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Mono y Conejo: the Journal of the Mesoamerican Archaeological Research Laboratory publishes contributions on original research throughout greater Mesoamerica. Mono y Conejo provides a public medium for the description and reporting of anthropological interests. Flexible in format, the journal accepts and publishes works on archaeology, art history, ethnohistory, and related cultural-historical issues. Published at irregular intervals, each issue constitutes a single volume.

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Cover art: Lithic artifacts from August Pine Ridge, Belize (illustrations by Dee Turman, courtesy of the Programme for Belize Archaeological Project).

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From the Editors

Richard Meadows
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Greetings, Introductions, and Farewells

Research Reports

Hubert R. Robichaux
Brett A. Houk

A Hieroglyphic Plate Fragment from Dos Hombres, Belize: Epigraphic
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A Fluted Paleoindian Point and Other Chipped Stone Artifacts from
August Pine Ridge, Belize
Greetings and salutations! Well, a lot has happened in the time since the last volume of *Mono y Conejo: the Journal of the Mesoamerican Archaeological Research Lab* was completed. More fieldwork has been done, laboratory analysis finished, reports written, papers presented, and other projects have just gotten off the ground. But as the old saying goes, “The more things change the more they stay the same.” And with that said, we proudly present Volume 3 for your reading enjoyment.

We realize that quite a bit of time has passed since Volume 2 came out in the spring of 2004. However, let us just say this about Volume 3: in our humble opinions, the wait was worth it. The present volume presents some of the strongest papers we have published yet; papers that address a number of research issues in Mesoamerican studies, primarily Maya archaeology as well as epigraphy.

These papers represent a cross-cut of what we promised you in Volume 1 of the journal, the opportunity for established scholars, graduate and post graduate students, and young scholars to get papers published in a relatively timely fashion. We will continue to improve our rate of publication and can only ask for your continued contributions, support, and patience!

The first article, authored by Robichaux and Houk is a cogent analysis of the hieroglyphic text present on a vessel fragment recovered from a sealed context at the ancient Maya site of Dos Hombres, a substantial Classic Period center located on the Rio Bravo river in what is known as the Three Rivers region of northwest Belize and northeast Guatemala. As anyone who is familiar with the region knows, recovery of hieroglyphic texts in any medium are few and far between, due to a number of factors; and the recovery of this plate fragment has been critical to furthering our understanding of site histories and intersite contact. In this article, the authors carefully break down the text into its constituent parts and then reassemble it based on solid knowledge of the principles of ancient Maya writing systems.

Of note is the somewhat contentious nature of the decipherments, in that while a true revolution has occurred over the past 40 years in the understanding of ancient Maya hieroglyphic texts; with the breakthrough work of Tatiana Proskouriakoff, Yuri Knorosov, David Kelley, Floyd Lounsbury, Linda Schele, David Stuart, Nikolai Grube, Stephen Houston, Simon Martin, Peter Mathews, Victoria Bricker and dozens of other professional and amateur epigraphers; there are still wide gaps in our knowledge base that call into question many of the specifics of people, places, things, and actions recorded in the texts.

Robichaux and Houk’s work is no exception, and indeed ran into obstacles when first submitted to a prominent journal whose reviewers included some power players in the field of ancient Maya epigraphy. These pre-eminent scholars hold what we consider to be a rather dogmatic belief in the centralization of Maya political power. In turn, this limits the referencing of place names in the hieroglyphic texts to a few specific sites. The debate led to an impasse with regard to publication of the paper in the previously unnamed journal. In their interpretation, Robichaux and Houk suggest that other, smaller, yet still substantial sites and the elites that held political authority at these sites were also recording historical events and promoting their political agendas. It is important to consider that elites at places such as the grand site of La Milpa, also located in the Three Rivers region and the smaller center of Dos Hombres, were likely recording historical events in relation to one another and promoting their political programs and alliances.

We felt that this kind of healthy and relevant debate should be nurtured, and that scholars presenting well-researched and alternative interpretations should be recognized for their work and others should be exposed to these interpretations. Thus, we decided to publish the paper as the lead article in this, Volume 3. We invite you, dear readers to have a look for yourselves and come to your own conclusions about the textual content of the Dos Hombres hieroglyphic plate.

The next three articles appearing in Volume 3 of *Mono y Conejo* are bundled as part of the Preclassic Working Group of the 2003 Texas Maya Meetings, co-chaired by Julia Guernsey and Travis Stanton. This working group has for the last few years focused on a number of research issues dealing with the nature and extent of Preclassic Maya occupation across both the northern and southern lowlands. In the present volume, the three papers report on the results of work undertaken in three different areas of the northern Yucatan Peninsula.

The first article, authored by David Anderson is the results of initial survey and test excavations in the extreme northwest corner of the Yucatan Peninsula, in the areas surrounding the large Maya center of Dzibilchaltun. The survey, conducted under the auspices of the Proyecto Costa Maya recorded dozens of sites dating from the Middle and Late Preclassic. Moreover, Anderson and his colleagues also documented a number of Preclassic ball courts and present the results of their testing of one of those examples. Anderson also discusses the survey of a number of larger sites, including Komchen and Xtohe, among others. He concludes this well-written and coherent work with a discussion of intersite patterning, indicating significant development in the Preclassic Period in the region.

The second article, authored by Jeffrey Glover, Dominique Rissolo, and Fabio Estaban Amador is a presentation of the results of a regional settlement study focused on the Yalahua region of the extreme northeast Yucatan Peninsula. The article presents a detailed background of varying models of development for the region, and then
goes on to present a concise interpretation of the ceramic data with respect to specific groups of ceramics present at varying sites in the region. Glover et al. hold that the implementation of the Type-Variety: Mode classificatory system, the presence or absence of specific kinds of ceramics allows for both a refinement of site chronology, as well as provides information on site interaction and influence. Their work also focuses on the documentation of a number of cave sites in the region. They conclude with a well-articulated argument that Maya occupation of the Yalahau extends forward in time from the Middle Preclassic Period.

The third article in the Preclassic Working Group series is authored by Travis Stanton. Stanton presents some preliminary conclusions about the relationship between the construction of causeways and early site design among the ancient inhabitants of Yaxuna, also located in northern Yucatan. Stanton reports that causeways, so important to the site of Yaxuna, had their origins in the Middle Preclassic Period. He concludes by indicating that more data are needed to substantiate the notion that early monumental construction at Yaxuna incorporated the causeway as constitutive of civic design.

The final article presented in Volume 3 is a report of lithic artifacts recovered from surface deposits at the village of August Pine Ridge in northern Belize, and is authored by Fred Valdez and Grant Aylesworth. The authors document several Maya era lithic artifacts and perhaps more importantly, discuss two pre-Maya lithic artifacts recovered in the same area. These artifacts appear on the cover of Volume 3 of Mono y Conejo and include a broad bladed triangular and stemmed Archaic Period projectile point and a fluted lanceolate Paleoindian projectile point. These significant finds once again indicate a lengthy human occupation of Belize from the end of the Pleistocene some 10,000–12,000 years before present.

We hope you enjoy these articles and continue to support Mono y Conejo: the Journal of the Mesoamerican Research Lab. It is our pleasure and privilege to bring you the results of anthropological and archaeological research from across greater Mesoamerica. And we ask only for your continued readership and your future contributions!

To close, this is my, Richard Meadows’, final volume as Fred’s co-editor. Although I hope to return as a guest editor in future volumes of Mono y Conejo, I have begun some new endeavors in the northern reaches of North America, pursuant to issues of social justice and transformation; concerns that I have developed over a number of years. I will continue teaching and anthropological work in native communities in the vast and beautiful country of Canada. It has been a tremendous experience working with Professor Valdez and all those who have been a part of the journal and the Mesoamerican Archaeological Research Lab’s numerous projects. I thank you for the many opportunities I have had to work and play with you all.

Fred Valdez and I would like to thank Brett Houk for coming on board with Volume 3 as co-editor. Surely, his keen eye and broad range of expertise will be an added bonus for the journal.

To all whom I have had the privilege to get to know, I wish you all the best and I look forward to seeing you again in Mexico, Central America, Texas, Canada or wherever our work and travels take us! In the words of Zapata: !Siempre adelante!

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A Hieroglyphic Plate Fragment from Dos Hombres, Belize: Epigraphic and Archaeological Evidence Relating to Political Organization in the Three Rivers Region of Northwestern Belize and Northeastern Guatemala*

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Introduction

Dos Hombres is one of over a dozen medium-to-large-sized centers in northwestern Belize and adjacent portions of northeastern Guatemala, a study area known as the Three Rivers Region (Figure 1). Rio Azul, Guatemala is the most extensive ruin in the region, but La Milpa—the third largest site in Belize—may have been the largest Late Classic site in the area (Adams 1999; Adams et al. 2004; Houk 1996; Robichaux 2002:3). Hieroglyphic texts in the region are uncommon, and the names of individual rulers are known from only a handful of sites, including Rio Azul and La Milpa (Adams 1999; Grube 1994; Robichaux 1990, 2000). Other than the possible mention of a visit to Rio Azul by someone from La Milpa on the badly damaged Stela 2 at Rio Azul (Robichaux 2000), only one text has been discovered to

Figure 1. Map of the Three Rivers Region showing the locations of sites discussed in the text.
date that indicates a possible political relationship between sites in the region—an eight-glyph text from a hieroglyphic plate fragment excavated at Dos Hombres in 1993. This paper presents the context of the hieroglyphic plate, our interpretation of its text, and our argument that the text may refer to Late Classic rulers from Dos Hombres and La Milpa. Much of our reasoning is based on circumstantial evidence—archaeological context and patterns seen in other texts—but the interpretations put forth are both intriguing and plausible. They are also, apparently, contentious. However, this paper offers something for even those who disagree with our conclusions: the previously unpublished text from the Dos Hombres plate.

The Context of the Find

Dos Hombres is located in a low, gently undulating topographic zone at the base of the Rio Bravo Escarpment. The site is approximately 1 km east of the Rio Bravo—a small river that flows near the base of the escarpment—and 13 km southeast of La Milpa. La Milpa, a larger site, is located above the La Lucha Escarpment on a rugged, limestone plateau that extends to the west into Guatemala. Houk (1996, 2003) has argued, based on similarities in the physical layout of the two sites, that Dos Hombres was a Late Classic outpost or colony of La Milpa, founded perhaps to take advantage of a more stable source of water and, presumably, more reliable agricultural land. Dos Hombres was occupied as early as the Late Preclassic, but experienced a rapid and significant architectural expansion during the Late Classic around A.D. 750–850 (Houk 1996). Many of the major architectural groups at the site were constructed entirely during the Tepeu 2–3 phase of the Late Classic, and the rest are covered in a Late Classic veneer (Houk 1996).

Dos Hombres is built on low limestone hills that are surrounded by seasonally inundated bajos. The site core, composed of four plazas, is organized along a north-south axis (Figure 2). At the southern end of this line of architecture is the Acropolis, an elevated complex of temples and rooms clustered around the small Plaza C-1. On the north side of the plaza is Temple C-1, and on the south are the paired temples, C-2 and C-3. Access to the Acropolis was presumably through a series of climbing platforms at the complex’s northwest corner, ultimately entering Courtyard C-7, a small courtyard on the western side of Plaza C-1.

In 1993, a 1-x-2-m test pit was excavated in the center of Courtyard C-7. In 1994, the excavation was expanded by the addition of a 1-x-1.5-m unit on the eastern side of the original excavation. These two units documented the construction sequence of the Acropolis, which was apparently built entirely during the Tepeu 2–3 phase of the Late Classic (Figure 3). The earliest construction at Courtyard C-7 was a hard packed dirt floor (Floor 4) surface built directly on bedrock, which is found approximately 2.75 m below the modern ground surface. Floor 4 was covered by 25 cm of dry-stone core rubble fill that was capped by an extremely well preserved plaster floor (Floor 3). As part of a substantial expansion of the courtyard, numerous exotic artifacts, including a hieroglyphic plate, were apparently broken on the plaster surface of Floor 3 and subsequently buried in a thin layer of marl (Houk 1996, 2000; Houk et al. 1999). A thick layer of dry-stone core and another plaster floor (Floor 2) surface, which raised the level of the courtyard floor by approximately 1 m, covered this deposit. The final floor, Floor 1, was a hard-packed earth floor constructed shortly before the site was abandoned.

The stratigraphy of this courtyard indicates a rapid construction of the acropolis at Dos Hombres during the Tepeu 2–3 phase of the Late Classic. The hieroglyphic plate fragment was found in Lot 2-D-8, the deposit found on the surface of Floor 3 in the courtyard. The excavated portion of the 10–20-cm thick layer of soft marl was discolored pink by weathered plaster chunks and contained a number of exotic artifacts in addition to the partially reconstructable hieroglyphic plate.

The Hieroglyphic Plate and its Text

The Dos Hombres plate belongs to the Palmar Orange Polychrome ceramic type (Sullivan 1998; Valdez et al. 1999), a Tepeu 2–3 Peten Gloss Ware first described at Uaxactun by Smith (1955). The plate’s background color is light orange. The glyphs are located along the perimeter of the plate interior, and are enclosed between a red band along the rim and a red band on the interior side of the text. The glyphs themselves are red, outlined in black. Based upon the curvature of the fragment’s rim, it is estimated that the intact plate was 54 cm in diameter. The size of the individual glyphs suggests that the complete text was approximately 25 glyphs long. Figure 4 is a drawing of the text on the plate fragment. Seven contiguous glyphs and the beginning of an eighth glyph are present. The recovered glyphs have been labeled “A” through “H” in the drawing and are considered individually below.

Glyph A

The leading edge of this glyph is missing. The glyph depicts the face of an animal that has its tongue extended. The animal’s ear has a marking that is associated with the Muwaan (Muwan, Muan or Moan) bird (Thompson 1971: Figure 20, Numbers 13 and 14). The glyph is not otherwise recognized.

Glyph B

The mainsign of this glyph is a face that appears to represent the Muwaan bird. The overall face configuration is similar to that in many depictions of the Muwaan bird (e.g., Thompson 1971:Figure 18, numbers 32–42), with oblong shapes emerging from the mouth area. The oblong shapes themselves have the markings associated with the Muwaan bird. Several oblong shapes present in the headdress also contain similar markings. The Muwaan bird played a role in ancient Maya mythology and in the Maya calendric system. Thompson (1971:114) considered the bird to probably...
Figure 2. Map of Dos Hombres, Belize.
be a representation of the “screech owl”. Roys (1940:43) identifies it as a “sparrow hawk”. The “Muwaan” mainsign is prefixed by T229 (Thompson 1962). A or AH “he”, producing a tentative reading of “AH-MUWAAN”, or “He, Muwaan” (“He, Screech Owl”, or “He, Sparrow Hawk”, or simply “Screech Owl” or “Sparrow Hawk”) for Glyph B.

It is noted that “Ah” was occasionally utilized in so-called titles of origin (Stuart and Houston 1994:33–42) and in such cases was followed by a toponym rather than by the personal name of an individual. It is very clear that “Ah” was also used frequently in the manner posited here, i.e., before a personal name. This is evident from Colonial period texts. Sometimes Ah was used to refer only to the family name, as in Ah Cehob, which can be a reference to the men of the Ceh family (Roys 1967:77, Note 1). At other times “Ah” preceded a specific individual’s personal name. The Chilam Balam of Chumayel is replete with the names of important individuals who had “Ah” prefixed to their personal names in the manner
of a title relating to masculinity (e.g., Roys 1940:38, 1967:66 [Footnote 7], 66 [Footnote 9], 69 [Footnote 5], 119 [Footnote 2], 119 [Footnote 2]). Some of the individuals thus named in the Chilam Balam of Chumayel lived in Late Postclassic period times—for example, Ah Mex Cuc (Roys 1967:69 [Footnote 5]) whose representative is said to have been the famous Hunac Ceel of Mayapan. In the Dos Hombres plate instance, we consider Ah Muwaan to be the name of an individual, and not a title of origin, based upon its textual context as discussed below, and also upon the fact that the Maya frequently incorporated animal names into the names of humans (e.g., the aforementioned Ah Mex Cuc, which means “He, Whiskered Squirrel”, or simply “Whiskered Squirrel” (Roys 1940:35, 1967:69 [Footnote 5]).

Glyph C

The mainsign is a face glyph that is prefixed by a bar-dot numeral BOOLON, “9”. The ear of the face is infixed with a caucan design representing phonetic ku. Although the damaged face proper does not match precisely with T559 (phonetic tzu), there is a reasonable probability that this is what is represented, thereby generating BOOLON-tzu-k(u), or bolon tzuk. This has possible meanings of “nine parts (portions)” or “nine divisions” (Barrera Vasquez 1980:866), or “nine gourds” (McLeod and Reents-Budet 1994:121).

Glyph D

The prefix (T117, wi) and mainsign (T507b, tzi) combine to provide a phonetic spelling wi-tz(i), or “witz”, meaning “mountain/hill” (Barrera Vasquez 1980:925), or possibly “pyramid”. A poorly defined suffix to “witz” is present. It is possibly T24, phonetic li, which would produce a reading of wi-tzi-l(i), or witzil. The Yucatecan word witzil is used both as a toponym and a patronym, with meaning similar to witz (Barrera Vasquez 1980:925). It is likely that the preceding glyph, Glyph C, modifies Glyph D forming a phrase meaning “Nine Partitions Mountain”. This is almost certainly a toponym, or place name.

Glyph E

T115, phonetic “yo”, is prefixed to an unrecognized mainsign, which appears to be a simplified, almost cartoon-like face. This glyph possibly is part of the toponymic name phrase that precedes it, or it may serve as a title, or part of a title, for Ah Muwaan.

Glyph F

This glyph has T116, phonetic ni, prefixed to a T585a mainsign representing phonetic bi. These combine to spell ni-b(i), or nib. Houston et al. (2001:16–17, 50) have suggested that nib may be an instrumental suffix associated with titles related to place names and emblem glyphs. In the present case, nib is preceded by an apparent toponym, “Nine Partitions Mountain”, and likely was followed by an emblem glyph later in the text (see the discussion of Glyph G below). It is also noted, however, that among the glosses for Yucatec nib (Martinez Hernandez 1929:671) is “cosa encomendada, encargada, y dada a hacer o mandada hacer”, roughly translating to “a thing (or person) which (or who) has been commissioned, or charged with a responsibility, or given (something) to do, or ordered to do (something)”. The context of nib in the Dos Hombres plate text suggests that it may function as a title for an elite individual (Ah Muwaan) who has been commissioned for a certain duty or responsibility, which, possibly, is the one specified by the next glyph, Glyph G (see the discussion of Glyph H below).

Glyph G

This glyph consists of a prefixed T126, phonetic ya, a superfixed T168 logogram signifying AJAW (“lord”), a damaged and faded mainsign that is apparently T683b, phonetic ja, and finally, a damaged suffix that appears to be T130, phonetic wa. These combine to render ya-AJAW-ja-w(a), yajaw, meaning “its/his/her lord” (Bricker 1986:70). The yajaw phrase has been noted in some texts—for example, that on Piedra de Arroyo Stela 2—to refer to the subordination of a lord from one site to a politically higher ranking lord from another site (Martin and Grube 2000:19), and that appears to be its role in the present text. This would indicate that the lord cited before the yajaw glyph (Ah Muwaan) is subordinate to the lord cited after the yajaw glyph (Glyph H).

Glyph H

The only part of this glyph present on the recovered plate fragment is the prefixed numeral 18, which itself was only partially present. Based upon the preceding glyph being “yajaw”, it is highly probable that Glyph H is the name, 18-AJAW-2, of the superior lord to whom Ah Muwaan was subordinate. This inference is based upon the patterning in texts elsewhere, including those on Piedra de Arroyo Stela 2, on Naranjo Stela 1, and on an unprovenienced column referring to Bonampak and Tonina (Martin and Grube 2000:184), wherein the yajaw glyph is followed immediately by the name glyph of the superior lord and then by the emblem glyph of the superior lord’s polity (see also Harris and Stearns 1997:68). If the Dos Hombres plate text follows this pattern, the glyph following Glyph H, which is unfortunately missing, would have been the emblem glyph of the superior lord’s polity. We suggest that nib (Glyph F above), in the context of this yajaw statement, may be a reference to the responsibility (reflected by the title nib) 18-? has given to Ah Muwaan for governance of the Nine Partitions Mountain site.

Significance of the Dos Hombres Plate

The recovered Dos Hombres plate text fragment clearly contains a yajaw political relationship phrase, and it is of particular interest for that reason. It apparently states the relationship between two lords, or “rulers”, and their respective sites. The lower ranking of the two is named “Screech Owl?” (Ah Muwaan) and his polity is called “Nine Partitions Mountain” (Bolon Tzuk Witz). The politically
superior lord’s name began with the number “18”, but the balance of his name, and the identity of his site were not recovered in the excavations.

Ceramics are portable objects that could be moved easily from site to site, and, as such, the Dos Hombres plate may have been gifted or traded to an occupant of the Acropolis, in which case the text would refer to a persons and places unknown. While we acknowledge this is certainly a distinct possibility, in this paper we explore the possibility that one of the two rulers was from Dos Hombres. This approach is justified by the context of the find—a special deposit related to a significant expansion of the Acropolis at Dos Hombres—but we are cognizant of the fact that others may favor a different approach to interpreting the text of the plate. Because Dos Hombres is a moderate-sized Maya site, we consider the case wherein Ah Muwaan was the ruler at Dos Hombres and 18-? was the ruler at the politically superior site to be likely. This assumption posits “Nine Partitions Mountain” to be the ancient name of Dos Hombres.

_A Case for La Milpa as the Superior Site_

If Dos Hombres is the subordinate site referred to in the text, then, based upon its large size and proximity to Dos Hombres, La Milpa is a logical candidate for the politically superior site referred to in the Dos Hombres plate’s yajaw statement. Located only 13 km (ca. 7.8 miles) away and with an estimated population of 50,000 during the Late Classic period (Hammond et al. 1996:86; Robichaux 1995:290; Tourtellot et al 1997:5, 8–10), La Milpa was the nearest larger site to Dos Hombres. Houk (2003) hypothesizes that La Milpa in effect colonized Dos Hombres during the Late Classic period, based on the similarities in the plans of the two site centers. Archaeological evidence from La Milpa (Tourtellot et al. 1994:119) shows that La Milpa experienced a “dramatic renaissance” with regard to construction and population growth beginning around A.D. 780 during the reign of the ruler labeled “Ukay” by Grube (1994), and continuing into the reigns of his successors. The time of this expansion at La Milpa coincides with the time Dos Hombres experienced its robust architectural growth, which was initiated with the special deposit containing the hieroglyphic plate fragment at the Acropolis.

A number of monumental texts have been discovered at La Milpa. These have been described and analyzed by Grube (1994). Of particular interest with regard to the Dos Hombres plate’s yajaw statement is La Milpa’s Stela 7, which dates to A.D. 780. The text on the front side of La Milpa Stela 7 (Figure 5) contains a partially eroded glyphic mainsign at position C6 that is prefixed by the number “18” (Grube 1994:233). Immediately following this glyph at positions D6 and C7 are the two glyphs that Grube (1994:223) believes constitute a double emblem glyph for the La Milpa polity. These emblem glyphs are followed by the _bakab_ title commonly assigned to rulers. The empirical fact that rulers’ name glyphs on stelae are very commonly positioned immediately preceding emblem glyphs is sufficient reason to consider the possibility that Glyph C6, _18-?_, is the name, or part of the name, of the ruler of La Milpa that is cited on Stela 7. This is particularly so given the insight presently offered by Glyph H on the Dos Hombres Plate that there may have been a “superior” ruler in the Dos Hombres’ area around this time whose name began with an “18.”

Earlier in the La Milpa Stela 7 text, at position D4, is the damaged glyph that Grube construes to be the ruler’s name (Grube 1994:223). He read this glyph as _Ukay_ based upon its perceived resemblance to a well-preserved glyph on the reverse side of Stela 7 that clearly reads _Ukay_ (Grube 1994:223; Tourtellot et al 1994:123). Grube uses the presence of the phrase _K’UL-u-K’ABA_ (“his/her/its holy name”) at

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Figure 5. Drawing of the front (west) side of La Milpa Stela 7 (after Nikolai Grube [1994:233, Figure 4]).
Glyphs D3–C4 to support his view that the next glyph, at D4, is the name of the ruler. Additionally, he suggests that the possible presence of a “penis” title later in the text at Glyph D5 is consistent with the ruler’s name being at D4.

Our reading of Stela 7, however, indicates that the ruler’s name is not located at Glyph D4, and that the ruler’s name is not “Ukay.” We read and interpret this text as follows. Glyphs C1 and D1 in the La Milpa Stela 7 text provide a calendar round date. The next three glyphs, Glyphs C2, D2, and C3, are damaged and unreadable. We believe the k’u l’ u k’aba phrase at Glyphs D3 and C4 refers not to Glyph D4 (Grube’s “Ukay”), but to a proper name cited earlier in the text within the damaged glyph string C2 through C3. Yaxchilan Lintel 56 and the Palenque Temple of the Cross panel provide examples of this patterning. Indeed, the “k’ul u k’aba” phrase is sometimes referred to by epigraphers as a “terminator for proper names” because it commonly appears after the proper name to which it refers (Schele 1992:55), and before the thing that is being named. Glyph D4, instead of being the ruler’s name, is the specific noun (object) that is being named, and whose holy name was being given in the preceding phrase. The prefixed “u” on Glyph D4, rather than being part of the spelling of the ruler’s name, is the possessive, “his,” indicating that the possessed thing that is specified by the Glyph D4 mainsign is possessed or owned by a person cited lower in the text. It is further clear that the spelling of this possessed thing begins with a consonant and ends with y(u). The type or nature of the possessed item is not known due to the damaged condition of Glyph D4, but the text is very possibly referring to Structure 5, a small pyramid located just a few meters directly behind Stela 7 (Hammond et al. 1996:88). Structure 5 had an elaborate polychrome stucco facade, and an altar was possibly present in the innermost of two vaulted rooms at its summit. Excavations by Boston University’s La Milpa Archaeology Project have demonstrated that Structure 5 is associated with the dedication of Stela 7 (Hammond et al. 1996:88), and the text on Stela 7 possibly names the structure itself, or some aspect of it. Glyph D5, the possible “penis” title, rather than being associated with Glyph D4, may be associated with a ruler’s name farther down in the text (that “penis” titles can occur before the name they modify is illustrated by Lamanai Stela 9). Damaged Glyph C5 is also a possible title for a person cited lower in the text. This analysis indicates, first, that “Ukay” was not the name of the ruler cited on the front side text of La Milpa Stela 7, and, second, that Glyph C6, 18-?, may, in fact, be the name of the ruler to whom the text is referring. As noted earlier, Glyph C6 is situated immediately before the site’s apparent emblem glyph, the position at which a ruler’s name is very commonly found.

Although the mainsign is missing from both the Dos Hombres’ Plate’s Glyph H and La Milpa Stela 7’s Glyph C6, it is possible that the mainsign was the same for both glyphs because names of ancient Maya elite beginning with a number are quite rare in the recovered hieroglyphic corpus. Among the few currently known are 18 “Ub’aah K’awiil” (also known as “18 Jog”) of Naranjo (A.D. 814–830?), “9 K’awiil” (A.D. 771–789?) and “4 Pet” (A.D. 849) of Calakmul, “18 Ub’aah K’awiil” (also known as “18 Rabbit”) of Copan (A.D. 695–738), “Chak 9 Chaak” (Early Classic) of Tonina, and “6 Death ? Shield” (A.D. 799) of Palenque (Martin and Grube 2000). If there are two approximately contemporary textual references to persons whose names begin with “18”, within 13 km of each other, the likelihood is that the references are to the same person.

Converging Lines of Evidence

Chase and Chase (2000:58), in a commentary regarding varying and conflicting epigraphic interpretations of the damaged text on Caracol Altar 21, have observed that small alterations in how damaged glyphs are perceived can have major impact in how a text is interpreted. They strongly urge that epigraphic interpretations not be considered in isolation, but rather in conjunction with relevant archaeological data. We believe that their admonition is applicable to the present case. Macro- and micro-settlement pattern considerations (including relative site sizes, distance between sites, comparative site plans, etc.), excavation data at both La Milpa and Dos Hombres (including the archaeological context of the Dos Hombres plate and that of Stela 7), and the epigraphic interpretations of the Dos Hombres plate and La Milpa Stela 7 texts presented here are all consistent with each other in suggesting that Ah Muwaan was a ruler of Nine Partitions Mountain (Dos Hombres) and that he was politically subordinate to “18-?”, the ruler of La Milpa cited on La Milpa Stela 7.

Conclusions

We thus consider that the text on the Dos Hombres Plate may indeed refer to the Three Rivers Region sites of Dos Hombres and La Milpa, and not to two unknown sites located elsewhere in the Maya lowlands. At this point we see the latter case as possible, but less likely when the totality of evidence is considered. Unfortunately the issue cannot be settled conclusively using the currently available damaged and incomplete epigraphic database. Continuing archaeological fieldwork in and around the vicinities of La Milpa and Dos Hombres provides the possibility for the discovery of additional texts that will further illuminate this issue.

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Valdez, Jr., Fred, Lauren A. Sullivan, and Andrew Manning
The far northwest corner of the Yucatán Peninsula has recently been subjected to an intensive archaeological survey by Proyecto Costa Maya (PCM). This project was conceived and directed by Fernando Robles C. and Anthony P. Andrews (2000, 2001, 2003) in order to provide better documentation of the region’s sites, and to study coastal and inland dynamics among those sites. As is typical for archaeological projects, the resulting data bore little resemblance to what was expected. Northwest Yucatán is well known for being the driest and least hospitable area in the Northern Maya Lowlands (Hammond et al. 1981:24; Wilson 1980: 21–25), yet the project documented the existence of over 250 prehistoric sites where only 69 had been known before. Even more surprising was that an extensive Preclassic occupation was encountered across the region. Of the 250 plus sites, 140 had Preclassic occupations (Figure 1). The settlement is remarkable, not only for its size, but also for its complexity and antiquity. Previous work in the region had documented only a handful of Preclassic sites, and favored the Late Preclassic period for the development of complex regional systems (Ringle and Andrews V 1990:229). We now know that political complexity developed in northwest Yucatán by the Middle Preclassic period (600–300 B.C.).

The investigation of Preclassic sites in northwest Yucatán began with survey work by Edwin M. Shook in the early 1950s, when he carried out several surveys within and around the city of Mérida (Shook 1955). He located six sites with Preclassic sherds, but only four had substantial occupations. The Dzibilchaltun project, directed by E. Wyllys Andrews IV, conducted excavations in three Preclassic settlement groups: the Mirador group, the Komchen group, and the Xculul group (Andrews IV and Andrews V 1980:5). Excavations revealed signs of occupation during the Middle Preclassic at the Mirador group and Komchen, but only Mirador had evidence for stone construction during that period (Andrews IV and Andrews V 1980:26, 43). The Xculul group was not occupied until the late Late Preclassic (Andrews IV and Andrews V 1980:59). Contemporaneously, Edward Kurjack (1974) carried out a survey of structures at Dzibilchaltun. He reported, “25 percent of the structures were made or

Figure 1. Preclassic sites recorded by Proyecto Costa Maya in northwest Yucatán. Triangles represent Middle Preclassic Sites; Squares represent Late Preclassic Sites; Circles represent Middle and Late Preclassic Sites. Hollow symbols represent ballcourt sites. Drawn by author, based on INEGI maps and project data.
reused during the Middle [Preclassic] period," but that there was very little activity at the site during the Late Preclassic (Kurjack 1974:91). In 1968, Jack Eaton (1978) carried out a coastal survey of the west and north coasts of the Yucatán peninsula. He recorded two coastal sites in northwest Yucatán with Late Preclassic occupations. This was followed by the Yucatán Atlas project, which began in 1974 (Garza T. de González and Kurjack 1980:13). The Atlas did not collect chronological information from most of the sites it surveyed; therefore several Preclassic sites were recorded, but not recognized as such until they were revisited by PCM.

In 1980, Komchen was subjected to a more intensive project directed by E. Wyllys Andrews V (Andrews V 1988, 1989; Andrews V et al. 1980; Andrews and Ringle 1992; Ringle 1985; Ringle and Andrews 1990). The project created a detailed map of the site, and carried out an intensive test-pitting program. The site was estimated to cover ca. 200 hectares, and was shown to have a substantial monumental core. Despite ample evidence of a Middle Preclassic occupation, no stone architecture was found dating earlier than the Late Preclassic period (Ringle and Andrews V 1990:221). As a result of this project, Komchen became well known and is widely cited as the prime example of Preclassic settlement in the northwest lowlands (Sharer 1994:129; Ball 2001:434). Based on Komchen’s size and complexity, it has been interpreted as a regional center (Ringle 1985; Ringle and Andrews V 1990:229), but little was known of its surrounding sites. Many of the sites recorded by PCM can be seen as filling that role, but a great number of sites are also associated with a Middle Preclassic settlement that developed before Komchen’s fluorescence.

Before moving on to the data gathered by PCM, a statement on how the sites were dated is necessary. The primary tool used for dating was the pottery recovered from the sites. The sherds were classified to the group level in the Type-Variety System (Smith et al. 1960) by Robles, with the assistance of Socorro Jiménez A. and Teresa Ceballos G.; all three of whom are accomplished ceramicists, and are proficient in the use of the Type-Variety system (Ceballos and Jimenez 2000; Jimenez et al. 2000; Robles 1987, 1990, 2000). The majority of the pottery was collected from the surfaces of the sites, but on several occasions test pits were excavated in sites with suspected Preclassic occupations (Robles and Andrews 2000, 2001, 2003). The author is well aware of the problems associated with using surface collections to date sites (Redman and Watson 1970), but the thin and heavily bioturbated soils of northwest Yucatán make for ideal surface collecting conditions, because pottery sherds from all occupations at a site end up on the surface. Future survey and excavation will help to refine the local chronology, and the dating of sites, but the widespread distribution of Middle and Late Preclassic pottery groups throughout the region leaves little doubt that it served as the home for a significant Preclassic population.

The Preclassic Settlement of Northwest Yucatán

The data gathered by PCM can best be presented here in the form of a settlement pattern analysis. Sabloff and Ashmore (2001:14) have recently forwarded a refined definition of a settlement pattern as “the distribution across the landscape of material traces of human presence,” which suits the current discussion well. For the purpose of description, the Preclassic settlement pattern of northwest Yucatán will be divided into the three units that were suggested by Ashmore (1981:39), “individual structures, community layout, and intercommunity patterning.” Additional units, such as activity areas within structures, have been suggested (Trigger 1989:284–285), but the current data from northwest Yucatán lack the specificity to incorporate those units. A description of the data from Ashmore’s units is presented below, and it is followed by some preliminary observations.

Individual Structures

The individual structures of the region fall into two main forms, apsidal structures, primarily associated with residences (Kurjack 1974:53), and platforms, used in many varying forms and combinations. The apsidal structures are like those that have been found throughout the northern lowlands (Kurjack 1974:53). The remains of these structures consist of an oval ring of stones with a gap for an entrance on one of the long sides. The walls and roofs are presumed to have been made from perishable materials. The remarkable feature of this structure type, is that the form appears to have been used from the Middle Preclassic, through the prehistoric and historic periods, and is still being built today (Robles and Andrews 2003). Stone platforms are the primary architectural type in the region. They vary greatly in size and shape, but the most common type is rectangular, about 1 m tall, and has several structures on top, usually smaller platforms, and sometimes apsidal structures. The majority of these structures likely served as residences for family groups, or otherwise associated groups. Larger platform types also exist in the region, representing structures that go beyond the needs of residential life, and demonstrate the social complexity of this early settlement (Kurjack and Garza T. de González 1981:296).

Several of the more developed sites have platforms that are tall enough, in comparison to their surrounding structures, to be called pyramids. The tallest Preclassic pyramids in the region appear to be the two pyramids at the center of the site of Xtobo (CY1-166), which are 7½ m tall. Structure 21J1 at Komchen (CY-187) was taller than 7 m, but its original height cannot be measured due to heavy stone robbing (Andrews V 1981:319). Late Classic pyramids in the region may encapsulate Preclassic structures of similar height, but substantial excavations will be needed to determine if they are present. The primary significance of the pyramids is that they represent a greater energy expenditure than the surrounding buildings, and therefore can be seen as having a special significance, or importance to the site’s inhabitants.
Beyond the standard apsidals, platforms, and pyramids, several platform groups are constructed to specific predetermined forms. One of the more dramatic examples of this practice is the ballcourts of northwest Yucatán. Over the course of the three field seasons, 25 structures were identified as possible ballcourts (Lawton and Medina 2001; Medina and Lawton 2001; Robles and Andrews 2000, 2001, 2003). All of the structures have parallel mounds oriented roughly north-south, with closing mounds on either, or both, ends. In order to confirm that these structures were ballcourts they have been compared to the nine features used by Taladoire and Calsenet (1991:164, Figure 9.1) to identify ballcourts in southern Mesoamerica. These features are the lateral structures, the upper wall, the apron, the bench, the bench wall, the playing field, the end fields, the back wall, and the end walls. Definitive examples of each of these features have been documented, with the exception of explicit end field markers (Robles and Andrews 2003). Most of these features can be seen in the profile drawing of the excavation in the ballcourt at the site of Na On (CY-127) (Figure 2).

As a group, the ballcourts are most closely associated with the Middle Preclassic Period. The only site with a ballcourt where Middle Preclassic sherds were not found was CFE 2 (CY-212), which did not produce any surface collections (Robles and Andrews 2001; Robles et al. 2001). Whenever possible, surface collections specific to the ballcourt structures were made at the other 24 sites; all but one of these collections suggested a Middle Preclassic date. Although Middle Preclassic sherds were encountered at the near-coastal site of Tzikul (CY-123), several Early Classic pottery sherds were found inside a looters pit in one of the ballcourt mounds, making a Preclassic construction date unlikely. Therefore, there are at least 23 ballcourts that date to the Middle Preclassic.

During the 2002 field season, test pits were placed in the playing fields of four ballcourts to provide a check against the surface collections. At Na On (CY-127) a 2-x-2-m test pit was placed in the center of the playing field, and excavated to bedrock. No distinctive layers were encountered, only an even fill of rock and soil. Then a small trench was extended to the edge of the eastern mound of the ballcourt, uncovering a similar fill. Throughout the excavations, only Middle Preclassic pottery sherds were found. A 1.5-x-1.5-m test pit was placed in the playing field of the ballcourt of Sinab (CY-98), and again all pottery collected was dated to the Middle Preclassic. Another 1.5-x-1.5-m test pit was excavated in the playing field of the ballcourt at Xkitinché (CY-111). The excavations uncovered a flat floor of stones leading up to the eastern structure. The majority of the pottery recovered was Middle Preclassic, but one Early Classic sherd was found. One final test pit was placed in the playing field of the ballcourt at Xtabó (CY-166). It also revealed a floor of large flat stones. Sherds from the surface level of the test pit were a mix ranging form the Early Classic to the Middle Preclassic. Only one sherd was found deeper in the pit, and it dates to the Middle Preclassic. This test pit is, of course, the least convincing, but it does gain support from the consistency of evidence from the other test pits and surface collections at the ballcourts. In addition, 81 percent of identifiable surface collected sherds at Xtabó date to the Middle Preclassic, further strengthening a Middle Preclassic date for Xtabó’s ballcourt.

This evidence for dating the ballcourts to the Middle Preclassic is by no means unchallengeable. The excavations did not encounter any sealed contexts within the ballcourts, and the dating is based on a pottery sequence that is still being developed (Hernández 2000; Robles and Andrews 2000). Some ballcourts may end up being more closely associated with the Late Preclassic, e.g. Benatunas (CY-4), but nevertheless, when looked at as a group the evidence favors a Middle Preclassic date. Only with further excavation and eventual absolute dating will we be able to further refine the date of construction for each of the ballcourts.

Although less intensively examined, a number of other platform groups of significant arrangement were noted.
Several examples of platforms arranged as triadic groups were encountered. Triadic groups consist of a pyramidal platform flanked by two smaller platforms oriented perpendicularly to the main structure (Hansen 1998:77). The examples identified by PCM include two groups at the near-coastal site of Tzikul (CY-123) (Robles and Andrews 2001), and three groups at the site of Xtabó (CY-166) (Robles and Andrews 2003). The best example is found in Group B at Xtabó (Figure 3), which forms a double triadic group, with three small structures replicating the triadic form on top of the main pyramid. These structures represent a link with Preclassic Maya sites in the Petén, Guatemala, such as Nakbe and El Mirador, where triadic groups are common (Graham 1967:46; Hansen 1998:78). Group B also bears a distinct similarity to structure 5E-19 at Yaxuna (Ardren, personal communication 2002), particularly in regards to its location within the site, and the presence of a sace leading up to it.

Intra-site saceo’ob, or raised causeways, were a common structure type of the larger Preclassic sites in the region. A sace has long been known from Komchen (CY-187) (Andrews V et al. 1980), which has been dated to the Late Preclassic period (Ringle 1999:204). Two saceo’ob are also known from the Preclassic site of Tamanche, located just outside of our survey zone (Kurjack and Garza T. 1981:304). During our survey work many new saceo’ob were encountered, but the surface collections made cannot directly date their construction. Those sites with the greatest potential of having Preclassic saceo’ob are Haltunchén 1 (CY-191), Kakamul Ulub (CY-223), Tzikul (CY-123), and Xtabó (CY-166) (Robles and Andrews 2003). Once again, Xtabó has the best examples of this feature. There are three saceo’ob that radiate out of the site’s central plaza; each extends to a platform complex, possibly representing elite residences. Saceo’ob have traditionally been associated with political complexity (Kurjack and Garza T. 1981:305; Ringle 1999:207), thus reflecting on the development of those sites containing them.

One final structure from the site of Tzikul (CY-123) is worth mentioning. It is a platform with a circular structure sunken into the center. The current hypothesis is that this structure served as a sweat bath (Robles and Andrews 2001). The Tzikul example has not been directly dated, but the site itself has a strong Preclassic occupation. Precedence for such an early example of a sweat bath in northwest Yucatán exists in the form of a Middle Preclassic sweat bath excavated at the nearby Mirador Group of Dzibilchaltun (Andrews IV and Andrews V 1980:31). There are some similarities in form between the two structures, but they are not identical. Tzikul also had a significant occupation in the Early Classic, thus making it difficult to date the sweat bath without excavations.

Community Layouts

Three general types of community layouts have been seen among the Preclassic sites of northwest Yucatán. For simplicity’s sake, they are here referred to as Large, Medium, and Small sites. The Large sites of the Preclassic period are defined by an aerial extent of 100 hectares or more, and the presence of monumental architecture. There are three sites that definitely fall in this category Xtabó 1 (CY-166), Cometa (CY-62), and Komchen (CY-187). Two other sites, Tzemé (CY-1) and Ch’el (CY-138), may have also fit these criteria, but they were both heavily occupied in the Late Classic period, obscuring the Preclassic occupation. Medium sized sites are smaller than 100 hectares in extent, but still have a center identified by nonresidential architecture. This central architecture most frequently consists of a platform complex, made up of a 1 to 2 m high basal platform, with several small platform superstructures. The majority of the ballcourt sites fit within this description. The ballcourt is always located less than 100 m away from the platform complex. Two of the best examples of this site type are Xkitinché (CY-111) and Sin Nombre (CY-115). The Small Preclassic sites recorded by PCM were only a hectare or two in extent. These sites consisted of apsidal structures, and an occasional small platform. There were exceptions, for example, the site of San Jerónimo 1 (CY-156) appears to be an isolated ballcourt. In lieu of describing all 140 sites with Preclassic occupations, those examples mentioned here will be described below.

Xtabó

The archaeological site of Xtabó (CY-166) was first visited by project members in March of 2002, at which time it was apparent that the site was one of the largest and most complex in the region. This, combined with a perceived predominance of Middle Preclassic sherds in a preliminary examination of the surface collection by Robles, prompted multiple returns to the site in order to map it (Figure 3), and excavate three test pits. As mentioned above, 81 percent of identifiable surface collected sherds from the site can be associated with the Middle Preclassic. The remaining 19 percent is spread between the Late Preclassic, Early Classic, and Late/Terminal Classic, suggesting that the site never experienced a major reoccupation.

The center of the site consists of a well-defined plaza set on top of a low platform. The plaza is dominated by two 7.5 m tall pyramids. Test pit 3 was placed in the plaza directly in front of structure A1. Excavations uncovered one solid stucco floor, and the remnants of another floor above that. All of the sherds recovered from the pit were Preclassic, and 97 percent are Middle Preclassic, suggesting that basal platform of the plaza was built and modified in the Middle Preclassic. Directly to the south of the plaza is a ballcourt, measuring ca. 12 m long. Examinations of the lateral structures showed clear indications of the benches and bench walls, leaving little doubt that it is a ballcourt despite it being shorter than most other examples in the region.

Radiating out from the main plaza are three saceo’ob. Sace Nojol is the longest, passing nearly 100 m to Group B, the double triadic group mentioned previously. The sace lines up perfectly with the remnants of a stairway on the north side of the basal platform. Test pit 2 was placed in front of the main stairway, on the fringe of Sace Nojol. It uncovered the remnants of construction fill and some stucco. This fill
Figure 3. Map of the site of Xtabó (CY–166). Drawn by author and C. Lawton, with the assistance of F. Robles C., A.P. Andrews, E. Medina C., and A. Torres B.
was likely part of the *sacbe*. The ceramics recovered from the pit are exclusively Preclassic, and seem to favor a Middle Preclassic date. The other two *sacbeo’ob* also lead to major platform complexes. *Sacbe Chik’in* extends west to Group C, and *Sacbe Xaman* extends north-northwest to Group D. Both groups are associated with metates and pilas, strengthening the possibility that they represent residential groups.

*Xtobó* presents a very well organized site center that is strongly associated with the Preclassic period, and in particular the Middle Preclassic. The main plaza is clearly defined on all four sides, and was clearly seen as the center due to the three *sacbeo’ob* leading into it and the general orientation of other architectural groups towards it. *Xtobó* is the only Large site in the region with a ballcourt, thus making it the logical choice for the regional center of the ballcourt tradition.

**Cometa**

The site of Cometa (CY-62) was visited briefly by project members in 2001 (Robles and Andrews 2001). During the 2002 field season, the site was revisited to gather a more substantial surface collection, and draw a sketch map of the site core. The previous surface collection had provided only one identifiable pottery sherd, which dated to the Late Classic period (Robles and Andrews 2001). The new surface collection provides a very different picture of the site’s occupation history. 77 percent of the current surface collection is Preclassic in date, and most of these sherds are Middle Preclassic. The core of the site includes a plaza with pyramids similar in proportion to those in *Xtobó*’s core, although they are heavily damaged from stone robbing. This site is in need of much future work, including an accurate map, and test pits to confirm the dating. Until such work has been carried out, an assessment of the site’s role in the region cannot be made.

**Komchen**

The site of Komchen (CY-187) is well known from a previous project directed by E. Wyllys Andrews V (Andrews V 1988, 1989; Andrews V et al. 1980; Andrews and Ringle 1992; Ringle 1985; Ringle and Andrews 1990). The site covers ca. 200 hectares and is predominately Late Preclassic. It has long been viewed as a regional center for that time period. The site was revisited by project members during the 2002 field season in part to satisfy protocol of visiting all previously reported sites, but mostly out of professional curiosity. Small surface collections were made for comparative purposes, but no other work was carried out.

**Tzemé and Ch’el**

Unlike the previous three sites, Tzemé (CY-1) and Ch’el (CY-138) both had heavy Late Classic period occupations. Each site extends well over 100 hectares, includes substantial monumental architecture, and produced large collections of Preclassic pottery; however, without further excavations we will not be able to determine the nature of the Preclassic occupations at either site. Ch’el is worth extra attention due to the arrangement of its central plaza. Its form closely resembles that of an E-group (Aveni et al. 2003; Ruppert 1940). Although E-groups are often associated with the Preclassic period (Hansen 1998:63), the form of Ch’el’s E-group suggests that it is more likely to date to the Late Classic (Anderson 2003).

**Xkitinché**

*Xkitinché* (CY-111) is an ideal example of a Medium ballcourt site. The site primarily consists of a large platform complex and a ballcourt, located a few meters to the west of the platform complex. The lateral structures are 25 m long and separated by a playing field 5 m wide. The structures are oriented roughly north-south, with end walls, i.e. closing mounds, on both ends. The platform complex is based on a 1 m tall quadrilateral platform. It is dominated by a large platform on the north edge that rises a further 2 m. There are two other platforms located in the southeast and southwest corners, along with three apsidal structures, and other assorted features that make up the compliment of superstructures. Although a few other apsidal structures were seen in the vicinity, the site is primarily made up of the platform complex and the ballcourt.

**Sin Nombre (CY-115)**

*Sin Nombre* (CY-115) represents a Medium site without a ballcourt. Like Xkitinché, its main focal point is a platform complex. The basal platform measures 30 x 20 m and is 0.5 m high. There are three small platform superstructures, and the remains of an apsidal on top of the platform. Around the platform complex several apsids and other platforms are found in all directions. This pattern of a central platform complex surrounded by smaller structures is common through out the region. In the absence of excavations, it is difficult to know what their function, or role, was. Two possibilities are that they were public structures, or that they represented “elite” residencies, of a very marginal sort.

**San Jerónimo 1**

The site of San Jerónimo 1 (CY-156) is an abnormal example of a Small site. Instead of consisting of a few apsidals or small platforms, it is made up almost entirely of a ballcourt. The ballcourt is 19 m long, with two closing mounds. The orientation of the court is ca. 349°. Outside of the ballcourt there are two apsidal structures a few meters to the southwest. After which the nearest structures are a small group of apsids a few hundred meters to the northeast.

**Intersite Patterning**

Based on his previous work in the region, Ringle (1985:226) suggested that a three-tiered settlement hierarchy existed in Late Preclassic northwest Yucatán, centered on Komchen. The data gathered by PCM supports this assessment of intersite patterning for the Late Preclassic. A similar three-tiered hierarchy can now also be hypothesized for the Middle Preclassic, with the site of Xtobó as the regional center. It should be noted that the three site types discussed under community layout are an expression of this three-tiered
hierarchy, but not directly indicative of it. It is the unequal number of total sites from each category that indicates the hierarchy. Only a limited number of large sites existed, and they may have all reached their peak development independently. A greater number of medium sites are found scattered around the large sites, and then an even larger number of small sites are found between sites of both types. Thus, a classic pyramid form of hierarchy is present.

Regional site hierarchies are frequently used as indicators of the level of political complexity (e.g. Marcus and Feinman 1998). It cannot be denied that a level of complexity existed in northwest Yucatán as early as the Middle Preclassic that went beyond independent, egalitarian, farming communities. However, there is still insufficient data beyond the general settlement pattern to make a detailed analysis of the region’s political or social structure. If we are to continue using Service’s (1962) terminology for political organization, the settlements of Northwest Yucatán most closely resemble those of Chiefdom organization (Carneiro 1981; Peebles and Kus 1977). This is, however, only a preliminary assessment, much more data will need to be gathered to support it.

Conclusions

The data gathered by PCM have broad implications for the study of Preclassic Maya culture. Many recent discoveries have forced Mayanists to concede that significant developments occurred in the southern lowlands during the Preclassic (e.g. Hansen 1998; Urquizú and Saturno 2002), but now it is apparent that developments also occurred in the northern lowlands. Once further excavations are undertaken, we hope to uncover evidence of contact with other regions of the Maya world, through obsidian trade or other forms of interaction. Evidence of contact between the northern lowlands and the Gulf Coast of Veracruz, Mexico, has already been found in the form of Preclassic pottery sherds, typical of the northern lowlands, in and around the site of La Venta (Andrews 1986; von Nagy et al. 2002). Thus it is apparent that the northern lowlands were a part of the Preclassic Mesoamerican regional system.

The most striking Preclassic find made by PCM is, of course, the regional system of ballcourts. Although we cannot lay claim to the earliest ballcourt in the Maya area (Hill et al. 1998), northwest Yucatán appears to have one of, if not the, earliest pervasive regional tradition of building ballcourts. Other Middle Preclassic ballcourts in the Maya area appear to be scarce. Individual examples have been found and excavated at the sites of Nakbé (Valásquez 1993) and Abaj Takalik (Schieber 1994); also Agrinier (1991:175–177) reports four Middle Preclassic ballcourts in southern Chiapas. In a later table, Agrinier (1991:Table 10.6) lists several other potential Middle Preclassic ballcourts, most of which come from the Upper Grijalva river valley. The original sources for these ballcourts (e.g. de Montmollin 1995; Lowe 1959; Rivero 1990) are regional surveys that do not give specific information on the dating of the ballcourt structures. The result is that the Upper Grijalva river valley may also be home to a Middle Preclassic regional ballcourt tradition, but more data are needed to make that determination. The presence of ballcourt architecture in northwest Yucatán at sites of all sizes suggests that they held an integrative role in the region. Whether that integration was carried out in an actual ballgame cannot be directly established as of now. The structures are similar enough to Late Classic and Postclassic ballcourts to classify them as such, but we cannot yet put the ball in the court.

The discovery of Preclassic remains is a recurrent trend all across the Northern Lowlands. In the past, our knowledge of the Maya Preclassic period has largely been confined to isolated finds, and the deepest layers of test pits at larger Late Classic sites. With the growing interest in regional systems, more intensive regional surveys are being carried out, resulting in greater than expected numbers of Preclassic sites. Other archaeological work in northwest Yucatán has also lived up to this trend. A possible Middle Preclassic ballcourt was located by the Kiuic project (Ringle, personal communication 2002), and a Middle Preclassic structure was excavated at Tipikal by an Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia salvage project (Peraza et al. 2002). It would seem likely that we can expect to see a continuing surge in the reporting of Preclassic remains in the coming years.

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Notes

1 CY numbers are used for site identification in Figure 1.
2 CFE: Comisión Federal de Electricidad. This site was recorded in survey carried out by PCM for the CFE.

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This article presents the initial results from three integrated projects being conducted within the Yalahau region of northern Quintana Roo, Mexico, by Jeffrey B. Glover, Dominique Rissolo, and Fabio Esteban Amador II. All three of these projects are part of the larger Yalahau Regional Human Ecology Project (YRHEP), directed by Scott L. Fedick and Jennifer P. Mathews, which began work in the region in 1993, under the initial direction of Fedick and Karl A. Taube. The regional settlement pattern data is the focus of Glover’s dissertation project, which is being conducted in unison with a regional ceramic analysis under the direction of Amador. Rissolo carried out his dissertation research in the caves around the civic-ceremonial center of El Naranjal, located in the southern portion of the region, and Rissolo’s and Amador’s complementary data sets provide us with the most extensive ceramic collection for the region to date. This article addresses the following questions: 1) When was the region initially inhabited?; 2) Who were the initial inhabitants?; 3) What are the ceramic connections between the Yalahau and other areas in the northern lowlands during the Preclassic?; and 4) What can the ceramic and settlement data reveal about the socio-political organization within the region during the Preclassic?

Description of the Yalahau Region

The Yalahau region represents a unique physiographic landscape; dominated by extensive freshwater wetlands, it stands in sharp contrast with the dry karstic plain that characterizes the rest of the northern Yucatán Peninsula (Figure 1). In comparison to the rest of the Maya Lowlands, little archaeological research has been conducted in the region; however, the preliminary evidence from archaeological fieldwork conducted by YRHEP points to an intriguing occupational history of the region (Fedick 2001, 2002; Fedick and Taube 1995). The three sites thus far intensively studied (El Naranjal, Makabil, and T’isil) had major occupations during the Late Preclassic and into the Early Classic (c. 100 B.C.–A.D. 350) but were then virtually abandoned, with a modest reoccupation at the two larger sites of El Naranjal and T’isil occurring in the Late Postclassic (ca. A.D. 1250–A.D. 1520). In general, this pattern is markedly different from the continuous settlement histories in the surrounding regions: the Chikinchel region and Ek Balam to the west, Cobá to the south, the Gulf of Mexico coast to the north and northwest, and the Caribbean coast to the east (Andrews and Robles 1985; Andrews and Andrews 1975; Bey et al. 1998; Folan et al. 1983; Kepecs 1998, 1999; Robles 1990; Robles and Andrews 1986, 2000, 2001). Additionally, the Yalahau region is perhaps the most biotically rich and diverse ecosystem in the northern Maya lowlands (Lazcano-Barrero 1995), and recent research of the YRHEP has shown that the wetlands, the characteristic feature of the region, were used for some form of cultivation, most likely during the Late Preclassic period when the region appears to have been densely occupied (Fedick et al. 2000). It is this Preclassic population that we will explore here, initially focusing on the ceramic data from the region.

A Preliminary Assessment of the Preclassic Ceramics of the Yalahau Region

Introduction

Our general understanding of the Preclassic ceramic situation in the northeastern corner of the Yucatán Peninsula has been largely shaped by early coastal studies (Andrews IV et al. 1974; Ball 1978; Sanders 1960). Associated and subsequent ceramic analyses resulted in the identification of locally distinctive Late Preclassic assemblages, which were assigned either to the nascent and heretofore un-delineated (though uncontested) Cienaga sphere (Ball 1977:169–172, 1978:122–125) or more conveniently included among other Chicanel (or Chicanel-related) complexes. From these earlier studies two temporally and geographically distinct initial migrations into northern Quintana Roo have been proposed.
The ceramic data from both of these migration hypotheses will be discussed, and our recent ceramic data will be used to propose a third migration hypothesis. In addition, two models will be discussed that attempt to account for an apparent disjunction between the earlier and later Preclassic ceramic assemblages found within the Yalahau region.

**Initial Migration Hypotheses**

The commonly held notion is that the initial settlement of northern Quintana Roo occurred during the Late Preclassic and is marked by the presence of Chicanel sphere-related ceramic material. This migration, supported by Ball (1977:172–173) and Andrews V (1990:14–15), likely followed a northeastern route from the central Maya area (southeastern Campeche/northwestern Belize) through Quintana Roo. We see no reason to refute or amend the idea of a migration from the northeastern portion of the southern lowlands during the Late Preclassic; however, that population movement does not mark the region’s initial settlement as commonly believed. Present in the Yalahau region are ceramic groups that clearly predate the Chicanel-related pottery common throughout northern Quintana Roo.

Based on his Cienaga sphere, Ball (1977, 1978) proposed an earlier initial settlement of northern Quintana Roo from the northeastern portion of the Yucatán during the terminal facet of the Middle Preclassic or during the initial Late Preclassic. Ball (1978:124) describes the Cienaga phase assemblages as perhaps occupying a transitional period between the late Nabanche and early Komchén phases at Dzibilchaltún, and exhibiting attributes suggestive of a northwestern provenance. However, as Ball reminds us, his Cienaga sphere is a qualitative construct based on the occurrence of certain ceramic types along the North Coast (1978:122–124).

Prominent in Ball’s (1978:114, 124) Cienaga sphere assemblage are the unslipped, striated, solid monopod-based ollas—common throughout the Yalahau region as cajete forms—which he established as Chancenote Striated: Chiquilá Variety. Also present in his collections are incised and incision-zoned, punctated bichromes (Ball 1978:124), some of which may correspond to more recently established types such as Dzilam Verde Incised and Carolina Bichrome Incised. While Ball provisionally places the Cienaga phase within the initial facet of the Late Preclassic (300–100/50 B.C.), the abovementioned types appear later at Cobá (Robles Castellanos 1990). The extent to which we have relied on the Cobá collection, for purposes of cross-dating, is discussed below. Of particular interest to us are the bichromes, which represent the second-most frequently occurring type in the Yalahau Preclassic collections (with the ubiquitous and diagnostic Sierra Red type being the most common). It should be mentioned here that we suspect the incised bichrome tradition to emerge toward the terminal Late Preclassic-early “Protoclassic” Period, not during the initial facet of the Late Preclassic as proposed by Ball. This notion of its later appearance stems from subsequent archaeological data with more secure dates than were available to Ball. This type is of special interest to us not only because of its ubiquity, but also due to the fact that new forms have been found within the Yalahau region that suggest a local source of production and distribution of the Carolina Bichrome Incised type.

Ball’s proposed migration from the west during this early period appears to be supported by our preliminary study into the region’s pottery. However, we believe that this initial migration is marked not by Chicanel horizon pottery, but by earlier Mamom-related assemblages. In the Yalahau region, this arguably Middle Preclassic tradition appears to have been introduced from the west and was adapted by locally emerging potting communities. Perhaps early, regionalized ceramic traditions thrived in the kind of modest and nucleated settlements described by Ringle (1999:188–190) to be characteristic of the Middle Preclassic expansion in northern Yucatán.

**The Middle to Late Preclassic Assemblages of the Yalahau Region**

Surface collection and excavation efforts in the Yalahau region have thus far produced a modestly sized but nearly complete assemblage of Middle Preclassic ceramic groups. These groups include Achiote, Chunhinta, Joyventud, Dzudzuquil, and Kin. In general, sherds from this early assemblage bear strong affinities to Early Nabanche material from the Komchén collection. This complex is temporally affiliated with the Mamom ceramic sphere and has been described by Andrews V as extending from approximately 700 to 450 B.C. (for all references to Komchén ceramics see Andrews V 1988; 1989). The Early Nabanche complex has played a significant role in the identification and designation of Middle Preclassic assemblages at a number of sites in the northern lowlands: notably the Chunyaxche Complex at Muyl (Witschey 1993), the Itzamna Complex at Yo’okop (Johnstone 2001), the Yaxuná Ia Complex at Yaxuná (Suhler et al. 1998), and the Balam Complex at Ek Balam (Bey et al. 1998). These sites bear mentioning since they are, geographically, the closest sites to the Yalahau region that possess reported Middle Preclassic assemblages.

Since the ceramics recovered during recent investigations are from surface deposits and mixed sub-floor lots, any attempt to establish a local ceramic sequence at this point would be premature. Moreover, we are admittedly limited in terms of what we can infer regarding a regional chronology. Nevertheless, a comparative analysis of specific attributes reflected in certain types provides a better understanding of the relationship between the Komchén and Yalahau collections. Furthermore, it enables us to devise problem-oriented strategies for future investigations.

**Two Models of the Middle to Late Preclassic Transition**

A relatively complete Middle Preclassic assemblage suggests that related depositional events were more or less contemporaneous with local ceramic production. To address the inherent discrepancies produced by our cross-dating strategy, we devised two possible interpretive models (both
of which assume that the Early Nabanche-like material from the Yalahau region dates to at least the late facet of the Middle Preclassic).

The first, more simplistic model assumes that the Yalahau region was in fact occupied within the Middle Preclassic range proposed for the Early Nabanche Complex (700–450 B.C.). Interestingly, the more robust and typologically diverse Late Preclassic to “Protoclassic” assemblage in the Yalahau region bears a strong resemblance to the Añejo Complex of Cobá, which Robles Castellanos places no earlier than 100 B.C. (1990). This is reflected in the presence and high frequencies of the Unspecified and Clear-slipped varieties of Sierra Red and the Clear-slipped variety of Laguna Verde Incised in our collections — all three of which were defined by Robles at Cobá. If we assume that the Sierra Group, as well as the Tancah (also known as Sabán) group, emerged in the southern Yalahau region at what would be considered a rather late facet of the Late Preclassic, then we are left with a significant gap between the Early Nabanche-like material and the Añejo-like material. This apparent discontinuity is best addressed by an alternative, working model.

This second model instead proposes a transitional period between the terminal Middle Preclassic and the initial Late Preclassic. This horizon appears to be marked by the Kin ceramic group and the emergence of the characteristic Sierra Red slip. Our initial impression was that the Kin Group was part of a regional transition into Sierra Red. Even if this were not the case, Ball suggests that the dichromatic mode represented particularly by Muxanal Red-on-cream (and quite possibly by extension, Dzudzuquil Cream-to-buff and Kin Orange-red) is a transitional horizon marker between the Middle and Late Preclassic (personal communication 2002). This assessment is based on analyses of Southern Lowland vessels with cream-to-buff exteriors and red interiors, or red exteriors and black interiors (and vice versa). James Garber (personal communication 2002) suggests that sherds from the Belize Valley that reflect this dichromatic tradition might represent imports from the Petén or northern Belize, and date to around 500 B.C. Similarly, Ball (personal communication 2002) places this early mode somewhere between 500 and 300 B.C. — which, incidentally, fits within our provisional model. However, we cannot simply assume that the early dichromatic types in the southern lowlands are directly related to modally similar types in the north. Any such broadly shared tradition during this time period remains to be demonstrated.

With respect to the Sierra-like slip, it appears as if it extended well back into the Middle Preclassic assemblage. In fact, a few Dzudzuquil Cream-to-buff sherds from the Yalahau region possess red slips that are essentially identical — in terms of tone, color, and texture — to those found on Sierra Red: Unspecified variety sherds from Cobá. As an aside, Kuche Incised material (Dzudzuquil Group) recovered from a sealed Middle Preclassic deposit at the site of Tzubil, near Ticul, similarly possess this trademark slip (personal observation). It should be noted that Sierra Red was also present in early assemblages at Ek Balam (Bey et al. 1998) and Yaxuná (Suhler et al. 1998).

For the purposes of this second model, the early appearance of Sierra-like slips serves to push the Late Preclassic boundary back further in the cave collection than it is at Cobá. Moreover, one would expect Late Preclassic assemblages to emerge earlier in northern-most Quintana Roo (perhaps somewhere around 300 B.C.) based on Chicanel Horizon assemblages described by Andrews and Robles C. (1986), Ball (1977, 1978), Sanders (1960), and Simmons (1974), as well as in the Chikinchel Region to the west by Kepecs (1998). However, it should be noted that certain Sierra Red types (e.g. those with incisions and punctuations) emerged fully within the Late Preclassic and appear to extend into the Early Classic. The contextual co-occurrence or mixing of Early Nabanche-like material and Añejo-like material from surface lots and poorly stratified deposits within the Yalahau region lends additional support to the proposed continuity between the Middle and Late Preclassic cave assemblages.

A Case for Local Ceramic Production during the Middle Preclassic

The nature of the Middle Preclassic material from our collections suggests an indirect but indelible link to other early assemblages across the northern lowlands. Like Johnstone at Yo’okop (personal communication 2002) and Bey et al. at Ek Balam (1998), we have chosen to place this material within established typological units, which together represent a broadly shared or widely dispersed ceramic tradition. Nevertheless, there are notable and meaningful differences between the cave material and the Komché material. This became apparent during a purposive, fine-grained analysis of sherds from the Dzudzuquil Group.

Dzudzuquil Cream-to-buff is somewhat enigmatic. Surface finish is highly variable — both within assemblages and between them. We compared sherds of this type from the caves with those from Komché, with a particular focus on slip color, texture, opacity, thickness, and consistency. The cave sherds possessed a brilliant true cream, enamel-like slip, which appears to be unique. Like the Komché material, these slips were thick and well adhered, but were highly polished and extremely glossy. Unlike some of the more translucent slips in the Komché collection, which tend to reveal the red tones of the underlying paste, they were always opaque and consistent. In the cave collection, the interior surfaces of what appear to be Dzudzuquil Cream-to-buff tecomates were slipped with a Sierra-like red.

Regardless of our inability to place the Dzudzuquil Group temporally in northern Quintana Roo with any degree of confidence, it can be inferred from these distinctive attributes that they represent a localized development. Moreover, it is reasonable to account for the presence of Middle Preclassic utilitarian wares by assuming that nodes of local production exist. The investigation of the settlement context of these local nodes constitutes an aspect of the regional settlement pattern and ceramic studies to be discussed below.
The Regional Settlement Pattern and Ceramic Studies

Stemming from Rissolo’s localized work in the caves around El Naranjal as well as other project members more localized work, Glover and Amador’s project was initiated to put all of the fine-grained research in its broader, regional context. Their project began in 2001 and is still underway.

The ceramic connections between the sites in the Yalahau region and other portions of the northern Maya lowlands are the subject of Amador’s dissertation. His work will create an initial ceramic chronology for the region based on the ceramic collections obtained through test excavations and surface collections at a number of sites distributed throughout the Yalahau region. The chronology will be supplemented when possible by architectural design elements of known ages. Of interest in our discussion of Preclassic settlement is the Megalithic style of construction, which is one of the most imposing and unmistakable architectural styles found within the Yalahau region and dates to the Late Preclassic and Early Classic across the northern lowlands (Mathews 1998; Taube 1995). The most obvious trait associated with this style is “the use of large, well-dressed stones with rounded edges (almost pillow shaped) often over a meter in length, and horizontally laid” (Mathews 1998:75). In addition to the large stones, buildings constructed in this style are often apsidal, and may possess corbeled vaults (located under stairways) and/or corbeled aprons. The Megalithic style is also commonly associated with large basal platforms with a triadic grouping of superstructures (Mathews 1995).

Glover’s research involves a settlement pattern study of the Yalahau physiographic region (with a 20 km buffer) that will test four models of political/economic interaction among sites. Each of these models describes a different system of relationships between sites within the Yalahau region, as well as relationships between those sites and the political/economic regions that have been documented in the surrounding areas of the northern Maya lowlands. These four models, the Autonomous Decentralized Model, the Autonomous Centralized Model, the Periphery Model, and the East/West Corridor Model, incorporate elements of both the hierarchically structured Central Place theory and heterarchical theory. Each model will be tested primarily through analysis of the geographic patterning of administrative power, as measured by the spatial distribution and relative size of sites. The relative size of sites will be measured primarily through volumetric calculations of the largest architecture at each site. The volumetric data will be used to create the relative settlement ranking. The models will also be tested through analysis of architectural styles, such as the Megalithic style mentioned above, and site layouts that can indicate connections with other regions.

The models to be presented are positioned not only within the general conceptual frameworks of hierarchical and heterarchical systems outlined above but more specifically within the ongoing debate of socio-political organization in the Maya Lowlands. This debate has revolved around the question of whether there were centralized polities controlling large areas, or decentralized, kin-based polities that controlled smaller areas and were less stable (e.g. Ball and Taschek 1991; Chase and Chase 1996; Demarest 1992; Folan 1992; Fox and Cook 1996; Hammond 1991; Marcus 1976, 1993; Martin and Grube 1995, 2000). Specific hypotheses regarding the spatial distribution of social power across the landscape stem from both schools and will be applied in the models.

Initial Results of the Regional Survey

To date 59 sites have been identified within the Yalahau region (Figure 2). The southern and eastern portions of the region have been the most intensively surveyed to date and the initial results will draw mainly from those data.

In support of the argument made above that the initial settlement of the region took place during the Middle Preclassic, ceramics from the Achiote, Chunhinta, Dzudzuquil, Joventud, and Kin groups have been found at 11 of the 22 sites (where surface collections and/or test excavations have been conducted) and within four caves from Rissolo’s survey (Table 1). Late Preclassic material occurs at 21 of the 22 sites, and the site without Late Preclassic ceramics, Site #25, does have Carolina Bichrome Incised, which following the argument above may be closely related temporally to the other Late Preclassic ceramics, Site #25, does have Carolina Bichrome Incised, which following the argument above may be closely related temporally to the other Late

![Figure 2. Distribution of sites in the Yalahau Region.](image)
Preclassic material. The ubiquity of the Late Preclassic material stands in sharp contrast to the almost absence of Late Classic material. If the lack of Late Classic material is not related to sampling error, we are in a rare position to investigate Preclassic settlement without the Late Classic cultural overburden found at most sites in the Maya.

An interesting pattern has begun to emerge in the eastern portion of the region. The larger sites of Site 8 (Ox Mul), Site 12 (Nohoch Pich), Site 7, and Site 13 (Kimin Yuk) are
generally located on the eastern periphery of the region, furthest away from the wetlands, and are evenly distributed, about every 7 km., along a roughly north/south line. The smaller sites are found between the larger sites and the wetlands, with the smallest sites generally the closest to the wetlands. This pattern may represent a dendritic extraction network where the larger sites were exploiting the wetland resources via the smaller settlements (Smith 1976:345–353). These resources might have been used for trade with coastal sites or for internal consumption. These sites do not seem to form a cohesive socio-political unit due to differing site layout plans and architectural techniques; and therefore, led us to conclude that a number of independent socio-political units may have been operating within the eastern zone.

In contrast to the eastern data, a Late Preclassic/Early Classic incipient Megalithic state based at El Naranjal appears to be present. All of the sites share in the Megalithic architectural tradition discussed above and discussed in detail by Mathews (1998). With El Naranjal as the center, there are secondary sites positioned 20 km to the east and north (Tres Lagunas, and Victoria) and a tertiary center identified at San Lorenzo e. 8 km north of Victoria as well as other small Megalithic settlements surrounding El Naranjal. The distribution of Megalithic architecture within the region does not conform to this neat pattern however, and anomalies with these data come from Kantunilkin and Ox Mul. There are reports of a large ancient site of Kantunilkin, which could have been larger than El Naranjal, but since contact the ancient site has been systematically dismantled by the modern population (Sanders 1960). In fact, cut megalithic stones can be seen in house walls in the modern pueblo. The other anomalous site is Ox Mul. Located in the far northeast section of the region, it has one structure with Megalithic architecture. Its distance from both El Naranjal and Kantunilkin raise many interesting questions that cannot be fully answered at this point in time.

Conclusions

The presence of an extensive Middle Preclassic occupation within the Yalahau region seems hard to refute given the data from the cave and regional surveys. Where exactly this population came from and what mechanisms were involved in the population explosion of the Late Preclassic remain to be answered. The region does provide us with the rare opportunity to investigate regional socio-political and economic systems as well as interregional interaction during the Late Preclassic. Preliminary results of the regional survey point to a Preclassic period occupation conforming to the spatial characteristics laid out in the Autonomous Decentralized Model but with varying types of socio-political organization coexisting within the region.

Final Comments

We would also like to briefly comment on the differing types of data, especially the disparity between Northern and Southern Lowland data sets, brought to the table by the various scholars in attendance at the 2003 Preclassic workshop where this paper was initially presented. While the Northern Lowland data was often focused on more basic questions of settlement patterning and the identification of Preclassic ceramic assemblages (especially the data from our region and the Northwestern Survey discussed by David Anderson in his paper), the Southern Lowland data tended to be more associated with elite context activities that occurred at discrete locales in specific sites or on iconographic data. This contrast in types of data often led us to talk past one another. Although we are sure this observation is nothing new, we feel that scholars need to constantly be self-aware of these differences so that the differing data sets can be used to strengthen our understanding of the Maya Preclassic in general.

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Raised causeways, or *sacbeob* (*sacbe*, singular), are known from numerous lowland Maya sites (Folan 1991; Keller 1994; Shaw 2001; Villa Rojas 1934). While some *sacbeob* run between sites, most are short internal causeways. Primarily documented from Classic Period (A.D. 250–1150/1200) contexts, their functions have been extensively debated. Although Formative Period (1000 B.C.–A.D. 250) *sacbeob* may exist at Komchén, Yucatán and in the Mirador Basin, Guatemala, there is considerable skepticism concerning early dating of such features. In this paper, I document evidence for Middle and Late Formative causeways at the site of Yaxuná, Yucatán. Although a Middle Formative date for one causeway is probable, a Late Formative *sacbe* has been identified through investigations by the Selz Foundation Yaxuná Archaeological Project and the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. These data indicate that causeways were integral to the internal site design for some Maya prior to the Classic Period.

**Sacbeob at Yaxuná**

Yaxuná is located in the center of the northern Maya lowlands, approximately 20 km south of Chichén Itzá (Figure 1). The most famous causeway at the site is Sacbe 1, connecting Yaxuná to the sprawling Classic Period center of Cobá. One-hundred kilometers long, Sacbe 1 is the longest known causeway in the Maya area. This causeway was first seriously investigated by Alfonso Villa Rojas (1934; see also Bennett 1930; Thompson et al. 1932) in the 1930s and is argued to have served as a military link between Yaxuná and Cobá (see Andrews and Robles C. 1985; Freidel 1986, 1992). Originally thought to be a Terminal Classic feature (Freidel 1992), recent investigations have dated its construction to the beginning of the Late Classic Period (A.D. 600–700), coeval with other intersite *sacbeob* emanating from Cobá (Folan 1977, 1983; Folan and Stuart 1974; Robles C. 1976).

Although Yaxuná is most well known for this rather late intersite causeway, there exists a system of six internal *sacbeob* at the site (Figure 2). These causeways are integrally related to the urban design of this center. Often overlooked, this early *sacbe* system provides some interesting insights into Maya site design and into antiquity of causeway construction. At the present date, we have ceramic dates from two of the six internal causeways. Both *sacbeob* indicate Formative Period construction.

**The Middle Formative Period**

The first evidence of occupation at Yaxuná dates to the Middle Formative (Ardren and Johnstone 1996; Stanton 2000). Work by Brainerd (1958), Johnstone (2001), and Stanton (2000) identified Middle Formative Mamom-style ceramics throughout portions of the core settlement zone and in association with major acropolis groups. To date, sealed Mamom ceramics samples have been excavated from the 5E-19 Group, a triadic group reaching nearly 11 m in height during the Middle Formative, as well as from the 6E-30 Group, a residential/ritual complex. Both of these groups are located in the southern zone of the site core (Ardren and Johnstone 1996; Stanton 2000). Although Late/Terminal Classic architecture was found in association with some superstructures in both groups, these late modifications were minimal and the bulk of the extant architecture has been securely dated to the Formative Period. Eight test pits placed in the 6E-30 Group, including the southern temple structure, Structure 6E-31, indicate that it is primarily Middle Formative in construction. Fewer data are available for the 5E-19 Group (12 m at its maximum height), although a Middle Formative substructure was encountered at approximately a meter and a half beneath the surface of the southern superstructure. Middle Formative ceramics have been found in residential areas of the site, although no domestic architecture has been securely dated to this period.

Running almost due north from the 6E-30 Group, the remains of a short causeway, Sacbe 6, lead toward the center of the site (Figure 2). A single two by two meter test pit excavated through this causeway uncovered an unsealed ceramic sample of pure Mamom sphere ceramics suggesting a Middle Formative construction. Approximately 40 cm high, the matrix of the causeway consisted of small stones and a light brown sediment. No ceramics dating to later periods.
were identified in the fill of the causeway or in surface association. As the sacbe is located in zone of the site with a strong Middle Formative component and it is in line with the Middle Formative southern temple structure, we feel that further investigations will corroborate this dating.

The Late Formative Period

Although the present data indicate that the civic plan and sacbe system at Yaxuná were initiated during the Middle Formative, their Late Formative manifestations were much more extensive. Excavations demonstrate that the massive Central Acropolis/E-Group complex was nearly completed during the Late Formative. Additionally, evidence suggests that both the North Acropolis and the 5E-30 Group were under construction at this time. The population density seems to have risen dramatically over the Middle Formative period as evidenced by the large numbers of domestic structures associated with Chicanel ceramics found throughout the settlement zone (Stanton 2000).

Excavations by both the Selz Foundation Yaxuná Project and the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia date the construction of Sacbe 3, the largest north/south causeway at the site, to the Late Formative. This causeway is defined in two parts; the broad northern section and the narrow southern section. These sections are separated by a zone of the site that is vacant of surface features apart from Structure 6E-13, a small radial structure whose final construction phase dates to the Early Classic (Stanton 2000). The dating of Sacbe 3 comes from extensive excavations in the northern section. Excavations revealed several flooring episodes associated with Chicanel ceramics. Although this section of the causeway may have been in use after the Late Formative, it was not refloored or modified in any other way until a Terminal Classic ballcourt was placed on its surface at its northern extent. The southern section of Sacbe 3 has not been investigated. Final construction of the 5E-30 Group, to which this segment causeway is aligned, however, dates to the latter phase of the Late Formative (Stanton 2000). This evidence, in conjunction with the Late Formative date of the northern section, strongly suggests that this section also dates to this period.

Discussion

During the Formative Period, there was a consistent emphasis in civic design on a general north/south axis. Although the data from Sacbe 3 and Sacbe 6 indicate a shift in the orientation of this axis, it is clear that the people of Yaxuná continued to emphasize this design. Unfortunately, we do not have data from Sacbe 4, the causeway running north from the 5E-19 Group. As we have identified both Middle and early facet Late Formative, as well as Terminal Classic construction at this group, the causeway could date to one of these periods. If it is Formative in date, it may have been constructed between the times when Sacbe 3 and Sacbe 6 were built. Its orientation is the same as Sacbe 3 suggesting a later date than Sacbe 6 and the placement of the 5E-19 Group appears to obstruct the 6E-30 Group from access to the site center. Although this interpretation is tentative, the placement of the 5E-19 Group in the civic zone is suggestive of an intermediate date.

The Yaxuná data clearly indicate that the Maya began to use raised causeways to delimit civic site designs during the Formative Period. If the Middle Formative date for Sacbe 6 can be corroborated by future investigations, we will be able to clearly argue for site design continuity through causeway construction for over half a millennium. The implication is that community civic design was not only long lasting and important for the ancient Maya, but that it also dates to the first construction of monumental architecture in the lowland Maya sequence.

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Introduction

Four chipped stone tools from the village of August Pine Ridge in northwest Belize are documented in this report. Rogelio Chi, a resident of August Pine Ridge, but employed in Belize City, showed the items to the authors in the summer of 2004. The intent, for Rogelio’s part, was an information seeking agenda. He wanted to know what these chipped stone items are and did the Maya use them. Upon viewing the artifacts, it was realized that at least two of the four items are pre-Maya artifacts. Recognizing the importance of the tools, each was borrowed with permission for proper documentation (measurements, photos, and illustrations). This paper serves to report and document these significant chipped stone artifacts. All of the artifacts were donated by Mr. Chi to the Institute of Archaeology and are now housed in Belmopan, Belize.

Interest in pre-Maya occupation of Belize has been increasing in recent years. Much of this research interest originated in the 1980s with the Belize Archaic Archaeological Reconnaissance Project (BAAR) under the direction of MacNeish (MacNeish, Wilkerson, and Nelken-Turner 1980; MacNeish and Nelken-Turner 1983) and the Colha Project directed principally by Hester and Shafer (Hester, Eaton, and Shafer 1980). The Colha Project and the more recent Belize Postclassic Project (directed by Masson) have provided additional opportunities for research focused on the pre-Maya components. The results of this research may be found in research papers (Hester, Iceland, Hudler, and Shafer 1996; Hester, Kelly, and Ligabue 1981; Hester, Shafer, and Kelly 1980; Shafer, Hester, and Kelly 1980; Rosenwig 2001, 2002, 2004; Rosenwig and Masson 2001), several theses (Wood 1990; Lohse 1993), and a dissertation (Iceland 1997). The continued interest in the early inhabitants is demonstrated by more recent reviews of pre-Maya Belize (Lohse 2004; Lohse et al. 2005).

The Chipped Stone Artifacts

Utilized Blade

The tan-to-gray unifacial chert blade measures 12.19 cm in length (Figure 1). It is 3.75 cm at its widest and 1.08 cm thick. The blade was struck on a simple platform and both lateral edges, on the dorsal face, have significant edge wear. The artifact has a few brown spots that show through the...
surface, therefore, it has been impossible to determine if the blade has a tan-to-gray patina or if the brown spots are simply natural flaws, inclusions, or anomalies. It is undetermined if this artifact is a pre-Maya tool as chert blades were produced throughout both significant periods.

**Tapered-stem Biface**

The chert biface is made of a dark brown chert that has lighter, buff colored, bands across the artifact. The biface measures 12.26 cm in length, 4.46 cm in width (at its widest), and a maximum 0.97 cm thick. The artifact is similar to other specimens of the Classic Maya and is likely a Maya artifact (versus pre-Maya). The biface is illustrated in Figure 2.

**Pre-Maya, Archaic (Lowe) Point**

The dart point is recognized as the type called Lowe and is of the Archaic Period (Kelly 1993). A number of these specimens as well as other preceramic points had been reported (Hester, Shafer, and Kelly 1980) from a collection held by David Lowe in Belize. Kelly and Valdez observed additional specimens in the Lowe collection about a decade later (ca. 1990). The Lowe Point for this report is a slightly patinated honey-brown chert. It has a maximum length of 7.54 cm. The dart point width is 4.62 cm at the point’s shoulders with a stem width of 2.82 cm and a stem length of 1.50 cm. The point is 1.00 cm thick. Interestingly, both lateral edges are beveled indicating that it likely served as a knife rather than as a projectile. Figure 3 provides an illustration of the Lowe Point.
Pre-Maya, Paleoindian (Clovis) Point

With a significantly patinated (white) surface, this Paleoindian dart point has a few brown spots showing through the patination. This point has the following metrics:

- Maximum length: 5.16 cm
- Length of flute: 2.70 cm
- Maximum width: 2.61 cm
- Width at indent/waist: 1.96 cm
- Width at basal corners: 2.04 cm
- Maximum thickness: 0.60 cm

The August Pine Ridge point closely resembles a specimen reported by Coe (1960:Figure 1) from highland Guatemala, although the Guatemala artifact was made from obsidian. The constricted (or waisted) basal section along with the basal ears is reminiscent of fish-tail forms. Brown (1980) reported other Paleoindian data from Guatemala and placed the Coe find along with two others as “fish-tail” varieties of Clovis. The Belize find clearly fits in the Clovis type of Paleoindian dart points and is categorized as such for this report.

The Clovis point has parallel flaking on both faces, common for Paleoindian biface technology. A large single flute thins one face of the point’s base. Two smaller channel flakes basally thin the other surface. Basal grinding, also characteristic of Paleoindian points, occurs along both lateral edges. The edge dulling commences just below the shoulders and extends to the basal “ears”. The Clovis point is illustrated in Figure 4.
Summary and Significance

The four lithic tools reported in this paper are all from the community of August Pine Ridge. The specific context of the finds is uncertain, but interesting that the proposed range of tools, Paleoindian to Maya periods, were found from one (general) location.

Of the four artifacts, the tapered-stem biface is certainly a Maya tool. The utilized (unifacial) blade is likely a Maya artifact as well, but we recognize that the blade technology is also known for pre-Maya groups. The Lowe Point (Archaic) and the Clovis Point (Paleoindian) are both from the pre-Maya hunting-gathering periods.

The Maya tool(s) are indicative of either a nearby Maya settlement or ancient activities requiring the identified chert artifacts. The Archaic and Paleoindian points are quite significant indicating that the area was utilized over a lengthy period of time (beginning ca. 9,200 B.C.).

The increasing number of early finds from Belize (and Central America) provides the hard evidence for early humans in the region. Significant is the identification of early occupants in the region, some who may have remained unknown given the research interests in the Maya region. Important also is that these finds emphasize Central America not just as a corridor to South America, but an area of great interest (for resources, etc.), to these early hunter-gatherers.

The location at August Pine Ridge represents a more interior site versus many of the “coastal” finds such as the Lowe Ranch or Ladyville sites indicating that the earliest Americans traveled well inland in their subsistence activities.

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