



# The PARI Journal

A quarterly publication of the Ancient Cultures Institute  
Volume XXII, No.2, 2021

In This Issue:

## Upakal K'inich: A Late Classic Period Ruler of El Palmar, Mexico

by

Kenichiro Tsukamoto,  
Octavio Esparza  
Olguín, Daniel Salazar  
Lama and Luz Evelia  
Campaña Valenzuela

PAGES 1–20

## “Teotihuacan,” “Spearthrower Owl,” and “Kaloomte’”: Clues to the Language of Teotihuacan Writing, from Classic Maya Texts

by

Thomas Vonk

PAGES 21–35

Marc Zender  
Editor

marc@ancientcultures.org

Joel Skidmore  
Associate Editor  
joel@ancientcultures.org

The PARI Journal  
202 Edgewood Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94117  
415-664-8889  
journal@ancientcultures.org

Electronic version  
available at:  
www.precolumbia.org/  
pari/journal/2202

ISSN 1531-5398

## Upakal K'inich: A Late Classic Period Ruler of El Palmar, Mexico

**KENICHIRO TSUKAMOTO**

*Department of Anthropology, University of California, Riverside  
Institute of Latin-American Studies, Kyoto University of Foreign Studies*

**OCTAVIO ESPARZA OLGUÍN**

*Centro de Estudios Mayas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*

**DANIEL SALAZAR LAMA**

*Archéologie des Amériques, CNRS UMR 8096; Centro de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos*

**LUZ EVELIA CAMPAÑA VALENZUELA**

*Independent Researcher*

The Late Classic period (695–800 CE) witnessed several Maya rulers who triggered or were involved in political turbulence. Upakal K'inich, a ruler of the El Palmar dynasty, was one such case. He was depicted in inscriptions of different sites during the early eighth century, a time of political transformation in the southern Maya lowlands as a consequence of the military defeat of Calakmul (i.e., the Kaanul dynasty) at the hand of Tikal (Martin and Grube 2008). The frequent appearance of Upakal K'inich suggests that he was a central player in the El Palmar dynasty during this sociopolitical process. The present study examines those inscriptions associated with Upakal K'inich together with iconographic images and archaeological remains that provide clues to his reign. We draw special attention to El Palmar Stelae 8 and 10, two monuments that have never been studied in detail since their discoveries by Sir Eric Thompson in 1936. The archaeological, iconographic, and epigraphic studies of these stelae took place through the El Palmar Archaeological Project (Proyecto Arqueológico El Palmar, hereinafter referred to as PAEP) which is directed by Kenichiro Tsukamoto (University of California, Riverside/Institute of Latin-American Studies, Kyoto University of Foreign Studies) and Javier López Camacho (Escuela

Nacional de Antropología e Historia). In the present study, Campaña Valenzuela and Tsukamoto supervised archaeological operations of these two stelae, Esparza Olguín and Tsukamoto conducted epigraphic studies, and Salazar Lama is responsible for iconographic analyses.

### El Palmar

El Palmar is located in southeastern Campeche, Mexico (Figure 1). It consists of the civic-core or the Main Group, surrounded by numerous architectural groups. The Main Group is composed of monumental architecture and four reservoirs or *aguadas* (Figure 2). At the center of the Main Group, there is an *aguada* in which a structure was built with a plain stela and altar. This Central Aguada is flanked in the north-south direction by the two largest pyramidal temples at the site. There is a causeway that connects the Central Aguada to the K'awiil Plaza, the south sector of the Main Group where the second largest pyramidal temple, Temple II, stands. Some 400 m southwest of Temple II is a cave. The mountain (i.e., pyramidal temple), water (i.e., *aguada*), and cave were fundamental elements in Mesoamerican religious belief, symbolizing abundance, fertility, and the underworld. The location of the Central Aguada suggests that



Figure 1. Map representing the location of El Palmar and sites mentioned in the text.

the El Palmar dynasty gave particular weight to water related ritual and ceremonies. Indeed, carved monuments such as Stela 23 (Figure 3) and Altar 3 (Figure 4) which were placed around the Central Aguada contain cloud symbols that evoke rain and lightning.

Stone monuments commemorate theatrical performances that successive rulers of El Palmar conducted in public plazas over centuries. So far, we have relocated 34 stelae and 13 altars that Thompson (1936b, [1963]1994) discovered at the Main Group in 1936. While many of them are badly weathered, there are still some monuments whose inscriptions are legible. Elsewhere we have published preliminary studies of Stela 12, 14, and 16 that were erected at the two largest public plazas, the Great Plaza and Plaza E of the Main Group (Esparza Olguín and Tsukamoto 2011). Our test excavations suggest that these two plazas were built during the Middle Classic to the Early Late Classic period (400–690 CE) and were used until the Terminal Classic period (800–900 CE) (Tsukamoto 2014b; Tsukamoto et al. 2012). Esparza Olguín, Campaña Valenzuela, and Tsukamoto (2019; see also Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2021) studied Altar 10 and its corresponding Cache 3, which were located in front of Temple II on the K'awiil Plaza. At the Great Plaza, rulers commissioned 12 stelae and two altars. Among the 12 stelae, Stelae

8 and 10 containing sophisticated iconographic representations and hieroglyphic texts are relevant for addressing our research question of how king Upakal K'inich of the El Palmar dynasty reigned during political turbulence. These stelae are exhibited at the east end of the Great Plaza where a series of structures are paired with stone monuments. Because Stela 10 was erected before Stela 8 according to their calendrical dates, we first describe the former monument following this chronological order.

### Stela 10

Thompson (1936b, [1963]1994) was the first archaeologist to document Stela 10. During three weeks of fieldwork in 1936, Thompson and his team mapped El Palmar and photographed some of the monuments he discovered, including Stela 10. He read the Calendar Round carved on the front face of the stela as 6 Ahau 13 Muan, which he tentatively connected to 9.14.0.0.0 (December 2, 711 CE).<sup>1</sup> Unlike other El Palmar monuments including Stelae 8, 14, and 16, however, the absence of a temporal glyph such as *tahn lamaw*, which marks a specific point of the Long Count, made it difficult for Thompson to connect the Calendar Round to the Long Count and Christian calendar. Thompson's photos archived in the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University show that Stela 10 was found face-down, but it seems that they turned the front face up to document inscriptions and iconographic images. From the north corner of the stela they recovered a cache which consisted of seven eccentric cherts, two leaf-shaped chert blades, 19 obsidian cores, and numerous obsidian flakes. Sylvanus Morley (1938:228; 1956:420, Pl. 102) mentions that

<sup>1</sup> We use dates in the Julian Calendar and the Martin and Skidmore (2012) 584286 correlation.

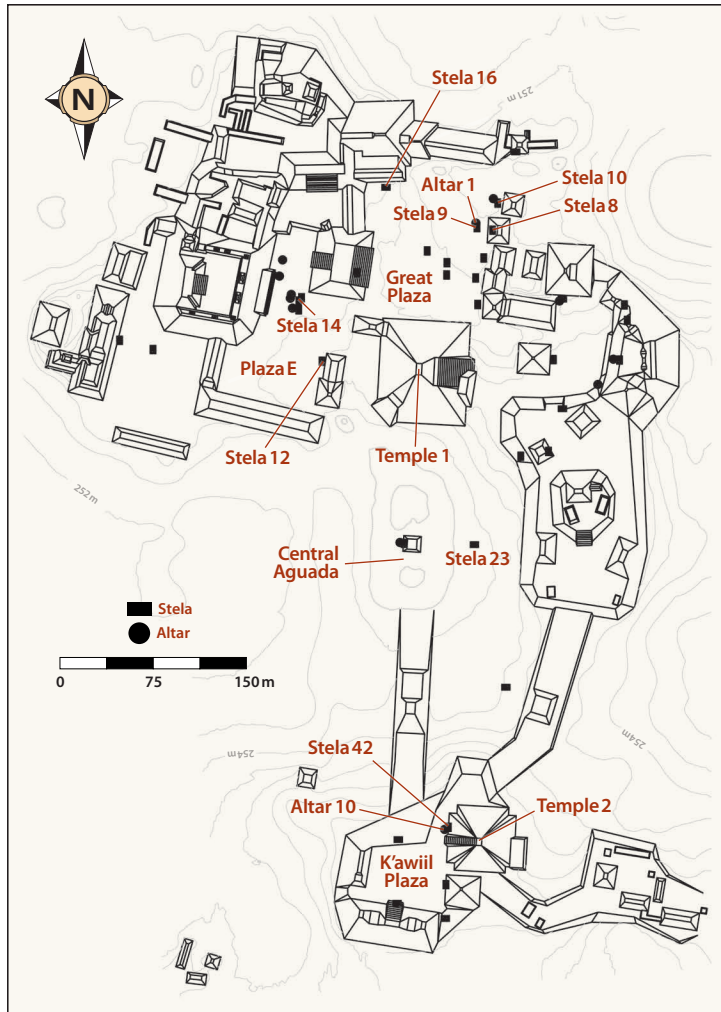


Figure 2. Map of the Main Group with the location of monuments.



Figure 3. El Palmar Stela 23. A cloud symbol is visible on the lower left corner of the stela.

one of the eccentric cherts resembles that held by rulers of Naranjo on Naranjo Stela 30 and Lintel 2 of Tikal Temple III.

At the south corner of the stela, they uncovered an anthropomorphic eccentric made of dark brown chert (Figure 5). Because of this spectacular piece that resembles the eccentric found at the site of Quirigua, Thompson questioned his original reading of the Calendar Round, observing that “[t]he writer feels that this date is too early for such a fine example of an eccentric flint” (Thompson 1936a:316). Decades later he published *Maya Archaeologist*, in which he changed the reading of the Calendar Round, writing of Stela 10 that “[i]t was weathered but enough remained to yield the date (9.15.15.0.0 9 Ahau 18 Xul [746 CE]) and to show that the personage had stood on a mask...” (Thompson [1963]1994:264). Following Thompson’s report, Alberto Luz Lhuillier (1945:20, 95-96) described the principle characteristics of El Palmar, citing Thompson’s former date of 9.14.0.0.0. In *A Study of Maya Sculpture*, Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1950:81-85, 128, and 192) used Thompson’s later date, but she felt that it was too eroded to be accurately placed in the calendar. In

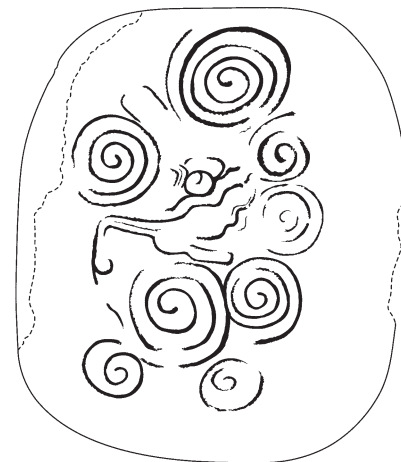


Figure 4. El Palmar Altar 3 representing a creature emerging out of cloud symbols.



Figure 5. El Palmar eccentric flint, part of Cache 1 recovered from Stela 10 (photograph by Jorge Pérez de Lara).

the same volume she briefly analyzed the iconography of Stela 10, identifying leg garters with parallel strands worn by the personage which she classified as the Yucatecan type that dates to the Ornate phase (9.13.0.0.0 to 9.16.0.0.0).

During the first season in 2007, PAEP relocated Stela 10 where Thompson originally found it, but it was lying face-down. It was positioned in front of Structure T22-2 at the Great Plaza of the Main Group about 20 m north of Stela 8, which we will analyze below. The stela is made of local limestone and is 3.83 m long by 1.34 m wide by 0.42 m thick and weighs approximately 3.6 tons. Because of its weight and a lack of appropriate equipment, we could not turn it over during the field season. Based on Thompson's photos, Tsukamoto (2014b:274-276) attempted to read the inscription carved on the front face. Following the Calendar Round, he identified three glyph blocks in which the second one was read as **u-pa-ka**?-? **K'INICH**, *upakal(?) k'inich*, "Upakal(?) K'inich." He also recognized a ruler with military costume and parallel-strand garters on the front face.

The anthropomorphic eccentric associated with Stela 10 attracted a number of scholars. Thompson (1936a: 316) exalts it as a "masterpiece of stone-working" comparing it to another masterpiece of eccentric flint found beneath Zoomorph O of Quirigua. He also describes it as "a queer-shaped affair with human profiles at all four corners"

(Thompson [1963]1994:264). More recently, Karl Taube suggests that the El Palmar eccentric flint represents "four deity heads at its corners, possibly alluding to cosmic guardians of the four-sided world" (Agurcia-Fasquelle et al. 2016:22). It is unlikely to be a coincidence that El Palmar Altar 10 also shows four gods surrounding a deity impersonated by the ruler, K'ahk' P'ulaj Chan Yopaat (Esparza Olguín et al. 2019; Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2021). Taube and Tsukamoto (n.d.) point out that the iconographic features of the El Palmar eccentric resemble eccentric flints recovered from the termination deposits at Rosalila, Copan. Within the Rosalia building, Ricardo Agurcia and his team (2016:22-49) found a radiocarbon sample that dates the termination ritual to 571-774 CE (2-sigma range). Other material remains in the same context refine this date to 710-775, partly overlapping the reigns of Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil of Copan and Upakal K'inich of El Palmar.

During the 2018 field season we were able to study the inscriptions and iconography of Stela 10 in situ. Campaña Valenzuela supervised turning over the monument using two mechanical pulleys. After this was accomplished, Tsukamoto photographed the stela while Esparza Olguín and Salazar Lama focused on epigraphic and iconographic studies, respectively (Figure 6). We found inscriptions only on the front face; there is no trace of carving on the lateral and back sides (Figure 7). After careful photographs and drawings, we could read the short inscriptions as **6-AJAW 13-MUWAAN-ni u-BAAH u-\*PAKAL-K'INICH SAK-o-ka**, *wak ajaw oxlajuun muwaan ubaah upakal k'inich sakho'ok*, "On the day 6 Ahau and 13 Muan it is his image, Upakal K'inich, the White Valley." As we mentioned before, the lack of Long Count anchors prevents us from determining its correlation. Nevertheless, there are important indicators that support the correlation of the Calendar Round with the period-ending of 9.14.0.0.0 (December 2, 711 CE). First, we confirmed in the field that the main sign of the Haab date clearly represented the month Muan which was complemented by the syllabic sign **ni**. Due to the fact that Thompson's correction was based on his reading of the Haab date as 18 Xul, it is highly unlikely that 9.15.15.0.0 is the long count. Secondly, Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín (2015) had previously detected the name Upakal K'inich in the hieroglyphic stairway of the Guzmán Group, which is located 1.3 km north of El Palmar's Main Group (Figure 17). The Guzmán Stairway was built on September 14, 726 CE (9.14.15.0.0) when the ruler of El Palmar was no longer Upakal K'inich but Yunen. This finding implies that the reign of Upakal K'inich ended before 726, indicating that the 746 date Thompson proposed is highly unlikely. Therefore we conclude that the Calendar Round of Stela 10 is



Figure 6. El Palmar Stela 10.

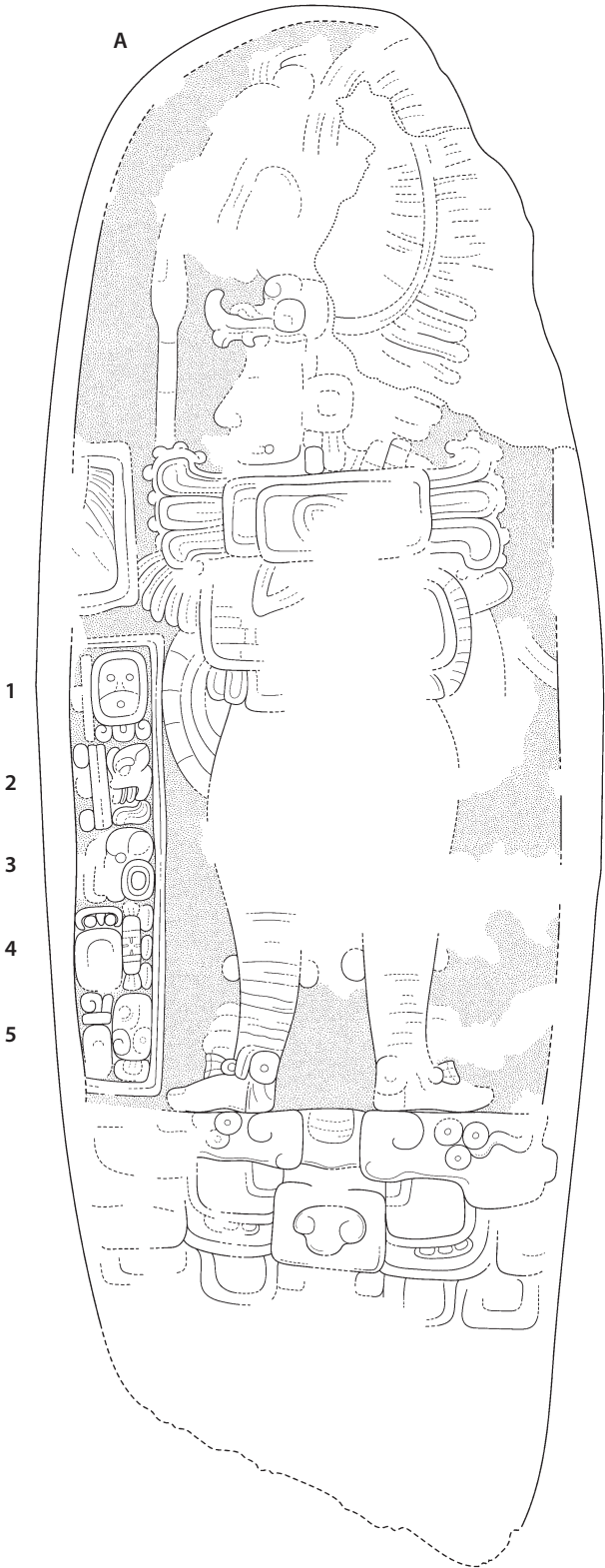
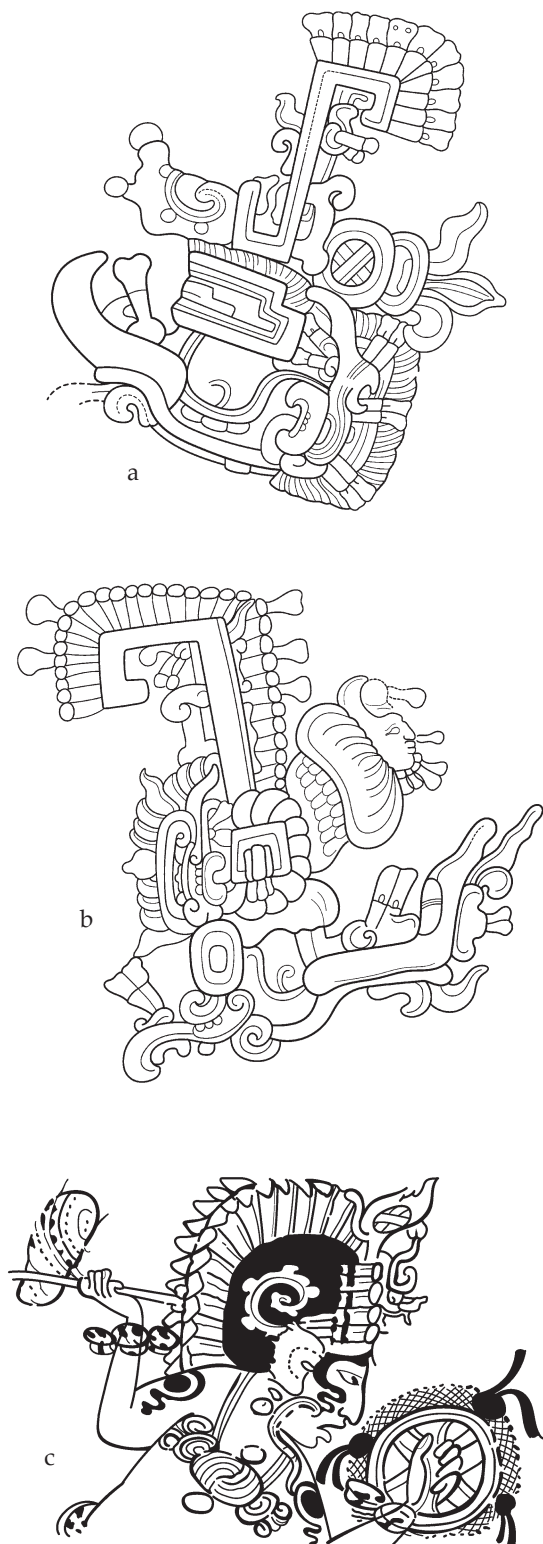


Figure 7. Drawing of El Palmar Stela 10.



**Figure 8.** (a) Witz' serpent headdress, El Peru Stela 34; (b) Witz' serpent headdress, Pomona Sculpture 30; (c) Chak Xib' Chahk on Vase 98 (after Robicsek and Hales 1981).

correlated with 9.14.0.0.

On Stela 10, Upakal K'inich's attire represents the multiple roles he played in the kingdom. He stands in front view looking to the left, legs apart, and feet pointing outwards. His body is larger than lifesize—2.03 m from head to toe and 2.66 m to the tip of the headdress—clearly exceeding the natural dimensions of the human body. The image of Upakal K'inich together with his attire and posture embodies royal authority at the Great Plaza, which could accommodate about 36,000 people in a public event (Clancy 1999:23-25, 2015:215-216; Salazar Lama 2019a:79-80; Tsukamoto 2014a). Originally the headdress of Upakal K'inich seems to have been a gorgeous carving, but the front part is heavily eroded and thin-incisions of long feathers on the back of the head are barely visible. On the front part only a zoomorphic head remains at the base of the headdress. It represents a snake or reptile of the aquatic world, which is most likely a variant of Yax Chit Juun Witz' Naah Kan, a deity commonly called the Water Serpent or Witz' Serpent (Stuart 2007). Comparative examples of snake heads on headdresses include El Peru-Waka' Stelae 30 and 34, Naranjo Stela 30, and Pomona Sculpture 30 (Figures 8a, b). The snake head in the headdress was used for impersonation rituals of nobles and rulers who impersonated this aquatic deity, perhaps alluding to power through water management (Fash 2005:122-123). Because of the common use of the Witz' Serpent in Late Classic headdresses, it is possible that Upakal K'inich also impersonates the Water Serpent on Stela 10. In addition, he stands on a zoomorphic mountain mask or Witz monster that reinforces his mythic representation. It may also represent an idea of territoriality and power exercised over a given space as stepping on a captive and standing over him is a sign of subjection and dominance. Baudez (1998:153) suggests that terrestrial masks in the lower parts of the scenes (which are mountain masks with no particular references) refer to a broader concept of territory under the rulers' control. In this regard, El Palmar Stela 10 expresses a territorial control or political intervention associated with military exercise and warfare. An iconographic message similar to this is seen on Bonampak Stela 1, Rio Bec Group V Stela 6, and the roof comb of Okolhuitz Structure 1 and Kohunlich Structure B4 (Nondédéo and Patrois 2007:163-168, 182-183; Salazar Lama 2019b:204-208), which represent victorious sovereigns and noble warriors standing or enthroned on zoomorphic mountains (Figure 9).

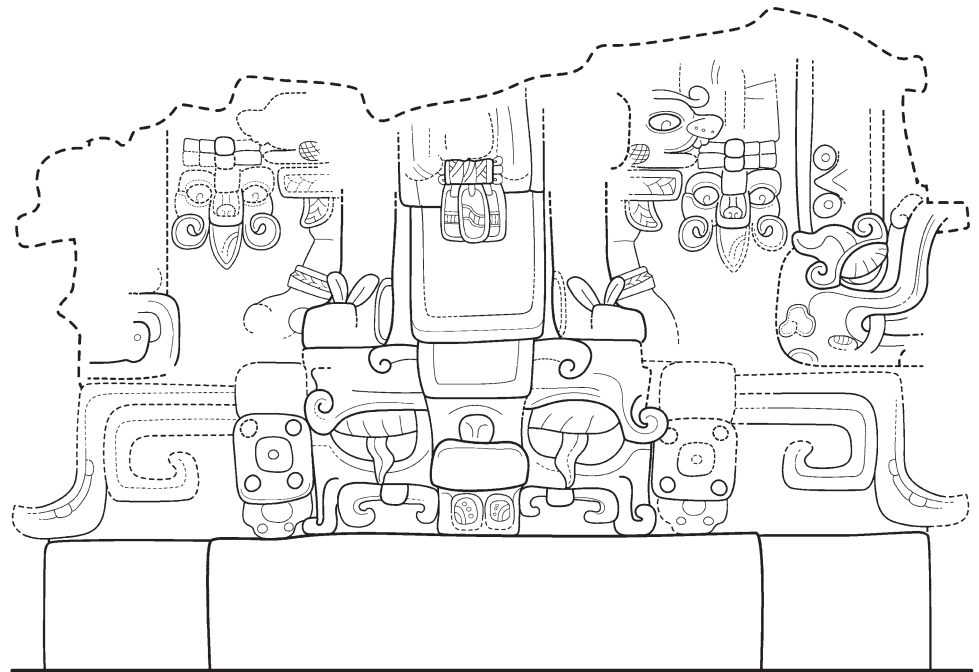
Other elements embody a military aspect of Upakal K'inich. For example, a huge pectoral of Upakal K'inich that covers his shoulders and arms is common in many Late and Terminal Classic scenes. Ana García Barrios (2008:96) describes it as a knotted pectoral due to the strings knotted in the center, while Mathew Looer (2003:104, 133) calls it a "white pectoral" because the lateral parts have elements similar to the logogram SAK, "white." The pectoral of Stela 10 is one of the variants in which cut shells or beads decorate the side extremities of the lateral parts (Coe and Benson 1966:16, 18; Houston and Taube 2012). According to García Barrios (2009:96-97) this kind of pectoral is a distinctive attire of Chahk, the deity of rain and storms that Maya rulers enacted in various ritual contexts to invoke rain (see also Houston and Taube 2012) and in enthronement ceremonies (Looer 2003). Likewise, the pectoral accompanied by pieces of war clothing, spears, shields,

and captives express Maya rulers' military role during the Late Classic period (García Barrios 2009:467-475). García Barrios (2006:137, 144) further suggests that rulers who use warfare paraphernalia, including the pectoral, enact a specific aspect of Chahk as a warrior, named Chak Xib' Chahk (Figure 8c), who often appears in the "confrontation" scenes in Late Classic codex-style pottery (e.g., K2096 and K2710).

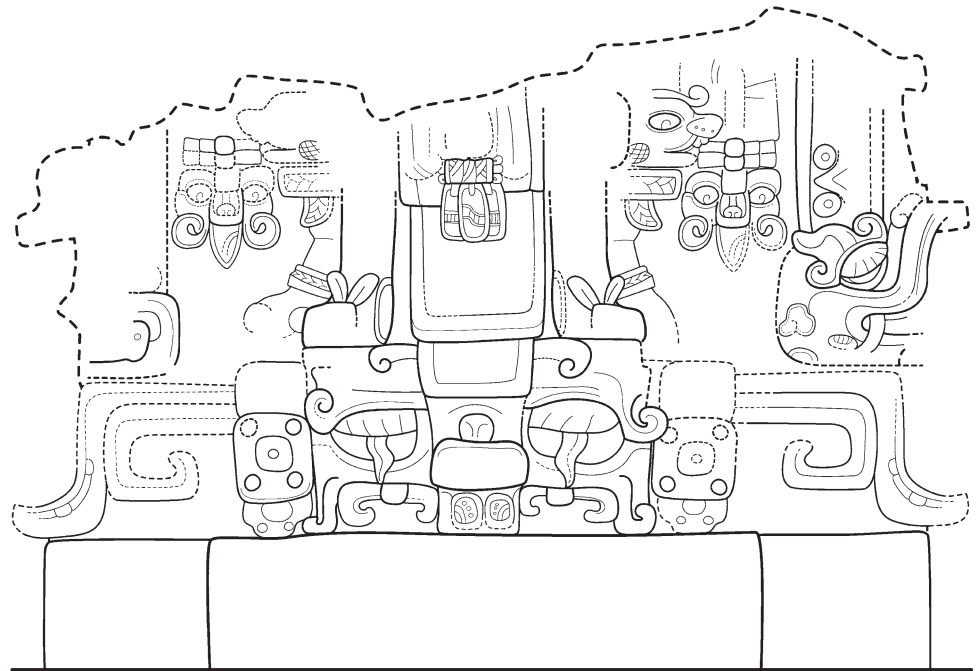
Behind the pectoral we can observe a necklace of rectangular plates, and below it there are feathers that cover his right shoulder. The necklace and oversized pectoral highlight the military representation of Upakal K'inich, who indeed holds a spear. Similar warrior costume is found on Naranjo Stelae 1, 8, and 21 (Graham and von Euw 1975). At the height of the waist there exists a rectangular shape that appears to be a protector from which jade plates are hinged. The large round item carried on his back is most likely a shield. This is a common way of carrying shields among warriors of Central Mexico and later those of Chichen Itza. In fact, the garters parallel to the calves on the legs are in Yucatecan style, similar to those worn by the warriors portrayed on the carved columns of the northeast colonnade of Xculoc and the mural of the Temple of Jaguars at Chichen Itza (Proskouriakoff 1950: 84-85, Fig. 10i). Thus, the military paraphernalia of Stela 10 indicates that Upakal K'inich is a warrior ruler.

### Stela 8

During the same expedition Thompson (1936b, [1963]1994) found Stela 8, which was placed in the Great Plaza of the Main Group. Thompson's



a



b

**Figure 9.** Roof comb at Kohunlich Structure B4: (a) Segment 1 East; (b) Segment 1 West; (c) Segment 2 West. Note the bicephalic thrones on which rulers are seated over *witz* masks, and the two heads shown on the both sides of the thrones.



**Figure 10.** Recovering process of Stela 8. The fragmented lower part of the stela can be seen on the photo's upper left side.



**Figure 11.** El Palmar Stela 8 after exposure. One of the authors, Luz Evelia Campaña Valenzuela, is cleaning glyphs.

map plots the location of Stela 8 within a structure that is one of the several structures that close the east side of the Great Plaza. He photographed and did a rubbing of the stela, and read its Calendar Round as 5 Ahau 3 Mac, which dates to 9.14.10.0.0 (October 10, 721 CE). Thompson's photo shows that Stela 8 stood during his survey while Stela 9 had fallen. On the map Stela 9 is placed together with Altar 1 about 10 m west of Stela 8 (Šprajc 2008, Map 6). In his table, Lhuillier (1945) follows Thompson's reading of the Calendar Round. Years later Proskouriakoff (1950:128) used Thompson's photo for her iconographic study

in which she briefly described the stela as "...the best-preserved monument of the site, [showing] a pose and an arrangement of feather work quite advanced for the date 9.14.10.0.0, as indicated by its inscription." She suggests that the iconographic style dates to 9.16.0.0.0, while providing no detailed analysis. Carlos Brokmann (1997:13) reported the relocation of the "heavily deteriorated" Stela 8, mentioning that it was found 250 m east of the principal pyramid. Because 250 m east of the principal pyramid is only a small compound, he most likely lost the azimuth orientation in the field and was confused with the other stela. He also mentioned that he buried looter's trenches but did not report that he buried monuments. We suspect that he did not find Stela 8 but buried it accidentally when filling a looter's trench.

PAEP spent two field seasons relocating it. During the first season in 2007 Tsukamoto, López Camacho, and Esparza Olgúin conducted surface surveys and topographic mapping of the Main Group. Before the field season, we analyzed Thompson's map carefully to estimate the stela's original location in the middle of Structure T22-1 on the Great Plaza. While we found Stela 9, which was moved some meters south of the original location, we could not relocate Stela 8. What we observed in Structure T22-1 was a large looter's trench in which a fragment of stone monument was laid aside. We did not detect any inscriptions and iconographic images on Stela 9, probably due to its heavy erosion. A decade later during the 2018 field season Campaña Valenzuela and Tsukamoto again attempted to relocate Stela 8. Campaña Valenzuela hypothesized that the fragment we found in 2007 was part of the stela, which was broken apart for some reason. If this



Figure 12. El Palmar Stela 8.



Figure 13. Chert objects that are probably a cache dedicated to El Palmar Stela 8.

was the case, another part or parts should be displaced toward the foot of the structure. When cleaning the looter's trench from the top to the bottom of the structure during the 2018 field season, Campaña Valenzuela successfully found a missing part at the foot of the structure (Figures 10 and 11). This part contained beautiful inscriptions and iconographic images (Figure 12). The fragmentation of the stela appears not to have been a natural phenomenon but intentional, most likely done by looters for the purpose of finding an associated cache. Through clearing looters' debris, we recovered a chert eccentric in the form of a crescent and a chert biface that were probably part of a cache dedicated to Stela 8 (Figure 13). A few meters from the cache Campaña Valenzuela found the original location of the stela, which had been excavated probably by Thompson. Putting the two parts of monuments together, Stela 8 measures 3.91 m in length, 1.73 m in width, and 0.47 m in thickness and weighs 3.9 tons.

Stela 8 has an iconographic pattern similar to that observed on Stela 10: the oversized body of the protagonist in front view but face in profile, legs apart, feet pointing outwards, and a complex attire (Figure 14). The military aspect is also present. A distinctive feature is a scene with two figures: the main figure standing in front view, looking to the left, and the other in full side position with his arms tied behind his back, kneeling in front of the first person. The protagonist is Upakal K'inich, and the second figure a captive. The inscriptions provide important information regarding Upakal K'inich. The texts are distributed in three columns on the front face. We did not detect any glyphs on the lateral sides. The back side remains underexplored although we think there is no carving due to the absence of information in Thompson's report. On the front face we denominate Columns A to C from left to right (Figure 14). Column A consists of four glyph blocks that read 5-AJAW 3-ma-MAHK TAHN-LAM-wa CHOK-wa, *ho' ajaw ux mak tahnlaraw (u)chokow*, "It was October 10, 721 CE (9.14.10.0.0), half-diminished, he scatters." This means the scene carved on the front face is a period-ending ritual performance that was carried out presumably in the Great Plaza.

The text of Column B is problematic. It is heavily eroded and we can identify four glyph blocks although there may have been one additional block judging from a space under the fourth. There are three possibilities for Column B. First, it continues from Column A. In this case, the first glyph block reads *ch'a-ji* and the following glyph blocks are a ruler's name. However, as we can see below, the ruler's name starts in Column C. The second possibility is that it refers to a place name where the incense-scattering ceremony took place, as we can see a similar expression on Dos Pilas Stelae 1, 8, 11, and 15 (Houston 1993). Unlike Dos Pilas whose place name is depicted as a single glyphic block, however, Column B of El Palmar Stela 8 contains four or five glyphic blocks. The place name seldom uses more than two glyphic blocks in the

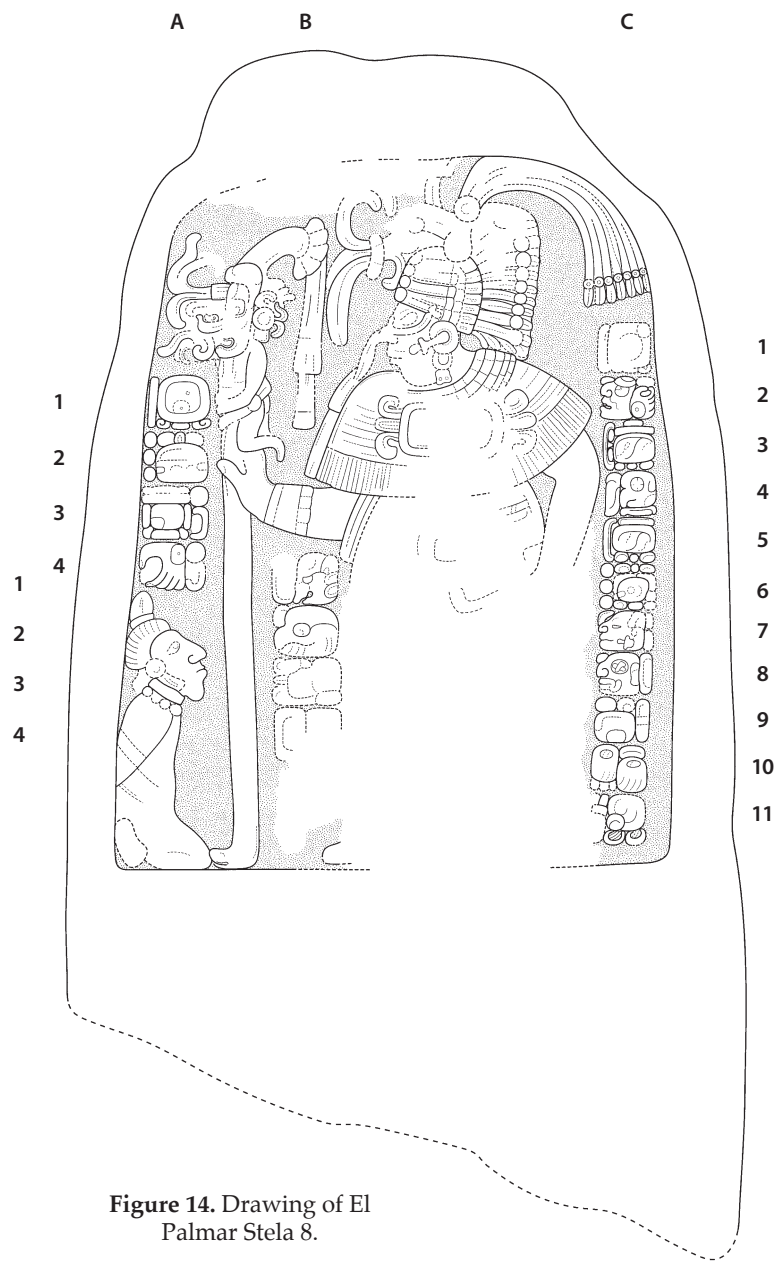


Figure 14. Drawing of El Palmar Stela 8.

Classic Maya corpus of inscriptions, and therefore this reading is less plausible. We think the third possibility is the most likely candidate. Column B gives the name and title of the captive who sits at the lower left corner. If this is the case, the first block could be the syllable **u** and a variant of the logogram **BAAH**, *ubaah*, “his image,” followed by the captive’s name and title. We will come back to these interpretations shortly.

Column C has a long text that consists of 11 glyph blocks. The text reads **u-PAKAL-la K’IN-ni-chi u-6-TAL-la yo-OHK-K’IN-ni? u-5-TAL-la 3-? ? WAK-ka PIIT-ta ba-ka-ba SAK-o-ka**, *upakal k’inich uwaktal yok’in uho’tal ux ?? wak piit baahkab sakho’ok*, “Upakal K’inich, he is the sixth successor of *yok’in*, he is the fifth successor of three..., Six Litters, Baahkab, the

White Valley.” *Yok’in* (also *yohk’in* or *yok’ihn*) is a title meaning “sun foot, the base of the sun, or sunset” (Boot 2009:211; Gómez 2007:3-4; Johnson 2013:331). The title is seen in a number of inscriptions. For instance, Copan’s travertine vessel depicts the lord Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat, who carries the title *nohol chan yok’in baahkab ch’ahom* (Kerr 1992:406; Tokovinine 2002:4). Naranjo Stela 20 and Stela 21 give Wak Kab Yok’in as a substitution for Wak Kab Nal Winik (Boot 2009:197). In the Dresden Codex Waklajuun Yok’in refers to a deity, while the god Bolon Chan Yok’in accompanies period-ending celebrations in the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque (Callaway 2011). Another proposed reading for the dog head glyph with infixed *k’in* sign is **OON**, (**yo-OON?-ni?**, *yoon*), which means “relative” or “family,” a title or noun that refers to succession or parentage (Schele and Grube 1997:87). The main sign of glyph C6 remains elusive. Returning to Column B, the glyph blocks refer to a longer name of Upakal K’inich if the first reading is the case. However, we have not yet found his extended name in any other inscriptions. If the third reading is correct, Column A continues to Column C, which starts with Upakal K’inich. This latter case is also problematic because the transitive verb (*u*) *chokow* lacks an object such as *ch’aaj*.

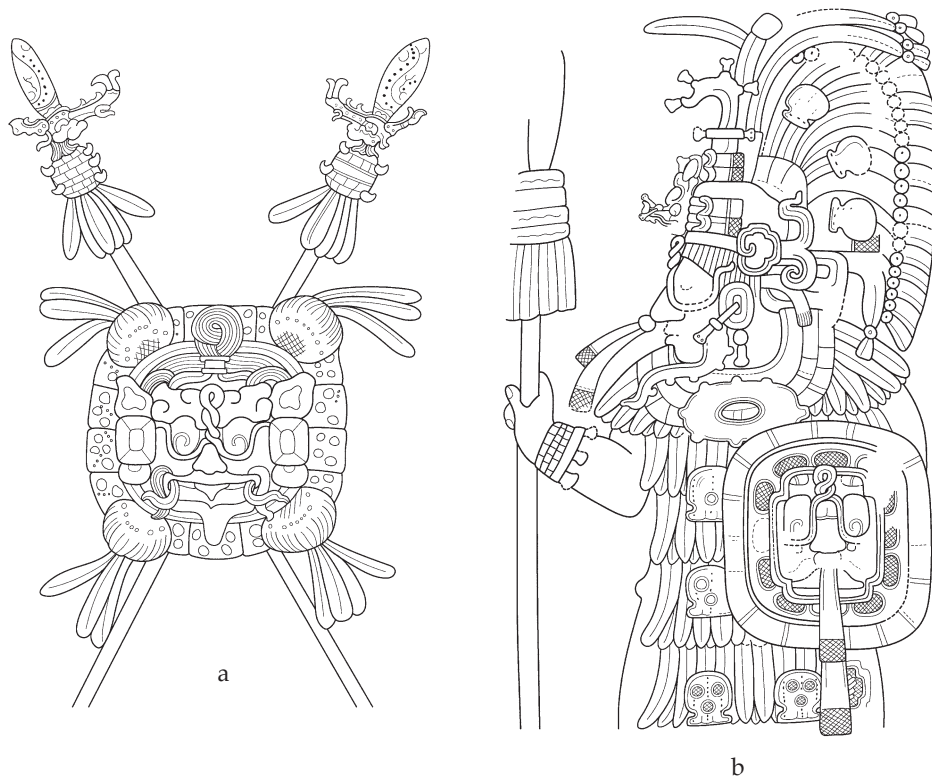
There are notable differences in physical appearances between Upakal K’inich and his captive that embody social distinctions and political authority. The front and profile views define social hierarchy (Benson 1974:110-111; Houston 1998:341-344; Velásquez García 2019:136-137). On Stela 8 Upakal K’inich stands in front view but his face is in profile. His legs are apart with feet pointing outwards. In contrast, the captive is in the full side position. In many monuments at Maya sites rulers or captors are invariably in front position while the prisoners are shown in full side view. In addition to Stela 8, we can see these positional differences on Piedras Negras Stela 26, Uaxactun Stela 20, Yaxchilan Lintel 12, and Laxtunich Lintel 1.<sup>2</sup>

The inequality of body scale and attire frequently generates different ranges of visibility that enhance scenic importance and narrative weight (George 2004:78; Schapiro 1999:48). In

<sup>2</sup> The front and side views are not exclusively used to symbolize the relation between the captor and captive. Maya sculptors also applied it to highlight other sociopolitical relations such as between elites of different ranks and between rulers of different dynasties (Velásquez García 2019:137, Fig 7).

Mesoamerica the oversized image of rulers in front of other smaller individuals symbolizes political authority, greatness, and majesty (Velásquez García 2019:132). This is precisely what happens with El Palmar Stela 8 where the diminutive captive contrasts dramatically with the size of the ruler Upakal K'inich, who occupies the center of the front face (Baudez and Mathews 1979). Likewise, Upakal K'inich is fully dressed while the captive is stripped of almost all clothing. Examples similar to this scene include Aguateca Stela 2, Ceibal Stela 11, Piedras Negras Stela 8, and Yaxha Stela 31. These monuments were erected on public plazas, suggesting that acts of humiliating captives took place in front of a large audience (Baudez 2004; O'Neil 2012:81-87). We should note that the kneeling captive of Stela 8 has a beaded necklace with his name and title on Column B if our reading is correct. These features suggest that the captive had a certain status. Baudez (2004:58) suggests that this is a common treatment when one wants to emphasize the relevance of the capture and importance of the captive's submission. Several dynasties applied this technique to captives carved on stone monuments that include Yaxha Stela 31, Yaxchilan Hieroglyphic Stairway 3 Step 3, an altar paired with Ucanal Stela 3, the stairs of Building E-13 at Dzibanche, and Tonina Monuments 27, 83, 84, 108, and 122.

The portrait of Upakal K'inich contains important features. He wears a mask that covers the upper part of his face with a kind of a cord that runs from the headdress to his nose, a diagnostic element of the Jaguar God of the Underworld (Figure 15a). According to Taube (Taube and Houston 2015:214), the prototype of this motif could be a pair of serpents or a double-headed snake that goes back to the end of the Late Preclassic period,



**Figure 15.** (a) Jaguar God of the Underworld in Palenque, Temple of the Sun interior panel; (b) detail of Naranjo Stela 21.

as is shown in the stucco masks attached to Structure 5D-22-3<sup>rd</sup> of the North Acropolis at Tikal. Facial masks similar to that of El Palmar Stela 8 can be observed in Naranjo Stelae 21 and 30, among other instances (Figures 15b). The Jaguar God of the Underworld is also considered to be the sun of the Underworld or a nocturnal aspect of the sun in relation to fire and sacrifice, imagery materialized in El Zotz Mask 2 of the Temple of the Night Sun (Taube and Houston 2015) and a polychrome lidded bowl from the burial chamber of Structure IX of Becan (Boucher et al. 2004; Stuart 1998:408, 2005:62, 176). Throughout the Classic period, this god was linked to warfare because of its recurrent presence on war shields such as a panel of the inner sanctuary of the Temple of the Sun in Palenque (Figure 15a), Naranjo Stelae 11, 19, and 21, Ixkun Stela 1, and Aguateca Stela 19. Thus, Upakal K'inich impersonates the Jaguar God of the Underworld linked to warfare during the ceremony that took place in the Great Plaza.

The bodily expression of Upakal K'inich on Stela 8 represents his political power and authority. He grasps a full-bodied K'awiil staff whose right foot represents a serpent head. While many iconographic images on monuments represent the deity K'awiil in the form of a scepter, the full-bodied K'awiil staff that reaches the ground plane is unique to date (compare to Figures 16a and 16b). K'awiil is a deity associated with the abundance of food and lighting that announces rain, but more importantly during the Classic period *uch'amaaw k'awiil*, "He takes K'awiil," was a textual phrase which alluded to the enthronement of rulers who grasp political authority. The way in which Upakal K'inich holds the K'awiil staff in front of a captive recalls Yaxchilan Stela 11 where the ruler Yaxnuun Bahlam IV holds a K'awiil scepter over the heads of three captives. The performance of these rulers demonstrates the military nature of their political authority.



Figure 16. (a) K'awiil staff on Aguateca Stela 3; (b) K'awiil staff on Tzendales Stela 1.

Other elements of Upakal K'inich's attire also symbolize the military aspect. The pectoral of Upakal K'inich is a smaller version of the pectoral carved on Stela 10. The headdress base of Upakal K'inich resembles a Teotihuacan war helmet known as *ko'haw*. The Teotihuacan-inspired mosaic helmet is usually made of small plaques of shell (Figure 16a). Claudia García-Des Laurier (2000:114-115) suggests that this type of helmet is associated with the Teotihuacan War Serpent, whose skin is made of shell mosaic (see also Taube 1992). The war helmet of Upakal K'inich is adorned with a bundle of feathers on the front, short feathers with beads on the back, and long feathers—also with beads—that rise and curve backwards. There are similar sets of feathers attached to the head of the Teotihuacan War Serpent (Figure 18a), especially when it is worn by Maya rulers. Teotihuacan military costume became prestigious among Maya ruling elites during the Late Classic period as exemplified on Piedras Negras Panel 2, Stelae 7 and 40, Bonampak Stela 3 (Figure 18b), and Naranjo Stela 2 (Stone 1989; Taube 1992). It is possible that the style of helmet came from the Usumacinta region because El Palmar had interactions with Yaxchilan (Tsukamoto 2014b:316). By wearing this helmet together with a feathered headdress, Upakal K'inich embodies a warrior ideology.



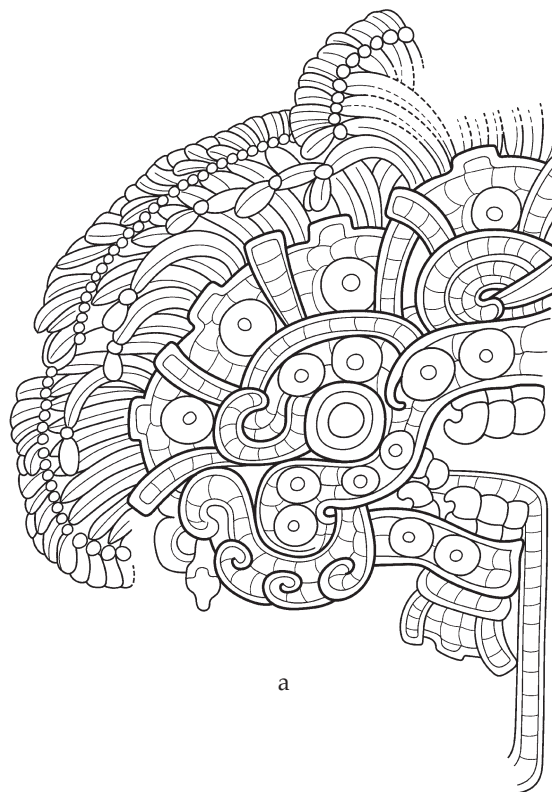
Figure 17. Reference to Upakal K'inich on the Guzmán Hieroglyphic Stairway at El Palmar.

### Upakal K'inich in Other Inscriptions

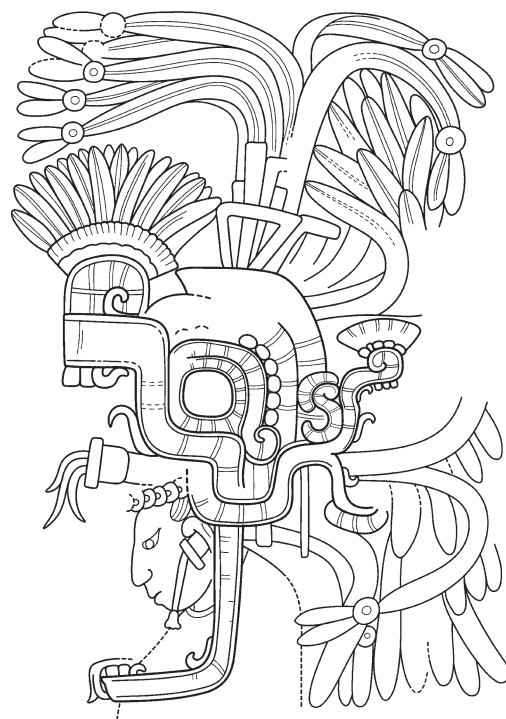
The first instance of the name of the ruler Upakal K'inich was recovered from El Palmar Hieroglyphic Stairway Step 2 of the Guzmán Group (Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2015). The inscription records the travel of the ambassador Ajpach' Waal, who went up to Copan to see the ruler Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil. The El Palmar ruler, or more likely Ajpach' Waal himself, commemorated his travel by building the hieroglyphic stairway on the period-ending 9.14.15.0.0 11 Ahau and 18 Zac (September 14, 726 CE). Ajpach' Waal claims that his ancestors were standard-bearers who served successive rulers of El Palmar. One of the standard-bearers is his father who worked for the lord Upakal K'inich. The glyph blocks that name Upakal K'inich were partially broken, and we did not find the missing part at the moment of discovery. However, Tsukamoto analyzed fragments scattered around the stairway during the following seasons and one of these was refitted. Thus, the new reading of Step 2 Q1–W1 and Step 3 A1–B1 is **yu-ne AJ-lu-#-chi-hi AJ-ti-xa-ha u-LAKAM u-pa-ka-la K'IN-ni...** **SAK-o-ka, yunen ajlu...chih ajtixah ulakam upakal k'inich...sakho'ok,** "He (Ajpach' Waal) is the son of Ajlu...Chih, his title is *tixah*, he is a *lakam* of Upakal K'inich, the White Valley" (Figure 17). As we mentioned earlier when Ajpach' Waal commemorated the building of the stairway the El Palmar ruler was Yunen, implying that Upakal K'inich's reign ended before 726 CE.

The second case comes from Naj Tunich, Guatemala. Drawing 29 consists of 34 glyphic blocks that form two columns (Figure 19). Unlike other inscriptions, the texts are read not from Column A to B but from the top to the bottom of Column A followed by Column B. Column A1–2 starts with the Calendar Round 6 Akbal 16 Xul. Barbara MacLeod and Andrea Stone (1995:155-184) proposed the correlated Long Count of these dates as 9.17.0.6.3 (May 24, 771 CE) but the texts in the Guzmán stairway prove this implausible. They also considered 9.14.7.11.3 (June 6, 719) as an alternative Long Count but rejected it based on other texts in the area of the cave. We support this latter date because of the duration of Upakal K'inich's reign lasting at least from 711 CE (Stela 10) to 721 (Stela 8).

Column A3-8 reads **yi-IL-wa? mo-no pa-na CHAK-BALAW-wa ma-yi-ki K'AN-na-bi-ya?-ni, yilaw monpan chak balaw mayik k'an biyaan?**, "Monpan was witnessed by Chak Balaw, offering, yellow, *biyaan*." Although some sections of the text are difficult to read due to their state of deterioration, it recounts that a vassal who served Upakal K'inich visited Monpan, the ancient name of Naj Tunich (MacLeod and Stone 1995:169). The person, whose name can be partially read as Chak Balaw (Carter and MacLeod 2021:5; see also Prager 2015 for the reading of logogram **BALAW**), bears the unusual title *mayik* that MacLeod and Sheseña (2013:216-220) translate as "offering," since in various Mayan languages such as Ch'olti' and Kaqchikel, the words *mayi*, *ah mai*, and *maih* mean "gift," "offering," and "authority" respectively. In a similar vein, they suggest that the title indicates ritual specialists who devote offerings to ensure agricultural abundance and fertility during ceremonies and propitiatory rites. In this regard, the meaning of Monpan is "taking care of sprouts" which is associated with agricultural ceremonies to promote good harvests (Carter and MacLeod: 2021: 5; MacLeod and Sheseña 2013). If this is the case, the El Palmar priest-scribe visited Naj Tunich to attend an agricultural ceremony related to



a



b

Figure 18. (a) Teotihuacan War Serpent on Lintel 2, Temple I, Tikal; (b) Bonampak Stela 3 headdress.



Figure 19. Naj Tunich Drawing 29 (based on photographs by James Brady and Gene Ware).



Figure 20. Naj Tunich Drawing 52 (based on photographs by James Brady and Gene Ware).

the new growth of maize at the beginning of the rainy season. The following title is *k'an biyaan*. The meaning *biyaan* remains unclear but it often combines with adjectives of color such as *sak*, "white," *k'an*, "yellow," and *yax*, "green-blue," and also with nominal clauses of rulers and their consorts (Boot 2009:80). For instance, Yaxchilan Lintels 11 and 56 depict *sak biyaan* and *yax biyaan*.

The text continues with the royal title *k'uhul ajaw* suggesting that Chak Balaw is the holy lord of a dynasty or a relative of Upakal K'inich. Alternatively, he is a vassal of Upakal K'inich but aggrandized himself using the *k'uhul ajaw* title. The following glyphs relate that Chak Balaw is subject to El Palmar's Upakal K'inich. They begin with a directional glyph of south with a title of *anahb*, a title that appears constantly in the signatures of various sculptors (Houston 2016:407-409). The meaning of *anahb* is controversial. Sheseña (2008a:16) proposed the meaning of *ajnahb* as "he of the well" that identifies the titled person as a specific type of priest or ritual specialist who visits a body of water within a cave in order to collect virgin water for diverse purposes (see also Redfield and Rojas 1934; Thompson 1970). Sheseña thinks that the *anahb* also plays several roles such as a scribe, priest who brings offerings to deities, and a ritual performer who provokes rain and food abundance. More recently, Houston (2016:407) proposed two possible meanings. First, *AJ-na-bi* is a common title of Maya officials with close to the same sequence of glyphs. Therefore, the person who possesses this title would be a courtier. The second possible meaning is a sculptor as an instrument of the ruler based on the lexicon of Colonial Tzotzil Maya. Drawing 29 continues at A10 with *no-NOH?-lo? a-na-bi ya-na-bi-li u-PAKAL-la K'INICH-chi SAK-o-ka 6-PIIT ba-ka-ba K'UHUL-i-bi-li WINIK-ki?*, *nohol ajnahb yanahbil upakal k'inich sakho'ok wak piit baahkab k'uhul ibil winik*, "a south *anahb*, he is an *anahb* of Upakal K'inich, the White valley, Six Litters, *baahkab*, holy Ibil person." Here we observe an unusual repetition of *ajnahb* and its possessed form *yanahbil*, emphasizing that the person Chak Balaw is not just a south *anahb* but an *anahb* of Upakal K'inich. Considering that this repetition is not a scribal error, we suggest that the text intentionally attests that Chak Balaw is Upakal K'inich's courtier who was responsible for collecting virgin water in the cave.

Rituals at Naj Tunich were often attended by a pair of ritual specialists. Chak Balaw was accompanied with his younger brother Tz'itz'il who also held a string of titles **ma-yi-ki K'AN-na-bi-ya-ni u?-chi-chi wi-WINIK-ki pa-li?-?-ku? BAAX?-TUUN?-AJAW? 8-20?-ya?-AJAW?-? K'UHUL?-?-AJAW?**, *mayik k'an biyaan uchich? winik paal? ...baax tuun ajaw? waxakwinik ajaw? yajaw?... k'uhul ajaw?*, "offering, yellow biyaan, of Paal...Baax Tuun lord? lord of the twenty eight? vassal of the holy...lord." McLeod and Stone (1995:174) proposed the meaning of *chich winik* as a storyteller<sup>3</sup> since in colonial Yukatek the expression *ajchich* refers to a person skilled in telling stories or outstanding events (Sheseña 2008b:1042). As with Chak Balaw, his younger brother uses the title of *mayik k'an biyaan* and, perhaps, he was associated with a lord of the Baax Tuun dynasty (Carter and MacLeod 2021:9). Other pairs of participants at Naj Tunich are linked with terms *itz'in winik*, "person younger brother" or "the lesser" and *sakun winik*, "person older brother" or "the largest," which appear to be related to a ritual hierarchy of individuals. The most important person in the ritual is the *sakun winik* while the least relevant is the *itz'in winik* (MacLeod and Sheseña 2013; Sheseña 2010). The term *yitz'in*, "younger brother," that appears before his title suggests that Tz'itz'il is a lower-ranking official.

Naj Tunich Drawing 52 (Figure 20) depicts the arrival of Aj Chak at the cave in the company of Naah Chan...K'awii? Tz'uul who is the *anahb* of *sakho'ok* (MacLeod and Stone 1995:174; Sheseña 2008b:1044). It is unclear whether this official Chak Balaw is the same person as Chak Balaw mentioned on Drawing 29. One of the reasons is that the chronology of this event is problematic since the text only contains the date of the Calendar Round 3 Ahau 3 Mol, which MacLeod and Stone (1995:158) tied to 9.15.10.0.0 (July 27, 741 CE). However, it is equally possible that the Calendar Round corresponds to 9.12.17.5.0 (June 10, 689). The official Chak Balaw of Drawing 52 could be the same person as in Drawing 29 if Upakal K'inich reigned El Palmar in 689. At this point, there is no evidence of his accession date and Drawing 52 is too damaged to understand the entire text. Finally, Drawing 37 contains the *sakho'ok* title but it is too eroded to identify its context.

## Discussion

Classic Maya titles provide clues to the political organization of the El Palmar dynasty during the Late Classic period. The El Palmar royal titles *sakho'ok wat piit* were

used at least from 554 CE (Esparza Olguín et al. 2019; Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2021). While the duration of his reign remains unknown, Upakal K'inich presided over El Palmar no less than a decade according to the period-ending events on 9.14.0.0.0 (December 2, 711 CE) and 9.14.10.0.0 (October 10, 721) that are carved on El Palmar Stelae 10 and 8, respectively. Upakal K'inich also holds the title of *k'uhul ibil winik*, "holy bean person" (Tokovinine 2014). This enigmatic title remains underexplored but the relationship between Upakal K'inich and his officials hints at some hierarchical position. On 9.14.7.11.3 (June 6, 719 CE) at the beginning of the rainy season, Upakal K'inich appears to have sent Chak Balaw to Naj Tunich. The titles of *anahb* and *mayik* suggest that these officials attended an agricultural ceremony in this case, invoking abundant rain and harvest. The spatial configuration of the El Palmar Main Group places emphasis on the significance of water and cave. Upakal K'inich's impersonation of the Aquatic Serpent attests to the importance of water related rituals. Chak Balaw and Tz'itz'il who probably collected virgin water in the cave, therefore, could have been of high status in the El Palmar dynasty. Chak Balaw holds the title of *k'uhul ajaw* which was usually possessed by powerful rulers. The use of *k'uhul ajaw* was highly restricted even among rulers in southeastern Campeche until the middle of the eighth century (Grube 2005). Indeed, El Palmar royal titles lack the *k'uhul* sign. Because Chak Balaw states that he is the *anahb* of Upakal K'inich, the political rank of *k'uhul ibil winik* could have been higher than *k'uhul ajaw*. It is equally possible that they had heterarchical relations and those relations constantly changed. Further archaeological, epigraphic, and iconographic studies will continue to reveal the nature of political organization in Classic Maya society.

In addition to these titles, there existed other officials in the El Palmar dynasties. *Lakam* were diplomats who negotiated political alliances with other dynasties in the southern Maya lowlands, particularly Copan (Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2015). The Guzmán stairway suggested to Tsukamoto (2014a) that Ajpach'Waal, a descendant of standard-bearers (*lakam*), emphasizes his political ties more to the Copan ruler than to the El Palmar ruler. Other titles include *ajk'uhuun* who appear in an El Palmar courtly scene on the Señor de Peten cylinder vessel, which was found by Cortés de Brasdefer (1996) at Icaiche, a site located about 16 km east of El Palmar. The courtly scene represents the El Palmar ruler, his princes, and two *ajk'uhuun*. The ruler's adolescent prince sits on the lowest step where two *ajk'uhuun* are placed. Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín (2021) suggest that this spatial arrangement represents the political importance of *ajk'uhuun* in the El Palmar kingdom. Thus, the presence of different elite titles indicates the complexity of the El Palmar political organization, and their appearances at different sites imply

<sup>3</sup> This probably entailed among his roles the reciting of various prayers during the ceremonies carried out in Naj Tunich. This resembles *ajb'ix*, "reciter or singer" of the modern town of Momostenango where priests specialize in the narration of prayers in K'iche' during diverse ceremonies (Sheseña 2008b:1043).

that the El Palmar dynasty had complex geopolitical networks during the Late Classic period.

In the Maya lowlands the war victory of Jasaw Chan K'awiil over Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' in 695 CE swayed neighboring dynasties (Martin and Grube 2008). Iconographic images in El Palmar Stelae 8 and 10 attest the shrinkage of the Kaanul dynasty in the Maya lowlands during the early eighth century. The king Upakal K'inich wears military costume carrying a spear to perform a period-ending ceremony that took place in front of a large audience in the Great Plaza. On Stela 8 Upakal K'inich wears a Teotihuacan-style headdress in the company of a captive. Monuments of neighboring sites erected around this time also represent rulers with military costume and captives. The frequency of militaristic representations in public ceremonies denotes increase in conflicts in southeastern Campeche during the eighth century. At El Palmar a sign of militarization was already visible around the time when a powerful ruler of the Kaanul dynasty, Sky Witness, oversaw the accession of a ruler, Sak Baah Witzil, at Los Alacranes in 561 CE (Grube 2008:193-195). El Palmar Stela 42, which is paired with Altar 10, represents a ruler with military costume somewhat similar to that of Upakal K'inich on Stelae 8 and 10 (Esparza Olguín et al. 2019). Altar 10 was placed in 554 CE under the supervision of El Palmar ruler K'ahk' P'ulaj Chan Yopaat. Inscriptions on Stela 42 are heavily eroded and therefore it is difficult to discern the ruler's name. If Stela 42 was erected together with Altar 10 in 554, the protagonist on the stela is most likely K'ahk' P'ulaj Chan Yopaat, suggesting that his theatrical performance on a large public plaza already had some military aspects around the sixth century. The study of contemporaneous monuments at El Palmar will allow us to evaluate the degree of militarization at El Palmar during the Middle Classic period (400–600 CE).

Notwithstanding the historical defeat in 695 CE, Yuknoom Took' K'awiil attempted to prevent the Kaanul dynasty from collapsing vassalage networks that his predecessors built eagerly in the Maya area, particularly in the Peten region. At Calakmul he ordered the erection of six stelae at the foot of Structure I, commemorating the period-ending of the 15th katun on 9.15.0.0.0 (August 19, 731 CE). Elsewhere, he visited former allies such as La Corona where he supervised the dedication of a building on 9.14.3.5.15 (March 11, 715). On 9.14.9.9.14 (April 27, 721) he sent one of his daughters to the city of Sak Nikte' to ally with its local ruler Yajaw Te' K'inich (Martin 2008). Four years later on 9.14.14.7.2 (February 8, 726) Yuknoom Took' K'awiil visited Naranjo together with a ruler of Dos Pilas in order to supervise an impersonation ceremony performed by K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chahk, a son of the famous Lady Six Sky (Martin et al. 2017). In the same year (9.14.15.0.0)

Yuknoom Took' K'awiil appears in the inscription on the El Palmar Hieroglyphic Stairway at the Guzmán Group, overseeing the political alliance with Copan (Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2021). Another site is El Peru-Waka' where Yuknoom Took' K'awiil supervised the enthronement of a local ruler although the event cannot be dated with confidence (Martin and Stuart 2009). Because El Palmar had a long-term relationship with the Kaanul dynasty (Esparza Olguín and Tsukamoto 2011), interactions of Upakal K'inich and his son with rulers of other sites were probably tied to the political campaigns of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil.

The political strategy of the Kaanul dynasty under the reign of Yuknoom Took' K'awiil was likely to incorporate Copan into his confederated networks and ultimately attempt to encircle Tikal (Tsukamoto et al. 2015:214). Considering the dynastic events mentioned above, it is difficult to think that El Palmar *anahb* and *mayik* visited Naj Tunich only for a religious purposes. As with *lakam*, they were likely emissaries who negotiated political alliances with other dynasties. At this point there is no evidence that Upakal K'inich went to the south. However, a Copan-style eccentric flint in the cache dedicated to Stela 10 attests that Upakal K'inich or his officials had a certain contact with Copan's authority. If so, the negotiations of political alliance with Copan occurred not just once in 726 CE, which the Guzmán hieroglyphic staircase commemorates, but also several times that go back to 711 when Stela 10 was erected and 719 when Upakal K'inich's officials attended the agricultural ceremony at Naj Tunich. Furthermore, Upakal K'inich or his son attempted to consolidate political ties to the Usumacinta region that are attested by the presence of an El Palmar sculptor on Yaxchilan Lintel 26 in 724 (Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2015). Nevertheless, Yuknoom Took' K'awiil could not regain the ancient regime since a few years later around 734 he was defeated and captured by Tikal's Yik'in Chan K'awiil (Martin and Stuart 2009). This event would bring with it a series of misfortunes for Kaanul's old allies such as El Perú and Naranjo, who suffered bloody military defeats from Tikal in 743 and 744 respectively.

Conversely, some dynasties in southeastern Campeche flourished culturally after the collapse of the Kaanul dynasty. Rulers at Oxpemul, Chactun, and La Muñeca commissioned several monuments throughout the eighth century (Šprajc 2008, 2015). In the Río Bec region ruling elites enjoyed new architectural and ceramic styles (Nondédéo et al. 2013). El Palmar rulers did not throw their lot in with the Kaanul dynasty. They continuously erected stone monuments at the Main Group during the ninth century, and *sakho'ok* elites appear at other sites such as Río Azul (Stela 2, 790 CE) and Cancuen (Panel 3, 795 CE), demonstrating that the geopolitical

network of the El Palmar dynasty was maintained after the collapse of the Kaanul dynasty.

### Conclusion

Upakal K'inich is thus far the best-known and best-documented ruler in the El Palmar corpus of inscriptions. His name was recorded on El Palmar Stelae 8 and 10 that celebrate period-endings on a large public plaza. He also appears as a former ruler in the inscriptions of the Guzmán stairway. Several officials worked for Upakal K'inich not only to support the internal political organization but also to assist in interregional negotiations. He experienced a dramatic change in the geopolitical landscape of the Maya lowlands after 695 CE. His military costume symbolizes political turbulence and simultaneously his attempts to stabilize and control the dynasty. However, the fall of the Kaanul dynasty was not immediate, giving Upakal K'inich an opportunity to enhance a sense of his presence in the geopolitical landscape. In this regard El Palmar officials played critical roles, negotiating political alliances with other dynasties that were not limited to southeastern Campeche but also distant regions such as Quintana Roo, the Usumacinta, Peten, and Copan. Despite the second defeat of Calakmul against Tikal around 734 CE, El Palmar managed to survive, maintaining its networks with other dynasties.

A number of carved monuments have not been studied yet in detail at El Palmar. Future research will provide additional insights into a deeper understanding of the El Palmar political organization and its inter-regional interactions in the Maya lowlands during the Classic period.

### Acknowledgments

We thank Javier López Camacho, the co-director of the El Palmar Archaeological Project for his continuous support. This study would not have been possible without the support of the project crews and people in Kiché Las Pailas. We appreciate Travis Stanton for his constructive comments and useful suggestions to clarify our arguments. We extend our gratitude to Jorge Pérez de Lara who kindly provided his beautiful photo of the eccentric flint. Archaeological research at El Palmar was generously permitted by the Consejo de Arqueología of Mexico's Instituto de Antropología e Historia. We thank the University of California, Riverside, Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Centro de Estudios Mayas de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, and the Centro INAH Campeche for their institutional support. This research was funded by the JSPS KAKENHI (19K1440, 19K13408, and 20H05141).

### References

- Agurcia-Fasquelle, Ricardo, Payson Sheets, and Karl Andreas Taube  
2016 *Protecting Sacred Space: Rosalilla's Eccentric Chert Cache at Copan and Eccentrics among the Classic Maya*. Precolumbia Mesoweb Press, San Francisco.
- Baudez, Claude-François  
1998 Cosmología y política maya. In *Modelos de entidades políticas mayas. Primer Seminario de las Mesas Redondas de Palenque*, edited by Silvia Trejo, pp. 147-160. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City.
- 2004 Los cautivos mayas y su destino. In *Los cautivos de Dzibanché*, edited by Enrique Nalda, pp. 57-77. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City.
- Baudez, Claude F., and Peter Mathews  
1979 Capture and Sacrifice at Palenque. In *Tercera Mesa Redonda de Palenque*, edited by Merle Greene Robertson and Donnan Call Jeffers, pp. 31-40. Pre-Columbian Art Research Center; Herald Printers, Monterey
- Benson, Elizabeth P.  
1974 Gestures and Offerings. In *Primera Mesa Redonda de Palenque, Part I. A Conference on the Art, Iconography, and Dynastic History of Palenque*, pp. 109-120. Pre-Columbian Art Research, Pebble Beach.
- Boot, Eric  
2009 *The Updated Preliminary Classic Maya-English, English-Classical Maya Vocabulary of Hieroglyphic Readings*. Available: [www.mesoweb.com/resources/vocabulary/Vocabulary-2009.01.pdf](http://www.mesoweb.com/resources/vocabulary/Vocabulary-2009.01.pdf).
- Boucher, Sylviane, Luz Evelia Campaña, and Yoli Palomo  
2004 Dramatis Personae de la ofrenda funeraria en la estructura IX de Becán, Campeche. In *Culto funerario en la sociedad maya. Memoria de la Cuarta Mesa Redonda de Palenque*, edited by Rafael Cobos, pp. 369-394. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City.
- Brokmann, Carlos  
1997 *Proyecto Arqueológico El Palmar, Campeche. Informe preliminar de actividades de la primera temporada de campo*. Report submitted to the Archivo Técnico del Centro INAH Campeche, Campeche.
- Callaway, Carl D.  
2011 A Catalogue of Maya Era Day Inscriptions. M.A. Thesis, School of Historical and European Studies, La Trobe University, Bundoora.
- Carter, Nicholas, and Barbara MacLeod  
2021 Naj Tunich Drawing 29 and the Origins of the Baax Tuun Dynasty. *The PARI Journal* 21(4):1-16.

- Clancy, Flora  
1999 *Sculpture in the Ancient Maya Plaza: the Early Classic Period*. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.  
2015 Public Spaces in the Ancient Maya City: A History. In *Maya Imagery, Architecture, and Activity: Space and Spatial Analysis in Art History*, edited by Maline D. Werness-Rude and Kaylee R. Spencer, pp. 210-228. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- Coe, Michael, and Elizabeth P. Benson  
1966 Three Maya Relief Panels at Dumbarton Oaks. *Studies in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology* 2:1-36. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.
- Cortés de Brasdefer, Fernando  
1996 A Maya Vase from "El Señor de Petén". *Mexicon* 18(1):6.
- Esparza Olguín, Octavio Q., and Kenichiro Tsukamoto  
2011 Espacios de la escenografía ritual. In *Los Mayas. Voces de piedra*, edited by Alejandra Martínez de Velasco and María Elena Vega, pp. 393-399. Ámbar Diseño, México City.
- Esparza Olguín, Octavio Q., Kenichiro Tsukamoto, and Luz Evelia Campaña Valenzuela  
2019 Estudio arqueológico y epigráfico del Altar 10 de El Palmar, Campeche, México. Un monumento maya del periodo Clásico Temprano. *Estudios de Cultura Maya* 54:65-90.
- Fash, Barbara  
2005 Iconographic Evidence for Water Management and Social Organization at Copán. In *Copán: the History of an Ancient Maya Kingdom*, edited by E. Wyllys Andrews and William Fash, pp. 103-138. School of American Research Press, Santa Fe.
- García-Des Lauriers, Claudia  
2000 Trappings of Sacred War: The Warrior Costume of Teotihuacan. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Riverside.
- García Barrios, Ana  
2006 Confrontation Scenes in Codex-Style Pottery: An Iconographic Review. *Latin American Indian Literatures Journal* 22(2):129-152.  
2008 Chaahk, el dios de la lluvia en el período Clásico Maya: aspectos religiosos y políticos. Ph.D. dissertation, Departamento de Historia de América II, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid.  
2009 El aspecto bélico de Chaahk, el dios de la lluvia en el período Clásico. *Revista Española de Antropología Americana* 39:7-29.
- George, Herbert  
2004 *The Elements of Sculpture*. Phaidon, New York.
- Gómez, Martín Sobrino  
2007 Phonological Processes Depicted in the Dresden Codex. Paper presented at the VII Congreso Internacional de Mayistas, Mérida.
- Graham, Ian, and Eric von Euw  
1975 *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions, Volume 2, Part 1: Naranjo*. Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge.
- Grube, Nikolai  
2005 Toponyms, Emblem Glyphs, and the Political Geography of Southern Campeche. *Anthropological Notebooks* 11:89-102.  
2008 Monumentos esculpidos: epigrafía e iconografía. In *Reconocimiento arqueológico en el sureste del estado de Campeche, México: 1996-2005*, edited by Ivan Šprajc, pp. 177-231. BAR International Series 1742. Archaeopress, Oxford.
- Houston, Stephen  
2016 Crafting Credit: Authorship among Classic Maya Painters and Sculptors. In *Making Value, Making Meaning: Techné in the Pre-Columbian World*, edited by Cathy L. Costin, pp. 391-431. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C.
- Houston, Stephen D.  
1993 *Hieroglyphs and History at Dos Pilas: Dynastic Politics of the Classic Maya*. University of Texas Press, Austin.  
1998 Classic Maya Depictions of the Built Environment. In *Function and Meaning in Classic Maya Architecture: A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks, 7th and 8th October 1994*, edited by Stephen D. Houston, pp. 333-372. Harvard University, Washington D.C.
- Houston, Stephen, and Karl Taube  
2012 Carved Panel (Plate 1). In *Ancient Maya Art at Dumbarton Oaks*, edited by Joanne Pillsbury, Miriam Doutriaux, Reiko Ishihara-Brito, and Alexandre Tokovinine, pp. 39-47. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C.
- Johnson, Scott A. J.  
2013 *Translating Maya Hieroglyphs*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.
- Kerr, Justin  
1992 *The Maya Vase Book: A Corpus of Rollout Photographs of Maya Vases, Volume 3*. Kerr Associates, New York.
- Lhuillier, Alberto Ruz  
1945 *Campeche en la arqueología maya*. Acta Antropológica. Sociedad de Alumnos de la Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City.
- Looper, Matthew G.  
2003 *Lightning Warrior: Maya Art and Kingship at Quiriguá*. University of Texas Press, Austin.

- MacLeod, Barbara, and Alejandro Sheseña  
2013 Ritos agrícolas mayas clásicos desarrollados en cuevas. In *Religión maya: rasgos y desarrollo histórico*, edited by Alejandro Sheseña, pp. 201-224. Universidad de Ciencias y Artes de Chiapas, Tuxtla Gutiérrez.
- MacLeod, Barbara, and Andrea J. Stone  
1995 The Hieroglyphic Inscriptions of Naj Tunich: Naj Tunich and the Tradition of Maya Cave Painting. In *Images from the Underworld*, edited by Andrea J. Stone, pp. 155-184. University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Martin, Simon, and Nikolai Grube  
2008 *Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens: Deciphering the Dynasties of the Ancient Maya*. 2nd ed. Thames and Hudson, London.
- Martin, Simon, and Joel Skidmore  
2012 Exploring the 584286 Correlation between the Maya and European Calendars. *The PARI Journal* 13(2):3-16.
- Martin, Simon, and David Stuart  
2009 *The Snake Kingdom: History and Politics at Calakmul and Related Royal Courts. Sourcebook for the 2009 Maya Meetings and Symposium, University of Texas at Austin*. Mesoamerica Center; Department of Art and Art History, University of Texas, Austin.
- Martin, Simon, Alexandre Tokovinine, Elodie Treffel, and Vilma Fialko  
2017 La Estela 46 de Naranjo Sa'al, Peten, Guatemala: hallazgo y texto jeroglífico. In *XXX Simposio de Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Guatemala, 2016*, edited by Bárbara Arroyo, Luis Méndez Salinas, and Gloria Ajú Álvarez, v. 2, pp. 669-684. Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes; Instituto de Antropología e Historia; Asociación Tikal, Guatemala City.
- Morley, Sylvanus G.  
1938 *The Inscriptions of Petén. Publication No. 437*. Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, D.C.  
1956 *The Ancient Maya*. 3rd ed. Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Nondédéo, Philippe, M. Charlotte Arnauld, and Dominique Michelet  
2013 Río Bec Settlement Patterns and Local Sociopolitical Organization. *Ancient Mesoamerica* 24(2):373-396.
- Nondédéo, Philippe, and Julie Patrois  
2007 Iconografía del poder en la Región Río Bec: representaciones y primeras interpretaciones. In *El patrimonio arqueológico de Campeche. Novedades, afectaciones y soluciones*, edited by Ernesto Vargas Pacheco, and Antonio Benavides Castillo, pp. 159-205. Centro de Estudios Mayas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City.
- O'Neil, Megan  
2012 *Engaging Ancient Maya Sculpture at Piedras Negras, Guatemala*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.
- Prager, Christian M.  
2015 Notes on Ancient Maya Writing-Is T594 the Logograph for BAL(AW) "Cloth, Cover, Textile"? Electric document, accessed February 18, 2022. [https://www.academia.edu/25792741/Notes\\_on\\_Ancient\\_Maya\\_Writing\\_-\\_Is\\_T594\\_the\\_Logograph\\_for\\_BAL\\_AW\\_cloth\\_cover\\_textile\\_](https://www.academia.edu/25792741/Notes_on_Ancient_Maya_Writing_-_Is_T594_the_Logograph_for_BAL_AW_cloth_cover_textile_).
- Proskouriakoff, Tatiana  
1950 *A Study of Classic Maya Sculpture*. Classic Maya Sculpture. Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington D.C.
- Redfield, Robert, and Alfonso Villa Rojas  
1934 *Chan Kom: A Maya Village*. Publication 438. Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, D.C.
- Robicsek, Francis, and Donald Hales  
1981 *The Maya Book of the Dead: The Ceramic Codex*. University of Virginia Art Museum, Charlottesville.
- Ruz Lhuiller, Alberto  
1945 *Campeche en la arqueología maya*. Acta Antropológica 1. Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City.
- Salazar Lama, Daniel  
2019a Escultura integrada en la arquitectura maya: tradición y retórica en la representación de los gobernantes (400 a.e.c. – 600 e.c.) Ph.D. dissertation, Estudios Mesoamericanos, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City.  
2019b Frente al antepasado: Imágenes y discursos de poder en el entorno construido de Kohunlich. *Revista de Española de Antropología Americana* 49:193-216.
- Schapiro, Mayer  
1999 *Estilo, artista y sociedad. Teoría y filosofía del arte*. Tecnos, Madrid.
- Schele, Linda, and Nikolai Grube  
1997 The Dresden Codex. In *Notebook for the XXIst Maya Hieroglyphic Workshop, March 8-9, 1997, Part 2*. University of Texas at Austin.
- Sheseña, Alejandro  
2008a El título maya clásico aj naa[h]b'. *Wayeb Notes* 28:1-21.  
2008b Jerarquía ritual y política en la cueva de Naj Tunich. In *XXI Simposio de Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Guatemala*, edited by Juan Pedro Laporte, Bárbara Arroyo, and Héctor Mejía, pp. 1041-1055. Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes, Instituto de Antropología e Historia, Asociación Tikal, Guatemala City.

- Sheseña, Alejandro, continued  
 2010 Discurso ritual maya en contextos de cuevas. Particularidades de una tradición milenaria. *Acta Americana. Journal of the Swedish Americanist Society* 13:47-72.
- Šprajc, Ivan  
 2008 *Reconocimiento arqueológico en el sureste del estado de Campeche, México: 1996-2005*. BAR International Series 1742. British Archaeological Reports, Oxford.  
 2015 *Exploraciones arqueológicas en Chactún, Campeche, México*. Založba ZRC, Ljubljana.
- Stone, Andrea  
 1989 Disconnection, Foreign Insignia, and Political Expansion: Teotihuacan and the Warrior Stelae of Piedras Negras. In *Mesoamerica After the Decline of Teotihuacan. A. D. 700-900*, edited by Richard Diehl, and Janet Catherine Berlo, pp. 153-172. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C.
- Stuart, David  
 1998 "The Fire Enters His House": Architectural and Ritual in Classic Maya Texts. In *Function and Meaning in Classic Maya Architecture: A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks, 7th and 8th October 1994*, edited by Stephen D. Houston, pp. 373-426. Harvard University, Washington, D.C.  
 2005 *The Inscriptions from Temple XIX at Palenque*. Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute, San Francisco.  
 2007 Reading the Water Serpent as WITZ'. *Maya Decipherment: Ideas on Ancient Maya Writing and Iconography*: [mayadecipherment.com/2007/04/13/reading-the-water-serpent/](http://mayadecipherment.com/2007/04/13/reading-the-water-serpent/).
- Taube, Karl  
 1992 The Temple of Quetzalcoatl and the Cult of Sacred War at Teotihuacan. *RES: Anthropology and Aethetics* 21:53-87.
- Taube, Karl A., and Kenichiro Tsukamoto  
 n.d. Hills of the Ancestors: Sacred Architecture and Solar Worship in the Northern Maya Lowlands. In *When East Meets West: Chichen Itza, Tula, and the Postclassic Mesoamerican World*, edited by Travis W. Stanton, Karl A. Taube, Jeremy K. Coltman, and Nelda I. Marengo Camacho, pp. xxx. British Archaeological Reports, Oxford.
- Taube, Karl, and Stephen Houston  
 2015 Masks and Iconography. In *Temple of the Night Sun: A Royal Tomb at El Diablo, Guatemala*, by Stephen Houston, Sarah Newman, Edwin Román, and Thomas Garrison, pp. 208-229. Precolumbia Mesoweb Press, San Francisco.
- Thompson, Eric J. S.  
 1936a An Eccentric Flint from Quintana Roo, Mexico. *Maya Research* 3:316-318.  
 1936b Exploration in Campeche and Quintana Roo and Excavations at San José, British Honduras. In *Carnegie Institution of Washington Year Book*, Vol 35, pp. 125-128. Carnegie Institution, Washington, D.C.  
 [1963] 1994 *Maya Archaeologist*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.
- Thompson, J. Eric S.  
 1970 *Maya History and Religion*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.
- Tokovinine, Alexander  
 2002 Divine Patrons of the Maya Ballgame. *Mesoweb*: [www.mesoweb.com/features/tokovinine/Ballgame.pdf](http://www.mesoweb.com/features/tokovinine/Ballgame.pdf).
- Tokovinine, Alexandre  
 2014 Beans and Glyphs: A Possible IB Logogram in the Classic Maya Script. *The PARI Journal* 14(4):10-16.
- Tsukamoto, Kenichiro  
 2014a Multiple Identities on the Plazas: The Classic Maya Center of El Palmar, Mexico. In *Mesoamerican Plazas: Arenas of Community and Power*, edited by Kenichiro Tsukamoto and Takeshi Inomata, pp. 50-67. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.  
 2014b Politics in Plazas: Classic Maya Ritual Performance at El Palmar, Campeche, Mexico. Ph.D. dissertation, School of Anthropology, University of Arizona, Tucson.
- Tsukamoto, Kenichiro, Javier López Camacho, Luz Evelia Campaña Valenzuela, Hirokazu Kotegawa, and Octavio Q. Esparza Olguín  
 2015 Political Interactions among Social Actors: Spatial Organization at the Classic Maya Polity of El Palmar, Campeche, Mexico. *Latin American Antiquity* 26:200-220.
- Tsukamoto, Kenichiro, and Octavio Q. Esparza Olguín  
 2021 Title, Space, and Architecture: Negotiating Kingship in the Classic Maya Dynasty of El Palmar, Mexico. In *Maya Kingship: Rupture and Transformation from Classic to Postclassic Times*, edited by Tsubasa Okoshi, Arlen F. Chase, Philippe Nondédéo, and M. Charlotte Arnauld, pp. 185-201. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.
- Tsukamoto, Kenichiro, Hirokazu Kotegawa, and Luz Evelia Campaña Valenzuela  
 2012 Secuencia constructiva de las plazas en el grupo principal de El Palmar, Campeche, México. *Estudios de Cultura Maya* 39:13-30.
- Tsukamoto, Kenichiro, and Octavio Esparza Olguín  
 2015 Ajpach' Waal: The Hieroglyphic Stairway at the Guzmán Group of El Palmar, Campeche, Mexico. In *Maya Archaeology*, edited by Charles Golden, Stephen Houston, and Joel Skidmore, pp. 30-55. Precolumbia Mesoweb Press, San Francisco.
- Tsukamoto, Kenichiro, and Octavio Q. Esparza Olguín  
 2021 Title, Space, and Architecture: Negotiating Kingship in the Classic Maya Dynasty of El Palmar, Mexico. In *Maya Kingship: Rupture and Transformation from Classic to Postclassic Times*, edited by Tsubasa Okoshi, Arlen F. Chase, Philippe Nondédéo, and M. Charlotte Arnauld, pp. 185-201. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.
- Velásquez García, Erik  
 2019 Gesto y rango en el arte maya clásico. *Revista Española de Antropología Americana* 49:131-150.

## Errata

The following figure captions have been revised to include citations:

**Figure 8.** (a) Witz' serpent headdress, El Peru Stela 34 (drawing by Daniel Salazar Lama, after Montgomery, John 2000: <http://research.famsi.org/uploads/montgomery/269/image/JM00651prust34frntupper.jpg>); (b) Witz' serpent headdress, Pomona Sculpture 30 (drawing by Daniel Salazar Lama, after García Moll, Roberto 2005 *Pomoná: un sitio del Clásico Maya en las colinas tabasqueñas*. Colección Científica. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Ciudad de México).

**Figure 9.** Roof comb at Kohunlich Structure B4: (a) Segment 1 East; (b) Segment 1 West; (c) Segment 2 West. Note the bicephalic thrones on which rulers are seated over *witz* masks, and the two heads shown on both sides of thrones (drawing by Daniel Salazar Lama, modified from Bourillón, Alejandra, Sara Fernandez, and Luis Amaro 2001 *Informe de los trabajos de restauración efectuados en la zona arqueológica de Kohunlich, Quintana Roo. Enero-Abril 2001*. Unpublished work with the permission of Luis Amaro and Alejandra Bourillón).

**Figure 15.** (a) Jaguar God of the Underworld in Palenque, Temple of the Sun interior panel (drawing by Daniel Salazar Lama, after Linda Schele: <http://research.famsi.org/uploads/schele/hires/01/IMG0075.jpg>); (b) a detail of Naranjo Stela 21 (drawing by Daniel Salazar Lama, after Ian Graham, in Graham, Ian, and Eric von Euw 1975 *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions. Volume 2, Part 1: Naranjo*. Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge).

**Figure 16.** (a) K'awiil staff on Aguateca Stela 3 (drawing by Daniel Salazar Lama, after Ian Graham: <https://collections.peabody.harvard.edu/objects/details/657063>); (b) K'awiil staff on Tzendales Stela 1 (drawing by Daniel Salazar Lama, after Spinden, Herbert [1913]1975 *A Study of Maya Art: Its Subject Matter and Historical Development*. Dover Publications, New York).

**Figure 18.** (a) Teotihuacan War Serpent on Lintel 2, Temple I, Tikal (drawing by Daniel Salazar Lama, after William R. Coe, in Jones, Christopher y Linton Satterthwaite 1982 *The Monuments and Inscriptions of Tikal: The Carved Monuments*. Tikal Report 33, Part A. Monograph 44. University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia); (b) Bonampak Stela 3 headdress (drawing by Daniel Salazar Lama, after Mathews, Peter 1980 "Notes on the Dynastic Sequence of Bonampak, Part 1." In *Third Palenque Round Table, 1978, Part 2*, edited by Merle Greene Robertson, pp. 60-73. University of Texas Press, Austin).