

COSMOLOGY AND SOCIETY: HOUSEHOLD RITUAL AMONG THE TERMINAL CLASSIC MAYA

PEOPLE OF YAXHA (ca. A.D. 850-950), GUATEMALA

by

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This study of domestic ritual and symbolism centers on the ancient Maya kingdom of Yaxha in northeastern Guatemala, during the last part of the Classic period (A.D. 850-950/1000). Classic Maya high-culture functioned within a dynastic cosmology that framed royalty's power. The central question in this dissertation is 'how did the non-royal population participate and interact with this dynastic cosmology?'

Exploring some possible ways in which ancient Yaxhaeans participated and interacted with the local dynastic cosmology, I have hypothesized three possible behaviors derived from ethnographic studies: active engagement, resistance, and passive compliance. A comparative study of ritual practices and symbolism in ten residences of different social ranks provides the grounds for the discussion. This sample of residences includes the royal palace, a noble palace, two high-end commoner residences, and six low-end commoner residences. While the data from the eight commoner residences was obtained through original research, the information from the royal and noble palaces was recovered from previous research and salvage archaeology projects at Yaxha. The same ritual and symbolic aspects were investigated: symbolism in architectural layouts, ritual feasting, funerary rituals, dedication and termination rituals, and ritual paraphernalia.

I have concluded that while nobles and high-end commoners were actively engaged with the ruling dynastic cosmology, low-end commoners were more reluctant. A certain degree of disconnection

in the ritual practices of the higher and lower ranks has been detected, suggesting that low-end commoners might have been more passively compliant than actively engaged with the ruling cosmology. No evidence for overt resistance has been found. Although passive compliance is not a behavior usually associated with social change, ethnographic observations suggest that as a form of passive resistance, it might be a symptom of social unrest.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xvii
1. STUDYING STRATEGIES OF INTERACTION WITH THE DYNASTIC COSMOLOGY THROUGH HOUSEHOLD RITUAL AT YAXHA	1
1.1. STRATEGIES: ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT, RESISTANCE, AND PASSIVE COMPLIANCE	2
1.1.1. Active Engagement	7
1.1.2. Resistance	8
1.1.3. Passive Compliance	9
1.1.4. Strategies use by different groups of people	11
1.2. CLASSIC MAYA SOCIETY AND COSMOLOGY	14
1.2.1. Classic Maya Society	15
1.2.2. Cosmology	17
1.2.3. Ritual	21
2. METHODS: INFORMATION SOURCES AND FIELD RESEARCH	26
2.1. INFORMATION RECOVERY FROM PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND RESTORATION PROJECTS AT YAXHA	27
2.2. SAMPLING STRATEGIES: MAPPING AND EXCAVATION	31
2.2.1. Mapping and Survey	31
2.2.2. Excavation Strategy	33
2.3. CERAMIC CHRONOLOGIES	35
3. YAXHA: THE LORDS OF THE BLUE WATER	39
3.1. YAXHA'S DYNASTIES	40
3.2. YAXHA'S CIVIC CENTER	49
3.3. YAXHA'S KINGDOM	55
4. YAXHA'S RESIDENTIAL UNITS: DEVELOPMENT AND STATUS DIFFERENTIATION	58
4.1. THE ROYAL PALACE (SOUTH ACROPOLIS)	59
4.2. A NOBLE PALACE (WEST GROUP)	64
4.3. HIGH-END COMMONER RESIDENTIAL UNITS	67
4.3.1. HECR-Cheje	67
4.3.2. HECR-Saraguate	70
4.4. LOW-END COMMONER RESIDENTIAL UNITS	72

4.4.1.	LECR-Escobo	73
4.4.2.	LECR-Chichicua	76
4.4.3.	LECR-Cedro	77
4.4.4.	LECR-Corozo	79
4.4.5.	LECR-Chacaj	80
4.4.6.	LECR-Pacaya	82
4.5.	SUMMARY: TERMINAL CLASSIC HOUSEHOLD STATUS DIFFERENTIATION	85
5.	ARCHITECTURAL LAYOUT AND SYMBOLISM	89
5.1.	THE ROYAL PALACE: SOUTH ACROPOLIS	93
5.2.	THE NOBLE PALACE: WEST GROUP	95
5.3.	HIGH-END COMMONER RESIDENTIAL UNITS: CHEJE AND SARAGUATE	96
5.4.	LOW-END COMMONER RESIDENTIAL UNITS: ESCOBO, CHICHICUA, CEDRO, COROZO, CHACAJ, AND PACAYA	98
5.5.	SUMMARY: ARCHITECTURAL LAYOUT ACROSS THE DIFFERENT SOCIAL RANKS	101
6.	RITUAL FEASTING	103
6.1.	ANCIENT CUISINE AND THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF FEASTING	105
6.2.	ROYAL AND NOBLE RITUAL FEASTS	110
6.3.	COMMONER RITUAL FEASTS	111
6.3.1.	Ceramic Containers' Shapes	112
6.3.2.	Cooking and Serving Ware	114
6.3.3.	Vessel Size	118
6.4.	SUMMARY: FEASTING AND RITUAL INDEPENDENCE	120
7.	FUNERARY RITUALS	122
7.1.	YAXHA'S FUNERARY RECORD	125
7.1.1.	Terminal Classic Burial Practices at Yaxha	126
7.1.1.1.	Funerary Construction	128
7.1.1.2.	Burial Location	129
7.1.1.3.	Body Positioning	130
7.1.1.4.	Demography	131
7.1.1.5.	Body Aesthetics	132
7.1.1.6.	Grave Goods	133
7.1.1.6.1.	Ceramic vessels	133
7.1.1.6.2.	Ceramic Figurines/Whistles	136
7.1.1.6.3.	Jade/Green Stones	136
7.1.1.6.4.	Flint and Obsidian	137
7.1.1.6.5.	Shell and Stingray Spines	138
7.1.1.6.6.	Bone Artifacts and Animal Bones	140
7.2.	ROYAL AND NOBLE FUNERARY RITUALS AT YAXHA	142
7.3.	HIGH- AND LOW-END COMMONER FUNERARY RITUALS AT YAXHA	146

7.4. SUMMARY: RITUALS OF DEATH AND LIFE AT YAXHA	154
8. CACHING AND SCATTERING: DEDICATION AND TERMINATION RITUALS	160
8.1. ROYAL, NOBLE AND COMMONER RITUAL DEDICATION AT YAXHA	161
8.2. ROYAL, NOBLE, AND COMMONER RITUAL TERMINATION AT YAXHA	171
8.3. SUMMARY: RITUAL DEPOSITS AMONG YAXHA'S DIFFERENT SOCIAL RANKS	175
9. RITUAL PARAPHERNALIA	177
9.1. CERAMIC VESSELS	178
9.2. INCENSE BURNERS	181
9.3. CERAMIC FIGURINES/WHISTLES	185
9.4. LITHIC ARTIFACTS	194
9.5. JADE/GREENSTONE	197
9.6. SHELL AND BONE ARTIFACTS	197
9.7. SUMMARY: ROYAL, NOBLE AND COMMONER RITUAL PARAPHERNALIA	199
10. CONCLUDING REMARKS: COSMOLOGY AND SOCIETY IN CHANGING TIMES	203
10.1. CHANGING TIMES	205
10.2. SOCIAL HIERARCHIES AND IDEOLOGICAL INTEGRATION	207
10.3. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	217
11. REFERENCES CITED	220

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Conditions of comparisons between cases	6
Table 1.2 Model adaptation	7
Table 1.3 Model adaptation 2	10
Table 2.1 Yaxha's research antecedents (sources informing this research highlighted).	27
Table 2.2 Chronology and ceramic complexes.	36
Table 3.1 Sequence of dates and events from epigraphic inscriptions.	43
Table 4.1 Sample of residential units in this study.	59
Table 4.2 Royal palace's ceramic lots by period	61
Table 4.3 Noble palace's ceramic lots by period	65
Table 4.4 HECR-Cheje's ceramics by period	68
Table 4.5 HECR-Saraguate's ceramics by period	71
Table 4.6 LECR-Escobo's ceramics by period	75
Table 4.7 LECR-Chichicua's ceramics by period	77
Table 4.8 LECR-Cedro's ceramics by period	78
Table 4.9 LECR-Corozo's ceramics by period	80
Table 4.10 LECR-Chacaj's ceramics by period	81
Table 4.11 LECR-Pacaya's ceramics by period	84
Table 7.1 Description of burials by social rank	156
Table 8.1 Dedication deposits in residential unit	164
Table 8.2 Termination deposits in residential unit	172
Table 9.1 Ceramic vessels in ritual contexts	180
Table 9.2 Distribution of incense burners by residential unit	185
Table 9.3 Distribution of figurines by residential unit	187
Table 9.4 Distribution of ritual artifacts by residential unit	200

Table 10.1 Synthesis of results by topic and hypothesized behaviors	209
Table 10.2 Ritual elements by location within residences	213

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1.1 Yaxha's location in the Southern Maya area.	12
Fig. 1.2 Location of Yaxha and neighboring sites in Northeast Peten.	12
Fig. 1.3 Map of Yaxha's civic center and known residential units.	13
Fig. 2.1 Map of Yaxha with survey transects.	37
Fig. 2.2 Map of Yaxha showing the location of investigated residential units.	38
Fig. 3.1. Yaxha's emblem glyph.	42
Fig. 3.2 Map of Yaxha's civic center with location of some of its stelae.	45
Fig. 3.3 Yaxha's Stelae 11, 13, and 31.	46
Fig. 3.4 Ritual scenes on graffiti.	48
Fig. 3.5 Yaxha's civic center showing directionality in architectural layout.	51
Fig. 3.6 Maps showing similarities on the symbolic layouts of Tikal and Yaxha.	52
Fig. 3.7 Yaxha's examples of monumental compounds celebrating directionality.	53
Fig. 3.8 Monumental compounds celebrating directionality from Uaxactun and Tikal.	53
Fig. 3.9 Regional map showing location of sites mentioned in the text.	57
Fig. 4.1 Royal and noble palaces (South Acropolis and West Group).	63
Fig. 4.2 High-end commoner residential units: Cheje and Saraguate.	69
Fig. 4.3 Low-end commoner residential units: Escobo and Chichicua.	74
Fig. 4.4 Low-end commoner residential units: Cedro, Corozo, Chacaj, and Pacaya.	83
Fig. 5.1 Yaxha's monumental compounds celebrating directionality.	91
Fig. 5.2 Symbolic layouts emphasizing the east and center.	92
Fig. 5.3 Yaxha's royal palace, ritual construction in the center of northwest patio.	94
Fig. 5.4 Noble palace (West Group) with central ritual construction highlighted.	96
Fig. 5.5 High-end commoner residential units with ritual constructions highlighted.	97
Fig. 5.6 Low-end commoner residential units.	99

Fig. 6.1 Ceramic vessels shapes.	107
Fig. 7.1 Map of Yaxha showing the location of burials.	124
Fig. 7.2 Funerary construction types.	128
Fig. 7.3 Tunnel in Str. 216, royal funerary chamber.	129
Fig. 7.4 Vessels from burials: Bowl, Bu. 14a HERC-Cheje, Cylinder, Bu. 17, HERC-Saraguate.	135
Fig. 7.5 Jade pendant, Bu. 14a, HERC-Cheje.	137
Fig. 7.6 Chert lance point, Bu. 14a, HECR-Cheje.	138
Fig. 7.7 Spondylus shell rectangular bead, Bu. 14a, HECR-Cheje.	139
Fig. 7.8 Bone tools, Bu. 14a, HECR-Cheje.	141
Fig. 7.9 Tikal's Altar 5, exhumation and transportation of bones of a lady from Yaxha.	145
Fig. 7.10 Burials 14a and 15, HECR-Cheje.	150
Fig. 7.11 Burials 16 and 17, HECR-Saraguate.	151
Fig. 7.12 Burials 20 and 21, LECR-Chichicua.	152
Fig. 7.13 Burial 18, LECR-Escobo.	153
Fig. 7.14 Burial 19, LECR-Corozo.	153
Fig. 8.1 Map of Yaxha showing the location of dedication (DD) and termination deposits (TD).	162
Fig. 8.2 Terminal Classic cached bowl from the royal palace (DD1).	163
Fig. 8.3 Terminal Classic jaguar-vessel cached in LECR-Pacaya.	165
Fig. 8.4 "Ritual kit" cached in HERC-Cheje (DD1/Bu. 14a).	167
Fig. 8.5 Terminal Classic bowl cached in HECR-Cheje (DD2/Bu. 14b).	168
Fig. 8.6 Terminal Classic cached lithic eccentrics from HECR-Saraguate (DD1).	170
Fig. 8.7 Terminal Classic cached lithic eccentrics from HECR-Saraguate (DD2).	170
Fig. 9.1 Vessel with carved scene of two lords, royal palace.	179
Fig. 9.2 Incense burner basic shapes recognized in Yaxha's ceramic collections.	182
Fig. 8.3 Incense burner fragment, HECR-Cheje.	182
Fig. 8.4 Examples of incense burner fragments from commoner residential units.	184
Fig. 9.5 Male figurines from royal settings.	190
Fig. 9.6 Female figurines from royal settings.	190
Fig. 9.7 Bird figurines/whistles from royal settings.	191

Fig. 9.8 Mammal figurines from royal settings.	191
Fig. 9.9 Figurine fragments from high-end commoner residences.	192
Fig. 9.10 Headdress fragments.	193
Fig. 9.11 Limestone spindle whorl from Burial 17, HE CR-Saraguate.	196

LIST OF GRAPHS

Graph 4.1 Royal palace's trajectory of occupation by ceramic lots percentages.	61
Graph 4.2 Noble palace's trajectory of occupation by ceramic lots percentages.	65
Graph 4.3 HECR-Cheje's trajectory of occupation by ceramic lots percentages.	68
Graph 4.4 HECR-Saraguata's trajectory of occupation by ceramic lots percentages.	71
Graph 4.5 LECR-Escobo's trajectory of occupation by ceramic lots percentages.	75
Graph 4.6 LECR-Chichicua's trajectory of occupation by ceramic lots percentages.	77
Graph 4.7 LECR-Cedro's trajectory of occupation by ceramic lots percentages.	78
Graph 4.8 LECR-Corozo's trajectory of occupation by ceramic lots percentages.	80
Graph 4.9 LECR-Chacaj's trajectory of occupation by ceramic lots percentages.	81
Graph 4.10 LECR-Pacaya's trajectory of occupation by ceramic lots percentages.	84
Graph 4.12 Ceramic classes by residential unit.	86
Graph 4.13 Most frequent ceramic types by residential unit.	87
Graph 4.14 Proportion of obsidian from lithic samples by residential unit	88
Graph 6.1 Graph indicating the proportional distribution of vessels by residential unit.	113
Graph 6.2 Proportion of slipped and unslipped ceramics at Yaxha's residential units.	114
Graph 6.3 Bullet graphs illustrating the proportions of slipped and unslipped ceramic shapes.	115
Graph 6.4 Proportions of cooking (unslipped) and serving (slipped wares by residential unit).	116
Graph 6.5 Proportions of cooking ware shapes by social rank.	117
Graph 6.6 Proportions of serving ware shapes by social rank.	118
Graph 6.7 Mean diameter of jars by residential unit.	119
Graph 6.8 Mean diameter of bowls by residential unit.	119
Graph 7.1 Burial class percentages.	126
Graph 7.2 Number of individuals per burial.	126
Graph 7.3 Funerary constructions percentages.	128

Graph 7.4 Location of burial within architectural compound percentages.	129
Graph 7.5 Body position percentages.	131
Graph 7.6 Body orientation percentages.	131
Graph 7.7 Age categories percentages.	132
Graph 7.8 Gender categories percentages.	132
Graph 9.1 Incense burner proportions by residential unit.	183
Graph 9.2 Incense burner proportions by social category.	183
Graph 9.3 Figurine proportions by residential unit.	186
Graph 9.4 Figurine proportions by social category.	187

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1. STUDYING STRATEGIES OF INTERACTION WITH THE DYNASTIC COSMOLOGY THROUGH HOUSEHOLD RITUAL AT YAXHA

This dissertation examines three possible attitudes/strategies that people might have used in ancient Maya kingdoms to interact with the dynastic cosmology that governed them. The study poses two central sets of research questions: 1. what kind of strategy was used by nobles and commoners to interact with the dynastic cosmology? Where they actively engaged, resistant, or passively compliant? and 2. did all nobles and commoners use similar strategies? or was there pluralism of behaviors across the different groups of people? If so, was such pluralism related to social status?

I address these questions from the perspective of ritual actions in residential contexts, based on field research in Yaxha, Guatemala (Fig. 1.1). I conducted research in eight different commoner residences, and complemented the information using the results of previous research and restoration work at Yaxha. From those previous works, I gathered general information about the civic center of the kingdom, as well as field information about the royal palace and a noble palace. I examine the ritual activities from these palaces and commoner residences in a comparative perspective, using four social categories: 1. Royals, 2. Nobles, 3. High-end commoners, and 4. Low-end commoners.

In each of the residential units and social categories, I examine the use of symbolic architectural layouts, feasting, funerary rituals, dedicatory, and termination rituals, along with an examination of ritual artifact assemblages in the different residential units and rank categories. The results of the analysis show that nobles and to certain extent high-end commoners were actively engaged with the dynastic cosmology and its ritual expressions. Low-end commoners, instead, were more compliant than engaged. They were carrying on some of the ritual activities that the higher ranks did, but only selectively.

I defined the three strategies to examine (active engagement, resistance, and passive compliance) based on an ethnographic model advanced by Gary Gossen (2004). I explain this model in the immediately following section, which also includes the definition of the strategies in this study and the expectations for their identification in the archaeological study at Yaxha.

1.1. STRATEGIES: ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT, RESISTANCE, AND PASSIVE COMPLIANCE

This study has been set to discern between three different possible attitudes or strategies that people could use in their interactions with the dynastic cosmology: 1. Active engagement, 2. Resistance, and 3. Passive compliance. Following the sociological studies of James Scott (1985, 1986, and 1990), ethnographers (Gossen 2004; Restall 1995) and cultural anthropologists (Brown 1996; Miller et al 1989; Ortner 1995) have discussed the same behaviors. Similarly, archaeological studies in Mesoamerica and South America have also incorporated them in their discussions (Joyce et al 2001; Joyce and Weller 2007; Hutson 2002; Lohse 2007; Swenson 2007). Here, I

defined categories after Gary Gossen's ethnographic model from Maya traditional communities in Chiapas Mexico (Gossen 2004).

Since 1994, Chiapas has been the scenario of an organized resistance movement widely known as the Zapatista Movement (Higgins 2004; Rus et al 2003). This movement is characterized by the strong participation of indigenous peasant communities and a strong pan-indigenous consciousness. According to Gossen (2004:130), the Zapatista movement inaugurated a *new form of indigenous discourse about identity and belonging*. However, the author believes this new form of discourse is deeply rooted in *traditional forms of native discourse* about community-state relations in Chiapas. Pursuing a better understanding of the 'new' discourse, Gossen modeled a classification of *conventional postures* toward the Mexican state. Such postures are believed to have roots in pre-Columbian times, have been adapted through colonial times, and continue in the present. They are all derived from social spaces of domination and exploitation in contexts of radical asymmetries of power.

The four conventional postures as defined by Gossen (2004:132) are:

1. Categorical moral opposition and separation.
2. Indifferent neutrality.
3. Pragmatic deference in patron-client relationships (Indian clients as subordinate subjects of state- or foreign-sponsored institutions).
4. Resistance (Indian people who seek to break the colonial contract and its established patron-client relationships by converting their compatriots to a revitalized older order or to new cults, often demanding severance of all relationships with the existing state apparatus).

Relevantly, rituals often express these postures among these traditional Maya communities. This is particularly in rituals of inversion and renewal like those marking the winter solstice. The winter solstice rituals mark a period of solar, agricultural, and community renewal, and constitute a space for social commentary.

Gossen (2004:133) sees the first posture, *moral opposition and separation*, as having been in place since the 16th century when the ruling elite created the “Republics of Indians” in contrast to the “Republics of Spaniards and Creoles.” Indigenous *municipios* developed their distinctive fiesta cycles, patron saints, customs, and costumes. Such system deepened the sense of a separate indigenous identity. In the annual solar renewal ritual at Chamula in Chiapas (now corresponding to the pre-Lenten Carnival in the Christian liturgical cycle), Spanish, Mexican, and Guatemalan armies invade and conquer the community only to have their violent and immoral behavior ritually purged by a fire walk. This walk is a symbolic retracing of the sun’s orbit and through such path, the impersonators of the ethnic enemy become Chamulas again. In this way, Chamulas remark a proud separation and ritually mock the state system.

Gossen (2004:134) defines the second posture, *indifferent neutrality*, as a corollary of the first. He exemplifies it using the carnival’s mocking performance of a battle between Mexico and Guatemala over Chiapa’s territory. Armed with pieces of dry horse manure, they fire three volleys. Mexico wins the first and Guatemala wins the second. Nevertheless, the third is a draw, remarking the irrelevance of the events to the native community.

The third posture, *pragmatic deference*, refers to the patron-client contract that has been in place since colonial times (Gossen 2004:135). In such contract, local individuals, usually native elites, serve as intermediaries (patrons) with the state in exchange for their lower-ranking native clients’ deference, loyalty, and political and economic dependence. Contemporary expression of this relationship cited by Gossen are the relatively recent Protestant evangelical movement and recent experimentation of indigenous leaders with the Mexican political process. These relationships work only if indigenous leaders become subordinate followers of the state or

foreign allies. According to Gossen, this follows a model of tutorial condescension that began with the sixteenth-century friars and continues, virtually unaltered in the present. It continues with Protestant and Catholic Action missionaries, representatives of government dependencies (like the National Indian Institute), political parties (like PRI), and Chiapas elite with landowners – all seeking to manipulate subordinate Indian leaders in the guise of helping them achieve social and spiritual progress.

The fourth posture, *resistance* (or “new words”), is a posture toward the state that articulates radical initiatives for change in the community-state relations (Gossen 2004:135). According to the author, predominantly Indian communities periodically seek redress of structural grievances locally through violent movements of resistance and cultural affirmation. Such movements typically imply new religious activities. These are local movements. Before the Zapatista movement, there was no other forum to express indigenous concerns than the local community. Examples of rebellions in the area are the Tzeltal Revolt (1712), the War of Santa Rosa (1868-1870), and the Pajarito Rebellion (1910-1911). These movements have all developed during times of political instability at a national level, when there was more room for indigenous communities to gain some autonomy (Gossen 2004:136).

Although none of these behaviors have led to permanent social change in Chiapas, they are means through which Indigenous populations cope with their subordinate status. These behaviors might not influence the working of the Mexican state, but they can be more successful at the local level. In Gossen’s case study (Chamula – with reference to other Maya communities in Chiapas), ritual action is a means that expresses these postures most clearly. In fact, the same attitudes have been reinforced enough for these communities to completely dislocate

themselves from the Mexican state, at least ideologically if not in real terms. The disruption is such that actually it facilitated the development of the Zapatista movement and the proclamation of autonomous communities within the Mexican state.

This dissertation builds on this model, modifying them to fit the purposes and conditions of the present study. Gossen’s ethnographic model is highly informative theoretically. Nevertheless, the projection of the model to the pre-Columbian past required modification. This is the case because 20th century Chiapas and Classic Maya political, social, economic, and ideological systems are extremely different (Table 1.1). While the first is a modern, secular democratic state (with some neocolonial undertones in Chiapas); the second is believed to have been more of a theocratic monarchy, with an only incipient market economy, operating under a pre-axial cosmology. In addition, the fine distinctions between different sets of behaviors that Gary Gossen (2004) has achieved in his ethnographic study would be trickier to distinguish based solely in archaeological collections, without written records from the subordinate groups (that would be commoner people in the pre-Columbian case). Therefore, adapting the model for its applicability in an archaeological study has implied some modifications.

Table 1.1. Conditions of Comparison between Cases	
Modern	Pre-Columbian
Mexican state and foreign allies (ethnically different to indigenous communities).	Royal dynasties and nobles: Ethnically the same but with some qualitative differences (e.g., semi-divine royals).
Patrons (native intermediaries).	High-end commoners?
Indians: Economically and politically dependent.	Low-end commoners: Economically and politically dependent.
Reinforcement of authority through legal system and schooling (not so much through religious doctrine).	Reinforcement of authority through a cosmological system that subsumes all other aspects of life.

An aspect that is not covered in the ethnographic model is the possibility of a non-conflictive relationship between the people and their government. An engaged behavior is particularly relevant for the study of ancient societies. We have to take into account the possibility that people could have been positively engaged with their ruling systems. Therefore, active engagement is a category that has been added to the model for this archaeological study. In addition, in order to use behavioral categories archaeologically more manageable, the four postures included in the ethnographic model have been combined and reduced to only two categories: resistance and passive compliance (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2. Model Adaptation	
Ethnographic Model	Pre-Columbian Model
	Active engagement.
Indifferent neutrality.	Passive compliance.
Pragmatic deference.	
Moral opposition and separation.	Resistance.
Resistance	

1.1.1. Active Engagement

I define this strategy defined as an active and positive attitude towards the dynastic cosmology and its symbols and practices. The possibility that people might be engaged with the ways of the state was not included in Gossen’s ethnographic model (2004) as a separate strategy. However, it is implied in his observation about natives serving as intermediaries of the community and the Mexican state. It is important to take into account the possibility that people could have been actually supporting the dynastic cosmology in Classic times. This is not to say they uncritically accepted the ruling dynastic cosmology, but that they actually participated in it. Not only higher

social ranks could have been on board with the dynastic cosmology, commoners could have been supporting and participating in that cosmology as well.

In this archaeological study, this attitude has been identified in the very similar types of ritual artifacts and activities from a noble palace and the royal palace, and to some extent in the residences of high-end commoners. In these residences, ritual constructions celebrated the same cosmological principles that royalty celebrated in their royal palace (see Chapter 5). They interred their dead following the same principles (see Chapter 7), and dedicated and terminated their houses through the same rituals (see Chapter 8). They had similar iconography in the artifacts they used, like figurines and lithic eccentrics (see Chapter 9). Their practices did not contradict the ritual ways and symbols of the dynastic cosmology in any way. To the contrary, they actively engaged with them.

1.1.2. Resistance

In direct opposition to the previous one, this second strategy refers to the active rejection of the dynastic cosmology (Gossen 2004; Joyce and Weller 2007; Lohse 2007; McAnany 2002; Scott 1990; Swenson 2007). It expresses disagreement. Resistance is usually related to overt actions involving violence (Gossen 2004; Joyce et al 2001), but it can also be carried out in more subtle, non-violent ways, particularly when in private contexts outside official control, like in private residences (Joyce and Weller 2007; Lohse 2007; Scott 1990).

No overt indications of resistance were found in this archaeological study. The expectation to interpret resistance were to find ritual assemblages that would sharply differ from

those representing the dynastic cosmology, expressing contradictions. For example, the king is the most recurrently found motif in the royal palace's ceramic figurines. The use of figurines representing other characters but the king would have signaled resistance; or perhaps unreverent representations of the king. Similarly, messages overtly contradictory to the dynastic cosmology could have been expressed in other aspects of domestic ritual, including the symbolism of the architectural layout, the funerary, dedicatory, and termination rituals. However, no such clear declarations of opposition were found.

1.1.3. Passive Compliance

This last hypothesized strategy refers to a rather passive behavior in which commoners acquiesce to the dynastic cosmology. This would be a similar behavior as the "indifferent neutrality" that Gossen (2004:131) observed among Chiapas' modern Maya communities in relation to the Mexican state. Although it is a rather passive behavior, indigenous peoples use this strategy to disassociate themselves morally from the state. It entails certain amount of resistance, but it does not amount to drastic confrontation.

The expectations to interpret passive compliance in this archaeological study were set in the selective use of some of the symbols and activities pertaining to the dynastic cosmology. I found that while nobles and high-end commoners used similar symbols and activities as the royals, low-end commoners did it only selectively. For example, they buried their dead following the same prescriptions (see Chapter 7), but they did not conducted the same ritual termination of their houses (see Chapter 8). In addition, although some low-end commoners used ceramic

figurines, these were significantly more abundant in the residential units of the higher ranks (see Chapter 9). Low-end commoners did not build altars or shrines in their house as higher ranks did. It is impossible to say if they constructed perishable altars or shrines, but is clear they did not follow the same styles of the higher ranks. This selective rejection of symbols and practices from the dynastic cosmology could be a form of resistance. However, it is not a complete or overtly conflictive rejection. I interpret this as a compliant behavior in which people disassociate themselves from the dynastic cosmology without completely rejecting it.

Altogether, the archaeological interpretation of the three hypothesized attitudes or strategies can be expressed in terms of levels of connection or disconnection. Although there is no possible quantitative measurement for these behaviors, practical qualitative measurements are certainly possible. I am referring here to levels of connection (similarity) or disconnection (dissimilarity) between the ritual actions and symbolism used by the different social ranks and/or the different studied households (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3. Model Adaptation 2	
Pre-Columbian Model	Practical Measurement
Active engagement.	Closely connected (same ritual and symbolism)
Passive compliance.	+/- (selectiveness in ritual and symbolism).
Resistance.	Disconnected (very different ritual and symbolism).

After the consideration of each kind of strategy, the following set of questions leading this research was about the possibility of different households using different strategies among one another and among groups of households of different rank. These issues are further discussed in the next section.

1.1.4. Strategies Use by Different Groups of People

Gary Gossen's (2004) model suggest that different peoples within the same community use different strategies in pursue of their own interests. In fact, in the ethnographic model people might use different strategies according to the occasion. In this archaeological study, the questions asked in this direction are: did all nobles and commoners used similar strategies or was there pluralism of behaviors across the different groups of people? If so, was social status tied to such pluralism?

The research at Yaxha exposed that although there are shared elements, there was also certain diversity of ritual actions among the different investigated residences. People clearly had enough independence of ritual action in their homes. Low-end commoners were certainly aware of the practices of the higher ranks and had access to similar artifacts (see Chapter 9), but did not practice or used them all. It is the case that high-end commoners display greater similarities of behavior with the higher ranks than with low-rank commoners.

Early in the research, distinctions of behaviors between different wards (or barrios) within the same settlement were considered. The hypothesis to test was that there was certain unity amongst households living to closer proximity, implying a ward level of organization. However, the research did not provide the necessary information to test this hypothesis.

Findings at Yaxha can be interpreted only with the understandings of ancient Maya society and cosmology from the studies of many authors. The rest of this introductory chapter presents a synthesis of topics that set the background for the analysis and interpretations that I present in this dissertation.



Fig. 1.1. Yaxha's location in the southern Maya area.

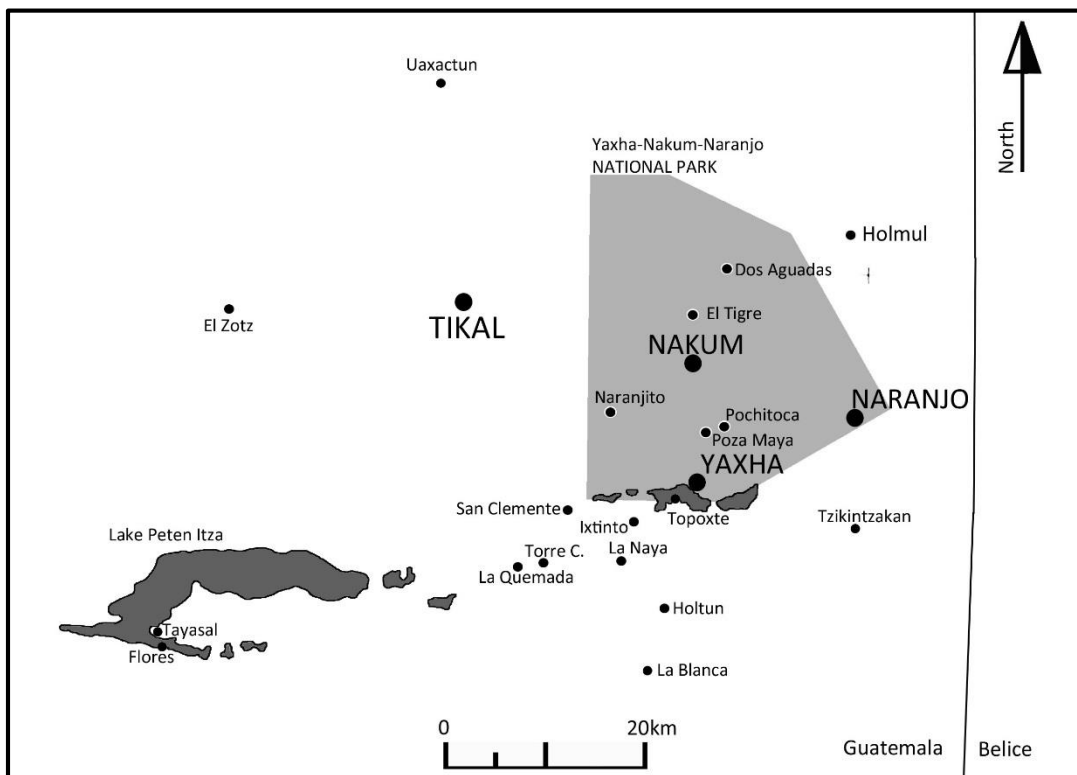
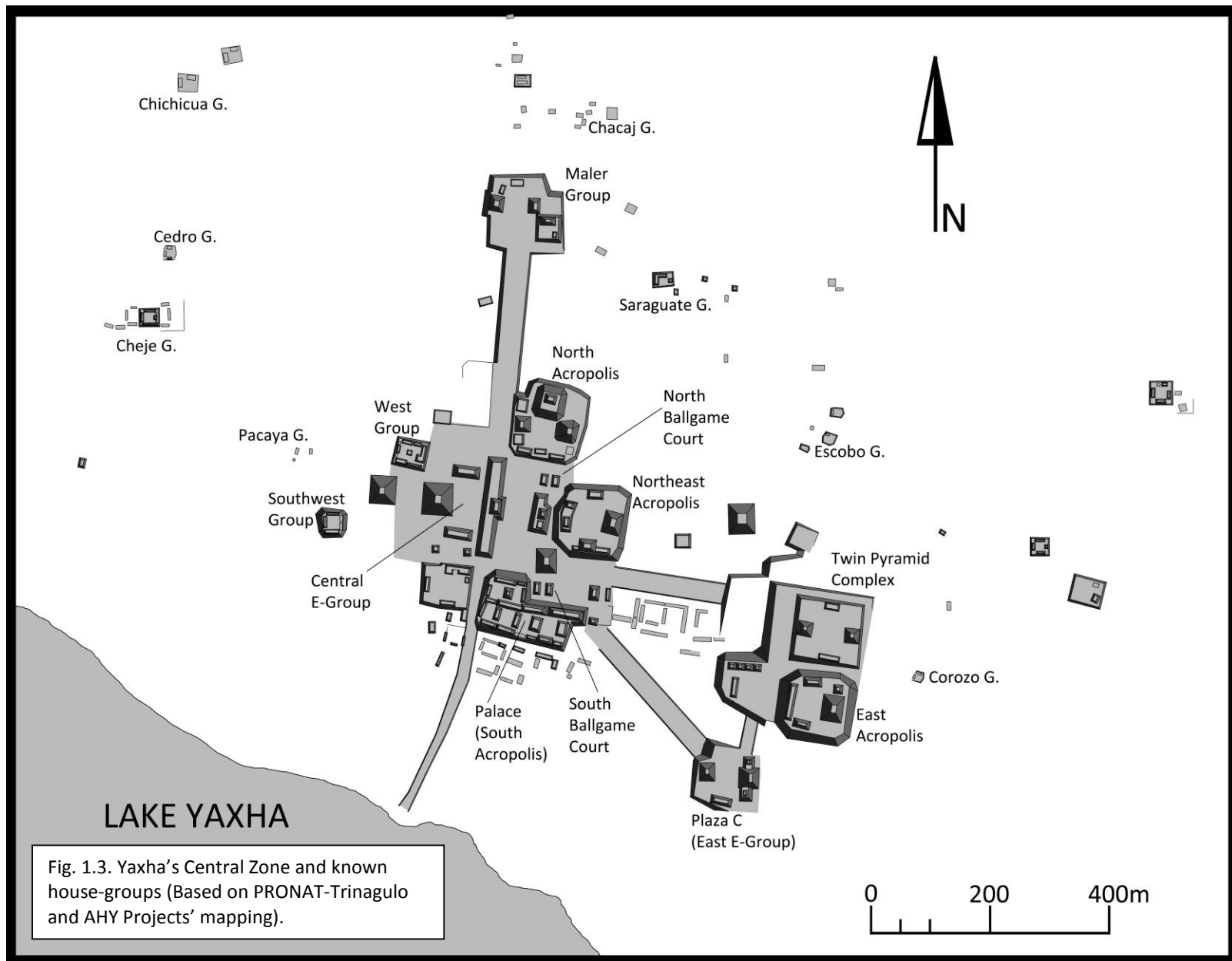


Fig. 1.2. Location of Yaxha and neighboring polities and Central Peten main lakes (shaded area indicating the area of the YNN-National Park).



1.2. CLASSIC MAYA SOCIETY AND COSMOLOGY

The following pages are dedicated to a synthesis of background information about the Classic (A.D. 250-1000) Maya. This information constitutes the basis for my study at Yaxha. The reviewed topics include sociopolitical structure, cosmology, and ritual. These topics are discussed in light of their immediate relevance for this dissertation.

Numerous studies about the ancient Maya have shaped our present understanding of this extremely complex society. The study of the art and architecture that represented the high-culture of the ancient Maya kingdoms has provided much knowledge about the same ancient societies (Carrasco 1998; Freidel et al 1993; Grube 2008; Houston and Inomata 2009; Schele 1986; Taube 1992; Trigger 2003). However, the picture would not be complete without the study of more modest contexts. Public and private ritual activity most certainly took place in the monumental settings of the ancient civic centers, but ancient Maya people practiced rituals in the privacy of their houses as well (Becker 2004; Gonlin 2007; Gonlin and Lohse 2007; Lohse and Valdez 2004b; Lucero 2010; McAnany 1995; Robin 2003; Tourtellot 1988).

Central in this dissertation is the cosmology that framed all aspects of ancient Maya life, including politics, social structure, and religion (see Cosmology section below). This cosmology shaped the ideology that archaeological studies generally regard as a basic mechanism for social integration and a coercive mechanism for the emergence and maintenance of the ruling elites' power (Demarest 2004; Dornan 2004; Freidel 2008; Freidel et al 1993; Houston and Stuart 1996;

Houston and Inomata 2009; Lucero 2006; McAnany 2001; Sharer and Traxler 2006). Relatively recent agent-centered approaches call the attention to the roles that commoners had in the workings of their own societies. In general, they have come to propose that both elites and non-elites somehow shaped the ruling ideology (Gonlin 2004 and 2007; Gonlin and Lohse 2007; Hendon 1991; A. Joyce et al 2001; Joyce and Weller 2007; R. Joyce 2004; Lohse and Valdez 2004a and b; Marcus 2004; McAnany 2002; Robin 2001 and 2004).

1.2.1. Classic Maya Society

Ancient Maya Classic populations lived in apparently theocratic kingdoms, in a system of independent and semi-independent polities, with regal-ritual centers as the main political foci (Demarest 2004; Houston and Inomata 2009; Martin and Grube 2008; Rice 2004:7; Sharer and Traxler 2006; Trigger 2003; Webster 2002). Leading the different kingdoms there were lineages of semi-divine kings who performed a wide array of religious obligations to warrant the wellbeing of their subjects. Maya societies were highly stratified, and although there most certainly were religious specialists during the Classic as in it was in later Postclassic times (Landa 1983 [16th century]), the king remained the highest religious authority (Freidel 2008; Freidel et al 1993; Grube 2008; Houston and Stuart 1996; Schele 1986; Schele and Freidel 1990). The monumentality of the civic centers and their multiple impressive artistic representations reinforced the royal political and religious authority. A well-defined local nobility was the strongest supporter of the royal traditions, being at the same time an active participant of the dynastic cosmology.

Royalty and nobility, however, were a very small portion of any given population. The commoner people, generally understood as those without access to political office (Chase and Chase 1992), constituted about 80 to 98 per cent of the population (Lohse 2007:9; Lohse and Valdez 2004b:2; Webster 2002:146). It is important to note though, a fair amount of diversity most likely existed within the defined ranks (i.e. royalty, nobility, and commoner population). Neither elites nor commoners were homogeneous groups. To the contrary, further socioeconomic differentiation existed within both social categories. At the same time, ethnic and ideological diversity might have been also present. Furthermore, a clear-cut division between elites and non-elites might have not existed. It is not the intent here to stress a conflictive polarization of ancient Maya society, but to approach diversity in a manageable fashion.

It is our general understanding that ancient Maya peoples lived most frequently in extended-family households, inhabiting multi-dwelling compounds distributed in a rather dispersed fashion in relative proximity to a public core related to political and ritual activities. These residential units were typically comprised of separated dwellings arranged around one or more courtyards or patios. The different dwellings had various functions, like sleeping, cooking, storage, and religious activity. Traditionally, we recognize the patio as an all-purpose activity area, whereas the areas surrounding the individual residential unit are often identified as “gardens” or “orchards”, or “middens”. Variation in the form of an individual residential unit is usually linked to its location within the settlement and local population densities, but variations are most typically connected to local differences in rank, economic role in production, wealth, and/or political status of its occupants (Hendon 1991; Wilk 1988:136).

1.2.2. Cosmology

As other ancient civilizations, ancient Maya peoples operated within a non-axial cosmology. This is a particularly relevant aspect for this study because such cosmology shaped people's understandings of the world and the ways in which they related to one another. For a start, the pre-axial cosmology does not distinguish between what is now perceived as social, natural, and supernatural realms. According to Houston and Inomata (2009:193), the ancient Maya perceived the world as a *blend of physical matter and spirit vitality*. In his wide study, Trigger (2003) discusses how ancient non-axial peoples observed the world in which they inhabited as immersed with elements or powers that nowadays would be regarded as "supernatural". Some "powers", moreover, manifested themselves as entities who behaved much like human beings, but were stronger than them, enough so as to be able to control them (Trigger 2003:411). In this sense, elements other than human influenced and/or controlled regular human affairs, and there is a generalized lack of distinction between religious and political, social, or economic realms of action. Although some ancient cultures might have had complex 'theologies', 'religion' was apparently more a matter of practice than of doctrine, and carried a strong content of social and civic obligations (Hinnells 2007:3).

Specifically in the case of Mesoamerica, Monaghan (2000:26) has determined after his ethnographic studies that reality is perceived as a unified whole, with a single divine principle responsible for the nature of the cosmos. However, within such monistic orientation, the concept of deity is pantheistic, encompassing many manifestations of the 'One'. Houston and Inomata (2009:196), after their rich combination of epigraphic, iconographic, and archaeological

evidence, argue that there is a necessary modification to the Maya monistic principle. According to them, a vital energy (or energies) animated the material. Such energy could dissipate or shift location, implying it was not static and allowing the possibility of human “handling” of the energies through proper action. These concepts are relevant here because they deny any exclusivity of the divine to particular people, places, or things. Divinity was present in the royal palace but also in the low-end commoner’s houses. Palaces and kings, however, were more charged with divinity than ordinary homes and commoners

In their epigraphic studies, Houston and Stuart (1996; see also Houston and Inomata 2009), identify the divine principle that animated the world as “*K’uh*.” According to Houston and Inomata (2009:195), this very ancient word goes back to the beginnings of Maya languages. It is actually still in use among modern Maya languages with the due variants (*K’uh* or *Ch’u* – Houston and Stuart 1996: 292; Monaghan 2000:28). According to the same authors, the same word has a range of meanings, including “god”, “soul” or “spirit” and “blessing.” However, in a wider Mesoamerican setting, it is a concept that refers to a “spirit essence” or a “divine principle” manifested in multiple forms (Houston and Inomata 2009:196). Once again, a divine principle apparently present to some extent in all things and beings. However, certain ‘categorization’ of divinity was also present. So far, studies on the topic have defined the existence of at least three different “kinds” of divine entities that populated the Maya “non-human” realm: Deities or gods, spirit companions (*Way*), and ancestors.

Mentions of *K’uh* in Classic hieroglyphic inscriptions and royalty are strongly related. However, *K’uh* and the multiple manifestations of divinity that are recurrently referred to as “gods” are also related (Baudez 2004; Chinchilla 2011; Miller and Taube 1993; Taube 1992; Rivera

Dorado 2006). Houston and Stuart (1996:292) clearly state the difficulty of developing an inclusive and satisfactory definition for Maya “gods”, as they may embody natural forces (e.g. lightning or the essence of corn) while assuming human and/or animal forms (see also Houston and Stuart 2009:193). In his volume about Ancient Yucatec Gods, Taube (1992:8) explicitly uses the term “god” to refer to “*supernatural sentient beings.*” However, the definition remains problematic. Moreover, the very complex and still not well-understood divine order was also hierarchic and classified in different realms of pertinence (e.g. sky, earth, and underworld).

The relationship between ancient Maya people and the “gods” or “deities” might present many facets, but in all, following Karl Taube’s (1992:8) observation, these beings seem to have served as metaphors of the social and natural worlds. In such sense, specialists in the subject see deities to operate in narratives depicted for example, in the surviving pre-Columbian painted and carved scenes. Such narratives, Houston and Inomata (2009:200) suggest, might have had an entertaining value, but also should have been tokens of elite status and likely promoters of certain actions. These modern scholarly appreciations relate exclusively to ancient elites. However, it is easy to imagine that oral traditions or representations on more perishable media could have served similar functions for commoners as well.

The second related kind of non-human entities is that of the *Wayob*, which are defined so far as “spirit companions” that apparently contributed to the psychological and spiritual identity of Maya peoples and places (Freidel et al 1993:52; Houston and Stuart 1996:291; Houston and Inomata 2009:208; Taube 1992:9). According to the cited authors, invisible but unbreakable bonds attached humans to these beings. They lived in “peripheral” places like forests, mountains, and caves. The extent of influence that this entities had over human everyday

life remains unknown, but their representation in painted surfaces of some Maya vessels suggest invocatory practices, at least by the users of such vessels (Houston and Inomata 2009:208).

Finally, the third category of non-human entity in the ancient Maya worldview is that of the ancestors. The ancestors are by definition people who have died. However, death for the ancient Maya was apparently seen not so much as the end of life, but more as a transformation or displacement into a different realm of existence that does not mean the extinction of the social persona (Fitzsimmons 2009; Fitzsimmons and Shimada 2011; McAnany 1995). It seems ancestors were believed to possess special energies, with which they are suggested to have had the ability to nourish the living (Houston and Inomata 2009:211), and in many ways, although invisible, they coexisted with the living.

All beings, visible and invisible, inhabited their own place within the different parts of a layered, four-sided, and concentric universe. The sky, the earth, and the underworld composed this universe. The center was often represented by a tree (Freidel et al 1993:53) or alternatively by images of the Maiz God (Taube 2003:461). This “axis-mundi” was not only the center, but also connected the three “domains” of the universe. These domains, more than separated realms of existence, formed a continuum in which different kinds of beings existed, although not readily visible to the human eye. The surface of the earth is often represented as the back of a great reptile, while the sky and the underworld were multi-layered domains, all connected by both visible and invisible powers – including those powers represented by celestial bodies (sun, moon, planets, and stars) (Freidel et al 1993; Sharer and Traxler 2006:730).

A cosmological order tied to the predictable movements of the celestial bodies governed the universe; while it also maintained the time cycles. The basic unit of time was the day (*k'in*),

which in the different calendars kept by the ancient Maya was multiplied in a vigesimal system, forming cycles of 20 days (*winal*), 360 days (*tun*), 7,200 days (*k'atun*) and so on (Stuart 2011). In an interrelated fashion, directionality as expressed by the celestial bodies was also a fundamental part of this understanding of the universe.

The overall design implied order, but human action was also required for its proper continuation. In a universe where powerful divine entities behaved much like humans, proper reciprocity and nourishment was required from humans.

1.2.3. Ritual

Ancient Maya monist perception carried with it certain instability. Since the “divine essence” had the possibility and ability to move, inertia did not prevail. Humans had the possibility to interact and somehow channel and/or modulate the “energies” through specific actions (Houston and Inomata 2009:196).

Monaghan (2000) has noted that in Mesoamerica, interaction with the divinity somehow parallels social conventions. The engagement with the divinity along ritual is intense the author states, and many of the sculpted figures worshiped are not simple representations, but living entities. Actions like processions, pilgrimages, and offerings are truly “meetings”, “visits”, and “meals”. The Maya, Monaghan continues, do not distinguish between rite and event, while the focus seems to be more on performance and punctiliousness and less on will and motivation (Monaghan 2000:32). The projection of such ethnographic observations to the past provides a general framework for the understanding of ancient religious ritual.

In a more general level, ritual is a behavioral manifestation that authenticates the belief system. The practice of ritual not only reproduces and reinforces beliefs, but also builds and strengthens a sense of community amongst participants, while suggesting cosmological coherence (Bell 1992:141; Dornan 2004:29). By definition, ritual implies patterned actions and recurrent symbolism. The material expression of such symbolism, along with the material remains of such actions is what is observable in the archaeological record.

Archaeological, iconographic, and epigraphic evidence, in combination with ethnohistoric, ethnographic, and linguistic information have greatly contributed to our understanding of ancient Maya ritual (Freidel and Schele 1998; Houston and Stuart 1996; Taube 1992). Following C. Bell's (1997) typology of ritual styles, P. Plunket (2002:4) has proposed two "types" of ritual for ancient Mesoamerica: 1. appeal and appeasement, which refers to the practices designed to placate gods, spirits, and ancestors and to secure their help or avoid their anger; and 2. cosmological ordering, mainly related to higher status court and public ritual. However, in light of the previous discussion, a sharp distinction in between religious ritual "types" might not be possible in this case, as both instances would be tightly interwoven.

In any case, although ritual intent is almost impossible to discern from the archaeological record, traces of ritual activity are recognized at least at three different levels: 1. The polity level, presumably mainly carried out at public civic-ceremonial areas when within the built landscape; 2. the corporate group or lineage level, probably carried out at the corporate group or lineage head residence and/or secondary ceremonial areas; and 3. the household level, with its main physical setting within the household compound (Gonlin 2007:88-90). All these levels of ritual activity could have occurred also outside the built landscape. This is, in "special" locations from

the natural landscape, like hills, mountains, water bodies, and caves (Ishihara 2008; Moyes et al 2009; Prufer et al 2003:231).

As it is suggested by ethnohistoric sources (Landa [16th century] 1978:47-49; Sanchez de Aguilar [1613] 2008:145), ritual specialists are assumed to have been an important element of ancient Maya religious life at all mentioned activity levels. Religious specialists should have been present within the royal court, while there likely were religious specialists also conducting ritual in other settings, like secondary ceremonial settings and even households (Brown et al 2002:88-92; Prufer et al 2003:231). Nevertheless, ritual practice was not limited to the specialists and/or subjected to their sole leadership. Fray Diego de Landa's account of the early colonial Yucatan (Landa 1978) suggest that all people engaged in ritual activity, both in their houses as in other locations (e.g. *milpas*, water bodies, forests, etc.).

In general terms, among the ritual activities that have been archaeologically identified in the Maya area – regardless of the nature of the ritual, social level of the event, or status of the practitioners – are: bloodletting, offerings of objects, incense burning, feasting, sacrifices, and interment of the dead. With the exception of feasting, which remains unclear (see Chapter 6), these are all activities that have been found at Yaxha.

McAnany and Plank (2001) have defined three categories in which they divide the ritual practices people carried out at their houses: mortuary/ancestor veneration, house dedication [and termination], and agricultural/calendrical. Moreover, they also define some other categories of ritual practices for which, according to the authors, little importance is assigned at the household level, but which are important in the royal courtyards of the Maya. These include succession/heir designation, military/ballgame exercises, and territory delimitation.

Nevertheless, based on both existing ethnohistoric (Landa 1978) and epigraphic accounts (e.g., Martin and Grube 2008), it is highly probable that rituals related to personal life stages – that can also be related to age and gender – were relevant to the commoner household as they were to the royal one. It is important to consider the possibility that ancient Maya commoners could have paid similar attention to events such as birth, marriage, parenthood, etc.

Architectural layouts, artifacts, and special deposits provide archaeological evidences of ritual activity and symbolism (Ashmore 1991; Becker 2004; Gonlin 2007; Kunen et al 2002; McAnany 1995; McAnany et al 1999; Boteler Mock 1998). Symbolic manipulation of built space was a common feature of ancient Maya regal-ritual centers. Multiple and redundant messages were contained within centers laid out as microcosms (Ashmore 1991 and 2004). Relevantly, cardinal directions were symbolically charged positions in architectural arrangements (Ashmore 1991:200 and 2004; Ashmore and Sabloff 2002; Mathews and Garber 2004; Smith 2003). Cardinal directions are mainly associated to the cosmological division of the world in four parts, each one with a particular symbolism. The east-west axis is primarily associated with the path of the sun. The east was considered a position of honor and was recurrently marked by monumental solar observatories and other monumental constructions (Becker 2004; Coggins 1980). The north-south axis is also relevant for civic center's layout; it was related to vertical connections between the natural world and the supernatural domains (Ashmore 1991:201). In a similar way as the east-west axes, the north-south axes are relevant in the public-monumental layout, they were sometimes celebrated in residential ones as well (Becker 2004; Tourtellot 1988). These are patterns that clearly guided the layout of Yaxha's civic center (see Chapter 3), and that are also expressed in the houses of the nobility and high-end commoners (see Chapter 5).

In other line of evidence, some of the most recognized ritual artifacts usually found in the Maya archaeological record, both in elite and commoner contexts, are ceramic incense burners and figurines. Incense burners are without a doubt a basic trans-regional ritual item, but there were various kinds. According to Prudence Rice's study (Rice 1999), variability in terms of both shape and iconography might be related to specific functions and meanings. Similarly, figurines constitute another common ritual artifact across the Maya region. However, diverse studies have recorded a wide variability of shapes and representations, likely related to different functions and meanings (Cohodas 2002; Gonlin 2007; Halperin et al 2009; Hamilton 1996; Hendon 2003; Lesure 1997; Marcus 1996; Triadan 2007). Both figurines and incense burners were found at Yaxha, along with other utilitarian artifacts that were also used as ritual paraphernalia, like ceramic vessels and lithics (see Chapter 9). Ritual paraphernalia might be found in special deposits, such as caches or burials, or cratophonous deposits specially meant for their discard, like termination deposits (Deal 1985; Douglass 2002; Garber et al 1998; Killion 1992; Kunen et al 2002; LaMotta & Schiffer 1999; McKee 1999; Boteler Mock 1998; Plunkett 2002; Prufer et al 2003). These kinds of special deposits have been found at Yaxha's houses and they are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8 of the present dissertation.

2.0. METHODS:

INFORMATION SOURCES AND FIELD RESEARCH

In order to address the questions posed in this dissertation, it was necessary to collect information from both elite and non-elite contexts. The research was to focus on ritual action in domestic contexts, but a general knowledge about the ancient city was also required. In fact, recovering information about commoner households was only one aspect of the research. The research required information about elite households, including the royal and at least one noble household. In addition, a general understanding of the dynastic cosmology at the civic center was necessary to frame the findings in domestic contexts, while an understanding of the development of the city was central to warrant the chronological coherence of the analysis. Starting anew to collect such information through field research would have been too ambitious a project, particularly for a small scale doctoral research. As an alternative strategy, information from previous research at Yaxha was to be selectively recycled to complement that from new research in areas where no previous investigations had taken place.

In such a way, this project was developed with two different sources of information. On the one hand, the major source of information about Yaxha's civic center, including the royal and a noble palace, comes from previous work by different projects. While on the other hand, a research project on residential units was developed by the author addressing specifically the

previously defined research questions. A central goal of this doctoral research has been to incorporate and thus maximize the outcome of the previous Guatemalan investments in restoration work, building on such salvage efforts from a more academic perspective.

2.1. INFORMATION RECOVERY FROM PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND RESTORATION PROJECTS AT YAXHA

Several different research projects have taken place in Yaxha (Table 2.1), each one designed for different objectives. Most recently, archaeological work enabled by Guatemala's government with foreign financial support was carried out in different stages at Yaxha. The general objectives of such work have been first, the preservation of the national cultural patrimony; and second, the creation of opportunities for the economic development in this part of the country through tourism. Although this dissertation has benefited some way or another from the results of all previous work at Yaxha, it has borrowed mostly from the products of those most recent works.

Yaxha is located within the natural and cultural reserve identified as "Yaxha-Nakum-Naranjo National Park" (PNYNN). The Park does not correspond to a distinctive cultural zone, but was created purposefully to include the major archaeological sites of Yaxha, Naranajo, Nakum and Topoxte for their protection (Herrera and Fialko 2006). The creation of this National Park in 2003 was achieved mainly through the efforts of the PRONAT-Triangulo Project (PTP) from the Anthropology and History Institute. Since 1989, under the direction of Dr. Oscar Quintana, the PTP mapped anew Yaxha's civic center, excavated and produced an account of the development

of the ancient city, and restored certain buildings for their better appreciation by the public (Hermes 1996; Quintana et al 2000).

Time frame	Project	Institution	Project director	Work at Yaxha	References
1904	"Explorations in Peten"	Peabody M. Harvard	Teobert Maler	First map, monuments photographs and description.	Maler 1908:55-127.
1928	John Geddings Gray Expedition	Tulane University	Franz Blom	Corrections to Maler's map (the map hasn't been located for this dissertation).	Blom [1928] 1988.
1932	"The Inscriptions of Peten"	Carnegie Insitution	Silvanus Morley/W. Lincoln	Monuments descriptions and Lincoln's new version of the map and numbering of mounds.	Morley 1938.
1958	"Survey in Northeast Peten"		William R. Bullard	Mapping. Test-pit and chultun excavations (no technical report has been located).	Bullard 1960:355-372.
1966	"Corpus of H. Inscriptions"	Peabody Museum	Ian Graham	Photographs and drawings of carved monuments.	Unpublished. Peabody Museum Archives
1970-1973	Yaxha Project		Nicholas Hellumth	Mapping and numbering of mounds. Excavations and monument inventory.	Hellmuth 1970, 1971
1974	Historial Ecology Project	Florida State University	E. S. Deevey/ D. Rice	Paleoecological studies. Survey and test-pit excavations by D. Rice in the Yaxha-Sacnab Basin. P. Rice ceramic sequence.	Deevey et al 1979; Rice 1976; Vaughan 1979.
1970's	Intersitio Project		Anabell Ford	Survey transect between the sites of Tikal and Yaxha.	Ford 1986.
1989-present	PRONAT – Triangulo Cultural (today DECORSIAP)	IDAEH/ KAVA/ KfW	Oscar Quintana	Mapping, excavation, restoration, monument preservation, adjustments for visitors, conservation.	Quintana et al 2000 (among others).
1998-1999	PRONAT-Triangulo/Yaxha BID, Phase 1	IDAEH/ PDS/ BID	Vinicio Garcia	Excavation and restoration (Maler Group, Blom Causeway, North Acropolis).	
1990's	PRONAT-Triangulo/ Intersitios	IDAEH	Vilma Fialko	Survey, test-pit excavation. Transect from Yaxha to Nakum.	
2003	PRONAT-Triangulo/Estr. 218	IDAEH	Paulino Morales	Excavations and restoration of Str. 217, 218, and 219.	
2002-2007	Yaxha-BID, Phase 2	Keit Seit Inc/ PDS/ BID	Aracely Avendano/ Bernard Hermes	Excavation and restoration (Maler G., Blom C., North A., South A., Ballgame Court, West Group, Plaza B, Plaza C). Infrastructure for tourism.	Grupo K 2006, 2007

The declaration of the YNN-National Park was accompanied by a new, more extensive restoration project at Yaxha. This was a multi-year project developed by Guatemala's government with the financial aid of the Inter-American Development Bank, and was carried out by the private company Keit-Sei S.A., also known as 'Grupo K', under the direction of Dr. Aracely Avendaño. The restoration of multiple monumental constructions implied extensive excavations that produced a voluminous body of archaeological information.

Both projects, the PRONAT-Triangulo (PTP) and Yaxha-IDB (YIP), have greatly contributed to the present knowledge of the history of this ancient capital. They not only took the necessary steps to preserve architectural features, but also preserved sample artifact collections while recording contextual information in their field reports. Their work was not guided by particular research questions, but it was meant to record as much information as possible while extensively excavating and restoring. This dissertation would not have been possible without all this wealth of information, both from these two projects and from previous efforts by multiple scholars (Table 2.1). In fact, this research was able to focus its resources for field work on Yaxha's surrounding residential areas only because of the availability of decades' worth of information from the civic center of the city.

An extensive review of the available published and/or technically reported information from Yaxha was carried out. In preparing the existing information for this research, the first step taken was to create a spreadsheet of 'field operations' from both PT and YI Projects. This was a basic task to conduct because until now, no one document comprised a comprehensive record

of all the 'operations' conducted at the site. Both PT and YB projects followed the same field code system: Operation, identified by a roman number; Suboperation, identified by a consecutive number within the Operation; and Lot, identified by a consecutive number within the Suboperation. This is for example: IV-209-2, where Operation IV refers to Str. 137 from the North Acropolis, Suboperation 209 to a trench in front of the southern façade of the structure's lower platform, and Lot 2 to the layer formed by the architectural collapse, over the plaza floor.

In all, the rows in the resulting spreadsheet refer to excavated Lots, while the columns contained the following information: Operation, Group, Structure/Feature, Suboperation, Suboperation brief description, Lot, Lot brief description, Assigned Chronology, Secondary assigned chronology, Special findings, and other observations. In this way, information before dispersed in several separated volumes, both from excavation and laboratory work were brought together in a single dataset appropriate for further analysis.

This exercise made obvious the fact that there is overlap in the registration codes as both projects started in different areas using the "Operation I" code. After about two decades the bulk of information is large, and the task also brought out the presence of some gaps in the information from different excavation phases, limiting the feasibility of putting it all together for the present research. Finally, the decision was made to work solely with the second phase of the Yaxha-BID Project (a total of 1563 lots). Such fieldwork phase covered a wide area of the settlement following one single methodology, while it included the two domestic residences from the civic center that are of most interest for this dissertation: the Royal Palace, known as South Acropolis, and a Noble Palace, identified as West Group (Fig. 1.2).

2.2. SAMPLING STRATEGIES: MAPPING AND EXCAVATION

The research for this dissertation was based on ten different residences of diverse characteristics and locations within Yaxha, all corresponding to households of different social conditions. As further described in Chapter 4, these ten residences include the Royal Palace, one Noble Palace, two High-End Commoner residences, and six Low-End Commoner residences. Sources of information from the first two were the previous works indicated above, while the rest had to be first found and mapped and then excavated. Therefore, field research started with a survey and mapping operation in the surroundings of the already mapped civic center.

2.2.1. Mapping and Survey

The base map for this research was the contours map produced by the PRONAT-Triangulo Project (Quintana et al 2000). The topographic information for this map was produced using an electronic theodolite, gathering data for about 3700 measurement points that were used to manually draw a map at a scale of 1:500, with contours at every one meter. Their survey covered an approximate area of about 700,000m² (Quintana et al 2000:263). An electronic copy of such map was kindly provided by the Project, and a new schematic plan of the site was drawn on its bases using AutoCad software. The topographic detail – location of benchmarks or measurement points –

was not entirely available. The original map was manually drawn and then digitized. Numbering of mounds/structures was reconstructed as best as possible from the copy of Nicholas Hellmuth's map of the site kindly provided by the Peabody Museum of Harvard University.

The sample of eight residential units to further investigate was to be chosen based on their size and location in relation Yaxha's civic center. The condition was for them to represent a household of different social status (see Chapter 4). Following the premise that construction volume reflects social status, they were all to be of different size. In addition, in order to test the possibility of further religious unity at the ward (or barrio) level, the residences to investigate were to be distributed on both the east and west sides of the settlement, the two most obvious possibilities for ward organization based on the original map of the settlement. In this way, the sample of residential units was not randomly selected. Being able to explore only a limited set of cases, priority was given to secure a diverse sample in a directed way.

This survey and mapping operation was in no way exhaustive. Five survey transects were carried out in the surroundings of the already mapped central zone, each one starting from architectural features (Fig. 2.1). Each transect reached a different length, but they were all based on a central path with stations at every 50m. Perpendicular paths departed from the central path at every 100m, extending the survey at least 150m to each side of the central path. All cultural features found along these transects were mapped. In all, a total of 59 construction mounds distributed in 15 different residential units were mapped. From these, the eight residential units to further investigate were chosen for their varying sizes (Fig. 2.2).

2.2.2. Excavation Strategy

In order to address the research questions indicated in the previous chapter, it was important to define the kinds of ritual activities that took place in these different residences. In each one, the study of religious ritual was explored through four main lines of evidence: 1. Architectural layout and location of ritual activity areas. 2. Content and function of ritual assemblages, 3. Ritual activities as expressed by the two previous lines of evidence, and 4. Meaning as expressed on iconographic representations. The architectural layout is rather easily observed on the surface of the ground. The shape of mounds is generally very suggestive of the shape of the ruined architecture that formed them. Ritual assemblages and artifacts instead, must be found through excavation.

In this way, the excavation strategy was set to maximize the possibility of finding traces of ritual activity. This is, excavations were not randomly located but purposefully located in places where it was more probable to find ritual deposits. Because of the significance of the cardinal directions and axis in ancient Maya cosmology, it can be expected to find traces of ritual action in such points. The excavations were located as close as possible to the axis of the construction in each side of the patio, aiming at excavating right by the façade of such a construction. The abundant presence of trees sometimes made it impossible to excavate in the exact desired location. Also, in cases where no construction was obvious in the surface of the ground, excavations were located on the approximate axis of the patio.

Because of time and resource constraints, there were no possibilities of excavating extensively in each and all residences. Therefore, test-pits were deemed more appropriate as an

excavation strategy in this case. It was decided to excavate at least one test-pit on each side of the patio-group, systematically testing the same spots in all groups if possible. The excavations were not located directly over the mounds of individual dwellings, but in the patio, right by the constructions façades (see Chapter 4). Excavating in the center of a house-mound would most likely expose the remains of architectural features such as benches, steps, or walls. Such features are better understood and recorded through horizontal excavations than through vertical ones (test-pits). Test-pits expose a rather limited area. In order to properly continue with a test-pit, these features would have to be destroyed without proper recording. The rules for archaeological research in Guatemala are strict in their conservation principles and do not condone the destruction of features without proper justification. Although it could have been informative to excavate on the interior axis of the constructions, the façades axis were chosen instead to avoid further complications. The methodology proved to be useful as traces of ritual activity were effectively found.

The starting excavation unit had an area of 4 square meters (2x2m), but some flexibility was allowed to carry out extensions when necessary due to special findings, like burials. This excavations were carried out respecting both natural and cultural layers. However, because they were located within built spaces, most excavated layers were cultural and not natural.

For recording purposes, each residence was investigated as a different 'operation' (identified by a letter: A, B, C, etc.). A 'suboperation' number was also assigned to designate different patios within the same residence; while a 'unit' number identified each test-pit within their corresponding operation and suboperation. Finally, a 'lot' number was used to identify the stratigraphic provenience of collected artifacts. In this way, field codes are for example B1-2-4,

that is to be read 'Operation B, Suboperation 1, Unit 3, Lot 4' and refers to the fourth layer excavated in the unit located in the east side of the Cheje Group's Central Patio. These codes are not used throughout this dissertation, but they were used in the field reports and are used in the datasets that describe the collected artifacts. All datasets used for this dissertation are electronically available at the Center for Comparative Archaeology of the University of Pittsburgh (<http://www.cadb.pitt.edu/>).

2.3. CERAMIC CHRONOLOGIES

All collected artifacts were analyzed and stored in the National Park's administration facilities at Yaxha, where collections from previous projects are also stored. The ceramic collections from this project's excavations were analyzed by Guatemalan ceramicist Mara Reyes; while earlier collections from the PT and YI Projects were analyzed by ceramicist Bernard Hermes (Hermes n.d.; Grupo K 2007b). All this analysis were done using the Type-Variety Method (Smith et al 1960), building on previous classifications by other scholars in the region (Hermes n.d. and 2000a; Laporte 2007; Rice 1979a and b).

The well-defined Type-Variety classifications from the Maya Lowlands constitute the basis for chronological interpretations. This is the case for this study, in which no radiocarbon dating was performed. The same ceramic typology has other applications in this study. It provided comparative data used in the discussions of status and the kinds of ceramics used in certain ritual actions, like feasting. Additionally, an analysis of ceramic shapes and vessels dimensions was also carried out, particularly useful for the discussion of feasting.

Table 2.2. Chronology and Ceramic Complexes (Hermes 2000b; Laporte 2006)			
Years	Period	Yaxha	Uaxactun
900	Terminal Classic	Tolobojo	Tepeu 3
800		Late Classic	Ixbach
700	Ucutz		Tepeu 1
600	Early Classic		Tsutsuy
500		Agua Verde	
400			
300			
200		Late Preclassic	Kuxtin
A.D. 100			
0			
100 B.C.			
200			
300	Middle Preclassic	Yancotil	Mamom
400		Ah Pam	
500			
600			
700			
800			

After all material classifications and field analysis were concluded, it was established that most of the collected evidence pertained to the Terminal Classic period (A.D. 850-1000). For the coherence of the study, further analytic comparisons between cases were to be restricted to this period. Therefore, the analysis in this dissertation is strictly synchronic, focusing its attention in the last part of the Classic period, right before the so called Maya ‘collapse’ that implies the abandonment of many Classic cities, including Yaxha (see Chapter 3).

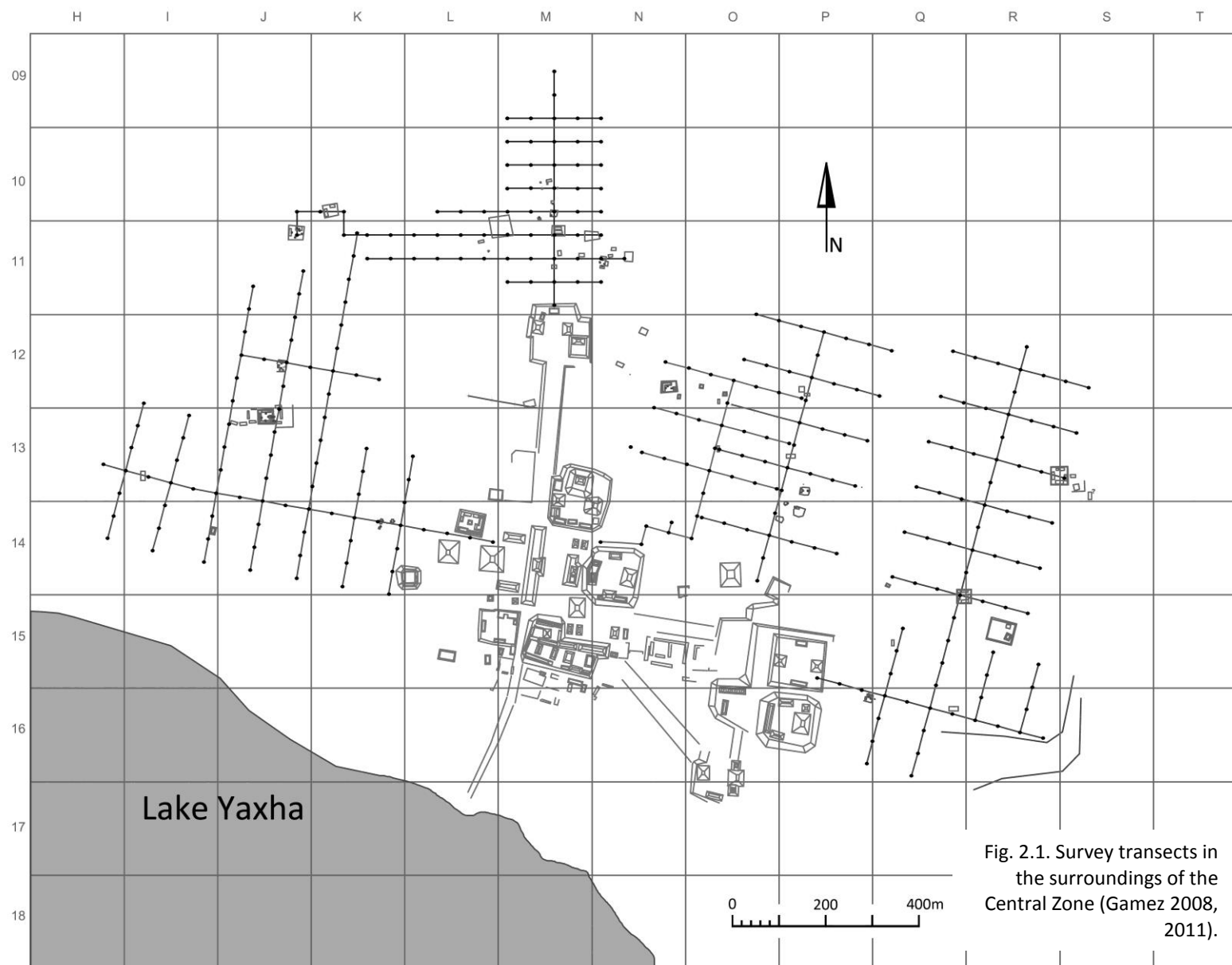


Fig. 2.1. Survey transects in the surroundings of the Central Zone (Gamez 2008, 2011).

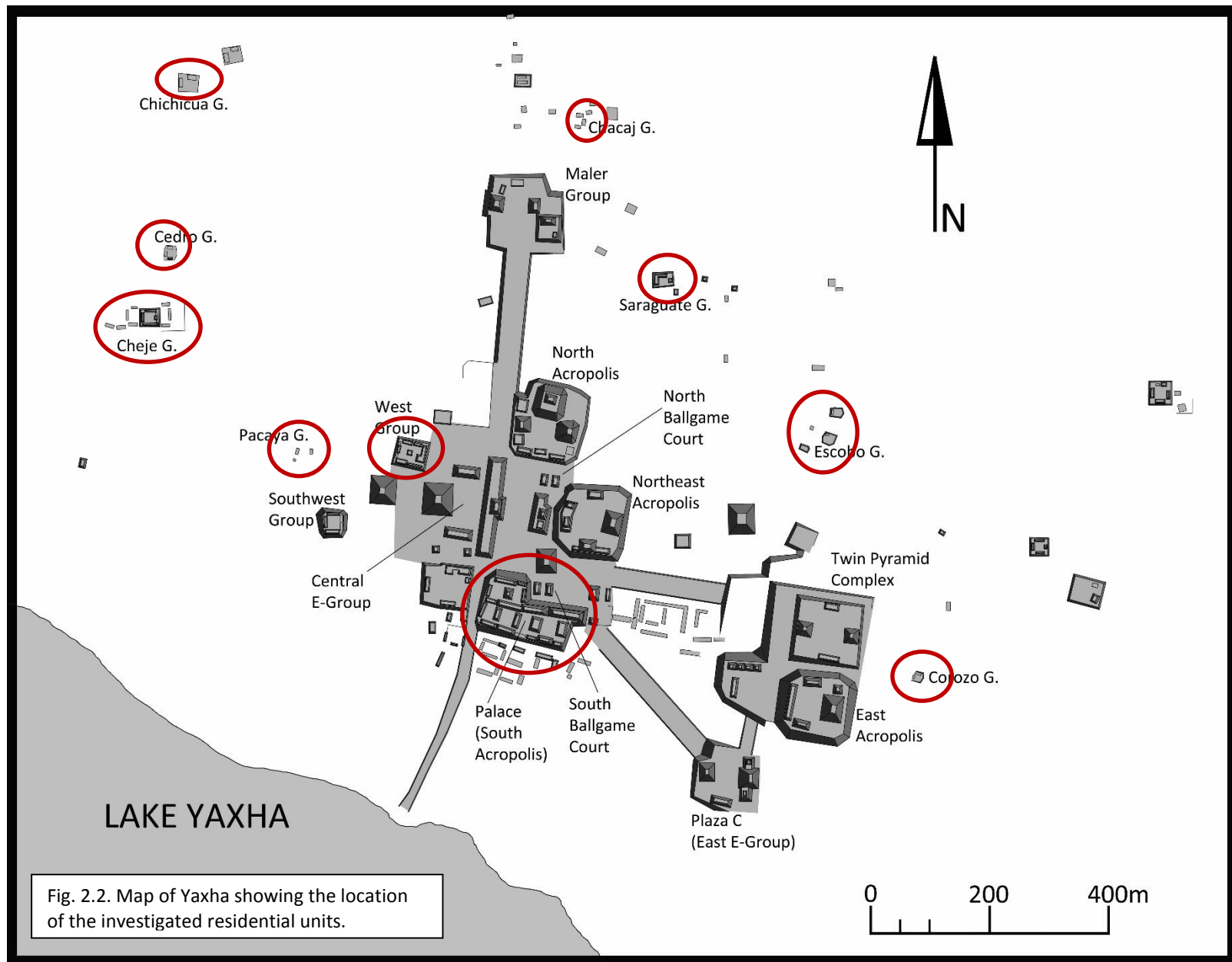


Fig. 2.2. Map of Yaxha showing the location of the investigated residential units.

3. YAXHA:

THE LORDS OF THE BLUE WATER

The ruins of the ancient capital of Yaxha are located in present day northeastern Guatemala, on the northern shore of Lake Yaxha (Deevey et al 1979; Dunning et al 2002; Ford et al 1997; Hermes 2001; Maler 1908; Martin and Grube 2008; Quintana et al 2000). The Classic city developed after centuries of human occupation. Traces of agricultural activity have been detected in the lake zone for as early as 3000 B.C. (Deevey 1979:302), while the earlier known ceramic samples and architectural features have been dated to the about 700 B.C. (Hermes 2000b and 2001). By the Late Preclassic (250 B.C. – A.D. 250), Yaxha was a big settlement with numerous monumental constructions. By Late Classic times (A.D. 650-850), it most certainly was a capital that participated in the regional political system. It possessed its own emblem glyph, a toponym that is considered to have also represented the functioning of local dynasties (Marcus 1976:11; Mathews 1991:26; Stuart and Houston 1994:3-7). Epigraphic sources suggest that Yaxha was affected by regional political conflicts during this time period (Grube 2000:249-268). However, the archaeological record indicates that the Terminal Classic (A.D. 850-1000) represented a period of renewed prosperity at Yaxha. For still unknown reasons, the city was nevertheless abandoned during this last period.

Multiple research programs have contributed to the present knowledge of this ancient capital (see Table 2.1). Although there is still much more to discover, a general characterization

of the city and its social organization is certainly possible. In this chapter, available evidences are explored in order to obtain a working definition of the Late-to-Terminal Classic dynastic cosmology at Yaxha.

3.1. YAXHA'S DYNASTIES

Classic Maya dynastic cosmology was generally expressed in art and architecture. In fact, Royal dynasties were the central theme of Classic iconography and writing, while monumental settings framed and celebrated the glories and actions of such dynasties. Yaxha was no exception. Although names and chronological sequence of the local dynasty or dynasties remain unknown, there is enough information indicating that a dynastic system was indeed in place at Yaxha during Classic times. Yaxha's dynasties made use of the same or similar symbols as other neighboring dynasties, reinforcing the dynastic cosmology that supported their power within the region, but perhaps more strongly in local terms. This is, among their own subjects.

Andrea Stone (1989:153) advanced a model of relationships of rank or social bonds between rulers and subjects. In her model, ancient Maya rulers used certain symbols to relate to their subjects, while at the same time they used others to distinguish themselves from the same subjects. Both strategies, connection and disconnection, support the implementation and permanence of a dynasty. On the one hand, Maya rulers would use themes central to the concerns of peasant farmers. That is, themes related to the subsistence strategies of the people. Rulers would align themselves with themes like fertility and beneficial natural cycles. While on

the other hand, they would distinguish themselves with foreign symbols of power. Stone's study demonstrates the wide use of recognizable Teotihuacan motifs in various kingdoms, like Piedras Negras, Tikal, and Dos Pilas (Stone 1989:164). Such symbols are often tied to warfare and exclusivity. In the case of Piedras Negras, Stone argues connection strategies are implemented during the accession of the ruler to the throne. While disconnection strategies arise later during his reign in contexts of warfare and are expressed through a pictorial tradition associated with the foreign Teotihuacan style from Central Mexico (Stone 1989:154). Yaxha's ruling dynasty seems to have used strategies similar to these other kingdoms, including the use of Teotihuacan warfare motifs. The paragraphs that follow discuss these and other general aspects that define Yaxha's dynastic cosmology.

The epigraphic record for Yaxha is rather small in comparison to those of other contemporary kingdoms (Martin and Grube 2008:72). However, aside from the few that have been found on site, there are some mentions of Yaxha in other cities' inscriptions, including Naranjo, Tikal, and La Naya (Fig. 1.2, 2.) (Grube 2000, 2004 and 2008).

The possession of an emblem glyph is considered to represent the presence of a ruling dynasty. Yaxha's emblem glyph (Fig. 3.1) has actually been deciphered as *Yax-ha* (Stuart 1985) and according to Stuart and Houston (1994:5), it was likely to be read as *Yaxha' Ahau* (*Lord of the Blue/Green Water*, or *Holy Lord of the Blue/Green Water* when presided by a 'water group' prefix).

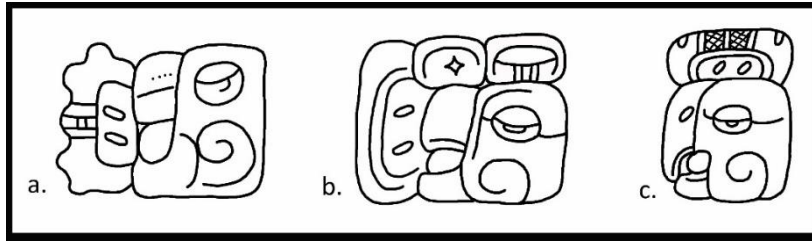


Fig. 3.1. Yaxha's emblem glyph, a. Yaxha Stela 2 (B1); b. Naranjo Stela 23 (F20); c. Tikal, Temple IV, Lintel 3 (B4) (Stuart 1985:1; see also Grube 2000:251 for more variants).

The various mentions of Yaxha in other Classic capitals are indicative not only of the presence of a royal dynasty, but also of its relevance within the regional political affairs of the time. The Late Classic political landscape was marked by the conflictive relations between Tikal and Calakmul, the two more powerful polities of the time (Houston and Inomata 2009:109-112; Martin and Grube 2008). Yaxha seems to have been an ally (or subject) to Tikal. However, alliances seem to have changed rather often, as conflict often leads to the subjection of one kingdom by another. Victories were recurrently used as political propaganda in the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the succeeding kingdom.

The regional events in which Yaxha was involved included both political alliances and conflicts. The most powerful Classic capitals neighboring Yaxha were Tikal to the west and Naranjo to the east (Fig. 1.3). By the beginning of the Late Classic, Naranjo was ally or subject to Calakmul, Tikal's greatest rival. As Tikal's subject, Yaxha seems to have been caught up in the conflicts between Tikal and Naranjo more than once. In the sequence of events that epigraphy has shed light on so far (Table 3.1), Yaxha does not seem to have a protagonist role at all, at least not prior to the late 8th century. This is likely more the result of the small number of inscriptions

that have been found at Yaxha until now. Inscriptions celebrating local victories might have gotten lost during Yaxha's defeats or might just be missing from the present known record for other reasons. In fact, Nikolai Grube (2000:253) has indicated that some of Yaxha's Early Classic steale show signs suggesting they were carved over earlier monuments. Some stelae also show traces of arbitrary destruction and there is reason to believe some fragments were moved from their original placing in ancient times (Grube 2000:257).

Date	Event
AD 546	Naranjo's king enthroned as subject of the lord of Calakmul.
AD 562	Defeat of Tikal by the Calakmul-Caracol alliance.
AD 682	Lady from Dos Pilas arrives at Naranjo. Calakmul influence.
AD 682	Jasaw Chan K'awiil arrives to throne at Tikal. Yaxha possibly ally or subject of Tikal.
AD 693	Son of Dos Pilas' lady is enthroned at Naranjo. Self-declared subject of Calakmul.
AD 710	Naranjo defeats Yaxha. Yaxha's queen, perhaps a princess from Tikal, is expelled from Yaxha (Naranjo, St. 23).
AD 710	The bones from the former lord of Yaxha, Yax Bolon Chak, are exhumed and scattered around the island, most likely Topoxte (Naranjo St. 23).
AD 711	The bones from a lady from Topoxte are exhumed and taken to Tikal (Tikal Altar 5; see Chapter 7, Fig. 7.9).
AD 714	Son of Yaxha's lord Yax Bolon Chak is enthroned in La Naya (La Naya St.1).
AD 744	Tikal conquers Naranjo (Tikal Lintel 2, St. 5, Alt. 8).
AD 793	Lord K'nich Lakamtunil is in power, conducts ritual (Yaxha St. 13).
AD 796	Capture of prisoner by Yaxha (Yaxha St. 31).
AD 799	Yaxha is defeated by Naranjo (Naranjo St. 35).
AD 800	K'nich Lakamtunil is still in power at Yaxha. Naranjo continues military campaign against Yaxha (Naranjo St. 12).
AD 771, 815, and 849.	Nakum dated monuments are the last ones with inscriptions in Yaxha's immediate territory (Nakum St. U, C, and D).

The names of the dynasty might not be known, but the available monuments are highly informative about the dynastic cosmology that was in place at Yaxha. Stelae and altars were located all around the civic center (Fig. 3.2.), distributed in patterns similar to those used all across the Classic Maya Lowlands. In addition, similar iconographic motifs as those used in other

kingdoms were used in here as well. For example, both Stelae 13 and 31 depict a central male figure, richly attired and in ritual action (Fig. 3.3). The depicted characters on these monuments are the kings of the last part of the 8th century, *K'inich Lakamtunil (Great Sun Big Stone)*, and another royal or noble character of unknown name.

Stela 13, located by the western pyramid at the Twin Pyramid Complex, includes epigraphic inscriptions mentioning two dates: 9.18.3.0.0 12 *Ajaw 3 Mak* (September 21 AD 793) and 9.18.7.0.0 9 *Ajaw 13 Keh* (August 31 AD 797). The first date is associated with a frontal carved scene. In this scene, the local lord is depicted in ritual action, scattering something, probably blood or incense. The second date is carved in a lateral panel, and although it is now incomplete, there must have been another date on the other side as well. According to Grube's reading, the inscription ends with the mentioning of the lord *K'inich Lakamtunil* and Yaxha's emblem glyph (Grube 2000:262).

Stela 31 is located in front of Str. 130 to the east of the Central E-Group. According to Grube (2000:262) it commemorates the taking of a captive from unknown origin. The inscription dates this apparently very important capture to 9.18.5.16.14 13 *Ix 2 Sak* (August 10, AD 796). The front scene shows the main character dancing in front of the prisoner. Although the name of the protagonist in this action is unknown, it has been recognized it is not the king from Stela 13 even though he was the ruler by this time (Grube 2000:263).

The scene on Stela 13 is a good example of what Stone (1998:153) found to be a strategy used by the ruling dynasties to connect with the lower ranks. The central position of the king in ritual action, celebrating calendric cycles and offering or symbolically planting (with his own blood?), is consistent with a strategy for connecting with the people. The themes are the natural

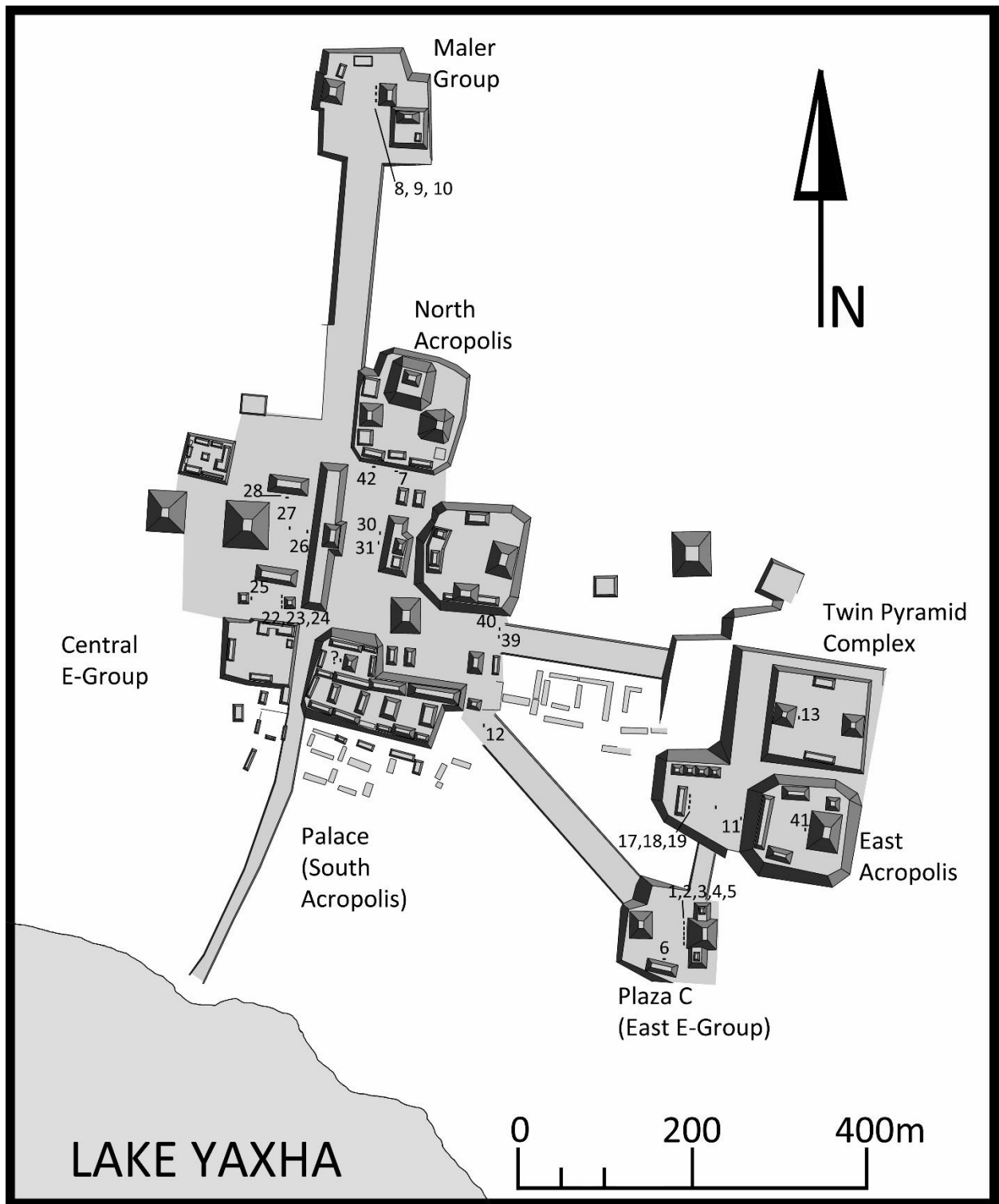
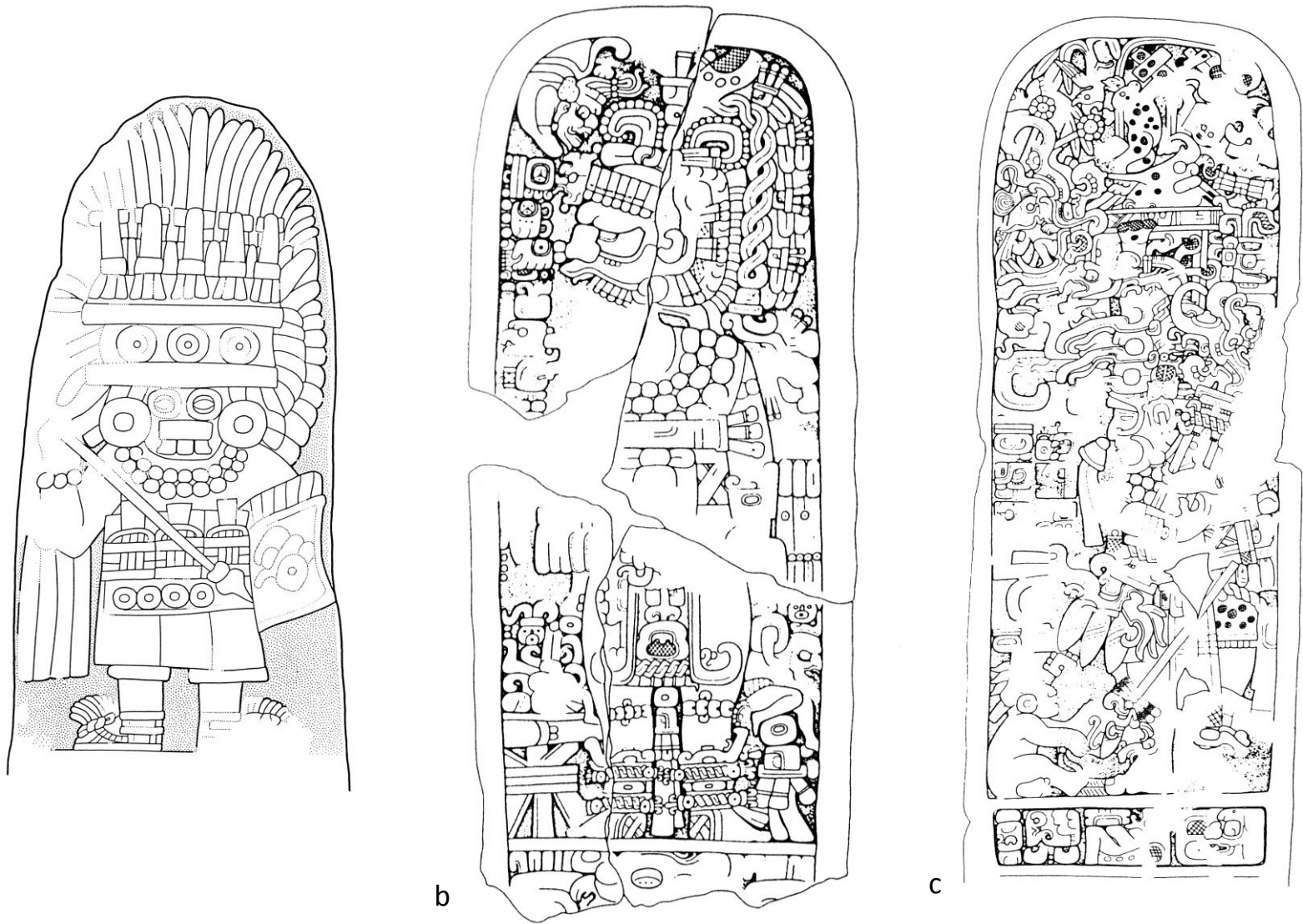


Fig. 3.2. Civic center with location of some of the Stelae.



a.

b

c

Fig. 3.3. Yaxha's Stelae: a. Stela 11; b. Stela 13; c. Stela 31 (Grube 2000).

cycles – agricultural and astronomical – symbolizing fertility. Though the elevated position of the king is clear, he addresses the concerns of the community.

In contrast to this last theme, Stela 11 (Fig. 3.3) depicts the Teotihuacan iconography of warfare that Stone (1989) has identified elsewhere in the Classic Maya Lowlands. In Stone's connection/disconnection model, Classic Maya dynasties used this iconography to disconnect themselves from their subjects. They proclaimed their power by using foreign symbols that reemphasized their qualitative distinctions. In Yaxha's Stela 11, a single male figure is dressed in Teotihuacan style, wearing Tlaloc's goggles, and is armed with a lance and a square shield – a widely recognized Teotihuacan symbol. The monument does not carry any hieroglyphic inscriptions and the date in which it was dedicated remains unknown. The style suggests an Early Classic timeframe. However, it is clear it was in place during the Terminal Classic.

The centrality of royalty in ritual action was not only recorded in stone. At Yaxha, graffiti on the walls of some temple and palace rooms depict royal processions (Fig. 3.4). These graffiti decorated the interior walls of Terminal Classic constructions, and they clearly depict a central character wearing wide feather headdresses. In a wonderful procession scene found in Str. 385 from the Royal Palace (Fig. 4.1), the king is being carried up-hill in a litter, preceded by a procession of people carrying banners and a person carrying a lance walking right in front of the king. In this scene, the procession is passing in front of a temple pyramid.

In another graffiti recorded in Str. 216, the eastern temple pyramid in the East Acropolis (Fig. 2.2), depicts a ritual scene taking place in front of two pyramids. Once again, the king is the central figure. He is distinguished from the rest by his wide headdress and by the fact that he is

carrying something in his hands, maybe some form of offering. The figure in front of the king might be a tied up prisoner, but this is not entirely clear. Clearer is the fact people behind the king are carrying banners and playing music; while there is a person that seems to be reading, or perhaps announcing the king? While more people seem to be walking forward downhill.

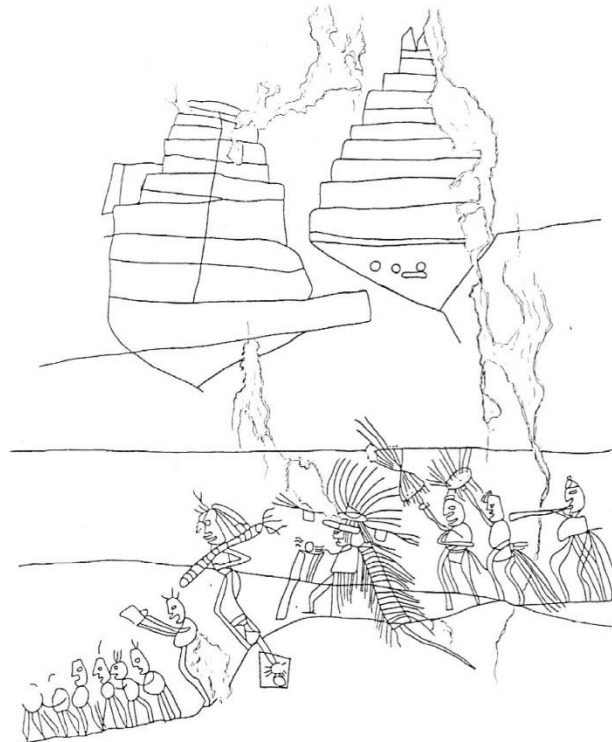
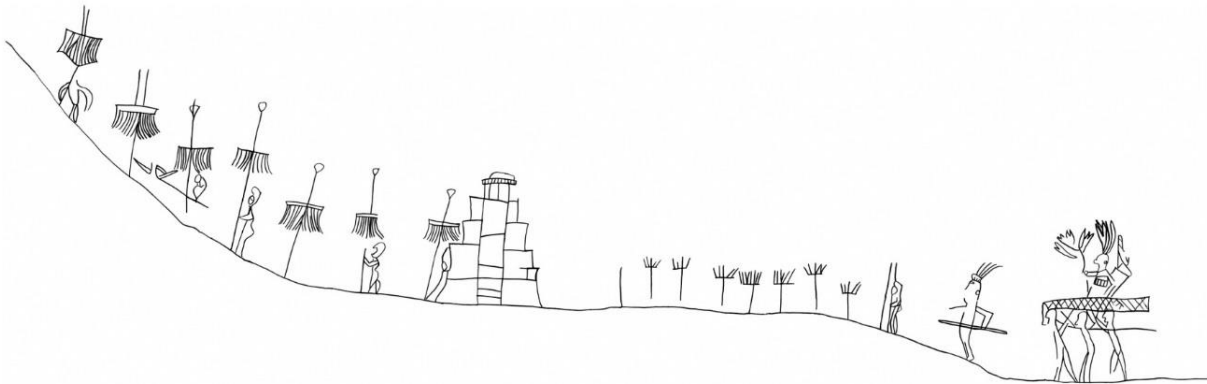


Fig. 3.4. Ritual scenes in Graffiti, a. Procession in Str. 385, Royal Palace (Drawing by J. Cazali); b. Ritual event in Str. 216, East Acropolis (taken from Hermes et al 1996).

These graffiti scenes are not elaborate works of art. They were not intended for a wide audience. Instead, they were small drawings in private rooms. However, they are depictions of the pageantry of ritual and the centrality of the ruler by the Terminal Classic. Despite the popular idea that graffiti were made by squatters (an argument already disputed by Andrews 1980:2; and Haviland and Haviland 1995:295), these graffiti were not. They were found in buildings that were in use and were subsequently closed during the Terminal Classic, right before the abandonment of the city. In these scenes, not only people and action are recorded, but also the monumental architecture used as a setting for such actions.

3.2. YAXHA'S CIVIC CENTER

Yaxha's dynasties operated in an impressive monumental civic center that developed over some 1500 years. By the Terminal Classic, an area of about one square kilometer was occupied by monumental constructions of diverse characteristics, all forming part of architectural compounds that served as stages for ritual activity. These settings were undoubtedly symbolically charged. In fact, the characteristics and location of most constructions was calculatedly set to convey very relevant cosmological concepts.

As indicated in the first chapter of this dissertation, ancient Maya cosmology implied a multilayered universe in which human realm was one of three main layers. This realm was understood as a quadripartite space, informing certain concepts of symbolic directionality often expressed in the architectural layout of built spaces and certain artistic expressions (Ashmore

1989:272-286, 1991:200-2001; Astor-Aguilera 2010; Aveni and Hartung 1986; Coe 1965; Coggins 1980, 1982; Schele and Mathews 1998:36-37). Architectural features recurrently marked the four cardinal directions and the central axis, with their astronomical associations and subsequent cosmological meanings.

Wendy Ashmore (1991:200) advanced a template of 'site- [civic center-] planning principles' involving the cardinal directions. This template combines a set of five principles: 1. Emphatic reference to a north-south axis in the civic center layout. 2. Formal and functional complementarity or dualism between north and south. 3. Addition of elements on east and west to form a triangle with the north, and frequent suppression of marking the south position. 4. Presence of ball court as transition between north and south. And 5. Frequent use of causeways to emphasize connections among the cited elements, thereby underscoring the symbolic unity the whole layout (Fig. 3.2). The layout of Yaxha's civic center includes all these principles, remarking the connection of Yaxha with the overall Classic Maya high-culture, especially from that of Tikal (Fig. 3.6).

One of the most widely recognized architectural patterns in the Southern Maya Lowlands are those recognized as 'E-Group' after the one from Uaxactun (Aveni et al 2003). E-Groups were composed of a pyramid with stairways on all four sides and a long platform located to the east of such a pyramid. The pyramid would serve as observatory for the annual shifts in the path of the sun. Fixed features would mark equinoxes and solstices in the long platform. There are two E-Groups at Yaxha (Fig. 1.3). In fact, the Central E-Group is one of the most ancient compounds at Yaxha.

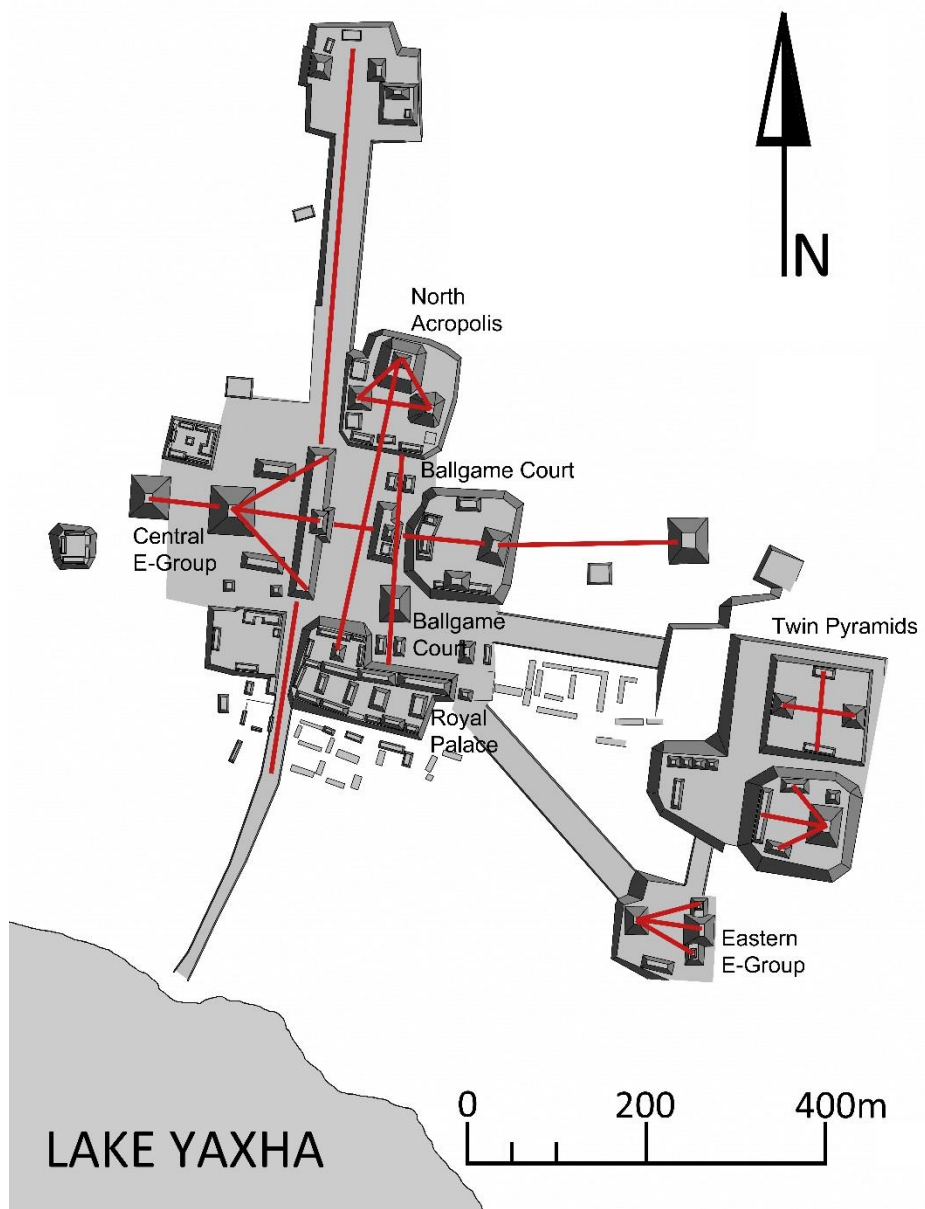


Fig. 3.5. Yahxa's civic center with the most noteworthy directional statements in the architectural layout.

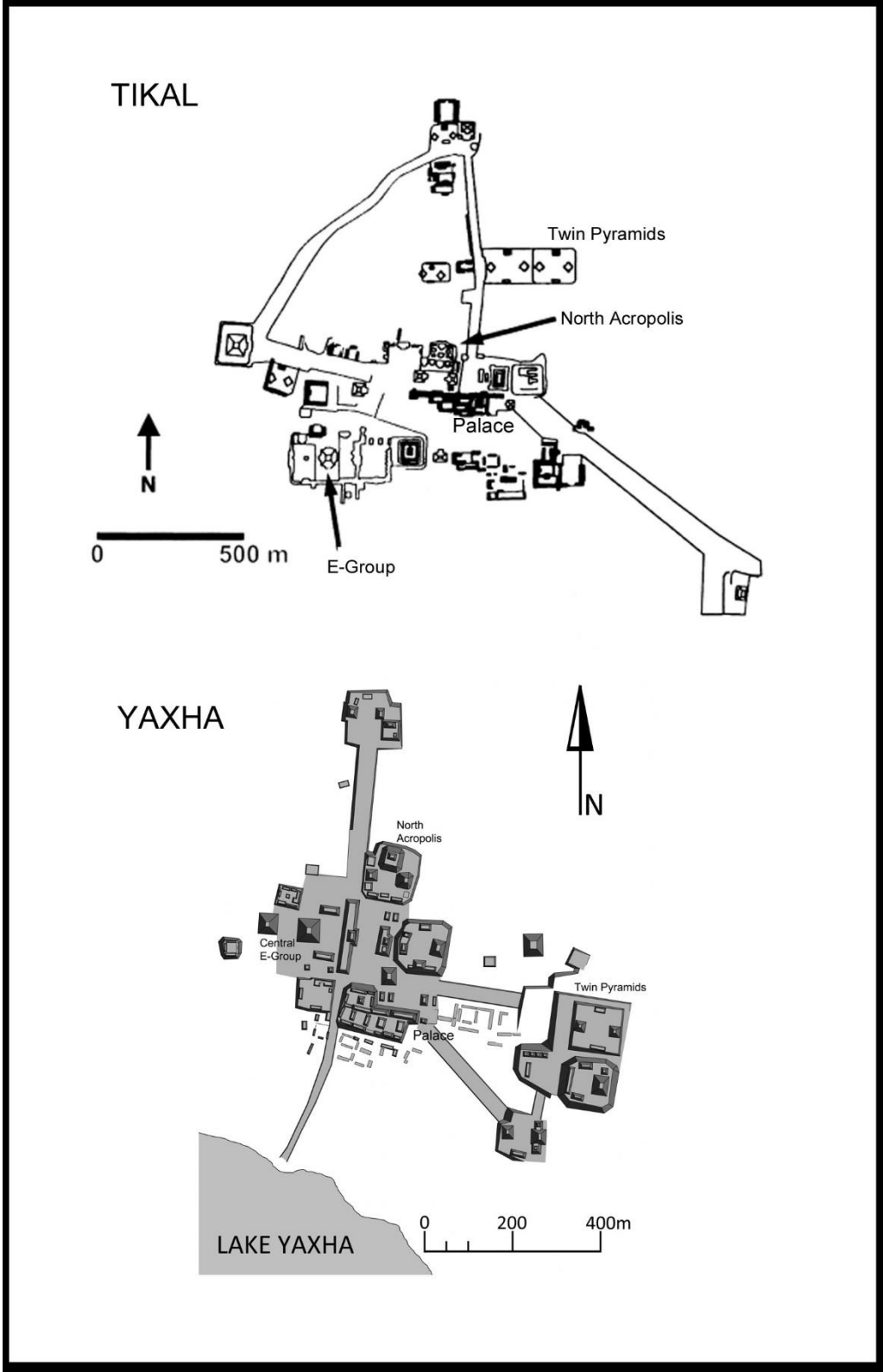


Fig. 3.6. Maps showing the similarities in the symbolic layout of Yaxha and Tikal (map of Tikal taken and modified from Ashmore and Sabloff 2002:203).

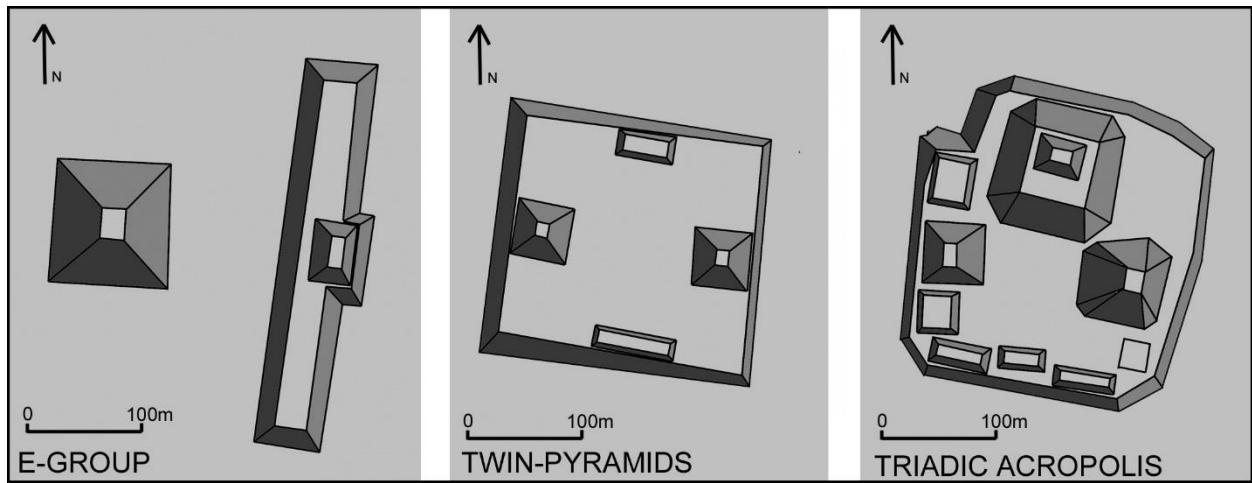
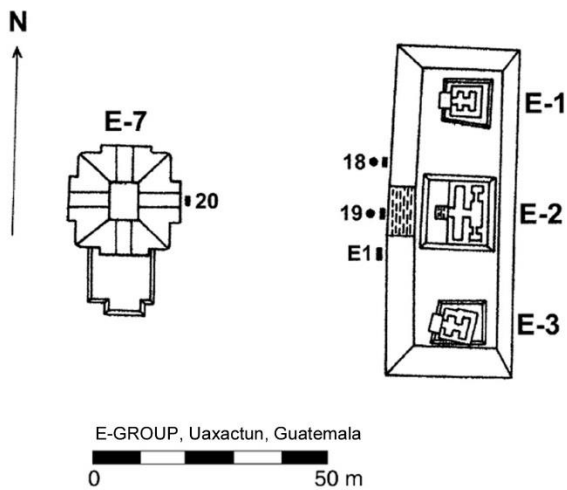


Fig. 3.7. Examples of monumental compounds celebrating directionality at Yaxha.



Triadic Acropolis, Uaxactun, Guatemala



Twin Pyramids, Tikal, Guatemala

Fig. 3.8. Monumental compounds celebrating directionality in the same patterns as those from Yaxha (Fig. 5.1). E-Group from Uaxactun (modified from Aimers and Rice 2006:80); Triadic Acropolis, Uaxactun (taken from Proskouriakoff 1976); Twin Pyramids, Tikal (drawing by N. Johnson, taken from Harrison 1999:167).

Another kind of symbolic architectural feature that Yaxha shared with other polities of the same region was the “triadic pyramid acropolis,” an arrangement of one central pyramid to the north and two more pyramids (or platforms) closing a shared plaza on its east and west sides. This is a Preclassic pattern that has been identified for example at Tikal, Nakbe, and El Mirador (Sharer 1992:132). Yaxha’s North Acropolis is an example of this pattern (Fig. 1.2). It was first constructed during the Preclassic and was subsequently re-constructed and modified several times until the Terminal Classic.

Conveying even more explicitly the cosmological concepts of directionality, Yaxha’s ‘Twin Pyramid Complex’ has been identified with reference to the several groups at Tikal with which it shares its main characteristics. This is a set of two equal pyramids flanking the east and west sides of a plaza, while a wide roofless room is centered in the north side and a long rectangular structure closes the south side. In Tikal, the south construction is sometimes a long vaulted room with nine doors. The room to the north is assumed to represent the sky, the room to the south represents the underworld and its nine levels, while the pyramids celebrate the daily path of the sun from the sky to the underworld (Ashmore 1991).

These examples illustrate the conveyance of cosmological symbolism in Yaxha’s monumental civic center. In general, the incorporation of cosmological concepts in cities’ layout is usually associated with leaders’ political strategies (Ashmore 1989:272-273, 1992: 173-184). The combination of monumentality with cosmology is assumed to be a profitable source of political power and legitimation of such power, using the built landscape to reinforce authority. This is also assumed to have been a widely used strategy during Classic times, when the cosmological templates are more strongly centered on the ruler (Ashmore 1989:279; Sharer

1994:292). Some authors argue that a process of elite appropriation of cosmological commoner symbolism to reinforce power took place sometime during Maya history (Astor-Aguilar 2010:35-38; Demarest 2004; Kerr 1992:109-121; Lucero 2003; McAnany 2001). However, the origins of these principles lie outside the scope of this dissertation. Suffice to note that royal dynastic cosmology at Yaxha was widely expressed throughout its civic center, which was the main scenario for royal ritual action.

3.3. YAXHA'S KINGDOM

The full extension of Yaxha's kingdom is still unknown. However, its capital's scale signals its prominence within a wide territory in which several other mid- and small size towns were also located. Midsize towns that are hypothesized to have been under Yaxha's wing include Poza Maya and perhaps La Pochitoca to the north; Topoxte, Ixtinto, and possibly La Naya, Torre Corozal, La Quemada, and San Clemente to the southwest (Fig. 3.5) (Herrera and Fialko 2006). These are all towns represented by civic centers in which there is at least one public plaza defined by monumental constructions, including royal or noble palaces. Nevertheless, these centers are less than a third the size of Yaxha's center. Many smaller sites have been located in Yaxha's surroundings (Fialko 1996; Herrera and Fialko 2006:161-163), suggesting the presence of a widespread population that could have been politically and economically attached to Yaxha.

Although further research is necessary to clarify the relationship of all these different populations, the closest of Yaxha's neighbors that rival it in size and monumentality are Nakum and Naranjo. Nakum is located at about 15km to the north of Yaxha, while Naranjo is located at

about 17km to the northeast. The territories under control of these two kingdoms would be limiting Yaxha's territory to the north and northeast; while Tikal's territory would be clearly limiting Yaxha to the northwest. The territory to the south was occupied by mid- and small size towns, making the hypothesizing of Yaxha's frontier in this direction more difficult. The neighboring territory in this direction was probably Ucanal's, another Classic Tikal ally located at about 25km to the south of Yaxha (Fig. 3.5).

It is impossible to establish how strong the relationship between the different populations was, but just based on scale, Yaxha was clearly a prominent civic center that must have been supported by a numerous population. After his research around the Yaxha and Sacnab Lakes, Don Rice (1976) estimated a Late Classic population density of 272.6 persons by square kilometer in an area of about 167 square kilometers (Rice and Rice 1990:143). Although the construction density recorded through the most recent survey in the urban periphery of Yaxha is rather low (about 43 structures by square kilometer, Gamez 2008), there is the suggestion that several thousand people inhabited it and a more thorough survey should support it.

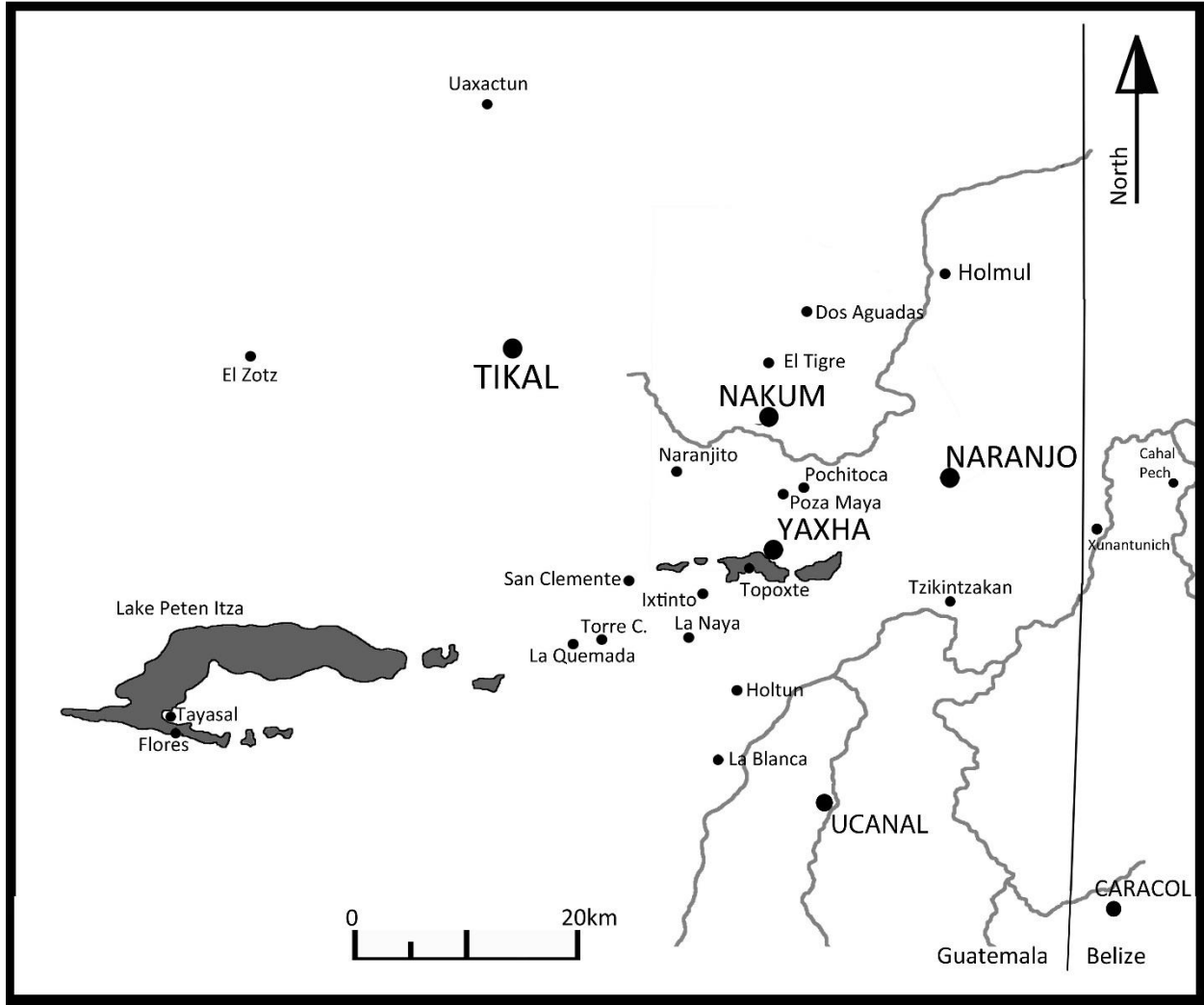


Fig. 3.9. Regional map showing location of sites mentioned in the text.

4. YAXHA'S RESIDENTIAL UNITS: DEVELOPMENT AND STATUS DIFFERENTIATION

Yaxha was a politically, socially, and economically stratified society. The architectural investments in their homes expressed the social status of their occupants. In this chapter, I describe the sample of residential units that constitute the basis of this dissertation. This description is guided by a four-tier rank classification: 1. Royal palace, 2. Noble palace, 3. High-end commoner residential units, of which there are two cases included, and 4. Low-end commoner residential units, including six cases. The main criteria used in this classification were construction volume and the presence or absence of masonry-vaulted roofs (Table 4.1).

These architectural characteristics are related to the labor investments that signal the economic power and social prestige of the people that built the residential units (Abrams 1994). Conveniently, both volume and presence/absence of vaulted roofs are characteristics that are readily identifiable in the size and shape of the corresponding mounds. Although it was originally hypothesized that higher-status peoples made use of finer ceramics and imports, this study has not found such distinctions. In fact, the data presented in this chapter illustrates how ceramics in higher status residential units were actually very similar to the lower status ones. In addition, the proportions of imported obsidian do not show distinctions related to status (Graph 4.14).

Table 4.1. Sample of Residential Units in this Study						
Rank	Residential unit	Volume (m³)	Dwellings	Vaulted Roofs	Patios	Platform height (m)
Royal	Palace	118,725	21+	20+	6	3+
Noble	West Group	11,614	10	7	1	2
High-end Commoner (HEC)	Cheje	4,384	15	3	4	1+ (in one patio only)
	Saraguat	1,505	5	2	2	1+ (in one patio only)
Low-End Commoner (LEC)	Escobo	1,138	4	0	1	0
	Chichicua	823	2	0	1	0.5
	Cedro	269	3	0	1	0.5
	Corozo	180	2	0	1	0.5
	Chacaj	131	2	0	1	0
	Pacaya	41	3	0	1	0

4.1. THE ROYAL PALACE (SOUTH ACROPOLIS)

Housing those peoples on the top of the local economic, social, and political hierarchies, royal palaces are the most complex and elaborate residential units within ancient Maya cities. Although palaces served political and administrative functions that distinguished them from other local households, they also served the domestic functions that other households served (Christie 2003; Delvendahl 2010; Houston and Inomata 2009:152; McAnany and Plank 2001; Webster 2001). It is in this last sense that Yaxha's palace (Fig. 4.1), identified as the South Acropolis (aka Central Acropolis in Lincoln's map [in Morley 1938]), is brought into discussion here.

No extensive research has taken place in this palace, but there is enough evidence supporting its interpretation as the royal palace. The superficial morphology and size of the compound clearly shows the same characteristics observed in other kingdoms' palaces, being

essentially a raised collection of several constructions, most of which are multi-room buildings, all enclosing various rectangular patios. Yaxha's royal palace is smaller than but similar to Tikal's Central Acropolis (Harrison 2001).

Yaxha's royal palace is a massive architectural complex. It is raised over a platform of variable height (~3-5m) and about 175m of maximum length by around 100m of maximum width, a group of at least 21 constructions of diverse characteristics surround six different patios (Fig. 4.1). Multi-room constructions surround these patios, indicating a very restricted access, while conveying great privacy to any activity occurring inside the same palace.

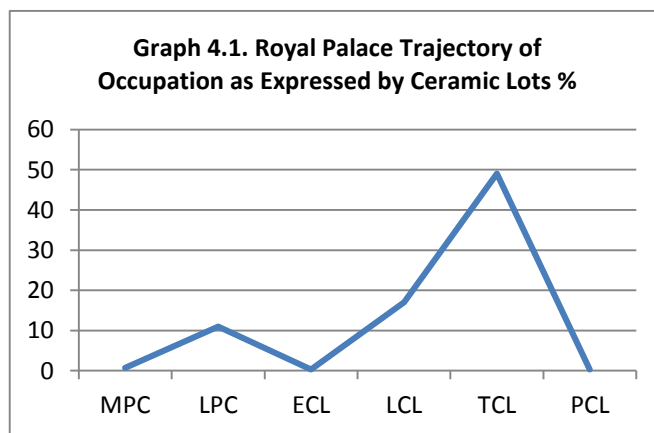
In addition, the location of the Palace is very indicative of its prominence within the settlement. It is located on the east side of the higher end of the Lake Causeway, arguably the main access to the civic center. At the same time, it is also located very closely to the southeast of the Central E-Group. It limits Plaza E on its south side, which is limited to the north by the North Acropolis. Amongst other very relevant features, it integrates to its architecture the Southern Ballgame Court, flanking its southern and western sides, closing the Ballgame Court on its south side.

The other monumental compounds found throughout Yaxha's civic center, regardless of the number of constructions they include, are either open or raised single-plaza groups in which pyramidal constructions predominate. The Palace, to the contrary, is the compound that would have offered the most private spaces in the whole settlement, while apparently presenting the most restricted access of them all. Furthermore, it is designed as a collection of rectangular patios surrounded by rectangular buildings, very reminiscent of domestic architecture.

Most mounds in this complex are roughly rectangular in shape, although somewhat variable in dimensions. With one exception only, all mounds suggest “palace type” constructions. The only exception is a pyramidal mound of at least 8m in height (Str. 363), located in the northwestern area of the palace, in between Patios 5 and 6.

After the PRONAT-Triangulo 1990’s test-pit program, Hermes (1996) indicated that all non-superficial ceramic collections from the South Acropolis were dated to the Preclassic period. In all five tested patios, the most ancient ceramic samples collected were dated for the last part of the Middle Preclassic and/or the beginning of the Late Preclassic. In fact, according to B. Hermes dating, Late Classic sherds were found only on the surface of Patio 1 (Subop. 35), while some Early Classic sherds were found in Patios 1, 3 (Subop. 46), and 6 (Subop. 53). The preeminence of Preclassic ceramics in the construction fills was remarkable. Several floors were located in these test-pits, including sequences of four floors in Patios 1 (Subop. 35) and 5 (Subop. 52), and three floors in Patio 6, suggesting the presence of earlier construction phases under these areas. All excavations reached the bedrock, at variable depths, from 1.9m in Patio 3 to 5.35m in Patio 6.

Period	Lot	Lot
	#	%
PCL	0	0
TCL	91	31
LCL	50	17
ECL	1	0.003
LPC	32	11
MPC	2	0.006



From the later, more extensive, excavations by the Yaxha-BID Project (Grupo K 2007), but also directed by B. Hermes (Grupo K 2007), a somewhat different picture emerges. A total of 296 lots were excavated through 72 Suboperations. Thirty-one percent of these lots were dated to the Terminal Classic, the highest proportions assigned to one single period. The available information about the evolution of this monumental palace is highly fragmentary. However, B. Hermes' excavations (Grupo K 2007) provide invaluable information in this regard. Although the sample is obviously biased because of the excavation strategy, as further discussed later on in this chapter, this sequence is consistent with the results of the most recent research elsewhere at the city (Gamez 2011). It is impossible to know if the Preclassic architectural features detected beneath the Late and Terminal Classic Palace served a similar function. It is clear, however, the royal palace was in use during the last centuries of the Classic period and by this time, along with its political and administrative function, it was most likely the residential unit of the highest elite at Yaxha.

There is no detailed report available about the ceramic collections from the royal palace. Therefore, the frequencies of ceramic types and/or shapes in relation to status are not available for comparison. However, material collections from the royal palace, although abundant, are not particularly telling about socioeconomic status.

Within the lithic sample, most artifacts are tools made out of chert. From the Terminal Classic sub-sample, 90% (n=1504) corresponds to flaked chert tools. Imported obsidian comprised about 4% (n=67) of the same sub-sample from the royal palace. This is neither the highest neither the lowest frequency of obsidian artifacts found at the different investigated residential units (see Table 4.12).

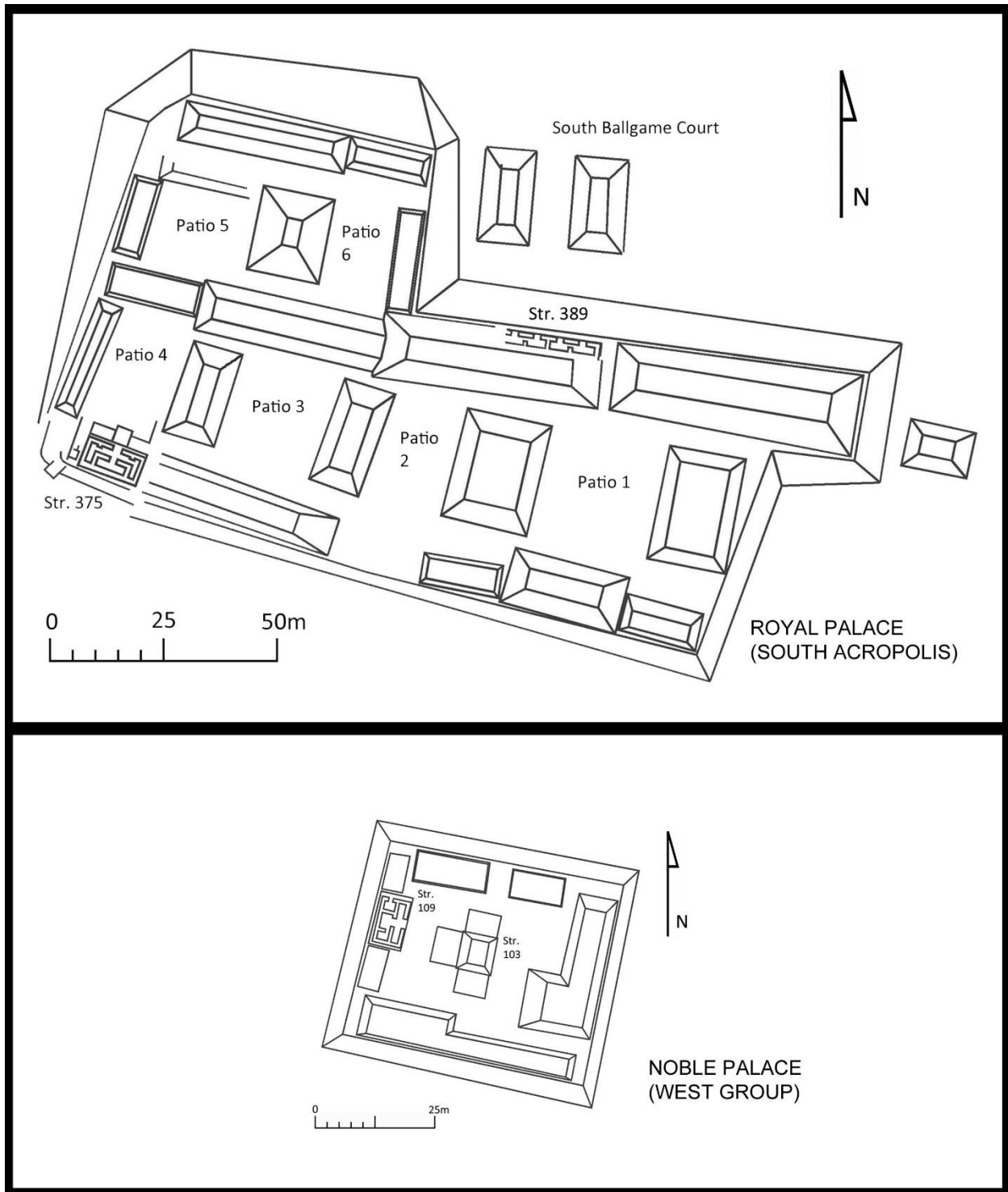


Fig. 4.1. Royal and noble palaces.

4.2. A NOBLE PALACE (WEST GROUP)

After the Royal Palace, the next bigger and more complex residential unit at Yaxha is the one identified as the West Group (hereafter 'noble palace') (Fig. 4.1). People inhabiting this noble palace would have been definitely elite, as it is indicated by the location and constructive effort invested in it. However, within the hypothesized variation within the elite (as discussed by several authors in Elson and Coby 2006, and in Chase and Chase 1992), this household would have been a step below the ruler's household. The archaeological definition of the practical relationships between these two households might be impossible to attain but as an apparently economically and most likely politically distinguished household, the people in this noble palace should have been interacting more closely with the royalty from the nearby royal palace than other households around the city.

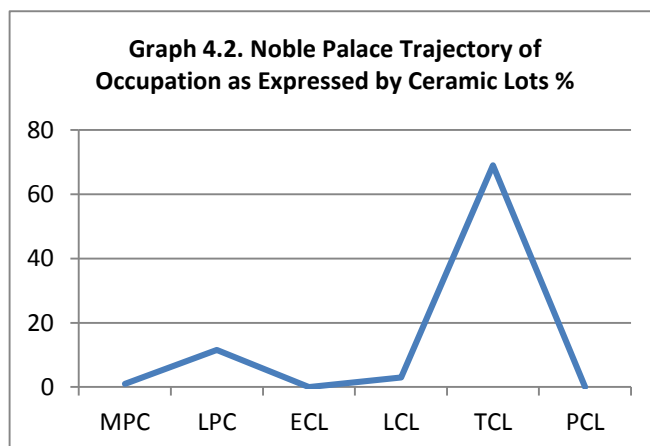
This noble palace is located by the northwest corner of the Central E-Group (Fig. 1.3), in an architecturally well-integrated position within the civic center of the city. It consists essentially of a raised, single patio surrounded by at least ten different buildings. Additionally, one other building distinguishes itself at the center of the same patio. This noble palace was partially excavated for restoration purposes by the Yaxha-BID Project (Grupo K 2007). Also, previous excavations were conducted in the same areas by Nicholas Hellmuth's project during the 1970's (Hellmuth 1972a and b).

The latest construction phase of this residential unit has been dated to the Terminal Classic. The platform provides a surface of around 60 by 50m, with a height of around 2m. The

north side of the patio is limited by at least two constructions (Str. 100 and 101), while the eastern side is limited by most likely two other constructions although they are identified together as Str. 102. The south side of the patio is limited by apparently three constructions (Str. 104, 105, and 106), while the west side is limited by Str. 107, 108, and 109. With the exception of the two lateral constructions on the west side, which are low platforms without masonry superstructures, all other constructions seem to be multi-chamber masonry buildings. The construction in the center of the patio (Str. 103) has been proven to have been a relatively small square platform.

In Hellmuth's (1971a:2) appreciation, all excavated constructions in the Noble Palace were constructed during the Classic period, including what he identified as a *secondary* occupation for Tepeu 3. After PRONAT-Triangulo's test-pits, Hermes (1996 and 1997) concluded there was enough evidence to distinguish a Late Preclassic occupation of the western side of the civic center, including the Noble Palace. Some Late Classic sherds were reportedly recovered in the surface in the excavation unit inside the patio; but Hermes (1996) mentions in conclusion that there might have been some Terminal Classic sherds as well.

Period	Lot	Lot
	#	%
PCL	0	0
TCL	72	69.2
LCL	3	2.88
ECL	0	0
LPC	12	11.5
MPC	1	0.96



From the later Grupo K's (2007) excavations, most collected ceramics were dated to the Terminal Classic. From 104 ceramic lots, 69.2% (n=72) were dated to this period and are mostly related to the last architectural version of the residential unit. Although no sherd counts from these excavations are available, the trajectory of occupation suggested by the ceramic lots as a whole is consistent with that found elsewhere in the city.

The architectural chronology has been established by association to ceramic typologies. However, the lack of detailed report about such typologies and modes limits the possibilities of further discussion about the socioeconomic status of this residential unit's inhabitants. In a similar way as for the royal palace, other material collections from this noble palace are not very telling about the status of their inhabitants.

From the Terminal Classic lithic sample, 83% (n=452) corresponds to flaked chert tools, while about 4.25% (n=23) corresponds to imported obsidian. This obsidian proportion is very similar to that of the Palace, but lower than that found at other smaller residential units like the high-end commoner residential units Cheje and Saraguate, and the low-end commoner residential unit Chacaj (see next two sections in this chapter).

4.3. HIGH-END COMMONER RESIDENTIAL UNITS:

CHEJE AND SARAGUATE

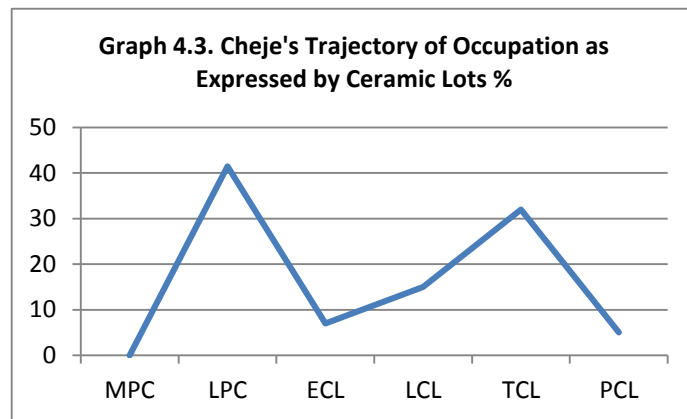
4.3.1. HECR-Cheje

The high-end commoner residential unit (HECR) Cheje (Fig. 4.2) is a relatively big residential unit located at about 800m to the west of the civic center (Fig. 2.2). It includes at least 15 constructions distributed in four different patios, all four consecutively aligned in an east-west orientation. The Central Patio is distinguished from the rest for being the only one raised over a platform of more than 1m in height, and for being the only one completely surrounded by constructions. These surrounding constructions are all represented on the ground surface as long mounds of variable heights (Str. 13J-1, 3, and 4), with the exception of one, the central construction to the east (Str. 13J-2). Str. 13J-2 is a pyramidal mound of about 3m in height, flanked to the south and north by lower rectangular constructions.

Despite the significant construction volume and architectural complexity of this residential unit, it is located at a considerable distance from the civic center of the city. In addition, because there is no other one of similar proportions in the area, it can be hypothesized this residential unit enjoyed certain prominence in this western area of the city. Further investigations might well prove a leadership position relative to the inhabitants of the close periphery of Yaxha.

The information collected from the Central Patio of HECR-Cheje has yielded a sequence of occupation that starts during the Late Preclassic (250 BC – AD 250) and extends until the Terminal Classic (AD 800-900), followed by some later Postclassic activity – although perhaps a single event. The stratigraphic sequence observed through the test pits is about 2.5m deep, and includes a sequence of three stucco floors before the last building stage in the same residential unit. In addition, one of the looting trenches exposed a part of a considerably sized substructure on the east side of the Central Patio.

Period	Sherd	Sherd	Lot	Lot
	#	%	#	%
PCL	89	2	2	5
TCL	1897	40	13	32
LCL	441	9	6	15
ECL	41	1	3	7
LPC	1859	40	17	41
MPC	0	0	0	0



The Terminal Classic ceramic sub-sample at HECR-Cheje is composed of ceramics from four different ceramic classes, 13 groups, and 25 types. Most sherds, a 57% (n=1084) have been classified as class *Uaxactun sin Engobe*, from which type *Cambio sin Engobe* make up 52% (n=990) of the total sample from HECR-Cheje. The *Peten Lustroso* Class is the second most frequent 43% (n=812) of the whole sample, as it includes the second most frequent type: *Tinaja Rojo*, which comprises 36% (n=692) of sherds from this residential unit. The remaining sherds belong to classes *Ceniza sin Engobe* (n=4) and *Gris Fino* (n=1).

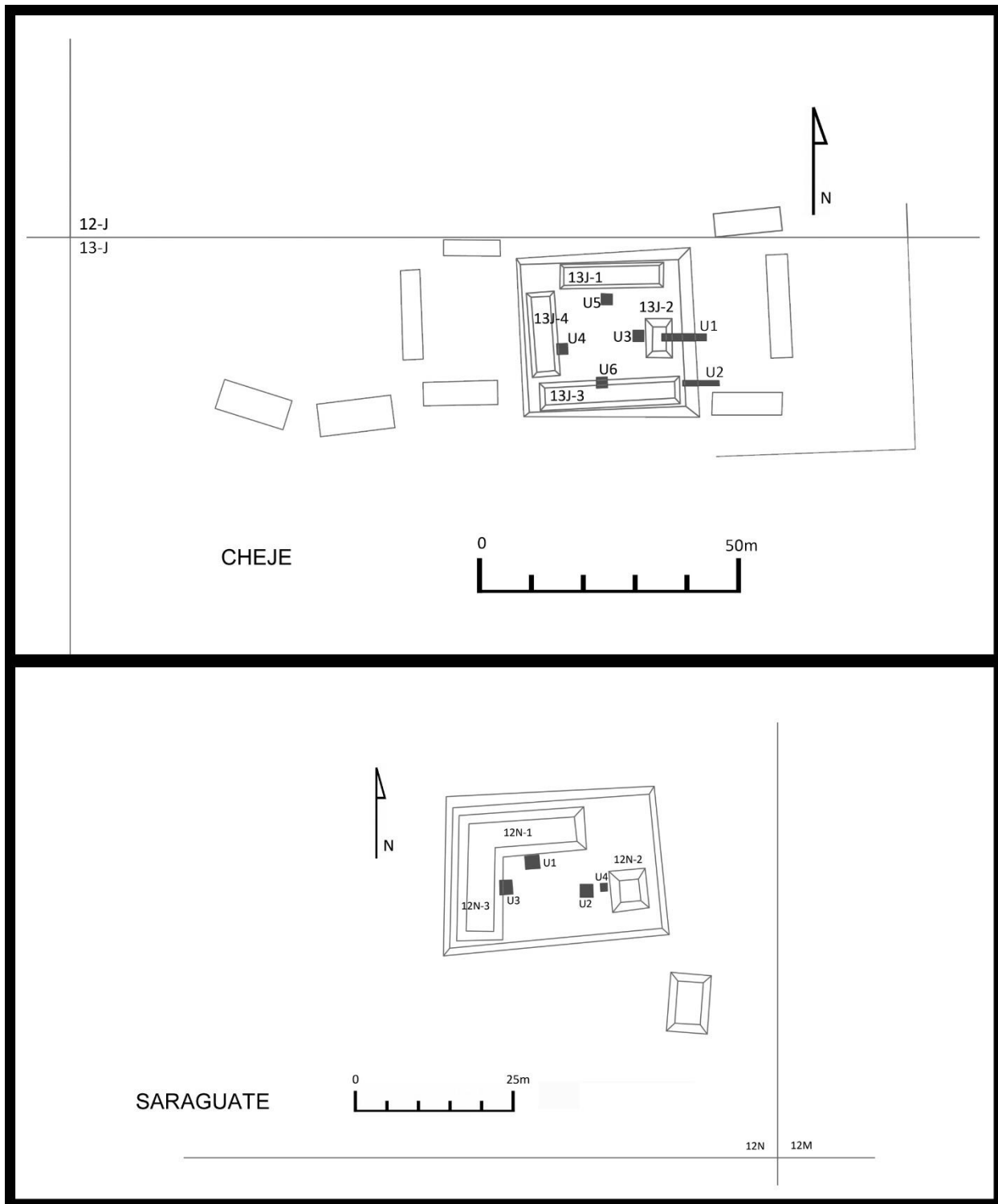


Fig. 4.2. High-end commoner residential units: Cheje and Saraguaté.

The Terminal Classic lithic sample from this residential unit is mostly composed of flaked lithic tools, which comprise 89% (n=137); while imported obsidian corresponds to 6.5% (n=10) of the same sample.

4.3.2. HECR-Saraguate

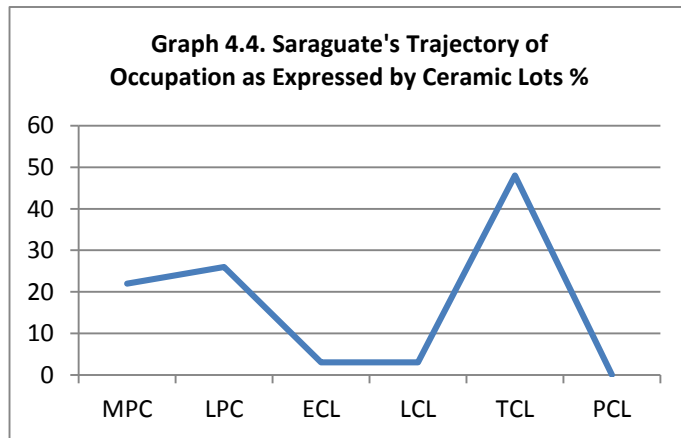
The second high-end commoner residential unit (HECR) investigated was Saraguate (Fig. 4.2). It is a medium size residential unit located at about 500m to the north of the civic center (Fig. 2.2). It is formed by at least two patios: North and South. The Northern Patio is raised on a platform of about 35m of length in its east-west axis, 25m of width in its north-south axis, and about 1m in height. The north side of this patio is delimited by Str. 12N-1, while Str. 12N-2 limits the east side and 12N-3 the west side. There were no detected constructions on the south side. Structures 12N-1 and 12N-3 are represented now by rectangular mounds attached to each other in the patio's northwest corner, forming an "L" shape. Str. 12N-2, instead, is represented superficially by a relatively small, square mound about 5m long per side.

The Southern Patio is defined by the sole presence of one rectangular mound of about 2m in height (Str. 12N-4), located a few meters to the south of the southeast corner of the Northern Patio's platform. No other constructions in the area have been located so far. Although other constructions were located relatively close to east of this residential unit (Gamez 2008), the relationship between the different features is still unclear. A modern – mostly organic – garbage dump created during the restoration process covers a considerable area between these elements.

HECR-Saraguatè is located about 200m to the east of the north end of the Blom Causeway. It would have been apparently separated from the monumental center by some seasonally waterlogged terrain (Gamez 2008; Quintana et al 2000), perhaps making it accessibly close but not well integrated within the main settlement.

Although no extensive excavations over architecture were carried out and architectural details remain unexplored, the vertical excavations contributed a sequence of 5 floors made out of stucco within a stratigraphic layering of about 3.5m in depth that represent the architectural evolution of the Northern Patio's platform. The full sequence of five floors was located in the northern axis of the patio, in front of Str. 12N-1. On the western side of the patio, the detected floor sequence was limited to the upper three floors; while in the east it was further limited to the upper two floors, suggesting the patio expanded through time from its center to the east and west sides. The earliest occupation of this area is represented by Middle Preclassic ceramics, while the latest occupation has been dated for the Terminal Classic.

Period	Sherd	Sherd	Lot	Lot
	#	%	#	%
PCL	0	0	0	0
TCL	901	24	13	48
LCL	32	0.8	1	3
ECL	37	0.9	1	3
LPC	1471	39	7	26
MPC	1353	36	6	22



The Terminal Classic ceramic sub-sample is composed of ceramics from 4 different ceramic classes, 8 groups, and 15 types. Most fragments unequivocally belong to the ceramic

class *Peten Lustroso* (n=628), within which the most frequent ceramics belong to the *Tinaja Rojo* Group (n=617), represented mostly by monochrome type *Tinaja Rojo: Tinaja*, but including also some sherds from types *Camaron Inciso: Camaron*, *Tolla Acanalado: Tolla*, and *Chinja Impreso: Chinja*. The class *Uaxactun sin Engobe* (n=267) is represented by types *Cambio sin Engobe: Cambio*, *Manteca Impreso: Manteca*, *Ciro Inciso: ND/Acanalado Inciso*, and *Encanto Estriado: Encanto*. Although this sample is somewhat more diverse in typology than some from the other residential units, the composition of the sample is not particularly rich in comparison.

The general Terminal Classic lithic sample from this residential unit includes a majority of flake chert tools (90%, n=550), while 6.6% (n=10) corresponds to imported obsidian. This is the highest proportion recorded so far, but it is not remarkably higher than that of the HECR-Cheje. Also, the artifact collections from HECR-Saraguate are distinguished from the rest by the presence of a set of 18 lithic 'eccentrics' and one jade bead, all found in association with Burials 16 and 17 (see Chapter 7).

4.4. LOW-END COMMONER RESIDENTIAL UNITS:

ESCOBO, CHICHICUA, CEDRO, COROZO, CHACAJ, AND PACAYA

Six low-end commoner residential units were investigated for this dissertation. These six residential units have all different characteristics, and are variable in terms of construction volume, area, and location. However, they are all relatively small, and their architecture seems to have been rather simple, built mostly out of perishable materials over low stone platforms.

4.4.1. LECR-Escobo

The low-end commoner residential unit (LECR) Escobo (Fig. 4.3) is located to the northeast of the civic center, at approximately 350m to the north of the Twin Pyramid Complex, and at about 500m to the northeast of the settlement center (Fig. 2.2). It is also located to the east of an apparently seasonally flooded area that separates it from the monumental compounds of the civic center.

This residential unit is morphologically different from others because it is composed of three relatively big platforms over which other perishable constructions most likely existed, and a single small mound in relative proximity. The three platforms are distributed irregularly surrounding the south (Str. 14-3), and east sides (14P-2 and 13P-1) of an open space, in the center of which a small quadrangular mound was located (14P-1). This configuration is different from the small mounds surrounding a patio as has been described above. Although each platform might represent a different household, given the low density of mounds found throughout Yaxha, their proximity makes it easy to group them as a single residential unit.

The three bigger platforms are irregular in shape, but obviously artificial. The two bigger platforms are the ones to the east of the residential unit (13P-1 and 14P-2), both of about 20 to 25m in length and 15 to 20m in width. A low rectangular mound was located over the west side of Str. 13P-1, but no other traces of construction were identified. A possible very low mound was recorded over the northwest corner of Platform 14P-2.

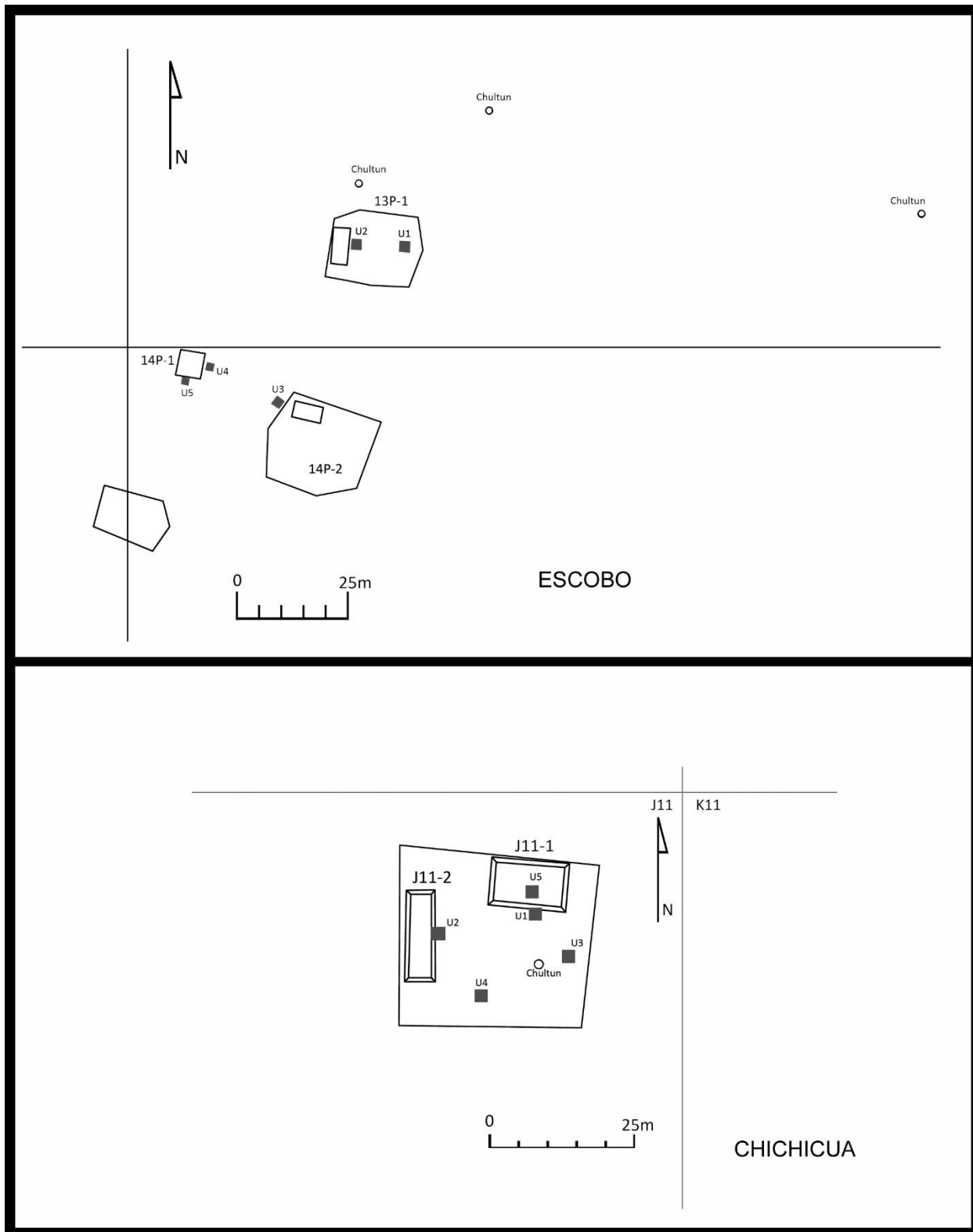


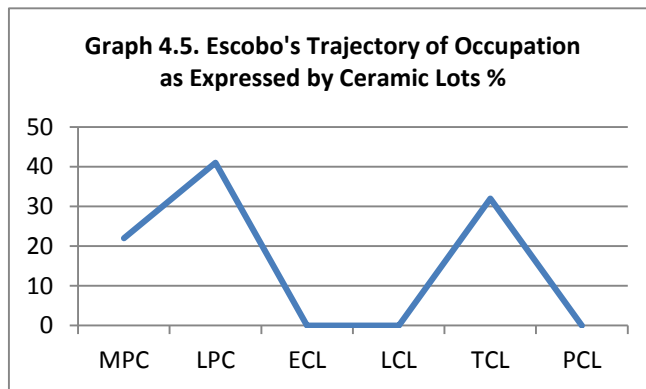
Fig. 4.3. Low-end commoner residential units: Escobo and Chichicua.

Three *chultunes* were located in relative proximity to this residential unit, none of them was on a “patio area”, but the closest to architecture was a few meter away to the north of the northernmost platform (Str. 13P-1).

Chronologically, earliest ceramic samples have been stylistically dated to the Middle Preclassic. Although no architectural features were dated to this early period, a considerable 23% (n=1064) of sherds and 22% (n=6) of lots were dated to this period. The subsequent Late Preclassic period is represented by 37% (n=1717) of the sherd sample and 41% (n=11) of material lots. Two thick stucco floors were dated to this period.

The Early and Late Classic are not represented at all in this residential unit’s ceramic sample. In contrast, the Terminal Classic is distinguished in 20% (n=901) of the sherd sample, and 37% (n=10) of the ceramic lots. It has been established that the last construction phase and occupation of this residential unit was sometime during this last period of occupation.

Period	Sherd	Sherd	Lot	Lot
	#	%	#	%
PCL	0	0	0	0
TCL	1434	31	10	37
LCL	0	0	0	0
ECL	0	0	0	0
LPC	1717	37	11	41
MPC	1064	23	6	22



The Terminal Classic ceramic sample from LECR-Escobo has been classified in 3 classes, 7 groups, and 13 types. Most sherds belong to the *Peten Lustroso* Class with a 53% (n=774) of the classified sample. The *Uaxactun sin Engobe* Class follows it with a 46.5% (n=682); while the *Naranja Fino* Class is represented by a 0.5% (n=8) of the same sample. The most common types

are the same as those found in other ceramic groups: Tinaja Rojo is the most frequent of the *Peten Lustroso* Class with a 97% (n=694) of this class; while *Cambio sin Engobe* is the most frequent within the *Uaxactun sin Engobe* Class, representing 94.5% of the same class.

Lithics from LECR-Escobo that have been dated as Terminal Classic include a high 97% (n=194) of flaked chert tools and 1% (n=2) of obsidian artifacts.

4.4.2. LECR-Chichicua

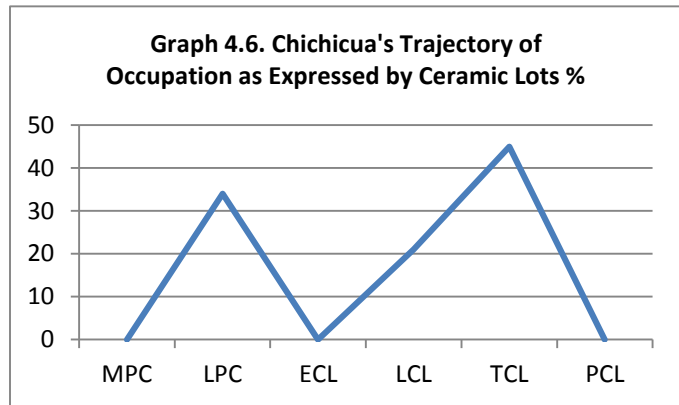
The low-end commoner residential unit (LECR) Chichicua (Fig. 4.4) is located at about 1000m to the northwest of the civic center, but only at about 500m away from the Maler Group (Fig. 2.2). It is settled over a low and relatively square platform. Two rectangular mounds (J11-1 and 2) limit the north and west sides a single patio, while a *chultun* is the only built features that was identified by the central-eastern side of the patio. No other architectural features were located in the close surroundings of this single patio.

The stratigraphic sequence exposed by the excavations in this residential unit is rather shallow and simple. The ceramic collections indicate that the occupation of the area began sometime during the Late Preclassic. The Early Classic is not represented at all in the ceramic collections, suggesting a break in the occupation sequence. A new period of occupation started during the Late Classic, extending to the Terminal Classic.

The first of the three periods of occupation, the Late Preclassic, is represented by 39% (n=987) of collected sherds and 34% (n=13) of ceramic lots. The Late Classic is represented by

22% (n=562) of the identified sherds and 21% (n=8) of ceramic lots. Finally, the Terminal Classic is represented in the collection by 37% of sherds and 44% (n=17) of lots.

Period	Sherd		Lot	
	#	%	#	%
PCL	0	0	0	0
TCL		37	17	44
LCL	562	22	8	21
ECL	0	0	0	0
LPC	987	39	13	34
MPC	0	0	0	0



Terminal Classic ceramics from LECR-Chichicua have been classified in five classes that include 8 groups and 12 types. Although a few sherds have been assigned to classes *Ceniza Sin Engobe*, *Naranja Fino* and *Puux Rojo*, most ceramics belong to the class *Peten Lustroso* with 68% (n=642) and *Uaxactun sin Engobe* with 31% (n=301). Most common types are *Tinaja Rojo*, comprising 67% (n=636) of the Terminal Classic sample from this residential unit; and *Cambio Sin Engobe*, which represents 31% (n=289).

The lithic sample of LECR-Chichicua dated to the Terminal Classic is composed of 96% (n=24) flaked chert tools, and 4% (n=1) imported obsidian.

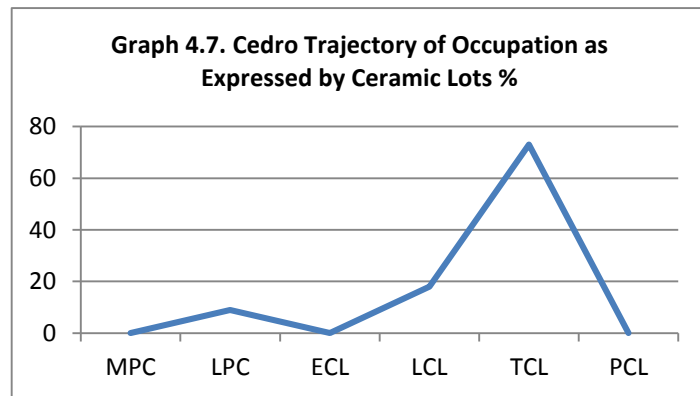
4.4.3. LECR-Cedro

Low-end commoner residential unit (LECR) Cedro (Fig. 4.4) is located at a relatively long distance from the civic center, more than 800m in a straight line to the west (Fig. 2.2). It is also located about 100m to the north of the HECR-Cheje. It is a small patio raised over a low platform (less

than 50cm in height), limited on its south, west, and north sides by one rectangular mound per side (Str. 12J-1, 2, and 3). A *chultun* was located in the center of the patio.

The stratigraphic sequence as revealed by the excavations is very short. The last occupation and most likely the construction of the residential unit has been dated to the Terminal Classic, but traces of previous Late Preclassic and Late Classic occupations are also present. The ceramic sample is divided in a 24.5% (n=500) of sherds and 9% (n=1) of lots identified as Late Preclassic; 8% (n=159) of sherds and 18% of ceramic lots as Late Classic; and 64.5% (n=1311) and 73% (n=8) of ceramic lots as Terminal Classic.

Period	Sherd	Sherd	Lot	Lot
	#	%	#	%
PCL	0	0	0	0
TCL	1311	64.5	8	73
LCL	159	8		18
ECL	0	0	0	0
LPC	500	24.5	9	1
MPC	0	0	0	0



In terms of typology, the sample includes ceramics from 4 different classes, 9 groups, and 16 types. The composition of the ceramic sample is not very different from that of other excavated residential units. Most ceramics belong to the *Peten Lustroso* Class (64%, n=846) and in a smaller frequency to the *Uaxactun sin Engobe* Class (33%, n=440). The most frequent type is *Tinaja Rojo*, represented by the 62% (n=816) of all Terminal Classic ceramics at this residential unit, followed by the type *Cambio sin Engobe* (n=439), which represents 32% of the same sample. However, other types form classes *Ceniza Engobe Rojo* (n=27) and *Naranja Fino* (n=8) are also

present. No status distinction between this and other residential units is apparent based on this ceramic sample. If anything, this small residential unit has provided the second most diverse ceramic sample of all; but the most represented ceramic types are the same as those found in the other residential units.

About 95% (n=308) of the collected Terminal Classic lithic artifacts from this residential unit are flaked lithic tools; while the remaining 5% (n=16) corresponds to imported obsidian.

4.4.4. LECR-Corozo

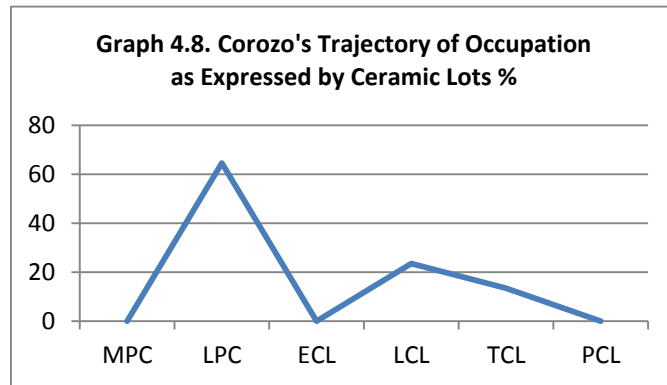
The small low-end commoner residential unit (LECR) Corozo (Fig. 4.4) is located to the east of the civic center, approximately 100m away from the Twin Pyramid Complex (Fig. 2.2). The residential unit is defined by two rectangular mounds limiting the west (Str. 16P-3) and north (Str. 16P-1) sides of a patio partially raised over a low platform. A possibly human modification of the terrain was located at about 25m to the east of such platform. Two test-pits were excavated nearby some possibly anthropic features but it was impossible to define if they were in fact artificial. One chultun was located to the north of the Str. 16P-1.

The ceramic sample from LECR-Corozo includes diagnostics for the Late Preclassic, the Late Classic and the Terminal Classic. The first mentioned period is the most numerous, representing 70% (n=1937) of the sherd sample and 64% (n=14) of the material lots. No specific architectural features have been assigned to this period, but there is a possibility that the platform was first constructed during this period. The Late Classic period is represented by 6%

(n=170) of the sherd sample and 23% (n=5) of the ceramic lots. Similarly, the Terminal Classic is also represented by another 6% (=169) of sherds, but by only 14% (n=3) of ceramic lots.

Table 4.9. Corozo's Ceramics by Period

Period	Sherd		Lot	
	#	%	#	%
PCL	0	0	0	0
TCL	169	6	3	14
LCL	170	6	5	23
ECL	0	0	0	0
LPC	1937	70	14	64
MPC	0	0	0	0



The Terminal Classic sub-sample from this residential unit is relatively scant, but it is considered very likely that there was a consistent occupation for this period. The ceramic classification includes two classes, two groups, and three types. The Classes are *Peten Lustroso* (33%, n=56) and *Uaxactun sin Engobe* (67%, n=113). Similarly to the obtained results in other residential units, the most common types are *Tinaja Rojo* and *Cambio sin Engobe*, each representing practically 100% of their respective classes.

No obsidian artifacts dated to the Terminal Classic were collected at LECR-Corozo.

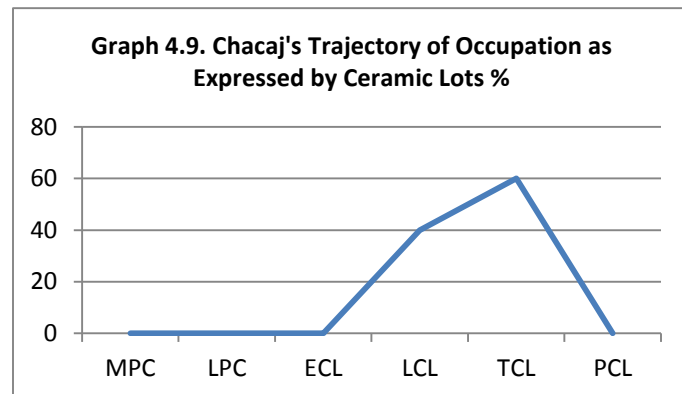
4.4.5. LECR-Chacaj

The low-end commoner residential unit (LECR) Chacaj (Fig. 4.4) is located at about 740m away from the civic center, and at about 150m to the north from the northeast corner of the Maler Group (Fig.2.2). It is rather small residential units, so far represented by three low rectangular

mounds delimiting the north, east, and south sides of one single patio (N11-1, 2, and 3). The excavations revealed these mounds correspond to low stone platforms over which more perishable constructions must have existed. No *chultun* has been located in this patio.

The stratigraphic sequence observed through the excavations is rather short and suggest a single construction phase (at least for the recorded masonry features). However, the ceramic collections indicate a Late to Terminal Classic occupation. About 50% (n=1926) of sherds have been dated to the Late Classic, however this corresponds to 40% (n=6) of dated ceramic lots. The Terminal Classic is represented by about 49% (n=1904) of sherds and 60% (n=9) of ceramic lots. A few sherds from stylistically dated to the Late Preclassic were collected, but no ceramic lot was dated to this period.

Period	Sherd	Sherd	Lot	Lot
	#	%	#	%
PCL	0	0	0	0
TCL	1904	49	9	60
LCL	1926	50	6	40
ECL	0	0	0	0
LPC	0	0	0	0
MPC	0	0	0	0



The Terminal Classic ceramic collection from this residential unit includes fragments from 4 different classes, 10 groups, and 17 types. Ceramics from the classes *Puux Rojo* and *Temax Burdo* make up for less than 1% (n=4) of Terminal Classic sherds from LECR-Chacaj. As it is the case in other residential units, most ceramics belong to the classes *Peten Lustroso* and *Uaxactun*

Sin Engobe. About 56% (n=1073) of sherds belong have been classified to the first class, while a 43% (n=824) to the second.

For the same time period, the lithic collection from LECR-Chacaj includes a 94% (n=105) of flaked chert tools, and 5.4% of obsidian artifacts. This proportion of obsidian is not very different from that of other residential units, but despite the rather modest size of this residential unit, it is higher than that of the royal and noble palaces.

4.4.6. LECR-Pacaya:

The low-end commoner residential unit (LECR) Pacaya (Fig. 4.4) is located about 100m to the west of the westernmost pyramid at the civic center (Str. 116) and the noble palace (West Group) (Fig.2.2). It consists of at least three very low mounds (around 50cm in height) that corresponded to low masonry platforms, and one *chultun*. Two rectangular mounds limit the west (Str. 14K-1) and east (Str. 14K-2) sides of a small patio, apparently open on its north and south sides. The third mound (Str. 14K-3) is located at about 8m to the south of the west platform (Str. 14K-1). The *chultun* is located in the patio, midway between the two rectangular mounds.

Excavations have demonstrated that these mounds correspond to platforms of only one or two stone rows, and it is assumed that perishable constructions existed over these low platforms. Nevertheless, extensive excavations would be necessary to further support such assumption.

This is the smallest residential unit that has been excavated at Yaxha. The depth of the excavations was rather small.

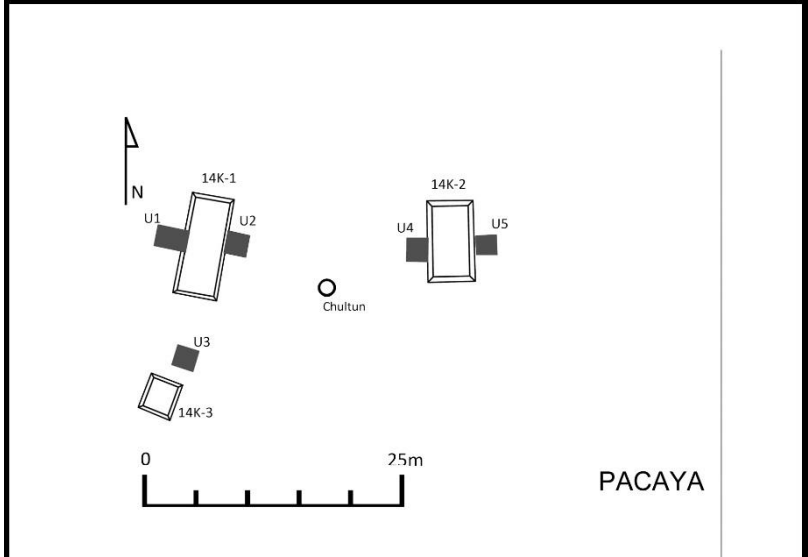
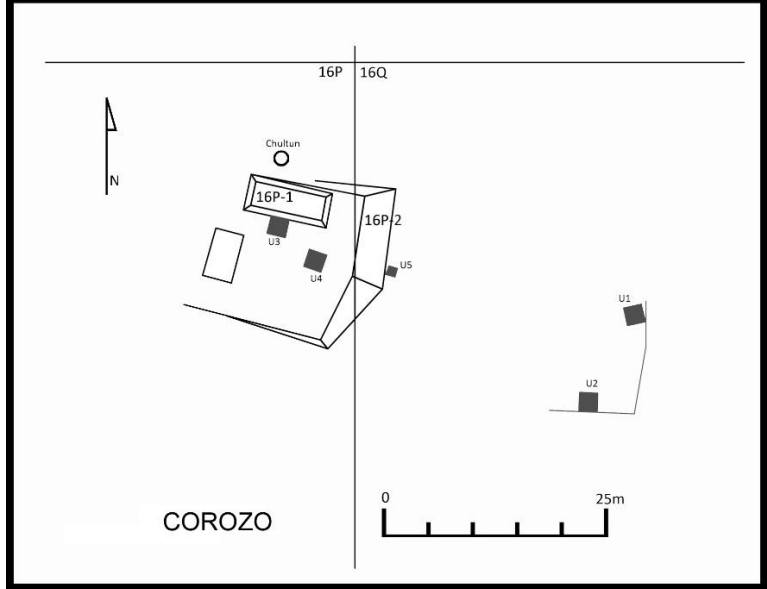
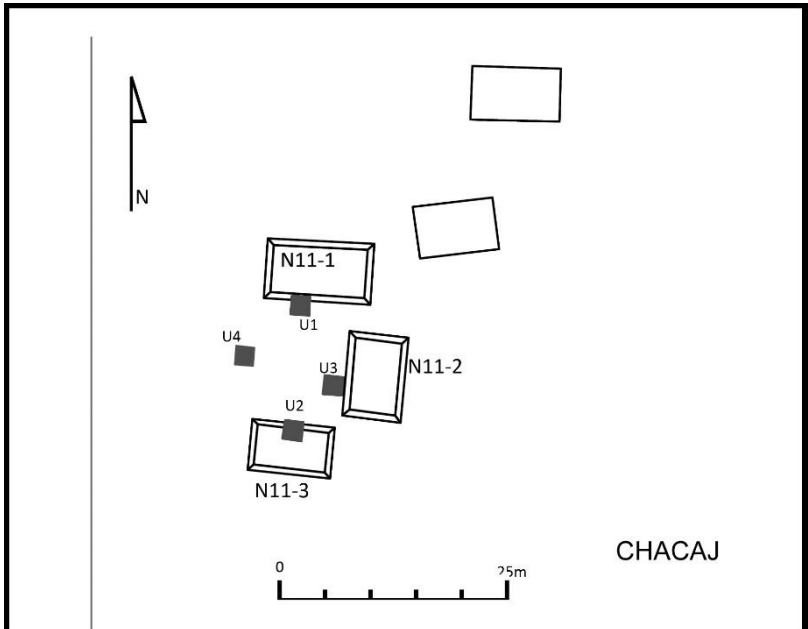
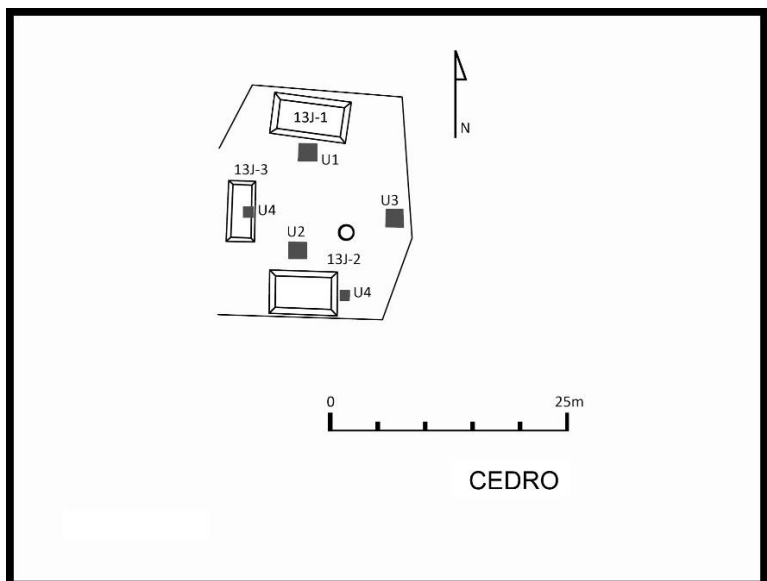
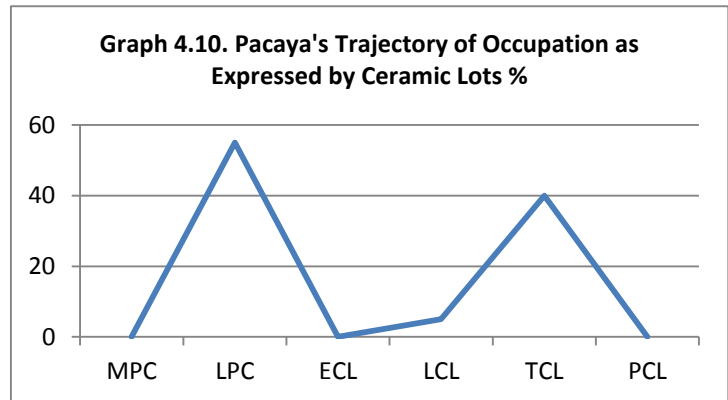


Fig. 4.4. Low-End Commoner Residences: Cedro, Corozo, Chacaj, and Pacaya.

The ceramic collections from this residential unit indicate the area was first occupied by the Late Preclassic. 62% (n=627) of sherds and 55% (n=11) of ceramic lots from this LECR-Pacaya has been classified as Late Preclassic, but no construction has been identified. No Early Classic ceramics have been found so far at LECR-Pacaya; while a low 4% (n=43) of sherds and 5% (n=1) of ceramic lots have been dated to the Late Classic. So far, it seems more likely the recorded constructions at this residential unit were built during the Terminal Classic. 21% (n=211) of sherds, corresponding to 40% (n=8) of ceramic lots, were dated to the Terminal Classic.

Period	Sherd		Lot	
	#	%	#	%
PCL	0	0	0	0
TCL	211	21	8	40
LCL	43	4	1	5
ECL	0	0	0	0
LPC	627	62	11	55
MPC	0	0	0	0



The Terminal Classic ceramic collection from LECR-Pacaya includes ceramics from five different classes and six groups, among which eight different types have been identified. 71% (n=150) of the identified ceramics are type *Tinaja Rojo* from the *Peten Lustroso* Class; while 19% (n=40) have been identified as *Cambio sin Engobe* from the *Uaxactun sin Engobe* Class. Other more scantily represented classes include *Naranja Fino* (n=9), *Puux Rojo* (n=2), and *Ceniza Engobe Rojo* (n=10). With this composition, this ceramic sample is the typologically most diverse sample

collected in all investigated residential units. The most frequent ceramic types, however, are the same as in those other residential units.

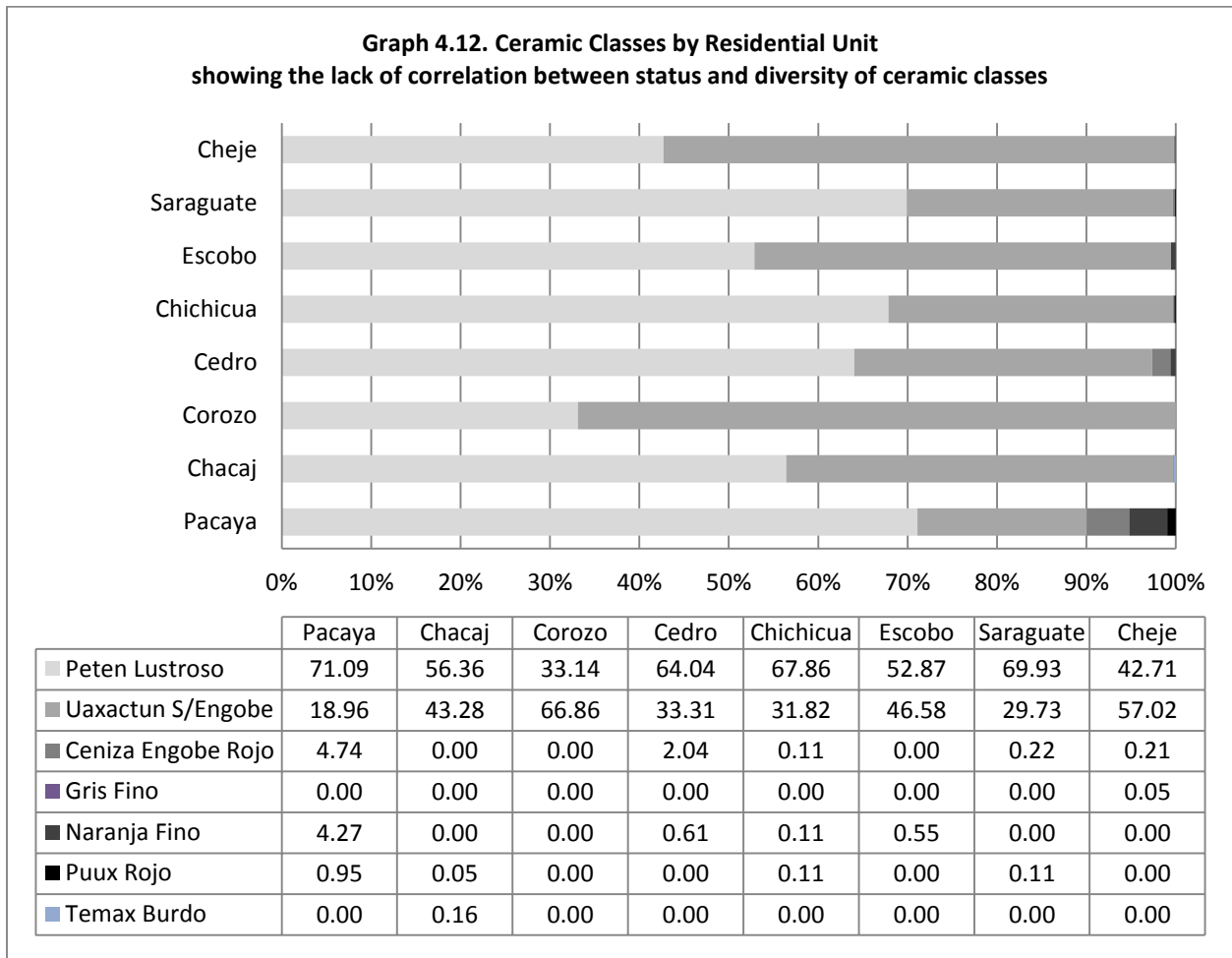
Similarly to other investigated residential units, about 85% (n=11) of LECR-Pacaya's Terminal Classic lithic sample corresponds to flaked chert tools. The rest is composed of polished tools made out of chert or other kinds of local stone. No obsidian artifacts were dated to this period in this residential unit. However, the sample is admittedly small.

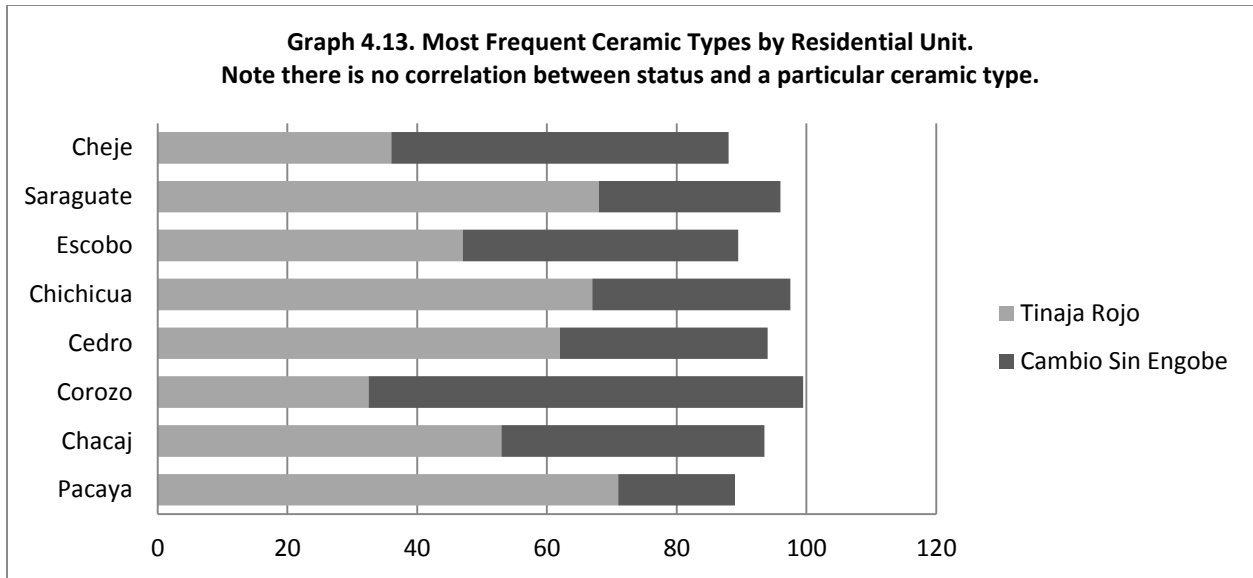
4.5. SUMMARY: TERMINAL CLASSIC HOUSEHOLD STATUS DIFFERENTIATION

In this study, I have used the construction volume and the presence/absence of vaulted roofs in the different investigated residential units as indicators of status. The labor and resources invested in these constructions is highly relevant because they entail a measurement of socioeconomic power, and possibly political power as well (Abrams 1994:7).

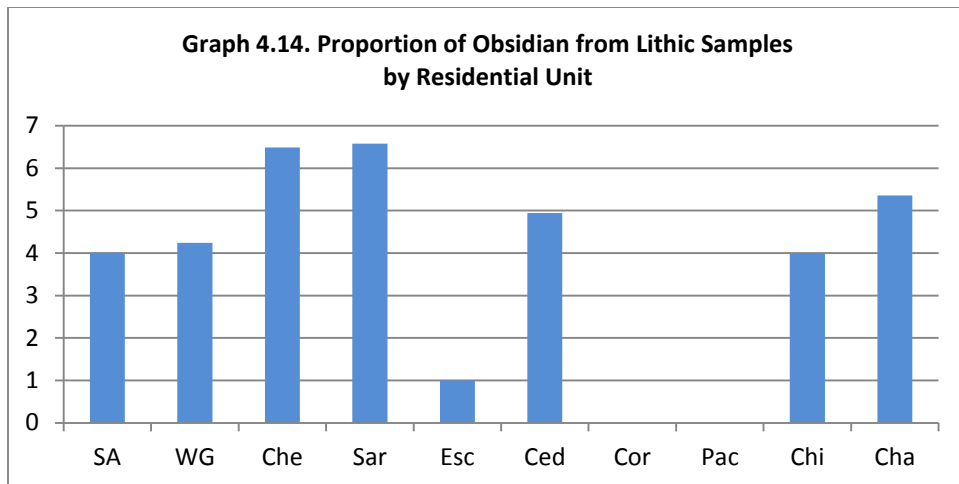
The discussion is limited to the Terminal Classic period, when all of the investigated residential units were constructed and/or occupied. By this period at Yaxha, notable differences of status are indicated by the architectural features. However, little differentiation is observed in the artifact collections. As shown in Table 4.10, ceramic collections from the different investigated residential units are rather similar. There are two ceramic classes dominating all samples: *Peten Lustroso* and *Uaxactun Sin Engobe*. Contrary to the expectation of more diverse ceramic classes in higher status residential units, the greater diversity was located in the lower status one. There is no detected correlation between status and recognized ceramic classes

(Graph 4.12). Even more, there are two ceramic types that dominate the samples from all residential units. Although there are some differences between the proportions of the two types in each residential unit, there is no discernible correlation between such differences and status (Graph 4.13).





For exploring the possibility of higher-rank households having greater access to foreign luxuries, jade and obsidian are the materials under consideration. Jade was found only in the residential units of higher rank: Cheje and Saraguata. Obsidian, on the other hand, has been collected in most of the residential units (Graph 4.14). Even more, the proportion of obsidian among the lithic samples from each residential unit is somewhat variable. Although the differences are not relevantly statistically significant, the observation here is that higher status residential units do not necessarily possessed higher proportions of obsidian. In fact, the residential units where no obsidian was collected are not the lower-rank ones. Therefore, the presence of obsidian cannot be defined as a sensitive marker of status in this case.



Again, the most useful marker of status in this case is the construction volume and the presence/absence of vaulted roofs. These architectural characteristics are sensitive indicators of status because they reflect construction costs that in a comparative study like this one can be related to rank and status. Ceramics and lithic collections at Terminal Classic Yaxha's residential units have not provided clear indicators of status. Nevertheless, the architectural distinctions are clear enough for the purposes of this dissertation.

5. ARCHITECTURAL LAYOUT AND SYMBOLISM

As indicated in the first chapter, ancient Maya cosmology implied a multilayered universe in which human realm was but one layer. This realm was understood as a quadripartite space which informed certain concepts of symbolic directionality often expressed in the architectural layout of built spaces and certain artistic expressions (Ashmore 1989:272-286, 1991:200-2001; Astor-Aguilera 2010; Coe 1965; Coggins 1980, 1982; Schele and Mathews 1998:36-37). The four cardinal directions and the central axis, with their astronomical associations and subsequent cosmological meanings, were recurrently marked by architectural features. At Yaxha monumental compounds such as the “E-Groups,” the “Twin Pyramid Complex,” and the “Triadic Acropolises” (Fig. 5.1) celebrate directionality in ways that have been identified recurrently at other ancient Maya polities like Tikal, Copan, Uaxactun, and many more (see Chapter 3). Furthermore, the distribution of these and other monumental compounds around Yaxha’s Central Zone suggests an intentional delineation of both a north-south and an east-west axis (see Chapter 3).

These principles are an integral part of the royal dynastic cosmology that is under examination in this dissertation. The main question addressed in this chapter is about how other people, nobles and commoners, related to this highly symbolic practice of building microcosms. Discerning among the three different strategies that these people might have used (engagement,

resistance, or compliance) as discussed in Chapter 1, I argue that while nobles and high-end commoners at Terminal Classic Yaxha were engaged with this practice, low-end commoners were rather resistant to it. Representing the ruling dynastic cosmology, the royal palace was built as an integral part of the cosmogram that is represented by the civic center of the city; while representing in itself a microcosm. In their own scale, the noble palace and the high-end commoner residential units were built following similar prescriptions (Fig. 5.2). The low-end commoner residential units, in contrast, do not emphasize the same symbolic principles in their architectural layout.

The incorporation of cosmological concepts in cities' layout is usually associated with leaders' political strategies (Ashomre 1989:272-273, 1992: 173-184) (see also Chapter 3). The combination of monumentality with cosmology is assumed to be a profitable source of political power and legitimation of such power, using the built landscape to reinforce authority. This is also assumed to have been a widely used strategy during Classic times, when the cosmological templates are more strongly centered in the ruler (Ashmore 1989:279; Coggins 1980:730). For example, the so-called Twin-Pyramid Complexes (Fig. 5.1) celebrate the east and the west as the sun's pathway, and the north and south as representations of the sky and the underworld (Harrison 1999:181). At Tikal, a stela bearing the image of the king is located in the interior of the northern construction, symbolically placing him in the sky. As discussed in Chapter 3, these patterns apply to Yaxha as well.

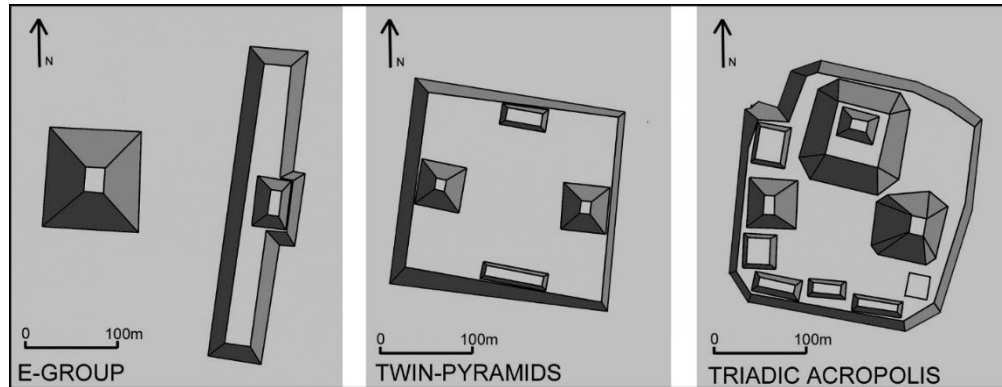


Fig. 5.1. Examples of monumental compounds celebrating directionality at Yaxha.

As directional aspects have been identified in the design of monumental centers around the Maya Lowlands, they have also been observed at smaller scale (Becker 2004). The basic ancient Maya residential unit is centered in an open space or “patio” defined by two or more constructions delimiting its sides. Such basic layout was used in ancient times regardless of socioeconomic status. Multi-patio residential units are common, but they all follow the same basic layout. Within these patios, different constructions had different functions, and in some cases different symbolic connotations. For example, a well-known pattern in the Peten area is the so-called Plaza-Plan 2 (PP2) after Marshall Becker (1999, 2004) classification of “plazas” (and patios) at Tikal. This PP2 pattern is defined by the presence of an “altar” or “shrine” in the east side of the patio house-group. Aside from ritual connotations, such specialized construction has been also related to “distinguish” funerary activity. Within our understanding of ancient Maya cosmology, the east is a direction of great symbolic content due to the association with the rising sun (Aveni and Hartung 1986:59; Coggins 1980:729). Other symbolically charged house-groups’ layouts are possible, like the one with a specialized ritual construction in the center of the patio. This pattern was identified by Becker at Tikal as Plaza-Plan-4 (PP4) (Becker 1982:119).

The cosmological templates that have been observed in Yaxha's residential units are: 1. Emphasis on central axes, which is expressed in Yaxha's civic center by Central E-Group's pyramid, and also by the ritual constructions in the royal and noble palaces. 2. Emphasis on the east side of a compound as a position of symbolic honor, as represented in Yaxha's civic center by the pyramid in the East Acropolis, and in high-end commoner residences by the location of their ritual constructions (Fig. 5.2).

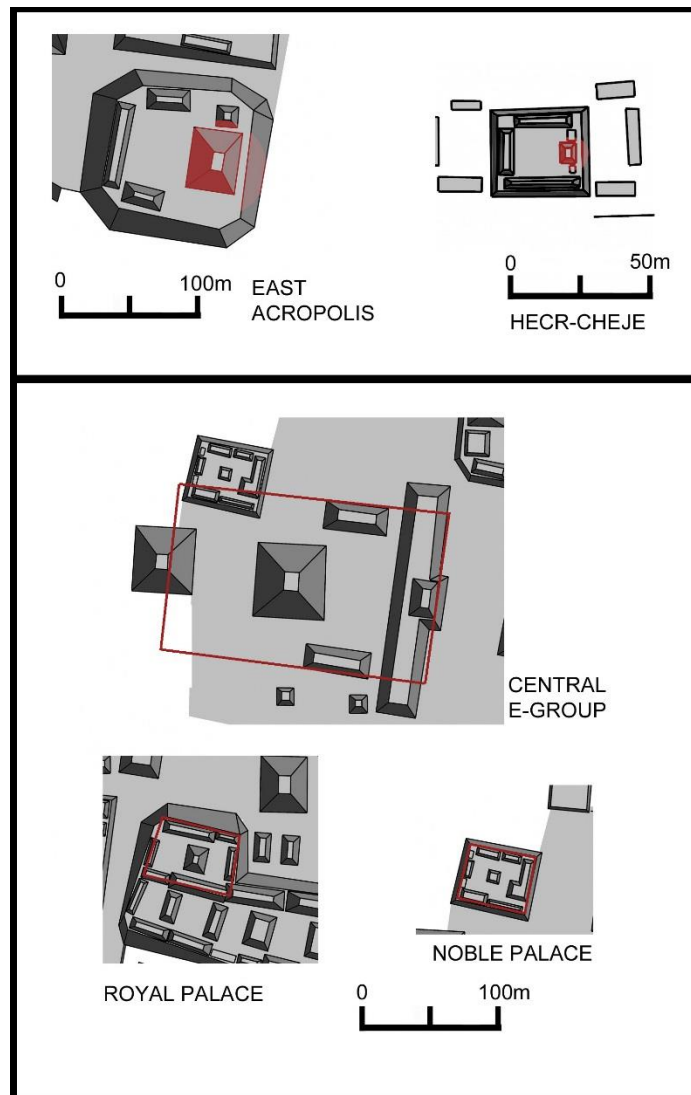


Fig. 5.2. Symbolic layouts emphasizing the east (East Acropolis and High-end Commoner Residential Unit Cheje) and center (E-Group, Royal and Noble Palaces).

5.1. THE ROYAL PALACE: SOUTH ACROPOLIS

Being the most prominent residential unit at Yaxha, the royal palace is clearly located in a very significant position within the settlement. It limits the south side of a plaza, also delimited to the west by the Central “E-Group”, to the north by the North Acropolis, and to the east by the Northeast Acropolis, monumental Structures 128 to 131, and the two ballgame courts. Although the evolution of all these monumental constructions is not yet entirely clear, there seem to be enough evidence to argue for this area to be the epicenter of the settlement. So far, it has been here where the earliest traces of occupation and construction have been identified. The distribution of all these elements most certainly followed Maya cosmological principles of directionality (Ashmore 1992; Ashmore and Sabloff 2002), presenting some similarities with the distribution of elements in Tikal’s Main Plaza, where the royal palace – the Central Acropolis – is also located on the south side, facing the North Acropolis with its Triadic Complex. In addition, as in Tikal, the ballgame courts at Yaxha are located on the east side of the Plaza, in between north and south acropolises, with a north-south orientation that has been symbolically linked with the vertical axis of the world (Ashmore and Sabloff 2002:202).

While the east and west were celebrated in representation of the sunrise and sunset, the north and south represented the mid-points in its daily path. North and south then represented a vertical axis in which north was up, the midday sun in heaven, and south was down, the midnight sun in his path through the underworld (Coggins 1980). In the general template of Yaxha’s civic center, the North Acropolis and its massive northern pyramid represents the sky

and the daily sun, while the private royal palace represents the underworld and the night sun. As the sun, the ruler traveled through the underworld at night.

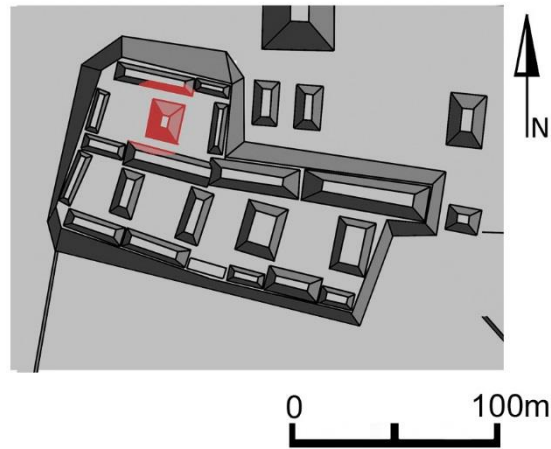


Fig. 5.3. Yaxha's Royal Palace, ritual construction in center of northwest patio.

Within Yaxha's royal palace (Fig. 5.3), pyramid Str. 363 was most certainly dedicated to ritual functions. It is a temple pyramid located in the center of a patio in the northwest corner of the royal palace. A stela was located in front of its western façade (Hellmuth 1970). However, the characteristics of that monument are presently unknown. Although this construction was apparently facing west, it is also aligned with Str. 142, the central pyramid of the North Acropolis. It is most likely that there was a direct view from the tops of one to the other.

Marshal Becker (1982:119) classified this template of a central altar or shrine in residential units. He thought the pattern to be related somehow with Teotihuacan style as it has been found there too. This observation supports the idea that Yaxha's Terminal Classic royalty might have been still using foreign Teotihuacan symbols to distance themselves from the local population as suggested by Andrea Stone's (1989) connection/disconnection model (see Chapter

3). This model suggested that rulers across the Classic Maya Lowlands used symbols from the distant Teotihuacan as a source of prestige, emphasizing their distinction from the local population. As indicated in Chapter 3, evidence supporting this model at Yaxha is found in Stela 11 (Fig. 3.4). It is located in front of the East Acropolis and depicts a character attired in Teotihuacan warfare style.

5.2. THE NOBLE PALACE: WEST GROUP

As described in Chapter 4, the noble palace includes at least ten constructions surrounding a rectangular patio. The mounds formed by these constructions' remains surround the patio completely, interrupted only in the southeastern corner, where access to the compound is located. Additionally, a ritual construction is located on the center of this patio (Fig. 5.4). It is a small square platform of about 4.5m by side and about 1.5m in height. It has a full-façade stairway in its west side. Three very low additional platforms are attached to this central one. This three additional platforms flank its south, west, and north sides, almost forming a cross – although it is unclear if there was another of this low features in the east side. Hellmuth (1971a:2) reported the presence of a looted burial chamber under this construction, as well as a noteworthy amount of ash and fragmented artifacts that account for a ritual deposit (See Chapters 7 and 8).

This template greatly resembles the one in the royal palace and the general template from the Central E-Group. This similarity suggests a close connection of the noble inhabitants of

this house with the cosmology expressed in the royal palace and the civic center. This supports the hypothesis that nobles were the closer supporters of the dynastic cosmology of royalty. Even more, if the central altars were reminiscent of Teotihuacan style as indicated in the previous discussion about the royal palace, the nobility from this West Group used the same strategy as royals as a form of distinction from the lower ranks.

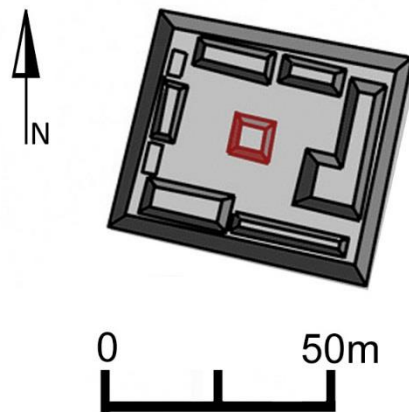


Fig. 5.4. Noble Palace (West Group) with central ritual construction highlighted.

5.3. HIGH-END COMMONER RESIDENTIAL UNITS: CHEJE AND SARAGUATE

As described in chapter 4, the construction investments from the residences identified as Cheje and Saraguata signal them as higher-end commoners. The first is located to the west of the civic center, while the second is located to the east (Fig. 1.3). They both possess a specialized ritual construction to the east of their respective patios (Fig. 5.5). This template is consistent with M. Becker's (2004) PP2 from Tikal (see introduction to this same chapter). This template relates to

the symbolism of the east as a position of honor, which is associated with the rising sun as symbol of rebirth/life (Coggins 1980). It is a widely recognized, although not universal, template for residential units across the Southern Maya Lowlands for Classic times. Ritual constructions on the east served also as burial places for distinguished members of the household (Becker 2004:129). No excavations were conducted directly beneath these ritual constructions at Yaxha (see Chapter 2 for methodology). Therefore, no burials in such locations were found. However, two burials were excavated in front of the ritual construction in HECR-Saraguate (see Chapter 7); while traces of ritual termination were found in relation to the one in HECR-Cheje (see Chapter 8).

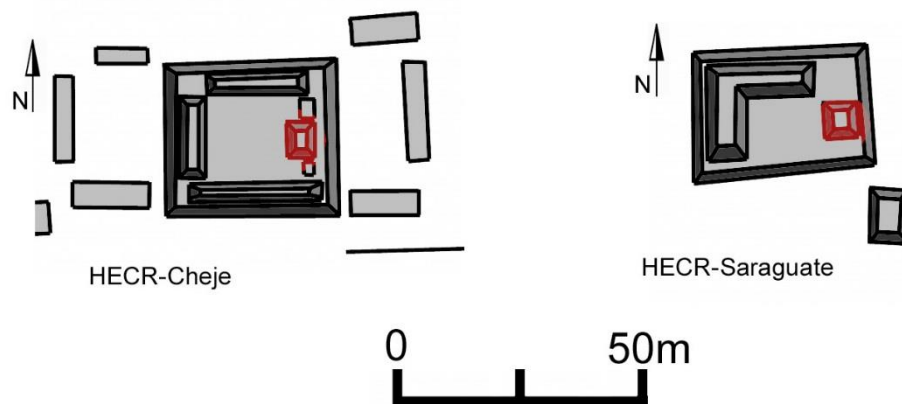


Fig. 5.5. High-End Commoner Residential Units with ritual constructions highlighted.

In both residential units, the ritual constructions are located in a central position at the open east side of the patio and distinguish themselves from all other construction by their pyramidal shape. In this way, high-end commoner residential units Saraguate and Cheje do not follow the same template as the royal and noble palaces. Nevertheless, they follow a template

widely recognized in the Classic Maya lowlands and even more relevantly here, recognized in other monumental compounds from Yaxha's civic center, like the East Acropolis (Fig. 5.2). Despite the use of a different template from the palaces', I interpret this pattern a form of engagement with the dynastic cosmology. High-end commoners might have not been positioning their domestic rituals in the center of their built microcosm, but they used a template that is also used by royalty. In fact, the comparable eastern temple-pyramid from the East Acropolis was the burial place of a king (see Chapter 7). There clearly is a differentiation between the upper tier of royals and nobles and that of high-end commoners in this regard, but they were not necessarily resisting the cosmology expressed in the civic center's templates. They were not passively complying either. Instead, the ritual constructions in their residences make a strong cosmological statement, suggesting they were rather actively engaged with it.

5.4. LOW-END COMMONER RESIDENTIAL UNITS:

ESCOBO, CHICHICUA, CEDRO, COROZO, CHACAJ, AND PACAYA

As described in Chapter 4, these six residential units were classified as low-end commoner because of their architectural characteristics. This is particularly their relatively small construction volume in comparison to royal, noble, and high-end commoner residences; and the lack of masonry vaulted roofs (which also precludes masonry walls). They all vary in size, layout, and location. However, with only one possible exception, they all have in common the absence of a specialized ritual construction in any of their patios (Fig. 5.6). No central constructions have

been found. Both LECR-Pacaya and LECR-Chacaj have eastern constructions, but they are low rectangular platforms similar to the others in the same house-groups. They do not present the characteristics that suggest a specialized ritual function.

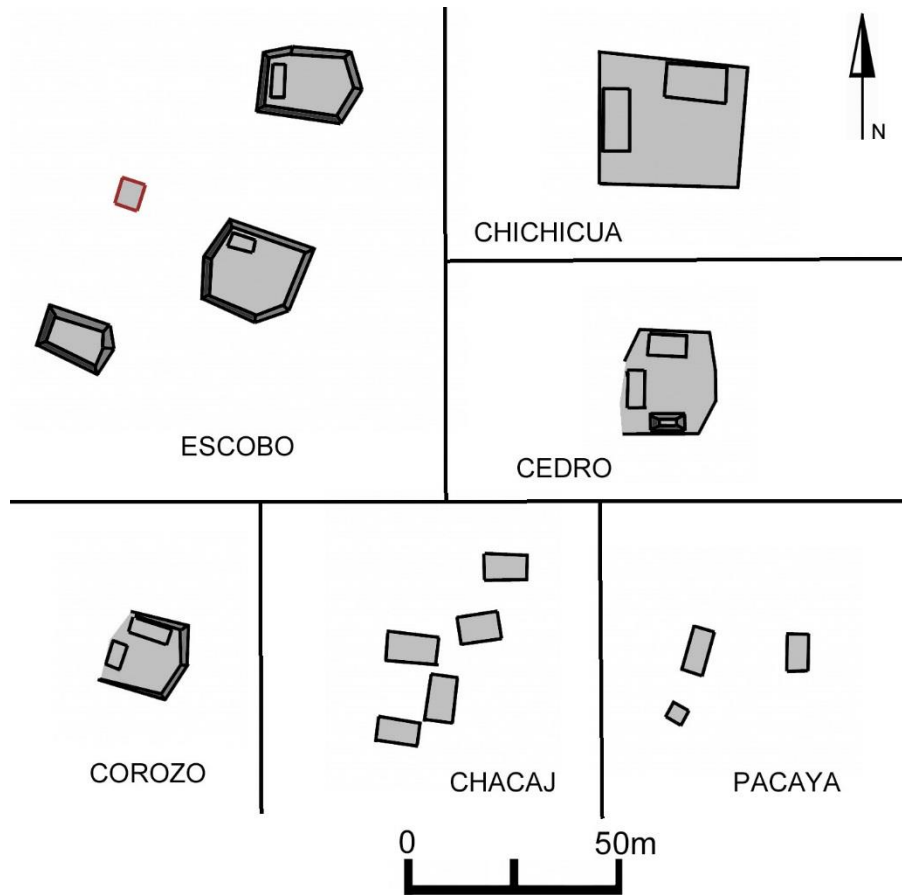


Fig. 5.6. Low-End Commoner Residential Units. The only possible ritual construction was identified in Escobo, the other units do not have specialized ritual constructions.

The only possible exception to possessing a specialized ritual construction was found in LECR-Escobo. Here, a small square platform was located to the west of the other three platforms that form the residential unit. This small platform not only distinguishes from the other three by its size, but also by the presence of three big roughly round stones lined on its eastern façade.

Such rocks are very different to those used in the construction of the other platforms. Unfortunately, the excavations around the little platform did not yielded any traces of ritual activity and its identification as ritual construction remains rather hypothetical. In any case, if it were in fact ritual, it would be located using a very different template than that from the dynastic cosmology of the royalty and nobility.

In addition, it is also relevant to note that none of the patios in these residential units are totally surrounded by constructions. Instead, each patio is open at least on one side or in some cases in two sides. No regularities to the open side have been found. If perishable constructions existed in these empty spaces is not known at present, but even if that was the case, there is no regularity in the known features at these house-groups, making it very unlikely for them to have follow a same pattern on the location of possible perishable ritual constructions or specialized ritual activity areas.

The residential units from the western side of the settlement, Cedro, Chichicua, and Pacaya, all have a *chultun* roughly in the center of the patio. Because burials and traces of ritual activity have been found in *chultunes* elsewhere around the site (Calderon and Hermes 2005), there is a possibility that this artificial subterranean chambers might have had a special religious connotations for the inhabitants of these house-groups. Nevertheless, no research at this *chultunes* has been attempted yet. *Chultunes* were also located at Corozo and Escobo, but they are in both cases to the north of the patio-group and not in the center.

Taken altogether, I interpret the evidence from the low-end commoner residential units as a form of resistance to the dynastic cosmology. As it is further discussed in the following chapters, commoners at Yaxha seem to have enjoyed enough independence to carry out the

ritual activities of their choice in their own residences. However, they chose not to use the same architectural templates that higher ranks used in their own residences. It is a form of rejection. However, in most cases it is not a challenging form of resistance. It is more of a passive form of resistance, perhaps overlapping with passive compliance.

Only one case, LECR-Escobo, provided suggestion of more concrete resistance. If its western construction is in fact an altar or shrine, then a more active rejection of the symbolism of the dynastic cosmology can be argued.

5.5. SUMMARY: ARCHITECTURAL LAYOUT ACROSS THE DIFFERENT SOCIAL RANKS

In sum, the royal palace was well integrated in the symbolic architectural layout of Yaxha's civic center. While its own layout followed a particular symbolic prescription. Ritual action in the royal palace was placed symbolically in an axis, in the center of a microcosm. The same layout was used in the investigated noble palace. Nobles inhabiting this compound were clearly actively engaged with the symbolism conveyed in this particular layout.

High-end commoners used a different layout. This could signal disagreement with the symbols of the royal dynastic cosmology. However, the layout used by high-end commoners (PP2) is also used in other monumental compounds in Yaxha's civic center. In such sense, people in this category were actively engaged with certain aspect of the royal dynastic cosmology. At least as far as it is expressed in the symbolic architectural layouts.

In contrast, low-end commoners were either only compliant or resistant to this symbolism expressed with architecture. They did not use it in their residences, neither the layout used in the palaces nor the one used by high-end commoners. Only one residential unit has provided tentative evidence of resistance. In this residence (LECR-Escobo), the symbolism of the west is emphasized by the presence of a possible ritual construction to the west of other construction in the residential unit. This contrast with the emphasis on the center and the east from the higher rank residences.

6. RITUAL FEASTING

Food and drink were essential components of ancient Maya rituals. Iconographic and epigraphic evidence (Houston et al 1989; Taube 1989), along with ethnohistoric and ethnographical (e.g. Monaghan 2000; Staller 2010) sources support this notion. Relatively recent studies have made relevant advances about the archaeological identification of the ritual uses of food, including feasting (LeCount 2001; Hendon 2002; see also Bray 2002 and Staller and Carrasco 2010). Food and the action of eating seem to have been of pivotal importance for ancient Mesoamerican cosmology, with corn as the central staple both in material and immaterial terms (Stross 2006; Taube 1989). As a pre-industrial agricultural society, food production was a primary social concern for the Maya and the main topic of religious celebrations. Food had a prominent place within what was religiously “offered” and sacrificed (see also Chapter 8); while consumption of both food and drink was most likely a common activity during family and/or community wide religious celebrations. However, it remains unclear if every household, regardless of socioeconomic status would have been hosting ritual feasts or if to the contrary, it was by the Late and Terminal Classic a prerogative of only the wealthy and politically powerful.

In Gary Gossen’s ethnographic model of postures that Chiapas’ indigenous communities hold towards the Mexican state, communal ritual activities are the means through which people express and reinforce such postures (Gossen 2004; see in Chapter 1). Similarly, ritual feasting

could have provided such an occasion in pre-Columbian times. Continuing with the objective of discerning whether people at Yaxha were actively engaged, resistant, or passively compliant to the ruling dynastic cosmology, this chapter examines the evidence for ritual feasting. Hypothetically, people actively engaged with the ruling dynastic cosmology would have been celebrating ritual feasts in the same ways than royals would do. They would use for example, similar serving wares. People resisting what feasting represented for the dynastic cosmology, would either have held their feasting in a very different way, for example using very different serving ware, or would not have held feasts at all. The definition of compliance in this case might be trickier. In such case, people could have held ritual feasts using some of the elements used in the royal feasts but not all of them. By the beginning of this research, it was expected to find iconography or other stylistic attributes in the ceramic collections to help discern between these interpretations. However, the Terminal Classic ceramic collections from Yaxha did not provide this kind of stylistic evidence.

So, discerning between the three hypothetical attitudes/strategies from the perspective of ritual feasting has proven to be very challenging. Nevertheless, as I explain in this chapter, the consideration of ritual feasting has been telling about a general lack of distinction in the ceramic wares of high-end and low-end commoners. All commoners, regardless of status, were similarly equipped if it was in fact the case that they were hosting ritual feasts. I interpret this as a unity of behavior that does not suggest any form of disagreement between these two categories of people. A limiting aspect for the analysis, however, is that the royal and noble categories could not be included in the analysis at Yaxha because the necessary data was not available by the time of this study.

As I further explain in the next section, ceramic collections provided the basis for the analysis at Yaxha. The variables that I took into account were ceramic shape, decorative attributes, and size. I was able to gather this information from my own excavations at commoner residential units, but not from the excavations at the royal and noble palaces conducted by other projects (see Chapter 2). Nevertheless, although no comparative information from Yaxha's higher ranks is available, other studies from around the Classic Maya Lowlands do suggest feasting was indeed part of courtly life (Houston et al 2006:127-130). I discuss this topic in a section on 'royal and noble feasting' below. First, some relevant background discussion about food and feasting in the Classic Maya Lowlands is presented below.

6.1. ANCIENT CUISINE AND THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF FEASTING

Corn tamales, *atole*, and cacao drinks are the feasting foodstuffs most usually recognized by scholars in the Maya area (Houston et al 1989; Joyce and Henderson 2010b; LeCount 2001; Taube 1989). Nevertheless, these are only some foodstuffs within a more varied repertoire of dishes and drinks that the ancient Maya could have served at social gatherings. Aside from the usually mentioned corn, beans, squashes, and chili peppers, there was a wider variety of resources that people might have consumed. A variety of vegetables, fruits, meat, fish, mollusks, seeds, herbs, and spices must have been certainly available. Although by now it is impossible to get closer to Classic cuisine, Fray Diego de Landa's descriptions of everyday life in Yucatan by the 16th century includes diverse dishes, like stews and 'breads'; along with different drinks, including cold and

hot beverages and alcoholic drinks as well (Landa 1994:115-116). Although some dishes and drinks might have pertain more to ritual feasts than to everyday meals, it seems more likely that feast and everyday foods were not entirely separated categories. As discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, there is ample reason to believe that ritual actions were somehow parallel to social conventions. This is, non-human or divine entities were believed to behave like humans and participated in ritual events in similar ways that humans did.

In any case, the archaeological identification of feasting does not depend entirely on the knowledge of the ancient cuisine *per se*. It can be interpreted from the material remains of cooking and serving utensils. It can potentially be interpreted from animal remains and traces of other foodstuffs, and even chemical traces (as suggested by Dahlin et al 2010). However, these last lines of evidence were not available at Yaxha. No traces of foods were collected and no chemical analysis conducted. Therefore, the interpretations must rely solely on ceramic collections. The attributes that are used in this analysis are: 1. Ceramic shapes in combination with surface treatment/decoration (cooking vs. serving wares), and 2. Ceramic shapes in combination with mean vessel size.

Feast hosting implies, among other things, food/drink preparation and food/drink serving. The cooking process in the Maya area implied grinding, boiling, and toasting, as well as soaking and drying. Serving would have implied the serving of both dry and liquid foodstuffs, the last ones involving both pouring and holding for consumption. As it is explained in the following paragraphs, these actions can be correlated with the shapes of the vessels that people used.

The Terminal Classic inhabitants of Yaxha used four basic ceramic vessels in their houses: Jars/pots, bowls, plates, and cylinders (Fig. 6.1). Jars and pots are globular vessels with a

restricted neck and everted lip. The distinction between the two kinds of vessel, jar or pot, might lie on the length of the neck. However, in this sample the distinction was problematic, and both are subsumed in a single category of “jars”. Most of these vessels would have been used for cooking and storing; but some, perhaps of smaller and handier size, would have been used for serving beverages.

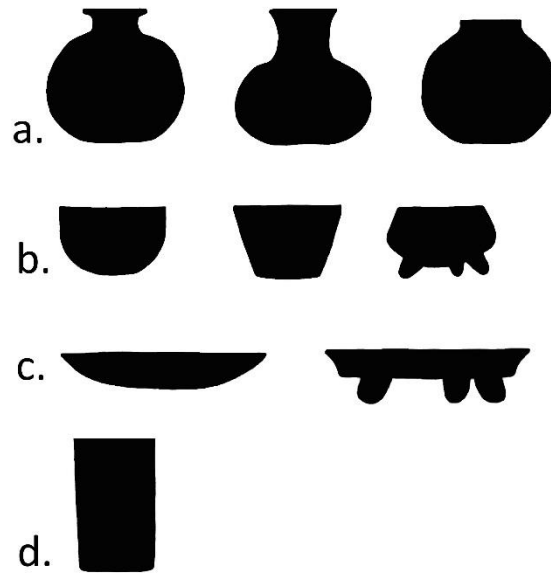


Fig. 6.1. Examples of conventional ceramic shapes at Yaxha, a. pot/jar, b. bowl, c. plate, d. cylinder (vase) (drawing by L. Gamez).

Bowls are containers of similar height and width. There are globular and semi-globular bowls and others with flat bases and straight-everted walls. Some of these bowls might have well been used as drinking vessels, but also could have been serving vessels for soups and stews for example. Even more, some bowls of considerable size might have served for the serving foods but not necessarily for direct consumption from them but for food presentation. The same bowls, however, could have served as cooking vessels or as containers used during the preparation of

food. The distinction in between cooking and serving bowls might be a subtle difference in terms of surface treatment and decoration.

Plates are vessels considerably wider than high. They might include rather flat plates with no walls and plates with everted low walls. Some might have had feet. Although plates are usually recognized as serving vessels, there is also the possibility that some might have functioned as griddles (*comales*). *Comales* are nowadays used for cooking tortillas, but also for other cooking activities, like “roasting” fish and meat, and toasting spices and seeds for example. The distinction, aside from the presence or absence of feet, might be, once again, one of surface treatment and decoration.

Cylinders are as the same word implies, tubular vessels, more tall than wide, most likely with a flat base. This kind of vessel is the only one that seems unlikely to have served for cooking purposes, as it would not probably be really practical for such purposes. All around the Maya territory, this kinds of vessels are usually highly decorated, like the polychromes with epigraphic inscriptions or the Terminal Classic carved vessels (*Pabellon Modelado Tallado*). Furthermore, it is a vessel shape that has been epigraphically identified as a drinking vessel, specifically for cacao (Houston et al 1989; LeCount 2001).

Cooking could have employed pots/jars, bowls, and plates (including *comales*). Serving could have used small jars, bowls, plates, and vases. In this way, there is certain overlap between the shapes of cooking and serving vessels. However, attributes such as surface treatment and decoration might distinguish the ‘cooking ware’ from the ‘serving ware.’ Highly elaborated carved or painted serving vessels, some with hieroglyphic inscriptions, are perhaps the most recognized kind of serving vessel throughout the Maya area. Such kinds of vessels were most likely destined

for public display. Cooking ware and everyday serving ware could avoid elaborate decorations and/or not used “fancy” polished surfaces for practical reasons (Rice 1989).

In this study, I argue that shape alone, although suggestive, is not a direct indicator of vessel function, as it could have served a variety of different functions. However, shape in combination with other attributes, such as surface treatment and decoration can potentially be more telling about the distinction between cooking and everyday ware and the serving ware that could be indicative of ritual feasting. In this way, the analysis in this chapter uses a combination of ceramic shape and surface treatment/decoration to separate ‘everyday ware’ from ‘fancy ware.’ The ceramic collections from the investigated residential units are not particularly diverse in this respect. Everyday wares are represented by unslipped ceramics and fancy wares are represented by slipped red ceramics.

In addition to the analysis of vessel shape and surface treatment/decoration, the other set of attributes that was considered was vessel shape and vessel mean size. If ritual feasts involved a greater number of people than the normal household, it would necessitate higher frequencies of ceramic vessels and bigger ceramic containers than those used in regular everyday meals. In this sense, I argue that the finding of comparatively bigger cooking ware is a sensitive indicator of feasting. The analysis at Yaxha suggests that all commoner households had similar sizes of vessels. No residential units distinguishes itself from the rest for having bigger vessels (see later in this chapter).

6.2. ROYAL AND NOBLE RITUAL FEASTS

Classic Maya art sometimes depicts royalty in the action of drinking. For example, the central scene on Panel 3 from Piedras Negras, Guatemala, depicts a royal feast (Houston et al 2006:129). In this scene, the lord from Piedras Negras is drinking from a cylinder-shaped vessel, probably for cacao. He is sitting on his throne, surrounded by his court and a group of subsidiary lords. Feasts are generally assumed to have been common practices of royalty and nobility. In fact, archaeological studies in other Classic kingdoms support the hypothesis. For example, Lisa LeCount (2001:948) found that most high rank households at Xunantunich, Belize, sponsored feasts in which they consumed tamales and chocolate. Similarly, Julia Hendon (2002:220) concluded from her analysis at Copan, Honduras, that feasting was an important part of nobility's behavior and competition for political control and prestige.

These studies from other Classic Maya kingdoms suggest that Yaxha's royalty and nobility must have been holding ritual feasts as well. There is no reason to believe that Yaxha's higher ranks would behave much differently than their peers in other kingdoms. Following the initial expectations of this dissertation, material evidence of feasting in Yaxha's palaces should provide the details for comparison with those from lower ranks. However, the necessary material evidence for these palaces was not available.

As indicated in Chapter 2, this dissertation has benefited from the knowledge produced by previous research and restoration work at Yaxha, particularly from the information regarding the royal and noble palace. The wealth of information that was collected by such previous works

allowed this small-scale research project to focus its efforts on commoner residential units. Although in other respects such information is amply useful, it proved to be of no use for the study of feasting. The ceramic analysis from previous works were conducted under different objectives and although informative in other respects, it was not apt for the study at hand. Therefore, the analysis that follows focuses by necessity on the evidence from residential units of commoner people.

6.3. COMMONER RITUAL FEASTS

Hosting of ritual feasts by commoner peoples during Classic times has not been as amply supported by archaeological evidence as the feast hosting by elites. However, there is reason to believe that could have been the case. For example, Lisa LeCount (2001:948) found that higher rank commoner households at Xunantunich, Belize, held feasts similarly to the local elites. Even more, the 16th century accounts from Fray Diego de Landa describes a well established tradition of feast holding among the Maya of Yucatan (Landa 1994). Although there is no iconographic or hieroglyphic evidence from Classic times regarding commoners engaged in ritual feasts, it does not preclude the possibility that they would do so.

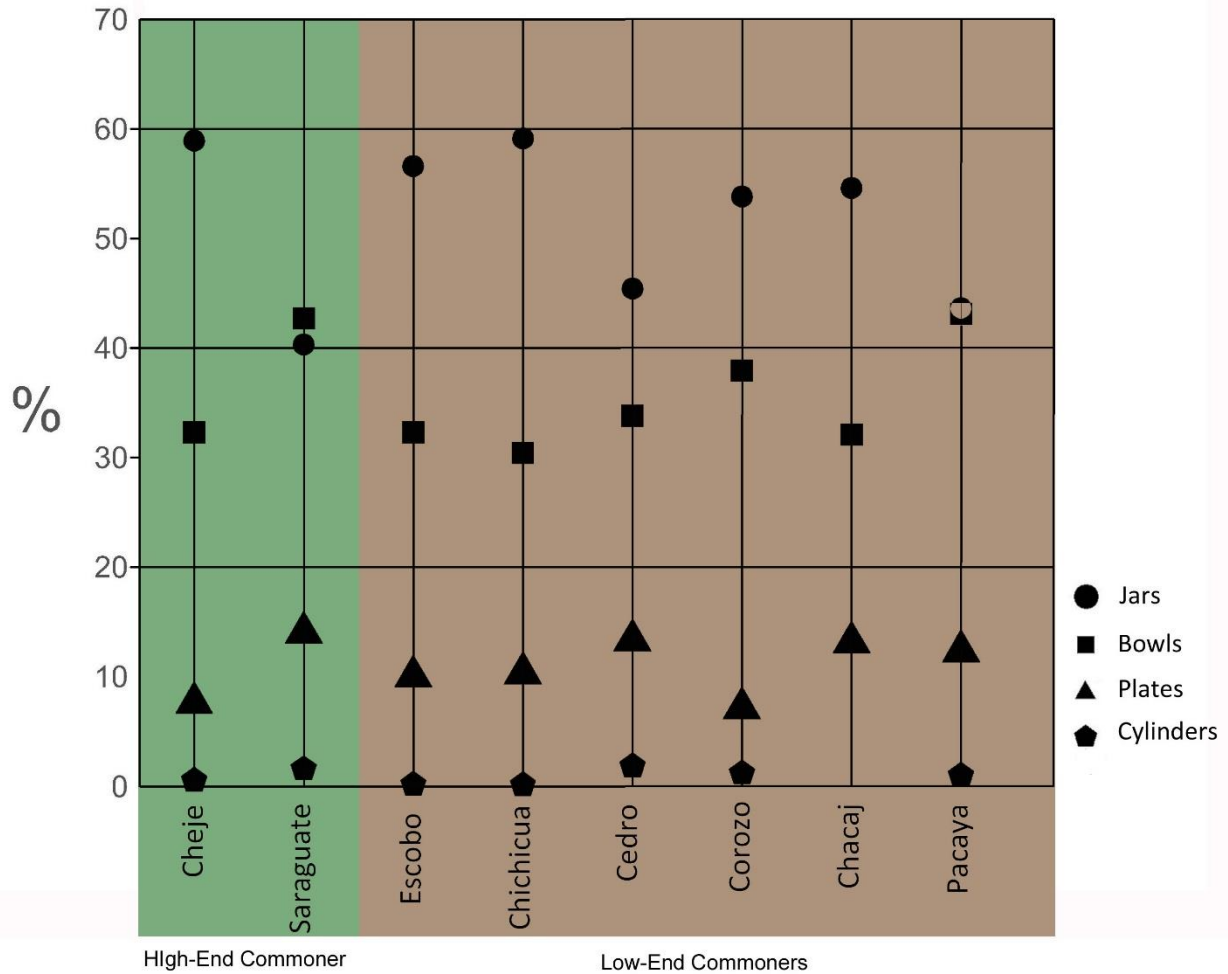
As indicated before in this chapter, ceramic evidence constitutes the basis for this study. Four basic ceramic shapes have been identified in the collections of Terminal Classic Yaxha: Jars, bowls, plates, and cylinders (Fig. 6.1). Among these, non-slipped jars, bowls, and plates (*comales*) are considered cooking ware. Finer slipped jars, bowls and plates, along with all cylinders, are

considered serving ware. Initially, the expectation was that Yaxha's ceramic collections would include a fair amount of decorated ceramics, marking not only differences of status but also differences in the uses of the different ceramic containers. However, that was not the case. The general ceramic analysis proved that ceramic samples for Terminal Classic Yaxha were highly homogeneous and undecorated. Polychromes are very rare findings, both in high- and low-end commoner residential units, while no findings of iconography on ceramic vessels were made.

The following sections in this chapter described the analysis, presenting first the data about vessels' shapes in the different investigated residential units, and then the comparisons about cooking and serving wares and vessel sizes.

6.3.1. Ceramic Containers' Shapes

Jars are the most abundant ceramic containers at Yaxha's residential units, comprising 52% (n=4670) of the classified sample (n=9002). Bowls follow with a 33% (n=2974), while plates comprise about 11.5% (n=1030) and cylinders are the most scant, representing less than 1% (n=70) of the sample. The comparison between houses shows similar results. Jars tend to be in between 40-60% of the residential units' ceramic sample, while bowls are generally within 30-40%, plates around 12% and cylinders around 1% when present (Graph 6.1). This is a rather homogeneous distribution that indicates all households, regardless of socioeconomic status, were similarly equipped in their kitchens. There is no one shape exclusively used by some peoples. To the contrary, all houses had similar proportions of the same basic ceramic containers.



Graph 6.1. Graph indicating the proportional distribution of vessels by residential unit. Residential units ordered in terms of status from higher at the left and lower at the right.

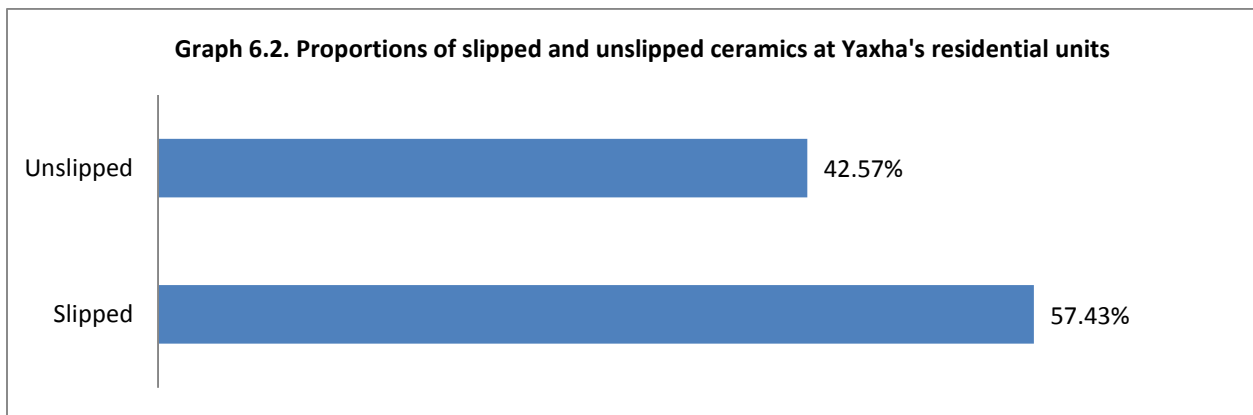
Nevertheless, within the expressed homogeneity, there are some distinctions worth further exploration. Residential units HECR-Saraguata and LECR-Pacaya's assemblages are slightly different from the rest. Bowls are somewhat more numerous than jars at HECR-Saraguata, the high-end commoner residence located to greater proximity to the civic center. In addition, the sample from this same residential unit shows a slightly higher proportion of plates than the other residential units. Considering shapes only as a comparative category where bowls,

plates, and cylinders are mostly serving vessels and jars are mostly cooking vessels, Saraguaté's inhabitants seem to have employed more serving than cooking ware.

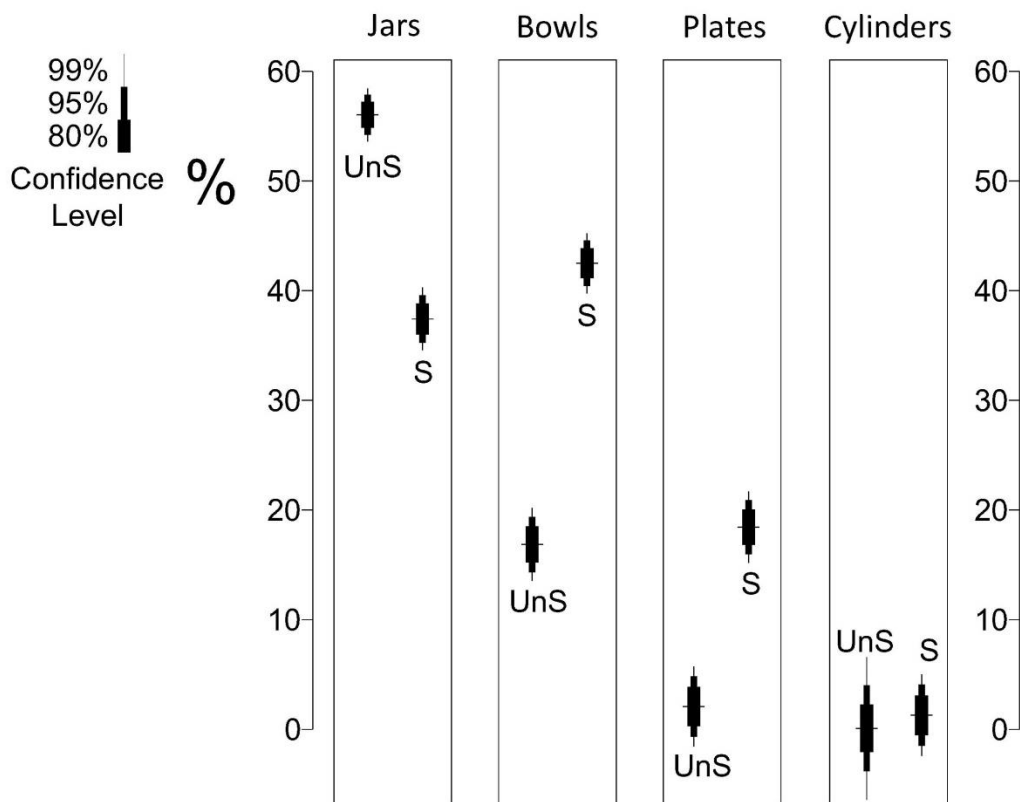
The low-end commoner residence (LECR) Pacaya, the other group with a slightly different assemblage, has a rather high proportion of bowls in comparison to other residential units. However, this proportion is similar to the proportion of jars, making the distinction so far less suggestive. It is relevant to mention that this is the smallest investigated residential unit. However from the low-end commoners, this is the one located in greater proximity to the civic center.

6.3.2. Cooking and Serving Ware

The ceramic samples from Yaxha include very few polychromes or other kinds of decoration. By the Terminal Classic, the most common wares at Yaxha were unslipped (*Uaxactun sin Engobe* Class) and monochrome red slipped ceramics (Type *Tinaja Rojo* from the *Peten Lustroso* Class) (see also Chapter 4). In relative terms, the *Peten Lustroso* ceramics constitute the “fancier” ware of the time in domestic contexts.

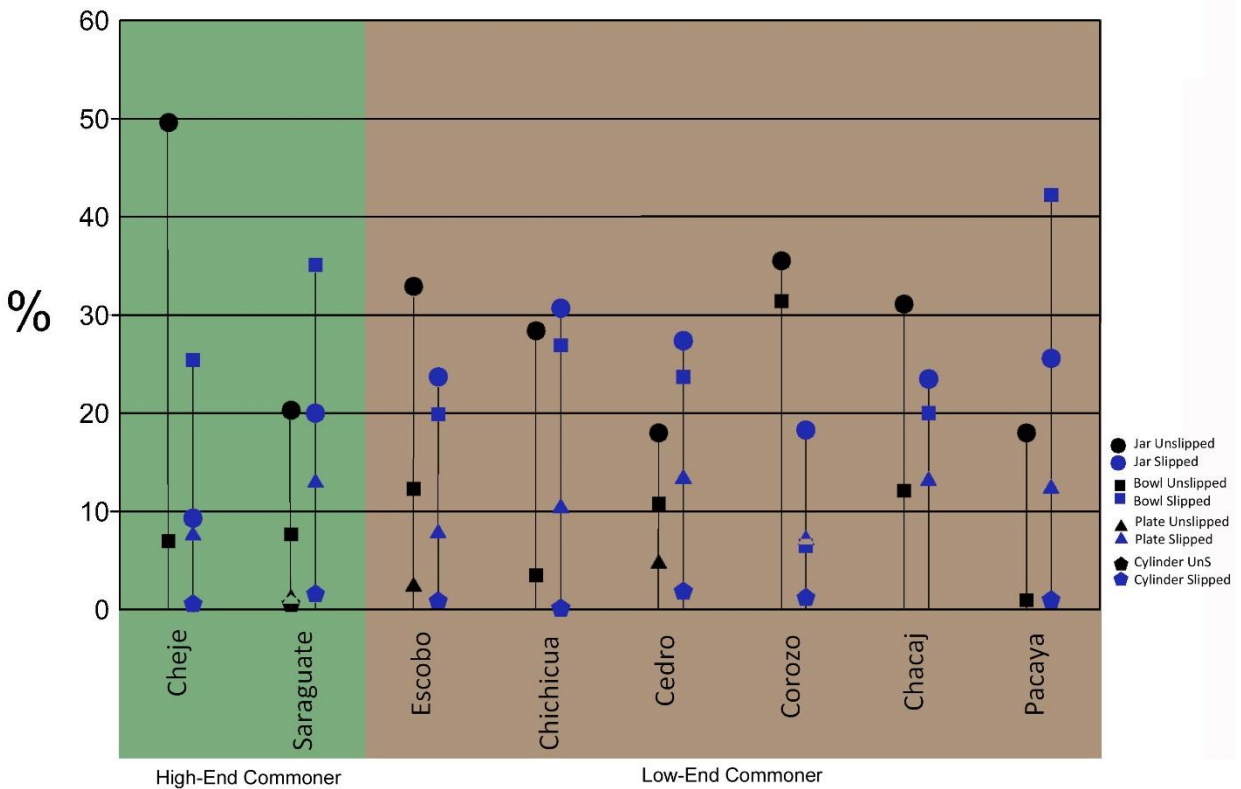


Extrapolating this distinction of slipped and unslipped ceramics with the indicated ceramic shapes, it has been determined that most jars were unslipped, while bowls, plates, and cylinders were most frequently slipped (Fig. 6.2). This supports the hypothesis that jars were most frequently unslipped cooking vessels (see Henricks and McDonald 1983:261); while bowls, plates, and cylinders were more frequently used as fine serving vessels, in this case slipped in red. Cylinders are scarce, the difference between the two categories is not statistically significant. Nonetheless, cylinders are the only kinds of vessels that are considered as serving vessels only.



Graph 6.3. Bullet graphs illustrating the proportions of slipped and unslipped ceramic shapes with error ranges at different confidence levels attached.

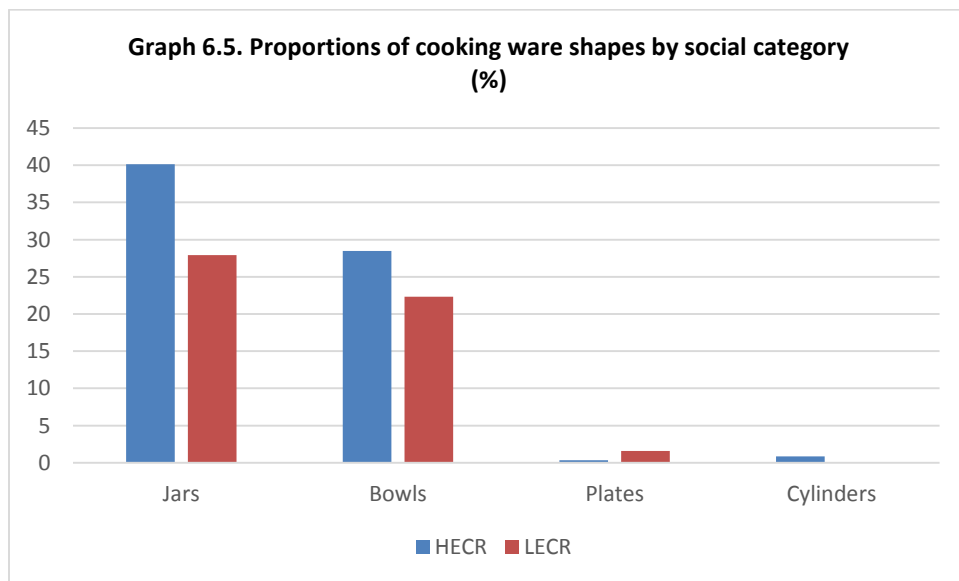
Graph 6.4 shows the proportions of ceramic shapes by category and residential unit. Residential units HECR-Saraguate, LECR-Chichicua, LECR-Cedro, and LECR-Pacaya show proportionately more serving ware than kitchen ware, emphasizing more the possibility of feasting. The relationship is inverted in the other four residential units: HECR-Cheje, LECR-Escobo, LECR-Corozo, and LECR-Chacaj. Kitchen ware is proportionately more frequent in these last residential units, taking emphasis away from serving activities. In all, there is no correlation between status and the proportion of kitchen and serving ware in each residential unit.

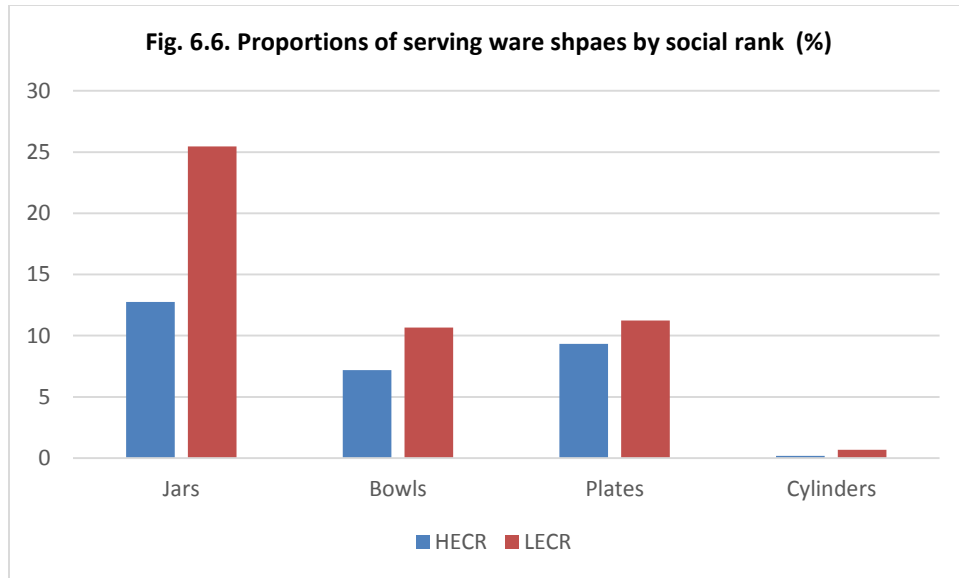


Graph 6.4. Proportions of cooking (unslipped) and serving (slipped) wares in the different residential units.

Considering the slipped ceramics subsamples only, HECR-Cheje, HECR-Saraguate, and LECR-Pacaya distinguish from the other residential units because of higher proportions of slipped bowls, the overall more frequent serving vessel at Yaxha. Similarly, HECR-Saraguate and LECR-Pacaya are further distinguished by having higher proportions of serving ware than the rest. Following the delineated expectations, these two houses would have been more likely engaging in feasts than the others. Once again denying the possibility of a positive correlation between higher status and feast-hosting.

Overall, despite the division of the sample of residences in two ranks (high- and low-end commoner), there is no indication that higher rank residences were better prepared for feasting. In fact, in a comparison between the two social categories, high-end commoners had higher proportions of cooking ware (unslipped) (Graph 6.5) and low-end commoners had higher proportions of serving ware (Graph 6.6).



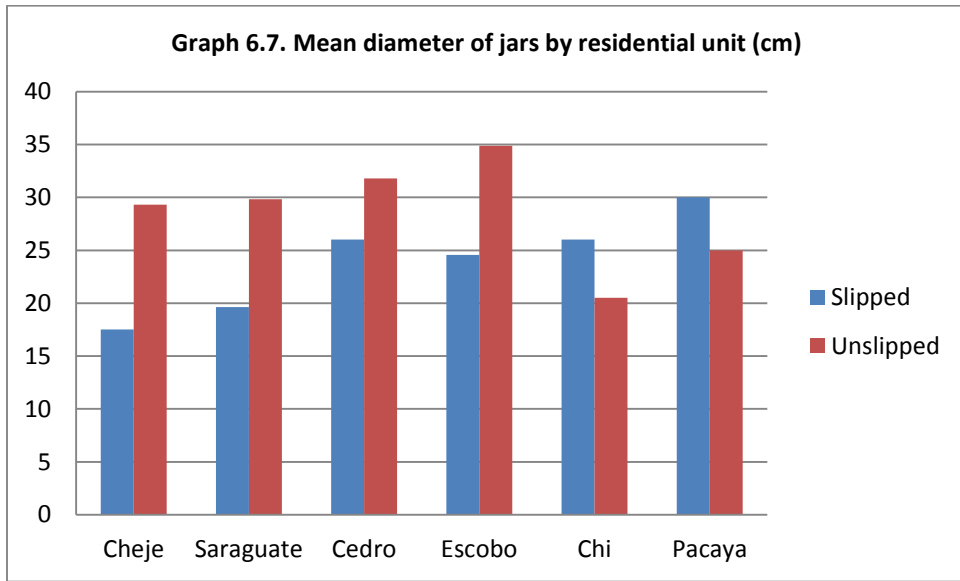


6.3.3. Vessel Size

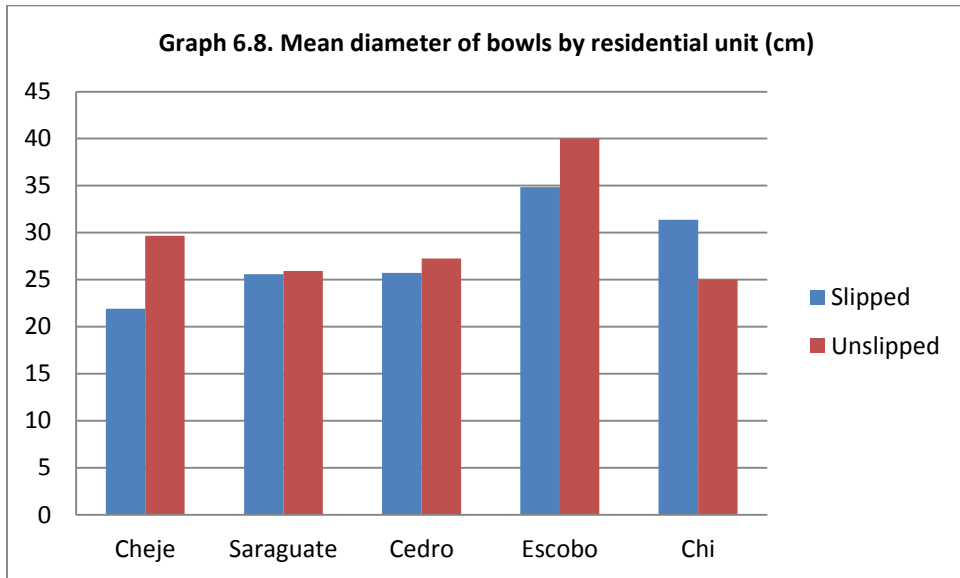
Hosting meals for groups of people more numerous than the hosting household requires not only more serving ware, but also bigger kitchen containers for preparation and cooking. Taken altogether, the mean recorded jar-mouth outer diameter is 27.3cm at Yaxha. Bowls mean diameter is 27.5cm, while plates is 36cm, and cylinders is 11.6cm. Most collected sherds did not present appropriate characteristics for this kind of measurement, so these results are based on a partial sample. In addition, I am assuming that the vessels' mouth diameter is proportional to their capacity.

As expected, cooking ware tends to be bigger than serving ware, at least in terms of jars and bowls (Graphs 6.7 and 6.8). Although the samples from LECR-Chichicua and LECR-Pacaya behave differently than the rest, the differences are not in fact very pronounced. LECR-Escobo

has the bigger jars and bowls, but a difference of only a few centimeters is not expected to have much impact on the capacity of the vessels for cooking for considerably bigger groups than the regular household.



Graph 6.7. Mean diameter of jars by residential unit.



6.4. SUMMARY: FEASTING AND RITUAL INDEPENDENCE

In all, the ceramic samples from Yaxha's investigated residential units are rather homogeneous. Despite rank differences expressed in the architecture of the different residences, commoner people at Yaxha were using very similar ceramic assemblages during the Terminal Classic. There is no exclusivity in the shapes used by the different households and vessel size does not vary much from house to house. In all, the ceramic evidence suggests that the different households were similarly equipped. If they were hosting feasting, they all had access to similar cooking and serving ware. Based on ceramic shape and surface treatment/decoration, low-end commoner households had higher proportions of serving ware than high-end commoners, suggesting that the former were better prepared for feasting. However, the similarity of vessel sized within the sample does not provide support for the idea that low-end commoner households would have the capacity to cook for more people than high-end commoner households would.

The evidence is inconclusive. It is impossible to say if commoners at Yaxha were indeed hosting feasts in their homes. However, through this analysis we have learned that low-end commoners had access and used very similar ceramic wares than high-end commoners. If they were in fact hosting feasts, then all commoner households had the capacity to do so. Even more, the evidence indicates that low-end commoners possessed greater quantities of the fine ceramics of the time than high-end commoners did.

Making the link between these results and the attitudes that commoners might have had toward the dynastic cosmology is not easy. Even more so in absence of appropriate data for the royal and noble palaces. Discerning among the three possible attitudes/strategies (active engagement, resistance, and passive compliance), I believe it is clear there is no evidence for resistance. Since all commoners were using the same kinds of ceramic wares, no contradictions can be interpreted in their actions. However, I find it impossible to discern between active engagement and passive compliance. Any argument in this regard is limited by the missing data from the royal and noble contexts. Future research in this regard should contribute the necessary evidence to further the discussion.

7. FUNERARY RITUALS

Human remains are a common archaeological finding in ancient Maya contexts. The ancient Maya did not use cemeteries, but buried their dead within their built environments: below house-floors, within monumental architecture, and even below plaza-floors. Not everybody received the same treatment after death. Some people were buried following certain funerary conventions, but other people were disposed of in other ways. It seems some people were cremated and not buried. In addition, some people were disposed of as part of ritual events not necessarily centered on the human remains, where the bodies were sometimes kept articulated but other times they were not. Bodies might have been either deposited complete or incomplete. In all, it is clear that human remains were manipulated in multiple ways, either as the object of funerary events or as ritual paraphernalia in other kinds of religious celebrations.

Funerary rituals were at the heart of the Classic dynastic cosmology. Ancestor veneration was a fundamental part of the Maya ritual repertoire (McAnany 1995; Fitzsimmons 2009:15). The deification of deceased kings is a common theme in the courtly art of the different Classic Maya kingdoms. As in life, they clearly had an exalted position after death (Fitzsimmons 2009:53). The afterlife of commoner people might not have been as exalted, but ancestors seem to have formed part of most if not all households. Funerary rituals certainly gave people the opportunity to express their own cosmological perceptions and now they provide us with an opportunity to

observe how non-royals related with the dynastic cosmology. Once again, the three attitudes/strategies to test, in this chapter through funerary rituals, are 1. active engagement, 2. Resistance, and 3. Passive compliance (see Chapter 1). I hypothesized that people actively engaged with the ruling dynastic cosmology would carry out their funerary rites in a very similar way to royal rites. This is not in terms of material richness, but in terms of the symbols that are used in the rite; for example, in the positioning and orientation of the body and the kinds of funerary furniture that accompanied the dead. To the contrary, people resisting the ruling dynastic cosmology would use completely different symbols, while passively complying people would be using some symbols from the dynastic cosmology but not all of them. With very similar funerary rites across the different social ranks, the evidence from Yaxha points towards an actively engaged relationship of the people with the cosmological precepts expressed in funeral practices.

In this chapter, I first describe the different components of funerary rites at Terminal Classic Yaxha. All burials are included in these descriptions, both from the residential units and from other architectural compounds around the civic center. Funerary rites in the monumental civic center were certainly part of the high-elite's functions and were conducted following the precepts of the ruling dynastic cosmology. For the analytical purposes of this dissertation, these burials are included in a royal/noble category that is compared to the high- and low-end commoner category. This comparative analysis is presented after the descriptive section in this chapter.

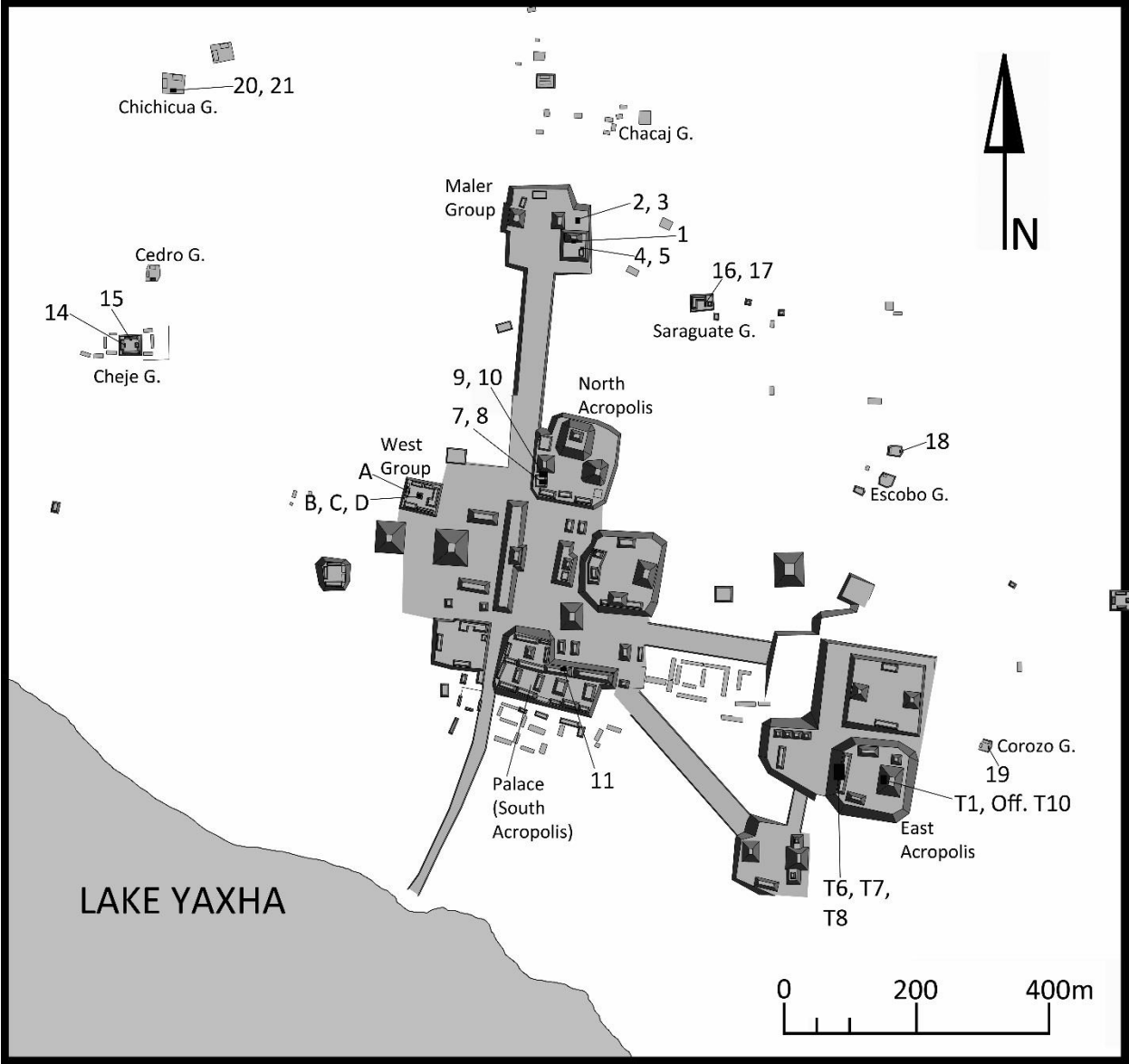


Fig. 7.1. Map of Yaxha showing the location of burials.

7.1. YAXHA'S FUNERARY RECORD

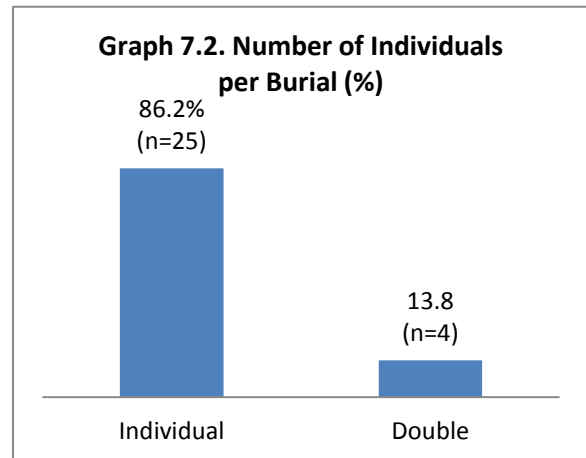
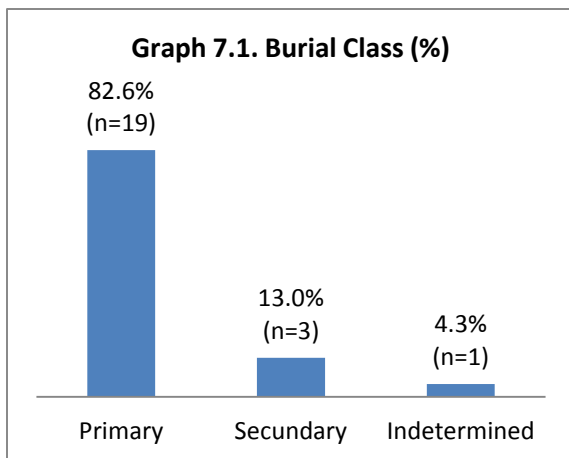
The burial inventory at Yaxha includes 36 burials. Before the present project, there were 26 excavated burials in different areas of Yaxha's Central Zone (Bu. A-D, T1-T8, and 1-13). Additionally, a royal funerary chamber was located within the temple-pyramid in the East Acropolis (Hermes et al 1997). The present research added nine more burials from domestic contexts (Bu. 14-21).

The information available for all these burials varies and in most cases is rather fragmentary (Table 7.1), making it impossible to carry out the ideal statistical analysis of similarities and/or dissimilarities within the sample. However, the analysis here takes into account all available information, in combination with the osteological information from the analysis conducted by Dr. Andrew Scherer on the skeletal remains that were available (Scherer 2011).

From the total sample of 36 burials, 80.5% (n=29) has been dated to the Terminal Classic, and it is on this portion of the sample that the following discussion is centered. As it is discussed in the next pages, there is a fair deal of variability, but the sample shows certain preferences in the funerary practices: Terminal Classic burials are more often primary, individual, within simple crypts, and located more often in the eastern side of the architectural compounds. The bodies were more often buried in an extended position, in a north-south orientation and with their heads to the north. Monochrome ceramic vessels are the most frequent artifact accompanying the dead. Such regularities crosscut the defined socioeconomic ranks.

7.1.1. Terminal Classic Burial Practices at Yaxha

Most of the burials in this sample are primary, but some secondary burials have been reported as well. From 29 Terminal Classic burials, information in this respect is missing for 6 cases (Bu. D, T1, 1, 3, 4, and 8). However, from the remaining 23, 83% (n=19) are primary, while 13% (n=3) are secondary (Bu. 5, 13, and 14b). The remaining 4% (n=1) corresponds to an unidentified case due to bad preservation (Bu. 15). In this way, what these numbers show is most people at Yaxha was buried in one single event, but there were some that were skeletonized in a different location to that of their last deposition. The secondary burials illustrate cases of ritual manipulation of human remains, and these manipulations were most definitely the product of ritual events during which the bones were re-deposited. In their connotation of “special deposits” these secondary burials are further discussed below along with other related instances.



In this Terminal Classic sample, most burials are individual, but it includes 4 cases of double burials. These are Bu. T6, 11, 14 and 20. Bu. T6 was excavated under the stairway to Str. 218 at the East Acropolis (Morales 2003), however, not much information is available and the skeletal remains have not been analyzed. Bu. 11 refers to the remains of two infants of less than one year of age found inside one room of Str. 389 at the Palace. Although they seem likely to have been placed there during the same event, they were not found bounded close together, therefore they are identified here as Bu. 11a and 11b. Then, Bu. 14, from the high-end commoner residence (HECR) Cheje, originally contained the remains of two individuals. However, I think it is more likely that they represent separate events carried out in the same spot within the house. They are identified separately here as Bu. 14a and 14b. Finally, Bu. 20 from low-end commoner residence (LECR) Chichicua contained the remains of one adult and a fetus, definitely interred during the same event. There are no Terminal Classic burials containing more than two individuals (the only multiple burial – Bu. 6 – from Yaxha has been dated to the Preclassic period).

In all, although there are some instances of double burials for the Terminal Classic, the case of Bu. 20 of a mother with her baby is the only one that is a true funerary deposit – a formal disposal of the dead –. The other two cases from domestic contexts are rather unique deposits that express further ritual purposes than the mere disposal of the dead. Both Burials 11 and 14 are different special cases in which human remains were used as part of complex ritual events (see section on secondary burials later in this chapter).

7.1.1.1. Funerary Construction

Regarding grave construction, although information is missing for 13 cases, the remaining 16 strongly suggest a preeminence of simple crypts. Following Welsh's (1988:17) classification, these crypts were built using only rough limestone slabs arranged vertically on the sides and horizontally over the buried bodies. 65% (n=11) of the cases for which the information is available used this kind of crypt; while 24% (n=4) did not have any apparent funerary construction.

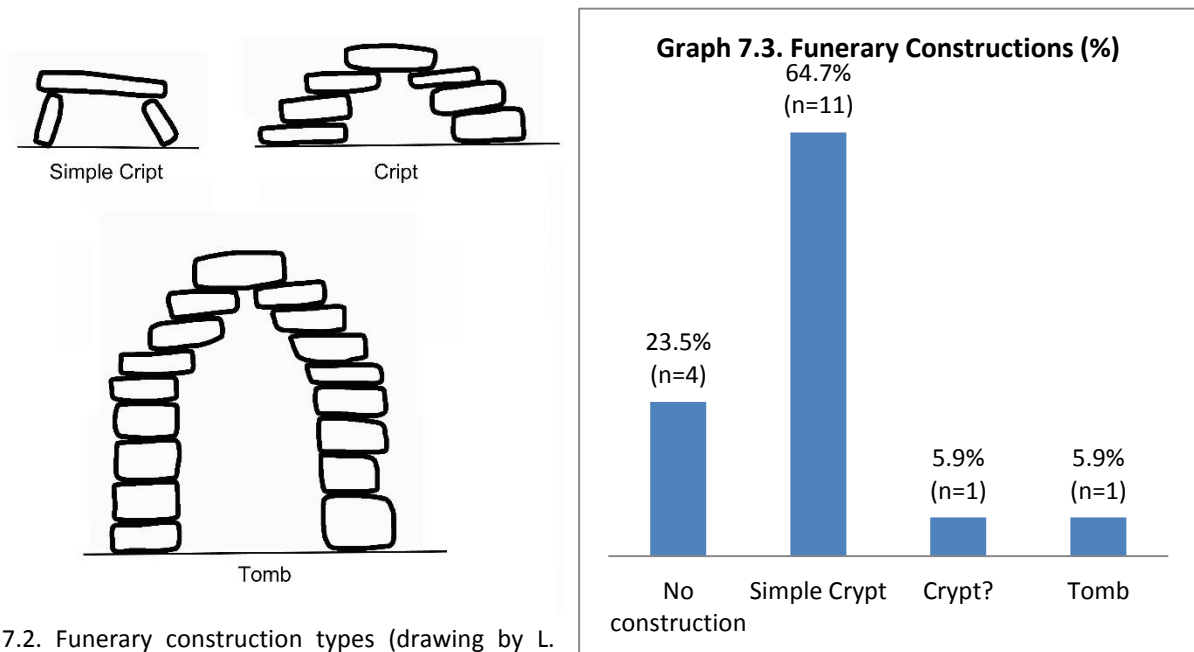


Fig. 7.2. Funerary construction types (drawing by L. Gamez).

The only case of a crypt comes from the noble palace and was reported by Nicholas Hellmuth in the early 1970's (Hellmuth 1972a and b). The only royal tomb so far excavated at Yaxha is located below the temple-pyramid 216 in the East Acropolis (Hermes et al 1997). This is a formal vaulted room, a "tomb" in Welsh's terminology (1988:18). Its lower part was carved into the bedrock, while its upper part was constructed within the pyramids infill (Fig. 7.3).

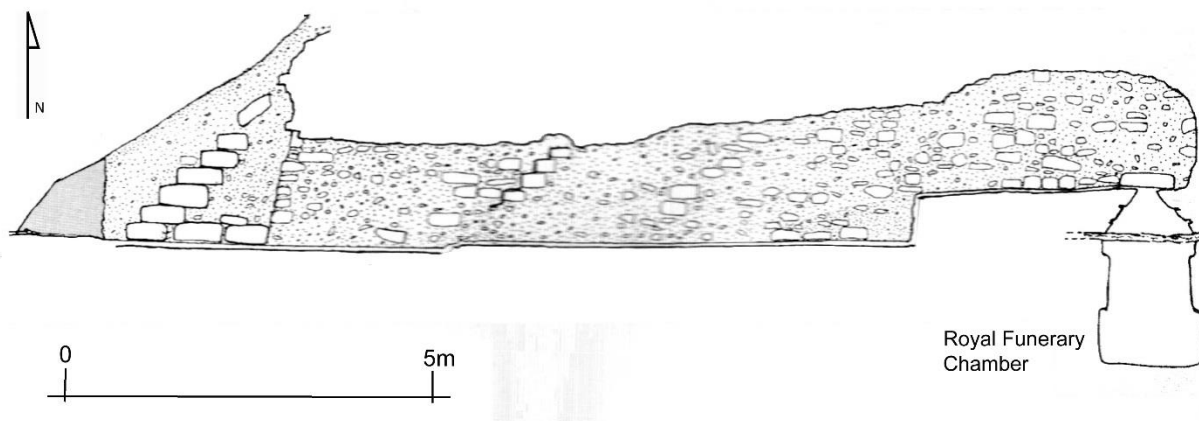
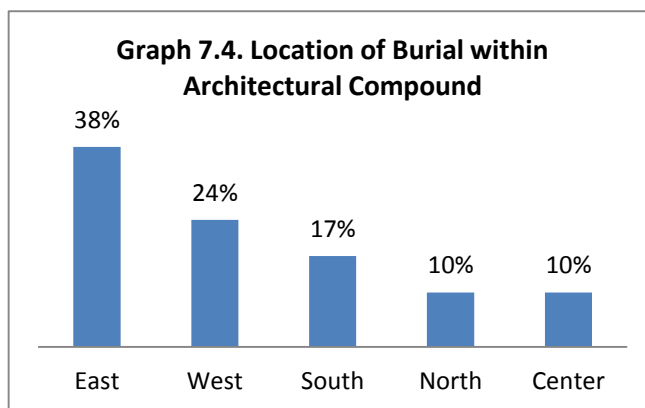


Fig. 7.3. Tunnel excavated by the PRONAT-Triangulo Project in the base platform of pyramid 216, East Acropolis. It lead to a royal tomb under the pyramid (Hermes et al 1997).

7.1.1.2. Burial Location

All known burials from Yaxha have been found within built environments. Taking all burials into consideration, with the exception of one for which the information is not available (Bu. 13), most burials were located within or below constructions on



the eastern side of their corresponding plazas or patios. However, the location is rather variable, as burials have been found on all sides of the architectural compounds as well as in their centers. It is impossible to discern any distributional patterns with much certainty because the sample is very small, and not all areas of the same compounds have been excavated.

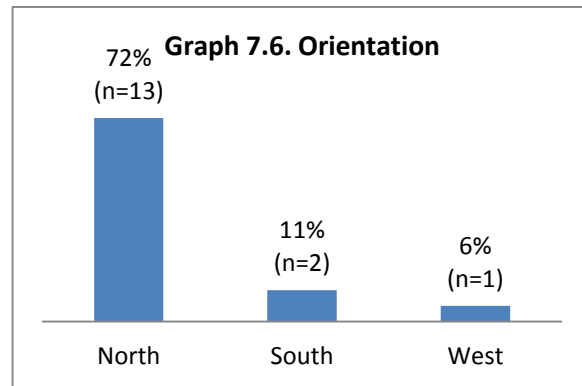
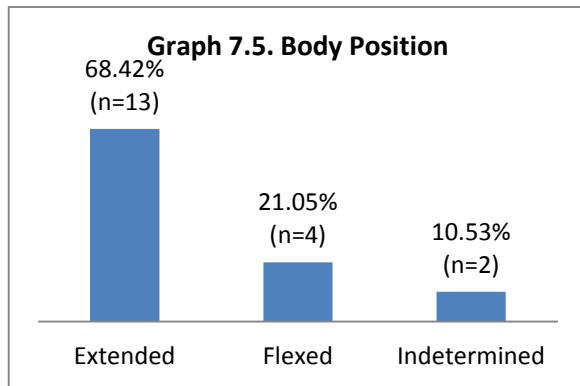
Overall, there is the suggestion that the east was a preferred side for interments at Terminal Classic Yaxha. Nevertheless, there could be individual preferences when observed at

the household level. Excavations on the four sides of each patio suggest a preference for the east at HECR-Saraguate (Bu. 16 and 17), LECR-Escobo (Bu. 18), and LECR-Coroza (Bu. 19); while the south was preferred at LECR-Chichicua (Bu. 20 and 21). HECR-Cheje is a special case in which special deposits with human remains were located on the north and the west (Bu. 14a and b, and 15), but there is reason to believe at least one more formal burial could have been under the eastern construction, where a collapsed looting tunnel was found.

In this way, from the houses that provided funerary contexts, once again the east seems to be a preferred side for inhumation. However, there is the case of LECR-Chichicua in which the south was the side used for inhumation. This exception might suggest certain degree of independence in this particular household choice of burial location and the symbolism conveyed.

7.1.1.3. Body Positioning

The position in which the body was set at the time of burial is unknown for 10 of the 29 Terminal Classic cases. Nevertheless, from the remaining 19 cases for which the information is available, 68.5% (n=13) were laid in an extended position, most likely all on their backs. 21% (n=4) were flexed in variable positions, while the remaining 10.5% (n=2) corresponds to cases where it was impossible to establish body position due to preservation issues (Bu. 14b and 15, Chapter 6).

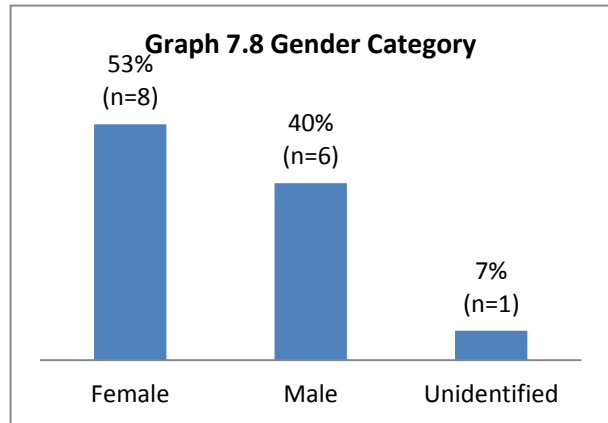
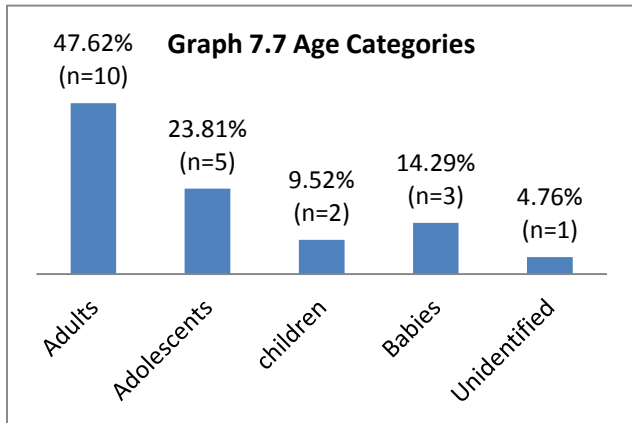


The majority of skeletons were oriented in a north-south direction, with their heads to the north. Information about orientation is missing for 11 cases. Within the remaining 18 for which there is information available, 72% (n=13) had their heads to the north, 11% (n=2) had their heads to the south, 5% (n=1) had their head to the west, while the remaining 11% (n=2) corresponds to the two cases where it was impossible to define orientation due to preservation issues (Bu. 14b and 15, Chapter 6).

7.1.1.4. Demography

Age and sex definitions are not available for the eight Terminal Classic burials reported by Hellmuth (1972 – here identified as Bu. A, B, C, and D) and the PRONAT-Triangulo (Hermes 1995, 1996; Morales 2004 – here identified as Bu. 1T-8T). However, it was possible to carry out either partial or complete osteological analyses on the remaining 21 burials – that is, 22 individuals including the fetus from Bu. 20 (Scherer 2011). Aside from the latter, from the 21 individuals, 48% (n=10) are adults, 24% (n=5) are adolescents or young adults, 9.5% (n=2) are children under 5 years, and 14% (n=3) are babies under 1 year. 4.5% (n=1) was impossible to identify. From the

15 adults and adolescents, 53% (n=8) were females and 40% (n=6) were males, one remains unidentified.



7.1.1.5. Body Aesthetics

Three cases of cranial modification have been identified among the known peoples of Terminal Classic Yaxha. However, the sample is skewed because most skeletons are incomplete and in very poor preservation, heads are not always present. From three known cases, one comes from the North Acropolis (Bu. 13) and the other two from the low-end commoner residence (LECR) Chichicua (Bu. 20 and 21). Therefore, cases of peoples with cranial modifications come from at least two different context of social interaction: royal/noble semi-private compound and a low-end commoner residential unit. This suggests the practice was not tied to status considerations. In addition, it does not seem to have been limited by considerations of gender, as the available examples include both men and women.

Not all teeth are present in the sample, but six cases of dental modifications were observed among the existing remains. Three of these come from royal/elite monumental

settings: two from the Maler Group (Bu. 1 and 4) and one from the North Acropolis (Bu.7), an elite semi-private monumental compound. Two other individuals with dental modifications come from the high-end commoner residence (HECR) Saraguata (Bu.16 and 17). The sixth case was excavated in the low-end commoner residence (LECR) Chichicua (Bu. 20).

In this way, neither cranial nor dental modifications seem to have been limited in terms of status and gender. Although very small, the sample includes individuals with these kinds of modifications in both elite and commoner contexts, and in men and women without observable patterned distinctions.

7.1.1.6. Grave goods

As it is the case with other aspects of this sample, the inventories of graves goods are incomplete: there are 6 burials from which the information is missing (Bu. A, D, T6, T7, T8, and 13). The inventories used here include as many elements as it was possible to retrieve from the available field reports and laboratory inventories (Table 7.1). As already mentioned, Bu. 14 to 21 were excavated through this dissertation project and inventories in these cases are unproblematic.

7.1.1.6.1. Ceramic vessels

Ceramic vessels are the most common grave good. From the 23 burials with information available, almost half of them, 48% (n=11) included vessels. From these, about half come from residential units and the other half elsewhere in the civic center of the city. This suggests a lack

of correlation between the type of activity area, status, and the presence/absence of ceramic vessels.

These burials comprise cases from both commoner and royal/noble contexts. Most include only one vessel, but two cases had two vessels, while one had three (Bu. C, 17 and 19 respectively). All these burials are located in residential units: Bu. C from the noble palace; Bu. 17 from the high-end commoner residence (HECR) Saraguate; and Bu. 19 from the low-end commoner residence (LECR) Corozo. In this way, this sample does not suggest a positive correlation between rank and quantity of vessels included in burials.

Moreover, the sample is also scarcely suggestive of a correlation between rank and quality of “funerary” vessels. The ceramic types are known for only 9 cases. Most vessels belong to the most common ceramic group at the site: *Tinaja*. From the 12 vessels with known attributes, 10 belong to the *Tinaja* Group, including 8 *Tinaja Rojo*, one *Chaquiste Impreso*, and one *Camaron Inciso*. The remaining two vessels belong to Burials 14b and 16, one has been classified as type *Chinos Negro/Crema* from the *Zacatal* Group, and the other as *Leona Rojo/Naranja* from the *Palmar* Group. All these vessels belong to the same *Peten Lustroso* Class.

Within this sample, the most common ceramic vessels are bowls. Only burials 17 and 19 have other forms, both including a combination of one deep plate and one cylinder. However, Burial 19 had also an additional miniature cylinder. Both burials are from commoner’s residential units, but one of obvious higher rank than the other is. Once again, the comparison does not suggest a distinction of rank and in this instance, ceramic shapes.

For comparative purposes, the royal funerary chamber under temple-pyramid Str. 216 has to be mentioned here. There were no human remains found within the chamber, but other

materials were collected inside. The inventory included three vessels: one miniature bowl, one plate (tetrapod), and one cylinder. The ceramic type of the bowl is unknown, but it was a bichrome black/cream decorated with three “framed” beetles (Hermes 1996). The plate was a polychrome type *Palmar Naranja Policromo*, but most of it was reportedly stolen soon after the discovery of the tomb. The cylinder was also stolen and its characteristics are unknown. Other sherds are mentioned to have been dispersed around inside the funerary chamber. These vessels can be distinguished from the other found in other burials because of the presence of polychromes and more elaborated decorations. However, this set is conformed by the same vessel shapes than those from the small, low-end commoner residence (LECR) Corozo. The symbolism contained in the combination of these ceramic shapes was similarly present both in the royal and at the low-end commoner cases.

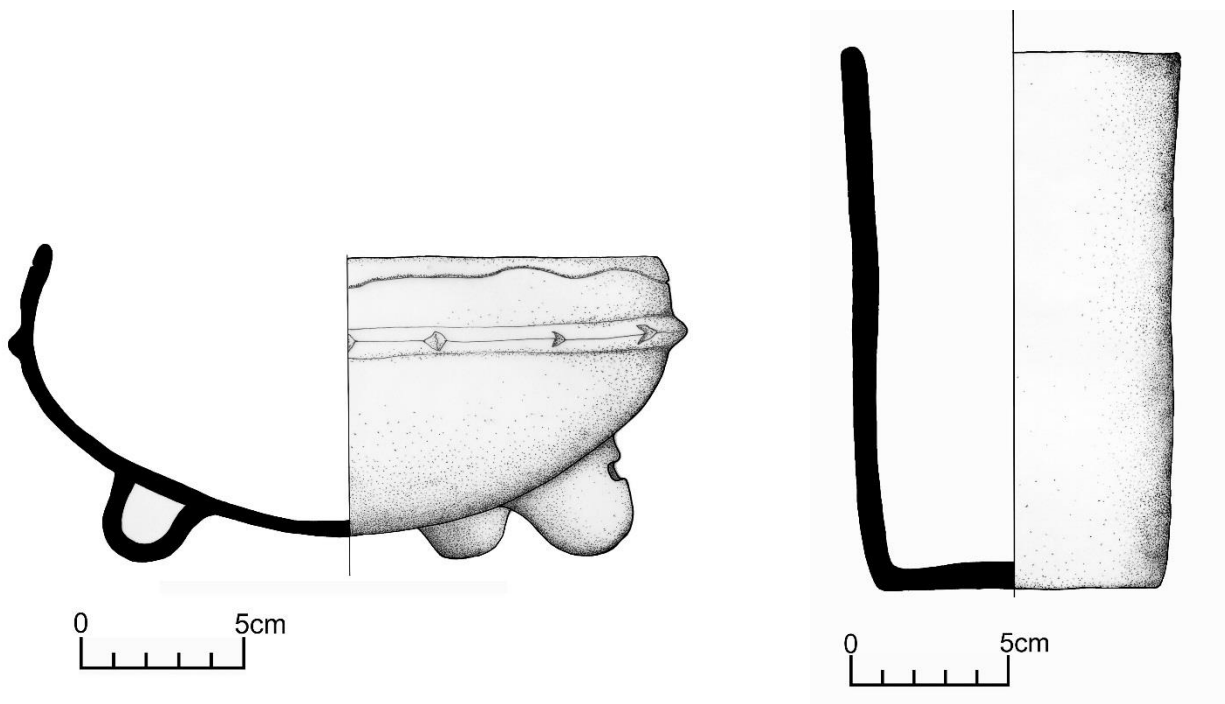


Fig. 7.4. Vessels from burials: tripod bowl from Bu. 14a, HECR-Cheje; cylinder from Bu. 17, HECR-Saraguaté (drawings by L. Gamez).

7.1.1.6.2. Ceramic Figurines/whistles

Ceramic figurine fragments were reported in relation to three children's burials at Yaxha: Bu. 3, 9, and 11. They were all located in different compounds from the civic center: Burial 3 in Str. 5 from the Maler Group; Bu. 9 in Str. 147 from North Acropolis; and Burial 11 a and b from Str. 389 at the royal palace. However, all these burials have something else in common: they are a different kind of inhumations than the rest. In all cases, the inhumation of the children was not the central purpose of the ritual action. Instead, they were deposited as part of a wider ritual event. Similarly, the associated figurine fragments were part of wider deposits of broken artifacts. This is to say, the figurines were not "accompanying" the children, but rather that both figurines and children, together with more artifacts, were components of something else, another kind of deposit, other than reverential inhumation (see also Chapter 8).

7.1.1.6.3. Jade/green stones:

The royal funerary chamber from temple-pyramid 216, in the East Acropolis, included 283 pieces of jade (Hermes et al 1997:291). Although not much detail is known, such pieces included round beads from jewelry and mosaic pieces (from a mosaic that was never reconstructed but apparently included also shell and stucco). Elsewhere in the East Acropolis, Bu. T8 included one piece of jade, a single pendant.

From the most recent excavations, jade was included in burials from the two investigated high-end commoner residences Cheje and Saraguate. Burial 14a from HECD-Cheje included one

quadrangular jade pendant (Fig. 7.5), and Burial 17 from HECR-Saraguate included one spherical jade bead. The piece from Bu. 14a is very similar to others from a royal Late Classic burial from Topoxte (Topoxte's Bu. 49, Wurster 2000:137).

In all, jade seems to have been scarce in Terminal Classic Yaxha. It can be characterized as an elitist material, considerably more frequent in but not exclusive to royal contexts.

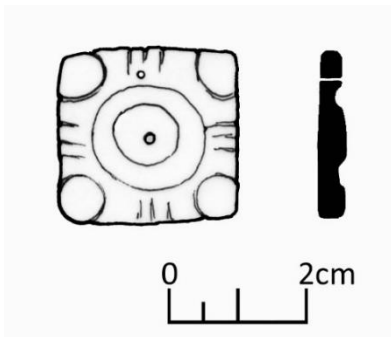


Fig. 7.5. Jade Pendant, Bu. 14a, HECR-Cheje (drawing by L. Gamez).

7.1.1.6.4. Flint and Obsidian

Lithics are not very frequent in Yaxha's Terminal Classic burials, but there are some cases to cite. A grey obsidian prismatic blade was found in Bu. 10 from the North Acropolis, while a flint lance point was found with Bu. 14a from HECR-Cheje (Fig. 7.6). Some chert flakes (3 primary and 6 secondary), along with one chert nodule and 2 chert cores were collected along with Bu. 18 from the LECR-Escobo. Similarly, in Bu. 19 from LECR-Coroza, 16 secondary chert flakes, 4 tertiary chert flakes, and 1 obsidian debitage was collected. However, in these last two cases, Bu. 18 and 19, such lithic elements might as well be discards and not necessarily part of the funerary furniture. In both cases, the inhumations seem to have intruded into Preclassic constructions' fill and discarded lithics could have well been part of such fill.

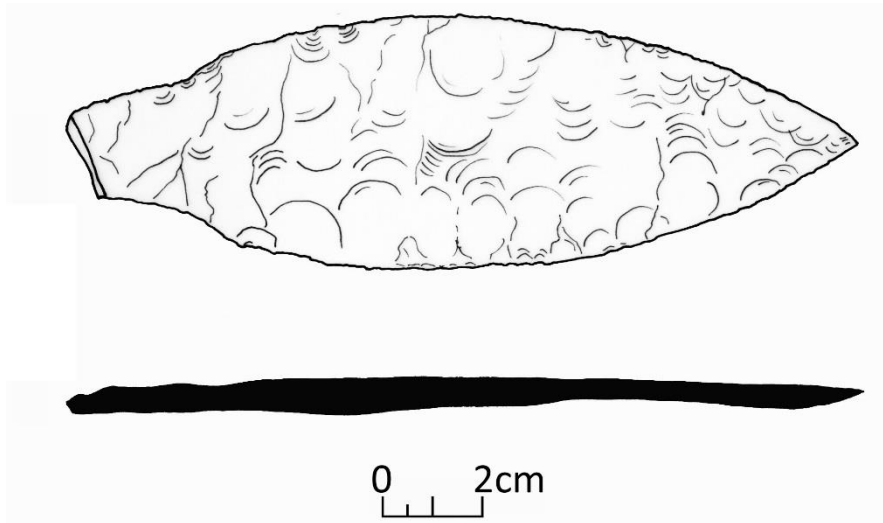


Fig. 7.6. Flint lance point, Bu. 14a, HECR-Cheje (drawing by L. Gamez).

Other cases of lithic artifacts associated with burials are some sets of eccentric flints and obsidians associated with Bu. 7 from the Maler Group, and Bu. 16 and 17 from the HECR-Saraguate Group (see Chapters 8 and 9). Nevertheless, in all three cases, the eccentrics were collected apart from the burials and it is impossible to know if they were deposited as part of the same ritual event or were in fact separate events.

7.1.1.6.5. Shell and Stingray Spines

The royal funerary chamber from Str. 216 contained about 187 shell artifacts or shell pieces. Although further details are unknown, it was reported that these elements included beads and mosaic pieces, but also at least one whole *spondylus* shell (Hermes et al 1997).

From the burials found around the city's civic center, Bu. 7, 9, and 10 contained some shell, all from the North Acropolis. Bu. 7 was apparently buried using a shell bead necklace and one shell bead bracelet on each wrist (for a total of 49 cylinders, tubes, and globular beads). In association to Bu. 9, one single tubular shell bead was reported; while for Bu. 10 the catalogue (Grupo K 2007) includes ten globular shell beads and one pendant.

From the recently investigated residential units, only Bu. 14 from HECR-Cheje included a shell ornament. This is a rectangular long bead carved on *spondylus* shell, decorated by two parallel incised lines in each extreme. The design is very similar to at least one jade (or greenstone) from a royal Late Classic burial (Bu. 49) from neighboring Topoxte (Wurster 2000:137), and some other artifacts from Tikal (Moholy-Nagy 2008). This is another similitude between the two burials adding to the jade pieces mentioned above (see also further discussion below).

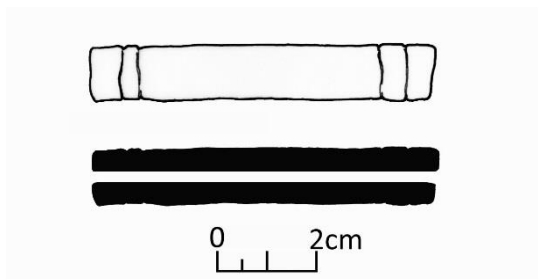


Fig. 7.7. Spondylus rectangular bead, Bu. 14a, HECR-Cheje (drawing by L. Gamez).

From the available information that has been gathered, only Bu. 2 from the Maler Group contained one stingray spine (Morales 2000:13). It was reportedly found near the pubic area of the deceased person, who apparently was a woman (Scherer 2011).

7.1.1.6.6. Bone artifacts and animal bones

Among the least frequent artifacts, Terminal Classic bone artifacts were included in Burials 16 from HECR-Saraguate and 14a from HECR-Cheje. In Bu. 16, a small bone needle was found, presumably part of a burial shroud. In Burial 14a, there was one needle point, one fish hook, three awls, two tubes, and one possible handle for a feather whisk (Moholy-Nagy 2008:63).

The “needle,” similarly to the one in Bu. 16, was either incomplete, missing the eye end, or was in truth some other sort of perforator or pin, it could have been holding clothing together. The fish hook is a very delicate piece with a sharp point. It could have also been used a kind of pin, but its fish hook shape is very self-explanatory. The three awls can be interpreted only as some kind of perforators. As Moholy-Nagy (2003:59) has indicated, these kinds of artifacts might be related to matting production, basketry, nets and/or weaving. These last three tools from Bu. 14a were possibly made out of deer bone.

The two tubes are more mysterious in terms of function. Both seem to have been made out of animal bone. They are both tubes of about 1.5cm in diameter and in between 8 and 10cm in length. Only one has a collar in one end and it is rather straight; the other one is rather curved and plain. Although it is impossible to determine with any certainty, these tubes could be part of syringes for ritual enemas as proposed by Coe (1988:229; see also Furst and Coe 1977:88-91) and as it is indicated by diverse painted vessels (see for example Kerr 1890).

Finally, the supposed handle for a feather-whisk was made out of a youth’s femur (Scherer 2011). It has a carved collar on its narrow end, but has not further decoration.

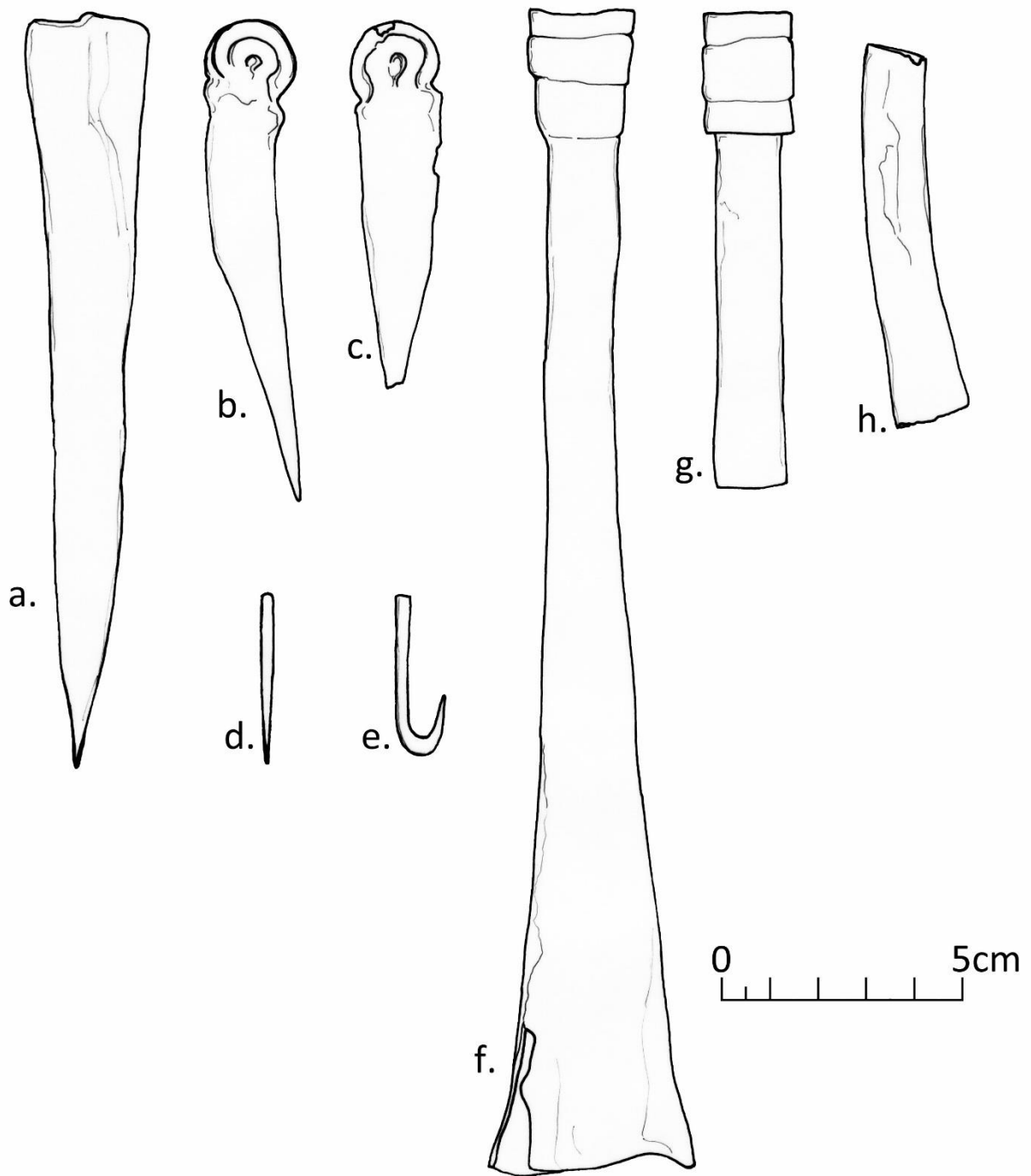


Fig. 7.8. Bone tools, Bu. 14a, HECR-Cheje. a, b, c. awls; d. needle point; e. fish-hook; f. feather whisk handle; g, h. tubes (possible parts of enema syringes) (drawing by L. Gamez).

7.2. ROYAL AND NOBLE FUNERARY RITUALS AT YAXHA

Houston and colleagues' (2006:11) work on ancient writing and iconography informs that the Classic Maya word for "person" was *winik*. The same word apparently carried a sense of "animate, sentient being" and there were different forms of *winik*, including non-human forms. Linguistically, being alive was expressed as *kux*, a term that might have also mean "to come back to life." Bodies were animated by energies that might have been referred to as "soul" or "spirit," and "wind" – *ik'* – as associated to breath and memory. Fitzsimmons (2009:11) indicates the classic hieroglyphic phrasing of death is referred to as the "finishing of his white flower breath", but there are also cases in which it is expressed as "*road-entering*." In his study of royal funerals, Fitzsimmons has found somewhat variable expression of death, with different burials displaying variations on common themes of descent, rebirth, and flowery paradises. Nevertheless, the underlying idea is that of the soul leaving the body at death, eventually joining a pool of ancestors (Fitzsimmons 2009:13).

The Classic hieroglyphic inscriptions from which these concepts are expressed clearly refer to the most powerful peoples in their own societies, most often the kings. Kings enjoyed a semi-divine quality tied to their right to rule. Their bodies would have not only represented but also contained certain divinity. According to Houston et al (2006:34-35), *k'uhul* is an adjective read in hieroglyphic texts as "holy, sacred", and is exclusively related to lords, suggesting that "holiness" emanated from the body of kings. In the iconography, such "holiness" emanates from

the body of kings as a fluid or as “beaded shapes” interpreted as blood (see for example in Yaxha’s Stela 13, Fig. 3.3). It is clear the remains of dead kings received special treatment.

At Yaxha, the only known kingly burial was located in the East Acropolis, under the tallest building in the city: temple-pyramid 216 (Bu. OF10, Fig. 7.3). The bones were no longer present by the time of the discovery. It is unclear if they simply disintegrated after the centuries, or if they were removed in pre-Columbian times. It is certain, however, that the tomb was sealed under the construction. This was a rich burial. There were mosaics of jade and shell, pieces of jewelry, and ceramic vessels (Table 7.1 at the end of this chapter). The tomb was located in the east side of the acropolis and had a north-south orientation.

There is no other known funerary construction at Yaxha like that of Bu. OF10, nor any other set of funerary furnishings as rich as those found inside that tomb. However, the same general characteristics from this tomb are also found in other burials from the city’s civic center. Regardless of the size of the funerary construction, most inhumed bodies were placed in an extended position, lying on their backs, in a north-south orientation with their heads to the north. Although not always present, ceramic vessels are the most common artifacts accompanying the bodies. Clearly, these seemingly basic characteristics of funerary practices were guided by well-established cosmological prescriptions.

Terminal Classic burials at Yaxha were not particularly rich, but it is clear that burial in the monumental civic center was a restricted privilege. For the purposes of this analysis, I assume that all burials in a monumental setting are representative of royal and noble behaviors. The known burials from the royal and noble palaces are scant and the analysis has benefited from including funerary data from other areas of the civic center.

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, not everyone received the same mortuary treatment. Within the burials from Yaxha's civic center, there is evidence of secondary handling of bones and ritual depositing of human remains. Three burials have been reported as secondary: Bu. T1 (Hermes et al 1997), Bu. 5 and 13 (Grupo K 2007).

Burial T1 was located over the central stairway from temple-pyramid 216 in the East Acropolis (Hermes et al 1997:292). It was described as a deposit of bones representative of at least parts of three individuals. There was no funerary construction protecting the bones, and there were no associated artifacts either. The bones were disarticulated and in no defined position. It was a very superficial deposit, apparently covered only by some rubble. More than a practical disposal of human remains, this deposit can be characterized as a ritual deposit of possible votive intentions. Information about this feature is scant now, but it is reasonable to assume that these human remains were deposited there after some ceremonial handlings. Either the people were dismembered and some parts were deposited in this particular location, or perhaps more likely, the bones were brought here from a previous location.

Burial 5 was located nearby Str. 7 on the eastern side of the Maler Group. Field information about this element is not available, however, the collected bones were. There were only pieces of a long bone, possibly a femur. Clearly, this was not a regular interment of a dead person, but a secondary disposal of a human bone. It could be classified as a kratophanous deposit (Kunen et al 2002), but its possible association to a set of lithic eccentrics suggest more a votive purpose. Burial 13, the last reported secondary burial from the civic center, was located by the southern façade of the North Acropolis platform. It was reported on the field reports as secondary (Grupo K 2007).

No cases of re-entering tombs and removing of bones have been found in Yaxha's civic center yet. However, these practices have been identified in other places around the Maya area, particularly in relation to royalty (Fitzsimmons 2010:75; Weiss-Krejci 2011:19; Welsh 1988:81). The purpose was presumably to collect heirlooms or ancestral relics. Although no archaeological cases are known, a good example of this practice involving Yaxha is found in the inscriptions of Tikal's Altar 5 (Fig. 7.9). The altar depicts an event in which the bones of a lady from Yaxha were expatriated to Tikal, presumably to keep them from harm posed by the attacks of Naranjo against Yaxha (Harrison:1999:133; Grube 2000:260).



Fig. 7.9. Tikal's Altar 5, exhumation and transportation to Tikal of the bones of a Lady from Yaxha (taken from www.famsi.org).

No cases of human sacrifice have been properly identified in Yaxha's civic center yet. However, there are cases of children deposited as part of termination deposits (Bu. 3, 9, 11a, and

11b). Human sacrifice is a practice that has been recognized before in the Maya Lowlands (Tiesler and Cucina 2007). The frequency with which it was practiced remains unknown. Material identification is challenging due to poor preservations of evidence in the tropical lowlands. There is no physical evidence proving the children from Yaxha were sacrificed. However, it is clear they did not received the same treatment as other people. They were all deposited along with abundant broken artifacts, in the manner that we recognize as rituals of termination (see Chapter 8).

7.3. HIGH- AND LOW-END COMMONER FUNERARY RITUALS

Hieroglyphic inscriptions are silent about commoners and their perceptions of life and death. The only way to approach this topic is through the traces of funerary rituals. From the great body of research that goes on in the Maya Lowlands, scholars have established that albeit differential investments, similar funerary treatments were ensured for both commoners and elites (Fitzsimmons 2009:16). Some have argued that commoner people revered their ancestors as much as elites did (McAnany 1999). The objective from the analysis at Yaxha was to establish if the symbolism of the funerary rituals from different social ranks was indeed similar or not.

No all the investigated houses yielded funerary contexts, but there are known examples from both high-end commoner residential units Cheje (Bu. 14a and b, 15; Fig. 7.10) and Saraguatze (Bu. 16 and 17; Fig. 7.11), and the low-end commoner residential units Escobo (Bu. 18; Fig. 7.12), Chichicua (Bu. 20 and 21; Fig. 7.13), and Corozo (Bu. 19; Fig. 7.14). These were all burials of adult individuals. No one burial is identical, but all these burials present some very relevant similarities.

Like those noble and royal burials from the civic center, these commoner burials from residential units were mostly individual, with the bodies extended lying on their backs. They most frequently oriented from north-to-south, with their heads to the north. Although not always present, ceramic vessels were the most frequent artifact accompanying the dead. Even more, some of these burials reveal that commoners carried out rituals that involved the secondary handling of human remains.

Some of these commoner burials at Yaxha are clearly primary and were never disturbed after such primary placement (Bu. 16, 17, 19, 20 and 21; Fig. 7.13). However, there is an instance in which bones could have been brought from another location (Bu. 14b) and others in which bodies were dismembered and then buried (Bu.14a, 15; Figs. 7.10 and 7.14), and yet others in which bones were certainly removed sometime after the primary burial occurred (Bu.18; Fig. 7.12). These are variable funerary treatments that add other dimensions to ancient people dealings with the dead. As in the royal and noble contexts, funerary treatments sometimes went further than a final disposal of the bodies in commoners' residences as well. As it has been indicated by various scholars, the distinction between burials and caches containing human remains is sometimes problematic (Becker 1992, 1993; Boteler 1998:6; Chase and Chase 1998:300; Kunen et al 2002). Therefore, these burials are discussed both in this chapter on funerary practices and the following chapter on dedication and termination rituals (Chapter 8).

Burial 14b refers to the osteological remains of an adult individual collected in the west side of the Central Patio of HECR-Cheje, mixed up with the remains of another individual (Bu. 14a). The bones from Bu. 14b seem to have been disturbed by the later intrusion of Bu. 14a. Although the original exact positioning of the remains is uncertain, the bones from 14b are clearly

distinguished from those of 14a because of their dense consistency and coloration which suggests they were inside a cave for some time (Scherer 2011). It is most likely these bones, which include only long bones diaphysis and one cranium piece, were brought from another primary location and re-buried here.

In the same HECR-Cheje, Burial 15 (Fig. 7.10) consisted of a very superficial deposit of the bones of an adolescent person, possibly female. The bones were found in very bad condition. The collected bones were not anatomically articulated. It is probable that this person was dismembered prior to burial. However, the poor preservation of the bones makes a clear deduction impossible.

An example of post-burial removal of bones was found in Burial 18. It was located on the eastern side of the low-end commoner residence (LECR) Escobo. The burial was most definitely a primary deposit of an articulated skeleton, but specific bones were removed some time after the body was skeletonized. It is the burial of an adult woman buried without the protection of any kind of funerary construction. The body was laid over its back, with the legs and arms flexed towards the left side (Fig. 7.12). The head and the right femur were missing.

Marshall Becker (1993:63) has suggested the possibility that specific bones, including the face and femurs, might have had greater significance than others as representative of the total embodiment of an individual. Becker argues the most easily recognizable human bones had more religious value (see also Fitzsimmons 2011:56). The particular case of Yaxha's Burial 18 is congruent with such interpretation.

Burial 14a from the HECR-Cheje is another possible case of post-burial bone removal. In this case, the left arm was missing. Additionally, this is also a possible case of human sacrifice

(Fig. 7.10). The burial contained the skeletal remains of an adult man. He was facing down, with his hands and feet tied over his pelvic area, and with his decapitated head resting facedown over his back. The body was covered with rough slabs that formed a small simple crypt. Some valuable artifacts were buried with this individual: a jade pendant with a quadripartite design; a spondylus rectangular bead similar to some found at Tikal (Moholy-Nagy 2008) (Fig. 7.7); a lance point of possibly imported flint (Hruby pers. com. 2010) (Fig. 7.6); a set of bone tools, including a possible feather whisk handle and bone tubes that might have been part of enemas syringes (Coe 1988:229) (Fig. 7.8). Also, a ceramic tripod bowl was placed nearby the individual's shoulder (Fig. 7.5), the same location where ceramic vessels were found at other burials (Bu. 19, 20, and 21).

The definition of sacrifice as the cause of death for the individual in this deposit is uncertain because of the inherent difficulties of such kinds of interpretations (Tiesler 2007). Nevertheless, there is no doubt the individual was decapitated. The first cervical vertebra was found together with the skull, and it showed peri-mortem fractures. Suggestive of a cause of death is a fracture on the frontal bone of the individual. This fracture seems to be the product of a blunt force trauma to the head that might have caused the death of the individual, although admittedly, it could have also resulted from a hard dropping of the head at the time of burial (Scherer 2011:91). In all, there is evidence of violence towards the body that suggests a possible human sacrifice. But even if this man did not really die as part of a ritual killing, his body was treated in very particular ways, very different from other funerary treatments found around Yaxha so far. His burial, along with the burial of the valuable set of artifacts that accompanied it, seems to carry a votive connotation that surpasses the practical disposal of the deceased.

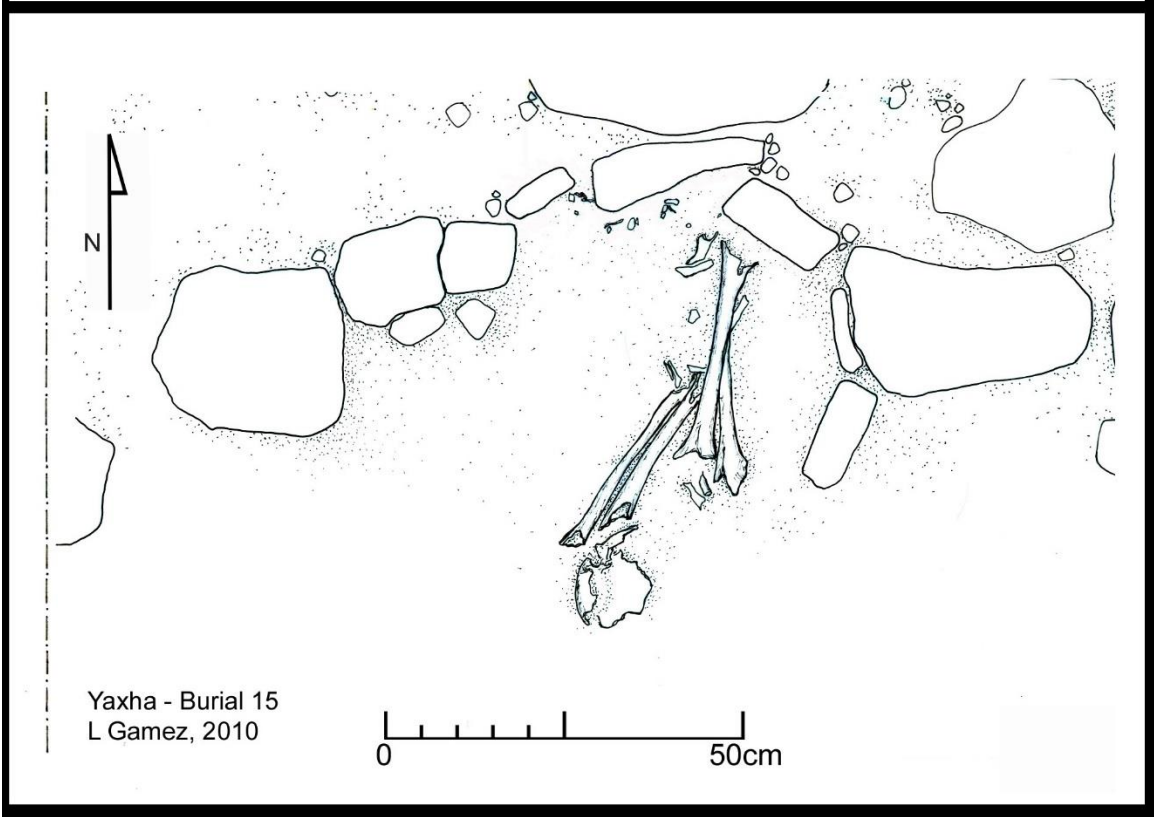
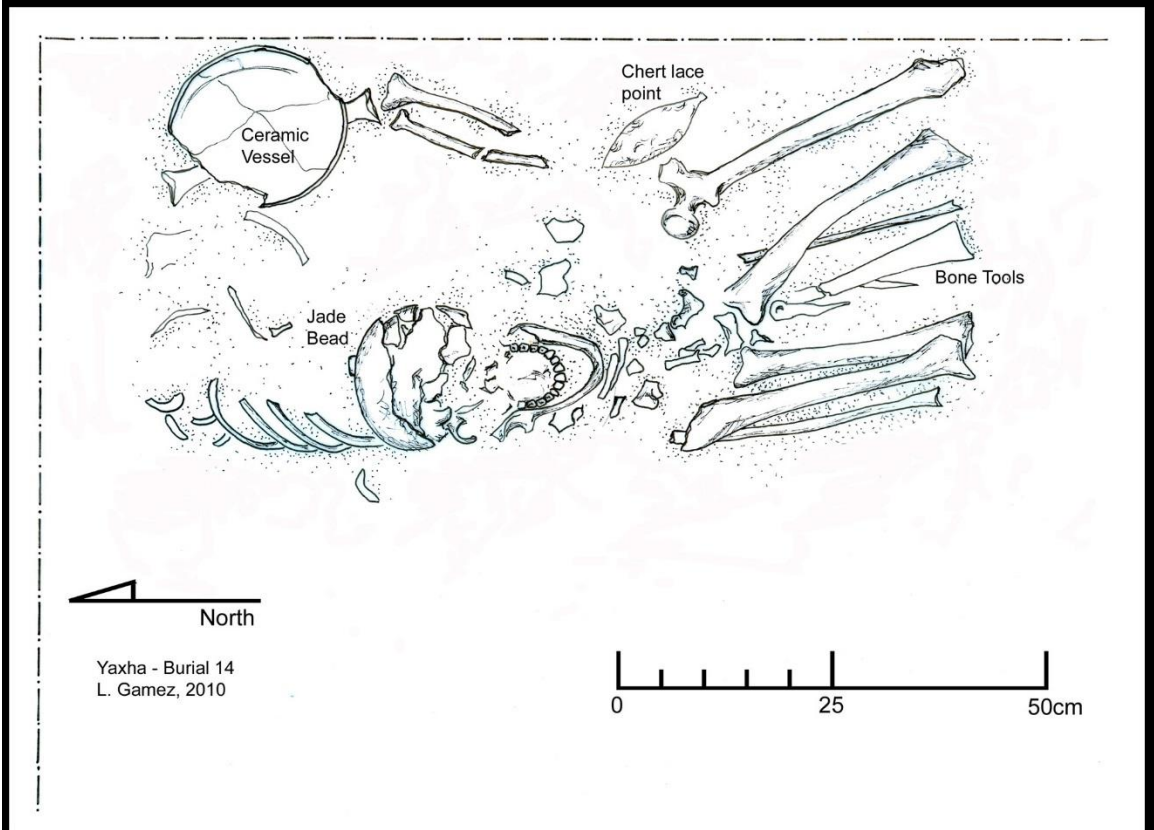


Fig. 7.10. Burials 14a and 15, HECH-Cheje.

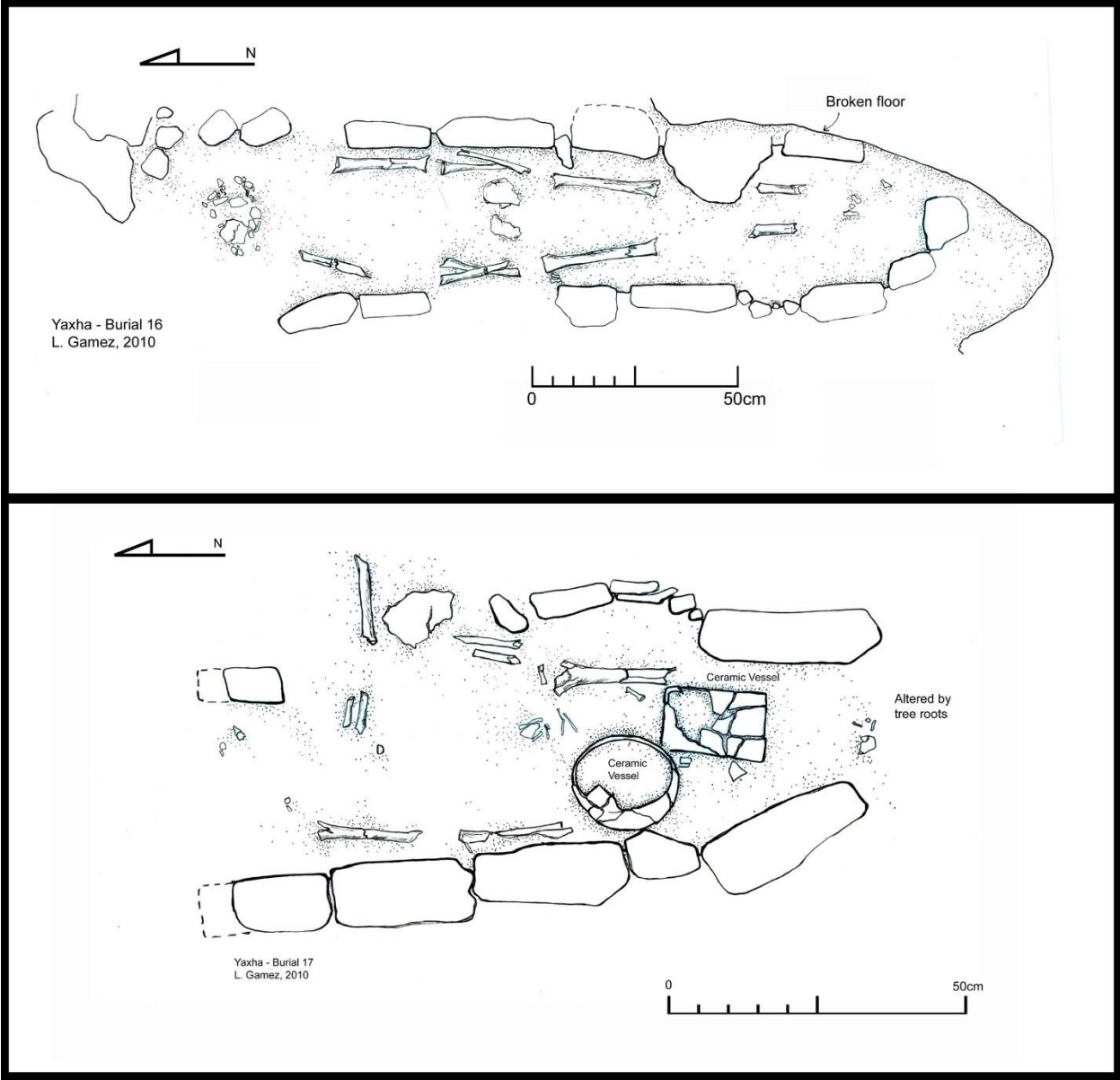


Fig. 7.11. Burials 16 and 17, HE CR-Saraguate.

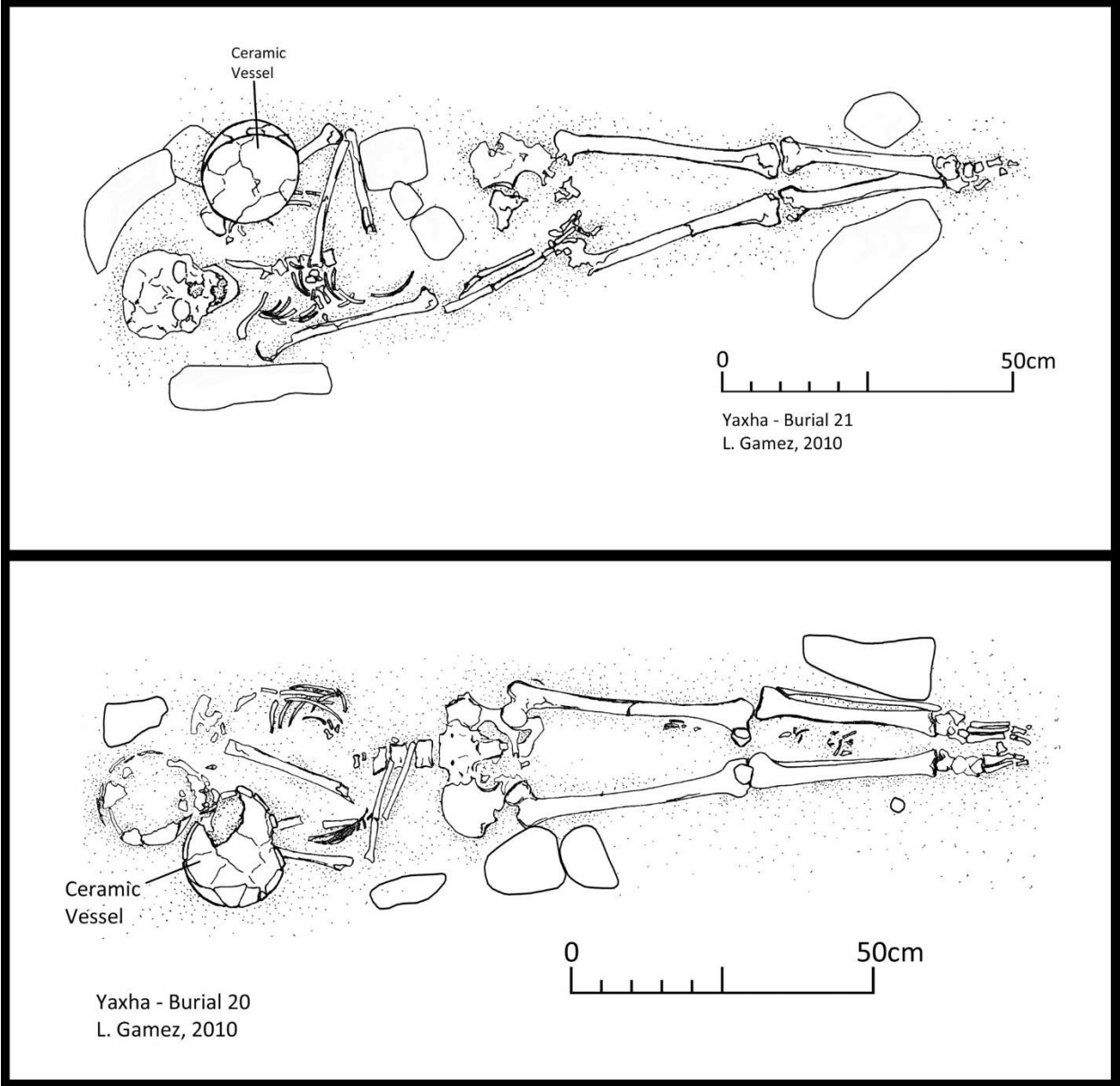


Fig. 7.12. Burials 20 and 21, LECR-Chichicua.

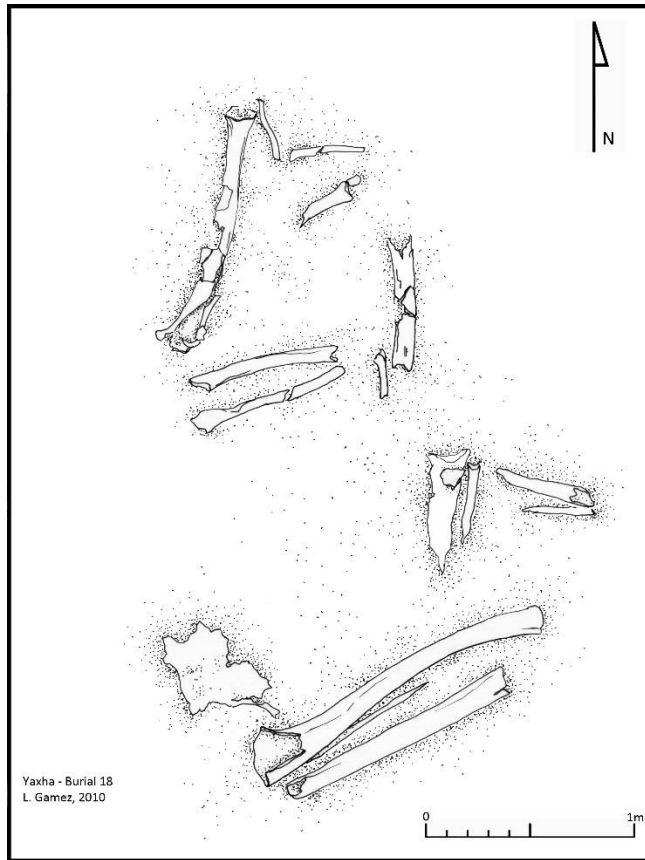


Fig. 7.13. Burial 18, LECR-Escobo.

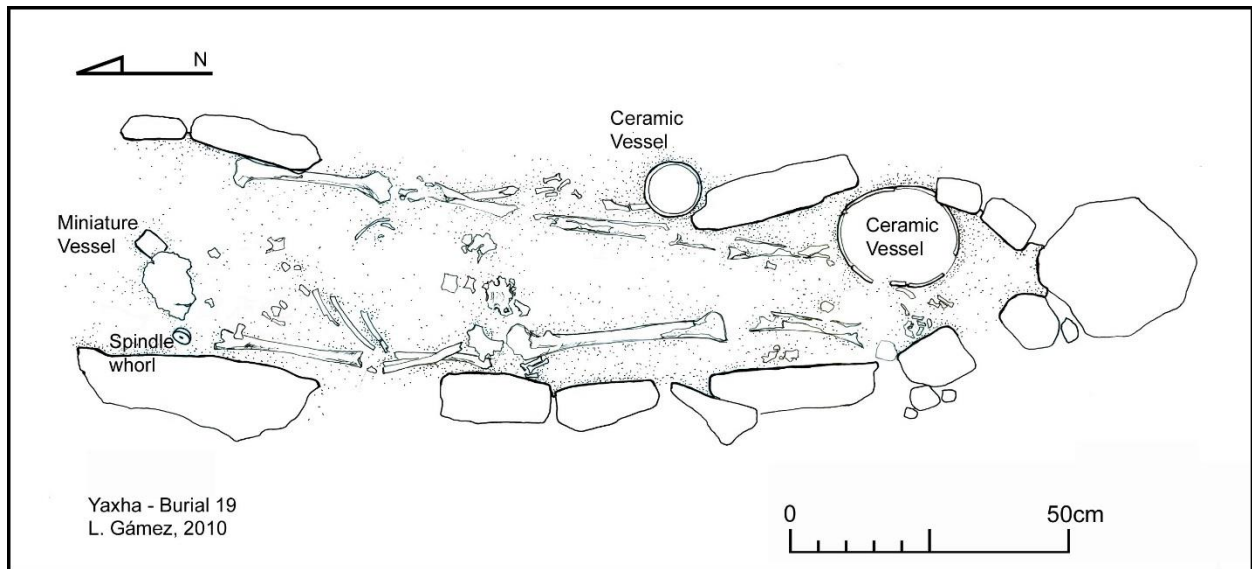


Fig. 7.14. Burial 19, LECR-Coroza.

7.4. SUMMARY: RITUALS OF DEATH AND LIFE AMONG YAXHA'S PEOPLES

Based on his studies from Tikal's ample sample of burials, caches, and "problematic deposits," M. Becker (1992, 1993) proposed there was a symbolic similarity between all these different kinds of deposits. Human burials among the ancient Maya, aside from the obvious functional disposal of the dead, carry a metaphorical connotation of life-planting that express cultural ideas about a death-and-rebirth cycle (Becker 1992; Coggins 1988; Fitzsimmons 2009:67). Certain caches might have had similar connotations, particularly those containing human remains. The practical distinction of the modern scholarly categories remains problematic in some instances, as it is the case for Yaxha.

The examination of the available evidence from Yaxha leads to some relevant inferences:

- a. Deposits of human remains occur in all kinds of contexts within built spaces: public and private, elite and non-elite. These deposits occur in all sides of the patios or plazas, but there seems to be certain preference for the east side of their corresponding architectural compounds.
- b. Despite differences of socioeconomic status, there are some common, more frequent characteristics in the remains of funerary practices: Most burials are protected by simple crypts; bodies are extended supine, oriented from north to south with their heads to the north. Ceramic vessels are the most common artifact accompanying the dead, and among these, there are no noteworthy differences of ceramic quality or quantity between elite and non-elite contexts.

- c. Ritual deposits containing human remains go from clear reverential disposals of the dead to secondary deposits and other kinds of possibly votive deposits, one even containing the remains of a possible human sacrifice. Post-burial removal of bones has also been recorded. Interestingly, these kinds of behavior are not limited to public or elite contexts, they were also found at domestic contexts, including some commoner residential units.

In all, ritual activity involving human remains is the most pervasive one found around Yaxha's residential units. It is clear that by the Terminal Classic royals, nobles, and commoners treated their dead similarly and carried out similar rituals involving the handling of human bones. There is indication that people at Yaxha had enough independence to perform their rituals in their homes and certain variability among cases has been identified. Nevertheless, there is also certain sense of unity in the funerary rituals of the different social ranks. I interpret this as an overall engaged behavior towards the ruling dynastic cosmology. The basic cosmological concepts expressed across the settlement were similar. There is no suggestion of resistance and instead of passive compliance, the examples of secondary burials and handling of bones support better a more engaged attitude.

Table 7.1. Description of Burials by Social Rank

Context	Burial	Location	Description	Furniture	Osteology
Royal	Of-10	East Acropolis, Str. 216. Over bedrock.	Funerary vaulted chamber. No bones were found inside but the chamber was apparently sealed. N-S orientation (Hermes et al 1996:279). Dated for the second part of the Late Classic (Tepeu 2).	3 vessels (1 bowl, 1 plate, and 1 cylinder), 9 lithics, 283 jade fragments, 187 shell fragments (including spondylus), 66 animal (?) and carved bones, 34 "other" (?) – including cinnabar and other unidentified materials.	Bones were not available for analysis.
	11a	Palace, Str. 389, central room, north side.	Primary. Double (with 11b). Extended. No funerary construction covered the body (Grupo K 2007).	Multiple broken artifact pieces from a "special deposit" within layer of ash.	Infant, 6-12 months (Scherer 2011).
	11b	Palace, Str. 389, central room, north side.	Primary. Double (with 11a). Extended. No funerary construction covered the body (Grupo K 2007).	Multiple broken artifact pieces from a "special deposit" within layer of ash.	Infant, 3-9 months (Scherer 2011).
Royal/ Noble	1	Maler Group, Str. 6 (East side of Plaza).	Single. Although the provenience is signaled by the field codes, no other characteristics of the burial are known.	No artifacts were reportedly found accompanying the bones (Morales 2000:14)	Incomplete skeleton. Possibly female. Adult. Dental modification: L-1 ¹ (B2)* (Scherer 2011).
	2	Maler Group, Str. 5 (east side of Plaza).	Single. Extended supine, N-S oriented, head to the north. It is not known if there was a funerary construction around the remains (Morales 2000:13).	Stingray spine near pubis (Morales 2000:13).	Old adult. Possible female. Teeth lost in life. Cranium possibly removed from grave (Scherer 2011).
	3	Maler Group, Str. 5 (east side of Plaza).	Single. No information about the position of the body is available. It apparently lacked any funerary construction and was associated to considerable amount of ceramic fragments and other artifacts.	2 whistle fragments (1 owl and 1 human), globular jar, multiple ceramic fragments, 1 snake upper maxillary.	Child, 3-5yrs.
	4	Maler Group, Str. 7 north façade. East side of Plaza.	Single. Although the provenience is signaled by the field codes, no other characteristics of the burial are known.	It is possible a set of lithic eccentrics were associated with this burial. However, the information has not been securely confirmed.	Female, adult. Sclerotic periostitis, Dental calculus. Dental modifications: ("Ik") LR-1 ¹ (B5), LR-1 ² (A4), L-C ^x (A1), R_C ^x (A4)* (Scherer 2011).
	5	Maler Group, Str. 7 north façade. East side of Plaza.	Report indicates this burial does not exist (Morales 2000:19). However, the remains in storage are identified as such, with the same provenience as Bu. 4.	This might be part of the same context than Bu. 4 and the set of lithic eccentrics. The information is not clear.	Remains in storage include only 23 long bone fragments, possibly from the same femur. Adult (Scherer 2011).
	T1	East Acropolis, Str. 216 (east side of Plaza).	Secondary, direct, multiple (includes parts of 3 individuals). Undefined body position. Over stairway (Hermes 1996)	No artifacts were related to the human remains.	Bones were not available for analysis.

Table 7.1. Description of Burials by Social Rank (Cont.)

Context	Burial	Location	Description	Furniture	Osteology
Royal/ Noble (cont.)	T6	East Acropolis, Str. 218 (south side of Plaza).	Primary, double. Flexed. N-S orientation, head to the north (Morales 2005).	It is unclear if there were any artifacts directly related to the burial.	Bones were not available for analysis.
	T7	East Acropolis, Str. 218 (south side of Plaza).	Primary. Single. Flexed. N-S orientation, head to the north (Morales 2005). It is not clear if there was any kind of funerary construction.	It is unclear if there were any artifacts directly related to the burial.	Bones were not available for analysis.
	T8	East Acropolis, Str. 218 (south side of Plaza).	Primary. Single. Extended supine. N-S orientation, head to the north. Simple crypt (Morales 2005).	Jade pendant and another pendant of unknown material.	Bones were not available for analysis.
	7	North Acropolis, Str. 146 (southwest side of Plaza).	Primary, single. Extended, over left side. Unknown orientation. Simple crypt.	Multiple shell beads: 1 necklace and two bracelets, one from each wrist (Grupo K 2007).	Possibly female. 14-17yrs. Dental modification: L-I ¹ (variación de A3), L-I ² (A4), R-I ² (A4), L-C ^x (B5), and R-C ^x (B5)* (Scherer 2011).
	8	North Acropolis, Str. 146 (southwest side of Plaza).	Single. Although the provenience is signaled by the field codes, no other characteristics of the burial are known.	It is not known if there were any artifacts associated with this burial.	Possibly masculine. Adolescent (Scherer 2011).
	9	North Acropolis, Str. 147 (southwest side of Plaza).	Primary, single. Located in the space between Str. 145 and 147. Extended, supine position. No funerary construction was recorded.	Multiple artifact fragments from "Midden 2", including one shell bead and one anthropomorphic ceramic figurine fragment (Grupo K 2007).	Infant, 8-16 months (Scherer 2011).
	10	North Acropolis, Str. 147 (southwest side of Plaza).	Primary, single. Under floor in the space between Str. 145 and 147 (Grupo K 2007). Position unknown. It is not clear if there was a funerary construction.	10 shell beads and one obsidian prismatic blade.	Child, 6-10 years (Scherer 2011).
	13	North Acropolis, in front of platform's façade.	Exact location in front of the platform is unclear. Extended over right side, with head oriented to the west. Simple crypt (Grupo K 2007).	It is unclear if there were any artifacts associated with this burial.	Adult. Possibly masculine. Tubular oblique (pseudo-annular) cranium modification (Scherer 2011).

Table 7.1. Description of Burials by Social Rank (Cont.)

Context	Burial	Location	Description	Furniture	Osteology
Noble	A	West Group, Str. 109 (west side of patio).	No details about the human remains are known. Vaulted construction, likely a formal crypt (Hellmuth 1971).	Burial reported looted (Hellmuth 1971).	Bones unavailable. Their current location is unknown.
	B	West Group, Str. 103 (central within patio).	Single, apparently extended, N-S orientation with the head to the north (Hellmuth 1971). Likely simple crypt.	2 ceramic vessels of unknown characteristics.	Bones unavailable. Their current location is unknown.
	C	West Group, Str. 103 (central within patio).	Single, extended, N-S orientation, head to the north (Hellmuth 1971). It is unknown if there was any funerary construction.	1 ceramic vessel of unknown characteristics.	Bones unavailable. Their current location is unknown.
	D	West Group, Str. 103 (central within patio).	Apparently single and oriented S-N with the head to the south (Hellmuth 1971). However, available information is very limited.	No artifacts were found in association to the remains (Hellmuth 1971).	Bones unavailable. Their current location is unknown.
High-end Commoner	14a	Cheje, Str. 13J-4 (west side of Patio), under center east façade.	Primary. Single (mixed with 14b). Flexed, prone, arm and feet tied on back, disarticulated head over back. Inside simple crypt. N-S orientation, head to the north.	Tripod bowl. Flint lance point. Jade square bead. Spondylus rectangular bead. Bone feather handle, bone hook and needle, bone tube, 2 bone awls.	Male, adult (~35-50yrs). Left arm missing. Porotic hyperostosis. Striate periostitis. Healed broken rib, phalanx, and metacarpal. Perimortem damage to the cervical 1, broken frontal bone (Scherer 2011).
	14b	Cheje, Str. 13J-4 (west side of Patio), under center east façade.	Secondary? Single (mixed with 14a). Unknown position, most likely disarticulated. No funerary construction.	1 bowl.	Adult, undetermined sex. Periostitis. Bone texture suggestive of cave burial (Scherer 2010).
	15	Cheje, Str. 13J-1 (north side of the patio), under center south façade.	Secondary? Single. Unknown position, apparently disarticulated, highly eroded. No funerary construction – bones found within a layer of compact mortar and stones.	No artifacts were found in direct association to the human remains.	Partial skeleton. Adolescent, possibly female. It is impossible to observe pathology due to bad preservation (Scherer 2010).
	16	Saraguata, Str. 12N-2 (east side of patio) west façade.	Primary, single. Extended supine. N-S orientation, head to the north. Inside simple crypt.	1 bowl. 1 bone needle. A set of flint and obsidian eccentrics was collected outside the crypt.	Adult (>35yrs), male. It is impossible to observe pathology due to bad preservation (Scherer 2010).

Table 7.1. Description of Burials by Social Rank (Cont.)					
Context	Burial	Location	Description	Furniture	Osteology
High-end Commo ner	17	Saraguat e, Str. 12N-2 (east side of patio) west façade.	Primary, single. Extended supine. N-S orientation, head to the north. Inside simple crypt.	2 ceramic vessels: 1 cylinder and 1 plate. 1 jade bead. 1 limestone spindle-whorl. A set of flint and obsidian eccentrics was collected outside the crypt.	Adolescent, possibly female. It is impossible to observe pathology due to bad preservation. Dental modification: Notching on mesial and distal aspects on I ¹¹ and I ^{1D} similar to C9* but not the same (Scherer 2010).
Low-end Commo ner	18	Escobo, Str. 13P-1, east side of platform.	Primary, single. Supine with legs and arms flexed. Head and right femur removed. N-S orientation, head to the north. No funerary construction.	No artifacts accompanied the remains. One single rectangular limestone block was set over body.	Adult, feminine. Healed broken femur (Scherer 2010).
	19	Corozo, Str. 16P-2, east side of platform.	Primary, single. Extended, supine. N-S orientation, head to the north. Simple crypt.	3 ceramic vessels: 1 cylinder, 1 plate, and 1 miniature cylinder. 1 limestone spindle-whorl.	30-45 years, probably masculine. Periostitis. Unidentified cranium modification (Scherer 2010).
	20	Chichicua, 11J-2, south side of patio.	Primary, double. Extended, supine. N-S orientation, head to the north. Simple crypt.	1 ceramic bowl.	30-40 years, feminine, and 36-40 week fetus. Scleroticperiostitis in adult individual. Tabular oblique cranium modification and dental modification: L-I ¹ (B2), L-I ² (A4), R-I ² (A4), L-C ^x (B5), R-C ^x (B5)* (Scherer 2010).
	21	Chichicua, 11J-2, south side of patio.	Primary, single. Extended, supine. N-S orientation, head to the north. Simple crypt.	1 ceramic bowl.	>35 years, masculine. Caries (Scherer 2010).

*Dental modification style classification from Romero 1986.

8. CACHING AND SCATTERING: DEDICATION AND TERMINATION RITUALS

The ancient Maya engaged in complex ritual events that involved the reverential disposal of ritual paraphernalia. This ritual paraphernalia might include regular everyday utensils, special ritual utensils, foodstuffs, or even human remains. What defines their character as ritual paraphernalia for us is the form in which they were disposed of. This disposal might take the form of buried deposits or superficial scatterings and it might include one single artifact or several. The artifacts might be bundled together or dispersed over a particular area. We generally understand these deposits as the residue of ritual action that consecrates particular spaces (Kunen et al 2002:197). However, there are at least two different categories: a. Dedication, and b. Termination, both understood as dedication or termination of architectural features.

This chapter describes and analyses the evidence for these kinds of rituals at Terminal Classic Yaxha. The evidence comes from residential units that are representative of the four social categories that are used throughout this dissertation: royals, nobles, high-end commoners and low-end commoners. The traces of ritual dedication and termination in these different social categories are compared in search for indicators about the strategies that people used to interact with the ruling dynastic cosmology in Terminal Classic Yaxha. As in

previous chapters, royal ritual and symbolism is taken to represent this cosmology and the objective is to test how much non-royals participated in it. The hypothesized attitudes or strategies of interaction are 1. Active engagement, 2. Resistance, and 3. Passive compliance. Active engagement implies a very similar ritual behavior among the different social ranks. Resistance implies a very different behavior with the use of contradictory symbols among the different ranks. Passive compliance is defined as an in-between behavior, implying a partial/selective use of some of the symbols of the dynastic cosmology without the introduction of different practices or symbols.

In this analysis of ritual dedication and termination, I have concluded that while nobles and high-end commoners were actively engaged with the dynastic cosmology, low-end commoners were either resistant or passively complying. Dedication and termination were similarly conducted in royal, noble, and high-end commoner residences, but they were either barely or no conducted at all in low-end commoner residences.

8.1. ROYAL, NOBLE, AND COMMONER RITUAL DEDICATION AT YAXHA

Both dedication and termination were rituals apparently derived from a human-centered understanding of the world, in which buildings, monuments, and other features had a human-like life cycle. Constructions were even described using the same words used to describe human body parts; while at the same time, houses and temples (god's houses), were also models of the cosmos (Boteler Mock 1998:4; Stuart 1998:395; Taube 1998:429). Thorough dedication rituals, buildings were brought to life. As a human production (as opposed to divine),

new or newly renovated buildings needed to be provided with their corresponding souls through ritual action (Boteler Mock 1998; Freidel et al 1993:234-235; Stuart 1998).

Archaeologically, dedication rituals are signaled by caches within architecture. The ancient Maya placed these caches in specific locations within the constructions: in axial positions or on the corners. They usually followed the same principles of cosmological directionality expressed in architectural layouts (see Chapters 3 and 5). In general, caches are common findings around the Classic Maya Lowlands and are rather easy to identify as meaningful deposits (Ashmore 1991; Becker 1992; Chase and Chase 1998; Coe 1959, 1965; Kunen et al 2002; Mathews and Garber 2004).

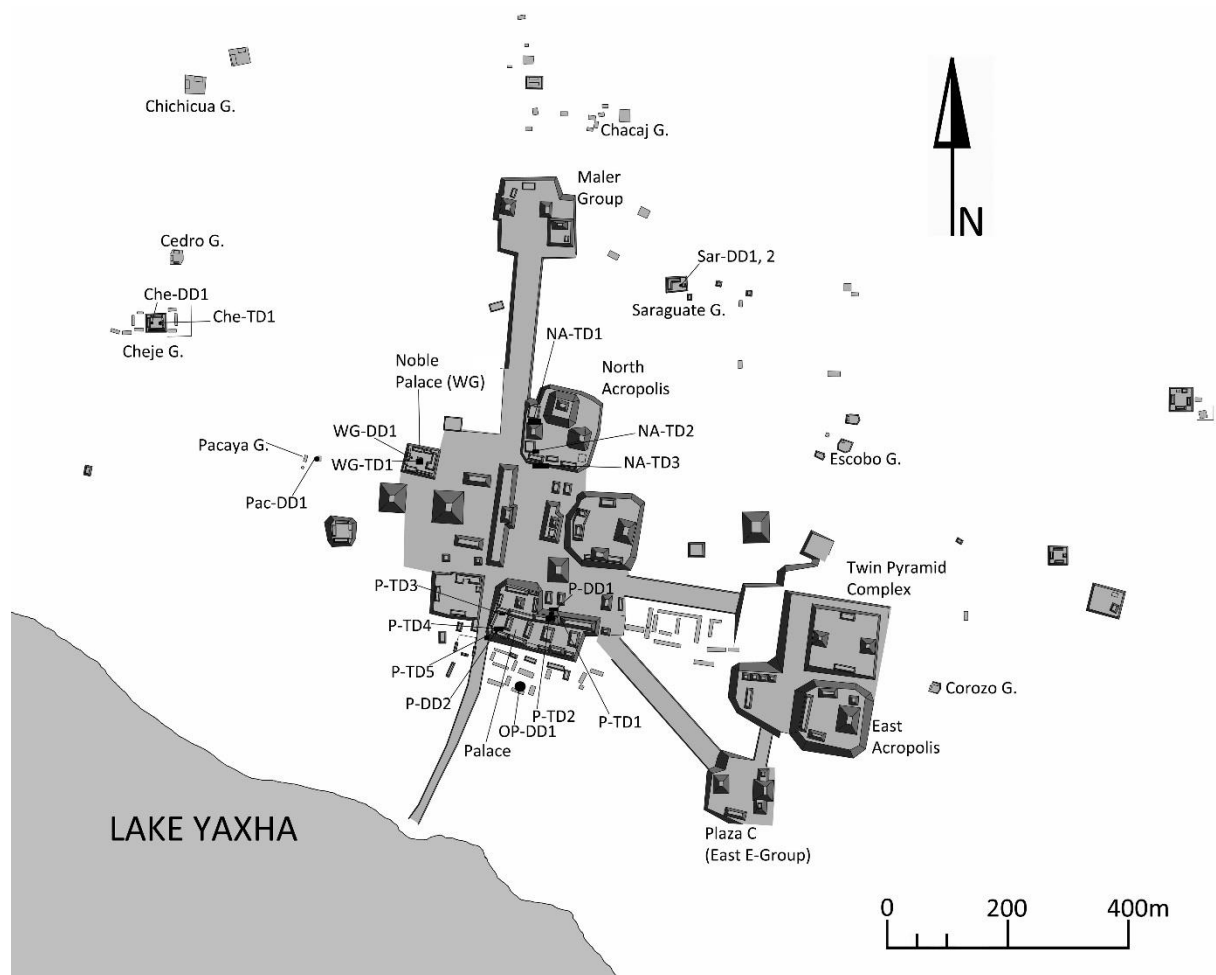


Fig. 8.1. Map of Yaxha showing the location of Dedicatory Deposits (DD) and Termination Deposits (DT).

There are only a few cases of Terminal Classic caches at Yaxha. However, there are known examples from all defined social rank categories: royals, nobles, and high- and low-end commoners. Table 8.1 synthesizes the information from all known dedicatory deposits in residential units at Yaxha. In the royal palace, a Terminal Classic bowl was cached on the northern axis of Str. 389, the façade towards the South Ballgame Court (P-DD1 in Fig. 8.1). It was an orange bowl with red and black decoration buried under the floor (Fig. 8.2). It is unknown if it was containing any perishable material by the time of its interment, but there is also the possibility that it was placed upside-down as other similar findings around Yaxha, including those from the noble palace and two low-end commoner residences.



Fig. 8.2. Terminal Classic cached bowl from the Royal Palace (Palace DD1).

No other Terminal Classic cache has been located at the royal palace so far, but there is one Late Preclassic cache found on the northern axis of Str. 375 (P-DD2), on the south side of Patio 4 (*Offering 39*, Grupo K 2007). In this case, a *Sierra Rojo* vessel containing two freshwater snail shells, one obsidian core, two obsidian prismatic blades, and one chert flake, was sealed

under the fourth floor. Although several centuries separate the two dedicatory deposits, it is clear that by the Terminal Classic, this was a very old practice at Yaxha. It also suggests that constructions could have been dedicated only once in their earlier times. The royal palace at Yaxha was first built sometime during the Preclassic and continue to grow until the Terminal Classic.

Similarly, the only dedicatory deposit that has been found has been dated to the Late Preclassic and not to the Terminal Classic (WG-DD1). It was a *Sierra Rojo* bowl cached on the east axis of Str. 109 (*Offering 36* - Grupo K 2007). It was placed upside-down over a group of sherds of unknown characteristics and an obsidian prismatic blade. It is possible that despite its subsequent later construction phases, this part of the house was dedicated in its Preclassic beginnings.

Royal	Palace DD1	North axis, Str. 389 in north side of patio.	Polychrome bowl (YXMC068).	Terminal Classic
	Palace DD2 (aka <i>Ofrenda 39</i> , Grupo K 2007)	North axis, Str. 375 on south side of patio.	Sierra Rojo deep bowl and Boxcay Café plate. 70 lithics: 28 obsidian, 37 chert. 3 bone artifacts, 33 animal bone fragments, 28 conch-shells.	Late Preclassic
Noble	West Group DD1 (aka <i>Ofrenda 36</i> , Grupo K 2007)	East axis, Str. 109 on west side of patio.	Sierra Rojo vessel, upside-down over obsidian prismatic blade and sherd.	Late Preclassic
High-End Commoner	Cheje DD1 (aka Bu.14a)	East axis, Str. 13J-4 on west side of patio.	Human remains, Tinaja Rojo bowl, bone tools, jade pendant, spondylus bead, chert lance point	Terminal Classic
	Cheje DD2 (aka Bu.14b)	East axis, Str. 13J-4 on west side of patio.	Secondary burial of human remains and ceramic bowl.	Terminal Classic
	Saraguato DD1	West façade, Str. 12N-2 on east side of patio.	Lithic eccentrics: 3 obsidian, 5 chert	Terminal Classic
	Saraguato DD2	West façade, Str. 12N-2 on east side of patio.	Lithic eccentrics: 2 obsidian, 8 chert	Terminal Classic
Low-End Commoner	Group O-P DD1 (aka <i>Ofrenda 9</i> , Hermes 2006).	North axis, Str. 350 on south side of patio.	Cambio sin Engobe bowl, upside-down.	Terminal Classic
	Pacaya DD1	West axis, Str. 14K-2 on the east side of patio.	Tinaja Rojo jaguar jar, upside-down.	Terminal Classic

Because of their similarity, I must compare here the findings from the royal and noble palaces with others from low-end commoner residences. I get back to the very different sets of dedicatory deposits from the high-end commoners afterwards.

A Terminal Classic dedicatory deposit (OP-DD1) was found in a residential unit of more modest characteristics, a low-end commoner residence located to the south of the royal Palace (Fig. 8.1) (“Offering 9,” Hermes 1995). This residential unit is one of a set of at least eight contiguous quadrangular patios to the south of the royal palace (identified in Table 7.1 as Group O-P). The deposit was defined by a plain *Cambio Sin Engobe* bowl. It was buried upside-down in front of the northern façade of Str. 350.

Another very similar deposit to the last one was excavated in the small low-end commoner residence (LECR) Pacaya (Pacaya DD1), to the west of Yaxha’s civic center. In this case, a *Tinaja Rojo* jar was located upside-down, by the axis of the western façade of Str. 14K13 on the east side of LECR-Pacaya (Fig. 8.1). The vessel has a pouring opening in the shape of a jaguar head, with its mouth as the opening. It also has four little paws around its base (Fig. 8.3). A small hole was poked in the vessel’s body, suggesting the “killing” of the vessel before burial.

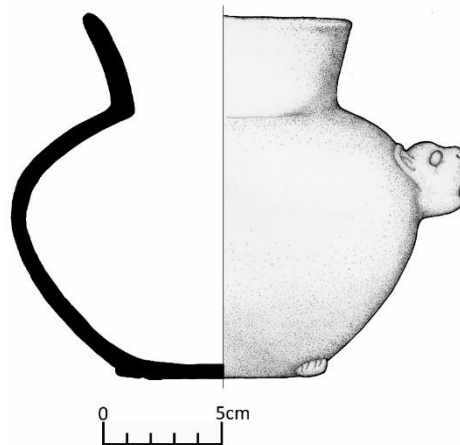


Fig. 8.3. Terminal Classic Jaguar-vessel cached in LECR-Pacaya (drawing by L. Gamez).

So far, these dedicatory deposits suggest that since Preclassic times, ceramic vessels were the main kind of artifact cached for dedication. Although the kinds of vessels vary, there seems to be certain significance in placing the vessel upside-down. It probably was placed over other perishable materials or spilled liquid. Although the known cases are few, it can be said that this was a ritual practiced by royals, nobles, and low-end commoners. However, cached vessels are not the only kind of dedicatory deposit that has been found at Yaxha. Dedication in high-end commoner residential units has proven to have been much more elaborate.

The most complex dedicatory deposit found so far at Yaxha was found at the higher-rank commoner house-group named Cheje. It is the Terminal Classic Burial 14a (Cheje-DD1; Table 7.1), also discussed in the previous chapter. It was located by the axis of the east façade of the Cheje Group's western construction (Str. 13J-3). As indicated in Chapter 7, although this deposit contains the remains of an adult man, it is different from other burials. There is evidence suggesting this was a human sacrifice and not a regular reverential interment. The body was buried facing down, with the hands and feet tied together over the individual's back. The dismembered head was also facing down and located over his back. His left arm was missing.

Several objects accompanied the human remains from Bu. 14a. Along with a *Tinaja Rojo* tripod bowl, a set of unusual artifacts was buried along with the individual from Bu. 14. These artifacts included: one jade square pendant carved with a quadripartite motif; one rectangular spondylus bead; three bone awls; two bones tubes, a possible parts of enema syringes; one bone needle fragment or pin; one bone fish-hook; one human bone feather-whisk handle; and

one brown chert lance point. Taken altogether, these set of artifacts could well represent a “ritual tool-kit” used and later deposited in a careful and meaningful way (see also discussion in chapter 7).

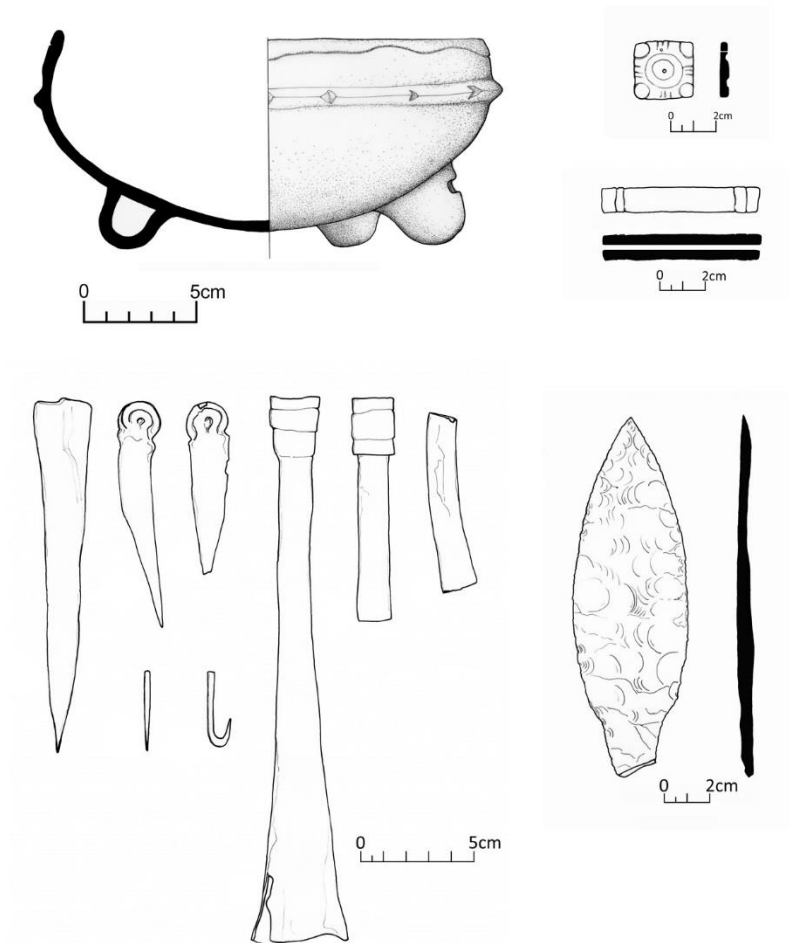


Fig. 8.4. “Ritual kit” cached in HECR-Cheje along with possible human sacrifice (see Burial 14a in Chapter 7) (drawings by L. Gamez).

Another dedicatory deposit including human remains was found in the same location as the previous. Also located in the east axis of Str. 13J-3 in the west side of the Central Patio of the HECR-Cheje, another was disturbed by the introduction of Burial 14a. Burial 14b (Cheje-DD2, Table 7.1) refers to the deposit of pieces of long human bones and a ceramic bowl (Fig.

8.4). As indicated in Chapter 7, these bones show signs of having been in a cave environment for a while before their interment in the HECR-Cheje. More than the reverential burial of a deceased relative, this deposit can be interpreted as a dedicatory offering as well.

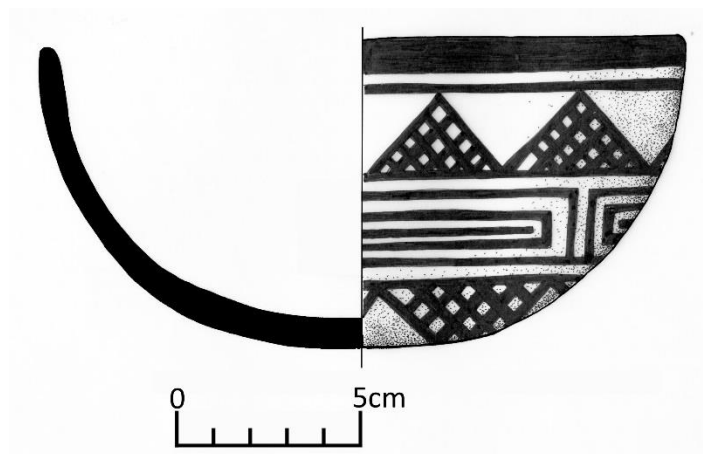


Fig. 8.5. Terminal Classic bowl cached in HECR-Cheje along with human bones (Cheje-DD2 in Table 7.1, see also Bu. 14b in Chapter 7)

A very different kind of dedicatory deposit was found in the high-end commoner residence (HECR) Saraguate. Here, two sets of buried lithic eccentrics were collected) nearby Burials 16 and 17 (Saraguate-DD1 and DD2 in Table 8.1, Fig. 8.6), in front of the eastern ritual construction. Although these eccentrics were generally found in association with the burials, they were outside the crypts protecting the bodies, likely place there in a separate event. This kind of ritual deposit might have different connotations than the ones described before. No other deposit like these ones have been found in the other investigated residences. However, for the purposes of this study, I must indicate these deposits are very similar to others elsewhere in the civic center. Similar deposits of lithic eccentrics were found in the monumental Maler Group, in this case associated with Burial 4 (see table 7.1), and in the East Acropolis.

The detail positioning of each piece in HECR-Saraguat'e's deposits was lost during excavation and meaningful information was lost. However, following the classification and interpretation of motifs worked out by William Coe after Tikal's collection (in Moholy-Nagy 2008), some general cosmological concepts seem to be present.

The first set of eccentrics, the one associated with Bu. 16, includes 3 obsidian and 5 flint pieces. The motifs include a red-with-yellow-strokes chert "sun," a white chert "human bone" (femur?), and "insects" or "arachnids" – there is one yellow chert "tick" and one grey obsidian "scorpion". There is also one white chert bifacial projectile point and a grey obsidian one.

The set of eccentrics associated with Bu. 17 includes 8 cherts and 2 obsidian pieces. There are two chert "sun" representations, one red and one yellow, as well as two red chert "crescent moon" representations. There is also one yellow chert "scorpion" and three "snakes", one red and two white; along with one grey projectile point. Clearly both color and shape were combined in a meaningful way in these sets of artifacts, combining themes of life and death.

Although the meaning of these lithic eccentrics and of their deposit is somewhat mysterious. Their similarity to others in Yaxhas civic center, and even to others in foreign kingdoms like Tikal, suggest a connection between the ritual practices of the inhabitants from Saraguat'e and the general cosmological principles behind the artifacts and their ritual deposition. HECR-Saraguat'e's deposits are very different from those so far known from the royal and noble palaces. Nevertheless, they are similar to others that represent the ways of the ruling dynastic cosmology.

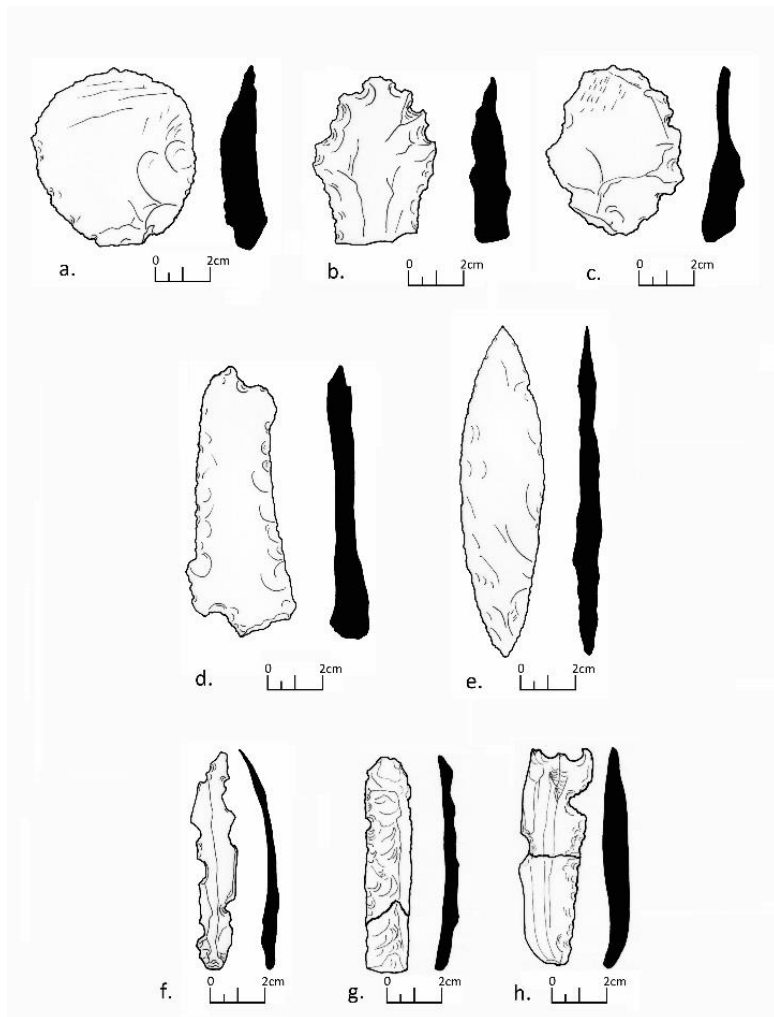


Fig. 8.6. Terminal Classic cached lithic eccentrics from HECC-Saraguat (Saraguat DD1): a. red and yellow chert, sun?; b. red chert, arachnid?; c. yellow chert, tick?; d. white chert, long bone?; e. milky-white chert projectile point; f. grey obsidian, prismatic blade with notches, snake?; g. grey obsidian, unidentified motif (Type 11 in Tikal's classification); h. grey obsidian, scorpion?.

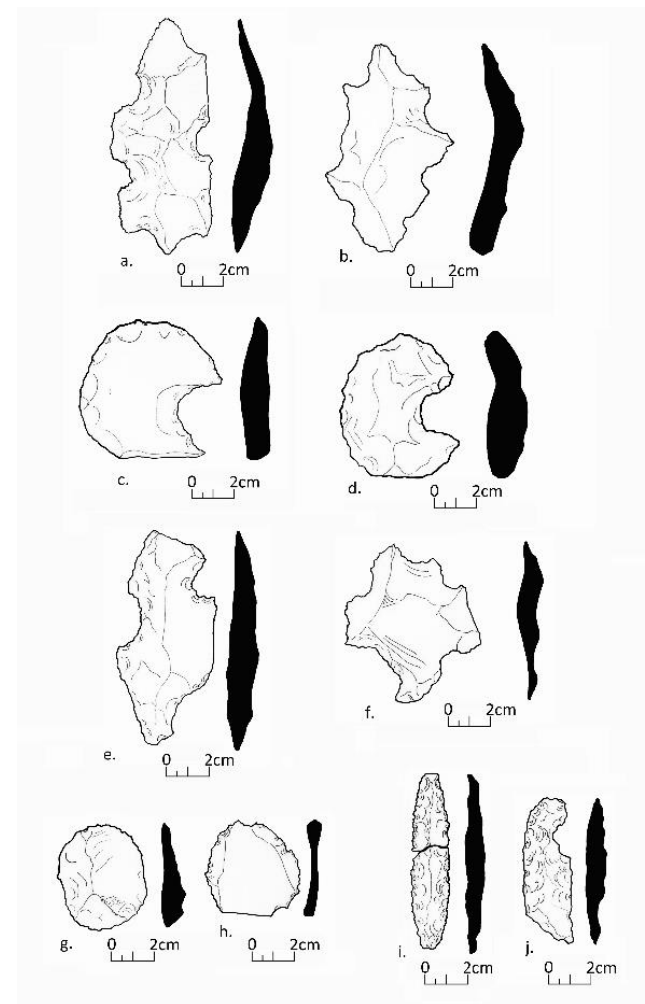


Fig. 8.7. Terminal Classic cached lithic eccentrics from HECC-Saraguat (Saraguat D2): a. red chert, snake?; b. grey chert, unidentified motif; c and d. red chert, crescent moon; e. white chert, scorpion; f. yellow chert, scorpion; g. yellow chert, sun?; h. red chert, sun?; i. grey obsidian, projectile point; j. grey obsidian, incomplete, unidentified motif.

8.2. ROYAL, NOBLE, AND COMMONER RITUAL TERMINATION AT YAXHA

While ritual dedication brought life to human creations, termination rituals ended it. Termination refer to the ritual finalization of previously animated human productions. In opposition to dedication, when animating forces are introduced or fed into itmes, termination implies the dispersal of such forces. The ritual actions in this instance might imply breakage or drilling of artifacts, partial destruction of architecture, and/or scattering of broken elements (Boteler Mock 1998). Various studies around the Classic Lowlands indicate that specific content within apparently similar deposits is variable (Ashmore 1991; Becker 1992; Botler Mock 1998; Chase and Chase 1998; Coe 1959, 1965; Kunen et al 2002; Mathews and Garber 2004; Navarro 2009; Pagliaro et al 2003; Stanton et al 2008). However, this was a common practice all around the Classic Maya Lowlands and similar general cosmological concepts are sometimes at least partially recognizable.

Termination deposits have also been widely identified around the Classic Lowlands. However, their identification has been more problematic and they are sometimes taken for domestic refuse or even post-occupational squatters' refuse (Boteler Mock 1998; Navarro 2009; Pagliaro et al 2003; Stanton et al 2008). Termination deposits have been identified at Yaxha, both in the monumental compounds of the civic center and in some residences around it, particularly those of higher rank (see TD's in Fig. 8.1).

Table 8.2. Termination Deposits in Residential Units

Table 8.2. Termination Deposits in Residential Units			
Royal	Palace TD1 (aka <i>Basurero 7</i> , Grupo K 2007)	Platform's north façade, in front of South Ballgame Court	Unknown number of sherds and one miniature vessel.
			20 figurine fragments and 1 whole figurine.
			82 lithics: 1 obsidian blade. Chert: 15 cores, 17 nodules, 38 flakes, 1 scraper, 4 knives, 2 chisels, 1 ax. Also, 1 hammer-stone and 1 <i>metate</i> .
			3 Bone artifacts: 2 spatulas, 1 pendant. 127 animal bone fragments (including 5 deer antler). 1 shell plaque and 251 conch-shells.
	Palace TD2 (aka <i>Entierro 11</i> , <i>Ofrenda 37</i> , and <i>Ofrenda 38</i> ; Grupo K 2007)	Inside rooms 2 and 3, Str. 389, in front of South Ballgame Court	Reportedly abundant, but unknown number of sherds; 3 broken and incomplete vessels (YXMC063-65).
			8 figurine fragments. 1 censer fragment.
			47 lithics: 3 Obsidian prismatic blades; 44 chert, including 10 flakes, 4 cores, 5 nodules, 2 axes. Also, 2 <i>metates</i> , 1 hammer-stone and 1 polishing-stone.
			3 bone artifacts (including two tubular beads). 138 animal bone fragments (including 1 deer antler).
	Palace TD3 (aka <i>Basurero 4</i> , Grupo K 2007)	North side, Patio 4, in front of Str. 365.	Reportedly abundant, but unknown number of sherds.
			16 figurine fragments. 2 censer fragments.
			97 lithics, including 3 obsidian pieces, 1 chert chisel, and 1 slate disc among many others.
			2 animal bone fragments and 1 conch-shell.
	Palace TD4 (aka <i>Basurero 5</i> , Grupo K 2007)	South side, Patio 4, in front of Str. 375.	Reportedly abundant but unknown number of sherds. 1 fragmented tripod bowl (YXMC056).
			58 figurine fragments, 3 censer fragments.
			143 lithics, including 8 obsidian blades and 2 chert projectile points. Also a miniature grinding-stone.
3 bone artifacts, including 2 tubular beads. 1 human bone. 12 animal bone fragments. 1 conch-shell.			
Palace TD5 (aka <i>Basurero 8</i> and <i>9</i> , Grupo K 2007)	Platform's southwest corner, over and around corner stairway.	Reportedly abundant but unknown number of sherds.	
		23 figurine fragments. 7 censers.	
		182 lithics: 8 obsidian prismatic blades, 2 obsidian flakes. Chert: 8 nodules, 34 cores, 34 flakes, 1 chisel, 2 scrapers, 4 knives, 3 axes. Also, 1 hammer-stone, 1 <i>metate</i> , 1 <i>mano</i> , and 1 polishing-stone.	
		17 human bone fragments. 196 animal bone fragments (including 3 deer antlers). 27 conch-shells.	
Noble	West Group TD1 (aka <i>Basurero 3</i> , Grupo K 2007 – Also partially excavated by Hellmuth, 1971)	Around central construction, Str. 103.	Reportedly abundant but unknown number of sherds. Miniature ceramic bottle (YXMC050) found inside big pot neck and rim (YXMC049).
			6 figurine fragments. 2 incense burner fragments.
			144 lithics: 128 chert artifacts, 2 obsidian (1 core, 1 prismatic blade), 14 polish-stone tools.
			14 animal bone fragments, 20 conch-shells.
High-End Commoner	Cheje TD1 (only partially excavated by AHY Project 2010)	In front of west façade of Str. 13J-2 on the east side of patio.	694 ceramic sherds.
			13 figurine fragments. 1 censer fragment. 1 ceramic drum fragment.
			37 chert artifacts, including 1 knife. 4 polished-stone artifacts, including two <i>metates</i> and 1 <i>mano</i> .
			4 animal bone fragments.

Yaxha's royal palace, like the rest of the city, was abandoned sometime by the end of the Terminal Classic. It was not abandoned in haste. Instead, it was ritually terminated before people's departure. Some rooms were sealed and several deposits of apparent refuse within layers of ash were left over the floors, particularly around and over stairways and in front of doorways. Similar deposits were found in other monumental compounds of the civic center, and also around the ritual constructions of the noble palace and the high-end commoner residence Cheje (Table 8.2).

These deposits are characterized as concentrations of broken artifacts, mostly ceramics, but they also contained other elements. Most ceramic figurines and/or whistles fragments come from these deposits (see Chapter 9). Lithics were also included. In addition, at least in deposits from the civic center, animal remains, including deer antlers. At the HECR-Cheje, a fragment of a ceramic drum was identified, suggesting that musical instruments other than whistles were sometimes included. Even more, at the royal palace, human remains were also included. There, the remains of two infants were located within the layer of ash and broken artifacts (Bu. 11a and b, see Chapter 7).

Artifacts in these deposits are generally broken and pieces do not connect with each other. This indicates that the artifacts were not broken in the location where they were finally deposited. In addition, burning of other perishable materials clearly took place before the placing of the broken elements. Despite the presence of ash, the artifact and bone fragments do not generally show traces of being exposed to fire. In all, the actions that created the deposits are burning of perishable materials and scattering of fragments of artifacts that could

have been used for ritual events: musical instruments, figurines, vessels, incense burners, lithic cutting tools, and sometimes animal and/or human remains.

As it has been discussed in detail by Pagliaro and colleagues (2003:77-81), termination deposits can be distinguished from regular domestic refuse both by their location and contents. Regular refuse was disposed outside the domestic compounds, while termination deposits are always located within built areas, over floors blocking passways, entrances, stairways, inside rooms or over platforms.

As mentioned earlier, this kind of deposit has been found in both public and private spaces at Yaxha. In domestic areas, the main interest of this dissertation, they were found exclusively in those of higher status: the royal and noble palaces and the HECR-Cheje. All excavated areas in the royal palace were marked by termination deposits. In the noble palace and HECR-Cheje, these have been found so far only in relation to the altars or shrines found in the center and on the east side in each group respectively.

No traces of termination rituals were located in the other investigated high-end commoner residence, HECR-Saraguate. However, due to the presence of trees, the excavations were carried out a couple of meters to the west of the eastern shrine and it is possible that it could have been missed by the excavation. No traces of termination rituals were detected in low-end commoner residences.

In sum, termination deposits occur at Yaxha exclusively in monumental compounds and higher status house-groups. There is the suggestion that they might occur only in association of constructions of special cosmological significance, like pyramids and domestic shrines, or the royal palace. As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, the Palace occupies a strongly meaningful

position within the layout of the site, on the south side of a basic cosmogram marked elsewhere by other significant constructions. In addition, as the palace was residence of the most prominent person in the settlement, both in political and religious terms, the occurrence of more reverential actions there than in other more regular house-groups can be expected.

8.3. SUMMARY: RITUAL DEPOSITS AMONG YAXHA'S DIFFERENT SOCIAL RANKS

Among the Classic Maya, life imbued into human creations through “dedication” ritual could be canceled thorough “termination” rituals. Constructions were certainly one kind of creation that was dedicated and terminated. However, not every “dedicated” location was necessarily “terminated”, at least not in the same archaeologically recognizable way. In general, at Yaxha dedicatory deposits were not limited to a particular social rank. Riches aside, dedication rituals were carried out in residences of all defined social ranks. In contrast, termination occurred only in high status contexts, possibly only in constructions of higher symbolic meaning, like specialized ritual constructions.

Moreover, observing the evidence from each residential unit independently, it is clear that even dedication was not a very common practice among low-end commoner peoples. A dedicatory cache was found only in one of the six recently investigated low-end commoner residences and in another residential unit investigated by a previous project. Further investigation in these and other residential units might provide more evidence for the practice of ritual dedication in low-end commoner residences. However, for the moment, these practice

can only be define as one that was practiced by only some of the low-end commoner household. Following the initial expectations used to characterize the attitudes/strategies of Yaxhaeans towards the ruling dynastic cosmology, this line of evidence suggest that the higher ranks were actively engaged while the lower ranks were rather resistant. They were somehow rejecting these kinds of ritual dedication/termination practices. However, because some of the households were conducting dedicatory rituals in their residences in the same ways that royals and nobles were, certain compliance might be also read in the evidence.

In all, the available evidence suggests certain unity of practice among the higher ranks, from royal to high-rank commoner. Nevertheless, at least in the most humble expression: the cached upside-down vessel, it also suggests certain unity with commoner practices. Economic considerations aside, dedication caches occurred in residential units of all ranks. If the symbolic intentions behind the action were the same as our scholarly interpretations suggest, then the cosmological principles behind them were shared or at least accessible to all peoples around the settlement.

9. RITUAL PARAPHERNALIA

Previous chapters have discussed certain artifacts because of their relevance for the different topics. Ceramics have been discussed in their aspect of possible status indicators (Chapter 4) and as possible indices of feasting events (Chapter 6). In addition, certain artifacts, including ceramics, lithics, and bone artifacts have been discussed in their connotation as grave goods (Chapter 7) and in passing as components of special ritual deposits (Chapter 8). However, the quantitative and distributional analysis of all artifacts potentially used in ritual events, like figurines and incense burners, are also relevant in addressing the questions posed by this dissertation.

I hypothesized that people actively engaged with the dynastic cosmology would have used the same kinds of ritual paraphernalia that royals used. Even if economic constraints limited their access to the same quality of objects, actively engaged people could display similar behavior using more economic imitations of the same objects. People resisting the dynastic cosmology would use different sets of ritual paraphernalia than royalty, somehow contradicting their message. Passively complying people would make a more selective use of ritual paraphernalia, using some but not all of the symbols of the dynastic cosmology. The examination of the distribution of ritual paraphernalia in the investigated residential units suggest once again, an active engagement from nobles and high-end commoners with the dynastic cosmology and a rather passive compliance from low-end commoners. Although low-

end commoners had access to similar artifacts than the higher ranks, they did not use them all as ritual paraphernalia.

9.1. CERAMIC VESSELS

Ceramic vessels are not necessarily ritual items, but some vessels were definitely used in ritual events, serving to different purposes according to the occasion. All complete or semi-complete vessels so far found at domestic contexts come from already discussed contexts: Burials, termination deposits, and dedicatory deposits (Table 9.1). The discussion here is limited to these complete or semi-complete vessels, fragments are not taken into account because typological and quantitative details of the collections from the royal and noble palaces are not available for comparison.

Ceramic vessels were used as ritual paraphernalia in residences of all social ranks. However, three of the six investigated low-end commoner residences did not yield such ceramic vessels. From all the other residences, including the royal and noble palaces and the high- and low-end commoner residences, no patterns of use of particular kinds of vessels in particular contexts have been discerned. Shapes, sizes, and types vary in the different contexts. As discussed in Chapter 4, despite differences of status, there is little typological variation in the Terminal Classic ceramics from Yaxha. No painted scenes or hieroglyphic inscriptions have been recorded in this period's ceramics. The only almost complete vessel where iconographic scenes are present is a *Retiro Gubiado Inciso* cylinder from the royal palace. This vessel depicts two

sitting lords facing each other, surrounded by pseudo-glyphs. Fragments of the same kind of ceramics were found at HECR-Cheje and LECR-Cedro.

In general, this short examination demonstrates that ceramic vessels were used as ritual paraphernalia in similar ways across the differently ranked residential units. With the only exception of those used in termination rituals which, as has been indicated in chapter 8, have been detected only in the three residences of the higher ranks – the royal palace, the noble palace (West Group), and the HECR-Cheje.



Fig. 9.1. Vessel with carved scene of two lords, Royal Palace (vessel on exhibit at the Yaxha Field Museum, photo by M. Pellecer).

Table 9.1. Ceramic Vessels in Ritual Contexts			
Social Category	Residential unit	Vessel	Context
Royal	Royal Palace	Cylinder with round lateral handles. <i>Retiro Gubiado Inciso</i> , 2 scenes of lords sitting over thrones. Broken and incomplete (YXMC052). Yaxha-BID Project's Midden 7.	Termination deposit by platform, South Ballgame Court.
		Miniature jar. Yaxha-BID Project's Midden 7.	Termination deposit by platform, South Ballgame Court.
		Bowl, tripod. <i>Achiote Group</i> . Broken and incomplete (YXMC056). Yaxha-BID's Project's Midden 5.	Termination deposit on north side of Patio 4.
		Miniature jar (amphora). In front of entrance to third room. Yaxha-BID Project's Offering 37.	Over floor, in front of central entrance to Str. 389, possibly as part of Termination deposit.
		Deep plate, tripod. <i>Tinaja Group</i> . Fragmented and incomplete. Yaxha-BID Project's Offering 38.	Termination deposit inside second room of Str. 389.
		Deep, big bowl. <i>Tinaja Rojo</i> . Fragmented and incomplete.	Termination deposit inside second room, Str. 389.
		Polychrome bowl. <i>Palmar Naranja Policromo</i> . Fragmented. Buried within the platform in front of the third room.	Dedicatory deposit inside platform, on northern axis, Str. 389.
Noble	West Group	Bowl with handle – " <i>cucharon</i> ". Unknown type. Yaxha-BID Project's Offering 30.	By southeast corner of platform.
		Miniature bottle. Unknown type. Surrounded by the neck rim of a broken pot. Yaxha-BID Project's Offering 31 within Midden 3.	Termination deposit over Str. 103.
		Three vessels of unknown characteristics reported by Hellmuth (1971, 1972).	Burials B and C.
High-End Commoner	Cheje	Bowl, tripod. <i>Camaron Inciso</i> . Broken and incomplete.	Bu 14a.
		Bowl. <i>Chinos Negro/Crema</i> . Broken and incomplete.	Bu 14b.
	Saraguate	Bowl. <i>Leona Rojo/Naranja</i> . Broken and incomplete.	Bu 16.
		Deep plate. <i>Tinaja Rojo</i> . Broken and incomplete.	Bu 17.
		Cylinder. <i>Tinaja Rojo</i> . Broken and incomplete.	Bu 17.
Low-End Commoner	Escobo	-----	-----
	Chichicua	Bowl, tripod. <i>Tinaja Rojo</i> . Broken, incomplete and highly eroded.	Bu 20.
		Bowl, tripod. <i>Tinaja Rojo</i> . Broken, incomplete and highly eroded.	Bu 21.
	Cedro	-----	-----
	Corozo	Deep plate. <i>Tinaja Rojo</i> . Broken and incomplete.	Bu 19.
		Cylinder. <i>Tinaja Rojo</i> . Broken and incomplete.	Bu 19.
		Miniature cylinder. <i>Tinaja Rojo</i> .	Bu 19.
Chacaj	-----	-----	
Pacaya	Jar with pouring opening in the shape of a jaguar head. <i>Tinaja Rojo</i> .	Dedicatory deposit on the axis of eastern construction.	

9.2. INCENSE BURNERS

Incense burning was a common practice in Maya rituals. Although remains of incense (*pom* or *copal*) have been found occasionally in archaeological excavations, it is not a common finding. It is more common to find ceramic incense burners. These are recognizable vessels of special shapes and decorations. Styles vary across time and region, but following the classification posed by P. Rice (1999:32), there are two basic kinds: image and non-image. The first ones are usually cylindrical vessels decorated by effigies, either full- or partial-figures, amid other complex decorations, usually appliqued. Non-image censers are usually open bowls, either with pedestal or biconical vases, or ladle censers. These might be also decorated, but most likely by simple repetitive appliques or incised patterns. Handles of ladle censers are hollow and often depict reptiles or feline motifs.

There is certainly overlap in the decorative attributes of the different censer types. In addition, some censers used lids, sometimes plane and sometimes decorated. While there is also overlap between censers and braziers, which have been suggested by Ball and Taschek (2007) to have been cooking utensils instead of ritual ones. However, according to the same authors, there is also the possibility that braziers could have been used sometimes to burn incense as well (Ball and Taschek 2007:454). The distinction between types in small sherds is sometimes impossible, as it is the case for Yaxha where no whole incense burners have been found so far. However, important observations are drawn from the available sample.

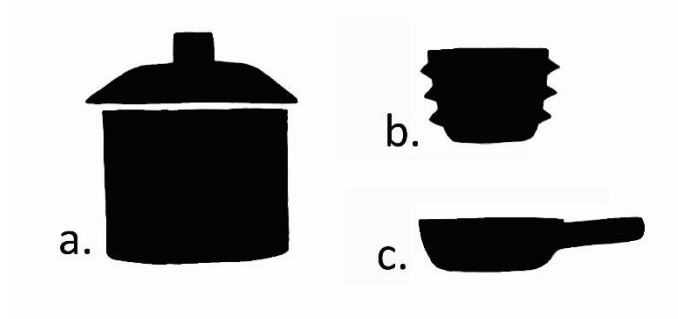


Fig. 9.2. Incense burner basic shapes recognized in Yaxha's ceramic collections:
 a. cylinder with lid (non-portable); b. spiked bowl (non-portable); c. ladle censer (portable) (drawing by L. Gamez).

Taken altogether, incense burner fragments have been found in most but not all excavated architectural compounds at Yaxha. They tend to be more abundant in the civic center than in the residences in its surroundings. Nevertheless, despite location, proportions of incense burner fragments within the Terminal Classic ceramic collections are generally low and variable (Graph 9.1). The higher proportions are found in the high-rank commoner residence (HECR) Cheje, and at the rather small low-end commoner residence (LECR) Cedro. Nevertheless, the numbers are small and the differences are not statistically significant.

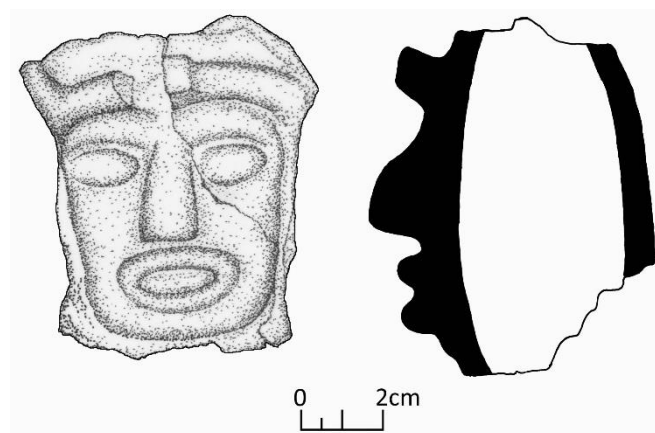
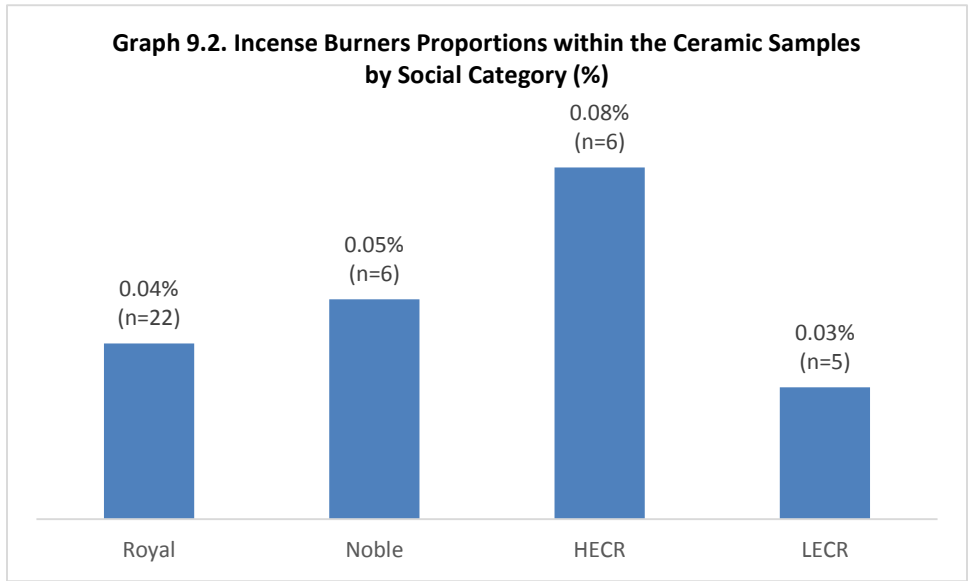
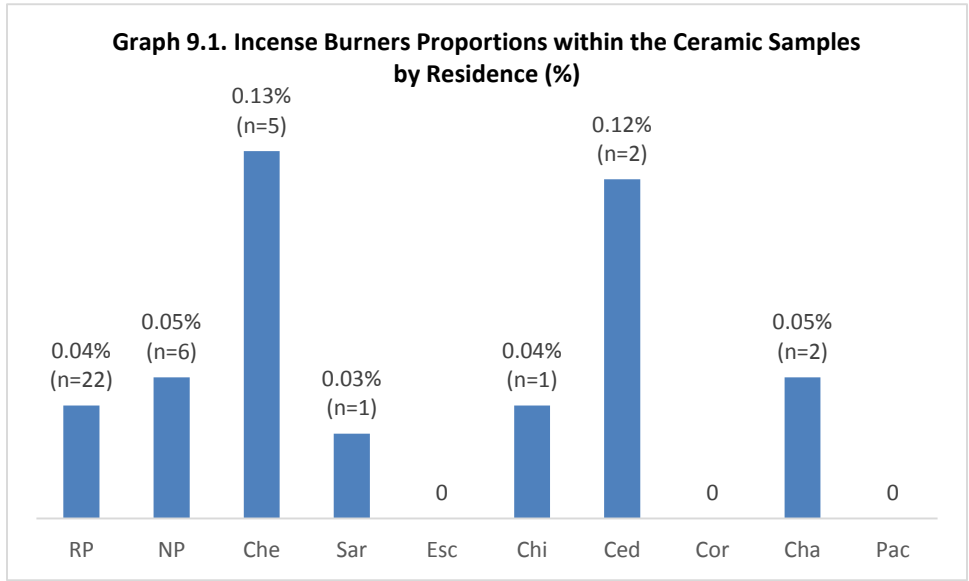


Fig. 9.3. Incense burner fragment, HECR-Cheje (drawing by L. Gamez).



Comparing the proportions of incense burner fragments by the established social rank categories (Chart 9.2), the high-rank commoner category is shown to have more censers than other categories, even more than the royal category. Only a few fragments, however, make this difference. The evidence seems to point more to a generally similar proportional use of incense

burners across the different social ranks at Yaxha. Not only is the sample small, it is also composed of small fragments (Fig. 9.4). Therefore, it is also impossible to say with certainty if there were differences of style. The sample from the royal palace includes more decorated fragments than the others do and fragments of censer lids have been identified only at the higher rank contexts. Additionally, there is the possibility that a few of the fragments from the most recently excavated residential units could belong to braziers that might or might not have been used to burn incense. In any case, although shape and quality might vary, the implication so far is that all ranks had access to specialized vessels for incense burning, but they disposed of only few fragments in comparison to the other ceramics they disposed of.

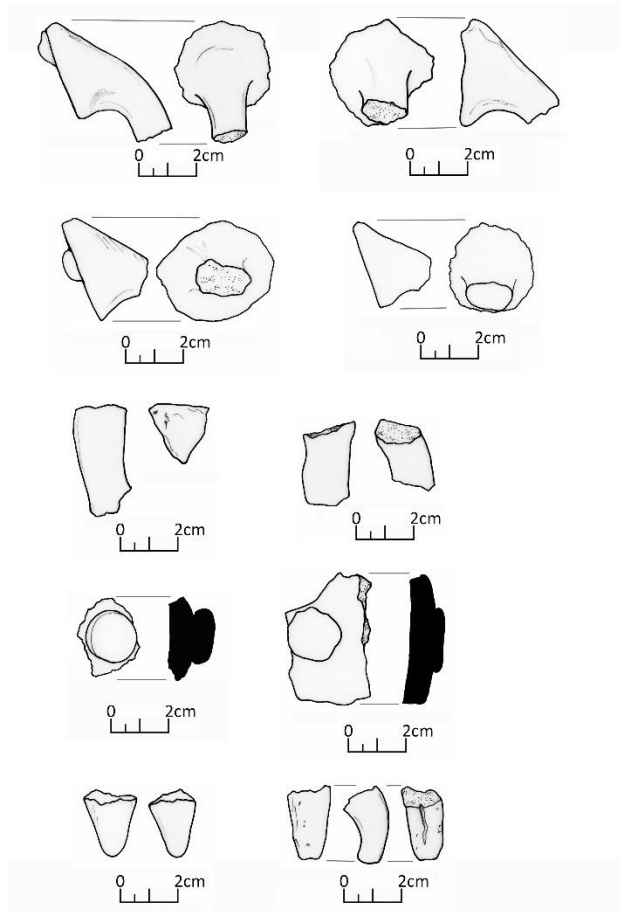


Fig. 9.4. Examples of incense burner fragments from commoners residential units (drawing by L. Gamez).

Considering incense burners as markers of ritual activity, a simple comparison of the location of these elements within the different residential units is productive. The royal and noble palaces cannot be included because excavations there were focused on very particular areas that do not facilitate the comparison. Therefore, observing the distribution of the elements only in those residences where is possible (Table 9.2), it is made obvious that incense burners were present only on the east and south sides of the excavated patios. Once again, these are only a few fragments, but it might be symbolically relevant as cardinal directions were central in the ancient dynastic cosmology.

Social Category	Residential unit	Censers	Location			
			North	East	South	West
High-End Commoner	Cheje	5	0	2	3	0
	Saraguata	1	0	1	0	0
Low-End Commoner	Chichicua	1	0	1	0	0
	Cedro	2	0	1	1	0
	Chacaj	2	0	0	2	0

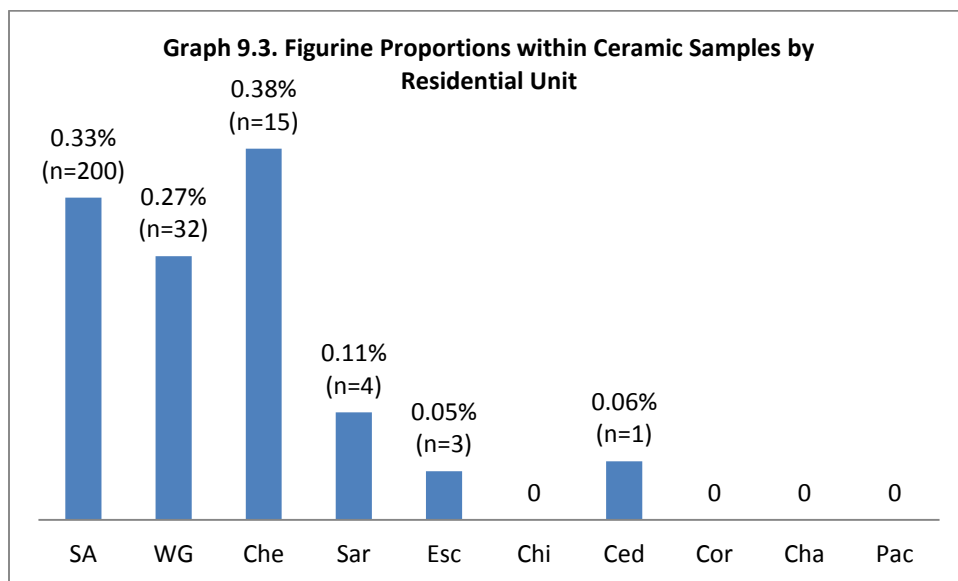
9.3. CERAMIC FIGURINES/WHISTLES

Ceramic figurines are small, portable modeled or molded artifacts that depict diverse motifs. They might depict human characters, animals, or mythic/supernatural characters (Halperin et al 2011; Marcus 1996). The exact purpose of ceramic figurines is still object of debate. By the Late and Terminal Classic, most figurines were in fact whistles. Therefore, they could have served as musical instruments in ritual events. A second kind of figurines is that of small solid effigies, for which their function is somewhat more mysterious. At Terminal Classic Yaxha there are very

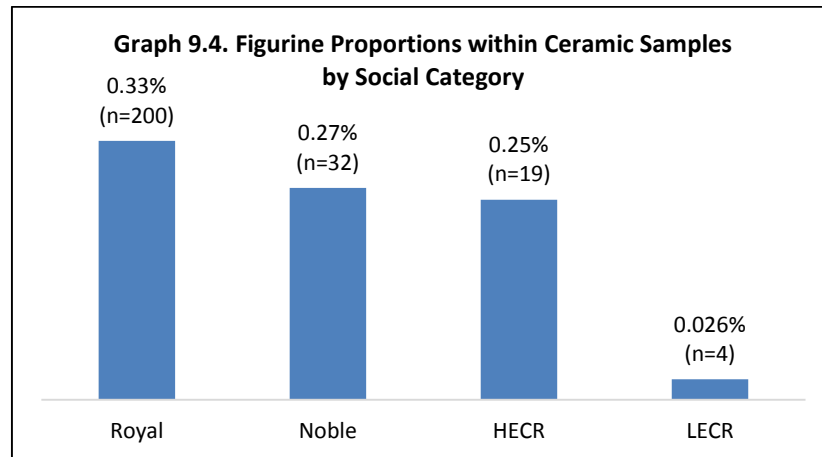
few fragments of effigy-figurines as the greater part of the sample is composed of hollow figurines.

Altogether, Yaxha's Terminal Classic figurine sample includes 2 whole whistles and 427 figurine or whistle fragments. From these, 32% (n=138) are definitely whistles, but another 49% (n=209) of the sample corresponds to fragments of hollow figurines that were most likely parts of whistles. Even more, some of the remaining 19% (n=82) that has been catalogued as 'solid' fragments, might also be parts of hollow whistles that include solid parts (e.g. limbs, hats).

Figurines have been found in most investigated architectural compounds at Yaxha: public plazas, more private monumental compounds, palaces, and commoner residences. Nevertheless, they are clearly more frequent at the royal and noble palaces than at the other contexts. Chart 9.3 compares the frequency and proportion of figurines at the ten domestic compounds that are under closer consideration in this dissertation. In such comparison, figurines are obviously more frequent in the residential units of higher rank and rather scant in those of lower rank, in most cases completely absent.



Comparing the proportions of figurines by rank category, a statistically significant higher proportion of figurines is found at the royal rank than at other ranks (Chart 9.4). Noble and high-rank commoner categories are fairly similar in their figurine proportions, but the commoner rank is clearly lower. Although figurines have been found in all defined ranks, it is possible to say with certainty that these artifacts are more frequent at elite contexts than at non-elites.



Considering the distribution of figurines within the residential units, the exercise is limited to the most recently excavated residences because excavations at the royal and noble palaces were not distributed with such purposes in mind. In the high-end commoner residence (HECR) Cheje most figurine fragments (n=13) were collected on the eastern side of the Central Patio, as part of the termination deposit that was partially excavated in the ritual construction. The other two fragments were collected on the southern side of the patio.

Social Category	Residence	Figurines	Location			
			North	East	South	West
High-End Commoner	Cheje	15	0	13	2	0
	Saraguata	4	0	2	0	2
Low-End Commoner	Escobo	3	0	2	0	1
	Cedro	1	0	0	1	0

In the high-end commoner residence (HECR) Saraguat, half (n=2) of the fragments were found on the east side of the investigated patio, nearby a ritual construction. The other two fragments were collected on the west side of the same patio. At the low-end commoner residence (LECR) Escobo, two of the three fragments were located on the east side of the group, while the third fragment was found on the west side of the same patio. Finally, at LECR-Cedro, the only collected fragment was found on the southern side of the patio. In this way, most figurines were found on the eastern side of their corresponding patios, followed by the south and the west sides. No figurine fragments were collected on the northern sides of these patios.

In terms of the iconography expressed in all these figurines, there are some relevant observations to be made. At the settlement level and not only at residential contexts, with a wider sample (N=388), it has been established that most figurines depict human beings. About a 55% (n=214) of the whole Terminal Classic sample of figurines can be recognized as human (Fig. 9.5 and 9.6). In contrast, a low 6% (n=24) can be recognized as animal representations (Fig. 9.7 and 9.8). The remaining 39% (n=151) includes fragments of undefined motifs.

From the human representations found around Yaxha, 41% (n=88) are masculine (Fig. 9.5) or probably masculine; while about 28% (n=62) are feminine (Fig. 9.6) or probably feminine. The remaining 29% (n=64) corresponds to fragments recognized as part of human representations but that are impossible to identify in terms of gender. There are some recurrent motifs among the ones that are recognizable: 1. lord wearing a wide headdress and a loincloth, kneeling with his hands over his knees (Fig. 9.5c); 2. standing lady with her hands crossed under her chest, wearing a dress with geometric designs on the sides (Fig. 9.6b-c); and

3. standing lady carrying a baby in her right arm (Fig. 9.6a). These are all molded whistles. The figurine of the kneeling lord has been found so far in two different sizes; while the lady with hands under chest has been found in three different sizes (Fig. 9.6b and c).

It is important to note that the architectural compound with the higher proportion of masculine figurines in the whole settlement is the royal palace. Elsewhere around the civic center, at least in the cases where it is possible to make such a distinction, the difference between male and female representations is small. It is only at the royal palace where the male representations clearly dominate the sample. The Palace would have been not only the house of the most prominent family in the kingdom, but it would have been also housing the most prominent male at Yaxha. The ceramic figurine motifs at this palace reinforce the centrality of the male figure. Overall, male figurines from Yaxha display kingly attributes, like jaguar headdresses (Fig. 9.5).

As mentioned above, animal representations are very scant at Terminal Classic Yaxha (n=24) (Fig. 9.7 and 9.8). Among those, bird representations are the most frequent (46%, n=11), and from these in turn, owls are the most frequent. Felines, possibly jaguars, are also rather frequent (25%, n=6), but these are mostly concentrated at the Palace. Jaguars are known symbols of power usually related to ruling elites. Other animal representations are a dog, a deer (most likely part of a headdress), and a possible reptile.

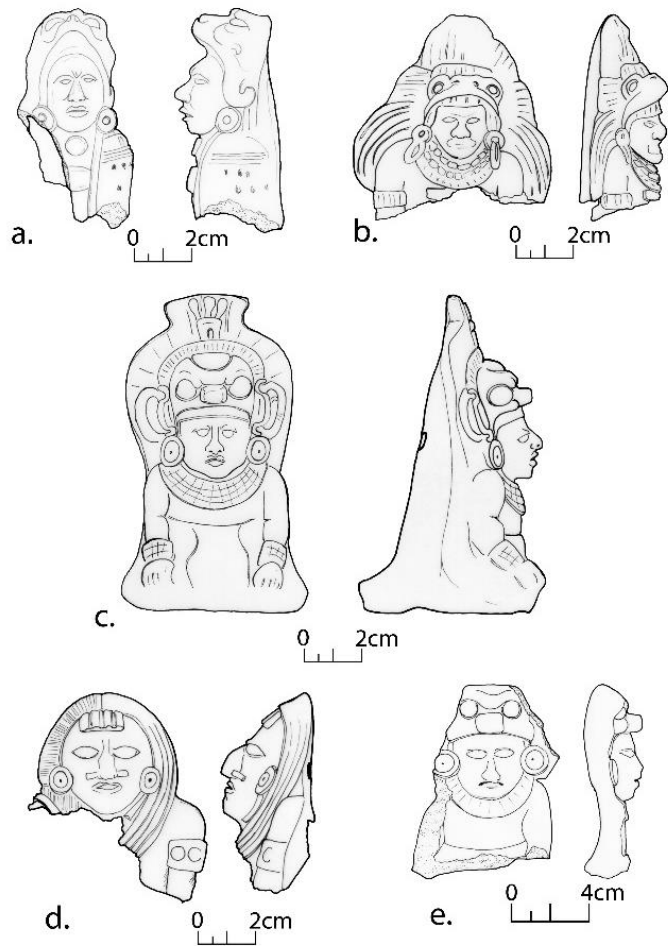


Fig. 9.5. Male figurines from royal settings: a. Man with jaguar headdress and feather cape; b. Man with feather headdress; c. kneeling lord with jaguar headdress; d. Man with dual hairdo; e. kneeling lord in smaller size than the one on 'c' (drawings by L. Gamez).

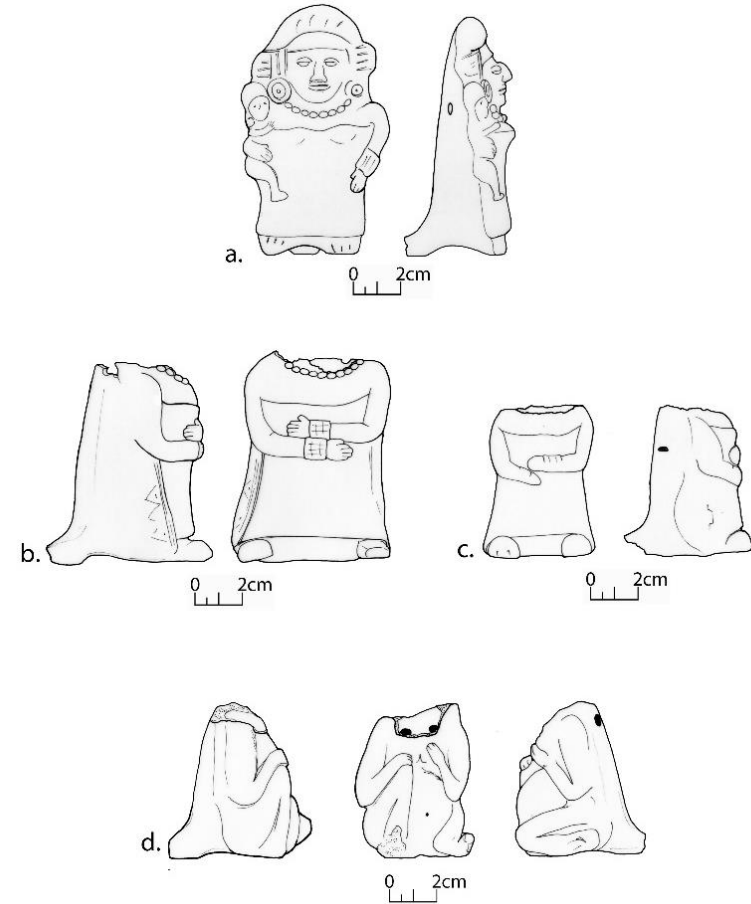


Fig. 9.6. Female figurines from royal contexts: a. standing woman with child; b. standing woman with hands under chest; standing woman with hands under chest in smaller size than the one on 'b'; d. pregnant woman (drawings by L. Gamez).

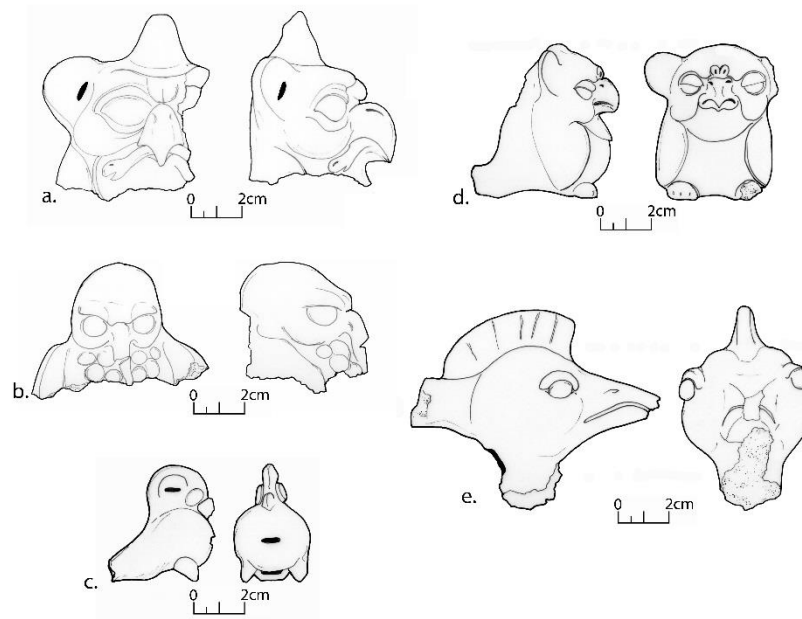


Fig. 9.7. Bird figurines/whistles from royal settings: a. Bird of prey with snake on beak; b. turkey (?); c. bird; d. owl; e. XX (drawing by L. Gamez).

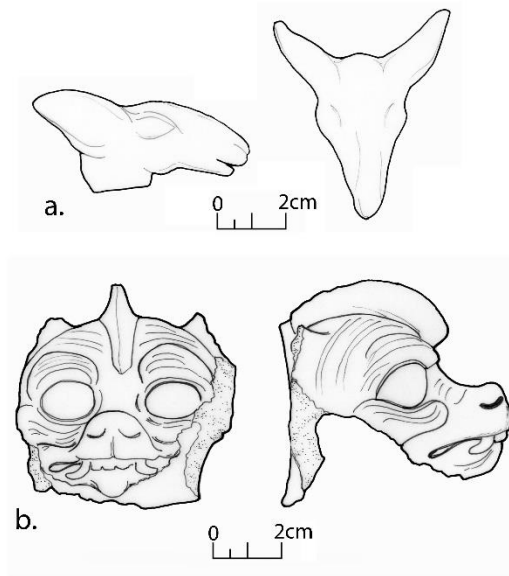


Fig. 9.8. Mammal figurines from royal settings: a. deer (possible peace of headdress); b. dog (drawings by L. Gamez).

Focusing on the sample of ten residential units that are the focus of this dissertation, aside from the royal palace, figurines have been found in the noble palace, the two high-end commoner residences Cheje and Saraguaté, and the low-end commoner residences Escobo and Cedro. Human representations predominate in all cases. In fact, only one fragment of an animal representation was found at the noble palace.

In contrast to preeminence of male representations from the royal palace, in the noble palace the most frequent motif is the lady with her arms crossed under her chest. However, the difference between female (n=9) and male (n=7) representations is small in quantitative terms.

Within the sample from the high-end commoner residential unit (HECR) Cheje, it is impossible to identify the represented motifs in most of the sample. Amongst the 15 fragments, there are only three that can be identified as human and one as animal. There is the foot under the dress edge that suggests a female, and there is also a top of a head wearing a headdress with a bird or reptile central motif, suggestive of a male representation. A piece of an eye of an animal is also present, possibly the eye of a jaguar.

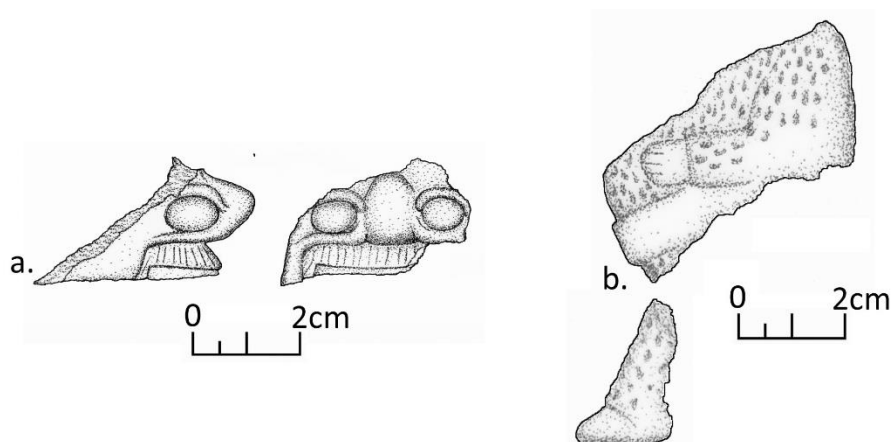


Fig. 9.9. Figurine fragments from high-end commoner residences, a. headdress, note the similarity with headdress in fig. 9.5b; b. man wearing feather suit, compare to feather cape in fig. 9.5a (drawings by L. Gamez).

In HECR-Saraguate, the figurine fragments include only human motifs. From these, two are fragments of the same figurine representing a man wearing a feather suit. The same motif was found at the noble palace, while other examples of characters using feather capes have been found at the North Acropolis and the Palace (South Acropolis) as well.

Following with the findings at low-end commoner residences, at LECR-Escobo there are only two male representations recognized so far, both part of headdresses. One is the upper part of a head using a headdress with a bird as a central figure, very similar to others found at the HECR-Cheje and at the noble palace. The other one is a fragment of a high headdress with a six-eyed character as central figure (Fig. 9.10b), the same that was found at the noble palace. The only fragment from the LECR-Cedro is a molded piece from the base of a figurine, possibly the foot of a woman as suggested by the edge of a dress.

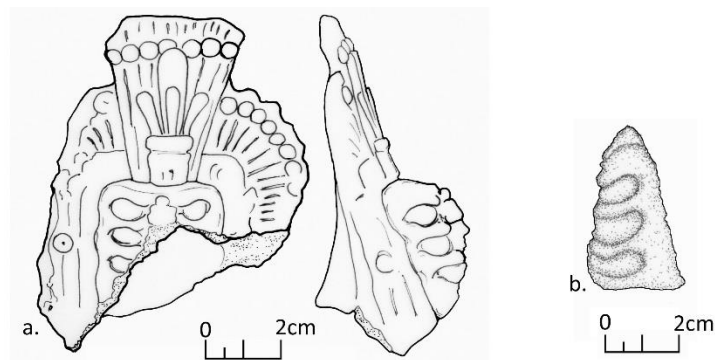


Fig. 9.10. Headdress fragments, a. fragment from the royal palace; b. fragment of the same three-eyed headdress motif from the LECR-Escobo (drawings by L. Gamez). The central character on Stela 31 is wearing the same headdress (see Fig. 3.3).

In all, figurines around Terminal Classic Yaxha are molded artifacts. Repetitive motifs are found in the different investigated residential units. However, although low-end commoners seem to have had certain access to the same kinds of artifacts, figurines were used considerably

more frequently by those households of higher socioeconomic rank. The motifs and the quality of figurines are not very different among the four social ranks.

9.4. LITHIC ARTIFACTS

Specially deposited lithics at Yaxha include both otherwise utilitarian objects and non-utilitarian symbolic items. Among the first, there are cutting, grinding, and pounding tools. The second refer particularly to obsidian and chert eccentrics (Fig. 8.6 and 8.7) but some other artifacts of personal adornment might be included as well. The different ritual deposits so far excavated in residential units at Terminal Classic Yaxha have been already discussed in previous chapters. After examining the distribution of lithic artifacts among these deposits, it has been established that lithic utilitarian artifacts were frequently included in termination deposits and non-utilitarian lithic artifacts were sometimes used in dedication deposits. Lithic artifacts were not commonly included in funerary deposits.

In termination deposits, lithic artifacts are majorly utilitarian tools. There are mostly chert tools, but there are also some obsidian and even other kinds of polished-stone tools (See Table 8.2). It is impossible to know what proportion of artifacts from these deposits was composed by lithic tools. We know that ceramics were the most abundant component in them, but the total number of sherds by deposit is generally unknown. Anyhow, lithic tools are the second most frequent component of the same deposits and they include tools that would have been part of everyday activities. Some of them could have been used during the preparation of feasts or even during the same rituals. For example, some cutting tools could have been used as

blood-letting devices; some could have been used in the preparation of feasts, in the hunting of game, or even in the ritual killing of animals. However, as it is the case with the ceramics, some of these tools are fragmented and incomplete.

As indicated in chapter 8, termination deposits were present only in the higher ranked residential units – the royal and noble palaces, and the high-end commoner residence (HECR) Cheje –. Therefore, over the available evidence so far, the ritual deposition of lithic tools is defined as an elitist practice that has not been identified at commoners' residences.

Terminal Classic dedicatory deposits include at least three different kinds of deposits according their main contents: 1. ceramic vessels, 2. human remains, and 3. lithic eccentrics. The first kind of deposit does not include lithic tools, as its only preserved component is a ceramic vessel. Similar deposits during the Late Preclassic included obsidian prismatic blades, but that is not the case for the known Terminal Classic ones.

In the second kind of dedicatory deposit, the one centered in human remains, some lithic tools have been found. There is an obvious overlap between burials and these kinds of deposits, of which in Yaxha only one has been identified in a residential context (Bu. 14a). In this case, a fine chert lance point (Fig. 7.6) was buried along the corpse. This deposit belongs to a high-rank commoner context and no similar deposit has been found at low-rank commoner residences.

The third kind of deposit, the one primarily formed by lithic eccentrics, is obviously centered in symbolically charged lithic artifacts. In residential contexts at Terminal Classic Yaxha, this kind of deposit has been identified only in a high-rank commoner residential unit (see Saraguat DD1 and DD2 in Table 8.1; Fig. 8.6 and 8.7). Although similar findings were made

in public monumental compounds, not even pieces of similar objects have been found at low-rank commoner residences. In all, lithic eccentrics and therefore their ritual deposition can be defined as elitist elements and practices respectively.

Finally, adding to the already mentioned dedication and termination deposits, burials are another kind of ritual deposit that is to be examined. Although it might not have been the case in earlier times, by the Terminal Classic, lithic tools seldom accompanied the dead in their final burial arrangements. In fact, aside from Bu. 14a (Table 7.1; Fig. 7.10), which has been also interpreted as a dedicatory deposit, the only lithic artifacts found within funerary cists accompanying the deceased were limestone spindle-whorls. Although only two cases have been identified so far, they are very similar pieces that come from houses of different socioeconomic rank. These cases are Bu. 17 from the high-rank commoner residential unit Saraguat, and Bu. 19 from the low-rank commoner residential unit Corozo, suggesting a common practice across social ranks.

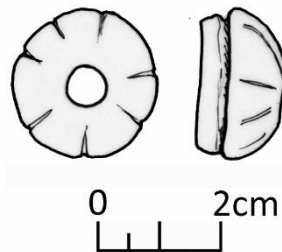


Fig. 9.11. Limestone spindle whorl from Burial 17, HECR-Saraguat
(a very similar piece was found in Bu. 19 from the LECR-Corozo) (Drawing by L. Gamez).

9.5. JADE OR GREENSTONE

Jade is a rather scant material in the collections from Terminal Classic Yaxha. It is present exclusively in burials. It has never been reported as part of termination deposits, and is present only in the one dedicatory deposit that involves human remains and therefore is also described as a burial (Bu. 14a; see Table 7.1, Fig. 7.10). In fact, jade has only been found in Burials 14a and 17 in domestic contexts and in one other burial from the Central Zone (Bu. T8). In all cases, the findings were small ornamental pendants or beads.

Jade was obviously not widely distributed around Terminal Classic Yaxha and the few known examples are from elite and high-rank commoner contexts. In fact, no objects of personal adornment have been found in low-rank commoner burials. Therefore, there is no even an economic version of the same kind of items to compare with those from the higher ranks.

9.6. SHELL AND BONE ARTIFACTS

Ritually deposited shell and bone artifacts are very scant in residential settings at Terminal Classic Yaxha. However, they have been found in both dedication, termination, and funerary deposits. Shell artifacts collected so far include mostly beads found along human remains in Burials 7, 9, 10, and 14a. The last one also considered a dedicatory deposit, where a *spondylus* rectangular bead was collected (Fig. 7.7). One small shell “plaque” was found in one of the

termination deposits at the Palace (Palace TD1, Table 8.2). The first three burials come from monumental compounds in Yaxha's civic center, while the fourth one comes from the high-end commoner residence (HECR) Cheje. The only finding of shell in a low-end commoner residence was a piece of a shell ornament found at LECR-Escobo. It was found just lying on the floor and not in an obviously ritual context.

Bone artifacts have been found in termination deposits at the royal palace (Palace TD1, TD2, and TD4; Table 8.2), in Bu. 14a from HECR-Cheje Group and in Bu. 17 from HECR-Saraguate (Table 7.1; Fig. 7.10 and 7.11). In the termination deposits, bone artifacts included a few tubular beads (Grupo K 2007) and some "spatulas." These last ones are some long and narrow instruments with one round end and one flat end, but despite the name, their intended function remains unknown. Other artifacts, including awls and needles have been also found in similar deposits in other non-residential compounds in the civic center. However, in the residential settings the inventory is rather narrow.

In Bu. 17 (Table 7.1; Fig. 7.8), a single needle point was found, most likely part of a funerary shroud. A very similar needle was found also in Bu. 14a (Table 7.1; Fig. 7.11), along with several other artifacts, including awls, tubes, a fish-hook, and a feather-whisk handle. This is the most complex set of bone tools found so far at Yaxha. Once again, Burial 14a is considered both a burial and a dedicatory deposit and there is no other of similar characteristics that would provide comparative material. In any case, the available evidence suggest that bone artifacts might be found in termination deposits, but they might be more likely to be found in reverential dedicatory deposits. In regular burials, bone tools might include the pins or needles holding funerary shrouds.

Taken altogether, like shell artifacts, bone artifacts have been found in elite and high-end commoner residential units. There are no examples from the low-end commoner residences. These kinds of artifacts therefore, are a rather elitist prerogative, at least in their connotations of ritual paraphernalia.

9.7. SUMMARY: ROYAL, NOBLE, AND COMMONER RITUAL PARAPHERNALIA

Domestic ritual assemblages at Yaxha included most frequently ceramic vessels, incense burners, and figurines, and less frequently obsidian, chert, jade, shell, and bone artifacts. Ceramic vessels were used as ritual paraphernalia by households of all defined social ranks, from royals to low-end commoners. Incense burners were used across all social ranks as well, but they are generally scant in all of them. Figurines too, were used by people from the different ranks, but much more frequently by those from the higher ranks. Although low-end commoners had access to the same molded figurines that royals, nobles, and high-end commoners used, they do not seem to have used or ritually disposed them as frequently.

Lithic artifacts were a common part of ritual assemblages of higher social rank, including high-end commoner residences. In contrast, low-end commoners did not use them as ritual paraphernalia. Similarly, jade, shell, and bone artifacts seem to have been more a prerogative of the higher ranks.

Category		Vessels	Censers	Figurines	Lithic 1	Jade	Shell	Bone
Royal	Royal P.	7	0.04%	0.33%	26%	0	1	9
Noble	Noble P.	5	0.05%	0.27%	26%	0	0	0
High-End	Cheje	2	0.13%	0.38%	10.3%	1	1	7
Commoner	Saraguat	3	0.03%	0.11%	2.41%	1	0	1
Low-End Commoner	Escobo	0	0	0.05%	0	0	0	0
	Chichicua	2	0.04%	0	0	0	0	0
	Cedro	0	0.12%	0.06%	0	0	0	0
	Corozo	3	0	0	0.16%	0	0	0
	Chacaj	0	0.05%	0	0	0	0	0
	Pacaya	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

There is the possibility that economic aspects could have limited the access of low-end commoners to some kinds of artifacts. However, there is evidence suggesting they had access to the same raw materials as elites. The difference would be that they did not dispose of them ritually as elites did. Found imports include obsidian (mostly from *Jilotepeque* in the Guatemalan Highlands), jade, and marine shell. From these, jade is the only one that has not been found at low-rank commoner residences. Although they tend to be scarce, obsidian and shell have been found in low-rank commoner residences, suggesting they had access to such materials. In addition, although low-rank commoners did not ritually dispose of bone artifacts, it is hard to believe they had no access to animal bones. Having access to the raw materials is relevant because the ritual paraphernalia could have been imitated if desired.

The ritual deposit of ceramic vessels was obviously a common practice across Yaxha. They have been found in most investigated residences, including residences of all defined ranks (Table 9.1). These vessels are not particularly fancy. The known inventory actually includes a majority of vessels of the most common ceramic types at Yaxha. Some vessels might be decorated, but that is not always the case. Some vessels might have been placed as containers of foodstuffs; however, this might not be always the case, particularly in those cases where the

vessels were placed upside-down. The symbolism expressed by the vessels in the different deposits might be variable to a certain extent. Nevertheless, what is certainly pervasive is the depositing of ceramic vessels as ritual action.

Incense burners have never been found whole, but only represented by fragments, either in public monumental compounds or small residential units. Despite the ritual connotation of incense burners, whole pieces were not ritually disposed. All findings of incense burners are of small fragments mixed with other ceramics, perhaps as ritual refuse. Similarly, figurines are very rarely found whole, and they have not been found in dedicatory deposits but only in termination deposits, always broken and incomplete. Aside from the termination deposits where incense burners and figurines occur, these artifacts occur only as small fragments, most frequently on the east and south sides of domestic patios. Assuming these fragments are remnants of past ritual activities, preeminence of these locations for ritual purposes is suggested.

As mentioned earlier, jade is the only import that has not been found at low-rank commoner residential units. It could have been a luxury import of limited availability for commoner peoples. In addition, bone tools have never been found in these residential units, but it seems rather unlikely that commoners would not have access to such mundane artifacts. In fact, the raw material for this kind of tools – local animal bone – would have been within reach of most households. Although manufacture might have had implied certain specialized knowledge, it seems unlikely it would be extremely restricted. It is impossible to prove, given the available evidence, but there is the possibility that commoners chose not to ritually deposit bone tools.

Even more, the evidence suggests the possibility that even though low-end commoners had at least some access to molded figurines and incense burners, they were not ritually disposing them either. The implication is that despite their access to the same kinds of artifacts, they might have been selectively choosing what kinds of artifacts to use (or not) as ritual paraphernalia, in some instances displaying the same behavior as the higher ranks and sometimes rejecting it.

10. CONCLUDING REMARKS:

COSMOLOGY AND SOCIETY IN CHANGING TIMES

After examination of ritual practices in ten different residences from Terminal Classic Yaxha, what can be said about relationship of the people with the dynastic cosmology surrounding ancient monarchs? Although there is no possible direct measurement, certain suggestive patterns have emerged after the consideration of the different lines of evidence presented throughout this dissertation. First, it clear that there is some relevant degree of diversity in the ritual practices of different households, likely tied to the lack of orthodoxy in the religious system. But such diversity definitely exists within a general ideological frame that somehow integrates the same practices. Second, while there are clear indications that nobles and high-end commoners were actively engaged with the practices and symbols of the ruling dynastic cosmology, low-end commoners seem more reluctant to participate. Low-end commoners did not overtly resist this cosmology, but their engagement with it was rather passive as they rejected some of the practices of the higher ranks. Bringing together the different topics addressed in the previous chapters, I discuss in the following pages the possible implications of these results for the overall functioning of the ancient society under consideration.

The hypothetic expectations posed earlier in this dissertation questioned the attitudes or strategies that people used in their interactions with the ruling dynastic cosmology. Were they actively engaged? Resistant? Or were they only passively compliant? As suggested by the

ethnographic model from G. Gossen (2004) that provided the theoretical basis for this study (see Chapter 1), these kinds of behaviors might affect the overall working of society and in some instances can even promote social change. Modeling attitudes archaeologically has clear limitations. The ethnographic model used here is informed by direct observations of peoples' actions and discourses. The archaeological evidence that constitutes the basis of this study is obviously non-discursive and requires tentative inferences about people's attitudes towards the Classic dynastic cosmology at Yaxha. However, the results of the comparative analyses are suggestive of different levels of connection between the ritual actions and symbols used by different social groups. As it was indicated in Chapter 1, the practical measurement of the three hypothesized attitudes/strategies was defined along a scale of levels of similitude that are taken to express connection or disconnection. In this way, greater similitude is taken to express greater engagement, while greater dissimilitude is taken to express greater resistance. Possible alternative interpretations are discussed later in this chapter.

At ancient Yaxha, the Terminal Classic was a period of both growth and turmoil, ending with the total abandonment of the city. The reasons for such abandonment are outside the scope of this dissertation, but the examination of people's relationship with the ruling cosmology indicates certain degree of disconnection between the higher and lower ranks of society that could be a symptom of a weak social fabric. In this regard, the synchronic nature of the study limits the discussion. A diachronic analysis considering changes through different periods of time would be more appropriate. Nevertheless, these conclusions should be taken as a first approach in this direction.

10.1. CHANGING TIMES

Previous studies at Yaxha had demonstrated a long history that spanned at least two millennia (ca. 800 B.C. – A.D. 1000), or even longer if the paleobotanical evidence is taken into account (see Chapter 3). Within such understanding, these previous studies tended to emphasize the Late Classic (ca. A.D. 650-850) as the heyday of the kingdom, assuming that the Terminal Classic (ca. A.D. 850-1000) occupation was a short and diminished extension of previous times (Rice and Rice 1990). The last known hieroglyphic date referring to Yaxha is A.D. 800 and speaks about a defeat of Yaxha by Naranjo (Grube 2000), suggesting a tragic setback for the city by the end of the Late Classic. Nevertheless, it is evident now that the Terminal Classic was a more important at Yaxha than previously thought. In fact, the Terminal Classic is so widely spread around the site that it seems to supersede the Late Classic with even greater construction volumes and population density.

There are both new and renovated Terminal Classic constructions all around Yaxha's civic center. Additionally, all excavated residences in the close periphery of the civic center were either constructed or at least occupied during this same period. Despite the political turmoil that epigraphic information from the Late Classic suggests, Yaxha in fact seems to have gained population during the Terminal Classic. New architectonic styles were implemented in the monumental constructions, like totally vertical platform walls (as opposed to sloping walls) and cut-in stairways (as opposed to protruding stairways). In the civic center most monumental compounds were somehow modified, indicating not only the use of such compounds during this time, but also the capacity of investment, centralized planning, and labor availability.

Like other monumental compounds, the royal palace was at least partially renewed during the Terminal Classic. It was obviously occupied, and it was ritually “terminated” before its final abandonment. Such “termination” involved not only the symbolic ritual termination, but also the infilling of some multi-room buildings, like Str. 375 for example. It is impossible to establish how long into the Terminal Classic the royal palace continued its functions, but there was enough time for renovation and non-hasty closure. The noble palace (West Group) was also built during this time and all other investigated residences were either built anew or at least continued to be in use. Overall, despite the epigraphic data, Yaxha’s population went into the Terminal Classic strong and stable enough to engage in new construction projects.

Sometime during the same period, however, people left. The subsequent Early Postclassic period is not represented at all in the habitation areas. While in the monumental Central Zone, it has been detected in single event deposits, like the *Offering 1* from Str. 216 (excavated by PRONAT-Triangulo, Hermes 1996:283, 2000b:295). There is a possibility the same population could have moved across the lake and re-settled at Topoxte (Fig. 1.2). However, research by PRONAT-Triangulo suggests this was a separate, later occupation of the islands, apparently sometime around AD 1150-1200 (Hermes 2000b:295). The reasons for the abandonment of Yaxha remain unknown, but it does not seem to have occurred in a hurry like at Aguateca for example (Inomata 1997). At Yaxha, abandonment seems to have been a more gradual process. Households packed and took their belongings, monumental compounds were ritually terminated, and no squatting seems to have taken place around the civic center. No evidence of conflict has been recorded so far.

10.2. SOCIAL HIERARCHIES AND COSMOLOGICAL INTEGRATION

During the Terminal Classic, Yaxha's society was obviously hierarchical. Different peoples inhabited residences of different characteristics, some implying widely different investments. For example, while the royal palace had a floor area of more than 15,000 square meters, the low-end commoner residence (LECR) Pacaya occupied only about 750 square meters. That is, the area occupied by the royal palace was at least 20 times bigger than this commoner residence. Similarly, using the same examples, the royal palace's construction volume amounted to more than 118,725 cubic meters, more than 2900 times more than the humble 40.5 cubic meters of LECR-Pacaya.

The rank categories used in this dissertation have been: 1. Royal, 2. Noble, 3. High-end commoner, and 4. Low-end commoner. These are obviously artificial categories, an oversimplification of a very complex ranked society's structure. However, it remains a useful characterization for analytical purposes. In this study, I have assumed that the rank expressed by the construction investments can be positively correlated with higher power of consumption, and also tied to higher access to political office. I have hypothesized that people of higher rank would have been more closely involved in the ruling dynastic cosmology. The collected evidence supports this hypothesis.

Traces of ritual activity were found in all ten examined residences. In general, Terminal Classic Yaxhaeans were definitely practitioners of household religious ritual. They were ritually

consecrating their houses, burying some of their dead at home, and ritually handling human bones. Artifacts used in rituals included ceramic vessels, incense burners, figurines and whistles, drums, bone tools, lithic tools and ornaments, and sometimes shell artifacts. Doubtlessly other kinds of more perishable artifacts were used as well, but then they are absent in all investigated contexts. Dividing the evidence in separated social ranks, differences of behavior among the ranks are obvious, particularly between the low-end commoners and the other higher ranks.

In chapters 5 to 9, I have discussed separately the evidence for different aspects of ritual action in order to discern from three possible strategies that people could have used to interact with the ruling dynastic cosmology: 1. Active engagement, 2. Resistance, and 3. Passive compliance. The results of these separate analyses suggest an overall active engagement on the part of nobles and high-end commoners with the dynastic cosmology. Nevertheless, the results in relation to low-end commoners are more variable. For the reader's convenience, those results are summarized in tabular form in Table 10.1. While the ritual and symbolic behavior of nobles and high-end commoners appears aligned with those from royals, low-end commoners display a more selective behavior. Overall, in all discussed ritual and symbolic aspects nobles and high-end commoners were actively engaged with the ruling dynastic cosmology. Low-end commoners instead, are in most instances either resistant or passively complying.

Table 10.1. Synthesis of Results by Topic and Hypothesized Behaviors

Ritual	Rank	Engagement	Resistance	Compliance
Architectural layout	Royal	Palace located to the south of the North Acropolis, both separated by two ballgame courts (north-south axis). Central pyramid (palace shrine) facing central pyramid in North Acropolis (direct view). Similar layout of Main Plaza (Central E-Group).		
	Noble	Ritual construction (altar) in center of patio (= royal palace), similar to layout of Main Plaza (Central E-Group).		
	High-End Commoner		Ritual construction (altar) to the east of the patio. Not the same as palaces, but consistent with directionality celebrated by other elements of the civic center (e.g., East Acropolis).	
	Low-End Commoner		Possible ritual construction in only one house, isolated to the west of other platforms. No discernable patterns in distribution of constructions around the patios.	
Feasting	Royal	No data		
	Noble	No data		
	High-End Commoner	Unclear. Both houses are similarly equipped (ceramics) – among them and in comparison to LE-Commoners. One house has some more serving ware than the other.		
	Low-End Commoner	Unclear. All houses are similarly equipped (ceramics) – among them and in comparison to HE-Commoners. The smallest house has some more serving ware than the rest.		

Table 10.1. Synthesis of Results by Topic and Hypothesized Behaviors (Cont.)

Ritual	Rank	Engagement	Resistance	Compliance
Funerary	Royal	North-South orientation, supine. 3 vessels (1 cylinder, 1 plate, 1 bowl). Other royal, not from the palace. East construction.		
		2 secondary burials.		
		No known cases of sacrifice, but we assume there were some...		
	Noble	North-South orientation, supine. 2 of 3 cases with artifacts: one with two vessels, the other one with one. West and central construction.		
			No known secondary burials	
			No known sacrifices	
	High-End Commoner	North-South orientation, supine. 3 with bowl; 1 with bowl, plate, and cylinder. 2 east side, 2 west side, 1 north side.		
		1 secondary burial		
		1 human sacrifice		
	Low-End Commoner	North-South orientation, supine. 2 with bowls, 1 with plate, bowl and cylinder.		
		No secondary burial, but one with removal of head and femur (handling of bones).		
			No known sacrifices	

Table 10.1. Synthesis of Results by Topic and Hypothesized Behaviors (Cont.)

Ritual	Rank	Engagement	Resistance	Compliance
Dedication	Royal	Vessel under floor, in front of construction axis (one Terminal Classic and one Late Preclassic).		
	Noble	No Terminal Classic example known, but one Preclassic up-side-down vessel, under floor, in front of construction axis.		
	High-End Commoner	One secondary burial=dedicatory deposit (bowl and bones brought from cave). Two cases of eccentrics deposits (similar to other in pyramids)		
	Low-End Commoner			Only one case known. One house has the up-side-down vessel (also at noble house and at other nearby the palace). Because it is 1/6 of houses, the suggestion is that they were no so much on board with the practice, perhaps had another way to dedicate their houses.
Termination	Royal	Termination all over the palace – including one deposit with the bodies of two babies (= others nearby pyramids).		
	Noble	Termination over central ritual construction.		
	High-End Commoner	Termination over east ritual construction in 1 of 2 cases.		
	Low-End Commoner		No Termination at all (at least not in the same way as elites.	

Table 10.1. Synthesis of Results by Topic and Hypothesized Behaviors (Cont.)

	Rank	Engagement	Resistance	Compliance
Ritual Paraphernalia	Royal	Vessels used in funerary, dedication, and termination.		
		Censers = 0.04% of ceramic sample.		
		Figurines = 0.33 % of ceramic sample.		
		Lithics in termination deposits. Jade in burial.		
		Bone/shell in termination and burial.		
	Noble	Vessels used in funerary, dedication, and termination.		
		Censers = 0.05% of ceramic sample.		
		Figurines = 0.27% of ceramic sample.		
		Lithics in termination deposits.		
		No known bone/shell artifacts.		
	High-End Commoner	Vessels used in funerary, dedication, and termination.		
		Censers = 0.08% of ceramic sample.		
		Figurines = 0.26% of ceramic sample.		
		Lithics in dedication, termination, funerary. Jade in funerary.		
		Bone/shell in burial.		
	Low-End Commoner	Vessels used in funerary.		Only one case of dedication. Not everybody dedicating with vessels.
		Censers = 0.04% of ceramic sample.		Censers found in 3 out of the 6 houses. Altogether, the proportion is the same, but in a case by case, not everybody seem to have been using them.
		Figurines = 0.02% of ceramic sample.		Only two houses of 6 using figurines.
			No lithics in ritual contexts.	
			No bone/shell in ritual context.	

Not all investigated low-end commoner residences yielded ritual deposits, but artifacts of likely ritual function, like figurines and incense burners, were present (Table 10.2). Albeit in lower quantities, low-end commoners had access to most of the same materials higher ranks used. They also had access to some of the symbolic knowledge held by higher-ranked people. The location of the found ritual deposits and paraphernalia suggest recognition of symbolic directionality. In addition, similarities in funerary practices and dedicatory deposits also indicate the shared knowledge and practices.

Table 10.2. Ritual Elements by Location within Residences

Categories of ritual elements	Symbolic feature/ritual element	Social Rank																	
		Royal					Noble					HEC				LEC			
		N	S	E	W	C	N	S	E	W	C	N	S	E	W	N	S	E	W
Architecture	Orientation	←→				←→					←→					←→			
	Altar					X					X			X					X
Feasting																			
Funerary	Primary	X							X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		
	Secondary											X							
	Removal of bones																	X	
Dedication	Vessel	X	X						X						X			X	
	Human remains											X			X				
Termination		X	X			X					X			X					
Paraphernalia	Vessels	X	X						X	X				X	X	X	X		
	Incense burners	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X			X	X		
	Figurines	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	

N=north, S=south, E=east, W=west, C=center

However, their domestic ritual actions were clearly limited in comparison to those of the higher social ranks. Commoners seem to have enjoyed enough independence of action. They

seem to have had the ability to choose not only the actions but also the media to address their own needs and interests.

Although low-end commoners' rituals functioned within similar cosmological understandings that those from the other ranks, they were not entirely engaged with them. Their selective rejection of some of the ritual actions of the dynastic cosmology could be described as a form of resistance. However, they were not openly or comprehensively confronting such cosmology. No indication of overt conflict or contradiction were found. Instead, taken altogether, the attitude of low-end commoner people seems more appropriately described as passively compliant.

Compared with the higher ranks, low-end commoner ritual at Terminal Classic Yaxha is selective in its practices and symbols. It does not show the high levels of connection observed among royals, nobles, and even high-end commoners. However, it is not entirely disconnected. It is clear that low-end commoner ritual followed very similar cosmological principles as those used by the higher ranks. For example, they celebrated the cardinal directions with similar ritual deposits, like burials and caches. They certainly possessed the ritual knowledge and there is reason to believe they had the independence to carry out their own ritual actions in the privacy of their homes. They carried out their ritual obligations through similar behaviors than elites, but through a selectively limited set of actions. As suggested by the ethnographic model that constitutes a guideline for this study, this passive attitude might have been used by low-end commoners to morally disassociate themselves from the dynastic cosmology of the higher ranks. In this sense, this attitude might well be a strategy of passive resistance. However, the same passiveness would hardly be a significant promoter of social change. It is unlikely that a passive

behavior like this could have promoted in itself an episode of drastic change, like the abandonment of the city. However, a moral division between the lower and upper ranks could have certainly contributed to social unrest. In the ethnographic case, moral opposition and separation is tied to the reinforcement of a separate identity that has fueled the development of a resistance movement. So far, there is no reason to believe that resistance from the lower ranks promoted the abandonment of Yaxha by the end of the Classic period, but this is a possibility worth exploring in future studies.

Alternative interpretations to those modeled here are certainly possible. For example, low-end commoners might be limiting their domestic ritual performances for a variety of reasons other than disconnection from the dynastic cosmology. Some of the reasons that are worth considering are: 1. Impositions from above and 2. economic limitations. The impositions from above refer to the possibility that 'official' prohibitions limited the ritual actions and symbols that low-end commoners were allowed to have. However, this interpretation implies first the existence of a cosmological orthodoxy that has not been identified for ancient Mesoamerica (Monaghan 2000); and second, it implies that Classic Maya rulers had the capacity to control people's action in the privacy of their homes. As discussed by Houston and Inomata (2009:158-162, 244), Classic Maya kingdoms did not develop the impersonal and intrusive governance systems of empires and other kinds of states. Instead of through prohibitions and coercion, a commitment to the ruler was cultivated through collective ritual. In addition, commoners seem to have enjoyed certain amount of physical mobility, suggesting that moving to a new locality was an option when faced with local oppressive conditions.

Economic limitations could be another alternative explanation for a differential ritual behavior between the lower and higher social ranks. One might imagine that economic constraints limited low-end commoners' access to ritual paraphernalia and architecture. Nevertheless, with the exception of jade, low-end commoners at Terminal Classic Yaxha had access to the very same materials as the higher ranks. Even in the case that they would not have been able to access high skilled crafts, they could have produced lower skilled but symbolically similar objects. We know that craft production occurred in commoner houses all around the Maya area. There is no reason to believe that commoners would not be able to produce their own ritual paraphernalia. Similarly, low-end commoners built their own houses using similar features as the higher ranks (Houston and Inomata 2009:118); they could have built their own ritual constructions. These ritual constructions could have been modest platforms built with readily available stone. No great investments would have been necessary to convey the same symbols and cosmological concepts.

It is important to reiterate that despite the shared ritual features and symbolic elements, no two cases are exactly similar. There certainly is pluralism of ritual behavior among the investigated residential units. Nevertheless, within each defined social category, the cases remain within the parameters that led to the conclusion that nobles and high-end commoners were more actively engaged with the dynastic cosmology than low-end commoners.

10.3. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This dissertation has approached the topic of resistance from the perspective of household ritual. However, studying ancient people's attitudes towards authority from their material remains has its obvious limitations. I found guidance for this study in ethnographic observations from traditional Maya populations. In the future, this avenue of research could be strengthened by the incorporation of ethnographic and ethnohistoric observations from domestic contexts. The ethnographic guidelines for this dissertation (see Chapter 1) were based mostly on communal public performances. Since the archaeological data comes from domestic contexts, it would be productive to observe ethnographically the expressions of people's attitudes in the privacy of their homes.

Additionally, an important finding from this study is that a difference of domestic ritual behavior separates lower-ranked people from the higher-ranked people. This difference is materially recognizable and in some instances quantifiable for Terminal Classic Yaxha. The causes and consequences of such difference can be discussed only in hypothetical terms. Observing relative levels of ritual connection and disconnection between different social ranks, I have interpreted low-end commoner households to be less engaged with the dynastic cosmology than high-end commoners and nobles. This hypothesis could be explored in the future by comparing Yaxha's data with that of other Classic Maya kingdoms. In fact, so much data has been already collected from other kingdoms throughout the last decades that an effective avenue of future research can be the re-analysis of this information following the same reasoning used in the

present study. Past research in ancient kingdoms like Tikal, Palenque, and Copan, where household research has taken place could provide the necessary comparative data. Although sampling issues have to be carefully considered, the comparative exercise can be done in any site where archaeological research in several residential units has taken place and the information is available for consultation.

Sampling issues had to be resolved for the research at Yaxha. The research design implied collection of data from several different residential units. Working with limited resources, the excavation strategy had to allow such coverage and provide the necessary lines of evidence. Excavations were not randomly located. The idea was to maximize the results by targeting areas of known ritual significance within each residential unit, and at the same time avoid excavations of architectural features that would require more time and resources. Therefore, priority was given to the excavation on the axis of patios' four sides. This strategy was successful for locating traces of ritual activity and pieces of symbolic objects. Nevertheless, the research could benefit from excavations in other areas within the same residential units, particularly inside the different dwellings surrounding the patios. For example, ethnographic research suggest that house dedication might involve the caching of objects in the center of the single dwelling (e.g., Vogt 2004). Excavation in that particular setting could be productive. This kind of further research could significantly strengthen the interpretations by providing further data and facilitate statistical comparisons from more numerous artifact collections.

This research focus on the Terminal Classic period came about also from sampling concerns. The ceramic collections confirmed that all investigated residential units were last built and/or occupied during this period. Ritual deposits were consistently dated to the Terminal

Classic. However, some of the residential units showed traces of previous occupations, both from earlier during the Classic and from the Preclassic. There is the possibility that further excavations could provide useful data from these previous occupations and contribute a more diachronic analysis. The collected evidence in this case allowed a synchronic analysis, but in the future, a diachronic view could contribute a better understanding of the causes and consequences of the behaviors that were identified in this dissertation.

The Yaxha case contributes a better understanding of the relationships between the people and the dynastic cosmology by the end of the Classic in an ancient Maya kingdom. Future research will reveal if the same patterns can be recognized at other kingdoms and if these patterns are Terminal Classic phenomena or if they are consistent throughout Maya history. I am particularly interested in exploring the possible long-term consequences of the identified relative disconnections between the lower and higher ranks' ritual and symbolism. A fundamental next step is to investigate the evidence from other kingdoms to see if the observed patterns for Yaxha are found throughout the Maya Lowlands or if to the contrary, there were (synchronic and/or diachronic) variations among Maya kingdoms concerning this disconnections between ranks.

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