

**Evidence for Macro-Political Organization Amongst Classic Maya Lowland
States**

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"The lesson I learned is that no one, however powerful a mathematical model he borrows from geography, can really make sense out of the Maya site hierarchy unless he can read their hieroglyphs" (Flannery 1977: 661).

1.0 Abstract

This paper proposes a new outline model for the higher political organisation of the Classic Maya. Specifically, it presents epigraphic evidence for hierarchical ranking between polities and argues for the existence of a macro-political structure that operated above the level of individual Maya polities. It suggests that during the greater part of the Classic Period a very small number of Maya states held sway over others and formed the focal points of pan-regional groupings or 'political spheres'. Such arrangements differ both from earlier projections of integrated 'regional states' and recent reconstructions of more dispersed authority, including those derived from 'weak state' models. The strategic map of patronage, alliance and subordination that emerges is of surprising constancy, producing a 'semi-rigid' system of political control; for which precedents exist within Mesoamerica itself, without the need to introduce external models from the Old World. Since it is derived primarily from hieroglyphic inscriptions, the Maya's own records of political affairs, it represents an emic model of the nature and dynamics of Maya states.

2.0 Introduction

A central interpretative question in Maya studies has been in what manner the numerous Maya cities, especially those of the florescent Classic Period, correspond to a political landscape. It is now clear that major architectural remains are the cores of large population centers, around which were sited an array of secondary sites that range in size from smaller cities to rural hamlets. Whilst this distribution has provided a convincing picture of political structure within this immediate zone, archaeology is largely silent on how the major centers themselves were organised. The only explicit references to this area are to be found in Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions. In 1958 Heinrich Berlin discovered a class of site-specific hieroglyphs he termed "Emblem Glyphs" (Berlin 1958), that since that time have been the major source for identifying

Maya political units. Although most of the largest centers have now been associated with their own Emblem Glyph (Mathews 1985, 1988, 1991), there has been an ongoing debate as to what degree these markers elucidate political structure.

The importance of this topic lies in its implications for placing Maya social, cultural and economic interaction within its wider political context. Any model of Maya political organization that posits a hierarchical structure between states has profound impact on our view of their internal composition as well as their external interaction, and must be compared with the theoretical constructs that have been applied to Maya social structure. A model that suggests larger political groupings beyond single polities, which implies the existence of a more centralized structure for political governance, is not easily reconciled with recent applications of 'weak state' models.

The approach taken in this paper is a conjunction of several lines of epigraphic research that have a bearing on Maya political organization. In addition to Emblem Glyphs, there are a range of hieroglyphic terms and expressions that describe interactions between Classic Maya states. This evidence can be used to contradict a current consensus that the incidence of Emblem Glyphs accurately reflects the number and distribution of wholly autonomous states. It can be shown that Emblem Glyphs are not reliable indicators of independence, rather that they represent a former, or ideal, status of political nucleation and autonomy that was, by the end of the Early Classic, submerged in more complex environment of "realpolitik".

3.0 Previous models of Maya political organization

Fundamentally, there have been four approaches to reconstructing Maya political organization: those based on archaeological data, those derived from the hieroglyphic record, ethnohistorical analogies, and external models applied from anthropological theory. In nearly all a recurrent division in the thinking can be noted: one favours a large-scale view of 'multi-center polities', that can be characterised as a 'regional state' model; the converse being a small-scale view, one that sees polities of limited size, a central place surrounded by its immediate sustaining area, and can be termed a "city-state" model.

Early researchers, though not explicit in their interpretation of Maya socio-political structure, implicitly accepted the idea either of city-states (Thompson 1954: 81; Morley 1946: 50) or larger regional groupings (Morley 1947: 160). The first empirical attempts to derive political implications from material remains can largely be dated to William R. Bullard Jr. (1960). His localized analysis of settlement distribution produced a size-based hierarchy of sites and projected territories under their administration. In projects such as Norman Hammond's study of Lubaantun (1972, 1975) environmental factors were used to assess a polity's resource base and thus to reconstruct its total 'realm'. Hammond later used a similar approach to cover the entire

Maya area (1974), using Thiessen polygons as a schematic way in which to express potential polity boundaries and territories controlled by major centers. His definition of a 'major center', and hence a polity capital, was a general judgement based on building mass and typology and, like Bullard's, his study did not, whilst noting the issue, address the great disparity in size between such centers.

These points were directly taken up by Richard E. W. Adams, who, together with several collaborators assessed the construction mass and typological make-up of a great many centers in an attempt to produce an objective method for the rank-ordering of sites (Adams and Jones 1981; Turner, Turner and Adams 1981). His work proposed a hierarchy of four tiers and a map of the Maya area that delimited eight regional states: Tikal, Calakmul, Palenque, Copan, Yaxchilan, Rio Bec, Coba, and 'Puuc-Chenes' (Figure 1a). Tikal and Calakmul were particularly pointed to as the heads of large and populous states with far-flung influence.

His findings rely on two assumptions: firstly, that the accuracy, or rather inaccuracy, of site maps available for the study were of a constant factor; and secondly, that size itself unerringly equates with political importance. Both principles have been contested (cf. Houston 1993:3) but nevertheless, his work extends Bullard's approach to include the relationship between major centers and remains the only attempt to reconstruct macro-political organisation using archaeological data alone.

The first person to make real use of Berlin's discovery of the Emblem Glyph was Thomas Barthel (1968). He noted that a hieroglyphic text to be seen on the Copan monument Stela A names four Emblem Glyphs in succession, those of Tikal, Calakmul, Palenque and Copan, and that each is associated with both a 'sky' glyph and a sign for one of the four cardinal directions. He interpreted these as the capitals of the foremost political entities of their time, and proposed that they were conceptually linked to a cosmo-directional model of the Maya world. He further suggested that a similar composition of four Emblems on the Terminal Classic monument Seibal Stela 10, which includes only two of the same centers, indicated a shift in political precedence by the close of the Classic Period.

His ideas were adopted by Joyce Marcus (1973, 1976, 1983) who combined them with features of Central-place Theory (Flannery 1972) and a statistical and contextual analysis of Emblem Glyph distribution to propose a hierarchical ranking between such centers. In her model the four 'primary centers' cited on Stela A headed regional states whose domain incorporated strata of secondary, tertiary and quaternary sites (adding to Barthel's schema two shifting 'confederacies', those of Yaxchilan and the 'Petexbatun') (Figure 1b). More recently, Marcus has stressed the dynamic quality of the model and has argued that the cyclical unification and fragmentation of Post-classic polities in the Yucatan provides a close parallel for the Classic Period (Marcus 1993).

The decipherment of the key *ahaw* "lord, ruler" element of Emblem Glyphs (Lounsbury 1973) allowed Peter Mathews to identify such compounds as the personal titles of Maya kings (Mathews and Justeson 1984: 216; Mathews 1985: 32). His analysis demonstrated that

Emblems refer to the sovereignty of a ruler over a particular center or territory, and that the title does not in itself make any differentiation in rank between the various office-holders. Based on this interpretation and the spatial distribution of Emblem Glyphs, he produced his own reconstruction of the layout of Classic Maya polities in which, by the Late Classic, the Lowlands were politically divided into some forty independent states (Mathews 1985, 1988, 1991) (Figure 2). He thus arrived at a view diametrically opposed to that of Marcus, and yet derived from the same basic data.

Although theoretical models such as 'feudalism' (Adams and Smith 1981), 'patron-client states' (Sanders 1981), or 'archaic states' (Marcus 1993), are mostly concerned with the organisation of single polities, most have implications for the broader political landscape. The application of models such as the Segmentary State and Galactic Polity constructs (Southall 1956; Tambiah 1976, 1985) to the Maya area, introduced by James Fox (1987) and Arthur Demarest (1992), are clearly in accord with the small-scale city-state view that has emerged as a broad consensus both of archaeologists (Sabloff 1986; Sanders and Webster 1988; Leventhal and Dunham 1989; Dunham 1990; Ball and Taschek 1991; Dunning 1992) and epigraphers (Houston 1992a, 1992b, 1993; Stuart 1993). These models characterize Maya states as friable structures with weak control over people and territory; centered on the rule of charismatic kings who use personal ties, rather than a formal bureaucracy, to administer their authority. This viewpoint goes largely hand-in-hand with an interpretation of warfare as a predominantly small-scale activity with heavy ritual overtones; little concerned with territorial aggrandizement and the control of populations and resources (Demarest 1978; Freidel 1986). Dissenting voices have been few, though both Patrick Culbert (1988, 1991) and William Folan (1985, 1992) have consistently argued for both stronger central administration and larger regional territories than have been generally accepted.

4.0 Epigraphy and its role in identifying hierarchy amongst Classic Maya states

The ongoing decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic writing provides contemporary records of political interaction between Lowland Maya communities that were not accessible at the time when the above models were developed. Though one must be conscious of the limitations of epigraphic interpretations, to which must be applied the same critical and analytical methods as to any textual source, epigraphy provides data whose specificity is unmatched by any other avenue of research.

Ever since Tatiana Proskouriakoff's key breakthrough in demonstrating the historicism of Maya inscriptions (1960), a wealth of information has been recovered. Increasingly, the content of Maya texts is seen to reflect similar themes to those recorded by other ancient societies, and to closely parallel the documented concerns of other Mesoamerican cultures. Of these topics, a number have a direct bearing on issues of political organisation and will be relevant to our study.

The isolation of parentage statements has allowed true genealogies to be reconstructed for the Classic Period; not only revealing the patrilineal descent of Maya dynasty, but also the marital ties between centers that have clear political implications (Jones 1977; Schele, Mathews and Lounsbury 1983; Stuart 1986; Bricker 1986:106-107). More recently, a range of familial relations have been added, including precise sibling relationships and the important *y-itah* expression which may represent a generic "sibling" term (Stuart 1987: 27; 1988a; 1988b) or simply "companionship" (probably of some formal kind) (MacLeod 1991a).

After Proskouriakoff's identification of birth, accession and death statements, her next major contribution came in revealing the warlike concerns of Maya kings (1963; 1964). Over the succeeding years a number of glyphic compounds describing various types of battle and capture event have been identified (Houston 1983; Riese 1984a; Grube 1989; Grube and Schele 1993; Stuart 1993) and specific historical events, including the conquest of one site by another, revealed (Sosa and Reents 1980; Riese 1984a).

The recent identification of toponyms and their associated terms, representing place-names distinct from the polity names contained in Emblem Glyphs (which are often geographic referents), has opened new areas in understanding the political control of territory and isolating the location of particular historical events (Stuart and Houston 1989).

Likewise, we now have a better comprehension of the internal composition of Maya polities and have recognised some of the strata of administrative and specialist duties within a single site (Stuart 1984; Houston 1993:127-136). These have been joined by other terms that indicate the participation of actors other than the protagonist in ritual or political events: *y-ilah* "to witness" and *y-ichnal* "in the company of" (Stuart 1987: 25-27; 1988a: 15; Houston 1989: 39).

Thus we now have at our disposal a whole range of specific political exchanges and relationships that take us beyond a simple recognition of Maya states, to tell us about how they operated and interacted. Our study employs a series of acknowledged decipherments of glyphic terms expressing agency and subordination to reconstruct a more organized view of Maya political structure than that currently favored. In the following section it will be shown that these expressions provide the critical data for establishing hierarchy between Maya states. Dealt with initially will be those that describe explicit relationships of subordination and dominance between the kings of Emblem Glyph-bearing polities.

4.1 Accessions under the aegis of foreign kings

One particular hieroglyphic compound (Figure 3a) appears in contexts where it connects an event to a human or divine agent. Grammatically, the compound can be interpreted as an agency expression that occurs mostly after intransitively-inflected verbal phrases and connects this phrase with the initiator of the verb. Expressions of this type are found in all Mayan languages, where they are especially common when introducing the actor, or semantic subject, of passive

verbal phrases. The precise linguistic translation of this compound is still uncertain, though the authors favour a transliteration of *u-kahiy*, a form which has direct precedents in Yucatecan languages¹. *U-kahiy* best translates as "by the doing of", or simply as "by". Whatever the precise reading, the general sense and syntactical function of this glyph is widely accepted amongst epigraphers and is frequently glossed as "under the auspices of" (Schele 1982: 73; Stuart 1985: 178; 1988c: 192). Its relevance to macro-political organization stems from its appearance in six accession statements from across the Maya area.

The earliest of these is to be seen at the site of Naranjo on Stela 25 (Figure 3b). Its hieroglyphic text marks the K'atun, or twenty-year, anniversaries that have elapsed since the accession of the incumbent king, Ruler I (Gaida 1983: 51; Closs 1984: 86). An "auspices" phrase is associated with the inauguration date itself, 9.5.12.10.4 (AD 546), and links this event to the name and Emblem Glyph (here in a variant spelling) of a king from a quite different polity, "Ku-Ix" of Calakmul (Schele and Freidel 1990:175). Although the context is obscured by unusual syntax, the association of the agency term with the accession event is clear and demonstrates that the event was sanctioned, authorized or brought about by the king of Calakmul.

Less than seven years later, the neighboring polity of Caracol also saw the accession of a new king: *Y-ahaw Te K'inich* at 9.5.19.1.2 (AD 553). Two of the three references to this event, though partially eroded, can be shown to include the "*u-kahiy*" agency term: Caracol Stela 6 and Altar 21 (Figure 3c). Both of these are followed by an indistinct name, and then a clear Emblem Glyph, that of Tikal (Grube in press: b).

A remarkable unpublished panel from within the polity of Cancuen shows two further examples. This very long text covers a number of events in the history of Cancuen, including the accessions of two of its rulers, at 9.11.4.4.0 (AD 656) and 9.12.4.16.1 (AD 677). Both phrases are ultimately completed by *u-kahiy* statements that give the generic title used by Calakmul kings (Martin 1991: 37-39; MacLeod 1993), followed in one case by a full Emblem Glyph, in the other, by an alternative royal title and toponym for the Calakmul capital (Figure 3d).

¹ In most Mayan languages, agency expressions are composed of some form of the verb "to do", "to make". *Kah* is the root "to make, to do, to begin" in many lowland languages (Note Proto-Cholan **kaj* "begin", Kaufman and Norman 1984: 122; Chol *cajel* "comenzar", *caj* "por causa de", Aulie and Aulie 1978: 36; Chontal *cah-el* "ocurrir", Smailus 1975: 149; Tzotzil *kaj* "begin", *ta koj* "because of", Laughlin 1988: 218-19; Yucatec *kah* "hacer suceder", "pospuesto al cuerpo de todos los verbos en presente de indicativo, significa estar actualmente haciendo lo que los tales verbos significan ...", Barrera Vásquez 1980: 281). In Classical Yucatec, the agent of transitive and intransitive verbs in the incompletive aspect was represented by the auxiliary phrase *E-kah*, the ergative pronoun in combination with the defective verb *kah* "to do" (Smailus 1989: 39), like in *kambesah u kah* "he teaches", lit. "teaching is his doing". In the glyphic compound, *u* represents the ergative pronoun of the third person Sg., while the main sign has been identified by Grube and Martin (n.d.) with the verbal root *kah* (a view also shared by Barbara MacLeod 1991d), often complemented by *hi* signs and extended to include a final *-i* completive suffix ("was his doing"). Arguments for the phonetic reading of the T526 "Kaban" sign as *kah* will be presented in a forthcoming publication (Grube and Martin n.d.).

Four texts at the site of Quirigua record the inauguration of a local ruler, *Butz' Tiliw* ("Kawak-Sky") at 9.14.13.4.17 (AD 724) (Grube, Schele and Fahren 1991:107). Three of the four employ different verbs to describe the event, apparently separate acts in a whole sequence of initiation rituals. The example on Stela E (Figure 3e) describes the Quirigua ruler's performance of the so-called "God-K-in-hand" event, or *u-ch'am k'awil* "he takes God K". Once again, an *u-kahiy* term connects this passage to the name and Emblem Glyph of a foreign king; this time *Waxaklahun U-bah K'awil* ("Eighteen Rabbit") of the neighboring polity of Copán (Stuart 1987a).

At the site of El Peru, Stela 27 has a further *u-kahiy*-marked accession that took place at some point close to 9.15.10.0.0 (AD 731) (Figure 3f). This is the second event of a couplet expression and another inauguration event, this time "raising the headband". Again, the presiding agent is the ruling king of Calakmul.

A recently discovered panel from the Bonampak region records the accession of a lord from Lakanha *u-kahiy Yaxun Balam*, apparently Bird Jaguar IV of Yaxchilan and dated to 9.15.15.16.16 (AD 747)² (Perez Campa and Rosas Kifuri 1987: 768). This accession falls in the interregnum between the death of Shield Jaguar and the formal accession of Bird Jaguar IV at 9.16.1.0.0 (AD 752).

Finally, a rather enigmatic instance appears on Lintel 3 of Piedras Negras and also concerns Bird Jaguar IV. A small caption on this complex scene records the accession of this king, probably placed at 9.16.6.9.16 (AD 757), as being under the "auspices" of the Piedras Negras king Ruler 4 (Figure 3g). This accession takes place some five years later than the same event recorded at Yaxchilan and Peter Mathews (1988: 230) and Mary Miller (n.d.) have suggested that this may have been the point at which Piedras Negras recognised the new king. Whatever the exact circumstances, Piedras Negras evidently claimed some authority over Bird Jaguar and his right to rule at Yaxchilan.

4.2. Explicit statements of political subordination

Ranked beneath the ruler of any particular kingdom were a whole range of elite, but lesser lords, who performed administrative functions within the polity center as well as controlling outlying secondary sites on behalf of the king. Their offices can be identified in the inscriptions

² The critical passage that would have contained the date and the accession verb are broken off. Only the end of the accession phrase with the name of the Lakanha lord, the Lakanha Emblem (or simply an *ahaw* title and toponym, since it lacks the *k'ul* "divine" component), and the expression *u-kahiy Yaxun Balam* are preserved. The identification of this sentence as a reference to an accession event is based on the fact that the connecting distance number of 4.10.12 is connected to the phrase *chumlahi ahawlel* "since he was seated into kingship". The events on this text, if we have correlated them correctly, coincide with the events described on Lakanha Lintel 1. This text deals with the accession of a Lakanha *sahal*, and states that he is a subordinate of a ruler carrying the paired Emblems of Bonampak and Lakanha. The subject of the new panel, a Lakanha *ahaw*, appears to be different character; another noble in what seems to be a complex hierarchy in this area, and not one we fully understand.

and their relationship to their overlord is expressed by the use of possessive terms. The title *ahaw*, the highest rank of nobility; *sahal*, and *ah k'un*, specialized titles used by non-ruling lords; and *ah bak* "captor", *ah tz'ib* "scribe" and *ah nab* (meaning unknown), are transformed into possessed terms when prefixed by an ergative pronoun in the form: *y-ahaw*, *u-sahal*, *y-ah k'un*, *y-ah bak*, *y-ah tz'ib* and *y-ah nab* (Stuart 1984: 13; Mathews and Houston 1985: 27; Bricker 1986: 70; Houston 1993: 128-136) (Figure 4). These terms are well-known to define relationships of hierarchy within a single polity; of great significance to this study are possessive terms that link the king of one polity to that of another. Such explicit statements of subordination are rare, but where they occur, are obviously of considerable significance.

On a hieroglyphic stairway discovered at Dos Pilas in 1990 (Figure 5b) the name of the local king, Ruler 1, is connected to that of the generically-named Calakmul ruler by a compound reading *y-ahaw*, "the lord of"³. This states that the Dos Pilas king was the subordinate of his counterpart at Calakmul, and that a hierarchical relationship existed between them (Houston, Symonds, Stuart and Demarest 1992: 10; *pace* Houston 1993: 108).

An unusual column altar now in the St. Louis Art Museum links the name of a hitherto unidentified king of Bonampak to that of the Tonina king, *Baknal Chak*, at 9.14.3.8.4 (AD 715). The *y-ahaw* relationship between them representing an otherwise unknown hierarchical connection between these polities (Figure 5c) (Liman and Durbin 1975; Houston and Mathews 1985: 27).

The small site of Arroyo de Piedra, that shares an Emblem Glyph with Tamarindito, shows further explicit evidence of subordination. A *y-ahaw* relationship is found between the name of the local king and that of the nearby Dos Pilas polity, in this case Ruler 2 (Houston and Mathews 1985: 27) (Figure 5d).

A re-evaluation of Stela 1 at Naranjo suggests there may well be a further instance of a hierarchical relationship between the rulers of major states. Stela 1 records the birth of someone linked by a *y-ahaw* statement to the king of Calakmul (Figure 5a). A re-examination of the chronology of this text suggests that this person was none other than *Butz' Tiliw*, or "Smoking Squirrel", the current Naranjo king⁴.

³ Stephen Houston (in Houston and Mathews: 1985) first produced a semantic decipherment of this term, whilst Victoria Bricker (1986:63-76) produced the correct phonetic reading.

⁴ A partial distance number (E1) of 7.7/8.12 accords well with a reconstruction of 5.8.12 required to link the birth of Smoking Squirrel at 9.12.15.13.7 to his accession at 9.13.1.3.19, as first noted by Peter Mathews (pers. communication to Michael Closs, 1979). It is possible that the birth event was one recorded on the now heavily eroded left side of the stela. The birth glyph at E2 would therefore be restated base for calculating the distance number and may well be followed at F2 by a verb, highlighted by the T679 *iwal* "and then" marker. This event would have to be the accession of Smoking Squirrel, whom we suspect was the deleted subject to this phrase. Another distance number follows. The published drawing (Graham and Von Euw 1975: 12) shows little detail other than an apparent tun coefficient of 10. In our view, erosion makes this reading uncertain, and 8, as part of the distance number 8.14.1 would form a better fit to the chronology of Naranjo, linking the accession to the period ending of 9.13.10.0.0 at F5-E7.

Other texts that give examples of *y-ahaw* statements placed between Emblem Glyph-bearing kings are known, as, for example, on an early stela from Bejucal⁵, where the *y-ahaw* expression links the name and Emblem of a ruler from the "Ik-site" polity with those of a now effaced polity (Figure 5e); on La Florida Altar G, where a local lord states his subordination under a foreign king whose nominal is also effaced⁶; and a panel of unknown provenance (Mayer 1987: pl.33) that expresses the subordination of Lakanha to a lord of the still unidentified "Sak Tz'i" center (Figure 5f).

5.0 The historical context of hierarchical relationships

The examples cited above demonstrate that the rulers of a number of large and populous states acceded under the direct influence of kings from other centers, and that others expressed their 'possession by', and subordination to, such foreign kings. The incidence and nature of these inter-polity contacts mirror those seen in intra-polity contexts and form a direct parallel. This data suggests that it would be wrong to assume that the stratification evident in elite Maya culture ended at a single polity level in the person of a divine ruler, clearly this was not always the case. However, it is still to be established whether these contacts represent a coherent 'structure' or, as some researchers believe, simply isolated and transient circumstances that existed between some opportunistic states and their temporarily disadvantaged neighbors. If such a structure were to be a more formal and long-lived phenomenon than currently accepted, then one would expect it to have a pervasive influence over state interaction during the Classic, and to be identifiable in the hieroglyphic record. Thus the hypothesis must be tested against other known historical events of the Classic Period.

5.1 State interaction in the Middle to Late Classic central southern lowlands

As a case study we have confined ourselves to the central southern lowlands, an area that includes the so-called 'core area' of Classic Maya civilisation, and to the Middle and Late Classic periods. This is the region, and era, where epigraphic documentation is at its fullest and where the majority of the hierarchical statements described above are concentrated. The aim is to give an overview of the most significant historical events and instances of state interaction, with particular reference to centers cited in such relationships.

5 The glyphs following the *y-ahaw* expression include a "smoke" sign, the "Batab" title, and a damaged Emblem Glyph. At this date the only person known to carry the "Batab" title and to have a name that includes "smoke" is "Smoking Frog", one of the major protagonists at Tikal in the Early Classic. There also appears to be an eroded Tikal Emblem on this stela, though its syntactical context is unclear.

6 The text on this round altar recorded by Ian Graham (1970: Fig. 11) is heavily eroded. Glyph D contains a reference to the altar itself and is followed by two nominal glyphs. The *y-ahaw* expression is found at Glyph G and precedes names and titles of a superordinate lord. Unfortunately the degree of erosion does not permit the identification of the lord's name or Emblem.

As we have seen, at the end of the Early Classic two of the largest sites in the eastern part of the region, Naranjo and Caracol, acquired new kings. Their accessions were under the aegis of two different and quite distant polities, Calakmul and Tikal respectively. Whilst we know little about the reign of Ruler I at Naranjo, a number of important events involve *Y-ahaw Te K'inich* at Caracol. Altar 21 at the site records the next major event in Caracol's history, an "Axe War" or "Decapitation Event" by Tikal against its former associate at 9.6.2.1.11 (AD 556)⁷ (Grube 1991) (Figure 6a) This is followed, six years later, by an even more important military action, a "Star War"; this time recording a defeat for Tikal (Houston 1987:93) at the hands of a now illegible opponent (Figure 6b). This event coincides with the beginning of the so-called "Hiatus" at Tikal, though any direct linkage between the two has yet to be established. It is only after this time that Caracol starts to show significant ties to the state of Calakmul, whose Emblem Glyph appears in a related phrase to the Star War on Altar 21 (Houston 1991:41) (Figure 6c)

Further ties may well be represented by the arrival some years later of a new bride for *Y-ahaw Te K'inich* (Grube in press:b) (Figure 7b) since she bears a title that may link her to Calakmul or a site under its influence, and mention of her birth on Caracol St.3 is directly followed by a now lost event that clearly involves a Calakmul king (Martin 1991a:2.2) (Figure 7a). A child from this marriage was to become the Caracol ruler K'an II (Martin 1991b:31). He expresses many ties to Calakmul on his monuments, including: his performance of an now effaced event *u-kahiy*, or "by the doing of" the Calakmul king (Figure 7e), a *y-ak'aw* or 'gift-giving' (MacLeod 1991b:5) by a Calakmul ruler or noble (Figure 7d), and his *y-itah* relationship to the Calakmul king (Martin 1991a:2.3; Grube in press: b) (Figure 7f); here, as so often, represented by this center's generic title. During the reign of K'an II, Caracol engages in a vigorous military campaign against its northern neighbor Naranjo (Sosa and Reents 1980, after a suggestion by Mathews).

These wars take place at some point after the death of the long-lived Ruler I and involve his immediate successors (Martin 1991b:28). The final, decisive event of this sequence is a further Star War action marking the conquest of Naranjo at 9.9.18.16.3 (AD 631) (Figure 8a-b). After this, Caracol established an hegemony over this center and erected a triumphal stair, commemorating its victories and recording a biography of K'an II. However, it is crucial to note that this monument (as well as St.3 at Caracol) gives the true agent of the Naranjo conquest (using the same *u-kahiy* term seen earlier) not as K'an II, but as the king of Calakmul. Furthermore, the fallen Naranjo ruler was apparently removed to Calakmul itself: *ta Ox-te-Tun ah Naab Tunich*, "at" followed by two Calakmul toponyms (Schele and Freidel 1990:176; Martin 1991b:29), where he was evidently tortured in a ritual that may have involved his cannibalization (Stuart 1987:29). Other portions of the conquest stairway describe other events

⁷ This term is based on the root *ch'ak* "to cut with a blow", "to decapitate" in Yucatec (Barrera Vásquez 1980) identified by both Jorge Orejel (1990) and Nikolai Grube. However, on some occasions it is associated with attacks on locations and here may be more compatible with Cholan *ch'ak* "maldecir" (Aulie and Aulie 1978) or Proto-Cholan **ch'aak* "lastimar/injure" (Kaufman and Norman 1984) (Looper and Schele 1991:2). On Altar 21 the patient appears to be a Caracol lord, though if the intended referent is *Y-ahaw Te K'inich* himself, he clearly survived the encounter.

performed by Calakmul lords, including a ballgame ritual, a 'gift-giving', further military adventures and a death (Martin 1991b:26-27). Since we know that Caracol maintained authority here for the next twelve years at least, it is clear that actual administration of Naranjo passed from the hands of Calakmul to those of Caracol.

At around this time, in the Petexbatun area previously controlled by the Tamarindito-Arroyo de Piedra polity, arose a new state, Dos Pilas, on a relatively 'green field' site with little in the way of previous Classic Period occupation (Foias et al. 1990). One of its most striking features was its use an Emblem Glyph identical to that of Tikal. This rather puzzling occurrence has been the subject of some debate over the years, but may well be explained by recent work from David Stuart and Stephen Houston. They suggest it was brought into the area by an offshoot of the Tikal dynasty and that its king, Ruler 1, was the son of the Tikal ruler Animal Skull (Houston, Symonds, Stuart and Demarest 1992: 8; Demarest 1993: 97-99). Despite its use of this prestigious Emblem, Dos Pilas is a relatively small center that never rivalled in scale or population the enormous origin of this epithet.

As we have seen, the political affiliations of Dos Pilas and Ruler 1 were orientated not towards Tikal, but in the direction of the even more massive seat of Calakmul. Ruler 1 is not only the *y-ahaw* or subordinate of this foreign king, he is also his *y-itah*, showing the same kind of personal tie as that shared with Caracol's K'an II at a similar date.

Like Caracol, Dos Pilas records not only its own military exploits on its monuments, it cites those of Calakmul as well (Mathews 1979a:7-8). One of these is a Star War waged against Tikal at 9.11.5.4.14 (AD 657). This is followed at 9.12.0.8.3 (AD 672) by a similar event enacted by Tikal over Dos Pilas (Houston 1993:108). More war events follow, before a concluding *hubiy u-tok' pakal* event "he brought down the flint and shield of", which represents the last mention of the Tikal king and putative brother or half-brother of Ruler 1, Shield Skull (Houston 1993: 100; Demarest 1993: 97-99) (Figure 9). The agent of this is clearly Ruler 1 of Dos Pilas and Houston and Stuart interpret these events as a "civil war" fought between estranged members of the same family. After the war, Ruler 1 records two events that took place at Calakmul itself; at least one of which, his witnessing of the accession of the Calakmul ruler Jaguar Paw, entailed a visit to this center (Schele and Freidel 1990: 181; Houston 1993: 108) (Figure 10). In addition, the kings of both sites appear to have met at a third center, possibly one placed within the polity of El Peru (Schele and Freidel 1990:181; Martin n.d.)

One the most important marital ties known for the Classic Period involves the daughter of Ruler 1, the subject of a *huli* "arrival" event at the subjugated site of Naranjo at 9.12.10.5.12 (AD 682) (Grube in press:b) (Figure 11a-b). Her exceptional status here is reflected by the privilege of conducting her own ritual ceremonies and her portrayal on several stelae. Her true relevance, however, seems to stem from her position as mother to a new king of Naranjo: *Butz' Tiliw* or "Smoking Squirrel". The accession of this ruler, at just five years old, re-established the dynastic line of Naranjo, reviving its Emblem Glyph and marking political independence from Caracol. Smoking Squirrel's reign is an aggressive one with many records of military action

(Schele and Freidel 1990: 186-194). Whilst still a child, and obviously no more than a figurehead, Naranjo is engaged in a war against its giant neighbor, Tikal (Houston 1993:108). Despite all the evidence suggesting that he was a powerful and effective ruler, there is, as we have mentioned, reason to doubt that Smoking Squirrel was a wholly independent one. Like his grandfather before him he appears to have been the *y-ahaw* of the Calakmul king and subject to this site's influence.

For reasons that are as yet unknown, the monumental record at Caracol falls largely silent at this time, not to resume much before the beginning of the Terminal Classic (Chase, Grube and Chase 1991). The last monument before this partial hiatus, Stela 21 at 9.13.10.0.0 (AD 702), includes a captive figure that may yet prove to be a lord of Tikal, suggesting the possibility of further conflict between these centers in the years shortly preceding this date⁸. Though much reduced, some record from this interval does survive: in fallen and jumbled stucco texts from Caracol itself and in the cave texts of Naj Tunich, where Caracol interacts with one of the smaller polities in its region and is again associated with a lord of Calakmul (Grube in press: b; MacLeod and Stone n.d.: 312-318). A certain consistency in Caracol's foreign relations may be indicated by a much later, Terminal Classic, war against Tikal (Grube in press: b).

The son and successor of Ruler 1 of Dos Pilas, Ruler 2, continues aggressive contact with Tikal, recording a further *hubiy* event at 9.13.13.8.2 (AD 705) (Houston 1993:111) (Figure 12); as well as maintaining the site's links with Calakmul (Mathews 1979b:8). This war is apparently led by the future Ruler 3, who may have acted here as a war captain⁹. After this king's rise to power, a representative of Calakmul visits Dos Pilas to participate in an important bloodletting ceremony of what is probably the young heir to the Dos Pilas throne (depicted on Panel 19), and is cited as the 'guardian' of the young prince (perhaps the future Ruler 4) (Houston 1993: 115) (Figure 13). Dos Pilas went on to expand its influence in the region with the conquest of Seibal at 9.15.4.6.4 (AD 735) (Riese 1984a); other war actions against Yaxchilan, El Chorro, Motul de San Jose; and a marriage 'alliance' with Cancuen (Houston 1993:115,117).

Our knowledge of Cancuen, the most southerly lowland Maya site, placed at head of the Pasión River and at a 'gateway to the highlands', is confined to a very few monuments. To

⁸ The kneeling captive on Caracol Stela 21 is associated with a caption (Z1-3) that names him (Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981:Fig.19). The final compound in this sequence is clearly an Emblem Glyph, though it is an unusual combination that has thus far escaped identification. Superficially, it resembles a variant of the Ixtutz Emblem, to be seen on Ixtutz Stela 4 at B4 (Graham 1980:181). However, all complete versions of this title include the single bar numeral for 5, which here almost certainly represents the syllabic value *ho* (examples are also to be seen in the cave texts of Naj Tunich). This main sign is marked out by its prominent headdress or hair arrangement, divided by two vertical lines. If one turns to Tikal Stela 5 at D6 (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982: Fig.8) one finds a much closer semblant; a legitimate variation of the Tikal Emblem Glyph. Unfortunately, the degree of erosion is too great to be absolutely sure about this identification.

⁹ The agent of this war is given as *U-Chanal K'in Balam* "Guardian of Sun-Jaguar", the title used by Ruler 3 throughout his life. The fact that Dos Pilas Stela 11 names *U-Chanal K'in Balam* as the *y-itah* of Ruler 2 (cf. Houston 1993: Fig.3-27) would make it very unlikely that this was a title borne by both Rulers 2 & 3.

judge from the unpublished panel, its relationship to Calakmul (a center some 230 km distant in air-line) was close in the period 9.11.0.0.0 to 9.12.5.0.0 (AD 652 to 677) at least. A now lost event takes place *y-ichnal* "in the company of" the Calakmul ruler, whilst soon after an unidentified person dies at *Naab Tunich*, the same Calakmul location mentioned at Naranjo and Dos Pilas. One of the aforementioned accession statements tells us that the event took place "in the company of" some deity important to Calakmul¹⁰.

The next reference to Cancuen comes from the inferred marriage between Ruler 3 of Dos Pilas and a Lady "Xok" of this center. At some later point a hieroglyphic stair was erected at Cancuen that mentions Ruler 4 of Dos Pilas (Johnston 1985:53) and documents an event performed by him, or in his company, at the Petexbatun capital.

The glyphic record tells us that the period between 9.13.0.0.0 and 9.14.0.0.0 was one of particular struggle between Tikal and its neighbors. Apart from conflicts with Dos Pilas, Naranjo and possibly Caracol, one, as yet unmentioned, is surely the most significant of these: a further war between Tikal and Calakmul at 9.13.3.7.18 (AD 695) (Schele and Freidel 1990: 205-210) (Figure 14). In this encounter the "flint and shield" of Jaguar Paw, Calakmul's best known ruler, were "brought down" in a *hubiy* event. His victorious foe was Ruler A or *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil*, son and successor of the same Tikal king, Shield Skull, that fell to Ruler 1 of Dos Pilas. Just like Shield Skull before him, nothing more is heard of Jaguar Paw after the *hubiy* event and we might presume that this occasion was also a terminal encounter¹¹.

There is no epigraphic, or other data, to suggest that this defeat was a devastating blow to Calakmul. Within seven years of the reverse, at least five stelae were raised at the site to mark the period-ending 9.13.10.0.0, whilst the next two K'atuns saw the realization of major architectural programs. Nevertheless, foreign mentions of this center do decline after this time, particularly in the east of the region. Its relations to the west, however, are better maintained: notably at Dos Pilas and the little known but large and important site of El Peru. This polity, one that almost certainly shared a northern border with Calakmul, records contacts between the two that date back to the Early Classic, including a number that center on the actions of Calakmul dynasts. These include the "arrivals" of Calakmul queens and the births and accessions of Calakmul kings¹².

10 At D5 in this text, the second glyph in the name of the deity, there is a compound that apparently reads *y-ahaw man(?)*. The only other instance of this glyph we are aware of appears on Tikal Temple I Lintel 3 at B6, where it is the subject of a *baknah* "capture" phrase. *Y-ahaw man(?)* here represents an object or deity figure taken by Tikal in its war against Calakmul.

11 A bone text recovered from Burial 116 at Tikal (Tikal MT.39a-b) appears to name Jaguar Paw's successor, "Split-Earth", apparently in power by 9.13.3.13.15.

12 Among the most intriguing of these contacts is one of the former incidents, the *huli* "arrival" at El Peru of a Calakmul lady on 9.12.6.16.17 (April 30th AD 679). This is precisely the day on which Shield Skull of Tikal fought his final battle and seemingly fell victim to the king of Dos Pilas. Though we cannot yet be sure what precise significance this may have, there is some kind of relationship between *huli* events on one hand and battles that take place elsewhere on the same day on the other; grounds to view this as more than a freak coincidence (a similar circumstance involves Dos Pilas Ruler 1 and a war fought by Calakmul against an unidentified center). It should also be

Interaction at accession ceremonies is represented not only by the aforementioned "auspices" intervention, but also in the inauguration of the El Peru ruler *K'inich Balam*, which was *y-ichnal*, or "in the company of" a generically-named Calakmul king (Schele and Freidel 1990: 457). There is good reason to believe that when seen in such inter-polity contexts this form serves as a third, though implicit, statement of hierarchy, with the latter named character supervising the first (Houston 1989:34). Finally, *K'inich Balam's* wife is a *Na Kan Ahaw*, a member of the Calakmul royal line.

The period 9.14.0.0.0 to 9.15.0.0.0 is particularly sparse in notable military events. This may be an accident of preservation, but seems so marked that a lull in major inter-polity conflict must be considered. The most intense record for the period is found at Dos Pilas, where Ruler 2 engages a number of unknown and probably small centers (Houston 1993: 111).

The advent of 9.15.0.0.0 sees a return to major antagonisms. At Tikal, a son of *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil*, Ruler B, becomes the new king at 9.15.3.6.8 (AD 734) (Jones 1977). His inaugural monument is paired with an altar bearing the image of a bound Calakmul lord, indicating new conflict between these centers (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982: 48; Martin: in press). The peak of this cycle of wars occurs just after 9.15.10.0.0, here two "star war" actions are separated by just 191 days. These involve the defeat of first El Peru at 9.15.12.2.2 (AD 743), and then Naranjo at 9.15.12.11.13 (AD 744) (Martin 1991b:1-14; in press; n.d.) (Figure 16,17). Hereafter, the monumental record at both centers is badly disrupted; with a consistent pattern of stelae erection not returning to Naranjo for some 35 years.

From this point on, recorded examples of both war events and other interactions between major states decline significantly, even though the general level of warfare and output of inscriptions, initially at least, remains much the same. Indeed, this period shows a substantial *increase* in sites carving inscriptions and claiming their own royal dynasties. Most of the major centers in the sample area continue to erect monuments for another fifty years at least; whilst Tikal, Calakmul and Caracol are active close or into Cycle 10, almost a century later.

6.0 Identifying primary centers and political spheres

Even in this summary view of Classic Maya state interaction, support for a more overarching arrangement of Maya polities emerges. It will be noted that the linkages between centers expressed by the hierarchical statements discussed in sections 4.1 and 4.2 do not appear in isolation, but are joined by a whole range of additional contacts, including marital and other personal ties, royal visitations and commonly directed military campaigns. Such relationships appear to be both close and of some longevity. Where the nature of these contacts emphasises the foreign center as a supervising agent, or commemorations of its exploits and royal history appear on the home center's own monuments, we believe that the evidence supports that from

remembered that the day of Shield Skull's downfall is exactly one K'atun, or twenty years to the day, after a *huli* event he was involved in recorded at Palenque (an observation of Linda Schele).

more explicit statements and indicates that a hierarchical relationship is indeed present. Following sections will further describe why we believe that this amounts to a relatively stable macro-political structure.

6.1 The primary centers

The data presented thus far shows that only two centers in the study area consistently appear in superordinate positions. Even a cursory view establishes that the state of Calakmul appears in disproportionately high number of such relationships and gives every indication of being a dominant power in the region and timeframe under consideration. Equally, though Tikal is less evident in these relationships, patterns of interaction and opposition suggest that it too should be considered a primary center within a hierarchy of states. Before embarking on a description of such hierarchies, it is worth examining these primary centers in more detail.

6.1.1 Calakmul

The evidence suggests to us that the state of Calakmul was the single most influential force in Maya politics for most of the Middle to Late Classic Periods, and that a significant number of major states, hitherto taken to be quite independent (by most authors), were directly within its 'political sphere'. Although this arrangement may well be characterised by a range of differing relationships, we believe that many, if not all, were its effective vassals. Though not immutable, these relationships show a surprising persistence. The arrangement can be dated from at least the Early Classic, where clear signs emerge by 9.6.0.0.0 (AD 554), probably reaching its maximum extent in the Late Classic at around 9.13.0.0.0 (AD 692), and enduring in some form until 9.15.10.0.0 (AD 741) or thereabouts. A minimal sphere centred on Calakmul would include El Peru, Dos Pilas, Cancuen, Naranjo and Caracol; although there is good reason to believe that its influence extends even wider than this (Martin 1993; Grube in press: a). The data is supported by evidence from outside the test area and by the wide distribution of its Emblem Glyph which is, by some considerable margin, the most commonly seen in foreign contexts throughout the lowlands (Mathews 1979; Martin 1991a, 1993).

The fact that a client state of Calakmul, Dos Pilas, is dominant in its own inter-polity hierarchy, that with Arroyo de Piedra, strongly suggests that this structure extends to a third tier, the existence of which might be predicted when a high-level hierarchy is present¹³.

¹³ It should be noted that the *y-ahaw* connections between Calakmul, Dos Pilas and Arroyo de Piedra are not precisely contemporaneous. Although we believe that Calakmul exerted a powerful and persistent hold on Dos Pilas, up until this reference and beyond, this must be inferred from other evidence. It is not inconceivable, given the problems that Calakmul faced at this time, that Dos Pilas now considered itself a primary center, largely independent of Calakmul control (we might also note the uncertain status of the Calakmul visitor on Panel 19; who seems to lack both a prestigious title and rich costume).

The archaeology of Calakmul itself, already known to be a very extensive site, now suggests that it was the largest of the Classic Period and perhaps 30% or more bigger than the next largest, Tikal (Folan 1988; Fletcher and Gann 1992). It was a major center during the Late Pre-classic and a contemporary of such giants as El Mirador (M. del Rosario Domínguez Carrasco 1991). It is surrounded by a number of very substantial sites, that Flannery (1972) and others have taken to be the secondary centers of a large and populous polity.

Calakmul also has the greatest number of stelae of any Maya site, with at least 108 so far discovered, constituting one of the most complete Late Classic sequences. Sadly, the poor quality of the local limestone has led to their severe erosion, rendering all but a small number quite illegible (barring their initial series dates) and severely restricting the epigraphic information that can be extracted from the site. For many years this has caused the Emblem Glyph of Calakmul to be a topic of debate amongst epigraphers. But of late, a consensus has emerged that the "snake-head" Emblem, read *K'ul Kan(al) Ahaw*, the assignation originally proposed by Thomas Barthel (1968), is indeed the correct one¹⁴.

6.1.2 Tikal

Tikal is the other major center to appear in a hierarchical relationship within the sample. This, perhaps the most intensively investigated of all Maya sites, was a significant center from Late Pre-classic times onwards and features some of the earliest dynastic monuments found in the lowlands (Culbert 1977: 39; Mathews 1985).

The epigraphic evidence presented thus far undoubtedly understates the influence of Tikal during the Early Classic, where the inscriptional record is not so extensive and the limited number of Emblem Glyph-bearing polities precludes much discussion of state interaction (early mentions of Tikal are seen in the immediate periphery of the site and at El Zapote, Uaxactun,

¹⁴ The Emblem Glyph with a snake head as its main sign was first associated with the site of Calakmul by Thomas Barthel (1968), based on the "four capitals" phrase on Copan Stela A. He noted that the only major site in the lowlands with the physical size and number of stelae that would justify its identification as a regional capital was this extensive ruin in Southern Campeche. Later, Jeffrey Miller (1974) attributed looted stelae in the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Kimbell Art Museum to this center, based on the appearance of this Emblem on the former monument. Peter Mathews (1979a), in his key study of inscriptions featuring this title, referred to the polity as "Site Q", reflecting the uncertainty of its correct assignation. A few years later, Ian Graham discovered the sawed-off remains of both Cleveland and Kimbell stelae at El Peru, a heavily looted site at the Rio San Pedro Martir. This led a number of researchers to believe that El Peru was the site in question. In time, however, several epigraphers recognised that El Peru had its own, distinct Emblem Glyph (cf. Martin in press: Fig. 8), and that the "Site Q" Emblem on the Cleveland stela is a reference to a foreign center. More recently David Stuart and Stephen Houston (in Schele and Freidel 1990: 456-457) have returned to the topic and found more evidence in support of Calakmul. This centers on the identification of Ox-te-Tun as a key "Site Q" location, often mentioned at Calakmul itself as well as at Dos Pilas, Naranjo and now Cancuen.

During the 1993 field season at Calakmul, Ramón Carrasco (1994) excavated a new hieroglyphic stairway that features the snake-head Emblem, an example that joins at least four certain or probable examples on Calakmul stelae (and has found a further reference to Ox-te-Tun on a second monument). This data joins that from Calakmul Stela 9, that mentions the birth of Jaguar Paw. Taken together, there seems to be little doubt that "Site Q" and Calakmul are one-in-the-same.

Yaxchilan, Caracol, Xultun and probably Rio Azul). Nevertheless, archaeological, iconographic and glimpses of epigraphic detail all argue for Tikal as a dominant force during this era (Mathews 1985; Adams 1987; Schele and Freidel 1990; Schele, Fahsen and Grube 1992).

By the Middle Classic, Tikal formed the hub of a second, though notably smaller political grouping, that appears to be little more than the remanent rump of what had once been a wider and more powerful sphere of influence. Tikal lords are mentioned at both Motul de San Jose and Uaxactun, with the latter having long been thought of as subject to Tikal control (Marcus 1976; Mathews 1985; Schele and Freidel 1990). In addition, it is highly probable that El Zotz, the adjacent polity to the west, was also a member of Tikal's sphere; though epigraphy for this center is scant indeed. Further afield there appears to be an early Late Classic reference to Tikal at Altar de Sacrificios, though this appearance on the Pasión is not sufficiently legible to understand the relationship involved¹⁵. Grube's discovery of Tikal's involvement in the accession of a Caracol king indicates that this polity was also once under its influence.

After emerging from its well-known Hiatus (a feature that might largely be defined as the silence of its monumental record), the center made a strong recovery that transformed the architectural core of the site (Jones 1991: 120). This process is associated with two particular Tikal kings, Rulers A and B, and appears strongly related to their military success. Whilst the lack of detailed historical texts for the following period prevents any proper epigraphic study, the consistent erection of stelae and further impressive construction argues for a stable and prosperous state-of-affairs that prevailed until at least the end of the Late Classic and into the ninth-century. Foreign references to Tikal during this later period mostly concern warfare (Caracol, Xultun and Naranjo), or suggest the dismemberment of the polity during Terminal Classic times (Jimbál, Ixlu).

6.2 The nature of macro-political units in the Classic Period

If organizations of the kind we have described were indeed active constituents of Classic Maya geo-politics, we must next attempt to define what kind of structures they actually represent. Primarily, what were the bonds that secured subordinate polities to their patron or overlord, and secondly, did the form constitute a cohesive whole, or simply a group of independent linkages to a dominant center. To answer this last point we must review the interactions seen in Section 5.1, with particular note taken of relations between sphere 'members'.

There are five inter-polity marriages within the study zone. All connect sites in the projected sphere of Calakmul: Dos Pilas-Naranjo, Dos Pilas-Arroyo de Piedra, Dos Pilas-Cancuen, Calakmul?-Caracol and Calakmul-El Peru. Whilst hypogamous ties to the dominant superpower

¹⁵ David Stuart and Stephen Houston have identified a probable reference to Animal Skull, Tikal's most notable Hiatus-period king, on Altar de Sacrificios Stela 8 (Houston, Symonds, Stuart and Demarest 1992: 13).

might be predicted ¹⁶, of more interest here are the relationships between Calakmul-affiliated centers. We should also note the absence of any surviving record of inter-marriage between any of these centers and Tikal, or any site under its influence.

Other kinds of royal visitation all link Calakmul to its affiliates: Calakmul-Dos Pilas (3), Calakmul-El Peru (3), Calakmul-Cancuen and almost certainly Calakmul-Caracol. Once again no interaction of this type is shared with Tikal.

Equally, aggressive contact between members of the same grouping (ie. those within the second tier) is low, with Caracol's wars against Naranjo a notable exception. Wars involving dominant powers and their own clients produces two examples: Calakmul-Naranjo and Tikal-Caracol. The circumstances of all three of these encounters are of particular significance and will be returned to presently.

If all wars cited in the central area are charted, a striking and unambiguous pattern emerges. The predominant picture of warfare in the Classic Period is one that links Tikal with its neighbors: Tikal-Dos Pilas (3), Tikal-Caracol (1-2), Tikal-El Peru, Tikal-Naranjo (2) and Tikal-Calakmul (3). Even before a number of these encounters were recognised, Linda Schele and David Freidel had identified the pattern and suggested that Calakmul had developed a strategy of surrounding Tikal with hostile states that constituted its allies (1990: 211, 457).

Analysis of these exchanges leads us to conclude that subordinate polities, within at least one of these political structures, that of Calakmul, engaged in diplomatic and other non-aggressive interaction with each other and that these relationships were exclusive and not shared with members of a different grouping. Furthermore, that members of a common sphere shared the same antagonisms as their partners, and that rivalries between these states rarely resulted in outright conflict. Both features indicate that we are correct in perceiving these structures as units of some cohesion, and that membership of the Calakmul Sphere or Tikal Sphere is predictive of certain shared characteristics and policy (though it should be stressed that this is something less than the unified state and behaviour of true empire¹⁷). The data indicates that the two blocs maintained an active opposition towards one other, that we would suggest represents an elaborate and extended competition between the states of Calakmul and Tikal.

Whilst such interactions reveal aspects of their operation, how such structures were formed, as well as details of their internal cohesion, are much less open to view. We have seen that kinship and other personal links represent part of the mechanism, but these are surely secondary rather than primary features. To what degree, if any, did economic factors, prestige or

¹⁶ To our knowledge, the initial usage of the twentieth-century term 'superpower' in a Mesoamerican context was by Warwick Bray (1972:919). We employ it to describe states that are not simply the strongest in their region, but are ones that manipulate and control other states that are nominally independent and including some well outside their immediate sphere. Our initial description of Classic Maya superpowers, superpower blocs and the hegemony of Calakmul (as Site Q) was outlined in a letter from Simon Martin to Patrick Culbert (Martin1992a).

¹⁷ We should not overstate the unity of such an agglomeration at this stage. At present, evidence that sites in the system undertook synchronised military attacks is very tenuous.

ideological concepts such as 'ritual pre-eminence' play a part? Were spheres formed by voluntaristic 'enfranchisement', or through coercion?

Of course, we might anticipate that a range of such factors were involved, each arising from a particular political and geographic context, and individual to each relationship. The subtlety and complexity of such a landscape is indicated by the emerging 'strategic map' of the central zone, in which spheres like that of Calakmul do not 'radiate' from a central source, but follow contours in political geography to form a chain-like network.

Economic interaction, as ever in the Maya area, is very difficult to examine in the archaeological record, and is completely absent from surviving texts. Hierarchical structures imply that tribute or other 'up-ward' exchanges existed, but demonstrating this empirically, aside perhaps from a limited range of imperishable items and the more promising area of elite commodities, is beyond us at present.

There are clear signs that the political organization of the Maya was intimately entwined with a corresponding and sustaining ideological charter (Houston, Stuart and Taube 1991:502), particularly visible in their concern with patron deities and mythological founders (Mathews 1977; Schele 1992). But, as yet, there is no firm suggestion that primary centers were associated with a *superior* mythological or cosmic significance, comparable to their political status. Their general absence from such contexts (with the possible exception of that on Copan Stela A) makes it highly unlikely that macro-political units were founded on the principles of "sacred leadership" (Netting 1972:233), even if they did carry some ideological baggage (perhaps of their own creation)¹⁸. There can be little doubt that primary centers carried prestige, but in our judgement the likely source of this was their military, economic or other political power, rather than a universally-accepted divine authority.

In theory at least, the extension of a sphere system may have involved voluntaristic recruitment. Smaller polities, under threat from a neighboring rival, may have sought protection by aligning themselves to a distant 'guarantor' (Martin 1992a; Houston, Symonds, Stuart and Demarest 1992: 10). If this process provoked more polities to adopt the same strategy, the sphere system could spread very rapidly; though the effect would presumably weaken as the source of the power/protection became progressively more remote.

Instances of internecine struggle within groupings may be particularly revealing and are worthy of further examination. It seems clear that Caracol moves between the spheres of Tikal and Calakmul at some point after the accession of *Y-ahaw Te K'inich*. The first visible disjuncture is the outbreak of hostilities between Tikal and Caracol. This sequence might be used as a parallel to explain events at neighboring Naranjo.

¹⁸ The "Holmul Dancer" vases are undoubtedly connected to ideological concepts concerning Maya polities (cf. Houston, Stuart and Taube 1991); though just why the great majority concern Calakmul and the *Mut* Emblem of Tikal or Dos Pilas remains unknown (the *Mut* decipherment is by Stuart 1993c). Conceivably, this is some reference to these centers pre-eminent role in the Maya lowlands.

Here, after what seems to be a lengthy period of Calakmul influence, Naranjo is attacked by the now Calakmul-sponsored Caracol, and finally conquered in a Star War whose agent is the Calakmul king. Since all other instances of this syntactical structure refer to the actual combatants, this indicates that forces from Calakmul took the city, a military adventure of some 120 kilometers. After being given over to the control of Caracol for a period between 12 to 52 years, Naranjo regains its dynastic line and state-level prerogatives. However, this is directly tied to the lineage of one of Calakmul's most important client states, Dos Pilas; and the boy king himself acknowledges his subordination to the Calakmul superpower.

We must wonder at what brought about this dramatic volte-face in Naranjo-Calakmul relations. The Caracol example suggests that a reversal of political orientation can be associated with such struggles, though whether this represents cause or effect is less clear. Whether to enter the sway of Tikal, or simply assert its independence, it is plain that Naranjo left the supervision of its former patron. There is every reason to believe that, in response, Calakmul successfully brought about a devastating retribution, one that finally led to Naranjo's full re-integration.

The most important point stemming from this is the coercive power wielded by both Calakmul and Tikal against their former affiliates or vassals. Whatever the cause of the Naranjo 'problem', the 'solution' was the overthrow of its dynastic line, followed, after a suitable period, with renewed bonds of kinship and subordination. This example suggests that the ultimate sanction against secession was military might and that coercive threat was a factor in maintaining political spheres.

7.0 Political Spheres: prevailing models and precedents

Although, by definition, macro-political units are a feature of external, inter-polity organization, their existence would have telling implications for the internal, intra-polity organization of Maya communities. Of late, arguments on the scale of Maya polities, regional or city-state, have been overtaken by the closely related debate on their internal composition: whether polities of the Classic Period were characterized by strong central administration, or weaker, more dispersed authority (for the best summaries of the latter see Ball and Taschek 1991: 156-161, Demarest 1992, or Houston 1992a, 1993: 142-148).

The degree of political intervention and control suggested by our study, indeed, any lasting political structure above that of the individual polity, does not sit easily with some of the core principles behind 'weak state' models such as the Segmentary State and Galactic Polity. Some of the features that suggest these comparisons are worthy of further discussion, as are the points of departure.

Segmentary-style interpretations have overt implications for both the aims and extent of warfare. Such models predict great instability on the periphery of polities: where weak central authority is in constant, sometimes violent, struggle with provincial lords seeking to enhance

their own powerbase. Conquest warfare is limited by the yet greater difficulty of maintaining control over incorporated populations and territory, a problem amplified at ever greater distance from the center. In this environment, territorial expansion remains a low priority for inter-polity conflict and, if it occurs at all (perhaps during the reign of a particularly effective ruler), is unstable and quickly unravels. The focus of war is directed instead towards ideological concerns, the enhancement of royal prestige, the capture of sacrificial victims and seizure of booty (Freidel 1986; Demarest 1992; Houston 1992a, 1993: 142-148)¹⁹.

It is indeed the case that the inscriptional record provides very few instances where the victor of a war occupied and directly governed a rival Emblem Glyph-bearing polity. Indeed, the example of Naranjo's conquest may be exceptional in the surviving texts. In other instances, such as the defeat of Seibal at the hands of Dos Pilas, neither the Seibal polity nor its royal line were extinguished. The end result was the subordination of the defeated site and its ruler, rather than their absorption into a monolithic 'conquest state'²⁰. If the political subordination of Dos Pilas to Calakmul persisted until this time, and it may well have done, Seibal would take its place in the third tier of a state hierarchy headed by Calakmul.

The presence of a limiting factor that prevented the emergence of true conquest states and of permanent empires for the Classic Period has been seen by many as evidence for the Maya polity's innate internal weakness, and grounds for pursuing the theoretical models that explain this feature. But the evidence suggests to us that powerful states adopted an alternative

19 It is easy to why these particular traits have been associated with the Classic Maya. The iconography of Classic period warfare frequently isolates victorious rulers with a single humiliated prisoner, in a manner that suggests the centrality of individual captures. Accompanying texts often acknowledge the modest status of the prisoner, who very often hails from an insignificant or completely unknown center. Yet there is likely to be notable distortion in this view; which takes little account of iconographic conventions that can abbreviate complex events to a single, even idealised, moment, and is disproportionately influenced by sites who made prodigious records of their relatively minor military adventures. The development and refinement of epigraphy allows us to assess the relative macro-political importance of a particular center and make some judgements on its war-related record. In all certainty war was waged for differing reasons, towards individual objectives and varied markedly in scale. The focus of our study leads us to consider wars between 'major players', where the results could profoundly affect the fortunes of those centers, their populations and ruling dynasties.

20 The Seibal Hieroglyphic Stairway not only records ritual events enacted by Ruler 4 of Dos Pilas, it deals at some length with actions performed by a Seibal ruler (and at least one other lord) in his presence. Three of these mentions name *Y-ich'ak Balam*, a ruler with a name identical to that of the Seibal dynast captured in the conquest war of some fifteen years earlier (this nominal was first read phonetically by Stuart 1987:27-28). Contrary to some earlier interpretations there is no record of *Y-ich'ak Balam's* sacrifice on the two monuments that deal with this event at Dos Pilas and Aguateca, only a *nawah* "adornment" event, one that probably constitutes the humiliation of the prisoner and his special dressing or body-painting (the *ch'ak* "decapitation" event is associated with some other character). We concur with Stuart (*ibid.*) that these two rulers are one-in-the-same person, but believe that the result of *Y-ich'ak Balam's* defeat was not his death, or even removal from the Seibal throne, but his enforced vassalage to successive kings of Dos Pilas. It is clear that Seibal remained a functioning, Emblem-bearing polity at this time, albeit one unable to erect monuments on its own behalf and firmly under Dos Pilas domination. This is not an isolated instance (Smoking Squirrel's capture of Shield Jaguar of Ucanal is a similar case, whilst the process may be described on the "Fort Worth Panel" from Laxtunich) and such examples suggest that epigraphic rather than iconographic distinctions will be required to determine which captives survived their imprisonment, and were even returned the their thrones, and which died an agonising death.

strategy to outright conquest, and instead wove webs of patronage and allegiance, through both coercive threat and kinship ties, to construct political spheres of an imperial magnitude.

To explain why this might be so we should examine ethnohistoric, iconographic and epigraphic sources that reveal the Maya's concern for concepts of 'place', and particularly the divine rights of kings to govern. The reading of the Emblem Glyph title shows that any number of Maya *k'ul ahawob* or "divine kings" could exist simultaneously, since each drew its power from, and was specific to, a given place or locality; which is better seen as a central source rather than a bounded and demarked territory (Schele and Freidel 1990: 60; Hammond 1991: 277; Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993: 138-172). Thus the many acclamations of divinely-sanctioned rule were not competing claims to a singular authority, but expressions of a cosmological remit to rule a particular 'seat' of dynastic authority. Such 'place-specific' systems possess innate limits that restrict their legitimacy to a certain geographic range. For the Classic Maya this range would seem to be the average radius surrounding each polity core (Renfrew 1982:282; Hammond 1991:275-282). Direct control by a distant, and therefore less than fully legitimate power may well have represented an alien and, in the long-term, unworkable system of governance. Thus effective administration would rely on the co-opting of a subjugated local elite, a system with many other Mesoamerican precedents (Conrad and Demarest 1984; Fox 1987; Hassig 1988). Local autonomy, in most practical senses, would have been real; only those aspects of political or economic activity that touched upon the affairs of the superordinate power would necessitate intervention (Hassig 1988: 19).

In seeking Mesoamerican parallels, we are struck by comparisons rarely cited in connection with Classic Maya political process: most particularly that of the Aztec Empire. This, the best documented of all Pre-Columbian political systems, was not an integrated polity in the Western sense, but an impermanent hegemony held over numerous provinces, city-states and individual towns (Barlow 1949; Hassig 1985; Conrad and Demarest 1984). It was notionally headed by a 'Triple Alliance' of states, but was actually dominated by a single polity, the Mexica and their center of Tenochtitlan. Aztec conquests were not consolidated by occupation; instead effective control was maintained through intimidation, ensuring obedience and the regular forfeit of tribute. Local lineages, having been defeated in war, were usually returned to power and allowed to administer their realms without hindrance, so long as they collaborated with the central power. Rebellion was met by renewed conquest, reprisals against the instigators and the imposition of punitive taxation. Little or no attempt was made to assimilate subject peoples within the cultural identity of the Aztec, and the empire remained ethnically divided and fracturous in character.

This is what Hassig (1988: 18-19) calls an "Hegemonic Empire", in contrast to the Territorial Empires more typical of the Old World. Its characteristics suggest that models for the

kind of structure we describe for the Classic Maya exist within Mesoamerica itself, and constitute a native approach to the problems of large-scale political administration and control²¹

Another prime attribute of Segmentary-style organisation is the emphasis on the personal prestige of the incumbent king. Here, polities that lack established bureaucracies rely heavily on the cohesive qualities of a successful ruler. Thus, by implication, centers that enjoy prosperity and stability are headed by charismatic individuals, whilst elsewhere, or at another time, weak kings engender social decline or disintegration.

If all Maya states were thus dependent, it is surprising, not to say inconsistent, that the kings of Calakmul, the most successful site at extending its influence and power, should suppress the personal identities of its rulers behind a generic title²². This 'de-personalizing' effect stressed the institution of Calakmul kingship itself; evidently a more prestigious and durable commodity than the office-holder as an individual. Such behaviour is more characteristic of centralized, rather than segmentary, authority and seems indicative of the developed stage of Calakmul statehood.

Stephen Houston, who has drawn a number of cogent comparisons between epigraphic data and the Segmentary State and Galactic Polity constructs, has, in his most recent work, also noted signs of a "higher-order" to political organization and detected "glimmerings of veritable geo-politics" (Houston, Symonds, Stuart and Demarest 1992:10; Houston 1992a:10). He identifies the longevity of some of the relationships involved, but prefers a less structured context for them than we believe to be the case. Whilst a broad advocate of the Segmentary model, he concedes that if larger political structures are to be accommodated within it, the interpretation must adopt a more elastic nature than any of the applications made in the Maya area have thus far suggested. Proponents of 'weak state' models stress the difficulty that even small Maya polities, barely 60 kilometers in diameter, would have in maintaining effective central

²¹ The Aztec system is revealed to us by virtue of a very extensive ethnohistoric record, supplemented by Post-Columbian codices. We might ask ourselves how visible such a structure would be were it not for these invaluable sources. In the case of the Maya, our only contemporary documents are represented by monumental inscriptions, but these are very unlikely to be a comparable source. Such public texts were commissioned to emphasize the prowess and legitimacy of the local ruler, his relationship to the divine and cosmic worlds and his actions fixed within the great cycles of time; there is very little doubt that both text and image were primarily directed towards a local audience. Such records may well represent only a poor-to-moderate source for macro-political information, which would often humble the status of the starring protagonist and commissioner of these monuments. We believe such features account, at least in part, for the difficulty in observing macro-political organization in the Maya area. Instances where the local protagonist gives up part of his central position in the text, to honor and document the affairs of his patron power, may represent only the most overt of these complex relationships.

²² Barbara MacLeod (1993: letter to Simon Martin) has outlined a reading for this title based on a transliteration of *yukom*. She interprets its root as *yuk*, meaning "join", "unite" (Wisdom 1950; Barrera Vásquez 1980), forming with its suffix: *yukom* "unifier". The usual form has a further appended or infixed noun, the "impinged-bone" sign that MacLeod (1991c: letter to Nikolai Grube) reads as *kun* or "seat, station". This is one of the most common components of locative references (Stuart and Houston 1989), where it is often applied to major centers. MacLeod's full reading is therefore *yukom kun* "unifier of seats/stations (polity centers)". This intriguing proposal requires further examination, but would seem highly appropriate when borne by Calakmul kings (though it should be noted that this title compound is not exclusive to the Calakmul dynasty and appears in other, though much less common, contexts elsewhere).

authority in the long term and preventing the dissolution of their realms. Influence over other polities is an even weaker feature, since they lack the coercive tools of more centralized states and have no way of forging stable lines of authority. It is noteworthy that the applications of Segmentary theory we have seen in recent years did not prove to be predictive of the large political units now coming into view.

Whilst several features of such models remain highly relevant to Maya political organisation, the adoption of a 'catch-all' comparative model may well obscure and blind us to very explicit information provided by Maya inscriptions (cf. Culbert 1991:339). Our own study does not seek to form a full and comprehensive model of Classic Maya society, rather it concentrates on one of the areas that are most profitably studied through epigraphy, namely the interaction and organization of the largest and most politically-active centers. Being cautious to avoid over-simplified generalizations, we acknowledge that 'weak state' models may have a role in explaining the internal structure of smaller polities, perhaps even for social organization in general at the lowest levels. But they do not seem to be an appropriate tool for elucidating political behaviour beyond the limits of the single polity, or in yielding new insights into the internal structure of the superpowers and most politically-active states, such as Caracol, Naranjo, and Dos Pilas.

Though we differ in several respects with the conclusions of Peter Mathews (1985, 1988, 1991), his work has been decisive in establishing an epigraphic basis for the Emblem Glyph title, and in the identification of a number of Maya polities. We certainly agree that the basic territorial units he delimits are the administrative fiefdoms of such polities, and that such units were headed by the semi-divine kings described in the Emblem Glyph title. At the time his studies were made clear epigraphic evidence of any larger, more over-arching organization was very limited and did not constitute a clear pattern.

Joyce Marcus has been a consistent advocate of both large regional structures and a reconstruction of Classic Maya states as hierarchically-ranked and internally stable entities (1973, 1976, 1983); in the mould of Archaic States (1993). Although there is much in her viewpoint we would agree with, her case is significantly weakened by its eschewal of modern epigraphic technique and its findings. Thus her specific reconstructions of the composition and layout of Classic Period hierarchies can be refuted in detail (cf. Houston 1992b: 65-67, 1993: 4-8), whilst Barthel's interpretation of Seibal Stela 10, a central feature of the quadripartite model, cannot be sustained in the light of recent research (Houston 1992b: 66). Our fundamental point of agreement with Marcus is that Emblem Glyph-bearing polities were units capable either of independent existence, or absorption into larger entities.

That the primary centers she proposes approximate or match our own is a less a feature of common epigraphic data, and more one of the associated attributes of such metropolises: principally their proportionate size within a given region and the quantity of their monuments. Although we do not necessarily see these features as being as predictive of primary status as either Marcus or Adams believe, it is, nevertheless, hard to avoid the observation that those

centers that appear at the head of epigraphically-derived hierarchies are also those of notable size and often, though not always, numerous monuments. If politically dominant centers can now be established, further examination, specific studies of the economic, topographic and ecological basis of their position, might now be considered.

Both Marcus and Adams have defined their reconstructions in terms of 'regional states'; authority by a dominant center over secondary centers and surrounding territory, over a particular geographic range. As a general principle do not believe that 'regionalism' is an accurate model for the units we perceive, and places too great an emphasis on the relationship between proximity and political alignment; a feature our study finds notable exceptions to. Our formations resemble regional states only in their immediate hinterlands, and are more closely akin to the Superpower Blocs of the twentieth-century; which constitute a core 'home' territory, peripheral states in direct proximity, and those at a greater distance where political rather than geographic factors are in operation (on 'regional' grounds it is easy to explain why Poland became a Soviet satellite, but much less so Cuba).

Houston (1992: 7, 1993: 142) joins Freidel (1983: 375) in seeing a potential for the co-existence of differing social structures within the same regional environment. Thus more centralized (Archaic) superpowers may have operated in a landscape of more weakly structured, less stable (Segmentary) states. Although we think this a possibility, we should also consider the alternative: that primary centers are simply the more advantaged and successfully centralized examples of a Maya polity 'type' that resembles some aspects of Segmentary organization, without constituting a comprehensive parallel. The polities that orbited these superpowers did not follow independent trajectories but were synchronised with one another, forming common bonds and policy. Furthermore, we think it perfectly possible that the conditions of hierarchy expressed at this uppermost level is representative of the system as a whole; and that secondary centers held sway over their own hierarchical structures in progressive replication. Thus a primary center may be a distinctive entity simply in the scale of its political and socio-economic development, rather than any root difference in its social organisation. We suspect that the contradictions Houston highlights are more easily resolved if we were to accept a more stable and centralized Maya polity than purest Segmentary and Galactic models permit.

Evidence that suggests the weakness of Maya states and political spheres must be compared with their potential strengths. Conrad and Demarest (1984: 53) as well as Calnek (1982: 60) have recently called attention to the advantages of limited integration in the Aztec macro-state. Calnek argues that the unconsolidated power of the 'Triple Alliance' made a complex bureaucracy unnecessary. He stresses the cohesive effect of kinship ties and that the nobility, even in vassal states, profited from the expansionist politics of the Aztec state and the redistribution of tribute. By leaving the local leadership structure of subject centers intact, the Aztecs minimized their administrative problems. Such advantages would be no less beneficial in the Classic Maya lowlands, where, though culturally more homogeneous, political division had apparently acquired a firm ideological basis. There is no evidence that Calakmul ever became

involved directly in the internal affairs of its vassal states, or that it maintained *gouverneurs* or "ambassadors" in the centers. Yet, as we have discussed, the network of states headed by Calakmul was extremely stable, acted over significant distance and possessed coercive power. Present evidence suggests that the system of political spheres cannot be characterized through antagonistic terms like "weak" and "strong". In the future much more analytical work will have to be devoted to the integration of polities in the political sphere pattern.

8.0 Areas for future research

We have not yet dealt to any degree with macro-political organization outside the study area of the central southern lowlands (and will do so here only in the briefest way). These regions can be divided into those where the epigraphic data approaches the volume and comprehensiveness of the central zone; and those where inscriptions are poorly understood, rare or absent altogether. The latter category includes Classic Period Yucatan, Eastern and Southern Belize and the Highland regions; and an epigraphic approach to political organization in these areas is either impossible or somewhat premature. Much more can be said for the Western, Usumacinta and Southeastern zones, which bear close comparison to the Classic Period traditions of the central area.

In the west there is no indication that Palenque was part of Calakmul's sphere, indeed there is some evidence for conflict against Calakmul itself and certainly with its affiliates. Similarly, there appears to be some contact between Palenque and Tikal, possibly involving a visit by the Tikal king Shield Skull to Palenque, and perhaps even co-operation in a common war (Schele and Mathews 1993: 116; Grube in press: a). There is therefore some reason for believing that the age-old human condition of "mine enemy's enemy is mine friend" drew these distant powers into an association (Grube in press:a). The important site of Tonina shows no epigraphic data to suggest it was anything else than an autonomous primary center. The dominant position it held over Bonampak suggests that, for a time at least, its influence was felt well into the Usumacinta.

Sites all along this drainage show significant links to Calakmul, which include marriage ties and involvement in political legitimization (Martin 1991b, 1993). Though less integrated in the affairs of the center, it seems plain that the Usumacinta was not a distinct sub-region, aloof from the machinations of the superpowers, but an active participant in a pan-regional scenario.

On the south-eastern periphery, Copan may well have dominated the centers in its region during most of the Classic, though specific evidence for this is not yet very plentiful (Fash and Stuart 1991). There is certainly reason to believe that it once held sway over neighboring Quirigua, a relationship interrupted or ended by Kawak Sky's 'rebellion' against his overlord *Waxaklahun U-bah K'awil* (Marcus 1976:134-140).

Other interesting questions remain, though inevitably these enter speculative terrain. What does our interpretation offer to explain the rise of Dos Pilas? As we have seen, all the evidence

suggests that the Dos Pilas dynasty was an intrusive presence in the Pasión. The identification of this line as an estranged off-shoot of Tikal makes comprehensible their claim of the Tikal Emblem and quickly explains their violent opposition to Tikal as a "civil war" over rival claims to this title, and probably to the Tikal throne itself (Houston, Symonds, Stuart and Demarest 1992). Though these authors recognise the decisive influence of Calakmul, they see a more independent role for Dos Pilas, throughout its history, than we do. We prefer to interpret the emergence of Dos Pilas as the consequence of Calakmul policy and sponsorship, and should be seen as a part of the long-term powerplay between Tikal and Calakmul. In this way, the small center of Dos Pilas would have had the support necessary both to resist, and then overcome, its much larger and more populous adversary.

Future research might also be directed towards Seibal, which received a sudden influx of people that revitalised the center at much the same time as Dos Pilas's creation (Willey 1990: 247-255, 264; Mathews and Willey 1991:49). The origin of this population is still a matter of debate; both Willey and Sabloff (1975: 236) see possible links to the Pasión valley or the Petexbatun region, or more interestingly, an intrusion from the northeast Peten and the "Tikal-Uaxactun vicinity". The solution to this particular puzzle would have wide implications for how we interpret the founding of Dos Pilas.

The Early Classic influence of Tikal is an area that requires particular attention. There are a number of iconographic indicators and vague glyphic references, from sites as diverse as El Peru and Copan, that may conceivably represent contacts during Tikal's most expansive era. It is also interesting that so many of the centers that bear 'Problematic Emblem Glyphs' (Houston 1986), are ones with connections to Tikal. These titles omit the elements *k'ul/ch'ul* "divine" or *ahaw* "lord", or sometimes both of these, without appearing to effect their status as polities. Could we be seeing some vestige of political nomenclature from the period before Emblems became standardized; a period in which, perhaps, Tikal as the dominant power restricted the use of certain titles within its sphere?

Before any really fundamental questions about the early development of macro-political organization can be answered we need to learn much more about the genesis of Classic Maya culture, the process of state formation in the Maya area and the expansion of dynastic rule. With the discovery of founding events and royal successions counted from founder kings (Mathews 1975; Riese 1984b; Schele 1992), we can go beyond a chronological assessment of the spread of a 'dynastic stela complex', to more specific details on the origins of various polities as they appear in their Classic Period form. This data seems to show that, whatever the actual antiquity of any particular center, dynastic rule (in the form we associate with the Classic) was a specific phenomenon that finds its earliest expression in the central area during the Proto-Classic, and later spread to more peripheral areas; with all the major centers in these regions (for which we have this information) established during the latter part of Cycle 8.

It is too early to assess whether early Tikal pre-eminence is associated with this process (a theme either explicit or implicit in a number of authors work), and will remain so until the same

intensity of archaeological investigation conducted there has been carried out at other sites in the 'core area'. Given the Classic Period pre-eminence of Calakmul, it is especially important to find out more about its early development in the Early and Proto-Classic Periods.

9.0 A view of Classic Maya political history

It is now possible to attempt a reconstruction of Middle to Late Classic politics as seen from the perspective of superpowers and political spheres. As ever, we are limited to our available sources and to the degree of information that can be extracted from them; but although amendments may well prove necessary, we believe that the basic pattern revealed is both real and of some significance.

Although there seems to be notable evidence for the Early Classic pre-eminence of Tikal, epigraphic signs of polity-level interaction and macro-political organization only clearly emerge at the very end of the period. By this point, Tikal and Calakmul, both large survivors of Late Pre-Classic culture, are acting over considerable distance to intervene in the affairs of other polities. If, as seems certain, this represents competition between the two, then the upper-hand is clearly enjoyed by Calakmul, who is soon seen to gain an affiliate at the expense of Tikal. This event coincides both with a known military defeat of the Tikal polity, and with the onset of the famed 'Tikal Hiatus'. Though the specific historical circumstances are important; we can now begin to see the outline of an over-arching and consistent *process* whereby the power of Tikal is displaced by that of Calakmul.

Calakmul continues to gain associates and client states throughout the Middle and into the Late Classic, a period that corresponds almost precisely to the absence of surviving monuments at Tikal²³. By the early stages of the Late Classic, Calakmul had established an extensive network of contacts and personal relations, placing it at the head of a state hierarchy that dominated the central southern lowlands and some areas beyond.

This arrangement, though maintained for over 130 years (circa AD 562 to 695), was not to last. The Late Classic resurgence of Tikal is closely associated with the reversal of its military fortunes and a victory over Calakmul that brought down one of this center's most famous kings (AD 695). This war is accompanied by others between Tikal and major affiliates of Calakmul, suggesting that a sustained era of violence had been initiated (AD 695 to 705). Despite some apparent or claimed defeats, Tikal survives the attentions of its many enemies, and emerges with its ruling dynasty intact. By contrast, the highpoint of Calakmul power appears to have past and foreign citations of it begin to fall sharply. Though waning, its sphere survives for a further

²³ Throughout this era, Tikal appears to have maintained its own dynasty and, judging from elite burial goods and architectural construction, relative prosperity (Jones 1991:115-119, Haviland 1992). However, the site did suffer monument destruction (Jones 1991:117), though at exactly what point is difficult to determine. The absence of stelae for long-lived and notable rulers such as Animal Skull may suggest a late date. If it were to be the result of a single attack, in the reign of Animal Skull or Shield Skull, much evidence for a Tikal hiatus would be removed. We view this period as one of weakness at Tikal, though to a much lesser degree than others have supposed.

forty years or so, and can be traced at least until a further cycle of wars breaks out in the central area. After a further victory against its great rival, Tikal is able to record decisive success against two of Calakmul's closest affiliates (at AD 743 and 744); neutralizing their influence in the region and perhaps even placing them under Tikal supervision, at least for a time.

Hereafter, the evidence for long-range interaction between states, subordination and joint activities, all but evaporates, suggesting that the political sphere system itself was in serious decline or collapse. The disappearance of these features predates the official onset of the Terminal Classic, though it approximates the period by which some researchers consider the Late Classic was in decline. The ninth-century, widely thought to be a time of increasing instability and conflict leading towards final collapse, is a period where Maya states seem more independent, but also more isolated. Indeed, the concomitant increase in centers raising monuments for the first time, an apparent "balkanization" that has been commented on by a number of scholars (cf. Dunham 1988, 1989), may be another feature linked to this process.

We interpret the very deliberate expansion of Calakmul power as an attempt to gain a pre-eminence over the Middle to Late Classic southern lowlands. In this, it apparently sought to emulate and succeed a position previously enjoyed by Tikal. Whatever the similarities between these two endeavours, their greatest success was obtained in distinctively different environments. Tikal's amidst an expansive growth of dynastic rule and the rapid development of new centers; Calakmul's within a fast maturing system of Emblem Glyph-bearing polities²⁴.

In our view, it is significant that the dissolution of viable political spheres predates, and apparently presages, the following Terminal Classic Period. The end of a system that had been such as feature of the Classic era must be examined in the context of the ensuing collapse.

George Cowgill (1979) draws a number of interesting comparisons between the Classic Maya and societies engaged in 'militaristic' competition for regional dominance. His basic theme is that 'state-system' societies can evolve from a form of peer-polity competition to a new level of warfare, where the strategic aim has shifted to the ~~prize~~ of complete mastery over all other states in the region. He contrasts two examples, that of the Peloponnesian War of Greece and China during the late Zhou Dynasty, as alternative outcomes of this scenario. In China, the ~~Warring States~~ period led eventually to the success of a single polity, the Ch'in, that went on to establish a unified Chinese state under a heavily-centralized administration. In Greece, the rising supremacy of Athens and its client states, was fiercely resisted, notably by Sparta and its allies, leading to a protracted and enfeebling conflict from which no overall victor emerged. The consequence was a stymieing of Greek development and, in time, social crises.

It is not yet possible to assess how debilitating a social consequence resulted from conflict between the Tikal and Calakmul spheres, and it might still be debated as to whether Maya civilization had developed into full militarism by the eighth century (cf. Webster 1977). What we

24 The emergence of an arrangement of polities which maintained some solidarity against Tikal, might be seen as a response to such early dominance. If so, this was a factor working to Calakmul's advantage; part of whose success may have come from exploiting this scenario to marshal hostility against its rival.

do see is that any attempt by Calakmul to gain an hegemony over the lowlands failed and that this marked the end of any effective effort to achieve pan-regional unity amongst the Classic Maya. A key distinction we can draw between Terminal Classic politics, and the Late Classic that preceded it, is the absence of any visible large-scale hierarchical linkage between polities.

A southern lowland society under the mounting stress of ecological degradation and population overload envisaged by several authors (Culbert (ed.)1973; 1988b; Culbert and Rice 1990; Rice 1993), may have benefited from the political union a Tikal or Calakmul might have provided. The success of the northern Post-Classic centers at this very kind of centralized administration may be instructive here. There is good evidence that important differences distinguish the elite governing structure of these polities, that employed a system of confederate government or 'joint rule', rather than the autocratic rule of lone Classic kings (Schele and Freidel 1990: 360-363; Stuart 1993: 348). Perhaps this was an adaptation directly inspired by the experience of collapse in the south (Schele and Freidel 1990: 347), and there is some evidence that monopolistic power was already being eroded during the latter stages of the Late Classic (Fash 1991: 172; Fash and Stuart 1991: 168-175). The new conditions produced centers that were capable of forming stable political groupings and achieving regional dominance. That these 'empires' were to persist for a time, dissipate, reform and then disintegrate again, seems indicative of a continuing cultural trait whereby small-scale polities remain the fundamental, most resilient, units of Maya society, and re-assert themselves over time (cf. Marcus 1993:121).

10.0 Summary

The data presented in this study persuades us that the Maya lowland states were organized at a macro-political level, and were dominated for much the Classic Period by a limited number of powerful and manipulative centers. These states formed the heads of hierarchical arrangements that constituted a 'semi-rigid', rather than 'semi-fluid', system of control, that possessed strong cohesive features.

The evidence for hierarchy between polities, expressed in the form of relationships of subordination between one ruler and another, has been noted over the last decade. But now, in our view, new discoveries have combined with long recognised information, widely-known but lacking its appropriate context, to form a 'critical-mass' of data that reveals patterns and structures only hinted at previously.

The picture that emerges of the central area during Classic Period, where our analysis has been concentrated, is the opposition of two state formations: one led by Calakmul, the ascendant power of the Middle to Late Classic; the other by Tikal, whose greatest influence was felt during the Early Classic, before achieving a more limited Late Classic revival.

We believe that both went through expansionist periods; though firmly within a Mesoamerican tradition of unconsolidated and unintegrated control, which retained strong

elements of local autonomy. It remains to be seen whether such organizations approximate or match the Hegemonic Empires of Highland Mexico, but we would certainly not rule out this possibility. For the purposes of this study we have characterized these structures as Political Spheres, and in doing so hope to retain a measure of flexibility to the model, which may have been dynamic over time and included variable bonding between affiliates and their dominant patrons.

Although a number of features evident within Maya states are typical of Segmentary structure, we cannot say that many of its key tenets adequately describe the primary centers who headed political spheres, or even many of the largest affiliates of these centers. These states appear neither weak nor decentralized in their behaviour. Our analysis is directed toward large-scale interaction and organization at the macro-scale; it is too early to say whether these structures are indicative of Maya society as whole, but it does raise certain questions about 'weak state' models, that may require re-assessment in the light of new information. If Segmentary theory were to have fulfilled its early promise, we might expect it to have been predictive of what seems to be such a prominent feature of Classic Period political interaction.

Since the pattern we discern dissipates before the end of the Late Classic, it does not seem to be an active factor in the Maya collapse itself. More research will be required before we can decide between the options of viewing large-scale hierarchical structure as a sign of Classic Period stability, whose undoing led to a fractured environment ripe for collapse; or whether competition between organised factions simply exacerbated Classic Period stress factors, and lit the fuse for eventual perdition in the southern lowlands.

Authors Note

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Captions for Figures

- Figure 1a: Richard Adams' (1981) reconstruction of Late Classic regional states (after Mathews 1988: Figure 11-9).
- Figure 1b: Joyce Marcus' (1976) view of Maya geopolitical organization in the Late Classic (after Mathews 1988: Figure 11-6).
- Figure 2: Peter Mathews' view of Maya geopolitical organization and polity centers at 9.18.0.0.0 (A.D. 790) (after Mathews 1988: Figure 11-10).
- Figure 3: The hieroglyph *u kahiy* defining the agency of verbs. a) The *u kahiy* glyph (N. Grube drawing); b) The accession of Naranjo Ruler 1 *u kahiy* a ruler of Calakmul, Nar. St. 25 (Graham 1978: 70); c) The accession of Yahaw Te K'inich *u kahiy* the divine king of Tikal, Caracol Stela 6 (Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981: Fig. 7) and Caracol Altar 21 (Chase and Chase 1987:); d) The accessions of Cancuen kings *u kahiy* the king of Calakmul, Panel from the Cancuen Region in a Private Collection, Guatemala (drawing by Linda Schele); e) The accession of Butz' Tiliw from Quirigua *u kahiy* Waxaklahun Ubah from Copán, Quirigua Stela E (Maudslay 1889-1902, Vol. 2, Plate 31); f) The accession of a king from El Peru *u kahiy* the king of Calakmul, El Peru Stela 27 (inked by Grube after a field drawing by Ian Graham); g) The accession of Yaxun Balam (of Yaxchilan?) *u kahiy* a lord of Piedras Negras, Piedras Negras Lnt. 3 (drawing by Linda Schele).
- Figure 4: Hieroglyphic titles and their possessed variants. a) *ahawand y-ahaw*; b) *sahaland u sahal*; c) *ah k'unand y-ah k'un*; d) *ah tz'iband y-ah tz'ib*; e) *ah bakand y-ah bak*; f) *anaband y-anab*.
- Figure 5: The possessed *ahaw* title as an expression of subordination. a) Butz' Tiliw is the *y-ahaw* of the king of Calakmul, Naranjo Stela 1 (Graham and Von Euw 1975: 12); b) Dos Pilas Ruler I is the *y-ahaw* of the king of Calakmul, Dos Pilas HS 4, Step IV (Houston 1993: Figure 4-11); c) A Bonampak king is the *y-ahaw* of the king of Tonina, COL St. Louis Column Altar (Houston and Mathews 1985: Fig. 12); d) The king of Tamarindito is the *y-ahaw* of Dos Pilas Ruler 2 (Houston and Mathews 1985: Fig. 12); e) A king of Bejucal is the *y-ahaw* of the king of Tikal (?), Bejucal Stela 2 (unpublished drawing by Ian Graham); f) A king of Lakanha is the *y-ahaw* of a king from the "Sak Tz'i" site, COL Panel in a private collection in Europe (field drawing by Ian Graham).
- Figure 6: The "star war" against Tikal and the *ch'ak* event which precedes it, Caracol Altar 21 (drawing by Stephen D. Houston in Chase and Chase 1987: #), a) The *ch'ak* event against a bearer of the Caracol emblem *u kahiy* the divine king of Tikal at 9.6.2.1.11; b) The star war phrase, dated 9.6.8.4.2.
- Figure 7: Relations between Caracol and Calakmul as recorded on Caracol Stela 3 (Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981: Fig. 4). a) The name of a Calakmul king, A13; b) The arrival of Lady Batz' Ek' from Yax Ahaw at the *ox witz ha* Caracol toponym at 9.7.10.6.8, A14-A16; c) A second arrival by Lady Batz' Ek' at Caracol at 9.9.9.10.5, D10-D12; d) A *y-ak'aw* "gift-giving" event associated with the Calakmul king at 9.9.9.10.5, D12-D14; e) An event done to Tum Ol K'inich (K'an II) *u kahiy* the Calakmul king at 9.9.5.13.8, D7-D9; f) Tum Ol K'inich (K'an II) is recorded as the *y-itah* "companion of" the Calakmul king, C20-D20.
- Figure 8: The "star war" against Naranjo at 9.9.18.16.3. a) Naranjo HS, Step VI, N1-L3 (Graham 1978: 109); b) CRC St. 3, F2-F5 (Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981: Fig. 3).

- Figure 9: The peak event of the Tikal wars at 9.12.6.16.17 as recorded on Dos Pilas Hieroglyphic Stairways 2 and 4. a) Hieroglyphic Stairway 2, Step ## (drawing by Linda Schele); b) Hieroglyphic Stairway 4, Step V (Houston 1993: Figure 4-11).
- Figure 10: The accession of Jaguar Paw of Calakmul recorded on Dos Pilas Panel 7 (Drawing by Linda Schele)
- Figure 11: The arrival of Lady *wak chan ahaw* of Dos Pilas at Naranjo at 9.12.10.5.12. a) NAR St. 29, F1-G17 (Graham 1978: 78); b) NAR St. 24, B1-C10 (Graham and Von Euw 1975: 64).
- Figure 12: Another war by Dos Pilas against Tikal at 9.13.13.8.2. DPL St. 1
- Figure 13: A Calakmul lord is attending the bloodletting of a Dos Pilas youth. Dos Pilas Panel 19 (Houston 1993: Fig. 4-19).
- Figure 14: The war against Jaguar Paw of Calakmul on Tikal Temple I, Lnt. 3 (Jones and Satterthwaite 1981: Figure 70).
- Figure 15: The accession of a Ruler of El Peru *y-ichnal* "in the company of" the Calakmul king. El Peru Stela ## (Drawing by Peter Mathews).
- Figure 16: The war against El Peru on Tikal Temple IV Lnt. 3 (Jones and Satterthwaite 1981: 74)
- Figure 17: The Naranjo war on Tikal Temple IV, Lnt. 2 (Jones and Satterthwaite 1981: Figure 73)

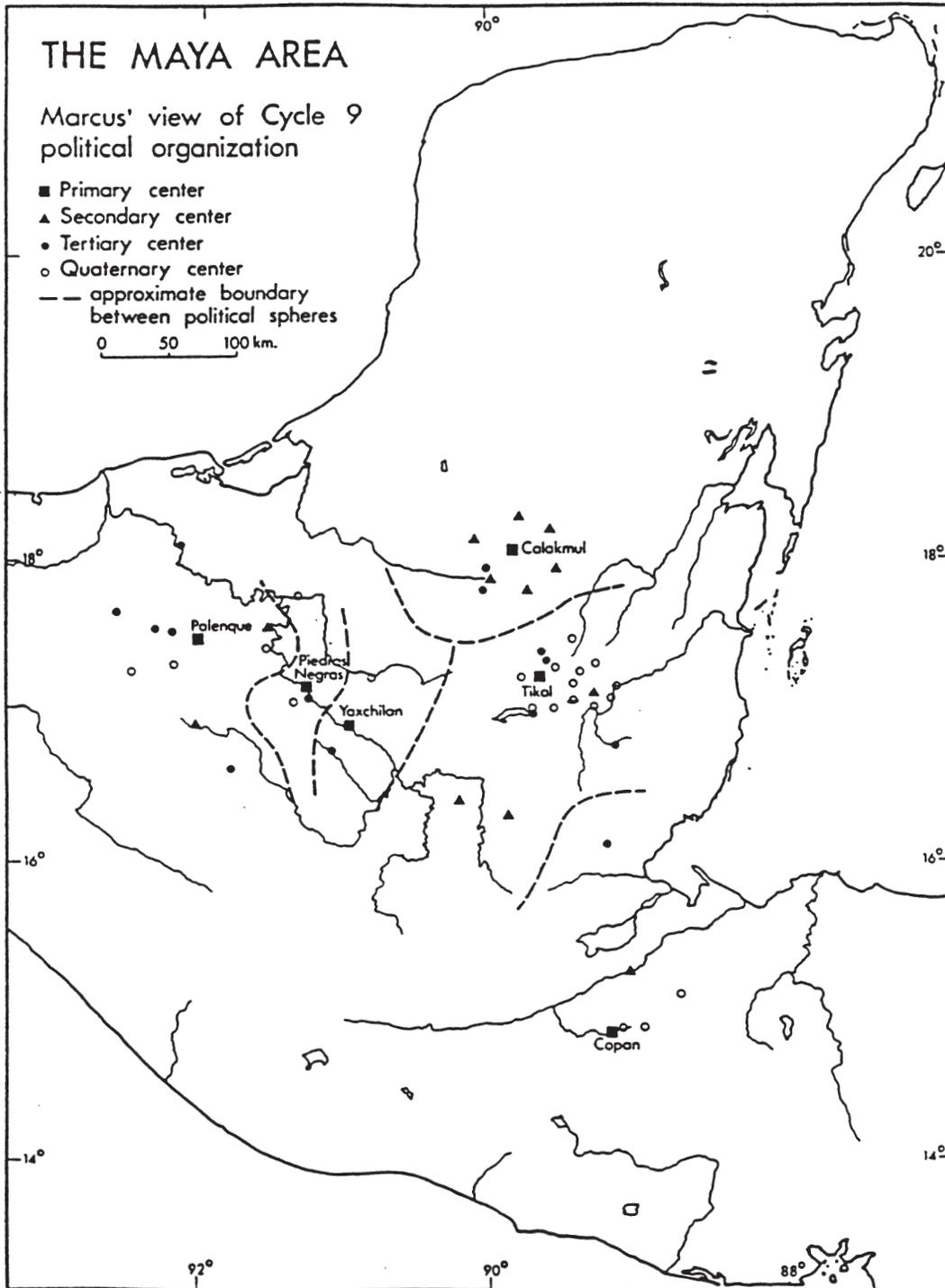


FIGURE 1

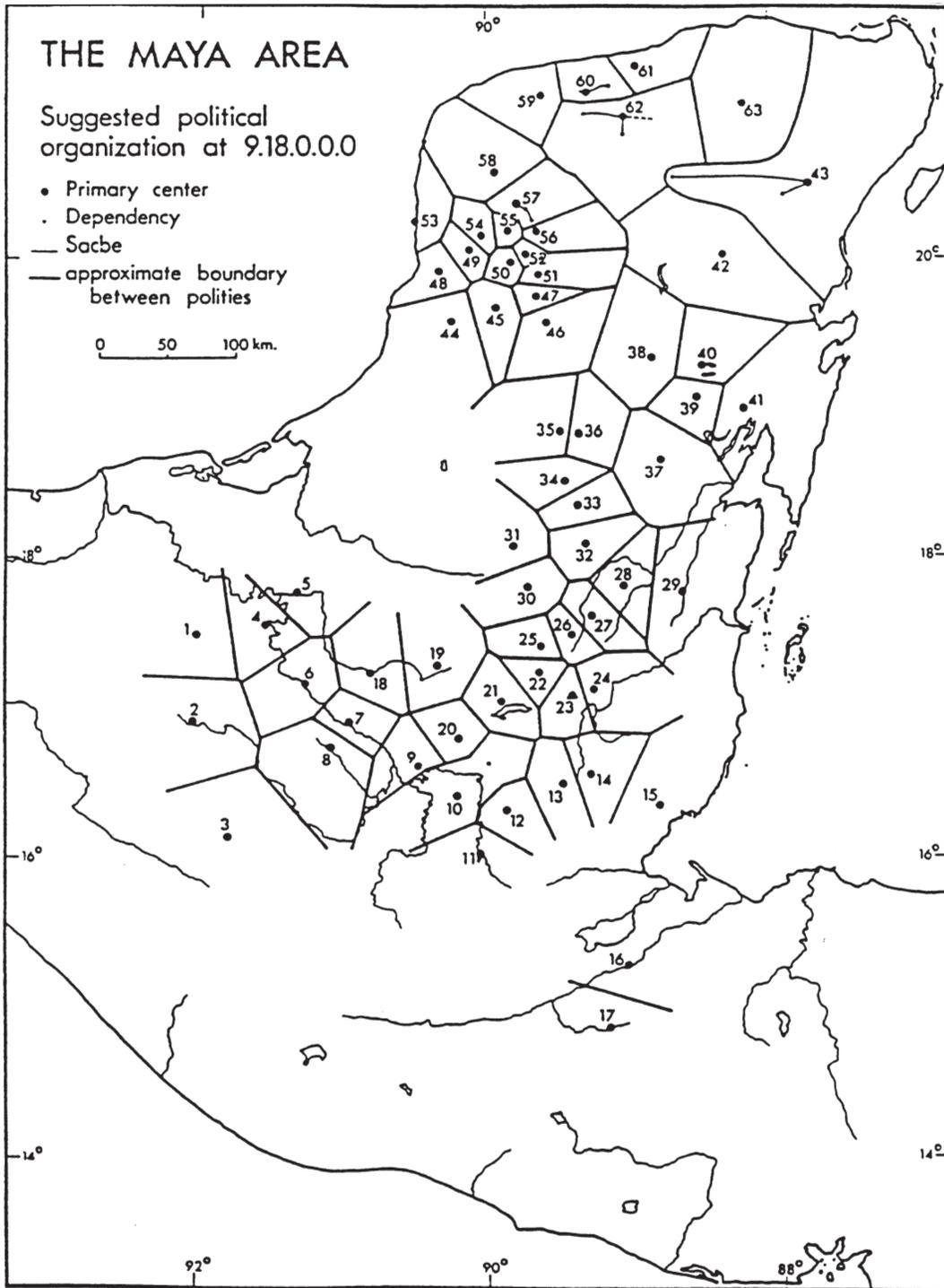
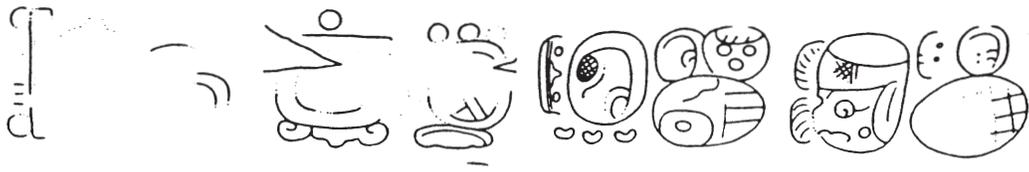


FIGURE 2



a

FIGURE 3



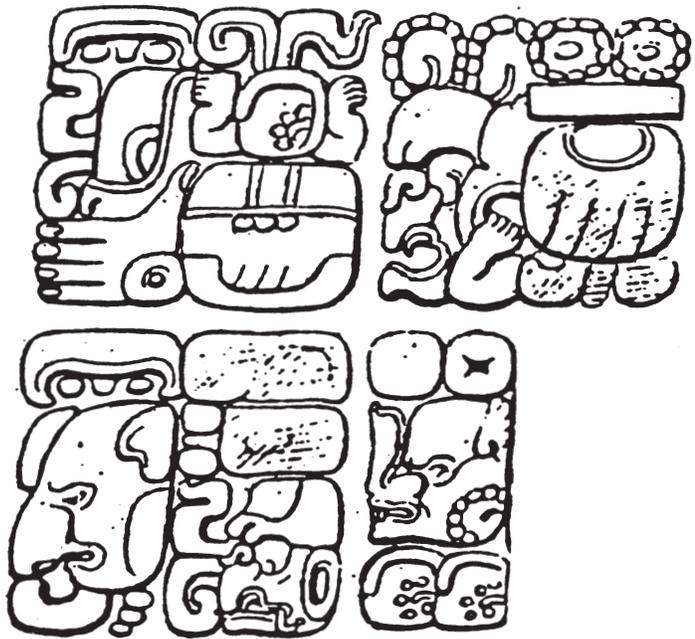
b)



c)

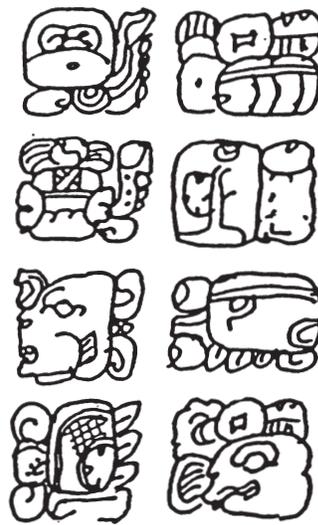
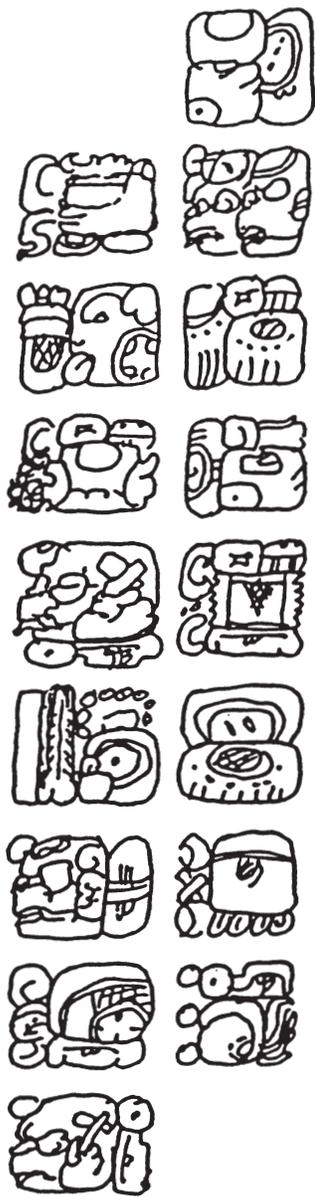


g)



e)

FIGURE 3



d



f

FIGURE 3



FIGURE 4

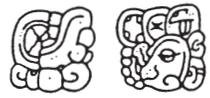
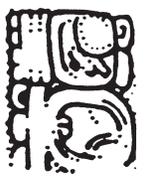
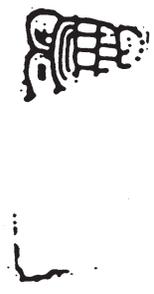


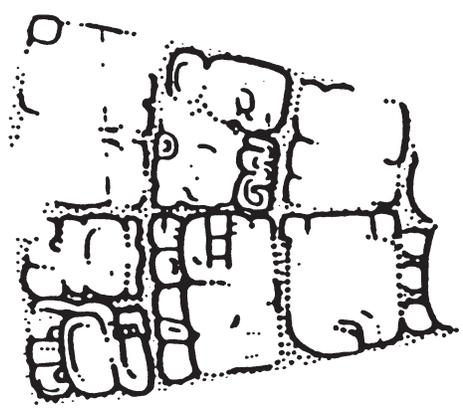
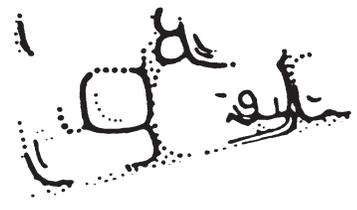
FIGURE 5



a)



b)



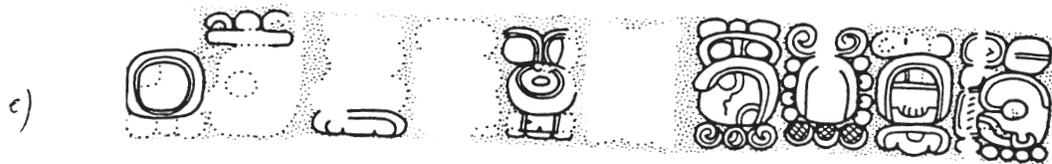
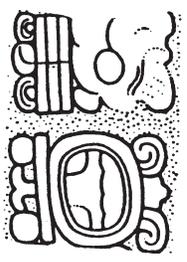
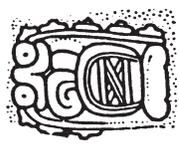
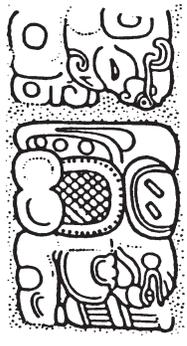
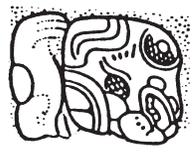
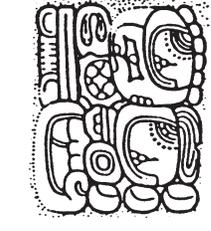


FIGURE 7



a)



b)

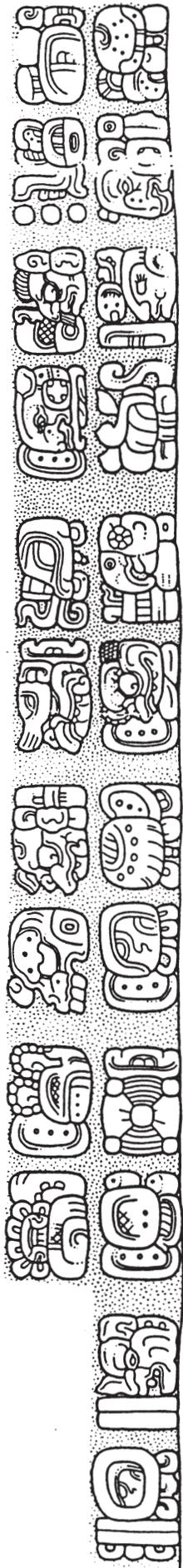
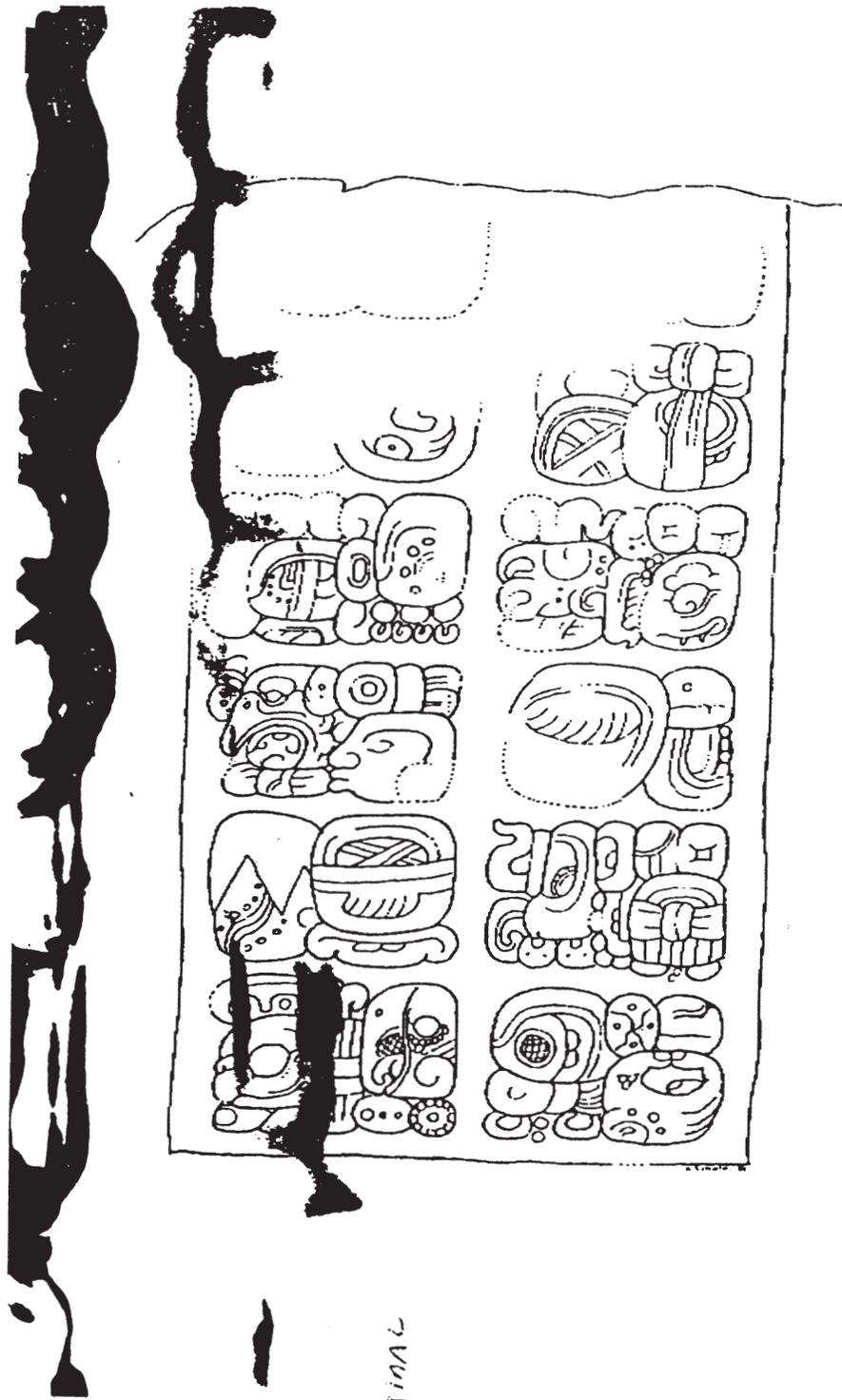
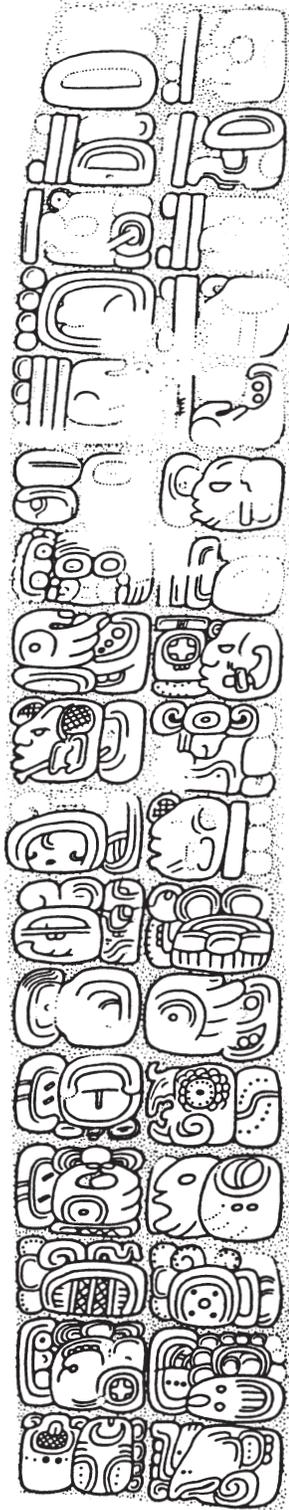


FIGURE 9
THE BEAK EVENT

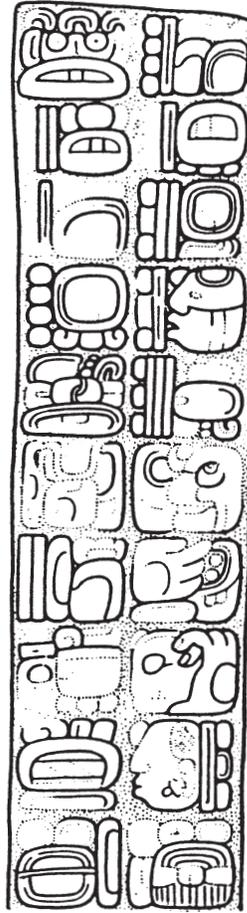


on origine
↖

FIGURE 10



9)



5)

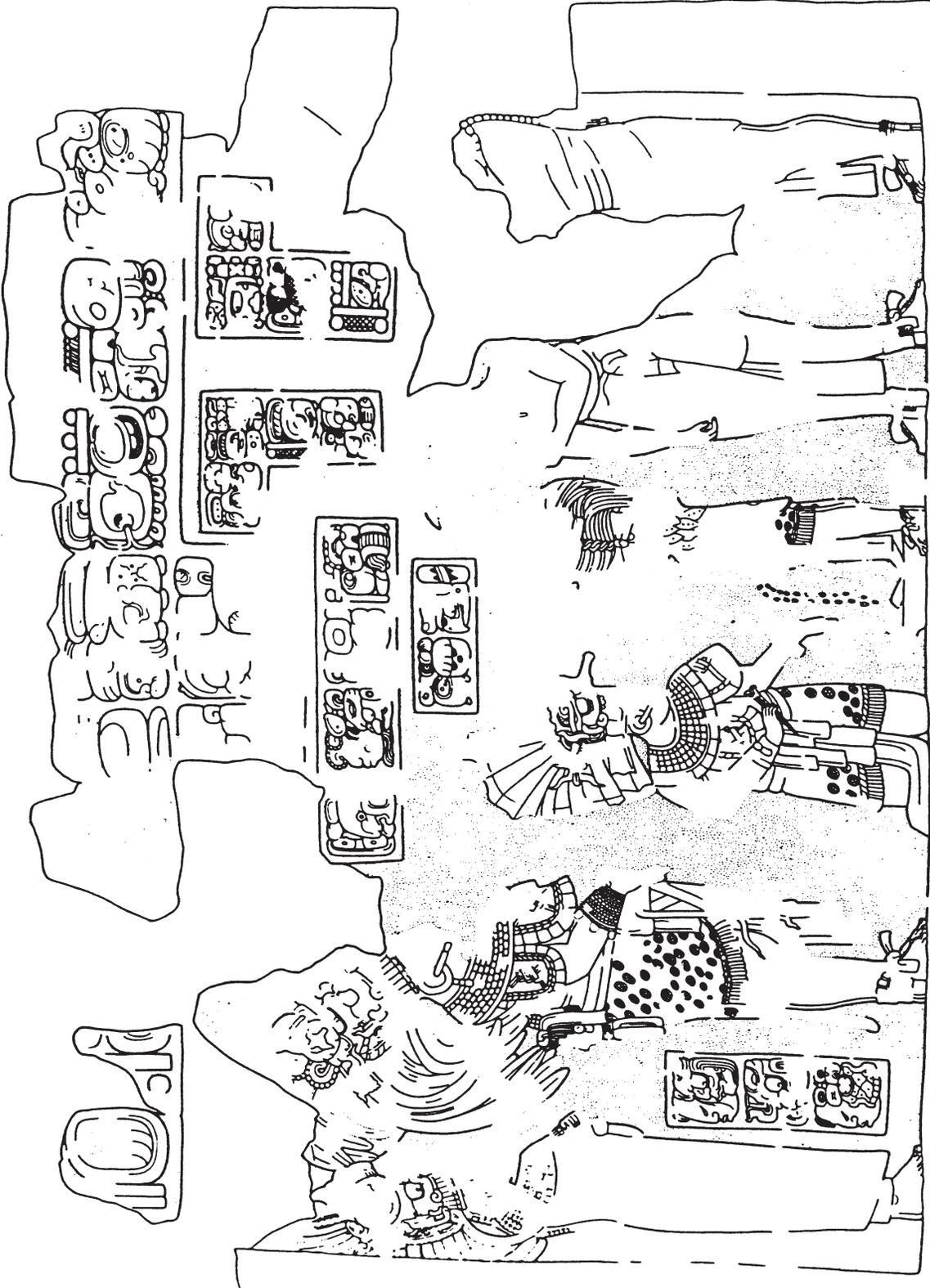
FIGURE 11

1-3

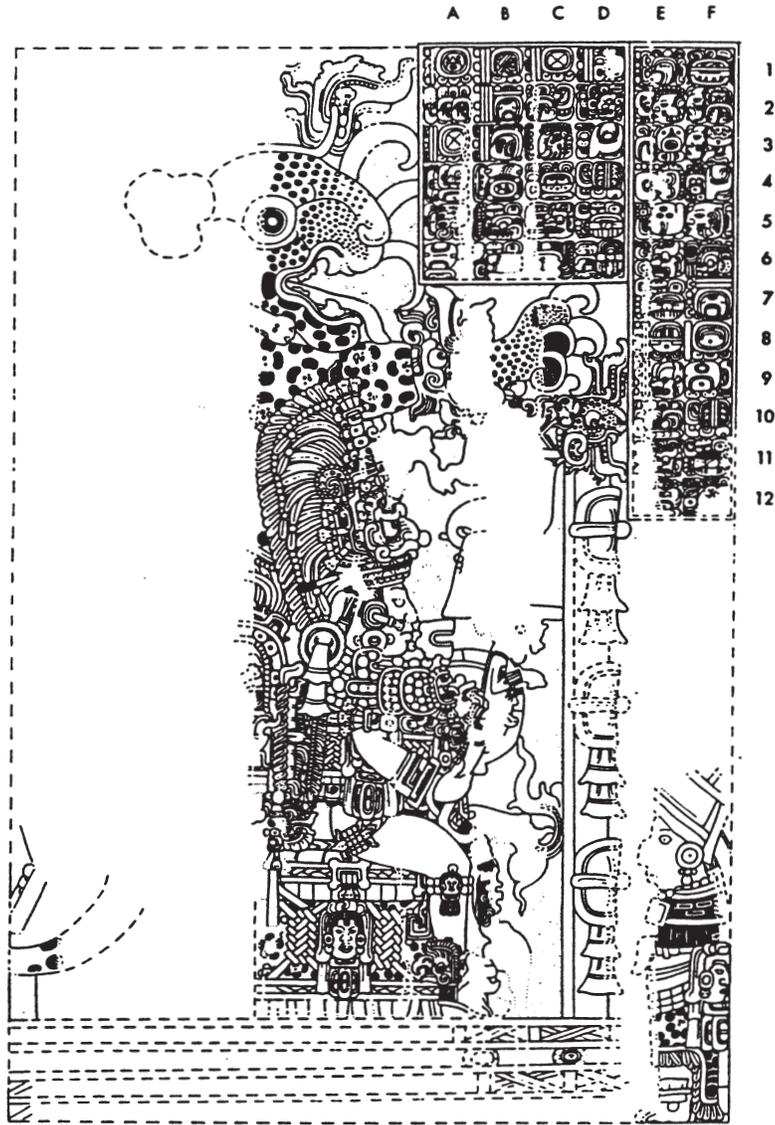
J K L M

A B C D E

F G H

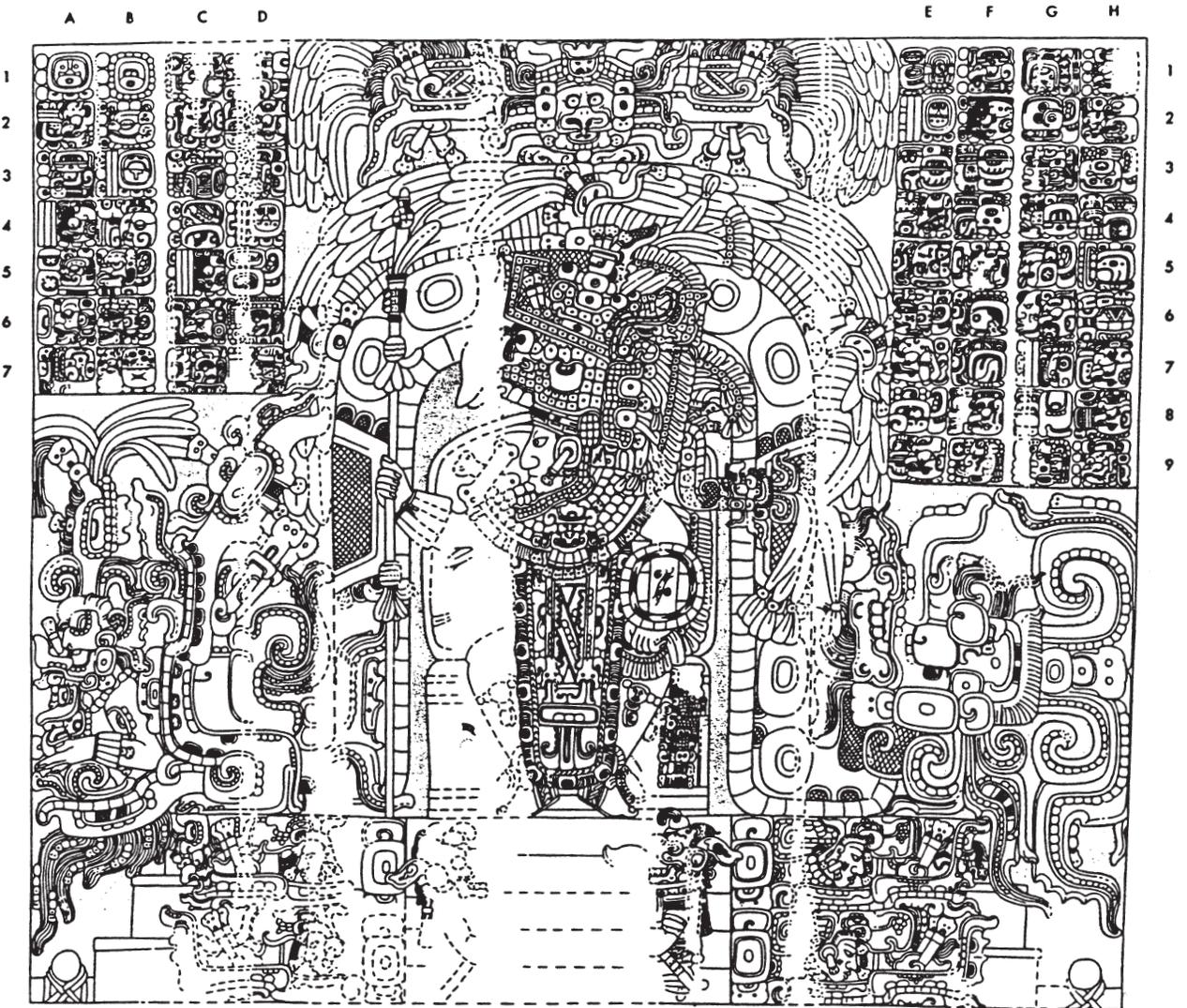


R S
1
2
3



0 .50 M.

FIGURE 14



0 .50 M.

FIGURE 16

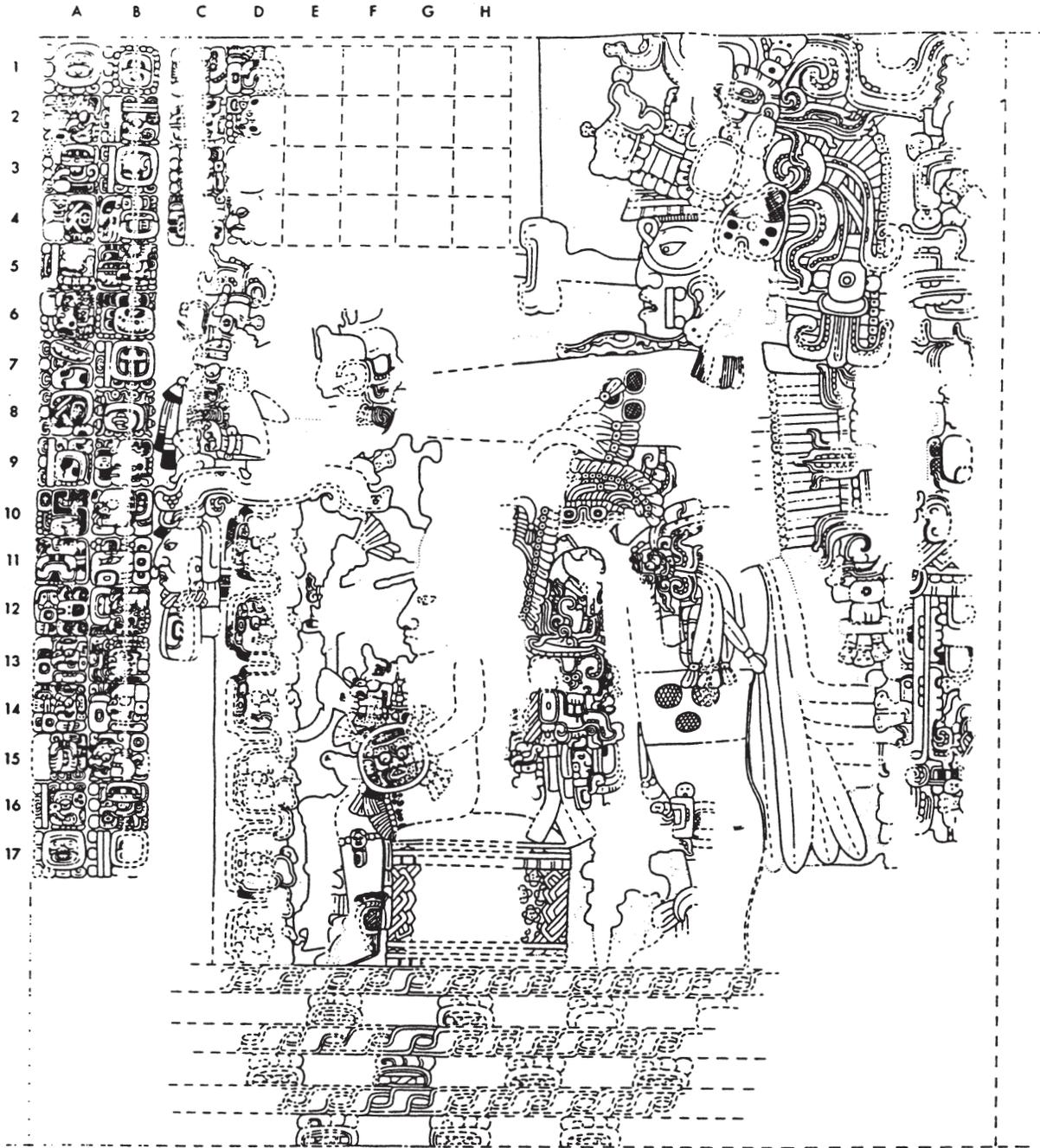


FIGURE 17