Iconography and Style of Calakmul's imperialism

(AD 600-750)

imposed on secondary kingdoms

The case of La Corona, Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul

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ABSTRACT

Calakmul was the seat of the Kanu'l dynasty (The Snake) during the Late Classic period, one of the most important and powerful dynasties of all the Classic Maya dynasties. The Kanu'l dynasty's desire to rule over smaller cities was met in the sixth century by the response from its main rival, Tikal. Victories over Tikal and its vassals in the sixth and seventh centuries led to the establishment of a widespread overkingship by the Kanu'l dynasty, whose influence extended to all parts of the Maya Lowlands.

Although the Snake dynasty was never considered an empire, it employed some imperial strategies to incorporate smaller sites into its sphere of influence. One of these strategies was the co-optation of local rulers. Archaeologically, this can be seen in the imitation of imperial styles. The introduction of the Kanu'l style to other sites was mainly based on the adoption and repetition of the same art conventions and symbols. The Kanu'l dynasty paid particular attention to visual representations as a means of political control, propaganda and the dissemination of ideologies and ideas.

So far, little is known about how the incorporation of centres located in close proximity to Calakmul changed their use of style and symbol system. Paired stelae and ballgame panels at Uxul, Naachtun, La Corona and Oxpemul follow an iconographic programme known from other sites under Kanu'l dynasty rule. Areas far from Calakmul may have emulated this imperial style as very prestigious or powerful, but in the case of towns close to it, this is usually seen as evidence of political control. Nevertheless, there is much diversity among Uxul, La Corona, Naachtun and Oxpemul in terms of the chronology of the paired stelae and ballgame panels, their location, and the post-depositional processes. All these factors suggest that different dynamics (imitation, co-option, forced adoption/imposition) are reflected in the iconographic practises of these centres. My case study is

also a good example of how a superstate uses iconography as a means of asserting power and domination and how its subordinates responded to its imperial politics.

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Danke

Gracias

Dziękuję

TABLE OF CONTENT

Contents

TABLE OF FIGURES

TABLE OF TABLES

TABLE OF CATALOGUE

TABLE OF MAPS

INTRODUCTION

The Late Classic period in the central part of the Maya Lowlands was characterised by the antagonism of two kingdoms: Tikal, located in northern Petén (Guatemala), and Kanu'l with its capital at Calakmul, in southern Campeche (Mexico). The fifth and sixth centuries, the time when the Kanu'l dynasty resided in Dzibanche (Quintano Roo, Mexico), marked the first expansion of their territory. In the seventh century, after an internal conflict within the Kanu'l dynasty, the victorious branch of the dynasty settled in Calakmul (Delvendahl 2010; Helmke and Awe 2016a, 2016b, Martin 2005a, 2008, 2011, 2012, Marcus 1976, Mumary Farto 2019; Nalda 2004).

In the seventh and eighth centuries, Calakmul created networks of relationships that helped extend its influence far beyond its kingdom. The role Calakmul played in marriage alliances, battles, commemorations, and accessions confirmed its status as an overkingship (Canuto et al.2017, Carrasco 2012; Estrada Belli and Tokovinine 2016; Martin and Grube 2008, Martin and Beliaev 2017; Martin 2008; Nygard and Wren 2008; Sharer 2006). Yet, despite all the efforts devoted to the study of ancient political power, relatively little attention has been paid to the question of how Calakmul kings incorporated weaker polities into the sphere of their domination. "Only recently scholars' move their interest from exploring the economic and social foundation of ancient polities to the study of political strategies of acquiring authority and staying in power" (Foias 2013:24).

Although Calakmul was never considered an empire, at the height of its power this powerful city employed some imperial strategies that enabled it to gain political control over its subordinates, especially within its kingdom. Its dominance was achieved through imitation of style rather than acquisition of territory.

1

Visual communication provided an effective and reliable method for transmitting information between the centre and its subordinates. In the Late Classic Period, the Kanu'l dynasty paid special attention to visual representations as a means of disseminating ideologies and ideas to its vassals, clients, and subordinates. Kanu'l rulers promoted certain iconographic patterns to emphasise their common identity. The adoption of imperial style at these sites was mainly based on the adoption and repetition of the same art conventions and symbols (Grube 2004; Marcus 1987; Reese Taylor et al. 2009). However, it is still not fully understood how this political program of control and expansion was introduced inside its kingdom.

For a long time, scholars have seen Calakmul as a single dominant power within southern Campeche and northern Petén, surrounded by a number of different smaller sites that were considered its satellites (Marcus 1976). Hieroglyphic inscriptions provide information about Calakmul's supremacy in the seventh century at sites around Calakmul, such as Champerico, Uxul, Naachtun, Oxpemul, Los Alacranes or La Corona. Recent epigraphic discoveries and archaeological excavations have provided important new information about the socio-political link between Calakmul and these sites (Canuto and Barrientos 2013a, 2018, 2019, Canuto et al. 2009, 2017; Grube and Paap 2009, Grube and Martin 1998, Grube 2008, Nondédéo et al. 2018, Robichaux 2010, Ruppert and Denison 1943). Iconographers have also used the discoveries of murals, art objects and other types of data for aesthetic, anthropological and historical studies. These developments have produced an enormous amount of material that needs to be analysed. Indeed, some of the sites lying in a radius of up to 40km from Calakmul, such as Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul, follow an iconographic program known from other, more distant sites allied to Calakmul.

Icons are central to a recent branch of archaeology, cognitive processual archaeology. The very physicality of art provides an excellent medium for the intellectual study of other societies. One of the implications of this research is that wall paintings and objects with iconographic

elements may reflect their meaning more clearly than we previously thought. These are also examples of imperial imagery designed to be persuasive and recognisable to a society that was overwhelmingly illiterate. The understanding of a message, especially in ancient cultures, often depends on the effectiveness of visual representations. Moreover, the particular role of the artists responsible for creating these works of art was to facilitate communication between the kings and their people. They were responsible for conveying the messages from the elite to the public, and for these reasons they were an important part of the socio-political structure. Media are carriers of important religious and political symbolism and a rich source of information. Moreover, they may not only have conveyed one meaning, but communicated multiple levels of meaning in complex ways. Consequently, altars, stelae, monuments, ceramics, and walls can be analysed iconographically in ritual, mythological, anonymous, or historical terms. Myths and rituals were fused with politics, which is evident in the iconographic records (Burszta 1998:73-75; Donald 2001:258; Schele and Miller 1986). We should bear in mind, however, that there may have been many other material objects made of perishable material that simply did not survive and whose information is now lost. Mesoamerican iconography was mainly a medium of communication controlled by the elite. The content of icons was used to disseminate the point of view of local elites and was sometimes manipulated to achieve certain political goals. The media that carried images were designed to influence their audience, often by selectively presenting the facts. The iconography of power was particularly important to rulers. Rulership was shaped through political communication and iconography played an important role in this process. Maya architecture not only had a religious and political function, but the images were also designed to make political statements about the rulers. The visual representations characteristic of the Kanu'l dynasty can be understood as a genuine political message. These messages served as a means

for the rulers to communicate ideas and legitimise their power (Schele 1993). The entire political system was based on the display of wealth and power. The most important rulers invested considerable effort in the public display of their ideology. This ideology was based on a glorification of the king and militarism, which was reflected in art, architecture, sculptures, paintings and official state symbols of authority (Schele and Miller 1986). In my studies on the imperial art of Calakmul, I will use the term "iconographic analysis" in a broader sense that corresponds to the iconological level of the art historian Erwin Panofsky. I will try to reconstruct the deeper meaning of an artwork by placing it in an appropriate broader socio-cultural and political context. A spatial, cultural, or temporal context is crucial for interpreting the meaning of a representation. The medium chosen to express ideas and thoughts (e.g. ceramics, monumental sculptures, altars, lintels) implies the type of information encoded and categorised by the audience - the recipients of a particular message (Zubrow 1994:107). In previous studies, icons have played a role, but in most cases they have received less attention than other groups of archaeological data. There is a tendency to use icons only as a supplement to other types of archaeological remains and written sources. For this reason, knowledge about political networks and imperialism in the Late Classic Maya world is mainly based on epigraphic and archaeological data, ignoring the rich source of information provided by iconography. My research deals with the rich iconography data as a means to evaluate the kind of strategies Calakmul employed in the Late Classic Period to incorporate weaker polities into the sphere of its domination. The case studies are Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul, but also the slightly more distant (about 90 km) La Corona, which I have included in my research because of its special and unique relationship with Calakmul.

Research Goals

The aim of this study is to examine how the symbols and style associated with Calakmul served as instruments for establishing and securing power and legitimation, and as indicators of

supremacy and imperialism in the region of southern Campeche and northern Petén. This work attempts to shed light on the role of symbols and iconography in representing the power of the Kanu'l in the Calakmul area: specifically, in La Corona, Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul. This in itself is a major undertaking that has never been done before. The visual patterns characteristic of Calakmul have been studied and discussed before, but either they have been examined separately or they have been treated as an additional source of information about larger Maya political systems. Through the descriptions and interpretations of this vast amount of empirical material, I seek to provide new evidence for the relationship between Calakmul and its secondary kingdoms. By secondary kingdoms, in my case, I mean kingdoms that a) are located in considerable proximity to Calakmul, b) are not part of Calakmul, c) do not have full political independence, and d) are ruled by local lords.

On a more general level, my research project is part of a larger scholarly endeavour to examine how a Mesoamerican empire that is expanding uses iconography as a means to assert power and dominance. To understand power, one must analysis it in its most Different and specific manifestations. Power is not limited to specific places and sites, but it is also embedded in an individual's dress, behaviour, and actions, which in the case of ancient societies is often evident in art.

Combining different types of data will provide a solid foundation for developing new models about the role of iconography and art as legitimating strategies of power in the ancient Maya kingdoms. In this way, I will be able to assess how the sameness expressed in standardised and conventionalised visual patterns helped to convey Kanu'l identity. My research will therefore also make an important contribution to a more balanced understanding of the complex relationship between the "superpower" and its subjects by demonstrating the role of art, and iconography in particular, in understanding the political system of the Maya Lowlands. Furthermore, placing the monuments in their broad archaeological perspective (location within

the site, relationship to other monuments, spolia) will provide a broader understanding of the role of art in politics and show how iconographic themes and motifs can be used as historical evidence.

Regarding the relations between Calakmul and its subordinates, these issues bring forth a couple of interesting implications. I am particularly interested in how the people experienced their subordination and how this affected their material culture.

How is political domination expressed in art? How does the incorporation of one polity into another change its use of style and symbol system? Did all sites that were in close proximity to the dominant power respond similarly to its imperialist visual strategies? Did Calakmul impose codified iconographic patterns? These questions also touch on the broader issue of the importance of art in legitimising power among the Classic Maya.

The research question is based on the database of the temporal and spatial distribution of the four codified and standardised iconographic themes and motifs often associated with the rule of Late Classic Calakmul:

1) Paired stelae 2) Ballgame panels 3) Net costume 4) Woman standing on the captive

I will use this consistent and reliable source of data to address the question of the expression of Calakmul's power in an iconographic context.

My initial research questions concerned the relationship between distance from the dominant center and the degree of imitation of the imperial style. Areas that were far from the hegemonic centre might have adopted this imperial art as particularly prestigious or powerful, but in the case of towns that were less than 30-40 km from Calakmul, the appearance and adoption of certain themes and motifs might have served as evidence of political control. However, during my research it became clear that there are major differences in La Corona, Naachtun, Uxul and Oxpemul in terms of the type of iconographic motifs used, the chronology of monuments

bearing features of Kanu'l motifs, and their archaeological context. In addition, the iconographic program of these sites differs from those further away from Calakmul, and also from allies. All these factors reveal different models of interaction and submission to the hegemon, manifested in different ways at different sites. Local centres were an important part of a larger chain of power, so that the influence of decisions made by provincial lords and their interests must also be taken into account when examining certain art conventions.

That there was such heterogeneity in terms of content and style may also have to do with the materials available and the existence of local art schools and workshops that developed individual styles. The processes and strategies of integrating art into the political system of political control are also interesting in comparison with other ancient states and empires. Political control based on propaganda in art is not limited to Maya culture. In fact, all ancient empires advocated the use of propaganda, employing a range of techniques to convey their ideas, messages, and influence. Art, with its transparency, was one of the preferred means for ancient peoples to exercise power and control.

It was an active player in the domination and establishing asymmetrical hierarchies (Ellenius 1998). The Aztecs, Teotihuacan, the Incas, The Ancient Rome and even the regimes of the Soviet Union and the Third Reich all used iconography to convey messages relating to social, cultural, and economic control and political authority. Even the most distant territories were subjugated. The rule of the Late Classic Kanu'l was much weaker than that of empires, even at sites close to its capital, Calakmul. The degree of influence of the Kanu'l on Uxul, La Corona, Naachtun and Oxpemul was different at each site, which is reflected in their Late Classic iconographic program.

One of the specific aims of this study is to examine how Calakmul's system of overlordship over polities of different rank and status is apparent in the iconographic records. I will examine how the imitation of imperial styles and symbols by the limited and localised centres differs

from those of the larger centres. To this end, I will discuss the themes and motifs that appear in Calakmul and other sites under the political influence of the Kanu'l (El Peru Waka, Piedras Negras, Naranjo, among others) and compare them with the Late Classic iconographic program of Uxul, Naachtun, Oxpemul and La Corona. The comparison will also provide important case studies to test the hypothesis on the role of visual programs in political propaganda.

Furthermore, in this study I attempt to demonstrate that although the paired stelae, ballgame panels, the woman standing on the captive and the motif of the net costume more or less concern the iconography of power, only the first two themes can be strictly related to the predominance of the Kanu'l. The implications of the above idea for understanding the relations between Calakmul and its immediate neighbours are significant. The information contained in the visual media would enable me to place the history of La Corona, Naachtun, Uxul and Oxpemul within a broader context of the political history of the Kanu'l dynasty in the Late Classic Period. Finally, a close examination of the visual programmes of the Kanu'l in La Corona, Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul fill in some of the gaps in studies of the iconography of power and allows us to see Calakmul as a complex entity in which authority was constantly negotiated. The contribution of this research advocates iconographic patterns as modes of political communication in which socio-political power was constructed and in which dynamic tensions between Calakmul and its allies were articulated.

CHAPTER I.

THEORETICAL APPROACH TO POWER, IMPERIALISM AND ART

1.1 Introduction

The political system of the Maya Lowlands was formed in a dynamic process in which shifting economic, cultural, political, and social relations led to the political expansion of the most powerful kingdoms. The integration of the centers of different sizes into networks was accomplished on the elite level. As a result, extensive elite networks reaching beyond the borders of the particular kingdom were created. Through this integration, large centres became the capital of the states bringing the less powerful sites into the orbit of their domination (Foias 2013, Hammond 1991; Martin and Grube 1994, 1995; Smith 2003). The incorporation of smaller sites into the superstates could lead to the reorganization and transformation of the architectural and iconographic patterns of these incorporated states (Grube and Delvendahl 2015:8).

The Kanu'l dynasty promoted visual representations as a means of spreading ideologies and ideas to its subordinates (Jabłońska 2016; Marcus 1987; Vázquez López 2016, 2017). While the primary goal of my thesis is to investigate how art, iconography, in particular, was incorporated into the imperial strategies of Calakmul, this chapter seeks to advance our understanding of the role of art, power, and propaganda in a wider political context.

Art, which can be defined as a system of communication that could carry information on a wide range of easily decoded topics, was one of the preferable means for the ancient people to express the power (Smith and Montiel 2001:246).

The Aztec, the Teotihuacan, The Incas, Ancient Rome and even the twentieth century regimes of the Soviet Union and the Third Reich are worthy comparisons. These examples, drawn from

a variety of cultures and periods, offer promising points of analogy and comparison to the case of imperial strategies of the Kanu'l dynasty.

This chapter advocates the processes and strategies of art incorporation into the political system of control by these major empires. Of special importance are ancient empires because they widely used programs of iconographic communication.

This chapter will also provide the theoretical background of my research, addressing the role of iconography in communicating messages related to social, cultural, and economic control and political authority. The study of iconography must display congruence with multiple lines of other disciplines such as epigraphy, archaeology, linguistics, and semiotics. My dissertation relies upon these data, aware of limitations and restrictions each may potentially encompass. A brief discussion of the value of these sources will be presented.

I will also present some important concepts of power, focusing on theoretical issues explaining how power is conveyed in iconography. This interplay between power and iconography will constitute an analytical framework for my studies. However, I will commence with Erwin Panofsky's methodological approach to iconography, which has contributed significantly to our understanding of art.

1.2 Panofsky's approach to art

Iconography is one of the branches of art history whose intention is to delimit the form from the subject matter or meaning and is based on identification, description, and the interpretation of the content of images (Panofsky 1939). Broadly speaking, the term *iconography* is frequently referred to as the media of icons (paintings, sculptures, stelae, ceramics, lintels), where icons are seen as the embodiment of ideas and meaning. The study of iconography relies on the work of describing, analysing, classifying, and relating various motifs and themes to the broader cultural and political context within they operated (Hassenumeller 1978:295).

Likewise, the study of iconography should be regarded as an important intellectual process. The appearance of visual symbols and images preceded the acquisition of writing skills. Therefore, symbols and images have been an effective means of cultural communication, especially in societies without written language or where the knowledge of writing is limited (Ganguly and Mandy 2004:2). As viewed from the structuralist perspective, the symbol becomes an object that is conveyed with meaning; when it is incorporated into a group of symbols it can reflect on culture (Ganguly and Mandy 2004:29-30).

The analysis of all sculptural and ceramic sources studied in the present work is based on the method of decoding the meaning of art, expressed most explicitly by German art historians – Aby Warburg and Erwin Panofsky. Aby Warburg[1] was a precursor in an iconographic method within the history of art, later developed by Erwin Panofsky (Johnson nd https://warburg.library.cornell.edu/about/aby-warburg). Although both scholars concentrated on Renaissance paintings, their methods of discerning strata of meaning have been widely employed in all iconographical studies. The work of Panofsky, in distinguishing three levels of meaning in art, contributed significantly to the way we perceive and understand the work of art. Applying Panofsky's method to my research on the iconography of imperialism constitutes a solid theoretical and methodological background that I chose to adopt and apply.

Panofsky distinguished pre-iconographic, iconographic, and iconological interpretations of art. The pre-iconographic description was based on the recognition and perception of "pure forms." The next level of interpretation, "Iconography" relied on the analysis of images that Erwin Panofsky considered as a traditional association of motif and literary content (Holly 1985:160). It included socio-cultural associations (e.g., ideological, historical, political, mythological, or related to rank) and/or "personal" (e.g., related to sex and age) (Panofsky

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[1] Warburg was the first to define iconology, the term referring now both to the study of images and to the history of art.

1955:39). Contrary to pre- iconographic and iconographic interpretations, which were viewed by Panofsky as a descriptive process, "iconology," the last level of interpretation, was considered as a matter of synthesis. Explicitly, iconology was an interpretation that reached the essential and unconscious meaning of art (Popescu 2011:5-7). To give an analogy; Panofsky compared iconography to our recognition of thirteen men sitting around the table in the Last Supper. A great degree of cultural knowledge has to be shared to conclude that the scene of thirteen men eating refers to a particular supper and conveys a biblical message (Panofsky 1939:8).

Regarding "Iconology," its object was defined as „symbolical values" as Cassirer called it. This turns us into symbols themselves, which are essential components of the Iconological interpretation. The literal sense of symbols refers us to its second deeper meaning. In this regard, the media carry messages that need to be decoded in order to understand them fully (Cassirer 1971:312-318).

In my studies of Calakmul's imperial art, I will use the term "iconographical analysis" in a broader sense, corresponding to the iconological level of Panofsky. It is difficult to reach the third level of Panofsky's studies within Mesoamerican studies as the number of written texts that goes with the image is limited. Panofsky relied on texts when interpreting the work of art, something that can not be fully achieved within Mesoamerican art.

Nevertheless, I will try to reconstruct the political meaning of a work of art by placing it in a suitable broader socio-cultural and political context. However, before that, I will employ a general methodology of art history in the analysis of particular motifs and themes of representations that I chose to work on. These motifs and themes, together with symbols, constitute three hermeneutic levels introduced by Panofsky as a means to study the art.

The second of Panofsky's hermeneutic levels is confined to themes that form specific components of conventional subject matter and refer to images, stories, and allegories

(Panofsky 1939, 1955). In order to understand particular representations, we need to concentrate on their specific components and then analyse the whole set. We should keep in mind, however, that the interpretation of the entire depiction may differ from the meaning of its particular components (Kurtz 2001). As Kubler pinpointed, "the success of iconographical methods depends upon the detection of relational and contextual uniformities among the motifs composing the pictorial themes" (Kubler 1969:4). The analysis of particular elements of depiction helps to address some issues reaching beyond the simple description of who and what is represented. In Panofsky's terminology, we reach the iconological level of interpretation, which in terms of imperial strategies of power allows us to seek the relationship between political or/and social power and the power of images.

1.3 History of Studies in Maya Iconography

The modern study of Classic Maya iconography can be traced back to the beginnings of the twentieth century when H.J Spinden's "*Study of Maya Art" its subject matter and historical development* (1913) was first published. As Kubler noticed nothing superior come out in the following decades, excepting the "*A Study of Classic Maya Sculpture*" (1950) by Tatiana Proskouriakoff and "*Maya Hieroglyphic Writing" (*1950) by Eric Thompson. Proskouriakoff was devoted to stylistic analysis of iconographic elements, characteristic to the particular time. She was matching visual patterns with events inscribed in accompanying texts in order to catch the change of style through time and space. She understood the style as a form of communication for conveying information about *inter alia* political status affiliation and relations between centres. Her contribution to Maya studies was also a systematic approach in analysing the meaning of motifs, which changed not only through time but also from observer to observer (Proskouriakoff 1950:2-3).

Proskouriakoff's methods of stylistic analysis are still employed by scholars to establish an estimated date of a monument when its inscription is too eroded to be read. Her method based on the seriation of selected motifs provides a good background for my studies. I will use and apply Proskouriakoff's data to conduct my proper analysis.

With regards to Thompson, his compendious "*Maya hieroglyphic Writing*" dominated the area of Maya iconography and for decades it was the major source of Maya art studies. It was not until the decipherment of Maya writing and advances in this field that iconography gained more attention among scholars. It was Linda Schele and her respectful attitude towards art that brought Maya iconography into the light (Schele and Miller 1986; Schele and Freidel 1990). Jane Berlo (1983), Linda Schele and Mary Miller (1986), with their "epigraphic- iconographic approach" in analysing Maya iconography contributed significantly to a fuller understanding of Maya art. Berlo even applied the term "embedded text" to refer to conjoined texts and images in Mesoamerican art (Berlo 1983:11). Nowadays, iconographers can recognize and define most of the visual elements and motifs represented in Maya art (Berlo 1983; Kettunen 2005; Kubler 1969; Miller 1981; Proskouriakoff 1950; Schele and Miller 1986). Modern Maya scholars have established a strong and close link between iconography and epigraphy. This premise is successfully applied in the project Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions which has run since 1968 and has involved many prominent scholars such as Ian Graham, Peter Mathews, Eric Von Euw, David Stuart and it is also applied in the photographic collection of a great number of ceramic vessels compiled by Justin Kerr, Francis Robicseck, Donald Hales and Nicholas Hellmuth. Their work has been a fundamental act of development of both iconography and epigraphy within Maya studies.

1.4 Epigraphy

As strong links between epigraphy and iconography have been established, the correlation of these two data will constitute a solid basis for my research.

Interestingly, the verb for writing in both Mayan and Nahuatl (*tz'ib*; and *tlacuiloliztli* respectively) has also the meaning of "painting" and "drawing"[2] (Olko 2010:352).

Thus, it seems clear that for Mesoamerican cultures, the links between text and image were very strong since both were regarded as a medium of communication (Figure 1.1). Texts and images transmit a coherent message (Schele and Miller 1986:45-55). When the text accompanies the image, the viewer is encouraged to find a meaningful relationship between them. Also, the artist may intentionally manipulate the relationship between them. The relations between text and image can be described in three ways 1) as symmetry when the image closely relates to the text, 2) as an augmentation when the image enhances or extend the text or gives it a new meaning and 3) as a contradiction when the image contradicts the text. When viewed in such terms, it seems clear that studying Maya iconography requires an interdisciplinary approach in which the reading of an associated text has great value and significance (Kornalijnslijper 2007:222).

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[2] Additionally, the words for writing and codices in Nahuatl (*tlilli, tlapalli*) also refer to the wisdom and knowledge of their creators (Olko 2010:352).
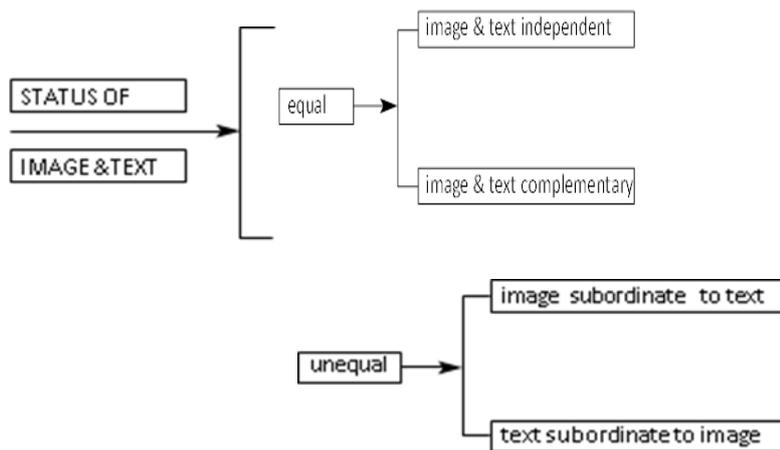
Figure 1. 1. Image–text relations (after Martinec and Salway 2005: Fig. 8).

Nevertheless, although texts have indisputably a lot of interpretative potencies, and are more "exposed" to scholars' interpretations, visual symbols are sometimes more marked and more influential, as they reach out to the wider circle of recipients and are more transparent (Ganguly and Mandy 2004:2). In this case, the image can be considered as the main carrier of information, and the text plays only a supplemental role. Besides, a text does not always explain the picture. In fact, the same image or text may convey different meanings for a different audience in a different context.

The use and meaning of symbols may change through time; symbols may acquire different meanings depending on who "reads" them. For these reasons, one has to be aware of the contextualisation of an iconographic motif. Miller (1983) applied a diagram that explains the relationship between context and images. At the base of the diagram lies the memory of society at a particular time and space, called "encyclopaedic knowledge." Links between the image and encyclopaedic knowledge depend on the context of the image as well as on its spatial and temporal background. In order to analyse and interpret visual representation, the process involved in its formation must be explored. In this sense, compared to the written metaphor, an image is a more powerful means by which its meaning is revealed. We receive less information about the image by studying its accompanying text than analysing the mechanism by which the image was formed (Miller 1983:51). To discover this mechanism, a semiotic approach to art

and culture must be applied. The study of semiotics, to which Panofsky and his followers frequently alluded, is regarded by the art historians as complementary to the iconological analysis and particularly useful in studying symbols and icons. For these reasons, I applied semantics as the theoretical framework and background for my research on Calakmul's iconography of power[3] (Hasenmueller 1978:290-295).

1.5 Semiotics

Semiotics can be defined as a field of study exploring the nature, structure, and function of the sign. It is a philosophical theory of signs and symbols that take the form of images, words, acts, gestures, and objects. Of my particular interest is semantics, the branch of semiotics that focuses on the relation between signs and their meaning. In both disciplines, the reader has to recognise the source as silent and make meaning out of it by employing cultural codes. The existence of these codes enables the representation to be created and interpreted. Thus, the sign is determined by the code to which it is attributed (Bagha 2011:1411). As can be seen, the implications of these issues reach far beyond traditional semiotic methods employed mainly in linguistic and in literary fields (Donald 2002; Hasenmueller 1978:298). The emphasis on the images in my research refers to various systems of signs, transparent in different kinds of media, from various political and socio-cultural contexts. Cognitive semiotics, integrating a wide range of methods and theories from different fields of cognitive studies, is of special importance with regard to my research. It addresses the questions of how meaning is created, including the production of meaning through art and communication. Hence, cognitive semiotics and semantics provide me with a conceptual framework and endow my research with a set of methods essential to conduct proper iconographic analysis. The methods employed and

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[3] These two methods, however, require some modification when applying them to Maya art.

integrated into cognitive semiotics are developed, among other things in cognitive archaeology. The archaeological context of the work of art may reflect the intentions of artists and provide us with some information on the depiction itself (Zubrow 1994:110).

1.6 Archaeology

I will base my research on cognitive archaeology defined as the domain of investigations that focus on the way ancient people thought. As Colin Renfrew pointed out, "all human behaviour is symbolic behaviour" (Renfrew 1994:5). Cassirer used even the term an *animal symbolicum* to define humans (Cassirer 1971). There are different symbolic categories, within a symbolic system; however, I will restrict myself to depictions. The media expressing ideas and thoughts (e.g., ceramics, monumental sculptures, altars, lintels) indicates the kind of information that was encoded and categorised by the audience – the receivers of a particular message (Zubrow 1994:107). Also, specific kinds of media offer a different kind of framework for representations (Brumfiel 2001:283; Domingo Sanz *et al.* 2008; Miller 1983).

The media carrying images also mediates between the cognition of scientists and the cognition of the ancient artist. What is more, they accommodate the past with the present. We should keep in mind; however, that this process is not static and simple (Zubrow 1994:107). Different methods of analysis and interpretation should be employed when the artists and the interpreter do not come from the same historical and cultural background; therefore, they do not share the same part of knowledge. (Domingo Sanz *et al*. 2008:15). The cognition expressed through material culture is partly determined by the scientist's knowledge of this particular culture as well as his/her mental abilities, "the commonalities of the profession and most important the universality of aspects of human cognition" (Zubrow 1994:107).

A context, either spatial, cultural, or temporal is crucial whilst interpreting the meaning of a depiction. Under this premise, I will give detailed information on which particular media

Calakmul's imperial iconography is represented, where it is situated within the site and finally how its style can be defined.

The contextual approach to the study of iconography is of particular importance as it helps to validate or reject hypotheses formulated from "patterns apprehended in iconography" (Zender 2003:12). Following Zender, I agree that the context and detailed and complete synthesis of a work of art are crucial in order to understand it from a subjective perspective. Speaking of the context, the iconography of sites like Late Classic Uxul, La Corona, Naachtun, and Oxpemul appears in the context of Calakmul's domination and power. Therefore, it is reasonable to present some issues concerning the role and nature of power.

1.7 Power

This subchapter will advocate various approaches to the theory of power and will raise some questions about models and concepts of power within archaeology and the history of art.

Scholars have assumed that the relations of power are about to be found solely at the macro and central levels. This assumption has produced little interference into the world of a powerless and marginal group of people. It also strengthens the notion that the people exaggerating power reside at the state's centres, whilst those subjugated are located only at the regional level. As a result, the minor centres are considered passive receivers of power transmitted from the core of the state. The assumption that the centres are the only focal conductors of power is at odds with factual archaeological and iconographical evidence (Kothari 2002:140). According to Foucault, methodologies based on the framework where micro is set against macro and powerless against powerful have created a disordered effect on how we perceive the power and its distribution. Power is not static and inert; rather, it should be considered as dynamic and conflictive; in fact, there is a constant war between the leaders and their followers or/and subordinates. As Foucault states, "power must be analysed as

something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization" (Foucault 1980:86). In this regard, we should not perceive a state as a holder of power and its subordinates as the subject of power because they all take an active part in its distributions and transformations. As Kothari noted, all individuals are a vehicle of power (Kothari 2002:141).

To understand power, one has to analyse it in its most varied and specific manifestation and be aware of the fact that it is not only restricted to particular sites and places but is also embedded in an individual's costume, behaviour and action, which in case of ancient societies it is frequently displayed in art (Kothari 2002:144). The iconography of power cannot be studied only based on visual well recognisable attributes of power, separately from accompanying postures, gestures, clothes, and other body adornments such as headdresses or jewellery. All of these elements communicate the meaning and are transparent indicators of rank, gender, wealth, class, and a performed function.

Moreover, power may change its location and operate through different strategies. One of them is iconography. Giving a Maya example; several panels from Uxul portrait Kanu'l kings while playing the ballgame at the site of Uxul (Grube *et al*. 2012; Grube and Delvendahl 2014:89-90, 91-92). At Piedras Negras or El Peru Waka,' the collaboration with Calakmul in the Late Classic Period is best exemplified by the presence of paired stelae characteristic of Kanu'l domination (Jabłońska 2016; Marcus 1987, 2012, Tuszyńska 2016; Vázquez López 2017). Thus, the power embedded in Kanu'l king's status and rank is not only displayed in Calakmul, the city where the mighty king resided, but also at its allied sites (sees more Chapters IV and V).

All strategies through which power operates are designed to fill a particular role. Anthropologies explore how the leaders, nobles, and kings by using skills, power, cunning, and

various strategies, achieved their political goals. These goals usually concentrate on increasing rulers' authority, enhancing their legitimacy, defeating the enemy, or imposing their will (Kurtz 2001:10, 30). Yet the question of sources of power has to be addressed, for power is reflected in the control of resources: material and ideational, or both of them (Kurtz 2001:31).

There are at least five sources of power: ideological, economic, social, military, and political. The use of coercion and force to achieve political goals sometimes appears to be too costly; therefore, ideological means were applied. Ideological sources of power are of my particular interest because they include, among other symbols, information, and knowledge. Control of symbols and the exchange of information between elites may have been a political strategy to maintain power (Foias 2013:30). The understanding of a message, especially in ancient cultures, frequently depends on the effectiveness of visual representations. Herein, it should be stated that this visual communication provides an effective and reliable method for transmitting information between the centre and its subordinates (Miller 1983:44). In visual communication, access to information is restricted only to those who can "read" symbols, therefore to those who possess certain knowledge. This knowledge is symbolic, for the meaning becomes transparent only by evoking other metaphors detectable in numerous media. As Miller noted, this knowledge is not of things or words but of "memory of things and words of conceptual representations" (Miller 1983:49).

Besides, visual representations conveyed standardized ideologies and ideas to impose meaning on political activities. Thus, the power that is provided is more subtle but not minor. According to Geertz "cultural systems such as religion and ideology consist of a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (Geertz 1993:90).

Symbols provoke an intense response in the audience. They can evoke strong feelings and emotions, apart from conveying specific knowledge. At the same time, the elite can manipulate the meaning of symbols and information, so they fit their needs (Ganguly and Mandy 2004:3; Kurtz 2001:31). Empires and powerful states especially employed this visual strategy of maintaining power. Applying this principle to the Maya, Calakmul pursued some imperial strategies, especially inside its kingdom, in order to achieve political goals and bind smaller sites into the orbit of its influence. For these reasons, in order to fully understand the mechanisms of political control, some information about imperial strategies should be provided.

1.8 Imperialism and Empires

Empires are territorially and politically expansive states[4]. Empires and imperialism are distinguished by:

1) the existence of capital,

2) the dominance over provinces,

3) the strong influence over other areas.

The study of ancient empires employs various kinds of sources: archaeological artifacts, written texts, art, and architecture. Archaeologists especially have developed some methods that help to analyse various aspects of imperialism. Following Smith and Montiel, I present an

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[4] Michael Doyle sees the political and territorial expansion of an empire as a fusion of metrocentric, pericentric and systematic impulses, which form three main models of empires. The metrocentric model focuses on the attitudes and aspirations of those at the core of an empire. The pericentric model focuses on the reaction of the periphery to the actions of empires. Finally, the last model explores the nature of power. According to Doyle's models, the main motivations for empires' expansionism in either the metrocentric, pericentric or systemic model are fear, greed, competition, militarism, glory or a combination of all five (Doyle 1986 after Mattingly 2010:16).

archaeological model for identifying empires that were powerful states, usually with large urban centres that served as an imperial capital. Of personal interests are imperial artistic conventions which often originate at a capital. Rulers would commission public art (architectural complexes, stelae, altars) as a means of demonstrating and proclaiming imperial ideology. They invested considerable effort and energy to demonstrate their power and wealth (Smith and Montiel 2001: 245-248).

Interestingly, this symbolic public proclamation did not always represent real events; frequently it was rulers' propaganda aiming towards influencing the audience by presenting the facts selectively and/ or underlying these themes that evoked a particular response. As Mattingly states, it is a characteristic feature of empires to create facades that disguise the true aspiration, nature, and motivation of a particular empire (Mattingly 2010:19). Thus, as ancient empires relied upon militarism and an ability to use force, war themes and war motifs appeared in a significant number in imperial art. In an ancient empire, this display of propaganda could have taken the form of public images of warriors, war, battles, soldiers, captives, or constructions of the symbolic fortress in the capital (Smith and Montiel 2001:248).

Through public monuments designed to glorify the king or/and to make political statements, links between the king and the cosmos were established. However, it is not an imperial capital with its proclamation of imperial ideology that helps to define empires. Rather, it is their impact on the subordinated area and ways of incorporating different states that marked the origin of an empire.

Domination over territory can be identified archaeologically by the exchange[5] between the capital and a province and by political control (Chase and Smith 2009:181; Smith and Montiel

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[5] Applying this principle to the Maya, the flow of goods between sites in the case of trade is still poorly understood by Maya scholars. Although the scenes of tribute payment often appear on the painted vases, they are hardly

2001:247). Political control over provinces takes a variety of forms that are difficult to assess. First of all, the process of expansion through conquest can be rarely detected archaeologically. In addition, empires had more interest in controlling sites than in their entire destruction. This control over provinces could have been achieved by co-optation of the local elite, who were frequently offered gifts and privileges to "buy off" their loyalty. Archaeologically this co-option could be identified by the emulation of imperial art and style by dominated states.[6] The introduction of an imperial style relying mostly on incorporation and repetition of the same art conventions and symbols is evidenced in many empires (Smith and Montiel 2001:247). It also fits into an overall coherent theory of territory, which derives strongly from biological concepts based on a natural need to defend and identify its own space. Under this premise, groups of individuals, sharing collective identity expect to be recognised through their artistic expressions e.g., architectural, or iconographical. The common symbols, served as indicators of Self and Others as they allowed both to identify and differentiate one from another (Musholt 2018:143). This stimulates fruitful research to address dynamic correspondence between groups and their constructed spaces. Applying these principles to imperial strategies, one of the methods to define a hierarchy of space is the presence or absence of particular motifs and symbols displayed in public art (Arredondo Leiva 2010: 28-30).

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mentioned in the carved inscriptions (Martin and Grube 2008: 21; Tokovinine and Beliaev 2013:171). Nevertheless, we can assume that in some cases the exchange served as a means of domination and, although it was two-way (core zone - province, province - core zone), it was often, as Smith and Montiel stated, "not equivalent in value" (Smith and Montiel 2001:247).

[6] Some ancient empires such as the Incas and Rome built an imperial infrastructure with cities, garrisons, and fortresses. However, there are some forms of political control, such as the imposition of tribute or taxes or the reorganisation of settlement patterns, which are very difficult to discern archaeologically (Smith and Montiel 2001).

In the following subchapters, I would like to present how empires, used art, iconography in particular as a way of asserting power and supremacy in the process of expanding. I will restrict my examples to Incas, Teotihuacan, Tenochtitlan, Ancient Rome, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union.

1.8.1 Incas

The Inca Empire at its height in the fifteenth century encompassed an area of about 1-1, 5 mln km² with an ethnically, politically, and linguistically diverse population of about 12 million people. By the time the Spaniards arrived, the Incas had managed to subjugate societies living from southern Colombia to Central Chile [7]*(D'Altroy 2001, Szemiński and Ziółkowski 2006:19).

The political power was achieved by means of building authority on a base of existing formations. Different imperial strategies were applied to incorporate and control various communities. Here, for the sake of the topic of my dissertation, I will briefly discuss strategies that are based on the imperial co-option of local elites and emulation of imperial style.

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[7] It encompassed the present countries of Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Columbia, Argentina, and Chile (Szemiński and Ziółkowski 2006:19).

One of these strategies is a specific rock art employed by Pachakuti Inca Yupanki, the ninth Inca ruler, who reconstructed the landscape by setting rock *wak'as*[8] on the empire's roads and conceptual lines. In Andean cultures, stones were regarded as the manifestation of power and animated essence; therefore, it seems that rock *wak'as* were part of Paczakuti political strategy (Millones and Barron 2018:21-22) Evidently, Paczakuti, co-opted the general stone sculpture worship and manipulated it to integrate societies into the empire. These stone *waka'as* replicated some aspects of *paqarinas*[9]and were visual proof of Inca hegemony. The stone ideology served to construct a public image of a glorified ruler and a state. It was also a means of advertising 'Inca-ness' through stone art outside its capital in Cuzco (Christie 2009:109, 113).

Another important strategic tool that accompanied the Incas expansion was "buying off" the local elite by recognizing their claims to power and authority. It was a clever policy of the Inca state to share some power with the provincial elite while at the same providing the empire's supremacy and maintaining legitimacy. The Inca adopted some forms, structures, styles, and images from earlier cultures or /and different regions (e.g., Cusco Valley, Tiwanaku, Wari) and included them to suit the new order. However, the Inca reinterpreted and reformulated, for instance, geometric quadripartite architectural arrangements in order to turn them into the

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[8] *Wak'a* also *Huaca "* ancient Inca and modern Quechua and Aymara religious concept that is variously used to refer to sacred ritual, the state of being after death, or any sacred object. The Spanish conquistador Pedro de Cieza de León believed that the word meant "burial place." *Huaca* also means spirits that either inhabit or actually are physical phenomena such as waterfalls, mountains, or man-made shrines. The aforementioned shrines, which are found throughout the Inca territory from Ecuador to Chile, may be as simple as stones piled in a field (*apachitas*) or as complex as stepped pyramids that were once topped with canopies and carved images". (after https://www.britannica.com/topic/huaca).

[9] Andean place of origin regarded as a shrine.

visual sign of the power and authority of the empire. It was a state architectural style exported

to the provincial areas to mark its political presence[10]. (Christie 2006:383-386). This is also

expressed by the presence of high-value Inca objects and hybrid (Inca- local) artifacts

appearing in the context of conquest and administration. This is the case of North Coast Chimu-

Inca pottery. Inca conquered the Chimu about AD 1470 and their style was incorporated into

the hegemonic system of the Inca empire. The typical Inca *Aryballo* (storage jar) form, which

clearly refers to a human body and embodied state, was amalgamated with characteristics of

Chimu iconography. The Inca manipulated these symbols to signal status and social identity

and to establish their legitimacy, whilst allowing local leaders to fulfil the role of mediators

between the imperial administration and the local population. The provincial elite were granted

privileges to cooperate with the Inca state. It has been suggested that the manufacture of the

pottery was state-sanctioned (Pena 2013:24). Ceramics, its forms, and iconography also

provide ample information on the nature of contacts between the Maya and Teotihuacan.

1.8.2 Teotihuacan

The dominant role of Teotihuacan in other parts of Mesoamerica in the Early Classic Period

and its impact on other cultures is undeniable. Evidence of contacts between Teotihuacan and

Classic Monte Alban, Veracruz and the Maya region is established by archaeology, epigraphy,

anthropology, and iconography. Characteristic to Teotihuacan ceramic forms, objects made

from green obsidian and the *talud tablero* have been discovered on a great number of sites

across Mesoamerica (Braswell 2004, Marcus 2004: 348-352; Martin 2006; Stuart 2000:481).

The iconographic motifs and themes of Tlaloc, torches, flames, spearthrowers, Teotihuacan

warriors and the war serpent clearly refer to an ideology based on militarism and imperialism

(Nielsen 2003; Martin 2006:101; Von Winning 1987). Maya rulers appeared on monuments,

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[10] This geometric quadripartite structure can also be identified on Inca textiles.

murals, and portable artifacts with Teotihuacan motifs – google eye, butterfly, or warrior serpent. Warrior costume in Teotihuacan style displayed their force, legitimated their power and/or promoted their victory on a battlefield (Martin 2006:101-109). Although the nature of these contacts is still a mystery, signs of political intrusion are particularly evident in the Maya area. The clearest examples are Tikal and Copan (Bell *et al.* 2004:133-134; Martin and Grube 2008; Reents-Budet *et al.* 2004a: 174-182; Reents-Budet *et al.* 2004b).

Yax Nuun Ahiin, Tikal's ruler and K'inich Yax Ku'k' Mo' from Copan exhibited both Teotihuacan and Maya traditions which suggest that they both were part of a New Order[11]. The most famous depiction of K'inich Yax K'uk Mo' and at the same time, the most magnificent statement of the Copan dynasty, comes from Copan's Altar Q. On each side of this stone table, there are four kings portrayed seating on their name glyph. K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' converses with his successor – the 16th king of Copan Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat, who commissioned the stone. Although we do not know the origins of Yax K'uk' Mo,' his google eyes and the square shield on Altar Q, strongly connect him to Teotihuacan (Bell *et al*. 2004, Stuart 2004, Stuart and Schele 1986). It is important to note that just after the *entrada* in AD 378[12], the number of Teotihuacan artifacts and symbols increased enormously in the Maya area. Teotihuacan-style tripod vessels have been found in many tombs and deposits, and symbols of Teotihuacan power appeared in many Maya monuments (Braswell 2004; Jabłońska 2019:67-86; Nielsen 2003). Explicitly, the presence of Teotihuacan iconography in the Maya area speaks in favour of Teotihuacan's direct influence on Maya cities with a possibility of political control and

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[11] The term introduced by Clemency Coggins refers to a change of power in Tikal in AD 378 (Coggins 1979b).

[12] *Entrada* event − the journey of Sihyaj K'ahk' into Maya Lowlands in AD 378 leading to major political disruption in the area.

conquest of some Maya sites. Certainly, the art was considered by Teothihuacanos as the effective means of control and subjugation (Adams 1999; Coggins1979a; Nielsen 2003).

The adoption of Imperial style and themes was also evident in the provinces of the Aztec Empire.

1.8.3 Aztec Empire

The domination that the Triple Alliance of Tenochtitlan, Texcoco and Tlacopan achieved over the vast territories in the fifteenth century was based more on marriage alliances and thread to use a force rather than military conquest[13]. At its height, The Triple Alliance controlled most of the part of Central Mexico and expanded towards the modern state of Morelo, Gulf of Mexico, Valley of Oaxaca, and Pacific coast (Solis Olguin 2004).

The provincial elite valued the royal Aztec insignia. Even outside the core of a state, the local elite imitated and adopted the turquoise regalia, and especially headdresses. The turquoise diadem, the clear status of power and Mexica culture is frequently seen on the images of the local aristocracy. As Olko noted, it testifies either the Triple Alliance presence in a particular region or adoption of its ideology (Olko 2006:334).

The best example of Aztec imperial art however is Cuetlaxtlan, an archaeological site lying along the Cotoaxtla River, in a modern state of Veracruz. Aztec state ideology is reflected by the presence of imperial-style sculpture, architecture, pottery, and figurines. They all indicate state ritual functions and served as means of imperial incorporation, integration, and control

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[13] Some of the rulers, however, felt compelled to suppress rebellions in the provinces or to conquer the regions that were not willing to cooperate. Surprisingly, however, the warfare centered ideology was almost not expressed in the provinces. It seems that the ideology of war was only directed at a small group of people: young men, inhabitants of Tenochtitlan, the core of the army (Brumfiel 2001:284, 2006).

(Ohnersorgen 2006:12). These displays of Aztec power in Cuetlaxtlan "remind and reinforce imperial presence in a politically tenuous context" (Ohnersorgen 2006:16).

On the other hand, the complete ignorance of turquoise regalia by the Tlaxcallan aristocracy, (the fierce Aztec enemy, never conquered by the empire), seems to have been their conscious strategy by which they manifested their independence. The elite of Tlaxcala through careful selection of local attributes authorized their power (Olko 2010:324, 2014). Tracking this topic, the extreme emphasis on the representations of Tezcatlipoca and a near absence of a cult of Quetzalcoatl, so vivid in Tenocztitlan, implied Tlaxcallan's rejection of Aztec authority (Fargher *et al.* 2010:242-251).

1.8.4 Roman Empire

The most powerful and influential empire of the classical world at its height covered an area of 6, 8 mln km^2 and controlled vast territories in Asia, Europa, and Africa. During the five centuries of the empire's existence, ancient Rome was ruled by emperors perceived as the greatest of men and equal to gods[14]. In every part of the empire, the cult of emperors received considerable attention. Emperors used varied forms of art to convey messages of imperial domination and hegemony. Arches and columns commemorated important events and disseminated the message of imperial power, whilst coins, widely distributed across imperium, indicated the authority of the person presented on it and conveyed his achievements (Crawford 1974:47; Henig 1983; Tuck 2015). There were also effective means of imperial propaganda. However, the most popular form where Roman emperors displayed their military victories and expansion was cuirassed statuary (Sorabella 2010).

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[14] Divine kingship in Ancient Rome dates between 31 BC (an accession of the first emperor – Oktavian Augustus) and AD 312 (conversion to Christianity of the emperor Constantine) (Woolf 2008:243).

Contrary to other media of mass communication, the message imposed on cuirassed statuary was more understandable for the average viewer. Cuirassed statues of emperors in provincial cities acted as markers of the emperors' presence and power. They were placed in temples, law courts and market places, where citizens and residents could swear oaths to the image of the emperor. Emperors, through public display of their images, could even oversee some ceremonies. Thus, strong links between the authority and the lower parts of society were established. Interestingly, the monuments were situated alongside the statues of major gods, giving emperors by association the status of gods. Roman rulers were regarded as the lowest of gods and received divine honours (Menteges 2010:55-58).

1.8.5 twentieth-century Imperial Strategies

When investigating the cases of empires, employing iconography as a means of asserting power and supremacy, the twentieth century is not exceptional.

Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union used art to pursue their political goals. twentieth century's political propaganda remained a system of representation that helped the people to recognize and identify the regime, which was demanding their total allegiance (Duprat 1999:441-444). The art of Nazi Germany addressed a lower class of society, deprived of basic amenities in life, to express their dreams and aspirations. The National Socialist Regime aimed to create institutionalized art serving only propaganda purposes. The emphasis given to monumental paintings, mainly to altars and tryptic compositions was not coincidental (Krakowski 1987:184-230). In the Nazi regime, the work of art had to bring out lofty values and create a specific sacral aura. An idealized representation of a woman-mother had the aim of increasing the rate of birth whilst for instance; portraits of Adolf Hitler epitomized the Father of the Nation, the Messiah sent by Divine Providence to revive the German nation. Sculptures depicted the ideal Aryan men, which were the true expressions of Nazi racial theories (Welch 2002:158). Everyone should have been committed to the new government and realised its

objectives. Hence the drawings and posters of soldiers, especially those performing some acts of heroism like heroes of aviation, were very popular. They were designed to give special respect to war heroes, underline race superiority and glorify German militarism.

A special role in German propaganda was fulfilled by posters, representing an enemy either interior or exterior. The posters were also used to encourage Germans to enter various Nazi organizations (Luckert and Bachrach 2009).

Postcards also conveyed important messages about the Soviet regime which evolved in the 1930s. As Victoria Bonnell has stated in her study of Soviet posters iconography produced after October 1917, they often functioned to legitimise power. Posters were addressed for a semi-literate population for which images were more understandable than texts. Thousands of vivid and compelling posters, revealing Bolshevik propaganda, found their place in Russian homes (Bonnell 1999:10-18). Everyone who lived in Russia after October 1917 was accustomed to the images of great communist leaders, the male labourers performing their tasks, collective female workers or capitalists. These were new icons intended to remold the Russian man into a new Soviet man, yielding to the will and influence of a new Bolshevik regime (Bryan 2010). The postcards were easily accepted by people, as the iconographic tradition together with the legacy of Russian autocracy and Orthodox Church tracking back deep to pre-revolution times were still vivid in Russia after 1917. These standardised Soviet conventions were persistently repeated to establish relations of power. Postcards displayed the new Soviet heroes and their adversaries. Some of them were "equipped" with such features as braveness, hard-working, dedication, and contrasted with laziness, opportunism and deviousness. After the Second World War II, this kind of art easily spread into the countries dominated by the Soviet Union (Bonnell 1999:10-18). Although Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union used art to express their ideas mostly inside their territories, there is also evidence of subordinated areas forced to adopt imperial art. The palace of Culture and Science, a high-rise

building in the centre of Warsaw, is a replica of skyscrapers built in the Soviet Union, and a gift from Stalin to the Polish people. These kinds of "gifts" are observed in many satellite countries of the Soviet Union. Especially worthy of note are sculptures and paintings in the socialist realism style, glorifying communist values. They conveyed the meaning of the superior role of the communist regime in subordinated areas (Murawski 2012:145-157).

Hence the political strategy of the Soviet regime was based on the notion that an image can transmit certain power and influence. In fact, art was used as a powerful means of political control and/or propaganda in all empires presented in this chapter. Incas, Aztec, Teotihuacan, Ancient Rome and two twentieth century totalitarian states all expressed political domination through art. At this point, after presenting some characteristic features of an empire and giving some examples of ancient and modern empires, it is crucial to address fundamental question relevant to my research:

1.8.6 Was Calakmul an empire?

One of the key differences between an "empire" and a "state" is that an empire has multi-ethnic or multinational dimensions, rather than being homogenized, it deals with diversity. What is more, differences between the core of the empire and its provinces are not reduced but redefined and maintained (Morrison 2001:6-8). This is attested to the presence of the eclectic mix of local and empire styles (e.g., Inca-Chimu *aryballos*, Teotihuacan -like ceramic with Maya iconography). Archaeologically, these hybrid forms signalled the dual identities of the local elite incorporated into the system of empire (Smith and Montiel 2001) Applying these principles to Calakmul, it seems that it does not fulfil all the requirements to be considered an empire. Although Calakmul itself was undoubtedly the most powerful city in the Maya Lowlands in the Late Classic Period, the domination over areas was only achieved in its hinterlands. The relations between Calakmul and more distant areas and cities were not stable and were easily prone to change (see more Chapter II and III). The Kanu'l dynasty allied with

many distant cities, some of them were even Calakmul's vassals and clients, but this did not lead to great changes in their socio-political systems (Jabłońska 2016). Rather, cities were joining the forces to fight with Tikal, Calakmul's fierce enemy (Martin 2005a; Martin and Grube 2008; Traxler and Sharer 2006; Zender, Awe and Martin 2016). In fact, neither of the Classic Maya cities can be called an empire. For these reasons in the course of the twentieth century, classic Maya polities were defined as "kingdoms," "city-states" "segmentary states" "regional states, "superpowers," "over kingship" but not empires. In the subchapter that follows, I will present some issues regarding classic Maya political models for a better understanding of the nature of the contacts between Calakmul and its vassals.

1.9 Classic Maya political models

Questions concerning the organization of Classic Maya polities arose shortly after the discoveries of monumental architecture at many Maya sites in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. All evidence indicated that many sites were centres of large populations inhabiting these places. Cities were surrounded by an array of secondary sites ranging from smaller centres to remote rural communities. The divergence of sites in terms of their size and complexity provided essential information on the hierarchical nature of the polities (Wanyerka 2009). However, archaeologists have failed in understanding how these complex relations between major centres and their smaller neighbours were organised. Although all Maya scholars agree that Maya sites clearly differ in terms of size and structures, numerous theoretical models have been proposed to understand the nature of Classic Maya political organisations. Generally, scholars have grouped around two polarised ideas: 'centralised' and 'decentralised' states. The supporters of the first model (Chase and Chase 1996; Haviland 1997; Marcus 1993) view classic Maya polities as strong centralised states ruled by a king able to wield considerable power. In the centralists' model, the capital of a state is characterised by

a large, relatively dense population and strongly institutionalised bureaucracies (Wanyerka 2009). Centralists also claim that the state was composed of several levels of social hierarchy in which smaller cities were tightly controlled and integrated with the capitals (Foias 2013:60). At the other end of the spectrum, there are followers of the 'decentralist' model. This model encompasses many conceptions ranging from the 'peer-polity' model (Renfrew 1986), through the 'segmentary state' (Southall 1988), the 'theater state' (Geertz 1980), the 'galactic polity' (Demarest 1992), to the 'regal –ritual' model (Ball and Taschek 1991). Although they vary in detail, they share some common features. First of all, scientists, gathered around this model, see governments as weak and decentralised. The capital of a state was surrounded by the secondary weakly controlled smaller sites, which emulate structures and functions of the major centre. The power of the king depends on his charisma, success on a battlefield, rituals, and successful marriages enhancing his prestige. As opposed to the centralists model, a state in a decentralist model, is generally able to control economic systems (Foias 2013:60).

The debate between centralists and decentralists intensified in the 1970s after Joyce Marcus' hierarchical model was published. Marcus proposed her definition of the regional capitals regarded by her as those generally having more stelae and monumental architecture than any other centres lying in the respective regions. They also could have had more than one emblem glyph. As for the secondary centres she situated them at regular intervals from the state's core. As can be seen in the example, (Figure 1.2) secondary centres form hexagonal lattices around the capital (Marcus 1976:46, 1998, 2012).
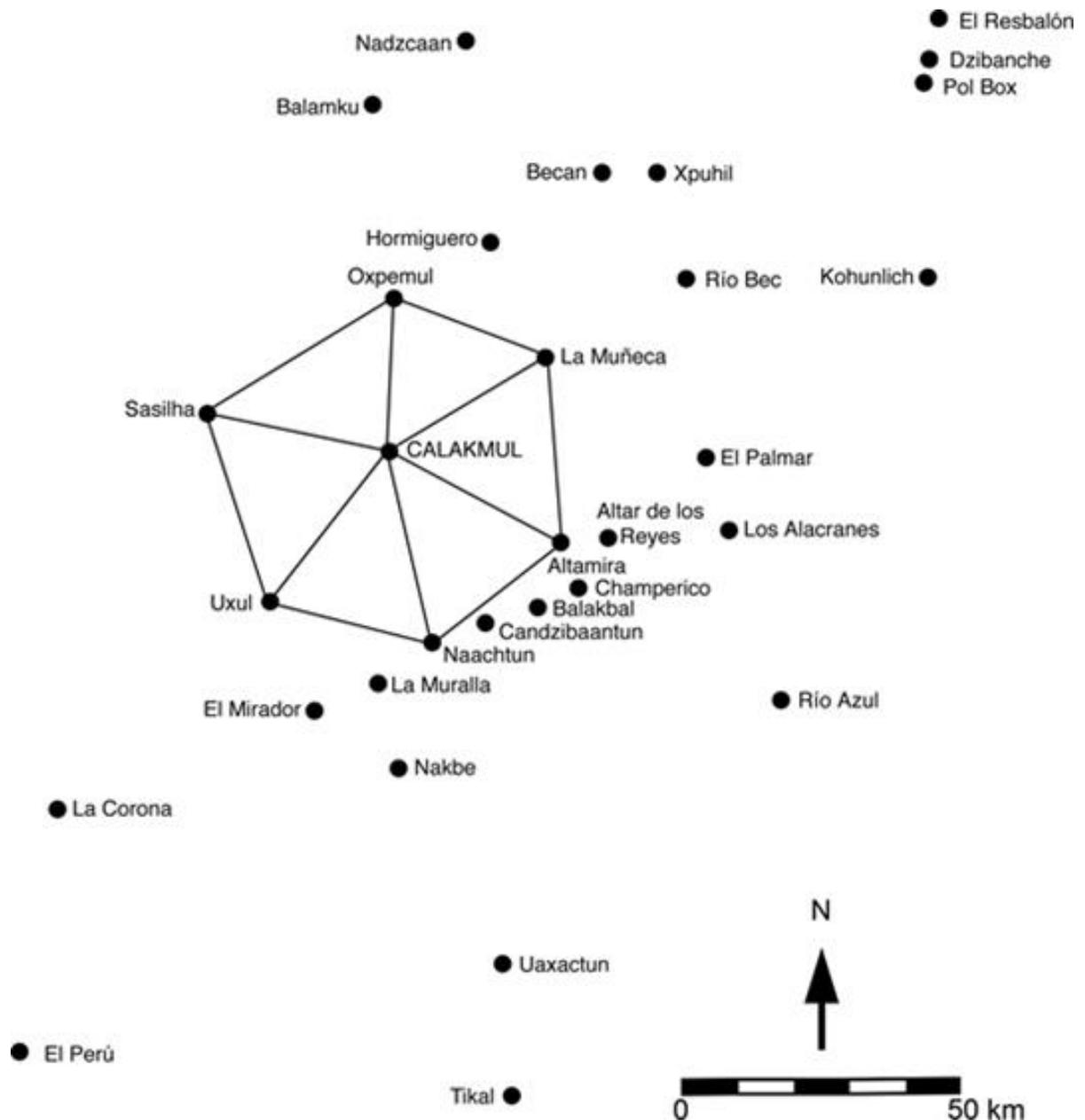
Figure 1. 2. Hexagonal zone of Calakmul+ more distance sites during the seventh century (modified by Braswell 2013: Fig.5 from Marcus 2012: Fig. 4.3).

Chase and Chase argue that the distance between the hegemonic state and its subordinate should not exceed 60km (Chase and Chase 1998:18); however, as Veronica Vázquez López noticed, this hypothesis carries some problems. Firstly, it refers to the linear and symmetrical distance, which does not consider topographic features such as mountains, rivers, lakes. Secondly, it does not take into account the complex socio-political development of ancient Maya society and intricate relations between different centres (Vázquez López 2016:104).

Notwithstanding the complexity and innovativeness of Marcus' and Chase's models, the archaeological excavations and large-scale mapping projects in the Maya Lowlands, together with epigraphic analysis, have revised it. Some of the sites included in Marcus's model appeared to have been larger than previously thought; others do not exist[15]. As Wanyerka stated most of the models of either side had to be re-evaluated, for they were based on the analogies and comparisons with pre-industrial societies geographically and culturally distant to the Maya area (Wanyerka 2009:488).

Scholars agree; however, that dynamism and diversity characterised complex sociopolitical processes taking place during the Classic Period (Beliaev 2000; Martin and Grube 1995; Rice 2004; Wanyerka 2009). We need to admit that there is no single model that would explain all Maya societies within a particular time and space, as different models present their features and each region can be characterized using a different model, depending on its history and spatial patterns of territory use.

For the sake of my discussion on imperial strategies, I will stick to Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube's model of superstates, as it best describes relations between overkings and their subordinates.

Scholars have pointed to a system of overkingship in which a few Maya polities (e.g., Tikal, Calakmul) through the creation of hegemonic networks yielded considerably more political power than other states. This system, based on patronage, alliance, and existence of subordinate seats of power and a high degree of administrative control, helped the "superstates" to dominate

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[15]Sasilha, for example, is not an archaeological site, but only a chiclero camp (Nikolai Grube personal communication 2022).

over other regions (Martin and Grube 1995, 2008). The hierarchical relations[16] are evidenced through some glyphic expressions, especially those which refer to the use of possession. Hence, the high-ranking noble- *sajal* could have become *usajal*, (the noble of) which directly linked him to his king. The same structure can be observed with *yajaw* (the lord of) derived from the title *ajaw* (lord, ruler). The *ajaw* title, till the end of the fourth century the highest office in Maya society, lost his superior rank in favor of *k'uhul ajaw* (holy lord). The *k'uhul* lords applied this title in order to have been distinguished from a lower class of *ajaw* lords (Houston and Stuart 2001:59-64). Another title *kaloomte'* was linked with the most powerful and prestigious Maya kings (Berlin 1958; Stuart *et al.* 1989). The subordinated status was frequently expressed by the phrase "*ukabjiiy*" he supervised it" followed by the name of a foreign king, a sponsor or patron of particular activity of his client, e.g., access to the throne. These expressions describing interactions between Classic Maya polities are much better represented for the Late Classic Period than for the Early Classic, as the lack of sufficient data impedes scholars to get a full picture of the Early Classic political landscape. As a result, the early influence of Tikal is under-represented while the seventh century Calakmul's pre-eminence is well established. As Grube and Martin stated, "while they were twin superpowers, as the chart shows, they were by no means the only polities to produce overkings" (Martin and Grube 2008:20).

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[16] In fact, all complex polities had hierarchical and heterarchical elements of organization. The heterarchical model, in contrast to hierarchy, emphasizes the relative autonomy of integral groups that play an equal role in decision-making. Recently, Izquierdo de la Cueva et al. proposed a heterarchical model for Maya society using the example of Palenque (Izquierdo de la Cueva et al. 2011). However, the radical distinction between these two models does not correspond to the evidence: Even a hierarchical model rarely exists without heterarchical components (e.g., opposing groups and institutions).

1.10 History of research on Maya imperial art strategies

The word imperialism meaning from Latin „absolute power" referred originally to the expansion of the Romans. In the second half of the twentieth century, scholars focused on the study of ancient imperialism and empires in other parts of the world (Gudova 2018:489). The collective work on Imperialism in the Ancient World (1979) included chapters *inter alia* about Ancient Egypt, Carthage, or Sparta.

The idea of Kanu'l as being close to imperialism is a relatively new concept. The *21 Wayeb Maya European Maya Conference* held in Moscow in 2016 explored the topic of *Hierarchy and Power in Maya World.* The section devoted to empires and superstates discussed some of the imperialistic strategies of the Snake Kingdom (Jabłońska 2016; Martin 2016; Vepretskii and Galeev 2016), Martin in his articles from 2017 and 2019 used the term "imperium" to refer to the Kanu'l dynasty.

The theme of imperialism was also picked up by art historians who began to study the relations between iconography, power, and domination. In the Maya area, the pioneering investigation on the ideology of power was done by Joyce Marcus (1974) who noticed Mesoamerican iconography was mainly an elite-controlled medium of communication. She even used the term propaganda, previously reserved for the modern regimes of communist Russia, fascist Italy, and Nazi Germany, to describe the manipulation of the content of the icons by the elite to achieve specific political goals. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Linda Schele published a series of books with her colleagues, where they studied *inter alia* the ancient Maya political system through the display of wealth and power of the ruler. The authors noticed that Maya ideology was based on a glorification of kingship and militarism, which in turn was reflected in art, architecture, sculpture, and paintings (Schele and Miller 1986; Schele and Freidel 1990; Schele and Mathews 1991).

The study on Kanu'l's iconography of power would not be possible however without acknowledging the role and importance of elite women in ancient Maya society.

Herbert J. Spinder, the early twentieth century American scholar who was particularly interested in Maya art and its symbolism, in his work "*A study of Maya Art its subject matter and historical development*" (Spinden 1913) drew the scholars' attention to elite female Maya depictions. At that time, the importance of elite Maya women was regarded as peripheral, compared to the world of Maya men. Since the pioneering works of Tatiana Proskouriakoff e.g. "*A Study of Classic Maya Sculpture*" (1950) however, ancient Maya women have received more attention. As more archaeological, epigraphic, and iconographic evidence came to light; the significance of elite royal females and the role they played in the social and political life of the ancient Maya was revealed. Proskouriakoff was the first to notice how Maya royal marriage relationships are expressed through art. The pattern of a set of monuments including portraits of royal women facing their husbands on the same monument or separate monuments has been termed since her work "*Portraits of Women in Maya Art*" (1961) paired stelae. It was not until 1987 however when royal marriage and paired stelae found in Calakmul was analysed in detail by Joyce Marcus in her book „*The Inscriptions of Calakmul. Royal Marriage at a Maya City in Campeche, Mexico*" (1987).

Since Marcus' work, various scholars analyse the association between the Snake dynasty and paired stelae. Steward analysed paired stelae as parentage statement (2008), Vázquez López as the expression of the Kanu'l's sociopolitical strategy to build hegemonic power (2011, 2016, 2017), while Tuszyńska highlighted the importance of interdynastic marriages (2016). The authors created a vast database of paired stelae from the Classic Period, which my research is based upon.

The general consensus of scholars is that the spread of paired stelae across a number of sites has to be connected with the hegemonic aspiration of the Late Classic Kanu'l dynasty from its

seat at Calakmul (Grube *et al*. 2012; Jabłońska 20016; Marcus 2006; Mumary Farto 2019; Reese Taylor *et al.*2009; Tuszyńska 2016; Vázquez López 2016; 2017).

The second iconographic theme linked with Kanu'l power is the image of the ballgame. Grube and Delvendahl noticed that ballgame panels from Uxul are very similar to those from La Corona in terms of imagery, location and size (Grube and Delvendahl 2014:76). The discovery of a ballgame panel at Tipan combined with evidence of ballgame imagery at other sites helped Helmke and his colleagues (2015) formulate the hypothesis that this visual theme was promoted by the Kanu'l.

The female netted costume motif and the image of a noblewoman standing on a captive have also been analysed in terms of their association with the Kanu'l expansion. This topic was raised by Kathryn Reese-Taylor and others in "*Warriors Queens among the Classic Maya*" (2009) and by Ana García Barrios and Veronica Vázquez López in their article "*The Weaving of Power: Women's Clothing and Protocol in the Seventh-Century Kingdom of Kanu'l*" (2011). Still, little attention has been paid to the study of Kanu'l's visual media in the vicinity of Calakmul. Our understanding of the problem of interaction between Calakmul and the secondary sites has evolved through the field of archaeology and epigraphy over the past 20 years. The history of research at La Corona, Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul is provided in Chapter III, but here I would like to refer to Karl Ruppert's and John Denison's monumental work, who conducted mapping of these sites in the 1930s on behalf of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. They also completed the first drawings of monuments published later in "*Archaeological Reconnaissance in Campeche, Quintana Roo and Petén,*" in 1943. More than half a century later Ivan Šprajc and his team verified the location and the state of preservation of monuments that had been recorded before under the aegis of the Carnegie Institution of Washington (Šprajc *et al*. 1997; 2008; 2015).

1.11 Maya court

Regardless of how we label the polities, and how we define their complex hierarchical relations, some features are common to all Maya states. The presence of a king, an elite and a court, are characteristic features of Classic Maya governance (Houston 2008:4; Inomata and Houston 2001). From the Ith century BC, the power and authority which originated in the hands of one individual were surrounded by devoted supporters forming the classes of nobles, sages, and priests. It was the beginning of a royal court that acquired prestige, high status, and power, expanding its reputation through various ideological concepts (Valdes 2002:138). The king operated within the court, which surprisingly could have been peripatetic. It seems that the royal court in Classic Maya time did not always have a fixed residence (Taschek and Ball 2004:198).

Such movements have been also attested to medieval and renaissance Europe. Let me mention the medieval German court travelling around provinces and dioceses e.g., thirteenth century German rulers such as Frederic Barbarossa or Henry IX used to have peripatetic courts. Through the ceremony of wearing the crown in various subordinated regions, the ruler displayed his power and prestige. It also served the ideological function of presenting a king as a clear embodiment of the earthly governor of Jesus Christ. The peripatetic court was wherever the king happened to be. Tracking this topic, Queen Elizabeth I of England resided and ruled the country from one of her many magnificent royal palaces at Whitehall, Hampton Court, Greenwich, Richmond, Westminster, St James, or Windsor Castle. Significantly, the existence of peripatetic courts attested to the dynamic nature of power, which is not confined to a particular place or group of people (Arnold 2004:392-410; Grube *et al.* 2012, Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018). Symbolically the power they represented travelled with them. This also

applies to the Late Classic Kanu'l kings and emissaries who emanated their power wherever they happened to be. It was reflected in the iconographic program of their dependencies and subordinated sites which I am planning to investigate and discuss in the following chapters. This project builds upon and is based upon the methodology presented in this chapter.

1.12 Chapter Summary

As I have presented, power is based on the shifting relationship between those who possess it in a significant quantity and those who have it less. It is not a web of domination, but it is a display of several processes of various scales and quantities (Foias 2012). It should be considered as the abstraction or anthropomorphized force, for power cannot disassociate from those who exaggerate it. The power of rulers depended on various sources of power, on ideology, among others. The contribution of this chapter addressed the role of symbols and iconography in representing the ideology. It seems that iconography overwhelms other means of art expressions in terms of variety and diversity of information that is encoded in a particular motif or theme, the prime study of iconography.

Having in mind that Mesoamerican iconography was an elite medium of communication; this information was implemented to impose meaning on political activity. Media carrying images were designed to influence the audience frequently by presenting the facts selectively. Although the context is markedly different, the use of propaganda in modern times is similar in many respects to what we observe within ancient empires. Political propaganda as a means of impressing certain ideas was successfully implemented by many ancient empires.

Empires tend to co-opt local elites in order to gain their cooperation and reduce the need to use military force. Archaeologically this situation is identified by the emulation of an imperial style by provincial elite. Six empires presented in this chapter incorporated art into their system of domination and political control. The Incas, Aztec, Teotihuacan, Ancient Rome,

twentieth century regimes vary in terms of the history of their expansion, structure, size, and type of imposed control. They all had to adapt and apply their polities without implementing deep sociopolitical and economic changes in the areas they occupied. By these means, they succeeded in incorporating other societies. In contrast, when we discuss the Maya, the iconographical and epigraphical evidence suggests that a "rigid system of political control" characterized ancient Maya polities (Martin and Grube 1994:2) Nevertheless; Calakmul implied some imperial strategies to achieve political control over its subordinates. Intriguingly, the strategy of control based on imposition/adoption of certain art themes seems to have been of considerable importance in Kanu'l's program of expansion. However, before presenting my arguments for that, I would like to provide some information about the history of the Snake dynasty as well as the history of La Corona, Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul. In the following chapters, I will include sufficient contextual information that will allow for the development of a systematic approach and a framework for analysing iconographic representations of power.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY OF THE KANU'L DYNASTY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter puts the complex relations between Calakmul and Uxul, Naachtun, Oxpemul, La Corona in the wider context of the history of the Kanu'l dynasty. The realm of social, political, and cultural relationships between Kanu'l overlords and their subordinates was inextricably interwoven. Similarly, the iconographic expressions of Kanu'l power and propaganda, the area of my research, were deeply rooted and entangled in the history of the Kanu'l dynasty. The visual standardised patterns characteristic to the late classic Calakmul and its allies not only reflect the political and social activities of the late classic Kanu'l dynasty but were also influenced and affected by it.

To fully understand the language of power through which the Kanu'l dynasty operated, it is essential to place it within the larger framework of politics. This chapter then sets out our understanding of the social, political, and cultural factors through which the Kanu'l acquired, exercised, and legitimised power and authority.

Kanu'l, the dynasty of the Snake (where *kanu'l*, stands for "(where) snakes abound") and its rarer variant Kana' (kan-a', "snake-water") (Helmke and Kupprat 2016:41; Lacadena and Wichmann 2004), was one of the most powerful dynasties in the Late Classic Period (Figure 2.1).

a   b   c   d
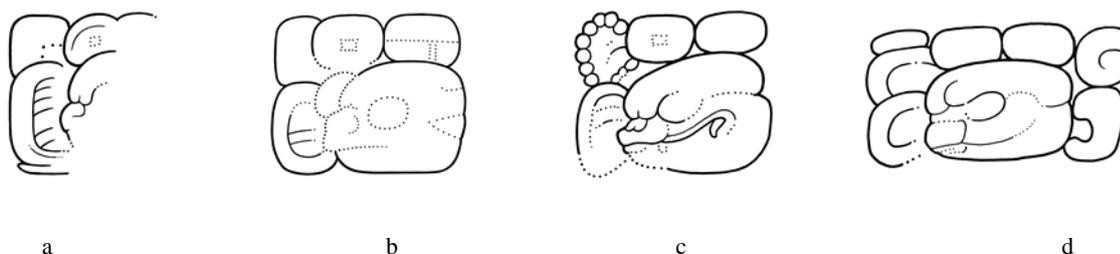
Figure 2. 1. The Kan "Snake" emblem glyph at Calakmul: a) Calakmul Stela 9 (E4); b) Calakmul Stela 74 (D3); c) Calakmul Stela 89 (I2); d) Calakmul Fragment 20 (A1). Drawings by Simon Martin.

It was one of the two dominant powers that affected and influenced almost every site in Maya Lowlands and not only that. It also created an extensive network of relationships, wielding power far beyond the border of its kingdom. The role the Kanu'l dynasty played in marriages, battles, commemorative events, and accessions confirmed its superior status. However, its ambitious and aggressive politics met a violent and fierce reaction from their arch-enemy, the Mutul dynasty from Tikal. The conflicts between Tikal and Calakmul, the seat of the Kanu'l rulers in the seventh and early eighth centuries, defined the Late Classic history. Both Tikal and Calakmul would fight for the leading position in the Lowlands. To achieve it, the Kanu'l dynasty, drew other cities into the sphere of its influence, trying to surround its rival with a network of subordinates, malleable allies, vassals, and clients[17]. The victories over Tikal and its vassals in the sixth and seventh centuries resulted in the establishment of Kanu'l's widespread overkingship with its influence extended to all parts of the Maya Lowlands. The

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[17] We have to be careful when using the terms "an ally", "a vassal" and "a client". According to Oxford dictionary the ally is a state formally cooperating with another for a military or other purpose or a person or organization that cooperates with or helps another in a particular activity. The vassal is a holder of land by feudal tenure on conditions of homage and allegiance or a person or country in a subordinate position to another. The term "client" originally denoted a person under the protection and patronage of another. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/. Thus, although the terms vassal and client denote a kind of subordination, to be an ally does not mean to be a vassal.

golden age of the Kanu'l kingdom, when its power reached its peak, coincided with the reign of Yuknoom Ch'een II, also called Yuknoom the Great (Martin and Grube 2008). If he was also known as Yuknooom Head (Martin 2005a) he is also credited with the victory over the legitimate Kanu'l king Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kaan who resided in Dzibanche (Quintana Roo, Mexico) (Helmke and Awe 2016a and 2016b).

Unfortunately, the attempts of Yuknoom Ch'een's sons to continue their father's legacy failed. In AD 695 Calakmul was severely defeated by Tikal. This defeat revealed the weakness of the kingdom and encouraged his subordinates to break free from its domination. Although Calakmul still exercised some hegemony in the years that followed the battle, it never regained its former splendour and glory. The second defeat at the hands of Tikal in the '30s of the eighth century was a proverbial "final nail in the coffin" of the Kanu'l. Shortly after the second fall, the Snake emblem glyph disappeared from the inscriptions of Calakmul and also from other Maya regions. It appeared once again on the Hix Witz panel (circa 736-744), and in an enigmatic single reference in Seibal in AD 849 (Martin 2005a; Martin and Grube 2006; Zender, Awe and Martin 2016). Towards the middle of the eighth century, references to the Bat dynasty appeared on a few monuments of Calakmul. In fact, the first reference to the Bat emblem glyph comes from the Early Classic, when Calakmul monuments lacked the Snake emblem. These observations led epigraphers to believe that Calakmul, which for decades was considered the only seat of the Kanu'l dynasty, did not assume this role until the Late Classic Period (Marcus 1976; Mathews 1979; Miller 1974; Stuart and Houston 1994:28-29).

A problem with the location of the capital of the Kanu'l dynasty in the Early Classic Period has generated heated debate in recent years. It is very difficult to reconstruct the history of the Snake dynasty as the eroded state of many Calakmu'l's monuments makes it impossible to answer many important questions. However, it cannot be denied that the first references to the Snake Emblem glyph appear at sites more than 100 km north of Calakmul. In particular the

excavations at Dzibanche provided much information about the history of the Early Classic Kanu'l. The data obtained through excavations and epigraphic analysis suggest that Dzibanche served as the Early Classic seat of Kanu'l power. A stairway from Dzibanche, displaying bound captives, features their names, the conquest of their towns and the name of the snake king Yuknoom Ch'een I (Nalda 2000, 2004, 2005; Nalda and Balanzario 2005; Nalda and López Camacho 1995; Velásquez García 2008:335). The late classic Kanu'l rulers must have recognised the importance of this king for their names - Yuknoom Ch'een II, Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'; and Yuknoom Took K'awiil clearly refer to Yuknoom Ch'een I. The Late Classic Kanu'l rulers did not refer only to their predecessor. For some reason, the Mirador Basin region had a special significance for their politics. These puzzling relations between the powerful Late Classic Calakmul and the small, dispersed settlements in the Mirador Basin have recently forced scholars to look more closely at the problem of the origins of the Kanu'l dynasty. Some leading scholars propose the Mirador Basin was probably the home of the Kanu'l dynasty in the Preclassic Period (Freidel 2008; Grube 2004; Hansen and Guenter 2005, Martin 1997). According to them, it was in the Late Preclassic Period that the divine kings of the Kanu'l dynasty emerged (Freidel 2008; Grube 2004; Marcus 2012:106).

2.2 Origins of the Kanu'l dynasty

For a long time, it was believed that the beginnings of urbanisation and the evolution of hierarchical structures within Maya society evolved outside the Maya Lowlands. However, excavations in Guatemalan Uaxactun, Tikal or Cuello in Belize in the 1960s and 1970s confirmed the existence of the Preclassic architecture. Later research at the sites of Colha, Aguada Fenix, Altar de Sacrificios, Seibal, Naachtun, Yaxuna, Blackman Eddy, Dzibilchaltun, Rio Azul, Komchen and many others have shown that Maya culture in the Lowlands was

already complex and architecturally developed in the first millennium BC (Hansen 2006:51; Inomata et al.2020; Marcus 2003:82).

Of particular interest to me and relevant to the question of the origins of the Kanu'l dynasty is the Mirador Basin region. The Mirador Basin is a swampy basin in northern Guatemala and southern Campeche, Mexico. The formation of a complex society in this area is a result of the presence of many small ponds and lagoons suitable for agriculture. People collected fertilised mud from the swamps and used it to create upland plots that could be watered with hands from the nearby *bajos*[18]. Large urban settlements can be traced there from the Middle Preclassic (100-350 BC), although early villages may still be buried under subsequent pyramids of Tintal, El Mirador, Nakbe, Wakna, La Florida, Calakmul, La Muralla, Naachtun, Xulnal, Porvenir or Pacaya. Monumental architectural complexes, ranging from 40 meters to 72 metres high, are evident in El Mirador, Nakbe and Wakna. Emerging elite also controlled and organised the construction of an intricate system of causeways that connected buildings within a site or joined different sites (e.g., El Mirador with Nakbe and Tintal) (Doyle 2017; Estrada Belli 2011; Marcus 2003:82; Sharer and Traxler 2006). The Early Middle Preclassic explicitly marks the emergence of the kingship system that developed in the Late Middle Preclassic and continued through the Late Preclassic. It should also be noted that the causeway road system enabled and facilitated social integration and possibly political and economic unification during this period, arguing strongly for the emerging state formation (Hansen 2006:63). Following this line of reasoning, Marcus suggests that El Mirador, the

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[18] Comparative studies in Naachtun, Calakmul and La Joyanca show the importance of the *bajos* (local depressions) for the past communities. They are thought to have served as a source of water in the prehispanic times, providing resources for a large population. Certainly, the proximity to water must have attracted the first settlers. The archaeological remains found near the *bajos* argue strongly for their significance (Lucero 2008; Métailié et al. 2003).

largest preclassic Maya site in the southern Lowlands, with its series of roads connecting other sites, may have been the centre of a powerful ranked society or a capital of the state. It seems that at some point Nakbe, a major centre in the Middle Preclassic, eventually declined and lost its importance in favour of El Mirador. Thus, causeways may have linked El Mirador with its satellite communities (Marcus 2012:96). The Protoclassic Period (AD 150-250) in the Mirador Basin was characterised by dramatic depopulation followed by complete abandonment at the beginning of the Early Classic Period (AD 250-550) (Hansen 2006:64). As Hansen noted, there must have been subsequent kings after AD 150, but El Mirador never regained its former splendour (Hansen 2012:160). On the other hand, at this time, next to surviving Preclassic centres, new settlements appeared and began to grow in size and importance. These include Tikal and Calakmul, which, by the end of the Early Classic Period dominated the Maya region and created an extensive system of allies (Martin and Grube 2008; Reese-Taylor and Walker 2002:105-107). The Mirador Basin must have been of great importance to the Late Classic Kanu'l dynasty as the most elaborate and artistically accomplished ceramics of the Late Classic Period - codex-style ceramics, manufactured by artists in the ruins of the great Preclassic sites, were somehow related to Calakmul. At least twelve codex-style vases describe the accessions of rulers from the Kanu'l dynasty (Figure 2.2).
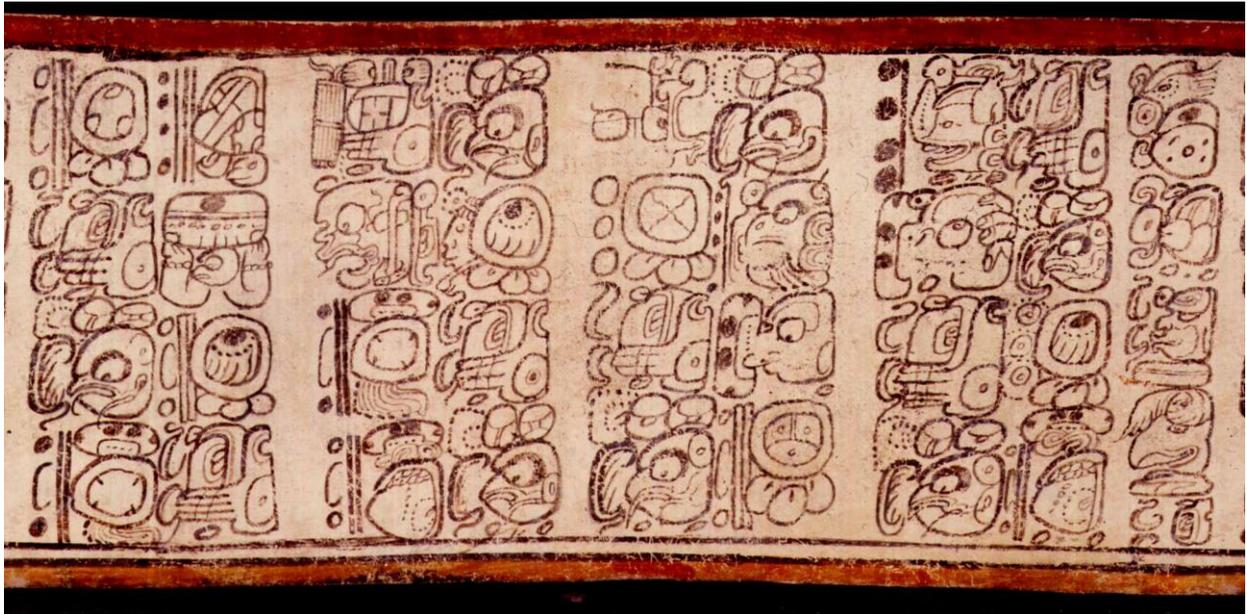
Figure 2. 2. Dynastic Vase, K0955. Photo by Justin Kerr.

The codex vases mention nineteen Kanu'l kings' inaugurations, commencing with "Skyraiser,"
probably the founder of the dynasty. Early research by Simon Martin on Dynastic Vases
suggested that the kings listed on these ceramics were either legendary or ancestral, although
some historical names also appeared there too (Martin 1997:849-58).

However, the recent discovery, of a previously unknown Kanu'l king, K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' Aj
Xakil has helped to review the king list. It appears that K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' Aj Xakil matches the
name of the 16th ruler on the Dynastic Vase (Figure 2. 3) indicating that the painted king list
is in fact a historical one. The length of the reigns of the 16th (K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich'), 17th (Sky
Witness) and 19th king (Scroll Serpent) matches the order on the monuments (Martin 2017a,
Martin aand Beliaev 2017).

Figure 2. 3. Comparison of the names of the rulers from the K6751 Dynastic Vase (top) with the ones from the monumental record (bottom). Drawings by Simon Martin.

Based on the dynastic vases we know now that the 10th ruler from the list (Yuknoom Ch'een I) and 13th ruler (Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk') have to be anchored in the Early Classic history with Yuknoom Ch'een I ruling in the first half of the fifth century (Martin 2017a; Vepretskii *et al.* 2021)[19]. The discrepancies in the dynastic vases regarding the names of the rulers and their accession dates led researchers to believe that there were copies of a copy which, together with the source (perhaps a codice), is now lost. It seems that the painters used two different chronological systems when creating these vessels. Since they probably could not write, the content of the inscription depended greatly on how precise and accurate the material they copied was. The researchers classified the codex-style vases into two groups - A (with a consistent chronology and few errors) and Group B (with an inconsistent chronology and a

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[19] Recently re-read Monument 160 from Tonina points to the death of an unknown ruler of the Kanu'l in AD 505, which is another argument that the Dynastic vases record the list of historical kings (Tokovinine personal communication 2021, Vepretskii et al. 2021).

large number of errors) (Vepretskii et al.2021). The other possible explanation for the discrepancies between the accession dates on the Dynastic Vases and the accession dates of the same individuals on the inscriptions of the monuments is that the latter only mention Kanu'l rulers who held the office of "holy kings" (*k'uhul ajaw*), while the lists in the codex style only mention Kanu'l lords who attained the rank of *kaloomte'* (Estrada Belli and Tokovinine 2022, Martin 2017a, Martin 2020).

However, by tracing the inscriptions of vases in Group A, it is now possible to reconstruct the early classic Kanu'l list, starting with the founder "Sky Raiser" following e.g., Tayal K'inich (Ruler 2), Yax/ Chaak Jol (Ruler 4) or Taaj 'Ol Bahlam (Ruler 9). Between Yuknoom Ch'een I (Ruler 10) and K'ahk Ti' Ch'ich' (Ruler 16), there are several other rulers whose names are also known from the Late Classic Period. These include Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' and Tajoom Uk'ab K'ahk' (Vepretskii et al.2021). Unlike Yuknoom Ch'een I, for whom there are many references in the monumental programme of the early classic Dzibanche, no other data confirm the existence of the early classic ruler named Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' or Tajoom Uk'ab K'ahk' (Martin 2017a). If we believe the dynastic sequence from codex-style ceramics, the name Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' has to be attributed to two rulers – one from the Early Classic Period and one from the Late Classic Period.

When we try to trace the origin of the Kanu'l dynasty, the dynastic sequence of vases offers a strong clue. According to Simon Martin's calculation, based on an inscription from Dynastic Vases, the foundation of the Kanu'l dynasty can be dated to around AD 187, making it less ancient than the Mutul dynasty (Martin 2017a).

Until recently, all dynastic vases came from private collections; therefore, they lacked archaeological context. In recent years, Simon Martin has deciphered texts on three sherds from Calakmul that were recovered from Structure XX and apparently once belonged to the Dynastic Vases (Figure 2.4).
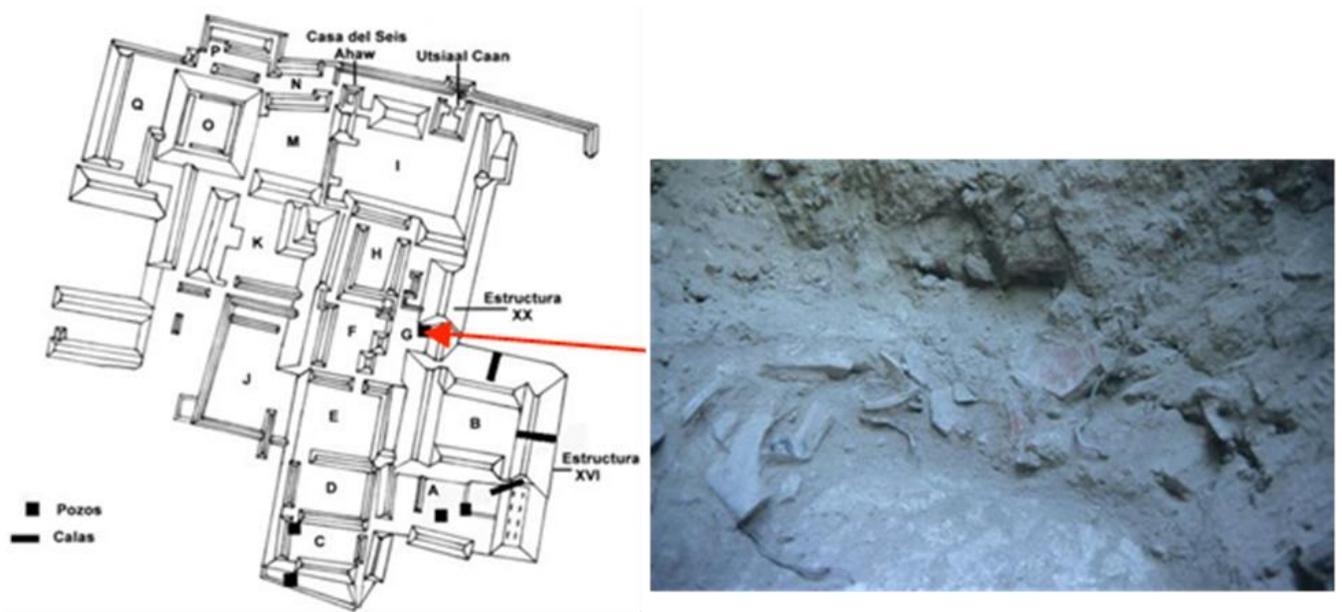
Figure 2. 4. Codex-style fragments with their location within Structure XX, Calakmul. Photo and map by Kai Delvendahl.

The first fragment mentions the name of the Ruler 2, TAJ-?-K'INICH**,** part of his inauguration date – 12 Yaxk'in, as well as the fragment of the Ruler's 3 accession date – 7 Yax Sihoom (Vepretskii *et al.* 2021). The jewel assemblage, displayed on this piece of ceramic, clearly indicates that there may once have been a portrait. Simon Martin suggests that it could be the portrait of the founder of the dynasty. The glyphs on the second fragment probably refer to the accession of the Ruler 8, whereas the last fragment features the verb for "taking of k'awiil"[20] CH'AM [K'AWIIL] wa, however without attributing this fragment to the particular king (Martin 2011:278-299, Mumary Farto 2015:95-112).

Dynastic Vases were not the only codex-style ceramics recovered at Calakmul. There are also vessels painted by different artists yielding classic myths and supernatural creatures. The main topics include different episodes from the myth of the Maize God, Chaak, Itzam, God L, "baby jaguar," along with symbols connected with Teotihuacan -- like War Serpent Waxaklajun Ubaah Chan, the trapeze, or the butterfly cocoon with the jaguar fur. Significantly,

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[20] meaning taking an office

they were all found in Calakmul in the elite residences (e.g., deposit from Structure XX or the royal tombs). Codex-style pottery was rarely distributed outside the Mirador Basin (exceptions being Uaxactun and El Zotz) and this indicates a limited exchange of this type of pottery among nobles (Lopez Finn 2014:30; Reents-Budet et al. 2010:4; Velásquez García 2009:3-5). According to James Doyle and Stephen Houston, the most elaborate codex-style vessels could have been bestowed by the rulers of Calakmul themselves. Local lords from subordinate areas could have received these precious gifts in return for their loyalty and submission (Doyle and Houston 2017).

A recent analysis of the paste compositions of codex-style ceramics combined with archaeological data and stylistic investigations showed that most of the codex-style ceramics recovered at Calakmul were manufactured at Nakbe (Reents Budet et al 2010:9).

Nakbe, lying 12km from El Mirador, exhibits not only massive preclassic architecture, but also scattered occupation during the Late Classic Period, particularly in the residential group called Codice Group, situated northeast of the main architectural complex of the site. Although many other sites in the Mirador Basin (e.g. El Mirador, La Muerta, Zacatal, Porvenir, Pacaya, Tintal and La Muralla) have yielded sherds and occasionally complete vessels in the Codex style, neutron activity analysis, leaves no doubt that they were all made in Nakbe [21] (Reents Budet *et al.* 2010:3; Suyuc *et al.* 2005). Pottery, however, may be manufactured from clay procured in a region distant from the ceramic workshop. Thus, neutron analysis does not provide answers to many questions regarding the origin of the codex-style ceramics. Reents Budet and Boucher suggest that Nakbe may be one of few places within Mirador Basin that could be considered the origin of codex-style pottery (Reents Budet et al. 2010:3) or, as García

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[21] In previous investigations, archaeologists have not been able to determine to which site or sites the production of codex style ceramics should be attributed, as many artefacts were found without context. Regrettably, they were often discovered at the entrances to looter's tunnels (López 1992; López and Fahsen 1994).

Barios postulates, the codex-style vases may have been manufactured in Nakbe and later transported to Calakmul to be painted and decorated (Barrios 2010: 90).

A large number of codex-style ceramic fragments have been also found in Calakmul. Investigations carried out in the 90s of the twentieth century located two complete codex-style vases *in situ* - one in Tomb 1 (probably belonging to Yuknoom Took K'awiil) in Structure II Substructure-H and another one in Tomb 4 (belonging to Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk') in Structure II Substructure-B (Carrasco 2004:233; Delvendahl 2008). Additionally, an important deposit, possibly a midden with huge quantities of codex-style sherds, was detected in Structure XX at Great Acropolis in 2005. Two years later, new codex-style fragments, some with inscriptions were found in Structure Kaloomte', named after a ceramic fragment containing an inscription with a *kaloomte'* title (García Barrios 2010:69). Codex-style ceramics have also been excavated at Uxul (Delvendahl and Grube 2012: 74) and La Corona (Looper and Polyukhovych 2018:3). It seems that "some socio-political mechanism existed that brought Mirador Basin produced, high-status pottery to Calakmul" (Reents Budet et al. 2010:9). For some reason, Kanu'l kings invoked the power, splendour, and prestige of the ancient Preclassic centres of the Mirador Basin.

Interestingly, Petén ceramic traditions, including codex-style ceramics, are not evidenced further north of Calakmul, in the Rio Bec region. The same pattern can be observed in Rio Bec ceramics which have been attested in Calakmul but are not present south of Calakmul, in the Petén. It seems that Calakmul functioned as a centre for ceramic traditions that absorbed styles from both the north and the south, but without passing them on (Carrasco and Folan 2015:19).

Regrettably, we do not know how the artists' workshops were organised, but we do know that some ornaments and decorative motifs evolved locally (Boucher 2012:203). Local Calakmul potters from Calakmul produced imitations of codex ceramics under the patronage

of the Late Classic rulers. Reents Budet calls these vases "non-Mirador basin codex- style" or "pseudo codex-style" vases and stresses that they do not imitate cream white pottery known from the northern Mirador Basin. Instead, they follow the traditions of the southern Mirador Basin. Their characteristic feature is the yellowish background colour of the pottery (Reents Budet et al. 2010:8).

An example of this comes from archaeological excavations carried out in Structure 13R-9 and 13R-10[22] at La Corona. The excavations revealed a large number of ceramics, including many polychrome pottery sherds, drums, and animal bones. Interestingly, many of the polychrome ceramics bear inscriptions, some of which include the royal names from La Corona and Calakmul (Baron 2013:296). Some of these polychrome ceramics resemble the codex-style ceramics that were almost exclusively found in the northwestern Petén/southern Campeche region. All codex-style type ceramics from La Corona were manufactured locally and are considered "pseudo codex-style" (Reents Budet after Baron 2013:298).

The presence of codex-style imitations, commissioned by the rulers of Late Classic Calakmul and made by local artists, confirms the importance of the true codex-style ceramics. Kanu'l kings highlighted unique connections between the Mirador Basin and Calakmul. It can even be assumed that the kings of Calakmul considered powerful ancient centres as a place of sacred origin (Boucher 2012; Reents Budet et al. 2010:9).

Moreover, the Kanu'l kings may have perceived themselves as the true inheritors of the monumental preclassic sites of the Mirador Basin (Martin 1997:862). Thus, the overall meaning of codex-style ceramics at Calakmul may be that of indicators of ancient socio-political and ideological claims to power (Reents-Budet et al. 2010:10).

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[22] The construction of a large platform forming a base of Structure 13R-9 and 13R-10 was initiated probably in the mid seventh century (Baron 2013: 293).

Judging from the extensive production and limited distribution of the codex-style vases, it seems that Mirador Basin and Nakbe in particular may have been a centre for pilgrimages during the Late Classic Period (Grube 2004:124). This interpretation finds confirmation in archaeology. Late Classic incense burners, recovered at the summits of Preclassic pyramids of the Mirador Basin region, indicate rituals related to religious practices at places regarded as sacred (Grube 2004:124). In the case of Nakbe, codex-style pottery was associated with elite burial contexts. Fragments of pottery were especially found in the Codice Group complex (Hansen et al. 1991:239-241). A large number of Late Classic burials in the Codice Group complex may also suggest that this place was regarded as sacred (Grube 2004:125).

The first seat of the Kanu'l dynasty may have been located in one of the Mirador Basin sites[23], or more likely, the Kanu'l people regarded Mirador Basin as their place of origin. The special role this region played for late classic Kanu'l rulers is attested by epigraphy and iconography. As already mentioned, some codex-style vases bear the names of the kings of Calakmul.

Simon Martin stresses the fact that the dynastic vases bridge the dynasty's past with its Late Classic history (Martin 1997:862). The name of the founder king can also be seen on K4117[24], showing the scene of confrontation between the two groups of people. There are at

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[23] (However, the possible reference to Kanu'l in the rock relief of La Muerta (Suyuc et al. 2005) is quite problematic. We are not sure whether the emblem glyph with the snake? sign on the relief has anything to do with the Kanu'l dynasty (Sergei Vepretskii personal communication 2021).

[24] Referring to Maya vase database created by Justin Kerr http://research.mayavase.com/kerrmaya.html

least 24 codex-style vases that carry the same image of two groups of people confronting each other[25] (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2. 5. Confrontation vase, K4117, Photo by Justin Kerr.

Nikolai Grube, by examining their headdresses, outfits and attributes, came to conclusion that they represent two opposing powers. The first group is represented by armed warriors with round shields wearing headdresses with the heads of forest beings, the second by unarmed people with the attributes characteristic of priests (Grube 2004: 126). For the ancient and contemporary Maya, the forest has been perceived not only as a place where demons and dangerous creatures reside but also, due to its wilderness, as a "buffer zone or "no man's land" between competing polities" (Taube 2003:479). For these reasons, the forest was the place where raids and battles took place and representations of warriors wearing headdresses of wild forest animals denote them as denizens of the bush, creatures from the savage world (Taube 2003:280).

Christophe Helmke, on the other hand, sees the priests as members of the Maize God group confronting the fierce Earth lords characterised by shields, cervical and cranial headdresses, and facial markings. The researcher believes that the scene represent the

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[25] The vessels that form part of this series are: K1224, 1248, 1333, 1338, 1343, 1346, 1365, 1366, 1395, 1489, 1562, 2011, 2096, 2710, 3428, 4117, 5002, 8201 (Kerr 2008);Vessels 91, 95, 98, 100, 106 published in "*The Maya Book of the Dead"* by Robicsek and Hales (1981: 70-74) and one from the collection of the Fundación Ruta Maya, Guatemala (Helmke and Kupprat 2016:51).

mythological confrontation that led to the defeat and decapitation of the Maize God (Helmke 2009:98-99).

Regardless of how we interpret and identify these figures, they may be regarded as a basic foundation for the origin of the Kanu'l dynasty. Some glyphs on these ceramics may add further data to the conflict. All texts contain the same basic information, starting with the Long Count date. Although these dates seem to refer to the distant mythological past rather than to true historical events, the presence of the name of the Kanu'l founder is significant. Skyraiser is involved in the armed conflict, which suggests that some kind of confrontation may have played a role in the legitimisation of power by the first Kanu'l kings (Grube 2004:118-120,123-127).

The texts on the three codex-style vases mention a person called K'inich Yajaw hu'n. He is also known from other inscriptions as Foliated Ajaw. Although his name does not appear in a King's List, he seems to have been well recognized at other sites and associated with early dates and texts (Boot 2005:18; Grube 2004:124)[26].

What is more, an interesting reference to the place called *chi witz* (Grube 2004:127) or as recently translated by David Stuart chi-CHA'(*chi(h) cha'*) or chi-KA'(*chi(h) ka'*) occurs[27]. As Nikolai Grube has proved, *chi CHA'* is a toponym frequently found in the narratives of the foundations and the contexts of dynasties' origins (Grube 2004:128).

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[26] This name appears in Copan Stela I, on peccary skull from Tomb 1 (Copan), two stelae from Pusilha (K and P), Stela 31 from Tikal and on the Costa Rica jade pendant. It is remarkable to note that Foliated Ajaw is either associated with the date AD 159 (e.g., Copan Stela I) or AD 376 which means that were at least two early classic individuals carrying this name (Boot 2005:18).

[27] where *CHA''* stands for grinding stone, the *chi* denotes "maguey," so that *chi CHA'* can be translated as the "maguey grinding stone," *Chi* sign is combined with Bent Kawak sign, not as previously thought with WITZ "mountain" sign (Stuart 2014, Stuart 2018).

In the late classic Kanu'l narrative, Deer Snake Chij Chan, the *way* of the Kanu'l dynasty[28], appears on some vessels with connection to the *chi CHA'* altar and God K'awiil (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2. 6. The old deer god (left) emerging from Deer Snake that originates from the serpent foot of K'awiil. *Chi Cha'* altar in the middle. K1384. Photo by Justin Kerr.

Also, the glyphic text on Lintel 21 from Yaxchilan (Figure 2.7) mentions that the king who commissioned the construction of Structure 22, Yaxchilan was the seventh king in the order, of the lineage of the *chi* (Tokovinine 2013:59).

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[28] All texts in which *wayob (*plural of *way*, spirit companions*)* occurs on Maya ceramic form a construction *u way*''the *way* of'' followed by a particular toponym or emblem glyph. Deer Snake Chij Chan follows Kanu'l emblem glyph. He is the lord of savage animals, deer in particular (Grube 2004:128). He is also linked with K'awiil and appears emerging from his serpent leg. In Maya art the serpent leg of K'awiil, the god of kingship, gives the birth to the co- essence. Thus, K'awiil's serpent leg was his own *way*, through which he made other gods appear (Houston and Stuart 1989:8). Following this assumption, Snake –Deer, the *way* of the Kanu'l dynasty, is the co-essence emerging from K'awiil (e.g., text on K2752 u-*? chi-ji CHAN-nu u-W AY-ya K' A WIIL-Ia, "u-?).* (Grube 2004:127-128).

Figure 2. 7. Inscription from Lintel 21 refering to *chi* lineage, Yaxchilan (after Grube 2004: Fig.13).

References to chi CHA' are also found in many other inscriptions, including the famous House C from Palenque, which I will discuss later in this chapter. Chi CHA' could have been an important sacral place (like Teotihuacan or Tula) since the Preclassic times. Because chi CHA' title is not confined to sites that are in any way associated with the Kanu'l dynasty but is widely distributed in the Maya Lowlands, it seems highly unlikely that this place was regarded as the place of origin only by the Kanu'l dynasty (Figure 2.8). Also, the arch-rival of the Kanu'l dynasty in the Late Classic - Tikal, may have traced its origin to chi CHA'. Some texts on the monuments of Tikal refer to the Period Ending at [chi [T316][29]. The event is mentioned as the earliest in the narrative; thus, Tokovinine links it with a founding event (Tokovinine 2011:227-229, 2020:260).

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[29] refering to the Catalogue of Maya glyphs by Eric.S Thompson

http://www.famsi.org/mayawriting/thompson/index.html

Figure 2. 8. *Chi CHA'* toponym (marked in yellow) a) Palenque b) Tikal. Drawings by Nikolai Grube.

In addition to this, the Kanu'l late classic founder displayed on the carved vessel from Schaffhausen, Switzerland [30] is described as "man of chi [T316]" (Prager 2004:37) whereas on Tikal Stela 22, the founder of Mutul dynasty is called "K'awiil of [chi[T316] (Beliaev *et al.* 2013:135).

It seems clear that royal families from different dynasties apparently shared the same identities (Tokovinine 2011:229). Grube locates chi CHA' as one of the sites or centres that flourished in the Mirador Basin during the Preclassic period (Grube 2004:131). However, this is still a hypothesis that requires further evidence (Stuart 2014).

Given the importance of Nakbe and El Mirador in the Preclassic period for the development of human society and divine kingship, one might expect one of these sites to have been recognised as the place of origin for the Classic Maya dynasties (Freidel 2008; Grube 2004, Hansen 2012).

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[30] For more about Schaffhausen pot please see Chapter V

Significantly, in the Late Preclassic murals of San Bartolo, the great feathered snake emerges from the maw of Flower Mountain (place of resurrection and rebirth), marked with the *k'an* cross[31]. As Saturno, Taube and Stuart point out, these remarkable murals confirm the links between the mythology of the Maize God and the emergence of divine kingship (Saturno, Taube and Stuart 2004:9). Since the Maize God is associated with divine kingship, Freidel believes that the Kanu'l dynasty considered themselves the true people of maize, overseers of the Maize God's earthly birthplace and the place where humans were created from his flesh (Freidel 2008:199).

Following all these assumptions, it can be argued that other dynasties may also have seen themselves as inheritors of the place where the Maize God had emerged. The association between the Kanu'l dynasty and the Maize God can be seen in the so-called Holmul Dancer scenes, which depict a group of two, three or, more rarely, four youthful Maize Gods in a dancing pose. Maize Gods wear elaborate backracks in which small, seated figures can be seen. The accompanying glyphic inscriptions clearly show that these figures are associated with the toponymic main signs of selected emblem glyphs. It is important to note that the two most common figures, saurians and cats, represent respectively two of the most powerful Classic dynasties - Kanu'l and Mutul. For example, a snake figure from the Maize God backrack on K0633 is paired with the toponym Kanu'l while an ocelot is paired with Mutul. This suggests that the rulers not only associate themselves with the Maize God and his resurrection, but that they also refer to the different and localised manifestation of the same deity. Helmke and Kupprat go even further and identify the toponym of Kanu'l as the supernatural, mythic location, the place where the Maize God was resurrected (Helmke and Kupprat 2016:68). To

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[31] *K'an* cross sign, a cartouche Greek cross, frequently appears in the context of resurrection of the Maize god theme. One of the codex-style ceramic so-called "Resurrection pot" shows the Maize God, in the company of his two sons, emerging through a turtle carapace. The turtle carapace is marked by *k'an* sign (Freidel 2008:194).

support their theory, they make further arguments based on the connection between depictions of the Maize God on confrontation scenes, the expression *och ch'en* and the Kanu'l dynasty.

They base their interpretation on the inscription of a fragmentary codex-style vase from Structure XX Calakmul, which may represent a confrontation scene in which the toponym ka-Kan follows the expression OCH CH'EN -na (Carrasco and Lopez 2011:263). Indeed, the OCH CH'EN -na expression appears on many confrontation vases. OCH CH'EN -na "enter the cave" has the meaning of invading or conquering the city (Grube 2004; Martin 2004; Velásquez García 2004), supporting Nikolai Grube's thesis of a conflict underlying the foundation of the Kanu'l dynasty (Grube 2004).

According to Helmke and Kupprat, however, this toponym refers to a cave called Kanu'l. It is thus a mythological cave where the Maize God is said to have been defeated by the Earth Lords (Helmke and Kupprat 2016:57). The supernatural cave from which the Kanu'l dynasty traces its origin may have a counterpart in the physical landscape. This raises the question of how the toponym Kanu'l should be understood and interpreted. Helmke and Kupprat see it as a mythic location closely associated with the Maize God, his death and resurrection. By claiming to be related to the Kanu'l cave, the snake dynasty may have wanted to emphasise that their lineage emerged from the cave of the same name (Helmke and Kupprat 2016:57; Helmke 2012:117).

"OCH CH'EN Kanu'l", however, should be read as "enter the cave of Kanu'l" rather than "enter the cave called Kanu'l", which changes the meaning slightly. On Stela 21 Naranjo, for example, we find the expression *u'b'aah ti och ch'en yootz*, where *yootz* does not imply the name of the *ch'en* (cave) but refers to a rival kingdom in the Naranjo region (Martin 2004:109). If we assume that *och ch'en Kanu'l* should be read as entering the cave of Kanu'l, then the toponym Kanu'l could refer to a specific place within the city or even to the city itself. Eric Velásquez García and Simon Martin argue convincingly that an expression like *tahn ch'en* (in

the middle of the cave) never refers to supernatural events, which supports the case that the place Kanu'l is earthly [32] (Martin and Velásquez García 2016:30).
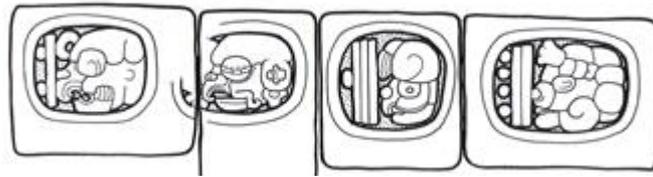
Figure 2. 9. Step 3 from HS 3, El Resabalon. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

Recent excavations in southern Quintana Roo, Mexico, have revealed remarkable monuments with inscriptions closely referring to the Early Classic Kanu'l dynasty (Grube 2004; Martin 2004; Nalda 2000, 2004; Velásquez García 2004). The region is home to many sites with monumental architecture and records a long history of settlement running from the Late Preclassic to the Postclassic. The most important sites include Dzibanche, Kinichna, Kohunlich (Campaña 1995; Nalda 2004, 2005; Nalda and Balanzario 2005; Nalda and López Camacho 1995) Ichkabal (INAH 2009), Margerita, Lagerta, (Villamil and Sherman 2017), El Resbalon (Camacho and Tsukamoto 2003; Carrasco and Boucher 1987; Tsukamoto 2005) and Pol Box (Esparza Olguín and Pérez Gutiérrez 2006, 2009). Some of these sites clearly relate to the Kanu'l dynasty.

The hieroglyphic stairs at El Resbalon, record some events related to the Kanu'l dynasty, but its exact meaning remains unknown. Only the Kanu'l emblem glyph can be read. The dating is also problematic. Block 1 of El Resbalon HS 3 [Map 1] has two Initial Series - 9.4.14.10.4 corresponding to AD 529 and 9.7.6.4.19 corresponding to AD 580, while Step 3 (Figure 2.9) evokes the Preclassic date - 7 Baktun corresponding to 337 BC (Camacho and Tsukamoto 2003: 961-962; Carrasco and Boucher 1987:2-5). It is also not clear how these dates were related and what they implied. It is also not known whether the date 7 Baktun is associated

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[32] Kanu'l as a toponym, however, can refer to both mythological and real place, as these two categories are hardly ever restrictive in the Maya world (Martin and Velásquez García 2016:27).

with the Kanu'l lord. If so, this could confirm Nikolai Grube's theory of a Middle Preclassic origin of the Snake Dynasty (Grube 2004). More reliable evidence for the presence of the Kanu'l in this region comes from Dzibanche.

2.3 The Early Classic History of the Kanu'l Dynasty

Dzibanche is a large site in southern Quintana Roo on the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico. It is the second largest site in Quintana Roo after Coba. The word "Dzibanche" itself means "writing on the wood" and derives from a large, inscribed lintel (made of quebracho wood) found in the Temple of the Lintels (Nalda and Balanzario 2005).

The Temple of the Lintels is one of several structures in Dzibanche - including the Temple of the Owl, the Temple of the Cormorants, the Temple of the Captives, and the K'inich Na Temple located 2 km outside the core of Dzibanche[33] (Nalda and Balanzario 2005). The first settlements in Dzibanche can be traced back to the Late Preclassic Period, but the most important regional centre during this time seems to have been Ichkabal, judging by its monumental architecture. According to some scholars, Ichkabal could be considered the first seat of the Kanu'l dynasty (Martin and Velásquez García 2016: 30).

The question of whether Ichkabal is the right place to look for the beginnings of the Kanu'l dynasty is still open, as the early classic references to the Kanu'l dynasty come from Dzibanche. In the Early Classic Period, Dzibanche had become one of the most important political centres in southern Quintana Roo (Nalda et al. 1994:16).

The earliest style at Dzibanche - "Peténero" - is characterised by temples with very wide walls surmounted by roughly dressed corbelled slab vaults, and by the use of apron-shaped slopes

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[33] K'inich Na means" House of the Sun God". (Nalda and Balanzario 2005:42-44). It is suggested that it served as a residence for the Dzibanche elite.

resting on a short incline (Nalda and Balanzario 2008:306). Of particular interest to me, however, are the hieroglyphic steps decorated with depictions of captives. The texts accompanying the images clearly refer to the Snake Dynasty (Figure 2.10).

Figure 2. 10. A captive from Dzibanche, Monument 6 (after Velásquez García 2004: Fig. 3).

These blocks of stones formed part of a stairway of the structure now called the Temple of the Captives (Figure 2.11). They had been taken from other, older structures[34] and inserted into the new structure, in a disorderly manner without respecting their original sequence. All but four monuments depict captives with an accompanying hieroglyphic inscription. The inscriptions begin with the date of capture, an expression *och uch'e' n'....* (OCH -u- CH'EN-na) (Figure 2.12), followed by the name of the captive, the enigmatic expression ya; TE'?-Aj (Figure 2.13) and the name of the divine Snake king, known as Yuknoom Ch'een I (Martin and Grube 2001:10).

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[34] Most of the hieroglyphic stairs seem to have come from the Temple of the Owl, situated in the central plaza, Plaza Xibalba (Campaña 1995; Nalda and Balanzario 2008:316).

Figure 2. 11. Hieroglyphic Stairs from the Temple of the Captives, Dzibanche. Photo by author.

a   b

Figure 2. 12. Some glyphic expressions for "war" at Dzibanche: a) OCH-u-CH'EN- na, *och[i] uch'e'n*, Monument 18,

b) OCH-CH'EN, *och[i] [u]ch'e'n*, Monument 15 (after Velásquez García 2005: Fig. B).
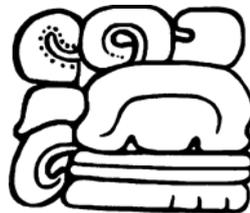
Figure 2. 13. Glyphic expressions that connect the name of a captive with that of his captor, ya-T514-AJ, Monument 18

Dzibanche (after Velásquez García 2004: Fig. 4).

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Figure 2. 14. Yuknoom Ch'een I, the Snake king, Monument 5, Dzibanche. Drawing by Octavio Esparza and Vania Pérez.

Yuknoom[35] Ch'een I (Figure 2.14) seems to have been the agent of the wars and the captor of the individuals named on the steps. These hieroglyphic steps probably once contained a count of the captives. Only the glyphs for the "second", "fifth", "eighth" and "sixteenth captive" have survived, suggesting that Yuknoom Ch'een I was credited with the victory over at least 16 prominent and important captives [36] (Figure 2.16) (Velásquez García 2004:85).

If we acknowledge that the Dzibanche stairs indeed represent the captives of the Kanu'l ruler, it becomes clear that Maya state formation took place in the context of military competition (Marcus 2012:98), which is also suggested by Grube (2004) (earlier this chapter).

Figure 2. 15. A captive from Dzibanche, Monument 3 (after Velásquez García 2004: Fig. 1).

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[35] Yuknoom means "shaker" or "mover" from the root *Yuk* meaning "shake "or "earthquake" (Esparza Olguin and Velásquez García 2013:2).

[36] Prisoners must have been adorned with some prestigious stones, as suggested by the parts of their outfit (Nalda 2004).

When exactly the action of "taking captives " took place, however, is still a mystery. The chronology of the staircase also remains a mystery due to the severe destruction of the glyphs and the lack of Long Count dates. Although none of the blocks mention the place of origin of the captives, a hieroglyphic stairway from the small site of El Resbalon, located 12 km south of Dzibanche, gives us some clues to this question. One of the Dzibanche captives is named Yax K'ahk' Jolo'm. Almost the same name, K'ahk' Jolo'm, appears on one of the steps of El Resbalon. It would be a mistake to identify one with the other; rather, as García has pointed out, we are dealing with two different people bearing the same name. Nevertheless, many Maya proper names were distributed locally; thus, it suggests that K'ahk' Jolo'm and a captive of Yuknoom Ch'een I came from the close vicinity of Dzibanche (Velásquez García 2005:3).

Taking into account the previous considerations and observations, one can ask the question about the role and importance of Dzibanche for the Kanu'l king. The as yet undeciphered expression ya; TE'?-Aj may shed some light on this question. The position of this expression between the name of the prisoner and the king Yuknoom Ch'een I is not accidental. It seems that ya; TE'?-Aj served to associate a captor (Yuknoom Ch'een I) with his captives (Martin 2004:109-110). As Velásquez García has noted, "the manner in which he (Yuknoom Ch'een I) is cited leaves little doubt that he in early times, was the sovereign of Dzibanche, since no other individual is mentioned as a local lord" (Velásquez García 2005:3). At the same time, he is the first Kanu'l king mentioned in inscriptions. These facts led some scholars to advocate Dzibanche as a Kanu'l capital[37] (Grube 2004; Martin 2004; Nalda 2004; Velásquez García 2004, 2005).

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[37] These suggestions came to light a few years after the discovery of the hieroglyphic stairs in 1994 by the archaeologist Enrique Nalda and his team.

There is evidence that Dzibanche was indeed the capital of Kanu'l during the Early Classic Period (Martin and Velásquez García 2016). One of the oldest structures in Dzibanche, the Temple of the Owl, became the resting place of a very important person, as suggested, among other things, by the architecture of his tomb. Similar to the famous Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque, the basement of the Temple of the Owl consisted of a narrow, spiral, vaulted passageway, of three levels. On the lowest level was the burial chamber of an individual, accompanied by an elaborate early classic offering. Among the grave goods was a jade pectoral representing an investiture ceremony, which also confirms the high (probably royal) status of the tomb's owner (Campaña 1995; Stuart 2004a; Vela 2002:34-37). Undoubtedly, the establishment of the Kanu'l capital at Dzibanche had an impact on the local elite who had lived there since the Late Preclassic. The Kanu'l lords must have subjugated the local lords to gain power in the region. According to Enrique Nalda and Eric Velásquez García, these war victories are depicted in the hieroglyphic stairs of Structure 13, Dzibanche. The hieroglyphic staircase of Dzibanche contains an important clue to the establishment of the Kanu'l dynasty in the modern state of Quintana Roo and suggests that the local nobles acted under the direction of the Kanu'l kings (Nalda 2000:52, 69; Velásquez García 2008:335).

The first Kanu'l king to mark the rise of power and establish political networks far beyond the borders of the Snake kingdom was Tuun K'ab Hix. The date of his accession to the throne is not known, but he must have been in power as early as AD 520, for Panel 6 mentions the arrival of his daughter Ix Naah Ek' at the site of La Corona (Martin 2008:3-4). Tuun K'ab Hix attempted to extend his power as far as the Usumacinta River, as one of the Yaxchilan lintels (Lintel 35) describes a war captain of Tuun K'ab Hix named Nawkal Tipina falling captive to

Yaxchilan in AD 537[38] (Martin and Grube 2008:121, Mumary Farto 2020:401). Interestingly, the reference to his capture appears alongside texts that mention captives from the greatest kingdoms. This suggests that the kingdom of Kanu'l was still a strong power despite its defeat. Certainly, Kanu'l extended its influence on La Corona and perhaps also to El Peru Waka'. The recently discovered Stela 44 at El Peru Waka' (Pérez et al. 2014) and Altar 5 at La Corona (Stuart et al. 2018) mention the ruler Chak Tok Ich'aak, who is probably one and the same person who ruled in two centres concurrently. Stela 44, dedicated in AD 564 and erected by the local ruler Wa'oom Uch'ahb Ahk, commemorates his late father Chak Tok Ich'aak (Figure 2.16), while Altar 5 at La Corona (Figure 2.17) mentions Chak Tok Ich'aak's journey to a place called *Baaktuunil* to participate in a calendar ritual in AD 544, on the occasion of the half-period of a k'atun.
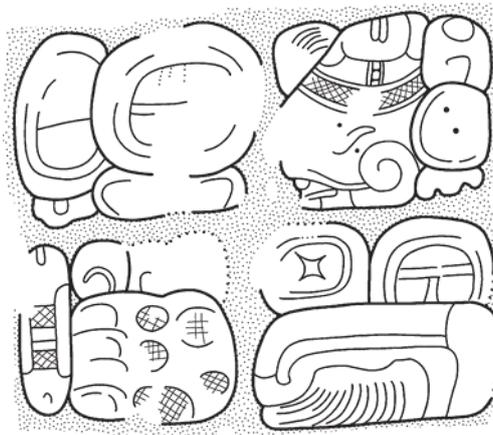
Figure 2. 16. The name of Chak Tok Ich'aak on Stela 44 of El Peru Waka'. Drawing by Mary Kate Kelly.

The location of Baaktuunil remains unknown, but its connection to the geopolitical network of the Kanu'l dynasty is quite likely if we take into account the fact that the rulers of La Corona travelled to Calakmul, the Late Classic seat of the Kanu'l dynasty,

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[38] The lintel is dedicated to the military triumphs of the Yaxchilan king K'inich Tatbu Skull II over many sites, including Palenque and Bonampak (Martin and Grube 2008:121).

in the seventh and eighth centuries. Baktuunil could refer to a place near El Peru Waka'

or even Dzibanche (Stuart et al. 2018:8-10).

Figure 2. 17. Altar 5, La Corona. Photo by David Stuart.

Although the Kanu'l king Tuun K'ab Hix is not mentioned on Altar 5, he may have supervised the reign of Chak Tok Ich'aak, just as his successor K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' oversaw accession of Wa'oom Uch'ab Ahk - the son of Chak Tok Ich'aak (Martin and Beliaev 2017:3; Stuart et al. 2018:8-10).

The first notable evidence of the Snake dynasty exercising power outside its kingdom (in northern Petén) comes from Stela 25, Naranjo. In AD 546, 9 years after the unfortunate clash with Yaxchilan, Tuun K'ab Hix (Figure 2.18) presided over the inauguration of the Naranjo king - "Aj Wosal" (Aj Numsaaj Chan K'inich), as recorded on Stela 25[39] (Estrada Belli and Tokovinine 2016:164; Velásquez García 2008). Gaining Naranjo as an ally must have

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[39] Stela 25 was erected in AD 615, shortly before the death of "Aj Wosal". The reference to his AD 546 accession is a retrospective. For these reasons, it can be safely assumed that "Aj Wosal" remained an ally of Kanu'l throughout his reign (Martin and Grube 2008:72).

happened at the expense of Tikal as some evidence suggests a close connection between Tikal and Naranjo in the Early Classic Period (Kettunen 2012; Tokovinine and Fialko 2007:11)[40]
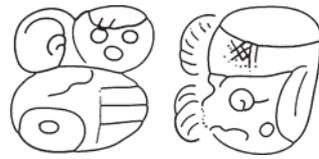
Figure 2. 18. Tuun K'ab Hix, Stela 25, Naranjo. Drawing by Ian Graham.

The route taken by the Kanu'l to install Aj Numsaaj Chan K'inich on the Naranjo throne was probably through the eastern lowlands and centres such as Punta de Cacao and El Pilar. It is very likely that this was a military campaign. The desecration of the Early Classic monuments at La Sufricaya and the subsequent relocation of the dynastic seat to Holmul in AD 500-550 were probably related to the military activities of the Kanu'l (Estrada Belli and Tokovinine 2022).

The inscription on the richly decorated Holmul Frieze on Building A, Group II (dedicated around AD 593) makes it clear that its ruler K'inich Tajal Tuun was connected by blood to the Naranjo ruler and at the same time he was a *yajaw* ("vassal") of Kanu'l lord (s). The name of the overlord is not specified, suggesting that the overlordship was extended to all consecutive Kanu'l members. Holmul must have felt under the sway of Kanu'l at least 20 years before the dedication of the frieze, judging from the K'inich Tajal Tuun's parentage statement, which names Aj Numsaaj [Chan K'inich], the king of Naranjo and loyal vassal of Kanu'l dynasty as his grandfather and Ix Sak Chuween, daughter of Aj Numsaaj [Chan K'inich] as his mother. The inscriptions show a clear political connection between Naranjo and Holmul, and the subordination of both places to the powerful Kanu'l dynasty. The subordination of Holmul

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[40] Chak Tok Ichaak II of Tikal (c. AD 486-508) carried the title Sak Chuwen, which was also adopted by Naranjo kings (Tokovinine and Fialko 2007:11).

to Naranjo and the Kanu'l dynasty must have been accompanied by the loss of Tikal, which had exerted influence over Holmul since the Early Classic Period. Aj Numsaaj? Chan K'inich remained a strong ally of Calakmul and created his regional hegemony in the eastern lowlands, equally satisfying his ambitions and the interests of his Kanu'l overlords (Estrada Belli and Tokovinine 2016:164).

The Holmul frieze, Stela 25 and Stela 47 of Naranjo are among the earliest surviving examples of political patronage – "where one king sanctions the rule of another" - and are the first sign we have of this northern kingdom's emerging power" (Martin and Grube 2008:72)

Stela 47 of Naranjo refers to Tuun K'ab Hix as the first king in the order of 4 successive kings 4 TZ'AK -bu K'UH -ka [KANU'L] AJAW. These four kings appear as the overlords of Aj Numsaaj Chan K'inich. The stela also gives a glimpse at the name of the previously unknown Kanu'l king. The second in the order of 4 kings stands for Aj -? XAK- li (Martin et al. 2016:615-617; Albert Davletshin personal communication 2017), recently identified by Martin and Beliaev as the Kanu'l lord who ruled between Tuun K'ab Hix and Sky Witness. Martin and Beliaev have also established that Aj Xakil and K'ahk' 'Ti' Ch'ich,' another important figure in Kanu'l's history, are one and the same person (Martin and Beliaev 2017: 4-6).

K'ahk' 'Ti' Ch'ich', appears as the overlord of Aj Numsaaj (?) Chan K'inich on the inscription from the ceramic vessel excavated from Burial 23, Uaxactun. How this ceramic vessel came to be buried in Uaxactun is still a mystery,' but it is probably linked to the increasing power of the Kanu'l dynasty at the expense of Tikal. The end of the hegemonic domination of Tikal is also observed in El Peru Waka' [41]. On Stela 44 from El Peru Waka' the

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[41] El Peru Waka'was subordinate to Tikal in the Early Classic Period. Stela 44 clearly shows turnover in the relationship between the two dynasties. The shift must have taken place during the reign of Chak Tok Ich'aak, and his marriage to Ix Ikoom (see also Chapter IV).

ruler Wa'oom Uch'ab Ahk appears as *yajaw* of K'ahk' 'Ti' Ch'ich in AD 556[42] (Martin and Beliaev 2017: 3). The accession of Wa'oom Uch'ab Ahk is also followed by an overlordship statement, naming K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich, the 16th Kanu'l king in the sequence, as his overlord (Martin and Beliaev 2017:3).

Concerning the residence of K'ahk' 'Ti' Ch'ich, Lintel 3 (Figure 2.19) from the Temple of Lintels (E-6), Dzibanche gives us a privileged glimpse into this issue. This lintel records an accession in AD 550 of a king (Beliaev and Safronov 2002; Martin and Beliaev 2017:5). However, it is not an ordinary accession; to the throne, but an accession as *kaloomte'*.

Figure 2. 19. Lintel 3, Dzibanche. Photo by Peter Harrison.

Leading Maya scholars who have traced the title *kaloomte'* from inscriptions have concluded that it denotes supremacy and is limited only to the most powerful dynasties (Berlin 1958; Harrison 1999:79; Houston 1993:108; Stuart et al. 1989; Stuart 2000:486-487). Martin and Beliaev argue convincingly that the elevation to the status of *kaloomte'* at AD 550 fits perfectly into the reign of K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich and corresponds to Ruler 16 in the Dynastic Vase sequence. This is also supported by the bone inscription from Tomb 6 (Figure 2.20) in Structure II at

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[42] The *yajaw* statement is preceded by Wa'oom Uch'ab Ahk' accession in AD 556.

Calakmul, where K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich was also given the title *kaloomte'*, probably preceded by the title *el k'in* (East)[43] (Martin and Beliaev 2017:4). The same title *el k'in*[44] *kaloomte*, attributed to K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich, can be seen on a recently discovered frieze in Chochkitam (northeastern Guatemala). It clearly indicates that K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich saw himself as an "eastern" hegemon (Estrada Belli and Tokovinine 2022). [45]

Figure 2. 20. Detail of an inscribed bone from Tomb 6, Structure II, Calakmul. Photo by Rogelio Valencia. Drawing by Simon Martin.

Safronov and Beliaev go even further and cautiously suggest that the *kaloomte'* ruler from Lintel 3 Dzibanche might have been a father of the *la –k'a ...cha –B'alam* from El

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[43] The king's name is followed by Aj-?XAK, which corresponds very well with the name on Stela 47, Naranjo and strongly suggests that both names belong to one and the same person.

[44] The glyph for *el k'in* is for some scholars read as *lak'in* (Beliaev personal communication 2018).

[45] The texts on the frieze indicate also that the boundary between the "East" and the "West" ran somewhere west of Xultun and east of Naachtun.

Resbalon[46] (Beliaev and Safronov 2002). At this stage it is impossible to prove whether l*a k' a..cha B'alam* and *kaloomte'* were related, as the jumbling, erosion and resetting of the monuments make them difficult to understand (Martin and Grube 2008:104), although strong doubts exist. However, the extended influence over El Resbalon, La Corona and Naranjo, as well as efforts to subjugate Yaxchilan, initiated a siege of Tikal. This strategy of enclosure and subjugation of other Maya cities was continued by Sky Witness, another Kanu'l lord (Nalda and Balanzarios 2008:320).

The first clear reference to Sky Witness comes from Los Alacranes, a small site in southern Campeche, Mexico. The inscription on Stela 1 (Figure 2.21) mentions the birth of the ruler Sak Witzil Baah (a lord from a region called Buuk'). The text states that he ascended the throne 57 years after his birth under the auspices of Sky Witness. According to Nikolai Grube, Sak Witzil Baah was installed as ruler on 9.6.7.3.18 7 Etz'nab' 1 Sip (AD 30.04.561) (Grube 2008:195). However, Sky Witness's expansionist ambitions went much further. Only one year after the installation of Sak Witzil Baah, in AD 562, Naranjo's southern neighbour Caracol came under the influence of the Kanu'l king.

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[46]They assumed that Lintel 3 and El Resbalon HS1 share the same name - the commissioner of Lintel 3 Dzibanche, the ruler a -? be-ya (Beliaev and Safronov 2002, Martin and Beliaev 2017). Recently, however, Sergei Vepretskii has suggested that this is not a name but a form of "focus markers" and should be spelled a - AL -ya, which, however, weakens the theory of the kinship relationship between Dzibanche and the ruler of El Resbalon (Sergei Vepretskii in Marin and Beliaev 2017).
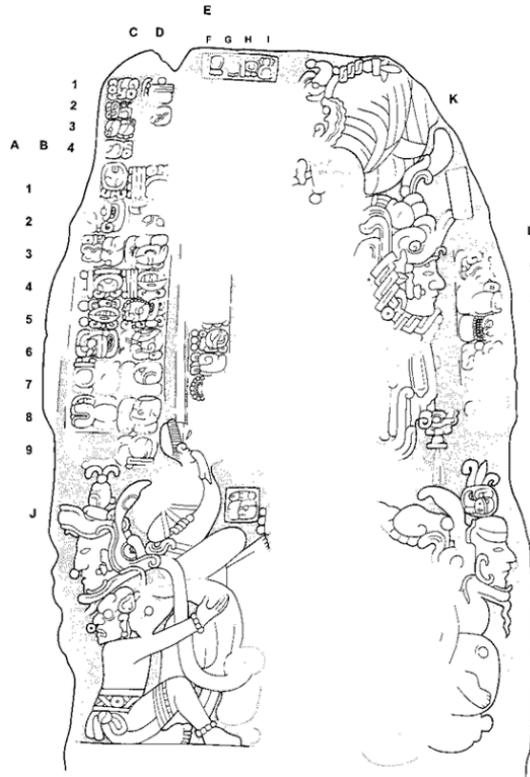
Figure 2. 21. Stela 1, Los Alacranes. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

Caracol, the ancient Uxwitza (Three Hills Water), long vacillated between two superpowers - Tikal and the Kanu'l. The city's history was marked by several unexpected reversals in the city's alignments. As early as the reign of K'an I (AD 531-534), clear interactions between Tikal and the Snake kingdom were established. Stela 15 marks the installation of K'an I as ruler under the authority of a high-ranking person, either a divine being or one of the overlords of the region. The text also mentions an "axe" (*ch'ak*) event against the Caracol. The author of this attack is not clear - both rulers from Tikal and from the Snake dynasty are mentioned in the inscription. Although it is not certain exactly when and who was involved in these events and whose client was at the time was Caracol, the connections to the greatest powers suggest a special role of Caracol in sixth-century politics (Martin and Grube 2008:87). In AD 553, the king of Tikal, Wak Chan K'awiil, installed a son of K'an I - Yajaw Te' K'inich II (553-593 >) as ruler, as attested by Caracol's Stela 6 and Altar 21 (Martin 2005b; Zender, Awe and Martin 2016).

However, relations between Tikal and Caracol did not last long. They ended violently with Tikal's *ch'ak* attack against its former client. A valuable source on the complicated relations between Tikal, Caracol and the Kanu'l dynasty comes from Altar 21, Caracol (Martin 2005b:3-4). Altar 21 (Figure 2.22), commissioned by K'an II to celebrate the 9.10.0.0.0. k'atun ending in AD 633, gives a retrospective account of the life of his father -Yajaw Te' K'inich II. K'an II also makes several references to the Snake dynasty and he appears to have been its ally in the military campaigns against Naranjo in AD 631 (Martin 2005b:3-4)[47]. Yet Caracol, established a relationship with the Kanu'l dynasty much earlier, than a clash with Naranjo. Altar 21 mentions the defeat of Tikal in a "star war" in AD 562. Sergei Vepretskii made more precise drawings of this altar; he proposes a new reading for some of its glyphs. According to the researcher, Caracol captured patron deities of Tikal (e.g., Sak Hix Muut) as revenge for a similar act performed in AD 556 by Tikal on Chuwah, a patron deity of Caracol (Vepretskii et al. 2021).

Even more surprising, however, is the identity of the agent of the war who was thought to be none other than Sky Witness (Martin 2005b). However, the recent re-reading of Altar 21 clearly shows that it was K'ahk ' Ti' Ch'ich', although Sky Witness is also mentioned in the text (Vepretskii et al. 2021).

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[47] After the end of the wars with Naranjo in AD 631, Caracol experienced a period of great prosperity, which was evident in large public building projects and a growth in population (Chase and Chase 2003:184).
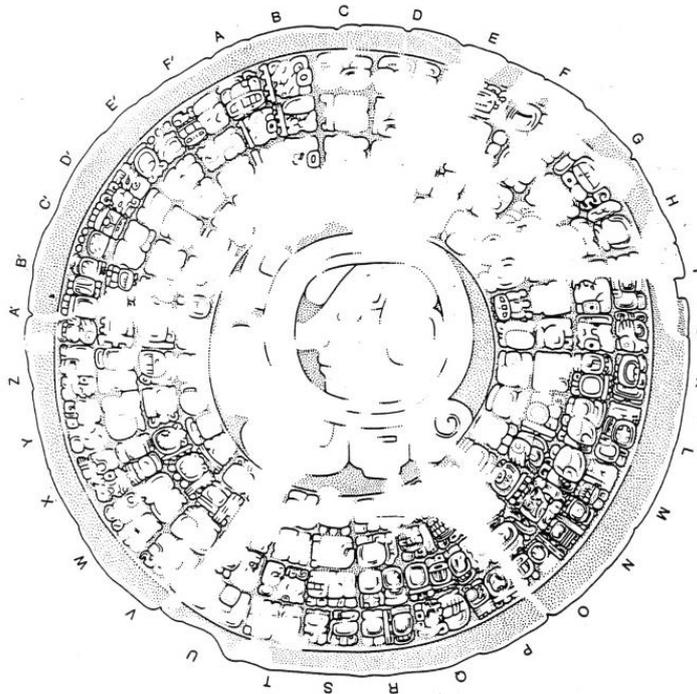
Figure 2. 22. Altar 21, Caracol. Drawing by Stephen Houston.

According to Vepretskii, the references to Sky Witness, dated to AD 561 (Los Alacranes Stela 1), and to his presumed predecessor (K'ahk' Ti' Chi'ch'), dated AD 562 (Caracol, Altar 21), indicate the existence of a dual rule in which K'ahk' Ti' Chi'ch' probably held the highest office. In this scenario, *kaloomte'* K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' would reside in Dzibanche and oversee the military operations and political activities of Sky Witness (Martin 2020; Vepretskii et al. 2021). The theory of dual power is confirmed by the inscription from the Chochkitam frieze mentioned earlier. It mentions that K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' commanded a local ruler whose name is no longer known. One of the Long Count dates recorded in the text corresponds to AD 568. This proves not only that Chochkitam fell under the rule of the Kanu'l dynasty, but also that K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' was still in power 6 years after the victorious battle against Tikal. Since both Kanu'l rulers - Sky Witness and K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' - were still alive (AD 568), this proves the hypothesis of corulership (Estrada Belli and Tokovinine 2022). Chochkitam could serve as a strategic waystation to launch attacks against Xultun and Tikal. The king defeated in a "star war" of AD 562, as recorded on Altar 21, Caracol was none other

than Wak Chan K'awiil, a ruler of Tikal who had patronized the accession of the Caracol king Yajaw Te' K'inich II nine years earlier (Martin 2005b:3; Martin and Grube 2008; Zender, Awe and Martin 2016). Due to the erosion of the glyphs, it is not known what happened to Wak Chan K'awiil. However, as Martin and Grube pointed "such accounts usually concern the display and treatment of prisoners, a prelude to their sacrifice, increasing the likelihood that Wak Chan K'awiil did not long survive the encounter" (Martin and Grube 2008:90). It is conceivable that Wak Chan K'awiil's successor, Animal Skull, represented a new royal patrilineage, as there are reasonable assumptions that the previous lineage was liquidated. Unlike his predecessor, Animal Skull paid special attention to his mother - Ix Ajaw of Bahlam - and little to his father, who is mentioned in the inscriptions only once and without a title. Perhaps Animal Skull served as a puppet of his conqueror, the Kanu'l king (Martin and Grube 2008:41).

It can be seen that Tikal was humiliated and dispossessed in many ways - the consequences and effects of the defeat were far-reaching and extended far beyond the Tikal region. The conquerors of Tikal - Kanu'l - not only established a new royal patrilineage by eliminating the existing one; they also possessed new strategic allies - Caracol and Holmul (Estrada Belli and Tokovinine 2016; Martin and Grube 2008: 40-41, 89, 104).

The year of the overwhelming victory over Tikal coincides with the "Tikal Hiatus."
[48] (Weiss Krejci 2011). No dated stone monument was erected at Tikal during this period. It was a decisive moment in the political history of the Maya Lowlands, for the rise of a Snake

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[48] Not a single monument was dedicated in Tikal between AD 562- 692

power was achieved by the fall of its rival - Tikal[49] (Harrison 1999:92; Martin and Grube:2008, 40-41, 89, 104; Sharer 2006:369).

The Kanu'l dynasty continued to make and maintain alliances in the north and south. Sky Witness supervised the second accession of Yajaw Te' K'inich II from Caracol, as attested by Altar 21, Caracol. Vepretskii speculates that K'ahk' Ti' Chi'ch' established a personal bond with a ruler of Caracol. After the death of a Dzibanche ruler, his successor Sky Witness had to reinforce the relationship with Yajaw Te' K'inich II by ordering his second accession ceremony (Vepretskii et al. 2021).

The references to Sky Witness are also found in other regions. In 1997, Simon Martin managed to identify the name of Sky Witness on one of the stone blocks from Yo'okop (Figure 2.23), Quintana Roo (Mexico). Although the stone lacks a date and the Kanu'l emblem glyph, the presence of the Sky Witness name suggests political interference of the Kanu'l dynasty in Yo'okop (Martin and Grube 2008: 104; Nygard and Wren 2008:8).

Figure 2. 23. Sky Witness, Stone B, Yo'okop (after Nygard and Wren 2005: Fig.11.4).

Two final references to Sky Witness come from Caracol Stela 3 and Pol Box Stela 3. The enigmatic passages of Stela 3, Pol Box (Figure 2.24) record the names of Kanu'l kings (the first name probably belongs to Sky Witness, the second appears to be Yuknoom, a name related to

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[49] The "Dark age" of Tikal did not mean the end of a building activity. Various studies indicate that this period marked an extensive construction program (e.g., the construction of the 53-metre-high Temple V) and a material prosperity followed by the redeposition of early classic artefacts: bones and stelae (Moholy Nagy 2016:264; Weiss- Krejci 2011).

various Kanu'l lords[50]) followed by the emblem glyph and logogram *Mam*, "grandfather, grandson, or ancestor".

According to Esparza Olguin and Pérez Gutierez, this combination of the names of the Kanu'l kings with the logogram *Mam* indicates that this is a list of the deceased ancestors of the Kanu'l dynasty (Esparza Olguin and Pérez Gutierez 2009:9-11). Stela 3 from Caracol records a missing event concerning Sky Witness dated to AD 572.

Figure 2. 24. Stela 3, Pol Box (after Esparza and Pérez Gutiérrez, 2009: 7)

If indeed Sky Witness ruled under K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich', the death of the latter must have occurred in AD 573 or earlier. Monument 16 and Monument 2 from Dzibanche, dated to AD 573, mention the new ruler Yax Yopaat celebrating the end of k'atun.

The second half of the sixth century saw important changes in architecture and burial practices at Dzibanche. A recently discovered rich tomb at Dzibanche (Figure 2.25) may provide intriguing new insights into the death of Sky Witness (Velásquez García and Nalda

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[50] Yuknoom Ch'een I, Yuknoom the Head, Yuknoom Ch'een II, Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk and Yuknoom Took' K'awiil

2005:31). A bone awl found between femurs and near the pelvis of the individual buried at the top of the Temple of the Cormorants contains an inscription. In all likelihood, this inscription allows the skeleton to be attributed to a person who was closely associated with Sky Witness or, more likely, to Sky Witness himself.
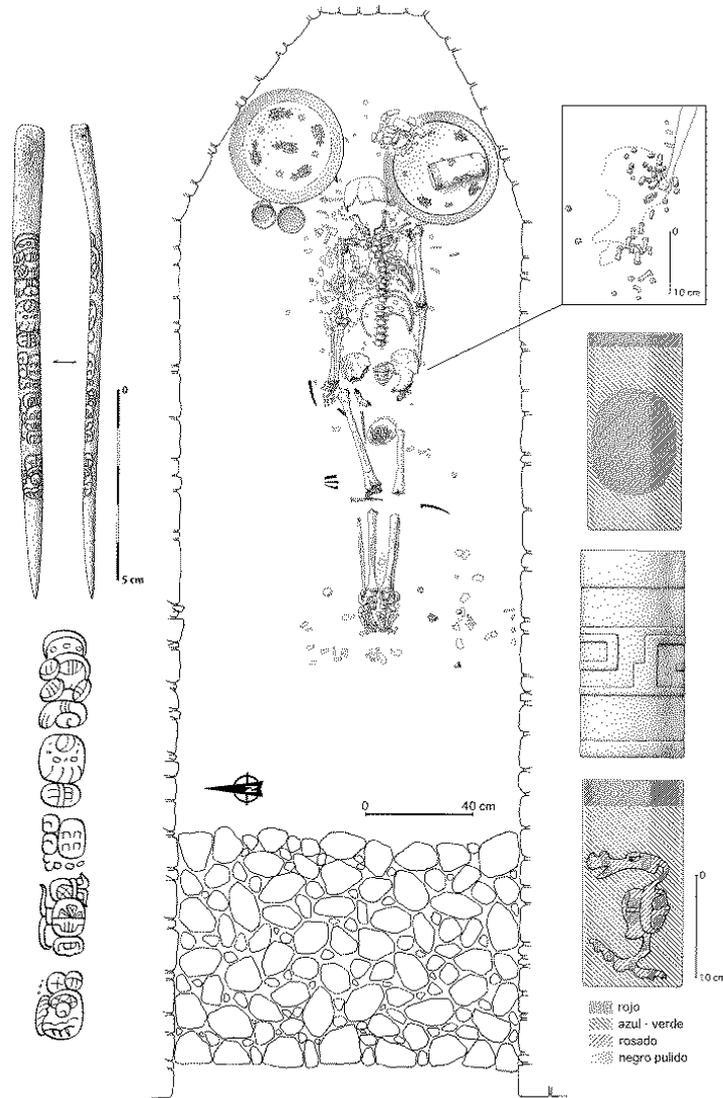
Figure 2. 25. Tomb of Sky Witness, Temple of the Cormorans, Dzibanche (after Nalda and Balanzario 2011: Fig. 9).

The text states "u -May-yi b'a-ki yu -ko-no-ma UT?-tu-Tnn- CHAN -na K'UH -ka- KAN-AJAW - this is a sacrificial bone of Sky Witness (Figure 2.26) or this is a gift of Sky Witness (Velásquez García 2011:353). Various archaeological methods have helped to date the tomb to the second half of the sixth century, which coincides with the reign of Sky Witness. The bones

of the individual show severe injuries, probably resulting from violent confrontations or battles in which the man participated (Nalda and Balanzario 2011:331).

However, this is not the only tomb in the Temple of the Cormorants. There are at least five people buried in the temple - four in chambers and one in a cist. The tombs are dated to the early and late sixth century. All the men buried in the chambers were between 30 and 40 years old. Their bodies were aligned east-west and were accompanied by rich grave goods - vases, plates, jade beads, necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. Three individuals were even covered with a jaguar skin, a great symbol of power and dynastic lineage.

This uniformity of architecture, burial pattern and grave goods led Nalda and Balanzario to conclude that it was the burial of a homogeneous group of an elite that resided in Dzibanche during the Middle Classic Period. Nalda and Balanzario assume that all occupants of the tombs had equal status. The Temple of the Cormorants with its *talud tablero* and

decorative elements evoking the style of Teotihuacan[51] was a clear statement of prestige, power, and authority. Therefore, it may have also served as a place of a cult of the mighty Kanu'l kings in the sixth century (Nalda and Balanzario 2011:332). Perhaps one of the tombs belonged to Yax Yopaat, the Kanu'l ruler known from the inscription on Monuments 2 and 16. Monument 16, as well as Monuments 2 and 19, represent a new sculpture program, introduced in Dzibanche as early as AD 573[52]. These monuments were not part of hieroglyphic staircases and did not show images of captives. Instead, their iconography is associated with the ballgame (Velásquez García 2004:99). The reign of Yax Yopaat remains obscure, for apart from Monument 16, his name is only known from a small, looted mirror with an inscription (K4829). Interestingly, Yax Yopaat, whose name is followed by the full emblem glyph, appears on an inscription from K4829 as the father of a lord[...]Wa'om Ch'ee'n the owner of the mirror. Lord[...] Ch'een bears the title *kanu'l ajaw*, but not the title *k'uhul*. Furthermore, this inscription is the first example of the *kanu'l ajaw* emblem being transferred from a father to a son. It is very likely that these are two different Yax Yopaats. The one from a looted mirror may even have been the father of Yuknoom Ch'een I, the second can be dated to the late sixth century and associated with Monument 16 (Kupprat and Vázquez López 2018:87).

If Yax Yopaat from Monument 16 was a successor to K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' or Sky Witness, he reigned for only 6 years, as AD 579 marked the accession of another important figure in the history of the Kanu'l dynasty - Scroll Serpent.

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[51] One of the *tableros,* for example, was decorated with red and blue circles. Its size and arrangement are reminiscent of a Mural of the Puma from the Avenue of the Dead in Teotihuacan. The pyramid is also decorated with stucco friezes coated with red paint and yielding symbols typical to Teotihuacan (Nalda and Balanzario 2011:322).

[52] suggested by the date of the inscription – 5 December AD 573

Scroll Serpent is one of the four Kanu'l kings that supervised the reign of king Aj Numsaaj (?) Chan K'inich from Naranjo. Stela 47 of Naranjo clearly mentions Tuun K'ab Hix, K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' Aj Xakil, Sky Witness and Scroll Serpent as the *chan tz'akbu(ul) k'uhul Kanu'l ajaw* "four holy Snake[-Place] kings in order" (Martin et al. 2016:617). The fact that Yax Yopaat does not appear in the inscriptions from Stela 47 could again indicate a dual rule - the existence of the two branches of the Kanu'l dynasty as early as the late sixth century. Yax Yopaat would then represent the legitimate king in Dzibanche, the successor of K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich'. In this way, Aj Numsaaj (?) Chan K'inich could have supported the system of dual rule created by K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' and submitted to a new line of Kanu'l represented by Sky Witness and Scroll Serpent. Alternatively, Aj Numsaaj (?) Chan K'inich only referred to those Kanu'l rulers who, from his point of view, had the greatest influence on the political life of Naranjo. Tuun K'ab Hix, K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' Aj Xakil, Sky Witness and Scroll Serpent were probably overlords of the Naranjo ruler during his long reign (Martin 2017a).

Scroll Serpent, the last Kanu'l king mentioned in the text, proves to be as talented as his great predecessors K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' and Sky Witness. During his reign, the Kanu'l dynasty sparked interest in gaining control over the eastern and western Maya Lowlands. Serpent Scroll, for example, appears on Uxul Stela 4, possibly dated to 9.8.10.0.0 (AD 603) (Nikolai Grube personal communication 2021).

A valuable source of information about Scroll Serpent are two stelae from Calakmul - Stela 8 and Stela 33, both erected by his successors. Stela 33, commissioned by Yuknoom Ch'een II and erected in AD 667, tells of Scrolls Serpent celebrating the event 9.8.0.0.0. in AD 593 (Martin 2005a:7). At this point he was no longer *ajaw* lord but became in AD 592 (according to K6751) a *kaloomte'*, possibly after a remarkable political or military achievement (Martin 2017a). Stela also records the name of the mother of Yuknoom Ch'een II and the wife

of Scroll Serpent. Her name is Ix K'abel and she carries the title *chiik nahb ajaw,* strictly related with Calakmul (see later this chapter) (Vepretskii and Savchenko 2022).

The fact that AD 721, Scroll Serpent is again named on Stela 8 of Yuknoom T'ook K'awiil > 702-731[53] as the celebrant of the event 9.8.0.0.0 (Martin 2005a:7), implies that he was an important ruler also for the late classic Kanu'l kings. By marrying local *chiik nahb ajaw* lady he legitimised the rule at Calakmul. Perhaps also he repeated the success of K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' and consolidated much of the power at the expense of Yax Yopaat. Iconographically, the data supporting this idea could come from Monument 16, Dzibanche, mentioned earlier. The name Yax Yopaat appears in connection with the event in which various figures participate. One of them may have been Yax Yopaat. If so, he would not be depicted on this monument as an overlord, but among other leaders of equal rank. On the contrary, Scroll Serpent was always portrayed as a clever diplomat, great military tactician and war leader. He enhanced cooperation and improved relations with Caracol. He supervised now an eroded event in the life of Caracol's king Yajaw Te' K'inich II, as recorded on Stela 4 probably from AD 583 (Martin and Grube 2008:90, 103). It is quite possible that he also arranged the marriage of Yajaw Te' K'inich II and Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' from the Yax kingdom, who arrived (*huli*) to Caracol in AD 584 (Tuszyńska 2016:167), (see Chapter IV).

The campaigns against Palenque in AD 599 and 611 revealed Kanu'l's ambitious plans to expand the sphere of influence westwards. Scroll Serpent had to contend with difficult logistical aspects in his campaigns, including a great distance and the crossing of the Usumacinta River[54].

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[53] Dates of reign. The ">" and "<" refer to uncertainty in dates.

[54] Warriors took advantage of the dry season. Both attacks took place in April, when the low rainfall facilitated the crossing of the mighty Usumacinta River.

The ability to sack Palenque twice in a short period of time can thus be seen as a demonstration of power by the Kanu'l dynasty (Schele and Mathews 1998:14-106, Martin and Grube 2008, Bernal 2016:28-29). A text from Palace C, Palenque mentions a person K'oox Kula'[55] Chi CHA' Yajawte'[56] Sky Witness," as the protagonist of an attack (Bernal 2016:21, Martin and Grube 2008:161). Interestingly, this military leader also bears, among other titles, the title chi CHA', which I have already discussed in this chapter. If we acknowledge that chi CHA' is a toponym located in northern Petén or southern Campeche, the protagonist of an attack might not have come from the capital of the Kanu'l dynasty, but from the place that the Kanu'l people considered to be their place of origin (Grube 2004:20). We also cannot exclude the possibility that the protagonist of an attack was a prince named after his ancestor - the great king Sky Witness (Sergei Vepretskii personal communication 2021). The title *chihka' yajawte'* seems to be the title attributed to the rulers. For example, on Lintel 21 from Yaxchilan, the ruler carries the title *chihka' yajawte' yopaat b'ahalam*. According to Bernal, it is quite strange for a subordinate leader to claim a victory over such an important centre as Palenque (Bernal 2016:19-20). It would have been expected that the order would have come from the main hierarchy, a high-ranking individual.

Although the true identity of the leader of the first attack on Palenque is not yet clear, the conquest of Palenque is beyond question. Inscriptions from Palace C chronicle an axing of Lakamha' (*ch'ak*) and throwing down (*yaleh*) of the Palenque Triad. The first expression (*ch'ak*) clearly refers to the sacking of Palenque; the second (*yaleh*) speaks of the desecration of the

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[55] The same title *koox kula'* (where *koox* corresponds to the bird name *koox*) is recorded on a Late Claasic vase from Uci, and an inscribed column from Ek Balam, Yucatan, Mexico. The owner of the vase from Uci bears the title *koox kula'*, which is similar to that found in the regions of Calakmul and La Corona (Hruby et al.2022:159-160).

[56] meaning a war captain (Lacadena 2010).

sacred idols of the kingdom. Ix Yohl Ik'nal (AD 583-604), the first Palenque queen in power, survived an encounter, but the forces of Palenque were weakened. In AD 611, 12 years after the first attack, Palenque came under another assault, this time by a king, Scroll Serpent. He appears as the protagonist of the *ch'ak* event against Lakamha on the text from the East Panel of the Temple of Inscriptions (built around AD 680): c*h'ak-ah lakam-ha' 4 Ix 7 Uo u chabhi un neh chan k'uhul -Kanu'l ajaw* (Stuart 1998:8). The enigmatic expression is followed by *'satay k'uhul ixik, satay ajaw* "lost is the divine lady, lost is the world". The text also informs that certain rituals are not performed (Grube 1993; Martin and Grube 2008:161). Obviously, the second attack was more decisive, for it resulted in the breaking of the patriline of Palenque in AD 612 (Bassie Sweet 2019:6, Martin and Grube 2008:161 Velásquez García 2008). The name of the following king of Palenque - Muwaan Mat - refers to the ancestral deity of the city, the father of the Palenque Triad. Perhaps Muwaan Mat was a foreigner installed by the Palenque to supervise the city, or on the contrary, his rule may have been metaphorical, signifying the bad fortunes of the city (Martin 2000c:42; Martin and Grube 2008:161).

Scroll Serpent died soon after the attack on Palenque and it seems that the subsequent Snake rulers endeavoured to retain patronage over their subordinates and to possess new ones. The inscription on Element 58, found in Structure 13Q-4G[57] of La Corona palace mentions the death of a person, named Ho' Yatik of Uxul at the place Five Lakes *(ho'nahb)* on the 19 April, AD 613. According to Canuto et al. it is quite possible (Canuto et al. 2017:11) that this event refers to one of the Kanu'l conquests. The location of the five lakes could be Coba (Nikolai Grube personal communication 2021).

However, the death of Scroll Serpent created a new opportunity for its vassals to free themselves from the hegemony of their overlords. As Martin and Grube have noted, "in all hegemonic systems, the transition of authority from an established figure to an untried

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[57] Element 58 once formed a part of the hieroglyphic stairway.

successor is a period of uncertainty, a juncture at which old ties might be altered or repudiated entirely" (Martin and Grube 2008:106). The names of Scroll Serpent's successors - Yuknoom Ti' Chan and Tajoom Uk'ab K'ahk' - appear only in the inscriptions of Caracol, Naranjo (Maritn and Grube 2008), and perhaps Holmul, giving these cities a special significance (Aleksander Tokovinine personal communication 2018).

The strong links between Caracol and the Snake kingdom developed and continued during the reigns of Yuknoom Ti' Chan and Tajoom Uk'ab K'ahk'. Yuknoom Ti' Chan supervised a ceremony in AD 619 (Figure 2.27) in which the king of Caracol - K'an II (Tum Yol K'ihnich II) - received a royal headband, as attested on Stela 3 from Caracol[58] (Martin 2017; Zender, Awe and Helmke 2016).
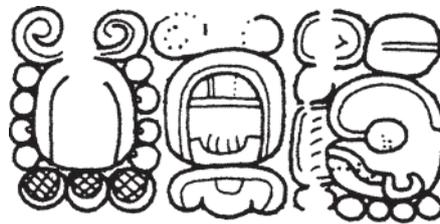
Figure 2. 27. Yuknoom Ti' Chan, the Snake king, Stela 3, Caracol (after Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981).

The accession of Tajoom Uk'ab K'ahk in AD 622 is mentioned on a damaged Stela 22 Caracol, as is the gift (possibly a headdress or deity effigy) to K'an II in AD 627. The inscription on Stela 3, Caracol marks the arrival of the god "Man-Eater" in Caracol. It was a gift from Tajoom Uk'ab K'ahk' to K'an II. According to Baron, the gift was a new effigy of the "Man-Eater" to replace an old statue. Since the same god appears in Caracol inscriptions from at least AD 534 (Stela 16), if not earlier (Baron 2013:199, 396), "bestowing the effigy might mark a new patronship. This may have been a gesture of goodwill, or it may have been an overtly political statement, by effectively becoming a sponsor of a local god" (Baron 2013:396). Broadly speaking, the gift aimed at binding and ensuring close ties between Caracol and the Kanu'l dynasty. Diplomatic relations supported a military pact. Indeed, Caracol, a loyal client

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[58] It was a second accession of K'an II. The first one in AD 618 was supervised by the gods (Stela 3, Caracol)

of the Snake kingdom, was involved in a conflict with Naranjo. Relations between the Snake kingdom and Naranjo were to change after the death of Naranjo King "Aj Wosal", who was a loyal ally of the Kanu'l Kingdom throughout his life. Naranjo, which was surrounded by its rival Caracol in the south and its overlord the Kanu'l dynasty in the north, began to break its dependence. Having a strategic ally in the south, the Snake dynasty wanted to subjugate Naranjo and restore the status quo. Clashes between Naranjo and Caracol broke out in AD 626. Naranjo suffered a defeat at the hands of the Caracol king K'an II in *jubuy* (got downed/toppled) in AD 626. Naranjo's allied lords at Kohk Ka suffered the same fate. There is no information on Kanu'l involvement in the conflict, but AD 627 shows that K'an II attacked the site of Tzam, which is in close proximity to Naranjo (Helmke and Vepretskii 2019; Kettunen 2012:128, Zender, Awe and Martin 2016). On the same day, Tajoom Uk'ab K'ahk', the Snake King, played the ballgame, as recorded on hieroglyphic steps at Naranjo. It is more than likely that this event was in some way connected with a battle and a prisoner sacrifice. The final subjugation of Naranjo belonged to Yuknoom Head[59] who defeated K'uxaj of Naranjo[60] in a 'star war' event in December, AD 631. The defeat of Naranjo is attested on Stela 3, Caracol and HS1, Naranjo (Helmke and Vepretskii 2019). In this context, it is also worth noting that around the same time, public monuments associated with the Kanu'l dynasty mark their presence in Calakmul.

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[59] The attempts of Tajoom Uk'ab K'ahk to subdue the rebellious Naranjo were cut short by his death in AD 630 (Naranjo HS1, step VI). Moreover, the fact that the agent of the victory over Naranjo was not a Caracol king but Yuknoom Head lord with the *Uxte'tuun* people, is very significant. It is clear that the successor of "Aj Wosal" tried to repudiate the patronage of its northern lord but failed.

[60] The defeat brought the city into a 50-year decline. No architectural program was carried out during this time (Beliaev 2000:69).

2.4 Calakmul [Map 2]

The first scholar to identify the title "snake" in Calakmul (Stela 9) was Peter Mathews (Mathews 1979). However, the idea that Calakmul was the seat of a Snake dynasty had already circled in the academic field in the early 1970s. The suggestion had been put forward by Jeffrey Miller (1974) and Joyce Marcus (1976:51), although the results of their investigations were long questioned as the snake emblem glyph was distributed over many sites. As Martin points out, "due to the heavily eroded condition of its exposed stonework, Calakmul is notable for the rarity of these titles, a factor that hampered epigraphic studies for many years" (Martin 2011:274). In fact, due to the poor quality of the stone material used to construct the monuments, Calakmul represents the smallest number of surviving texts in the Maya area. Most of the 117 monolithic monuments recorded at Calakmul were made of local limestone, which is soft, delicate, and fragile and dissolves in rainwater. Centuries of exposure to downpours led to the destruction of these monuments, making the sculptural details and associated texts difficult to read. In addition, several Calakmul stelae have been destroyed and removed from the site by modern looters (Marcus 1987:195-197; Martinez Vega 2012, Ruppert, and Denison 1943).

Fortunately, David Stuart's and Stephen Houston's work on specific place names provided additional strong arguments that helped to match the Snake emblem glyph with Calakmul. They identified two place names: "Nab Tunich" (now *Chiik Nahb*) (Figure 2.28) and "*Oxte'tuun"* with Calakmul and linked them to the activities of the Kanu'l rulers (Stuart and Houston 1994:28-29).

| a | b | c |

Figure 2. 28. *Chiik Nahb* toponym in three different contexts: a) u-ti-ya chi[ku]-NAHB, Dos Pilas Panel 7 (pB6); b) AJ-chi[ku]-NAHB, plate from Calakmul Structure IV; c) chi[ku]-NAHB-AJAW, Calakmul Fragment 6 (pA2). Drawings by Simon Martin.

The snake emblem itself consists of the characteristic logograms K'UH and AJAW and the head of a snake forming an emblematic main sign (Figure 2.1). The main sign is regularly followed by the phonetic complement ka', allowing the spelling la' -Kan and the reading *kan* (snake) (Marcus 1976: 9; Martin 1997: 851-852; Martin 2005a). In the Classic Period, snake was known as *chan*; however, the dynasty continued to use the archaic form to demonstrate that its origin could be traced back to antiquity and legitimised its authority by using archaism in the name (Grube 2004: 117).

The early classic reference to the Kanu'l dynasty in Dzibanche and the absence of the Snake head emblem in Calakmul during this period has puzzled scholars for years. Simon Martin was one of the first scholars to question the Early Classic link between Kanu'l and Calakmul, suggesting that Calakmul did not serve as the seat of the Kanu'l dynasty until the Late Classic Period (Martin 2005a). The Early Classic rulers of Calakmul rulers carried *Chiik Nahb* (see later in this chapter), furthermore the inscription of Stela 114 from Calakmul mentions the Bat king (Figure 2.29) in a context that is still puzzling to scholars (Nikolai Grube personal communication 2021).

2.5 The Bat emblem glyph
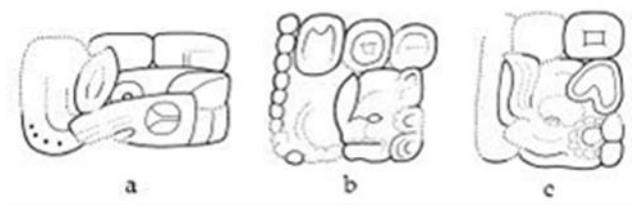
Figure 2. 29. The Bat emblem glyph at Calakmul monuments; a) Stela 114; b) Stela 62; and

c) Stela 59, (after Martin 2005a: Fig. 6).

The bat emblem glyph (Figure 2.29) appears for the first time on two stelae of Naachtun: Stela 23 (dated to AD 361) (Figure 2.30) and Stela 24 (Cases and Lacadena, 2014:375-379). Stela 24 records the enthronization of the Bat lord k'alhu'njiiy k'uh[ul] Suutz' in AD 363, but also refers to the *entrada* event on 8.17.1.4.12 11 Eb' 15 Mak (16 January, AD 378). The local person b'u/mu-JOL is mentioned in the text as *u yajawte'* (the war captain of) Sihyaj K'ahk,' clearly suggesting that Naachtun and the Bat dynasty were actively involved in the Teotihuacan incursion into Maya territory (Cases and Lacadena 2014:377-379; Nondédéo et al. 2016a:93-94; Nondédéo 2016b).
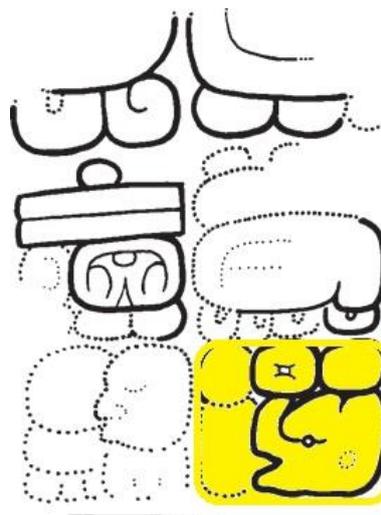
Figure 2. 30. The Bat Emblem glyph (marked in yellow), Stela 23, Naachtun. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

A few decades after the *entrada* of Teotihuacan, the Bat emblem appears on Stela 114 at Calakmul. Perhaps the Bat lord mentioned on Stela 114 (Figure 2.31) was from Naachtun. However, the syntax of Stela 114 is not quite so clear. Furthermore, the Bat lord appears in an

inscription of Stela 114 as *u mam,* which was used in early classic texts not only as an expression for "his grandfather/grandson" but also as an honorific title (Nikolai Grube personal communication 2021).

Interestingly, there is no further reference to the Bat emblem glyph in the Early Classic Period. The Bat emblem glyph disappears from the records for 200 years, only to reappear, for example, in Late Classic Calakmul (Stelae 51 and 52 dated to AD 731, Stela 59 dated to AD 741 and Stela 62 dated to AD 751) (Gronemeyer 2012:29; Martin and Grube 2008:115).
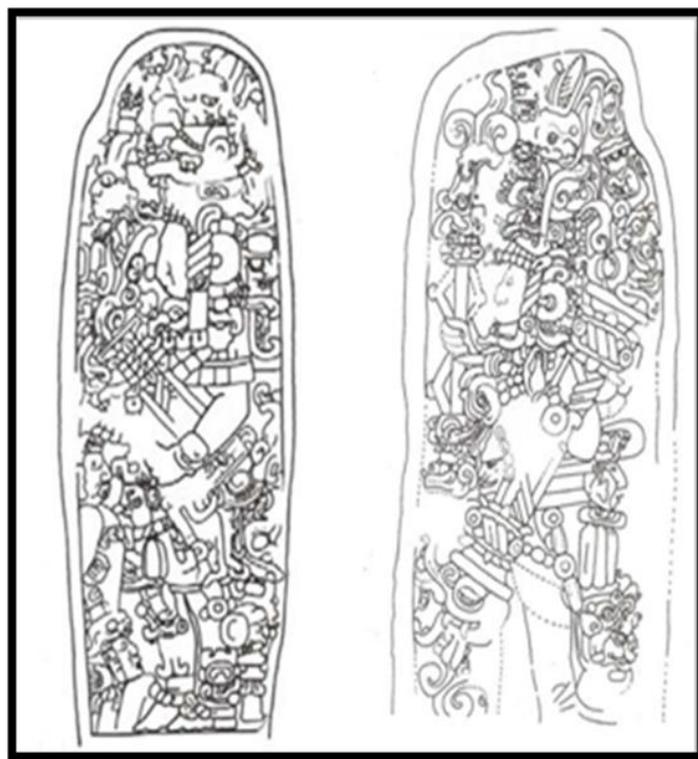
Figure 2. 31. Stela 43 (left) and 114 (right), Calakmul (after Mumary Farto 2019: Fig. 1).

"It is however not clear why we again see the Kanu'l emblem in Calakmul with Ruler Z after the bat head emblem was restored and continued to be used since the times of his predecessor Ruler Y. Possibly, this is a historicizing reference or larger scaled dynamics was involved in the political history of southern Campeche that is currently unavailable in the epigraphic record" (Gronemeyer 2012:29). We could break down the same information for the two subordinates of Calakmul. We have an occurrence of the bat form at Uxul: 1) Stela 3 dated to

AD 633, 2) Stela 17[61] recarved in the Late Classic Period (Grube and Paap 2008: 270), and Oxpemul: 1) Stela 2, dated to AD 771, 2) Altar 15, unknown late classic date, 3) Stela 7 dated to AD 831 (Grube 2008:197-215). It seems plausible that the Bat dynasty changed its seat several times and ruled from different places during different periods (Gronemeyer 2012:25; Grube 2005:197-231). In fact, the Bat emblem on Stela 51 serves as a toponym and could refer to the origin of the Bat dynasty (Martin 2020:410).

The great mobility of dynasties is also attested for the Chatahn people, who are also associated with the Kanu'l dynasty. The title *K'uhul Chatahn winik* appears in many places in different contexts, often in connection with Calakmul.

2.6 K'uhul Chatahn winik and Sak Wahyis

The early classic Stela 43 from Calakmul, dated to AD 514, features an important title connected with the city of Calakmul - *K'uhul Chatahn winik* (Holy Chatahn Lord).The stela shows the image of an elaborately dressed individual, who is most likely a ruler, holding the ceremonial bar with two deities coming out of it - baby K'awiil and K'inich Ajaw. Two captives can be seen at the foot of the man (Valencio Rivera and Esparza Olguin 2018; Vázquez López et al. 2016a). The ruler's proper name is probably *chan ek'* and he is *Mam K'uhul Chatahn winik* (Sergei Vepretskii personal communication 2019).

Stela was of special importance to the Late Classic Kanu'l dynasty as it was reset in the Late Classic Period in front of Structure II (Figure 2.31 and 2.32), one of the most important buildings in Calakmul (Pincemin et al. 1998; Vázquez López et al. 2016b:1103). The Late Classic Kanu'l dynasty, which resided in Calakmul, must therefore have recognised the important role of the Chatahn people in the city and accorded them a high status.

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[61] in the context of a captive's name (Nikolai Grube personal communication 2022).
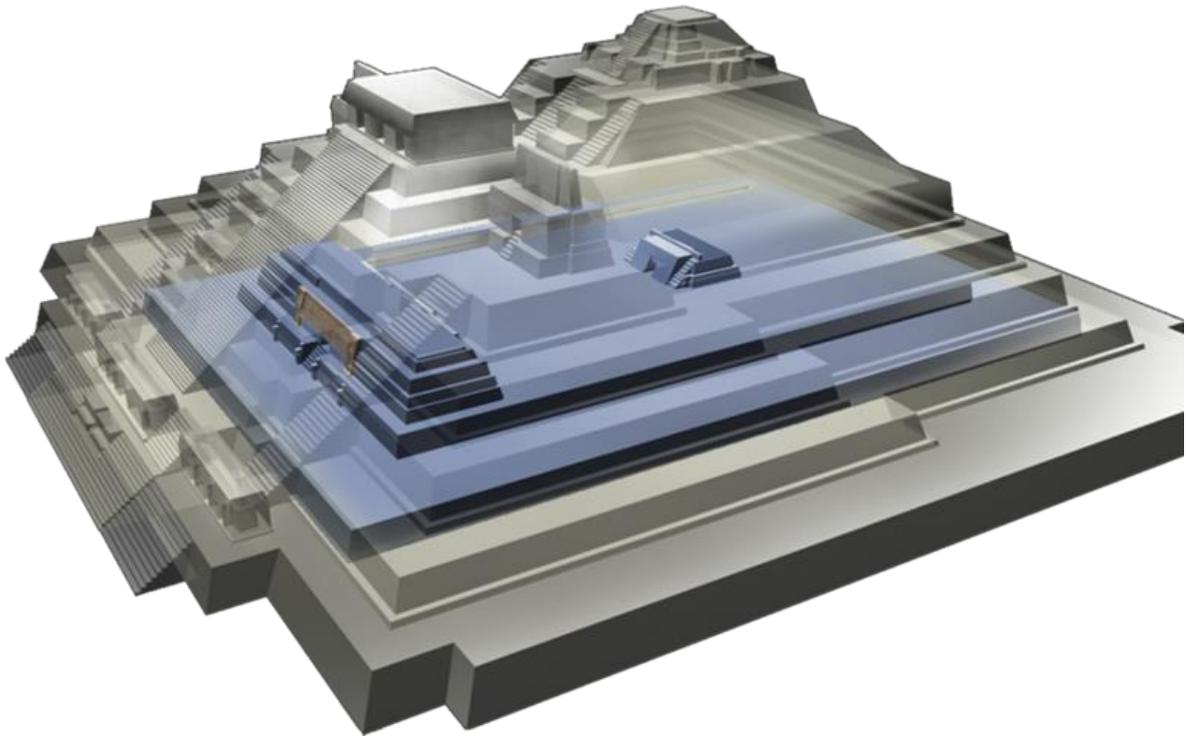
Figure 2. 32. Digital reconstruction of Calakmul's Structure II, indicating the Late Classic and Middle/Late Preclassic Periods, Proyecto Arqueologico Calakmul (after Rodrigez Campero 2008: Photo 4).

Being related to *Chatahn winik* was definitely considered very prestigious. For instance, the recently discovered Stela 1 in Achiotal was commissioned by *Mam K'uhul Chatahn winik*, who celebrated the completion of his second k'atun on 22 November AD 411. He ascended the throne in AD 379 only 16 months after the *entrada* event, strongly suggesting that Achiotal was also part of a Teotihuacan New Order (Barrientos et al. 2014:224; Beliaev et al. 2017:34).

Apparently, the title *Chatahn winik* is not only attributed to Calakmul. In fact, it is widely distributed across many Maya sites, including Nakbe, Tikal, Copan, Rio Azul, El Peru Waka', Altar de Los Reyes, Uxul and La Florida (Boot 2004:509-510; Vázquez López et al. 2016a). As the peccary skull from Copan (Figure 2.33), yielding *Chatahn winik*, title might have been imported from the Tikal area, the distribution of *Chatahn winik* is restricted to northern Petén only (Boot 2004:511).

Figure 2. 33. Peccary skull from Tomb 1, Copan. Drawing by Barbara Fash.

Eric Velásquez García and Ana Garcia Barrios have pointed out that in the Early Classic Period the *K'uhul Chatahn winik* title frequently appeared with the title *Mas'ul ajaw and tz'eh kab*, in contrast to the Late Classic Period when it is frequently associated with the title *Sak Wahyis* (Velásquez García and Barrios 2018: 7). *Sak Wahyis* (White Nagual)[62] was a social group, family or lineage that frequently occurs in the Late Classic Period together with the title *K'uhul Chatahn winik*. Its distribution is restricted to northern Petén (Boot 2004:5).

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[62] Anna Garcia Barrios and Eric Velasquez offer a new reading of the title *Sak Wahyis*. They note that in many cases this title contains the bird's feather, which is recognised by epigraphers as the sylabogram "o". For this reason, they propose the reading *Sak O' Wahyis*, Nagual Bird O' White (Velásquez García and Garcia Barrios 2018:19-23).

One of the first links between *K'uhul Chatahn winik* and *Sak Wahyis* comes from El Peru Waka'. The late classic Stela 44, El Peru Waka' records the accession of the ruler Wa'oom Uch'ab Ahk to the throne in AD 556. The event is witnessed by Ix Ikoom, probably the mother of Wa'oom Uch'ab Ahk. She carries the title *Sak Wahyis*, *K'uhul Chatahn winik* (Pérez et al. 2014:118-119).

Another example comes from Uxul. Stela 2 (Figure 2.34) contains a hieroglyphic inscription which, although partially eroded, provides us with some information about the name and titles of the lady depicted on this stela. Her name is Ix Ajaw K'ahk' and she carries the titles K'uhul cha?-tahn-wi-Winik, *k'uhul chatahn (?) winik* and SAK WAY -si, *Sak Wahyis*. The title *Sak Wahyis* appears more than once in Uxul (also at Stelae 16 and 17) (Grube et al. 2012:21-22; Grube and Esparza Olguin 2017:4-5).

Figure 2. 34. *K'uh[ul] Chatahn winik* and *Sak [O'] Wahy[is]* Fragment of Stela 2, Uxul (C1-D2). Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

The context of the title *Sak Wahyis* on the undated Stela 16 is not well understood but the early classic Stela 17, which was recarved in the Late Classic Period, carries a peculiar hieroglyphic inscription mentioning the title *Sak Wahyis*. The text refers to the dedication of a kind of throne stone belonging to *u Mam Sak Wahyis*, "the maternal grandfather of *Sak Wahyis*". Another *Sak Wahyis* title associated with Uxul is attributed to the captive from this site. He is mentioned on a monument of unknown provenance (Grube and Esparza Olguin 2017:5). Perhaps the *Sak Wahyis* people resided at Uxul, as Grube and Delvendahl suggest (Grube and Delvendahl 2012:22-

23), yet the title has a wider distribution. It appears in an inscription on an undated wooden lintel from El Zotz with relation to the mother of a Yaxchilan ruler (Carter 2015:12). According to Barrientos and Canuto (2021), the *Sak Wahyis* title was specifically reserved for the rulers of La Corona, where it was most widely used, and was never associated with *K'uhul Chatahn Winik*. Perhaps marriage alliances were at play when the fusion of the two titles is observed.

Sak Wahyis appears frequently in La Corona, where subsequent kings held this title (Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018; Tokovinine and Estrada Belli 2016:164). Barrientos and Canuto argue that at the other sites this title is often attributed to women - the mothers of kings - whereas at La Corona it is attributed to kings (Barrientos and Canuto 2021). Nevertheless, the political landscape of northern Petén seems to have been more complex and ambiguous. Yuknoom Cheen II on an altar at La Corona also carries the title *Sak Wahyis* (Sergei Vepretskii personal communication 2021), moreover, the title *Sak Wahyis* at Uxul does not always refer to a woman (e.g., Stelae 16, 17, Unprovenanced Panel). Uxul and La Corona are two sites where this title occurred most frequently, suggesting a link between this title and these two locations (see also Chapter III).

The location of chatahn polity is more problematic. An inscription on Altar 3 (Figure 2.35) of Altar de Los Reyes sheds light on this. It features "divine land(s) Thirteen Divisions" and mentions thirteen emblem glyphs, including, among others: holy Chatahn lord, holy Mutal lord, holy Baaka'l lord, holy Kanu'l lord (Grube 2003; Tokovinine 2008:12).
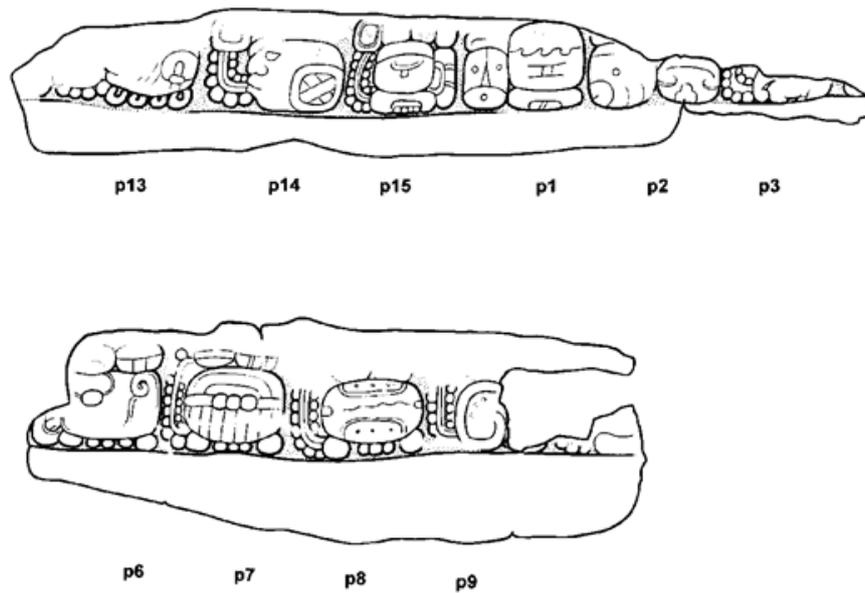
Figure 2. 35.The inscription from Altar 3, Altar de Los Reyes. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

This not only confirms the status of Chatahn as a distinct political entity, but also places it among the most important Maya dynasties from the perspective of Altar de Los Reyes (Grube 2003:37). This title also appears on many ceramics. For example, the Florida (Namaan) rulers -Chakjal Chich? and Siyaj Chan (K'awiil) carry the title *K'uhul Chatahn winik* on some ceramic bowls (Baron 2014a; Barrientos et al. 2014:248-249; Jørgensen and Krempel 2014:99-100; Lopez 2003:13). However, it is mostly associated with codex-style vases (Figure 2.36).

Figure 2. 36. Kerr No. 2723: K'UH cha-TAN-na wi-WINIK-ki; b) Kerr No. 1335: K'UH cha-ta-wi-WINIK-ki. Drawing by Eric Boot.

Figure 2. 37. Codex-style ceramic from the Codex Group at Nakbe. (after Hansen et al.1991LFig.11).

The quantity of codex-style vases with the title *K'uhul Chatahn winik* and their attribution to the Mirador Basin lead some scholars to suggest that we should consider this region, particularly Nakbe (Figure 2. 37) (Stuart 2013) or Tintal (Hansen et al. 2006), as the home of the Late Classic Chatahn dynasty.

Twelve polities mentioned on Altar 3 of the Altar de Los Reyes are said to be "the white pumpkin seed of the Chatahn winik throne" "SAK-SAK (?)25-TZ'AM(?)-li [*cha]- TAN -#- WINIK, sak saak(?) tz'am[i]l Chatahn winik". This enigmatic reference to Chatahn may suggest that it is not a geographical entity but an archetypal one. According to Barrios and Velásquez García, by claiming descent from Chatahn, the elite of northern Petén sought to ennoble their ancestry and justify their claims by increasing the prestige of their ancient tradition (Velásquez García and Barrios 2018:13).

Regardless of whether Chatahn is a geographical or archetypal site (or both), the Late Classic rulers of Calakmul made a clear distinction between themselves and the Holy Lords of Chatahn. Various dynasties, including Kanu'l, referred to the Preclassic system of authority in

105

their inscriptions. At this point, it is important to emphasise the context of the appearance of the *K'uhul Chatahn winik* at Calakmul. Both early classic examples are associated with royal authority.

The ruler mentioned on Stela 43 and the hieroglyphic throne in the palace complex of Structure XX is called *u Mam chatahn winik* (Velásquez García and García Barrios 2018:59). Intriguingly, the bench belongs to *u mam chatahn winik* (a grandson or grandfather of Chatahn winik person)[63] who is said to have been the underlord - *yajaw[te']* of a *kaloomte'*, the lord of *Uxte'tuun Chiik Naahb* (García Barrios and Velásquez García 2016:81; Martin 2012a). As can be seen*, U mam Chatahn Winik* had no superior authority in Calakmul; he was a vassal of a more powerful ruler. Nevertheless, the *Chatahn Winik* dynasty must have enjoyed a high status in early classic Calakmul, because the Structure XX in which they resided was an important building within a larger palace complex that was clearly elite in character.

It is very likely that they also enjoyed high status in Calakmul during the Late Classic Period (García Barrios and Velásquez García 2018:7; Valencia Rivera and Esparza Olguin 2018:58, Vázquez López et al.2016a). This is most evident on Stelae 51 (Figure 2.38) and 89, which date to AD 731, where the carvers carry the title *Chatahn Winik.* Indeed, both stelae bear the signatures of the same sculptors: Sak Ikin(?) Yuhk "Head" *K'uhul Chatahn winik Sak Wahyis* and Sak O' Yibaah Tzak Bahlam (followed by the title *K'uhul Sak Wahyis* and a toponym of Uxul on Stela 51).
Stela 89 (Figure 2.39) states that Sak O' Yibaah Tzak Bahlam was from Nahku'm, (AJ-NAAH -ku-ma), where Naahkum probably stands for the ancient name of Uxul (Martin et al. 2015). It

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[63] According to Grube, we cannot decide whether it is "grandfather" or "grandson". Both translations would make sense (Nikolai Grube personal communication 2022).

also clearly shows that artists could have migrated from the subordinate areas to the larger political and artistic centres (Jagodziński 2019:71).
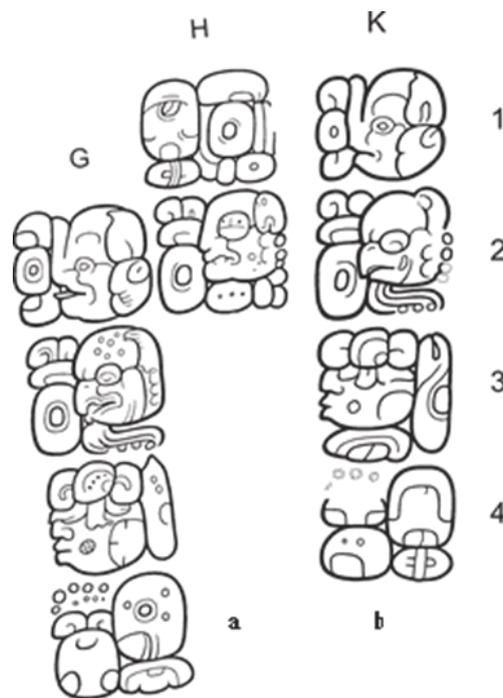
Figure 2. 38. Signature of Sak Ikin(?) Yuhk…" Head carrying the titles *K'uh[ul] Chatahn Winik* y *Sak [O'] Wahy[i]s*: (a) fragment of Stela 51, Calakmul, (b) fragment of Stela 89; Calakmul (K1-K4). Drawings by Simon Martin.

Interestingly, the first sculptor uses the verb root *yuhk*, which is so characteristic of the members of the Kanu'l dynasty from the Early and Late Classic Period. The artist thus not only associated himself with the Chatahn and *Sak Wahyis* dynasty, but also with a powerful Kanu'l dynasty. The verb *yebew* on Stela 51, which can be translated as "delivered", suggests that this monument can be considered a tribute by the two *Sak Wahyis* sculptors to Yuknoom Took' K'awiil, the Late Classic Kanu'l ruler (Velásquez García and García Barrios 2018:15; Zender, Beliaev and Davletshin 2016:46). As both sculptors carried high-ranking titles, they may have acted as symbolic and rhetorical producers rather than the actual carvers of the monuments (Martin et al. 2015).

a   b

The title *Sak Wahyis* also accompanies *K'uhul Chatahn winik* on some of the codex-style

ceramics (Figure 2.40). Barrios suggests that the above codex-style vases and stelae were the

work of a single artist (Barrios 2010:88).

Moreover, Stela 52, dated AD 731, although it lacks the title *K'uhul Chatahn winik* and

the signature of an artist, is in all likelihood the work of the Chatahn artist, as all three Stelae

(51, 52, 89) share similar stylistic patterns and represent the best quality of stelae erected during

the reign of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil (Velásquez García and Pallan 2006:346). Another *K'uhul*

Chatahn winik artist appears on the Late Classic Structure Panel 5D-141 from Tikal. The

person of *K'uhul Chatahn winik* is mentioned as the author of an inscription or even the carver

of the entire panel. The presence of the *K'uhul Chatahn winik* title in late classic Tikal, a period in which it was linked with the Kanu'l dynasty and Calakmul, remains a mystery. García Barrios and Velásquez García suggest that the panel could have been erected before the Kanu'l kings moved to Calakmul, as there is no firm date for the inscription (Velásquez García and García Barrios 2018: 9). Importantly, the title *K'uhul Chatahn winik* was not only attributed to high-ranking scribes and artists in the Late Classic Period but was also possessed by kings.

Three rulers are known from Codex-style ceramics carrying the title of *K'uhul Chatahn winik* and *Sak Wahyis* - Yopaat Bahlam, his son Titomaj K'awiil and the recently discovered K'ahk' Yahx(?)bil (K'AK'-YAX?-bi-li). On K2226 Titomaj K'awiil is referred to as the son of the four K'atun lord, suggesting that the Chatahn dynasty had an established line of succession.

Large quantities of codex-style vases featuring the title *K'uhul Chatahn winik* in the place where we would normally expect to find the owner of the vessel indicate that these vases were produced under the patronage of lords with this title (García Barrios and Velásquez García 2016:85). In this way, the Kanu'l lords must have recognised the special significance of Chatahn and *Sak Wahyis* and gained prestige and/or legitimised their power by referring to them.[64]

In contrast, the early classic references to *K'uhul Chatahn winik* in Calakmul suggest that Calakmul was at some point under the control of an elite related to the Chatahn people. It is uncertain whether their authority was based on kinship relations or whether it was a group of various local nobles who claimed descent from the distant real or legendary entity.

Since there are no major archaeological changes between the sixth and seventh centuries indicating military conflict at Calakmul, but rather a continuous development of the

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[64] The importance of Chatahn in late classic politics is also attested by the offering, consisting of fragments of codex style ceramics placed next to Stela 1, Achiotal, where the reference to *K'uhul Chatahn Winik* is found Barrentos and Canuto 2021).

site, it is very likely that the transition of power from the Chatahn people to the Kanu'l dynasty was peaceful. According to Vázquez López et al. (2016a and 2016b:1104), the Kanu'l branch that moved from Dzibanche to Calakmul allied with Chatahn. They may also have been forced to move to other places under Kanu'l's influence and maintain a presence in the capital as a means of coercion (Mumary Farto 2019:134). This allowed Kanu'l to dominate the city on the one hand, and the Chatahn to maintain important and privileged positions on the other. The Chatahn may still have lived in Late Classic Calakmul and enjoyed great privileges by participating in the activities of the court, as patrons of the arts, ritual specialists, painters, and sculptors (Vázquez López et al. 2016a, Velásquez García and Barrios 2018). The artists from Nakbe could also claim their origin from *Chatahn Winik* and create codex-style vases under the patronage of the Kanu'l kings (Barrientos and Canuto 2021). As mentioned above, the production and distribution of codex-style pottery seems to have been of particular importance to the Kanu'l dynasty. The elite of the Kanu'l dynasty had an interest in evoking their distant past and origins by referring to the confrontation and mythological themes on the codex-style ceramics. The mythological themes depicting the exploits of the gods may also have been part of the political strategy of the Kanu'l kings. Barrios suspects that they pursued this strategy to assert their power and legitimise their rights to the throne (Barrios 2010:90).

2.7 Chiik Nahb

Implicit in this discussion of the titles and toponyms of Calakmul is the question of the title *Chiik Nahb ajaw. Chiik Nahb* is an important place in Calakmul and perhaps the city itself. The exact meaning of this toponym is not clear, as the word *chiik* has many meanings in many Maya languages and it is not known which one is used here. The second word, *nahb*, has the

meaning of "lake", "pool" or "expanse of water" and may refer to water in inscriptions[65] – either real or supernatural (Martin 2011:277).

The earliest reference to *Chiik Nahb* (Figure 2.41) is dated to AD 435 (Stela 114, Calakmul), and the latest comes from Stela 7 from Oxpemul, dated to AD 830 (Carter 2014:41; Grube 2008:204), suggesting that it was an extremely important locator not only attributed to the Kanu'l dynasty. Interestingly, one of the architectural complexes north of the core of the site of Calakmul was called *Chiik Nahb* by the ancient inhabitants of Calakmul (Martin 2011:237).
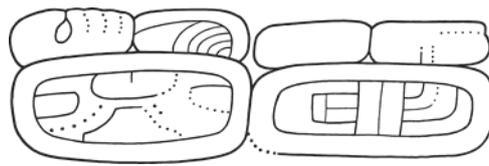
Figure 2. 41. Chiik Nahb Ajaw, Stela 114, Calakmul. Drawing by Simon Martin.

The Chiik Nahb Acropolis is famous for its impressive and amazing wall paintings depicting the daily life of the inhabitants of Calakmul (Figure 2.42). These depictions of quotidian life are unique in Maya art. The stucco-covered façade depicts men and women engaged in various activities, from serving, receiving or eating various foods to transporting or carrying other goods (Aquirre and Baqueiro 2007:167-170). The scenes in blue, green, yellow, red, and brown are accompanied by short texts. These are usually the expression aj, followed by the name of the particular material of foodstuff; for example, *aj ul,* meaning "Maize gruel person" (Figure 2.43), appears next to the person with a large pot who serves *ul* "maize gruel" to other

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[65] There are some suggestions that *chiik* refers to coati, therefore, *chiik nahb* would mean coati pool or coati *aguada* (Helmke and Kupprat 2016:38). However, as Grube has pointed out *chiik* means "coati" only in Yucatec languages, while in the Cholan languages, *chik* is the word for "light" and "illumination". In Yucatec*, chi'ik* means "coati", and c*hik* is the word for "sign". All of this is difficult to explain in the toponymic context (Nikolai Grube personal communication 2022).

individuals [66] (Carrasco Vargas *et al.* 2009:19245-19247, Carrasco Vargas and Cordiero Baqueiro 2013). These expressions possibly denote sellers or traders dealing in certain goods and reflect aspects of the palace economy of Calakmul (Stuart 2014a).

Figure 2. 42. Scene SE-S1, Substructure 1-4 of Chi'k Nahb (after Martin 2012a: Fig. 4).

A related theme is women serving drinks, offering *atole*, but, as Houston noted, depicted in a "subtly sexualized way", often showing the body- plump thighs, breasts, or areolas, and adorned with jade jewellery or body paint. The painting style as well as the palaeography of the glyphs have helped to date the murals to the seventh century. The paintings thus show market facilities built during the great period of rivalry between Calakmul and Tikal (Houston 2014a).

Figure 2. 43. Scene showing the serving and drinking of *ul* ''maize-gruel''. The hieroglyphic caption *aj ul* ''Maize-gruel person'' (AJ u-lu) appears at the top left (after Carrasco, Vázquez López and Martin 2009: Fig. 5).

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[66] Other examples include *aj atz'aam*, "the salt person," or *aj may*, "the tobacco-snuff person."

Strikingly, the panels of the south façade of the Chiik Nahb Acropolis carry images of water plants (water lily) and water animals (turtles, serpents, fish). A series of roundels that appear on the lower panel of the façade contain a single glyphic compound that can be reconstructed as chi[ku]-Nahb -ko-to; therefore, links between the place name *Chiik Nahb* and the water images are clear (Martin 2011:237). It would be worth considering whether the *Chiik Nahb* place refers explicitly to the palace complex in Calakmul - Acropolis Chiik Nahb (Figure 2.44).
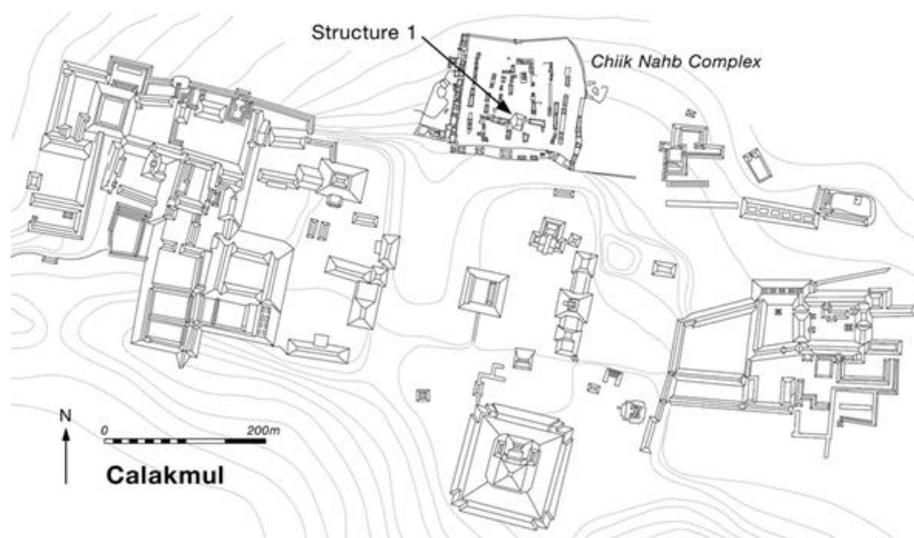
Figure 2. 44. Map showing the position of the Chiik Nahb complex with the center of the Calakmul site (after Carrasco, Vázquez López and Martin 2009: Fig.2).

Evidence for this comes from La Corona - Panel 1, which mentions its ruler K'inich ? Yook heading to *Chiik Nahb*, where he was received by Yuknoom Ch'een II in AD 673 (Stuart et al.2014:439). *Chiik Nahb* could thus refer to a specific location in Calakmul, as opposed to another expression linked with Calakmul - *Uxte'tuun*, which probably has a wider scope and denotes some kind of regional area (Biro 2012:45; Martin and Velásquez García 2016:25).

2.8 Uxte'tuun (Figure 2.45)

As *Chiik Nahb* seems to refer to the city of Calakmul, the toponym *Uxte'tuun* (Three Stone) refers to the place associated with Calakmul, although the exact area covered by this expression is not known[67]. Its meaning is probably related to the setting up of three hearth stones during the creation event at 13.0.0.0. (Boucher and Palomo 2000:36). *Uxte'tuun* must have been a very important place even after the decline of Calakmul, as two of its dependencies seem to have claimed rights to it.

a   b   c

Figure 2. 45. *Uxte'tuun* and *uxte'tuun kaloomte'* titles: a) 3-TE'-TUUN-ni, Fragment 37, Calakmul (pB2); b) 3-TE'-TUUN-ni KAL[TE']-ma, Calakmul Stela 89 (D5-C6a); c) 3-TE'-TUUN-ni KALTE', Panel 1, Cancuen (D8-C9).

Drawings by Simon Martin.

Three late classic stelae at Oxpemul record the toponym *Uxte'tuun* in association with the titles held by the rulers of Oxpemul (see also Chapter IV). At least one Oxpemul ruler from the eighth century and one from the ninth century claimed to have been *Uxte'tuun* lord (Grube 2008). The appearance of this glyph in Oxpemul suggests some kind of relationship between Oxpemul and its giant neighbour to the south - Calakmul (Carrasco et al. 2011; Folan et al. 2009, Folan et al. 2008; Grube 2008, Robichaux 2010, Robichaux and Pruett 2005, 2008).

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[67] In classic Maya cosmogony, the location of the three stones alludes to the three stones of creation and the three stone thrones that were set up at the beginning of the world. According to Boucher and Palomo, Calakmul may have been considered by the ancient Maya as one of the three primogenital places that supported the structure of the cosmos (Boucher and Palomo 2000:36).

Perhaps the Oxpemul elite considered themselves the true successors to the power of Calakmul (Grube 2008:208).

The late reference to *Uxte'tuun* also comes from Naachtun. The queen depicted on the late classic Stela 18 from Naachtun is shown stepping on the captive from *Uxte'tuun* (Barrios and Velásquez García 2011:76; Morley 1956; Nondédéo et al. 2013; Proskouriakoff 1950). It is quite possible that the woman depicted on Stela 18 (paired with Stela 19) is none other than the daughter of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil (see Chapter V). We cannot rule out the possibility that the royal couple of Naachtun were trying to restore the status quo and regain the control over *Uxte'tuun* lost by the Kanu'l lords.

The earliest example linking the Kanu'l lords with the place names of *Uxte'tuun* and *Chiik Nahb* comes from a passage on Step 6 Naranjo. Yuknoom Head[68], who seized Naranjo in AD 631, was accompanied by the *Uxte'tuun* people (Vepretskii 2021). Interestingly, a text on Stela 8 Calakmul explicitly locates Yuknoom Took' K'awiil's Period Ending ceremony (9.14.10.0.0 AD 721) in *Uxte'tuun* (Martin and Velásquez García 2016: 30). The same Period Ending seems to be recorded on the badly damaged Stela 1 (dated to the eighth century), where the toponym *Uxte'tuun* and the title *lak'in* (eastern) are the only glyphs that can be deciphered besides the date[69] (Martin 1998; Mumary Farto 2019: 253; Sergei Vepretskii personal communication 2022). Fortunately, the inscription on Stela 8 is much better preserved. Yuknoom Took' K'awiil's Period Ending ceremony is contrasted with the event performed by his predecessor Scroll Serpent in AD 593 9.8.0.0.0 at an unknown location *uhtiiy tahn ch'een*

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[68] Recently Sergei Vepretskii has proposed that Yuknoom Head does not carry Kanu'l ajaw title on Step 6. His new reading of the glyph that follows Yuknom Head is K'anal ajaw which he believes is part of Yuknoom Head's name (Vepretskii 2021).

[69] Both stelae are located in the Main Plaza, about 80 metres apart, Stela 8 in front of Structure IV and Stela 1 in front of Structure I.

x, "it happened in the midst of x ch'een", where this particular "x" is an eroded toponym (Martin 2005a:7; Martin and Velásquez García 2016:-30). It seems that there was a "conscious attempt to contrast local and foreign locales" (Martin 2005a:7), that Scroll Serpent's 9.8.0.0.0 celebration took place in a place other than *Uxte'tuun.*

2.9 The murky end of the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh century

The commemoration of the 9.8.0.0.0 k'atun ending must have been of special significance to the late classic Kanu'l kings. In addition to Yuknoom Took' K'awiil, Yuknoom Ch'een II also accorded special importance to this ending, as can be seen on Stela 33, dated to AD 657[70]. The AD 593 k'atun ceremony may have taken place at Dzibanche, for only a decade separates the celebration of 9.7.0.0.0, recorded on Monument 16 Dzibanche, from the Period Ending 9.7.10.0.0 (AD 583), which is also recorded on Stela 33 at Calakmul (Martin 2005a:11).

Not a single monument from Calakmul can be attributed to Scroll Serpent. This could also confirm that the 9.8.0.0.0. celebration took place outside Calakmul (Martin 2005a:7). If one may speculate, Stela 8 from Calakmul may have marked foreign locales of the Scroll Serpent celebrations to indicate that the dynasty was not yet established in Calakmul. On the other hand, it does not rule out the possibility of another location, since all references to Scroll Serpent during his life come neither from Dzibanche nor from Calakmul. The expression *tan cheen* (in the middle of the cave), which refers to 9.8 0.0.0.0 event on Stela 8, has a broad meaning; in a wider sense it can also refer to a settlement "polity capital" or even primordial place of origin and emergence (Helmke and Awe 2016b:14-16). The retrospective reference to Scroll Serpent's k'atun celebration on two late classic monuments from Calakmul has great

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[70] Scroll Serpent was a father of the great Yuknoom Ch'een II and a grandfather of Yuknoom Took K'awill as attested by an inscription on Stela 33, Calakmul (Martin 2020:140, Vepretskii and Savchenko 2022)

significance. Perhaps it was the last k'atun celebrated in Dzibanche or, in another scenario, the late classic Kanu'l kings wanted to emphasise that it was the first time it had taken place outside Dzibanche. Another argument supporting this thesis are two inscriptions in which the expression *tan ch'een Kanu'l* occurs. Fragment 1 from Dzibanche is somewhat eroded, but shows the sequence TOOK'-PAKAL-la ta-*na-* CH'EEN-na ka-KANU'L *uKAB-*ji-ya took'pakal tahn ch'een Kanu'l(ul) ukabjiiy "... flint and shield in the midst of the Snake[-Place] ch'een (Martin and Velásquez García 2016: 29). The second monument Panel 4 at Xunantunich (Figure 2.46) records the enigmatic expression *machaj k'awil[i]l ta[h]n ch'e[e]n kan[u']l pa[h]t[aa]l k'awi[i]l [ta] uxte'tuu* "there is no god effigy" in the middle of the Kanu'l cave, but there is one at Uxte'tuun" (Helmke and Awe 2016b). Ch'en K'an [u'] l could be interpreted as either the location within the central core of Dzibanche, Dzibanche itself, or a larger area (Helmke and Awe 2016b:13-16; Martin and Velásquez García 2016:30; Martin 2017).

The lack of a clearly visible Kanu'l glyph on Stela 8 Calakmul could also indicate a location other than Dzibanche for the Scroll Serpent celebrations. In this case, the first signs of separation within the Kanu'l dynasty must be dated to the end of the sixth century, as I argued earlier in this chapter.

Figure 2. 46. Panel 4, Xunantunich. Drawings by Christophe Helmke.

In fact, some architectural features at Dzibanche indicate some changes towards the end of the sixth century that may be related to events a few decades later: the outbreak of a civil war within the Kanu'l dynasty and an official relocation of the capital to Calakmul.

The new architectural style of a local character, dated between AD 550 and AD 650/700, represents a real "break" with the prevailing architecture of the Petén. It challenges and defies the Petén tradition in all possible aspects: the new local style is characterised by massive temples whose walls are decorated with pairs of pilasters forming large, recessed panels, something that had not existed before in Dzibanche. In addition, the superstructures support heavy, single-walled roof combs centred over medial walls, in contrast to the hollow, chambered roof combs found on numerous buildings in Petén (Nalda and Balanzario 2008:317). The style of "walls of pilasters" (Spanish *estilo de pilastras pareadas*) is with one exception, limited only to Dzibanche, but the location of this style outside Dzibanche is very meaningful. It comes from the Calakmul Structure XIII -Sub, which is dated to the Middle

118

Classic Period. The structure is decorated with pairs of pilasters (Nalda and Balanzario 2008:303-310, 2011:320, 2014:192-194). It is tempting to suggest some kind of relationship between Dzibanche and Calakmul in the second half of the sixth century. There are other arguments that I believe support the theory that the Kanu'l people were resident, albeit temporarily, in Calakmul in the late sixth and early seventh centuries. The fact that Scroll Serpent is mentioned on Stela 4, Uxul (Nikolai Grube personal communication 2021), the Late Classic dependency of Calakmul, with relation to AD 603 is more than meaningful.

Also relevant to the discussion of the murky late sixth century is a bone that probably served as a weaving stick and was discovered in Tomb 6 of Structure II, Calakmul (Carrasco 1999:31, 2004). The inscription seems to mention the daughter of Kahk' Ti' Ch'ich' as the owner of the object. K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' became *kaloomte'* in AD 550 (Beliaev and Safronov 2002; Martin and Beliaev 2017:5; Martin 2020:140), his daughter then must have lived in the second half of the sixth century. It is still an open question whether she lived in Calakmul. In all likelihood, Tomb 6 belonged to the wife of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk', who was buried next to her in the lavishly furnished Tomb 4 (Parpal 2021:279)[71].

The bone was more likely a gift or an heirloom, perhaps passed on from a grandmother or mother to a granddaughter/daughter. Iconographic evidence also points to an earlier presence of Kanu'l than the epigraphic data suggests. The two paired stelae - Stelae 28 and 29 from Calakmul, presenting a couple facing each other and dated to AD 623, feature a monument pattern observed later at sites allied to Kanu'l or subordinated to Calakmul (Grube et al. 2012; Jabłońska 2016; Marcus 1987; Tuszyńska 2016; Vázquez López 2016, 2017). It is quite

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[71] The identity of the lady buried in Tomb 6 is also confirmed by the impressive Late Classic grave assemblage, the location of her tomb next to the tomb of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' and Stela 116, which stands in front of Structure II and depicts a woman (Garcia Moreno and Granados 2000:31; Parpal 2021).

probable that Stelae 28 and 29 represented a Kanu'l king Yuknoom Ch'een II with his mother (Sergei Vepretskii personal communication 2022) (see also Chapter V).

Another argument comes from the connection between *K'uhul Chatahn winik*, *Sak Wahyis* and Calakmul. Although these titles were limited to the area around Calakmul, their connection to the Kanu'l dynasty became clear as early as the middle of the sixth century. It is stated on Stela 44 from El Peru Waka', dated to AD 564, where Ix Ikoom carrying the titles *Sak Wahyis*[72] and *K'uhul Chatahn winik* is described as a mother of the lord submitted to K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' (Figure 2.47) (Freidel *et al.* 2013:243; Martin and Beliaev 2017: 3; Pérez *et al.* 2014).

Figure 2. 47. K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich' name on Stela 44, El Peru Waka'. Drawing by Simon Martin.

The information on Stela 44 may indicate that the plan to settle in northern Petén was put forward in the middle of the sixth century, or at least that the northern Petén region became of much more interest to Kanu'l.

Based on these observations, it seems reasonable to investigate the process of relocation to Calakmul. I believe, following Kupprat and Vázquez López (2018:123), that several powerful social groups - Bat, *Chatahn Winik* - coexisted in Calakmul before Kanu'l came to power, and that they were somehow linked to Kanu'l. This could explain why there are no wars or rebellions against a new hegemon from the east in the archaeological and epigraphic records.

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[72] She possibly also carries the title *Sak Wahyis* on Stela 43, El Peru Waka' (Barrientos and Canuto 2021). The block where we expect to see this title, is largely obliterated.

I believe that the Kanu'l dynasty, or at least one of its branches, was already present in Calakmul in the late sixth century, but the full consolidation of power by Kanu'l seems to have been achieved in the fourth decade of the seventh century, after winning the war against Naranjo and defeating the Dzibanche branch of the Kanu'l royal family.

2.10 A troubled decade 628-638?

Sometime in the last decade, some ideas about the Kanu'l move from Dzibanche to Calakmul were subjected to close scrutiny and more information came to light. On Step 6 of the Hieroglyphic Stairway Naranjo, the ruler T'ajom Uk'ab K'ahk' is simply referred to as the Kanu'l lord, in contrast to Yuknoom Head, for whom there seems to be the first direct link to Calakmul (Tokovinine 2007:20).

As mentioned earlier Stela 3, Caracol mentions T'ajom Uk'ab K'ahk' in connection with a victory over Naranjo in AD 627. Warfare continued after the death of T'ajom Uk'ab K'ahk in AD 630. Yuknoom Head took part in a war campaign recorded on the Naranjo Hieroglyphic Stairs Step 1 and dated to AD 631 (Martin and Grube 2008:72 92, 106). The conflict was possibly related to the war between Yuknoom Head and his close relative, perhaps half-brother, Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kaan (Helmke and Vepretskii 2019, Helmke and Awe 2016a and 2016b). Since the exact relationships between the two Kanu'l lords are unknown (Helmke and Awe 2016a:19), I could also consider them as two distant cousins who share the same great-grandfather, perhaps K'ahk' Ti Ch'ich'[73]. According to Tokovinine, Caracol supported the

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[73] Dzibanche may provide some clues in this matter. The ceramic vase, dated to an early facet of the Late Classic Period and discovered in one of the northern structures of Plaza Pom, contained a peculiar inscription. The text refers to a *kaloomte'* lord and an elder brother of the Kanu'l dynasty (Nalda and Balanzario 2014:198). Although the identity of the ruler is a mystery, the inscription clearly indicates that political power may have been redistributed within certain members of the royal family.

Yuknom Head faction against the Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kaan faction allied with Naranjo (Alexandre Tokovinine personal communication 2018).

Following recent discoveries at Xunantunich, our understanding of the nature of this conflict is more profound. Of particular relevance is Panel 3 and 4 from Xunantunich, which were once part of the Hieroglyphics Stairs at Caracol. The stairs dedicated in AD 642, chronicle the 40-year rule of K'an II of Caracol, with particular emphasis on the conflict with Naranjo and its defeat. Most of the conquest stairway was moved to Naranjo sometime after Naranjo's victory over Caracol in AD 680 (Figure 2.48), probably as an act of revenge by a revived Naranjo dynasty.

Figure 2. 48. The hieroglyphic stair as found at Naranjo. Photo by Teobert Maler.

However, some of the stones were taken as far as Ucanal and Xunantunich (Helmke and Awe 2016b; Tokovinine 2007:16). Panel 4 from Xunantunich is one of them. It features the aforementioned metaphorical expression *machaj k'awil[i]l ta[h]n ch'e[e]n kan[u']l pa[h]t[aa]l k'awi[i]l [ta] uxte'tuun*, which refers to transition of power and authority to *Uxte'tuun*. This text is certainly linked with the reestablishment of power and a final and official move from Dzibanche to Calakmul. Together with Panel 3, Panel 4 recounts the circumstances of this relocation.

It seems that the final shift from Dzibanche to Calakmul was not slight and subtle. The dynasty plunged into civil war between two factions. What is now understood from Panel 3,

Xunantunich (Figure 2.49), it appears that *k'uhul Kanu'l ajaw* Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kaan was defeated by Yuknoom Head in AD 636 (Helmke and Awe 2016a:10, 2016b: 26).
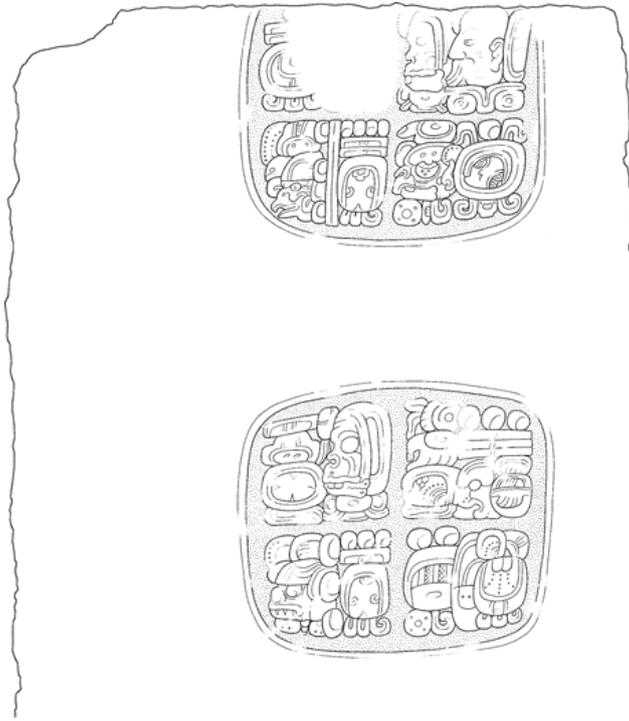
Figure 2. 49. Panel 3, Xunantunich. Drawings by Christophe Helmke.

Yuknoom Head, who resided in Calakmul, did not bear the title *k'uhul*. The lack of this title clearly shows that he had a lower status than his opponent. Nevertheless, it was Yuknoom Head who gained a victory over Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kaan, who probably resided in Dzibanche. Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kaan, possibly a captive of Calakmul, was put to death, as recorded on Panel 3, at ti -ye -TUUN -ni - at the edge of a stone, possibly implying execution. This occurred four years after he lost the battle against Yuknoom Head (Helmke and Awe 2016a; Stuart 2017).

Traces of the war can also be discovered in Dzibanche. Structure II, located in the Tutil group and constructed in the style of walled pilasters, contains a large stucco in the centre of the main gallery. It represents an individual dressed in a feathered headdress and holding crossed torches (a symbol of the *Wite' Naah*, a place of origin) in his hands (Nalda and Balanzario 2008:312) (Gayol 2011:312; Tokovinine 2013). The face of the figure was

123

deliberately and intentionally destroyed by the ancient Maya[74].The tomb, which was under the stucco floor of the gallery, suffered the same fate. The pottery from the most recent strata of the temple helped date the looting to the beginning of the Late Classic (Nalda and Balanzario 2008:312). The faces of the figures on the Ball Court's II friezes are also destroyed (Nalda and Blanzario 2014:200). In this respect, I believe that these acts of ancient vandalism may be related to the conflict between the two branches of the Kanu'l dynasty. The faction led by Yuknoom the Head appears to have been stronger and more influential, and its victory in all likelihood followed the destruction of the insignia of power in Dzibanche.

Conflict between two relatives over the throne may have been a trigger for the relocation of the seat. Panel 4 makes it clear, albeit in ritual language and poetic construction, that the conflict eventually ended and the process of re-establishing the seat was completed by the k'atun Period Ending in 9.10.0.0.0 AD 642 (Helmke and Awe 2016b:16).

Relevant to this issue is Element 33 of Hieroglyphic Stairs 2 from La Corona, which records an event in AD 635 related to the Kanu'l dynasty. The reading of the phrase is unclear, but could be understood either as the founding of K'anu'l in Calakmul (Helmke and Awe 2016b:18) or as an event related to the rupture and civil war between Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kaan and Yuknoom the Head (Martin and Velásquez García 2016:28-29; Stuart 2017).

La Corona appears to have supported the Calakmul faction in this war. Blocks V, VII and VIII of HS II record a *pitz* game event involving Yuknoom Ch'een II and La Corona king Sak Maas that took place in AD 635 in La Corona (see Chapter V for more details). The fact that the same event is repeated more than once underlines its importance (Stuart and Baron

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[74] The looting was incomplete and careless, probably performed in aggressive manner – for instance the face was cut and scratched off until it was unidentifiable (Nalda and Balnzario 2008:312, 2014).

2013:197). At this point, Yuknoom Ch'een II was only an heir to the throne, facing opposition from his relative Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kaan.

Only 24 days separated the defeat of Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kaan by Yuknoom Head and the accession of Yuknoom Ch'een II in AD 636. This unusual coincidence has led scholars to believe that Yuknoom Ch'een II and Yuknoom Head were one and the same person. In this scenario, Yuknoom Head would be the pre-accession name of Yuknoom Ch'een or his moniker (Martin 2017).

A recently discovered panel from Tz'unun includes the *k'uhul Kanu'l ajaw* emblem in connection with the date AD 639. Unfortunately, nothing can be seen apart from the date and the reference to Kanu'l[75] (Stuart 2017). Luckily, there is enough data to reconstruct the deeds of the three great Kanu'l kings of the seventh and eighth centuries and to locate their seat of power. The evidence that the reigns of Yuknoom Ch'een II (636-686), Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' (686-697); Yuknoom Took' K'awiil > 702-731 > and Wamaw K'awiil (736) took place in Calakmul is clear (Carrasco Vargas 1996, 1998; Carrasco Vargas et al. 1999, 2006, 2009; Delvendahl 2008; Folan 1985, 1988, 1992; Marcus 1987; Martin and Grube 2008; Martin 2005b; Zavala 2012).

2.11 The Age of the Three Kings

The 4th decade of the seventh century marked significant changes for the Kanu'l dynasty. Calakmul became the seat of power of Yuknoom Ch'een II, Yuknoom Yich'aak

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[75] If we acknowledge that the inscription was made shortly after the defeat of Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kaan (Stuart suggests the date 9.10.6.11.5 7 Chicchan 18 Mol, 7August, AD 639) but before his execution, the inscription may have contained some information about the civil war (Stuart 2017).

K'ahk', Yuknoom Took' K'awiil and Wamaw K'awiil. Yuknoom Ch'een II and Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' extended or consolidated their sphere of influence considerably to the south, north, east and west (Figure 2.50) (Grube 2008; Martin and Grube 2008; Martin 2020; Mumary Farto 2019; Sharer and Traxler 2006; Vázquez López 2017).
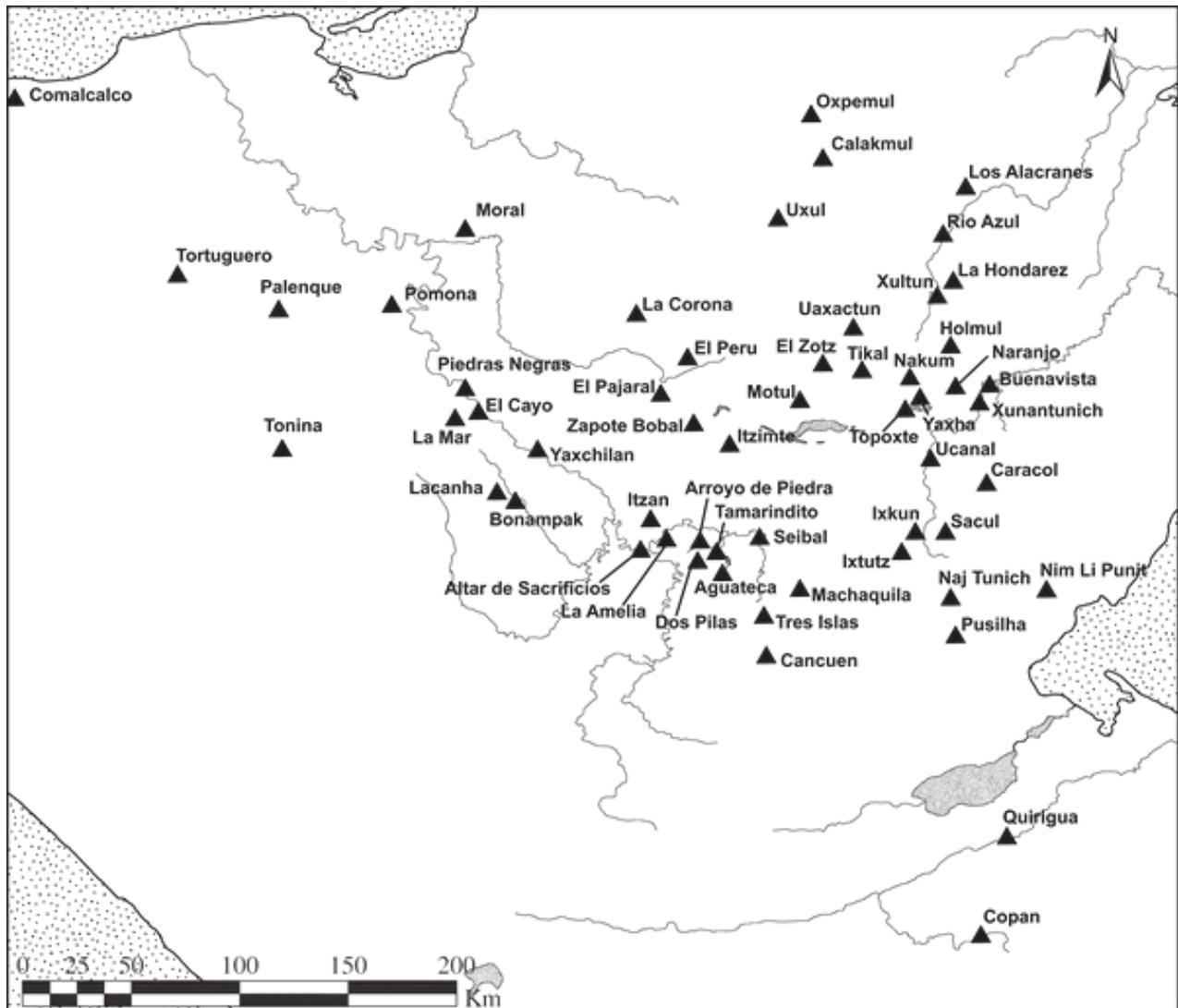
Figure 2. 50. Southern Lowlands Maya sites in the Classic Period (after Tokovinine 2020: Fig.7.1)

2.11.1 Yuknoom Ch'een II

The establishment of hegemony over the kingdoms in Petexbatun and east Petén constituted a remarkable achievement by Yuknoom Ch'een II. By gaining access to Petexbatun and eastern Petén, he used geographical corridors, a terrestrial route that connected the Maya Lowlands with the Highlands.

There were various routes established by the Kanu dynasty to reach their allies. They were created in the sixth century, when the seat of the dynasty was still in Dzibanche. The hypothetical route from Dzibanche to La Corona, for example, could pass through Los Alacranes before turning west towards the Preclassic and Classic centres such as Nakbe, Tintal, La Florida and Achiotal, other could pass through La Milpa, Chochkitam, Xultun, Uaxactun to Tikal, another through Punta de Cacao, El Pilar to Naranjo and Caracol (Estrada Belli and Tokovinine 2022). There is no doubt that control over these routes was much easier from Calakmul than from the distant Dzibanche, for instance Cancuen could be reached via Uxul, La Corona, El Peru Waka' and Zapote Bobal (Freidel et. al 2007:59) once the relationship with Uxul had been established (Figure 2.51).
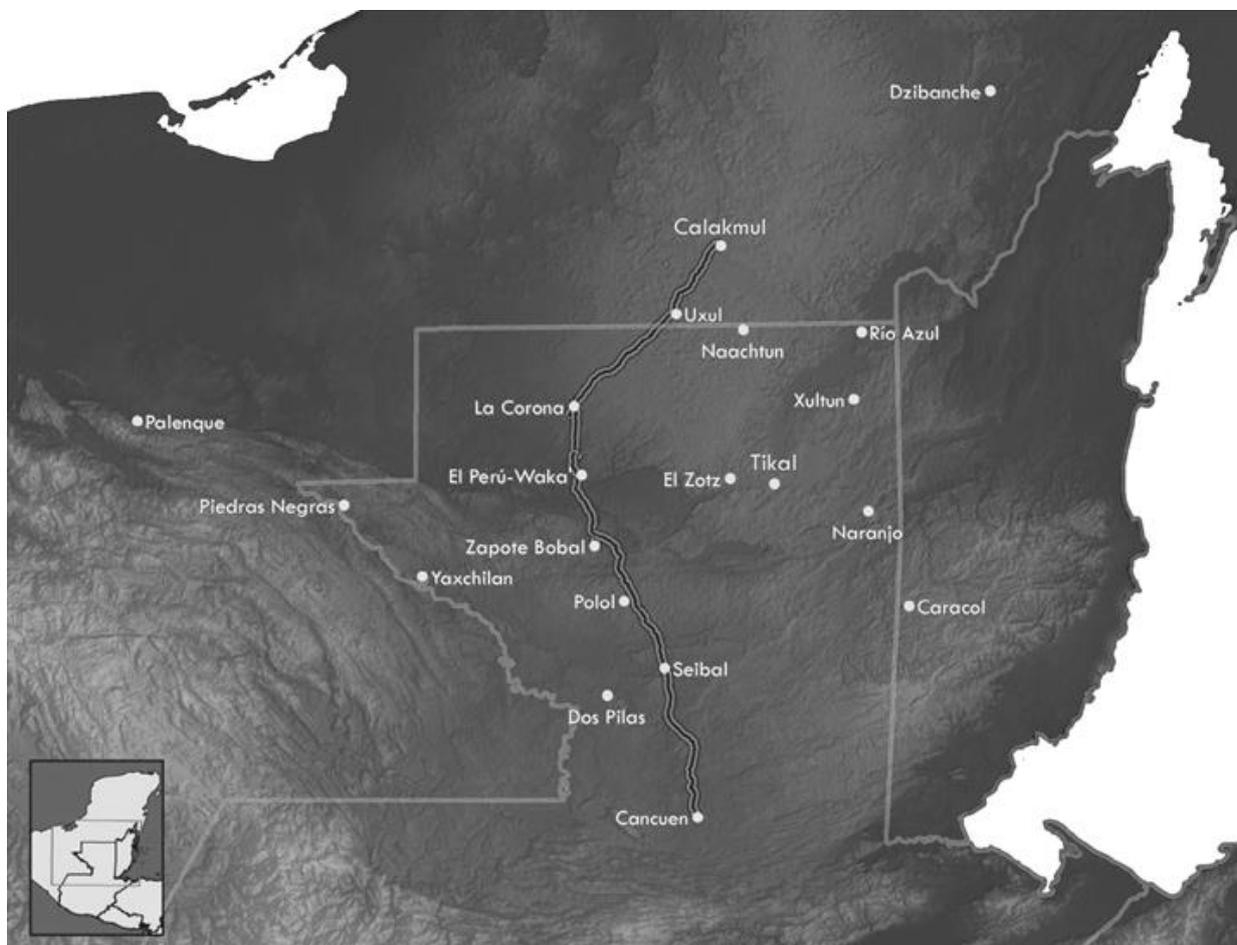
Figure 2. 51. Hypothetical route connecting Calakmul with Uxul, La Corona, El Peru Waka,' Zapote Bobal and Cancuen (after Canuto and Barrentos 2013).

One of the sites closest to Calakmul that came under its rule in the Late Classic Period was Uxul. Uxul's strategic location between Calakmul and one of its important allies - La Corona - brought it into the sphere of wider geopolitics. In the seventh and early eighth centuries, Uxul came under the sway of the Kanu'l dynasty, which ruled from Calakmul (Delvendahl and Grube 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2015, 2016; Grube et al. 2012; Grube and Delvendahl 2014).

The long hieroglyphic text consisting of 159 glyph blocks on Uxul Altar 2, erected for the Period Ending 9.10.10.0.0. (AD 642), provides some interesting information about the nature of contacts between Calakmul and Uxul. Unfortunately, the poor state of preservation prevents the recovery of important details. It does, however, contain the toponymic title of Uxul, NAAH-kum-a, which appears at least twice in this inscription[76]. Intriguingly, there is no emblem glyph in the entire corpus of Uxul inscriptions. As Grube noted "the lack of a full emblem glyph at Uxul can only be explained as an expression of hierarchy between the powerful Kanu'l dynasty and Uxul, a city under its dominance" (Grube *et al.* 2012:26) Tellingly, the overkingship of Calakmul is most evident at Uxul when its ruler Muyal Chaak[77] was in power (AD 660-*circa* AD 680).

There is good evidence that the large remodelling of the city core of Uxul took place under the aegis of Muyal Chaak. Muyal Chaak followed the major architectural programme introduced in Calakmul by Yuknoom Ch'een II and mimicked Calakmul's architecture (Grube 2008:225-227; Grube and Delvendahl 2012:23, 2014:60-61).

Under the reign of Yuknoom Cheen II, the Great Plaza of Calakmul, the centre of ceremonial activities, lost its function in favour of the Great Acropolis (Guenter 2003:12-17).

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[76] It is assumed that toponym titles denoted a lower position in the regional political hierarchy in relation to full emblem glyphs, as they lack the prefix *k'uhul (*divine), which is reserved for more powerful lords (Grube 2005:1).

[77] He probably was a successor of the king who erected Altar 2.

The great Kanu'l king was mainly responsible for erecting many monuments (at least 18 stelae) and works in the palace complexes. The remarkable paintings of the Chiik Nahb complex, for example, may have been executed during his reign (Guenter 2003:12-17). Nevertheless, Yuknoom the Great is most famous for his struggle against reviving Tikal. The hegemony of Kanu'l under the leadership of Yuknoom Ch'een II was achieved largely at the expense of its arch-rival Tikal.

Tikal was in a state of civil war in the mid-seventh century and this internal conflict was played strategically by Yuknoom Ch'een II. Two lords from Tikal - Bajlaj Chan K'awiil and his half-brother Nuun Ujol Chahk - claimed to have been the holy lords of Mutul, one settling in Dos Pilas and the other in Tikal. According to Federico Fahsen, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil was sent to establish a new city in Dos Pilas to secure its western frontier and protect the region from the possible hostile intentions of the expanding hegemony of Calakmul (Fahsen 2002:10). Civil war broke out in AD 648 when Bajlaj Chan K'awiil defeated the army of Lam Naah K'awiil, the high-ranking prince or even king of Tikal, and declared himself the legitimate king of Tikal by proclaiming independence. The kingdom was split into two parts - the capital under the control of Nuun Ujol Chahk and the rebel area in the Petexbatun region. Yuknoom Ch'een II seized the opportunity of his archrival's civil war and conquered the city of Dos Pilas in AD 650[78]. Yuknoom Ch'een II probably preferred to attack the small and weak city of Dos Pilas rather than the strong Tikal. As a result of this campaign, the young Bajlaj Chan K'awiil was forced to flee Dos Pilas (Guenter 2003:12-17).

Around the same time, Ruler 3 from Edzna ascended the throne under the patronage of Kanu'l. The hieroglyphic Stairway 1 at Edzna records two Kanu'l emblem glyphs, at least one

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[78] Dos Pilas was located in a strategic position on important trade routes through the Usumacinta River. This definitely aroused the interest of Tikal and Calakmul (Barrientos and Canuto 2013:388).

of which is associated with the "political patronage"statement, implying that Edzna played an important role in the Kanu'l expansion plan. Although the original order of the blocks of HS1 has been lost, the monument yields the accession to power of Ruler 3 in AD 649/650. Kanu'l's patronage of Edzna was thus probably established from Calakmul. One might even suggest that the remarkable development of Edzna in the seventh century was related to Kanu'l's patronage of the city. As Gayol has noted, "it was during this time that Edzna reached its climax, acquiring the status of a regional capital in western Campeche" (Gayol 2012: 104). The fact that both the rulers of Edzna and Dos Pilas recognised Yuknoom Ch'een II as the more powerful king clearly shows the pace of Kanu'l expansion. The dynasty did not directly confront its arch-rival Tikal. However, the subjugation of the weak Dos Pilas brought many advantages. It opened up the possibility of extending power even further south.

Cancuen[79], lying close to Dos Pilas, records on its looted panel (Panel 1) that some kind of event took place in front (*yichinal*) of king Yuknoom Ch'een II in AD 652. This event refers to the founding of Cancuen by Calakmul (Capistran 2012:49, Guenter 2002:2, Herring 2005:30). Recent research indicates the presence of jade from Cancuen in some of the Calakmul tombs. Presumably, Cancuen was founded by Calakmul to control the trade routes that were developed to transport goods (including jade) between Tierras Altas and Tierras Bajas (Andrieu and Forne 2010:950). This would suggest that Calakmul not only subjugated Dos Pilas, but also managed to consolidate its power in the rest of the Passion region. It is even believed that the Cancuen dynasty resided in Calakmul. In AD 654, one of the Cancuen lords - K'ihnich K'ap? Neel? Ahk B'alu'n, died in Calakmul. He probably spent some time in Calakmul, which explains the close relationship between these two cities. In the seventh

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[79] The ancient name of Cancuen is known as Haluum − a place of pools, islands, and springs (Tokovinine 2020:263).

century, the rulers of Cancuen tied the royal headband in front of Yuknoom the Great. This is the case, for example, in the investiture ceremony of K'ii'b' Ajaw, which took place in AD 656 in front of the powerful Calakmul king and the patron gods of Calakmul - Yajaw Maan, Yax Ha'al Chaahk and Ho' Kokan K'uh (Capistran 2012:49; Guenter 2002:8, Herring 2005:51; Mumary Farto 2019:86). The fact that the patron gods of Calakmul participated in a political event of such relevance may indicate that they were imposed on Cancuen [80] (Barrios 2014:58-62; Mumary Farto 2019:86).

The following year, AD 657, Yuknoom Ch'een II overran Tikal in a star war attack and brought Nuun Ujol Chahk under his supervision. This is attested in Step 3 of Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 from Dos Pilas (Boot 2002:15-16). The monument records pre-accession ceremonies of the young son of Yuknoom Ch'een II - Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk at the lake of Yaxha'. This ceremony was attended by both Bajlaj Chan K'awiil and Nunn Ujol Chaak attended this ceremony. As Guenter noticed " by witnessing this childhood ritual for the young heir of Calakmul, "Nuun Ujol Chahk and Bajlaj Chan K'awiil were likely recognizing him as their future lord" (Guenter 2003:19).

From this point on, Dos Pilas was closely related to Calakmul. Although some parts of Bajlaj Chan K'awiil's history are unclear and we do not know when he returned from exile, he certainly became a loyal client and ally of the Kanu'l dynasty, implacably standing out against the Tikal kingdom. In contrast, his half-brother Nuun Ujol Chahk remained a vassal for only 15 years until he felt strong enough to free himself from the hegemony of Calakmul. He achieved triumph against Dos Pilas in AD 672 and expelled Bajlaj Chan K'awiil from the city

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[80] Sending patron gods to subordinated areas was a means of political control. Kings strengthened their political power over local lords through ceremonies and rituals to deities. The rituals to Yax Ha' al Chaahk associated with the rule of the Kanu'l are also attested in e.g., Cancuen, Piedras Negras, Santa Elena (Baron 2016:67; Barrios 2014:58-62).

(Dos Pilas Hieroglyphic Stairway 2, East Stair, Step 5, E1-F2) (Boot 2002:8-9; Gronemeyer 2012: 18). The ill fate of Calakmul's *yajaw* lasted five years and was ended by Calakmul's intervention. In December AD 677, the army of Nuun Ujol Chahk was defeated by Yuknoom Ch'een II in a star war attack at the site of Pulil. Bajlaj Chan K'awiil was able to return from Hix Witz [81] (Fahsen *et al.* 2003; Martin 2020:126).

A few months earlier, in January AD 677, Yuknoom Ch'een II supervised another accession of a Cancuen king - Itzam Chan Ahk (Herring 2005:51, Guenter 2002:11). Given the short distance between Dos Pilas and Cancuen, both cities may have felt under the influence of Tikal during the rebellion of Nuun Ujol Chahk. Perhaps the installation of the king of Cancuen under the supervision of Yuknoom Ch'een II was the Kanu'l king's first step towards reclaiming the lost territory (Guenter 2002:12). The subsequent campaign against Nuun Ujol Chahk in AD 677 must have cut the king of Tikal off from the Pasion region and forced him to abandon Dos Pilas. However, this did not end the conflict (Boot 2002a:5). The final victory was recorded on Hieroglyphic Stairway 2, West Step 3 and dated to AD 679. Nevertheless, the ultimate defeat of Nuun Ujol Chahk, in all likelihood conducted by the combined forces of Dos Pilas and Calakmul, is described by the poetic phrase *u took ' u pakal Nuun u Jol Chaahk naahb 'aj u ch'ch'el* "the blood was pooled and the skulls were piled into mountains of the people of the Central Petén, the Tikal people", implying the scale of the victory (Boot 2002:15; Tokovinine 2008:18-21). There is no mention of Calakmul's direct intervention in bringing down "of flints and shields of Nuun Ujol Chahk" nor the capture or death of the king of Tikal, but it seems reasonable to assert that the small Dos Pilas needed the support of its ally to defeat the great Tikal (Martin and Grube 2008:57). This accords well with similar arguments made by Stanley Guenter. On Step V, Hieroglyphic Stairway 4, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil is said to have

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[81] where he found a refuge after he was expelled from Dos Pilas

been dressed as the elder deer god Ik'Sip[82]. Significantly, many codex-style vases portray Ik Sip emerging from the jaws of Chij Chan "Deer Snake" (Figure 2.52) the *way* of the Kanu'l dynasty (Guenter 2003:39-40).

Figure 2. 52. Ik Sip, identified in an inscription as Xukub Chij Chan emerging from the jaws of Deer-Snake (left), K7794, Photo by Justin Kerr.

The association between two gods in this context could be significant. Perhaps Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, disguised as Ik Sip, received the power of Kanu'l on the day of the defeat of Tikal. Bajlaj Chan K'awiil paid at least two visits to Calakmul (AD 682), during which he performed a dance with Yuknoom the Great (e.g., at the celebration of the event 9.12.10.0.0), as recorded on Dos Pilas Stela 9 and Hieroglyphic Stairway 2. Presumably, these visits were arranged to demonstrate the submission of Bajlaj Chan K'awiil to Yuknoom the Great and to reassert his claims to the throne of Tikal. The objective was partially achieved, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil remained a loyal vassal of Calakmul, but the throne in Tikal went to the son of Nuun

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[82]. He is depicted on many ceramic vessels with black spots around his eyes, a brown face, deer ears and antlers protruding from his open mouth. In his hand he holds a shell trumpet, which was probably used to graze animals and communicate when hunting.

Ujol Chahk. For various reasons, the combined forces of Calakmul and Dos Pilas could not prevent the elevation of Yasaw Chan K'awiil to the throne of Tikal in AD 682 (Martin 2003:46-47; Pallan 2010:5). Perhaps Yuknoom Ch'een II was too busy fighting on several fronts, for war activities were not confined to Central Petén and Petexbatun. They took place further east and involved two traditional enemies - Naranjo and Caracol.

Naranjo, which was first subjugated by the Calakmul ally Caracol and then seized by the Kanu'l king himself, dared to take revenge on Caracol and won a triumph against that city in a star war event in AD 680 (Grube 2004a). By all accounts, Naranjo was allied with Tikal against the forces of Calakmul at this time, and the war with Caracol was part of a larger military conflict (Beliaev 2000:69; Grube 2004a; Helmke and Awe 2016a:2; Kettunen 2012).

During Naranjo's fierce revenge, the monuments that once formed the hieroglyphic stairs at Caracol were subsequently dismantled and transported to Naranjo as a kind of war booty, where they were used to form Hieroglyphic Stairs. On the way back, some of the Caracol panels found their way to Ucanal and Xunantunich (the famous Panels 3 and 4), where they were either left behind unintentionally or as local trophies (Helmke and Awe 2016a and 2016b).

The victory did not last long, as Naranjo soon experienced a severe dynastic crisis that led to the disappearance of the entire ruling line within two years. "Whoever inflicted the blow, there is every sign that Calakmul orchestrated its aftermath" (Martin and Grube 2008:109). A loyal ally of Yuknoom the Great - Bajlaj Chan K'awiil - sent his daughter Ix Wak Chan to restore the dynasty of Naranjo in AD 682, which may indicate some involvement of Dos Pilas and Calakmul in the subjugation of Naranjo (Martin and Grube 2008:109).

Dos Pilas and Calakmul also came into contact with Hix Witz. The ties between Hix Witz and Calakmul were first established during the conflict between Tikal and Dos Pilas. The king who gave shelter to Bajlaj Chan K'awiil in Hix Witz's kingdom was an ally of Dos Pilas and Calakmul. Hix Witz ("Ocelot/Margay Hill") was a small polity with centres in Zapote

Bobal and neighbouring El Pajaral in Petén. In the Late Classic Period, the ruler of Hix Witz came under the influence of Calakmul.

The most important event in the life of Jan Ti O, the ruler of Hix Witz, was undoubtedly his investiture ceremony. Yuknoom Ch'een II oversaw his inauguration - ch'amaaw huuʔ n ... Jan Tiʔ ʔO y-i[chnal] Yuhknoom Ch'een in AD 669. Apparently this was not his first accession. Stela 1 from Zapote Bobal records his *ch'amaaw 'ajawlel* (accession) in AD 663 (Bealiaev et al. 2017:88, Vepretskii and Galeev 2016).

Similar events are documented in Moral Reforma and Caracol where local kings ascended the throne for the second time under the supervision of the Kanu'l king (Beliaev et al. 2017:87). At each centre, the second enthronement appears to have been associated with subordination to the Kanu'l dynasty (Beliaev et al. 2017:87; Fitzsimmons 2012:14; Martin and Reents-Budet 2010:3).

In AD 662 Yuknoom the Great oversaw, at Moral Reforma, an inauguration of a six-year-old king Muwaan Jol. It was his second inauguration but the first one under the supervision of the great Yuknoom Ch'een II (Martin 2003:45).

"...king underwent formal ceremonies or "reinstallation; repeated crownings that involved the bestowal or alternative names. New fealty definitely requires a transformation of royal identity, the persona beholden to one overking cast aside for another" (Martin 2020:346).

The powerful Kanu'l king must have undertaken a campaign to distant Tabasco, possibly also via Piedras Negras (Yokib). Stela 35 of Piedras Negras, records the Kanu'l emblem glyph associated with some kind of fire event that took place in the year AD 662. Most likely, Yuknoom Ch'een II participated in this ceremony with the additional aim of establishing a military union with Piedras Negras, as evidenced by the victories over e.g., Santa Elena (Martin 2003:46-47; Pallan 2010:5).

Subsequent events are recorded on an unprovenanced panel from the Piedras Negras region. It describes an adorning with *ko'haw* "helmet" and *nuk* "pelt" of Ruler 2 from Piedras Negras. This adornment was supervised in AD 685 by an individual called Aj-?-ja k'u2 -lu-? K'AK' 2 -ku-ki, who was *yajbaak* of Kaan, "He of the Captives", a vassal of Yuknoom Ch'een II (possibly his military captain) (Martin and Grube 2008:144; Mumary Farto 2020:401). Certainly, Piedras Negras was involved in the web of diplomacy and politics of Calakmul.

This period also marked the great revival of the Palenque dynasty under the rule of Janab Pakal and, as Simon Martin points out, there must have been a struggle between Palenque and Piedras Negras over the leading position in Tabasco. Beyond doubt, the Kanu'l king did not want to be excluded from this competition. The installation of the boy-king in Moral Reforma not only consolidated the power of Piedras Negras, but also helped Calakmul to triumph over the ambitious plans of Palenque (Martin 2003:45-47, 2020). The reconquest of Santa Elena by Calakmul (with the help of the Yokib kingdom in AD 662) was another political failure of Palenque against the Kanu'l dynasty (Bernal Romero 2016:35).

In the seventh century, at an unknown date, the king of El Peru Waka', K'inich Bahlam II, took hold of the sceptre of the K'awiil (an event linked with enthronement), under the auspices of Yuknoom Ch'een II, as recorded on Stela 33, El Peru Waka'. Considering the early classic close relations between El Peru Waka', Tikal and Teotihuacan, this loss of the ally by Tikal must have been regarded as its severe failure.

The marriage of K'inich B'alam II to Ix "K'abel", the princess from Calakmul, testifies to the new alliance with Calakmul. Ix "K'abel" carries the title *kaloomte'* on the Stela 34, El Peru Waka' associated with the date AD 692. This title marked her great importance in the city. Through marriage, K'inich Bahlam II enforced relations with the powerful Kanu'l dynasty (Marcus 1987:135-47; Miller 1973; Navarro Farr et al.2020, Tuszyńska 2016, Pérez et al. 2015: 16-22) (see also Chapter IV).

It also seems that the Late Classic El Peru Waka' tried to recruit allies in the vicinity of Tikal[83].

El Zotz, lying 56 km west of El Peru Waka', is situated near Tikal, "in the shadow of the Giant", as Stephen Houston put it (Houston 2010:8-9). Apparently, El Zotz did not establish close relations with its powerful neighbour. Rather, it flourished when Tikal was weakened. The best evidence of contacts between Kanu'l and El Zotz comes from a polychrome ceramic cylinder vessel, the so-called "Vase of the Initial Series", excavated from a Burial in the substructure of Structure A-I, Uaxactun. Although the vessel is one of the grave goods from Uaxactun, it was evidently produced at El Zotz, as palaeographic evidence shows. It depicts a seated king seeing two other lords, possibly subordinates. Interestingly, the main text does not refer to Uaxactun, but to Calakmul and the Kanu'l dynasty. The main character in the scene (presumably the seated lord) is called the Holy Snake Lord. He carries the title *el k'in kaloomte'* - eastern overlord. The two nobles facing the king are called K'uk' Kan or K'uk'ul Kan ("Quetzal Snake") and Yax Ajaw ("First Lord"), the latter surprisingly referred to as *Aj Chiik Nahb*, "He of Chiik Nahb". According to Nicholas Carter, the scene of a mythohistorical figure shows one of the late classic Kanu'l kings, possibly Yuknoom the Great, being visited by two pre-Classic lords. The image on the Vase of the Initial Series could be a source of moral and political legitimacy for Yuknoom the Great, who claimed to have authority over the first lords of Calakmul and their heirs. It was the Kanu'l version of the preclassic and early classic history of Calakmul, in which the rulers had recognised the supremacy of the Kanu'l dynasty centuries before the Kanu'l people moved to Calakmul. Yuknoom the Great "reasserted a paramount

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[83] A text on the back of a mirror states that this artefact was a gift from the ruler of El Peru Waka' to the king of El Zotz, indicating friendly relations between the two cities. At the same time, K'inich Balam II of El Peru Waka' was a close ally of Yuknoom Ch'een II. What is more, an inscription on a jade plaque from a royal tomb in Calakmul mentions events (procession and arrival) related to El Zotz (Fields and Reents-Budet 2005: Pl 77 after Houston 2010; Houston 2010:8-9).

authority for his lineage which stretched back to the beginnings of kingship at Calakmul and perhaps the inception of the Kan line" (Carter 2015:12). This suggestion could also account for the dual identity of the Holy Snake Lord from the scene. He probably represented both the early classic Kanu'l king who took tribute from subordinates as well as the Late Classic Kanu'l lord who legitimised his right to rule by referring to the distant past (Carter 2015).

Returning now to the relations between Calakmul and El Zotz, the latter seems to have a strategic function in geopolitics. The valley that lies near El Zotz in all likelihood separated Tikal's sphere of influence from Calakmul. If so, El Zotz took advantage of the Late Classic conflict between two superpowers and, by having easy access to the important valley, controlled movements from both sides of the conflict. In times of great victories for Kanu'l, El Zotz, as Houston suggests, could lead partially "to disruptions in daily life and royal dynasty of Tikal" (Houston 2010:8-10). Indeed, at the time of Yuknoom Ch'een II's passing, Calakmul was a prominent power in the Maya Lowlands, surrounding its archrival Tikal with allies and vassals (Martin and Grube 2008).

2.11.2 Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'

Many of Yuknoom Ch'een II 's military achievements and diplomatic successes, however, can be attributed to his son - Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'. Stela 9 from Calakmul, dated to AD 662, and Element 5 from La Corona record Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' s birth in AD 649 and assign him the full royal title of Kanu'l ajaw. At the age of 13, he was elevated to full *k'uhul* Kanu'l *ajaw s*tatus. The bestowal of the *k'uhul* title on Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' is also confirmed on the Ucanal Stela 4 where we see two lords, one identified as *k'uhul k'anwitznal kaloomte'* and the other as *k'uhul k'anwitznal ajaw*. At this time Yuknoom Ch'een II was almost 62 years old[84].

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[84] The date of his birth (AD 600) is recorded on Stela 20 from El Peru Waka' and Calakmul Stela 75 (Guenter 2005a: 372, Vepretskii and Savchenko 2022).

By granting high status to his 13-year-old son, the king secured the dynasty and established a junior kingship. In this scenario, only the senior figure - the father Yuknoom Ch'een II - would carry the title *kaloomte'* (Martin 2017a). The fact that Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' was given a special status twenty-four years before he even took power could indicate his leading position in a kingdom during the last years of the aged Yuknoom Ch'een II. Furthermore, Stela 115, Calakmul records the name of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' and establishes him as the direct successor of K'awiil - five K'atun lord. Since Yuknoom Ch'een II was indeed five K'atun lord, being 86 years old at the time of his death, K'awiil may have been his post-mortem title (Martin 2005a:8).

Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' acceded to the throne in AD 686 and continued the political activities of his father. The beginning of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk''s reign was a long success story. He maintained and even strengthened bonds with his allies. His enthronement is mentioned on Stela 34 from El Peru Waka' (ch'amaw k'awiil of *k'uhul kanu'l ajaw)*, while Panel 7 from Dos Pilas records a journey by Bajlaj Chan K'awiil to Calakmul to witness the accession of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' to the throne on 9.12.13.17.7, 6 Manik 5 Zip, 3 April, AD 686 (Guenter 2003:32). Bajlaj Chan K'awiil remained a loyal ally of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'. The hieroglyphic stairway from El Reinado records "the guardian of" Torch Macaw, the Mutul Lord (a title used by Bajlaj Chan K'awiil from Dos Pilas) in association with the k'atun ending 9.13.0.0.0, which occurred in AD 692. Finally, the peculiar reference to *Uxte'tuun* appears in a text. El Reinado, which lies between the Rio Pasion region and the kingdoms of Hix Witz, may have served as a geopolitical "bridge" between various allies of the Kanu'l rulers. According to David Stuart, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil passed through El Reinado on his way to Calakmul, where he attended the 13 k'atun ceremony of his overlord Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' (Stuart 2012:3-5).

Bajlaj Chan K'awiil was not the only king to appear before the ruler of Calakmul. Stela 1 at La Corona records the 9.13.0.0.0. k'atun celebration undertaken by Yuknoom Yichaak K'ahk' and witnessed by the ruler of La Corona, Chak Ak' Paat Kuy (Stuart 2012b). The k'atun ceremony 9.13.0.0.0.0 was thus a great opportunity to strengthen the bonds between the allies under the hegemony of Kanu'l.

Element 56 (Figure 2.53) from La Corona is a peculiar testimony to the transformation of Chak Ak' Paat Kuy from nobleman to king of La Corona under the watchful direction of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'.
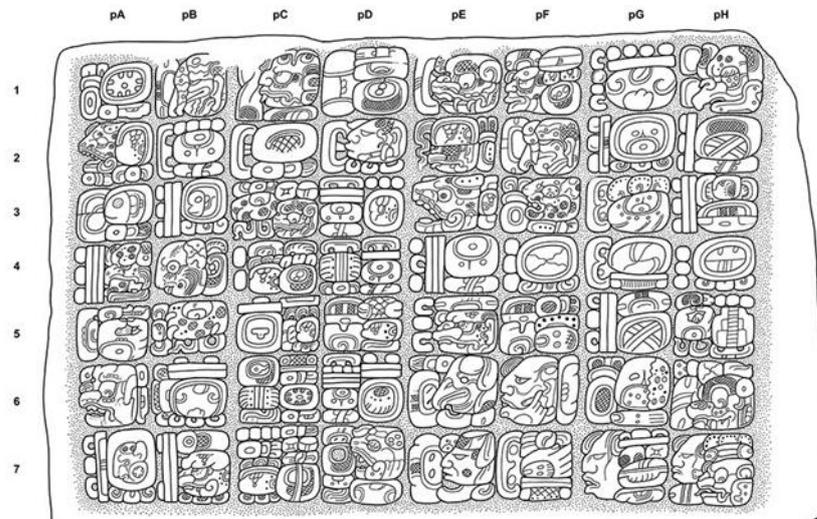
Figure 2. 53. Element 56, La Corona. Drawing by David Stuart.

The investiture rites more than likely took place in Calakmul, where Chak Ak' Paat Kuy probably spent a few months. Although the event is missing, Element 56 may record the date of Chak Ak' Paat Kuy's departure for Calakmul. It happened on 9/12/16/12/5 9 Chicchan 13 Muan, 7 December, AD 688. Four days later, he was summoned before Yuknoom Yich 'aak K'ahk': *pehkaj yichnal yuknoom yich 'aak k'ahk'*, which indicates perhaps an important meeting with the king of Calakmul (Houston et al. 2017; Stuart 2015). The word *pehk* appears in a particular context - it refers to subordinates being called, invited, and summoned into the royal

presence[85]. For instance, the former La Corona ruler K'inich ? Yook was seen in Calakmul by his overlord Yuknoom Ch'een II who performed a *pehk* "calling or inviting" in November AD 673 (Houston 2014).

Returning to Chak Ak' Paat Kuy, his investiture rites began a few months later after the *pehk* event in Calakmul. The text on Element 56 states *pohtzaj u paat*, possibly meaning "his back is wrapped", which could indicate that Chak Ak' Pat Kuy was adorned with a snake's backrack. This rite was followed a week later by the *sak huun* event (possibly referring to the tying of some kind of royal headband or wristlet) (Stuart et al. 2015).

Despite Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk's successes in the field of diplomacy (strengthening relations with Dos Pilas, El Peru Waka', Naranjo, La Corona), the power of the Kanu'l dynasty during the reign of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk"s began to shrink. The lords of Namaan (La Florida) who used the title *ajaw* until the middle of the seventh century, began to use the title *k'uhul ajaw* from the beginning of the eighth century (Jørgensen and Krempel 2014:101). The acquisition of the *k'uhul* title by Naaman, a coastal city on the San Pedro Mártir River, can be seen as a symptom of the weakening of the Calakmul dynasty. The defeat of Kanu'l by Tikal in AD 695 was probably a key factor in this process, but the Calakmul calamity began much earlier. Indeed, Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' is the most famous for his great defeat at the hands of Tikal.

This loss of power is clearly evident in AD 691. One of the cylinder vases, K5453 (Figure 2.54), probably from Tikal, portrays a Tikal lord receiving tribute in AD 691 from a kneeling emissary (K'ahk' Hix Muut) of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'. The depiction takes place in a palace or the inter patio with canopies, probably at night, as one of the depicted individuals

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[85] *Pehk* meeting would also take place in times of dynastic turmoil - e.g., a war, a succession, internal intrigues (Houston 2014).

holds a torch. The tribute consists of textiles, quetzal feathers and a bundle of 24000 cacao grains (3 Pik, uhx pihk 3x8000). The whole scene attests to the reversal of Tikal's fortunes, although its source is still unknown (Boucher 2012:196).
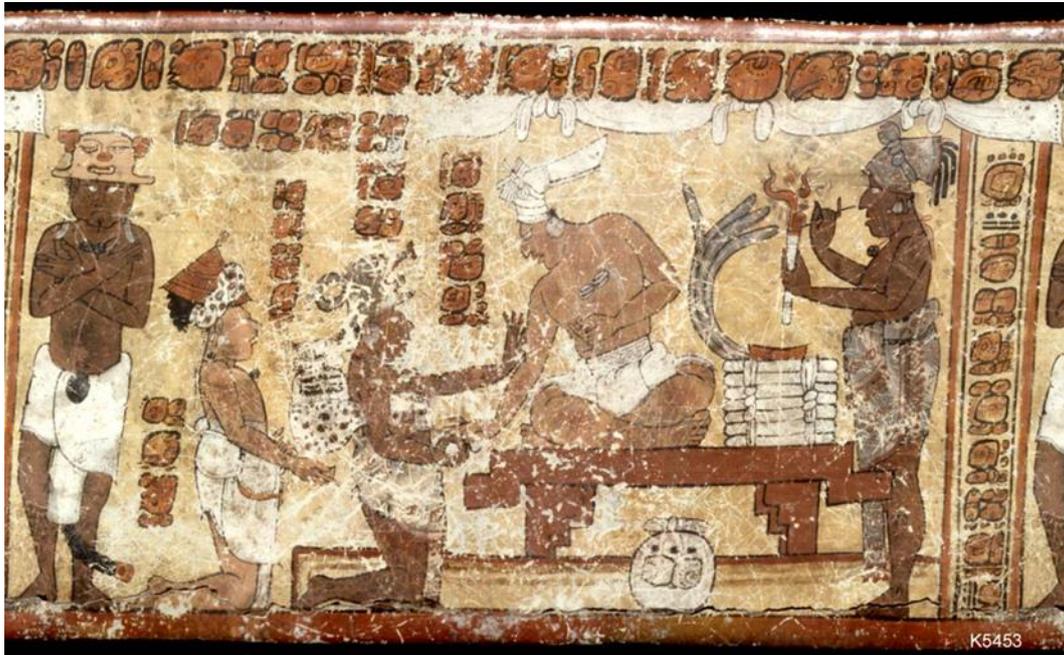
Figure 2. 54. Scene from K5453. Photo by Justin Kerr.

However, before the full glory of Tikal was revealed, on 9 13 2 16 10, 5 Ok 8 Kumk'u (2 February, AD 695), at a place called K'an? Tuhl, Naranjo took a prisoner (named Sihyaj K'awiil) from Tikal. This action may have been orchestrated by Calakmul as part of a broader campaign against its rival, who was rising in power (Zender, Awe and Martin 2016).

A final clash between the two superstates took place on 6 August AD 695. The defeat of Calakmul ended its golden age. The supremacy of the Kanu'l over their clients and vassals diminished somewhat in the years following the defeat. As Martin and Grube pointed out, " hegemony of the kind exercised by Classic Maya powers relied heavily on their military prestige, and defeat could quickly undermine their hold over clients and affiliated, provoking thoughts of succession" (Martin and Grube 2008:111).

In a broader and wider perspective, the consequences of this battle were experienced throughout the classic Maya world. It was the first step towards the dissolution and

disintegration of the entire Maya political and social structure, as the political balance of the two dominant forces was weakened (Grube and Martin 2006:171).

However, in an inscription from Lintel 3, Tikal Temple 1, the battle is described only as "Yich'aak K'ahk's flint and shield were brought down", leaving much to the imagination of scholars. We do know, however, that the main deity of the Calakmul, Yajaw Maan, was captured. (Martin and Grube 2008:45; Mumary Farto 2019:84). The lord who bore the title *aj sa(al)*, which probably means "He of Naranjo", was also captured. The capture of the lord of Naranjo indicates the direct involvement of this city in a battle. Presumably, Naranjo reinforced the army of Calakmul with its warriors (Doyle 2005:3-8; Martin and Grube 2008:76; Zender, Awe, and Martin 2016).

The wooden lintel from Temple 1 at Tikal (Figure 2.55) shows Jasaw Chan K'awiil I on a richly decorated throne, placed on a great wooden palanquin (a kind of ceremonial litter). Behind the proud king is the monumental figure of a supernatural jaguar.

Figure 2. 55. Lintel 1, with glyphs *jubuy pakal yich'aak K'ahk' Kanu'l ajaw,* Tikal (after Martin and Grube 2008:45).

This probably features one of the Calakmul's patron gods. The ceremonial litter may have belonged to the defeated Kanu'l king and as such was considered precious war booty (Martin and Grube 2006:169; Martin 2009; Martin and Grube 2008:45). The building façade of Structure 5D-57 from the Central Acropolis of Tikal (Figure 2.56) gives us a privileged glimpse into the fortune of Calakmul. The king of Tikal is depicted holding the bound captive, who is said to be *ajbaluun sihn ajsa'uul* "he of Nine extents, he of Naranjo". The identity of the represented captive is unknown; however, he must have belonged to the troops supporting the Calakmul forces (Helmke 2017:113).
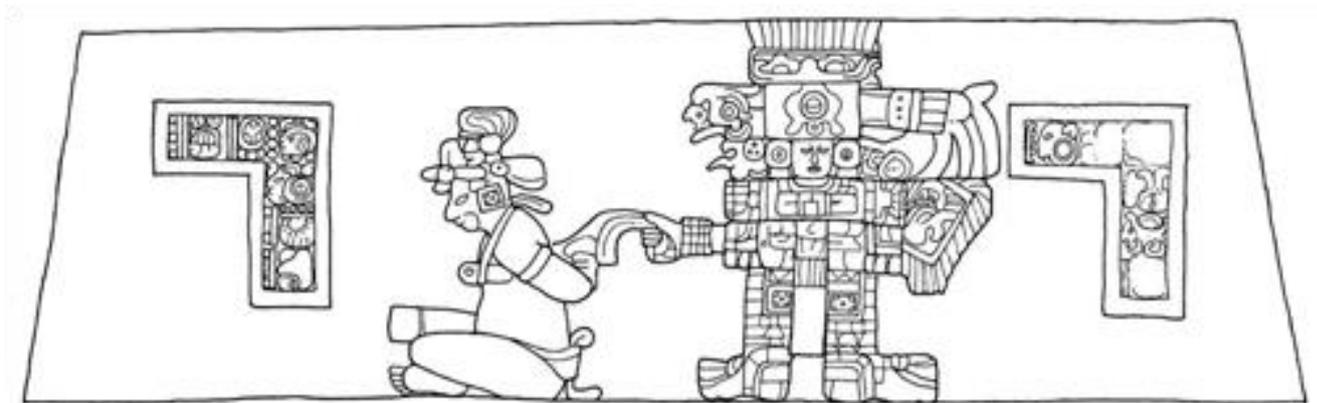
Figure 2. 56. Stucco frieze from Structure 5D-57, Tikal showing the captive from Naranjo. (after Schele and Mathews 1998: Fig,2.29a)

For many years it was assumed that Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' either died in a battle of AD 695 or was captured by Tikal forces. Velásquez García and Pallan suggested that he was wounded or killed in battle and later buried in his city (Velásquez García and Pallan 2006:342). However, recent discoveries at La Corona have disproved this theory.

The inscription on Block V, Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 of La Corona, commemorates Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk''s visit to La Corona on 29 January, AD 696. This inscription is of great importance as it shows us that Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' not only survived the battle but also retained power over his closest allies and subordinates. On the same inscription, Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' is given the unusual title of 13 K'atun lord, a clear reference to the k'atun ritual he had performed four years earlier. The title 13 K'atun lord, which Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'

holds on Block V, HS 2, is juxtaposed on the inscription with the 13.0.0.0 bak'tun ending that came on 21 December 2012. It seems reasonable to assert that the scribe wanted to place this story in a larger cosmological framework while acknowledging the importance and significance of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' who, though defeated, was a king of time and still wielded some power. As Stuart noted, in visiting La Corona, his closest ally, Yuknoom Yicha'aak K'ahk' also visited his close family, as the two dynasties were also linked by close personal ties (Stuart 2012b) (see Chapter IV).

The inscription on Block V, Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 also informs us that Chak Ak' Paat Kuy, the ruler of La Corona, was involved in a carving of the *k'an tuun* (precious stone). The event was witnessed or sanctioned by Yuknoom Yicha'aak K'ahk' and took place on the day of his arrival. The text on the block states i huli ha'i Waxakluhuun Ub'aah Chan Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' *k'uhul Kan ajaw* on 9.13.3.16.17 8 Kaban 10 Kumk'u (Stuart 2012b; Stuart and Baron 2013:197). The title *Waxakluhuun Ub'aah Chan*, (18 images of Snake) associated with the Teotihuacan War Serpent and military iconography, probably alludes to Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk's great abilities at war and his skills as a powerful warrior[86]. The reference to *Waxaklajuun Ubaah Chan*, in the context of HS Block V La Corona is a clear statement of the power of Yuknoom Yich'aak Kahk, real or fictional. Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk may have taken this title to show himself as a great warrior who, even weakened by the power of Tikal, was able to bring good fortune to the city and the dynasty. *Waxaklajuun Ubaah Chan* Yuknoom

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[86] In addition, two vessels K1152 and K1647 bear the image of a jaguar paw and flames alongside images that clearly refer to Teotihuacan (e.g., *k'an* crosses). They could allude symbolically to Yich'aak K'ahk', since in shortened examples his name is simply written with a jaguar's paw (ICH'AAK) and fire (K'AHK'), which stands for Yich'aak K'ahk', "Claw of Fire" (Stuart 2013).

Yich'aak K'ahk' thus still considered himself a powerful ruler who was able to regain power after losing the battle against Tikal (Stuart 2013).

The information that Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' survived the clash with Tikal in 695 also allows us to reconsider the meaning of the well-known war phrase ju-bu-yi u-TOK'-PAKAL. Previously unselfconsciously Maya scholars assumed that ju-bu-yi u-TOK'-PAKAL followed by the name indicated the actual capture of the person mentioned. Now it is known that this is not the case, because the expression ju-bu-yi u-TOK'-PAKAL yi- ICH'AK-K'AK K'UH -ka- KAN-AJAW *jubuuy utook' upakal yich'aak k'ahk' k'uhul kan ajaw* "brought down is the flint and shield of Yich'aak K'ahk' Divine Lord of Calakmul" seems to refer to the fall of the military campaign rather than the death of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' (Canuto et al. 2015:3). As evidenced on Block 4, Hieroglyphic Stairway 2, La Corona, Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' died on 15 December, AD 697 (Stuart et al. 2015a:2). Most likely he was buried in Tomb 4, Structure II of Calakmul.

Tomb 4 (Figure 2.57) was located deep in Structure II, under the floor of a buried temple called IIb-sub. Inside, archaeologists discovered the skeleton of an adult male (45-60 years old) accompanied by a rich offering. The individual was lying on his back in an extended position.

Figure 2. 57. Tomb of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk.' Reconstruction in the Baluarte de San Miguel Museum in Campeche, Mexico. Photo by Kai Delvendahl.

The quantity and quality of the artefacts exceeded scholars' wildest expectations. The individual was wrapped in a jaguar skin and a textile made from local plants, both partially preserved by the resin with which the material was impregnated. He was adorned with an 80 cm jade belt, a necklace of jade and pearls, a pectoral of jade and shells, a cluster of jadeites and spondylus beads sewn into the fabric, an elaborate mosaic headdress and a death mask with polychrome decorations in various colours - yellow, red, green and greenish-blue. The body was also accompanied by the bone beads, obsidian 'eccentrics', an early classic earplug, elaborate ceramics (some of them contained perishable grave goods and were wrapped in an open-weave cloth) and the remains of lacquered wooden artefacts (Boucher and Palomo 2000, Carrasco et al. 1999; Moreno and Granados 2000:29-32). Although one of the tomb's plates names its owner Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk', some other grave goods such as a codex-style vase and a jade mask carry the name Yuknoom Ch'een II[87] (Boucher 2012:198, Delvendahl 2008:52, 87). The mask (Figure 2.58) records a short text: *ubaah Yuknoom Ch'een (*this is the image of Yuknoom Ch'een) followed by the teonim associated with an Aquatic Serpent *yax chit juun witz* [naah kan][88], a patron deity of the Kanu'l dynasty.

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[87] Sylviane Boucher has postulated that it may be reasonable to consider Tomb 4 as the resting place of Yuknoom Ch'een II (Boucher 2012:198).

[88] *Chit Juun Witz' Naah Kan* appears as a patron deity on Stela 54, Calakmul (Baron 2013:181). Vázquez López and Kupprat suggest that this title is strictly related to the Kanu'l dynasty and also to individuals affiliated with the dynasty through various mechanisms of cohesion, such as marriage (Vázquez López and Kupprat 2018: 90). This title is carried for example, by Ix "Kab'el" on Stela 34 of El Peru Waka'. However, if we look at the spatial distribution of this title, it is also found at many other sites not associated with the Kanu'l dynasty, such as Bonampak or Palenque (Houston and Taube 2011:19; Tuszyńska 2016:126).

Figure 2. 58. The mask of Yuknoom Ch'een II found in Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk's tomb in Sub II-B (Tomb 4), Calakmul. Below, the small inscription with the name of Yuknoom Ch'een II. Photos by Valeria García Vierna.

2.11.3 Yuknoom Took' K'awiil[89]

It has been suggested that the successor to Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' was a person called Split Earth, a ruler whom Tikal installed in Calakmul after the death of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk. However, recent discoveries in El Peru Waka' and La Corona contradict these theories. Block 4 of Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 at La Corona records the date 7 Muluc 7 Zip, which is only 109 days after the death of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' (Stuart et al. 2005a:4). The same date appears on El Peru Waka' Stela 43 in relation to *ch'am K'awiil* of the king Yuknoom Took' K'awiil. Therefore, it can be assumed that the date AD 698 refers to the accession of the successor of

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[89] Vepretskii suggests the new reading of his name - Yuknoom-Head Kanal Ajaw (Vepretskii 2021), but for the sake of clarity I will stick with Yuknoom Took' K'awill.

Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk (Stuart and Baron 2013:195), who was certainly not Split Earth. The name Split Earth only appears on an inscribed bone from Burial 116 at Tikal, but its historical context remains ambiguous (Canuto et al. 2015:3).

Yuknoom Took' K'awiil sought to restore the glory of his famous predecessors. This is best seen in the archaeology and epigraphy of Uxul, Calakmul's immediate neighbour. There is some evidence that the Snake dynasty exercised control over Uxul after AD 695. The clearest indication of Uxul's subordination to Calakmul comes from Structure K2, the main building of the palace complex. The text on the Southern Stairway, Panel 3 of K2 refers to the construction or dedication of a house - PAT -la?-ja? 8- AJAW-NAAH, *patlaj waxak ajaw naah* " it is built in stone the 8 Ajaw house". According to Nikolai Grube, the date of the erection of this building can be reconstructed as 8 Ajaw 8 K'ayab, which probably corresponds to a Long Count date 9.13.13.0.0 (AD 705). Although the name of the protagonist of the house is partially destroyed, his long nominal phrase ends with a glyph that shows some resemblance to the name of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil recorded on Stela 8, Dos Pilas (later in this chapter). It consists of various signs, including a dotted scroll and possibly the head of K'awiil. The other glyphs on Panel 3, Southern Stairway, can be regarded as other names of this king, possibly his pre-accession names. The whole expression could be read as u- CHAB'-(ji)-ya ?-na-ke-KELEM "by the authority of ?-Kelem", followed by another title or part of the nominal phrase Aj -pi-tzi-K'IHNiCH *aj pitz k'ihnich* "he the ballplayer -the sun god". On the basis of the available information, it can be concluded that Structure K2 was commissioned by the Snake King Yuknoom Took K'awiil. If we follow this assumption, a direct influence of Calakmul on the architecture of Uxul must be considered. The architectural layout of the palace K2 and its configuration pattern strongly resemble that observed at Calakmul, suggesting a close relationship between the two centres (Delvendahl and Grube 2015; Grube 2011; Grube et al. 2012, Grube and Delvendahl 2014:78).

There is also some evidence of contact between Calakmul and Oxpemul, a small site only 25 km from the Kanu'l seat. Two stelae from Oxpemul, Stela 12 and Stela 17, commissioned during the reign of ruler Chak Tajal Way, record the celebration of the 15 k'atun in AD 731. On Stela 12, the ruler carries the title *Uxte'tuun*, which may indicate some relations between the Kanu'l dynasty and the lords of Oxpemul (Grube 2008:33-38).

The end of the 15 k'atun was a major celebration held by Yuknoom Took' K'awiil during his reign. The best-preserved stelae from his reign are those that record this event.

On Stelae 52 and 89 (731 AD), Yuknoom Took' K'awiil refers to himself as "Third counted in the step of the lord ?' K'awiil", where K'awill is used as a postmortem title for Yuknoom Ch'een II. [90]" (Martin 2005a:8).

For unknown reasons, Yuknoom Took K'awiil is referred to as Ti-[?] K'awiil outside Calakmul. This name appears on Stela 8, Dos Pilas (AD 702) and El Peru Waka', Stela 27 (unknown date). On the latter stela, Ti [?] K'awiil supervises the enthronement of the local lord (Guenter 2014a:160; Martin 2009; Martin and Grube 2008:112). Ti [?] K'awiil is also displayed engaged in a dance on Element 55, La Corona (Figure 2.59)[91] (Stuart 2015 *et al.).*

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[90] Similar expression appears on Stela 115 where YuknoomYich'aak K'ahk' is *utz'akbuil ajaw k'awiil ho ? ajaw* "Counted in step of the lord, K'awiil, Five K'atun Lord". The expression then places Yuknoom Ch'een II (who was indeed Five K'atun Lord) as the founder of the dynasty and implies "the resetting of the dynastic clock" (Martin 2005a:8).

[91] a sculptured block recovered from La Corona's main palace.
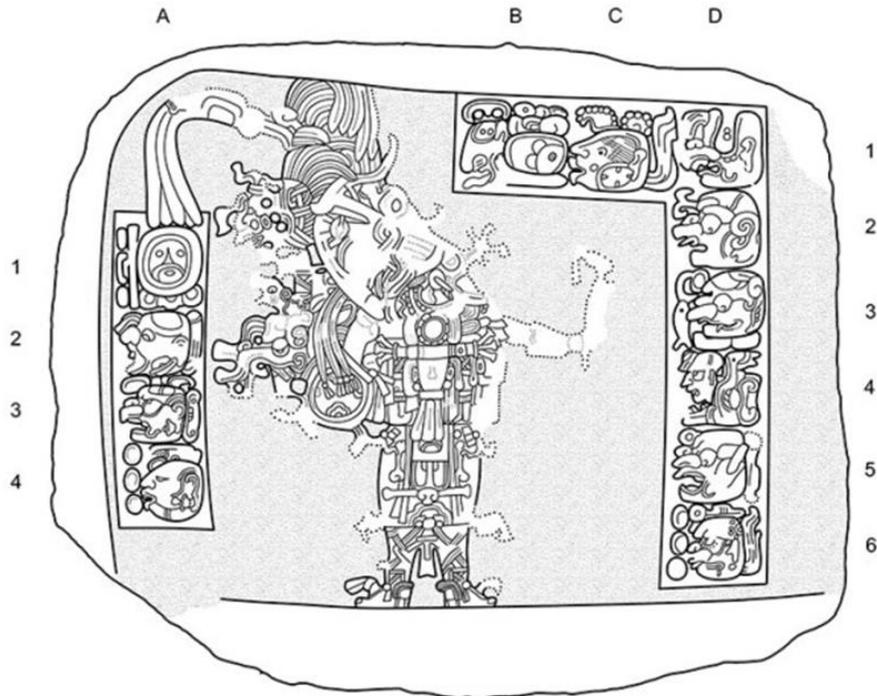
Figure 2. 59. Element 55, La Corona. Drawing by Mary Kate Kelly.

If Yuknoom Took' K'awiil and Scroll-Head K'awiil are one and the same, this would

suggest that hegemonic practice was maintained despite the loss of power.

Calakmul still had control over the San Pedro River area, Naranjo, Dos Pilas, and La Corona

(Velásquez García and Pallan 2006). Loyalty and allegiance to Kanu'l is evident in Naranjo

during the reign of a boy king K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk and his mother Ix Wak Chan. K'ahk'

Tiliw Chan Chahk was a pawn in the political game of his mother, who had been sent to

Naranjo from Dos Pilas to restore kingship. Her arrival in AD 682 was no doubt orchestrated

by the Kanu'l dynasty (see Chapter IV). K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk declared himself a true ally

of the Kanu'l dynasty on the inscription from Stela 1 Naranjo, dated to AD 702. In one of the

passages of Stela 1, K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk's name is replaced by the subordination formula

"the lord of Yich'aak K'ahk', Divine King of Calakmul" (Doyle 2005:3-8; Martin and Grube

2008:75). K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk mentioned his subordination to Yich'aak K'ak' again on

Stela 23, erected at AD 711. These posthumous references to Yich'aak K'ak' are very puzzling,

as both Stela 1 and Stela 23 were dedicated when Yich'aak K'ak' was already dead and a new ruler of the Kanu'l was in office (Doyle 2005: 7).

The assertion of vassalage can also be observed in La Corona and Naachtun, where Yuknoom Took' K'awiil sent his daughters to consolidate and maintain alliances (Canuto and Barrientos 2013; Garay 2019:119; Martin 2008:7), (see also Chapters IV and V).

La Corona, Block 10 of HS 2 records the capture of K'in Kaloom Chak in 9.14.4.4.2 7 Ik' 15 Kumk'u (AD 716) by a *kaloomte'* lord, probably Yuknoom T'ook K'awiil (Stuart and Baron 2013: 203). Similarly, Yuknoom Took' K'awiil probably arranged for his nobleman K'ahk' Wahy Na' to be sent to La Corona. K'ahk' Wahy Na' is documented on six monuments in La Corona. Block 12 of HS2, dated to AD 715, records his name in relation to his overlord Yuknoom Took' K'awiil (Matteo 2010:103). Interestingly, the inscription omits the name of the king of La Corona, while HS 2 (Element 21) records the dedication of the house of Wahy Na' of K'ahk in the presence of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil (Canuto, Barrientos, and Ponce 2014: 283). It is doubtful that La Corona's *aj k'uhuun*[92] dared to establish a relationship with the powerful Yuknoom Took' K'awiil without recognising the king of La Corona as his overlord (Canuto, Barrientos, and Ponce 2014: 283; Matteo 2010:103-104). According to Lamoureux-St-Hilaire, K'ahk' Way Na' was closely connected to the Halcon embassy - part of the palace of La Corona that was presumably inhabited by the Kanu'l elite during their stay in La Corona As *Aj k'uhuun* and *Anab*[93] of *kaloomte'* "Spangle head"-Ti K'awiil[94] he may have been

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[92] A high-ranking official/priest performing multiply courtly roles.

[93] Still little understood title, likely referring to artists.

[94] Mumary Farto noted that K'ahk' Wahy Na' was given the title *aj k'uhuun* while he was already *anaab* of *kaloomte'* Yuknoom Took K'awiil. This indicates that the noble attained a higher status than he already had (Mumary Farto 2019:120).

responsible for designing the Halcon embassy (Canuto et al. 2017; Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018:451).

As for the title *kaloomte'*, Yuknoom Took' K'awiil adopted the title *el k'in kaloomte'* during his reign. The title *el'kin kaloomte'* is extremely rare in the Corpus of Maya Inscriptions and could literally denote the overlordship of the eastern Maya territory, in contrast to the title *och k'in kaloomte'* (western overlord), which appears more frequently and is connected to the mighty Teotihuacan (Carter 2015: 10; Martin 2020:80). Beliaev and Martin propose that the Kanu'l kings at Calakmul used the "west" *kaloomte'* title, while *el k'in* was employed by the Dzibanche lords (Martin and Beliaev 2017:4). Towards the end of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth century, the Kanu'l lords also adopted the title *el k'in kaloomte'*. This is best seen on the Uaxactun vessel referring to Yuknoom Ch'een II (see earlier in this chapter), and Element 55 from La Corona referring to Yuknoom Took' K'awiil. Yuknoom Took' K'awiil on Element 55 is said to be *u baah ti ahk'ot ? ti' k'awiil k'uhul Kanu'l ajaw elk'in(?) kaloomte'' ux te' tuun* "(it is) his person in (the act of) dancing, ? Ti' K'awiil, the Holy Kanu'l Lord, the east Kaloomte", (at) uxte'tuun." (Stuart et al. 2015).

Claiming the title *el k'in kaloomte'* by Yuknoom Took K'awiil coincides with the reopening of the royal/elite tombs in Structure E-2 and E-6 of Dzibanche. The ritual of reopening the tombs at Dzibanche took place in the early eighth century (Nalda and Balanzario 2008), possibly as a form of ancestor veneration. If we allow ourselves to speculate, the reopening may have been carried out by Yuknoom Took' K'awiil, who commemorated his ancestors to show that he was related to them. In this way, Yuknoom Took K'awiil confirmed his ancestry and legitimised his claims to rule Dzibanche.

This interpretation accords well with the recent work of Mumary Farto. In his book "Los señores de la serpiente Poder y organización de la dinastía Kaan" (2019), he argues convincingly that the Late Classic Kanu'l lords (especially Yuknoom Took' K'awiil) claimed

their power and authority in the time of crisis by invoking the prestige of past times (Mumary Farto 2019: 238). Ancestor veneration in the old capital would definitely help achieve these goals. This could also aim to maintain and reconstruct group identity, not to mention political identity.

Yuknoom Took' K'awiil also took part in politics. A recently discovered hieroglyphic stairway (Figure 2.61) in the Guzman Group, El Palmar [Maps 3 and 4] offers a unique insight into interregional dynastic interactions and diplomatic affairs. Here on Step V, on 13 September AD 726, an official - Aj Pach' Waal - celebrated the completion of the hieroglyphic stairway together with a ruler of El Palmar and a *k'uhul Kanu'l ajaw*, "the holy lord of Kanu'l", Yuknoom Took' K'awiil. The Kanu'l king's involvement in this event remains unclear (Esparza Olguin and Tsukamoto 2014:30, 52). Nevertheless, it proves a political connection between Calakmul and El Palmar. In fact, contacts between the two kingdoms must have existed much earlier, because Stela 12, erected in El Palmar's huge Plaza E, tells of a royal dance witnessed by Yuknoom Ch'een II (Tsukamoto 2014:59).
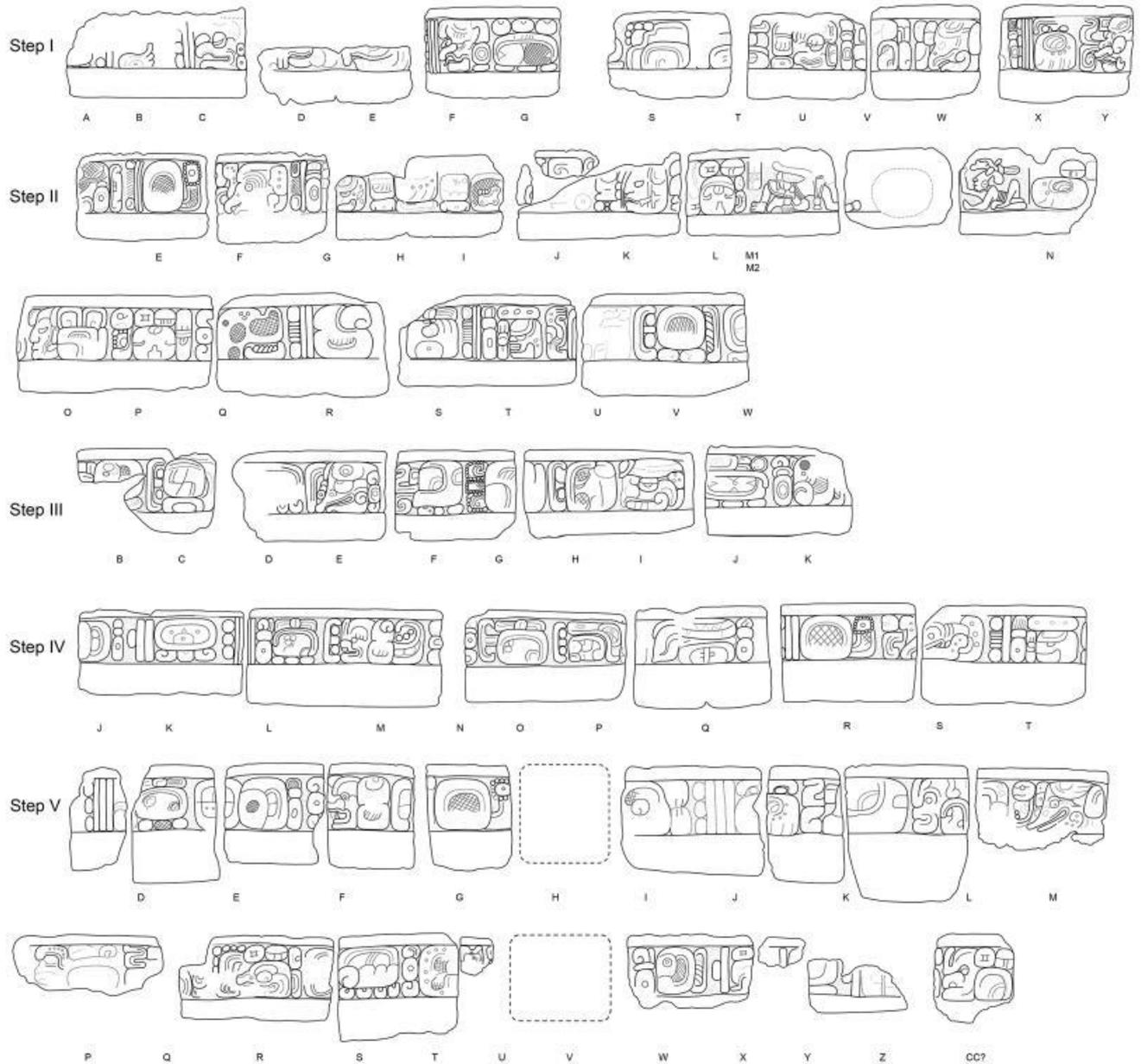
Figure 2. 60. Steps I–V of the Hieroglyphic Stairway, El Palmar. Drawings by Octavio Q. Esparza Olguín.

The same year (AD 726) possibly marks the presence of the Kanu'l lord in Naranjo.

Stela 46 of Naranjo records some rituals performed by K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk and his mother

Ix Wak Chan, seen (*yila*) by the Kanu'l and M'utul (Dos Pilas) lords and supervised by

Naranjo's ancestor Aj Numsaaj Chan K'inich, the loyal ally of Kanu'l dynasty in the sixth

century (Lopez Oliva 2019:129-134; Martin et al. 2017:674-677).

Although it exerted some influence on other regions, Calakmul had never regained the power from the period of spectacular glory[95] (Beliaev *et al.* 2013:132).

2.12 The second defeat

The clear testimony of Calakmul's misfortunes comes from Altar 9 at Tikal, dated to around AD 736 (Figure 2.61). It depicts a bound captive with a caption naming Kanu'l lord, possibly the king Yuknoom Took' K'awiil (Beliaev et al. 2013:131; Martin 2009; Martin and Grube 2008:48-49,113). The meaning of this representation seems to be obvious. The second defeat of Calakmul at the hands of Tikal must have taken place around AD 734 or AD 735 if stela was dedicated in AD 736 (Beliaev et al. 2013:132).
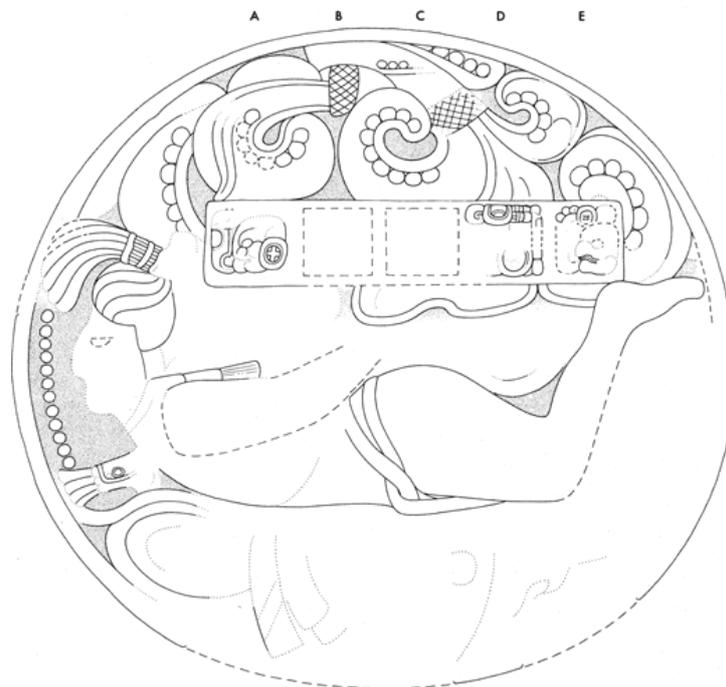
Figure 2. 61. Altar 9, Tikal. Drawing by William Coe.

Two years before the capture marked the death of the great Tikal king Jasaw Chan K'awiil. His burial offering provides some information on the conflict between Calakmul and

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[95] Altar 9 is paired with Stela 21 erected in AD 736 at the Temple VI complex. It is assumed that the altar was raised in the same year.

Tikal at the end of the seventh century (Jones 1977: 42-45; Martin and Grube 2008:111; Trik 1963). A pair of bones from Burial 116, features a depiction of a captive from the site of Hixil (Figure 2.62). He is referred to as the "grandson "or grandfather": of the lord called Split Earth from the Kanu'l dynasty. The main columnar on the bone records a war related event (*jubuy*) against an individual named Bahlam K'eeb from Kob'a[96]. The attack was orchestrated by Split Earth on 9.13.3.13.15, 11 Men 8 Muwan (30 November, AD 695).

Figure 2. 62. Two depictions of the captive from Hixil on the pair of bones from Tomb 116, Tikal. Drawing by Christophe Helmke.

Although Split Earth was not a king of the Kanu'l, he exercised considerable power in Calakmul, probably as a military leader. The attack on Kob'a in AD 695 may have been Calakmul's victorious response to the battle against Tikal a few months earlier. Perhaps Split

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[96] Bahlam K'eeb could have been a local noble or the ruler of Coba. In the first case, he could be an underlord of Chan Yopaat - a Coba king who came to power in AD 682, while the second option would indicate that Bahlam K'eeb was a king of Coba who ruled between Chan Yopaat and Ruler D, who acceded to the throne in AD 697 (Esparza Olguin 2016:292).

Earth attacked the ally of Tikal. One might suspect, if only implicitly, that the clash between Jasaw Chan K'awiil and Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' was one of the most influential clashes, not because Calakmul's army was destroyed (as Split Earth's combat against K'oba proves), but because Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk's military prestige and authority were damaged. He failed as a leader; his deity was captured, and he certainly struggled politically. This definitely increased doubts about his competence and divinity and reduced the fear of being subjugated again. Calakmul's failure enabled the prompt emergence of regional states such as Naranjo, Yaxchilan, Dos Pilas and Piedras Negras, which pursued their strategies of cooperation but were nevertheless loyal allies of Calakmul.

The inscriptions on the bones from Tomb 116 indicate that not all kingdoms were on friendly terms with Calakmul. The expansionist policy of the Kanu'l dynasty could lead to a close alliance between Tikal and Coba (Gayol 2012:98).

Tikal may have taken revenge for the sack of Kob'a' (probably present-day Coba) by capturing a member of the Kanu'l dynasty (the grandson of Split Earth) (Esparza Olguin 2016:292). It seems that Coba and Calakmul were enemies at the end of the seventh century (Guenter 2014:417). Stela 19 (AD 692) from Edzna displays a captive from Kob'a and may be related to the *jubuy* attack of Split Earth (Gayol 2012:97-98). If Coba and ancient Kob'a were the same polity, then the city succeeded in taking revenge on its former friend. The enigmatic conflict between Coba and Uxul, recorded on Panel 19 of Coba, may have been aimed at weakening Calakmul, the overlord of Uxul (Grube and Esparza Olguin 2017:1-4). Although no date supports the texts, it is reasonable to assume that the misfortune of Uxul took place a few decades after AD 695 AD, when Calakmul was losing power. Thus, the capture of Split Earth's grandson by Tikal and the capture of individual from Uxul may have been part of a broader campaign that eventually led to the downfall of the Kanu'l dynasty. What is known about the later Kanu'l dynasty is sparse.

2. 13 Wamaw K'awiil

The Quirigua Stela I mentions a new Calakmul king - Wamaw K'awiil - in relation to the period's ending rituals, conducted by the Quirigua king in AD 736. Although the reference is retrospective, Waman K'awiil may have been involved in the Quirigua's rebellion against Copan in AD 738 (Tunesi 2007:19). Looper postulates that Calakmul encouraged Quirigua to free itself from Copan's rule and provided warriors for the rebellion (Looper 2003:81). The Hieroglyphic Stairway of Copan mentions the birth of Yax Ha'al Chahk, one of the patron gods of Calakmul, in relation to the death of Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil of Copan (*siyaj yax ha'al chahk yax chum ? sas haa' ...aj u took' u pakal ti ko[h]kwitz ik'a'ayi usaak usakik'aal tutook' tupakal waxaklajuun [u] baah k'awiil* "the God Yax Ha'al Chahk was born at First Jade seat (and) his warriors were..... ed at Turtle Hill, then Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil died with his warriors") (Zender and Guenter 2016).

Perhaps the Kanu'l king was concerned about the increasing influence of Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil from Copan on the political life of El Palmar, a centre considerably far from Copan (about 300 km) and close to Calakmul (about 60 km). From the hieroglyphic stairway at El Palmar, we know that in AD 726 (12 years before the clash between Copan and Quirigua) the individual Ajpach' Waal and possibly the ruler of El Palmar went up to Copan to see Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil. The lack of *k'uhul* sign in the royal title of the ruler of Copan in the inscription may indicate a dominant role of Calakmul in El Palmar. The event involving Yuknoom Took K'awill, the ruler of El Palmar and Aj Pach' Waal took place only three months later than this journey (Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguin 2015: 53). Calakmul may have been troubled by the growing power of Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil, who not only dared to establish a relationship with El Palmar, but also placed Copan in the ranks of the mightiest classic cities along with Tikal, Calakmul and Palenque. This is evidenced on four way-oriented Stela A dated to AD 731 (Andrews 2005; Garay 2017; Martin and Grube 2008:203; Webster 2000). Had

Copan and Calakmul allied with El Palmar, the bonds would not have lasted long, as the Kanu'l king supported Quirigua against Copan in AD 738 (Tsukamoto et al. 2015:214).

As a result of the war with Quirigua, Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil was beheaded, and Copan's fortunes declined for 17 years. The Copan renewal programme initiated by K'ahk' Yipyaj Chan K'awiil and continued by Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat was only made possible by the decline of Calakmul, according to some scholars. For example, Wiliam Fash in his article "Enshrining the Great Revival of Fortunes: Architectural Charters for Late Classic Rulership at Palenque Copan and Tikal" compared these three cities in terms of their architectural programmes after a downturn in monumental construction[97]. He speculates that the boom in cities' architectural activity (e.g., funerary temples, the Palace or Acropolis complex, a large public plaza)[98] was a kind of "declaration of independence" from the hegemony of the Kanu'l kings (Fash 2011:28-51).

The loss of power of Calakmul can also be seen in the inscriptions. Fewer and fewer hieroglyphic texts refer to the Kanu'l dynasty. One of the last texts comes from a small late classic monument that is now in a private collection. It shows the scene of a ballgame (see also Chapter V), with two players facing each other. The figure on the right is the holy Kanu'l lord Wamaw K'awiil, while the figure on the left represents the Hix Witz lord. This may indicate a continuing relationship between Hix Witz and Calakmul, despite their second defeat by Tikal in the fourth century.

On the Quirigua Stela I, Wamaw K'awiil is referred to as the "holy Chiik Nahb Lord", on the ballgame monument *-k'uhul Kanu'l Ajaw Kaloomte'*. Interestingly, the Quirigua Stela I

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[97] As evidenced at Palenque and Tikal in the sixth and seventh centuries (see earlier in this chapter) and at Copan after the defeat of Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil in AD 738.

[98] All designed to commemorate or to celebrate dynastic history, with a particular attention to the king who restored the kingdom's glory.

was inaugurated in AD 800, more than 60 years after the Copan-Quirgua conflict. Rafael Tunesi suspects that the Kanu'l dynasty did not reside in Calakmul at the time of the erection of Stela I, but in a place still unknown to us. To make Stela I comprehensible to contemporary readers, the scribes used the toponym *Chiik Nahb* to refer directly to Calakmul, the place of origin of the Wamaw K'awiil (Tunesi 2007:16-19).

2.14 Calakmul rulers in the late eighth century

The complex web of relationships that the Kanu'l kings had created in previous centuries was eventually unravelled. The conquest of El Peru Waka' and Naranjo, two leading clients of Calakmul, revealed the powerlessness and weakness of the kingdom and led to its final decline. Calakmul's former allies were defeated by Tikal in AD 743 and AD 744, respectively. These must have been major military defeats for El Peru Waka' and Naranjo. Yax Mayuy Chan Chahk of Naranjo is depicted as defeated and humiliated on Stela 5 at Tikal, while the defeat of Bahlam Tz'am of El Peru Waka' (whose accession to the throne was overseen by Yuknoom Took K'awiil in the early eighth century) is depicted on one of the door lintels of the Temple IV at Tikal (Guenter 2014a:160; Helmke 2017:118; Martin and Grube 2008:112).

Nevertheless, the Calakmul kings continued the erection of stelae, Wamaw K'awiil was appointed by the ruler Y[99], Great Serpent, and Bolon K'awiil (Martin 2012:173, Martin and Grube 2008:115). The city may have served as the seat of the Bat dynasty, for stela 59, dated to AD 741, and Stela 62, dated to AD 751, instead of the Kanu'l emblem glyph, feature Bat emblem glyph (Martin 1998; Martin 2012:168-173). The date AD 751 also appears on Stela 88. Stela 88 features the image of a queen, but her name as well as her relation to the Bat

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[99] His name is recorded on a few stelae dated to AD 741. The damage prevents further reconstruction; it may refer to Wamaw K'awiil himself (Martin 2012).

king (Great Serpent) of Stela 62 is unknown (Martin 2012:173). The exact location of the political entity with the Bat emblem glyph remains obscure.

Stela 57 falls within the reign of B'olon K'awiil, who appears in an inscription in connection to the event in 9.17.0.0.0 (AD 771) involving the patron deities of Calakmul: Bolon Yokte', Yajaw Maan and Yax Ha'al Chaahk, who are also known from the Kanu'l times. Bolon K'awiil did not bear the Kanu'l emblem glyph, on one of the isolated blocks from Calakmul he is simply referred to as "*Chiik Nahb Ajaw"* (Martin 2009; Valencia Rivera and Esparza Olguin 2018:3).

2.15 Ninth century

The last reference to the Kanu'l emblem glyph comes from Seibal, Stela 10, dated to AD 849 - long after the decline of the Kanu'l kingdom (Martin 2005a:12). Apparently, the ruler of Seibal, Wat'ul K'atel, sought to restore ancient traditions and evoke the glory of the powerful kings of the past by inviting the kings of Motul de San Jose, Tikal and the Kanu'l dynasty to witness a celebration of a Period Ending, as evidenced on Stela 10. It remains to be clarified where Kan Pet, the Kanu'l ruler mentioned on Stela 10, resided. There is no doubt that his power was elusive compared to his predecessors (Martin 2005a; Martin and Grube 2006:171).

At Calakmul, close ties with northern cultures can be discerned from the mid-eighth century onwards. The architecture reflects the influence of the Rio Bec style. Major structures were modified (e.g., temples gained new residential functions) and a few buildings were given Rio Bec style elements, such as ornate façades (Braswell et al. 2004:169, 180). In addition, archaeological evidence suggests heavy settlement in the ninth century, with large architectural renovations to the main façade of Structure II (Folan et al.2008a). However, by the middle of the ninth century, most of the major dynasties collapsed.

Tikal and Calakmul were no exception. Despite many victories over Calakmul's allies, Tikal, like many other Lowlands sites, was ravaged by the Terminal Classic. It seems that the once powerful Tikal did not create the strong and solid socio-political infrastructure needed to sustain a web of alliances and connections. This failure led to the creation of a "political vacuum" resulting in the escalation of wars and the emergence of competing states. If we add climatic changes, social pressures, ecological crisis, and the rejection of the institution of kingship, we get a pretty miserable picture of what happened in the Maya Lowlands during the Terminal Classic. The collapse of the major Maya sites in the Terminal Classic was not reflected in all sites, for example, the northern cities (e.g. Chichen Itza or Uxmal), but also some sites in the southern Maya Lowlands sites such as Nakum, Naachtun, Seibal or Ucanal experienced growth and prosperity during this period (Demarest et al. 2005; Martin and Grube 2006; Nondédéo et al. 2013; Źrałka 2008, Źrałka and Hermes 2012). In fact, Naachtun was the only site allied to Calakmul that flourished in Terminal Classic. Surprisingly, each site in my research area - Uxul, Naachtun, Oxpemul and La Corona - responded differently to the collapse of the Kanu'l dynasty. At Oxpemul, an extensive architectural programme was introduced. Its rulers used Bat emblem glyph and the title *uxte'tuun kaloomte'*, once reserved only for the kings of Calakmul (Grube 2008, Robichaux 2010). In contrast, Uxul showed a marked decline and abandonment closely related to the demise of Calakmul (Delvendahl and Grube 2015; Grube et al. 2012). La Corona flourished in the eighth century and maintained both a real and symbolic connection to the Kanu'l dynasty (Canuto and Barrientos 2012, 2013, 2013a, Lamoureax St Hilaire 2018, Stuart et al. 2014). Finally, La Corona and Oxpemul also suffered population decline in the ninth century.

2.16 Chapter Summary

As presented in this chapter, the importance of the Kanu'l was reflected in places far beyond the area of its domination. The Kanu'l emblem glyph is one of the most frequently observed emblem glyphs in ancient Maya texts and its spatial distribution is greater than that of any other Maya city. The kingdoms that accepted the patronage of the Kanu'l dynasty experienced a remarkable boom. They took advantage of Calakmul's rise to power and used it for their own purposes. Yet, the victories over Tikal and its vassals were the result of clever diplomacy rather than military campaigns, although the Kanu'l dynasty was able to mobilise the army and use it when needed.

Instead of attacking directly, Tikal and Calakmul tried to encircle their opponents with loyal vassals, clients, and allies. Although Calakmul managed to encircle Tikal because it had allies in Caracol, Naranjo, Cancuen, Dos Pilas and El Peru Waka', it was never able to subjugate Tikal for any length of time. Some of the subjugated cities, before they became involved in the politics of Calakmul, were loyal clients of Tikal. The dramatic reversal of alliances was characteristic of the Late Classic Period. Relationships were thus very fragile and prone to change depending on which faction took power in a particular place at a particular moment in history. This strategy of minimising the cost of military operations and asserting power through marriage alliances, gift-giving or overseeing enthronements seems ultimately insufficient to maintain power. Yuknoom Ch'een II was unable to prevent the accession of Jasaw Ch'an K'awiil, the son of his arch-rival Nuun Ujol Chahk. AD 695, marked the beginning of the end of Kanu'l's hegemony followed by their defeat at the hands of Tikal. The first signs of a crisis within the Kanu'l dynasty began before AD 695 with the increase in the practice of managing bonds and legitimising status. The demand for constant display and proof of authority forced the kings of Kanu'l to meet these demands. The legitimisation of power is particularly evident at times when a group or even a political identity was reconstructed (as in the case of the

establishment of the seat of power in Calakmul by one of the branches of Kanu'l) or when it suffered a major political crisis and loss of power (the clash with Tikal in AD 695). These changes and upheavals affected the way the language of power was transmitted. It also affected the way Calakmul's closest neighbours -Uxul, Naachtun, Oxpemul- and La Corona maintained their relations with Kanu'l and how they reacted to the collapse of the powerful dynasty.

It is now undisputed that the Kanu'l dynasty moved its seat from Dzibanche to Calakmul following an internal conflict within the dynasty. The conflict culminated in the defeat of the legitimate and rightful ruler of Dzibanche Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kaan. The establishment of the capital at Calakmul entailed the introduction of a new strategy of political integration, and/or control based on the distribution of standardised visual patterns.

Uxul, Naachtun, Oxpemul and La Corona established and developed different forms of dependence on Kanu'l, which is reflected in their iconographic programme. In each place, standardised visual patterns characteristic of Kanu'l were implemented, although their context and meaning varied. To understand how power and control were enforced through art, we need to place Uxul, Naachtun, Oxpemul and La Corona not only in a broader context of political history, but also in the spatial-temporal micro-context. The following chapter will look at the origins and developments of these sites and their complex relations with Calakmul. It will also set out their response to the decline of the hegemon.

CHAPTER III

THE HISTORY OF LA CORONA, UXUL, NAACHTUN AND OXPEMUL

3.1 Introduction

The Late Classic history of La Corona, Uxul, Naachtun and La Corona (Figure 3.1) is strictly

related to the domination of Calakmul order.
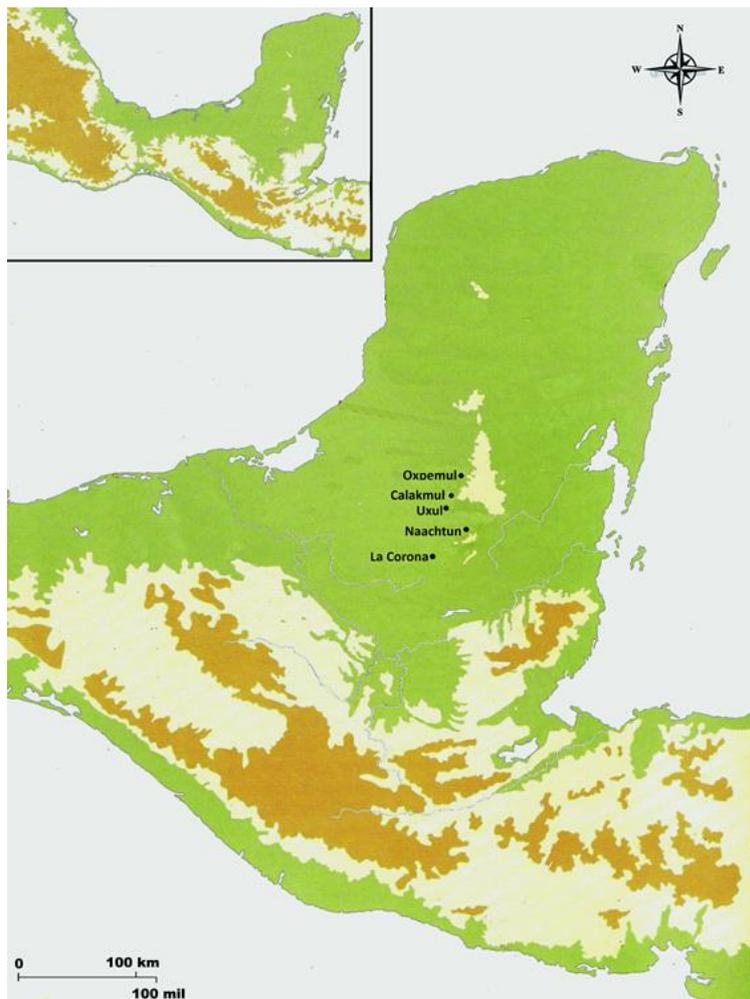
Figure 3. 1. The location of La Corona, Uxul, Oxpemul, Naachtun and Calakmul.
Recompiled by author.

All sorts of reasons brought these places within Kanu'l's sphere of influence. Also, the response

to the fall of Calakmul at each site was different. This chapter aims to provide an overview of

the history of La Corona, Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul, with particular attention to the nature

of the relationship these sites established with the Kanu'l dynasty. Understanding the history of these centres will help me to constitute a solid basis for further discussion of their role and importance in the Late Classic Period politics. I argue that the iconographic programmes of these sites reflect different kinds of relationships with the Snakehead dynasty. Therefore, knowledge of the history of Naachtun, Uxul, Oxpemul and La Corona will also provide a fundamental grounding for my research on the iconography of power and the role of art in domination strategies.

3. 2 The special role of La Corona

La Corona, located between El Peru Waka' and Uxul, played a special role in Kanu'l's expansion plans. Its rulers (similar to Uxul and Oxpemul) did not bear the title *k' uhul ajaw*; they were referred to either as *Sak Wahyis* or *k' uhul Sak Wahyis* (Figure 3.2) (Canuto et al. 2012:435).

| a | b | c |
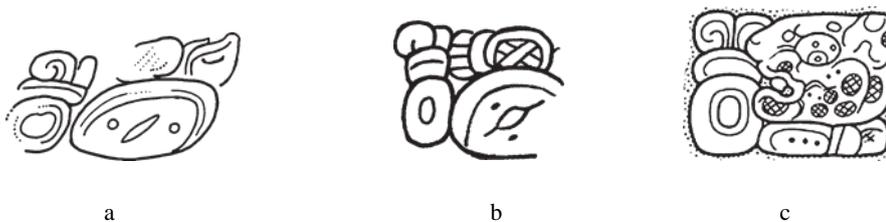
Figure 3. 2. Examples of the *Sak Wahyis* title: (a) La Corona Altar 5; (b) La Corona Panel 1; (c) La Corona Element 56. Drawings by David Stuart.

This contrasts, for example, with the ruling elite of El Peru Waka', Naranjo or Piedras Negras, who carried *k'uhul ajaw* title with an emblem glyph while claiming to be an ally of Calakmul lords. "This difference suggests that some dynasties were able to retain greater autonomy and regional political aspirations. What distinguishes them from places like La Corona or Uxul for example, is that they were situated farther afield in the Kanu'l hegemony" (Tokovinine and Estrada Belli 2016:164). However, the archaeological and epigraphic evidence confirms that La Corona was neither a close subordinate of the Kanu'l dynasty nor its dependency, but rather

a colony and a strategic partner (Canuto and Barrientos 2013a:387). La Corona is included in the research as a reference point and as a basis for comparison with other centres.

3.3 La Corona [Map 5]

The archaeological site of La Corona is located in the northeastern part of Petén, Guatemala, approximately 90 km from Calakmul and 30 km from El Peru Waka'.

The site is situated on the western edge of the karstic central meseta of the Maya Biosphere Reserve, surrounded by the seasonal lakes known as *civales* (Canuto et al. 2012a:317). The ancient name of La Corona -*Sak Nikte*[100]' (Figure 3.3) is considered a toponym[101] (Canuto and Barrientos 2011:16).

Figure 3. 3. *Sak Nikte*. Drawing by Stanley Guenter.

3.3.1 History of discovery

The importance of La Corona was recognised long before its official discovery in 1996.

As early as 1960, many of its sculptures (whose provenance was unknown at the time) had appeared on the market in Europe and the United States. Some of them had also entered private collections. Two decades after the artefacts had come on the market, the epigrapher Peter

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[100] standing for *plumeria alba*, common white flower in Maya Lowlands

[101] The emblematic version of this toponym can be found on K4020. The vessel shows repeated scenes of K'awill seated on the throne and adorned with a large flower, probably referring to *Sak Nikte*. The other possible links to La Corona on K4020 come from the name of the owner of the vessel - Yajawte K'inch. It is very likely that this name refers to the late classic king of La Corona, who bore the same name and was married to the daughter of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk of Calakmul (Stuart 2012c).

Mathews noticed the similarities between these sculptures in terms of their size, content, and good preservation. He attributed them to the unknown Site Q. Many of these monuments mentioned the Kanu'l emblem, which at that time could not be assigned to any site. Therefore, the search for Site Q was combined with the search for the Kanu'l capital (Mathews 1998). When it was finally determined that Site Q was not the capital but a subordinate site to the Snake dynasty, the investigation reached a new stage (Freidel and Guenter 2003; Houston and Stuart 2001).

In the late 1980s, *chicleros[102]*, working in the northwestern Petén, came across the site which they named Los Veremos, after the camp, they set up nearby. Finally, Los Veremos was visited by American scholars Ian Graham and David Stuart in 1997. They renamed it "La Corona" after the series of 5 small temples that resemble the peaks of the tiara. Several references to the Kanu'l polity on many monuments gave Stuart the idea that La Corona was actually Site Q (Graham 1997, Stuart 2001). His suggestion was then confirmed by the discovery of carved panels (Monuments 7 and 8) during the short expedition to La Corona led by Marcelo Canuto in 2005. Both monuments were consistent with the site's Q monuments in terms of size and style. This confirmed that La Corona was indeed Site Q (Canuto and Barrientos 2013; Guenter 2005, 2005a). The La Corona archaeological project run by Tulane University and the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, finally began in 2008 and has continued since then.

3.3. 2 Description of the site

La Corona consists of two distinct monumental groups: the Group 13 Q (the Main Group) and the Group 13 R (the Coronitas Group) [Map 6]. The Main Group [Map 7] consists of a huge plaza surrounded by two long-range structures to the north and south (Structure 13Q-3 and Str. 13Q-5), two large pyramidal platforms to the east (Structure 13Q-1 and Str. 13Q-2) and the

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[102] people who extract gum from wild or cultivated trees.

palace acropolis to the west (Structure 13Q-4). This palatial acropolis [Map 8], covering 4000m2 and built in five major construction phases, was the seat of power for La Corona kings from the Middle Classic Period to the Terminal Classic when the site was abandoned (Barrientos and Canuto 2012, 2015, 2016; Canuto et al. 2017; Canuto and Barrientos 2014; Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018).

The Main Group served administrative purposes and as a residence for the ruling dynasty. It is also known as the original location of two Hieroglyphic Stairways 1 and Hieroglyphic Stairway 2.

HS 1 is located on the south façade of Structure 13Q-3, while HS 2 is integrated into Structure 13R-10 in the Coronitas Group. The original location of HS 2 must have been a façade of Structure 13Q-2 in the Main Group as evidenced by archaeological excavations (Guirola and Slowing 2013: 101; Ponce 2021). The ancient inhabitants of La Corona deliberately removed the blocks of Structure 13Q-2 and arranged them in a mixed and textually completely unintelligible (incomprehensive) form. This rearrangement took place between AD 760 and AD 850. Many centuries later, history came full circle and the monuments of La Corona changed location again, this time looted by modern looters. It is very likely that many of the Site's Q glyphic panels formed once part of Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 (Guirola and Slowing 2013; Stuart, Canuto and Barientos 2015:6).

Like the Main Group, the Coronitas Group [Map 9] consists of a series of structures arranged around a plaza (Baron 2013:269). Of particular interest are five temple mound structures located on the eastern side of the group, Structures 13 R-1, 13R-2, 13R-3, 13R-4 and 134-5. Panel 1 discovered in Structure 13R-5 gives us a clue to the purpose of the Coronitas Group. It mentions ritual and mythological passages and speaks of the foundation of Structure 13R-5 as a sanctuary in AD 677 dedicated to a patron god (Baron 2013:311, 2016, 2017:124; Guenter 2005). Other structures of the Coronitas Group seemed to have had similar use. Scholars agree

that the Coronitas Group was dedicated to patron deities and rituals, while the Main Group was associated with political events and royal power (Barrientos and Canuto 2013:103).

3.3. 3 The history of La Corona

The first occupation at La Corona dates back to the Late Preclassic Period. At that time, however, La Corona was probably a small rural centre overshadowed by its neighbour El Achiotal (Auld-Thomas et al. 2016; Canuto and Barrientos 2019:386-390).

The site of El Achiotal, located only 20 km from La Corona, was probably the largest in the region during the Late Preclassic, with architecture dating back even to the Middle Preclassic. The most important monument in Achiotal is Stela 1 (dated to AD 418), which records events associated with the Teotihuacan order and Tikal. Stela was carefully deposited in one of the main buildings of the site in the sixth century, clearly indicating that connections to Tikal were important to the people who lived there, even two centuries after the *entrada* of Teotihuacan (Arredondo et al.2018; Auld-Thomas et al. 2016; Barrientos et al. 2016:252).

Unlike El Achiotal, there is no evidence that La Corona was involved in the sphere of influence of Tikal-Teotihuacan[103],in fact, it is difficult to discern the Early Classic history of La Corona from the epigraphic record. La Corona seems to have been a small regional centre that began to flourish at the end of the Early Classic Period. The ceramic material from the palace complex dates to the beginning of the sixth century, corresponding to the establishment of relations between La Corona and the Kanu'l dynasty and the arrival of Ix Naah Ek, the Kanu'l princess in La Corona in AD 520 (Canuto et al. 2017:4; Lamoureux-St-Hilaire and Bustamante 2016:313; Martin 2008). The sixth century also marked important changes in the material

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[103] According to Barrientos and Canuto (2021), there must have been some kind of boundary between El Achiotal and La Corona in the Early Classic Period. The ceramic from El Achiotal is more similar to the region of El Mirador than La Corona.

culture of La Corona. This is evidenced by the presence of exotic goods that were part of the funerary and dedicatory offerings. For example, Tomb 6 (Figure 3.4) in Structure 13 R-2, dated to the mid-sixth century, contained up to 30 000 pieces of flint that sealed the tomb (Canuto and Barrientos 2015; Baron 2012:240). Presumably, La Corona was involved in long-distance trade, perhaps even without the direct involvement of the Kanu'l dynasty[104] (Andrieu and Roche 2015:344; Canuto and Barrientos 2012).
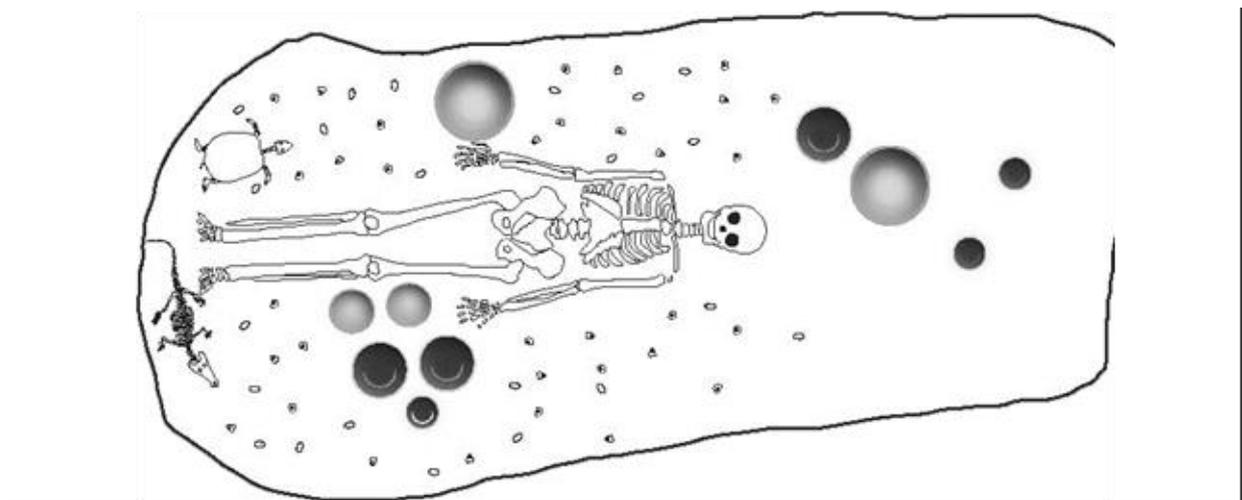
Figure 3. 4. Tomb 6, La Corona (after Canuto *et al.* 2012a:Fig.5).

On the other hand, royal tombs at La Corona reflects the emergence of new symbols of power, suggesting an elevation of the status of rulers and a change in the way the political authority was legitimized. The hypothesis, first put forward by David Freidel and his colleagues, assumes the existence of a "royal road" that connected the ruling houses of Kanu'l with Cancuen, El Peru Waka', Uxul and/or Zapote Bobal (Freidel, Escobedo and Guenter 2007). La Corona was most likely located on such a route. Each site was no more than 30 km from another site, with

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[104] For example, the quantity of obsidian as well as the quality of jade objects from La Corona is higher than those from Calakmul (Andrieu and Roche 2015:346).

the exception of La Corona and Uxul, where the distance is 60 km[105] (Canuto and Barrientos 2013: 2). The luxury goods may have been transported via La Corona on this "royal road". In the epigraphic records, the earliest dates in La Corona are associated with the growing influence of Dzibanche. From the sixth century onwards, the lords of La Corona lords assumed *Sak Wahyis* title strictly linked to the hegemony of the Kanu'l. Thus, on Stela 1 of La Corona, a retrospective reference to AD 554 speaks of the celebration of a Period Ending by the *Sak Wahyis* nicknamed "Vulture II" (Canuto and Barrientos 2018; Stuart et al. 2014:438).

The first non-retrospective reference appears to be from Altar 5, which was recently discovered in the Coronitas Group. Altar 5 (Figure 2.17) mentions a local ruler *Sak Wahyis* Chak Tok Ich'aak in AD 546. Chak Tok Ich'aak conjured *Sak Nikte* patron deities (Stuart et al. 2018). The connection to these patron gods was celebrated through ritual feasts in the seventh century, as material evidence shows[106] (Baron 2013, 2016, 2017). The patron gods granted divine protection to an entire community and signified the ruler's supernatural abilities to venerate gods. The lords of La Corona acted as intermediaries between society and the patron gods (Baron 2016, 2017; Barrientos and Canuto 2013:389). By establishing special relationships with the patron gods, the rulers of La Corona legitimised their power. As Joanne Baron argues, Kanu'l allowed, cultivated, and supported the worship of these local deities in order to give the elite of La Corona an inherent sense of identity and to ensure cooperation and bonding between them and the Snake head kings (Baron 2013:46).

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[105]It is possible that the missing key point of the "Kanu'l route" is the site known as Las Guacamayas, located 25 km north of La Corona and 30 km south of Uxul. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of hieroglyphic inscriptions at Las Guacamayas, hence the question of the connection to La Corona or Calakmul remains open (Arredondo Leiva *et al.* 2015:404-440).

[106] Large midden deposits with a wide variety of animal bones, plant remains; serving vessels, serving basins and storage jars (Baron 2013:241).

One of the first acts of the late classic ruler Chakaw Nahb Chan (reigned AD 658-667) after he ascended the throne was to dedicate three shrines to the patron gods: "Yaxal Ajaw Lord', 'K'an Chaak" and 'Chak Wayib" in AD 658 (as recorded on Panel 1). In all likelihood, the set of three temples13R-2, 13R-3 and 13R-4 (Figure 3.5) became the seat of these patron gods (Baron 2016, 2017:124).
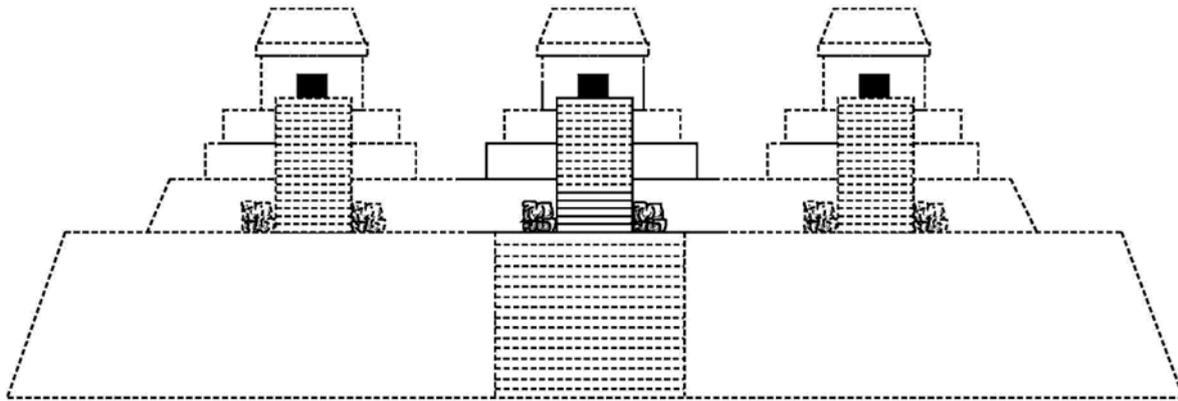
Figure 3. 5.Schematic view on Temples 13R-2, 13R-3, and 13R-4. Drawing by Joanne Baron.

The son of Chakaw Nahb Chan - K'inich ? Yook (667 - c. 689), continued the architectural changes commenced by his father. He remodelled the Structure 13 R-5, replacing the ancestral shrine with the deity shrine. It is interesting to note that the temple dedication took place ten years after his accession in AD 675, while his father apparently dedicated the patron deity shrine just only 35 days after his accession. According to Joanne Baron, the rushed completion of the temple was intended to consolidate the legitimacy of Chakaw Nahb Chan, who, unlike his son, came to power in uncertain times (Baron 2013:353).

The question of the Kanu'l dynasty's involvement in the internal La Corona affairs remains open, but is quite plausible. Calakmul may have supported the ruler of La Corona, Chakaw Nahb Chan, in his successful attempt to regain power after the usurper K'uk Ajaw ascended the throne in AD 655. The circumstances of K'uk Ajaw's enthronement are rather a tragic story. K'uk Ajaw disempowered Chakaw Nahb Chan's father Sak Maas, who met a violent end "with the edge of a stone" a year later, in AD 656 (Stuart et al. 2014:438). By supporting Chakaw Nahb Chan, the son of Saak Maas, against the usurper K'uk Ajaw (supported probably by

Kanu'l), the Kanu'l dynasty favoured the lineage with which it had established a strong and long relationship (Baron 2013:346).

However, the earliest historical date in La Corona comes from another retrospective reference from Panel 1 of Structure 13R-5. The monument was commissioned by K'inich? Yook and referred to a person named Ahnel Tahn K'ihnich who had come to La Corona in the year AD 314. The same Panel recorded the date 3805 BC, in relation to the arrival of a person from Six Nothing Place[107] (WAK MIH?-NAL) (Figure 3.6) (Baron 2013:325, 2016).

Figure 3. 6. *Wakmihnal*, Element 19, La Corona. Drawing by David Stuart.

K'inich ? Yook also commissioned structures on the north side of the Plaza in the Coronitas Group. Structures 13R-9 and 13R-10 contained rich burials, caches, and, most famously, large, half-looted hieroglyphic staircases (Ponce 2014, 2020; Stuart and Baron 2013).

K'inich ? Yook was also responsible for the construction of a shrine (*"sleeping place"*) for his parents, who had died within a few months of each other in AD 667. The death of his parents made K'inich ? Yook return from the Calakmul court, where he had stayed for three years from AD 664 to 667 (Baron 2013, 2016, 2017; Stuart et al. 2014:439).

At this time, the political role of La Corona was of greater importance in its so-called "Golden Age', defined by the rule of six rulers between AD 625 and AD 745. The period of the reigns of Sak Maas (625-655), K'uk Ajaw (655-658), Chakaw Nahb' Chan (AD 658-667), K'inich ? Yook (667 - c. 689), Chak Ak' Paat Kuy (AD 689 - >?), Yajawte' K'inich (731) is mainly

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[107] *Wakmihnal* was probably of mythological character but could also refer to a specific temple or sanctuary in the Coronitas Group (Stuart *et al*.2018:9).

characterised by the presence of a large number of sculptures with inscriptions, often recording events related to the Kanu'l dynasty (Stuart et al.2014).

In the seventh century, the royal palace complex underwent significant changes. Many new masonry buildings with different functions (administration, residential, storage or production) were constructed and changed the appearance of the site. According to Lamoureux-St-Hilaire and Bustamante (Lamoureux-St-Hilaire and Bustamante 2016:319), the changes to the palace complex must be linked to the dominance of the Kanu'l dynasty, which controlled institution of power in La Corona from the sixth to the mid-eighth century. Some of these structures, such as the Halcón South in the Palace Acropolis, probably housed the Kanu'l lords during their visits to La Corona. The buildings of exceptional style and quality provided extreme privacy for high-ranking officials, perhaps the Kanu'l lords themselves (Canuto et al. 2017:5; Canuto, Barrientos, and Ponce 2014: 482; Lamoureux-St-Hilaire and Morales Forte 2016).

In the period between AD 625 and AD 746, the lords of La Corona: played the ballgame (Sak Maas, Chak Ak' Paat Kuy), married Kanu'l princesses (K'inich ? Yook, Yajawte K'inich), ascended the throne under the supervision of Kanu'l lords (K'inich ? Yook, Chak Ak' Paat Kuy) and lived at the court of Calakmul (K'inich ? Yook, Chak Ak' Paat Kuy).

Even after the defeat of Calakmul in AD 695, La Corona remained a close ally of Calakmul under the rule of Chak Ak' Paat Kuy and Yajawte' K'inich. Confirmation comes from the hieroglyphic panel (Monument 74), which mentions that Chak Ak' Paat Kuy and his overlord Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk travelled to La Corona in AD 696 (Guenter 2005; Houston 2014; Martin 2020; Stuart and Baron 2013:197, Stuart et al. 2014:440; Stuart 2013, 2015).

Also, the marriage between Ix Kaan and Yajawte' K'inich in AD 721 certainly cemented the alliance between Kanu'l and La Corona that had been established two centuries earlier. However, as Calakmul's hegemony declined, so did its dominance over other sites, La Corona being no exception (Canuto and Barrientos 2012, 2013a, 2019; Stuart et al. 2014:441).

The last monument to provide information about the king Yajawte' K'inich is interestingly not from La Corona itself, but from the nearby site of La Cariba. La Cariba was a minor site that was reintegrated into the political system of La Corona (Chatelain 2020:10). The altar from La Cariba, recovered by the La Corona Project in 2009, shows the ruler with his wife, both standing in front of a kneeling high-ranking -individual. The ruler's name is eroded but ends with the glyph *k' inich*. The depiction probably represents the couple - the king Yajawte' K'inich and his wife Ix Ti Kaan, Kanu'l lady (Barrientos et al. 2016; Chatelain and González 2016:166-167; Marken 2010:25; Canuto and Barrientos 2010). The monument at La Cariba recorded the Period Ending of AD 746. After this date, a forty-five-year hiatus in hieroglyphic inscription is observed at La Corona. It seems that the decline of Calakmul after the crushing defeat of two of his major clients, El Peru Waka' (AD 743) and Naranjo (AD 744), severely affected political life at La Corona. Tikal's victorious campaign against El Peru Waka' and Naranjo demonstrated Calakmul's powerlessness and contributed to the collapse of its network. This in turn may have had far-reaching disastrous effects on the socio-political life of La Corona. Towards the middle of the eighth century, inferior stones began to be used for the production of inscriptions. In addition, the southern part of the palace was abandoned in the middle of the eighth century. This lack of activity in the southern part of the palace and the termination of the Halcon south is probably related to the collapse of the Kanu'l dynasty and thus their absence from La Corona (Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018:453). Yet, the palace remained the seat of power for the officials of La Corona for the next fifty years. The large throne room and the Audience Hall were constructed inside the palace compound where fiesta-associated activities still took place (Barrientos et al. 2012:424; Canuto et al. 2017; Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018:454).

Apparently, the *Sak Wahyis* achieved considerable autonomy and sovereignty. La Corona seems to have transformed from a colonial vassal state to a more independent place after the fall of Calakmul. "This new, regionally adapted regime was somewhat reduced but was also

successful in maintaining the sovereignty of the *Sak Wahyis*" (Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018:454).

One of the characteristic features of the second half of the eighth century in La Corona was *spolia* - the deliberate reuse of monuments that were relocated and incorporated into other monuments. For instance, the hieroglyphic panels that once formed the stairs of HS of Structure 13 Q-2, were dismantled and relocated to Structure 13 R-10 in the Coronitas Group (Canuto et al. 2017:5).

The relocation also took place in the palace complex. The aforementioned Element 55 and Element 56 (both related to the Kanu'l power) were found in the backrest of the veranda bench of the palace. The original location of these panels is not known, but the palace complex seems to be a good candidate. According to Lamoureux-St-Hilaire, by reusing architectural elements associated with Kanu'l, La Corona referred to the past glory of Calakmul and identified with its order (Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018:448; Lamoureux St-Hilaire and Morales Forte 2016:82-85).

The *spolia* at La Corona coincide very well with the time when Calakmul's power declines considerably and disappears from Petén, as a result of several military victories by Tikal over Calakmul's allies in AD 743 and 744 (Barrientos et al. 2016). There is no evidence that Tikal reached La Corona with the military campaign following the victories over El Peru Waka'. On the contrary, the site made an alliance with the Mutul Ajaw lords.

The inscription on Altar 4, located in front of the regal palace, in the Main Plaza, mentions the arrival of Ix Ajaw from the Mutul dynasty in AD 791, probably to marry the king of La Corona, whose name is as yet unknown. Scholars interpreted this event as a shift of the alliance towards Tikal (Stuart et al. 2014). Recent investigations by Maxime Lamoureaux-St-Hilaire in the royal palace of La Corona suggest an alternative scenario. In the second half of the eighth century, after the fall of Dos Pilas, Petexbatun Pasion became an area of "petty kingdoms" with

Aguateca as the main centre, exercising dominance over the landscape. Its rulers assumed the title Mutul, once reserved only for the lords of Tikal and Dos Pilas (Martin and Grube 2008:64). Considering that La Corona maintained ties with Kanu'l's past in the late eighth century through the production of *spolia*, the princess mentioned on the altar might actually not be from Tikal - Calakmul's former archrival - but rather from Aguateca. The lady might have been the daughter of Tahn Te' K'inich from Aguateca and sent to La Corona to establish bonds between two former allies of Calakmul (Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018:92).

Soon after the alliance with Mutul (AD 791), La Corona shared the fate of many other sites in the Maya Lowlands. The collapse of royal authority was followed by progressive and growing depopulation in the Terminal Classic (AD 830- 950) and the final abandonment of the site at the beginning of the Postclassic Period (AD 950-1300), after which there is no evidence of substantial settlement at La Corona (Canuto and Barrientos 2019).

3.4 Uxul [Map 10]

The site of Uxul is located in the extreme south of the Mexican state of Campeche (Yucatan), 4 km from the border with Guatemala and 30 km from the site of Calakmul.

The ancient name of Uxul is Naahkum, (Martin et al.2015), where *naah* may stand for "house" and *kuum* for a particular quality of the house (Grube and Esparza Olguin 2017:1-3). Altar 2 from Uxul, erected for the Period Ending 9.10.10.0.0. (AD 642), features Uxul toponym title - NAAH-KUM -a?[108] (Grube and Delvendahl 2016:20), where the main sign is the KUUM logogram and the suffix is a TE "tree" logogram or the syllable/vowel "a" (Figure 3.7), (Nikolai Grube personal communication 2022).

a	*b*	*c*	*d*	*e*
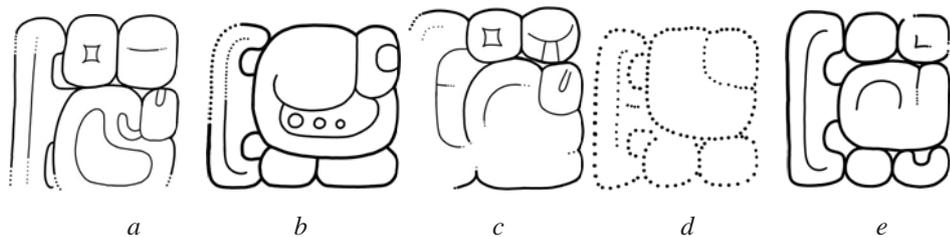
Figure 3. 7. The toponymic title of Uxul on a) Altar 7, b), Stela 14, c) Stela 6, d) Altar 2, Uxul e) Stela 10, Uxul. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

3.4.1 History of discovery

Uxul was discovered in 1934 by the third expedition of the Carnegie Institution of Washington to Campeche. Archaeologist Carl Ruppert and photographer John Denison were the first to map and examine the site. As Ruppert noted in his diary, the expedition was only able to spend nine days at Uxul because the rainstorm interrupted the topographical survey that was to be completed. Fortunately, the explorers managed to document the monuments (Ruppert and Denison 1943).

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[108] It is assumed that toponyms denoted a lower position in the regional political hierarchy than full emblem glyphs. The toponyms lack the prefix *k'uhul* "divine", reserved for more powerful lords. In fact, there are only two emblem glyphs known for southern Campeche: the Snake and the Bat emblem glyphs (Grube 2005:1).

However, their discovery did not bring scientific recognition to the site; in fact, the site was forgotten for decades. In the 1980s, the Campeche region was explored by loggers who wanted to extract tropical hardwoods. Unfortunately, this also attracted the interest of looters, who began to plunder and massively destroy the site (Grube and Delvendahl 2015: 27).

The modern rediscovery of the site is due to Ivan Šprajc. In 2005, his team succeeded in locating the site using aerial photographs. A year later, archaeologists began excavations (Projecto Arqueológico Uxul) under the direction of Nikolai Grube in collaboration with Antonio Benavides Castillo, Iken Paap and Kai Delvendahl (Grube and Delvendahl 2015:11).

3.4.2 Description of the site

The site is located on three adjacent plateaus (Spanish *mesetas*) on the west side of karst hills that run from northern Petén (Guatemala) into eastern Campeche (Mexico). These hills are surrounded on the east and west by plains known as *bajos*, which turn into swamps during the rainy season.

The ceremonial and administrative core of the site is located on the highest and widest plateau, 50 m2 above two large *aguadas* [109]- Aguada Occidental and Aguada Oriental (Grube and Delvendahl 2013b: 60; Grube and Delvendahl 2016; Grube *et al.* 2013). Interestingly, the reservoirs are of the same size (roughly about 100 by 100 meters), form and extent and they are located on the same east-west axis. They probably served as the visual boundary points (western and eastern) of the settlement (Seefeld 2012:38).

The nuclear area consists of nine large architectural complexes including the palace complex (Group K)[110][Map 11], groups of civic-ceremonial and possibly administrative functions (A,

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[109] reservoirs used by the ancient Maya to sustain the water during the dry season.

[110]. It measures 700 meters in an east-west direction and 400 meters in a north-south direction and is confined by the three large plazas. All the main buildings are located around these three plazas.

B, C, D, L), the ball court and residential complexes (E, F, M). Five other elite residential groups (K'eej, Ya'ab, Ak', Wob and Kopo') were identified outside the core area. They represent different sizes and a wide range of spatial arrangements (Grube and Delvendahl 2016:20).

3.4. 3 The history of Uxul

The first settlement, dated to the Late Preclassic Period, was confined to the area near the western *aguada* where the largest amount of preclassic ceramic sherds was discovered. The plateaus east of *aguada* were successively inhabited in the following centuries (Grube and Delvendahl 2015:23).

The site then experienced considerable growth in size during the Early Classic period. Epigraphic and archaeological evidence seems to indicate that Uxul was an independent polity during much of the Early Classic Period (Grube et al. 2012a:20). Moreover, as pottery finds demonstrate, Uxul established contacts with areas to the north and south. Thus, ceramic analysis suggests that Uxul developed relations with Calakmul in the Early Classic Period. The pottery was imported from the Calakmul area, or it was made locally, but with a clear Calakmul style (Dzul Góngora and Bach 2013).

There are only two stelae that can be dated to the Early Classic Period - Stela 17 and the broken Stela 18 (Grube et al. 2012a:20). The boom in architectural activity at this site was yet to come. The earliest building in the central core of the site is the small substructure found under the northern gallery of the palace complex - Structure K2. The size and lack of the usual basal platform suggest that it was a very modest structure, perhaps covered with a perishable roof (Grube and Delvendahl 2013b). Recent excavations at Uxul have revealed a considerable number of Preclassic and Early Classic sherds associated with the substructure mentioned above. This discovery enabled the dating of the structure to the Early Classic Period (probably to the fourth century AD). The northern façade of this substructure displayed paint with a red and pinkish background. As Grube and Delvendahl argue, this substructure does not represent

the earliest version of the palace structure, instead, it was a painted ceremonial building that formed a loose arrangement with other early structures (Grube and Delvendahl 2012b:70-72). In addition, excavations under the bench of the central entrance to the palace led to the discovery of the mural painting dated to the fifth century and displaying possibly God Chaak in a manifestation of a fisherman (Figure 3.8) (Grube and Delvendahl 2015:19, 2016:21).

Figure 3. 8. Mural painting from Structure K2, Uxul. Archaeological Project Uxul.

Also, some residential complexes are dated to the Early Classic Period. The Group K'áak in the southeastern part of the Uxul marks the peak of settlement between the fourth and seventh centuries, as evidenced by the large number of pottery fragments (Grube and Delvendahl 2015:27).

A valuable source of information about early classic Uxul has been obtained from the analysis of obsidians found at the site. Geoffrey Braswell has examined and compared obsidian artefacts from Uxul and Calakmul. Surprisingly, the results of his research have revealed more

differences than similarities between these two centres in regard to procurement and production patterns. First of all, the number of obsidians recovered in Uxul is extremely high compared to Calakmul. Even taking into account the 30 years of investigations in Calakmul, obsidian artefacts from Uxul appeared in four times greater quantities. Besides, most of the obsidian from Uxul is dated to the Early Classic Period, while Calakmul received most of its obsidian in the Terminal Classic Period. More than 90% of the obsidian from Uxul came from El Chayal, 7.5% represented green Pachuca obsidian. The surprisingly frequent presence of exotic Pachuca obsidian at Uxul suggests some relationship with Teotihuacan[111], probably through an intermediary[112].

The almost complete absence of Pachuca obsidian at Calakmul, as well as the insufficient evidence[113] of connections between Teotihuacan and Calakmul in the Early Classic Period, suggest that the latter cannot be regarded as a mediator for contacts between Uxul and Teotihuacan. As Braswell postulates, Tikal could have been an intermediary for Uxul in receiving Pachuca obsidian as a large number of early classic Pachuca obsidian has been detected at Tikal (Braswell 2013:169).

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[111] Teotihuacan controlled the source of Pachuca obsidian in the Early Classic Period (Santley and Arnold 2005, Spence 1996).

[112] Green obsidian from Pachuca was not used as a commodity in any way and appeared almost exclusively in a palace context at Uxul. This indicates that there must have been close contacts between Uxul and other cities.

[113] Apart from the ceramic imports from Calakmul, there is little evidence of a relationship between Teotihuacan and Calakmul. There are some vessels whose forms clearly recall the Teotihuacan style, but whose decoration and iconography always show Maya origins. This could indicate indirect relations between Calakmul and Teotihuacan via Tikal and Kaminaljuhu (Boucher 2012:188; Carrasco et al. 1999:52, Jabłońska 2019:86). Clayton explains the lack of direct contacts as follows: a) it was a direct political interaction that left no iconographic and material traces in Calakmul or these have not yet been discovered, b) it was a direct contact but not a political one, c) it was an indirect contact via Tikal (Clayton 2005:428-445).

If only implicitly, the close ties between Uxul and Tikal during the Early Classic Period might be considered. Unfortunately, we still have no epigraphic evidence to confirm a relationship between Tikal and Uxul. It seems that apart from the two early classic stelae, all other stelae are dated to the Late Classic Period, covering the period between AD 630 and AD 705 (Braswell 2013:168).[114] This short epigraphic history of Uxul coincides with the highest glories of Calakmul. The proximity of Uxul to Calakmul inspired Joyce Marcus (1973) to suggest that Uxul fell under the sway of Calakmul and became its subordinate. There is some evidence that the glory and misfortune of Calakmul had an impact on the Late Classic history of Uxul. The influence of Calakmul on Uxul is clearly expressed in the iconographic and epigraphic records of the site, especially in the second half of the seventh century (see Chapter V) during the reign of Muyal Chaak (Figure 3.9, Figure 3.10).

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[114] This massive erection of new stelae was probably accompanied by the destruction and desacralisation of the monuments erected by the early classic kings. Archaeologists have found many fragments of these monuments scattered around the site. For example, the early classic Stela 18 was discovered in the rubble of the temple-type Structure M1. In addition, large early classic ceramic deposits (assigned as Tzakol 2 and probably dated to the fourth century) were found in Structure L1 and in Structure A3 during excavations in 2014 (Grube and Delvendahl 2015:23).
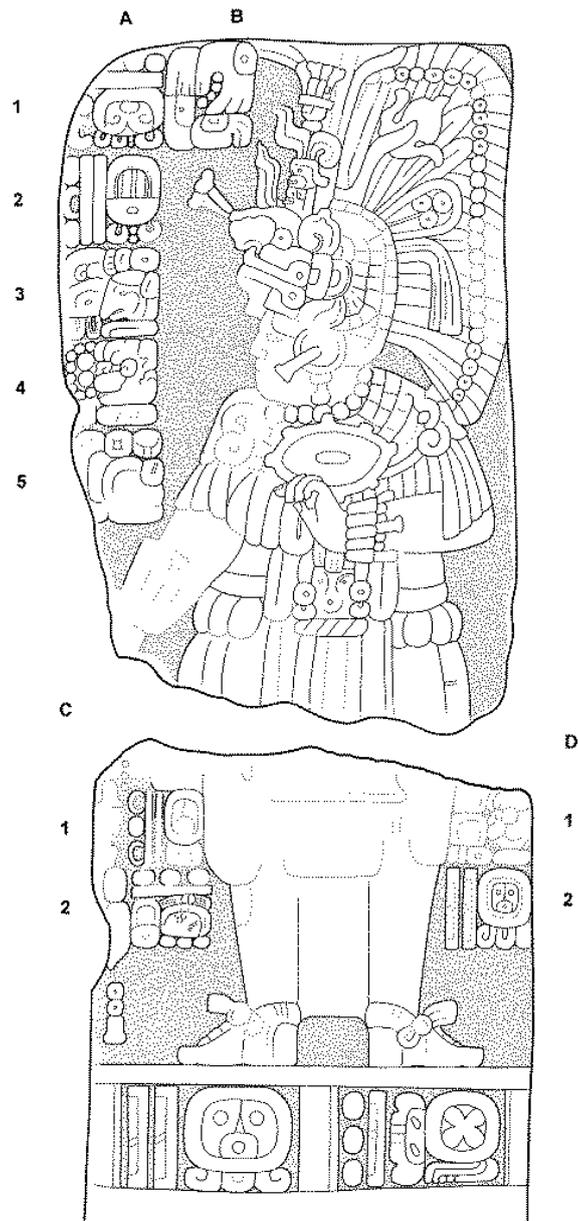
Figure 3. 9. Representation of Muyal Chaak, Stela 6, Uxul. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

Similarly, the spectacular and impressive architectural growth of Uxul in the seventh and early

eighth centuries must be associated with Calakmul's activity in the area.
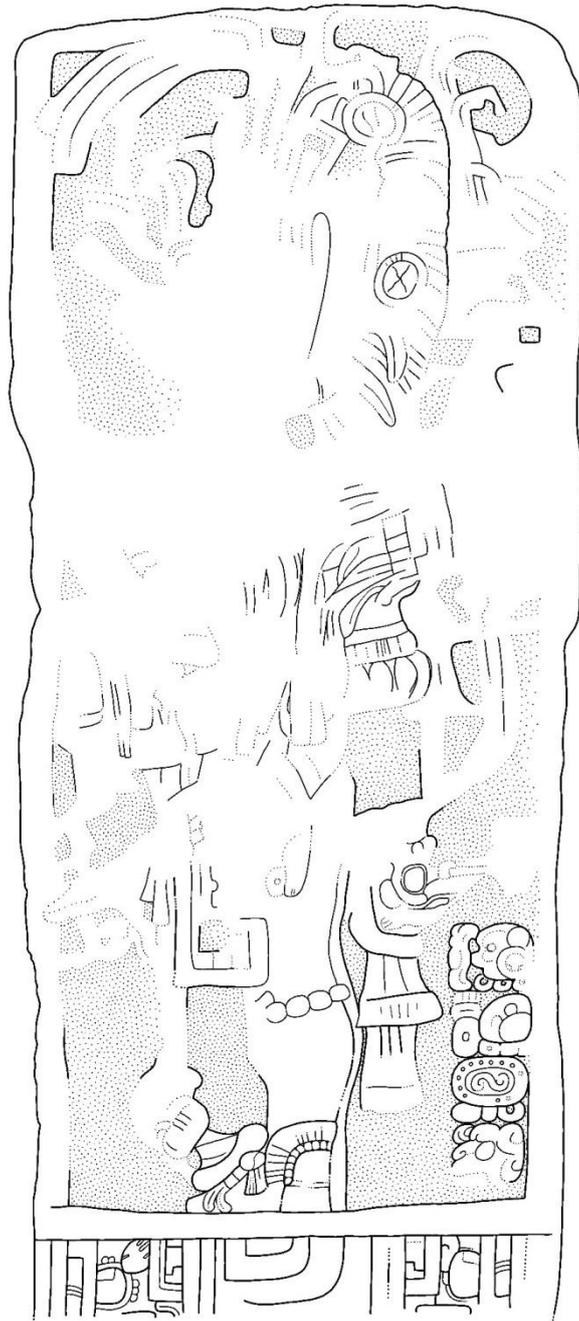
Figure 3. 10. Dancing Muyal Chaak, Stela 13, Uxul. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

As Grube et al. pointed out, "one of the most radical changes that the supremacy of the great city of Calakmul caused at Uxul was no less than the total transformation of the city's center."(Grube *et al.* 2012:27). It seems more than likely that the city centre was remodelled according to the architectural plan of Calakmul. The imitation of Calakmul's layout was introduced in Uxul in the first half of the seventh century. At both cities several central plazas, aligned in a west-east direction, feature the tallest and most important buildings. Even when

comparing the maps of Uxul and Calakmul, the arrangement of the main buildings in Uxul follows the pattern of Calakmul (Grube and Delvendahl 2016:20). Moreover, the E group[115] at both of the sites (Structures IV and VI of Calakmul, Structures D1 and D3 of Uxul) are of similar size and both display two stelae standing in front of the western building (Grube *et al.* 2012).

At both sites, the largest buildings - Structure II of Calakmul and L1 of Uxul - are located on the south side of the plaza. The differences lie in their size and monumentality. While Structure II is extremely high and large, its counterpart in Uxul is smaller. The explanation for this lies in the long over 1300 years constructive history of Calakmul, which spans over 1300 years, compared to the short, monumental constructive effort at Uxul (Grube et al. 2012).

A similar pattern can be observed in the Palace Groups of the two sites. Group K of Uxul seems to have been a smaller version of the Small Acropolis and the Great Acropolis of Calakmul. It can be considered a medium-sized palace complex (110 x 130 m) with five courtyards and seventeen buildings around them. Archaeological excavations have confirmed that the palace complex at Uxul was inhabited in the seventh and eighth centuries. Judging by its complexity and the large number of buildings, the compound must have served various functions: from rituals through administrative to residential (Grube et al. 2012). The available archaeological data show that the massive construction took place in a single effort (Figure 3.11). The architectural layout of the palace mimics the Great Acropolis of Calakmul and suggests a correlation between the construction of the palace in Uxul and the domination of Calakmul in the region (Grube and Delvendahl 2014:75).

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[115] The E group is in Group D and forms one of the three significant plazas of Uxul, north of Group K (Grube and Delvendahl 2015:24).

Figure 3. 11. Structure K2, South Facade, central entry, Uxul. Photo by Kai Delvendahl.

The glorious time of Uxul was also evidenced by elite burials in Structure K11 (Figure 3.12)-(Jabłońska 2012:181-184) and Structure K4 (Grube and Delvendahl 2013a:100). The site marked also evidence of a mass grave of 14 men and one woman, prisoners of war from Southern Maya Lowlands. They were killed outside the Uxul water reservoir; their bodies were deliberately dismembered and placed at the bottom of the reservoir (Nicolaus Seefeld personal communication 2019).

Figure 3. 12. Burial from Structure K11. Photo by author.

Whether this massacre (Figure 3.13) was inspired by the Kanu'l dynasty is not known but taking into account the sociopolitical dependence of Uxul on Calakmul, it is more than likely that the war was not waged without Kanu'l's approval. The war may even have taken place in the eighth century, as Calakmul still exercised some power in Uxul at that time.

In fact, the recent discovery of an elaborate burial in Group K points to close relations between Uxul and Calakmul in the first half of the eighth century. In 2012, Archaeological project of Uxul encountered a crypt in Structure K2 with the poorly preserved skeleton of a man aged 20-25. The body was accompanied by rich grave goods (Figures 3.14 and 3.15), consisting of four vases, four plates and a small ceramic flacon (also called a *tabaquero*). The inscriptions on the two vessels and the quality of the grave goods indicate that the buried person was a young prince, a *ch'ok,* who never ascended the throne. The text on one of the vessels says *yu -k'i-b' I ch'o-ko, y-uk' ib ch'ok* "it is the drinking vessel of the young boy/prince".

Figure 3. 14. The drinking cup of the young prince, Tomb 2, Uxul. Photo by Nikolai Grube.

Figure 3. 15. Tomb 2, Structure K2, Uxul. Photo by Kai Delvendahl.

Intriguingly, some of the vessels discovered in the crypt bear a remarkable resemblance to ceramic artefacts excavated at Calakmul. These include the vessels found in Tomb 4 of Structure IV, which most probably belong to Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'. The inscription on another vessel from the prince's crypt marked the reference to the date 6 Ajaw (corresponding to the k'atun ending 9.14.00.0 AD 711). The ceramic types from the tomb were assigned to the beginning of the Tepeu II (AD 700-730), indicating that its construction took place sometime during this period. The individual buried in Tomb 1 may have belonged to the local lineage linked to the Kanu'l dynasty. The ruling family of Uxul still maintained close relations with Calakmul in the first decades of the eighth century, although the last two recorded dates at this site are AD 695 and AD 705[116](Grube and Delvendahl 2013b:70-75). Architectural activity after AD 705 continued in Structure M3 and the south and north sides of Structure K2, but the quality of these constructions is poor. Shortly after the second defeat of Calakmul by Tikal (c. AD 734), the reversal of relations between the Snake kingdom and Uxul was evident. Stairway Panels of Structure K2 depicting the kings of Kanu'l were dismantled, relocated, and placed sideways or even upside down (Grube et al. 2012a:43-45). (Since the iconography of these panels is part of my research, they will be discussed in detail in the following chapter).

By AD 750, Uxul had already begun to suffer a drastic decline in population, as evidenced by an almost complete absence of Terminal Classic pottery. Uxul may have become so dependent on Kanu'l sovereign that its collapse led to the disintegration of the Uxul political system. The local elite no longer exercised power in the place. When the central authority collapsed, the Terminal Classic inhabitants of Uxul lacked the social cohesion to protect the water infrastructure, for example. The partial destruction of the Aguada's Occidental pavement area to facilitate water extraction by the fastest means was provoked by the lack of water in dry

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[116] They come from southern and northern stairway of Structure K2.

seasons. The destruction of the hydraulic system indicated the absence of a central power (Grube et al. 2012a:43-45).

The crisis was possibly followed by war. The considerable amount of spear points on the surface of the north-eastern court and on the southern edges of the royal palace testify to this. Uxul met a cruel end (although it is not known how long this process lasted) and followed the same process of political collapse and abrupt decline that characterised many Maya cities in the ninth century (Grube and Delvendahl 2016:23).

3.5 Naachtun

The archaeological site of Naachtun is located in the extreme north of Petén, Guatemala, about 4 km from the border with Mexico and 36 km from Calakmul. The name is derived from Yucatec Maya and means "distant stone", *naach* meaning far or far away and *tun* meaning stone (Ruppert and Denison 1943:45).

<u>3.5 1 History of the discovery</u>

The first scientific exploration of Naachtun was undertaken by The Sixth Central American Expedition of the Carnegie Institution conducted by Sylvanus Morley, who reached the site in 1922. Morley returned to Naachtun once more in 1932, inspired by the discoveries of botanist Cyrus Lundel, who conducted an ethnobotanical expedition to the area in late 1931. Lundel did not realise that the site was the same one Morley had discovered more than a decade earlier. He called it Nohoxna. It was not until 1943 that the 16th Central American Expedition, led by Karl Rupper and John H. Denison, confirmed that Morley's Naachtun and Lundel's Nohoxna were the same sites (Lundel 1932, 1933; Morley 1938; Ruppert and Denison 1943:45). Over the next few decades, Naachtun received little scientific attention due to its remoteness and lack of water. The only visitors were *chicleros*, who established their village at Dos Lagunas, some distance from Naachtun. After activities of the *chicleros* in the region declined in the 1980s, the site was completely abandoned to looting.

Looters' activity was put to an end in 2004 with the new expedition of the scholars: Katherine Reese-Taylor from the University of Calgary, Canada, Peter Mathews from the La Trobe University, Australia, and Ernesto Arredondo Leiva from the Universidad del Valle, Guatemala, who raised awareness of the site's importance (Arredondo Leiva 2010; Mathews et al. 2005; Mathews and Parmington 2005; Reese Taylor et al. 2004).

However, systematic excavations began in 2010 under the auspices of the National Centre for Scientific Research of France and the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala. They initiated The Naachtun Petén Norte Archaeological project, which has since been carried out under the leadership of its director Philippe Nondédéo (Nondédéo et al. 2010, 2011; 2013, 2019).

3.5 2 Description of the site

The most characteristic hydrological feature of the site is the great *bajo*, which runs north-south and ends only a few kilometres from the Calakmul bajo system. The Naachtun site is located on its southern boundary.

Naachtun core consists of three main groups: A, B and C, each wielding different functions [Map 12]. The central group (Group A), which has ceremonial and ritual functions, comprises four broad plazas (to the north, south, west, and east), three monumental buildings (Structures XIX, XXI and XXVII), stelae, a large Group E, and a ballgame pit (Nondédéo et al. 2011; Walker and Reese Taylor 2012).

Group B [Map 13], located in the eastern sector of the site, incorporated a range of structures on raised platforms. This is considered to have been a residential and habitation area (Arredondo Leiva 2010; Nondédéo et al. 2011:53-59).

The western sector (Group C), where the triadic group is located, possibly served as a sacred and burial place during the Classic Period. It was connected to Group A by a causeway (Morton 2007; 2012; Reese Taylor et al. 2004).

The general configuration of the site together with the architectural data suggests a horizontal development of the site from west (Group C) to east (Group B) (Arredondo Leiva 2010; Nondédéo et al. 2013). These shifts in the seat of power indicate possible dynastic ruptures and socio-political changes, which I will discuss in the following subchapter.

3.5. 3 The history of Naachtun

The origins of the site can be traced back to the Late Preclassic Period, although apart from some buildings in Group C (e.g., Structure V) and the water reservoir in Group A, there are no other architectural activities that could be dated to this period.

Interestingly, the presence of some ceramic types at Naachtun suggests cultural and social links with other sites in the Central Lowlands such as Uaxactun, Edzna, Barton Ramie, Altar de Sacrificios, Ceibal or Becan. Remarkably, most of the Chicanel ceramics are[117] discovered at Naachtun share some characteristics with the pottery from El Mirador (Patiño Contreras 2013:196). Given the proximity to the great site of El Mirador, it is reasonable to assume that there may have been contacts between these two regions. According to Arredondo Leiva, Naachtun, with its widely dispersed population probably around a large *bajo*, was on the periphery of the main population concentrated in Nakbe and El Mirador (Arredondo Leiva 2010:165). Architectural data and ceramic evidence suggest that towards the Protoclassic Period Naachtun marked the first architectural development and growth. Surprisingly, the first settlers did not choose the higher and more defensive areas of Group A to establish their community. They preferred the lower, 6-metre-high, elevated *meseta* of Group C, which became the centre of the site's public and ritual activities. The settlement showed no signs of defensive walls or barricades; rather, its northern end was an easily accessible zone. This

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[117] Chicanel ceramics, dated to the Late Preclassic Period, includes *inter alia* jars, buckets, bowls, and dishes with wide grooved rims.

contrasts with the defensive constructions known from Tintal, Xulnal, Cerros, Becan or El Mirador, which were built in response to a war thread or environmental pressures (Estrada Belli 2011; Hernandez 2016).

Naachtun's spectacular boom in architectural activity in the Early Classic Period has led scholars to suggest that the crisis affecting the El Mirador region around AD 150 may have been an important factor in the region's growth. The partial abandonment of El Mirador, as well as other large centres nearby, led to the social, political, and economic crisis. It is quite possible that new occupants arrived at Naachtun from El Mirador. Large *bajo* near Naachtun may have been attractive to settlers in terms of access to water and agricultural advantages. However, not only the demography, but also the archaeological findings speak in favour of this scenario. Naachtun followed the pattern of El Mirador, where the main complexes were located on the east-west axis. As mentioned earlier, the centres also shared the same ceramic types and forms during the Late Preclassic Period (Patiño Contreras 2013:181,191). In addition, the citizens of the early classic Naachtun created artificial upland plots from the fertilised mud of swamps in the same way as the ancient inhabitants of El Mirador. Various layers of black, fertilised mud full of organic material were observed in different sectors of Naachtun, both in the centre of the site (South Plaza, West Complex of Group B) and in its immediate periphery. These muddy layers preceded the construction of the large public and private buildings. Naachtun seems to have been a successor to these preclassic architectural techniques of agriculture (Nondédéo et al. 2011:58). The new population came to the city, bringing with it the new political and social structure (Nondédéo et al. 2013:127).

In the Early Classic Period, Naachtun established contacts with Teotihuacan and Tikal. In Tikal, these contacts with Teotihuacan could even lead to a change in the political sphere. The date 15 January AD 378, marked the arrival at Tikal of a lord known as Sihyaj K'ahk' carrying the title *och k'in kaloomte'*, a lieutenant of the alleged monarch of Teotihuacan "Owl-

lanzadardos" (Jatz'o'm Kuy in the Maya texts). Recent discoveries by Alfonso Lacadena and Ignacio Cases have revealed that Naachtun recorded the name of an individual b'u /m -Jol (probably a local ruler of Naachtun), who is claimed to have been the *yajaw* or *yajawte'* (a war captain) of Sihyaj K'ahk' himself. Stela 24 of Naachtun (Figure 3.16) mentions the dates 8.17.1.4.10 9 Oc 13 Mac and 8.17.1.4.11 10 Chuen 14 Mac - which are two consecutive days before the stated arrival of Sihyaj K'ahk' at Tikal. It seems that the Naachtun elite allied themselves with Teotihuacan (Nondédéo et al. 2019, 2016a; 2016b). It is also quite possible that the appearance of the glyph *k'uhul* on the inscription of Stela 24 is related to the introduction of the New Order in the Maya Lowlands.

Figure 3. 16. Stela 24, Naachtun, Photo by Ignacio Cases.

Indeed, Stela 23, erected in AD 361, refers to a local ruler with an *ajaw* title, while some fifteen years later the king b'u/mu-JOL mentioned on Stela 24 carried a full title - *k'uhul ajaw*. The Bat emblem glyph *K'uhul Suutz' Ajaw* appeared on both stelae, indicating that Naachtun was the seat of the Bat dynasty in the Early Classic Period. Thus, the inscription on Stela 24 can be viewed as testimony to the political relationship between Naachtun and Teotihuacan and the

elevation of its ruler from *ajaw* to *k'uhul ajaw*. It is likely that Naachtun was the regional chief in the northern area, which encompassed the northern Petén and southern Campeche (Cases and Lacadena 2014:374-385; Nondédéo et al. 2019a:63-65, 2016a, 2016b; Stuart 2014c). The high status of Naachtun was definitely achieved through a good relationship with Tikal and possibly Teotihuacan in the fourth and fifth centuries (Patiño Contreras 2013:205). Material culture indicates that Naachtun received a significant amount of goods from the Central Highlands. This is evidenced by the presence of a few Teotihuacan-like ceramics[118] in the residential areas of the site and a significant amount of green Pachuca obsidian, pyrite, and mica in the burial context (Acropolis V, Triadic Complex, La Perdida) (Nondédéo *et al.* 2019a:66). Although Tikal's New Order lasted no more than 30 years and is related only to one king who was inclined towards Teotihuacan, relations between Tikal and Naachtun continued and developed. It is very likely that many Teotihuacan- related goods were channelled through Tikal - the organiser of the exchange of networks in Early Classic Petén (Jabłońska 2019:86-87).

The close connection between Tikal and Naachtun during the Early Classic Period is clearly demonstrated by the architectural similarities between these two sites. One of the most impressive structures within Group C of Naachtun is Structure V (Figure 3.17), which contained at least 14 burial chambers from the Early Classic Period. The similarity between Structure V and the North Acropolis of Tikal led scholars to suspect a parallel development of

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[118] Local black cylindrical tripod vases with hollow rectangular supports and thin orange of Ratones Anaranjado and Competencia Inciso type (Patiño Contreras 2013).

both acropolises, with Structure V of Naachtun being a replica of the North Acropolis on a smaller scale[119] (Nondédéo *et al.* 2018:406).
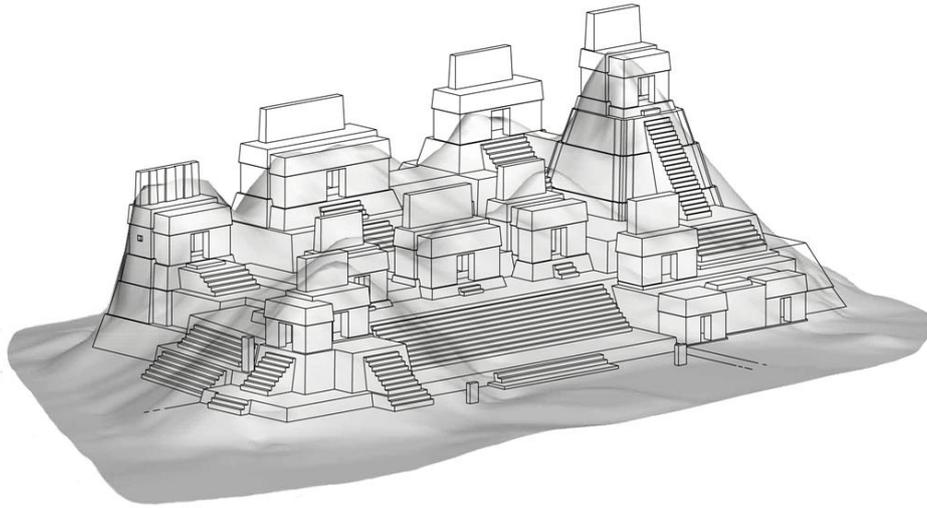
Figure 3. 17. Hypothetical reconstruction of Structure V (Acropolis), Naachtun (after Nondédéo 2015 *et al.*Fig.28).

Additionally, Group A of Naachtun followed the same pattern of modification as Mundo Perdido at Tikal. The western pyramids and the central temples of the eastern platform of each complex reveal the same dimensions and contained burial chambers (Arredondo Leiva 2010:171).

In the Early Classic Period, Group A became the dominant locus of sacred and public life at the site. In fact, most of the constructive activities concentrated during the Early Classic Period in Group A. The Triadic Group[120] (Figure 3.18), Group E, Ballcourt and some pyramids (La Perdida or Structure XXVII) were constructed in Group A during this time.

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[119] There are, however, some differences - Acropolis V contained four platforms decorated with *talud tablero,* whereas the presence of *talud tablero* at Tikal is limited to Mundo Perdido and Group 6C XVI (Laporte 2004:199-216; Nondedeo 2019 *et al.*:67).

[120] The available data show that the Triadic Acropolis was built during the Naachtun 3b phase (AD 238-292) or during the Naachtun 4A phase (between AD 292-378) ergo before the *entrada* of Teotihuacan.
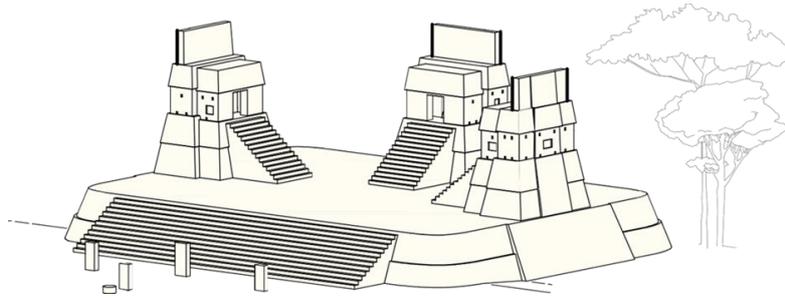
Figure 3. 18. Hypothetical reconstruction of Triadic complex, Naachtun (after Nondédéo *et al.* 2015: Fig.20).

Naachtun's alliance with the Teotihuacan and Tikal undoubtedly accelerated this process of architectural development and opened a period of prosperity to the city (Nondédéo *et al.* 2019:63-65). The alliance was probably cemented through the marriage of Ix Tzuutz Niik?[121], represented on Stela 26, Naachtun (Figure 3.19) and K'an Chitam (458-486?) from Tikal.
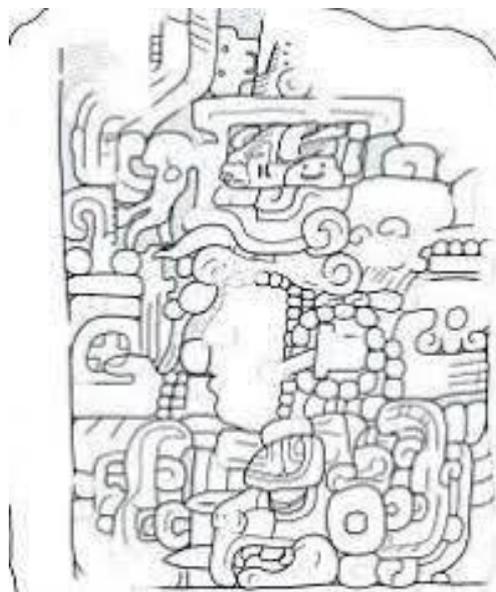
Figure 3. 19. Stela 26. Drawing by Peter Mathews.

The son of Ix Tzuutz Niik'? -Chak Tok Ich'aak II (c. 486-508) became the next king of Tikal and in all likelihood created close bonds between the two kingdoms (Mathews 2013; Nondédéo et al. 2018a:337-338; Parpal 2021:301; Rangel et al. 2013). The late early classic

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[121] The tentative reading of her name was proposed by Alfonso Lacadena in 2015. The fact that she also appears in the inscriptions of Tikal (e.g., Stela 3) led Lacadena to assume that it is the same person (Lacadena in Nondedeo et. al. 2018:338).

Stela 21, erected at the northwest corner of Structure V, renders the image of a woman (Figure 3.20), probably the queen, dressed in a large *huipil*. It is tempting to associate the depiction of this woman with influence from Tikal, although the inscription accompanying the portrait is too eroded to support or refute this theory (Nondédéo et al. 2018a: 343).

Figure 3. 20. Stela 21, Naachtun.Photo by Alejandro Garay.

Apparently, after the relationship with Tikal ceased, Structure V was no longer used in the Late Classic period and its early classic mascarons and façades were buried under the late classic fill (Nondédéo et al. 2018:406).

If the Early Classic period at Naachtun is characterised by the boom in monumental activity, then the Late Classic period coincides with the demographic apogee. The architectural development of the site was followed by an increase in population. The large settlement was concentrated both in the centre of the site and on its periphery. As Nondédéo and colleagues have noted, these changes marked a profound social, political, and economic restructuring of the site (Nondédéo et al. 2013:131). The walled compound [Map 14], surrounded by a wall 3 to 5 metres high and 3 metres wide, became the seat of power in the Middle Classic Period. Its obvious defensive character raised many questions about its purpose, especially with regard to the conflict between superpowers: Mutul and Kanu'l dynasties (Arredondo Leiva 2009, 2010:526). It is still not clear whether the walled complex was the response of the Naachtun people to the threat of Tikal or the growing power of Calakmul. However, in AD 623, two important stelae were erected at Calakmul - Stela 28 and Stela 29 (Marcus 1987, Ruppert, and Denison 1943). In the same year, Stela 1 was erected at Naachtun to commemorate the k'atun ending (Garay 2019:115). Stela 2, situated at the foot of the Palace 5O-0 near Stela 1 and dated to AD 642, may also be the work of the same king who had commissioned Stela 1 one k'atun earlier. From Stela 1 we know part of the king's name - ...Ek (Garay 2019:115). Both stelae were dedicated at a time when the Kanu'l dynasty was probably established in nearby Calakmul, but surprisingly there is as yet no firm data confirming a relationship between Calakmul and Naachtun in the seventh century. The influence of Kanu'l on Naachtun is most evident in the eighth century in the pattern of paired stelae (Stelae 18 and 19, stylistically dated to AD 741 or 761) and the textual reference (Stela 10) to the princess of Kanu'l (Garay 2019:118; Mathews and Parmington 2005: 105-113; Morley 1938; Reese Taylor et al. 2004). As in other sites associated with Calakmul, the presence of Kanu'l women at Naachtun may attest to a marriage alliance between two centres (see Chapters IV and V).

A recent study of the so-called Plaza Rio Bec, located between the east complex east and the south complex south of Group B, revealed that it became the most important ceremonial and public place at the centre when it was built towards the end of the Late Classic Period. This is clearly expressed by the proximity of five stelae with inscriptions and iconography dating to the mid-eighth century. In the Plaza Rio Bec were Stela 16, associated with Altar 4, Stela 17 (Rupert and Denison 1943), Stela 25 and the two paired Stelae 18 and 19 mentioned earlier (Matthews and Parmington 2005: 106).

The monuments, dated to the eighth century, are also in Group A, which remained an important civil-ceremonial centre during the Late Classic Period. This is evidenced by the presence of important monuments in the North Plaza of Group A. Three stelae behind Structure XIX formed a group of monuments, with Stela 8 standing between Stelae 7 and 9. They all record subsequent k'atun endings - Stela 9 - 9.15.0.0.0 (AD 731) Stela 8 - 9.16.0.0.0 (AD 751) and Stela 7 - 9.17.0.0.0 (AD 771) (Arredondo Leiva 2010; Garray 2019:118; Nondédéo et al. 2013). Additionally, Stela 10 (AD 761) and plain Stelae A6 and A7 as well as Altar 6 are located to the south of Structure XX (Arredondo Leiva 2010:144).

Then, towards the Terminal Classic, many residential complexes and public structures were modified according to the Rio Bec style (Nondédéo et al. 2013:132). For instance, the last monumental structure constructed at the site - Structure XXXIX, known as El Castillo - reflects influences from the north architecture (Arredondo Leiva 2010:489). Major changes can also be observed in Groups A and B. The abandonment of the walled compound was probably linked to the disappearance of the ruling system, but the crisis that characterised many Petén sites in the Terminal Classic was not directly detectable at Naachtun (Nondédéo et al. 2013:133). In fact, Naachtun shared a similar history to some other Petén cities such as Nakum, Topoxte, Yaxha or Holmul, which reached a new peak during the Terminal Classic and survived the collapse of the major Petén centres (Freidel and Escobedo 2005; Garrido et al. 2012: 337;

Źrałka 2008: 145). Naachtun experienced growth and prosperity at this time. The site participated in and benefited greatly from the flourishing trade, which is reflected in the presence of elaborate artefacts from distant regions.

Yet, the site's great prosperity did not last long. Archaeologists documented termination rituals as well as restricted access to the main structures. Places with increased occupation during the ninth century were partially abandoned a century later. At least half of the residential areas located in the periphery also appear to have been abandoned in the Early Terminal Classic. Scholars are not certain when the abandonment of Naachtun took place, but it must have been after AD 950. The data collected from the site indicates that the abandonment was not sudden and violent (or with limited force), rather it was proceeded in an organised manner. As Nondédéo noted, Group B may have played the role of the shelter for the dispersed inhabitants, as the South Complex of Group B was only constructed in the Terminal Classic, while the West Complex was only partially abandoned (Nondédéo et al. 2013). In the Postclassic, Naachtun was not permanently inhabited, although occasional visits are attested in the archaeological record via post abandonment deposits (Perla and Sion 2018:228).

3.6 Oxpemul

The site of Oxpemul is located 25 km north of Calakmul in the Mexican state of Campeche. Its location on the border of two regional states of the Classic Period - Calakmul to the south and Rio Bec to the north provided Oxpemul a strategic position (Folan et al. 2005, Carrasco 2011). The ancient name of the site is not known, but several Oxpemul texts contain a sign that was certainly its toponym. The toponymic title possibly contained "bent -Kawak" sign and two small unknown signs, all combined with an *ajaw* superfix (Figure 3.21)[122]. It appears on a few

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[122] It is not quite clear what the main sign could represent. It could be a grindstone or an altar. Unfortunately, in no case is the main glyph well enough preserved to see the inner details. It is possible that this is the bent Kawak

monuments from Oxpemul (e.g., Stela 2, 4, 7 12, 17 and 18) and its use extends from the Early

Classic Period (Stela 22) to AD 830 (Stela 7) (Grube 2005, 2008; Robichaux 2009).

| a | b | c | d | e |
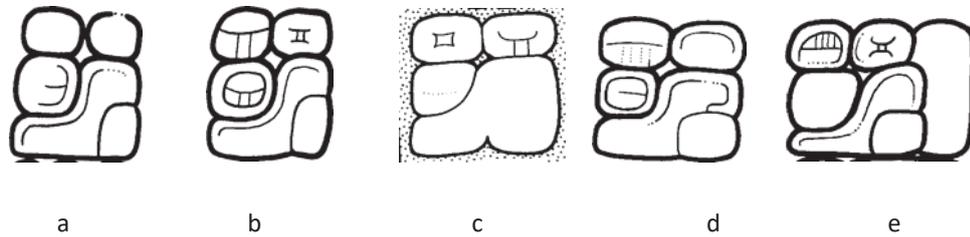
Figure 3. 21. The toponymic title of Oxpemul on a) Stela 12, b) Stela 17, c) Stela 18, d) Stela 4, e) Stela 7, Oxpemul. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

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sign. If this is the case, the main sign should read CHA. However, there is another sign in the upper left corner

which is also difficult to read because the inner details are missing (Nikolai Grube personal communication 2022).

The first exploration of the site is attributed to Karl Ruppert and John H. Denison, who visited and mapped the site as part of the Third Campeche Expedition in AD 1934 (Rupper and Denison 1943:50).

Similar to Uxul, the site's location had been forgotten for decades. The modern rediscovery of the site occurred in 2004 during reconnaissance work led by Dr Ivan Šprajc under the patronage of the National Geographic Society (Šprajc et al. 2005). Modern excavations began in 2006 and were led by William Foland and his team. The fieldwork included: 1) the mapping of the settlement, 2) the recording and conservation of the monuments, 3) several test pits, 4) the excavation of several stratigraphic wells, 5) the epigraphic documentation by Nikolai Grube and Hubert Robichaux (Folan et al. 2008; Grube 2008; Robichaux 2010). However, compared to the large excavation programmes at Uxul, La Corona and Naachtun, the scale and area of archaeological work at Oxpemul is considerably small, thus less is known about the development of the site and the relationship of the Oxpemul elite to the Kanu'l dynasty. The site is guarded in the dry season to prevent looting, but large-scale fieldwork remains out of reach. Nevertheless, excavations at Oxpemul have yielded important data on the chronological sequence of occupation of the site (Carrasco 2009:51; Carrasco et al. 2011).

3.6.2 Description of the site

Oxpemul is divided into two groups: The North Group [Map 15] and the Southwest Group [Map16].

The North Group, covering the area of 5 km2, was a seat of royal power in the Late Classic Period. It includes two large plazas (East and West Plaza), the E Group (Structure V together with Structure II), 19 stelae (1-17, 20 and 21), 19 altars (Altars 1-16 and 19-21), a ball court within the East Plaza and a residential complex of the elite (Structure II). There are also three sizeable pyramids on the edge of the West Plaza (Structures III, IV and VI) (Carrasco et al. 2009).

The Southwest Group is located 1.2 km from the North Group. It contains another four stelae (Stelae 18, 19, 22 and 23) and two altars (Altars 17 and 18).

With the exception of stela 15, which was looted shortly after Ruppert's and Denison's expedition, all the other stelae were found in the same place where Ruppert and Denison had found them (Grube 2005, Robichaux 2010:166).

3.6.3 The history of Oxpemul

The earliest occupation of the site is dated to the Middle Preclassic Period. The Southwest Group, with an architectural complex of vaulted structures and platforms surrounded by patios and courtyards, was the main ceremonial centre of the Preclassic Period. The importance of the Southwest Group is evidenced by the nearby *sakbe*, which probably also dates from the Preclassic Period. This *sakbe* connects the Southwest Group with the North Group (Šprajc and Esquivel 2008:51-61). Though, in the Early Classic Period the occupation continued in the Southwest Group, the ceramic materials show a shift of settlement to the north, into the second large architectural complex - the North Group. The North Group grew in importance and became the most important civil ceremonial group at the site in the Late Classic Period. Yet, the earliest stelae are in the Southwest Group - they are Stela 22 (Figure 3.22) and Stela 23 (Dominguez Carrasco 2011:169-172). Stelae 22 and 23, together with Stela 1 (of the North

Group), were assigned to the Early Classic Period[123], rendering them to be the earliest monuments at Oxpemul.
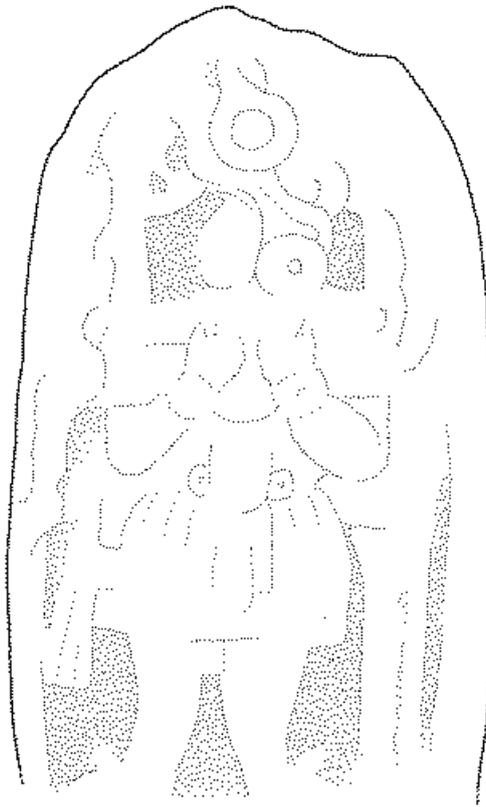
Figure 3. 22. Stela 1, Oxpemul. Drawing by Nikolai Grube

Apart from these three early classic monuments, there are no other monuments dated to the Early Classic Period. In fact, there is a gap of more than 300 years in the dedication of monuments at Oxpemul (Grube 2008; Robichaux and Pruett 2005; Robichaux 2010). The first date comes from Stela 12 and Stela 17 (Figure 3.23), which record the *chok* event (scattering ceremony) on 9.15.0.0.0. AD 731. Two titles are associated with these stelae - one is the toponym of Oxpemul followed by *ajaw* title, the second title is *Uxte'tuun*, which is associated with the Calakmul kingdom. In addition, Stela 17 reveals the name of the celebrant - the

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[123] Stylistically, the stelae are dated to the Early Classic Period, but their exact date is uncertain, as no clear dates could be established.

Oxpemul ruler Chak Tajal Way is depicted on the stela as a manifestation of the Sun of the Underworld.
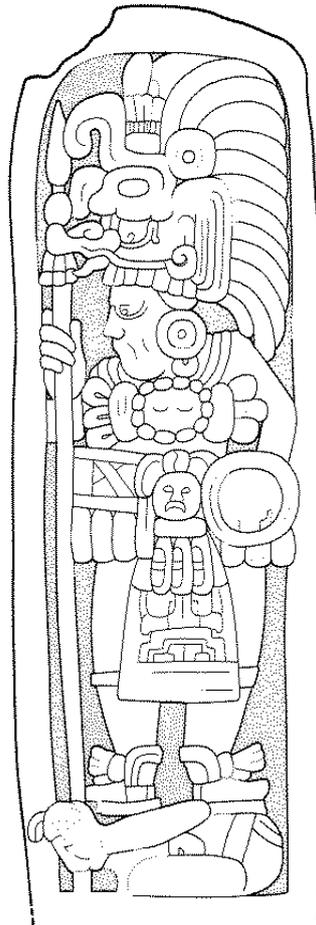
Figure 3. 23. Stela 17, Oxpemul. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

As Nikolai Grube has noted, the presence of *Uxte'tuun* in the titular phrase of the ruler of Oxpemul could indicate the relationship between two sites, or alternatively "Oxpemuleños" saw themselves as the true heirs of Calakmul after the defeat of Calakmul in AD 695 (Grube 2008:207). The interpretation I favour sees close links between Oxpemul and Calakmul in the first half of the eighth century, if not longer. First of all, there is no evidence that Oxpemul entered into armed conflict with Calakmul[124].Secondly, the same k'atun ending ceremonies of

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[124] According to Hubert Robichaux, the individual standing on the coiled snake on Stela 9 represents the victorious ruler enjoying success over the defeated Kanu'l dynasty, symbolically represented by the coiled snake (Robichaux

9.15 0.0.0 are recorded on stelae placed at the foot of Structure 1 at Calakmul. Interestingly, similar to stelae 12 and 17, Stela 52 at Calakmul also records a scattering ceremony during the k'atun ending 9.15. 0.0.0. The event took place at the place associated with the Bat emblem glyph, which was also associated with Oxpemul in the eighth century.

At this time, the Kanu'l, although weakened after their defeat by Tikal, still had considerable power in the Calakmul area. Perhaps Yuknoom Took K'awill and Chak Tajal Way participated together in the same event where incense or blood was scattered.

The construction activity at Calakmul diminished soon after the k'atun ending 9.15.0.0.0 (AD 731); Oxpemul, however, remained active for the next 100 years. In fact, the boom in epigraphic recording at Oxpemul began in AD 731 and ended with the erection of the last stela (Stela 7) in AD 830 (Grube 2008; Robichaux and Pruett 2008). Chak Tajal Way was probably succeeded by his son Chan K'inich, who was responsible for the erection of monuments in the West Plaza[125] of the North Group. Two stelae from this plaza - Stela 2 and Stela 4 - form a pair of stelae. However, they are dated to AD 771, long after the fall of Calakmul, and show two images of a king (one on each stela) instead of a male-female pair. Similar pairs of male stelae, dated to AD 751, have been found in the Southwest Group (see Chapter V for more information).

The second half of the eighth century, also marked the appearance of the Bat emblem glyph at Oxpemul. This is evident on Stela 2 (dated to AD 771), Stela 7 (dated to AD 830), Altars 9 and 15 (unknown date), all of which are located in the West Plaza of the North Group. Bat emblem glyph formed a part of Oxpemul rulers' titles, perhaps suggesting that Oxpemul became the

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2010:75). I would not favour this interpretation, however, as this type of representation of a snake has never referred to the Kanu'l dynasty in the entire corpus of hieroglyphic descriptions. On the contrary, it is found in the postclassic Dresden and Madrid codices (Grube 2008:205).

[125] All monuments found at the West Plaza are stylistically dated after AD 751 (Grube 2008:199).

seat of the dynasty that used Bat as an emblem in the eighth century (Grube 2008:199). In another scenario, Bat kings ruled a regional state from Calakmul in the late Late Classic (Carter 2014:41). Certainly, Oxpemul must have wielded considerable power during the Late Classic Period, as evidenced by the establishment of its relationship with the Mutul dynasty. The inscription of Stela 3 contains the Mutul Ajaw glyph and refers to the arrival of three lords from Mutul (Grube 2008:200).

The last date from Oxpemul is recorded on Stela 7 mentioned above. The inscription on Stela 7 mentions the *ajaw* lord who bears the Bat emblem glyph and the toponymic title of Oxpemul. The glyphs supposedly forming the ruler's name are illegible, but they are followed by other titles follow - *oxte'tuun* and *kaloomte'*. It is somehow unclear, but it is tempting to consider that Oxpemul lords claimed descent from a royal house from Calakmul. At the same time, the connection to the city of Calakmul seemed to have been more important to the Oxpemul elite than links to the Kanu'l dynasty, which in fact was never mentioned in Oxpemul's corpus of inscriptions.

In the ninth century, Oxpemul marked the decline of a settlement, perhaps related to population movements to other regions, most likely to Calakmul (Carrasco 2011; Folan et al. 2008).

3.17 Chapter Summary

The history of Uxul, Naachtun, Oxpemul and La Corona provide an important insight into the political strategies of Kanu'l expansion. Oxpemul, Uxul and Naachtun surround Calakmul at roughly the same distance. The spatial location of these places, their proximity to Calakmul and their small size in relation to the hegemon made them a natural political target for a great neighbour. In contrast, La Corona is located at a greater distance (about 90 km) from Calakmul and about 60 km from Uxul. Archaeological and epigraphic data suggest that La Corona was a

strategic partner and ally rather than a subordinate (Canuto and Barrientos 2013:2; Marcus 1976).

The appearance of the Bat emblem glyph at Naachtun and Oxpemul precedes (Naachtun) and postdates (Oxpemul) the presence of Kanu'l at Calakmul, while La Corona and Uxul do not display *k'uhul* signs throughout their history (Cases and Lacadena 2014; Grube 2005:100; Grube 2008; Martin 1998, 2005a; Nondédéo et al. 2019).

Despite their lower position in the regional political hierarchy in the Late Classic Period, La Corona, Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul represented political entities of great importance to the expansionist plans of the Kanu'l dynasty. However, Uxul, Oxpemul, Naachtun and La Corona came under Kanu'l's sphere of influence for different reasons and motivations. Their reaction to the overthrow of their former overlord also varied.

Naachtun survived the Late Preclassic decline and became an important centre in northern Petén. In the second half of the fourth century, the Bat kingdom was involved in the New Order of Teotihuacan-Tikal and maintained close contact with Tikal throughout the Early Classic Period. The relationship with Tikal probably influenced the architectural and economic development of the site. In fact, Naachtun is the only site covered in my research whose major development was not related to the expansion of Calakmul in the region.

Unlike Naachtun, the highest political and economic power of Uxul is linked to the glory of Calakmul. The economic, cultural, and social prosperity of the city, as well as the profound and remarkable architectural transformation from the Early to the Late Classic have to be connected with the advance of the Kanu'l dynasty into southern Campeche. This great monumental boom under the watchful eye of the Kanu'l kings completely transformed the city (Delvendahl and Grube 2015:8; Grube and Delvendahl 2016:23).

Similar to Uxul, the apogee at La Corona occurred between the seventh and eighth centuries. The *Sak Wahyis* kingdom was not as radically transformed architecturally as Uxul, although

architectural activity in the Main Group and the Coronitas reached a peak at the height of Calakmul's power (Canuto and Barientos 2014:264).

Under the patronage of the Kanu'l dynasty, the *Sak Wahyis* from La Corona enjoyed access to luxury goods, scribes, and artists. This is best seen in the rich burial equipment and the high quality of the monuments with hieroglyphic inscriptions. Both La Corona and Uxul benefited greatly from their close relationship with Calakmul. Most likely, La Corona entered willingly into the sphere of Kanu'l's influence, as this brought mutual benefits to both parties (Kanu'l and La Corona lords). Since the lords of *Sak Wahyis* maintained family and not just economic ties to the rulers of Kanu'l, compliance was probably strong enough that it did not need to be enforced. The relative independence of La Corona (compared to Uxul) enabled its elite to survive the collapse of the Kanu'l "imperium" and occupy the city until about AD 850. On the other hand, the available data suggest that the socio-political bonds between Uxul and Calakmul were so close that the fall of the hegemon provoked a rapid decline of its subordinate (Grube et al. 2012b; 2013).

This rather rapid abandonment of Uxul (c. AD 750) contrasts strikingly with a long and successful settlement of Naachtun in the Late and Terminal Classic Period. The political and economic sphere of Naachtun showed a great resilience at this time. It is conceivable that the short and long-distance trade fostered the flourishing and development of the site until it was overcome by the systematic and definitive crisis in the second half of the tenth century (Nondédéo et al. 2013:138).

The growth of Oxpemul also postdates the time of Calakmul's greatest political and military successes. There must have been some contact with Calakmul, for the ruler of Oxpemul who celebrates the k'atun ending in AD 731 bears the title *uxte'tuun kaloomte'*, formerly reserved only for the rulers of Calakmul. Interestingly, the dynastic history of Oxpemul is silent during the heyday of the Kanu'l. The first epigraphic record from the Late Classic Period is from AD

731 The weakening of Calakmul did not lead to the fall of Oxpemul. Rather, Late Classic Oxpemul may have become the seat of the Bat dynasty, which may have moved from Naachtun.

In the second half of the eighth century, Oxpemul established some contacts with the Mutul dynasty, as evidenced by the inscription on Stela 3, which mentions the arrival of three Mutul lords to Oxpemul (Grube 2008:199). La Corona also maintained a relationship with Mutul. Altar 4, dated to AD 791, records the marriage alliance between Ix Chan of the Mutul dynasty and an unknown La Corona lord. The references to the Mutul dynasty in La Corona and Oxpemul could indicate the shift of the alliance from Calakmul to Tikal (Grube 2008: 199; Stuart et al. 2014:441), but they could also refer to the relationship with Aguateca, as the lords there used the Mutul emblem glyph in the late eighth century. However, the relationship did not last and the dynasties at La Corona and Oxpemul began to collapse in the middle of ninth century. Both sites suffered an abrupt decline, while Naachtun marked another boom in the activity that lasted until the mid-tenth century (Nondédéo et al. 2013).

The different political response to the fall of Calakmul indicates a different type of dependency and a different cooperation with a hegemon. Oxpemul, La Corona, Naachtun and Uxul played a different role in the hegemonic plans of the Kanu'l dynasty, and this is reflected not only in their architectural and epigraphic record but also in the late classic iconographic programme of these sites.

Of particular interest to me are the representations of queens directly and indirectly associated with the Kanu'l dynasty. Women played a prominent role in cementing and forging alliances and their images, which form part of paired stelae, are an important and widely used type of visual media associated with the Kanu'l dynasty. La Corona offers the clearest epigraphic evidence of marriages between Kanu'l princesses and local La Corona lords. The presence of

Kanu'l woman is also attested for the site of Naachtun, although the context and timing of her arrival is rather unclear.

The following chapter will advocate the undertakings of Kanu'l women across time and space. I will not limit myself to the places that are my case studies but will give a broader perspective of strategies based on social cohesion that were employed by the Kanu'l dynasty. I hope that through a deeper understanding of the role of women in the Kanu'l dynasty, I will be able to unravel the hidden meaning of their representations, the goal I hope to achieve and pursue in Chapter V.

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN IN KANU'L'S POLITICS

4.1 Introduction

The number of texts and images referring to high-ranking Maya women in public display attest to the importance of these female figures. Their significance in ancient Maya society was inextricably tied to their role as mothers and wives. In fact, the importance and status of elite Maya women were displayed and constructed through the manipulation of their roles. This was particularly significant for kings, who could not only easily track their descent but also legitimise their rights to the throne through association with their mothers or wives (Bojkowska and Jabłońska 2018). The divergence in the range of actions they were represented is enormous. They are shown standing on the captives (e.g., Calakmul Stela 23, Coba Stela 5, Naachtun Stela 18), attending the accession of their son's (e.g., Palenque Oval Panel, Piedras Negras Stela 33) or performing rituals. They are seen performing vision rites (e.g. Calakmul Stela 88, Coba Stela 29, Pomona Jamb 3), self-sacrifices (e.g. Naranjo Stela 19, Yaxchilan Stela 35, Xcalumkin Lintel 4) (Figure 4.1) or Period Ending ceremonies (Naranjo Stela 31, Tikal Stela 23, El Peru Waka' Stela 34) (Ardren 2002; Josserand 2002; Parpal 2021; Proskouriakoff 1961; Reese Taylor et al. 2009; Tuszyńska 2016**).**

Figure 4. 1. Stela 35 (back), Yaxchilan. Drawing by Peter Mathews.

Women are also well reported in tombs at a large number of Maya sites, including among others: Altar de Sacrificios (Coe 1988), Calakmul (Delvendahl 2008), Caracol (D. Chase and A. Chase 1987), Copan (Reents-Budet *et al.*2009), El Peru Waka' (Freidel 2012), La Corona (Canuto and Barrientos 2015), Palenque (Gonzalez Cruz 2011), Tikal (Coe 1965) and Yaxchilan (García Moll 2004). Royal women were also granted with high ranking titles such as *kaloomte' (*Figure 4.2), *k'uhul ajaw* or *bakab* (Tuszyńska 2017).
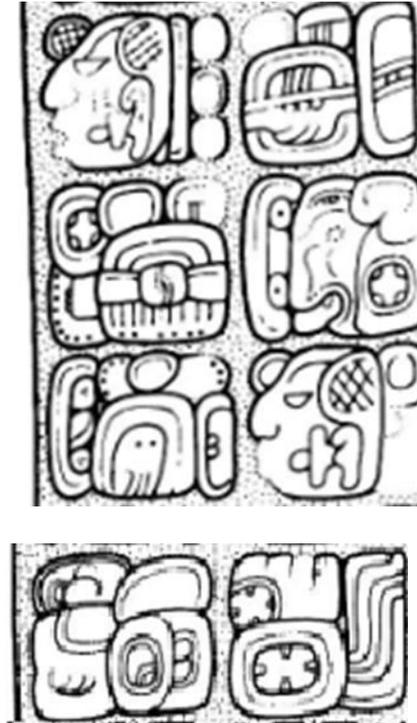
Closely related to the above-mentioned role of royal women in Maya society is the role of marriage. In the expansionist programme of Kanu'l, marriage was an important weapon to enhance the political standing of the dynasty. One of the strategies of the Kanu'l dynasty to gain a new client or to subjugate the centre was to arrange alliance through marriage. Kanu'l women were sent to marry local lords to represent their fathers' interests. The Kanu'l lords ceded their power to their female relatives, who effectively interceded on their behalf. These marriage alliances can be seen as a symbolic manifestation of the political, social, and economic power of the Kanu'l kings. Kanu'l rulers demonstrated their authority over allied or subordinate territories by sending their female relatives to smaller centres, thus securing their supremacy (Bojkowska and Jabłońska 2018; Jabłońska 2016, Marcus 2006, Schele and Mathews 1991; Teufel 2006; Tuszyńska 2016; Vázquez López 2016, 2017). Royal women who did not belong to the Kanu'l dynasty were also used as political tools and included in the larger politics, as Kanu'l also played a mediating role in arranging marriages. Remarkably, it was not

until the seventh century that these important Kanu'l women were commemorated in public art. This is best illustrated by the pattern of paired stelae, which often served as a visual expression of marriage. This theme expressed the strictly codified visual programme of art that the Kanu'l introduced or inspired in other places as a means of cooperation and domination over other social units (Vázquez López 2016, 2017). The concept of the marriage alliance and the role of women discussed in this chapter thus form a fundamental basis for my research. However, I will not limit myself to the examples from La Corona, Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul. Instead, I want to offer a broader perspective on Kanu's strategy of incorporating territories into its area of influence/domination through marriage alliances throughout the Maya area. This chapter seeks to generate consistent examples of political marriage alliances to advance our understanding of their role in expressing Kanu'l political domination as depicted in their iconography. The contextual data provided in this chapter would help me to fully explore the relationship between art and the Late Classic domination of Calakmul.

The importance of elite women, directly or indirectly associated with the Kanu'l dynasty, is clearly expressed in the monumental displays of Maya sites across the Lowlands. However, the iconography of these sites is very diverse, both temporally and spatially. This diversity may rest with the important role that marriage alliances played in establishing and negotiating Kanu'l power. I see the increase in marriage alliances inspired by the Kanu'l dynasty in the second half of the seventh century as a response to the increasing political obstacles that the Kanu'l dynasty had to face and overcome. The changes in the political arena also affected the way political rule and influence were expressed through art. Representations of Kanu'l affiliated women;(often standardised and conventionalised) had a different meaning in the seventh century than in the eighth, even within small kingdoms.

In order to shed light on the role and significance of women in La Corona, Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul, and thus their visual representations in the Late Classic Period, it is essential to understand the role of Kanu'l and marriage alliances in general.

4.2 The political aspect of marriage

There is no glyph in the inscriptions that stands for marriage. However, it seems that it was a complex ritual that involved various activities and phases, such as *mak* (cover) and *naw* (present), followed by the *nup* (join) ceremony, which could stand for wedding ceremony (Biro 2011:2). The political aspect of the marriage alliance is emphasized in the inscriptions by the verb *hul*, which means 'to arrive". This word was used in a context of great political significance and is somewhat related to political changes in Maya society (MacLeod 1990:339-341; Stuart 2000:479)[126].

Such marriage-based political alliances are reported from many sites not associated with the Kanu'l dynasty, for example between Yaxchilan and Bonampak, Naranjo, and Tikal, or Machaquila and Cancuen (Arden 2002, Delvendahl 2005; Martin and Grube 2000: 143; Schele and Mathews 1991: 243; Tuszyńska 2016).

In the case of the Kanu'l dynasty, however, marital relations played a fundamental role in their political expansion and control over a vast territory. Calakmul's political strategy aimed to form a loop around Tikal and thus isolate it (Vázquez López 2017:25). In this and the following chapter, I would like to demonstrate that this strategy was only partially successful.

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[126] *Huli* also refers to lunar phases and - by extrapolation - to the arrival of Lady Moon. The path the princess had to take to unite with her future husband was liken to the passage of Lady Moon through the sky (Helmke 2017:84; Macleod 1990; Miller and Martin 2004: 96-97).

The marriage was a political act. Power was transferred from the Kanu'l kings to their close female relatives, especially their daughters who, as wives of local rulers, forged the alliances between two centres. As wives and mothers, the Kanu'l princesses were political actors who consolidated alliances through marriages and brought in bloodlines. In fact, the Kanu'l princesses could meet their future husbands at the court of Calakmul. We know from the inscriptions that two La Corona rulers (K'inich ? Yook, Chak Ak' Paat Kuy) spent some time at the Calakmul court or may have even grown up in Calakmul (Stuart et al. 2014). Creating close bonds between the future local ruler and his overlord was a very common strategy of hegemonic and imperial states. It was not only about educating the children of their subjects, but also about gaining control over the politics of their parents. Therefore, this strategy facilitated identification with the hegemon (Kosto 2012:25-28; Parkes 2006:359-342). This identification could also be reinforced through marriage arrangements between the lords of La Corona and their future wives, whom they could meet while in Calakmul.

The frequent references to women in the socio-political sphere of the Kanu'l dynasty and its allies attest to the high status women enjoyed in Late Classic politics (Sharer and Traxler 2006:400). By marrying local lords, Kanu'l princesses not only acted as diplomats who travelled to other city-states to convey power and authority, but they also wielded power and could play a superior role in the cities to which they were sent. They legitimised the power of their husbands, local lords, whose rank was raised through marriage with the daughters of powerful kings. The women of Calakmul acted as conduits for the political advancement and success of their husbands. This in turn ensured them a prominent place in Classic Maya history, as hieroglyphic inscriptions attest (Barrientos and Canuto 2012:434; Bojkowska and Jablońska 2018).

It is also an example of hypogamy - marriage in which the status of women exceeds that of men. This kind of marriage was an important tactical move of a more powerful dynasty to gain

222

a new ally. However, it was beneficial for both parties as it generated political capital that strengthened the credibility of the local dynasty.

Sending a woman to the subordinate city was a common practise among the Mexica in the early fifteenth century. The ruler of Azcapotzalco sent his daughter Tecpaxochitl to Texcoco to marry the future tlatoani Ixtlilxochitl. However, he offended Azcaptzalco by making Tecpaxochitl his concubine and taking a senior royal from Tenochtitlan as his wife (Pennonck 2018:14). The taking of a new lady could serve as a confirmation of the change or/and a breach of the alliance, which made it an important tool in power consolidation. It also provided the local dynasty with wealth and prestige and recognition of its high status through the affiliation to the hegemon (Marcus 2001).

On the other hand, smaller localities came under the control of the more powerful centre. Thus, the presence of a high-ranking royal woman at the court of a smaller site was not only a sign of an alliance between two centres, but also functioned symbolically as an indication of adopted political subordination (Diel 2007:270). Women could also have been bearers of royal offspring, and children born of this kind of marriage had their rank raised. Hypogamy in this case provided a mechanism through which a woman could attempt to influence the political will of her protagonists. In the case of the Kanu'l princesses who were sent to smaller territories, they were most likely acting on behalf of their fathers, who used clever politics and political manoeuvring to achieve their goals at low costs. It was a subtle way of gaining a new ally without bearing the cost of a war campaign (Marcus 2001:315). Therefore, marriage sent a strong and important message about alliances. It was a transformative act per excellence, as it turned a daughter into a wife. The consequences of this marriage contract can be compared to those of starting a war or finalizing a peace treaty. The circumstances of these wedding arrangements, whether they were imposed or accepted, are not known.

Marriage alliances served as strategies to expand social networks and, in the case of powerful families, also promoted the expansion and consolidation of their political spaces. It also carried a potential risk - a foreign wife could be a powerful ally or an enemy if the alliance ended (Pennock 2018:15). The loyalty of Kanu'l princesses to their home centre, either Dzibanche or Calakmul, never seemed to be in question. It seems that marriages cemented alliances and that Kanu'l ladies were loyal to their families. They were affiliated to their husbands as affiliated to their fathers. On the other hand, the loyalty of subordinate/allied lords to the Kanu'l family was probably regarded as one of their duties (Barrientos and Canuto 2012:435).

Interestingly, the hypergamous marriage system - marriage to a lord of higher rank, i.e. the marriage of a local lady to a member of the Kanu'l family - is not evident in the hieroglyphic corpus of inscriptions,[127] comparing for instance to the Nahuatl world where subordinated rulers would give their daughters as wives to the tlatoani (Pennonck 2018:7).

Kanu'l also seemed to have played an intermediary role in negotiating marriage strategies, as in the case of the relationships between Naranjo and Dos Pilas or Naranjo and Holmul. In other words, the Snake dynasty does not appear to have established marriages with these entities, but apparently the Kanu'l rulers endorsed, supervised or even decided on such alliances, taking on the role of mediator in the formation of such partnerships (Vázquez López 2016:177). This strategy helped the Kanu'l maintain their territorial boundaries and leadership positions.

Often, the arrival of high-ranking women marked the emergence of new artistic styles and cultural traditions. Women who arrived at their husbands' residences would bring artists and scribes from the ruling centre to their new homes as part of their dowry. It is quite possible that artists were part of tribute/tax arrangements (Elizabeth Graham, personal communication

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[127] However, it is quite possible that some wives of the Late Classic Calakmul kings may have had local origin. For more information, see Chapter V.

2022), which would explain, for example, the large number of inscriptions at La Corona or the presence of codex-style ceramics at Uxul. Perhaps this privileged access to artists would otherwise have been impossible for these subordinate rulers (Barrientos and Canuto 2012:432). Moreover, there is evidence that these marital events could have been accompanied by social gatherings and dedications of new buildings, for example at La Corona (Barrientos and Canuto 2012:432; Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018).

As daughters and sisters of powerful kings, the Kanu'l princesses were commemorated during their lifetime and as royal ancestors. This was made publicly visible in iconography, texts, and mortuary practices at e.g., La Corona, El Peru Waka' or Yaxchilan. Additionally, the intermediary role of the Kanu'l dynasty in arranging marriages could be observed at Uxul, Holmul, Naranjo and Caracol (Barrientos and Canuto 2012; Martin 2020; Tuszyńska 2016; Vázquez López 2017).

In the following sections, I will examine the cases of Maya sites where the role of Kanu'l kings as marriage overseers, either directly or indirectly, is evident. This also clearly shows the importance of women in a Kanu'l dynasty socio-political plan for expansion.

4.3. The direct role of the Kanu'l dynasty in arranging marriages

4.3.1. El Peru Waka'

Undoubtedly, the arrival of Ix "K'abel" in El Peru Waka' and her marriage to K'inich B'ahlam II, the ruler of El Peru Waka', had political implications. K'inich B'ahlam II by marrying the Kanu'l princess, the daughter of the great Yuknoom Ch'een II enforced relations with the Snake dynasty and strengthened his position.

The exact date of Ix "K'abel's" arrival at El Peru Waka' is not known, but it probably occurred several decades before AD 692, the date on which the famous Stela 34 with her portrait was erected. The elaborated Burial 39, located in the ceremonial precinct known as the Mirador

Group and dated to the middle of the seventh century, contained, among other grave goods, a figure probably representing Ix "K'abel"[128]. According to Navarro *et al.* Ix "K'abel" took part in the funeral of the individual buried in Burial 39 (Navarro Farr *et al.*2020:45; Rich and Freidel 2017). As the death of an important royal figure could also lead to re-negotiation[129] of existing alliances or the establishment of new alliances (Bojkowska and Jabłońska 2018), perhaps the participation of Ix "K'abel" at the funeral was the beginning of her co- reign with K'inich Bahlam II[130].

The marriage between K'inich B'ahlam II and Ix "K'abel" is not recorded in the hieroglyphic inscriptions, nor is the relationship between Ix "K'abel" and Yuknoom Ch'een II or Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'. It is implied in the image of the couple and the reference to great Kanu'l rulers on paired Stelae 33 and 34, which depict Ix "K'abel", Noble Lady of Kanu'l (Stela 34) and her husband K'inich Bahlam II (Stela 33) (Marcus 1987:135-47; Miller 1973; Pérez et al. 2015; Wanyerka 1996).

Stela 34 depicts Ix "K'abel" personifying the Water Serpent Yax Chiit Jun Witz' Naah Kan and also carrying the title Yax Chiit Jun Witz' Naah Kan. Stela 34 mentions the enthronement of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' (*ch'amaw k'awiil*). It also records the name of Yuknoom Ch'een II, followed by the name of a woman who carried the title k'uh[ul] [...]nal [wak ajaw]? It is very likely that this is a parentage statement for Ix "K'abel" (Martin 2000:116, 2020:184; Vázquez López 2016:140, 2017). In this scenario, Ix "K'abel" would be the daughter of Yuknoom Ch'een II and a sister of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'. If so, she would be named after her paternal

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[128] The figurine is consistent in style, attributes, and adornments with the portrait of Ix "K'abel" on Stela 34

[129] Strengthen former relationships or challenge their continuity.

[130] Consequently, the graves can be viewed as agencies that served as a means of royal communication and legitimation (Bojkowska and Jabłońska 2018; Ekengren 2013: 176; Oestigaard and Goldhahn 2006).

grandmother, as the recent re-reading of the inscription of Stela 33 from Calakmul by Sergei Vepretskii allows for the naming of Ix "K'abel" as the mother of Yuknoom Ch'een II (Vepretskii et al. 2021, Vepretskii and Savchenko 2022).

K'inich Bahlam II put considerable effort into venerating his wife by interring her near Stela 44[131], buried within Structure M13-1. Stela 44 records Wa'oom Uch'ab Ahk's accession in AD 556, witnessed by Ix Ikoom, probably his mother. As mentioned in one of the previous chapters she carries the titles *Sak Wahyis* and *K'uhul Chatahn winik* (Pérez *et al.* 2014), strictly related to Calakmul and the Kanu'l dynasty in the Late Classic Period. According to Freidel *et al.* (2013:243), the marriage of Ix Ikoom to Chak Tok Ich'aak (or different kind of relationship)[132] cemented El Peru Waka's shift of alliance from Tikal to Calakmul. Furthermore, Stela 15 of El Peru Waka', celebrating the *entrada* of Sihyaj K'ahk', was shattered and dumped sometime in the mid-sixth century before its pieces were collected and reset in the late eighth or early ninth century. Guenter argues that the erosion on the surface of the stela indicates varying levels of exposure to the sun. Therefore, some parts of Stela 15 were laying face up, others face down (Guenter after Freidel et al. 2013:243). Similar to the marriage alliance, this Middle Classic destruction of Stela 15 would also argue for the end of Teotihuacan-Tikal's influence and the beginning of Kanu'l's domination in the area. The destruction of stela was probably a very telling sign of the change of alliance.

The location of the tomb of Ix "K'abel" (Tomb 61) in El Peru Waka' is also significant (Figure 4.3). Ix "K'abel" was buried in a prominent place in the city, in Structure M13-1, the main

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[131] It has been thought that the placement of stela within M13-1 occurred during a funerary rite for Ix "K'abel" (Pérez Roblez, Navarro Farr 2013:12-13). However, recent archaeological excavations, however, suggest that Stela 44 was buried in the late Early Classic Period or early Late Classic possibly during a ritual, long before Ix "K'abel" was entombed (Freidel *et al.* 2016:40).

[132] There is no evidence in the entire corpus of hieroglyphic inscriptions that the couple was married.

temple. She was entombed (Pérez et al. 2015:16-22), with insignia reflecting ties to Kanu'l [133] which not only attest to her enormous power but also indicate that Kanu'l's domination over El Peru Waka' was still strong in the eighth century (Navarro Farr *et al.* 2020:51).

Figure 4. 3. Tomb 61, El Peru Waka' (after Freidel *et.al.*2012: Fig.8).

She was venerated long after the demise of the dynasty and on into the Terminal Classic Period[134] (Rivas 2017:18). K'inich Bahlam II, by burying Ix "K'abel" near Stela 44, may have

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[133] The artefacts resemble the one found in the Late Classic Calakmul tombs (e.g., ceramics, jade mask) (Navarro-Farr *et al.*2020).

[134] Some of the tombs were re-opened as a form of ancestral veneration, which clearly denotes their occupant's high status (Bojkowska and Jabłońska 2018; Fitzsimmons 2009:170-180).

marked the relations between Ix Ikoom and Ix "K'abel" (factually or symbolically) and placed himself in the ranks of Kanu'l's loyal allies (Bojkowska and Jabłońska 2018). The royal Maya burial then turns out to be a deliberately manipulated socio-political tool, reflecting as much, on Ix "K'abel" as on K'inich Bahlam II, who used the dead as a means of restoring and reconstructing royal power and hierarchy and as a form of political legitimation (Bojkowska and Jabłońska 2018).

This assumption is confirmed by a hieroglyphic text. K'inich Bahlam II commemorated Ix Ikoom on Stela 43 (Figure 4.4), which was dedicated in AD 702. The text on Stela 43 links her with the K'atun celebration of AD 573 (Pérez Robles and Navarro Farr 2013:13).

Figure 4. 4. Stela 43, El Peru Waka'. Photo by Francisco Castaneda.Proyecto Arqueológico El Perú-Waka´ and PACUNAM.

It is not known when Ix Ikoom arrived in El Peru, but the AD 520 reference to the arrival of the Kanu'l princess Ix Naak Ek to La Corona, located only 30 km north of El Peru Waka', may

provide a clue. Pérez Robles and Navarro Farr suggest that both women were somehow related (Pérez Robles and Navarro Farr 2013:14).

4.3.2 La Corona

The first documented marriage between the Kanu'l princess and the local ruler comes from retrospective reference from Panel 6 (Figure 4.5) of La Corona. The inscription attests to the complex and intense relationship between the ruling houses of Kanu'l and La Corona over two centuries. It is of great importance for understanding the political strategies pursued in the region by the Snake dynasty (Martin 2008).
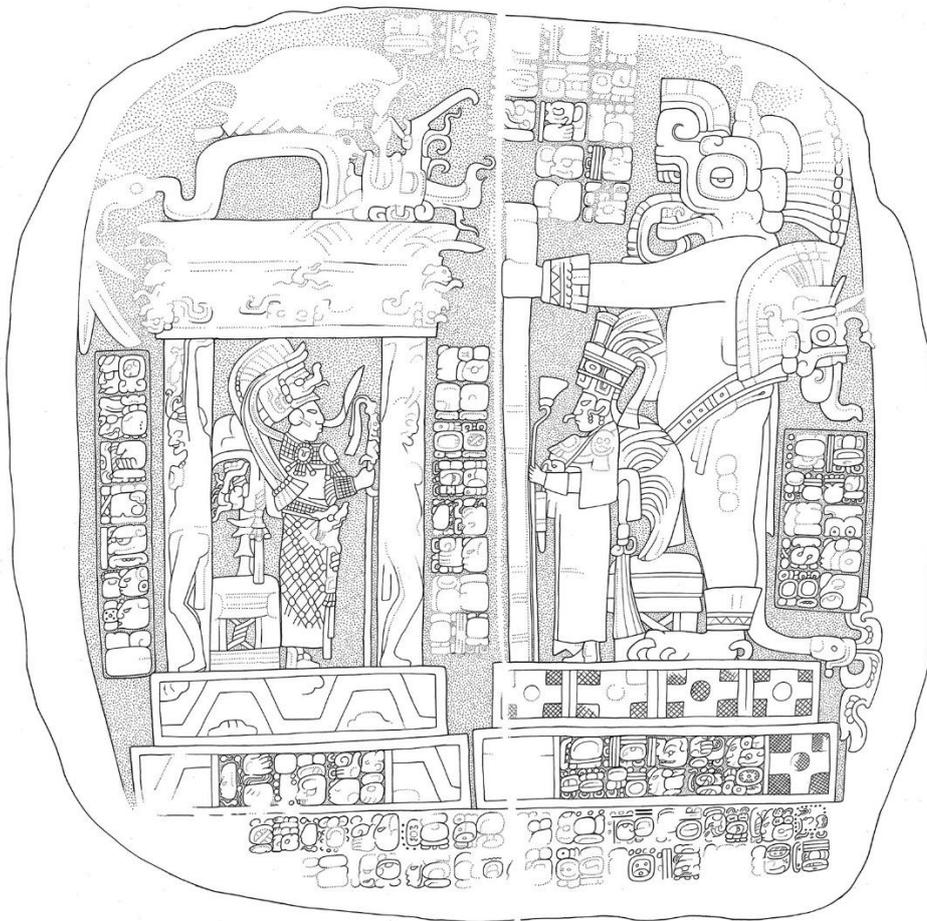
Figure 4. 5. Panel 6, La Corona. Drawing by David Stuart.

Panel 6 celebrates the 9.15.0.0.0 (AD 731) Period Ending (Freidel and Guenter 2003; Martin 2008:2), but also refers to the arrival of three Kanu'l princesses in La Corona in AD 520, 679 and 721. All three women are said to have been *atan* (wife, companion) of La Corona lords

and daughters of Snake kings (Martin 2008:2-4). The princesses carry Kanu'l emblem glyphs that in all likelihood were passed down patrilineally, that is, from father to sons and daughters, indicating male dominance in much of Classic Maya politics (Vázquez López 2016:147). The Kanu'l princesses mentioned in this inscription appear as Ix Kanu'l ajaw without the *k'uhul* title compared to their fathers who carried the full emblem *k'uhul Kanu'l ajaw* (Vázquez López and Kupprat 2018:81). What struck me most, however, was that the Kanu'l princesses outranked their husbands, who instead of carrying the emblem glyph were granted *Sak Wahyis* title closely associated with Kanu'l power. This could be an example of morganatic marriages, "a marriage between people of unequal social rank which, in the context of royalty prevents the husband's (or wife's) titles and privileges being passed on to the wife (or husband) and/or any children born of the marriage" (Wikipedia.org). The children born of a relationship between Kanu'l princesses, and a local husband would never carry the Kanu'l emblem glyph, therefore they could not claim rights to the throne of Calakmul[135].

Panel 6 depicts a pair of women, each standing on a tiered platform. The left side of the panel shows a woman under the roof of a temple full of water symbolism. The panel represents Ix Ti Kanu'l, who celebrated the Period Ending in AD 731. The giant Teotihuacan-style jaguar figure stands behind the other lady, possibly Ix Naah Ek, the daughter of Tuun K'ab Hix (Stuart 2013b). It is possible that this is a giant deity effigy, a version of the Teotihuacan War Serpent.

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[135] Interestingly, Block 3 of HS 3 and Panel 1 of La Corona refer to the siblings of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk. Panel 1 mentions that there were seven of them 7-ti-ki-li ch'o-ko TAK-ki yu-ne- KAN-AJAW *huk tikil ch'oktaak yunen Kanu'l ajaw* (seven young lords, sons of the Kanu'l lord). Sending these young lords to other places to forge alliances through marriage does not seem to have been considered by their father Yuknoom Ch'een II. Perhaps because this could lead to destabilisation and consequent disintegration of the dynasty if one of the princes was ambitious and dared to rebel against the rightful heir to the throne. Consequently, there must have been a social mechanism, not attested in the epigraphic or archaeological records, which kept the siblings on their toes.

The marriage between Ix Naah Ek' and a lord Kooj from La Corona was established when the Kanu'l dynasty still resided in Dzibanche.[136] It is quite possible that Tomb 18 located in the pyramidal Structure 13 Q-2, was a burial place of Ix Naah Ek'. The tomb contained evidence of architectural changes[137], perhaps as a result of re-entry. The grave goods consisted of a large quantity of jade and shell pieces, two ceramic vessels, flint objects, pyrites, and stingray spines (Gómez 2015:178-201). Interestingly, the tomb thought to have belonged to her husband (Tomb 19) in the opposite Structure 13 Q-1, is less elaborate, and may indicate lower status of its occupant. In both tombs, the archaeologists found jewels or diadems with a deity. The effigy on the diadem from Tomb 18 however, carried the image of Yax Ha'al Chaak (Figure 4.6), the patron god of Calakmul (Zender and Guenter 2016), which, in addition to the close connection to the Kanu'l dynasty, could also reflect the higher status of the tomb's occupant (Canuto and Barrientos 2013: 2).
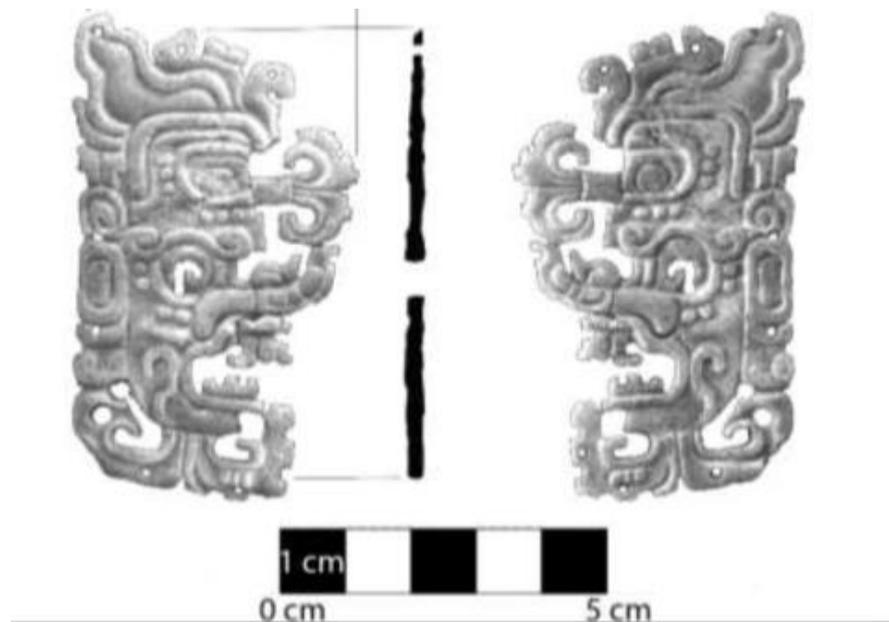
Figure 4. 6. Effigy diadem from Tomb 18, La Corona (after Informe La Corona 2015: Fig.13.9).

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[136] Perhaps even Tuun K'ab Hix was still a prince when he sent his daughter to *Sak Nikte*. According to the Kanu'l king list from Dynastic Vases, he acceded in AD (Vepretskii *et al.*2021).

[137] alteration and remodel.

The lady who arrived second in the order - Ix Tz'ihb Winik, although she is not depicted on Panel 6, is mentioned on Element 22 from La Corona as Ix Kanu'l Ajaw and mother of Janaab.'[138] The arrival of Ix Tz'ihb Winik in AD 679 9.12.6.16.17 11 Kaban 10 Sotz' to become a wife of K'inich ? Yook is also recorded on Block 9 of HS 2, La Corona (Stuart and Baron 2013:202).

The power of the rulers of La Corona and their foreign wives is perhaps best illustrated by the elaborate palace acropolis and monumental epicentre. Ix Tz'ihb Winik, daughter of the great Yuknoom Ch'een II, was probably brought up at Calakmul. She must have been familiar with the art of governance at that time. Lamoureaux suspects that her presence in La Corona influenced or even forced the changes in the regal palace, as her arrival coincided with the palace and the renovation of the architectural institutions. On her journey to La Corona, she was probably accompanied by scribes and artists (Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018:448).

Interestingly, the date of Ix Tz'ihb Winik's arrival coincides with the defeat of Tikal by Bajlaj Chan K'awiil of Dos Pilas. Since Dos Pilas was a vassal kingdom of Calakmul, it seems that both events were part of simultaneous political strategies, one involving war and the other a marriage alliance (Barientos et. al. 2016:341). Such a coincidental date, albeit related to different events, can also be observed between Coba and Naranjo.

4.3.3 Coba

There is no single evidence of the Kanu'l emblem glyph at Coba so far, but the inscription on Stela 1 mentions the enthronization of a ruler Chan Yopaat (*k'al hu'n tu.. u baah*) on 27 August, AD 682 (9.12.10.5.12.4 Eb 10 Yax) (Stuart 2010). Strikingly the same date appears on Stelae 24 (Figure 4.7) and 29, Naranjo where it refers to the arrival of Ix Wak Chan, the daughter of

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[138] Janaab's parentage statement included also included the name of his grandfather - the Great Yuknoom Ch'een II. This certainly served to emphasise the direct descent from the royal line.

Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, to Naranjo. "This was a pivotal event in Naranjo's history and was instrumental in re-establishing Naranjo as a major political force within the complex alliance network forged by rulers of Calakmul [...] The co-occurrence of two major dynastic events on the same day in separate kingdoms is probably not a coincidence; it may point to some important historical connection between Coba and the "Snake kingdom" to the south [...] (Stuart 2010: 3 -4).
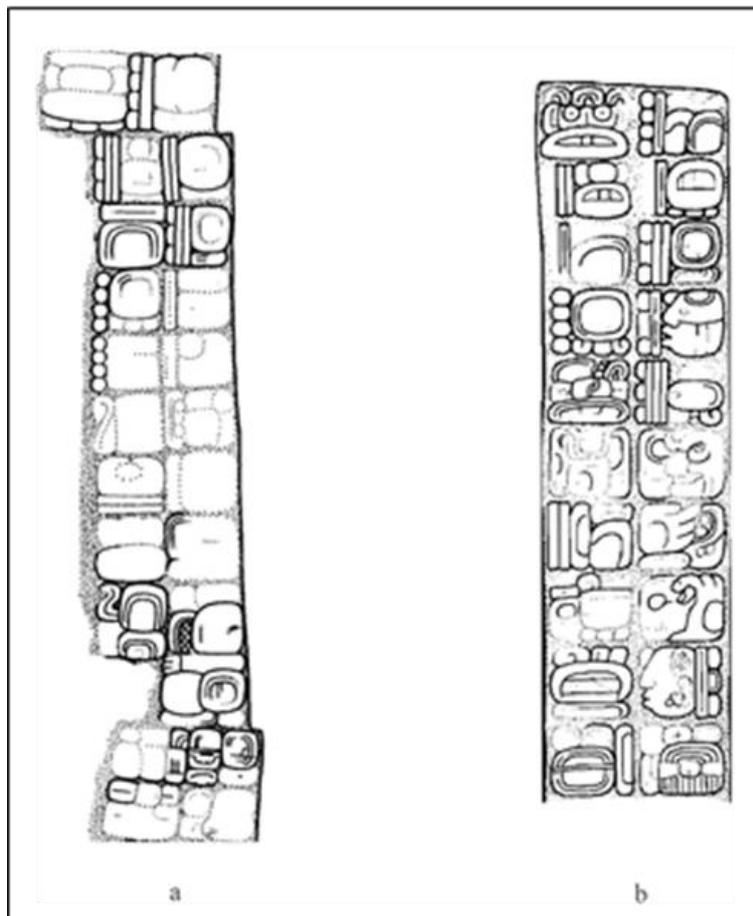
Figure 4. 7. 9.12.10.5.12,date on: a) Stela 1 from Coba b) Stela 24 of Naranjo. Drawings: a) from Stuart 2010: 4 –b) from Graham and von Euw 1975: 64. Recopliated by Esparza Octavio Ogluin.

According to Stanley Guenter, Ruler B presented on Stelae 1, 2, 4 and 5 standing on the captive might have been a woman[139]. The reign of Ix K'awill (AD 640-682) falls during the rule of a Yuknoom Ch'een II of Calakmul (AD 636-686) and she carries the title *kaloomte'* (Gronemeyer 2004:4; Guenter 2014:410). Ix K'awill (Figure 4.8) played a prominent role in the city; in fact, she is the main character displayed on the stelae dated to the seventh century.
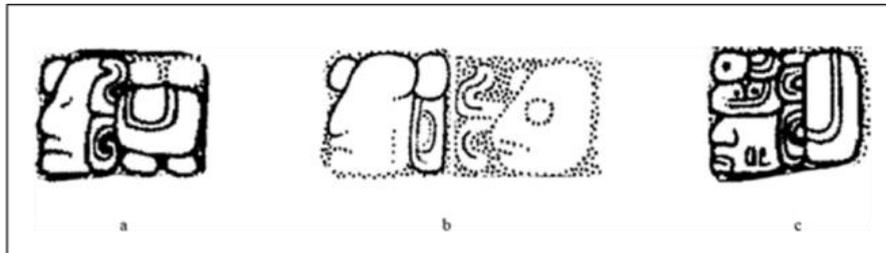
Figure 4. 8. Possible reference s to Ix K'awiil Ajaw on Stela 1: a) Glyph H20; b) Glyphs B13 and A14; c) Glyph W21. Drawings by Graham and von Euw 1997:18 and 24, recompiled by Octavio Esparza Olguin.

On the other hand, several interesting implications point to some kind of relationship between Coba and Tikal and indirect conflicts between Calakmul and Coba (elsewhere Chapter II). At this point it is important to refer to a small hieroglyphic inscription on the jade plaque from Tomb 23 (Figure 4.9) of the North Acropolis of Tikal, which apparently names the queen of Coba as the owner of the plaque -: *utuun ixik? ixik? k'awi[il]? ... k'uhul koba' ajaw* (Esparza Olguin 2016:295).

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[139] He identifies Ruler B as woman based on the glyph of anthropomorphic profile (Ix/Ixik?) accompanied by the logogram K'AWIL, in B13 and A14 of Stela 1 (Guenter 2014).
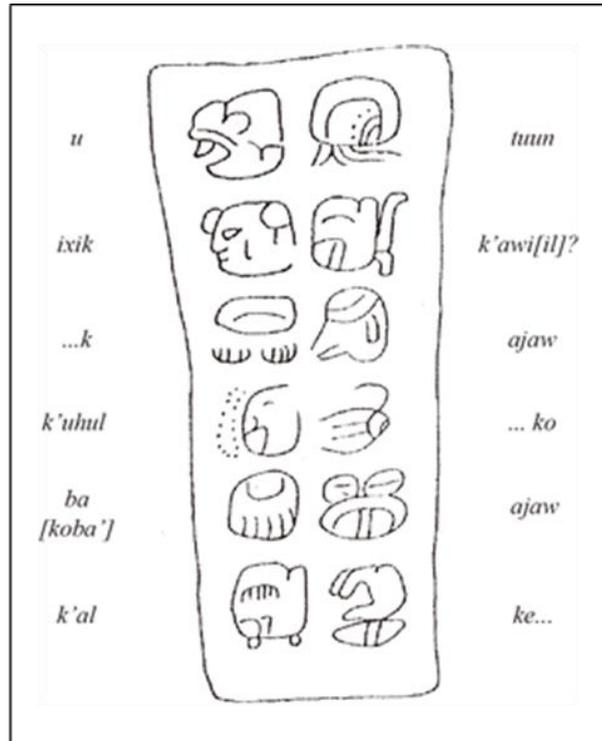
Figure 4. 9. Jadeite Plaque from Tomb 23 with a reference to Ix K'awill, Tikal. Drawing by David Stuart.

For Stanley Guneter, the lady from the plaque is none other than the great Ix K'awiil. This hypothesis is also supported by the dating of the tomb (late seventh century), which coincides with the last decades of Ix K'awiil's reign (Guenter 2014). It is unclear how this object made its way to Petén, but as Esparza Olguin noted, it may have been a gift from Ix

K'awiil to the ruler of Tikal ?[140] to honour some kind of alliance or relationship[141] (Esparza Olguin 2016: 294-296). It could also serve as a potential indicator of the relations that both entities maintained as an attempt to restrain the Kanu'l dynasty from its expansionist impetus, which, under the leadership of Yuknoom Ch'een II and his sons, reached maximum expression (Esparza Olguin 2016: 294-296). There are other indications that Coba pursued a more independent policy in the seventh and eighth centuries than has been assumed so far. This is evident not only in the inscriptions, but also in the Late Classic iconographic programme, which I will discuss in the following chapter.

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[140] Tomb 23 at Tikal may have contained the remains of Nuun Ujol Chahk (although Temple 35 is another candidate), who was defeated by his brother Bajlal Chan K'awill of Dos Pilas, the loyal ally of Calakmul (Martin and Grube 2008:43). On the other hand, a recent isotopic analysis by Lori Wright suggests that the individual buried in Tomb 23 spent his childhood outside of Tikal, at a place that was "located on limestone but with highland sourced water". He also had maxillary teeth inlaid with jadeite and hematite, an unusual custom for Tikal (Wright 2012:349). According to Chase and Chase, the individual buried in Tomb 23 is K'an II from Caracol. Tomb 23, which apparently belonged to a foreigner, has some characteristic features of Caracol burial practises (e.g., inlaid teeth). Scholars believe that after the defeat of Tikal by the combined forces of Caracol and the Kanu'l dynasty in the early seventh century, K'an II sought to demonstrate his dynastic rights to Tikal and was eventually buried there (Chase and Chase 2020:34-38). However, I am quite sceptical about this scenario. We cannot understand this theory by analogy and there is no epigraphic evidence for the origin of the figure buried in Tomb 23. Still, the elaborate burial of the "foreigner" suggests that he must have been a very important person for the Late Classic society of Tikal, recognised even by a distant ruler from Coba.

[141] Gift-giving by rulers to loyal subordinates or the exchange of gifts between allied territories was a common practice for Classic Maya. An example of this is the great variety of painted vessels that served as "products exchange" between various elites to establish and maintain political and social relations (Tokovinine 2016:21-24).

<u>4.3. 4 Yaxchilan</u>

Three women are related to "Itzamnaaj"[142] Bahlam III, but only one appears to have been the official wife of the king – Ix K'abal Xook. Interestingly, the successor of "Itzamnaaj" Bahlam III was the son of another woman - Ix Uh Chan Lem, a Kanu'l princess (Martin and Grube 2008:126), who also carried the title *aj k'uhuun*. Ix Uh Chan Lem was never mentioned in inscriptions during the lifetime of "Itzamnaaj" Bahlam III. It was her son Yaxuun Bahlam IV who introduced her to history. Yaxuun Bahlam IV acceded to the throne in AD 752 after a ten-year interregnum and made many efforts to demonstrate his legitimacy and secure his rights to the throne. The ruler legitimised his position in political discourse by highlighting his mother's prestigious lineage (Bradsley 1994; Vázquez López 2016:141). He presented his parents during bloodletting (mother on Stela 35 Fig.4.1) or when performing visionary rites[143] (e.g., Stelae 1 and 4) (Martin and Grube 2008:126-129; Tuszyńska 2009:7, 2016:240), frequently in direct imitation of images featuring "Itzamnaaj" Bahlam III and his official wife – Ix K'abal Xook. There are nine references to Ix Uh Chan Lem in Yaxchilan (Figure 4.10), but she is only mentioned as Ix Kanu'l ajaw on Stela 10 (Vázquez López 2016:143). It is possible that Yaxchilan was inclined more towards Tikal during the lifetime of "Itzamnaaj" Bahlam III and Ix Uh Chan Lem was his "minor wife".

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[142] Recently read as Kokaj

[143] including conjuring double-headed serpents and centipedes

During her lifetime, Ix Uh Chan Lem did not enjoy the same status as Ix K'abal Xook. This would explain why she languished in anonymity and why no monument was dedicated to her at that time. On the other hand, there must have been political reasons for having female *aj k'uhuun* from Calakmul at the Yaxchilan court. According to Boguchwała Tuszyńska, she must have come to Yaxchilan before AD 695, when Calakmul was still heights in its glory (Tuszyńska 2016:182).
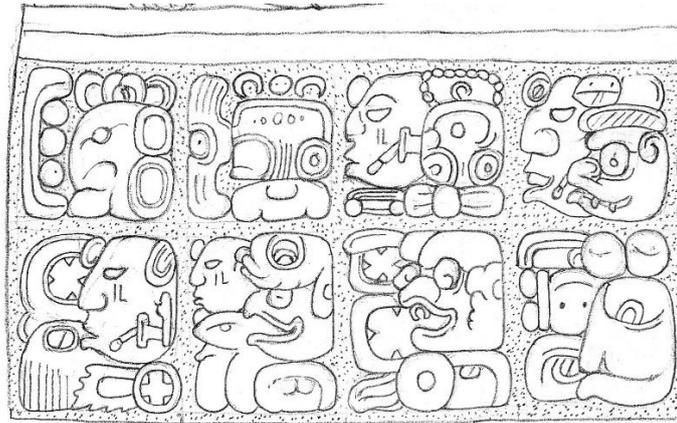
The presence of the Kanu'l lady at the court of Yaxchilan may attest to the increasing influence of Calakmul in the city. Thus, the arrival of Ix Uh Chan Lem may have signalled the beginning of a switch of alliance to Calakmul. Nevertheless, the power of Ix K'abal Xook and her lineage during the reign of her husband "Itzamnaaj" Bahlam III was too strong for Ix Uh Chan Lem to be immortalised on monuments.

This is consistent with the view of Houston and Stuart, who noted that "the practice of elite polygamy was relatively common but that only a few women were entitled to monumental representation" (Houston and Stuart 2001:66).

Ix K'abal Xook remained a powerful source of legitimation of power even after her death. Yaxuun Bahlam IV, even though he was not a son, honoured her memory through her rich burial and following important rituals (Bojkowska and Jabłońska 2018). She was given the title *kaloomte'* on inscriptions on some lintels (Lintels 24, 25) and *och k'in kaloomte'* title on Lintel 23 in contrast to Ix Uh Chan Lem who appears as *el k'in kaloomte'* on Stela 10 (Figure 4.11). These two different directions, followed by an important high-ranking title, may have had political implications. If one may speculate, Ix K'abal Xook could represent a faction supporting Tikal, as *och k'in kaloomte'* was a title associated with Teotihuacan and the New Order (Kovacs and Barrios 2012), while *el k'in kaloomte'* Ix Uh Chan Lem was associated with

240

the Kanu'l dynasty. As I presented in Chapter II, the title *el k'in kaloomte'* could indicate the Dzibanche origin of the individual carrying this title. Ix Uh Chan Lem could thus be from Dzibanche, but still, the marriage alliance was most likely approved by the Calakmul lords. Indeed, the title *kaloomte'* is often given to women from Kanu'l. This could also be the case with the Yo'okop queen.

4.3.5 Yo'okop

Although some authors have pointed out that Yo'okop remained under Coba during the Early and Late Classic Period (Robles and Andrews 1986:76), recent studies have pointed out the alternative scenario. Yo'okop could have been a border settlement, bringing together different traditions and styles from both the Petén and the Northern Lowlands were combined. Indeed, Yo'okop may have been under the influence of the Kanu'l kingdom as a result of the expansionist politics that the Snake kings forged for decades (Shaw 2001:60; Wren, et al. 2015). The Kanu'l lords likely wanted to control the goods and trade networks of Coba, which dominated the routes on the east coast of the peninsula and controlled the flow of various products such as honey, cotton, obsidian, wax or salt (Esparza Olguin 2016:293-294).According to Nygard and Wren, the name of the *kaloomte'* queen mentioned on Stone Block C[144] (Figure 4.12) represents the woman from the Kanu'l dynasty, sent to Yo'okop to cement an alliance through a marriage with the local lord. Scholars believe that the inscription of Block B, C, and D has to be read in a sequence. If so *Ix Chaak Kab*[145] may have ruled under the auspices of Sky Witness mentioned on Block B (Nygard and Wren 2008:7). In this scenario, as the *kaloomte'* lady, she may have had a superior status to her husband.

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[144] found in the same area as stone Block B

[145] Stones B, E and F recovered from Group A indicate that the 8 k'atun was celebrated in AD 593. Nygard and Wren assume that this event was celebrated by the Yo'okop queen under the auspices of Sky Witness, as the phrase *ukabij*, linking subordinates to their lords, is visible in a text (Nygard and Wren 2008:9).
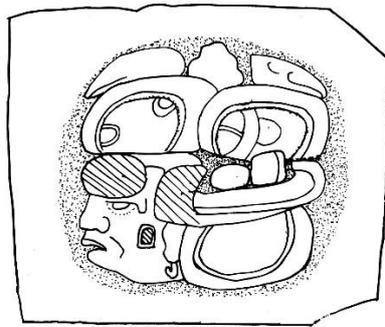
We should bear in mind, however, that these are only speculations since the context of the block stones is completely lost. An enduring problem is the question of the reading order of the stones. It might be worth considering whether all the blocks are from the same monument and, if so, in what order the hieroglyphic inscriptions should be read. It is striking that stones B, C and D were found near Structure S5E1-1, close to the large *aguada.* Nygard and Wren suggest that structure S5E1-1 served ritual purposes and that Ix Chaak Kab was involved in and responsible for these rituals. The logographic sign for the logogram HA', meaning sea, water, lake, and a sign for *nal,* meaning place, both associated with the queen on Block D, speak compellingly for this interpretation. Similarly, she was probably the patron of building S5E1-1. If she was indeed daughter of Kanu'l king, the public display of her power and status on a stairway was intended to strengthen her position and extend Kanu'l's dominant influence in the region (Nygard et al.2015:66; Wren et al. 2015:318-321).

4.4 The intermediary role of the Kanu'l dynasty in arranging marriages

Tracing the royal women through the inscriptions, it is clear that the Kanu'l dynasty also played an intermediary role in arranging marriages. Few cases show that the dynasty not only sent Kanu'l women to other regions to establish alliances, but also sent daughters of allies to other regions to bind them closer (Vázquez López 2016:192).

242

One of the earliest examples of the intermediary role of Kanu'l in arranging marriages comes from Caracol and is associated with the arrival of Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' from the kingdom of Yaxa in Caracol in AD 584, as recorded on Stela 3, Caracol. She became a junior wife of Yajaw Te' K'inich II, who had been in office for 31 years at that time and already had a son from a previous marriage (Martin and Grube 2008; Tuszyńska 2009:2; Zender, Awe and Martin 2016). The marriage between the young 18-year-old Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' and an ageing Yajaw Te' K'inich II was certainly politically motivated. Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' carried the title *k'uhul yax ajaw*, which is only known from two other inscriptions - Stela 52 from Calakmul and Stela 2 from Morales, a site allied with Calakmul. This would indicate a connection between Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' and the Kanu'l dynasty (Grube 1994:107). As Tuszyńska noted, the Kanu'l dynasty may have imposed the marriage between Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' and Yajaw Te' K'inich II in order to consolidate its dominance in the region and lead to the demise of Tikal (Tuszyńska 2016:91). At this time, Caracol was oscillating between two superpowers, the Mutul and Kanu'l dynasties, and the city's history marked several unexpected reversals in its political alignments. The marriage between Yajaw Te' K'inich II and Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' was probably instigated by the Kanu'l dynasty as part of its strategy to gain control over Caracol (Martin 2005b:3; Tuszyńska 2016:91). As a junior wife of Yajaw Te K'inich II, she possibly used her influence to bring her son K'an II to the throne and remained an important figure in the Caracol court during his reign. K'an II successfully sought to elevate and promote his mother's status, especially as he may have faced opposition from the faction that supported his half-brother "Knot Ajaw" [146]whom he succeeded on the throne.

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[146] The inscription on Stela 6 (AD 603) mentions that "Knot Ajaw" receives a royal crown from his father. Surprisingly, the text omits the Kanu'l dynasty. Perhaps "Knot Ajaw" was trying to break an alliance with the Snake head dynasty and was looking for support in Tikal (Vepretskii et al. 2021).

K'an II recorded the life of Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' on many monuments - from her birth, through many events she sanctioned and witnessed, to her death. She is also named in his parentage statement on Lintel 1, Naranjo and Step 3 of HS, Naranjo (Helmke and Awe 2016a:8). Apart from promoting his mother, K'an II showed himself to be a loyal ally of the Kanu'l dynasty.

In fact, all important events during K'an II 's reign were supervised by the Kanu'l king, e.g., his enthronement in AD 619 (Martin and Grube 2008:91). Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' seems not only to have approved of this oversight but also to have supported it. Furthermore, Caracol Stela 3 records the arrival of the god "Man-Eater" as a gift from the Kanu'l king Yuknoom Ti' Chan[147]. This event was seen by Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' (Baron 2013:396).

It has been suggested that the female burial in Structure B19-2 in the Caana complex (Figure 4.13) at Caracol was a resting place of Ix Tiwol Chan Ek'. The Caana complex, consisting of four palace compounds and three temples, was the most important structure at Caracol. It also contained several tombs, one of which, located in Structure B19-2, is the largest burial yet discovered at Caracol which belongs to a woman (Chase and Chase 1987).

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[147] The name of a gift-giver on Stela 3 is too eroded to be deciphered; however Hieroglyphic Stairway 4 of Naranjo records almost the same passage. The inscription states that "Man-Eater" arrived in Calakmul and was a gift from Tajoom Uk'ab K'ahk'.

This elaborate burial, furnished with eight ceramic vessels and ear flares must have belonged

to a very prominent woman. The inscription on the wall of her tomb chamber recorded a date

(Figure 4.14) falling in the year AD 634 (probably the year of her death), which has led scholars

to propose Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' as the owner of the tomb (Chase and Chase 1987, 1994, 2017).
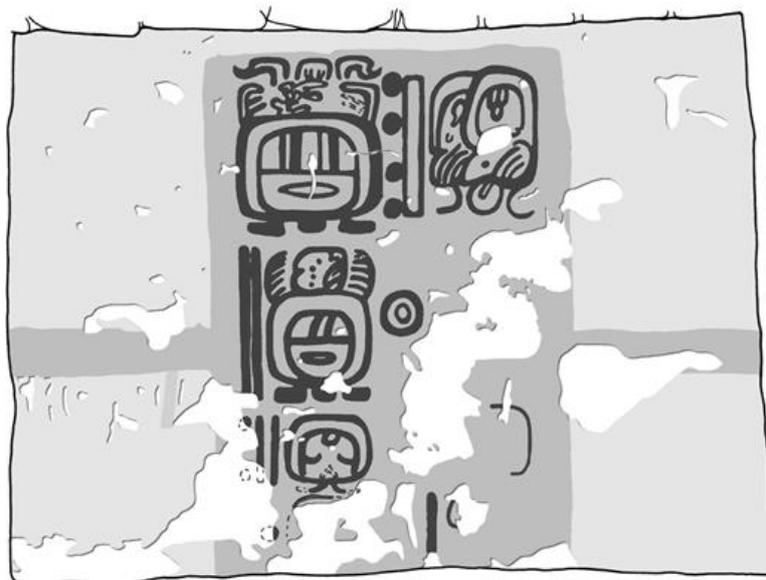
Figure 4. 14. The painted text on the rear wall of the Str. B19-2nd tomb, Caracol (after Chase and Chase 1987: Fig. 23).

However, recent discoveries at Xunantunich clearly show that Structure B19-2 did not house

the remains of Ix Tiwol Chan Ek'. Panel 3 found at Xunantunich, which once formed a

hieroglyphic stairway at Caracol, records her death on 23 September, AD 638, again raising the question of the identity of the woman buried in Structure B19-2 (Helmke and Awe 2016:9). If one may speculate, the wife of K'an II, who was not mentioned in any of the recorded inscriptions, might be a good candidate. As Caracol reveals strong ties with the Kanu'l dynasty during this period, there is a possibility that the woman came from the city under the influence of the Kanu'l (Bojkowska and Jabłońska 2018).

4.4. 2 Holmul

The inscription on a recently discovered frieze (Figure 4.15) in Building A at Holmul (dedicated around AD 593) indicates that its ruler was a grandson of "Aj Wosal" and a son of Ix Sak Chuwen from Naranjo. "Aj Wosal" probably sent his daughter to Holmul. The text also states Holmul's subordination to the Kanu'l dynasty and it is possible that the marriage between the Naranjo lady and the lord of Holmul was arranged by the Kanu'l dynasty (Estrada Belli and Tokovinine 2016:161-164).

Figure 4. 15. Archaeologist Anya Shetler cleaning inscription, Holmul Frieze, Building A. Photo by Francisco Estrada Belli.

By gaining a new ally, the Kanu'l dynasty extended its influence southwards and took control of important north-south trade routes. The route provided access to jade, basalt, and obsidian from the highlands of Guatemala, but omitted Kanu'l's arch-rival - Tikal. These political

charades must have happened at the expense of Tikal, which lost an important ally (Estrada Belli and Tokovinine 2016:161-164).

<u>4.4.3 Edzna and Dos Pilas</u>

There are also records of inter-dynastic marriages between Itzan princesses with Dos Pilas and Edzna lords. In the seventh century, Itzan became an ally of Dos Pilas and thus an ally of Calakmul. The presence of a royal Itzan woman in distant Edzna may have been inspired by the Kanu'l dynasty, for the marriage alliance must have been made at the same time that the Kanu'l emblem glyph appeared in Edzna (mid-seventh century). It seems that Yuknoom Ch'een II cemented the marriages between Itzan and Dos Pilas and Itzan and Edzna in order to consolidate the alliance between them and thus secure their loyalty and strengthen the supremacy of the Kanu'l dynasty (Bienavides and Gayol 2010:167-169).

Both Itzan princesses are mentioned in the parentage statements of their sons, who ruled in the second half of the seventh century. Stela 18 from Edzna (AD 672) mentions Jut? Chanek' as the mother of the 5th Edzna ruler Janahb Yook K'inich (Pallán 2009: 67-69), while Hieroglyphic Stairs 1 from Dos Pilas (dated between 698-726) refers to the Itzan lady as the mother of "Itzamnaaj' K'awiil" (Guenter 2003:29; Schele and Mathews 1991).

Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, the husband of the Itzan lady and father of "Itzamnaaj' K'awiil", took at least one other wife. Ix Bulu', the first wife of Balaj Chan K'awill of Dos Pilas, was the mother of Ix Wak Chan, who came to Naranjo to restore the dynasty after lengthy hiatus (Martin and Grube 2008; Tuszyńska 2009:3). It seems more than likely that both the marriage of Bajlaj Chan K'awiil to Itzan Lady and the arrival of his daughter in Naranjo were orchestrated by Yuknoom Ch'een II - the overlord of Bajlaj Chan K'awill and a powerful ally in Dos Pilas' clashes with Tikal.

I believe that it cannot be ruled out that after a victorious battle with Tikal in AD 679 (with the help of Calakmul) (Martin and Grube 2008; Tokovinine 2008:18-21), Bajlaj Chan K'awiil

sought to fulfil his ambitions to strengthen his position against his brother in Tikal. By sending the daughter to Naranjo, he could equally pursue his political goals and satisfy Kanu'l's overlord.

<u>4.4.4 Naranjo</u>

The arrival of a new princess in AD 682 was a pivotal moment in Naranjo's history and led to the establishment of a new royal lineage leaning towards Calakmul (Stuart 2010:3-4). The arrival of Ix Wak Chan came at a time of dynastic crisis and two months after Tikal king Jasaw Chan K'awiil acceded to the throne (Doyle 2005, Helmke 2017). The Kanu'l dynasty may have felt threatened by the rising power of the Mutul dynasty in Tikal, which had suffered a severe defeat at the hands of Calakmul three years earlier (AD 679) but had not lost its lineage. Jasaw Chan K'awiil, the son of the humiliated king Nuun Ujol Chahk, managed to take the throne in AD 682 and could thus pose a real threat to Calakmul. Under the circumstances in which the throne of Naranjo remained vacant, sending Ix Wak Chan to Naranjo (Figure 4.16) would be a logical step to secure Kanu'l's rights in the area and precede Tikal's actions. Calakmul sought to enforce the political and economic isolation of Tikal.

Figure 4. 16. Fragment of inscription relating the arrival of Ix Wak Chan in AD 682, Stela 29, Naranjo. Drawing by Christophe Helmke.

Naranjo, but also El Peru Waka' were crucial elements of this strategy, as they blocked access to important routes from east to west and thus affected Tikal's trade routes (Sharer and Traxler 2006:400).

The enthronement of the Coba king on the same day that Ix Wak Chan came to Naranjo could also be interpreted as securing the rights of the Kanu'l in the area (Stuart 2013b).

For Helmke, Ix Wak Chan's frequent reference to the king of early classic Naranjo - "Aj Wosal" - was meant to liken her long reign (even if she was not officially a queen) to his long reign (Helmke 2017:99). If one allows the assumption that she intentionally compares her deeds to those of "Aj Wosal", this could be due to his loyalty to Calakmul. By associating herself with the dynastic ancestor who had been a strong ally of Calakmul throughout his life, she confirmed her loyalty and allegiance to her Calakmul overlord. In this way, she was able to make a memorable impression on Calakmul's court and gain support. She could have used this support to put her son on the throne. The notable absence of K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk's father in the inscriptions could mean that K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk was not a legitimate and designated heir to the throne.

If Helmke is right, the battle could have been preceded by internal conflicts between two factions, each supporting a different candidate to the throne. "This leaves us with the impression of some sort of machination on the part of Ix Wak Chan, and it seems patent enough that she served as the dominant parental figure for much of his life, at the detriment of the father" (Helmke 2017:99). She put considerable effort into exercising influence over the young king. In iconography, the manifestation of her relationship with her son is best expressed in paired stelae where she faces him on the separate monument (e.g., Stelae 2 and 3, Stelae 29 and 30) (see Chapter V).

As regent for her son, she used the title *k'uhul mutul ajaw*, (divine lord of Dos Pilas), which denotes her origin from Dos Pilas (Tuszyńska 2016:85) 148, never assuming titles linked with Naranjo. According to Christophe Helmke, Ix Wak Chan may have exercised power in Naranjo from her arrival until her death in AD in 741, putting on the throne of Naranjo, her son K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk, his successor and perhaps a brother Yax Mayuy Chan Chaahk. therefore, she maintained the power and influence in the Naranjo court as regent (Helmke 2017:118). Presumably, Ix Wak Chan reinforced the army of Calakmul with the warriors of Naranjo and captured the Tikal lord Sihyaj K'awiil at the place called K'an ? Tuhl in AD 695 (Doyle 2005:3-8, Martin and Grube 2008:76, Zender Awe and Martin 2016). The revenge of Tikal came shortly after. The capture of the Naranjo lord in a battle between Calakmul and Tikal later that year suggests direct Naranjo involvement in the conflict and proves the loyalty of the Naranjo elite to Calakmul.

Two elaborate vessels manufactured in the Naranjo region that found their way to Calakmul may also attest to the close relations between the two cities (Boucher 2012:206).

4.4 5 Piedras Negras

Ceramics is also a good indicator of contacts between Namaan (La Florida) and La Corona. Inscriptions on one of the late seventh century vessels recovered from the fill of the palace

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[148] Interestingly, the name Ix Wak Chan Jalam Ajaw is attributed to different women in the history of the Classic Maya. The same name belonged to a wife of Chak Tok Chahk from La Corona, a princess from Motul de San Jose who was married to Yaxuun Bahlam IV from Yaxchilan, a princess from Naaman and a lady from Oxpemul. As Grube noted, the nominal phrase of these names (among others) consists of a logogram T284, that he believes stands for the word *jalam*, which, if the identification is correct, could mean weaver. The title *jalam* is always used in connection with the expression "six sky" and associated with the Maize God and the Moon Goddess. Therefore, like the other women carrying the same name, Ix Wak Chan of Naranjo associated herself with the Moon Goddess in her aspect of a weaver (Grube 2016).

complex at La Corona mentions the Namaan lord Sihyaj Chan K'awiil, who also carried the title *K'uhul Chatahn winik*. The connection between the two sites may indicate the extension of Kanu'l influence also westward along the San Pedro River (Baron 2014:7, Canuto, and Barrientos 2015:7-10), which apparently reached Piedras Negras on the north bank of the Usumacinta River. The marriages of Itzam K'an Ahk (639-686) and his son K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II (686-729) of Piedras Negras to Namaan princesses (Baron 2014; Jørgensen and Krempel 2014:101) may be indirectly related to the Kanu'l expansionism enforced by Yuknoom Ch'een II (Canuto and Barrientos 2014:247-269).The arrival of Ix Naaman Ajaw[149] to Piedras Negras to marry Itzam K'an Ahk II in AD 665 is marked on Stela 8 with the aforementioned verb *hul*, carrying political implications (Jørgensen and Krempel 2014:100-101). Itzam K'an Ahk II orchestrated the marriage of his son Kooj (K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II) to Ix Winakhaab, who also came from Namaan. The wedding ceremonies began on 16 November, AD 686 Ix Winakhaab quickly became a prominent figure at the court of Piedras Negras (Baron 2014; Jørgensen and Krempel 2014:101; Martin and Grube 2008:145; Zender et al. 2015) and references to her are found on Stelae 1, 3, 8 (Figure 4.17) and grave goods from Burial 5 (Lopez 2003).

These two marriages seem to attest not only to a long and friendly relationship between Namaan and Piedras Negras, but probably also to the great interest of the Kanu'l in maintaining these alliances.

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[149] tentatively read by Jørgensen and Krempel as Ixchuwaj? Sak? (Jørgensen and Krempel 2014:100).
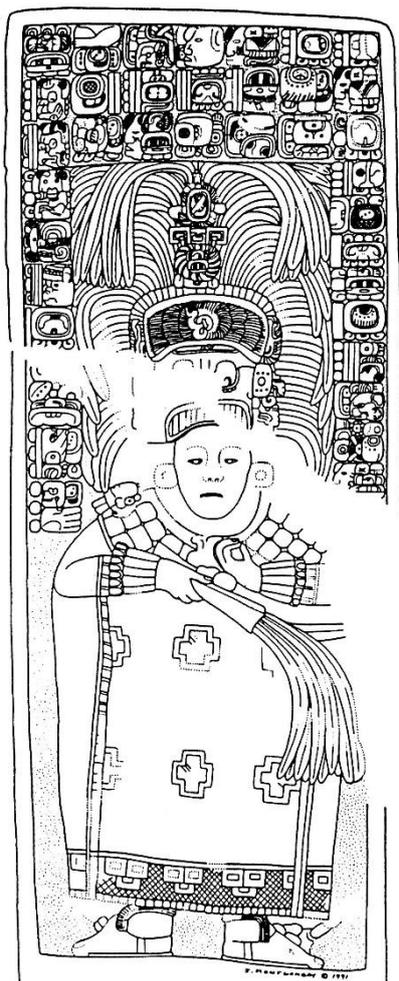
4.6 The role of marriage alliances in Kanu'l's expansion plan

The marriage alliances established by the K'anu'l dynasty involved the transfer of status, material goods and political authority from a dominant centre to subordinated areas/allies. Women were the agents of these changes.

Marriage alliances served as strategies to expand social networks and, in the case of powerful families, also promoted the expansion and consolidation of their political territory (Vázquez López 2016:200). The involvement of La Corona and El Peru Waka in long-distance trade, through which goods such as obsidian, granite, and jadeite from the southern Lowlands and the Motagua region circulated, suggests that their source of legitimate power legitimation was

252

closely linked to the Kanu'l dynasty (Canuto and Barrientos 2013:2). Through these alliances, Calakmul improved access to the south of Petén and built a hegemonic bloc against Tikal.

The arrangement of marriages was also fundamental to the process of social and political regeneration. The benefits were reciprocal for both groups. The Kanu'l dynasty formed more stable and lasting alliances by forging kinship ties and producing heirs to the throne who became their loyal vassals. These types of partnerships are considered stronger than strategies based on violence and coercion (Vázquez López 2016:200).

The marriage of Kanu'l women to local lords allowed the Snake dynasty to achieve its goals.

The biological bonds provided political stability, which helped to consolidate power and expand and achieve political goals without additional costs. The ties between two lineages served various purposes; they helped the Kanu'l avoid wars, establish productive alliances, strengthen social ties, and facilitate trade contacts (Evans 2008:326). This may have given the Kanu'l access to tribute for generations without having to fight for it. It would have been more complicated than making someone a direct vassal, but if a rival kingdom was powerful, marriage was a good choice (Elizabeth Graham personal communication 2022).

Not only were marriages established, but inter-group relations were also strengthened. The strategies based on the creation of social units proved fruitful, especially when the domination of Kanu'l began to collapse after the defeat of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' in AD 695. La Corona, Dos Pilas, Yaxchilan and Naranjo maintained close relations with Calakmul in the first half of the eighth century (Martin and Grube 2008; Vázquez López 2017:34). On the other hand, the strategy of encircling Tikal through alliances based on marriages did not fulfil its primary purpose - to keep Tikal out of power in the longer term. In the second half of the seventh century, Tikal was surrounded by the Calakmul-affiliated sites - Naranjo, Dos Pilas, Yaxchilan, Piedras Negras, El Peru Waka' and La Corona. Nevertheless, the long-standing enemy of Calakmul managed to regain power and defeat Calakmul in AD 695. As Estrada Belli and

Tokovinine cogently argued, "the Kanu'l strategy of allowing, if not encouraging, regional hegemonies within its own broader area of influence may be at the root of the rapid emergence of regional kingdoms centred on Naranjo, Dos Pilas, Yaxchilán, Piedras Negras, Palenque, and Tonina after the first major setback suffered by Kanu'l in the late seventh century A.D" (Estrada Belli and Tokovinine 2016: 164).

In all likelihood, the Kanu'l dynasty with its strategy of incorporating local elite through marital alliances contributed to the rise of these polities. This strategy was employed for the first time in the Middle Classic Period.

In the sixth century, there are only a few sites where women directly or indirectly connected to the Kanu'l domination were sent to establish bonds: La Corona, Caracol, Holmul, possibly El Peru Waka' and Yo'okop. They were located far from the Kanu'l capital in Dzibanche. In the case of La Corona and El Peru Waka', they acted as important bridgeheads for Kanu'l's plans to expand southwards in the first half of the sixth century. The women sent to these kingdoms acted as diplomatic representatives of their fathers' interests.

The strategy of a marriage alliance became particularly evident in the second half of the seventh century. It is very likely that it was the young Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk who arranged a marriage for his female relatives on behalf of his old father Yuknoom Ch'een II.

He had already been endowed with power and appointed ruler during his father's lifetime (Martin 2017a). In this scenario, Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' intensified the already existing alliance with La Corona and El Peru Waka' by sending his sisters there. He would also play a mediating role in arranging marriages (e.g., Piedras Negras, Naranjo). In fact, the intermediary role in arranging marriages increased in the second half of the seventh century. The reason for this could be prosaic - the number of women in the Kanu'l royal family was not sufficient to cover all the places Calakmul sought to ally. Nevertheless, I believe that political motivations were behind the increase in marriage alliances in the second half of the seventh century. I argue

that Kanu'l authority began to wane slightly a few decades before the clash with Tikal in AD 695 and that the increase in Kanu'l-inspired interdynastic marriages was related not only to Kanu'l attempts to expand their sphere of influence in the Maya Lowlands, but also to maintaining control over a pre-existing relationship that required reinforcement.

As I mentioned in Chapter II, the reclaiming of Santa Elena with the help of Piedras Negras in AD 662 (Martin 2003:46-47; Mumary Farto 2020; Pallan 2010:5) led to a reordering of the Kanu'l's political strategy - the dynasty had to negotiate to achieve its goals.

. One of the forms of negotiation was alliances, considered as an effective response to changing socio-political conditions. The advantages of the marriage alliance outweighed the disadvantages such as the division of control and the imbalance of power.

Alliances also required compromise (Cursi 2014:187; White 2018:599; Wohloforth 2007). The second arrival of Kanu'l women in La Corona and El Peru Waka' (both in the second half of the seventh century) was probably prompted by weakening relations between the Kanu'l dynasty and some of its allies. Consequently, the marriages were a means of strengthening cooperation with the local lords. In this way, the initial alliances were sustained and assured.

Even more revealing is the intermediary role of Kanu'l in arranging marriages. Princesses sent to other places were the key political players representing their family's interests (Bojkowska and Jabłońska 2018, Canuto et al. 2014, Jabłońska 2016; Teufel 2006; Tuszyńska 2016; Vázquez López 2016, 2017). Therefore, the affiliation to the Kanu'l dynasty may have been stronger in the places where the Kanu'l rulers sent their daughters [150].Non-Kanu'l princesses (e.g. Itzan ladies sent to Edzna and Dos Pilas, Ix Sak Chuwen sent to Holmul, or even Ix Wak Chan in Naranjo) may have identified more with their dynasty or the dynasty of their husbands than with the powerful Snake dynasty.

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[150] Alliances between family members (e.g., daughter and father) are usually stronger (Keesing 1975).

I believe that Kanu'l's intermediary role in arranging marriages opened up wide-ranging opportunities for the local elite to rise to power and assume a regional leadership role.

Local dynasties were able to achieve their goals and realise their ambitions while following the political orders of their superlords - the Snake kings.

This is, for example, the case of Naranjo during the reign of "Aj Wosal" - by sending his daughter to Holmul (Estrada Belli and Tokovinine 2016:164). - he consolidated his power and fulfilled the political demands of Kanu'l. This could also be the case with Ix Wak Chan, who was a dominant mother during the reign of her son K'ahk Tiliw Chan Chahk and effectively led war campaigns[151] (Helmke 2017; Kettunen 2012; Martin and Grube 2008). They became powerful leaders leading regional independent politics.

The branch of the Kanu'l family that moved to Calakmul employed the same marriage alliance strategies but added some elements: visual representations of the alliance in the form of paired stelae (García Barrios and Vázquez López 2011; Jabłońska 2016; Marcus 1987; Vázquez López 2016, 2017). The increase in interdynastic marriages was reflected in the increase in the importance of women and their public display. "The frequency and prominence of stelae pairs displayed at Calakmul emphasizes women's importance as essential partners in rulership and underscores their agency in political affairs" (Navarro Farr et al. 2020:45).

It appears that there are at least ten marriage alliances inspired or arranged by Calakmul in the seventh century (El Peru, La Corona, Yaxchilan, Naranjo, Piedras Negras x2, Edzna, Dos Pilas, Uxul, Naachtun), but only five dated to the sixth century (La Corona, El Peru, Caracol, Holmul, Yo'okop) and only three dated to the eighth century (La Corona, Naachtun and perhaps Oxpemul). The first marriage alliances orchestrated by the Kanu'l dynasty attested by

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[151] For instance, Stela 22 from Naranjo dated to AD 702, records burnt places in the Valley of Belize between AD 696 and AD 698.

iconography are attested in Calakmul and perhaps in the nearest vicinity of Calakmul - in Uxul (Grube 2008:218-223; Ruppert and Denison 1943), the last perhaps in Naachtun.

4.7 Women in the vicinity of Calakmul

4.7.1 Calakmul

There are several references to Kanu'l queens who resided at Calakmul and were depicted as wives of Kanu'l kings (Marcus 1974, 2012; Proskouriakoff 1961). There is no doubt that royal Maya women from Late Classic Calakmul were depicted at public events, as expressed in several paired stelae from the period AD 623 to AD 771[152]. They were presented personifying deities (Stela 9 – personified deity Ho' Huun Tzihkal? K'uh Ix), scattering rite – *chok* event (Figure 4.18) (Lintel 1 from Structure VII, Stela 28, Stela 116) or vision rites (Stelae 28, 54, 88) (Marcus 1987:149-170; Tuszyńska 2016:197, 203, 216-217).

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[152] The first paired stelae – Stelae 28 and 29 are dated to AD 623, the last one – Stelae 57 and 58 were erected in AD 771, possibly during the reign of B'olon K'awiil from the Bat dynasty (Martin and Grube 2008:115).
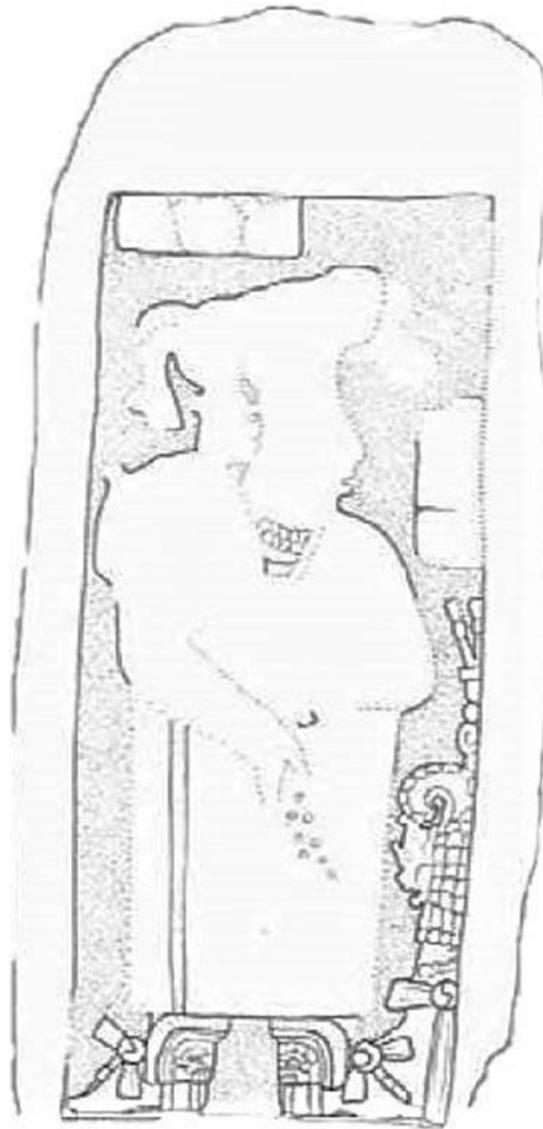
Figure 4. 18. Lintel 1, Calakmul. Scattering rite. Drawing by Rocio G arcia Valgañon.

They were also interred in elaborate burials - for example, in Tomb 1 (Figure 4.19) of Structure

XV and probably belonged to the wife of Yuknoom Ch'een II (García Moreno and Granados

2000:31; Pilsbury et al. 2017: 212). The identity of the female skeletons is supported by the

iconography of Stela 79, which depicts a powerful queen. Furthermore, Stela 79, which is

located in front of Structure XV, falls within the lifetime of Yuknoom Ch'een II. The recent

reading of Stela 33, Calakmul by Sergei Vepretskii allows us to place Yuknoom Ch'een II in a

new historical context. According to the researcher, the inscription on Stela 33 contains the

parentage statement of Yuknoom Ch'een II with Scroll Serpent as the father and the previously

unknown Ix K'abel - who is *Chiik Nahb Ajaw* - as the mother. If he is right, Yuknoom Ch'een

II would then move to his mother's hometown and live there. He would also name his daughter after her grandmother (Vepretskii and Savchenko 2022).

Unfortunately, the names of the other late classic queens of Calakmul are not legible due to the poor preservation of the stone monuments. Therefore, I base my discussion of the royal women of Calakmul on their images, which I will discuss in the following chapter. We know even less about the women at the court of Oxpemul. Stela 14, which is only partially preserved and is paired with Stela 16 and dated to the first half of the eighth century, may have carried the portrait of a queen. Fortunately, the inscriptions from Naachtun and Uxul refer to women who were directly (Naachtun) or indirectly (Uxul) affiliated to the Kanu'l dynasty.

4.7.2 Naachtun

At Naachtun there is only one clear reference to a Kanu'l woman in the hieroglyphic corpus of the site's inscriptions. It comes from Stela 10 (Morley 1938: figures 41d-e, 151e), which is located to the south of the Structure XX on the North Plaza of Group A. Stela 10 is largely obliterated but there is a clear reference to Kanu'l woman, daughter of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil.
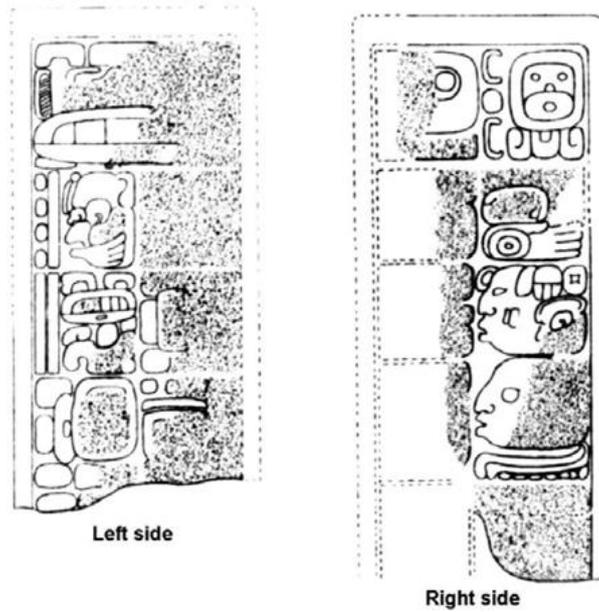
Figure 4. 20. Stela 10, Naachtun. Drawing by Sylvanus Morley.

The text mentions Ix Kanu'l ajaw (Figure 4.20 and 4.21) engaged in *k'altuun* event (wrapping of the stone), an important ceremony associated with the Period Ending, which the lady presided over in AD 761 (Garay 2019:120). There is no inscription at Naachtun to suggest that the princess of Kanu'l married a local lord, but the similarly dated Stela 18, which depicts a woman and is paired with Stela 19, may indicate an alliance of Naachtun with another kingdom, probably Calakmul. Perhaps the lady on Stela 18 is the same woman mentioned on Stela 10.
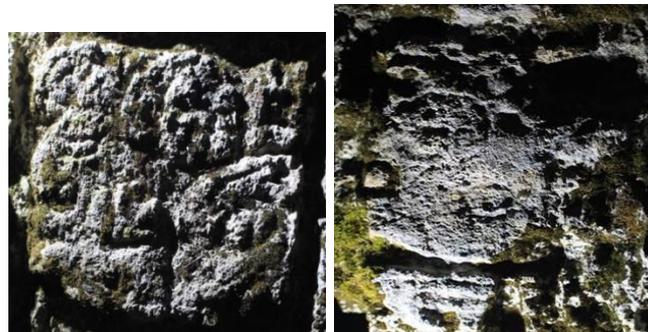
Figure 4. 21. Details of inscriptions from Stela 10, Naachtun. Block D3 with the reference to the Ix Kanu'l (left)and Block D4 (right) with the possible reference to Yuknoom Took' K'awill. Photo by Alejandro Garay.

260

4.7.3 Uxul

Stela 2, paired with Stela 3 in Uxul, dated to AD 633, contains the image of a woman. She carries *K'uhul Chatahn winik* and *Sak Wahyis* titles associated in the Late Classic Period with the Kanu'l dynasty (Grube 2008: 218-221). The erection of Stelae 2 and 3 at Uxul was certainly inspired by the Kanu'l dynasty. However, if one assumes that the paired stelae of Naachtun and Oxpemul represent the royal couple, they must have had a different meaning than the paired Stelae 2 and 3 from Uxul, which were erected more than a hundred years earlier. The elaboration of this consideration follows in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

ICONOGRAPHY AND STYLE OF CALAKMUL'S IMPERIALISM

(AD 600-750)

5.1 Introduction

The kings of Kanu'l pursued various strategies to subordinate and incorporate other centres, which in turn helped them create a system of hegemonic control (Foias 2013, Hammond 1991; Jabłońska 2016; Marcus 1987, 2012:110; Martin and Grube 1994, 1995, Smith 2003; Vázquez López 2017:12). These strategies of domination, when considered in a suitably broad context, now allow for a reassessment of the relationship between political control, art, and power. Apparently, there was no single strategy used by the Kanu'l dynasty to gain a new ally. The nature of the contacts depended on local factors (geographical, historical, or economic), general politics and/or personal relationships. The resulting forms of cooperation with other sites could range from direct subordination to political patronage to alliance. Consequently, different degrees of integration with the centre were achieved (Marcus 2006:212).

One of the ways to demonstrate political affiliation to the Kanu'l dynasty was to imitate its style and symbols. The provincial elite emulated the style and iconography of Late Classic Calakmul by incorporating and repeating its artistic conventions. This chapter draws on a rich body of iconographic data to show how political domination is expressed in art.

The vast quantity of catalogued iconographic material enables us to discuss a whole range of new issues concerning the relationship between art and power in the Calakmul network. The centralization of power in Calakmul at the beginning of the seventh century was a key moment for the mobilization of iconography to further the socio-political interests of the kingdom.

It is also important to understand how the local elite viewed Kanu'l's characteristic visual representations. The way they imitated and integrated the iconographic patterns of Kanu'l power says a lot about the kind of relationship they established with the hegemon.

Stelae and panels representing kings and queens were a prime vehicle for the dissemination of a simple message of power. Of course, there were a variety of media that Kanu'l could use for this task. Codex-style ceramics could carry similar narratives. However, monumental stelae and ballgame panels, because of their public character, offered unique qualities that reinforced the coded message and served as part of the narrative itself. Through the codex-style pottery, the Kanu'l demonstrated their claim to genealogical and mythological ascendancy in Calakmul by going through the pattern of standardised and conventionalised representations - the influence/dominance over other territories.

Stelae, above all, had several distinct advantages over other media. They took an active role in the ancient Maya realm, being not only a block of stone but also an essential part, an avatar, of the representative (Stuart 1996: 165). Stones like rulers possessed a divine soul *k'uh* and were considered similar to living beings (Stuart 2010a:286-291).

The term for stela - *lakamtuun* can be read as "banner stone", suggesting that cloth or some other perishable material was combined with the monument (Houston 2016; Stuart 2010b). "Stone may have been visible, then covered, then uncovered again. Carvings were less about sustained legibility than intermittent exposure or, in a paradox, their "concealed presence'," an understanding that something was there but removed from public gaze" (Houston 2016). Most stelae commemorated Period Endings ceremonies. "As stelae encompass a number of religious

and political messages that were carried into public spaces, the dedication of stelae undoubtedly helped stabilize the institution of the kingship, which was renewed at the advent of each future cycle. Stelae incarnated not only sacred periods but also incarnated real people and ceremonial actions represented on these stelae" (Stuart 2010a:286-291). The erection of stelae at the Period Endings echoes the amalgamation of rituals and religion with political power. Stelae played an important role in the establishment and negotiation of power and social hierarchy and as such could be manipulated to achieve specific political goals. As an active participant in rituals, stelae may have served as a means to reinforce the message conveyed in inscriptions or images. Images were seen as an extension of the self of the figures depicted - a perpetual and ever-acting manifestation of kings, queens, and the elite (Gillespie 2008; Houston and Stuart 1998:86). This discussion is also about the relationship between monuments and their location. Squares, as places where public events took place, had a political significance. They provided space for large numbers of people and enabled them to experience the performances together. Inomata described plazas as theatrical spaces through which the ruler conveyed his authority and disseminated political propaganda (Inomata 2006:806-835). Public monuments played a similar role.

Stelae from Late Classic Calakmul had great political significance. From AD 633, Calakmul's allies and vassals such as Uxul, El Peru Waka' or Naranjo began to erect stelae and panels with iconography characteristic of Calakmul (Grube et al. 2012; Marcus 1987; Tuszyńska 2016). As Veronica Vázquez López has noted, these coded visual media correspond to patterns that can be identified as indicators of cooperation and integration strategies of social units (Vázquez López 2016:334). We can also consider the role of these images in the political propaganda and machinations of the ancient Maya.

The spatial-temporal analysis I use in this chapter to describe visual representations characteristic of Kanu'l power provides a wide range of information about the manifestation of

rulership. Another advantage of spatiotemporal analysis in describing standardised iconographic patterns is that it can be examined at different levels. The number of Kanul's related motifs and themes at, *inter alia*, Calakmul, El Peru Waka', La Corona, Uxul, Naachtun or Dos Pilas, allows them to be traced through cultural and historical narratives. As I mentioned in the first chapter, my dissertation aims to examine the iconographic program of secondary kingdoms of Calakmul in the Late Classic Period. Calakmul under the Kanu'l dynasty, exerted and imposed some authority over the sites in its immediate vicinity (Grube 2005: 100; Marcus 1976). The elites of La Corona, Uxul, Oxpemul and Naachtun, were involved in the broad system of Late Classic interactions and played an important role in Late Classic Maya politics. Symbols and motifs characteristic of Calakmul are also found in the public monuments of these sites. Areas that were distant from the hegemonic centre may have adopted imperial art as highly prestigious or powerful (Smith and Montiel 2001:248-250). Sites distant from Calakmul repeated art conventions characteristic of Kanu'l to identify with the great city of Calakmul, enhance its prestige, and/or mark political alliance with the Kanu'l dynasty (García Barrios and Vázquez López 2011; Jabłońska 2016; Marcus 2012, 1987; Tuszyńska 2016; Vázquez López 2016, 2017:20; Vázquez López and Kupprat 2018). Locations closest to the hegemon tend to be more closely intertwined with their overlords. Distance appears to be an important factor in the Calakmul's exercise of power. As Chase and Chase noted, extended territorial control beyond 3 days' march or 60 km is difficult (Chase and Chase 1998, 2011:98). In areas closest to the hegemon, we tend to expect the greatest degree of similarity to the art of the capital, as it could be easily directed and controlled by those who were in charge (Chase and Smith 2009:181; Musholt 2018:143; Nielsen 2003; Smith and Montiel 2001). Imposition of the style is particularly evident (but not exclusive) at sites in close proximity to the capital. The sites of Oxpemul, Uxul and Naachtun are therefore important

examples to test the hypothesis about the role of iconography as a factor of political control. They are located 25 km, 30 km, and 36 km from Calakmul, respectively.

In the following sub-chapters, I will present arguments that the degree of integration with Kanu'l depends not only on the physical distance from the capital, but also on the Calakmul's particular socio-political plans towards the other kingdoms and the position of the latter in the wider Late Classic geopolitics. Each Late Classic Kanu'l leader reigned in exceptional and changing socio-political circumstances that required the use of different propaganda strategies and a new meaning of power. When discussing the relationships between Calakmul and Uxul, Naachtun, Oxpemul and La Corona, the line between imitation of the Kanu'l iconographic style on the one hand and its forced adoption on the other is quite fine and sometimes it is difficult to discern a difference between them in the iconographic records. The question of whether the Naachtun, Uxul, Oxpemul and La Corona elite imposed or imitated the iconographic canon is as significant as it is challenging.

As examples from other Maya regions demonstrate (e.g., Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan), political relationships between kings and their subordinate nobles varied both temporally and spatially (Golden et al. 2008:267-269). The period of imitation of style may be followed by imposition; indeed, both may operate simultaneously. Obviously, the control strategies introduced by the Kanu'l dynasty in Oxpemul differ from those observed in Uxul and Naachtun. All these strategies are in turn different from those used in El Peru Waka', La Corona, Naranjo, or Coba.

Iconography and style are good examples and indicators of different spectrums of dependence on the hegemon. Therefore, following the example of style and iconography, in order to understand the relations between Calakmul and its close neighbours in the Late Classic period, a broader comparison must be made.

I believe that the visual programme of Naachtun, Oxpemul, Uxul and La Corona cannot be analysed without the reference to other visual programmes of sites more distant to Calakmul. Only by comparing them can we see how strategies of political control are expressed in the iconography. Comparison will also help me to see how the use of repetitive visual representations worked in the formation and consolidation of the power of the superstate. Providing such contextual data will help me understand how the Kanu'l rulers reinforced their political control through visual representations in the areas within a 30-40km radius of Calakmul. It will also enable me to understand the role of politics in creating public art in shaping politics. To be explicit, visual strategies seem to have been active agents in the process of constructing a hegemonic state. My intention is therefore not to provide a complete iconographic description of the individual monuments, but to consider and "scan" them in an appropriate socio-political context.

In the sections that follow, I will present four characteristics of Kanu'l art conventions:

1) paired stelae,

2) ballgame,

3) net costume,

4) woman standing on the captive

I will analyse their role in establishing and negotiating power and social hierarchy across time and space.

5.2 Paired Stelae (Catalogue Paired Stelae Figure 1-39)

Paired stelae are those that generally represent a male-female pair, usually corresponding to the royal couple. Paired stelae were usually erected at the bases of platforms supporting buildings or at the entrance to structures. Most of the paired stelae are formed by two stelae placed in such a way that the couple faces each other. In other cases, the ruler is depicted on the front of the stelae and the spouse on the back. When stelae were erected at plazas only the front part was visible to the public, while the back was restricted only to a small group of people, the highest elite, who were closely associated with the royal couple (Marcus 1987; Miller 1973; Proskouriakoff 1993; Stewart 2008; Tuszyńska 2016:249; Vázquez López 2016:60).

Figure 5A. 1. The distribution of paired stelae. Recompiled by author.

The pattern of paired stelae (Figure 5A.1) has been interpreted as an indicator of kinship relationships between the individuals depicted on the monuments. Tatiana Proskouriakoff was the first to notice that the pattern of paired stelae reflected marriage alliances (Proskouriakoff 2007 [1985]:59-61). Since her work, however, other ideas regarding paired stelae have

emerged over time and have been the subject of many debates. Apparently, paired stelae did not always represent pairs of kings. The paired stelae at Naranjo, for example, depicted the dominant queen Ix Wak Chan and her son Kahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk (Helmke 2017:102). Also, Stelae 28 and 29 from Calakmul may display the image of Yuknoom Ch'een II with his mother Ix K'abel (Sergei Vepretskii personal communication 2022) (see later this chapter). They do not even always depict two different genders - examples from Uxul and Oxpemul show portraits of a local ruler, each on a separate monument (Grube 2008; Jabłońska 2016; Robichaux 2010).

In terms of arrangement, the stelae may be in a row of three (El Peru Waka'), four (Calakmul, Naranjo) five (Calakmul) or even eight (Piedras Negras). A good example is Stela 35 from El Peru Waka', which in AD 711 complemented paired Stelae 33 and 34 erected in AD 692. Stela 35 depicts a male person looking towards the queen depicted on Stela 34. He could be the son of K'inich Bahlam II (Wanyerka 1996: 81-82) and his wife Ix "K'abel", who are depicted on Stelae 33 and 34 respectively (Guenter 2005a: 372-383, Guenter 2014a:156, Miller 1974). Similarly, Stelae 6 (female) and 8 (male), located in front of the central staircase of structure M13-1, the largest ritual structure in El Peru Waka', may have formed a triad with Stela 7 between them (Guenter 2014a:158).

Likewise, when examining the spatial and temporal distribution of paired stelae, we can note that the earliest evidence for paired stelae slightly predates Kanu's presence at Calakmul. Stela 5 from El Zapote (AD 439) (Reese-Taylor et al. 2009; Schele et al. 1992) and Stela 1 from Tulum, dated by Tatiana Proskouriakoff to AD 564 (1950:11), are double-sided monuments with the portrait of the king on the front and that of the queen on the back. Calakmul probably adopted the pattern of depicting kings on a double-sided stela. More frequent however, was the depiction of a royal couple on two separate monuments, a pattern certainly introduced by the Kanul' dynasty from their seat in Calakmul.

One of the first references to paired stelae perhaps comes from Champerico. Its Stela 2 (AD 603) probably formed a pair with a stela of unknown origin, which is now in the Museum Baluarte, Campeche, Mexico. Both stelae show a person holding a plate, looking to the right (Stela 2) and to the left (Stela from the Baluarte Museum). Inscriptions contain the name of the ruler, which includes the logogram Chaak on both monuments. In addition, an ambiguous text on Stela 2 mentions a woman, perhaps referring to the figure depicted (Grube 2008:189). Champerico is located only 33 km southeast of Calakmul. If the two monuments are pair, their presence at Champerico would attest to the relationship with the branch of the Kanu'l dynasty that moved to Calakmul and provide an additional argument for the early relocation of the seat (see Chapter II). Indeed, the real surge of paired stelae began in Calakmul and is dated to AD 623. From this point on, paired stelae spread to many sites, especially those affiliated to Calakmul (see Table 1) (Arredondo Leiva 2010; Esparza Olguin 2016; Graham 1972; Graham and von Euw 1997; Grube 2008; Stewart 2008; Stuart and Graham 2003). These conventionalised images of kings continued in the iconographic record.

5.2.1 Calakmul

The prominent location of paired stelae in the main complexes of Calakmul clearly reinforced their status as embodiments of royal power. They were placed either in the Main Plaza, a ceremonial area, and the most significant public sector of the city (Stelae 9, 23 and 24, 28 and 29, 51-55) or on the Great Acropolis, which is considered a palace complex (Stelae 57 and 58 and 75-77-79). Although it is not always possible to decipher the identity of the royal couple, it is assumed that paired stelae at Calakmul represented late classic kings and their wives (Joyce 1996, 2000; Marcus 1987:135-147, 1992; Stewart 2009). The earliest stelae Stelae 28 and 29, however, in all probability depict Yuknoom Ch'een II (Stela 29) with his mother "Ix K'abel" (Stela 28), who carries the title *Chiik Nahb ajaw*. Yuknoom Ch'een II is mentioned on both monuments, while Stela 28, although the name of the lady depicted has

been obscured, contains the same date (AD 586) as on Stela 33, where it appears in connection with "Ix K'abel". This led Sergei Vepretskii to assume that it was the same person (Sergei Vepretskii personal communication 2023).

The identity of the other kings' female companions remains more obscure (Martin 1998). The poor quality of the stone makes it impossible to reconstruct the names and titles of the queens. However, the Late Classic Calakmul kings must have married very prominent ladies, since from the second half of the seventh century the royal women were depicted at Calakmul on the right side, which is considered dominant in Maya art (Houston 1998:341). This is the case with the paired Stelae 79 and 75, 23 and 24, and Stelae 52 and 54 (Delvendahl 2008; Marcus 1987; Martin 2012:155-177; Tuszyńska 2016:252; Velásquez García and Payan 2006: 348)

Remarkably, these paired stelae seem to have been designed in such a way that the women could be considered equal to their husbands or even higher in rank. Pursuing this theme, the position of the stelae representing the wives could reflect the queens' aspirations and ambitions to be treated as rulers. Perhaps the wives of these two great Late Classic Kanu'l kings were the daughters of *K'uhul Chatahn-Winik* lords, producers of codex-style vases, if we consider the close but still enigmatic relationships between the *K'uhul Chatahn-Winik* lords and the late classic Calakmul rulers. The first female portrait on the right stela belongs possibly to the wife of Yuknoom Ch'een II. Her image is captured on Stela 79 along with Stelae 75 or 77, all of which are located in front of Structure XV (Delvendahl 2008; Martin 1998, 2011, 2012; Ruppert and Denison 1943).

On the contrary, the paired stelae of Calakmul from the early reigns of Yuknoom Head represent the most common pattern of paired stelae in which the woman is depicted on the left side (Houston 1998:341; Marcus 1987). The significance of this arrangement for understanding early seventh century Calakmul is very significant. It shows Kanu'l as the dominant force at

271

Calakmul. Perhaps the two paired stelae from the early seventh century were erected to mark the presence of Yuknoom Ch'een II in *Uxte'tuun* and justify his rights to rule at Calakmul through his mother, a local *Chiik Nahb* lady while the paired stelae from the late seventh century legitimised Kanu'l power by acknowledging higher position of their wives and perhaps referring to some prestigious lineages, for instance to *K'uhul Chatahn winik* or *Sak Wahyis.*

If Yuknoom Head is the youth name of Yuknoom Ch'een II, as Martin believes (Martin 2017), then his female companion is depicted on both the submissive left side (Stela 28 dated to AD 623, Stela 76, dated to AD 633) and the dominant right side (Stela 79, dated to AD 672). Perhaps both early monuments display the image of the mother of Yuknoom Ch'een II while, the later one his wife.

I believe that the placement of the paired stelae in a row with other monuments strongly influenced their narrative. The stelae from 75 to 79 are in one line, as if they were to be read as a whole. Stela 79 forms a triad with Stela 75 and Stela 77[153], while Stelae 76 and 78 form a pair (Delvendahl 2008; Martin 1998:78-79). Thus, by AD 672 when a triad was formed, the earlier pair Stelae 76 and 78 was no longer to be considered just paired stelae, but the placement in a row gave the monuments a new meaning and function.

The stelae 75-79 conveyed strong messages about the importance of royal women as bearers of power and important figures in power politics. They were used to support the claim to rule.

Regardless of where the royal women of Late Classic Calakmul came from, it can be argued that the public depiction of royal women in the art of Late Classic Calakmul legitimised the rule of Kanu'l in Calakmul. If the two early pairs of stelae in Calakmul (Stelae 28 and 29, Stelae 76 and 78) show the image of the mother of Yuknoom Ch'een II, a local lady, this could

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[153] showing probably Yuknoom Ch'een II

mean that Yuknoom Ch'een II affirmed his own power and demonstrated his authority by associating himself with her. Having a *Chiik Nahb* mother who championed his interests and gained supporters could enable Yuknoom Ch'een II to take power in Calakmul. The mother of Yuknoom Ch'een II, *Chiik Nahb* Lady, may have been depicted on the left side as she conferred the prerogative of power on her son, while later stelae depicting women on the right side indicate cooperation with other social units and suggest processes of power negotiation.

In the eighth century, the weakening position of Kanu'l forced the dynasty to extend some degree of cooperation and control over other entities. This also forced the Snake family to look for ways to codify the succession of power and confirm their right to rule Calakmul. The placement of the queen's portrait on the right dominant side may have been aimed at gaining the support of the local community at minimal cost. This strategy may have been employed by Yuknoom Ch'een II in his late reign and later continued by his son Yuknoom Took' K'awiil. The late paired stelae dated to the reign of Yuknoom Ch'een II possibly refer to the marital union.

Some information about Yuknoom Ch'een II's wife can be gleaned from a vessel featuring the date AD 686 and located in the Museum zu Allerheiligen in Schaffhausen, Switzerland. The vessel refers to the pattern of paired stelae and shows a royal portrait[154]. Two associated texts identify the first individual as Yuknoom Ch'een II. The second individual - IX-AHK?- TOOK' IX?-na-NAH-?-li? - who carries the elaborate titles *ixbakab* and *Sak Wahyis*, could be his wife (Prager 2004:10-13). She must therefore have been a prominent figure at court. Yuknoom Ch'een II may also have emphasised his wife's higher rank by placing her stela (Stela 79) on the right to please and woo the 'queen's people", the *Sak Wahyis*. By marrying

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[154]Unlike the paired stelae, however, the images from a vessel are not shown in a standardised convention. Both figures personifying calendar days are depicted realistically, with a queen depicted as if she were conversing with her husband (Parpal 2021:272).

Sak Wahyis woman, the Kanu'l king could have gained prestige and legitimised their power and authority in Calakmul.

Paired stelae erected during the reigns of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' and Yuknoom Took' K'awiil are also designed to emphasise the equal or higher rank of their spouses[155] (e.g., Stelae 23 and 24 on the upper terrace of Structure VI and Stelae 52 and 54 in front of Structure I).

Of particular interest to me are Stelae 52 and 54, which together with Stelae 51, 53 and 55 were erected by Yuknoom Took' K'awiil to commemorate the end of the 15 k'atun in AD 731. Stelae 52 and 54 were joined by Stela 53 in the centre and flanked by Stela 51 (to the left of Stela 52) and the eroded Stela 55[156] (to the right of Stela 54).

Figure 5A. 2. Stela 51, Calakmul. Photo by Frances Morley (after Martin *et al.* 2015: Fig.1).

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[155] Depicted queens could be also their mother but I consider it less likely

[156] We have no record of the figure on Stela 55 on the far right (Proskouriakoff 1993:80). If it represents the king, as I believe, this will support the theory of his efforts to be treated as the dominant force in the kingdom.

Monument 54, depicting the wife of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil, occupies the right dominant side in the row, but the ruler took great pains to show himself in full splendour. Monuments 51 (Figure 5A.2) and 52 and 53, but also associated with the same Structure I - Stela 89 (on the upper terrace), show him in keeping with martial, victorious, and ritual themes.

"While these stones are undoubtedly impressive, they should not be taken as a barometer of the wider health of the kingdom" (Martin and Grube 2008:113). Following Mumary Farto, I agree that the surge of monumental activity at Calakmul, associated with the reign of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil, was one of the means used to reinforce Kanu'l overkingship after the end of its golden age (Mumary Farto 2019: 275). Yuknoom Took' K'awiil bestowed a great honour on his wife by placing her monument (Stela 54) on the right, but at the same time he surrounded himself with symbols of authority and military prestige. However, these images had more to do with propaganda than with reality.

Political circumstances dictated the need to restore respect and authority within the city of Calakmul. Yuknoom Took' K'awiil sought to restore the political stability of past times, developing a building programme guided by propaganda that portrayed the ruler as the great ruler (Mumary Farto 2019:262, 239, 289). While on Stelae 23 and 24, dated to 702 (Marcus 1987: 84, 145), Yuknoom Took' K'awiil and his wife both stand proudly in a victorious posture on the platform of Structure VI of the Main Plaza, the iconographic programme from his late reign highlights his military virtues rather than his wife. Due to the deterioration of Stela 52 and 54, it is difficult to tell if the rulers are standing on the captive. What is seen is that Yuknoom Took' K'awiil is holding the K'awiil sceptre in his left hand and a square shield in his right hand, while his wife on Stela 54 is holding the K'awiil sceptre in her right hand and a

water plant in her left[157] (Marcus 1987:170). The militaristic image of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil is also found on other stelae dating to his late reign (3rd and 4th decades of the eighth century).

In fact, at least 21 stelae can be attributed to him, many of which show him trampling on an enemy or holding a shield (as on Stela 51). The king's prerogative to appear as a victorious king in full martial attire serves as an expression of his supreme power. Yuknoom Took' K'awiil must have recognised the potential of military symbolism to underline his authority as a leader. I believe that this martial propaganda art was aimed at manipulating the public to consolidate loyalty and create a common identity, which was especially needed in difficult times. His iconographic programme was designed to promote his virtues and strength.

The best example of a propaganda portrait is the aforementioned Stela 52, on which Yuknoom Took' K'awiil wears a large mosaic headdress and carries the title *kaloomte'* (Stuart 2011; Ruppert and Denison 1943). The same title is attributed to his wife on Stela 54 (Tuszyńska 2016:94).

Mumary Farto tends to see the monumental activity of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil as an attempt to restore already waning power (Mumary Farto 2019: 275). In this respect, the monuments were a form of propaganda aimed at making the public believe in a great invincible kingdom of the Snake. Therefore, the position of the paired Stelae 52 and 54 was manipulated to achieve certain goals. I believe that the Kanu'l dynasty used a cunning strategy to maintain a strong position in Calakmul by promoting royal women (both mothers and wives) who legitimised their rule.

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[157] Both are attributes of transformative power, rituals, and legitimate rulership (Coggins 1988; Lucero 2008:41-42; Rice 2013:105-108). According to Parpal, the plant the lady is holding is a hallucinogenic plant used by the Maya in rituals. The image could thus refer to the queen's royal duties, in which she communicates with the ancestors, deities and uses psychotropic substances (Parpal 2021:291).

The strategy of manipulating paired stelae became particularly evident during difficult times for the dynasty. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the first early signs of Kanu'l's weakness can be observed from the second half of the seventh century.

Stela 9 is a double-sided monument, with Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' at front and his mother (?)[158] at the back (Marcus 1987; Martin 1998; Vázquez López 2016: 188). The militaristic stance of stela is not without significance Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' holds a shield while his mother tramples over the female captive, probably from Santa Elena. By taking a captive Kanu'l aggressively responded to an earlier submission of Santa Elena to Palenque (Martin 2020:265). This accord well with Grahams' ideas on the political aspects of taking captives. "A hierarchy of political, social, and economic obligations must have already been in place before a conflict. Individuals could be credited with capturing other individuals, but capture was also a political and social act, and one with complex implications" (Graham 2019 10-11). When immortalized on the public monument, it converted into an enduring symbol of hegemonic power.

Surprisingly, Stela 9 is made of basalt stone, which is not native to either Calakmul or Santa Elena. It comes from the Maya Mountains in modern southern Belize and was probably a tribute from one of the political entities that felt under the influence of Calakmul (Delvendahl 2010:47; Mumary Farto 2019:249). Stela 9 then became a true expression of the dominance over the west (Santa Elena) and the east (southern Belize).

However, the image of the queen could only be seen by a small group of people, the high-ranking elite who had access to the king, as the back of the stela could not be viewed by the public. All the glory of the victory was then given to the young Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk',

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[158] I have added a question mark because we cannot confirm the identity of a lady from Stela 9. Delvendahl, following Martin, suspects that this is the same woman depicted on Stela 79 (Delvendahl 2008:116; Martin 1998:79).

whose image is rendered on the front of the stela. Stela 9 is also a good example of how one person's position could be played off against another to achieve certain political goals. On Stela 79, the wife of Yuknoom Ch'een II is depicted on the right dominant side, possibly to lend credibility to Kanu'l overkingship at Calakmul, while on Stela 9 she was depicted on the back as this served the political interests of her son, the future king of Calakmul.

Let us take a closer look at Stela 9 - it was erected when Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' was only 13 years old. Twenty-two more years must have passed before he finally ascended the throne AD 684. The public and explicit recognition of the young, 13-year-old Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' on Stela 9 was probably a means of securing his rights to the throne and ensuring his position in the socio-political structures of the dynasty.[159] In fact, the inscription on Ucanal Stela 4, dated to AD 662, refers, among other things, to the establishment of a junior kingship with Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' as the future heir to the throne and Yuknoom Ch'een as *kaloomte'* (Martin 2017a) (see also Chapter II). Stela 9 was also erected at the end of Tun 09.11.10.0.0 (AD 662). Stela 5 of Coba was also erected at the end of the same Tun, following the same pattern of depicting a pair of kings on one stela. I believe that this co-occurrence is not accidental. The erection of double-sided paired stelae - Stela 9 of Calakmul and Stela 5 of Coba for the Period Ending 09.11.10.0.0 could well be an expression of a link between the Kanu'l dynasty and Coba, or another scenario - Yuknoom Ch'een II may have responded to the rise of power in Coba by sharing power with his son and preparing him to rule. The most meaningful representation of co-regency would be Stela 9.

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[159] Although kings may retrospectively mention their young lives, it is very rare that heirs are mentioned before their enthronement (e.g., also Lintel 2, Yaxchilan). One of the reasons for this could be claims by rivals (Martin et al. 2017: 671).

<u>5.2.2 Coba [Map 17]</u>

Coba was a dominant site in the north of the peninsula in the Late Classic, establishing a complex network of contacts with other regions such as Chontalpa, Petexbatún or Petén. Its most powerful ruler - *kaloomte'* Ruler B - was instrumental in the expansion and consolidation of the kingdom in the seventh century (Esparza Olguin 2016:310). Ruler B is depicted on some stelae that are full of war symbolism. Some suggestions assume that Ruler B is a woman known as - Ix K'awiil (see Chapter IV). Since the title *kaloomte'* was frequently held by Kanu'l princesses, this raises the question of this lady's identity (Guenter 2014:414; Tuszyńska 2016:99). To make matters worse, neither photographic nor drawing registers prove the presence of the glyph of the Kanu'l emblem in the entire corpus of Coba inscriptions. It is therefore impossible to confirm the origin of Ruler B (Esparza Olguin 2016:2015).

Stela 5, commissioned by Ruler B in AD 662, may shed some light on the hypothetical relationship between Coba and Late Classic Calakmul. The monument was erected in front of the hieroglyphic stairs of Structure III, located in Group A (Macanxoc), one of the four architectural complexes of Coba (Con Uribe and Gomez Coba 2008:121, Esparza Olguin 2016: 23). As mentioned earlier, Stela 9 from Calakmul is a double-sided monument with a royal portrait on the front and back of the stela. However, there is one major difference. The front of Stela 5 does not show the image of a male person.

Instead,[160] it is the image of a woman trampling on a captive. There is no direct evidence of contacts between Calakmul and Coba, but it seems that Coba adopted the imperial style and motifs of Calakmul. The kingdom also established relations with Tikal.

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[160] If we consider Ruler B as Ix K'awiil

I believe that during the reign of Ruler B, Coba pursued an active and clever policy in its relations with Tikal and Calakmul, skilfully manoeuvring between these two sites and maintaining a good relationship with both of them.

[161]. As Esparza Olguin noted, Coba became a real power, comparable to Tikal and Calakmul (Esparza Olguin 2016:310). Coba's high status is confirmed by its involvement in conflicts with distant sites (Uxul, Oxkintok, Edzna) or the 98 km causeway linking Coba to Yaxuna, among others (Esparza Olguin 2016; Martin 2019). The presence of paired stelae at Coba would therefore not imply that Coba became a vassal of Calakmul in the seventh century. Rather, this would attest to the adoption of certain themes related to prestige, splendour, and power.

However, some stelae reveal the character of the relations through their affinity and direct affiliation with the Kanu'l dynasty. This is particularly evident at sites where we have evidence of a marriage alliance inspired by the Kanu'l dynasty. The best example is El Peru Waka'. (Guenter 2005a; Marcus 1987; 135-147; Miller 1973; Pérez et al. 2015; Wanyerka 1996).

5.2. 3 El Peru Waka'

There are seven paired stelae (Table 1) in El Peru Waka'. Four of them (Stelae 11 and 12, 18 and 20, 33 and 34, and 6 and 8) are chronologically divided by the reigns of Ix "K'abel" and K'inich Bahlam II, the most powerful rulers of El Peru Waka' (see Table 1) (Guenter 2005a, 2014a-144-166; Miller 1973; Vázquez López 2016:26).

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[161] The harmonious relationship between Coba and Calakmul would change towards the end of the seventh century (Gayol 2012:98; Grube and Esparza Olguin 2017:1-4; Guenter 2014:417), but tensions may have increased after the death of Ruler B. If we assume that the jade plaque from Tomb 23 at Tikal with the name of the queen of Coba attests to an alliance between Tikal and Coba, the enthronement of Chan Yopaat of Coba on the day that Bajlaj Chan K'awiil of Dos Pilas orchestrated the arrival of his daughter at Naranjo could be seen as a violation of Coba's authority by Calakmul.

The portraits of a royal couple, arranged in a pair of stelae, were placed on the southern (Stelae 11 and 12) and northern side (Stelae 33 and 34)[162] of Structure M12-35, a small pyramidal building located to the eastern end of the Plaza I and II (Acuña 2014:54). Neither of these stelae is in its original location today. Stelae 33 and 34 are split between two different museums - Stela 33 at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, (Texas), Stela 34 at the Cleveland Museum of Art, (Ohio), while Stelae 11 and 12 were fragmented in the Late Classic and relocated from an unknown location to the front of Structure M12-35. The other paired stelae from the late seventh century: paired Stelae 18 and 20[163] (AD 682) and a triad of Stelae 6, 7 and 8[164] probably refer to the same royal couple.

On all these stelae, the queen faces to the right, which highlights her superior position and places her as the main character in the narrative. It also shows Ix "K'abel's aspiration to be treated as a ruler, which is not surprising given her close ties to the Kanu'l dynasty. Indeed, her connection to Calakmul is fully expressed on Stela 34 (Lee and Piehl 2014:91). Here, Ix "K'abel "s connections to the Kanu'l dynasty are emphasised in her probable parentage statement and reference to the enthronement of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' (see chapter IV). As a powerful queen, most likely the daughter of Yuknoom Ch'een II, she is portrayed on the stela with a

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[162] Only remains of Stelae 34 and 35 are *in situ* now. „The precise pre-looted location of Stela 34 and 34 on the northern side of the building is unknown. The position of Stela 35, however, suggests that the paired monuments, Stelae 33 and 34, were aligned along the front of the building in a similar fashion" (Acuña 2014:60).

[163] Stela 18 depicts Ix Naah Chan, which according to Guenter was probably the nickname of Ix "K'abel" (Guenter 2005, 2010:189-190; Lee and Piehl 2014:91).

[164] Late Classic Monuments 6, 7 and 8 are badly damaged, but enough detail survives to identify a woman on Stela 6. Fragmentary pieces of Stela 8 show the legs of the Late Classic king, while the recently discovered Stela 43 may be the counterpart in the upper part. It portrays a male ruler, almost certainly K'inich Bahlam II, and features the date 9.13.10.0.0, 7 Ahau 3 Cumku (20 January, AD 702) (Freidel *et al*. 2012).

shield in her left hand and a sceptre of power, similar to her husband on Stela 33[165] (Martin 2000:116; Miller 1974, Wanyerka 1996).

The presence of a dwarf on Stela 34, a symbol of liminality (Bacon 2007), attests to Ix "K'abel's ability to contact the supernatural. Indeed, the inscription on the stela informs us that she was responsible for the ceremonial dedication of the monument at the end of k'atun of AD 692 (Acuña 2014:59; Miller 1974; Vázquez López 2016, 2017).

The earlier paired stelae in El Peru Waka' do not mention her origin; it was only through the pattern of paired stelae that we were able to establish her connections to Calakmul. This identification with the power of Kanu'l seemed to be reinforced in AD 692 when Stelae 33 and 34 were erected. Stela 34 truly celebrates the connection of Ix "K'abel" to Kanu'l - here the iconographic evidence is reinforced by the epigraphic record.

Perhaps the geopolitical circumstances in AD 692 demanded the reinforcement of the message about the origin of Ix "K'abel" and encouraged the emphasis on the close ties with Calakmul. By this time, Calakmul's power had begun to wane. By depicting Ix "K'abel" in a warrior pose and highlighting her roots, her continued affiliation to the Kanu'l family was emphasised.

No other paired stelae dated between AD 692 and AD 736 have been detected at El Peru Waka' between AD 692 and AD 736. Stela 31 from AD 736 showed the image of a new royal couple; unfortunately, their names have not been preserved[166]. A gentle hint to the king's name is found on Stela 27, dated to AD 741. His name is Bahlam, perhaps standing for Bahlam

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[165] Stela 33, which shows the portrait of her husband K'inich Bahlam, is inferior in terms of the quality of the stone and the execution of the carving (Wanyerka 1996).

[166] When it was found, the monument was scattered and split in two. Therefore, it was initially classified as two different stelae, the lower half as Stela 29, the upper as Stela 31 (Freidel and Escobedo 2005:3; Guenter 2014a:160).

Tz'am, the king who was defeated by the forces of Tikal in AD 743 (Guenter 2014a:160). Stela 27 is also interesting for another reason - the artist's signature.

As Jagodziński noted, some paired stelae at El Peru Waka' were marked by the signature of the carvers. This is evident on Stelae 18 and 34[167], depicting Ix "K'abel" and also on the eroded Stela 8, which possible renders the image of K'inich Bahlam II. The presence of a carver's signature on paired stelae could attest to the importance of El Peru Waka. The artists may have demonstrated the glory and power of the powerful Calakmul kingdom by producing artworks that followed the visual programme of Kanu'l's imperialist strategies. This in turn could demonstrate the prominent role of El Peru Waka' in Calakmul's politics and expansionist plans. Perhaps some of the artists were from Calakmul itself or from the dependent areas. Possibly they were part of the royal entourage of Ix "K'abel" on her arrival in El Peru Waka'. Stela 27, mentioned above, is the last stela with the signature of a carver. The tradition of signing stelae was strongly associated with the fortunes and misfortunes of Calakmul (Jagodziński 2019:143). Bahlam Tz'am may have been the last king of El Peru Waka' allied with Calakmul. Stela 31 and also Stela 32, dated to AD 790, are not typical paired stelae, as they render the image of a royal couple on a single monument. However, there is some evidence that Stela 32 indirectly evoked the past glory of Calakmul. My arguments for this will follow later in this chapter.

Rare but not atypical arrangements of paired stelae have also been observed at Piedras Negras. Similar to Stela 9 from Calakmul and Stela 5 from Coba, here the royal couple is portrayed on both sides of one stela.

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[167] Most likely an artist left the signature on Stela 11 or Stela 12, but erosion and fragmentation prevent further investigation (Jagodziński 2019: 140).

<u>5.2.4 Piedras Negras</u>

There are three paired stelae at Piedras Negras: Stelae 1, 2 and 3, all depicting King K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II on the front and his wife Ix Winak Haab Ajaw on the back. Together with five other monuments, they stand in front of Structure J-4, the extended royal palace in the West Group. The West Group became the new seat of power during the reign of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II. All eight stelae were erected at intervals of one quarter k'atun between AD 687 and 726 (Martin and Grube:146; Stewart 2008:57; Stuart 1985:176; Stuart and Graham 2003). The portraits of the king on Stelae 1 and 3 have been largely obscured because the monuments were badly looted in the early 1960s and parts sawed off, broken and mutilated (O Neil' 2012; Stuart and Graham 2003). Fortunately, the images of Ix Winak Haab are still quite well preserved. She must have been an important figure at the court, for her portrait adorned the entire surface of Stelae 1, 2 and 3.

In the previous chapter I made some arguments that the marriage of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II from Piedras Negras and Ix Winak Haab from Namaan could have been arranged by the Kanu'l dynasty (Tuszyńska 2016:176, see Chapter IV). If this is the case, it is not surprising that the royal couple found it extremely attractive and prestigious to present themselves in a similar way to the great kings of Calakmul. Paired stelae from Piedras Negras may also have marked the close alliance with Calakmul. Ix Winak Haab, as she is depicted on the back of the stelae, occupies a lower position in relation to her husband. She was not related by blood to the Kanu'l dynasty and therefore did not attain the same rank as Ix "K'abel" of El Peru Waka'. On the other hand, the inscriptions on these stelae give special attention to Ix Winak Haab. Stela 3 even depicts her three-year-old daughter, both sitting on the throne (Pitts 2011; Stuart and Graham 2003).

The unique mother-child relationship can also be observed in Naranjo, where the strong figure of Ix Wak Chan dominated her son during much of his reign. Their relationship is also expressed through the pattern of paired stelae.

5.2.5 Naranjo [Map 18]

The pattern of paired stelae in Naranjo is by no means unique, reflecting the complicated relationship between the younger male ruler and his dominant mother, who acted as regent. Ix Wak Chan claimed almost all the prerogatives of kingship even when her son K'ahk Tiliw Chan Chahk reached the age of majority and was able to rule himself (Helmke 2017; Martin and Grube 2008:75). The first set of paired stelae in chronological order is a true expression of maternal relations. Stelae 22 and 24 (AD 702) were not placed next to each other but opposite each other at the base of Structure C-6 and C-7 respectively (Graham and von Euw 1975; Tokovinine and Fialko 2007:8-9). As Helmke has noted, pairs of stelae placed side by side may have been intended only for the ruling couple - the king and queen (Helmke 2017:105).

As monuments depicting Ix Wak Chan continued to be erected in the following decades, also in the form of paired stelae, it can be assumed that her status and prerogatives as regent and perhaps co-ruler diminished in favour of her son K'ahk Tiliw Chan Chahk. On all three paired stelae, K'ahk Tiliw Chan Chahk is depicted in full martial stand, either with a captive (Stelae 22 and 30) or with Mexican warrior-priest insignia (Stela 2) (Closs 1985; Helmke and Kettunen 2011: 45-46; Mitchell 2016; Schele and Freidel 1990: 190-193). His mother, however, seems to have been unwilling to give up the power and status she had possessed (Helmke 2017). On the second pair of stelae in the chronological order (Stelae 2 and 3, AD 713), the mother and son are depicted side by side (Graham and Von Euw 1975), as if they were a royal couple. Ix Wak Chan still made her presence visible to the public by standing proudly beside her son as if he were her husband. This pattern of pairs of stelae standing side

by side is repeated on the third and final pair of stelae[168],Stelae 29 and 30 were erected at the foot of Structure C-9, the largest in the C complex and the entire site. Moreover, on Stela 29, as on Stela 3, she is depicted standing on the captive (Reese Taylor et al. 2009:64; Tuszyńska 2016:270) (see later in this chapter).

Naranjo pledged the fealty to Calakmul during the reigns of Ix Wak Chan and K'ahk Tiliw Chan Chahk, as recorded on some stelae (Doyle 2005: 7; Lopez Oliva 2019:129-134; Martin et al. 2016:674-677) (see Chapter II). Paired stelae and images of a warrior queen reinforced this message. A few years after the dedication of Stelae 29 and 30 in AD 714, the monuments were flanked from both sides by Stela 28 (AD 719) and Stela 31 (AD 721). By AD 721, these four stelae formed a front row on the terrace in front of Structure C-9.

What is special about this row of stelae is their arrangement. The southernmost Stela 31, showing the portrait of Ix Wak Chan, was to the right of the viewer, while the northernmost Stela 28, depicting K'ahk Tiliw Chan Chahk, was to the left. In addition, K'ak Tiliw Chan Chahk on Stela 28 (AD 719) is looking to the left towards his mother, who is depicted on Stela 29 (AD 714). Both individuals face each other as if they had formed a couple, although they were dedicated for different Period Endings[169].

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[168] I have not included Stelae 40, 31, 18 and 46 in my study, although they are sometimes considered paired monuments (Helmke 2017). They were shaped as male and female counterparts and dedicated in the same year (Stela 40 and 31 in AD 721, 46 and 18 in AD 736), but are located in different parts of the city (see this chapter below).

[169] It is highly unusual for Naranjo rulers to be depicted facing left, and the paired stelae are no exception. Ix Wak Chan and K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk do not face each other on the paired stelae.

It looks as though K'ahk Tiliw, through Stela 28, belittled himself and gave prominence to his mother[170]. I also believe that this new arrangement, created by the addition of two stelae at the two corners of the row, positions Ix Wak Chan as the main character in the narrative and highlights her close connection to the ritual complex of Structure C-9.

Three years later, however, in AD 721, K'ahk Tiliw seemed to attempt to separate from the influence of his dominant mother by no longer placing his monuments in close proximity to hers. This is evident from AD 721, when both Ix Wak Chan and K'ahk Tiliw Chan Chahk each erected a stela for the same occasion but in a different part of the city (Helmke 2017:107). No other paired stelae were erected.

The examples from Naranjo clearly show that paired stelae were political instruments used and manipulated by the kings to achieve their specific goals. The study of the iconography of these stelae, as well as their spatial arrangement, allowed Helmke to hypothesise about the predominant rule of Ix Wak Chan at the Naranjo court during her son's reign (Helmke 2017). Similarly, the paired stelae at Coba not only testify to contacts with Calakmul, but also express Ruler B's expansion plans.

At El Peru Waka' and Piedras Negras, the presence of paired stelae testifies to marriage alliances arranged directly (El Peru Waka') and possibly indirectly (Piedras Negras) by the Kanu'l dynasty. The iconographic affiliation with Calakmul in the case of these two sites does not necessarily imply their subordination and control.

As mentioned earlier, we would expect the visual patterns of Calakmul and the closest resemblance to its artistic canon to be enforced at the sites closest to the hegemon. We would also expect them to be produced, controlled, and directed under the watchful eye of the Kanu'l

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[170] This agrees with epigraphic evidence. K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk seemed to avoid mentioning his mother; Stela 28 is a great exception to this. It records a ritual event celebrated by Ix Wak Chan. The same event is likened to the ritual event celebrated by "Aj Wosal", the famous early classic king (Helmke 2017:112).

elite. As we will see from the examples of the paired stelae from Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul, this is not always the case, and the time when stelae were dedicated plays an important role in decoding the meaning of the monuments.

5. 3 Time framing of stelae

Paired stelae first appeared outside Calakmul at Uxul in AD 633. The dedication of Stelae 2 and 3 at Uxul appears to be related to alliance-building activities based on marriages and the huge role of local dynasties (Bat and *k'uhul Chatahn winik*) in legitimising Kanu'l's rights to rule Calakmul. I consider the early presence of paired stelae at Uxul as evidence of Kanu'l's rule at this site.

The beginning of the record of paired stelae at Calakmul in AD 623, which precedes the official establishment of the Kanu'l dynasty at Calakmul, is also intriguing. The erection of Stelae 28 and 29 (AD 623) was followed ten years later by more paired stelae (76 and 78) at k'atun ending 9.10.0.0.0 (AD 633). Even more surprising is that the erection of Stelae 76 and 78 was followed by almost 30 years of monumental inactivity at Calakmul. Moreover, the beginning of the spread of the pattern of paired stelae outside the Calakmul area is dated to the second half of the eighth century. In the first half of the seventh century, paired stelae only appeared in places very close to Calakmul - in Uxul and perhaps in Champerico.

The strategy of spreading the visual pattern of paired stelae becomes clear from AD 662, when both Calakmul and El Peru Waka' erected paired stelae for the Katun ending 9. 12.0.0.0. From this point on, paired stelae appeared at many Maya sites, including, for example, Piedras Negras, Cancuen, Naachtun and Oxpemul. The monumental records of paired stelae

are limited to two time windows - the first is relatively narrow and spans only 11 years[171] from AD 623-633 and including paired stelae at Calakmul (Stelae 28 and 29) and Uxul (Stelae 2 and 3) and the second window spanning over AD 662 – 790 with the maximum spread of the theme between AD 662 and AD 736. The evident lacuna of monuments between AD 633 and AD 662 and the marked decrease in paired stelae from AD 741 to AD 790 raise questions about the nature of these changes and fluctuations. I argue that the strategy of spreading Kanu'l visual programmes was not developed in the first half of the seventh century. I believe that the appearance of the paired stelae at Uxul was enforced by the Kanu'l dynasty, which saw Uxul as an extension of its territory and a dependency of Calakmul. It is the first site to follow the pattern of depicting the royal couple, even before the Kanu'l style and iconographic expression became popular and adopted by distant sites as extremely prestigious and powerful. The short distance between Calakmul and Uxul certainly contributed to the early presence of paired stelae at Uxul. However, at Naachtun and Oxpemul, which are also in close proximity to Calakmul, paired stelae did not appear until the mid-eighth century. So, although I believe that distance was a key factor in Kanu'l's strategy of political control and influence, the processes of integration with the hegemon were different at each site. This is clearly reflected in the different visual programmes of La Corona, Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul.

5.3.1 Uxul

The two paired stelae from Uxul are by no means typical of their counterparts from Calakmul, yet they still attest to a close relationship with Calakmul.

On Stela 2, which is paired with Stela 3 [Map 19], we see a royal woman involved in an event that remains unclear to epigraphers due to erosion. It is possible that this was a

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[171]Or twenty years if we accept that Champerico Stela 2 formed a pair with the stela from the Museum Baluarte de la Soledad in Campeche, Mexico.

significant moment in her life, as the Long Count Date, 9.9.19.15.0.6 6 Ajaw 8 K'ank'in (25 November, AD 632) associated with this date also appears on Stela 3. Stela 3, although poorly preserved, shows a male figure.

Stela 2 contains a hieroglyphic inscription which, although partially eroded, gives us some information about the name and titles of the lady depicted on this stela. Her name is Ix Ajaw K'ahk' and she bears the titles *K'uhul Chatahn (?) winik* and *Sak Wahyis*, which are well known from Early and Late Classic Calakmul (Grube and Paap 2009:13). She also carries the title *yajaw k'ahk'*, which is associated with priest warfare. The person bearing the title *yajaw k'ahk'* may also have been responsible for burning incense (Zender 2003:202-210), and this role would be most appropriate for women, since *yajaw k'ahk'* was only an honorific title in the case of women, not a function (Tuszyńska 2016:138). The other glyphs that can be read from the inscription on Stela 2 are those of "mother of", u-bat (T756)-na, followed by the title *kaloomte'*. This agrees with the name of the character presented on Stela 3, who, in addition to *kaloomte'* is identified with the title *k'uhul* followed by the bat head sign and the AJAW logogram, forming an emblem glyph (Grube 2008). It is therefore very likely that Stelae 2 and 3 represent a mother and son[172]. This would suggest the outbreak of a pattern of paired stelae, most of which represent king and queen, man, and woman. Stelae 2 and 3 would then be the manifestation of the relationship between mother and son, but also of the relationship between the Bat dynasty and *K'uhul Chatahn winik*; both played an important role in early classic Calakmul. There is no doubt that Calakmul's branch of the Kanu'l dynasty inspired the erection of Stelae 2 and 3. They were raised when Kanu'l was at the dawn of the brotherhood conflict, when one part of the family supporting Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kaan resided in Dzibanche, while the other part supporting Yuknoom "Head" seemed to be located in Calakmul (Helmke and Awe 2016a and 2016b). Therefore, the erection of the paired stelae in Uxul also reflects the

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[172] In another scenario the text does not refer to the image and we deal with a representation of a royal couple.

predominance of the Kanu'l branch as opposed to the Dzibanche branch. It would be a clear sign of the influence and consolidation of Calakmul's power in the region.

The beginning of the seventh century marks the dominance of Calakmul over Uxul. The erection of two stelae in Uxul in AD 633 showed for the first time Calakmul's influence on the socio-political life of Uxul. Stela 2 and Stela 3 from Uxul were erected in the year AD 633, only 10 years after the first paired stelae in Calakmul (Stela 28 and 29) (Grube 2008; Marcus 1987; Martin 1998). They were probably erected on 9.10.0.0.0 1 Ajaw 8 K'ayab' to commemorate the union between the Bat dynasty and the lineage that used the titles *K'uhul Chatahn winik* and *Sak Wahyis*. However, of particular interest to me is the date 9.9.19.15.0 6 Ajaw 8 K'ank'in common to both monuments. I believe that this great attention to a non-major Period Ending suggests a historical reason for its prominence. The alliance between two dynasties was of such importance that it had to be recorded away from the major calendar Period Endings.

The inscriptions on Stelae 2 and 3 indicate that *K'uhul Chatahn winik*, *Sak Wahyis* and the Bat dynasty were of particular importance to the branch of Kanu'l that moved to Calakmul. By referring to them, they legitimised their power in the region. The inscription does not indicate Calakmul overkingship at Uxul. Rather, the influence of Calakmul is evident in the repeated pattern of erecting paired stelae. Regardless of how we interpret the relationship between the two figures depicted (mother - son or husband - wife), I would argue that Stela 2 and Stela 3 indicate that both *K'uhul Chatahn winik* and the Bat dynasty were related, and both fell under the rule of the Snake dynasty in the Late Classic Period.

At this point it is important to point out that Ix Ajaw K'ahk', by bearing the titles *K'uhul Chatahn winik* and *Sak Wahyis*, may have come from the place where these titles were used (Grube et al. 2012a:22). The first enigmatic indirect link between the Kanu'l dynasty and *K'uhul Chatahn winik* comes from the inscription on Stela 44 of El Peru Waka', dated to AD

564 (see also chapters II and IV), but since Stelae 2 and 3 of Uxul form paired stelae, the link between the people depicted on these stelae and the Kanu'l dynasty is even clearer.

5.3.2 Naachtun

As pointed out in the previous chapter, there is little, if any, evidence of political or cultural domination by Calakmul over Naachtun in the seventh century. Ernesto Arredondo Leiva, in his dissertation "Archaeological Investigations in a walled compound" refers to Stela 1 and Stela 2 as paired stelae (Arredondo Leiva 2010:138). Both stelae are located in the East Plaza, at the foot of Structure XXV, with Stela 2 located only a few meters to the west of Stela 1. Although the monuments resemble a pair of stelae, they were erected in two different periods. Stela 1 dedicated for the tun ending in 9.9.10.0.0, AD 623 while Stela 2 was erected one k'atun later in 9.10. 10.0.0 AD 642. Both stelae depict male individuals, most likely two portraits of the same king, known by the inscription on Stela 2 as ...Ek (Garay 2019:115). Their portraits represent two different styles - the individual on Stela 1 is shown in profile, while the individual on Stela 2 is shown from the front with his head in profile (Patrois 2016:302).

The pattern of depicting only male figures on paired stelae is unusual, though not unique. It is particularly observable in the Calakmul area. In addition to the example from Uxul, Oxpemul also exhibited the pattern of male paired stelae (Grube 2008:215, 226). The replacement of a royal couple by two portraits of the same king may have been aimed at emphasising the dominant role of the ruler in its kingdom. However, the hypothesis that Stelae 1 and 2 form a pair of stelae will remain weak until we find better evidence of contacts between Calakmul and Naachtun in the seventh century.

Unlike stelae 1 and 2, which may have formed a pair, there is no doubt that Stelae 18 and 19 were set up as a pair. The monuments are located on both sides of the western stairway

entrance to the Temple 6O3[173] (Stela 18 to the north and Stela 19 to the south) and probably depicted a royal couple (Nondédéo *et al*. 2013:129; Nondédéo *et al.* 2018; Reese –Taylor *et al*. 2005:11-12; Ruppert and Denison 1943:134). By the time of their discovery by Cyprus Lundell, the stelae had fallen on their sides and broken into several fragments (Stela 18 in 3), (Stela 19 in 7) (Patrois 2019:121-126).

Luckily, the portraits of the king (Stela 19) and the queen (Stela 18) are in a moderate state of preservation. Both figures are shown in front, standing on the captive, and holding a circle shield, but the glyphs carved on both sides are too eroded and precise deciphering is impossible. The gender of the person on Stela 18 is determined by the net costume, which is often associated with women (see later in this chapter). She is standing in front but looking to the left.

Different chronologies have been proposed for the erection of these two stelae. Sylvanus Morley suggested the date AD 652 (Morley 1938:340), while later scholars based on style, suggested much later dates. Tatiana Proskouriakoff assumed that the stelae may have been commissioned around 9.15.0.0.0 (AD 741) (Proskouriakoff 1950), Patrois between AD 731 and 751 (Patrois 2019:124) and others even 9.16.0.0.0 (AD 761) (Nondédéo et al. 2013:19; Patrois 2011 after Nondédéo et al. 2013). Most scholars tend towards a later date for Stelae 18 and 19, as this is consistent with the archaeological evidence [174]. The fact that the captive depicted on Stela 18 is said to be from *Uxte' tuun* led some scholars to assume that the two stelae were expressions of an anti-Calakmul and anti-Kanu'l coalition in which Tikal played a

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[173] The Temple 603 is delimited by the Plaza Rio Bec which is situated between a central and southern complex of Group B

[174] Another argument for a late chronology of Stelae 18 and 19 is based on the architecture and location of the stelae in the Plaza Rio Bec. The Plaza Rio Bec was founded shortly before AD 750 (Nondédéo et al. 2013:129). It is therefore very likely that the stelae date to around the same time.

leading role (Arredondo Leiva 2010:482; Mathews and Parmington 2005; Mathews et al. 2005). These assumptions were based on evidence of Kanu'l's decline, which led to the near disappearance of its emblem glyph towards the middle of the eighth century (Guenter 2014:160; Helmke 2017:118; Martin and Grube 2008:112). I believe that the recent reading of the Stela 10 from Naachtun by Alejandro Garay opens up new possibilities for how we can interpret the paired Stelae 18 and 19.

From the inscription on Stela 10, we now know that the Kanu'l princess performed a ritual for a Period Ending in AD 761 (Garay 2019:120). It is quite plausible to assume that the queen from Stela 18 and Stela 10 was one and the same person. If so, this would mean that Kanu'l's presence was marked in two different sectors of the city: in Group A, where Stela 10 was placed, and in Group B, where Stelae 18 and 19 were located. Perhaps Naachtun is where the Kanu'l people settled after their reversal of fortunes and from where they launched an attack on *Uxte'tuun.* I will elaborate on this idea later in this chapter when I analyse the motif of standing on a captive motif.

The nature of the relationship between Naachtun and Calakmul in the mid-eighth century is still not fully understood, nor are the contacts between Oxpemul and its giant neighbour to the south.

5.3.3 Oxpemul

Only a few paired stelae have been found at Oxpemul, all of which are dated to the eighth century. In fact, there are only three stelae that can be dated to the Early Classic Period - Stela 1, 22 and 23 (Grube 2008; Robichaux 2010). Oxpemul began erecting stelae again in AD 731 after a long hiatus, but the dating of the earliest paired Stelae 14 and 16 is unclear. It is not even entirely clear whether they formed a pair of stelae, as the monuments stand 40 metres apart. However, there is some evidence to suggest that they were erected as a pair. First, both stelae were placed in front of the eastern end (Stela 14) and the western end (Stela 16) of

Structure VII, which is located on the East Plaza of the North Group. Secondly, Stela 14 shows the image of a man, in all likelihood a ruler of Oxpemul, while a woman on Stela 16 can be identified by a netted costume (Figure 5A.3), a feature often associated with the depiction of royal women (Barrios and Velazquez 2011:84-85; Le Fort 2002:110-12; Milbrath 1995, 1999; Robichaux 2010:118). Both the king and the queen are facing each other - with the queen looking to the right as if she has a higher status than her husband.
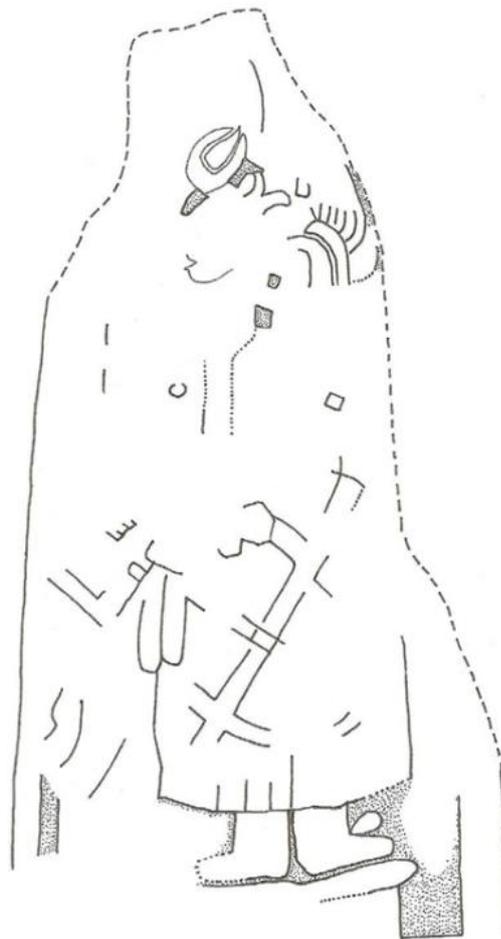
Figure 5A. 3. Stela 16, Oxpemul. Drawing by Hubert Robichaux

Interestingly, Stela 14 contained the glyph *Uxte'tuun,* which refers to Calakmul. Unfortunately, the date is obliterated. However, we know that most of the stelae in the East Plaza are dated between AD 731 and AD 751 and are associated with the Oxpemul ruler Chak Tayal Way (Grube 2008:217). Furthermore, these stelae were accompanied by two altars (Robichaux 2010:118). The stela-altar pairing was often a place for ritual killing (Stuart

2014b). If this is true of Oxpemul, it would indicate the rise of its elite towards the middle of the eighth century, both on a political and ritual level. The wider significance of Oxpemul is also attested by the inscription on Altar 15 associated with Stela 16 - the text is heavily eroded but contains the glyph *k'uhul bat ajaw* followed by the title *kaloomte'* (Grube 2008:2011). It is not known if and when Oxpemul became a seat of the Bat dynasty. Altar 15 is probably dated between AD 731 and AD 751[175], suggesting that some connections were established between the Bat dynasty and Oxpemul around this time.

The clearest reference to the Bat emblem glyph comes from Stela 2, which is probably paired with Stela 4. Both monuments are located south of Structure IV - a tall pyramid on the north side of the West Plaza, North Group. The front of Stela 4 is largely damaged, but it is still possible to see the faint figure of the ruler looking to the right towards the ruler depicted on Stela 2. Stela 2 is in better condition and displays the image of a ruler, probably standing on the representation of the *witz* monster. Following the pattern known from Stelae 12 and 13 from Uxul, the stelae show the same individual - Ch'an K'inich. He is followed in the inscription by the parentage statement. Stela 2 refers to his mother while Stela 4 to his father - Chak Tayal Way[176] (Grube 2008: 199; Robichaux 2010: 19). The two monuments carry the same date – AD 771 and are almost of the same height.

Also recorded on Stela 2 are the titles of Chan K'inich, including the toponym of Oxpemul and the Bat emblem glyph. Interestingly, there are no records to date that clearly attribute the Bat emblem glyph to his predecessor Chak Tayal Way.

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[175] as it is located at the East Plaza.

[176] The name of Chan K'inich's father on Stela 2 contains elements that are also found in the inscription of Stela 12. Stela 12 is located on the East Plaza, which is associated with the kingship of Chak Tayal Way (Grube 2008:200).

The complex and ambiguous history of Late Classic Oxpemul is also reflected in the monumental activity in the remote area of the site. Two paired stelae (Stelae 18 and 19), located 1.2 km south of the centre of the site, depict a person known from accompanying inscriptions as *aj mi'iy k'inich*. He probably served as an interim ruler who acted as regent (Grube 2008:216). It is likely that *aj mi'iy k'inich* resided in the southern area of Oxpemul. The importance of Oxpemul South is attested by two (of three) stelae from the Early Classic Period.[177] The late classic Stelae 18 and 19 were thus located in a place associated with the origin of the dynasty or considered significant by the ancient Oxpemuleños in terms of their history. Both Stelae 18 and 19 probably celebrated the accession of AJ-mi-yu-K'INICH to the throne in AD 756[178]. His name is followed in the inscription by the Oxpemul toponym. The lord is holding a sceptre with his right hand and a shield with his left (Grube 2008; Marcus 1987:122-123; Mathews and Parmington 2004:111; Robichaux and Pruett 2005:34; Ruppert and Denison 1943:142).

Additionally, the ruler is accompanied by a dwarf on Stela 19. Bacon, in her doctoral thesis on the dwarf motif (2007), following the original insights of Miller (1974:5), highlighted the similarities between the image of the dwarf on Stela 89 (Calakmul) and Stela 19 (Oxpemul). The secondary figure on Stela 19, according to Bacon, was a simpler version and imitation of the dwarf from Calakmul (Bacon 2007:310). She based this on Proskouriakoff (1950:128-129), who had noted "a late tendency to simplify and distort" among the sculptures of Oxpemul. My careful examination of Stelae 89 and 19 does not support this theory. There are some

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[177] The lower halves of Stelae 22 and 23 were encountered lying horizontally next to each other. As the upper halves have never been found, Robichaux suggests that they could be moved from other area, perhaps from the outside of Oxpemul South (Robichaux 2010:166).

[178] The word u-CH'AM-ma, *u ch'am,* "he grasps, he takes" recorded on Stelae 18 and 19 probably refers to the accession of this lord to throne.

similarities between the dwarfs: both the Calakmul and Oxpemul dwarfs are depicted in profile with heads turned to the right, both have round costume elements at the waist, but at the same time the Oxpemul dwarf resembles other depictions of dwarfs recorded on monuments at various sites throughout the Maya Lowlands. Bacon goes even further and claims that former satellites and subordinates of Calakmul expressed their freedom in artistic creation (Bacon 2007:301). According to the researcher, the unusual pattern of a paired stela at Oxpemul (two male paired stelae) may have been the result of the artists' creativity in adapting borrowed themes and an expression of independence from Calakmul. However, this contradicts the data from Uxul. As I mentioned earlier, there are pairs of male stelae in Uxul that are closely associated with the power of the Kanu'l. Therefore, the presence of this pattern does not necessarily indicate freedom of artistic expression outside the influence of the Kanu'l.

However, the sudden output of standing monuments at Oxpemul, dated from AD 731, reflects the increasing power of Oxpemul, probably at the expense of Calakmul. The weakening of Calakmul is also evident at other sites around Calakmul - Chactun and Nadzcaan began to erect monuments from AD 731, while monumental activity at La Muñeca flourished from AD 780 to at least AD 889 (Martin 2020; Šprajc 2015:95, 2008). The erection of stelae at Oxpemul however, was probably coordinated and inspired by the Kanu'l dynasty, at least until the mid-eighth century. The attachment to and identification with Calakmul is expressed in the title *uxte'tuun kaloomte'*, which the ruler of Oxpemul carries on Stela 12, dated to AD 731 (Grube 2008:208; Robichaux 2010:102). It is hard to imagine that the ruler of a small place like Oxpemul dared to granthimself the title *uxte'tuun kaloomte'*, while Yuknoom Took' K'awiil still had considerable power in the region. Oxpemul began recording the stela in the same year that Yuknoom Took' K'awiil erected seven stelae (51-55,66 and 89) to celebrate the end of 15 k'atun (Carrasco 2012:84; Delvendahl 2010; Martin 2012:168). I believe that this coincidence

cannot be accidental. On the other hand, the fact that Oxpemul only started erecting monuments when Calakmul was weak is also significant.

The contradictory signs of sovereignty and dependence describing Oxpemul in AD 731 can be explained in one way - Kanu'l voluntarily and consciously granted Oxpemul more power. Late Classic Oxpemul seemed to restore its power through and because of cooperation with social units related to Calakmul. Both parties enjoyed mutual benefits. The Oxpemul elite gained the ability to erect standing monuments and glorify their own kings on monuments, but at the same time they tied themselves closely politically and ideologically to the Kanu'l dynasty by incorporating the paired stelae format into their iconographic programme. This would demonstrate the spread of Kanu'l ideology and power outside Calakmul through iconography and written records. Perhaps Stelae 14 and 16 were also commissioned by Oxpemul for the 15 k'atun ending ceremony in AD 731[179].

If this is the case, and Stelae 14 and 16 were indeed erected in AD 731, then they followed the pattern of other paired stelae and present a valid argument for Kanu'l's influence over Oxpemul - influence but not political control. Seventh-century rule and domination over Oxpemul was replaced in the eighth century by equal but still hierarchical contact. I believe that the presence of paired stelae in Oxpemul and Oxpemul-South was no longer evidence of the overkingship of Calakmul but the autonomous decision of Oxpemul's rulers to imitate Kanu'l's style. Indeed, if we analyse only the hieroglyphic inscriptions from Oxpemul, we find references to the great metropolis of Calakmul, but not to the Kanu'l kings themselves.

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[179] Alternatively, they could have been commissioned for the 10-tun Period Ending in AD 741, but not for the k'atun Period Ending in AD 751, as all stelae dated to AD 751 and after are located in the West Plaza (Grube 2008). This limits the possibilities and is a strong argument that Stelae 14 and 16 were in fact commissioned in AD 731, as paired stelae were usually recorded at the k'atun or tun ending ceremonies.

There are other arguments supporting the theory that Oxpemul gradually became less dependent on Calakmul. Late Classic pottery and pigment analyses at Oxpemul and Calakmul suggest that there were distinct cultural patterns between the two cities. A paligorskite clay used to obtain red pigments was present in the stelae from Oxpemul dated to the Late Classic period but was absent in the pigments analysed from Calakmul for the same period (Dominguez Carrasco 2011:177).

However, one may ask why Oxpemul was 'silent' in the seventh century. Why is the imperial strategy of disseminating visual representations, characteristic of Kanu'l, not evident when Calakmul reached the height of its power, as in the case of Uxul or La Corona, sites located at a relatively short distance from Calakmul?

I believe that the domination of each site was achieved and maintained through different strategies. Perhaps the elite of Oxpemul in the sixth century resisted accepting the new regime and its ideology. In this scenario, the disruption of records at Oxpemul was the result of the complete subjugation of the site to Calakmul[180].Kanu's expansion from Calakmul focused mainly on encircling its rival Tikal to the south. Therefore, close cooperation with Uxul and La Corona, sites that lay south of Calakmul, was essential to advance its imperialist expansionist plans. Perhaps Oxpemul, which lay to the north of Calakmul, did not hold such political values as other subordinate sites, and from the Kanu'l dynasty's point of view, the complete subjugation of the site was the only option to ensure successful expansion to the south[181].

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[180] Maybe Oxpemul remained under the authority of the early classic Calakmul lords, and the subjugation continued when the Snake dynasty moved to Calakmul. This would explain the lack of monuments from the Early Classic Period (except Stelae 1, 22 and 23).

[181] Seen not only as a military offensive but also as the expansion of ideas, styles, marriage alliances and "supervisions."

However, the political climate in the 4th decade of the eighth century was different from that of the seventh century, when the Kanu'l dynasty was a dominant centre in the Maya Lowlands. Possibly the resources and energy of Calakmul were not sufficient to dominate Oxpemul in the same way as in the seventh century. However, changes occurred in the mid-eighth century and the Kanu'l emblem glyph disappeared from Calakmul records, making way for the Bat emblem glyph (Martin 2005a). Interestingly, the Bat rulers repeated the format of paired stelae characteristic of sites under Kanu'l influence.

5.4 Bat emblem glyph and paired stelae

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are only a few known references to the Bat dynasty dated to the eighth century - four are from Calakmul (Stelae 51 and 52, dated to AD 731, Stela 59, dated to AD 741, Stela 62, dated to AD 751), one from Uxul (Stela 17)[182] and three from Oxpemul – Altar 15 (AD 731-AD 751), Stela 2 (771) and Stela 7 (AD 830) (Delvendahl 2010; Grube 2008; Martin 2005a; Valencia Rivera and Esparza Olguin 2018).

Interestingly, of these seven examples, three are associated with paired stelae. As mentioned earlier, Stela 52, representing Yuknoom Took' K'awiil and paired with Stela 54, contains information about the scattering rite that took place in a place associated with the Bat emblem glyph (Pallan after Martin 2020:410). This is the first reference to the Bat emblem glyph since AD 633 and Stela 2 of Uxul. The mother-son relationship or a marriage alliance between the Bat dynasty and *K'uhul Chatan winik*, expressed iconographically by paired stelae at AD 633 (Stelae 2 and 3 at Uxul) (Ruppert and Denison 1943), helped Yuknoom Ch'een II to legitimise his power in *Uxte'Tuun* and the surrounding area. The references to the Bat emblem

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[182] The reference to the Bat emblem glyph on Stela 17 is stylistically dated to the late seventh century or the early eighth century (Nikolai Grube personal communication 2022).

glyph at Stela 52 from Calakmul and Altar 15 from Oxpemul were the first sign that the Bat dynasty again began to grow in importance in the region after a century of silence.

The importance of the Bat dynasty is also expressed by the erection of Stela 62, which was probably paired with Stela 88 (Calakmul[183], AD 751) and Stela 2 paired with Stela 4 (Oxpemul, AD 771) (Grube 2008; Robichaux 2010; Robichaux and Pruet 2005, 2008).

It is not fully known why or how the Bat dynasty appears in the Late Classic history of Calakmul and Oxpemul and what the relationship was between the Bat ruler Great Serpent, depicted on Stela 62 of Calakmul, and the *k'uhul Bat ajaw* Chan K'inich, portrayed on Stelae 2 and 4 of Oxpemul.

As Martin mentions, Stela 62 appears to be a smaller version of the stelae erected by Yuknoom Took' K'awiil. It remained unfinished, suggesting either that the king died prematurely or was unable to consolidate his power (Martin 2012:173). In contrast, the image of the queen on Stela 88 is in a fairly good state of preservation and shows her as a warrior, powerful queen responsible for performing important rituals. The woman's tomb under the Structure XIII may have contained her remains (Parpal 2021:295).

Returning to Stela 62, it is sobering to note that while Stela 62 is a miniature version of the paired stelae from Kanu'l's reign, Stelae 2 and 4 from Oxpemul, which also refer to the Bat emblem glyph, they are the tallest standing monuments in Oxpemul, reaching a height of 4 metres (Robichaux 2010:37). twenty years - one k'atun - separate the erection of Stelae 62 and 88 (AD 751) from Stelae 2 and 4 of Oxpemul (AD 771). Perhaps the Bat dynasty succeeded in consolidating its full power in Oxpemul, which is reflected in both the shape and size of the paired stelae.

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[183] Stela 88 is now in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, while Stela 62 is in front of Structure XIII (Martin 2012:173). The relationship between Great Serpent and the woman represented on Stela 88 remains ambiguous (Martin 2012:173).

Calakmul also marked the erection of monuments for the Period Ending 9.17.0.0.0. AD 771. Two stelae to the east of Structure 13 at Calakmul - Stela 57 and Stela 58 feature the name of the ruler B'olon K'awiil, but neither Kanu'l nor the Bat emblem are visible in the associated inscriptions. Nevertheless, these 3-metre-high monuments follow the format of paired stelae depicting either B'olon K'awiil or B'olon K'awiil and his wife[184].

In addition to the name of B'olon K'awiil, three gods are mentioned on stela 57, including Yajaw Maan, the patron god of Calakmul (see also Chapter II). Its effigy was captured and exhibited in the Tikal War AD 695 (Martin 1998: 77). The renewal of this patron deity took place in AD 731, as testified by Stelae 54 and 89 of Calakmul[185] (Baron 2013:199; Martin 1998:77).

Although Yajaw Maan was associated with the city of Calakmul and not with the Snake dynasty, I believe that Bolon K'awiil associated himself with the past glory of Kanu'l by repeating the pattern of paired stelae and referring to Yajaw Maan. Whoever ruled Calakmul and Oxpemul in the late eighth century did not reject Kanu'l's legacy. On the contrary, Kanu'l's style, expressed in the pattern of paired stelae, was imitated, and incorporated into the iconographic programme of the rulers of Oxpemul and Calakmul in the late eighth century. In the eighth century, the Bat elite repeated the art conventions of Kanu'l, as they probably considered themselves successors to Kanu'l traditions. Consequently, Kanu'l's strategies of cooperation, integration and domination over sites and regions expressed in visual representation survived its creators. In this way, the Snake Dynasty's propaganda programme was successful.

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[184] Stelae are deteriorated.

[185] The text on stela 54 refers to an event in which a palanquin was carried for the site's principal patron deity - Yajaw Maan. This god oversaw grasping of K'awiil by Yuknoom Took K'awiil on the Period Ending 9.15 0. 0.0 (Baron 2013:99).

As Mumary Farto has noted, the late eighth century also show us the importance that the dynasty had in the socio-political tradition of the time (Mumary Farto 2019:265). Just as the late eighth century La Corona likely maintained ties to Kanu'l through the production of spolia (Lamoureux-St-Hillaire 2018:92), the El Peru Waka' elite were also able to honour the memory of the Snake dynasty and sought to ally themselves with their former vassals.

Stela 32 from El Peru Waka' shows a king and queen in the front of the scene. This representation can be seen as the less common arrangement of paired stelae, where both figures - male and female - are depicted on the same medium[186]. Stela is dated to AD 790 but the inscription contained important information on events taking place in AD 771. The date AD 771 records the arrival of Ix Pakal who carries the Bat emblem glyph, to El Peru Waka'. Stela then reflects on the marriage alliance between Ix Pakal and the 3 K'atun lord whose name is illegible (Guenter 2014a; Martin 2005a). What is more notable is that Stela 32 was placed just north of famous Stelae 33 and 34. According to Stanley Guenter, this unique placement suggests "a deliberate evocation of this earlier royal couple from the site's golden age" (Guenter 2014a:162). The arrival of Ix Pakal at El Peru Waka' coincides with the erection of Stelae 2 and 4 at Oxpemul, where for the first time the Oxpemul ruler carries, next to Oxpemul toponym, the Bat emblem glyph. We have no direct evidence of this, but perhaps Ix Pakal came to El Peru Waka' from Oxpemul. If so, then the former dependencies of Calakmul - Oxpemul and El Peru Waka' established political relations. This hypothesis is strengthened by the absence of any evidence of Tikal's influence (political or cultural) on El Peru Waka' after AD 743 (when El Peru Waka' was defeated) (Guenter 2014a:162; Lindley 2012:24; Martin and Grube 2008). Instead, El Peru Waka' evoked past glories by resetting of a pair stelae.

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[186] (Another example of this kind of representations is Element 19 from La Corona which shows the ruler Chakaw Nahb Chan and his wife Ix Chak Tok Chahk (Stuart *et al*. 2014:439).

"Resetting of Stelae 11 and 12 on the south side at a later date highlights the function of Stelae as devices used for remembering events over spans longer than a generation (in other words, as a means of communication. These monuments, depicting two prominent figures in the history of El Perú, would commemorate in perpetuity and reassert the meaning of Structure M12-35 in the history of the site and specifically emphasize the moments in time when the site enjoyed significant power and regional importance" (Acuña 2011:62)

As I mentioned in Chapter III, La Corona and Oxpemul may have established contacts with Aguateca rather than Tikal in the eighth century, since both carried the Mutul emblem glyph. If so, two former allies of Calakmul would maintain a relationship with the probable ally of Kanu'l.

5. 5 Sites without paired stelae

Interestingly, paired stelae are not present at all sites that were connected with Calakmul. The sites that were allied with Calakmul but did not have paired stelae are La Corona, Caracol and Dos Pilas. Moreover, the paired stelae at Cancuen are dated to AD 790, long after the demise of Calakmul (Stewart 2008; Tuszyńska 2016; Vázquez López 2017). In this subchapter, I would like to analyse two cases where there are no paired stelae - La Corona and Caracol. La Corona is of particular interest to me because it is one of the sites located in close proximity to Calakmul and had an unusual relationship with the Kanu'l dynasty that is not comparable to other sites. The case of Caracol is different in that its rulers not only did not erect paired stelae, but also did not have other themes characteristic of Calakmul in the Late Classic Period. The case of Caracol will serve at the end of this chapter as a comparison to other sites where motifs and themes characteristic of Kanu'l appear.

<u>5.5. 1 Caracol</u>

The strong influence of Calakmul on Caracol became particularly evident after the arrival of Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' in Caracol in AD 584 (Tuszyńska 2016:91, 2009:2).

Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' had a bearing on maintaining a good relationship between Caracol, under the aegis of her son K'an II, and the Kanu'l dynasty. Nevertheless, her image was never depicted in public art (Sergei Vepretskii personal communication 2019). This is in contrast to the Late Classic depictions of the regent queen Ix Wak Chan and her son K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk from Naranjo.

As I have already mentioned, the appearance of themes and motifs characteristic of Calakmul outside its kingdom is dated no earlier than the second half of the seventh century. Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' died, according to the inscription on Panel 3 in Xunantunich (Helmke and Awe 2016:9), in AD 638, when the adoption of Calakmul's style could only be traced in the city's immediate surroundings - in Uxul and, perhaps in Champerico. What struck me, however, is that there is no iconographic or epigraphic evidence of Calakmul's influence on Caracol dated to the reign of Yuknoom Ch'een II, that is, before Naranjo's attack on Caracol in the Star War AD 680 and Caracol's Hiatus period, which began in the same year and lasted 118 years (Chase and Chase 2017; Grube 1994; Martin and Grube 2008:95). It is conceivable that relations between Calakmul and Caracol began to deteriorate after the death of Ix Tiwol Chan Ek' and that, according to Sergei Vepretskii, this could be related to the fraternal conflict in the Kanu'l dynasty (Sergei Vepretskii personal communication 2021).The lack of monuments at Caracol dated to the reign of the successor of K'an II – K'ahk' Ujol K'inich II[187] (acceded in AD 658), may indicate that they were purposefully destroyed (Chase and Chase 2020:39),

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[187] There are only two monuments dedicated to K'ahk' Ujol K'inich. They are located at the Caracol terminus of La Rejolla (Chase and Chase 2021:229).

Relations between Yuknoom Ch'een II and a former ally of the Kanu'l - Caracol - seem to have been disturbed under the rule of K'an II and K'ahk Ujol K'inich II, as evidenced, for example, by the absence of paired stelae or ballgame panels. The attack on Caracol in AD 680 by Naranjo, while possibly ending as revenge for Caracol (Chase and Chase 2003: 178; Martin and Grube 2008:95; Martin 2017), did not counteract the political crisis and decline of Caracol. "It may be well significant that traditional enemies such as Tikal and Naranjo flourished for much this time, while Calakmul's great ally Caracol suffered defeat and decline" (Martin and Grube 2008:95).

If the presence of paired stelae at sites far from Calakmul is to be taken as a sign of identification with the glory of Calakmul and as a source of inspiration, then the absence of these stelae at Caracol could indicate that K'an II and K'ahk' Ujol K'inich II rejected their predecessor's political affiliation or/and supported the losing branch in the brotherly conflict within the Snake family.

For some reason, Calakmul decided to support Naranjo against Caracol and influenced or even forced its ally Bajlaj Chan K'awiil from Dos Pilas to send his daughter to Naranjo to establish a new dynastic lineage inclined towards Calakmul. Perhaps towards the end of the seventh century, Calakmul was not strong enough to have two fierce enemies as allies and invested in the one that better suited its imperialist plans.

Unlike Caracol, La Corona achieved great prosperity under the influence of Calakmul in the Late Classic Period. Nevertheless, the presence of three Kanu'l princesses at La Corona was not attested by the erection of paired stelae. The only oblique reference to paired stelae comes from Element 19.

Element 19 features the image of Ix Chak Tok Chaahk and her husband, the king Chakaw Nahb Chan, performing the scattering rite to celebrate the end of the Period Ending of AD 662. The queen does not carry the Kanu'l emblem glyph and was most likely of local origin.

The royal couple is also depicted together on the front of Element 19, a pattern that has not been detected at Calakmul[188].

To all intents and purposes, it is unclear whether Element 19 was inspired by Calakmul's art.

<u>5.5 2 La Corona</u>

The reference to the presence of Kanu'l princesses at the court of La Corona is late and comes from Panel 6, dated to AD 731, when Kanu'l domination of the Petén lowlands had already weakened considerably but still showed some resilience (Martin 2008, Martin and Grube 2008). The absence of paired stelae in La Corona contrasts with what we observe in nearby El Peru Waka' (Guenter 2005a, 2014a; Navarro Farr et al. 2020; Wanyerka 1996). For some reason, the strategy of emphasising the huge role of Kanu'l women in the formation of a Middle and Late Classic authority at La Corona was not seen in the iconographic and epigraphic records at this site before AD 731.

The late reference to the presence of Kanu'l women at the court of La Corona and their marriages to the lords of La Corona was a means of emphasising the long-lasting relationship with the Snake dynasty. It also emphasised the important role of Kanu'l women in strengthening relations between the two kingdoms. The absence of paired stelae raises the question of the meaning of Panel 6. The inscription and iconography of the panel can be seen as a propaganda work to show that the elite of La Corona were still loyal to Calakmul despite their failures. It shows the Kanu'l dynasty as a powerful dynasty capable of wielding power, while I believe the reality was different - the Kanu'l dynasty was weak and vulnerable. The textual and iconographic references to Kanu'l princesses and Teotihuacan symbols on Panel 6 would be a new imperialist strategy to exert influence on La Corona. The introduction of the Kanu'l

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[188] But appears in El Peru Waka' in AD 736 and AD 790 (Stela 31 and Stela 32 respectively).

princesses into La Corona's visual programme also served as a projection of Calakmul's power - a power that was diminishing.

In the iconographic records, the theme that associated La Corona with Calakmul was mainly limited to the ballgame. The pattern of creating ballgame panels is also a feature characteristic of other sites within Calakmul's sphere of influence. This stimulates fruitful research to address the ballgame theme as one of the modes of political communication and perception of Kanu'l power and politics.

5.6 Ballgame Theme

A large number of ball courts, as well as representations of ballgames, and rulers as ball players at a number of sites, indicate that the ball game was of paramount importance to Mesoamerican cultures. The game was practised both locally and throughout Mesoamerica and had a strong cosmological significance (Jones 1985; Miller and Houston 1987; Rivera Dorado 2001: 152-153; Schele and Freidel 1991; Zender 2004b).

By playing the game, rulers re-enacted a local myth that could involve a life-and-death struggle (Barrios and Tokovinine 2005, Reichard and Phil 2009; Tokovinine 2002). The ball game was closely linked to the maize cycle, hunting and warfare, and therefore had great significance for public performances, rituals and pageantry (Helmke et al. 2015:1; Taladoire 2001: 97). These events were great opportunities to bring the community together and create a common identity. They also formed a link between a mythological world and historical narratives and created a conceptual framework for competition (Baron 2006; Fox 1996 et al. 483-500).

More recently, another meaning of the ballgame has come to light - it was not only a public display of local power but had a broader political significance. By playing the ballgame, those involved in the practice could establish and demonstrate a hierarchy or alliance (Helmke et al 2015; Liendo and Lopez 2006; Torres 2010).

309

The visual representation of the ball game and the ball players was of particular importance to the Kanu'l dynasty. The representation of ball games was an integral part of the various socio-political messages that the Kanu'l princes wanted to convey. Ballgame panels (Figure 5B.1) were often commissioned as a means of socio-political alliance between Calakmul and the local ruling elite, and as such were promoted by the Kanu'l dynasty (Helmke 2015:8-11; Jabłońska 2016, Stuart 2013a; Vázquez López 2018). The ballgame could be an expression of a horizontal alliance - with elites on the same hierarchical level or vertical--between an overlord and his client (Marcus 2012).

Figure 5B. 1 The distribution of ballgame panels. Recompiled by author.

The presence of ballgame iconography at a particular site may indicate that the ruling elite participated in a larger network of allegiance and collaborated directly or indirectly (through another site) with the Kanu'l dynasty (Helmke et al. 2015:9; Vázquez López 2017:12, 27). Nevertheless, there are major differences between these sites in terms of the chronology of ballgame panels, their occurrence, the number of individuals presented on the panels and their identity. All these factors could indicate different motivations for the incorporation of the ballgame theme by the local elite. To better understand the ballgame panels and their

connection to the Kanu'l dynasty, we need to examine their socio-political and archaeological context. Thus, the scope of my research is wider as it aims to look at distinct ballgame panels and their iconography to reflect the imperialistic strategies of the Kanu'l dynasty.

Imitating the image and style of the ballgame seems to have been extremely attractive to the local ruling elite, as it attested to their alliance with Kanu'l. Interestingly, of the three sites in close proximity to Calakmul - Oxpemul, Naachtun and Uxul - only Uxul displayed panels of ball players. Moreover, the presence of ballgame iconography at Uxul could be an expression of the close and extreme subordination of this site to Calakmul.

To understand how Kanu'l political rule was expressed through the depiction of ball games at Uxul, comparative iconographic analyses of different sites should be conducted.

5.6.1 Epigraphic evidence

However, let me start with some examples where the ballgame between the Kanu'l king and the local lord is attested in inscriptions and iconography, but does not follow the pattern of the ball game depictions themselves.

I begin with two representations of kings dressed as ballplayers. Stela 66 of Calakmul (Figure 5B.2), which is integrated into the ball court, probably shows Yuknoom Took' K'awiil in a ballplayer costume. The monument records the date AD 731 and mentions ba pi?-tz'i-la, baah pitz'iil, "the first ball player", although the text is not very clear (Esparza Olguin and Valencio Rivera 2020:174).
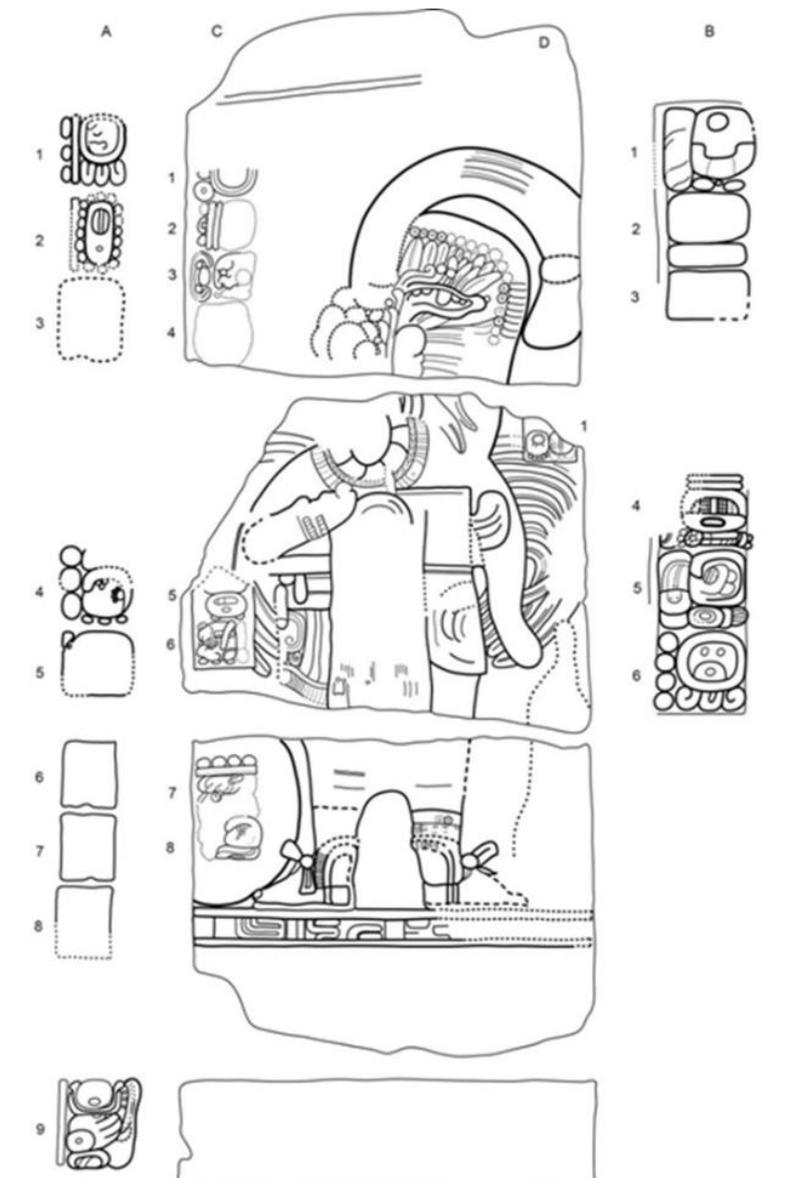
Figure 5B. 2. Stela 66, Calakmul. Drawing by Rogerio Valencia.

The second example comes from Stela 47, Naranjo. It shows Naranjo's ruler Aj Numsaaj Chan K'inich ("Aj Wosal"), the loyal ally of the Kanu'l kings, shortly before his accession to the throne in AD 546. The inscription continues with the expression *ukabaaj/ukabij,* followed by the names of four successive Kanu'l kings. It is noteworthy that the future king was dressed for the ballgame - joy[aj] ti pitz or ti joy[aj] ti pitz (Martin et al. 2016:617-620).
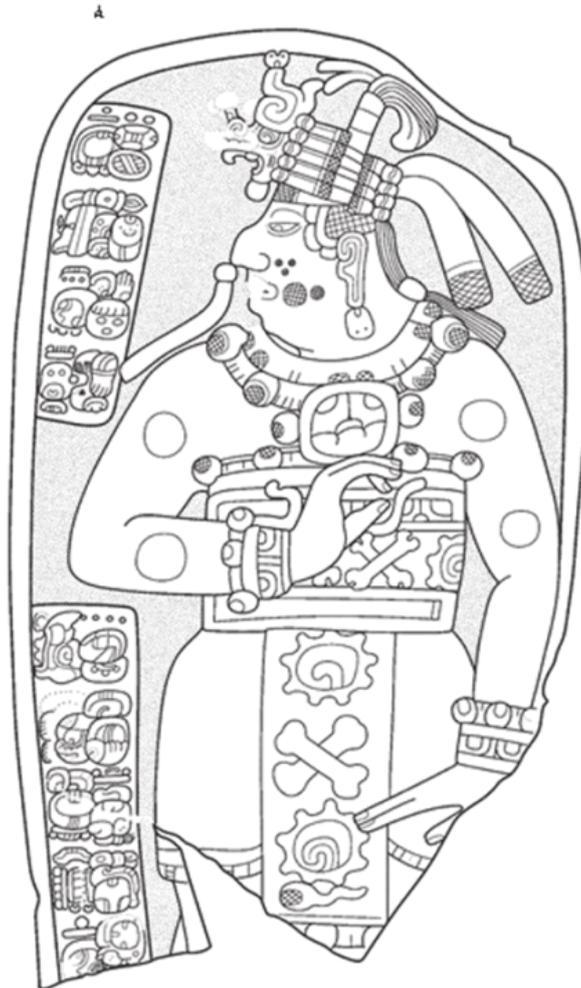
Figure 5B. 3. Stela 47, Naranjo. Drawing by Alexandre Tokovinine.

The ball game was thus not only linked to the accession ceremonies, but also to political manoeuvres of the Kanu'l lords who established ties of overkingship and fealty with the Naranjo king. The image of Aj Numsaaj Chan K'inich as a ball player (Figure 5B.3) is a clear manifestation of Calakmul expressed in iconography, and an excellent example of how politics can be associated with the ancient Maya ballgame. The relationship between power and the ball game is also evident on the block VIII of La Corona's Hieroglyphic Stairway 2. It shows two seated lords holding stone hammers (Figure 5B.4). The accompanying inscription, although incomplete, mentions that the local ruler of La Corona - Sak Maas and probably Yuknoom Ch'een II - were involved in a certain kind of ballgame or ritual contest (*pitz*).The

pitz event, according to the inscription, took place on 11 February, 635 AD[189] before Yuknoom

Ch'een II became a king (Stuart 2012a).

Fifty-four days after the meeting between the Kanu'l lord and the La Corona lord, some

kind of refoundation event associated with the re-establishment of royal authority took place,

probably at Dzibanche[190] (Martin and Velásquez 2016:28; Martin 2005a:7-8; Stuart 2012a).

Both events - the ballgame and the restoration - are recorded in La Corona and took place

within two months. They may even have been connected. The *pitz* event took place during the

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[189] The hammers they hold are possibly used in a game and are related to rainmaking rituals and the god Chaak.

In fact, both rulers are probably acting as impersonators of the god Chaak, the figure on the right is most likely

Yuknoom Ch'een II himself (Stuart 2012a).

[190] The verb KAJ "to settle, to reside" is followed by the Kanu'l emblem glyph and a toponym that is too

damaged to be read (Martin and Velasquez 2016:28).

dark and unstable times for the Kanu'l dynasty, possibly in the midst of the brotherly war between Yuknoom Ch'een II and Waxaklajuun Ubaah Kaan. It seems that the lord of La Corona supported Yuknoom Ch'een II in the conflict and the event recorded on block VIII consolidated the cooperation.

Furthermore, Block V of HS 2 refers to the same *pitz* event and links it to the arrival of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' in La Corona, sixty years later (Stuart 2012b). These two events are linked, perhaps to emphasise the alliance between the two cities and their mutual friendship.

If it were not for the accompanying inscription, we would not know that the image on Block VIII refers to an event related to the ballgame. Nevertheless, Block VIII from La Corona clearly shows that amalgamation of the ballgame and the exercise of power was important in the imperialist strategies of collaboration for the Kanu'l dynasty.

The ballgame event is also mentioned in the inscriptions of Xunantunich Panel 3 (Helmke and Awe 2016a:7) and Step VII and XII of the Naranjo Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 (Martin 2017). They were all part of the Caracol Hieroglyphic Stairway erected by the Caracol king K'an II. In these examples, the hieroglyphic text referring to the ballgame is not accompanied by the image of the ballplayers [191] (Helmke and Vepretskii 2019; Kettunen 2012:128; Zender, Awe and Martin 2016). The stairway, however, is regarded as the conquest monument related to the war campaigns of K'an II, while giving special significance to the victorious deeds of Calakmul (Martin and Grube 2008:73). The *pitz* events can therefore be associated with the war and Calakmul's struggles for domination. As Martin noted, "symbolic ballgames are regularly associated with monumental steps, where they were staged to celebrate success in war and the subsequent tormenting of prisoners" (Martin 2017). This brings me to

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[191] For instance, the Kanu'l king Tajo'm Uk'ab K'ahk' (AD 622-630) is mentioned in Naranjo in connection with a ballgame in AD 627 (Helmke and Vepretskii 2019; Martin 2020:249).

the main topic of this subchapter - representations of the ballgame on the panels of the monumental stairways. These images were placed and promoted by Calakmul in the seventh and eighth centuries at sites allied to the Kanu'l dynasty. Interestingly, they are not observed at either Caracol or Naranjo and, unlike the references to pitz events on the Naranjo Step VII, XII and the Xunantunich Panel 3, are related to socio-political alliances between the sites rather than the ritual killing of prisoners and war.

5.6.2 The archaeological context of the ball panels

To contextualise the ball game tablets, they were often found at secondary sites integrated into Hieroglyphic Stairs (Figure 5B.5, 5B.6 and 5B.7). Most of the known ballgame panels were relocated in the Terminal Classic Period from their original position. These include the panels from Dzibanche, Uxul, El Peru Waka', Tipan Chen Witz, La Corona and most likely Zapote Bobal. There may be two main reasons for the relocation of the panels:

Figure 5B. 5. Part of HS 2, La Corona (after Stuart, Canuto, and Barrientos 2015: Fig. 6).

1) It could be a high-level elite that may have invaded and forced some changes in the architecture for their specific services and activities. 2) A secondary elite or non-elite reused, dismantled, and relocated material that they found

Either of these options could mean political disruption and upheaval or, on the contrary, Terminal Classic inhabitants of the sites could move the blocks to preserve history and refer to the past glory of Calakmul (Ponce 2014:978; Tsukamoto 2017). The first scenario is often applied to Uxul panels while the second to its neighbour - La Corona. Scholars believe that the terminal classic inhabitants of Uxul relocated panels, placing some of them upside down to symbolically sever ties with their former hegemon and show him their disrespect by deliberately desecrating the monuments (Grube and Delvendahl 2012:36-37). Be that as it may, the spolia at La Corona suggest otherwise - the panels were probably relocated to mark the connection to the boom times when the site was under the influence of Calakmul (Lamoureux-St-Hillaire 2018; Ponce 2014, 2020).

The small size of ball panels (the average size of 30 to 80 cm high and 30 cm to 1 metre wide) suggests that their original location could also be hieroglyphic stairs. Perhaps the game was also played on the stairs as iconographic and epigraphic[192] sources suggest (Miller and Houston 1987: 57-63; Schele and Grube 1990).

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[192] The six stairs' stairways recognised both glyphically (*wak ebnal*) and iconically were particularly common in ballgames (Schele and Grube 1990:64-69).

Figure 5B. 6. Southern Stairway, Uxul. (after Informe Uxul 2011: Fig.16).

Hieroglyphic stairs often recorded dynastic history and military campaigns, acting as static, exposed memories for the local population, constantly reminding them of their past and present. Regarding images that involve sports or action, as in the case of representations of the ballgame, the scene in question is not itself representative, but evokes what happened before and what will happen after (Miller 1998; Nygard et al. 2015; Stone and Zender 2011). The royal couple ascending and descending such a stairway would add another meaning to the stairs.

Figure 5B. 7. Hieroglyphic Stairway, El Palmar. Photo by Kenichiro Tsukamoto

Through physical contact with them, the royals would interact with a text as well as with the images displayed at these stairs. The interaction - images-stairs-a ruler - would be widely seen and watched by the public, as hieroglyphic stairs tend to be located centrally on the facades of buildings. The stairs would be engaged in a performance in which each actor - the ruler, the audience and the building - would play an important role (Innomata and Tsukamoto 2014; Inomata 2006; Miller 1998; Nygard et al. 2015:65-66, 71; Tsukamoto 2014).[193] Hieroglyphic stairways are also frequently located at sites integrated into Kanu'l's socio-political network and as such may attest to an alliance or vassalage with this great kingdom (Boot 2011; Helmke et al. 2015).

Returning to the ballgame itself, it is impossible not to mention the arena where it all took place - the ball court. The presence of a ball court in a particular place increased its prestige

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[193] Recent excavations by Kenichiro Tsukamoto in the Guzman Group El Palmar suggest that these theatrical performances on the hieroglyphic stairway, could be accompanied by a ritual feast at which large meals and drinks were served (Tsukamoto 2017).

and elevated its rank. Calakmul, the site that promoted and influenced the appearance of ballgame panels, had a very modest, not to say small, ball game court (Figure 5B.8). It is about 20 m long and 23.2 m wide (overall) and no more than 3 m high (Delvendahl 2010:109).
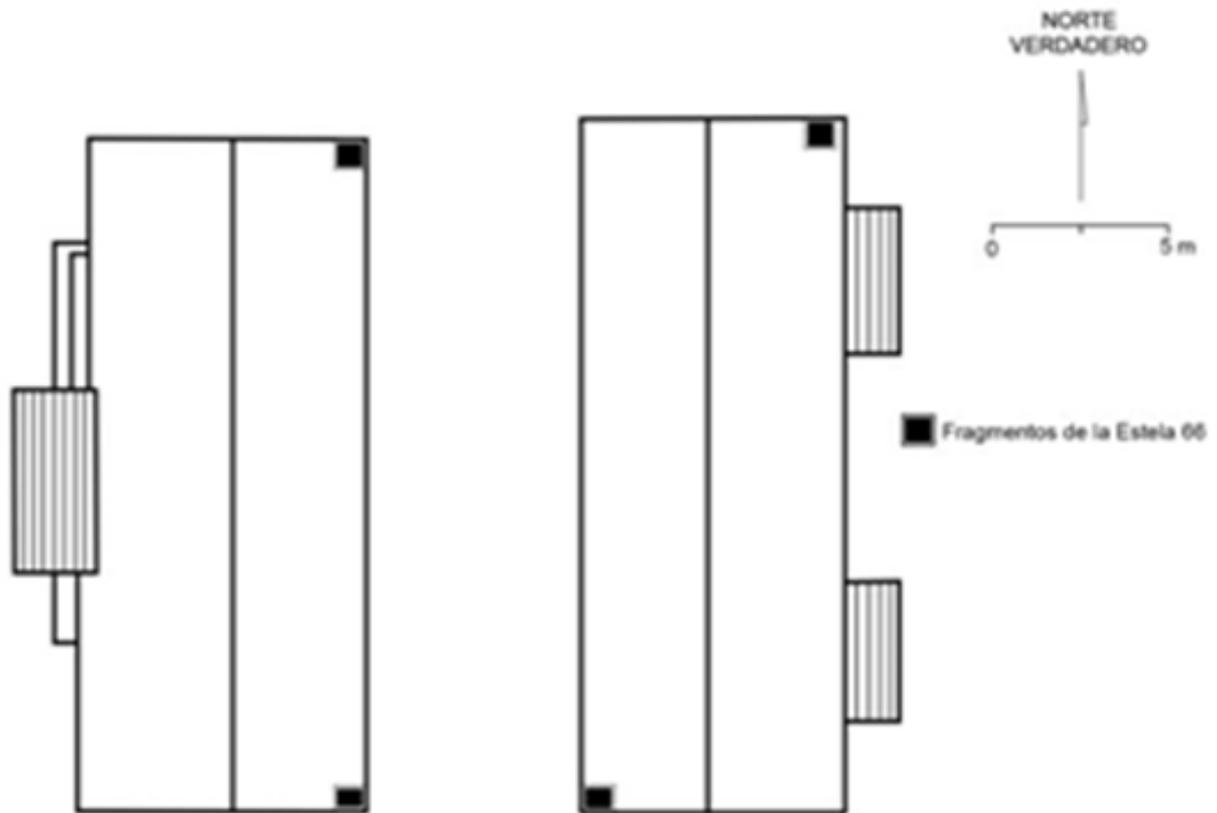
Figure 5B. 8. Ballcourt at Calakmul with a location of Stela 66 (after Esparza Olguin and Rogerio Valencia Rivera 2020: Fig. 10)

The dimensions of the ball courts of its allies are even smaller (Table 5B.1) (Figure 5B.9)

Site	Length	Width
Calakmul	20m	23.2m
Uxul	15m	16.5m
Naachtun	12m	10m
La Corona	15m	13m
El Peru Waka'	8m	16m
Piedras Negras	18.1m	11.2m
Palenque	22m	10.4m
Palenque	21.3m	6.7m
Tonina	29.4m	20m
Tonina	70m	30m

Table 5B.1 Dimensions of ball courts

Moreover, Kanu'l's arch-rival Tikal exhibited at least five ball courts during the long history of the site (Jones 1985) but no ballgame panels. The variety of ball courts' sizes indicates that there were different variants of the game.

Figure 5B. 9. Ballcourt, Uxul (after Informe Uxul 2011).

It is very difficult to determine the rules and outcome of the game from the iconography of the ball game panels. The images are so conventionalised and stylised that it is difficult for modern scholars to fully understand them. The overwhelming majority of ball game panels show ball players in the same postures and with similar equipment - such as *hachas*, *yugos*, *manoplas* or *palmas*[194] (Helmke *et al.*2018).) The teams can be recognised and distinguished in the iconography by their regalia and headdresses, representing supernatural creatures that refer to the celestial or underworld realm (Figure 5B.10). The celestial association is indicated by the presence of birds and snakes, while the underworld and terrestrial realm are represented by feline, deer, and waterlilies (Barrois and Tokovinie 2005).[195]

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[194] *Hachas* (Axes), worn atop of *yugos*, u-shaped object worn by ballgame players around waist, *manoplas* (handstones) objects used to strike the ball, *Palmas* – gear worn over the chest during the ballgame.

[195] For example, the headdress of Chak Ak' Paat Kuy with the row of birds on Panel 1, La Corona, associates him with the celestial realm, while his opponent, who wears a headdress representing the Teotihuacan Storm God, is tied to the terrestrial team. Similarly, K'inich Baknal Chaahk, in his broad-brimmed, quetzal-hat-like headdress

Figure 5B. 10. The example of the celestial player (left) and underworld player (right), K2912. Photo by Justin Kerr.

The silent difference lies in the number of ballplayers shown on the panels. Usually, we see only the captains of the teams or the most valuable players. But sometimes two teams consist of two to five players on each side (e.g., Uxul).

However, rather than concentrating on the ballgame rules, this chapter advocates association of ballgame iconography with Calakmul and its development through time and space. I have arranged the description of the panels in chronological order to see how the ballgame theme evolved. The description of the panels is followed by my analyses and interpretations in relation to the relationships between power- Calakmul- ballgame iconography in the subchapter Discussion.

5.6.3 Panels **(Catalogue Ballgame Figure 40-77), (Table 2)**

5.6.3.1 Dzibanche (Figure 40)

The earliest ballplayer panel comes not from Calakmul however, but from Dzibanche and is probably associated with its ruler Yax Yopaat (Velásquez García 2004:97).

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on Monument 171, Tonina is the captain of a celestial team, while his opponent, who wears a headdress consisting of storm-god goggles and the ear of a deer, represents the underworld deity (Helmke *et al.* 2018:18-20).

323

Monument 19 displays the image of six figures and the ball court. The ball player on the left side of the panel is shown in a dynamic position leaning on his right knee. His right arm deflects the ball, which seems to bounce on the steps of the ball court. The scene on the right is more static - the five standing individuals looking to the left seem to be watching the game. The panel forms one of the steps of the hieroglyphic stairway of the Building of the Captives, best known for its depictions of bound captives. However, Monument 19, along with another monument (Monument 16), is of a different style, size and origin from the Captives (Khohkriakova et al. 2021). Panel 16 shows the image of three individuals, perhaps related to those presented on Monument 19. Their original dedication may have taken place in AD 573, as Monument 16 records this date in connection with the ruler Yax Yopaat (Velásquez García 2004:97).

5.6.3.2 Uxul a) Altar 2 (Figure 41).

Altar 2 is located in the North Group, south of Structure VI displays the earliest dated image of the ball game in Uxul. The hieroglyphic inscription accompanying the scene and showing four ballplayers is heavily eroded and nothing but three dates (9.9.9.9.18 - AD 622), 9.10.9.17.0 and 9.10.10.0.0 - both AD 642) can be read[196].

The central part of the panel is also destroyed. The scene on the side of the altar shows four ballplayers divided into two groups facing each other around the ball (Ruppert and Denison 1943: Pl. 59). Two players stand on their left knee while the player on the right prepares to hit the ball (Grube et al. 2012:26). The figure behind the right ball player could represent a dwarf (Bacon 2007:128). The king who was responsible for the erection of Altar 2 also commissioned one of the Stairways Panels rendering images of the ballgame.

b)   Stairway Panels (Figure 42-44)

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[196] The last date refers to the erection of the altar for the k'atun Period Ending in AD 642

The ballgame panels forming the stairs of Structure K2 are without exception later than Altar 2, with dates between AD 652 and AD 705. The earliest dated panel is from the Northern Stairway of the palace complex, Structure K2. The inscription on Panel 2, Northern Stairway, begins with a Long Count date corresponding to the date 9.11.0.0.0. 12 Ajaw 8 Keh (12 October, AD 652). This must have been the work of the predecessor of Muyal Chaak. Muyal Chaak, the most famous king of Uxul who acceded to the throne AD 660, in all likelihood commissioned most of the panels (Grube et al. 2012). Although the blocks were not found *in situ*, there is a strong indication that they were once part of a stairway.

This evidence came together when excavations of Structure K2 in 2011 uncovered a total of five rows of steps (between 0.7 and 1 metre wide) made of 260 stone blocks. Six of these stones show images and inscriptions referring to the Kanu'l dynasty. Four of them (K2, Southern Stairway Panel 1, 2, 4, Northern Stairway Panel 1) show ballplayers identified as Kanu'l kings, while a fifth and a sixth (K2, Southern Stairway Panel 3, Northern Stairway Panel 2) are fully glyphic (Figure 5B.11). As Grube and Delvendahl suggest, these six panels could have belonged to an earlier phase of the building's construction or could have come from an entirely different structure within Group K (Grube and Delvendahl 2014:83-86, Nikolai Grube personal communication 2022)[197]. The only recognizable date on panels with the ballgame scene comes from Panel 4 and corresponds to the important year of AD 695.

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[197] Similar to La Corona, the panels were recycled as part of the penultimate and terminal construction phase that took place in Uxul after AD 705, when architectural activity slightly diminished.

a   b

Figure 5B. 11. Southern Stairway, Uxul. a) Panel 1 and 3, b) Panel 2 and 4. Photo by Kai Delvendahl.

The ballplayers occupy a central part of each panel. They are dressed in typical ballgame attire (a wide yoke, a knee protector) and are adorned with elaborate headgear and jewellery - necklaces, earrings, or bracelets. They are also shown in a dynamic position preparing to receive or strike the ball falling from the three-stepped ball structure, perhaps a ball court. This stepped structure contains the sign K'an and the logogram NAL (Grube and Delvendahl 2011, 2014; Grube et al. 2012). The combination of these signs stands for *k'anal,* meaning precious, and together with the representation of the three stepped structure, the expression *k'anal ehb* means "precious stairway"[198].

Returning to the iconography of the panels: In three cases (Panel 1 and 4 of the Southern Stairway, Panel 1 of Northern Stairway) the figures are shown before hitting the ball with their hip and an arm extended backwards. The king represented on Panel 2 kneels on his right knee and prepares to receive the rubber almost from the ground. The upper part of his body, his face and a headdress are largely damaged by deliberate destruction, roots and general erosion. The same fate befell Panel 1 of the Southern Stairway and Panel 1 of the Northern Stairway. The panels are partially damaged, especially in the area of the faces. Only Panel 4 of the Southern

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[198] The *K'an* sign in connection to *pitz* (the ballgame), appears also on the two blocks located in the annex of Structure XIII, Calakmul. One features the text *wa?-a,-pi-tzi* K'AN-na-TE'-NAL?, which Esparza Olguin and Valencia Rivera translate as "the ballgame called K'ante'nal" (Esparza Olguin and Valencia Rivera 2020:175-176).

Staircase is in a good state of preservation, showing no deliberate destruction and only minor surface erosion (Grube and Delvendahl 2011, 2014:89-90, 91-92).

Interestingly, the name Muyal Chaak does not appear on any of the panels. Instead, references to the glyph of the Kanu'l emblem glyph and the title *kaloomte'* appear (Southern Stairway Panel 1, Panel 2, Panel 4, Northern Stairway Panel 1).

The *kaloomte'* title on Panels 1 and 4 of the Southern Stairway and Panel 1 of the Northern Stairway is preceded by the glyph OCH -K'IN ni (west), which together stand for the directional designation of ruling. As the panels are badly damaged, the identity of the kings remains unclear. Perhaps the person on Panel 2 of the Southern Stairway carrying the title *kaloomte'*, is Yuknoom Ch'een II, although the glyph of his name is not clear. Only the identity of the king on Panel 4 is recognisable (Grube and Delvendahl 2011:67).

Panel 4 shows the king Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'. The inscription on the panel informs us that on date 3 Imix 19 Kumk' u (10. February, AD 695) *och k'in kaloomte'* Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' played the game (pi-tzi-ja, yu-ku-Yich'AAK-K'AHK') (Delvendahl and Grube 2011; Grube and Delvendahl 2014:89-90, 91-92, Grube et al. 2012, Helmke et al. 2015, Jabłońska 2016, Vázquez López 2017).

The ballgame of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' took place only 8 days after capturing the Tikal lord, his arch-rival in the competition for domination in the Maya Lowlands. Perhaps the game was an event celebrating the end of a losing streak (from the perspective of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'). However, analysis of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk''s bones suggests that he suffered from ankylosing spondylitis, which fused his spine and prevented him from playing the game (Vázquez López 2016:334). This not only means that the game may have more symbolic meaning than previously thought, but also shows the power of these images to reflect and perhaps strengthen hierarchical relationships.

<u>5.6.3. 3 La Corona (Figure 45-50)</u>

Hierarchical relationships reflected in the iconography of the ballgame are also attested in La Corona. One of the panels, now in the collections of the Chicago Art Institute, shows a ballgame between two people wearing protective belts (Stuart, Canuto, and Barrientos 2015:9).

The figure on the right, seemingly the protagonist of the panel, represents a local ruler of La Corona, Chak Ak' Paat Kuy (Zender 2004a:11-12). He is leaning on his right hand, with his head pointing to the viewer's left towards the ball court, which is depicted in the form of stepped elements. With his two legs touching the ground, he seems to be trying to bounce the large ball that is suspended between him and the player standing on the lateral end of the ball court. The text states that the ballgame took place in Calakmul, as two toponyms associated with this city appear in the inscription. Interestingly, the ruler of La Corona did not play with the king of Calakmul. Chak Ak 'Paat Kuy's opponent, ba-AJ-?-K'INICH, is referred to as *uti'huun kaloomte'* "the spokesperson of the supreme ruler", undoubtedly of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil (Helmke et al. 2015:9; Stuart et al. 2015). He also carries the title Itz'in Taaj, a title reserved for individuals who held a prominent position in the court (Rossi 2015: 135-141; Saturno et al. 2017).

This ballgame probably took place in 9.13.15.0.0 AD 706[199] (Vepretskii personal communication 2021) when Yuknoom Took' K'awiil was already firmly established at the throne. It is important to note here that the ruler of La Corona commissioned this panel at his home kingdom (Helmke et al. 2015:10). Therefore, the engagement in a game with a high-ranking Kanu'l official at the royal court of Calakmul must have been considered very

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[199] The earlier proposed date for this panel - AD 687 - is less likely, as it falls in the period when Chak Ak' Paat Kuy was not yet king (acceded in AD 689) (Sergei Vepretskii personal communication 2021).

prestigious by king Chak Ak 'Paat Kuy's. In fact, La Corona displayed more than one ballgame panel.

Five ballgame blocks, thought to have come from a hieroglyphic stairway of La Corona, show ball players in various poses related to the game. Each panel, labelled from 2 to 6, represents a ball player. Their original location is unknown, as the panels were looted and then sold to various institutions in the mid-1960s. However, they could be part of HS of Structure 13Q 1. In favour of this location is the fact that inscriptions from blocks of this structure refer to ball games as well as various events related to the rulers Chak Ak' Paat Kuy, Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' and Yuknoom Took' K'awiil (Canuto et al. 2009:34; Stuart, Canuto, and Barrientos 2015:9). The steps of Structure 13Q 1[200] and ballgame panels are also similar in terms of size (Guenter 2005).

The ballplayers on Panels 5 and 6 can be seen preparing to receive the ball (which is not depicted on Panel 5), while individuals on Panels 2 and 4 are hitting the rubber back. Compared to Panels 2, 4, 5and 6, the figure on Panel 3 is shown in a static pose - standing straight, head in profile and turned to the left. The figure on Panel 2 appears to be preparing to receive the ball with his hand. In contrast, the figure on Panel 4 uses his leg bent at the knee to kick the ball. Each ball player wears a full ball player outfit, including a large yoke, a protective hip cloth, knee pads and an elaborate headdress. They are also adorned with bracelets and necklaces. The accompanying inscription identifies them as nobles, but not necessarily kings. For instance, the individual on Panel 2 is identified as *aj k'uhuun*. Fortunately, his name is also recorded on Panel 2; it is none other than K'AK'- WAY -ya?-na?-? known from other inscriptions from La Corona (Canuto, Barrientos, and Ponce 2014: 283, Canuto et al. 2017; Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018:451; Matteo 2010:103-104). The absence of an image of a Kanu'l

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[200] This is also the place where archaeologists have observed the greatest looting activity.

king as a ball player is even more intriguing when we juxtapose La Corona ballgame iconography of La Corona with that from nearby El Peru Waka'.

5.6.3. 4 El Peru Waka' (Figure 51)

A fine example of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' playing ball with a local lord comes from El Peru Waka'. Archaeological excavations at the palace complex of El Peru Waka', a ballgame panel reset in the Terminal Classic Period into the hieroglyphic stairway of Structure L11-38. Panel, set on the front of the palace acropolis, shows a dynamic game involving two individuals. The accompanying caption identifies the person on the right as Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' (*Ubaah ti pitz Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'*-"His image playing ball Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk"). The name of his opponent is obliterated but it appears that the figure represents the ruler of El Peru Waka', K'inich Bahlam II (Freidel et al. 2007a:61; Lee and Piehl 2014:96; Lee and Guenter 2010). The two standing figures are dressed in kneepads and yokes and face each other. The dynamics of the game are reflected in the trajectory of the ball that appears between the two kings. Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' looks as if he is ready to bounce the ball back to his opponent.

The background of the scene forms four lines that are supposed to represent a ball court[201]. In fact, the original location of the panels may have been Structure L11-31 in the ball court complex (Melendez 2014: 11).

5.6.3.5 Calakmul (Figure 52)

The association between the ball court and the ballgame panels can be also traced at Calakmul. Two ballgame panels were found in the fill of Structure XIII of the Gran Acropolis, close to the ball court[202] (Vázquez López 2017:30). The first block depicts two figures standing one after the other in front of the ball and accompanied by the inscription, which is

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[201] Similar lines are present on Dzibanche ballgame panel.

[202] Intriguingly, there are only two panels in Calakmul related to this topic.

unfortunately illegible (Esparza Olguin and Valencia Rivera 2020:176). The second panel is in better condition. It contains a preserved caption with the emblem glyph *k' uhul k' anul ajaw yuhkno'm* followed by the logogram, perhaps the head variant of Ch'een, indicating that the ballplayer depicted was none other than the Great Yuknoom Ch'een II. Stylistically, the panel is dated to AD 700; the inscription must therefore be a retrospective reference to the king who died in AD 686 (Helmke et al. 2015:12; Martin 2012:160). The composition of the panel, however, bears an obvious iconographic resemblance to other ballgame panels from other regions. Like the figure on the Dzibanche panel, for example, the ballplayer is kneeling on his right knee, perhaps to catch a ball that is not shown on the monument. The same type of posture, albeit in different configurations, can also be observed on panels indirectly associated with Kanu'l's power. The ballgame iconography from Tipan Chen Witz is the best example of this.

5.6.3.6 Tipan Chen Witz (Figure 53-54)

Monuments 3 and 4 were found in a secondary context, integrated into the stairs of Structure A-1, which forms the entrance to the palace. Helmke et al. suggest, based on the size and shape of Monuments 3 and 4, that they may have originally been part of a larger monument, possibly a hieroglyphic staircase in the upper part of the same building - Structure A1. They were probably reused as risers in the final phase of the architecture, perhaps when the local dynasty abandoned the site. This is indicated by the degree and nature of the destruction of the monuments. Their iconography and accompanying hieroglyphic inscriptions are incomplete, but the date associated with these monuments can be anchored to 9.14.4.9.6, 18 May, AD 716. The panels are broken, and the faces of the represented ballplayers are perhaps intentionally obliterated (Helmke et al. 2015:8, 13).

Monument 3 and Monument 4 each depict a ball player in a dynamic pose. The figure on Monument 3 holds a staff-like object in his right hand. He is leaning on his left heel while his right knee touches the surface. With his bent left arm, he appears to be preparing to hit back

the large ball (*baluun nahb k' ik'*, or "nine handspan ball", according to the inscription on the ball) depicted in the left part of the panel. The ball player depicted on Monument 4 also appears to be approaching the ball. In contrast to Monument 3, however, the ball is not shown. The accompanying caption recognises the ball player as Janaab Uti' Chanal K'ahk', "Bird of prey is the mouth of celestial fire."

Both Tipan Chen Witz players wear protective belts and are adorned with large, elaborate headdresses. In addition, Janaab Uti' Chanal K'ahk' on Monument 4 is adorned with a hand bracelet and an earspool. It is not known whether the two are the same person or two different ones. Helmke et al. assume that the ball figure on Monument 3 may have been a local Tipan lord nicknamed Waterscroll Ocelot, while the lord on Monument 4 would represent a high-ranking person from Naranjo. The connection between the figure on Monument 4 and Naranjo is based, among other things, on the text of one of Naranjo's ball rings, which contains the name Uti' Chanal K'ahk'. It is thus quite possible that Tipan Chen Witz, a small site near Naranjo, recorded its overlord playing a ballgame (Helmke et al. 2015:12-22).

5.6.3.7 Dos Pilas (Figure 55)

The next ballgame panels in chronological order come from Dos Pilas and are dated to AD 724, which falls within the reign of the king Itzamnaaj K'awiil. They were found in their original context, integrated into Hieroglyphic Stairway 1. The two uppermost panels (Step 1 and Step 2) show a large ball bouncing down the stairways. The trajectory of the ball is observed by five costumed figures (Houston 1993:88, 112). The clash with the heavy ball may have inflicted injuries on the players, as witnessed by the logogram YA or YAX, meaning "wound", which accompanies the image (Grube 2020:4).

The lower panel (Step 3) shows an image of the two teams facing each other, separated by two tied balls. Seven figures wear large caps, while two are dressed as ballplayers. The Dos Pilas

ballgame blocks do not refer to the Kanu'l dynasty, yet Dos Pilas may have imitated the Kanu'l style as it revealed strong ties to Calakmul.

It is also possible that the ball game theme was considered very prestigious and was used by the kingdom as a source of power. This is probably the case at Coba, a truly hegemonic "imperium" in the Late Classic Period.

5.6 3.8 Coba (Figure 55-58)

Two ballgame panels were found in a secondary context at two different sites in Coba. Panel 1 was located at the southern base of Structure XXXIII (Figure 5B.12), while Panel 2 was part of the retaining wall of Sacbe 1.
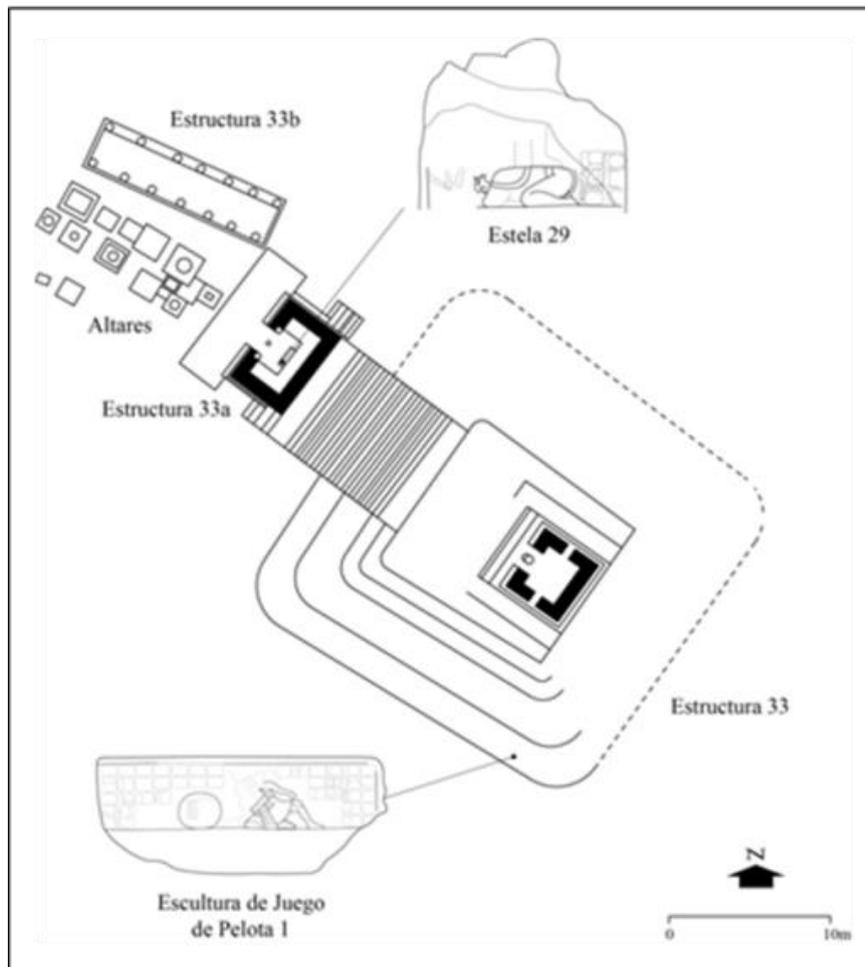
Figure 5B. 12. Location of Panel 1 within Structure 33, Coba. Drawing by Vania E. Pérez Gutiérrez y Octavio Q. Esparza Olguín.

Both panels have almost the same size and shape and were once part of another monument, most likely a hieroglyphic stairway. Each panel represents a player. The first player kneels on his right knee, while his left leg is bent and points to the right. The player's dynamic posture is certainly related to the large rubber ball he has placed on his left side, as if trying to bounce it. The details of his regalia are not clear, but he must have been lavishly adorned with a headdress (perhaps composed of feathers, as the irregular shape suggests) and an earspool. The identity of the figure is even more ambiguous. The only glyph that can be read is the one that stands for *kaloomte'*, perhaps indicating the rank of the player. The inscription on the second panel is also heavily eroded and only two glyphs can be read. Cartouche A2 contains the word *tuun* (tu-Tun-ni) followed by a number, probably 15 (Esparza Olguin 2016:228-231).

The second glyph at B2 represents the ball court. The damage to the image of the ball player prevents a closer look at his attire, however, a distinctive loincloth and a yoke around his waist are clearly visible. The ball rolls down the steps of the ballcourt while the ballplayer leans forward as if trying to strike it back (Esparza Olguin 2016:228-231). The dating of the panels as well as the identity of the ballplayers is still a question mark. However, the pattern of occurrence shows that more and more sites displayed the ballgame theme, even those not previously considered vassals of Calakmul. The site of Mucaancah is a good example of this.

5.6 3.9 Mucaancah (Figure 59-61)

Two ballgame panels are located in the South Complex, at the southeast (Panel 1) and northeast (Panel 2) corners of the ball court of Mucaancah, a medium-sized site in southeastern Campeche, Mexico. The position of the reliefs and the presence of other blocks (plain) suggest that they were part of the steps of a stairway that has since been lost. They were likely blocks on the extremes of the stairs (Šprajc et al. 1997a: 10, Šprajc and Esquivel 2008: 49).

Each block represents a ball player with a ball. The players, whose faces and headdresses are obliterated, wear a protective belt. The ball player on the first panel is almost in an extended

position. The ball is between his right hand, which is touching the surface, and his right knee, which is resting on a kind of stone. The second player is lying face down on the floor with his legs bent upwards. He is reaching with his hand for the ball, which is at the lower right end of the scene (Grube 2008: 196; Šprajc and Esquivel 2008: 49).

The hieroglyphic text accompanying the two panels is now lost and it is therefore difficult to discern any possible connection between the rulers of Mucaancah and Calakmul. However, there is no doubt that close contacts between El Palmar, a large site near Mucaancah, and Calakmul were established.

5.6.3.10 El Palmar (Figure 62)

Evidence of Kanu'l's influence on El Palmar can be traced back to the seventh century and the reign of Yuknoom Ch'een II. However, ball game iconography does not appear in El Palmar until the late reign of his son Yuknoom Took' K'awiil. A small ball game panel was discovered at the site. It was integrated into the hieroglyphic stairway of Structure GZ1 in the Guzman Group, located 1.3 km north of the Main Group of the site[203]. The hieroglyphic stairway records events related to Aj Pach' Waal, who commissioned the hieroglyphic stairs in AD 726. Apparently, he was not a ruler. In fact, the ruler of El Palmar is only mentioned on one block of the stairs. Aj Pach' Waal claimed to be a descendant of the lakam officials (banner bearers) (Lacadena 2008) and the owner of the hieroglyphic staircase. He is also described as the uchan (the master of) the Copan king Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil. The enigmatic reference to Yuknoom Took' K'awiil at HS 1, which probably refers to the event celebrating the completion

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[203] The archaeological context of the hieroglyphic stairway is also intriguing. In contrast to the monumental architecture of the Main Group, the Guzmán Group is rather a small complex. It consists of a small temple with a hieroglyphic stairway and six lower structures, all surrounded by a plaza. It is believed that Ajpach' Waal resided here (Esparza Olguin and Tsukamoto 2014:33).

of the hieroglyphic stairs, suggests that Aj Pach' Waal played an important role in wider politics. The textual discourse of HS from the Guzman Group may point to some interactions between El Palmar, Calakmul and Copan. As Tsukamoto and Esparza suggest, Yuknoom Took' K'awiil attempted to establish an alliance with Copan through El Palmar and Aj Pach' Waal (Tsukamoto and Esparza 2015; Tsukamoto et al. 2015:203-214).

Perhaps Yuknoom T'ook' K'awiil was trying to ally against Tikal, and this meeting provided a good opportunity to discuss the future coalition. Alternatively, the meeting of lords was aimed to strengthen Calakmul's authority in the face of Copan's growing influence.

The short alliance with Copan could be cemented by participating in the ballgame. One of the glyph blocks on Step II shows the image of two kneeling ballplayers dressed in protective belts and headdresses, although the degree of erosion prevents us from seeing all the details of the image. It is noteworthy that the accompanying text, apart from a small caption probably referring to the name of one of the two players, describes the parentage statement of Aj Pach' Waal. His mother, Ix Winik Ajaw, carried the title *baah ajaw,* "head lord" (Step II: N1), but from the limited data we cannot determine whether she was a noblewoman from El Palmar or another polity (Tsukamoto and Esparza 2015:38; Tsukamoto et al. 2015:211). It will be interesting to see if the woman had any connection to the Kanu'l family, as her name and title appear directly above an iconographic scene showing two ballplayers facing each other on either side of a large ball. It is known that El Palmar was involved in Yuknoom Took' K'awiil's wider plan to form alliances with the greatest kingdoms. In AD 727, just one year later, after the events in El Palmar, a ball game took place in Tonina, as recorded on the city's Monument 171. The inscription that follows the panel dates the event to 31 October AD 727 during the reign of the Tonina king known as K'inich Yich'aak Chapaat (723-739 >). Monument 171, now in the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, was found in one of the two

entrances to a chamber on the fourth level of Tonina's Acropolis. Its original location, however, may have been a hieroglyphic stairway.

5.6.3.11 Tonina (Figure 63)

According to David Stuart, the ball game of AD 727 was real and involved Yuknoom Took' K'awiil and K'inich Yich'aak Chapaat, the latter one is curiously not depicted on the panel. According to researchers, the panel depicts Yuknoom Took' K'awiil playing ball with the deceased Tonina ruler K'inich Baaknal Chahk (Stuart 2013a).

The current Tonina ruler K'inich Yich'aak Chapaat (723-739 >), by showing the image of his predecessor instead of himself, most likely referred to the same ball game that must have taken place about twenty years earlier, when K'inich Baaknal Chahk was still alive and Yuknoom Took' K'awiil was already a king (Stuart 2013a). The relationship between the current Tonina king and the Calakmul ruler is expressed in D1. In this scenario, the Calakmul ruler was involved in both ball games or at least had contact with both Tonina rulers. However, there are several arguments against such a scenario. We have no evidence of friendly contacts between the two kingdoms. On the contrary, Monuments 153, Tonina dated to the reign of K'inich Chuwaaj (?) K'ahk' (708 > 721), shows the captive from *Chiik Nahb*. (Martin and Grube 2008:184, Sanchez et al.2021). In addition, the name of Ruler 2 (668-687) also includes "Yuknoom Head" glyph, which is recognised on Monument 171 in position B3 as the name of Yuknoom Took' K'awill (Guido Krempel personal communication 2023). In this example we would have a current Tonina ruler K'inich Yich'aak Chapaat (right) involved in a game with a late K'inich Baaknal Chahk (left) witnessed by (Ila-B3) Ruler 2 *Ilaan Yuknoom Head Kalomte' Utzel K'inich Ich'aak Chapaat* "it was witnessed by Yuknoom Head Kalomte', who is at the side of Ich'aak Chapaat". However, it is even more likely that the phrase *Ilaan?/....-n'Yuknoom Head' Kalomte' Utzel K'inich* could describe K'inich Yich'aak Chapaat and the corresponding deity he represented in his ballplayer dress (Guido Krempel personal communication 2023).

Monument 171 would show then K'inich Yich'aak Chapaat playing with the late Tonina ruler K'inich Baaknal Chahk (688-704 >). The rulers, dressed in ball game attire, occupy most of the panel, with K'inich Yich'aak Chapaat on the right and K'inich Baaknal Chahk on the left, with a large ball between them in the centre of the composition. Both players approach the ball. K'inich Baaknal Chahk even touches the ball with his yoke. The action is represented by their postures - with their left hands behind their backs and right knees on the ground, they seem to be preparing for the confrontation on the ball court. In fact, the accompanying text (on A3 and G1) states that these are their images in the act of ballplaying - *u baah ta pitz*, "(it is) his image in (the act of) ball-playing".

5.6.3.12 Zapote Bobal (Figure 64)

The last panel, depicting the Kanu'l ruler in a ballgame with a ruler of another polity comes from a small monument in a private collection. It was examined and analysed by Rafael Tunesi, who identified the players as the Kanu'l ruler Waman K'awiil (right in the scene) and Janaab Ti O of the Hix Witz polity (left), based on the accompanying glyphic inscription. Both players wear large protective belts and knee pads and are adorned with elaborate headdresses. Jaanab Ti's headgear consists of a *chapa'ht* (centipede) and three *ajaw* signs between feathers. The headgear of Waman K'awiil consists of a deer's head with a kin sign with flames between feathers. According to Tunesi, the headdresses refer to various patron gods and represents the opposing teams (Tunesi 2007:15). In contrast to the players on other ballgame panels, both individuals are depicted in a static position. They stand in front of each other with their legs closed and their arms along their torsos while the ball hurls down from the ball court steps towards the Kanu'l king. The ball is so close to the Kanu'l ruler that he touches it with his yoke. It is very likely that this panel was once also integrated into the hieroglyphic staircase of Zapote Bobal, the ancient capital of Hix Witz (Tunesi 2007; Stuart 2008).

5.6.3. 13 Laguna Perdida (Figure 65)

A ballgame panel depicting two players with the ball between them, hurtling down the steps has been found in the vicinity of Zapote Bobal. The left player stands while the right player kneels to receive the ball. The ball is supported by the third step of the stairs.

In the 4th decade of the twentieth century, Cyrus Lundell reported a ballgame panel removed from a chicle camp of Laguna Perdida. However, he never visited the site and later investigations (e.g., by S. Morley, I. Graham, K. Mayer) could not attribute the panel to any specific location. Nevertheless, it was tentatively assigned to Laguna Perdida, an ancient Maya site on the northern shore of the lake of the same name in Péten, Guatemala. A recent study by Karl Mayer and his team confirmed the existence of Late Classic monuments with inscriptions at Laguna Perdida (Mayer 2015:16-17). The panel may once have been incorporated into the hieroglyphic stairs of Laguna Perdida, judging by its size (44 cm) (Miller and Houston 1987:59). The identity of the ball players cannot be determined, but as the example from Tipan Chen Witz shows, the game could reflect hierarchical relations between a sublord and his overlord, with a reference to the Kanu'l lord omitted.

5.6.3.14 Yaxchilan (Figure 66-76)

Hieroglyphic Stairway 2, leading into Structure XXXIII (Figure 5B.13) at Yaxchilan, consists of 13 carved blocks. 11 display the image of ballplayers. Similar to the hieroglyphic stairway of Dos Pilas, HS 2 of Yaxchilan remains *in situ*. It is located above a small plaza, which in turn can be reached via the Grand Stairway of the Main Plaza. The hieroglyphic stairway is thus located in the central and ceremonial part of the site, but interestingly is not visible from the Grand Stairway (Graham 1982:155-164; Schele and Miller 1986:249).

Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 was probably commissioned by Yaxuun Bahlam IV but features the image of his ancestors - father (Step VI), grandfather (Step VIII), his *sajal* K'an Tok Wayaab (Step X) and some unnamed lords. It also shows his female relatives (mother and perhaps his wives) performing some rituals related to the game and placing the ball in play (Step II and III). Each block presents one ballplayer playing the game against a set of steps representing either a ballcourt or the steps of Structure 33 (Miller and Houston 1987: 53-55). Steps VI, VII and VIII display the image of so-called "captive" balls, referring to prisoners whose bodies form the ball (Nolan 2015:115). One of them is a captured king of Lakamtuun (Step VII). Other ball depictions show *lajchan nahb* or the "twelve handspan" balls[204] (Zender 2004:8). The hieroglyphic inscriptions that accompany each player often place the game in a historical and mythological settings. For example, the hieroglyphic inscription on Block VII mentions *uhx ahaal ehb* "the three conquests stairway", echoing the name of the mythological location where the decapitation of three supernatural beings took place. Yaxuun Bahlam IV, accompanied by the two dwarves, symbols of liminality, embodies a deity in the mythical past.

At the same time, the events were part of a historical narrative. Step VI describes the ballgame of Itzamnaaj Bahlam III (Step VI) in AD 743 while Step VII of Yaxuun Bahlam IV

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[204] Refering to the size of the ball

in AD 744. Finally, Step VIII describes the ballgame of Yaxuun Bahlam III on 9 Lamat 16 Yax (perhaps in AD 668) (Helmke et al. 2018:17; Lopez Oliva 2019: 327:330; Nolan 2015).

Panels were a ritual re-enactment of ancient myth in which ancestral gods played an important role, but also reflected the attempts of Yaxuun Bahlam IV to place himself at the centre of events during the period of the Yaxchilan Interregnum (AD 742-752).

This period is marked by the instability of dynastic succession before Yaxuun Bahlam IV acceded to the throne (AD 752) and after Itzamnaaj Bahlam III passed away.

"By representing his parents and grandparents on HS. 2, who played a vital role in the florescence of Yaxchilan, Bird Jaguar IV (Yaxuun Bahlam IV) was not only demonstrating a continued and uninterrupted ancestry but proving he was able to 'channel' their political and spiritual strength in order to assert his legitimacy to rule. Bird Jaguar IV recalled his direct ancestors, as well as employed the support of his wives, *sajals*, and other political supporters, to engage in a militaristic pageant that reaffirmed the strength and power of the ruling lineage throughout its history, and further supported his own claim for legitimacy and right to rule*"(*Nolan 2015:246).

5.6.3.15 Quirigua (Figure 77)

The last dated panel showing the ballgame comes from Quirigua. It was located on the west bench (Figure 5B.14) of Structure 1B-14 in the elite residence (Group E). The panel shows two ballplayers whose game is being watched by two other people. The spectators sit behind each ball player, one on the far left, the second on the far right of the panel, both with their legs crossed. Compared to the ballplayers, whose elaborate headdresses and jewellery (necklaces and pendants) suggest that they were of high rank, the spectators are probably people of lower rank. The accompanying inscription is quite eroded, but the date 10 Ik' 10 Zotz', 9.18.17.13.2, 28 March, AD 808 is clearly visible. The bench dates from the reign of the last Quirigua king,

K'ahk' Jolow Chan Yopaat > 800-810 > and records his name, according to scholars (Crasborn et al. 2012:378).

Figure 5B. 14. The West Bench, Copan. Photo by Jose Crasborn.

The identity of the king finds further confirmation on one of the blocks from the Structure's 1B-1[205] bench at the Acropolis. The hieroglyphic inscription records the date 8 Ajaw 18 Xul, 9.18.19.16.0, 15 May AD 810 in connection with the ballgame of K'ahk' Jolow Chan Yopaat, who is said to be playing in the company (yitaaj) of 20 young lords (Crasborn et al. 2012:377; Zender and Guenter 2016).

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[205] The hieroglyphic benches from Structure 1B-1 are of similar size and form to those from Structure 1B-14. The inscriptions are associated with K'ahk' Jolow Chan Yopaat, but also refer to K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Yopaat, probably the father of K'ahk' Jolow Chan Yopaat. The block that mentions K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Yopaat but is dated to his son's reign was also discovered in Structure 1B-14. These frequent references to K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Yopaat, the great victor over Copan, can only be seen as attempts by K'ahk' Jolow Chan Yopaat to legitimise his own rule (Crasborn *et. al* 2012; Luin *et al.* 2011:993).

Turning to the ball panel from Structure 1B-14, the two ball players sit facing each other and look at the large ball placed between them, above the ground. One of their legs is extended towards the observer who is watching the game, while the second leg, bent at the knee, supports the arm. This position of a movement indicates that the game is being played. As Crasborn et al. noted, this is the first instance in Quirigua iconography in which the Quirigua king, in this case K'ahk' Jolow Chan Yopaat, interacts with nobles. The East Group, where the bench with the panel was found was probably inhabited by an important nobleman who had considerable power to shape his monuments.

5.6.3.16 Discussion

As we have seen, the frequent occurrence of panels depicting ball games and ballplayers is especially evident in the Late Classic Period, when the Kanu'l dynasty resided in Calakmul and reached the highest power. Furthermore, the monuments are found in greater numbers at sites that showed some affinity or alliance with the great Calakmul. However, if we look more closely at the spatial and temporal distribution of ballgame panels, we will find that the first display of this pattern comes from Dzibanche and is dated to AD 573. This clearly suggests that the idea of depicting a ballgame on small blocks originated before Calakmul became the seat of the Snake dynasty. The ballgame theme was adopted and developed by the Kanu'l branch that moved to Calakmul and became a symbol of its power.

There is no other evidence for the presence of ball game panels at Dzibanche from the period after AD 573, but their appearance at AD 573 marks the beginning of a new sculptural programme that had not previously existed at Dzibanche (Velásquez García 2004:99). The depictions of captives, largely associated with a war context, were replaced in the late sixth century by depictions of a ballgame (Monument 19) and some kind of socio-political event involving other rulers probably from different kingdoms (Monument 16). Perhaps Yax Yopaat, the Dzibanche king who commissioned these panels, was seeking an alliance in the troubled

years following the death of K'ahk' Ti' Ch'ich'. The individual playing the game on Panel 19 is probably none other than Yax Yopaat. He demonstrated his power on the ball court in the presence of other lords whom he wanted to ally. Surprisingly, Calakmul did not use the ballgame theme until the middle of the seventh century. The first connections between Calakmul and ballgame iconography come from its dependent - Uxul, where subsequent Kanu'l kings were depicted involved in this activity on panels.

The image of the ball game developed over time. The earliest representation from Uxul focused more on teamwork, cooperation, and competition than on the power and skills of the rulers. Altar 2 from Uxul, with its image of two teams playing the game, is reminiscent of Dzibanche Monument 19 in its depiction of a social event. Similar to Monument 19, we see a group of people actively engaged in a game. We do not know the identity of the players as the accompanying text is illegible. However, the altar was created in AD 642 when the authority of Kanu'l was already firmly established in Calakmul. The image also fits well with the narrative of alliance and cooperation known from the paired Stelae 2 and 3 erected 9 years earlier, AD 633. The AD 642 depiction of the ballgame at Uxul is exceptional for another reason - it was not incorporated into the hieroglyphic staircase but carved on the altar.

The later representations of the ballgame from Uxul, fall far short of what we know from Altar 2 and Dzibanche Monument 19. At the end of the seventh and in the eighth century, the predominant (but not exclusive) form of representation of the ballgame was that of a player (Uxul, Coba, La Corona) or two ballplayers playing against each other (e.g., La Corona, El Peru Waka', Tonina, Zapote Bobal).

A true arterial dissemination of a ballgame pattern began with the monuments of Uxul (second half of the seventh century), La Corona (eighth century) El Peru Waka' (c. AD 687-696) Coba (Late Classic), Mucaancah (Late Classic), Laguna Perdida (Late Classic), Tipan Chen Witz (c. AD 716), Dos Pilas (AD 724), El Palmar (AD 726), Tonina (AD 727), Zapote

Bobal (c. 736-744), Yaxchilan (c. AD 751), and finally Quirigua (AD 808) (Mathews 1988:226; Houston 1993:106; Tunesi 2007:6; Stuart 2013; Crasborn et al. 2012:375, 378; Tsukamoto et al. 2015:211-214).

Indeed, the ball game panel pattern characteristic of Calakmul developed only in the last decades of the seventh century and reached its maximum distribution in the first half of the eighth century. The spread of the ball game motif compared to the pattern of paired stelae is thus relatively late and does not extend to the same sites.

The exceptions are Uxul, El Peru Waka' and Coba, where both paired stelae and ballgame panels were present. In addition, the spatial distribution of the eighth-century ball game theme suggests that they appear at sites further away from Calakmul. All these factors may reveal important aspects of the nature of contacts between Calakmul and other kingdoms.

It is often assumed that ballgame contests cemented dynastic interactions between the Kanu'l lords and the ruling local elite. Explicitly, by erecting monuments to commemorate the ballgame with the kings of Calakmul, the local rulers fostered ties with the great city of Calakmul (Helmke et al 2015).

Awareness of the different socio-political and spatial contexts of each of the panels brings the discussion of their significance to another, higher level. As we have seen in the case of the paired stelae, we must refrain from assigning a general meaning to the ballgame iconography. The erection of panels was intended to achieve specific results, which differ according to socio-political circumstances. The iconography of ballgame panels of Uxul, La Corona and El Peru Waka' should be treated as a language and expression of hierarchical power, while the iconography from the more distant centres, dating from the late reign of Yuknoom Took K'awill', rather reflects the formation of new alliances and artistic freedom.

At the same time, the ball game panels from Uxul, a dependency of Calakmul, convey a different message than those from El Peru Waka', an ally of Calakmul, and different from

those from La Corona. What they have in common is that they were a form of displaying hospitality that could not exist without hierarchy and power relations between two parties - the host and the visitor.

The link between the ballgame and authority is explicitly expressed in Uxul. While strengthening the bonds through action, panels at Uxul underscored the superiority of the kings of Kanu'l over the elite of Uxul. I think it is really significant that the panels do not show local Uxul lord(s) playing against Kanu'l kings, as we observe for example in El Peru Waka' or Zapote Bobal. As Grube and Delvendahl noted, the absence of a reference to Muyal Chaak, the ruler of Uxul, on one of the seven panels may indicate that the royal palace of Uxul, the likely original location of the monuments, was at least temporarily occupied by Kanu'l lords (Grube and Delvendahl 2014:90-92).

The Kanu'l kings at Uxul panels acted as the embodiment of power and as such served as a dominant force in Uxul. The dominance over Uxul may have been renewed and maintained through recurrent demonstrations of the Kanu'l's overkingship through the public display of the kings of Calakmul at ball game events. The ballgame panels from Uxul thus reflect Calakmul's political control over its small dependency. They were probably commissioned by Kanu'l lords who could exclude the local ruling elite from active participation in the iconographic programme created by their overlords.

The authority and status of Kanu'l kings in the subordinated areas had to be constantly proved as alliances were never static. This is also evident in the iconography. El Peru Waka' is a flagship example of this. The dating of the ballgame panel from El Peru Waka' is not clear, but since it depicts K'inich Bahlam II and Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk', it probably fell within the reign of the latter (AD 687-697). I would suggest a date towards the end of Yuknoom Yich'aak Kahk''s reign, perhaps even after the battle of AD 695, as this is more consistent with the time

frame of his image as a ball player in Uxul[206]. Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' may have planned to travel to El Peru Waka'[207] in order to regenerate the alliance with El Peru Waka'. He would provide socio-political interaction with its close ally. The ballgame may have been intended to reassert vassalage over El Peru Waka' after the misfortunes of Calakmul.

The display of the ballgame theme may have been out of sheer political necessity after Kanu'l's power in a larger arena had diminished. Affiliation with Kanu'l was maintained through the act of playing ball, which the panels commemorate. Considering the state of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk''s bones, the game was perhaps only symbolic and metaphorical. The power would not be based on the king's ability to prove himself worthy through deeds, but on the actual display of that ability.

It is also likely that the priority of the ballgame had only to do with power and perhaps little to do with competition on the ball court, although the social aspect of this performance should not be underestimated. Through visits Kanu'l kings established and maintained close relations with their allies and sublords. The play, therefore, did not promote political equality. It served as a means to reinforce existing hierarchies.

On the other hand, the fact that Yuknoom Yich'aak is shown with the ball together with the king of El Peru Waka' indicates that this image was imitated by the elite of El Peru Waka' rather than enforced by Kanu'l. In all likelihood, the friendship and alliance with Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' were highly valued by K'inich Bahlam II, who probably sought to secure his position by emphasising his affiliation with the Kanu'l family. The ballgame panel was probably commissioned by K'inich Bahlam II himself and served as a source of prestige for his dynasty.

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[206] Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' may be depicted on other panels from Uxul, perhaps even earlier than AD 695, but since the identity of these *och k'in kaloomte'* players is unclear, Panel 4 renders the earliest confirmed depiction of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' as a ball player.

[207] Alternatively, the game might have taken place in Calakmul and then recorded at El Peru Waka.'

Perhaps it even strengthened his rank and status vis-à-vis his wife Ix "K'abel", a Kanu'l princess. The ballgame, as depicted on the panels was a male activity and, in most cases, referred to the relations between the rulers of two different entities. For K'inich Bahlam II, the ball panel was undoubtedly a source of prestige and power; at the same time, it served as a platform for the ideological and symbolic representation of Kanu'l and its political involvement in El Peru Waka'. The display of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' together with his ally K'inich Bahlam II provided the level of sociability and visibility that was essential to maintain the alliance.

Amazingly, this is also the first depiction of the Kanu'l king playing the game against his sublord. The ballgame recorded on Panel 1 from La Corona took place AD 706 in Calakmul and involved the king of Calakmul's high-ranking official instead of the king. The epigraphic sources clearly indicate that the *Sak Wahyis* lords of La Corona were engaged in ballgame events with the Kanu'l lords (e.g., Sak Maas and Yuknoom Ch'een II), yet the iconographic records do not show any of the Kanu'l kings actively playing against their *Sak Nikte* allies.

It is not surprising, then, that Chak Ak' Paat Kuy aimed to acknowledge the special relationship between him and his overlord by immortalising the game he had played at the court of Calakmul. It is surprising that on Panel 1 the Kanu'l king is not shown as in the case of El Peru Waka'. Perhaps the way the panel of El Peru Waka' ball game was depicted, with two kings together, was framed and shaped by the social and political position of K'inich Bahlam II. El Peru Waka', unlike La Corona, used an emblem glyph that denoted its higher position in a geopolitical hierarchy (Melendez 2014:11, Gronemeyer 2012; Grube 2005). The effect of a king's personal visit and subsequent public display was most important for the consolidation of existing ties. Panel 1 from La Corona underlines the political inequality of the parties even more than its counterpart from El Peru Waka'.

At the same time, there is no evidence of paired stelae in La Corona. The earliest references to Kanu'l princesses date from the late reign of Yuknoom Took K'awiil. Instead, we have at least 5 panels showing nobles in the act of the game. One of these nobles is K'ahk' Wahy Na, a high-ranking official closely associated with Yuknoom Took K'awil.

The special emphasis on the representations of ball players in La Corona and the hospitality expressed through various visits indicate that the strong ties and alliances between these two sites were not only based on the marriage of three kings from La Corona to princesses from Kanu'l. As Mumary Farto noted, the political organisation of Kanu'l was also based on the presence of different power groups in the periphery carrying out orders from the dynastic head without the physical presence of the *k'uhul Kaan ajaw* (Mumary Farto 2020:407). While the panels at Uxul depicted the kings of the Kanu'l, La Corona, which is a little further from the capital, perhaps showed the image of executives of the Kanu'l power who were sent to La Corona to advocate Kanu'l political interests. Their portraits as ballplayers would then be an emanation of the power of the hegemon in that place. The ballgame of Chak Ak' Paat Kuy with *uti'huun kaloomte'* was part of this discourse. The king is not stated in the inscription, but the fact that the game took place at Calakmul is quite meaningful. As Martin and Grube (2000:110) have aptly described, "[s]uch records give some insight into the great gatherings of lords that took place on these occasions, as client nobility travelled to the capital to participate in solemn rituals, sumptuous feasts and great public spectacles". Chak Ak' Paat Kuy enjoyed hospitality that was promoted as free yet compulsory. Perhaps the ballgame as presented on Panel 1 symbolically referred to the establishment of a relationship between the La Corona and a representative of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' under the aegis of the latter.

Ballgame panels from Uxul, La Corona and El Peru Waka' are perfect examples of how Kanu'l's power was distributed from Calakmul. Uxul, which is closest to the hegemon, proves

its dependence through the demonstrative display of a single ball player on each panel - the king of Kanu'l. El Peru Waka' demonstrates the alliance with Calakmul through a display of two kings engaged in a common activity. La Corona, located between Uxul and El Peru Waka', established a special relationship with Calakmul, through *inter alia* the presence of Kanu'l emissaries whose portraits as ballplayers served as clear testimony to Kanu'l domination.

Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' and Yuknoom Took' K'awiil were aware of the subjectivity of bonds and accordingly promoted the iconography of the ball game in these three places as a means of strengthening ties. This method was then further developed and improved by Yuknoom Took' K'awiil towards the end of his reign.

Yuknoom Took' K'awiil proved to be exceptionally adept at making and manipulating the bonds. This is also reflected in the distribution pattern of the ball game iconography. As I have already mentioned, the ballgame themes depicted on the panels reached their peak in the first half of the eighth century and seem to be correlated with the alliance-building activities of Calakmul after its crushing defeat by Tikal in AD 695. Even the recovered parts of the ballgame panels from Calakmul, although probably referring to the exploits of Yuknoom Ch'een II on the ball court, are dated to about AD 700. The first decades of the eighth century saw a marked increase in the popularity of ball game panels.

Similar to the case of the paired stelae, the visual image programme left out a larger area of Tikal. It is also suggested that Kanu'l attempted to surround Tikal with an "imaginary wall" by spreading the pattern of, for example, paired stelae and ball game art (Vázquez López 2017:25-33). Indeed, in the seventh century, ballgame panels appeared in the near south of Calakmul, while in the eighth century their distribution pattern tends to favour more distant sites in the east: El Palmar, Mucaancah, southeast: Tipan Chen Witz, south: Zapote Bobal, far south: Dos Pilas, and southwest of Calakmul: Tonina, Yaxchilan.

In addition, the northernmost example of the ball game table comes from Coba[208] (unknown date) whereas the southernmost comes from Quirigua and is dated to AD 808. Tracking the topic of the distribution of the ball game panels, we can see a shift in their arrangement towards the reign of Yuknoom Took K'awiil. It seems that Yuknoom Took' K'awiil concentrated on arranging alliances with more distant kingdoms.

Alliances have been most urgent in times of socio-political instability (Andersen 2016). The defeat of AD 695 by Tikal rendered Kanu'l's power, weaker although Kanu'l's dominance had begun to wane several decades earlier (Mumary Farto 2019). After AD 695, power became more decentralised and the Kanu'l dynasty had to seek more alliances. As a result, cooperation between Calakmul and elites from other places increased. This is expressed in the language of friendship used in ballgame panels. Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' actively promoted and reinforced bonds with other sites. The theme of the ball game not only signalled relationships but also manifested them literally. It was a staged performance, an alliance or even friendship in practice. The display of the ballgame was a demonstration of its importance in an act of forging or cementing and maintaining alliance and political identity. On the other hand, the ball game panels show indirect to no connection to the power of Kanu'l. The power of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil became more dispersed compared to the glory days of Yuknoom Ch'een II.

The references to the Kanu'l dynasty expressed through the pattern of the ball game also became more indirect. On the one hand, the panels from Laguna Perdida, Tipan Chen Witz, El Palmar or Mucaancah may indicate the integration of these sites into a wide network of influence from Calakmul; on the other hand, they are a sign of the growing power of the regional centres. The fact that the ruler of Tipan Chen Witz recorded the game in all probability

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[208] The dating of the panels from Coba, but also from Mucaancah, is problematic, but they probably fall into the first half of the eighth century, as do most of the other panels.

with its overlord of Naranjo in AD 716 reflects the ambitious political plans of Naranjo rather than Calakmul. Similar to Panel 1 from La Corona, the Tipan Chen Witz do not represent Naranjo king but perhaps his high-ranking official involved in a game with a local (Tipan Chen Witz) lord. Kanu'l's strategy of maintaining control over subordinates via executives, expressed in the iconography of the ball game, seems to have been emulated by the Naranjo elite at the time.

In my opinion, such a narrative of Calakmul's ally engaged in a ballgame with his sublords would not be possible in the seventh century, when Calakmul was stronger. Power was increasingly diluted and shy separatist voices emerged.

In El Palmar, the ball block did not even appear in the context of royal power. The *lakam* official of El Palmar must have consolidated a lot of power in his hands if he served as a mediator between Calakmul and Copan. In the iconographic record, this is reflected in the location of the ballgame panel at his seat, the Guzman Group.

Following this line of evidence, I believe that the extensive narrative of the ballgame hieroglyphic stairs from Coba, Dos Pilas (AD 724), Tonina (727) and Yaxchilan (AD 752-768) served as an indicator of the aspirations of these kingdoms to be regarded as powerful kingdoms building networks of alliances independent of Calakmul. In the previous chapter, I made some arguments that Coba was a great kingdom, comparable to Tikal and Calakmul. If the ballgame theme at Coba could attest to an alliance with Calakmul, I believe that it was an alliance between lords and kingdoms of equal rank and status. Similarly, Tonina Monument 171 could show Yuknoom Took' K'awill playing with a Tonina ruler, but recent research by Guido Krempel suggests the panel it could refer to the ball game between the Tonina ruler and his ancestor (Guido Krempel personal communication 2023). In the second scenario, K'inich Yich'aak Chapaat could emulate Kanu'l's style of depicting a ball game for his own political reasons.

At some cities inscriptions accompanying the images of the ball games do not even mention the Kanu'l dynasty; on the contrary, they are full of mythological symbols (Yaxchilan) and references to competition (Dos Pilas). If the Dos Pilas ball game panels indeed reflect not only the alliance with Calakmul but also the political aspirations of Itzamnaaj K'awiil, the king of Dos Pilas, then his death in AD 726, two years after the ballgame, would mark a change in relations between the two kingdoms to the disadvantage of Dos Pilas.

Itzamnaaj K'awiil's successor - Ruler 3, was more of a regent for the young heir to the throne, Itzamnaaj K'awiil's son, than the legitimate ruler. The limited power of the rightful heir to the throne could lead to an increase in Calakmul's influence in this region. Only a few years after the erection of the ballgame raisers at Dos Pilas, a *ch'an* (a guardian, a mentor) from Kanu'l (AJ-ka Kan-la, he of Kanu'l) presides over the ritual bloodletting of a young boy, probably the son of Itzamnaaj K'awiil (Houston 1993; Martin and Grube 2008:60, Mumary Farto 2020:403). The presence of the image of a Kanu'l official, similar to the example from La Corona, would attest to the dominant influence of Kanu'l[209].

The last clear and direct identification of the ballgame theme with the hegemonic aspirations of Calakmul comes from Zapote Bobal and is dated to the time when Waman K'awiil, the successor of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil wielded the sceptre. Not much is known about Waman K'awiil, the ballgame panel from Zapote Bobal is the best source of information about this ruler. It shows Waman K'awiil in a game with his ally from Zapote Bobal.

Does the theme of the ball game reflect Waman K'awiil's attempts to strengthen alliances along the royal route: La Corona - El Peru- Waka' - Zapote - Bobal - Cancuen? Was the erection of the Zapote-Bobal block part of a wider campaign aimed at restoring the former glory of the

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[209] A guardian from Calakmul might have been sent to Dos Pilas after the death of Itzamnaaj K'awiil, or he might have been there before but come to power under favourable political circumstances.

Kanu'l dynasty? Even if so, the attempt must have failed as the dynasty's fortunes continued to decline.

The last two panels (from Yaxchilan and Quirigua) are even dated to a period when the Kanu'l emblem glyph can no longer be traced in the inscriptions of Calakmul. Both kingdoms established some form of contact with Calakmul (see Chapters II and IV), but to associate the ballgame theme with Kanu'l hegemonic aspirations in the case of these two sites seems a little over the top. Rather, Yaxchilan and Quirigua imitated the Kanu'l style to achieve their own regional socio-political goals.

The Quirigua panel (AD 808) shows the last king playing with one of his nobles. Instead of reflecting on the macro-political alliance, it concentrates on local affairs. Perhaps K'ahk' Jolow Chan Yopaat interacted with his nobles and shared resources and power with them through a prestigious and once successful process - the alliance forged through the ballgame. If K'ahk' Jolow Chan Yopaat had in mind an idea of establishing or improving political communication via (*inter alia*) displaying the theme of the ballgame, it was already too late. "Quirigua was deserted within a few years, with severe decline or abandonment affecting sites throughout the valley" (Martin and Grube 2008:225).

While Quirgua plunged into decline, some sites in the vicinity to Calakmul still prospered. These include among others, Oxpemul and Naachtun, two sites of particular importance to my research. No ballgame panels have yet been discovered in these centres. Perhaps they are still buried under one of the structures, waiting to be discovered. The large-scale excavations at Oxpemul are still pending. With regard to Naachtun, where the Guatemalan- French project has been running for years and the architectural features are gradually being clarified (Arredondo Leiva 2009, 2010; Nondédéo et al. 2013, 2016a; 2016b, 2019), the absence of a ballgame panel is intriguing. Scholars assume that contact between Naachtun and Calakmul was established in the early seventh century. However, evidence for seventh-century contacts

is sparse and based only on the presence of a motif showing women in a netted outfit, a motif often associated with Calakmul (García Barrios and Vázquez López 2011, Lacadena in Nondédéo et al. 2018a:34, Vázquez López 2017).

5.7 Net costume motif

Examining the relationship between the distribution of a net costume motif and the domination of Calakmul in the Late Classic Period has been one of my research objectives. This subchapter sets out the symbolism and development of the imagery of the net costume from the Early Classic to the Late Classic Periods throughout the Maya area (Figure 5C.1). Emphasising the broad socio-political context in which this motif was placed will enable to shed light on its significance for the iconographic programme of Uxul, Naachtun, Oxpemul and La Corona, the main area of my research.

Figure 5C. 1 The distribution of the net costume motif. Recompiled by author.

In the seventh century, Maya royal women were often depicted in netted costume (García Barrios and Vázquez López 2011, Helmke 2017:103, Reese Taylor et al. 2009, Tuszyńska

2016, Vázquez López 2017:21). Many of these women were related to the Kanu'l dynasty. Some scholars (Reese Taylor et al. 2009; Vázquez López 2017:21) have argued that royal women showed their affiliation to Kanu'l by wearing the net costume. This fact also led them to believe that the use of net dresses in public art was politically related to the expansionist plans of the Snake dynasty.

However, following Tuszyńska's (2016) original findings, this study presents further evidence that the display of net costume in public art is not exclusively reserved for the local elite seeking allegiance to the Calakmul lords. Moreover, not all centres allied with Calakmul exhibited women in net costume. In the following subsection, I will argue that the presence of the net costume on public monuments at various sites is not a sign of Kanu'l influence or supremacy. I believe that its prevalence must be related to the increasing role of royal women in Late Classic politics.

5.7.1 Description of the net costume

The net costume is attire made of jade or shell beads (cylindrical or round) in a technique that creates a net pattern. Because it was made of exotic and valuable material, the net dress (either in the form of shell or jade) was probably restricted to the upper class of society: queens and sometimes kings (Figure 5C.2) (Houston et al. 2020).

Figure 5C. 2. A plate representing a male figure in the net skirt. The text mentions Ucanal toponym. Drawing by Dorie Reents- Budet.

Net attire could either consist of 1) *huipil* (a long loose tunic reaching the feet), 2) *quechquemitl* (rectangular cloth covering the shoulders) made of beads (jade or shell) and accompanied by a jade/shell skirt, 3) a simple net skirt (Looper 2002:178-182; Taube 2005; Vázquez López 2017:21).

The outfit was equipped with a belt consisting of a Spondylus shell set in the maw of a stylized shark, the *xook* monster (Figure 5C.3).
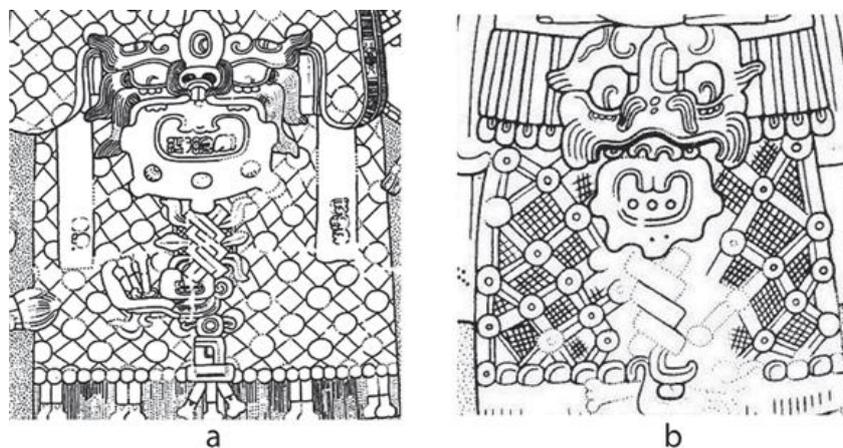
Figure 5C. 3. Detail of the shark-head and spondylus belt. a) El Perú Stela 34 (drawing by John Montgomery); b) Naranjo Stela 24 (drawing by Ian Graham).

The belt regalia symbolically referred to the resurrection of the Maize God, who emerged from the aquatic monster, represented in the form of the *xook* motif (Taube 1985: 172). Both the *xook* belt and shell had multivalent meanings referring to watery environments and fertility. The Spondylus shell could symbolize the primordial sea from which the first creation emerged or the watery depths of the underworld where the cosmic monster resides[210] (Wanyerka 1996: 77). It could also refer to a woman's womb and symbolize birth and femininity (Freidel et al. 2002:67; Millbrath 1999). By wearing the net costume, the elite, like the maize god, sought to overcome death (Figure 5C.4) (Helmke 2012a: 111-113).

Figure 5C. 4. The death of the Maize God and the acquirement of the Spondylus regalia. The sides of the vase depicting

a) *Yax Bahlam* and b) *Juun Ajaw.* Photos of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

As both kings and queens are represented wearing the net attire[211], scholars have assumed that this garment, when worn by noblewomen, referred to the female aspect of the Maize God or to

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[210] Such shells held blood offerings and were often placed in sacred caches (Wanyerka 1996: 77).

[211] Men however tended to wear a short skirt instead of a long *huipil* (Le Fort 2002:110-123; Milbrath 1995, 1999).

the Moon Goddess who is frequently depicted in Maya iconography wearing a netted dress (Looper 2001:182; Quenon and Le Fort 2002:110-123). The relationship between Moon Goddess and Maize is still evident among the contemporary Maya, who perceive Maize and Moon as their Mother and regard them as one (Sigal 2000:5-7; Taube 2005). Joyce (1996: 182) even argued that "male and female costumes could be combined in ways that blurred the boundaries between the dichotomous gender poles they represented, creating a costume creating other genders encompassing maleness and femaleness".

5.7. 2 Netted dress in burials

Net attire has also been identified in female burials. The Late Classic Period Tomb 1 of Structure XV from Calakmul contained a body of a middle-aged woman, probably the spouse of Yuknoom Ch'en II. She was adorned with jade bracelets, a jade necklace and ear flares, jade, and shell beads[212], one pearl, as well as bone and flint pendants, and a precious shell cape in the form of *quechquemitl* (Figure 5C.5) composed of 380 Spondylus shells (Pilsbury *et al.* 2017: 212).

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[212] Some artefacts can also imitate jade. The burial of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II and his successor Ruler 4 of Piedras Negras contained clay beads covered in blue-green colour, imitating jade (Tremain 2017:235).

Figure 5C. 5. *Spondylus quechquemitl* from Tomb 1, Calakmul. Photo of Proyecto Arqueológico Calakmul.

Moreover, the velvet shell was placed at the height of her pelvis, suggesting that it could be part of the elements of the *xook* belt (Carrasco 2004: 225; Delvendahl 2008: 115). An analogous shell plaque, adorning a cape was found in the tomb of Ix "K'abel"s tomb at El Peru Waka'. This large, perforated shell mimics the *xook* belt embellishing Ix "K'abel" on Stela 34 (Freidel et al. 2012; Navarro-Farr 2020:48; Pérez et al. 2015). Last but not least, the early classic Copan burial offering of the "Lady in Red" contained a large number of jade beads and shells, possibly made a net costume in which she was buried (Bell et al. 2004: 136-143).

5.7.3 Net costume in public art (Catalogue Net costume Figure 78-105)

Intriguingly netted attire is not represented in portable media, such as elaborately painted ceramics. Ceramics, frequently displaying the scenes of the royal Maya court, were probably confined to an elite audience in a private setting. As Tremain noted, the attire represented on portable objects differs from that of monumental art. The outfit displayed on stelae, lintels or murals is large and elaborate. It encompasses the body that covers it.

360

"The large, public, spaces that stelae were set in a necessitated larger and more elaborate dress that could be seen from a distance and would 'impress' large audiences" (Tremain 2017: 114).

The first images of women dressed in the net costume in the Maya area are dated to the fifth century and appeared at El Zapote (Stela 5), Yaxha (Stela 7), Tres Islas (Stela 2) and Tikal (Stela 40) (Proskouriakoff 1961:91-92; Tuszyńska 2016: 286-287). Non-Maya examples can be dated even earlier and include La Venta and Teotihuacan (e.g., earth-water goddess ca. AD 100) (Tate 2012:188).

However, the Late Classic period saw an increase in the number of women depicted in net costume. This motif appeared at Tulum, Palenque, El Peru Waka', Naranjo, La Corona, Naachtun, Uxul, Itzimte, or Xupa among others (Table 3) (https://art.famsf.org/panel-woman-jade-costume-1998142; Graham 1978, Graham and von Euw 1975; Grube 2008, Marcus 1987; Martin 2008; Miller 1973; Ruppert and Denison 1943; Schele and Freidel 1990). The new style of elite fashion can also be observed. The early classic representations are restricted to the net skirt, while in the Late Classic Period a long one-pieced tunic or huipil became the predominant form of the beaded suit. According to Barrios and Vázquez López, the long single component beaded huipil was introduced and inspired by Calakmul and sites politically linked with Calakmul in the Late Classic Period (Barrios and Vázquez López 2011:84-85). They concur that the change in fashion style signifies transmission of power and a new order established by the Kanu'l branch that ruled from Calakmul.

The modified net costume, consisting of a huipil instead of a net skirt, is discovered for example in Calakmul (e.g., Stela 23), El Peru Waka' (e.g., Stela 34), Naachtun (Stela 18) or La Corona (Miscellaneous Panel 2, Panel 6). Interestingly, Ix Naah Ek on Panel 6 was depicted according to the fashion guidelines of the Late Classic Period (in a long, beaded tunic reaching to the ankles), although at the time of her reign (early sixth century) royal women were only

shown in net skirts. The artist probably carved the monument from his eighth-century perspective. By depicting two Kanu'l princesses from two different centuries in the same style, he acknowledged their kinship and common origin.

The poor condition of the Calakmul stelae makes it difficult to determine the type of attire attire the royal women, but a careful visual examination of drawings of stelae depicting queens suggests that a long huipil is the predominant form. The long huipil is seen on Stelae 23 and 88. It is difficult to tell whether the woman depicted on Stela 9 and 79 of Calakmul (possibly the mother of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk') is dressed in a one-piece long piece (a tunic or huipil) or a net skirt (Barrios and Vázquez López 2011: 73, Tuszyńska 2016:254). The early and so far, only drawing of Stela 28 attributed to Karl Ruppert and John H. Denison (Ruppert and Denison 1943, plate 49), which shows a royal woman from the time of Tajom U'kab K'ahk', is also not very clear. However, I agree with Anna Barrios, Veronica Vázquez López and Boguchwala Tuszyńska that it depicts the queen in the long huipil with the shark and shell ornament (Barrios and Vázquez López 2011: 71, Tuszyńska 2016: 286). Barrios and Vázquez López suggest that the complete costume can be recognised by the generous sleeves still visible on the monument (Barrios and Vázquez López 2011: 71). My visual examination of the drawing also suggests that it is a one-piece huipil: The net is visible on both the upper and lower body, giving the impression of a single unit. In contrast, judging from the shape of the clothing, the woman on Stela 2 from Uxul is dressed in a skirt rather than a huipil (Figure 5C.6)
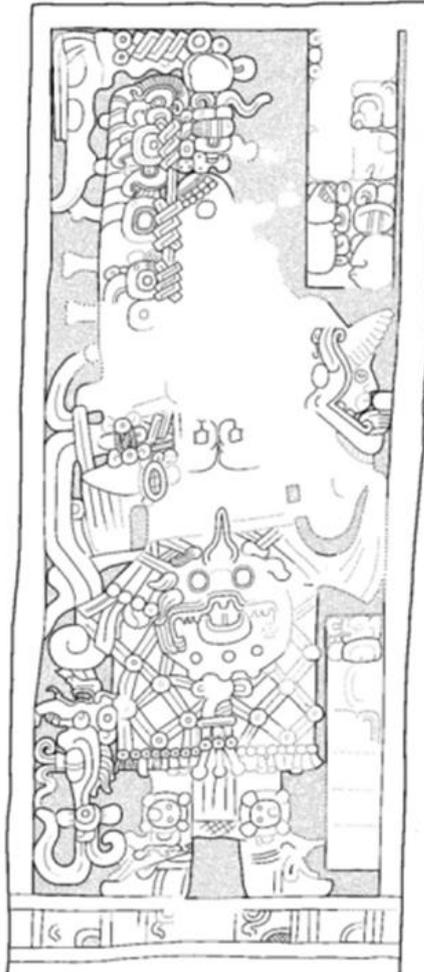
Figure 5C. 6. Stela 2, Uxul. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

The presence of images of a short net skirt at sites apparently associated with Calakmul gives me pause to reflect on whether the net skirt was transformed into a one-piece dress by the Kanu'l dynasty in the Late Classic period and spread to its political allies. Ix Wak Chan, a prominent queen of Naranjo whose arrival in Dos Pilas and refoundation of the local dynasty was indirectly inspired by the Kanu'l dynasty, was never shown on the stelae wearing a one-piece beaded dress. Instead, she was robed in a net skirt adorned with *xook* - the shell belt ornament (Stelae 3, 24, 29, 31). At Naachtun, fragmented Stela 27, located in the Wall Compound complex and dated to the seventh century, shows a figure probably dressed in a beaded skirt. It will never be known with absolute certainty whether the figure is wearing a skirt, as the upper part of the body is missing due to damage to the monument. However, the shape of the garment, cut tightly around the waist, suggests that it is a net skirt and not a full

363

costume. The Chicago Art Institute Stela from AD 702 shows Ix Kaan ajaw in a jade net skirt holding a ceremonial bar and wearing a K'awiil headdress (Palka and Buechler 2003). The San Francisco de Young Museum Stela portrays Ix Mutul in a jade net skirt conjuring a K'awiil Vision Serpent (Reese-Taylor et al. 2009; Stone and Zender 2011: 158). Furthermore, Stela from the Late Classic Pomoy polity depicts Ix Ook Ayiin in a jade net skirt and wearing the K'awiil headdress (Stone and Zender 2011: 202).

It is clear from this observation that the image of the net dress is very flexible. Both the short skirt and the long huipil could be worn with or without the *xook* belt motif (see Table 3), although the long huipil is more common in the monumental records. Perhaps in places like Naranjo, Naachtun or Uxul, the short skirt was an expression of local identity, or a regional variant of rituals associated with this dress. This is in line with the concept of an "informal uniform" (Craik 2005: 17), where the local fashion tradition conforms to the rigid rules of society. The question remains whether the net tunic/skirt was closely associated with the power of the Snake kingdom in the Late Classic Period.

5.7.4 Spatiotemporal distribution of the net costume motif

If we look at the temporal distribution of the net costume in the public art of the Classic Period, we will find that this motif experienced a great surge in the seventh century, when Kanu'l became a dominant force in the Maya Lowlands (Vázquez López 2017:25). Indeed, the involvement of Calakmul and its allies in the net tunic tradition is evident on stelae from El Peru Waka', La Corona, Naachtun, Naranjo, Oxpemul, Uxul and Zapote Bobal. With the exception of Zapote Bobal and La Corona, the netted attire is associated with paired stelae. What struck me, however, was the fact that not all sites linked by marriage to Calakmul in the Late Classic period show the motif of a noblewoman in a netted robe.

The marriage between K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II from Piedras Negras and Ix Winak Haab from Namaan was probably inspired by the Kanu'l dynasty (Zender et al. 2015 see also Chapter IV). The huipil worn by Ix Winak Haab on the double-sided Stelae 1, 2, 3 does not resemble a net tunic made of shell or jade. Rather, it is an elegant huipil, probably made of cotton and with some adornments.

Ix Uh Chan, a Kanu'l princess, the mother of Yaxun Bahlam IV from Yaxchilan, was immortalised on some stelae and lintels together with Itzamnaaj Bahlam III (Graham and Von Euw 1977; Graham 1979, 1982; Tuszyńska 2009:8). On none of these stelae is she dressed in the net costume.

The woman on Stela 116 from Calakmul (Marcus 1987), who probably represents the wife of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk', is also not dressed in a net costume.

Tracing the pattern of the net dress through images, we can also note that there are several places where the distribution of the net outfit motif in the Late Classic Period may have been neither enforced nor inspired by Calakmul. These include: Altar de Sacrificios, El Chorro, Itzimte, Palenque[213], Pechal, Pomona, Stela from San Francisco Museum, Xupa, Yomop (Mejia *et al.* 2005; Schele and Freidel 1990; Zender 2003:358). If we add the examples

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[213] In Palenque, the net skirt was worn by Pakal, his mother Ix Sak K'uk, his wife Ix Tz'akbu Ajaw and their son K'an Bahlam on several Maya monuments, e.g. the lid of Pakal's sarcophagus (Pakal), the Oval Panel (Ix Sak K'uk), Tablet from the Temple XIV (K'an Bahlam), Palace Tablet (Ix Tz'akbu Ajaw) (Greene Robertson 1983; Reese-Taylor et al. 2009:42-44). Even if we assume that Calakmul played a role in placing Pakal on the throne (Stuart and Stuart 2008), I do not believe that the dress of the women associated with Pakal was intended to reveal their direct connection to the Kanu'l lineage, as Verónica Vázquez López believes (Vázquez López 2017:26). All instances of the net costume known from Palenque are dated to the period after AD 654, when the kingdom assumed a regional leadership role and brought glory to the city. The reconquest of Santa Elena (AD 659), a former ally of Calakmul, must have caused tensions with Calakmul. Therefore, I consider a display of any link to Kanu'l power at Palenque in the second half of the seventh century as highly unlikely.

from the Early Classic and Middle Classic Period: El Zapote, Tres Islas, Tikal, Yaxha and Tulum, the number of sites not affiliated to the Kanu'l dynasty where the net costume appears outnumbers the ones affiliated.

The great number of images of jade dresses and skirts from the Maya Lowlands across time and space precludes attempts to determine which sites were allied to Calakmul. Thus, the rendition of paired stela and ballgames panels dated to the time when the Snake dynasty resided at Calakmul covers the sites affiliated directly or indirectly to Kanu'l. The data we have for the same period regarding the motif of the net costume does not allow us to sort the sites according to political affiliation with the Kanu'l dynasty. The net costume is not exclusive to the Snake dynasty and therefore cannot be treated as an indicator of the Kanu'l presence in a particular area. This rule also applies to sites that are in close proximity to Calakmul. A telling example is Naachtun.

5.7.4.1 Naachtun

The major argument for the presence of Kanu'l at Naachtun in the seventh century concerns Stela 27. The woman depicted on this monument stands facing forward, but only the lower half of the body, which shows a net skirt with a *xook* belt motif, and the lower part of the arms are preserved (Mathews 2013: 92).

The arms, which were cut off by the destruction, indicate that the lady held an object between her arms, possibly a ceremonial bar. Epigraphic analysis carried out by Alfonso Lacadena in 2015 revealed a hieroglyphic inscription under the feet of the figure - 7 - IK'-K'AL NAL - 9-? These toponyms probably refer to the primordial places of origin and abundance (Nondédéo et al. 2018a:344). It is presumed that the figure depicted on Stela 27 is none other than the Kanu'l princess, who was sent to Naachtun to establish or cement an alliance with Calakmul through marriage. This assumption is based on the iconography of the stela - the presence of the net skirt and the archaeological context of the monument.

Stela 27 was found in 2005 by Ernesto Arredondo Leiva during the excavation of the hieroglyphic stairway leading to the Structure XI, in the Wall Compound Complex of Group A. Surprisingly, the monument formed part of the stairway and was used as the central step of the second layer of the megalithic stairway. The fragmentation of the stela and its intentional redepositing suggest that the monument was ritually and deliberately killed by destruction (Arredondo Leiva 2013:78, Mathews 2013:92; Nondédéo et al. 2018a). Each time the kings climbed the stairs, they literally and symbolically stepped on this monument (Nondédéo et al. 2018a: 345). Stylistically, Stela 27 is dated to the Late Classic Period so is its deposition[214]. As indicated by the ceramic, the Walled Compound is dated between AD 554 and AD 652 (Arredondo Leiva 2010: 516-519). The hieroglyphic stairway, however, was a second construction added to the original in the late seventh century or the early eighth century (Arredondo Leiva 2010:304). The erection and the subsequent integration of Stela 27 into the stairway must have happened at short interval.

The Wall Compound with its defensive and ritual character, possibly served possibly as protection of rulership. The ritual killing of stela could have been a public event at the place where the power of the local dynasty was ceded.

The question of whether its construction was a local response to the Kanu'l threat or evidence of the alliance with Kanu'l remains open (Arredondo Leiva 2010:527).

The lack of any archaeological evidence for Kanu'l's dominance over Naachtun in the seventh century raises the question of the identity of the women displayed on Stela 27. Kanu'l's influence over Naachtun in the seventh century is based solely on the presence of the net skirt

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[214] An upper fragment of a stela similar in size to Stela 27 was found at the level of the fourth step. Fragment 1 is painted red (in contrast to Stela 27) and unfortunately bears no inscription. It is not known whether it belonged to Stela 27 Arredondo 2013 :78-79).

motif, which, as I have argued above, had a wide distribution across time and space and is not limited to Kanu'l's sphere of influence. If we also assume that the Kanu'l princess from Stela 27 was an ancestress of a daughter of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil mentioned on Stela 10 (AD 761), the disrespect shown to her portrait when it was stepped on would be difficult to explain. Perhaps then Stela 27 does not represent Kanu'l lady but a local queen. The data we have for the seventh century does not necessarily support the interpretation of Naachtun as a dependency of Calakmul. An iconographic motif is not sufficient to state Calakmul's domination.

A different scenario can be drawn for eighth century Naachtun. The first strong evidence for the presence of Kanu'l at Naachtun dates from the mid-eighth century and is related both to the presence of paired stelae and to the inscription mentioning the Kanu'l princess (Stela 10) (Garay 2019:117-120). Stela 18, which is paired with Stela 19, probably depicts the Naachtun queen (Kanu'l princess?) in a netted tunic with a *xook* belt and Spondylus shell. Knowing that many women associated with the Kanu'l wore a net costume, and armed with other stronger arguments (e.g., paired stelae, the inscription on Stela 10), we can safely assume that the monuments are associated with the Snake dynasty.

Properly speaking, the presence of the net costume motif can only be considered as a supporting argument for the influence of Kanu'l at Naachtun (see Chapters IV and Va). The same principle can apply to seventh century Uxul and eighth century Oxpemul. Stela 16 from Oxpemul, together with Stela 14, features an image of a queen in a netted robe. The association to the Kanu'l dynasty is expressed by the pattern of the paired stelae rather than the fashion of the queen.

There are also various archaeological, epigraphic, and iconographic evidence for Calakmul's supremacy at Uxul. Ix Ajaw K'ak on Stela 2 from Uxul wears a net skirt and holds a ceremonial bar in her hand. The ceremonial bar, an attribute of royal power, symbolised the queens' ability to contact a supernatural world (Clancy 1994). The links between rituals and net costumes are

widely known. Tuszyńska has noted that the net costume was often associated with Period Ending ceremonies (Tuszyńska 2016:290). As the net costume carries deep symbolical meaning, it can be considered as ceremonial attire worn only on very special occasions.

5.7. 5 Net costume and rituals

Some of the rites related to the Period Ending might have required specific dress. It is difficult to determine which particular rite the net garment referred to, as it appears in connection with vision rites, *chok* rites, *tz'ap tuun* and *k'altuun* rites, personifications, royal coronations or sacrifices. All these rituals and events could take place during Period Ending ceremonies.

Tuszyńska, following Barrios and Vázquez López, suggests that a net costume was an elegant dress that could be worn during important public ceremonies. The outfit would have been an expression of a code of etiquette and diplomacy (Barrios and Vázquez López 2011, Tuszyńska 2016:291). It was a significant and prestigious garment worn at important public events, especially during the Period Ending ceremonies. Elites allied to Calakmul often commemorated (as at Calakmul) the Period Ending rituals and the queens' engagement in the ceremonies through the erection of paired stelae.

As the net outfit referred to the Maize God and Moon Goddess (Taube 1985:172), the royal woman may have been required to wear a jade or shell dress, for instance, as part of an agricultural ritual or self-sacrifice to attract crop fertility, renew vegetation, or secure lineage (Stone 1991:2001-202; Tuszyńska 2016:290).

5.7.6 Discussion

The pattern of net attire is especially evident in the Late Classic Period, although its origins in the Maya area date back to the Early Classic Period. However, the costume did not emphasise political affiliation but the rank of women.

The presence of the net costume at various sites can only be seen as a supporting argument for the predominance of Kanu'l. Since marriage alliances greatly shaped the politics of Late Classic Kanu'l, the royal women of this dynasty often held a high position and were therefore frequently depicted, for example on paired stelae, in a net skirt or tunic. On the other hand, it can be misleading to rely only on iconography to identify affiliation with Kanu'l, as the example from Naachtun shows.

Net attire was probably considered very prestigious and attractive and suitable for certain ceremonies. Their distribution in monumental art was not limited to the sphere of influence of Late Classic Calakmul but was spread over many Maya sites. The motif of the simple net tunic, often considered characteristic of Kanu'l, is the predominant form in iconographic display, although it is not exclusive. The regalia of the *xook* belt and the shell motif are also very common, but not essential to complete the dress.

I therefore believe that we do not have enough data to support the idea that the adoption of a netted costume was determined by the plans, values, and priorities of the hegemon. The net dress, in my opinion, should not be considered as a distinguishing feature between "us and them" in relation to the Kanu'l dynasty.

I believe that the adoption of this motif in the Late Classic iconography of, for example, Calakmul, Palenque, El Peru Waka', Naranjo and Pomona, was a result of the increased status of women who actively participated in rituals, especially associated with Period Ending. The elaborate and prestigious net dress enhanced their status and increased the legitimacy of their role as powerful queens, mothers, or wives (Le Fort 2002:34). Women adorned with jade/shell dresses demonstrated their authority and ability to lead important rituals. The visual pattern of netted costumes could be mobilized and employed in a public environment to emphasise the importance of royal women. Some of these queens dressed in net attire, were even depicted standing on top of captives (e.g., Stela 9, Calakmul; Stela 29, Naranjo; Stela 18, Naachtun) or

holding a shield (Stela 34, El Peru Waka'; Stela 18; Naachtun) as if they were military leaders. The royal woman standing on the captive motif is associated by some scholars with the power of the Kanu'l (Reese-Taylor et al. 2009:64). The following subchapter will advocate this motif in order to determine whether certain practices and perceptions centred on the war iconography of Late Classic royal women contribute to defining the local elite seeking allegiance to the Calakmul lords.

5.8 Standing on the captive motif

Maya rulers were frequently portrayed in public art as idealised 'warrior kings" - standing on captives or with captives at their feet. These images were particularly evident in Late Classic Maya art and likely reflect the intensified military conflicts that are thought to have taken place during this era (Martin 2006a:175; Proskouriakoff 1950; Reese-Taylor et al. 2009:42; Schele 1984:45).

Stephen Houston, David Stuart, and Karl Taube (2006:203) argue convincingly that captives were often depicted in contradictory ways: beaten, naked and humiliated, yet with their high rank often acknowledged by their titles, names, or royal regalia (Figure 5D.1)[215].

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[215] Jewellery was frequently removed to show shame and objectify the defeated (Benson 1978; Burdick 2016).
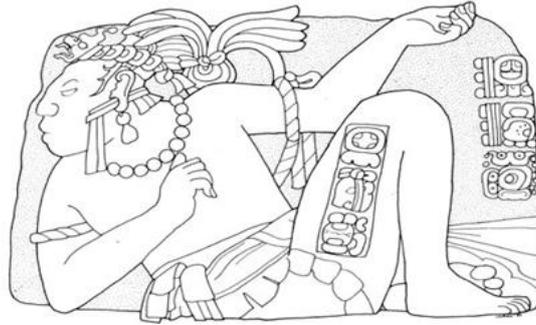
Figure 5D. 1. Monument 122, Tonina Ruler K'an Joy Chitam II of Palenque depicted as a tagged captive at Tonina, A.D. 711.

Drawing by Linda Schele.

The captive did not only represented himself, but his failure in battle was also extended to his lineage, social class, community, and city (Burdick 2016:33; Scharer and Golden 2014:60). Prisoners were important elements in the public memory of a great military victory and, as such, served as a means to foster the prestige and rank of the captor. In this respect, the motif of trampling a captive stood for an enduring symbol of defeat and the political dominance of one polity over another (Helmke 2020; Marcus 2006:240).

Figure 5D. 2. Stela 12, Piedras Negras. Ruler 7 from Piedras Negras trumphing over Pomona, AD 795.

Drawing by Linda Schele.

The image of the imposing figure of a ruler crushing the captive under his feet is not exclusive to the monumental art of Calakmul and the sites influenced by it. Depictions of kings with captives are also common in other Maya centres (Figure 5D.2 and 5D.3), such as Tikal, Dos Pilas, Piedras Negras, Aguateca, Yaxchilan, Tonina or Bonampak (Budrick 2016; Graham and Euw 1975; Martin and Grube 2008; Mumary Farto 2019: 235).
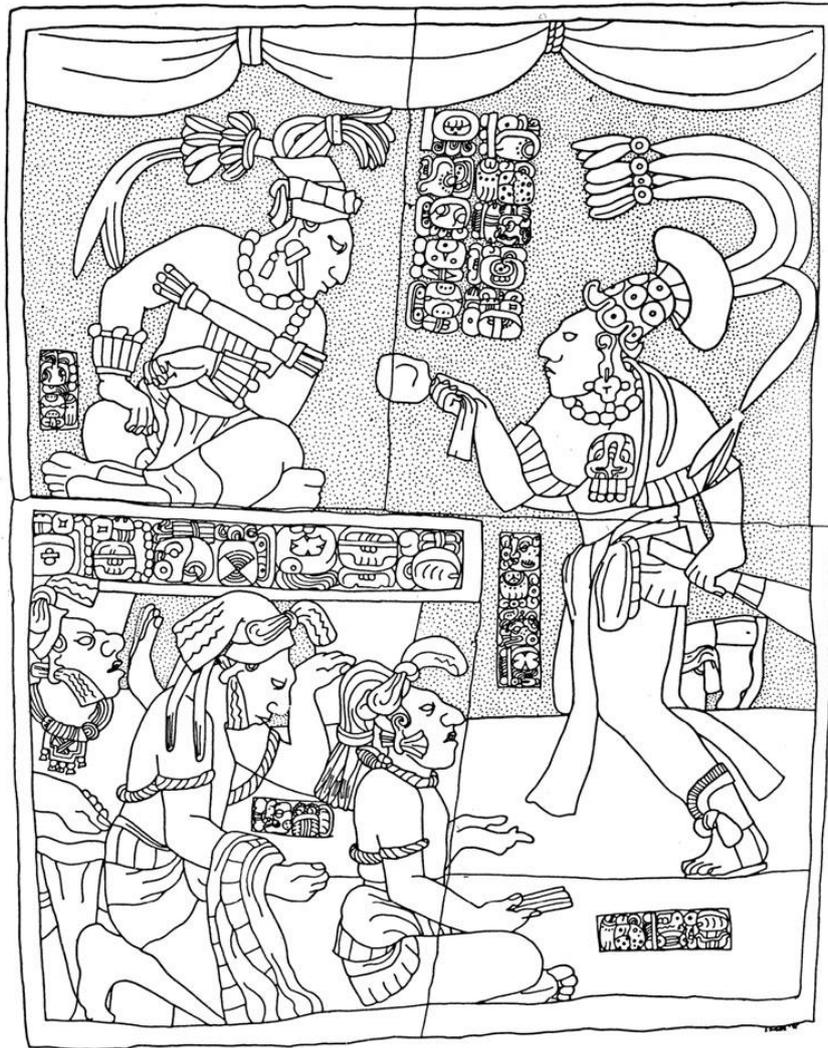
Figure 5D. 3. Panel from Laxtunich with three captives. Aj Chak Maax (right) presents captives to Chelte'
Chan K'inich, ruler of Yaxchilan AD 785. Drawing by Linda Schele.

Noblewomen were also shown as warriors standing on captives, although the number
of these representations is relatively small compared to those depicting kings. Reese-Taylor et
al. suggest that the appearance of warrior queens must be related to the expansion of the Kanu'l
dynasty in the Central Lowlands in the seventh and eighth centuries (Reese-Taylor et al.
2009:64). Calakmul, Naachtun, Coba and Naranjo are important examples to test this
hypothesis in terms of the imperial strategies of the Kanu'l dynasty.

There are 12 portraits of women standing on captives in the pictorial corpus of Maya
inscriptions. Five at Calakmul, four at Coba, one at Naachtun and two at Naranjo (Reese-Taylor
et al. 2009; Tuszyńska 2016:271), (Figure 5D.4)
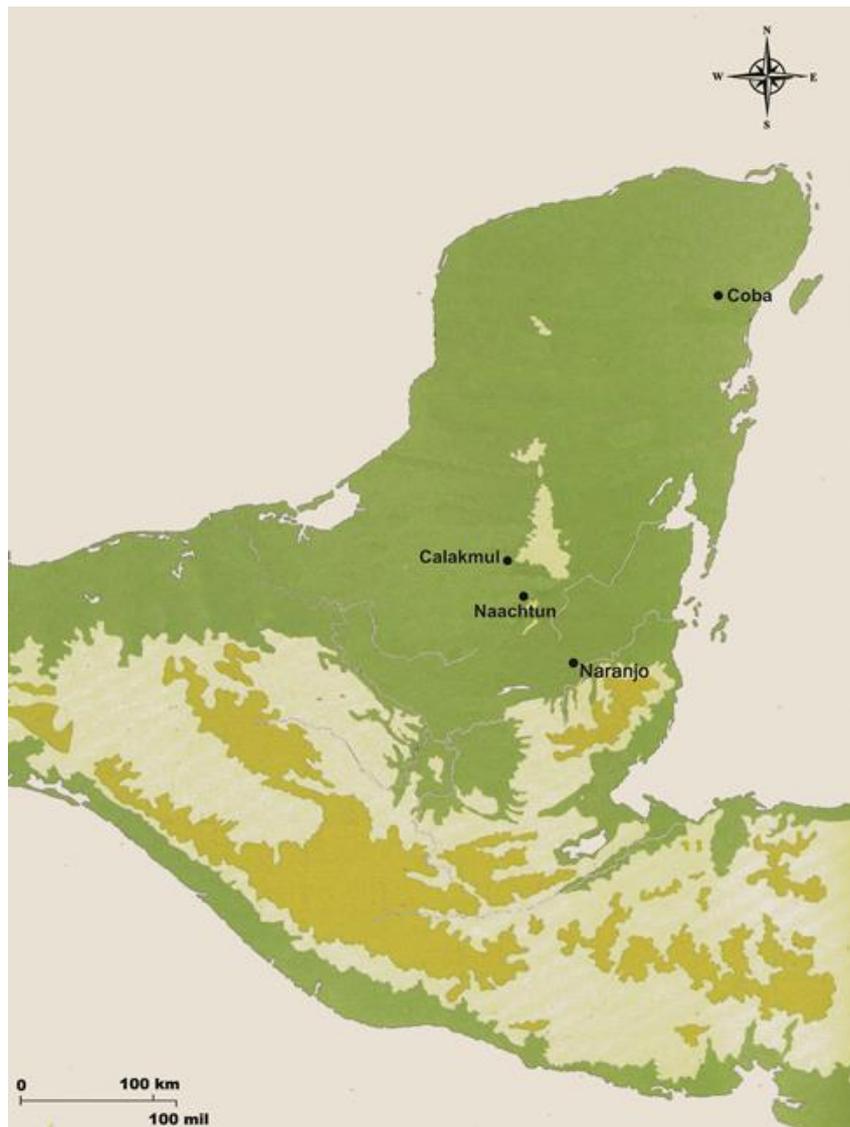
These images are also often part of paired stelae where both individuals: the king and queen, were portrayed with the captive under their feet (Hardman 2006:15; Joyce 2000:68; Reese-Taylor et al. 2009). In the scenario proposed by Reese-Taylor and others, the appearance of the image of a noblewoman standing on a captive at sites inclined towards Calakmul would testify to their alliance, collaboration or even subordination to the Kanu'l dynasty. According to scholars, the adoption of this motif emphasized queens' association with the Snake dynasty (Reese-Taylor et al. 2009:63-67; Vázquez López 2017:22).

However, as Tuszyńska aptly describes, images of women standing on a captive are not observed at many Maya sites that made contacts or alliances with the Kanu'l dynasty in the

seventh and eighth centuries (Tuszyńska 2016:271). The motif of the woman standing on the captive theme does not only not appear at Piedras Negras, Yaxchilan, Caracol and Dos Pilas, but also in the sites located near Calakmul, such as Los Alacranes, Uxul, Oxpemul or La Corona. My research shows that the primary motivation for adopting this image was the ideology of power that formed the basis of the political systems of the ancient Maya. The earliest example of a visual medium showing a noblewoman standing on a captive comes from Stela 28 at Calakmul (Marcus 1987:137-138; Rupert and Denison 1943: plates 49, 50).

5.8.1 Calakmul (Catalogue Figures 107-110).

At Calakmul, with the exception of Stela 116 and possibly Stela 88 (see Chapter Va), the woman standing on a captive is modelled on a similar image that represents the king.

These include paired Stelae 28 and 29, 76 and 78, perhaps Stelae 79, 77, 75, Stela 9, Stela 23 paired with Stela 24. At Calakmul, then, we are dealing with depictions of "warrior couples". Their images with captives at their feet were designed to make their victories visible[216].

Even if the queen did not take an active part in the warfare, she had to be credited with the victory. It is difficult to prove that queens actively participated in war in the Maya world, but as Navarro Far et al. mention (Navarro Far et al. 2020:38-45), military techniques involve a wide range of activities, not all of which necessarily rely on physical ability and strength. They may involve planning, command and control, or divination. Strategy and the ability to summon deities to provide support on the battlefield were key elements for success in war. This is true, for example, of Ix "K'abel", a Kanu'l princess. She holds a shield and is

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[216] Symbols of victory were designed in many ancient cultures to celebrate military successes, e.g., in ancient Rome or Egypt (Novakowa and Šályová 2019; Spalinger and Armstrong 2013).

accompanied by a dwarf, a symbol of liminality on Stela 34 of El Peru Waka' (Bacon 2007; Navarro Far et al. 2020; Marcus 1987:135-47; Miller 1973; Pérez et al. 2015; Wanyerka 1996).

Returning to Calakmul: The relationship between power and the image of the warrior queen was particularly significant during the reign of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'. Unlike his predecessor (Yuknoom Ch'een II) and his successor (Yuknoom Took K'awiil), Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' is not depicted together with his wife on a pair of male-female stelae. Instead, the young Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' is depicted with his mother on double-sided Stela 9 (AD 662), while his wife is probably featured on Stela 116 (AD 692). Both women, important to the king, are shown with a captive - the one on Stela 9 is a female captive from Santa Elena (Martin 2020:265). In the subchapter on paired stelae, I have put forward some ideas about the significance of Stela 9.

It would also be interesting to see if the erection of Stela 116, which does not follow the format of paired stelae, can tell us something about the nature of the relationship between Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' and his wife. The inscription on the bone found in her tomb (Tomb 6, Structure II), which names the daughter of K'ahk Ti' Chi'ch as the owner, may indicate that the wife of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' was related by blood to the great ruler of Dzibanche, probably being his granddaughter or great-granddaughter. In this light, Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' would have married his distant cousin. Stela 116 was erected in the middle of the staircase of Structure II, one of the most important buildings in Calakmul. The queen performing a ritual of scattering incense, is credited with capturing a figure, lying below her feet. Perhaps the image serves as a manifestation of the queen's authority, prowess and prestige

in unstable times for the dynasty[217]. Outside Calakmul, Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' was still shown engaged in maintaining hierarchical relationships with his allies, as expressed on ballgame panels from Uxul and El Peru Waka' (Freidel et al. 2007a:61; Grube and Delvendahl 2011, 2014; Grube et al. 2012:26; Lee and Piehl 2014:96; Lee and Guenter 2010). Yet, we know that his emissary had to pay a tribute to Tikal in AD 691 (Boucher 2012:196, see also Chapter II). Perhaps the depiction of a queen as a dominant force in *Uxte'tuun* AD 692 was a means to misdirect opinion away from the failures of their ruler.

The monumental activity of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil in the eighth century seems to have followed the same strategy of propaganda art, but on a bigger scale. The martial imagery of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil was the king's response to adverse times. The images were propaganda aimed at strengthening his power and authority. His wife was depicted with a captive in AD 702 (Stela 23), then Yuknoom Took' K'awiil was given all the glory and prestige of a warrior, as can be seen on at least 21 stelae attributed to him (see also Chapter Va).

The militaristic character of the queen's monuments is also reflected in Coba during the reign of Ruler B (Ix K'awiil Ajaw?) (Esparza Olguin 2016; Guenter 2004, 2014).

5.8.2 Coba (Figure 111-114)

In contrast to Calakmul, where we have several noblewomen displayed with a captive, in Coba only queen Ix K'awiil Ajaw adopted this style. The defeated enemies, depicted with bent hands, serve as her throne, or kneel at her feet on Stelae 1, 2, 4 and 5. The importance of these monuments is also attested by inscriptions recording important events from her life. Perhaps Ix K'awiil incorporated the style of a warrior queen from Calakmul. In my opinion,

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[217] The fact that she was buried with lavish goods supports the notion of her active political role in the court of Calakmul (Parpal 2021:279). Her tomb contained fine jewellery, polychrome vessels, shell, obsidian, and bone artefacts, but also a wooden stuccoed headdress (Garcia Moreno and Granados 2000:31).

however, the presence of these images does not reflect the alliance between Calakmul and Coba or even the subordination of the latter (although there must have been some contact, see earlier chapters). Rather, they served as evidence of Coba's imperialist ambitions to be the political equal of the Kanu'l dynasty.

The standing on the captive theme did not serve to identify with Kanu'l's prestige and authority, but rather to reinforce Ix K'awiil's authority within Coba society. In my view, the stelae in Coba reflect the queen's quest for dominance over the conquered territories.

As Martin aptly pinpointed, "Much like Calakmul and Tikal, Coba was surely the architect of its own hegemonic "imperium"— one maintained or enhanced by military conflict with rival polities right across the peninsula." (Martin 2019 https://mayadecipherment.com/2019/12/31/a-northern-war-coba-vs-oxkintok/).

The scholar referred to Coba as the "imperium" because of its successful campaigns against Oxkintok, among others (which is attested by hieroglyphic inscriptions). However, based on the above observations, I believe that Ruler B's iconographic programme also testifies to Coba's imperialist inspirations.

5.8.3 Naranjo (Figure 115-116)

The ambition and political aspirations of a queen are also reflected in the iconographic programme of Ix Wak Chan, the regent for her son K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak. As at Calakmul, the depictions of women in victorious stances are associated with paired stelae.

On Stela 24, dated to AD 702, Ix Wak Chan is depicted triumphant on an enemy from K'inichil Chab, a site defeated in AD 693 and AD 698, while her son K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak sits on the jaguar-skin covered cushion on Stela 22 (Tokovinine and Fialko 2007: 8-9). A decade later, paired Stelae 29 and 30, dated to AD 714, both show them stepping on enemies as if they were a warrior couple. K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak must have assumed some power as he matured, for both epigraphic and iconographic evidence show that he led successful war

campaigns, for example against Yootz or Yaxa (Martin and Grube 2008: 76). However, the fact that his mother surrounded herself with military symbolism on Stela 29 suggests that she still held a strong position in the kingdom (Helmke 2017:94,118). Stela 29 fits well into the political propaganda of a charismatic and dominant queen and mother who takes credit for successfully waging wars and taking captives[218].

Presumably, the pattern of a female conqueror was taken from Calakmul, a great ally of Naranjo. Calakmul's role in the arrival of Ix Wak Chan from Dos Pilas to Naranjo and the process of dynastic renewal in that centre is indisputable (Doyle 2005; Helmke 2017; Sharer and Traxler 2006; Tuszyńska 2016). However, more than identifying with the Kanu'l, Ix Wak Chan's image as a warrior served as a means to underline her aspirations to maintain power and influence in the city.

Interestingly, Naachtun is the only place in the immediate vicinity of Calakmul where the image of the warrior couple was employed. In the case of Uxul, Oxpemul[219] and La Corona this pattern is not observed in their monumental record. The paired Stelae 2 and 3 of Uxul (AD 633), depicting *Ix Yajaw K'ahk'* and *K'uhul Ajaw* of the Bat dynasty, do not carry images of captives, although a decade earlier Calakmul erected paired stelae with captives (Stelae 28 and 29). The Kanu'l princesses on the monuments at La Corona are also not depicted with captives.

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[218] Her power is also displayed through the name - tagging of captives as seen on Stela 24 and Stela 29. Name tagging not only identified the captive, but also helped the captor to re-enact a victory and the acquisition of an individual, who as a prisoner became the treasured possession (Budrick 2016: 31, 42).

[219] The military aspect of Oxpemul's iconographic program is reflected on Stela 17 (AD 731) where the ruler, in the manifestation of the Underworld Sun stands atop of a captive and holds a shield and a spear in his hands (Grube 2008:208, 214). Yet, there is no female counterpart depicted in a similar manner.

5.8.4 Naachtun (Figure 117)

Stela 18 from Naachtun, paired with Stela 19, displays the image of a woman standing on a captive who is accompanied by the toponym *Uxte'tuun*, which is associated with Calakmul. The glyphs on the monument are badly damaged, preventing accurate decipherment (Arredondo Leiva 2010; Mathews and Parmington 2005:108; Mathews et al. 2005; Morley 1938:339-341; Ruppert and Denison 1943:134).

It has long been suspected that the depiction of captives on Stelae 18 and 19 represents Naachtun's victory over Calakmul in the armed conflict. In 2005, Mathew et al. wrote: "Considering the localization of Naachtun, so close to its powerful neighbour, this declaration shows almost an arrogant confidence on the side of Naachtun, probably quite safe as a Tikal ally" (Mathew et al. 2005:4). Following recent epigraphic discoveries at Naachtun, we know that Kanu'l was not yet out of the competition. As discussed in the previous subchapter the Kanu'l princess mentioned on Stela 10 and the woman portrayed on Stela 18 may have been one and the same person, or at least related. Against this background, the question arises how then to explain that the monument refers to the captive as an unnamed *Uxte'tuun*?

Stelae 18 and 19 may suggest collaboration between the allied forces of the Naachtun and Kanu'l dynasties against one or sublords, one of whom claimed to be from *Uxte'tuun*.[220] Nor can we exclude the possibility that the Kanu'l dynasty, with the help of Naachtun, attempted to subjugate *Uxte'tuun*, which was once part of their sphere of influence. The idea that the stelae reflect the armed conflict between Naachtun and the Kanu'l dynasty cannot be ruled out either, as Nondédéo and his colleagues have recently suggested (Nondédéo et al.

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[220] According to Carter, "kings required the presence of subordinate nobles in the capital, and those lords in turn used their association with the charisma of *Chiik Nahb* and *Uxte'tuun* to emphasize their own prestige" (Carter 2014:42).

2021), although I consider this less likely, as the pattern of paired stelae is closely associated with Kanu'l rule.

Naachtun, the site in close proximity to Calakmul, may have been forced to participate in the struggle or, perhaps more likely, the Naachtun elite voluntarily engaged in conflict because it suited their interests. I have no hard evidence for this, but the absence of the Kanu'l emblem glyph at Calakmul in the second half of the eighth century and its surprisingly late appearance at Naachtun in AD 761 warrants discussion of the latter as a late seat of the Kanu'l dynasty.

Regardless of how we interpret the relationship between the Snake head dynasty and Naachtun, the fact that the couple from Stelae 18 and 19 are depicted triumphantly standing on the prone figure of a captive attests to their concern with power over the people and control over the land. The motif of standing on the prisoner is a perfect example of the iconography of power in terms of the self-promotion of the victors and the affirmation of their achievements. The images aimed to exert influence on the audience and convince them that the royal couple depicted was powerful, fearless, and unbeatable. As discussed in earlier chapters, the archaeological data indeed points to a major development of Naachtun in the Late and Terminal Classic Period. Whether or not they are associated with the Snake dynasty or not, Stelae 18 and 19 are a clear testimony to the power of Naachtun.

5.9 Chapter Summary

The strategy of domination through the public commemoration of royal women who defeated elite rivals in battle was particularly evident in places where women held strong positions of leadership. One might even suggest that this motif emerged in places where high-ranking nobles were said to have contributed to the military success of their polities. It does not necessarily mean that royal women took part in battle or captured enemies. The images would

be a propaganda symbol aimed at promoting the prestige of the queen and emphasising her wide political and/or military role within the kingdom.

But the image itself would represent ambitious, imperious, and influential women or royal couples in the ancient Maya court rather than attest for Kanu'l's dominance.

To all intents and purposes, I have not found enough evidence to directly link the motif of royal women standing on captives to the Kanu'l dynasty. This type of representation is not limited to Kanu'l and could be a reflection of the expansion strategies of at least four centres: Calakmul, Coba, Naranjo and Naachtun. Similar to the motif of the net costume, the portrait of a noblewoman standing on a captive is also part of the "iconography of power" narrative. The motif developed in Calakmul but was adopted by other centres and lost its connotation with the Snake Dynasty. Coba and Naranjo, who were probably inspired by the art of Kanu'l, adopted the pattern of a royal woman standing on the captive and employed it to demonstrate their supremacy. As for Naachtun, we only recognise the affiliation to Calakmul by the pattern of paired stelae and the reference to the Kanu'l princess on Stela 10. The visual representation of a warrior queen or warrior couple was manipulated in different ways, but always revolved around militarism and the symbolism of domination.

When these considerations are made, it becomes clear that only two iconographic themes, namely the paired stelae and the ballgame panels, can be considered characteristic of Calakmul and its sphere of influence. The other two, the royal female net costume and the images of a warrior queen, were employed at various kingdoms, regardless of their affiliation to the Kanu'l dynasty. However, in Calakmul, the capital of the kingdom, the iconography of power was used to consolidate the authority of the dynasty. In this way, all four motifs and themes - paired stelae, ballgame, royal female net costume, and images of a warrior queen - were employed by the Snake-head kings for specific reasons and with a planned objective.

In this chapter, I attempted to show that the imagery characteristic of Kanu'l found on the monuments of various Maya sites provides excellent information about the socio-political influence and/or control of Calakmul. These visual patterns echoed far and wide the hegemonic network of Kanu'l, which encompassed many socio-political entities. The Late Classic histories of, for example, El Peru Waka', Naranjo, Piedras Negras, Coba, La Corona, Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul, viewed through the lens of iconography, provide an important window into the hegemonic strategies of the Late Classic Snake-head kings. The sites showed different relationships to Calakmul. The dissemination and integration of visual patterns from Calakmul to other regions took a variety of forms, ranging from imitation of Calakmul's style to co-optation to forced adoption and imposition.

Paired stelae and ballgame panels through their public placement were used by the Kanu'l kings as an effective means of spreading their ideology to other centres. They viewed art as a language of power and a political strategy to create a larger, hierarchical political system.

Local elites from distant sites immersed themselves in the glorious splendour of Kanu'l by adopting its iconographic canon. The Late Classic elite of Naachtun adopted the pattern of paired stelae in the mid-eighth century, perhaps to mark the marriage arrangement between the Snakehead dynasty and Naachtun. Since the mention of a Kanu'l princess at Naachtun is late and post-dates the last mention of the Snake head kings at Calakmul, perhaps Stelae 18 and 19 mark the seat of Kanu'l at Naachtun? The presence of Kanu'l princesses as well as high-ranking officials is also attested at La Corona. The special relationship between La Corona and the Kanu'l dynasty, based on personal bonds, blood kinship and the presence of Kanu'l emissaries in *Sak Nikte*, created a unique foundation for its Late Classic art. It remains unknown how the lords of La Corona perceived the display of portraits of Kanu'l emissaries as ballplayers in the prestigious place of their rule. However, there is no doubt that these images helped the elite of *Sak Nikte* to associate themselves with the power and prestige of Calakmul.

The co-optation of Uxul and Oxpemul as seen in the iconographic records seems to have been much more complex. The forced adoption of Kanul's iconographic conventions may have been characteristic of Late Classic Uxul. The dominance of Calakmul over Uxul was omnipotent and this is reflected not only in the iconography of Uxul.

In Oxpemul, both strategies - appropriation and imposition - are interwoven and difficult to separate. The opportunity to erect monuments in Oxpemul after a long period of silence and to follow the iconographic canon of Kanu'l may have been granted by Yuknoom Took' K'awill. Both parties benefited from these arrangements. The opposition of "adoption versus imposition" is not rigid in the case of Oxpemul, at least not in the first half of the eighth century, when the Kanu'l dynasty was still strong. When the power of the Snake dynasty disappeared, the local Oxpemul elite continued to incorporate the pattern of paired stelae into their art, but without the supervision of the powerful Kanu'l kings.

Interestingly, "no resistance strategies in which local elites strove to avoid being incorporated or aggressive strategies in which elites at secondary sites fought to gain autonomy" (Marcus 2006:212) have been observed.

Nevertheless, Maya polities were dynamic, and the nature of political authority changed over the course of the Classic Period. Any arguments that a similar distance from the hegemon produces the same political and cultural response from the subordinates are unproven assumptions. The examples of Uxul, Naachtun, La Corona and Oxpemul demonstrate changing patterns of relationship with the Kanu'l dynasty, and this is evident in the iconographic developments at these sites.

CONCLUSIONS

Kanu'l expansionism was a dynamic phenomenon that reached its peak when Calakmul became the seat of the dynasty in the Late Classic Period. The Kanu'l branch that moved to Calakmul emphasised separation from Dzibanche through the use of certain iconographic motifs and themes.

Iconography immortalized the advance of Kanu'l hegemony, which explains why sculptures and stelae in particular important media of communication between the Kanu'l kings, and their allies and clients were. The Late Classic Kanu'l rulers manipulated artworks in their favour by creating, inspiring, or imposing certain art canons. This is also evident in the iconographic programme of Kanu'l presented to their allies or subordinates.

My analyses suggest that only two motifs are closely associated with Kanu'l power: paired stelae and ballgame panels. The visual representations of royal women dressed in a net costume and standing on top of captives are not exclusively associated with Kanu'l. Following an initial investigation by Tuszyńska (2016), I could not find any evidence that the image of powerful queens in their warlike (captive) or ritual (netted costume) posture is linked to Kanu'l's imperial strategies. Rather, these motifs reflect the growing role of women in the art of the Late Classic Period art and served as an expression of the "iconography of power".

Tracing the path of the paired stelae and ballgame panels through time and space, a correlation between political relations and iconography becomes apparent. Visual representations of ballgame panels and paired stelae symbolically glorified the achievements of the Kanu'l kings and evoked the power they wielded.

Art, and especially iconography, was able to convey important messages to a mostly illiterate society. Only members of the royal family and, in the Late Classic Period also the elite could be depicted on stone monuments (Houston 1998). Images served as intermediaries between a

depicted figure and the rest of society and were possibly even more significant in conveying messages than the texts accompanying them.

The rulers of Kanu'l projected their power through images that both glorified and honoured them. Stelae erected in public plazas where they could be seen by large numbers of people were considered sacred. They were an important means of demonstrating power, diffusing ideology, and expanding Kanu'l's sphere of influence. Art was an instrument of political strategy that Kanu'l used in subordinate territories to secure their submission and loyalty.

The distribution of the ballgame theme and paired stelae in the seventh and first half of the eighth centuries followed the political affiliation. The depiction of paired stelae and ballgame motifs created solidarity and a common identity between the different kingdoms under the influence of Kanu'l. This affiliation was constructed through a shared cultural and ideological identity - their 'self' as opposed to the 'others' who did not belong to their group. By adopting Kanu'l's style and repeating its art conventions, the elite of e.g., Uxul, El Peru Waka', La Corona, contributed to the creation of this shared self. Common symbols enabled the elite of these places to identify and distinguish themselves from the non-Calakmul elite. Imagery was incorporated into the construction of their identity, showing how the Snake kingdom manipulated art, particularly iconography, to legitimise its power. This shared identity was also defined by opposites. Sites associated with Tikal and Tikal itself did not display the pattern of paired stelae and ballgame panels. In this sense, the pattern of common themes and motifs may have been a sign of political order, marking the boundary between Kanu'l's allies and its enemies. The presence of the ballgame theme and/or paired stelae in the seventh and eight centuries at certain sites most likely indicates a relationship with Calakmul, either directly or indirectly through an intermediary. It must be noted here, however, that the adoption of elements and motifs by clients and vassals was based on a voluntary decision rather than imposition. The imitation of the imperial style and symbols was considered extremely

prestigious and advantageous by the distant sites. By referring to powerful overlords, local elites signalled their identification with the supreme polity.

Physical distance from the Late Classic capital of the Kanu'l dynasty - Calakmul - was an important factor contributing to the degree of integration of a site with the hegemon, but it was not the decisive factor. Relevant examples from the Late Classic iconographic programme of Uxul, Naachtun, La Corona and Oxpemul clearly show that these repetitive motifs and themes are a product of the dynamic power relations between Calakmul and its immediate neighbours. The response to Calakmul's expansionist plans, as seen in the monuments, was different at each site and was not always based on direct control and submission. We cannot say whether the art conventions of Kanu'l were adopted or imposed without knowing their socio-political context. The images were highly codified and standardised and to fully understand their meaning we need to draw on other evidence - archaeological, epigraphic, and iconographic when examining the question of co-optation and forced adoption. There is no single model or strategy by which symbols and themes were imposed or imitated.

Certainly, the imperial strategies of Kanu'l were far more spatially and temporally dynamic than previously thought. For example, Naachtun, often considered a dependency of Calakmul, seems to have been an important player in geopolitics throughout the Classic Period and even towards the Terminal Classic Period. Surprisingly, we know more about the role of Early Classic Naachtun in relation to *entrada* of Teotihuacan than we do about its Late Classic relations with Calakmul. The only paired stelae at Naachtun, Stelae 18 and 19, were erected in the middle of the eighth century, when the power of the Snake dynasty had already faded. Naachtun was not included in the boom of display of paired stelae in the Maya Lowlands, which is dated to the second half of the seventh century. This is in contrast to Uxul, where the first paired stelae were erected AD 633, only ten years after the earliest appearance of the paired stelae in Calakmul. The incorporation of standardised visual themes, which was characteristic

of Calakmul in the Late Classic Period, does not seem to have been essential for the Naachtun elite. Considering the close proximity of Naachtun to Calakmul, this visible non-adoption of the artistic conventions of Kanu'l by the Naachtun elite is significant and noteworthy.

The absence of paired stelae at Naachtun and other archaeological and epigraphic evidence pointing to contacts between the kingdoms in the seventh century may suggest that Naachtun pursued a more independent policy in the Late Classic Period than has previously been assumed. The hypothesis that a short distance from Calakmul would lead to visual representations and greater similarities with hegemonic iconographic patterns being enforced does not apply to Naachtun.

Early Classic Naachtun was the seat of the Bat dynasty and maintained a close relationship with Tikal. The demise of the latter in the sixth century had no negative impact on Naachtun. The growth of the site is witnessed, for example, by the construction of the Walled Compound. Perhaps Naachtun's position in general geopolitics was significant enough to enable it to resist the imperialist efforts of Calakmul?

One of Kanu'l's strategies to ensure the loyalty of its clients was to enter into marriage alliances. Stela 27 from the seventh century from Naachtun, which shows a figure wearing a netted dress, is believed to represent a princess from Kanu'l who was sent to Naachtun. The display of the net costume suggests the presence of an important woman at the court of Naachtun who was involved in performing rituals, perhaps during Period Ending ceremonies. The elaborate and prestigious net dress granted her the status of a powerful queen. Adorned with a dress of jade/shell dress, the queen demonstrated her authority and her ability to communicate with the gods. It is tempting to assume that this was a princess of the Kanu'ls or at least a woman indirectly connected to the Kanu'l dynasty. However, since the motif of the net costume was widespread throughout the Maya Lowlands from the Early Classic Period, regardless of a site's affiliation with the Kanu'l dynasty, the identity of the woman depicted cannot be determined

in the absence of a surviving inscription indicating her origin. It is safer to assume that the monument shows the image of a high-ranking woman, probably a queen, whose prominent role at the court of Naachtun was underlined by the erection of the stela.

The image of a queen on Stela 18 at Naachtun shown crushing the enemy from *Uxte'tuun* has an even more powerful meaning. It shows her image as a warrior queen, a true propaganda of power and a demonstration of the reversal of her traditional gender role as a woman.

By adopting both masculine (a shield, a captive) and feminine attributes (a netted costume), she was able to convince enemies and her people that she was capable of leading, mediating between gods and commoners and giving birth to the next generation of rulers. This message of power and domination is reinforced by the image of a ruler on Stela 19, which is paired with Stela 18. The king is also standing on a captive. Together, the two stelae represent the image of a "warrior couple". The image of the "warrior couple" was intended to show the military success of the kings and their invincibility, and at the same time to give the queen symbolic or de facto prerogative to the kingship. The monuments testify to the royal couple's ambition to be commemorated through their expansionist programme, which is illustrated by the humiliated figure of the captive and the shield weapon in the queen's hand.

Whether the target of Naachtun's attack was the Kanu'l dynasty remains an open question. The captive from *Uxte'tuun* seen on Stela 18 does not necessarily come from the Snake dynasty, although we cannot rule out this idea at this stage. *Uxte'tuun* is a place that in the Late Classic Period was dominated by the Snake elite. When the dynasty moved to *Uxte'tuun,* it absorbed groups that had lived there before it. It is therefore difficult to determine the identity of the captive figure. In this sense, the question of who commissioned Stelae 18 and 19 is crucial to understanding the Late Classic history of Naachtun.

According to Nondédéo et al. (2021), Stelae 18 and 19 represent a pair of kings undertaking an attack on the capital of the Snake kings. They argue that Naachtun took advantage of the decline

of Calakmul's fortune, and that the couple depicted on Stelae 18 and 19 rejected Kanu'l's influence.

In my dissertation, however, I have provided convincing arguments for a connection between the paired stelae and the expansionism of Late Classic Calakmul under the rule of the Kanu'l dynasty. Moreover, Stelae 18 and 19 are stylistically dated earlier or around the same time as Stela 10, which records the ritual with the daughter of Yuknoom Took' K'awill (AD 761). Perhaps the Kanu'l princess from Stela 10 and the woman from Stela 18 were the same person? If the couple on stelae 18 and 19 had been Calakmul's adversaries, then we would expect an act of mutilation of their portraits as revenge. Instead, both stelae are in a moderate state of preservation with no signs of deliberate damage that can be dated to the Prehispanic times. There is no doubt that the way monuments have been treated in different periods echoes socio-political narratives. The aforementioned Stela 27 from Naachtun, which shows the motif of a netted outfit motif, was deliberately destroyed towards the end of the seventh century and used as a hieroglyphic stair. This action was perhaps done to humiliate the figure depicted, which would be stepped on by those who climbed the structure. It is hard to imagine that the daughter of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil would allow a portrait of her relative (if indeed we identify the woman's net costume with Kanu'l symbolism) to be disrespected and disregarded. Therefore, I believe that Stela 27 may portray a local woman. The lack of evidence of ballgame panels at Naachtun, together with the presence of the "warrior couple" stelae, suggests that the enigmatic relationship between Naachtun and Calakmul from the mid eighth century was based on a marriage alliance and the authority of the Kanu'l princess rather than personal ties between the rulers of two kingdoms. Nevertheless, economics certainly played a role. A marriage alliance probably meant that some of the tribute/taxes owed to the wife would go to Naachtun (Elisabeth Graham personal communication 2022). When the Kanu'l princess resided in Naachtun and her father Yuknoom Took' K'awill passed away, the link between the two centres was perhaps

based only on the connection between the Kanu'l woman and the Naachtun lord. Such a relationship without direct interference from the Snake ruler would, on the one hand, give the Kanu'l princess the prerogative to rule, but on the other hand, it would testify to a partnership rather than hierarchical ties, which would not be surprising in the middle of the eighth century, when the Snake supremacy was gone. Nevertheless, these relationships must have been economic in nature, both parties had to benefit for them to come about. It is also worth considering that the Snake dynasty may have moved to Naachtun sometime in the middle of the eighth century.

The time at which the stelae were erected plays a crucial role if we are to understand their significance. Paired Stelae 2 and 3 from Uxul (AD 633) are the earliest examples of this type outside Calakmul and also the last paired stelae before the apparent hiatus in this pattern. This hiatus in production ended AD 662 with the erection of paired stelae at Calakmul, Coba, Uxul and Altar de Sacrificos. The hiatus in monument construction between AD 633 and AD 662 was perhaps related to the internal dynastic conflict within the Kanu'l family towards the middle of the seventh century. The boom in the construction of paired stelae coincided with the focus on increasing their sphere of influence and rule shortly after the end of the conflict. Returning to paired Stelae 2 and 3 from Uxul, the monuments testify to a link between the Bat dynasty and the *K'uhul Chatahn* and *Sak Wahyis* lineages. The supremacy of the Snake dynasty from its new seat in Calakmul was legitimised in Uxul by its association with these three local powers. This in turn was illustrated by the codified representation of paired stelae. Political alliances through marriage strengthened the position of the local elite by raising their rank. The strategy of sending Kanu'l princesses to maintain or consolidate alliances through marriage with princes from different kingdoms was not observed in Uxul in the second half of the seventh century. The paired stelae 12 and 13 (AD 662) do not show a royal couple, but the Uxul prince Muyal Chaak on each stela.

This exception to the pattern of depicting men and women was also recorded in the stelae from Oxpemul from the eighth century (Stelae 2 and 4, 18 and 19). The socio-political landscape was different in the early seventh century and the late eighth century and therefore the stelae indicate different meanings. The subjugation of Oxpemul to Calakmul was expressed in a lack of monumental records, while Uxul experienced tremendous development and flourishing in the seventh century. The difference between Uxul and Oxpemul may reflect on the different strategies of the hegemon toward its close subordinates. Ample architectural, archaeological, and iconographical evidence of Kanu'l's influence on Late Classic Uxul can be explained by its direct control of Calakmul, which treated Uxul as an extension of its territory. The dependent status of Uxul is reflected in the depictions of Kanu'l kings as ball players and the lack of equivalents representing Uxul's rulers. Unlike ballgame panels from other regions, the panels from Uxul do not show interactions of members of the royal family of Uxul with their overlords and therefore cannot be considered as signs of an alliance and a publicly proclaimed friendship. Instead, the data available from Uxul suggest that the level of control over Calakmul was extremely high. By imposing certain symbols and motifs, Kanu'l justified authority not only over the territory but also over the people living in Uxul. The themes and motifs in Uxul were produced under the control and direction of the Snake Head kings. In the case of Uxul, the monuments may have functioned as 'visual triumphal signifier" of the control exercised by Kanu'l. Political control brought overwhelming benefits in expanding Kanu'l's sphere of influence, which was mainly concentrated in the south of the capital. The Snake dynasty ensured cooperation with Uxul through command, submission and hegemony. It is not coincidental that the relationship between Calakmul and Uxul was not fostered by the marriage alliance and the arrival of a Kanu'l princess in Uxul. The ties were so strong that sending a Kanu'l princess to Uxul would have been an unnecessary waste of a

valuable human resource that could be used successfully in other regions. In Uxul, Kanu'l's visual program was carefully and confidently constructed and deployed. The double portrait of Muyal Chaak on Stelae 12 and 13 is a clear testimony to the role of this king as a loyal ally of the Kanu'l king. Muyal Chaak probably built a close and strong relationship with his overlord Yuknoom Ch'een II without any Kanu'l princess in between. The wife of Muyal Chaak does not seem to have been important enough to be worshipped with her husband on the paired stelae. Indeed, the Late Classic rulers of Calakmul probably stayed at the palace of Uxul when they visited their near neighbours. The Kanu'l dynasty probably inspired the construction of the palace complexes at Uxul (Structure K2). "These satellite palaces were not places where the king was, but rather places where the king could be" (Webster 2001:161). The constant physical presence of the Kanu'l king was not necessary; the ritual essence of the ruler was manifested, among other things, by portraits of the kings as ball players on the ballgame panels that form part of the hieroglyphic stairs leading to Structure K2. In the case of Uxul, the lifes of the elite were shaped by the forces emanating from their overlords in Calakmul. Both Muyal Chaak and his predecessor and successor ruled Uxul under the auspices of the Snake rulers. The reference to Scroll Serpent on Stela 4 at Uxul, possibly dated to AD 603, suggests that contact between the Kanu'l dynasty and Uxul existed long before the official establishment of Calakmul as the new capital.

The last monument at Uxul features the date AD 702, but Stelae 51 and 89 (AD 731) from Calakmul bear the signature of an artist from Uxul who worked for Yuknoom Took' K'awiil. Even when Uxul's role as an important satellite of Calakmul diminished, its artists were roped in to create propaganda images for its overlord. Yuknoom Took' K'awiil's image-based propaganda program served as the sole validation of his rule and as a means of ideological

legitimation of authority. His portraits in Calakmul were full of military and warfare symbolism.

They also played an important role in reinforcing the projected image of authority at a time of deep crisis for the dynasty (Mumary Farto 2019). Outside Calakmul Yuknoom Took' K'awiil devoted himself entirely to cementing alliances, ensuring the fealty of the reconquered settlements, and maintaining diplomatic relations. The political transformation of the state, which increased after AD 695, made the kingship institutionally weaker than before, and power became much more decentralised and personalised compared to the celebrated times of Yuknoom Ch'een II. As a result, the king increasingly acted through the language of friendship. This is most evident in the iconography of the ballgame panels. The king, in person or through his emissaries, as the embodiment of power, interacted with other rulers through the ballgame. Most of the ballgame panels are dated to the eighth century, when Calakmul was desperately seeking alliances after its failure with Tikal. The eighth century ballgame panels from El Palmar, Tonina, Yaxchilan or Dos Pilas reflect the imitation of Calakmul's style or the creation of new alliances rather than the establishment or maintenance of a political hierarchy with the king of Kanu'l as overlord. In contrast, the earlier dated ballgame panels from Uxul, La Corona and El Peru Waka' give an insight into the degree of control exercised by the Kanu'l dynasty. These three sites show different types of relationships with their overlord, as reflected through ballgame iconography. In the case of Uxul, La Corona and El Peru Waka', the distribution of the Kanu'l's power was directly proportional to their distance from Calakmul. Uxul, which is closest to the hegemon, demonstrates its dependence through the effective depiction of a single ballplayer on each panel, the king of the Kanu'l. El Peru Waka' shows an alliance with Calakmul through the depiction of two kings actively participating in a game. La Corona, located between Uxul and El Peru Waka', established a special relationship with Calakmul through, among other things, the presence of Kanu'l executives whose portraits as ballplayers

adorned and at the same time formed hieroglyphic stairs at La Corona's temple(s). But even El Peru Waka' did not promote political equality. Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' by visiting K'inich Bahlam II sustained strong bonds and re-enforced existing hierarchies with his ally. Nevertheless, the authority of K'inich Bahlam II is not questioned, both rulers are shown the same size and elaborate dress. The panels from Uxul and La Corona further emphasise the inequality between the parties. Only one ruler from La Corona is shown on a ball game panel. Chak Ak 'Paat Kuy is involved in a game with *uti'huun kaloomte'* of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil. The game took place in Calakmul and was certainly approved and arranged by the Snake king. The following portraits of Kanu'l's emissaries in La Corona are a proclamation and emanation of Kanu'l's power in that place. There are no portraits of high-ranking officials visiting the local kingdom on behalf of their ruler, but images of residents of the city who probably had real power in La Corona. The princesses of the Kanu'l were also sent to La Corona to advocate for the Snake dynasty's interests. The arrival of the Kanu'l princesses in La Corona was probably agreed upon by both parties - a close relationship with a powerful dynasty must have been seen as extremely beneficial by the elite in La Corona. The relationship between the Kanu'l princesses and the Kanu'l emissaries remains unknown, but the presence of portraits of the latter in the absence of paired stelae may give us a clue to the power relations at the court of La Corona. The fact that the presence of the Kanu'l princesses is not commemorated through the pattern of paired stelae could indicate differences in local styles and iconography, but also have a political significance. Marriage alliances between Kanu'l and La Corona are recorded only on Panel 6, dated to AD 731. The panel however does not follow the format of the paired stelae but shows two of the three Kanu'l princesses coming to *Sak Nikte* to marry its lords.

One of the strategies the Kanu'l used to secure an alliance with La Corona was to build strong personal ties with the rulers. At least two La Corona lords - K'inich ? Yook and Chak Ak' Paat

Kuy, were sent to the Calakmul court, probably as high-ranking hostages who pledged their loyalty to Kanu'l rulers. By the time they returned to La Corona, they were probably already indoctrinated, and their political position stemmed from their collaboration with the royal dynasty of Calakmul.

It was during the reign of Yuknoom Took' K'awill that the role of Kanu'l's women at the court of La Corona and the 200 years of relations between the two kingdoms was emphasized for the first time. In AD 731, the elite of La Corona changed the rhetoric and promoted a close relationship with its overlord by displaying two princesses of Kanu'l, wives of the kings of La Corona, and pointing to three marriage alliances. The presence of Kanu'l emissaries and the display of the latter as ballplayers were no longer enough for Calakmul to maintain political authority, as perhaps only personal ties could be relied upon. The fact that ties were not static, indisputable, or maintained a priori made them an easy target for manipulation.

The introduction of the Kanu'l princesses into La Corona's visual programme also served as a projection of Calakmul's power, the power that was decreasing. Yuknoom Took' K'awill was forced to support his claim to authority through a never-ending process of negotiation and reassessment. In AD 731 he made considerable efforts to celebrate the end of the 15 k'atun by erecting a set of seven stelae (Delvendahl 2010, Martin and Grube 2008: 112). These were propaganda works designed to make the public believe that the Snake dynasty, under the aegis of Yuknoom Took' K'awill, had overcome the political crisis and was once again a major force in the Maya Lowlands. Panel 6 commemorating the arrival of the three Kanu'l princesses in La Corona was also dedicated to this k'atun ending and it seems that the celebrations in La Corona and Calakmul were coordinated.

The shift in the balance of power began long before the reign of Yuknoom Took K'awiil. The increase in marriage alliances in the Maya Lowlands in the second half of the seventh century, inspired directly or indirectly by the Kanu'l dynasty, was related not only to Calakmul's

attempts to expand his influence, but also to efforts to strengthen existing alliances that had probably begun to weaken. Marriage alliances helped to maintain and secure cooperation between the local elite and the Late Classic kings of Calakmul. This kind of arrangement ensured the consolidation of socio-political networks, ensured continued obedience among subordinates, and also helped to consolidate borders. As Marcus has aptly noted, "the long-distance marriages did not lead to Calakmul's domination or incorporation they were intended (designed) to create allies" (Marcus 2006:212).

Of particular significance are marriages between two vassals/allies of Kanu'l where the future bride was not related by blood to Kanu'l's family. As much as these indirectly inspired interdynastic marriages brought benefits, they also required compromises. Local lords who were not married into the family of the great Kanu'l, but instead to another subordinate of Calakmul, tended to focus on achieving their own political ambitions while meeting the political needs of the kings at Calakmul. Affiliation with the Kanu'l dynasty was still emphasised in the eighth century through the erection of paired stelae, but more distant sites chose now a language of friendship rather than one of rigid hierarchy when referring to their relationship with Calakmul. In the iconographic record, this is best exemplified through ballgame panels, which not only commemorate local rulers facing their overlord (as in the case of the panel from El Peru Waka' or Zapote Bobal), but also the local elite engaged in a game with their sublords. Political power was given to the local elite through 'empowerment', which is reflected in the iconographic program of these centres. Two ballgame panels from Tipan Chen Witz, which probably show the images of the local lord and his master from Naranjo, are telling examples of this. The identification with the power of the Kanu'l and the benefits that came from this loyalty opened up opportunities for regional centres to grow and eventually become regional leaders. The presence of ball panels at Tipan Chen Witz probably attests to the site's participation in a network of loyalty with the Snake kings (Helmke et al. 2017),

although I believe it tells us more about the hegemonic relationships between Naranjo and his subordinates than about the relationship with Calakmul. Ball game figures, the important type of visual media associated with Late Classic Period Calakmul, were modified, and manipulated in the eighth century by Tipan Chen Witz, Dos Pilas, Yaxchilan, El Palmar, Tonina or Quiriqua (ninth century) to express artistic freedom. Such a narrative, in which Kanu'l no longer played the role of a dominant force, would not have been possible in the seventh century, during the height of the dynasty. An exception might be Coba, which I consider a powerful kingdom capable of wielding significant power in the Maya Lowlands during the Late Classic Period. Coba, like Naachtun, La Corona and Calakmul, displayed images of a ruler, probably a woman, standing proudly atop a captive. The kingdom adopted the themes of the paired stelae and ballgame panels of Kanu'l to assert its supremacy. The portraits of Ruler B (Ix K'awill?) on the front of the double-sided stelae were intended to emphasise her identity and legitimacy as the ruling queen, as were the images of the queens at Calakmul. The paired stelae at Coba do not necessarily indicate a marriage alliance with or arranged by the Snake head kings, rather they were examples of imitation of Kanu'l's style.

At this point it is important to note that in the eighth century the number of new marriage alliances orchestrated by the Kanu'l dynasty decreased from ten to three and was limited to La Corona, Naachtun and perhaps Oxpemul, the three major sites in Calakmul's vicinity. Calakmul was probably trying to strengthen and improve the dynasty's political position and/or secure the borders by returning to the strategy that had once proved successful. Uxul was not part of this plan. The gradual decline of architectural activities in the early eighth century was followed by the fall of the court of Uxul (Grube et al. 2012). This clearly shows how closely Uxul and Calakmul were linked, as the weakening of the hegemon had far-reaching effects on its dependency. Perhaps, after AD 695, Calakmul faced with the loss of resources, decided to

invest in those centres that represented strategic assets from the point of view of its elite. The misfortune of Uxul contrasts with the sudden flourishing of Oxpemul.

In the eighth century, after more than a 300-year gap in the dedication of monuments, Oxpemul undertook a major campaign of monument construction. This great 'period of silence' was in all likelihood related to the rise in power of Calakmul under the aegis of the Kanu'l kings. It ended in AD 731 with the erection of a few stelae in the centre. The increase in importance of Oxpemul is also emphasized through inscriptions mentioning local kings holding both the local 'stone throne', 'bat head' emblem glyph or carrying *Uxte'tuun kaloomte'*, the latter formerly reserved for the kings of Calakmul. The kings of Kanu'l are not recorded on the Oxpemul monuments. The connection to this dynasty is observed through the pattern of the three paired stelae. On the one hand, Oxpemul benefited greatly from the weakening of its overlord; on the other hand, the repetition of artistic conventions characteristic of Calakmul indicates an affiliation with this dynasty. I believe the key to understanding this discrepancy lies in the history of the Kanu'l dynasty in the eighth century. As mentioned earlier, Calakmul under the rule of Yuknoom Took' K'awil experienced a new surge in monument carving, a process that reached its peak in AD 731 (Martin and Grube 2008:112). This sudden output of standing monuments at Oxpemul coincided with the erection of seven stelae at Calakmul. In my opinion, such an occurrence was not coincidental.

The iconographic data supporting this idea is the dating of paired Stelae 14 and 16, which were most likely erected in AD 731. All Late Classic Kanu'l kings used art as a tool of rule and manipulated the way they were perceived by the public in Calakmul through the deliberate selection and display of images. But Yuknoom Took' K'awiil mastered the use of symbols and images as a political tool to perfection. By AD 731, he had commissioned at least 21 stelae in Calakmul (including three paired stelae, portraits of the king and queen as warriors) centred on the ideology of power. The erection of the first pair of stelae at Oxpemul, such a short distance

from the great city of Calakmul, must have corresponded with the large-scale construction work of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil based on propaganda images.

The incorporation of a pattern of paired stelae by Oxpemul, a small centre, definitely carried a different meaning to the same process that took place at a site further away from Calakmul. A good comparison is Coba, where there is also no epigraphic evidence of contacts with the Kanu'l dynasty. I think it would be a mistake to assume that Oxpemul adopted the style of the Kanu'l dynasty only to boost prestige and identify with its power.

In the first decades of the eighth century, Calakmul was weakened but still showed some resilience. I would suggest that the Late Classic Oxpemul regained its political strength and, due to cooperation with social units associated with Calakmul, the seventh-century subjugation expressed through the continuation of the period of silence was replaced by a relationship with the hegemon on a more equal but still hierarchical terms. The waning fortunes of Calakmul were reflected in the rise of Oxpemul. Its elite demonstrated the ability to commemorate and glorify their kings on monuments, but at the same time they showed allegiance to the snakehead kings by incorporating the paired stelae format into their iconographic program. The Kanu'l dynasty used art as a tool to secure power and granted the Oxpemul the freedom to erect monuments. These suggestions also explain the variety of strategies that the Kanu'l kings employed to spread their socio-political power through visual programmes. The absence of paired stelae in seventh century Oxpemul and their presence in Uxul carried the same meaning - political control. The cases of Uxul and Oxpemul show that the distribution of visual themes could be manipulated to achieve certain goals and gain political advantage. The available data also shows that the influence of the decision made by the local elite should not be underestimated. The eighth-century elite of Uxul accepted the new regime and benefited from it, while the lords of Oxpemul apparently rejected it. Competition between the elite of Oxpemul (as opposed to Uxul) and the elite of Calakmul must therefore have been strong.

It is difficult to discern how long this new, eighth century relationship between Oxpemul and Calakmul based on mutual benefits, lasted. The erection of paired stelae at Oxpemul continued even when Kanu'l emblem glyphs disappeared from the Calakmul inscriptions. Regardless of who ruled at Oxpemul and Calakmul after the fall of the Kanu'l dynasty, the iconographic and ideological legacy of the powerful kingdom remained. However, the presence of paired stelae in Oxpemul South (Stelae 18 and 19) and Oxpemul West (Stelae 2 and 4) was no longer evidence of the political control of the Snake kings (wherever they reappeared in the second half of the eighth century), but of the autonomous decision of the Oxpemul elite to imitate the style of Calakmul. The paired stelae at Calakmul and Oxpemul appear in connection with the Bat emblem glyph. Apparently, the iconographic tradition of the powerful snake-headed monarchs was not rejected by the Bat-kings. It seems that the Bat elite in the eighth century repeated Kanu'l's art convention of paired stelae, either because they considered themselves the rightful successors of the Calakmul traditions and/or because this pattern suited their socio-political goals. The Kanu'l strategies of cooperation, integration and domination expressed in visual programmes outlived their creators. The visual propaganda programme introduced by the Snake dynasty proved successful. As Mumary Farto noted, the references to Kanu'l in the eighth century indicate the importance that the dynasty had in the socio-political tradition of the time (Mumary Farto 2019:265). Surprisingly, the victories of Tikal in the mid-eighth century over former Kanu'l allies, for example El Peru Waka' or Naranjo, were not accompanied by the adoption or imposition of its iconographic style. The 'period of silence' that followed these victories may indicate that a rigid system of political control was established at these sites. Perhaps, similar to Oxpemul in the seventh century, the local elite rejected and resisted the new regime? But this time Tikal, not Calakmul, was the opponent. In fact, the visual representations characteristic of Kanu'l's sphere of influence were given a second life after the collapse of the dynasty.

'Spolia', the deliberate removal of monuments from their original context and their reuse in a new monument, was one of the characteristic features of the Terminal Classic Period. It was a powerful political tool to evoke the rulers of past times, to show them respect or disrespect. The production of *spolia* is embedded in and nourished by the selection process of human memory. Memories associated with a monument can be selectively reactivated and reinterpreted, and therefore retain their political power even when reconfigured. Major shifts in the arrangement of monuments indicate a change in the way political authority was legitimised. In this way, *spolia* can tell us a lot about the present and the past.

At Maya centres under the influence of Kanu'l, *spolia* is particularly evident in the ancient treatment of the ballgame panels, often found in secondary contexts. Monuments held the essence of the figures depicted (Gillespie 2008:128; Houston and Stuart 1998) and as such could be mutilated, turned upside down, but also moved to prestigious and prominent locations. Grube (personal communication 2021) emphasises that *spolia* at La Corona and Uxul related to ballgame panels was part of the same processes. The nuanced meanings associated with these phenomena have yet to be fully understood. Perhaps there were different motivations that led people at Uxul and La Corona to reposition the panels? Scholars studying Uxul see the reposition of its panels as symbolic of breaking ties with their former overlord (Grube and Delvendahl 2012), whilst researchers working at La Corona see the same event as reasserting the refoundation of the local dynasty through connections to Calakmul (Barrien-tos et al. 2016; Lamoureux-St-Hillaire 2018), furthermore, the monuments may still have the essence of the Kanu'l kings. The Terminal Classic *spolia* was definitely a complex process that requires more academic attention and further investigation. However, this must be the subject of another study. Whatever prompted the interest of the La Corona and Uxul elites in in relocating panels, they invoked the social memory of the Kanu'l dynasty. Snake head kings still evoked emotions and drew attention. To quote Oscar Wilde, "There is only one thing in the world worse than

being talked about, and that is not being talked about" (Wilde 1992:6). Kanu'l past glories and importance were still acknowledged. The image systems that Kanu'l had built to maintain and legitimise its power were reinterpreted to suit the needs of Terminal Classic society. The implications of these issues reach far beyond the hegemonic network of Calakmul, the Maya area and even ancient civilisations. Depending on the archaeological, spatial, political, or socio-cultural context, imagery has different meanings. It functions within specific spatial and temporal contexts and cannot be fully interpreted without them. Even in literate modern societies, images play a role in defining and negotiating power and social hierarchy. Manipulation based on the careful selection and representation of themes and symbols is commonplace in modern political life. The power of the image - transparent, accessible, vivid, and appealing - has not lost its importance and relevance. However, in ancient systems of power, where iconography was a medium of communication and representation, controlled mainly by the elite and where ideology was based on the glorification of the king, the transmission of a message through art had a stronger impact on society. It involved influence, integration, alliance, domination, and political control. All these strategies are reflected in the iconographic programmes of La Corona, Uxul, Naachtun and Oxpemul. However, power is never static, but a dynamic process in which interests are negotiated. The degree of integration of Late Classic Calakmul even within its political sphere was different in each place. The spatial and temporal variability in the pattern of paired stelae and ballgame motifs throughout the Maya Lowlands perfectly mirrors the complex nature of the relationship between art and power.

MAPS
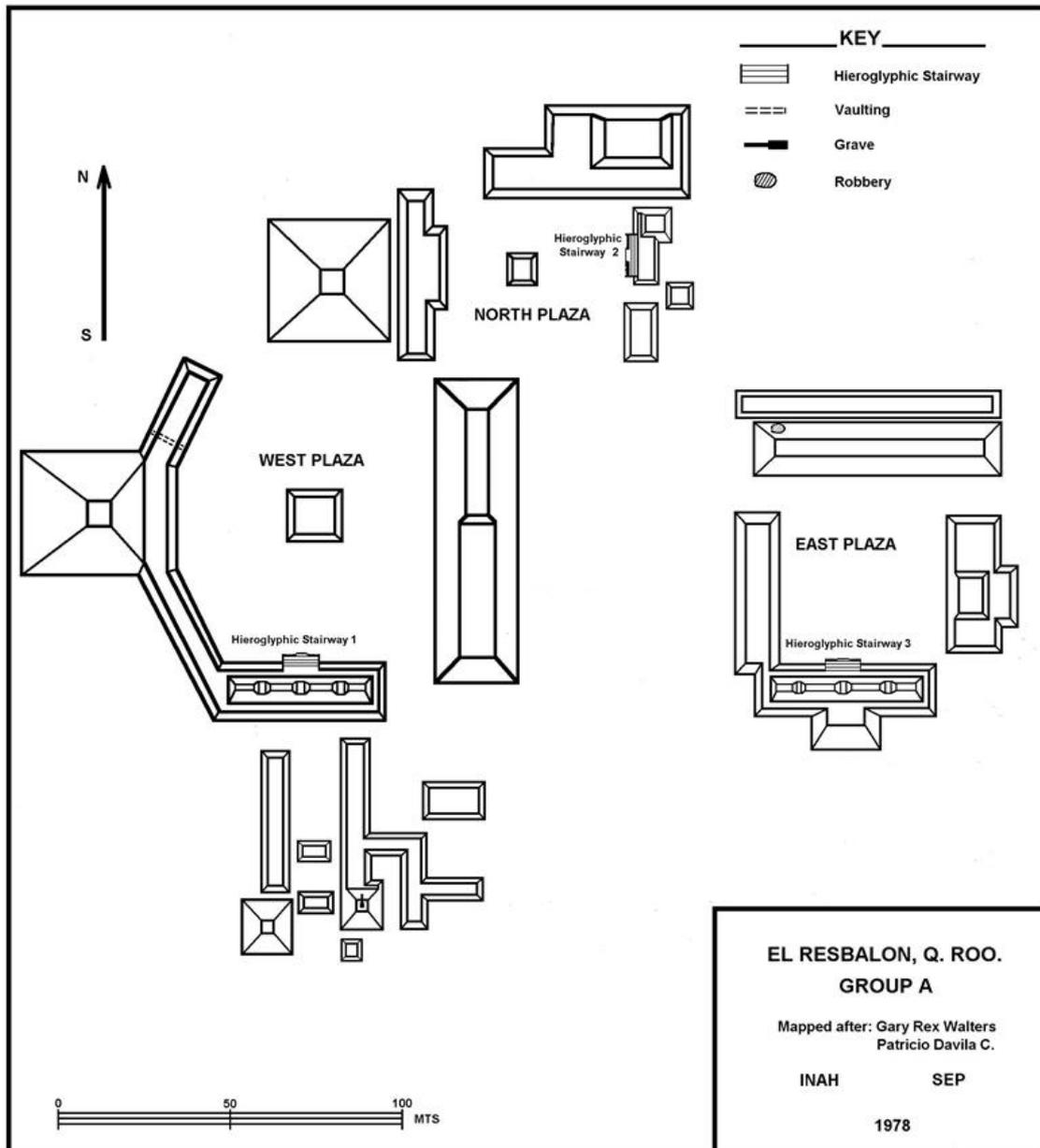
Map 1. El Resbalon. Mapped by Gary Rex Walters and Patricio Davila C.

Map 2. Calakmul (updated by Proyecto Arqueologico Calakmul after Ruppert and Denison 1943).

aguada

cantera

Conj. Ch'ik Naahb'

a Grupo Noreste

Gran Acrópolis

Grupo Chan Ch'i'ch

cantera

XX

XIII

Plaza del Jaguar

aguada

VII

XVI

VI

IV

a Grupo Suroeste

Plaza Central

V

III

Pequeña Acrópolis

II

N

CALAKMUL, Campeche

LATITUDE 18°05'
LONGITUDE 89°40'

I

0 10   100   200
scale in meters
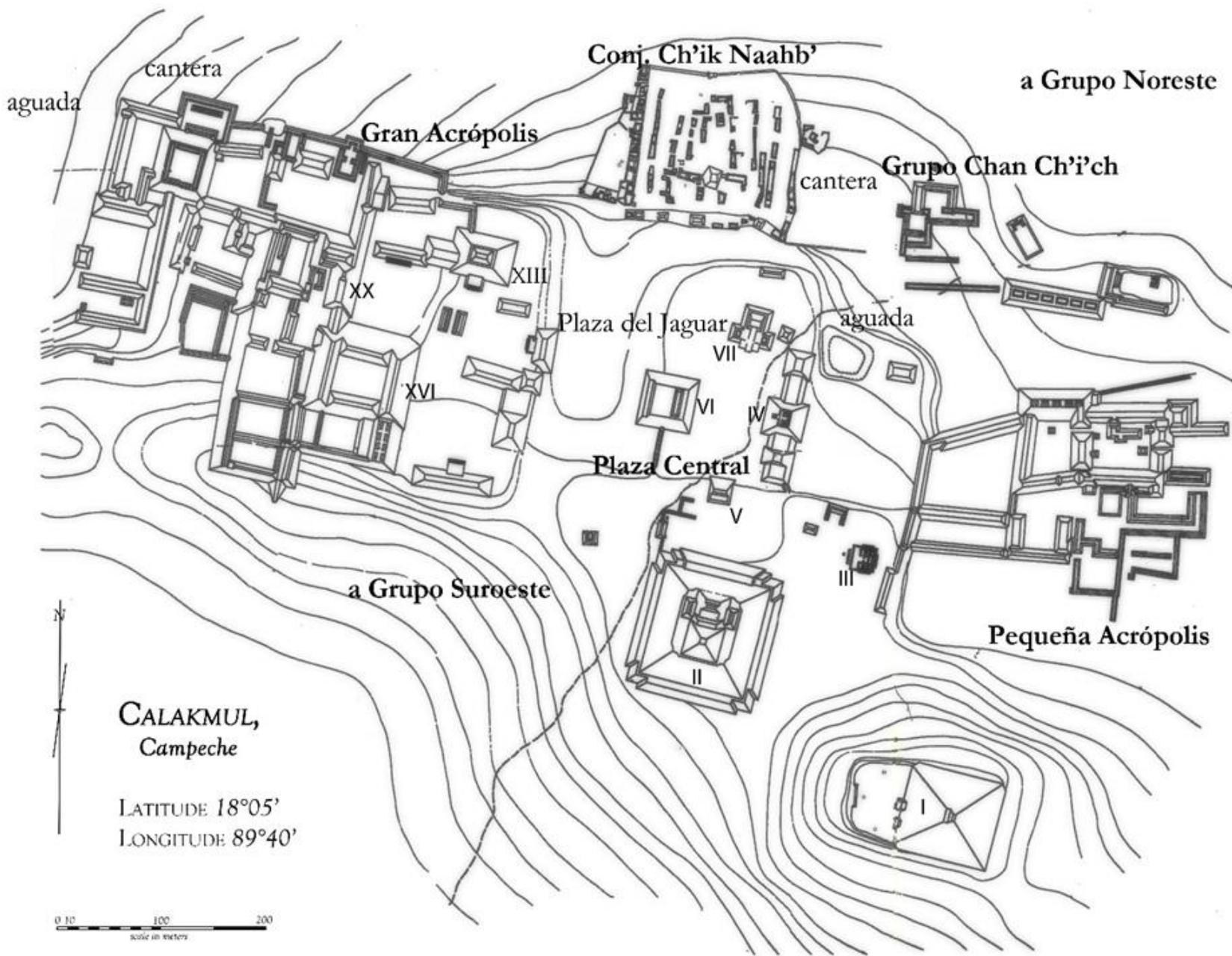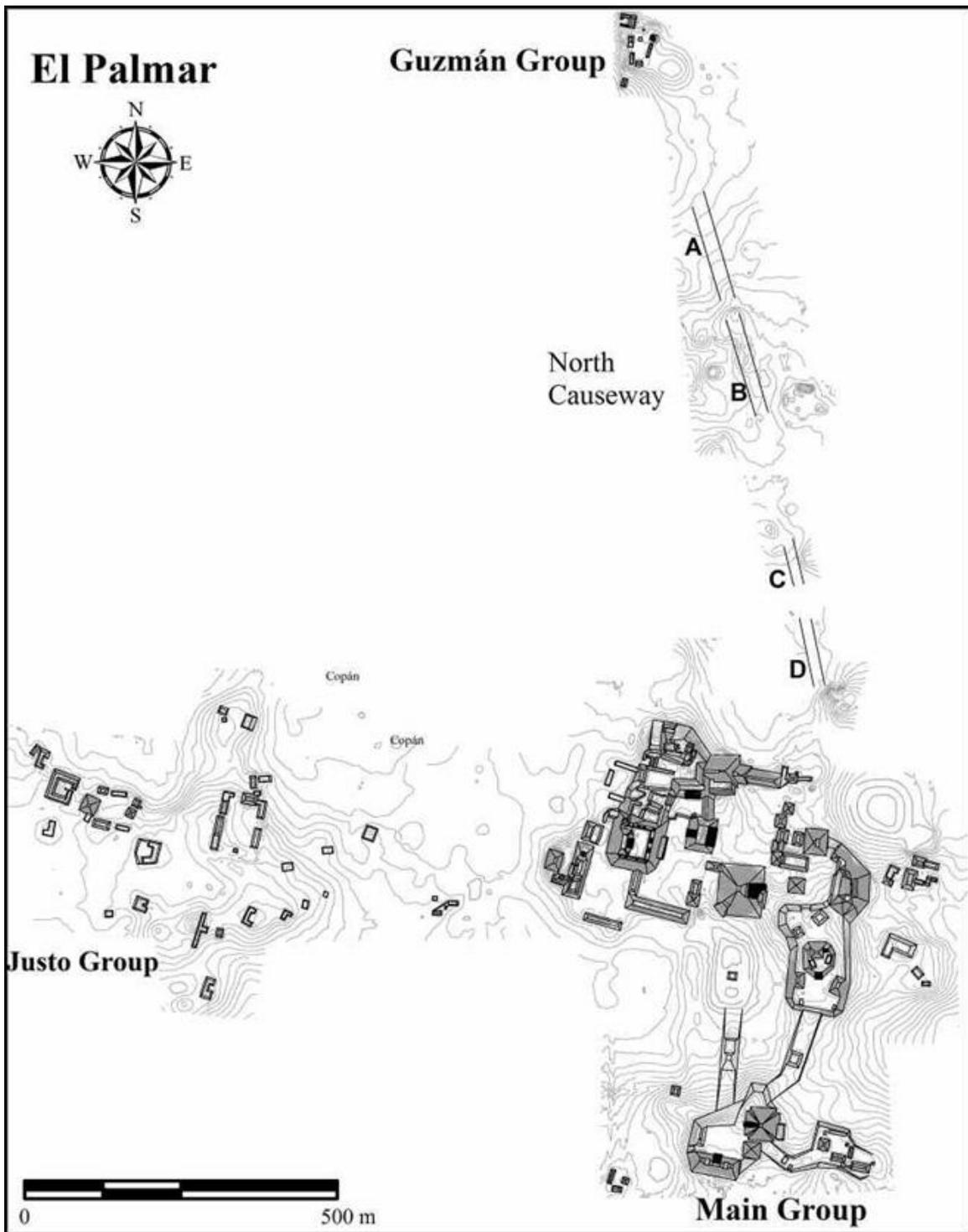
Map 3. El Palmar. Mapped by Kenichiro Tsukamoto and Javier López Camacho.
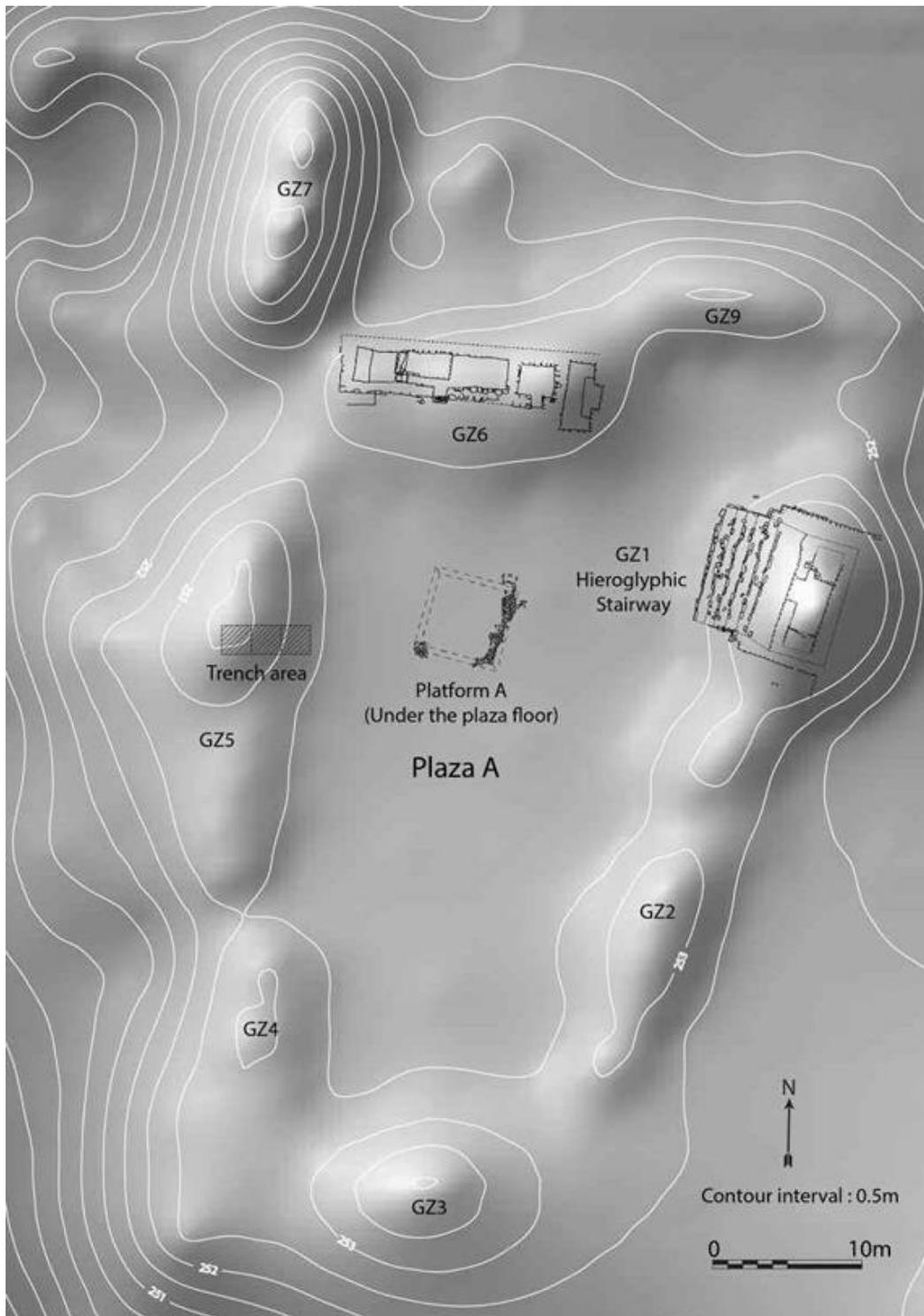
**Map 4.** Guzman Group, El Palmar. Mapped by Kenichiro Tsukamoto.
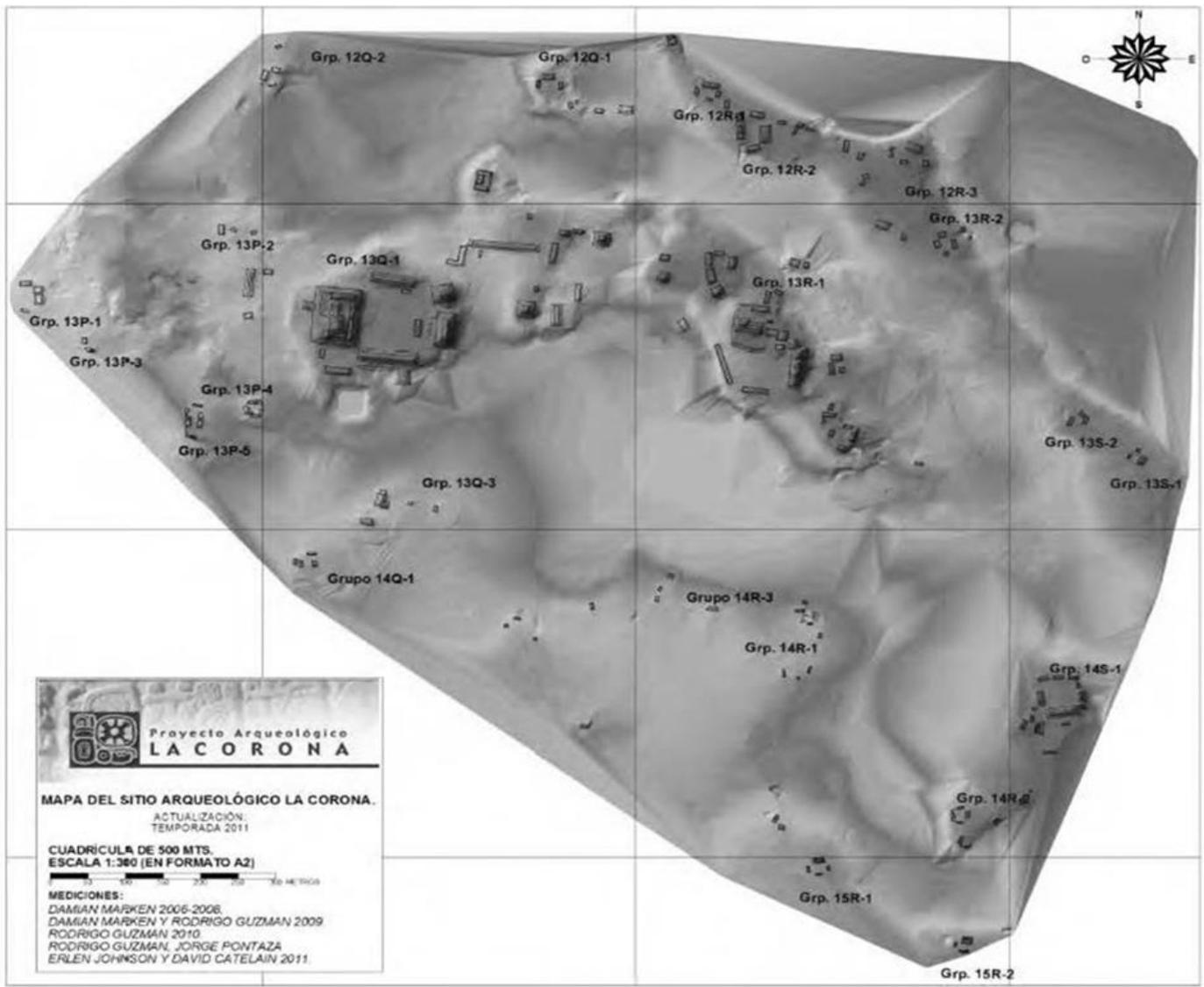
Map 5. La Corona (after Barrientos *et al.* 2015 © PRALC).
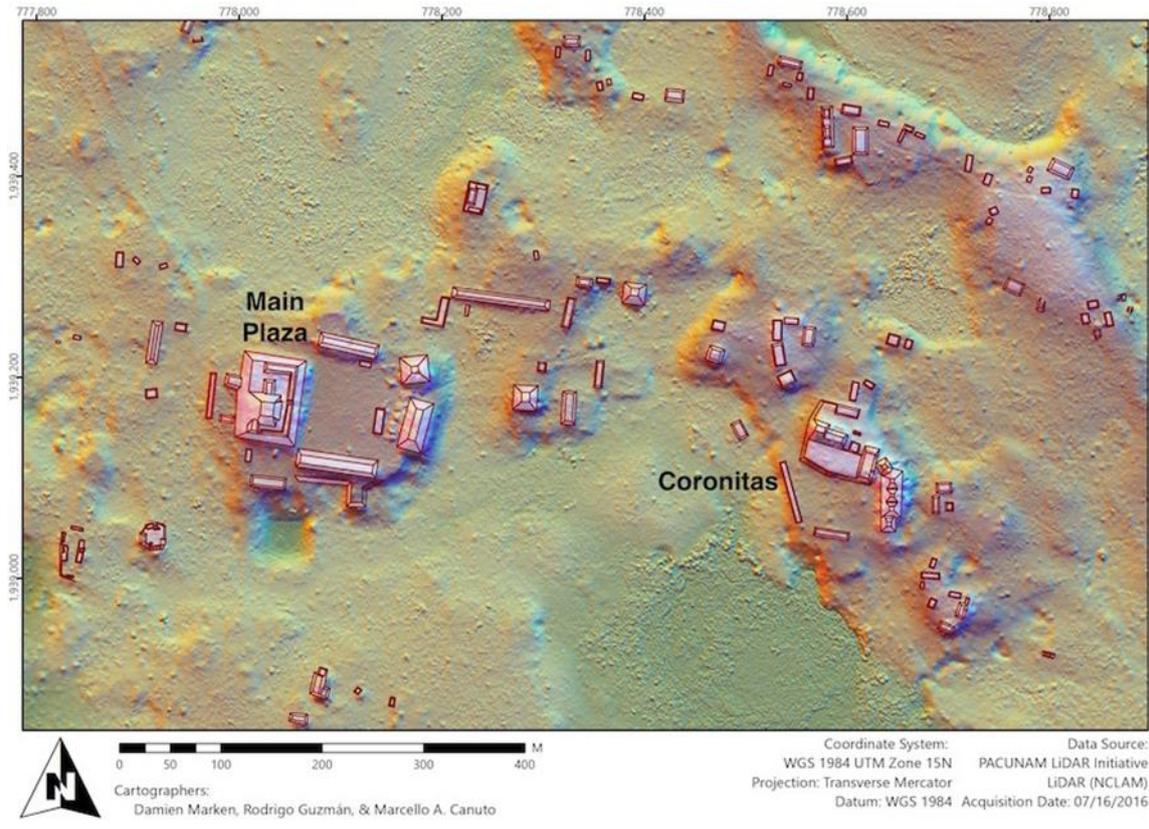
**Map 6.** Main Group and the Coronitas Group, La Corona (after Lamoureux St-Hillaire 2019: Fig.4.2).
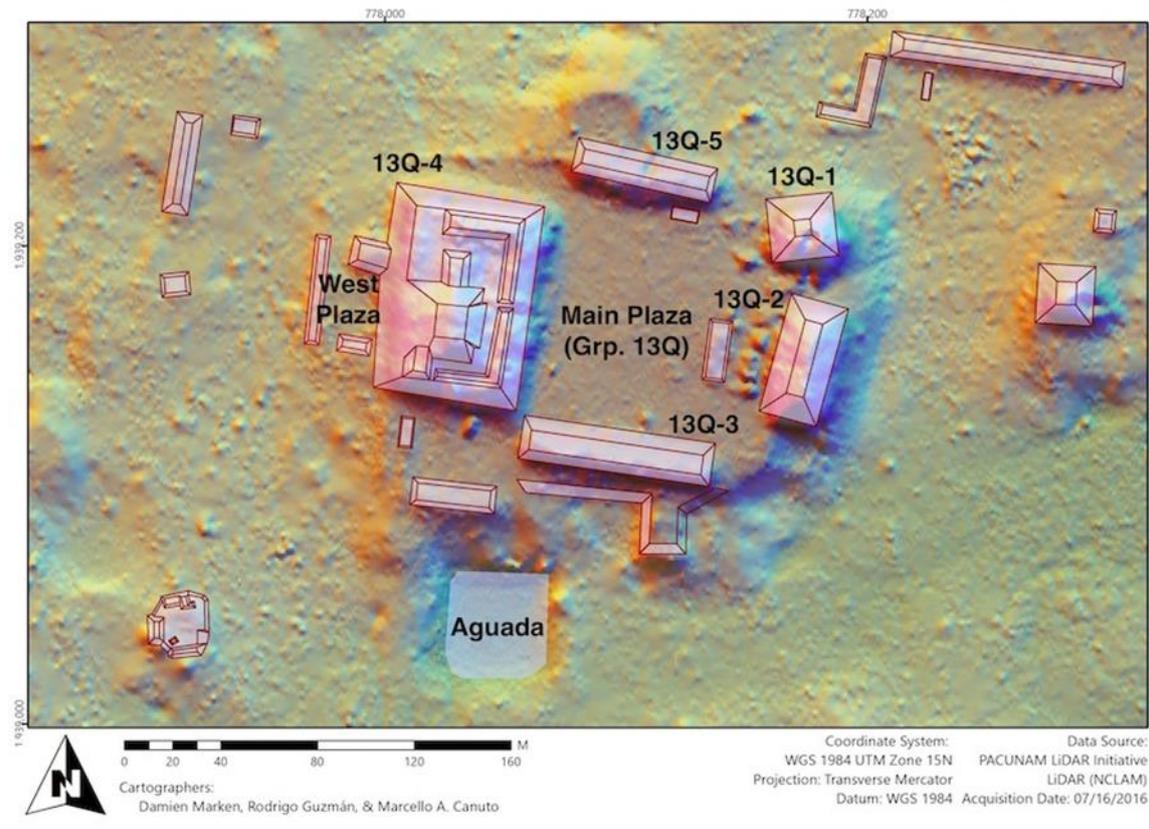

**Map 7.** Main Group, La Corona (after Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2019: Fig.4.5).
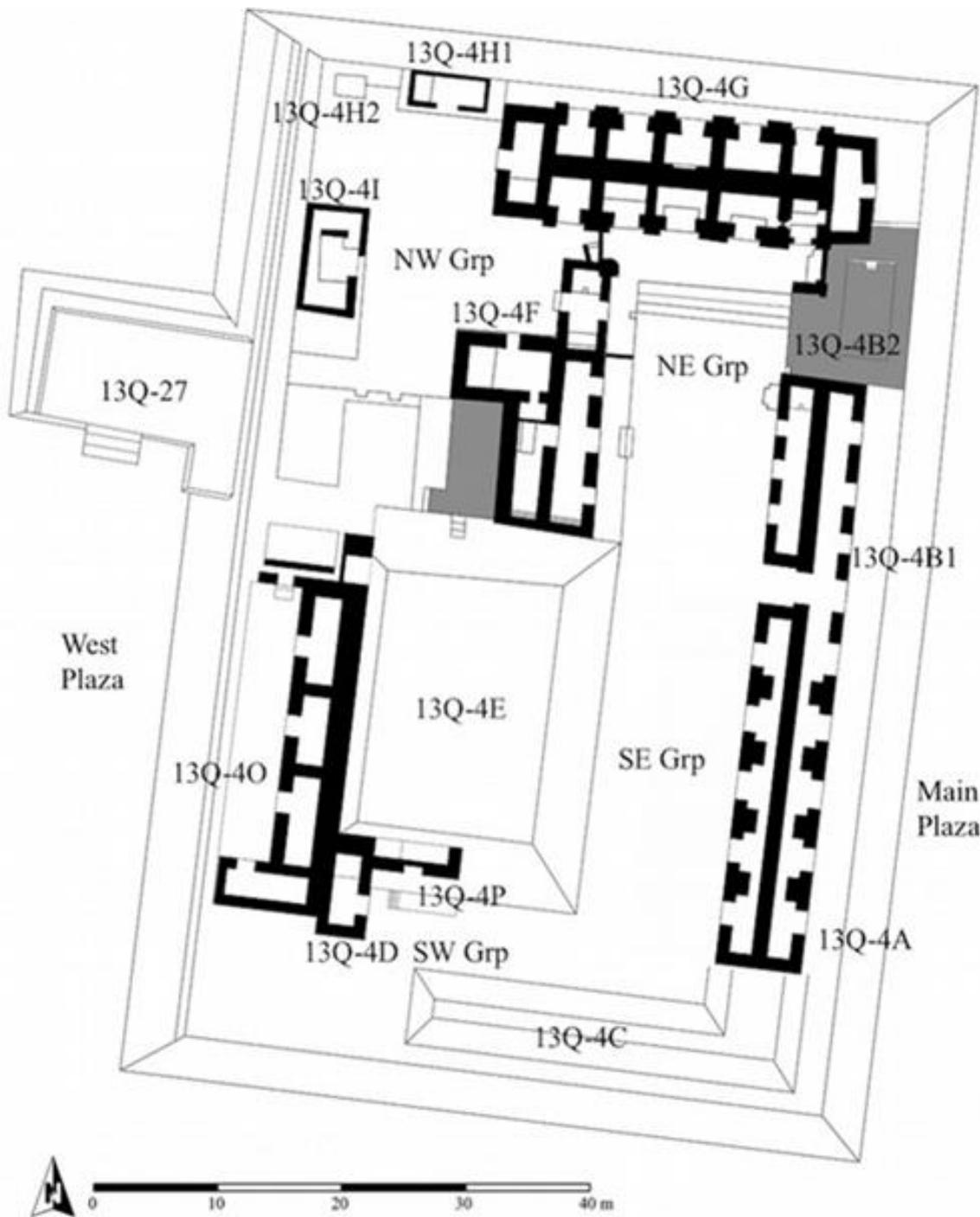
Map 8. Palace complex, La Corona (after Lamoureux St-Hillaire 2019: Fig.4.6).
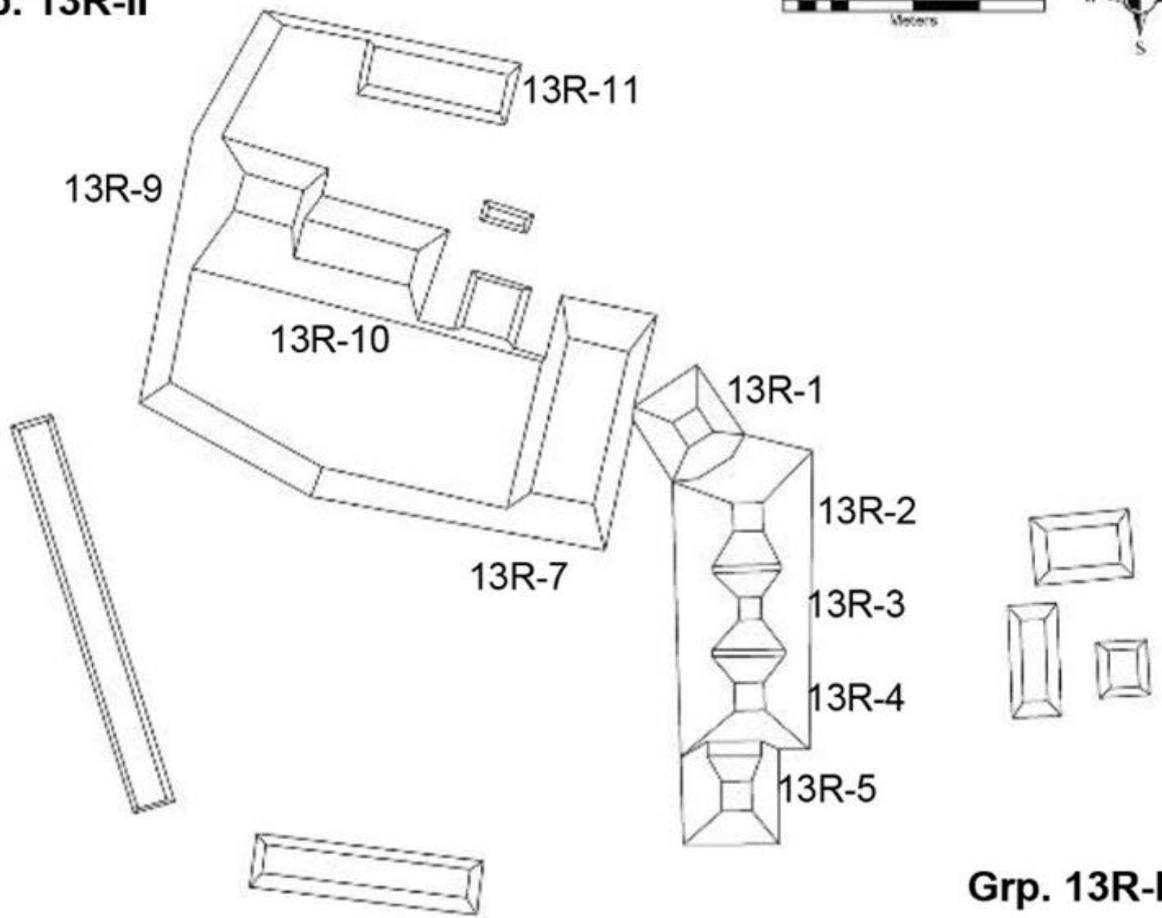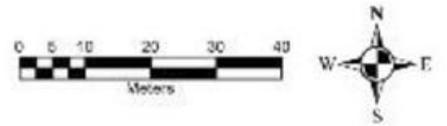
Map 9. The Coronitas Group, La Corona (map by Canuto from Barrientos *et al.* 2015: 12).
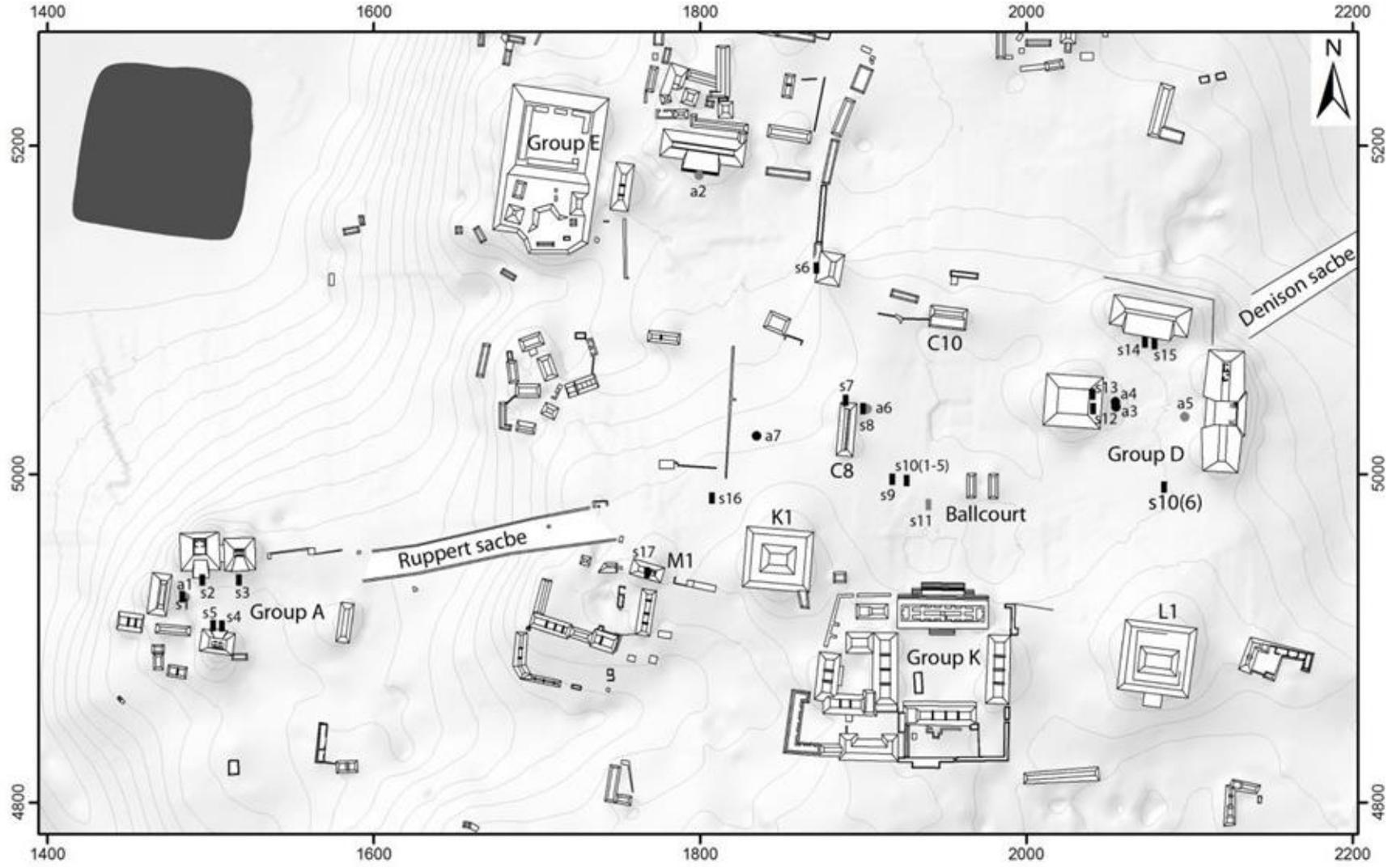
Map 10. Area central Uxul, (mapped by Beniamino Volta, ©PAU, Grube *et al.* 2013).
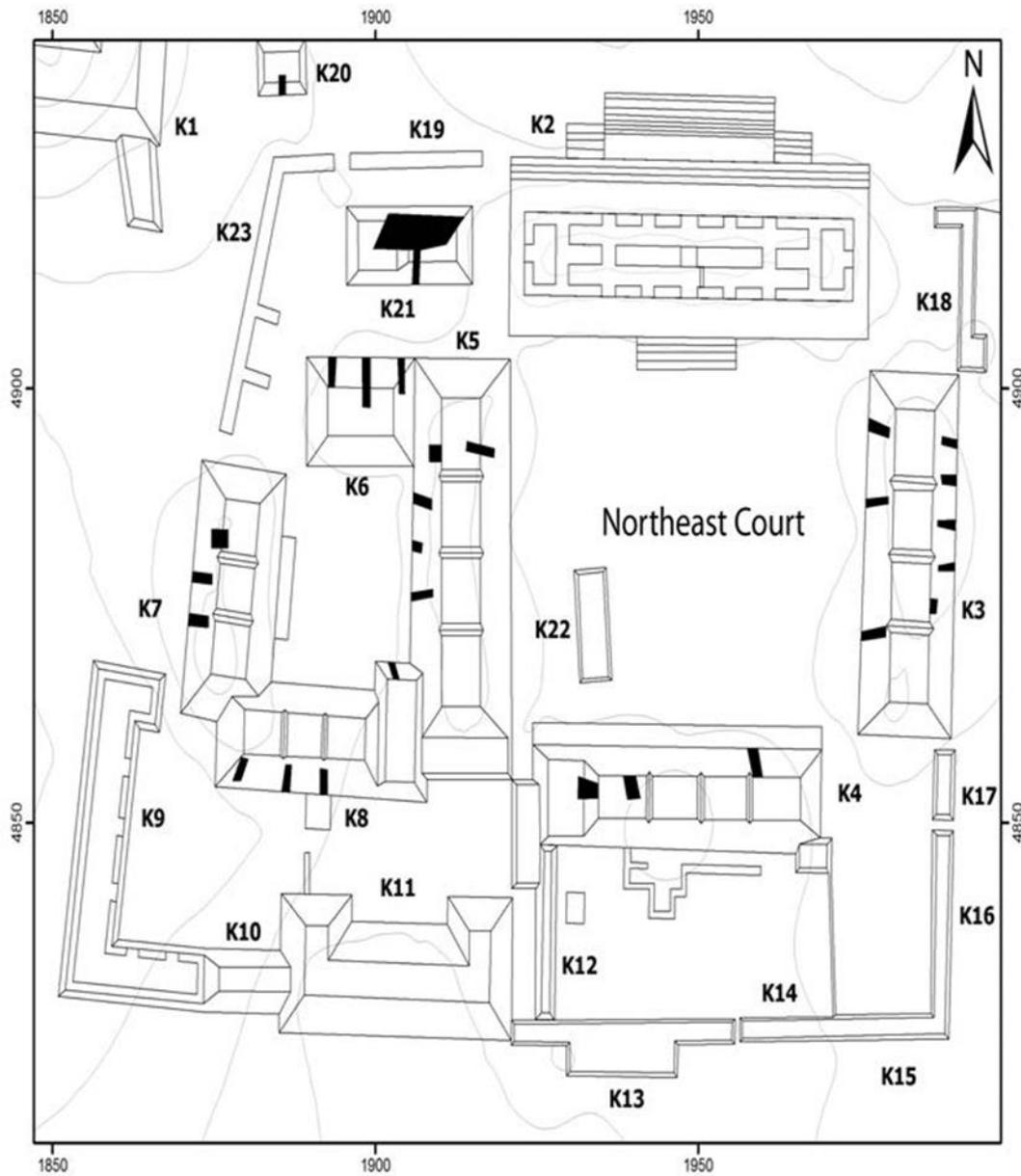
Map 11. Palace complex (after Grube *et al.* 2012 Fig.9).

Map 12. Naachtun (after Aredondo Leiva 2010:101).

Map 13. Group A and Group B, Naachtun © PAN (after Informe Naachtun 2011).
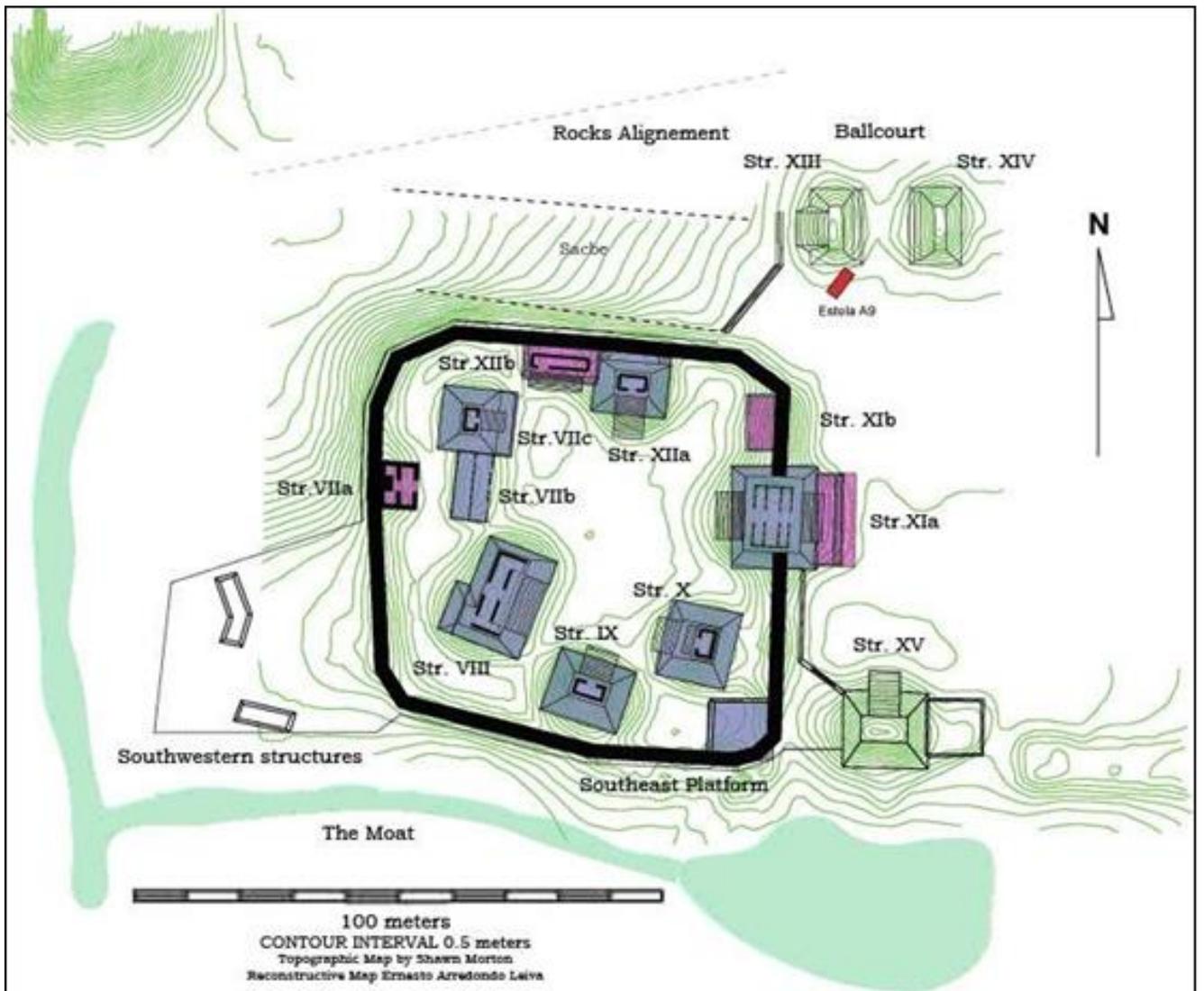
Map 14. Walled compound (after Arredondo Leiva 2010: Fig.V-1).
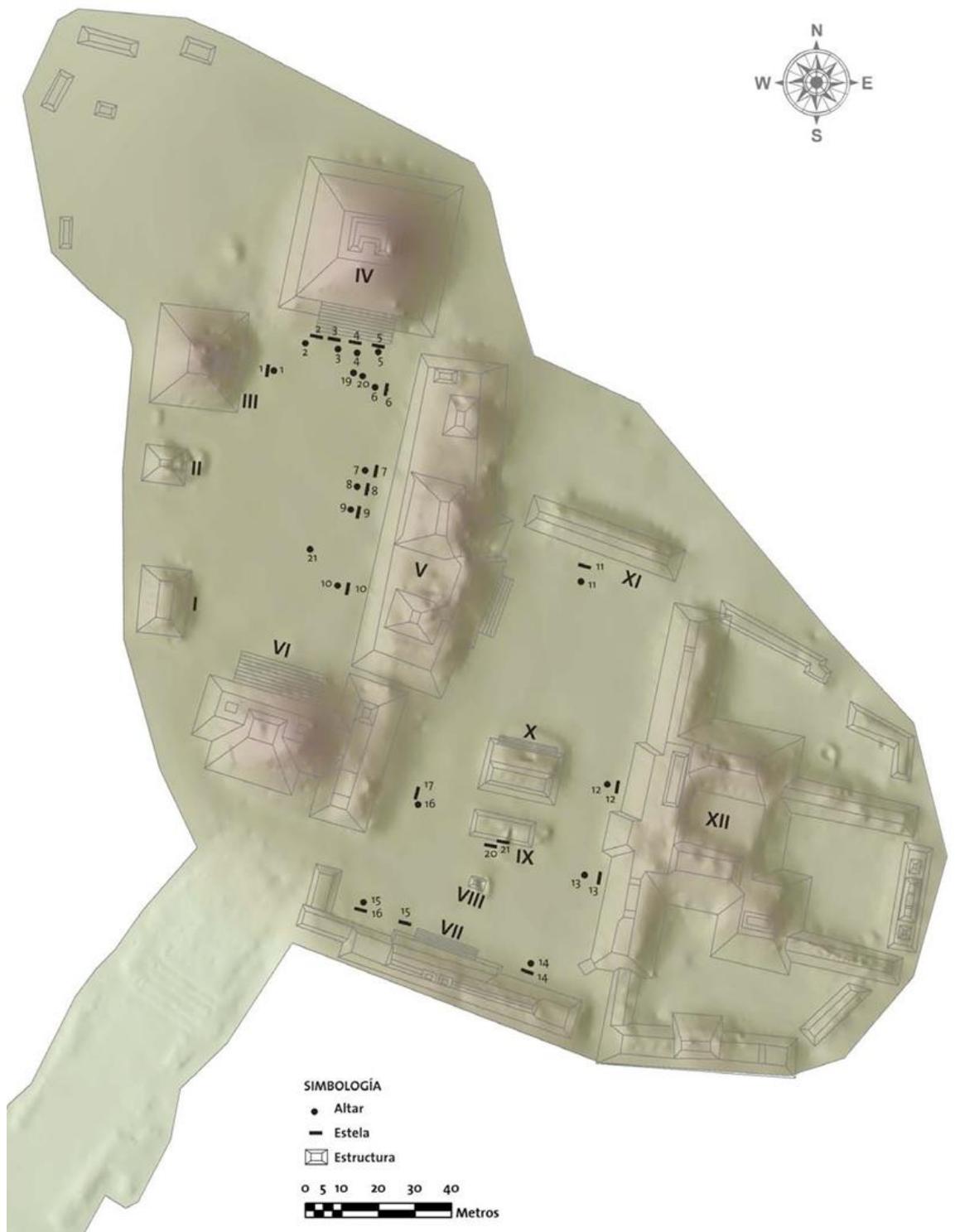
Map 15. Location of stelae and altars at Oxpemul Mapped by Jose Paredes, Irene Pastrana, Raymundo González Heredia, Ciriaco Requena Sandoval, and William J. Folan.

418

Map 16. Location of stelae at Oxpemul South. Mapped by Jose Paredes, Irene Pastrana, Raymundo González Heredia, Ciriaco Requena Sandoval, and William J.Folan.
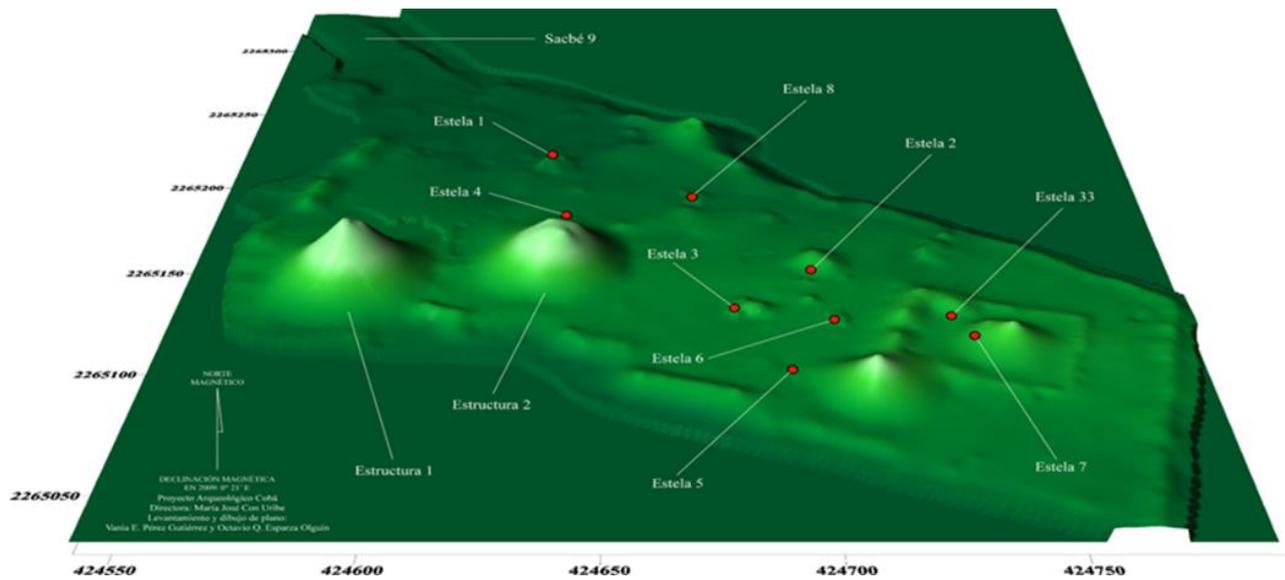
Map 17. Location of Monuments at Group A, Coba. Mapped by Vania E. Pérez Gutiérrez and Octavio Q. Esparza Olguín).
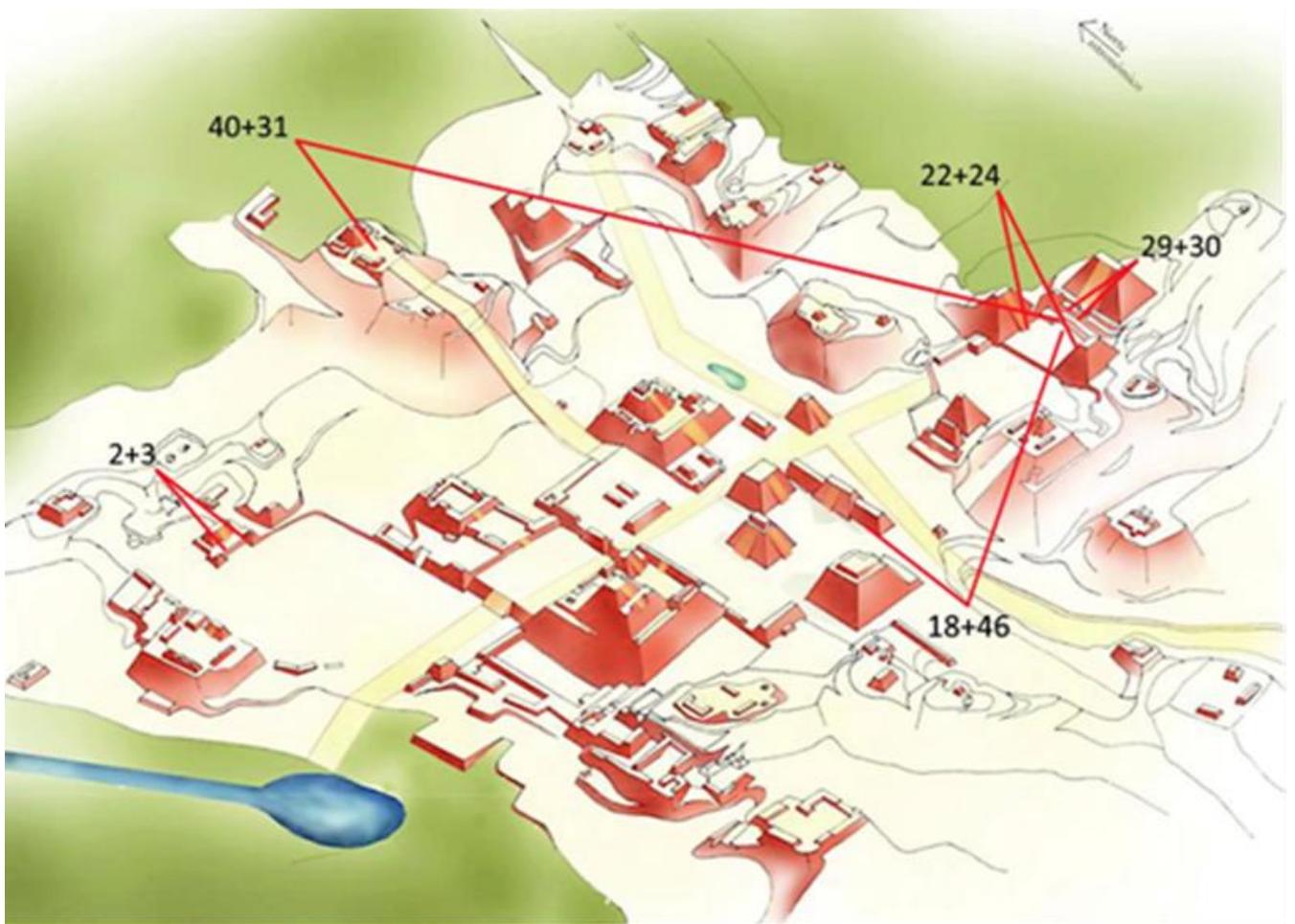
Map 18. Location of paired stelae at Naranjo (after Helmke 2017: Fig. 9).
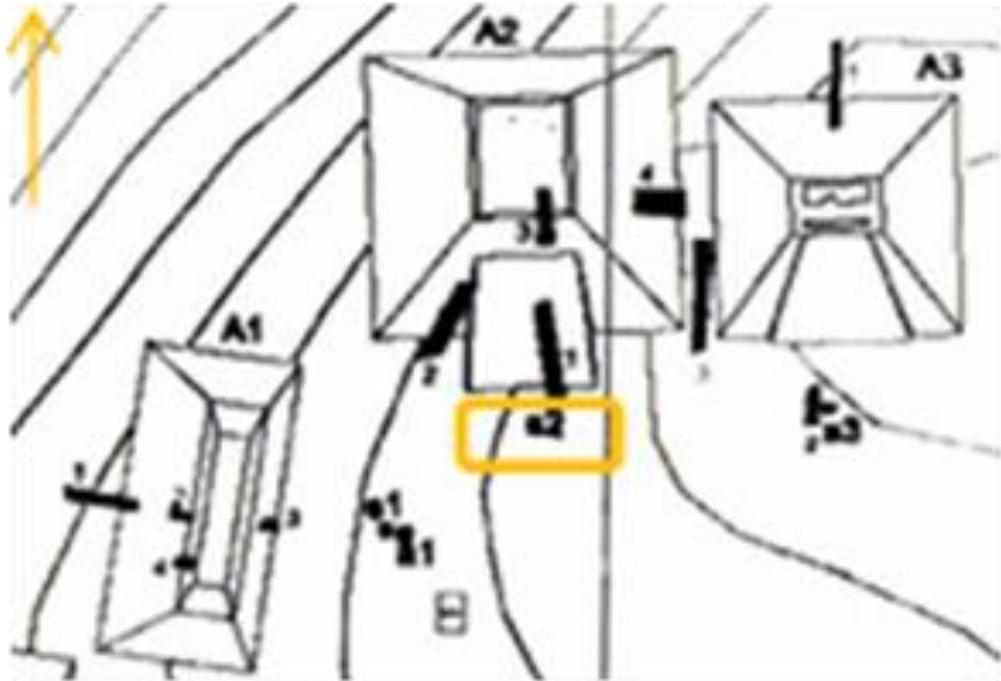
Map 19. Location of Stela 2 (top) and Stela 3 (down) ©PAU (after *Informe* Uxul 2011).

Map 20. Location of Stela 12 (ltop) and Stela 13 (down) ©PAU (after *Informe* Uxul 2011).

TABLES

SITE	DATE (AD)	STELA	FEMALE NAME	STELA	MALE NAME	ARCH. CONTEXT
Zapote	439	5b	?	5a	?	Central Plaza
Tulum	564	1b	?	1a	?	Temple of Initial Series
Champerico	613	2	?	Museum in Baluarte de la Soledad, Campeche	Ajaw Chahk	Structure 2
Calakmul	623	28	Ix?	29	Tajoom Uk'ab K'ahk'?	Str. V, Central Plaza
Uxul	633	2	Ix Yajaw K'ahk'	3	K'uhul Ajaw from "Bat" kingdom	Group A, Structure A2&A3
Calakmul	633	76	?	78	Yuknoom "Head"	Structure XV
Calakmul	662	9b	?	9a	Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'	Structure IV Central Plaza
Uxul	662	12	?	13	Muyal Chaak	Group D
Coba	662	5 (back)	?	5 (front)	?	Group A

Altar de Sacrificios	662	1	?	2 or 3	?	Structure A-II
La Corona	662	Element 19	Ix Chak Tok Chahk	Element 19	Chakaw Nahb Chan	
Calakmul	672	79	Wife of Yuknoom Ch'een II	75 or 77	Yuknoom Ch'een II	Structure XV
El Peru-Waka'	672	11	Ix "K'abel"	12	K'inich Bahlam II	M12-35
El Peru-Waka'	682	18	Ix "K'abel"	20	K'inich Bahlam II	Plaza 1
El Peru-Waka'	7th	6	?	7 or 8	?	M13-1
El Peru-Waka'	692	34	Ix "K'abel"	33	K'inich Bahlam II	M12-35
Piedras Negras	697	2 (back)	Ix Winakhaab Ajaw	2 (front)	K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II	Structure J-1
Calakmul	702	23	?	24	Yuknoom Took' K'awiil	Structure VI, Central Plaza
Naranjo	702	24	Ix Wak Chan Ajaw	22	K'ah'k Tiliw Chan Chahk	C7/C-6
Piedras Negras	706	1	Ix Winakhaab Ajaw	1	K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II	Structure J-4

Piedras Negras	711	3 (back)	Ix Winakhaab Ajaw	3 (front)	K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II	
Naranjo	713	3	Ix Wak Chan Ajaw	2	K'ah'k Tiliw Chan Chahk	Group A
Naranjo	714	29	Ix Wak Chan Ajaw	30	K'ah'k Tiliw Chan Chahk	Group C
Calakmul	731	54	?	52	Yuknoom Took' Kawiil	Structure 1
El Peru Waka'	736	31(front)	?	31 (front)	B'ahlam Tzam?	Plaza 1
Naachtun	Late Classic Period	18	Ix?	19	?	Structure XXXVIII
Oxpemul	Late Classic Period	16	Ix?	14	?	Structure VII
Calakmul	751	88	?	62	Great Serpent	Stela 88- National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City, Stela 62- Structure XIII
	755	18		19		South Group,

Site	Date	Stela	Name	Stela	Name	Location
Oxpemul		426				Structure XIII
Pechal	Late Classic	1b	?	1a	?	Structure VII
Pomona	Second half of the eighth cen.	Door Jamb 2 (Element 30)	Ix K'an Balun	Door Jamb 1 (Element 31)	Kuch Bahlam	Building 4
Calakmul	771	57	?	58	Bolon K'awiil	Structure XIII
Oxpemul	771	2	Ch'an K'inich	4	Chan K'inich	Structure IV
Cancuen	790	1 (back)	?	1 (front)	Tajal Chan Ahk	Structure LS-2, North Plaza
El Peru-Waka'	790	32	Ix Pakal	32	3 "K'atun" Ajaw	Plaza 1
El Peru-Waka'	First half of ninth cen.	37 (back)	?	37 (front)	?	Plaza 4

TABLE 1. Paired Stela

SITE	DATE	MONUMENTS	STRUCTURE	Associated to
Dzibanche	c.573	Monument 19	Building of the Captives	Yax Yopaat
Uxul	642	Altar 2	Structure F1	?
Uxul	652-705	Panel 1	K2 Northern Stairway	*Och k'in kaloomte*
Uxul	652 - 705	Panel 1	K2 Southern Stairway	*Och k'in kaloomte*
Uxul	652 - 705	Panel 2	K2 Southern Stairway	Yuknoom Ch'een II?
Uxul	695	Panel 4	K2 Southern Stairway	*Och k'in kaloomte*
El Peru Waka	Reign of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' (686-687)	HS 2, Structure L11-38	HS2, Structure L11-38	Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk,' K'inich Bahlam II
La Corona	706	Element 13 (Site Q Ballgame Panel 1)	-	Chak Ak' Paat Kuy and *uti'huun kaloomte* of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil
La Corona	Late Classic	Panel 2-6	Looted, perhaps part of Structure 13Q-1	Kanu'l's emissaries
Coba	Late Classic	Panel 1	Structure 33, Group D	?
Coba	Late Classic	Panel 2	Sacbe 1	?

Calakmul	700 (retrospective)	Element 39	Structure XIII	Yuknoom Ch'een II
Mucaanah	Late Classic	Relief 1&2	South Complex ballcourt	?
Laguna Perdida	Late Classic	Ballgame Panel	Found in chiclero camp	?
Tipan Chen Uitz	c.716	Monument 4	Structure A-1 (secondary context)	Janaab Uti' Chanal K'ahk'
Tipan Chen Uitz	c.716	Monument 3	Structure A1 (secondary context)	Water Scroll Ocelot?
Dos Pilas	724	HS 1 Steps	HS 1	Itzamnaaj K'awill?
El Palmar	726	HS 2 Step	HS Guzman Group	Yuknoom Took' K'awiil?, Aj Pach' Waal?, Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil?
Tonina	727	Monument 171-	Acropolis	K'ihnich Yihch'aak? Chapaht, Yuknoom Took K'awiil
Zapote Bobal	736 – 744	Panel	Private collection	Wamaaw K'awiil, Janaab Ti' O,
Yaxchilan	c.751	HS 2, Steps	Structure 33	Yaxuun Bahlam IV, „Itzamnaaj" Bahlam III, Yaxuun Bahlam III
Quirigua	808	Group E Structure 1B-14	Bench	K'ahk' Jolow Chan Yopaat

TABLE 2. Ballgame panels

SITE	DATE	Monument	Associated with	Arch. context
El Zapote	439	Stela 5	Ix "Kinich"	Main Plaza
Yaxha	The Early Classic Period	Stela 7	?	?
Tikal	468	Stela 40	Ix Ayiin	Temple 5D-29, North Acropolis
Tres Islas	475	Stela 2	?	
Tikal	517	Stela 25	Ix K'ak'	Structure 7F-86
Tulum	564	Stela 1	?	Temple of Initial Series
Yomop	Classic Period	?	Ok Ayiin	?
Palenque	c.654[221]	Oval Panel	Ix Sak K'uk	House E, Palace
Calakmul	623	Stela 28	?	Structure V, Central Plaza
Uxul	633	Stela 2	Ix Yayaw K'ahk	Group A, Structure A2&A3
Petén region	Late Classic	Altar	?	?
La Corona	662	Element 19	Ix Chak Tok Chahk	Looted, known also as Site Q Panel 3
Altar de Sacrificios	662	Stela 1	?	Structure A-II

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[221] The date when House E was completed (Martin and Grube 2008:163).

Calakmul	672	Stela 9	?	Structure IV , Central Plaza
Naranjo	672	Stela 37	Ix K'abel	Near the edge of plaza defined by Structures A-19, A-15 and the West Acropolis
Itzimte	677	Stela 6	?	Structure 1, Plaza F
El-Peru Waka'	682	Stela 18	Ix K'abel	Plaza 1
El-Peru Waka'	692	Stela 34	Ix K'abel	M12-35
Naranjo	697	Stela 3	Ix Wak Chan	Structure A-15
Palenque	c. Late 7th century	Panel D	Ix Tz'akbu Ajaw or Ix Sak K'uk	Palace complex, House D
Naachtun	Between 623 and 702	Stela 27	?	Structure XI, Walled Compound
Naranjo	702	Stela 24	Ix Wak Chan	Structure C-7
Palenque	(684-702)[222]	Pilar C	Ix Tz'akbu Ajaw	Temple of Inscriptions
Zapote Bobal	The Late Classic Period	S7L928	?	?
Zapote Bobal	The Late Classic Period	2 (fragment)	?	El Cementerio

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[222] Pilar commissioned by K'inich Kan Bahlam II (684-702)

Stela from Chicago Art. Institute	702	Stela	Ix Kaan	Chicago Art Insititute
Calakmul	702	Stela 23	?	Structure VI, Central Plaza
Palenque	c.710	Panel	Ix Tz'akbu Ajaw	Temple XIV Panel
Xupa	Late Classic Period	Panel 1	?	?
Naranjo	714	Stela 29	Ix Wak Chan	Structure C-9
Palenque	c. 720	Palace Panel	Ix Tz'akbu ajaw	Palace Panel
Naranjo	721	Stela 31	Ix Wak Chan	Structure C-9
Palenque	c.721	Panel	Ix Kinuuw Mat	Bodega de Palenque No.169
La Corona	731	Stela 6	Ix Ti Kanu'l	?
Calakmul	731	Stela 54?[223]	?	Structure 1
Naachtun	700 – 750	Stela 18	?	Structure XXXVIII
Oxpemul	Late Classic	Stela 16	?	Structure VII
Calakmul	751	Stela 88	?	Structure XIII
El Chorro	c.751	Stela D?	?	
Pomona	Second half of	Door Jamb 2 (Element 30)	Ix K'an Balun?	Building 4

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[223] The dress of a queen is highly eroded.

SITE	DATE	STELA	WOMAN	Archaeological context
Pomona	the eighth cen.			
Pomona	Second half of the eighth cen.	Door Jamb 3	Ix K'an Balun	Dallas Museum of Art
Stela San Francisco	761	Stela	Ix Mutul	San Francisco de Young Museum
Cancuen	790	1(back)	?	Structure LS-2, North Plaza
Private Collection	889	Stela	?	Private Collection

TABLE 3. Women's net costume

SITE	DATE	STELA	WOMAN	Archaeological context
Calakmul	623	28	Wife of Tajoom Uk'ab K'ahk?	Structure V , Central Plaza
Coba	642	2	Ruler B (Ix K'awill)	Group A , Structure VII
Coba	652	4	Ruler B (Ix K'awill?)	Group A Structure II
Coba	662	5	Ruler B(Ix K'awill)?	Group A Structure III

Calakmul	672	9	Wife of Yuknoom Ch'een ll	Structure IV
Coba	682	1	Ruler B (Ix K'awiil)	Group A Structure 9
Calakmul	692	116	Wife of Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'	Structure II
Calakmul	702	23	Wife of Yuknoom Took'K'awiil	Structure VI Central Plaza
Naranjo	702	24	Ix Wak Chan	Structure C-7
Naranjo	714	29	Ix Wak Chan	Structure C-9
Naachtun	700-750	18	?	Structure XI Walled compound
Calakmul	751	88	?	Structure XIII Great Acropolis

TABLE 4. Woman standing on a captive

CATALOGUE

Paired Stelae
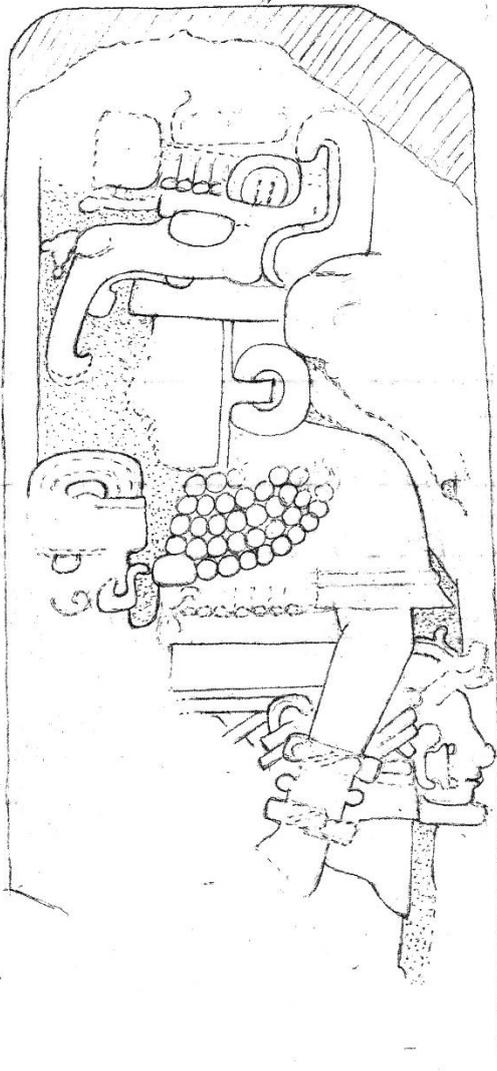
Figure 1. Stela 5 (front) El Zapote. Drawing by Ian Graham.

Figure 2. Stela 5 (back), El Zapote. Drawing by Ian Graham.

435
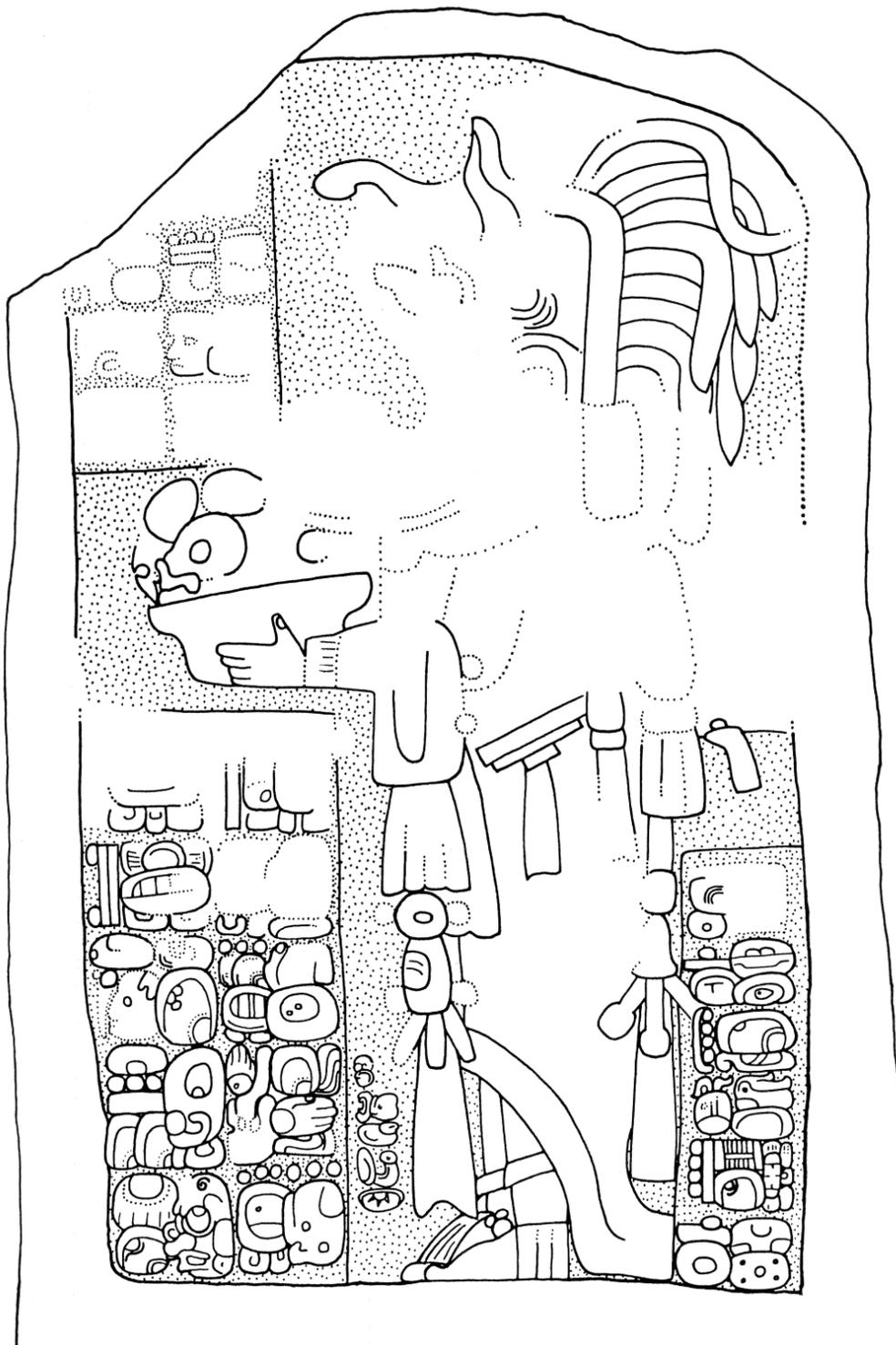
Figure 3. Stela from Museum Baluarte de Soledad, Campeche, Mexico (after Mayer 1995: Plate 111).

**Figure 4.** Stela 2, Champerico. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

437
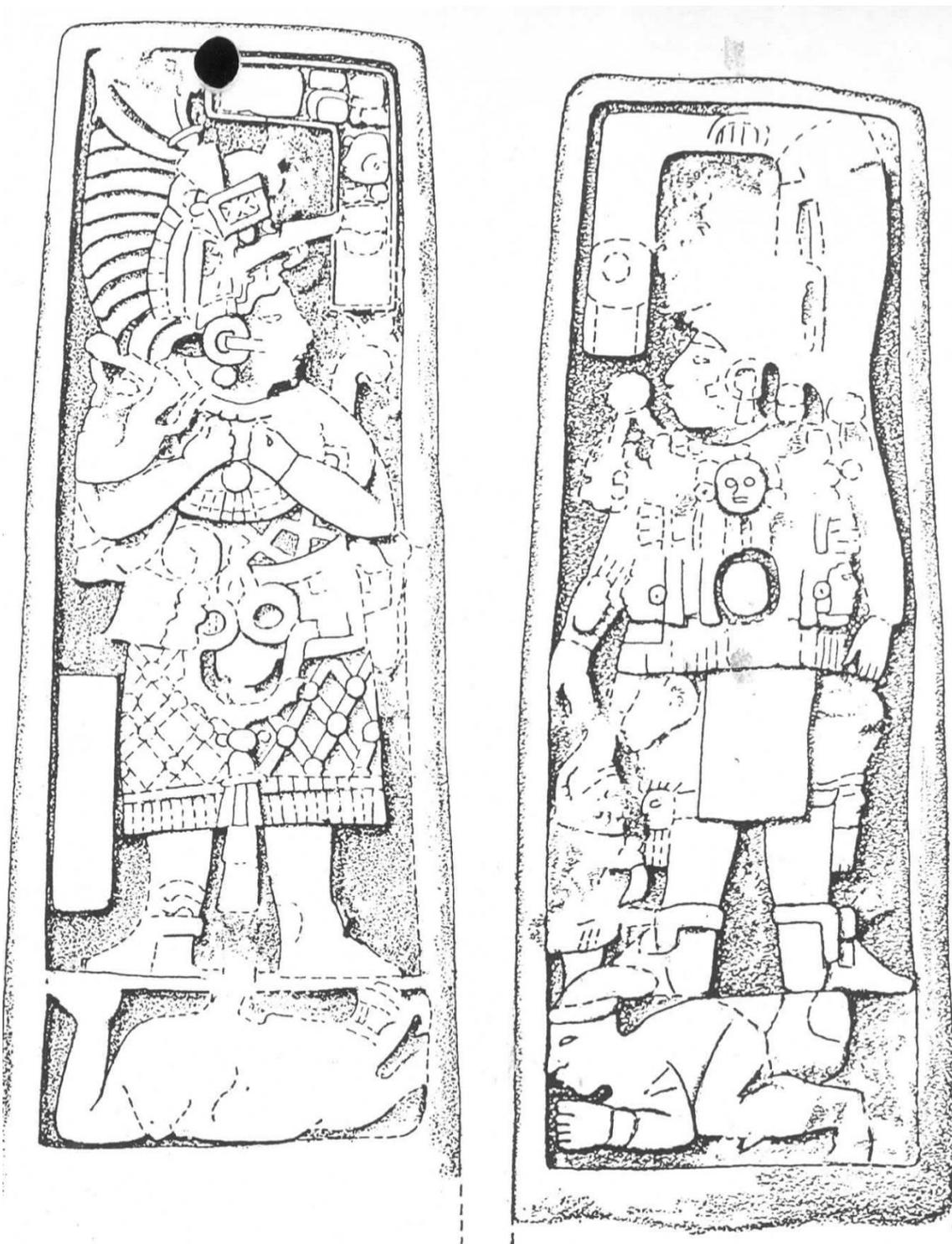
Figure 5. Stela 28 and 29, Calakmul (after Ruppert and Denison 1943: Plate 49)

438

Figure 6. Stela 9 (front), Calakmul. Photo by Harri Kettunen.
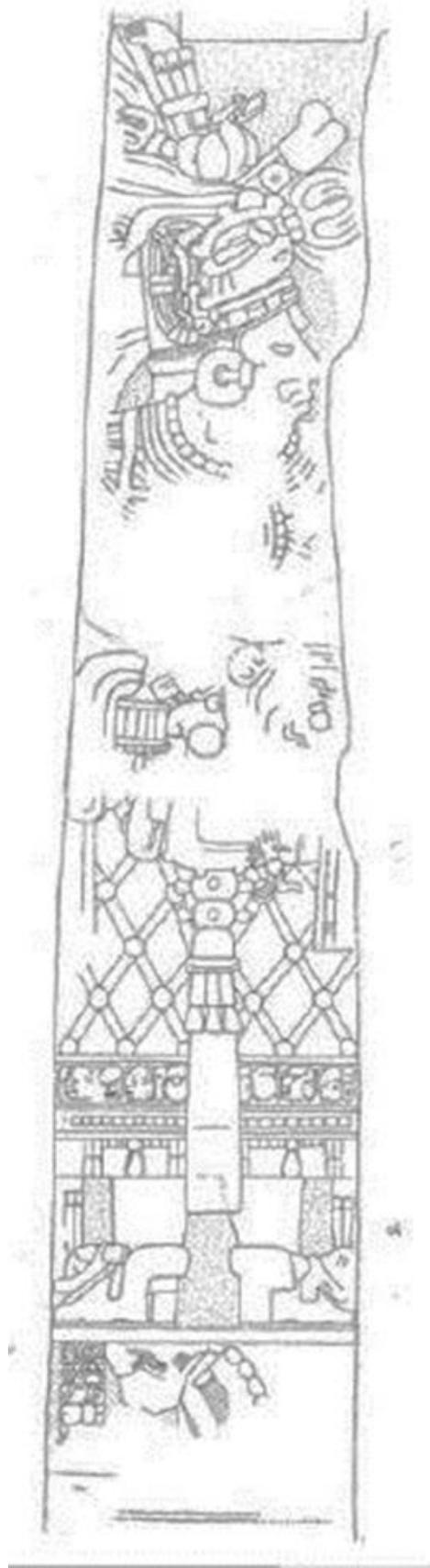
Figure 7. Stela 9, (back) (after Rivera Costa 2018:408).

440

Figure 8. Stela 75-79, Calakmul (after latinamericanstudies.org).
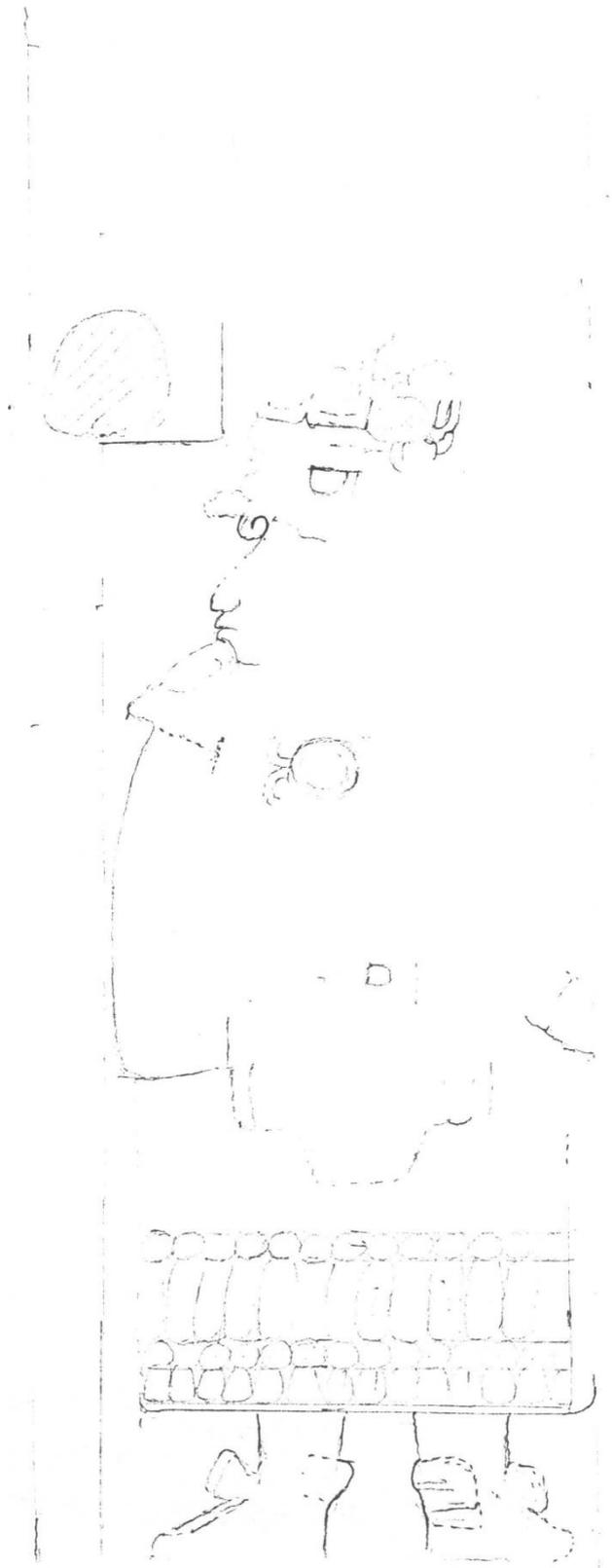
**Figure 9**. Stela 23, Calakmul. Drawing by Simon Martin.
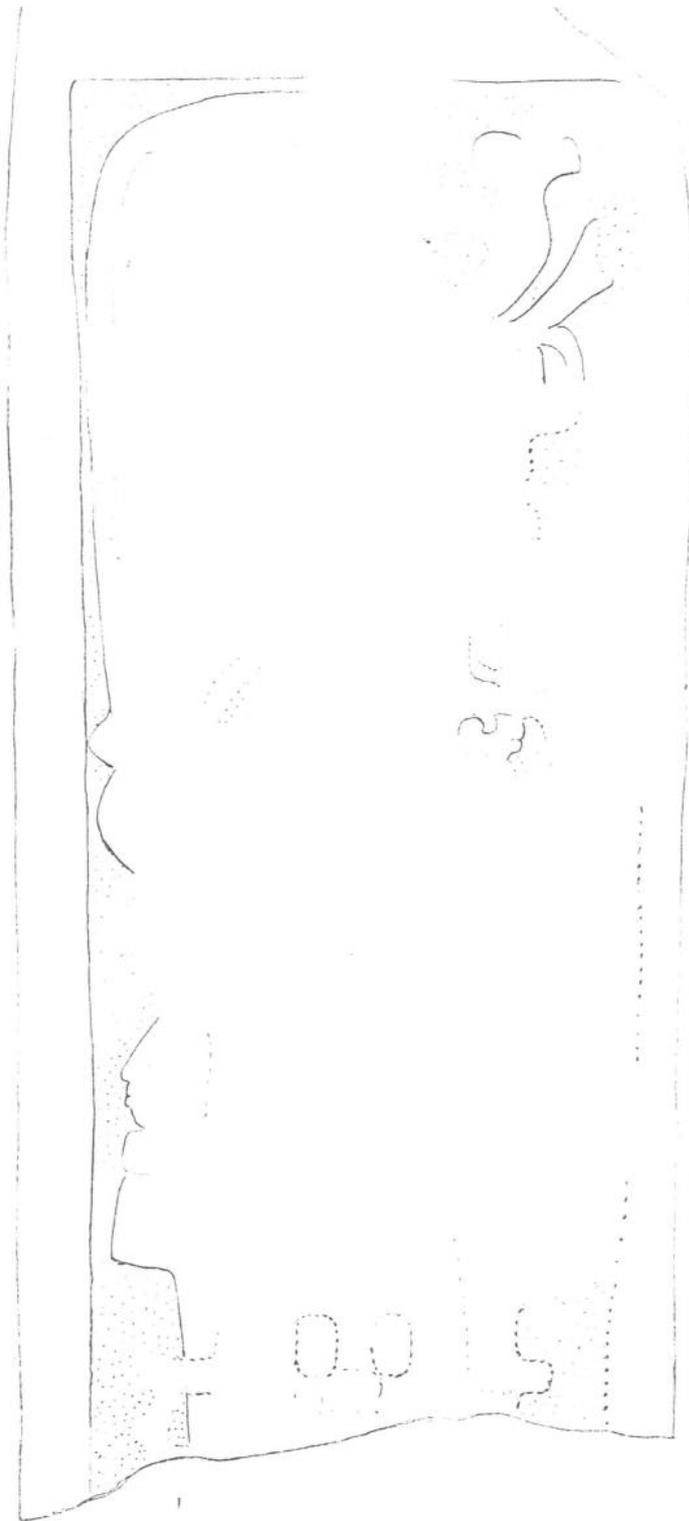
Figure 10. Stela 24, Calakmul. Drawing by Simon Martin.
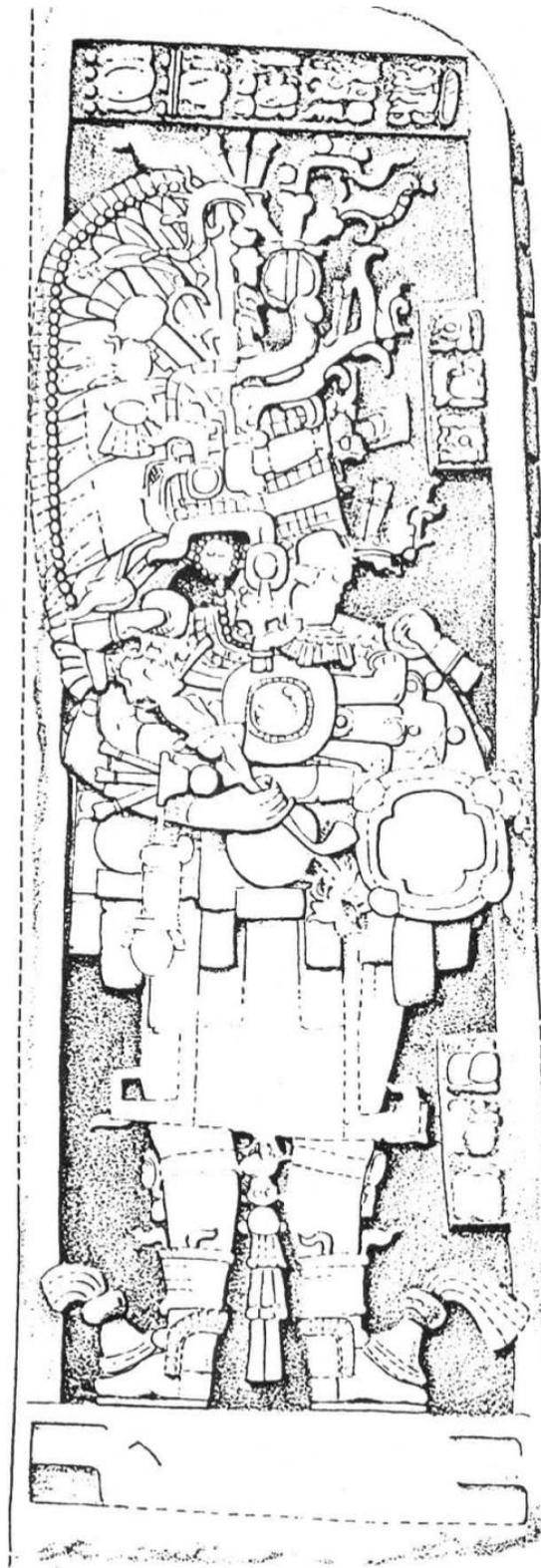
Figure 11. Stela 52, Calakmul (after Ruppert and Denison 1943: Plate 51a and 51c).

444

Figure 12. Stela 54, Calakmul. Photo by Sylvanus Morley.

445

Figure 13. Schafthausen pot. Photo by Christian Prager.

Figure 14. Medallion 1, Schafthausen Pot. Drawing by Christian Prager.

Figure 15. Medallion 2, Schafthausen Pot. Drawing by Christian Prager.

**Figure 16**. Stela 33 (left) and Stela 34 (right), El Peru Waka' (photo after Freidel *et al.*2012).
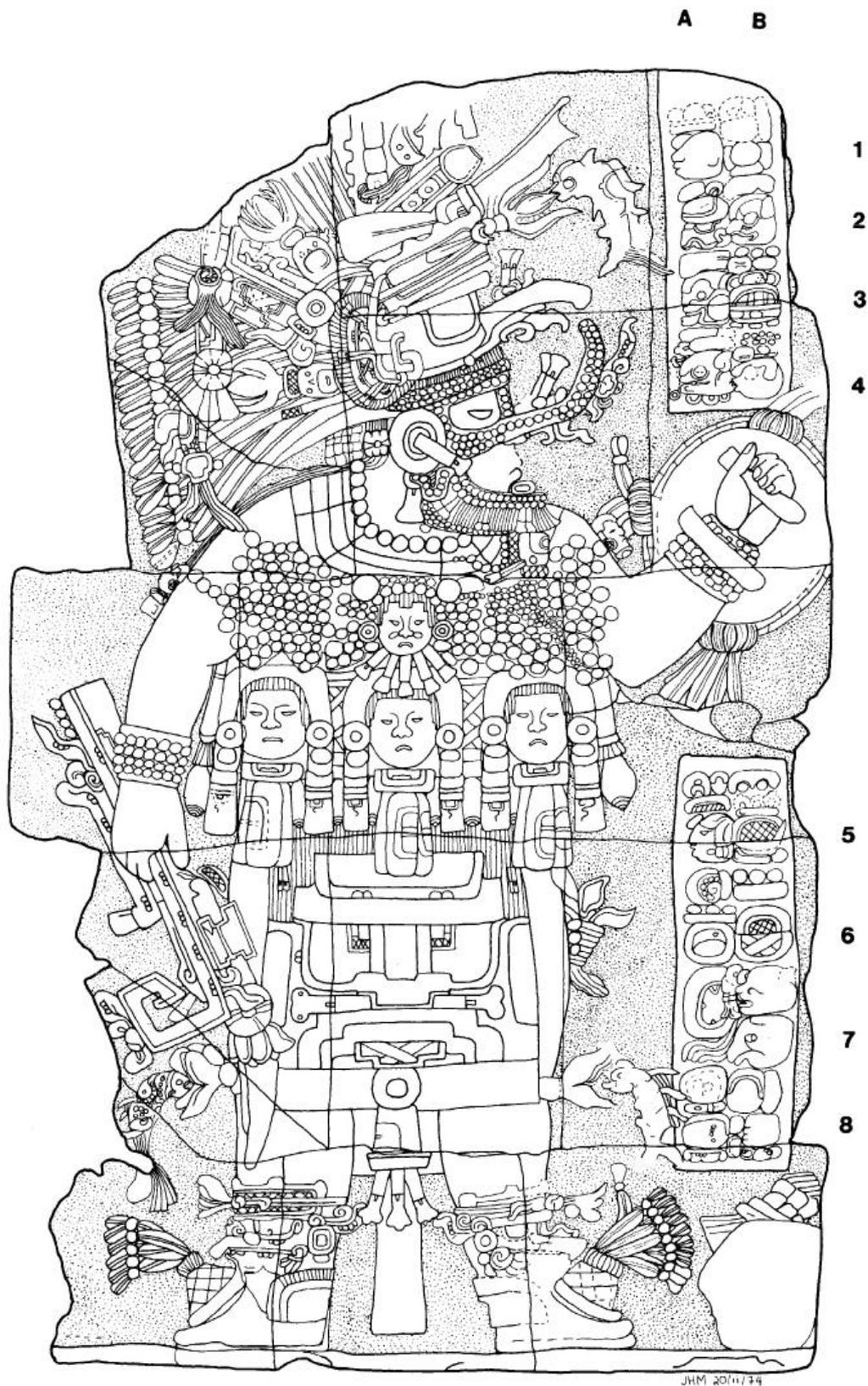
**Figure 17**. Stela 33, El Peru Waka'. Drawing by John Montgomery

449
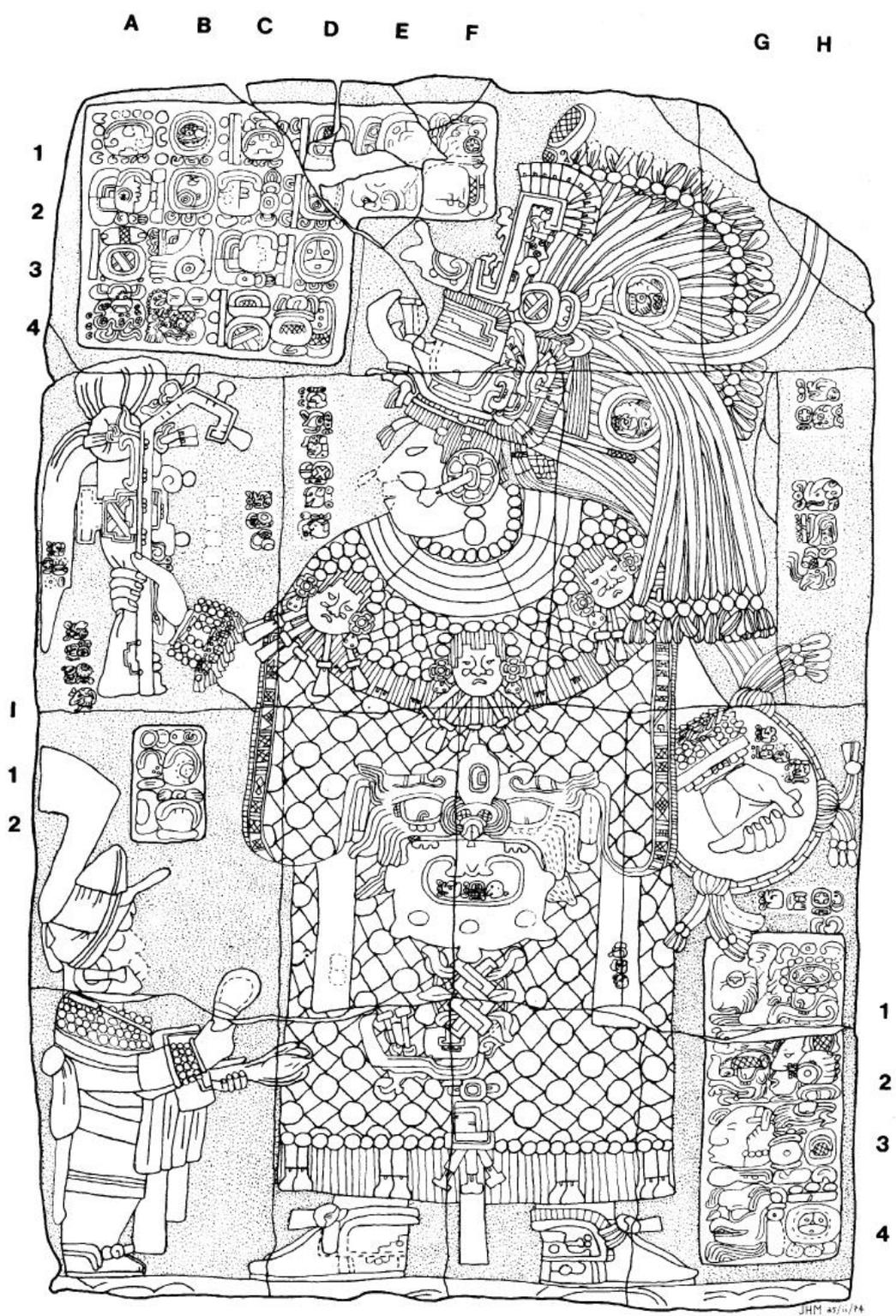
**Figure 18**. Stela 34, El Peru Waka'. Drawing by John Montgomery
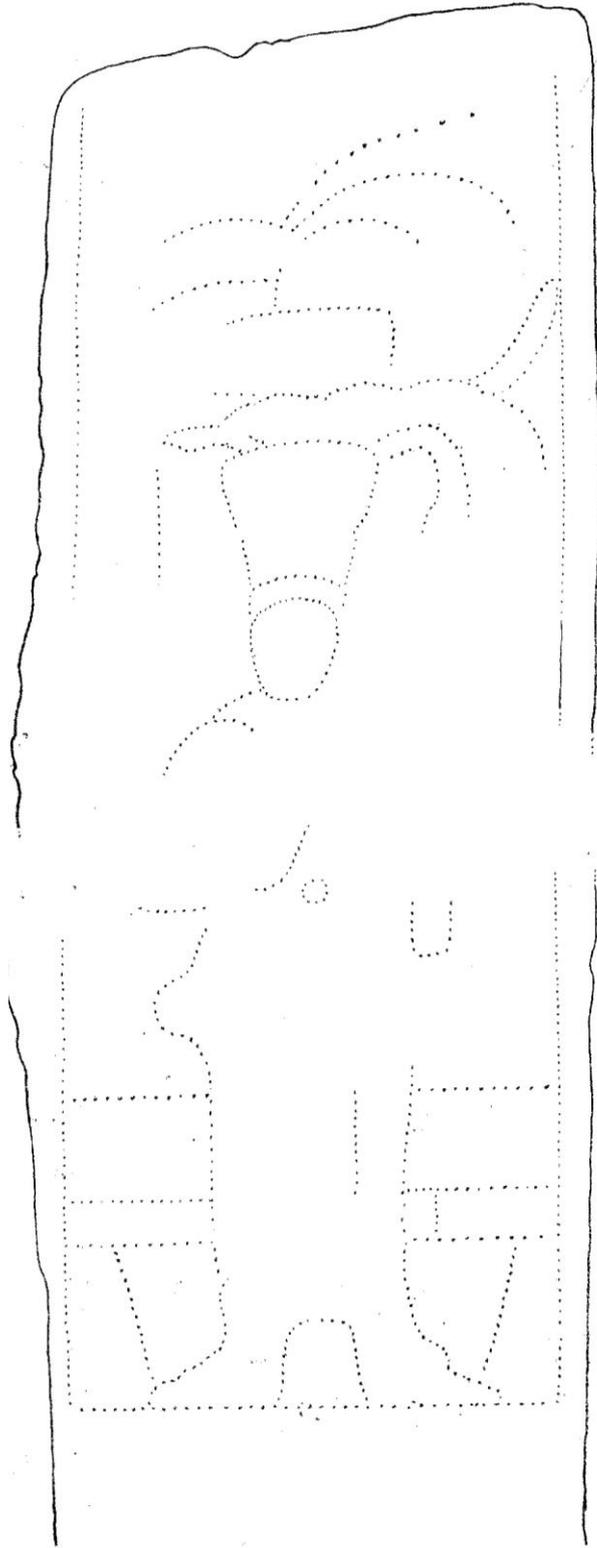
Figure 19. Stela 3 (front), Piedras Negras. Drawing by John Montgomery.

451
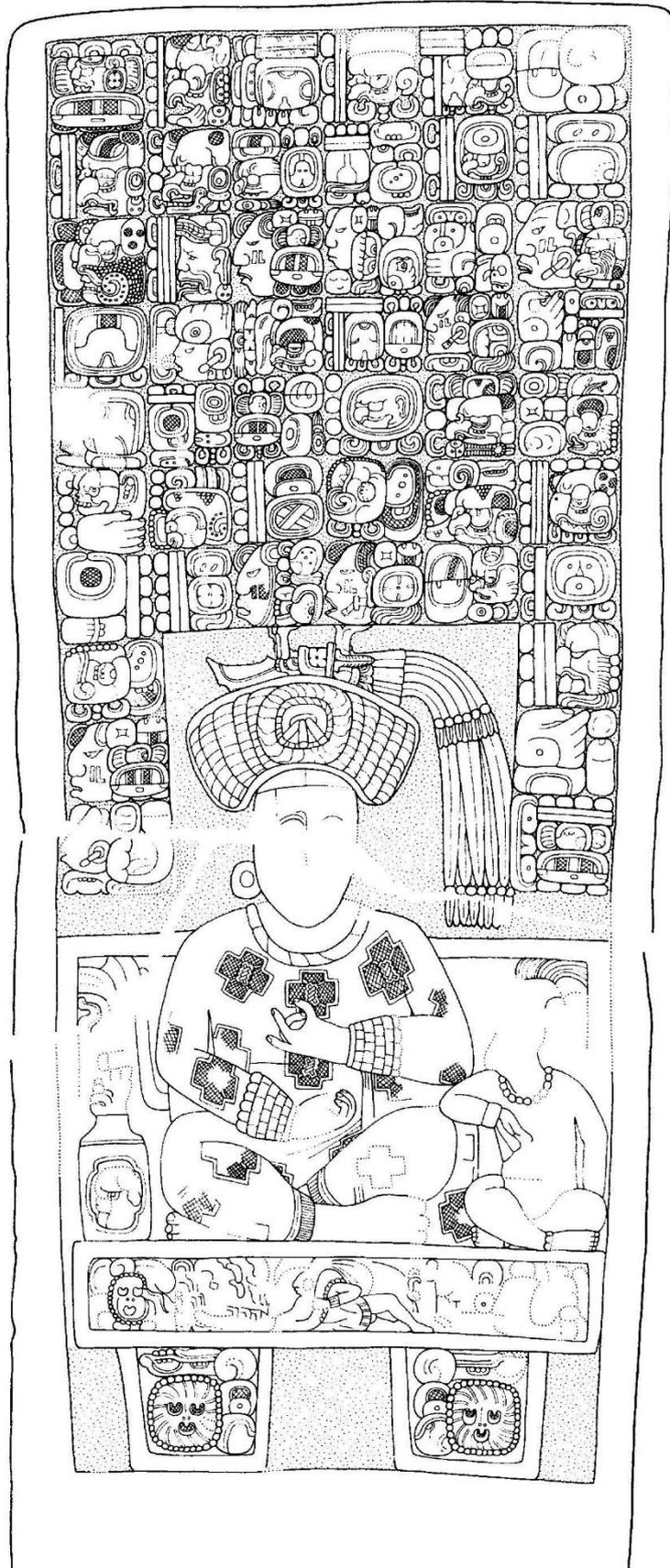
Figure 20. Stela 3 (back), Piedras Negras. Drawing by John Montgomery.

452

**Figure 21**. Stela 1, (front), Pechal (after Ruppert and Denison plate 60b).

453
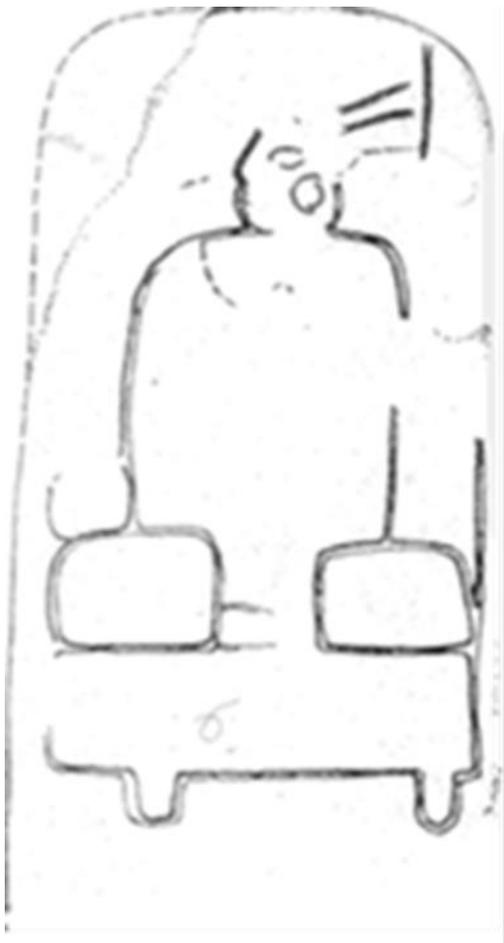
Figure 22. Stela 1 (back), Pechal (after Rupert and Denison plate 60f)
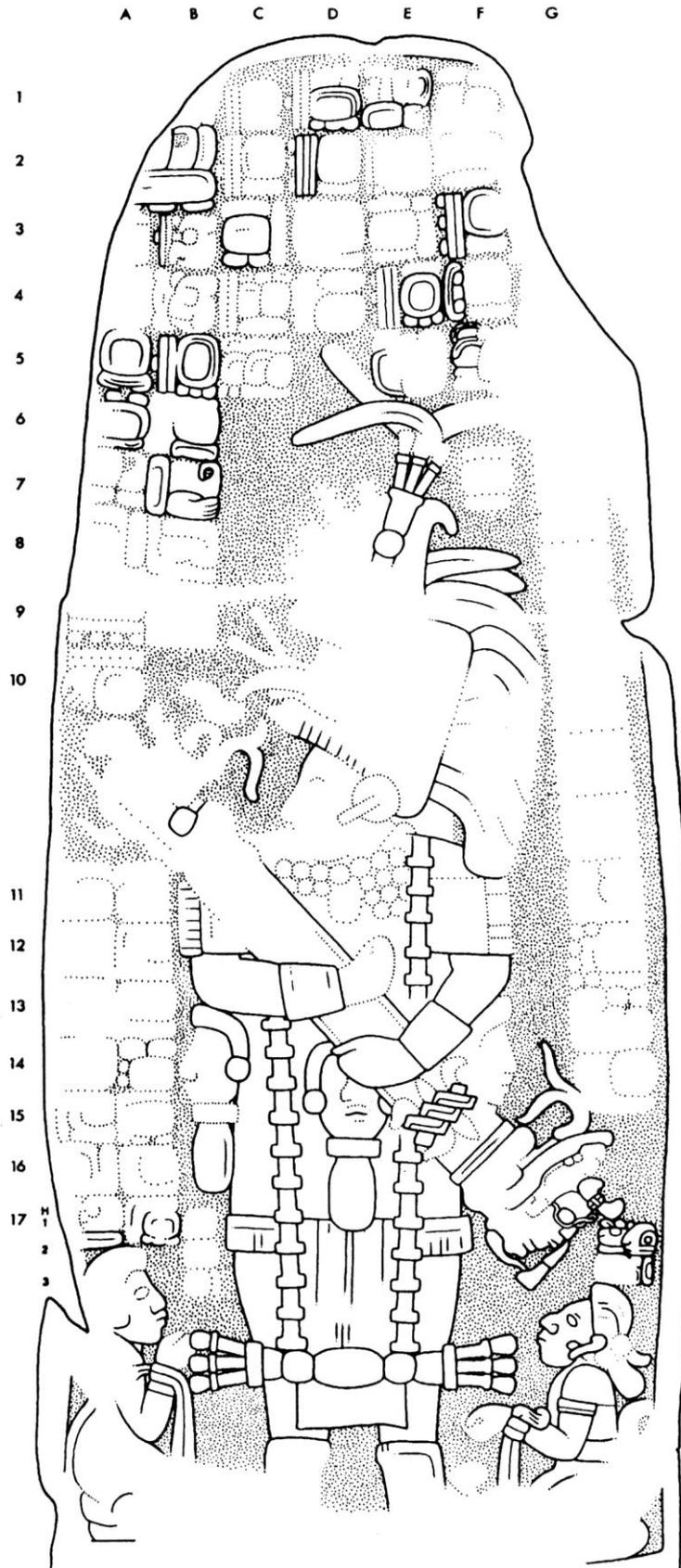
Figure 23. Stela 5 (front), Coba. Drawing by Eric von Euw and Ian Graham.

455
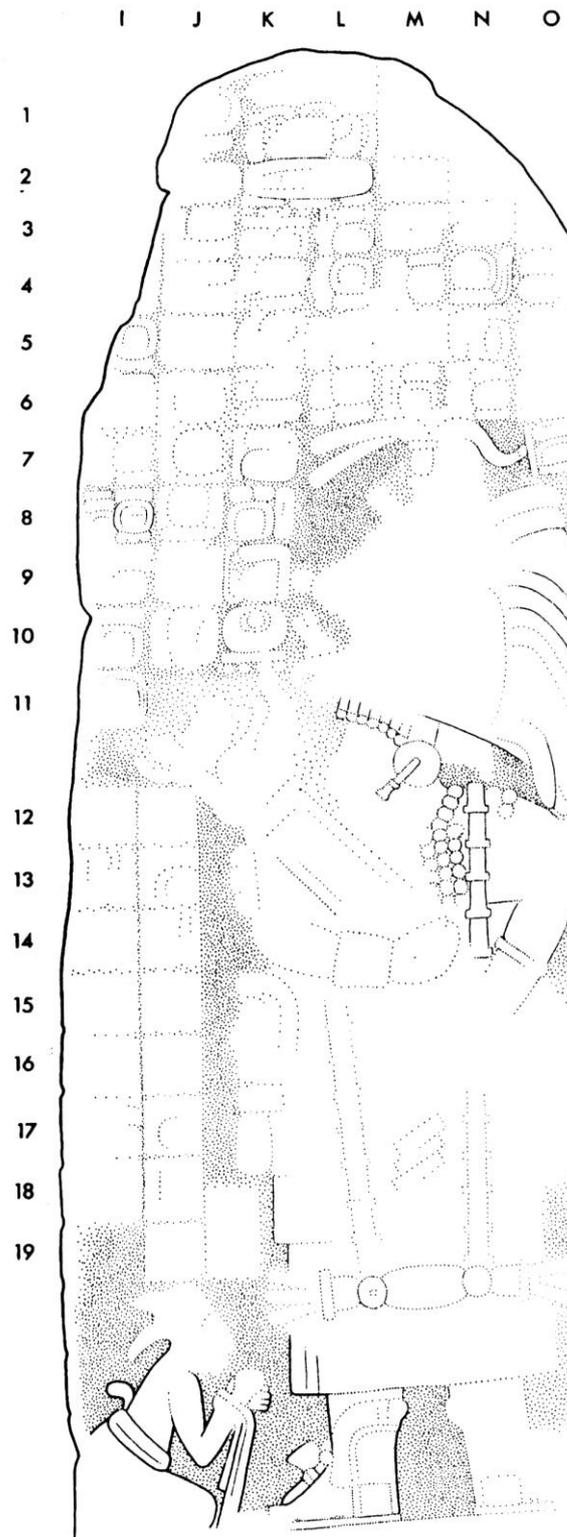
Figure 24. Stela 5 (back), Coba. Drawing by Eric von Euw and Ian Graham.

456

Figure 25. Stela 2, Uxul (after Ruppert and Denison 1943: Plate 58).

Figure 26. Stela 3(front), upper part (left), down part (right) (after *Informe* Uxul 2011).

Figure 27. Stela 12, (front), Uxul (after *Informe* Uxul 2011).

Figure 28. Stela 13 (front), Uxul (after *Informe* Uxul 2011).

460

Figure 29. Stela 18, Naachtun. Photo by Bruce Love.
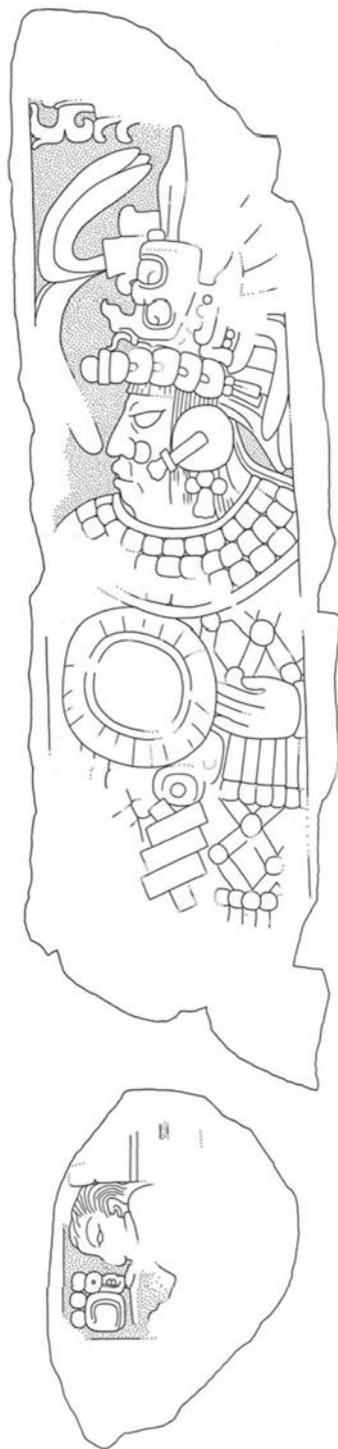
Figure 30. Stela 18, Naachtun (after Mathew and Parmington 2005: Fig.40).
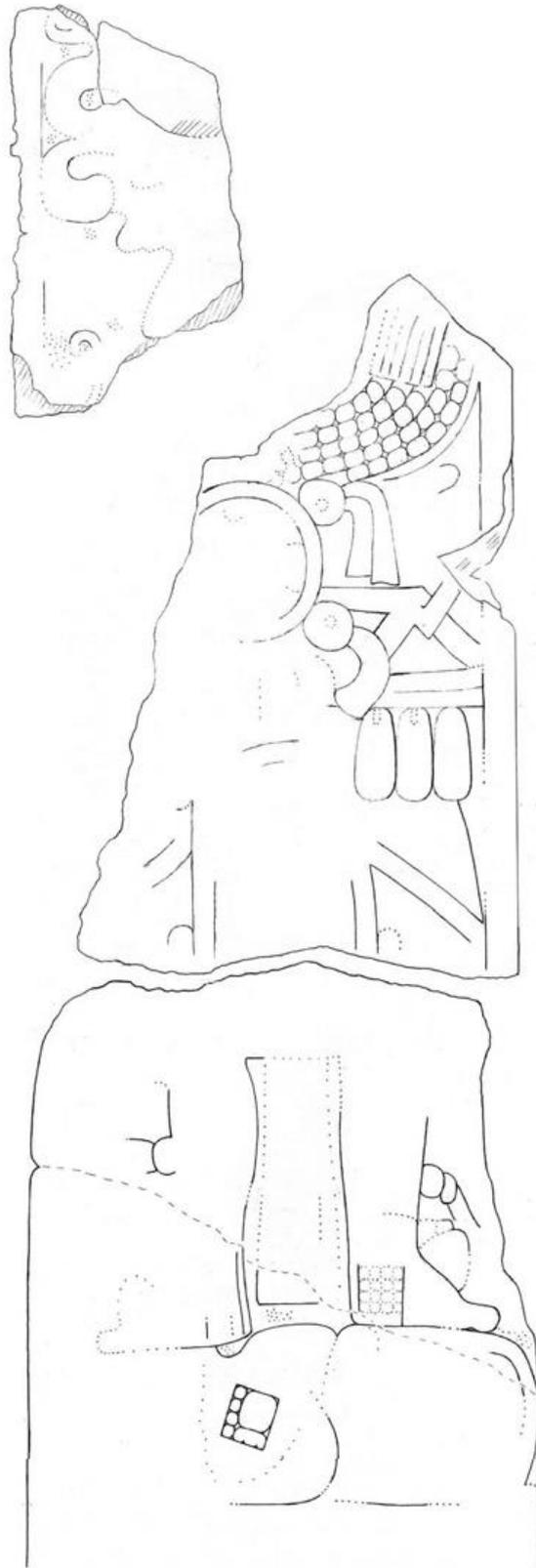
Figure 31. Stela 19, Naachtun (after Mathew and Parmington 2005: Fig.41).
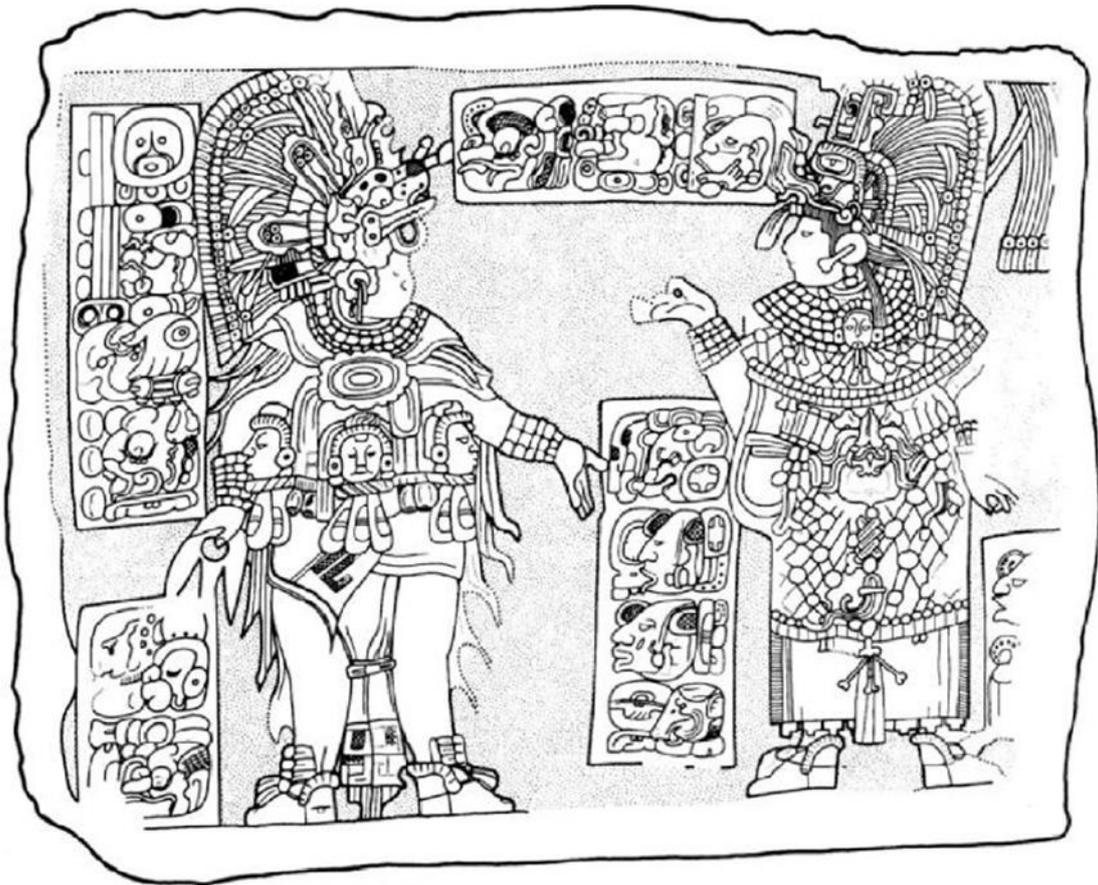
Figure 32. Element 19, La Corona. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.
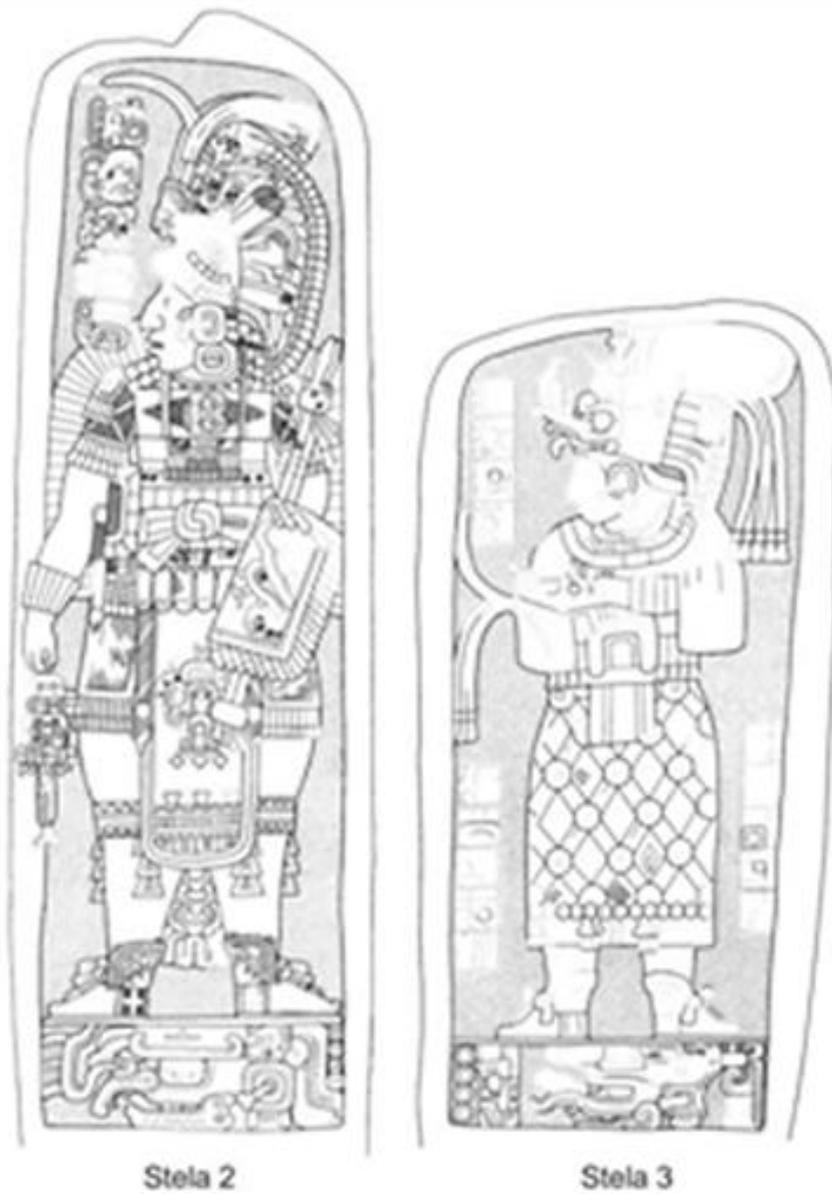
Stela 2   Stela 3

Figure 33. Paired Stelae, Naranjo. Drawing by Ian Graham and Eric von Euw.

Stela 22

Stela 24

Stela 30

Stela 29

Figure 34. Paired Stelae, Naranjo. Drawing by Ian Graham and Eric von Euw.
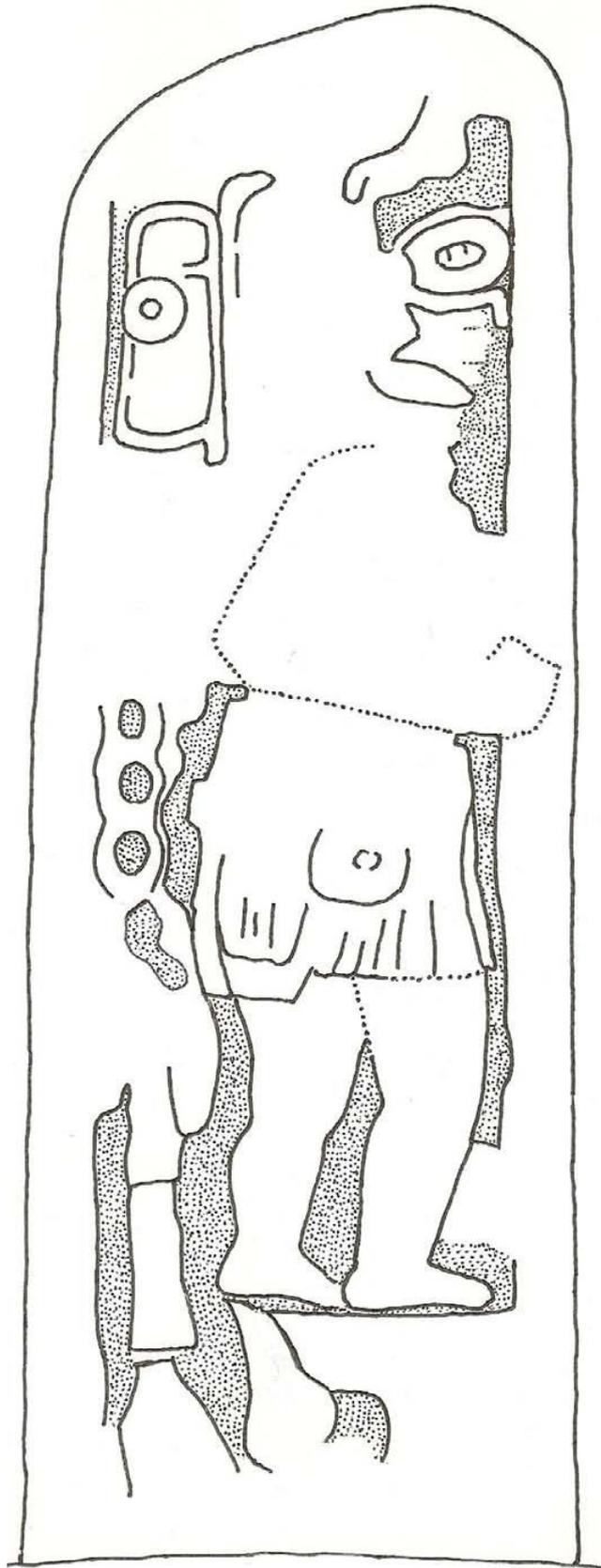
Figure 35. Stela 14, Oxpemul. Drawing by Hubert Robichaux.

467
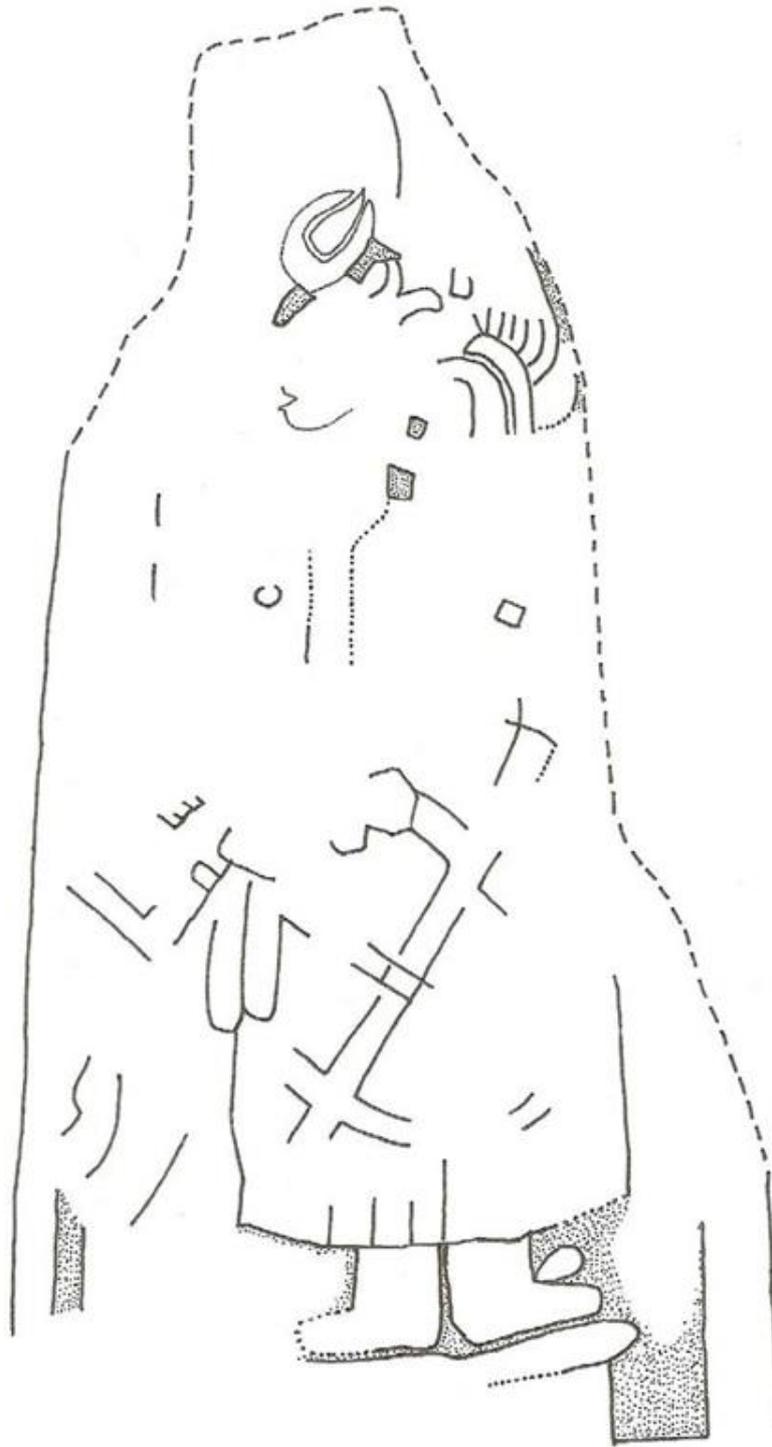
Figure 36. Stela 16, Oxpemul. Drawing by Hubert Robichaux.
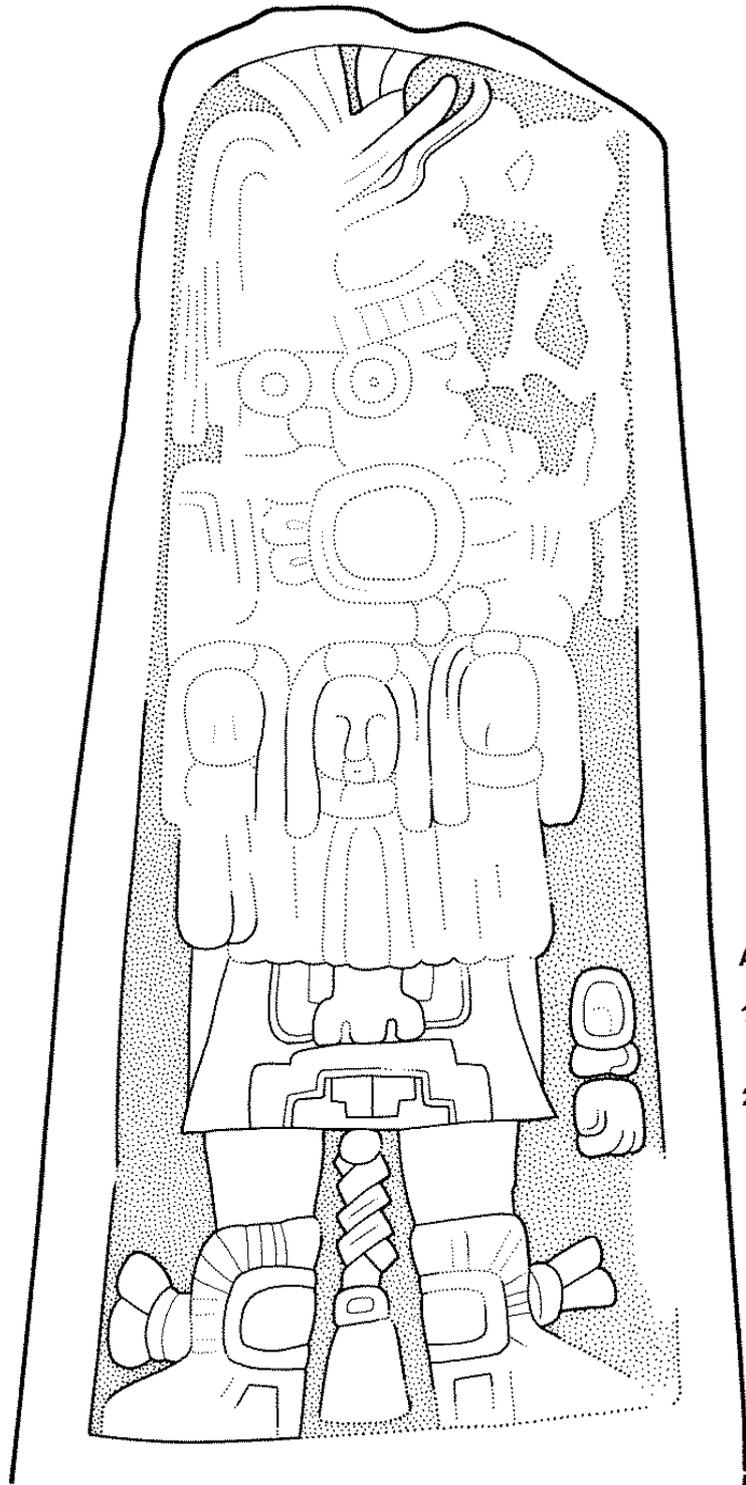
Figure 37. Stela 18, Oxpemul. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.
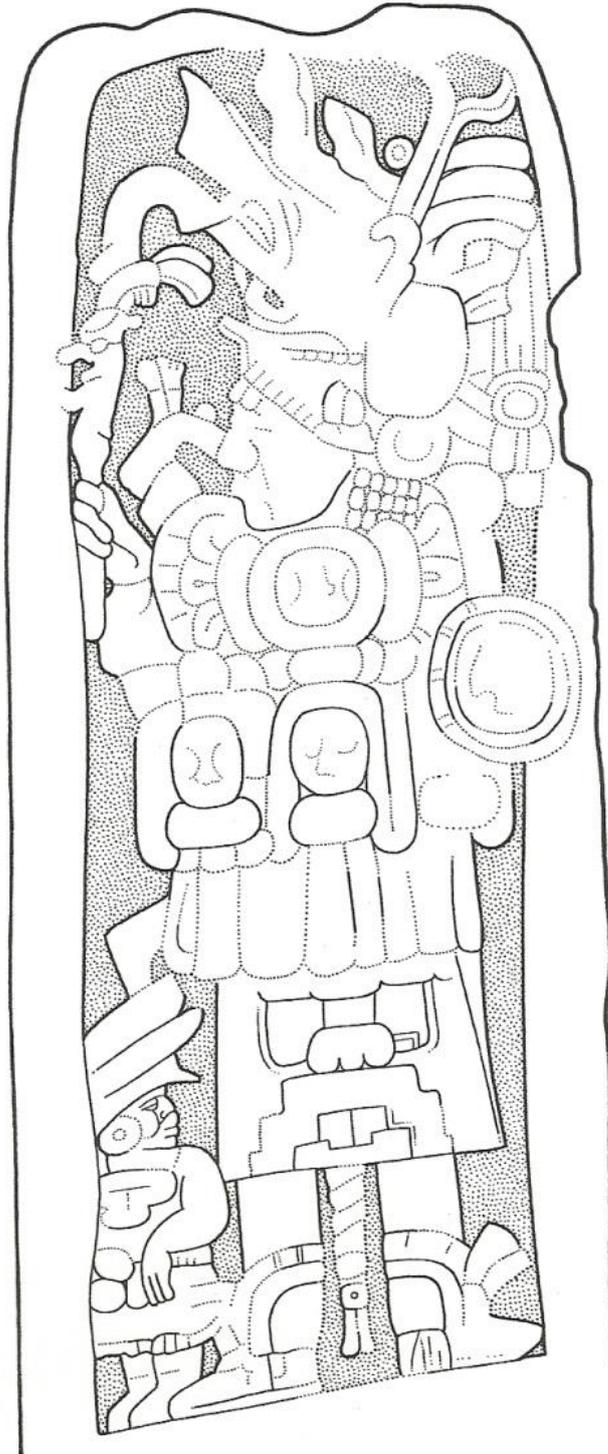
Figure 38. Stela 19, Oxpemul. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

470

Figure 39. Door jamb 1 and 2, Pomona. Drawing by Peter Mathews.
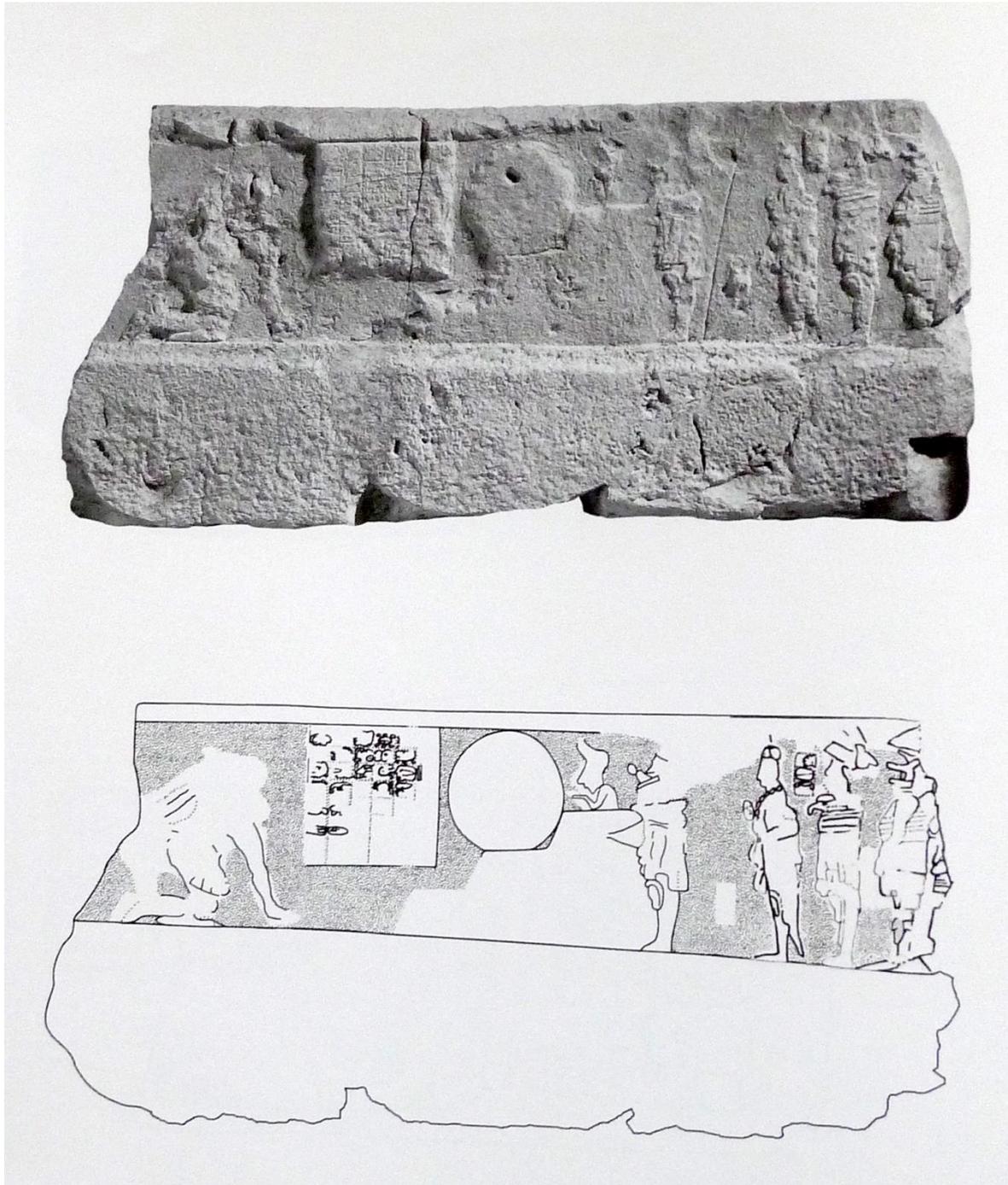
Figure 40. Monument 19, Dzibanche (after Nalda 2004: Figure 25).
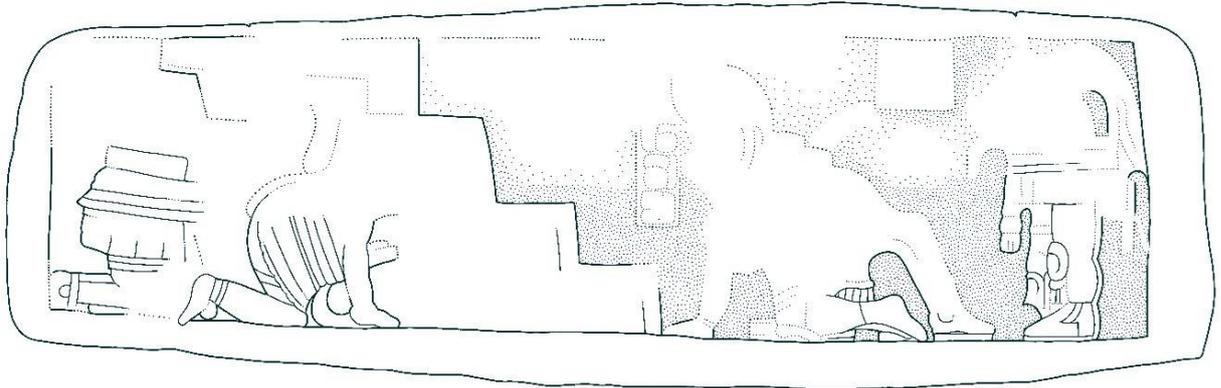
Figure 41. Altar 2, Uxul. Drawing by Nikolai Grube
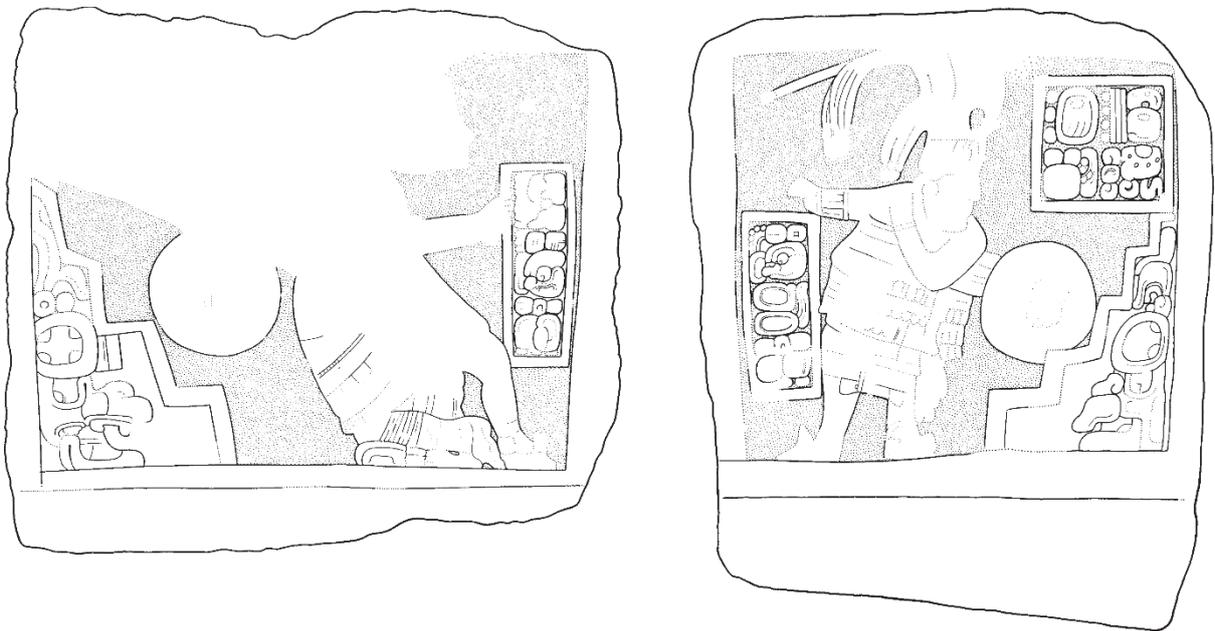
Figure 42. Panel 2 (left) and 4 (right) of HS South, Uxul. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

473
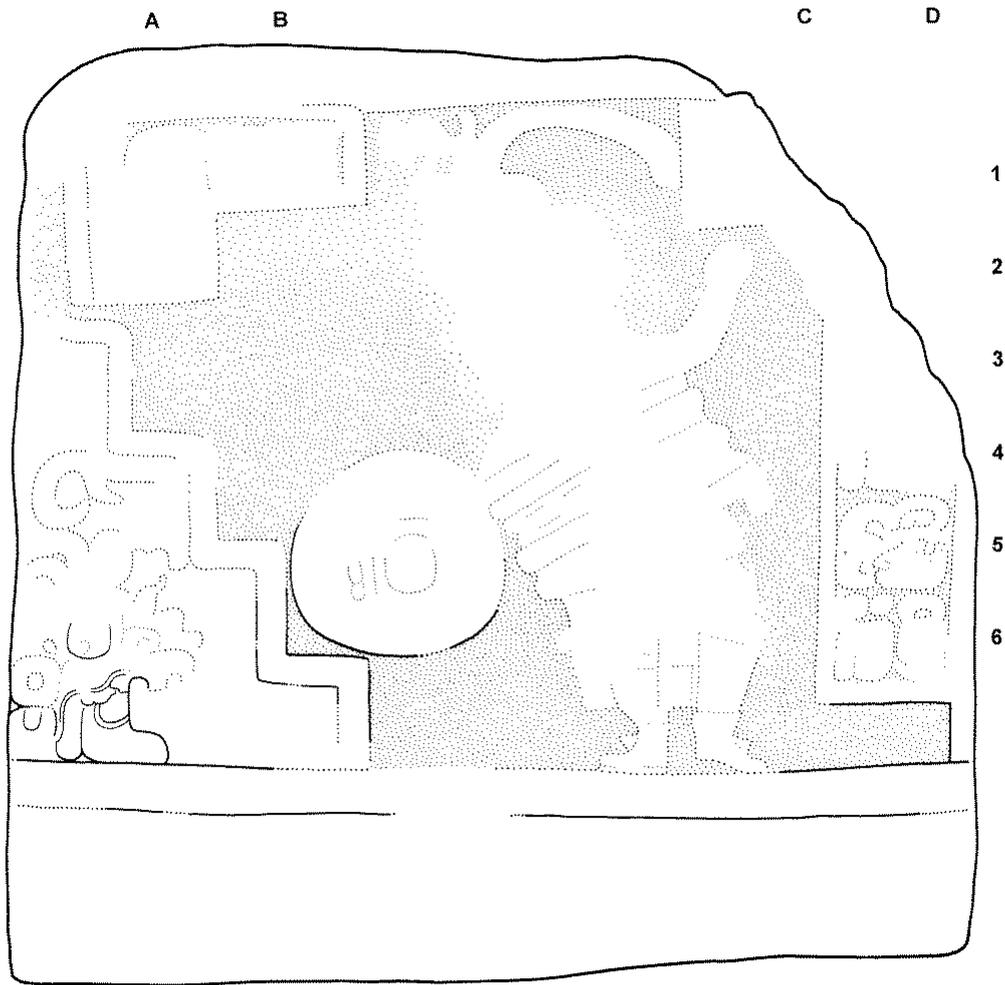
Figure 43. Panel 1, HS North, Uxul. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.
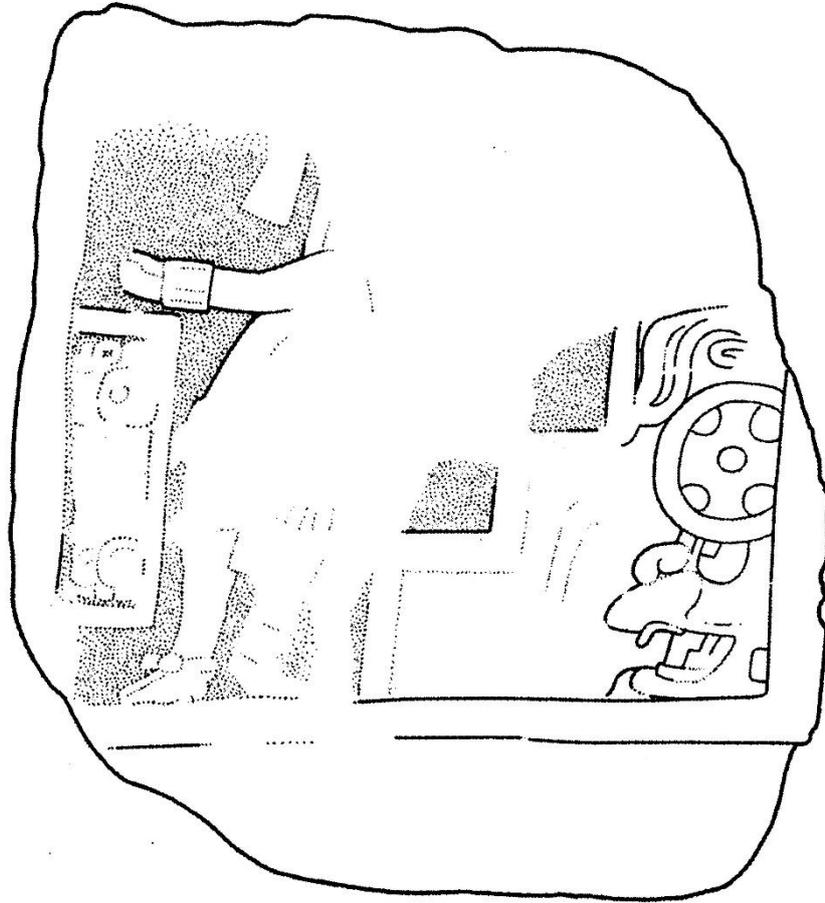
Figure 44. Panel 1, HS South, Uxul. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.

475

Figure 45. Panel 1, La Corona. Photo by Justin Kerr.
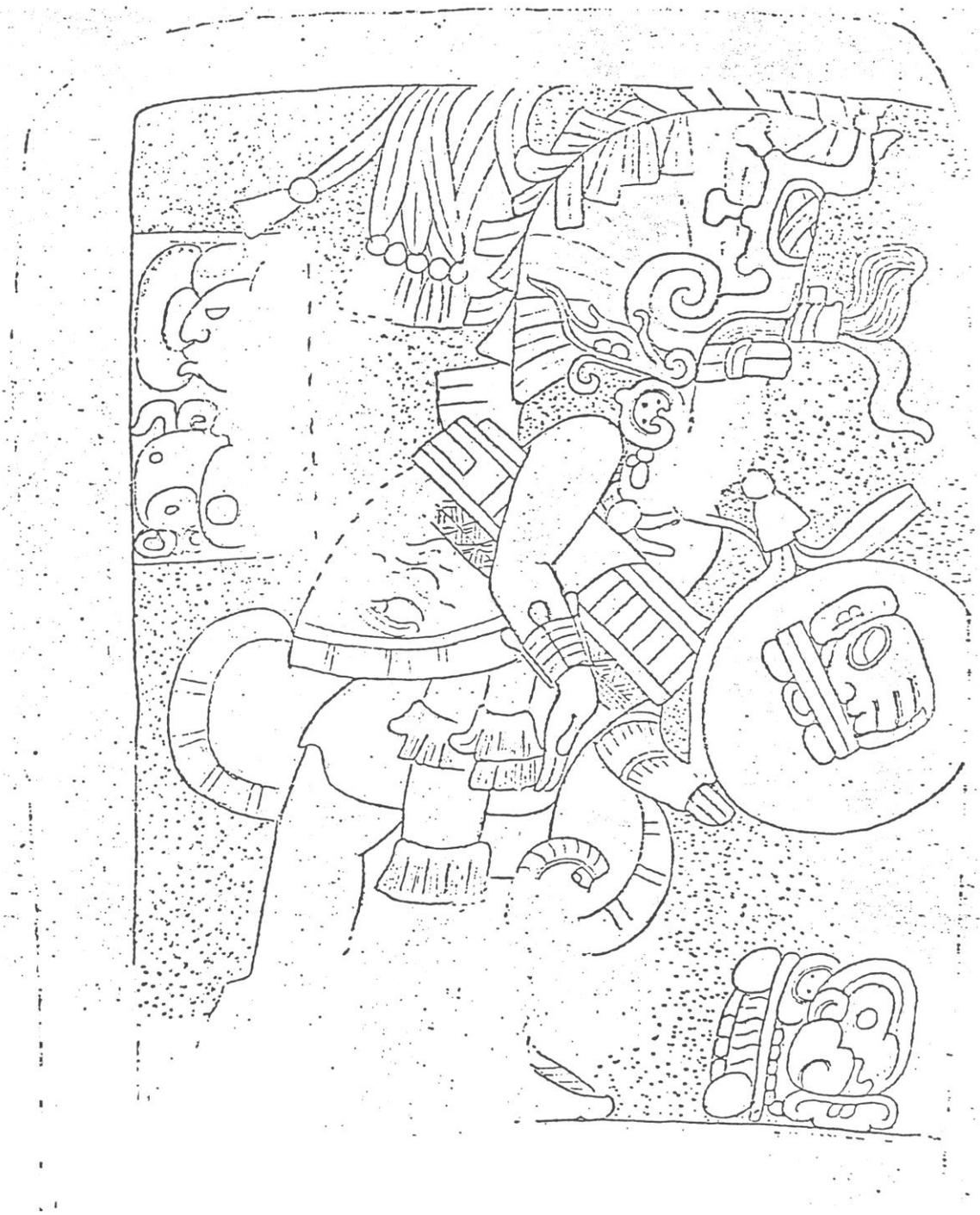
Figure 46. Panel 2, La Corona. Drawing by Ian Graham.

477

Figure 47. Panel 3, La Corona. Drawing by Ian Graham.

478
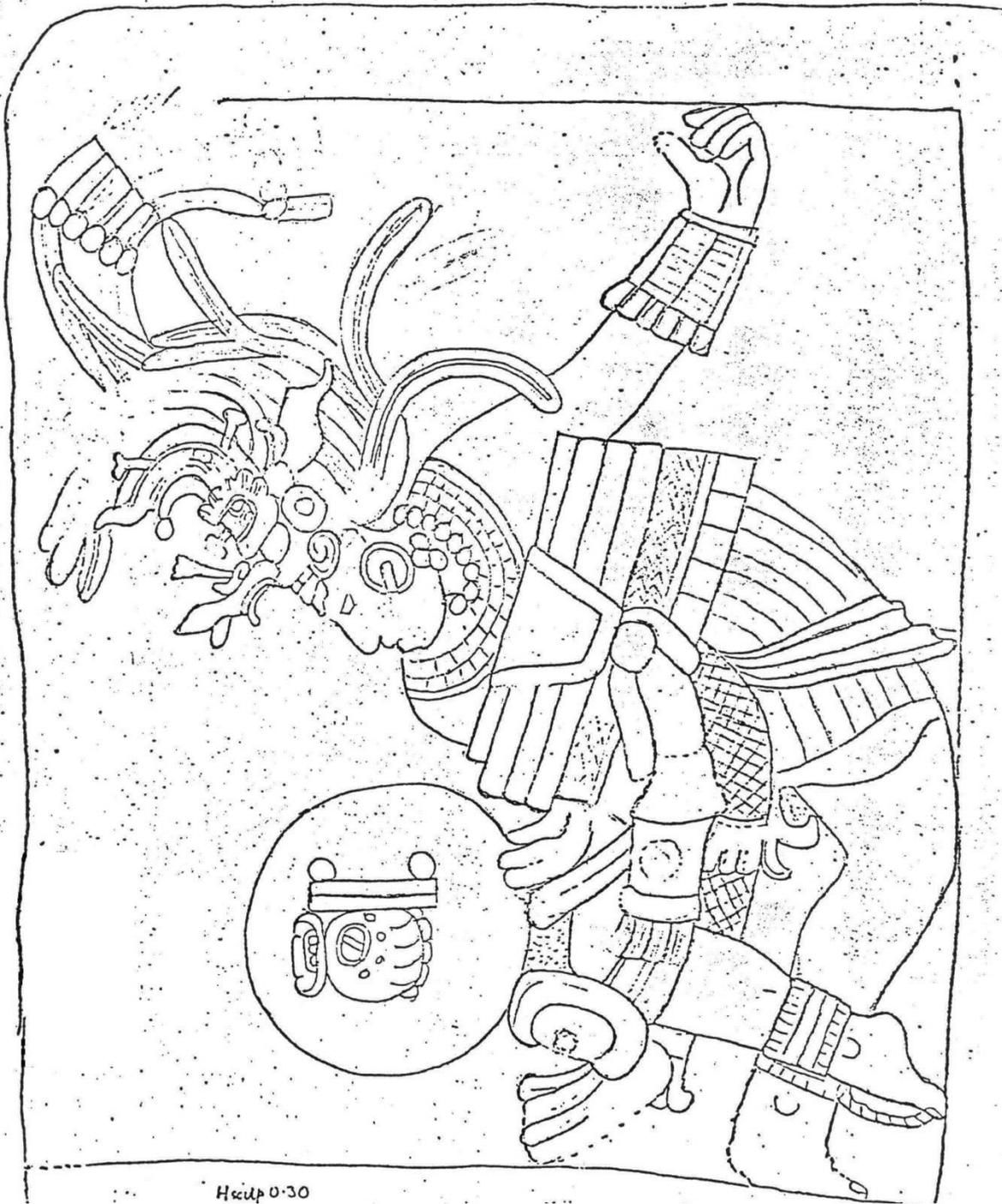
Figure 48. Panel 4, La Corona. Drawing by Ian Graham.

479
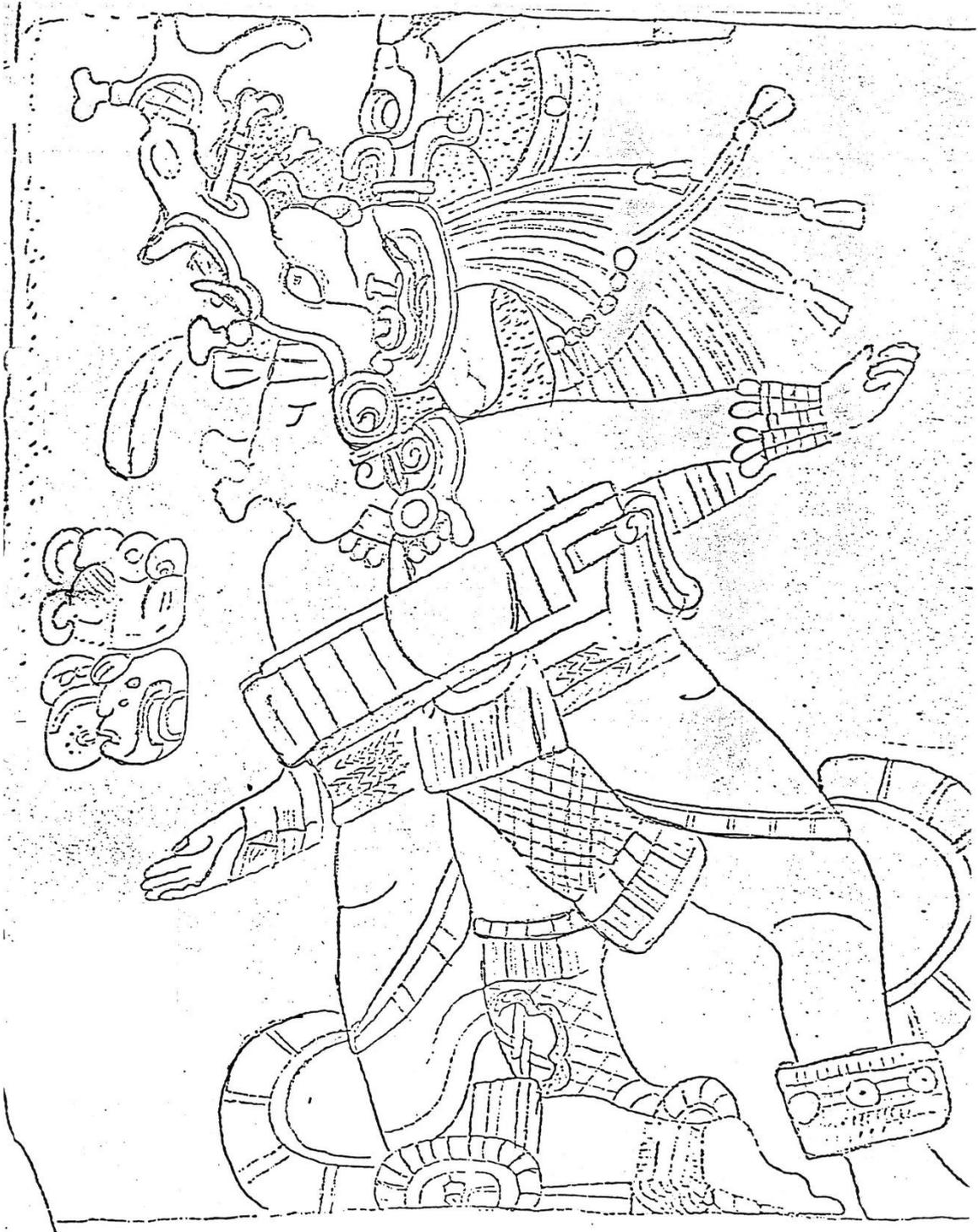
Figure 49. Panel 5, La Corona. Drawing by Ian Graham.

Figure 50. Panel 6, La Corona. Drawing by Linda Schele.

481
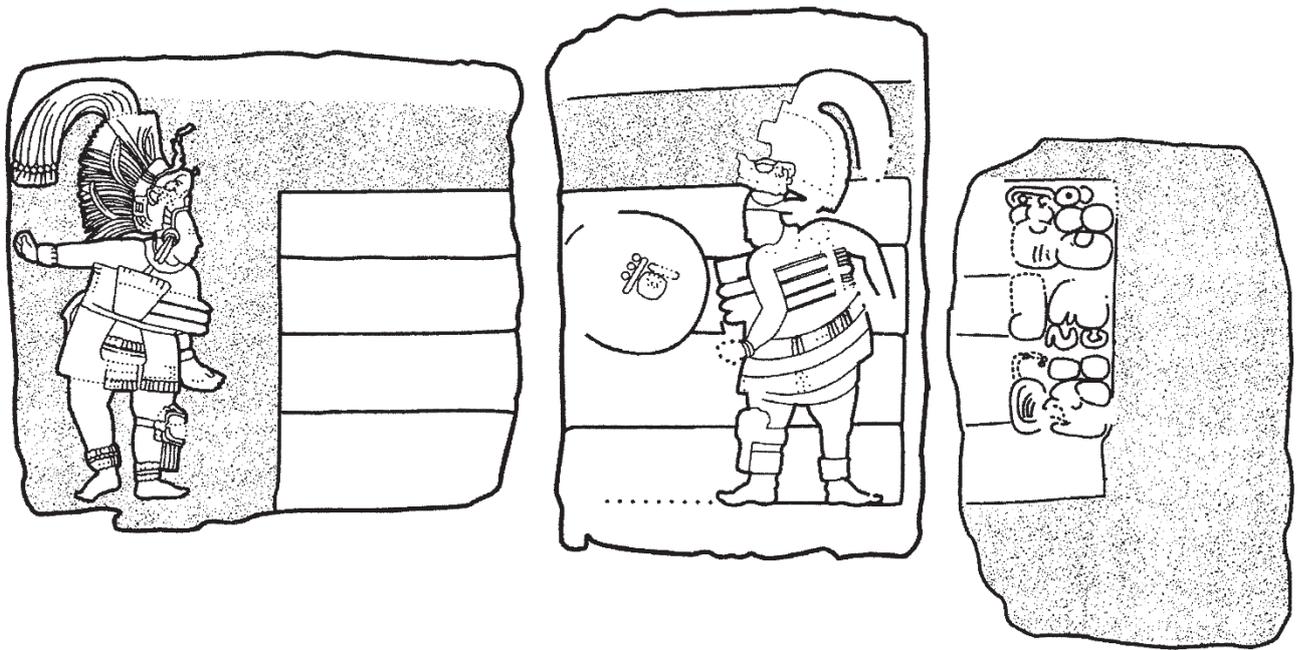
Figure 51. Ballgame panel from El Peru Waka.' Drawing by Sarah Sage.
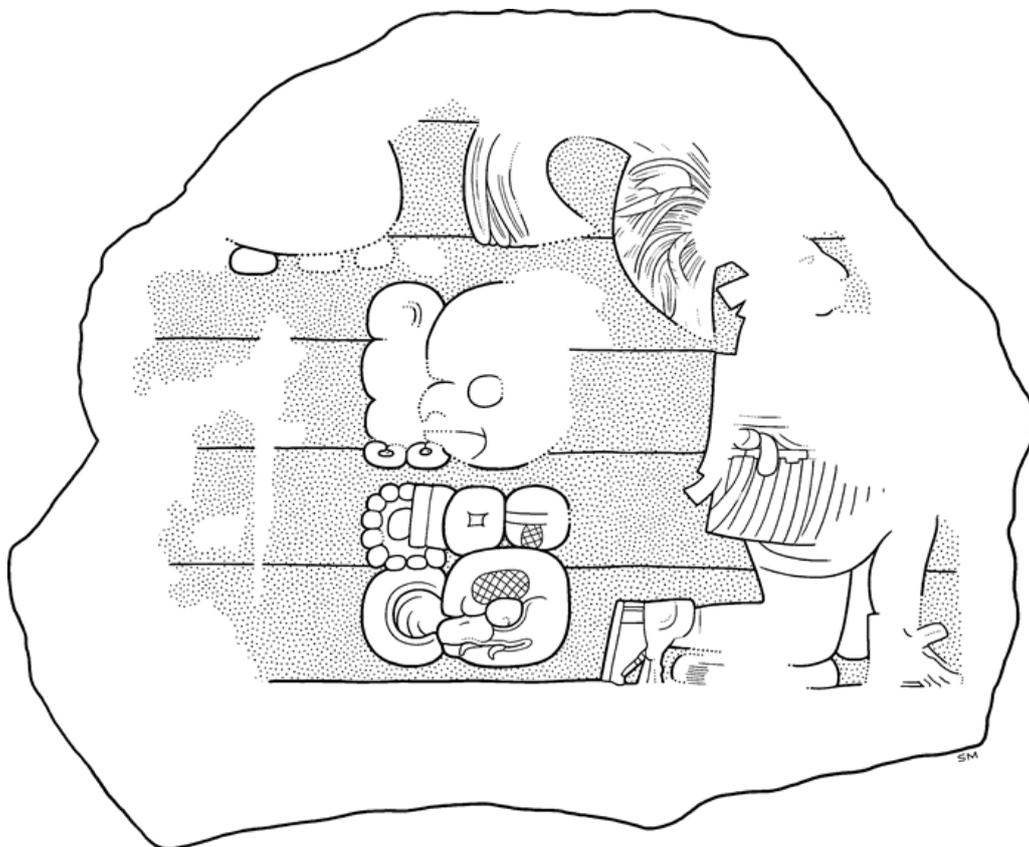
Figure 52. Ballgame panel from Calakmul (Element 39). Drawing by Simon Martin.
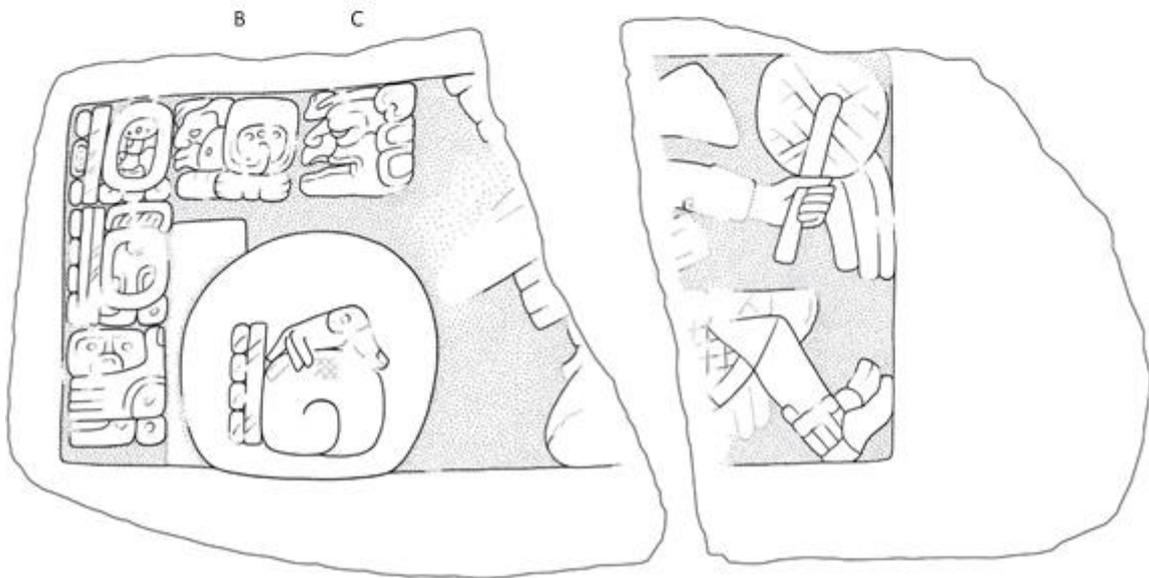
Figure 53. Monument 3, Tipan Chen Uitz. Drawing and photo by Christophe Helmke.

483
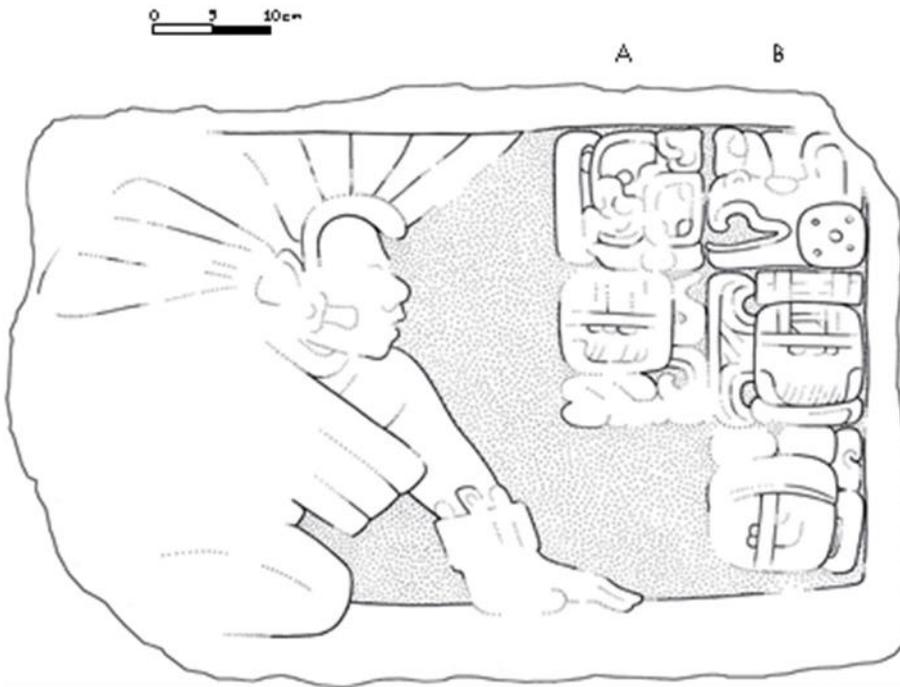
Figure 54. Monument 4, Tipan Chen Uitz. Drawing and photo by Christophe Helmke.
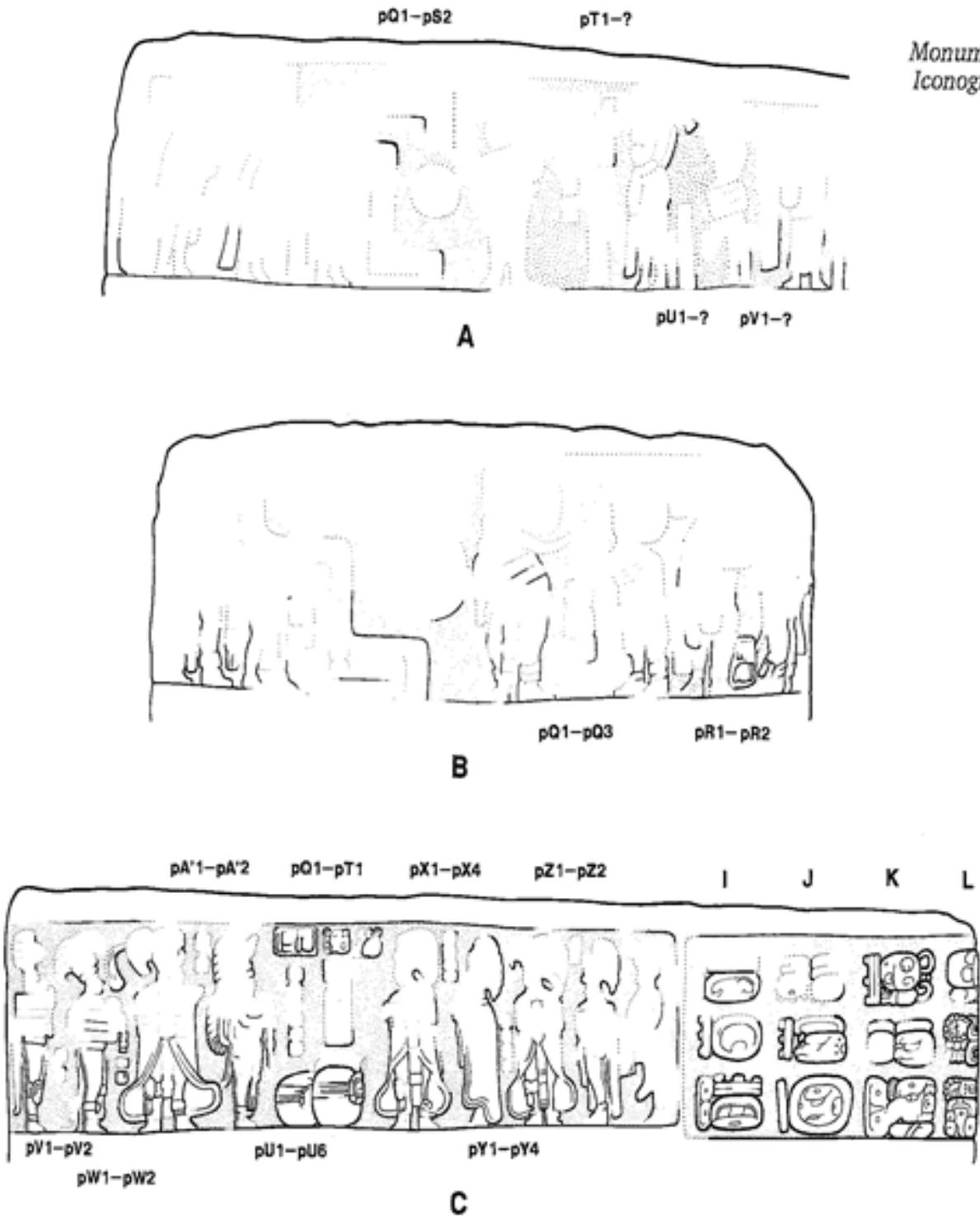
Figure 55. HS 1 Panels, Dos Plias (after Houston 1993: Fig.3-22).

Figure 56. Panel 1, Coba. Photo by Vania E. Pérez Gutiérrez
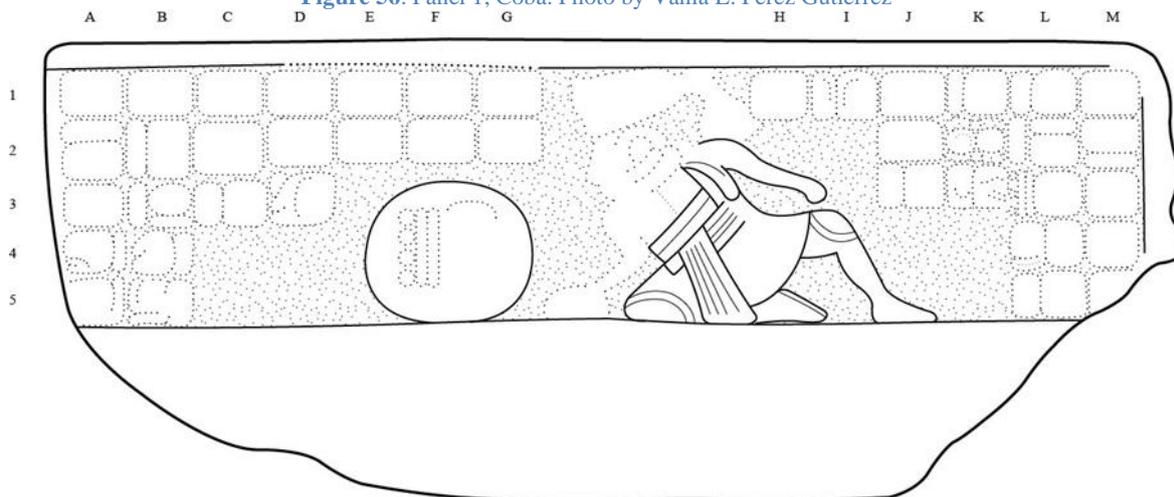
Figure 57. Panel 1, Coba. Drawing by Octavio Q. Esparza Olguín.
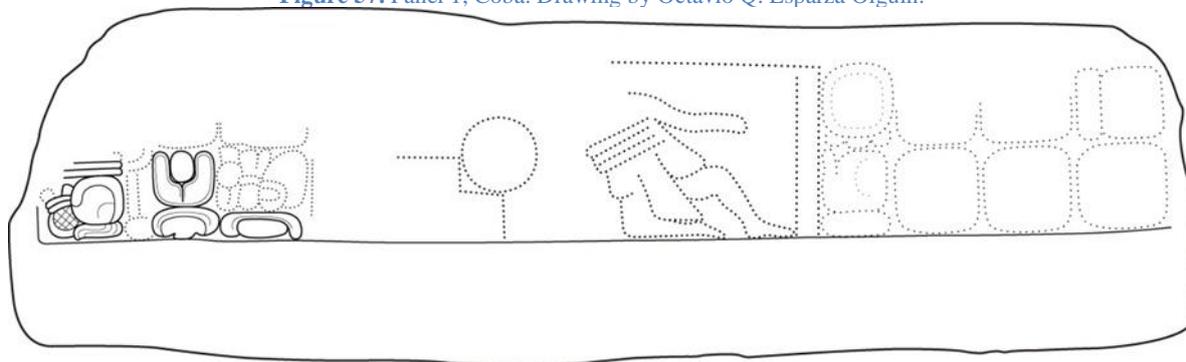
Figure 58. Panel 2, Coba. Drawing by Octavio Q. Esparza Olguín.

Figure 59. Panel 1, Mucaancah (after Šprajc 2008: Fig. 4.53).
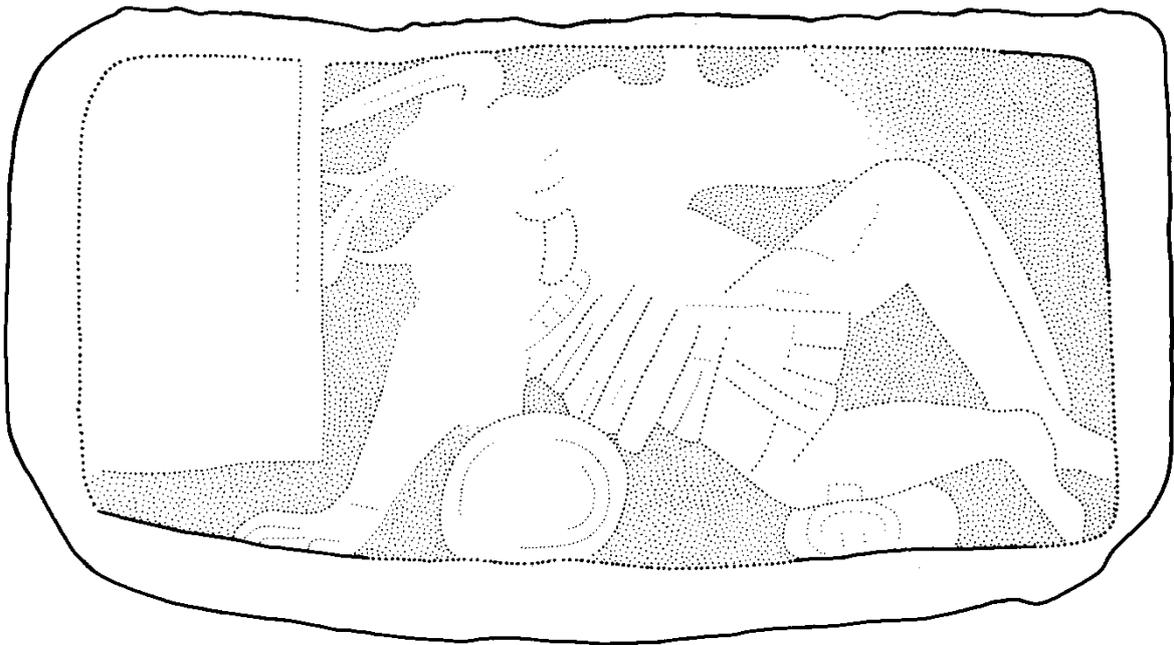
Figure 60. Panel 1, Mucaanah. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.
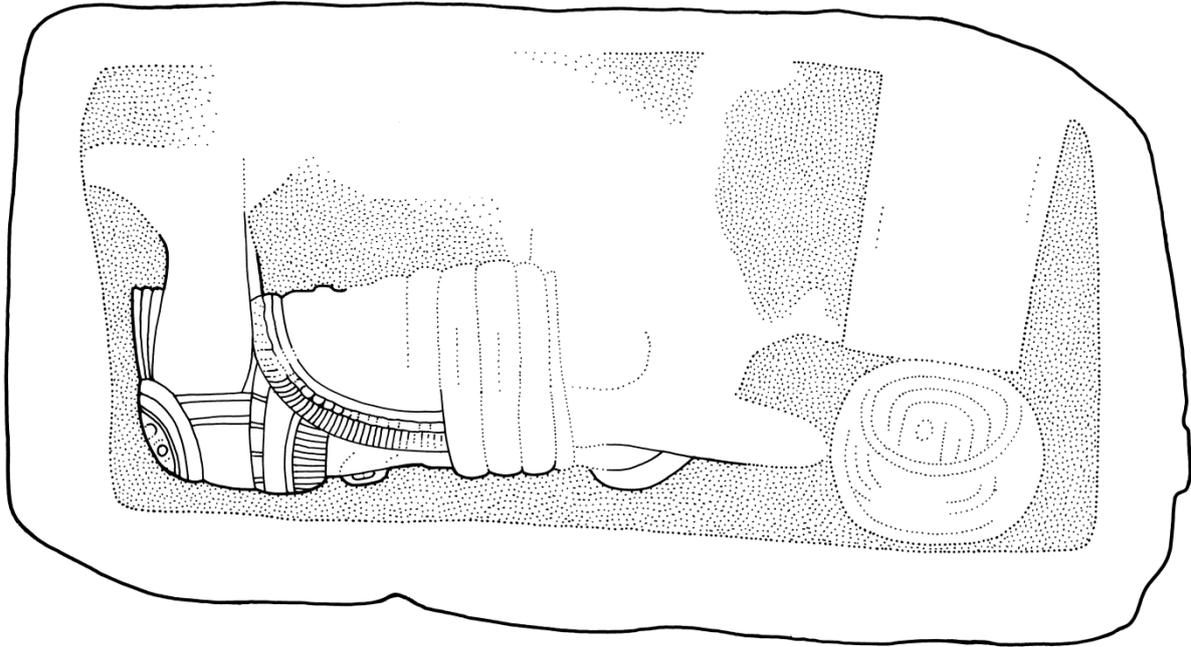
Figure 61. Panel 2, Mucaanah. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.
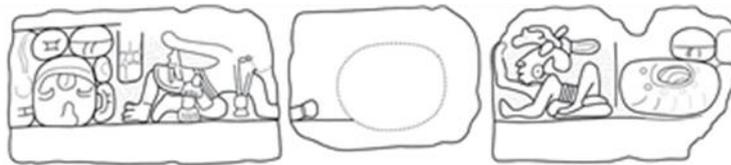
Figure 62. Ballgame Panel, Step II of HS, Guzman Group, El Palmar. Drawing by Octavio Q. Esparza Olguín.

Figure 63. Monument 171, Tonina. Photo by David Stuart.
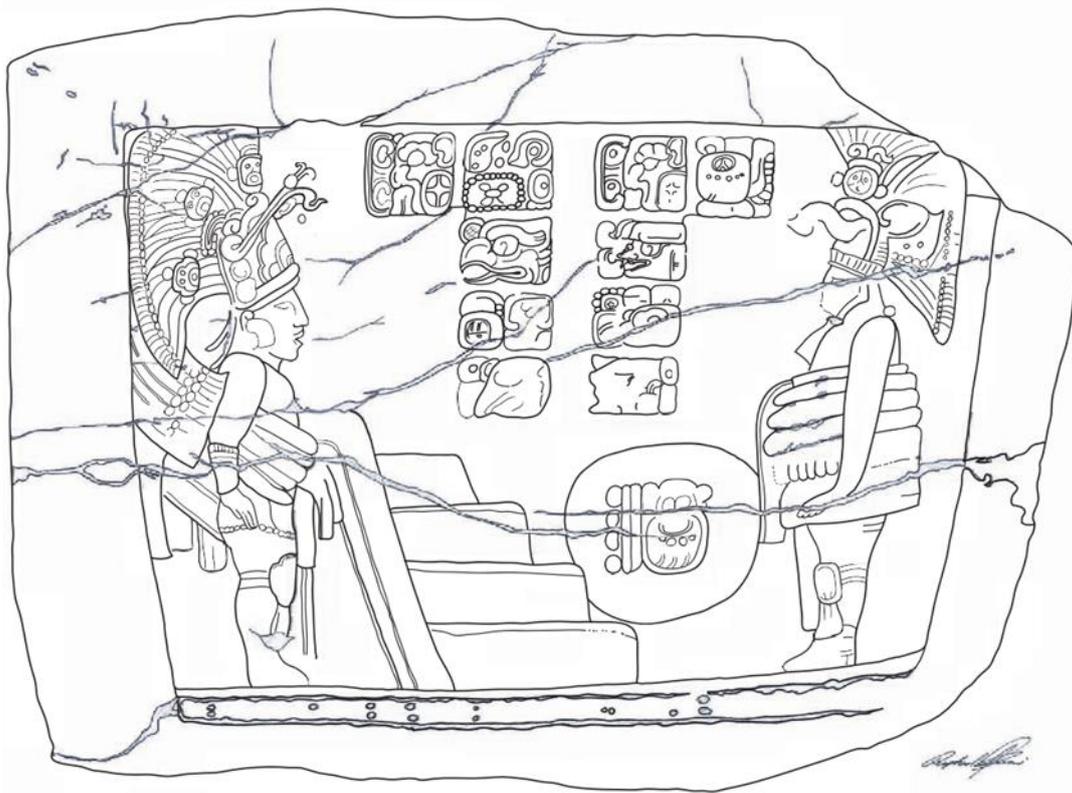
Figure 64. Ballplayer panel from Zapote Bobal. Drawing by Rafael Tunesi.

Figure 65. Ballgame panel from Laguna Perdida (after Morley 1938: p.325).

490

Step I
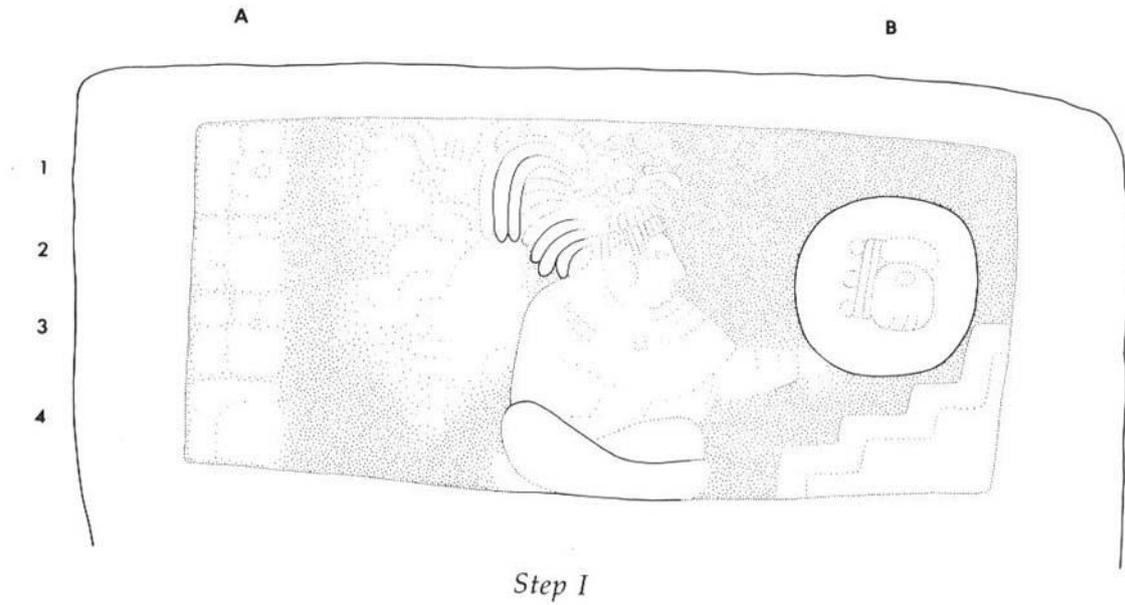
Figure 66. Ballgame panel from HS2, Step 1, Yaxchilan. Drawing by Ian Graham.

Step IV
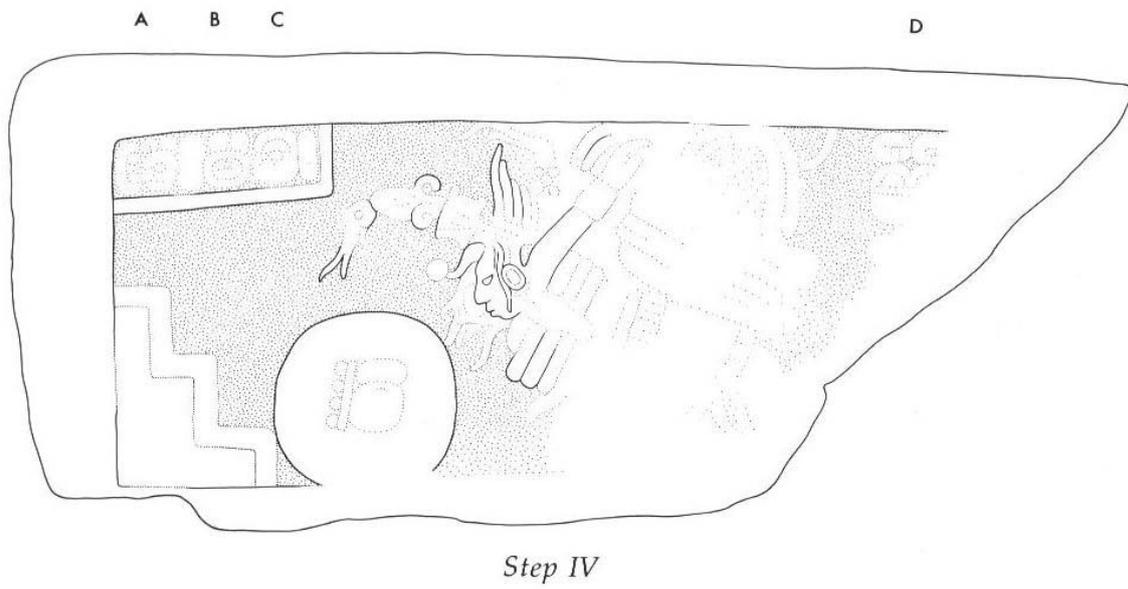
Figure 67. Ballgame panel from HS2, Step 4, Yaxchilan. Drawing by Ian Graham.

491
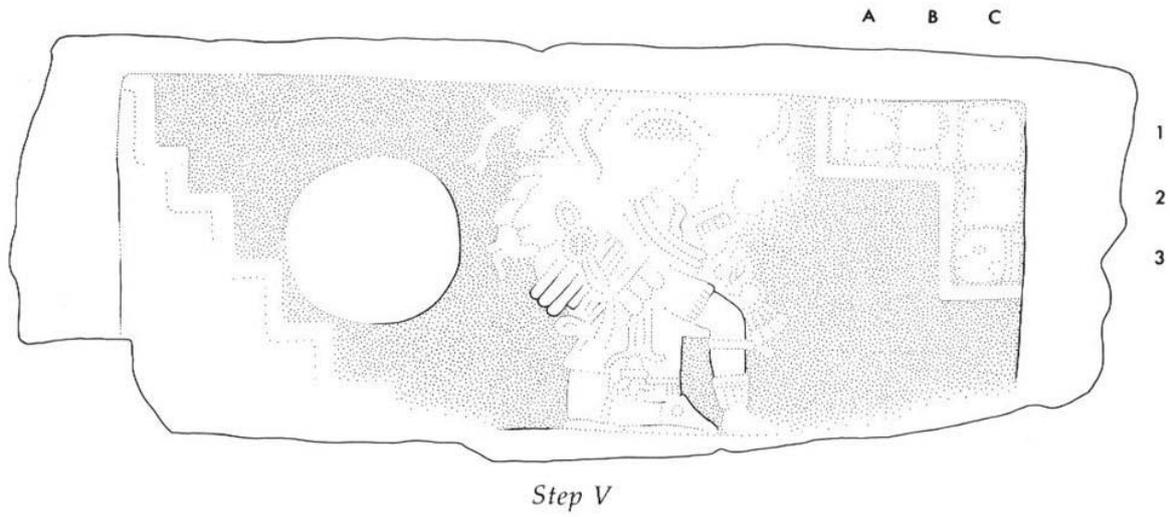
Figure 68. Ballgame panel from HS2, Step 5, Yaxchilan. Drawing by Ian Graham.
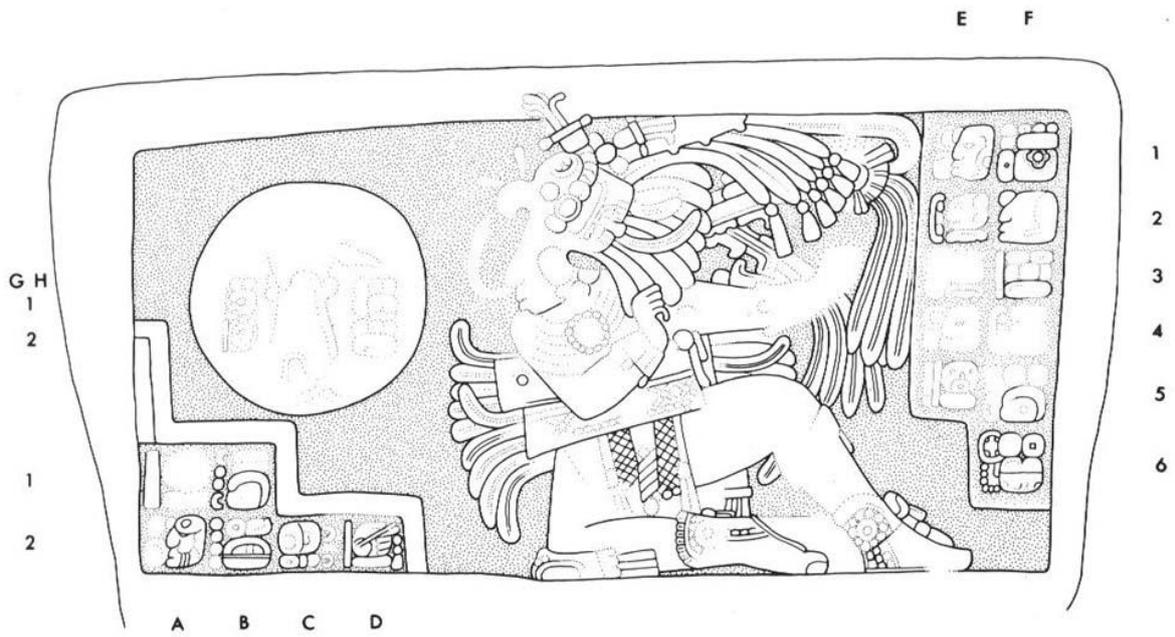
Figure 69. Ballgame panel from HS2, Step 6, Yaxchilan. Drawing by Ian Graham.
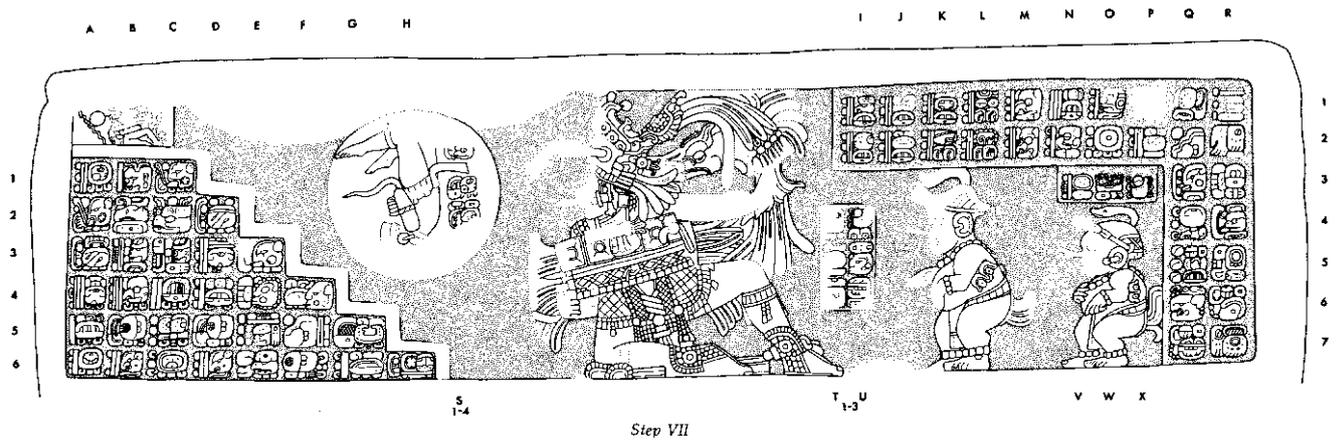
Figure 70. Ballgame panel from HS2, Step 7, Yaxchilan. Drawing by Ian Graham.
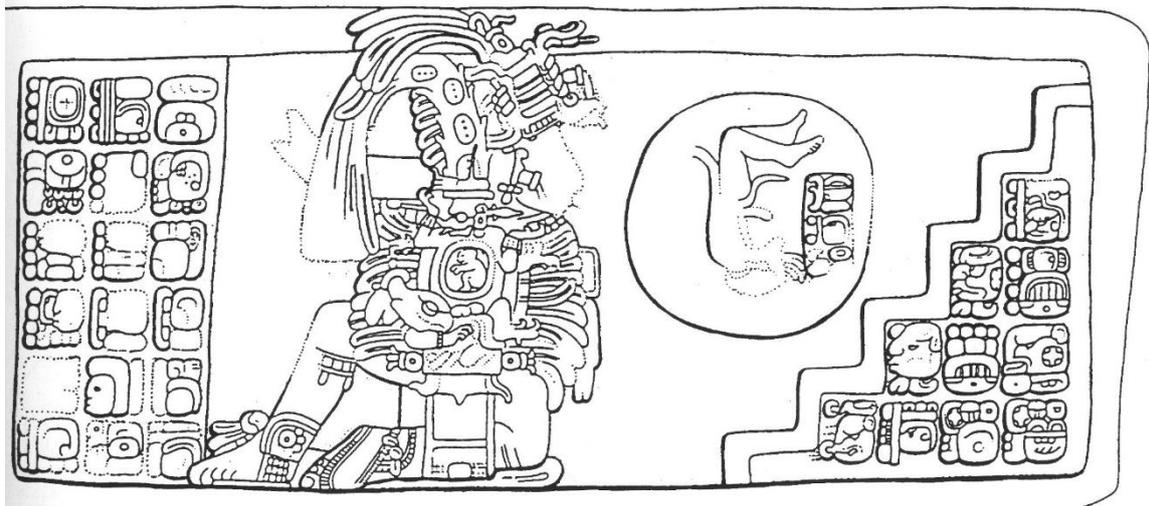
Figure 71. Ballgame panel from HS2, Step 8, Yaxchilan. Drawing by Ian Graham.
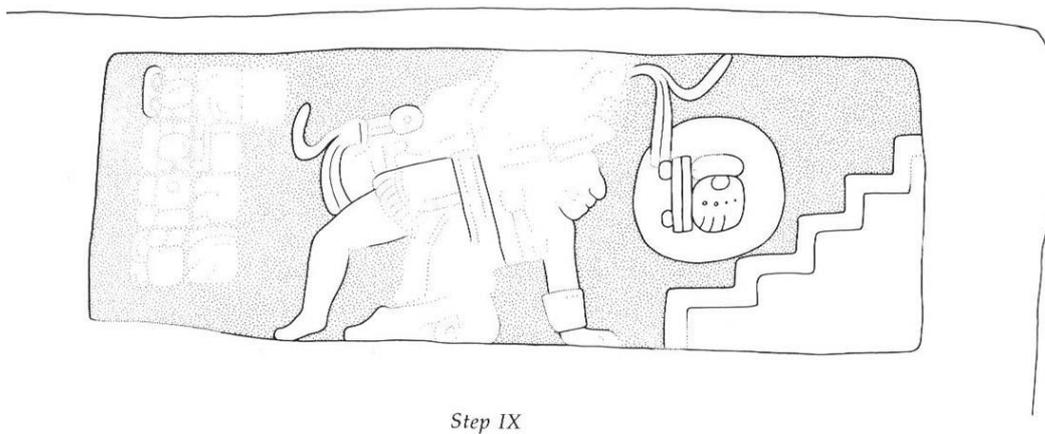
Figure 72. Ballgame panel from HS2, Step 9, Yaxchilan. Drawing by Ian Graham.

493
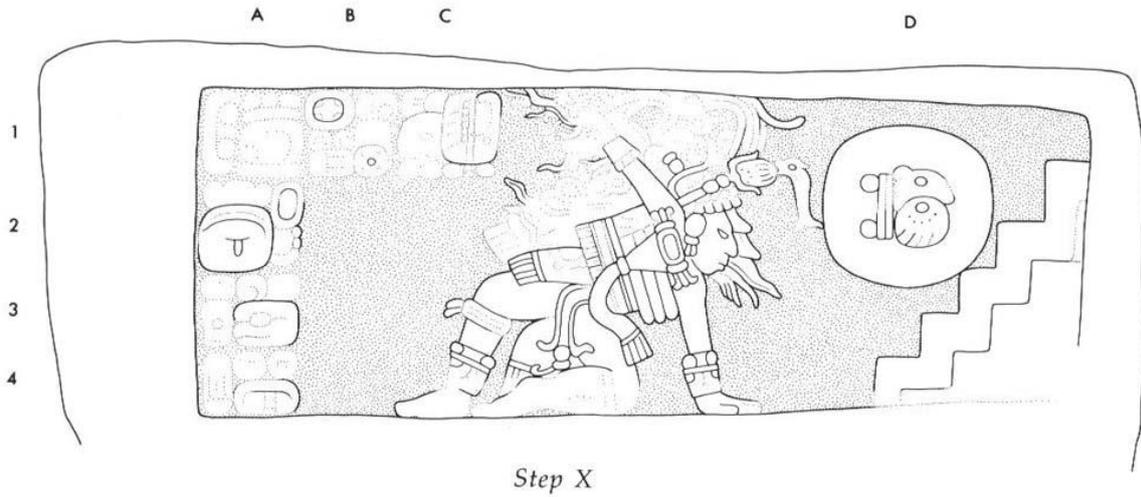
Figure 73. Ballgame panel from HS2, Step 10, Yaxchilan. Drawing by Ian Graham.
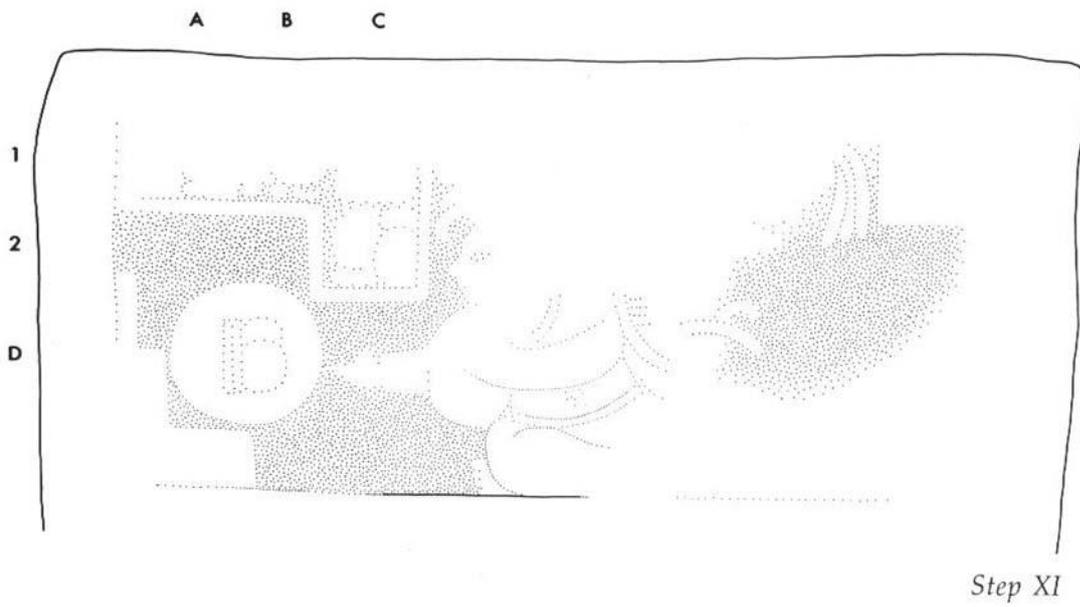
Figure 74. Ballgame panel from HS2, Step 11, Yaxchilan. Drawing by Ian Graham.
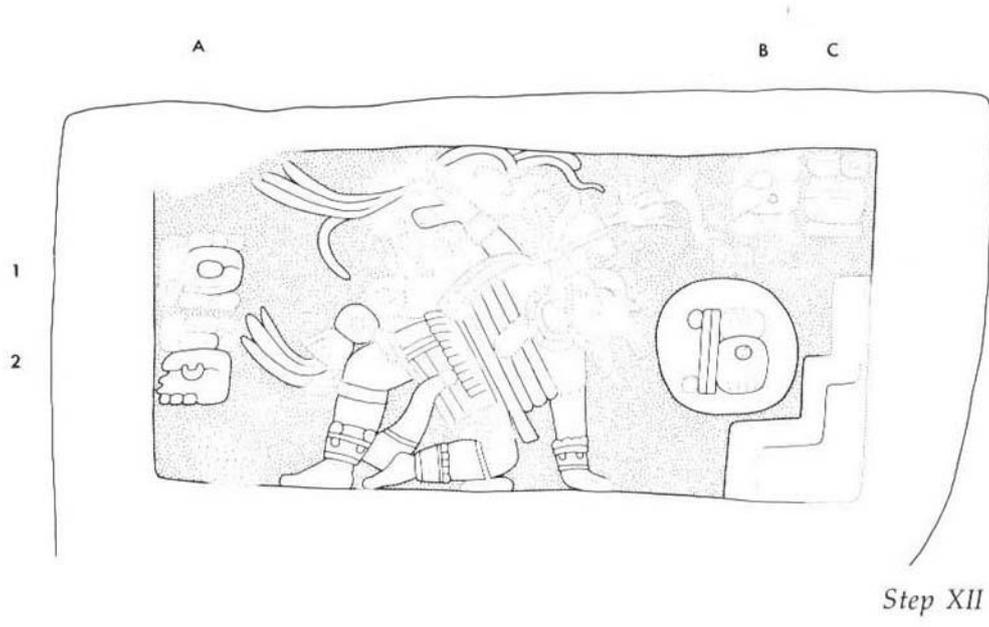
Figure 75. Ballgame panel from HS2, Step 12, Yaxchilan. Drawing by Ian Graham.
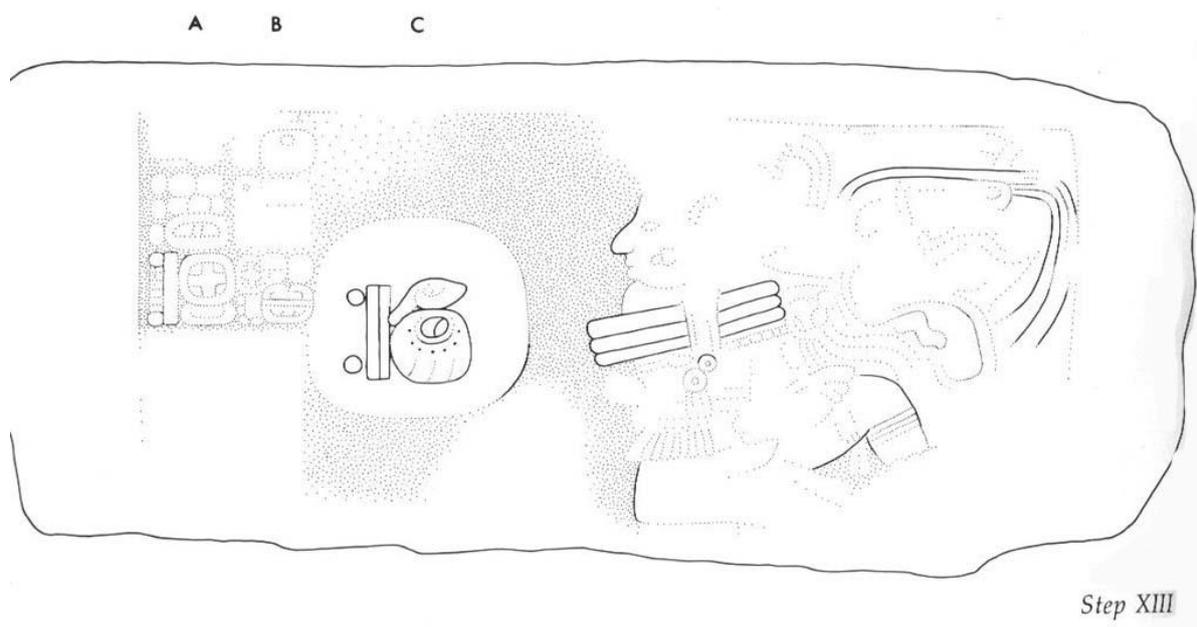
Figure 76. Ballgame panel from HS2, Step 13, Yaxchilan. Drawing by Ian Graham.

495

Figure 77. Ballgame panel fro Quirigua. Drawing by M. Aguirre.

Figure 78. El Zapote, Stela 5. Drawing by Ian Graham.
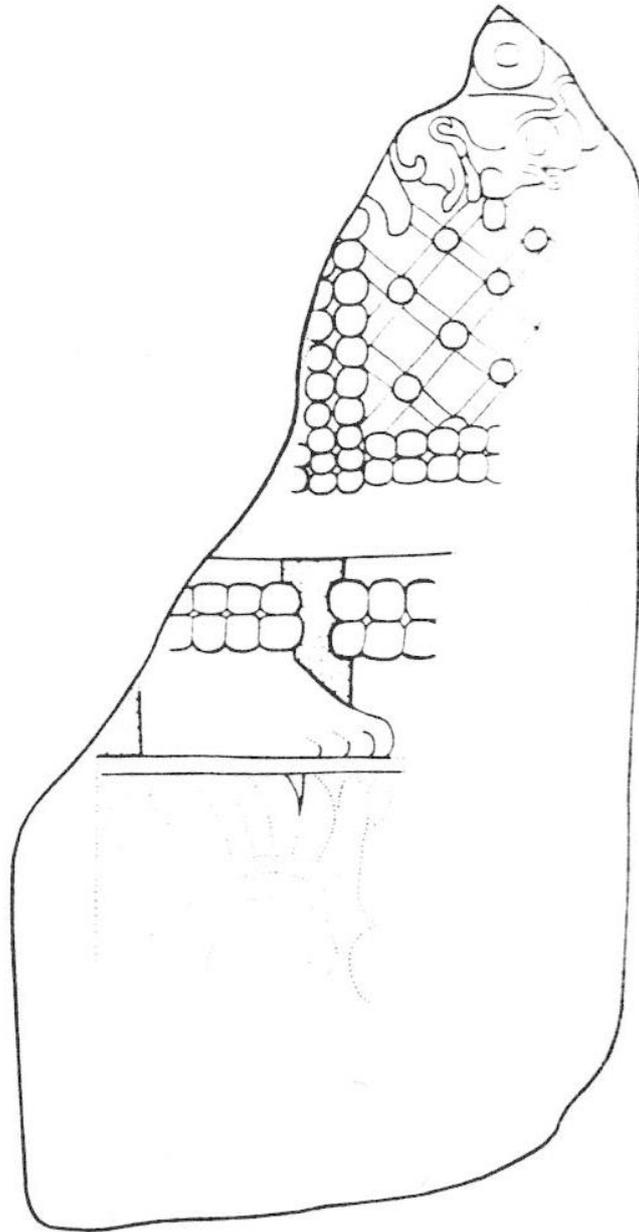
Figure 79. Fragment of stela 7, Yaxha. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.
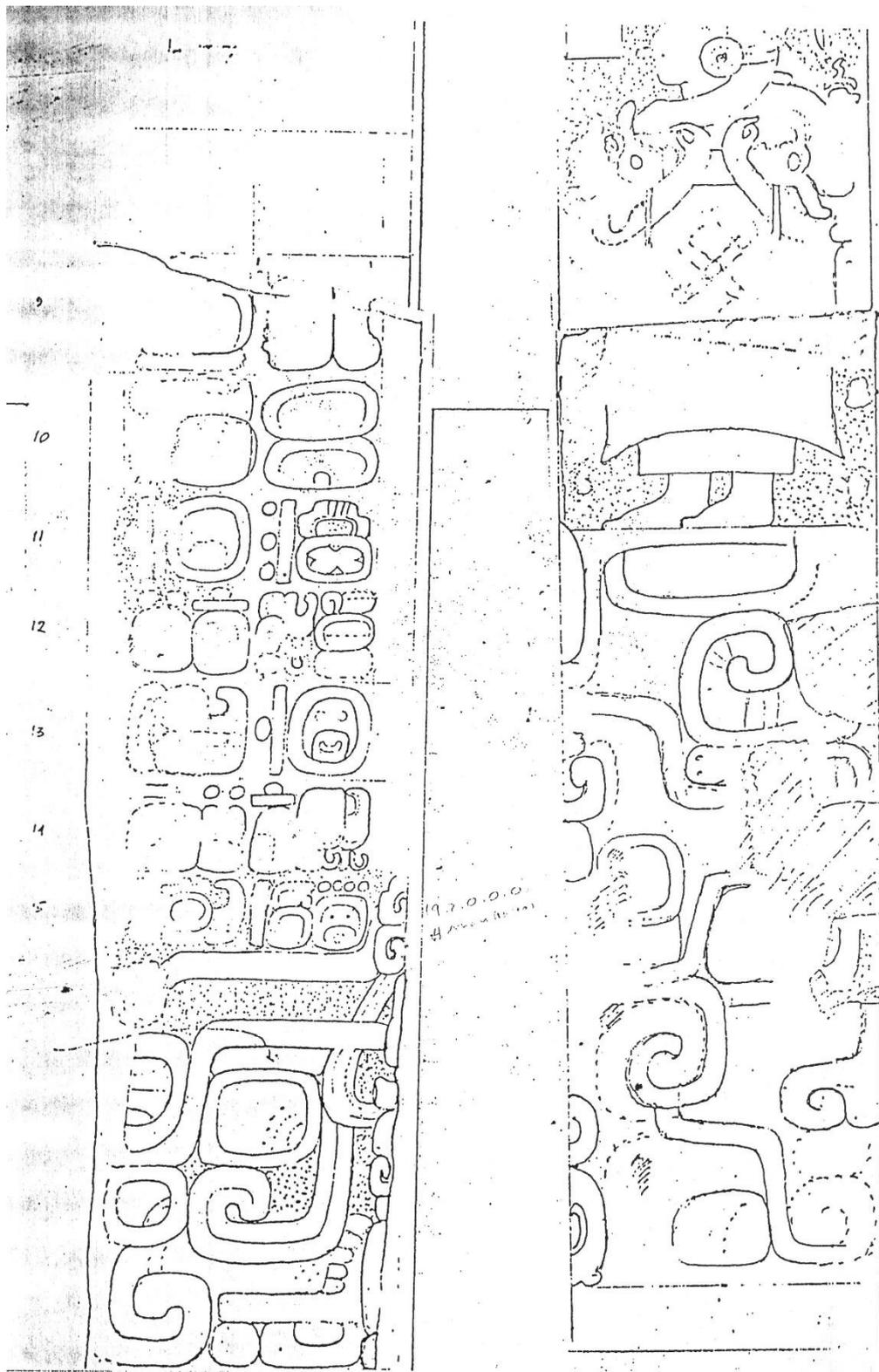
Figure 80. Stela 2, Tres Islas. Drawing by Ian Graham.

Figure 81. Yomop stela, (after http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/maya/stela-yomop.jpg).
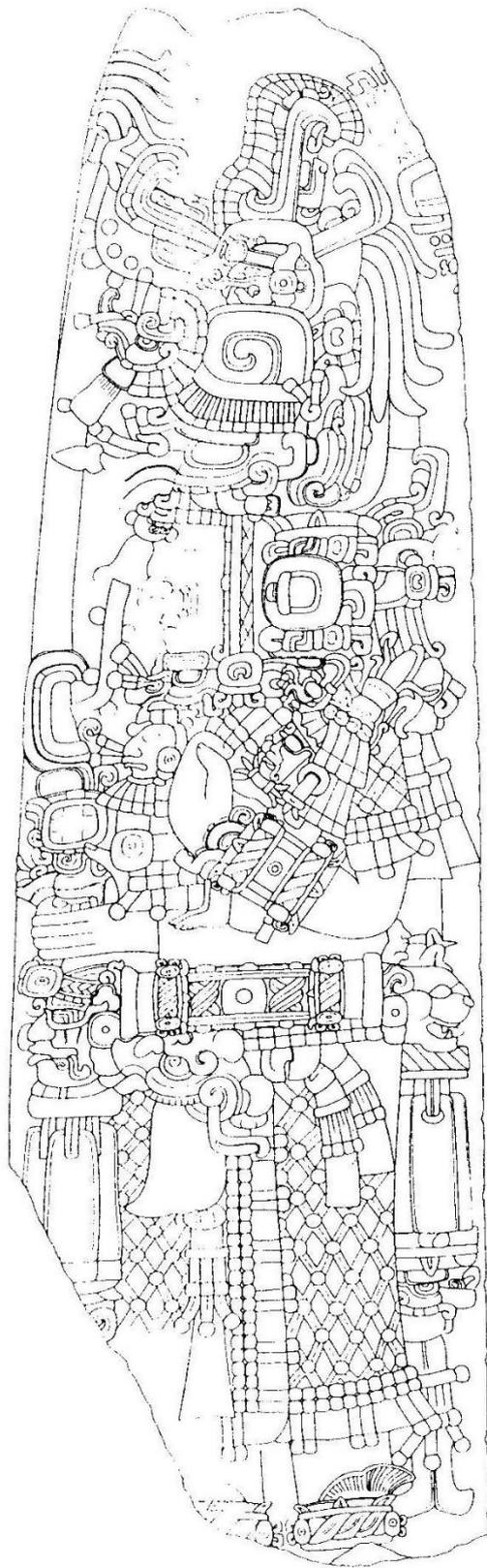
Figure 82. Stela 40, Tikal. Drawing by Fernardo Luin.

G   H

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3
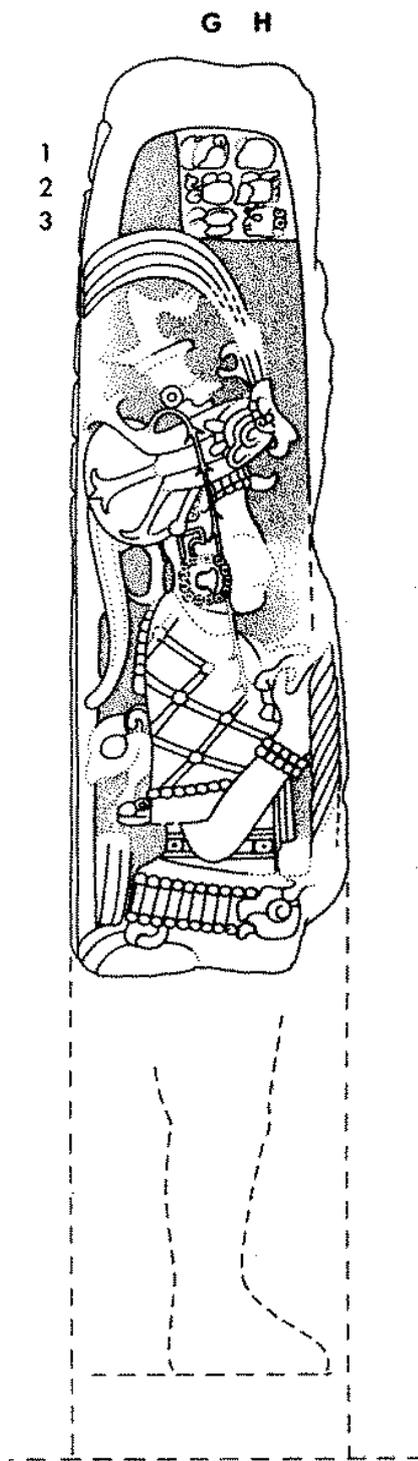
Figure 83. Stela 25 (back), Tikal, (after Jones and Satterwaite 1982 Fig.42).

502
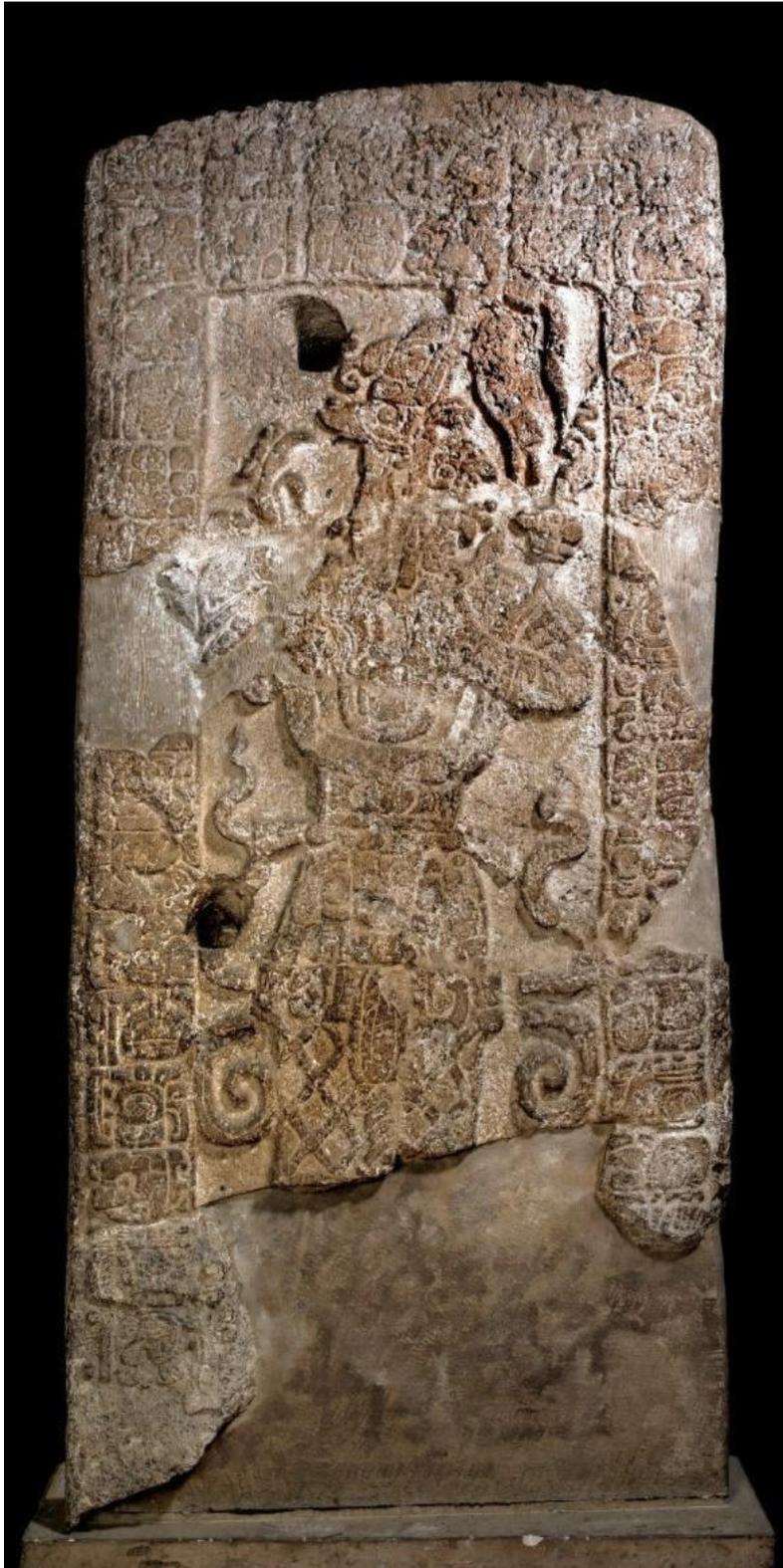
Figure 84. Stela 1, Tulum (after Pullen and Emeric 2020).

Figure 85. Altar, unknown precedence. Photo ©CEMYK (after Beliaev *et al.* 2013: Page: 321).
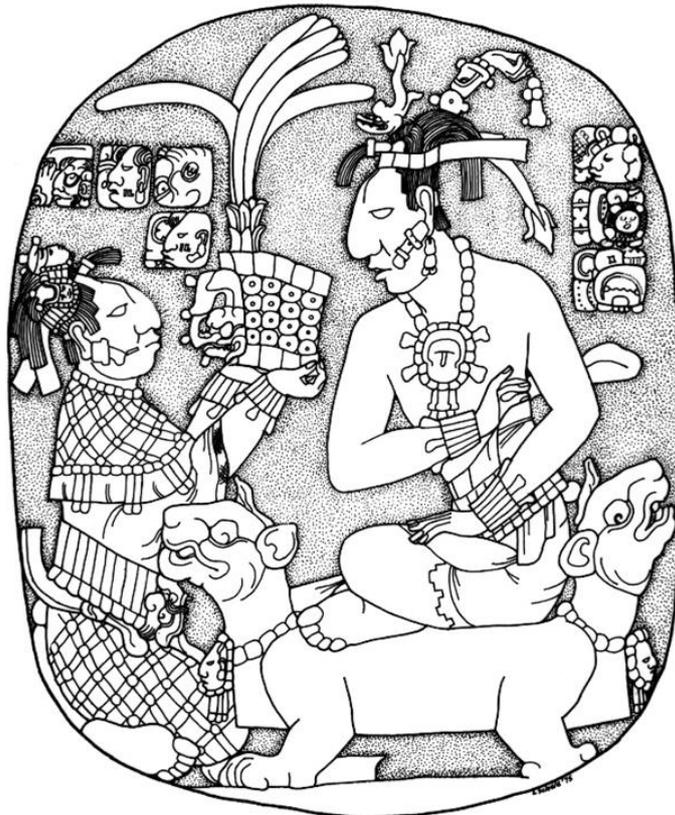
Figure 86. The Oval Panel, Palenque. Drawing by Linda Schele.
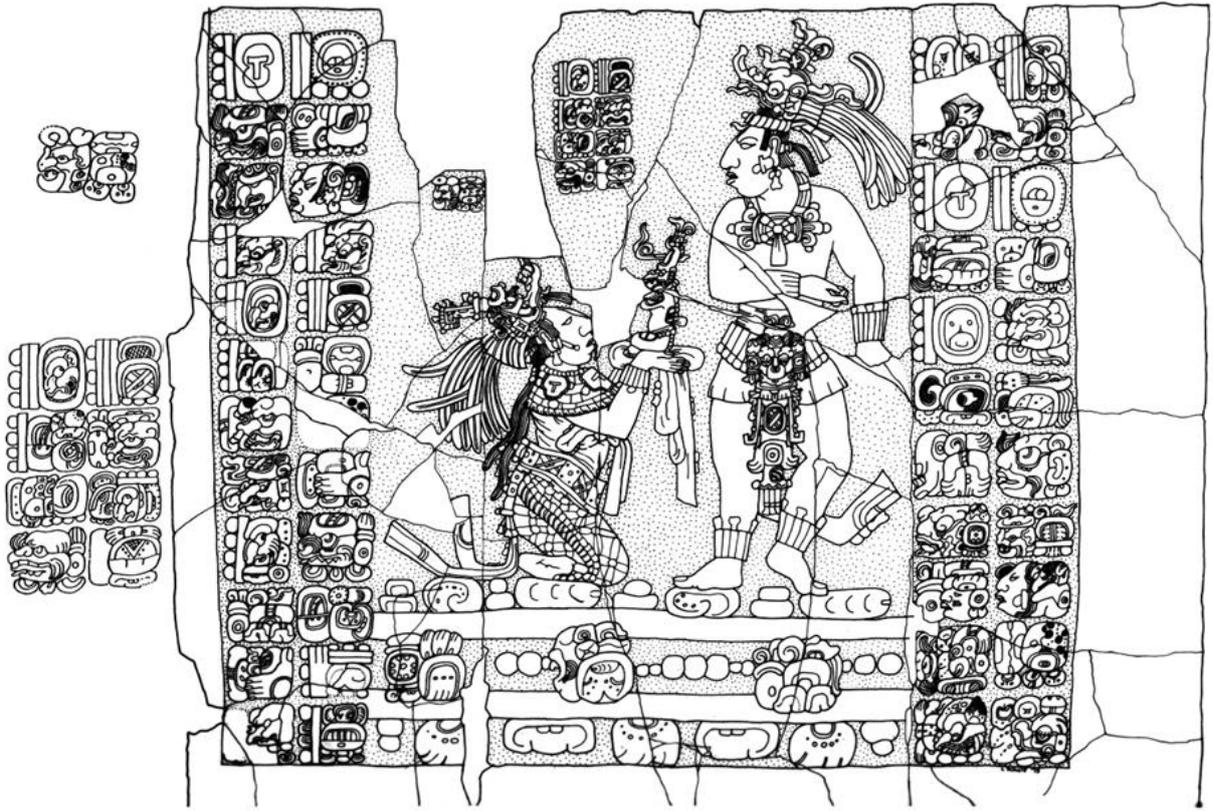
Figure 87. Panel from Temple XIV, Palenque. Drawing by Linda Schele.
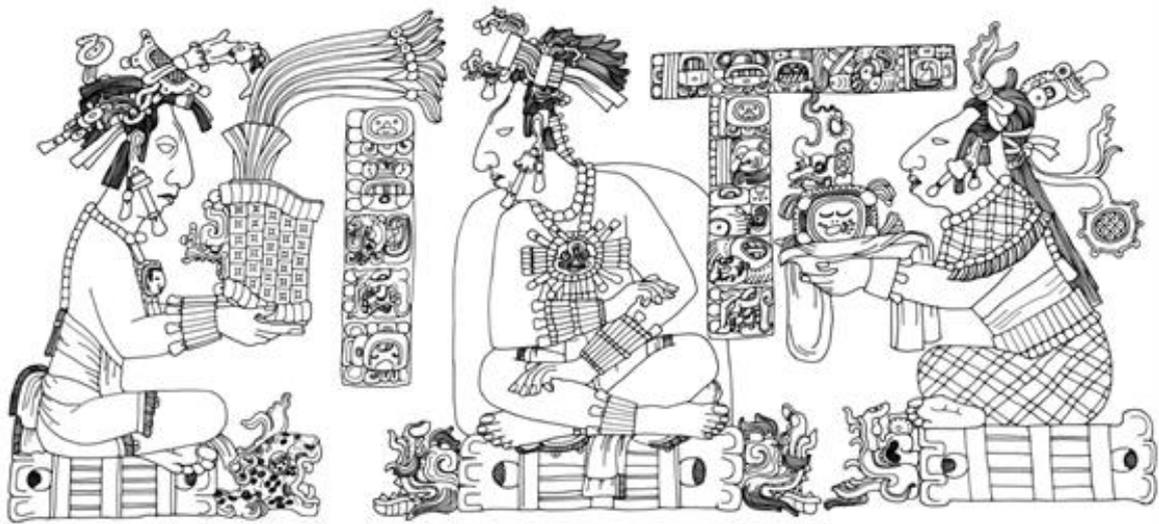
Figure 88. Palace Panel, Palenque. Drawing by Linda Schele.

Figure 89. Pilar C, Temple of Inscriptions. Drawing by Linda Schele.
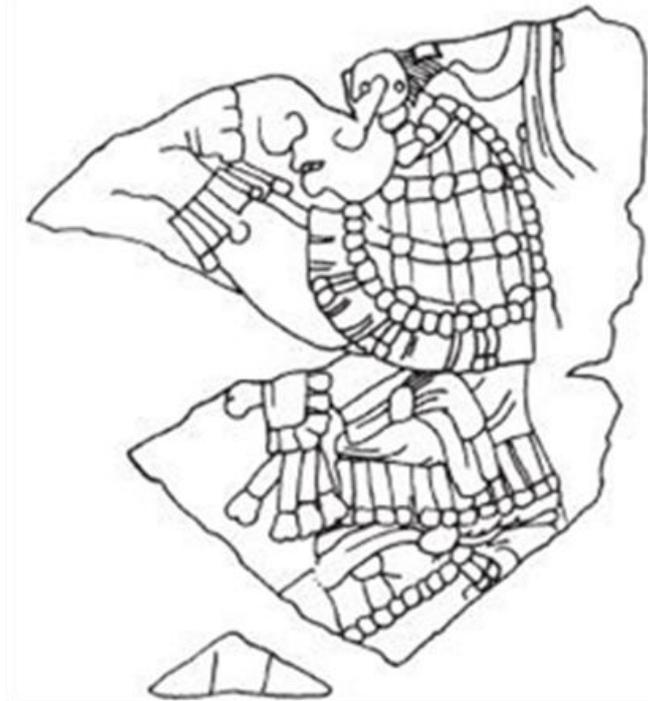
Figure 90. Fragment of the tablero, Bodega no 186. Drawing by Linda Schele.

Figure 91. Panel D from House D, Palenque.Drawing by Merle Greene Robertson.
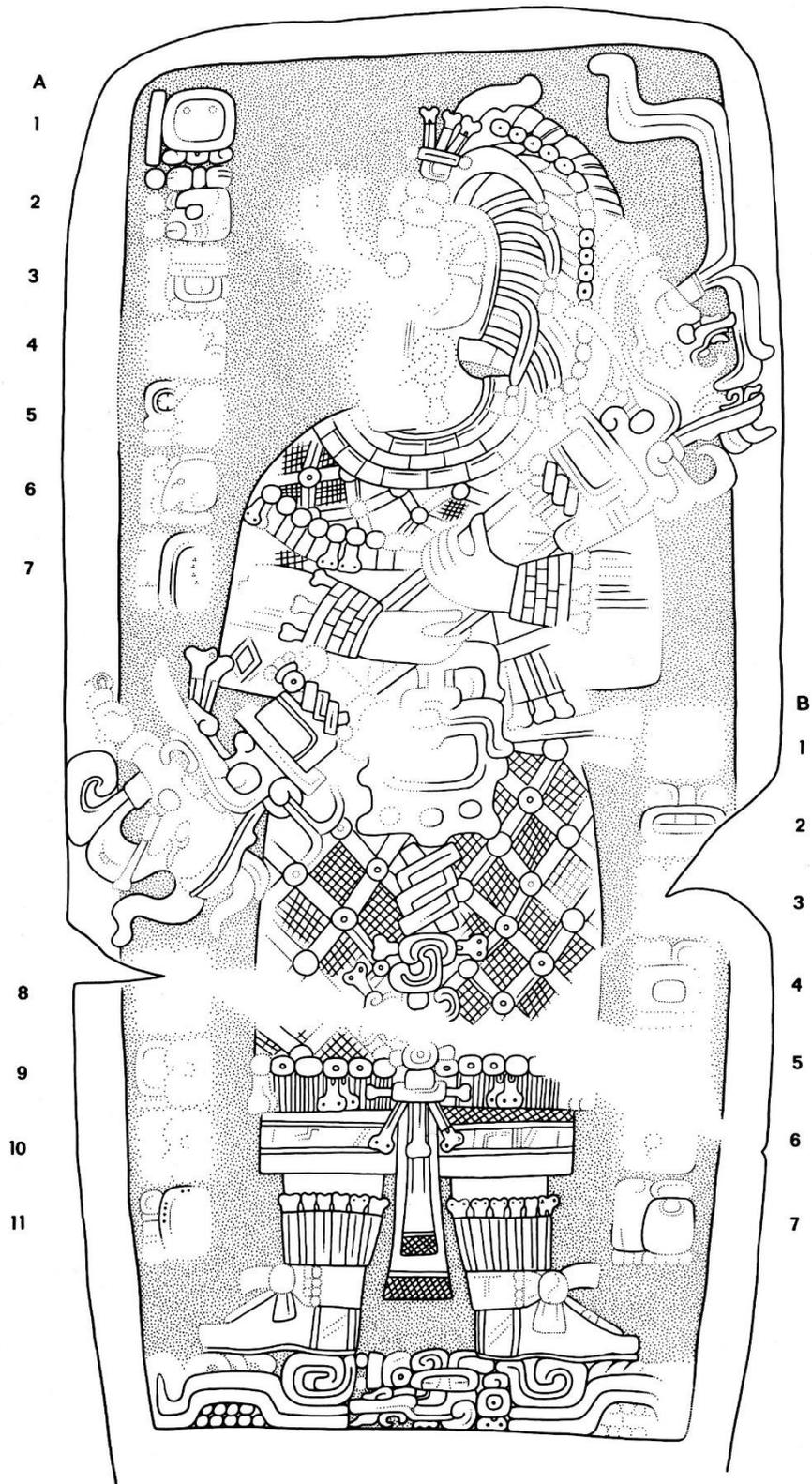
Figure 92. Stela 31, Naranjo. Drawing by Ian Graham.

Figure 93. Stela 1, Altar de Sacrificios (after Nelson 1998:fig.5). Drawing by Ian Graham.
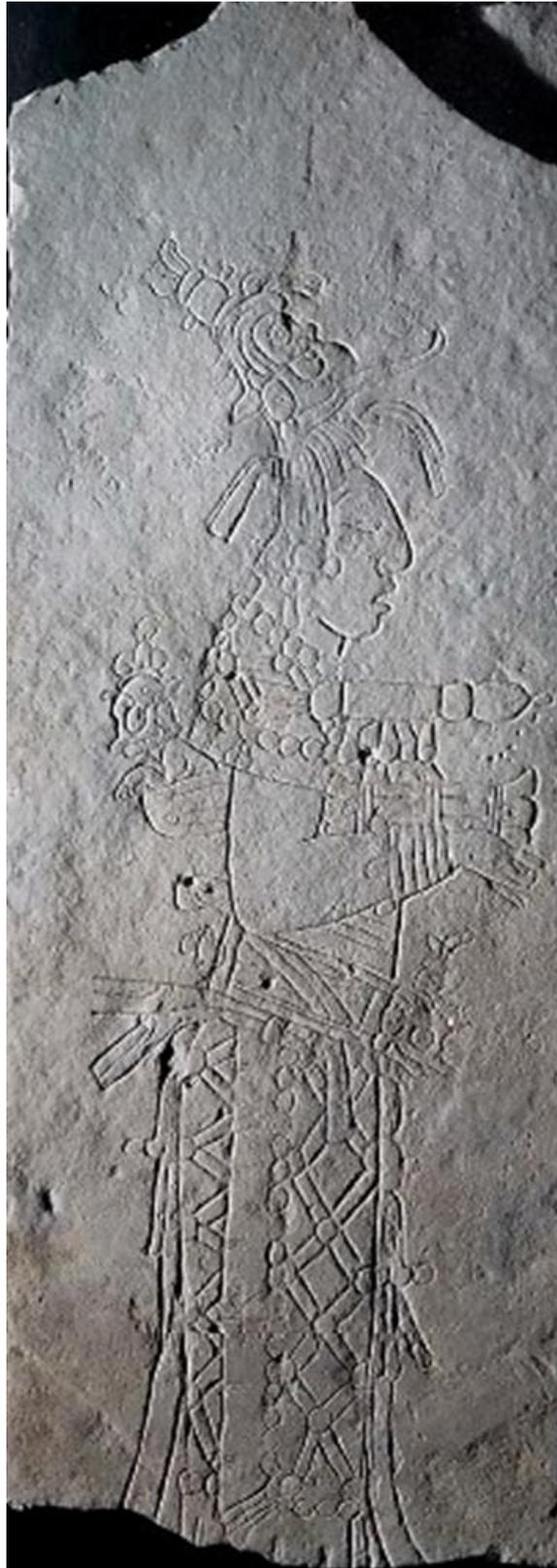
Figure 94. Panel from Xupa, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco.

510

Figure 95. Stela 23 de Calakmul (after Marcus 1987: 168).

511
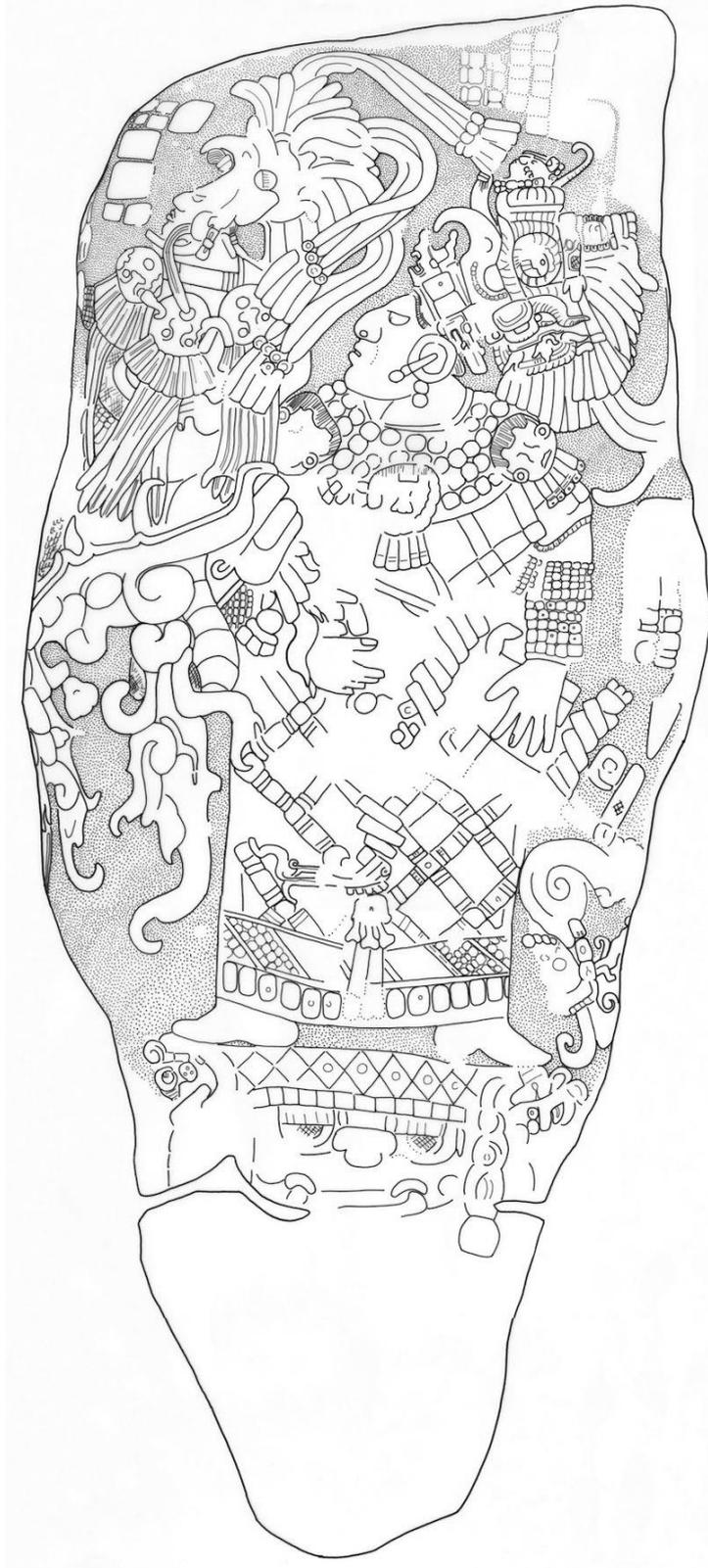
Figure 96. Stela 6, Itzimte. Drawing by Bruce Love.

Figure 97. Door jamb 2, Pomona. Photo and drawing by Roberto García Moll.
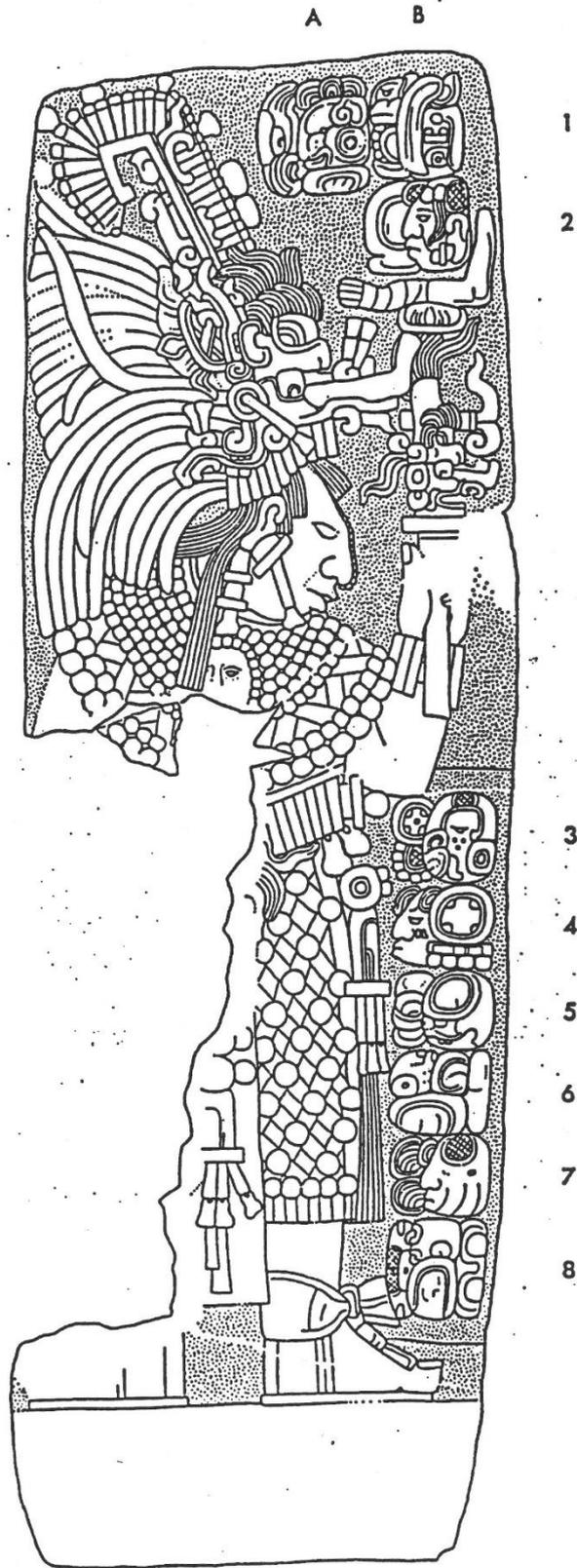
Figure 98. Door Jamb 3, Pomona. Drawing by Peter Mathews.

514

Figure 99. San Francisco de Young Museum Stela. © San Francisco de Young Museum.

Figure 100. Chicago Art Institute Stela. © Chicago Art Institute.
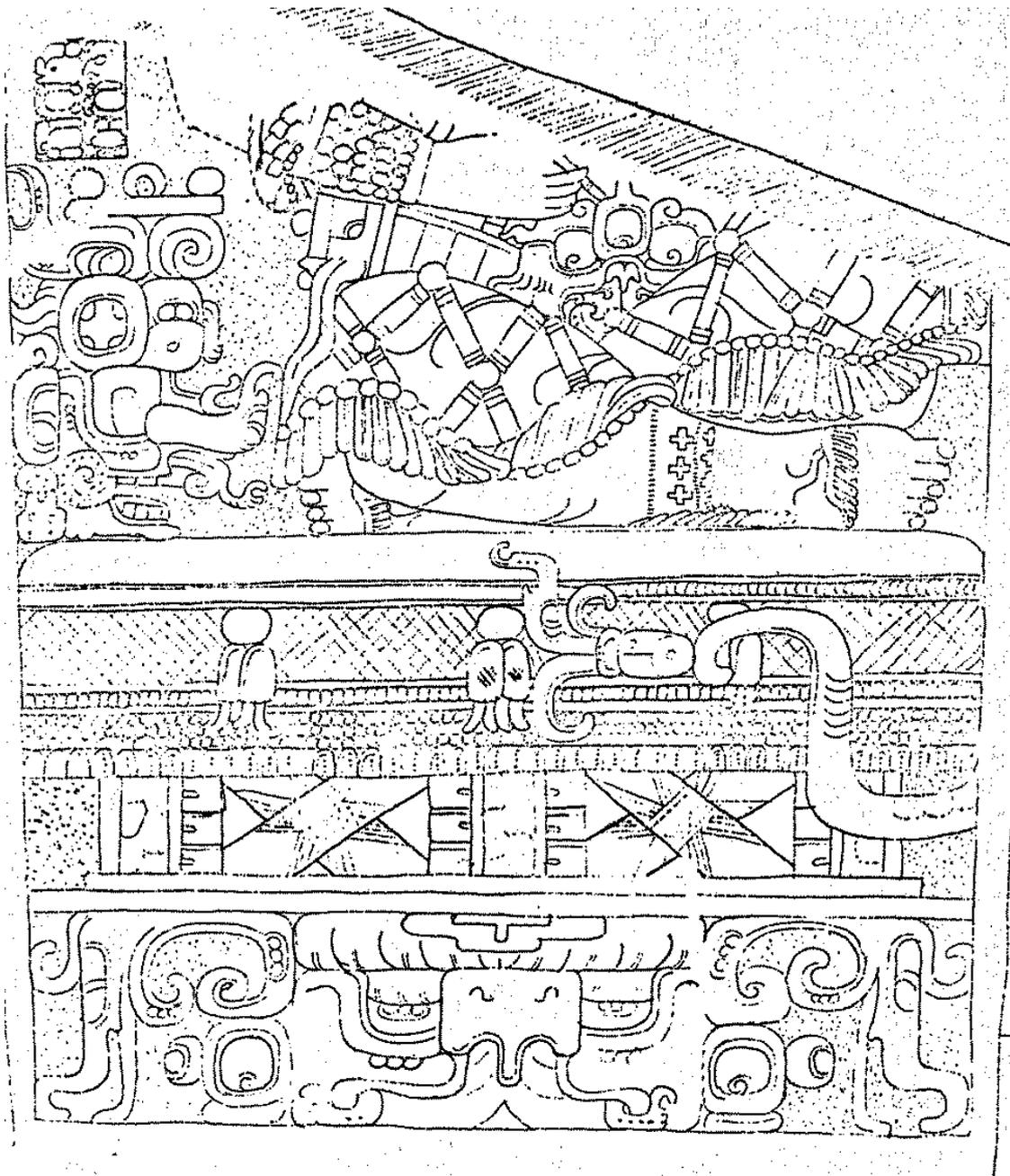
Figure 101. Stela 1, Cancuen. Drawing by Nikolai Grube.
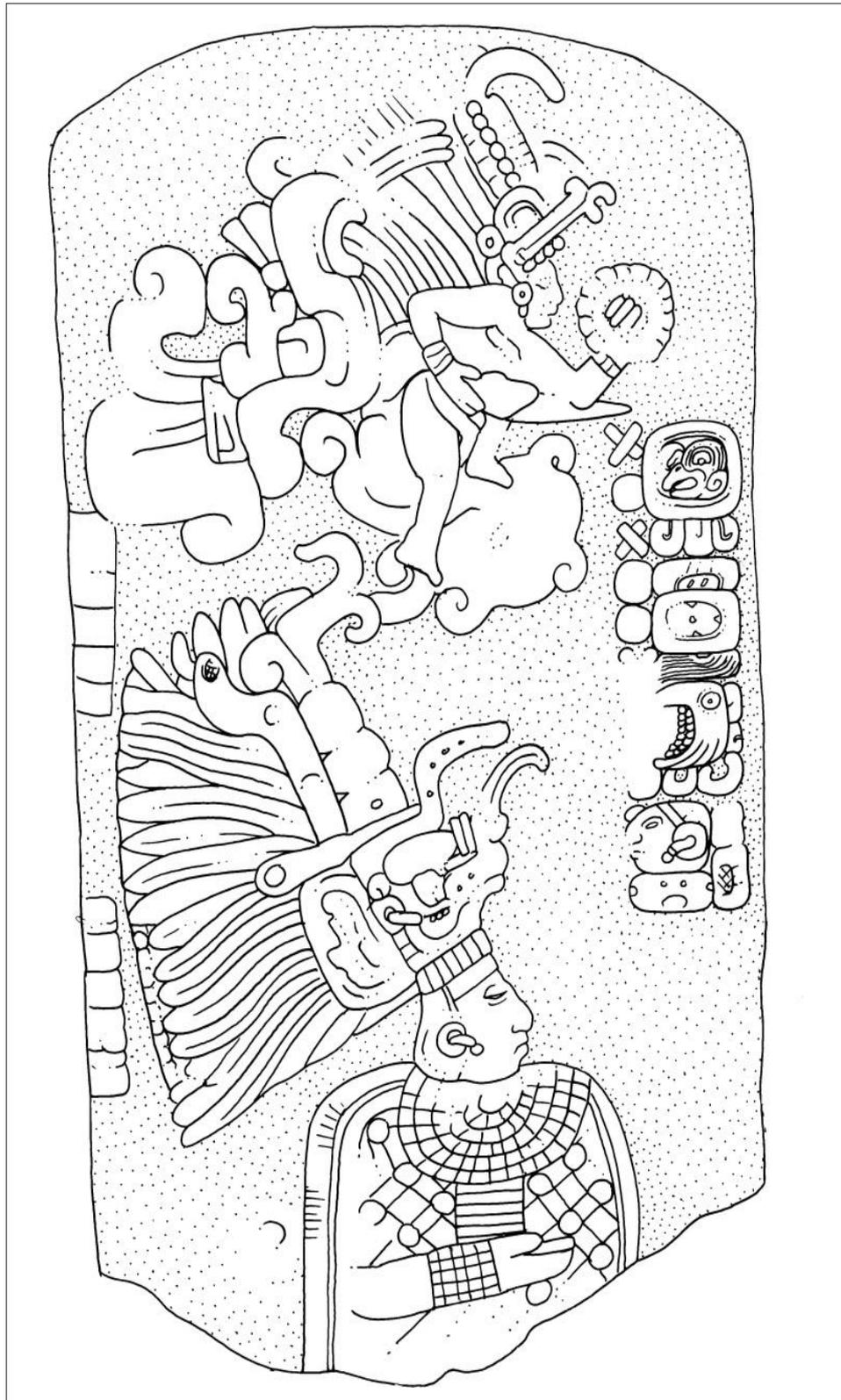
Figure 102. Stela fragment in private collection (after Houston 2008a: Fig10.7).

518

Figure 103. Stela 27, Naachtun. Photo by Alfonso Lacadena.
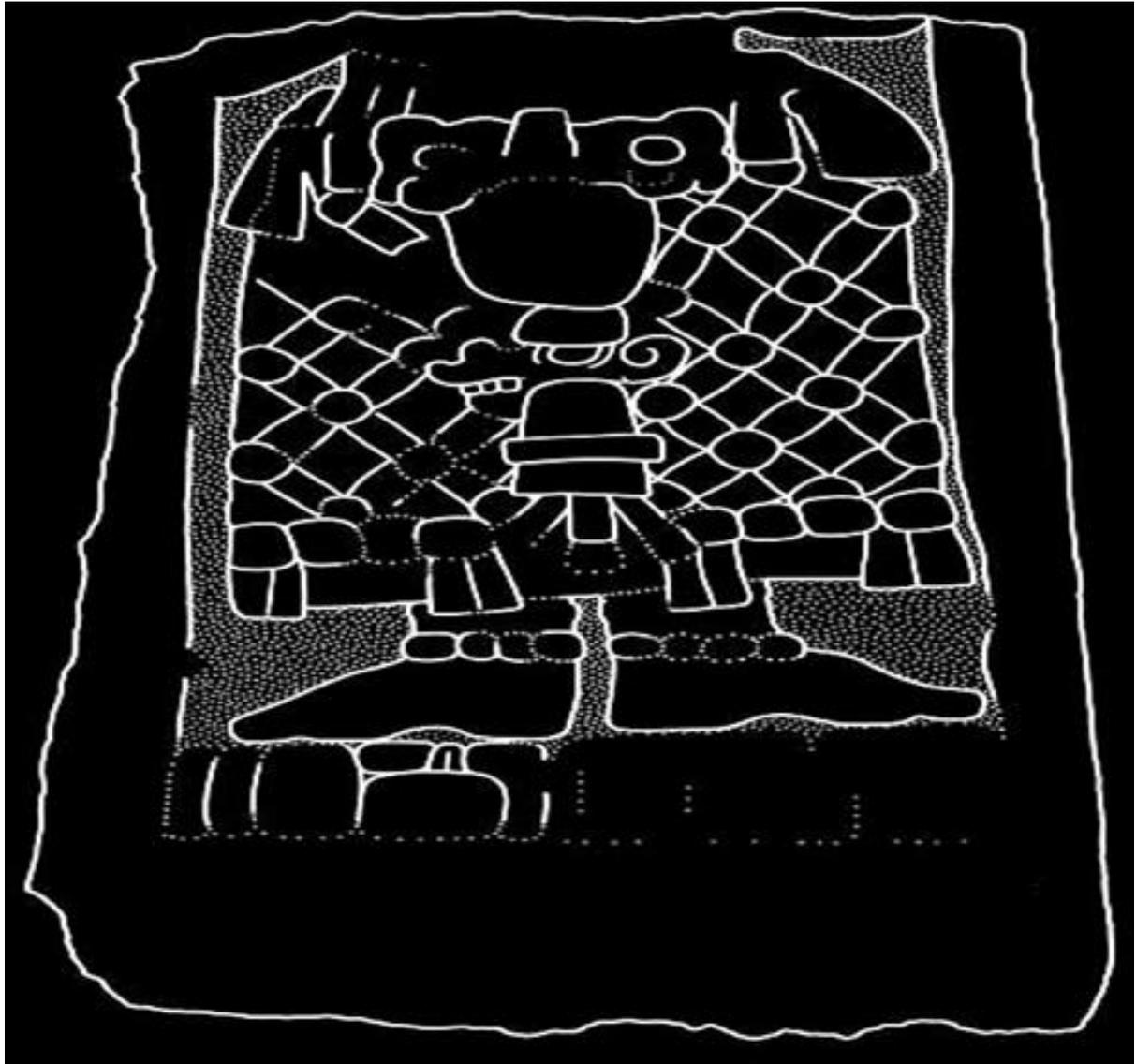
Figure 104. Stela 27, Naachtun. Drawing by Peter Mathews.
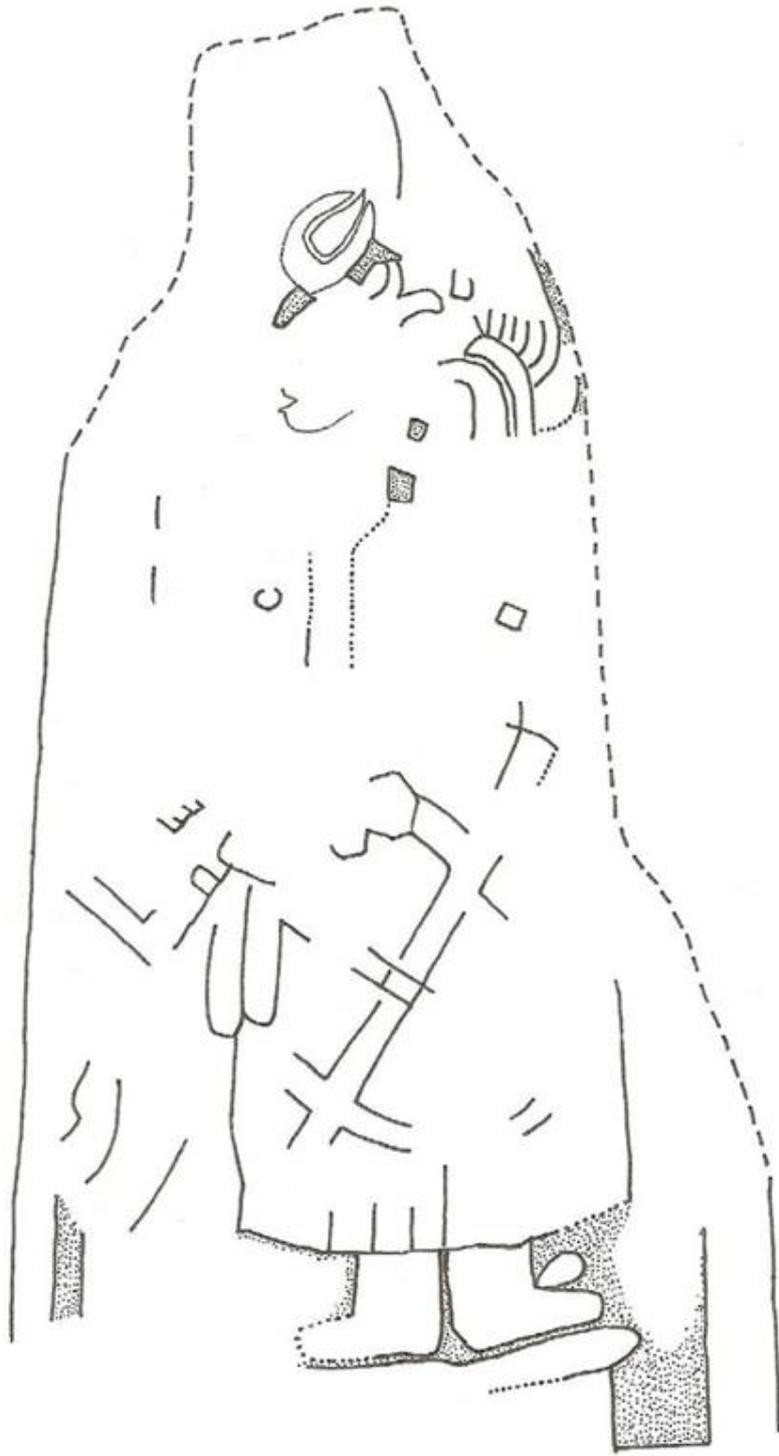
Figure 105. Stela 16, Oxpemul. Drawing by Hubert Robichaux.

521
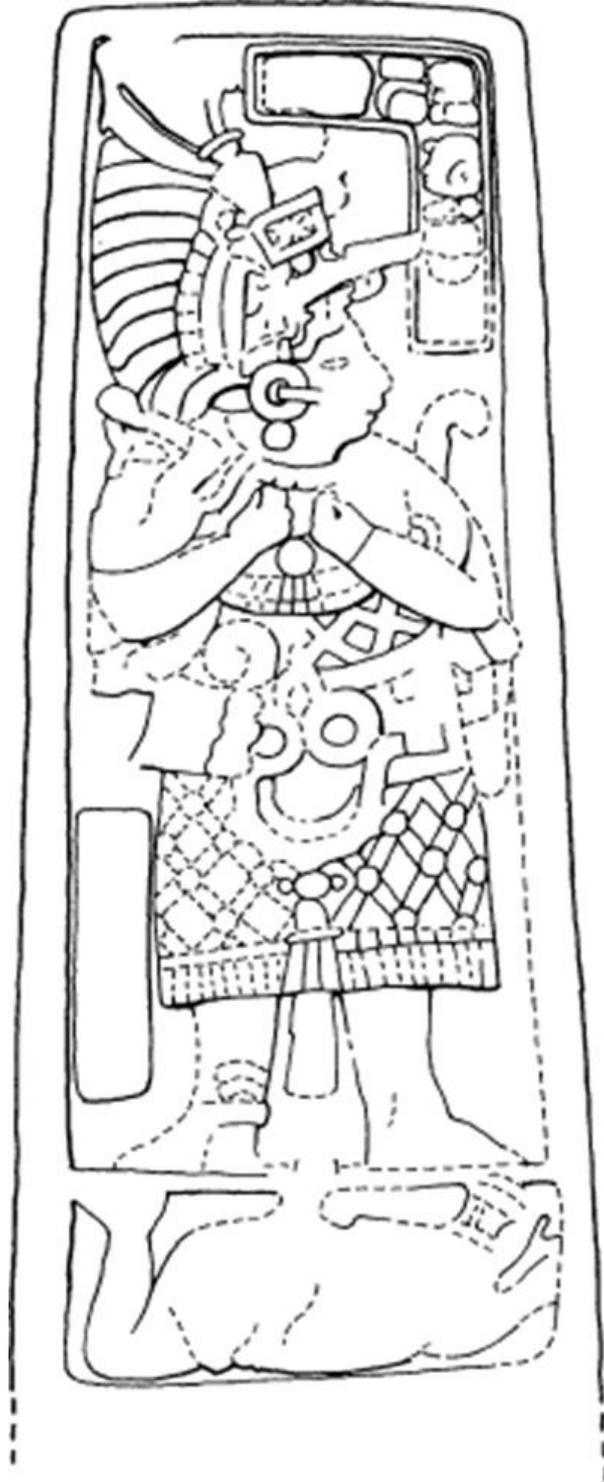
Figure 106. Stela 28, Calakmul (after Rupert and Denison 1943: Plate 49).
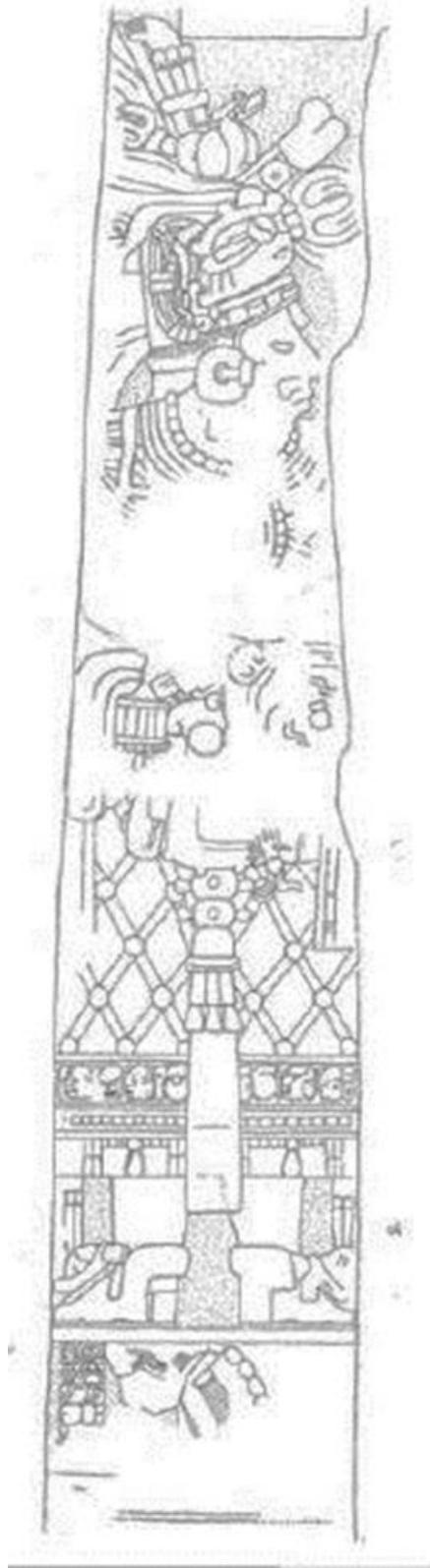
Figure 107. Stela 9 (back), Calakmul. Drawing by Eric von Euw.

523

Figure 108. Stela 23, Calakmul (after Marcus 1987: 168).
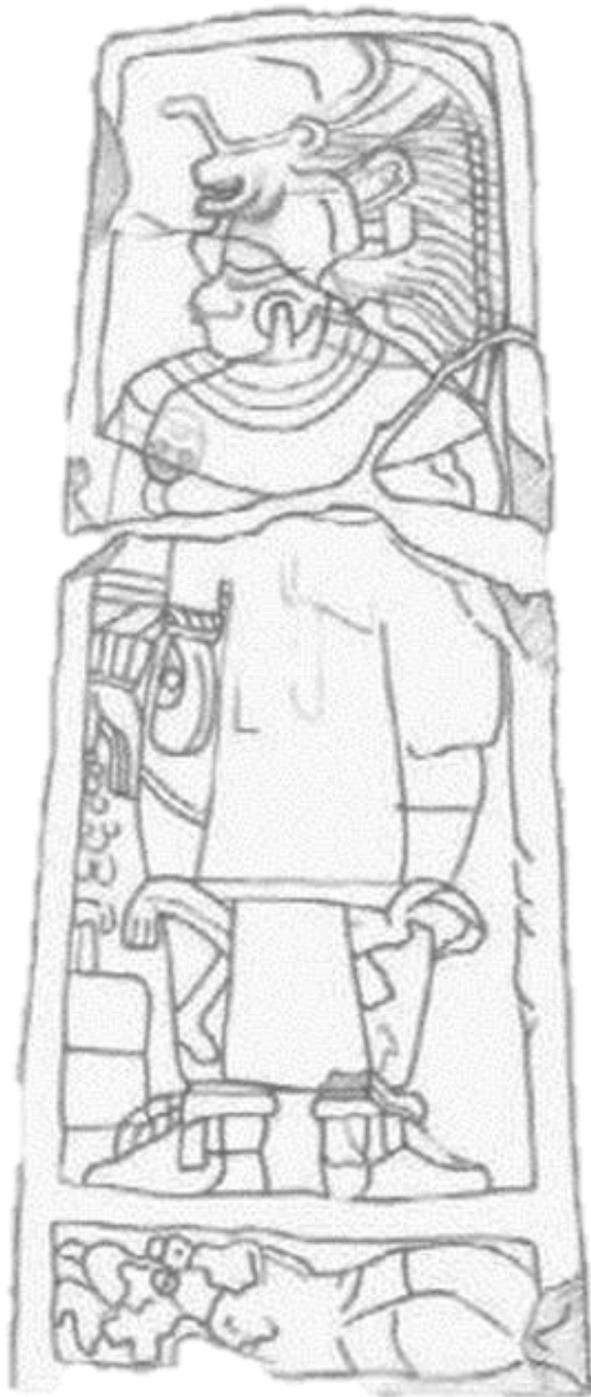
Figure 109. Stela 116, Calakmul. Drawing by R. G. Valgañón.
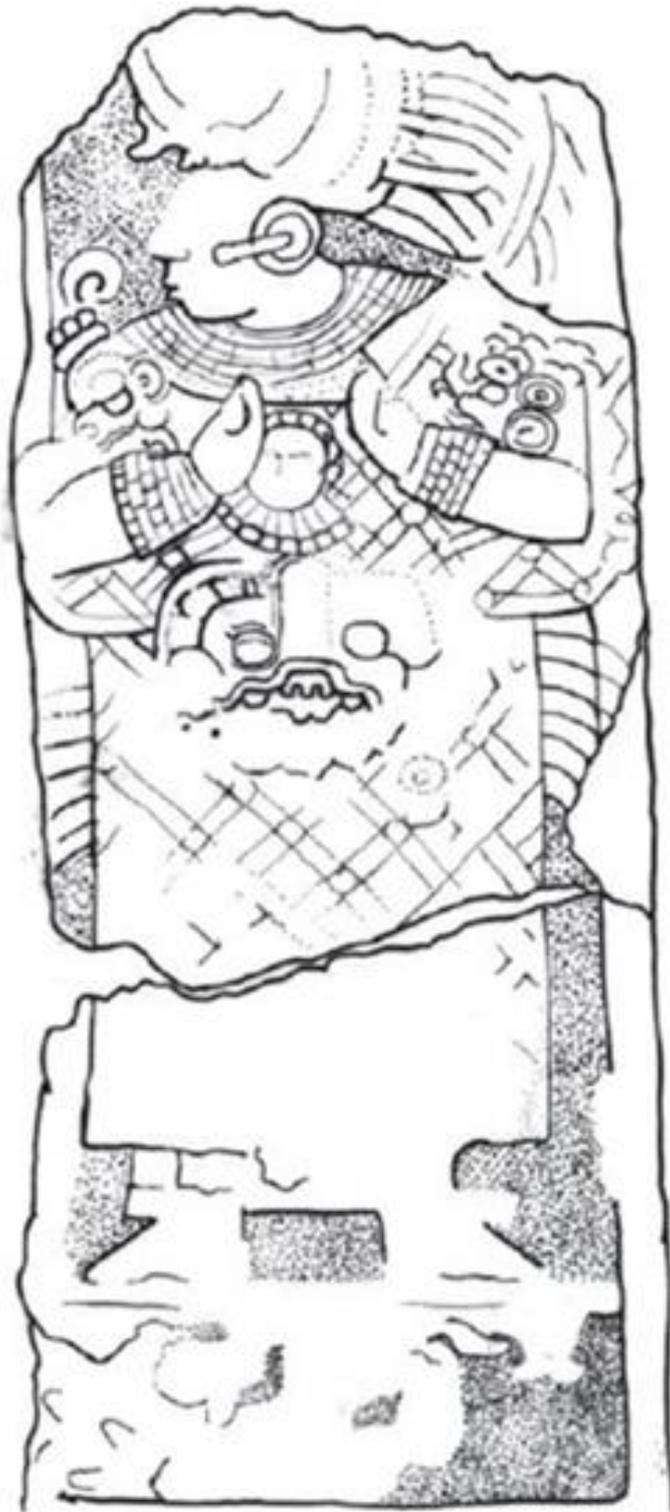
Figure 110. Stela 88. Drawing by A. Rodríguez Manjavacas.

526
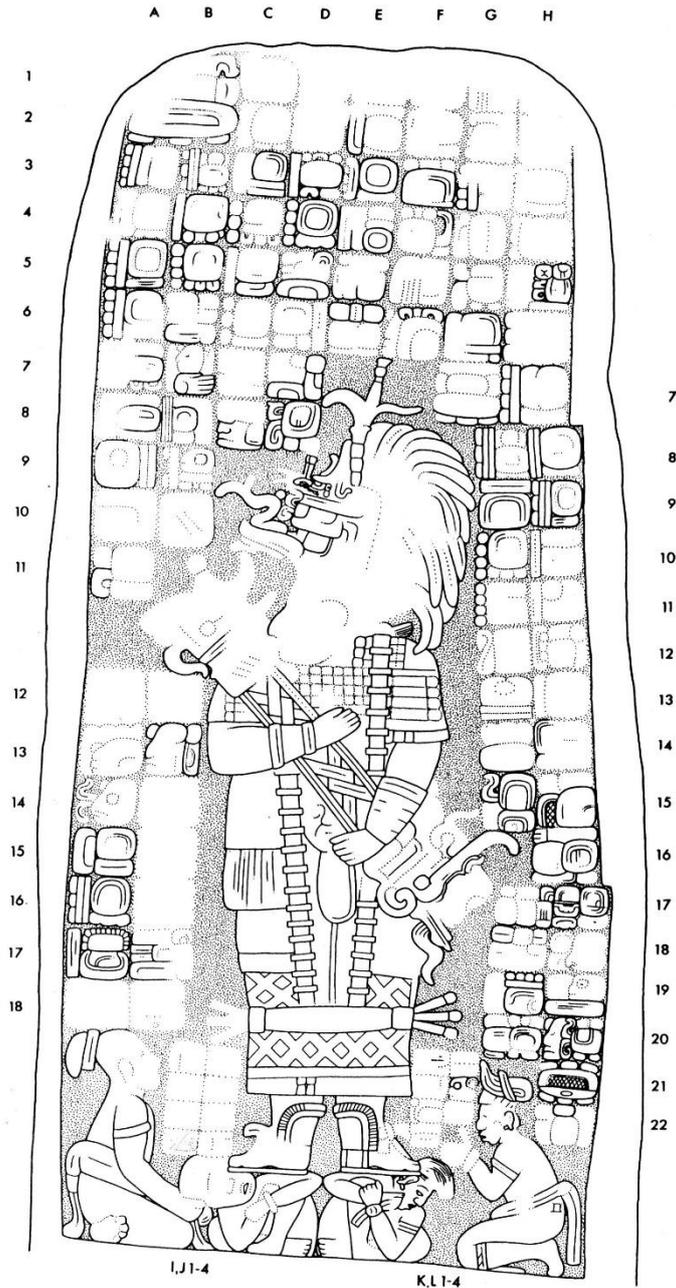
Figure 111. Stela 1, Coba. Drawing by Eric von Euw and Ian Graham.

527
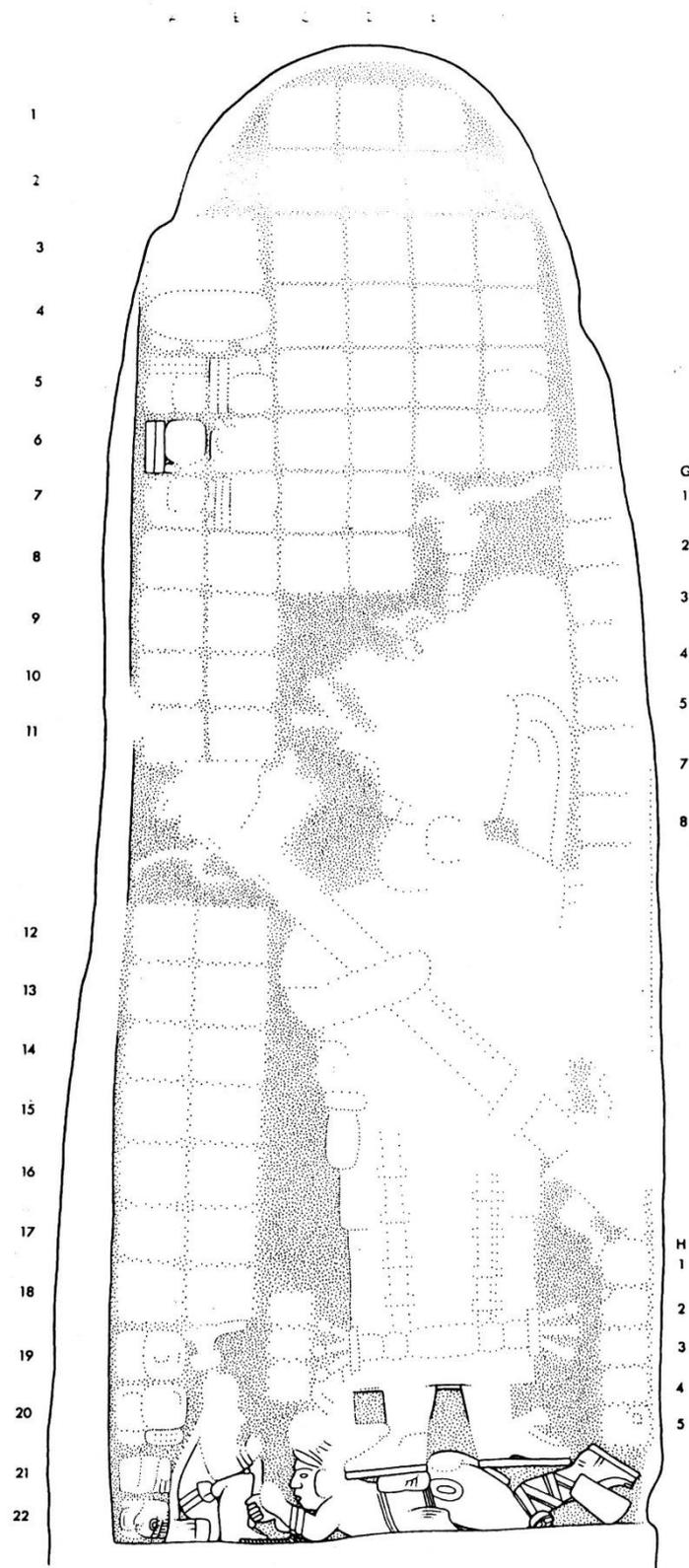
Figure 112. Stela 2, Coba. Drawing by Eric von Euw and Ian Graham.

528
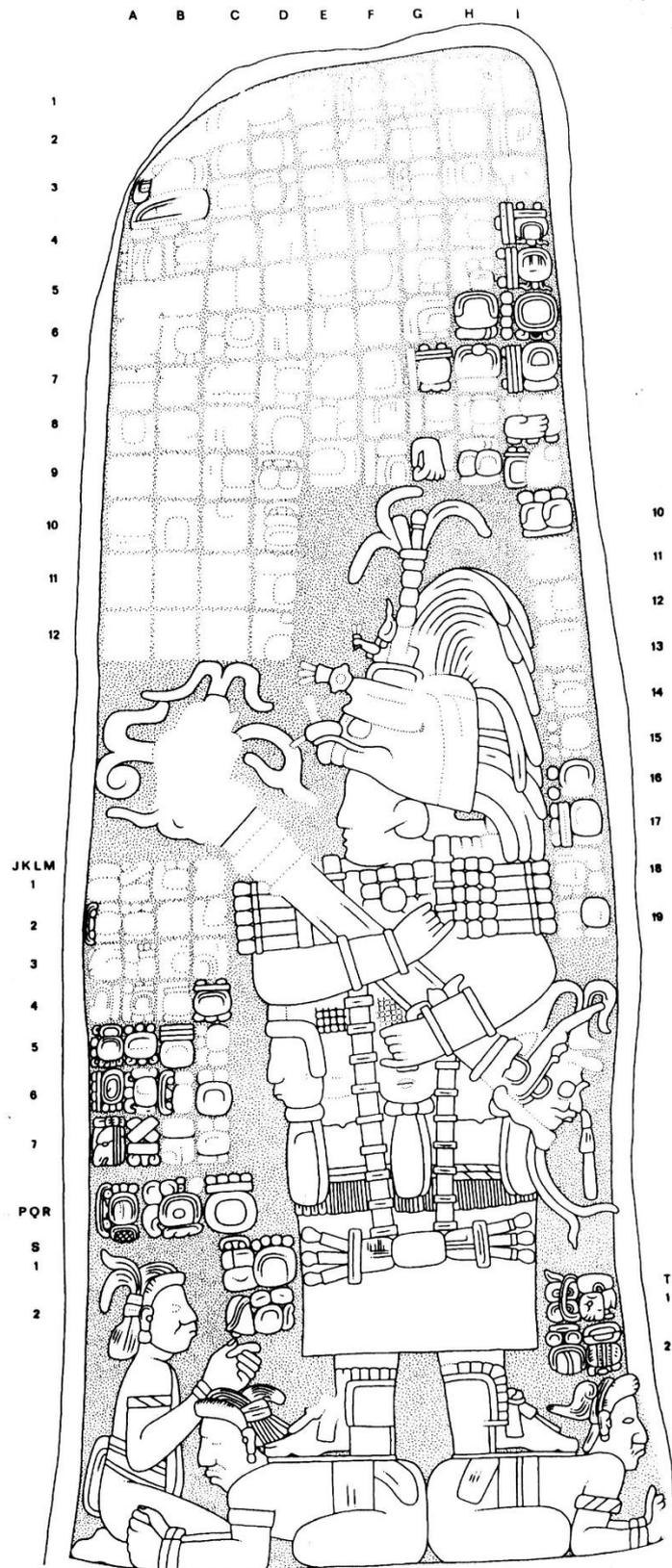
Figure 113. Stela 4, Coba. Drawing by Eric von Euw and Ian Graham.
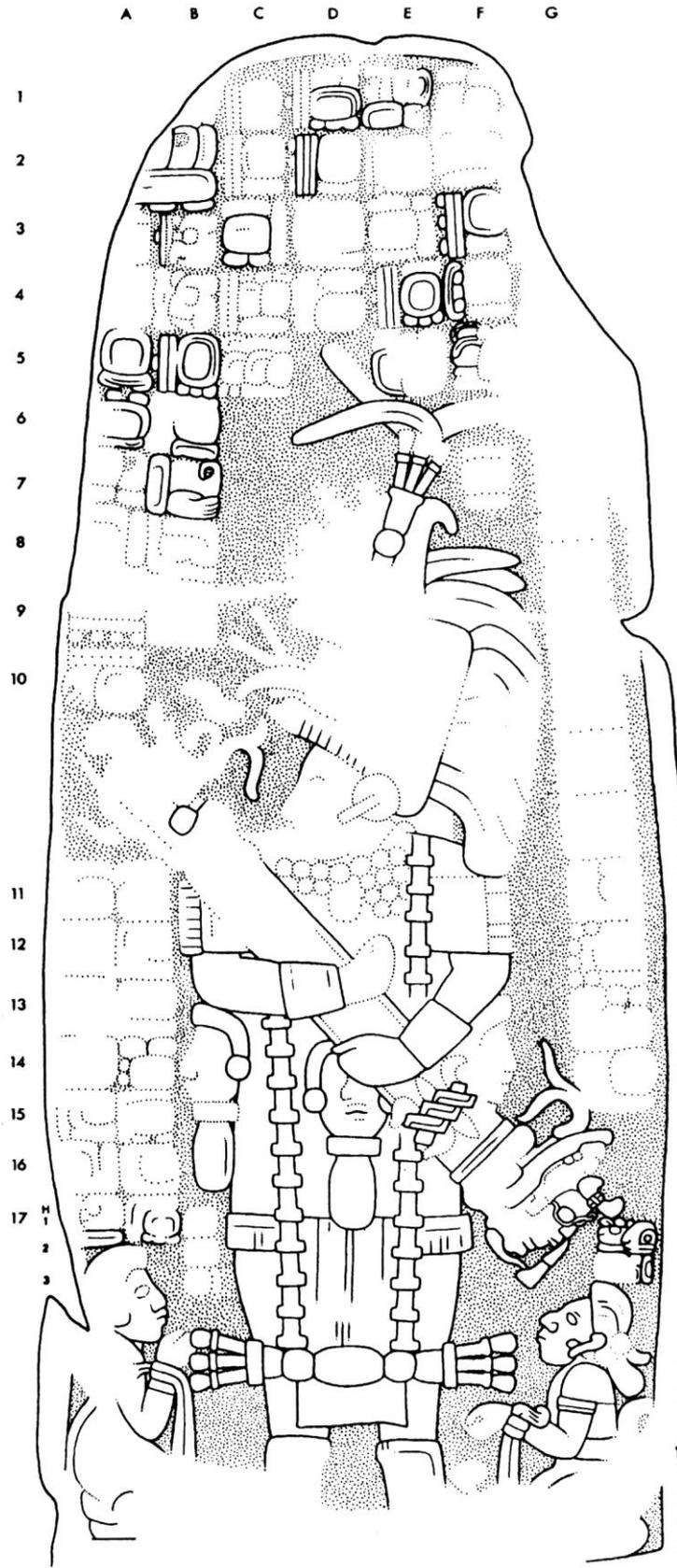
Figure 114. Stela 5, Coba. Drawing by Eric von Euw and Ian Graham.

Figure 115. Stela 24, Naranjo. Drawing by Eric Von Euw.
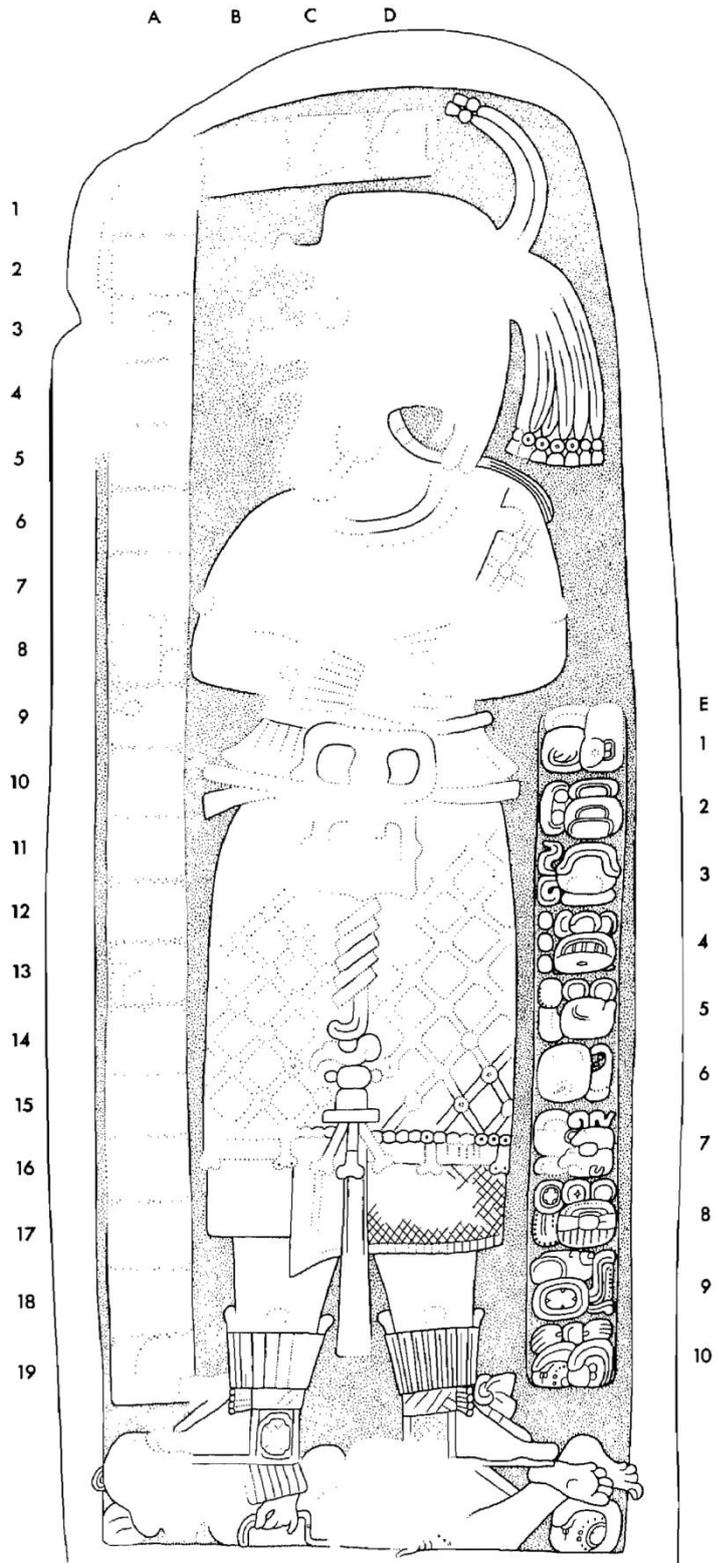
Figure 116. Stela 29, Naranjo. Drawing by Eric von Euw.

532
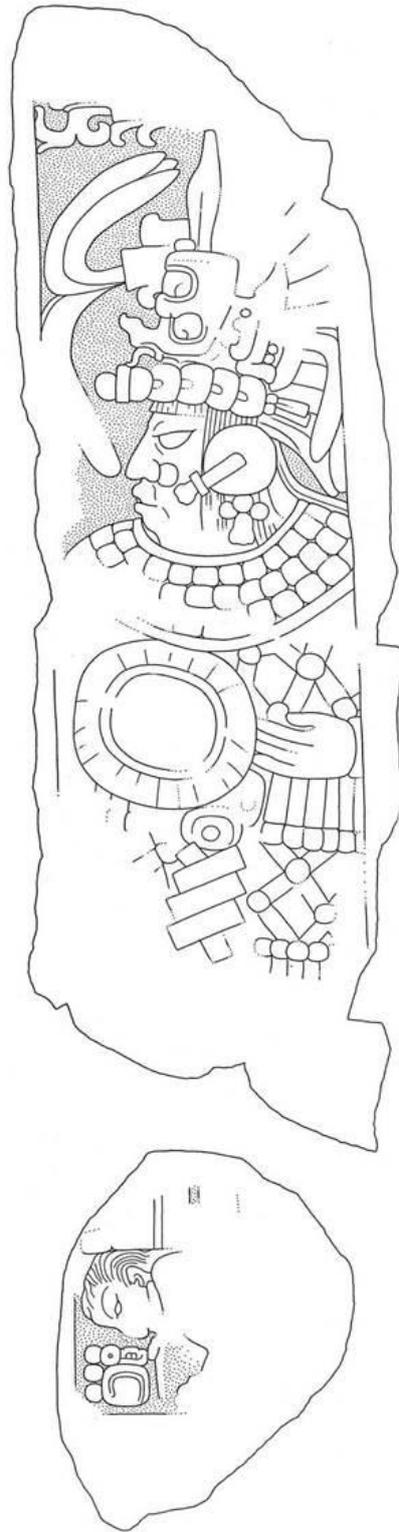
Figure 117. Stela 18, Naachtun (after Mathew and Parmington 2005: Fig.40).

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