

A Reading of the Cancuén Looted Panel

By Stanley Guenter




Introduction

The Cancuén Looted Panel is a purely glyphic monument carved with 160 glyph-blocks comprising 16 columns of 10 rows each. As the first clause begins halfway through a sentence, we may surmise that further parts of this text are still to be found on a companion piece, which has not yet come to light. This panel dates to the end of the eighth century AD, making it one of the latest monuments from the southern Petén. Commissioned by the king Tajal Chan Ahk, the panel documents the major events in Cancuén's Late Classic history, extending back to the (re)founding of the kingdom by K'iib' Ajaw in the middle of the seventh century. The specifics of this history are to be found below.

Due to limited access to the monument, the drawing presented here (and the only one available at present even to scholars) is a preliminary sketch made by Linda Schele from a video of the panel. Very few details are clear, and though many signs can be made out fairly well by context, the readings proposed here must be taken as tentative. It is hoped that further access to the piece in the future will solve many of the mysteries surrounding this inscription and clarify the many details which at present remain obscure.

The analysis and interpretation of a monument is never accomplished by a lone individual, and the author has had the opportunity to discuss this inscription with many leading epigraphers. In this regard, the author would like to credit the following people whose ideas on this panel have contributed greatly to its interpretation: Peter Biro, Nikolai Grube, David Kelley, Peter Mathews, Simon Martin, Linda Schele, David Stuart and Marc Zender. A special thank you must go to Federico Fahsen, epigrapher of the current Cancuén project, with whom I have had many long and productive conversations on the subject of this monument. However, as always, the individual interpretations are the author's own, and he takes full responsibility for the following presentation.

Passage One

	A	B		
1			A1: yi-NAL-chi	yichnal
			B1: yu[ku]-(no-ma)-CH'EEN	Yuknoom Ch'een
2			A2: K'UH-ka-AJAW-KAN	K'uh(ul) Kan(al) Ajaw

Date: 9.10.19.5.14 13 Ix 7 Kumk'u (February 8, 652¹)


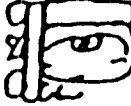










Translation: "...in the presence of Yuknoom Ch'een, Divine Snake Lord."

Free Translation: "...in the presence of Yuknoom Ch'een, King of Calakmul."

Discussion: The first half of this sentence is missing, presumably on another panel recording earlier Cancuén history. All we are left with is this short secondary clause informing us that some event occurred in front of Yuknoom Ch'een, the king of Calakmul. This is the first of a number of events in which Cancuén's history involves this great king, who appears as a benefactor of the Cancuén dynasty. By counting from the Distance Number (DN) at AB3 back from the date in the following sentence we reveal that this first event occurred on 9.10.19.5.14 13 Ix 7 Kumk'u (February 8, 652), if the tuun coefficient here is indeed a single digit.

¹ All Western dates are here given in the Julian Calendar according to the GMT (584285) correlation.

Passage Two

	A	B		
2			B2: u-TZ'AK-AJ	u tzakaj
			A3: 7-5-WINIK-?	huk (k'in) ho' winikjiiy
3			B3: 1?-HAAB'-ya	juun(?) haab'iiy
			A4: 'i-'u-ti	i uut
4			B4: 12-HA'	lajchan ha'
			A5: 4-ka-se(?)-wa	chan kaseew
5			B5: OCH-b'i-(hi)-ja	och b'ihaj
			A6: K'INICH-k'a[pa?]	K'inich K'ap?
6			B6: ne?-la?-'a-ku	Neel? Ahk
			A7: 9 OTOOT-ti	B'aluun Otoot
7			B7: 'u-ti?-'ya	utiiy
			A8: NAAB'-chi[ku]	Chiik Naab'
8				

Date: 9.11.0.11.1 12 Imix 4 Sek (May 20, 653)

Translation: "It changed; 7 (k'ins) and 5 winals; and 1 tuun later; and then it occurred on; 12 Imix; 4 Sek; he entered the road; K'inich K'ap?; Neel? Ahk; 9 House; it happened at; Chiik Naab'."

Free Translation: "One(?) year², 5 months and 7 days later and then it occurred on 12 Imix 4 Sek when K'inich K'ap? Neel? Ahk B'aluun Otoot died at Calakmul."

Discussion: This is a straightforward event, being the death of someone whose name, unfortunately, is not entirely clear. He is here referred to as K'inich K'ap? Neel? Ahk B'aluun Otoot³, although the individual glyphs comprising this name are far from clear.

² The year referred to here in the free translation is the 360-day tuun period. This is five-and-a-quarter days off of the solar year.








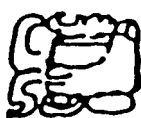














³ For convenience this name will be shortened to K'inich K'ap? Neel? Ahk in subsequent references.

He died at Calakmul, which immediately brings up the question of who this lord was. Given the subject matter of this text, being the history of the rulers of Cancuén, it is most probable that he was an early king of the site. However, this is not certain, and it must be stated that the preceding passage(s) on the now-missing first half of the monument likely made his relationship to Cancuén more clear.

As the Panel itself begins with an event involving Calakmul's king, and here we see a possible Cancuén ruler dying at Calakmul, we may be dealing with an extended sojourn for Cancuén's dynasty at that great capital. Possibly Cancuén's Late Classic kings descended from the royal dynasty of Calakmul itself. This would certainly account for the close relationship between these distant polities. However, no such relationship is ever documented at Cancuén (or at Calakmul) and it is far more likely that this text merely records the close relationship between Cancuén and its major benefactor, the imperial power of Calakmul.

At this time, Calakmul was at the height of its Late Classic splendor and power, under the rule of Yuknoom Ch'een the Great. One of the interesting notes about Calakmul is the preponderance of "palace" structures in the city, one of which perhaps was host to the "Cancuén dynasty in exile". In any event, K'inich K'ap? Neel? Ahk certainly died there and so, perhaps one day, his remains will be found somewhere in the ruins of Calakmul.

Passage 3

	A	B		
8			B8: 'u-TZ'AK-AJ	u tz'akaj
			A9: 19-10-WINIK-ji-ya	b'aluunlajuun (k'in) lajuun winikjiiy
9			B9: 3-HAAB'-ya	ux haab'iiy
			A10: 'i-'u-ti	i uut
10			B10: 11-AJAW	b'uluch ajaw
			C1: 8-MUWAAN-ni	waxak muwaan
	C	D		
1			D1: K'AL-ja	k'alaj
			C2: K'AK'-AL[?]-wa	K'ak'...alaw
2			D2: K'AWIL-?	K'awiil ...
			C3: tu-B'AAH	tu b'aah
3			D3: k'i-AJAW-b'a	K'iib' Ajaw
			C4: ya-K'UH-AJAW-?	K'uh(ul) Ya... Ajaw
4			D4: yi-NAL-chi	yichnal
			C5: KAL-TE'	Kal(oom)te'
5			D5: ya-AJAW-MAN-na	Yajaw Man
			C6: 5-?-K'UH	Ho' ... K'uh
6			D6: YAX-HA'	Yax Ha'
			C7: CHAAK-ki	Chaak
7			D7: 'u-KAB'-ji-ya	u kab'jiiy
			C8: YUKNOOM-CH'EEN	Yuknoom Ch'een
8			D8: 3-TE'-TUUN-ni	Ux Te' Tuun
			C9: KAL-TE'	Kal(oom)te'
9				

Date: 9.11.4.4.0 11 Ajaw 8 Muwan (December 9, 656)

Translation: "It changed; 19 (k'ins) and 10 winals; and 3 tuuns later; and then it occurred on; 11 Ajaw; 8 Muwan; it was wrapped (the); K'ak' al...w K'awiil (headband); on his head; K'iib' Ajaw; Divine Cancuén Lord; in the presence of; the Kalo'mte'; Yajaw Man; 5 Bloodletter God; Yax Ha'; Chaak; he oversaw it; Yuknoom Ch'een; the Ux Te' Tuun Kaloomte'.





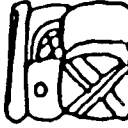






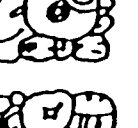








Free Translation: "3 years, 10 months and 19 days later, on 11 Ajaw 8 Muwaan, K'iib' Ajaw, king of Cancuén was crowned with the K'ak' al...w K'awiil ... headband in the presence of the deities Kalo'mte' Yajaw Man, 5 Bloodletter God, and Yax Ha' Chaak. This was supervised by Yuknoom Ch'een, the Calakmul Warlord."

Discussion: Three years after the death of the mysterious K'inich K'ap? Neel? Ahk, a new king of Cancuén was crowned, K'iib' Ajaw. This took place in the company of gods, including Yajaw Man, a palanquin deity also named at Tikal in connection with Calakmul. Given that this enthronement was also carried out under the aegis of Yuknoom Ch'een, the king of Calakmul, it is most likely that this took place at Calakmul itself. If K'inich K'ap? Neel? Ahk truly was the prior king of Cancuén then we are looking at a "Calakmul exile" of at least five years and probably more. What could have led to this situation where kings of this southern Petén city were in residence at this foreign capital hundreds of kilometers away?

To understand this one must take into account the greater political picture of the era. In 562 Calakmul, under the ruler Sky Witness, defeated Tikal and began to dominate the Maya lowlands. Even its arch-enemy, Tikal, appears to have been, if only briefly, under its sway, and few polities escaped its reach and influence. It is likely that at this time, around the turn of the seventh century, Cancuén first became involved with this superpower, and judging by the later course of history, this new relationship was beneficial to the city.

However, towards the middle of the seventh century there was a major resurgence on the part of Tikal and its allies, including Copan and Palenque. Tikal is situated directly between Calakmul and Cancuén, in the heart of the central Petén. Tikal's rulers are in evidence at the Pasión River site of Altar de Sacrificios, and later history indicates their major presence in this area at this time. This would have brought them into contact with Cancuén, not far to the southeast, and the renewed hostility between Tikal and Calakmul would have left Cancuén rather isolated and vulnerable to incursions by the forces of Tikal. Perhaps it was this which sent the city's dynasty to Calakmul. With the accession of K'iib' Ajaw, though, Cancuén's lords were ready to return home.

Passage 4

	C	D		
9			D9: 'u-TZ'AK-AJ	u tz'akaj
			C10: 2-5-WINIK-ji-ya	cha' (k'in) ho' winikjiy
10			D10: 'i-'u-ti	i uut
			E1: 9-IK'	b'aluun ik'
	E	F		
1			F1: 5 IK'-AT	ho' ik'at
			E2: HUL-li	huli
2			F2: ma-ka-na	Makan
			E3: wi-tzi	Witz
3			F3: 7-9-?-ni	huk b'aluunn
			E4: 6-12-k'a	wak lajchan k'a
4			F4: ju-?	Ju...
			E5: 'a-AK'-no-ma	Ak'no'm
5			F5: k'i-AJAW-b'a	K'iib' Ajaw
			E6: K'UH-ya-AJAW-?	K'uh(ul) Ya... Ajaw
6			F6: 4-?	chan ...
			E7: CHAK-?-?-li-b'i	chaklib'
7			F7: 'a-ni	aan
			E8: ?-AHK[CHAN]-na	...Chan Ahk
8			F8: AJ-?-na	Aj...n
			E9: MO'	Mo'
9				

Date: 9.11.4.9.2 9 Ik' 5 Wo (March 21, 657)

Translation: "It changed; 2 (k'ins) and 5 winals later; and then it occurred on; 9 Ik'; 5 Wo; he arrived; (at) Makan; Witz; the 7-9 ...n; the 6-12 k'a; to Ju...; the giver; K'iib' Ajaw; Divine Cancuén Lord; 4 ?; Chaklib'; ?; ... Sky Turtle; ?; Macaw."
















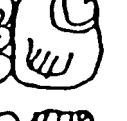
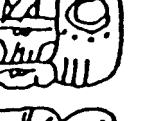


Free Translation: "5 months and 2 days later, on 9 Ik' 5 Wo, K'iib' Ajaw, King of Cancuén, arrived at Makan Witz." (And a lot of other information that hasn't yielded itself to decipherment or interpretation yet.)

Discussion: Five months later, on March 21, 657, K'iib' Ajaw arrived at Makan Witz. This is the short report; the actual passage, as can be seen, is much more lengthy and records many details that are still not fully understood. However, one can note the glyph at F4. Though this has not yet been translated, the glyph, actually a toponym of sorts, appears on a vase recovered archaeologically from the Mundo Perdido group at Tikal. This vase records that its owner, Ch'akat, was a lord from a site with this glyph as its emblem. This lord, Ch'akat, is also referred to in a cave painting from Naj Tunich, where he is associated with a lord of Caracol. These associations would suggest a location for Makan Witz somewhere in southeastern Petén, and this passage indicates that this was a site of incredible ritual significance.

In fact, Makan Witz may be named in variant form at Naj Tunich itself. Drawing 24 from this famous cave records that on, two individuals titled Aj Mak Witz (or "he of Mak Mountain") visited the Monpan place, which appears to be the region immediately around the cave itself. The deletion of final -an syllables in Classic Maya words is not uncommon, and it is most likely that these men were from the same mountainous site that K'iib' Ajaw visited a century earlier. Combining all of this information, we may tentatively suggest that K'iib' Ajaw made his way from Calakmul to Cancuén through the eastern Petén.

It is important to note that only a few months prior to K'iib' Ajaw's arrival at Makan Witz, Yuknoom Ch'een of Calakmul sacked Tikal for a second time and forced its new ruler, Nuun Jol Chaak, to flee from his city. His logical place of refuge would have been to the southwest, towards the Pasión region, where his ancestors had established a Tikal presence. This would effectively continue to block movement from Calakmul directly to Cancuén and would provide an impetus for K'iib' Ajaw's suggested eastern path.

Passage 5

	E	F		
9			F9: 'u-TZ'AK-AJ	u tz'akaj
			E10: 17-12-WINIK-?	huklajuun (k'in) lajchan winikjiy
10			F10: 'i-u-ti	i uut
			G1: 10-CHAWAK	lajuun chawak
			H1: 2-YAX-SIHOOM	cha' yax
	G	H		
1			G2: HUL-li	huli
			H2: k'i-AJAW-b'a	K'iib' Ajaw
2			G3: HAAB'-yi	haab'iiy?
			H3: ?-?	?
3			G4: ?-ma-?-ka	...ma...k
			H4: ?-?-WINIK?	...winik?
4			G5: ?-AHK	...Ahk
			H5: PET-ne	Peten
5			G6: ?-yo-OHL	...Yohl
			H6: 'a-ku	Ahk
6			G7: yu-lu	yul
			H7: CHAN-na-?	Chan ...
7			G8: ha	Ha
			H8: lu-b'u	lub'
8				

Date: 9.11.4.16.19 10 Kawak 2 Yax (August 25, 657)









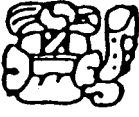


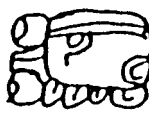


Translation: it changed; 17 (k'ins) and 12 winals later; and then on; 10 Kawak; 2 Yax; he arrived; K'iib' Ajaw; was dedicated; ?; ?ma...k; ?; ...Ahk; Peten; ...Heart of; Turtle; the ? of; Chan Ha'; Ha; lub'.

Free Translation: 12 months and 17 days later, on 10 Kawak 2 Yax, K'iib' Ajaw dedicated a series of buildings(?) at Halub'.

Discussion: Almost half a year later, on August 25, 657, K'iib' Ajaw finally arrived at Cancuén. We can infer this, even though the location is not immediately specified, as the king is simply said to "have arrived here" without any mention of the site of his arrival, a sure sign that this was a local event. Immediately following K'iib' Ajaw's name glyph is a dedicatory verb, indicating that attendant to his arrival was the beginning of the (re)construction of his city. Many of the following glyphs may be the names of towns in the vicinity of Cancuén or, more probably, buildings in the city itself. These include a mention of a "Turtle Island", or Ahk Peten, possibly an island in the Pasión river. The text concludes with the name Halub', which reappears in this text at glyph-block K5. This is perhaps the ancient toponym for the site of Cancuén itself.

This is the highlight of the text on the Looted Panel, and it is probably no surprise that it is located in the center of the panel itself. The history of the city of Late Classic Cancuén begins with this event. K'iib' Ajaw must have been kept busy with all of the new construction and this is the last we hear of him. Five years after his arrival, Tikal and Calakmul appear to have come to a new arrangement, and this cessation of hostilities must have greatly aided K'iib' Ajaw's efforts and his communication with his benefactor, Yuknoom Ch'een.

Passage 6

	G	H		
			G9: 'u-TZ'AK-AJ	u tz'akaj
9			H9: 2-14-WINIK-ya	cha' (k'in) chanlajuun winikiiy
			G10: 19-HAAB'-ya	b'aluunlajuun haab'iiy
10			H10: 'i-'u-ti	i uut
			I1: 7-HA'	huk ha'
	I	J		
			J1: 9-'a[K'AN]-si-ya	b'aluun k'anasiiy
1			I2: CHUM[mu]-wa-ni	chumwaan
			J2: ti-AJAW-le	ti ajawle(l)
2			I3: PAWAHTUUN?- AHK[CHAN]-wi	Pawahtuun? Chan Ahk Wi'
			J3: TAAK?-ki	Taak?
3			I4: ka-ya	Kay
4			J4: 'u-KAB'-ji-ya	u kab'jiiy
			I5: YUKNOOM- CHEEN-no-na	Yuknoom Ch'een
5			J5: K'UH-ka-AJAW-KAN	K'uh(ul) Kan(al) Ajaw

Date: 9.12.4.11.1 7 Imix 9 K'ayab' (January 14, 677)






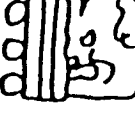
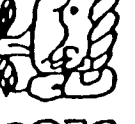
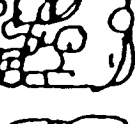
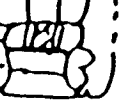

Translation: it changed; 2 (k'ins) 14 winal; 19 tuuns later; and then it occurred; 7 Imix; 9 K'ayab'; he was seated; in lorship; Pawahtuun? Chan Ahk Wi'; Taak Kay; it was overseen by; Yuknoom Ch'een; Divine Snake Lord.








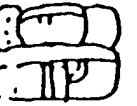









Free Translation: 19 years, 14 months and 2 days later, on 7 Imix 9 K'ayab', Pawahtuun? Chan Ahk Wi' Taak Kay was seated as lord by Yuknoom Ch'een, king of Calakmul.

Discussion: On January 14, 677, Cancuén received a new ruler. His name is the most complex of any we have seen so far, and, as previously, the reading given here should be considered provisional at best. Pawahtuun? Chan Ahk Wi' Taak Kay is a possible reading, but rather long, and he will here be referred to as simply Chan Ahk Wi', after the most certain parts of his lengthy name phrase.

Chan Ahk Wi's accession, as with his predecessor's, was carried out by Yuknoom Ch'een, by this time 77 years old. Given the age of this overlord, it is most likely that Chan Ahk Wi' went to Calakmul for his accession, rather than the reverse situation. Indeed, Chan Ahk Wi' could well have been on his own exile, as his accession corresponds to the second "rebellion" of Nuun Ujol Chaak of Tikal. Four years earlier, Nuun Ujol Chaak had attacked Dos Pilas and forced its lord, his own brother B'alaj Chan K'awiil, to flee. B'alaj Chan K'awiil, we know, did not return from his own exile (quite likely in Calakmul) until almost a year after Chan Ahk Wi''s accession, and then only with major military help from Calakmul. Given Dos Pilas and Cancuén's proximity it is most likely that Cancuén, as well as Dos Pilas, fell under the influence, if not the direct power, of Tikal. Cancuén's change of rulers at this period is perhaps not coincidental. Whatever the case, we know that Chan Ahk Wi', like his predecessors, was from the inception firmly in the Calakmul camp.

Passage 7

	I	J		
6			I6: 'u-TZ'AK-AJ	u tz'akaj
			J6: 19-6-WINIK-ji	b'aluunlajuun (k'in) wak winikji(iy)
7			I7: 5-HAAB'-ya	ho' haab'iiy
			J7: 'i-'u-ti	i uut
8			I8: 9-AJAW	b'aluun ajaw
			J8: 18 SUUTZ'	waxaklajuun suutz'
9			I9: 'u-TZAK-ja	u tzakaj
			J9: K'AWIIL	K'awiil
10			I10: PAWAHTUUN?- AHK[CHAN]-wi	Pawahtuun? Chan Ahk Wi'
			J10: TAAK?-ki-ka?-ya	Taak Kay

	K	L		
			K1: HUL-li	huli
1			L1: 1-?-?-CHAN-na	juun ... chan
			K2: 1-?-ki-?-wa?	juun ...k ...w
2			L2: ?-NAAJ?-?-?naaj?....
			K3: TZ'AT?-ta	tz'at?
3			L3: ?	?
			K4: PAT-wa-ni	patwaan
4			L4: ?	?
			K5: ha-lu-b'u	Halub'
5			L5: TZ'AK-AJ-ja	tz'akaj
			K6: 1-ya-AL[CHAN]	juunyal chan
6			L6: 'a-AJAW-?-?	A' Ajaw
			K7: hi-B'AAH-ja	b'aahaj
7			L7: 'u-ya-CH'AB'[AK'AB']	u ch'ab yak'ab'
			K8: ch'a-ho-ma	Ch'ahoom
8			L8: PAWAHTUUN?- AHK[CHAN]-wi?	Pawahtuun? Chan Ahk Wi'
9			K9: ?-ki?-ka-ya	Taak? Kay

Date: 9.12.10.0.0 9 Ajaw 18 Sotz' (May 7, 682)








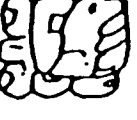
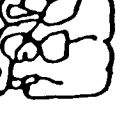

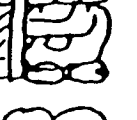


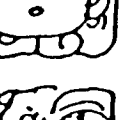







Translation: it changed; 19 (k'ins) 6 winals; 5 tuuns later; and then it occurred; 9 Ajaw; 18 Sotz'; he conjured; K'awiil; Pawahtuun? Chan Ahk Wi'; Taak Kay; he/they arrived; 1 ...Chan; 1 ??; ?; the messenger? of; ?; it was built; the stair?; (at) Halub'. It changed; 1 ?; ? Lord; it is the image; the fasting? and darkness? of; the Ch'ahoom; Pawahtuun? Chan Ahk Wi'; Taak Kay.

Free Translation: 5 years, 6 months and 19 days later, on 9 Ajaw 18 Sotz', Pawahtuun? Chan Ahk Wi' conjured K'awiil. There were arrivals of deities or individuals and a stair? was built at Halub'. Venus? changed. It is Pawahtuun? Chan Ahk Wi''s image in ritual?

Discussion: This *lajuuntuun* is the only Period Ending (PE) on the entire monument, and thanks to the generous use of DNs by the scribes on this monument, it has allowed us to reconstruct the Looted Panel's chronology. On this date *Pawahtuun? Chan Ahk Wi'* is said to have "conjured *K'awiil*", a major ritual often associated with ancestor veneration. At K1 we find an arrival glyph, indicating that included in these festivities was the arrival of someone or something (possibly deities given known Classic Maya monumental rhetoric). The following glyphs, naming the individual and/or the place of his arrival, are hard to make out and provide few clues to interpretation. Glyph K4 suggests that a monument of some sort was constructed at *Halub'*. The rest of the text is ritualistic in nature but poorly understood. While many of the glyphs have known readings their interpretation is at best only partial.

It is interesting that the events described here are almost a refoundation of the dynasty. The regal ancestor and fecundity deity *K'awiil* is conjured while we have arrivals and new construction being carried out. In fact, there may be more to this interpretation than may seem at first glance. We have already noted that *Chan Ahk Wi'*'s accession probably took place in *Calakmul*. If so, he must have subsequently journeyed south to take up his position as king of *Cancuén*. This would likely not have happened until after the ultimate defeat of *Nuun Ujol Chaak* in 672. In any event, the 9.12.10.0.0 PE was the first calendric festival to follow the defeat of *Tikal* and the arrival of *Chan Ahk Wi'* at *Cancuén*. This was certainly a time of celebration for *Calakmul* and its allies, and *B'alaj Chan K'awiil*, the man of the hour who claimed the downfall of his brother as his own personal victory, was even invited to *Calakmul* itself to parade his captives before the venerable *Yuknoom Ch'een*. It is from this period that *Dos Pilas* makes its meteoric rise to prominence as dominant power along the *Pasión* river, a situation which would see the eclipse of *Cancuén* as it was lost to history once again.

Passage 8

	K	L		
			L9: 'u-TZ'AK-A'	u tz'aka'
9			K10: 16-9-WINIK-ya	waklajuun (k'in) b'aluun winikiiy
			L10: 6-HAAB'-ya	wak haab'iiy
10			M1: 4-WINIK HAAB'	chan winik haab'
			N1: 'i-'u-ti	i uut
	M	N		
			M2: 8-KIB' ⁴	waxak kib'
1			N2: 9-TZIK-ni	b'aluun tzikin
			M3: 'u-TZAK-wa	u tzakaw
2			N3: K'AWIIL	K'awiil
			M4: TAJ-AHK[CHAN]-na	Taj(al) Chan Ahk
3			N4: AJ-TZUK?-TE'	Aj Chak Tzunkte'?
			M5: ?-?-?-?	?
4			N5: PIK-?	Pik ...
			M6: CHUM[mu]-la?-ja	chumlaj
5			N6: 4-PAWAHTUUN?-TUUN	Chan Pawahtuun?
			M7: 4-xi-wa?-TUUN?-ni?	Chan Xiiw Tuun?
6			N7: HUL-li	huli
			M8: ???	?
7			N8: wi-WINIK-ki?	winik
			M9: PET-ta-ja	petaj
8			N9: 'u-mu-lu-wa?-ja	u mulwaj
			M10: ?-?	?
9			N10: ?	?
10				

Date: 9.16.16.4.16 8 Kib' 9 Xul (May 17, 767)

Translation: it changed; 16 (k'ins); 9 winals; 6 tuuns; and 4 k'atuuns later; and then it occurred on; 8 Kib'; 9 Xul; he conjured; K'awiil; Tajal Chan Ahk; Aj Chak Tzuke'?; ?; ?; was seated; Chan Pawahtuun?; Chan ...; he arrived; ?; person; was circled; was piled up?; pyramid; altar.

Free Translation: 86 years, 9 months and 16 days later, on 8 Kib' 9 Xul, Tajal Chan Ahk Aj Chak Tzuke'? conjured K'awiil. Chan Pawahtuun? and Chan were seated. A person arrived and a pyramid was encircled and built, along with (or at) an altar.

Discussion: The narrative at this point jumps ahead 85 years to a conjuring event by Tajal Chan Ahk, the last known king of Cancuén and the man who commissioned this monument. It is unfortunate that Tajal Chan Ahk's scribes chose to gloss over this period, as the early eighth century at Cancuén remains something of a "Dark Age" to scholars. Due to the length of time involved it is certain that at least one and probably more rulers governed the city during this time. The hieroglyphic stairway at the site, also dating to the reign of Tajal Chan Ahk, contains a number of dates pertaining to this period but as most of the blocks comprising this inscription were stolen and badly eroded, little information can be gleaned at the moment, although study of this important text is ongoing.



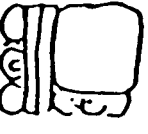




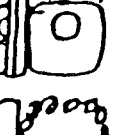






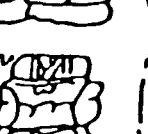
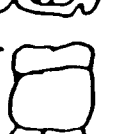




However, one block of this stairway mentions an event carried out at Dos Pilas by its fourth king, K'awiil Chan K'inich, indicating Cancuén's inclusion within the political sphere of this powerhouse in the mid-eighth century. This link between the two sites is further strengthened when we note that the previous ruler of Dos Pilas, Ruler 3, was married to a Cancuén princess. These connections have led scholars to conclude that Dos Pilas was deeply involved politically with Cancuén at this time, with the latter likely finding itself in vassal status, along with most of the other kingdoms of the region. This could help explain why Cancuén's scribes, when later drawing up their history of the kingdom for Tajal Chan Ahk, chose to ignore this period.

One other stair block from the hieroglyphic stairway informs us that Tajal Chan Ahk was born in 742, making him 25 years old at the time of the event described in this passage. Interestingly, the events on this date are remarkably similar to those in the previous passage; conjuring, arrivals and construction. We are not given Tajal Chan Ahk's accession date on this panel, but it must have occurred earlier, making this lord little more than a youth at the time of his coronation. Given the mention of K'awiil Chan K'inich on another block from this stairway, it is quite likely that Tajal Chan Ahk's accession was supervised by the king of Dos Pilas.

Dos Pilas' control of the region fell apart in the early 760s as a number of former vassals rose up in rebellion. It is not known if Cancuén was among these but the date of this "ritual refounding" of the city by Tajal Chan Ahk may be significant in this regard. While Dos Pilas's dynasty was not destroyed, it was forced to relocate to the secondary capital of Aguateca, and though it appears to have recovered much of its homeland along the Petexbatun river, its control of the greater Pasión region waned. This newfound freedom would allow Tajal Chan Ahk to embark upon a new construction boom in his city, to which the numerous new monuments attest.

⁴ This reading is not original but a modern or colonial name.

Passage 9

	O	P		
			O1: 'u-TZ'AK-AJ	u tz'akaj
			P1: 18-1-WINIK-?	waxaklajuun juun winikiiy?
1			O2: 12-?-?	lajchan haab'iiy
			P2: 1-?	juun winikhaab'
2			O3: ?-?-?	?
			P3: 'i?-u-ti?	i uut
3			O4: 9-HIX	b'aluun hix
			P4: 12-'o-OHL	lajchan ohl
4			O5: IL-la-ja	ilaj
			P5: 5-JANAAB'	Ho' Janaab'
5			O6: wi-tzi	Witz
			P6: ?-?-?	?
6			O7: 'u-NAL-MUK	u muknal
			P7: PAWAHTUUN?- AHK[CHAN]-wi	Pawahtuun? Chan Ahk Wi'
7			O8: ?-?-ka-ya?	Taak Kay
			P8: ya-?-ji	u kab'jiiy?
8			O9: TAJ-AHK[CHAN]-na	Taj(al) Chan Ahk
9			P9: AJ-CHAK-TZUK?-TE'	Aj Chak Tzunkte'?
10			O10: K'UH-ya-AJAW-?	K'uh(ul) Ya... Ajaw
			P10: ?-AJAW-KUCH?-su	K'uhul ? Ajaw

Date: 9.18.8.6.14 9 Ix 12 Kumk'u (January 7, 799)

Translation: it changed; 18 (k'ins) and 1 winal; and 12 tuuns; and 1 k'atuun later; ?; and then it occurred on: 9 Ix; 12 Kumk'u; it was seen; 5 "Flower"; Mountain; ?; the tomb of; Pawahtuun? Chan Ahk Wi'; Taak Kay; it was overseen by; Tajal Chan Ahk; Aj Chak Tzukté?; Divine Cancuén lord; Divine "Machaquila" lord.

Free Translation: 32 years, 1 month and 18 days later, on 9 Ix 12 Kumk'u, Tajal Chan Ahk Aj Chak Tzukté?, king of Cancuén and "Machaquila", oversaw rituals at the tomb of Pawahtuun? Chan Ahk Wi'.

Discussion: Although the glyphs at the beginning of this passage are among the least clear, this date has been recovered by Federico Fahsen. It places the Looted Panel in the same time period as all of the other monuments from Cancuén. The decade between 790 and the end of the eighth century saw the carving of Stela 2, then Altar 1 and finally Stela 1. The final date on the Looted Panel falls only a year and a half before the dedication of Stela 1, making these the ultimate monuments of the site.

By this time Tajal Chan Ahk was an elderly man, approaching his fourth k'atuun of life. Perhaps this fact led him to commission such a grand homage to his city's long history. The concluding sentence of this piece, as it were, records the reverence he paid to his predecessor Chan Ahk Wi's tomb. While the text here simply relates that "he saw" or "witnessed" it, we can be certain that the king would have paid his respects to this great ruler of nearly a century earlier. We do not know where Chan Ahk Wi's tomb was located, although Cancuén is probably the best bet. Interestingly, Ruler 4 of Piedras Negras was buried in a place with the same name, and the revisit of this tomb by the last ruler of that site was also recorded on a wall plaque recording historical events of ages past. However, it is most unlikely that these two kings were buried in the same place, and it is known that this Ho' Janaab' location has mythological overtones and likely refers to a mountain in the otherworld.

Tajal Chan Ahk in this final passage, in addition to taking the standard Cancuén Emblem Glyph (EG), also gives himself the one used normally at the nearby site of Machaquila. Curiously, it cannot be determined to which site either of these EGs belongs as both are found first on the stelae from the site of Tres Islas, which is situated about mid-way between Cancuén and Machaquila. Neither are ever used toponymically, and the Machaquila emblem is known to have had such an ancient history that by the Late Classic period it had taken on clearly mythological features such as an association with the resurrected Maize God and the Three Hearthstones of Creation. As such, this EG cannot be considered to necessarily refer to the site of Machaquila itself.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that it is at this exact time, around 800, that Machaquila appears to receive a new set of rulers. Only a year and a half after this tomb ritual Chik'in Kaloomte' became king of Machaquila and inaugurated the most vigorous period for the Machaquila polity. Tajal Chan Ahk's appropriation of this other city's EG would appear to suggest that he was in competition with this new lord for control of the southern Petén region. It is perhaps important here that in his earlier history, Tajal Chan Ahk accords no other Cancuén king with this foreign title and no mention of Machaquila is made at Cancuén. The reverse is also true

and no mention of Cancuén is known from Machaquila. The link of these two EGs would thus appear to be a late phenomenon.

Tajal Chan Ahk's reign saw a spate of new monuments erected in Cancuén, and it is perhaps this newfound wealth and power which compelled him to challenge the new regime in his neighboring city. If Tajal Chan Ahk did confront Chik'in Kaloomte' he was certainly bested in the struggle which must have followed. Cancuén Stela 2, dedicated on Aug. 15, 800, is the last we hear from Tajal Chan Ahk and Cancuén. Machaquila's new lords appear to have quickly established themselves as the one and only power in the region as they began to erect monuments on every PE while all of their neighbors fell eternally silent. Machaquila maintained its stranglehold on the region for almost half a century before it too succumbed to yet another new dynasty, that of Seibal.

Whatever the fate of Tajal Chan Ahk it is doubtful that he enjoyed his new wall panel commemorating the highlights of his city's history for very long. If our understanding of the process of the Classic Collapse from other sites is any gauge to go by, it is likely that within a few years of the downfall of the dynasty the royal palaces and temples, where this panel must have originally been placed, would have been occupied by the remaining commoners or the victorious foreign warriors. Perhaps the Looted Panel was seen for a few more years, all the while the jungle creeping in and slowly but inexorably taking over the buildings of the city. However, given the almost pristine condition of the monument, we can be fairly sure that eventually it must have fallen and been covered by the debris which would hide it, yet at the same time preserve it from the elements. Until one day, late in the twentieth century, someone stumbled across this stone and stole it from its ancient home. And somewhere out there, perhaps in somebody's basement or perhaps still under the jungle litter of a thousand years, is the companion piece to this panel. There is still much more to discover about the history of this ancient Maya kingdom of the southern Petén.