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Inscriptions and Iconography of Castillo Viejo, Chichen Itza

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Introduction

Castillo Viejo, or the Castillo at Old Chichen (designated 5B18 in the Carnegie survey of Maya structures), lies within the Principal Group of the Southwest, roughly 350 meters west of the Initial Series Group and 1.3 kilometers southwest of El Castillo (Ruppert 1952:111, Figs. 77, 142b-e, 151) (Figure 2). The west jamb of the temple on top of Castillo Viejo contains hieroglyphic inscriptions that were published and discussed by Tatiana Proskouriakoff in 1970 (Figure 1). The inscriptions have drawn scant attention since Proskouriakoff's article, but recently the INAH Chichen Itza Archaeological Project, under the direction of Dr. Peter Schmidt, has re-exposed the jamb along with the opposite facing east jamb and the two temple pillars in between. As a result, nine new hieroglyphic texts were discovered. Those nine—four around the base of each of the pillars, and one across the base of the east jamb—along with the previously known west jamb, constitute a new set of data with important implications for Chichen Itza studies. (It should be noted that the hieroglyphic inscriptions remain in situ, but are covered for their protection and are not visible or available for inspection.)

History of Exploration

The Castillo at Old Chichen was first explored in 1927 by the Carnegie Institution of Washington during a field season in which "minor excavations, to expose sculpture" were carried out on some thirteen structures at Chichen Itza (Ruppert 2006[1927]:615). Ruppert reported that

a glyph panel was photographed on the west jamb of that building and that the negatives were developed and found to be satisfactory before backfilling the excavation. Therefore it is somewhat curious that Proskouriakoff would write almost 40 years later that there was "no adequate record" of these inscriptions prior to 1953, when Carnegie photographer David de Harport, graduate student in training at Mayapan, photographed them (Proskouriakoff 1970:459; Pollock 2006[1953]:163). The 1953 photographs and subsequent drawings later formed

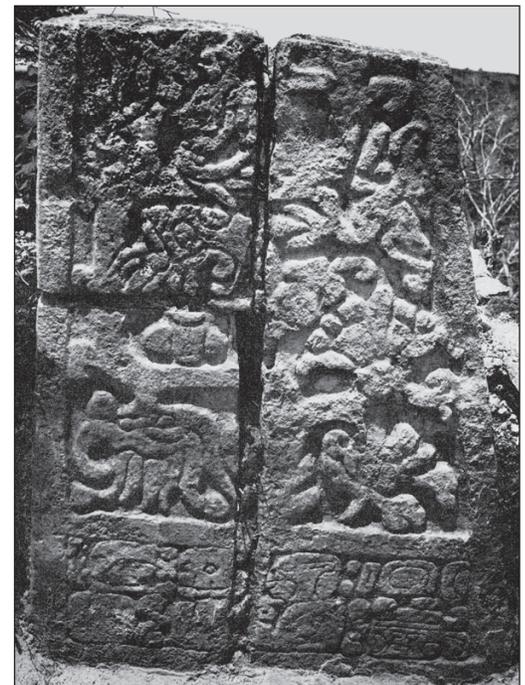


Figure 1. Castillo Viejo west jamb as photographed by David de Harport in 1953 (Proskouriakoff 1970).

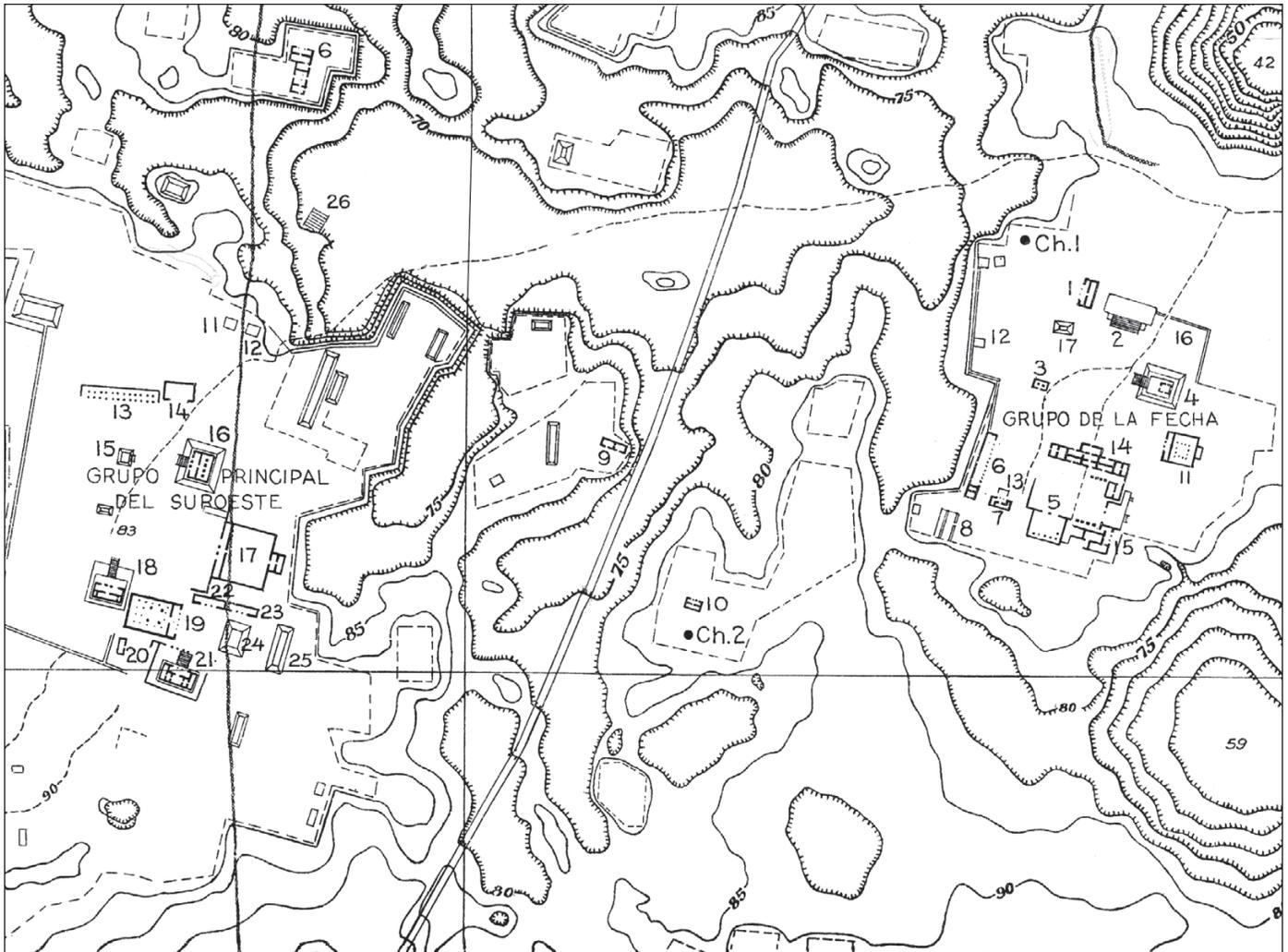


Figure 2. Carnegie Institution of Washington map showing location of Principal Group of the Southwest (Grupo Principal del Suroeste) roughly 350 meters west of the recently restored Initial Series Group (Grupo de la Fecha). Castillo Viejo, in the Principal Group of the Southwest, is marked as Structure 18. Source: Ruppert 1952; original scale not maintained for this cropped selection.

part of an important article by Proskouriakoff, as previously mentioned, dealing with the nature of Maya inscriptions at Chichen Itza (Proskouriakoff 1970).

Although essentially unreadable when first examined by Proskouriakoff, just the presence of inscriptions on this type of architecture—a “Toltec” style single-room temple atop a steep pyramid—bolstered her refutation of the traditional view that hieroglyphic inscriptions at Chichen Itza were associated only with “pure” Maya structures and were absent on “Toltec-Maya” structures. Tozzer (1957:35) supported Proskouriakoff’s position by publishing a brief list of “Hieroglyphs in Toltec Structures,” but without illustrations.

As far as is known, no other work was done at this architectural group until the 1990s, when the INAH Proyecto Arqueológico Chichén Itzá, under the direction of Dr. Peter Schmidt, remapped the Principal Group of the Southwest (Figure 3) and in the process exposed the temple jambs and pillars on the summit of Castillo Viejo,

allowing for drawings and photographs that form the basis of the current article. Project draftsman Guillermo Couh Cen completed drawings of all ten sets of inscriptions as well as the carved stone blocks with iconography, which allowed for virtual reconstruction of the pillars and jambs (Appendix A). Field drawings of the glyphs were then made available to David Stuart, who provided an initial translation and commentary in a letter to Schmidt. The west jamb and west pillar inscriptions were photographed by Stuart and Love. The east jamb and east pillar were photographed by Love (Appendix B, see also Figures 4 and 5).

The Texts

All ten texts repeat essentially the same message, with some variation in word order and selection of titles. A composite reading roughly translates “The image of the flowers of the grandfather of 12 Ak’bal, ‘Bone-nose’

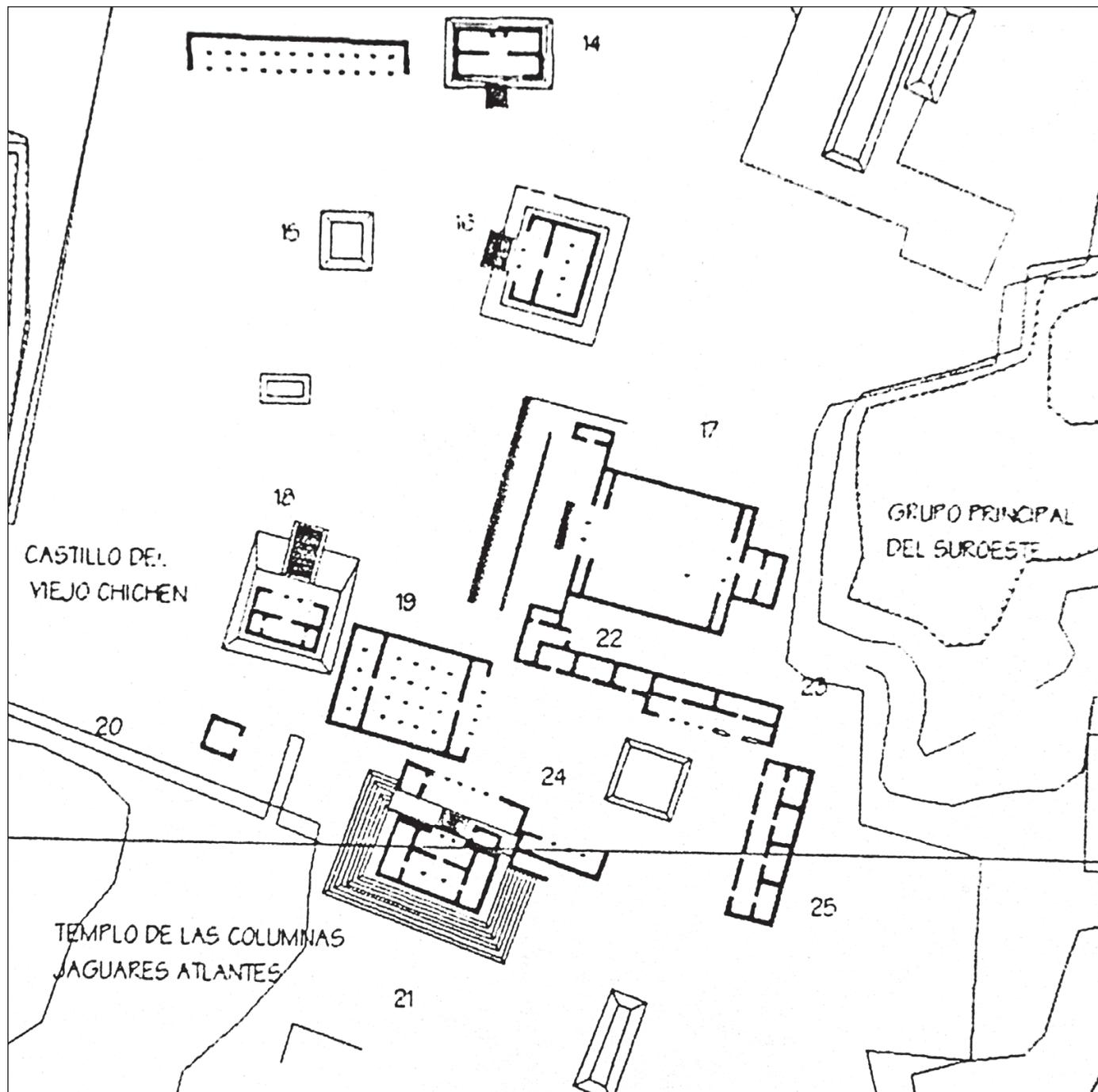


Figure 3. Principal Group of the Southwest (no scale) as remapped by INAH Proyecto Arqueológico Chichén Itzá in the 1990s. Source: Project archives.

Ch'ajoom Ajaw" (for drawings of the hieroglyphic texts and glyph-by-glyph analysis see Appendices C and D). Reading the glyphs is greatly facilitated, to say the least, by the repetition ten times of the same message. Those writers who have seen only the photograph and drawing in the Proskouriakoff article may perhaps be forgiven for mistaking the personal name 12 Ak'bal for a tuun-ajaw date, since it appears over the Ajaw glyph,

with the eroded "Ben-Ich" superfix appearing to be two dots for K'atun 2 Ajaw (Grube and Krochock 2007:221, 242, Fig. 26; Graña-Behrens 2002:331, Table 29).

The texts in fact have no dates, but are loaded with important information nonetheless. They serve as captions for the images carved above them, otherworldly scenes of flowery paradise, strongly suggestive of Taube's (2004) flower mountain analysis of Maya ico-



Figure 4. Castillo Viejo west jamb in a recent photograph by Bruce Love. The inscriptions are intact, buried below the ground surface (cf. Figure 1).

nography. This ancestral paradise is where the ancestors, or perhaps even specifically the grandfather, of 12 Ak'bal resides.

Lajchan Ak'bal (to render the “12” in Classic Mayan) is a new lord at Chichen Itza, previously unknown to us, unmentioned on other monuments. It is very interesting that he has a calendar name (“Twelve Darkness”), more specifically a day in the 260-day sacred round. Day names for royalty are not entirely unusual at Maya sites—the last known king of Palenque was named Wak Kimi (6 Kimi) Janaab Pakal (Martin and Grube 2008:175), but they occur much more commonly outside the Maya area. One thinks immediately of the Mixtec and Mexican pictorials in which rulers and gods are designated by

day signs (Caso 1967:190-199, 1979), but this trait also occurs in Puebla and the Gulf Coast, figuring strongly in Thompson’s so-called Putun hypothesis for the invasion of foreigners at the end of the Maya Classic Period (Thompson 1970:3-43).

In Eric Thompson’s discussion of the Putun Maya and their role in Maya history as the invading Itza, he points out the Putun (or Chontal) use of Nahuatl day names for personal names, albeit without numerical coefficients. In one case, however, there is a Maya calendar name with a coefficient, Bolon Lamat (Thompson 1970:8). Scholes and Roys (1948:65) note that the use of day names with coefficients as personal names is more a Nahuatl tradition. Given the already mentioned Mixtec



Figure 5. Lower blocks of east jamb (A), east pillar (B), and west pillar (C); all in situ. Hieroglyphic inscriptions are intact, buried below the ground surface. Other stones are scattered fallen upper blocks. Photo: Bruce Love.

pendant for calendar names, it is safe to say that the Castillo Viejo texts suggest a “foreign” system of naming but using the local Maya calendar.

Castillo Viejo is not the only example of “foreign” naming. Tozzer (1957:35, 97) points out three other examples of bar-and-dot naming at Chichen Itza which seem to have a very Central Mexican flavor (including 7 Reptile Eye and 10 Rabbit). Nearby, in the recently restored Initial Series Group, the Gallery of the Monkeys displays instances of a figure named 10 Dog¹ grasping expanding foliage in both hands, with the “ten” written with ten dots, no bars (Schmidt 2003: Fig. 50; 2007:191, Fig. 35) (Figure 6).

In very late times the Itza of northern Peten used day names, although without numbers, within strings of names and titles (Jones 1998:75).

In a separate discussion, also relevant to the Castillo Viejo inscriptions, Thompson (1970:16-17), crediting Ralph Roys, points out that Putun Maya, whenever

using Ajaw as a title with a chief’s name, position the Ajaw after the name rather than before as done by the Yucatec Maya. Lacadena (2000) expands greatly on this point, examining patterns of names and titles throughout the Maya lowlands, concluding that there is a strong Yucatecan tendency to place titles before personal names, while placement after names is more a Ch’olan trait (though not narrowly Putun/Chontal as Thompson urged). Seventeenth century Itza Maya also generally put titles before personal names (Jones 1998:75). The strings of titles here at Castillo Viejo conclude with Ajaw, again suggesting, albeit mildly, a “foreign” influence.

While use of a calendar name and the placement of titles that follow suggest foreign influence (be it Mixtec, Central Mexican, or Gulf Coast), the *Ch’ajoom* title, on the other hand, has a strong and deep Maya pedigree, appearing on Classic period monuments and ceramics throughout the Maya realm (except perhaps, in the western Puuc [Grube 2003:347]). Its meaning or translation is not yet settled, although “Scatterer” is used by many and, given the incorporation of *ch’aa*j “incense” (Love 1987), “Incenser” might be apt. On the basis of a Ch’olan cognate, Lacadena (personal communication

¹ On these figures the number of dots is difficult to discern and may be eleven in some cases. “Dog” is tentatively identified but could be some other canine-like animal.

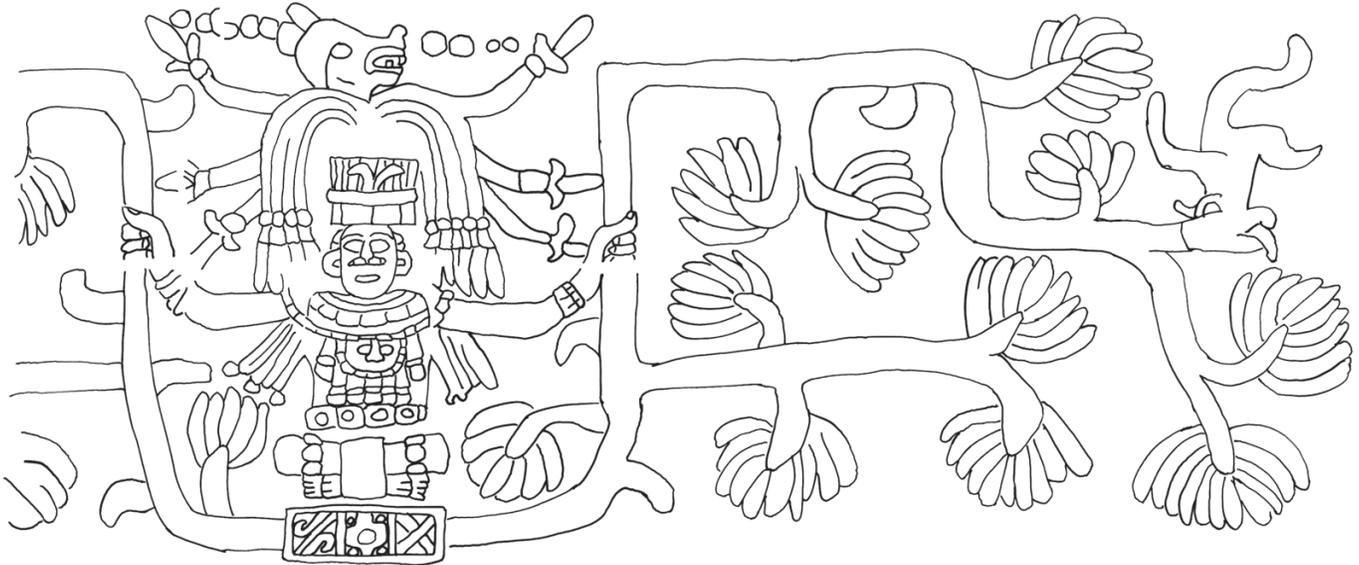


Figure 6. Lineage founder 10 (or 11) Dog (or canine-like animal) with plant motifs; upper frieze, Gallery of the Monkeys, Initial Series Group (after Schmidt 2003:Fig. 50; drawing by Guillermo Couoh Cen, redrawn with slight changes and inked by Stevie Love).

2007) suggests that it might be a title for male youths, like Aztec *tlacatehcutli*.

The other title used in these texts may be unique to Chichen Itza. Its nickname is “bone-nose.” The glyph is a male profile head with a pointed bone piercing the nose—not through the septum, but through the nose itself. The title “Bone-nose” Ajaw is conflated into a single glyph on Lintel 1 of the Temple of the Four Lintels (Figure 7), where it appears as part of a string of titles for K’ahk’upakal K’awiil, a string that reads “‘Bone-nose’ Ajaw Ch’ajoom” (Krochock 1989:Figure 4). K’ahk’upakal K’awiil also takes a Ch’ajoom title on Monjas Lintel 4, but without the “bone-nose” appellation (Boot 2005:329, García-Campillo 2000:72).

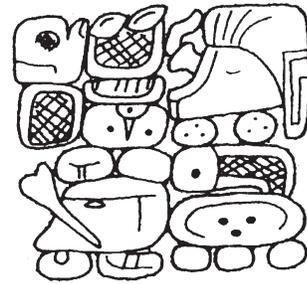


Figure 7. Name and titles from Temple of the Four Lintels, Lintel 1, C5-D6: k’a-k’u-pa-ka-la/K’AWIIL-la/?-AJAW-wa/ch’a-jo-ma (K’ahk’upakal K’awiil ‘Bone-nose’ Ajaw Ch’ajoom) (Krochock 1989:Fig. 4).

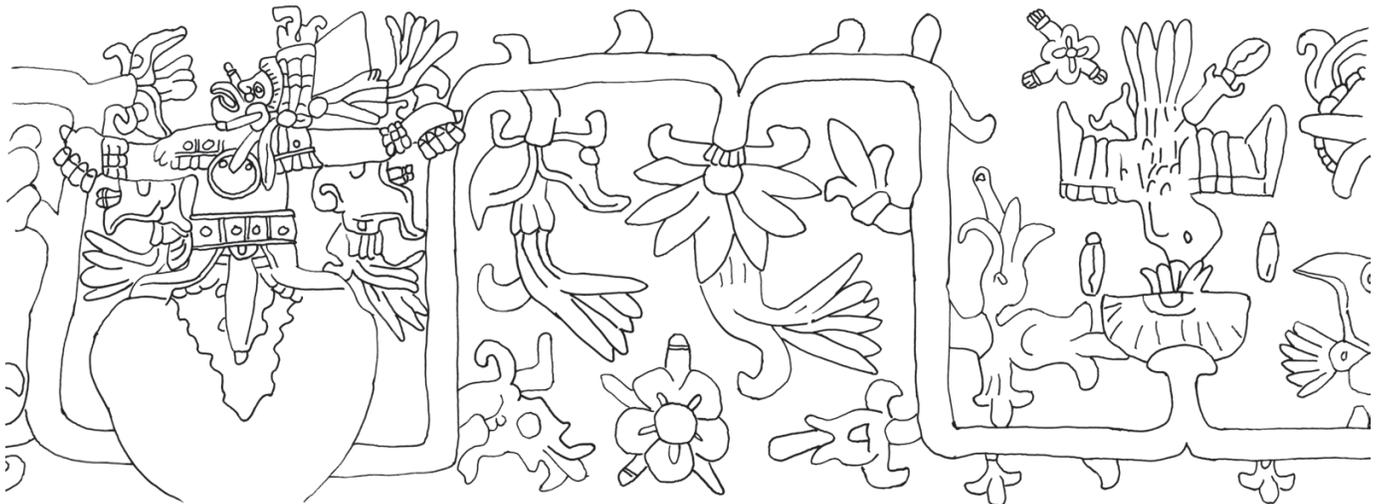


Figure 8. Vine, flower, and bird motifs held by probable lineage founder; upper frieze, House of the Snails (Structure 5C5), Initial Series Group (after Schmidt 2003:Fig. 36; drawing by Guillermo Couoh Cen, redrawn with slight changes and inked by Stevie Love).



Figure 9. Vine, flower, and bird motifs; lower register, Lower Temple of the Jaguars (Maudslay 1889-1902:III:Pl. 47).



Figure 10. Figures on west side of sarcophagus lid from Palenque portraying K'inich Janaab Pakal's ancestors as trees (drawing by Merle Greene Robertson).

Much has been said in the past about the lack of paramount rulers at Chichen Itza and the notion of group rule or joint government. Boot's (2005:377-451) thorough discussion of this issue and his presentation of royal titles at Chichen Itza goes a long way toward countering the joint government model. The discovery here, at Castillo Viejo, of a previously unknown lord with a personal name and royal titles further strengthens the view that Chichen Itza did indeed have titled lords, be they paramount rulers or lineage heads.

The Images

Returning to the first phrase of each text, *u baah u nikte' u mam* "it is the image of the flowers of his grandfather," we find poetic expression of flowery vines as a metaphor for ancestors. We should keep in mind that the texts serve as captions for the imagery above them. This assumption is warranted simply from the fact that such short texts that accompany portraits or images have exactly this purpose, basically to explain what the viewer is looking at. The carved flowers and vines, with their accompanying birds, represent the flowery paradise where Lord Lajchan Ak'bal's grandfather (or ancestors) resides (or perhaps the plant motif is the grandfather himself!).

There is an intriguing parallel in Lacandon mythol-

ogy recorded in the 1970s by Boremanse (2006:3-6). The Lacandon creator god created the *bik nikte'* flowers from which the principal gods, their helpers, and lineage founders were subsequently born. Boremanse points to a possible linguistic connection between *top'* "flower opening" in Yucatec and *top'ol* "birth" in Itza Mayan (Barrera Vasquez et al. 1980:807-808).

Castillo Viejo is not alone in this iconographic presentation. The previously mentioned restoration of friezes in the nearby Initial Series Group² reveals magnificent displays of vines, flowers, birds, and precious objects in the context of lineage and ancestry (Schmidt 2003:Fig. 36, 2007:187, Fig. 30; Prem et al. 2004:27-35) (Figure 8). A similar display, known for more than a century, stretches beneath the procession scenes in the Lower Temple of the Jaguars (Maudslay 1889-1902:III:Pls. 47, 48) (Figure 9).

For the Classic period we have the sarcophagus lid from Palenque portraying each of K'inich Janaab Pakal's ancestors as a separate type of fruit tree (Barthel 1980) (Figure 10). Certain Jaina figurines show old

² It needs to be emphasized that the Long Count date on the Initial Series lintel does not date the architectural group. The lintel was reused in ancient times and was incorporated by the builders of the Initial Series Group into their building plan without regard to original placement, wherever that may have been.



Figure 11. Old man god emerging from flower in Jaina figurine (Schele 1997:171, Pl. 11; photograph by Jorge Pérez de Lara).



Figure 12. Stone carving of being (face damaged) emerging from flower, found at entrance to archaeological complex known as Nuevo San Felipe Group, approximately 200 meters northeast of the Castillo, across the highway from the main tourist zone. Currently located in front of the INAH Archaeological Laboratory at the site. Photographed in 2008 by Bruce Love.

men emerging from flower blossoms (Schele 1997:171) (Figure 11). Remarkably, this same motif was found in full sculptural form on a large meter-high stone, carved in the round, located near Chichen Itza in the village of San Felipe Nuevo (Figure 12). Even in post-contact times we have the famous genealogical tree of the Xiu family showing lineage names attached to the tree's spreading branches (Quezada and Okoshi 2001:51) (Figure 13).

Conclusion

Nine new texts have now been added to the one reported by Proskouriakoff in 1970. Being essentially repetitions of the same phrases, secure readings are now possible with implications for Chichen Itza studies on several fronts. Politically, it reveals a new lord or paramount ruler with an impressive string of titles, weakening the joint-rule hypothesis for Chichen Itza gov-

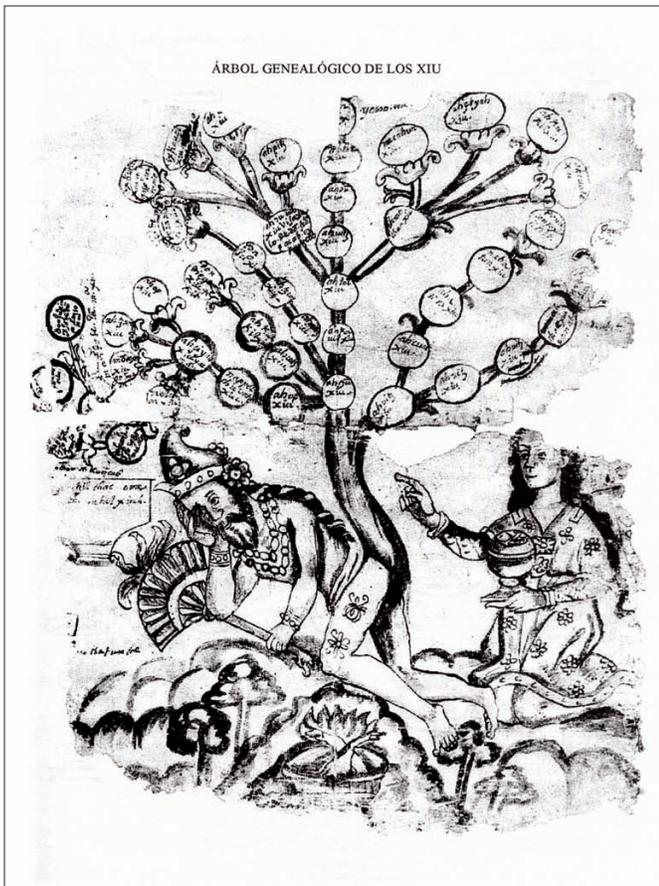


Figure 13. Genealogical tree of the Xiu family showing lineage names attached to the tree's spreading branches (Quezada and Okoshi Harada 2001:51).

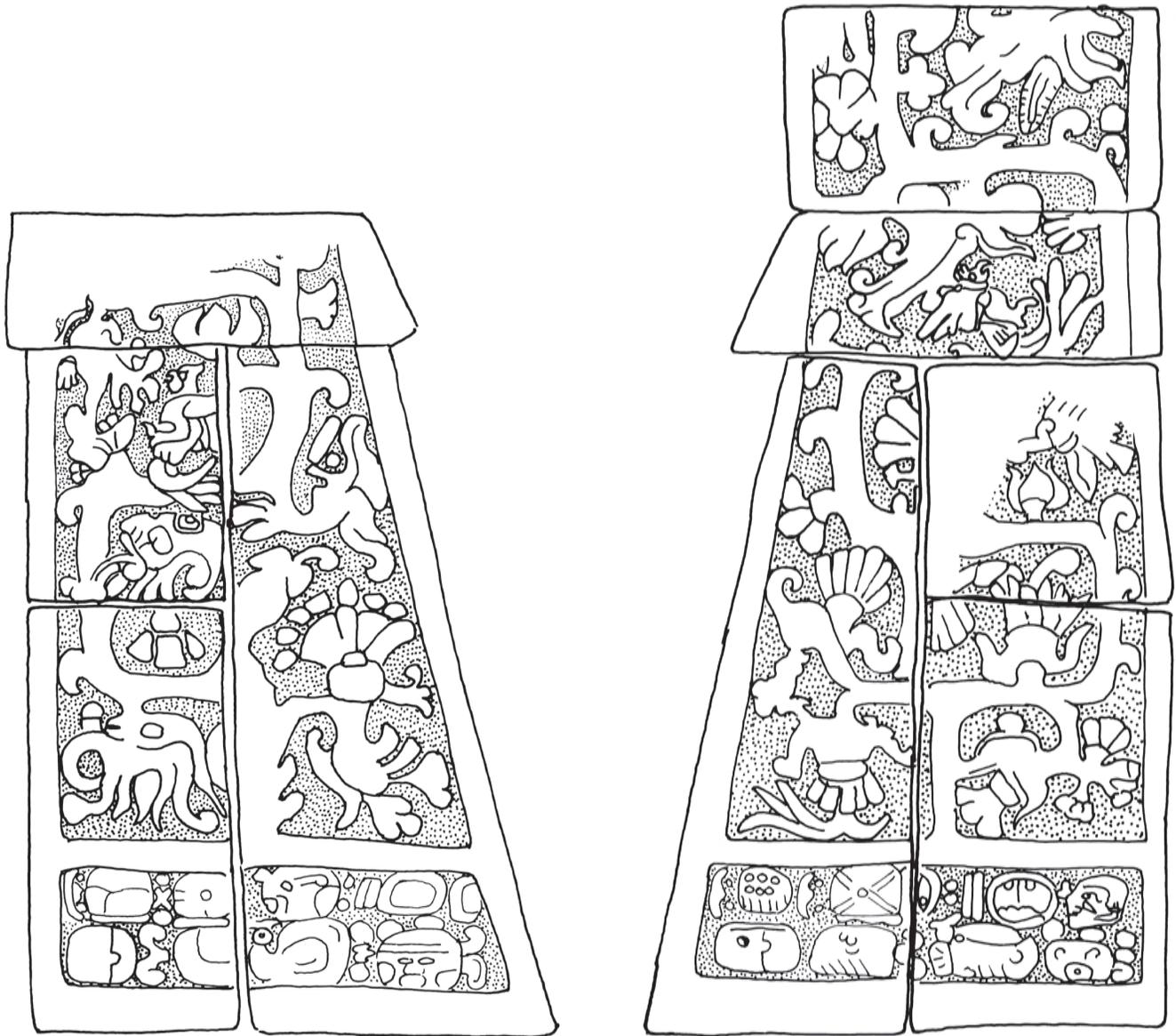
ernment. The use of a calendar day name for that ruler, Lajchan Ak'bal, and the syntax of placing the titles after the personal name, is suggestive of foreign influence and adds new grist for the mill in the continuing debate over Chichen Itza-Central Mexican interaction. And finally, the notion of flowery paradise as ancestral abode strengthens the flower mountain interpretation of Maya pyramids and enhances our understanding of ancestral lineage as living natural flora.

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Appendix A: Pillar and Jamb Drawings

Original field drawings by Proyecto Arqueológico Chichén Itzá draftsman Guillermo Couoh Cen, redrawn with very minor changes and inked by Bruce Love.



West Jamb

East Jamb

Appendix B: Photographs of Hieroglyphic Texts

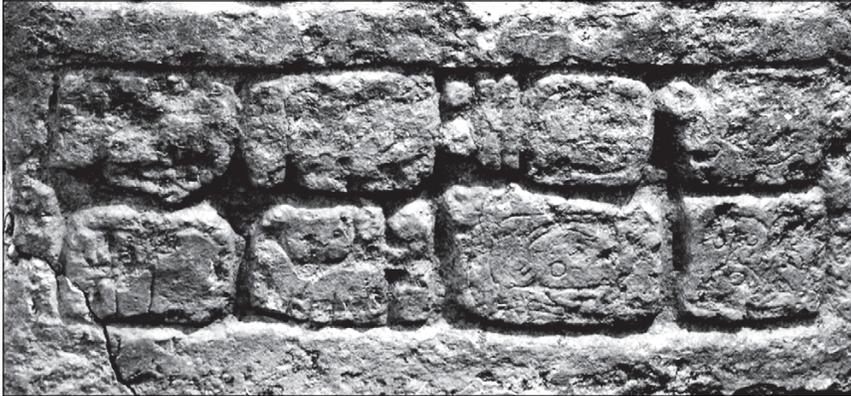
All photographs by Bruce Love.



West Jamb



East Jamb



West Pillar
East Side



West Pillar
North Side

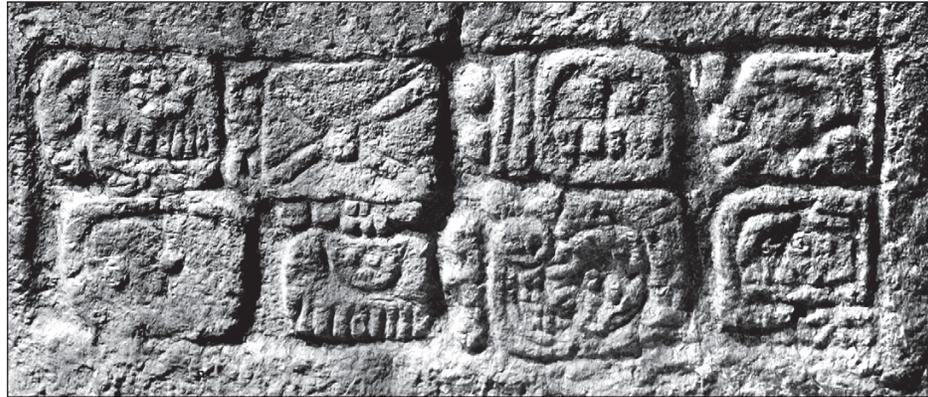


West Pillar
West Side



West Pillar
South Side

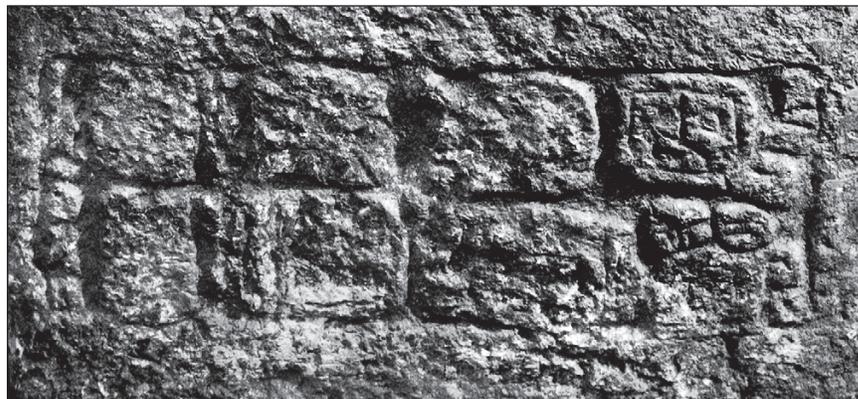
East Pillar
East Side



East Pillar
North Side



East Pillar
West Side



East Pillar
South Side

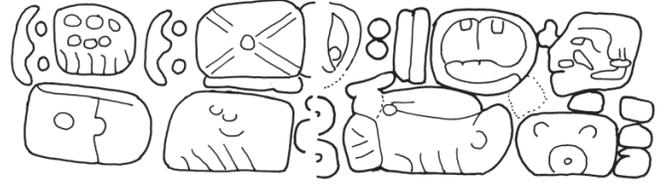


Appendix C: Glyph Drawings

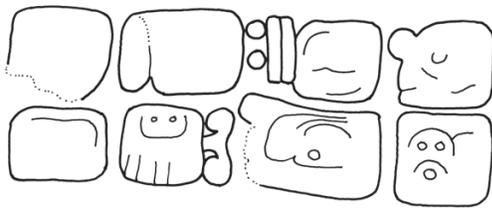
Original field drawings by Guillermo Couoh Cen; redrawn with some changes based on photographs and inked by Bruce Love.



West Jamb



East Jamb



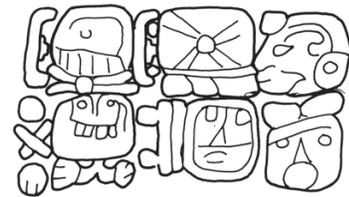
West Pillar: East Side



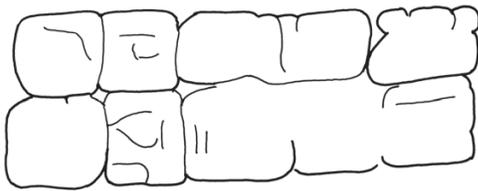
East Pillar: East Side



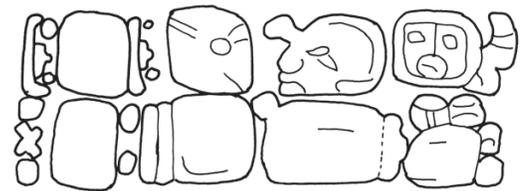
West Pillar: North Side



East Pillar: North Side



West Pillar: West Side



East Pillar: West Side



West Pillar: South Side



East Pillar: South Side

Appendix D: Glyph-by-Glyph Analysis

The following analysis presents a transcription, a transliteration, and a prose translation for each of the ten hieroglyphic texts of Structure 5B18.

West Jamb

A1: **U-ba-hi**, *u baah*, “it is the image of”
 B1: **U-NIK-TE'**, *u nikte'*, “the flower(s) of”
 A2-B2: **U ma-ma**, *u mam*, “the grandfather¹ of”
 C1: ‘Bone-nose’
 D1: **12-AK'AB-li**, *lajchan ak'b[aa]l*, “Twelve Darkness”
 C2: **ch'a-jo-ma**, *ch'ajoom*, “Incenser”
 D2: **AJAW-wa**, *ajaw*, “Lord”

West Pillar, East Side

A1: [**U-ba-hi**], [*u baah*], [“it is the image of”]
 B1: [**U-NIK-TE'**], [*u nikte'*], [“the flower(s) of”]
 A2-B2: **U ma-ma**, *u mam*, “the grandfather of”
 C1: **12-AK'AB**, *lajchan ak'b[aal]*, “Twelve Darkness”
 D1: “Bone-nose”
 C2: [**ch'a-jo-ma**], [*ch'ajoom*], [“Incenser”]
 D2: **AJAW-wa**, *ajaw*, “Lord”

West Pillar, North Side

A1: **U-ba-hi**, *u baah*, “it is the image of”
 B1: **U-NIK-TE'**, *u nikte'*, “the flower(s) of”
 C1: **U-ma-ma**, *u mam*, “the grandfather of”
 A2: **12-AK'AB**, *lajchan ak'b[aal]*, “Twelve Darkness”
 B2: “Bone-nose”
 C2: [**AJAW**], [*ajaw*], [“Lord”]

West Pillar, West Side

?

West Pillar, South Side

A1: **U-ba-hi**, *u baah*, “it is the image of”
 B1: **U-NIK**, *u nik[te']*, “the flower(s) of”
 C1: **U ma-ma**, *u mam*, “the grandfather of”
 A2: **12-AK'AB**, *lajchan ak'b[aal]*, “Twelve Darkness”
 B2: “Bone-nose”
 C2: ?

¹ It is very difficult to know if *mam* here refers to a specific grandfather or more generically to ancestors (Stuart 2007:14).

² Here, and on east pillar south side, **NIK-TE'** is followed by another glyph, as yet unread.

East Jamb

A1: **U-ba**, *u baah*, “it is the image of”
 B1: **U-NIK-TE'-?**², *u nikte'*, “the flower(s) of”
 A2-B2: **U ma-ma**, *u mam*, “the grandfather of”
 C1: **12-AK'AB**, *lajchan ak'b[aal]*, “Twelve Darkness”
 D1: “Bone-nose”
 C2: **ch'a-jo-ma(?)**, *ch'ajoom(?)*, “Incenser”(?)
 D2: **AJAW-wa**, *ajaw*, “Lord”

East Pillar, East Side

A1: **U-ba-hi**, *u baah*, “it is the image of”
 B1: **U-NIK-TE'**, *u nikte'*, the flower(s) of
 A2-B2: **U ma-ma**, *u mam*, “the grandfather of”
 C1: **12-AK'AB**, *lajchan ak'b[aal]*, “Twelve Darkness”
 D1: “Bone-nose”
 C2: **ch'a-jo**, *ch'ajom*, “Incenser”
 D2: **AJAW**, *ajaw*, “Lord”

East Pillar, North Side

A1: **U-ba-hi**, *u baah*, “it is the image of”
 B1: **U-NIK-TE'**, *u nikte'*, “the flower(s) of”
 A2: **U-ma-ma**, *u mam*, “his grandfather”
 B2: **12-AK'AB**, *lajchan ak'b[aal]*, “Twelve Darkness”
 C1: “Bone-nose”
 C2: **AJAW**, *ajaw*, “Lord”

East Pillar, West Side

A1 **U-[ba]**, *u [baah]*, “it is [the image] of”
 B1 **U-NIK**, *u nik[te']*, “the flower(s) of”
 A2 **U[ma-ma]**, *u [mam]*, “the [grandfather] of”
 B2 **12-AK'AB**, *lajchan ak'b[aal]*, “Twelve Darkness”
 C1 “Bone-nose”
 D1 **AJAW-wa**, *ajaw*, “Lord”
 C2 **ch'a-jo-ma(?)**, *ch'ajoom(?)*, “Incenser”(?)
 D2 **AJAW-wa**, *ajaw*, “Lord”

East Pillar, South Side

A1 **U-ba-hi**, *u baah*, “it is the image of”
 B1 **U-NIK-TE'-?**, *u nikte'*, “the flower(s) of”
 C1 **U-ma-ma**, *u mam*, “the grandfather of”
 A2 **12-AK'AB**, *lajchan ak'b[aal]*, “Twelve Darkness”
 B2 “Bone-nose”
 C2 **AJAW-wa**, *ajaw*, “Lord”

Some Thoughts About a New Vase and an Old God

RAPHAEL TUNESI



Figure 1. The subject vessel. Photograph by the author.

Introduction

Recently an unpublished vase with a readable text and interesting iconography came to our attention (Figure 1). This cylindrical ceramic is Late Classic and probably originates in the central Peten. Its dimensions are 18 cm high and 10 cm wide.

A general look at the style of the iconography shows close affiliation to K5453,¹ a vase probably painted in the Yaxha-Topoxte region in the eastern Peten (Figure 2).

The latter vase was commissioned by or for Jasaw Chan K'awiil of Tikal, who ruled between AD 682 and 734. K5453's Short Count date 4 Ajaw 13 Keh corresponds to October 10, 691. Thanks to this anchor-date, we can attribute the new vase to the time around 700.

Iconographic Analysis

The vase shows a royal *ambiente* in which the supreme celestial deity God D has his divine seat (Figure 1). God D's throne can be identified as a squared bench of the type often found by archaeologists in the ruins of Maya

residential compounds. We see him in a comfortable position with his arm leaning on a pink-colored bundle with the glyphic tag, *juun pik*, "one times eight thousand." This kind of bundle often contains precious material and in this case probably cacao beans (Houston 1997; Stuart 2007). Cacao beans were used in trade and commerce in Precolumbian Mesoamerica until the early Colonial period. The huge amount of cacao mentioned on the bundle stands for the richness of God D's court. Another status symbol is the jaguar pillow behind God D, leaning against a pillar which itself is decorated with a stepped fret called *xicalcolihqui* by the Postclassic Aztecs (Pasztor 1983:79).

In front of God D and separated from him by a short text of eight glyphs we find a second figure: a dwarf. This courtier is shown standing with a bird in his hand. The exact nature of this bird is unclear, since it unites elements of a parrot with the typical crest of the quetzal.

This scene is found on another vessel, K7727 (Figure 3). This wonderful vase has a complex and remarkable scene that shows a group of travelers or merchants arriving at God D's palace. Comparing the vases, we can

¹ "K-numbers" refer to designations in Justin Kerr's database of painted Maya ceramics at www.mayavase.com.



Figure 2. K5453. Photograph by Justin Kerr.



Figure 3. K7227. Photograph by Justin Kerr.



a



b



Figure 4. Primary Standard Sequence texts of (a) K5453 and (b) the subject vessel.

find only two major differences in the iconography: on K7727 God D manifests himself in the guise of the Old God, while on the new example he is young and strong. The other discrepancy is that the dwarf of K7727 holds two birds instead of one.

Epigraphic Analysis

Under the upper rim of our vessel we can read the Primary Standard Sequence (PSS) (Figure 4b). The PSS we have on this ceramic is almost parallel in content and style to K5453 (Figure 4a). Both sequences end by mentioning the name of the sage or artist who painted them. K5453 was painted by Aj Ik' Tuun ("He of the Black Stone"), while ours by the not less gifted Chab Te' Nal ("Earth Tree Place"). The great similarity of style and execution indicates a close connection between both artists; possibly they were masters of the same school at the same time or closely one after the other.

Our analysis will focus on the caption between the two figures, even if the PSS would have material for a separate article. The text (Figure 5) is an example of quoted speech and reads:

a-LAY ## *u-tzi i-wa ta-li u-tzi ya-la-wa 'GOD D'

alay ## uutz iwatali uutz yalaw 'God D'

"Here is ..., the good thing, and then it is arriving the good thing," says God D.

The *alay* reading was first suggested by Barbara MacLeod and Yuriy Polyukhovych. The collocation functions as a demonstrative pronoun meaning "this, this one."

uutz means "good" and is well attested in Classic texts and in Postclassic codices, as well as many modern Mayan languages.

i-watali: "and then it is arriving," where *i-* would be the particle meaning "and then" and *wa-* is a progressive aspect marker attached to the verb *tal* "to arrive."

The particle *i-* commonly appears in Maya texts, but it has never been found together with the *wa-* progres-

sive aspect marker (Albert Davletshin, personal communication 2007). Furthermore, the particle *wa-* is not very common; an example can be found on Naranjo Stela 32.

uutz: Once more we find the expression *uutz* "good." This refers to the birds the dwarf holds in his hands. It is worth mentioning that in the corpus of inscriptions from Chichen Itza we find in the Monjas Lintels a phrase similar to the one on this vase (Grube et al. 2003:II-63). Here we find *yiliw uutzil ta* + place name + actor ("he sees the good things at + place name + actor"). The appearance of the word *uutz* seems to reflect a general usage of this word as a term for offerings and gifts.

yalaw: The root of this verbal expression is *al* "to speak." Normally we would expect this collocation to be written as **ya-la-ji-ya**, spelling *yalajiiy* "he says" (see below). It is interesting to note that exactly the same *yalaw* can be found on Piedras Negras Panel 3 in connection with another appearance of the rare *wa-* progressive aspect marker. We will translate *yalaw* as "he says," although, tentatively, "he is saying" would take into account the progressive aspect noted here and in the text to be considered below.

Before examining the next glyph we would like to draw the reader's attention to a curious scribal error. To

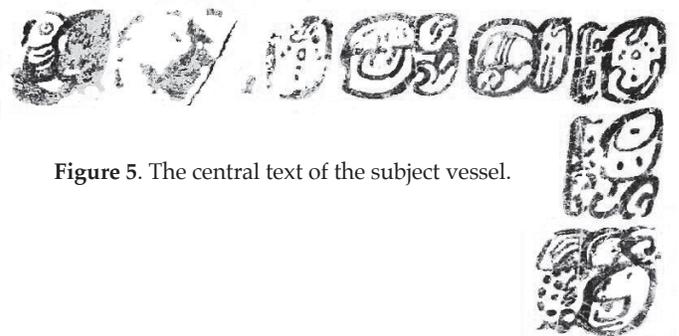


Figure 5. The central text of the subject vessel.

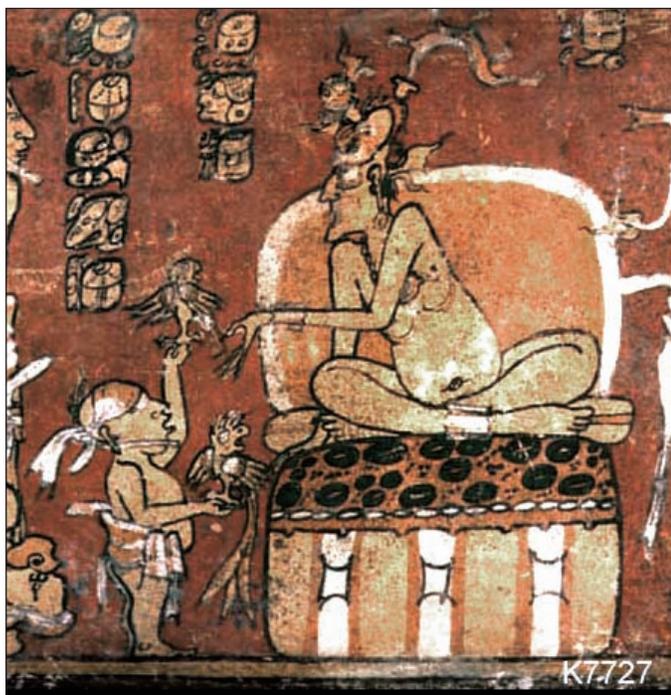


Figure 6. Detail of K7727.

begin the spelling of *yalaw*, the artist mistakenly started to paint the syllable **u-** and then corrected it into **ya-**. This may give us a clue that the scribe was copying the text from some other context and after finishing the **u-**

tzi collocation earlier in the inscription inadvertently started once again to draw an **u-** sign. Seldom in the Maya corpus do we find clues to the material act of writing like this, which seems to indicate that, as in other cultures, the Maya used to copy texts from one context to another.

The collocation representing God D's name is found in other texts on ceramics. The first part is written with the net headdress earlier ascribed to God N, the Bacab of the Colonial period, which seems to read **ITZAM** (Stuart 2005:93, n.32).

It was Marc Zender (personal communication 2008) who pointed out to me that it is God D himself who is speaking the words of this text. (If, instead, the dwarf were addressing the deity, we would expect the preposition **ti** before God D's name.)

Of special interest is to read the same phrase as we have considered here in the identical context on K7727 (Figure 6):

a-LAY -ya u-tzi i-wa-ta li u-tzi ya-la-ji-ya 'GOD D'

alay uutz iwatali uutz yaljiiy 'God D'

"Here is the good thing, and then it is arriving the good thing," says God D.

There are some small differences, but one can confi-



Figure 7. K4999. Photograph by Justin Kerr.

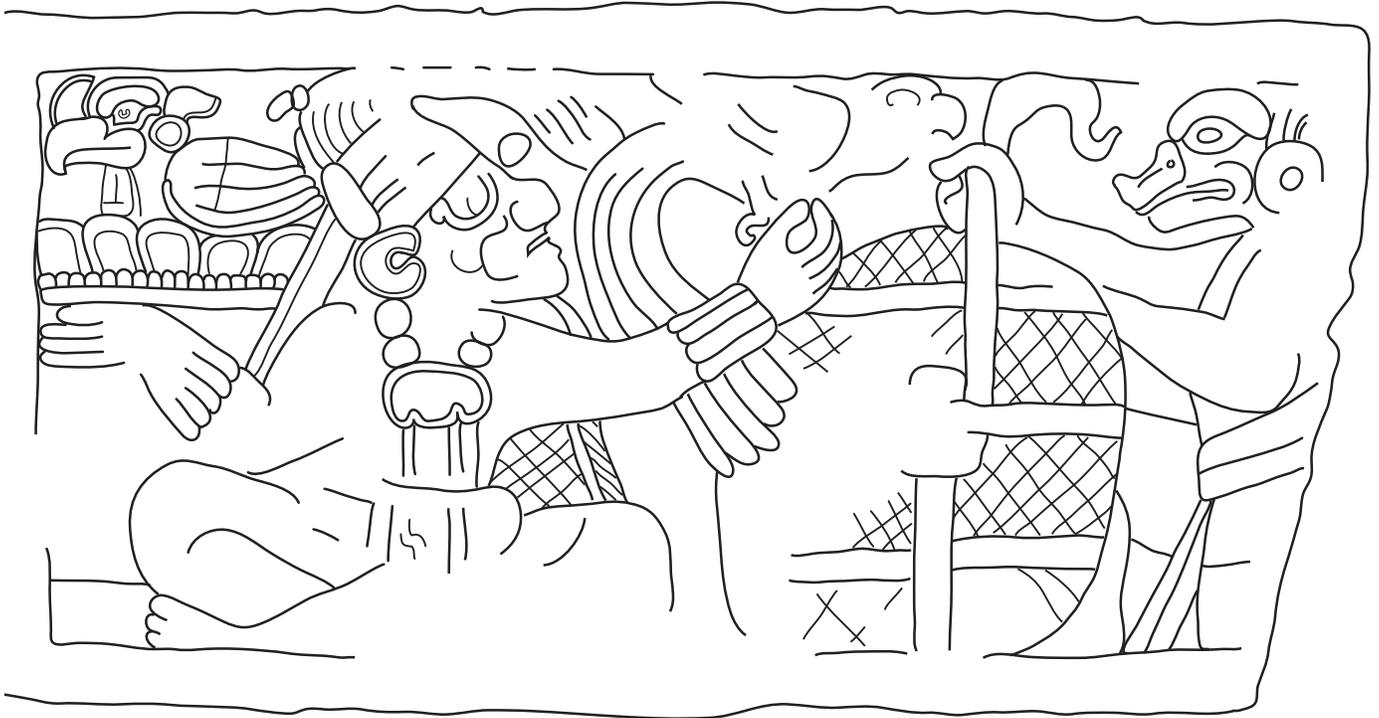


Figure 8. Panel depicting God L in the Museo de la Escultura Maya, Baluarte de la Soledad, Campeche City, Mexico.
Drawing by Raphael Tunesi, photograph by Simon Martin.

dently state that we are looking at a highly parallel, if not identical text. We must especially consider that these vases were painted without any kind of mass distribution, so this was the result of a commonly shared knowledge in the Peten area. This phrase must have been very meaningful for this classic Maya myth, even if it doesn't seem very telling nowadays when read out of context.

From the epigraphical point of view it is interesting to note that in the K7727 version of the phrase we do not find *yalaw* but the more common *yaljiiy*. This example shows that the forms can be substituted without altering the sense of the clause. As seen above with reference to the subject vessel, *yalaw* seems to underscore the progressive aspect introduced by the particles *i* and *wa*.

The iconography of K7727 is like a picture taken with a wider angle lens than the vase we discussed above. Thanks to this second perspective we can reconstruct a bit more of what happened on this occasion. It seems that the dwarf is presenting the birds to God D after the merchants brought them to the palace. The exact meaning of the scene remains unclear, but nevertheless two possible interpretations can be presented: first, the birds are thought to make God D amused; second, he has to judge them. In either interpretation, it seems that he expresses his satisfaction.

Interestingly, there is yet a third vase with the same scene and a similar text. K4999 is very different from the other two examples in that it has been stuccoed and painted, just like a codex (Figure 7). Its text is short but telling:

#-hi yu-tzi u-tzi ya-YAL 'GOD D'

We think that this is a short version and that the complete speech would look like this:

[a-LAY] #-hi yu-tzi [i-wa ta-li] u-tzi ya-YAL[ajiiy] "GOD D"

The mythological event recorded by the three ceramics must have been so famous that the spoken phrase could be written in an abbreviated form without the verbs and still everyone would have known how to complete it.

And there is yet another piece that could be added to the puzzle. In the Museo de la Escultura Maya in Campeche City there is a monument that seems to show a prior part of this very same myth (Figure 8). Perhaps because of its rude style or the absence of glyphs this panel has awaited a friendly look until now in the shadow of its new colonial home. Here we can see God L, the underworld counterpart of the celestial God D, giving a parrot to an animal merchant. This being is suspiciously

similar to the merchant of K7227; it even has the very same bundle. It is really tempting to think that God L is sending or selling this bird to God D, who at least seems to be expecting it, as his own quotation shows. As convincing as all this sounds, we have to remember that the connection between the vase group analysed above and this monument is still in need of further and stronger evidence.

Conclusions

In this note an episode of a Classic Maya myth was discussed and a single phrase of direct speech was highlighted that must have been very famous at that time. Future appearances of new vases could shed more light on this story.

Acknowledgments

A grateful thought for Albert Davletshin and Luis Lopes, the first for his illuminating council with the grammatical structure of this text, the second for his insights into the corpus of Maya vases. I would like to thank Marc Zender for revising this note and for his kind advice.

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A Future Cache in Guatemala

ELAYNE MARQUIS

Collectors in any field are generally proud to show their treasures to fellow collectors or professionals who can truly appreciate and provide additional data to their finds, but that is not always the case. When Mrs. X invited a knowledgeable archaeologist to see her collection of Precolumbian objects, it was with great dismay that she learned that her precious collection of "ancient" *hachas* were all fake.¹ By the next day she knew what had to be done. She summoned her gardener and instructed him to dig a deep hole in the yard and bury those fake *hachas*. She was so disturbed and embarrassed that she had been duped that she wanted the pieces out of her sight and wanted to be sure they did not reappear on the so-called "antiquities market." This all took place in the mid-1900s.

Many years later, when I was doing research in Guatemala for a forthcoming book I was working on with Ed Shook, I visited public and private collections that were known to have Precolumbian *hachas* in order to examine, record, and photograph each object for possible inclusion in the book. I was pleased when I was invited to the home of Mr. & Mrs. X, who were highly respected collectors, and had several *hachas* which were acquired in recent years with professional consultation for authenticity. It was then that I learned of their previous, expensive collecting fiasco.

When I inquired of Mr. & Mrs. X if they ever had an interest in digging up these pieces just to be able to recognize fakes, the answer was "yes," but the gardener in question had not been with them for many years and they did not know where to find him. The property is large and they would have no idea where to begin digging.

Time passes! Mr. X is no longer alive. Mrs. X has returned to her country of origin. Their grown children still reside in Guatemala, but I've had no contact with them and therefore I can't put a finish to this story.

This large estate was once considered to be on the outskirts of town, but is now smack in the center of a bustling section of the city, surrounded by hotels, condominiums, and fashionable restaurants and shops. One day, when this property is sold and the construction crews start the excavation for the foundation of some massive building in this desirable location, just imagine the surprise and delight of the laborers when they come upon a cache of *hachas*.

Several ancient caches of *hachas* and other archaeological material have been excavated scientifically, and have been recorded and published during the past century (Shook and Marquis 1996). When this cache is discovered, will it make the newspapers? Undoubtedly it will. And when someone who knows the true story makes it public, will it be believed? Certainly not by the dealers or the collectors who already have a vested interest in its being authentic. Or will the true story, with so interesting a provenance, make the objects even more desirable?

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Figure 1. Hacha in the form of a human head with a crouching naturalistic jaguar above. After Shook and Marquis (1996:115, H43 and cover).

¹ *Hachas* ("axes," so-named by the Spanish) are Precolumbian portable stone objects carved in the form of human or animal heads that taper to a sharp axe edge at the front profile (Figure 1).