



The PARI Journal

A quarterly publication of the Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute
Volume VII, No. 4, Spring 2007

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415-664-8889
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Electronic version
available at:
www.mesoweb.com/
pari/journal/0704

The PARI Journal is made
possible by a grant from
Precolumbia Mesoweb

ISSN 1531-5398

Stela 45 of Naranjo and the Early Classic Lords of Sa'aal

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During the 2004 field season of the Project of Archaeological Research and Salvage at the site of Naranjo, Peten, Guatemala, a team of archaeologists led by Dr. Vilma Fialko uncovered Early Classic sculpture fragments in the fill of the main structure of Triadic Acropolis C-9. This paper presents the results of preliminary epigraphic and iconographic analysis of these fragments, which belong to a previously unknown monument (Stela 45) commissioned by the king Naatz Chan Ahk. Among other things, the inscriptions and imagery on the new stela make reference to an other-

wise unknown Early Classic king of Naranjo, Tzik'in Bahlam, and suggest that the seat of the lords of *Sa'aal* was at Naranjo by the fifth century AD.

Archaeological Context of Stela 45

The site of Naranjo, located to the northwest of the town of Melchor de Mencos near the Guatemala-Belize border (Figure 1), was the capital of one of the most powerful Classic Maya kingdoms governed by the dynasty of the "holy lords of Sa'aal."¹ Its history has been investigated and

¹ The place name in the Naranjo 'emblem glyph' is usually transliterated as *saal* (Martin and Grube 2000:69). It is spelled with a sign T278:553 followed by *li*. In the spelling *sa-ja-la sajal* on Piedras Negras Stela 8, T278:553 apparently replaces one of the common *sa* syllabic signs (T1004 and T630). T278:553 is substituted twice by T1004 *sa* in the Naranjo emblem glyph itself (vase K1398 and Naranjo Stela 23:F16). T278:553 is not used as a syllabic *sa* elsewhere. Therefore, it seems that T278:553 may be 'reduced' to a syllabic *sa* and may be substituted by *sa* in certain contexts, but the phonetic value of T278:553 is different enough from *sa* to prevent common substitution.

In our opinion, the pattern described above suggests that T278:553 could be a logogram with a phonetic value similar to *sa* except for an additional and potentially reducible feature like a final /h/ or /'/. In Ch'olan languages, *sa'* means "maize dough" or "gruel" as well as drinks made out of it, like atole or pozole (Kaufman and Norman 1984:130). In Ch'orti', the word stands for gruel in general, e.g., *sa'rum* for "daub" (Hull 2005:100). T278:553 does appear in the names of beverages. Copan Altar K mentions drinking *SAK-T278:553-chi-ji*. The content of some vessels is described as T278:553-*la ka-ka-wa* (K6813, K7529). Finally, a vessel marked with T278:553 appears in a scene on the vase K8008. A logogram with a value *SA'* would fit all these contexts: *sak sa' chij* "white gruel(-ish) pulque," *sa'al kakaw* "gruel-ish chocolate," and

simply *sa'* "atole gruel."

If T278:553 is *SA'*, it remains to be explained why it is substituted by a syllabic *sa* in the emblem glyph of Naranjo rulers. The full spelling of the latter is *K'UH-(lu)-T278:553-li-AJAW-(wa)*. Nevertheless, in about forty out of fifty occurrences of the emblem glyph in Naranjo inscriptions, the spelling is *K'UH-T278:553-AJAW-(wa)*. Therefore, there is a systematic underspelling of *li*. We believe that it creates an environment in which the substitution of T278:553 by *sa* becomes possible. In other words, the substitution has little to do with the way the emblem glyph is read, but it constitutes a plausible outcome of the way it is habitually spelled. A substitution like *sa'-a-li-AJAW* may seem to be the correct way of spelling the word, but it cannot be derived from the habitual spelling. What we might expect is a substitution like *sa'-a-AJAW* indicating the final glottal. However, Maya scribes are remarkably inconsistent in indicating final glottals in words like *k'aba'* or *ha'*, so it is no surprise that they did not do so in the case of the two substitutions of T278:553 by *sa*.

The *li* sign in the Naranjo emblem glyph then spells the -*VVl* place name suffix producing *sa'aal* "the place where (maize) gruel abounds." The underspelling of *li* reflects a well-attested pattern of systemically underspelled -*VVl* place name suffixes in emblem glyphs (e.g. *BAAK-AJAW* vs. *BAAK-la-AJAW* or *MUT-AJAW* vs. *MUT-la-AJAW*).

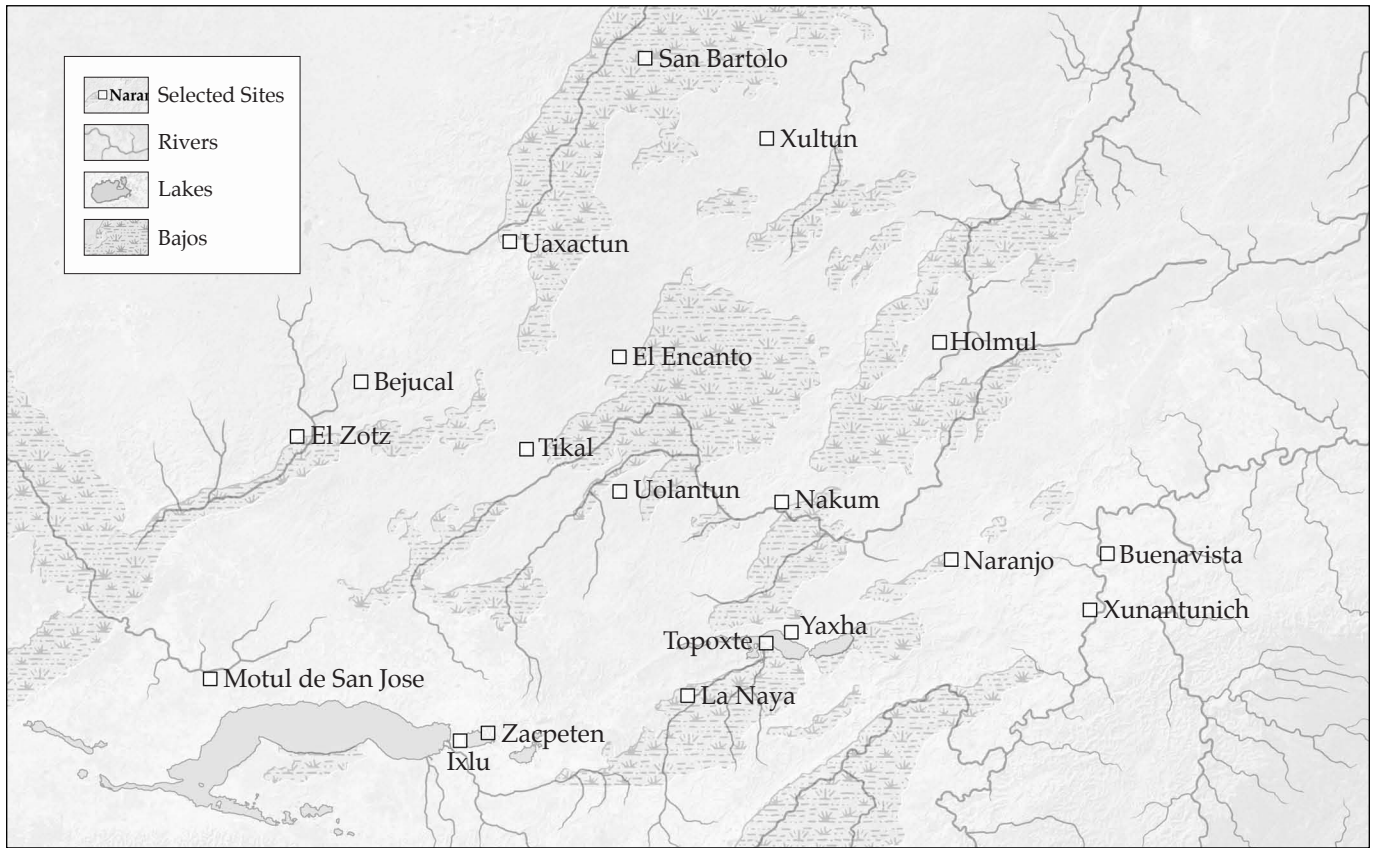


Figure 1. Map of northeastern Peten, Guatemala, showing Naranjo and nearby archaeological sites (Precolumbia Mesoweb Maps).

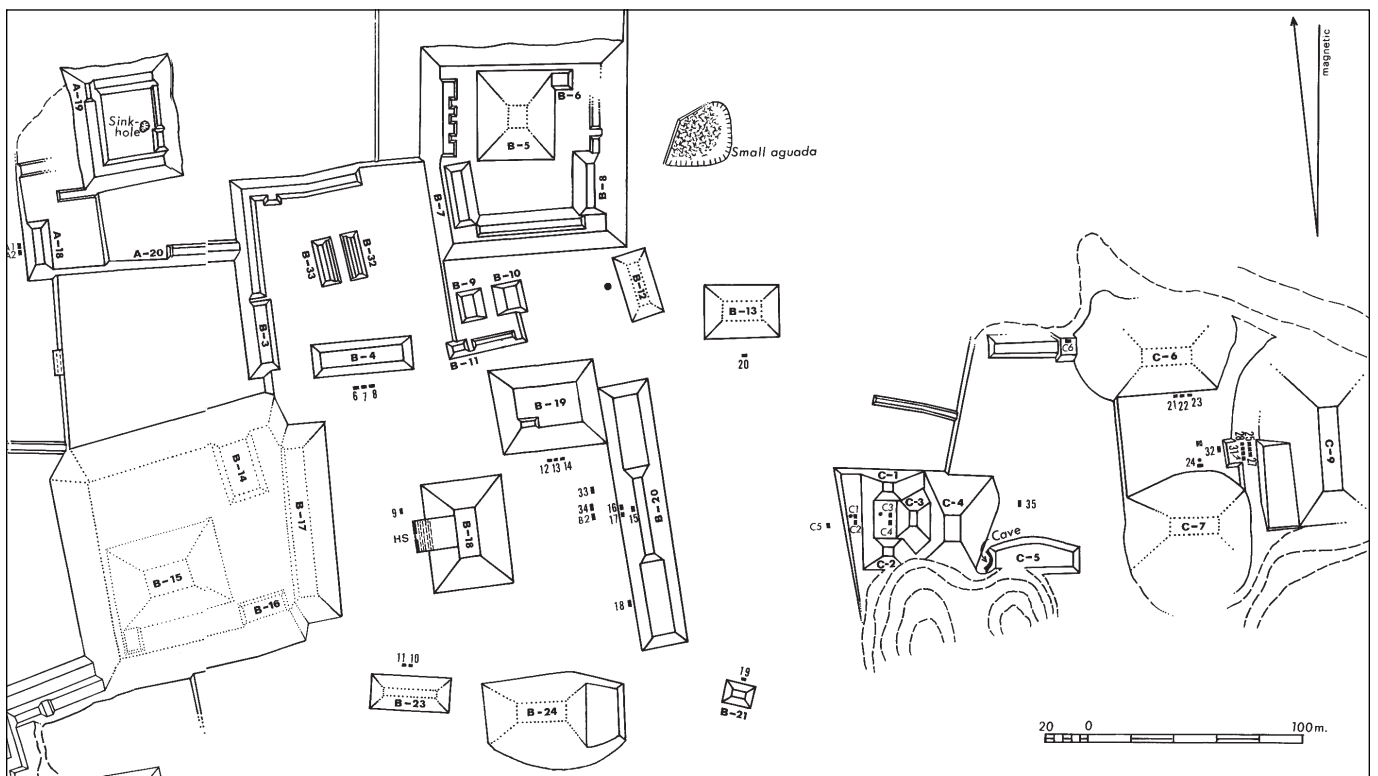


Figure 2. Map of the civil-ceremonial core of Naranjo (after Graham and von Euw 1975).

partially reconstructed in a number of publications (Beliaev 2000; Closs 1984; Culbert 1991; Grube 1994, 2000, 2004; Grube and Martin 2004; Houston 1987; Martin 1996, 2005; Martin and Grube 2000; Schele and Grube 1994, 1995). Almost nothing was known about the Early Classic rulers of Naranjo before the reign of 'Ajwosaaj' Chan K'ihnich (AD 546-615).² Political disturbances were blamed, and some scholars even suggested that the residence of Sa'aal lords lay elsewhere (Grube 2004).

Two place names—Maxam and Wakabnal—are prominently associated with Naranjo, although the distinction between the two is still unclear.³ The regal-ceremonial core of the site is about one square kilometer and includes over 112 structures grouped in six triadic complexes, two 'palace' compounds, one E-group, and two ball courts. There are 45 monuments, most of which were documented by Graham (Graham 1978, 1980; Graham and Von Euw 1975). Over the last decade, the site has suffered enormously from looters who have cut over 100 trenches and tunnels into major structures (Fialko 2004b, 2004c).

The Triadic Acropolis C-9 is located in the easternmost area of the site core. This architectural complex is dominated by a massive mound known as Structure C-9, measuring 79 x 55 meters at its base and reaching the height of 32 meters (Tokovinine and Fialko 2006). Two lines of carved stelae (Stelae 28, 29, 30, and 31 in the first row and Stelae 25, 26, 27 in the second row) once stood on a narrow platform in front of the main stairway of the pyramid, whereas Stela 32 was located at the foot of that sanctuary, upon the main terrace of the triadic group (Figure 2).

The remains of Stela 45 consist of 54 fragments of different sizes found in the lateral cuts inside a looters' tunnel that penetrates the western façade of Structure C-9 at its base (Tokovinine and Fialko 2006). Some fragments of the monument were likely looted during the excavation of that tunnel: examination of the looters' back dirt revealed two tiny fragments of the stela (Fialko et al. 2004).

The looters' tunnel penetrated four construction phases of Structure C-9 (Figure 3). The deepest phase (C-9 Sub-1) corresponds to the Middle Preclassic period and consists of a platform that encased the top of a natural hill with a cave inside. The second phase (C-9 Sub-2) can be attributed to the Late Preclassic period. The third construction phase (C-9 Sub-3), of truly monumental dimensions, corresponds to the Early Classic, while the last modification of the structure (C-9) dates to the Late Classic.

The western façade of the second platform of the Late Preclassic substructure (C-9 Sub-2) was characterized by the presence of a central access stairway and two lateral stairways leading towards the masks

on the façade. During the subsequent construction episode corresponding to the Early Classic period, the fragments of Stela 45 were placed in front of the southern lateral stairway of the earlier substructure into the fill of limestone blocks of different sizes in the matrix of compact, dark grey/black earth with some inclusions of charcoal pieces (Figure 3). Ceramics from that context could be dated to the Early Classic. The fragments of Stela 45 were distributed over an area of approximately 4.5 m² without any apparent order or orientation. They were found above the floor sustaining the base of the stair of C-9 Sub-2 to a height of 1.2 m, about the level of the fourth step of the stair. Part of the wall and the stair of C-9 Sub-2 were destroyed, possibly prior to the collocation of the fill containing the stela fragments. The remains of Stela 45 could have been part of either a termination ritual or a dedicatory offering associated with the construction of the Early Classic version of the structure.

The Monument and its Dating

Of 54 recovered fragments of the stela (all painted with cinnabar), 21 correspond with some degree of certainty to the front side of the monument (Figure 4). Its upper part is fully reconstructible, and there are several large

² We use one of the common transcriptions of the name of this ruler (e.g., Martin 2005). However, Simon Martin recently cast doubt on this reading (personal communication 2004, cited in Zender 2005:8). The name is usually spelled as **AJ-?-sa-?**. The glyph above **sa** looks like T67 **wo**, but it is always upside-down, like T155, even on the late eighth-century Altar 2 of Naranjo (Grube 2004:Fig.13). The grapheme below **sa** sometimes looks like T136 **ji**. However, other examples of the same name show a different sign that resembles T124. That makes one suspect that the name actually consists of **AJ** followed by an unknown sign partially covered by **sa**. Unfortunately, there are no examples where that sign can be seen in its full form.

³ The Maxam place name was identified by Stuart and Houston (1994:21-23). Wakabnal was noted by Houston, Stuart, and Taube (1992:513) but not discussed as a location. It was first identified as a place name by Martin (1996:225-226) based on his analysis of the inscription on Lintel 2 of Temple 4 at Tikal, which describes a victorious 'star war' against "Wakabnal." The identification of Wakabnal as a place name remains tentative because it is never explicitly mentioned as such. Naranjo lords often claim the title of Wakabnal *winik* ("Wakabnal person"). The word *winik* may be omitted in the script (NAR ST6:E1; NAR ALT1:H4; vase K4464). This observation sheds some light on the Tikal text mentioned above: the victim of the attack is not the "Wakabnal (place)" but the "Wakabnal (person)," the king of Naranjo.

That said, the term Wakabnal is similar to the titles of the dancing maize god on the so-called Homul-style vessels: *Wakhixnal*, *Wakchanal*, and *Wakchuwenal*. Houston, Stuart, and Taube (1992) pointed out that these titles refer to specific supernatural locales represented as mountains in the backracks of the maize god figures. Wakabnal, along with other place names like *Wakehbnal* and *Wakmi(h)nal* may belong to the same set that seems to comprise different settings of mythological events. Therefore, the title *Wakabnal winik* associates Naranjo rulers with a specific mythological place, but may not have anything to do with the site of Naranjo, unless that supernatural location was somehow embodied in its palaces and temples.

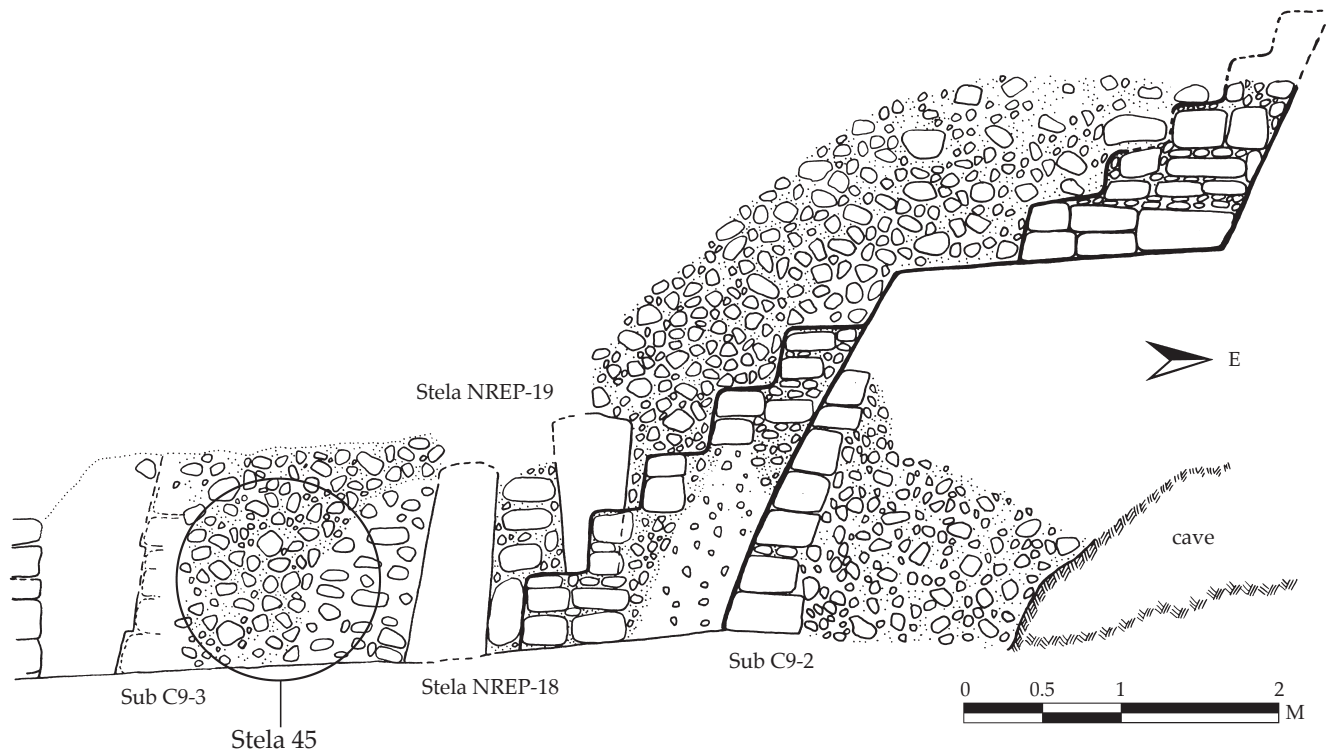


Figure 3. Construction phases of Structure C-9 and the location of the Stela 45 fragments in the looters' tunnel (Fialko et al. 2004: Figs. 54, 55).

fragments from the lower part of the same side. The middle is largely missing. We identified the fragments with the head, palms, and legs of the protagonist of the front-side scene. If one assumes that the proportions of that human figure were similar to other Early Classic monuments, then it would be possible to estimate the original size of Stela 45 as about 3 m tall and 0.8 m wide (Figure 4). None of the fragments exceeds 0.4 m in thickness.

The lateral sides of the stela were carved with inscriptions. The size of the surviving sections indicates that the Initial Series was presented as a single column on the right side of the monument, whereas the rest of the text appeared as paired hieroglyphic blocks on the left side (Figure 6). Only two fragments of the Initial Series can be securely identified—a section of the Long Count date (Figure 6e) and a fragment of a day name followed by the name of a corresponding 'lord of the night' (Figure 6f). These fragments are too small and isolated for reconstructing the date on the monument. Nevertheless, the archaeological context of the remains of the stela suggests that it was commissioned no later than the Early Classic.

The style of the imagery and of what is left of the inscriptions also supports an Early Classic date for Stela 45. The composition of the front scene features a disembodied ancestral head floating directly above the protagonist (Figure 4). Such heads are common in

Early Classic iconography but are not attested in the Late Classic when full-bodied ancestors appear inside solar cartouches or in separate upper registers of the scenes. The forms of the signs **HUUN**, **la**, **CH'E'N**, and **BAHLAM** are Early Classic without doubt, as are some smaller diagnostic features like U-shaped and 'stair' motifs (Figure 4, 6).

The Imagery of Stela 45

The scene on the front side of the monument represents a ritual of receiving a 'ceremonial bar' called "taking God K" (*ch'am k'awiil*) or "conjuring gods" (*tza'k k'uh*)—one of most common themes on Classic Maya stelae (Houston and Stuart 1996). In the case of Stela 45, we are left with a fragment showing the right end of the bar that, as Taube (2005:38-42) recently noted, represents a jade ear flare with smoke or breath coming out, personified as a serpent head (Figure 4o).

Inside the opened mouth of the serpent, one can discern part of the torso and the arm of a feline deity conjured by the protagonist. The fragment with the opposite (left) serpent head is gone, but it is possible to identify the arms and part of the head of another deity emerging from that end of the ceremonial bar. These arms appear at the level of the protagonist's ankles, hinting at the position of the ceremonial bar. The deity itself is a rather curious anthropomorphic being distin-

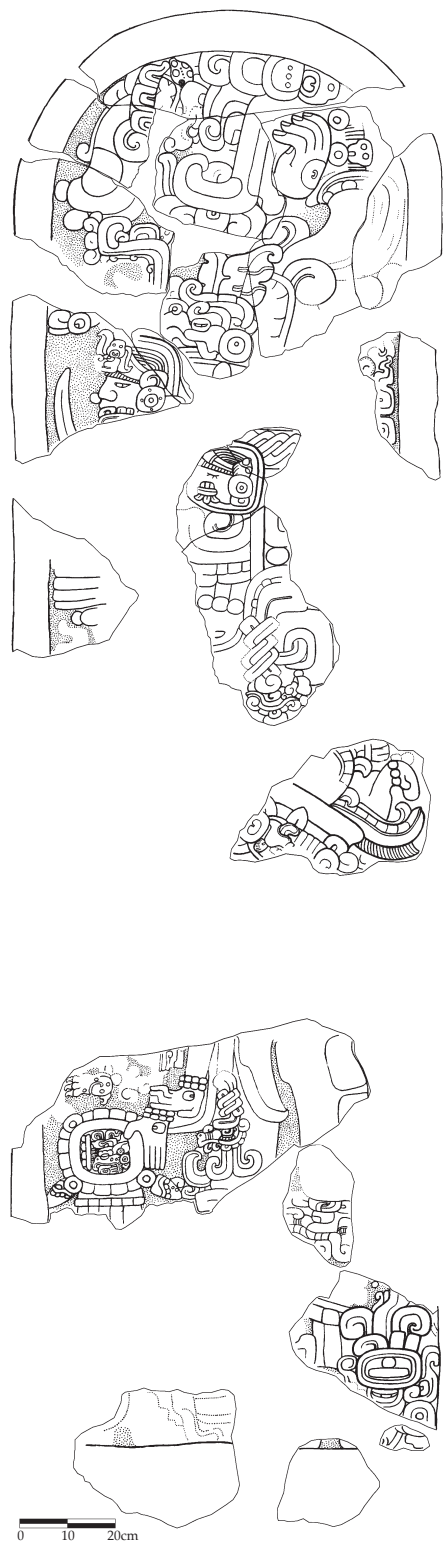


Figure 4. Reconstruction of the front side of Stela 45: (a) NREM 035; (b) NREM 041; (c) NREM 021; (d) NREM 029; (e) NREM 022; (f) NREM 024; (g) NREM 033; (h) NREM 030; (i) NREM 043; (j) NREM 019; (k) NREM 034; (l) NREM 012; (m) NREM 023; (n) NREM 031; (o) NREM 028; (p) NREM 036; (q) NREM 047; (r) NREM 038; (s) NREM 048; (t) NREM 053T; (u) NREM 053V.

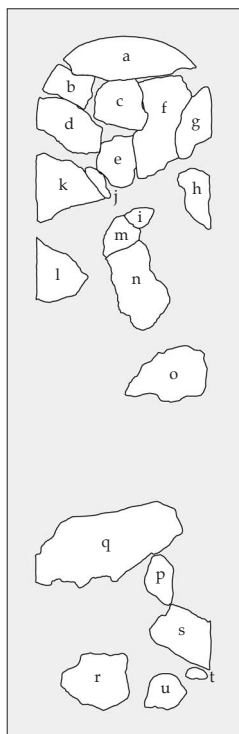


Figure 5. Stela 45, miscellaneous fragments: (a) NREM 039; (b) NREM 047B; (c) NREM 045; (d) NREM 046; (e) NREM 044; (f) NREM 018; (g) NREM 037; (h) NREM 042; (i) NREM 040; (j) NREM 053U; (k) NREM 052; (l) NREM 053M; (m) NREM 053J.

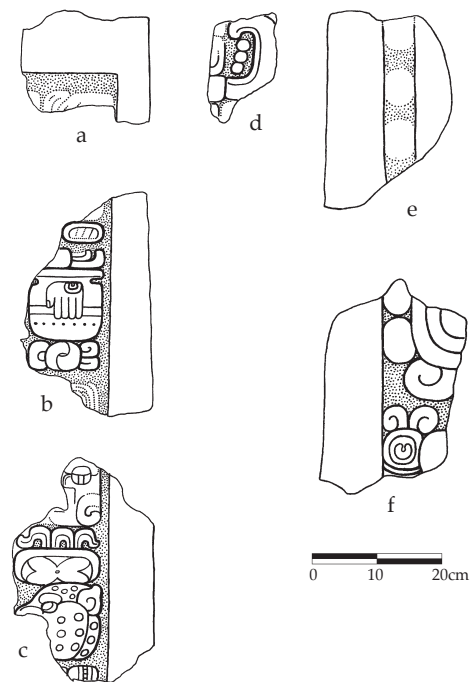


Figure 6. Stela 45, fragments of the hieroglyphic inscription: (a) NREM 029; (b) NREM 034; (c) NREM 012; (d) NREM 020; (e) NREM 030; (f) NREM 048.

Figure 8. The scaffold throne accession scene, incised bone, Dallas Museum of Art (drawing by Linda Schele [Schele 2000:#7320], courtesy of FAMSI, Inc., www.famsi.org).

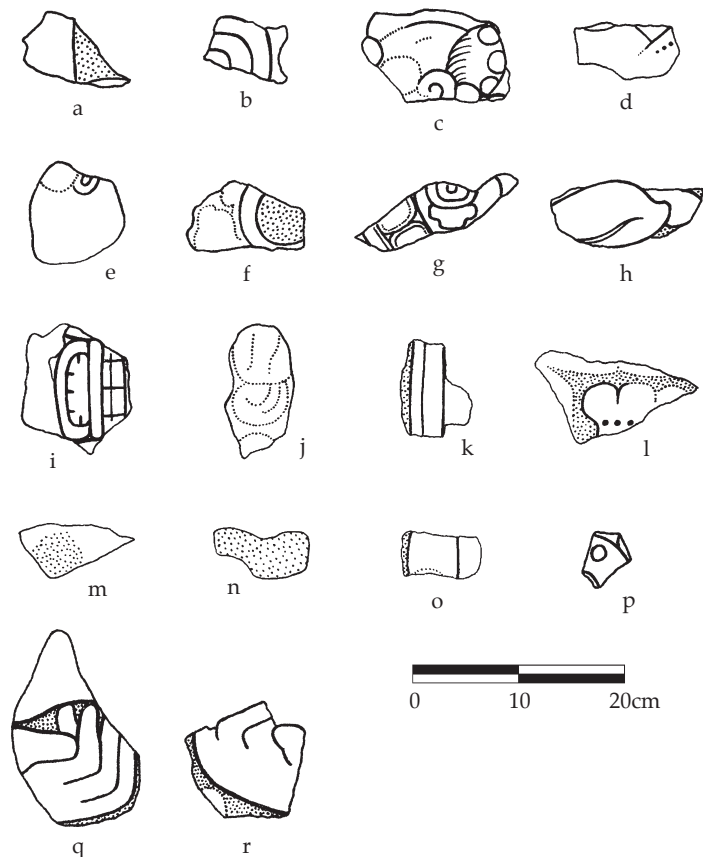


Figure 7. Stela 45, miscellaneous fragments: (a) NREM 053H; (b) NREM 053G; (c) NREM 049; (d) NREM 053N; (e) NREM 053K; (f) NREM 053E; (g) NREM 053L; (h) NREM 053F; (i) NREM 050; (j) NREM 053O; (k) NREM 053C; (l) NREM 053B; (m) NREM 053R; (n) NREM 053S; (o) NREM 053Q; (p) NREM 053P; (q) NREM 053A; (r) NREM 053D.



guished by a nose that ends in a jaguar paw (Figure 4q). Although most of the face is gone, one may hypothesize that it would have been similar to a head variant of the logogram *ICH'AAK* (Figure 9a). A full-figure axe-wielding version of the deity appears on the famous Princeton vase (Figure 9b) where it has been identified as a masked hero twin (Kerr and Kerr 2005). Another example comes from a previously undocumented vessel currently in the office of the mayor of the town of San Andres, Peten, where the same creature is depicted seated on a snake throne and holding an axe (Figure 9c). Stela 11 of Dos Pilas (Houston 1992:Fig.3-27) shows a local king, Itzamnaaj K'awiil, dancing in a paw-nosed mask as the impersonator of that god.

The protagonist of the scene on the front of Stela 45 is shown in profile, standing with a serpent bar in his hands, of which only the palms could be identified (Figure 7q, r). A semicircular motif around the protagonist's eye could correspond to the 'crueller' of the 'Jaguar God of the Underworld' frequently embodied by later Naranjo rulers in fire-making rituals (see Stelae 4, 8, 11, 21, 30, and 41). However, other attributes of this deity are missing. Instead, whatever remains of the protagonist's attire resembles *k'awiil*-taking scenes on Naranjo Stelae 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, and 20. The inscription on Stela 13 (A5-7) (Graham and von Euv 1975:37) permits the identification of the royal outfit on these later monuments with the impersonation of the so-called



Figure 9. A jaguar paw-nosed deity: (a) ICH'AAK logogram on Stela 39, Tikal (after Jones and Satterthwaite 1982: Fig.44); (b) jaguar paw-nosed deity, Princeton vase (K511; Coe 1973:92); (c) jaguar paw-nosed deity, vase without provenience, currently in the office of the mayor in the town of San Andres, Peten.

'Paddlers.'

The scene on the front of Stela 45 offers an additional clue to understanding the nature of the event. The curious paw-nosed character mentioned above holds a shield decorated with plumes and four flint blades (Figure 4q). The shield carries an inscription that can be read as 9-?-OCH-[mi]CH'E'N *bolon mi[in] ... och ch'e'n* "the cave-entering of nine *miin* ..." (Figure 10a).⁴ The same phrase appears on two later monuments at Naranjo—as a caption in a plate with sacrificial

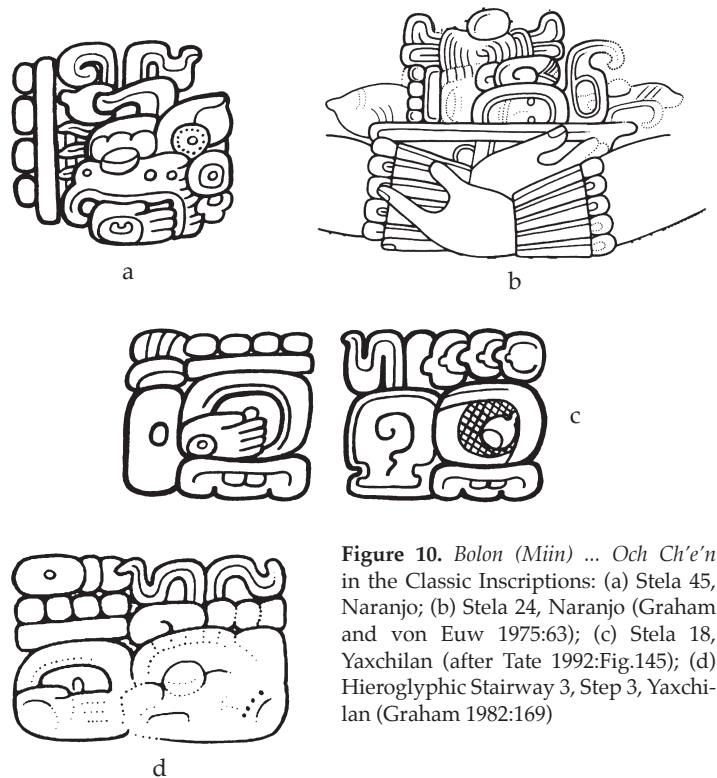
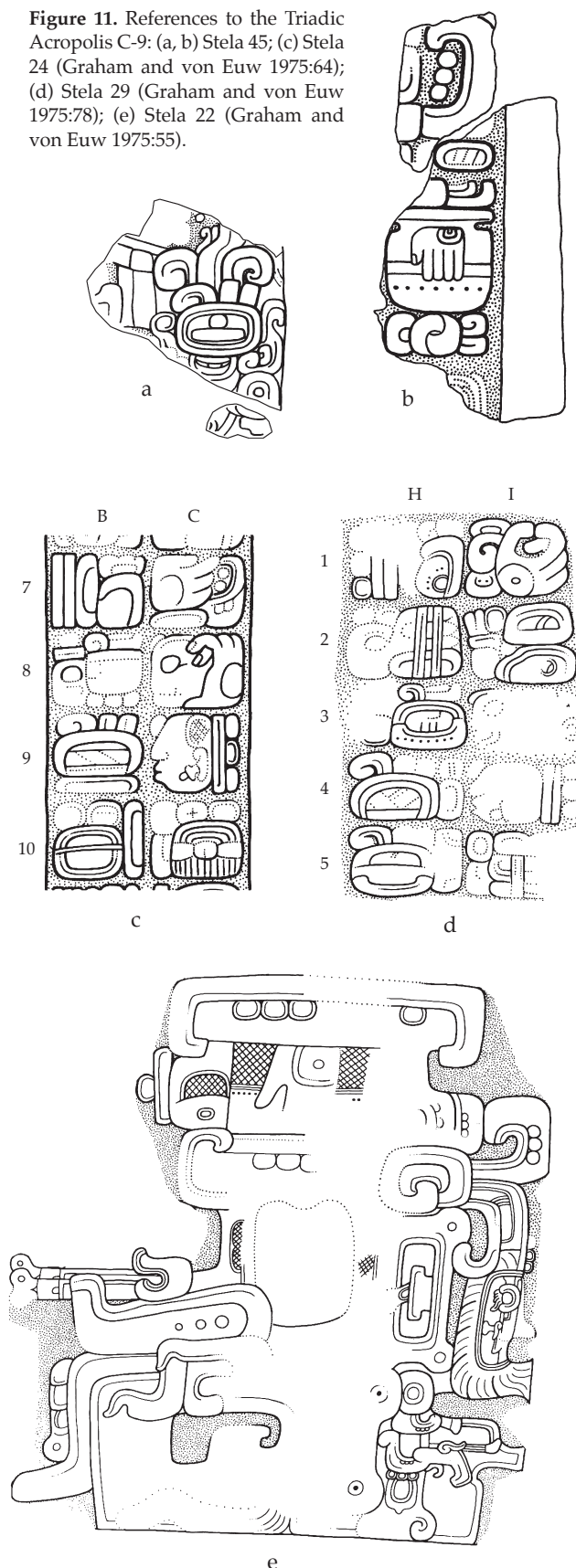


Figure 10. *Bolon (Miin) ... Och Ch'e'n* in the Classic Inscriptions: (a) Stela 45, Naranjo; (b) Stela 24, Naranjo (Graham and von Euw 1975:63); (c) Stela 18, Yaxchilan (after Tate 1992:Fig.145); (d) Hieroglyphic Stairway 3, Step 3, Yaxchilan (Graham 1982:169)

⁴ One way to tackle this string of nouns is to assume that *och-ch'e'n* is a compound noun that means "cave-entering" whereas everything else functions as adjectives. The result would be "the cave entering of nine [...]." The meaning of *miin* is unknown, but it appears to function as a numeric classifier and is occasionally omitted in the script.

The logogram after *bolon miin* remains undeciphered. Its full form, attested on Yaxchilan Stela 18:D1 (Figure 10c), looks like a combination of T122 and an upturned T686 jar with a scroll inside. Other known contexts of the sign are ?-ti-CHAN-na on the Temple of the Four Lintels Lintel 4:F5 at Chichen Itza, and ?-la-ja CHAN-na K'AWIIL-la on Miscellaneous Monuments 4 and 5 and Capstone 10 at Ek Balam (Grube et al. 2003:II-24, II-29, II-30, II-70). The latter context with a *-laj* suffix suggests that the word behind the sign may be a positional or affective verb.

Figure 11. References to the Triadic Acropolis C-9: (a, b) Stela 45; (c) Stela 24 (Graham and von Euw 1975:64); (d) Stela 29 (Graham and von Euw 1975:78); (e) Stela 22 (Graham and von Euw 1975:55).



paraphernalia held by queen 'Six Sky'⁵ on Stela 24 (Figure 10b) and as a caption in the mouth of a jaguar in the place name register on Stela 43. The meaning of the expression *bolon miin ... och ch'e'n* is unclear. It appears in the inscriptions of Yaxchilan: a prisoner is said to have been captured "in" or "with" *bolon miin ... och ch'e'n* (Figure 10c, d). Naranjo Stela 24 seems to support the association between the term and captive-taking, as the queen is depicted treading a bound captive (Graham and von Euw 1975:63). On the other hand, the context of the caption on Stela 43 hints that the term may have designated a particular supernatural locale.

The place name for the Triadic Acropolis C-9

Three Late Classic monuments located in the Triadic Acropolis C-9 make reference to a certain place name in the context of arrival events constituting important moments in the kingdom's history. The narrative on Stela 24 placed in front of Structure C-7 (Figure 2) mentions the arrival of queen 'Six Sky' at Naranjo, at a place called **6-IK'-?-ma?/HUUN?-NAL pe-ke SA'-li** *wak ik' ... nal pek sa'aal* "the six black ... place, the flat hill top, the maize gruel place" (Figure 11c).⁶ Three days later, according to the text on Stela 29 located in front of Structure C-9 itself (Figure 2), the queen entered a building of some kind at *wak ik' ... nal pek sa'aal* (Figure 11d).⁷ A decade later, the same place saw the presentation of Itzamnaaj Bahlam, a captured ruler of Ucanal. The front of Stela 22 located across the courtyard from Stela 24 (Figure 2) shows victorious K'ahk Tiliw Chan Chaak seated on a throne on top of a large zoomorphic place glyph that towers above the kneeling Itzamnaaj Bahlam. The forehead of that place glyph features the **6-IK'-?-NAL** sequence (Figure 11e).

A surviving portion of the text on the left side of Stela 45 apparently makes reference to a 'seating' event at **6-IK'-?-NAL**. Given that one column of hieroglyphs is missing, it is plausible to reconstruct the original inscription as **CHUM-la-ja [6-IK'] ?-HUUN-NAL [pe-ke SA'-li]** *chumlaj [wak ik'] ... huun nal [pek sa'aal]* "he sat at the [six black] ... place [the hill top, the maize gruel place]" (Figure 11b).

Another reference from a fragment of the lower right section of the stela is more enigmatic. The fragment depicts a zoomorphic head, not unlike the one on Stela 22 and probably an incense burner judging by the smoke volutes coming out of it (Figure 4s). The head carries a **SA'** logogram and a number six in its forehead (Figure 11a). It

⁵ The queen's name has not been deciphered, so we use her most common nickname.

⁶ Cf. Chr *pek* "short or flat object, snub part of knob, rounded head or end" (Wisdom 1950:563). We would like to thank David Stuart (personal communication 2006) for pointing out this passage on Stela 24.

⁷ Unfortunately, the exact meaning of this sentence is far from clear.

Figure 12. A references to Naatz Chan Ahk of Naranjo on a vase without provenience, K8042.



is tempting to speculate that the fragment was part of a place name register that would have had the entire *wak ik' ... nal pek sa'aal* sequence spelled out, but there are not enough fragments left to interpret this section of the stela.

The original location of Stela 45 is unknown. It might have been placed before an earlier version of Structure C-9 or one of the two lateral pyramids. It makes reference to an event happening at a place mentioned on three other monuments which once stood in the Triadic Acropolis C-9. This place name appears nowhere else in the corpus of Classic Maya inscriptions, including texts on other monuments from Naranjo. Therefore, it is highly likely that *wak ik' ... nal pek sa'aal* is the name of the Triadic Acropolis C-9.

The Protagonist of the Scene on Stela 45

The main character of the scene on the front of Stela 45 wears an elaborate headdress (Figure 4) identifiable as a complete version of the 'jester god' crown, such as that presented to the maize god or ruler in scaffold throne accession scenes (Figure 8) (Saturno et al. 2005; Taube 2005:27-30). Similarly complex versions of the crown appear on the Early Classic monuments at Tikal (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig.1) and Caracol (Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981:Fig.15). In the case of Stela 45, a 'jester god' head or jewel on the front of the crown

is replaced by a cartouche with the caption SA'-AJAW *sa'[aal] ajaw* where the AJAW glyph is the head of a lord wearing a 'jester god' royal headband (Figure 4k). The presence of the 'emblem glyph' leaves no doubt that the protagonist belongs to the Naranjo dynasty. A cartouche in the center of the headdress carries another caption with an undeciphered sign that resembles a trophy head with closed eyes and tied mouth.

The name of the protagonist appears on top of the crown. It can be read as **na-tzu CHAN[AHK]** *Naatz Chan Ahk*⁸ (Figure 13a) and likely refers to the same Naatz Chan Ahk who is mentioned on an Early Classic stuccoed and painted tripod vase without provenience, where the name phrase is followed by *sak chuwen*—a title of Naranjo rulers (Figure 12; see Closs 1984:80). Based on the presence of the *sak chuwen* title, Martin and Grube (2000:70-71) suggest that the individual mentioned on the vase was the first known historical lord of Sa'aal who, given the style of the vase and the inscription, ruled in the early fifth century AD. The protagonist on Stela 45 wears a crown with the name Naatz Chan Ahk and the *Sa'aal ajaw* 'emblem glyph,' leaving little doubt that he was a ruling king of the Sa'aal dynasty and that Naranjo was the capital of his kingdom.

It was Luís Lopes (2005) who noticed that Naatz Chan Ahk was possibly mentioned in the text on Stela 15 of Naranjo, in a clause naming the father of the king who commissioned the monument (Figure 13b). The date on Stela 15 is gone, although the main event seems to be the completion of the third year of the k'atun (Marc Zender, personal communication 2004, cited in Lopes 2005). That leaves us with several plausible Early Classic dates including AD 458, 478, and 498.

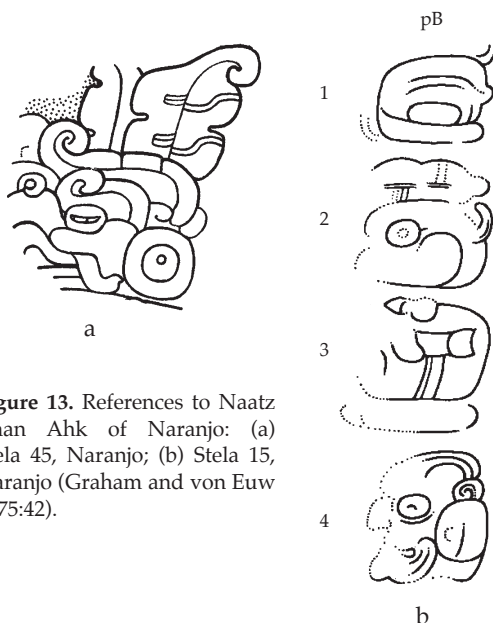


Figure 13. References to Naatz Chan Ahk of Naranjo: (a) Stela 45, Naranjo; (b) Stela 15, Naranjo (Graham and von Euw 1975:42).

⁸ Lopes (2005) argues that the T370 sign might have had a phonetic value other than **tz** because of a possible substitution in the name of a Rio Azul lord. The combination **na-T370** in the text in Burial 12 at Rio Azul is replaced in the text of vessel K1446 by **na** followed by an unknown mammalian head plus half of T370. However, the rest of the name is not the same, and the inscription on K1446 may refer to a different person. Moreover, the spelling on K1446 can be analyzed as **na-?-tz**, where **na** and **tz** function as phonetic complements to an unknown logogram. Therefore, we would transcribe the first word in the name of the Naranjo king as **na-tzu**. The disharmonic spelling leaves us with several alternative transliterations: *naatz*, *na'tz*, and *nahtz*, none of which corresponds to a word that would make sense in the context of the name phrase. We will transliterate the spelling as *naatz* until more evidence is available.

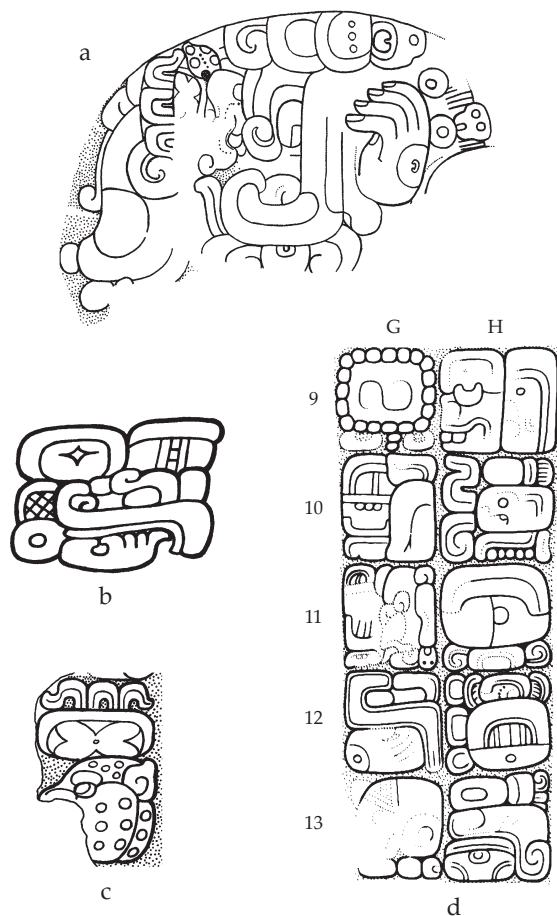


Figure 14. Tz'ik'in Bahlam, another king of Naranjo? (a) Tz'ik'in Bahlam as a deified ancestor in the front scene on Stela 45, Naranjo; (b) the name of the Naranjo founding deity on Altar 1, Naranjo (after Graham and von Euw 1975:103); (c) Tz'ik'in Bahlam mentioned in the text on the left side of Stela 45, Naranjo; (d) the founder's name incorporated into the name of K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak in the inscription on Stela 13, Naranjo (Graham and von Euw 1975:38).

The parentage statement indicates that dynastic rule at Naranjo continued after Naatz Chan Ahk. The successor's name has not been preserved. He could also have been responsible for commissioning Stela 41, dedicated in AD 475 (Grube and Martin 2004:12).

There is some circumstantial evidence that Naatz Chan Ahk was venerated as an important royal ancestor for at least two hundred years after his death. The scene on seventh-century Naranjo Stela 43 shows Naatz Chan Ahk as one of the ancestors floating above the protagonist (David Stuart, personal communication 2006).

Tz'ik'in Bahlam: A New King of Naranjo?

Naatz Chan Ahk is not the only historical character on Stela 45. A disembodied head of his ancestor appears floating in the upper register of the front scene on the

monument (Figure 14a). Such a way of presenting deified ancestors is typical of Early Classic imagery including the scene on the famous Stela 31 at Tikal where Yax Nuun Ahiin appears as a solar deity watching the actions of his son from above (Houston and Stuart 1996:296-297).

The ancestral head on Stela 45 does not have any apparent aspect of the sun god except mirror eyes. Instead, the head looks like a version of the T1021 'Zip monster' sign with the T807 infixed into its mouth and the IK' logogram replacing its ear flare (Figure 14a). This combination corresponds to the name of the divine founder of the Naranjo dynasty commonly known as the 'Square-Nosed Beastie' (Figure 14b) and mentioned in a number of inscriptions on monuments and painted vessels from Naranjo (Grube and Martin 2004:4; Martin and Grube 2000:70). In the case of the scene on Stela 45, this god appears to be observing the actions of the protagonist or, even more likely and in contrast to the Tikal tradition, the deified ancestor assumes the qualities of the local founding god. The last observation seems to be corroborated by the fact that at least once the name of a deceased Naranjo lord (K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak mentioned by his son) incorporates the name of the founding god, although such incorporation never happened in the king's lifetime (Figure 14d).

As suggested independently by Dmitri Beliaev and David Stuart (personal communications 2006), the ancestor's personal name hides in the headdress of the 'Square-Nosed Beastie.' It can be read as **tzi-K'IN-BAHLAM** *tzik'in bahlam* (Figure 14a).⁹ The name also appears in the text on the left side of Stela 45 although the glyphs before and after the name are gone (Figure 14c). It seems very likely that Tz'ik'in Bahlam is an otherwise unknown local ruler and possibly the father of Naatz Chan Ahk. Therefore, we can add one more name to the dynastic history of Naranjo.

Virtually nothing is known about the reigns of Tz'ik'in Bahlam and Naatz Chan Ahk. However, the inscriptions of Tikal suggest a possible connection between the ruling dynasties of the two cities at that time. The full name of the Tikal king Chak Tok Ich'aak II (AD ca. 486-508) includes the title Sak Chuwen, otherwise an exclusive title of Naranjo rulers (Figure 15a-c) (Martin 2005:8). The very same king or his namesake appears as one of the ancestors floating above the Naranjo ruler

⁹ We transcribe the name as two different signs—a syllable **tzi** and a logogram **K'IN**. The alternative approach would be to treat this spelling as an undeciphered logogram that looks like a combination of **tzi** and **K'IN**, because either grapheme appears in 'complex' signs. Since there is no variation in the spelling of the name, we do not have enough evidence to support either interpretation. We have chosen the simplest solution and transcribe it as **tzi-K'IN**.

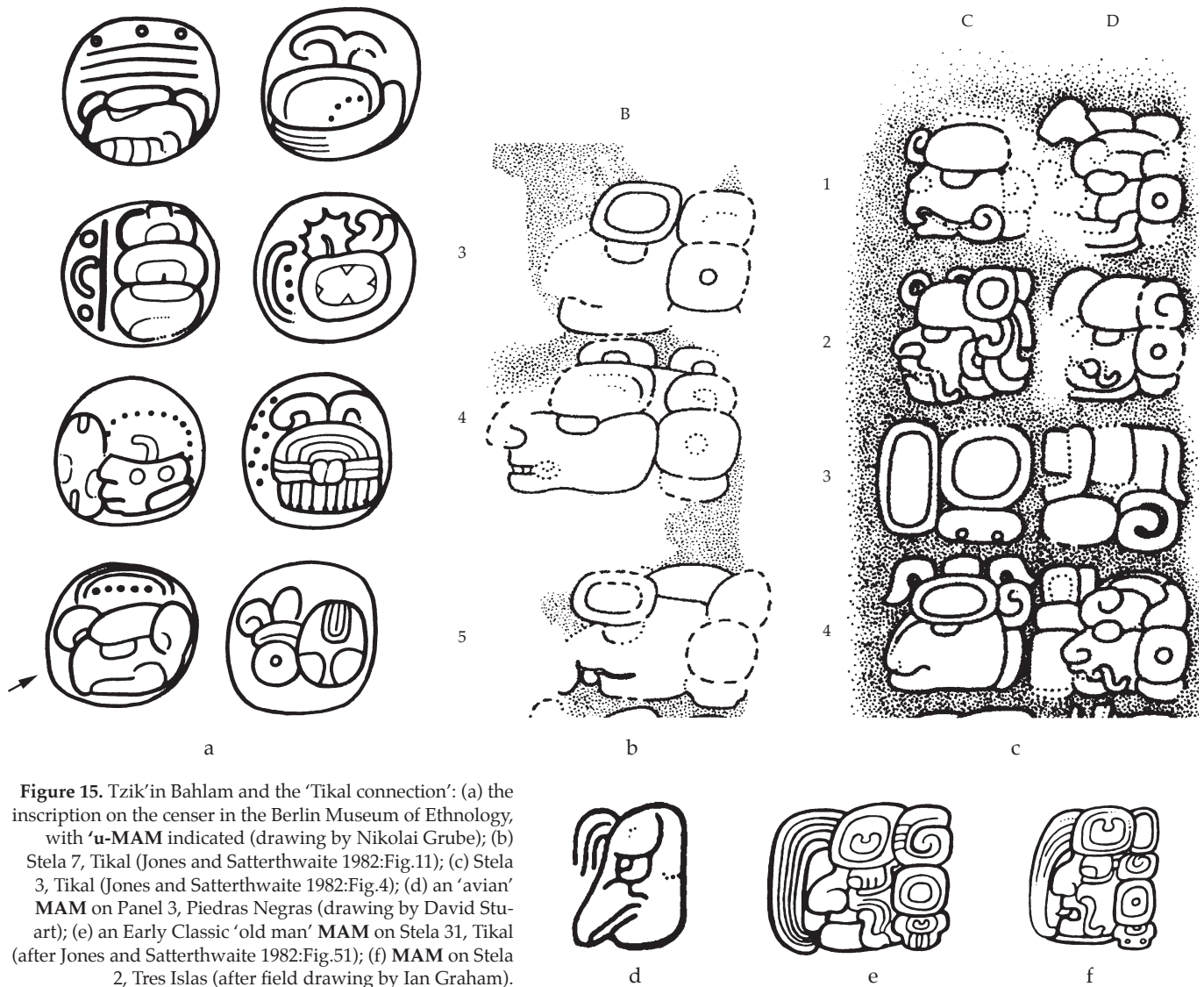


Figure 15. Tzik'in Bahlam and the 'Tikal connection': (a) the inscription on the censer in the Berlin Museum of Ethnology, with 'u-MAM indicated (drawing by Nikolai Grube); (b) Stela 7, Tikal (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig.11); (c) Stela 3, Tikal (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig.4); (d) an 'avian' MAM on Panel 3, Piedras Negras (drawing by David Stuart); (e) an Early Classic 'old man' MAM on Stela 31, Tikal (after Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig.51); (f) MAM on Stela 2, Tres Islas (after field drawing by Ian Graham).

on Stela 43 (David Stuart, personal communication 2006). The name of Chak Tok Ich'aak's son, Wak Chan K'awiil, also incorporates the title Sak Chuwen in the inscription on Tikal Stela 17 (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig.25; Martin 2005:8). As if that were not enough, the dedicatory formula on an unprovenanced vase (K8763) that could have been contemporaneous with the reign of the Tikal king mentions a certain "Wak Chan K'awiil, the divine lord of Sa'aal" (Martin 2005:6-8, Figs. 12, 14).

Simon Martin (2005:8) has suggested that the inscription on an effigy censer commissioned by Chak Tok Ich'aak II and currently located in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin (Fields and Reents-Budet 2005:148) offers a clue to understanding the significance of the name phrase of this king. In that particular

example, the king's name ends in what looks like 'u-MAM SAK-CHUWEN *umam sak chuwen* "the grandson of Sak Chuwen" (Figure 15a).¹⁰ Moreover, re-examining the inscriptions on Tikal Stelae 7 and 3 reveals that 'u-MAM may also be there, in blocks B3 and D2 respectively (Dmitri Beliaev, personal communication 2006), preceding references to Tzik'in Bahlam (Luís Lopes, personal communication 2006) (Figure 15b, c). The text on Stela 7 would then mention the period end-

¹⁰ The sign on the ceramic censer is similar to an avian allograph of MAM that becomes common in the Late Classic (Figure 15d) but is attested in some Early Classic texts such as the inscription on the 'Rio Azul' earflares (Schele and Grube 1994:95). The potential MAM logograms on Stelae 3 and 7 resemble other Early Classic MAM examples (Figure 15b, c, e, f).

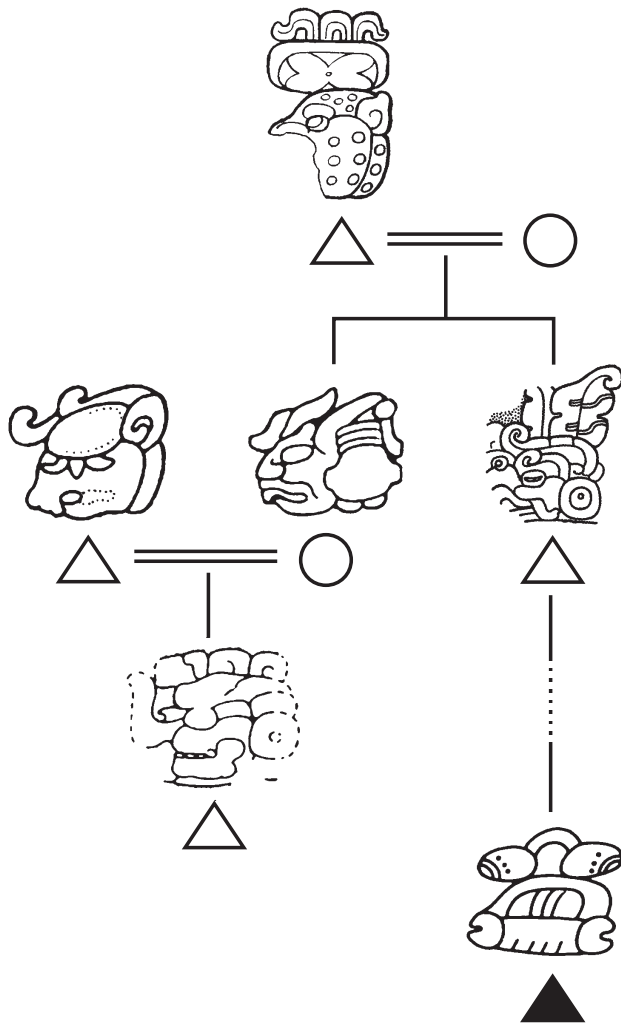


Figure 16. Schematic representation of the dynastic union between Tikal and Naranjo lords.

ing supervised by the “grandson of Tzik’in Bahlam,” whereas the inscription on Stela 3 would refer to Chak Tok Ich’aak II as the “grandson of *K’in Tahn Bolay Tzik’in Bahlam Sak Chuwen*.”

We know that Chak Tok Ich’aak’s paternal grandfather was Sihyaj Chan K’awiil of Tikal, but we know nothing about the origins of Chak Tok Ich’aak’s mother, although she or her namesake is mentioned on an Early Classic ear flare from Rio Azul (Schele and Grube 1994:95).¹¹ If Tzik’in Bahlam reigned in the early fifth century, as seems to be the case, then he could well have been the father of Chak Tok Ich’aak’s mother (Figure 16). The timing of such a dynastic marriage could not be more appropriate, as Tikal was at the peak of its Early Classic political expansion, and its influence extended to the north and to the south of Naranjo (Estada-Belli et al. 2006; Martin and Grube 2000:35).

Tzik’in Bahlam also appears to be mentioned on Early Classic Stela 7 at Yaxha (Grube 2000:Fig.200a).

However, the name of this Tzik’in Bahlam includes the Yaxha ‘emblem glyph’ and no titles related to the Naranjo dynasty. Therefore, he was likely the namesake of the Naranjo ruler. It is impossible to assess whether or not these two Tzik’in Bahlam characters were contemporaries because neither Stela 7 of Yaxha nor Stela 45 of Naranjo feature readable dates.

Concluding Remarks

The immediate contributions of Stela 45 to the dynastic history of Naranjo are the confirmation of Naatz Chan Ahk as the Early Classic ruler of the city and the identification of a previously unknown historical figure, Tzik’in Bahlam, as an even earlier king of Sa’aal. These discoveries refute the argument presented some time ago that the seat of the Sa’aal lords in the Early Classic could be elsewhere, possibly in the area of the site of Holmul (Grube 2004:196-197).

Some evidence of the dynastic union between the rulers of Naranjo and Tikal discussed above provides the first insight into the position of Sa’aal lords in the geopolitical landscape of the fifth century. This union was important enough for Tikal rulers to mention their Naranjo ancestors and even to claim the proper titles of Naranjo dynasts, something they never did before or after in Tikal’s history. We may interpret it as a reflection of the Sa’aal lords’ role in the events surrounding the establishment of the ‘foreign’ dynasty at Tikal, as an acknowledgement of the importance of the Sa’aal dynasty as one of the oldest Peten lineages at the time

¹¹ A passage in the inscription on Tikal Stela 3 (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Fig.4) is the only mention of Chak Tok Ich’aak’s mother, dubbed ‘Lady Tzutz Nik’ (Martin and Grube 2000:37). As rightly pointed to us by Simon Martin (personal communication 2006), this passage merits a brief discussion. It is sandwiched between the references to Tzik’in Bahlam and K’an Chitam. Tzik’in Bahlam’s name ends with the Sak Chuwen title in block D4. A string of names or titles follows in the blocks C5-C6 until K’an Chitam’s name is introduced by a ‘son of father’ expression.

The present assumption is that the blocks C5-C6 contain the mother’s name despite the omission of the ‘son of mother’ term at the beginning. The ‘son of mother’ term is similarly omitted on some earlier Tikal monuments like K’an Chitam’s Stelae 13 and 40. The alternative would be to see Tzik’in Bahlam’s name continuing for three more blocks, but it seems unlikely as in all sixty or so known occurrences of Sak Chuwen the title appears at the end of name phrases, occasionally changing places with an emblem glyph and *baah kab* (see Colas 2004). These blocks might refer to the other *mam* of the king, but the glyphs do not resemble any of the names of his known ancestors.

The name itself seems to evoke a specific aspect of the maize deity as an alligator-headed tree, planted face-down into the ground. It is depicted and named on Yaxha Stelae 6 and 13, as well as on Naachtun Stela 26. Interestingly, the name of K’an Chitam’s mother mentioned on Tikal Stela 40 (in the headdress on the side and in the blocks C9-D9 on the back of the monument) consists of a conflation of the maize/wind god and alligator heads.

when Tikal lords renewed the emphasis on their local origins, or simply as attempts to claim the actual domain of Sa'aal kings. There is not enough data in favor of one or the other of these plausible scenarios. Without doubt, Naranjo rulers benefited from this union. Archaeological evidence suggests that Tzik'in Bahlam and Naatz Chan Ahk were responsible for large-scale construction programs that resulted in the remodeling of the Triadic Acropolis B-5, the E-Group, and the Central Acropolis (Fialko 2004a, 2005; Gamez 2004, 2005).

The analysis of the imagery and the inscription on Stela 45 also reveals important parallels with later monuments associated with the Triadic Acropolis C-9. This architectural complex might have played a pivotal ceremonial role at Naranjo as early as the Late Preclassic: plain stelae were placed in front of the Late Chical phase of Structure C-9 (Figure 3) (Fialko et al. 2004). Stela 45 would not be the first monument dedicated in that location. Famous rulers of Naranjo, 'Ajwosaaj' Chan K'ihnich, Lady 'Six Sky,' and K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak, chose that place as a setting of the most elaborate groups of carved stelae (Martin and Grube 2000:71-75). C-9 was the largest triadic acropolis in the city. Its main pyramid is the tallest building at Naranjo. It occupies the top of a natural hill with a cave inside—a perfect candidate for a local 'sacred mountain.'

The full name of the Triadic Acropolis C-9 incorporates *sa'aal*—the 'emblem glyph' of Naranjo rulers. There is no other context in which *sa'aal* appears in reference to the physical landscape. In contrast to *sa'aal*, the term *maxam* carries a more generic meaning denoting the city, possibly the surrounding land and its dwellers. Therefore, *sa'aal*, at least in its origin, was not the name of a 'kingdom' or 'city' or 'dynasty' but of a particular hill, a temple within the site of Naranjo. The temple and the hill were more important in defining the identity of Naranjo rulers than anything else. This observation offers an insight into the meaning of other Classic Maya 'emblem glyphs.'

Acknowledgements

We are indebted to David Stuart, Luís Lopez, and Dmitri Beliaev for insightful comments and suggestions on the subject of this paper. Stephen Houston, Marc Zender, Simon Martin, and anonymous reviewers kindly reviewed earlier versions of the article and contributed greatly to its improvement. We would like to thank the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., and the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, for the financial support that made this research possible. Our appreciation also goes to Dr. Arturo Paz and to the Department of Pre-Hispanic Monuments (IDAHEH). Of course, we remain fully responsible for any errors or omissions in this manuscript.

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Of Snake Kings and Cannibals: A Fresh Look at the Naranjo Hieroglyphic Stairway

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Of the Stair and Its Tale

Naranjo Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 is a truly amazing monument and one of the most interesting of its kind. When it was discovered and photographed by Maler (1908) (Figure 1), the stairway could be reconstructed as a series of inscribed and plain carved blocks forming four steps at the base of the western stairway leading to the summit of pyramid B-18 (Figure 2). The main entrance to the Central Acropolis—the towering palace of Naranjo rulers, the *Sa'aal* lords—was just across the courtyard. Archaeological investigations of Structure B-18 indicated that the hieroglyphic stairway was added sometime in the seventh century AD after a major renovation when B-18 acquired its current dimensions and layout (Gamez 2003). Since the original discovery and documentation, all inscribed blocks have been removed from the site. Some ended up in museums across the globe;

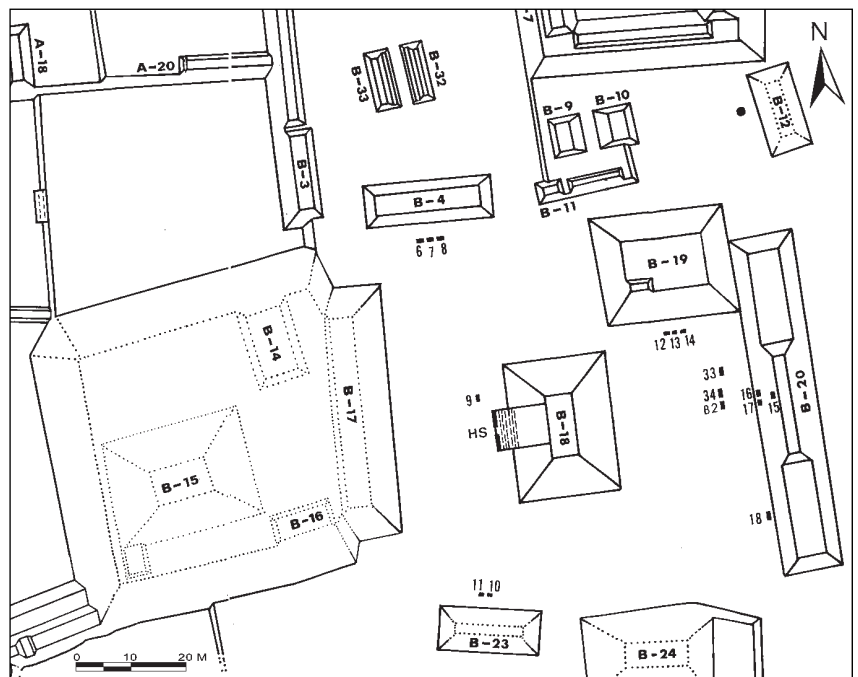


Figure 2. A section of the map of Naranjo showing the location of the hieroglyphic stairway (designated "HS") (Graham and Von Euw 1975:6-7).



Figure 1. Maler's photograph of "Monumental Stairway, Steps II and III" (after Maler 1908:Plate 24).

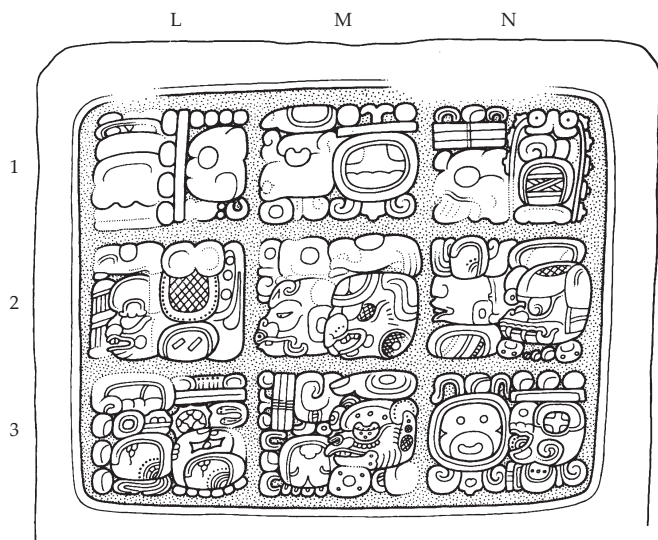


Figure 3. Naranjo Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 Step 6 (Graham 1978:109).

some were lost (Graham 1978:107). The inscribed sections were published by Graham as part of the corpus of Naranjo inscriptions (Graham 1978).

As soon as epigraphers could read some of the glyphs, it became clear that the inscription on the stairway exalted the deeds of Naranjo's archenemies from the site of Caracol and highlighted victories in wars against Sa'aal lords (Stone et al. 1985:273-274). The initial interpretation was that the stairway was a kind of conquest monument commissioned by Caracol rulers to remind the subjugated Naranjo court of its past humiliations. However, that interpretation ran counter to the fact that later powerful and independent Sa'aal kings still appreciated the stairway where it was, just in front of their palace (Figure 2).

The prevailing interpretation today is that the stairway was originally carved at Caracol, but taken away as a kind of military trophy when Naranjo rulers had the upper hand and plundered the enemy city (Martin and Grube 2000:73; Martin 2000:57-59). A fragment of a similar stairway block was discovered at Caracol confirming this hypothesis (Martin 2000:Fig.12). Most captured stairway blocks were reassembled at Naranjo without any order; some blocks were moved as far as the site of Ucanal (Graham 1978:107). The intention was seemingly to turn the inscription into an unintelligible mockery of its former self, a kind of reminder of what happened to Naranjo's enemies: however victorious they might be at times, all would eventually be ruined in defeat, brought to the court, and treaded by Sa'aal lords.

Of Cannibals

One of the key passages in the stairway narrative is the text on Step 6 that details Naranjo's defeat at the hands

of the Caracol ruler's liege, the powerful lord of the Kanal ("Snake") dynasty (Figure 3). The sign-by-sign reading of this passage has changed little over the past ten years. It begins with a verb spelled with the undeciphered 'star-over-earth' or 'star war' logogram. We know from the contexts of the word that it is an intransitive verb used to describe the downfall of people and places. The subject of the attack is Sa'aal, an important place at Naranjo, referred to in the inscription as the *ch'e'n* "cave"—a Classic Maya metaphor for cities and communities (Martin 2004:106-109)—of the Naranjo king. The narrative goes on to report that the attack was ordained by Yuknoom 'Head,' the ruler of Kanal.

(M1) 7-AK'BAL (N1) 16-MUWAAN ?-SA'-li (L2) 'u-CH'E'N k'u-xa-ja (M2) SAK-?CHUWEN 'u-[KAB]ji (N2) yu[ku]-?-li ka-KAN[AJAW]-la (L3) ta 3-TE'-TUUN-ni AJ-chi[ku]-NAHB

[ta] huk ak'bal waxaklajuun[te'] muwaan [?] sa'aal u-ch'e'n k'uxaj sak chuwen u-kabij yuk[noom] [?] kanal ajaw ta huxte'tuun aj chi'k nahb

Between the war event (at N1) and its agent (at N2), we find the term **k'u-xa-ja**, a spelling deciphered by Stuart in the seminal "Ten Phonetic Syllables" (Stuart 1987:29-30). Stuart suggested that *k'uxaj* had something to do with the gloss *k'ux* "to bite/eat/torture," reconstructible up to Common Ch'olan (Kaufman and Norman 1984:124). As *k'uxaj* preceded the Sak Chuwen title of Naranjo rulers, Stuart proposed that it might actually refer to the defeated king being eaten or tortured, with a reading along the lines of *k'u[h]xaj sak chuwen* "Sak Chuwen is eaten/tortured." This interpretation seemed to be corroborated by a fragment of the inscription that accompanied the depiction of a captive on a panel at Tonina: it contained the phrase **k'u-xa-**

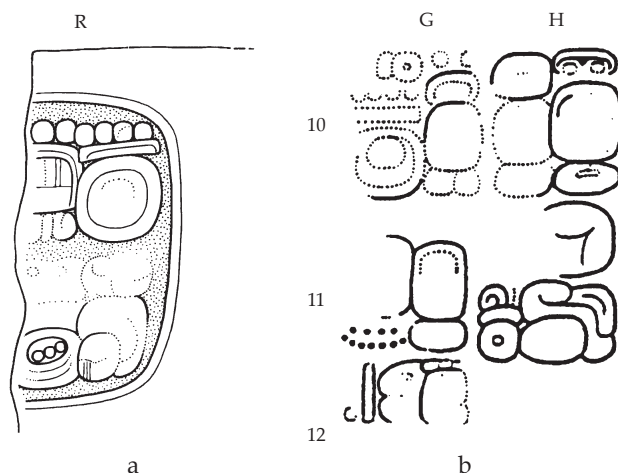


Figure 4. Possible **k'u-xa-ja** examples: a) Naranjo Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 Step 8:R2a (Graham 1978:109); b) Caracol Stela 22:G11-H11 (Grube 1994:Fig.9.3).

ji-ya B'AhLAM *k'u[h]xajiiy b'ahlam* "jaguar has been tortured / eaten" (Figure 6a). But since the word immediately before **k'u-xa-ja** on Step 6 remained undeciphered at the time, Stuart cautioned against any speculations about the **k'u-xa-ja** translation based only on two examples.

The word before **k'u-xa-ja** was eventually deciphered as **CH'E'N** *ch'e'n* "cave" along with its extensional meanings mentioned above (Martin 2004; Stuart n.d.; Stuart and Houston 1994:11-13; Vogt and Stuart 2005). The beginning of the phrase on Step 6 then could be read as "[it is] the 'downfall' of Sa'aal; [it is] the city of." However, the phrase "it is the city of" was not followed by the name of the ruler. The narrative seemingly consisted of three independent sentences: "[it is] the 'downfall' of Sa'aal; [it is] his city; Sak Chuwen is tortured." Some scholars accounted for the omission of the ruler's name in the second sentence as an instance of 'gapping,' known from other Classic Maya inscriptions, whereby an explicit reference to the protagonist (in this case, Sak Chuwen) is delayed until the last sentence (Martin, personal communication 2007).

There may be a better solution to the problem of understanding the syntax of the text. Two additional pieces of evidence strongly suggest that **k'u-xa-ja** *k'uxaj* in this context is part of the personal name phrase of the Naranjo king. The key hint comes from a previously unpublished panel fragment discovered in the debris on top of the Central Acropolis at Naranjo and currently stored at Yaxha (Figure 5). It consists of six hieroglyphic blocks arranged in three rows and two columns, as well as a section of the carved right edge of the monument. The left, lower, and upper sides are broken off so that only two blocks adjacent to the right edge are fully preserved. The block pB contains the beginning of the Calendar Round, but the rest of the Calendar Round is nowhere to be seen in the third row, and neither is the verb that should have followed the date. The text was likely read in horizontal rows with a minimum of four blocks in each row. This reconstruction of the original layout would account for the missing part of the Calendar Round and a verb of the primary clause in the third row of the inscription.

[MISSING] (pA1) ?-? (pB1) **ta**?-?-**ma** [MISSING] (pA2) ?-?-?**ya** (pB2) 9-'**K'AN'** [MISSING] (pA3) ?-**KAB-ji** (pB3) **k'u-xa-ja** [MISSING]

The size and the style of the glyphs are highly similar to the hieroglyphic stairway and to Panel 1 at Naranjo, which presumably came from Caracol. A particular conflation of **KAB** and **ji** is one of the hallmarks of Caracol inscriptions of that period (see Figure 3:M2). The layout of the inscription on the fragment indicates that it belongs to a previously unknown panel. In addition, the remaining section of the block pB1 resembles the spelling **ta-jo-ma** attested on the stairway where it is part of the name of the Kanal lord Tajoom Uk'ab K'ahk' (Figures 9a:H1 and 9b:P2). The

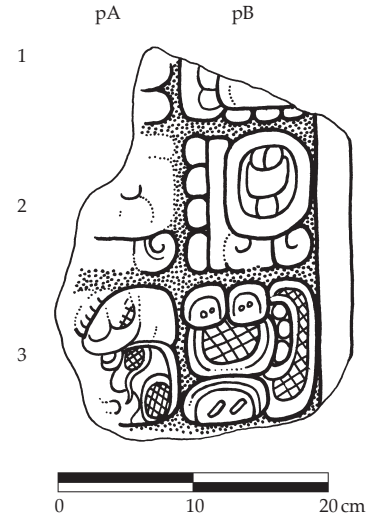


Figure 5. A new panel fragment from Naranjo (drawing by the author).

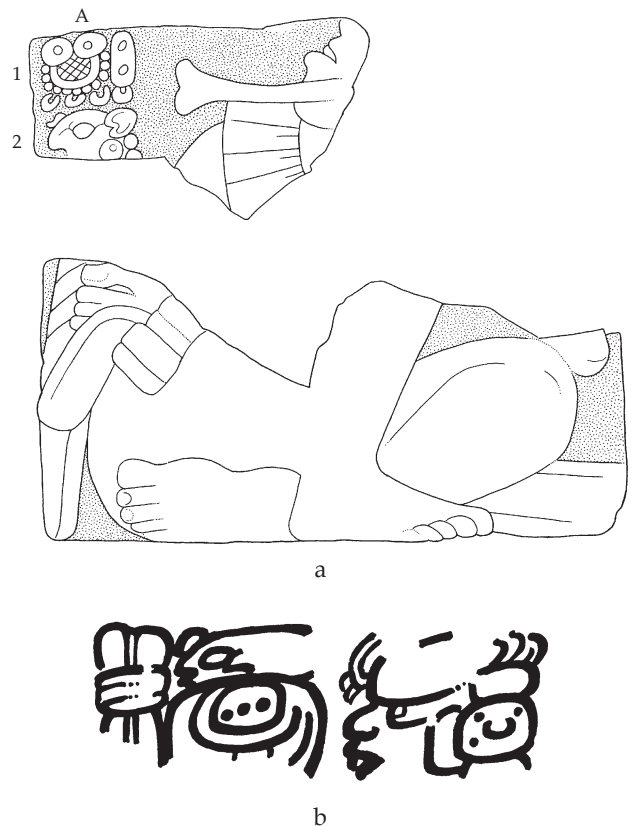


Figure 6. Contextualizing **k'u-xa-ja**: a) **k'u-xa-ji-ya** spelling on Tonina Fragment 1 (Graham 2006:122); b) **che-ka-ja K'IHNICH** on Caracol Stela 6 (Houston 1987:Fig.70).

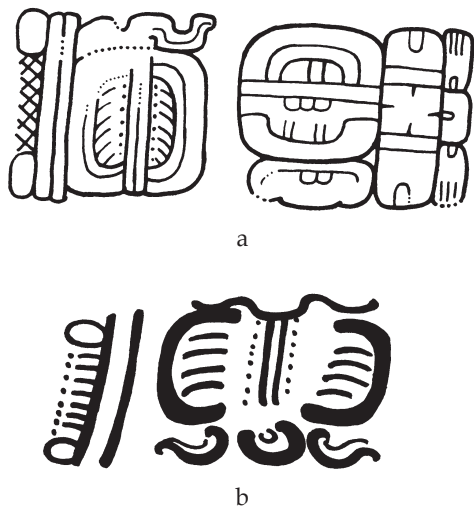


Figure 7. The names of ‘Double Comb’: a) a full spelling AJ-?-sa CHAN-na K’IHNIICH on Naranjo Altar 2:B3-A4 (Grube 2004b: Fig.13); b) an abbreviated AJ-?-sa spelling on the unprovenanced vase in the Santo Domingo Hotel museum, Antigua (drawing by the author)

Calendar Round date on the fragment begins with 9 K’an. It might be the date 9 K’an 2 Sek discussed below. As we shall see, the agent of the event mentioned on the fragment is not the ruler of Caracol unless Naranjo kings supervised their own ruin. Therefore, the occurrence of 9 K’an is likely a coincidence. Even if it is the same date, the text refers to a different part of the story.

The blocks pA3 and pB3 of the inscription on the fragment contain the spelling of a well known type of subordinate or secondary clause, which describes the event mentioned in the main or primary clause as something witnessed, accompanied, or ordained by the protagonist. The structure of such clauses is invariably a combination of a verb or a possessed noun (*u-kabij-Ø* / *u-kabjiiy-Ø*, *y-ichnal-Ø*, *y-ilaaj-Ø*, *y-itaaj-Ø*) and the name of the protagonist. Thus the verb [*u-]kabij-Ø* (“he has ordained it”) in the block pA3 should be followed in pB3 by the name of the person who “ordains” the action. The block pB3 spells **k’u-xa-ja**. In the given context, **k’u-xa-ja** can be nothing but a spelling of the agent’s name.

An additional piece of evidence comes from Step 8 of the same Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 at Naranjo. The step is broken in half, but the remaining right half is preserved well enough to see that the hieroglyphic block R2 spells **k’u-xa-ja SAK-CHUWEN** (Figure 4a). The layout of the text on Step 8 looks identical to other steps except Steps 5 and 6: there are four pairs of hieroglyphic blocks within a cartouche; the upper two pairs are read first, the lower two are read last. The remaining upper right pair of blocks contains the spellings of the last part of the Distance Number and the first half

of the Calendar Round date that begins with the day name 9 K’an. Other Calendar Round dates on smaller steps do not include a Supplementary Series. Therefore, the most plausible assumption would be that the now-missing lower left paired hieroglyphic blocks would spell the *haab* date and the verb or a compound noun at the beginning of the sentence. The only role left for **k’u-xa-ja SAK-CHUWEN** in the lower right pair of blocks is the spelling of the name of the subject of the sentence.

It may well be that the inscription refers to the defeat of the Naranjo army at a place known as “ko-bent cauac” on the day 9 K’an 2 Sek. The event is mentioned in several Caracol inscriptions including the Structure B-16 stuccoes, Stela 3, and Stela 22 (Grube 1994:87-90, 103). It was part of the series of successful attacks against Naranjo which culminated in the victory detailed on the stairway. The texts on the B-16 stuccoes and Stela 3 do not refer to the Naranjo king by name. It is possible that the name appeared on Stela 22 (Figure 4b), but it is now too eroded to read.

In summary, the new translation of the first sentence in the text on Step 6 of the Naranjo hieroglyphic stairway is “it is the ‘downfall’ of Sa’aal, the city of K’uxaj, Sak Chuwen.” One implication of the new translation is that now we have the name of the thirty-sixth ruler of Naranjo, the only seventh-century king unaccounted for since a reference to the thirty-seventh ruler was discovered on Naranjo Altar 2 (Martin, personal communication 2007; see also Grube and Martin 2004: II-38). We can also safely discard the story of torture or cannibalism in a Classic Maya court.

The new reading does not necessarily disprove the hypothesis that the word in the name is somehow derived from the gloss *k’ux* “to eat/to bite” (Kaufman and Norman (1984:276). Judging by the name, this Naranjo ruler might have been a rather grim fellow, although we may be looking at a wrong gloss. The inscription on the Tonina fragment discussed above (Figure 6a) might state that “the jaguar has been eaten/bitten/tortured,” although there is not enough of the original text to tell whether the phrase is part of the captive’s name or a reference to his fate. Another caveat of the Tonina text is that the bottom **-ji-ya** graphemes do not look distinct enough to discard the possibility that the spelling is just **k’u-xa-ji**. If it is **k’u-xa-ji**, the established translation falls apart.

Where does this discussion leave us with respect to the reading and the translation of **k’u-xa-ja** in the Naranjo inscriptions? One option is that **k’u-xa-ja** represents an abbreviation of a longer name phrase that would begin with a verb, something like *k’uhxaj chan k’ihnich* “Sun god is eaten/bitten in the sky.” However, it would be the first known example of such an extreme abbreviation. Verb-alone names (abbreviated or not)

are unattested in Classic Maya inscriptions. Therefore this interpretation seems unlikely.

On the other hand, the spelling **k'u-xa-ja** does not have to stand for a verb in this context. There is no proof that it does. The word *k'uxaj* may be a noun derived from the verb *k'ux*. The name *k'uxaj* may be an abbreviation of a larger name phrase that begins with a noun. Other names like *chekaj k'ihnich* at Caracol (Figure 6b) possibly reflect the same paradigm. The cognate *-a* nominalizer is attested in all Ch'olan languages (Lacadena García-Gallo 2004:178), and the *-aj* nominalizer possibly appears in Classic Ch'olti'an in spellings like **pa-sa-ja** for *pasaj* "opening" and **te-k'a-ja** for *tek'aj* "stepping" (Lacadena García-Gallo and Wichmann 2005:35).

The name *k'uxaj* may reflect a distinct pattern in naming and abbreviating the names of Early Classic Naranjo rulers. One of K'uxaj's immediate predecessors, the so-called 'Double Comb' or 'Ajwosaaj,' is usually mentioned under the name of **AJ-?-sa** (Figure 7b). The word is not deciphered, but it is likely a noun derived with the agentive prefix *aj-*. **AJ-?-sa** is only an abbreviation of the full name that takes the shape of **AJ-?-sa CHAN-na K'IHNICH aj ... chan k'ihnich** "Sun god [is] the [?er] [in the] sky" (Figure 7a). The template "something [is] something [in the] sky" is attested in the names of earlier Naranjo rulers—Pik Chan Ahk (Altar 1:J4) and Naatz Chan Ahk (Stela 45). Therefore, K'uxaj's full name might have been K'uxaj Chan Ahk or K'uxaj Chan K'ihnich—"Turtle is the eating/biting in the sky" or "Sun god is the eating/biting in the sky." Interestingly enough, the names of many Naranjo rulers from the later 'Dos Pilas line' (Martin and Grube 2000:74-75) do not follow this template, highlighting the fact that some kind of dynastic interruption took place after the arrival of 'Lady Six Sky' from Dos Pilas.

Of Snake Kings

A few years ago, Martin (2005) challenged established views and theoretical models in the world of Maya studies by suggesting that the Kanal dynasty was not autochthonous to the site of Calakmul. According to the new interpretation, sometime in the reign of Yuknoom 'Head' (AD 630-636) the seat of Kanal kings moved from the site of Dzibanche in Quintana Roo to Calakmul in Campeche (Grube 2004a; Martin and Grube 2000:103; Martin 2005). The new beginning was reflected in a zeroing down of the dynastic count, with Yuknoom 'Head' becoming a new founder, the "first" Kanal lord. The arrival of Kanal kings to Calakmul eclipsed a local dynasty with its own 'Bat' emblem glyph. The 'Bat' kings disappeared from public monuments for a while. Nevertheless, after Calakmul rulers suffered a series of military defeats in the eighth cen-

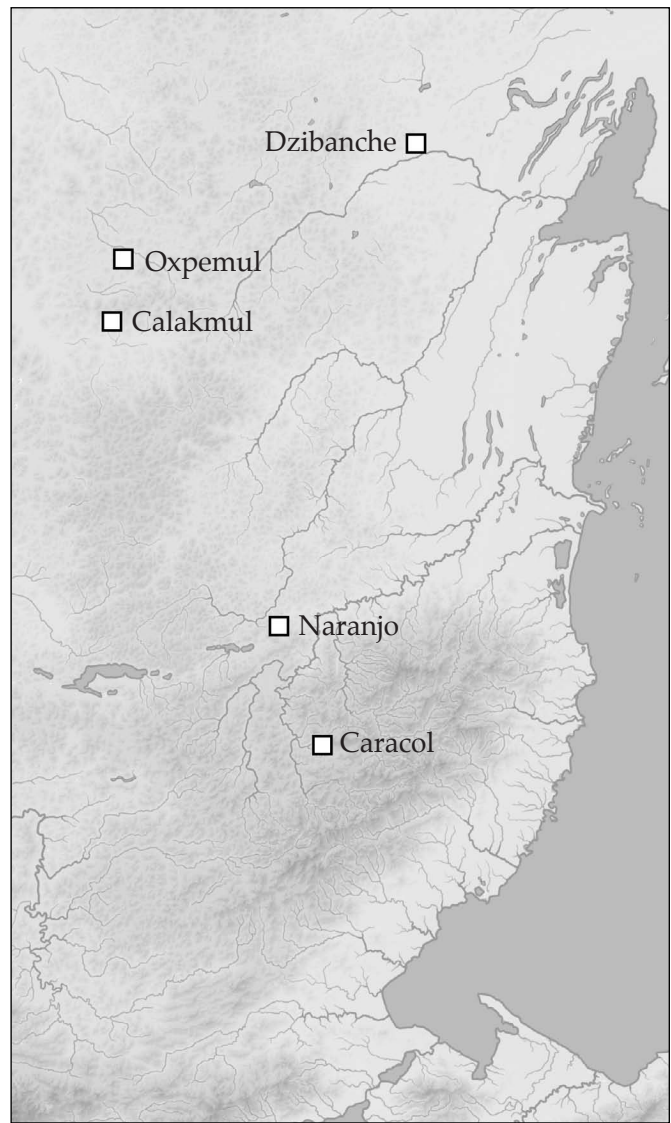


Figure 8. Sites discussed in the text (Precolumbia Mesoweb Maps).

tury AD, it was the turn of the Kanal kings to disappear from epigraphic records, while 'Bat' lords re-emerged as the sole lords of Calakmul and the nearby site of Oxpemul (Grube 2005:95-99; Martin 2005). Local and Kanal dynasts both shared the emblem glyph of "Calakmul kings" (*chi'k nahb ajaw*) and the title "those of Calakmul" (*aj chi'k nahb*).

The passage on Step 6 of the Naranjo stairway contains a crucial reference to the establishment of the Kanal dynasty at Calakmul. It has long been noticed that the text is the earliest known reference associating Kanal lords with the place names of Chi'k Nahb and Huxte'tuun, which seemingly refer to the site of Calakmul and the surrounding area (Martin and Grube 2000:104; Martin 1997:852; Martin 2005; Stuart and Houston 1994:28-29). However, the locative *ta* in the middle of the sentence *u-kabij yuk[noom] [?] kanal ajaw*

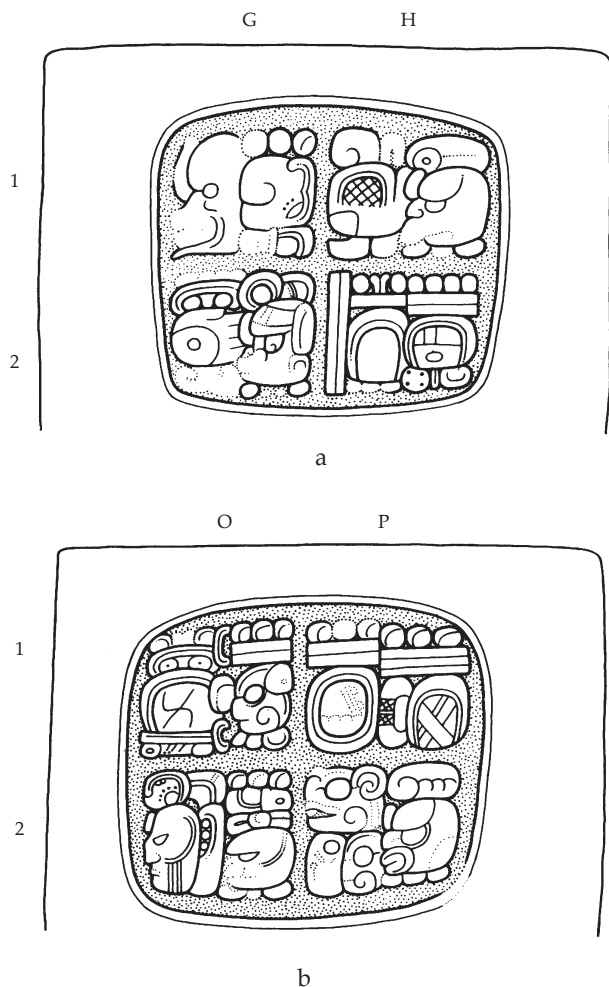


Figure 9. References to Tajoom UK'ab' K'ahk' on Naranjo Hieroglyphic Stairway 1: a) Step 4 (Graham 1978:108); b) Step 7 (Graham 1978:109).

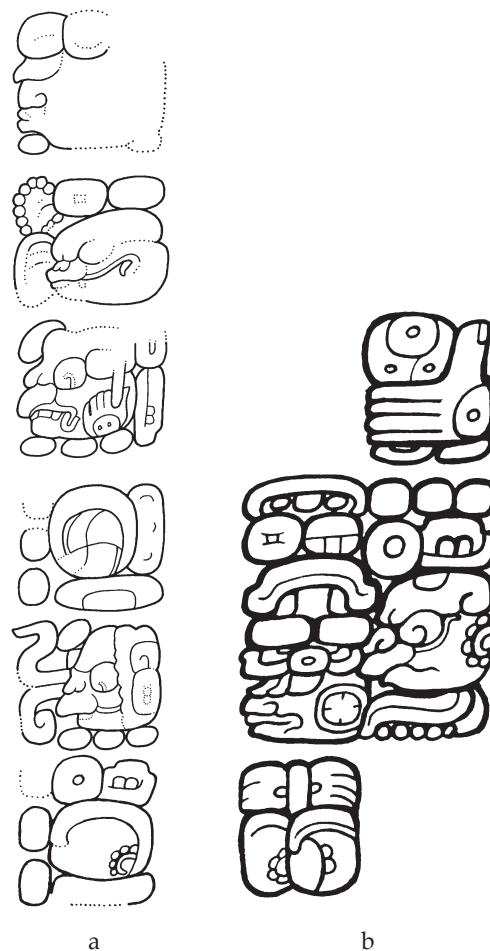


Figure 10. References to Huxte'tuun at Calakmul: a) Huxte'tuun in the dynastic count on Calakmul Stela 89 (Martin 2005:Fig.4b; Mayer 1989:Pl.5); b) Huxte'tuun *kaloonte'* title on Calakmul Stela 89 (Mayer 1989:Pl.7).

ta huxte'tuun aj chi'k nahb led scholars to the strange idea that the location of the event somehow interrupted the name phrase of the protagonist in the text. Such syntax is impossible in Mayan languages.

The solution to the problem is to read the sentence and translate it as it is—a verb followed by a name (a reversed word order compared to English): “Yuknoom ‘Head,’ the Kanal lord at Huxte'tuun, the person from Chi'k Nahb, ordained it.” It seems as if the author of the text decided to go to some extra length to specify that this Kanal king was not quite like the earlier Kanal kings in terms of his personal identity and location on the landscape (“from Chi'k Nahb”) and the location of his lordship (“at Huxte'tuun”). It is highly significant that the previous Kanal king mentioned in the same narrative, Tajoom UK'ab K'ahk', is referred to simply by his name or as “Kanal lord” (Figure 9).

The pattern where a noun and a locative together function as an attribute of a preceding noun (e.g.,

“Kanal lord at Huxte'tuun”) is attested in Colonial sources. Several early documents in the *Xiu Papers* (Quezada and Okoshi Harada 2001) contain strikingly similar examples, such as *u kahlay thoxci kaax tu menob almehenob yetel halach uinic don Francisco de Montejo Xiu gobernador uay ti noh cah mani lae* “this is the record of dividing the land by the noblemen and the *halach uinic* don Francisco de Montejo Xiu, the governor here in the great city of Mani” (Quezada and Okoshi Harada 2001:55). Similar examples can be found in the Chontal Paxbolón-Maldonado Papers: *nadzon Paxbolon escrivano publico ui ti cah Tixchel* “I, Paxbolon, public scribe here in the town of Tixchel” (Smailus 1975:23); *ukaba ta ui ba than acalan ukaba ta mexi[co]* “as it is called in the local language, called Acalan in the Mexi[can language]” (Smailus 1975:46).

A less likely possibility is that the inscription contains an abbreviated syntactic construction with the locative *ta*. Early Colonial Chontal and Ch'olti' docu-

ments invariably employ the participle *chumul* that precedes the locative as in the following sentence in the Paxbolón-Maldonado Papers: *tazcubilon ukal uyum cab enperador chumul tutepeual tu castilla* “I am sent by the ruler of the Earth, the emperor on his throne in Castile” (Smailus 1975:54). However, expressions like “our father in heaven” in Moran’s compilation of Ch’olti’ texts appear with and without *chumul*: *natzet ixte ah-calya tuba tuyanilbil mailbil, chumul tichan chumul tuut lum ti xibalba ixte, natzon ahtahnalon, tauut, tati* “you are also the maker of everything seen and unseen seating in heaven, seating on the face of the Earth, in hell also; we are the sinners in your face, in your mouth” (Moran 1695:67); *hunte cami tichan* “one our father in heaven” (Moran 1695:67); *cami tichan chumulet* “our father in heaven you are seating” (Moran 1695:73). Therefore, it is possible that the phrase *kanal ajaw ta huxte’tuun* implies an omitted participle, but it would still be grammatical without one.

In any case, such use of a place name with the locative *ta* is highly unusual. Albert Davletshin (personal communication 2007) has suggested that it might be a rhetorical device aimed at highlighting this part of the sentence, namely, the three different place names associated with Yuknoom ‘Head.’

The rhetorical emphasis and the distinction that the author of the inscription chose to make between Huxte’tuun and Chi’k Nahb addresses an important question about the nature of geographical entities behind these names. The evidence has been in favor of Chi’k Nahb as a place name for Calakmul proper (Martin 1997:852; Martin 2005). The latest confirmation comes from the self-referential inscriptions painted on the wall of the Calakmul North Acropolis (Carrasco Vargas and Colon Gonzalez 2005:44-45). Nevertheless, Kanal kings at Calakmul would sometimes refer to themselves as “the successors of K’awiil [at] Huxte’tuun” (Figure 10a; see also Martin [2005:7-8] for the discussion of the dynastic count) or “Huxte’tuun *kaloomte*” (Figure 10b). Moreover, Nikolai Grube (2005:95-99) has pointed out that in the inscriptions at the nearby site of Oxpemul, local rulers are referred to as “Oxpemul lords [at] Huxte’tuun” (Figure 11a) or as “Huxte’tuun *kaloomte*” (Figure 11b, see Grube 2005:95-99). The only way to interpret these data in light of the inscription on Step 6 of the Naranjo stairway is to assume that Huxte’tuun is the name of a larger geographical area that incorporates places like Calakmul and Oxpemul. Therefore, the inscription on the Naranjo hieroglyphic stairway claims that the political power of Kanal lords at Calakmul extended over the region of Huxte’tuun. To my knowledge, it is the only example in Classic Maya inscriptions where a distinction is made between one’s dynastic origins, geographical extent of political power, and current location.

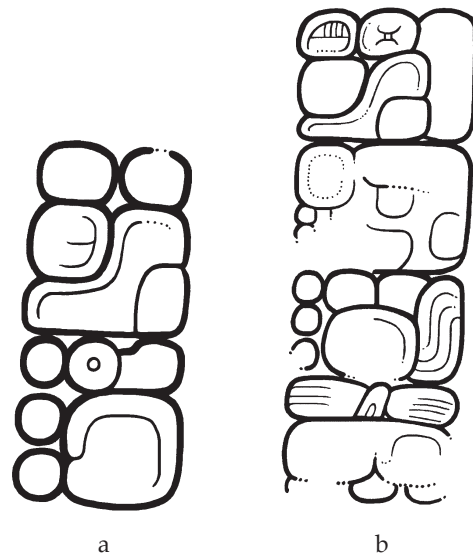


Figure 11. References to Huxte’tuun at Oxpemul: a) Huxte’tuun and the local emblem glyph on Oxpemul Stela 12:C5 (Grube 2005:Fig. 8a); b) Huxte’tuun *kaloomte* on Oxpemul Stela 7:C3 (Grube 2005:Fig.8b).

Concluding remarks

In summary, this paper offers a re-assessment of a highly important passage in the inscription on the Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 at the site of Naranjo in north-eastern Peten, Guatemala. The passage was believed to contain a reference to the ghoulish fate of the defeated Naranjo ruler allegedly eaten or tortured to death at the site of Calakmul. The new interpretation is that the syntax of the inscription makes sense only if the name phrases of the protagonists are not interrupted by subordinate clauses. Therefore, the text mentions neither cannibalism nor the location of the event. Instead, it only provides the names of the Naranjo and Calakmul rulers. As a result, we can add one more name to the Naranjo dynasty and gain a glimpse into the complex nature of the Classic Maya political landscape and its relation to personal identities.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Vilma Fialko and Barbara Fash for the permission to work with unpublished materials at Naranjo and in the archives of the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions. I deeply appreciate the financial support of FAMSI (Grant N06054) and the Peabody Museum of Harvard University that made this research possible. I also want to express my gratitude to Simon Martin, Joel Skidmore, and Albert Davletshin for reviewing the manuscript and sharing thoughts on the subject of the article. I am particularly indebted to Marc Zender for many comments and insights, as well

as for the invitation to present a preliminary version of this paper at the workshop during the Texas Maya Meetings in March 2007.

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An Updated Listing of Early Naranjo Rulers

Compiled by Joel Skidmore for *The PARI Journal*

New findings by Alexandre Tokovinine in this issue of *The PARI Journal* (Tokovinine 2007a, 2007b), together with the recent publication of Naranjo Altar 2 (Grube 2004; Grube and Martin 2004:20, 38, 70), now make it possible to supplement the list of early Naranjo rulers presented by Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube in *Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens* (Martin and Grube 2000:69-83), in consistency with the forthcoming second edition of that essential work (Martin and Grube in press). Except as noted, all drawings are after Martin and Grube (2000). All dates are Current Era (AD). Dates of rulership where known are given in parentheses after the ruler names.



Tzik'in Bahlam

This king of Naranjo is named in the inscription of Naranjo Stela 45 and also in the headdress of Naatz Chan Ahk, the ruler portrayed on the monument, making it likely that he was the father of Naatz Chan Ahk (Tokovinine 2007a). That Tzik'in Bahlam was a Naranjo ruler himself is confirmed by an inscription at Tikal, where he takes the Sak "Chuwen" title of Naranjo royalty (ibid.:11). The first part of his name, "Tzik'in," is more of a nickname than an actual translation (Martin and Grube in press). (Drawing by Alexandre Tokovinine.)



Naatz Chan Ahk

This ruler is known from a ceramic vessel on which he bears the Sak Chuwen title of Naranjo kings (Martin and Grube 2000:70) and from Naranjo Stela 15 (Lopes 2005), where he may well be named as "32nd in the line" from the Naranjo founder (Simon Martin, personal communication 2007; Aj Wosal Chan K'inich is elsewhere said to be "35th in the line"). The name of Naatz Chan Ahk, together with his portrait, appears on the recently discovered Naranjo Stela 45 (Tokovinine 2007a).



K'inich Tajal Chaak

This king is known only from a ceramic plate, probably dating to the early sixth century, on which he carries the Sak Chuwen title (Martin and Grube 2000:70).



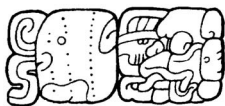
Aj Wosal Chan K'inich (546-615>)

Acceding to rulership under the auspices of the Kanal dynast K'altuun Hix, at a time when the Kanal ("Snake") lords were still located at Dzibanche (Martin 2005; Martin and Grube 2000:72, 103), this king ruled for sixty-nine years or more (Martin and Grube 2000:71). His full name was unknown before the discovery of Naranjo Altar 2 (Grube 2004; Grube and Martin 2004:20, 38, 70) (Figure 1). The "Wosal" part of it is a nickname rather than a true decipherment (Simon Martin, personal communication 2001). (Drawing by Nikolai Grube.)



K'uxaj (>630-631>)

Thanks to Alexandre Tokovinine's (2007b) reinterpretation of a crucial text, we now know the name of this ruler, who seems to have repudiated the suzerainty of the Snake kingdom accepted by his predecessor and suffered the consequences in a defeat by Kanal (Martin and Grube 2000:72). Based on parallels with other royal names, such as that of his immediate predecessor, his full name might have been something like K'uxaj (Chan) K'inich "Sun god is the eating/biting (in the sky)" (Tokovinine 2007b:19). As pointed out by Marc Zender (personal communication 2007) following a suggestion by Karl Taube (in Houston et al. 2006:123), it may be human hearts on which the solar deity is feasting. (Drawing by Ian Graham.)



K'ahk' Skull Chan Chaak (>644-680>)

The recent publication of Naranjo Altar 2 (Grube 2004; Grube and Martin 2004:70) has given us the name of the king known previously only as Naranjo Ruler 37. This ruler's relationship with the Snake kingdom is not known, but it is recorded that he attacked Kanal ally Caracol in 680 (Martin and Grube 2000:73). (Drawing by Nikolai Grube.)

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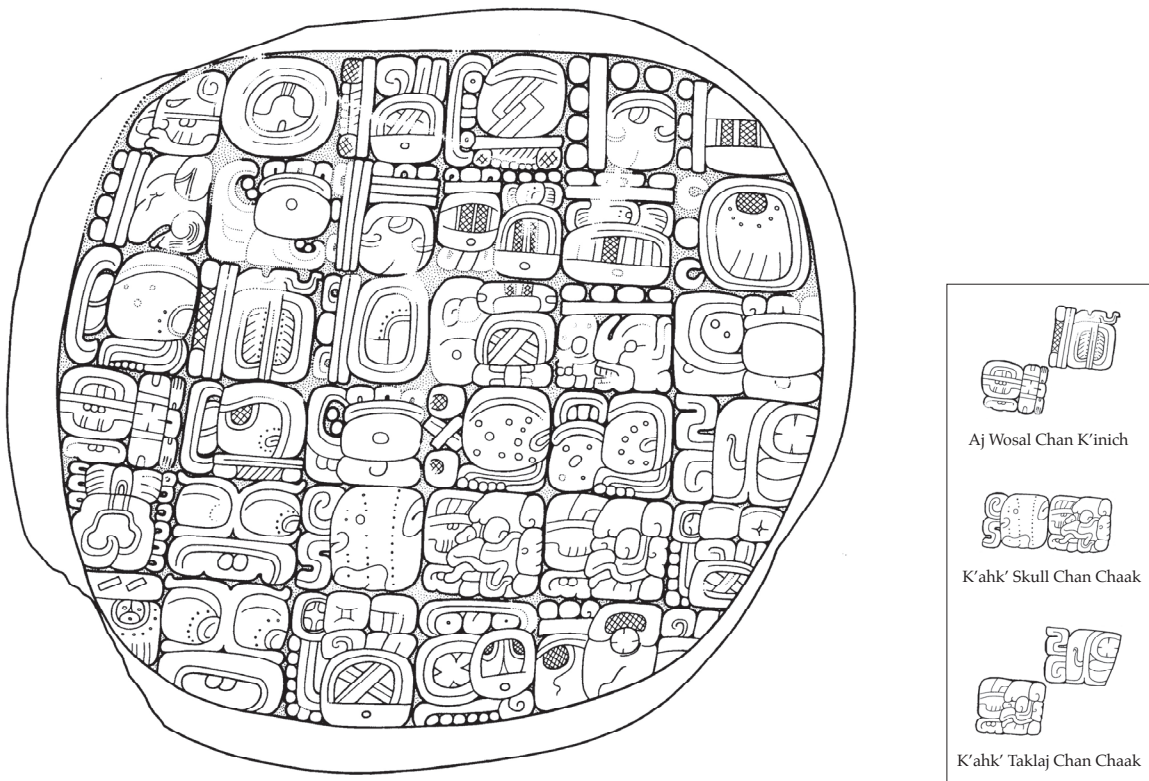


Figure 1. Naranjo Altar 2. Discovered in the Central Plaza of Naranjo immediately to the south of Structure B-18 (the Building of Hieroglyphic Stairway 1) in May of 2002, this recycled early eighth-century monument measures 93 cm in diameter and is about 21.5 cm thick (Grube 2004:207). It was commissioned in 790 by Itzamnaaj K’awiil (here using only the K’ahk’ Taklaj Chan Chaak portion of his lengthy nominal string) and records several poorly understood dedicatory events united by the theme of “striking” (*jatz’-*) a “paved surface” (*bihtuun*). While enigmatic, the altar nevertheless supplies critical information about the Early Classic Naranjo dynasty. The record of the first event, in 558, provides the full name of Aj Wosal Chan K’inich, elsewhere referred to only in the abbreviated form Aj Wosal. The second event, conducted in 644, was overseen by the previously unnamed 37th ruler, K’ahk’ Skull Chan Chaak (Grube and Martin 2004:20,38, 70). (Drawing by Nikolai Grube, after Grube 2004:208).