

## The Hieroglyphic Lintels of Yulá, Yucatán, México

BRUCE LOVE

*University of California at Los Angeles*

SO FAR IN THE HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN YUCATAN, the small site of Yulá is notable for two reasons: its proximity to the famed site of Chichén Itzá, and the hieroglyphic lintels found in its largest structure. The earliest published reference to Yulá is its appearance (as “Ula”) in a chart of dates derived by Morley (1920:512) from a survey of texts made during the 1918 field season. Later, the same author gave a brief account of “Yula,” providing its approximate location and noting the chronological relationship of the two lintels to those of the Temple of the Four Lintels at Chichén Itzá (Morley 1925:250-51).

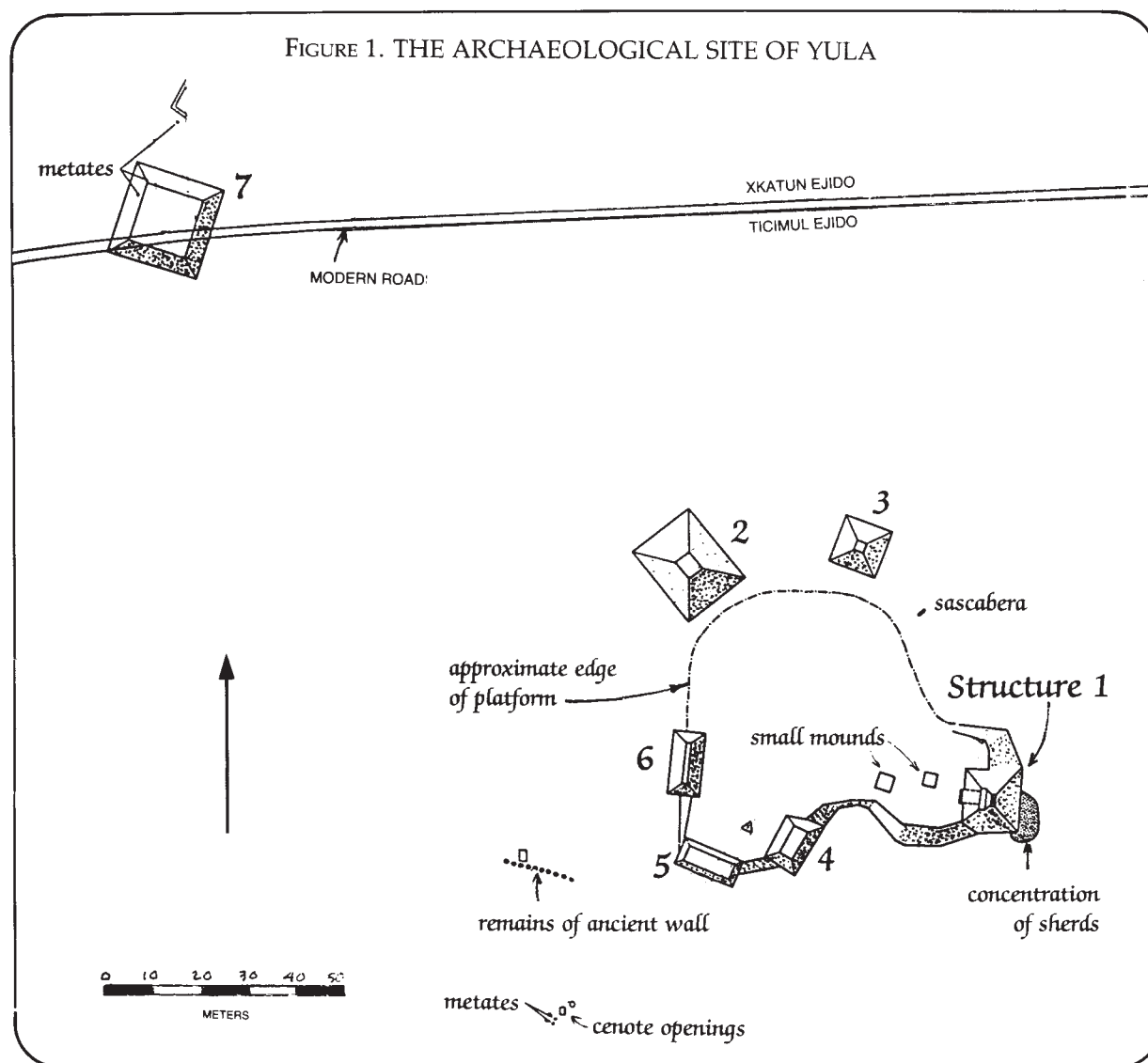
### THE SITE

In Morley’s early report, the site of Yulá is not described, but its location is given as “five miles south and slightly east” of Chichén Itzá (Morley 1925:250). Later, he locates it “four miles southeast of Old Chichen” (Morley 1927:234). On the map of the Yaxuná-Cobá causeway published by Villa Rojas (1934: Plate 9), Yulá appears as a *vivienda*, a small settlement rather than an archaeological site, some nine kilometers southwest of the approximate center of the Chichén Itzá archaeological zone. On that map, the nearest archaeological site to Yulá is Nichte-Ha, shown approximately seven kilometers due south of Chichén Itzá.

A map by Roys (1939: Plate 2) shows the same two places, Yulá and Nichte-Ha, but with their names switched. Roys (1939:61) discusses the confusion of names between the two, both locations of cenotes. According to Roys (1939:61), it resulted when the two places were incorrectly named on the occasion of their resettlement, presumably around 1930. In 1935, an “aged traveler” somehow persuaded the settlers of the error, and the names were corrected. Yulá is given by Roys as a cenote “directly south of Chichén Itzá;” Nichte-Ha is some three kilometers to the southwest. Thompson’s map of archaeological sites with hieroglyphic inscriptions (1950: Fig. 1) gives the name “Nictcha” for this site.

All the problems of nomenclature and location for the site of Yulá were resolved by the 1980 publication of the *Atlas Arqueológico del Estado de Yucatán* by Garza and Kurjack. There, Yulá appears about 5.5 kilometers south and slightly east of “Chichén Viejo,” the southern portion of Chichén Itzá (1980,2: hoja 16Q-[d9]). Nichte-Ha lies about two kilometers west of Yulá. Garza and Kurjack (1980,1:37) list Yulá in their “Range IV” category, typified by small sites with very little monumental architecture.

During the 1983-84 Harvard University Chichén Itzá project, headed by Charles Lincoln,



Yulá was accurately tied in to the detailed survey in the southeastern area of the site (Lincoln 1985; 1987; and see Figure 2 of the Introduction, page 3, above). The cement benchmark on the main platform at Yulá is 5.375 kilometers from the survey on the southeast side of the "Ceh" Platform (Ruppert's [1952] Structure 6E4) along a bearing of North  $179^{\circ} 30'$  East. This puts Yulá much closer to Chichén Itzá than any of the estimates given by the early investigators and confirms the placement by Garza and Kurjack. In terms of relative elevation, the Yulá benchmark is 4.8 meters below the datum point on the Ceh Platform, and 6.7 meters lower than that of the station on the Platform of the Hieroglyphic Jambs.

**Structure 1** (see Figure 1) is the tallest at Yulá, and is the discovery site of the hieroglyphic lintels, which originally spanned two doorways. The uncarved jambs are still *in situ*, though all but one are leaning over or collapsed. The remains of a stairway are apparent at the west base of the structure, which rises four and a half meters off the main (and perhaps the only) platform at Yulá. The "back," or east, side of the building descends to natural soil, where there is a dense concentration of broken ceramics.

**Structures 2 and 3** are north of the platform and rise from the natural surface. There are no remaining features on the summits of these mounds, only rocky level areas.

**Structures 4, 5, and 6** are three low rectangular mounds with no existing superstructures. All three have one side rising from the platform while the other rests on natural surface. Thus, the mounds themselves make up the southwest perimeter of the platform. Structure 4 has the widest and most level surface. This is in contrast to Structure 6, which rises to a rather narrow ridge which runs its entire length.

**Structure 7** is an almost square terrace with no remaining surface architecture. Two metates were found on its northwest slopes. A modern road, which also marks the *ejido* boundary between Xkatun and Ticimul, crosses Structure 7 in an east-west line.

A *sascabera*, an excavation pit for crumbled limestone, was seen from the top of Structure 3 and plotted, but was not investigated or measured.

Two *cenote* openings were mapped at the southwest extreme of the project area. One, with a rectangular opening, measures 2.4 by 1.4 meters. It was cut through about one meter of rock into a large cavern containing standing water. There are drill marks on the exposed walls of the opening which the workers said were from dynamite used to make the opening. It is 21 meters from the ground surface at the cenote opening to the surface of the water.

About two meters northwest of the rectangular opening is a circular opening into the same subterranean cavern. This opening measures 25 centimeters in diameter and also goes through about a meter of rock. Its method of construction and its age are unknown. The cylindrical walls are smooth and certainly artificial, but with no apparent tool marks. A hemispherical plug of limestone, shaped for the purpose, fits imperfectly into the opening.

West of these features lies a stone and plaster *pila*, or water trough, of fairly recent construction. Some meters south of this is a modern apiary in a cleared level space. Two metates hold rainwater. Apparently these signs of recent activity—the dynamite-cut cenote opening and the modern *pila*—mark the remains of the 1930s resettlement of Yulá mentioned by Roys (1939:61).

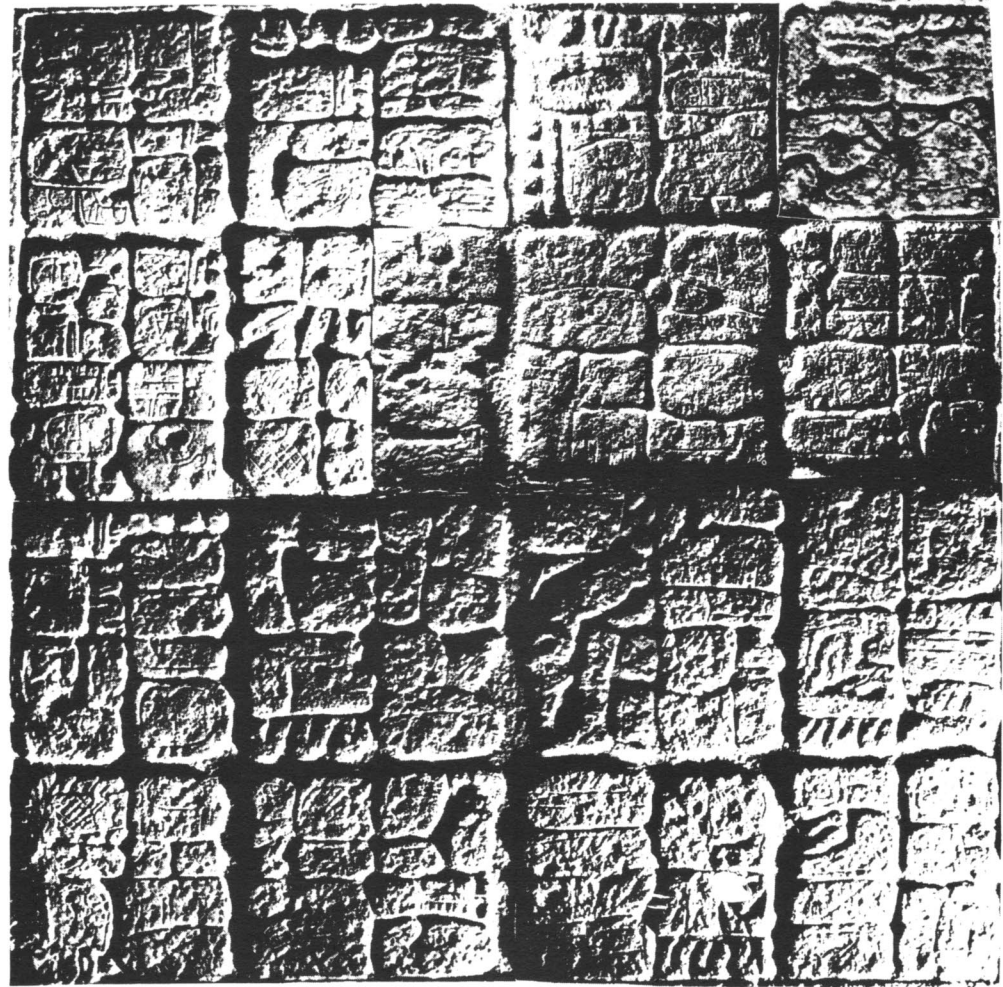
## THE TWO LINTELS

In his earliest survey of the inscribed dates in the vicinity, Morley (1927:234-35) compares the Yulá readings to ones in 18 Chichén Itzá texts and to that on the lintel from Halakal, another site in close proximity to Chichén Itzá.

The Yulá texts figure prominently in Beyer's (1937) pioneering analysis of the inscriptions of Chichén Itzá. In that work, Beyer refers to the Yulá structure as the "Temple of the Two Lintels" (Beyer 1937:33), and includes it—as well as Halakal—in his survey, along with the first good photographs of the Yulá pieces (1937: Plates 7 & 8). Beyer's analysis reiterates the close relationship between the Yulá inscriptions and those of Chichén Itzá's Temple of the Four Lintels, pointing out similarities not only in style, but also in content, reflected in the duplication of certain glyph groups, or "phrases," between the two sets of texts (Beyer 1937:167).

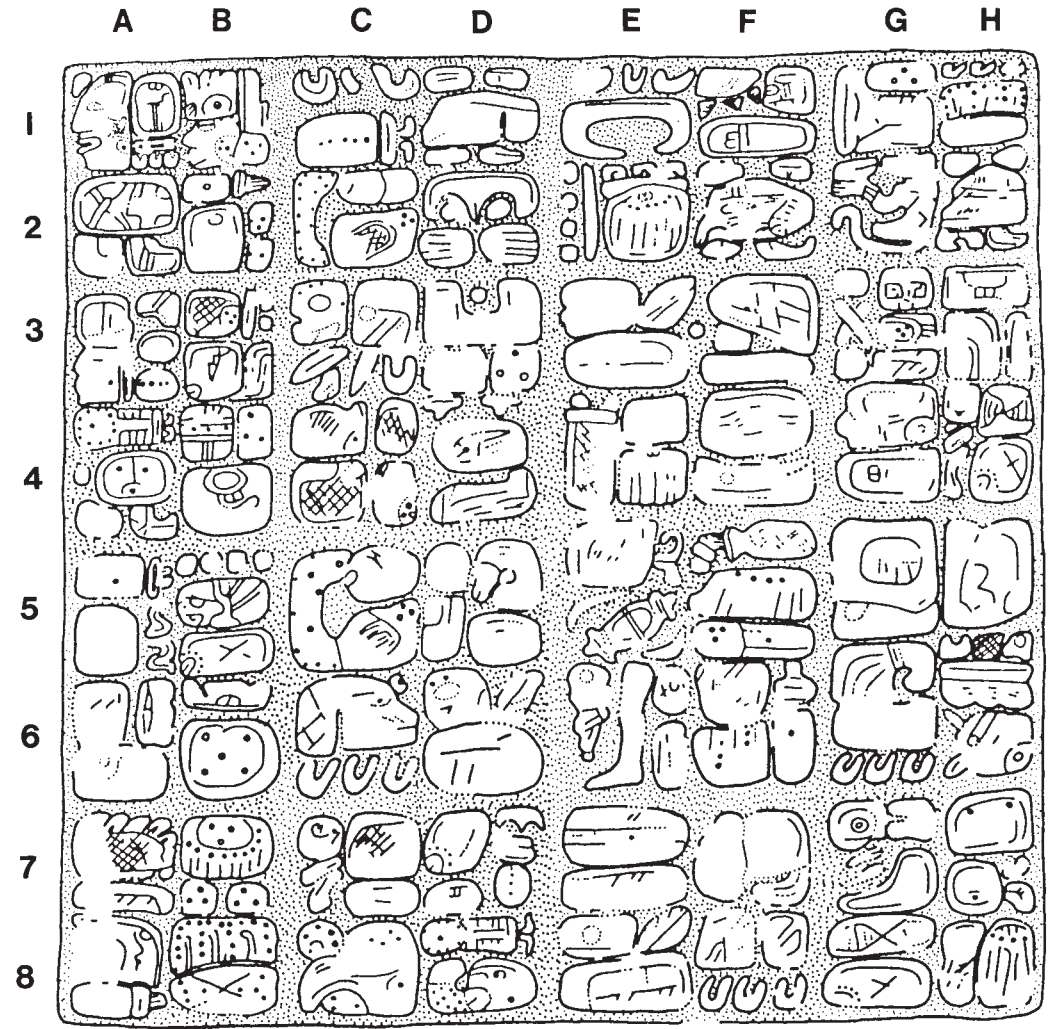
In June 1987, the author drew and photographed the Yulá lintels, which by that time had been moved into a small unroofed and partially completed public building on the west side of the plaza in Ticimul, the town about three kilometers southeast of the archaeological site (Fig. 1). Both lintels had been broken, but the fragments were together.

The individual pieces were photographed at night with side-raking light. Preliminary drawings were made by laying transparent acetate over the stones and tracing the hieroglyphs. These renderings were later photocopied and reduced. The final inking was done by placing drafting vellum over the reduced photocopies on a light table and again tracing the inscriptions. A set of the 1987 photographs has been deposited at the Center for Maya Research.



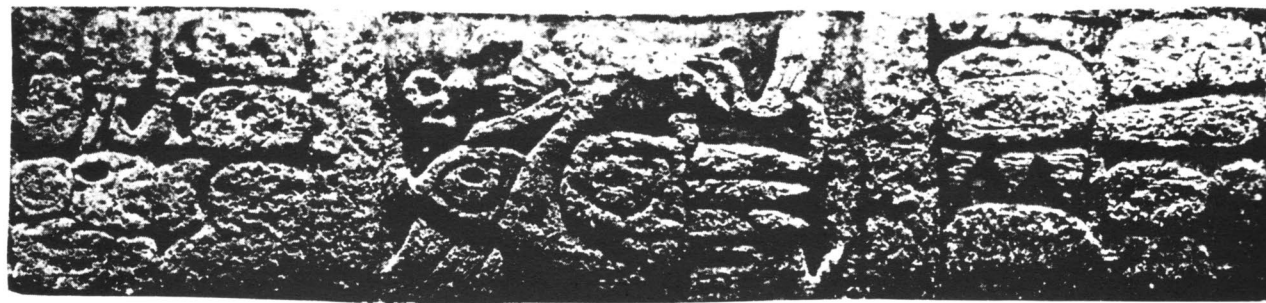
PHOTOGRAPH BY BRUCE LOVE

1:5



1

DRAWING BY BRUCE LOVE

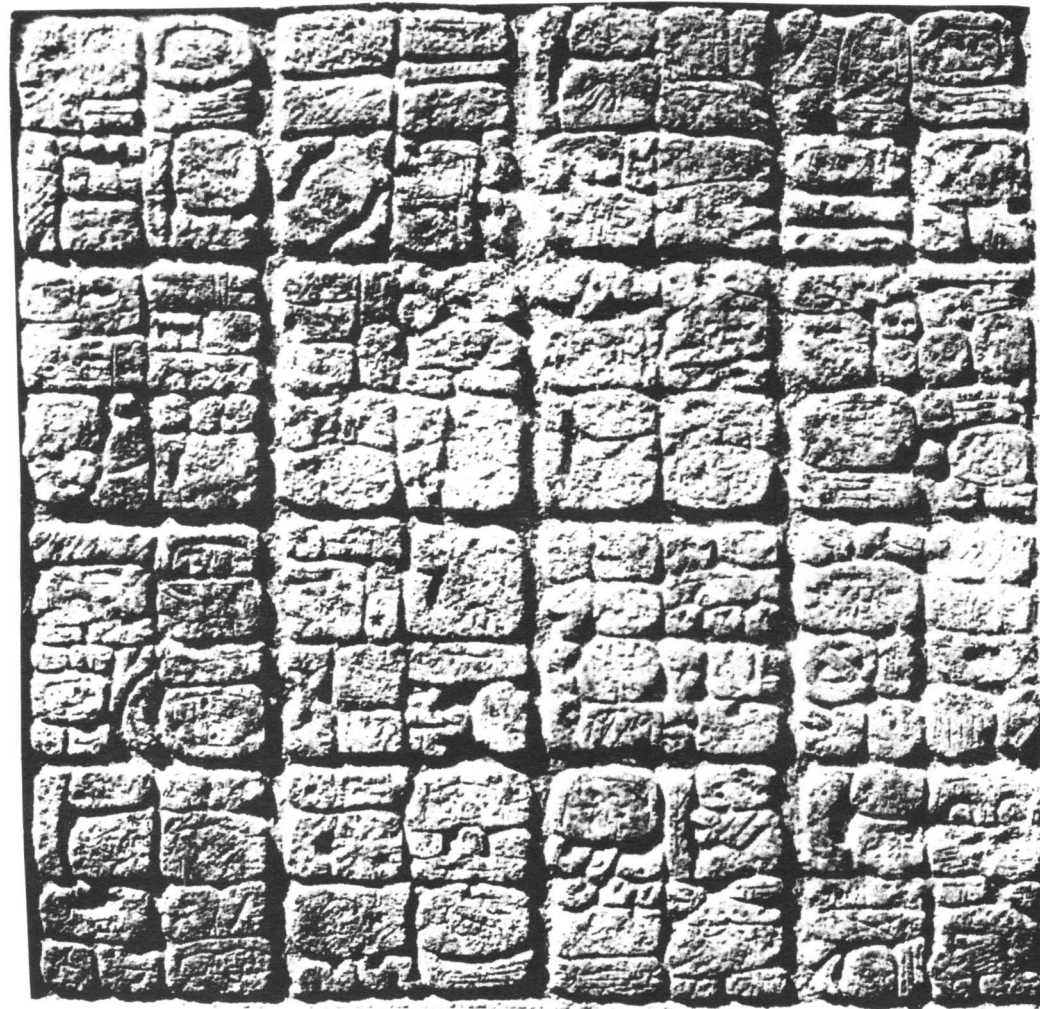


PHOTOGRAPH FROM BEYER (1937: PLATE 11)



1A

FIGURE 2. YULA LINTEL 1

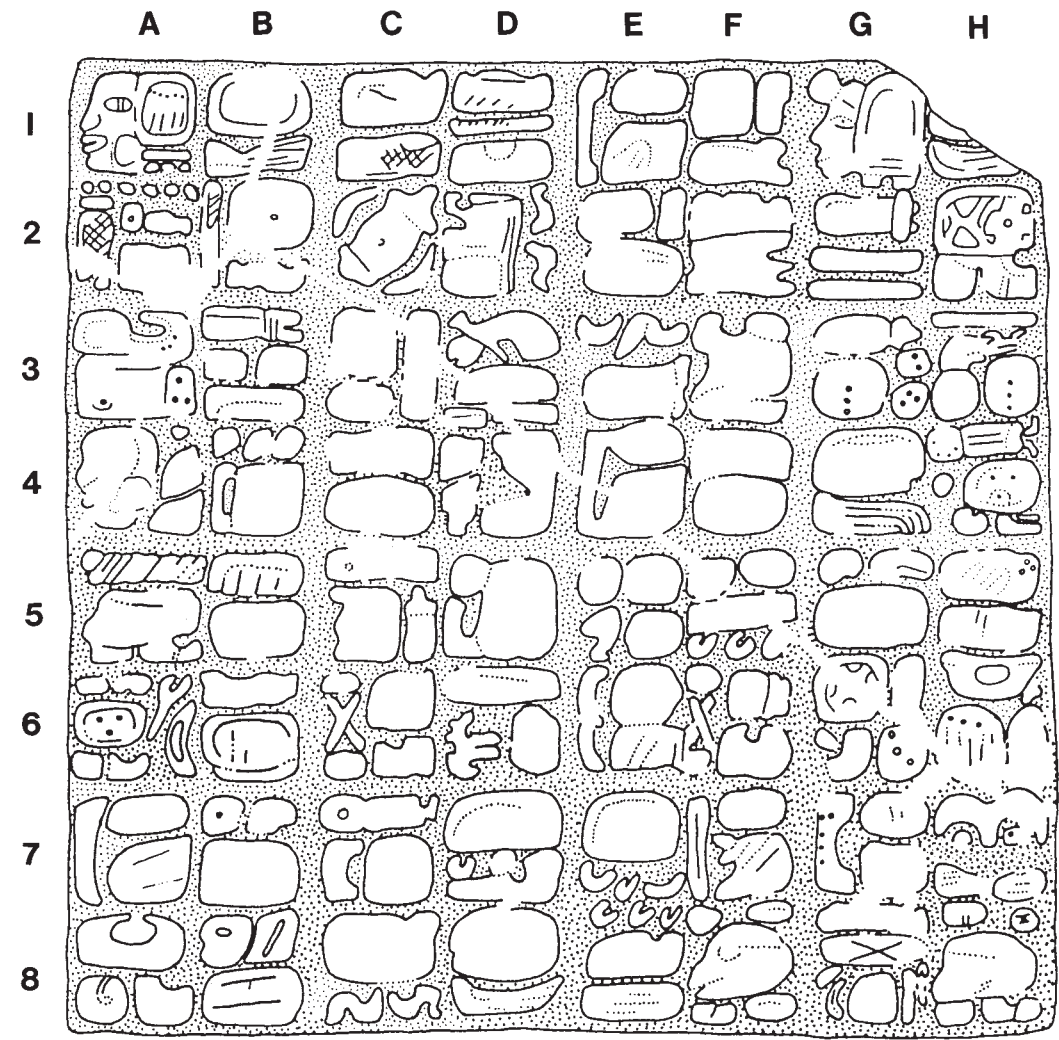


PHOTOGRAPH 5 FROM BEYER (1937: PLATE 12)

1:5

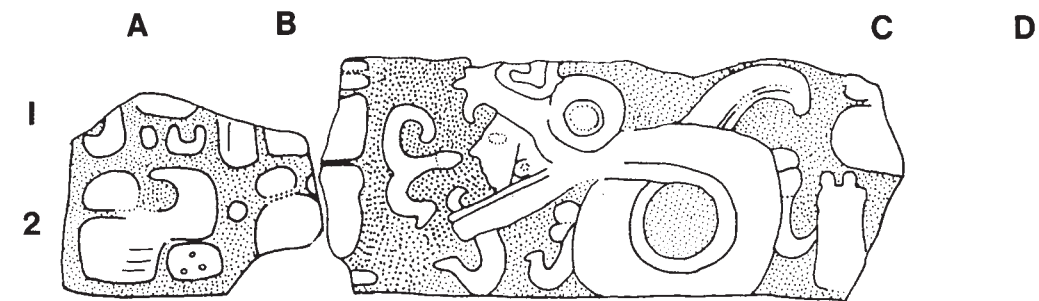


FIGURE 3. YULA LINTEL 2



2

DRAWING BY BRUCE LOVE



2A

THE FRAGMENTARY INCOMPLETE STATE OF YULA LINTEL 2 IS REFLECTED IN THE AUTHOR'S 1987 DRAWING, RIGHT. THE CONDITION OF THE MONUMENT IN THE 1930S IS SHOWN BY THE PHOTOGRAPH, LEFT.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The mapping of Yulá was made possible by the support of Charles E. Lincoln of the Harvard University Chichén Itzá Project in collaboration with Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Centro Regional del Sureste, Mérida. The drawing and photography of the Yulá lintels were greatly facilitated by the Center for Maya Research, Washington, D. C. Parts of this report were written during my residency as Junior Fellow at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D. C., in 1986-87.*

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- BEYER, HERMANN  
1937 *Studies on the Inscriptions of Chichen Itza*. Carnegie Institution of Washington, Publication no. 483, pp. 29-175. (Contributions to American Archaeology, no. 21.) Washington, D.C.
- GARZA TARAZONA DE GONZÁLEZ, SILVIA, AND EDWARD BARNA KURJACK BASCO  
1980 *Altas Arqueológico del Estado de Yucatán*. Two volumes. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Centro Regional del Sureste. México, D. F.
- LINCOLN, CHARLES E.  
1985 Informe: Primera Temporada del Proyecto Arqueológico Chichén Itzá: Resultados del trabajo de campo y laboratorio, 1983 a 1985. Manuscript report for limited distribution.  
  
1987 Primera Temporada del Proyecto Arqueológico Chichen Itza: Resultados del Trabajo de Campo y Laboratorio: 1983 a 1985 con un Ensayo Exploratorio sobre el Patron de Asentamiento del Sitio. *Boletín de las Ciencias Antropológicas de la Universidad de Yucatán*, Vol. 15, No. 86, pp. 3-43. Mérida, Yucatán.
- LOVE, BRUCE  
1987 Proyecto de Mapeo de Yula: Chichen Itza. *Boletín de la Escuela de Ciencias Antropológicas de la Universidad de Yucatán*, Vol. 15, No. 86, pp. 44-52. Mérida, Yucatán.
- MORLEY, SYLVANUS G.  
1920 *The Inscriptions at Copan*. Carnegie Institution of Washington, Publication no. 219. Washington, D.C.  
1925 *Archaeology*. In: Carnegie Institution of Washington Year Book No. 24, pp. 247-273. Washington, D.C.  
1927 *Archaeology*. In: Carnegie Institution of Washington Year Book No. 26, pp. 231-267. Washington, D.C.
- ROY, RALPH L.  
1939 *The Titles of Ebtun*. Carnegie Institution of Washington, Publication no. 505. Washington, D.C.
- RUPPERT, KARL  
1952 *Chichen Itza: Architectural Notes and Plans*. Carnegie Institution of Washington, Publication no. 595. Washington, D.C.
- THOMPSON, J. ERIC S.  
1950 *Maya Hieroglyphic Writing: Introduction*. Carnegie Institution of Washington, Publication no. 589. Washington, D.C. (Editions by University of Oklahoma Press in 1960 and 1970)
- VILLA ROJAS, ALFONSO  
1934 *The Yaxuna-Cobá Causeway*. Carnegie Institution of Washington, Publication no. 436, pp. 187-208. (Contributions to American Archaeology, no. 9.) Washington, D.C.

