The murals progressively uncovered at Calakmul over recent years supply a wealth of new data on the life of a major Classic Maya capital. Their subject matter has no precedent in Maya art and offers an opportunity to explore hitherto unknown social activities and practices. Crucially, the rich iconographic material from the paintings is joined by a substantial body of hieroglyphic inscriptions, producing an invaluable interaction between text and image in which each supports and illuminates the other.

The present study remains in many respects an interim effort. Eight seasons of work by the Proyecto Arqueológico Calakmul (PAC) have revealed much about the “painted pyramid” of Chiik Nahb Structure Sub 1-4 (see Carrasco Vargas and Cordeiro Baqueiro, this volume; Carrasco Vargas et al. 2009; Cordeiro Baqueiro 2012), but the work continues and a final report must await a range of analyses that are still in process—especially the full conservation and study of the uppermost third tier. Even so, this is an appropriate moment to report on the progress made thus far, and to give some idea of the significance of what has been uncovered from an epigraphic point of view.

Some 86 glyph-blocks have been identified on the murals, the great majority interspersed between the human figures in a manner characteristic of captions (Figure 1). Their state of preservation ranges from almost pristine to the faintest of traces. The glyphs in all phases of the paintings were originally outlined in black or dark brown, although in many cases this has decayed to a red-brown or pinkish hue. Some have plain interior spaces or are decorated with light brown highlights, but most are filled with solid areas of yellow tan, blue, or green. Each phase mixes styles and colors, making it difficult to assign particular glyphs to particular layers by appearances alone, although it is clear that those from the third and final phase are predominantly filled with yellow tan. The full technical analysis of the pigments and paint stratigraphy will ultimately refine and clarify the sequence as currently understood (see Carrasco Vargas and Cordeiro Baqueiro, this volume). Assorted glyph fragments with blue and tan infilling were recovered from the construction fill around Structure Sub 1-4 (Figure 2). Their original locations are unknown, but an associated figurative fragment bears a close resemblance to the final phase of painting, suggesting that all may be remnants from the same program, probably from anciently dismantled portions of stairway.

The palaeography of all three phases is distinctly Late Classic, with some features that become common only after the

1 Photographs and pencil drawings were produced on-site and later compared to the multi-spectral images produced by Gene Ware (2008). The line drawings reproduced here were traced from photographs and are not intended to replace measured tracings of the paintings themselves. The restricted space underground during excavation made technical photography difficult, and a number of drawings are composites made from two or more photographs in order to minimize distortion.

2 An evaluation of the third tier and other newly emerged texts has recently been completed and will appear in Martin (n.d.c), a study to accompany the complete publication of the murals in the series La pintura mural prehispánica en México.
middle of the seventh century. This is consistent with the chronology derived from ceramic evidence, both in terms of types recovered from sealed deposits within the building and those depicted in the paintings. Together these data suggest a placement between 620 and 700 (Boucher and Quirúñez 2007:47).

The captions differ from those we normally see in Maya art in that they identify people by means of generic titles rather than by personal names. In most cases they follow a consistent formula and begin with AJ in one of two logographic versions. In an inversion of the normal pattern, it is the rare form—the “Flaming Ak’bal” in which the sign aj’ *darkness* sprouts fiery volutes (Zender 2005a)—which is the more common on the murals. In modern Mayan languages aj’ is a male agentive

First, it is the number nine (Rogelio Valencia Rivera, personal communication 2010). The scene of SE-S1 was the first to be uncovered in 2004 and remains the iconic image of the Structure Sub 1-4 murals (Carrasco Vargas and Colin González 2015:40) (Figure 4); for photos see Figure 1 and pages 24, 25, and 36–39. Here a striking woman wearing a diaphanous blue huipil—decorated with roundels filled by zoomorphic heads and a row of horizontal hieroglyphs in red and orange—marches out to put, steady, or take a large pot on the head of another female. This second woman or girl is expressly more simple, with a plain garment wrapped around her body and over her shoulder. Her whole face is colored bright red, much like the face-paint most women in the murals wear but in this case possibly a humorous reference to the effort of bearing her burden. This pair is flanked by two seated men. The one at right brings a bowl to his lips; the one at left handles an unidentified object (possibly a calabash vessel) in a bowl at his feet.

The hieroglyphs on the hem of the decorated huipil include at least one recognizable sign (k’e) and resemble a readable text. Nevertheless, the remainder are so cuspidate as to probably constitute pseudo-glyphs designed only to give the appearance of writing. The literate texts on SE-S1 consist of two captions. The one on the right side provides an example of the ‘Flaming Ak’bal’ prefix AJ, followed by paired a and b syllables (Figure 5a). Spelling ul “atole,” this term was first recognized on the rims of ceramic vessels designed to hold this mashed maize drink (Stuart 1999:152) (Figure 5b). The full caption therefore reads aj’ “atole person,” the first of three appearances on the Structure Sub 1-4 murals. It would seem logical to suppose that the text refers to the man who drinks from the vessel, but for reasons that will become clear as we progress around the scenes, it more likely refers to the women who handle the weighty pot, the “blue lady” in particular.

A four-glyph inscription on the left of SE-S1 is one of the longest of the whole mural program (Figure 5c). It can be understood as individual elements for the most part, but the overall sense is elusive. The first three blocks provide the sequence lu’ k’a hu’un, which most likely renders lu’k’an. Lexical entries for the root lu’k’a are largely restricted to the Yukatekan language branch, with la’a/la’x (“mud, clay,” “to swallow,” gulp, “to leave,” and “to free, save”) (Barerra Vásquez et al. 1980:464-466; Bricker et al. 1998:174-175; Hoffing and Tossacín

Figure 4: SE-S1 scene. Drawing: Simon Martin/PAC.

Figure 5. (a) SE-S1 caption 1 (photo: Juan Ignacio Cases Martín/PAC); (b) spelling of “atole” (from K4387 [Carr and Kerr 1991:487] [drawing: Simon Martin]); (c) SE-S1 caption 2 (photo: Juan Ignacio Cases Martín/PAC).
In sum, this text is a puzzle with dotted motif on his temple, very similar (but not identical) to the identifier of some sort. Prefixed by ti and suffixed by, the main passage is also opaque, although it is probably a personal at our disposal. The role and reading of the final glyph in the luk’if the Classic-era bears any relationship to the lexical entries (e.g., Hull 2005:79; Kaufman 2003:420, 1318). Since the possible “to leave” that is attested in several Western Mayan languages may simply be a variant of the intransitive verb root luk’-es u-kuch spirit of the aforementioned statement. However, verbal and the suffix has that role here, our passage could refer to combines a suffix that derives positional roots into transitive conversation 2008) notes that in Ch’orti’ a in the script but most likely a verbal suffix. Kerry Hull (personal communication 2008) notes that in C’otór a –ba-n ending suffixes that derives positional roots into transitive ones with a terminal imperative marker. If the phrase is indeed verbal and the suffixes has that role here, our passage could refer to the taking of the heavy pot from the bearer’s head—echoing the spirit of the aforementioned ti’-os u-kuch statement. However, luk’ may simply be a variant of the intransitive verb root luk’ “to leave” that is attested in several Western Mayan languages (e.g., Hull 2005:79; Kaufman 2003:420, 1318). Since the possible development of luk’ from luk’ cannot be dated, it remains unclear if the Classic-era luk’ bears any relationship to the lexical entries at our disposal. The role and reading of the final glyph in the passage is also opaque, although it is probably a personal identifier of some sort. Prefixed by I and suffixed by, the main sign is an unknown glyph that has the head of an old man with a dotted motif on his temple, very similar (but not identical) to the portrait form of the syllable ye. In sum, this text is a puzzle with given the general theme of consumption, the sense of “to swallow, gulp” is a tempting interpretation. However, the caption is on the opposite side of the scene from the depiction of drinking and should refer to the actors or events closest to it.

“¡Quítale la carga!” Unload it! Take off his load!” (Hofling 1989:70, 75). As we turn the corner of the building we come to SE-E1, a scene with three participants (Figure 6; for photos see pages 15 and 44-49). The first character in a fine woven hat embraces a large pot and pours liquid from a spoon into a dish set atop a basket. The high hip-cloth is the kind worn by males, but this figure also wears the red face-paint usually applied to women in these murals. The next is a male drinker, this time imbiring from a vessel painted in a vivid blue. Finally a woman with a closely matching spoon, dish, and basket looks on. The caption at left repeats the AJ yul-u formula of the previous scene, describing another “atole person” (Figure 7). At right we see a different formula, consisting of the female classifier IX—translated as “Lady” or sometimes “She of”—followed by an uncommon and still-undeciphered hieroglyph (Figure 8). We will turn to a discussion of this important sign where it recurs elsewhere in the murals.

There is, in fact, one more text on SE-E1—a minutely incised inscription on the rim of the blue drinking vessel (see photo, page 48). This graffiti features three glyphs, although only the last of them, consisting of waa-u, is legible. The similarity of this form to the u l described in the caption suggests that ye’ “his atole” is intended. The preceding two signs in all likelihood once supplied the opening glyphs of the dedicatory phrase on Maya vessels called the Primary Standard Sequence (Coe 1973; Stuart 1989).

Little survives of the last scene on the bottom tier of the southeast corner, EsS-LS1. We can make out the figure of an old man, with what seems to be a thin cigar in his mouth. To the right we see the remains of a taller individual. There is an accompanying caption, but beyond the outlines of the by-now-familiar AJ introduction, it is too ruined to read (Figure 9). We return to the sidewall of the south stairway as we move up to the second tier and come to the scene designated EsS-LtE2. This carries a detailed image of a bearer carrying a large pot using a tumpline drawn over his forehead (for photo see page 22). Tied to the neck of the vessel is a net bag containing round objects of an unknown nature, but possibly small gourd containers. Surmounting this is a hat in the form of a long-snouted mammal, probably an opossum. There is no surviving caption, but the narrow-necked pot is similar to those in the scenes featuring atole, and he may be carrying this foodstuff.

Crossing to SE-S2, we encounter a woman in the same broad hat seen on SE-E1 and a basket containing large hieroglyphs for WAAJ “tamale” (Figure 10). This iconographic representation of maize bread is familiar from the Postclassic Maya codices, where we find such glyphs set in plates with various meat fillings—fish, iguana, or turkey—sometimes protruding from their tops (Figure 11). On SE-S2 the woman offers a platter of small breads to a
man who takes one and brings it to his mouth. The caption reads AJ wa-WAAJ-ji ‘tobacco person’ (Figure 14). The root has been written on it—a scene in which powdered tobacco was blended with tobacco to enhance its effects (John Justeson, personal communication 2008). The reaction of the man on SE-E2, who seems to be spitting or vomiting after taking nuxt from the spatula, suggests a powerful effect whether it was recreational or curative in purpose.7

The next painting, on EsE-LIS2, appears on the south side of the east stairway. It shows a woman holding a banded object in her right hand, with two or three more of the same visible in the basket in front of her (Figure 16; for photo see page 15). The accompanying text, legible with the aid of multi-spectral imaging, reads AJ-jaay, making jay the object in question (Figure 17b). This word is familiar from dedicatory phrases on ceramic vessels. Many texts on Chochola-style incised cylinder vases, for example, use the possessed form usiij ‘his/her clay vessel’ to introduce the names of their owners (Grube 1990:322) (Figure 17a). Jay has been lost from most Mayan languages but survives in Mopan (Ulrich and Ulrich 1990) and in Tzotzil (Delgaty 1964) as “clay bowl, tecomate” (Hull 2003:419; Lacadena 1997).8 The woman’s caption can therefore be read as aj ‘his clay vessel person.’ EsE-LIS2 occupies a rather narrow space constrained by the slope of the stairway (established by the corner of a single red-painted step to the right of the caption) and could not have accommodated a second figure. This is significant because it establishes that the captions refer to the providers of the materials in the scenes, as well as confirming that the aj term can be applied to women as well as men.

An initial investigation of the third tier of the southeast stairway...
corner from above revealed three scenes in good to moderate preservation (for photo see page 31). The restricted space available for EsE-LtE3 is filled with a seated bearer carrying a bound pot on his tumpline—in much the same manner as EsE-LiE2, which lies directly below it on the eastern flank of the south stairway. No identifying captions were exposed. SE-S3 is more informative. Its image features a seated woman in a decorated huipil that closelyparallels the colors and designs of that on SE-S1 (for which see Figure 1), here with the addition of a broad-brimmed hat slung over her back. Equipped with the spoon, dish, basket, and drinking cups of the “atole person,” here we see on SE-E1 (Figure 6), she serves a male drinker.

Turning the corner to SE-E3, we find another image featuring a pair of actors: on the left is a poorly preserved woman in a dark red huipil, and on the right a man who holds a white pointed object, perhaps a stone pestle. There is a text between them, but only the first sign, the ubiquitous aj, can be recognized (Figure 18b). The final scene on the third tier, EsE-LiE3, is now almost entirely destroyed.

Northeast Corner

This corner opens with EsE-LiN1, a scene that can be safely assigned to Phase 1 on stylistic grounds, featuring a standing man and seated woman. The painting of the male is in part even by the rather low standards of other Phase 1 works, with a greatly enlarged head and feet, although the proportions of the woman are more naturalistic: They are engaged in manipulating (perhaps rolling or untwisting) a decorated ribbon or cord. No captions are visible.

An especially significant text is found on NE-E1 (Figure 19). There we see a man who sits on a rounded white stone (identified as such by its “kawak” markings) holding a vessel above a large basket, his other hand outstretched and open as if giving or receiving something. Facing him is a woman wearing a plain blue huipil who holds a rounded, green object marked with wavy lines. The text between these actors shows the narrow affix version of aj followed by the vowel a and then a sign that at first sight resembles the syllable tza, but is actually two signs—a partly overlapped tza-mi version of Aj followed by the vowel o. The text therefore reads aj tza-mi o, the word for “salt” in almost all Mayan languages spoken today (Kaufman 2003:1240-1244; Kaufman and Norman 1984:116) and the full caption therefore reads aj tza-mi aj ortz’a “salt person.” This is the first time this

important foodstuff, flavoring, and preservative has appeared in Maya writing, and we can take it that the man’s basket held granular salt. Although the green object held by the woman looks like a vegetable, it is probably best explained as a ball of salt wrapped in leaves, an ethnographically attested packaging for this commodity (Ana García Barrios, personal communication 2009). An especially significant text is found on NE-E1 (Figure 19). There we see a man who sits on a rounded white stone (identified as such by its “kawak” markings) holding a vessel above a large basket, his other hand outstretched and open as if giving or receiving something. Facing him is a woman wearing a plain blue huipil who holds a rounded, green object marked with wavy lines. The text between these actors shows the narrow affix version of aj followed by the vowel a and then a sign that at first sight resembles the syllable tza, but is actually two signs—a partly overlapped tza-mi version of Aj followed by the vowel o. The text therefore reads aj tza-mi o, the word for “salt” in almost all Mayan languages spoken today (Kaufman 2003:1240-1244; Kaufman and Norman 1984:116) and the full caption therefore reads aj tza-mi aj ortz’a “salt person.” This is the first time this
and completed by a suffixed li. It is strange to see the God C head in this context and we might interpret it in one of two ways. Firstly, it could be joined to the curl with a toad-like head, and it is possible that God C places it in a rare or idiosyncratic variant. The poorly understood overlap between mu and bu in the script might tempt us to entertain bu as another possible value. While mu-li is not meaningful in this context, bu-li would yield bu ‘bean,’ of potential relevance to the bean-shaped object in the male’s hand. However, another Phase 3 text, from SO-OI (Figure 38), shows bu in its more conventional form—casting the “bean” reading into the realm of wishful thinking. This leads us to the second option, a spelling strategy in which logograms lose their semantic function and are used for their sound value alone. Although the God C portrait works as logographic K’U ‘god’ in Postclassic Yukatek (Ringle 1988), this is only because this is a language in which terminal aspiants have been lost. In Classic times it always carries the glottal aspiant and was read as K’U (Stuart et al. 1999a:41). No viable contender for the sequence as written, K’UH-mu-li, is at work then the order could easily be K’UH-mu-li, setting up a possible tie to k’uhmil/ch’um/c’um ‘calabaza’ (David Stuart, personal communication 2006). An even better option may be an entry from Ch’orti’ mentions how this dough could appear without lobes where space was limited. This suggests that the God C portrait is an engaging scene in which we see an elderly woman with a jutting, toothless jaw, struggling under the weight of an enormous, wide-necked pot (Figure 23; for photo see page 54). She is simply dressed in a blue textile wrapped around her midriff, with a similar cloth draped over her shoulder (perhaps as padding for her burden). Standing to the right and evidently helping her is a taller male. A two-glyph caption appears above her head (Figure 24). The first, formed of a main sign and suffix, is reminiscent of the red substance in the woman’s dish. Whatever material is involved here, it is the same as that mentioned on NE-E2 (see below).

EaN-LIE1 is an engaging scene in which we see an elderly woman with a jutting, toothless jaw, struggling under the weight of an enormous, wide-necked pot (Figure 23; for photo see page 54). She is simply dressed in a blue textile wrapped around her midriff, with a similar cloth draped over her shoulder (perhaps as padding for her burden). Standing to the right and evidently helping her is a taller male. A two-glyph caption appears above her head (Figure 24). The first, formed of a main sign and suffix, is

10 In their full, digraphic forms both mu and bu consist of curls attached to a toad-like head. The bu version is distinguished by the addition of two or three lobes attached to the curl. Although this is fairly consistently applied during the Late Classic period, in earlier times the same lobed form can represent mu (for an example of Calakmul see Martin n.d.b), while bu appears without lobes where space was limited.

A supplemental entry for Chu’-C’i mentions how this dough could be tinted with annatto, a red seed pulp used to color food (Hull 2005:76)—a common practice in the woman’s dishes.

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XI’

However, we also see it in free
in several contexts, where it represents a place-
and cheeks. This sign has a logographic function
by a string of dots running down its forehead
AJ
follows the recurring
each holding a vessel, with the child seated on a
and
T782—a skull with a ring of
T1046 in the Thompson (1962) system, and although it
XIIW-AJAW
on Naranjo Altar 1 (at N) (Graham
12 For example, the death god Akan seems to be titled
logographic
of the Maize God has recently been read as
aj ixiim
ma
“maize-kernel person.” The head
(Figure 28b, c). The full spelling is thus AJ i-xi-
eye—and it is sure to have that function here

Moving up to the second tier, the stair-oval of ESN-LI02 we see today is a plain plastered surface. On the adjacent NO-N2 we find a probable Phase 1 scene with two seated males that have a tie-landscape set between them (Figure 31). There is some wrapped object on top of the package and the figure on the right holds a matching one, perhaps examining or receiving it from his companion. The “receiver” wears a patterned headdress that seems to represent an armadillo—although an oversized oliva shell with a green-headed snake looking out would be another possibility. He is mostly obscured by two overlying Phase 3 figures. One is seated and possibly female, the other a male who adopts a strange crouching pose while holding two

Northwest Corner

The fine preservation that distinguishes much of the eastern side of the building disappears when we cross to the western. Here the outer layer of
stucco and its Phase 3 painting have often decayed to a powdery residue,
that seems to represent an armadillo—although an oversized oliva shell with a green-headed snake looking out would be another possibility. He is mostly obscured by two overlying Phase 3 figures. One is seated and possibly female, the other a male who adopts a strange crouching pose while holding two

Additional, the mural text makes clear that it
has vowel complexity, probably producing the long vowel IXIIM.

The adjoining ESN-LI02 supplies the image of an adolescent male who is intermediate in height between the adults and infant of NE-N2 (see Figure 27 for the composite scene). His age is confirmed by his caption of ke-la-ma for kelw “young man” (Figure 29). The fact that he shares the same ground-line and looks into
the other scene—and that he is not involved in any activity of his own—all indicate that he is part of the “maize family.”

west

each holding a vessel, with the child seated on a
bound sack (for photo see page 51). The caption follows the recurring AJ with three syllabic signs (Figure 28a). The first and last are an and ma, and between them is a human skull distinguished by a string of dots running down its forehead and cheeks. This sign has a logographic function in several contexts, where it represents a place-name linked to the Underworld, perhaps reading

or XIX. However, we also see it in its free
substitution with the very similar-looking XI syllable—a skull with a ring of dots around its eye—and it seems to have that function here (Figure 28b). The full spelling is thus AJ i-xi-

Since no readable texts survive on the first tier we can pass over its scenes with brief descriptions. The image of ESN-LI01, on the sidewalk of the north stairway, supplies a standing male with a large parcel or sack, together with a partially preserved seated female. NO-N1 features two men or a woman in a drinking scene, with traces of a Phase I image to the extreme right. The dress worn by the woman, her dish with its basket base, the large pot, the use of a spoon (whose outline is deeply incised in the stucco), and what may be wickered gourds for cups, replicate the atole-drinking scenes of SE-E1 (Figure 6) and SE-SS. No caption is now visible. The scene on NO-O1 shows the remains of two seated figures facing a Phase 1 caption and, to the right, a pole stand on which a scarlet macaw is perched (for photo see back cover of this volume). The four-glyph column cannot be read in its current condition (Figure 30). The final image on this tier, ES-O-LNI1, is a Phase 3 painting in relatively good preservation and shows a man stretching a decorated cord to a seated woman who adopts a rather deliberate hand gesture, a dish at her feet. The activity resembles that from the Phase 1 scene of ES-E-LNI, but here appears to be one of measuring. The woman is clearly one of the providers, perhaps casting the male into the role of recipient. We should note the blue-green diadem he wears, evidently a “Jester God” motif—similar ones occur on SE-E2 (Figure 13) and SO-SS. This is always a mark of elite status, carried not only by royalty but a wider noble class. Portions of an earlier phase are visible where the surface has broken away. No caption has survived.

Moving up to the second tier, the stair-oval of ESN-LI02 we see today is a plain plastered surface. On the adjacent NO-N2 we find a probable Phase 1 scene with two seated males that have a tie-landscape set between them (Figure 31). There is some wrapped object on top of the package and the figure on the right holds a matching one, perhaps examining or receiving it from his companion. The “receiver” wears a patterned headdress that seems to represent an armadillo—although an oversized oliva shell with a green-headed snake looking out would be another possibility. He is mostly obscured by two overlying Phase 3 figures. One is seated and possibly female, the other a male who adopts a strange crouching pose while holding two

unknown objects. The oversized design behind him, a MAN caricature, is a caption belonging to the earlier phase. The blue-green-filled caption above the “supplier” is difficult to make out in normal light, but rather clearer in a multi-spectral image (Figure 22; for multi-spectral image see page 22). The first of two compounds is the Flaming Ak’bal version of AJ, but the next glyph is unfamiliar, consisting of a humanoid head with an extended mouth area and three large spots in its upper portion—resembling, but not matching, the rare portrait form of ni (David Stuart, personal communication 2006). The final sign, marked by a simple diagonal line, is also hard to tie to a known counterpart. The remains of an illegible Phase 3 caption appear below it. NO-O2 presents an even more overt mixture of painting

Southwest Corner

The poor preservation of the northwest corner continues on the southwest, although more in the way of epigraphic data survives. Much of the west stairway was torn down in the construction of later versions of Structure 1 and little of the sidewall carrying the EsO-LtS1 scene is now in place. We can make out a standing male, although closer inspection reveals that there are in fact two overlapping figures from different phases of painting. No caption survives.

SO-O1 is another scene in which the Phase 3 painting was badly damaged, and what we see today is the Phase 1 image uncovered beneath. In Phase 3 there were once as many as three seated figures, a bowl or dish loaded with small, rounded objects painted red, and a glyphic caption. The Phase 1 scene shows three standing figures, two of them facing a large pot set on a cloth ring support, still wrapped in the bindings used to transport it (Figure 37). One of the facing pair, wearing a domed hat, looks over his shoulder toward the third figure.

The caption from Phase 3 was found in only moderate condition (Figure 38). The first sign was plainly Aj in its affix form, and the internal details of the next resemble syllabic chi in normal light but layers (Figure 33). A Phase 1 image consists of a standing male with one vessel cradled in his left arm and a rather larger one in front of him. The held vessel contains two unidentified objects (one may be an ear ornament), while the lip of the large pot features a tied object of cloth or palm and a miniature figure, seemingly a rabbit (see photo page 34). As fellow project members have noted, this is reminiscent of the “rabbit scribe” seated in front of an open codex on a vase now in the Princeton Art Gallery (Coe 1973:91) and presumably a figure made from clay or wood. Above the pot we see a hand that is all that remains of a second Phase 1 figure—although it is easily mistaken for that of a seated female who, along with the male seated on a mat behind her, belongs to Phase 3. The woman wears her hat over her back, but the activity she was once engaged in is now lost.

The Phase 1 caption shows the remains of four glyphs, of which the first two are almost completely erased (Figure 34). The third shows internal details consistent with the ak’ab sign and shows a volute beneath it that could be flames (conceivably this is a variant composition of the Flaming Ak’bal sign Aj, although only if the four-glyph block we see is in fact two closely spaced captions). The final sign is the head of a supernatural character, not unlike some divine monkeys. The remains of a Phase 3 caption, noticeably larger in size, appear just above the woman’s hat (Figure 35). The second of the two signs seems to be a head of some kind, but no other details can be discerned.

The second tier of the northwest corner concludes with EsO-Ln2. This features a seated woman in a dramatic blue huipil decorated with groups of triple spots. She holds her arms out in front of her, reaching over what seems to be a pot set on a coil of cloth, unidentified objects appear on top of it. A two-glyph caption is visible to the upper right (Figure 36). From its tan fill we can associate it with Phase 3, but although the first sign is clearly yet another “Flaming Ak’bal” form of Aj, the referent is too damaged to recognize.

Figure 33. NO-O2 scene. Drawing: Simon Martin/PAC.

Figure 34. NO-O2 caption 1. Photo: Rogelio Valencia Rivera/PAC.

Figure 35. NO-O2 caption 2. Photo: Rogelio Valencia Rivera/PAC.

Figure 36. EsO-Ln2 caption. Photo: Rogelio Valencia Rivera/PAC.

Figure 37. SO-O1 scene. Drawing: Simon Martin/PAC.
the flames and its position at the head of a caption we might wonder if this is some alternative version of AJ. Reason to believe so emerges on SO-O2 and the identification will be examined when we reach that text. The second glyph on SO-O1 consists of a bird-head with a second, now-damaged sign in its mouth. The most common glyph of this kind has a snout “person” sign in this infixed position, but there is currently no reading for this combination. The preponderance of syllabic spellings on these murals could suggest that it is employed as a syllabogram here. The final compound is spelled na-ba or just possibly ni-ba. Whatever the sense of this caption, it presumably relates to the contents of the large vessel depicted in the Phase 1 scene.

On SO-S1 we find three figures, two men and a woman, with two baskets set between them (Figure 40). The woman at right handles a thin stick with a splayed end, and 13 similar objects are seen projecting from the baskets, as if set into some pliable material as a deliberate display. Some look rather like paintbrushes but others have decorated ends in different styles (see photo, page 55). One, the leftmost in the basket to the right, looks like a crudely rendered head of the deity K’awiil. Bloodletters carved from bone are often embellished in this way, but the size of these objects suggests that they are larger pins for the hair, or possibly weaving picks. Even today, weaving picks have decorative carvings at their ends (Karl Taube, personal communication 2006). Some portions of Phase 1 painting are visible in the inset area below the panel, specifically the leg of a standing figure (not shown in the drawing). Some portions of the central male character seem to include a different layer, while the “ghosting” of his outstretched arm could be a trial underpainting or the remains of a separate phase.

The extant caption has blue-green-filled hieroglyphs which it shares with those on NO-N2 (for which see Figure 32) but no others on the still-surviving portions of the paintings (Figure 41). After the affix form of AJ we get logographic IHK’ “black,” before a mostly effaced second sign. Multi-spectral imaging helped to define its internal details but could not identify it. This could be a reference to the pins/picks depicted in the scene, which were originally painted a black-brown color. However, further analysis of the phase sequence is required before the scene and caption can be positively linked.

Despite the very poor condition of the next scene, EsS-LtO1, it is possible to make out a seated male. As with EsO-LtS1, first impressions are a little deceptive, however, since the image is actually composed of two different phases that align only in part. The rest of the scene was destroyed when most of the south stairway was anciently demolished and there is no surviving caption.

Beginning our final visit to the second tier, the stair-wall scene of EsS-LtS2 bears a crowded series of lines, probably the result of mixing between different phases. No recognizable figures or text can be identified.

The excavation of SO-O2 revealed a Phase 3 painting that was badly decomposed, but the Phase 1 painting beneath proved to have two males manipulating a large bundle bound with a cord or cloth (Figure 42). The one to the right looks at us full-face, displaying the rather “flattened” look of this convention in Maya art. The text consists of two captions with the dense black

Figure 38. SO-O1 Phase 3 caption: (a) photo; (b) drawing. Photo and drawing: Simon Martin/ PAC.

Figure 39. SO-O1 Phase 1 caption. Photo: Rogelio Valencia Riviera/ PAC.

Figure 40. SO-S1 scene. Drawing: Simon Martin/PAC.

Figure 41. SO-S1 caption. Photo: Simon Martin/ PAC.

Figure 42. SO-O2 scene. Drawing: Simon Martin/PAC.
outlines characteristic of this phase. The first, identifying the left-hand figure, starts with a pair of signs that closely resemble those beginning the Phase 1 caption on SO-O1 (Figure 43a; for the SO-O1 caption see Figure 39). They differ only to the extent that the dark inking at the top of the second sign is more characteristic of logographic "HA" "water" than the ba syllabogram. A major pointer to its meaning comes from the companion caption identifying the right-hand figure (Figure 43b). Although damaged, it is clearly a version of the "Flaming Akbal" form of Aj. The implication is that the two signs supply contrasting, but semantically equivalent, "fiery water" and "fiery darkness" compounds. An important precedent for this "fiery water" glyph is the "fiery water" and "fiery darkness" identifying the right-hand figure (Figure 43b). Although his outstretched arm suggests that he once held some object, everything else is too unknown and accidental for which the cardinal entry stairways suggest an ideal of ready access but were surely consistently interpreted as ritual-religious in character. The four eye appearances of the mystery glyph in the captions to the scenes. This survey of the epigraphic material of the surviving portions of Structure Sub-1-4 has left one text unmentioned. A number of the inset moldings that form the base of each tier also carry materials shown elsewhere on the murals, this is a possibility.

The Inset Moldings

This survey of the epigraphic material of the surviving portions of Structure Sub-1-4 has left one text unmentioned. A number of the inset moldings that form the base of each tier also carry materials shown elsewhere on the murals, this is a possibility.

15 For iku as the term for "nine" during the Classic period see Miller and Taube (2000:181).

16 The signs designated are T205-M and T205-M respectively in the Thompson (1982) system.

17 A typical contact name would be AJ-1-20-BAAK instead of AJ-1-20-BAAL as juxsul bleu heat "He of Twenty-One Prisoners," a title borne by Bird Jaguar IV of Yaxchilan and Stuart (1985b:Figure 6). There it might work as a numerical unit (greater than 20?), possibly as a homonym. However, our understanding of this formula is too poor to draw any conclusions.
formula: “Lady x” (neither includes the “nine stones” element). Both are engaged in rather menial tasks and are unprepossessing individuals. These hieroglyphic texts do more than identify particular materials since, as we have seen, they consistently fix them within titles denoting the affiliations or specializations of individuals. These generic associations indicate some formal or habitual character to the activities in the scenes. I have argued elsewhere that this and other features are consistent with a market scenario, with Structure 1 comprehensible as the focus of a religious-administrative compound at its heart (Martin 2007; Martin in Boucher and Quiñones 2007:48). That position is favored here again.20 Yet even if this is a reasonable description, we should remain alert to the possibility of systems of supply and exchange that blur or sidestep the contemporary dichotomy between capitalistic and non-capitalistic economies (McAnany 1993). The “pilgrimage fair” (Feild 1981) and similar festival-based systems are examples of distributive networks in which material consumption interacts with wider issues of socio-religious performance and engagement (Boucher and Quiñones 2007; García Barrios and Carrasco Vargas 2008; Vázquez López 2006).

Precisely what the unique murals of Ch’il Naab Structure Sub 1-4 portray will continue to be debated, but there is no question that they offer tantalizing glimpses into a once-hidden domain. When their message is better understood we will know substantially more about how the ancient inhabitants of Calakmul went about their daily affairs, obtained the necessities of life, and interacted as a communal whole.

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19 It is noteworthy that among the contemporary Ch’orti’ Maya a maize-seller can be called simply hik’ and a bean-seller a’ik’ (Kerry Hull, personal communication 2009).

20 In response to my proposal of a market temple Stephen Houston (personal communication 2006) suggested that the mystery sign could be a “check/coin or dictatorship/”market.” In this sense other possibilities include “exit, ch’iyén, or “western market.”

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