of Uxbenká in order to define its role and importance within the larger social, economic, and political parameters of Classic Maya civilization.

This chapter reviewed the geographic setting, the prehistory, the early historical accounts, and previous archaeological investigations in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Chapter 5 will discuss the methodological approaches used for the present study.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

The tablets probably contain the history of the king or hero delineated,
and the particular circumstances or actions which constituted his greatness...
Of the moral effect of the monuments themselves, standing as they do in
the depths of a tropical forest, silent and solemn, strange in design,
excellent in sculpture, rich in ornament, different from the works of any
other people, their uses and purposes, their whole history so entirely
unknown, with hieroglyphics explaining all, but perfectly unintelligible,
I shall not pretend to convey any idea (Stephens 1841: 158).

The above quote comes from John Lloyd Stephens, the American journalist and early Maya explorer, who along with English artist Frederick Catherwood, were among the first foreigners to travel and see firsthand the ruins of the Classic Maya during the early part of the 19th century. This passage represents an early attempt at unraveling the mystique surrounding Classic Maya writing and civilization. The goal of the research presented here is to explore Classic Maya political organization drawing from the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the little known and studied Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to test if the Classic Maya political organization was structured by a combination of macro-political or hegemonic practices informed by Maya calendrical science.

The evidence for this system is in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Classic

Maya. In 1994, Martin and Grube (1994, 1995, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2000) proposed a macro-political or hegemonic model for reconstructing Classic Maya political organization based on the decipherment of several key glyphic expressions that indicate agency, alliance, and subordination. This approach may explain how Classic Maya polities operated internally (intra-regionally) and how they interacted externally (inter-regionally) using the Maya's own written inscriptions. Combining methods of epigraphy, ethnohistory, art history, and archaeology, interdisciplinary approaches to the study of Maya political organization have dramatically altered our present understanding of Classic Maya. An interdisciplinary approach has been extremely effective in identifying the political affiliations and hierarchies that existed among sites in the central Petén and Petexbatún regions of Guatemala, where political power and control appear to have been established and maintained through the installation of subordinate seats of power (Guenther 2002; Houston 1993; Martin 1996; Martin and Grube 1994, 1995; Rice 2004; Schele and Mathews 1998). In addition to presenting epigraphic evidence for distinct political hierarchical ranking of sites, this approach also provides suggestive evidence that a larger politico-religious/ideational structure existed above the level of the individual kingdom or polity. This structure, known from Postclassic ethnohistoric sources as the *may* (see Rice 2004), may have served as the basic ideological framework that bound subordinate polities to their superordinate patrons. Martin and Grube (1994, 1995, 2000) contend that two powerful kingdoms, Tikal and Calakmul, dominated, controlled, and manipulated the social, economic, and political affairs of many key strategic sites throughout the Maya Lowlands for most of the Classic Period. However, minimal work has been done in applying the basic principals of the hegemonic and *may* models to lesser-known areas like the Southern Maya Mountains Region to test whether

the same types of hierarchical relationships and political affiliations now thought to exemplify the Classic Maya of the central Petén can be found recorded in the written inscriptions of southern Belize. If evidence of similar relationships can be found in this area, then it would bolster the validity of both models. By reconstructing the internal dynastic histories of lesser-known regions, like those of the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize, it may be possible to find evidence of hegemonic intrusion. The epigraphic research presented in this dissertation is such that it not only provides a clear diachronic view of Classic Maya political history and interaction in a peripheral zone, but it may also suggest how political power and authority were established and maintained across fluctuating political spheres as reflected in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of sites throughout the Maya Lowlands.

To investigate the nature of Classic Maya political organization in the Southern Maya Mountains Region, the author created the Southern Belize Epigraphic Project (SBEP) in 2000. Supported by grants in 2001 from the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies Inc. (FAMSI) and from the Sulak Foundation, the SBEP sought epigraphic data to examine three specific and interrelated goals. The first goal was to examine and analyze the hieroglyphic corpus of the Southern Maya Mountains Region using the methods of modern linguistics and epigraphy to test whether the same hegemonic characteristics described by Martin and Grube and by Rice for the Central Petén can be found in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Such a study could demonstrate whether peripheral regions participated in a similar hegemonic system which could be used to strengthen or challenge the validity of Martin and Grube's model of Classic Maya political organization. The criteria used in testing the hegemonic model were based on the presence or absence of the following four features in the

hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. 1) The use of elite royal titles (*K'uhul Ajaw* and *Kaloomte'*) reserved exclusively for the most prestigious Classic Maya kings. 2) The use of direct statements of subordination including explicit statements of hierarchy including possessed titles and statements that describe the accession of local rulers under the aegis of foreign overlords as expressed by the use of *ukab'jiiy*, *yichnal*, *hul*, *yitah*, or *ilaj* expressions. 3) The use of explicit epigraphic statements that indicate friendly, non-antagonistic relations between sites (i.e. inter/intra-regional marriages or lineage ties). 4) Finally, the use of explicit statements to warfare or inter-site conflict (i.e. *chuhk*, 'Star War' verb, *ch'ak*, *pul*, *jub'uy utook' pakal*, or *k'as*). If the epigraphic evidence cannot be found to support the basic tenants of the hegemonic system in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region, then Martin and Grube's model would have to be reevaluated. Since the basic tenants of Rice's *may* model are complementary and likely represent the basic underlying ideational structure of Martin and Grube's hegemonic model, this model will also be tested. The criteria used in testing Rice's *may* model are based on the presence or absence of the following six features. 1) Period-Ending stelae, in particular, *k'atun*-ending stelae. 2) E-Groups. 3) Twin-Pyramid Groups. 4) The use of elite royal titles (i.e. *K'uhul Ajaw* and *Kaloomte'*). 5) The idea that the most significant events within a *may* realm occur at either 128 or 256-year intervals and that these events often result in the destruction of the city, its roads, or its idols. 6) Lastly, that cycle seats within a given *may* sphere will likely share similar ceramic, architectural, and iconographic programs. The second goal of the SBEP was to develop and reconstruct a regional chronology and dynastic history of the emblem glyph-bearing sites located within the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Finally, the third goal of this project was to examine and define some of the cultural, geographic,

economic, ideological, and political processes that may have contributed to the growth and prosperity of this region.

Methodologically, this project utilized extensive data obtained from previous and ongoing archaeological investigations and from the extensive photographic archives obtained by the author as part of his long-term SBEP, as project epigrapher for the MMAP, and as co-principal investigator and project epigrapher for the UAP. Prior to the start of this dissertation research, less than a quarter of the known monuments located in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize had been properly documented in accordance with the standards set forth by the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions Project (CMHIP) (Graham 1975). Detailed photographs and some line drawings of the best-preserved monuments have appeared in several publications (Grube et al. 1999; Hammond 1975; Joyce et al. 1928; Leventhal 1990a, 1992; Morley 1938; Wanyerka 1996, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2003, n.d.). However, the rest of this corpus was in grave danger of being lost due to looting, acts of vandalism (Jackson and McKillop 1985; Leventhal 1990a, 1992), and continued exposure to the harsh tropical environment of southern Belize. I have since published numerous articles on the archaeology and epigraphy of southern Belize emphasizing the importance of this region within the larger framework of Classic Maya civilization (Grube et al. 1999; Wanyerka 1996, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2003; 2005; Prufer and Wanyerka 2005; Prufer et al. 2003; Prufer et al. 2006).

The author has sought and maintained a close working relationship with most of the principal scholars who have worked or continue to work in the Southern Maya Mountains Region including Geoffrey Braswell, Peter Dunham, Elizabeth Graham, Norman Hammond, Richard Leventhal, Barbara MacLeod, Heather McKillop, Jeff

MacKinnon, and Dorie Reents-Budet. These colleagues have all provided copies of their field reports and notes, photographs and slides, and preliminary sketches and drawings produced as a result of their work. These data, along with new epigraphic finds obtained in the field during the 2001 field season of the SBEP serve as the basis on which to test the validity of both models. Nearly all of the known carved monuments and hieroglyphic inscriptions located within the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize have been examined by me and professionally photographed and drawn according to the standards set forth by the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions Project. Each monument or inscription was photographed by SBEP photographer Jack Sulak as well as me using Nikon cameras and side-lighting. More than 3,000 images (including slide, print, and digital) were shot during the 2001 season alone. This photographic corpus served as the basis for new and improved drawings that were prepared by project artist John Montgomery and me. I then analyzed each inscription on a glyph-by-glyph basis in accordance with the conventions of proper epigraphic transliteration and translation (Fox and Justeson 1984: 363-366; Stuart 1988: 7-12). This meant that each text was broken down into individual glyphs or glyph blocks and was analyzed according to its constituent components (affixes and mains signs) and assigned a corresponding Thompson Number (or T-Number) for easy identification (Thompson 1962). Some of the values for the T-Numbers used in this dissertation come from the glyphic revision of the Thompson catalog published by Ringle and Smith-Stark (1996) and by Macri and Looper (2003). Logographic readings are capitalized and syllabic readings are in lower case. A single period between sign values represents a horizontal alignment of the reading order and a colon is used to denote a vertical relationship between signs. In general, this dissertation uses the orthography and spelling of Maya words that have been accepted by

the *Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala*. A complete transcription and translation of the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize appear in Appendix A.

Maya Hieroglyphic Writing

Hieroglyphic writing is one of the most important hallmarks of Classic Maya civilization. The script was used throughout the Maya Lowlands from approximately 100 B.C. to about A.D. 900, though hieroglyphic writing continued to be used in some portions of the Yucatan Peninsula and central Petén well into the 17th century. To date, archaeologists and epigraphers have uncovered and deciphered more than 34,000 hieroglyphic texts, many of which provide details concerning ruler's dynastic affairs and histories of their kingdoms (Macri et al. 2007). Carved or painted hieroglyphic texts can appear on a wide range of different media including: monumental architecture, stone or wooden lintels, walls, stelae, altars, jade ornaments, shells, ceramic vessels, bones, and bark paper books.

As defined by Justeson (1986: 437), writing systems are the “graphic representational systems whose encoding and decoding of information make crucial reference to language.” According to Hopkins (1997: 77), decipherment is “the interpretation of hieroglyphic writing in terms of a spoken language; the conversion of ciphers into plain text.” Thus, it is clear that the decipherment of the Mayan script depends on understanding the grammatical structure of the language being recorded. However, today there are many differing opinions as to precisely what language was being recorded by the script (Houston et al. 1998, 2000; Hofling 2000; Macri and Loooper

2000a), let alone having an explanation of the precise grammatical features of that language (Lacadena 1998; Mora-Marin 2002; Wald 1994; Zender 1999). Although, the grammatical features of the Classic Mayan script are still being worked out, we do have grammatical descriptions of most of the relevant Mayan languages. These grammatical descriptions allow us to examine the origins and spread of hieroglyphic representations of various noun and verb roots since they tend to remain stable throughout time and across related languages (Bricker 1986; Hopkins 1997).

Maya Hieroglyphic Decipherment

It is important to understand that proper decipherment depends on the interpretation of grammatical features by way of substitution and contrast. While valid decipherments, those that can be objectively evaluated, can lead to the decipherment of other signs, incorrect decipherments are detrimental to the field by misleading the researcher into false interpretations. Not only does this cloud the content of the inscriptions, but it can also give a false representation of what the writing system was like during its use (Hopkins 1997; Justeson and Kaufman 1993; Kaufman and Justeson 2001). This is why the methodology of decipherment must be rooted in the basic tenets of the scientific method. According to Kaufman and Justeson (2001: 129), decipherment involves the following tasks: First, one must determine the correct readings of phonetic or syllabic signs (which can be V, CV or CVC). Second, one must determine the correct reading of semantic signs that can either be logographs or semantic determiners. Third, one must understand the grammatical structure of the language that is being recorded by the script, and finally, one must be able to interpret hieroglyphic texts in terms of content

and grammatical structure (Kaufman and Justeson 2001: 129).

Great strides have been reached during the past century in Maya hieroglyphic decipherment (e.g. Coe 1992; Houston 2000; Houston et al. 2001; Macri and Looper 2003; Thompson 1962; Wichmann 2004). The basic principles of the writing system are as follows. During Classic times, the system typically used approximately 500 different logographic and syllabic signs (Martin and Grube 2008: 11). Maya texts are read top to bottom, left to right within paired columns. Individual glyph blocks are also read top to bottom and left to right. Thus, prefixes and superfixes are read before the main sign of each glyph block and postfixes and subfixes are normally read after the main sign (Thompson 1962; Bricker 1986; Coe and Van Stone 2002; Harris and Stearns 1997; Montgomery 2002a, 2002b). Therefore, when deciphering an unknown sign, one must analyze all the cases and contexts where that sign appears, as well as all of the signs with which it is associated. For example, if a sign appears in direct association with other syllabic signs, it is likely that it too is syllabic (Stuart 1995: 48). Logographs are unlikely to be used as phonetic complements; however, in some rare circumstances, a sign could have both syllabic and logographic values (Stuart 1995: 48). Syllabic signs may also serve as phonetic complements to logographs to indicate how the initial or final consonants of the logograph are pronounced. Thus, the task of decipherment requires the ability to verify a reading against a known language and the ability to illustrate the grammatical features of the language being represented by the script. This process ordinarily requires the examination of many texts because it is very difficult to determine a single sign's function from only one text and it requires a language model so that the results of a decipherment can be tested against the grammatical rules or constraints of that language (Kaufman and Justeson 2001: 130). Epigraphers use a formal method of

linguistic transcription in relating the script to a specific language. This process can be done using either a phonetic transcription that represents the pronunciation of each sign in a glyph block or it can be done using a morphemic transcription where the sequence of the sounds are segmented into meaningful units (Bricker 1986: 3).

Discourse analysis of Classic Maya narrative texts has revealed that they closely parallel modern narrative texts in that each text contains a formal opening and closing and the events or actions described within the narrative are structurally patterned by a chronological framework. Peak events are highlighted through the use of special syntax (repetition and elaboration) or through the use of overt grammatical marking (Hopkins and Josserand 1990; Josserand 1997). As Schele (1982) and Bricker (1986) have demonstrated, the basic word order for transitive clauses in Mayan texts was VOS (verb/object/subject) and VS (verb/subject) for intransitive clauses. Therefore, word order can also be used to test a decipherment based on a sign's morphological classification.

The process of decipherment has been made considerably easier through the published works of various scholars, including Ian Graham, Nikolai Grube, Peter Mathews, John Montgomery, Linda Schele, and David Stuart to name just a few, who have tirelessly photographed and drawn as many of the Mayan inscriptions as possible. Mayan glyphs can now be readily identified according to their specific Thompson Number (T-Number) based on a systemic inventory of all the known signs of the corpus as first formulated by J. Eric Thompson (1962). One of the greatest tools for this dissertation has been access to Martha Macri's *Maya Hieroglyphic Database*, a computer program that contains a searchable platform and complete grammatical transcription of some 34,000 Classic Maya texts (Macri et al. 2007). This database served as a secondary means for interpreting much of the epigraphic data.

Today there is little agreement among scholars as to the exact language(s) recorded in the written script during Classic times. On one side of this hotly debated issue are those scholars who recognize a mixture of both Yucatekan and Ch'olan languages reflected in the script (Bricker 1986, 1992; Kaufman and Norman 1984; Hopkins 1997; Holfing 2000; Lacadena 1997; Lacadena and Wichmann 2002; Wald 1994, 2007), while on the other side are those scholars who argue that the script reflects a single language, Classic Ch'olt'án (Houston et al. 2000). The importance of understanding this debate has wide-reaching implications for interpretations and reconstructions of Classic Maya civilization. As discussed below there is strong epigraphic evidence to suggest that ethnic conflict was one of a series of historical processes that may have led to the development and growth of a macro-political system. If the language of the script reflects a true diglossic situation as argued by Houston, Stuart, and Robertson (2000), then why is there so much variation in the way transitive and intransitive verbs were inflected at sites throughout the Maya Lowlands? The answer is likely simple linguistic variation. There is strong evidence to support the hypothesis that the regional variations we see in the morphological systems of the script reflect differences in the language being spoken and that the script truly reflects multilingualism. It is widely known that Mopan Maya, a member of the Yucatekan language family, was spoken in southern Belize at the time of the Spanish arrival in the 16th century (Bricker 1986: 2). However, Thompson (1972) notes that there was also a very large migration of Manche Ch'ol into southern Belize during the late 16th century. Josserand and Hopkins (2004: 1) notes that historically, the Manche Ch'ol had occupied portions of south-central and southeastern Guatemala while the Ch'orti' occupied portions of southeastern Guatemala and western Honduras. In addition, according to early missionaries the extinct language of Ch'olti' was spoken in

the area of northeastern Alta Verapaz, Guatemala (Josserand and Hopkins 2004: 1).

Given this distribution, it is quite likely that during the Classic times southern Belize was home to more than one language group. Epigraphic data suggest that the main divide of the Maya Mountains served as a formidable linguistic boundary which could be part of the reason why there is little archaeological or epigraphic evidence of regional interactions taking place between sites located in the Southern Maya Mountains Region and those located directly north at sites like Caracol, which was one of the largest and most powerful sites in all of Belize. As will be discussed, it is possible that another linguistic boundary ran between the sites of Pusilhá and Nim Li Punit. Both sites contain an unusually high number of carved stelae. Because the syntax and verbal morphology of the written inscriptions at both sites are so different, I have argued that the language spoken at each site was different (Wanyerka 1999c).

It is likely that ethnicity and identity played fundamental roles in the development and maintenance of a hegemonic political system. It is also likely that aspects of ethno-linguistic identity can be identified in the hieroglyphic texts of this region, which may provide key insights as to the morphological systems of the language(s) spoken in this region during Classic times. Epigraphic analysis of the inscriptions of southern Belize, conducted by me in 1999, suggests that Nim Li Punit includes Ch'olan inflections in its corpus (Wanyerka 1999c). As will be discussed later in this dissertation, it may be possible to detect different language groups or identities in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region.

Iconography and Iconology

In addition to epigraphic analysis, a large portion of this research involved the extensive use of iconography and iconology. Generally speaking, iconography refers to the “art of representing or illustrating by pictures, figures, images, etc.” or “the study or description of pictures, images, etc.” (Webster’s New World Dictionary 1959: 719). However, a more precise definition of iconography centers on the “study of meanings of visual elements that are composed to form a complete message” (Kurbjuhn 1986: 95). In art history an icon is generally defined as an “image” and thus the term, iconology, first coined by Warburg in 1912 (1999: 161) refers to both the “study of images” and the “science of art history” (Coe 1973: 1). Today, iconographers can describe and name nearly all of the visual elements or structural motifs in Classic Maya art and descriptive transformational grammars can be constructed for various motifs over both time and space (Kettunen 2005; Kubler 1969; Miller 1981; Nielsen 2003; Proskouriakoff 1950; Van Stone 1996). Zender (2004b: 12) notes that the study of iconology is based on iconographic analysis and that it must be demonstrated to be congruent with multiple lines of independent data such as epigraphy, linguistics, archaeology, ethnohistory, or ethnography, to name just a few. Thus, iconology “is a method of interpretation which arises from synthesis rather than analysis” (Panofsky 1939: 32). Iconology works in combination with the other data sources. This consideration is particularly important in light of validating or rejecting the meaning of an iconographic motif based on whether it is using an etically-oriented iconographic approach or an emically-oriented iconological one (Zender 2004b: 12-13). Both diachronic and synchronic controls must be observed if one hopes to understand the meaning behind the motif from an insider’s perspective.

Both iconography and iconology have had a long tradition in Mesoamerican Studies (i.e. Benson and Griffin 1988; Kubler 1969; Morley 1938; Proskouriakoff 1950; Spinden 1913). Scholars such as Berlo (1983) and Schele and Miller (1986) have advocated a more “epigraphic-iconographic” approach to analyzing Maya iconography. To Schele and Miller (1986: 15), the texts that accompany the figural scenes in Maya art are key to working out the meaning of Classic Maya art, since most of the texts that accompany figural scenes describe the action or event being recorded. Together, the text and image complement each other to form a combined coherent message. By conjoining text with image the Maya scribe was textualizing the art. Most epigraphers and iconographers understand that icons and texts complement each other to provide a fuller understanding of the intended message.

The practice of embedded text is also critical to the study of Maya iconography (Berlo 1983: 11-17). In embedded texts the “meaning that we would normally associate with verbal or literary sources is part of the image itself” (Berlo 1983: 11). An example of an embedded text can be seen on Tikal Stela 31 (Figure 5.1), where there are a number of recognizable glyphic motifs that represent the names of several important historical personages embedded within the iconographic program of the stela. Included on Stela 31 are the names of *Yax Nuun Ayiin*, Spearthrower Owl, *Siyaj Chan K’awiil II*, *Sak Hix*, *Yax Ehb’ Xook*, and *Une’ B’alam*. In addition to these names there are several toponymic references that are also recorded within the iconography on Stela 31 that refer to both Tikal and Teotihuacán. As Nielsen (2003: 38) notes, Classic Maya writing did not develop or evolve towards simplification; rather Maya scribes continued to incorporate a large number of naturalistic and figurative logograms throughout its existence. The script also remained highly pictorial “for it allowed for easy recognition of the glyphs without

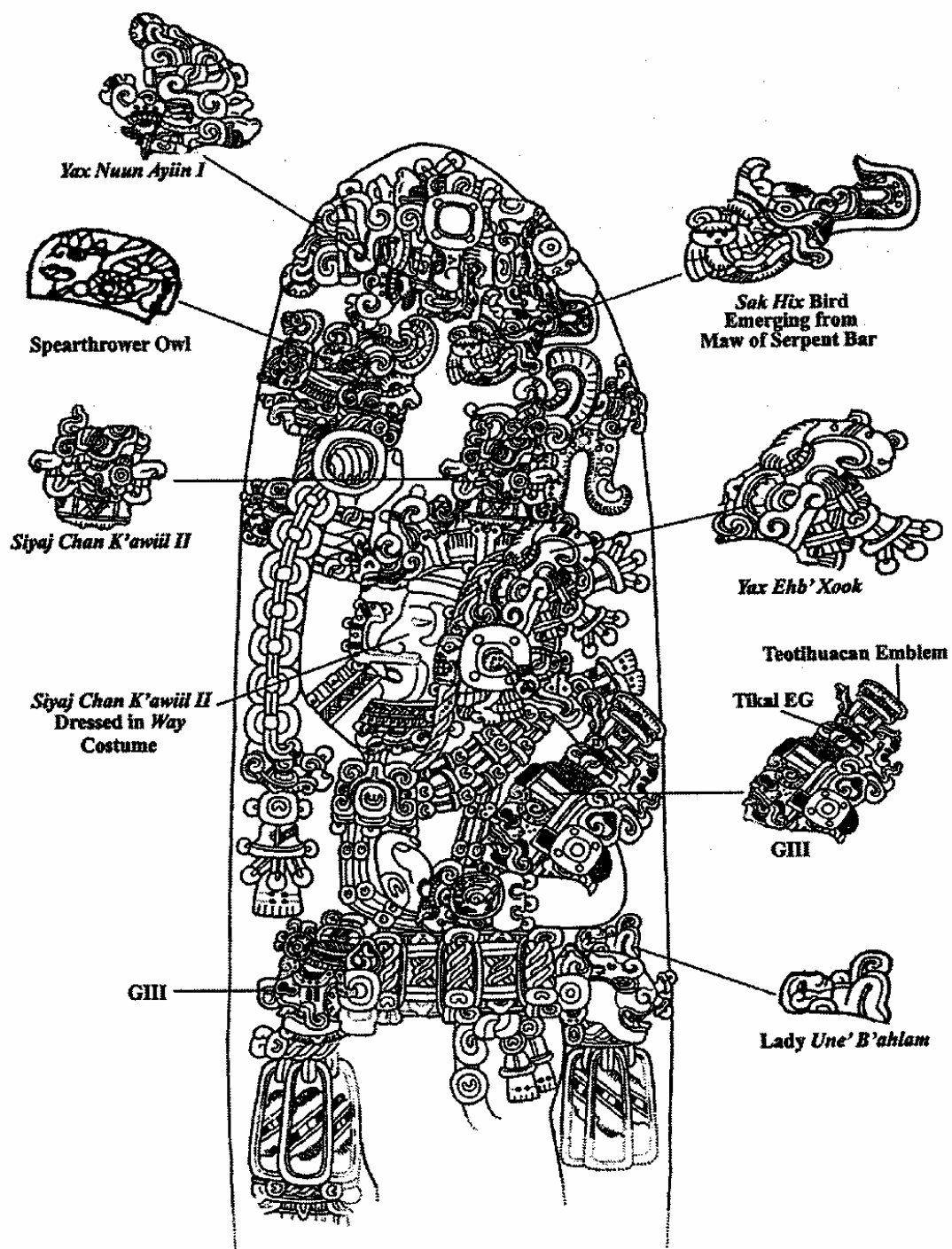


Figure 5.1. Tikal Stela 31 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

presuming a high degree of literacy” (Houston 1989: 25). From Stela 31 and other examples, it is clear that the merging of glyphs with the iconography was a common feature that permeated both the writing and iconographic systems. Finally, in both Classic Mayan and Nahuatl the term for ‘writing’ (*tz’ib’* and *tlacuiloiztli*) is in fact the same as the term for ‘painting’ or ‘drawing’ (Nielsen 2003: 39). This idea suggests that the notion of text and image were considered closely linked to the peoples of Mesoamerica since both were viewed as integral parts of the total communication process. Therefore, Classic Maya iconography can be examined, decoded, and in a very specific sense, “read” or “interpreted” much like a written text.

Epigraphic Investigations

This dissertation is the result of eighteen years of extensive epigraphic investigations of the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize. The carved monuments of the Southern Maya Mountains Region represent one of the least understood corpuses in the entire Maya Lowlands and are best known today because of their unusual style of syntax and iconographic themes. The earliest written dedicatory Long Count date in the region is 9.1.0.0.0 (27, August 455) as recorded on Uxbenká Stela 23 and the latest dedicatory Long Count date in this region is 10.4.0.0.0 (A.D. 909) as recorded on Tzimín Ché Stela 1. However, based on stylistic and iconographic evidence, the earliest monuments in the Southern Maya Mountains Region comes from the site of Uxbenká where I have stylistically dated three Early Classic stelae to between 8.16.3.10.2 and 8.17.1.4.12 (7, August 360 and 15, January 378 respectively) based on the name phrases of several well-known historical figures from Tikal. These

names include that of the 14th ruler of Tikal, *Chaak Tok Ich'aak* I or “Great Fiery Claw” (Wanyerka 1996, 2003). In total, the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region record dynastic history spanning 549 years.

Recent archaeological and epigraphic evidence now suggest that the Southern Maya Mountains Region may have played a critical role in the overall cultural development of Classic Maya civilization (see Dunham et al. 1989; Graham 1983, 1987; Hammond 1975; Laporte 1992; Laporte and Mejía 2000; Leventhal 1990a, 1992; MacKinnon 1989; McKillop and Healy 1989; Wanyerka 1996, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2003, 2005). There is now solid archaeological and epigraphic evidence to suggest that resource exploitation and exchange were the primary economic motivations for the development of a macro-political system in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. If this hypothesis is correct, then one would expect to see evidence of this interaction by way of explicit statements of patronage, alliance, warfare, and subordination in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of this region. As this dissertation will demonstrate, there is now sufficient epigraphic evidence to support the claim that a hegemonic system existed in the Southern Maya Mountains Region during Classic times. Numerous explicit references to accessions and other important historical events taking place under the supervision of foreign patrons are recorded in the dynastic inscriptions of Nim Li Punit and Pusilhá. This corpus contains information that significantly alters our current understanding of the political landscape and interactions of sites located within the Southern Maya Mountains Region.

The data presented here are based on my own extensive archaeological and epigraphic investigations of some thirteen Classic Maya sites bearing either hieroglyphic inscriptions or carved iconographic sculpture located within the Southern Maya

Mountains Region of Belize. The Southern Maya Mountains Region, as geographically defined here, includes all of southern Belize (the Toledo and Stann Creek Districts) and the adjacent portions of southeastern Guatemala (the *municipios* of Dolores, Melchor de Mencos, Poptun, and San Luis), though the research presented here is restricted to sites in Belize. Located within this vast regional sphere are more than 200 surface sites containing a corpus of more than 175 hieroglyphic inscriptions. The data examined here are restricted to the five major hieroglyph-bearing sites located within the Southern Maya Mountains Region: Lubaantún, Nim Li Punit, Pusilhá, Xnaheb', and Uxbenká.

This chapter discussed the methodology used in testing the hegemonic and *may* models. Chapter 6 will discuss the epigraphic and archaeological evidence of Late Classic hegemonic control in the Poité/Pusilhá Valley.

CHAPTER 6

EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE OF EARLY CLASSIC POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IN THE RIO BLANCO VALLEY

Uxbenká is a moderate-sized Classic Maya site located in the Rio Blanco Valley, some 14 km east of the Guatemalan/Belize border, near the modern Mopan village of Santa Cruz (Figure 6.1). The Rio Blanco Valley, running east to west from the modern village of San Antonio and into southeastern Dolores Guatemala, is located in the center of the Toledo upland soils that underlie the foothills of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Flanking the Rio Blanco Valley to the north and to the south are a series of karst, rugged hillslopes and ridgelines which define the boundaries of the valley system itself. These hills and ridgelines range in elevation up to 435m above sea level. The valley floor is not very flat, though it does contain several large undulating creeks and rivers including the Rio Blanco, Pueblo Creek, and several unnamed streams, all of which carry water year round. Because of the karst geologic nature of the areas to the north and to the south of the Rio Blanco Drainage, a large number of cave sites are found in this region. Entrance into the Rio Blanco Valley, in both ancient and modern times, is made via an overland route that runs directly through this drainage system. Because some of the rivers run underground in this area, including the Rio Blanco and Pueblo Creek, navigation can only be conducted using the wider Jalacte and Aguacate Creeks. The soils in this region are some of the best nutrient-rich soils in the Toledo Foothills. Evidence of ancient agricultural terracing is still evident in several areas of the Rio Blanco Drainage today.

As previously discussed, the primary goal of this study is to examine and analyze



Figure 6.1. Map of the Rio Blanco Drainage (Courtesy of Peter Dunham, Director, MMAP, modified by author after DGMS 1983)

the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region to test whether the same sorts of hegemonic characteristics as described by Martin and Grube and by Rice for the central Petén can be found in the written inscriptions of this peripheral region. If evidence of hegemonic control can be found in the inscriptions of this region it could then be used to strengthen or challenge the validity of Martin and Grube's hegemonic model. Evidence for Rice's *may* model of Classic Maya political organization was also examined. The criteria that were used in testing the hegemonic and *may* models were based on the criteria described in Chapter 5.

The Discovery of Uxbenká

Uxbenká (or *Uchb'en Kaj* as it should be spelled and pronounced) means 'ancient city' in Mopán Maya (Paxil et al. 2003: 46, 116). The site was first reported by locals from the nearby village of Santa Cruz in May 1984. The site was then reported to Placido Ash, a government watchman at the site of Nim Li Punit, who then reported it to the SBAP (Leventhal and Schele nd: 1). Located just 300 meters north of the modern village of Santa Cruz, the site is spread on top of a series of steeply-sided ridges and hills that form the southern foothills of the Maya Mountains. Outlying portions of the site, known as Site 26 (Santa Cruz North) and Site 27 (Santa Cruz East), were previously reported by Hammond in 1971, as part of his comprehensive archaeological investigations at Lubaantún (1975: 289-290). The main stela plaza group (now known as Group A) was unknown to archaeologists until villagers formally reported it to the Placido Ash (Figure 6.2). The SBAP sought permission to conduct limited archaeological investigations of the stela plaza group in June and July of 1984, in June of 1989, and in April of 1990

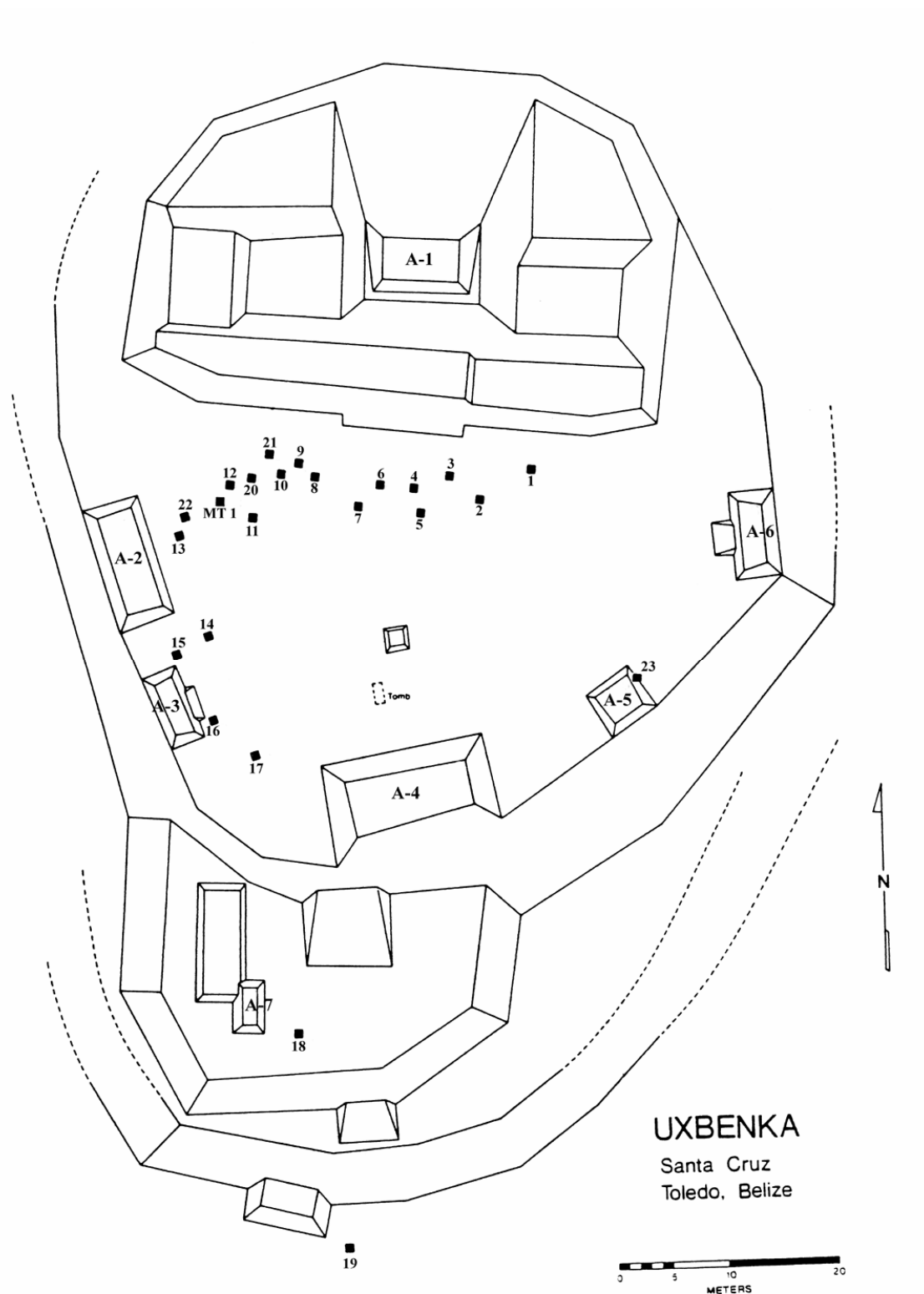


Figure 6.2. Plan Map of Stela Plaza Group (Map Courtesy of Richard Leventhal, modified by author after Leventhal 1990a: Fig. 8.4)

(Leventhal 1990a, 1990b, 1992). They devoted most of their efforts at investigating the main stela plaza where the remains of twenty-two stelae, three Early Classic in origin, were identified. Based on its size, site plan, the presence of a partially looted royal tomb, and the number of stelae located in the stela plaza group it is likely that Group A was the ceremonial core for Uxbenká's ruling elite. Group A is situated on top of a steep natural hill that has been intentionally modified to create the illusion of a larger labor-intensive construction. The entire hill has been faced with large rough-cut stones. A central stairway leading up from the south end of the plaza is the only access to this group. The hilltop was also leveled to create a large open plaza area (30 m x 50 m) that is surrounded by six structures (Strs. A1-A6). The largest of these structures is the 10 m high, triadic structure known as Str. A-1 located to the north, which features a central staircase and flanking east/west terraces. At some point in the recent past looters had dug multiple trenches into Str. A-1.

During the 1984 field season, the SBAP excavated the remains of a partially looted and collapsed royal tomb located in the south central portion of the stela plaza directly in front of Str. A-4. Although the skeleton had completely disintegrated, their excavations revealed several Early Classic artifacts including the remains of a shattered ceramic plate and basal-flange bowl, two jade earspools, several jade beads, at least four jade pendants, and more than 100 shell beads (Leventhal 1984: 2). Several small thin pieces of jade and pyrite, probably the remains of an elaborate pyrite plaque or mirror were scattered across the tomb (Leventhal 1984: 2). Earlier that year, Placido Ash reportedly found an Olmec-style jade "spoon" on the surface of the main plaza near the looted tomb. The spoon was finely carved, made from blue-green jade, and measured 18.5 cm in length by 6.8 cm wide with a maximum thickness of around 1.5 cm (Healy

and Awe 1996: 175, 2001: 61). Jade artifacts of this type have variously been interpreted as being a “spoon” or “tray” for inhaling hallucinogenic snuff (Furst 1995: 78), a *kuch abak* or a “paint pot” for holding pigments (Coe and Kerr 1997: 150-151, Kerr n.d: 3, MacLeod and Kerr 1994: 46-47), or simply a pendant in the form of a stylized tadpole or a stylized bird wing (Furst 1995: 78). Its blue-green color (a color closely associated with these types of Olmec jades) along with its shape, suggests that this jade dates to the Middle Preclassic Period (900 – 350 B.C.). It is likely that this jade served as an heirloom piece that was traded or exchanged from the Olmec living in the Gulf Coast region or obtained from Olmec traders from the recently identified (blue-green) jadeite source in the neighboring Motagua Valley (Gendron et al. 2002; Taube et al. 2004). The fact that this very ancient artifact turned up at Uxbenká serves as a powerful testament to the ability of the rulership at Uxbenká to obtain important heirloom pieces.

In total, the SBAP identified and mapped three major architectural groups in association with the site core of Uxbenká including the Stela Plaza Group and the two elite residential groups known collectively as Uxbenká North (Figure 6.3). Located within this North Group were four large open plazas and at least two ballcourts. No monuments were found by the SBAP in the North Group.

All of the stelae at the site are in poor condition, except for the recently discovered Stela 23, having suffered the ill-effects of looting, vandalism, and exposure to the elements. The majority of the stelae (thirteen) were erected along two east/west lines facing south, in front of Str. A-1. A third line of five monuments was also erected along the west side of the stela plaza, stretching along the eastern face of Strs. A-2 and A-3. Two additional stelae were located along the south face of the medial terrace leading up to the stela plaza. In total, there are eleven carved stelae at Uxbenká: four Early Classic

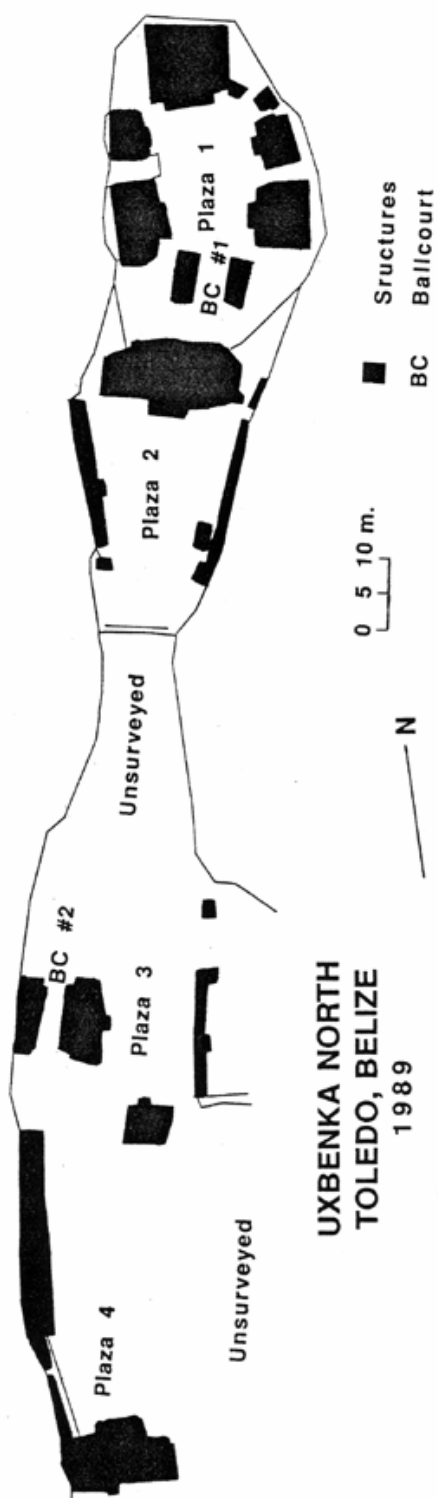


Figure 6.3. Map of Uxbenká's North Groups (Courtesy of Richard Leventhal 1990b:

Fig.6)

(Stela 11, 18, 21, 23) and seven Late Classic (Stela 3, 5, 6, 14, 15, 19, 22). There are more than a dozen miscellaneous carved sculptural fragments, most of which appear to be Early Classic in origin (Wanyerka 2003). Finally, there are more than 80 broken monument fragments scattered around the stela plaza, but unfortunately, most of these fragments have been moved from their original locations. The large number of stelae and stela fragments at the site suggests the ancient inhabitants of Uxbenká, like its neighbor Nim Li Punit, were active monument builders and carvers.

Perhaps the most important find made by the SBAP was the discovery of three Early Classic stela (Stela 11, 18, and 21). Stylistically, these three stelae are not only the earliest monuments in the entire Southern Maya Mountains Region, but they are some of the earliest monuments ever erected outside the central Petén. Leventhal quickly realized the importance of Stela 11, which featured an elaborate portrait of an Early Classic ruler holding an undulating double-headed serpent bar and a glyphic motif that featured the name of a well-known Tikal king (Figure 6.4). This motif can be seen dangling on a chain from the ruler's loin cloth located just below the ruler's mitten-gloved hands and has also been found on monuments at both Tikal and Uolantún referring to the 14th king of Tikal, *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I or 'Jaguar Paw' as he is commonly nicknamed (Martin and Grube 2000: 28).

Leventhal turned to the late art historian Linda Schele for her help in both drawing the monuments of Uxbenká and in understanding the hieroglyphic texts and iconography (see Leventhal and Schele n.d.). Using the epigraphic information provided by Schele, Leventhal (1990a, 1990b, 1992) and others (Jamison et al. 1991; Leventhal and Dunhan 1989) noted the political importance of Uxbenká in the context of secondary state development. In 1990 the SBAP was forced to abandon its project at Uxbenká

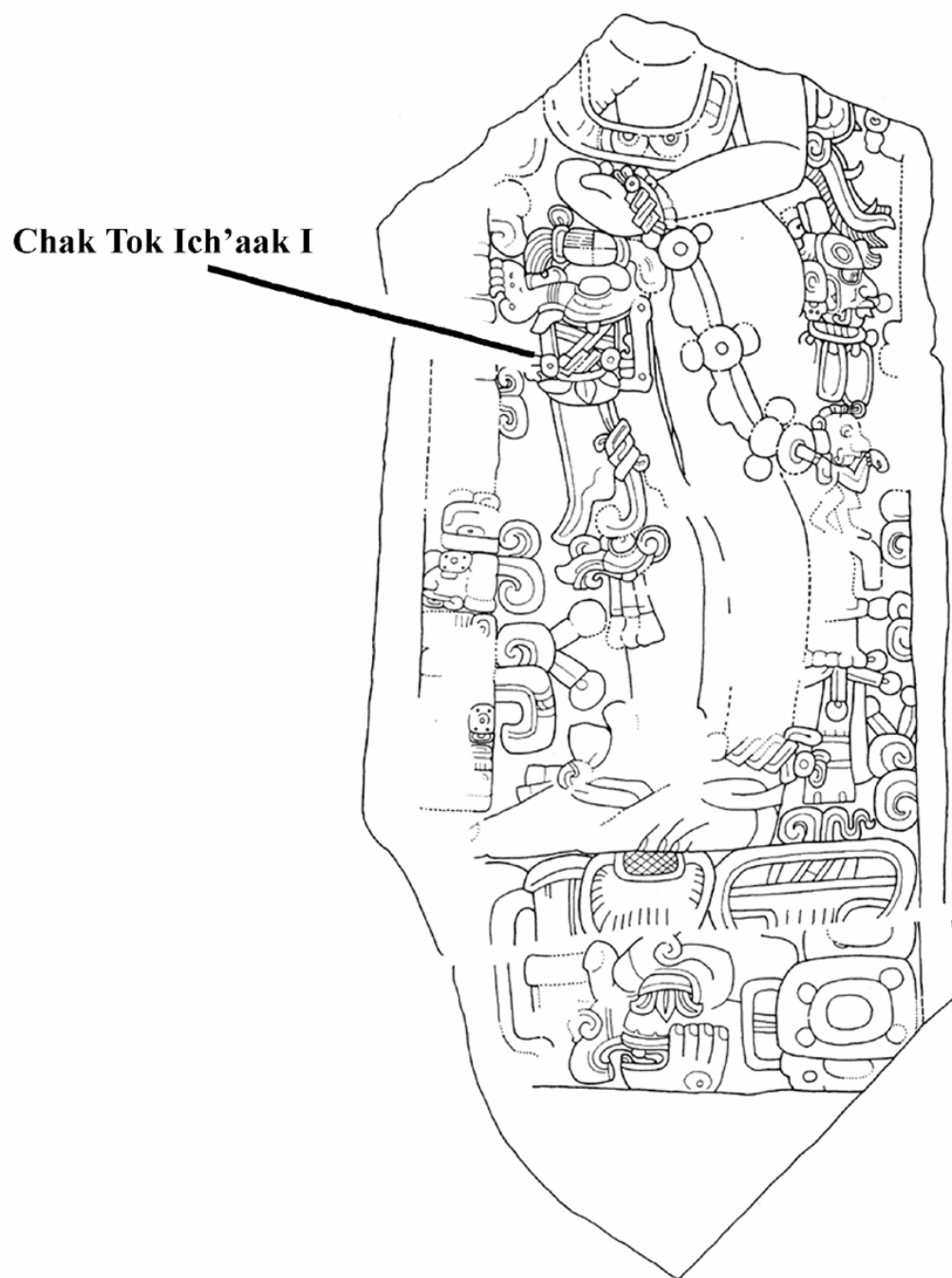


Figure 6.4. Uxbenká Stela 11 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

prematurely due to civil unrest and tensions in the community of Santa Cruz. The site was left largely unprotected for the next fifteen years and looting and vandalism are still common (Dunham and Leventhal n.d.; Wanyerka 1996, 2003).

Epigraphic Evidence of Political Organization at Uxbenká

Both archaeology and epigraphy confirm that Uxbenká, like many of its Early Classic neighbors in the central Petén, emerged in the Southern Maya Mountains Region as an important political entity shortly after A.D. 200 (Prufer et al. 2008: 1). The rise of Uxbenká as a primary, emblem glyph-bearing polity, may be tied to the emergence and growing prosperity of Tikal as the preeminent hegemonic power of this era (Harrison 1999; Laporte and Fialko 1995; Laporte and Valdés 1993; Martin 2003b, Martin 2003e; Martin and Grube 2000). The appearance of agency-marked accessions along with direct statements of subordination recorded on several Early Classic monuments at sites located in the environs of Tikal, including Bejucal, El Zapoté, El Perú, Río Azul, Uaxactún, Uolantún, Xultún, and Yaxhá (Figure 6.5), indicate that these polities were subject to greater Tikal control during this era (Mathews 1985; Schele and Freidel 1990; Wanyerka 2005).

Uxbenká's founding and subsequent rise may have been facilitated because it was both an important strategic ally of Tikal and was an intermediary for exchange between the southeastern Maya Lowlands and Tikal. Uxbenká is strategically located in the Río Blanco drainage, which extends eastward from southeastern Guatemala. This drainage system is navigable year round and is still utilized by both Mopan and Q'eqchi' traders today for easy access around the southern flank of the Maya Mountains. Avoiding a

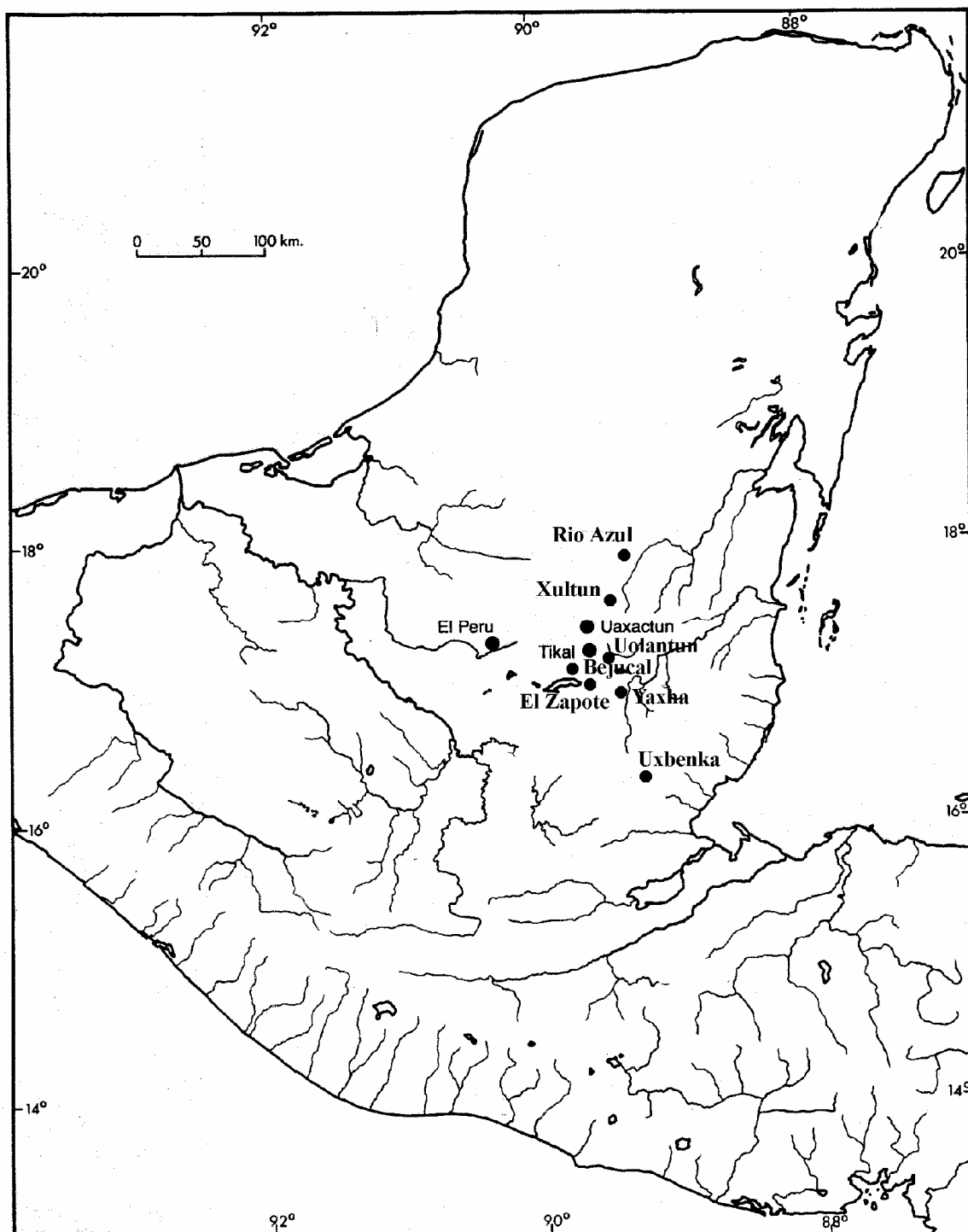


Figure 6.5. Map Showing Sites Subject to Early Classic Tikal Control (Map courtesy of Peter Mathews, modified by author, Mathews 1985: Figure 4)

direct route through the mountains, raw or finished goods could more easily be transported overland or via the numerous waterways that link this region to sites throughout the south-central Petén and adjoining Petexbatún and Pasión regions. Resources common to the Rio Blanco Drainage include Toledo Bed sandstone, Xpicilha Hills limestone, and bituminous dolomite which could be used in either construction or as a source of lime for plaster or for fertilizer (Dunham et al. 1989: 271; Hammond 1975: 14). In addition to these specific mineralogical resources, the Rio Blanco Drainage is also rich in both flora and fauna. Botanicals such as cacao, mamey, cohun palm, cashew, papaya, cabbage palm, rubber tree, and sapodilla tree found in this region could be used as food, construction material, and medicine (Dunham et al. 1993a: 13). A biological inventory of the animal species found in this drainage system includes a variety of game birds such as tinamou, guan, and curassow, all of which were highly prized by the ancient Maya for their meat and plumage. A wide variety of fish are found in the Rio Blanco itself including mountain mullet, tuba, sleeper, and blanco. This area is also home to a wide variety of mammals including peccary, tapir, brocket deer, paca, jaguar, howler monkey, spider monkey, and river otter which were likely used as both a source of food and pelts (Dunham et al. 1993a: 13). Therefore, Uxbenká may have been established as a local resource procurement or distribution center for either raw materials or finished products coming from extraction or processing sites within the interior of the Maya Mountains (Wanyerka 2005).

Archaeological evidence of an early occupation at Uxbenká can be seen in the stratigraphic record of the stela plaza. In excavations conducted by the SBAP in 1990, a test unit was placed immediately south of Str. A-1 in the vicinity near the base of the central stairway. According to Leventhal's excavation forms for this test unit (Op 205/

206, Subop 205D, dated 4/9/90 – 4/20/90), at least three extensive plaster floors were encountered: an upper floor corresponding to the Late Classic Period, followed by a second shallow intermediate plaster floor, and finally, a lower floor probably corresponding to either the Late Preclassic or Early Classic periods (Jamison et al. 1991: 2). The determination that the lowest floor likely represented an Early Classic construction was based on the construction sequence of the central staircase for Str. A-1. Excavations showed that the first set of stairs for Str. A-1 were laid directly on top of bedrock and that the upper floor overlaid the first three steps, suggesting that the floor below this level represented an earlier construction (SBAP Excavation Forms dated 4/23/1990).

Additional excavations along the row of stelae that stood in front of Str. A-1 also indicated that several stelae were set or erected into this lower floor during the Early Classic Period at the time of its initial construction. Stela 7 also included a unique dedicatory cache containing a large quantity of chert flakes, obsidian prismatic blades, and several chert eccentrics (Jamison et al. 1991: 3; SBAP Excavation Forms dated 4/18/1990). Coe (1962: 498) described many similar caches of this type with Early Classic stelae at Tikal.

The SBAP also reported the presence of eroded, but highly diagnostic Late Preclassic and Early Classic ceramics, most of which consisted of large and small basal-flange sherds. The paste associated with these basal flange sherds included a “high proportion of calcite and ferruginous nodules, a laminar appearance, and thick firing cores” that was noticeably different from the Late Classic ceramic assemblage from the site (Jamison et al. 1991: 3). In addition, the slip associated with these sherds appeared to be an intermediate form “on the continuum from the Late Preclassic waxy wares to the

gloss of the Classic in the central Petén” (Jamison et al. 1991: 3). While the SBAP’s ceramic sample was admittedly small, the UAP’s sample is now continuing to grow and the presence of numerous Late Preclassic and Early Classic ceramic types indicate that people were living at Uxbenká much earlier than previously believed. Recent excavations conducted by the UAP in 2006 and 2007 have confirmed the presence of Late Preclassic and Early Classic ceramics in association with at least two structures in Group A (Str. A-5 [Op A, Sub 4] and Str. A-6 [Op A, Sub 6 and Sub 7]). Radiocarbon dates from these new excavations have produced a range of dates from A.D. 137 to about A.D. 337, which also confirm that a significant Late Preclassic population was living at Uxbenká (Table 6.1). UAP excavations in the floor of the stela plaza group have confirmed the presence of at least two plaster floors (one of either Late Preclassic or Early Classic origins and another likely dating to the Late Classic Period) and have exposed a substantial earlier architectural program (including possible Late Preclassic earthen platforms and constructions) predating the latter Late Classic modifications to the stela plaza (Kindon and Prufer 2007: 7; Prufer et al 2008: 12). These new findings help confirm that Uxbenká was the earliest major surface site in southern Belize.

The stratigraphy associated with a massive looter’s trench along the south side of Str. A-1 revealed that the original construction probably incorporated at least three separate buildings similar in shape and form to that of Str. A-V at Uaxactún. Radiocarbon dates from material collected from the lowest levels of Str. A-1 suggest that this building was constructed sometime between A.D. 73 and 143 (Prufer et al. 2008: 12). In addition, the UAP’s excavations confirm the presence of Late Preclassic earthen architecture as the earliest phase of construction for Str. A-1. Stone was not used in the creation of monumental architecture at Uxbenká until the mid-fourth century (Prufer et al. 2008:12).

Table 6.1. AMS Radiocarbon Dates From Uxbenká (Courtesy of the Uxbenká Archaeological Project)

Operation	Description	Lab # ¹	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$	\pm	^{14}C age (BP)	\pm	95.4 (2 σ) ²	% ³
Stela Group	Plaza OpA Sub7 L4	33400	-199.7	1.9	1790	20	AD 137- 259	0.8270
							AD 284- 289	0.0090
							AD 291- 323	0.1630
Stela Group	Plaza OpA Sub 6 L3	33401	-183.9	2.0	1635	20	AD 348-368	0.0400
							AD 379-442	0.8150
							AD 452-461	0.0100
							AD 485-531	0.1360
Stela Group	Plaza OpA Sub 4 L4	33404	-198.5	1.8	1775	20	AD 143-151	0.0090
							AD 169-193	0.0370
							AD 210-337	0.9540
Stela Group	Plaza OpA Sub 4 L5	33403	-193.0	2.0	1720	25	AD 251-391	1.0000
Stela Group	Str. A6 Sub 07-3	42805	-190.8	1.3	1700	15	AD 259-294	0.1858
							AD 321-402	0.8142
Stela Group	Str.A4 Sub07-2	42806	-193.0	1.2	1725	15	AD 255-360	0.9016
							AD 362-381	0.0984
Stela Group	Str. A6 Sub 07-3	42807	-192.8	1.1	1720	15	AD 256-304	0.4491
							AD 312-384	0.5509
Stela Group	Str.A1 Sub 07-5	42808	-193.1	1.1	1725	15	AD 255-360	0.9016
							AD 362-381	0.0984
Stela Group	Str. A1 Sub 07-5	42809	-169.1	1.2	1490	15	AD 545-609	1.0000
Stela Group	Str. A1 Sub 07-5	42825	-208.6	1.3	1880	15	AD 73-143	0.8903
							AD 146-175	0.0658
							AD 193-211	0.0439
Settlement	SG21 Str 3 Pit Fea	42810	-156.3	1.2	1365	15	AD 646-671	1.0000
Settlement	SG21 Str 3 burial	42811	-147.0	1.3	1275	15	AD 681-772	1.0000
Settlement	SG21 Str 1 burial	42824	-198.4	1.1	1775	15	AD 179-185	0.0051
							AD 214-264	0.5496
							AD 275-334	0.4454
KNT Cave	Wooden Canoe?	33402	-205.3	1.7	1845	20	AD 90-101	0.0240
							AD 124-235	0.9760

¹ UCIAMS Kerk Carbon Cycle AMS Facility UC Irvine

² Calibrated with Calib 5.0.1, Stuiver, M., and Reimer, P.J., 1993, Radiocarbon, 35, 215-230.

³ Relative area under probability distribution

Archaeological investigations conducted by both the SBAP and the UAP suggest that the Late Preclassic and Early Classic components of the site appear to be restricted to the stelae plaza group itself.

On the basis of their early iconographic style and pose, and the presence of several well-known Early Classic names, at least four (Stela 11, 18, 21, 23) of the twenty-three stelae at Uxbenká are Early Classic in origin (Wanyerka 1996, 2003, 2005). Stela 11 and Stela 21 are of significant historical importance since they both appear to contain iconographic motifs and glyphic references to one of the most controversial events in Mesoamerican history: the arrival of Teotihuacanos in A.D. 378. Clemency Coggins (1975, 1979) and Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1993) were among the first scholars to suggest that the date 8.17.1.4.12 11 *Eb'* 15 *Mak* (15, January 378) signaled the start of a dramatic change and departure from the existing socio-religious, political, and military ideology to that of a “New Order” which profoundly impacted Classic Maya society. The nature of this event remains one of the most hotly debated issues among scholars today. Many of the ideas that will be discussed here concerning the events of A.D. 378 are not accepted by all scholars (c.f. Braswell 2003; Laporte 2003; Rice 2004). However, it is generally agreed by most scholars that beginning around A.D. 200 there is a strong presence of Teotihuacan-style iconography, architectural styles, and artifacts at sites across the Maya Lowlands including: Altun Há (Pendergast 1971; Pring 1977; White et al. 2001), Chac (Smyth and Rogart 2004), Copan (Fash 2002), Dzibilchaltun (Cardenas 2003), La Sufricaya (Estrada-Belli et al. 2006), Nakúm (Hermes et al. 2005; Koszkuł et al. 2006), and Tikal (Laporte 1989).

Like many of its Lowland Maya neighbors, Tikal had enduring cultural contacts with the great Central Mexican culture of Teotihuacan, located more than a 1,000 km to

the west, beginning during the latter half of the Late Preclassic Period (Braswell 2003; Fash and Fash 2000; Schele and Freidel 1990). By A.D. 250, a flourishing trade network had been established between Teotihuacan and many Maya cities including Kaminaljuyu and Tikal (Kidder et al. 1946; Laporte 1989; Laporte and Fialko 1995). Exotic trade items such as green Pachuca obsidian began to be imported at sites across the Maya Lowlands (Schele and Freidel 1990: 159). Along with the green obsidian came local versions of distinctive Teotihuacan iconography, artifacts (i.e. Thin-Orange ceramics, stucco-coated lidded tripod vases, slate-backed iron-ore mirrors) and *talud tablero*-style architecture (Fash and Fash 2000: 442). By the end of the 4th century, distinctive Teotihuacan-style artifacts, iconography, and architecture had swept across much of the Maya Lowlands. Proskouriakoff (1993: 4-10) referred to this period as the “Arrival of Strangers,” suggesting that this event marked a military invasion of the Maya Lowlands by armed Central Mexican warriors. The appearance of distinctive Teotihuacan-style artifacts, iconography, and architectural styles in the Maya area long before the so-called “Arrival of Strangers” event in A.D. 378 has caused many scholars (see Kubler 1973; Laporte 1989; Laporte and Fialko 1995; Demarest and Foias 1993; Rice 2004; Schele and Freidel 1990) to reject the interpretation that Teotihuacan “played a decisive or hegemonic role in the evolution of Classic Maya civilization” (Fash and Fash 2000: 438). However, based on recent archaeological and epigraphic evidence at sites including Tikal, Copan, and Kaminaljuyu, it appears that after several centuries of close cultural and interregional contact, an event occurred in the central and southern Maya lowlands on 8.17.1.4.12 (15, January 378) that triggered a major disruption in the relationship between Teotihuacan and the Classic Maya. This disruption did not bode well for the inhabitants of the central Petén, especially for the aristocracy living at Tikal. Perhaps the best piece of epigraphic

evidence to indicate that this was not a friendly meeting between foreign dignitaries is a passage recorded on Tikal Stela 31. As previously discussed in Chapter 3, the term *hul* meaning “to arrive” in Classic Maya(n) reflects a concept used by numerous Mesoamerican groups to describe the founding of new political dynasties (Stuart 2000: 478). In what appears to be an example of cause and effect, on the very day this foreign contingent arrived at Tikal, *Chak Tok Ich’aak* I, the 14th king of the Tikal royal dynasty, is said to have died. The text on Tikal Stela 31 describes the arrival event using the *hul* verb. With the death of Tikal’s king, Spearthrower Owl, the Teotihuacan overlord likely responsible for this change in succession, replaces the former Jaguar Paw dynastic line with a new patriline that appears to have been drawn from Teotihuacan aristocracy since the next king of Tikal was his son *Yax Nuun Ahin* (Martin and Grube 2008: 32).

Immediately following this chain of events, Tikal’s new aristocracy carries a new imperial royal title known as *Kaloomte’*, a title that appears to mark overlords or “emperors of conquered territories” (Stuart 2000: 486). For the next century or so, the “arrival event” had a transforming effect on dozens of polities throughout the Maya Lowlands (Braswell 2003; Coggins 1975, 1979; Nielsen 2003, 2006; Schele and Freidel 1990; Stuart 2000). In the epigraphic record there is evidence that *Sijaj K’ahk’*, the agent in charge of the *entrada* episode for Teotihuacan, presided over the accessions of numerous local lords including the accession of *Yax Nuun Ahin I* of Tikal in A.D. 379, the accession of a Bejucal lord in A.D. 381, and the accession of a Rio Azul lord in A.D. 393 (Martin and Grube 2008: 30). While scholars agree that interaction between Teotihuacan and the Maya took place, Braswell (2003: 7) argues that the questions that need to be asked involve the degree of Teotihuacan impact on the Maya, the length of social, political, and economic changes as a result of Teotihuacan interaction, and finally,

are the Maya considered to be passive recipients of this interaction or were they active participants?

Based on improved drawings of the hieroglyphic inscriptions at Uxbenká, a new piece of historical information has been found that links the aristocracy of Uxbenká to that of Tikal and perhaps to the *entrada* event itself. These new epigraphic data suggest that Uxbenká, an emblem glyph-bearing polity in its own right, was likely the first dependent vassal in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize subject to the greater Tikal hegemony. These data further suggest that Uxbenká's later rise to prominence during the late fourth century (as attested archaeologically by the switch in architectural practices from the previous earthen structures to the now larger stone constructions) may be linked to Tikal's Early Classic hegemonic expansion into the southeastern Maya lowlands during the late 4th century by *Chak Tok Ich'aak I* (A.D. 360-378) and his two immediate successors, *Yax Nuun Ayiin* (A.D. 379-404?) and *Siyaj Chan K'awiil II* (A.D. 411-456). Our understanding of the macro-political environment of the Southern Maya Mountains Region is better defined for the Late Classic Period when hegemonic power and intrusion were emanating from both Copan and Quirigua, but little has been known for the Early Classic (see Grube et al. 1995; Grube et al. 1999; Wanyerka 2003). Discussed below, my epigraphic findings indicate that a major political shift occurred just prior to the start of the Late Classic Period that loosened central Petén's power and influence in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. The shift in this region may have been the result of Tikal's so-called Hiatus Period (A.D. 562-692), a phenomenon that has been linked to the fall of Teotihuacan and the subsequent rise of rival superpower Calakmul, which competed with Tikal for hegemonic dominance of the central Petén during this period (Martin and Grube 2000: 40).

Beginning around A.D. 573, dozens of new sites, including the emblem-glyph bearing sites of Lubaantún, Nim Li Punit, and Pusilhá, appear in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize. These sites appear to have regional political ties to sites located in the southeastern Maya Lowlands and to sites located in the Petexbatún-Pasión region. What precipitated this turn in political affiliations is unclear, but the epigraphic record suggests that Tikal was actively engaged in keeping its hegemonic network in the central Petén intact while succumbing to defeats by its enemy Calakmul (Martin and Grube 2000). This shift in political alliances of the Southern Maya Mountains Region by the start of the Late Classic Period may also be a reflection of the rotational shift in power associated with Rice's (2004) *may* model. Rice (2004: 115) has argued that Tikal's "primary burden" as the Middle Classic *may* seat began in A.D. 426 and lasted some 128 years to A.D. 554. Tikal's end as host of the *may* likely resulted in a shift of rotational power from Tikal to Caracol (Rice 2004: 115). This shift corresponds exactly to the beginning of the so-called Hiatus Period, in which sites across the central Petén experience a sudden and dramatic decline in Tikal's power and influence. In addition, this period is also noted for the cessation of monument erections at Tikal and at sites in its immediate environs. Therefore, this shift in the political alliances of the Southern Maya Mountains Region at the start of the Late Classic Period may be associated with the larger regional change of power and influence as the *may* seat transferred from Tikal to Caracol.

The most important epigraphic link connecting Uxbenká to Tikal is found on Stela 11 (refer back to Figure 6.4). Stela 11 was discovered by the SBAP in 1984, in three pieces, lying facedown near the northeastern corner of Str. A-2. The stela features an elaborate portrait of an Early Classic ruler standing on a four glyph block toponymic

expression which reads *Ha Ka'an Ch'een* or 'Water-Sky Cave or City.' A short ten glyph-block text along the left edge of the monument. An iconographic motif featuring the Jaguar Paw name is recorded on Stela 11. Leventhal and Schele first recognized the significance of this rare and unusual motif as the personal epithet of the 14th ruler of the Tikal dynasty, *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I (Leventhal and Schele n.d.: 6). This motif appears in four other places associated with *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I including Tikal Stela 28, Tikal Stela 39, an unprovenanced cache vessel lid, and on Uolantún Stela 1 (Figure 6.6). Additional support for this identification is found in other glyphic expressions of the full *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I name phrase. There are at least eleven examples of this name recorded at Tikal and its environs, including examples on monuments at Corozal, El Temblor and Uxbenká. Glyphically, the *Chak Tok Ich'aak* name phrase is generally written using the following collocations: T109 or T590V (*CHAK*), T44 (*TOK*), and either T5, T1030qV, T931 or even T853 (*ICH'AAK* or *CHAK ICH'AAK*). However, two examples have been found (Tikal Stela 39 and Corozal Stela 1) that include the name of the Founder of the Tikal dynasty, *Yax Ehb' Xook*, as part of his full regal name phrase (Figure 6.7). Since the name recorded on Uxbenká Stela 11 contains both epithets, *Chak Tok Ich'aak* and *Yax Ehb' Xook*, along with the Tikal emblem glyph, there is no question that the name featured on this monument is that of the 14th ruler of the Tikal dynasty, *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I.

Epigraphically, *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I is one of the best-known Early Classic kings of Tikal. *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I left behind a rich collection of inscribed monuments and painted ceramic texts. *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I acceded to the throne at Tikal on 8.16.3.10.2 11 *Ik'* 10 *Sek* (7, August, 360), as recorded on Stela 1 at the outlying site of El Temblor (Martin and Grube 2000: 28). El Temblor is located approximately 23 km due south of

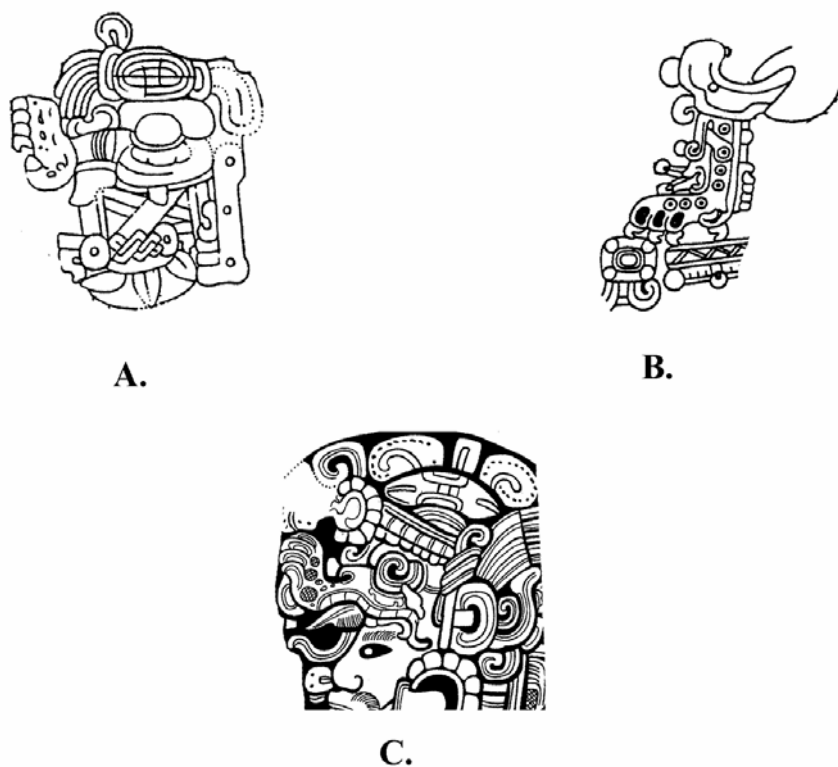


Figure 6.6. The *Chak Tok Ich'aak* Motif

A) Uxbenká Stela 11 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

B) Tikal Stela 39 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

C) Unprovenanced Ceramic Cache Lid (Drawing by S. Martin)

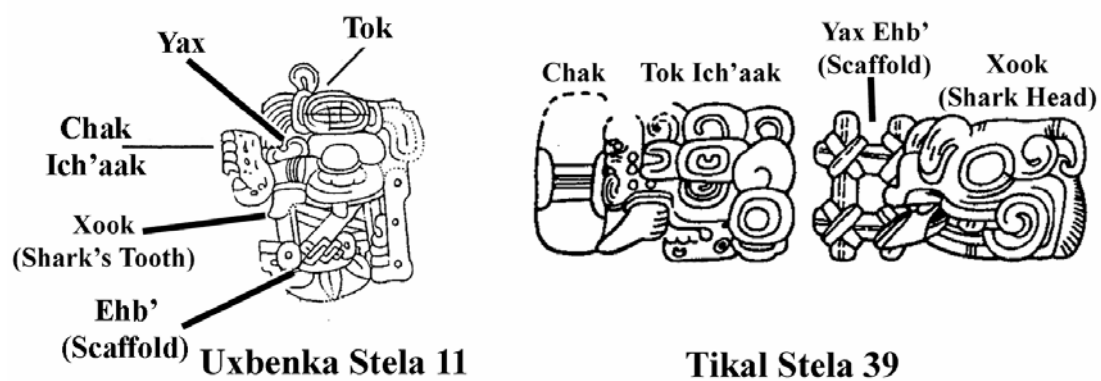


Figure 6.7. The *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I Name Phrase (Drawings by J. Montgomery)

Tikal close to the site El Zapote. Another reference to the accession of *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I is also found on Stela 1 at Corozal. Corozal is a small site, located approximately 6 km southeast of Tikal (Martin 2003e: 10).

An inscription on a remarkable ceramic text, nicknamed the “Dynastic Pot” (K4679) states that *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I (N) was the 14th ruler (K) in Tikal’s official count of royal kings (Figure 6.8). This text confirms that *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I’s father, *K'inich Muwaan Jol* (J), was the 13th successor (G) of the Founder of Tikal, *Yax Ehb' Xook*. This text also records several additional royal titles that serve as part of his full regnal name. These titles include *Wak Chan*, ‘Raised Up Sky’ (L) and *Tajal Chaak*, ‘Torch-Like *Chaak*’ (M). The final glyph in *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I’s name phrase includes the *u-lek* (O) collocation which is a numerical classifier used in official counts or lists of things such as dynastic counts (Grube and Martin 2000: 60).

Chak Tok Ich'aak I was responsible for the creation of the cluster of temples and buildings known today as the North Acropolis. Because of its east/west orientation, the North Acropolis was most likely viewed as the ceremonial heart of Tikal (Harrison 1999: 73). *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I built his royal palace, Str. 5D-46, in the Central Acropolis. This palace is one of the most ancient buildings at Tikal and shows virtually no signs of modification until very late in Tikal’s history (Grube and Martin 2000: 58). A dedicatory cache that contained a black, lidded ceramic vessel (MT 140) along with flint blades, shells, obsidian, pyrite fragments, and a jade medallion was buried deep beneath the west stairs of Str. 5D-46 (Schele and Mathews 1998: 77). The cached vessel (Figure 6.9) made it possible to identify this structure as *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I’s royal palace, since the text on the pot records its formal dedication. The text reads: *alay* ‘here’ or ‘now,’ *tab'ay* ‘he ascends’ or ‘dedicates’ the *k'ul na* ‘the divine house’, *b'olon tz'ak* ‘many generations’

(besides the number nine, *b'olon* can also mean 'many' or 'very numerous') (Roys 1954: 48) of *Yax Ehb' Xook* (the name of the Founder of Tikal), the *Wak Chan* 'Raised Up Sky', *Tajal Chahk* 'Torch-Like *Chahk*', *K'ul Na* 'the divine house' of *Chak Tok Ich'aak*, the *Mutul Ajaw* 'the Tikal lord'.

Only two of *Chak Tok Ich'aak I*'s monuments have been found at Tikal and both were found in secondary deposits cached in the construction fill of later buildings. The first of these monuments is Tikal Stela 26 (Figure 6.10) which was found broken, with the upper half completely missing, cached within the masonry bench of the rear room of Str. 5D-34-1st (Temple 34) in the North Acropolis (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982: 57). Though the dedicatory date is missing, the remaining portion of text on Stela 26 recalls a list of important patron gods or deities and other historical figures from Tikal including *Siyaj Chan K'awiil I*, Lady *Unen B'alam*, *Chak Tok Ich'aak I*, and *Yax Ehb' Xook*, the Founder of Tikal. The other monument is Tikal Stela 39 (Figure 6.11), which was also found broken with its upper half missing, and cached deep inside Str. 5D-86 located in the *Mundo Perdido* or 'Lost World' Complex at Tikal (Laporte and Valdés 1993: 23). The front side of Stela 39 depicts *Chak Tok Ich'aak I* standing on top of a bound captive. The rear text provides a parentage statement for *Chak Tok Ich'aak I* that identifies both his mother (Lady *B'alam Way*) and his father (*K'inich Muwaan Jol*) on the celebration of the 8.17.0.0.0 (20, October 376) Period Ending. The *Mundo Perdido* Complex is located southwest of the Central Acropolis. This complex was the largest Preclassic precinct at the site and included a four-temple astronomical configuration known as an E-Group. The largest structure in *Mundo Perdido* is the four-sided temple pyramid, Str. 5C-54, which was rebuilt several times beginning in the Late Preclassic Period (Laporte and Fialko 1995). Subsequent modifications of Str. 5C-54 show that by around A.D. 250

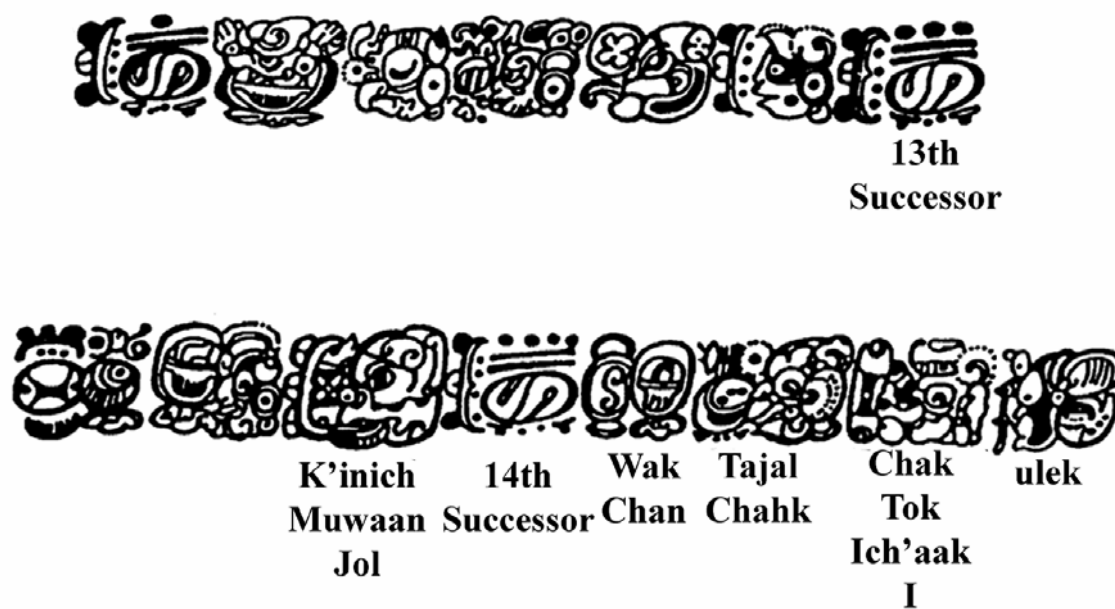


Figure 6.8. The “Dynastic Pot” (K4679) (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

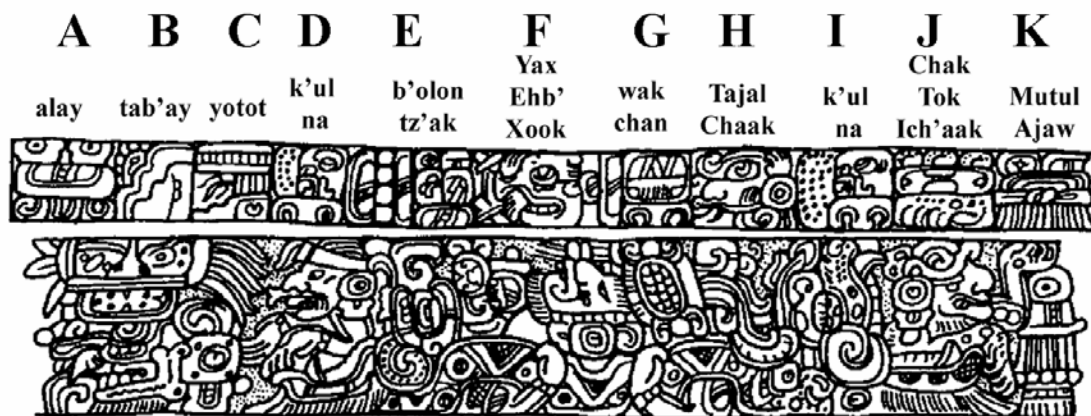


Figure 6.9. Blackened-Ware Ceramic Cache Pot (MT 140) from Str. 5D-46 at Tikal

(Drawing by L. Schele, © David Schele, courtesy Foundation for the Advancement of

Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org)

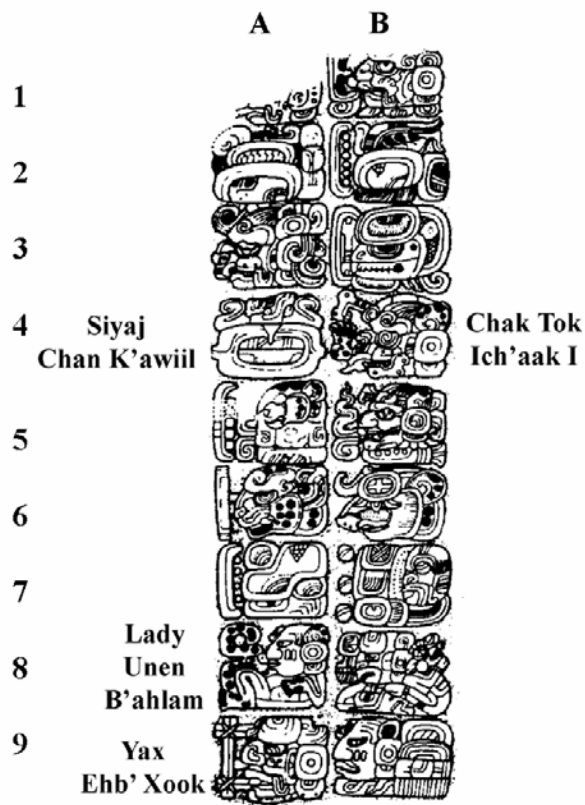


Figure 6.10. Tikal Stela 26 (Drawing by L. Schele, © David Schele, courtesy Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org)

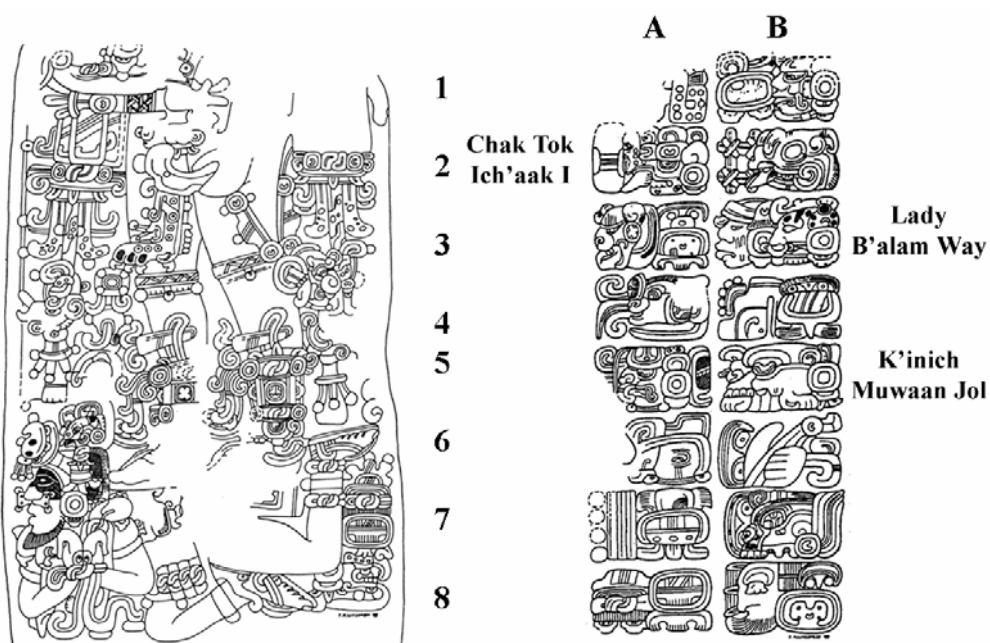


Figure 6.11. Tikal Stela 39 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Central Mexican influence in the form of *talud/tablero* architecture began to appear at *Mundo Perdido* (Martin and Grube 2000: 29). During this era, the favored burial site for Tikal's rulers was the North Acropolis. The tombs of *Yax Ehb' Xook* and *Chak Tok Ich'aak I* (Temple 26), *Yax Nuun Ayiin I* (Temple 34), *Siyaj Chan K'awiil II* (Temple 33) and Bird Claw are buried here (Temple 32) (Schele and Mathews 1998: 69).

Chak Tok Ich'aak I ruled over the largest city to emerge in the central Petén. The massive construction program flourished during much of *Chak Tok Ich'aak's* reign, no doubt funded by the success of both inter- and intra-regional trade with its neighbors, the Highland Maya, and the more distant Teotihuacanos begun by earlier Tikal kings. All of the achievements that *Chak Tok Ich'aak I* accomplished during his eighteen years of reign ended with the arrival at Tikal of the Teotihuacan lord named *Siyaj K'ahk'* on 15th of January 378.

It has long been recognized from the passage recorded on Tikal Stela 31 that *Siyaj K'ahk'* was a foreigner from Teotihuacan and was the person responsible for this arrival event at Tikal on 8.17.1.4.12 (15, January 378), the very day that *Chak Tok Ich'aak I* died (Harrison 1999: 79-80; Martin 2003b: 12; Proskouriakoff 1993: 8; Stuart 2000: 479-481). The texts do not explicitly state the events that transpired that day, but enough archaeological and epigraphic evidence survives to suggest that this arrival led to the execution of the Tikal king.

Variant spellings of *Siyaj K'ahk'* and the appearance of other unusual titles recorded at Tikal on the *Marcador* text and on Stela 31, indicate he was Teotihuacano. Grube believes that this name is probably a Maya representation of a foreign name (Grube and Martin 2000: 87). The name *Siyaj K'ahk'* appears in several early Classic texts from Tikal and its environs (Figure 6.12). The name consists of the 'fire' sign

k'ahk', an upturned frog head read *siy*, and a verbal completive suffix *ja*. Together, the name is read *Siyaj K'ahk'* and means 'Born of Fire' or 'Fire Born'.

Siyaj K'ahk''s journey to the central Petén can be traced epigraphically through the hieroglyphic inscriptions at various sites in the Maya Lowlands. The first description of *Siyaj Kahk'*'s *entrada* appears in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of El Perú, a large Early Classic site located approximately 75 km due west of Tikal. A reference to *Siyaj K'ahk'* is recorded on Stela 15 at El Peru in a passage dated to 8.17.1.4.4. 3 *K'an 7 Mak* (7, January 378), just eight days before *Siyaj K'ahk'*'s arrival at Tikal. Though the text is not fully understood, the reference to *Siyaj K'ahk'* on this date helps to identify the overland route from the Río San Pedro Martir to the central Petén, an ancient route still used for travel today between the Valley of Mexico and the central Petén (Grube and Martin 2000: 87) (Figure 6.13). This reference also suggests the time it took for the Teotihuacanos to arrive at Tikal. Recently discovered painted murals at the site of La Sufricayá that feature images of armed Teotihuacan warriors suggest that *Siyaj K'ahk'* traveled with a large contingent of armed warriors and the El Perú text suggests that it took approximately 8 days to travel the 75 km from El Perú to Tikal.

The arrival event itself was recorded on at least four monuments at both Uaxactún (Stela 5 and Stela 22) and at Tikal (Stela 31 and Marcador, Figure 6.14). In each case, the verb used to describe the arrival is the same intransitive verb *jul* 'to arrive'. An example of this type of arrival can also be found in the inscriptions of Naranjo that describe the arrival of a royal woman, Lady *Wak Chan Ajaw*, from Dos Pilas to Naranjo in A.D. 682 to marry into a lineage alliance (Grube and Martin 2004: 109; Stuart 2000: 477). The arrival of Lady *Wak Chan Ajaw* signals the establishment of a new royal dynastic line at Naranjo. It is that sense of *jul* that is suggested by the Teotihuacan *entrada*. A new



A.



B.

Figure 6.12. The Name Phrase of *Siyaj K'ahk'*

A). Tikal Stela 31 (Drawing by John Montgomery)

B). Tikal Stela 4 (Drawing by John Montgomery)

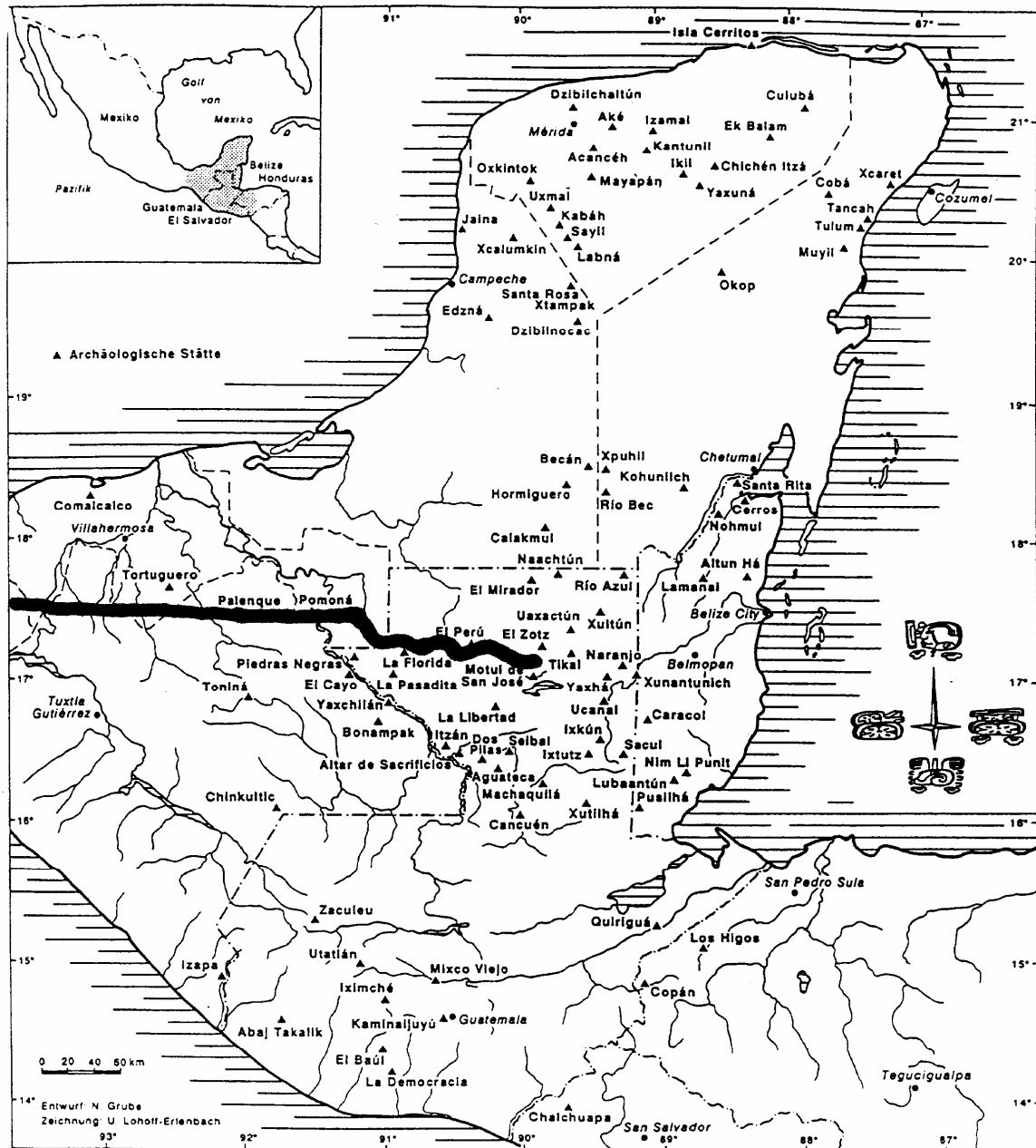


Figure 6.13 Map Showing Probable Route of Teotihuacanos to Tikal (Courtesy of Grube and Martin, modified by author, Grube and Martin 2000: Figure 86).

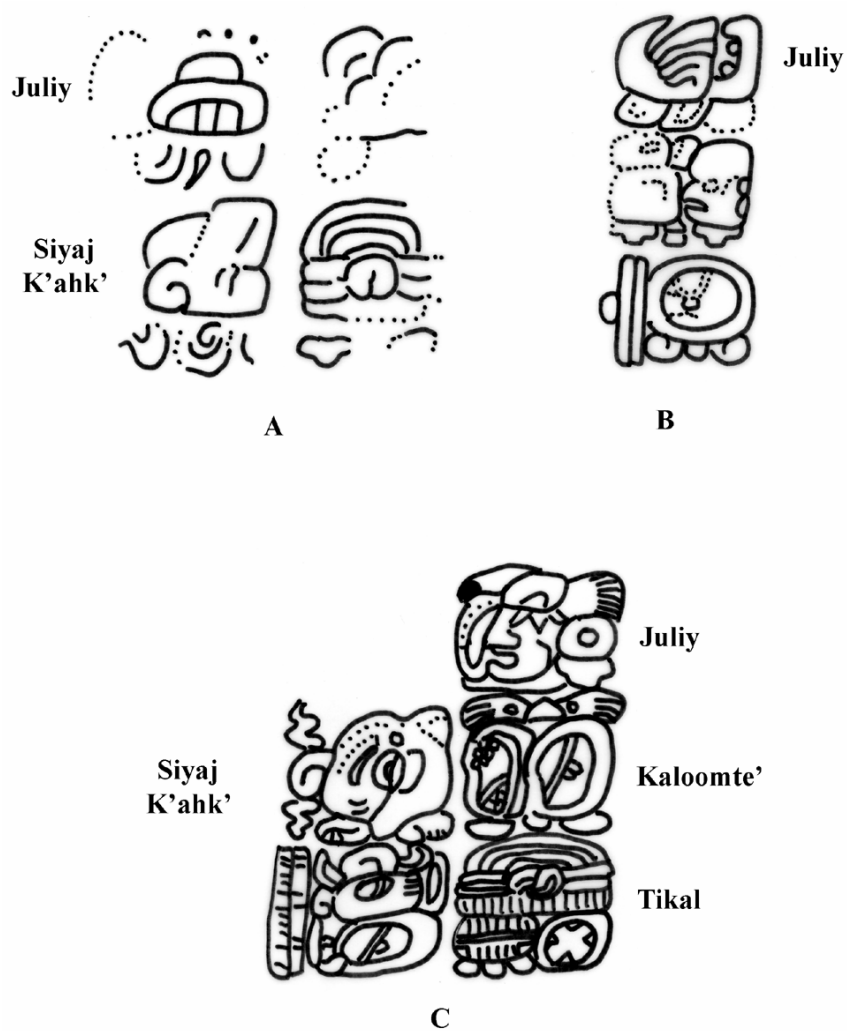


Figure 6.14. The Arrival of *Siyaj K'ahk'* as Recorded at Uaxactun and Tikal (Drawings redrawn by author, after Stuart 2000: Figure 15.12)

- A) Uaxactún Stela 5
- B) Uaxactún Stela 22
- C) Tikal Marcador Text

political order and change in both the architectural and iconographic programs sweeps across the southern Maya Lowlands. This may be the reason that nearly all of the known Early Classic monuments, dating to before A.D. 378 from the central Petén, have been found destroyed or badly broken or dispatched to peripheral sites (see Martin 2000). However, as both Rice (2004: 272) and Sharer (2004: 312) note, this type of ritualized destruction may represent calendrically-based termination rituals that accompanied the end of a *may* seating for a particular city.

Shortly after arriving at Tikal and following the sudden death of *Chak Tok Ich'aak I*, *Siyaj K'ahk'* began a vigorous program establishing new royal lines at sites across the southern Maya Lowlands. There is growing epigraphic evidence that *Siyaj K'ahk'* oversaw royal accessions at Tikal (for *Yax Nuun Ayiin*) on 8.17.2.16.17 5 *Kab'an* 10 *Yaxk'in* (12, September 379), at Bejucal in 381, and at Río Azul as recorded on Stela 1 on 8.17.16.12.2 10 *Ik'* 10 *K'ayab'* (27, March 393) (Martin and Grube 2008: 30). References to *Siyaj K'ahk'* can also be found on a monument from the site of El Zapote (Stela 4) (Martin and Grube 2000: 99) and recent excavations at Copan have also established firm links between *Siyaj K'ahk'* and the Founding of Copan. A passage that includes the name of the Founder of the Copan Dynasty, *K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo*, along with *Siyaj K'ahk'* is recorded on the *Xukpi* Stone, located in the Margarita Tomb (Burial 93-2) deep below Structure 10L-16 (Bell et al. 2004: 136). This passage represents additional evidence that the installation of kings and the establishment of new dynastic lines often involved the arrival of nobility from distant regions.

Having provided the basic epigraphic and archaeological background of the Teotihuacan *entrada*, we can return to the inscriptions of Uxbenká. I believe that a definitive link existed between the aristocracy of Uxbenká and Tikal during this time.

The appearance of the ‘Jaguar Paw’ name on a monument in southern Belize may be another example in a growing list of what Simon Martin (2000: 58) believes was the intentional movement, displacement, or “exiling” of existing royal monuments from the site of Tikal to peripheral sites immediately following the Teotihuacan *entrada*. Martin suggests that the movement or placement of these pre-A.D. 378 monuments at sites in the periphery may represent a pattern “where the king demonstrated his authority over distant outliers by placing monuments in their midst” (2000: 58). Martin believes that the relocation and placement of Tikal monuments at subordinate peripheral sites after A.D. 378 may have coincided with the literal movement of people and served to emphasize Tikal’s hegemonic control over its vassals (2000: 59). This type of monument-exiling behavior has been documented at other sites during the Early Classic Period including: El Encanto (Stela 1), Corozal (Stela 1), El Temblor (Stela 1), and Uolantun (Stela 1) (Fahsen 1990; Jones and Orrego 1987; Jones and Satterthwaite 1982; Martin 2000: 51; Vidal et al. 1996). Both of *Chak Tok Ich’aak* I’s accession monuments (Corozal Stela 1 and El Temblor Stela 1) were found reburied in secondary deposits at peripheral sites outside Tikal. In addition, all of Tikal’s pre-A.D. 378 monuments were found broken and smashed, displaced, and ritually cached in secondary deposits scattered around the site core (Martin and Grube 2000: 30).

Given the Petén-style of carving, its broken condition, and the name of *Chak Tok Ich’aak* I recorded on Uxbenká Stela 11, it is likely that this monument originally came from Tikal. Uxbenká Stela 11 and Stela 18 both appear to have been carved from a non-local variety of fine-grained calcareous sandstone (Wanyerka 2003: 212). Stone of this color (light whitish-blue), texture, and quality cannot be found locally in either the Rio Blanco drainage or anywhere in southern Belize, indicating that the

stone itself was imported to Uxbenká. It has not been confirmed that this stone came from a quarry near Tikal, but its style and close iconographic similarities to other late fourth century Early Classic stelae at Tikal suggest monument relocation. In the future compositional analysis and sourcing should be conducted on Stela 11 to trace the source of the stone.

The restricted nature and rarity of the Jaguar Paw name during the late fourth century, along with other diagnostic features recorded on Stela 11, suggest that this monument records a contemporary reference to the same Jaguar Paw of Tikal. Based on the artistic and iconographic canons of Classic Maya art, if this reference to Jaguar Paw were intended to be retrospective, one would expect to see the name attached to a “floating” apparition looming above the scene like the iconographic themes featured on Tikal Stela 29, Stela 4, and Stela 31. On Stela 11 the Jaguar Paw motif hangs directly from the ruler’s royal belt assemblage as a nametag. As previously discussed, *Chak Tok Ich’aak I*’s full regnal name included the *Yax Ehb’ Xook* epithet as a direct link to the Founder of the Tikal dynasty (Figure 6.15). The *yax* portion of the name appears just above the leg portion of the jaguar paw motif. The scaffold motif represents the *ehb’* portion of the name and the *xook* portion of the name is represented by the shark tooth protruding from the Jaguar Paw head.

A second name is located in the upper right hand corner of Stela 11, just behind the ruler’s elbow in the opened-mouth of a serpent head that forms the right half of a two-headed undulating serpent bar. A small portrait of a well-known, but poorly understood character known as the *Sak Hix Mut* or ‘White Jaguar Bird’ is emerging from the open maw of this serpent head. This character is mentioned about a dozen times in a fairly restricted context at Tikal on Stela 29, Stela 31, the “Headless Man” sculpture, and at

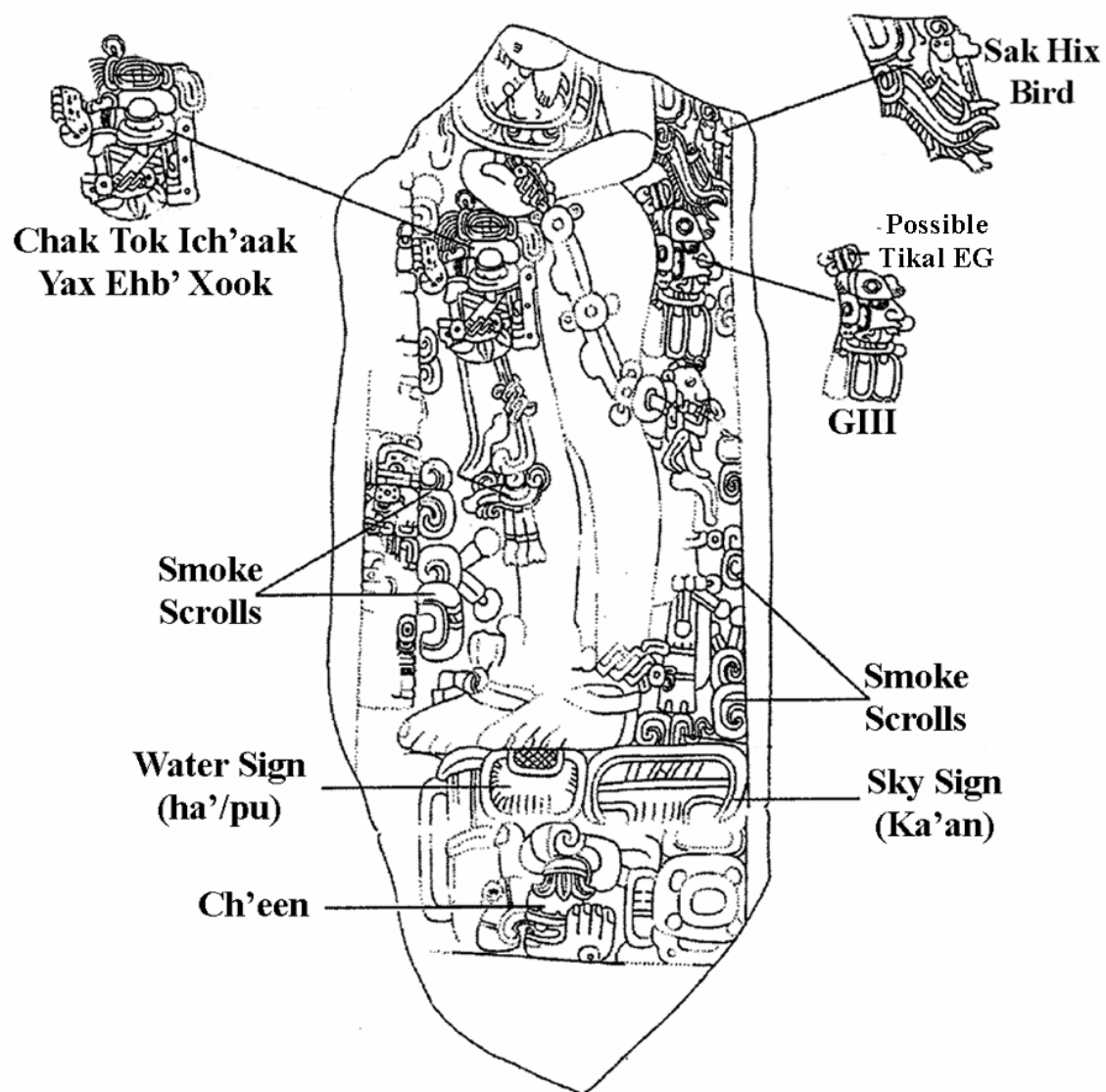


Figure 6.15. Important Historical Names as Recorded on Uxbenká Stela 11 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

least seven times on the huge facade of the Temple of the Inscriptions text (Stuart 2007b) (Figure 6.16). The Temple of the Inscriptions text chronicles ancient Tikal history beginning at 5.0.0.0.0 (1142 B.C.) and the main protagonist featured throughout this text is this *Sak Hix Mut* character (Grube and Martin 2001: 5). Grube believes this character is either an early ancestral king or the mythic Founder of Tikal (Grube and Martin 2000: 127). This character often carries the Tikal emblem glyph as part as his formal name phrase, suggesting that this figure was a historical being, and later Tikal kings seem to legitimize their descent via connections to this ancient being. The image of the *Sak Hix* Bird emerging from the open maw of the serpent bar on Uxbenká Stela 11 is also found on Tikal Stela 31, perhaps suggesting that this theme served as the sculptural prototype for both monuments (Figure 6.17). The pose and iconography depicted on Stela 11 is highly reminiscent of the pose and iconography carved on Tikal Stela 31. The monuments are so similar that they may have been carved by the same person. Finally, the smoke scrolls that frame the ruler on Uxbenká Stela 11 are also reminiscent of the Late Preclassic stucco figures from Group H-Sub 10 at Uaxactún. Together these new epigraphic findings strengthen the view that ideological and political links existed between the royal dynasties of Uxbenká and Tikal during the late fourth century. Based on these epigraphic links to Tikal, it is possible that Uxbenká may have served as a *k'atun* seat during Tikal's Early Classic *may* seating. As mentioned previously, Martin (2000: 59) also correlates the movement of monumental art with the movement of people. The accompanying glyphic text on Uxbenká Stela 11 provides epigraphic evidence of this movement. Though poorly preserved, the text on Stela 11 appears to contain information concerning Tikal's nobility, presumably at or near the time of the great Teotihuacan *entrada*. The left column of text states that *umehen*, 'the male children of noble descent'

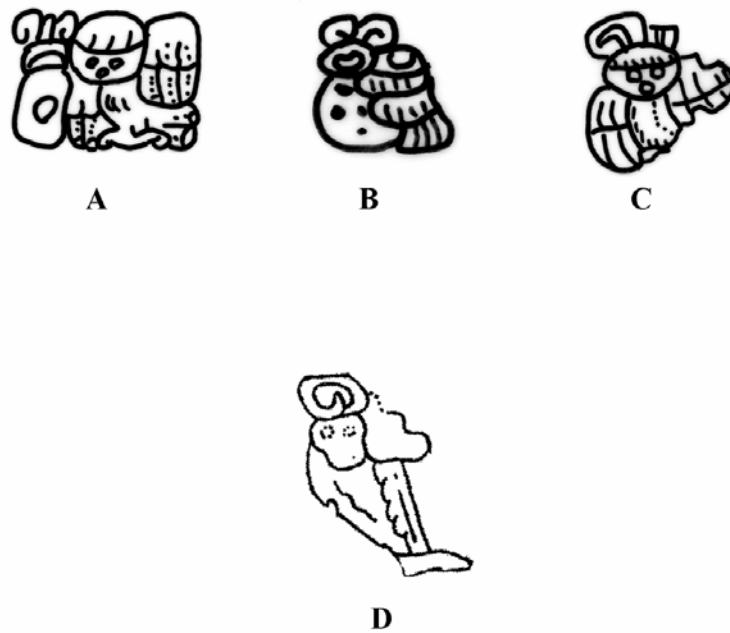


Figure 6.16. The *Sak Hix Mut* Name Glyph (All drawings redrawn by author, after Stuart 2007b: Figure 2).

- A) Tikal Temple of the Inscriptions Text
- B) Tikal “Hombre de Tikal”
- C) Tikal Stela 31, Located with Upper Ancestral Figure
- D) Uxbenká Stela 11

och b'ih 'enter the road' which is a metaphor for death (Figure 6.18). I interpret this passage, along with the Jaguar Paw name, as epigraphic evidence indicating that the text recorded information concerning the arrival event at Tikal in A.D. 378. The *mehen* expression appears in the Motul Dictionary (Hernandez 1930: 623) and in numerous passages of the *Chilam B'alams* of Chumayel in descriptions of arrival events involving 'male children of noble descent' (Bricker 1990: 317-320; Grube and Martin 2004: 27). The passage on Stela 11 seems to mirror the passage on Tikal Stela 31 that describes the death of Jaguar Paw on the day of this great arrival. Though no agent is mentioned in reference to the 'death of the people of noble descent' on Stela 11, a small Tikal emblem glyph can be seen in the upper right-hand corner of the final glyph block. The four glyph-block text located below the image of *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I on Stela 11 records a toponym known as *Ha' K'ahk' Chan Ch'een* or 'Fiery Water Sky City' which likely refers to some location at or near Tikal.

Uxbenká Stela 21 (Figure 6.19) is another Early Classic monument similar in pose and theme to that of Stela 11. Stela 21 was found in 1984 by the SBAP. It was found broken in two pieces (a left side piece and an upper piece) lying in the row of monuments that was erected in front of Str. A-1. The right side of Stela 21 was discovered in 1993 by the MMAP (Dunham et al. 1993: 22). However, it was not identified as such until 1994 when I realized that all three pieces fit together. Unfortunately, the top piece and right-hand side of this stela have since been stolen (Wanyerka 2003: 227). Stela 21 features a portrait of an Early Classic ruler facing left holding an undulating Double-Headed Serpent Bar. Emerging from the open maws of the serpent heads are two unidentified ancestral beings. The ruler is dressed in an elaborate array of fine accoutrements including a large jade bead necklace, an enormous jade earflare, and a large spangled

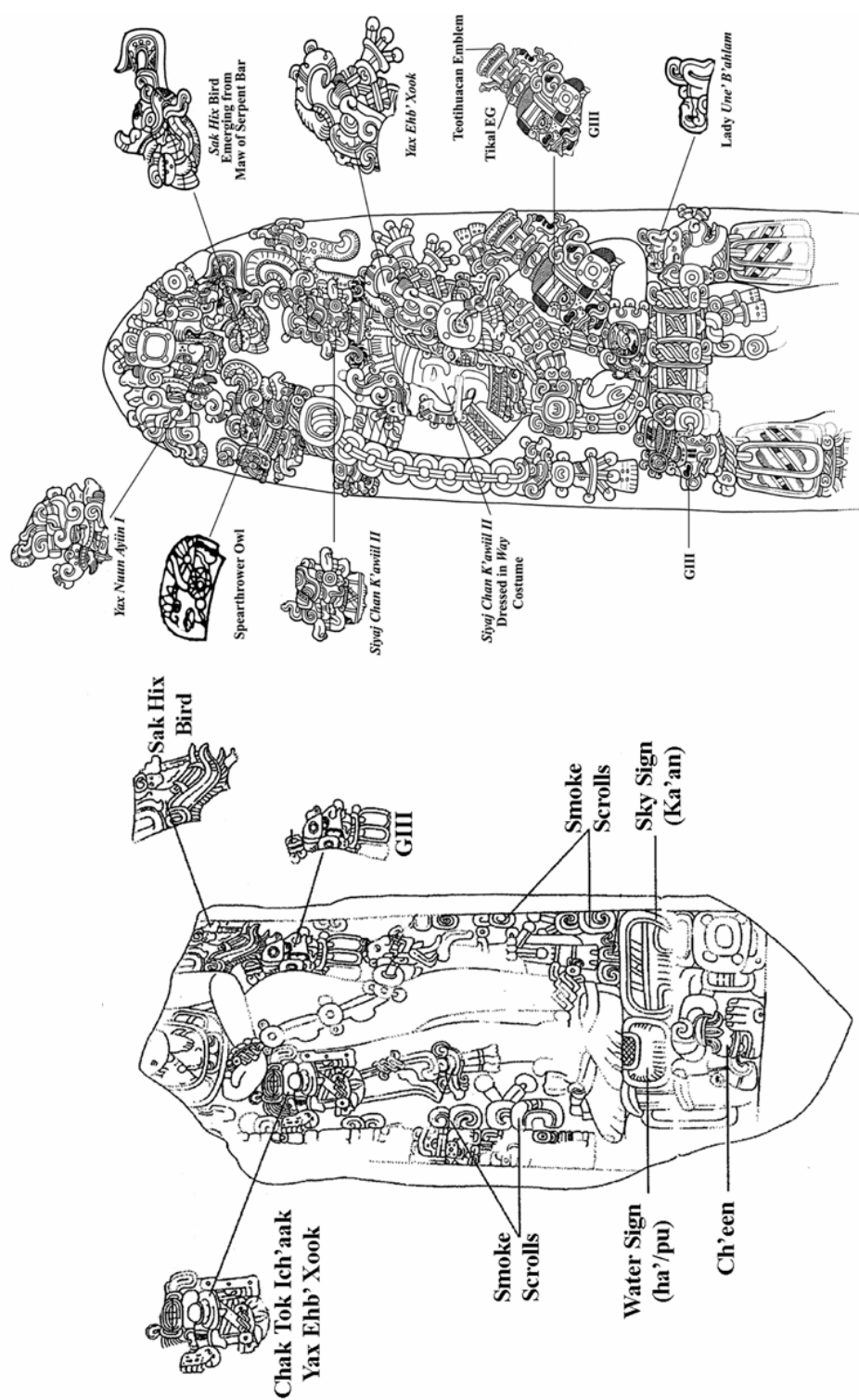


Figure 6.17. The *Sak Hix* Bird as Seen on Uxbenká Stela 11 and on Tikal Stela 31

(Drawings by J. Montgomery)

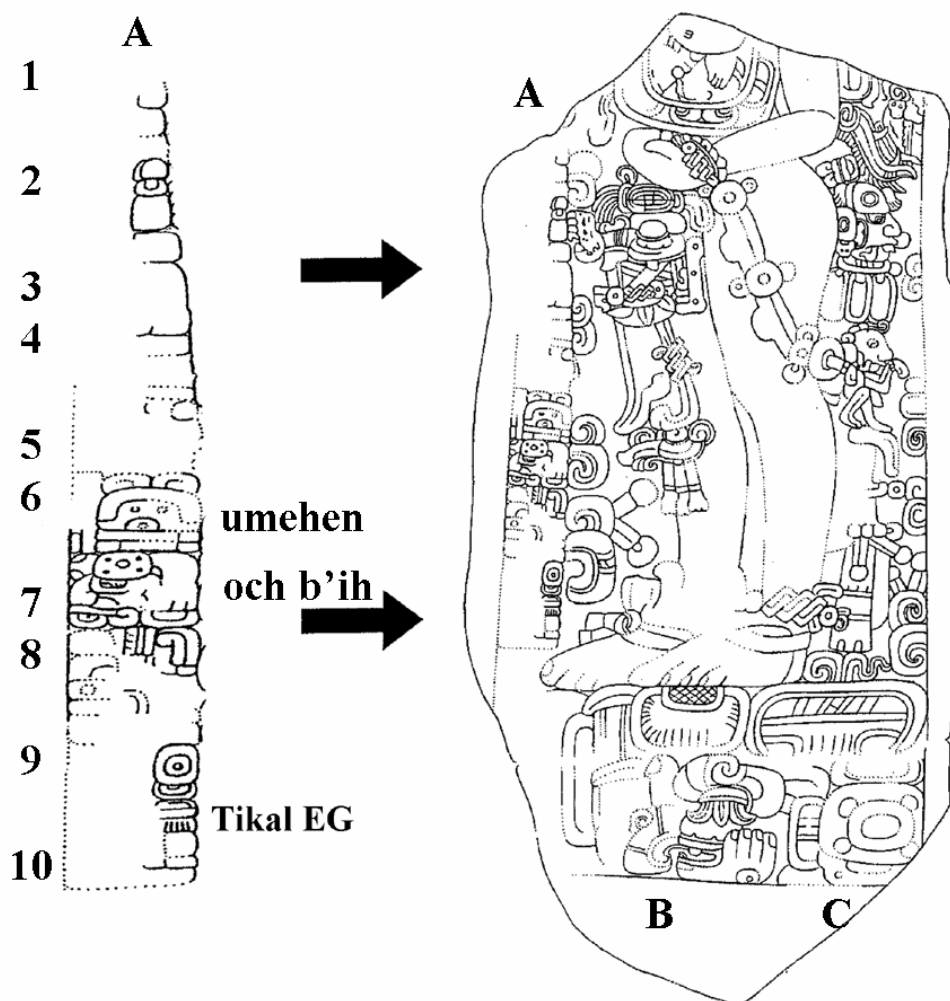


Figure 6.18. The Text of Uxbenká Stela 11 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

headdress that features a fringed medallion that also includes an elaborate portrait of a turtle. Based on the style and pose, along with the mitten-type hands, this stela likely dates to the late 4th century. Accompanying the figural scene is a short three glyph-block text that runs along the left lower side of the monument and a lone single glyph block sits just above the headdress. The three glyph-block text is badly eroded, but it appears to record a parentage statement. The text begins with *umehen* ‘the (male) child of noble descent’ followed by a glyph that should name the father; however, it simply looks like a full syllabic *ma* sign. The final glyph in this series looks like the ‘child of mother’ expression *yal*; however, this text is simply not clear. The lone glyph block, located above the ruler’s headdress is the “flat-hand” verb read *uk’alaw tuun* meaning that ‘he wrapped the stone or year.’ This is a common Period Ending expression. Unfortunately, no other calendrical information survives to ascertain the date of this text, though based on the style and appearance of the “flat-hand” verb and undulating serpent bar, the Long Count date is certainly Early Classic and probably records one of the following Period Endings: 8.17.0.0.0, 8.18.0.0.0, 8.19.0.0.0 or 9.0.0.0.0. Perhaps, more of this important monument will be found one day soon so that a readable date can be identified.

Stela 18 is another Early Classic stela discovered by the SBAP in 1984, located on top of the first medial terrace leading up and into Group A (Figure 6.20). The monument was found broken into several large fragments and the base was still in situ. Carved on one side only, Stela 18 features an Early Classic portrait of an Uxbenká king dressed in the guise of the “Skycracker” *Chahk* cradling a rigid ceremonial serpent bar under his arms (Wanyerka 1996: 33). Schele identified this character as a variant form of the better-known *Chak Xib’ Chahk* ‘Red or Great Rain God’ (Freidel et al. 1993: 203). *Chak Xib’ Chahk* can appear in either anthropomorphic or zoomorphic forms and can

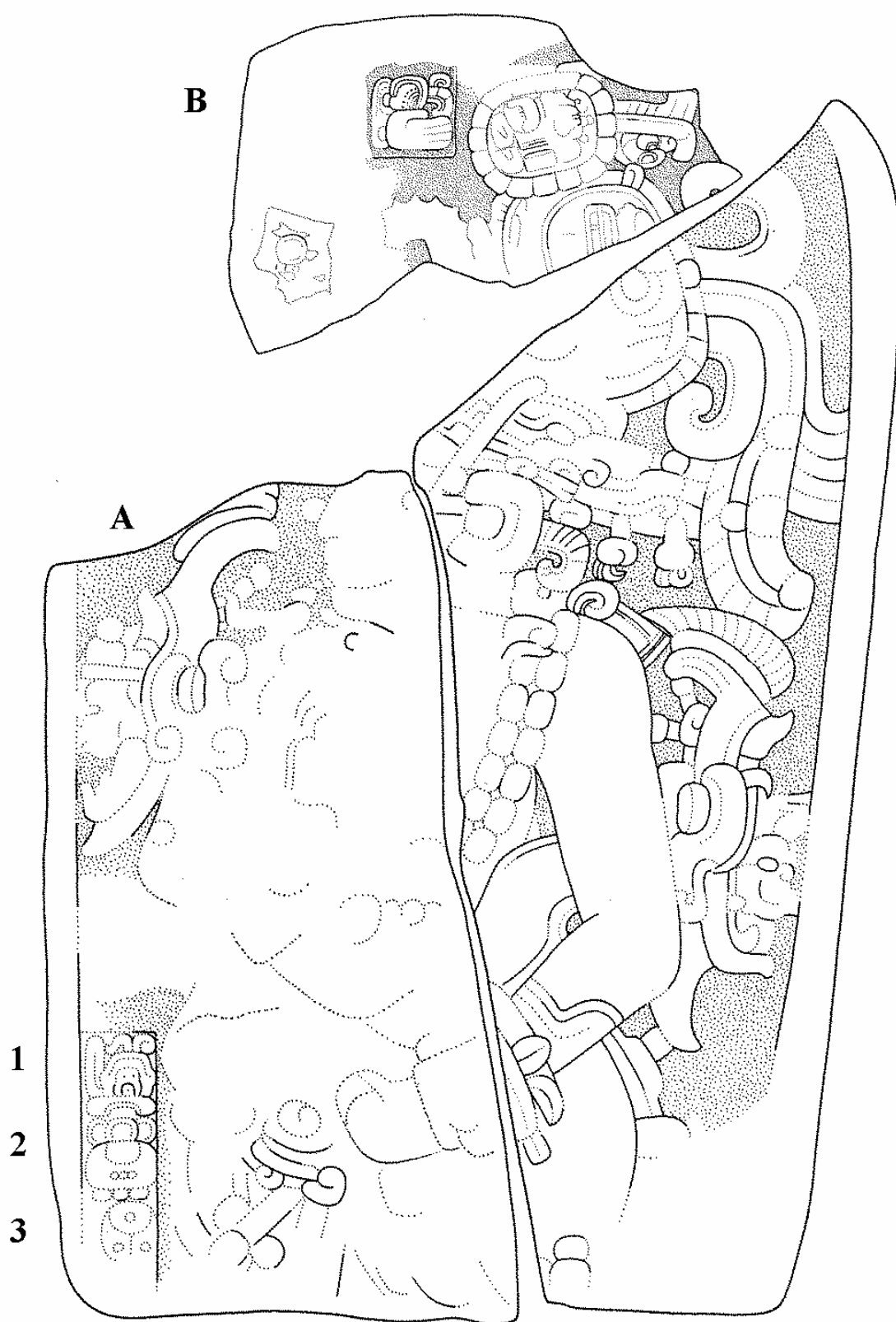


Figure 6.19. Uxbenká Stela 21 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

easily be identified by his shell earflare, a shell diadem, a fish fin along side his face, a twisted hank of rope that runs down the side of the face (that may or may not feature a small skull), and the axe he sometimes wields (García Barrios 2005, 2006; García Barrios et al. 2005; Schele and Freidel 1990: 408). Tozzer (1941: 138) mentions that *Chak Xib'* *Chahk* was also the earth-bearing *B'akab'* of the east. Several Early Classic kings at Tikal on Stela 29 and Stela 31 also wear this costume.

While clearing vegetation on the first day of the 2005 field season of the UAP, one of the workmen directed our attention to a monument fragment lying face down alongside a looter's pit in the southwest corner of Str. A-5 (Prufer and Wanyerka 2005). The text, though broken, was perfectly preserved in cookie-cutter relief. A short six-glyph block text was carved on one side along with the partial figural image of a right foot (Figure 6.21). This configuration suggests that a larger portrait of a standing king may still be found at the site. Stela 23 is Early Classic in origin and records the earliest contemporary Initial Series date in the entire Southern Maya Mountains Region. The date recorded on Stela 23 corresponds to the Period Ending date of 9.1.0.0.0 6 *Ajaw* 13 *Yaxk'in* (27, August 455). The text begins at A1 with an early stylistic version of the *tzolk'in* day 6 *Ajaw*. Following the *tzolk'in* at B1 is the beginning of a truncated Lunar Series. The half-shaded feature of this sign confirms that the Ninth Lord of the Night presided over this day as would be expected for a Period Ending date. This reading is followed at A2 with an unusual form of Glyph D that features a *ch'een* glyph. Grube believes that this text may record a reference to the New Moon (personal communication to Wanyerka September 2005). The only other text where this glyphic combination occurs is on La Milpa Stela 7 in a passage dated to 9.17.10.0.0 (Grube 1994: 222). The context on both monuments suggests that the moon was no longer visible. According to

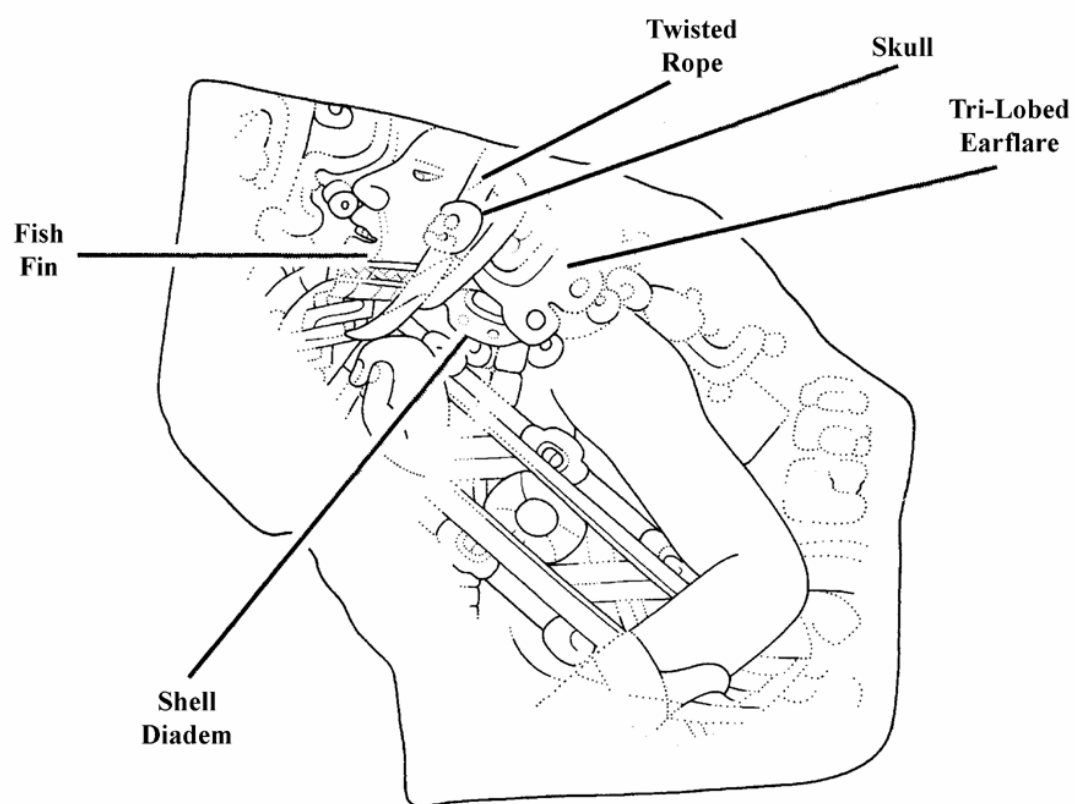


Figure 6.20. Uxbenká Stela 18 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

the Vienna Dictionary, the Yukatek had a phrase for New Moon, *b'inan uh tu ch'een*, which means 'the moon has gone into her well', a metaphorical reference to the blackening of the face of the moon (Thompson 1960: 236; Grube et al. 1999: 21). Though the example recorded here on Stela 23 is abbreviated, it does include the rare *ch'een* form of Glyph G which suggests that New Moon was likely its intended meaning. On this day the moon was 28.9 days old, hence it would not be visible (EZ Cosmos 1993). Following Glyph D at B2 is the *na* sign and "Jaguar-Eye" form of Glyph C, indicating that the 'first jaguar-eye' lunation had ended (Montgomery 2002a: 96). This reading is followed by Glyph A at A3 stating that the lunation was 30 days long and finally, the last glyph at B3 is the *haab'* portion of the date recorded as 13 *Yaxk'in*.

The last Early Classic text to be described here is Miscellaneous Text 1 (Figure 6.22). MT 1 was originally discovered by the SBAP in 1984, but its original provenance is not known. This fragment is broken and severely eroded and it represents the left-hand portion of a larger monument based on the visible text border along its edge (Wanyerka 2003: 236). It is carved on two sides with a six glyph-block text on the front and a five glyph-block text on its side. Due to its eroded state, little can be read on the front side of the fragment. Using side lighting in 2001 as part of my SBEP investigations, I was able to see that the side of this fragment was also carved with an additional hieroglyphic text. To date, this is the only monument found in the Southern Maya Mountains Region that contains both a front and side text. The side text seems to include the numerical coefficient 10 and an eroded cartouche (C2). There is not enough information visible to identify with any degree of certainty the date; however, the main sign probably represents the *haab'* portion of a Long Count date, since a well-known verb follows an intervening glyph. The verb, recorded at C4, is the *utz'ap tun* expression indicating that a stone was

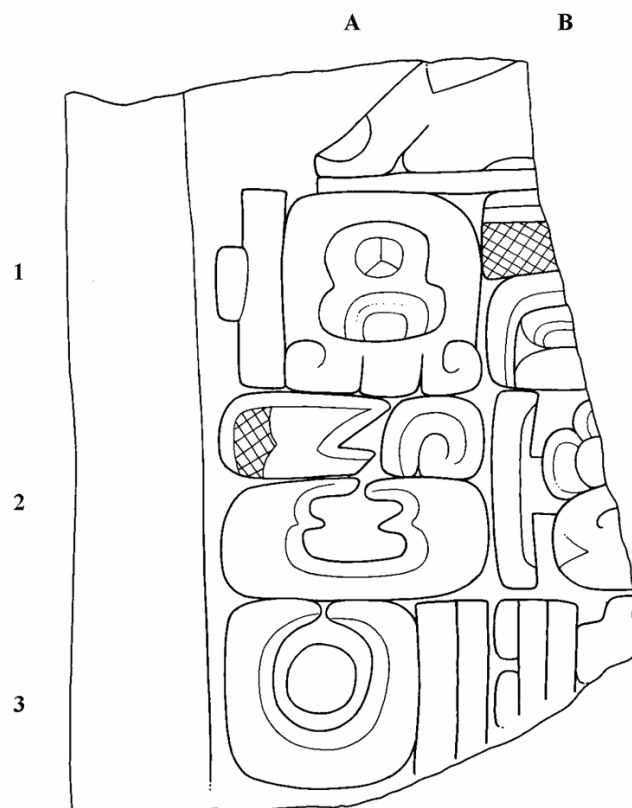


Figure 6.21. Uxbenká Stela 23 (Drawing by and courtesy of Peter Mathews)

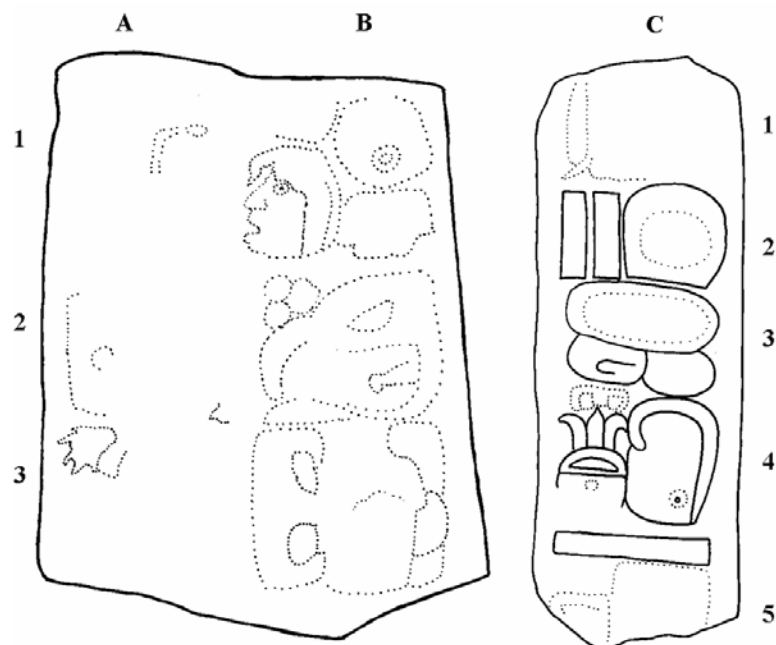


Figure 6.22. Uxbenká Miscellaneous Text 1 (Drawing by P. Wanyerka)

planted, a reference to a monument erection. Based on the elongated style of the tripartite appendage of the *tz'ap* glyph, it is in late fourth century Early Classic style, further evidence that Uxbenká was an important monument-bearing site during the Early Classic Period.

There are many carved miscellaneous sculptures at the site including at least ten Early Classic pieces (Figure 6.23). Most of the fragments depict a variety of costume elements such as tubular beads, scrolls, and other amorphous designs. Because of the fluidity of the line and the wispy nature of the costume elements along with the scrolls, the iconography suggests that these fragments are all Early Classic in origin. It is also likely that these fragments belong to one of the four known Early Classic stelae or possibly to some undiscovered one. For a full description of these ten miscellaneous carved sculptures see Wanyerka (2003).

Late Classic Epigraphic Investigations in the Río Blanco Valley

I will now turn to a brief discussion of the Late Classic monuments at Uxbenká. Stela 14 (Figure 6.24) is a Late Classic monument with a Long Count date between 9.12.0.0.0 (28, June 672) and 9.13.0.0.0 (15, March 692) based on the surviving three-glyph block text located below the figural scene. Stela 14, which still stands today, was discovered by the SBAP in 1984 and is located about 5m from the northeast corner of Str. A-3 along the western portion of the Group A Stela Plaza (Wanyerka 2003: 216). Though intact, the entire upper portion of the stela has flaked off due to fire damage and continued exposure to the elements. The lower half of Stela 14 was carved in low relief and only the vestiges of a carved *Witz* Monster pedestal with three hieroglyphs are still

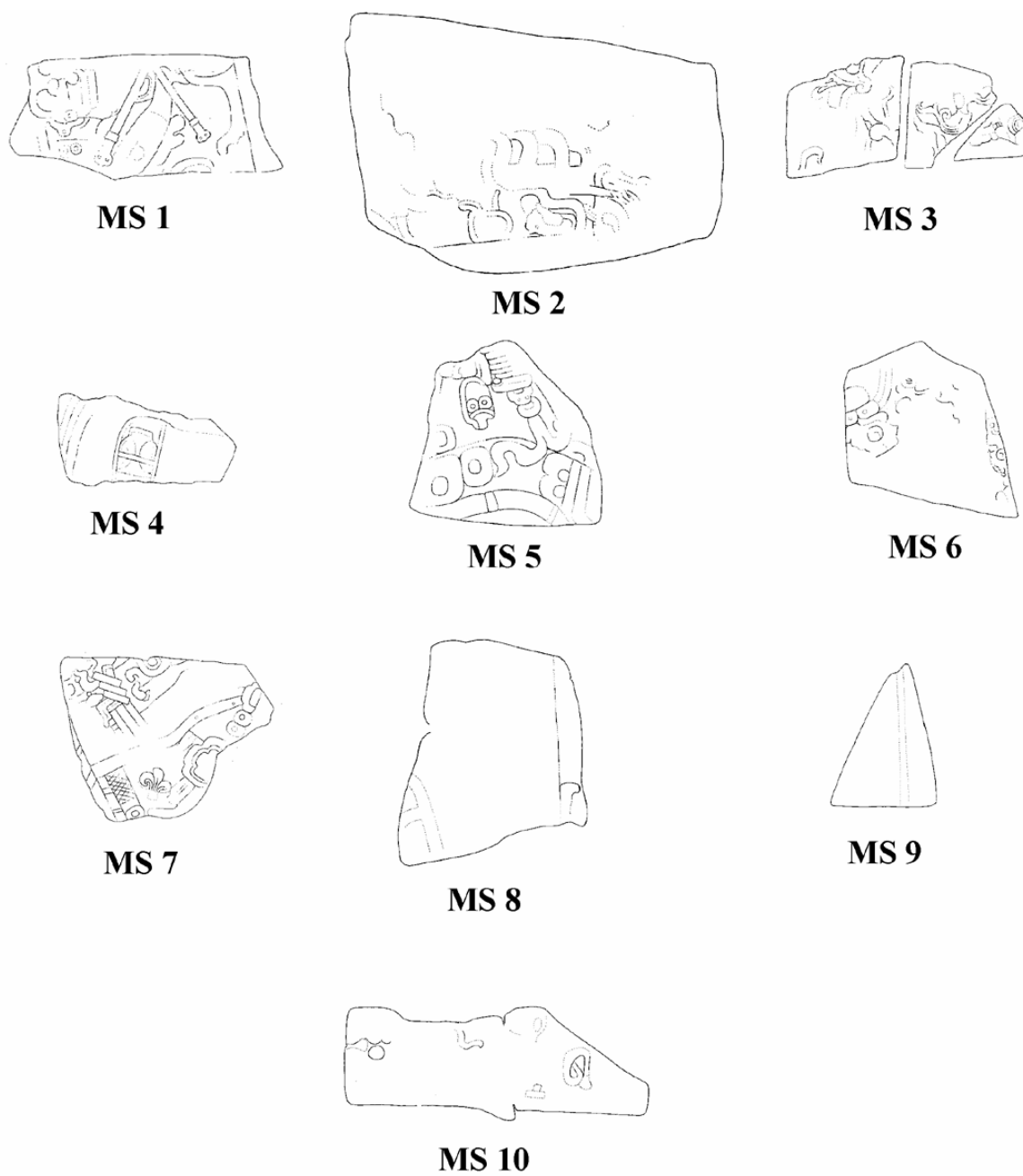


Figure 6.23. Uxbenká Miscellaneous Sculptures 1-10 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

visible in the lower right-hand corner of the stela. The *Witz* Monster pedestal is important for it appears to record the toponym *Chan Witz* ‘Sky Mountain’. This location may be the ancient hilltop name of the Uxbenká site core or it may be the name of a sacred mountain nearby.

As Stuart and Houston (1994: 57) noted, there are many examples in Classic Maya art that feature individuals standing on top of various *Witz* Monster pedestals. Often those pedestals incorporate iconographic motifs or contain explicit hieroglyphic renderings that refer to specific place names. From these Classic Period examples and from later 16th century ethnohistoric accounts, the Q’eqchi’ and many other indigenous Maya groups often marked their territorial boundaries using specific geologic features such as hills, mountains, other elevated places, caves, valley floors, cliff faces, and even trees or specific forests (Weeks 1997: 87). Since a large number of stelae in the Southern Maya Mountains Region feature *Witz* Monster pedestals I suspect that they were used to denote sacred geological features or to denote the names of their polities. It is likely that the upper half of Stela 14 featured a portrait of a ruler standing on top of the *Witz* Monster. This theme is repeated frequently in the sculptural programs of both Nim Li Punit and Xnaheb’. The short remaining hieroglyphic text located below the figural image is eroded, but enough survives to suggest that the *k’atun* portion of the Long Count date was probably 12 or 13, indicating a date between 9.12.0.0.0 and 9.14.0.0.0.

Stela 19 contains the longest text at Uxbenká (Figure 6.25). Stela 19 was first reported by the SBAP in 1984 and was located at the south base of the hill that contained the Group A Stela Plaza (Wanyerka 2003: 224). The stela was found broken into three pieces (not pictured is the missing base) and because it was found face-up, much of its surface details are completely eroded. Carved on one side only, Stela 19 contains the

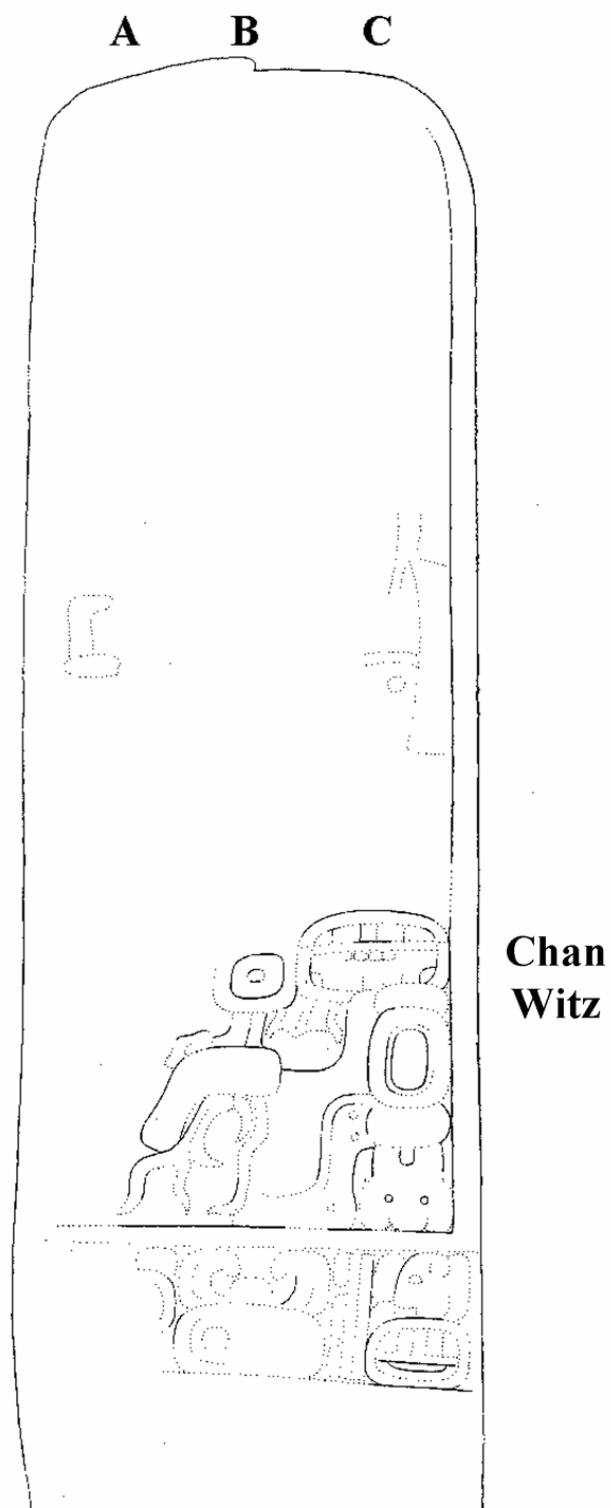


Figure 6.24. Uxbenká Stela 14 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

weathered remains of 36 individual glyph blocks. Besides a tentative Long Count date of 9.12.11.13.11 3 *Chuwen* 4 *Kumk'u* (28, January 684) virtually nothing can be ascertained with any degree of confidence except for a partial distance number at C1-D1 and a possible *b'akab'* epithet in the final glyph block.

Stela 22 (Figure 6.26) was found by the SBAP in 1986 face-up, approximately 2m southeast from the northeast corner of Str. A-2 (Wanyerka 2003: 230). The stela is missing its base and is severely eroded. It contains an unusual six-glyph block text in single column format. The text commemorates the Period Ending 9.16.0.0.0 2 *Ajaw* 13 *Sek* (5, May 751). The date was recorded in an abbreviated Calendar Round form confirmed by the “*tuun-in-hand*” expression at A4. Often to conserve space, dates were expressed using a shortened Calendar Round notation. The “*tuun-in-hand*” glyph commonly appears with Period Ending dates and seems to be a reference to the dedication of monuments that are erected in commemoration of Period Endings (Montgomery 2002a: 108). The protagonist’s name at A5 is completely obliterated and it appears that was intentional since only the name glyph was effaced from the monument. This person was likely a divine lord of Uxbenká, based on the outline of an emblem glyph at A6. The main elements of a standard emblem glyph are present here on Stela 22 (the *k'u* prefix, the T168 *ajaw* superfix, and the T130 *wa* subfix), but the main sign of the emblem glyph is no longer legible. The appearance of this emblem glyph indicates that Uxbenká was an emblem glyph-bearing polity during Classic times. The spelling of the *Haab'* sign *Sek* at A3 is interesting and noteworthy. During the Classic period, the month name *Sek* in all of the Ch'olan languages was pronounced *Kasew* (spelled glyphically as *ka-se-wa*). However, the example recorded here on Stela 22 lacks the initial *ka* prefix suggesting the possibility of a Yukatekan spelling of *Sek*. Similar spellings of the month

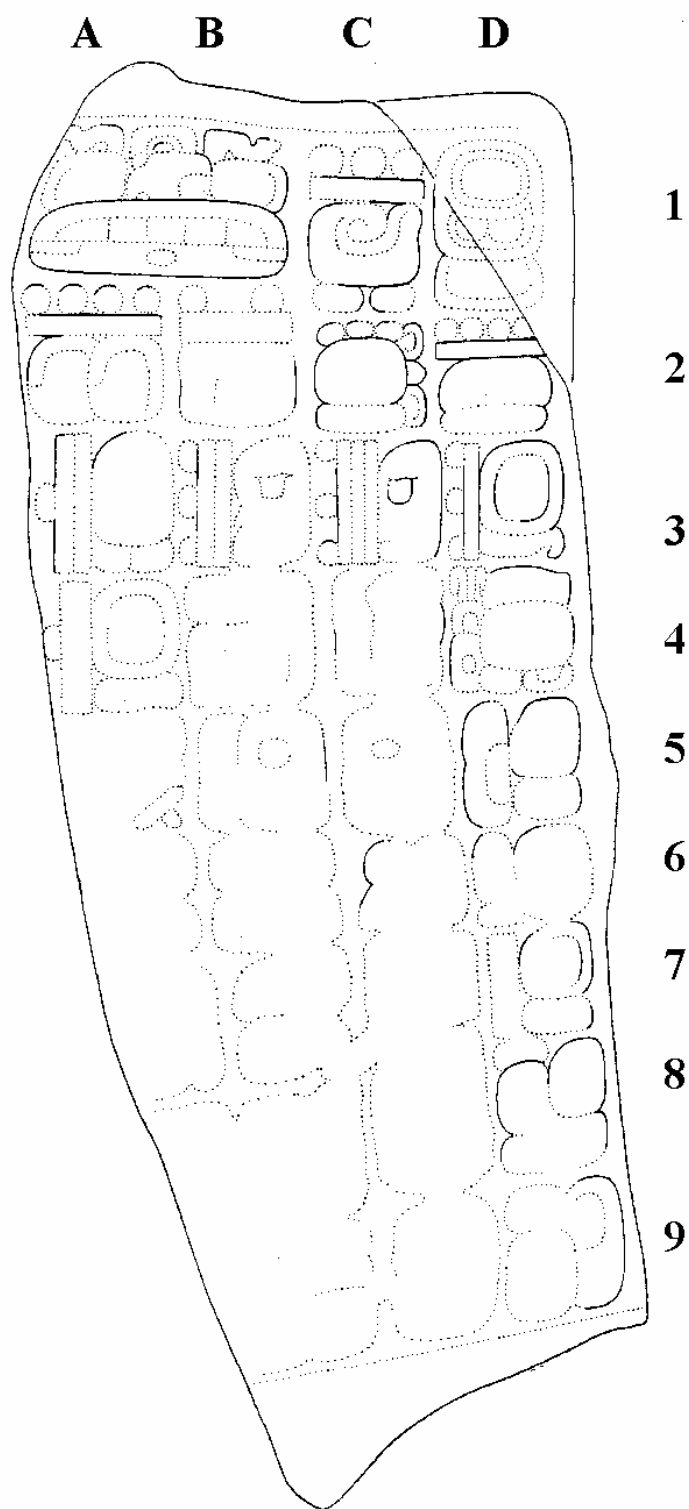


Figure 6.25. Uxbenká Stela 19 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

name *Sek* have been found in the Postclassic codices dating to the mid-13th century and so this spelling here may indicate that a Yucatekan language was spoken at Uxbenká during the Late Classic Period.

The Yucatekan spelling of *Sek* at Uxbenká following the death of the Tikal king *Chak Tok Ich'aak I* in A.D. 378 has implications for the political makeup, structure, and dynamics of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Based on current archaeological and epigraphic evidence, Uxbenká was the first major settlement in the Southern Maya Mountains Region to have close political and regional ties with the central Petén, a point that likely served to facilitate Uxbenká's rise to prominence during the Late Preclassic to Early Classic periods, as well as suggesting Uxbenká's regional importance in the control and distribution of Maya Mountains resources (Jamison et al. 1991: 6). With the exception of the commemoration of the 9.1.0.0.0 Period Ending (27, August 455) recorded on Stela 23, no further inscriptions were recorded at Uxbenká for some 229 years (which may relate to one complete *may* cycle) until Stela 19 was erected on 9.12.11.13.11 3 *Chuwen* 4 *Kumk'u* (28, January 684). However, by the start of the 7th century several other emblem glyph-bearing polities had emerged in the Southern Maya Mountains Region including Pusilhá, Lubaantún, and Nim Li Punit. In addition, dozens of smaller sites, whose main economic activities appear to be tied to resource exploitation and exchange (Dunham 1991, 1995, 1996; Dunham et al. 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999; Prufer 2005c; Prufer and Wanyerka 2001; Wanyerka 2000, 2005a), suddenly appear in an area generally void of population centers prior to the start of the Late Classic Period. Perhaps the sudden emergence of several emblem glyph-bearing polities in the Southern Maya Mountains Region at this time is a reflection of increased competition for resources following the vacuum created with the end of Tikal's Middle

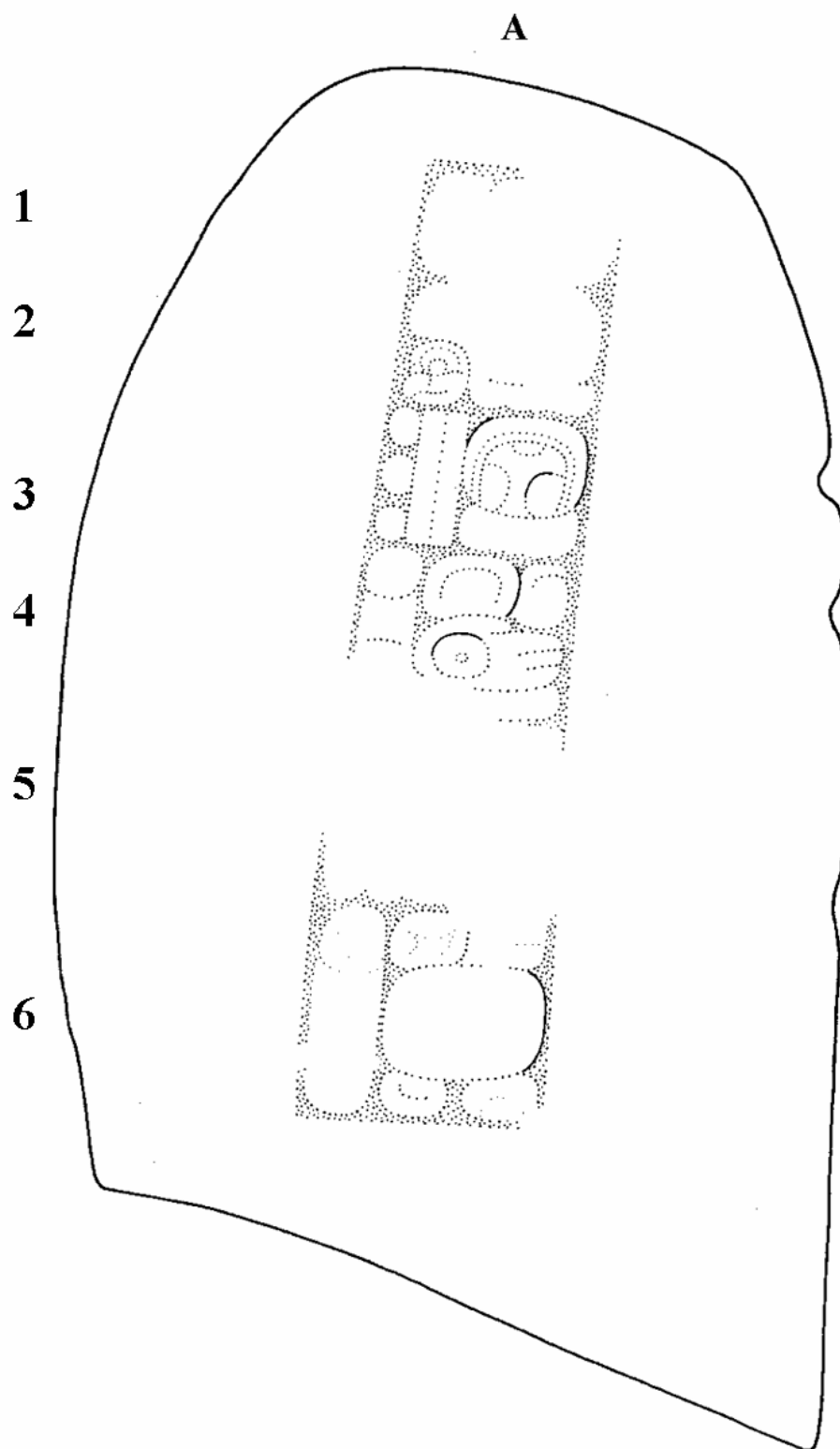


Figure 6.26. Uxbenká Stela 22 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Classic *may* seating and its inability to maintain tighter control in the region during its so-called Hiatus Period (A.D. 562-692). In fact, following the end of Early Classic period, there is little or no epigraphic evidence of central Petén influence in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. It is likely that the rapid population increase along with the appearance of numerous new polities in the Southern Maya Mountains Region by the start of the 7th century was the result of foreign migrations into the region. Therefore, the Yukatekan spelling of the month *Sek*, as recorded at Uxbenká on Stela 22, may provide critical linguistic evidence to support the hypothesis that people who spoke a Yukatek language migrated into the region and mixed with the local population prior to the Late Classic Period.

The latest dated monument at Uxbenká is Stela 15 (Figure 6.27). Stela 15 was discovered by the SBAP in 1984 and was originally located 1m north of the northeast corner of Str. A-3 (Wanyerka 2003: 219). The monument was broken into at least three pieces and is severely eroded, but most of its text can be read, including the Initial Series Date, 9.17.10.0.0 12 *Ajaw* 8 *Pax* (28, November 780). This particular Long Count date commonly appears in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region and was commemorated at Ixtutz (Stela 4), Ixkun (Stela 12), and Xnaheb' (Stela 2).

The text includes a reference to a fire-scattering (B6) as a final part of the Lunar Series. The fire-scattering expression features a collocation consisting of a closed fist surrounded by a second open hand (*pukil*) immediately followed by the head variant of a glyph for *k'ahk'* 'fire'. Together this expression is read *pukil k'ahk'* 'the scattering of fire' (Wisdom 1950: 590). Grube has noted an interesting fire sequence involving the lighting or drilling of fire, actual fire burning, and fire scattering in association with a

particular god who is the possessor of that fire. According to Grube (2000b: 101-102), the most common verb used in statements referring to the fire-scattering is *puk* and this glyph commonly occurs together with the Jaguar God of the Underworld (JGU). When the verbal root is *joch* 'drill (fire)', the possessor is always an opossum. When the verbal root is *til* 'to burn', it is always associated with *Chak Xib' Chahk*, and finally when the verbal root is *jatz'* 'cause (fire) by lightning' or 'hitting stones', it is always in association with the Sun God (Grube 2000b: 101-102). These fire statements seem to correspond with the figural representations in the Maya codices that depict fire drilling or the scattering of incense into incense burners. Some of the best examples of individuals shown scattering incense into incense burners are found on monuments at Nim Li Punit, especially on Stela 1, 2, and 15. Apparently, sacred fire and the burning of incense were important Period Ending activities at sites located in the southeastern Petén and southern Belize, for references to them are often included in the formulaic Lunar or Supplemental Series (Grube 2000b: 105).

Recently, Rice (2004: 245-248) has argued that many of these Classic Period references involving fire may be directly related to the Late Postclassic and Colonial Period burner rituals described in the Maya codices, the books of the Chilam B'alam, and in Landa's written account. Fire starting or fire quenching rituals appear to have been an important component in Maya Period Ending celebrations (Rice 2004: 245). According to Landa (Tozzer 1941: 163), the burner rituals were carried out to ensure proper rain for crops and signaled the start of the planting season. Rice (2004: 247) believes that Grube's (2000b) Classic Period findings of a sequence of lighting, burning, and extinguishing fire are directly related to the burner rituals described in Postclassic and Colonial Period accounts. According to Rice (2004: 245), fire rituals may

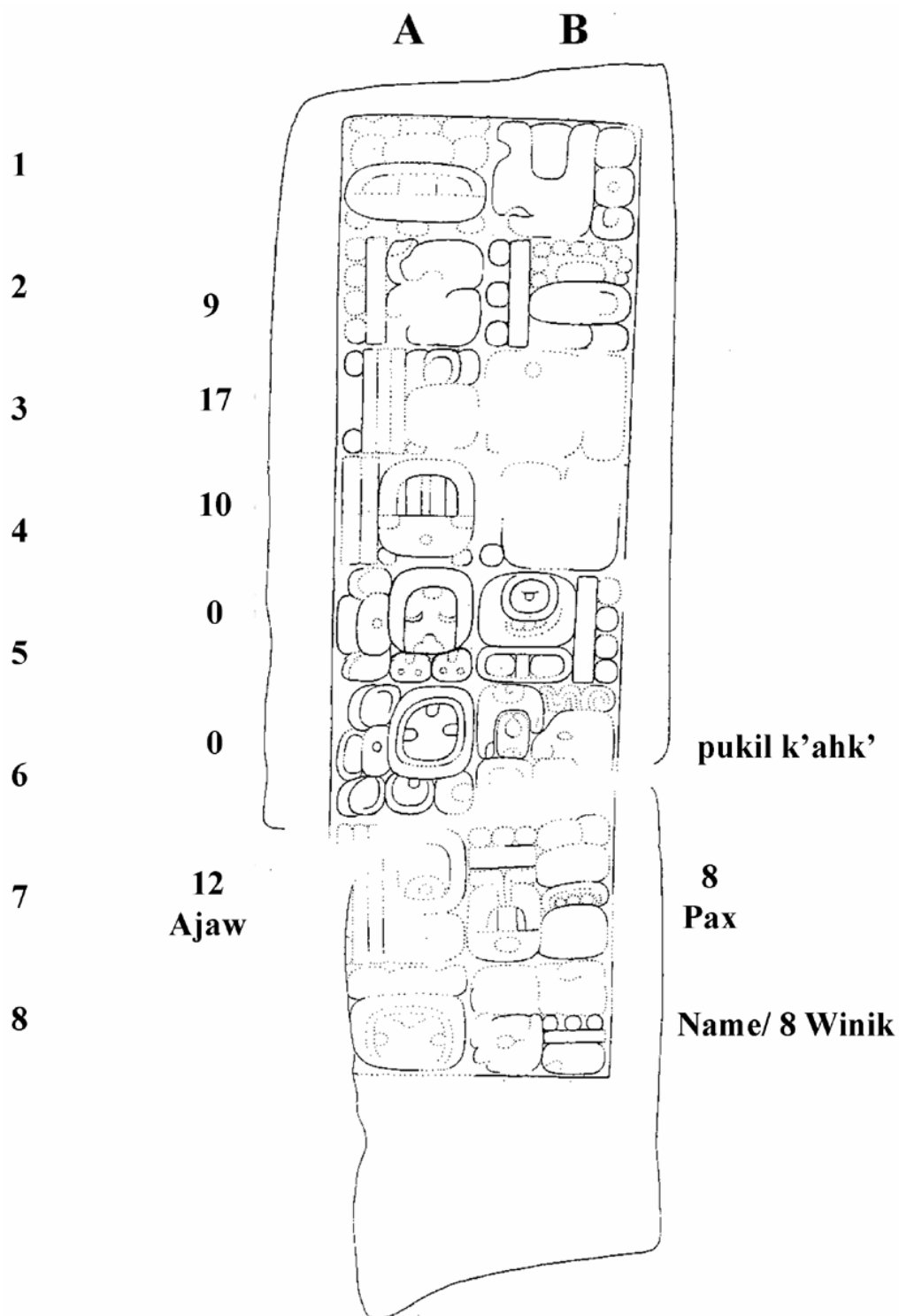


Figure 6.27. Uxbenká Stela 15 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

have played an important role in the structuring of the socio-political order since many Period Ending celebrations likely involved the starting and quenching of fire in specific temples or public areas.

The peak event recorded on Stela 15 appears to be the ritual commemoration of the 9.17.10.0.0 Period Ending. Unfortunately, the name of the main protagonist is too eroded to read (first half of B8). However, the protagonist carried the 28 *Winik* Title (last glyph of B8), a title common among emblem glyph-bearing sites located in the eastern Petén and Southern Maya Mountains Region during the Late Classic Period (Grube et al. 1999: 35; Wanyerka 2003: 68). The meaning of the title remains a mystery, though clues are emerging that may eventually lead to its reading. All of the 29 known examples of this collocation begin with the numerical coefficient of *waxak* or ‘8’ as it is read in most of the Yucatekan and Ch’olan languages (see Table 6.2). The main sign of the collocation appears to be the T683a or T683b logograph that was deciphered long ago as either *k’al* meaning ‘twenty’ (Barrera Vasquez 1980: 367) or *winik* meaning ‘man’ (Barrera Vasquez 1980: 923) or as the syllable sign *ja* (Figure 6.28) based on its normal context as Glyph A and Glyph E of the Lunar Series. In most Maya languages the word *winik* means ‘man’ but it can also be used to refer to ‘people’ in general. In Yucatek Maya, *winik* can also be interpreted as ‘otorgar o concertar o apalabrar las mujeres para que se casen’ or ‘offer or arrange or engage women for marriage’ which is an interesting idea if the marriage in question involved arranging women for specific lineage heads (Barrera Vasquez 1980: 923). In addition, *winik* or *vinic*, as noted in the Motul Dictionary, is also a term used to refer to a unit of measure for marking land (Hernandez 1930: 905). According to Yucatek sources (Barrera Vasquez 1980: 923), a *winik* is a unit for measuring milpas or cornfields by using a stick that is tied with a specific length of cord

(usually the distance of a man's outstretched arms). The cord itself is known as a *k'aan*. Roys (1943: 197) notes that a *k'aan* or *mecate* is a surface measure of about 20 meters square or roughly 1/10th of an acre. Whether this collocation was meant to be read as 8 or 28 is not entirely clear nor is it clear as to whether the main sign is to be read *winik* or *k'al*, but the fact that a phonetic *ki* sign is recorded in nearly half of the examples strongly suggests that *winik* was its correct reading. A figural scene portrayed on Dos Pilas Panel 19 describes an event during the reign of Ruler 3 that was *yilaj* 'witnessed' by the *Waxak Winik* lords. The figure captions for five of the six people depicted on Panel 19 include the names of Ruler 3 of Dos Pilas, a young lord from Calakmul, and a royal woman from Cancuen who was also presumably in attendance at Dos Pilas to observe a bloodletting. This same statement involving the 'witnessing' of an event by the *Waxak Winik* was also recorded at Dos Pilas on Stela 8 and later on Ixtutz Stela 4, though neither of these two stelae actually depicts the gathering of lords. Houston (1993: 154) interprets these kinds of witnessing ceremonies as an important means for rulers to validate events within one's polity. These types of witnessing events may be further epigraphic evidence to support Rice's *may* model. Perhaps the lords who attended these specific ritual commemorations were lords or rulers of the various *k'atun* seats who used this occasion to come together under the *may* system, perhaps to discuss the business of negotiating future *k'atun* seats.

Nikolai Grube believed that the 28 prefix might have been used to signal a play of words upon *waxak* (the word for 'eight') with *wa* meaning 'standing' and *xak* meaning 'firm' or 'fixed' (Grube et al. 1999: 35). This may imply that those who carried the title are related or allied. The royal epithet read *B'akab'* meaning 'First of the Earth' or 'First of the World' follows the *Waxak Winik* title in nearly half of these examples (Grube et al. 35). It is also interesting to note that in Yukatek Maya *b'akab'* can also mean

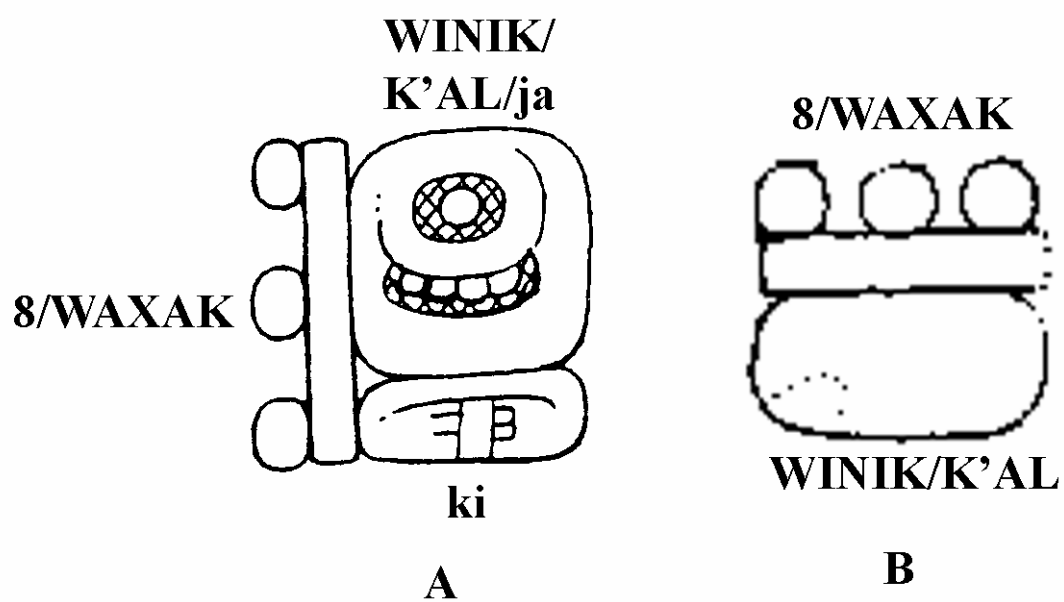


Figure 6.28. The 28 *Winik* Title

A) Nim Li Punit Stela 21 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

B) Uxbenká Stela 15 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Table 6.2. The 28 *Winik* Epithet in Chronological Order

Location	Date	Collocation
Naranjó St. 21	9.13.14.4.2 (24, Mar. 706) 8 Ik' 0 Sip	(<i>ELK'IN</i>) VIII-WINIK
Nim Li Punit St. 15	9.14.10.0.0 (9, Oct. 721) 5 Ajaw 3 Mak	<i>K'U</i> -VIII-WINIK-AJAW
Dos Pilas St. 8	9.14.15.5.15 (6, Jan. 727) 9 Men 13 K'ayab'	<i>yi-IL-aj</i> VIII-WINIK AJ-AJAW-TAK
Naj Tunich D. 66	9.16.3.10.4 (9, Nov. 754) 12 K'an 2 Muwan	VIII-WINIK (<i>B'AKAB'</i>)
Naj Tunich D. 28	9.16.4.1.5 (9, May 755) 11 Chik'chan 18 Sek	VIII-WINIK-ki (<i>B'AKAB'</i>)
Naj Tunich D. 28	9.16.4.1.5 (9, May 755) 11 Chik'chan 18 Sek	VIII-WINIK-ki (<i>B'AKAB'</i>)
Naj Tunich D.25	9.16.12.6.5 (6, July 763) 1 Chik'chan 18 Mol	VIII-WINIK-ki (<i>B'AKAB'</i>)
Naj Tunich D. 29	9.17.0.6.3 (23, May 771) 6 Ak'b'al 16 Xul	VIII-?-WINIK
Ixtutz St. 4	9.17.10.0.0 (28, Nov. 780) 12 Ajaw 8 Pax	<i>Y-IL-aj</i> VIII-WINIK-AJAW TAK
Naranjó St. 13	9.17.10.0.0 (28, Nov. 780) 12 Ajaw 8 Pax	VIII-WINIK-?
Uxbenká St. 15	9.17.10.0.0 (28, Nov. 780) 12 Ajaw 8 Pax	VIII-WINIK
Ixkun St. 1	9.18.0.0.0 (7, Oct. 790) 11 Ajaw 18 Mak	IX-WINIK (<i>B'AKAB'</i>)
Naranjó St. 14	9.18.0.0.0 (7, Oct. 790) 11 Ajaw 18 Mak	VIII-WINIK
Nim Li Punit St. 14	9.18.0.0.0 (7, Oct. 790) 11 Ajaw 18 Mak	VIII-WINIK (<i>B'AKAB'</i>)
Nim Li Punit St. 21	9.18.0.0.0 (7, Oct. 790) 11 Ajaw 18 Mak	VIII-WINIK
Caracol BC Marker 3	9.18.8.3.9 (3, Nov. 798) 9 Muluk 7 Muwan	VII-AJAW-WINIK[<i>ja</i>]-wa
Machaquila St. 2	9.18.10.0.0 (15, Aug. 800) 10 Ajaw 8 Sak	VIII-WINIK-ki (<i>B'AKAB'</i>)

Continuation of Table 6.2.

Location	Date	Collocation
Machaquila St.2	9.19.0.0.0 (24, June 810) 9 Ajaw 18 Mol	VIII- <i>TE'</i> - <i>WINIK-ki</i> (<i>B'AKAB'</i>)
Machaquila St. 8	9.19.15.13.0 (22, Dec. 825) 1 Ajaw 3 Kumk'u	VIII- <i>WINIK-ki</i>
Machaquila St.6	10.0.5.0.0 (13, Feb. 835) 13 Ajaw 13 Wó	VIII- <i>WINIK-ki</i> (<i>B'AKAB'</i>)
Machaquila St. 6	10.0.5.0.0 (13, Feb. 835) 13 Ajaw 13 Wó	VIII- <i>WINIK</i> (<i>B'AKAB'</i>)
Machaquila St. 5	10.0.10.0.0 (18, Jan. 840) 6 Ajaw 8 Pohp	VIII- <i>WINIK-ki</i> (<i>B'AKAB'</i>)
Without Dates		
Dos Pilas Panel 19	Missing	<i>yi-IL-aj VIII-WINIK-wa-AJ-AJAW-TAK</i>
Ixtutz Panel 2	Missing	<i>WINIK-ki-VIII</i>
Narnajó Altar 2	Missing	(<i>ELK'IN</i>) VIII- <i>WINIK-?</i>
Naranjón K635	Missing	VIII- <i>WINIK/PET</i>
Machaquila Str. 4 Panel	Missing	VIII- <i>WINIK-ki</i>
Machaquila Str. 4 Panel	Missing	VIII- <i>WINIK-ki</i>
Seibal St. 6	Eroded	VIII- <i>AJAW-WINIK-ki</i> (<i>AJ-mu-MUT-la</i>)

‘representante’ (‘representative’) or ‘agente’ (‘agent’) (Barrera Vasquez 1980: 27; Michelin 1976: 15). I suspect that this is the intended meaning of this title since there is an entry in the San Francisco Dictionary (Michelon 1976: 385) that reads *bakte uinic* meaning ‘hombre que está bajo el poder de otro’ or ‘a man that is under the power of another’. It seems plausible that those kings who carry this 28 *Winik B’akab’* title are allied, since this title is restricted to only a few specific sites located in the south-central and eastern Petén and southern Belize. Perhaps the *b’akab’ob’* are vassal ‘agents’ or ‘representatives’ to more powerful superordinate patrons or overlords and by using this title the rulers of this region are all proclaiming their loyalty and allegiance to one another. This title may function in much in the same way as the *yajaw* or *ukab’jiiy* expressions to indicate that the person who carries this title is subordinate to or acting as an agent of a more powerful superordinate patron, ruler, or even kingdom. If this title represented a unified system of alliance, like that discussed by Rice (2004) then one would not expect that the rulers who carry this title would show outward signs of aggression against one another. Thus far that epigraphic evidence seems to support this interpretation and so this epithet may refer to an alliance network much like that of the Postclassic Mayapán or the K’ichee’ Maya of Uatatlán. According to Carmack (1981: 160), the vassals of greater Uatatlán were organized in some 24 exogamous patrilineal-descent groups.

There are at least two other examples of numbered *winik* epithets in the inscriptions of the Classic Period. The numbers expressed are 7 and 9. In a passage recorded at Ixkun on Stela 1 there is a reference to a *Sak Tz’i* lord who is called a *B’olon Winik* or a ‘nine person.’ At Caracol on Ballcourt Marker 3, there is a reference to a *Wuk Winik* meaning either ‘seven person’. In any case, the 28 *Winik* title is an epithet that

appears to be restricted to sites located in the eastern Petén and in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. The title only appears in the inscriptions of this region for a short 134 years, from 9.13.14.4.2 (24, March 706) to 10.0.10.0.0 (18, June 840). These 134 years roughly correspond to half of a *may* cycle and may be evidence to support Rice's (2004) theory of rotating seats of power among particular sites who were allied together in a larger socio-political system during the Classic Period.

There are no other monuments containing dateable hieroglyphic inscriptions at Uxbenká. However, there are several other carved stelae and miscellaneous sculptures. Stela 3 (Figure 6.29) was discovered by the SBAP in 1984, broken in the main row of monuments in front of Str. A-1. It is badly eroded and shows evidence of being burned in the recent past (Wanyerka 2003: 204). Virtually none of the inscription remains on the monument except for the rough outlines of a probable textile fringe running along the left side. The textile fringe probably represented the costume of a standing ruler.

Uxbenká Stela 5 (Figure 6.30) was also discovered by the SBAP in the row of stelae in front of Str. A-1 (Wanyerka 2003: 206). Though intact, much of the main surface of the monument has flaked off due to recent fire damage. During the 1980's runaway milpa fires swept through the main stelae plaza and burned many of the stelae in situ. 3.2 m in height, Stela 5 depicts a portrait of a ruler facing left, standing on top of a *Witz* Monster pedestal. An eroded "L-shaped" textbox is located in front of and over the ruler's face. The text is no longer legible, but the ruler appears to be wearing an elaborate headdress that includes a zoomorphic head of some mythic being.

Recent Discoveries by the Uxbenká Archaeological Project (UAP)

The UAP began its first full season of archaeological and epigraphic investigations in the spring of 2005. Epigraphic studies were restricted to the main Stela Plaza (Group A). During this initial season, Project Photographer Jack Sulak and I examined, reassessed, and photographed all 22 of the known stelae. In addition, a search was conducted for carved monuments and monument fragments. As previously mentioned, on the first day of this field season a portion of a previously unknown stela (Stela 23) was discovered on top of a looter's pit near the southeast corner of Str. A-5. In the process of relocating all of the known monuments I recognized two previously unknown carved monument fragments belonging to Stela 6 (Figure 6.31). Both of these new fragments have long been noted at the site; however, they were completely covered with a thick layer of lichen. Once the lichen was removed, one could see that these two pieces fit together and that they depicted a portrait of a standing Uxbenká lord. Reassembled, Stela 6 is over 3.5m in height and depicts an eroded, but finely dressed Uxbenká king standing on top of an unusual *Witz* Monster Pedestal holding a rigid Double-Headed Serpent Bar across his chest. It appears that the ruler is wearing the costume of the Jaguar God of the Underworld because he sports a cruller around his eyes. Emerging from the left end of the Serpent Bar is a miniature portrait of an ancestral deity. The base of Stela 6, still standing at the site today, was found by the SBAP in 1984 directly in front of Str. A-1 (Wanyerka 2003: 209). Until these two new pieces were identified, the only surviving image of Stela 6 was a *Witz* Monster with a strangely-shaped nose or proboscis and a single hieroglyph to the right. The upper left-hand portion of this base has now been defaced and a large piece of the *Witz* Monster is now missing

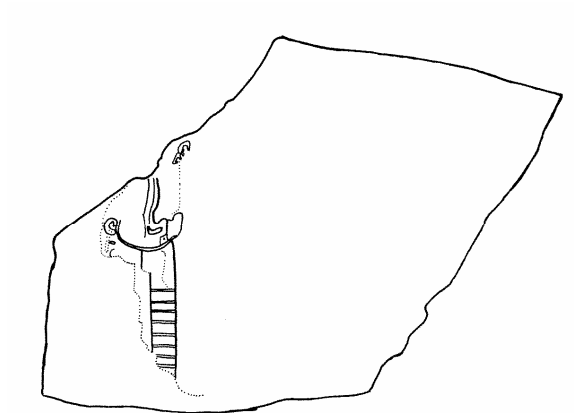


Figure 6.29. Uxbenká Stela 3 (Drawing by P. Wanyerka)

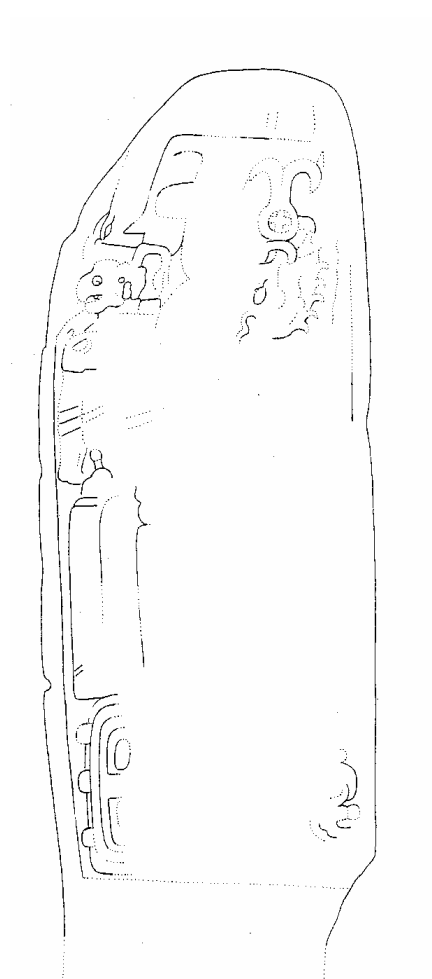


Figure 6.30. Uxbenká Stela 5 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

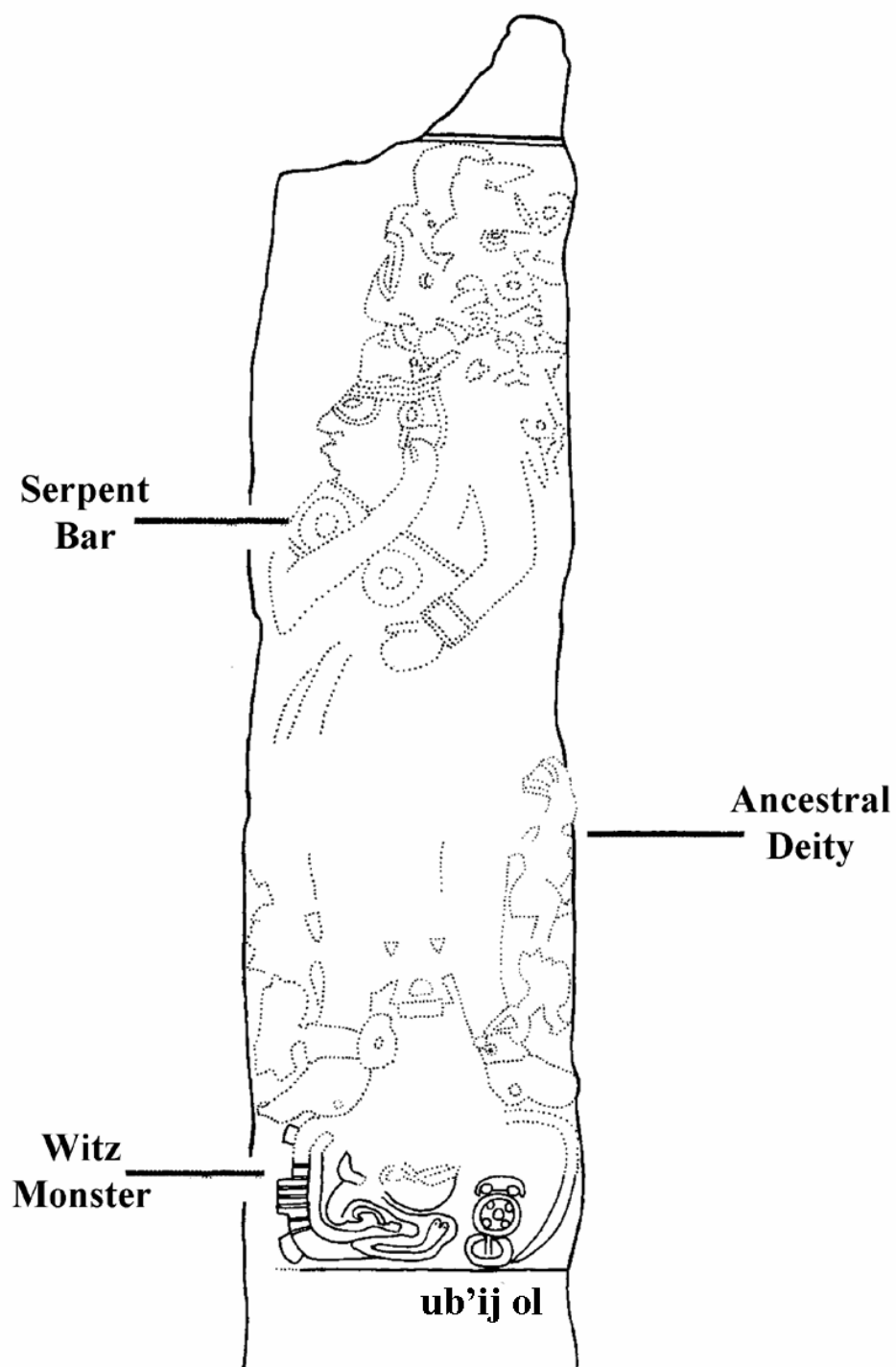


Figure 6.31. Uxbenká Stela 6 (Drawing by P. Wanyerka)

(Wanyerka 2003: 209). The reading of the glyph remains unclear. The glyph appears to begin with a third-person personal pronoun *u-* followed by a T585a sign that reads either *b'i* or *b'ij*. However, the lower sign is unique. It resembles a variant form of the T774v *ol* sign meaning 'heart' and so together *ub'ij ol* may simply mean 'the road of the heart' or 'the heart of his soul-road to the underworld'.

Synthesis and Discussion

Current archaeological and epigraphic evidence indicate that Uxbenká, a moderate-sized Classic Maya site strategically located in the Rio Blanco Valley of southern Belize, was the first emblem glyph-bearing polity in the Southern Maya Mountains Region with ties to the central Petén. This relationship to the ruling elite of the central Petén, in particular to Tikal located some 120 km northwest of Uxbenká, can be confirmed by the text and imagery recorded on monuments at Uxbenká during the Early Classic Period. These monuments specifically record the names of several well-known historical figures from Tikal including its 14th ruler *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I. Uxbenká's Early Classic rise and subsequent prominence as a major emblem glyph-bearing polity may have been the result of social, economic, and political relationships forged between the rulers of Uxbenká and Tikal for resources obtained from the Maya Mountains, the Caribbean Coast, and even from points further south including resources from the Motagua Valley and beyond. Uxbenká's strategic position along a major east-west trade route (the Rio Blanco Valley) would enable the rulers of Uxbenká to control and facilitate commerce and the movement of resources from both the Caribbean and from processing centers within the interior of the Maya Mountains to points west (including the

Petexbatún and Pasión regions) or to points north (the central Petén) via one of the major north-south trade routes located west of the Maya Mountains in adjoining Dolores, Guatemala. Political and economic ties to the central Petén during this era may have also served to highlight its own regional importance in the wider scope of the Classic Maya civilization.

The primary goal of this chapter was to look for epigraphic and archaeological evidence in the Rio Blanco Valley to support or challenge the hegemonic and *may* models of Classic Maya political organization (see Appendix B).

In regard to the hegemonic model, the epigraphic evidence indicates that the lords of Uxbenká were using the elite royal title *K'uhul Ajaw* to indicate divine status. This title likely appears three times (on Stela 19, Stela 22, and on Stela 15) in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Uxbenká as part of the standard emblem glyph collocation. However, due to the poor condition of Uxbenká's monumental inscriptions, the *K'uhul Ajaw* title can only be seen for certain on Stela 22, which commemorates the 9.16.0.0.0 Period Ending. The lack of readable emblem glyphs on monuments at Uxbenká is frustrating given the fact that the site contains some of the earliest carved monuments in all of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Uxbenká may have been an emblem glyph-bearing polity much earlier than the site's Late Classic texts indicate. Unfortunately, nearly all of Uxbenká's hieroglyphic monuments, both Early and Late Classic, were found broken and badly shattered. In particular, the Early Classic stelae (Stela 11, 18, 21, and 23) look as if they were intentionally destroyed and many parts of these monuments are still missing. Some have been stolen over the years, and some were likely cached and still await discovery by archaeologists. This behavior is reminiscent of the kind of action that took place to all of Tikal's pre-A.D. 378 stelae, which were intentionally smashed and destroyed and either

carefully reburied in later construction fill or dispatched from Tikal entirely and sent to peripheral sites in the environs of Tikal (see Martin and Grube 2000: 30). On the other hand, this type of destructive behavior could be taken as archaeological evidence to support Rice's *may* model since this type of behavior could be interpreted as one associated with the end of a *k'atun* seat's run within a given *may* cycle. Even though the *K'uhul Ajaw* title appears on Stela 22, the main sign of the emblem glyph is now totally effaced which makes it impossible to identify what appears to be an Uxbenká emblem glyph. Hopefully one day soon a new inscription will be found at Uxbenká that includes a readable emblem glyph. The *Kaloomte'* title does not appear in the inscriptions of Uxbenká.

The second criterion used to test the hegemonic model is the use of direct statements of subordination, especially those that describe the accession of local kings under the auspices of foreign overlords. While there are no direct epigraphic statements (like *ukab'jiiy*, *yichnal*, *hul*, *yitah*, or *ilaj*) to indicate hierarchy in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Uxbenká, there is circumstantial evidence, both epigraphic and archaeological, to suggest that hierarchical relations did exist between the rulership of Uxbenká and Tikal. From an epigraphic perspective, Stela 11 may be an example of what Simon Martin refers to as the "exiling" of royal monuments from the site of Tikal to peripheral sites following the *entrada* event of A.D. 378 (2000: 58). Martin cites a number of examples of monument-exiling at sites throughout the central Petén during the Early Classic Period and suggests that relocating monuments to sites located in the periphery of the hegemonic powers may represent the manner in which an overlord demonstrated his authority over his or her vassals (2008: 58). He also suggests that these types of monument relocations may have coincided with movements of people, which

may have been another way in which Tikal expanded its control over various subject polities (2000: 59). Based on the Petén-style of carving, its broken condition, the full regnal name of *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I including the *Yax Ehb' Xook* epithet, as well as a reference to the *Sak Hix* Bird recorded on Stela 11, there is little question that this monument is foreign. Both Stela 11 and Stela 18 from Uxbenká were carved from a light whitish-blue, non-local variety of fine-grained calcareous sandstone, which further supports the view that the stone was foreign and was likely relocated to Uxbenká (Wanyerka 2003: 212).

Another circumstantial argument can be made attesting to the possibility that friendly hierarchical relations existed between Tikal and Uxbenká based on the appearance of the Tikal emblem glyph recorded in the accompanying hieroglyphic inscription on Stela 11. Though badly broken and severely eroded and lacking any chronological details, the text on Stela 11 refers to the 'death of the people of noble descent' which I argue refers to the events that occurred at Tikal on 8.17.1.4.12, the day the 14th king of Tikal died. The appearance of a Tikal emblem glyph on any monument in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize is evidence to suggest that ties existed between these two polities.

I suspect that Tikal and sites throughout the greater Petén were interested in obtaining the resources of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Uxbenká's strategic position near highly coveted resources and the fact that Uxbenká was the earliest political entity in the region suggests to me that Uxbenká likely controlled trade and exchange in the southwestern portion of the Southern Maya Mountains Region during the Late Preclassic and Early Classic Periods. Petrographic analysis by Shipley and Graham of eighteen *manos* and *metates* made of muscovite granite found at Uaxactun and Seibal

have been traced to various outcrops located in the North Stann Creek Valley of Belize (Graham 1987: 756-758). In addition, the presence of non-local, Petén-style ceramics at Uxbenká, such as Sierra Red and other waxy wares, along with large and small basal-flange bowls, and explicit Petén-style iconography at Uxbenká strongly indicate that inter-regional ties existed between the Southern Maya Mountains Region and the central Petén during this time. There are no explicit references to warfare or conflict in the written inscriptions of Uxbenká. Based on the epigraphic findings presented, the criteria were not met in the written inscriptions of Uxbenká to suggest that a similar hegemonic system was likely in place there during the Early Classic Period that resembled the system outlined by Martin and Grube for the central Petén.

In regard to the *may* model, the epigraphic evidence shows that period ending stelae, in particular those that commemorated certain *k'atun*-endings, were the most common theme recorded in the monumental inscriptions of Uxbenká. There are a total of five carved period ending stela at Uxbenká (Stela 14, 15, 21, 22, and 23) (see Table 6.3). The earliest period ending stelae at Uxbenká is Stela 21, which commemorates either the 8.17.0.0.0, 8.18.0.0.0, 8.19.0.0.0 or 9.0.0.0.0 period ending based on the accompanying hieroglyphic text that appears to parallel the text recorded on Uxbenká Stela 11. Although no calendrical data survive on this monument, there is a lone glyph block which features the standard “flat-hand” verb to indicate a period ending. Since the next period ending monument at Uxbenká is Stela 23 which commemorated the period ending 9.1.0.0.0 (27, August 455), it is tempting to think that Stela 21 commemorated the period ending 9.0.0.0.0 (10, December 435), which would fit nicely within Tikal’s Early Classic *may* seating, which began in A.D. 426 (Rice 2004: 115).

Following the dedication of Stela 23, no further carved period ending stelae are

erected at Uxbenká for some 217 or 237 years depending on whether the long count date recorded on Uxbenká Stela 14 is 9.12.0.0.0 or 9.13.0.0.0. This interregnum is close enough to the 256-year *may* seating to suggest that Uxbenká's interregnum may be tied to the loss of Tikal's *may* seat to Caracol during the so-called Hiatus Period (Rice 2004: 115). If correct, the lack of new carved monument erections at Uxbenká during this period may be explained as a necessary and anticipated consequence of Tikal's loss as an outgoing *may* seat. Despite new archaeological investigations by the Uxbenká Archaeological Project, our understanding of the historical record during the interregnum period remains poorly defined. However, it is possible that Uxbenká seated one of the 13 *k'atun* seats during Tikal's Early Classic hosting of the *may*.

Only two carved, period ending stelae were erected at Uxbenká following this interregnum period: Stela 22 which commemorates the period ending 9.16.0.0.0 (5, May 751) and Stela 15 which commemorates the period ending 9.17.10.0.0 (28, November 780). The archaeology reveals that by the start of the 7th century the architectural program at Uxbenká was rapidly expanding (see Prufer 2008). This new expansion and prosperity at Uxbenká may be a reflection of its greater economic wealth and political fortune, perhaps as a result of a change in the *may* seating. This change may have also been accompanied by an influx of new immigrants whose identity was different from the region's original Late Preclassic and Early Classic inhabitants. Evidence for this influx of new immigrants may be seen in the rapid emergence and proliferation of nearly three dozen new surface sites (refer to Figure 4.1) including three other emblem glyph-bearing polities (Pusilhá, Lubaantún, and Nim Li Punit) that appear across the Southern Maya Mountains Region during this time. The epigraphic and archaeological data hint that many of these new surface sites maintained strong regional ties with either the Pasión and

Petexbatún regions of Guatemala or to the kingdoms of Quiriguá and Copan located in the southeastern Maya lowlands (Braswell 2008; Bill and Braswell 2005; Grube et al. 1999; Hammond 1975; Wanyerka 2003). By the 7th century, site orientations at Uxbenká and at other newly founded sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region have changed from the more typical east-west (cosmological) orientation of the Late Preclassic and Early Classic Periods to a more variable and complex, north/northwest- south/southeast site orientation (see Braswell et al. 2005: 74). A possible Yucatekan spelling of the month name *Sek* occurs on Stela 22 which commemorates the period ending 9.16.0.0.0 (5, May 751) at Uxbenká, while a Ch'olan spelling of the same month for the same period ending can be found recorded on Stela F at Pusilhá, suggesting linguistically different groups. In addition, new iconographic programs begin during this time with themes centered on fire-scattering rituals and the display of captives.

No E-Groups or Twin-Pyramid Complexes have been identified in the architectural assemblage of Uxbenká. It is more likely that the carved period-ending stelae at Uxbenká were erected in commemoration of the various *k'atun*-endings in lieu of these distinctive architectural assemblages. Nearly two-dozen additional plain uncarved stelae have been found in the main stela plaza at Uxbenká, suggesting the possibility that these plain monuments may have been erected and painted with stucco texts to commemorate additional *k'atun* endings. Rice has noted (2004: 86) that during the Late Preclassic Period triadic structures may have substituted for the more typical E-Group assemblages. Located at the north end and facing south in the Group A Stela Plaza at Uxbenká (refer back to Figure 6.2) is the triadic Structure A-1. In contrast to the more standard t-shaped platform which supported three smaller structures on its distal wings, Structure A-1 is pyramidal-shaped. Excavations conducted by the Uxbenká

Table 6.3. Period-Ending Dates in the Hieroglyphic Inscriptions of Uxbenká

Monument Number	L.C. Date	Year	Period-Ending Ritual
Stela 21	8.17.0.0.0*	20, Oct. 376	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
	8.18.0.0.0*	7, July 396	
	8.19.0.0.0*	24, March 416	
	9.0.0.0.0*	10, Dec. 435	
Stela 23	9.1.0.0.0	27, Aug. 455	Uncertain
Stela 14	9.12.0.0.0*	28, June 672	Uncertain
	9.13.0.0.0*	15, Mar. 692	
Stela 22	9.16.0.0.0	5, May 751	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
Stela 15	9.17.10.0.0	28, Nov. 780	Fire Drilling

*Denotes Uncertain Long Count Date

Archaeological Project in 2007 and 2008 confirm the presence of at least two earlier constructions along the eastern and western distal wings. Therefore, it is possible that Structure A-1 served the same important function as an astronomical complex in lieu of the more typical E-Group assemblage. Often these triadic structures were adorned with large stuccoed masks of various important astronomical or astrological deities. The east-west orientation of these deity masks can be interpreted in terms of cosmic cycling to denote the rising and setting of both the sun and the planet Venus (Freidel and Schele 1988: 551-552). It has not been determined whether or not Structure A-1 was adorned with stucco masks. According to Rice (2004: 118), the creation and importance of these architectural assemblages can serve to link the “seat of power of the reigning lineage... from one architectural group to another over time ” to the various changes in the *may* and *k’atun* seatings and to the institution of Classic Maya kingship.

The most significant events recorded at Uxbenká, the death of *Chak Tok Ich’aak I* of Tikal on a monument at Uxbenká, the interregnum period of written dynastic history at Uxbenká, and the eventual restart of dynastic history at Uxbenká through *k’atun*-ending stelae (ca. 9.12.0.0.0 or 9.13.0.0.0), may have been the result of a change in the *may* seating. As previous discussed, following the reference to the 9.1.0.0.0 period ending as recorded on Stela 23, no further hieroglyphic inscriptions were recorded at Uxbenká for some 237 years. The interregnum period at Uxbenká is close enough to a complete 256-year *may* cycle to suggest that the lack of hieroglyphic inscriptions at Uxbenká during this period may be tied to Tikal’s loss of the *may* seat to Caracol at the start of the Hiatus Period (2004: 115). As Rice explains, this was the anticipated outcome of Tikal’s loss of outgoing *may* seat and may also explain why all of Uxbenká’s Early Classic stelae were found intentionally smashed or destroyed. They may have been ritually destroyed as part

of larger termination rituals that coincided with the end of the *may* seating (Rice 2004: 272). The appearance of a monument from Tikal with a reference to the death of one of its Early Classic kings on a monument at Uxbenká could be interpreted as evidence to suggest that prior to the start of this interregnum period the rulership of Uxbenká enjoyed close inter-regional ties as part of Tikal's Early Classic *may* realm and may have even hosted one of its *k'atun* seatings. Conversely, the re-appearance of written dynastic history at Uxbenká and the start of dynastic history at other hieroglyph-bearing sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region by the end of the 7th century appear to coincide with a larger demographic shift and rise in the overall population of the region.

The 7th century signals the start of a period of cultural florescence in the Southern Maya Mountains Region that would last for 237 years, nearly another full *may* cycle. The dates for this period of florescence are based on the re-appearance of dynastic history at Uxbenká as recorded on Stela 14, which likely commemorated the period ending 9.12.0.0.0 (A.D. 672) and the latest dated monument in the Southern Maya Mountains Region, Tzimín Ché Stela 1 which commemorated the period ending 10.4.0.0.0 (A.D. 909). According to Rice (2004: 121), Tikal was renewed as a cycle seat in the Late Classic Period during *K'atun* 8 (A.D. 672-692); however, there were now other rival cycle seats or *may ku* (such as Copan and perhaps even Dos Pilas) vying for control of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. As the two most powerful political rivals of the Late Classic Period, Tikal and Calakmul were locked in continuous hostilities and conflict for most of this period. As Rice argues (2004: 201), conflict between these two sites likely centered on issues involving ethno-linguistic differences, on competition to seat the *may* or perhaps on other issues dealing with calendrical matters. For whatever reason, it would appear that following the interregnum period at

Uxbenká, Tikal's hegemonic influence in the Southern Maya Mountains Region waned and no further mention of the central Petén can be found in the written inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. These findings suggest that Tikal may have been caught up in the political upheavals of its engagement with Calakmul to adequately control or protect its economic or political interests in southern Belize. The loss of Tikal's influence in the Southern Maya Mountains Region likely led to new economic and political opportunities for the rulers of the other *may ku* who now sought to control the resources of this area for themselves in order to expand their own power base.

The final criterion used for testing the *may* model is that notion that cycle seats within a given *may* sphere will likely share similar architectural, iconographic, and ceramic programs. Rice (2004: 200) cautions that there may be a degree of variability in the outward expression of some of these features by individual cycle seats, as each tries to assert or incorporate the unique historical, genealogical, and divine claims of its ruling elite. At Uxbenká monumental constructions occur in two distinctive phases: a pre-A.D. 500 phase and a post-A.D. 500 phase (Prufer 2008: 3). Radiocarbon dates and ceramics indicate that Uxbenká was initially settled as a small farming village sometime between A.D. 70 and A.D. 200 (Prufer 2008: 3, 31). The primary focus of habitation during this initial occupation appears to be restricted to the Group A Stela Plaza which was likely favored for its commanding view of the Rio Blanco Valley as well as its proximity to the most fertile lands and year-round water supplies (Prufer 2008: 31). All of Uxbenká's carved monuments were found in this group including Stela 11 and Stela 21, whose hieroglyphic inscriptions refer to the 14th king of Tikal. Excavations in Group A during the 2007 field season revealed Late Preclassic earthen platforms, the first to be found in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize. Sometime after A.D. 400, the Group A

plaza underwent significant reorganization and modification which left the hilltop in its current configuration (Prüfer 2008: 3, 8). Because there is no evidence to suggest that any of the structures of Group A were remodeled during the Late Classic Period, we suspect that the plaza may have served as a stela garden and ancestral memorial (Prüfer 2008: 8). By A.D. 500, a massive construction program began some 500 meters to the northwest of Group A resulting in the creation of Groups B-F. During the Late Classic Period Groups B-F would become the new ceremonial heart of Uxbenká. These building programs appear to be tied to Uxbenká's transformation from a farming village to a political and possible emblem glyph-bearing polity.

As discussed in this chapter, Stela 11 records the name of the 14th king of Tikal using his full regnal name: *Chak Tok Ich'aak I, Yax Ehb' Xook*. The sculptural themes of Uxbenká's Early Classic stelae are nearly identical to that of Tikal and to Tikal's other *k'atun* seats. Based on the presence of E-Groups and period-ending monuments, Rice has proposed that Tikal's Early-Middle Classic *may* sphere included the following *k'atun* seats: Uaxactún, Yaxhá, Xultún, El Zapote, Uolantun, El Peru, El Encanto, Corozal, El Temblor, Rio Azul, and Ucanal (2004: 166-167). It is also interesting to note that besides Uxbenká Stela 11, other Early Classic stelae were removed from Tikal and dispatched to its various possible *k'atun* seats including Uolantún (Stela 1), El Encanto (Stela 1), Corozal (Stela 1), and El Temblor (Stela 1) following central Mexican contact in A.D. 378 (Martin 2000). Nearly all of these stelae seem to be closely associated with *Chak Tok Ich'aak I*. The removal and movement of stelae to foreign sites controlled by Tikal could be taken as evidence in support of the *may* model. The sculptural themes common to the monuments of Tikal's *may* sphere include monuments that feature *k'atun* or lajuntun-ending dates, portraits of elaborately dressed standing rulers holding rigid or undulating

serpent bars, complex royal headdresses featuring various zoomorphic images of supernatural beings, and at Uxbenká the theme often features the ruler standing on top of a *Witz* Monster pedestal.

The presence of certain epigraphic epithets, such as the *Waxak Winik* title may also serve to identify the various *k'atun* seats within a *may* sphere. For example, at Uxbenká during the Late Classic Period, the *Waxak Winik* title is used as an elite royal title suggesting that the people who carry this particular epithet are somehow allied to one another. Because this epithet is found almost exclusively in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region, I have argued that this epithet may signal inclusion as a possible *k'atun* seat within a larger *may* sphere. I would argue that since the *Waxak Winik* title commonly appears only in the Late Classic inscriptions of Nim Li Punit, Naj Tunich, Ixtutz, Ixkun, Machaquila, Naranjo, and Dos Pilas these sites may be related as possible *k'atun* seats within their own *may* sphere. Rice (2004: 198) argues against Dos Pilas being a *may ku* during the Late Classic Period but the appearance of this title as well as similar Pasion and Petexbatún-style ceramics found at these same sites, including sites in southern Belize, suggests to me that close inter-regional relations existed amongst this grouping of sites and that Dos Pilas could have served as a *may* seat. It is possible that the *Waxak Winik* title may relate to the larger indigenous, geopolitical or *tzuk* system of reckoning the Classic Maya realm. As will be discussed in Chapter 9, it would appear that the Classic Maya conceived their territorial realm as one consisting of thirteen distinct geopolitical/territorial units. Each of the thirteen geopolitical units or 'provinces' (*tzukob'*) were numbered from 1 to 13 and I suspect that the numbered *tzuk* title functioned similar to that of the Classic Maya emblem glyph whereby a particular collocation referred to one of these thirteen distinct geopolitical or territorial units/

regions. Thus, I suggest that the *Waxak Winik* title refers exclusively to someone who hails from the 'Eighth Province' and it is also likely that the Eighth Province incorporated much of the Southern Maya Mountains Region.

This chapter discussed the epigraphic and archaeological evidence of Early Classic hegemonic control in the Rio Blanco Valley. The following chapter will discuss the epigraphic and archaeological evidence of hegemonic control in the Poité-Pusilhá Valley.

CHAPTER 7

EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE OF LATE CLASSIC POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IN THE POITÉ-PUSILHÁ VALLEY

Investigations at Pusilhá

Pusilhá is one of the largest Classic Maya sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. It is located between the Poité (or Joventud) and Pusilhá Rivers, approximately 2 to 3 km east of the Guatemalan/Belize border, near the modern village of San Benito Poité (Figure 7.1). The Poité-Pusilhá Valley runs roughly northeast to southwest from the modern village of Joventud (where the Poité and Pusilhá Rivers merge to form the Moho River) and into southeastern Dolores Guatemala. The site is situated in the Toledo upland soils that form the southern foothills of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. A series of karst, rugged, steep hillslopes and drainages frame the valley system boundaries to the north and south. The valley floor is relatively flat and elevations in this drainage range upward to 155m above sea level. Like the Rio Blanco Valley, there are a number of important cave sites in this region including Pottery Cave, a rich site first described by Joyce et al. (1928: 343) that was extensively used as a midden for the deposition of potsherds, flint and obsidian debitage, broken tools and weapons, and even skeletal remains.

The Poité-Pusilhá Valley can be entered via an overland route or a water route. All three rivers (the Poité, the Pusilhá, and the Moho) contain year-round water deep enough to permit canoe passage either to the coast via the Moho River to the east or west into southeastern Dolores Guatemala. This region receives more than 150" of rainfall



Figure 7.1. Map of the Poité/Pusilhá Drainage (Courtesy of Peter Dunham, Director, MMAP, modified after DGMS 1983)

annually and the soils are the best soils in the Toledo foothills. Early ethnohistoric accounts describe this region as one of the finest cacao producing regions in Mesoamerica (Jones 1983: 73).

The primary goal of this chapter is to examine and analyze the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Poité/Pusilhá Valley to test whether the same sorts of hegemonic characteristics as described by Martin and Grube and *may* features described by Rice for the central Petén can be found in the written inscriptions of this region (cf. Chapter 5).

The Discovery of Pusilhá

It is possible that Pusilhá may be the ancient name of this archaeological site. As reported by the Dominican Fray Joseph Delgado, who led the *Entrada* of 1677, an early Maya settlement named *Puzilhá* was located along the Puzilhá River. Fray Francisco Ximenez, another early Spanish Chronicler, also identified a settlement in the same area known as *Pusitlá* (Stone 1932: 261). The Maya often named their towns and cities after some major environmental or geologic feature, such as mountains or rivers, so it is possible that Pusilhá has retained its original name since Classic times. There is ambiguity as to what the name *Pusilhá* means. Morley (1928: 318, 1938: Vol. IV: 14) claims that the word *Pusilhá* in Yukatek Maya is based on two words: *p'u'us* meaning 'stagnant' or 'stinking,' the qualitative particle *-il*, and *há* meaning 'water' as a reference to 'stinking or stagnant water' or to some unknown characteristic of the river that carries the same name. On the other hand, Thompson (1963: 148) notes that the word Pusilhá probably refers to 'water of the sweat baths' or that it could even be a corruption of *p'usilha* meaning 'the water of the hunchback.'

Pusilhá first came to the attention of archaeologists in the spring of 1927, when it was reported by James R. Mason, a supervisor for a mahogany operation, owned by Lee Pearce of Punta Gorda (Morley 1928: 319). Mason discovered the main stela plaza of Pusilhá in June of 1927 while cutting a logging trail (Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 12). He noticed many large slabs of broken stone lying on the ground within an area bounded by several small mounds. While moving some of these large stone slabs, Mason noticed that several were carved. He reported the discovery to Pearce, who then mentioned it to Thompson in the early fall of 1927 (Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 13). Thompson, who had been working since 1926 at the nearby ruins of Lubaantún as part of the British Museum Expedition to British Honduras, had heard of the ethnohistoric report of a ruin located along the Pusilhá River, but was never able to find it. A trail was also reported that led from the modern village of Pueblo Viejo, close to the headwaters of the Pusilhá River, all the way west to the village of San Luis, Guatemala (Joyce et al. 1927: 315). Thompson journeyed to Pusilhá with close friend Faustino Bol. It took several days for the men to travel to Pusilhá and upon their arrival at San Antonio, Thompson's companion took advantage of a visiting Jesuit priest to get married, prompting Thompson to retort "I couldn't persuade him that Maya hieroglyphic texts were more important than marriage" (Thompson 1963: 145). This line encapsulates Thompson's ideas about marriage and Maya hieroglyphic writing! Thompson briefly described the hieroglyphic inscriptions found on seven carved stela and one carved lintel in an article for the English journal *Man* (Thompson 1928b) and in the Field Museum's Annual Report for 1927. During this short trip, Thompson noted massive terracing present on many of the hillslopes in the area, along with numerous small mounds and some bridge abutments on the banks of the Pusilhá River (Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 12). Perhaps the most unusual architectural features

at Pusilhá are the bridge abutments or bastions located on opposite banks of the river. These abutments, made of finely-cut stone blocks measuring some 20' high by 30' wide, extended out from the banks of the Pusilhá River approximately 12'. The resulting gap between abutments is approximately 30' and could have easily been spanned by wooden beams (Joyce et al. 1927: 316). At the time of its discovery, this was the only known Maya stone bridge. Today, others have been identified at sites including Palenque, Yaxchilán, and El Baúl (Thompson 1963: 111).

Upon hearing of Thompson's discoveries of carved stelae at Pusilhá, Thomas Gann, who also had been working at neighboring Lubaantún, traveled to Pusilhá in December of 1927 in order to see if it was feasible for the British Museum to mount an extensive systematic investigation (Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 13). Gann reports the discovery of some fifteen stelae during this brief trip (Gann 1929: 30). Gann returned to Pusilhá the following March of 1928 along with T.A. Joyce, E.L. Gruning, R.C.E. Long, and H. Clive-Smith to begin the third British Museum Expedition to British Honduras (Gann 1930; Joyce et al. 1928; Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 13). Ten major architectural groups were identified during this field season and seven more carved stelae were also reported for a total of twenty-two stelae (Figure 7.2). Several carved stelae (Stela E, M, O, P, Q, R, and Z) were removed from the site and shipped back to England for eventual display in the British Museum (Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 13). Morley visited Gann at Pusilhá in May of 1928. During that trip Morley photographed and drew many of the carved stelae at the site (see Morley 1928, 1938: Vol IV: 11-72). In 1929, a fourth British Museum Expedition to British Honduras was conducted at Pusilhá led by T. A. Joyce, accompanied by E.L. Gruning, and Robert Ashton (Joyce 1929: 439). Excavations were conducted at Pottery Cave and at several outlying mound sites. In addition, several more

stelae fragments (Stela C, D, E, and P) were crated and shipped back to England (Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 14).

A final season of fieldwork at Pusilhá began in late February of 1930 under the auspices of the fifth British Museum Expedition to British Honduras. This expedition was led by E.L. Gruning and accompanied by Robert Ashton and E.H. Nelson, who served as project photographer (Gruning 1930: 477, 1931: 26). Several mound groups south of the Pusilhá River were excavated, Pottery Cave was re-explored, a complete survey was made of all of the architectural groups on both sides of the river, and Stela H and K were removed from Pusilhá and shipped to England (Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 14). The British Museum Expedition cut a 50 km long road directly through the forest from Pusilhá to Punta Gorda in order to safely transport the stelae out of Pusilhá (Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 15).

There were no further archaeological investigations at the site until 1979, when Richard Leventhal and his SBAP spent two seasons at Pusilhá (1979 and 1980) (1980, 1990a; Ulrich 1982). Leventhal's research at Pusilhá was primarily focused on a settlement survey of the site core and of the outlying residential settlement zones in order to create an internal site chronology (1990a: 131). Leventhal's new map of Pusilhá indicated that the site featured two major focal zones: a "Stela Plaza/Ballcourt" zone (BC 1) to the north of the Pusilhá River and a "Gateway Hill Acropolis and Ballcourt" zone (BC 2) to the south of the Pusilhá River (Figure 7.3). In addition, Leventhal described the architecture on the north side of the Pusilhá River as diminutive in size and scale, while the architecture on the south side of the river was enormous. Temple pyramids on the south side of the river are over 30m in height with Gateway Hill itself located approximately 75m above the river. This is the tallest architectural complex in southern

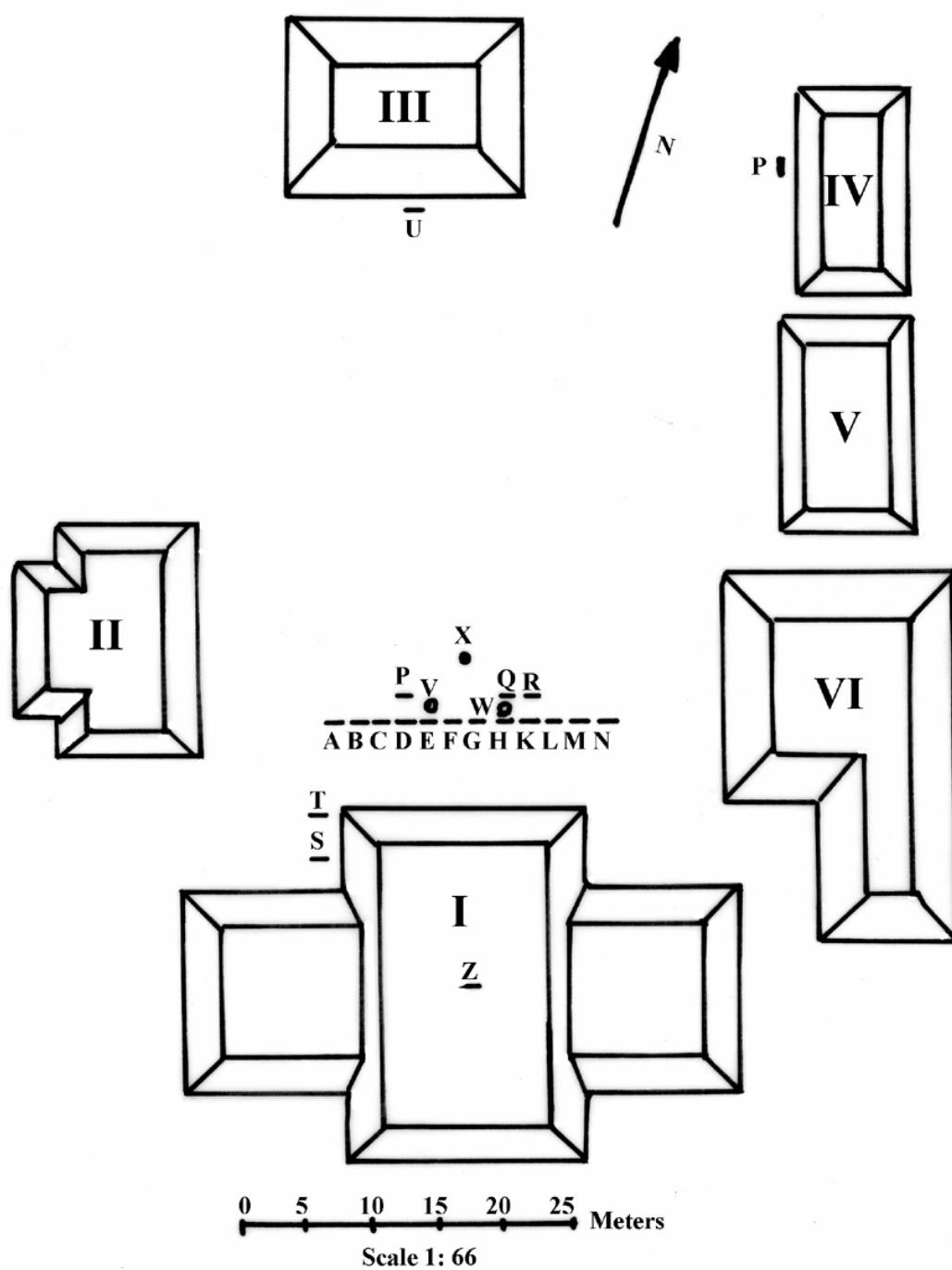


Figure 7.2. Plan Map of Pusilhá Stela Plaza Group (Redrawn by author after Morley 1938: Vol. V: Plate 199A)

Belize (Leventhal 1990a: 131). Two ballcourts (BC 1 and BC 2) were enclosed within low rectangular walls. To the south of the Stela Plaza Group, the SBAP identified a short *sacbé* that led southeastward into an enclosed area that contained Ballcourt 1 (Figure 7.4), notable for the presence of a low stone wall enclosure with at least two restricted gateway entranceways in the north and south walls (Leventhal 1980: 20). A plain ballcourt marker made of soft white limestone was located in the middle of the playing alley. A second walled ballcourt (BC 2) nearly identical to the BC 1 was located just west of the Gateway Hill Acropolis. While surveying the area southwest of the Gateway Hill Acropolis in 1979, Leventhal discovered a large architectural group consisting of a series of conjoined buildings and substructures surrounding a 35 x 65m long plaza, which he named Machaca Plaza (Figure 7.5).

The Pusilhá Project led by Gary Rex Walters and Lorington Weller began work in 1989 (Walters and Weller 1994). Members of the Maya Cave Project had hiked into the site and located a previously unreported architectural group approximately 3 km west of the Stela Plaza, where they found a new ballcourt marker as well as several new cave sites. Walters and Weller returned to Pusilhá in 1990 and 1991 to begin archaeological investigations in this new architectural group, which they named Moho Plaza (Walters and Weller 1994: 3). During their final field season in 1992, Walters and his crew cleared and mapped the Moho Plaza, which included a ballcourt with three carved ballcourt markers (Figure 7.6) and a hieroglyphic stairway (Figure 7.7) in front of Str. VI. The three ballcourt markers are similar in size and shape to markers at Lubaantún. Two of the three ballcourt markers contain short hieroglyphic texts, but virtually nothing can be read with any degree of certainty due to erosion. All three markers depict ballplayers and appear to be Late Classic in style. The hieroglyphic stairway reported by Walters and

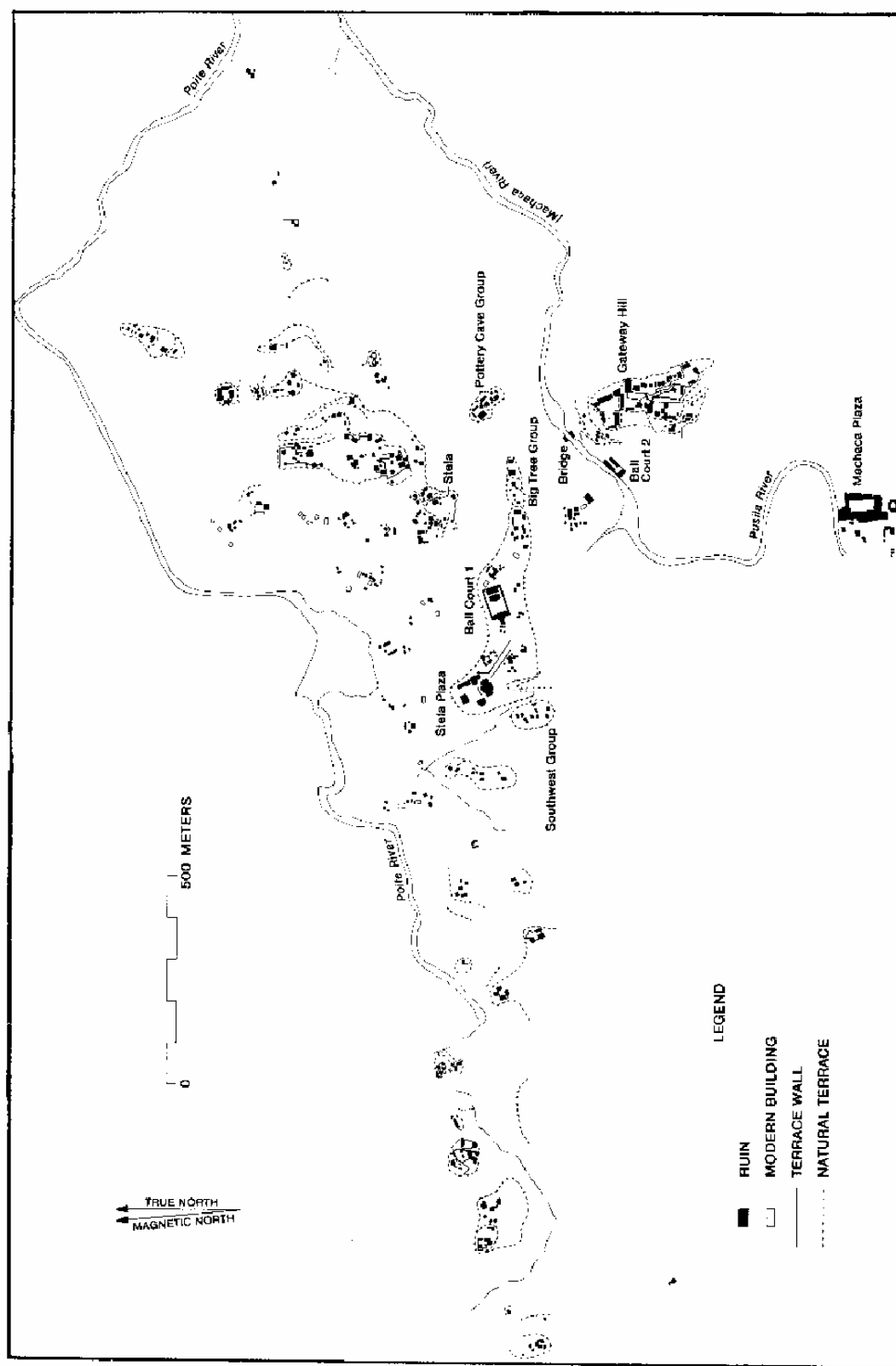


Figure 7.3. Plan Map of Pusilhá (Courtesy of Richard Leventhal, 1990a: Map 8.1)

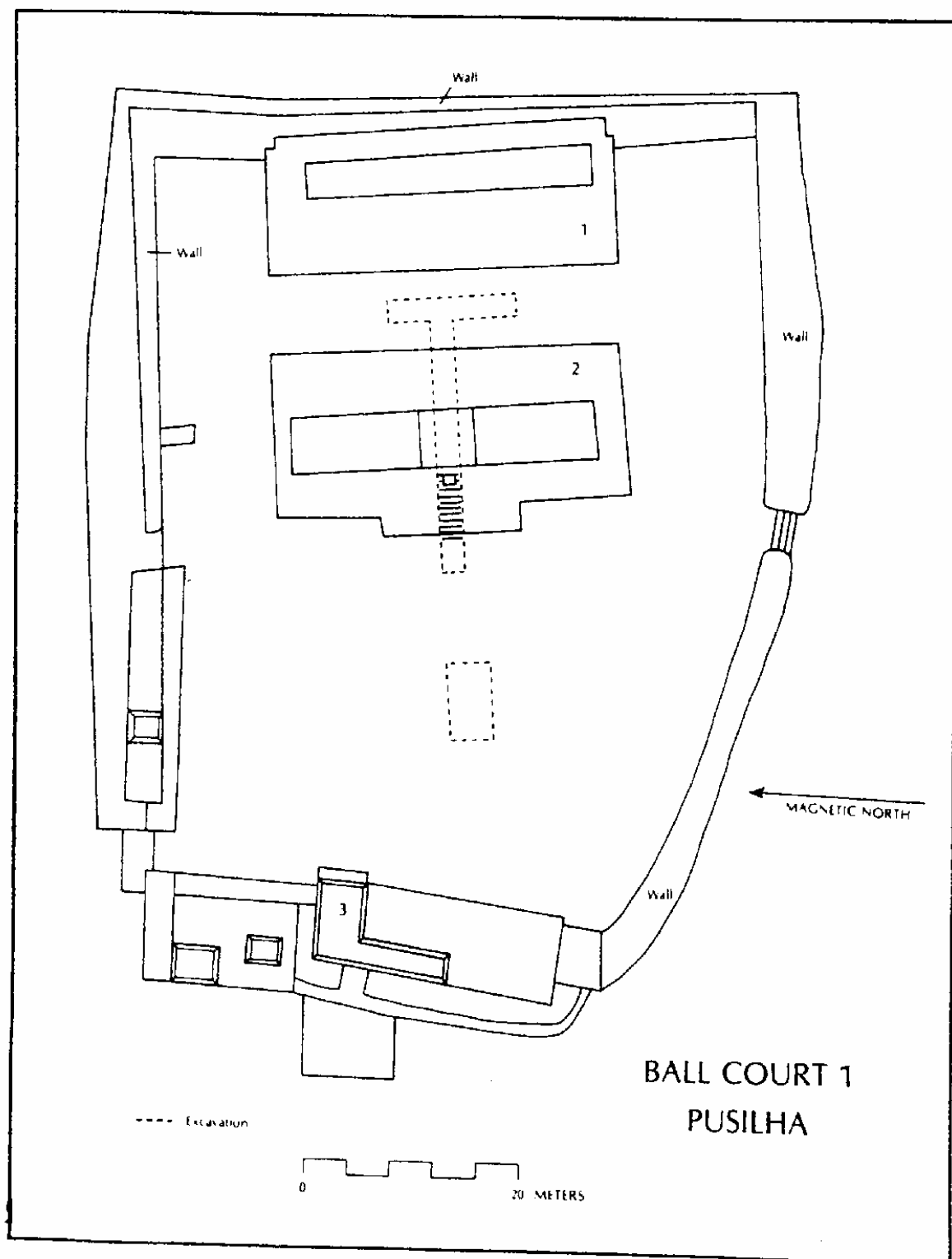


Figure 7.4. Plan Map of Ballcourt 1 (Courtesy of Richard Leventhal, 1990a: Figure 8.5a)

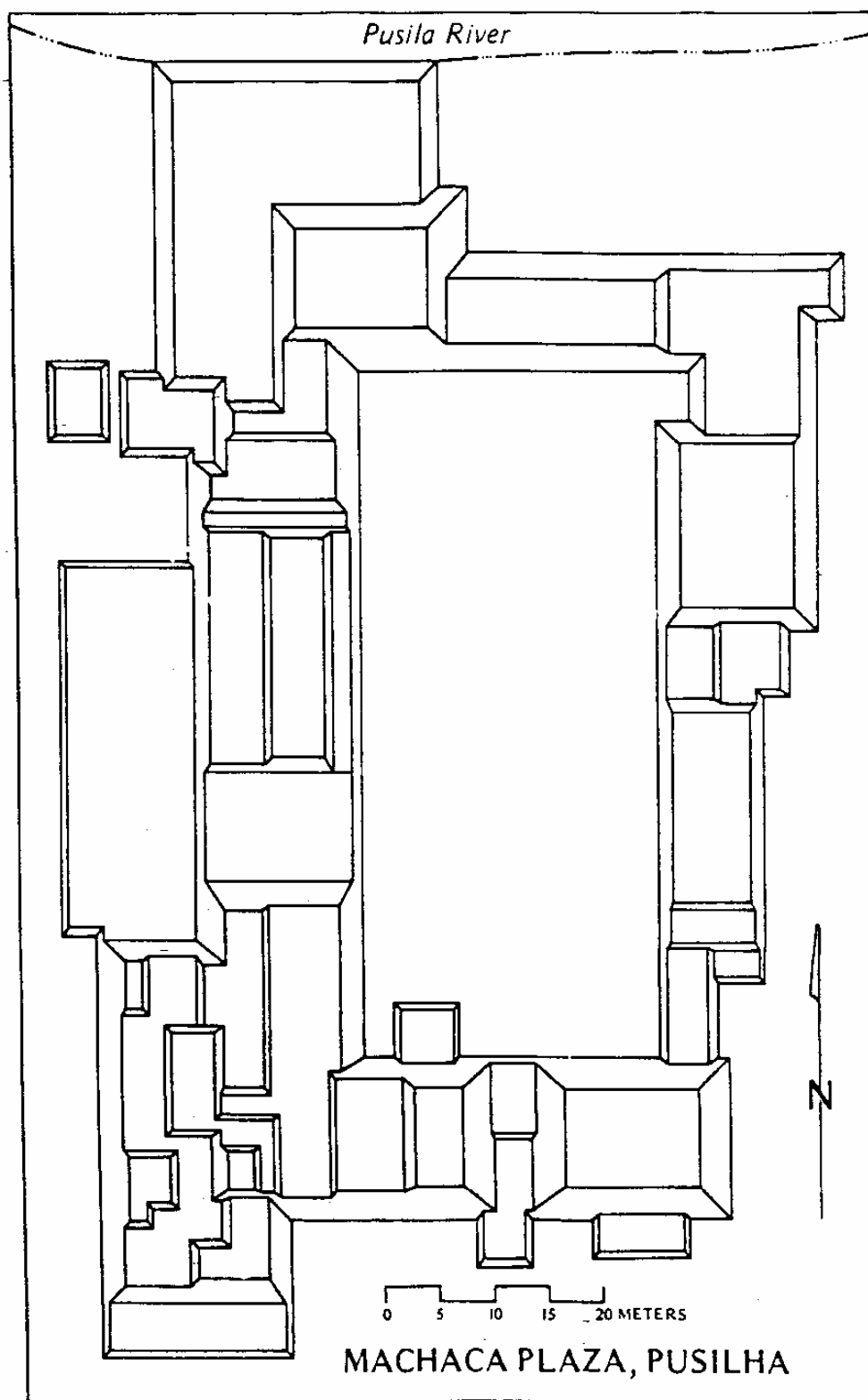


Figure 7.5. Plan Map of Machaca Plaza (Courtesy of Richard Leventhal, 1980: Figure 6)

Weller contains nine individually carved blocks. Each glyph is enclosed by a circular or oblong cartouche. The stairway appears to be incomplete and the original text probably contained several more stones. The style of the text is Late Classic, but the dedicatory date has proven problematic. At least two stones (Stone 6 and Stone 7) appear to record a Calendar Round date. Stone 6 appears to record a *Tzolk'in* date of 4 *Ak'b'al* while Stone 7 appears to record a *Haab'* date of 2 *Sotz'*. However, these two stones cannot be paired as a calendar round date since 2 *Sotz* will never appear with 4 *Ak'b'al*. In order for a *Sotz'* date to match the *Tzolk'in* date of 4 *Ak'b'al* the numerical coefficients can only be 1, 6, 11, or 16.

There are different ways to interpret these data. First, the *Tzolk'in* date may not be *Ak'b'al*. There is a possibility that the main sign is a variant form of the day name *K'an*. If so, the day recorded here may correspond to one of three possible Calendar Round dates: 9.13.14.5.4 4 *K'an* 2 *Sotz* (15, April 706), 9.16.7.0.4 4 *K'an* 2 *Sotz* (2, April 758), or 9.18.19.13.4 4 *K'an* 2 *Sotz* (20, March 810). All three dates fall within a plausible time span given Pusilhá's chronology. A second way to interpret this Calendar Round date is that the *Haab'* date was incorrectly recorded as 2 *Sotz*. Prager (2002: 111) favors this interpretation and believes that the Calendar Round date should actually read 4 *Ak'b'al* 1 *Sotz* which leads to the following possibilities: 9.13.2.2.3 4 *Ak'b'al* 1 *Sotz* (17, April 694), 9.15.14.15.3 4 *Ak'b'al* 1 *Sotz* (4, April 746), or 9.18.7.10.3 4 *Ak'b'al* 1 *Sotz* (22, March 798). Prager (2002: 111) favors the latest dated possibility of 9.18.7.10.3. However, the possibility also exists that these two blocks represent two separate Calendar Round dates and each is missing its own corresponding *Tzolk'in* or *Haab'* date.

Walters and Weller (1994: 3, 50) report finding little in the way of cultural material from their main excavations in Moho Plaza, but their cave survey, which

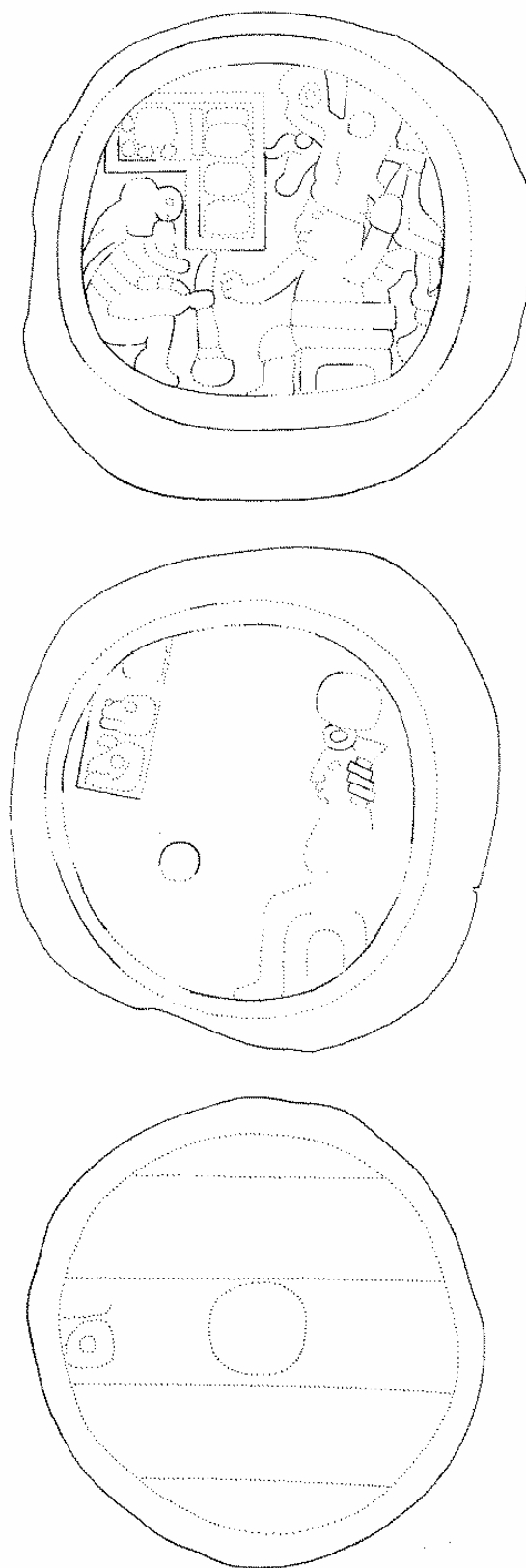


Figure 7.6. Pusilhá Ballcourt Markers 1, 2, and 3 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

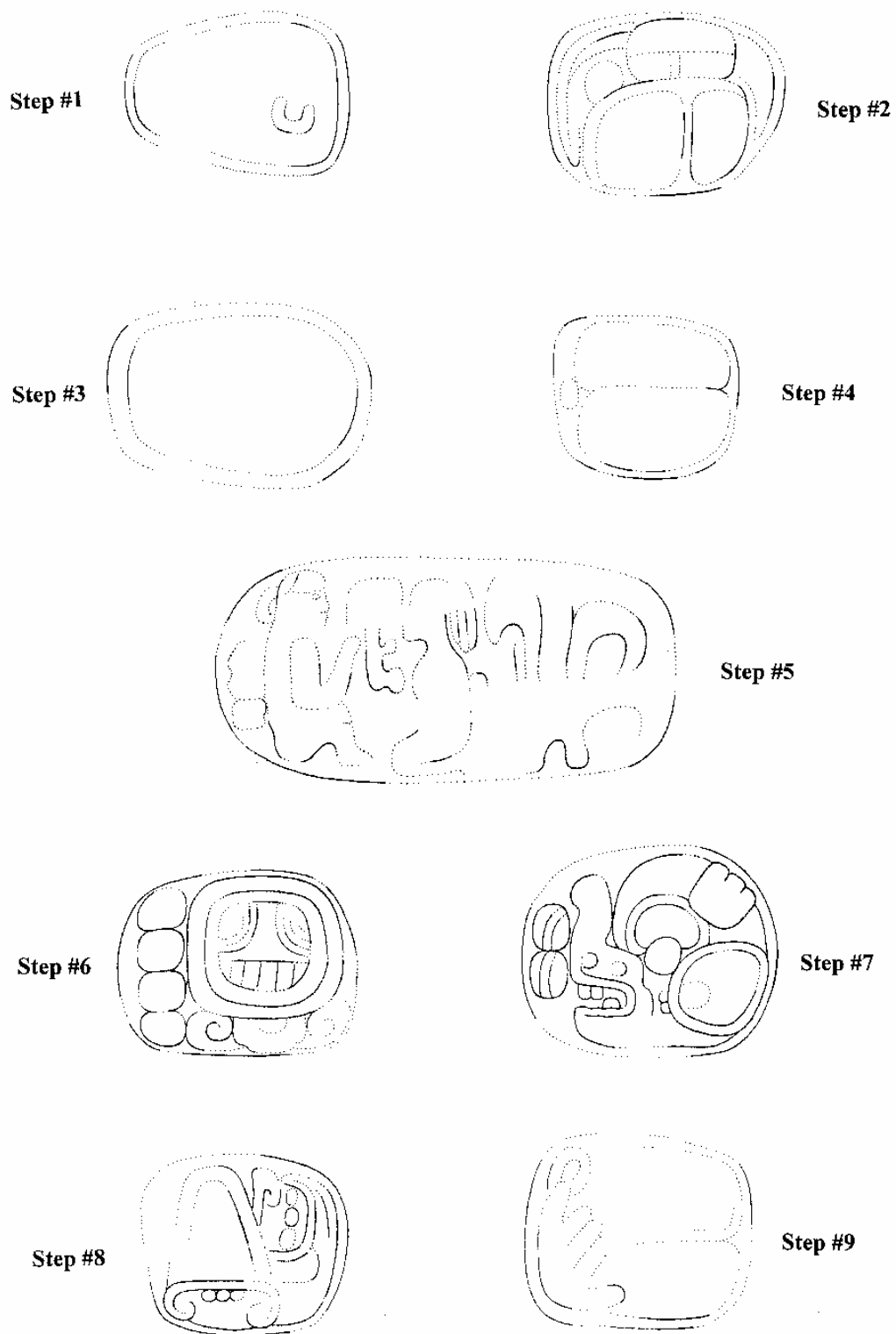


Figure 7.7. Pusilhá Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

included the exploration of some 70 caves, yielded several thousand ceramic sherds from various plates, bowls, cylinder vases, *tecomates*, and *incensarios*. Based on the ceramic assemblage, Walters and Weller suggest that the site included both an Early Classic component (due to the prevalence of basal-flange bowls) and a Terminal Classic component indicating that the site was occupied well before and well after the known stela dates (1994: 3, 40). Most of the ceramics they found were either ritually broken or cached, and missing sherds suggest that many were placed or deposited elsewhere. In addition to the discovery and mapping of the Moho Plaza, Walters and Weller also reported finding several other architectural groups including one known as the *Ik Bolay* Complex, which included six smaller plaza groups. Unfortunately, this complex was never properly mapped. There is only a crude hand-written map drawn by one of its discoverers. They also reportedly found a massive monumental staircase, approximately 60' wide by some 200' high, directly west of the bridge abutment (Walters and Weller 1994: 20). However, the staircase may have been one of the massive terraces common throughout the site. Walters and Weller (1994: 49) also briefly describe major defensive fortifications along the western and northern portions of the site. Walters and Weller state that these fortifications are located near a modern trail located just west of the *Ik Bolay* Complex that is still used by local Maya residents for travel back and forth to southeastern Guatemala. They describe these fortifications as "fortress-like" structures (perhaps a massive terrace wall or platform ranging in height from 1' to 6') just north of this trail built high on the narrow crests of several hills, from which "stones and spears could be thrown at intruders below" (Walters and Weller 1994: 7, 16). They also state that no such structures exist to the east of the site, perhaps indicating "friendly territory" in that direction. Regardless of the function of these so-called "fortifications," the walls

are described as being made of irregular stones that were carefully fitted together (Walters and Weller 1994: 16).

Following the close of the Pusilhá Project, no archaeological investigations were conducted at Pusilhá for nearly ten years. In 2001 Geoffrey Braswell began the Pusilhá Archaeological Project (PUSAP). Preliminary findings from the first several seasons of fieldwork have been published in various journals, in online reports, and in the annual Research Reports in Belizean Archaeology series (Bill and Braswell 2005; Bill et al. 2005; Braswell 2001a, 2001b, 2002; Braswell and Gibbs 2006; Braswell and Prager 2003; Braswell et al. 2002; Braswell et al. 2004; Braswell et al. 2005; Maguire et al. 2003; Prager 2002, 2003, 2006). The PUSAP's research focused on investigating the claims of Gann and Thompson (1931: 54) and later Marcus (1976: 47, 145-146, 2003: 95), who argued that Pusilhá was closely tied to both Copan and Quiriguá during the Late Classic Period (Braswell and Gibbs 2006: 272). The evidence for this connection was based largely on shared sculptural conventions that included large in-the-round zoomorphic altars, close similarities between the emblem glyphs of Pusilhá and Quiriguá, the appearance of a Pusilhá king whose name was similar to that of Ruler 12 (Smoke *Imix*) at Copan, and finally the appearance of an early dynastic Founder nicknamed Foliated *Ajaw*, prominently mentioned in the inscriptions of Pusilhá (Braswell and Gibbs 2006: 272). Following the epigraphic ideas proposed by Martin and Grube (2000) of a hegemonic organizational system, Braswell tried to find further evidence of a link between Pusilhá and Copan, but failed to find one. Braswell currently believes that Pusilhá was not closely allied with either Copan or Tikal, based on his ceramic and epigraphic analysis (Braswell and Gibbs 2006: 272-274). However, my findings contradict Braswell's analysis.

During their first season of fieldwork in 2001 the PUSAP cleared and mapped the Stela Plaza group resulting in the discovery of 88 carved monument fragments. Since many of the best-preserved stelae were broken up and then transported to England during the late 1920's, it was widely believed that little was left in situ in the Stela Plaza. The discovery of 88 carved monument fragments including two new stelae and a fourth zoomorphic altar suggest that additional monuments may still be found at Pusilhá (Braswell 2001a: 16). These new monument fragments were identified using oblique lighting at night. Many of the monuments that both the British Museum Expedition and Morley identified as being "plain" or "uncarved" have now been proven to be carved, when viewed under side lighting.

Additional archaeological investigations were conducted in the Moho Plaza Group. Thirteen structures have been located within this group, including two ballcourts, one of which (Ballcourt 3) is reported to be the largest in southern Belize (Braswell 2001a: 17). Braswell also thinks that the occupation within the Moho Plaza was relatively late based on the style of architecture, which is quite different in form than that of other architectural groups at the site. He notes that many of the buildings within this group are fronted by large monolithic stairs similar in style to those at both Lubaantún and Nim Li Punit, which suggest a later date. In addition, Ballcourt 3 is oriented east-west, which is typical of Terminal Classic to Postclassic ballcourts, and is not located within a walled enclosure like Ballcourts 1 and 2 (Braswell 2001a: 17).

Archaeological investigations were also conducted in the Gateway Hill Acropolis. According to Braswell (2001a: 17), the Gateway Hill Acropolis is the largest architectural group at the site and is much larger in size and scale than Leventhal depicted it in his earlier description of the site. Some temple pyramids in this group stand more

than 80m above the Pusilhá River. However, as was pointed out earlier, much of this height was achieved by facing the surrounding hillslopes with cut stones to give the appearance of large labor-intensive constructions. Based on the appearance of looted tombs and local villager accounts, the burial place for many of Pusilhá's nobility appears to have been the southern-portion of the Gateway Hill Complex (Braswell 2001a: 20).

A systematic settlement survey has also been conducted by the PUSAP to better understand the spatial distribution of elite versus commoner residences at Pusilhá, and to determine the site growth (Braswell 2001a: 20). A second *sacbé* was identified in the area around the *Ik Bolay* Complex and Braswell confirms the appearance of a major fortification or platform in the mountain pass on the Guatemalan border, which he thinks demarcates the northwestern boundary of Pusilhá (2001a: 20). Based on a settlement density of 255 platforms per km², using standard demographic calculations for the Maya Lowlands, Braswell believes that a population density of 850-1400 individuals per km² occupied the residential zones at Pusilhá, supporting the hypothesis that Pusilhá supported a large population (2001a: 20). Braswell also reported discovering a second bridge complex approximately 1.5 km upstream from the previously identified bridge near the Gateway Hill Complex (2001a: 22).

On the basis of preliminary ceramic data, Braswell reports a four-phased sequence of occupation beginning at the start of the Late Classic Period (A.D. 600-700), a second Late Classic Phase (A.D. 700-780), a Terminal Classic Phase (A.D. 780-850), and a Postclassic Phase (A.D. 950-1100) (Braswell et al. 2005: 66). Braswell acknowledges a problem with the ceramic data. He knows that Pusilhá was likely occupied during the Early Classic Period, but he has uncovered only two Early Classic sherds, both from the same mixed context (Braswell et al. 2005: 67). On the basis of the ceramics recovered by

Joyce (1929), Leventhal (1980), and Walters and Weller (1994), it would appear that there was an Early Classic component at the site, as indicated by a prevalence of Tzakol 2-3 style basal-flange bowls. Braswell acknowledges a weak tie to the southeastern Maya Lowlands during the early stages of the Late Classic Period (Braswell et al. 2005: 67). He reports no evidence of interaction between the Belize Valley and Pusilhá, either during the early or late phases of the Late Classic Period, but sees a close connection to southern Petén, in particular to the Pasión and Petexbatún regions (Braswell et al. 2005: 68). However, those connections end by the start of the Terminal Classic Period (see Demarest et al. 2004). During the Terminal Classic (roughly the end of the 8th and early 9th centuries), huge numbers of ceramics from the Belize Valley (Belize Red) are found at Pusilhá, suggesting that a change in political relations or order had occurred at the onset of the Terminal Classic Period (Braswell et al. 2005: 68). These finding may provide further evidence in support of Rice's *may* model by suggesting that the change in regional ceramic styles corresponds to a change in the rotational shift of power.

Christian Prager, project epigrapher for the PUSAP, wrote his Master's thesis on the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Pusilhá (2002), building upon previous epigraphic analyses by Riese (1980) and Reents (1982). Prager's thesis remains one of the most comprehensive studies of the monuments at Pusilhá. He has identified more than 39 individuals, including the names of at least 11 individuals with emblem glyphs, from the 46 sculpted monuments at the site (Prager 2003: 7). The main sign of the Pusilhá emblem glyph is read logographically as either *UN* or *UNIW* meaning 'avocado' (Fox and Justeson 1980: 213; Lacadena and Wichmann n.d: 10) and so the lords of Pusilhá were referred to as 'Divine Avocado Lords' (Figure 7.8). The monuments chronicle historical events starting at 9.6.17.8.18 (17, June 571) and ending on 9.16.0.0.0 (5, May 751), or

perhaps slightly later, based on a possible Calendar Round date recorded on the Hieroglyphic Stairway. Prager has reconstructed a dynastic sequence at Pusilhá that includes the names of at least 7 kings spanning nearly 180 years.

Epigraphic Evidence of Political Organization at Pusilhá

Except for Prager's analysis, little attention has been paid to the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Pusilhá by modern epigraphers. Previous attention had focused on the decipherment of both dedicatory dates (Gann 1930; Morley 1928, 1938: Vol. IV; Thompson 1928b) and elements associated with the supplemental series (Andrews 1951; Satterthwaite 1951; Thompson 1929). The inscriptions of Pusilhá are interesting to epigraphers because of their highly unusual syntax along with numerous apparent calendrical errors (see Wanyerka n.d.). Many of the basic units of time appear to have been recorded incorrectly. On Stela D there are at least four major anomalies in the way dedicatory dates were recorded. The anomalies include incorrect coefficients associated with particular numbered *winal* or *k'atun* dates and incorrect *haab'* signs. There are at least five examples (recorded on Stela D, H, K, and M) where elements associated with the Calendar Round date atypically appear before the supplemental series. Also, Pusilhá scribes seem to have used a different system in determining moon ages. The moon ages in the Initial Series dates recorded on Stela D, H, and P are off by as much as 3 days (Thompson 1929: 227; Wanyerka nd: 15). Pusilhá scribes also commonly restated initial Calendar Round dates in later passages. This unusual restatement of earlier Initial Series dates appears on Stela D and on Stela H twice. There is often a complete lack of anterior date indicators or posterior date indicators, most notably on Stela D and Stela P.

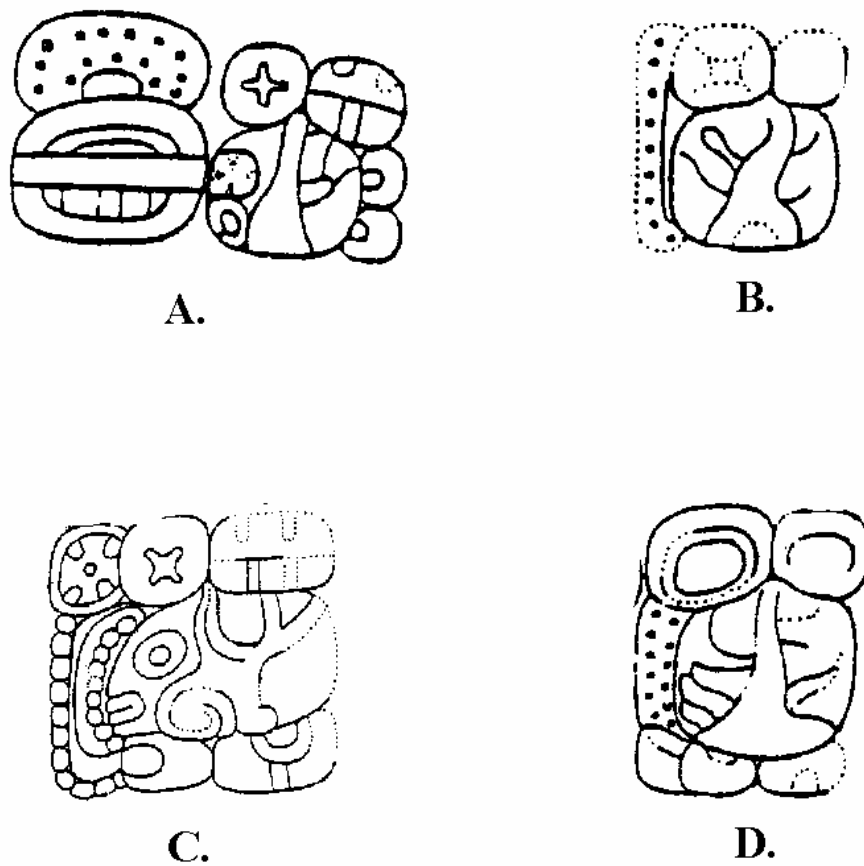


Figure 7.8. The Pusilhá Emblem Glyph (Drawings by J. Montgomery)

A) Pusilhá Stela D

B) Pusilhá Stela H

C) Pusilhá Stela M

D) Pusilhá Stela P

Another uncommon feature in the inscriptions at Pusilhá included on Stelae D, H, and P are single texts that feature two complete Long Count dates with supporting supplemental and lunar series data. The unorthodox reading order of Stela K is also unusual. The text was recorded using five columns. Instead of the more typical reading order of left to right in double columns, the text on Stela K begins in the third and fourth columns, with an enlarged initial series introductory glyph (see Figure 7.32). The reader of this text must then decide whether to read the fifth column next or move back to the left-hand section of the text and read columns 1 and 2.

In their book entitled *The History of the Maya: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, Gann and Thompson hypothesize that both Quiriguá and Pusilhá were “colonized” from Copan (1931: 54). Later, both Berlin (1958) and Barthel (1968) included Pusilhá emblem glyph data to identify Maya capitals. Marcus initially entertained the possibility that Quiriguá owed its existence to rulers who emigrated from Pusilhá, based on her belief that a Pusilhá emblem glyph appeared on a monument at Quiriguá, as well as the idea that Pusilhá was a younger site than Copan, but older than Quiriguá (1976: 145-148). Marcus believed that Pusilhá and Quiriguá shared the same main sign in their respective emblem glyphs. Marcus (1983b: 465) later incorporated these findings in her rank ordering of Classic Maya centers based on epigraphic references to site hierarchy using emblem glyphs. However, several epigraphers have now concluded that they represent two different emblem glyphs (Looper 2003: 60; Prager 2002: 74-75; Wanyerka nd: 15). Proskouriakoff (1993: 56) observed that a name of a Pusilhá ruler recorded on Stela D resembled the name of the Copan king *Butz’ Chan* recorded on Copan Stela 7. Proskouriakoff also suggested that the rulers of Copan were tied to the rulers of Pusilhá and that Quiriguá’s emergence as a political entity was due to

settlers who originally hailed from Pusilhá (1993: 56). These ideas were later expanded by Schele and Grube, who interpreted a reference to the location *Tz'am Witz* 'throne mountain' along with a ruler's name recorded on Pusilhá Stela D as a contemporary reference to either the 11th or 12th king of Copan, *Butz' Chan* or Smoke *Imix* (1994a: 118, 1994b: 136-137). Schele and Grube argued that the Quiriguá emblem glyph was likely read *tzuk* meaning 'partition' or 'province' and that the references to a Pusilhá lord with the same name as that of a ruler at Copan strongly suggested that Pusilhá was a province or dependent polity of Copan at this time (1994a: 118). They also argued that the geographic area between the southern Maya Mountains and the Rio Dulce, along with the area between the Lower Motagua Valley and the La Entrada Valley, were allied with Copan (1994a: 118). Slightly later, Schele and Mathews (1998: 346) andLooper (2003: 60) again argued that Copan held sway over Quiriguá and that Copan's influence was also likely felt in southern Belize at both Pusilhá and Nim Li Punit. As will be discussed below, the lords at Nim Li Punit record a royal title known as the *Ek' Xukpi Ajaw* title, 'Black Copan Lord,' which is closely associated with both Quiriguá and Copan lords. Furthermore, the lords of Nim Li Punit wear a distinctive turban headdress, a costume element unique to the southeastern Maya Lowlands, which also supports the case of Copan's influence in the Southern Maya Mountains Region during the Late Classic Period.

The inscriptions of Pusilhá will now be discussed chronologically, drawing on passages from different monuments, rather than simply reading each text and then backtracking to highlight the relevant passages from a combination of texts. This method of interpretation is crucial for understanding the internal dynamics of macro-political organization at Pusilhá.

The earliest historical reference in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Pusilhá occurs in a retrospective passage recorded on Stela P (Figure 7.9). This monument contains two complete Initial Series dates with supporting supplemental series. The initial dedicatory date for Stela P is 9.7.0.0.0 7 *Ajaw* 3 *K'ank'in* (5, December 573) while the second records the Long Count date of 9.10.15.0.0 6 *Ajaw* 13 *Mak* (7, November 647) (see Stela P in Appendix A). The retrospective passage (G6-H11) goes back in time from the second Long Count date of 9.10.15.0.0, via a distance number to 8.2.0.0.0 5 *Ajaw* 8 *Sak* (11, February 81). The verb at H9 is too eroded to read, but the next glyph (G10) appears to be the “*Chi*-Throne” place name based on detailed photographs taken in the British Museum and provided by Dorie Reents-Budet. This toponym appears to have been of great importance to sites across the southern Maya lowlands and seems to refer to a place of origin of the “founding of royal lineages” (Grube 2003b: 363; Schele and Freidel 1990: 309).

This “*chi*-throne” toponym is connected to events relating to the Late Preclassic Period. The toponym consists of the syllabic sign *chi* located over a bent or “wedge-shaped” *Kawak* logographic sign, followed by some unknown suffix that includes *tuun* markings (Figure 7.10). This toponymic expression has been referred to by many different names. It is known as “*Chi*-Witz” (Schele and Freidel 1990: 309), “*Chi*-Throne” Place (Grube and Martin 2001: 32), “*Chi*-*Kawak*” Place (Grube 2003b: 63), “Bent *Kawak*” Place (Stuart 2004a: 219), and “*Chi*-Altar” Place (Guenter 2005:11). Guenter (2005:11) believes that this location refers to the giant Late Preclassic site of El Mirador, based on numerous references to this location on codex-style ceramics from the Mirador Basin.

This title is of great interest for its political implications for the larger political

structure of Classic Maya civilization. The retrospective reference to the *Chi*-Altar Place recorded on Pusilhá Stela P is currently the earliest dated reference to this location. The *Chi*-Altar toponym also appears twice in retrospective passages recorded at Copan on Stela 4 and Stela I (Figure 7.11). These references suggest that later Copan kings viewed and commemorated the 8.6.0.0.0 10 *Ajaw* 13 *Ch'en* Period Ending (19, December 159) as a date of great importance; unfortunately it is not clear why. Stela 4 is the first monument at Copan to discuss the 8.6.0.0.0 Period Ending (Figure 7.11A). Stela 4 was commissioned by the 13th ruler of the Copan Dynasty *Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil*, who is depicted on the front face of the stela. The dedicatory date for Stela 4 is 9.15.0.0.0 4 *Ajaw* 13 *Yax* (18, August 731). The text then jumps back in time to the 8.6.0.0.0 Period Ending to describe an event involving the *chan té chan* 'four heavens', perhaps some sort of quadripartite or cosmological reference, followed by a reference to *ch'am ik' hu'un*, the 'receiving of the black headband' at the *Chi*-Altar Place. The significance of receiving the black headband will become clearer later on when I discuss the inscriptions at Nim Li Punit. A parallel reference to this event was recorded on the right side text of Copan Stela I (Figure 7.11B). Stela I was commissioned by the 12th ruler of the Copan Dynasty, *Smoke Imix* (Grube 2004: 128). This passage begins with a Calendar Round date of 10 *Ajaw* 13 *Ch'en*, which corresponds to the 8.6.0.0.0 Period Ending. The passage also includes the verbal expression *jomiiy uwak k'atun* 'the sixth *k'atun* had ended'. The *Chi*-Altar toponym follows this date and a two-part generic toponym read *chan ch'een*, 'sky-cave,' finishes the passage, perhaps a general reference to 'a city' indicating that this location was a 'major polity' (Grube and Martin 2004: 122-123). The name of the protagonist overseeing the events associated with the 8.6.0.0.0 Period Ending is an personage that epigraphers have nicknamed "Foliated *Ajaw*," based on the three

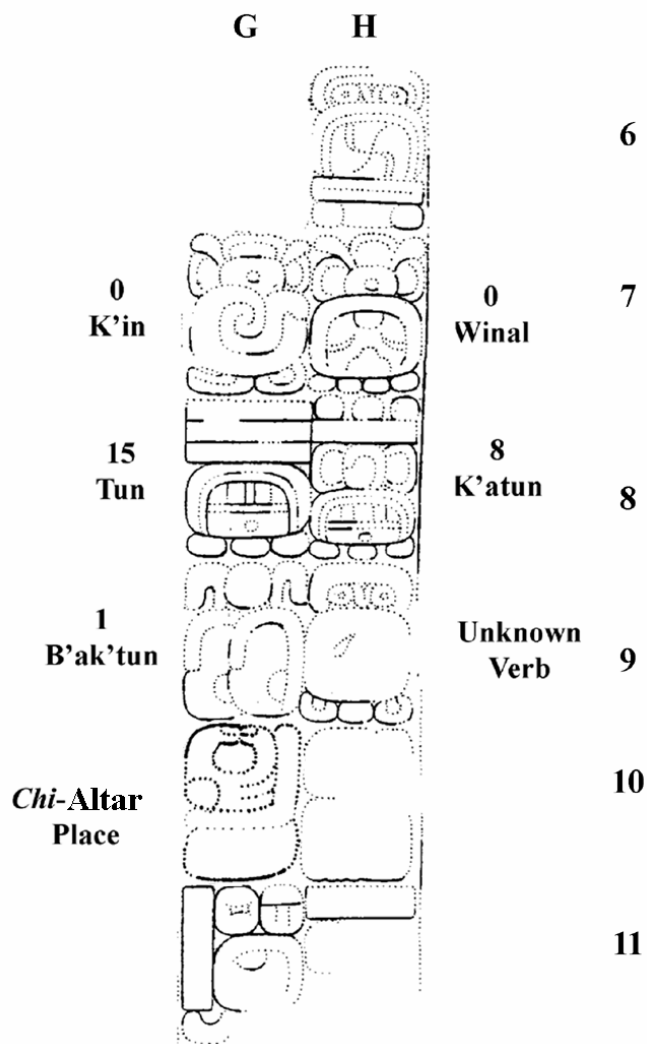


Figure 7.9. Pusilhá Stela P, H6-H11 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

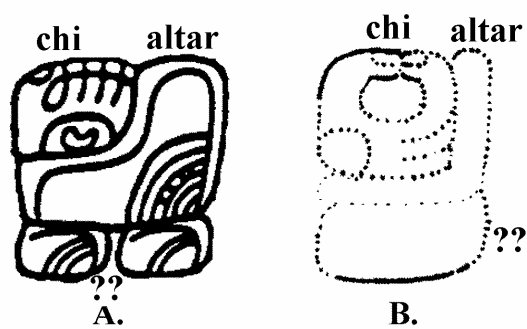


Figure 7.10. The *Chi-Altar* Toponym

A) Tikal Stela 31 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

B) Pusilhá Stela P (Drawing by P. Wanyerka)

distinctive maize leaves that surround an *ajaw* face. The text continues moving forward in time via a distance number of 208 days to reach the day 8.6.0.10.8 10 *Lamat* 16 *Pop* (14, July 160). The event associated with this date is completely eroded. At the end of the text is the up-turned, leaf-nosed bat head, which serves as the main sign of the Copan emblem glyph, followed by the *chan-ch'een* glyph. Stuart (2004a: 219) thinks that 208 days may have been the time it took Foliated *Ajaw* to travel to the *Chi*-Altar Place. Both texts from Copan suggest that the *Chi*-Altar location was a location that was quite far from Copan.

There are several Late Classic references that link the *Chi*-Altar location to specific historical figures, many of whom are the Founders of royal dynasties. The first passage to be discussed is recorded on the Hieroglyphic Stairway at Palenque (Figure 7.12A). The dedicatory date for this passage is 9.8.5.13.8 6 *Lamat* 1 *Zip* (21, April 599) and the event described is the 'axing' of Lacanjá by a king of Calakmul known as Sky Witness, who is associated with the *Chi*-Altar toponym (Grube and Martin 2001: 19; Grube 2004: 130). A second example comes from Tikal Stela 31 (Figure 7.12B). Though the Long Count date at the bottom of the monument is now missing, it must precede 8.14.0.0.0 7 *Ajaw* 3 *Xul* (31, Aug. 317) since the next passage recorded on Stela 31 states that Lady *Une' B'alam* is the person celebrating that particular Period Ending (Grube and Martin 2001: 22-23; Grube 2004: 130). Foliated Jaguar, the Tikal lord is associated with this section of text. The event recorded in the missing section of text *utiiy* 'happened at' the *Chi*-Altar Place. Tikal Stela 22 (Figure 7.12C) shows a link between the *Chi*-Altar toponym and the Founder of the Tikal Dynasty, *Yax Ehb' Xook* (Grube and Martin 2001: 21). The dedicatory date for this passage is the Period Ending 9.17.0.0.0 13 *Ajaw* 18 *Kumk'u* (20, January 771). The *Chi*-Altar toponym follows a reference to the 29th ruler of

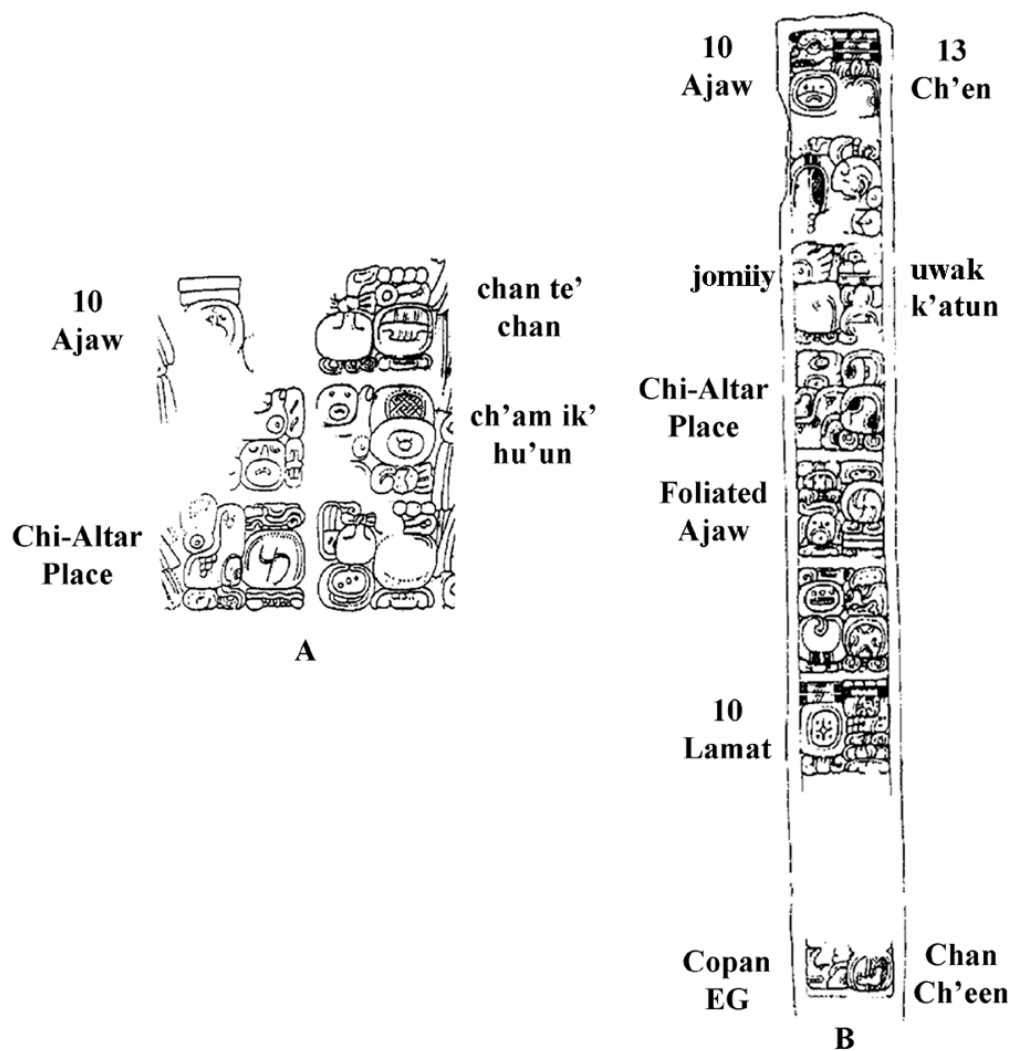


Figure 7.11. References at Copan to the 8.6.0.0.0 Period Ending (Drawings by Linda Schele, © David Schele, Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org)

A) Copan Stela 4

B) Copan Stela I

Tikal, *Yax Nuun Ayiin* II. Following the Tikal emblem glyph is the reference to *Yax Ehb' Xook*, the Founder of Tikal, whose name seems to be incorporated into *Yax Nuun Ayiin* II's royal name phrase, linking the 29th king of Tikal to the Founder. Finally, on Yaxchilán Lintel 21 (Figure 7.12D) there is a reference involving the seventh king of Yaxchilán, Moon Skull, who is linked to the *Chi*-Altar Place by a title that calls him a *Chi*-Altar *Y-ajaw Té* of the Founder of Yaxchilán, *Yoaat B'alam* (Grube and Martin 2001: 21; Grube 2004: 130).

One of the last references to the *Chi*-Altar toponym appears on Stela K at Pusilhá (Figure 7.13), which features another reference to the 8.6.0.0.0 Period Ending. The dedicatory date of Stela K is 9.12.0.0.0 10 *Ajaw* 8 *Yaxk'in* (28, June 672). The text then drops back in time to chronicle a now unreadable date that includes a 'binding of the *tuun*' by Foliated *Ajaw*. The text continues with a Calendar Round date of 10 *Ajaw* 13 *Ch'en*, which corresponds to the 8.6.0.0.0 Period Ending, followed by *utiiy* 'it happened at' and what appears to be the *Chi*-Altar toponym. This passage records the same information including date, location, and actor that is recorded on Copan Stela I (cf. Figure 7.11B), suggesting a link between the rulership of Copan and Pusilhá.

Foliated *Ajaw* appears a number of times in the inscriptions of the southern Maya lowlands, each time in retrospective references dating back to the Late Preclassic and Early Classic Periods. The earliest references to Foliated *Ajaw* are recorded on Pusilhá Stela K (Figure 7.14A) and Copan Stela I (Figure 7.14B), which refer to the 8.6.0.0.0 Period Ending. A jade pendant discovered by Gruning at Pusilhá in 1929 may also graphically depict the Foliated *Ajaw* name (Figure 7.14.C).

The Foliated *Ajaw* motif is extremely ancient in Mesoamerican art and has been identified as a motif associated with kingship since Olmec times (Freidel and Schele

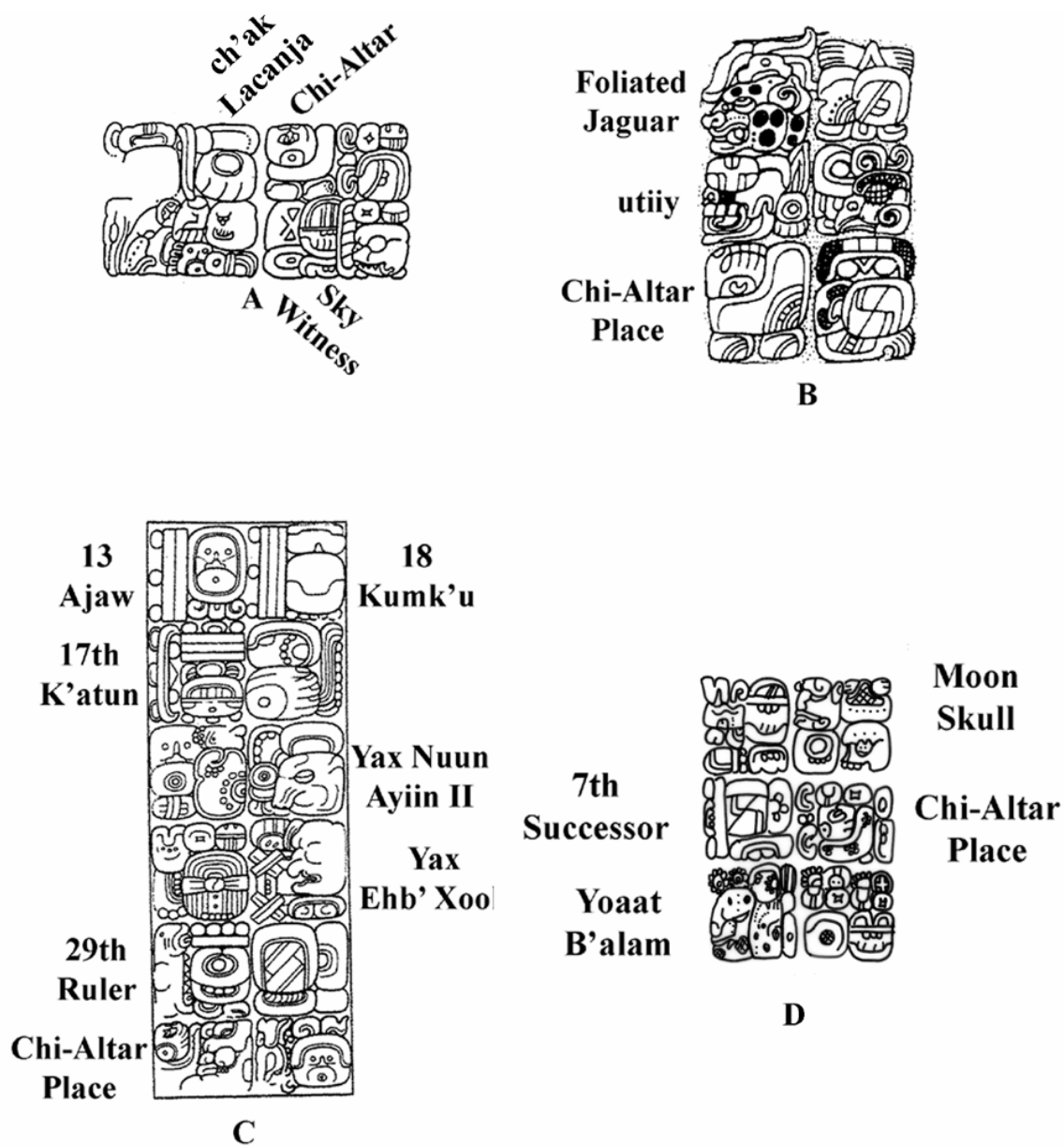


Figure 7.12. Context for *Chi-Altar* Toponym

A) Palenque House C, HS (Drawing by S. Martin), B) Tikal Stela 31 (Drawing by J. Montgomery), C) Tikal Stela 22 (Drawing by J. Montgomery), D) Yaxchilán Lintel 21 (Drawing by P. Wanyerka)

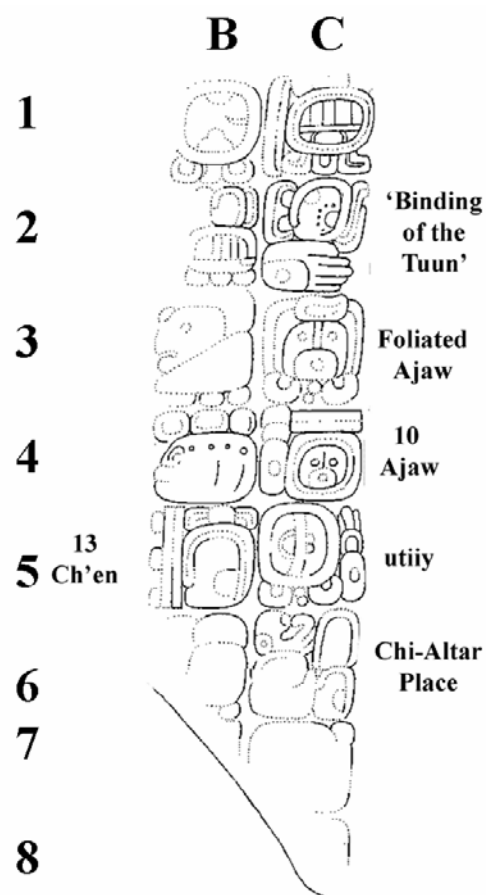


Figure 7.13. Pusilhá Stela K, B1-C8 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)



Figure 7.14. The Foliated *Ajaw* Name

A) Pusilhá Stela K (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

B) Copan Stela I (Drawing by P. Wanyerka)

C) Pusilhá Jade Pendant (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

1988: 552). It appears on Monument 65 at Kaminaljuyú, which features a portrait of a seated king wearing the tri-lobed headdress (Kaplan 1999, 2000; Fahsen 2002). The Foliated *Ajaw* motif is prominently featured in the headdress of the king portrayed on Quiriguá Monument 26 (see Grube 2004: 130). It is also recorded in the royal headdress portrayed on an Early Classic jade celt from the site of Rio Azul (see Grube 2004: 130), on a pair of conch shell medallions from the site of Holmul (see Stuart 2004: 136), and on the famous jade head of *K'inich Ajaw* from the site of Altun Há (see Stuart 2004c: 136).

The installation of newly allied subordinate rulers at various sites in the central Petén shortly following the Teotihuacan-led *entrada* event of A.D. 378, suggests that the founding of Maya kingdoms and the establishment of royal dynasties are part of a larger macro-political system. Perhaps references to a *Chi*-Altar place are analogous to the concept of Tollan and indicate an effort to trace origins of dynastic rule to the earliest and most powerful Preclassic kingdoms of the central Petén.

A number of Late Classic kings commemorated earlier Preclassic events dating between 8.2.0.0.0 and 8.17.0.0.0. The use of this toponym in association with events involving the Founders of particular kingdoms may be evidence that rulers traveled to the *Chi*-Altar site for legitimation, perhaps to gain the right to rule under the auspices of a larger authority. Given the fact that the earliest and largest sites during the Preclassic Period were centered in northern Petén and southern Campeché, the *Chi*-Altar location may refer to one of the three greatest sites of this region: El Mirador, Nakbé, or Calakmul. This possibility has gained support from recent archaeological and epigraphic findings (Grube 2003b; Guenter 2005; Walker et al. 2006). Guenter (2005: 5) notes another example of the *Chi*-Altar toponym on a Hieroglyphic Step at the site of Resbalon in southern Quintana Roo. This example substitutes a parrot head for the bent *kawak* sign

and a small *chi*-hand element is located near the parrot's forehead. This step also contained the well-known *Kaloomte*' title, associated with only the most powerful of Maya kings. Guenter (2005: 5) notes a second reference of the *Chi*-Altar toponym at Resbalon on two blocks that read *uti* 'it happened at' the *Chi*-Altar Place. Using the codex-style dynastic vases from the Mirador Basin that feature the royal genealogy of the *Kaan* Dynasty, both Guenter (2005) and Martin (1997) have attempted to identify a Preclassic dynastic sequence of 19 rulers who are said to have ruled the *Kaan* or 'Snake-Head' polity. Both the archaeological and epigraphic evidence suggest that the physical capital of the *Kaan* polity may have shifted at least twice prior to the Late Classic Period. During the Preclassic Period, Walker et al. (2006: 5) suggest that the *Kaan* polity was centered in the Mirador Basin, as attested by the preponderance of local codex-style ceramics that feature Kaan history. Guenter (2005: 9) proposes that the Mirador Basin was integrated as a single state and that El Mirador was connected to various subordinate sites such as Tintal and Nakbé via *sacb'eob*'. El Mirador was extremely powerful during the Late Preclassic Period and was able to build the 70m tall Danta Pyramid, the largest stone structure ever built in the Maya area. It would also seem, based on the ceramic assemblage, that the early success and power of the Mirador Basin quickly declined by A.D. 150 and soon thereafter the region was abandoned (Guenter 2005: 9). The *Kaan* Dynasty again flourished by the start of the Late Classic Period, but this time the capital city seems to have shifted to the massive site of Dzibanché or Calakmul. The rise, and movement of the Snake-Head polity may also be evidence in support of Rice's *may* model. Rice (2004: 184-188) has argued that Calakmul, most likely the home of the Snake-Head polity during the Classic Period, served as a *may* seat at least three times. Rice (2004: 184) suggests that during the Late Preclassic Period Calakmul may have

served as a *k'atun* seat within Tikal's *may* system. During Calakmul's Early Classic *may* seating, power may have rotated between Balakbal, El Mirador, El Tintal, and Nakbé (Rice 2004: 182). During Calakmul's Middle Classic *may* seating, power likely rotated between Dzibanché and El Resbalón and finally, during Calakmul's Late Classic *may* seating, power likely rotated between sites such as El Perú, Oxpemul, La Muneca, Altamira, Naachtún, Uxul, Sasilá, Los Alacranes, La Corona, Nadzcaan, Xamantún, and Xultún (Rice 2004: 188-191). The idea that the capital of the Snake-Head polity rotated between various seats does not diminish Martin and Grube's notion of a Classic Maya hegemonic system nor does it diminish Rice's interpretation of a *may* system. In fact, the two models appear complementary.

The first contemporary passage recorded at Pusilhá appears on Stela P. A distance number leads from the Initial Series date of the monument on 9.7.0.0.0 7 *Ajaw* 3 *K'ank'in* (5, December 573) to the Long Count date of 9.6.17.8.18 2 *Etz'nab'* 11 *Sek* (17, June 571) and the accession of *K'awiil Chan K'inich* 'Resplendent Sky *K'awiil*.' *K'awiil Chan K'inich* appears to be the first king of Pusilhá and he carries the standard *UNIW* version of the Pusilhá emblem glyph (Figure 7.15).

One of the first acts in *K'awiil Chan K'inich*'s reign is the celebration of the 9.7.0.0.0 7 *Ajaw* 3 *K'ank'in* (5, December 573) Period Ending. This Period Ending was commemorated on Stela P (Figure 7.16) and Stela O (Figure 7.17), both of which originally stood directly in front of Str.1 in the main stela plaza. The text on Stela P states that *K'awiil Chan K'inich utz'apaw lakam tuun*, 'plants or drives into the ground, the grand stone', a probable reference to the erection of Stela O in front of Str.1. The text appears to name the location where the stela was erected, for the glyph immediately following the stela planting reads *utiyy* 'it happened at', however, the monument is

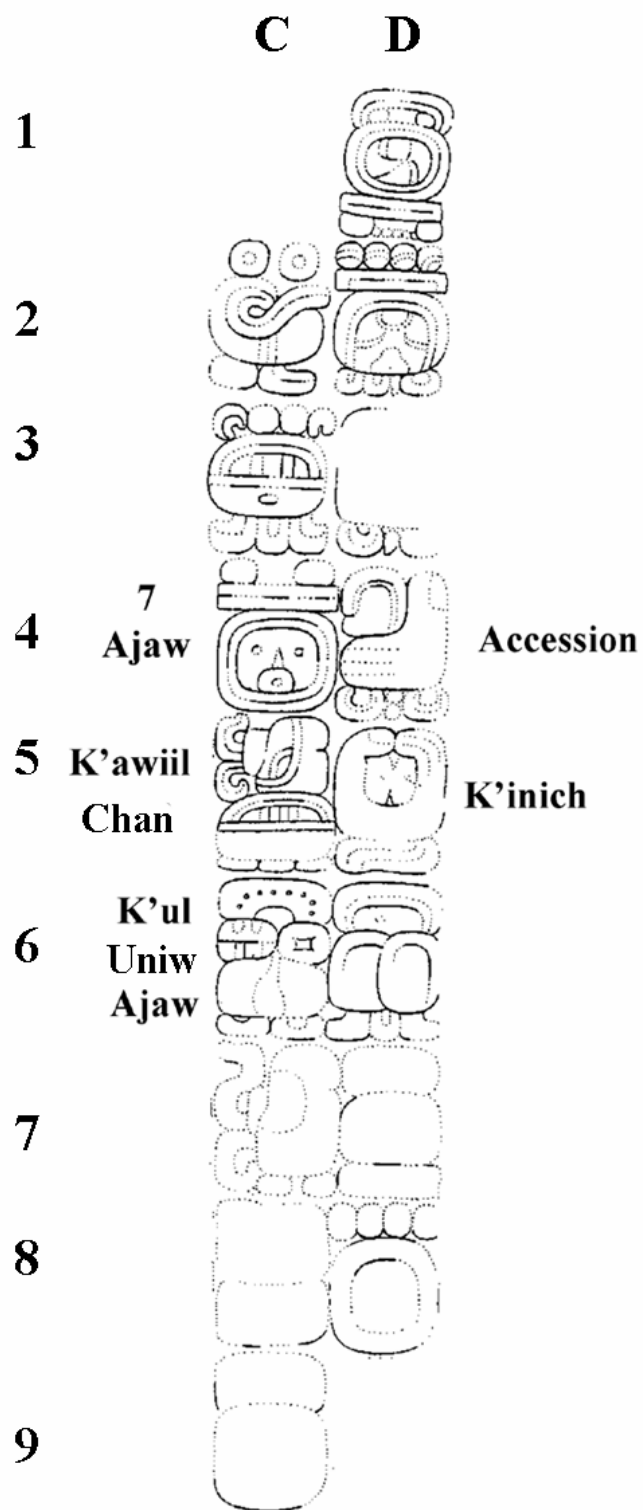


Figure 7.15. Pusilhá Stela P, D1-C9 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

broken and so the name of the location remains unknown. *K'awiil Chan K'inich's* name is also missing (A12-B12), but the final glyph in the passage (C1) is the Pusilhá emblem glyph and so there is little doubt as to the identity of the agent of this action. The text on Stela O (Figure 7.17) is beautifully rendered, but is broken and the bottom half of the text is now missing. A “fire-scattering” reference was inserted into the Lunar Series, as can be seen by the glyph with the downward-turned hand with flames below. In the upper vestiges of the final glyph at A7 one can just make out the *k'awiil* portion of *K'awiil Chan K'inich's* name.

K'awiil Chan K'inich's reign appears to have been quite short, approximately 12 years. The next Pusilhá lord accedes to office on 9.7.10.0.0 6 *Ajaw* 13 *Sak* (14, October 583), as recorded at Pusilhá on Stela H (Figure 7.18). The passage at E7-F16 states *ch'amaw k'awiil* ‘he *K'awiil* grasps’, followed by the name of the new Pusilhá lord, which appears to be *K'ahk' Uhulaj* ‘Fire Arrives’ or ‘Arrives with Fire.’ The text then jumps forward in time almost three years via a short distance number to the next Calendar Round date of 8 *Manik* 10 *K'ayab'* (7, February 586). This Calendar Round corresponds to the Long Count date of 9.7.12.6.7 if this distance number was subtracted from the next Calendar Round date of 12 *Ajaw* 8 *Keh*. The nature of both events is unknown, but it is likely that the protagonist for the first event (the one recorded for 9.7.12.6.7) was *K'ahk' Uhulaj*.

Nothing else is known of *K'ahk' Uhulaj's* reign at Pusilhá, for he is not mentioned again. The next historical event recorded at Pusilhá is the 9.8.0.0.0 Period Ending. This Period Ending was commemorated twice at Pusilhá, on Stela D (Figure 7.19) and on Stela Q (Figure 7.20). Stela D contains the longest hieroglyphic text in Belize, and besides the commemoration of this particular Period Ending, the text

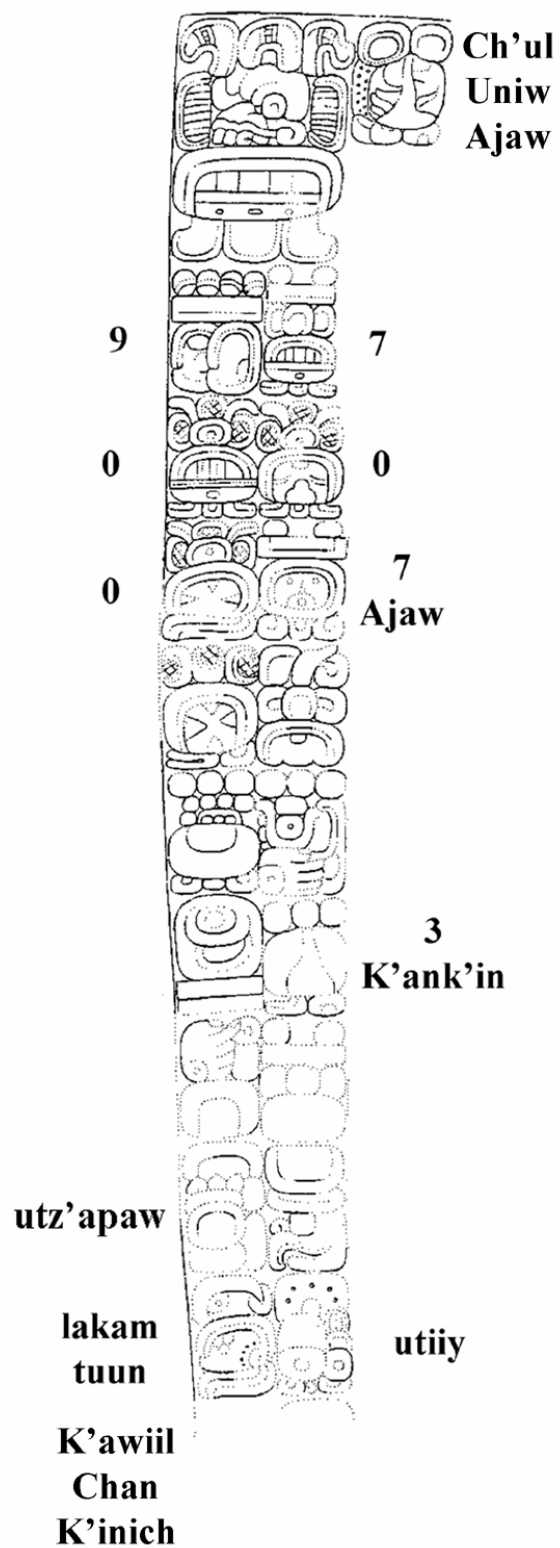


Figure 7.16. Pusilhá Stela P, A1-C1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

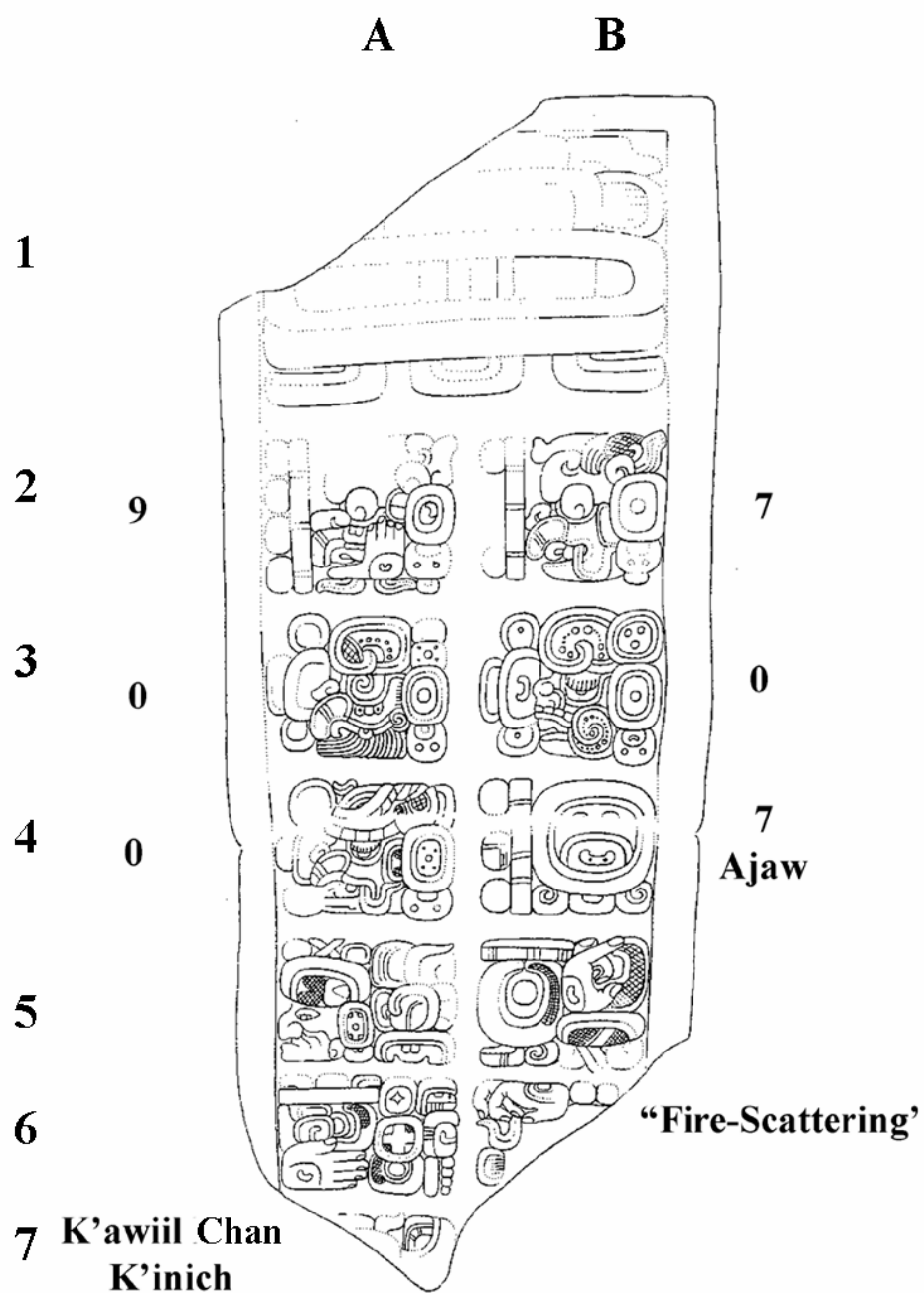


Figure 7.17. Pusilhá Stela O (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

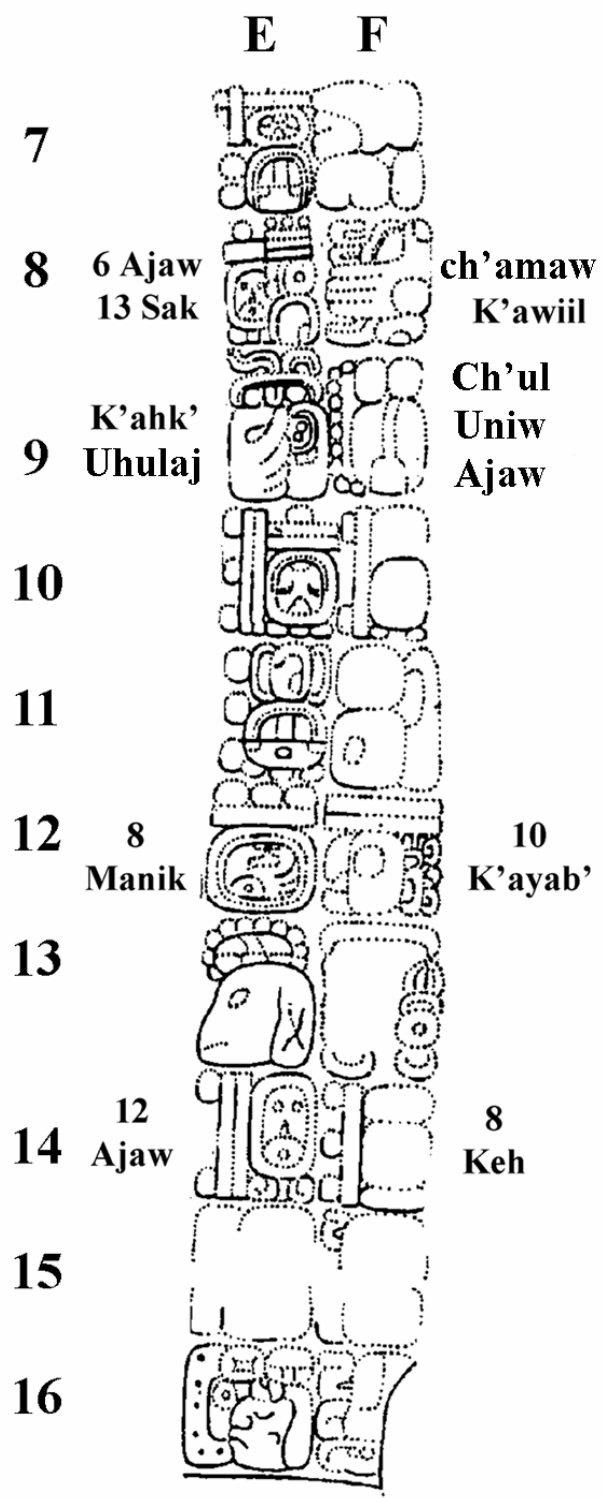


Figure 7.18. Pusilhá Stela H, E7-F16 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

describes a series of battles waged by Pusilhá against an individual from an unknown site referred to as the Water Scroll site. The text on Stela D begins with an incorrect Initial Series date written as 9.3.0.0.0 though the Calendar Round date suggest that the true date must of 9.8.0.0.0 5 *Ajaw 3 Ch'en* (22, August 593). As part of the ritual celebrations for the 9.8.0.0.0 Period Ending, a new lord at Pusilhá *utz'apaw lakam ch'ul tuun* 'erects a grand holy stone' probably Stela Q, since it also refers to the Long Count date of 9.8.0.0.0. According to the text recorded on Stela D, the monument was erected at a location known as *Ch'ul Witz* 'Holy or Divine Mountain', which must be a reference to either the specific name of Str.1 of the Stela Plaza or to the name of the Stela Plaza area itself, since Stela Q was located directly in front of this building (as was Stela D). The text continues to say that this action *ukab'iiy* 'was overseen' by *Wuk Chapaat K'awiil Chan* or 'Seven Centipede Sky *K'awiil*.' There is some ambiguity as to whether this name refers to the first Pusilhá lord, named *K'awiil Chan K'inich*. Prager (2002) believes that these two names refer to the same person, but I am not convinced, since the names are written slightly differently. On Stela D, besides the *Wuk Chapaat* addition to the name phrase, the name includes a final *K'awiil K'inich*. If Prager is correct then *K'awiil Chan K'inich*'s full regnal name may be something like *Wuk Chapaat K'awiil Chan K'awiil K'inich*. This is a rather long name, but acceptable in Classic Maya naming practice and a similar example is found at Copan on Stela 19. On Stela 19 the text records a long string of names associated with the 12th king of Copan, Smoke *Imix*. Interestingly enough, the name recorded at Copan on Stela 19 is *Wuk Chapaat K'inich Ajaw K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo*, who was a West *Kaloomte'*. So, the name on Stela D could simply be the full extended name of *K'awiil Chan K'inich*. However, the second part of this name, the *K'awiil K'inich* portion, is written differently than the earlier name on Stela P. On Stela

		A	B	C	D
1					K'awiil K'inich
2					3-12 Pih Ajaw
3	9 8				4 K'atun Ch'ajom
4	0 0				K'awiil Chan K'inich
5	0 5 Ajaw				we' Sak Tz'unun
6					Ochk'in Kaloomte'
7					Aj Chi-Altar Ch'ul Uniw Ajaw
8	8 K'atun				
9					
10	utz'ap			lakam	
11	ch'ul tuun				
12				ch'ul witz	
13				ukab'iiy	
14	Wuk Chapaat			K'awiil Chan	

Figure 7.19. Pusilhá Stela D, A1-D7 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

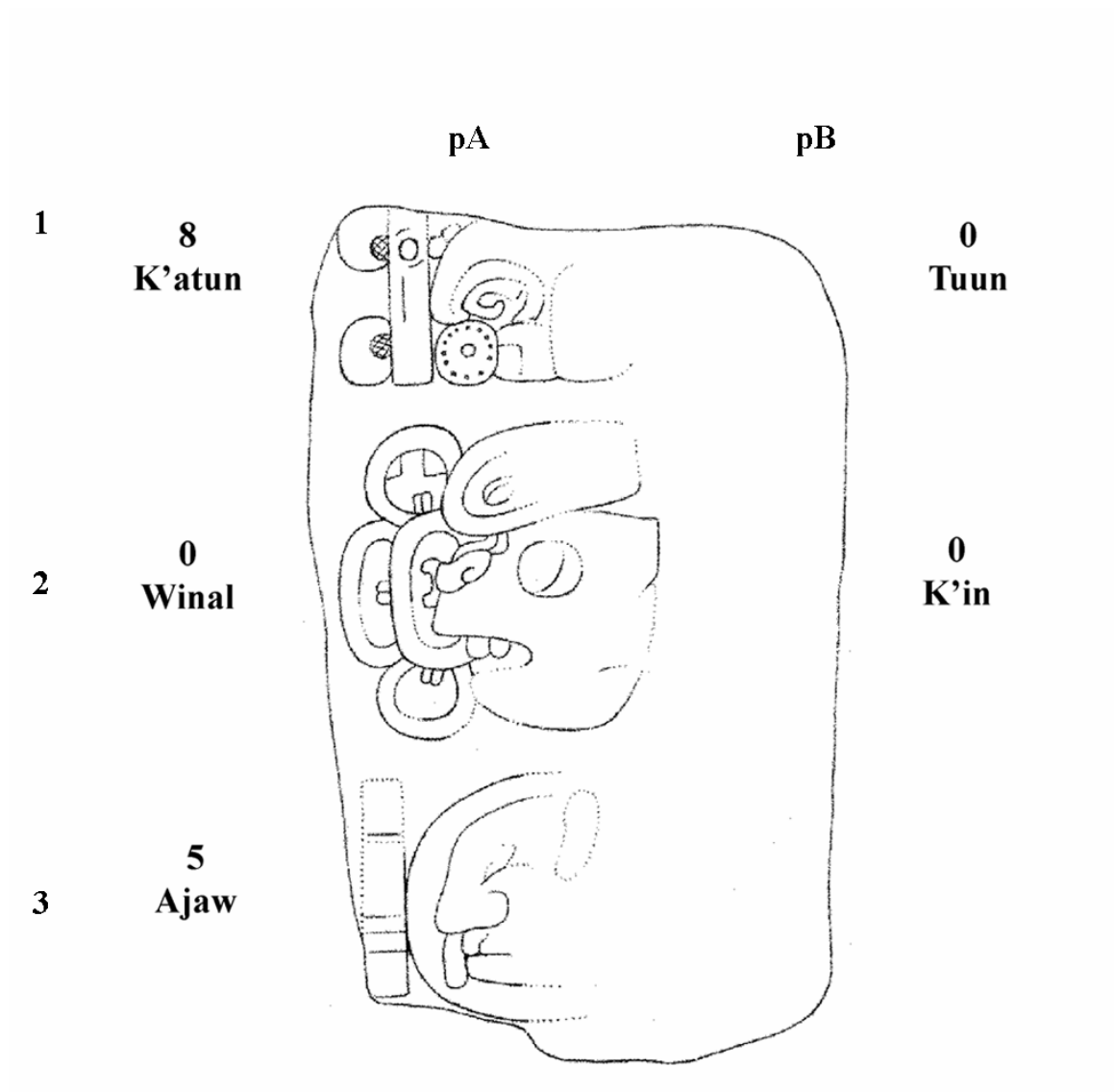


Figure 7.20. Pusilhá Stela Q (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

D the second part of the name does not include the *Chan* logograph, which seems to distinguish the first *K'awiil Chan K'inich* from this second figure. Based on this evidence, I favor the interpretation that these were two separate individuals.

The royal titles that appear with the second *Wuk Chapaat K'awiil Chan* figure include some of the oldest and grandest titles associated with Classic Maya kings. The first, recorded at C2, is the 3-11 or 3-12 *Pih* title, which is common in the inscriptions of Quiriguá and Copan. The earliest examples of this title appear at Copan with events dated to the mid-fifth century (Looper 2002: 1-2). Though most texts that feature this title are broken, Looper has proposed an interpretation based on an example recorded on a carved bone from Burial 166 (MT 26) at Tikal (Figure 7.21). Featured on MT 26 are three dates. Each date is followed by a different compound involving an ordinal number (either 1, 2 or 3), followed by an 11-*pih* statement. The first date is listed as 6 *Ajaw* 8 *Mak*, followed by the 'first' 11-*pih*. The second date is listed as 8 *Ajaw* 8 *Mol* followed by the 'second' 11-*pih* and finally, the third date is recorded as 10 *Ajaw* 8 *Sip* followed by the 'third' 11-*pih* statement. As Looper (2002: 2) has demonstrated, these dates occur in a sequence separated by 1.4.1.0 (1 *k'atun*, 4 *tuuns*, 1 *winal*, and 0 *k'ins*) which is equivalent to 8660 days. This sequence follows the calendar round date beginning on 4 *Ajaw* 8 *Kumk'u*, suggesting a cosmological aspect to the use of this title. *K'ahk' Tiliw* of Quiriguá was about 28 years old when he became king and some 36 years later when he erected Stela F he was 64 years old. Looper (2002: 2) believes that the 3-11 *pih* title that appears with his name on Stela F may function like a numbered *k'atun* title, simply there to state that he was in his 3rd *k'atun* of life at that time.

On Pusilhá Stela D, the text states that *Wuk Chapaat K'awiil Chan* was a 3-12 *pih* (C2) *Ajaw* (D2). The following numbered *k'atun* title referring to this Pusilhá lord as a 4

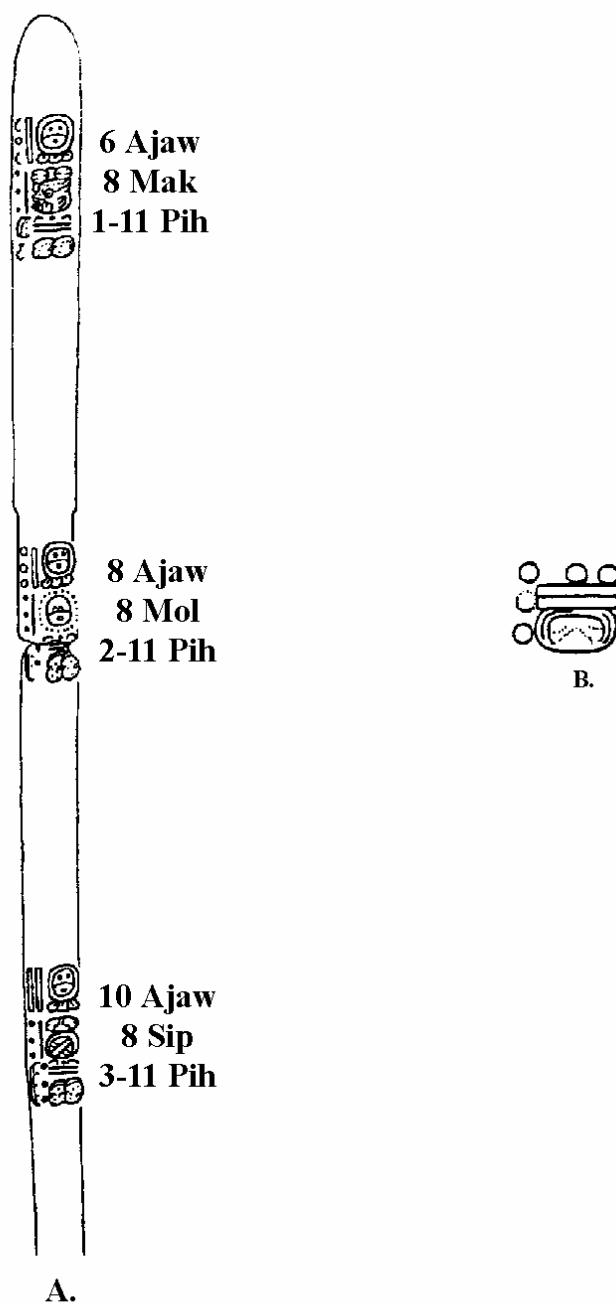


Figure 7.21. The 3-11 *Pih* Title

A) Tikal MT 26 (Drawing by L. Schele, © David Schele, courtesy Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org.)

B) 3-12 *Pih* Title on Pusilhá Stela D (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

K'atun Ch'ajom or 'Scatterer' (D3) suggests thatLooper is correct that these 3-11 *Pih* titles serve a similar function. The text continues with an unusual reference to *K'awiil K'inich*. Again, this name lacks the *Chan* logogram that was featured in the first *K'awiil Chan K'inich* name at C4-D4. Following this name is a statement that refers to 'eating' or 'drinking' recorded as *we* followed by *Sak Tz'unun*, perhaps meaning 'Eating White Hummingbird.' This is followed by the archaic title *Ochk'in Kaloomte* 'West *Kaloomte*', which is a title apparently reserved for only the most powerful of Classic Maya dynasties (Martin and Grube 2000: 17) and closely associated with Teotihuacan (Stuart 2000: 487). The next glyph appears to be a title naming this ruler an *Aj Chi-?* 'He of the *Chi-?* Place' followed by *K'UL UNIW AJAW* 'Divine Avocado Lord'. I believe this title is a reference to the *Chi*-Altar Place and it is impressive that this king of Pusilhá had the right to these highly restricted royal epithets. The text on Stela Q (Figure 7.20), though badly broken, may have recorded this same narrative, since enough information remains to verify the Long Count date of 9.8.0.0.0 5 *Ajaw* 3 *Ch'en*.

On Pusilhá Stela D (Figure 7.22), a distance number moves forward in time 1.12.17 from the Initial Series date of 9.8.0.0.0 to describe an apparent battle that occurred on 9.8.1.12.8 2 *Lamat* 1 *Sip* (22, April 595). However, the distance number recorded here appears to be incorrect, since 8 *k'in*'s would have been required to reach the calendar round date of 2 *Lamat* 1 *Sip*. Prager (2002) interprets the text to read *ik'asay lakam tuun* (D11-C12), 'and then they were broken in two, the grand stelae', apparently a reference to the destruction of stelae at the site. The text continues with the *ukab'iiy* agency expression (D12) meaning 'under the supervision of' followed by the name of an individual whose name eludes decipherment, but was nicknamed by Schele and Grube (1994b: 105) as 'Scroll-*B'i*' (C13). This person does not carry the Pusilhá emblem glyph

suggesting that Scroll *B'i* was not a ruler, but perhaps a *sajal* or some other war captain. The text continues with a reference to the *jub'uy utok' upakal* 'the downing of his flints and shields'. The message here is perhaps that the stelae were broken in half under the supervision of Scroll *B'i*, the 'Downer of the Flints and Shields.' Recently, Simon Martin (2001b: 5) has suggested that many of the titular references involving the 'flint and shield' epithets may, refer to military specialists and by metaphoric extension, refer to 'armies.'

The location where the breaking of stelae occurred is uncertain. The glyph following the reference to 'flints and shields' should be the name of the owner of the flints and shields. However, the glyph reads *ma ak'ab'al*, perhaps meaning 'not at night'. Whatever this means it should be a part of the name phrase. The text continues at the top of the upper right-hand corner of Stela D. One would expect to find a continuation of the name and emblem glyph, but the text here is broken and eroded. However, the text at E3-F3 appears to read *ujol* 'his skull' or the 'skull of' followed by either the Water-Scroll emblem or the logographic sign for 'divine water', *Ch'ul Ha*, perhaps indicating the result of this antagonistic encounter. The placement of skulls in divine waters may be a metaphor for death. The text continues with *utiyy* 'it happened at' and the following glyph should be the name of the location where this event occurred, but it is not clear.

It is possible that the site attacked was Altun Há, based on the Water-Scroll emblem at both E2 and F3, which closely resembles the Water-Scroll emblem recorded at Nim Li Punit on Stela 2 (Wanyerka 2003). Epigraphic evidence of the identification of the Water-Scroll site as Altun Há will be discussed in Chapter 9.

Following the presumed location in this passage on Stela D is a reference to *Puk* 'scattering of fire' *TAHN TUUN* 'in front of' the stela (E5-F5). This event was *ukab'jiyy*

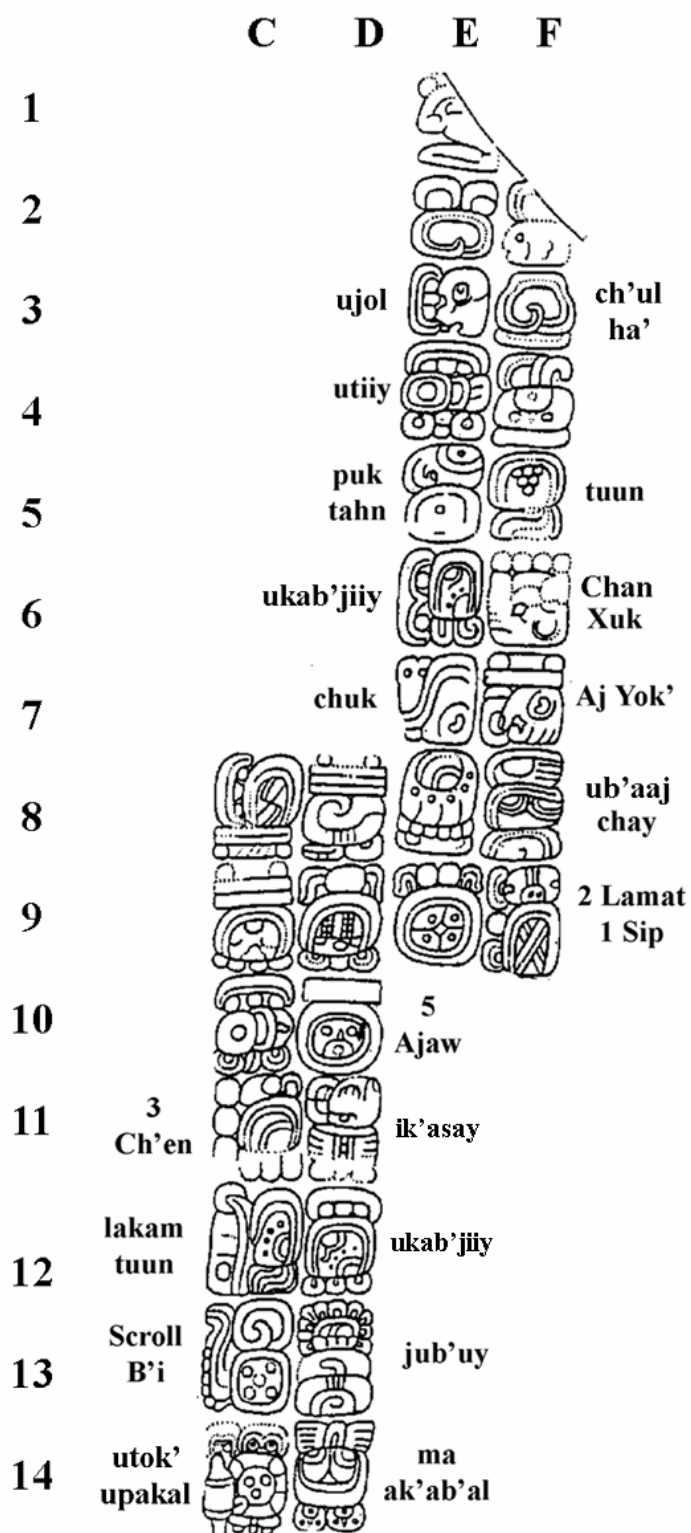


Figure 7.22. Pusilhá Stela D, C8-F9 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

‘supervised’ by *Chan Xuk* (F6). The “bat-head” sign, read *Xuk* or *Xukpi*, is the central element of the Copan emblem glyph. The following four glyphs are difficult to understand (E7-F8). The first glyph appears to be the ‘capture’ verb *chuhk*. According to Prager (2002: 225) the next sign reads as *aj* followed by a place read *Yok’*, ‘he of *Yok’*. The *Yok’* place name also appears in the inscriptions of Copan on Stela 2 in a passage dated to 9.10.15.0.0, the same date that ends the text on Pusilhá Stela D. This suggests that *Yok’* may be located near Copan, Pusilhá, or both. *Yok’* is also the ancient name of a site located in the central Petén (near Motul de San José) known as Aguacatal, but given its distance it is doubtful that this reference refers to that site (Zender 1998: 72). Following this title the text reads *ub’aj ch’ay*, perhaps reading ‘he died.’ The final two glyphs in the passage, 2 *Lamat* 1 *Sip*, lock this series of events to the Long Count date of 9.8.1.12.8 (22, April 595) from which this passage began.

Pusilhá Stela C (Figure 7.23) was found broken. The dedicatory date is unknown. Based on style, Morley (1938: Vol. IV: 25) dated Stela C to the 9.9.0.0.0 Period Ending (9, May 613). However, given the rich Teotihuacan iconography associated with the depiction of this ruler, I would date this stela to the mid to late 6th century since by the start of the 7th century, much of the Teotihuacan-iconography had completely faded from the carved monuments of the southern Maya lowlands. Stela C depicts a portrait of a standing Pusilhá lord cradling a rigid Double-Headed Serpent Bar across his chest. Emerging from both ends of the serpent bar are portraits of ancestral deities who wear the distinctive goggle-eye markings of Tlaloc. The ruler wears an elaborate royal headdress that features a second, undulating, Double-Headed Serpent Bar from which ancestral deities also emerge out of the open maw at each end. While the figure in the upper left-hand corner is partially eroded and unrecognizable, the figure on the right wears the

distinctive Teotihuacan-inspired spangled headdress and goggle-eye protection. The standard torch bundle with the “trapezoid and ray” Mexican Year sign, a sign common in Teotihuacan iconography, is prominently featured in the central part of this figure’s headdress (see Nielsen 2003). The beaded scales associated with the serpent’s head suggest that it is a portrait of the Teotihuacan Mosaic War Dragon. An unusual seated skeletal figure appears in the center of the rulers’ headdress, within a small palanquin or a small house shrine, based on the woven backrest. This figure also rests his left arm on a folded bark-papered codex. Although the identity of this skeletal figure is unknown, he cradles a three-part hieroglyph that is a well-known royal title that reads *CHAN ch’o-ko* or *Chan Ch’ok* ‘Four Youths’ (Wanyerka 2003: 102) (Figure 7.24). This title is restricted to the southeastern Maya Lowlands and commonly appears in the inscriptions of Copan and Quiriguá where it seems to function as a royal title that refers to ‘Four Sacred Youths.’ *Ch’ok* in proto-Ch’olan can mean either “unripe, immature, or young child” according to Kaufman and Norman (1984: 119). Schele suggested that the *Chan Ch’ok* title may be a metaphorical reference to the four most important dynastic lineages of Copan (Morales et al. 1990: 5). David Stuart has recently suggested that this title may refer to the set of four directional Year Bearing gods who are closely associated with the New Year Dates (2004b: 5). Its appearance on a monument at Pusilhá strongly suggests that the rulership at Pusilhá shared similar ideological and cosmological beliefs with kings living in the southeastern Maya lowlands.

In the lower right-hand corner of Stela C is a two-glyph block caption text that provides the name of the seated captive whose headdress is just visible in the figural scene. Most of the stelae at Pusilhá feature similar themes of standing rulers flanked by bound seated prisoners. The name here seems to include *Itz’am B’alam* ‘Shield Jaguar’

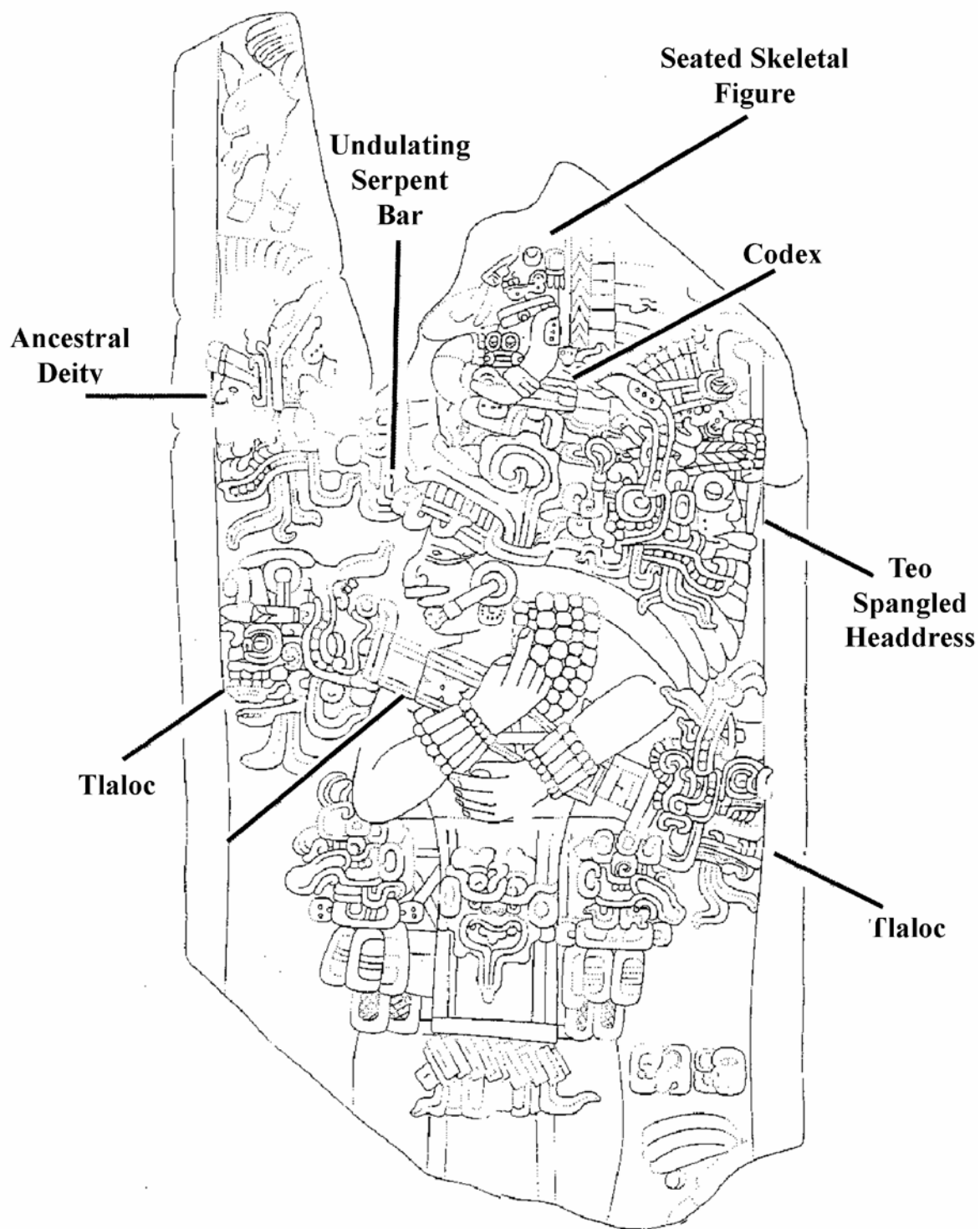
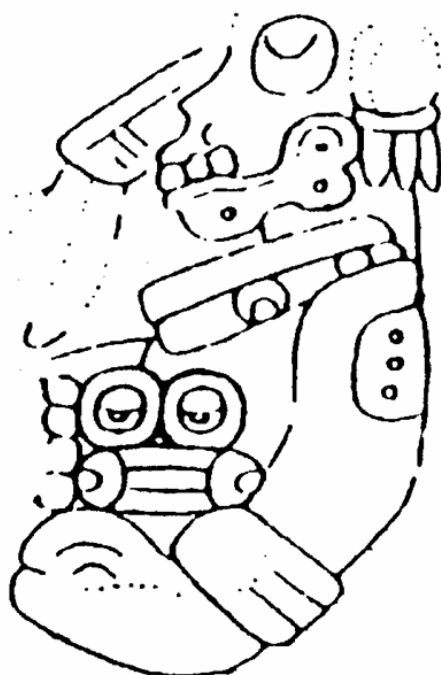


Figure 7.23. Pusilhá Stela C (Drawing by J. Montgomery)



Pusilha: St. C



A.



B.



C.

Figure 7.24. The *Chan Ch'ok* Title

A) Quiriguá Stela C (Drawing by M.Looper)

B) Copan Stela 7 (Drawing by P. Wanyerka)

C) Copan Stela I (Drawing by P. Wanyerka)

but unfortunately, we cannot ascertain where this prisoner was from. The next event recorded at Pusilhá is the ritual commemoration of the 9.10.15.0.0 Period Ending and the formal dedication of Stela D (Figure 7.25). Immediately following the passage that described the breaking in half of stelae, the text jumps forward in time 2.8.5.12 to reach the Period Ending date of 9.10.15.0.0 6 *Ajaw* 13 *Mak* (7, November 647). The text then repeats the previous statement describing the breaking in half of stelae. It is not clear whether this represents a new episode of war or if the Pusilhá scribes are highlighting their previous victory. The passage in question is written in the same way as it was on 9.8.1.12.8, the date of the original event. The text states *k'asay lakam tuun ukab'jiy* 'it gets broken the grand stone' and again the person supervising this event was Scroll-*B'i*. The text continues with the verbal expression *i walaj* 'and then it was set up', which is likely a reference to the erection of a stela. The text in the upper right hand corner of the monument is too eroded to read. This passage ends with a statement of the commemoration of the Calendar Round date of 6 *Ajaw* 13 *Mak* which refers to the Period Ending date of 9.10.15.0.0.

The unusual method for recording dates on this stela suggests that the scribe was intentionally highlighting the peak events of *Wuk Chapaat K'awiil Chan*, which included the commemoration of the 9.8.0.0.0 Period Ending, the breaking of stelae, the capture of the person from *Yok'* (just under two years later), and the celebration of a second monument dedication on the Period Ending 9.10.15.0.0. Using an unusual means of clarifying the chronology, the scribe then recorded a second full Initial Series date with full accompanying Lunar Series. This second Long Count date records the same Period Ending of 9.10.15.0.0. On this day *utz'apaw lakam ch'ul tuun* 'he plants the grand divine stone' at *Tz'am Witz*, 'Throne Mountain', which appears to be the name of the

E F G H				
				1
6 Ajaw			13 Mak	2
				3
9			10	4
15			0	5
0			6 Ajaw	6
				7
				8
				9
utz'akaj 12 k'in			13 Mak utz'apaw	10
5 winal 8 tuun			lakam ch'ul tuun	11
2 k'atun k'asay			tz'am witz	12
lakam tuun ukab'jiiy			ukab'jiiy K'ahk' Uchan	13
Scroll B'i iwalaj			Ch'ul Chan Uniw Ajaw	14

Figure 7.25. Pusilhá Stela D, E10-H14 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Stela Plaza Group at Pusilhá since nearly all of the known stelae for the site were erected in this area. Having the toponym for a particular section of a Maya site is rare.

Interestingly, this toponym also appears in hieroglyphic inscriptions at Copan (Figure 7.26). A scene that depicts twenty seated individuals is recorded on a sculpted bench at Copan mounted on the north end of the raised platform of Str. 10L-11 (Temple 11). The date for this panel is 9.16.12.5.17 6 *Kaban* 10 *Mol* (28, June 763) and the text refers to the accession of *Yax Pasaj Chan Yoaat* as the 16th king of Copan. This scene is generally described as *Yax Pasaj's* coronation (Schele and Miller 1986: 124-125) and *Yax Pasaj* is the first figure to the right of the main text. Witnessing his coronation are nineteen other figures including several earlier Copan kings and other historical figures. Each figure is sitting on a specific name glyph or toponym. Seven figures to the right of *Yax Pasaj* an individual is seated on a toponym that reads *Tz'am Witz*. I believe that this is a reference to the same *Tz'am Witz* or 'Throne Mountain' location recorded on Stela D at Pusilhá. This would appear to indicate that some of the individuals seated on particular place names represent lords from neighboring polities who came to witness this accession. At least four kings from Copan are recorded on this bench (*Yax K'uk' Mo*, Waterlily Jaguar, *Butz' Chan*, and Smoke *Imix*) (Martin and Grube 2000: 209). The *Tz'am Witz* toponym recorded at Pusilhá on 9.10.15.0.0 suggests that the 'Throne Mountain' location was located at or near the main stela plaza group of Pusilhá and the reference to this location at Copan suggests that an important relationship existed between these two polities during the Late Classic Period. In view of Rice's *may* model, the epigraphic evidence may indicate that some of these seated lords were rulers of various *k'atun* seats within Copan's *may* network.

Stela D concludes with a statement indicating that this action was supervised by

a new Pusilhá ruler whose name is recorded as *K'ahk' Uchan*, 'Fire, His Sky,' *Ch'ul Uniw Ajaw*, 'Divine Pusilhá Lord,' a name similar to that of both the 11th king of Copan *K'ahk' ?-Chan Yoaat*, also known as *Butz' Chan*, and the 12th king of Copan *K'ahk' Unaab' K'awiil*, also known as Smoke *Imix* (Figure 7.27). The Pusilhá lord's name is different from both names at Copan, but there are enough similarities to suggest an intentional borrowing of royal names by the Pusilhá lords (Schele and Grube 1994b: 136-138; Schele and Looper 1996: 88). The dates associated with the Copan rulers are within the range of the dates featured at Pusilhá relating to *K'ahk' Uchan*. The birth date of *Butz' Chan*, the 11th king of Copan is unknown, but he acceded to the throne on 9.7.5.0.8 8 *Lamat 6 Mak* (17, November 578) and died on 9.9.12.16.9 11 *Muluk 2 K'ayab'* (30, January 626) (Martin and Grube 2000: 200). *K'ahk' Unaab' K'awiil* or Smoke *Imix*, the 12th king of Copan, acceded as king on 9.9.14.17.5 6 *Chik'chan 18 K'ayab'* (5, February 628) and died on 9.13.3.5.7 12 *Manik' 0 Yaxk'in* (15, June 695) (Martin and Grube 2000: 201).

The 9.10.15.0.0 Period Ending was also recorded on Stela P at Pusilhá. The front of the stela, which had broken away from the rest of the monument (Figure 7.28), depicts the Pusilhá king *K'awiil Chan K'inich* holding a Double Headed Serpent Bar in commemoration of the Period Ending. A skeletal Tlaloc-like figure can also be seen in the front part of the royal headdress. The passage begins on the back of Stela P (Figure 7.29) in the lower broken section of columns C and D, though the glyphs can be partially reconstructed to include the Initial Series Introductory Glyph as the final glyph of column D.

As previously discussed, Stela P contains two complete Initial Series dates with accompanying Lunar Series information. The first Initial Series date commemorates the

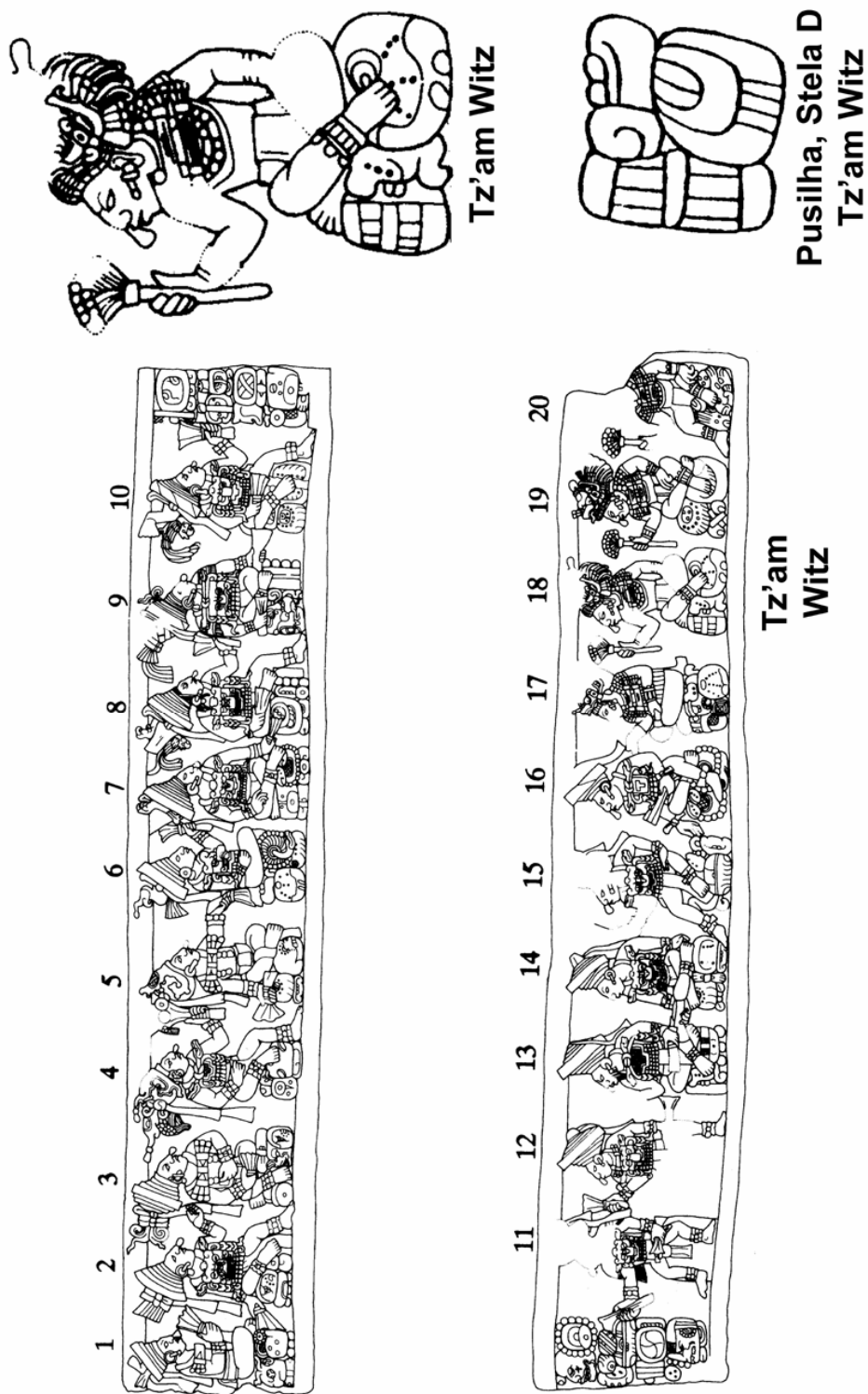
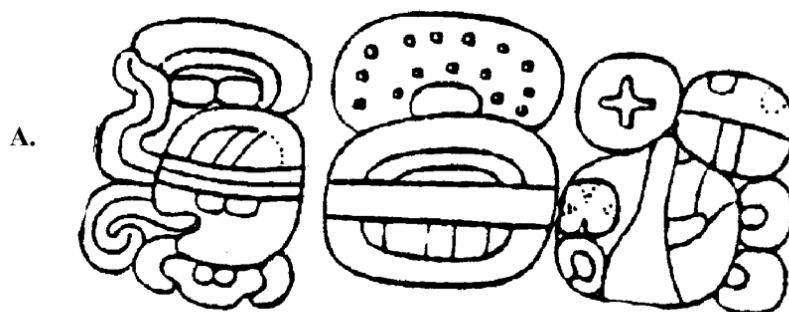


Figure 7.26. Copan Sculpted Bench Panel from Str.10L-11 (Drawing by L. Schele, © David Schele, courtesy Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org)



K'ahk' Uchan Ch'ul Chan Uniw Ajaw



Butz' Chan (K'ahk'-?-wa Chan-na Yoaat)



K'ahk' Unaab' K'awiil

Figure 7.27. The Similarity of Name Phrases between Pusilhá and Copan

A) *K'ahk' Uchan* Name, Pusilhá Stela D, H13-H14 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

B) *Butz' Chan* Name Phrase, Copan Stela P, B9-C9 (Drawing by P. Wanyerka)

C) *K'ahk' Unaab' K'awiil* Name Phrase, Quiriguá Altar L, F4-F6 (Drawing by

M.Looper)

Period Ending 9.7.0.0.0 (5, December 573) and the second commemorates the Period Ending 9.10.15.0.0 6 *Ajaw* 13 *Mak* (7, November 647). To commemorate this date he planted a stela (*utz'apaw lakam tuun*). This event *ukab'jiy* 'was under the supervision of' *Sak Wuk Chapaat* [*K'ahk'*] 'White Seven Centipede Fire,' *Cha' K'atun Ch'ajom*, 'Two *K'atun* Scatterer', *B'a Te' Pitzil*, 'First Tree' or 'First Lineage Lord Ballplayer'. The lower part of Stela P is missing. The text at the top of the next column (G1) records the same *Tz'am Witz* toponym recorded on Stela D, as well as a *naab'* logogram and possibly the verbal expression *uk'alaj* 'he is tied'. The text continues *uyax ch'ok* 'the first youth' or 'the first noble youth', followed by a unique version of the *mehen* 'child of noble descent' expression that includes a glyphic reference to a sacred place known as *wi'te'naah*.

The *Wi'te'naah* expression is based on the word *wi'* 'root,' *te'* 'tree' or 'lineage' and *na* or *naah* 'house' and together *wi'te'naah* means 'Tree-Root House' (Figure 7.30). Linda Schele was among the first epigraphers to examine this title (1986, 1992), known then as the "Founders Glyph" because this glyph was found in contexts in association with statements describing the founders of dynasties. This title is found in many inscriptions at sites including Copan (Altar Q, Altar B', HS Steps 8, 15, 26, 59, Reviewing Stand Text, Stela B, Stela 11, Stela 12), Quiriguá (Stela F, Stela J, Zoomorph P), Machaquilá (Stela 3), Piedra Negras (Stela 14), Rio Amarillo (Altar 1), Tikal (Stela 31, MT 35), and Yaxchilán (Lintel 25) to name just a few (Macri et al. 2007). It appears to function as the proper name of a building, since the last part of the expression includes the glyph for *naah* 'house' or 'building'. The main sign of this expression includes a pair of crossed-torch bundles, that can also be substituted with a *wi* syllabic sign, as seen in examples from Tikal (Stuart 2000: 492) and a *te* sign (Figure 7.30B). Following the

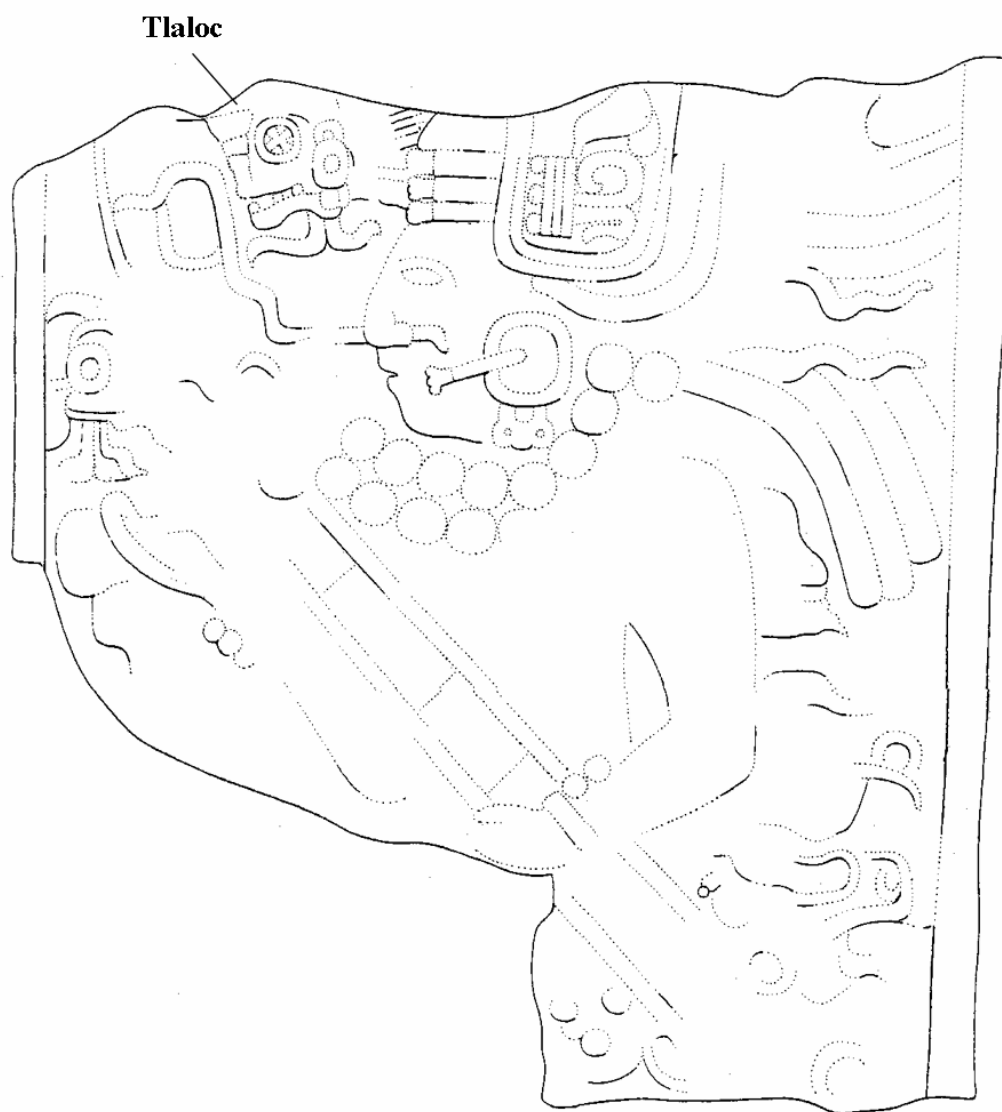


Figure 7.28. Pusilhá Stela P, Front (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

		E	F	G	H	
1	10 15					Tz'am Witz Naab'
2	0 0					uk'alaj
3	6 Ajaw					uyax ch'ok mehen wi'te'naah
4						3 k'atun ch'ajom ajaw
5						K'awiil Chan K'inich
6	13 Mak utz'apaw					Ch'ul Uniw Ajaw
7	lakam tuun					
8	ukab'jiy					Sak
9	Wuk Chapaat (K'ahk')					
10	2 k'atuns					ch'ajom ajaw
11	B'a Te'					pitzil
12						

Figure 7.29. Pusilhá Stela P, E1-G6 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

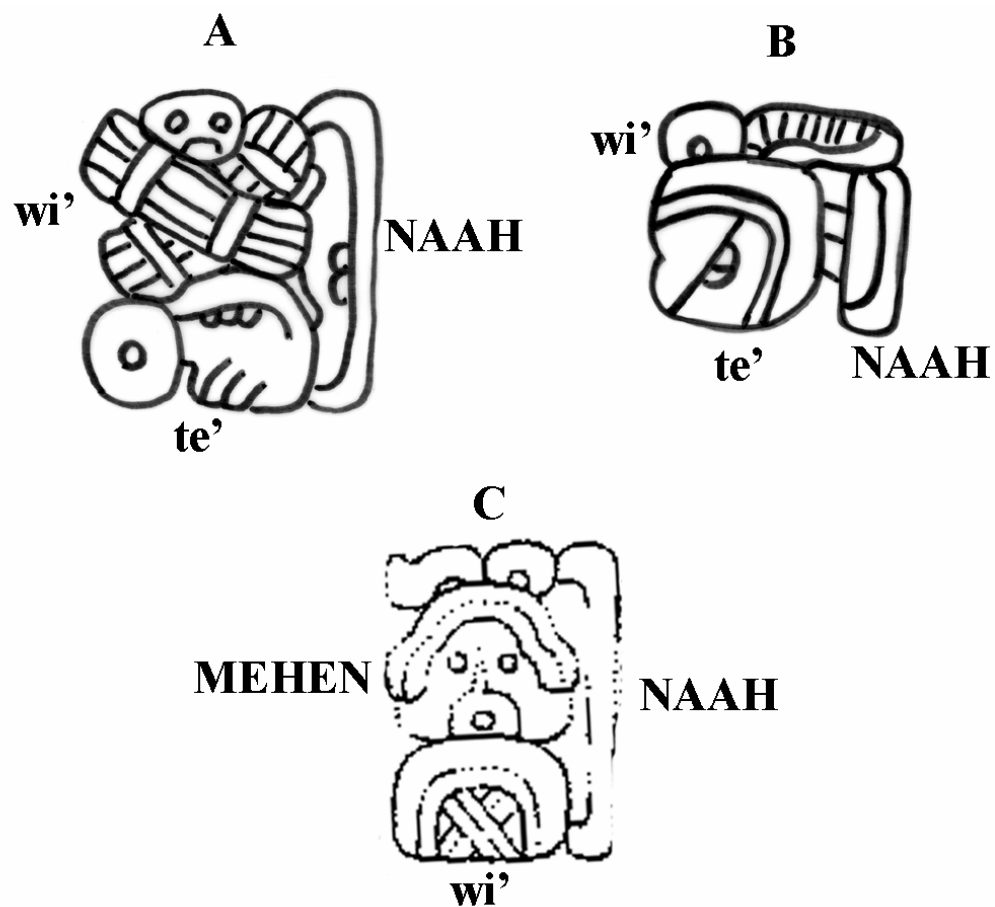


Figure 7.30. The *Wi'te'naah* Glyph

A) Copan Altar Q (Drawing by P. Wanyerka)

B) Tikal Stela 31 (Drawing by P. Wanyerka)

C) Pusilhá Stela P (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

reference to the *Wi'te'naah* is an extended name phrase that includes a string of titles including the Ox *K'atun Ch'ajom* 'Three *K'atun* Scatterer' title (G4-H4) prior to his name *K'awiil Chan K'inich* (G5-H5), *Ch'ul Uniw Ajaw*, 'Divine Lord of Pusilhá' (G6).

Stela H (Figure 7.31) commemorates the Period Ending 9.11.0.0.0 12 *Ajaw* 8 *Keh* (11, October 652). Another example of a fire scattering ritual conducted in conjunction with the Period Ending celebrations is recorded within the Initial Series date at A9. The event was recorded as *k'ahk' pukaw* 'fire is dispensed' or 'fire is scattered', probably a direct reference to the Burner Rituals described by Rice (2004: 246). The Initial Series ends with the *Tzolk'in* and *Haab'* date, and is followed by a verbal expression that probably reads *uk'alaj k'ahk' wak chit tub'aaj* 'it is closed, the Fire of the Upright Ancestor for him'. This may be a reference to either a headband ceremony or to the fire scattering ritual that was conducted on the Period Ending for the individual named, *Muyal Naj Ch'ul K'ahk' Uchan*, a divine Pusilhá lord. This ruler's name appears to read 'Cloud House, Divine Fire is his Sky'. This may be the same name recorded in the final passage on Pusilhá Stela D (A14-B15), which closely resembles the names of the 11th and 12th kings of Copan.

Determining the royal genealogy at Pusilhá has proven problematic because of the use of similar names, extended name phrases, and the lack of typical parentage expressions. The end of this passage is too eroded to provide much information except that a capture event seems to have taken place that involved a lord from the Water-Scroll site. Immediately following this capture statement is a short four glyph-block passage *uk'aliw tuun* 'he stela binds' on the day 12 *Ajaw* 8 *Sotz*, which corresponds to the Long Count date of 9.11.3.11.0 (3, May 656).

Stela K commemorates the 9.12.0.0.0 Period Ending. The front side of the stela

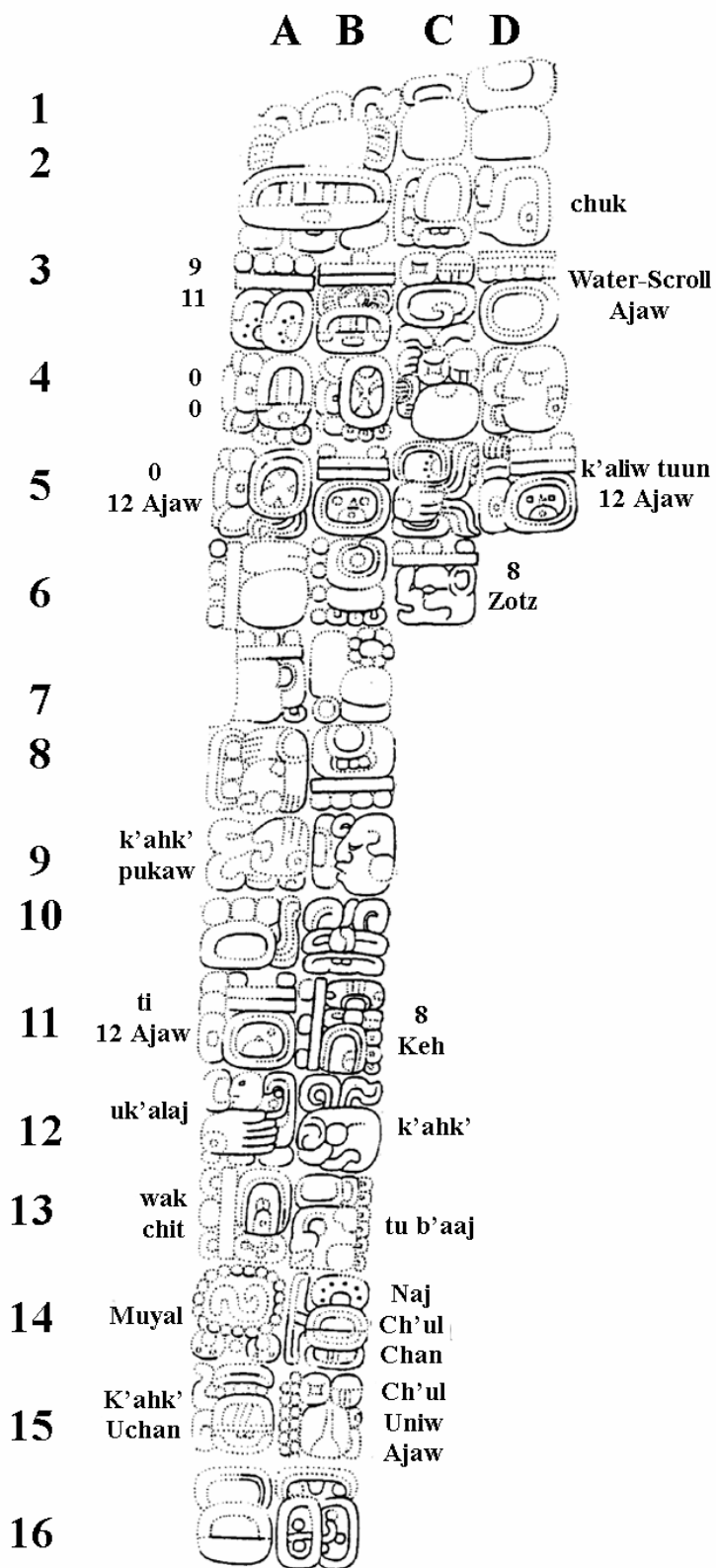


Figure 7.31. Pusilhá Stela H, A1-D4 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

(Figure 7.32) depicts a standing Pusilhá lord with an elaborate feathered headdress holding a large rigid Double-Headed Serpent Bar. Flanking the king are two bound captives C1-D1. The Initial Series date for Stela K is 9.12.0.0.0 10 *Ajaw* 8 *Yaxk'in* (28, June 672). Except for some retrospective information dating back to the 8.6.0.0.0 Period Ending in columns A and B, virtually nothing can be read in the fifth column of text except a Pusilhá emblem glyph at E10.

Stela M (Figure 7.33) records the Period Ending date of 9.14.0.0.0 6 *Ajaw* 13 *Muwaan* (1, December 711). Although the bottom portion of Stela M is now broken and missing, a fire scattering ritual represented by the *puk* verb is still visible at B7. The name of the main protagonist appears to be recorded in C1-C2, followed by the *Ochk'in Kaloomte'* title recorded at D2-C3, followed by the title *Ch'uhul Chan* 'Divine Sky' or 'Divine Snake'. Prager (2002: 275) suggests that the next glyph may read *yon* 'his family'. What follows appears to be the name *K'ahk' U? K'awiil* 'Divine Lord of Pusilhá'. This is nearly the same as the name of the 12th king of Copan, *K'ahk' Unaab' K'awiil* causing Schele and Grube (1994b: 137-138) to suggest that this was the same name as the Copan ruler. However, given the date for this passage (9.14.0.0.0) and knowing that the 12th ruler of Copan died on 9.13.3.5.7 (15, June 695) (Martin and Grube 2000: 201) that seems unlikely, though he could have been named after him. A rare parentage expression *ub'aaj jun tan* 'he himself is the cherished one of' appears next followed by the name of this person's father, which is not readable.

The chronology at Pusilhá becomes obscure shortly after the 9.14.0.0.0 Period Ending. The next event recorded at Pusilhá is on Stela U (Figure 7.34), but due to the severity of the erosion, the Initial Series date is no longer legible. Morley (1938: Vol. IV: 60-61) tentatively assigned the Long Count date of 9.16.0.0.0 because most of the other

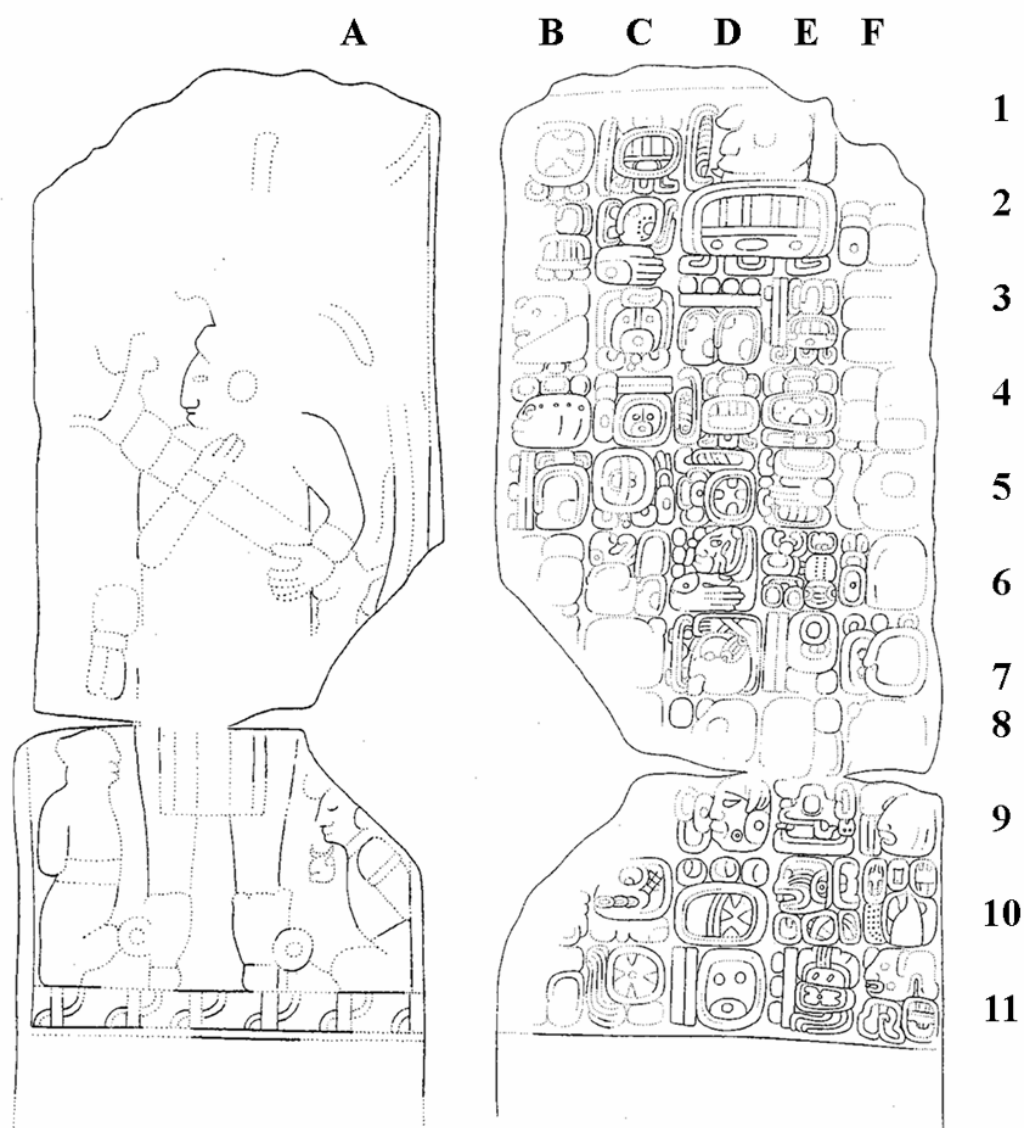


Figure 7.32. Pusilhá Stela K (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

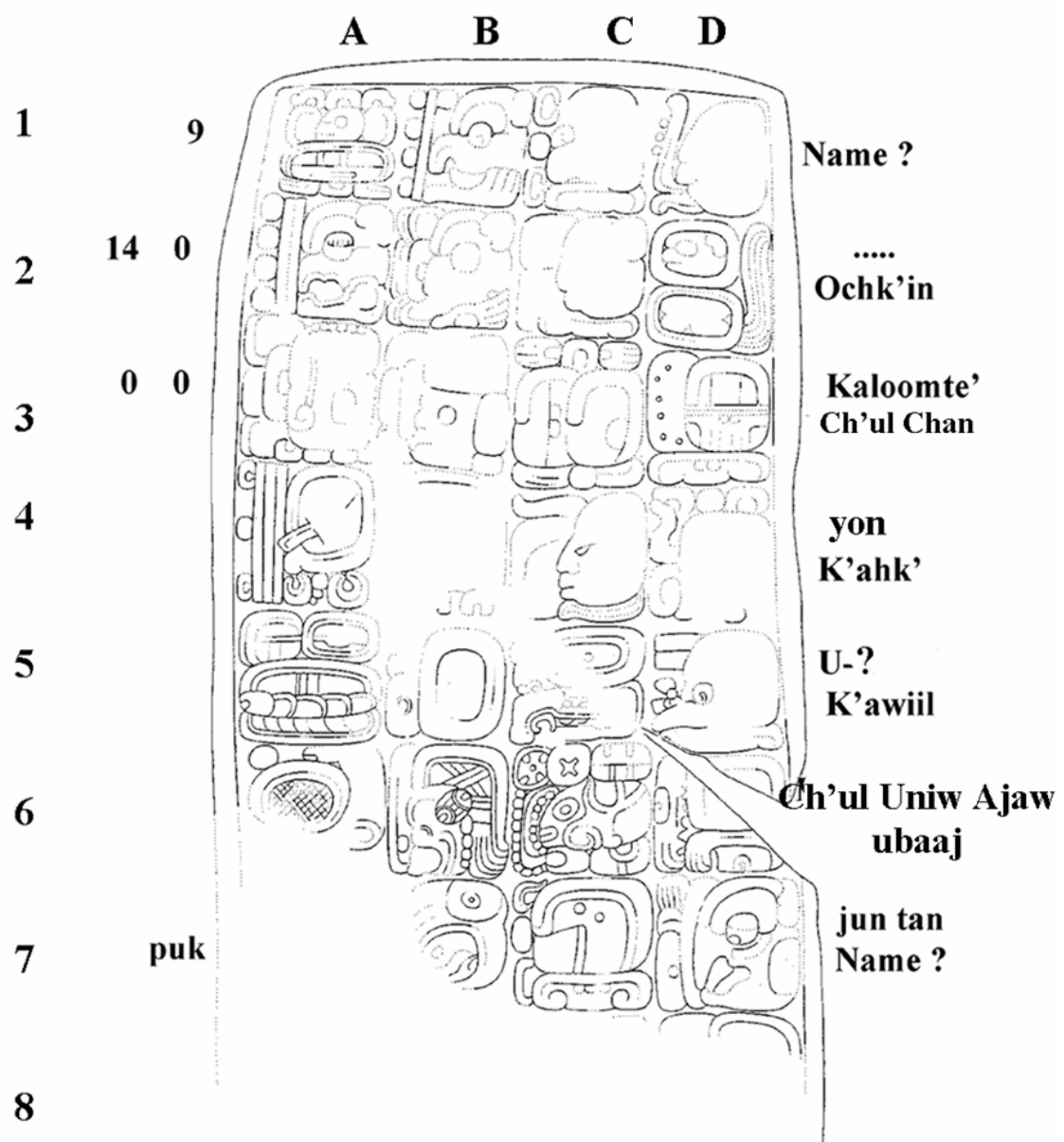


Figure 7.33. Pusilhá Stela M (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

monuments at Pusilhá record *k'atun*-endings and the surviving Lunar Series may support a 9.16.0.0.0 date. Prager (2002: 88-89) favors an Initial Series date of 9.15.0.0.0 4 *Ajaw* 13 *Yax* (18, August 731), based on the rough outlines of the *haab'* as 13 *Yax* recorded at D4. This text contains a reference to fire-scattering within the Lunar Series at A8-B8 and seems to record a distance number of 19.5.2 at C6. Without a solid anchor date from which to begin, it is impossible to ascertain what this distance number leads to or from. In the glyph at C7 someone acceded into *ajaw*-ship and the outlines of a fire sign can be read at D7. Following the fire sign is a glyph that appears to read *Jun Winik K'awiil*, which could be part of this person's full royal name or refer to the conjuring of a vision serpent of this same name. In many Classic Period texts there are descriptions involving the conjuring of a Vision Serpent known as the *Jun Winik Kaan*.

The next monument to be discussed is Stela E. The front side of Stela E features a portrait of a standing Pusilhá king facing left holding a spear or scepter in his right hand and an incense bag in his left (Figure 7.35). Two bound prisoners flank the lord seated at his feet. An eroded two-glyph block text is located just above the headdress of the prisoner on the left. The upper portions of Stela E were removed from the site and transported to London in 1929 (Wanyerka 2003: 112), but the lower portion of the monument can still be found in situ in the Stela Plaza today.

The rear side of Stela E (Figure 7.36) contains four columns of text. The main text does not appear to begin with the large Initial Series glyph at E1-F1, but rather in the space located directly above the textual border. Due to severe erosion and breakage, virtually nothing is readable in this upper portion of text. The main section of readable text records the Period Ending date of 9.15.0.0.0 4 *Ajaw* 13 *Yax* (18, August 731). The Period Ending of 9.15.0.0.0 can be confirmed from the final two glyph blocks (E12-F12)

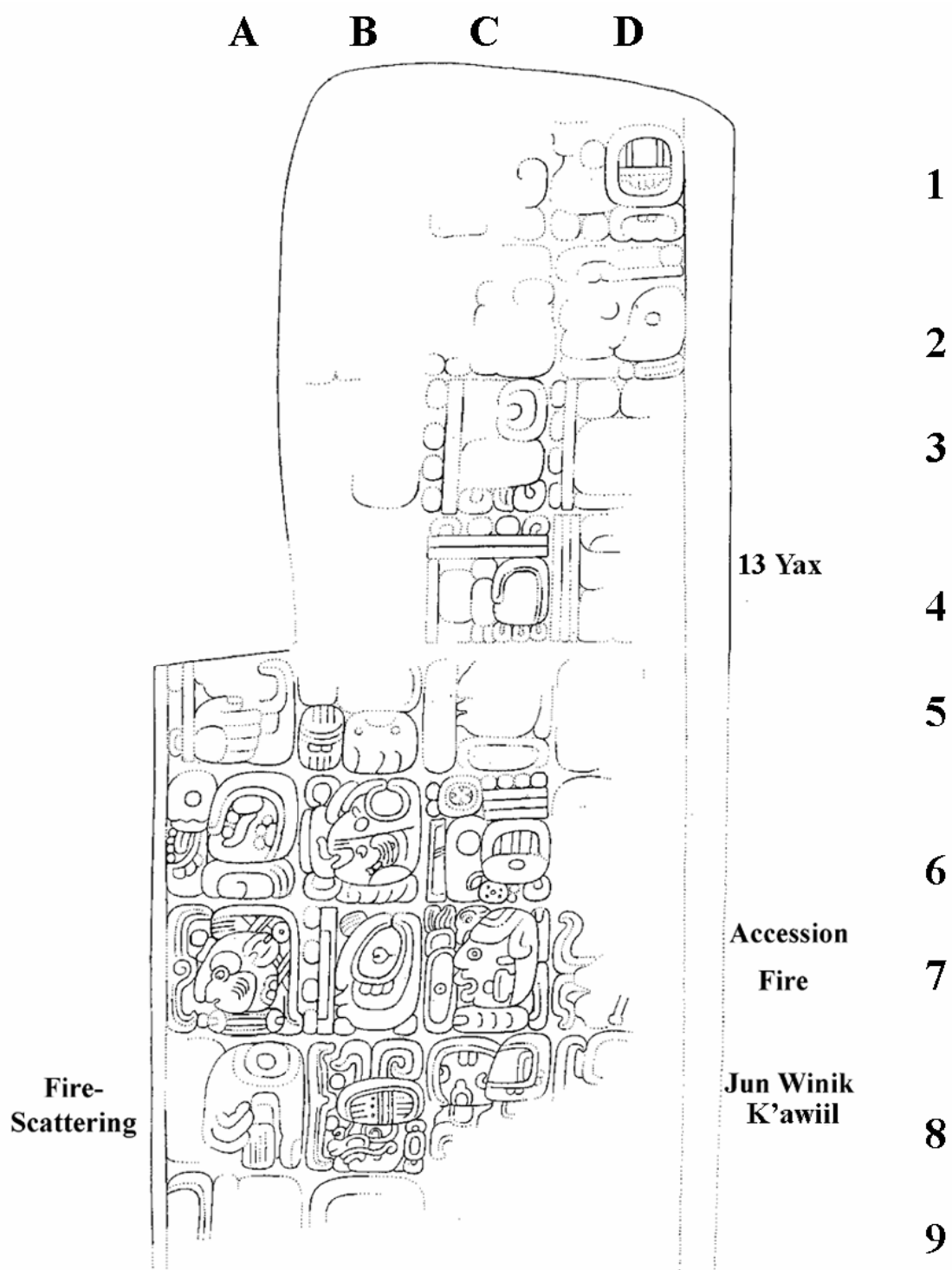


Figure 7.34. Pusilhá Stela U (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

immediately following the calendar round date. A glyph that reads *tzutzaj* ‘it was joined’ is recorded here (E12) linking the preceding calendar round date of 4 *Ajaw* 13 *Yax* to the 15th *k’atun* (F12). This appears to be a Short Count reference linking the calendar round date to the arrival of the 15th *k’atun*, thereby confirming the 9.15.0.0.0 Period Ending.

Stela E also features a reference to a fire scattering within an expanded Lunar Series. The fire scattering was recorded as *uk’ahk’ taliy yukaw* (E7-F8) ‘his fire arrived, he joined it’. What follows is unclear, but it may name several patron deities of Pusilhá.

The text continues at the top of the next column with what appears to be another binding of the *tuun* expression, supporting the 9.15.0.0.0 Period Ending date. The protagonist’s name is now missing, though vestiges remain in the lower portions of G2-H2. He was a Pusilhá king and he carries the Pusilhá emblem glyph as part of his name phrase (G3). Immediately following his name is a parentage statement that reads *ub’aaj uhun tahn ch’ul ixik* ‘he himself is the cherished one of the Divine Woman,’ followed by the name of his mother *Ixik Ich’aak (?) K’inich* (G5-G6) ‘Lady Resplendent Claw’ *Ch’ul Uniw Ajaw* ‘Queen of Pusilhá’ (G7). It would appear that her son was the current king of Pusilhá and that Lady Resplendent Claw was an earlier ruler of Pusilhá. If so, she is the first royal Queen noted in the Southern Maya Mountains Region.

Following the reference to the mother of the current king of Pusilhá, the text continues with a reference to his father in a statement that parallels one recorded in the first passage of Stela H (refer back to Figure 7.31: B12-A13) that described a fire scattering ritual taking place on the 9.11.0.0.0 Period Ending. On Stela E the text reads *uwunik wak uchit uti ch’ab’* (C7-D7) ‘the Upright Person, his Patron or Father, his creation’. Next is the name of the father recorded as *K’inich (?)B’akis Mo’* ‘Resplendent Bone Macaw’. The name seems to continue in G9 with what appears to be the syllabic

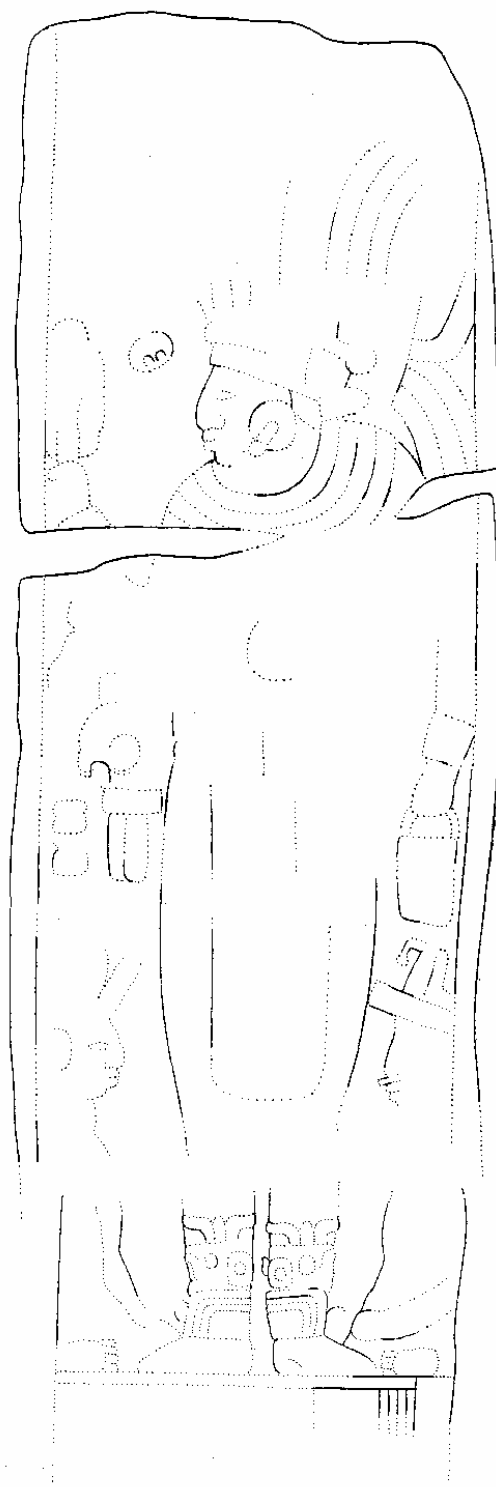


Figure. 7.35. Pusilhá Stela E, Front (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

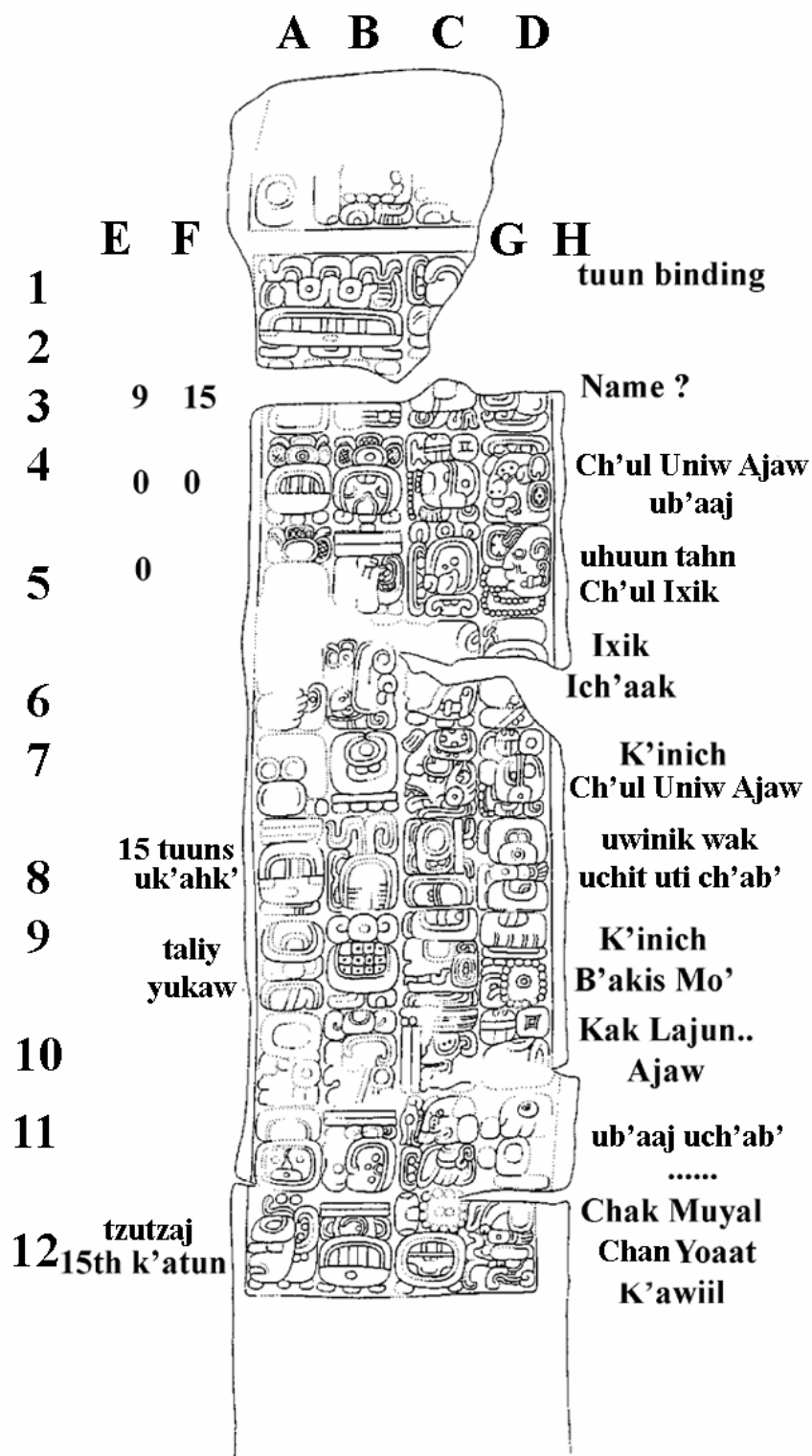


Figure 7.36. Pusilhá Stela E, Text (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

sign *ka* which is to be doubled (*ka-ka* or *kak*) because of the two dots. This is followed by the number 10 (*lajun*) plus an unidentified head variant, and the last glyph states that this person was a lord but not a divine lord. The next glyph block appears to read *ub'aa*
uch'ab 'his image, his creation' followed by an unknown glyph. In other contexts, the *ub'aj uch'ab* collocation is often used to identity the father in parentage statements and this may be its sense here. The individual's name is recorded as *Chak Muyal Chan Yoaat K'awiil* 'Great Sky Cloud Lightning God *K'awiil*'. The *Yoaat* or *Yopaat* 'Lightning God' title, is an important honorific title common with the rulers of both Copan and Quiriguá (seeLooper 2003). It appears 13 times in the inscriptions of Late Classic kings at Copan and 19 times in the name phrases of Quiriguá kings (Macri et al. 2007). The first appearance of this title occurs in the name phrase of Quiriguá's ruler *K'awiil Yopaat*, whose only dynastic monument is Altar L which commemorates the Period Ending 9.11.0.0.0 (11, October 652). From this date forward, all future Quiriguá kings, including *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Yopaat*, *Sky Xul*, and *Jade Sky*, carry the *Yoaat* or *Yopaat* epithet as part of their full regnal name phrases. This epithet also appears in the name phrase of the sixteenth ruler of Copan, *Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat*, who accedes on 9.16.12.5.17 (28, June 763).Looper (2003: 4) has argued that the *yopaat* epithet refers to the lightning deity *Chahk*, who was responsible for splitting the great cosmic turtle's carapace resulting in the rebirth of the maize god. The appearance of this title at Pusilhá suggests social and political connectedness between the rulership of Pusilhá and the southeastern Maya Lowlands. Stela R (Figure 7.37), has a partially destroyed text that also seems to include the *Yoaat* 'Lightning God' title. The individual portrayed on Stela R may be *Chak Muyal Chan Yoaat K'awiil* or 'Great Sky Cloud Lightning God *K'awiil*.'

In 2001, Prager of the PUSAP rediscovered Stela F (Braswell et al. 2002: 7).

Morley published a drawing of the opening Calendar Round of this monument in his *Inscriptions of the Petén* (1938: Vol. V: Plate 46), but until Prager redrew this monument it was thought to have been lost (Figure 7.38). The monument was first published in Braswell's 2002 Annual Report (see Braswell et al. 2002: Figure 1.13). The text records one of the last dedicatory dates in the inscriptions of Pusilhá with a Calendar Round date of 2 *Ajaw* 13 *Sek*, which corresponds to the Long Count date of 9.16.0.0.0 (5, May 751). Here, the month name *Sek* is clearly spelled *ke-se-wa* indicating a Ch'olan spelling of the month name, in contrast to the way this month name was spelled at Uxbenká on Stela 22. This Long Count date is confirmed as the Period Ending 9.16.0.0.0 based on the third glyph in the passage that records 16 *K'atuns*. Prager suggests that the following glyph is the hand scattering verb read *chok ch'aj* 'he scatters drops', a reference to bloodletting in celebration of the Period Ending (Braswell et al. 2002: 8). According to Prager (Braswell et al. 2004: 230) the final glyph recorded on Stela F appears to be the name of a ruler, *K'ahk' Pi(?)*, but it is not followed by an emblem glyph. This may mean that the final glyph is part of a verbal phrase, perhaps indicating something like 'he scattered drops in the fire or for the *pih*' ('bundle').

The last major monumental text to be discussed at Pusilhá is Stela N. Like Stela F, this stela was also rediscovered by the PUSAP in 2001 in the middle of the main stela plaza (Figure 7.39). The dedicatory date is not readable due to erosion. Morley (1938: Vol. IV: 63) suggested that the monument may have commemorated the Period Ending 9.17.0.0.0 13 *Ajaw* 18 *Kumk'u* (20, January 771). Looking at photographs of this monument and at the monument in the field was no help in determining the missing elements and Prager's drawing is accurate. The monument contains a reference to a fire-scattering ritual at B6. Following is perhaps *utiyy* (B7) 'happened at', perhaps followed

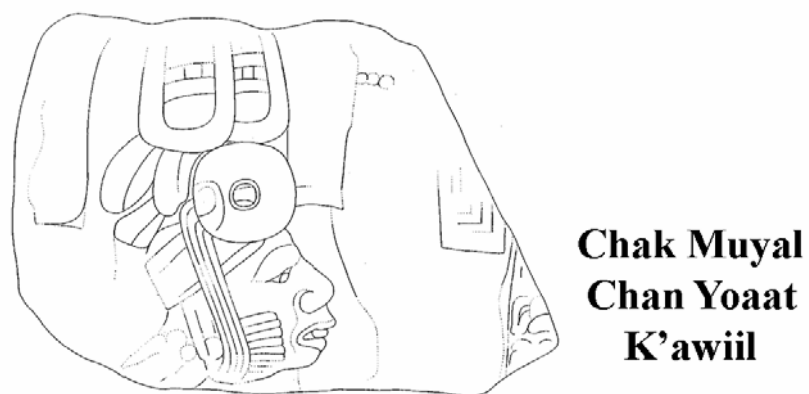


Figure 7.37. Pusilhá Stela R (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

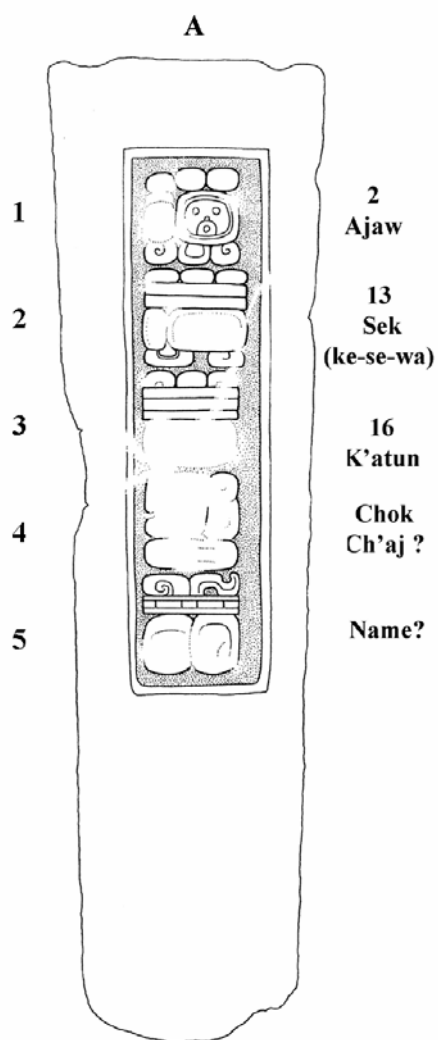


Figure 7.38. Pusilhá Stela F (Drawing courtesy of Christian Prager)

by the name of the location where this scattering event occurred. It would be quite interesting if this toponym read *Ox Witz*, a reference to the site of Caracol (Stuart 2007a: 2). The outline of the glyphic element located in the lower left-hand corner of the glyph block, strongly resembles the *Witz* logogram. The next glyph reads *Jun B'a Xuk* 'Head or First Copan Person'. The name that follows appears to read *Ixik Ch'ul* 'Divine Woman'. Together these glyphs suggest that the woman was a foreigner to Pusilhá, perhaps a royal woman from Copan. Prager (2002: 279) reads the second part of this woman's name as *Emach*, and thus, her name may be *Ixik Ch'ul Emach* 'Lady Divine Raccoon'. The next portion of the text is eroded, but a name may be recorded at C4 that includes *uk'ahk'*. The rest of the text is too eroded to ascertain any further details except for a possible Pusilhá emblem glyph recorded at D8.

Miscellaneous texts also appear on several unprovenanced portable objects found in the region of Pusilhá. A beautifully incised slate scepter known from the Kerr Photographic Archive (K3409) contains a text featuring the Pusilhá emblem glyph and is believed to have come from the area around Pusilhá. Measuring just under 25 cm in length, the scepter represents a powerful emblem of rulership. Its shape resembles that of a hafted axe and is incised with a detailed portrait of a seated ruler on the left side of the scepter (Figure 7.40). An equally impressive portrait of *Hunajpú* or *Hun Ajaw* (Figure 7.41), the legendary Hero Twin is portrayed on the right side of the scepter holding his blowgun (Coe and Kerr 1997: 86). The incised hieroglyphic inscription stating that the scepter belonged to a ruler who had captured a Pusilhá lord frames both sides, as well as the back edge of the scepter (Figure 7.42). One wonders if it refers to the battle recorded on Stela D on 9.8.1.12.8.

The left-side text names the object as a scepter, *ukaal tuun* 'his stone scepter' or

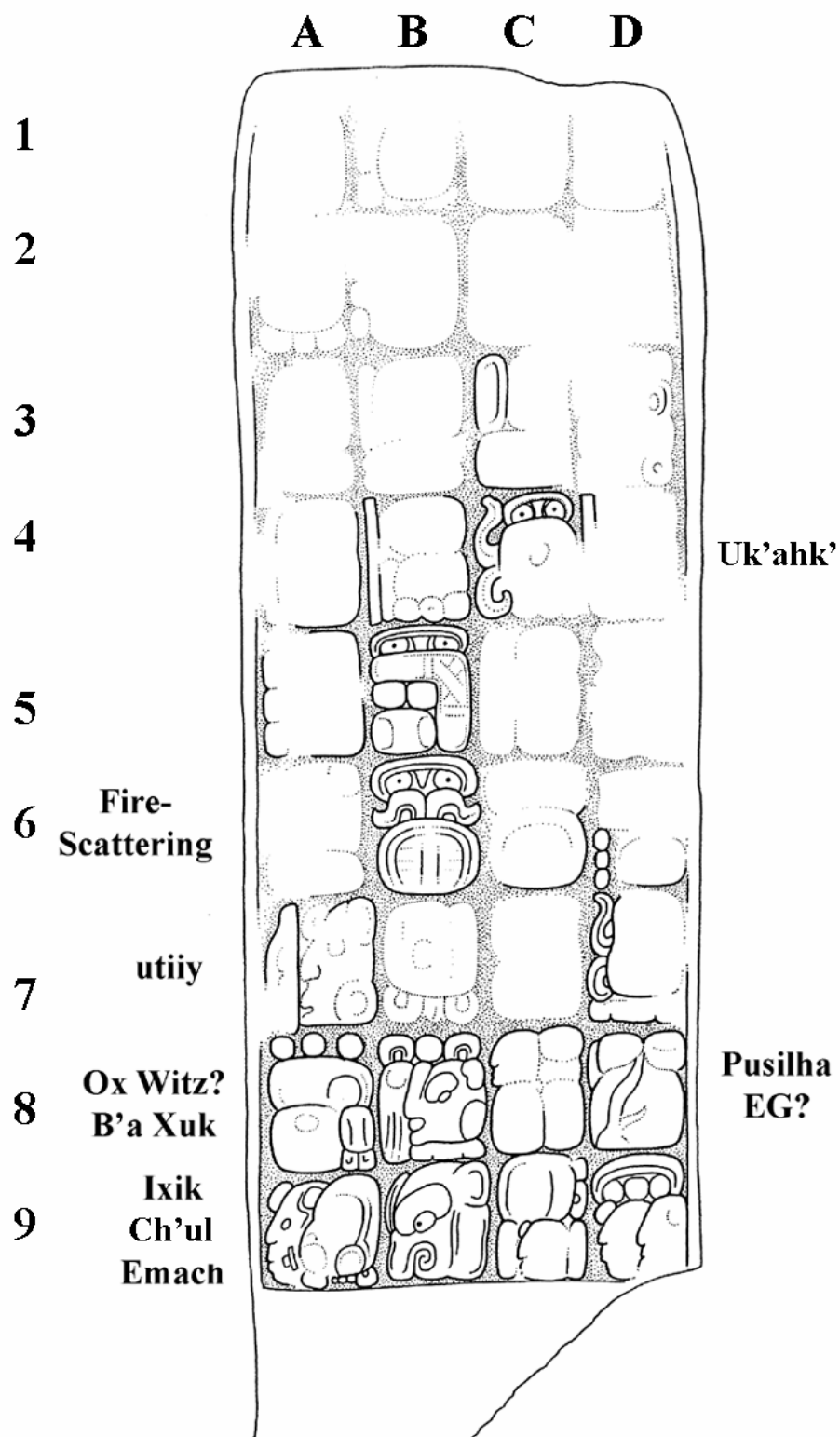


Figure 7.39. Pusilhá Stela N (Drawing courtesy of Christian Prager)

‘the stone scepter of’ (A1-B1). The second part of the glyph recorded at B1 seems to include the logogram *pet* ‘round’ or ‘to make round’ (Barrera Vasquez 1980: 648) followed by a glyph which reads *huun chi-? aj*. There is a small sign in the interior part of the *chi*-hand that is not clear. *Huun* can mean ‘headdress’ and this glyph may refer to the beautifully rendered stacked headdress that the figure is wearing.

On the right side of the scepter, the text begins *ub’aaj* ‘his image or self’ *tilb’u k’uhul winik*, meaning that this scepter was a possession or belonged to (Barrera Vasquez 1980: 794) a divine person. The text then continues with the logograph *chan yotot* ‘serpent’ or ‘sky house of’ *mul b’olon ajaw* ‘a stack of nine deities or lords’. The final glyph on the right side text is a royal title that reads *Elk’in Winik* ‘East Person’, perhaps indicating that this person is from the east.

The text on the edge of the scepter, begins *ub’aaj tzak [tuun]*, ‘he, himself grasps the *tuun*’ perhaps a reference to grasping this scepter, followed by *hun yotot ch’ok* ‘Headband House of the Youth’, which seems to indicate that this conjuring or grasping ritual occurred at the Headband House of the *ch’ok* ‘Youth’ or the ‘Emergent One’. The last phrase on the scepter reads *uchan Ch’ul Uniw Ajaw* ‘captor of the Divine Pusilhá Lord’. To summarize: a young noble of a particular lineage house was the captor of a Pusilhá lord. No date is included to tie this event to the series of conflicts recorded at Pusilhá.

A beautiful unprovenienced polychrome vase (K8089) photographed by Justin Kerr (Figure 7.43A) and drawn by John Montgomery (Figure 7.43B) is now in the Princeton University Art Museum. At over 40 cm high, this vase is one of the tallest Late Classic cylinder vases known (Wanyerka 2003: 186). The vase features a palace scene that depicts nine individuals. Five men are presenting sacred bundles or bolts of woven

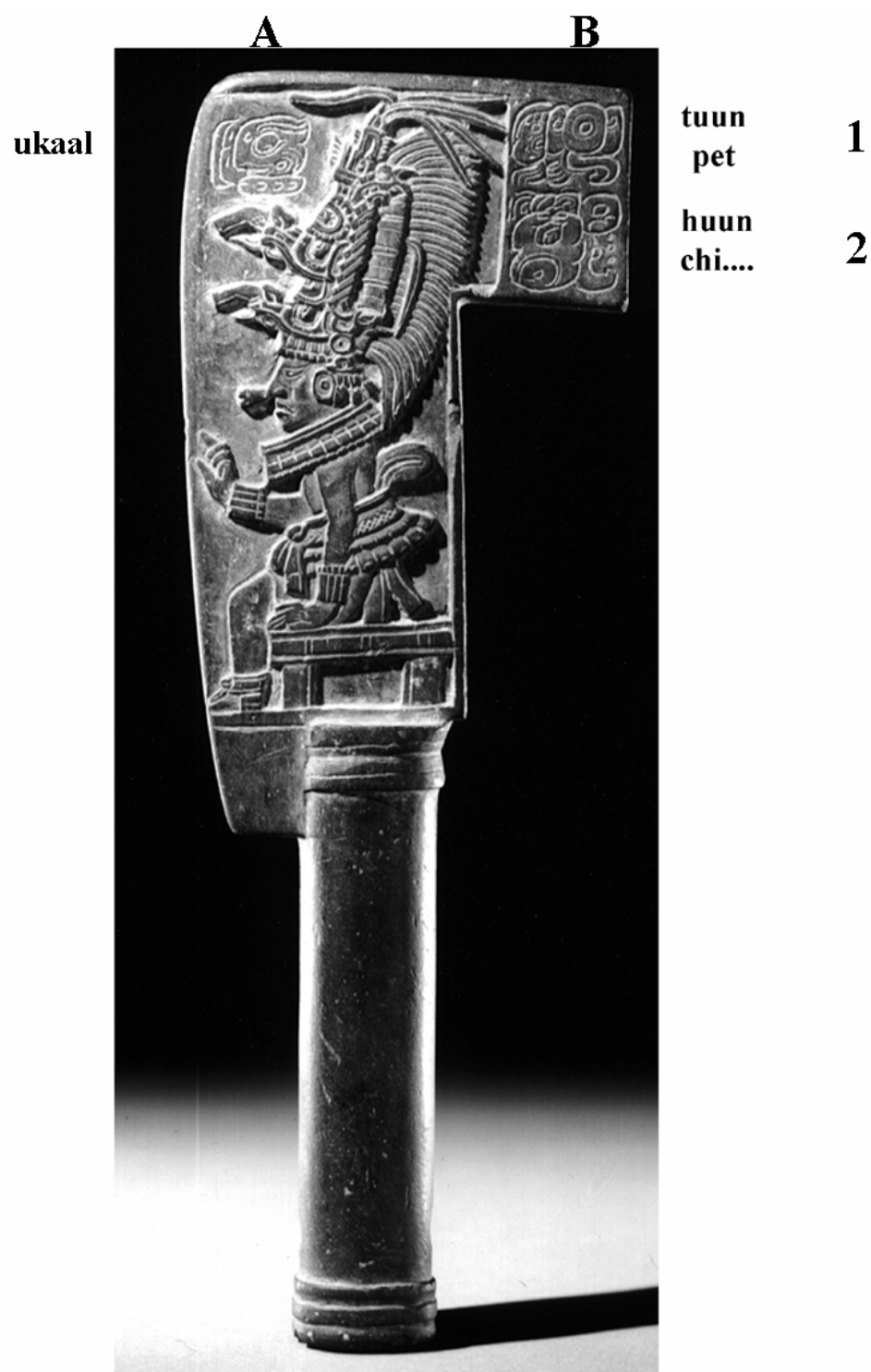


Figure 7.40. Slate Scepter, Left Side (K3409) (Photo courtesy of Justin Kerr)

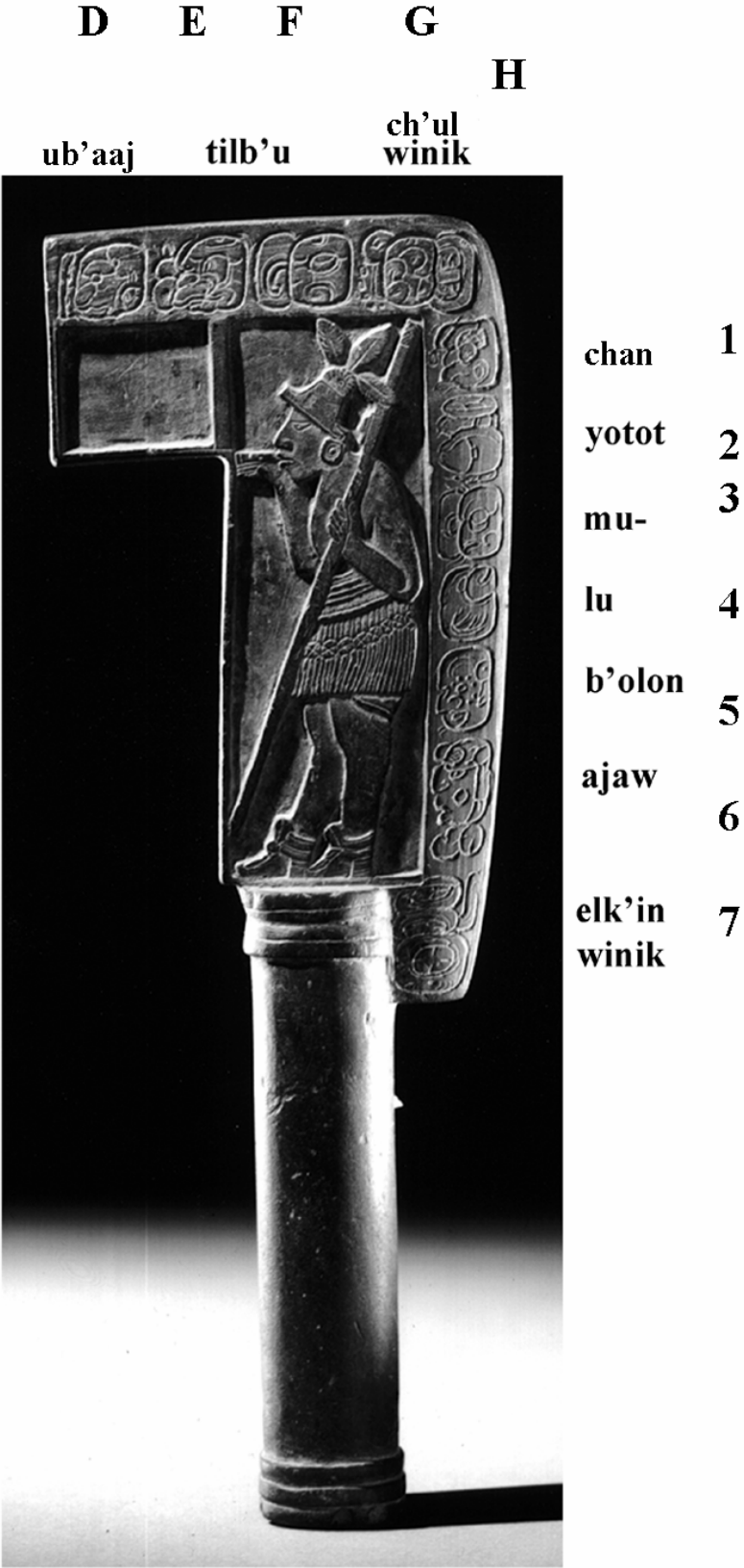


Figure 7.41. Slate Scepter, Right Side (K3409) (Photo courtesy of Justin Kerr)

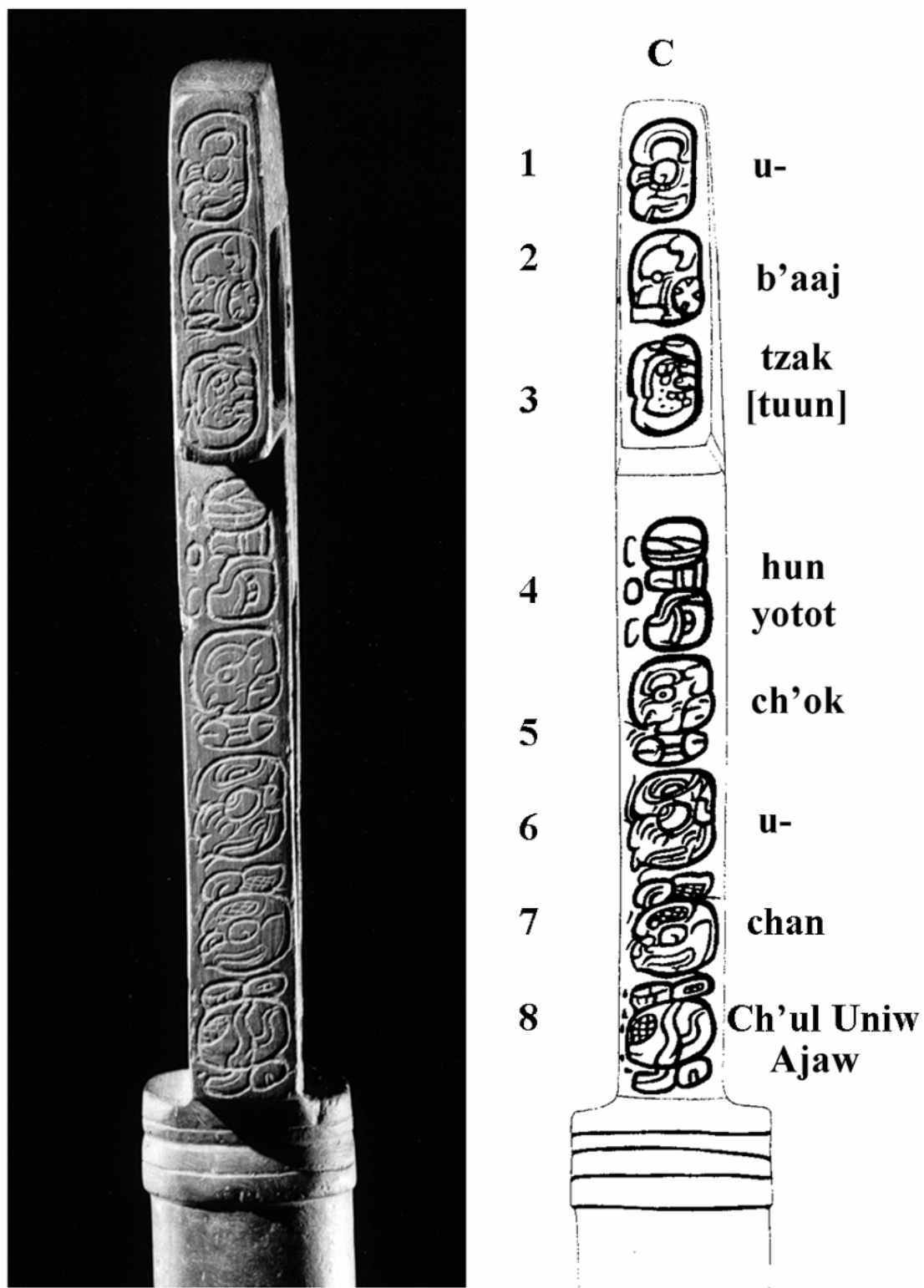


Figure 7.42. Slate Scepter, Edge Text (K3409) (Photo courtesy of Justin Kerr and Drawing by J. Montgomery)

cloth as formal tribute to the seated king. Three tattooed-faced men are kneeling below the king who appear to be unraveling the cloth bolts, perhaps to inspect their quality and to measure their length. The king is seated on a jaguar-pelt throne accepting the tribute, indicated by his hand gesture. He wears an elaborate macaw headdress with a small image of *K'awiil* protruding in the front. A speech-scroll comes from the mouth of the king leading to a small illegible secondary text. The speech-scroll suggests that the king is officially recognizing the tribute.

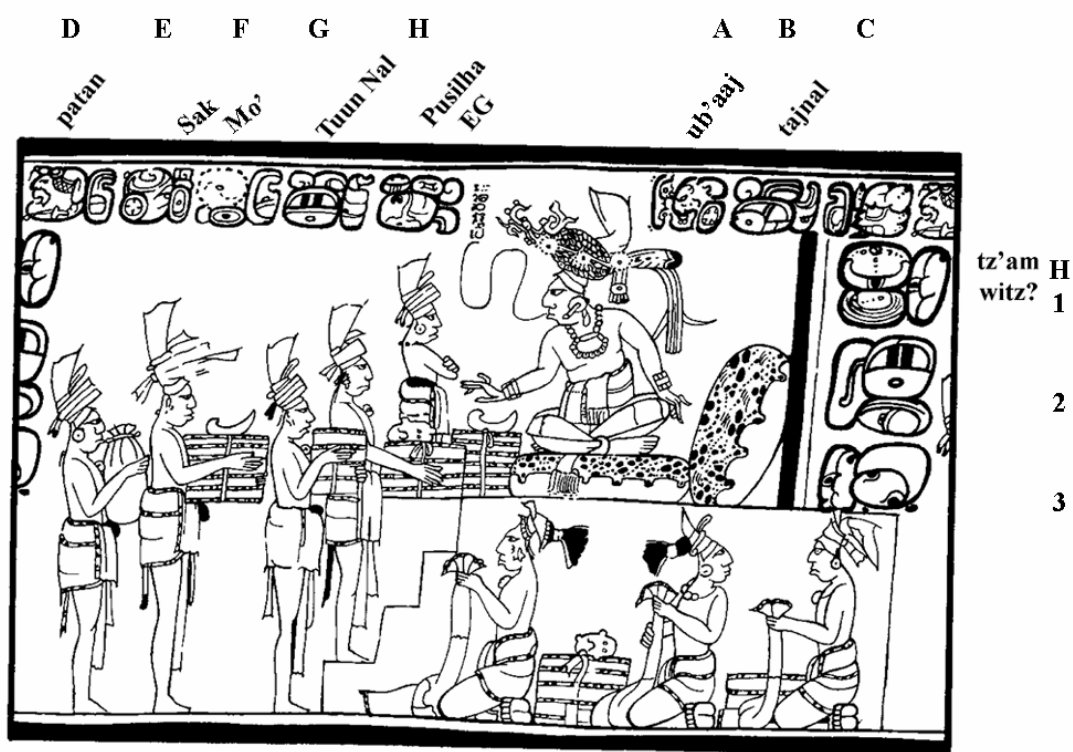
The accompanying hieroglyphic inscription, written in eleven glyph blocks, describes the figural scene as taking place in a Classic Maya royal court. It begins in the section of text located directly behind the seated ruler's head, stating *ub'aaj tajnal* 'he is the patron of the court place' (Boot 2002a: 73). The text also includes a head variant glyph that reads *patan* 'tribute'. The next glyph is similar to the last glyph recorded on the scepter edge text, that featured a large profile head with a *k'in* infix. Following is the name *Sak Mo'*, perhaps indicating the name of the king is White Macaw. The king is wearing a headdress that looks very much like a Macaw-Head. The text continues with a location, perhaps *tuun nal* 'Stone Place' followed by what appears to be a Pusilhá emblem glyph. The first of the final three glyphs recorded at I1 seems to read *Tz'am Witz* 'Throne Mountain', a location that appears several times in the inscriptions of Pusilhá.

Synthesis and Discussion

Pusilhá was strategically located in the Toledo upland soils of the southern foothills of the Maya Mountains near the confluence of the Poité and Pusilhá Rivers. Together these rivers form the Moho River, a source of year-round water deep enough for



A.



B.

Figure 7.43. K8089

A) (Photo courtesy of Justin Kerr)

B) (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

canoe navigation eastward toward the Gulf of Honduras and westward into eastern Dolores, Guatemala. Known as one of the finest cacao-growing regions in the entire Maya Lowlands (Jones 1983: 73), Pusilhá probably controlled access to the entire lower Poité-Pusilhá Valley since the valley itself is framed by steep-sided karst ridges and hillslopes that closely follow the valley system unimpeded into eastern Guatemala. This valley system, like that of the Rio Blanco, served as a major east/west trade route that likely facilitated the prosperity of Pusilhá during the Late Classic Period. Access to navigable year-round waters with connections to other river systems made this region easily accessible to those living in the Guatemalan Highlands, those living in the adjoining Petexbatún and Pasión regions of the southern Petén, and those living along the coastal regions of southern Belize. Archaeological evidence, specifically ceramic types and ground stone tools, confirm regional interactions between Pusilhá and these areas (Bill et al. 2005: 467). However, as also outlined in this chapter, there is an abundance of epigraphic evidence to suggest that Pusilhá was closely connected to the southeastern Maya Lowlands and may have served as a *k'atun* seat within Copan's Late Classic *may* sphere. The socio-religious/political connection between these two sites may go back even further in time based on new archaeological and linguistic evidence. Pusilhá was the first of three emblem glyph-bearing centers to emerge in the Southern Maya Mountains Region towards the end of the interregnum period (A.D. 455 to A.D. 692) at Uxbenká. Unfortunately, both the archaeological and epigraphic records of the Southern Maya Mountains Region during this period remain poorly defined. It would seem that Pusilhá's founding, much like that of neighboring Copan shortly after A.D. 400 (see Sharer and Traxler 2006: 36), may have been the result of a new migration of non-local Ch'olan-speaking people into the Southern Maya Mountains Region from the central or southern

Maya lowlands. Sharer and Traxler have detected profound changes (i.e. monumental changes in site planning, construction techniques, and building functions) in the archaeological record of Copan that support this view (Sharer and Traxler 2006: 36). The epigraphic evidence also suggests that Copan's founding may have been the result of close connections to Tikal during this same era (Sharer and Traxler 2006: 37). An Early Classic inscription recorded on the back of the Hombre de Tikal statue, some twenty years prior to Copan's founding, features a reference to an individual named *K'uk' Mo'*. This same name appears on the retrospective text recorded on Copan Altar Q, which refers exclusively to the pre-dynastic events surrounding the founding of Copan. Strontium isotope analysis of the bones of the Founder of Copan, *K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'*, indicates that he likely came from the central Petén region (Buikstra et al. 2004: 211). Thus, given Pusilhá's commanding position along the major east-west trade corridor that connected the Southern Maya Mountains Region to the southern Petén, I suspect that the people who founded Pusilhá were related to these same people who migrated from the southern Petén eastward into the Motagua and Copan Valleys during the Early Classic Period, where they either joined or supplanted the local population. The migration of foreign peoples into the Southern Maya Mountains Region during the later part of the Early Classic Period could account for the linguistic variation observed in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of this area. As mentioned in Chapter 6, during the Late Classic Period the scribes at Uxbenká were using Yukatekan orthography to spell particular month names while the scribes at Pusilhá appear to be using Ch'olan orthography. The epigraphic data at Pusilhá show no deviations in the way particular month names were spelled, nor are there any other notable syntactic changes in the way inscriptions were recorded to indicate possible language change during the site's existence. The texts all

seem to suggest a Ch'olan-based language, most likely Eastern Ch'olan based on Pusilhá's geographic location and proximity to the known Classic Ch'orti'an-speaking region of the southeastern Maya lowlands. Ch'orti'an was likely spoken at Pusilhá from its founding in the mid to late 6th century to its last written text in the mid to late 8th century.

The primary goal of this chapter was to look for epigraphic and archaeological evidence in the Poité/Pusilhá Valley to support or challenge the hegemonic and *may* models of Classic Maya political organization. Beginning with the hegemonic model, the epigraphic evidence indicates that the lords of Pusilhá were using the elite royal title *Ch'ul Ajaw* to indicate divine status. This title appears fifteen times in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Pusilhá (once on Stela K, Stela M, Sculptural Fragment 3, and on the Slate Scepter; twice on Stela D and Stela E; three times on Stela P; and four times on Stela H), all as part of its standard emblem glyph collocation. The first appearance of the Pusilhá emblem glyph occurs on Stela P in a passage dating to 9.6.17.8.18 (17, June 571) which commemorates the inauguration of *K'awiil Chan K'inich*. This date occurs during Uxbenká's interregnum period and falls less than ten years after the start of the so-called Hiatus Period at Tikal (A.D. 562-692) (Martin and Grube 2000: 40). Pusilhá's appearance as the second major emblem glyph-bearing polity in the Southern Maya Mountains Region may be linked to Tikal's loss as *may ku* prior to the start of its Hiatus. A dramatic increase in the population of the Southern Maya Mountains Region during this time (as reflected by the appearance of dozens of new surface sites in the region) to suggests that Tikal's loss as *may ku* may have sharply reduced its ability to control this region. Recently, Colas argued (2006: 95) that the *K'inich* epithet itself was commonly used at sites located in the western Maya lowlands and that its use by the founder of

Copan and his son suggests that *K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'* was a foreigner to the region. The same may also hold true for *K'awiil Chan K'inich*, the first divine lord of Pusilhá, who by using this epithet, may be indicating that he too migrated to this region from the west. It is also interesting that this particular king of Pusilhá carried the rare *Ochk'in* or 'West' *K'aloomte'* version of this exclusive title. Curiously, the West *Kaloomte'* title appears only one other time in the inscriptions of Pusilhá, that being on Stela M in commemoration of the period-ending 9.14.0.0.0 (1, December 711). The interval between the first and second appearance of the West *Kaloomte'* title is approximately 118 years which is close enough to half a *may* cycle to suggest that the two instances were intentionally linked.

The second criterion used in testing the hegemonic model are direct statements of subordination, especially those that describe the accession of local kings under the supervision or aegis of foreign overlords. Immediately following a reference to warfare, the text on Stela D (refer back to Figure 7.22) dating to 9.8.1.12.8 (22, April 595) states that a fire scattering event took place in front of a stela that was 'supervised' by a 'Precious Lord of Copan.' This lord was not named but the text states that he was the captor of someone from Yok', a polity prominently mentioned in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Copan Stela 2, which dates to the same time as Pusilhá Stela D. This passage seems to indicate that someone from Copan was overseeing this event at Pusilhá. I take this as epigraphic evidence to indicate that Pusilhá may have been under Copan control at this time.

The third criterion used in testing the hegemonic model, is the presence or absence of explicit epigraphic statements that indicate friendly, non-antagonistic relations between sites. Perhaps the best piece of epigraphic evidence to demonstrate socio-

religious or political ties between Pusilhá and Copan is the reference to *Tz'am Witz* or 'Throne Mountain' recorded on monuments at both Pusilhá and Copan. As argued in this chapter, the earliest reference to this location is recorded in passages on two monuments at Pusilhá; Stela D and Stela P, both of which date to 9.10.15.0.0 (7, November, 647). The context for both passages relates specifically to the location where period-ending stelae were erected. Since all of Pusilhá's stelae were erected in one location, that being the main stela plaza, it would appear that its name during Classic times was *Tz'am Witz*. This same toponym also is recorded at Copan on a sculpted bench inside Temple 11 that featured the portraits of twenty seated individuals. Though this inscription dates 116 years later than the Pusilhá references, I believe that this bench features a specific reference to Pusilhá. The scene featured on this bench represents important individuals who have come to Copan to take part in or to witness the accession of *Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat*, the 16th ruler of Copan on 9.16.12.5.17 6 *Kaban* 10 *Mol* (28, June 763) (Schele and Miller 1986: 124-125; Martin and Grube 2000: 209). Therefore, it is likely that the individual seated on the *tz'am witz* toponym at Copan represents a Pusilhá lord who traveled to Copan to observe the coronation. A text (Stela 21) at neighboring Nim Li Punit also describes historical events occurring at Copan, suggesting to me that the rulership of both Nim Li Punit and Pusilhá were historically linked to the rulership of Copan, though there is no epigraphic evidence linking Nim Li Punit directly to Pusilhá. The scene described here could be interpreted as an event that brought the rulers of a *may* sphere's *k'atun* seats together in ritual observance of divine succession. The appearance of a Pusilhá toponym on a monument at Copan in the context described here, along with the names of other site-specific toponyms, strongly suggests that all of these toponyms represented subordinate 'seats of power' within Copan's political hegemony or *may ku*.

Further evidence of external contact with Copan can be seen in the use of similar personal name phrases at Pusilhá. Besides being unusually long (i.e. *Wuk Chapaat K'awiil Chan K'awiil K'inich*), a characteristic of the personal name phrases of many Copan kings, the names of Pusilhá lords are similar to those of Copan lords. Pusilhá Stela M records a statement that includes a reference to the glyphic collocation *yon* meaning 'his family' followed by *K'ahk' U..K'awiil* a name phrase that strongly resembles that of the 12th king of Copan *K'ahk' Unaab' K'awiil* (Smoke *Imix*). The *yon* reference on Stela M may indicate that the Pusilhá lord was a relative or somehow related to the Copan king. Another interesting example of a shared name phrase occurs on Pusilhá Stela E. In commemoration of the period ending 9.15.0.0.0 (18, August 731), the Pusilhá king, *Chak Muyal Chan Yoaat* or *Yopaat K'awiil*, bound the *tuun*. The *yoaat* epithet is an important honorific title restricted to the rulers of Copan and Quiriguá (Looper 2003). Furthermore, several of the Pusilhá lords carry the *K'inich* or 'Resplendent' epithet as a formal part of their names, an epithet that also appears with the names of two early Copan kings. Another title found in the inscriptions of Pusilhá that may indicate non-antagonistic relations with Copan is the appearance of the *Chan Ch'ok* or 'Four Youths' title in the headdress of a Pusilhá lord on Stela C, which features distinct Teotihuacan-inspired iconography. The *Chan Ch'ok* title is restricted to the inscriptions of the southeastern Maya lowlands, where it appears to function as either a royal title that refers to the four sacred lineages of Copan or to the set of four directional Year Bearing deities who are associated with Maya New Year dates (Stuart 2004b: 5).

The *wi'te'naah* expression is another important title that appears in the inscriptions of both Copan and Pusilhá. On Stela P a Pusilhá lord named *Sak Wuk Chapaat [K'ahk']*, is said to be a Two *K'atun* Scatterer, a First Lineage Lord and

Ballplayer, and described as a First Youth and a person of Noble Descent from a sacred place known as the *Wi'te'naah* 'Tree-Root' or 'Tree-Lineage House'. In Ch'orti', *wí* can be glossed as 'source, origin, navel, umbilical cord, or root' (Wisdom 1950 as cited in Stuart 2004: 237). This particular building seems to have functioned as a Foundation or Origin House and may have been the location where investiture ceremonies took place (Martin and Grube 2000: 192). Based on the presence of explicit Teotihuacan iconography, Stuart (2004: 238) suggests that Structure 10L-16 at Copan may have functioned as an Origin House. If correct, the reference to the *wi'te'naah* in a text at Pusilhá would suggest that this Pusilhá lord, *Sak Wuk Chapaat*, likely traveled to Copan to receive instruction and divine sanction prior to becoming king. The idea of an Origin House as a specific location where rulers of subordinate polities (i.e. *k'atun* seats) traveled prior to their formal accessions could also provide support for Rice's *may* model by referring to how the rulers of various *k'atun* seats received instruction on what was expected or demanded from them as representatives or keepers of the *k'atun*.

The *Chi*-Altar toponym is another title found in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Pusilhá that may indicate non-antagonistic relations. This toponymic title is related to the concept of *wi'te'naah* for it also refers to places of origin, especially in regard to the founding of royal dynasties (Grube 2003b: 363). The retrospective reference to the *Chi*-Altar Place recorded at Pusilhá on Stela P is the earliest dated (8.2.0.0.0 or 11, February 81) reference to this well-known location. There are many Late Classic references that link the *Chi*-Altar location to the Founders of various royal dynasties including Palenque, Tikal, Yaxchilán, and Pusilhá. I suspect the *Chi*-Altar Place may be connected to a larger *may* system or be representative of a more ancient system related to the concept of *tzukob'* or territorial 'divisions'. It is reported in many 16th century ethnohistoric accounts

that the Maya believed that Yucatan was historically divided into 13 ‘divisions’ or *tzukob*’ (Means 1917: 141; Roys 1962: 68; Taube 1988: 198). A late seventeenth century description by Fray Andrés de Avendaño states: “These ages (i.e. *k’atun*) are thirteen in number; each has its separate idol and its priest, with a separate prophecy of its events. These thirteen ages are divided into thirteen parts which divide this kingdom of Yucathan and each age, with its idol, priest, and prophecy, rules in one of these thirteen parts of the land, according as they have divided it” (Means 1917:141). It is likely that Yucatan served as a metaphor to represent the entire Maya area. Other groups including the K’iche and Cakchiquel (Brinton 1885; Recinos and Goetz 1953: 48) also believe there were thirteen primordial groups or divisions as part of their creation stories.

After reading the previous quote by Means (1917: 141) and working on a later chapter in this dissertation that dealt with the notion of *tzuk* as meaning ‘province’ or ‘division’ or ‘groups of towns’ as Brinton states (1882: 54), I noticed the repetition of the number thirteen. The meaning of *tzuk* ‘groups of towns’ suggests that the Classic Maya were using this term to represent their entire territory. It would seem that the Classic Maya thought about their own cultural identity and political system as one divided into thirteen distinct geopolitical/territorial units that were identified and recognized as such by everyone in the Maya realm during Classic times. *Oxlahun* in all of the Yucatekan languages is the word for the number thirteen. According to Roys (1965: 157, 163) *oxlahun* can also mean ‘supremely’. This translation reminded me of a new inscription that recently came to light at the site of Altar de los Reyes in southeastern Campeche. The emblem glyphs of thirteen Classic Maya polities including Edzná, the Ik’ Site (possibly Motul de San José), a site known as Chatan Winik (perhaps referring to either El Mirador or Nakbé), Calakmul, Tikal, Palenque, and Altun Há are recorded on the side

of Altar 3 (Figure 9.22). The first glyph reads *Ajaw Tz'am* 'Throne Lords' or 'Lords of the Throne'. Two glyphs located on the top of the altar read *k'u kab*, 'Divine Earth' or 'Divine Land' followed by *oxlahun kab* meaning 'Thirteen Lands' or 'Supreme Lands.' Therefore, I agree with Rice (2004) that the *may* system was in place during Classic times and that these thirteen *tzukob* represented part of a larger indigenous system that was used to define the geo-political or territorial realm of the Classic Maya. This is in contradiction to Martin and Grube, who have argued that territoriality did not play an important role in the concept of Classic Maya political organization (2000: 20). I suggest that territoriality did play a fundamental role in how the Classic Maya perceived their world and how they thought about their geo-political borders based on my work with the numbered *tzuk* titles. This conclusion has also been partially and independently confirmed by Beliaev (2000) and Wagner (2006). In addition, Craine and Reindorp (1979: 78) located a passage in the Chilam B'alams of Maní that describes how thirteen men were made provincial governors of Yucatan in 1541 and each was a protector of one of thirteen *k'atuns*. If this description is related to the thirteen emblem glyphs recorded on the Altar de los Reyes text, the system was ancient. If each emblem glyph on the Altar de los Reyes monument represented the seat of an ancient *may ku*, then each of these major emblem-glyph-bearing polities controlled a number of subordinate *jetz' k'atunob* or *k'atun* seats in a system like that described by Rice. As Guenter has recently argued (2005: 9), the *Chi*-Altar site, which could refer to the site of El Mirador, may have been a Place of Origin where the founders of those thirteen *k'atun* seats formally received "official" sanction, legitimation, and perhaps training prior to becoming founders of dynastic polities. The appearance and use of the *Kaloomte*' title in conjunction with the *Chi*-Altar toponym, as seen on Pusilhá Stela D suggest to me that it may have originally

been used only by those sites that traced their origins back to the original thirteen polities. Those thirteen polities may represent the *k'atun* seats of a particularly powerful *may* sphere or they may represent thirteen original *may* seats that made up the geopolitical landscape or territorial extent of the Maya area. Given the fact that the emblem glyphs of at least six polities cannot be read on the Altar de los Reyes text, it is possible that Pusilhá was included since at least one of its kings carried the very exclusive *West Kaloomte'* title.

Another bit of epigraphic evidence indicating non-antagonistic relations between Pusilhá and Copan can be found recorded on Pusilhá Stela N. The text describes a royal woman, *Ixik Ch'ul Emach* 'Lady Divine Raccoon', as a *Jun B'a Xuk* or 'First or Head Copan Person'. The title suggests that she was a royal woman from Copan, perhaps sent to Pusilhá to solidify relations between these two regions as part of an inter-regional marital alliance.

The final criterion used in testing the hegemonic model was the presence or absence of explicit epigraphic statements to warfare or to inter-site conflict. Conflict and warfare are a common theme in both the sculptural program and hieroglyphic inscriptions of Pusilhá, more common than at other sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Although many of the stelae are broken, at least three of Pusilhá's 13 carved stelae (Stelae C, K, and E) and a glyph (Step 5) from the Hieroglyphic Stairway, depict images of bound prisoners either seated before a standing Pusilhá lord or flanking him on either side. It is likely that more of Pusilhá's broken stelae featured similar themes. The earliest reference to warfare in the Southern Maya Mountains Region is recorded on Stela D dating to 9.8.1.12.8. (22, April 595). Apparently, the attack was carried out against Pusilhá and resulted in the breaking in half of stelae and the downing of the flints and

shields of Scroll *B'i*. Much of this passage is missing. It is not clear who Scroll *B'i* was, but the attack appears to have involved the Water-Scroll site, which may refer to Altun Há, an important Classic Maya site located in northern Belize. The text on Stela D also describes the capture and death of a person from the *Yok'* polity. As stated earlier, a passage recorded at Copan on Stela 2 also mentions a place called *Yok'* suggesting that *Yok'* may have been located somewhere in the region between Copan and Pusilhá. The earlier event involving the 'breaking in half of stelae' was mentioned twice on Stela D using highly unusual syntax, perhaps a means for highlighting this action as an important peak event in the dynastic history of Pusilhá. A later reference to conflict occurs on Stela H, which commemorates the period ending 9.11.0.0.0 (11, October 652) and it appears that a lord from the Water-Scroll site was captured by a Pusilhá lord. This reference could explain why the earlier event was prominently mentioned twice at Pusilhá. The reference to the breaking in half of stelae could also be seen as evidence in support of the *may* model as an example of a termination ritual associated with the end of a *k'atun* seat's reign that resulted in the destruction of stelae (Rice 2004: 118-119). The reference to the destruction of stelae is followed by the 'downing of the flints and shields', an expression that Simon Martin now interprets as a Maya metaphor for military specialists or an army (2001b: 5).

Another piece of epigraphic evidence that is relevant to understanding the intra-regional relations between Pusilhá and Nim Li Punit. A captive's name recorded at Pusilhá on Sculptural Fragment 17 (see Figure 9.30) includes an emblem glyph of a polity named *B'alam* or 'Jaguar.' As will be discussed in Chapter 9, the mother of a contemporary king of Nim Li Punit was a royal woman from the *B'alam* site. The appearance of a *B'alam* emblem glyph in association with a captive at Pusilhá suggests

that Pusilhá and Nim Li Punit were not allies. Since there are several references to the *B'alam* site in the inscriptions of the Pasión and in the Southern Maya Mountains Region, it is likely that the site is located somewhere near the Guatemala-Belize border. Finally, an unprovenienced text recorded on a beautifully incised slate scepter handle records the capture of an unnamed Pusilhá lord by another unnamed individual.

With reference to the *may* model, the epigraphic evidence shows that period-ending stelae, in particular those that commemorated *k'atun* endings, were the most common theme recorded in the monumental inscriptions of Pusilhá. It is likely that all thirteen of Pusilhá's carved stelae commemorate period endings, with the possible exception of Stela R whose hieroglyphic text is largely broken and missing (see Table 7.1). The earliest period-ending date at Pusilhá and the earliest date in the entire Southern Maya Mountains Region is found in a retrospective passage on Stela P that recalls and commemorates the 8.2.0.0.0 (11, February 81) period ending. This passage links the later *hotún*-ending of 9.10.15.0.0 (7, November 647) to this period ending in the Late Preclassic, which likely involved the *Chi*-Altar Place and a historical figure known as the Foliated *Ajaw*.

As Rice (2004: 116) notes in the *may* system, there were thirteen *k'atun* seats, perhaps reflected by the same number of period-ending stelae. There are thirteen carved monuments at Pusilhá and twelve feature period endings dates, though not consecutive. Period-ending dates on monuments at Pusilhá range from 9.7.0.0.0 to 9.17.0.0.0, (though period endings 9.10.0.0.0 and 9.13.0.0.0 are missing in the textual record), suggesting that Pusilhá may have served as host of a *may* seat during this time, though it is more likely that Pusilhá served as a *k'atun* seat within Copan's *may* sphere given the close ties to that kingdom. The importance of period ending celebrations is also indicated in the

Table 7.1. Period-Ending Dates in the Hieroglyphic Inscriptions of Pusilhá

Monument Number	L.C. Date	Year	Period-Ending Ritual
Stela P	8.2.0.0.0	11, Feb. 81	Unknown Event at <i>Chi</i> -Altar Place
Stela K	8.6.0.0.0	14, July 160	<i>Tuun</i> Binding at <i>Chi</i> -Altar Place
Stela P	9.7.0.0.0	5, Dec. 573	Stela Planting
Stela O	9.7.0.0.0	5, Dec. 573	Fire-Scattering
Stela H	9.7.10.0.0	14, Oct. 583	Unknown Event
Stela D	9.8.0.0.0	22, Aug. 593	Stela Planting
Stela Q	9.8.0.0.0	22, Aug. 593	Unknown Event
Stela C	9.9.0.0.0*	9, May 613	Commemoration of the <i>Kan Ch'ok</i>
Stela D	9.10.15.0.0	7, Nov. 647	Stela Planting
Stela P	9.10.15.0.0	7, Nov. 647	Stela Planting
Stela H	9.11.0.0.0	11, Oct. 652	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
Stela K	9.12.0.0.0	28, June 672	Unknown Event
Stela M	9.14.0.0.0	1, Dec. 711	Fire Scattering
Stela E	9.15.0.0.0	18, Aug. 731	Fire Scattering, <i>Tuun</i> Binding
Stela F	9.16.0.0.0	5, May 751	Fire Scattering
Stela N	9.17.0.0.0*	20, Jan. 771	Fire Scattering

* Denotes Uncertain Long Count Date

(Stelae D, H, and P are unique in that all three texts feature two complete Long Count dates with accompanying Supplemental Series.)

Books of the *Chilam B'alam*s that state that the end of a *may* and the beginning of the next were celebrated with great reverence and fanfare. Rice has been able to correlate some of these Colonial Period rituals to period-ending rituals conducted during Classic times.

No E-Groups or Twin Pyramid Complexes have been identified in the architectural assemblages at Pusilhá. However, Braswell has identified a unique architectural plan at Pusilhá that may function like the more traditional E-Group assemblage (Braswell et al. 2005: 74). Braswell (2007: 72) refers to these unique architectural groups as “Special Function Groups.” He notes that the most elaborate architectural groups at the site were built on a north by northwest and south by southeast axis. The plan includes three low, parallel and closely spaced range structures that frame the eastern side of the patio group (Braswell 2007: 72). A single range structure is found along the western side of these groups and their principal structures are generally located to the north and south of the patio (Braswell 2007: 72). Braswell (2007: 72) has identified three Special Function Groups at Pusilhá: the Moho Plaza Group, the Stela Plaza Group, and the Lunar Group (Figure 7.44). Braswell reports that most of the ceramics found in these Special Function Groups are non-utilitarian and consist mainly of incense burner fragments indicating that food preparation and food consumption were not an important function of these groups (2007: 73). It appears that these groups served as the locations where calendrical rituals and *k'atun* celebrations were conducted. Rice (2004: 116) suggests that sites with these architectural complexes and period-ending stelae had formal politico-ritual roles as seats of the *k'atun*.

The proposal with *may* intervals of either 128 or 256 years, is not strongly supported by the inscriptions of Pusilhá, nor do the epigraphic findings directly

correspond to the archaeological findings.

The last criterion used for testing the *may* model is that cycle seats within a given *may* sphere will share similar architectural, iconographic, and ceramic programs. However, as stated in Chapter 6, it is also possible that there was variability in the outward expression of these features amongst the individual cycle seats (Rice 2004: 200). Leventhal (1990: 138-139) was among the first to define the Southern Maya Mountains Region in terms of architectural features. Braswell (2007: 72) notes that the lack of vaulted superstructures and tombs, as well as the paucity of typical E-Group assemblages at sites in southern Belize, could be added to Leventhal's list for defining the Southern Maya Mountains Region. However, Laporte has identified more than a hundred E-Group assemblages in the southern Petén that date to the Late and Terminal Classic Periods (Braswell 2007: 72). In addition, Braswell sees a major difference in the placement of principal tombs between the sites of southern Belize and that of western Belize and eastern Petén. In western Belize and eastern Petén, the burials are usually placed in a pyramidal structure along the eastern edge of the plaza group, whereas in Southern Belize, the burials are usually placed in low range structures that may have supported residences or other types of buildings and can be found in association with either the northern, southern, western or eastern structures of the plaza group (Braswell 2007: 72).

Pusilhá contains four ballcourts, including one reported to be the largest ballcourt in southern Belize (Braswell et al. 2002: 3-4). Given the number of ballcourts at Pusilhá and at the other major emblem glyph-bearing sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region (Uxbenká, Lubaantun, and Nim Li Punit), it would seem that the ballgame was an integral part of the social, religious, and perhaps political affairs of those living in this region. The abundance of so-called "Lubaantún-style" ballplayer figurines at sites

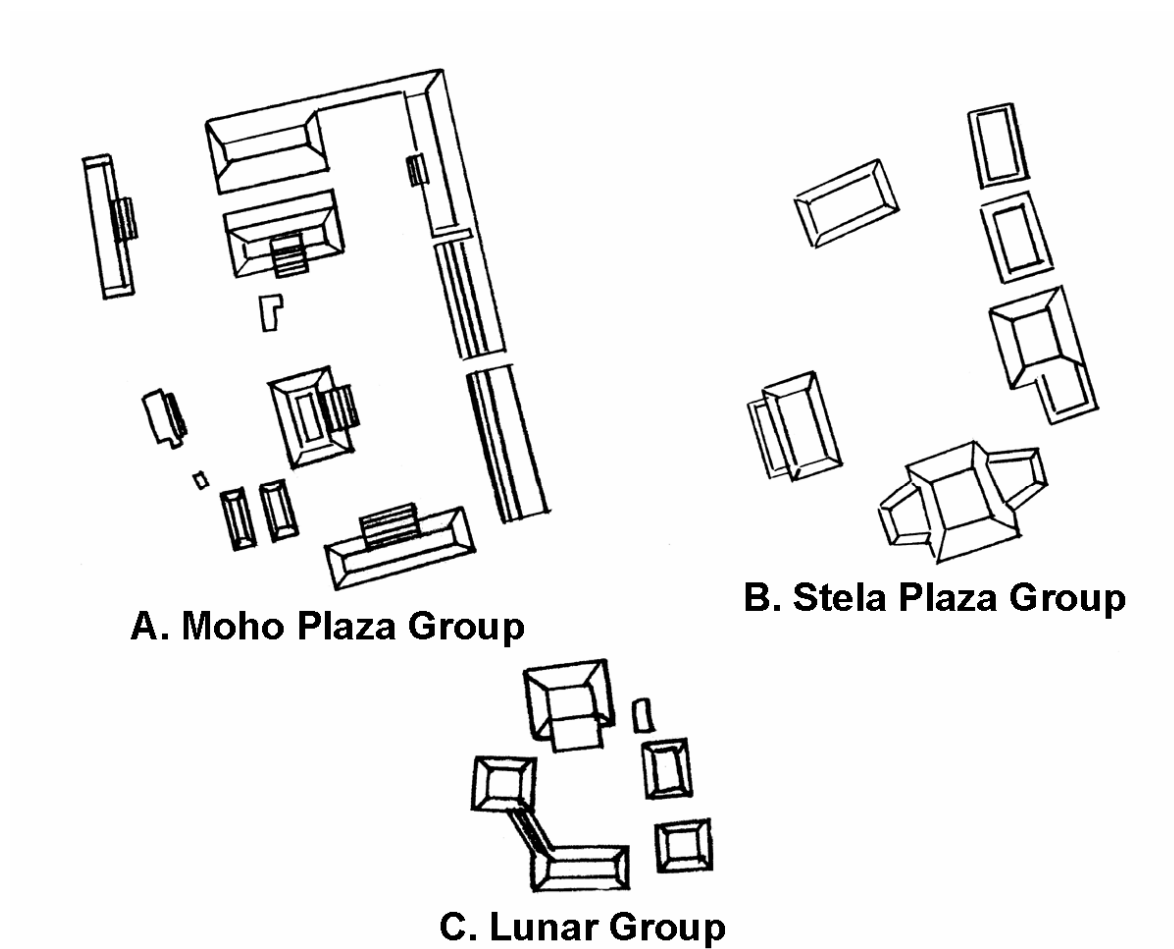


Figure 7.44. Plan Maps of the Three Special Function Groups at Pusilhá (redrawn by author after Braswell 2007: Figure 4)

throughout the Southern Maya Mountains Region and beyond provides additional evidence that the ballgame had deep significance to the inhabitants of this region.

Turning to the sculptural theme at Pusilhá, Prager (2003: 7) and I have identified more than three dozen historical figures in the inscriptions, including seven Pusilhá kings. To date, forty-six sculpted monuments have been identified at Pusilhá. The inscriptions of Pusilhá have unusual syntax and numerous calendrical discrepancies. The general syntax and narrative prose of these texts are distinctly different from other sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region, suggesting that those living at Pusilhá were linguistically different from the neighboring populations. Although the syntax and calendrics in the inscriptions at Pusilhá are different from the inscriptions of the other hieroglyph-bearing sites in the region, I do not believe that this phenomenon represents incomplete knowledge of writing by the scribes of Pusilhá. I suspect that these differences reflect ethno-linguistic differences in the social identity of this site's inhabitants. The distinctive geography of the Southern Maya Mountains Region isolated ancient settlements from each other. Ethnicity may receive its greatest expression in linguistically diverse regions characterized by differences in their micro-environments (Chance and Stark 2001: 237). Colas (see 2004 and 2006) has recently argued that personal names and identities are closely related and may be used as markers to denote ethnicity as well as define ethnic boundaries (Colas 2006: 87).

Lacadena and Wichmann (2002) have recently shown that different vernaculars representing ethno-linguistic variation can be detected in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the southern Maya lowlands. It has long been assumed that during Classic times Ch'olan languages were located in a swath across the base of the Yucatan Peninsula. The real problem was deciding how far to the south Yukatek extended and how far north Ch'olan

extended (Lacadena and Wichmann 2002: 288). Lacadena and Wichmann were able to identify enough specific Yucatekan and Ch'olan characteristics to demonstrate that at least three major vernaculars (Classic Western Ch'olan, Classic Ch'olti'an, and Classic Yucatekan) are reflected in the texts of the southern Maya lowlands during Classic times (2002: 311). These vernaculars feature specific lexemes (i.e. certain month names and other certain word spellings) and other phonological and morphological diagnostic markers that distinguish the inscriptions of the western lowlands from those in the eastern lowlands (Wichman 2006). The split that separated the western Ch'olan from the eastern Ch'olan occurred around A.D. 400 and lies somewhere west of El Cayo. Western Ch'olan was spoken at Comalcalco, Palenque, Piedras Negras, Yaxchilán, Bonampak, and Lacanhá (Lacadena and Wichman 2002: 305; Wichman 2006: 283). Eastern Ch'olan was spoken in the Pasión region and included Dos Pilas and Aguateca, the central and southern Petén sites of Tikal, Naranjo, and Ixkun, the northern Petén sites of Calakmul and Naachtún, and the southeastern region of Pusilhá, Quiriguá, and Copan (Lacadena and Wichmann 2002: 305; Colas 2006: 92). Wichmann (2006: 283) argues that around A.D. 600, there is evidence of further differentiation within the Eastern Ch'olan vernacular that resulted in the Ch'orti'/Ch'olti' split. This split may be reflected in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Overall the linguistic data now suggest that three different vernaculars (Eastern Ch'olan, Western Ch'olan, and Yucatekan) have left traces in the script of the Classic Period, indicating that Classic Maya civilization was plurilingual and probably the result of prolonged and profound close cultural contact (Lacadena and Wichmann 2002: 310).

Differences in ethnicity and identity have long been hypothesized and extend back into the early work of Gann and Thompson (1931: 54), who argued that both

Pusilhá and Quiriguá were “colonized” by people from Copan. Proskouriakoff (1993: 56) recognized a similarity in the names of Pusilhá rulers and those at Copan. Both Schele and Grube (1994a: 118) would use these findings and other ethnic markers including the turban headdress to propose that the entire region composed of the Southern Maya Mountains Region, the Rio Dulce Drainage, the lower Motagua Valley, and the La Entrada Valley was politically controlled by Copan. My epigraphic findings also suggest that close socio-religious, political, and economic ties existed between Pusilhá and Copan.

Unlike the archaeological data, which have shown very limited evidence of regional connections to the southeastern Maya lowlands, the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Pusilhá are rich in historical details that indicate close regional ties to the southeast. These details include the use of similar emblem glyphs (the Quiriguá emblem glyph is the same as Pusilhá’s except that it is rotated 90°); the similarity between the name phrases of the kings at both Pusilhá and Copan; the explicit reference and connection to a Late Preclassic religious-politico location (*Chi-Altar Place*) where the future founders of royal dynasties received instruction and legitimization prior to becoming Founder; a scattering event recorded on Stela D that was overseen by a Copan lord; prominent mention of the *Yok’* polity; the appearance of the Copan title *Chan Ch’ok* at Pusilhá; the reference to Pusilhá’s Stela Plaza Group (*Tz’am Witz*) at Copan; and lastly, the use of the *Wi’tē’naah* or Founders House epithet in the name phrase of a Pusilhá lord, which may indicate Pusilhá’s inclusion as a *k’atun* seat within Copan’s *may* sphere.

Captive-taking is the main theme of Pusilhá’s sculptural program. At least four of Pusilhá’s thirteen carved stelae feature portraits of finely-dressed standing rulers holding ceremonial bars with bound captives at their feet. At least two of these captives are

named and they likely represent foreign lords, since one of them carries the *B'alam* emblem glyph. The main epigraphic theme of Pusilhá's monumental inscriptions revolve around period ending dates, in particular *k'atun* endings and the various rituals conducted in commemoration of these dates, which include fire scattering, monument planting, and *tuun* binding activities. Although it is widely believed that the hegemonic system was based on the collection of tribute (Martin and Grube 2000: 21), few instances of named tribute have been found in the inscriptions of the Classic Period. Most references to tribute are in scenes painted on Maya ceramics such as K8089, which features a seated Pusilhá lord named *Sak Mo'* 'White Macaw' accepting tribute in the form of bundles of folded cloth. It is likely that the tribute scenes featured on painted ceramics depict a location within a royal palace where tribute was collected, inspected, and inventoried (Le Fort and Wald 1995: 112).

As previously discussed, the ceramic assemblage at Pusilhá indicates regional connections with sites in the Pasi6n and Petexbat6n. Based on these findings Braswell (2008: 14) suggests that these Late Classic settlers of Pusilhá may have originally come from southern Pet6n. The earliest ceramic materials found at Pusilhá were located in a midden deep within Pottery Cave. According to Braswell (2008: 5), nearly all of the material excavated from this cave corresponded to the earliest phase of the Late Classic Period (A.D. 600-700). Most of the sherds came from Tepeu I or Tepeu II jars that featured striated or impressed designs closely resembling the Pantano Impressed or Palmar Orange polychromes common in the Pasi6n and in southwestern Pet6n. Braswell reports finding a small quantity of ceramics that were imported from western Honduras (i.e. Masica Incised), most likely Copan, and a few polychrome sherds with a "twist and bud" motif indicative of eastern El Salvador (2008: 6). One of the most interesting

aspects of Pusilhá's ceramic assemblage is the presence of *comales*. *Comales* are common at sites in both the Upper Pasión and Dolores Valley located due west (Braswell 2008: 6) but are generally rare in the archaeological record of the central Petén and do not appear at any other major surface site in southern Belize. Braswell argues that the presence of *comales* at Pusilhá and not at Lubaantún may be an indication that groups with different identities existed in southern Belize during Classic times (2008: 6). Finally, it should be noted that the groundstone used at Pusilhá during Classic times came from one of two different sources: a local-variety of sandstone from the Toledo Formations and a non-local igneous pumice stone from the Guatemalan Highlands (Braswell 2008: 12). It would appear that neither Pusilhá nor Lubaantún acquired their groundstone from the Maya Mountains, but rather, they imported both finished artifacts and raw material from the volcanic highlands of Guatemala (Abramiuk and Meuer 2006: 347; Braswell 2008: 12).

CHAPTER 8

EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE OF LATE CLASSIC POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

Investigations at Lubaantún

The ruins of Lubaantún, originally called the Rio Grande Ruins, are located on the north bank of the Columbia Branch, roughly 7 km northwest of its confluence with the Rio Grande in the Toledo District of southern Belize (Figure 8.1). The Rio Grande Valley runs roughly northwest to southeast across the southernmost portion of the modern Columbia River Forest Reserve. The Q'eqchi' village of San Pedro Columbia is situated south of a small stream (Gann's *Likinhá* or 'East Water') that borders the eastern side of Lubaantún (Toledo Maya Cultural Council 1997: 94-95). Like the Poité-Pusilhá Valley, the Rio Grande Valley is located within the soils of the Toledo Uplands and is flanked to the north and south by a series of karst, steep hillslopes and drainages that form the southern foothill chain of the Maya Mountains. The ruins of Lubaantún are immediately west of the Southern Coastal Plains, a region that includes both the Toledo Swamps and an area known as the Machaca Plain (King et al. 1986: Map 1b). Its location on a steep north-south ridge, between two converging valley systems of the Columbia Branch of the Rio Grande (the *Lakinhá* and the *Chikinhá*), suggests that Lubaantún enjoyed a strategic position to control the flow of trade and exchange between the southern foothills and the coastal plain.

Entrance into the Rio Grande Valley can be made via the numerous waterways that flow in and out of this region. The underground headwaters of the Columbia Branch



Figure 8.1. Map of the Rio Grande Drainage (Courtesy of Peter Dunham, Director, MMAP, modified after DGMS 1983)

emerge from a subterranean passage approximately 4 km west of the village of San Pedro Columbia. Both the Columbia and Rio Grande are navigable by canoe for most of their eastern course. Canoe travel in the area south of San Pedro Columbia is difficult because of its many rapids and fans. The Rio Grande eventually drains into the Caribbean Sea.

The primary goal of this chapter is to examine the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Rio Grande Valley to test whether the hegemonic characteristics as described by Martin and Grube and the *may* system described by Rice for the central Petén can be found here based on the criteria provided in Chapter 5.

The Discovery of Lubaantún

Morley (1938: Vol. IV: 2) writes that Lubaantún was initially discovered around 1875 by early Anti-Reconstructionists, a group of people who fled the southern United States following the end of the Civil War and settled in the Toledo District of southern British Honduras. Thomas Gann, an English physician and amateur archaeologist, was dispatched to the site in 1903 shortly after an official report on the ruins was given to the Governor of British Honduras (Gann 1903, 1905). Gann returned to the Rio Grande Ruins in 1925, accompanied by an adventurer and the so-called discoverer of the Crystal Skull, T. Mitchell Hedges, and his travel companion, Lady Richmond Brown. Because its buildings had fallen and were in ruins, Gann decided to rename the site Lubaantún (*lub'a'an tun*) 'fallen stones' (Hammond 1975: 33; Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 81).

The next archaeological project at Lubaantún was directed by R.E. Merwin, who headed the Twelfth Peabody Museum Expedition to Central America in 1915 (Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 2). Merwin explored the site core of Lubaantún in May of 1915 and made

detailed sketch maps of it. The architectural drawings (plan maps) are highly accurate and his handwritten personal notes include interesting descriptions of the site. He drew several sketches that depict what Joyce (1926: 210) would later call the unique “In-And-Out” style of masonry architecture prominently featured on buildings throughout the site. Merwin also conducted the first archaeological excavations in the south ballcourt, where he uncovered the only known carved monuments at Lubaantún: three ball court markers (1915: 25). Merwin removed all three ballcourt markers from Lubaantún and shipped them back to the Peabody Museum of Harvard University, where they reside today.

Gann returned to Lubaantún in 1926 as leader of the First British Museum Expedition to British Honduras (Joyce 1926a, 1926b, 1928). Gann along with T. A. Joyce (1927) and J. Eric Thompson, would clear, map, and excavate Lubaantún for the next three years until Pusilhá was discovered. Then the focus shifted from Lubaantún to Pusilhá because of its many carved monuments. In 1927, as part of the Second British Museum Expedition to British Honduras, a small survey expedition led by Geoffrey Laws (1928: 224) of the Royal Geographical Society was dispatched to Lubaantún to determine the site’s exact location as well as produce the first detailed topographic map of the surrounding area (Close et al. 1928: 236). Joyce also produced a fine plan map of Lubaantún, though as Hammond (1975: 36) notes, Joyce omitted several structures that appeared in Gann’s 1925 map.

In January of 1970, Norman Hammond initiated his Lubaantún Excavation Project (1970, 1971a, 1971b, 1972a, 1972b, 1974, 1975, 1977; Hammond et al. 1975a, 1975b; Hammond et al. 1976; Saul and Hammond 1974). Bullard (1960) had estimated the territorial size of major realms in the northeastern Petén as approximately 100 km² clustered within a radius of 20 km from each other. Hammond thought that given the

sparse populations of the Southern Maya Mountains Region, centers were more likely to be spaced an average of about 31 km from each other. Using Thiessen polygons, Hammond (1975: 100) estimated the realm of Lubaantún's influence to be an area of about 1616 km² (Figure 8.2). A primary goal of the project was to map the ceremonial core and outline the historical sequence of its occupation. More than 100 structures and platforms were mapped (Hammond 1975: 35).

Based on the archaeology and ceramics recovered from the 1970's excavations (Figure 8.3), Hammond suggested that Lubaantún was occupied from A.D. 730 to about A.D. 860 (1975: 133) and that the ancient inhabitants of Lubaantún migrated into the Rio Grande Valley, probably from the southwest, most likely from its closest neighbor, Pusilhá, based on similar ceramic assemblages, architectural features, and site plans. Given the environmental diversity and varied landforms in the area surrounding Lubaantún and the Rio Grande Valley itself, he estimated that the region could have supported a population of at least 50,000 inhabitants (Hammond 1975: 133). The rich diversity of resources in this region would also make Lubaantún a desired trading partner. Hammond described both the historic and prehistoric trade routes in this region based on ethnohistoric data and his own archaeological data, and argued that the Rio Grande Valley was strategically located to command and oversee trade and exchange via numerous land and water trade routes (1975: 134). Hammond's ideas about hierarchy and political structure at Lubaantún are very much in tune with Martin and Grube's hegemonic model for Classic Maya political organization. Unfortunately, unlike the other major sites in the region (Pusilhá, Uxbenká, or Nim Li Punit) there are no dynastic monuments at Lubaantún. Without epigraphic data, Hammond's arguments about hierarchy and political structure were limited. Large numbers of mold-made pottery

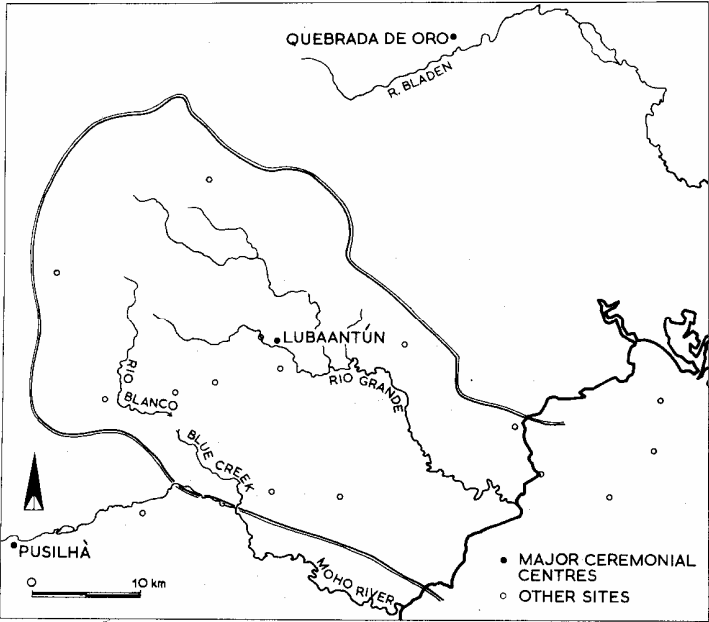


Figure 8.2. Hammond’s Reconstruction of Lubaantún’s Realm (Courtesy of Hammond 1975: Figure 43)

Ware	Group	Type
Temax Gross	Puluacax	Puluacax Unslipped
Moho grit/shell tempered	Turneffe	Turneffe Unslipped
Peten gloss	Remate	Remate Red
		Chacluum Black
		Lazaro Red
	Monkey River	Monkey River bichrome
Xaibe cream-coated	Hondo	Hondo Red
	Louisville	Louisville Polychrome
		Unnamed gouged-incised
		Unnamed gouged-incised bichrome
British Honduras	Belize	Unmaed gouged-incised
Volcanic Ash Ware		Belize Red
Fine Orange	Altar	Altar Orange
		Cedro Gadrooned
		Pabellon Modeled-carved

Figure 8.3. Hammond’s Lubaantún Ceramic Typology (Courtesy of Hammond 1975: Figure 107)

figurines and whistles (*ocarinas*) featuring scenes from everyday life as well as strangely-dressed ballplayers were found at Lubaantún (see Butler 1926; Harberd n.d.; Joyce 1933; Wegars 1977). Lubaantún seems to have featured as many as five major architectural phases lasting between 35 and 50 years each (Hammond 1975: 134). The site was gradually expanded and modified utilizing features in the natural terrain (Figure 8.4). Like most of the other major sites in southern Belize, the ridge upon which the main ceremonial precinct of Lubaantún lies was first flattened and then terraced and faced with large cut-stone blocks. This architectural practice provides the illusion of large labor-intensive constructions and is often described as megalithic. A series of interconnecting and descending platforms were built over the ridge. The southern end of the site is much lower in elevation than the northern end. There are at least four ballcourts located within the ceremonial core of the ruins: two are located on either side of Plaza Court V, a miniature is located about 40m due west of Court V in Plaza Court VI, and a large one is located to the area south of the main acropolis between Plaza Court II and Plaza Court III. The number of ballcourts and the abundance of ballplayer figurines suggest that the ballgame was of deep cultural significance to the people of Lubaantún and especially to its nobility. Lubaantún also features two large pyramids, known as Str. 10 and Str. 12. Both structures, measuring just over 15m in height, originally contained frontal staircases that faced the inner court of Plaza IV (Figure 8.5).

Hammond places Lubaantún within the possible realm of the 8th and 9th century Manche Ch'ol (1975: 135). This is a prescient suggestion, given that the only inscriptions known in southern Belize at the time were the three ballcourts markers found by Merwin at Lubaantún and the stelae found at Pusilhá which were not extensively deciphered until very recently. As argued in Chapters 6 and 7 there is growing archaeological and

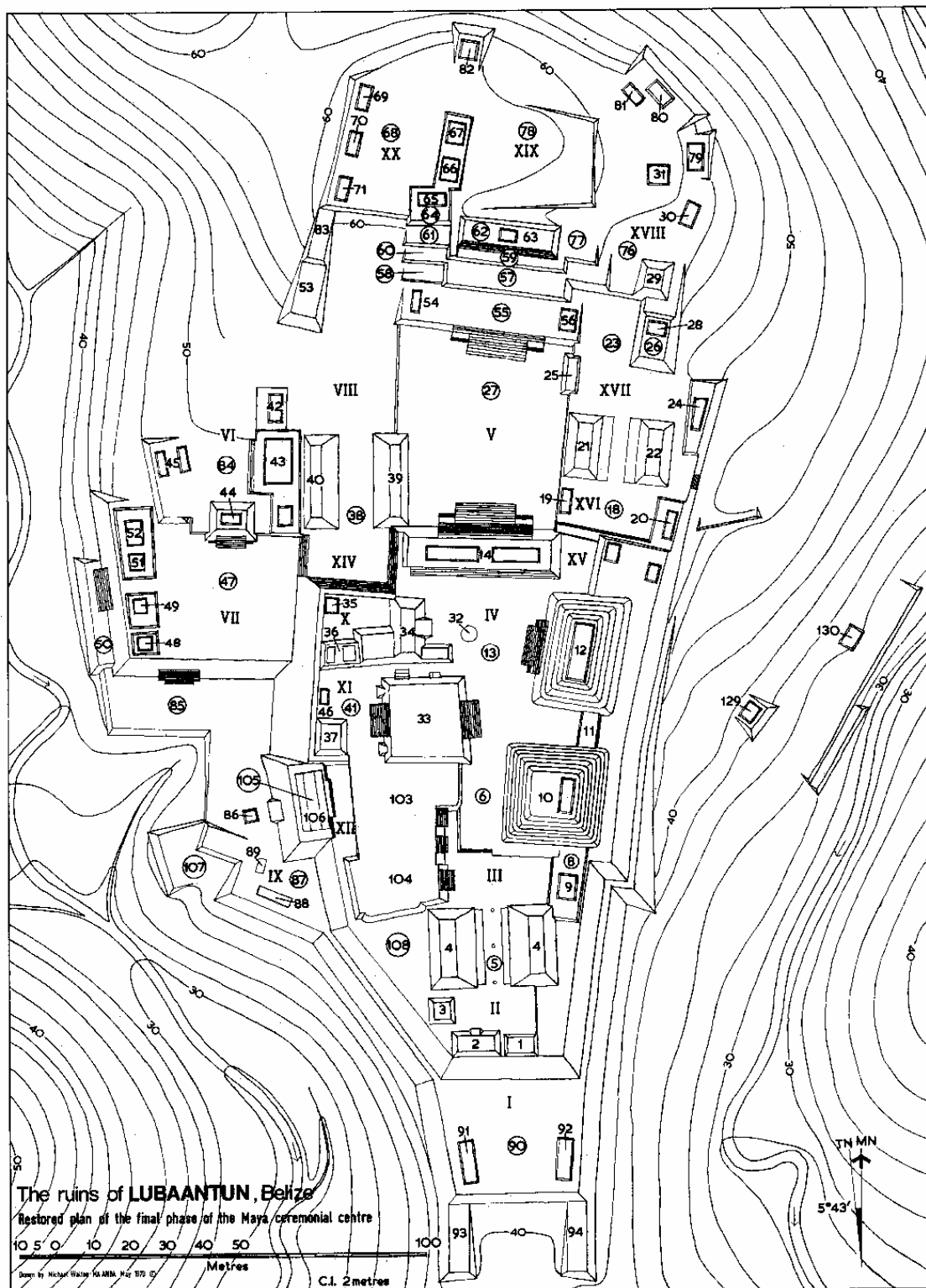


Figure 8.4. Hammond's Plan Map of Lubaantún (Courtesy of Hammond 1975: Figure 107)

epigraphic evidence to suggest that the Southern Maya Mountains Region included different ethno-linguistic groups based on the appearance of several key diagnostic markers of identity found at sites across this region. Since Lubaantún was likely settled by immigrants coming from Pusilhá or from perhaps further west from the southern Petén, I believe that the ancient inhabitants of Lubaantún, like those of Pusilhá, likely spoke Ch'olan, more specifically, Eastern Ch'olan. I suspect that many of the communities in the Southern Maya Mountains Region were bilingual or plurilingual based on recent linguistic evidence (see Wichman 2006).

Leventhal and his Southern Belize Archaeological Project worked at Lubaantún briefly in the spring in 1987. Leventhal's fieldnotes indicate that they excavated several test units both in and around the main ceremonial core of Lubaantún and in several ancillary areas around the site. From 1997 to 1998, as part of the Maya Archaeological Sites Development Program (MASDP) and in conjunction with both the European Union and with the Belizean Department of Archaeology, Belizean archaeologists began a systematic program of archaeological consolidation and restoration at several archaeological sites in Belize including Lubaantún and Nim Li Punit. While no official archaeological report has yet been published, the restoration and consolidation work at Lubaantún has resulted in the creation of a new interpretative Visitor Center at the site.

Epigraphic Evidence of Political Organization at Lubaantún

Lubaantún's lack of monumental inscriptions has led some archaeologists to question the importance of Lubaantún within the larger socio-economic and political sphere of the Southern Maya Mountains Region (Joyce 1926: 229). Joyce attempted to

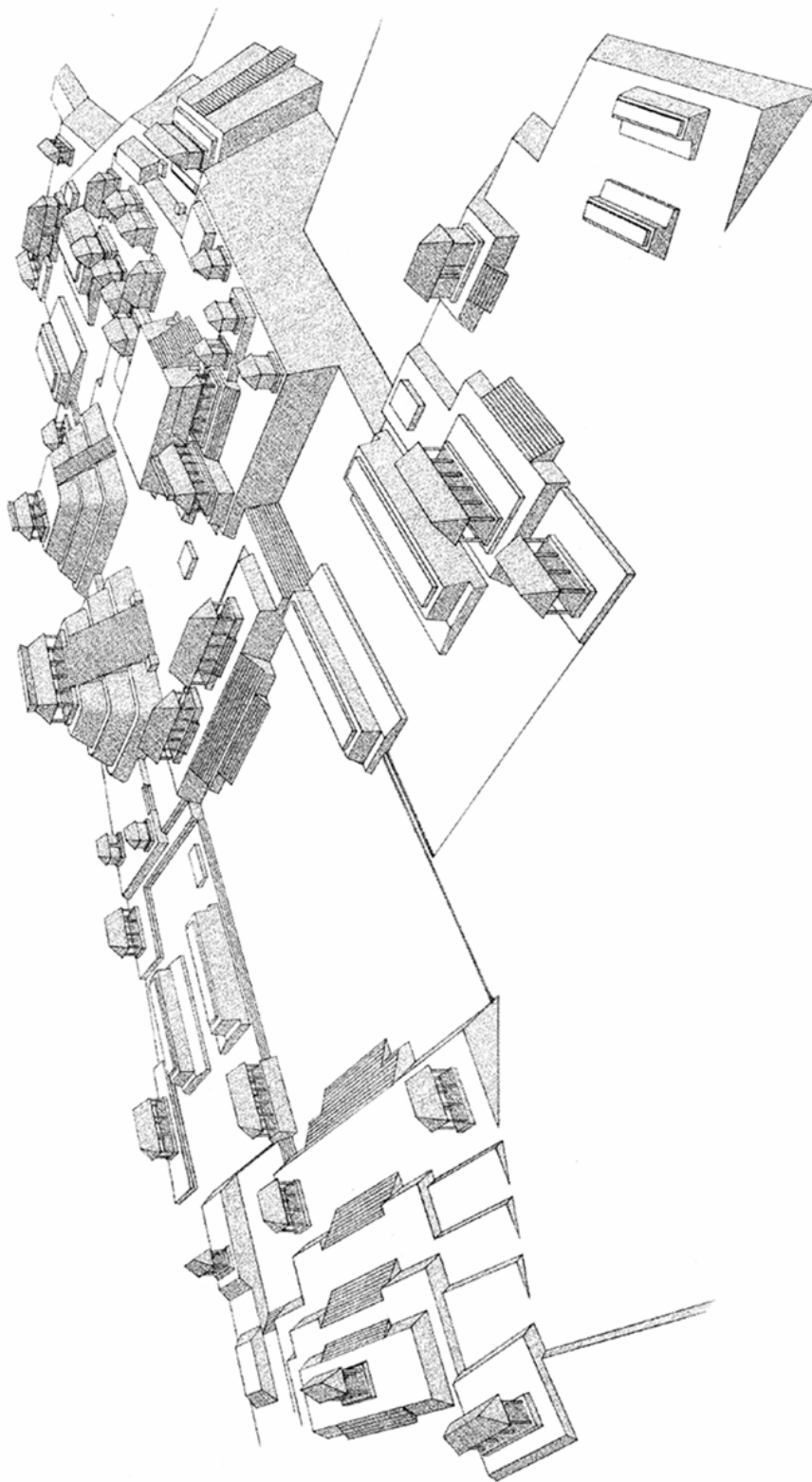


Figure 8.5. Reconstruction of Lubaantún Site Core (Drawing by Dave Morgan, used with permission, courtesy of Nicholas Hellmuth, FLAAR)

place Lubaantún within a secure Maya chronology, but given the lack of dateable materials, all he could suggest was that Lubaantún flourished in the Early Empire and its origins must be from a “still remoter period.” Joyce went on to say that the site may have been occupied in very late times, even “possibly after the discovery of America” (1926: 230). Gann noted that given the lack of stelae, it would be impossible to date the site itself, but suggested that Lubaantún and Pusilhá were contemporaneous and that “free communication took place between them” early during the Old Empire (Gann 1929: 170-171). He further suggested that Lubaantún supplied the Lubaantún figurine types found at Pusilhá. Gann (1929: 171) believed that this exchange was not reciprocal, since he did not find many Pusilhá-manufactured ceramics at Lubaantún. Just two years later, Gann and Thompson (1931: 44) would take a different position arguing that “there was evidently close communication between Pusilhá and Lubaantún, in ancient times, for a good deal of the pottery manufactured at the former is found at Lubaantún, and quite a number of figurines from the latter appear at Pusilhá.”

The lack of carved stelae at Lubaantún led Hammond to make the following observation: “The existence and florescence of Lubaantún as such a center for over a century without the dedication of a single stela demonstrates that the political, religious, administrative, and commercial functions attributed to major ceremonial centers as regional centers of control may be carried out in the absence of the ideology of which the stela cult is the concrete expression” (1975: 103-104). Hammond also argued that Lubaantún probably enjoyed close cultural relations with Pusilhá during the Classic Period (1975). Hammond, like Morley (1938: Vol. IV: 11) before him, also believed that the cessation of monument erections at Pusilhá between A.D. 731 and A.D. 751 suggested that the practice of erecting Period Ending “*K’atun* Markers” may have moved

to Lubaantún and thus, Lubaantún may have been founded for such a purpose (1975: 102), though no stelae have been found at Lubaantún. Hammond was unable to demonstrate that the cessation of monuments at Pusilhá led to the founding of Lubaantún since the archaeology showed that both sites were occupied simultaneously for some period of time prior to A.D. 731, when Pusilhá stopped erecting monuments (1975: 103). It is likely that the cessation of monuments at Pusilhá may indicate Pusilhá's end as a *k'atun* seat for a Copan-centered *may*.

Dunham (1988b: 1) attempted to explain Lubaantún's rise and the subsequent lack of monuments at the site as evidence that a cargo system, similar to Rice's *may* model, was established in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Working off Hammond's (1975) earlier assumptions, Dunham proposed that in this system leadership and power were rotated among peripheral groups, rather than invested in a lineage. Dunham argued that the absence of carved monuments at Lubaantún might be directly related to the appearance of carved monuments at sites located on Lubaantún's periphery. Dunham (1988b: 7) suggested that monuments erected or moved to the peripheral environs of Lubaantún may have functioned to signal changes in office and may have commemorated the involvement of those people living in the periphery under the aegis of that united cargo system. Following the discovery of nearby Nim Li Punit in 1976, many scholars including Hammond believed, that Nim Li Punit served as the dynastic seat or cult center for the Lubaantún ruling dynasty since it contained many carved monuments, while Lubaantún itself served as a habitation site (Dunham 1988b: 4). The system that Dunham describes is similar to Rice's (2004) *may* model. However, Dunham's hypothesis does not adequately explain why monuments were not erected at Lubaantún, given its size and monumentality as a ceremonial center. The lack of monuments at

Lubaantún could be interpreted as another example of what Simon Martin calls the intentional movement or “exiling” of royal monuments from a primary center to various peripheral sites located within the primary center’s regional sphere (2000: 58). In this case, the peripheral sites where carved monuments have been found in the environs of Lubaantún include Uxbentun, Caterino’s Site, and Choco I.

As previously stated, only three sculptural monuments have been found at Lubaantún. Figural scenes of individuals playing the ballgame with one or two text blocks recorded on three small ballcourt markers were uncovered face-up in the middle of the alleyway of the South Ballcourt (Merwin 1915). These markers are similar in size, shape, and stone type (a finely burnished limestone) to the three ballcourt markers found by Walters and Weller (1994) at Pusilhá.

Ballcourt Marker 1, also known as the North Marker (Figure 8.6), measures .54m across and is .32 m thick (Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 5-8). The figural scene features two elaborately dressed ballplayers facing each other. Both figures are wearing feathered headdresses and each is heavily wrapped with padding around their upper torsos. The scene takes place within a ballcourt as indicated by a ball in motion between the two figures with the steps of the ballcourt in the background. A short, severely eroded six glyph block text accompanies the figural scene, beginning with an illegible Calendar Round date. According to Marc Zender, the month sign at A2 appears to contain the “crossed banded” element of either the month name *Wo’* or *Zip* (personal communication 13, April 2004). This information is helpful for determining a range of possible dedicatory dates. Hammond’s archaeological and ceramic analysis indicates that the site was occupied from A.D. 730 to A.D. 860, a 130 year period, perhaps corresponding to half of a *may* cycle. The sculptural style and theme of these ballcourt markers is also Late

Classic in origin. Most dedicatory dates for monuments located in the Southern Maya Mountains Region date prior to the ninth century, suggesting that the date of this ballcourt marker ranges somewhere between A.D. 724 and about A.D. 796. Braswell et al. (2002: 49) believe that the Moho Plaza at Pusilhá, the group that contained the ballcourt that featured three markers, was constructed very late in Pusilhá's history and they suggest that it may have been constructed near the end of the 8th century. Based on these facts, I would date the Lubaantún ballcourt markers to somewhere in the mid-late 8th century. The rest of the text is largely illegible.

Ballcourt Marker 2, the Center Marker (Figure 8.7), also features a figural scene depicting two individuals playing the ballgame. The standing figure on the left appears to be wearing heavy chest protection and kneepads, while the kneeling figure on the right appears to be wearing an *hacha* in the form of a human head. Two separate text blocks that contain thirteen individual hieroglyphs are located above the figural scene. Most of the text cannot be read, but some elements are clear enough that the general gist of the inscriptions can be discerned. The hieroglyph at A2 seems to feature a reference to the size of the ball being used in this game. Recent epigraphic work by Macri andLooper (2000b), Eberl and Bricker (2004), and by Zender (2004a) has identified two new glyphic compounds that are commonly associated with the balls used in the Maya ballgame. Zender (2004a: 1) has shown that the logograph that features a palm-down hand with the thumb and forefinger spread apart is the logograph for *nahb'* meaning "handspan" (Figure 8.8A). The lexical support for this reading is based on multiple entries from Ch'ol, Tzeltal, and several Yukatekan languages that refer to the thumb and forefinger as a unit of measure known as a "handspan" (Zender 2004a: 3). In Colonial Yukatek and in modern Itzaj this handspan measurement is between 8" and 9" or between 21 and 23 cm

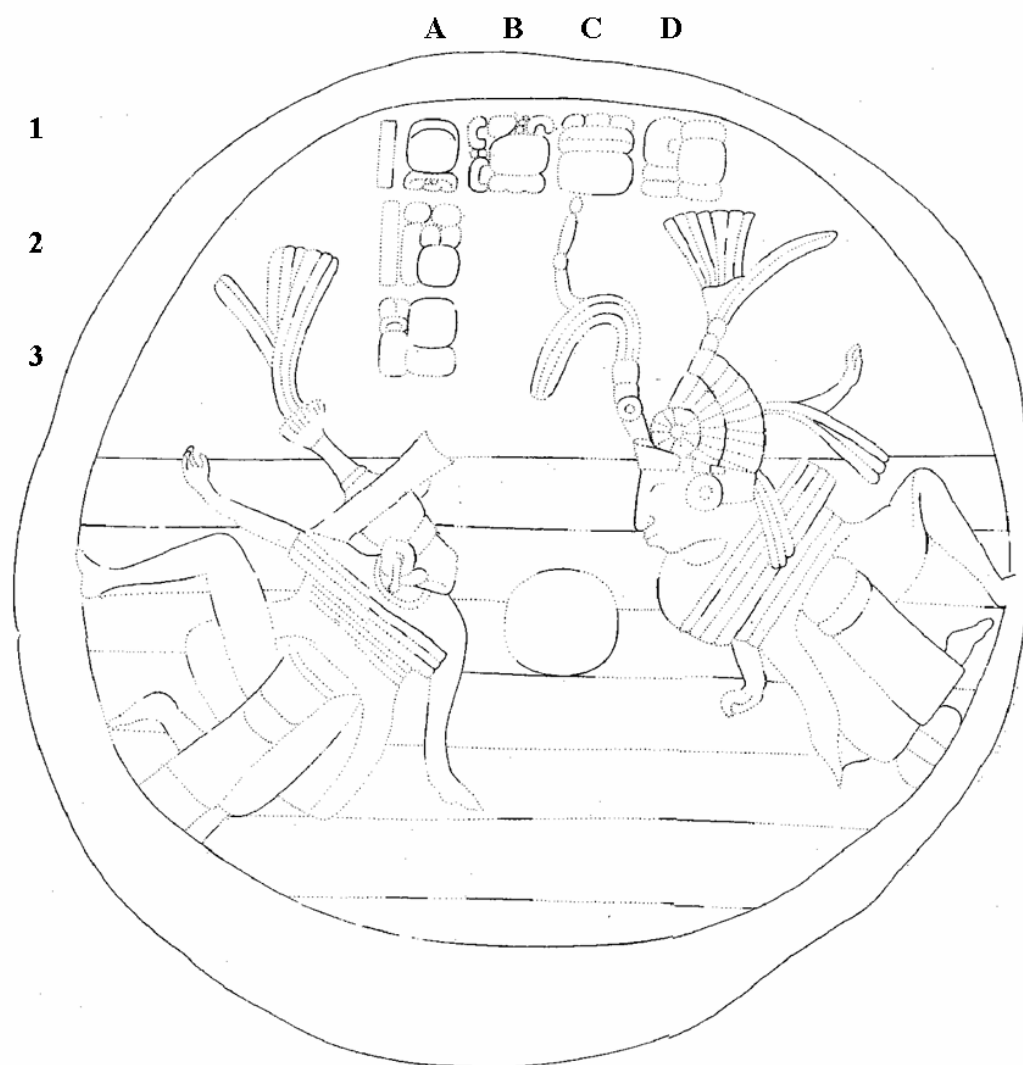


Figure 8.6. Lubaantún Ballcourt Marker 1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

and using a median measure of 8.5” both Zender (2004a: 3) and Eberl and Bricker (2004: 35) have calculated various ball sizes based on texts that describe the number of handspans for the circumference of a ball. A ball labeled as being a 9 *Nahb*’ or 9 ‘Handspan’ would mean that its circumference was 76.5” and its diameter was 24.4” (or 61.9 cm) and a ball labeled as 14 *Nahb*’ would mean its circumference was 119” and its diameter was 37.9” (or 96.2 cm) (Zender 2004a: 3). Eberl and Bricker (2004: 27) have identified 52 examples of texts that record ball size in both the monumental sculpture and painted ceramics of the Classic Maya. Their research has shown that ball circumference ranged from 7 handspans to 14 handspans.

Another interesting aspect of the decipherment of the ballgame texts is the realization that the “stone-in-hand” glyph may be read as *jatz*’, ‘to strike’ (Figure 8.8B). There are depictions of the ballgame where figures are shown holding paddle or hand stones used for ‘striking’ (Borhegyi 1961). A good illustration of this form of “striking” can be seen at Piedras Negras on Sculptured Stone 10 (Figure 8.9) where two ballplayers are holding hand stones in their right hands while wearing the accoutrements of the ballgame.

A possible nominal phrase follows the *nahb*’ expression at A3-B1 on Ballcourt Marker 2. The head variant for *AJAW* is the second half of B1. Zender (personal communication 13, April 2004) confirms that the glyph at B2 begins with the *b’a* “gopher” head followed by the syllabic signs *ka* and *b’a*, apparently naming the person on the left of the scene as a *B’akab*’. The text on the right begins with the standard dedicatory verb *tab’ay*, ‘he ascends,’ suggesting that the text refers to the dedication of a stairway or ballcourt at Lubaantún. A name phrase that includes the “Bat-Head” emblem of Copan (D1) follows. The bat head emblem often includes an *Ek*’ or ‘black’

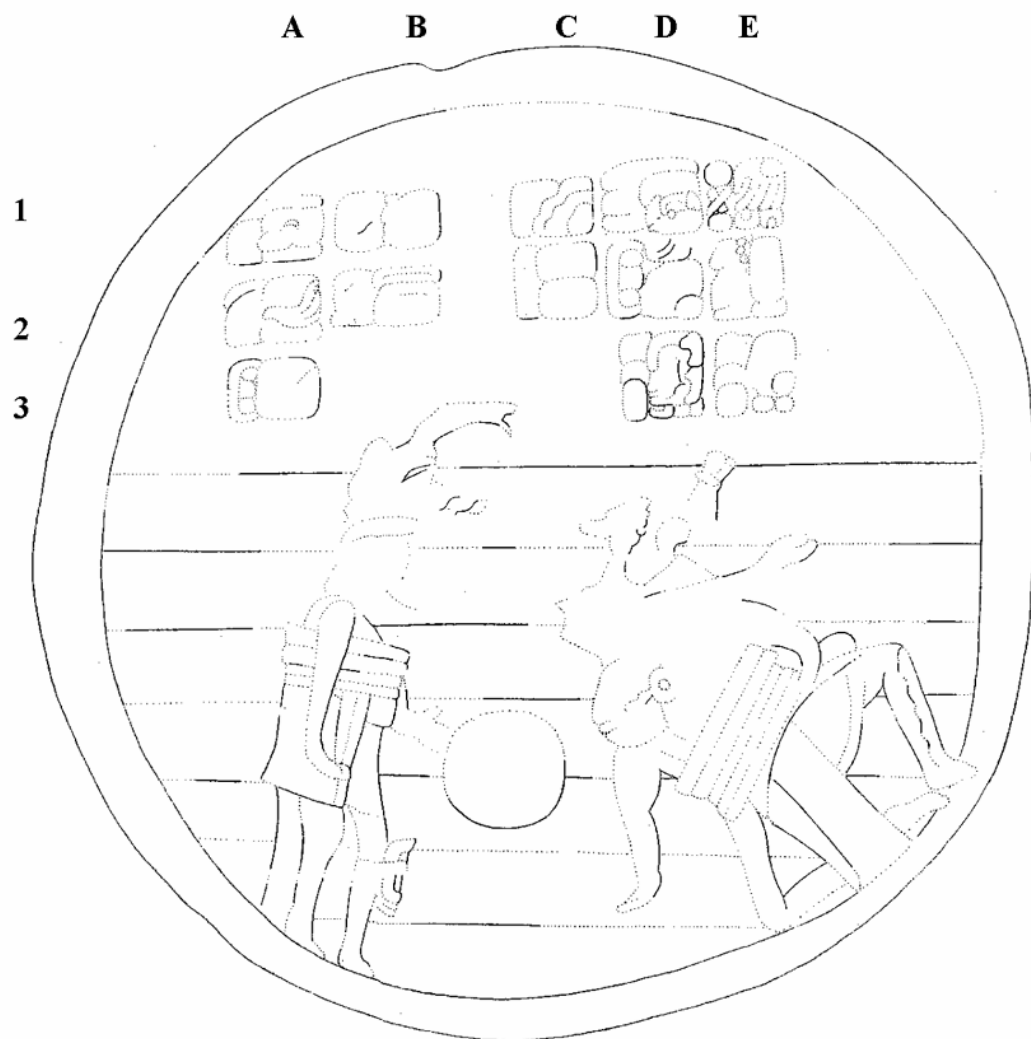


Figure 8.7. Lubaantún Ballcourt Marker 2 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)



A.



B.

Figure 8.8. Glyphs for 'Handspan' and 'To Strike'

A) *Nahb'* or 'Handspan' (Drawing by M. Zender)

B) *Jatz'* or 'To Strike' (Drawing by M. Zender)

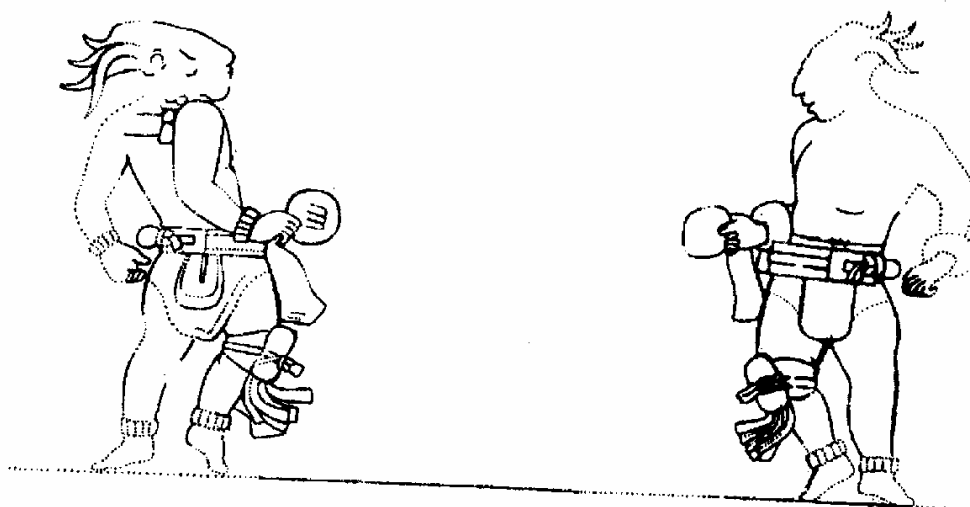


Figure 8.9. Piedras Negras Sculptured Stone 10 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

sign at Nim Li Punit and Quiriguá for the Black Bat or Black Copan Title. The meaning of this title is uncertain, but is associated with the kingdoms of Quiriguá and Copan (Schele and Grube 1990: 17). If this is a reference to either Quiriguá or Copan then the text recorded on Ballcourt Marker 2 at Lubaantún suggests that interregional connections existed between Lubaantún and the major polities of the southeastern Maya Lowlands. Virtually nothing else can be read on this ballcourt marker except for the verbal expression *uchokaw*, ‘he scatters’ at E1. The name of the subject and the location where this event took place are no longer legible.

The text on Ballcourt Marker III is written in two main text blocks containing a total of nine individual glyphs, many of which are no longer legible (Figure 8.10). It begins with the reflexive *ub’a* meaning ‘his being’ or ‘he, himself.’ The main verb and subject are too eroded to read, but the final glyph in the passage is an emblem glyph, perhaps referring to Lubaantún itself. It is written in the standard template of emblem glyphs, which includes the T36 prefix *ch’ul*, ‘divine’ or ‘holy,’ the T168 *ajaw* or ‘lord’ superfix, and the T1016 *ch’ul* head variant. Together, this collocation reads *Ch’ul Ajaw* meaning the ‘Divine Lord.’ It is possible that collocation is simply a generic form of an emblem glyph stating that the individual who carries this was a ‘divine lord.’ However, the *ch’ul* head may be the main sign of the Lubaantún emblem glyph. In 2001, the SBEP photographed two small broken ceramic figural plaques, Figural Plaque #1 (Figure 8.11A) and Figural Plaque #2 (Figure 8.11B), in the archaeological collections of the new Lubaantún Visitor Center that featured this emblem. Another possible example of this emblem glyph may be found in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of neighboring Naj Tunich, located just 30 km due west of Lubaantún. A short two-glyph-block text (Drawing 90, Figure 8.11D) that may feature the same generic emblem glyph is painted on a wall at the

cave site of Naj Tunich. If this interpretation is correct, then we can add Lubaantún to the growing list of Classic Maya polities that carry their own specific emblem glyphs. The second block of text is almost completely unreadable, but the glyph at D2 looks like the *yichnal* glyph, ‘facing’ or ‘standing before’ and thus this text may state the name of the second ballplayer. The figural scene of Ballcourt Marker III features a numerical reference to the rubber ball that reads *wuk nahb*, ‘seven handspan.’ According to Eberl and Bricker (2004: 25) the reference here at Lubaantún to a 7 *Nahb* is unique and it is the smallest rubber ball so far documented in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Classic Maya.

A large number of ceramic figurines and figural plaques have been recovered at Lubaantún (Joyce 1933; Wegars 1977), some of which contain unusual hieroglyphic inscriptions. Some scholars have suggested that these inscriptions were written with pseudo-hieroglyphs, but as noted above, some contain legible texts (Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 5). Hammond’s (1970: 221) excavation revealed that there was a thriving industry in ceramic figurine/*ocarina* manufacture at Lubaantún. Hammond suggests that they were mass produced at the site based on the discovery of numerous ceramic figurine molds in Plaza IV at Lubaantún and that they were traded or exchanged within the local communities surrounding the site core, including the area east around San Miguel and to the west around San Antonio and Uxbentún (1970: 221). Hammond indicates that besides a few figurines found at Pusilhá, they are not common outside the Río Grande Drainage, perhaps indicating the formal limits of Lubaantún’s local influence and trade (1970: 221).

Joyce published images of some of these Lubaantún figural plaques and figurines (1933). The text on Figural Plaque #2 (Figure 8.11C) appears to describe a standard fire dedication ritual. The text states that *tab’iy* ‘it was presented’ (A1), *yuxul* ‘its carving’

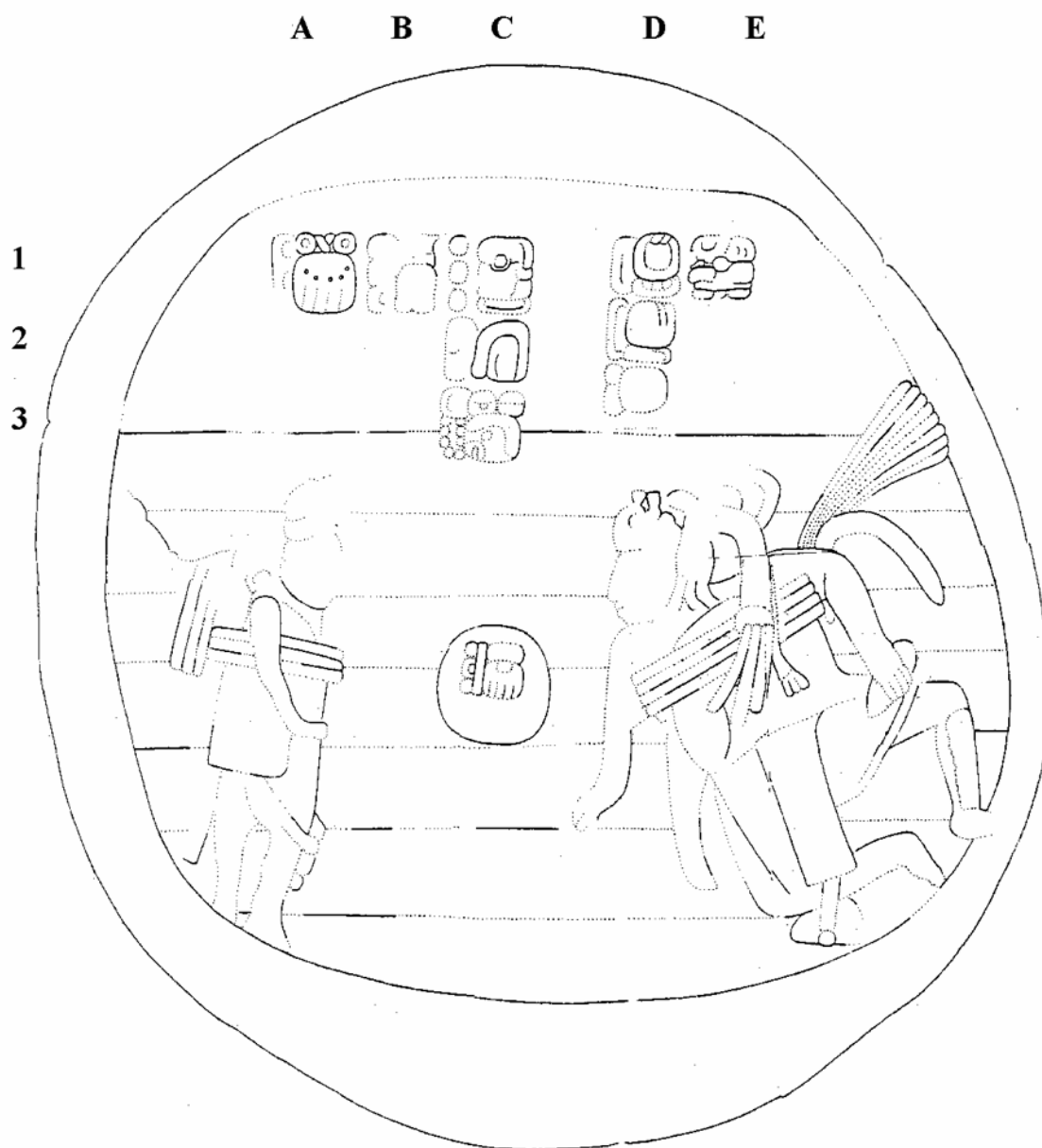


Figure 8.10. Lubaantún Ballcourt Marker III (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

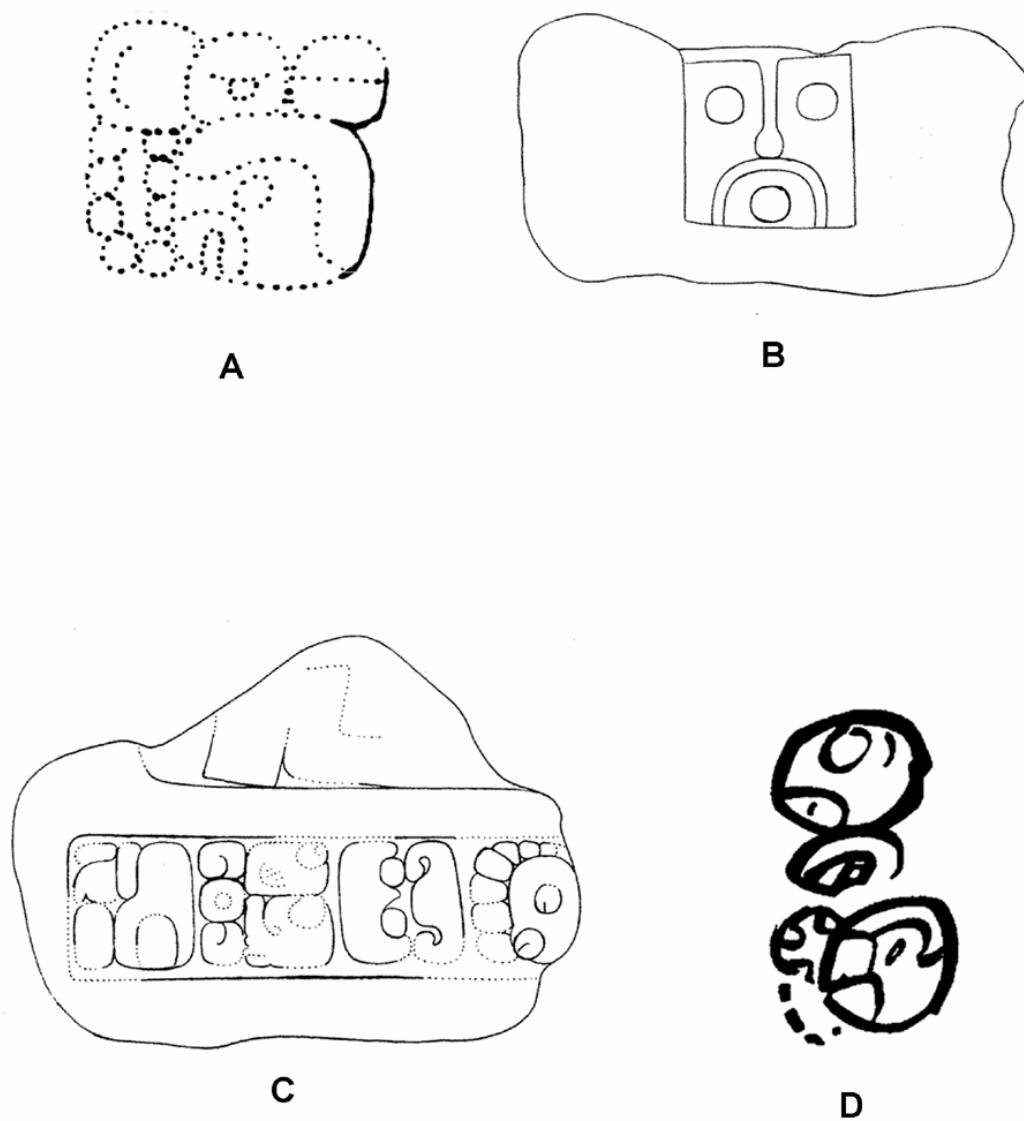


Figure 8.11. A Possible Lubaantún Emblem Glyph

- A) Lubaantún Ballcourt Marker III (Drawing by J. Montgomery)
- B) Lubaantún Figural Plaque #1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)
- C) Lubaantún Figural Plaque #2 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)
- D) Naj Tunich Drawing 90 (Drawing by A. Stone)

(B1) *uk'ahk* 'his fire' (C1), followed by the T41 *ch'ul* head 'divine' (D1), which may serve as a possible Lubaantún emblem glyph. It is possible that this figural plaque may have been used to commemorate the ritual activities that accompanied some unspecified period ending, since fire scattering or fire drilling activities are common themes of period-ending monuments.

Figural Plaque #3 (Figure 8.12), though broken, also contains a readable hieroglyphic text that appears to record the numerical coefficient of 8 or *waxak* followed by another bar and dot number recorded as 12 or *lajka*, and may record an unknown calendrical date.

Figural Plaque #4 (Figure 8.13) is a footed-style figural plaque commonly found at Lubaantún. Though also broken, it depicts a person seated within a quatrefoil cave opening or temple enclosure holding a staff. This depiction may be a representation of a Lubaantún king, since the act of receiving or grasping a scepter is normally reserved for Maya kings. The two main glyphic elements on either side of the figure's legs are *huun* logograms, which indicate 'kingship' by referring to a royal headband. These figural plaques may have been given to members of the local population as personal tokens in appreciation for participation in ritual celebrations, perhaps period ending celebrations, with Lubaantún kings. Most of the figural plaques appear to be mold-made, suggesting that these plaques may have been mass-produced and then handed out to those who participated in the event they were meant to commemorate. These figural plaques may have served as a marker of social identity. They feature detailed portraits of both Lubaantún's nobility and its commoners in everyday activities. Items such as dress, hair styles, masks, footwear, and particular woven motifs can be identified on these figurines.

The text caption on Figural Plaque #4 is unusual in both glyphic form and style.

The glyph located directly below the seated figure (B1) appears to record the T1066 logograph read *o'* or *ol* perhaps meaning 'heart' or 'heart of,' followed by the T1028c logograph read *kelem*, 'strong,' or 'young,' or 'youthful' (C1).

Figural Plaque #5 (Figure 8.14) is another footed-style figural plaque. Though broken, the image featured here is also of a lord seated within a sacred quatrefoil opening. The text at the bottom of the plaque appears to record a reference to a *ch'ahuun* 'headband' (A1). The next glyph appears to be the day name *B'en* (A2) and contains two numerical coefficients: 3 over the top of the main sign and a number 5 immediately following and adjacent to the main sign. However, a day name, *B'en* can only be paired with a month name that features numerical coefficients of either 1, 6, 11, or 16, and this may be evidence that the Maya at Lubaantún were using a different calendar system, perhaps the same Short Round system that was used at Pusilhá, for recording calendrical dates. The verb (B1) is too eroded to read but the name of the person appears to be recorded in the final two-glyph blocks read as either *hix* or *b'alam ajaw* (C1-D2). The name *B'alam Ajaw* appears in the inscriptions of Nim Li Punit twice and in the inscriptions of Pusilhá once. In all three of those contexts, the name *B'alam Ajaw* was used as a royal title or epithet to indicate that the person who carried this title was from *B'alam*. The *B'alam* Site has yet to be located, but numerous references to this location in the inscriptions in both the Southern Maya Mountains Region and in the neighboring Petexbatún Region suggest that it must lie somewhere in southeastern Guatemala. A fuller description of the *B'alam* Site will be presented in Chapter 9 when the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Nim Li Punit are discussed.

Figural Plaque #6 (Figure 8.15) also features a lord seated in profile facing right within a sacred quatrefoil enclosure wearing an elaborate feathered headdress and

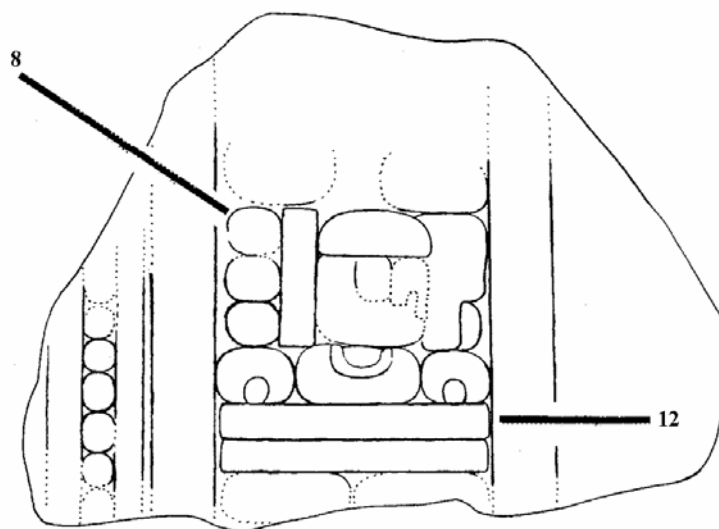


Figure 8.12. Lubaantún Figural Plaque #3 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

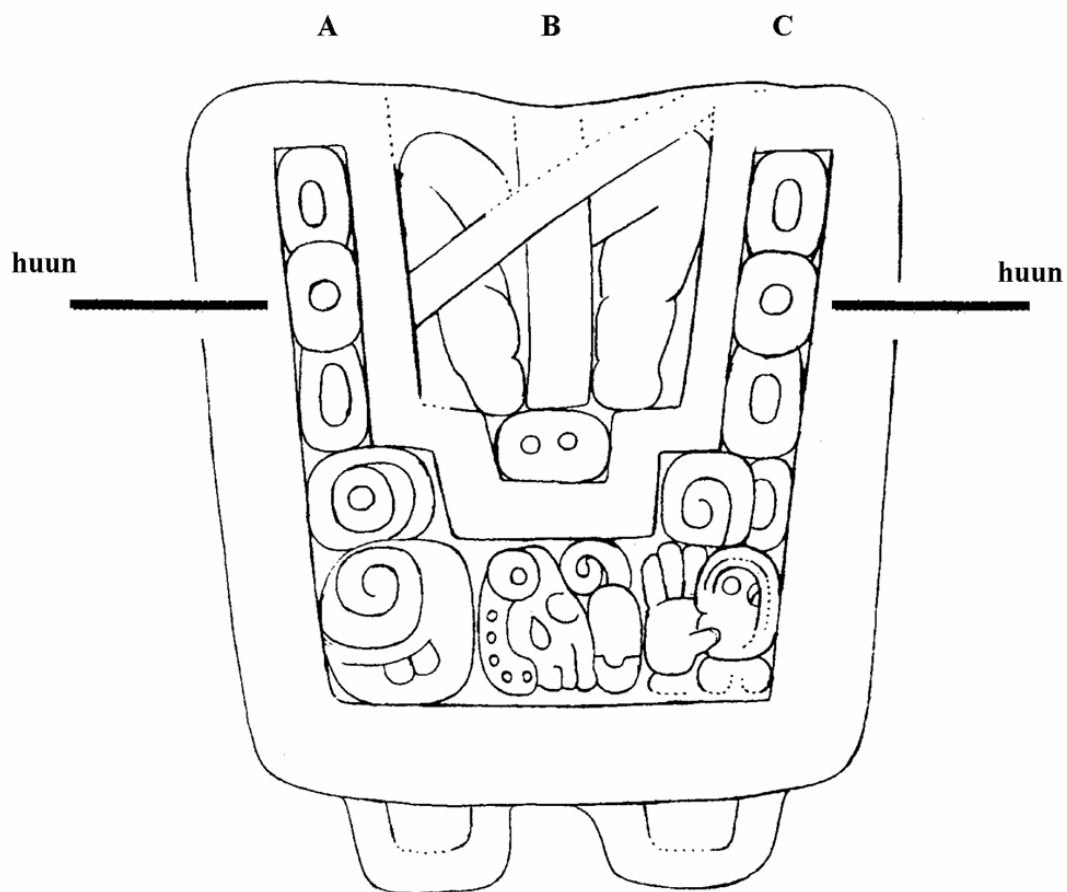


Figure 8.13. Lubaantún Figural Plaque #4 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

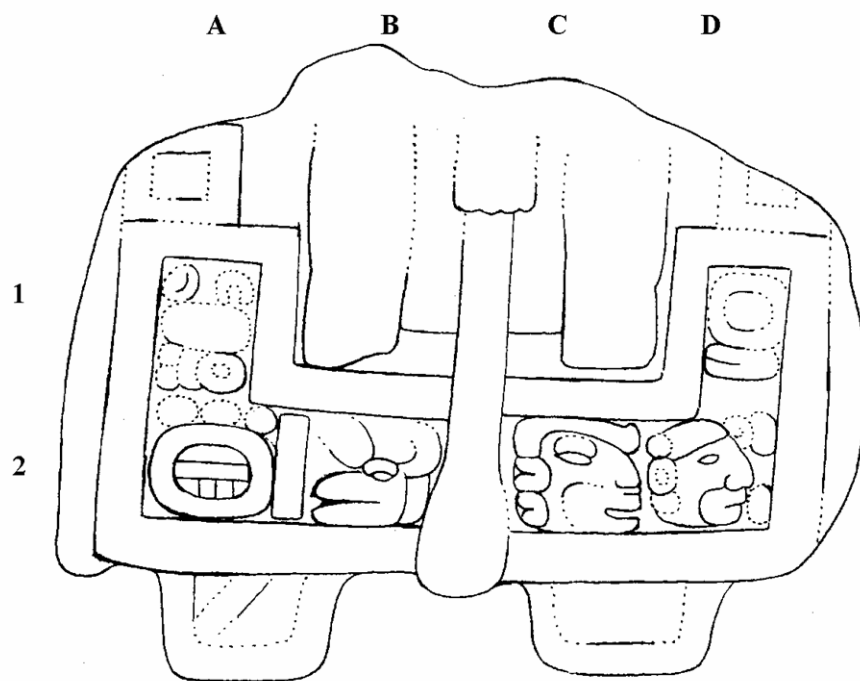


Figure 8.14. Lubaantún Figural Plaque #5 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

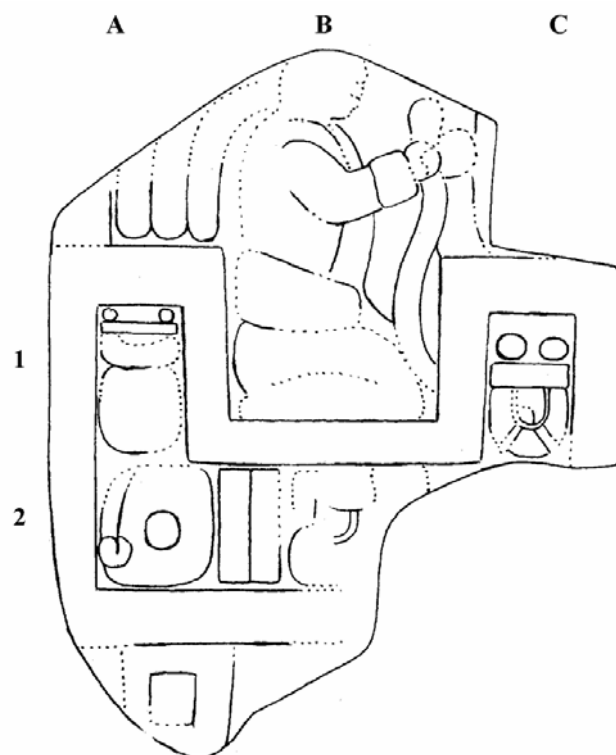


Figure 8.15. Lubaantún Figural Plaque #6 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

holding or shaking an object, perhaps a rattle with long flowing ribbons. Little from this inscription can be interpreted except for a possible birth glyph, read *sij* at B2. It is interesting to note that the following glyph (the probable subject of the verb) contains the number 10 (*lajun*) followed by an unknown head variant. A similar name appears on Stela 1 at the nearby site of Nim Li Punit in a reference to a king named *Lajun Chan* ‘Ten Sky’ who is seen commemorating the Period Ending 9.15.10.0.0 (26, June 741). The glyph at C1 resembles the T699 logogram read *tahn lam*, meaning that the *k’atun* was half-finished. Based on the Nim Li Punit inscription, it is tempting to link this text to the Period Ending 9.15.10.0.0.

The final figural plaque to be discussed here is nicknamed the “Pocket Stela,” which was excavated at Lubaantún by Hammond in 1970 (Figure 8.16) at a collapsed stair that led down from Plaza IV into Plaza III and into the northern end of the South Ballcourt (Hammond et al. 1975: 17). Though slightly broken, it shows the typical Lubaantún footed-style plaque and features a portrait of a seated king holding a ceremonial bar or scepter. A huge double-headed serpent with its mouth opened wide flanks the seated figure. Peter Mathews and David Kelley were the first to work on this inscription in 1975 (Hammond et al. 1975a). Based on recent epigraphic decipherment I can now provide a new interpretation of the text recorded on this plaque.

The inscription on the “Pocket Stela” begins with a Calendar Round date recorded as 7 *Lamat* 6 *Yax* (A1-B1). This date corresponds to one of four possible Long Count dates: 9.13.10.10.8 7 *Lamat* 6 *Yax* (22, August 702), 9.16.3.5.8 7 *Lamat* 6 *Yax* (9, August 754), 9.18.16.0.8 7 *Lamat* 6 *Yax* (27, July 806), or 10.1.8.13.8 7 *Lamat* 6 *Yax* (14, July 858). Given the chronological possibilities outlined by Hammond (1975), the most likely dedicatory date for this plaque is 9.16.3.5.8 (5, August 754). A dedicatory verb read *ti*

tab'ay (A2) follows the Calendar Round date. The dedicatory object appears to be a stela, for the text continues with a reference to a stone written as *yutuun tzuk* 'partition stone' (B2-A3). This is ironic since no stelae have been found thus far at Lubaantún; however, it may be a reference to one of the three carved ballcourt markers. Following the name of the stone is the verb read *puk* 'scatter' (B3). The next glyph at C1 appears to include two reversed, but inter-connected hands. In other contexts, this hieroglyph is associated with lunar eclipses (see Grube et al. 1999), which may be its function here. A similar collocation involving a lunar eclipse occurs in the text of Stela 15 at Nim Li Punit on 9.14.10.0.0 (9, October 721), but the date recorded on this plaque does not match that eclipse date. The next glyph, at C2, was originally believed by David Kelley (1976: 218) to be a Lubaantún emblem glyph based on its general emblem-glyph-like shape and location within the text, but it is the *butz'* logograph meaning 'smoke.' The last glyph appears to record the word *kakal*. In Yukatek Maya, *Kakalch'en* is a toponym that refers to a place known as an earthly cave of fertility (Barrera Vasquez 1980: 284) and perhaps this plaque refers to censers at a similar sacred location.

At least three carved monuments have been found at peripheral sites in the immediate vicinity of Lubaantún. Dunham (1988b: 5) reports that several carved monuments, including an inscribed block, were apparently looted from the site of Uxbentun, a minor surface site located 1.5 km west of Lubaantún (see Hammond 1975: 267-268). Unfortunately, there are no photos or drawings of the Uxbentun monuments. A second monument, Monument 1 (Figure 8.17), was found at Caterino's Site, another small center located approximately 3.25 km northeast of Lubaantún. Caterino's Site was first reported by Hammond as part of his regional survey of archaeological sites in the Toledo District. The site was revisited by Leventhal and his SBAP in 1987. The

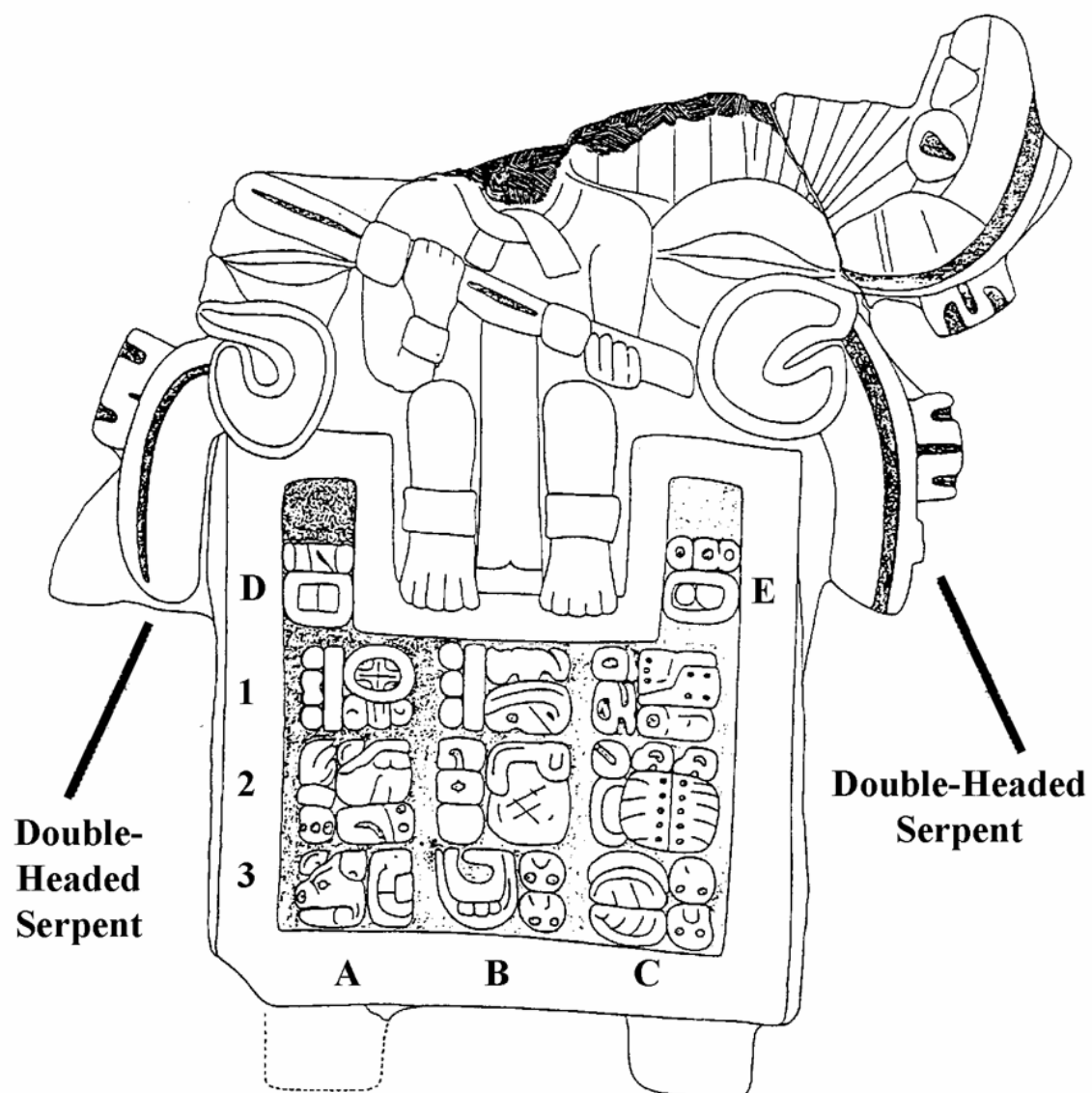


Figure 8.16. Lubaantún, The “Pocket Stela” Plaque (Drawing by Peter Mathews and courtesy of Hammond et al. 1975a: Figure 2)

monument was located on a talus along the exposed face of a block on the southern edge of the site (Dunham 1988: 5-6). Monument 1 contains a short three-glyph-block text. This text is unusual in both style and syntax, which mirrors the idiosyncratic nature of the texts recorded on the figural plaques of neighboring Lubaantún. An unusual variant of the *tz'am* glyph, meaning 'throne' follows a calendrical reference to the day 9 *Imix* (Barrera Vasquez 1980: 875). Next is the T533 *ajaw* head logograph and a glyph that looks very much like a variant of the T950 "worm-bird" logograph *LI*. The meaning of this text is not clear, but it appears to refer to the seating or accession of someone into *ajaw*ship. If correct, it would appear that the scribe who carved this text was not only using a Short Count notation, but he was also using a highly unusual combination of glyphs to refer to the seating or accession of a Lubaantún lord into office.

The third monument, found in the vicinity of Lubaantún, is Monument 1 (Figure 8.18) from the small site of Choco I, located approximately 2.6 km west/southwest of Lubaantún. The site was first reported by a local villager who showed the monument to members of the SBAP in 1987 (Dunham 1988: 6). It is situated on an east-west saddle that lies between a series of hilltops in the vicinity of Lubaantún. According to Dunham (Dunham et al. 1987: 14), two pieces of a broken stela were found lying on the ground just east of a still standing monument base. No plan maps of the site have ever been drawn and it is uncertain whether the monument fragment is still located at the site today. The monument features a high-polished luster that is quite distinct from the local mudstone indigenous to the region. It has a strange figural scene that includes at least three portrait heads, the largest of which appears to be skeletal and another that appears to be the head of some small mammal, perhaps a gopher. I suspect that the portrait head on the left represented the head of a person and the other two heads are

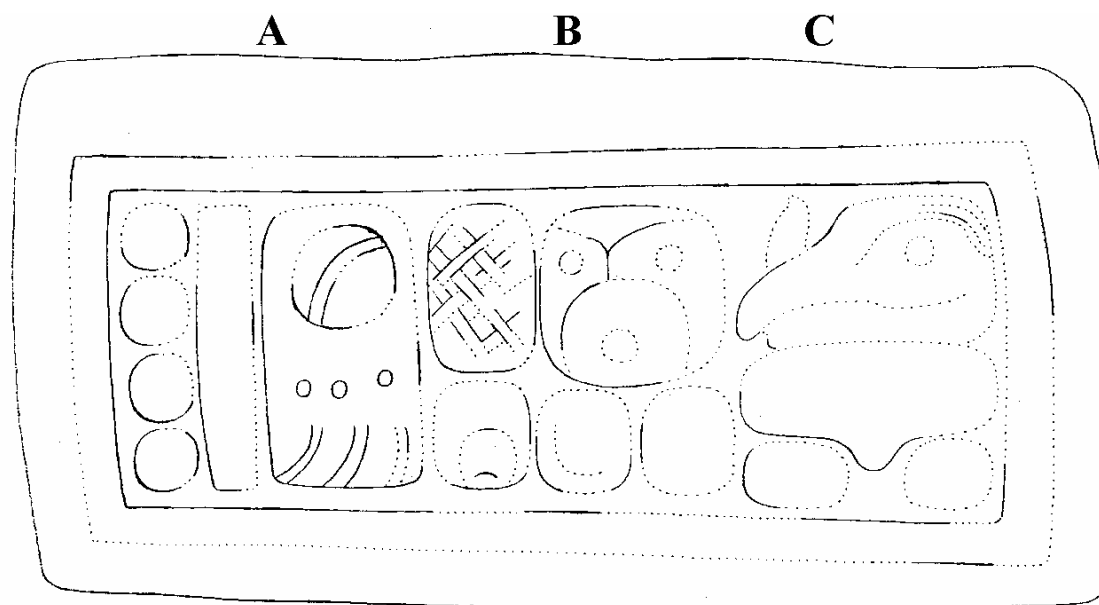


Figure 8.17. Caterino's Site Monument 1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

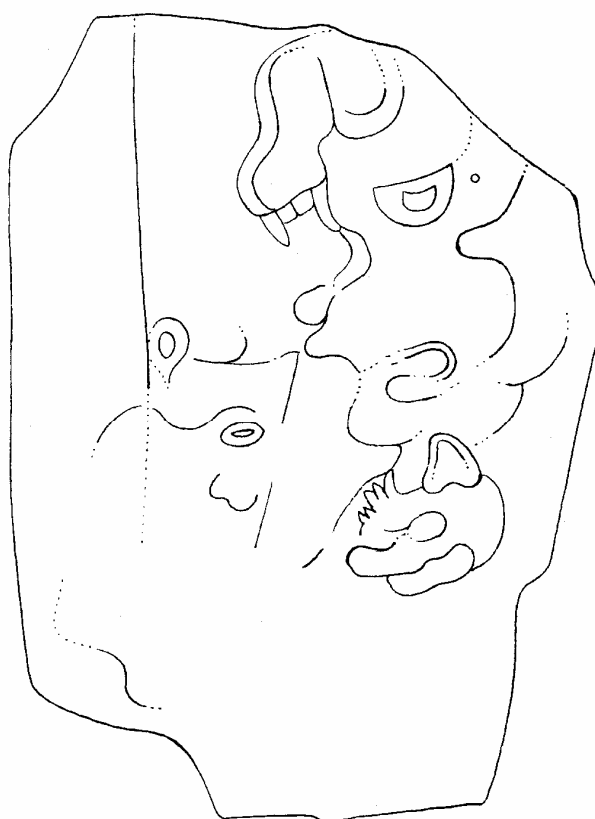


Figure 8.18. Choco I, Monument 1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

elements associated with an elaborate headdress or perhaps an image of a skeletal patron deity like those found in the graffiti of Tikal depicting large protective *nagual* figures (Schele and Mathews 1998: 91).

Synthesis and Discussion

The primary goal of this chapter was to look for epigraphic and archaeological evidence in the Río Grande Valley that would either support or challenge the hegemonic and *may* models of Classic Maya political organization. Given the paucity of monumental inscriptions in this region, little can be said to either support or challenge the hegemonic and *may* models. There is just not enough epigraphic data to properly test these models. However, with that said, I will briefly discuss how the data found in this region can be used to make preliminary observations about the hegemonic and *may* models.

In regards to the hegemonic model, the epigraphic evidence appears to indicate that the rulers of Lubaantún used the elite royal title *Ch'ul Ajaw*, referring to themselves as divine lords. A previously unrecognized emblem glyph found at Lubaantún on Ballcourt Marker III features a main sign composed of the T1016 *ch'u* or *CH'UL* head variant. This particular emblem glyph is written in standard form which includes the T36 prefix *ch'ul* 'divine' and the T168 *AJAW* 'lord' superfix. Because of the *ch'ul* head as its main sign, many epigraphers view this collocation as a generic emblem glyph labeling the lord who carries this title as a 'divine lord.' I also found two other inscriptions at Lubaantún both recorded on figural plaques (Figural Plaque #1 and #2) that depict the same main sign. The context for at least one of these figural plaques (Figural Plaque #2) is in association with a fire scattering or fire drilling ritual and its placement as the final

part of this text suggests that this main sign was the standardized form of Lubaantún's emblem glyph. If this main sign is an emblem glyph, it would have political ramifications for Lubaantún and for the other emblem glyph-bearing sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Given the close proximity of all the emblem glyph-bearing sites in southern Belize (Pusilhá, Uxbenká, Lubaantún, Nim Li Punit) one would expect to see a number of explicit references (antagonistic or non-antagonistic) to each other in the written dynastic history of each site. However, this does not appear to be the case. Because of the lack of monumental inscriptions at Lubaantún, some scholars have suggested that the sites Nim Li Punit and Pusilhá may have served as the dynastic seat or stela cult center for Lubaantún's ruling elite (Dunham et al. 1988b: 4; Hammond 1975: 103). These emblem glyph-bearing sites are possible *k'atun* seats within a larger Late Classic *may* sphere that was likely overseen by Copan.

There are no direct statements of subordination in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Lubaantún, but a passage recorded on Ballcourt Marker 2 refers to someone who is called an *Ek' Xukpi* 'Black Copan' lord. This title's appearance in a ballcourt marker text at Lubaantún in association with a standard dedicatory verb used for consecrating or dedicating important buildings suggests that the overseer of this event was someone from either Quiriguá or Copan.

There is also some epigraphic evidence to indicate friendly or non-antagonistic relations between Lubaantún and other sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. It is possible that Figural Plaque #6 records the birth of a Nim Li Punit lord named *Lajun Chan* 'Venus' or 'Ten Sky'. A variant spelling of *Lajun Chan*'s name, along with a glyph that indicates that the *k'atun* was half-finished, are recorded on a period ending monument (Stela 1) at Nim Li Punit in reference to the 9.15.10.0.0 (26, June 741) period

ending. An interesting piece of epigraphic evidence linking Lubaantún to one of its dependent satellites is found on Monument 1 from Caterino's Site. Though brief, the text recorded on Monument 1 appears to refer to the seating or accession of someone into *ajaw*-ship. This passage could be epigraphic evidence that lords were being seated at Lubaantún and that this monument was relocated or exiled to Caterino's Site as a way of linking these two communities together. A reference to a *B'alam* lord on Figural Plaque #5 links the rulership of Lubaantún to the *B'alam* Site. A *B'alam* lord was named as a captive at Pusilhá, perhaps suggesting that alliances were ever changing between the southern Belize sites. This is possible evidence of rivalries between various potential *k'atun* seats (Rice 2004: 262). There are no explicit statements to warfare or to inter-site conflict in the inscriptions of Lubaantún.

The "Pocket Stela" has a calendar round date that likely corresponds to the Long Count date of 9.16.3.5.8 (5, August 754) and the text includes a reference to a possible lunar eclipse. The same glyphic collocation appears on a monument at Nim Li Punit in celebration of the period ending 9.14.10.0.0 (9, October 721). It is possible that the eclipse glyph recorded on the Pocket Stela was meant to link these two dates together (9.16.3.5.8 and 9.14.10.0.0). The Pocket Stela text refers to the dedication of a monument (recorded as 'partition stone') and the scattering of fire. Since this plaque was excavated at Lubaantún, it may suggest that the monument dedication took place at Lubaantún. However, as previously mentioned, it could also refer to the dedication of a stela at any one of Lubaantún's dependencies including Caterino's Site, where a monument was found that refers to the seating or accession of someone into lordship. In addition, there is a possible reference to the 9.15.10.0.0 (26, June 741) period ending as recorded at Lubaantún on Figural Plaque #6. To date, no E-Groups or Twin Pyramid Complexes

have been formally identified in the architectural assemblage of Lubaantún.

Although Lubaantún may have been an emblem glyph-bearing polity, it was relatively short lived, lasting approximately 130 years, roughly half a *may* cycle. As Rice has proposed, *lajuntuns* or half-*k'atun* intervals likely represented the transfer of the burden of responsibility of the office of the *k'atun* and the same can be said for half-*may* cycles as well (Rice 2004: 114). Based on analogy to the Postclassic Period, new *may* seats were determined midway through the 256-*tuun* cycle and because of this fact, Rice argues that the given *may* seat may have governed only during the first half of the cycle and during the second half, power was likely shared with the city that was to become the next *may* seat (2004: 114). The lack of carved monuments, especially period-ending ones at Lubaantún, could be interpreted as Lubaantún losing its governing power as *may* seat during its second half of the cycle. This would only be true if Lubaantún actually served as the seat of a *may* sphere. If Lubaantún were a *k'atun* seat within a Copan-based *may* sphere, the lack of monuments at Lubaantún could also be associated with a loss of political power as other seats within Copan's *may* sphere hosted the remaining *k'atuns*. The lack of monuments at Lubaantún could also be interpreted as the result of termination rituals as both ritual and political power shifted to the next *k'atun* seat. Since at least one of the figural plaques at Lubaantún refers to a stela dedication and others refer to the ritual activities, perhaps associated with period ending celebrations, it is possible that the figural plaques themselves were used like tokens to commemorate these termination rituals.

A last point to be made in regard to testing the *may* model is that cycle seats within a given *may* sphere will likely share similar ceramic, architectural, and iconographic programs. The Rio Grande Valley is situated in the rich Toledo Upland

soils and is flanked to the north and south by a series of karst, rugged, steep hillslopes and drainages that form the southern foothill chain of the Maya Mountains. Given that this region is rich in natural resources and given its close proximity and easy access to both riverine and overland trade routes, the resources from this region would have been highly sought after by communities living both inside and outside the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Hammond (1975: 95-96) reports that people across the southern Maya lowlands would have been interested in the animal, plant, and mineral resources of this region. The Rio Grande Drainage was renowned for producing some of the finest cacao anywhere in Mesoamerica (Hammond 1975: 124). Ethnohistoric accounts claim that chocolate from this region was traded all the way to the Gulf Coast and beyond during pre-Conquest times.

There is extensive evidence of both ancient and modern overland and riverine trade routes in this portion of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Non-local materials have been recovered from excavations and from surface collections at sites throughout the region (Hammond 1975: 118). Hammond (1975: 120) reports finding a considerable quantity of basalt *metates* at Lubaantún whose source appears to be the Guatemalan Highlands. Highland Guatemalan materials can easily be distinguished from Maya Mountain materials since the Guatemalan materials have higher levels of chloritized lava, while Maya Mountain materials contain a higher level of detrital sandstone (Hammond 1975: 343). Large pockets of Toledo Bed detrital sandstone as well as Xpencilha Hills limestone are found within a 1-km distance of Lubaantún (Hammond 1975: 267). According to Hammond (1975: 343), 91 out of 101 *metate* fragments were reportedly made from materials found outside the Toledo District and thus outside the realm of Lubaantún. Mineralogical analysis of *manos* found at Lubaantún indicate that 40% were

made of local materials, 20% were made of Maya Mountain materials, and 40% were imported from Highland Guatemala (Hammond 1975: 348). On the basis of ethnohistoric and archaeological data, Hammond (1975) mapped the major trade routes in the Maya area (Figure 8.19). Hammond noted the presence of non-local, eccentric flint, in the site core of Lubaantún. On the basis of the physical characteristics of the stone, Hammond believes this material came from the extensive flint or chert beds around Altun Há in northern Belize (1975: 120). An abundance of Pacific Ocean shells have also been found at Lubaantún, indicating probable access to the Pacific via the Motagua Drainage (Hammond 1975: 121). Lubaantún-style figurines and *ocarinas* have been found at several sites in Alta Verapaz, including a mold-made figurine found at Cobán that featured a portrait of an older woman seated with a small animal on her lap. Hammond (1975: 123) reports that several examples of this figurine have been recovered at Lubaantún. Other Lubaantún-style figurines have been recovered at several coastal sites including Wild Cane Cay and Pork and Doughboy Point (Hammond 1975: 371). Ceramics recovered at Lubaantún include types and forms common at sites in both the Pasión and Petexbatún regions and include: Fine Orange Wares including Fine Altar Orange, Nubbin-Footed Bowls of Cedro Gadrooned type, and Late Classic Unit-Stamped vessels that are common at Seibal and Aguateca (Hammond 1975: 125, 327). Belize Red is also found in large quantities during the later occupation at Lubaantún indicating late contact with the Belize Valley (Hammond 1975: 126).

My analysis of the figural plaques at Lubaantún has demonstrated that the texts, once believed to represent pseudo-writing are hieroglyphic writing. The inscriptions found on these figural plaques represents a new, formerly unrecognized corpus that may be useful in understanding Lubaantún's dynastic history and in exploring other issues

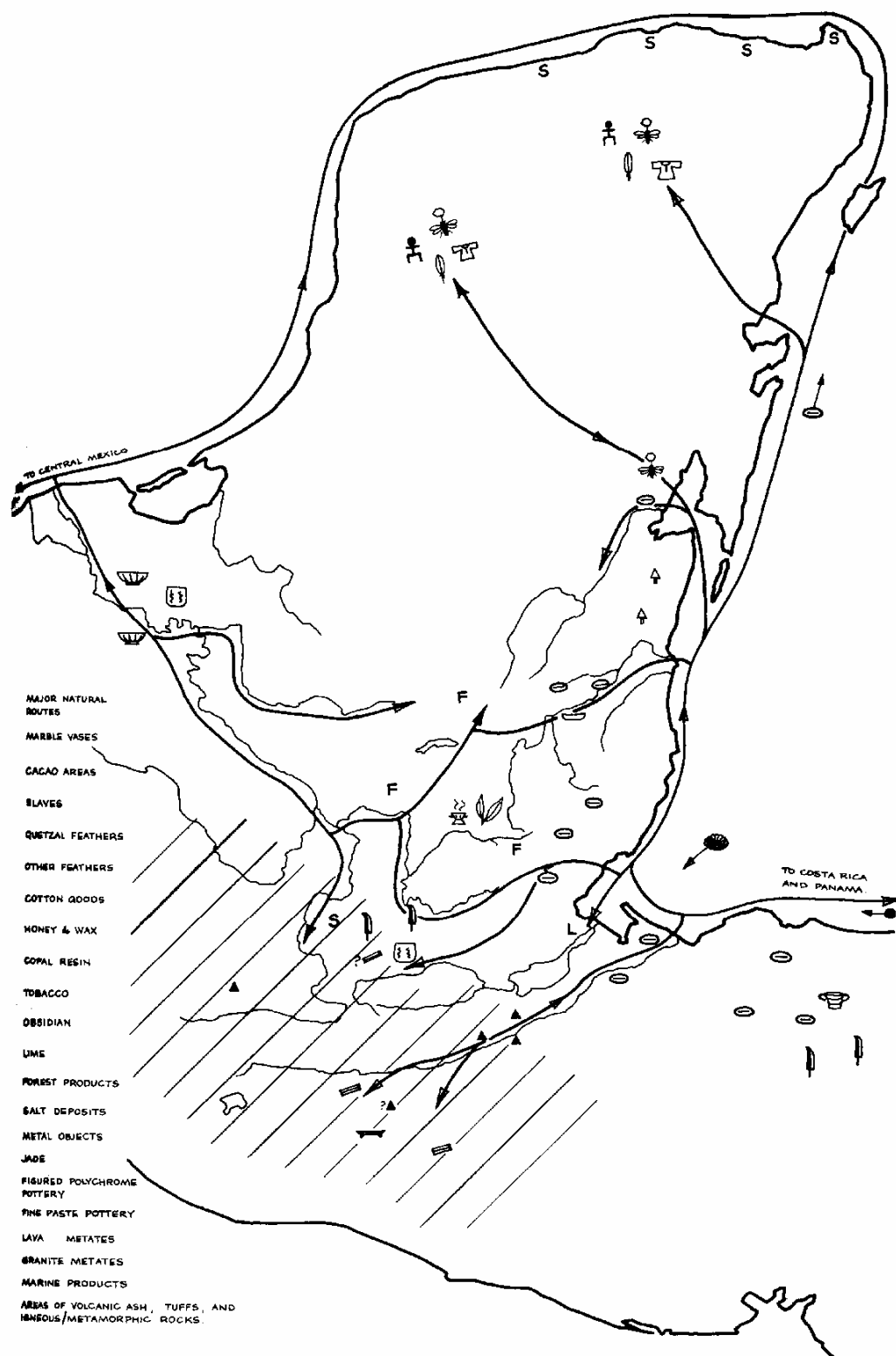


Figure 8.19. Map Showing the Major Trade Routes in the Maya Area (Courtesy of Norman Hammond and used with permission, Hammond 1975: Figure 49)

pertaining to identity. With four ballcourts and hundreds of ballplayer figurines recovered at Lubaantún, it would seem that the ballgame had a deep cultural significance to both the rulers and people living at the site. The use of molds suggests that these figural plaques or whistles were mass-produced and may indicate that these figural plaques may have a larger socio-religious or ritual purpose. It is possible that the figural plaques were given to the people of Lubaantún for use during certain public ritual events. They may have also served as tokens or gifts which were handed out during period ending celebrations or during important religious events with the purpose of marking group identity for those who attended the event. Perhaps they were also used as mnemonic devices to recall a particular incantation or ritual activity. The style and syntax on these figural plaques mark a departure from the rigid style of writing found on monumental sculpture. The dates on these figural plaques are truncated, using only one glyph to describe a Calendar Round date. I suspect that this style of dating may indicate the use of a different calendrical system at Lubaantún. This Short Count method of dating is a late feature in Classic Maya writing and it is also common at sites in and around Highland Guatemala, which may indicate that Hammond was correct when he suggested the possibility that Lubaantún was founded by peoples who originally lived west of Pusilhá, possibly immigrants from Highland Guatemala. The inscriptions on the three Lubaantún ballcourt markers appear quite normal compared to the texts recorded on the figural plaques. The different styles of texts at Lubaantún could indicate the presence of different vernaculars being used at Lubaantún or they could simply represent a short-hand notation of writing that may have served a different purpose from that of the monumental inscriptions.

On Monument 1 at Caterino's Site there is a short three-glyph inscription that is written in the same style as that of Lubaantún's figural plaques. It is likely that Caterino's

Site was a dependent polity to Lubaantún. Based on similar architectural style, Dunham et al. (1989: 278-282) suggested that the sites of Silver Creek and Twelve Mile, located just east and northeast of Lubaantún, were also satellites of Lubaantún because of the use of sandstone masonry constructions that are different than the architectural style at both Nim Li Punit and Xnaheb’.

The information presented in this chapter highlights the epigraphic evidence of Late Classic hegemonic control in the Rio Grande Valley. The next chapter will discuss the epigraphic evidence of hegemonic control in the Golden Stream Valley.

CHAPTER 9

EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE OF LATE CLASSIC POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IN THE GOLDEN STREAM VALLEY

Investigations at Nim Li Punit

Two major archaeological sites are located in the Golden Stream Valley: Nim Li Punit and Xnaheb', and each has stelae with carved hieroglyphic inscriptions (Figure 9.1). Both sites are located less than 2 km northeast of the modern Q'eqchí village of Indian Creek (Figure 9.1). The Golden Stream Valley, running west to east, lies between the Deep River and the Rio Grande Drainages near the confluence of three major environmental zones. To the north are the karst, steep-sided Xpíclhá Hills that form the northern expanse of the Toledo Foothills of the Maya Mountains. Immediately to the east are the Machacá Plains of the Belize's southern coastal plain and to the south are the Toledo Uplands (King et al. 1986: Map 1a). The Golden Stream Valley drains the eastern interior of the Southern Maya Mountains Region and connects this area to the Caribbean Coast. Both Nim Li Punit and Xnaheb' lie on top of a protracted narrow finger of the easternmost extension of the Xpíclhá Hills immediately to the west of the modern Southern Highway. Their location, high atop a series of rolling hills and ridges that directly overlook the Machacá Plains to the east would have been strategic for controlling the movement of resources and exchange in and out of the interior of the Maya Mountains to points east including sites located along the Caribbean Coast. Entrance into the Golden Stream Valley from the east can easily be made via the Golden Stream or



Figure 9.1. Map of the Golden Stream Drainage (Courtesy of Peter Dunham, Director, MMAP, modified after DGMS 1983)

Indian Creek, both of which contain year-round water. Seasonal waterways, such as Joshua Creek and Boden Creek, also drain parts of the eastern Golden Stream Valley. Entrance into the Golden Stream Valley from the west would have been difficult since this area is composed of a series of karst rugged hills, cliffs, and escarpments that form the southern Maya Mountains. However, entry from the west could have been made via the neighboring Rio Grande Valley. A relatively flat, ½ km wide, corridor that runs west to east nearly all the way to the modern village of Indian Creek is approximately 3 km directly north of the modern village of San Miguel. This corridor appears to have been heavily used in the past and it is used today by the local Q'eqchi' Mayas to travel between Indian Creek and the Columbia River Forest Reserve.

The primary goal of this chapter is to examine the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Golden Stream Valley to test whether the same sorts of hegemonic characteristics as described by Martin and Grube and the *may* model by Rice for the central Petén based on the criteria outlined in Chapter 5. can be found in the written inscriptions of this region.

The Discovery of Nim Li Punit

Nim Li Punit, meaning 'Large Hat or Headdress' in Q'eqchi' Maya, was given that name after the discovery of an enormous stela that featured an individual wearing a large elaborate headdress. The site was first reported in March of 1976 shortly after oil prospectors bulldozed a corner of a stone structure located on the north side of the site (Hammond 1976a: 60). The discovery was then reported to Joseph Palacio, the Archaeological Commissioner of Belize. Palacio inspected the site and invited Norman Hammond, director of the Corozal Project, to conduct a preliminary examination of the

site. Hammond (1976a, 1976b) and his team, consisting of Sheena Howarth (Graphic Artist), Fritz Johnson (Surveyor), Richard Wilk (Archaeologist) (1976,1977), along with Jaime Awe, Barbara MacLeod (1981), Don Owen Lewis, Charles Wright, and nearly a dozen local Maya explored and cleared the site between April 22 and April 24, 1976 (Hammond 1976a: 60; Wilk 1976: 22).

At the time of its discovery, the site consisted of one major plaza, flanked on all four sides by four stone structures and nearly two dozen stelae, six of which were carved (Stela 1, 2, 4, 7, 14, and 15) and contained long hieroglyphic inscriptions. The architectural style was similar to the “stepped perpendicular” of neighboring Lubaantún, located approximately 15 km southwest of Nim Li Punit. There was a single entrance from the north via the ballcourt into this architectural group (Hammond 1976a: 61).

Hammond’s team excavated several small test units across the stela plaza, most of which were done in connection with the raising and turning of monuments (Wilk 1976: 1). They recovered large quantities of ceramics, including at least one Late Preclassic ceramic sherd (Wilk 1976: 1-2). Prior to 1976, no surface site in southern Belize had yielded Late Preclassic ceramics, which caused Wilk to question the nature of archaeological sampling in the region since Late Preclassic and even Middle Preclassic ceramics were being found in the Stann Creek Valley to the north, in the Izabál Valley to the south, and in the Poptún region of southeastern Guatemala (Wilk 1976: 2-3). Today, there are several sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region where Late Preclassic ceramics have been recovered, most notably at Uxbenká and at several cave sites in the Ek Xux Valley. Juan-Luis Bonar, a member of the Mayan Archaeological Sites Development Program (MASDP) from 1997 to 1998 provided the SBEP with photographs and texts concerning excavations conducted in Str. 8 that resulted in the

discovery of two new royal tombs at Nim Li Punit. Photographs from Tomb 2 feature an early Tzakol 2-style basal flange bowl (personal communication dated 10, January 2005). Bonar has identified Early Classic ceramics in both of these new tombs (Tombs 2 and 3), though no official report of the ceramics recovered from these tombs has been published.

The ceramic assemblage recovered during the Corozal Project investigations of Nim Li Punit was meager. Most of the sherds were small with virtually no remaining surface slip. Wilk (1977: 8) reports that Patrick Culbert identified several sherds that could date to the Late Preclassic Period. His attribution was based on vessel shape, since the slips were almost non-existent. According to Culbert, the pastes varied in color from buff-brown to orange and were tempered with calcite. In addition, he noted one sherd (possibly corresponding to Sabloff's Sierra Red or Cantutse-Chicanel at Seibal) that contained grooved-incising along the interior portion of the rim, a common characteristic of Preclassic ceramics throughout the Maya area (Wilk 1977: 8). Nearly all of the possible Late Preclassic ceramics were recovered in the lowest level of a test unit located near the base of a steep slope that led into the northernmost structure (Str.7) of the stela plaza group (Wilk 1977: 5, 8). A couple of probable Early Classic ceramic sherds (mostly basal flange fragments) were also identified, perhaps dating to Tepeu-1 (Wilk 1977: 8). The Late Classic ceramics showed similarities to neighboring Lubaantún, but also contained some differences. At least ten sherds were identified by their "soft yellowish paste and glossy red slip" as being Belize Red (Wilk 1977: 9). This identification corresponded to similar forms found at Lubaantún. Some polychrome ceramics were also recovered at Nim Li Punit including Hammond's Louisville Polychrome and numerous redware incurving-sided bowls were found whose slips and paste were similar to Hammond's Remate Red and to his Chacluum Black types (Wilk 1977: 9). Wilk also

reports that 23 neck-sherds from various storage vessels that featured squared rims and small external flanges similar in shape to those of the Early Classic Junco Complex at Seibal were also found at Nim Li Punit (1977: 9). No Terminal Classic ceramics were identified in the ceramic assemblage of Nim Li Punit. Wilk (1977: 11) argued that the site appeared to have been heavily occupied between the Late Preclassic and Late Classic Periods based on the preliminary observations of its ceramic sequence. A lone piece of green obsidian in the form of a small bladelet was discovered. This piece of obsidian that most likely came from the Pachuca obsidian source located some 1000 km to the west in the Valley of Mexico (Wilk 1977: 10). The final report of the Corozal Project's discovery and exploration of Nim Li Punit was published in 1999 (Hammond et al. 1999; Hammond and Howarth 1999) and featured a new, labeled plan map of the ceremonial core (Figure 9.2) as well as several drawings of the best preserved stelae.

Archaeological investigations of Nim Li Punit and Xnaheb' were also conducted by Richard Leventhal and his SBAP from 1983 to 1987 (see Dunham 1990; Jamison 1993, 2001; Leventhal 1990a: 129). On the basis of these investigations, Leventhal demonstrated that Nim Li Punit was much larger than Hammond originally indicated (Figure 9.3). The central core of Nim Li Punit was composed of four major architectural groups: the North Group, the South Group, the East Group, and the West Group, whose organization suggests that each served a different function.

The South Group, consists of the Stela Plaza Group and a second architectural group, located immediately to the west, known today as the Plaza of the Royal Tombs. The architecture in these two areas is extensive, with buildings rising above 12 m (Leventhal 1990a: 132). The stela plaza sits on a 5 m tall platform (Hammond et al. 1999: 2). More than two dozen stelae, whose median height is 3.62 m ring the Stela Plaza

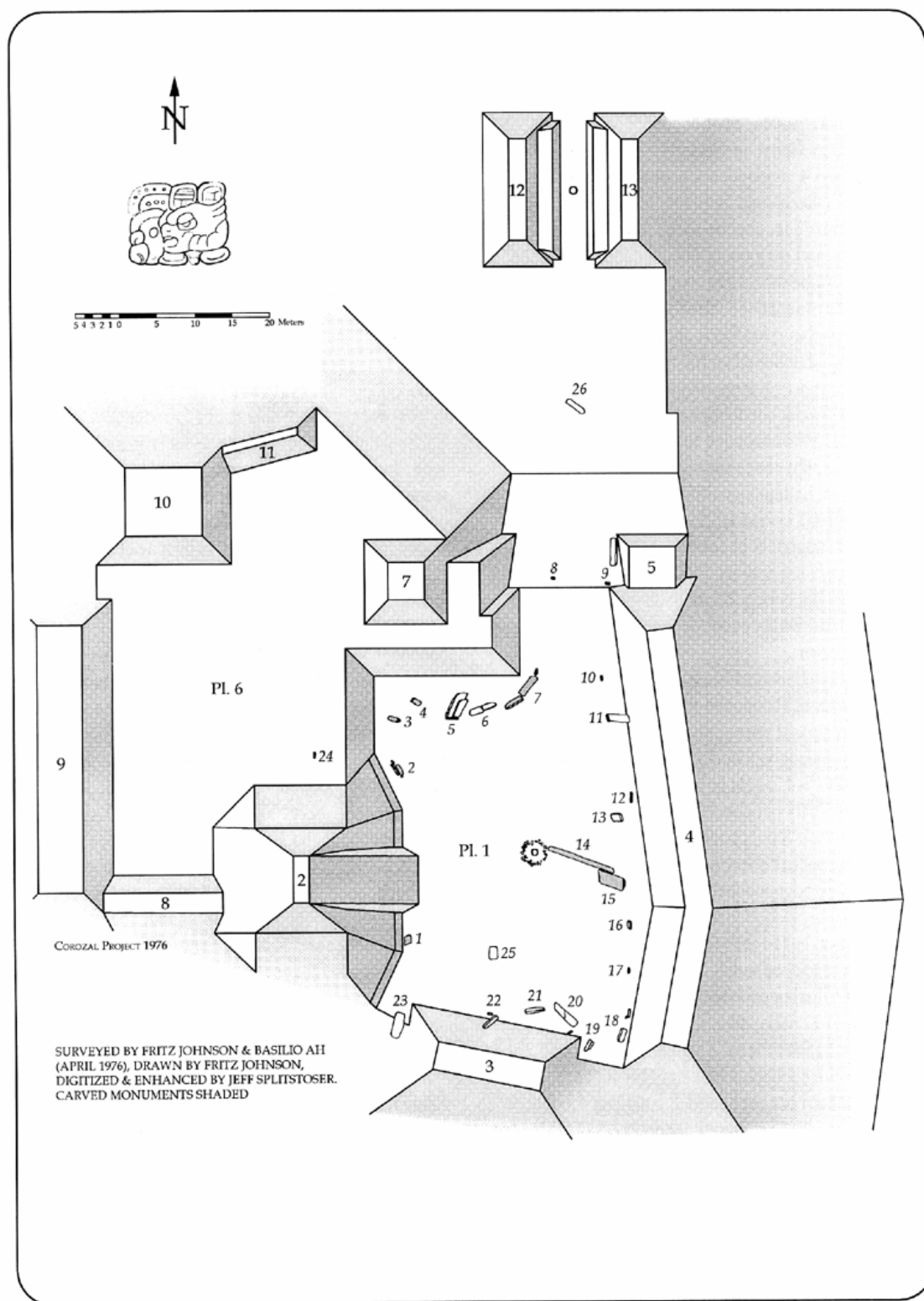


Figure 9.2. Nim Li Punit, Plan Map of Stela Plaza Group (Courtesy of Norman Hammond, used with permission; Hammond et al. 1999: Figure 2)

An E-Group Complex has also been identified in the South Group, suggesting that the stelae were used to mark the movements of the sun across the eastern horizon on both equinoxes and solstices. The adjoining Plaza of the Royal Tombs appears to be both the ancient necropolis and elite residential group for the royalty of Nim Li Punit. Three major royal tombs have been discovered in front of two buildings in this architectural group. Leventhal excavated a royal tomb in 1987 in front of the western face of Str. 7. The tomb contained as many as five individuals and at least 40 ceramic vessels (Leventhal 1990a: 132). A short stairway that leads down to a ballcourt is to the north of the Stela Plaza. The ballcourt at Nim Li Punit is very much like the ballcourts at Pusilhá and is surrounded by low retaining walls. Leventhal believes that these low retaining walls are a regional characteristic of ballcourts in the Southern Maya Mountains Region (1990a: 140).

The East Group, located northeast of the ballcourt, consists of a series of raised platforms, terraces, and plaza levels (Leventhal 1990a: 132). A series of buildings that include range structures, house mounds, and shrines that may have served as lineage houses spread across these plazas (Hammond et al. 1999: 2). The West Group or the Akam Plaza is located directly west of the East Group. This group is comprised of several structures located on top of a single massive platform. According to Jamison (2001: 81), none of these buildings appear to be residential and the large plaza likely served a public function. Jamison's research indicates that the residential population lived in dispersed settlements on hills surrounding the site core.

The last major archaeological project at Nim Li Punit was the restoration and consolidation work by MASDP between 1997 and 1998. As part of that project new restrooms, pathways, and a Visitor Center were built at Nim Li Punit. In addition, all of

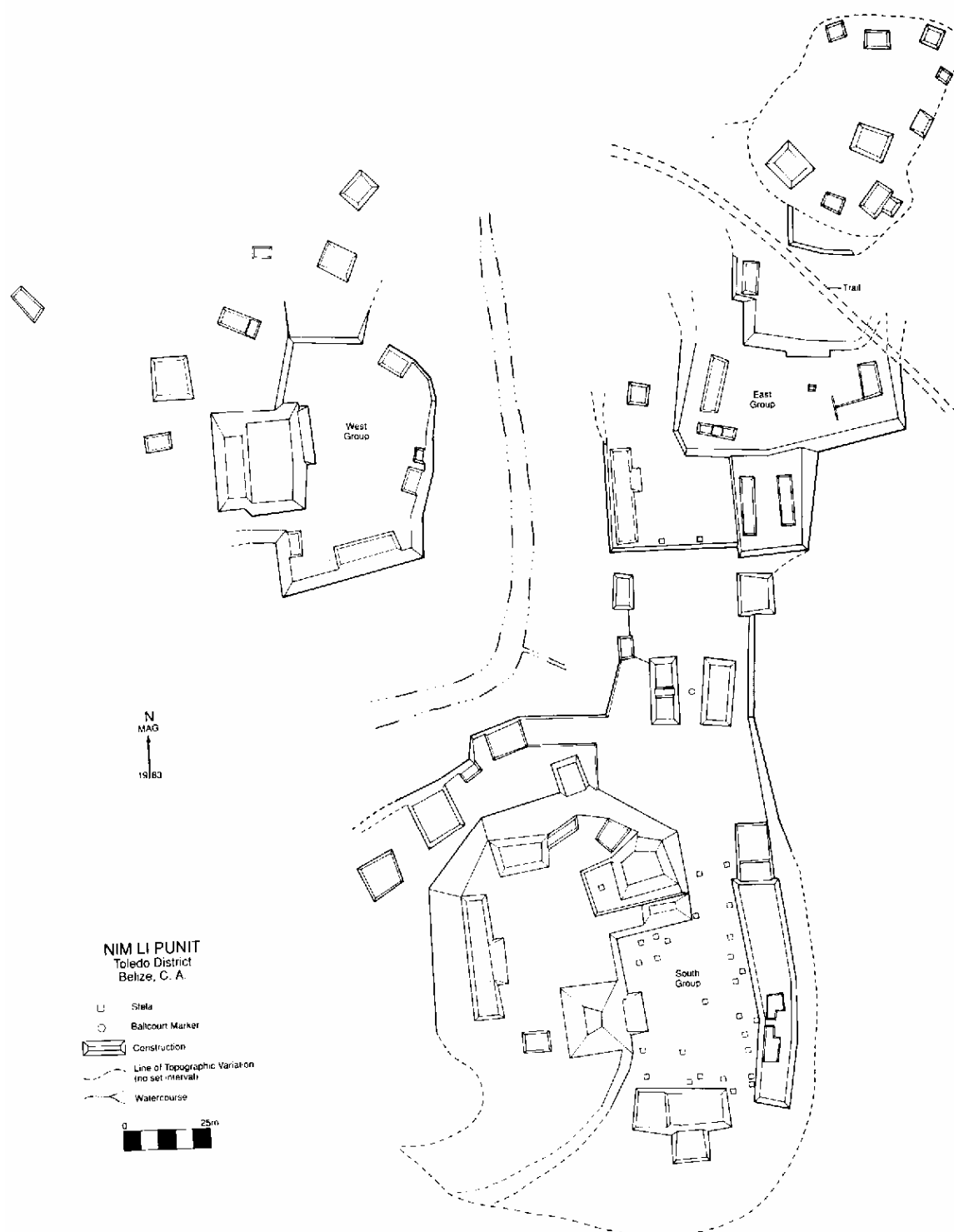


Figure 9.3. Nim Li Punit, Plan Map of Site Core (Courtesy of Richard Leventhal, used with permission, Leventhal 1990a: Map 8.2)

the ancient buildings and plazas were cleared of forest growth and many of the stairways, walls, and temple structures were restored (Bonor and van Opstal nd; Larios Villalta 1998). Two new tombs were discovered in the course of restoration and consolidation work in the area in front of Str. 8. The first tomb was empty except for two ceramic bowls, several marine shells, and a number of broken stalagmites. The second tomb contained the remains of at least six individuals, all poorly preserved, made even worse by the rains associated with Hurricane Mitch in October of 1998. The human remains were grouped in different parts of this second tomb, indicating sequential burials where the remains of an earlier deceased person were moved to the side to make room for a new body (Bonor and van Opstal nd: 16). A previously unreported and nearly pristine carved stela (Stela 21) was also found. This stela is the best-preserved monument in Belize.

Epigraphic Evidence of Political Organization at Nim Li Punit

The hieroglyphic inscriptions of Nim Li Punit are best known because of their unusual style and syntax. With more than 32 stelae, including 8 carved ones and several dozen monument fragments, Nim Li Punit houses the second largest corpus of texts in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. The monuments are enormous, including the 9.29 m high Stela 14, the second tallest stela ever carved by the Classic Maya behind Quiriguá's Stela E which is the tallest Maya monument at 10.6 m (Sharer 1990: 36). The dedicatory dates for Nim Li Punit's monuments range from 9.14.10.0.0 (9, October 721) to 10.0.0.0.0 (11, March 830), a span of just 109 years. However, the archaeology of the site suggests that people were living at Nim Li Punit as early as the Late Preclassic Period and well into the Terminal Classic Period. Ceramics include Daylight-Darknight types,

which correspond to the New Town phase at Barton Raime (A.D. 880-1000) (Dunham et al. 1989: 268).

I discovered that K1440 (Figure 9.4), a Late Classic polychrome bowl nicknamed the “Bowl of Eighty-Eight Glyphs,” can be directly attributed to the site of Nim Li Punit through the decipherment of its hieroglyphic inscription. Robicsek and Hales (1981: Figure 23) were the first to publish photographs and written descriptions of this remarkable bowl as part of their examination of Codex-Style vessels. The bowl was also featured in a Maya exhibition entitled “The November Collection of Maya Ceramics” (Robicsek and Hales 1982; Walt Disney World 1982) and it appeared in the first Maya Vase volume produced by Justin Kerr (1989: File K1440). Dieter Dutting (1986) attempted to decipher this long, difficult text and though his epigraphic analysis is now dated, his analysis of the chronology still stands. The history recorded on this bowl covers a wide span of time from mythic times to historical events dating to the Late Classic Period.

The text on K1440 (Figure 9.5) was rendered in a beautiful calligraphic style that incorporated a number of unique head variants and one-of-a-kind collocations. These unique collocations have been the source of much consternation to epigraphers trying to understand this long and difficult text. It begins with a dedicatory Long Count date of 1.14.3.3.12 9 *Eb*’ 10 *Muwaan* or 24th of January 2439 B.C (A1-C4). This Long Count refers to a date 674 years after the start of the current creation. Following the Long Count date the text states *alay sijajiiy B’ahlam Te*’ ‘here he was born long ago, *B’ahlam Te*’. The text continues with a possible verbal expression that reads *b’aan tu ka tuun*, perhaps meaning ‘scatters on the second *tuun*. Though the beginning of this text refers to the birth of *B’ahlam Te*’, the rest of this passage is obscure. The next couple of



Figure 9.4. K1440 (Photo courtesy of Justin Kerr, used with permission)

glyph blocks are destroyed, but the outlines of a leaf-nosed bat at K2 are clear. This bat glyph likely corresponds to the bat figure (*Sutz'*) in the enthronement scene on the bowl which features a rat and bat holding incense bags while conversing with a seated lord. This seated lord sits on top of a *tz'am* 'throne' that features the toponym *K'ahk' Ek' Kaan* 'Black Fiery Snake' Place. The passage ends with a reference to the 'stirring of fire or incense' (*til*) complementing the figural scene. It would appear that this ritual activity occurred at a supernatural location identified as *Ek' K'in Nal* 'Black Day or Black Sun Place' (K3-L3). Next is a child of mother expression (K4, *yal*) followed by the name of the mother *Ixik Ek' Ik'il Nal*, 'Lady (Evening) Star of the Wind Place' (L4-K5).

In outward appearance, the scene and text of K1440 are somewhat disjointed. It is likely that the text and figural scenes were both designed to connect the birth of *B'ahlam Te'* and his accession to earlier mythic events. A portrait of Lady Evening Star is featured in the figural scene looking directly behind her at the initial series introductory glyph. As will be discussed below, the accession of the local Nim Li Punit lord *B'ahlam Te'* was supervised by a foreign king. Both the scene and text featured on this vase portray the same historical events recorded in the text of Nim Li Punit Stela 2.

The next piece of dynastic history at Nim Li Punit comes from a retrospective passage recorded in a secondary text on Stela 15 (Figure 9.6). The dedicatory date for Stela 15 is 9.14.10.0.0 5 *Ajaw* 3 *Mak* (9, October 721). The date for this retrospective event was 10 *k'atuns* earlier on 9.4.10.0.0 12 *Ajaw* 8 *Mol* (24, August 524). Using a simple Short Count notation, a feature common in the inscriptions of the Yucatan and in the Southern Maya Mountains Region, the date was recorded as 12 *Ajaw* followed by a glyph that reads 10-4 *k'atun* which must correspond to the 4 *k'atun*-10 *winal* portion of the 9.4.10.0.0 Long Count date. The text states that on this day *uti y utz'ap utuun* 'it

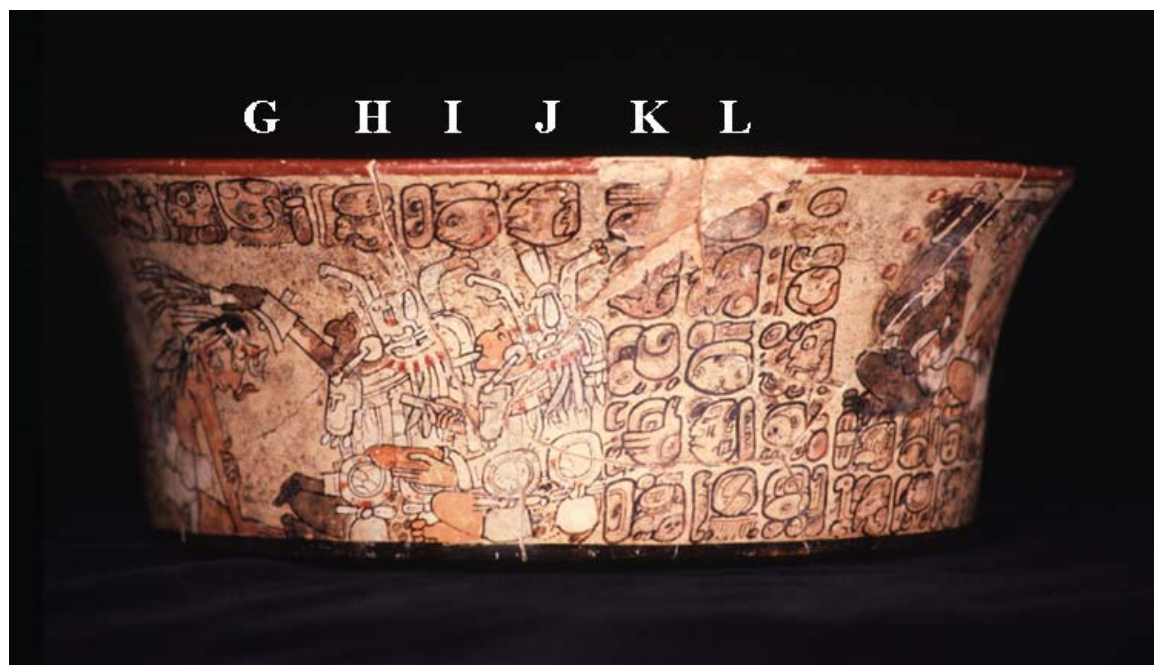
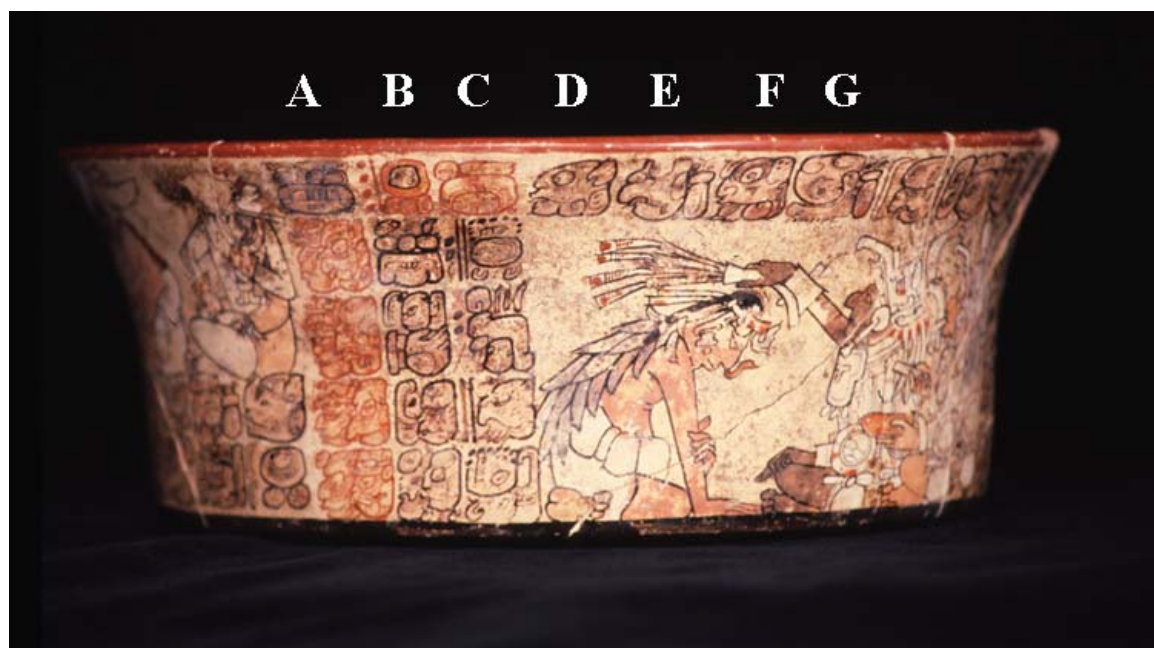


Figure 9.5. K1440, A1-L5 (Photos courtesy of Donald Hales, used with permission)

happened, the planted of the stone’, a reference to the planting of a stela. The stela was named *Chak U-Nan* ‘Great Uncle’, perhaps in reference to a particular deity. The text then continues with phrase, *uwak tz’akal lakam tuun utz’apaj* ‘the sixth accumulated grand stone was planted’, perhaps indicating that the person overseeing this action was erecting his sixth stela at Nim Li Punit. The lord responsible for the planting is named as *K’inich Ajaw* ‘Resplendent Lord’, also the name of the Classic Maya Sun God. As part of his royal name phrase he carries the *Ch’ajom Ch’ok* ‘Youthful Scatterer’ title, as well as the *Che’ Ahaw* ‘Tree Lord’ title. The final part of his name includes the *Waxak Winik* title, which marks this individual as allied with other regional polities.

The final glyph block of this passage may record a second Nim Li Punit emblem glyph. This collocation reads *Che’ Ajaw* or *Te’ Ajaw* ‘Tree Lord’. Some have argued that the parrot head main sign represents an alternate version of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph (Grube et al. 1999: 25). The parrot head appears to have the syllabic value *a*. I am not completely convinced that it refers to Nim Li Punit since the other versions of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph are quite different (Figure 9.7). The best known version of a Nim Li Punit emblem glyph is the one that appears on Stela 1 and features a raptor-like bird, possibly a Harpy Eagle based on the distinctive feathers jutting out from behind its head (Figure 9.7A). The main sign has long been identified as having the logographic value *KAY* ‘fish’ (Grube et al. 1999:28), but that reading does not fit its bird-like features. Looking through various dictionaries for a “fish-like bird” I found an entry in Chorti’ that described a large fish-catching bird known as a *chuk chay* (‘fish catcher’) and perhaps this is a representation of that bird (Wisdom 1950: 1036). Though slightly different in shape and form, the emblem glyph on Stela 2 resembles the one featured on Stela 1 (Figure 9.7B). Both of those signs differ greatly from the main signs featured on Stela 14

(Figure 9.7C) and Stela 15 (Figure 9.7D), which seem to feature a parrot head rather than a raptor head. It is possible that Nim Li Punit employed two different emblem glyphs, one for the political realm of Nim Li Punit and perhaps one to denote the ceremonial core. A new syllabic version of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph appears on the recently discovered Stela 21 (Figure 9.7E) that spells the name of the site as *ka-wa-ma* or *kawam*. There is no clear translation of this name though, but it is likely that it served in substitution for the logographic version.

K1440 recorded a series of extraordinary events in the dynastic history of Nim Li Punit. The second passage of K1440 (Figure 9.8) begins with a jump forward from mythic times to Late Classic times. It begins with a distance number introductory glyph *utz'akaj* 'it was ordered' or 'it was accumulated' at L5 followed by a Calendar Round date of 1 *Ajaw* 8 *Kumk'u* (M1-M2), which corresponds to the Long Count date of 9.14.5.4.0 (23, January 717) less than five years before the dedication of Stela 15. The text then describes the accession of the local Nim Li Punit lord under the auspices of several related Patron Gods and historical figures, including one from Copan who brings gifts to this Nim Li Punit lord on behalf of Copan.

Following the move forward in chronology, the text continues with a passage that reads *alay utiy chumaj tanal jul kab' naah* (M3-O1) 'here or now it happened, he was seated in the court of the Pierced Earth House'. The bowl text continues with a glyph that reads *wi'il* (N2), an apparent reference to either 'root' or 'lineage' or perhaps to the verb based on the root *wi'* meaning 'to create carnage' (Aulie and Aulie 1978: 130; Boot 2002: 86). Next is a supernatural location known as the *Ek' Way Nal Naah* (O2-P1) 'Black Hole House' or 'Black Transformer Place.' According to Freidel, Schele, and Parker (1993: 51), the Black Transformer Place was a sacred cave portal, also known to

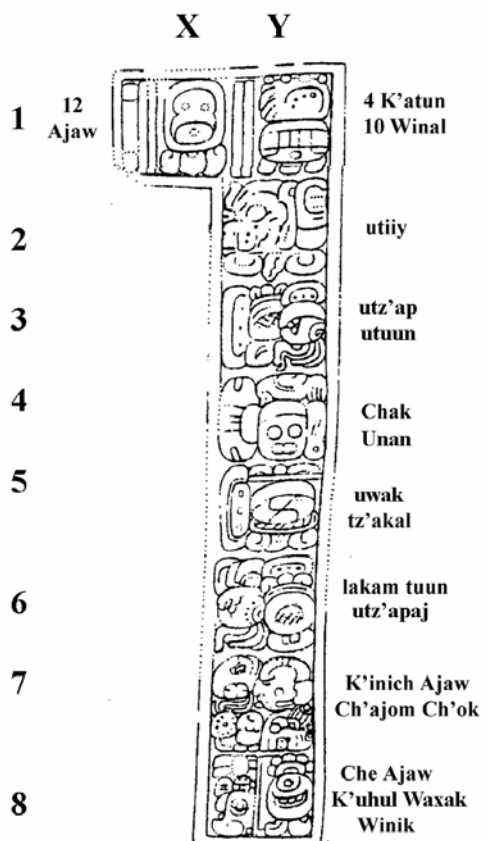


Figure 9.6. Nim Li Punit Stela 15, Passage X1-Y8 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

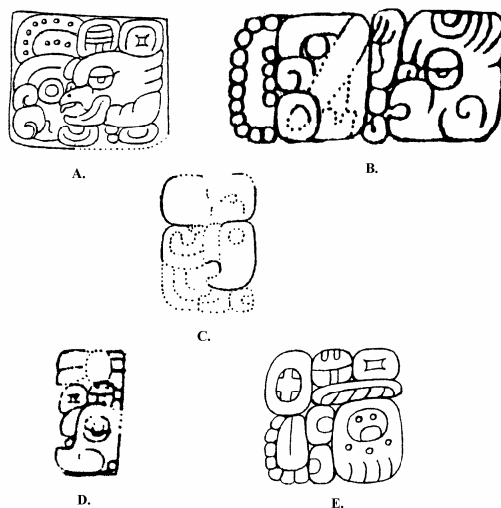


Figure 9.7. The Nim Li Punit Emblem Glyph (All Drawings by J. Montgomery)

A) Stela 1

C) Stela 14

E) Stela 21

B) Stela 2

D) Stela 15

the later Yukatek Maya as the *uhol gloriyah* ‘the Glory Hole’ which connects the human world with the Otherworld. Sacrifice seems to be a major theme associated with the Black Transformer Place. As recorded at Quiriguá on Stela F, its contemporary king *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Yoaat*, was said to have executed his former overlord, the king of Copan, *Waxaklajun Ub’aah K’awiil*, in May of 738 at a location known as the Black Transformer Place.Looper (2003: 77) has shown that this type of sacrifice was the domain of the lightning god *Chahk*, who is often portrayed in Classic Maya art presiding over this supernatural location. Thus, it would appear that the newly installed king of Nim Li Punit is declaring that his accession and likely his divine power were the result of cosmic sanction.

The text on K1440 continues with references to other supernatural beings. A reference to a throne, likely the one featured in the main figural scene follows the reference to the Black Transformer Place. The glyph block reads *tutz’am* ‘at or on the throne’ and includes an unknown profile head (Q1). The text appears to state that the throne belonged to *Kelem Ox Ik’ K’u* ‘three strong’ or ‘youthful gods of Wind’ (P2-R1) and *Naab’ K’u* ‘god of Water’ (S1-R2). The references to wind and water deities here may refer to the living and breathing aspects of that supernatural cave known as an *Ek’ Way Nal*. The Maya believed that caves and *cenotes* were living, breathing, supernaturally charged locations, often noted in ethnohistoric chronicles as the places where gods were born. Water and wind form a unique couplet for the Maya. Water is an essential part of life and is often found dripping in caves along with a steady cool breeze. Winds coming from caves also bring rains (Adams and Brady 2005: 305). Next is a reference to *kan k’al taj k’an* (S2-R3) ‘receiving of the four precious patrons’. As discussed in Chapter 7, *Chan Ch’ok* is an important royal title that appears in the

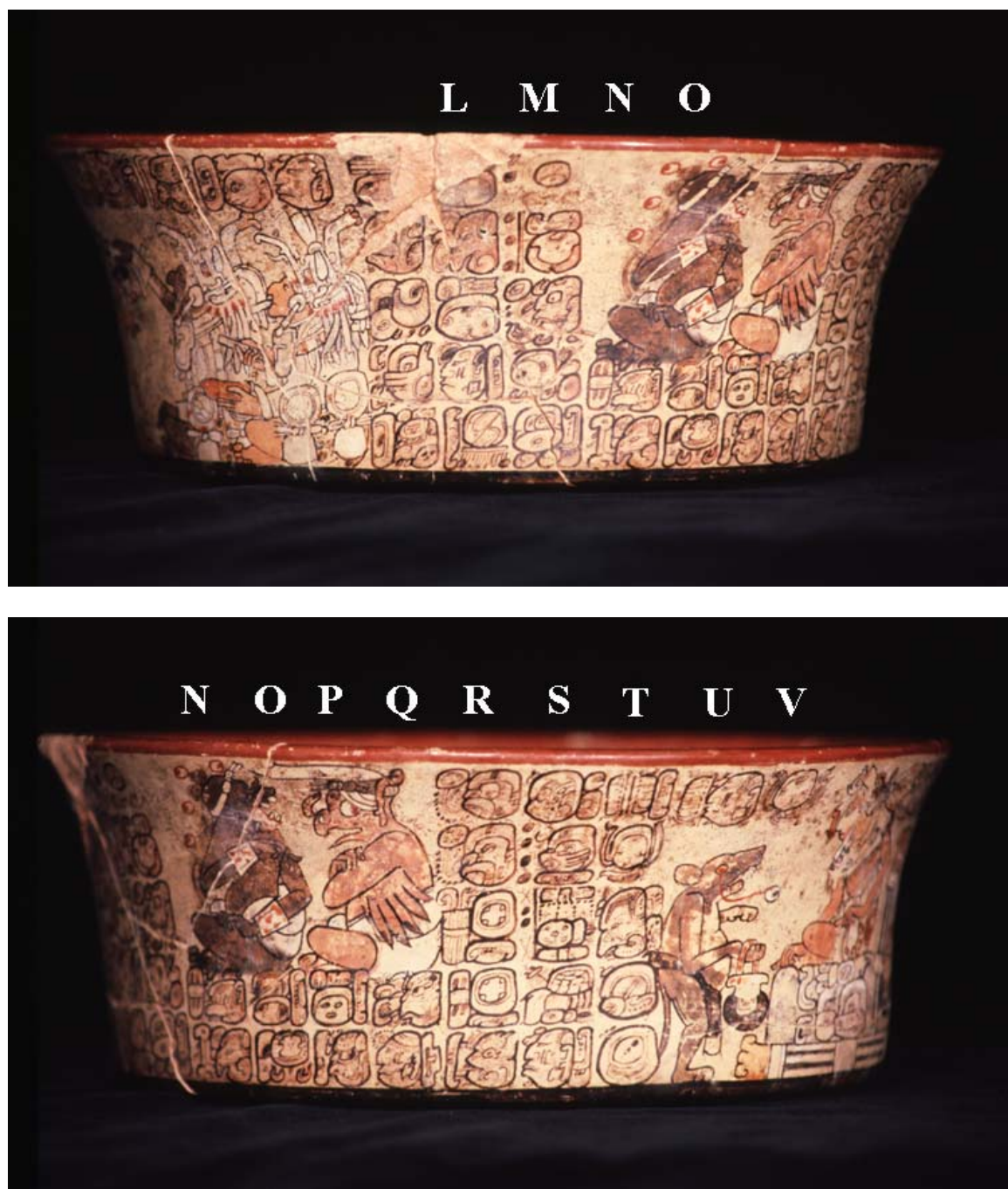


Figure 9.8. K1440, Passage L5-V1 (Photos courtesy of by Donald Hales, used with permission)

inscriptions of Copan and may be used to refer to the four most important royal lineages of Copan (Morales et al. 1990: 5). The next glyph of the vase text is not clear (S3), but it is followed by a statement which reads *K'an Yotot Na Kay Naah* (R4-S5) 'Precious House of the First Nim Li Punit Woman', likely a reference to the royal house of the Nim Li Punit lords. What follows are several other royal titles that are exclusive to this royal house. The text states that she was a *sas na winikil taj sas naah winik* (T1-V1) 'the first Resplendent Person, the Patron of the Resplendent Person House'. These titles, reserved for the highest ranking members of Maya society, indicate that this woman was of great importance to the nobility of Nim Li Punit. Classic Maya descent is widely believed to be patrilineal (Hage 2003; Hopkins 1984), but our understanding of Classic Maya social organization remains incomplete. This text suggests that the notion of "house" was an important concept to the Classic Maya living at Nim Li Punit (Gillespie 2000; but see Hageman 2000). Epigraphically, there are numerous examples of lineage houses named in the inscriptions of the Classic Period. For example, the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Copan name at least two important structures including the *Wi'te'naah* 'Root Tree House' (Stuart 2000: 493) and the *Popol Naah* 'Council House' (Gallegos Gomora 2003: 518) and at Palenque there is a building known as the *Sak Nuk Naah* 'White-Skinned House' (Schele and Mathews 1998: 44). These structures were likely the focus for corporate group maintenance and may have been used as personal estates for the most prestigious lineage groups (Gillespie 2000: 467). Access to these buildings was tightly controlled as can be seen by their respective layouts which feature tightly-enclosed patio groups. These places are located in the center of royal acropolises and most show little modification after their initial construction.

The final passage on K1440 (Figure 9.9) begins with a restatement (W1) of the

king's personal name (*B'ahlam Te'*) and a figural scene that features *B'ahlam Te'* seated on his throne being attended by two supernatural figures, a rat on the left and a bat on the right. *B'ahlam Te'*'s name glyph appears directly behind the head of the seated lord as a way of highlighting this particular passage of text. Following the name are some of his personal titles including *K'uhul Yax Ajaw Te'* 'First Divine Tree Lord' (X1-Y1), followed by two intervening glyphs (Z1-A'1) that may refer to death (*u-kimi* ?) and an unusual reference to royal roads that are traveled by both the dead and the sun (Carrasco 2005: 218). The clause is read *ta haat chan ub'ihil K'inich waxak ub'ihil* (Z2-A'3) 'for you, four are the roads of *K'inich*, eight are the roads of [some other god name]'. Carrasco discusses nearly identical phrases on the famous jade earflare text from Pomona, located in the Stann Creek District of southern Belize (also see Justeson et al. 1988). The earflare text contains the earliest description of roads traveled by both the sun and the Maize God, stating *Hunnal Ye' B'ih Waxak K'inich Ajaw Chan B'ih* 'eight roads are the Maize God, four roads are the Sun God' (Carrasco 2005: 218). The text on K1440 continues with the *ja'i na Ik' K'u Aj Xukpi* 'this or that one, the First Wind God, He of Copan' (A'4-A'5). The next phrase states *ja'i jomiy Ek' Jul Kab'* 'this or that was destroyed, the Black Pierced Earth Place' (B'1-B'3) and continues *hun tuun taliy sih Xukpi Naah* 'one year later, had arrived, the gift or offering, from the House of Copan' (B'4-C'1). The text concludes with the passage *che'en utz'ib'il taliy sih Xukpi tu Ajaw Kay Naah* 'so he says, the writing of, had arrived, the Copan gift or offering for the Nim Li Punit Lord House' (D'1-F'2).

The text recorded on K1440 is one of the most complicated in the entire Classic Maya corpus. It is full of unique references to events taking place in supernatural locations in conjunction with a multitude of patron deities. On the basis of this text, it

would seem that royal accessions involved numerous aspects of divine intervention that remain largely unrecognized. The investiture ceremony featured in the figural scene on this bowl involves the wearing of a feathered cape by *B'ahalm Te'* who is portrayed with his left hand grasping his right forearm in a Classic Maya gesture of submission (see Figure 9.15) (Miller 1981, 1983). Overseeing *B'ahlam Te'* inauguration are two lordly figures that also appear in the figural scene recorded at Nim Li Punit on Stela 2. One of these figures is shown touching the head of *B'ahlam Te'* with a wand or whisk consisting of finely cut pieces of cloth, perhaps in a gesture of conferral. The figure to the right appears to be holding special accoutrements including an obsidian axe and perhaps a small hand stone. These implements may signify fire drilling associated with royal accessions.

The next piece of Nim Li Punit dynastic history comes from Stela 15 (Figure 9.10), a monument raised to commemorate the 9.14.10.0.0 Period Ending. Stela 15 was originally found face down approximately 5m east of Stela 14 along the eastern side of the Stela Plaza near the center of Str. 4. Like most of the other carved monuments at the site, Stela 15 has been damaged by vandals who have tried to destroy these monuments repeatedly by attacking them with machetes (Dunham and Leventhal nd; Jackson and McKillop 1985). In 1998, most of the carved stelae were moved into the new Visitor Center as part of the MASDP restoration and consolidation project at Nim Li Punit.

The figural scene of Stela 15 features three individuals conducting an incense or fire burning ritual. Numerous texts across the Southern Maya Mountains Region describe fire scattering rituals within the standard supplemental series. It appears that fire rituals were an integral part of the ritual commemorations of Period Endings and monument dedications. All three figures featured on Stela 15 are shown scattering drops of (blood

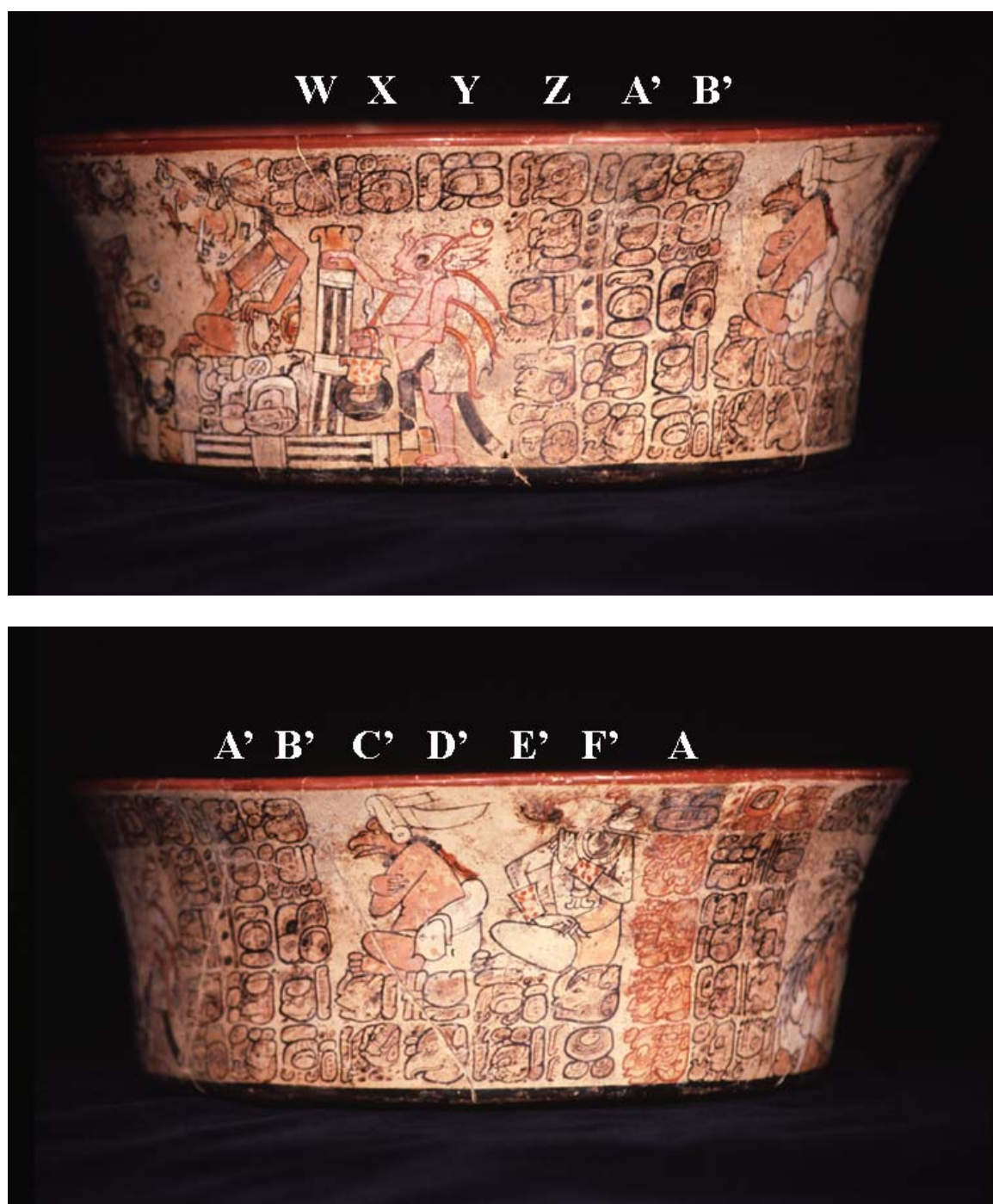


Figure 9.9. K1440, Passage W1-F'5 (Photos courtesy of Donald Hales, used with permission)

or) incense directly into a two-part ceramic censer. Nearly identical censers have been found archaeologically at Copan (see Agurcia Fasquelle 2004: Figure 6.3). The presence of soot on the interior of these censers and on the walls in temples across the Maya Lowlands attests to the widespread use of incense and torches in various ritual activities.

Analysis of the costumes worn here by Zender (2004b: 136) suggests that the figure to the left of the center figure is wearing the vestments of a high-ranking Maya priest based on the distinctive cape and the lengthy, front-gathered hipcloth that he wears. This identification is based on a larger epigraphic and iconographic study of Classic Maya priests and their costumes (see Zender 2004b). This figure also wears a tall cylindrical miter headdress with two distinctive knots. This costume contrasts with that of the figure on the right whose frontally-tied hipcloth is indicative of another ritual specialist (Zender 2004b: 136). The king is shown frontally, with his head turned right in profile. The turban headdress worn by the Nim Li Punit king is highly distinctive and is regionally restricted to sites located in the southeastern Maya Lowlands including Copan, Quiriguá, Santa Barbara, and La Entrada. Schele and others have suggested that the turban headdress served as a regional marker of ethnic identity that may have been used to signify Nim Li Punit's allegiance to the hegemony of greater Copan (Martin and Grube 2000: 201; Schele and Looper 1996: 123). Sixteen portraits of seated Maya kings representing the complete royal dynasty of Copan are shown wearing the distinctive headdress on Altar Q at Copan (Figure 9.11).

Stela 15 has an unusual reading order (Figure 9.12). The text begins in normal, left to right order, but switches to a right to left, or mirror view, immediately following the *haab'* at the beginning of the verbal expression in D4. The reading order then switches back to the standard, left to right, format at the bottom of the stela and there are

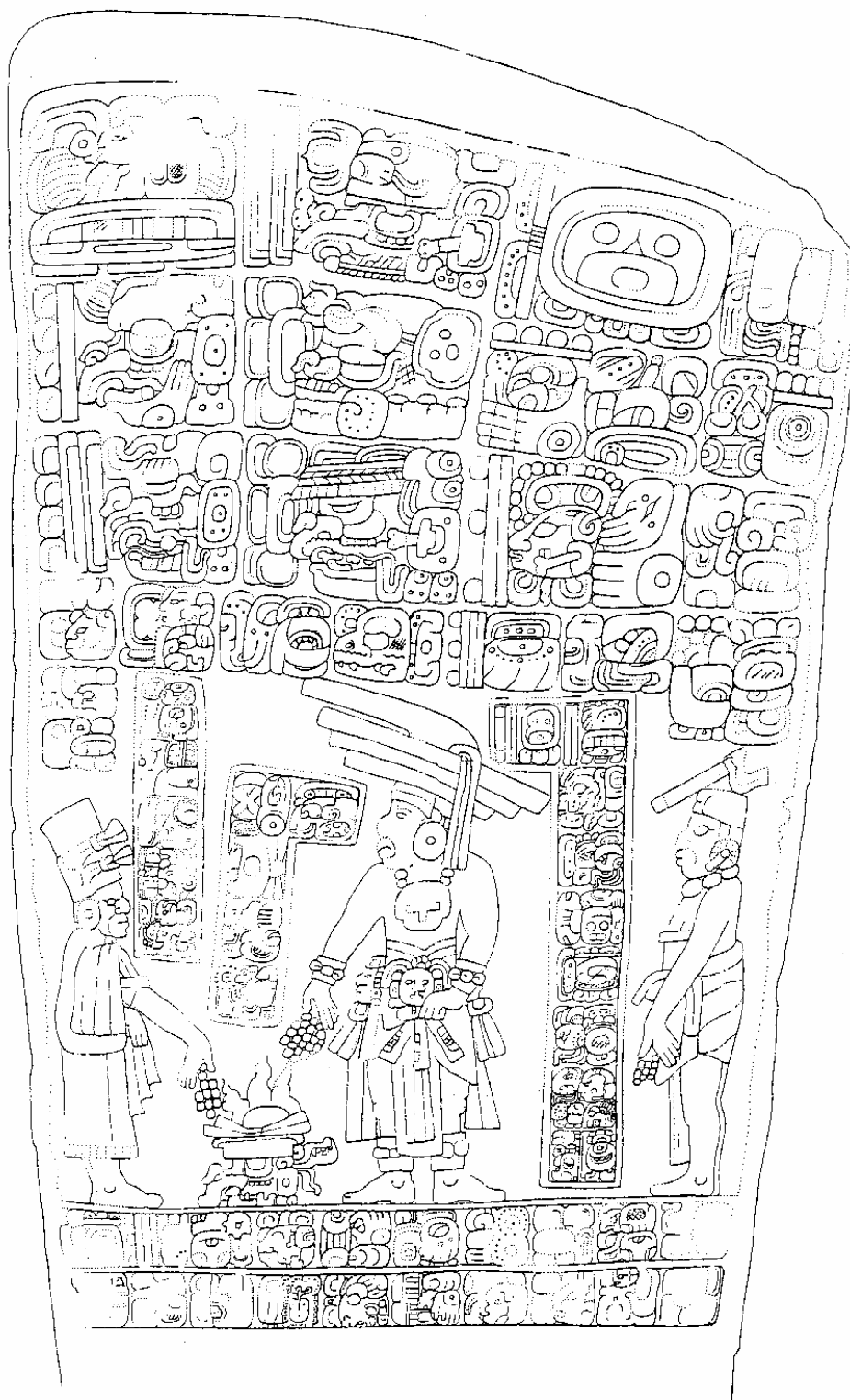


Figure 9.10. Nim Li Punit Stela 15 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

the three secondary figure captions. The dedicatory date for Stela 15 is recorded as 9.14.10.0.0 5 *Ajaw* 3 *Mak* (9, October 721). This Long Count date coincides with the day of a partial lunar eclipse that would have been visible at Nim Li Punit on the evening of October 9, 721 (Grube et al. 1999: 21). This may be the reason why a glyph featuring two interlocked hands appears as a substitute for Glyph C at C3. This collocation appears on the Marcador Text at Tikal in association with an eclipse on 8.17.1.4.12 (15, January 378) and at Palenque in the Temple of the Inscriptions' West Panel, where this sign substitutes for the month name *Ch'en*. It may also appear at Lubaantún on the Pocket Stela text. Grube believes that this glyph is related to the modern Yukatek expression *b'ina'an [uh] tu ch'en*, 'the [moon] had gone into her well' for a lunar eclipse (Grube et al. 1999: 21). Stela 15 also features a reference to fire scattering within the supplemental series (the first part of D3). The accompanying hieroglyphic text states that this scattering took place *utahn nal tz'apaj Ox Mak Tuun* 'in front of the planted 3 *Mak* Stela' (second part of D3-D4). Following the name of the stela is a reference to the *Waxaklajuun Ub'a Ka'an* '18 are its Images of the Snake' (F1-G1), which is the ancient name of Teotihuacán's Temple of Quetzalcoatl (Stuart 2000: 494; Taube 2003: 435), as well as the name of a fantastic Teotihuacán War Serpent (Schele 1990: 3; Freidel et al. 1993: 308-312). The text is written in mirror image perhaps as a means of highlighting the featured event of the stela. Large looming images of this great war monster were carried into battle on palanquins. An example of this war serpent appears on Lintel 2 of Temple 1 at Tikal, which features a portrait of *Jasaw Kaan K'awiil* sitting in a litter while a large image of the *Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kaan* hovers above him.

The name of the person who conjured this great war serpent follows the reference to the *Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kaan* on Stela 15. Her personal name is largely eroded (J1),

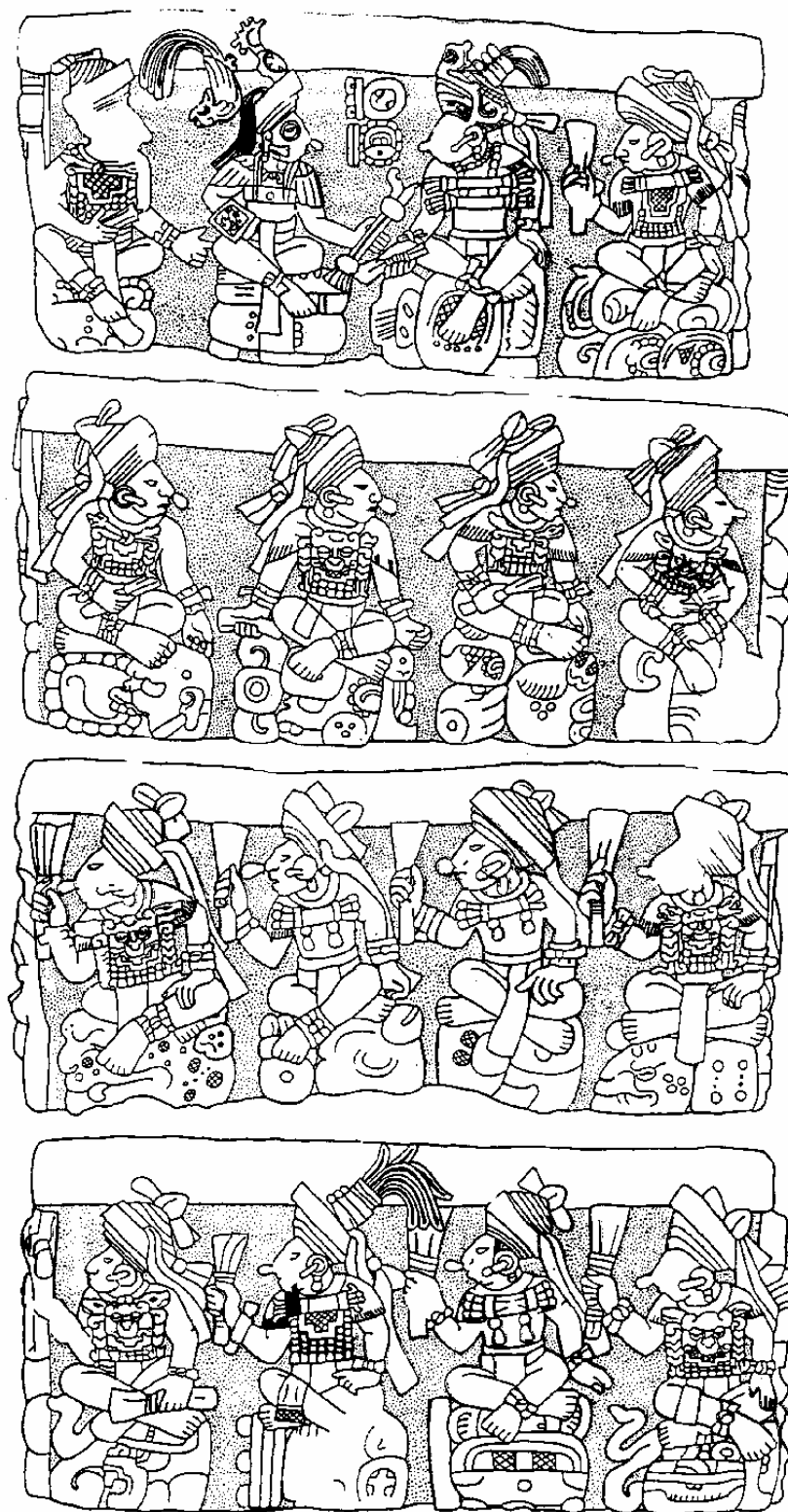


Figure 9.11. Copan Altar Q (Drawing by L. Schele, © David Schele, courtesy Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org)

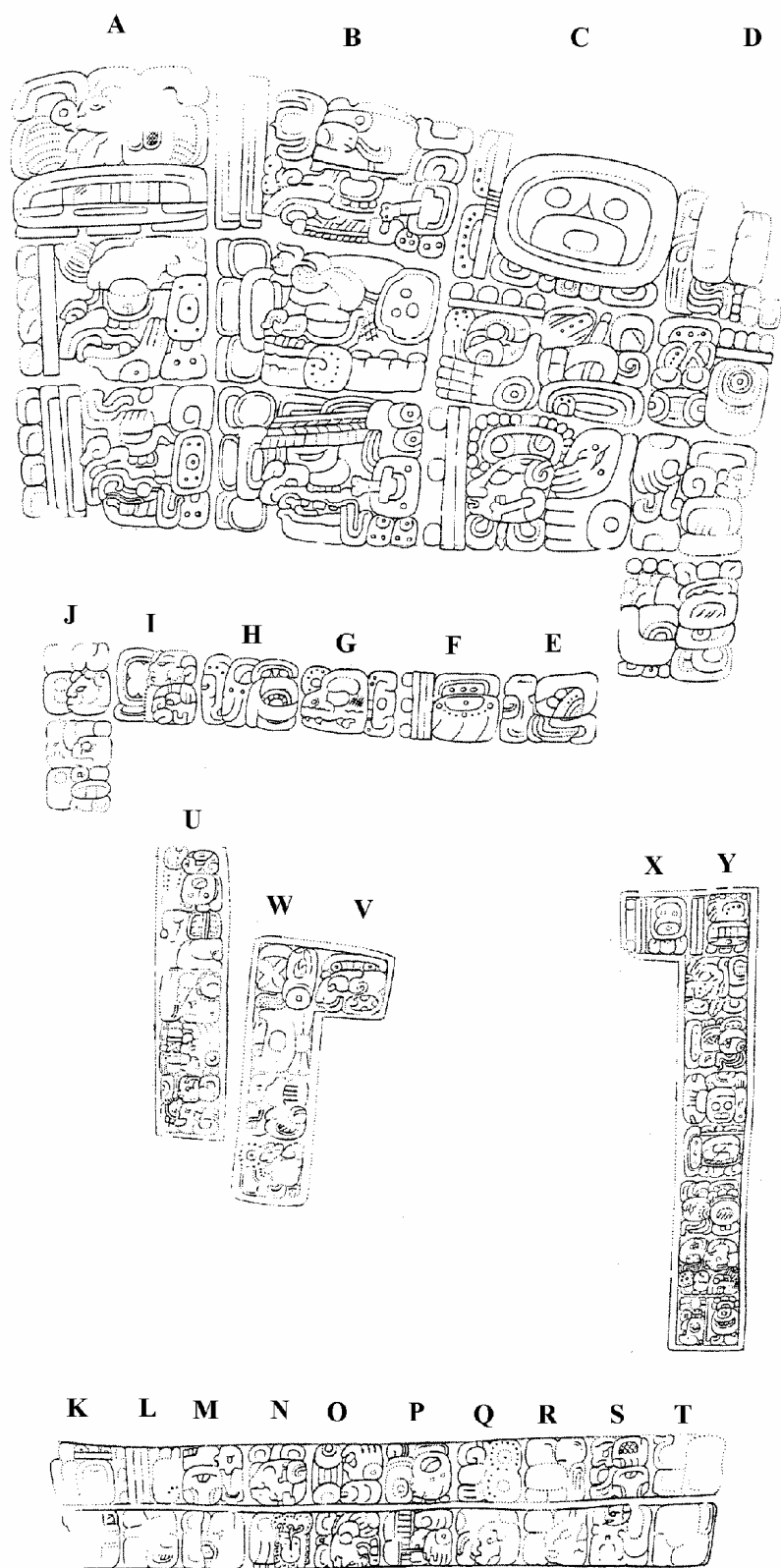


Figure 9.12. Reading Order for Nim Li Punit Stela 15 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

but her royal titles indicate that she was a divine lord of Nim Li Punit. The final glyph reads *Ixik K'u Kay Ajaw B'a Ajaw Te*, 'Divine Lady of Nim Li Punit Lord, the First Tree Lord' (J2).

The bottom text features a later Calendar Round date and will be discussed shortly. The inverted L-shaped secondary text associated with the central figure is very eroded (Figure 9.13). It begins with the reflexive *ub'aaj K'inich Sij Huun* 'he himself, Resplendent Born Headband' (V1-W2), the name of the king portrayed on the front of the monument. The next glyph is unreadable (W3), but the outlines seem to match an eroded name recorded in the lower text at L2. The final glyph in this secondary text is the bird-headed version of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph (W4). The second caption, located to the right of the high priest's face, is also severely eroded. Virtually none of this text can be read except for the final two glyph blocks, which appear to record *K'inich K'uk' yita Xukpi Ajaw* 'Resplendent Quetzal, companion of a Copan Lord' (U4-U5). It appears that *K'inich K'uk'*, is the name of the high priest pictured on the monument, a companion to, or a person from, Copan.

The next piece of Nim Li Punit dynastic history to be considered comes from Stela 2 (Figure 9.14). Stela 2, measuring 4.40m in height, was originally located in the main Stela Plaza at the northeastern corner of Str. 2. The monument was found broken in eight pieces, two of which have been stolen and are still missing. The monument was carved in deep relief with excellent preservation, but has been the target of repeated blows by machete wielding vandals. The monument is carved on the front side only and features three text registers: an upper text register contains the remains of at least six eroded glyphs; a lower main text register contains thirty-six glyph blocks; and finally, a small four glyph block scribal signature is located at the bottom of the monument.

The figural scene of Stela 2 resembles the figural scene depicted on K1440 (Figure 9.15). Stela 2 features three individuals: a portrait of a standing Nim Li Punit king scattering into an *incensario*, a caped individual seated on a small throne scattering on the left, and a standing figure to the right whose pose indicates subordination. The king portrayed on Stela 2 is wearing the same costume as those of the two lords depicted on K1440. The figure on the left, who is seated on a small throne, looks like the caped figure on Stela 15, whom Zender identified as a high priest. The person on the right is also of high status based on the presence of a hipcloth that is tied in the front. All three figures are on top of a profile of a *Witz* Monster pedestal that portrays a location known as ‘Flower Mountain’ (Grube and Gaida 2006; Saturno et al. 2005). Flower Mountain was an ancestral and paradisiacal location that provided supernatural access from the realm of the watery Underworld to the realm of the heavens (Taube 2003: 435-437). This concept exists today among some modern Maya groups, including the Tz’utujil, who view the Flower Mountain as the mountainous support for the *axis mundi* through which the maize tree emerges (Saturno et al. 2005: 18). The text recorded on Nim Li Punit Stela 2 is important for understanding the political relationships expressed in Late Classic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. As discussed in Chapter 6, Uxbenká appears to have been closely related to the central Petén during the Early Classic Period. However, from the mid-fifth century to just before the start of the seventh century, a 130-year interregnum period ensues at Uxbenká, characterized by a lack of written inscriptions. Immediately following this interregnum period, a number of emblem glyph-bearing polities appear across the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Pusilhá rises first, followed by Lubaantún, Nim Li Punit, Xnaheb’, and Tzimin Ché, all of which seem to be more closely aligned with the regional capitals of the southeastern Maya lowlands

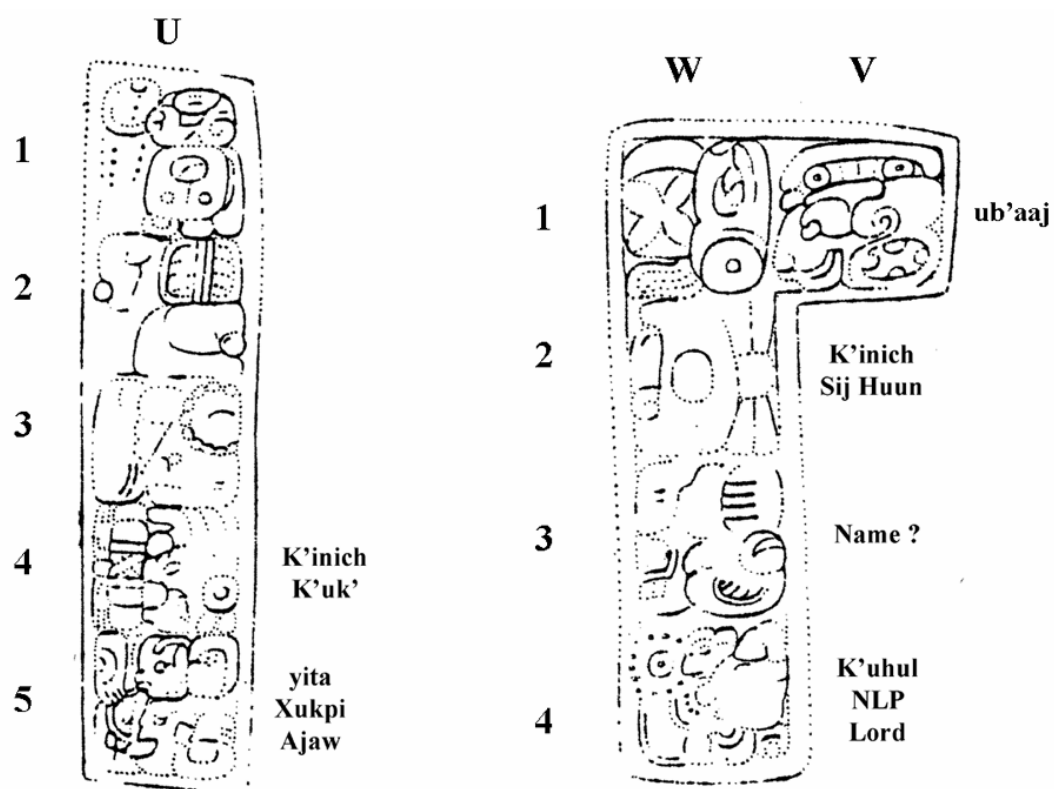


Figure 9.13. Nim Li Punit Stela 15, Secondary Texts (Drawings by J. Montgomery)

than with the central Petén. The text on Stela 2 suggests how this process may have occurred.

The text begins at the top of the monument with a now partially eroded initial series date of 9.14.15.?.?. (A1-C1) (Figure 9.14). Though one can see that a long text register once ran along the upper left-hand portion of the stela, only the vestiges of a glyph and the text border remain in front of the face of the standing king. Most of the entire upper surface of this monument has flaked off and is no longer legible. The main text begins with a missing calendar round date at D1-E1 (Figure 9.16). The only surviving information for this portion of text is the *haab'*, which appears to record 10 *Mol* (E1). In order to fit with other calendrical information, this Calendar Round date may be 2 *Ajaw* 18 *Mol*, which corresponds to 9.15.7.0.0 (12, July 738). However, if the missing portion of the Initial Series date recorded at the top of the monument recorded a date of 9.14.15.14.17, the corresponding calendar round date for the opening initial series date would have to be 9 *Kab'an* 10 *Mol*, which seems more likely. If this scenario is correct, the date would roughly correspond to the ten-year anniversary of *B'ahlam Te's* accession previously recorded on K1440. Due to the severity of the damage to the top portion of the text, it is unlikely that the chronology on Stela 2 will ever be certain. The text reads *uch'amaw K'awiil K'uhul Kay Mi' Ajawte* 'he grasps *K'awiil*, the Divine Nim Li Punit Zero-Tree Lord' (D2-D4), followed by the name *B'ahlam Te'*. The text on K1440 indicates that *B'ahlam Te's* accession took place either at Nim Li Punit or at a supernatural location known as the Pierced Earth House and so it is plausible that the two texts record sequential episodes of events chronicling *B'ahlam Te's* accession.

The text continues with an agency expression read *yichnal* 'facing' or 'with' (G1). As previously discussed, this agency expression is used to indicate patron-client

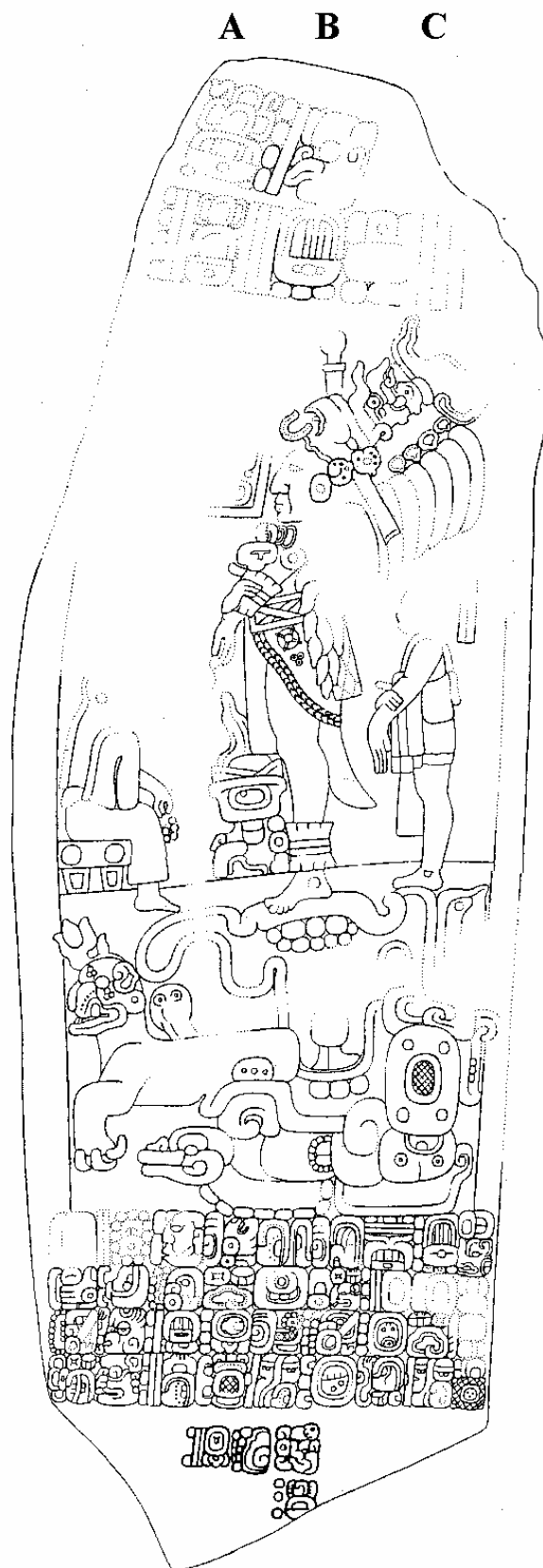


Figure 9.14. Nim Li Punit Stela 2 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)



A.



B.

Figure 9.15. Figural Scenes

A) Nim Li Punit Stela 2 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

B) K1440 (Photo courtesy of Justin Kerr, used with permission)

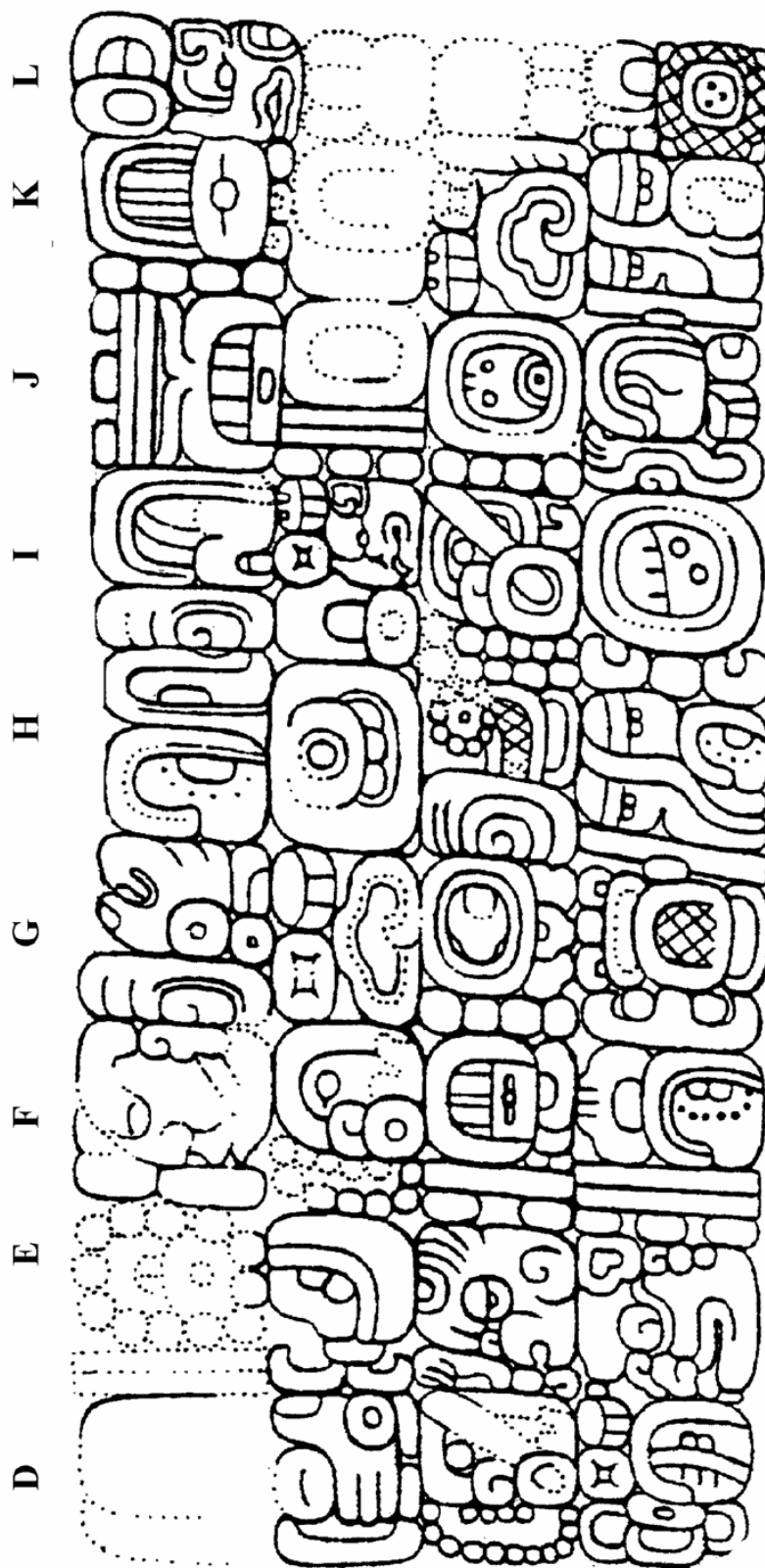


Figure 9.16. Nim Li Punit Stela 2, Main Text (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

relationships. In this case the patron is not named personally, but is referred to by his emblem glyph (F2-G2). The main sign of this emblem glyph has been the source of much confusion over the years. It appears in numerous places throughout eastern Petén and Belize. Christophe Helmke and I believe that this “water-scroll” emblem represents the emblem glyph of Altun Há, a large Classic Maya polity located in north-central Belize (see Helmke and Wanyerka nd).

The water-scroll emblem on Nim Li Punit Stela 2 looks very much like the main sign of the glyph for south, thought to read *nojol*. Houston (1993: 100) identified a similar-looking toponym at Tamarindito. However, there are enough differences in the known examples of the water-scroll emblem to suggest that they are different signs. Helmke and I compiled a corpus of all the known water-scroll emblems in an attempt to identify a substitution pattern that would help in translating this sign, but have been unsuccessful. The water-scroll emblem glyph appears in the inscriptions of Altun Há, Altar de los Reyes, Naj Tunich, Pusilhá, Tamarindito, Tikal, and Xunantunich, as well as Nim Li Punit (Figure 9.17). This distribution suggests that the location of the water-scroll site lies somewhere in the central/southeastern Maya Lowlands. However, the greatest concentration of references to the water-scroll emblem occurs in the Southern Maya Mountains Region.

The evidence that the water-scroll emblem refers to Altun Há comes from an inscription recorded on a jade pectoral from Tomb B-4/6 at Altun Há (Pendergast 1982: 84). In a passage dating to 9.7.11.2.17 7 *Kab'an* 5 *Kank'in* (4, December 584) a king named *Siyaj Chan K'inich* ‘Sky-Born *K'inich*’ acceded to the throne as the 4th Successor. He carries the water-scroll emblem glyph as the final part of his name, indicating that the water-scroll emblem likely refers to Altun Há. This king (*Siyaj Chan K'inich*) and this

water-scroll emblem glyph also appear on a small unprovenanced sculpture of God N thought to have originated in the Altun Há region (Hellmuth 1987: 308). A second God N sculpture features the main “fish” version of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph suggesting a connection between the rulership of Altun Há and Nim Li Punit. As mentioned earlier, the Altun Há emblem glyph also appears at Pusilhá on Stela D in a possible reference to a battle that resulted in the breaking in half of a stela on 9.8.1.12.8 2 *Lamat* 1 *Sip* (22, April 595).

Pendergast’s excavations at Altun Há have indicated that it was a wealthy city and enjoyed close interregional ties to Copan (1979, 1982, 1990). The discovery of the Quetzal Vase, which was recovered in a tomb located in the floor of an elite residential compound at Copan, also provides evidence of this relationship (Reents-Budet 1994: 201). This vase comes from a ceramic workshop at Altun Há (Reents-Budet 1994: 201). Other features including ceramics with black backgrounds, shared idiosyncratic God N motifs, and similar design layouts (Reents-Budet 1994: 201) have been found in the Ulua ceramics of northern Honduras, suggesting that a strong bond existed between the Ulua region and northern Belize during the Late Classic Period. It is quite possible that Altun Há had the wealth, power, and the leadership to conduct long distance military actions, and the ability to maintain political overlordship in regions far from home, as suggested by the appearance of a person who carries the Water-Scroll emblem in a statement describing the accession of a local Nim Li Punit king.

The next passage on Nim Li Punit Stela 2 (Figure 9.18) begins with a distance number moving back in time 7 *tuuns* (F3) from the initial Long Count date of 9.15.7.0.0 to the following calendar round date of 4 *Ajaw* 13 *Yax* (G3-F4) 9.15.0.0.0 (18, August 731) and to the *utz’ap tuun* ‘planting of a stela’ (G4-H1). The planting of the stela, likely

a reference to Stela 2 itself, was conducted *yitaj Ek' Xuk Ajaw* 'with the Black Copan Lord' (I1-I2) who was the *Yich'aak K'uhul Wak Tzuk* 'the Divine Claw of the Sixth Partition' (H3-H4).

Schele and Grube (1990: 17) have shown that during the Late Classic Period, neighboring Quiriguá lords borrowed this Copan emblem to refer to themselves as *Ek' Xukpi Ajawob* 'Black Copan Lords' (Figure 9.19). The use of color terminology in association with this title relates to the supernatural location known as the *Ek' Way Nal* 'Black Transforming Place'. Schele was the first to note that at least nine toponyms including one called the *Ek' Nahb' Nal* 'Black Water Place' were recorded across the upper facade of Str. 22A at Copan (Schele et al. 1991: 2-3) (Figure 9.20). Fash (1991: 134) has argued that this building, dedicated on 9.15.15.0.0 9 *Ajaw* 18 *Xul* (12, June 746), served as a *Popol Naah* 'Council or Lineage House' because of the oversized *mat* signs. Grube and Schele (1991: 5) believe that the *Ek' Nahb' Nal* toponym recorded on the northwest corner of Temple 22a is a specific reference to Quiriguá because the same toponym is also recorded at Quiriguá on Stela E.

Upon examination of the other toponyms featured at Copan on Str. 22A, I identified one that appears to refer to Nim Li Punit. This toponym is located above the second pier of the building and reads *Kay-Nal*, which I interpret to be the main sign of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph (Figure 9.20).Looper (2003: 59) has argued that the *Ek' Xukpi* Title indicates a lord's place of origin within one of the many provinces or districts affiliated with the Copan polity. It is likely that the locations on Str. 22A refer to polities socially, politically, and economically allied with Copan. Further epigraphic evidence to support this claim comes from another example of the fish-head version of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph recorded at Copan on the same sculpted bench from Temple 11 that

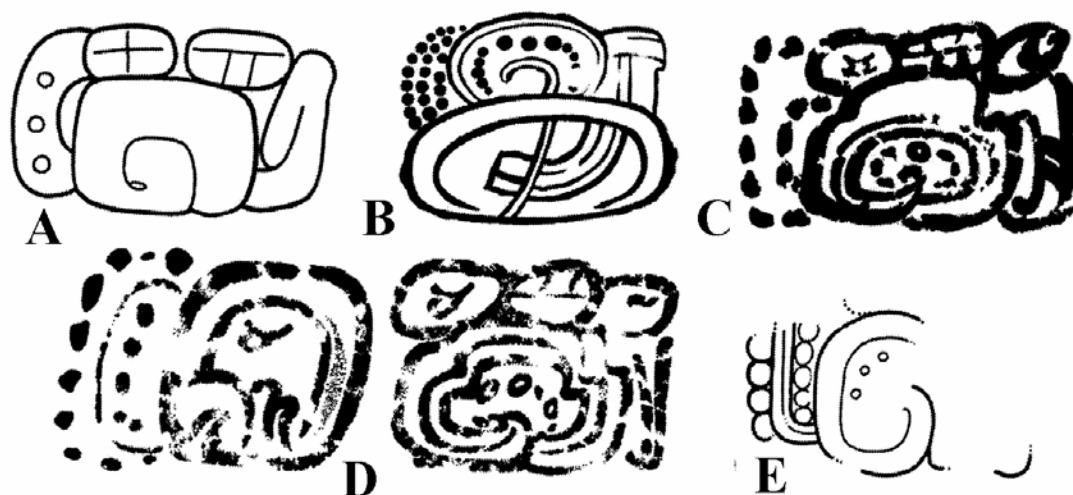


Figure 9.17. The Water-Scroll Emblem Glyph (All Drawings by C. Helmke)

A) Altun Há Jade Plaque B) God N Effigy Sculpture (K3331)

C) Naj Tunich Drawing 34 D) Naj Tunich Drawing 65

E) Altar 3, Altar de los Reyes

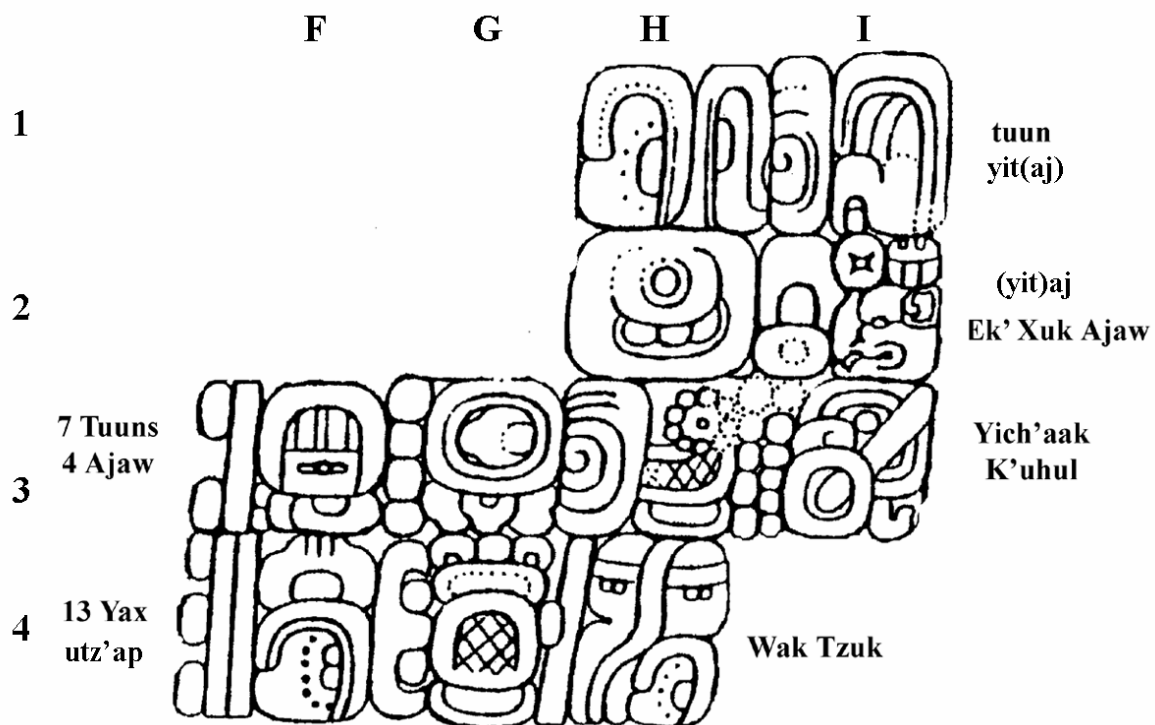


Figure 9.18. Nim Li Punit Stela 2, F3-I4 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

featured the portraits and names of twenty historical figures including one from Pusilhá, who were present to witness *Yax Pasaj*'s accession (See Figure 9.41). There is at least one other reference to Nim Li Punit recorded in the hieroglyphic inscriptions at Copan recorded on Step 35 of Copan's famous Hieroglyphic Stairway that mentions a royal person from the *Kay* polity. The appearance of the highly restricted *Ek' Xukpi* title and turban headdress at Nim Li Punit, along with several specific references to Nim Li Punit in the inscriptions at Copan, strongly suggest that Nim Li Punit was both a province and client to Copan and likely served as a *k'atun* seat within Copan's *may* network.

The notion that Nim Li Punit was a province of Copan is further supported by the appearance of a Numbered *Tzuk* title immediately following the reference to the *Ek' Xukpi Ajaw* on Stela 2. The *Tzuk* title can be written a number of different ways (Figure 9.21). Often this title is recorded *tzu-k(u)*, written with either the T559, T560, or T370 *tzu* sign and the T528 *ku* sign or simply with the T1017 *Tzuk* head variant. Schele and Grube suggested that the *tzuk* glyph represented a calabash or gourd tree since *tzu* in many of the eastern Maya languages refers to 'gourd bowls' or *tecomates* (1991: 2). Schele and Grube also noted several examples which featured a *ki* or *ku* suffix to indicate that the word being written was *tzuk* (Schele and Grube 1991: 3). *Tzuk* has numerous meanings in both Yucatekan and Ch'olan languages; however, its primary meaning is related to the concept of "province, partition or part of a town." The Motul Dictionary provides the following Yucatek entries (Hernandez 1930: 266-268):

tzuc: cuenta para pueblo, partes, párrafos, artículos, rezones, diferencias,
vocablos, y montones.

tzuc: partes, enpartimientos.

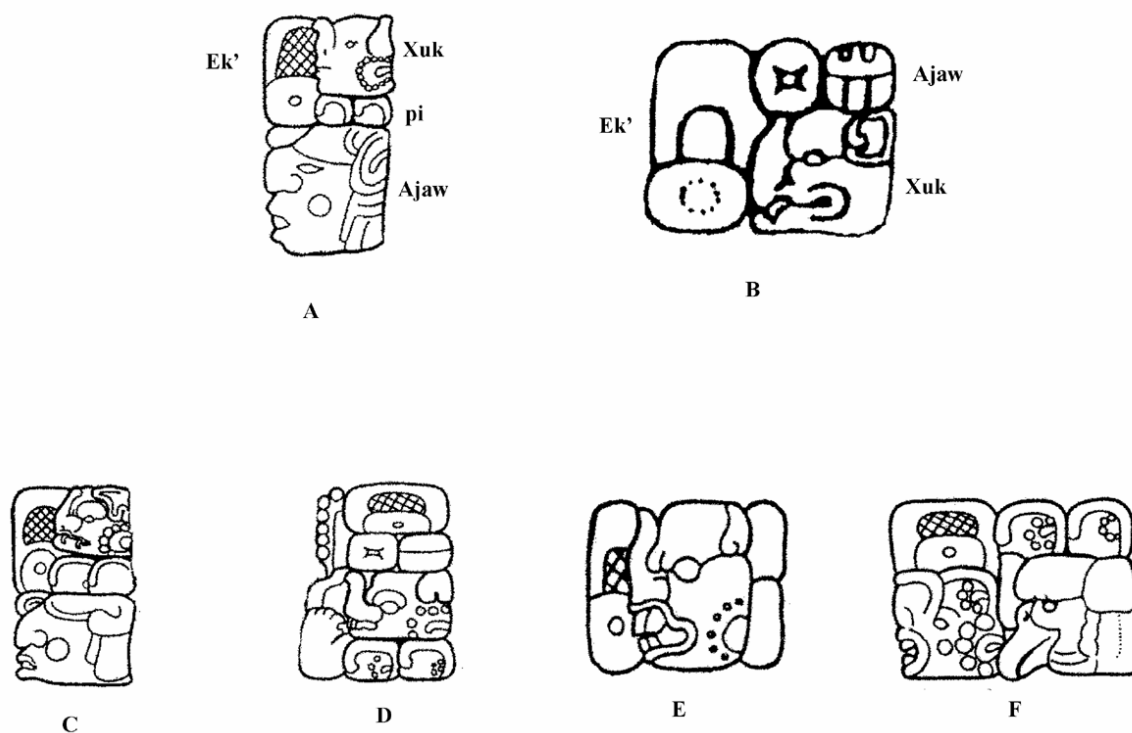


Figure 9.19. The *Ek' Xukpi* Title

A) Quiriguá Stela D-West (Drawing by M.Looper), B) NLP Stela 2 (Drawing by J. Montgomery), C) Quiriguá Stela D-East (Drawing by M.Looper), D) Quiriguá Stela E-West (Drawing by M.Looper), E) Quiriguá Altar M (Drawing by M.Looper), F) Quiriguá Stela F-West (Drawing by M.Looper)

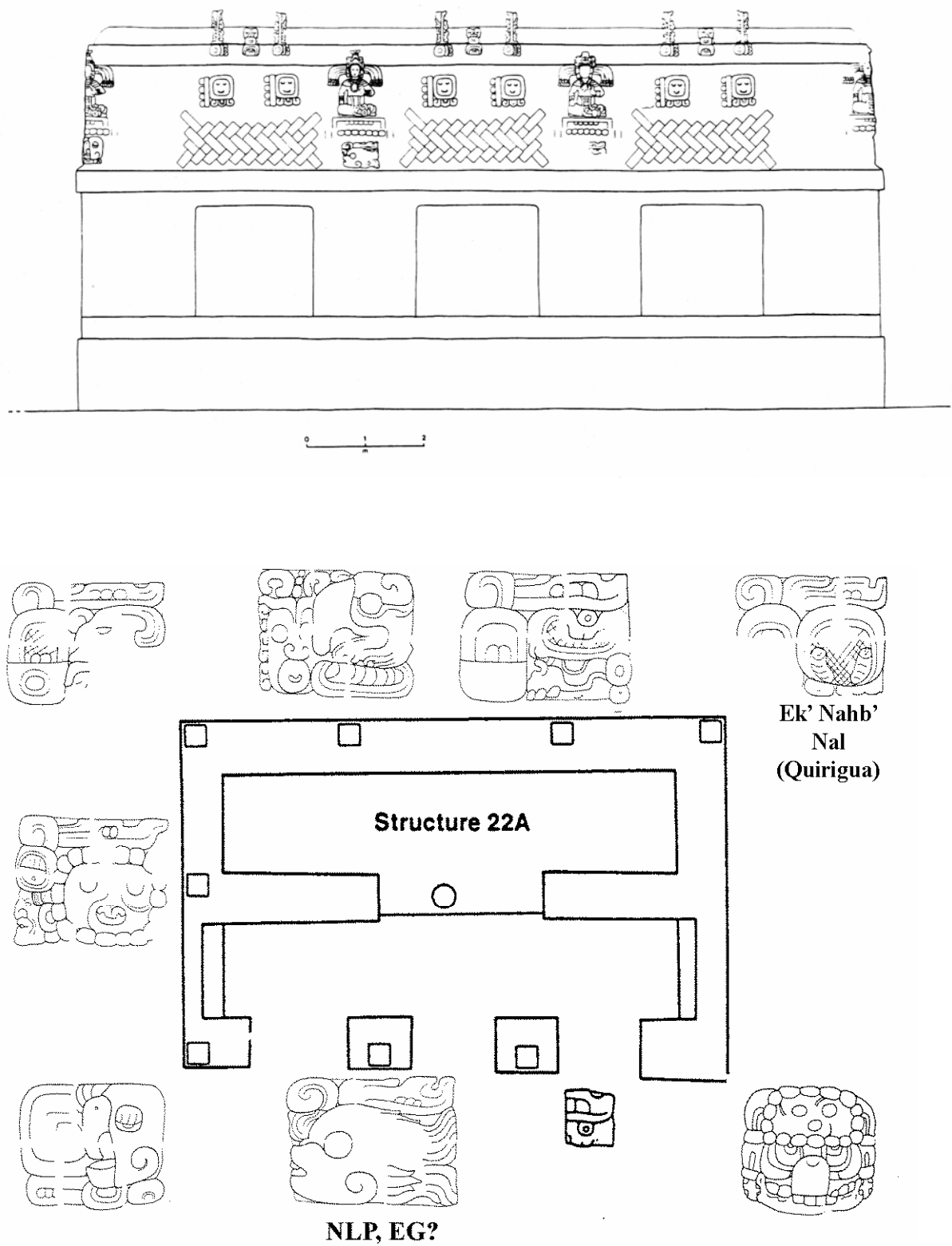


Figure 9.20. Copan Structure 22A (Drawing courtesy of Barbara Fash, used with permission)

tzuc: copete, o coleta de cabellos, y crines de cavallo, o las barbas que hecha el maiz para arriba estado en la mazorca y la cabeza que tienen algunas hachas y martillos en contra del tajo, y la cabeza del horcón, y las nuves levantadas en alto y quedar, que denotan, segun dize, temestad de agua.

tzucub: provincia.

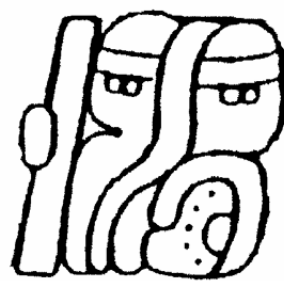
tzucul: pueblo pequeño, parcialidad, o parte de pueblo.

tzucúl: accento en la última, cuadrilla de gente.

Tzuk or *tzuc* has the same sense of “province” in the Chontal documents of Acalan. According to Scholes and Roys (1968: 54), a passage in the Acalan alludes to a larger territorial division of the polity. The passage states that the ruler of Itzamkanac, a person named Paxbolonacha, summoned his four principal men who oversaw the four major cities which make up the realm (Padzunun, Atapan, Chabte, and Tacato). The text describes these four places as *chan tzucul cab* ‘four divisions of the earth’ (Scholes and Roys 1968: 54). It was also reported that territory east of Acalan, the area known as Cehache Territory, was said to have been divided into various subdivisions that were named after the heads of the ruling families or after the predominating lineage heads of the group (Scholes and Roys 1968: 69). These subdivisions were strongly defended not only against foreign enemies, but against each other (Scholes and Roys 1968: 70). Sergio Quezada (1993: 20) and Susan Kepecs (2005: 124) expanded on this understanding of *tzucub* to suggest that members of a certain *tzucub* were allied economically. They based their findings on entries from the *Chilam B’alams* that stated that a particular *tzucub*, named Emal (near Chikinchel), was ruled by the Chan lineage and that they were in close economic alliance with kin located in Uaymil in southern Quintana Roo (Kepecs 2005:

124; Roys 1968:54). Quezada suggests that the notion of *tzucub* also referred to specific groupings of towns within a particular province or region. The *tzucub* system described by Quezada is similar to Rice's *may* model. He notes that during the 16th century, the names of the lineage heads were often prefixed by the word *tzuc*, suggesting that the groupings of towns were governed as political territories by lineal overlords (Quezada 1993: 20). The appearance of specific numbered *tzuk* titles at sites across the Maya Lowlands leads me to believe that a similar system was also employed during the Classic Period.

Research conducted by Dmitri Beliaev (2000), Prudence Rice (2004), and me indicates that the numbered *Tzuk* titles refer to groupings of sites located within a specified geographic territory. Rice (2004: 126) argued that there were thirteen *tzukob'*, possibly representing 13 different *k'atun* seats within Tikal's *may* based on two passages recorded on separate stairways (H.S. 2 and H.S. 4) at Dos Pilas. Both stairway texts commemorate Dos Pilas' victory over Tikal in A.D. 679. A reference to the downing of the flints and shields of the Tikal king, *Nuun Ujol Chaak* appears at Dos Pilas, on H.S. 2 West, Step III. This passage states that the "blood was pooled" and that "skulls were mountained" of someone described as a 13 *tzuk* lord. This action was overseen by *B'alaj Chan K'awiil*, the contemporary king of Dos Pilas (Schele and Mathews 1998: 70; Boot 2002b: 15). A reference to *Nuun Ujol Chaak* being a Tikal lord of the 13 *Tzuk* is also recorded at Dos Pilas, on H.S. 4, Step III (Guenter 2003: 37). Based on these references, Rice (2004: 126) has argued that the 13 *tzuk* likely referred to the 13 dependent provinces or the 13 *k'atun* seats of Tikal, which may have included Uaxactún, Yaxhá, Nakum, Xultún, Motul de San José, Ixlú, Zacpetén, Chalpaté, and Uolantún. I prefer the interpretation that these texts indicate that the captured person in question was from the



Wak Tzuk

T559
tzuT560
tzuT370
tzuT1017
TZUK1528
kuFigure 9.21. The *Tzuk* Title, Nim Li Punit Stela 2 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

13th *tzuk* or ‘province’.

This interpretation is somewhat different from Rice’s. I suspect that this system is an archaism left over from Late Preclassic or Early Classic times. These numbered *tzuk* titles may be directly related to how the Classic Maya viewed and interpreted their territorial world. The *tzuk* title may be related to the phrase *Oxlajun Kab* ‘Thirteen Lands’ noted on the altar text from Altar de los Reyes. I suspect that each of these numbered *tzuk* titles refers to the territorial expanse (or hegemony) of one of those thirteen original polities. This concept would strengthen Rice’s (2004) ideas concerning possible *k’atun* seats within a *may* system.

In my epigraphic survey of *tzuk* titles, I have been able to identify at least seven different numbered titles ranging from 1 to 13. With no numbers higher than 13, it would seem that the Classic Maya viewed their world or “realm” as having 13 *tzukob* ‘13 partitions’. The recently discovered Altar 3 at the site of Altar de los Reyes (Figure 9.22), located in southern Campeche, Mexico (Šprajc 2002, 2002-04, 2003) depicts an eroded portrait of a seated king on a throne. Two lone glyph blocks accompany the figural scene, reading *K’uhul Kab’ Oxlajuun Tzuk* ‘Divine or Sacred Earth, the 13 Partitions’ (Grube 2002). The hieroglyphic inscription that runs around the entire outer-surface of the altar features thirteen individual emblem glyphs all in a row. This text supports the interpretation that the Classic Maya regarded their realm as one consisting of thirteen *tzukob* or ‘provinces,’ whose emblem glyphs featured on this monument may name the regional *may* capitals for the entire realm. Part of this side text has been damaged and some of the main signs for a few of these emblem glyphs are now missing. However, the remaining emblem glyphs include the following sites: Edzna (p14), the Ik’ Site, possibly Motul de San Jose (p15), a site known as Chatan Winik probably referring to either El

Mirador or Nakbé (p2), Calakmul (p6), Tikal (p7), Palenque (p8), and Altun Há (p9). The glyph at p1 seems to begin the sequence of emblem glyphs and reads *ajaw tz'amil* 'the Throne Lords of'. This text seems to refer to an indigenous system of reckoning the Classic Maya realm as consisting of thirteen distinct territorial or regional polities. Since many of the polities listed on this altar were enemies, especially Tikal and Calakmul, it is unlikely that this system was fully controlled by a single polity or that it directly implies political oversight by a single polity, since it is doubtful that enemies would agree to such an arrangement. Rather, it is likely that these thirteen polities represented the thirteen original *may* seats. There are only two other known inscriptions in the entire corpus where multiple emblem glyphs were recorded side by side like those featured on Altar 3, those being Copan Stela A and Seibal Stela 10 (Martin 2003b). Recently, Wagner (2006: 158-159) has argued that the two quadripartite references on Stela A and Stela 10 may also refer to indigenous notions of the Maya region. Wagner cites an ethnohistoric account, written by Bernardo de Lizana in the early 17th century that describes great pilgrimages from all parts of the Maya area. As part of these pilgrimages four roads or causeways, oriented to the four cardinal directions, extended across the Maya area (2006: 158). While idealized, this quadripartite arrangement of specific kingdoms recorded on these two monuments appears to resemble those idealized circular maps (i.e. the Map of Maní) described in the Books of the *Chilam Balams* that feature the whole of the community. These statements to specific foreign polities or territories represent an idealized quadripartite map of their realm placed within a cosmological framework (Wagner 2006: 158-159). Roys (1939: 7) briefly describes a "safe conduct" passage regarding people on pilgrimages. At Naj Tunich it is clear from the hieroglyphic texts that pilgrimages of both local and non-local peoples were visiting the cave during Classic

times.

My analysis of the Numbered *Tzuk* title suggests that the ‘First Partition,’ *Hun Tzuk*, was located in the heart of the central Petén at the site of Rio Azul based on a text recorded on an unprovenanced jade celt that names a Rio Azul king (Figure 9.23A). There are two other references to *Yax Tzuk* ‘First Partition’ recorded at the Early Classic site of Tres Islas on Stela 1 (Figure 9.23B) (8.18.0.0.0) and Stela 2 (8.19.0.0.0) in the southern Petén. There is a reference to a *Ka Tzuk* ‘Second Partition’ in the inscriptions of Pomona, located in the western Maya lowlands near Palenque. This particular title appears at an early date at Pomona on Hieroglyphic Panel 8 (Figure 9.23C) (9.4.0.0.0) and it also appears at Palenque on the Hieroglyphic Stairway of House C in a later reference (9.11.6.16.11) to captives taken from Pomona. There is a reference to a *Kan Tzuk* ‘Fourth Partition’ (Figure 9.23D) in the Yucatan on Lintel 1 (10.2.4.8.4) at Yula, a small site located approximately 5 km due south of Chichén Itzá. The *Wak Tzuk* ‘Sixth Partition’ (Figure 9.23E) was recorded twice at Nim Li Punit both on Stela 2 (9.15.0.0.0/9.14.15.4.14) and there was another possible early reference to a Sixth Partition recorded at Copan on the Papagayo Step. The *Wuk Tzuk* ‘Seventh Partition’ (Figure 9.23F) appears to be the most common reference of all with at least ten examples in the inscriptions of sites clustered around Naranjo. They are La Naya Stela 1 (9.14.3.0.0), Naranjo Stela 8 (9.18.0.0.0), Naranjo Stela 13 (9.17.0.0.0), K2358, K635, K2730, Holmul K8019, Topoxté Incised Bone, and two texts from Tikal: Altar 8 and Column Altar 1 (9.15.17.10.4), both of which occur in passages referring to foreign captives (see Beliaev 2000). There is a lone example of *B’olon Tzuk* ‘Ninth Partition’ recorded on a broken ceramic plate from the site of Dos Hombres in northern Belize (Figure 9.23G). Finally, there are at least four references to an *Oxlaajaun Tzuk* ‘Thirteenth Partition’. References to

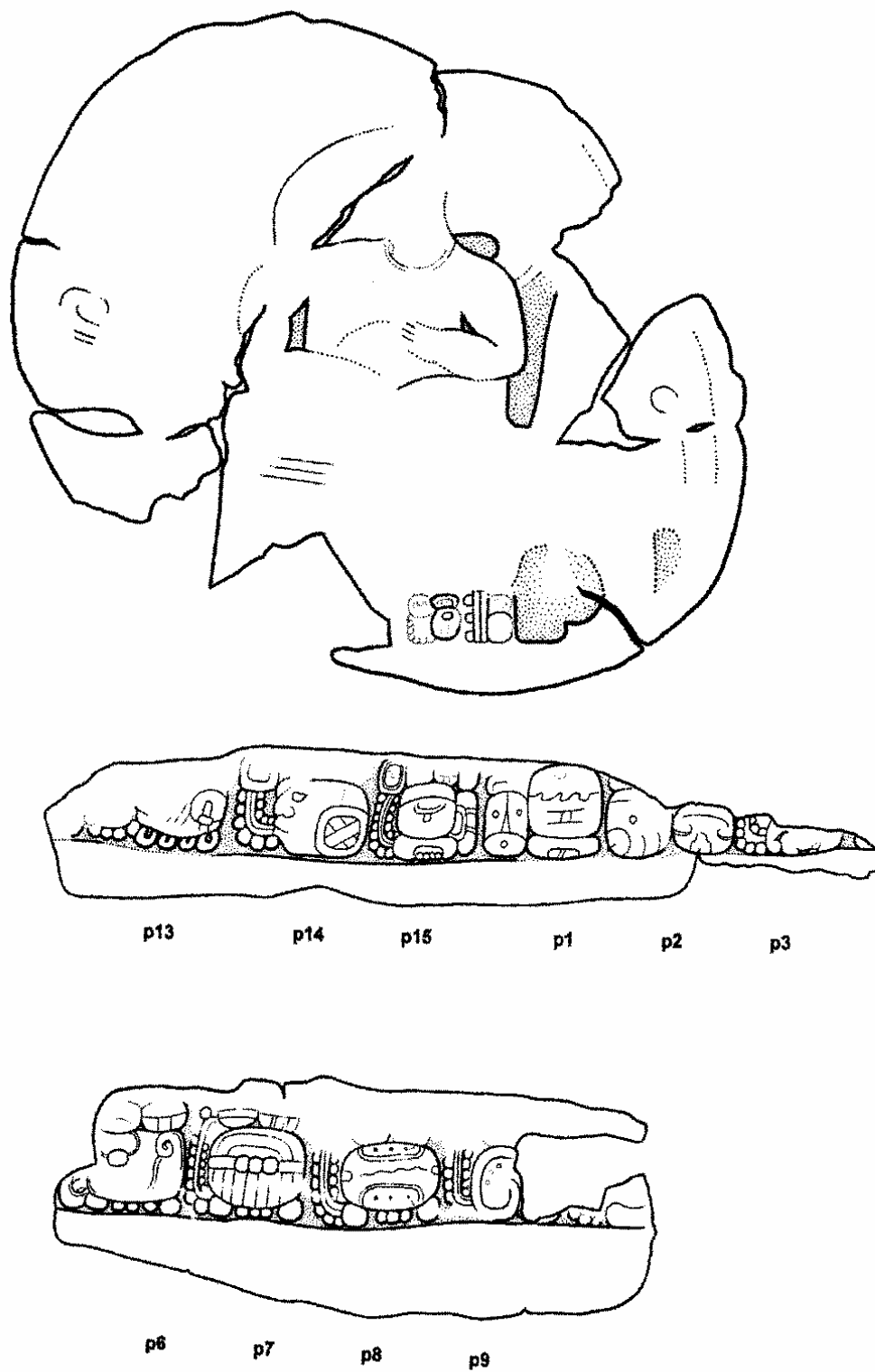


Figure 9.22. Altar de los Reyes Altar 3 (Drawing by N. Grube)

the *Oxlajun Tzuk* are featured on a jade earspool at Altun Há, on Stela 4 at La Honradez, and on Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 and 4 at Dos Pilas and the title seems to belong to a Tikal lord named *Nuun Ujol Chaak* (Figure 9.23H). Roys (1954: 15) refers to a ruined site located in the province of Chakan, that was called *Hotzuc* ‘Five Partition’ suggesting that the Fifth Province was located in the Yucatan. Finally, it is possible that the Eighth Partition was represented by the *Waxak Winik* Title, an elite title restricted in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of sites located in the Southern Maya Mountains Region including Naj Tunich, Ixtutz, Nim Li Punit, Machaquila, and Uxbenká.

In nearly every example, the Numbered *Tzuk* title is recorded at the end of a nominal phrase and appears to function much like an emblem glyph, describing which partition of the possible thirteen partitions the person named is from. As Tokovinine (2007: 9) noted, the distinctions between these numbered *tzuk* titles may provide epigraphic evidence for the existence of separate identities for the Classic Maya. It is likely that these titles could be used to identify ethnic or regional identity and therefore they may be useful in defining the ethno-linguistic boundaries of the polities or territories which utilized the same numbered *tzuk* title.

Based on the distribution of the sites that feature these numbered *tzuk* titles one can infer the geographic regions as they were conceived by the Classic Maya. For example, the First Partition appears to refer to the area around Rio Azul, or perhaps to the area around Tres Islas, depending on the reading of the *Yax Tzuk* examples. The Second Partition appears to demarcate the far western geographic region of the Maya lowlands, which likely includes the sites of Palenque, Tortuguero, Pomona, and perhaps Tonina. The Fourth Partition likely refers to the region of northern Yucatan, which would include the sites of Chichén Itzá, Yula, and perhaps Ek Balam. The Sixth Partition likely refers to

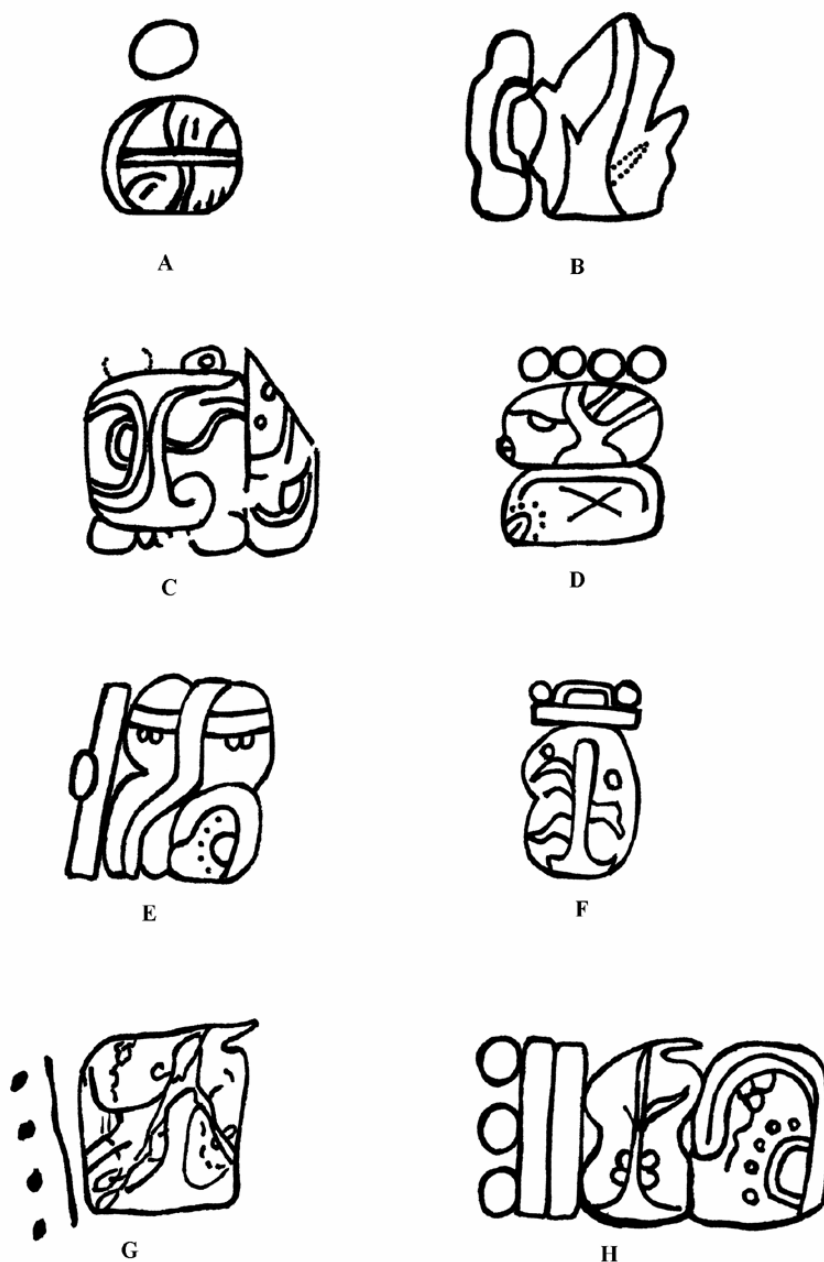


Figure 9.23 The Numbered *Tzuk* Title (All Drawings by P. Wanyerka)

A) *Hun Tzuk* (Rio Azul Jade Celt), B) *Yax Tzuk* (Tres Islas St. 1), C) *Ka Tzuk* (Pomona Hieroglyphic Panel 8), D) *Kan Tzuk* (Yula Lintel 1), E) *Wak Tzuk* (Nim Li Punit Stela 2), F) *Wuk Tzuk* (Topoxté Incised Bone), G) *B'olon Tzuk* (Dos Hombres, Broken Plate Fragment), H) *Oxla jun Tzuk* (Dos Pilas, HS 2)

the region between southern Belize and Copan. According to Beliaev (2000: 68) the Seventh Partition likely refers to the Eastern Petén, in particular, to the area between Naranjo, Yaxhá, and La Naya. The Eighth Partition likely refers to the Southern Maya Mountains Region. The Ninth Partition may be hard to pinpoint, since this lone example was featured on a broken painted ceramic text that may not have been made locally. However, given its appearance at Dos Hombres, a site located in northwestern Belize, it may refer to Belize Valley sites. As for the Thirteenth Partition, both Beliaev (2000: 68) and I agree that it likely refers to the area between Xultun, and La Honradez, and includes Tikal (2000: 68).

I concur with Beliaev (2000: 76) that the Classic Maya probably interpreted their world via a number of different models. The Maya at times conceived of their world from a single site perspective. Evidence for this comes from the dozens of individual toponymic references found throughout the monumental inscriptions that denote sacred geographic locations in relation to a local model of their world (Beliaev 2000: 76). Another model for interpreting the Classic Maya world is through the use of site-specific emblem glyphs. With more than 60 known examples, emblem glyphs are good indicators for the existence of larger polities, since the emblem does not simply refer to the capital itself, but to the larger polity of which it is the center (Zender 1998: 71). The appearance and use of these Numbered *Tz'uk* titles seems to indicate another, perhaps ancient model, that represents a larger regional system that was comprised of thirteen original polities.

Returning now to the final passage of the main text register of Nim Li Punit Stela 2 (Figure 9.24), the text begins with a new Calendar Round date of 1 *Ix* 12 *Pax* (I4-J1), which likely corresponds to the Long Count date of 9.14.15.4.14 (16, December 726). This Calendar Round seems to support the probable Initial Series date for Stela 2. The

text then moves forward in time 4 *tuuns*, 13 *winals*, and 6 *k'ins* (K1-K2). This distance number moves the chronology forward to arrive at the date of 4 *Ajaw* (J3) 13 *Yax* or 9.15.0.0.0 (18, August 731), repeating the Period Ending celebration that involved the planting of a stela in the presence of the *Ek' Xukpi* Lord. The text repeats that the earlier accession of the Nim Li Punit lord took place in the presence of a lord from the Water-Scroll site (K3) of Altun Há and that this entire event was supervised (J4) by the *Wak Tzuk* 'Sixth Partition' (K4), *Ek' Xukpi* Lord (L1). The following two glyphs are eroded (L2-L3) though it is likely that the *ajaw* epithet was recorded in L2. The final glyph in this passage is the glyph that in other contexts would read *utok' pakal* 'his flint and shield' as a metaphorical reference to warfare (Martin 2001b). The prominent mention of at least two important foreigners at Nim Li Punit in celebration of the 9.15.0.0.0 Period Ending may include a reference to an army or armed escort of the important visitors.

The text on Stela 2 concludes with a rare monument dedication phrase, the first found at any site in the Southern Maya Mountains Region (Figure 9.25). The four glyph block texts begin with a nondescript Short Count date of 12 *Ik'* (M1). With no other calendrical information, it is impossible to assign this day name a secure Long Count date. However, given that the latest date recorded on Stela 2 is 9.15.7.0.0 (12, July 738), I suspect that 12 *Ik'* likely corresponds to the Long Count date of 9.15.7.3.2 12 *Ik'* 0 *Keh* (12, September 738). This date is three *winals* and two days after the 9.15.7.0.0 Period Ending, which may indicate the time it took to carve and erect this monument. The rest of the text states *tab'ay yuxul ox k'atun* 'it was dedicated, the writing or the carving of the three *k'atun*' (N1-O2) and what may have been the glyph for 'lord' and the name of the sculptor are now missing.

This text reveals important aspects of the political relationships that existed in the

Southern Maya Mountains Region and specifically at Nim Li Punit during the Late Classic Period. The detailed descriptions of important high-ranking foreign dignitaries from sites located far from Nim Li Punit, who may have brought with them a contingent of armed military escorts as in the “arrival” at Tikal in A.D. 378, attest to the importance of the events that occurred at Nim Li Punit on that day. Not only did the king of Nim Li Punit accede under the supervision of a powerful hegemon, but the ceremony took place at the supernaturally charged location known as Flower Mountain.

The next text to be discussed at Nim Li Punit is recorded on the bottom of Stela 15 (Figure 9.26). The first sign is a probable anterior date indicator followed by the Calendar Round date of 6 *Ajaw* 18 *Ch'en* (K1-L1), which corresponds to the Long Count date of 9.14.10.15.0 (5, August 722). This date is just five months after the dedicatory date of this monument on 9.14.10.0.0. A lot of this lower text is unreadable, including the initial verbal phrase at K2-L2. However, what follows is a royal title naming someone a *chok winik yajaw Ek' Xukpi* ‘Young Person, the lord of the Black Copan Lord’ (M1-M2). The text further indicates that this person was a *b'a maax kokel sak kab' ub'aaj k'ul naah* ‘First Shield, the Guardian or Protector of White Earth, he of Divine Temple’ (N2-first half of P2). Following these titles is a reference to *puk* ‘scattering’ (second half of P2), likely referring to fire scattering rituals that took place in front of the sacred temple that involved a young person who was said to be the subordinate lord of the *Ek' Xukpi Ajaw*. The name of this youth was likely recorded at Q1, but it is now illegible. The text continues *ajawan* ‘he was seated in lordship’ (R1). This last statement may be a reference to *B'ahlam Te*’s heir apparent. The final six glyph blocks are too eroded to read.

The next piece of dynastic history comes from Nim Li Punit Stela 1 (Figure 9.27).

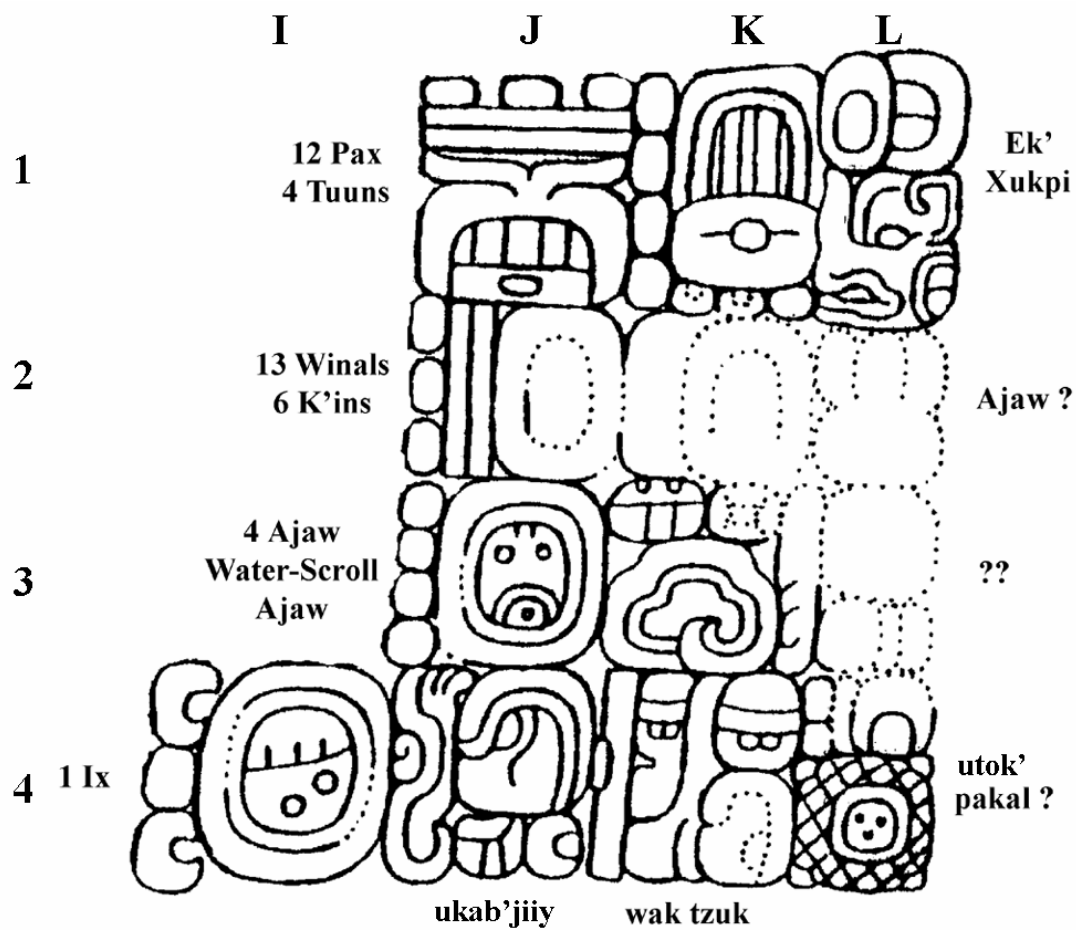


Figure 9.24. Nim Li Punit Stela 2, Passage I4-L4 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

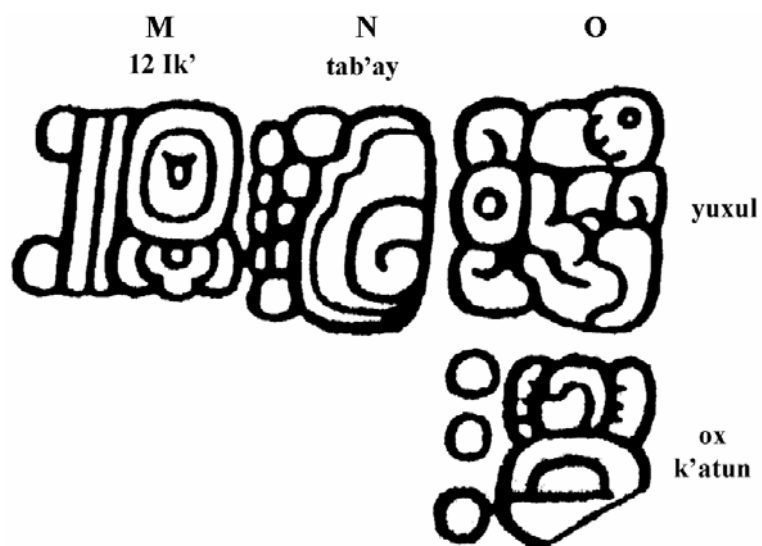


Figure 9.25. Nim Li Punit Stela 2, Dedicatory Text (M1-O2) (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Stela 1 was found standing in front of the southeast corner of Str. 2 in the main Stela Plaza. The figural scene depicts two individuals: a regal woman seated on a small throne and a standing king wearing an elaborate headdress. Both figures stand on top of a *Witz* Monster pedestal and they are depicted in the midst of a scattering ritual. The scribe who carved the *Witz* Monster employed a simple method of creating a frontal view by joining the portraits of two smaller profile heads (Hellmuth 1993: 65). A giant *mat* sign denoting rulership appears below the *Witz* Monster. The *mat* sign appears on the facades of numerous structures throughout the Maya area to indicate their use as *Popol Naah*'s 'Council Houses' and the appearance of this motif on a stela directly in front of Str. 2 suggests that Str. 2 served as a *Popol Naah* 'Council House.'

The accompanying hieroglyphic inscription was designed to be read, left to right, across all three columns of text. The text begins with a Long Count and records the Period Ending date of 9.15.10.0.0 3 *Ajaw* 3 *Mol* (A1-B3) (26, June 741). In celebration of the Period Ending, *uchok ch'a* 'he scattered drops' (C3). His name and titles include a reference to *B'ahlam*, 'Jaguar' or perhaps *B'ahlam Te*' followed by *Lajun Chan*, *Ajaw Te*' *K'u Kay Ajaw* 'Ten Sky, Tree Lord, Divine Nim Li Punit Lord' (second half of A4-C4). It is possible that this was the full name of *B'ahlam Te*', the individual featured on K1440 and in the text of Stela 2. A possible reference to someone called *Lajun Chan* also appears on an inscription recorded on Figural Plaque 6 at Lubaantún.

Following the scattering ritual on Nim Li Punit Stela 1, no further historical events are recorded for nearly 50 years. The lack of monumental inscriptions may signal a change in the way monuments were made at Nim Li Punit. Nearly three dozen stelae were erected in the main stela plaza alone, but only eight were carved. The scribes may have simply stuccoed and painted the remaining plain stelae with images and texts.

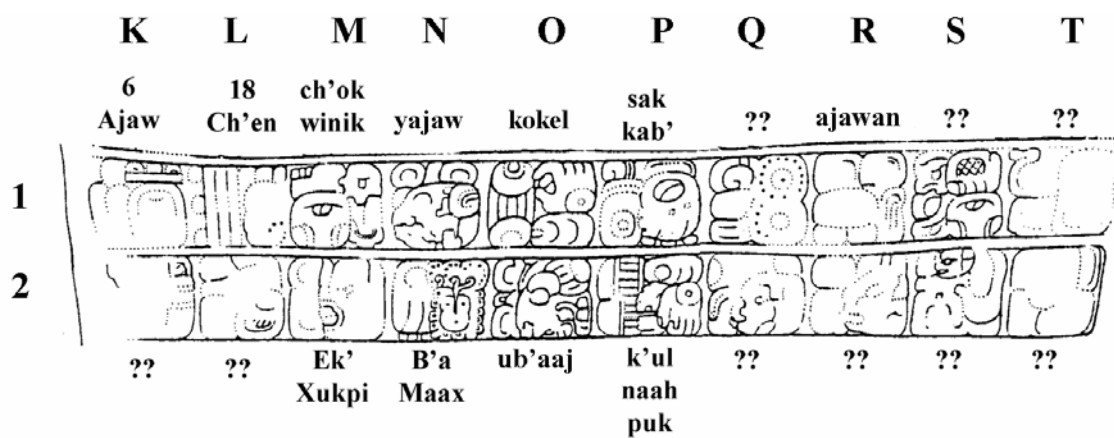


Figure 9.26. Nim Li Punit Stela 15, Passage K1-T1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)



Figure 9.27. Nim Li Punit Stela 1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

The next historical text to be considered is on Stela 14 (Figure 9.28) located directly in the center of the main stela plaza (Hammond et al. 1999: 10). A carefully prepared circular cyst was created as a socket to hold this enormous 9.29 meter stela. Quiriguá's Stela E was dedicated on 9.17.0.0.0 (20, January 771) while Nim Li Punit's Stela 14 was dedicated on 9.18.0.0.0 (7, October 790). It seems likely that the Nim Li Punit artisans were inspired by the work of Quiriguá's craftsmen (Grube et al. 1999: 34). Vandals attacked this stela in 1981 and left deep machete cuts across much of the top two rows of text. Subsequent machete attacks have left Stela 14 with more than 25 deep gashes across most of the figural scene and across most of the upper and lower text.

The enormous headdress worn by the king featured on this monument was the inspiration for the modern name of the site. Nim Li Punit, in Q'eqchi' Maya means 'big hat'. The portrait of the king featured on Stela 14 is nearly life-size. He is depicted in a dance pose and he wears an elaborate quetzal-feathered headdress which features a profile head of an unidentified zoomorphic creature. The king is wearing a large amount of jade jewelry, including multi-beaded necklaces, earflares, wristlets, and a bar pectoral. The king scatters drops of blood or incense with his left hand. His right arm is stretched across his chest and emerges just behind his left arm, where he holds a *K'awiil* scepter, emblematic of his divine status as king.

The text on Stela 14 is divided into an upper register and a lower register (Figure 9.29). The upper register features a Long Count date recorded as 9.18.0.0.0, but the accompanying Calendar Round date is recorded as 10 *Ajaw* 8 *Sak* (A6-B6), which does not correspond to the Period Ending 9.18.0.0.0 which requires an 11 *Ajaw* 18 *Mak* Calendar Round date. Instead, this Calendar Round combination is associated with the Period Ending 9.18.10.0.0 10 *Ajaw* 8 *Sak* (15, August 800). It would appear that the

scribe was purposely linking two different Period Ending dates (9.18.0.0.0 and 9.18.10.0.0) by the way he wrote this particular collocation. The linkage of these exact two dates is also featured at Caracol on Stela 11 (Grube et al. 1999: 35).

The text continues with the verb, *uchok* ‘he scatters’ (first part of A7) which mirrors the action portrayed on the monument. Next is the expression *yichnal Mo-JGU* ‘in the presence of the Macaw Jaguar God of the Underworld’ (second part of A7-B7). There is not a good translation of the JGU name, but it also appears to be the name of the main protagonist on the newly discovered Stela 21 text. It appears that the king’s name continues in A8 with a reference to either *k’ahk* ‘fire’, or perhaps to some patron deity but it is too eroded to be certain. The ruler’s titles continue *Huun Tahn Waxak Winik B’akab* ‘the cherished one, the 8 *Winik*, First Lord or First Representative of the Earth’ (B8-A9). The text continues with a parentage phrase beginning with *uhuun tahn* ‘he is the cherished one of’ (second half of A9) and what follows should be the name of his mother (B9-A10) and father (B10). Most of this passage is unreadable, but the basic outlines of his mother’s name are recorded on Stela 21 in a parallel parentage text. On Stela 21 her personal name is followed by a royal epithet that indicates that she was a foreigner to Nim Li Punit for her name reads *Ixik B’ahlam Ajaw* ‘Royal Lady from the Jaguar site’.

There are several references to the *B’ahlam* site in the inscriptions of the southern Maya Lowlands, but no one has yet firmly identified its location. Both Christian Prager and I have noted that a *B’ahlam Ajaw* appears in what looks like a captive’s name phrase on a broken piece of sculpture (Sculptural Fragment 17) at Pusilhá (Figure 9.30) (Prager 2002: 321; Wanyerka 2003: 68). The appearance of a *B’ahlam* emblem glyph in a capture statement recorded on a piece of sculpture at Pusilhá suggests that Pusilhá and Nim Li Punit were not allies, given that a queen from the *B’ahlam* site was the mother of a Nim

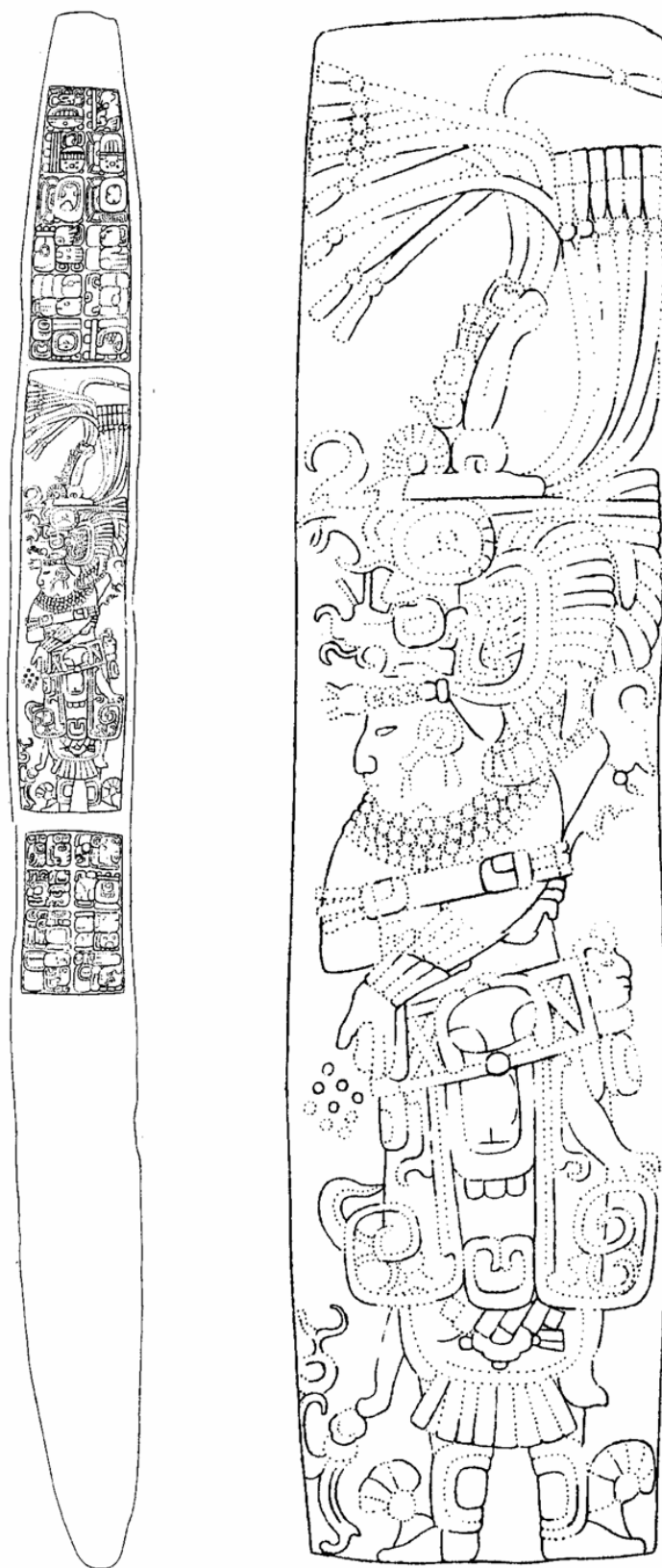


Figure 9.28. Nim Li Punit Stela 14 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

		A	B		
1				9	
2	18			0	
3	0			0	
4					
5					
6	10 Ajaw			8 Sak	
7	uchok yichnal			Mo' JGU	
8	K'ahk' ??			huun tahn waxak winik	
9	B'akab' uhuun tahn			Mother's Name	
10	Ixik K'u B'ahlam Ajaw			ub'a Father's Name	

Figure 9.29. Nim Li Punit Stela 14 Text (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Li Punit king. Another reference to the *B'ahlam* site comes from neighboring Naj Tunich recorded on Drawing 48 (Wanyerka 2003: 68-69). The text states that someone named *Yajaw K'ahk'* 'Lord of Fire' returned to Naj Tunich and was a *K'uhul B'ahlam Ajaw* 'Divine Jaguar Lord'. Guenter (2002: 102) has noted the presence of a *B'ahlam* site in the inscriptions of the Pasión. A ceramic vase (K772) contains a reference to Lady *Tzutz Chan*, who is said to be from the *B'ahlam* Site and the mother of the Tikal king *Wak Chan K'awiil*. There may also be a reference to the *B'ahlam* site recorded on Figural Plaque #5 at Lubaantún. The references to the *B'ahlam* site in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region suggest that the site was likely located somewhere near the border of Belize and Guatemala and was allied with Nim Li Punit. The final glyph on Stela 14 is a slightly truncated version of that recorded on Stela 21, but appears to record the name of his father.

Nim Li Punit Stela 21 was discovered by the MASDP in 1998 lying on top of Str. 3 in the main Stela Plaza (Bonor and van Opstal nd). Apparently, this monument had never been carefully examined until Belizean archaeologists turned it over and found one of the best preserved monuments in Belize (Figure 9.31). Stela 21 features a portrait of a standing king facing left holding a *K'awiil* Scepter carved in cookie-cutter relief. The king wears an elaborate zoomorphic headdress with feathers and a small Jester God headband. He also wears a huge spangled necklace and bar pectoral across his chest, as well as a royal belt assemblage that features three small portrait heads and nearly a dozen celts. He is posed in the Classic Maya posture of dance, with both feet apart, and so it appears that he is dancing with his *K'awiil* Scepter. The vegetal matter framing the king probably signifies the opened maw of the Flower Mountain Place associated with rulership.

The accompanying hieroglyphic inscription (Figure 9.32) appears in four columns of text containing 24 individual glyph blocks. The opening Long Count date for Stela 21 is 9.18.0.0 0 11 *Ajaw* 18 *Mak* (7, October 790). The text also features a reference to a fire ritual (A6) recorded within the supporting Lunar Series. The peak event of Stela 21 is the ritual commemoration of the 9.18.0.0.0 period ending by the ruler of Nim Li Punit who scattered drops (C2) at the *Ox Witik* ‘Three Roots’ Place, a prominent Copan location. The *Ox Witik* may have a similar interpretation to that of the *Wi’tē’naah* collocation discussed earlier. From the inscription recorded on Copan Altar Q, we are told that the Founder of Copan, *K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo*, traveled to a distant place, specifically to a building known as the *Wi’tē’naah* ‘Tree Root Place’ which appears to have functioned as a Foundation House where investiture ceremonies took place that resulted in the accession of *K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo* as the Founder of Copan (Martin and Grube 2000: 192). The text on Altar Q further states that the trip back to Copan, from the *Wi’tē’naah*, took 153 days to complete and that the journey ended at a specific location known as the *Ox Witik* (Grube and Martin 2001: 71). The reference to *Ox Witik* at Nim Li Punit may signify that the king of Nim Li Punit traveled to Copan to have his accession conferred or officially recognized since Nim Li Punit was likely a client to Copan. The grasping of the *K’awiil* Scepter by this Nim Li Punit lord likely symbolized his standing within the greater Copan hegemony.

The name of the Nim Li Punit lord *Mo’ JGU* follows the reference to the *Ox Witik* and, as previously discussed, he is the same lord described on Stela 14. *Mo’ JGU* carries the full syllabic version of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph, read *ka-wa-ma* or *Kawam*. He also carries the 8 *Winik* royal epithet. Following these royal titles is a parentage text that reads *uhuun tahn Ixik B’ahlam Ajaw* ‘he himself is the cherished one of the Lady

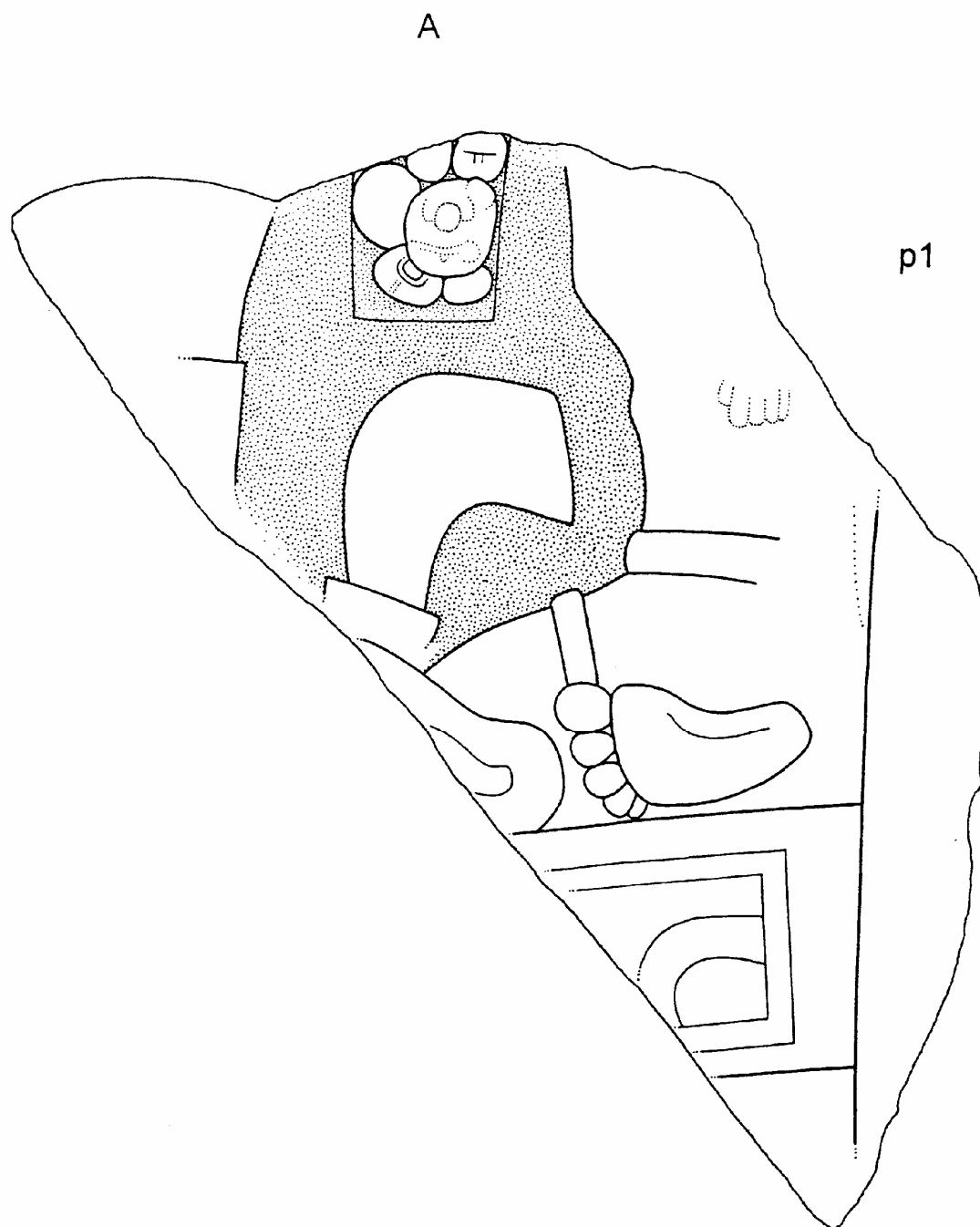


Figure 9.30. Pusilhá Sculptural Fragment 17 (Drawing by C. Prager)

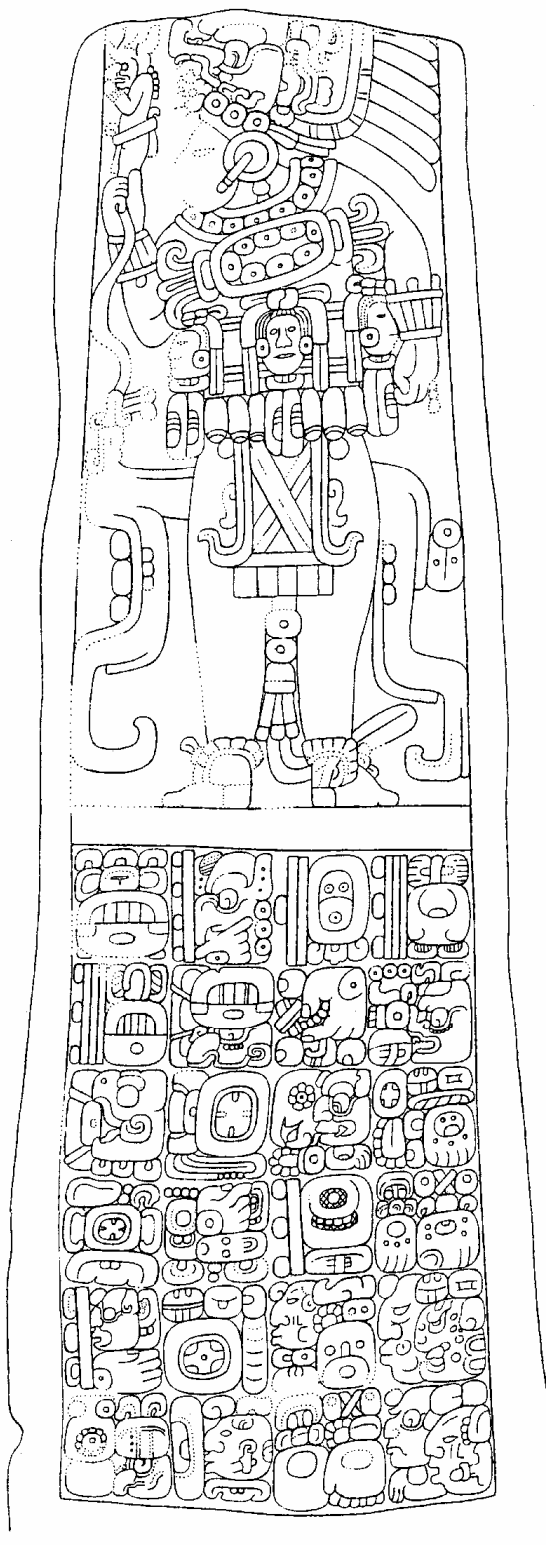


Figure 9.31. Nim Li Punit Stela 21 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Jaguar Lord'. The second part of the parentage expression reads *uhuun b'a uk'uhul ch'ab'* JGU 'he himself is the divine creation of' his father, the JGU Lord'.

Stela 7, found in the southeastern corner of the northern terrace near the entrance to the main Stela Plaza, is the second tallest carved monument at the site, measuring just over 5.53m in height. The monument is severely eroded, but graphic details of the monument can now be seen with greater clarity as a result of photographic work by project photographer Jack Sulak. The style of Stela 7 is similar to that of Stela 14, with an upper text register, a figural scene, and a lower text register (Figure 9.33).

Stela 7 features a portrait of two standing lords facing each other on top of a *Witz* Monster Pedestal. The scene is a figural depiction of the classic *yichnal* expression where two individuals, likely a patron and a client, are shown 'facing' each other. The figure on the left is wearing an elaborate *K'awiil* headdress, a front-tied hipcloth and perhaps some sort of royal belt or backrack. He appears to be presenting an object to the individual on the right. The figure on the right is nearly totally eroded and a single column of text, now illegible, was recorded in the space between the two figures.

The text on Stela 7 (Figure 9.34) begins with the Long Count date of 9.19.0.0.0 9 *Ajaw* 18 *Mol* (24, June 810). The supplemental series appears to have been omitted from this monument. The lower text begins with a disjointed Short Round date of 4 *Ajaw* (A5); but this date cannot be linked securely to a Long Count date. It may refer back to the Period Ending 9.18.5.0.0 4 *Ajaw* 13 *Keh* (11, September 795), since Period Endings were frequently celebrated here. The rest of Stela 7 cannot be read with any degree of certainty, but a Nim Li Punit emblem glyph may be recorded at A6. Paralleling the style of Stela 14 and Stela 21, the rest of the text might record a parentage passage. One final glyph that may be read is located at A7 and seems to feature two logographs including a

	A	B	C	D	
1	ISIG 9				11 Ajaw 18 Mak
2	18 0				uchokaw Ox Witik K'awiil
3	0 0				Mo' JGU K'uhul Kawam Ajaw
4					Waxak Winik u huun b'a u huun tahn
5					Ixik ?? Ixik B'ahlam Ajaw
6	Fire				u huun b'a uk'uhul ch'ab' Mo' JGU

Figure 9.32. Nim Li Punit Stela 21 Text (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

knotted *huun* sign and *witz* sign. If so, it may identify the location upon which these two figures stand as 'Headband Mountain.'

The last dated text at Nim Li Punit was recorded on Stela 3, originally located in the extreme northwest corner of the Stela Plaza, approximately 1m west of Stela 4. The monument was found broken in three pieces with the base still standing in situ. In 1998 the entire monument was reassembled as part of the MASDP restoration work at Nim Li Punit (Figure 9.35A).

The monument features a lone hieroglyph which records a Short Round date of 7 *Ajaw* written in an unusual reversed order. The *Ajaw* stelae of southern Belize are among the latest dated monuments in Belize. To date, two monuments (Nim Li Punit Stela 3 and Tzimin Ché Stela 1) have been found in the Southern Maya Mountains Region that feature single *Ajaw* glyphs (Figure 9.35). Satterthwaite (1954) was among the first Mayanists to suggest that these *Ajaw* dates represented a Short Count calendrical system. The *ajaw* glyph did not necessarily specify the dedicatory date of the monument, rather it indicated the day upon which the current *k'atun* ended. A similar Short Round system existed in Postclassic times as attested in the Books of *Chilam B'alam* (Roys 1933: 84; Schele et al. 1998: 400). In this case, the 7 *Ajaw* recorded on Stela 3 likely refers to either one of two possible dates: the Period Ending 9.7.0.0.0 (7 *Ajaw* 3 *K'ank'in* or 5, December 573) or the Period Ending 10.0.0.0.0 (7 *Ajaw* 18 *Sip* or 11, March 830). Based on the current epigraphic and archaeological data the 9.7.0.0.0 Period Ending is too early, so Stela 3 likely refers to the 10.0.0.0.0 Period Ending. This later date corresponds nicely with archaeological evidence that suggests that Nim Li Punit was occupied well into the 9th century (Dunham 1990; Jamison 1993). The other *Ajaw* Stela, Tzimin Ché Stela 1 was discovered in 1993 by the MMAP at a small site near the modern village of Medina Bank

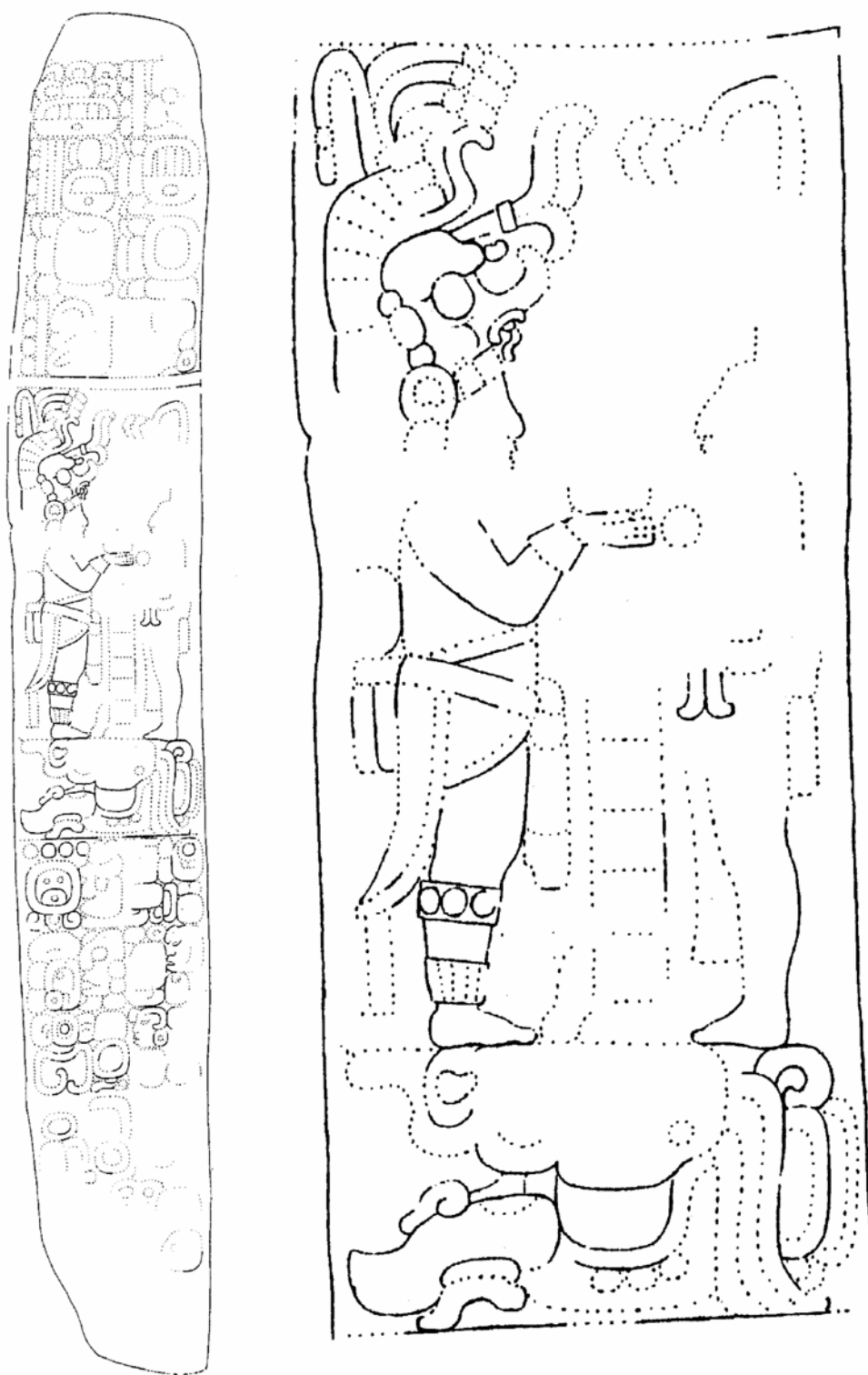


Figure 9.33. Nim Li Punit Stela 7 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

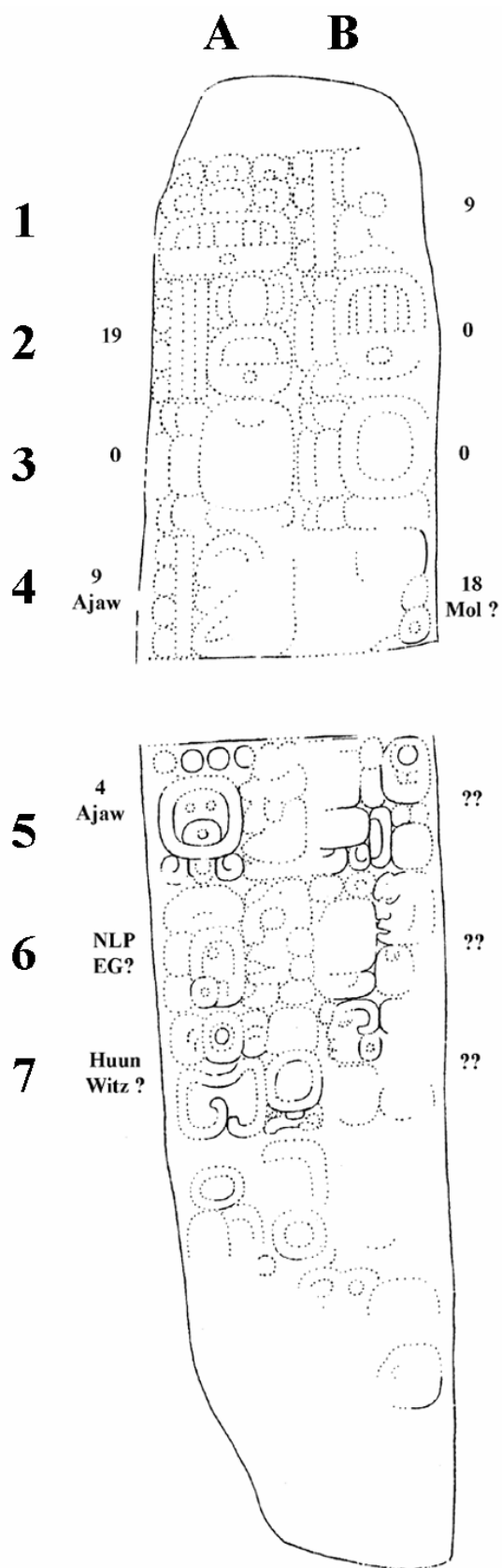


Figure 9.34. Nim Li Punit Stela 7 Text (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

(Figure 9.35B). The stela was in the extreme southwest corner of the West Plaza Group (Figure 9.36), approximately 1m west of the northwest corner of Str. 2 (Dunham et al. 1993: 13-15). The monument was found intact and measures some 3m in height. It features a single giant 12 *Ajaw* glyph, which corresponds to the Period Ending 10.4.0.0.0 12 *Ajaw* 3 *Wo'* (15, January 909). Stela 1 is the latest dated monument in the entire Southern Maya Mountains Region and is one of the latest dated monuments in the entire Maya region (Wanyerka 2003: 261).

The last carved monument to be discussed in relation to the dynastic history of Nim Li Punit is Stela 4 (Figure 9.37), located in the extreme northwest corner of the Stela Plaza, approximately 1m east of Stela 3. This text is in poor condition. Its upper surface has flaked off and the rest of the text is heavily eroded. Originally, the text consisted of 16 glyph blocks, but only 12 are visible. The surviving elements provide an additional reference to Copan. An *Ek' Xukpi* title is recorded at B4 suggesting that a *yichnal* expression may have preceded this title to indicate a joint activity. The main verb for this passage is *uchok ch'a* 'he scatters drops' (A5-B5). The rest of the text cannot be read with any certainty, although the number 3, Ox, may refer to that location known as the *Ox Witik* (A6).

Investigations at Xnaheb' Ahse Enel

The ruins of Xnaheb' Ahse Enel are located 3.5 km southwest of Nim Li Punit on top of a steep narrow ridge of the eastern Xpicilha Hills (refer back to Figure 9.1). Acting Archaeological Commissioner Jaime Awe reported the site shortly after the discovery of Nim Li Punit in 1976. Awe gave the ruin its Q'eqchi' name, *Xnaheb' Ahse Enel* 'the

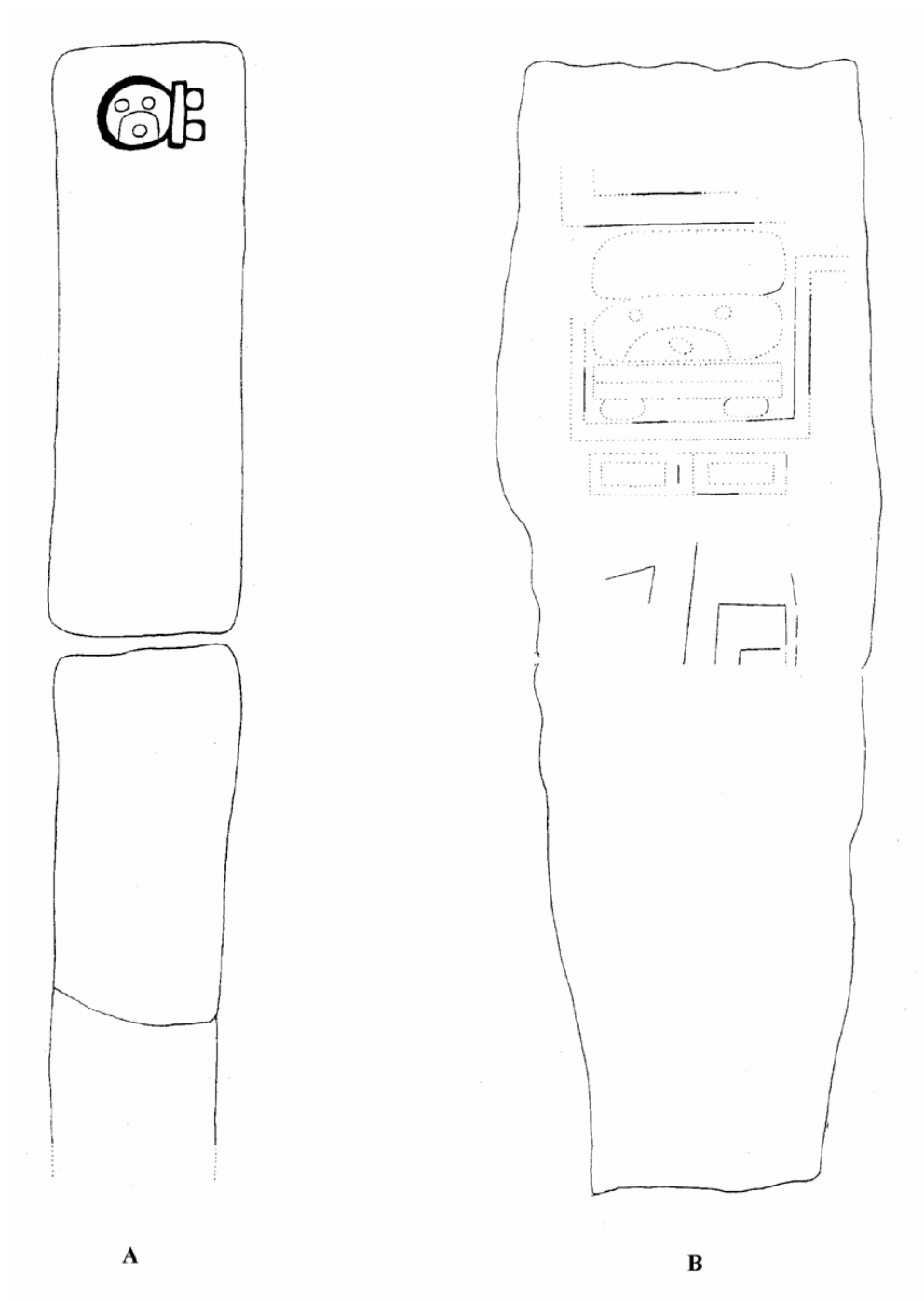


Figure 9.35. The Ajaw Stelae of Southern Belize

A) Nim Li Punit Stela 3 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

B) Tzimín Ché Stela 1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

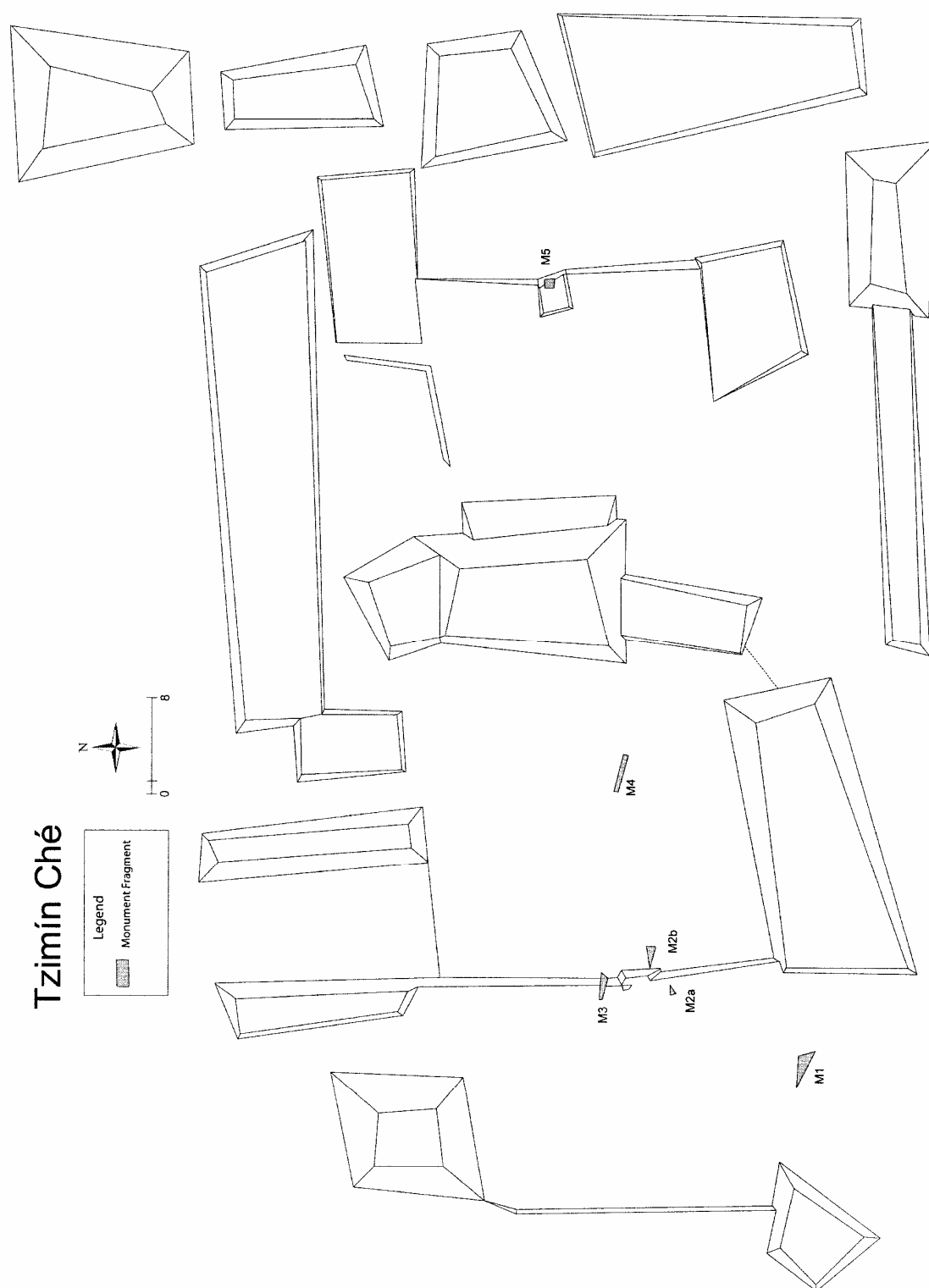


Figure 9.36. Plan Map of Tzimín Ché (Map courtesy of Peter Dunham and the Maya Mountains Archaeological Project)

Place of Laughter' following a humorous fall of the late Dennis Puleston, whose slip on a hillside knocked down all who were present (Awe 1978: 28). From 1983 to 1987, the SBAP systematically cleared and mapped most of the ruins of Xnaheb' (see Dunham et al. 1987; Dunham 1990; Jamison 1992; Leventhal et al. 1985) (Figure 9.38). The site is larger than its neighbors, Nim Li Punit and Lubaantún, in size and complexity. There are nearly twice the number of structures (approximately 100) at Xnaheb' than at its closet neighbor Nim Li Punit. Xnaheb' features five separate plaza groups, each with its own series of natural terraces faced with cut stone to create the illusion of large labor-intensive constructions. The North Group contains some of the largest architecture at the site and the entire hill upon which this group sits is entirely faced with stone, making this group look larger than any group at either Lubaantún or Nim Li Punit. A *sacb'e* that connected east and west plaza groups was also discovered (Dunham et al. 1989: 272-275). Dunham argued that Xnaheb's location between Nim Li Punit and Lubaantún was predictable on the basis of gravity boundaries and that its sudden rise during the late eighth century may have been a response to the changing economic and political spheres of its neighbors (Dunham et al. 1989: 275). This analysis was part of Dunham's 1990 dissertation on the gravity boundaries between sites in southern Belize.

There are at least six stelae at Xnaheb', but only Stela 1 and Stela 2 preserve any sort of carving or inscription that can be interpreted (Wanyerka 1999a). Xnaheb' was occupied for a period of roughly 100 years between A.D. 750 and 850, based on current archaeology and epigraphy (Dunham et al. 1989: 274). This time span corresponds to the latest period of occupation of sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. The inscriptions at Xnaheb' are contemporaneous with other monuments in southern Belize including the centers of Lubaantún, Nim Li Punit, Pusilhá, and Uxbenká.

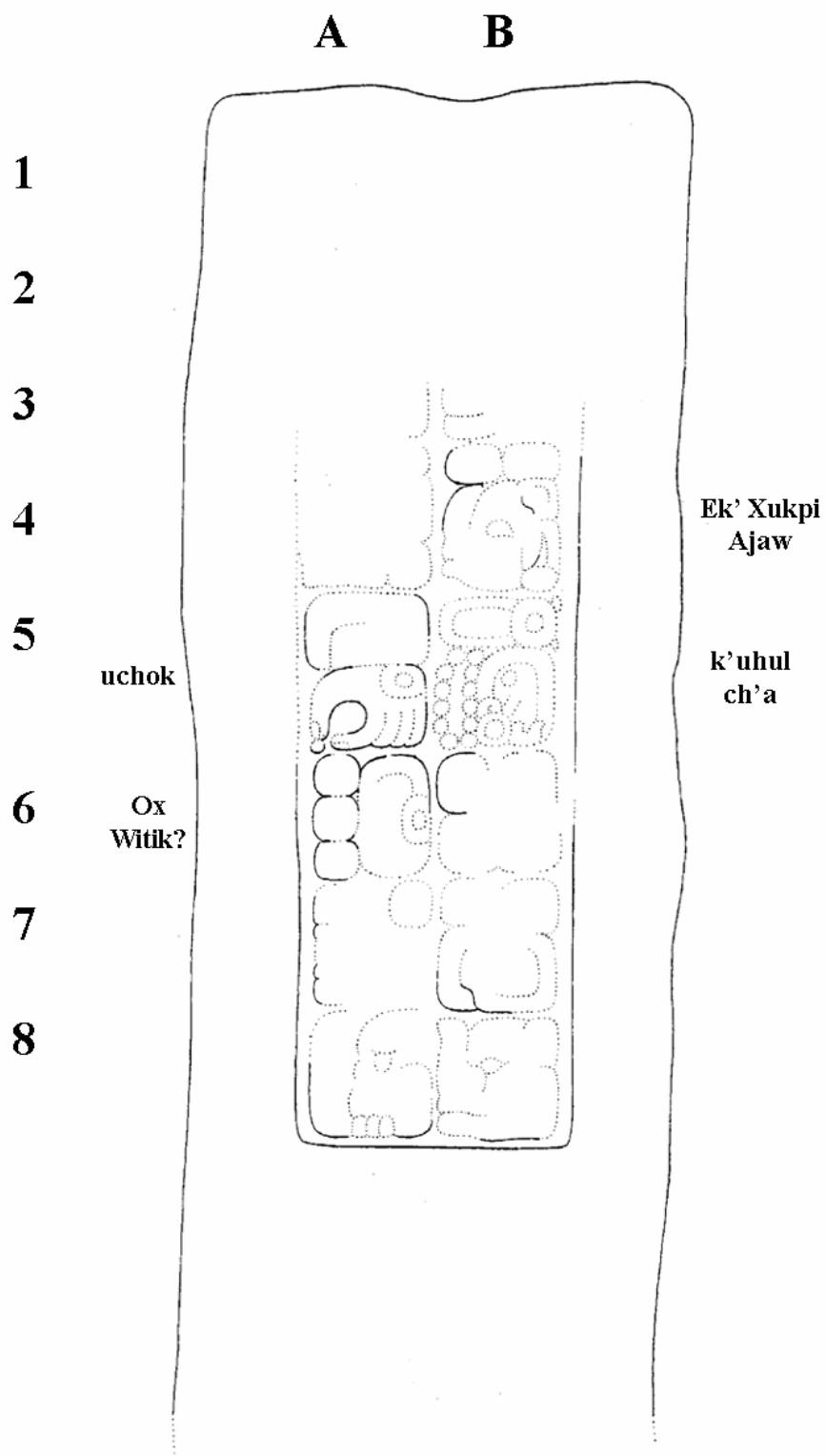


Figure 9.37. Nim Li Punit Stela 4 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

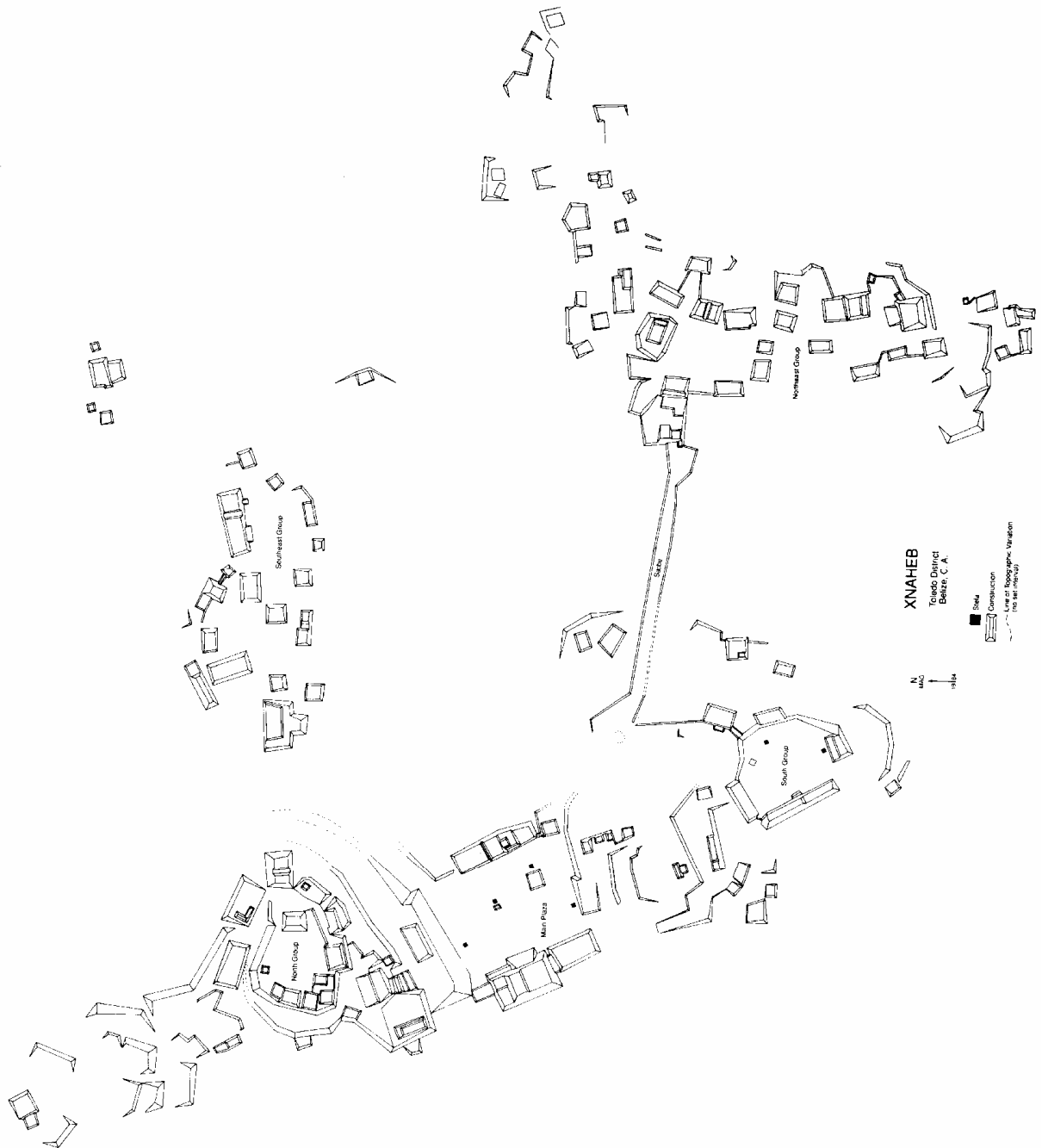


Figure 9.38. Plan Map of Xnaheb' (Map courtesy of Richard Leventhal, used with permission, Leventhal 1990a: Map 8.3)

Stela 1 (Figure 9.39) was found leaning directly against Stela 2 in the northwest corner of the Main Plaza Group, but broken in half with the upper portion of the monument missing, suggesting that it was moved from its original location. A portrait of a *Witz* Monster Pedestal is all that remains on Stela 1. The missing upper portion of the stela probably featured a portrait of a standing king.

Stela 2 (Figure 9.40) was directly in front of Stela 1 in the northwest corner of the Main Stela Plaza. The upper half of Stela 2 appears to have either flaked off in a single piece or had been hacked off by vandals. The inscription on Stela 2 records the Long Count date of 9.17.10.0.0 12 *Ajaw* 8 *Pax* (28, November 780). This Long Count date was recorded on several monuments in the region including Ixtutz Stela 4, Ixkun Stela 4, and Uxbenká Stela 15. The Initial Series on Stela 2 also features a reference to *puk uk'ahk'* 'the scattering of fire of' (A5-B5), which was likely conducted in conjunction with the 9.17.10.0.0 Period Ending. Next is the supporting lunar information for this date, including Glyphs F and D of the Lunar Series at A7-B7. The final legible glyph at A8 is a day name 12 *Ajaw* which corresponds to the *Tzolk'in* position of the Long Count date. Unfortunately, the rest of the text is too eroded to read.

Although the surviving hieroglyphic inscriptions at Xnaheb' reveal few insights concerning its internal dynastic history, the appearance of carved monuments at a site so close to Nim Li Punit is interesting. Xnaheb's rise as a major center in southern Belize may have been the result of the surrounding chaos created as the other cities of the Southern Maya Mountains Region began to fall. However, Xnaheb's florescence was short-lived and the only milestone marked by its rulers appears to be the ritual commemoration of the 9.17.10.0.0 Period Ending. By the middle of the 9th century Xnaheb' was abandoned and was no longer a thriving Classic Maya polity.

Synthesis and Discussion

This chapter discussed the epigraphic evidence of Late Classic hegemonic control in the Golden Stream Valley. Two major hieroglyph-bearing sites: Nim Li Punit and Xnaheb' are located within this drainage system. It seems likely that Nim Li Punit and Xnaheb' were situated in the Golden Stream Drainage to control the flow of resources and exchange between production sites located within the eastern interior of the Maya Mountains and the coastal region of southern Belize. Nim Li Punit is best known for its three dozen, enormously tall stelae, which feature highly unusual forms of writing. Nim Li Punit contains the second largest corpus of hieroglyphic inscriptions in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize. Archaeological investigations by Hammond (1976a; Hammond et al. 1999), Wilk (1976), and Leventhal (1990a; Dunham 1990; Jamison 1993, 2001) have revealed that the site was occupied from the Late Preclassic through Terminal Classic times.

The primary goal of this chapter was to look for epigraphic and archaeological evidence in the Golden Stream Valley that can either support or challenge the hegemonic and *may* models of Classic Maya political organization. In regards to the hegemonic model, the epigraphic evidence indicates that the rulers of Nim Li Punit referred to themselves as *K'uhul Ajawob'* 'divine lords' by the presence of its own emblem glyph. The Nim Li Punit emblem glyph first appears in a retrospective passage recorded on Stela 15 which dates to 9.4.10.0.0 (24, August 524). The appearance of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph is approximately 44 years earlier than the first appearance of Pusilhá's emblem glyph, as recorded on Stela P dating to 9.6.17.8.18 (17, June 571) and is 227 years earlier than the first readable emblem glyph at Uxbenká, which occurs on Stela 22

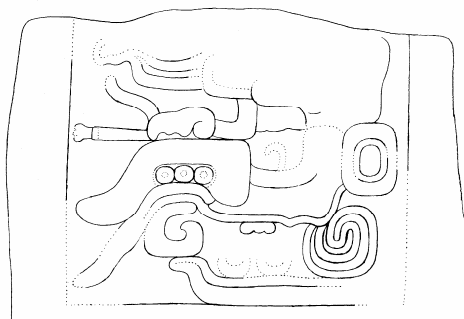


Figure 9.39. Xnaheb' Stela 1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

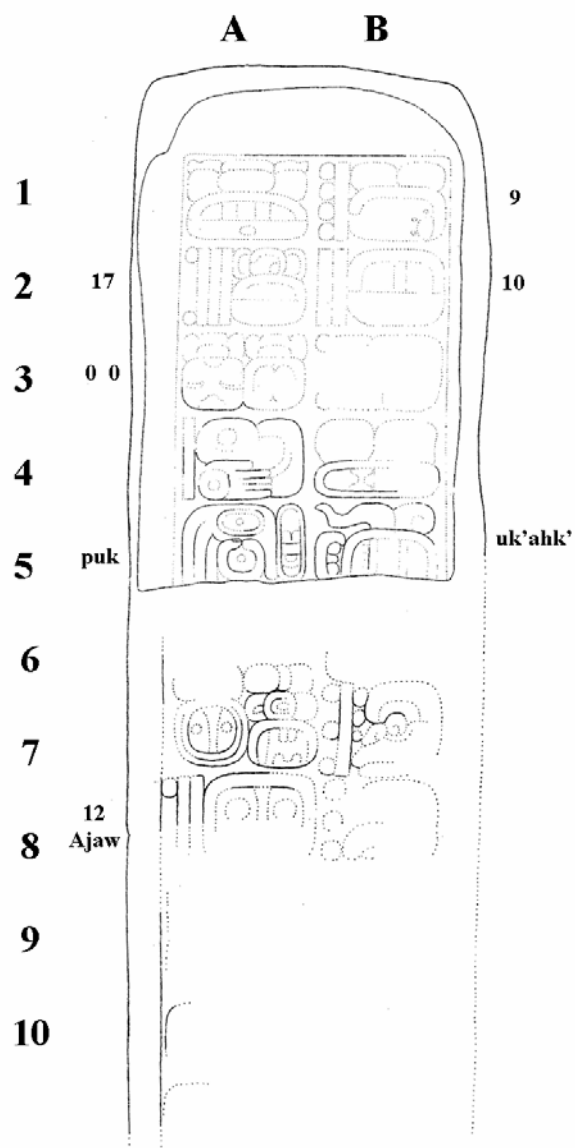


Figure 9.40. Xnaheb' Stela 2 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

dating to 9.16.0.0.0 (5, May 751). Based on epigraphy alone, it would appear that Nim Li Punit was the first emblem glyph-bearing polity to develop in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize. However, recent archaeological and epigraphic data has now demonstrated that Uxbenká was the earliest site to develop in the region. Therefore, the lack of a readable Uxbenká emblem glyph on a monument prior to 9.16.0.0.0 may be the result of poor preservation rather than anything else. The Nim Li Punit emblem glyph appears six times in the written inscriptions of the site (Stelae 1, 2, 7, 14, 15, and 21) and it also appears at least three times in the written inscriptions of Copan (on the facade of Str. 22A, on the Sculpted Bench from Temple 11, and on Step 35 from the Hieroglyphic Stairway). It would also appear that during Classic times the rulership of Nim Li Punit used two different emblem glyphs: one to perhaps represent the political realm of Nim Li Punit (*Kay*) and one which may have served as a specific toponym that referred to the stela plaza group itself (*Kawam*). In addition, there are numerous references to foreign lords, who are present at Nim Li Punit to observe the accession of a Nim Li Punit ruler named *B'ahlam Te'* including one who is said to be a *K'uhul Ajaw* from the site of Altun Há. The *Kaloomte'* title does not appear in the inscriptions of Nim Li Punit. The manner in which political interactions are described in the inscriptions at Nim Li Punit are extraordinarily important for understanding the political dynamics of hegemonic interaction in the Southern Maya Mountains Region.

The second criterion used in testing the hegemonic model is direct epigraphic statements of subordination, in particular are those examples that describe the accession of local rulers under the aegis of foreign overlords by using expressions as *ukab'jiiy*, *yichnal*, *hul*, *yitah*, or *ilaj*. There are several direct statements of subordination recorded in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Nim Li Punit and perhaps the best way to understand

them here is to examine and discuss them chronologically. The first reference to subordination can be found recorded at the end of a secondary text written on Stela 15. The date for this passage is the period ending 9.14.10.0.0 (9, October 721) and the figural scene features three standing figures shown casting drops of blood or incense into a censer. The accompanying text states that the person on the left was named *K'inich K'uk'* and he was *yita* 'with' a person simply named as a *Xukpi* 'Copan' Lord. The person who is named last is considered the initiator or patron of the event that is being described. Therefore, the figural scene on the monument could be interpreted as a period ending celebration that was initiated and overseen by a Copan Lord. As discussed in this chapter, the *Ek' Xukpi* 'Black Bat' epithet is a highly restricted elite title that is closely tied to Copan, since the bat head serves as the main sign of the Copan emblem glyph. Schele and Grube (1990: 17) have shown that during the Classic Period neighboring Quiriguá and Copan kings carried this title as part of their formal name phrases and so the appearance of this title at Nim Li Punit can be taken as epigraphic evidence to indicate a close relationship between the aristocracy of Nim Li Punit and Copan. As discussed in this chapter, it is quite possible that some of the kings of Nim Li Punit came from one of the four sacred lineages described at Copan. In addition, there is plenty of epigraphic evidence at both Nim Li Punit and at Copan to suggest that Nim Li Punit was a subordinate client or *k'atun* seat within a Copan-based *may* sphere. Perhaps the best piece of evidence for this fact can be seen at Copan where a huge stucco motif in the form of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph can be seen on the facade of Structure 22A, a structure that has been identified as a *Popol Naah* 'Council House.' The prominent mention of Nim Li Punit at a lineage house at Copan is convincing evidence that these two regions were closely related during the Classic Period.

The second direct reference to subordination in the inscriptions of Nim Li Punit can be found in a passage recorded on Stela 2 that dates to the period ending 9.15.0.0.0 (18, August 731). The passage states that a stela was planted, *yita* ‘with’ the *Ek’ Xukpi Ajaw* ‘Black Copan lord’ who is ‘the Divine Claw of the Sixth Partition’ indicating that the stela planting was overseen by the ‘Black Copan Lord’ who was the head of the Sixth Partition. As I have stated before, the Numbered *Tzuk* titles appear to represent an indigenous system, similar to the *may* system, that was used to identify the territorial expanses of the thirteen original polities and their supporting *k’atun* seats. The Sixth Partition appears to refer to the grouping of sites located in the southeastern Maya periphery including Nim Li Punit and Copan.

Perhaps the best example of a direct statement of subordination describing the local accession of a ruler under the aegis of a foreign overlord at Nim Li Punit appears in a passage recorded on Stela 2. The text states that the local ruler of Nim Li Punit, a person named *B’ahlam Te’*, acceded on 9.14.15.4.14 (16, December 726) and that this accession took place *yichnal* ‘in front of’ or ‘with’ someone named only as a ‘Divine Lord of Altun Há’. As discussed in Chapter 3, this agency expression is used to mark patron-client relationships. Altun Há was a major emblem glyph-bearing polity located in north-central Belize more than 120 km north of Nim Li Punit (see Helmke and Wanyerka nd). There are a number of hieroglyphic inscriptions at Altun Há including one inscription recorded on a small stone God N figure that prominently features the main sign of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph. Other texts from Altun Há indicate that it was an aggressive site for there are several Middle Classic references to warfare and to inter-site conflict (see Schele and Grube 1994a, 1994b; Helmke 1999). One such reference to warfare was discussed in Chapter 7 involving Pusilhá. The emblem glyph of Altun Há

also appears on the Altar de los Reyes text suggesting that it was one of the original thirteen polities, perhaps a clue that it served as a possible *may ku* within its own regional sphere. On the basis of ceramic evidence, it would appear that the rulers of Altun Há also enjoyed close interregional ties to Copan (Reents-Budet 1994: 201). It is quite possible that Altun Há had the wealth, power, and the leadership to conduct long distance military actions and the ability to maintain political oversight in regions far from home, as suggested by the appearance of an Altun Há lord recorded so prominently in a passage at Nim Li Punit that describes the accession of a local Nim Li Punit king. Together these findings suggest that strong political ties existed between Altun Há and southern Belize.

A final piece of epigraphic evidence that serves to define the connection between the rulership of Nim Li Punit and that of both Altun Há and Copan can be seen in the final passage of Stela 2. In commemoration of the 9.15.0.0.0 period ending (18, August 731), a stela was planted at Nim Li Punit in the presence of a both an *Ek' Xukpi* or Copan lord and an Altun Há lord. Furthermore, the text indicates that the entire action was *ukab'jiy*, 'supervised' or 'overseen' by the *Wak Tzuk* 'Sixth Partition' a title likely referring to the Copan lord. It is interesting to note that the final glyph in this passage refers to the 'flints and shields of the Sixth Partition' and thus, it would seem to indicate that the event was also observed by an armed contingent who likely accompanied the Copan lord.

A final piece of epigraphic evidence to support the claim that direct statements of subordination can be found in the inscriptions of Nim Li Punit appears in the last passage recorded along the base of Stela 15. The passage commemorates the Long Count date of 9.14.10.15.0 (5, August 722) and includes a now partially eroded reference to a Nim Li Punit lord who is called the *ch'ok winik yajaw Ek' Xukpi* 'young person, the lord of the

Black Copan Lord'. Here in this passage, the use of *yajaw* as a possessed royal title explicitly indicates that the ruler of Nim Li Punit was subordinate to the *Ek' Xukpi* lord.

The third criterion used in testing the hegemonic model is the presence or absence of explicit epigraphic statements that indicate friendly, non-antagonistic relations between sites. Perhaps the best piece of epigraphic data to indicate friendly relations can be found recorded on K1440. As discussed in this chapter, I believe that there is reasonable archaeological and epigraphic evidence to indicate that vase K1440 likely came from Nim Li Punit. The text is extremely long and is difficult and complicated to decipher; however, I have been able to firmly link the name and events recorded on the vase text to historical events recorded at Nim Li Punit on Stela 2. Both texts describe the accession of a Nim Li Punit ruler named *B'ahlam Te'* who acceded into office under the supervision of foreign patrons. The vase text appears to describe heir apparent or investiture rituals associated with *B'ahlam Té's* accession, which were conducted in the presence of several patron deities and important historical figures including one from Copan who brings gifts. It is unique in the inscriptions of the Classic Period to find an example of a subordinate polity receiving gifts from a superordinate patron. In this case, the text on K1440 states that one year following the destruction of the 'Black Pierced Earth Place' a gift from the House of Copan arrived for the Nim Li Punit Lord House. The bowl text also records a reference to a 'root' or 'lineage' location known as the *Ek' Way Nal Naah* or 'Black Transforming Place House' that is commonly associated with kingdoms located in the southeastern Maya lowlands, namely Quiriguá and Copan. This location may represent the supernatural portal that connects the human world with the Underworld.

B'alam Té is also one of the three protagonists featured on the front of Stela 15,

which commemorated the Period Ending 9.14.10.0.0 (9, October 721). The scene features three individuals performing a fire scattering or burner ritual. While the costumes worn by the two individuals flanking the central protagonist are indicative of the ones worn by Classic Maya priests, the distinctive turban headdress worn by the central protagonist is regionally localized to sites in the southeastern Maya lowlands including Copan, Quiriguá, Miramar, Santa Barbara, and La Entrada. The turban headdress may be seen as a regional marker of identity and may indicate friendly relations between the rulers of Nim Li Punit and Copan. As part of this ritual commemoration, a Vision Serpent or Mosaic War Dragon known as the *Waxaklajun Ub'aah Kaan*, '18 are Its Images of the Snake,' was conjured. This Vision Serpent was also a favorite at Copan and its appearance on a monument at Nim Li Punit may indicate a sharing of socio-religious ideology since this is the only site in the Southern Maya Mountains Region where this particular being is mentioned.

The *Ek' Xukpi Ajaw* 'Black Copan Lord' title appears five times in the inscriptions of Nim Li Punit. At Nim Li Punit, the *Ek' Xukpi Ajaw* title only appears in hierarchical contexts that define Copan as the superordinate power. The epigraphic evidence, including the mention of Nim Li Punit in the inscriptions at Copan on the sculpted bench from Str.10L-11, suggests to me that Nim Li Punit was likely a *k'atun* seat within a Copan-based *may* sphere (Figure 9.41). The prominent mentions of Altun Há in the inscriptions of Nim Li Punit, especially in a passage that describes the accession of a local Nim Li Punit ruler under the aegis of an Altun Há lord, are also evidence to suggest that close ties existed between these two polities. Since the relationship between Pusilhá and Altun Há appears to have been antagonistic, the references to Altun Há at Nim Li Punit would seem to suggest that while Nim Li Punit

and Pusilhá were both likely *k'atun* seats within a Copan-based *may* sphere, they did not get along as neighbors.

Following the erection of Stela 1 by *B'ahlam Te'* on 9.15.10.0.0 (26, June 741) no further inscriptions are recorded at Nim Li Punit for nearly fifty years. This lull may be tied to the larger political upheavals that were occurring at polities in the southeastern Maya lowlands during this period. Three years before the break in dynastic history at Nim Li Punit on 9.15.6.14.6 (29, April 738), Copan is mourning the death of its king, *Waxaklajun Ub'aah K'awiil*, who was captured and later beheaded by the king of Quiriguá, *K'ak' Tiliw Chan Yoaat*, a former vassal to Copan. The change in political fortunes at Copan may have also been felt at Nim Li Punit.

The dynastic history of Nim Li Punit begins again with the dedication of the enormous 9.29m tall Stela 14. A life-sized portrait of a Nim Li Punit lord who is shown scattering drops of blood or incense is depicted on Stela 14. The text on Stela 14 is unusual for the Initial Series date was designed to link two different period ending dates together: 9.18.0.0.0 (7, October 790) and 9.18.10.0.0 (15, August 800). The text describes the scattering of drops by a ruler named *Mo' JGU*, or 'the Macaw Jaguar God of the Underworld.' The most interesting part of this text is the parentage expression for *Mo' JGU* which includes the name of both his mother and father. His mother's name is noteworthy for she is said to be a royal woman from the *B'ahlam* site. This same parentage collocation also appears on the newly discovered Stela 21 at Nim Li Punit. Therefore, it would appear that the mother of the contemporary king of Nim Li Punit married into the dynastic line at Nim Li Punit. Based on these references, it would appear that Nim Li Punit and the *B'ahlam* Site were friendly allies. However, the same cannot be said with Pusilhá and the *B'ahlam* Site since Sculptural Fragment 17 at Pusilhá depicts a

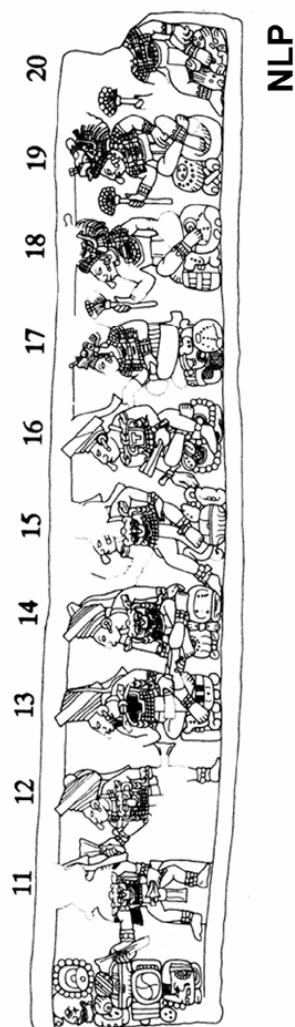


Figure 9.41. Copan Sculpted Bench Panel from Str. 10L-11 (Drawing by L. Schele, © David Schele, courtesy Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org)

captive from the *B'ahlam* Site.

The final piece of epigraphic evidence to indicate friendly, non-antagonistic, relations can be found recorded in a reference on Stela 21 which commemorates the period ending 9.18.0.0.0 (7, October 790). The text refers to a fire-scattering at a location known as the *Ox Witik* or 'Three Roots' Place. It is likely that the reference to this specific Copan place indicates travel to Copan by the lord of Nim Li Punit as part of these period ending rituals. This event may have also served to signify a reestablishment of Copan hegemony in southern Belize shortly following the death of Quiriguá's king, *K'ak' Tiliw Chan Yoaat*, less than five years earlier.

The final criterion used in testing the hegemonic model was the presence or absence of explicit epigraphic statements relating to warfare or to inter-site conflict. There are only two possible references to warfare in the inscriptions of Nim Li Punit and neither is certain. The first reference appears in the final passage recorded on the bowl text. The text states that a location known as the *Ek' Jul Kab'* 'Black Pierced Earth Place' was destroyed and that one year after its destruction a gift or offering from the House of Copan was presented to the House of the Nim Li Punit lord. Though vague, this could be a reference to a war or battle that involved Nim Li Punit and perhaps the gift was presented one year later in commemoration of that battle.

With regard to the *may* model, the epigraphic evidence shows that period ending stelae, especially those that commemorated *k'atun* endings and half-*k'atun* endings, were the most common theme recorded in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Nim Li Punit. It is likely that all eight of Nim Li Punit's carved stelae commemorate period endings, though the date on Stela 4 is now missing. The earliest period-ending date at Nim Li Punit is found in a retrospective passage recorded on Stela 15 which dates to 9.4.10.0.0 (24,

August 524). Stela 15 appears to link an earlier stela planting to the dedication of this monument, exactly ten *k'atuns* later, on 9.14.10.0.0 (9, October 721). By looking at the distribution of period ending dates at Nim Li Punit, one can see that the majority of these dates fall after 9.17.10.0.0 (28, November 780) (see Table 9.1). Though the period-ending date 9.17.10.0.0 was also commemorated at Uxbenká on Stela 15, there are no other period-ending monuments that date after this time on monuments at any of the other emblem glyph-bearing sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize. However, a lone *Ajaw* Stela, found at the site of Tzimín Ché in the headwaters of the adjoining Deep River Drainage, is not only the latest dated monument in the Southern Maya Mountains Region, but it is one of the latest dated monuments in the entire southern Maya lowlands. The placement of a lone period ending *Ajaw* Stela at Tzimín Ché is curious. Based on current epigraphic data, it would appear that all four emblem glyph-bearing sites in the region were likely abandoned and no longer erecting monuments by A.D. 909 and yet a period-ending, Terminal Classic monument was erected at a small site located along the Deep River Drainage. The style of carving on this monument (i.e. the square-cartouche) indicates that the scribe who carved this monument was fluent in the sculptural themes of central Petén Terminal Classic monuments.

The second and third criteria used in testing the *may* model involve the presence or absence of E-Groups and Twin-Pyramid Complexes. Although Nim Li Punit lacks a Twin-Pyramid Complex, the site does contain the only known E-Group in all of the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize. On the basis of monument size, it is likely that the enormous stelae erected in front of Structure 4 served as a giant solar-seasonal observatory to mark the various equinoxes and solstices (refer back to Figure 9.2). In addition, as Rice notes (2004: 92) these types of architectural complexes were the centers

Table 9.1. Period Ending Dates in the Hieroglyphic Inscriptions of Golden Stream Valley

Monument Number	L.C. Date	Year	Period Ending Ritual
NLP, Stela 15	9.4.10.0.0	24, August 524	Stela Planting
NLP, Stela 15	9.14.10.0.0	9, October 721	Fire-Scattering/Vision Serpent
NLP, Stela 2	9.15.0.0.0	18, August 731	Stela Planting
NLP, Stela 2	9.15.7.0.0	12, July 738	Unknown Event
NLP, Stela 1	9.15.10.0.0	26, June 741	Fire-Scattering
XNB', Stela 1	9.17.10.0.0	28, November 780	Fire-Scattering
NLP, Stela 14	9.18.0.0.0*	7, October 790	Fire-Scattering
NLP, Stela 21	9.18.0.0.0	7, October 790	Fire-Scattering
NLP, Stela 7	9.18.5.0.0	11, September 795	Unknown Event
NLP, Stela 14	9.18.10.0.0*	15, August 800	Fire-Scattering
NLP, Stela 7	9.19.0.0.0	24, June 810	Unknown Event
NLP, Stela 3	10.0.0.0.0	11, March 830	Stela Planting?
TZMCHE, Stela 1	10.4.0.0.0	15, January 909	Stela Planting?

Abbreviation Key**NLP:** Nim Li Punit**XNB':** Xnaheb'**TZMCHE:** Tzimín Ché

* Indicates the purposeful linking of two different Period Ending dates together.

of *k'atun*-ending celebrations.

In regards to the fourth criteria used in testing the *may* model, the lords of Nim Li Punit were using the elite royal title *K'uhul Ajaw* to indicate divine status. As mentioned above, the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph first appears in the epigraphic record in a retrospective passage recorded on Stela 15 which dates to 9.4.10.0.0 (24, August 524). The Nim Li Punit emblem glyph appears six times in the inscriptions of Nim Li Punit, at least three times at Copan (on the facade of Str. 22A, on the Sculpted Bench from Temple 11, and on Step 35 from the Hieroglyphic Stairway) and at least once at Altun Há (on a small God N sculpture). The *Kaloomte'* title does not appear in the inscriptions of Nim Li Punit. Perhaps some of the best epigraphic evidence to support Rice's *may* model comes from the way in which Classic Maya polities referred to themselves in terms of *tzuk* or geo-politico/territorial units. The numbered *tzuk* titles appear to function much like site-specific emblem glyphs; however, instead of being restricted to a single emblem glyph-bearing polity, more than one polity can use this title to claim affiliation as a probable *k'atun* seat to one of thirteen regional capitals or *may ku*. Evidence for this claim can be seen in the Altar de los Reyes text that prominently features the emblem glyphs of thirteen regional polities named one right after another. It is likely that these thirteen polities represented the thirteen original *may* seats which formed the basis for interpreting the Maya world.

The proposition that the most significant events within a *may* realm occur at intervals of 128 or 256 years is not fully supported in the inscriptions of Nim Li Punit. The epigraphic findings at Nim Li Punit do not correspond well with the archaeological findings, though granted, not much archaeological work has been conducted at Nim Li Punit. The dynastic history of Nim Li Punit spans some 306 years beginning with a

retrospective passage recorded on Stela 15 that dates to 9.4.10.0.0 (24, August 524) and ending with the period-ending Stela 3 which dates to 10.0.0.0.0 (11, March 830). On the basis of contemporary period-ending dates, which begin on 9.14.10.0.0 (9, October 721) and end on 10.0.0.0.0 (11, March 830), Nim Li Punit's overall dynastic history shrinks to approximately 109 years, which corresponds to roughly one-half of a *may* cycle. Since the bulk of Nim Li Punit's period-ending dates are among the latest in the region, it suggests that Nim Li Punit was one of the last *k'atun* seats within the Copan-based *may* sphere to commemorate period endings in the Southern Maya Mountains Region.

Perhaps the most important historical events recorded in the inscriptions of Nim Li Punit were the accession of *B'ahlam Te'* in the 'presence of' an Altun Há lord on 9.14.15.4.14 (16, December 726) and the later period-ending celebrations that resulted in the planting of a stela which was supervised by lords from both Copan and Altun Há. Since archaeological findings have linked the kingdoms of Altun Há and Copan during Classic times, it seems likely that these two polities were politically and economically connected, though Altun Há was not a dependent polity to Copan. The presence of two foreign patrons in the written inscriptions of Nim Li Punit in statements that indicate agency provides epigraphic evidence to support Martin and Grube's hegemonic model for Classic Maya political organization. It also provides additional evidence of close interregional ties between all three regions.

The last criterion used for testing the *may* model is the notion that cycle seats within a given *may* sphere will likely share similar architectural, iconographic, and ceramic programs. The architectural style of Nim Li Punit is similar to that of both Pusilhá and Uxbenká in that cut stones were used to face the sides of natural hills within the site core as a cost-cutting effort designed to make these constructions look more

massive or monumental. As mentioned above, the ballcourt at Nim Li Punit, like many in southern Belize, is enclosed by a low stone wall. The purpose of this wall was likely to control access into the South Stela Plaza Group. Although Nim Li Punit is home to the only typical E-Group complex in southern Belize, the positions of the sun on the eastern horizon for both the equinoxes and solstices were likely marked by stelae rather than temples. A portrait of two individuals, including the Founder, *B'ahlam Te'*, casting blood or incense into a bowl containing bark-paper are depicted on Stela 1. Both figures rest on top of a giant *Witz* Monster Pedestal. Located directly below the *Witz* Monster is a huge *mat* motif which represents the notion of divine kingship in Classic Maya art. This motif also appears on structures like Str. 22A at Copan, a structure that has been identified as a *Popol Naah* or 'Council House.' Its appearance here on Stela 1, located directly in front of Str. 2, may identify this structure as a *Popol Naah*.

Scattering rituals are the main sculptural theme of the monuments at Nim Li Punit. Stelae 1, 2, 14, and 15 feature various individuals in the act of scattering blood or incense into censers. A secondary theme at Nim Li Punit are those scenes that feature individuals standing or sitting on top of *Witz* Monster Pedestals. This theme is also prevalent in the sculptural programs at Uxbenká and Xnaheb'. Often these pedestals include explicit iconographic motifs or hieroglyphic texts that actually name these *Witz* Monster locations as sacred places. The presence of the turban headdress, a restricted marker of Copan ethnic identity, appears at Nim Li Punit on Stela 15. The turban headdress is regionally restricted to sites located in the southeastern Maya lowlands including Copan, Quiriguá, Santa Barbara, Miramar, La Entrada, and El Paraíso. The enormous size of Nim Li Punit's stelae, including Stela 14, the second tallest stelae ever carved by the ancient Maya, suggests that the Nim Li Punit scribes were emulating the

enormous size of Quiriguá's *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Yoaat*'s monuments.

The evidence presented in this chapter highlights the epigraphic evidence of Late Classic hegemonic control in the Golden Stream Valley. The next chapter will discuss my overall conclusions concerning the hegemonic and *may* models based on the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize.

CHAPTER 10

SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION: CLASSIC MAYA POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IN THE SOUTHERN MAYA MOUNTAINS REGION OF BELIZE

“The picture that is emerging is neither one of a centralized administration of regional states nor one of political vacuum populated by a weak one. Instead it would appear that a few powerful kingdoms held lesser ones in their sway, a system not unlike others seen throughout ancient Mesoamerica...We suspect that the Classic Maya conformed to a similar pattern – a complex environment of overlords and vassals, kinship ties and obligations, where the strong came to dominate the weak” (Martin and Grube 1995: 46).

The focus of this dissertation was to investigate and define the nature of Classic Maya political organization in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize in order to test whether or not those findings would support Martin and Grube’s assertion that Classic Maya political organization was largely structured by the hegemonic principle of over kingship made possible through agency, alliance, and subordination. My research was also designed to test the basic tenants of Rice’s *may* model to see whether or not it could be used to explain how lowland Maya political organization functioned in terms of strategies for negotiating power and time. In addition, I also proposed the possibility that the *may* model may have served as the basis for integrating the shared socio-religious/ political beliefs and understandings that united and bound dependent allies to their

sovereigns within a hegemonic system like that advocated by Martin and Grube.

Martin and Grube (1994, 1995, 2000) have argued that the ruling elite at two Classic Maya “superpowers”, Tikal and Calakmul, each created a variable network of allies and dependencies through a system of political alliances and interpersonal relationships which led to the creation of subordinate seats of power. According to Martin and Grube, the subordinate seats of power represented an overarching hegemonic system that enabled these two sites to dominate, control, and manipulate the social, economic, and political affairs of dozens of strategic sites throughout the Southern Maya Lowlands for most of the Classic Period. Martin and Grube and Rice have based their findings on the dynastic inscriptions of the Classic Period, on numerous indigenous 16th, 17th, and 18th century ethnohistoric accounts, descriptions, and reports, and on the shared use of political vocabulary among sites located in the best-studied region of the Maya Lowlands, that being the central Petén. However, all three scholars acknowledge that further investigations are warranted, especially those that target the lesser-known regions of the Maya Lowlands in order to ascertain whether the same types of hierarchical relationships and political practices now thought to exemplify the Classic Maya of the central Petén can be found in places like the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize. In the absence of solid archaeological data, epigraphic data can be integrated into archaeology as a useful method for identifying both inter and intra-regional political relations. The strength of both models is their ability to illuminate possible avenues of research by revealing epigraphic relationships that can then be explored archaeologically.

Currently, there is no single all-encompassing model that satisfactorily explains Classic Maya political organization. Most of the previously proposed models of Classic Maya political organization were based on various social, geographic, economic, and

political models observed or deduced from the archaeological, ethnohistoric, or ethnographic analogies to complex societies often far-removed from Mesoamerica (Grube 2000a: 547; Houston 1992b: 3). Much of the debate concerning Classic Maya political organization has centered on a major division: on one side, are scholars who see Classic Maya polities as being strong centralized states with powerful administrative bureaucracies (Adams 1981; Chase and Chase 1992; Marcus 1976) and on the other side are scholars who see Classic Maya polities as being weak, limited in size and decentralized with fleeting bureaucratic power (Demarest 1992; Dunham 1992; Fox 1987; Mathews 1991). Dissatisfied with either model and made possible by the rapid advancement of Maya hieroglyphic decipherment during the early 1990s, Martin and Grube proposed a new model for interpreting Classic Maya Political organization based on hierarchical political interactions between sites as defined by the appearance of emblem glyphs in the inscriptions . Grube and Martin referred to these polities as “hegemonic states” (1998: 131).

The findings presented here suggest that the Classic Maya were neither a centralized confederacy of regional states nor a political system of weak city-states. Rather, the hieroglyphic inscriptions and ethnohistoric accounts point to a political system where power and wealth were unequally distributed among polities over time and space, giving rise to a highly complex and ever changing geopolitical landscape (Martin and Grube 1995: 46). Thus, because of their economic and political circumstances, some polities were able to dominate the social, economic, and political affairs of lesser polities in a hierarchical or hegemonic system much like those described in other areas of Mesoamerica (Grube and Martin 2001: 150). While we may never fully be able to answer the questions as to why Classic Maya political organization took the form that it did, or

determine whether that form remained the same over time and space, or discuss how it began or how it ended, the evidence presented in this dissertation suggests that Classic Maya political organization was likely structured by a combination of hierarchical (or hegemonic) practices grounded in Maya calendrical science. As I have suggested in this dissertation, the basic tenants of both the hegemonic and *may* models are particularly relevant and are critically important in understanding the politics of the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize, an area that has received little archaeological attention historically, but contains many hieroglyphic inscriptions.

Classic Maya Politics in the Southern Maya Mountains Region

As a well-defined geographic, political, and linguistic zone, the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize indicate that the politics of this region were both complex and dynamic. The inscriptions found at sites within this region feature more references to powerful hegemons located outside the Southern Maya Mountains Region than the intra-regional interactions which involved their own closest neighbors. It is possible that this phenomena may be linked to the fact that the rulers of some polities in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize (in particular, Pusilhá and Nim Li Punit) were linked or claimed origins to polities outside the region. Perhaps the best pieces of epigraphic evidence in support of this are the three retrospective references recorded on stelae at Pusilhá (Stela P. K. and D) that refer to historical events involving a well-known geographic location known as the *Chi*-Altar Place. As discussed in Chapter 7, the *Chi*-Altar Place appears to refer to a distant location that was said to be more than 208 days away from Copan. Grube and Martin (2001: 19-21) have linked the

Chi-Altar Place to the accessions of numerous historical figures who appear to be the founders of royal dynasties. Grube and Martin (2001: 19-20) have suggested that these future founders may have traveled to the *Chi*-Altar Place prior to their accession in order to receive official sanction or legitimization for their right to rule from a higher authority. It is widely believed that the *Chi*-Altar Place referred to a site located in the region between Lake Petén Itza and the Mirador Basin, either El Mirador, Nakbé, or to the Kaanul Polity of Calakmul (Grube 2003b; Guenter 2005; Walker et al. 2006). The contexts in which this toponym appears in the inscriptions at Pusilhá suggest a similar interpretation.

I suspect that the references to the *Chi*-Altar Place are directly related and analogous to the larger socio-politico/ideological concept of Tollan as a Place of Origin to which the rulers and/or the founders of various dynasties traveled prior to their accessions in order to receive official sanction under the auspices of a larger authority. Given the fact that some of the earliest and largest Preclassic sites were located in the Mirador Basin, the references to the *Chi*-Altar Place may be a reflection of a larger geopolitical system left over from Late Preclassic or Early Classic times. The *Chi*-Altar toponym may represent the earliest epigraphic evidence for the existence of a larger macro-political system of organization that may be tied to Rice's *may* model. My research into the *tzuk* system indicates that Classic Maya kings were keenly aware that they were part of a larger geopolitical landscape, likely established during the Late Preclassic Period, that was based on a higher level of political authority organized by the politico-religious system known as the *may*. The *may* was an organizational system used by the Postclassic Maya living in Yucatan and references to this system can also be found in the both the Books of *Chilam B'alam*s and in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the

Classic Period. In this system, power (social, religious, economic, and political) and authority rotated every *k'atun* among the most important allied cities within a regional geopolitical landscape for a period of 13 *k'atuns* or 256 years (Edmonson 1979: 10-11; Rice 2004: 55). My findings surrounding the appearance and use of numbered *tzuk* titles in the Classic Period inscriptions suggests that the Maya viewed or conceived their geopolitical landscape as one consisting of thirteen distinct political divisions much like that described by Roys for Postclassic Yuacatan (1957). Thus far, I have been able to identify eight different numbered *tzuk* titles ranging from 1 to 13 (specifically, 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13) and based on the distribution of these numerical titles I have been able to associate each of these divisions to an approximate geographic territory (Figure 10.1).

A question that needs to be asked is whether the *tzuk* divisions represent thirteen distinct geographic territories or whether they represent an overarching political system that consisted of thirteen (supreme) polities, as possibly indicated by the Altar de los Reyes text which features the emblem glyphs of thirteen different polities. I suspect that the answer to this question may come from the *may* model itself. As Rice has argued, at the center of the *may* system was a capital city or *may ku* ('cycle seat') which headed a regional division (*tzuk*) of allied polities whose *k'uhul ajawob*, 'divine lords' were responsible for overseeing all of the major social, religious, economic, and political events for the *tzuk* for the duration of the 256-year *may* cycle (2004: 78). It is likely that this geopolitical system reflected a more sophisticated understanding and sense of a polity's local and regional identity and whose surrounding territories were implicitly and historically linked (Smith 2003: 183). Both the Chontal documents of Acalan and the various entries from the *Chilam B'alams*, suggest that the groupings of polities belonging to a particular *tzukob* were allied economically and were governed as unified political

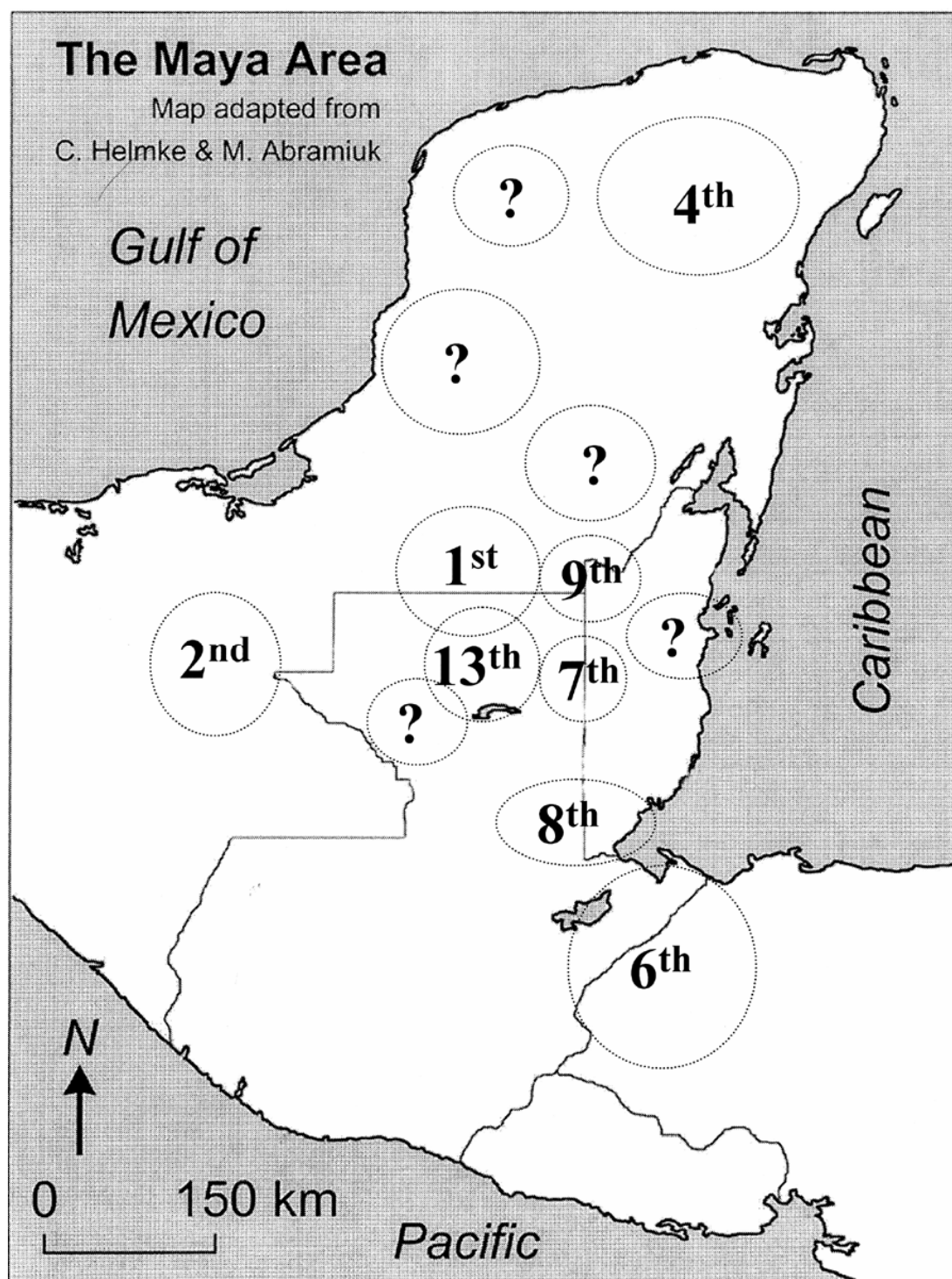


Figure 10.1. Map Showing the Probable Geopolitical Divisions Based on the Numbered *Tzuc* Title (Map courtesy of Helmke and Abramiuk and modified by author)

and were governed as unified political territories (Quezada 1993: 20; Kepecs 2005: 124). In light of these findings, it is my belief that the *tzuk* title is a reflection of that older primordial political system, the *may*, and it involved the rotation of power among thirteen supreme polities or *may kuob'* originally established by the Maya elite. Based on the Altar de los Reyes text as well as my research on the *tzuk* title, it is likely that the capitals of the thirteen original *may kuob'* included: The *Chi*-Altar Place (either El Mirador, Nakbé), Palenque, Calakmul, Yula/Chichen Itza, Copan, Naranjo, the Ik' Site (possible Motul de San Jose), Altun Ha, Edzna, and Tikal. The *may* system was likely established during the Preclassic Period at roughly the same time and in conjunction with, the wider social transformation of Maya society from one with an emphasis on the personal charismatic qualities of its rulers to the more formal institution of divine kingship (see Freidel and Schele 1988; Rice 2004: 92). It is also likely that the trappings of divine kingship also led to the creation of complex writing and iconographic systems. I suspect that the creation of the *may* system was originally formulated and developed by the rulers who sat at the primordial seat of power and authority in the Maya area, the founding kings of the *Chi*-Altar Place.

There are at least two other specific toponymic references in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region that lend support to the view that rulers in this area were linked to polities outside the region. The first toponymic expression is the *Wi'te'naah* or 'Tree-Root House' expression recorded on Stela P at Pusilhá. This expression is often found in the inscriptions of Copan in contexts that describe the founding of royal dynasties (Schele 1986, 1992). The second toponym is the *Ox Witik* or 'Three Roots' Place which is recorded on Stela 21 at Nim Li Punit. This particular location is known as one associated with the most important and prestigious royal

lineages from the site of Copan (Stuart and Grube 2000: 5). The appearance of these titles in the inscriptions of Pusilhá and Nim Li Punit suggest that the kings of both sites may have traveled to these sacred locations at Copan in order to have their accessions officially recognized. The appearance of these foreign toponyms in the inscriptions of both Nim Li Punit and Pusilhá suggests to me that both sites were likely *k'atun* seats within a Copan-based *may* system.

Peter Biro (2008: 293) was among the first to suggest that the founding of some Classic Maya polities may be tied to population movements into these regions shortly before or just after the start of dynastic rule. This appears to be the case for Pusilhá, which emerged as an emblem glyph-bearing polity during the later half of Uxbenká's 237-year hiatus shortly following the 9.1.0.0.0 Period Ending. As discussed in Chapter 7, I emphasized that Pusilhá's founding was likely the result of a migration of foreign immigrants into the Southern Maya Mountains Region following the onset of Uxbenká's hiatus or interregnum period. The evidence for this influx of new immigrants can be seen in the rapid emergence and proliferation of dozens of new surface sites throughout the region, including the appearance of at least two other emblem glyph-bearing sites (Pusilhá and Nim Li Punit) and perhaps a third emblem glyph-bearing site (Lubaantún). The epigraphic and archaeological data suggest that these new arrivals came from southern Petén, in particular either the Pasión or Dolores Valleys (Bill and Braswell 2005: 305-306). The epigraphic data suggest ethno-linguistic differences between the earlier resident population and these new arrivals into the Southern Maya Mountains Region. As Tokovinine (2007: 9) and I have argued, the distinctions between these numbered *tzuk* titles may also provide further epigraphic evidence for the existence of separate identities for the Classic Maya. It is likely that these titles may have been used to

identify or denote ethnic or regional identity and could be useful in further defining the ethno-linguistic boundaries of polities which utilized the same numerical *tzuk* title.

As discussed in this dissertation, the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region provide crucial insights regarding the identities of the linguistic groups that lived in the region during Classic times. The internal and external tensions within and between polities may have involved ethno-linguistic differences. The hieroglyphic inscriptions of this region are well known for unusual forms of syntax, unique grammatical conventions, and unusual reading orders (Wanyerka n.d.). While most scholars agree that Maya hieroglyphic writing reflects features of both Yucatekan and Ch'olan languages (Bricker 1992; Kaufman and Norman 1984), linguistic boundaries are dynamic. Borrowing likely played a key role in the development of both language groups as they interacted over time. With the identification of distinct vernaculars seeping into the inscriptions of the Classic Period, it is important to examine the lexical and verbal morphology of the texts of this region since they can be used as diagnostic markers of differences in language affiliation. It has been suggested that during Classic times, the Maya Mountains served as a geographic barrier that divided Yucatekan and Ch'olan speakers. However, the numerous syntactic and morphological anomalies found in the texts of this region, especially those at Pusilhá and Lubaantún, are not found elsewhere.

My research suggests that the Southern Maya Mountains Region contained at least two and perhaps three linguistic boundaries during Classic times (Figure 10.2). I suspect that one linguistic boundary separated the inhabitants of both Pusilhá and Lubaantún from Uxbenká. This hypothesis is based on the unusual syntax and the

restricted use of certain lexemes and spellings for certain month names in the written texts of these sites. For example, at Pusilhá on Stela F the month name *Sek* was spelled *ka-se-wa* which is the Ch'ol spelling of this month while on Uxbenká Stela 22, which commemorated the same 9.16.0.0.0 period ending, the month name *Sek* lacks the *ka* prefix indicating a Yukatekan spelling of this month. In addition, the inscriptions recorded on the figural plaques at Lubaantún appear to reflect the same scribal differences in the way that inscriptions were recorded at Pusilhá as, opposed to the way that inscriptions were recorded at either Uxbenká or Nim Li Punit. These findings would suggest that the people who lived at both Pusilhá and Lubaantún were ethno-linguistically the same, but different than their surrounding neighbors. The truncated way in which dates were recorded at both Pusilhá and Lubaantún leads me to conclude that a different calendrical system may have been employed at these sites, possibly indicating a change in social identity.

A second linguistic boundary may have formed in the area around Uxbenká which appears to share epigraphic features unique to the central-Petén. Features which include the name phrases of several well-known historical figures from the site of Tikal. A third possible linguistic boundary may have appeared very late in the Southern Maya Mountains Region, reflected by the Terminal Classic use of the unusual *Ajaw* Stelae at both Nim Li Punit and Tzimín Ché. Though rare across the Maya lowlands, the appearance of two *Ajaw* Stelae in such close approximation to one another suggests that the use of a Short Count calendrical system was in place at these two sites during this time. The Short Count notation used on both monuments also features the highly unusual backwards and upside down usage of the numerical coefficient. This phenomena is unique in the Maya area and I view this as possible evidence of the presence of

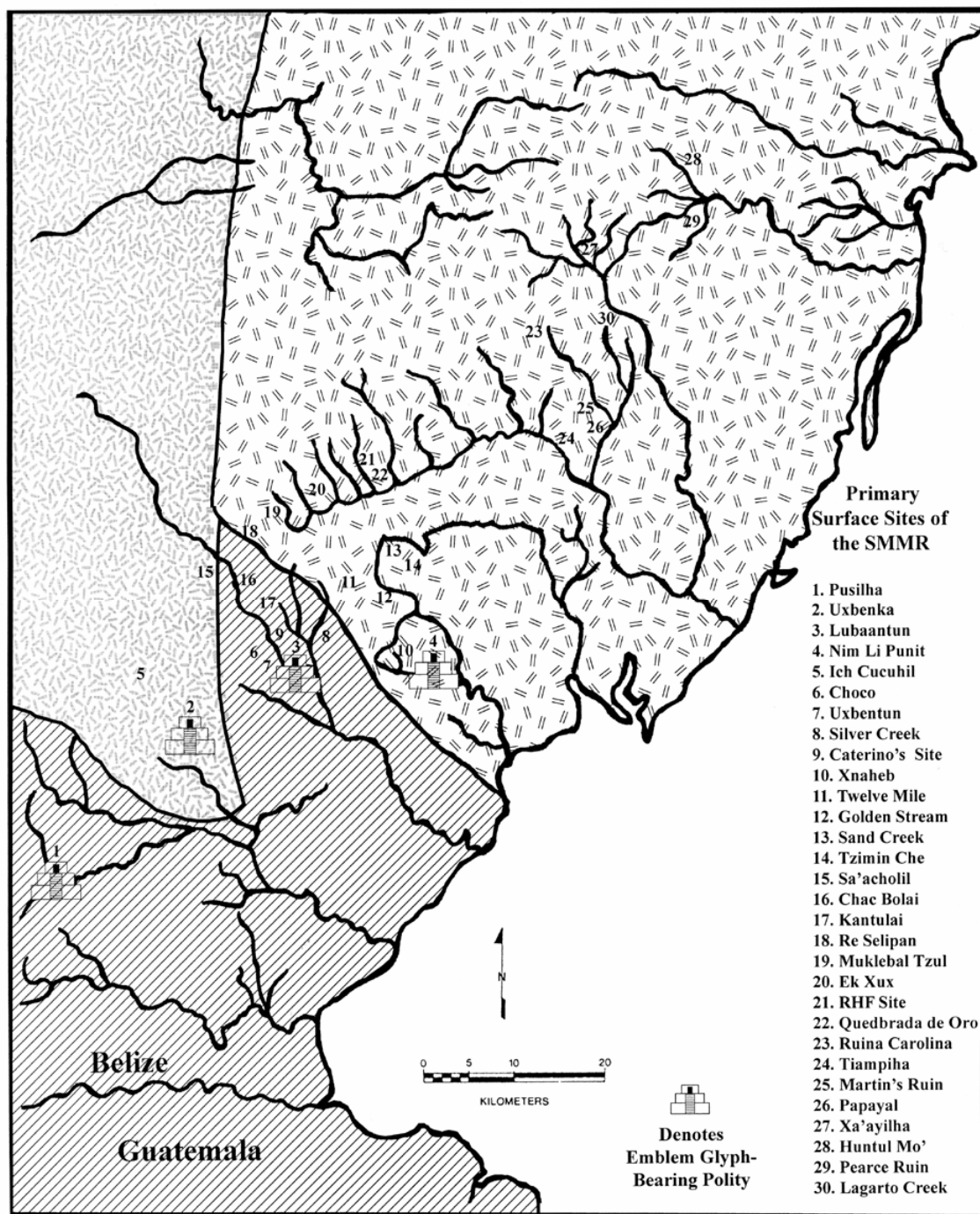


Figure 10.2. Map Showing Possible Ethno-Linguistic Boundaries in the SMMR

Yukatekan immigrants into the Southern Maya Mountains region sometime after A.D. 800 who are distinguishing their texts from preexisting texts of the region by using a different calendrical style and system. My earlier analysis of the verbal morphology of the Nim Li Punit inscriptions suggests that the inhabitants of the site during Classic times were either Yukatekan speakers who were literate in Ch'olan or the inhabitants were Ch'olan speakers (Wanyerka 1999a).

Like the politics of the central Petén, most of the interactions recorded in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region were between *ajaws* and *k'uhul ajaws*. Overall, there are few references to secondary elite titles in the inscriptions of this region, suggesting that secondary nobles like *sajal* or *aj naab'* did not play a significant role in the politics of this region. The rulers at all four emblem glyph-bearing sites (Uxbenká, Pusilhá, Lubaantún, and Nim Li Punit) referred to themselves as *k'uhul ajaw* 'divine lords.' Nim Li Punit features both the earliest (9.4.10.0.0, 24, August 524) and latest reference (9.19.0.0.0, 24, June 830) to the *k'uhul ajaw* title. Specific references to *k'uhul ajaw* from the foreign sites Altun Há, the B'alam Site, and Copan (expressed as the *k'uhul ajaw* of the 6th *Tzuk*) are said to be overseeing or witnessing the local accessions of the Nim Li Punit rulers.

Martin and Grube have contended that Tikal and Calakmul were the two most powerful polities or "superpowers" of the Late Classic Period and controlled other rulers throughout the central Petén and Petexbatun regions (Martin and Grube 1995). However, there is no solid evidence of either Tikal or Calakmul intervention in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize. The only possible exception to this is the appearance of an Early Classic monument at Uxbenká that commemorates the death of Tikal's 14th king, *Chak Tok Ich'aak* I. Though undated, the prominent reference to such an important

historical figure on a monument at Uxbenká implies a close political connection between these two polities. The monument could indicate that Uxbenká served as either a Late Preclassic or Early Classic *k'atun* seat within a Tikal-based *may* sphere. It is also possible that Uxbenká Stela 11 may have been exiled from Tikal as a consequence of termination rituals associated with the end of Tikal's Early Classic hosting of the *may* seat around A.D. 378 (Rice 2004: 103). Simon Martin (2000: 58) has argued that most of Tikal's pre-A.D. 378 monuments were found either broken or displaced ("exiled") to secondary deposits at peripheral sites outside Tikal. This behavior may reflect the *may* system as a physical reminder of the superordinate-subordinate relationship that bound dependencies (*k'atun* seats) to their sovereigns (*may ku*). The last readable Early Classic monument at Uxbenká is the broken Stela 23, which commemorated the 9.1.0.0.0 (27, August 455) period ending. Following the commemoration of this period ending no further monumental inscriptions were recorded at Uxbenká for 237 years, which is near enough to a complete 256-year *may* cycle to suggest that the interregnum period at Uxbenká was tied to Tikal's loss as *may* seat to Caracol at the start of its Hiatus Period (Rice 2004: 115).

While there is no solid evidence that either Tikal or Calakmul were vying for control of the Southern Maya Mountains Region, there is epigraphic evidence to indicate that Copan was. Evidence to support this claim can be seen in the numerous inter-regional references in the written inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region and Copan. Of particular importance are the hierarchical references that describe the accession of local rulers under the aegis of foreign overlords, as expressed by the use of the *ukab'jiiy*, *yichnal*, and *yitah* expressions (see Figure 10.3). In addition, possessed titles can be used to show hierarchical relations among rulers and polities. An example of

this kind of subordination is found in the inscriptions of Nim Li Punit. Recorded along the base of Stela 15 is a reference to a Nim Li Punit lord who is called the *yajaw* ‘lord of’ the *Ek’ Xukpi Ajaw* ‘Black Copan lord’. This reference indicates that the king of Nim Li Punit was subordinate to the Copan lord, suggesting that Copan viewed Nim Li Punit as a close political ally or a subject polity. There are similar statements in the inscriptions of Pusilhá that describe the planting of stelae under the supervision of a Copan lord. The appearance of the main sign of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph on the facade of Copan’s famed *Popol Naah* or ‘Council House’ along with toponymic references to both Nim Li Punit and Pusilhá on the sculpted bench from Temple 11 at Copan provide further evidence that both sites were likely *k’atun* seats within a Copan-based *may*.

There are numerous references to Copan lords in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. As discussed earlier, *Ek’ Xukpi Ajaw* is an elite royal title that is based in part on the main sign of the Copan emblem glyph. A passage on Nim Li Punit Stela 2 describes the local accession of a Nim Li Punit lord and subsequent stela planting under the supervision of a lord from Copan as well as a lord from Altun Há. In this case, the practice of over kingship is indicated by the *ukab’jiiy* expression, which links the actor of the event to the initiator of that action. I suggest that the *ukab’jiiy*-initiated events, like supervised local accessions, joint ritual activities/visitations, and inter-dynastic marriages were events that bound allied subordinate polities to superordinate ones in a hierarchical system.

Yichnal, ‘in the presence of’ or ‘to face’ is a related expression that can be used to indicate aegis. A *yichnal* expression on Nim Li Punit Stela 2 indicates that the local accession of the Nim Li Punit lord *B’ahlam Te’* took place in the ‘presence of’ a foreign lord from the site of Altun Há. Both archaeology and epigraphy confirm that Altun Há

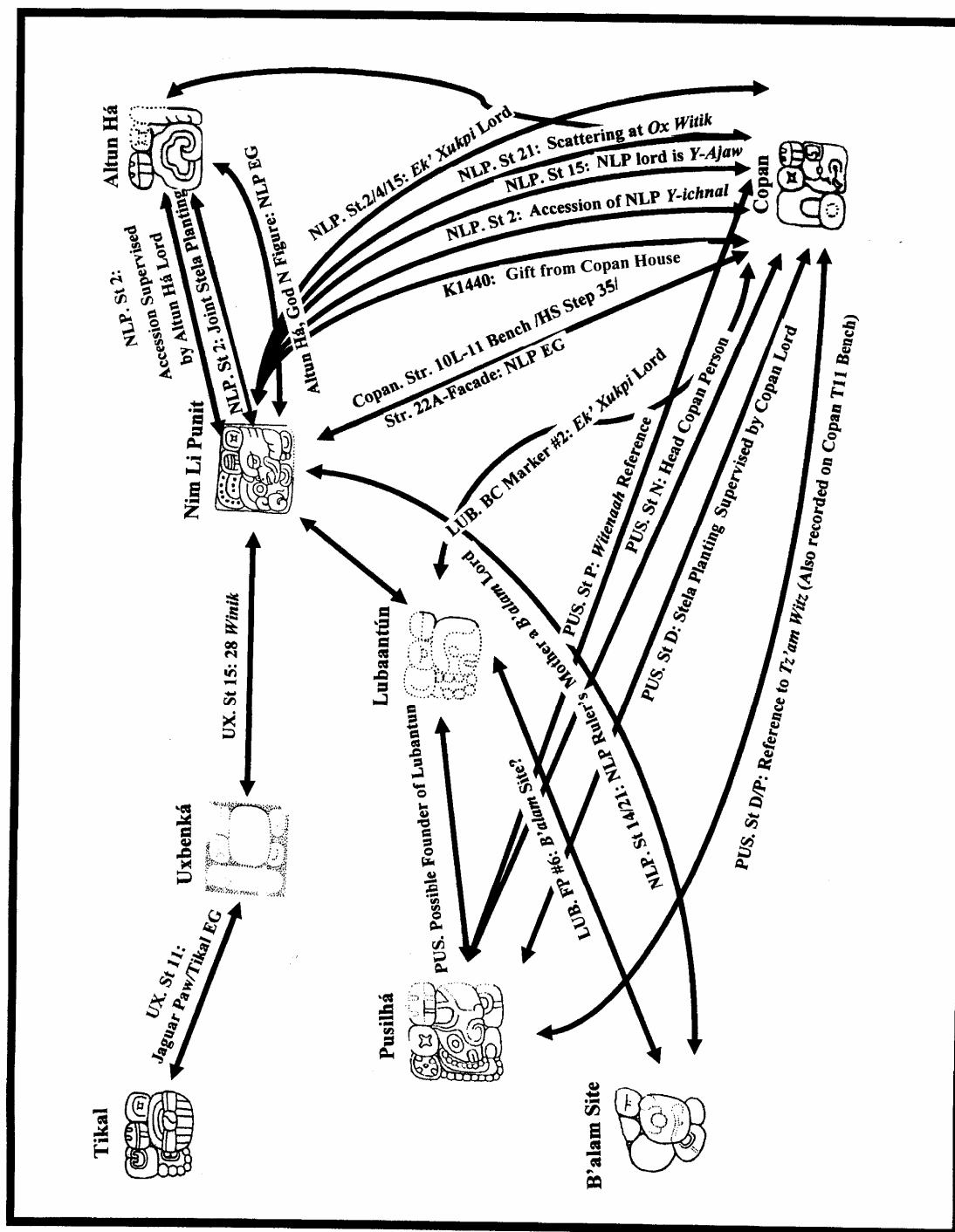


Figure 10.3. Chart Showing Diplomatic Relations Among Sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region

(the Water-Scroll Site) had close inter-regional ties to the rulership of Nim Li Punit and Copan during the Classic Period (Guenter 2002: 61, 108; Reents-Budet 1994: 201). There is also a reference to Nim Li Punit in the inscriptions of Altun Há.

Antagonistic encounters between polities can also be used to provide insights into the hierarchical relationships among Classic Maya polities (Martin and Grube 1994: 19) (Figure 10.4). Pusilhá appears to have been one of the most aggressive polities in the Southern Maya Mountains Region. The inscriptions at Pusilhá record nearly a dozen instances to warfare, conflict, or captive-taking, including the capture of lords from the sites of Altun Há, *B'alam*, and Yok'. The earliest reference to conflict in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region appears in a passage dating to 9.8.1.12.8 (22, April 595) recorded at Pusilhá on Stela D. The passage describes the 'breaking in half of stelae' which preceded the capture of the Altun Há lord. Though this reference could be interpreted as a predetermined termination ritual associated with the end of Pusilhá *k'atun* seating, the additional reference to the capture of an Altun Há lord suggests to me that the event involving the destruction of stelae was likely warfare related. There is a latter reference on Stela D at Pusilhá that describes the *jub'uy utook' upakal* 'the downing of the flints and shields of' Altun Há. The battles waged between Pusilhá and Altun Há suggest that each site was able to launch attacks over large distances; however, there is no evidence to suggest that new rulership was installed by the victor following the victory.

Both the archaeological and epigraphic data suggest that between the 6th and 7th centuries the geopolitical landscape of the Southern Maya Mountains Region became quite complex. Prior to the start of the 6th century the only major political entity in the Southern Maya Mountains Region was Uxbenká. Shortly after celebrating the 9.1.0.0.0 period ending (27, August 455), no further hieroglyphic inscriptions were recorded at

Uxbenká for 237 years (A.D. 455 to A.D.692). Elsewhere during this interregnum period, the Southern Maya Mountains Region experienced a sudden florescence with the rise of several dozen new surface sites, along with three new emblem glyph-bearing polities (Pusilhá, Lubaantún, and Nim Li Punit) in close approximation to one another. This phenomenon may be the consequence of migrations of foreign immigrants into this region following the end of Tikal's Early Classic hosting of the *may* shortly after A.D. 378 (Rice 2004: 103). I suspect that the end of Tikal's run as *may* seat resulted in a major shift that freed or at least loosened the Southern Maya Mountains Region from central Petén influence or control. Sharer and Traxler (2006: 36) have also noted and discussed the arrival of new Ch'olan-speaking immigrants into the Copan Valley at about the same time. Sharer and Traxler have detected profound changes in the archaeological record of Copan including monumental changes in site planning, construction techniques, and in building functions (2006: 36). These findings, along with the fact that these new sites are situated in command positions along the major east-west trade corridors that connected the Southern Maya Mountains Region to the southern Petén (Dolores and Pasión drainages), suggest that the people who were moving into this region were related to the people who migrated from the south/central Petén eastward into the Motagua and Copan Valleys towards the end of the Early Classic Period. The migration of foreign immigrants into the Southern Maya Mountains Region during this time could also account for the linguistic variation observed in the written texts of this region.

Based on the archaeological and epigraphic findings, it would appear that the Classic Maya living in the Southern Maya Mountains Region during the 6th, 7th, and 8th centuries viewed their geopolitical landscape in two very different ways. First, are the front line or emblem glyph-bearing polities whose rulers are acceding under the watchful

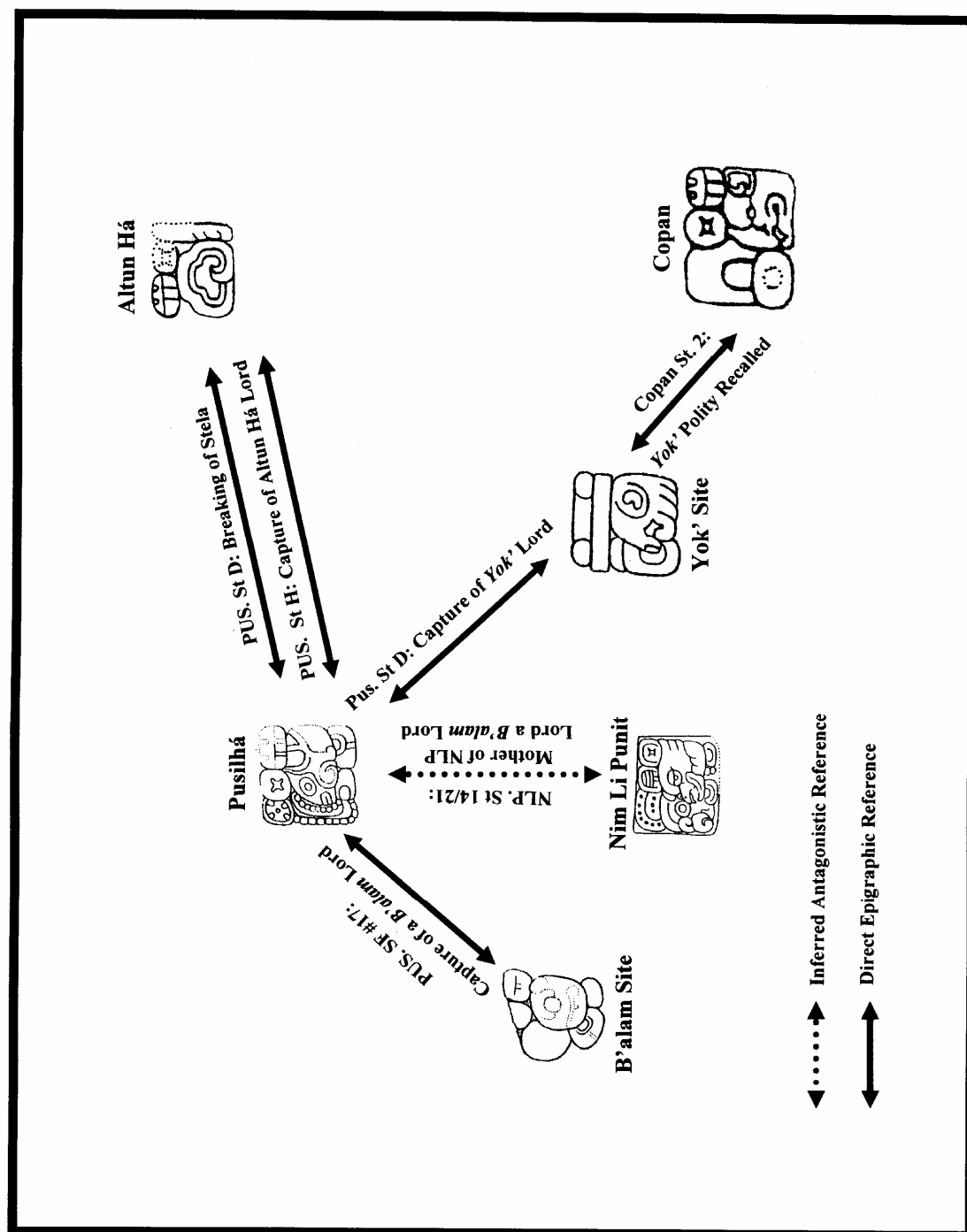


Figure 10.4. Chart Showing the Antagonistic Relations Among Sites in the Southern Maya Mountains Region

eyes of foreign superordinate overlords. As Biro notes (2008: 297), supervised accessions meant that underlords were required to fulfill certain obligations. The economic motives for a hierarchic system likely centered on resource exploitation and exchange and the collection of tribute. Though few references to tribute have been found on the inscriptions of the Classic Maya, there are two specific references to tribute/gift-giving recorded on polychrome pottery from Nim Li Punit and Pusilhá. The Classic Maya in polities at other sites in this region did not seek or claim rule over others (Biro 2008: 297). These are the smaller surface sites that are generally not producing hieroglyphic inscriptions or if they were, they are not referencing emblem glyph-bearing polities. As Martin and Grube have stated, supervised accessions were representative of the kind of relationships that were subject to constant change over time and were based on a ruler's personal charisma and ability to maintain close interpersonal relations with allies or dependencies (2000: 20). The fluctuation in the way that rulers and their polities interacted with each other was first noticed and discussed by Marcus (1976, 1983, 1993, 1998). However, it was Rice who noted that these fluctuations could be explained as the predicted outcome and consequence of the *may* organizational system (2004: 51). When viewed from a *may* perspective, these fluctuations can be seen as representing the predictable cyclical rotation of political power among a grouping of allied subject polities to the same superordinate patron. As Rice states, the *may* model likely minimized the chaos associated with political succession and the disruption of social order (2004: 83).

While I do not believe that Classic Maya political organization was structured solely on calendrical cycling, I do think that the basic principles of the *may* likely served as the underlying politico-religious/ideological system that bound dependencies to their superordinates. The evidence for this system as a politico-religious/ideological one can be

seen in the tremendous number of carved stelae (some 11,000) that were erected at sites across the Maya area dedicated to commemorating specific period-ending dates (Rice 2004: xvii). According to Edmonson (1986: 23), the erection of *k'atun*-ending stelae during the Classic Period can be equated to the period-ending ceremonies of the early Colonial Period in which crosses were erected to commemorate the ancestors. I also believe that this was their intended meaning and purpose during Classic times.

There are a total of 36 period ending dates recorded in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize (See Table 10.1). These dates extend back in time from the Late Preclassic Period (8.2.0.0.0, 11, February 81) to the Terminal Classic Period (10.4.0.0.0, 15, January 909). I believe that Rice (2004: 169) is correct in her suggestion that Copan's Early Classic *may* likely began on the nearest period ending (9.0.0.0.0, 9, December 435) following the site's founding on 8.19.10.11.0 (7, September 426), which would have been the mid-*k'atun* or *lajuntuun* of *K'atun 8 Ajaw* of 426. This idea could better elucidate why nearly a third of all of the period ending dates in the Southern Maya Mountains Region commemorate *lajuntuun* endings rather than the more common *k'atun* endings. The two earliest period ending dates in the region are found (in retrospective contexts) on stelae at Pusilhá (8.2.0.0.0, 11, February 81, 8.6.0.0.0, 14, July 160) that describe the same events as those recorded on stelae at Copan involving the *Chi*-Altar Place along with someone called the Foliated *Ajaw*. This suggests to me that Pusilhá was likely a *k'atun* seat within a Late Preclassic Copan-based *may*. Given the fact that Uxbenká was the earliest political entity in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize and that a monument was found at the site that appears to name the 14th king of Tikal, *Chak Tok Ich'aak I*, I believe that Uxbenká was likely a *k'atun* seat within Tikal's Early Classic hosting of the *may*. It would appear that Uxbenká switched *may* spheres to

Table 10.1. Period-Ending Dates in the Southern Maya Mountains Region

Monument Number	L.C. Date	Year	Period-Ending Ritual
PUS, Stela P	8.2.0.0.0	11, Feb. 81	Unknown Event at <i>Chi</i> -Altar Place
PUS, Stela K	8.6.0.0.0	14, July 160	<i>Tuun</i> Binding at <i>Chi</i> -Altar Place
UXB, Stela 21	8.17.0.0.0*	20, Oct. 376	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
	8.18.0.0.0*	7, July 396	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
	8.19.0.0.0*	24, Mar. 416	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
	9.0.0.0.0*	10, Dec. 435	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
	9.1.0.0.0	27, Aug. 455	Uncertain
UXB, Stela 23	9.1.0.0.0	27, Aug. 455	Uncertain
NLP, Stela 15	9.4.10.0.0	24, Aug. 524	Stela Planting
PUS, Stela P	9.7.0.0.0	5, Dec. 573	Fire Scattering
PUS, Stela O	9.7.0.0.0	5, Dec. 573	Fire Scattering
PUS, Stela H	9.7.10.0.0	14, Oct. 583	Unknown Event
PUS, Stela D	9.8.0.0.0	22, Aug. 593	Stela Planting
PUS, Stela Q	9.8.0.0.0	22, Aug. 593	Unknown Event
PUS, Stela C	9.9.0.0.0*	9, May 613	Commemoration of the <i>Kan Ch'ok</i>
PUS, Stela D	9.10.15.0.0	7, Nov. 647	Stela Planting
PUS, Stela P	9.10.15.0.0	7, Nov. 647	Stela Planting
PUS, Stela H	9.11.0.0.0	11, Oct. 652	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
PUS, Stela K	9.12.0.0.0	28, June 672	Unknown Event
UXB, Stela 14	9.12.0.0.0*	28, June 672	Unknown Event
	9.13.0.0.0*	15, Mar. 692	Unknown Event
PUS, Stela M	9.14.0.0.0	1, Dec. 711	Fire Scattering
LBT, Pocket Stela	9.14.10.0.0*	9, Oct. 721	Fire-Scattering?
NLP, Stela 15	9.14.10.0.0	9, Oct. 721	Fire Scattering/Vision Serpent
NLP, Stela 2	9.15.0.0.0	18, Aug. 731	Stela Planting
PUS, Stela E	9.15.0.0.0	18, Aug. 731	Fire Scattering/ <i>Tuun</i> Binding
NLP, Stela 2	9.15.7.0.0	12, July 738	Unknown Event
NLP, Stela 1	9.15.10.0.0	26, June 741	Fire Scattering
LBT, Figural Plaque #6	9.15.10.0.0*	26, June 741	Fire-Scattering?
PUS, Stela F	9.16.0.0.0	5, May 751	Fire Scattering
UXB, Stela 22	9.16.0.0.0	5, May 751	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
PUS, Stela N	9.17.0.0.0*	20, Jan. 751	Fire Scattering
UXB, Stela 15	9.17.10.0.0	28, Nov. 780	Fire Drilling
XNB', Stela 1	9.17.10.0.0	28, Nov. 780	Fire Scattering
NLP, Stela 14	9.18.0.0.0	7, Oct. 790	Fire Scattering
NLP, Stela 21	9.18.0.0.0	7, Oct. 790	Fire Scattering
NLP, Stela 7	9.18.5.0.0	11, Sept. 795	Unknown Event
NLP, Stela 14	9.18.10.0.0	15, August 800	Fire Scattering
NLP, Stela 7	9.19.0.0.0	24, June 810	Unknown Event
NLP, Stela 3	10.0.0.0.0	11, March 830	Stela Planting?
TZMCHE, Stela 1	10.4.0.0.0	15, January 909	Stela Planting?

* Denotes Uncertain Long Count Date

Abbreviation Key

LBT:	Lubaantún
NLP:	Nim Li Punit
PUS:	Pusilhá
UXB:	Uxbenká
XHB':	Xnaheb'
TZMCHE:	Tzimín Ché

Copan as Tikal's Early Classic run as *may* came to a close. Uxbenká celebrated the 9.1.0.0.0 period ending prior to its 237-year hiatus. However, midway through this hiatus, new sites were founded in the Southern Maya Mountains Region, including Nim Li Punit, which commemorated the period ending 9.4.10.0.0 (24, August 524). Both Uxbenká and Nim Li Punit were likely *k'atun* seats within Copan's Early Classic *may* seating. Within Copan's Middle Classic *may* seating (A.D. 554-682) the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region suggest that Pusilhá was the lone *k'atun* seat commemorating the period endings 9.7.0.0.0 through 9.11.0.0.0. The peak of period ending commemorations and activities in southern Belize occurs between A.D. 682 and A.D. 810, which would correspond nicely within Copan's Late Classic *may* seating. This period marks the end of Uxbenká's hiatus and signals the beginning of new site constructions across the Southern Maya Mountains Region. This period of florescence is reflected by a sharp rise in the number of period ending stelae recorded in this region. Period ending stelae were recorded at a number of sites including Pusilhá, Uxbenká, Nim Li Punit, Xnaheb', and perhaps even at Lubaantún (as reflected by the Pocket Stela text). Based on all of the evidence presented in this dissertation concerning regional ties between sites located in the Southern Maya Mountains Region and Copan, I believe that all of these sites were likely *k'atun* seats within a Copan-based *may*. Rice has suggested that Quiriguá, Santa Rita, and Los Higos were also likely *k'atun* seats within a Copan-based *may* (2004: 181). Though the last written inscription (Altar L) at Copan dates to 9.19.11.14.5 (6, February 822), there are at least three period ending stelae in the Southern Maya Mountains Region which indicate that people were still living and recording hieroglyphic inscriptions well into Terminal Classic times. There are two stelae (Stela 7 and Stela 3) at Nim Li Punit which commemorate the period ending 9.19.0.0.0

(24, June 810) and 10.0.0.0.0 (11. March 830) respectively and there is a stela (Stela 1) at the site of Tzimín Ché which commemorated the 10.4.0.0.0 (15, January 909) period ending. These stelae may suggest that both Nim Li Punit and Tzimín Ché were still active *k'atun* seats within a Copan-based *may* during this time.

Other evidence to suggest that the *may* likely served as the ideological means which bound superordinates and their dependencies can be seen in the shared architectural features, site plans, ceramics, sculptural themes, regional dress, and in many of the joint *ukab'jiiy*-initiated events described in the inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. Leventhal was the first archaeologist to note and discuss the regional uniformity of sites within the Southern Maya Mountains Region in terms of shared cultural features (1990). Such uniformity can also be seen in the other regions of the Maya world and likely served as a visual marker of regional identity by those polities united within a *tzuk* or *may* sphere.

Classic Maya Polities and the Role of Territoriality

Because territoriality can be seen as a conscious strategy or device for defining and maintaining polities as a product of the larger social context, a discussion of political organization should include a discussion on territoriality (Sack 1986:30). According to Smith (2003: 154), the notion of polity or community is only intelligible when it is embedded in the concept of “place.” In discussions concerning polities in general, it is often forgotten that polities are fluid and dynamic entities that were created as a result of specific political practices that produce boundaries, frontiers, and places of sovereign authority (Smith 2003: 154). This is illustrated in the hieroglyphic inscriptions

of the Classic Period, where we can track and follow the ebbs and flows of each polity as chronicled in their dynastic histories. By using the hieroglyphic inscriptions one can see how Classic Maya polities emerged as discrete territorial entities whose people had enduring commitments to the land as well as enduring attachments to their political leaders and regimes in both time and space (Smith 2003: 154). The appearance of the numbered *tzuk* title in the written inscriptions of the Classic Period suggests that the ancient Maya conceived their political landscape as multidimensional. The Maya perceived a landscape where there are binding ties and deep commitments to their own polity or “place” in opposition to rival polities (Smith 2003: 181). Smith’s definition of polity as “a bounded territory within which a sovereign regime rules the community of subjects by a shared sense of identity that binds them together in place” (2003: 151) reminds us that the *may* system itself was likely created out of this sense of “place” and “community.” Biro (2007: 96-97) suggests that the ancient Maya perceived their political landscape in terms of *ch’een* (as ‘built places’) and *ajawil* (as ‘shouters or proclaimers’). Both terms frequently appear in the inscriptions of the Classic Period suggesting a general sense of community of ruler and ruled (Biro 2007: 97). It is interesting to note that the ancient Maya did not distinguish gradations between large or small *ch’eenob’* which may be the reason why archaeologists have had such a difficult time conceptualizing Maya polities on the ground (Biro 2008: 302). The Maya could conceive their world from a single site perspective and the evidence for this view can be seen in the appearance of dozens of individual toponymic references and site-specific emblem glyphs that refer to sacred geographic locations and important political centers and/or polities respectively (Beliaev 2000: 76). The hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region are full of such references. The appearance of numbered *tzuk*

titles in the inscriptions of the Classic Maya also suggest that a larger and perhaps older geopolitical system was in place that divided the entire Maya world into thirteen distinct provinces, each with its own numerical designation and each likely headed by that region's most powerful political center or *may ku*. Thus, the ancient Maya may have thought of their geopolitical landscape in terms of bounded geographic territories that were headed by the thirteen supreme "heaven-born" polities or *may kuob'*.

Classic Maya polities can also be conceived as experiential landscapes regulated in part by strict political authority of the *k'uhul ajaw* in conjunction with the predetermined ideological/politico-religious precepts of the *may* system. This idea is crucial since the task of ritually seating each of the thirteen constituent *k'atuns* was the responsibility of the *k'uhul ajaw* of each *may kuob'*. Though the *may ku* was the social, religious, economic, and political center within the overall *tzukob'*, competition to host the next *k'atun* would have likely been fierce, since each *k'atun* seat would earn the right to control tribute, land rights, and appointments to public offices for the next twenty years (Edmonson 1979: 11; Rice 2004: 78). As Biro states (2008: 303), in order to have a polity it is necessary to have *ajawil* or a 'descent of *ajaw* lines into which someone could insert him or herself' and although the *ajawil* may refer to the polity or kingdom, it does not necessarily refer to the territorial entity. The same could be said with regard to emblem glyphs since emblem glyphs by themselves do not refer to or indicate dominion of one polity over another, but rather they function as titles that are specifically tied to certain individuals who are said to have originated from this built place (Biro 2008: 303). In other words, emblem glyphs appear to refer to the same descent lines.

Finally, Classic Maya polities can also be thought of as imagined landscapes whose successes and failures were tied directly to the charisma and power of its kings. As

Smith (2003: 181) reminds us, the fit between these three dimensions of landscape are not always perfect, since polities are not solely defined by territorial boundaries. This observation is especially true for the Classic Maya since the role of territoriality as it pertains to political organization remains hotly debated among Mayanists. However, besides creating borders and policing boundaries, polities can also be established as a result of the surrender to another (authority) or in conjunction with specific political practices that are aimed at establishing sovereign authority over a discrete group of subjects (Smith 2003: 182).

As Rice (2004: 51) has argued, most of the previous models of Classic Maya political organization have failed to adequately explain how lowland Maya political organization functioned in terms of strategies for negotiating power. Political power and authority make all of the other political relationships possible. According to Smith (2003: 104), we can conceptualize the term politics based on the following four characteristics: 1) interpolity or geopolitical relationships; 2) relations between regimes who created the polity and its subjects; 3) ties among the elite social groups and their links to kin groups that constitute the political regimes; and 4) the relationships among the various governmental institutions. All of these relationships constitute authority and have immediate effects on the life of the polity. Authority is based on two fundamental processes: the power to direct others and the formal acknowledgement and recognition of the legitimacy of those commands (Smith 2003: 108). Power is not simply the ability of one individual, class, regime, or polity to capitalize its social, political, and economic interests at the expense of another, but rather power has the ability to create interests and determine their significance within the management of existing conditions (Smith 2003: 108). Thus, political authority refers to a regime's ability to synchronize political

practices that allow it to perpetuate the existing political order within a legitimate discursive framework which fosters allegiance to the regime by its subjects (Smith 2003: 109). According to Rice (2004: xviii), the process of synchronizing political practice likely involved cosmic ordering and divine sanction, which are reflected in the elite iconographic programs of the Classic Maya. Thus cosmic sanctioning and the ordering of time were two specific methods used to structure and bind polities and their dependencies together in the *may* system. Evidence for these methods were successful and can be seen in nearly every Classic Maya text, since they are situated in absolute time and the texts themselves are used to both space and structure rituals and events which were the primary tasks of Maya kings. Therefore, one could say that the rulers are the ones who make the polity possible by organizing and ordering the spatial flow of time from which all other cultural phenomena are situated (Biro 2008: 305).

Perhaps one of the most important realizations to come out of Martin and Grube's analysis of Classic Maya political organization is that earlier theoretical models that referred to Maya polities as being contiguous territorial units were no longer supported nor was the method of using polygons to define the territorial limits of Maya polities (Smith 2003: 133). While some archaeologists continue to apply central-place theory to the question of Classic Maya political organization, others tend to seek singular principles involving general rules of politics as elaborated across space. Martin and Grube found Classic Maya polities to be highly variable and contentious, fraught with shifting political relationships that are predicated on changing landscapes (Smith 2003: 135). This is why many scholars, including Rice, argue that generalizations about Classic Maya political behavior are inadequate since previous models were unable to account for the dynamic nature of Classic Maya political behavior.

As mentioned earlier, the creation of a polity likely involved some form of ethnic identity that connected the ruler and the ruled (Biro 2008: 308). Issues surrounding identity with regard to the Classic Maya have long been difficult to prove or assess. It has been difficult to demonstrate the existence of larger regional identities in the inscriptions of the Classic Period, especially as they relate to the Maya notion of territoriality. However, Beliaev (2000), Tokovinine (2007), and I have now demonstrated that the numbered *tzuk* titles provide evidence of larger regional identities. In my work with the *tzuk* titles I have shown that the First *Tzuk* appears to refer to the region around Rio Azul while the Second *Tzuk* appears to refer to the Western Maya region, which likely included the sites of Palenque, Tortuguero, Pomona, and perhaps Tonina (Refer to Figure 10.1). The Fourth *Tzuk* appears to refer to the region of northern Yucatan which likely included the sites of Yula, Chichen Itza, and perhaps Ek Balam. The Sixth *Tzuk* appears to refer to the Southeastern Maya Lowlands and to the sites of Quiriguá and Copan. The Seventh *Tzuk* refers to the Eastern Petén, likely to the area between Naranjo, Yaxhá, and La Naya. The Eighth *Tzuk*, better known from the *Waxak Winik* Title, refers to the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Southern Belize and adjacent Guatemala which includes the sites of Ixkun, Ixtutz, Naj Tunich, Nim Li Punit, Machaquila, and Uxbenká. The Ninth *Tzuk* is hard to pinpoint, since it is a lone example, but given that it comes from the site of Dos Hombres, a site located in northwestern Belize, it may refer to northern Belize or the southern Campeche sites. Finally, the Thirteenth *Tzuk* likely refers to the region between Xultun, La Honradez, and Tikal. Although we are missing examples denoting the Third, Fifth, Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth *Tzukob'*, I suspect that we could turn to the Altar de los Reyes text for help in filling in some of the missing gaps. Some of the missing *Tzukob'* may include the sites of Altun Há, Calakmul, Edzna,

and perhaps the Ik' Site (possibly Motul de San Jose). As Tokovinine (2007: 9-10) notes, "the 'us-them' dichotomy in political identities, 'us' being more specific and internally complex and 'them' being more generic, can be extended to 'here' vs. 'there' descriptions of landscape." This dichotomy is illustrated in the following examples. At Nim Li Punit there is a reference to someone who is referred to as of the *Wak Tzuk* ('Sixth Province') which is a term that must relate to the people of the Southeastern Maya Lowlands, since it is connected to someone who is referred to as a Copan lord. In addition, we also have examples from texts at Dos Pilas that refer to captives from the site of Tikal who are referred to as "he of the thirtieth province," which is likely the term used to refer to people living in the greater central Petén region. Beliaev (2000: 76-77) has noted that these titles can also be self-referential mentions where they are regional-specific and only appear in the texts of that region. Tokovinine (2007: 12) notes, "it seems as if being a member of [a *tzuk*] group was implied and yet overshadowed by other identities deemed more significant in the written discourse centered on the ruler and the court."

Regardless of the *tzuk* system, emblem glyphs were the cornerstone of belonging for the Maya elite and it would appear that non-elites were able to participate in the identity marked by the emblem glyphs by accepting subordination (Biro 2008: 309). Classic Maya political organization probably developed in part as a result of a ruler's charisma and ability to command power and authority by structuring both time and space through the creation of a politico-religious/ideological system (the *may*) that was designed to bind subordinate polities to their sovereigns.

As my research has demonstrated, there is abundant epigraphic evidence to suggest that a far-reaching hierarchical system was in place in the Southern Maya

Mountains Region of Belize during Classic times. The research presented here supports Martin and Grube's claim that Classic Maya political organization was largely structured by the hierarchic practice of over kingship made possible through the methods of agency, alliance, and subordination. In addition, my research was also designed to test the basic tenants of Rice's *may* model to see whether it could be used to better explain how lowland Maya political organization functioned in terms of negotiating power and time. By doing so, I have been able to propose that the *may* model likely served as the underlying structural basis for integrating the shared socio-religious/political beliefs and understandings that united and bound dependent allies to their sovereigns within a hierarchical (or hegemonic) system. Lastly, the data presented here has also illuminated some of the social, economic, and political processes that may have contributed to the development, growth, and complexity of sites within the Southern Maya Mountains Region.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THE HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTIONS OF SOUTHERN BELIZE

A Note about Monument Dimensions

The following is a key to the abbreviations used in this report:

HT: Overall Height of the Monument
 MW: Maximum Width of the Monument
 HSA: Maximum Height of the Sculptural Area
 WSA: Maximum Width of the Sculptural Area
 WBC: Maximum Width at the Base of the Carving
 WTC: Maximum Width at the Top of the Carving
 MTH: Maximum Thickness of the Monument
 RELS: Maximum Depth of Relief of the Sculptural Area
 RELG: Maximum Depth of Relief of the Glyphic Area

A Note on the Epigraphic Conventions and Orthography

Each hieroglyphic text was analyzed on a glyph-by-glyph basis according to the conventions of proper epigraphic transliteration and translation (see Fox and Justeson 1984: 363-366; Stuart 1988: 7-12). Therefore, each glyph or glyph block was analyzed according to its constituent components (affixes and main signs) and assigned a corresponding Thompson (T) Number for easy identification (Thompson 1962). Some of the values for the T-numbers used in this report come from the glyphic revision of the Thompson catalog published by Ringle and Smith-Stark in 1996. Logographic readings are capitalized and syllabic or phonetic readings are in lower case. A single period (.) between each sign value represents a horizontal alignment of the reading order and a colon (:) is used to denote a vertical relationship between signs.

In general, this report uses the orthography for Maya words that have been accepted by the Academia de Lenguas Mayas in Guatemala.

The dates recorded in this dissertation have been correlated to the Julian calendar using the Goodman-Martínez-Thompson 584,285 correlation.

The Glyphic Corpus of Lubaantún, Toledo District, Belize

The Monumental Inscriptions

Lubaantún, Ball Court Marker I (North Marker)

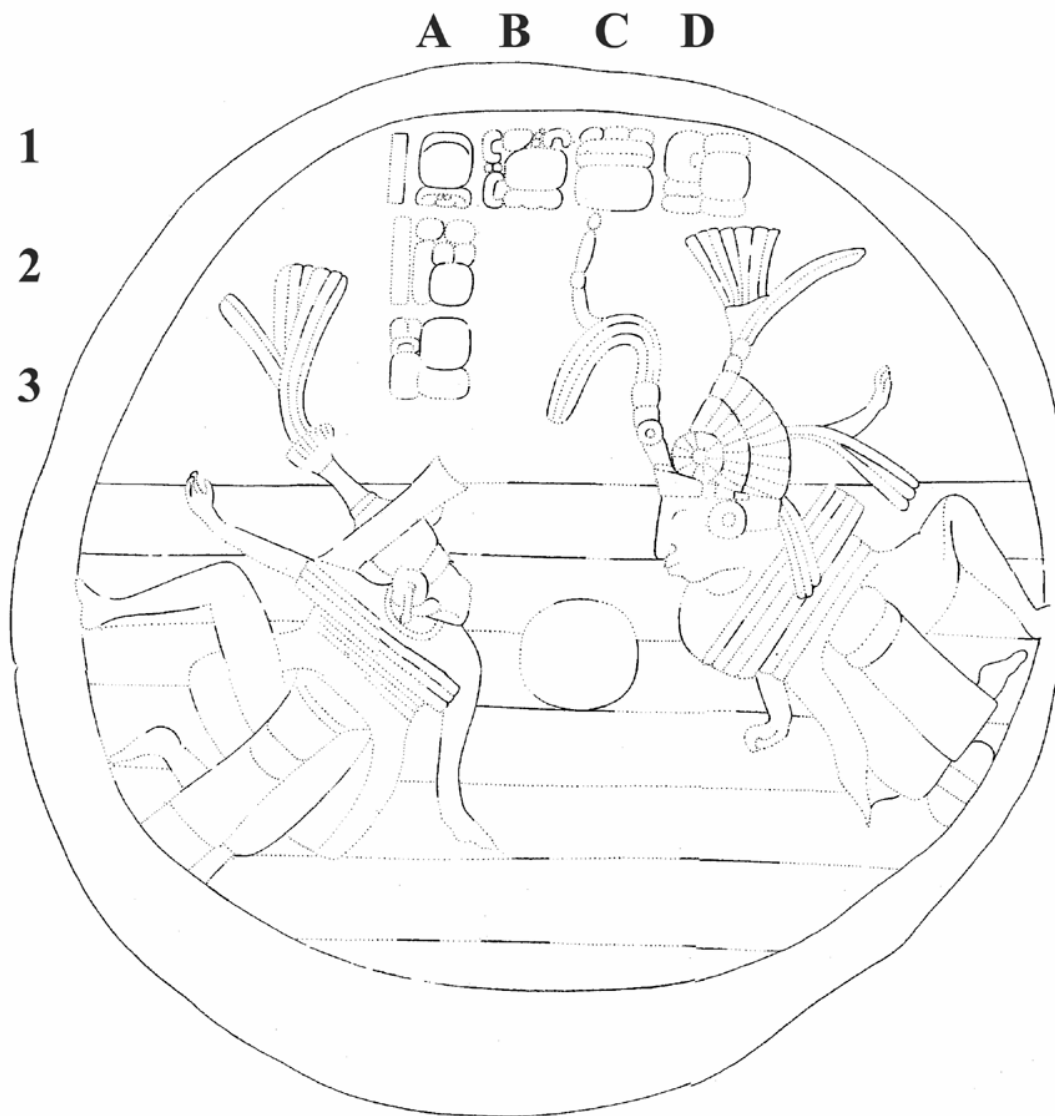


Figure 1. Lubaantún, Ballcourt Marker I (North) (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Originally located by Merwin (1915) face-up at the north end of the southern Ballcourt (Structure 4). Now located in the Peabody Museum at Harvard University.

Commentary: The text contains a total of 6 eroded glyph blocks, most of which cannot be read with any certainty. Morley was the first scholar to date all three ballcourt markers to between 9.17.10.0.0 to 9.18.0.0.0 (A.D. 780-790) based on stylistic evidence. Hammond's analysis of the ceramics associated with the ballcourt also seem to confirm Morley's tentative date (1975: 375).

Text:

A1: TV.?:23	HO.?:na
A2: TV.?:?:?:?	HO.?:?.WO/ZIP?
A3: T59.?:?	ti.?:?
B1: T126.128:?:?	ya.ch'a:?:?
C1: T?:?:?	?:?:?
D1: T?:?:?:?:?:?	?:?:?:?:?:?

Lubaantún, Ballcourt Marker II (Center Marker)

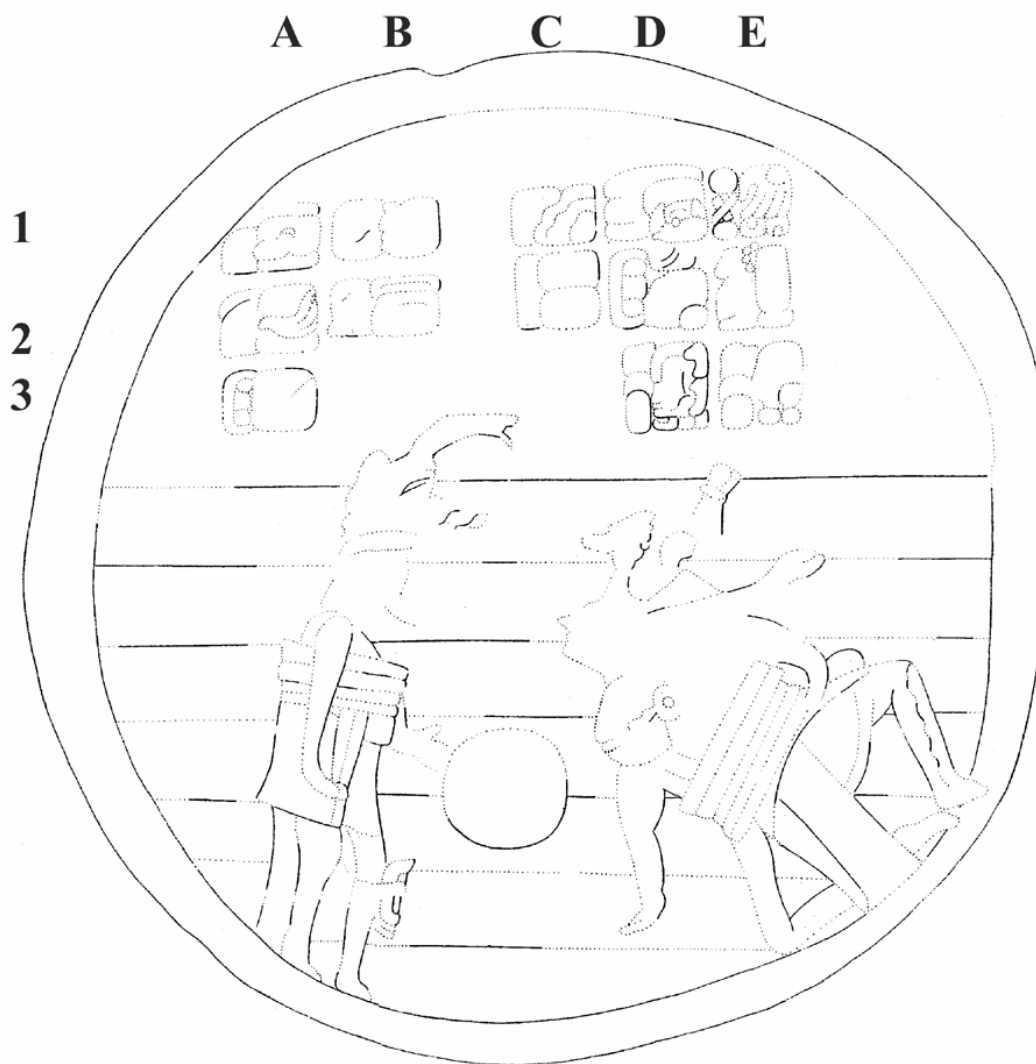


Figure 2. Lubaantún, Ballcourt Marker II (Center Marker) (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Originally located by Merwin (1915), face-up in the central alley of the southern ballcourt (Structure 4), between the north and south ballcourt markers. Now located in the Peabody Museum at Harvard University.

Commentary: The text contains a total of 13 eroded glyph blocks, most of which cannot be read with any certainty. The main sign of the glyph located at A2 looks like the *Nahb'* logograph and this is followed by several highly eroded glyphs ending with a T1000 *Ajaw* head at B1. The text continues with a glyph for either 'stairway' (*EB'*) or the well-known dedication verb read *tab'ay*. The text appears to refer to the dedication of a stairway, presumably at the site of Lubaantún. This text also includes a possible reference to the *Ek' Xukpi* or 'Black Bat' title common in the texts of Nim Li Punit and Quiriguá. While the meaning of this title is not clear, it likely refers to either the kingdom of Quiriguá or Copan. The *Ek' Xukpi* title appears in the inscriptions at Nim Li Punit four times in three separate texts (Stela 2, 4, and 15). Perhaps the most notable instance where this title appears at Nim Li Punit is in a passage recorded on Stela 2 that describes a monument dedication or planting of a stone in the company of an *Ek' Xukpi* lord. If this title appears on this ballcourt marker it may have important political implications for the people of Lubaantún. Given the lack of hieroglyphic inscriptions at Lubaantún, the political relationship between Lubaantún and the southeast will have to remain speculative and unclear. The text continues with another event, written as *uchokaw* referring to a scattering event. Unfortunately the name of the individual involved and the location where this event took place are eroded.

Text:

A1: T??:??	?:?:??
A2: T?:NN	?:NAHB'
A3: T1.?	U.?
B1: T?.1000	?.AJAW
B2: T57.25:501	B'A.ka:b'a
C1: T?.843	?.EB'/TAB'AY
D1: T??:756	?:?:XUKPI?
C2: T??:?	?:?:?
D2: T1.?:?	u.?:?
D3: T??:130	?:?:wa
E1: T13.710:130	u.CHOK:wa
E2: T603?:?	CH'AJ?
E3: T??:?	?:?:?

Lubaantún, Ballcourt Marker III (South Marker)

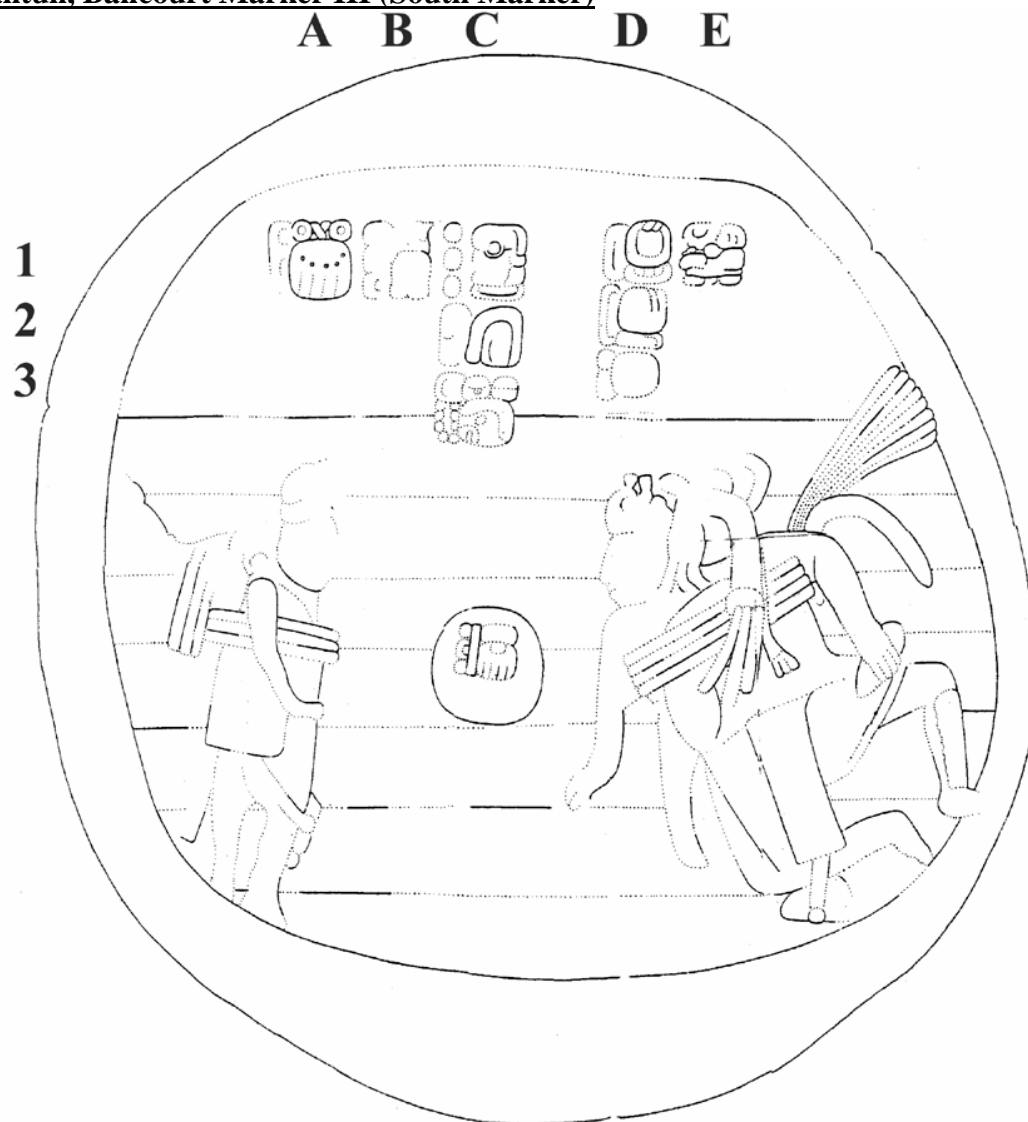


Figure 3. Lubaantún, Ballcourt Marker III (South Marker) (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Originally located by Merwin (1915), face-up, at the south end of the southern Ballcourt (Structure 4). Now located in the Peabody Museum at Harvard University.

Commentary: The text contains a total of 9 glyph blocks, most of which cannot be read with any certainty. The text begins with *u-b'aj* 'he himself'. Unfortunately, the subject is now eroded, but the end of the first passage contains what appears to be the emblem glyph of Lubaantún. This main sign of the Lubaantún emblem glyph is the T1016 *K'u* or *K'uhul* head variant. The possibility exists here that this emblem glyph is simply a generic form stating that the individual mentioned above in the text was a divine lord. However, there is some glyphic evidence to suggest that this *K'uhul* head is in fact the main sign of the Lubaantún emblem glyph. In 2001, the SBEP photographed a small

ceramic figural plaque (see Figural Plaque #2) in the collections housed at the Lubaantún Visitor Center that features the same main sign.

Text:

A1: T13.501	U.b'a
B1: T?.?:?	?:?:?
C1: TIII.?:?	OX.?:?
C2: T?.515	?.chu?
C3: T36.168:1016	CH'UL.AJAW:CH'UL
D1: T?.?:?	?:?:?
D2: T?.?:?	?:?:? (YICHNAL?)
D3: T36??.?	K'U.?
E1: T1029:130	KA'AN/b'i (NLP Main Sign?)
F1: TVII.23:501	WUK.na:b'a

The Ceramic Inscriptions

Lubaantún, Figural Plaque 1

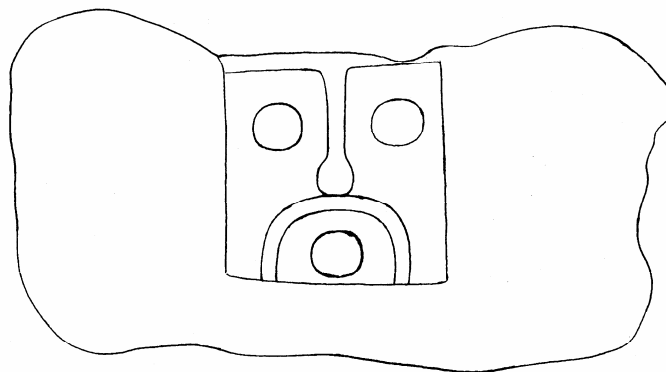


Figure 4. Lubaantún, Figural Plaque 1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Unknown. Now located in the archaeological collections of the Lubaantún Visitor Center.

Commentary: The image portrays a single T533 *AJAW* glyph.

Lubaantún, Figural Plaque 2

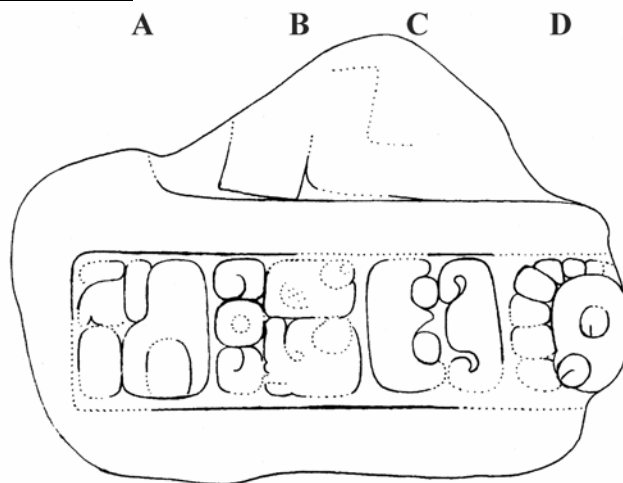


Figure 5. Lubaantún, Figural Plaque 2 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Unknown. Now located in the archaeological collections of the Lubaantún Visitor Center.

Commentary: The text appears to describe a standard presentation or dedication event that includes a possible reference to fire. The final glyph is the most interesting, for it might be interpreted as the Lubaantún emblem glyph (see Ballcourt Marker III).

Text:

A1: T45.843[17]	TAB'[iy]
B1: T61.568:756	yu.lu:xu
C1: T1.122?	U.K'AK'?
D1: T41v	CH'UL

Lubaantún, Figural Plaque 3

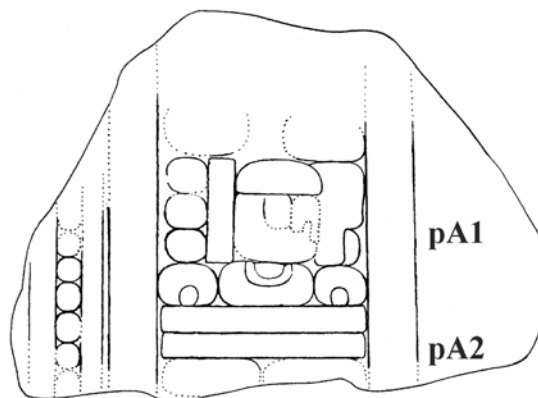


Figure 6. Lubaantún, Figural Plaque 3 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Unknown. Now located in the archaeological collections of the Lubaantún Visitor Center.

Commentary: The remaining portion of text appears to be calendrical in nature based on the bar and dot notation, but not enough survives to secure a Long Count date.

Text:

pA1: TVIII.?.?WAXAK.?.?

aA2: TXII:?. LAJKA':?

Lubaantún, Figural Plaque 4

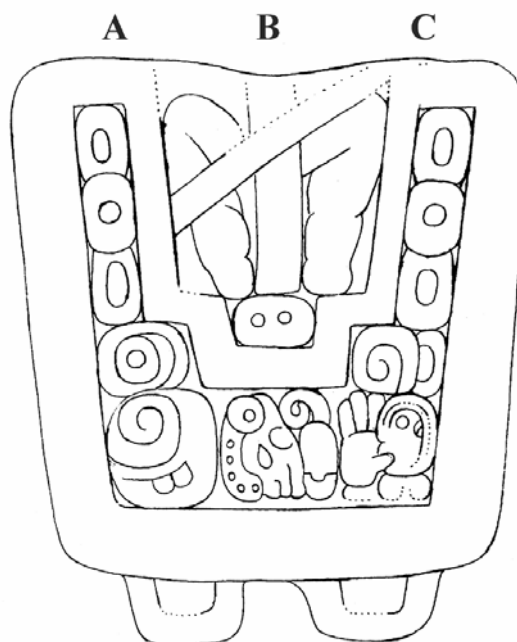


Figure 7. Lubaantún, Figural Plaque 4 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Unknown. Now located in the archaeological collections of the Lubaantún Visitor Center.

Commentary: While this partial text caption is highly unusual in both glyphic form and style, some aspects can be discerned. The glyph located at B1 appears to be the T1066 logograph *OL'*, perhaps to indicate 'heart' or 'heart of' and this is followed by the T1028c logograph read *KELEM* meaning 'strong', 'young', or 'youthful'. The figural scene features a portrait of a seated individual who appears to be seated within a sacred cave or temple enclosure.

Text:

A1: T683? **ja/K'AL**

B1: T1066? **O'/OI**

C1: T1028c **KELEM**

Lubaantún, Figural Plaque 5

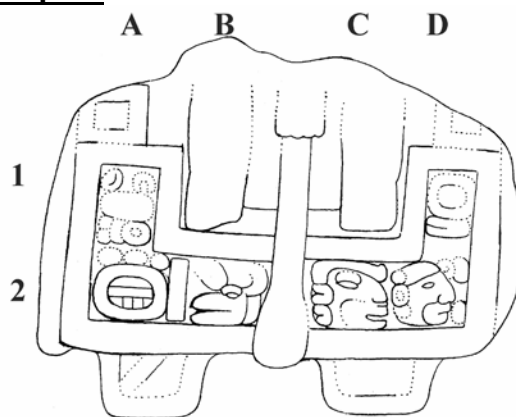


Figure 8. Lubaantún, Figural Plaque 5 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Unknown. Now located in the archaeological collections of the Lubaantún Visitor Center.

Commentary: The text appears to record a Short-Count date of 3 *B'en* and seems to make reference to someone called a *B'alam Ajaw*. The *B'alam* site appears several times in the inscriptions of this region including sites such as Nim Li Punit and Pusilhá.

Text:

A1: T128:23?:60(?)	ch'a:na:HUUN
A2: TIII:584	OX:B'EN
B1: T?	?
C1: T751v?	HIX/B'ALAM?
D1: T?	?
D2: T1000?	AJAW?

Lubaantún, Figural Plaque 6

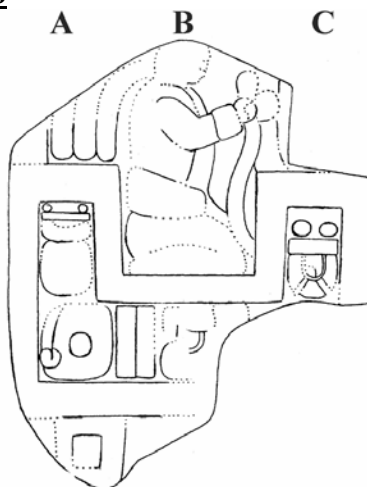


Figure 9. Lubaantún, Figural Plaque 6 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Unknown. Now located in the archaeological collections of the Lubaantún Visitor Center.

Commentary: Unfortunately little can be interpreted from this particular plaque except for a possible ‘birth’ glyph read *Sij* at A2. It is interesting to note that the subject of the verb, located at B1, contains the number 10, *Lajun*. A similar name phrase appears on Stela 1 at the nearby site of Nim Li Punit. There at Nim Li Punit, the name of the ruling king is *Lajun Ka’an/Ch’an* or ‘10 Sky’ which is also the proper name of one of the five gods of Venus as Morning Star as recorded in the Dresden Codex.

Text:

A1: TVII:?:? **WUK:?:?**

A2: T740 **SIJ**

B1: TX **LAJUN**

C1: T699v? **TAN LAM?**

Lubaantún, “Pocket Stela”

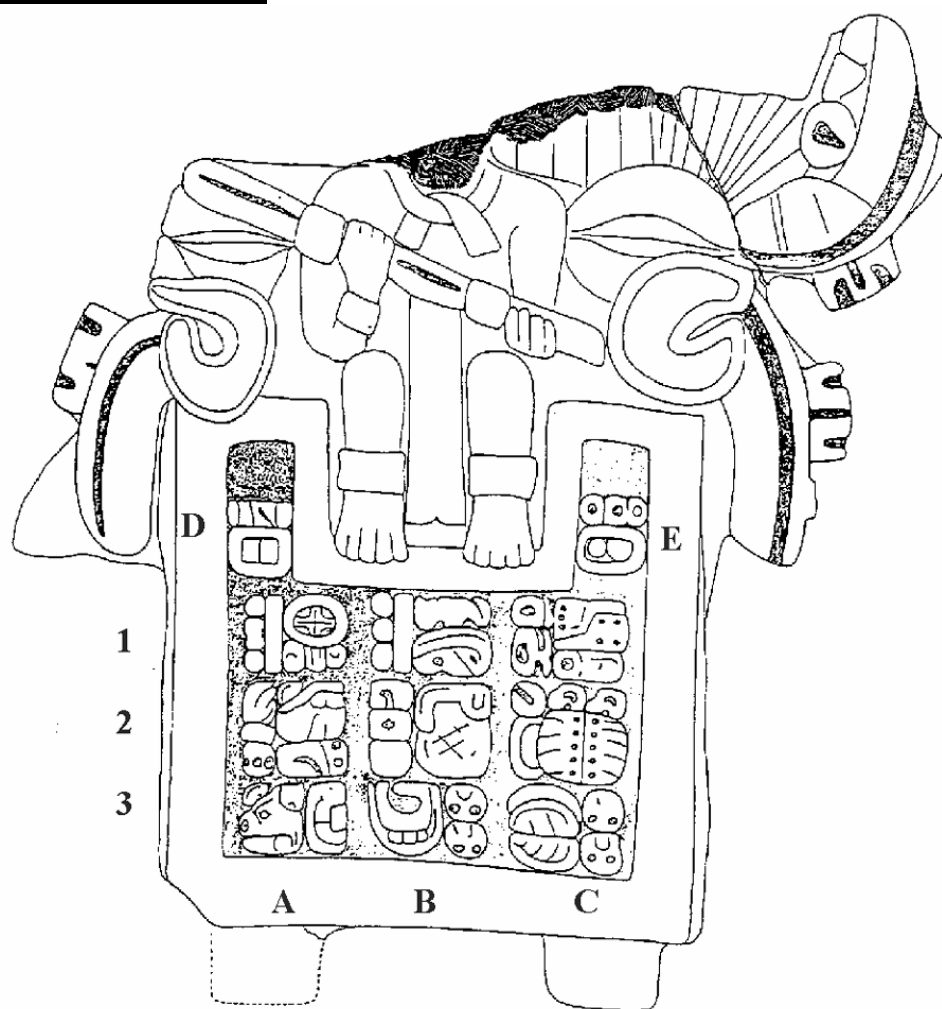


Figure 10. Lubaantún “Pocket Stela” (Drawing by P. Mathews)

Location: This pottery whistle or *ocarina* was discovered by Hammond in 1970. It was found broken in two pieces in the building fill and collapsed masonry along the low stair that leads down from Plaza IV into Plaza III (Hammond et al. 1975:17). It is now in the national archaeological collections of Belize.

Commentary: The inscription on this whistle begins with a Calendar Round date of 7 *Lamat 6 Yax* that likely corresponds the Long Count date of 9.16.3.5.8, (5, August 754). Following the date is a dedicatory verb that ironically describes the planting of a stela; however, no carved stelae have been found at Lubaantún. This is followed by a reference to the scattering of fire and may also include a glyph for a lunar eclipse.

Text:

A1: TVII.510:125	WUK LAMAT
B2: TVI.16?:?	WAK.YAX:?
A2: T59.[32.843v]:17?	ti.[TAB']:yi
B2: T62.528?	yu.TUUN?
A3: T753.?	TZUK.?
B3: T219v?.178:178	PUK?.la:la
C1: T?.?:?	??? (Eclipse?)
C2: T14/.122:563	u.BUTZ':tzi
C3: T25:25.178:178	ka:ka.la:la
D1: T228:?	A/AJ:?
E1: T135?:?	NAL?:?

The Glyphic Corpus of Nim Li Punit, Toledo District, Belize

The Monumental Inscriptions

Nim Li Punit, Stela 1

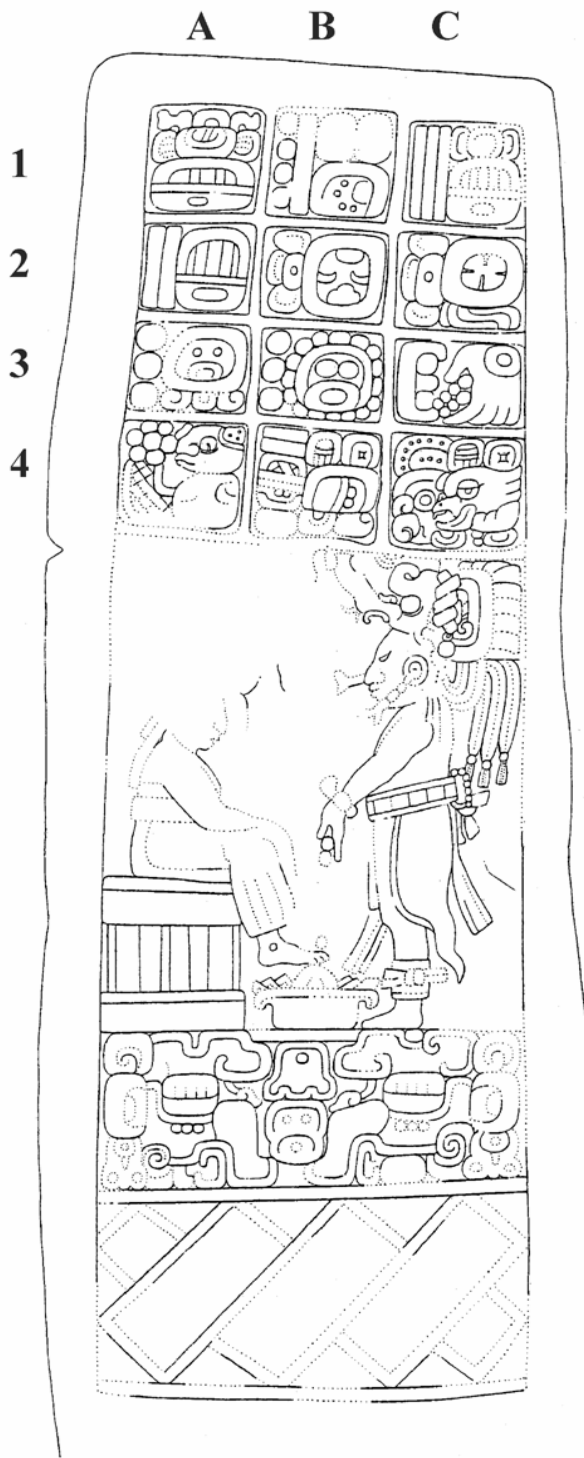


Figure 11. Nim Li Punit, Stela 1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela 1 was found standing in the main stela plaza at the southeast corner of Structure 2, just south of the central stairway. The stela was first reported by the Corozal Project in 1976.

Commentary: The text on Stela 1 records a scattering ritual conducted by the king of Nim Li Punit, *Lajun Ch'an/Ka'an*, in commemoration of the 9.15.10.0.0 Period Ending.

Text:

A1: T124:25.?.25:548	tzi:ka.?.ka:HAAB'
B1: TIX.200:528	B'OLON.PI':PIK
C1: TXV.28:548	JO'LAJUN.K'ATUN:TUN
A2: TX.548	LAJUN.TUN
B2: T173.521	mi.WINAL
C2: T173.544:116	mi.K'IN:ni
A3: TIII.533	OX.AJAW
B3: TIII.581	OX.MOL
C3: T1.710	u.CHOK
A4: T93.751a:?	ch'a.B' AHLAM:?
B4: TX:561a:23.168:518:130	LAJUN.CH'AN/KA'AN:na.AJAW:te:wa
C4: T41.168:?:126	K'U.AJAW:(KAY/KAWAM:NLP): ya

Nim Li Punit, Stela 2

Figure 12. Nim Li Punit, Stela 2 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

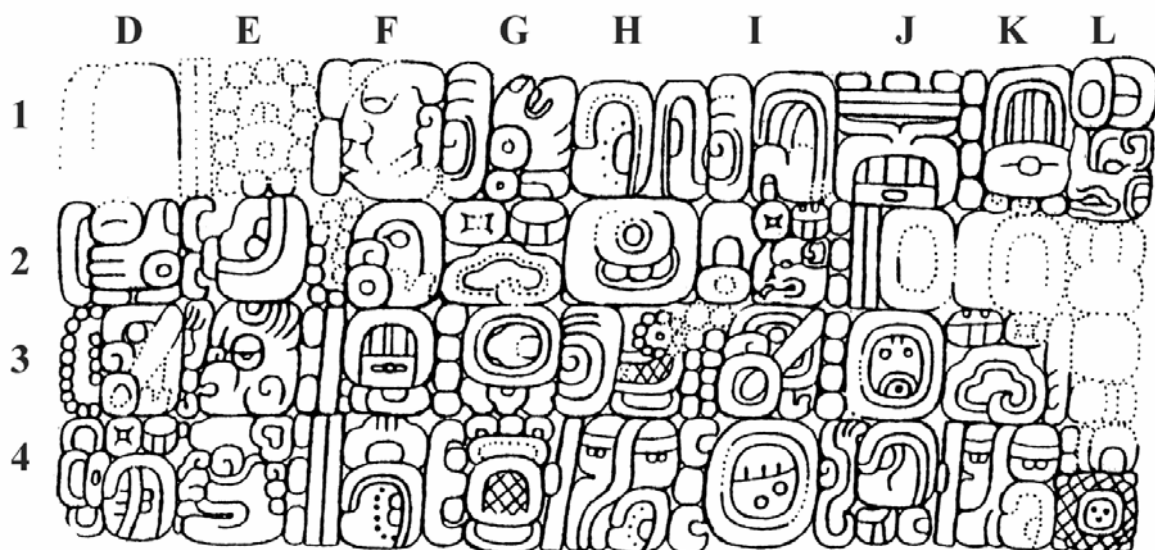


Figure 13. Nim Li Punit, Stela 2, Main Text Detail (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

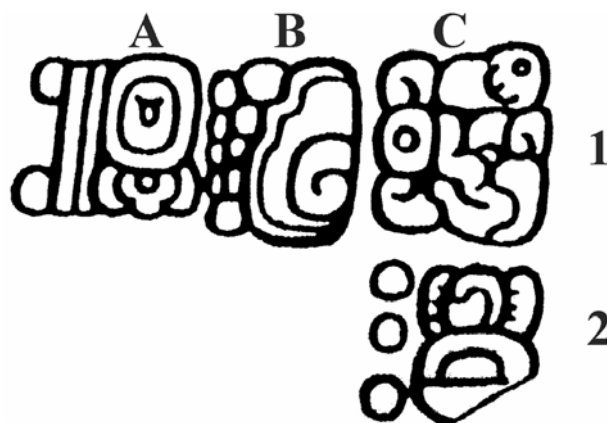


Figure 14. Nim Li Punit, Stela 2, Dedicatory Text (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Originally located in the main stelae plaza at the northeastern corner of Structure 2, just north of the central stairway. Location mirrors that of Stela 1. Stela 2 was first reported by the Corozal Project in 1976 and was moved to the newly created Nim Li Punit Visitor Center by the Maya Archaeological Sites Development Program Project (M.A.S.D.P.) as part of a comprehensive restoration and consolidation project in 1998.

Commentary: The text of Stela 2 is critical for understanding the importance of Nim Li Punit within the larger political framework of Classic Maya civilization. Based on new photographs taken by Jack Sulak in 2001, it is now possible to read the Initial Series Introductory Date recorded in the upper effaced surface of Stela 2. The date recorded appears to be 9.14.15.4.14 *1 *Ix* 12 *Pax* (16, December 726). The text describes a series of events that took place under the supervision of two foreign lords: one from the Water-Scroll site (a likely reference to Altun Há) and one from either Copan.

The main text begins with a reference to the accession of a Nim Li Punit king named *B'ahlam Te'* who is also featured on the polychrome bowl K1440. The text states that this accession took place *yichnal* 'with, before, or in the company of' a lord from the Water-Scroll site. Epigraphic evidence suggests that the water-scroll emblem can be attributed to the site of Altun Há, a Classic Maya site located 120 km northeast of Nim Li Punit. Based on archaeological and epigraphic evidence, Altun Há was deeply involved in the Late Classic politics of southern Belize.

The text continues with a distance number of 7 tuns leading back to the 9.15.0.0.0 4 *Ajaw* 13 *Yax* Period-Ending and the planting of a stela in commemoration of that date. This commemoration took place 'with' or 'facing' the *Ek' Xukpi Ajaw* 'Black Copan Lord'. Following the planting of the stela the text continues with a restatement of the Initial Series Date (9.14.15.4.14 1 *Ix* 12 *Pax*, 16, December 726) from which a distance number leads back to the 9.15.0.0.0 Period-Ending. In celebration of this Period-Ending (18, August 731) a lord from the Water-Scroll site and a lord from Copan were present at Nim Li Punit. The text further states that this event was supervised or overseen by the *Ek' Xukpi Ajaw* of the Sixth Partition. The final column of text is too eroded to ascertain anything further except for the final glyph. Here we see a reference involving the *Tok' Pakal* of the Sixth Partition which I interpret as a metaphor for armed escorts that accompanied the Copan lord.

The text ends with a dedicatory phrase. This text begins with a Short Count date of 12 *Ik'*. Given the range of possibilities, the exact Long Count date may never be certain. The text continues with the presentation or dedication verb followed by a 3 *k'atun* title.

Chronology:

A1-D1: 9.14.15.4.14 *1 *Ix* 12 *Pax* (16, December 726)

E1-F1: *9.15.7.0.0 2 *Ajaw* 18 *Mol* (12, July 738)

G3-G4: *9.15.7.0.0 2 *Ajaw* 18 *Mol* (12, July 738)
 - 7.0.0
 *9.15.0.0.0 4 *Ajaw* 13 *Yax* (18, August 731)

J4-K1: *9.14.15.4.14 1 *Ix* 12 *Pax* (16, December 726)

L1-K3: *9.14.15. 4.14 1 *Ix* 12 *Pax* (16, December 726)
 + 4. 13. 6
 9.15. 0. 0. 0 4 *Ajaw* *13 *Yax* (18, August 731)

N1: 12 *Ik'* (Corresponding Long Count Date Unknown)

Text:

A1: T124:25.?.25:548

B1: TIX.1033

A2: TXIV.28:548

B2: TXV.548:142

C1: T IV:?:?

tzi:ka.?.ka:HAAB'

B'OLON.PÍ

KANLAJUN.K'ATUN:HAAB'

JO'LAJUN.TUUN:ma

KAN:?:?

D1: TXIV.?

E1: T?.

F1: T?.581

E2: T1.670:130

F2: T1030d

E3: T32.1016[653]

F3: T224?:130?

E4: T173.168:518c

F4: T751v?

G1: T?.1000c

H1: T18.671:86

G2: T32.1016

H2: T168:578v

G3: TVII.548:93

H3: TIV.533

G4: TXIII.16:528v

H4: T1.68:576a

I1: T528.512a

J1: T18.565a

I2: T683

J2: T95.168:756

I3: T18.93:25

J3: T32.1016b[653]

I4: TVI.?:528

J4: TI.524

K1: TXIII:549

L1: TIV.548:126

K2: TXIII.521

L2: T?.

K3: TIV.533

L3: T168:578v

K4: T204.526:130

L4: TVI.?:528

M1: T95:756

M2: T?:?

M3: T?:?

M4: T??:624

N1: TXII.503

O1: T32v.843v

P1: T61.568:756

P2: TIII.28:548

KANLAJUN.?**(KA'.AJAW)****(WAXAKLAJUN).MOL****u.CH'AM:wa****K'AWIIL****K'U.K'UHUL[HUL]****ka.wa? (KAY/KAWAM: Nim Li Punit)****MI'. AJAW:TE'****B'APHLAM?****?. AJAW****yi.chi:NAL****K'U.K'UHUL****AJAW:JA? (Altun Há)****WUK.TUUN:tu****KAN.AJAW****OXLAJUN.YAX.?****u.tz'a:pa****TUUN.ye****yi.ta****ja****EK'.AJAW:xu (XUKPI)****yi.ch'a.ka****K'U.K'UHUL [HUL]****WAK.TZUK:ku****JUUN.IX****OXLAJUN:PAX****KAN.TUUN:yi****OXLAJUN.WINAL****(WAK.KIN)****KAN.AJAW****AJAW:JA (Altun Ha)****u.KAB'.wa****WAK.TZUK.ku****EK':xu (XUKPI)****?:?****?:?****(u).TOK':PAKAL****LAJKA'.IK'****K'U.TAB'AY****yu.lu:xu****OX.K'ATUN:TUUN**

Nim Li Punit, Stela 3

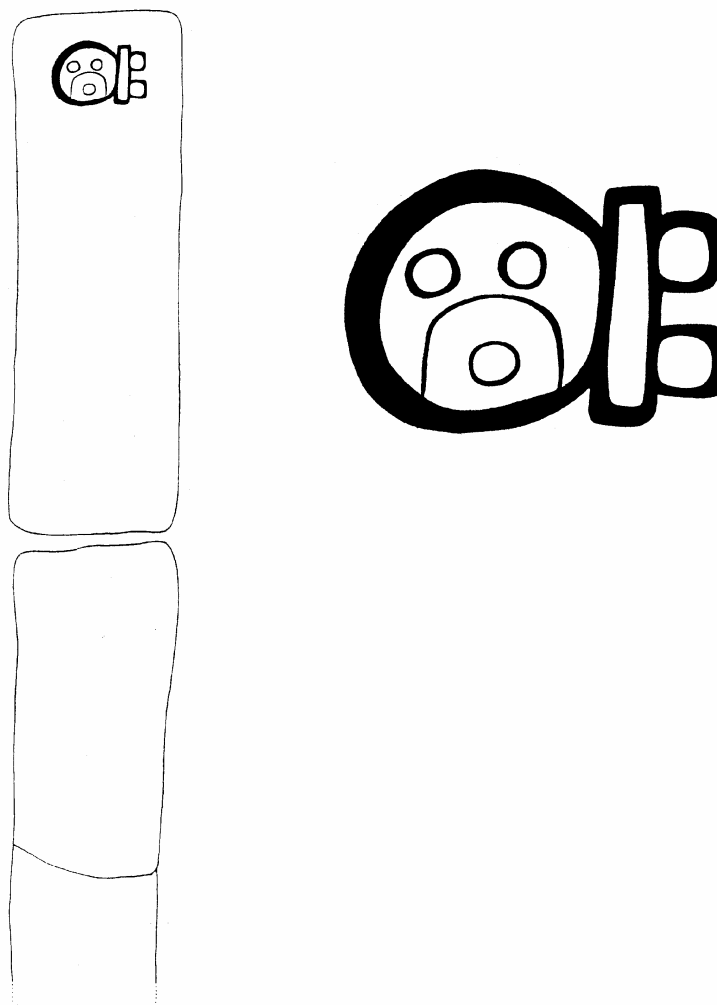


Figure 15. Nim Li Punit, Stela 3 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Located in the extreme northwest corner of the stelae plaza, one meter west of Stela 4. Stela 3 was first reported by the Southern Belize Epigraphic Project in 1986.

Commentary: The *Ajaw* stelae of southern Belize are among the latest dated monuments in Belize. Two *Ajaw* stelae have been found in the Southern Maya Mountains Region which contain single *Ajaw* dates (Nim Li Punit Stela 3 and Tzimín Ché Stela 1). Satterthwaite (1951) was among the first to suggest that *Ajaw* dating represented a Short Count calendrical system and that the date of these monuments could be interpreted through the *k'atun* cycle. The *ajaw* glyph did not necessarily have to specify the dedicatory date of the monument, rather it indicated the day upon which the current *k'atun* started. In this case, 7 *Ajaw* can refer to either one of two dates: the 9.7.0.0.0 (7 *Ajaw* 3 *K'ank'in*) Period Ending or the 10.0.0.0.0 (7 *Ajaw* 18 *Sip*) Period Ending. The 9.7.0.0.0 Period Ending (AD 573) is too early based on archaeological and epigraphic evidence and thus, the most likely date for Stela 3 is 10.0.0.0.0 (11, March 830). This Long Count date corresponds nicely with the archaeological evidence.

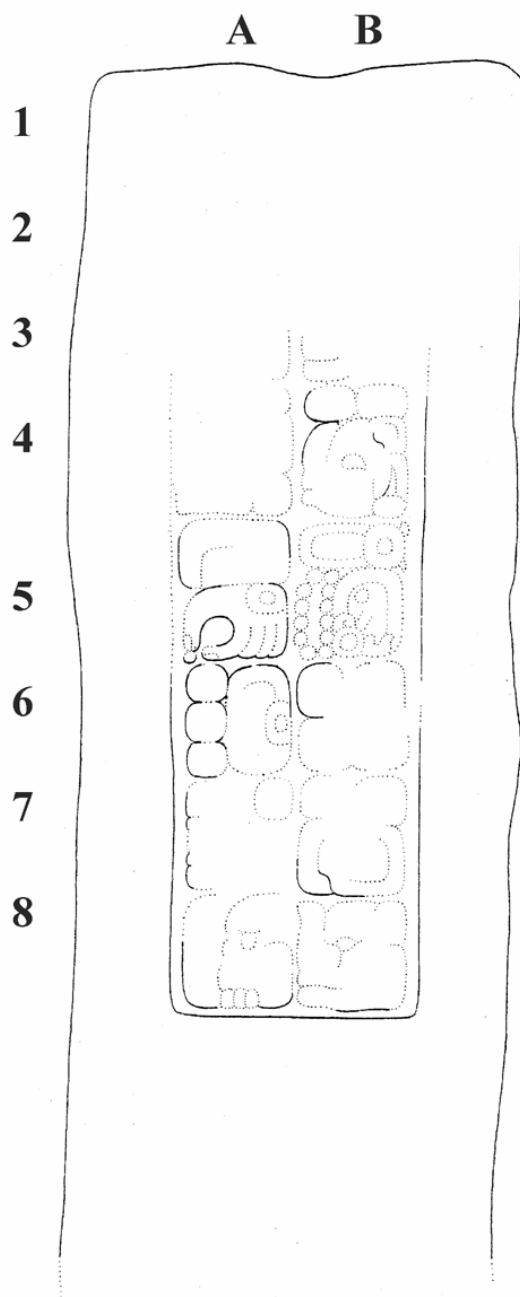
Nim Li Punit, Stela 4

Figure 16. Nim Li Punit, Stela 4 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Located in the extreme northwest corner of the stelae plaza, one meter east of Stela 3. Stela 4 was first reported by the Corozal Project in 1976.

Commentary: Though badly broken and eroded, the text on Stela 4 does provide epigraphic evidence that ties the ruler of Nim Li Punit to the kingdoms of the southeastern Maya lowlands. The evidence comes from the *Xukpi Ajaw* title recorded at B4 (see NLP, Stela 2 for further commentary). Following this title is a reference to a scattering event. Though the dedicatory date of Stela 4 is missing, it is likely that this text

dates to somewhere between 9.14.15.4.14 and 9.19.0.0.0 based on the other reference to the *Ek' Xukpi* Title in the inscriptions at Nim Li Punit. It is likely that the scattering event involved the joint participation of a Nim Li Punit ruler and an individual who carries the *Ek' Xukpi* title. The name of the Nim Li Punit ruler is now missing, but the *K'uhul* part of his name or title is written exactly as it appears on Nim Li Punit Stela 2 with a portrait head or full form of the *K'uhul* glyph. It is interesting to note that this sign also appears either as a generic *ajaw* title or main sign of the Lubaantún emblem glyph (see Lubaantún BC Marker 3 and Figural Plaque 2). Unfortunately, the rest of the text is just too eroded to read.

Text:

A1: Missing	??
B1: Missing	??
A2: Missing	??
B2: Missing	??
A3: Missing	??
B3: Missing	??
A4: ?????	??
B4: T168:756d	AJAW:XUKPI (Ek' Xukpi Ajaw)
A5: T1:710	u:CHOK
B5: T93.32.1016[653]	CH'A:K'U.K'UHUL [JUL]
A6: TIII.?	OX.?
B6: T529?	WITZ'?
A7: T??	??
B7: T??:?	?:?:?
A8: T?.1040	JOL
B8: T756d	XU/XUKPI

Nim Li Punit, Stela 7

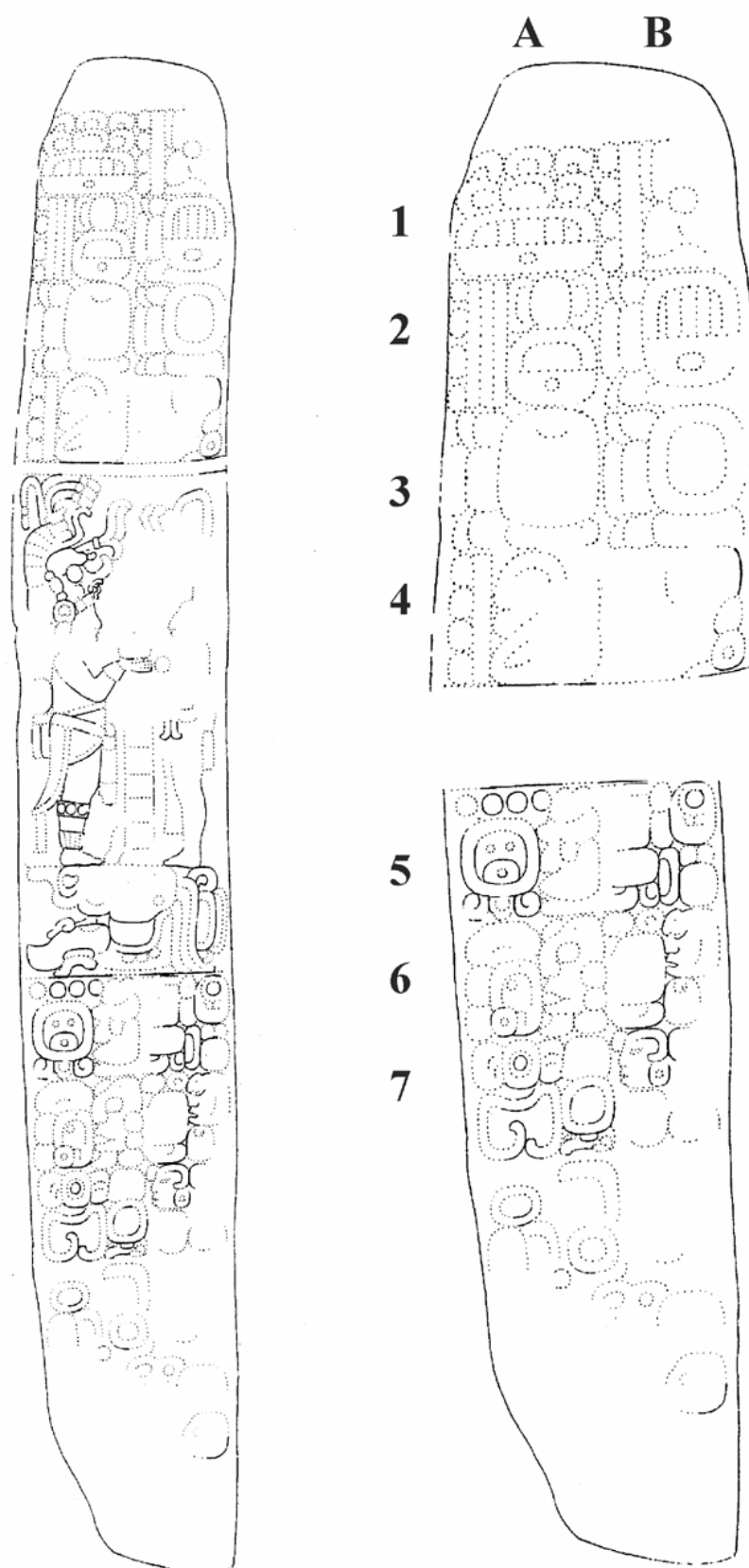


Figure 17. Nim Li Punit, Stela 7 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Originally located in the southeast corner of the northern terrace near the entrance to the main stelae plaza. Stela 7 was first reported by the Corozal Project in 1976 and moved by the M.A.S.D.P. as part of a comprehensive restoration and consolidation project in 1998, to the *bodega* of the newly created Nim Li Punit Visitor Center.

Commentary: This text is badly eroded, typical of many of the texts found in this region. While the upper text records an Initial Series date of 9.19.0.0.0 9 *Ajaw* 18 *Mol* (24, June, 810), the lower text begins with a Calendar Round date of 4 *Ajaw*. Thus, the date for the lower text is not entirely clear since there is no intervening Distance Number that leads from the Initial Series date to the date of the next event. Due to the severity of the erosion along the lower half of Stela 7, virtually nothing can be read from this text except for the *K'uhul Ajaw* expression at A6. A glyph that look like the head variant for *juun* appears as the final part of B6 and the last two glyphs appear to record a location involving a Patron Mountain location. The rest of the lower half of Stela 7 contains an unusual series of concentric circles that do not appear to be glyphic in nature and therefore their purpose remains a mystery.

Text:

A1: T124:25.?25:548	tzi:ka.?:HAAB'
B1: TIX.1033	B'OLON.PI
A2: TXIX.28:548	B'OLONLAJUN.K'ATUN:TUUN
B2: T173.548	mi.TUUN
A3: T173.521:136?	mi.WINAL.ji
B3: T173.544:116	mi.K'IN.ni
A4: TIX.?	B'OLON.(AJAW)
B4: T?.	(WAXAKLJAUN MOL?)
A5: TIV.533:125.?:?	KAN.AJAW:?:?
B5: T?:?:130.?683:?:?	?:?:wa.?.K'AL/ja:?:?:?
A6: T?:?.1016a.1000f:130	?:?.K'UHUL.AJAW:wa
B6: T?:?:?.1000a?:?:?	?:?:?.JUUN?:?:?
A7: T60?:529/856?:?:1031c	TAH/JUUN/ji:WITZ/NEN.?:HAAB'/TUUN
B7: T1008.?:?:?	XIB'/NAL.?:?:?

Nim Li Punit, Stela 14

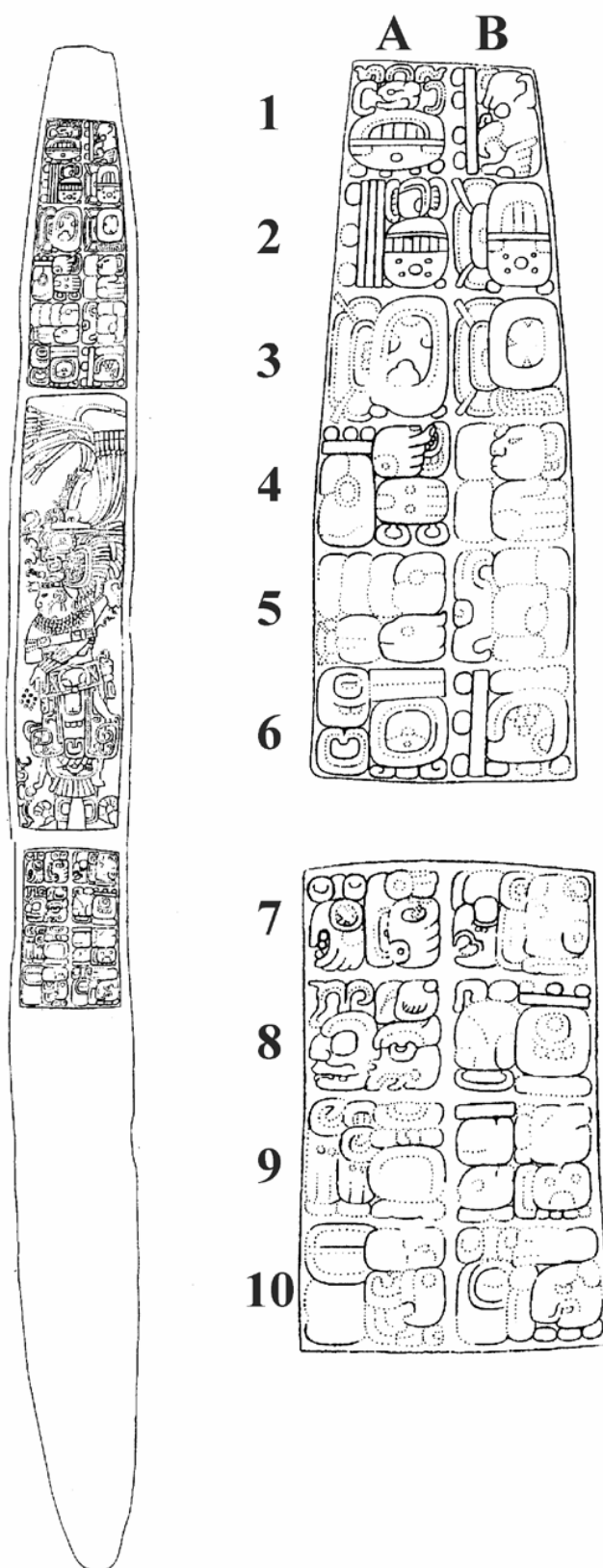


Figure 18. Nim Li Punit, Stela 14 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Originally located near the center of the stelae plaza near a stone-lined pit that originally supported the monument. Stela 14 first reported by the Corozal Project in 1976 and was moved to the newly created Nim Li Punit Visitor Center in 1998 by the M.A.S.D.P. as part of a comprehensive restoration and consolidation project.

Commentary: Stela 14 is the second tallest stelae ever carved by the ancient Maya (Quirigua Stela E is the tallest) and is the monument from which the site takes its Q'eqchi' name of *Nim Li Punit* meaning 'Big-Hat'. The text of Stela 14 is best known for the way in which the Initial Serial date was recorded. The Long Count date is 9.18.0.0.0, which would require a Calendar Round date of 11 *Ajaw* 18 *Mak* (or 7, October 790). However, the Calendar Round date recorded of this monument is 10 *Ajaw* 8 *Sak*, which corresponds to the Long Count date of 9.18.10.0.0 (15, August 800), a difference of ten years. While some might be inclined to view this anomaly as a scribal error, there is some epigraphic evidence to suggest that the scribe was intentionally linking both the 9.18.0.0.0 and 9.18.10.0.0 Period Endings.

Following the Long Count date is the glyph for scattering followed by *yichnal* to indicate that the scattering took place 'before' or 'with' an individual or individuals named next in the text. Following the name of the king is a parentage text that parallels the one recorded on Stela 21. The parentage statement includes the *Waxak Winik* title, a title restricted to the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Southern Maya Mountains Region. The most interesting aspect of this parentage text is the reference to the ruler's mother who seems to be a noble woman from the *B'alam* site. This may be the same *B'alam* site that is mentioned in the texts of Pusilhá (Sculptural Fragment 17) and at Naj Tunich (Drawing 48) and if so, it would suggest that the *B'alam* site, located somewhere in this region, enjoyed friendly non-antagonistic relations with Nim Li Punit. The text then continues with the name phrase of the noble woman from *B'alam* at A10 and the father's name at B10 which is also recorded on Nim Li Punit Stela 21 (D6).

Text:

A1: T124:25.?.25:548	tzi:ka.?.ka:HAAB'
B1: TIX.1032	B'OLON. PI
A2: TXVIII.28:548[585]	WAXAKLAJUN.K'ATUN[HAAB']
B2: T173.548[585]	mi.JAAB'
A3: T173.521	mi. WINAL
B3: T173.544:116	mi.K'in:ni
A4: TVIII.683.713.181:82:126	WAXAK.K'AL. JUL.ja:li:ya
B4: T?:?.1000a.181:713a	?:?.IXIK.ja:K'AL
A5: T?:?.?:173.?.738?	?:?:.mi.?.ka?
B5: T204.187:758a:110	u.K'AB'A:CH'OK:ko
A6: T683:517v.XV:533	K'AL:LAJUN.JO'LAJUN:AJAW
B6: TVIII.58:528	WAXAK.SAK:ku
A7: T13:710.18.86.671	u:CHOK.yi.NAL.chi
B7: T744?.279.?.88	MO.O.(JGU).ji
A8: T?.21?.568:849?	K'AHK'.b'u:lu:?
B8: TI.606:23.VIII:683:102	HUUN.TAHN:na.WAXAK:WINIK:ki
A9: T501.25:501.?:60:606:23	b'a.ka:b'a.?:HUUN.TAHN:na
B9: TV?:?:?:?:533v?:142?	JO?:?:?:?:NIK/MEHEN?:ma?

A10: T?:?.1000a.168:38.751.130

B10: T13:501.?:?.751.142

?:?.IXIK:AJAW:K'U.B'ALAM:ma

u:b'a.?:?.B'ALAM.ma

Nim Li Punit, Stela 15

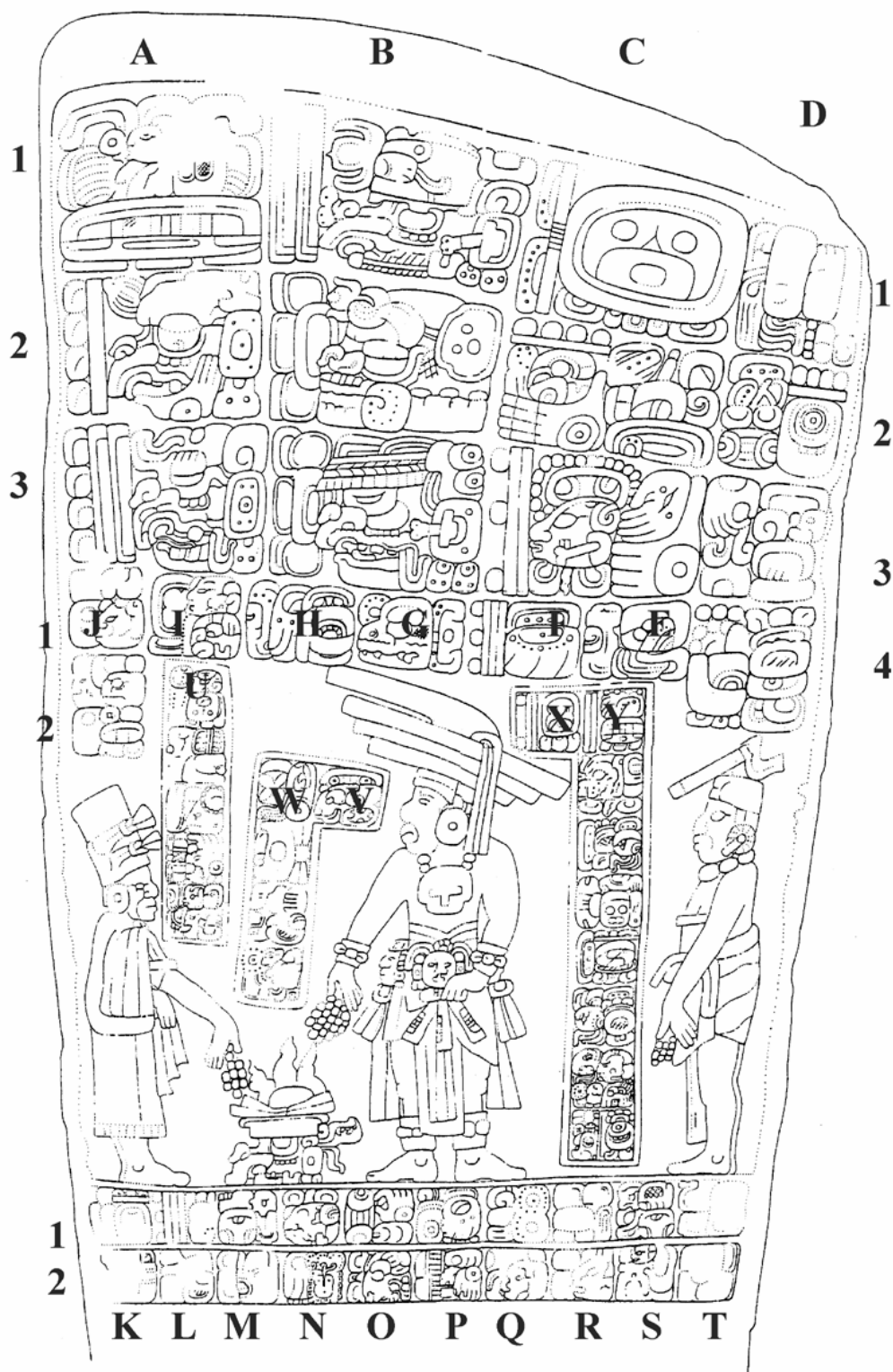


Figure 19. Nim Li Punit, Stela 15 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: The stela was originally found face down, approximately 5 meters to the east of Stela 14, along the eastern side of the stelae plaza near the center of Structure 4. It was first reported by the Corozal Project in 1976 and was moved to the newly created Nim Li Punit Visitor Center in 1998 by the M.A.S.D.P. as part of a comprehensive restoration and consolidation project.

Commentary: The text of Stela 15 is important for it contains several references to Copan. In addition, the text also mentions a unique astronomical event involving a partial lunar eclipse that was visible at Nim Li Punit on the evening of October 9th, 721.

The text begins with an Initial Series date (9.14.10.0.0 5 *Ajaw* 3 *Mak* or 9, October 721) which includes a reference to a fire-scattering ritual that occurred in front of or before this monument on the day of its dedication. The text then continues with a reference to the well-known Teotihuacan War Serpent (the *Waxakalajun Ub'aj Ka'an*) whose image was created or conjured through a bloodletting ritual by a royal woman named *Ixik K'an K'uhul* who appears to be a *B'a Ajaw* 'Head or First Lord'. The *B'a Ajaw* epithet is a title restricted to the leader of a kingdom's non-royal nobility (see Houston and Stuart 2001: 62) and in this case, she may be portrayed on the monument as the figure on the extreme left.

The text continues at the bottom of the stela with a partially eroded Calendar Round date of 6 *Ajaw* 18 *Sak*. This Calendar Round date can correspond to one of three possible Long Count dates (9.12.10.7.0, 9.15.3.2.0, or 9.17.15.15.0). The best guess here, is that this Calendar Round date corresponds to *9.15.3.2.0 or 11, September 734.

Unfortunately, the first part of the verb is now unreadable (K2-L2), but the second part is clearly an unusual spelling of the *chok* 'scatter' verb (M1). This rite was performed by a vassal lord to the *Ek' Xukpi* (*Ajaw*), who carries the rare *B'a Max* 'First Shield' title. The text also states that this individual was the 'guardian of the White Earth' and he was a 'youth of the Divine House'. The text is then broken, but states at R1 that 'he was in lordship'. Unfortunately, his personal name is now completely unreadable, except that the individual was a *K'u B'alam Ajaw* 'Divine Lord from the *B'alam* site.'

The three secondary texts also provide critical information concerning the extent of these relationships. The first secondary text (located just to the right of the left figure) begins with a reference to some sort of fire ritual by an individual named *K'inich K'uk'* who is said to be a Copan person (*Xukpi Winik.*). The middle text is highly eroded, but the passage ends with the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph. The last and longest of the secondary texts is the one located to the right of the figural scene. This text begins with a truncated Calendar Round date of 12 *Ajaw* to indicate the Long Count date of 9.4.10.0.0 12 *Ajaw* 8 *Mol* (24, August 524), which is exactly 10 *k'atuns* earlier than the dedicatory date of the stela. The text states that 'the 6th accumulated grand stone was planted'. The name of the person responsible is next named in the text as a 'Sun-Eyed or Sun-Faced Scatterer, the Youthful Lord, the Tree Lord of Nim Li Punit, and he carries the *Waxak Winik* title.

Chronology:

A1-D4:	9.14.10.0.0 5 <i>Ajaw</i> 3 <i>Mak</i> (9, October 721)
K1-L1:	*9.15.3.2.0 6 <i>Ajaw</i> 18 <i>Sak</i> (11, September 734)
X1-Y1:	*9.4.10.0.0 12 <i>Ajaw</i> 8 <i>Mol</i> (24, August 524)

Text:

A1: T124.25.?.25:548	tzi:ka.?.ka:HAAB'
A2: TIX.1033	B'OLON.PI
A3: TXIV.?	KANLAJUN.K'ATUN
B1: TX.1031v	LAJUN.TUUN
B2: T173.741	mi.WINAL
B3: T173.K'IN	mi.K'IN
C1: TV.533:125	JO'.AJAW:?
C2: TIX:38.1016:670.126:60:23v	B'OLON.K'U.K'UHUL:CH'AM.ch'a:HUUN:na
C3: TXIII.45:?.125.?:670	OXLAJUN.JUL:?.ya.?:CH'AM
D1: T?:?.548:116.?:?:IV.?:?	?:?.TUUN:ni.?:?:KAN.?:?
D2: T11:128:287.110.IX:683	u:ch'a:CHOK.ko.B'OLON:K'AL
D3: T219v:122:24.11:86:565:23	PUK:K'AK':li.u:NAL:TAN:na

(Reversed Reading Order)

D4: TIII:74?:617v?:246.68:586:683	OX:ma?:ka?:ji-ya.tz'a:pa:ja
E1: T204:528[767v]:116	u:TUUM[LAKAM]:ni
F1: TXVIII.11:501	WAXAKLAJUN.u.b'a
G1: T764.23	KA'AN.na
H1: T204.501.1:712	u.b'a.u:CH'AB'
I1: T281:23.1000a:41	K'AN:na.IXIK:K'U
J1: T?:?.?:1000a	?:?.?:IXIK
J2: T1000a:38?.168:?:518:130	IXIK:K'U?.AJAW:?:AJAW:wa

K1: T87.VI:533	te.WAK:AJAW
L1: TXIII.?:?	OXLAJUN.?:? (Ch'en)
K2: T??	??
L2: T?:?.568	?:?.lu
M1: T590:520:229	cho:ka:AJ
N1: T125:1000	ya:AJAW
M2: T95.756	EK'.XUK (XUKPI)
N2: T501.142:536	b'a.ma:xo
O1: T110.219.188	ko.ke.le
P1: T58.25:501	SAK.ka:b'a
O2: T1.757a	u.B'AAJ
P2: T685.1?:710v	K'U NAAH.u.PUK
Q1: T17:?:?.277	yi:?:?.?
R1: T168:518:130.116	AJAW:AJAW:wa.ni
Q2: T?:?.?	?:?.?
R2: T36.168:751	K'U.AJAW:B'ALAM
S1: T229.669b:506	a.k'a:wa

T1: T?:?:?	?:?:?
S2: T95.756:?:?	EK'.XUKPI:?:?
T2: T?:?:?	?:?:?
U1: T36.741a:534?:?	K'U.E':la:?
U2: T?.630:?	?.sa:?
U3: T501.?.582:?	b'a.?.MO':?
U4: T74.184.744	ma.K'INICH.K'UK'
U5: T17.?.683.756.528:?	yi.?:ja.XUK.PI:AJAW?
V1: T1:757	u:B'AAJ
W1: 544:116:670	K'IN:ni:chi
W2: T740:60	SIJ:HUUN
W3: T229.?:568	AJ.?:lu
W4: T36.168:?:1000:130	K'U.AJAW:AJAW:wa
X1: TXII.533:125	LAJKA'.AJAW:?
Y1: TX.IV:28:548:142	LAJUN.KAN:K'ATUN:TUUN:ma
Y2: T?.87:125	u.te:ya
Y3: T11.68:586b.11:528.116	u.tz'a:pa.u:TUUN:ni
Y4: T109.204:542.23	CHAK.u.na:na
Y5: T11.VI:573:25:178	u.WAK:TZ'AK:ka:la
Y6: T767v:528:116.11:68:586b:683c	LAKAM:TUUN:ni.u.tz'a:pa:ja
Y7: T670[544]:116.93.607:142.1000e:758a	ch'i[K'IN]:ni.ch'a.jo:ma.AJAW:CH'OK
Y8: T145:168:743.VIII.32:683b[181]:130	
che:AJAW:KAWAM/KAY.WAXAK.K'U:WINIK[ha]:wa	

Nim Li Punit, Stela 21

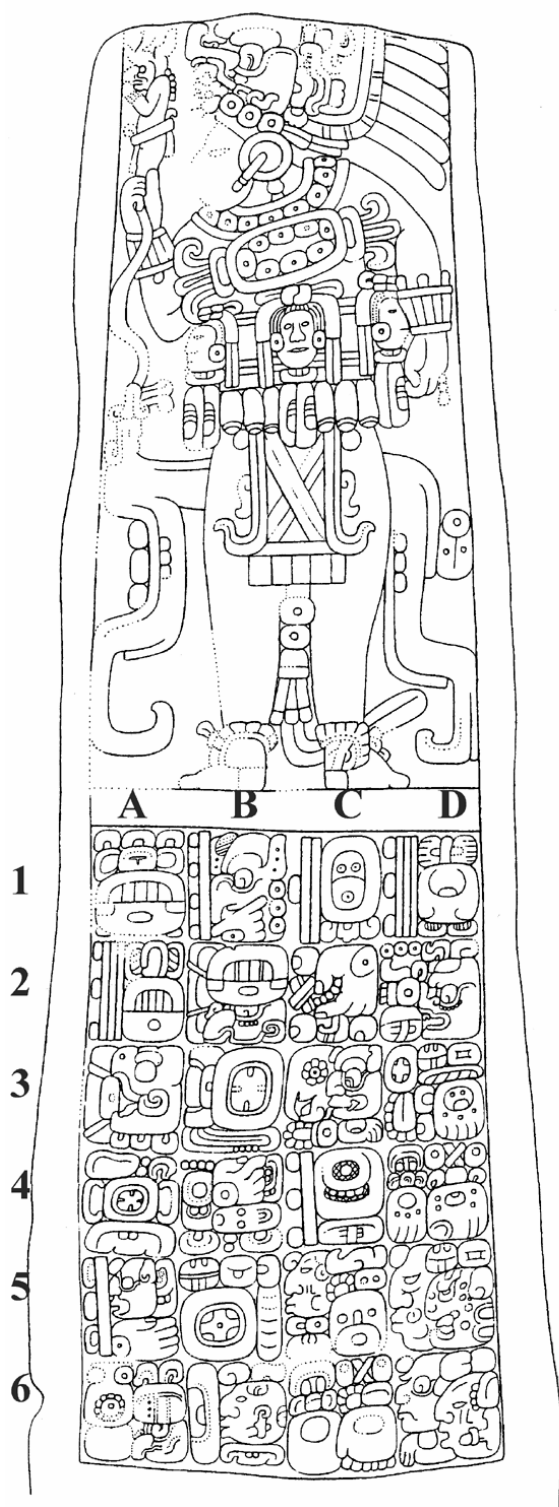


Figure 20. Nim Li Punit, Stela 21 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Originally located face down along the north side of stela plaza near the center of Structure 3 midway between Stela 22 and Stela 20. Stela 21 was first reported by the Corozal Project in 1976; however, it was not thought to be carved. Then in the spring of

1998 workmen flipped this monument as part of the first comprehensive restoration and consolidation project (M.A.S.D.P.) at Nim Li Punit and realized that it contained a nearly pristine text and image. The monument was then moved to the newly created Nim Li Punit Visitor Center.

Commentary: The text of Stela 21 is interesting for it features a reference to fire scattering within the Initial Series passage. The text also describes a scattering event which took place at a location associated with Copan known as the *Ox Witik* ‘The Three Roots’. This toponym appears in numerous Copan inscriptions (Copan, Stela 10, Stela 12, Structure 12, Altar L, Altar Q, and Temple 11, West) and seems to refer to either the ‘three families’ or the ‘three royal lineages’ of the Copan Dynasty. This passage may provide additional epigraphic evidence that the ruler of Nim Li Punit may have come from one of these Copan lineages. The name of the Nim Li Punit ruler was *K’awiil Mo’ Jaguar God of the Underworld*. There are at least three versions of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph and here on Stela 21 the main sign of the emblem glyph is spelled syllabically as *ka-wa-ma* or *Kawam*. Unfortunately, it is not clear what *Kawam* means, but based on the other two versions of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph that feature a raptor of some sort, it is most likely that *Kawam* might refer to this particular bird, perhaps a Harpy Eagle. The ruler carries the *Waxak Winik* title and the rest of the text provides a parentage statement that parallels the text of Stela 14. The text states that the ruler of Nim Li Punit was the ‘cherished one of’ a noble lady from the *B’alam* site and then the final two glyphs of Stela 21 record the father’s name.

Text:

A1: T124:25.503.25:548	tzi:ka.MAK.ka:HAAB’
B1: TIX.1033	B’OLON. PI
A2: TXVIII.28:548	WAXAKLAJUN.K’ATUN:TUUN
B2: T173.1031	mi. TUUN
A3: T173.741a:136	mi.WINAL:ji
B3: T173.544:116	mi.K’IN:ni
A4: T128:60[544]:23	ch’a:HUUN[K’IN]:na
B4: TIV.683.713b:181:82:126	KAN:K’AL.JUL:ja:li:yi
A5: VI.751a:181:713a	WAK.B’ALAM:ja:K’AL
B5: T168:544:188	AJAW:K’AN.le
A6: T?:?:?.1035	?:?:?.K’AK’/BUTZ’
B6: T121.1010c?:23	li.PUL:na
C1: TXI.533	B’ULUK.AJAW
D1: TXVIII.74:520:25.25	WAXAKLAJUN.ma:ka:ka:ka
C2: T13.710:130	u.CHOK:wa
D2: TIII.117:59:102.1030v	OX.wi.ti:ki.K’AWIIL
C3: T744b:280.?.88	MO:O.(JGU)?,ji
D3: T36.168:25:130.502	K’U.AJAW:ka.wa.ma (NLP)
C4: TVIII.683:102	WAXAK.WINIK:ki
D4: T1:60:501.13.I:606	u.HUUN:b’a.u.HUUN:TAHN
C5: T1000a:?:?:?:533	IXIK:?:?:?:AJAW
D5: T1000a.168.751	IXIK.AJAW.B’ALAM
C6: T1.60:501.13.?:?:712	u.HUUN:b’a.u.?:?:CH’AB
D6: T?:88.?:1000	(JGU):ji.?:AJAW

Nim Li Punit, Polychrome Bowl (Kerr 1440)



Figure 21. K1440 (Photo by Justin Kerr)

Location: Unknown Provenance. The bowl is now in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts. Based on several glyphic references which include the ruler's name as well as the main sign of the Nim Li Punit emblem glyph, it is thought that this bowl originally came from the region around Nim Li Punit.

Commentary: Polychrome Bowl K1440 (also known as the "Bowl of the Eighty-Eight Glyphs") features an extraordinary calligraphic text that links the seating of a Nim Li Punit lord to mythological events that occurred some 674 years before the start of the current creation. In addition, this bowl features four separate figural scenes that are incorporated into the text itself as a means for added emphasis to the written commentary.

The text begins in mythological time with the birth of the future Nim Li Punit king, *B'ahlam Te'*, on the Long Count date of 1.14.3.3.12 9 *Eb'* 10 *Muwaan* (24, January 2439). The text then describes a series of mythological events whose understanding is vague though it seems to relate to events that occur at a location known as the *Ek' Way Nal Naah* 'Black Hole House'. I suspect that the text and figural scenes were designed to link the birth and accession of the Nim Li Punit lord to earlier mythic events. The text then jumps forward in chronology to Late Classic historical times and to the accession of the local Nim Li Punit lord under the auspices of several related Patron Gods and historical figures, including one from Copan who brings gifts to this Nim Li Punit lord on behalf of Copan. The text on this bowl nicely compliments the historical events recorded on Nim Li Punit Stela 2.

Text:

A1: T124:25.?.181:548

A2: T1000a.1033

A3: T?.1034v

A4: T?.1034

A5: T?.741v

B1: TIX.741v

C1: T86:544

B2: T128:60:23

C2: TXII.45:82:126

B3: T11.1040v.181:48.218

C3: TII.?:187:41

B4: T683.736v

C4: TX.748v

B5: T229.1011:126

C5: T740.181:246

D1: T751v

E1: T?.

F1: T1154

G1: T757v:116.89

H1: T25.1030v?

I1: T2.115:765?

J1: T1008

K1: T?.

tzi:ka.?.ja:HAAB'

JUN.B'AK'TUN

KANLAJUN.K'ATUN

OX.TUUN

OX.WINAL

B'OLON. EB'

NAL:K'IN

ch'a:JUN:na

LAJKA':ju:li:ya

u.JOL.ja:NA.TZUTZ

KA'?:K'AB'A:K'U

WINIK.LAJUN

LAJUN.MUWAAN

A.YA:ya

SIJ.ja:ji-ya

B' AHLAM

?.?

TE'

B'A:ni.tu

ka.TUUN

EK'.yo:OK'

XIB'

?:?

L1: T?:?	?:?
K2: T756	SOTZ'/XUK
L2: T59.950	ti.LI?
K3: T95.574:136	EK'.K'IN:ji
L3: T86:521	NAL:WINIK
K4: T126.17:670:136	ya.yi:YAL:yi
L4: T1000a.2	IXIK.EK'
K5: T24?.86:?[503]	li.NAL:IK'
L5: T204.573a:12	u.TZ'AK:aj
M1: TI.533	JUN.AJAW
M2: TVIII.155:506	WAXAK.O:OWAL
M3: T229.1011:126	a.YA:ya
M4: T513.59:126	u.ti:ya
M5: T644:178:181	CHUM:la:ja
N1: T113.?:?	ta.?:NAL
O1: T653:526.23	JUL:KAB'.na
P1: T225v.950	wi.LI
O2: T95.769b:126	EK'.WAY:ya
P1: T86:542b.23	NAL.na.na
Q1: T90.150.950?	tu.TZ'AM.LI?
P2: T220/1028v	KELEM
Q2: T1082a.503v	OX.IK'
R1: T36.1016	K'U.K'UHUL
S1: T1148:?	NAAB':?
R2: T36.1016	K'U.K'UHUL
S2: TIV.528?:713a:23	KAN.TUUN?:K'AL:na
R3: T122.281:23	ta/TAJ.K'AN:na
S3: TVII.74:49?:59[585a]:102	WUK.ma:?:ti[b'i]:ki
R4: T113.281:23	ta.K'AN.na
S4: T51:115.614:59	ta:yo.YOTOT:ti
R5: T4.738	na.KAY
S5: T1000b.181	NA.ja
T1: T338:338:23	sa:sa:na
T2: T116.521.116:117	ni.WINIK.ni:wi
T3: T950.177	LI.pi
T4: T565	ta
T5: T683	ja
U1: T338.1000	sa.NAAH
V1: T116.521.116:117	ni.WINIK.ni:wi
W1: T?.280?:501:314	?.o?:b'a:ji
X1: T16.36:1016	YAX.K'U:K'UHUL
Y1: T16.168:518:130	YAX.AJAW:TE':wa
Z1: T204.1040	u.KIMI
A'1: T2.758a	u.CH'OK
Z2: T51.1041v?:103	ta.ha?:ta
A'2: TIV.204.1029:82	CHAN.u.b'i:li
Z3: T671[544]:116.145	chi[K'IN]:ni.che
A'3: TVIII.204:585a:82	WAXAK.u:b'i:li

Z4: TNN
 A'4: T60.1041
 Z5: T23:503.32:1016
 A'5: T229.168:756
 B'1: T60.1041
 B'2: T229.672:126.130
 B'3: T95.653:526
 B'4: T60:1030p:23
 B'5: T274:?:126.57
 C'1: T756d[177?]:na
 D'1: T148.741a:23
 C'2: T204.NN.301
 D'2: T59.747
 E'1: T274:?:126:517
 F'1: T756d[177?]
 E'2: T204.168:738:23
 F'2: T25:25.683:la

Toponym Under Throne
 T122.58[552]:95.764

?
 ja.i
 na:IK'.K'U:K'UHUL
 AJ.AJAW:XUK
 ja.i
 AJ.JOM:ya.wa
 EK'JUL:KAB'
 HUN:TUUN.na
 TAL.?:ya.SIH
 XUK[pi]:na
 che.e.na
 u. TZ'IB.b'i
 ti.AJAW
 TAL:?:ya.SIH
 XUK[pi]
 u.AJAW:KAY:na
 ka.ka.ja:la

K'AHK'.SAK[AAT]:EK'.KAAN

The Glyphic Corpus of Xnaheb, Toledo District, Belize

The Monumental Inscriptions

Xnaheb, Stela 1

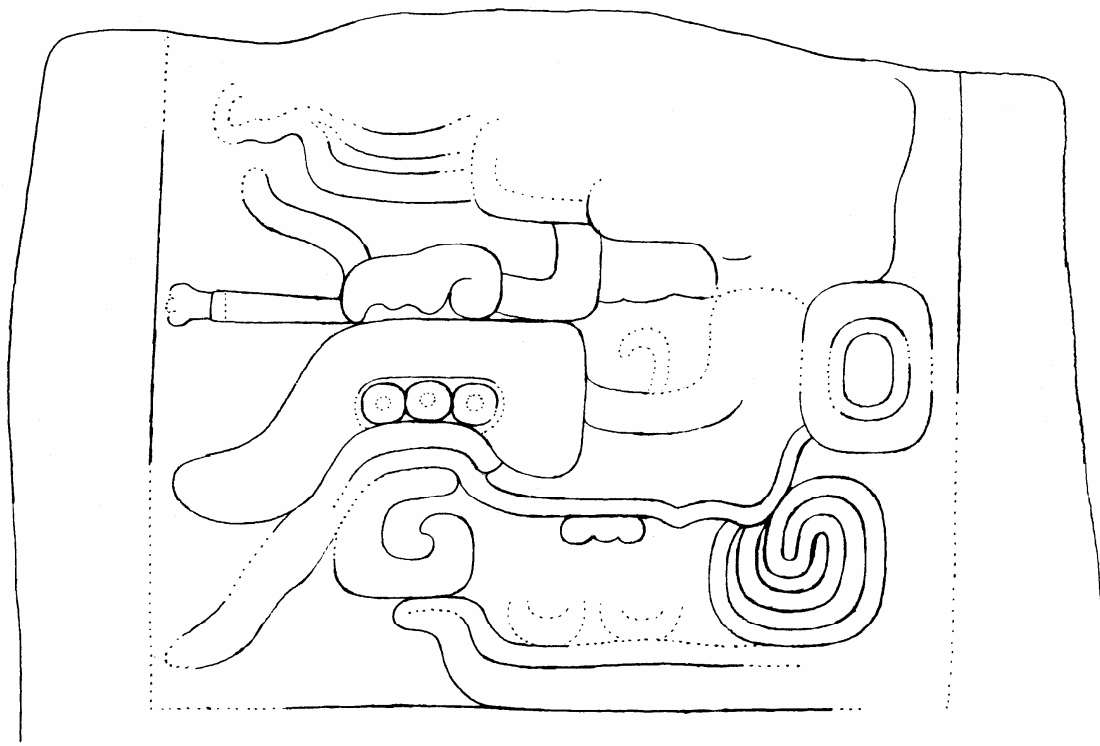


Figure 22. Xnaheb', Stela 1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela 1 was found by the Southern Belize Archaeological Project in 1986, standing directly against and behind Stela 2, in the northwest corner of the main plaza.

Commentary: Stela 1 consists of a single image of a broken *Witz* Monster. The image probably served as a pedestal separating a missing figural scene and text.

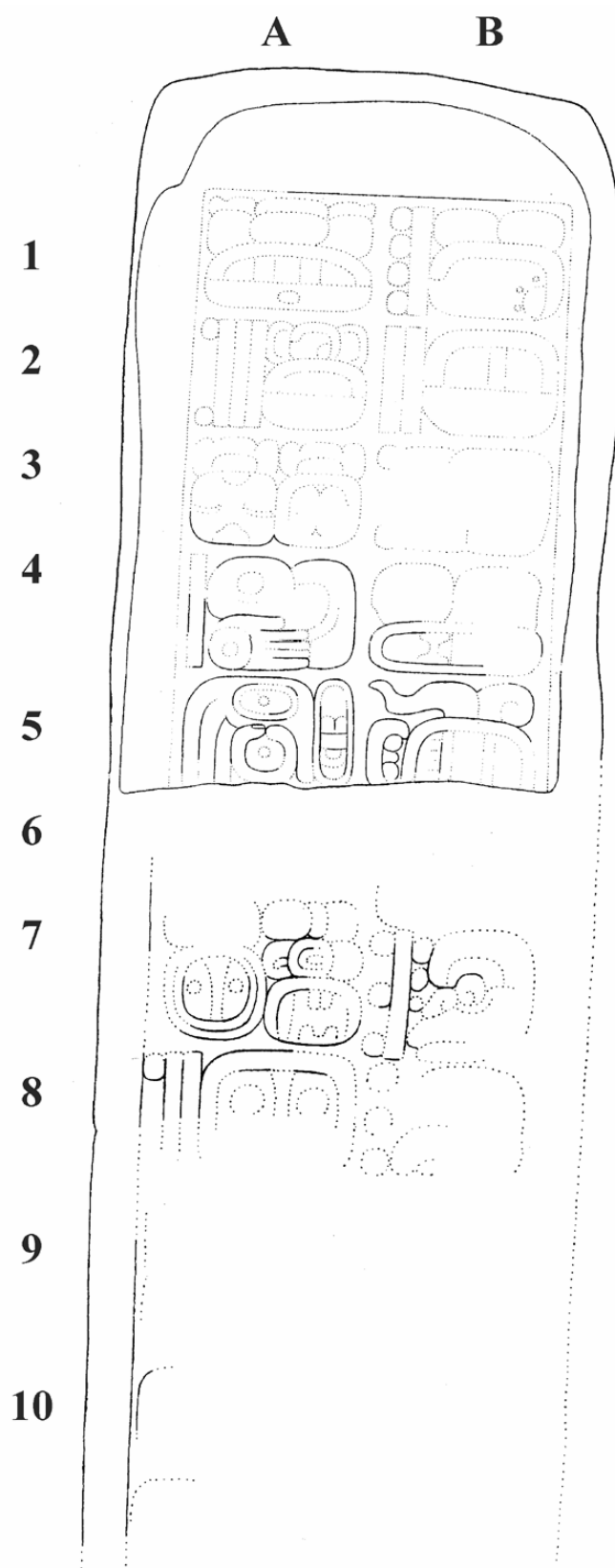
Xnaheb, Stela 2

Figure 23. Xnaheb, Stela 2 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela 2 was found by the Southern Belize Archaeological Project in 1986 standing against and directly in front of the lower half of Stela 1, in the northwest corner of main plaza.

Commentary: The text records the Long Count date of 9.17.10.0.0 and includes a reference to fire drilling event as part of the Lunar Series information. The lower half of Stela 2 records Glyph F and E of the Lunar Series as well as the first half of the Calendar Round date (12 *Ajaw*). The rest of the text is now completely unreadable. However, the vestiges of at least four glyph blocks can still be seen running along the left edge of the monument.

Text:

(Based on Stela 2 and the monument formerly known as Stela 3)

A1: T124:25.?.25:548	tzi:ka.?.ka:HAAB'
B1: TIX.200:548	B'OLON.PÍ/B'AK'TUUN:TUUN
A2: TXVII.28:548	WUKLAJUN.K'ATUN:TUUN
B2: TX.548	LAJUN.TUUN
A3: T173:521.173:544	mi:WINAL.mi:K'IN
B3: T?..?	???
A4: TV.683:713a.181	JÓ.UH:K'AL.ja (Glyph D)
B4: T?..?	???
A5: T219[671].8?	PUK.li?
B6: T1.122:248	u.K'AHK'/BUTZ:tzi
A6: T?:675.128:60:23	???.ch'a.HUUN.na (Glyph G2?/Glyph F)
B6: TVIII.?	WAXAK.?. (Glyph E?)
A7: TXII.533	LAJKÁ.AJAW
B7: TIII.?	OX.?
A8: T??	??
B8: T??	??
A9: T??	??
A10: T??	??

The Glyphic Corpus of Pusilhá, Toledo District, Belize

The Monumental Inscriptions

Pusilhá, Stela C

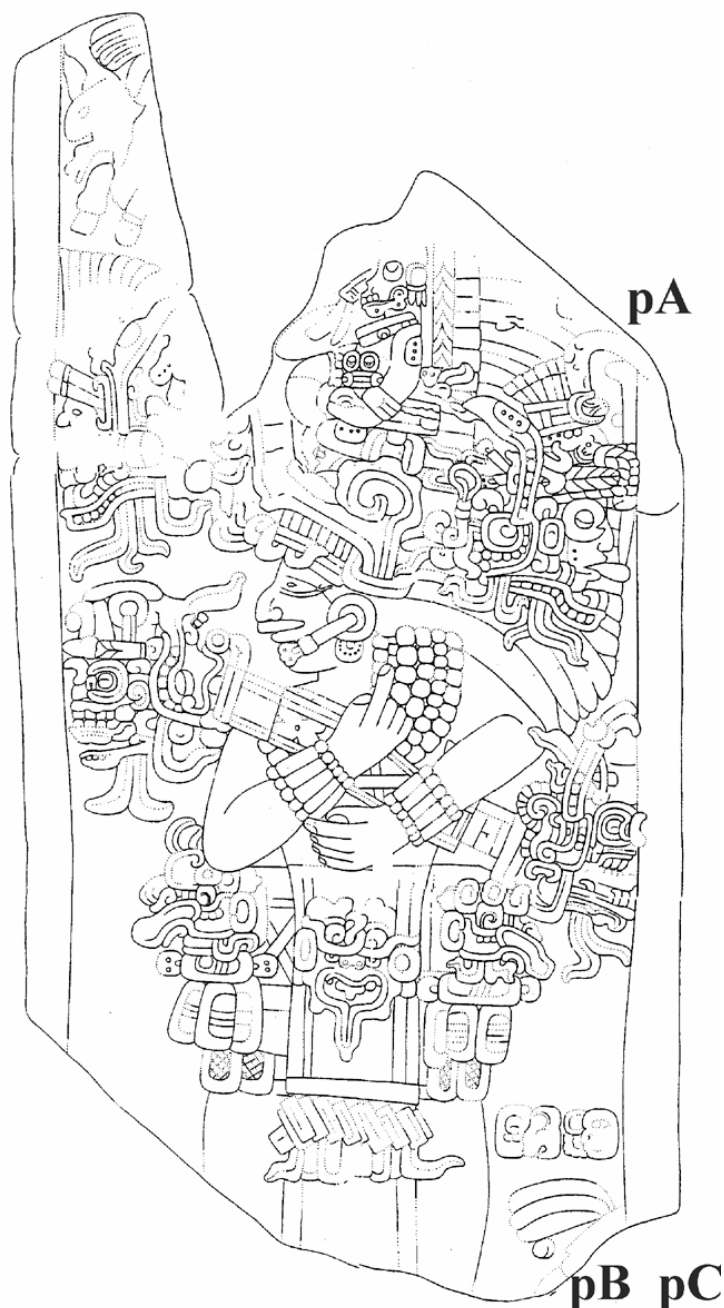


Figure 24. Pusilhá, Stela C (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela C was originally located third from the right in the row of 12 monuments in front (north) of Structure 1 in the south side of the Main Plaza. The stela was first reported by T.W.F. Gann in December 1927 as part of the British Museum Expedition to British Honduras. Joyce moved the stela to London in 1929 where it now resides in storage at the British Museum.

Commentary: The iconography of Stela C is perhaps the most elaborate and complex in all of southern Belize. The figural scene depicts a standing male figure, facing left cradling a Double-Headed Serpent Bar in his arms. Emerging from both ends of this Serpent Bar are two images of the goggle-eyed god Tlaloc. In addition, two other ancestral images can be found emerging from a second undulating Serpent Bar located in the ruler's headdress. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Stela C is the small full-figured portrait of a seated skeletal deity, located at the top of the monument as a central element of the individual's headdress. While the identity of this small figure is unknown, he cradles a three-part glyph that reads *Chan Ch'ok* 'Four Youths'. This title appears in the inscriptions of both Quiriguá and Copan in titular phrases that refer to the 'Four Sacred Partition Youths', perhaps a metaphor relating to the four most important lineages at Copan. The two-glyph block text located at the lower right of the figural scene is a text caption for a seated captive whose headdress is still visible on the monument, just below this text. The name of the captive appears to include the glyphic collocation *Itz'am B'alam*. Unfortunately, it is not known where this captive came from.

Text:

pA1: TIV.287:110 **CHAN.CH'OK/ch'o:ko**

pB1: T?/? **??**

pC1: T152.752 **ITZ'AM.B'ALAM**

Pusilhá, Stela D

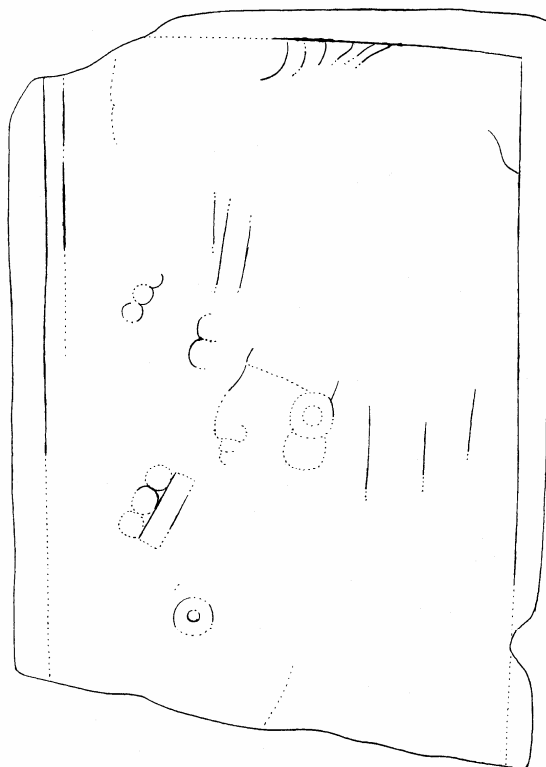


Figure 25. Pusilhá, Stela D, Front (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

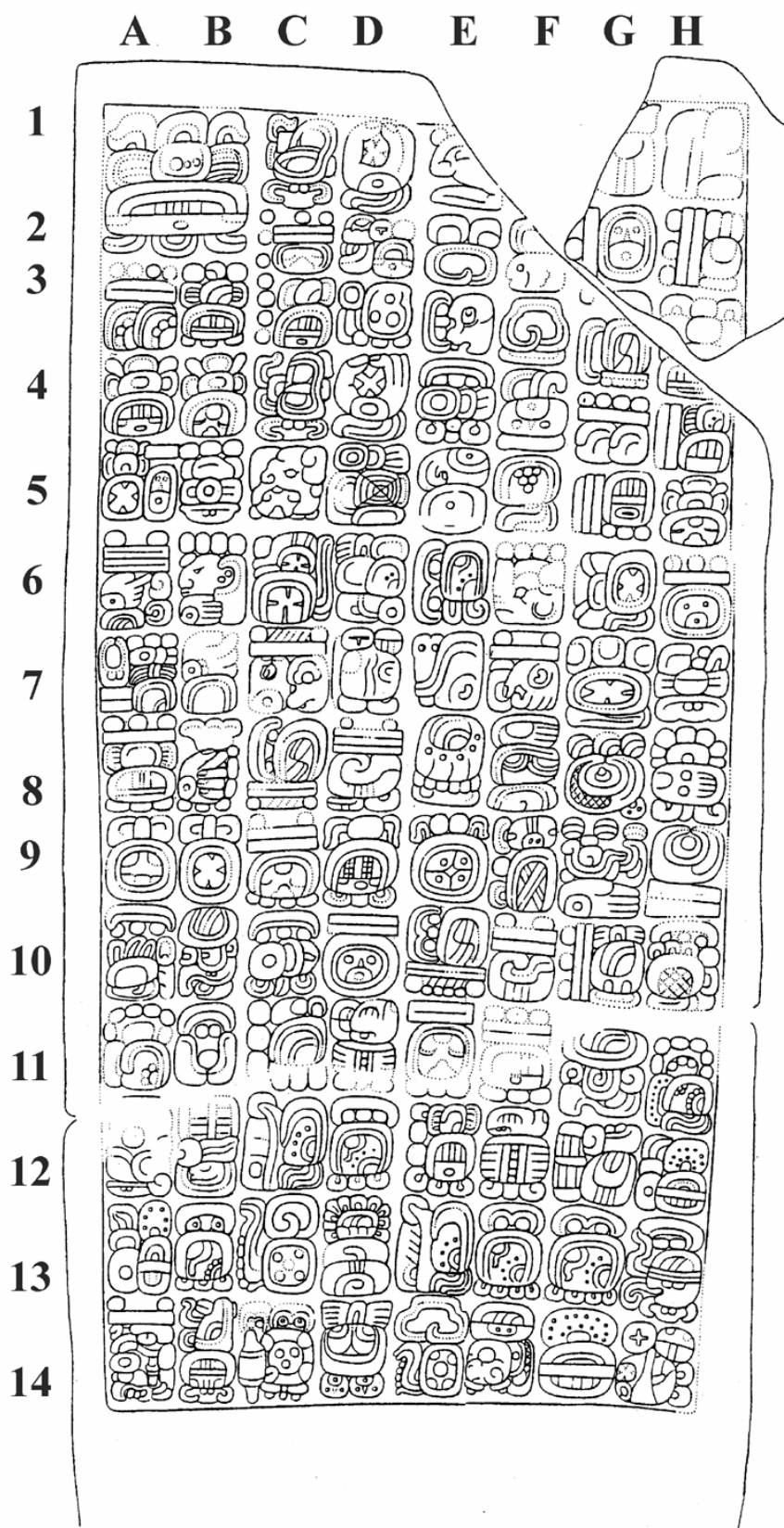


Figure 26. Pusilhá, Stela D, Back (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela D was originally located fourth from the right in the row of 12 monuments in front (north) of Structure 1 in the south side of the Main Plaza. The stela was first reported by J. Eric Thompson on October 3, 1927 as part of the British Museum Expedition to British Honduras and later moved to London in 1929 where it now resides in storage at the British Museum.

Commentary: Stela D contains one of the longest hieroglyphic texts in Belize. The text describes a series of battles against a lord from the Water Scroll site (a site now identified as Altun Há). As part of these battles Stela D describes the breaking in half of stelae. In addition, the name of the contemporary ruler of Pusilhá is similar to that of the contemporary king of Copan, *K'ak' Unaab' K'awiil* suggesting that the rulers of Pusilhá were borrowing the names of Copan rulers.

Chronology:

A1-A7:	*9.8.0.0.0 5 Ajaw 3 Ch'en (22, August 593). The Initial Series date as recorded on the monument appears to be 9.3.0.0.0 5 Ajaw 3 Sak; however, for the rest of the math to work out properly the Initial Series date must be 9.8.0.0.0.
C8-C11:	9.8.0. 0. 0 5 Ajaw 3 Ch'en + 1.12.17 9.8.1.12.8 2 Lamat 1 Sip (22, April 595)
E10-E12:	9.8.1.12.8 2 Lamat 1 Sip +2.13.5.12 9.10.15.0.0 6 Ajaw 13 Mak (7, November 647)
G3-G10:	9.10.15.0.0 6 Ajaw 13 Mak (7, November 647)

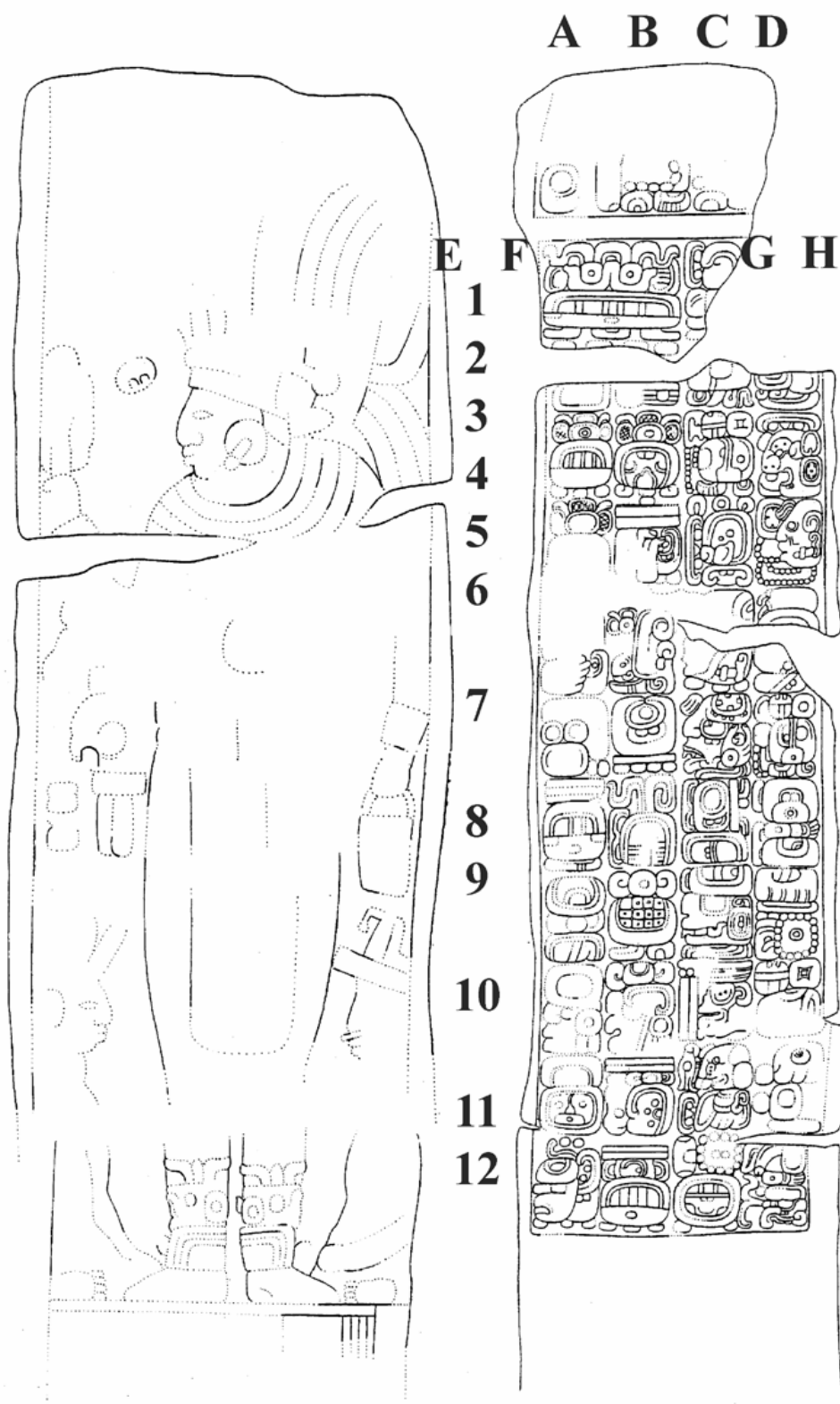
Text:

A1-B2: T124:25.683.25:548:255	tzi:ka.JA.ka:HAAB':DET.
A3: TIX.200	B'OLON.PI
B3: TIII:28:548:142	OX:K'ATUN:TUUN:ma
A4: T173:548	mi:TUUN
B4: T173:521	mi:WINAL
A5: T173:541.V:533	mi:K'IN.JÓ.AJAW
B5: T135:?:60:23	ch'a:?:HUUN:na
A6: TXVII.218:24.126	WUKLAJUN.JUL:li:ya
B6: TIV:1000a:713.181	CHAN.IXIK:K'AL.ja
A7: T683:X.III:58:60:528	K'AL:LAJUN.OX:SAK:hi.ku
B7: T218:575	TZUTZ:yi
A8: TVIII:28:548:255	WAXAK:K'ATUN:TUUN:ma
B8: T4:218?:142	NAJ:TZUTZ?:ma
A9: T904	AK'AB'
B9: T905	K'IN
A10: T1:68:586a.130	u:tz'a:pa.wa

B10:1084
 A11: T32:35.528
 B11: T1:591
 A12: T?:?
 B12: T685:117:507
 A13: T59.33:?
 B13: T1:526:125
 A14: TVII:1135:764
 B14: T1030d:561:23
 C1: T1030d[561]:23
 D1: T671[544]:116
 C2: TIII.XI:200
 D2: T228.168:518?
 C3: TIV.28:548
 D3: T93.672:142
 C4: T1030d[561]:23
 D4: T671[544]:116
 C5: T1008v?
 D5: T58:203b.592:23
 C6: T954:541.116
 D6: T[74:513?.528]:87
 C7: T12:671.?
 D7: T33.168:559:130
 C8: T1.573:12
 D8: TXVII:574:130
 C9: TXII:521:136
 D9: T60:548:126
 C10: T1:59:126
 D10: TV:533
 C11: TIII.?:528:142
 D11: T679.669:630:126
 C12: T767.528:116
 D12: T1:526.136.126
 C13: T116.578:585a
 D13: T266:21:17
 C14: T1:245.1:624:139
 D14: T74:504:178
 E1: T?
 F1: T?
 E2: T122:578
 F2: T?:?
 E3: T1.1040
 F3: 867v:35
 E4: T1:59:126
 F4: T?:?:?
 E5: T219:606
 F5: T528:116
 E6: T1.526:136.126

LAKAM
CH'UL:CH'UL.TUUN
u:CH'EN
?:?
CH'UL:wi:tzi
ti.K'UHUL:?
u:KAB':ya
WUK:CHAPAAT:CHAN/KA'AN
K'AWIIL:CHAN/KA'AN:na
K'AWIIL[CHAN/KA'AN]:na
chi[K'IN]:ni
OX.B'ULUK:PIH
AJ.AJAW:AJAW?
CHAN.K'ATUN:TUUN
ch'a.jó:ma
K'AWIIL[CHAN/KA'AN]:na
chi[K'IN]:ni
WE'
SAK:tz'u.nu:na
OCH:K'IN.ni
[KALOOM]:te
AJ:chi.?(Chi-Altar Place)
K'UHUL.AJAW:TZUK/UNIHW:130
u.TZ'AK:AJ
WUKLAJUN:E':wo
LAJKA:WINIK:ji
HUUN:HAAB':ya
u:ti:ya
JO.AJAW
OX.?:SIHOM:ma
Ik'a:sa:ya
LAKAM.TUUN:ni
u:KAB'.ji.ya
ni.ja:b'i
ju:b'u:yi
u:TOK'.u:PAKAL:?
ma:AK'AB':la
?
?
K'AK':JA?
?:?
u.JOL
CH'UL:ha
u:ti:ya
?:?:?
PUK:TAHN
TUUN:ni
u.KAB'.ji.ya

F6: TIV:756	CHAN:XUK
E7: T87.515a	?.CHUK
F7: T12:115.221	AJ.yo.k'o
E8: T501?:136:1	b'a:ji:u
F8: T77:77:17	ch'a:ch'a:yi
E9: TII:510	KA:LAMAT
F9: TI.109:552	HUUN.CHAK:K'AT
E10: T1.573:12	u.TZAK:AJ
F10: TXII:574	LAJKA:É
E11: TV.52:125	JO.WINIK:ya
F11: TVIII:548:126	WAXAK:HAAB':ya
E12: TII.28:548:126	KA.K'ATUN:TUUN:ya
F12: T669:630:126	k'a:sa:ya
E13: T767.528:116	LAKAM.TUUN:ni
F13: T1:526:136	u:KAB':ji
E14: T578:116.585	JA:ni.b'i
F14: T679:765:178.181	I.WA:la.ja
G1: T?:?	?:?
H1: T?:?:?	?:?:?
G2: TVI.533	WAK.AJAW
H2: TXIII.74:25:?	OXLAJUN.ma:ka:?
G3: T1.573:12	u.TZ'AK:AJ
H3: T124:25.?.25:548	tzi:ka.?.ka:HAAB'
G4: TIX:200	B'OLON:PI
H4: TX.28:548	LAJUN.K'ATUN:TUUN
G5: TXV.548:142	JOLAJUN.TUUN.ma
H5: T173:521	mi:WINAL
G6: T173.541:116	mi.K'IN:ni
H6: TVI.533	WAK:AJAW
G7: T135:544:116	cha:K'IN:ni
H7: T128:60:23	ch'a:JUUN:na
G8: TIII:683:534	OX:K'AL:la
H8: T266:88:126	ju:li:ya
G9: TIII:?.181:713	OX:?.ja:K'AL
H9: T683:X	K'AL:LAJUN
G10: TXIII.74:617?:25	OXLAJUN.ma:?:ka
H10: T1:68:586.130	u:tz'a:pa.wa
G11: T1084	LAKAM
H11: T45:33.528:116	CH'UL:CH'UL.TUUN:ni
G12: T150.117:779	TZ'AM.wi:tzi
H12: T59.33:561?	ti.CH'UL:CHAN
G13: T1:526:136	u:KAB':ji
H13: T1:122.561:23	u:K'AHK'.CHAN:na
G14: T33:561	CH'UL:CHAN
H14: T168:559.130	AJAW:UNIHW.wa

Pusilhá, Stela E**Figure 27. Pusilhá, Stela E (Drawing by J. Montgomery)**

Location: Stela E was originally located fifth from the right in the row of 12 monuments in front (north) of Structure 1 in the south side of the Main Plaza. The stela was first reported by T.W.F. Gann in the spring of 1928 as part of the British Museum Expedition to British Honduras. Joyce moved the stela to London in 1929 where it now resides in storage at the British Museum.

Commentary: The text of Stela E is presented in a slightly unusual manner. The text appears to have been divided into two registers: an upper register and a longer lower register, both of which are badly damaged. Little can be read of this upper text due to breakage and erosion. The lower text begins with the dedicatory date of 9.15.0.0.0 (4 *Ajaw* 13 *Yax*, or 18, August 731) and is followed by a supporting Lunar Series. This text also features a reference to a fire ritual within the accompanying Lunar Series. To commemorate this Period Ending a stone-binding ritual was performed by *K'ahk' ... Chan*, the ruler of Pusilhá. The text then provides a parentage statement for this ruler. His mother's name was *Ixik K'inich Ich'ak* ... 'Lady Great or Resplendent Claw' and she appears to have been a queen of Pusilhá. The father is also named and his name appears to be *K'inich Bak.. Mo' Kak Lajun*.

Chronology:

E1-F11: *9.15.0.0.0 4 *Ajaw* 13 *Yax* (18, August 731)

F12: the 15th *K'atun*

Text:

A1: T??

??

B1: T?:130

?:wa

C1: T??

??

D1: Missing

??

E1-F2: T124:25.510.25:548:255

tzi:ka.EK'.ka:HAAB'/TUUN:ma

E3: TIX:?

B'OLON:(PI)

F3: TXV:?

JOLAJUN:(K'ATUN)

E4: T173:548:142

mi:TUUN:ma

F4: T173:521:126

mi.WINAL:ya

E5: T173:?

mi.(K'IN)

F5: TXI:953.181

B'ULUK:JUL.ja

E6: T?:713.181

?:K'AL.ja

F6: T173:32.1132

mi:K'U.CHAN/KA'AN

E7: T?.187:287:110

?.K'AB'A:CH'OK:ko

F7: T683:X

K'AL:LAJUN

E8: TXV:548:?

JOLAJUN?:TUUN:?

F8: T122:1.248

K'AHK'/BUTZ':u.tzi

E9: T121:676:88

li:TAL:ji

F9: T61:708:130

yu:ko:wa

E10: T617:?

li:?

F10: T?:?

?:?

E11: T59:533

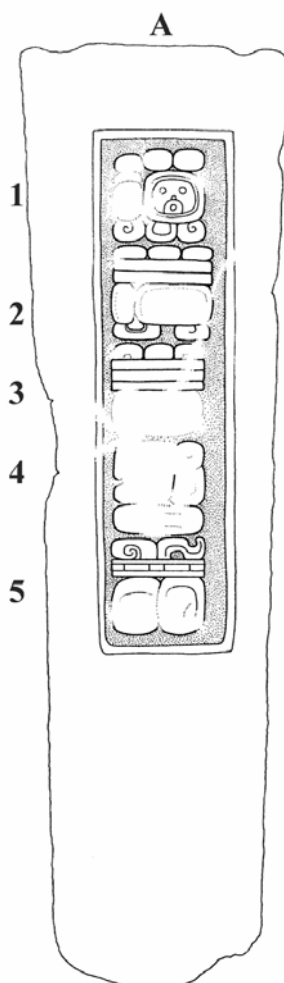
ti:AJAW

F11: TXIII:16.60:528?
 E12: T1017².181
 F12: TXV:28:548:255

G1: T1.528:713?
 H1: Missing
 G2: T?.?
 H2: Missing
 G3: T?:122
 H3: T?.561?:?
 G4: T37.168:559:130
 H4: T1:757
 G5: T1.I:606:23
 H5: T1001
 G6: T1000a
 H6: T931:?:102
 G7: T1010[671]:116
 H7: T36.168:559:130
 G8: T683.VI:8
 H8: T1.580:59:712
 G9: T1010[671]:116
 H9: T501:25:57.582
 G10: T738[2 Dot Diacritic]:X.1104
 H10: T168:?
 G11: T204.757:1.712
 H11: T?.?:?
 G12: T109:632v:561
 H12: T115.552v:59:1030

OXLAJUN:YAX.HUUN:?
tzutzu.ja
JOLAJUN:K'ATUN:TUUN:ma

U.TUUN:K'AL
??
?:?
??
?:K'AK'
?.CHAN/KA'AN:?
K'U.AJAW:TZUK/UNIIW:wa
u:B'AAJ
u.HUUN:TAN:na
CH'UL IXIK
IXIK
ICH'AK:?:ki
K'IN[chi]:ni
CH'UL.AJAW:UNIW:wa
WINIK.WAK:li
u.CHIT:ti:CH'AB'
K'IN[chi]:ni
ba:ka:si.MO'
KA[KA]:LAJUN.LAJUN
AJAW:?
u.B'AAJ:HUUN.u:CH'AB'
?:?:?
CHAK:MUYAL:CHAN
yo.AT:ti:K'AWIIL

Pusilhá, Stela F**Figure 28. Pusilhá Stela F (Drawing by C. Prager)**

Location: Stela F was found lying in the middle of the row of 12 monuments in front of Str. 1 in the main Stela Plaza. The stela was discovered by J. Eric Thompson in the fall of 1927 (Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 26). The stela still resides in situ at Pusilhá.

Commentary: Stela F is one of the latest dated monuments at Pusilhá. The inscription begins with a Calendar Round date of 2 *Ajaw* 13 *Sek* followed by a reference to 16 which must correspond to the Long Count date of 9.16.0.0.0. Following the date is the hand-scattering verb and either the object that was scattered was *k'ahk* 'fire' or together this final glyph records the name of the king of Pusilhá, *K'ahk' Pi*.

Text:

A1: T59.II:533:125

A2: TXIII:?.?:130

A3: T XVI:?

A4: T?.93:110?

A5: T122:200?

ti.KA:AJAW:ya

OXLAJUN:ka?.se?:wa

WAKLAJUN:K'ATUN?

CHOK?.CH'AJ:ko?

K'AHK':PI

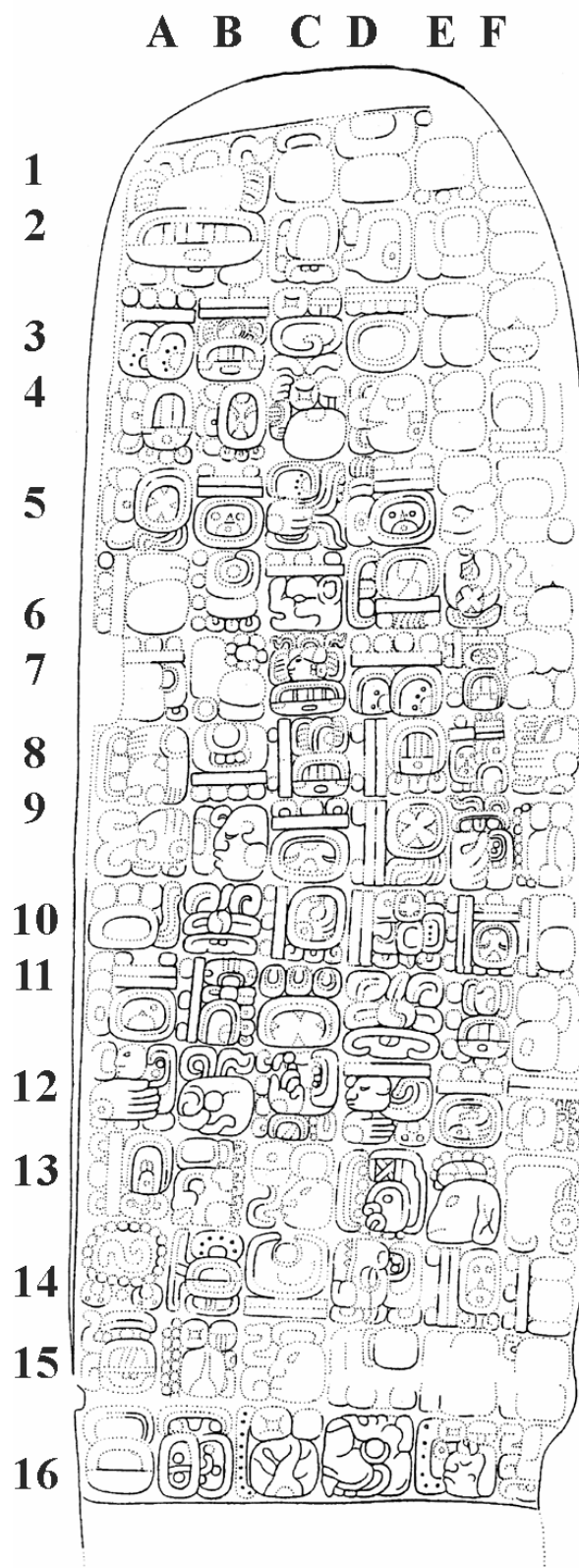
Pusilhá, Stela H

Figure 29. Pusilhá, Stela H, Back (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela H was originally located eighth from the right in the row of 12 monuments in front (north) of Structure 1 in the south side of the Main Plaza. The stela was first reported by T.W.F. Gann in the spring of 1928 as part of the British Museum Expedition to British Honduras. Joyce moved the stela to London in 1929 where it now resides in storage at the British Museum.

Commentary: The text of Stela H is unusual in that two complete Initial Series Introductory dates with supporting lunar series data are provided. The first Initial Series records the Period Ending 9.11.0.0.0 12 *Ajaw* 8 *Keh* and like numerous texts throughout southern Belize, a fire-scattering rite is included as part of the Lunar Series. The main protagonist of Stela H appears to be the Pusilhá king *Muyal Naj Ch'ull K'ahk' Uchan*. Though eroded, the text also describes the capture of a lord from the Water Scroll site. This is then followed by a reconfirmation of the Initial Series date at D5-C6 that leads to a second full Initial Series date. The second Long Count date is 9.7.12.6.7 8 *Manik* 10 *Kayab'* (7, February 586) which recalls the birth date of *Muyal Naj Ch'ul K'ahk' Uchan* who was the son of Lady *K'uk'*. The final passage is badly eroded; however, the text appears to go back in time to tie the accession of this ruler on 9.7.0.0.0 6 *Ajaw* 13 *Sak* (14, October 583) to the current Period Ending of 9.11.0.0.0 12 *Ajaw* 8 *Keh* (11, October 652).

Chronology:

A1-A6:	9.11.0.0.0 12 <i>Ajaw</i> 8 <i>Keh</i> (11, October 652)
A11-B12:	(9.11.0.0.0) 12 <i>Ajaw</i> 8 <i>Keh</i>
D5-C6:	(9.11.3.11.0) 12 <i>Ajaw</i> 8 <i>Sotz</i> (3, May 656)
D6-D10:	9.7.12.6.7 8 <i>Manik</i> 10 <i>Kayab'</i> (7, February 656)
E7-F7:	9.7.12.6.7 8 <i>Manik</i> 10 <i>Kayab'</i> - <u>2.6.7</u> 9.7.10.0.0 6 <i>Ajaw</i> 13 <i>Sak</i> (14, October 583)
E10-F12:	9.11. 0. 0. 0 12 <i>Ajaw</i> 8 <i>Keh</i> (11, October 652) - <u>3. 7. 11.13</u> 9. 7.12. 6. 7 8 <i>Manik</i> 10 <i>Kayab'</i> (7, February 586)
E14-F14:	(9.11.0.0.0) 12 <i>Ajaw</i> 8 <i>Keh</i> (11, October 652)

Text:

A1-B2: T124:25.?.25:548:255	tzi:ka.?.ka:HAAB'/TUUN/ma
A3: TIX:200	B'OLON:PI
B3: XI:28:548	B'ULUK:K'ATUN:TUUN
A4: T173.548:126	mi.TUUN:ya
B4: T173.521:136:126	mi.WINAL:ji:ya
A5: T173.544:116	mi.K'IN:ni
B5: TXII:533	LAJKA:AJAW
A6: TVIII.109:60:538v:142	WAXAK.CHAK:HUUN:SIHOM:ma

B6: TIV.218.181:24:126
 A7: TIV:?:713.181
 B7: T?:582:?:?
 A8: T1.187[758]
 B8: T683:IX
 A9: T122.711:130
 B9: T109?:1006
 A10: T135:544.116
 B10: T77.128:60:23
 A11: T59.XII:533
 B11: TVIII.109:60:528v
 A12: T1.?:713.181:142?
 B12: T1035v
 A13: TVI.580:21
 B13: T89:757
 A14: T632:178
 B14: T4.33:?
 A15: T122.1:561
 B15: T33.168:559.130
 A16: T?:679?
 B16: T1:?.21
 C1: T1:?.?
 D1: T?:?
 C2: T1.?.23?
 D2: T515[197]
 C3: T168:578?:130
 D3: T1:?
 C4: T110.168:?
 D4: T60:1042
 C5: T528:713:116.117
 D5: T59.XII:533
 C6: TVIII:756
 D6: T1:573:12
 C7: T124:25.?.25:548
 D7: TIX:200
 C8: TVII.28:548
 D8: XII.544:126
 C9: TVI:521
 D9: TVII.544:116
 C10: TVIII.671:125
 D10: TX.743[281].57:126
 C11: T135:544
 D11: T77.128:60:23
 C12: TII.218.181:24:126
 D12: TV:1000a:181.713:178
 C13: T?:?.561v
 D13: T1.187[758]
 C14: T683:X

KAN.JUL.ja:li:ya
 KAN:?:K'AL.ja
 ?.mo':?:?
 u.K'AB'A[CHOK]
 K'AL:B'OLON
 K'AK'.PUK:wa
 CHAK?:NAL
 cha:K'IN:ni
 ch'a.ch'a:HUUN:na
 ti.LAJKA:AJAW
 WAXAK.CHAK:HUUN:SIHOM
 u.?:K'AL.ja:ma?
 K'AHK'
 WAK.CHIT:b'u
 tu:B'AAJ
 MUYAL:la
 NAJ.CH'UL:?
 K'AHK'.u:CHAN
 K'U.AJAW:UNIIW.wa
 ?:Í
 u:?.b'u
 u:?.?
 ?:?
 u.?.na?
 CHU[ke]
 AJAW:ja?:wa
 u:?
 ko.AJAW:?
 ja:HA'I
 TUUN:K'AL:ni.wi
 ti.LAJKA:AJAW
 WAXAK:SOTZ'
 u:TZ'AK:AJ
 tzi:ka.?.ka:HAAB'
 B'OLON:PI
 WUK.K'ATUN:TUUN
 LAJKA.TUUN:ya
 WAK:WINAL
 WUK.K'IN:ni
 WAXAK.MANIK':(DET)
 LAJUN.A[K'AN].si:ya
 cha:K'IN
 ch'a.ch'a:HUUN:na
 KA.JUL.ja:li:ya
 JO:IXIK:ja.K'AL:la
 ?:?.CHAN/KA'AN
 u.K'AB'A[CHOK]
 K'AL:LAJUN

D14: T740.181:126
 C15: T122.1:?
 D15: T??
 C16: T33.168:559
 D16: T1000a.744
 E1: T?:?
 F1: T?:?
 E2: T59.33:?
 F2: T?:?
 E3: T?:?.?
 F3: T?:?
 E4: T?:?
 F4: T?:?.?:?
 E5: T?:?
 F5: T?:?.?
 E6: T671[544]:116
 F6: T122.?
 E7: TVII.VI:521:II.548
 F7: T?:?.?
 E8: TVI:533.XIII:58:?
 F8: T?:670?:130?
 E9: T122.1:713b.181
 F9: T33.168:559
 E10: TXIII.XI:521:142?
 F10: TVII.?:548:142?
 E11: TIII.28:548:142?
 F11: T?:?.181
 E12: TVIII:671
 F12: TX:743[281].57:126
 E13: T266:?:116
 F13: T?.59:126
 E14: TXII.533:125
 F14: TVIII.109.60:528
 E15: T?:?
 F15: T?:?
 E16: T33.168:559
 F16: T1030d[561]:23

Sl,ja:ya
K'AHK'.u:(CHAN)
 ??
CH'UL.AJAW:UNIIW
IXIK.K'UK'
 ?::?
 ?::?
ti.CH'UL:?
 ?::?
 ?::?.?
 ?::?
 ?::?
 ?::?.?:?
 ?::?
 ?::?.?
chi[K'IN]:ni
K'AK'.?
WUK.WAK:WINAL:KA.TUUN
 ?::?.?
WAK:AJAW.OXLAJUN:SAK:?
(K'AWIIL):CH'AM:wa?
K'AHK'.u:HUL.ha
CH'UL.AJAW:UNIIW
OXLAJUN.B'ULUK:WINAL:ma?
WUK.?:TUUN:ma
OX.K'ATUN:TUUN:ma
 ?::?.ja
WAXAK:MANIK'
LAJUN:A[K'AN].si:ya
hu:?:ni
(u).ti:ya
LAJKA.AJAW:(DET)
WAXAK.CHAK.HUUN:SIHOM
 ?::?
 ?::?
CH'UL.AJAW:UNIIW
K'AWIIL[CHAN]:na

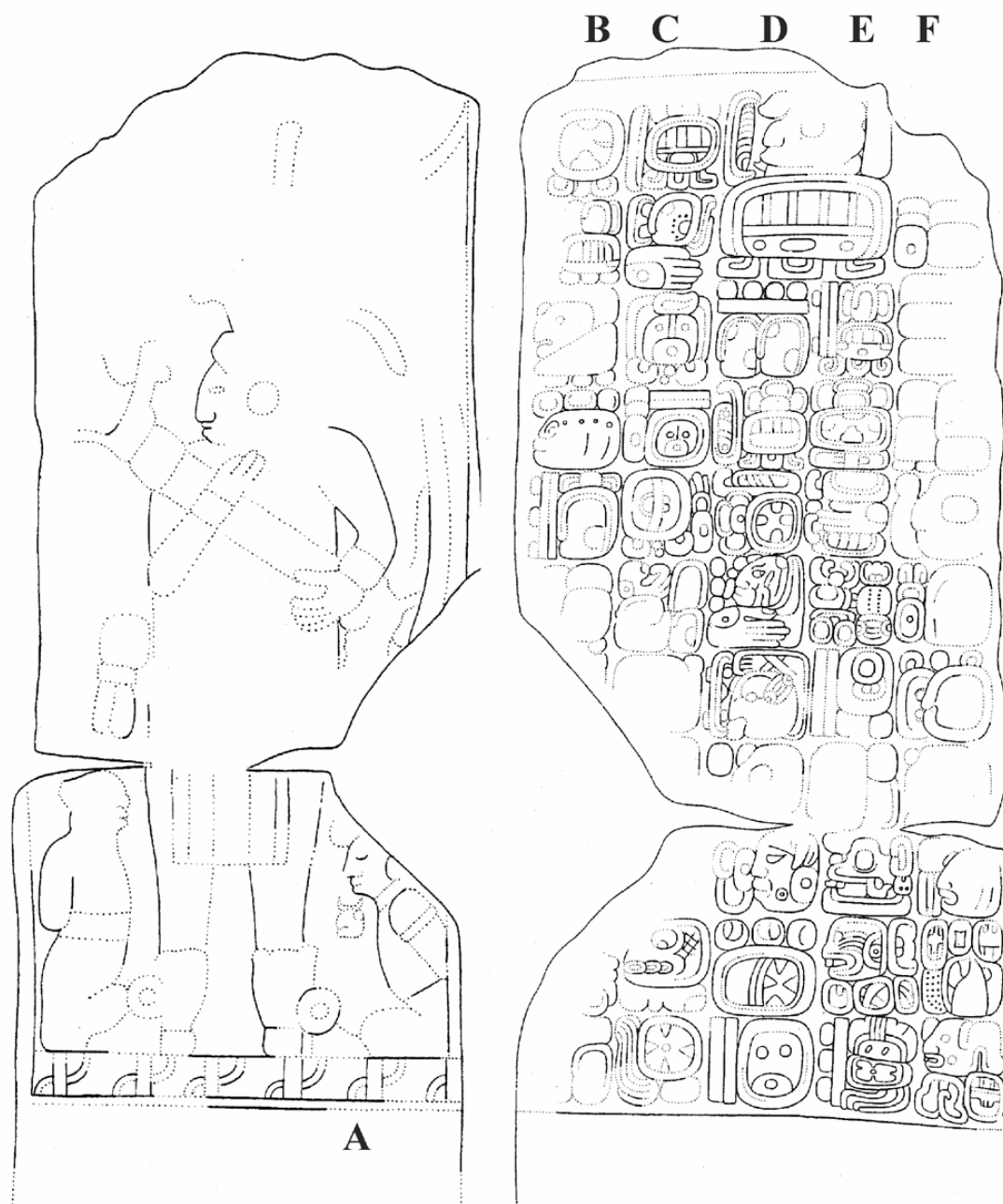
Pusilhá, Stela K

Figure 30. Pusilhá, Stela K (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela K was originally located ninth from the right in the row of 12 monuments in front (north) of Structure 1 in the south side of the Main Plaza. The stela was first reported by J. Eric Thompson on October 3rd, 1927 as part of the British Museum Expedition to British Honduras and was moved to London in 1930 where it now resides in storage in the British Museum.

Commentary: The text of Stela K is written in a highly unusual reading order. The first two columns of text appear to be read first even though a clear Initial Series Introductory Glyph and accompanying date can be seen recorded in the third and fourth column of this text. The text actually begins with a Distance Number and Calendar Round Date that presumably leads back in time from the true Initial Series Date of the monument. The first date recorded on the monument is a retrospective commemoration to an important event that occurred in the year AD 159 involving a person nicknamed *Foliated Ajaw* who may be a predynastic ruler of Copan. This event and the location where it occurs, the *Chi-Altar Place*, must have been an important political event for the southeastern Maya Lowlands since it was also recorded on at least three other monuments at the site of Copan (Copan, Stela 4, Stela 17, and Stela I). The Initial Series Date of Stela K commemorates the 9.12.0.0.0 Period Ending (28, June 672). While the last column of text is severely eroded the protagonist was a Divine Lord of Pusilhá.

Chronology:

C4-B5: (*8.6.0.0.0) 10 *Ajaw* 13 *Ch'en* (19, December 159)

D1-E11: 9.12.0.0.0 10 *Ajaw* 8 *Yaxk'in* (28, June 672)

Text:

pA1: T796?

CHIJ?

B1: T?:521:126

?:WINAL:ya

C1: TV.?:548:126

JÓ.?:HAAB':ya

B2: T?:28:548:142

?.K'ATUN:TUUN:ma

C2: T1.528.116:713

u.TUUN.ni:K'AL

B3: T?:142

?:ma

C3: T?[533]:126

?[AJAW]:ya (Foliated Ajaw Name)

B4: TIII?:?

OX:?

C4: T59.X:533

ti.LAJUN:AJAW

B5: TXIII.?:528

OXLAJUN.?:SIHOM

C5: T513.59:126

u.ti:ya

B6: T??:?

?:?:?

C6: T671:316[?]

chi:?[Chi-Altar Place?]

B7: T??

??

C7: T??:?

?:?:?

B8: Missing

??

C8: Missing

??

B9: Missing

??

C9: Missing

??

B10: Missing

??

C10: 764?

CHAN/KA'AN

B11: T??

??

C11: T116.544:?

ni.K'IN:?

D1-E2: T124:25.1010.25:548:255

tzi:ka.K'IN.ka:HAAB'/TUUN.ma

D3: TIX:200

B'OLON:PI

E3: TXII:28:548:126

LAJKA:K'ATUN:TUUN:ya

D4: T417.173:548:126

?.mi:TUUN:ya

E4: T173:521:102	mi.WINIK:ki
D5: T417:173.544	?:mi.K'IN
E5: T1.77?:953:24	HUUN.ch'a?:JUL:li
D6: TIII.1000a:713.181	OX.IXIK:K'AL.ja
E6: T61:57?:200.61:216?:110	yu:si?:PI.yu:su?:ko
D7: T1.187:758[110]	u.K'AB'A:CH'OK[ko]
E7: TX.683:?	LAJUN.K'AL:?
D8: T?:?	?:?
E8: T?:?	?:?
D9: T109?.1008	CHAK.XIB'
E9: T1011:25	CHAHK
D10: T135:544v	cha:K'IN
E10: T944.23:60	ti.na:HUUN
D11: TX:533	LAJUN:AJAW
E11: TVIII.16:544:116	WAXAK.YAX:K'IN:ni
F1: Missing	??
F2: T59.?:?	ti.?:?
F3: T?:?:?	?:?:?
F4: T?:?:?:?:?	?:?:?:?:?
F5: T120.?	NE.?
F6: T58.?	SAK.?
F7: TI:?:?	HUUN:?:?
F8: T?	?
F9: T12?1000c?	AJ?AJAW?
F10: T37v.168:559	CH'UL.AJAW:UNIW
F11: T1017?.530:703?:561	TZUK?.ku:XIB'?:CHAN

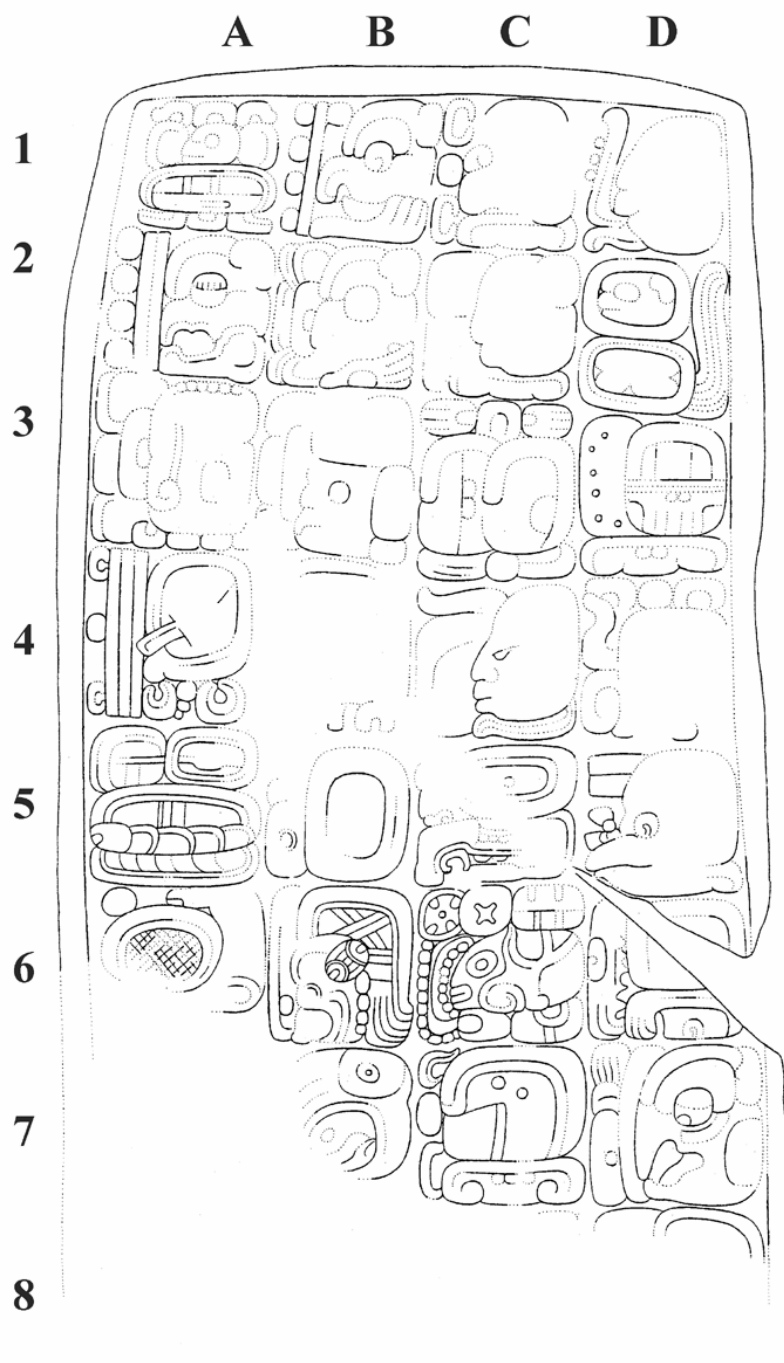
Pusilhá, Stela M

Figure 31. Pusilhá, Stela M, Back (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela M was originally located eleventh from the right in the row of 12 monuments in front (north) of Structure 1 in the south side of the Main Plaza. J. Eric Thompson first reported the stela on October 3rd 1927 as part of the British Museum Expedition to British Honduras. Gann moved the stela to London in the spring of 1928 where it now resides in storage at the British Museum.

Commentary: The text of Stela M begins with an Initial Series Date of 9.14.0.0.0 that also includes a reference to a fire-scattering ritual written within the supporting Lunar Series. Though the verb is now missing, the text seems to refer to a Pusilhá ruler whose name and titles include the West Kaloomté title along with a ‘Divine Sky’ title. The text also makes reference to the ruler’s family (*yon*) followed by the name of the contemporary Pusilhá ruler *K’ahk’ U-...K’awiil*, a name that looks similar to that of 12th king of Copan. The name of the ruler is then followed by an eroded parentage statement that includes the name of his mother *K’u K’uk’*.

Chronology:

A1-B7: 9.14.0.0.0 (6 *Ajaw* 13 *Muwaan*) (1, December 711)

Text:

A1: T124:25.?.25:548:255	tzi:ka.?.ka:HAAB’/TUUN:ma
B1: TIX.1033	B’OLON.PI
A2: TXIV.746	KANLAJUN.K’ATUN
B2: T173.1034	mi.TUUN
A3: T173.741:126	mi.WINAL:ya
B3: T173.544:116	mi.K’IN:ni
A4: TXVI.653:126	WAKLAJUN.JUL:ya
B4: T?:713.181	?:K’AL.ja
A5: T168?:565:25	AJAW?:ta:ka
B5: T?..?	??
A6: TI:586:711?	HUUN:pa:ke?
B6: T1.187:758[110]	u.K’AB’A:CH’OK[ko]
A7: Missing	??
B7: T219?	PUK?
A8: Missing	??
B8: Missing	??
C1: I?:23	HUUN.(TAN?):na
D1: T117.?	wi.?
C2: T?.751?:23	?.B’ALAM?.na
D2: T954:541:116	OCH:K’IN:ni
C3: T[74:513.528.74?]	KALOOMTE
D3: T33.526:23	K’U.CHAN:na
C4: T115.753:116	yo.ON:ni
D4: T1:122.?	U.K’AHK’.
C5: T1030?	K’AWIIL
D5: T?:23	?:na
C6: T36.168:559v:130	CH’UL.AJAW:UNIW:wa
D6: T204.757:88	u.b’a.ji
C7: TI.606:23	JUN.TAN:na
D7: T59.40.744	ti.CH’UL.K’UK’
C8: Missing	??
D8: T?..?	??

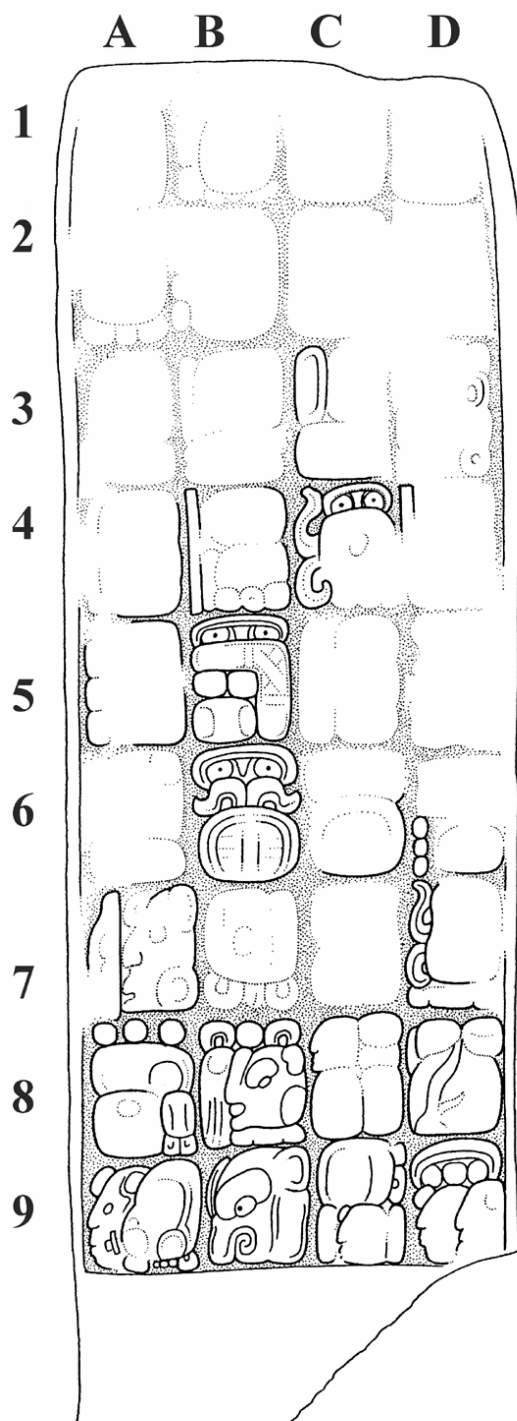
Pusilhá, Stela N

Figure 32. Pusilhá, Stela N (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela N was the 12th stela in a row of monuments originally located in front of Str. 1 in the main Stela Plaza. The stela was discovered by J. Eric Thompson in the Fall of 1927 (Morley 1938: Vol. IV: 63). Stela N still lies in situ at Pusilhá.

Commentary: Though the inscription is poorly preserved and the Long Count date is no longer legible, the text on Stela N does reveal that a fire-scattering ritual occurred at B6. The person presiding over the fire scattering was a royal woman named *Ixik K'uhul Emach* 'Lady Divine Racoon'. The rest of the text is too eroded to read, though a possible Pusilhá emblem glyph can be seen at D8.

Text:

A1: T?	?
B1: T?	?
A2: T?	?
B2: T?	?
A3: T?	?
A4: T?	?
B4: TV.?:?:?	HO'.?:??
A5: T?	?
B5: T1:187:287:110	u.K'AB'A:CH'OK:ko
A6: T?:?	?
B6: T1:122:563	u:K'AHK'/BUTZ':tzi
A7: T?.1145?	u.UT?
B7: T740?:?:126	SIH?.ji.ya
A8: TIII:?:?:?	OX:?:?:?
B8: T1:501.756:23	JUN.b'a.XUK:na
A9: T1000.1016:178	IX.CH'UL:la
B9: T 800?	EMACH
C1: T?	?
D1: T?	?
C2: T?	?
D2: T?	?
C3: T?	?
D3: T?	?
C4: T122:1:?	K'AHK':u:?
D4: T?	?
C5: T?	?
D5: T?	?
C6: T?	?
D6: T?:III.?	?:OX.?
C7: T?	?
D7: T1030d?.561:23	K'AWIIL?.CHAN:na
C8: T?:?:?:?	?
D8: T33. 168:559	CH'UL.AJAW.UNIW
C9: T?.130:?:?:?	?.wa:?:?:?
D9: T1:?:?	U:?:?

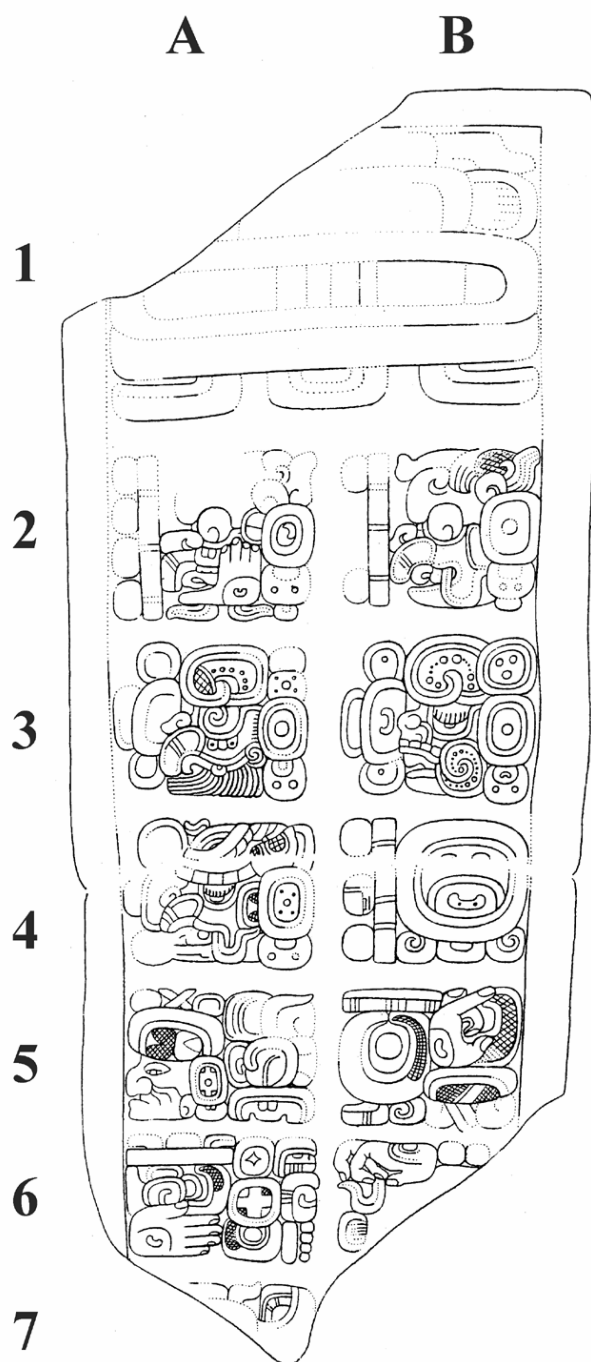
Pusilha, Stela O

Figure 33. Pusilhá, Stela O, Back (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela O was originally found on the north slope of Structure 1 near the center point of the structure along the south side of the Main Plaza. The stela was first reported by J. Eric Thompson on October 3rd, 1927 as part of the British Museum Expedition to British Honduras. The monument was moved to London in the spring of 1928 where it now resides in storage at the British Museum.

Commentary: Stela O is the second earliest dated Initial Series monument in all of southern Belize. The Long Count date recorded on Stela O is 9.7.0.0.0 7 *Ajaw* 3 *Kank'in* (5, December 573). Unfortunately, due to the breakage of the monument, nothing can really be said of text except that it, like so many other monuments in southern Belize, contains a reference to a fire-scattering rite contained within the lunar series of the Initial Series date.

Text:

A1-B1: T124:25.?.25:548:255?	tzi:ka.?.ka:HAAB'/TUUN:ma
A2: TIX.1033	B'OLON.PI
B2: TVII.1110	WUK.K'ATUN
A3: T173.1034	mi. TUUN
B3: T173.741	mi.WINAL
A4: T173.1112	mi.K'IN
B4: TVII.533	WUK.AJAW
A5: T135:1117.128:60:23	cha:K'IN.ch'a:HUUN:na
B5: TV:683:130.953.181:24.126	JO:K'AL:wa.JUL.ja:li.ya
A6: TVI:680?.181:713.168:281:17.683.IX	WAK:?.ja:K'AL.AJAW:K'AN:yi.K'AL.B'OLON
B6: T219:122:?.?	PUK:K'AHK':?.?
A7: T?.1030d?	?.K'AWIIL?
B7: Missing	??

Pusilhá, Stela P

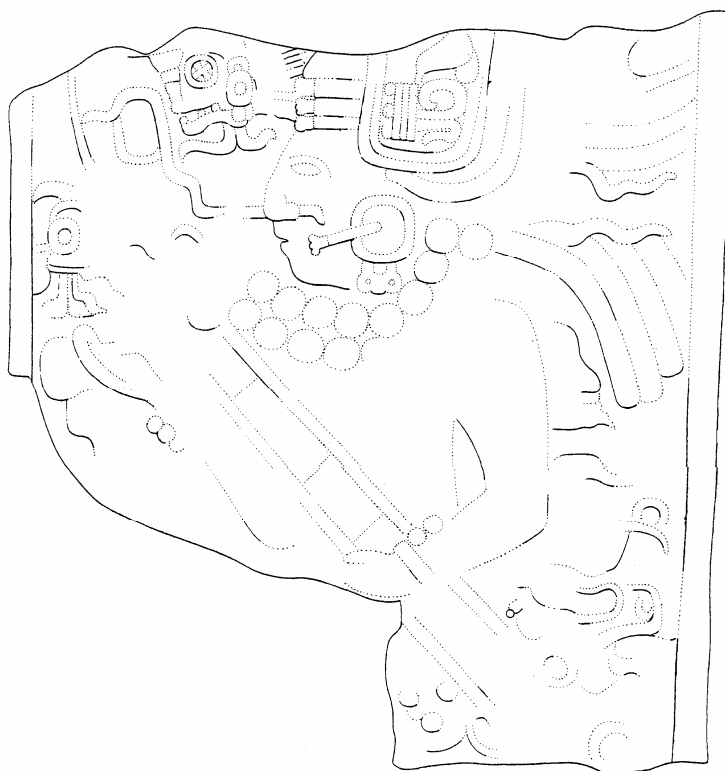


Figure 34. Pusilhá, Stela P, Front (Drawing by John Montgomery)

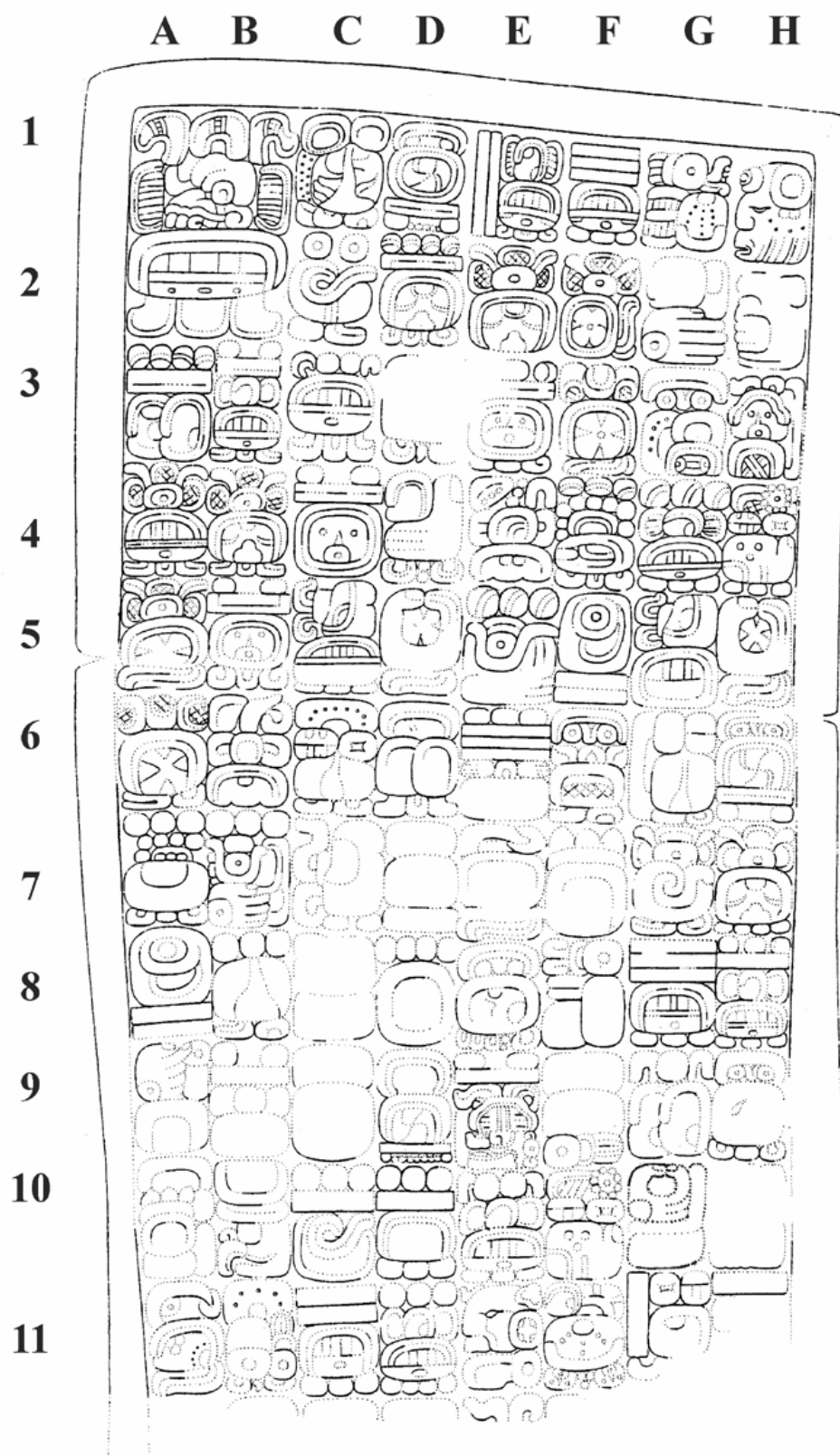


Figure 35. Pusilhá, Stela P, Back (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: T.W.F. Gann first reported Stela P in April of 1928 as part of the British Museum Expedition to British Honduras. The stela was originally found broken in 7 large pieces and it is not clear where the monument originally stood. The upper third of Stela P (formerly known as Stela Y) was found 6 meters south of the northwest corner of Structure IV on the east side of the Main Plaza. The middle third of Stela P was found about 5 meters north of Structure 1, just north of the row of 12 monuments, on the south side of the Main Plaza. Gann moved the stela to London in 1928 where it now resides in storage at the British Museum.

Commentary: The text of Stela P, tied with Stela H as the second longest inscription at the site, is unusual in that it features two complete Initial Series Dates. The first Initial Series Date is a commemoration of the 9.7.0.0.0 Period Ending. As part of the Period-Ending rituals a *lakam-tuun* ‘grand monument’ was ‘planted’ by the king of Pusilhá. The second passage begins with a Distance Number that moves the chronology back in time to the Long Count date of 9.6.17.8.18 (17, June 571) for the accession of *K’awiil Chan K’inich* the Divine Pusilhá Lord. Unfortunately, the next passage on Stela P is highly eroded and little historical information can be extracted from the written text. However, another Distance Number pushes the chronology either forward or backwards 3.10.8.8 depending on one’s interpretation of the missing lower portion of text on Stela P. If the Distance Number is subtracted then the date for the now missing event would be 9.3.7.0.10 10 *Ok’* 13 *Kank’in* (2, January 502). If the Distance Number is added then the Long Count date would be 9.10.7.17.6 7 *Kimi* 14 *Kank’in* (29, November 640). Because of the unusual chronological structure of the Pusilhá texts and generally of the chronological structure of most southern Belize texts, it is just not entirely clear which date was referred to in this passage. At Pusilhá there are examples of texts that feature Distance Numbers that do not appear to be linked to Calendar Round dates. What follows here is the second of two full Initial Series dates recorded on this stela. This second Initial Series date records the Long Count date of 9.10.15.0.0 6 *Ajaw* 13 *Mak* (7, November 747). On that day another *lakam-tuun* was planted; however, this time the planting was ‘overseen’ or ‘supervised by’ an individual whose name appears to be *Sak..Wuk Chapaat* who was a 2 *K’atun* Scatterer Lord, a First Tree, and a Ballplayer. Unfortunately, the lower portion of text is missing; however, it would appear that this event probably occurred at a location that is named at the top of the text at G1 and H1. The location is named *Tz’am Witz* ‘Throne Mountain’ and it likely was the ancient name of the Pusilhá Stela Plaza. This location is also recorded at Copan on a Sculpted Bench from Str. 10L-11. The text refers to the ruler as ‘the first youth, the child of...’ and he was the child of the 3 *K’atun* Scatterer Lord, *K’awiil Chan K’inich*, who was the ‘Divine Lord of Pusilhá’. The final passage recorded on Stela P includes another Distance Number of 1.8.15.0.0 that seems to connect back to the 8.2.0.0.0 Period Ending and a reference to the *Chi*-Altar Place. Unfortunately, what occurred on this day and who the protagonists were are now missing.

Chronology:

A3-B8: 9.7.0.0.0 7 *Ajaw* 3 *Kank’in* (5, December 573)

C2-C4: 9.7. 0. 0. 0

DN - 2. 9. 2

9.6.17.8.18 (2 *Etzab’* 11 *Sek*) (17, June 571)

D9-D11: *9.6.17.8.18
 DN - 3.10.8. 8
 *9.3. 7.0.10 (10 *Ok'* 13 *Kank'in*) (2, January 502)

or

*9.6.17.8.18
 DN + 3.10.8. 8
 *9.10.7.17.6 (7 *Kimi* 14 *Kank'in*) (29, November 640)

E1-E6: 9.10.15.0.0 6 *Ajaw* 13 *Mak* (7, November 647)

H6-G9: 9.10.15.0.0
 DN - 1. 8.15.0.0
 8. 2. 0. 0.0 5 *Ajaw* (8 *Sak*) (11, February 81)

Text:

A1-B2: T124:25.1045.25:548:255	tzi:ka.KANK'IN.ka:HAAB'/TUUN:ma
A3: TIX:200	B'OLON:PI
B3: TVII:28:548:255	WUK:K'ATUN:TUUN:ma
A4: T173:548:255	mi:TUUN:ma
B4: T173:521:255	mi.WINAL:ma
A5: T173:541:116	mi:K'IN:ni
B5: TVII:533	WUK:AJAW
A6: T135:544:?	cha:K'IN:?
B6: T128:60:23	ch'a:HUUN:na
A7: TIII:266:24:126	OX:JUL:li:ya
B7: TIII:680?:191:713	OX:?:ja:K'AL
A8: T683:X	K'AL:LAJUN
B8: TIII:559?:?	OX:KANK'IN?:?
A9: T218:?	TZUTZ.?
B9: TVII:28:548	WUK:K'ATUN:TUUN
A10: T1:68:586.130	u:tz'a:pa.wa
B10: T1084	LAKAM
A11: T767:528:116	LAKAM:TUUN:ni
B11: T679:513.59:126	I:u.ti:ya
A12: Missing	??
B12: Missing	??
C1: T33.168:559:130	CH'UL.AJAW:UNIHW:wa
D1: T1:573:12	u:TZ'AK:AJ
C2: TII:574:130	KA:E':wa
D2: TIX:521:246	B'OLON:WINAL:ji-ya
C3: TII:548:255	KA:TUUN:ma
D3: T?:126	?:ya
C4: TVII:533	WUK:AJAW
D4: T?:670:126	u?:CH'AM:ya
C5: T1030d:561:23	K'AWIIL:CHAN:na

D5: T671[544]:116	chi[K'IN]:ni
C6: T33:168:559:130	CH'UL:AJAW:UNIW:wa
D6: T?:?:126	?:?:ya
C7: T1030d	K'AWIIL
D7: T?:?:?	?:?:?
C8: T?:?	?:?
D8: TIV:?	CHAN:?
C9: T?:?	?:?
D9: T1:573:12	u:TZ'AK:AJ
C10: TVIII:574	WAXAK:É
D10: TIX:521:125	WAXAK:WINAL:ya
C11: TX:548:125	LAJUN:TUUN:ya
D11: TIII:28:548:142	OX:K'ATUN:TUUN:ma
C12: Missing	??
D12: Missing	??
E1: TX:28:548:142	LAJUN:K'ATUN:TUUN:ma
F1: TXVL548:142	JOLAJUN:TUUN:ma
E2: T173:521	mi:WINAL
F2: T173:541:116	mi:K'IN:ni
E3: TVI:533	WAK:AJAW
F3: T135:544:116	cha:K'IN:ni
E4: T128:60:23	ch'a:HUUN:na
F4: TIII266:88:126	OX:ju:li:ya
E5: TIII:680?.183:713	OX:?.ja.K'AL
F5: T683:X	K'AL:LAJUN
E6: TXIII:74:?	OXLAJUN:ma:(ka?)
F6: T1:68:586:130	u:tz'a:pa:wa
E7: T767:528:116	LAKAM:TUUN:ni
F7: T?:?:?	?:?:?
E8: T1:526:136:126	u:KAB':ji:ya
F8: T58:?:?	SAK:?:?
E9: TVII:1134:?	WUK:CHAPAAT:?
F9: T?:?:59	?:?:ti
E10: TII:28:548:142	KA:K'ATUN:TUUN:ma
F10: T93:168:672	ch'a:AJAW:JOM
E11: T757:87	B'A:TE'
F11: T177:507:178	pi:tzi:la
E12: T122:?	K'AK':?
F12: Missing	??
G1: T59:150.117:507	ti.TZAM.wi:tzi
H1: TNN?	NAAB'?
G2: T?:181:713	?:ja:K'AL
H2: T?	?
G3: T1:35.16?:?[110]	u:CH'UL.YAX?:(CHOK?)[ko]
H3: T535:600v.48	MEHEN:wi.NAAH
G4: TIII:28:548:125	OX:K'ATUN:TUUN:ya
H4: T93:168:672:142	ch'a:AJAW:jo:ma
G5: T1030d:561	K'AWIIL:CHAN

H5: T671[544]:116
 G6: T33.168:559:130
 H6: T1:573:12
 G7: T173:574:130
 H7: T173:521:246
 G8: TXV:548:142
 H8: TVIII:28:548:142
 G9: TI:200
 H9: T1:?:?:126
 G10: T671.316:?
 H10: T?:?
 G11: TV.168:526:130
 H11: TV:?

chi[K'IN]:ni
 CH'UL.AJAW:UNIW:wa
 u:TZ'AK:AJ
 mi:E':wa
 mi:WINAL:ji-ya
 JOLAJUN:TUUN:ma
 WAXAK:K'ATUN:TUUN:ma
 HUUN:PI
 u:?:?:ya
 chi. (Chi-Altar Place):?
 ?:?
 JO.AJAW:KAB':wa
 JO: (AJAW)

Pusilhá, Stela Q

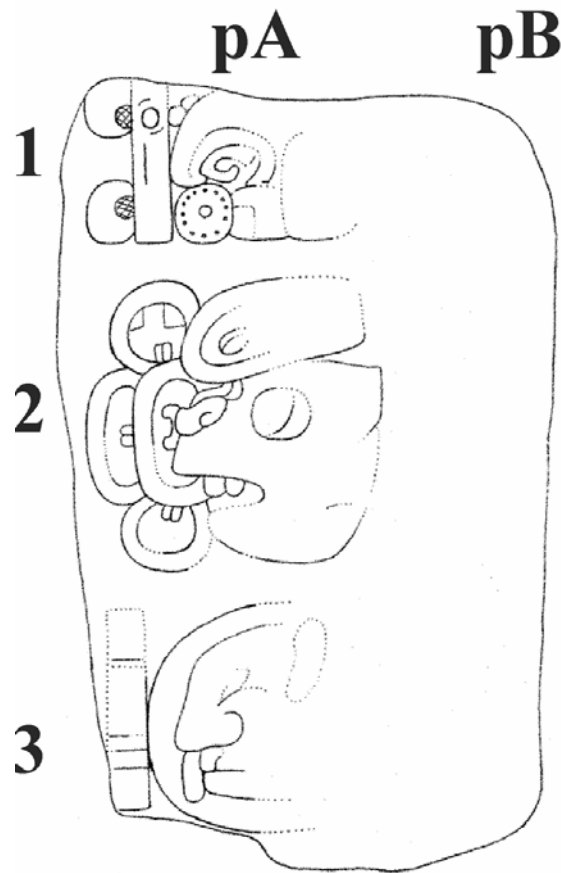


Figure 36. Pusilhá, Stela Q (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela Q was originally located directly in front (north) of Stela H on the north side of Structure 1 along the south side of the Main Plaza. T.W.F. Gann first reported the stela in December of 1927 as part of the British Museum Expedition to British Honduras. Gann moved the stela to London in 1928 where it now resides in storage at the British Museum.

Commentary: The partially eroded three glyph block text recorded on Stela Q records the Long Count date of 9.8.0.0.0 5 Ajaw 3 Ch'en.

Text:

pA1: TVIII:746?

WAXAK:K'ATUUN?

pA2: T173.741

mi.WINAL

pA3: TV.1000v

JO.AJAW

Pusilhá, Stela R

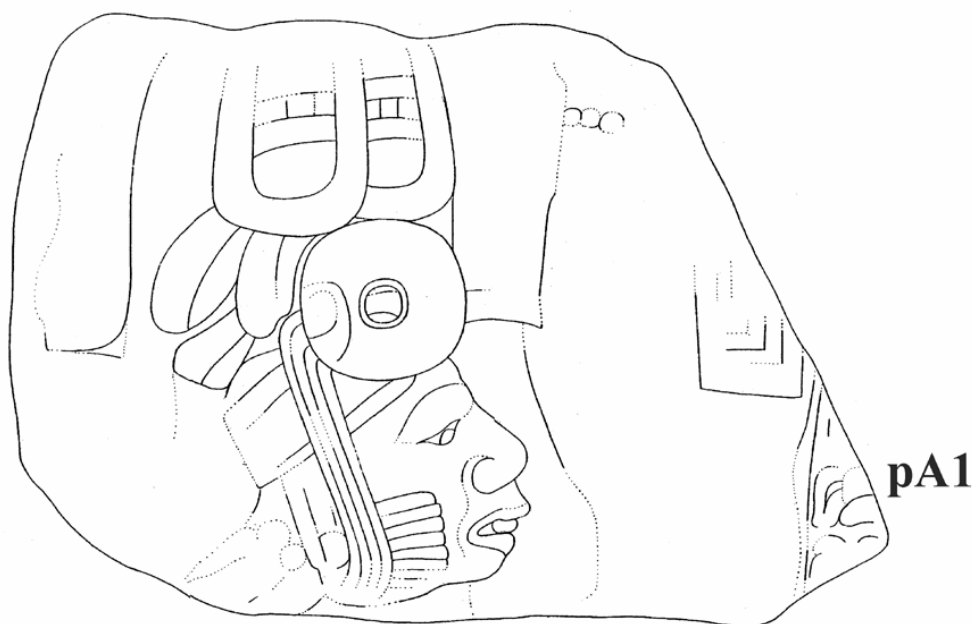


Figure 37. Pusilhá, Stela R (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

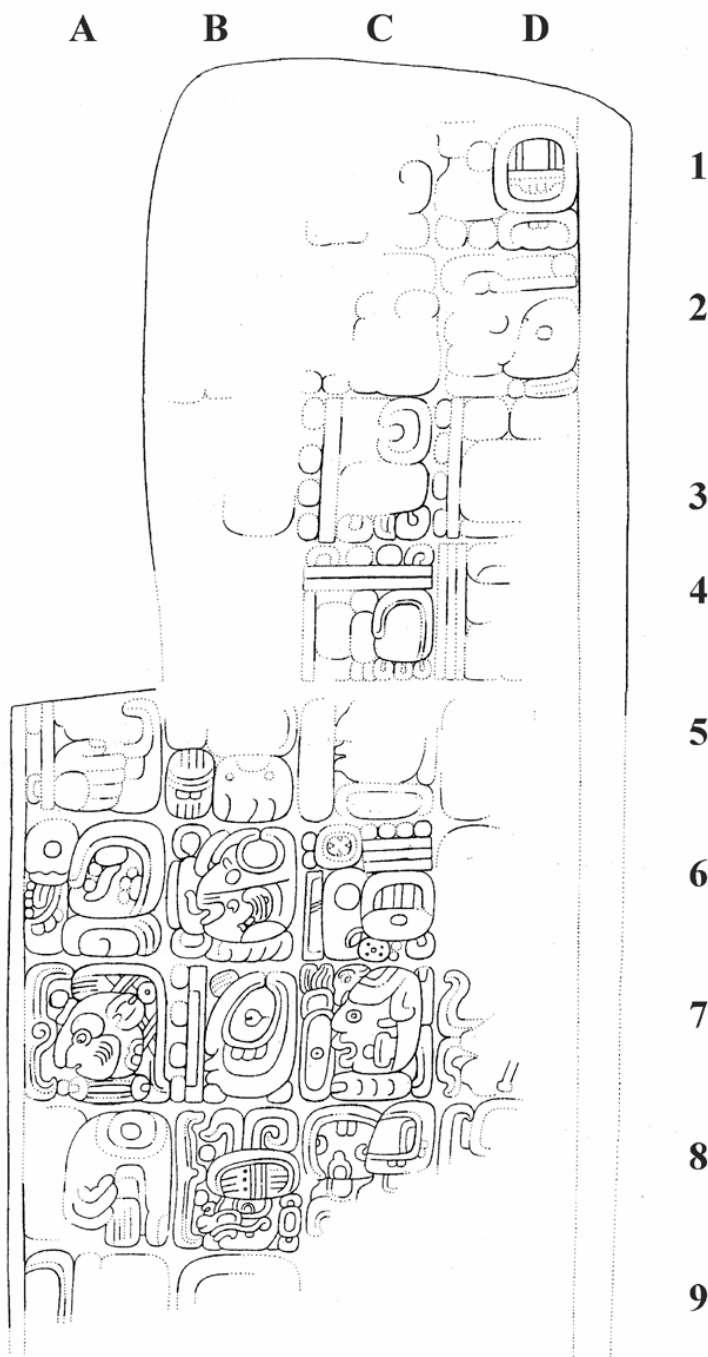
Location: Stela R was found just east of Stela Q, north of the row of 12 monuments that originally lined the north face of Structure 1 in the south side of the Main Plaza. T.W.F. Gann first reported the stela in the spring of 1928 as part of the British Museum Expedition to British Honduras. The stela was moved to London in 1928 where it now resides in storage at the British Museum.

Commentary: Depicted on Stela R is a partially eroded profile of a male figure facing right and wearing an ornate headdress. Located in the extreme right-hand side of the scene one can see the eroded vestiges of a partial text that may record the *Yoaat* title suggesting that this portrait may feature the Pusilhá ruler *Chak Muyal Chan Yoaat K'awiil*.

Text:

pA1: T115.552v

yo.AT

Pusilhá, Stela U**Figure 38. Pusilhá, Stela U (Drawing by J. Montgomery)****Pusilhá, Stela U**

Location: Stela U was originally located in front (south) of the middle of Structure III on the north side of the Main Plaza. The monument was first reported by J. Eric Thompson on October 3rd, 1927 and is still located at the site.

Commentary: Stela U features another reference to fire-scattering within the supporting Lunar Series information. Virtually nothing can be said with any degree of confidence concerning additional events recorded on this monument except that an unusual Distance Number appears to be recorded at C6. Unfortunately, the accompanying Calendar Round date is also missing making the chronology difficult. If the Distance Number of 19.5.2 is subtracted from the tentative Initial Series date of 9.15.0.0.0, the date arrived would be 9.14.0.12.18 4 *Etz'nab'* 6 *Yax* (15, August 712). If this chronology is correct than the reference to someone in 'lordship' at C7 could be the accession statement of another Pusilhá ruler whose name appears to be *K'ahk' Winal* or *K'ahk' Hun Winik K'awiil*.

Chronology:

A1-B2:	*9.15.0.0.0	4 Ajaw 13 Yax (18, August 731)
D4:	15 th	(<i>K'atun?</i>)
C6:	*9.15. 0. 0. 0	4 Ajaw 13 Yax
DN	- 19. 5. 2	
	9.14. 0.12.18	4 <i>Etz'nab'</i> 6 <i>Yax</i> (15, August 712)

Text:

A1: Missing	??
B1: Missing	??
A2: Missing	??
B2: Missing	??
A3: Missing	??
B3: Missing	??
A4: Missing	??
B4: Missing	??
A5: TVI.?:713.181	WAK.?:K'AL.ja
B5: T?:216.?:502	?:su.?:ma
A6: T229.528:17	AJ/Á.ku:yi
B6: T173.738?:?	mi.KA?:?
A7: T204.187:758:110	u.K'AB'A:CH'OK:ko
B7: TIX.683	B'OLON.K'AL
A8: T?.219v[?]	(u?).PUK[?]
B8: T1.1035	u.K'AK'/BUTZ
A9: T?..?	???
B9: T?	?
C1: T?:?	?:?
D1: T?:?.561?:23	?:?.CHAN:na
C2: T?..?:?	???:?
D2: T?:?.?:?:?	?:?:?:?:?
C3: TIX.?:?:126	B'OLON.?:?:ya
D3: TIX.?:?:?	B'OLON.?:?:?
C4: TXIII:?:?:136	OXLAJUN:?:?:ji
D4: XV.?:?	JOLAJUN.?:?
C5: T?..?	???:?
D5: Missing	??

C6: TII.544:V.521.XIX:548:126[585]

KA.K'IN:JO.WINIK.B'OLONLAJUN:HAAB':ya[b'i]

D6: Missing

??

C7: T59.1000d:188.130

ti.AJAW:le.wa

D7: T122.?

K'AHK'.

C8: T1032a?.1030

WINAL/HUUN WINIK.K'AWIIL

D8: T?.

??

Pusilhá, Stela Z



Figure 39. Pusilhá, Stela Z (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela Z was originally found during excavations conducted by T.W.F. Gann as part of the British Museum Expedition to British Honduras, atop the middle part of Structure 1. The fragment was found amongst the building fill rubble. The fragment was moved to London in 1928 where it now resides in storage at the British Museum.

Commentary: Little can be said other than the fact that the image appears to either be a partially eroded head variant of some unspecified glyph or a profile head of some unknown zoomorphic/reptilian creature head who sports an elaborate earflare assemblage as part of the overall image.

Pusilhá, Ballcourt Marker 1, East Marker

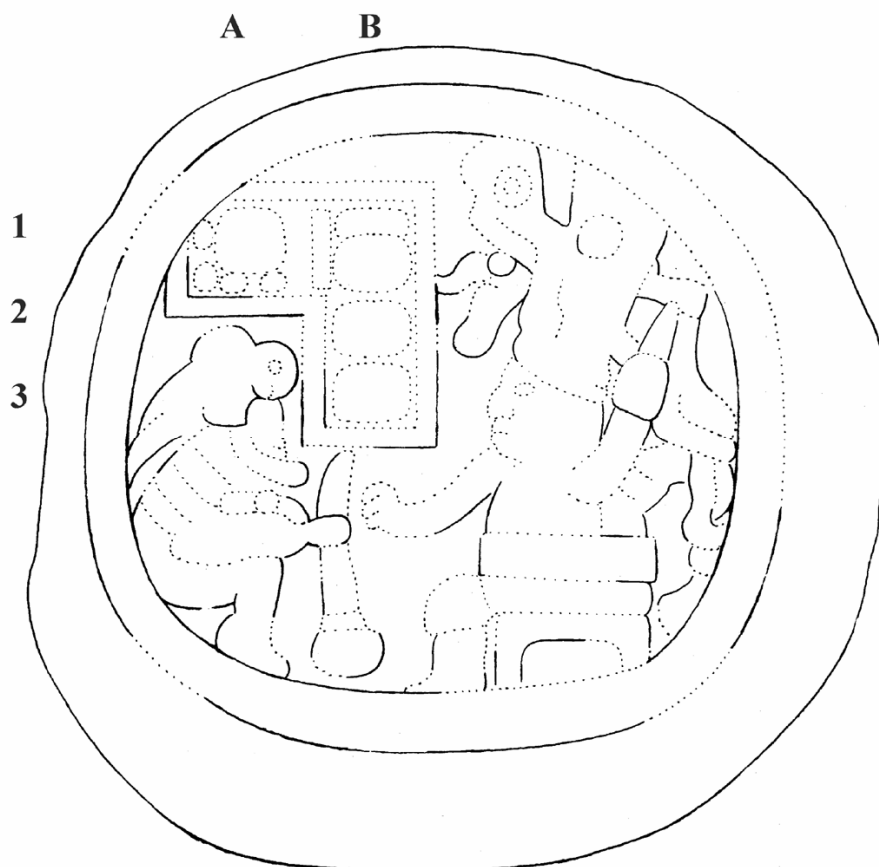


Figure 40. Pusilhá, Ballcourt Marker 1, East Marker (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Ballcourt Marker 1 was first reported in 1989 by members of the Maya Ceremonial Caves Project, directed by Gary Rex Walters (Walters and Weller 1992: 3) in the ballcourt located within the Moho Plaza Group. Walters later conducted a systematic settlement survey in 1992 where it became clear that sometime after the initial discovery of the three ballcourt markers they were moved from their original location to an area approximately 30 meters north of the ballcourt.

Commentary: The figural scene featured on Ballcourt Marker 1 is unusual in that both figures appear to be seated yet wearing all of their ballplayer attire. An exchange of some sort of elongated object also appears to be taking place. The figure to the right of the scene is seated on a small throne or stool. He holds his left arm up behind his head and with his right he reaches out to the individual seated in front of him to receive an unusual object. Unfortunately, this object is not clearly understood. Both figures wear elaborate flowing headdresses: one in the form of a probable *Witz* Monster (right figure) and the one in the form of a macaw (left figure). Both ballplayers are wearing defensive pads around their waists and the left figure also sports a chinstrap as part of his helmeted headgear.

As for the text, it cannot be read with any degree of confidence. Upon closer examination

of this ballcourt marker it would appear that a Calendar Round date begins the three or four glyph block text. A1 appears to record a numerical coefficient of either 2 or 3 and the *Haab'* position may record a bar and a single dot for the number 6. However, due to the severity of the erosion along the top surface of this monument, the date of this monument will have to remain a question.

Text:

A1: TII/III.?	KA/OX.?
B1: TVI??:?	WAK??:?
B2: T?	??
B3: T?	??

Pusilhá, Ballcourt Marker 2, Center Marker

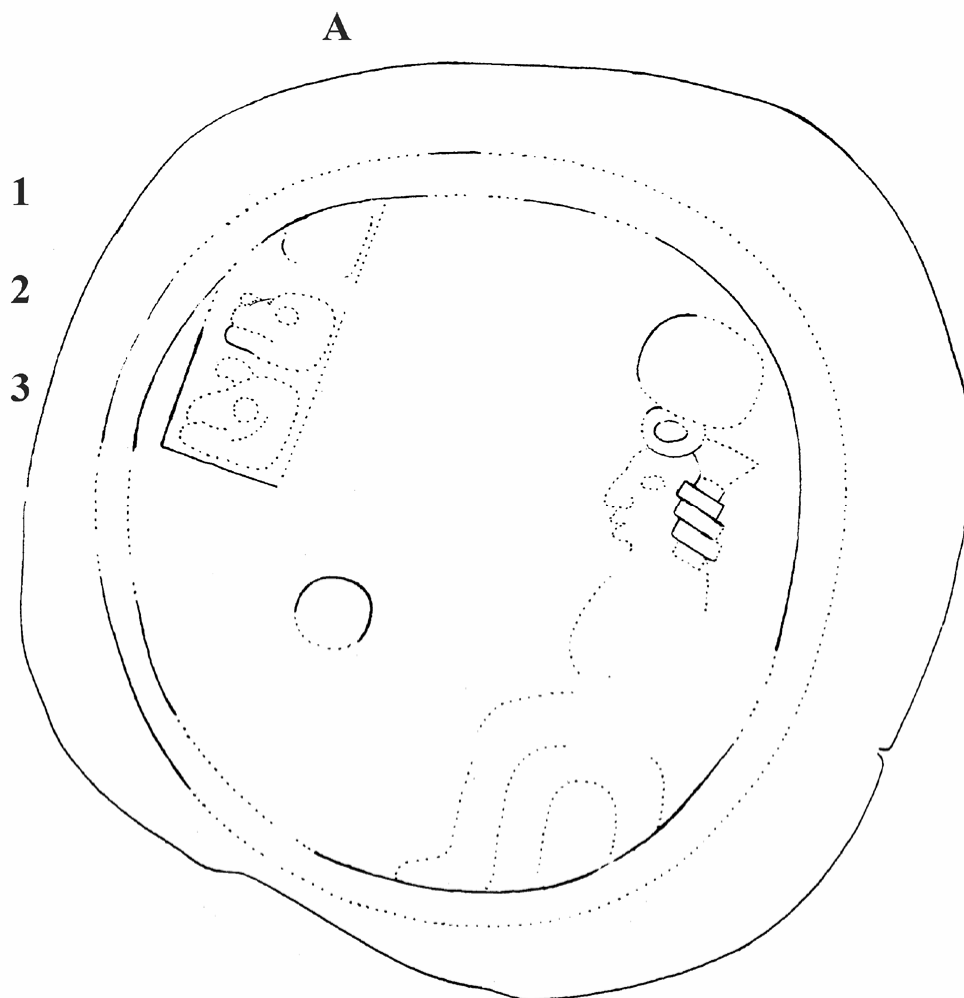


Figure 41. Pusilhá, Ballcourt Marker 2, Center Marker (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Ballcourt Marker 2 was first reported by Gary Rex Walters in 1992 as part of his Pusilhá Project (Walters and Weller 1994: 7) in the ballcourt located within the Moho Plaza Group. Subsequent to its discovery, the ballcourt marker was moved to a location approximately 30 meters north of the ballcourt.

Commentary: Unfortunately, little of the figural scene of Ballcourt Marker 2 is legible today. The scene portrays at least one ballplayer who appears to be sitting on a small stool or throne. He wears a headdress reminiscent of the one worn by the figure portrayed on Stela R. A ball may be represented near the center of the scene. In addition, a short three glyph block text appears in the upper left-hand corner of the scene which may include a T764 logographic *Ka'an* or *Chan* sign and a possible T1000 *Ajaw* sign.

Text:

A1: T?	??
A2: T764?	KA'AN/CHAN
A3: T1000?	AJAW?

Pusilhá, Ballcourt Marker 3, West Marker

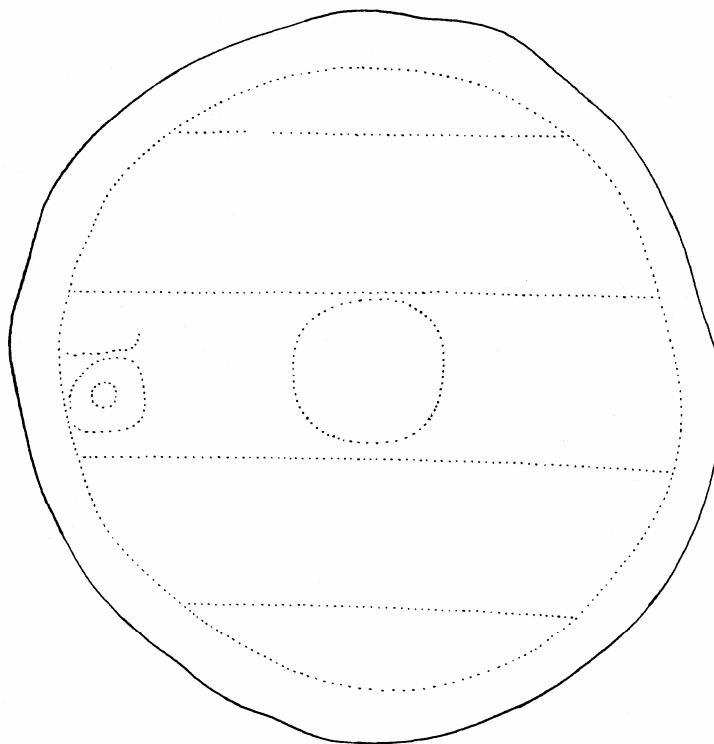


Figure 42. Pusilhá, Ballcourt Marker 3, West Marker (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Ballcourt Marker 3 was first reported by Gary Rex Walters in 1992 as part of his Pusilhá Project (Walters and Weller 1994 :7) in the ballcourt located within the Moho Plaza Group. Subsequent to its discovery, the ballcourt marker was moved to a location approximately 30 meters north of the ballcourt.

Commentary: The vestiges of four horizontal lines, representing the stairs or risers of a ballcourt are the only images visible on the ballcourt marker today. Located in the center of the marker is a large ball. On the basis of the figural scenes depicted on the other two ballcourt markers it is likely that one or two individuals were also featured on this monument too. Unfortunately, no traces of either can be seen.

Pusilhá, Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, (Structure VI)

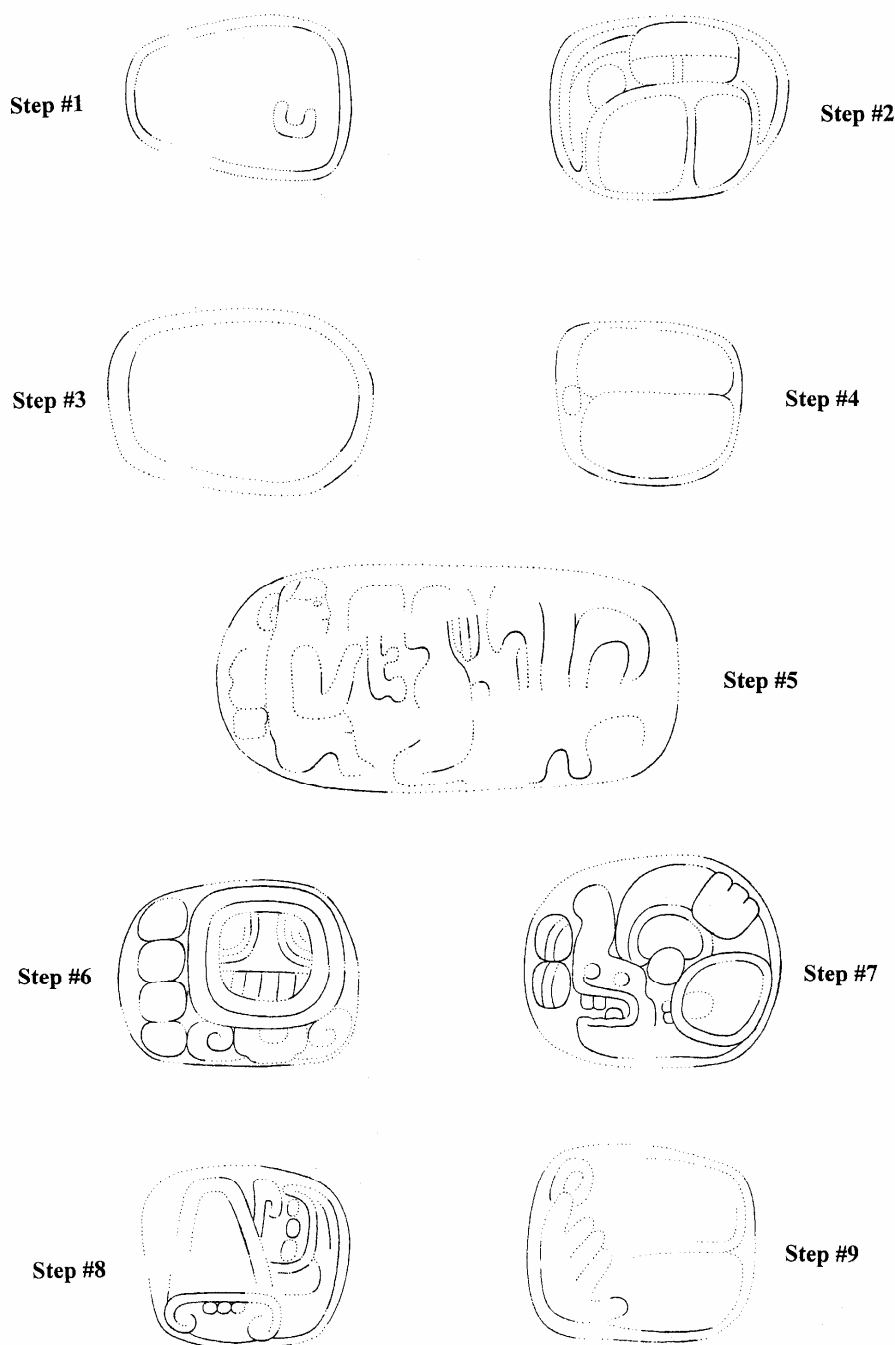


Figure 43. Pusilhá, Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, Steps 1 –9 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Gary Rex Walters first reported the Hieroglyphic Stairway in 1992 as part of his Pusilha Project (Walters and Weller 1992: 5). The stairway was found along the front portion of the staircase leading up Structure VI in a previously unreported plaza group known today the Moho Plaza. This new group is located approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile upstream from the famous Pusilhá bridge abutments. The jumbled appearance of the stairway today gives the impression that it either fell or slumped in antiquity or was the subject of disturbance by looters.

Commentary: Unfortunately, the text itself offers no real clues that could help to identify a date. The reading order of the stairs appears to begin with Steps 6 and 7 and continues with Step 9 with a possible reference to a scattering rite. The text then continues with Step 8 that may be a reference to a *Ch'ul Naj* or 'Divine House' based on a possible suffix recorded in the second part of the glyph block. The rest of the text is highly questionable. Step 5 appears to be either a figural scene or a text consisting of full-figured hieroglyphs. Not enough survives of the sculptural surface to ascertain either way. However, the scene does seem to include a seated figure on the left who is faced by another seated and bound figure, perhaps a captive, on the right.

Text: (Note that the following steps are not in their proper reading order)

Step 1: T?	??
Step 2: T?[?]:?	?[?]:?
Step 3: T?	??
Step 4: TI??:?	HUUN??:?
Step 5: Figural Scene or Full-Figured Hieroglyphs ??	
Step 6: TIV.504/506?:125	CHAN.AK'BAL/K'AN?:(DET)
Step 7: TII.657	KA. SOTZ
Step 8: T685?:23.181	CH'UL NAJ?:na.ja
Step 9: T?.219?:?:?	?.PUK??:?

Miscellaneous Texts

Pusilhá, Sculptural Fragment 3

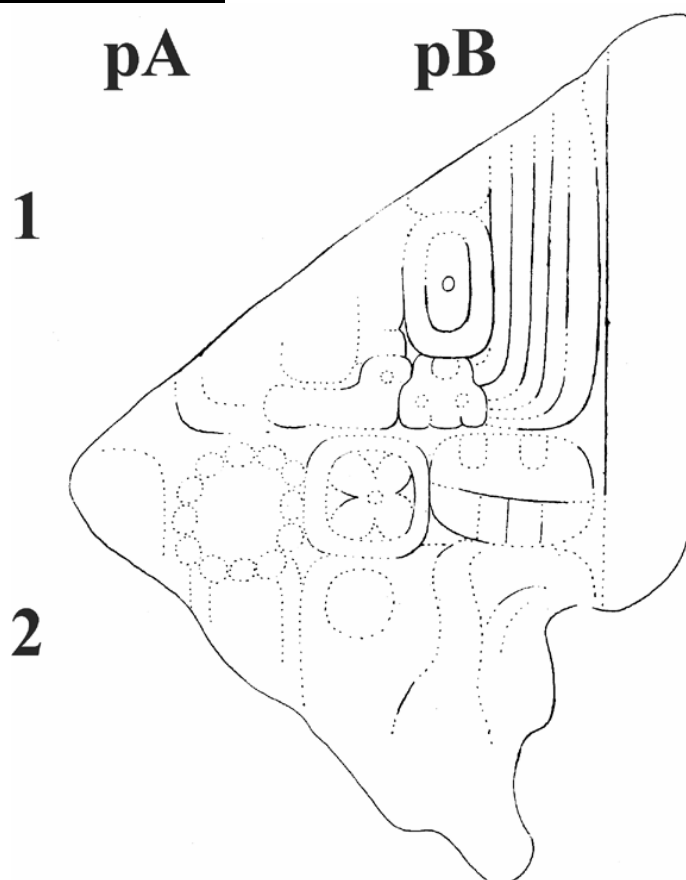


Figure 44. Pusilhá, Sculptural Fragment 3 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Original location unknown. Riese identified sculptural Fragment 3 as a Pusilhá text in 1971. Riese (1971: 14) believes the fragment belongs to Stela E; however, it is not really clear if this is the correct interpretation. The fragment is now in London where it resides in storage at the British Museum.

Commentary: Carved on this monument fragment are the remains of three hieroglyphs and a text border. The first and second glyphs are unknown, but the third (the lower) glyph represents the Pusilhá Emblem Glyph.

Text:

pB1: T??:116

?:?:ni

pA2: Missing

??

pB3: T36.168:559

CH'UL.AJAW:UNIW

Pusilhá, Polychrome Vase (Kerr 8089)

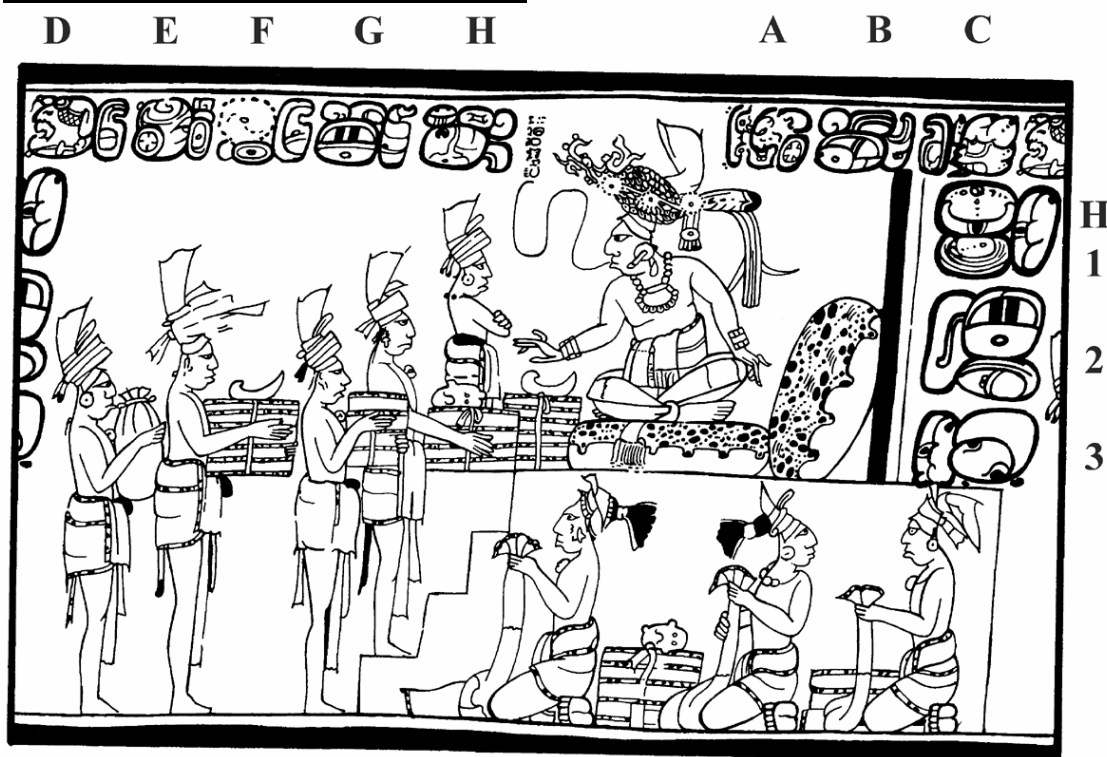


Figure 45. Pusilhá, Polychrome Vase (Kerr 8089) (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Unknown Provenance. The vase is reportedly in a private collection. Based on the appearance of the Pusilhá Emblem Glyph, it is thought to have originally come from the site or region.

Commentary: Polychrome Vase K8089 is one of the tallest Late Classic cylinder vases known. The vase features an extraordinary palace scene that depicts a total of 9 individuals. Five individuals are shown awaiting their chance to present bundles of woven cloth to the seated king, perhaps as a formal offering of tribute. Kneeling below the king are three individuals who are unraveling the cloth bundles to perhaps inspect their quality. In fact, the center figure among the three is depicted looking back to the individual behind him as if he were checking this individual's progress. The king is portrayed seated on a jaguar-pelt throne accepting the tribute as can be seen by his hand gesture. He wears an elaborate macaw headdress with a small image of *K'awiil* protruding out the front. In addition, a speech-scroll can clearly be seen coming from the mouth of the king leading to a small illegible secondary text.

The accompanying hieroglyphic inscription, written in 11 glyph blocks, describes the figural scene as taking place within a royal court (*Tajnal*) where tribute (*patan*) in the form of folded bundles of cloth is being received and inspected. The person overseeing the tribute is named *K'inich Sak Mo'* (whose name also appears to be represented in the headdress he wears). The location of this event seems to be connected in some way to a *Tz'am Witz* location of Pusilhá. The final section of text is difficult to discern, but it seems to deal with a stone veneration.

Text:

A1: T2.757

B1: T 86:565.181

C1: T88.748

D1: T1014v/1023.88

E1: T671[544].58

F1: T582:280?.88

G1: T86:548.?

H1: T168:559.130

I1: T507b:?.150v

I2: T115.548:102

I3: T266?:565?.526

u.B'AAJ

NAL:ta.ja

ji.MUWAAN

PATAN.ji

chi[K'IN].SAK

MO:ó.ji

NAL:TUUN/AB'.

AJAW:UNIW.wa

tzi:wi?.TZ'AM

yo.TUUN/AB':ki

ju?/ta.KAB'

Pusilhá Region, Slate Scepter Handle

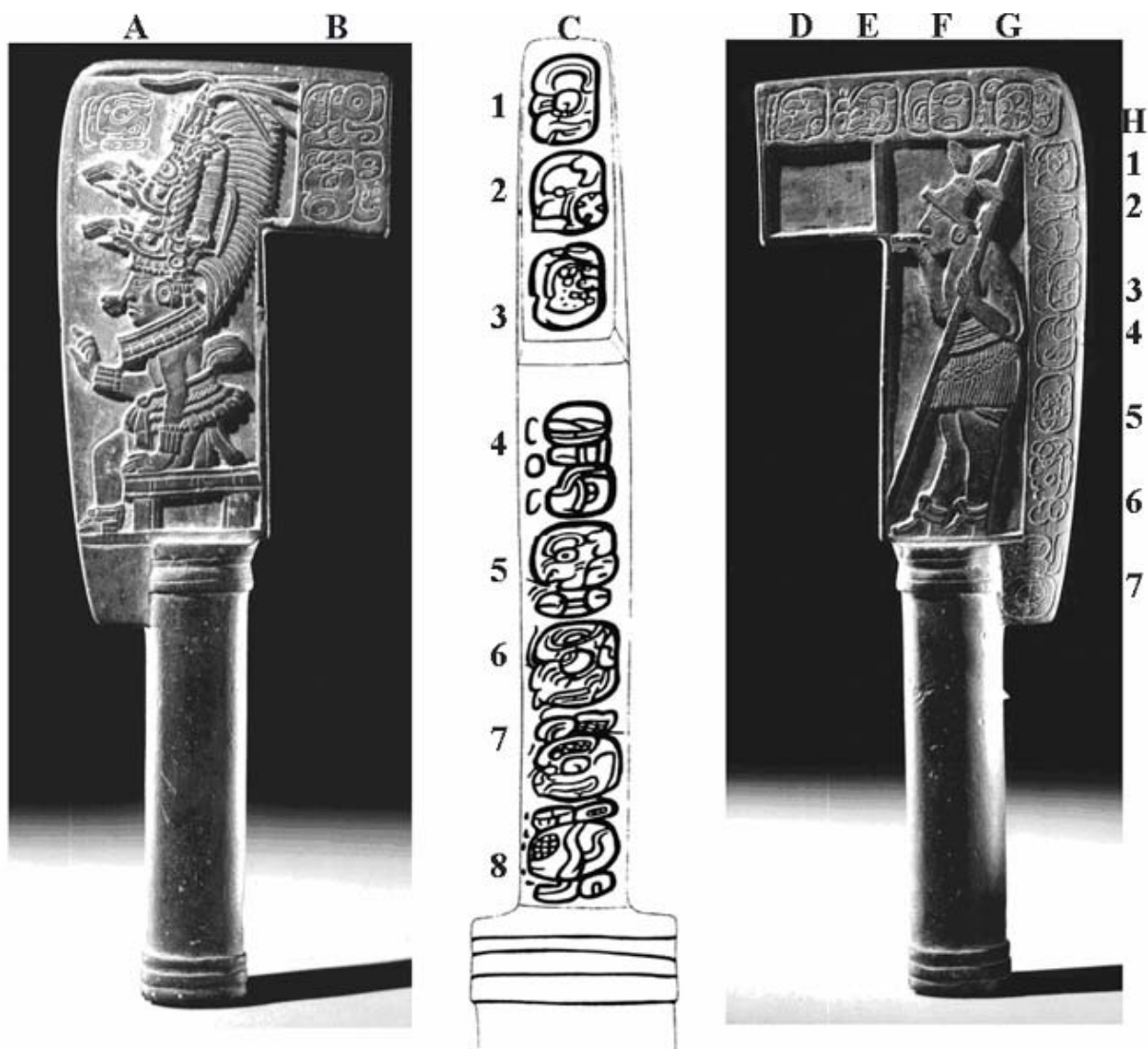


Figure 46. Pusilhá Region, Slate Scepter (Photograph © courtesy of Justin Kerr, see <http://www.famsi.org:9500/dataSpark/maya>, Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Unknown Provenance. The scepter is reportedly in a private collection. Based on the appearance of the Pusilhá Emblem Glyph on scepter's edge text, it is thought to have originally come from an unknown site in the region between southern Belize and adjacent Guatemala.

Commentary: The front side of this scepter depicts a regally dressed ruler, presumably the scepter's owner, sitting on a low bench or throne. He appears to be addressing someone as can be seen by his outstretched hand gesture. He wears an elaborate double-stacked monster headdress with a host of feathers attached to its backside. The accompanying hieroglyphic inscription makes special reference to this scepter as the personal property of the owner.

The edge text is interesting for it describes the owner of the scepter as the individual who 'grabs, take's hold of, or conjures the stone' in the Emergent One's Headband House and he is the 'captor or guardian of the Divine Pusilhá lord'.

The backside of the scepter depicts a portrait of *Hunahpú* wearing his Hunter's Headdress holding a blowgun and smoking a cigar. The accompanying hieroglyphic inscription is difficult to discern, but it also seems to make reference to the owner of the scepter as well. The first part of the text is not clear but it does seem to refer to a "god-like person" of the 'Sky or Serpent House' and he was a 'Supreme Lord of the East'.

Text:

Front Text:

A1: T3.738v:188

B1: T528:116.88?.511?.181:116

B2: T60:670.229

u.KAL:le

TUUN:ni.ji?.PET?.ja:ni

ji/HUUN:chi.AJ

Edge Text:

C1: T738v/205

C2: T757

C3: T714v[528]

C4: T1.115v:563v:518v

C5: T758a:110

C6: T205

C7: T108:764a

C8: T33.168:559:130

U.

B'AAJ

TZAK[TUUN]

HUUN.yo:to:te

CH'OK:ko

U.

cha:CHAN

CH'UL.AJAW:UNIW:wa

Back Text:

D1: T1.757

E1: T59.950v

F1: T21.741v

G1: T36.1016.683?

H1: T764?

H2: T614:115v:514v:59

H3: T[19.741v?]

H4: 568a

H5: T1003v?

u.B'AJ

ti.li

b'u

CH'UL.CH'UL.WINIK?

CHAN?

OTOT:yo:te:ti

[mu]?

lu

B'OLON

H6: 1000i:130
H7: T546:544.116:521

AJAW:wa
EL.K'IN.ni:WINIK

Pusilhá, Jade Pendant

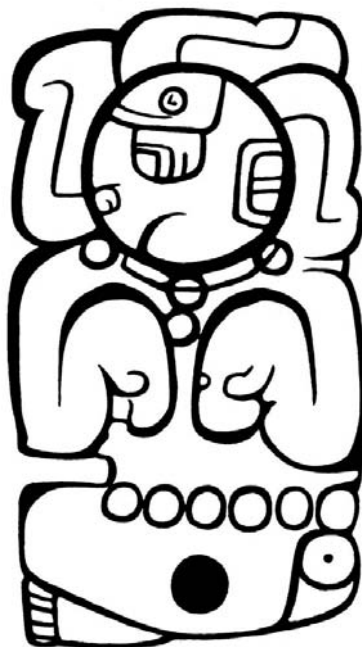


Figure 47. Pusilhá, Jade Pendant (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: According to Gruning (1929: 478) the jade pendant was originally found, in excavations conducted by the British Museum Expedition to British Honduras, along a partially collapsed structure in the area around Terrace 3. The jade is now in the collections of the British Museum.

Commentary: Gruning (1930: 478) describes this unusual jade as a “figure of a jaguar in a begging position” and the head is indicated by a glyph in a variant form of the Day-Sign *Ok’*. While creative, it is doubtful that this is the correct interpretation. Rather, because of the tri-lobed foliation appearing around the head of this figure I suspect that it might actually depict the Late Preclassic historical figure known as the Foliated Ajaw.

The Glyphic Corpus of Uxbenka, Toledo District, Belize

The Monumental Inscriptions

Uxbenka, Stela 3

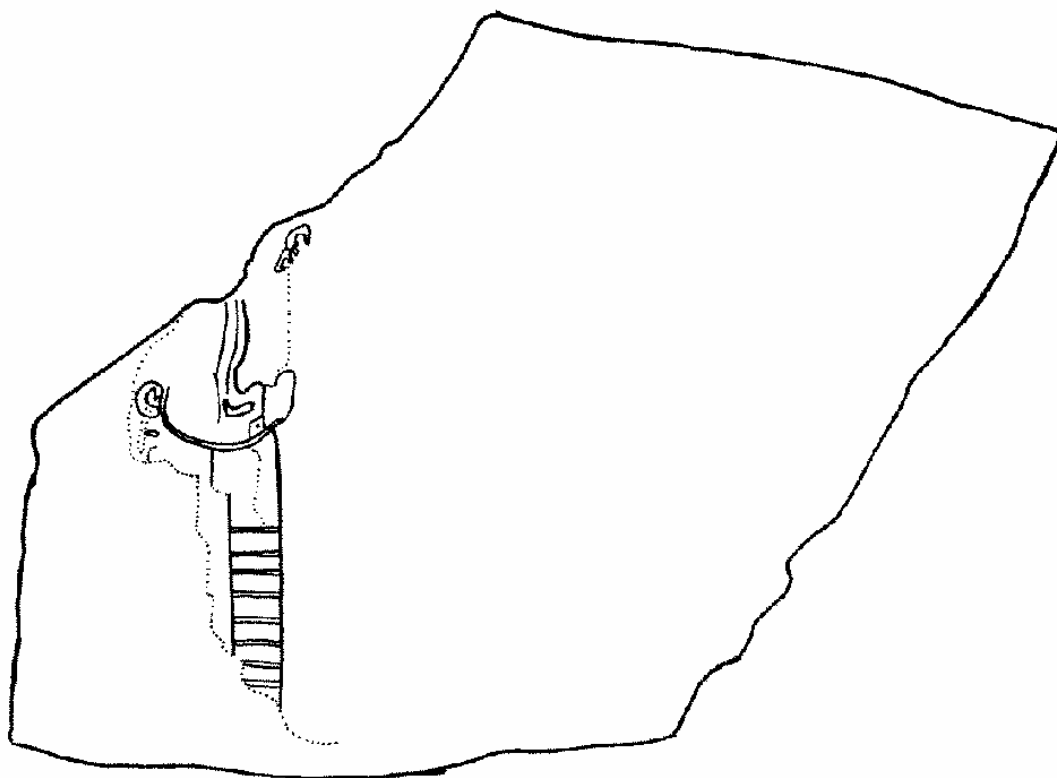


Figure 48. Uxbenka, Stela 3 (Drawing by P. Wanyerka)

Location: Stela 3 was first reported as a carved monument by the Southern Belize Epigraphic Project in 2001. The stela is located approximately three meters south of Structure 1, third from the right in a row of 13 monuments that originally lined the south face of Structure 1. The stela is still standing, but it is clear that this piece was thrust into the ground sometime after the initial breakage occurred.

Commentary: Virtually nothing can be said with any degree of certainty concerning the image carved on this stela except to say that an eroded textile fringe can be seen for a figure whose image is now obliterated.

Uxbenka, Stela 5

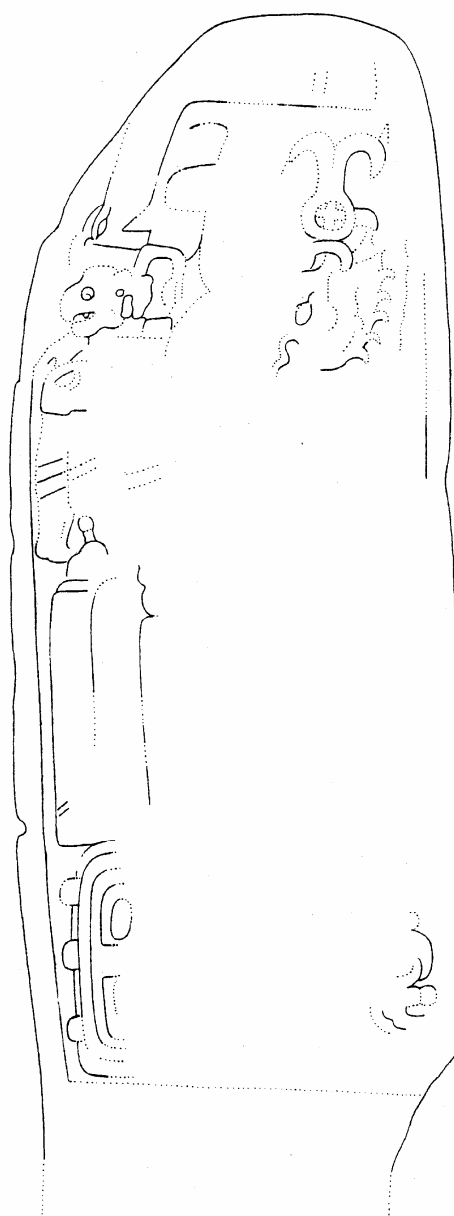


Figure 49. Uxbenka, Stela 5 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela 5 was first reported by Richard Leventhal in 1984 with the discovery of the site as part of his Southern Belize Archaeological Project. The stela is located on its side, approximately 8 meters south of Structure 1, the fourth stela from the right in a row of 13 monuments that originally lined the south face of Structure 1. The stela is still at the site today.

Commentary: Stela 5 features an eroded portrait of a standing male figure who wears an elaborate headdress. At least two zoomorphic creatures can be seen as part of this figure's

royal headdress. In addition, a short “L-shaped” text block can also be seen along the top left edge of the monument. Unfortunately, none of the text can be read today. Finally, based on the shape of the rough outlines, it would appear that the individual stands on a *Witz* Monster Pedestal.

Uxbenka, Stela 6

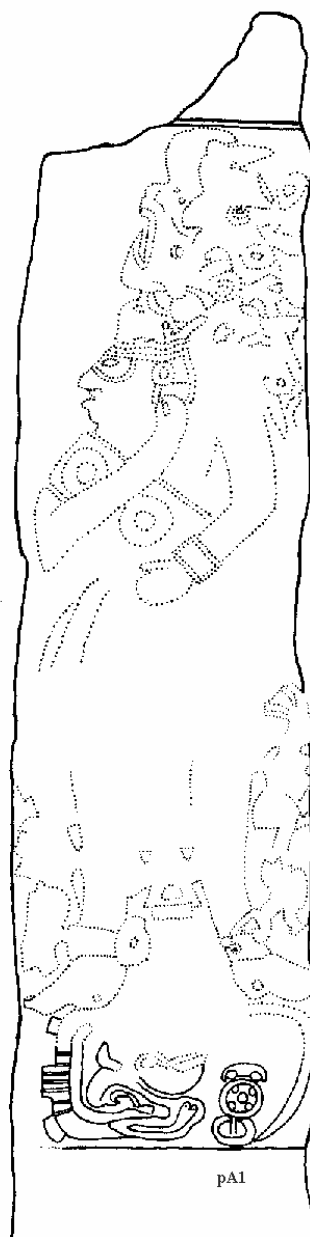


Figure 50. Uxbenka, Stela 6 (Drawing by P. Wanyerka)

Location: The base of Stela 6 was found standing approximately 6 meters south of Structure 1, the sixth stela from the right in a row of 13 monuments that originally lined the south face of Structure 1. Leventhal first reported it in 1984 as part of the Southern Belize Archaeological Project. In 2005, I located two additional pieces of Stela 6. The stela is still at the site today.

Commentary: Stela 6 features a portrait of a standing Uxbenká lord facing right holding a rigid Double-Headed Serpent Bar. The ruler stands on top of an unusual *Witz* Monster Pedestal. The *Witz* Monster is a common sculptural motif among the Late Classic monuments of southern Belize (NLP Stela 1, 2, 7; Xnaheb Stela 1; Uxbenka Stela 14). The stela contains a single hieroglyph located to the right of the *Witz* Monster's lower jaw. Unfortunately, the entire reading of this hieroglyph remains obscure. The glyph appears to begin with the third-person personal pronoun *u* followed by a T585a *b'i* sign; however, the lower sign is unique and looks very much like a variant form of the T774v *OL* sign. If correct, the glyphic combination may read something like *ub'i ol* perhaps having something to do with 'the heart of the road'.

Text:

pA1: T?:585a:774v? u?: b'i:OL

Uxbenka, Stela 11

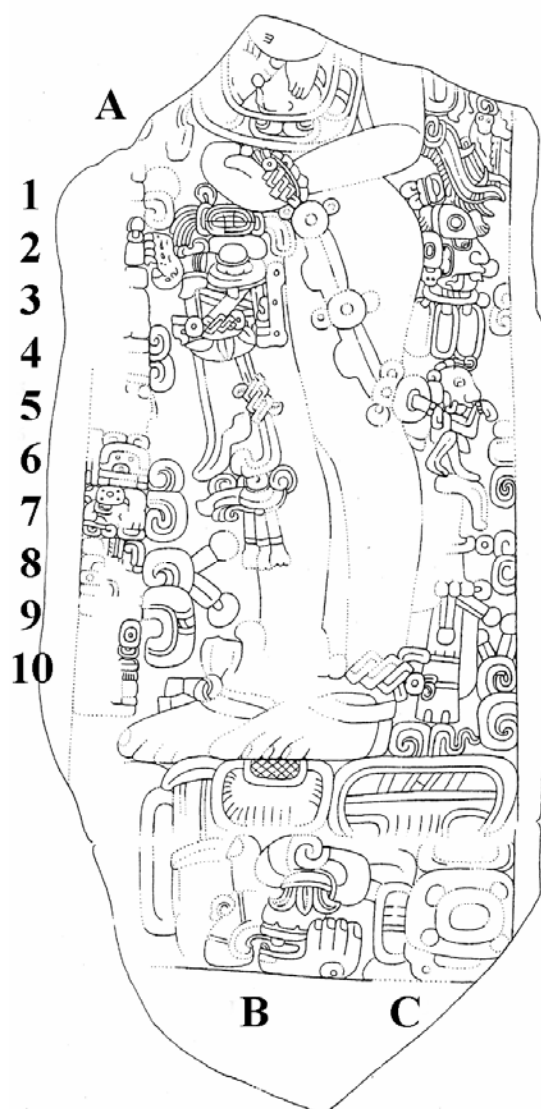


Figure 51. Uxbenka, Stela 11 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela 11 was originally found face-down, approximately 10 meters east of the middle of Structure 2, in the northern portion of the Main Plaza. The stela was first reported by Richard Leventhal in 1984 as part of his Southern Belize Archaeological Project. The monument has now been removed to a storage facility in the village of Santa Cruz.

Commentary: Stela 11 is the earliest and perhaps the most important monument in all of southern Belize. Featured on Stela 11 is an Early Classic portrait of a standing male figure facing left cradling an undulating Double-Headed Serpent Bar. The iconography and imagery of Stela 11 is highly reminiscent of the Early Classic monuments at Tikal, especially Tikal Stela 1, 2, 31, and 40. The individual is shown wearing an elaborate royal belt assemblage that includes portraits of the Sun God and *Chak Xib' Chahk*. In addition, a fine-line portrait of an owl, possibly the *Sak Hix Mut* bird, can be seen in the mouth of the Double-Headed Serpent just behind the ruler's left arm. By far, the most important element of this monument is the iconic reference to *Chak Tok Ich'aak I* that hangs from the front of this person's loincloth. This well-known motif is also found on Uolantun Stela 1 and on Tikal Stela 39. All three versions clearly refer to the famous Tikal king *Chak Tok Ich'aak I*.

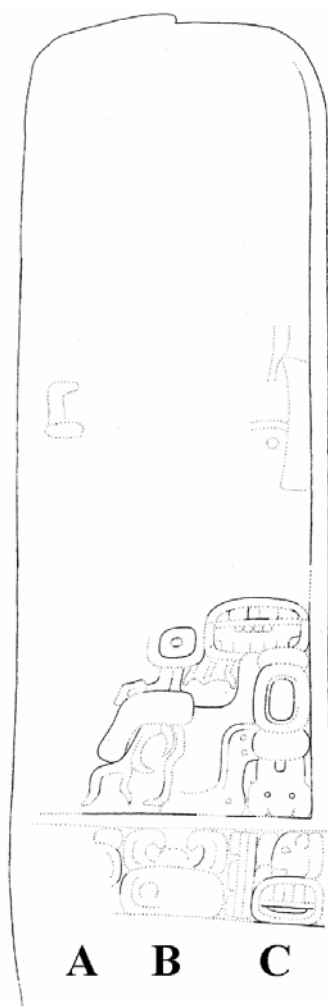
Epigraphic evidence for a possible connection between Tikal and Uxbenka can also be seen from the highly eroded and broken section of text that runs along the left edge of the monument. Though most of the original text is now completely obliterated due to the machete attack in 1985, the text does include a reference to the child or children of noble descent who are said 'to enter the road' (A6), a known metaphor for death. It would be unclear as to whom died here except that the last glyph of the text includes the main sign of the Tikal emblem glyph. I have examined this glyph in close detail and believe this to be a reference to Tikal. Therefore, given the *Chak Tok Ich'aak* name, I date Stela 11 to the period just after the famous entrada event of AD 378. Located below the figural scene in four glyph blocks is a toponymic location that seems to include a reference to a 'Fiery Water-Sky Cave or City'.

Text:

A1: Missing	??
A2: T?.	??
A3: T?.	??
A4: T?	??
A5: Missing	??
A6: T1.535:?	u.MEHEN:?
A7: T1029v	OCH B'I
A8: T?:1016.?:?	?:K'U.?:?
A9: T?	??
A10: T?.569?:??:?	?.MUTUL?:??:?

B1-C2:

T1.501v.122:561a:1085v.? u.HA/NAAB'.K'AHK':KA'AN:CH'EEN.?

Uxbenka, Stela 14**Figure 52. Uxbenka, Stela 14 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)**

Location: Stela 14 is located approximately 5 meters off the northeastern corner of Structure 3 along the western portion of the Main Plaza. The stela, still standing today at the site, was first reported by Richard Leventhal in 1984 as part of his Southern Belize Archaeological Project.

Commentary: Stela 14 features an eroded portrait of a *Witz* Monster Pedestal whose profile head includes a T561a *Ka'an* infix. The upper portion of the figural scene probably contained an image of a standing ruler. Unfortunately, the entire upper part of Stela 14 has either flaked off or has completely been erased due to erosion. The three glyph block text, visible just below the *Witz* Monster, cannot be read except for a possible 12 *K'atun* statement at B3.

Text:

A1: T?:? ??:?

B1: T?:? ??:?

C1: TXII.28:548 LAJKA'.K'ATUN:TUUN

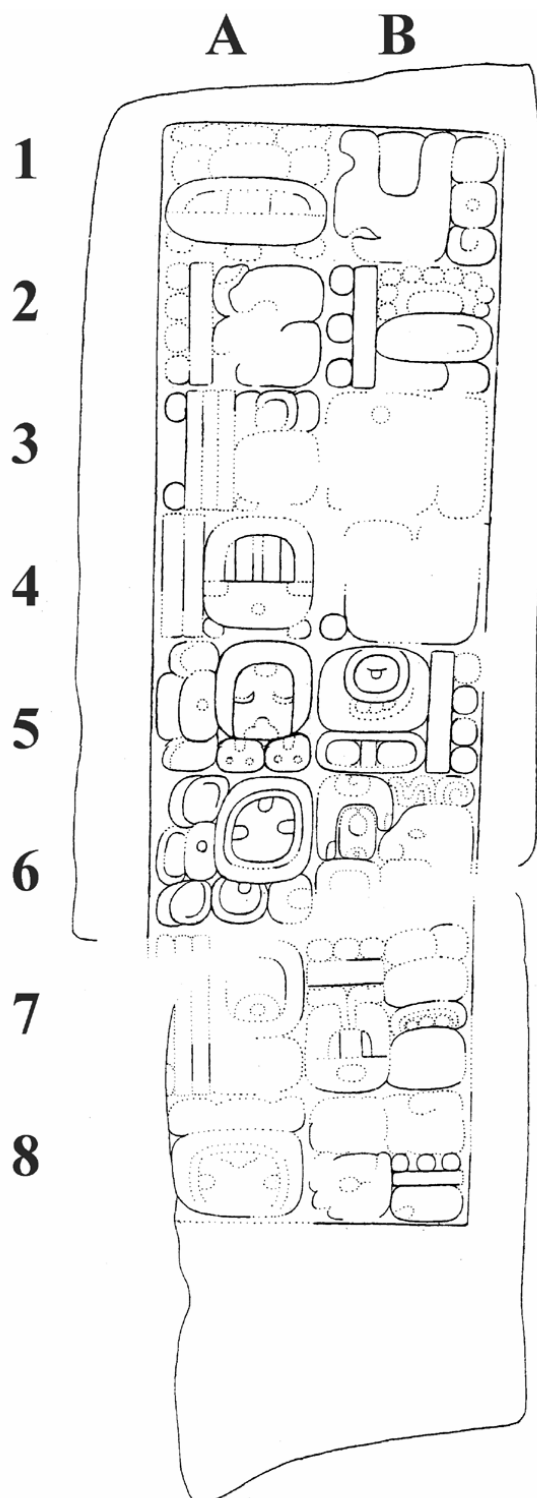
Uxbenka, Stela 15

Figure 53. Uxbenka, Stela 15 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela 15 was originally located approximately 1 meter north of the northeastern corner of Structure 3, along the western portion of the Main Plaza. The stela was first reported by Richard Leventhal as part of his Southern Belize Epigraphic Project

in 1984. Stela 15 has been moved several times over the years and is now located on top Structure 3.

Commentary: Stela 15 commemorates the 9.17.10.0.0 Period Ending, a Period Ending that was extremely popular in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of southern Belize. The text is also unusual in that it features a reference to fire-drilling as part of the Lunar Series information. Unfortunately, the verb and protagonist are no longer legible, but the protagonist does carry the *Waxak Winik* title, a royal title common among the ancient rulers of southern Belize and adjacent Guatemala.

Text:

A1: T124.25.?.25:548:142	tzi:ka.?.ka:TUUN:ma
A2: TIX.1033	B'OLON.B'AK'TUUN
A3: TXVII.28.548:142	WUKLAJUN.K'ATUN.TUUN:ma
A4: TX.548:142	LAJUN.TUUN:ma
A5: T173.521:178	MI'.WINAL.la
A6: T173.544:130	MI'.K'IN:wa
A7: TXII.533:125	LAJKA'.AJAW:?
A8: T128:544	cha:K'IN
B1: T1030oV.60?	JUUN.JUUN
B2: TVIII.45:82:125	WAXAK.JUL:li:ya
B3: T1?:?:?	u:K'AB'A.?
B4: T1?:?:?	JUUN.?:?
B5: T683:2.IX	K'AL:U.B'OLON
B6: T219[671v]:24.1035V	jo'[PUK]:li.K'AHK'
B7: TVIII.549.?:?.1.?	WAXAK.PAX.?:?.U.?
B8: T?:?:?.VIII:521	?:?:?.WAXAK:WINIK

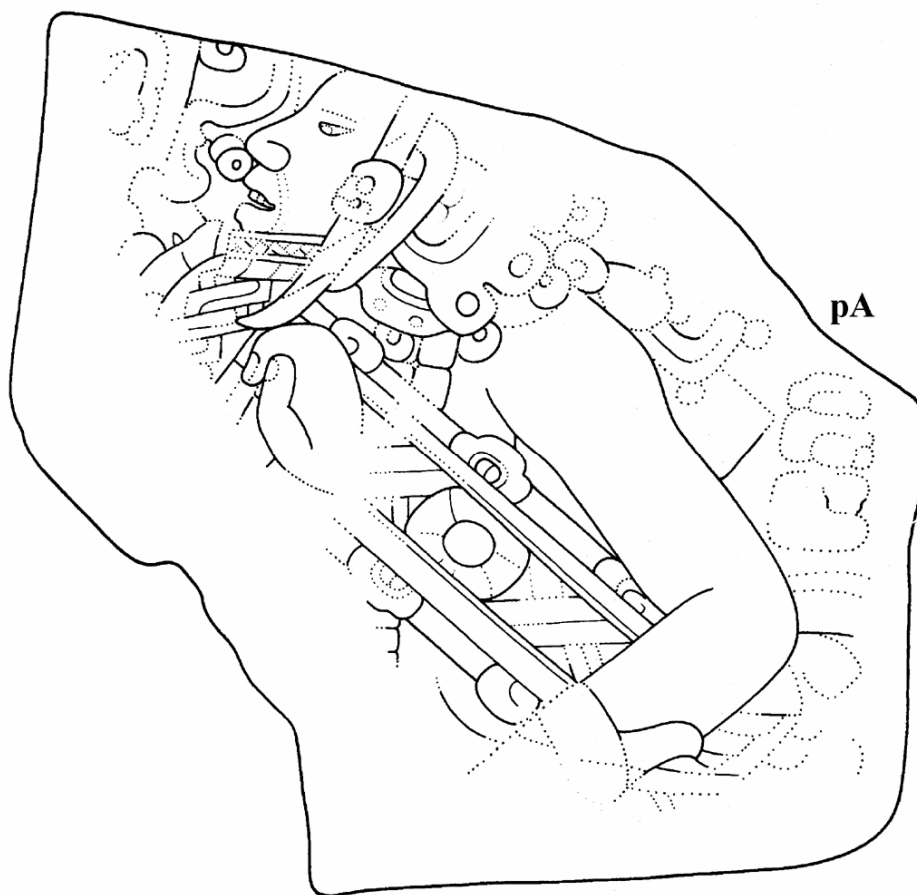
Uxbenka, Stela 18

Figure 54. Uxbenka, Stela 18 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela 18 was originally located on top of the first medial terrace, approximately 2 meters east of the southeastern corner of Structure 7. The stela has been removed from site and is currently in a secured location in the nearby village of Santa Cruz.

Commentary: Stela 18 features an Early Classic portrait of a ruler dressed in the guise of the 'Skycracker *Chahk*' cradling a Double-Headed Serpent Bar under his arms (Wanyerka 1996: 3). As part of this very specific costume, the ruler wears a helmeted headdress with a chinstrap that features a twisted piece of rope from which a small skull is mounted. He also sports a tripartite shell earflare assemblage and jade bead in his nose. Similar representations of this costume can also be seen on Tikal Stela 29, Tikal Stela 31, and El Zapote Stela 1. Located along the right-hand side of Stela 18 is a short two glyph block text. Unfortunately, the text is no longer legible.

Text:

pA1: T16?:? **YAX:?**

pA2: T? **??**

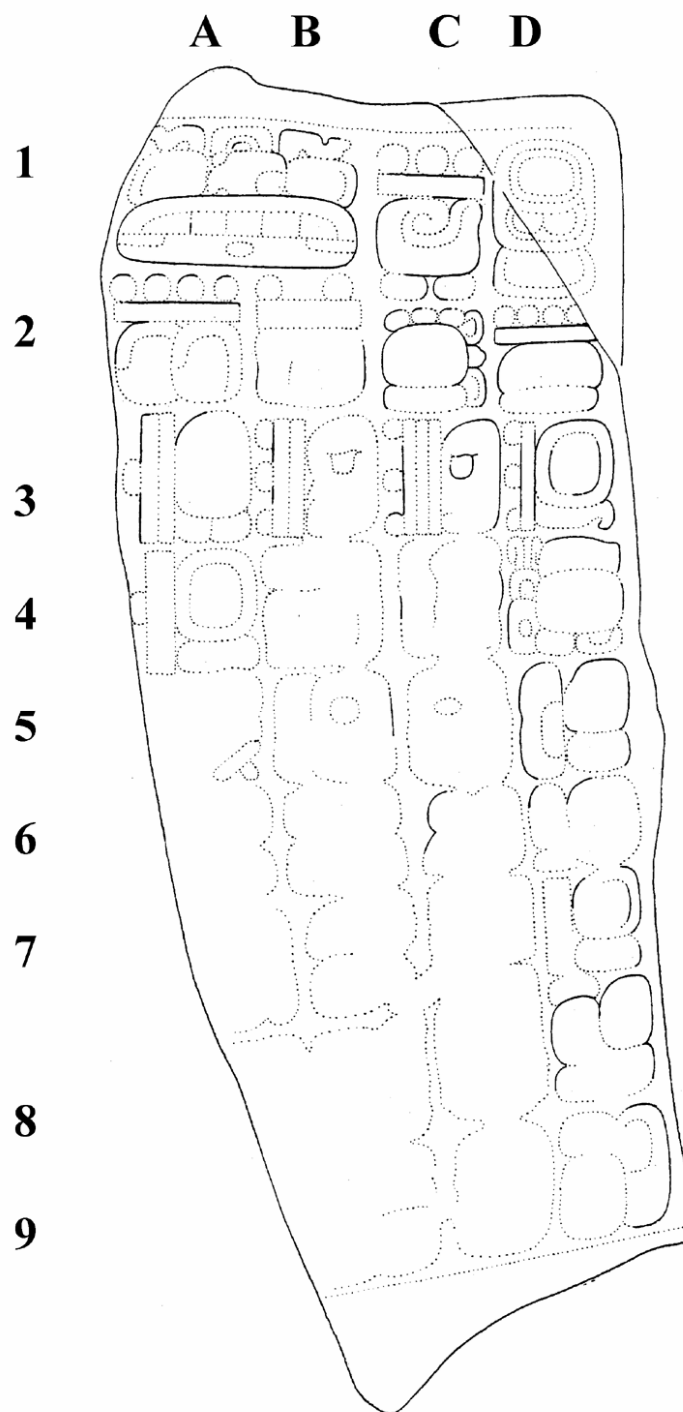
Uxbenka, Stela 19

Figure 55. Uxbenka, Stela 19 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela 19 is located at the base of the hilltop that contains the Stela Plaza. The stela was first reported by Richard Leventhal in 1984 as part of his Southern Belize Archaeological Project.

Commentary: Stela 19 begins with an Initial Series date of 9.12.11.13.11 (3 *Chuwen* 4

Kumku). Unfortunately, most of the remaining text is no longer legible. A Distance Number of perhaps 8 *k'ins*, 1 *winal*, and 3 *tuns* is partially legible at the top of columns C and D, but again, not enough detail survives to reconstruct the chronology. The enigmatic *y-itaj* verb may also be present at D5, but again, nothing else is legible except for the last glyph that appears to be the *B'akab'* title.

Text:

A1-B1: T124:25.?.25:548	tzi:ka.?.ka:JAAB'
A2: TIX:200	B'OLON: PI'
B2: TXII:?	LAJKA': (K'ATUN)
A3: TXI:548:116	B'ULUK:TUN:ni
B3: TXIII.741v?	OXLAJUN.WINAL
A4: TXI:544:116	B'ULUK:K'IN:ni
B4: T?:?	?:?
A5: T?	?
B5: T.?	?:?
A6: T?:?	?:?
B6: T?:?	?:?
A7: T?	?
B7: T?	?
A8: T?	?
B8: T?	?
A9: T?	?
B9: T?	?
C1: TVIII:574:126	WAXAK:E'(K'IN):yi
D1: T521:?	WINAL:?
C2: TIII:544:116:125	OX:TUN:ni:ya
D2: TIX:?:23	B'OLON:(K'ATUN):na
C3: TXVIII.?	WAXAKLAJUN.?
D3: TVIII:?:88	WAXAK:?:ji
C4: T?:?	?:?
D4: T58.?:?:130	SAK.?:?:wa
C5: T?	?
D5: T17.565?:181?	yi.ta?:ja?
C6: T?	?
D6: T?:?	?:?
C7: T?	?
D7: TV.?:?	JO'.?:?
C8: T?	?
D8: T?:?:?	?:?:?
C9: T?	?
D9: T501:?:501	b'a:(ka)?:b'a

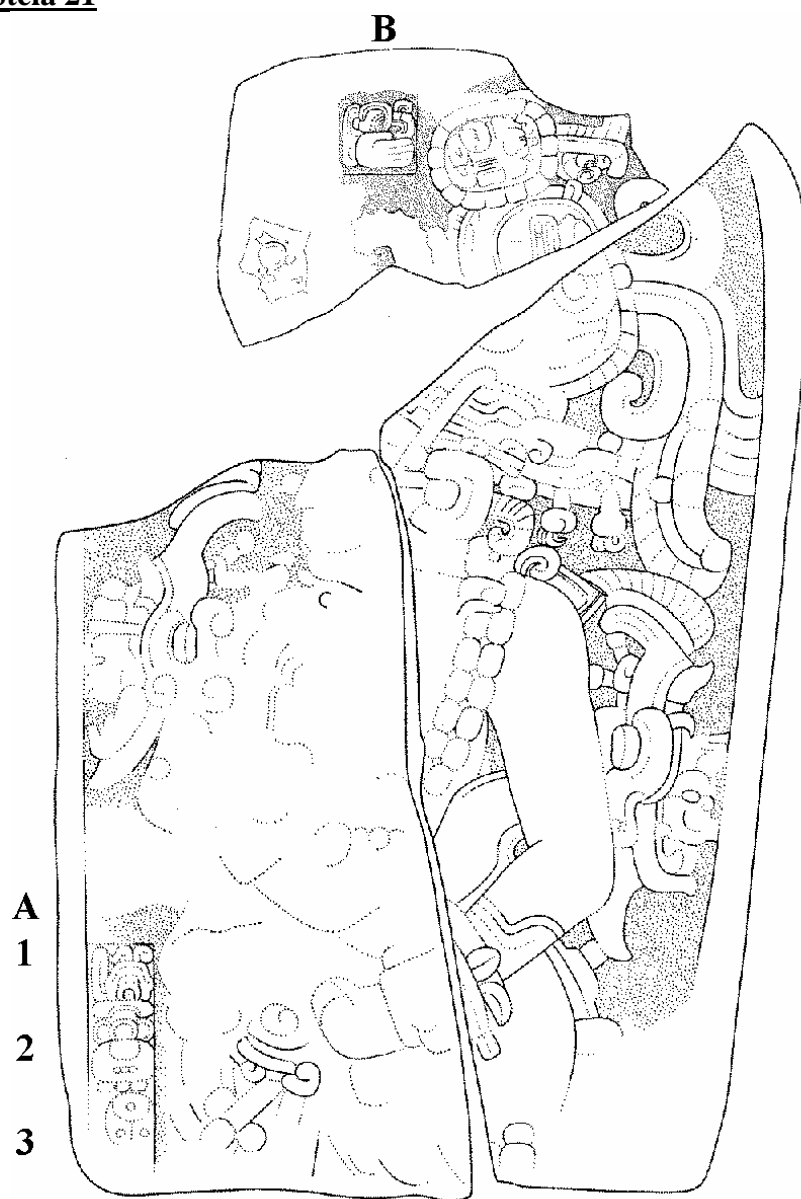
Uxbenka, Stela 21

Figure 56. Uxbenka, Stela 21 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: The left side of Stela 21 was originally located 11th from the right, in the row of 13 monuments that once lined the south face of Structure 1. It was first reported by Richard Leventhal in 1984 as part of his Southern Belize Archaeological Project. Subsequent to its discovery, the stela fragment was moved to an area east of Structure 3 where it was protected for some time under a thatched hut. In 1993, members of the Maya Mountains Archaeological Project (directed by Peter Dunham) discovered what would later be identified by me in 1994 as the missing right hand side of Stela 21 in a looter's pit near Stela 15 (Dunham et al. 1993: 22). Today, both fragments sit side-by-side in the area east of Structure 3. The upper fragment is now missing.

Commentary: Stela 21 features a royal portrait of an early Classic ruler facing left, holding an undulating Double-Headed Serpent Bar. Emerging from the mouths of the serpent bar are profile heads of two ancestral deities. The individual is also dressed in an elaborate array of fine accoutrements, including jade beads, wristlets, and a huge jade earflare. The overall portrait of Stela 21 is very reminiscent of the individual featured on Uxbenka Stela 11 and Stela 18. Included in the headdress of this individual are profile heads of at least two zoomorphic creatures. Accompanying the figural scene is a short three-glyph block text, written in a single column format, along the left-side of the monument. The text is important for it may reinforce the previous reading of Stela 11 that features a reference to the death of the ‘sons of noble descent’ at Tikal. Here, the text records the same *u-mehen* collocation.

Text:

pA1: T204.535:24

pA2: T74:NN:142

pA3: T178?

pB1: T1.528.130:713a

U.MEHEN:li

ma:MA:ma

la?

u.TUUN.wa:K’AL

Uxbenka, Stela 22

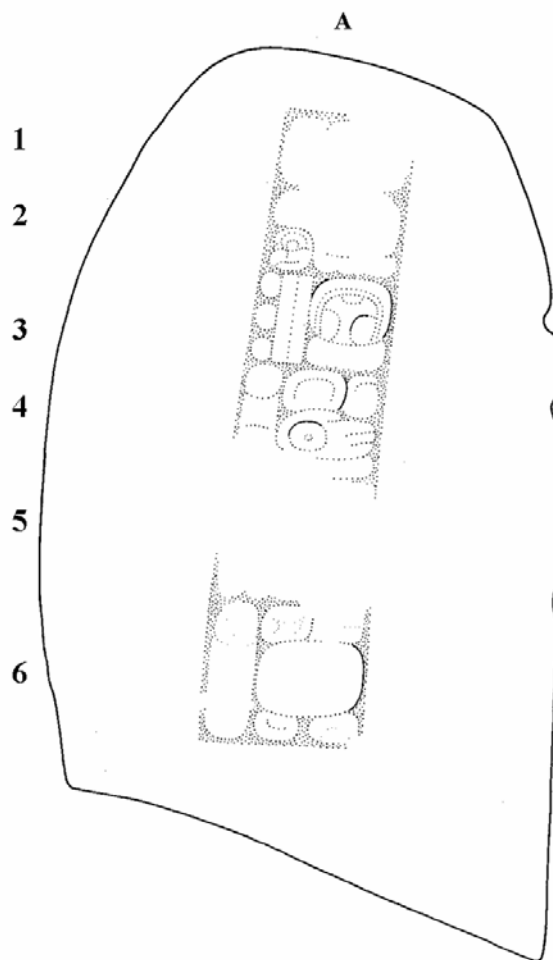


Figure 57. Uxbenka, Stela 22 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela 22 was found face-up approximately 2 meters southeast of the northeastern corner of Structure 2. The stela was first reported in 1986 by the Southern Belize Archaeological Project. The stela is still at the site today.

Commentary: The text recorded on Stela 22 commemorates the 9.16.0.0.0 Period Ending. Written in an abbreviated Calendar Round form, the confirmation of this date comes from the “*tuun*-in-hand” glyph at A4. The name of the protagonist is now totally obliterated, but he was clearly a divine lord, presumably of Uxbenka as the outlines of an Emblem Glyph can be seen at A6. Unfortunately, the main sign is no longer legible; however, its appearance does provide some epigraphic evidence that Uxbenka was an Emblem-Glyph-bearing site during Classic times. One other interesting fact here is that the scribes at Uxbenka spelled the month name *Sek* using Yukatekan spelling (*se-ka*) which is different from the way the same month was spelled at nearby Pusilhá (*ka-se-wa*).

Text:

A1: T?:?	?:?
A2: TII[738?]??:?	KA[ka?]??:? (Ajaw)
A3: TXIII.520:25?	OXLAJUN.SE:ka (Sek)
A4: T13.528.116:713a:130	u.TUUN.ni:K'AL:wa
A5: T?:?:?	?:?:?
A6: T36.168:?:130	K'U.AJAW:?:wa

Uxbenká, Stela 23

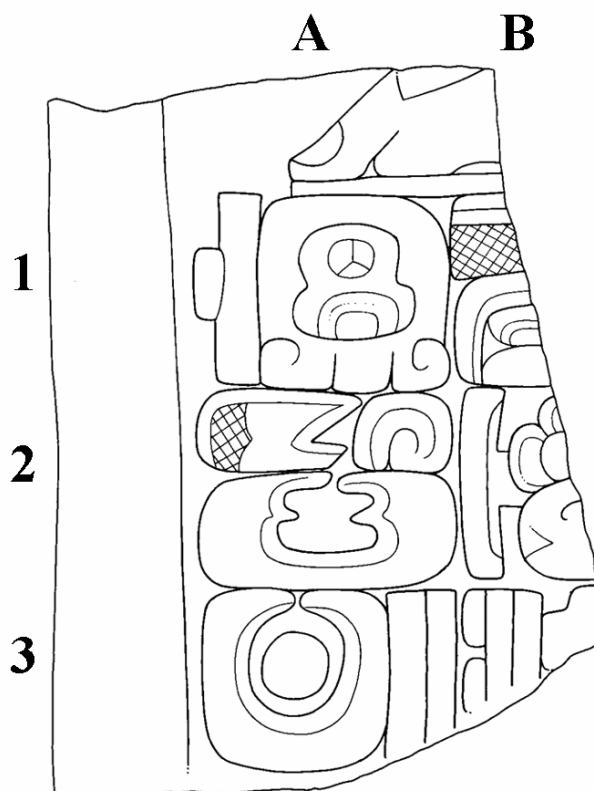


Figure 58. Uxbenka Stela 23 (Drawing by P. Mathews)

Location: Stela 23 was found by a workman, on the first day of the 2005 field season of the UAP, while clearing vegetation on top of the southeastern corner of Str. A-5. The stela fragment was found face down alongside a looter's pit.

Commentary: The Stela 23 fragment is Early Classic and records the Initial Series date of 9.1.0.0.0 6 *Ajaw* 13 *Yaxk'in* (27, August 455). Because of its importance and potential significance, photographs of this text were circulated to epigraphers Nikolai Grube, Simon Martin, David Stuart, and Peter Mathews. All four of them concur that the date on this stela refers to the Period Ending 9.1.0.0.0.

The text begins with a beautiful representation of an Early Classic *ajaw* glyph. Recorded at A1 is the *Tzolk'in* day name 6 *Ajaw*. Immediately following the *Tzolk'in* is a truncated Lunar or Supplemental Series featuring the Lord of the Night (B1). In this case, G9 appears to have been recorded since the main sign features a half-darkened *k'in* sign. The text continues at A2 with an unusual form of what must be Glyph D. According to Nikolai Grube, this example may be a reference to New Moon (personal communication to Wanyerka, September 2005). The only other example of this glyphic combination of this unusual syllabic sign over a *CH'EEEN* (T769) logograph is on the left side of La Milpa Stela 7; a monument that dates to 9.17.10.0.0 (Grube 1994: 222). The context for both monuments may suggest that the scribe was implying that the moon was no longer visible. According to the Vienna Dictionary, the Yukatek had a term *binaan u tu ch'en uh* 'the moon gone to her well' (Thompson 1950: 236). Though we cannot specifically read this particular form of Glyph D, the *Ch'een* sign strongly suggests this was its intended meaning. Running this date through a calendric program (EZCosmos) it is clear that the moon was 28.9 days old on 9.1.0.0.0 which would mean that the moon was not visible, or in its New Moon phase. Following Glyph D is another unusual form of Glyph C, recorded with a *na* prefix indicating 'first' along with a stylized form of the Jaguar-Eye element and "flat-hand" of the standard Glyph C collocation. This must indicate the first lunation had ended. Following at A3 is Glyph A which states that the lunation lasted 30 days. Following Glyph A is the *Haab'* date recorded as 13 *Yaxk'in* (B3). Taken together, the Initial Series date and supporting lunar date record the Long Count date of 9.1.0.0.0 6 *Ajaw* 13 *Yaxk'in*. Stela 23 is currently the earliest dated stela found in the Southern Maya Mountains Region.

Text:

A1: TVI.533v	WAK.AJAW
B1: TNN:545?	ch'a?:K'IN
A2: T128v?:769v	ch'a?:CH'EN
B2: T48.680v:713a	na.?:K'AL
A3: T616a.X	K'AL.LAJUN
B3: TXIII.16:?	OXLAJUN.YAX:K'IN?

Miscellaneous Texts

Uxbenka, Miscellaneous Text 1

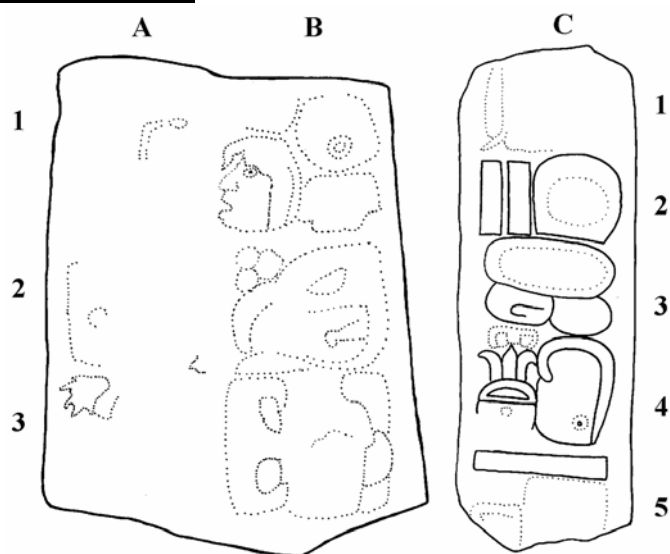


Figure 59. Uxbenka, Miscellaneous Text 1 (Drawing by P. Wanyerka)

Location: Miscellaneous Text 1 was originally found by the Southern Belize Archaeological Project in 1984. Its original location is unknown, but today it lies directly east of Structure 2 near a group of broken monument fragments scattered around Stela 11.

Commentary: While a hieroglyphic text was carved on two sides of this fragment, virtually none of the carving on the front can be read, except for a possible *Ajaw* title at pB2. The side of this fragment was identified as being carved in 2001 based on side lighting. The side text contains a numerical coefficient (10) followed by *utz'ap tuun* 'the stone was planted'.

Text:

Front Text

pA1: T?:??:? ??:??:?

pB1: T? ??

pA2: T?:??:? ??:??:?

pB2: T1000? AJAW?

pA3: T?:??:? ??:??:?

pB3: T1:~ u:~

Side Text

pC1: T? ?

pC2: TX:528? LAJUN:TUUN?

pC3: T?:? ??:?

pC4: T1:340.586b:548 u:tz'a.pa:TUUN

pC5: TV?:??:? JO':??:?

Other Miscellaneous Monuments

Tzimín Ché, Stela 1

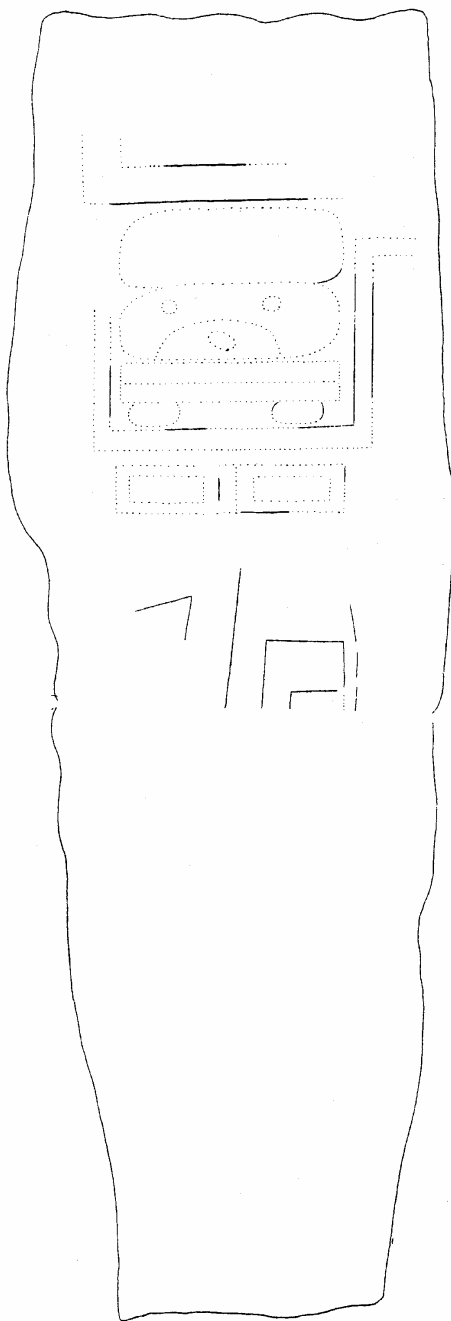


Figure 60. Tzimín Ché, Stela 1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Stela 1 was first reported by Peter Dunham in 1993 as part of his Maya Mountains Archaeological Project. It was located in the southwest corner of the West Plaza Group, approximately 1 meter west from the northwest corner of Structure 2. The stela was found face-up next to a deep looter's trench.

Commentary: Stela 1 is the latest dated monument in southern Belize and is one of the latest dated monuments in the entire southern Maya lowlands. The stela appears to commemorate the 10.4.0.0.0 Period Ending. To date, two *Ajaw* Stelae have been found in the Southern Maya Mountains Region of Belize: Nim Li Punit Stela 3 and Tzimín Ché Stela 1. Satterthwaite (1951) was among the first to suggest that the *Ajaw* date written on these monuments could be interpreted as *k'atun* names. The *ajaw* glyph did not necessarily have to specify the dedicatory date of the monument, but rather it indicated the day name upon which the current *k'atun* began. Its appearance within a square cartouche is typical of Terminal Classic calendrical conventions.

Text:

A: T?:533:XII

?:AJAW:LAJKA

Caterino's Site, Monument 1

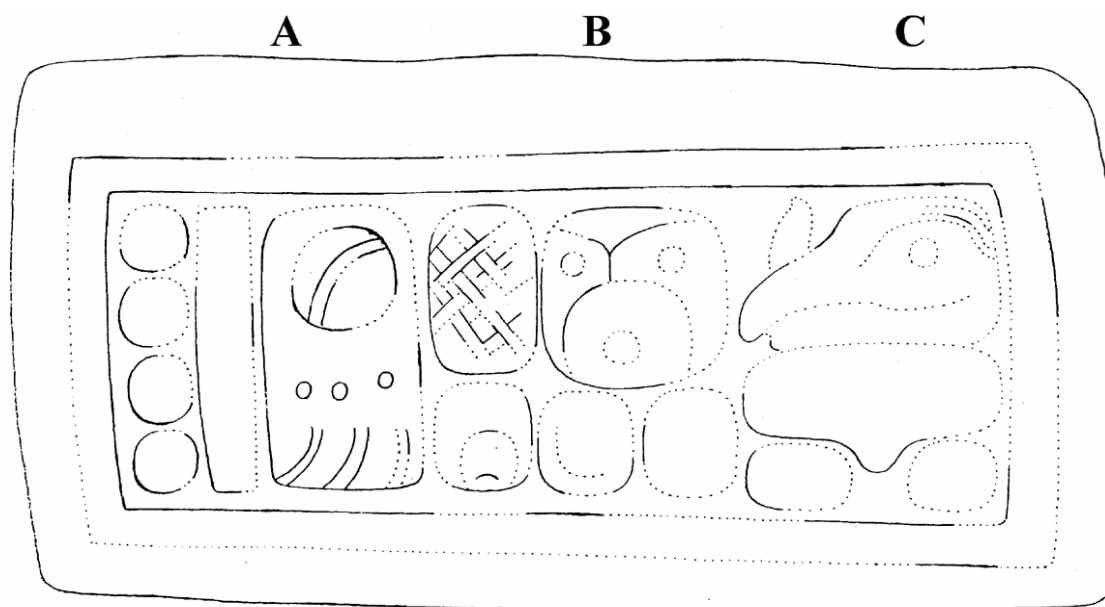


Figure 61. Caterino's Site, Monument 1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Monument 1 was reported by both Dunham *et al.* (nd: 15) as part of the Southern Belize Archaeological Project and by Norman Hammond in a personal communication to Richard Leventhal in 1986. The site is located approximately 3 km north-northeast of Lubaantun and the carved monument was located on an exposed face of a block in the southern talus.

Commentary: The text is unusual in that both the style and syntax of this text seems to mirror the idiosyncratic nature of the texts recorded on the figural plaques of Lubaantún. Following a reference to the Short Count date of 9 *Imix* the text continues with an unusual variant of the T656 TZ'AM glyph followed by the T533 AJAW head and a glyph that looks very much like a variant of the T950v LI bird. Though the exact meaning of

this text is uncertain, it may record the accession of a possible Lubaantún lord.

Text:

A1: TIX.501

B1: T656?:542?.533:178?

C1: T950v:?:?

B'OLON.NAAB'/IMIX/b'a

TZ'AM?:NA?.AJAW:la?

li:?:?

Choco 1: Monument 1

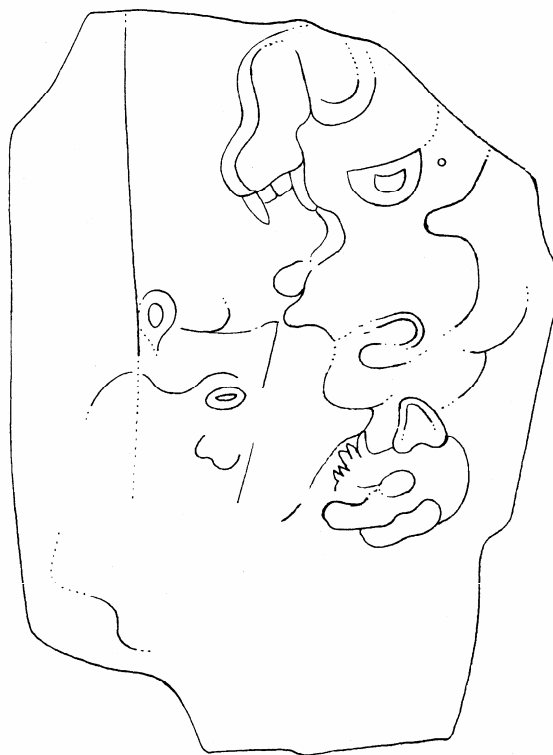


Figure 62. Choco 1: Monument 1 (Drawing by J. Montgomery)

Location: Monument 1 was first reported by a local villager who took members of the Southern Belize Archaeological Project to a small site approximately 2.75 km west-southwest of Lubaantún in 1987 (Dunham *et al.* nd:14). Known today as Choco 1, the site is situated on top of an east-west saddle between a series of hilltops in the vicinity of Lubaantún. According to Dunham *et al.* (nd:14), two pieces of a broken stela were found lying on the ground just east of a still-standing monument base. No plan maps of the site have ever been drawn of Choco 1 and it is uncertain whether the monument fragment is still located at the site today.

Commentary: Carved on Monument 1 is an unusual figural scene that includes at least three individual portrait heads, one of which appears to be skeletal by nature and another appears to be the head of some small mammal.

**APPENDIX B:
A COMMENDIUM OF LONG COUNT DATES FOR THE SOUTHERN MAYA
MOUNTAINS REGION OF BELIZE**

L.C. Date	Year	Monument #	EVENT
1.14.3.3.12 (9 Eb' 10 Muwaan)	24, Jan. 2439 BC	NLP, K1440 Vase	Mythic Birth of <i>B'ahlam Te'</i>
8.2.0.0.0 (5 Ajaw 8 Sak)	11, Feb. 81	Pusilha, Stela P	Unknown Event at <i>Chi</i> -Altar Place
8.6.0.0.0 (10 Ajaw 13 Ch'en)	19, Dec. 159	Pusilha, Stela K	<i>Tuun</i> Binding at <i>Chi</i> -Altar Place
8.16.3.10.2-8.17.1.4.12* (7, Aug. 360-15, Jan. 378)		Uxbenka, Stela 11	Death of <i>Chak Tok Ich'aak I</i>
8.16.3.10.2-8.17.1.4.12* (7, Aug. 360-15, Jan. 378)		Uxbenka, Stela 18	Unknown Event
8.17.0.0.0* (1 Ajaw 8 Ch'en)	20, Oct. 376	Uxbenka, Stela 21	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
8.18.0.0.0* (12 Ajaw 8 Sotz)	7, July 396	Uxbenka, Stela 21	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
8.19.0.0.0* (10 Ajaw 13 K'ayab)	24, Mar. 416	Uxbenka, Stela 21	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
9.0.0.0.0* (8 Ajaw 13 Keh)	10, Dec. 435	Uxbenka, Stela 21	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
9.1.0.0.0 (6 Ajaw 13 Yaxk'in)	25, Aug. 455	Uxbenka, Stela 23	Period Ending
9.4.10.0.0 (12 Ajaw 8 Mol)	24, Aug. 524	NLP, Stela 15	Stela Planting
9.6.17.8.18 (2 Etz'nab' 11 Sek)	17, June 571	Pusilha, Stela P	Accession of <i>K'awiil Kaan K'inich</i>
9.7.0.0.0 (7 Ajaw 3 Kank'in)	5, Dec. 573	Pusilha, Stela O	Period Ending
9.7.0.0.0.0 (7 Ajaw 3 Kank'in)	5, Dec. 573	Pusilha, Stela P	Stela Planting
9.7.10.0.0 (6 Ajaw 13 Sak)	14, Oct. 583	Pusilha, Stela H	Accession of <i>K'ahk' U-Hulaj</i>
9.7.12.6.7 (8 Manik 10 Kayab')	7, Feb. 586	Pusilha, Stela H	Unknown Event
9.8.0.0.0 (5 Ajaw 3 Ch'en)	22, Aug. 593	Pusilha, Stela D	Stela Planting
9.8.0.0.0 (5 Ajaw 3 Ch'en)	22, Aug. 593	Pusilha, Stela Q	Unknown Event
9.8.1.12.8 (2 Lamat 1 Sip)	22, April 595	Pusilha, Stela D	Stela Broken/Downing of Flints
9.9.0.0.0 (3 Ajaw 3 Sotz)	9, May 613	Pusilha, Stela C	Reference to <i>Kan Ch'ok</i>
9.10.15.0.0 (6 Ajaw 13 Mak)	7, Nov. 647	Pusilha, Stela D	Stela Planting
9.10.15.0.0 (6 Ajaw 13 Mak)	7, Nov. 647	Pusilha, Stela P	Stela Planting
9.11.0.0.0 (12 Ajaw 8 Keh)	11, Oct. 652	Pusilha, Stela H	Fire Scattering/Capture Episode
9.11.3.11.0 (12 Ajaw 8 Sotz')	3, May 656	Pusilha, Stela H	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
9.12.0.0.0 (10 Ajaw 8 Yaxk'in)	28, June 672	Pusilha, Stela K	Unknown Event
9.12.0.0.0* (10 Ajaw 8 Yaxk'in)	28, June 672	Uxbenka, Stela 14	Unknown Event
9.12.11.13.11 (3 Chuwen 4 Kumk'u)	28, Jan. 684	Uxbenka, Stela 19	Unknown Event
9.13.0.0.0* (8 Ajaw 8 Wo)	15, Mar. 692	Uxbenka, Stela 14	Unknown Event
9.14.0.0.0 (6 Ajaw 13 Muwaan)	1, Dec. 711	Pusilha, Stela M	Fire Scattering
9.14.5.4.0 (1 Ajaw 8 Kumk'u)	23, Jan. 717	NLP, K1440 Vase	Pre-accession of <i>B'ahlam Te'</i>
9.14.10.0.0 (5 Ajaw 3 Mak)	9, Oct. 721	NLP, Stela 15	Fire Scattering
9.14.15.4.14 (11x 12 Pax)	16, Dec. 726	NLP, Stela 2	Accession of <i>B'ahlam Te'</i>
9.14.10.15.0 (6 Ajaw 18 Ch'en)	5, August 722	NLP, Stela 15	Fire Scattering
9.15.0.0.0 (4 Ajaw 13 Yax)	18, Aug. 731	NLP, Stela 2	Stela Planting
9.15.0.0.0 (4 Ajaw 13 Yax)	18, Aug. 731	Pusilha, Stela E	<i>Tuun</i> Binding
9.15.0.0.0 (4 Ajaw 13 Yax)	18, Aug. 731	Pusilha, Stela U	Fire Scattering/Accession
9.15.7.0.0 (2 Ajaw 18 Mol)	12, July 738	NLP, Stela 2	Stela Planting
9.15.7.3.2 (12 Ik' 0 Keh)	12, Sept. 738	NLP, Stela 2	Dedication of Stela 2
9.15.10.0.0 (3 Ajaw 3 Mol)	26, June 741	NLP, Stela 1	Scattering
9.15.10.0.0* (3 Ajaw 3 Mol)	26, June 741	Lubaantún, FP #6	<i>Lajuntuun</i> Period Ending
9.16.0.0.0 (2 Ajaw 13 Sak)	5, May 751	Uxbenka, Stela 22	Fire Scattering
9.16.0.0.0 (2 Ajaw 13 Sak)	5, May 751	Pusilha, Stela F	Scattering
9.16.3.5.8 (7 Lamat 6 Yax)	5, August 754	Lubaantún, Pocket Stela	Stela Planting/Fire Scattering
9.17.0.0.0 (13 Ajaw 18 Kumk'u)	20, Jan. 771	Pusilha, Stela N	Fire Scattering
9.17.10.0.0 (12 Ajaw 8 Pax)	28, Nov. 780	Uxbenka, Stela 15	Fire Scattering
9.17.10.0.0 (12 Ajaw 8 Pax)	28, Nov. 780	Xnaheb, Stela 2	Fire Scattering
9.18.0.0.0 (11 Ajaw 18 Mak)	7, Oct. 790	NLP, Stela 14	Scattering
9.18.0.0.0 (11 Ajaw 18 Mak)	7, Oct. 790	NLP, Stela 21	Scattering at <i>Ox Witik</i>
9.18.7.10.3 (4 Ak'b'al 1 Sotz)	22, Mar. 798	Pusilha, HS	Stairway Dedication?
9.18.10.0.0 (10 Ajaw 8 Sak)	15, Aug. 800	NLP, Stela 14	Scattering
9.19.0.0.0 (9 Ajaw 18 Mol)	24, June 810	NLP, Stela 7	Unknown Event
10.0.0.0.0 (7 Ajaw 18 Sip)	11, Mar. 830	NLP, Stela 3	Period Ending
10.4.0.0.0 (12 Ajaw 3 Wo)	15, Jan. 909	Tzimin Che, Stela 1	Period Ending

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