

Site Q: The Case for a Classic Maya Super-Polity

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As the historical record left to us by the Classic Maya is slowly pieced together from various epigraphic clues, a single political entity, the state Peter Mathews has dubbed “Site Q”, shows an ever greater presence. Over the last few years, and certainly since Mathews’ original manuscript discussing Site Q (1979), a great deal of new data has emerged. These come not only from new finds provided by archaeological investigations, but more general advances in epigraphic research that have allowed us to reassess well-known texts, giving a fuller picture of Site Q’s place in the political geography of the Classic Period.

The original Mayan name of the Site Q polity, expressed in its Emblem Glyph, was *Kan* “snake”. Glyphically, it is usually preceded by the phonetic complement *ka* and often followed by the nominal ending *-al* to give *K’ul Kanal Ahaw* as a full reading for the compound (the suffix is not apparent in all examples and it is not clear whether this is an optional feature or was always read by context). In this, it joins Piedras Negras (*Yokib*), Yaxha (*Yaxha*), Palenque (*Bak*), Caracol (*K’an-tu-mak*), Pomona (*Pakab*) and Ucanal (*K’an Witz-Nal*) in having a readable ancient name. It is tempting to use *Kan* or *Kanal* instead of ‘Site Q’, since it avoids the difficulty of assigning this Emblem to any single site and will be equally relevant when Site Q is identified and the term becomes redundant, but for this present study I will stick with the Mathews moniker.

The Site Q Corpus

Firstly, we should deal with Mathews’ original ‘Site Q corpus’ (for a published summary of this see Mayer 1987:51 and 1989:53, for illustrations see Mayer 1978, 1980, 1984, 1987, 1989). It is now clear that this assemblage is unlikely to stem from a single source and that few if any originate from Site Q itself. Several monuments, including St.1 and 2, are now known to come from El Peru (Graham 1988); as does St.6, which is almost

certainly a fragment of Site Q St.2 or El Peru St.33. It is possible that Altar 1 is another El Peru monument. Site Q Stelae 3-5 show no epigraphic or other features that link them to the 'Kan Site'.

A second group, Site Q Panels 1, 2 and 3 (plus the partner to Panel 1 we might call Panel 4 and the other half of Panel 2 we might call 2a) and Glyphic Panels A-D, come from a single site that is probably not Site Q. These texts concern the lineage of *Sak Mas* (SAK-ma-su) (Mathews' Zac-ma-?) and his son *Chak Naab Kan* (Mathews' Hun Chac Chan). They are never directly linked to a Site Q Emblem Glyph, even though Glyphic Panel B does include this title. Although we cannot yet be sure of it, the literary style of these texts suggest that this is a secondary site under the direct influence of Site Q.

The Ballplayer series and Glyphic Panels contain much clearer references to Site Q. Ballplayer Panel 1 features a leading character who may be a Site Q king; though if not, the presence of *Ox-te-Tun* and *Naab Tunich*, two toponyms intimately linked to Site Q, certainly place this monument within its sphere (Stuart & Houston 1989; Martin 1991b). I have previously identified Ballplayer Panel 3 as naming the Site Q lord we might provisionally call Kan-Hun/Na-Mahk'ina (Martin 1991b). He is also to be seen on Glyphic Panel 9 and Yaxchilan St.35. Ballplayer Panel 6 and Glyphic Panel 11 appear to feature the same name, 'Chak Hix(?)'; further indication that these two sets of monuments come from the same source. The prominent display of Site Q rulers and emblems on these panels (including references to Jaguar Paw Smoke and the 'T528-title' of Site Q kings) should indicate that they were once placed in the site core. However, as a word of caution, we should remember that a key protagonist, mentioned on two separate occasions, 'K'ak Balam', is a secondary lord, an *Ah K'una* (see G.P.5 and 7). This leaves some possibility that it was this figure who commissioned the texts and that they may therefore come from another peripheral site.

The 9.15.1.6.15 date of Glyphic Panels 2 and 10 is a fair chronological fit for the likely age of this text. However, there are strong typological differences between these

two blocks and the other panels; both are of a significantly larger scale and share a unique 2x2 format. There must be considerable doubt that they really are from the same sculptural series (Martin 1991a).

These inscriptions seem to have been drawn out by at least two scribal hands. It is not yet clear to me whether this has implications for the arrangement of the panels and their differing formats. It is not inconceivable than we may have two different, though strongly related, narratives here; though it's also possible that two scribes contributed to a single text.

Monument	Likely provenance	Monument	Likely provenance
Stela 1	El Peru St.34	Glyphic Panel 1	Site Q?
Stela 2	El Peru St.33	Glyphic Panel 2	?
Stela 3	?	Glyphic Panel 3	Site Q?
Stela 4	?	Glyphic Panel 4	Site Q?
Stela 5	?	Glyphic Panel 5	Site Q?
Stela 6	El Peru St.33 frag.	Glyphic Panel 6	Site Q?
		Glyphic Panel 7	Site Q?
Panel 1	A Site Q subsidiary?	Glyphic Panel 8	Site Q?
Panel 2	A Site Q subsidiary?	Glyphic Panel 9	Site Q?
Panel 2a	A Site Q subsidiary?	Glyphic Panel 10	?
Panel 3	A Site Q subsidiary?	Glyphic Panel 11	Site Q?
Panel 4	A Site Q subsidiary?		
		Ballplayer Panel 1	Site Q or a subsidiary
Glyphic Panel A	A Site Q subsidiary?	Ballplayer Panel 2	Site Q?
Glyphic Panel B	A Site Q subsidiary?	Ballplayer Panel 3	Site Q?
Glyphic Panel C	A Site Q subsidiary?	Ballplayer Panel 4	Site Q?
Glyphic Panel D	A Site Q subsidiary?	Ballplayer Panel 5	Site Q?
		Ballplayer Panel 6	Site Q?
Altar 1	El Peru?		

Foreign References to Site Q

The earliest known Site Q Emblem Glyphs are to be seen on Resbalon HS.3, dated to around 9.4.0.0.0 - 9.6.0.0.0 (514-554 A.D.) (Carrasco & Boucher 1987; Schele & Mathews 1990). Since the blocks of this stairway are completely out of order, we have no exact datings or clearly associated name phrases.

Next comes two dates associated with the Site Q king, 'Cu-Ix'. These appear on Yaxchilan L.35 (at 9.5.2.10.6, 537) and Naranjo St.25 (9.5.12.0.4, 546) (Graham 1979:79, 1978:70). In this last instance he seems to be instrumental in placing Ruler I of Naranjo in his office.

This discovery of Caracol Alt.21 has changed many ideas about Tikal and its hiatus period (Chase & Chase 1987; Houston 1987). Although Caracol is the featured 'victor' of

the Star War defeat of Tikal, placed at 9.6.8.4.2 (562), the appearance of Site Q emblem on the very same day as the 'star war' event on Alt.21 has escaped almost without comment (Houston 1991); although this portion of the text is so damaged we cannot be sure what relevance Site Q has to these events.

Ten years later a Site Q king, 'Crossed-band Sky', appears on Caracol St.3 at A13 (Beetz & Satterthwaite 1981:Fig.4). The date is 9.6.18.12.0 and although the context is lost, it appears in a section dealing with the early life of 'Bats' Ek'', almost certainly the mother of Kan II, the Caracol ruler (Martin 1991b). This same character (or at least name) appears on the Palenque HS dated to 9.11.1.16.3 (662) (Maudslay 1889-1902:Vol.IV:Pl.23). I have speculated that this may be a retrospective reference to the Site Q founder (1991a); given that the 'chi-wits' compound from the Palenque phrase is associated with very early rulers or founders at Yaxchilan (L.21) and Copan (St.4 & I) (but there may well be other interpretations of this data).

Caracol St.3 supplies a further reference to Site Q at C9a-D9b (9.9.5.13.8, 622). This might be an early appearance of the 'T528-title' (a prevalent and long-lived nominal used to describe Site Q kings). This is an era of close co-operation between Caracol and Site Q which continues with the aforementioned Naranjo war; recorded on Caracol St. 3, St.22, Str. B19 stuccoes and the Naranjo HS. The 'star war' conquest of Naranjo took place at 9.9.18.16.3 (631) and on both Caracol St.3 and the Naranjo HS the agent of this victory is a Site Q king using the head-variant of the T528-title. I have previously argued that Ruler I died prior to this conflict and that at least one successor reigned before the eventual conquest (Martin 1991b). Most interestingly, Caracol St.3 also names the local king, Kan II, as the *yitah* of a Site Q lord (Martin 1991a; Grube 1991).

A trio of very important references on the Naranjo HS name a previous Site Q ruler and earlier ally of Kan II, 'Ta-Bats'', over the years 622-630 (Houston has raised the possibility that this figure is a secondary lord of Site Q, both Grube and myself, prefer to think of him as a genuine king). He appears again on the newly discovered Caracol St.22 (Grube 1991).

There is also reference to Site Q at Piedras Negras, with one damaged Emblem Glyph, dated to 9.11.9.8.6 (662), appearing on St.35 (Morley 1938:Pl.124). Later, probably at 9.12.13.4.3 (685), a Site Q king named with the same, ubiquitous T528-title, is found on a lintel from a secondary site in the Piedras Negras region (see Mayer 1989:Pl.103).

Our first direct reference to Site Q at Calakmul comes on St.9 (Ruppert & Denison 1943). This monument, marking the 9.12.0.0.0 Period Ending, carries the 9.10.16.16.19 birth-date of Jaguar Paw Smoke. It is unfortunate that St.9 supplies so little additional data

in readable condition. Mathews has thought it possible that the frontal text includes a Site Q Emblem Glyph (1979). The published photographs are too indistinct to allow a judgement on the matter.

Meanwhile, much to the south, Site Q was deeply involved with the emergent centre of Dos Pilas. Dos Pilas HS.2 and 4 as well St.17 and 13, dating approximately to the 9.12.10.0.0 (682) mark, all refer to Site Q. The discovery (by Demarest's team) and interpretation (by Houston and Stuart) of HS.4 has added enormously to our understanding of Late Classic interaction. Both HS.4 and the well-known HS.2 contain copious references to Shield Skull, the Tikal king and father to *Hasaw Ka'an K'awil* or Ruler A. The context is of a series of battles between Tikal and an apparently allied force of Dos Pilas and Site Q. Aggression is marked by a 'star war' event on HS.2 at 9.11.4.5.14 (658) (the subject is named with the T569 toponym, since the agent is the king of Site Q, it is logical to take this as another assault against Tikal rather than a reference to Dos Pilas). This eventually led to the downfall of Shield Skull and his probable capture and sacrifice in 679 (though the texts do not seem overly specific about this). One of the most important references is seen on HS.4 where Ruler 1, Flint Sky God K, of Dos Pilas is named as the *yahaw* (a form first identified by Stephen Houston in Houston & Mathews 1985), the subordinate of a Site Q king referred to using the T528-title. St.17 has a side text that gives *Ox-te-Tun* as the location of a now eroded event. St.13 describes Jaguar Paw Smoke's accession, witnessed by Ruler 1, at *Naab Tunich*. Jaguar Paw Smoke and Ruler 1, back on HS.2, are also linked in an event that took place at Yaxha, probably the lakeside site in the eastern Peten.

At a date that can be reconstructed to 9.12.19.?.0 someone born at Naranjo (on the Smoking Squirrel monument St.1) is named as the *yahaw* of a Site Q king, presumably Jaguar Paw Smoke again (Graham & Von Euw 1975:12).

El Peru St. 33 and 34 (Site Q St. 2 and 1) show the close links Site Q had with this important centre. The former monument records the accession of an El Peru ruler "together with" a T528-titled lord, the latter describes the accession of Jaguar Paw Smoke (Miller 1974). Yet nemesis was close for this notable lord and was the result of further conflict against the old Site Q adversary, Tikal.

Tikal T.I. L.3 recounts his defeat at the hands of Ruler A, who enacted an *hubi u-tok' pakal* event against him (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig.70). A second reference to Site Q appears on MT 38a&b, the famous captive portrait on bones from Burial 116. This is a confusing reference since it names a Site Q lord dubbed 'Split-Earth', as the protagonist of

a second *hubi* event that took place 117 days later. The prisoner is apparently a native of (ancient) Koban (a site also mentioned on Dos Pilas HS.2).

Dos Pilas again refers to a king of Site Q on St.8, this time with a name or title ‘?-ch’a?-k’awil’ (Mathews 1979b) (this same Site Q name also appears at El Peru on St.27). Sadly, the context here is lost but relates to the reign of Ruler 2, *Itz’am K’awil*, Ruler 1’s son and successor. Sometime during the reign of Ruler 3 of Dos Pilas (who has this same ‘?-ch’a?-k’awil’ nominal) a young prince of Dos Pilas undergoes a bloodletting ritual. The scene, on Panel 19, does not have a legible date but takes place sometime between 9.14.15.5.15 and 9.15.9.16.11 (727-741). Houston and Stuart have determined that one of the glyphic captions names a lord of Site Q (given as *Ah Kan*) as the *u-chanul* “guardian” of the young heir. Just as at El Peru, close contact between the two sites appears both stable and durable.

The date of the famous Copan ‘four capitals’ text of St.A is approximately 9.15.0.0.0 (731). While we are little closer to a full understanding of this reference, it does seem to suggest that Site Q maintained its position in the first rank of Maya polities.

This 9.15.0.0.0 date is also commemorated by Calakmul St.51 and features the same conflated T528-title/Site Q Emblem Glyph variant as that seen on Site Q Glyphic Panel 5 (see Marcus 1987:Fig.64; Mayer 1980:Pl.27). It is interesting that the style of these glyphs so closely matches that seen on G.P.4 and may help us narrow the possible chronology of this text and that on G.P.7.

On St.35 at Yaxchilan we find one of our rare personal names for a Site Q lord. This mention, dated to 9.15.10.0.1, has Lady Ik-Skull (Lady Eveningstar) performing an important bloodletting on the same day as her son, the future Bird Jaguar IV (Schele & Friedel 1990:275). This has always been seen as a crucial step in his rise to the throne. The agent of the event is the same Kan-Na/Hun-Mahk’ina figure encountered on Glyphic Panel 9, “playing” a ballgame dated to 9.15.1.1.7 (pictured on Ballplayer Panel 3) (Martin 1991b). We know that Lady Ik-Skull herself was a native of Site Q and it seems likely that Kan-Na/Hun-Mahk’ina Kan-Na/Hun-GIII (an important further part of his name) was a close relative. The agent of Bird Jaguar’s own bloodletting is named with an undeciphered compound that is probably a further reference to this character (Martin 1991a).

The aforementioned El Peru St.27 is dated to 9.15.10.0.0, and features the ‘?-ch’a?-k’awil’ name instead. This suggests either: that this is indeed another titular nominal rather than a personal name or; that Kan-Na/Hun-Mahk’ina (despite the lordly Mahk’ina suffix) was

not the true king of Site Q, but a sub-lord. El Peru St.27 is quite damaged and it is unclear whether the events associated with the Site Q king are contemporaneous or not.

Foreign mentions of Site Q become much less frequent after this time. There is a good chance that a further *Kan* Emblem Glyph appears on the Copan HS on Step 26 (Mayer 1989:Pl.16), though the chances of giving it context seem slim at present. There is a further Emblem Glyph in the cave texts of Naj Tunich (Stuart 1981:220-1). This is linked to someone called 'Yax-Mo'-ch'a??' and is associated with a second, rarely seen, Emblem Glyph or title of a hand grasping a stylised leaf. The mention appears in the same text dealing with a king of Caracol. Caracol itself has a possible Site Q Emblem Glyph (although a little aberrant) on St.19 dated to 9.19.10.0.0 (Grube 1991). Finally, of course, Site Q appears in the Seibal 'four capitals' listing on St.10 at 10.1.0.0.0 (Schele & Freidel 1990:Fig.10.6).

The Location of Site Q

Despite several published views to the contrary, an examination of the surviving texts of El Peru indicates that there is little or no possibility that this centre is Site Q. El Peru has a well defined emblem, distinct from *Kan* head of Site Q, present both on its own monuments and quoted elsewhere. All legible mentions of Site Q at El Peru are consistent with it being a foreign entity.

Calakmul texts, however, which show ample signs of contact with Site Q, do not contain any clear evidence of these as foreign references. As we have seen, Calakmul St.9 records the birth-date of Jaguar Paw Smoke as well as a possible Site Q Emblem Glyph. Calakmul St.51 features a reference to a *yitah* ("brother" or "companion") from *Naab Tunich*; as well as a T528-title and variant Site Q Emblem Glyph. The outline of the Emblem Glyph on Calakmul St. 89 is damaged, but not inconsistent with being that of Site Q. The same is true of St.53. [Remember that we do not have a single unprovenanced stela for Site Q; unless we have another Palenque on our hands, we are left to assume that the site core remains undiscovered, or that the monuments are in such poor condition that few were worth removing; a site, in fact, much like Calakmul].

To these should be added references to *Ox-te-Tun* on Calakmul St.63, St.53 and two on St.89. It should be noted that *Ox-te-Tun* was the site of the Naranjo captive's "torture", an act presided over by the king of Site Q (Stuart 1987:29-30; Martin 1991b:29). It is also the site mentioned on Site Q Ballplayer Panel 1 and where Ruler 1, the client king from Dos

Pilas, went for some unknown event. *Naab Tunich* is the scene of Jaguar Paw Smoke's accession, is paired with *Ox-te-Tun* on Ballplayer Panel 1 and Naranjo HS Step IV, as well as being cited on Site Q Panel 2.

There are four notable arguments against Calakmul as Site Q: a) the stone-quality evident in, for instance, the Ballplayer Panels is far superior to most of the stone used at Calakmul; b) there have been no reports of possible source at Calakmul for these pieces; c) the layout of stelae at the site does not bear any relation to the expected distribution suggested by Site Q dynasts (c.f. Marcus 1987); finally, d) that no codex-style ceramics have been found in any context at Calakmul (whereas, they have been excavated further south, at El Mirador and Nakbe).

This last point might suggest that Site Q is an unknown or (perhaps more likely) an under-reported ruin to the south of Calakmul. The border region between Mexico and Guatemala would be right for codex-style pots and roughly equidistant between Calakmul and the other site with strong Site Q affiliations, El Peru.

Given all the data cited above, it hard to ignore the number of parallels seen at Calakmul. If we were to accept that *Ox-te-Tun* is Calakmul itself (which seems very likely), then its direct association with Site Q would be close to proven. There may be special features of the Site Q polity that account for other anomalies (see below).

Interpretations

The epigraphic evidence seems clear, Site Q represents a phenomenon in Late Classic Maya politics. No other centre comes close to its wide distribution of mentions, their quantity or the elevated status they all seem to convey. In foreign contexts it is mentioned at least twice as often as Tikal, ten times more frequently than Palenque or Copan (outside Quirigua).

These mentions involve agency terms and statements of political subordination that are extremely rare outside localised contexts. I estimate that Site Q is involved in 90% of such foreign usages. Outside of battle contexts (such as its defeat by Tikal) Site Q is always the equal or superordinate actor of these events; no other polity in a decipherable context is shown deference by this kingdom. [It is important to note that *u-kahiy* actions are not, in themselves, statements of superiority. The key to understanding the relative standing of the participants involved comes from the nature of the initial event. There are

also isolated incidents where an apparently subordinate character is the agent of an action performed by his overlord.]

The influence Site Q exercised on its neighbours can be discerned in a broader sense than these isolated passages. I believe that the growth and prosperity enjoyed by several states can be linked to the activities of Site Q. Dos Pilas is archaeologically insignificant prior to the reign of Ruler 1. Dos Pilas HS.4 names a Site Q ruler as his overlord in a passage dated 9.10.15.4.9 (648); if we accept this reference as a contemporary placement (which might be disputed), Site Q figures at the very inception of the polity. After the victories over Tikal, Ruler 1 begins his monumental programme; it is not clear whether Dos Pilas was using the T569 'Tikal' Emblem prior to this or whether it 'took' the sign from its massive enemy. Site Q seems to be a on-going antagonist of Tikal, the rivalry between the two may well have shaped much of the Late Classic history of the central Peten.

The major war event, 'star war' (applied to individuals as 'star-earth' and to locations as 'star-shell') and seen at Dos Pilas, does not have Dos Pilas itself as a protagonist. The same is true of 'star war' events over Naranjo. Caracol is only associated with a different war verb, *hubi* (identified by Nikolai Grube), that is only applied to individuals and appears to be a lesser, non-lethal event. Whilst on the Naranjo HS and Caracol St.3 Site Q is fully credited, significantly, on the newly uncovered stucco at Caracol the 'star war' victory is omitted and only the *hubi* events occur. Since 'star war' is the event used to describe the only two proven conquests (Naranjo and Seibal) I take it as the 'peak' event against whole states. In both instances, Site Q is given the ultimate credit for overwhelming these polities. Although Caracol and Dos Pilas feature heavily (as you might expect on 'home' monuments) and surely had significant roles, both sides are compelled to give Site Q as the major partner and real victor. [We should perhaps remember that the 'star war' event on Caracol Alt.21 has an illegible protagonist ; there are sound contextual reasons for giving 'Lord Water' *Yahawte K'inich* the credit, but it is not certain. The outlines of the surviving signs do not readily match that of his usual nominal, or that of the Caracol emblem. As I have just outlined, although the later Naranjo HS was commissioned by Kan II of Caracol, this didn't prevent pre-eminence being given to Site Q.]

In my view, El Peru was strongly affected or dominated by Site Q during, at least, the period 9.12.10.0.0 - 9.15.10.0.0, or roughly sixty years. If Calakmul turns out *not* to be Site Q a similar situation might be posited there. At present, I see the creation of the Dos Pilas state as being intimately associated with Site Q's confrontation with Tikal, and it probably owed its very existence to their sponsorship. Much remains to be understood here. Since

we have no data suggesting that the T569 glyph serves as a toponym at Dos Pilas (which uses other compounds in that role) and is used only as a title, it's still possible that Ruler 1 was a member of a rival lineage that once originated at Tikal. We still know only the barest outline of this major conflict.

Chase and Chase (1989) report that Caracol was a relatively minor centre even during the reign of *Yahawte K'inich* and that it grew mightily after the Tikal war. However we have to wait until Kan II's tenure before that the city started many of the massive structures seen today. The point being that we would be wrong to assume that Caracol was the equal or near equal of Tikal in terms of population and military strength (this does not seem to be indicated by settlement surveys and discernible signs of elite power). Might, like Dos Pilas some 120 years later, Caracol have used its association with Site Q to overcome a more massive centre like Tikal? It is an interesting coincidence that Caracol disappeared from the monumental record at just the moment Tikal 'turned the tables' on Site Q and captured its king. If there was 'fallout' associated with this event however, it did not immediately stretch to the western Peten which continued to show strong affiliations with Site Q.

What of Naranjo? At the end of the Early Classic the major local king, Ruler I, came to the throne "by the doing" of Cu-Ix of Site Q. This recorded much later (70 years) on St.25 at 9.9.2.0.4 (615), when it was still prestigious or necessary for Ruler I to mention this. Upon his death, however, Site Q sided with Naranjo's local rival to conquer the city and deliver it into Caracol's hands. This control was maintained until Site Q's client state, Dos Pilas, instituted a new dynasty at the site. We do not know what led Caracol to withdraw from the site. What we have seen of long-distance conquest and occupation suggests that it was a fragile state-of-affairs; though it may be more than a little significant that Naranjo appears to remain in the orbit of Site Q. The *yahaw* statement on Naranjo St.1 suggests some renewed association, while the strong linkage shown to Dos Pilas gives considerable implicit support to this idea.

After Smoking Squirrel's death, sometime after 9.14.15.3.7 (726), Tikal moved against Naranjo and captured the king *Yax May* (probably a patronym or title rather than a personal name). The capture of the lord *Chak To-Wayab* also occurred around this time and may represent continued warfare between these regions (Martin 1991b). By the time of his sacrifice, however, a new king of Naranjo had already been 'crowned', though his record is confined to a single stela, St.20 from 9.15.15.3.16 (746). A further hiatus follows before 'Smoking Batab' erects five stelae at 9.17.10.0.0 (780) (one recording a much earlier accession for him at 9.16.4.10.18, 755) (Closs 1989).

Ruler B's military campaign was also directed against the king of El Peru. The site of this battle would seem to be the lakeside city of Yaxha, where we think Jaguar Paw Smoke and Ruler 1 of Dos Pilas met some three Katuns earlier. I have speculated that the polities linked to Site Q enjoyed some kind of alliance and that El Peru forces travelled to Yaxha for the battle. Whether or not Yaxha was the location of El Peru's involvement, I now think that both Naranjo-Yaxha and El Peru had been made vulnerable by Ruler A's defeat of Jaguar Paw Smoke. Both had significant connections to the *Kan* polity, yet Site Q plays no visible part in the proceedings that take place. From then on, both the archaeology and (the somewhat limited) epigraphy of Tikal suggests that it maintained its prosperity and independence until, at least, the general demise of the elites, and was one of the last centres to lose its Classic Period identity. Though I very much doubt that the seven Katuns following these battles were uneventful, these campaigns of Rulers A and B were a crucial element to the revival and long-term success of the polity.

It does not appear that Jaguar Paw Smoke's capture was a catastrophe for Site Q. Despite a significant gap in its foreign mentions, its closest associates, El Peru and Dos Pilas (perhaps Calakmul too), continue to show its influence well after 9.15.0.0.0 (though not, interestingly enough, after Tikal's wars with Naranjo and El Peru). Such continuity suggests that it was not completely emasculated but remained an important state. It may, however, have lost the dominant position it enjoyed earlier (or else the random survival of texts may under-represent and distort this period for us). I would speculate that the general process that we see during the end of the Late Classic: the emergence of many small polities and signs of collapse, seen both at the periphery and centre; affected Site Q equally, as the geo-political structure it had thrived in for so long rapidly unravelled.

If our geographical placement of Site Q is even only roughly correct; it places it in the heartland of Late Preclassic civilisation (although I should note that Mathews places it much to the south, close to the Usumacinta). It is quite possible that Site Q was an equal 'inheritor', along with Tikal, to this ancient past. We do not yet have any mentions of Site Q during the eighth-cycle, though these would only expect to find these in the site core itself, or its immediate environs (as is the case with Tikal); we do not yet have this archaeology for *Kan*. Of course, if Calakmul is Site Q (the new finds continue to tell us nothing about its epigraphy) it has an extensive Late-Preclassic background. It is already clear that Calakmul was one of the few notable survivors from this region that continued to grow in the new era. [The Site Q 'Dynastic Vases' fail to correlate with what we know of Site Q's Mid-Late Classic rulers and even omits Cu-Ix, our only securely established ruler from its Early Classic

dynasty (Robicsek and Hales 1981). If they prove to be accurate (or only partly so, given the 'careless' dating mistakes), rather than some kind of invented or mythological history, they most likely feature very early kings predating the reign of Cu-Ix. This is compatible with the corresponding sequence of Tikal, which is adjudged by Jones to have begun around 8.12.0.0.0, 278 (Jones 1991)].

I think it is plain that the Maya area reflects the organisation of other early state systems that show political fragmentation amidst a pan-regional cultural unity (amply set out by Yoffee in Culbert 1991). In this, division is based on a series of differing factors including not only linguistic and ethnic boundaries, but a myriad of finer distinctions derived from the nature of the political and religious systems that evolve. Power structures based on 'place specific' ideas have innate limits restricting the geographical range of commonly supported legitimacy. Access to divinely-sanctioned authority was widespread, and reflects the localised nature of belief-systems, implying perhaps that kinship and other 'small-scale' relationships were of great importance.

Within such a disparate system there is, nevertheless, often a goal of unification. Since this entails the acceptance of a singular, inherently new and unorthodox political authority (and the inevitable disenfranchisement or demotion of established elites), it is not achieved by consensus, but by conquest and domination. Even though the objective may never be attained, there is a dynamic that leads major social units to seek it.

I have already described the ways in which the overt influence of one polity, Site Q, can be traced in the inscriptions of other states. But these mentions may express only the most intense and unequivocal of these political relationships, more subtle processes could well lie hidden. The major inscriptional remains: stelae, lintels, panels, stairways, thrones and altars, may well represent only poor-to-moderate sources for macro-political information (just as if we were looking to ceramics to give us calendrical data or detailed dynastic history). They are messages produced by proud royal lineages, rooted to the ground on which their polity is centred, who share a 'ideal' of total autonomy and, better yet, the domination of their rivals. At various points throughout the Classic Period many such states were, in my opinion, involved in realpolitik, and were far less independent than these local inscriptions suggest.

As it is, we have good reason to believe that Site Q installed, or sanctioned, the rule of at least some foreign kings. Evidence from Naranjo and Dos Pilas suggests that this personal involvement began early in life. Both suggest to me that the influence from Site Q was a deeply-rooted and formalised affair.

The 'masking' of Site Q kings behind the veil of the T528-title is intriguing; over several generations this nominal is used in place of a personal name. This suggests that the institution of Site Q rulership was the paramount thing, over and above the particular personality that (temporarily) filled the office. Only really outstanding rulers, like Jaguar Paw Smoke, were noted individually and even here the T528 compound, or its T174 conflation, are usually attached. Whatever its exact relevance and meaning, its use is another unique feature to the Site Q polity.

The existence and extent of long-distance trade, beyond that of isolated 'elite goods', is a disputed area. There are those who argue that the fluorescence enjoyed by Maya civilisation must be attributed, at least in part, to economic factors brought about by trade in larger-scale materials. If and when evidence of this feature becomes clear, we may have to dramatically re-evaluate our understanding of state interaction, in order to demonstrate how goods flowed, in what direction and between which sites. An obvious case study is the Usumacinta, it is almost impossible to understand how trade moved along it without co-operation between the major sites on its banks.

I believe that Site Q may have come closest to this ideal of wider dominance. In a system in which outright and permanent conquest (over long distance) proved to be an unstable and ultimately untenable method; powerful states such as Site Q wove a webs of alliance and patronage, guaranteeing protection and local autonomy to its clients, whilst extending a confederacy of friendly states antagonistic to its enemies. If large-scale trading existed (only archaeology can answer this) I would expect these structures to have been one of its main conduits. I would be surprised if Site Q's own source of power was not, ultimately, derived from an economic strength based on a large home territory and a correspondingly sizeable population.

I have discussed the relative merit, as we currently understand it, of Calakmul as Site Q, Stuart and Houston have been notable proponents of late (1989), following the earlier assignation of Marcus (1973) and Miller (1974). Others, including Mathews, remained unconvinced. I would not be surprised if *Kan* had some more surprises for us before the assignation question is resolved. The polity operates in ways not reflected throughout the Maya world, even amongst other 'super-polities'. We do not yet know if Site Q followed the pattern of other centralised states, with a single large capital, or had another structure, such as a multi-centre organisation (as has been suggested by Reents et al. for the Ik-site and as is evident at Tamarindito/Arroyo de Piedra). [This rather useful idea might yet explain

the problematic codex-style: if this was a localised ware produced in a more southerly part of the polity].

If I am interpreting it correctly, there now exists epigraphic evidence for tiered, hierarchical structures during the Classic Period (linkage between Arroyo de Piedra, Dos Pilas and Site Q might well constitute the best evidence for this so far, even though, as yet, we lack perfectly contemporaneous confirmation). Although such data only seems clear for Site Q, I expect that *Kan* was only the most interactive and successful of a range of 'super-polities'. The outlines of this arrangement are hard to discern since the 'system' was not fixed and admitted many fine distinctions and scales of importance. Carved monuments emphasise the political and divinely-sanctioned authority of the local rulers who commissioned them and probably (apart from the most overt instances of outside control or influence) under-represent evidence of wider state interaction. I see macro-political organisation not as a concrete system, but simply as a status quo that evolved amongst a limited number of rival polities. The basic political unit was indeed defined by the use of the Emblem Glyph, yet these small kingdoms were also arranged within a semi-fluid map of overlapping spheres of influence, centred on a few (changeable) pre-eminent states.

It is still too early to reconstruct the exact circumstances of the Classic Period, but during the period 9.9.0.0.0 - 9.13.0.0.0 (613-692) we have evidence that Site Q had profound influence with a number of other major polities. With the exception of the 9.9.18.16.3 defeat of Naranjo by Caracol and Site Q, warfare between the major sites of the Peten area conforms to the pattern of interactions seen in other contexts (i.e. those described with *yahaw*, *yichnal*, *ukahiy* and *yitah* expressions). These show that El Peru, Dos Pilas, Naranjo and Caracol had strong, non-antagonistic, relations with Site Q and after suggest that the latter had a superordinate position.

All of these sites, as well as Site Q itself, fought wars against Tikal; which never appears in a non-conflict context with any of them. The Caracol-Tikal and Dos Pilas-Tikal wars are both associated with mention of Site Q, with the latter instance clearly showing the *Kan* polity as the major protagonist. Thus we would appear to have two complementary sets of data derived from inscriptions. Both suggest to me that Site Q was the dominant player amongst a series of largely non-antagonistic states and that all the members of this 'grouping' (sometimes in co-operation with Site Q itself) were opposed to Tikal at some point, and possibly throughout, the Middle-Late Classic.

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