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Architecture and Placemaking at a Northern Maya City: Ek' Balam and the Question of Style

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FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
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ARCHITECTURE AND PLACEMAKING AT A NORTHERN MAYA CITY:
EK' BALAM AND THE QUESTION OF STYLE

By

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To Nana, you may have entered the white road, but you are forever in my heart

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	x
Abstract	xvi
INTRODUCTION	1
1. THE HISTORY OF EK' BALAM	13
Location and General Description	13
The Historiography of Ek' Balam and El Torre	21
Ek' Balam and the Dating of GT-1	25
2. THE FOUNDING OF THE TALOL DYNASTY	49
"The Father of the Four Hard Flints"	55
The Founding of Ek' Balam	60
A Deformed King	69
Towards a Theory of Making Place	74
3. THE ARCHITECTURAL BRICOLAGE AT EK' BALAM: UKIT KAN LE'K TOK' AS BRICOLEUR	92
Structure 18: A Formal Arched Entrance	100
Structures 8 and 9: The Ballcourt	106
The Oval Palace	108
A Stepped Multi-Purpose Complex: Understanding GT-1 and its Many Uses	113
4. TO BE OR NOT TO BE CHENES: RE-EVALUATING EK' BALAM AND THE FAÇADE OF GT-1	146
Chenes Portals and Construction Techniques	148
The Zoomorphic Portal at Ek' Balam: An Iconographical Analysis	152
The Zoomorphic Portal at Copán	157
Pan-Mesoamerican Portal Ideology	164
5. THE QUESTION OF STYLE: CONSTRUCTING AN ECOLOGY OF ARCHITECTURAL FORMS	199
Peninsular Chronology: The Unsettled Debate	199
Finding Meaning in the Built Environment	208
An Ecology of Architectural Forms	211
CONCLUSION	221
APPENDIX A: FIELD NOTES FROM A REGIONAL SURVEY OF CAMPECHE	228

Bibliography	274
Biographical Sketch	288

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Map of Yucatán, showing Ek' Balam and the important architectural spheres	30
Figure 1.2	Map of central Ek' Balam	31
Figure 1.3	Structure 1, Ek' Balam	32
Figure 1.4	The façade of Room 35, Structure 1, Ek' Balam	33
Figure 1.5	Structure 18, Ek' Balam	34
Figure 1.6	Structure 16, Ek' Balam	35
Figure 1.7	Hieroglyphic Serpent, Structure 1, Ek' Balam.....	36
Figure 1.8	The Emblem Glyph of Ek' Balam (bottom left) from the eastern Hieroglyphic Serpent.....	37
Figure 1.9	The façade of Room 29, Structure 1, Ek' Balam	38
Figure 1.10	Drawing of Stela 1, Ek' Balam	39
Figure 1.11	Western Hieroglyphic Serpent, Central Stairway, Structure 1, Ek' Balam	40
Figure 1.12	Eastern Hieroglyphic Serpent, Central Stairway, Structure 1, Ek' Balam.....	41
Figure 1.13	Mural of the 96 Glyphs (section 1), Room 29-sub, Structure 1, Ek' Balam	42
Figure 1.14	Mural of the 96 Glyphs (section 2), Room 29-sub, Structure 1, Ek' Balam	43
Figure 1.15	Mural of the 96 Glyphs (section 3), Room 29-sub, Structure 1, Ek' Balam	44
Figure 1.16	Mural of the 96 Glyphs (section 4), Room 29-sub, Structure 1, Ek' Balam	45
Figure 1.17	Mural of the 96 Glyphs (section 5), Room 29-sub, Structure 1, Ek' Balam	46
Figure 1.18	Stela 1, Ek' Balam.....	47
Figure 1.19	Cover of Vault 19, Room 35, Structure 1, Ek' Balam	48
Figure 2.1	Lintel 1, Halakal	77
Figure 2.2	Tablet of the 96 Glyphs, Palenque	78
Figure 2.3	Drawing of Lintel 1, Halakal.....	79

Figure 2.4	Detail of the Casa Colorada inscription, Chichén Itzá	80
Figure 2.5	Mural of Room 22, Structure 1, Ek' Balam	81
Figure 2.6	Femur bone carved into a perforator, Room 49, Structure 1, Ek' Balam	82
Figure 2.7	Stela 31 inscription showing 11 Eb' arrival, Tikal.....	83
Figure 2.8	Blackware Vessel, Tikal.....	84
Figure 2.9	Marcador, Tikal	85
Figure 2.10	Drawing of K'iniich Yax K'uk' Mo' on Altar Q, Copán.....	86
Figure 2.11	Bone pendant depicting Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'	87
Figure 2.12	Cacao Vessel, Room 49, Structure 1, Ek' Balam.....	88
Figure 2.13	Cover of Vault 15, Room 49, Structure 1, Ek' Balam	89
Figure 2.14	Detail of Capstone 15, Room 49, Structure 1, Ek' Balam	90
Figure 2.15	Sarcophagus lid of K'iniich Janaab' Pakal I, Palenque.....	91
Figure 3.1	Map of Yucatán defining the regions of the Rio Bec, Chenes, and Puuc styles	119
Figure 3.2	Map of Chichén Itzá.....	120
Figure 3.3	Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jambs, Chichén Itzá	121
Figure 3.4	Panel 1, Ichmul de Morley	122
Figure 3.5	The final passage of Ikil Panel 2	123
Figure 3.6	Mural of Room 22, Las Monjas, Chichén Itzá by Jean Charlot.....	124
Figure 3.7	Structure 18, Ek' Balam	125
Figure 3.8	Structure 1, Nohchen	126
Figure 3.9	Comparison of portal vaults at Nohchen (left) and Kabah (right)	127
Figure 3.10	Drawing of Structure 1B1 at Kabah by Frederick Catherwood	128
Figure 3.11	Structure 1B1 at Kabah	129

Figure 3.12	Map of Kabah.....	130
Figure 3.13	Arch at Labna	131
Figure 3.14	Map of Labna	132
Figure 3.15	Drawing of the portal vault at Labna by Frederick Catherwood.....	133
Figure 3.16	Ballcourt at Ek' Balam	134
Figure 3.17	Structure 8 at Ek' Balam	135
Figure 3.18	Structure 9 at Ek' Balam	136
Figure 3.19	Structure 16, Ek' Balam	137
Figure 3.20	Plan of Uxmal Round Structure	138
Figure 3.21	Caracol, Chichén Itzá	139
Figure 3.22	Section and Plan of Caracol, Chichén Itzá.....	140
Figure 3.23	North façade of Structure 16 showing later building phase	141
Figure 3.24	Plan of GT-1, Ek' Balam.....	142
Figure 3.25	GT-1, Ek' Balam	143
Figure 3.26	Visual dislocation of the lower range-type structure, GT-1, Ek' Balam.....	144
Figure 3.27	False stairs of the west façade, GT-1, Ek' Balam	145
Figure 4.1	Chenes style façade of Room 35, GT-1, Ek' Balam	173
Figure 4.2	Eyelash details carved into the stucco of the zoomorphic portal at Chicanná	174
Figure 4.3	Scales carved into the stucco of the Chenes façade, GT-1, Ek' Balam	175
Figure 4.4	Structure II, Hormiguero	176
Figure 4.5	Reconstruction drawing of Structure II, Hormiguero	177
Figure 4.6	Structure II, Chicanná.....	178
Figure 4.7	Reconstruction drawing of Structure II, Chicanná.....	179

Figure 4.8	Proboscis of the reptilian earth monster above the central doorway, Room 35, GT-1, Ek' Balam	180
Figure 4.9	Wide inter-orbital space with seated royal attendants, Room 35, GT-1, Ek' Balam.....	181
Figure 4.10	Sentinels with elaborate feather back-racks, Room 35, GT-1, Ek' Balam	182
Figure 4.11	Pawahtuuns adorning the lower façade, Room 35, GT-1, Ek' Balam	183
Figure 4.12	Stacked masks of the lower façade, Room 35, GT-1, Ek' Balam	184
Figure 4.13	Structure 22-10L, Copán	185
Figure 4.14	Reconstruction drawing of Structure 22-10L by Tatiana Proskouriakoff	186
Figure 4.15	Reconstruction drawing of the central zoomorphic portal, Structure 22-10L, Copán	187
Figure 4.16	Reconstruction of Structure 22-10L showing Maize God busts	188
Figure 4.17	Altar 4, La Venta	189
Figure 4.18	Xochipala Vessel.....	190
Figure 4.19	Monument 9, Chalcatzingo	191
Figure 4.20	Petroglyph 1, Chalcatzingo	192
Figure 4.21	Structure 1, Tabasqueño	193
Figure 4.22	Main Temple at Malinalco	194
Figure 4.23	Page 14 of the Codex Borgia representation of a temple with animate features	195
Figure 4.24	Temple V at Tikal.....	196
Figure 4.25	False pyramid of the Rio Bec style	197
Figure 4.26	Structure 1, Xpuhil	198
Figure 5.1	Map of the Northern Plains	219
Figure 5.2	Harry Pollock's map of Yucatecan regions.....	220

Figure A.1	Zoomorphic portal at Channa Sur	241
Figure A.2	Inset mask of the commissure, Channa Sur	242
Figure A.3	Stacked masks showing stucco eyelash details, Channa Sur	243
Figure A.4	Structure II, Chicanná.....	244
Figure A.5	Traces of red, yellow, and blue pigment, Structure II, Chicanná.....	245
Figure A.6	Red pigment surrounding the scrolling volutes of breath, Structure II, Chicanná.....	246
Figure A.7	Incisors of the lower mandible, Structure II, Chicanná.....	247
Figure A.8	Group D, Structure XX, Chicanná	248
Figure A.9	Incisors of the lower mandible, Group D, Structure XX, Chicanná	249
Figure A.10	Detail of the lower portal, Group D, Structure XX, Chicanná.....	250
Figure A.11	Detail of the upper portal, Group D, Structure XX, Chicanná.....	251
Figure A.12	Structure II, Hochob.....	252
Figure A.13	Inset mask of the commissure, Structure II, Hochob	253
Figure A.14	Stacked corner masks, Structure II, Hochob	254
Figure A.15	Spiral shaped eye and eyelash details of the central mask and wide upper brow, Structure II, Hochob.....	255
Figure A.16	Detail of the double-headed serpent above the central mask, Structure II, Hochob	256
Figure A.17	Structure III, Hochob.....	257
Figure A.18	Structure II, Hormiguero	258
Figure A.19	Eyelash detail, Structure II, Hormiguero.....	259
Figure A.20	Inset mask of the commissure, Structure II, Hormiguero	260
Figure A.21	Incisors of the lower mandible, Structure II, Hormiguero	261
Figure A.22	Structure V, Hormiguero	262

Figure A.23	Structure I, Payan	263
Figure A.24	Detail of the stacked masks, Structure I, Payan	264
Figure A.25	Stucco details, Structure I, Payan	265
Figure A.26	Double-headed serpent (left side) above the central doorway, Structure I, Payan	266
Figure A.27	Double-headed serpent (right side) above the central doorway, Structure I, Payan	267
Figure A.28	The Building with the Serpent Mouth Façade, Santa Rosa Xtampak	268
Figure A.29	The Palace, Santa Rosa Xtampak	269
Figure A.30	Detail of the Palace, Santa Rosa Xtampak	270
Figure A.31	Structure I, El Tabasqueño	271
Figure A.32	Spiral shaped eye and eyelash detail, Structure I, El Tabasqueño	272
Figure A.33	Structure I, Xpuhil	273

ABSTRACT

Ek' Balam's ceremonial precinct offers what appears at first glance to be an interesting bricolage of architectural styles and anomalies. In this dissertation I examine the amalgamation of styles through the concept of placemaking and argue that through placemaking the built environment at Ek' Balam appears less unusual and more as a specific approach to meaning-making in the built environment. This dissertation is a monograph on the site of Ek' Balam that studies the architecture attributed to the dynastic founder, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' and how he and his polity constructed meaning through the use of and mixing of specific architectural styles. I argue that the architectural landscape at Ek' Balam introduced an important medium for this powerful discourse as a process of meaning-making at the inter-site and intra-site level. Ukit Kan Le'k Tok', meaning the "Father of the Four Hard Flints," becomes a principal actor in the creation of place and meaning-making by selecting and combining various styles to craft a city that was altogether different. The rulers of Ek' Balam separated and divorced styles from their original geographic spheres, marginalized those forms to the periphery, and reformed them into a new aggregate ecology. Most importantly, by gathering all of the known data about Ek' Balam in one place we can better identify and appreciate how Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' specifically appropriated and mixed styles to project a unique vision of his rule.

Placemaking refers to a particular strategy, both multi-faceted and complex. In this dissertation I define placemaking as a process involved in the planning and design of ancient Maya cities, as well as the treatment and handling of the built environment, its masonry forms, texts, and visual representations, over time. The notion of placemaking describes the relationships that people have to a specific place and the realization of those connections, as well as the relationships among people within the space of place formation. Sometimes activities

involved in forming, renovating, and representing a place are unremarkable and discreet while at other times these appear superbly dramatic, like those made at the site of Ek' Balam under the reign of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. While Ek' Balam may appear to some as a minor, unremarkable site with an assortment of masonry forms, the architectural choices made by the dynastic founder invested power in his reign and imagined on the most impressive stage the eternal reprise of his grandest moment – his rebirth as a divine ancestor through the symbolic jaws of the earth monster crafted in stone on the south-facing façade of GT-1.

Lastly, I argue based on osteological, epigraphic, and iconographical evidence that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' arrived as a foreigner from the Rio Bec or Chenes heartlands and that the architectural landscape at Ek' Balam reflects the network of relationships he maintained with the Northern Plains, the peninsula as a whole, and the Maya world further to the south. In addition to the famous zoomorphic façade of GT-1 at Ek' Balam, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' scattered features of the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands throughout his city, including rounded corners, columns, and false stairs. Not only do these elements reveal his place of origin, but they inscribe meaning on the built environment through Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's relationship to distant peninsular cities. In this dissertation I present Ek' Balam and its built environment in its richness and complexity. The architectural, artistic, and epigraphic evidence unearths the social and political relationships maintained by Ek' Balam and its preeminent ruler, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'.

INTRODUCTION

On my last trip to Yucatán I was hiking in the state of Campeche searching for zoomorphic portals along a firebreak in the jungle. The modern Maya carve these breaks in the thick foliage to control milpa burns, preventing them from spreading to the dense forests. On these long treks I often thought about style. What is style really all about? And it occurred to me that using style to discuss ancient Maya architecture parallels the firebreaks in the jungle – it ends the conversation in its tracks. You may hike quite far on the path of style, but ultimately the going gets too tough and you are forced to stop. Moreover, how do we treat cities with a *mélange* of architectural styles? Can styles be combined so that a cities built environment surpasses a singular declaration of its identity to present instead a polyglot of influences? At the ancient Maya city of Ek' Balam multiple styles merge to create a bricolage of forms. Yes, the façade of GT-1 mirrors the iconography and construction techniques used by the Rio Bec and Chenes styles in their zoomorphic portals, but acknowledging its relationship to the Chenes style simply results in its comparison to like portals rather than a more complete awareness of its use in creating place and identity at a site far removed from the Chenes heartland. Style as a methodology prevents a deeper understanding of the relationships occurring between users, viewers, and the built environment.

Until recently archaeologists and art historians generally overlooked the ancient Maya city of Ek' Balam owing to its classification in the 1970s as a minor site (Garza T. and Kurjack 1980). The architecture at Ek' Balam represents the few merits mentioned in scholarly accounts. Tourists typically omit the site from their travel plans preferring the larger and more familiar city of Chichén Itzá, except for perhaps thrill-seekers pursuing adventure and a daring rappel into the cool waters of the cenote X'canché that sits at the corner of the site. Tourist traffic has increased

in recent years. And yet Ek' Balam offers one of the best preserved stuccowork known from the Maya world. Examples of finely preserved stucco exist at other sites, including Balamkú and Acanceh, but none offer a complete specimen of Maya architectural adornment. Not only does it yield the most complete example of stucco ornamentation but a climb up the central stairs of the acropolis surrenders the finest vista to appreciate and truly visualize how elaborate the Maya cities once appeared. At Ek' Balam you can almost see the ancient city come to life, largely a result of the famously preserved stucco façade located on the plaza-facing side of the structure now known as GT-1. While located only a short distance from the popular tourist destination of Chichén Itzá it amazes me how few visitors wander off the beaten path to this ancient Maya gem.

The notable quality of GT-1, also known as El Torre and the Acropolis, and its intact stuccowork make the structure a tangible example of ancient Maya architecture. Ceramic analysis suggests that the earliest occupants arrived as early as the Middle Preclassic period (600 BC – 300 BC), although the large majority of architectural remains date to the Late Classic period (AD 770 – AD 870). The essence of Ek' Balam's ceremonial center offers what appears at first glance to be an interesting amalgamation of architectural styles and anomalies. Yet if we view this amalgamation through the concept of placemaking I argue that the built landscape at Ek' Balam appears less unusual and more as a specific approach to meaning-making in the built environment. The dynastic founder, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok', meaning the "Father of the Four Hard Flints," becomes a principal actor in the creation of place and meaning-making by selecting and combining various styles to craft a city that was altogether different. In fact, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's foreignness, the topic of Chapter Two, explains his need to fashion a sense of place. When compared to other peninsular cities Ek' Balam belongs beside Uxmal, Chichén Itzá and

Mayapán, all of which used similar placemaking principles to emulate the features of distant cities.

Placemaking refers to a particular strategy, both multi-faceted and complex. In this dissertation I define placemaking as a process involved in the planning and design of ancient Maya cities, as well as the treatment and handling of the built environment, its masonry forms, texts, and visual representations, over time (Schneekloth and Shibley 1995: 3). In addition, a current of social interactions fortifies the manmade structures as a part of placemaking on a smaller scale. Ritual activities like fire-drilling and fire-entering, and the documentation of those events as a lasting record of the ruler's presence represent an alternative kind of placemaking, which I discuss in Chapter Two. These are the social interactions where a structure is given meaning through the presence of the ruler and the community. Stephen Feuchtwang (2004) equates placemaking with movement, which I argue resembles the acts of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' as he maneuvers throughout his world and its hinterland to create significant points of focus relevant to Ek' Balam and his rule. Feuchtwang writes that placemaking acts as "the centering and marking of a place by the actions and constructions of people tracing salient parts of their daily lives as a homing point in their trajectories" (10-11). The places that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' shaped at Ek' Balam, Chichén Itzá, Ikil, Ichmul de Morley and others were made by the conscious selection of what Feuchtwang calls "focal points" (12). Ultimately placemaking is first and foremost about making and constructing various points of focus that form a web or relational network of locations. The most successful initiatives place the emphasis on this process of creation, design, and management (Schneekloth and Shibley 1995: 111). This dissertation examines the place, the ancient Maya city of Ek' Balam, to shed light on the making,

which will reveal in all its complexities how and why meaning exists in the built environment and the relationships that made it possible. I emphasize the process over the product.

While few studies exist on placemaking in the ancient Maya world, several seminal works paved the way for placemaking as a methodological approach.¹ Kevin Lynch (1960) explained how humans perceive the city and how they navigate the reality of the urban landscape. His work, *The Image of the City*, influenced architects and city planners who began to consider the importance of a human-centric design. William Whyte (1980) recorded the elements necessary for a successful public space based on his collection of time lapse photography documenting the human response to both good and bad public spaces. In *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* he linked urban design to the needs of a community. Ray Oldenburg (2009) coined the term “third place” to refer to the spaces where a community gathers in informal ways. Most importantly, he explains that the third place constructs “the infrastructures of human relationships” (Oldenburg 2009: 1). Thus, through placemaking we can understand and interpret the network of human connections.

Ek’ Balam thrived in the Northern Plains of the Yucatán peninsula around the same time as its neighbor Chichén Itzá as well as Uxmal in the northwestern Puuc heartland. George J. Bey III and William M. Ringle date the greatest period of occupation at Ek’ Balam to the Late or Terminal Classic period (AD 600 – AD 1100) corresponding to the florescence of the Puuc cities to the west, like Uxmal, Nohpat, and Kabah. And yet the built environment at Ek’ Balam does not include evidence of Puuc influence. The findings of the *Proyecto Ek’ Balam*, under the aegis

¹ Alexandre Tokovinine used placemaking to study the palatial complex of La Sufricaya near the site of Holmul in Petén, Guatemala. The relatively large textual and visual corpus allowed Tokovinine to identify various strategies selected by La Sufricaya rulers in shaping their identity and history in relation to the greater narratives of their time (Tokovinine 2008). George Andrews’ volume on Maya cities and placemaking is the only extensive survey of twenty sites. He investigates a number of ancient Maya cities as “artifacts” to explore the significance of civic planning (1975).

of Bey and Ringle argues that its principal structures were “constructed rapidly by an elite who migrated into the area” (Bey and Ringle 1998). During the same period Chichén Itzá dominated the northern peninsula politically. Its architectural landscape presented a combination of traditional Maya and central Mexican, or Toltec features. But again, at Ek’ Balam these features are lacking.² In this light Ek’ Balam as a whole, and more specifically the façade of GT-1, act as both an aesthetic object and a cultural manifestation of placemaking, identity, and memory at the site in the service of placehood by and for its first ruler, Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’. Viewed through the concept of placemaking I suggest that the style of Ek’ Balam acts to emulate or instantiate place through the quotation of architectural forms foreign to the Northern Plains.

Ek’ Balam’s architectural persona appears less idiosyncratic when compared to similar placemaking activities in the Yucatán peninsula. Scholars typically divide the architectural landscape at Chichén Itzá into two stylistic integrities. The Puuc personality of Old Chichén gives way to a Toltec style of expression around AD 900. New Chichén emulates the architectural character of Tula, often believed to be the Toltecs place of origin in Central Mexico. Even Uxmal incorporated the cult of the feathered serpent as it aligned itself with the

² Bey, Hanson, and Ringle (1997) studied the presence of C-shaped structures at Ek’ Balam to shed light on the Terminal Classic to Postclassic transition at peninsular sites. Their excavation of Structure GS-12 revealed a C-shaped structure generally associated with the later Postclassic occupation of Yucatán. Other C-shaped structures can be found at Uxmal during the same time. They determined that the presence of Cehpech-sphere ceramics at GS-12, a ceramic style belonging to the Terminal Classic, proved that C-shaped structures marked the transition from Terminal Classic to Postclassic periods in Yucatán. While no Toltec architectural influences exist at Ek’ Balam, Bey, Hanson, and Ringle contend that the C-shaped structures represent a building type constructed as an administrative building at cities subject to Chichén Itzá and Toltec Maya rule. At Ek’ Balam monumental construction ceased during the Late Classic period and hieroglyphic inscriptions name no rulers during the Terminal Classic period. Part of the Sacrificios Group, GS-12 lies northwest of the ceremonial precinct immediately outside the double walls. Two other C-shaped structures exist at Ek’ Balam located to the west. Like GS-12 both structures lie just beyond the double walled center. Alberto Ruz Lhuillier first recognized that C-shaped structures postdated monumental construction at Uxmal (Ruz Lhuillier 1952). Tomas Gallareta Négron explains that C-shaped structures at Uxmal represent “major changes in the design, workmanship, and construction techniques” and a “radical change in the conception of the use and disposition of the space” (Gallareta Négron 1989: 6). At Ek’ Balam the placement of C-shaped structures just beyond the site core demonstrates a break in the traditional use of space. During the Terminal Classic to the Postclassic period Ek’ Balam faced re-organization and depopulation. C-shaped structures ultimately represent this process of social and political organization under the new Toltec Maya presence.

new Toltec style of expression at Chichén Itzá. The Nunnery Quadrangle at Uxmal added feathered serpent iconography as a placemaking process visualizing their place in the new political climate of the peninsula. Moreover, the later Terminal Classic site of Mayapán constructed their city as a reflection of Chichén Itzá with versions of the Castillo and Caracol albeit on a smaller scale. In each example the emulation of architectural forms creates a strong sense of place. I view the main problem not as the interesting amalgamation at each site, but how each actor used style in the service of placemaking to shape a polity different from all the others. Just as the Toltec features at Chichén Itzá used placemaking as a marker of foreignness, I argue that the founder of Ek' Balam's dynasty migrated from the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands corresponding to the modern-day state of Campeche. Though Ringle and Bey arrived at a similar conclusion regarding Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' as a newcomer to the Northern Plains they did not guess at the ruler's place of origin. Whether this new sovereign simply visited the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands or maintained kinship ties to the south/southwest, the architectural aberrations at Ek' Balam confirm a preference for the Rio Bec and Chenes features. The materiality of El Torre's façade and other masonry forms at the site brings to light questions of identity and place through the use of architectural styles not present in the immediate region.

Sylvanus Morley, one of the earliest visitors to venture to the site, completed an extended study of Ek' Balam in the first decades of the twentieth century. While it is unfortunate that his preliminary study did not reveal the true architectural value of Ek' Balam, its merit to the peninsula's history and stylistic oddities can finally be appreciated thanks to the excavations of Bey and Ringle in the 1980s and 1990s and the discovery of the stucco façade by Leticia Vargas de la Pena and Victor R. Castillo Borges in 1999. The remarkable find of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's tomb inside GT-1 followed shortly (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 1999). Morley's

earliest critique of the site with its low buildings “built of crudely dressed masonry,” represents a stark contrast to the quality of the stucco façade of GT-1 known today.

Although Bishop Diego de Landa never visited Ek’ Balam, the words recorded in his c. 1566 *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán* convey in broader terms the site’s significance to the peninsula’s history. “If Yucatan were to gain a name and reputation from the multitude, the grandeur and the beauty of its buildings, as other regions of the Indies have obtained these by gold, silver and riches, its glory would have spread like that of Peru and New Spain” (Tozzer 1941: 170-71). I believe the facade of GT-1 so perfectly echoes the sentiment of Diego de Landa with its “grandeur and beauty” that it has been continually hailed as one of the masterpieces of ancient Maya architecture since its initial discovery. And yet – very little else is ever said. In fact, the architectural landscape at Ek’ Balam answers Diego de Landa’s call to put the built environment of the Yucatán peninsula on the map alongside the material splendors of Peru and New Spain.

Despite the fact that Ek’ Balam’s aesthetic value dynamically changed with the discovery of GT-1 and its well-preserved stucco façade, no extensive analysis of the site or iconographical study of GT-1’s Chenes style façade exists. And while documentary evidence dates back to the sixteenth century Ek’ Balam typically receives no more than a brief section in the general scholarship of Maya art and architecture, usually referring to the Chenes portal of GT-1. As a result, it has been difficult to ascertain the peninsular significance of Ek’ Balam and to construct a more comprehensive understanding of its architectural presence, which appears at odds with the architectural narratives and the stylistic aura of nearby Chichén Itzá and Cobá. Thanks to the efforts of archaeologists and the Ek’ Balam Architectural Conservation and Research Project led by Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges, supported by the *Instituto Nacional de Antropología*

y *Historia*, we know that Chichén Itzá, Cobá, and Ek' Balam coexisted during the Late Classic and Terminal Classic periods (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2006; Smith 2000). Recent hieroglyphic evidence and the discovery of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's tomb at Ek' Balam reveal the contemporaneity of these three sites, and yet Ek' Balam represented a political entity unto itself led by the powerful rulers of the Talol kingdom (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2009: 90).

Consequently, this dissertation presents a monograph on the site of Ek' Balam that will greatly enhance our knowledge about a significant Late Classic Maya center and its architectural landscape.³ In order to gain a better understanding of Ek' Balam's architectural importance, both to the peninsula as well as beyond, and the role that the site's style performs in the overall cultural landscape of Yucatán, we must recognize Ek' Balam first as a complex architectural event.⁴ I argue that architecture functions as a visual marker of the complexities inherent to the process of placemaking, the attainment of personhood and the representation of identity, and the extent to which disparate cultural and social processes are resolved.⁵ The notion of placemaking describes the relationships that people have to a specific place and the realization of those connections, as well as the relationships among people within the space of place formation.

³ While only a handful of volumes examine the full chronological scope of Maya architecture, perhaps the quintessential text is still George Kubler's on Mexican, Maya, and Andean traditions (1962). George F. Andrews (1975) focuses on the forms and functions of the architectural landscape, along with the thirteen contributions published in Stephen D. Houston's volume on Classic Maya Architecture (1994). Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1963) not only made significant contributions to the decipherment of hieroglyphic texts but also envisioned the world of the ancient Maya. She presents black and white reconstruction drawings of many ceremonial centers, both sweeping panoramas of temple complexes and palace precincts, as well as remarkable details. The newest contribution to Maya architecture focuses on the social complexities and royal dynasties of Maya cities from the Preclassic to the Postclassic periods (Coe and Brukoff 2012).

⁴ The architecture of northern and central Yucatán is perhaps the least studied, in contrast to the large majority of publications exploring the grand cities of the Classic southern lowlands and Guatemalan highlands (Andrews 1995; Andrews 1997; Andrews 1999; Gendrop 1998).

⁵ Dell Upton defines selfhood as "the sense of one's internal coherence and independent agency." On the other hand, personhood relates to an individual's position within society. Upton explains that personhood is "the understanding of one's obligation to fulfill socially assigned and defined roles" (Upton 2008).

Sometimes activities involved in forming, renovating, and representing a place are unremarkable and discreet while at other times they appear superbly dramatic, like those made at the site of Ek' Balam under the reign of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. Through the examination of these relationships I propose an ecology of built forms, a hermeneutical approach to the study of the built environment which identifies the interactions between peoples and places.

Style has its limitations, but ecology helps us to understand the relationships occurring between viewers and the built environment. Both Susan Sontag and Gregory Bateson discuss ecology (Sontag 1979; Bateson 1972). While Sontag's interests correspond to the relationships between images and reality, Bateson focuses more on systems theory and the maintenance of systems through feedback loops. He believes in a higher system that controls the individual, the community, and the ecosystem, which he refers to as the Mind (Bateson 1972: 1). Most importantly, the Mind must be approached as a whole and not as the single constituent parts. Applying Bateson's ideas to the visual world, this methodological approach envisions the architectural landscape at the macrocosmic level in which the identity and the community cannot be separated from the larger built environment. Since architecture gives shape to social processes Bateson's model offers a comprehensive perspective with which to view the relationship between built forms at the personal, social, and cultural levels. In fact, this dissertation is arranged into three parts to reflect the three constituent parts of Bateson's systems theory. First I explore the individual ruler responsible for the bricolage of styles at Ek' Balam, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. Second, I present the community of Ek' Balam through an analysis of its architectural forms. And lastly, I study the ecosystem of the Yucatán peninsula in which the zoomorphic façade appears. Chapter Five brings together these individual parts to show how they work in tandem to make meaning in the built environment.

While Ek' Balam may appear to some as a minor, unremarkable site with an assortment of masonry forms, the architectural choices made by the dynastic founder at Ek' Balam invested power in his reign and imagined on the most impressive stage the eternal reprise of his grandest moment – his rebirth as a divine ancestor. Lynda H. Schneekloth and Robert G. Shibley explain that, “mundane acts of placemaking can be significant acts of empowerment” (1995: 3). The built environment of the ancient Maya represents a highly visible form of human production that animates the architectural world with the supernatural essence found in the natural landscape. As such, it becomes a central component of the communal human experience reflecting a collective consciousness as well as local needs. Architecture maintains political hierarchies, reproduces cosmological beliefs, and re-enacts sacred moments, while at the same time innovating, reflecting, and facilitating the interpretation of shared social acts. This dissertation examines the architecture attributed to Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' and how he and his polity constructed meaning through the use of and mixing of specific architectural styles and how the built environment captured Ek' Balam's relationship to other regional powers. I argue that the architectural landscape at Ek' Balam introduced an important medium for this powerful discourse as a process of meaning-making at the inter-site and intra-site levels.

Using the architectural diversity of Ek' Balam, my dissertation examines how we might read the use of style within this complex architectural and political environment. It also questions the autonomy of such styles by offering a case of liminality where canons of representation become temporarily relaxed, rules broken, and traditions malleable to a specific cause. The rulers of Ek' Balam separated and divorced styles from their original geographic spheres, marginalized those forms to the periphery, and reformed them into a new aggregate ecology. Most importantly, by gathering all of the known data about Ek' Balam in one place we

can better identify and appreciate how Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' specifically appropriated and mixed styles to project a unique vision of his rule.

In the chapters that follow I present an account of the architectural landscape at Ek' Balam, examine the biographical data available on Ukit Kan Le'k Tok', and question the implications of style to studies of the built environment. Chapter One introduces the site of Ek' Balam, the early encounters and the later archaeological projects that brought to light its architectural, artistic, and political significance to the peninsula. It also includes a brief description of the site and its dynastic history. Chapter Two creates a biographical sketch of the founding ruler, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. It investigates the scientific, epigraphic, and artistic data relating to his life and argues that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' migrated from the south/southwest of the peninsula. The architectural personality at Ek' Balam presents monumental evidence of his foreign status and the impetus for his meaning-making in the built environment. In Chapter Three I take a closer look at the architectural anomalies that contribute to the synthesis of styles at the site and the creation of a unique urban temperament at Ek' Balam. The built forms that contribute to this architectural bricolage include a freestanding arch, a circular palace, false stairs, rounded corners, and a zoomorphic portal. A deeper analysis of GT-1 and the Chenes style façade continues with Chapter Four, which questions its iconographical features and construction technique. Chapter Four compares the zoomorphic façade of GT-1 with like portals from the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands. Additionally it assesses the symbolic nature of the monster mouth façade as a pan-Mesoamerican belief in transitional locations. Finally, Chapter Five summarizes the usefulness of style in the study of architecture and proposes an ecological approach to the built environment. It acknowledges the utility of relationships at the personal, social, and political level and the manner in which intra-site and inter-site relationships might be

envisioned in masonry form. Because I contend that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' arrived as a foreigner from the Rio Bec or Chenes heartlands the architectural designs that he made reflect the network of relationships he maintained with the Northern Plains, the peninsula as a whole, and the Maya world further to the south. In this dissertation I present Ek' Balam and its built environment in its richness and complexity. The architectural, artistic, and epigraphic evidence unearths the social and political relationships maintained by Ek' Balam and its preeminent ruler, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. The chapters that follow demonstrate the success of a more holistic approach to the architectural landscape – by securing the political, social, and aesthetic narratives we can form a more intelligible and comprehensive image of Ek' Balam.⁶

In addition to the stucco façade of GT-1, the architectural bricolage that mixed building types and styles from a variety of geographic regions and time periods exemplifies Diego de Landa's search for the “glory” of Yucatán. Not only has Yucatán's significance been understudied and the site of Ek' Balam, for the first time new archaeological study reveals its importance. This dissertation enriches our understanding of a Late Classic Maya city from the Northern Plains. By combining the existing scholarship on Ek' Balam and emerging discoveries in Yucatán not previously considered we can better understand the chronological significance of Ek' Balam and its stylistic oddities as a product of significant agendas as well as an active human placemaking process.

⁶ Kevin J. Johnston and Nancy Gonlin explain the significance of the structural approach to architecture as the urban landscape visually embodies and generates social processes by enacting them on a daily basis. Architecture is a culturally weighted space that through its very presence socializes based on the meanings encoded within its walls. “The relationship between social and spatial interactions is reflexive because production of space is linked to reproduction of social relations.” Therefore, the language of Maya architecture is generative – through architecture's representation it physically captures and recreates structure (1998: 144-145).

CHAPTER ONE

THE HISTORY OF EK' BALAM

Location and General Description

Compared to other ancient Maya cities Ek' Balam appears rather compact. Located in northern Yucatán (Fig. 1.1), it lies at the confluence of two powerful Late Classic regional centers – Chichén Itzá approximately 51 kilometers to the northeast and Cobá nearly 60 kilometers to the northwest (Houck 2004: 25; Bond-Freeman 2007: 3). While the architectural dispositions of Chichén Itzá and Cobá display a style representative of a Maya-Toltec and Petén Maya matrix respectively, their assertive stylistic integrities failed to leave a mark on the built environment of nearby Ek' Balam. When you take into account that a mere two days walk lies between Chichén Itzá and Ek' Balam it is surprising that the larger site of Chichén Itzá did not leave any noticeable presence at Ek' Balam stylistically, artistically, and most notably architecturally. Hieroglyphic dates at Chichén Itzá and Ek' Balam, as well as radio carbon dating and ceramic analysis, indicates that both sites co-existed for at least one hundred years, though Chichén Itzá became the dominant power around AD 900 with the influx of Toltec style iconography and architecture; as such the distinct character of the built environment at Ek' Balam built between AD 770 and AD 870 did not include any Toltec features. Even later kings elected not to alter the character of their city as envisioned by Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' and opted not to adopt any Toltec elements into later building programs. The lack of Toltec inspired architecture and other iconographical motifs borrowed from Epiclassic styles typical of the non-Maya records at Tula and El Tajín clearly articulate a unique agenda. The architectural *mélange* and stylistic oddities do indeed tell a remarkable story about the success of Ek' Balam in the political climate of the peninsula as a whole.

According to Bishop Diego de Landa three brothers founded Chichén Itzá, which inscriptions at the site appear to corroborate. The books of Chilam Balam, a prophetic history written after the conquest, also list their names as K'ak'upakal, who sat on the council at Chichén Itzá, Ah-Holtun-Balam, one of the founders, and Hun Pik Tok', though the information does not reveal if the Hun Pik Tok' mentioned in the Books of Chilam Balam was the same as the last ruler at Ek' Balam. Archaeologists divide the history of Chichén Itzá into two phases, a Maya phase from AD 700 to AD 1000 and a Toltec phase, though the dates are not quite as clear, but perhaps beginning around AD 900 to AD 1100 (Schele and Mathews 1998: 198). Some scholars believe that the Toltecs migrated from the site of Tula in the Mexican state of Hidalgo. The architecture at Chichén Itzá visualizes the two phases of expression. The Maya style buildings characterize Old Chichén in the southern region of the sacred precinct. These structures feature the typical Puuc mosaic technique found at sites like Uxmal and Kabah and include the Monjas, Casa Colorada, and Ak'ab Tz'ib, as well as the rectangular terrace supporting the Caracol. In contrast, New Chichén featured much larger structures with Central Mexican elements. Toltec features include serpent columns, feathered serpent balustrades, and colonnades. Buildings attributed to the Toltec style include the Great Ballcourt, the Upper and Lower Temples of the Jaguars, the Castillo, and the Temple of the Warriors (Sharer 2006: 563). More recent analysis suggests that the Maya and Toltec phases overlapped. Schele and Mathews explain the presence of Sotuta type ceramics at Uxmal often associated with the Toltec occupation; however scholars previously viewed Old Chichén and Uxmal as contemporaneous (Schele and Mathews 1998: 200).

A newer perspective views the Toltec iconography at Chichén Itzá not as the result of invaders from Tula but as a continuation of a Maya tradition at least four hundred years in the

making. The term Toltec referred to someone that inhabited Tollan, meaning the “Place of Cattail Reeds” (Schele and Mathews 1998: 2000). Most importantly, Tollan represented an origin place in the Mesoamerican consciousness. Aztec rulers journeyed to Tollan to obtain the emblems of rulership; the Kaqchikels believed in four Tollans corresponding to the cardinal directions. The K’iche’ Maya thought their ancestors came from *Tulan Suywaya*, the Place of Seven Caves. The Aztecs specifically identified four tangible Tollans in the Mesoamerican landscape – Teotihuacan, Tula, Cholula, and Tenochtitlan. In essence, many Tollans existed in ancient Mesoamerica. As Linda Schele and Peter Mathews explain the Maya of Chichén Itzá likely recognized Teotihuacan as the “Place of Reeds,” following the Classic period cities to the south, like Tikal and Copán, that appropriated images from Teotihuacan (Schele and Mathews 1998: 201). Being Toltec became a form of political currency and for the population of Chichén Itzá they crafted a Tollan using the same placemaking strategies employed at Ek’ Balam and other peninsular cities. Susan Gillespie (2007: 102) explains that no invasion occurred and no historical figure traveled from Tula as originally believed; rather an elite ideology migrated northward following the decline of the south. New evidence also dates the major period of occupation at Tula around AD 950 to AD 1150, making it unlikely that the Toltecs from Tula could have conquered Chichén Itzá since the Toltec influences appear just before Tula’s height (Schele and Mathews 1998: 2000). Therefore, the Toltec presence represents not an arrival of strangers, but the exchange of a visual vocabulary long representative of a Tollan in Maya thought.

In 2000 J. Gregory Smith completed a systematic analysis of the settlements positioned at the intersection of Chichén Itzá and Ek’ Balam’s influence. He explains in his study of the regional interactions between these two northeastern Yucatecan polities that “Chichén and Ek’

Balam differ in virtually every class of data available,” including the urban planning and organization, architectural styles and iconography (Smith 2000: 5). In fact, Smith correctly states that the architectural styles at both sites are “nearly mutually exclusive” (6). His argument proves incorrect though and not in the manner that you would immediately suspect since Ek’ Balam leaves discernible traces at Chichén Itzá, which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter Three. While radial pyramids and gallery patios that feature columns and large roofed spaces define the architecture at Chichén Itzá, the personality of Ek’ Balam’s built environment differs markedly, exploiting the narrow corbel vault construction used by the peninsular styles in the northern, northwestern, and south central regions of the peninsula. In addition, while a few columns at the site of Ek’ Balam exist, they likely speak to the population, or at least the elite, and their self-identification to the Rio Bec and Chenes of central Campeche; we should not assume a direct correlation to the Toltec paradigms since columns are often used in Rio Bec and Chenes architecture. The Toltec structures at Chichén Itzá date to AD 900, much later than the construction of the Acropolis during the reign of Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ (AD 770). Therefore, the use of columns at Chichén Itzá corresponds to the Toltec style of central Mexico, though the same cannot be said of the columnar supports at Ek’ Balam.

Covering over six kilometers at its height, Ek’ Balam’s architectural presence is most perceptible from the site’s ceremonial center, which includes a large plaza, eight pyramidal platforms, and one ballcourt (Fig. 1.2). Three monumental platforms dominate the main plaza, more appropriately defined as temple assemblages, (GT-1 on the north, GT-2 on the west, and GT-3 on the east side of the plaza), alongside several elite residences surrounded by two concentric walls restricting access to the 9.6 hectare ceremonial precinct. Bey and Ringle suggest that the walls had a symbolic function rather than a defensive one (Kelly 1993: 71).

Based on the distribution of building types the walls appear to divide the site's sacred core from the more secular bureaucratic offices (Voß and Eberl 1999: 125). The traditional temple assemblage combines a pyramidal platform and a range-type structure built adjacent at a right angle; a formula used repeatedly at Ek' Balam and replicating a building type found in many Classic Maya sites to the south in the Petén. In some cases these assemblages included a small temple in the plaza formed by the two structures (Proskouriakoff 1962). The temple assemblage as described by Tatiana Proskouriakoff at Mayapán reflects the combination of residential and administrative functions. I add that the temple assemblage behaves as a visible architectural marker of a deeper cultural process – temple assemblages merge the range structure's administrative offices with the religiously charged form of the pyramid.

Ek' Balam's site core contains three temple assemblages within the walled precinct (GT-1, GT-2, and GT-3 are part of these three architectural groups). Two such groups also define the south side of the plaza and beyond the ceremonial center two exist, one along the northern *sacbe* while the other stands at the termination of the southern *sacbeob*. The temple assemblage now known as GT-1 (Fig. 1.3) presents the most striking appearance and architecturally complex features at the site, though that was not always the case throughout its storied past. The largest of the three pyramids surrounding the main plaza, GT-1 measures 165 meters by 65 meters and is the tallest platform at the site rising 31 meters in height. Because El Torre features a well-preserved stucco façade in the Chenes style (Fig. 1.4) it lends itself to the study of Ek' Balam's politics and the agenda of the builder responsible for its grandest phase, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'.

A total of five *sacbeob* diverge from the site's ceremonial center, four of which adhere coarsely to the cardinal directions.⁷ At least three of the causeways continue for 1.8 kilometers (Bey, Hanson and Ringle 1997: 239). *Sacbe* number two passes through two concentric walls surrounding the site's inner core of sacred temples and elite residences. It offers the principal means of ingress through the outer walls to Structure 18 (Fig. 1.5), a very unusual four-sided vaulted arch that functioned as the main entrance to the site in ancient times. Today tourists still travel the white road and enter along this route. Structure 8 and Structure 9 form a small ball court immediately to the north, which connects the two main plazas at Ek' Balam. Structure 8 incorporates a graduated talud with rounded corners, a rather curious marriage of Toltec and Rio Bec features. The South Plaza includes Las Gemelas, two identical pyramids sharing a common base. The Oval Palace (Fig. 1.6) receives the greatest degree of attention and dominates the far southern boundary of the South Plaza. Its design features a series of superimposed semi-circular platforms built one atop another. A later building program enhanced its original plan with rooms being added to the first and second floors functioning as living quarters for the elite. The second phase also saw the addition of a small shrine at the top used for ritual purposes. It presents a commanding view of GT-1 to the north (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2009: 92).

Located to the north of the ballcourt the main Acropolis includes the temple assemblages GT-1, GT-2, and GT-3, though only GT-1 has been consolidated by archaeologists. A six-tiered imposing structure, GT-1 features two carved balustrades flanking the main stairway in the shape of serpents (Fig 1.7). Their large gaping jaws reveal slithering tongues descending along the staircase inscribed with two well-preserved hieroglyphic texts and nearly identical inscriptions. Alexander Voß and Markus Eberl explain that, “duplicated inscriptions of this kind belonging to

⁷ While Bey, Hanson and Ringle fail to date the *sacbeob*, they have reason to believe that the causeways at Ek' Balam correspond to the Terminal Classic period based on excavations beyond the double-walled precinct (1997: 250).

the same building are basically non-existent” (1999: 125). While Alfonso Lacadena (2004) fully deciphered the texts of the Hieroglyphic Serpents and other glyphic inscriptions found at Ek’ Balam, it is notable here to remark on the appearance of the ruler’s name responsible for the Acropolis, Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ and the title Kalo’nte’ for which he receives. The Emblem Glyph (Fig. 1.8) also appears on the Hieroglyphic Serpents, now translated as the Kingdom of Talol by Voß and Eberl (1999: 125). Giant masks cascade slightly above the Hieroglyphic Serpents, though now partially in ruin. Two massive stucco façades in the Chenes style flanked the central stairs, the eastern portal now completely in ruin (Fig. 1.9). However, the remnants of two giant incisors at least hint at the presence of a zoomorphic monster mouth façade.

The zoomorphic portal represents a quintessential feature of the Rio Bec and Chenes styles from the present day state of Campeche to the southwest. Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges (2009) argue that the Ek’ Balam version “stands out because of the large size of the molded stucco, showing how highly specialized the craftsmen who produced this kind of extraordinary work, unique in the Mayan area, were” (93). Although Chapter Four discusses the zoomorphic portal in greater detail, it symbolically represents the jaws of the giant earth monster and an entrance to the underworld. This is all the more appropriate considering the fact that it leads to the royal tomb of Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ who was laid to rest inside Room 49 of GT-1 with nearly 7,000 offerings of ceramics, precious jewels, shells, flint, jade and pyrite. Based on the abundance of sumptuous goods the buried ruler was undoubtedly an individual of extreme importance. Archaeologists also unearthed three pearls and a gold pendant (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2009: 93). The remarkable quality of the stucco and high level of preservation are a result of the façades burial during pre-Hispanic times.

The architectural landscape at Ek' Balam built primarily during the reign of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' channeled certain features of the distinctive northern Yucatecan styles (known as the Rio Bec, the Chenes, and the Puuc) to craft a particular aesthetic at Ek' Balam. The dramatic building program and renovation of Ek' Balam's site core under the guidance of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' facilitated the construction of meaning through the use of and mixing of specific architectural styles. To a trained eye this bricolage represents a rather haphazard effect that combines styles and architectural forms displaying a variety of geographic and temporal markers from the ancient Maya world. It could be said that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' assembled ideas from a variety of regional styles available within his known corpus of both peninsular and non-peninsular forms, and that this broader approach to placemaking had specific implications for the site of Ek' Balam.

The Chenes style architectural façade of GT-1 is particularly well-suited to a study of architectural styles because of its proximity to both Chichén Itzá and Cobá. Because of the elaborate iconography of the sculptural façade the discussion of Ek' Balam and architectural styles can be extended to the use of iconography in the process of placemaking, and the ways in which architecture constructs and extends communal identity. Located in a region of great architectural diversity Ek' Balam, perhaps accordingly, unites a number of regional styles that are typically discussed as autonomous, such as the Toltec Maya, Petén Maya, and the peninsular Rio Bec, Chenes, and Puuc styles. Because the architectural landscape at Ek' Balam presents a vast diversity of forms I examine how we might read the use of style within this complex political environment. At Ek' Balam the easing of stylistic strictures and the breaking, or rather the bending of iconographical constraints signifies the designs of a specific maker. Most importantly, by compiling all of the known data about Ek' Balam in one place we can better

identify and appreciate how Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' specifically mixed styles to project a unique vision of his rule.

The Historiography of Ek' Balam and El Torre

The earliest mention of Ek' Balam historically appears in the literature of the colonial period in Yucatán where the basic architectural types present at the site are introduced and their function/s imagined, summarized and put forward in brief. Referred to as *Tiquibolon*, the site fell under the jurisdiction and holdings of the Spanish conquistador Juan Gutiérrez de Picón in 1579 after being awarded the title of *encomendero* of the region to which the site of Ek' Balam belonged. As documentation of his holdings, Picón compiled and wrote the *Relación de Tiquibolon* and explained the etymology of the site name derived from the ancient Maya language and meaning “Black Jaguar” (de la Garza 1983). Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges (2009) suggest an alternative reading of “Jaguar Day-Star” or “Jaguar Splendor” (90). Marc Zender explains that the toponym itself is written as “Jaguar Star” and not “Black Jaguar.” However, Lacadena states that the local sixteenth century indigenous Maya understood Ek' Balam to mean “Black Tiger” (Lacadena 2004: 98). While Picón's record of the pre-conquest occupation of *Tiquibolon* reveals the presence of five principal structures located at the site's core, “all of hewn stone,” it notes of particular importance the highest structure, known today as GT-1, and approximates its dimensions. “This building is more than 400 paces in circumference: it can be mounted only with difficulty because the stairs by which it was ascended have collapsed and because it is so high, and from the top one can make out all that can be seen...” (de la Garza 1983; Houck 2004: 25). Picón compared the vaulted houses to cellars for the storage of sustenance, principally maize, and the many cisterns for the collection of rain water necessary to maintain the population of an influential Maya city. Most importantly, Picón suggests that at its height Ek' Balam was

“one of the principal *cabeceras*” in the region, relating an ancient New World site to the Spanish equivalent, or *cabecera*, meaning, “the chief city of a province.” It is likely that his explanation of the site’s pre-conquest significance relied heavily on a description of the history and founding of Ek’ Balam as revealed to Picón by the native leaders of the colonial city by the same name. While brief, Picon’s text records in passing the existence of “some manner of letters,” though their significance is now lost (de la Garza 1983).

Nearly three hundred years after Picon’s *Relación de Tiquibolon* Ek’ Balam receives a second mention in the historical literature. In 1886 the French explorer Desirée Charnay visited the site of Ek’ Balam during his tour of Yucatán. While he performed several initial test excavations the preliminary drawings completed by Charnay, who was a very accomplished artist and draftsman, are his greatest contribution. Visits to Ek’ Balam increased in the twentieth century, perhaps due to the amplified rumors of a finely preserved hieroglyphic text at the site. However, few serious scholars or archaeologists visited likely owing to increased reports of the crude architecture and poor masonry, deterring many adventurers from wandering off the beaten track and heavily frequented sites, which even then included Chichén Itzá. In fact the only Maya scholar of note, Sylvanus Morley, an American archaeologist and epigrapher, made the trip from Chichén Itzá to Ek’ Balam in June of 1928 eager to document the hieroglyphic inscriptions for the Carnegie Institution. According to his notes Morley reports being sadly underwhelmed by what he found and disenchanted with the architectural remains of Picón’s once grand *cabecera* (Morley 1927).

During his visit Morley defined the ancient city as merely, “a late provincial center,” connoting far less political significance and regional impact than Picon’s earlier analysis (1927:

318). In fact, his words regarding the quality of the artistic and architectural remains are worth quoting:

The buildings are low and built of crudely dressed masonry. Carved or even cut stones are almost entirely wanting, and the walls seem to have been finished, for the most part, with stucco as at Tulum...On architectural and stylistic grounds, it is more than probable that Ekbalam (sic) was a contemporary of Tulum and the other East Coast sites...(Morley 1927: 318).

Morley's appraisal of the site's artistic value echoes his earlier dissatisfaction with the architectural corpus. In particular he describes the sculpture as "very grotesque, crudely executed, and wholly without esthetic merit" (Morley 1927: 318). Since Morley's writings make no mention of the façade of GT-1 it is unlikely that he ever saw the remarkably well-preserved stucco adorning the earlier temple structure. If he had, he would undoubtedly have had a very different review of the site and lingered longer on its grounds than he did.

Ek' Balam finally witnessed minor scientific scrutiny in the 1970s when David Vlcek categorized it as a second-order center with the Yucatán Archaeological Atlas Project (Garza Tarazona de González and Kurjack 1980). In many ways his classification mirrors the earlier estimation of Morley and his suggestion that Ek' Balam was only of minor significance to the political landscape of the peninsula. Picon's initial ethnographic report from the sixteenth century documenting the site's importance prior to the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors finally proved accurate, albeit defined by a Western vocabulary, by the extensive archaeological excavations of Bey and Ringle first undertaken in the 1980s. With Ek' Balam centrally located between the largest northern capitals of Chichén Itzá and Cobá, the fieldwork by Bey and Ringle proved Ek' Balam conducted itself as an independent city in its own right. Most importantly, the *Proyecto Ek' Balam* not only established the site as a significant political force during the Late Classic period, archaeologists Ringle and Bey also demonstrated that the political landscape of

Yucatán was considerably mature, established, and more complex than originally presumed and reinforced for generations far more than Morley's original assessment of the site (Bey and Ringle 1998).

Archaeologists believe the site occupied an area of over twelve square kilometers including settlement outside the site's core. However, the work of Bey and Ringle mapped approximately 3.3 square kilometers and found evidence of nearly 700 structures (Bond-Freeman 2007: 5). The project had three primary objectives: 1) to understand the site's spatial organization, settlement density, and estimated size; 2) to shed light on the larger Ek' Balam polity through a site survey in the rural hinterland; and 3) to determine the role of Ek' Balam during the Late and Terminal Classic periods in Yucatán through an inter-site survey between Chichén Itzá and Ek' Balam (Bey and Ringle 1994; 1995; 1998). Originally viewed as a frontier community, Bey and Ringle hoped to reveal the relationship between two of Yucatán's "great powers" (Bey and Ringle 1989). The *Proyecto Ek' Balam* began with the goal to define the transition between the Late Classic and the Terminal Classic periods, but it accomplished far more by identifying the peninsular significance of the site at a time when Chichén Itzá dominated the political landscape of Yucatán.

In 1994 Ek' Balam's ceremonial core received further study under the auspices of Leticia Vargas de la Peña and the *Proyecto Arqueológico Ek' Balam* as well as the Centro INAH Yucatán. Shortly after the discovery of the Chenes façade, she shed light on one of the few royal tombs of the ancient Maya kings. In 1999 her excavations revealed a sizeable burial chamber with an offering including thousands of ceramics, rare jewels, shells, jade and pyrite (Vargas de la Peña and Castillo Borges 2006). It ranks alongside that of K'inich Janaab' Pakal I at Palenque as a rare example of elite burial practices.

Ek' Balam and the Dating of GT-1

The relative lack of dated inscriptions presents one of the greatest difficulties in dealing with Yucatán and the peninsular styles. Most sizeable cities of the northern Maya lowlands erected few stelae. Of the few sites with inscriptions and dated monuments the limestone quality is so poor that today they are too badly eroded for detailed study. Luckily, Ek' Balam has one of the largest bodies of dated monuments and hieroglyphic inscriptions anywhere in the peninsula. In the 1980s only two texts were known at Ek' Balam, but since that time a corpus of nearly forty texts have been unearthed by archaeologists (Lacadena 2004: 4). The majority of these inscriptions are located in GT-1, which contains an abnormally large percentage of painted murals with sizeable glyphic statements. Lacadena, who deciphered the corpus of inscriptions at Ek' Balam explains that, “the painted texts exceed the number of texts that are cut or carved, which is unusual” (2004: 5). Moreover, the inscriptions at Ek' Balam include a rich array of calendrical references and subject matter, which allows scholars to craft a rather complete record of the site's dynastic history over a one hundred year period. Lacadena (2004) is unequivocally correct when he writes, “Ek' Balam has come to fill, at last, a geographic and chronological void in the septentrional central region of the Yucatán peninsula” (5).

Based on the study of ceramic deposits excavated at the site Bey and Ringle determined that Ek' Balam was occupied as early as the Middle Preclassic period. And recent translations by Lacadena of the significant hieroglyphic corpus reveal that Ek' Balam was a relatively modest site well before the accession of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' on May 26, AD 770 (Lacadena 2004: 101). Discoveries within the last decade, at such sites as Kiuic and Xcoch in the Puuc heartland, suggest that the peninsula witnessed permanent masonry forms as early as the Late Preclassic period. So the development of architectural styles *in situ*, in combination with ceramic analysis

and archaeological evidence from Ek' Balam and other Yucatecan sites, dispute the more popular notion that Yucatán flourished as a Late Classic reaction only following the decline of the Classic cities to the south.

Ringle first identified the existence of an Emblem Glyph associated with Ek' Balam on Stela 1 (Fig. 1.10) erected in the South Plaza near the Oval Palace (Lacadena 2004: 96). The poor quality of the surviving inscription made translation impossible until further examples were discovered. Archaeologists later discovered two identical inscriptions on the Hieroglyphic Serpents (Fig. 1.11 and 1.12) flanking the grand stairway of GT-1, which revealed like texts, demonstrating the freedom with which individual scribes were allowed to work. Both examples contained the site's Emblem Glyph and the name of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' (Lacadena 2004: 96). The Emblem Glyphs found on both hieroglyphic serpents use the standard formula defined by Heinrich Berlin (1958), combining the T35-41 "Water Group" prefix and the T168 "Ben-Ich" superfix with a main element designating the individual site. This expression of glyphic elements reads the "divine X ruler." At Ek' Balam the T38 *k'ul* prefix is used in combination with the T168 logogram for **AHAW** and paired with the T130 **wa** phonetic complement. The main element includes the T676 **TAL** logogram and T580 **lo** suffix, where it signals the reading of the final vowel as Talol. Most importantly, few sites in Yucatán used an Emblem Glyph. As such Ek' Balam established its sovereignty through the use of a site toponym.

Today a number of texts exist with Emblem Glyphs, twelve examples at Ek' Balam, one at Halakal three kilometers northeast of Chichén Itzá, and three inscriptions at Chichén Itzá that detail the visit of an Ek' Balam lord during the first half of the ninth century. According to the *Relación de Tiquibolon* the site was called Ek' Balam after a great lord of the same name and considered the "lord above all" (de la Garza 1983: 138). It is likely then that the site was

renamed during the colonial period after a significant ruler. The site's original title preserved in the ancient texts reveals a capital of substantial consequence to the political history of the peninsula. Lacadena (2004) explains that "Talol was the name of the ancient kingdom of Ek' Balam and the rulers of the site called themselves kings of Talol" (97). It is interesting though that Ek' Balam appears as a possible place name in the Mural of the 96 Glyphs (Figs. 1.13 through 1.17) also at the site. Though the text is partially destroyed block E illustrates the logogram **EK'** combined with the suffixes for **b'a**, **la**, and **ma**. Most intriguing is the preceding block which presents the verb *huli* or "to arrive." Preserving Maya syntax, we know that an intransitive verb should be followed by the name of a place, in this case the location of the arrival event – Ek' Balam (Lacadena 2004: 97). Lacadena reconciles the exploitation of two names, suggesting that Ek' Balam denoted the ceremonial core of the site. In any case, it is probable that Talol represented a large city-state and its periphery or a lineage site.

There are approximately twenty named individuals at Ek' Balam all dated to the Late Classic and Terminal Classic periods (Lacadena 2004: 98). While dynamic changes were beginning to occur in record-keeping and dating at the site, Lacadena's analysis of the glyphic inscriptions conveys the importance of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' as perhaps the first king of his dynasty or the first ruler following the founding of the Talol kingdom. Posthumous inscriptions from subsequent rulers indicate the importance of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok', who repeatedly refer to the first ruler much like those at the site of Copán who trace their sovereignty to the founder K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo'. The Platform of the Stelae in the South Plaza houses two monuments. Although Stela 2 is far too eroded to decipher, Stela 1 on the left (Fig. 1.18) includes both the pictorial representation of the ruler K'inich Hun Pik Tok' K'uh...nal and a glyphic narrative. The monument was likely erected in AD 840 with his ascension to the throne. Ukit Kan Le'k

Tok' appears above the ruler as the founder of the Talol dynasty during the Late Classic period, presenting a direct relationship between the reign and building campaign of a powerful ancestor and the current *ajaw* (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2009: 92).

The stela's front depicts K'inich Hun Pik Tok' K'uh...nal in the elaborate garb of a ruler grasping the serpent staff of K'awiil and wearing a large feathered backrack and multi-tiered headdress. A sky band separates him from the founder Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' who sits inside an ancestor's cartouche holding a shield and serpent bar of rulership. The cartouche is anthropomorphized with a gaping jaw on the right, reminding viewers of the open cavernous jaws of Room 35 that seem to swallow those that enter the tomb of the once great king leading to the underworld. Glyph blocks to the left of the cartouche identify the ruler with his royal title and read "Ub'aah k'uh[ul] Kal[o']mte' Ukit Kan Le'k" meaning "This is the image of the sacred Kalo'mte' Ukit Kan Le'k: (Lacadena 2004: 12). It is clear that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' made the site core of Ek' Balam meaningful for its inhabitants and its descendants, in which architecture was used to create an expressive urban space.

The vault stone of Room 35 (Fig. 1.19) covers the chamber corresponding to the zoomorphic portal of GT-1 and housing the burial chamber of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. It includes a dedicatory text with a disputed date of AD 797 or AD 802. Lacadena (2004) used infrared technology to decipher the poorly preserved calendrical glyphs resulting in two possible dates. The text names Room 49 as the Sak Xok Naah meaning the "White Reading House," or "The White House of Respect/Obedience" (47). Scholars have long identified the significance of the color white, which is often associated with burial structures, underscored by its use in the expression for death "*k'a'ay u-saknich ik'il*," meaning "it ends, the white flower wind" (Coe and Stone 2001: 62). While the color white likely refers to the building's connection to death and its

function as a burial chamber, recent archaeological investigation reveals that the stucco façade was also left unpainted. It is interesting to note that the Acropolis was predominately painted red, with only the large zoomorphic portal of Room 35 left exposed in its natural state. From the vault stone's inscription we can begin to place the building of the Acropolis or a portion of its many tiers chronologically to the Late Classic period. From this brief historical backdrop we can already grasp the significance of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' as the dynastic founder and the decisions he made in crafting his city. In the following chapter I present the known biographical data on Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' in order to fully appreciate the relationships between man and their monumental cities.



Figure 1.1 Map of Yucatán, showing Ek' Balam and the important architectural spheres (Gendrop 1998: 6)

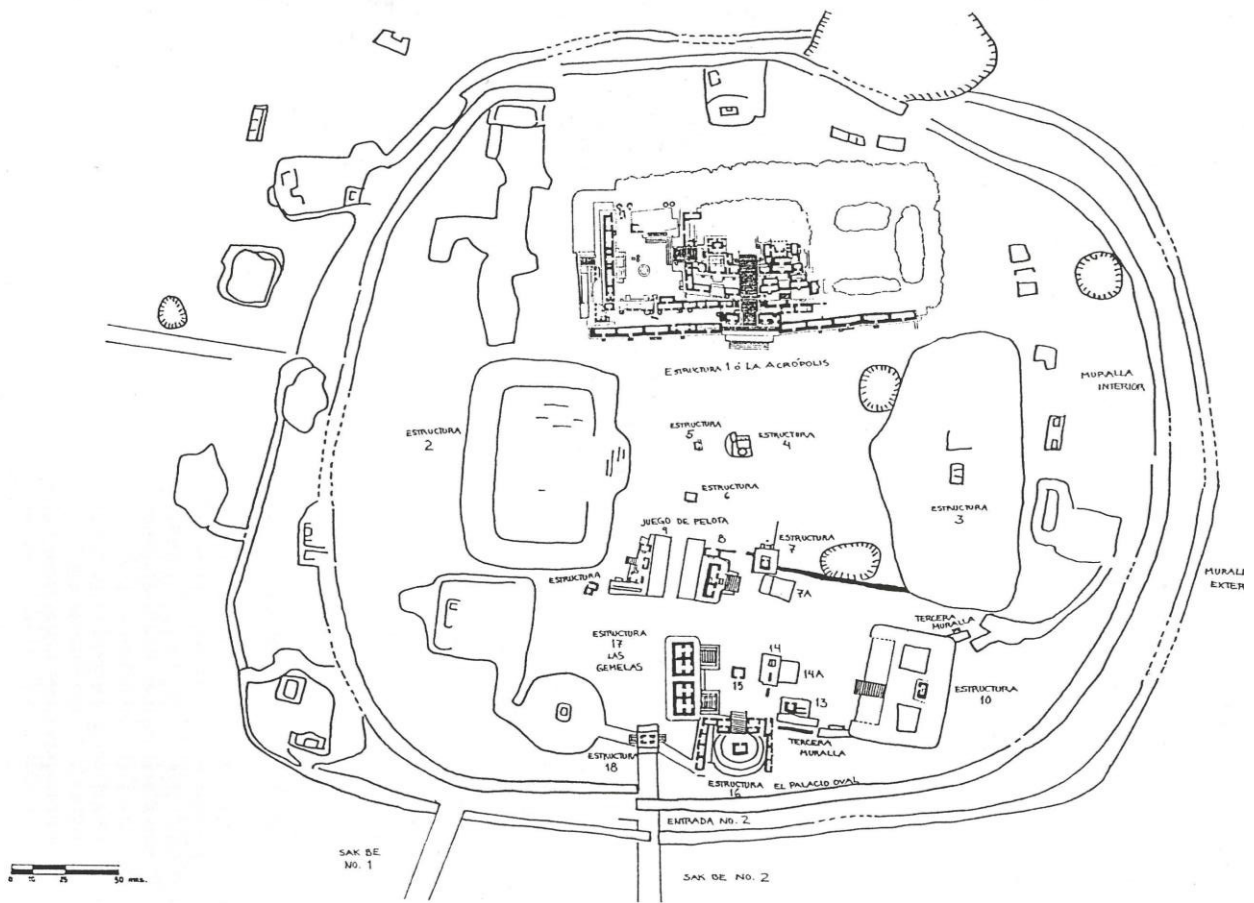


Figure 1.2 Map of central Ek' Balam
 (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2001: 404)



Figure 1.3 Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 1.4 The façade of Room 35, Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 1.5 Structure 18, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 1.6 Structure 16, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 1.7 Hieroglyphic Serpent, Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 1.8 The Emblem Glyph of Ek' Balam (bottom left) from the eastern Hieroglyphic Serpent
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 1.9 The façade of Room 29, Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)

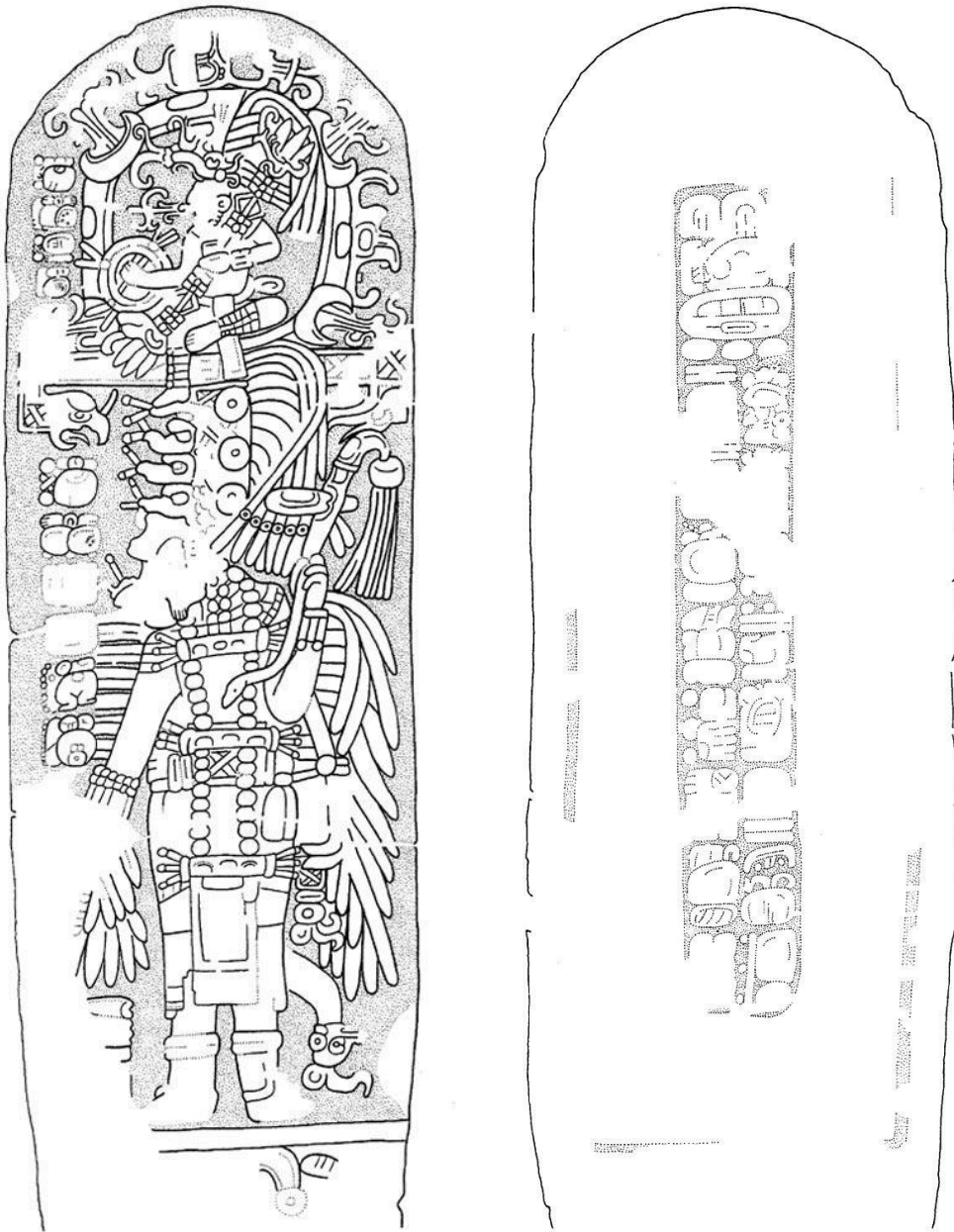


Figure 1.10 Drawing of Stela 1, Ek' Balam
(Lacadena 2004: 7)

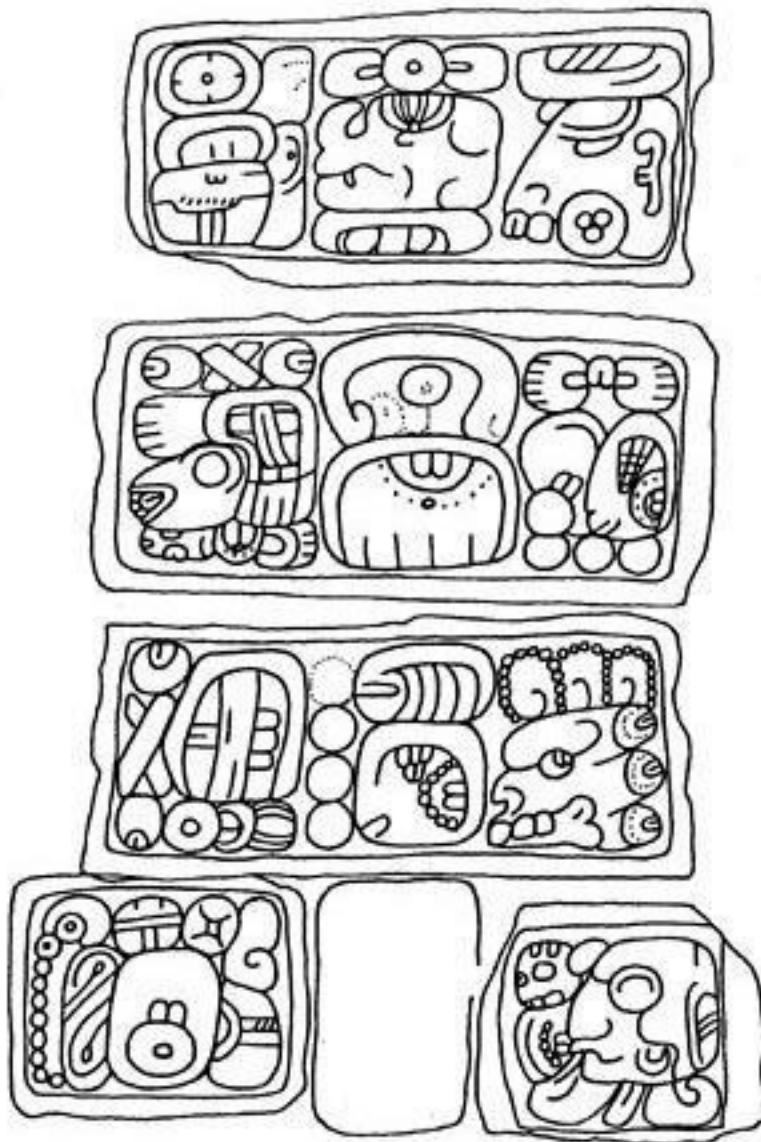


Figure 1.11 Western Hieroglyphic Serpent, Central Stairway,
Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Lacadena 2004: 13)

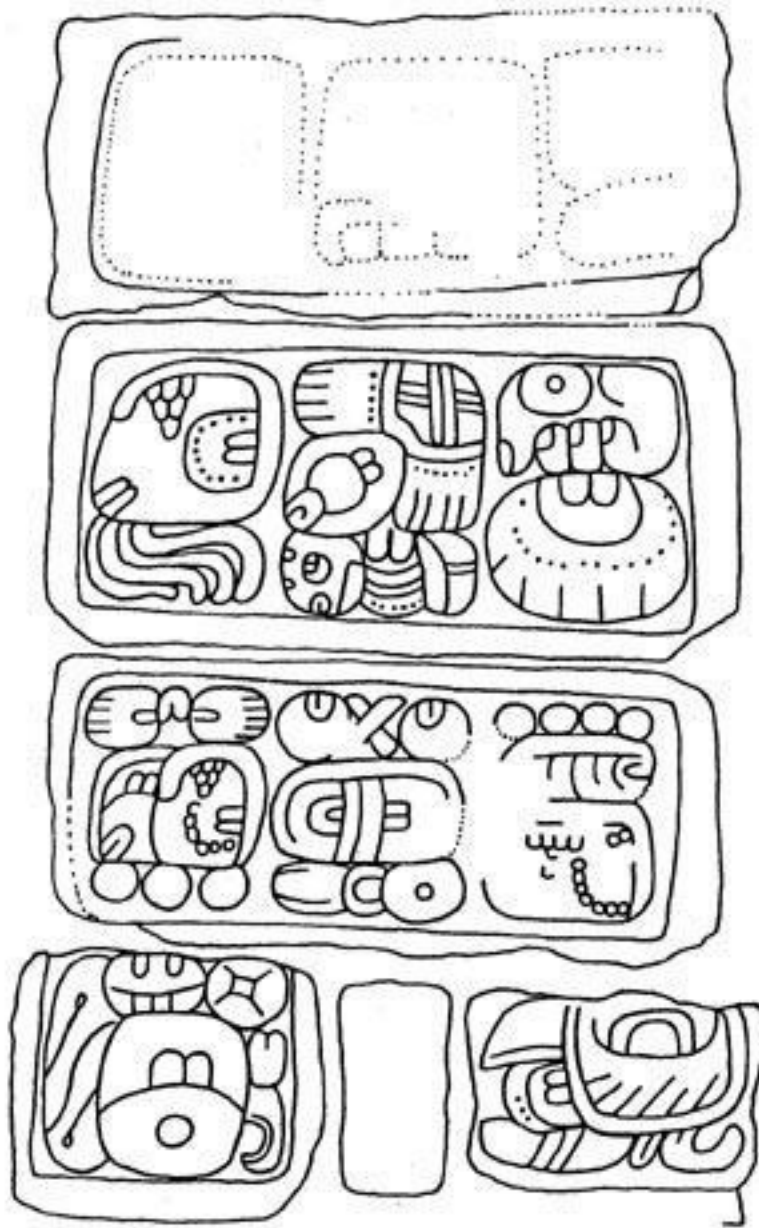


Figure 1.12 Eastern Hieroglyphic Serpent, Central Stairway,
Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Lacadena 2004: 16)

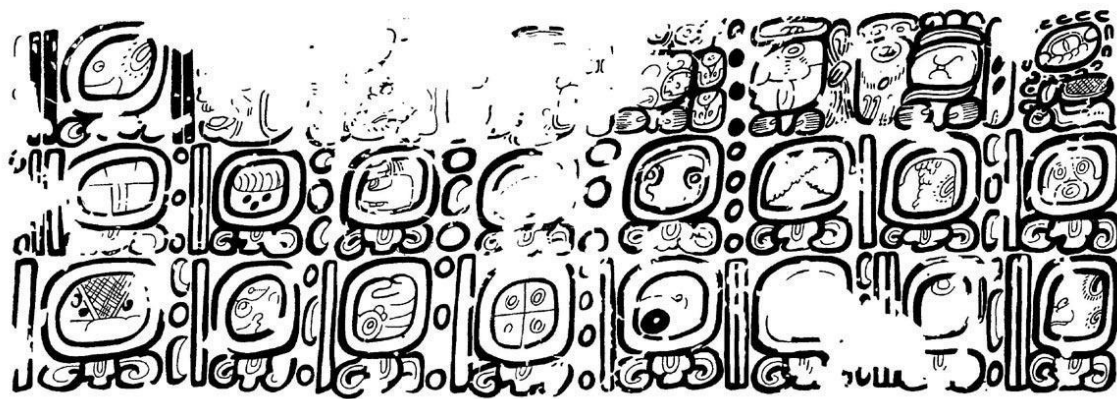


Figure 1.13 Mural of the 96 Glyphs (section 1), Room 29-sub, Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Lacadena 2004: 49)

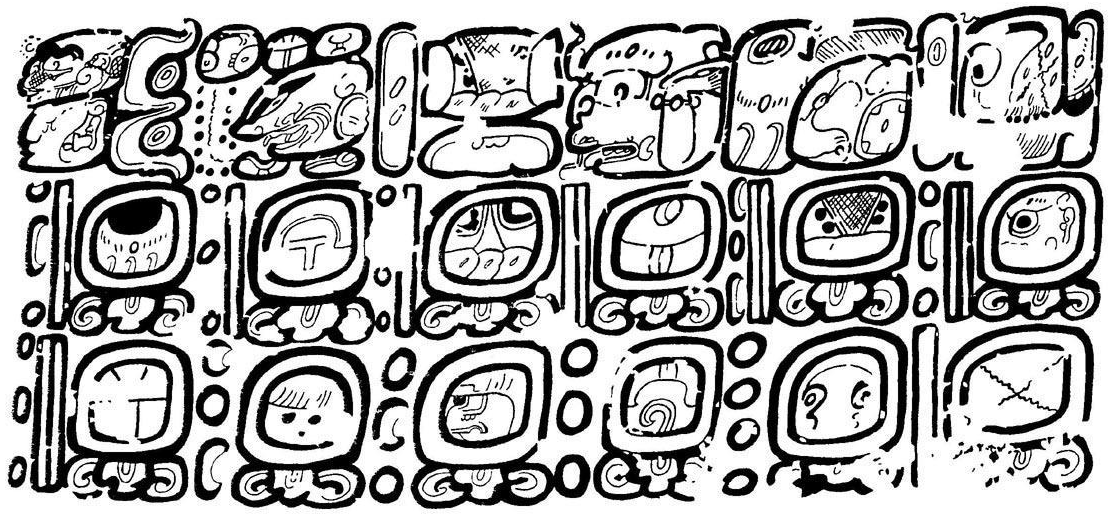


Figure 1.14 Mural of the 96 Glyphs (section 2), Room 29-sub, Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Lacadena 2004: 50)

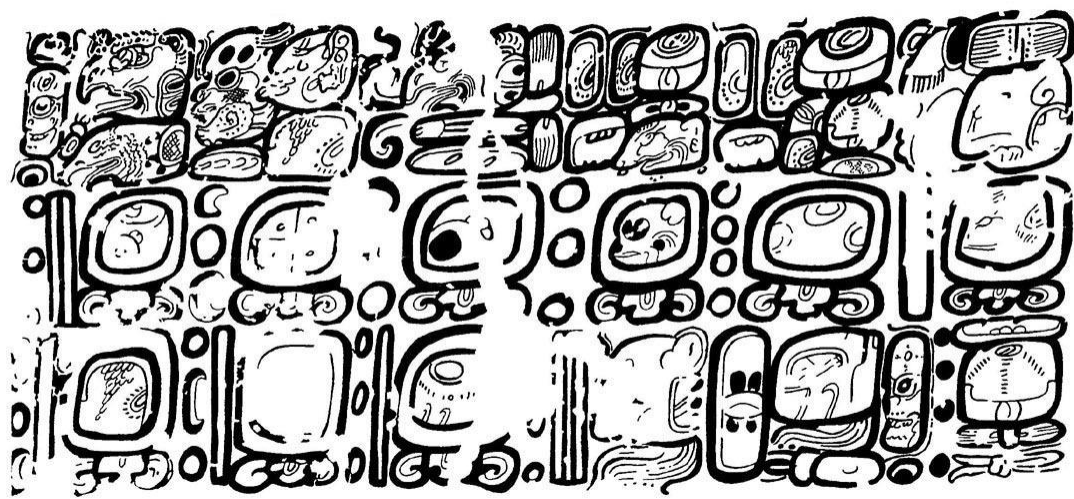


Figure 1.15 Mural of the 96 Glyphs (section 3), Room 29-sub, Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Lacadena 2004: 50)

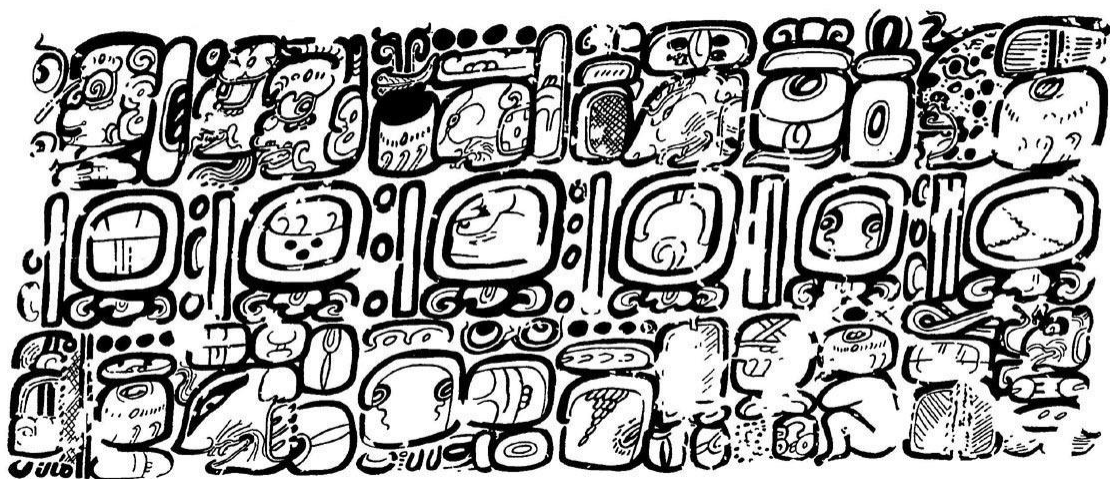


Figure 1.16 Mural of the 96 Glyphs (section 4), Room 29-sub, Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Lacadena 2004: 51)



Figure 1.17 Mural of the 96 Glyphs (section 5), Room 29-sub, Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Lacadena 2004: 50)



Figure 1.18 Stela 1, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 1.19 Cover of Vault 19, Room 35, Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Lacadena 2004: 48)

CHAPTER TWO

THE FOUNDING OF THE TALOL DYNASTY

The Classic Maya developed a complex hierarchical class structure dominated and controlled by the ruling elite. The significance of their royal culture can be seen in their art, architecture and writing. “Rulers combined supreme political authority with a quasi-divine status that made them indispensable mediators between the mortal and supernatural realms” (Martin and Grube 2000: 14). Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ constructed much of what one sees at Ek’ Balam and initiated the powerful Talol dynasty. Even as the city waned in importance during the Terminal Classic period (AD 900 – AD 1100) it maintained its independence from the powerful grasp of nearby polities, including Chichén Itzá, whose dominance of the peninsula increased around AD 800 – AD 900. Ek’ Balam’s hieroglyphic inscriptions identify Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ as the first ruler of the Late Classic period dynasty.⁸ Glyphic texts refer to him more than any other sovereign at the site; most importantly each subsequent ruler mentions the founder on their monuments and texts as a political approach establishing their authority to rule. Twenty inscriptions present the name of the founder along with an impressive array of titles (Lacadena 2004: 98). At least two inscriptions from the hinterland also include the name of Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ representing the scope of his rule. Through an analysis of the scientific, epigraphic, and iconographical sources I present a biographical sketch of the dynastic founder in which I argue that Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ migrated from the modern-day Campeche region associated with the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands. Therefore, his status as a foreigner to the Northern Plains

⁸ The glyphic corpus at Ek’ Balam represents one of the largest and best preserved in the Yucatán peninsula according to Lacadena. It ranks alongside the texts from Edzna, Chichén Itzá, Oxkintok, Xcalumkin, and Cobá. Thanks to the work of Bey and Ringle, as well as Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges, approximately forty texts comprise the extant corpus, which Lacadena analyzed and translated in 2004 providing important clues to the social, political, and dynastic history of Ek’ Balam. The quantity of painted inscriptions over carved inscriptions presents another unique occurrence at Ek’ Balam (Lacadena 2004).

explains why and how he created meaning in the built environment and a sense of place at the site of Ek' Balam.

Based on the translations of the hieroglyphic texts by Lacadena, the isotopic analysis of the king's skeletal remains by Buikstra, and the ethnographic data compiled by Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges I contend that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' called the Rio Bec or Chenes heartland home. Taken as a whole the osteological, stylistic, and epigraphic records collectively prove that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' migrated from the center of the Yucatán peninsula. This is important because it corresponds to the region from which the Rio Bec and Chenes styles heavily populate the architectural landscape. As such, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' arrived as a foreigner to Ek' Balam. In this chapter I argue that other scholars have already declared Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's foreignness, but I add that the bricolage of built forms at Ek' Balam conveys his perceived foreignness. Lacadena (2004) proves that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' arrived to Ek' Balam from the west based on hieroglyphic inscriptions describing his arrival to Ek' Balam.⁹ Jane Buikstra uses scientific analysis to show that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's genetic makeup did not include markers from the north coast of the peninsula equivalent to the Northern Plains or the Petén region to the south. The arrival of a stranger and subsequent founding of a new or reinvigorated dynasty exists elsewhere in the ancient Maya world. For example, at Copán and Tikal the perceived foreignness of the newcomers incorporates foreign styles into the artistic and architectural corpus.

⁹ Lacadena describes the arrival of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' in the Mural of the 96 Glyphs. Yet he very clearly argues based on hieroglyphic evidence that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' identified Maní as his place of birth. While the location of this city has yet to be discovered, Lacadena suggests that the toponym for Maní would be appropriate or another subsidiary site near Ek' Balam (2004: 100). I disagree with his statement based on the isotopic analysis of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's bones, which eliminates a birthplace in the Northern Plains. Since his argument relies on heavily eroded glyphs the osteological information is more revealing and conclusive.

Placemaking activities fall under two categories: the purposeful creation of a physical or tangible site, as demonstrated by Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' when he constructed the zoomorphic façade of GT-1, and placemaking activities that occur in pre-existing locations, which act to transform a particular setting into a place of significance, a social space of attachment, and a site memory. Even later sovereigns practiced placemaking through these transformative acts, building on the tangible placemaking of the founder at Ek' Balam to bolster their individual claims to power. Ek' Balam also continued to play a central role in the dynamics of nearby capitals even as its own significance to the political geography of the peninsula waned; and it is in the daily and ritual activities that we find the ruler's strategies for maintaining these transformative experiences aimed at the creation of a specific place with a reality and identity linked to Ek' Balam. Hieroglyphic records from outside Ek' Balam attest to its importance during the reign of later sovereigns and include activities like fire-drilling rituals, demonstrating one such activity designed to transform a material setting.

Three kilometers northeast of Chichén Itzá at the site of Halakal the ruler of Ek' Balam continued to practice placemaking activities as evidenced by a single inscription (Fig. 2.1) recording the performance of a conjuring and fire ritual attended by the Ek' Balam lord Hun Pik Tok' in the year AD 870 (Voß and Eberl 1999: 126). Karl Ruppert discovered the stone lintel at Halakal in the 1950s (Fig. 2.3) inside an unassuming structure now in ruins and described the text and image appearing on its surface (1952: 154).¹⁰ Surrounding the image of three armed men arrayed in ceremonial attire, the text documents the conjuring of a sacred ancestor and fire

¹⁰ Hermann Beyer published the first major work on the inscriptions at Chichén Itzá in 1937 but he made no attempt to include full texts. Beyer borrowed the Halakal and Chichén Itzá rubbings from Sylvanus Morley, however he reduced the large sheets to individual glyph blocks. When asked by Morley why he did not ask for permission to alter the full-text inscriptions Beyer answered that permission would have been denied and so he didn't ask. J. Eric Thompson carefully sorted the rubbings and re-ordered them to reflect their original format. They can be found at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University (Stuart 1989: 6).

ritual on March 29, AD 870 (Voß and Eberl 1999: 126). The *k'inich* title in the inscription identifies Hun Pik Tok' as a principal lord of Talol and as a divine ruler. The same character appears on Stela 1 at Ek' Balam who boasts of his divine relationship to the founder Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. Voß and Eberl explain that Hun Pik Tok' likely served as an overlord, and given his presence at Halakal and Chichén Itzá for sacred rites I agree with their assessment of his political stature (1999: 127).

Bishop Diego de Landa describes the custom of fire-entering in his *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*:

In either of the two months of Chen or Yax and on the day which the priest set, they celebrated a festival, which they called *Oc Na*, which means the renovation of the temple in the honor of the Chacs, whom they regarded as the gods of the cornfields; and in this festival...they renewed their idols of clay and their braziers; for it was the custom that each idol should have its little braziers in which they should burn their incense to it; and if it was necessary, they rebuilt the house, or renovated it, and they placed on the wall the memorial of these things, written in their characters (Tozzer 1941: 161).

Hieroglyphic inscriptions from the Classic Period also reveal the significance of the fire-entering or fire-drilling ritual. At Palenque the Tablet of the 96 Glyphs (Fig. 2.2) includes the phrase *och k'ahk' ta-y-otoot*, meaning “the fire enters into his house” (Stuart 1998: 389). While no ancient texts provide a detailed description of the ceremonial rites, Landa's words shed light on the ritual. The verb used by Landa to describe the “house-entering” matches the glyphic texts found at many ancient Maya sites suggesting that the Maya of the sixteenth century observed a similar rite as chronicled by Landa. In fact, even modern Maya communities practice a similar ceremony. Robert Redfield and Alfonso Villa Rojas (1964) record the dedication of a new house in northern Yucatán that parallels the accounts of Diego Durán who explained the Aztec renewal of sacred temples and the construction of dwellings. Called a *calmamalihua* or “house-drilling,” Durán documents the ritual process. “The host himself takes a newly lighted firebrand and

points it in one direction and in another, thus taking possession of the home he built” (Durán 1971: 149). At Halakal the fire ritual functioned as another component of placemaking where an actor introduces meaning through the presence of a ruler. Hun Pik Tok’ performed the sacred rites with the goal of sanctifying an edifice forever marked by the king’s presence. While the fire-drilling dedicated a specific space it also established ownership. Through placemaking activities like the fire-drilling ritual Halakal experienced a transformative journey marking it as a significant place through its relationship to the reality and identity of Ek’ Balam. With Hun Pik Tok’ s attendance at a subsidiary site in the hinterland the edifice he blessed through an ancient rite of fire acquired meaning physically and textually as well as through Halakal’s connection to the larger polity of Ek’ Balam.

Hieroglyphic inscriptions at the site of Chichén Itzá also confirm the importance of Hun Pik Tok’ as a descendant of the great Talol founder depicting him as a key protagonist in ceremonial functions and sacred rituals of the elite tied to the creation of place through the establishment of focal centers. The Casa Colorada text (Fig. 2.4) indicates that Hun Pik Tok’ visited Chichén Itzá on multiple occasions as an influential witness to four fire-drilling events between the years AD 869 and AD 871. “The glyphic texts of the Chichén Itzá area have Hun Pik Tok’, the divine lord of Ek’ Balam, enter the stage only in a restricted ritualistic setting” (Voß and Eberl 1999: 127). In each instance Hun Pik Tok’ performed the rites as a prominent representative and delegate of the neighboring polity. The texts also demonstrate that Ek’ Balam maintained its independence as a political entity of some rank based on Hun Pik Tok’ s limited presence at Halakal and Chichén Itzá. I suggest that he served as more than a trivial lord; he even received the status of *k’inich ajaw*, and so his presence at such events was honorary and temporary. Scholars originally believed that eastern Yucatán fell largely under the

administrative influence of Chichén Itzá. However, the surviving texts demonstrate that the lords of the Talol dynasty factored considerably and meaningfully in the political climate of the peninsula as key figures. Even at Chichén Itzá the rulers of Ek' Balam performed meaningful acts of placemaking.

By the Terminal Classic period Ek' Balam had established itself as an important site with a visible presence at nearby communities both small and large as exhibited in the hieroglyphic texts. The achievements of Hun Pik Tok's predecessors and the founding of a prominent capital by an earlier lord who bequeathed a powerful and successful city allowed Hun Pik Tok' to be effective as a ruler; the inscriptions at Halakal and Chichén Itzá further corroborate the image of a thriving capital and reign. Thus, the first sovereign built solid foundations, both literally and metaphorically, for the dynasty that followed.

Ek' Balam declared its autonomy through the almost unprecedented use of an Emblem Glyph, considered a rare occurrence in Yucatán, and its interactions in the political landscape of the peninsula.¹¹ Grube explains that scholars originally believed that Emblem Glyphs referred to dynasties, royal families, or larger states. Evidence now suggests that Emblem Glyphs relate to lineage and kinship (Grube 2005: 89). For example, Dos Pilas and Tikal used the same Emblem Glyph likely illustrating a familial relation (Houston 1985: 7).¹² Bey and Ringle proved that Ek' Balam almost entirely lacked the Late Classic Sotuta phase pottery associated with Chichén Itzá (Bey et al 1998: 115-116). In fact, the archaeological, architectural, and hieroglyphic evidence suggest that "Ek' Balam is present in the Chichén Itzá area but not vice versa (Voß and Eberl 1999: 129). Also, no evidence of any Toltec-Maya influence on the built environment at Ek'

¹¹ While Emblem Glyphs contain some common features they also include a main element specific to a site or ruling lineage. Approximately fifty Emblem Glyphs exist from the Maya lowlands (Grube 2005: 89).

¹² Heinrich Berlin first identified the Emblem Glyph at Dos Pilas and noted its similarities to the Emblem Glyph at Tikal. He called the glyph the "Laguna Petexbatun," but argued that the Dos Pilas and Tikal glyphs, despite their similarities, featured certain unique elements (Berlin 1960: 26-27).

Balam exists. Because the architectural program at Ek' Balam was largely built in a single phase under the aegis of its founding sovereign, the personality of the site and its separate architectural identity provides clues to the character of the ruler responsible for distinguishing Ek' Balam as an independent Maya kingdom. The most important question then in order to understand the architectural decisions made at Ek' Balam regards its key protagonist, who was Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'? How did he create a sense of place at Ek' Balam and ascribe it meaning? The dynastic founder initiated the dawn of an independent site that sustained its individuality and built an identity for itself powerful enough to prosper in the shadow of two significant capitals. This may at first seem trivial to the study of architecture, but as Chapter Four will demonstrate, knowing Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' provides a deeper understanding of meaning making at Ek' Balam and moreover, why the site presents such a confusing and unique mix of architectural styles.

“The Father of the Four Hard Flints”

Very little is known about the birth of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' or the city to which he called home; as this chapter will demonstrate, much can be learned by studying the ethnographic records associated with Ek' Balam, the scientific analysis of the burial remains discovered by Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges in room 35 of the Acropolis, the artistic portrayals of the ruler firmly identified as Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' in the accompanying texts, and the hieroglyphic repertoire describing his reign. Scholars generally agree that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' represents the complete version of his name, though it only appears three times in the inscriptions in this manner (Lacadena 2004: 99).¹³ Out of the twenty-one hieroglyphic inscriptions that include some version of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's name at Ek' Balam, many also conferred a large array of titles

¹³ While the name Ukit Kan Le'k appears more frequently in the inscriptions, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' likely represents the full name of the sovereign. The Western Hieroglyphic serpent, Capstone 15, and Capstone 18 also include *tok'* meaning “flint.” Barrera suggests “the father of the four flint gourd” as an alternative translation. He bases his argument on the reading of *lek* in the Yucatecan language as “gourd or bowl” (Barrera 1980: 444).

including the Sacred King, or *k'uhul ajaw*, divine lord or *kalo'mte'*, and the less common *Ch'ak O'hl B'ate'*, the “heart slicer warrior.”¹⁴ Finally the poor quality of the existing glyphic corpus makes a secure translation unfeasible for the many other titles bestowed upon him (Lacadena 2004: 99). All the titles suggest that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' achieved a remarkable level of status at Ek' Balam.

Parentage statements provide clues about the ruler's heritage.¹⁵ Rulers typically included statements of parentage following their name to record descent and legitimate their rule (Jones 1977; Schele, Mathews and Lounsbury 1977; Stewart 2008). They also provide significant genealogical information and allow scholars to reconstruct family histories. Although the date of his birth still remains unknown, the Mural of Room 22 (Fig. 2.5) located on the Acropolis and the north wall of Structure 1 identifies his father and mother. An accurate translation of his father's name proves difficult given the poor condition of the inscription, though Lacadena suggests Ukit Ahkan as a possible reading.¹⁶ The missing glyphs before and after his name would have divulged important information including his titles and place of origin. A femur bone perforator (Fig. 2.6) buried with Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' as an ancestor relic also mentions Ukit Ahkan. The long inscription describes Ukit Ahkan as an *ajk'uh*, or “priest” who was seemingly not of royal blood (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2006: 196). Because scholars can at least conclude, based on the two known inscriptions, Ukit Ahkan's non-royal status, the mother's bloodline should provide the necessary pedigree for a ruler of Ek' Balam.

¹⁴ The use of the *k'uhul*, meaning “sacred or divine” indicates a higher status than if the scribes only used *ajaw*.

¹⁵ Christopher Jones first discovered the use of parentage statements in 1977. Linda Schele, Peter Mathews and Floyd Lounsbury compiled a detailed analysis of parentage statements the same year. Their research remains unpublished.

¹⁶ The Mural of Room 22 in which Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's parentage statement appears presents a peculiar reading order. The orientation favors the standard reading in paired columns, but also combined with a reading in horizontal rows. Overall the text survives only partially and is badly preserved, but enough remains to venture an educated evaluation of the kinship relationships based on the available evidence. Lacadena argues for the presence of a familial expression at K2 through L2. The name of an individual immediately ensues at blocks M1 and N1 making it quite possible that the missing glyph at L2 represents the individual's title.

If Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' did not attain his noble blood through his father, then his mother would likely come from a family of well-born aristocrats or even the ruling bloodline of a neighboring site.¹⁷ Mentioned only once in the hieroglyphic corpus at Ek' Balam, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's mother is also the only woman to appear in the inscriptions at the site. While her name is not legible, her title as a *k'uhul ajaw* (divine ruler) and *ixik ajaw* (queen, female ruler) is clear (Lacadena 2004: 108). Lacadena proposes two probable origins based on the partial Emblem Glyph appearing in the Mural of Room 22, both of which end with *ho'*, making Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's mother the queen of the location in question. The texts at Cobá, nearly sixty kilometers southeast of Ek' Balam, present two possible cities ending with the syllable *ho'* that help to corroborate the partial Emblem Glyph of Mural 22 at Ek' Balam. In 1992 Grube suggested a reading of the Cobá Emblem Glyph as Ek'haab' Ho' which very likely served as Cobá's name during its height in the Classic Period (Lacadena 2004: 108). The second alternative appears on Stela 4 at Cobá belonging to a nominal clause describing the represented captive from Itz'a Ho', the location of which remains unknown. Whatever the case may be, the origin of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's mother remains inconclusive based on the inscriptions. Lacadena advocates for the city of Cobá as her place of birth (Lacadena 2004: 109). However, osteological evidence demonstrates the foreign status of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' to the Northern Plains, making it unlikely that his mother belonged to the immediate vicinity of Ek' Balam. Given the eroded nature of the glyphs any decipherment remains tenable at best. Her Emblem Glyph may also refer to a lineage and not a specific site, making it rather unlikely that she called Cobá home. Because the isotopic evidence places Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's birthplace in the Rio Bec or Chenes region, Lacadena's argument seems unlikely. In the Mural of Room 22 the inscription associated with Ukit Kan

¹⁷ While the phrase "son of father" likely appeared at K2 on the Mural of Room 22, the equivalent "son of mother," written as *yal* occurs at N2. Her name and titles follow from O1 to R2 (Lacadena 2004: 66).

Le'k Tok's mother comprises eight glyph blocks in comparison to the four blocks belonging to his father, Ukit Ahkan. Certainly the greater number of glyphs attributed to his mother allude to her social standing and elevated political stature. Both individuals arrived at the site and are described as "joining" to create a new dynasty at Ek' Balam. Similar events in which a woman of royal blood aligns with a nearby site hoping to regenerate a royal bloodline are known in the ancient Maya world.

Marriage alliances contributed greatly to the process of statemaking and placemaking. Queens bolstered the status of new ruling lineages by providing an explanation for their claim to power, especially where male bloodlines lacked the same level of high social standing. In fact, ancient Maya queens helped rejuvenate royal dynasties during times of political turbulence. Many examples exist that articulate the importance of royal women and their role in uniting distinct polities or bringing an end to inter-site warfare. Yet the marriage alliance of royal women represents the greatest transaction of all between Maya cities. Marriage alliances strengthened the bonds between friends and allies, improved status and rank, eased tensions during times of political unrest, and solidified political power. Heather Irene McKillop (2004) explains that ten percent of royal marriages, according to hieroglyphic inscriptions, involved women of elite status from neighboring polities (156). She writes, "Intermarriage fostered alliances between or within regional polities, enhanced a site's (or a ruler's) status if a woman was from a high ranking polity, and sometimes facilitated control of a lesser site" (McKillop 2004: 156). For example, At Dos Pilas the first ruler married women from the nearby sites of El Chorro and Itzan as a way to augment his authority and even gain acceptance locally. This trend occurs at other ancient Maya sites.

A local woman with an elevated pedigree often provided foreign rulers the justification for rulership as well. When Yax K'uk' Mo' arrived at Copán from Central Mexico, another example of the 11 Eb' arrival event discussed below, his marriage to a local woman of elite status signaled a significant act of placemaking. Arriving from the powerful city of Teotihuacan he solidified his local authority by marrying a woman of indigenous nobility. Both the founding of a new dynastic lineage or the disruption of an existing one required the appearance of legitimacy for its success. Marriage alliances provided the pretense of authenticity to the divine order. Lady Wak Chanil Ajaw of Dos Pilas married a powerful elite, K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak, at the site of Naranjo which lacked a ruling dynasty following their defeat by Caracol shortly before AD 682, a major military power at the time. As the daughter of the ruling *ajaw* at Dos Pilas her marriage re-established a dynastic line for the site of Naranjo, whose entire line disappeared following the Caracol attacks. Her marriage established a new royal line for Naranjo and provided it with the necessary pedigree. In fact Lady Wak Chanil Ajaw's presence at dedication rituals during her first three days at Naranjo helped to re-establish meaning and create a sense of place through the dedication of important shrines (Martin and Grube 2000: 74). The evidence suggests that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's parents did not call Ek' Balam home. His father may have been local and required a royal evocation of his status explaining his marriage to a royal woman from a prominent family, which would later give Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' the necessary lineage to establish his own rule at Ek' Balam.

Other monuments at the site of Ek' Balam help to reconstruct the reign of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' adding to our understanding of his parentage, dynastic lineage and rule. While the Mural of the 96 Glyphs dates the accession of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' to May 26, AD 770, they also help to determine the length of his reign. According to the hieroglyphic texts K'an B'ohb' Tok'

succeeded him on January 8, AD 814 (Lacadena 2004: 101). If Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's rule spanned the entire period in question than he likely enjoyed a relatively long reign lasting forty-four years. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's heirs to the throne all remembered him favorably. Lacadena explains that all of the rulers to follow in Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's footsteps name him at least once in the hieroglyphic texts associated to their rule and at least twice in monumental compositions. Two are given by his immediate successor K'an B'ohb' Tok' in the Mural 29-sub C. Column 1 attributed to K'an B'ohb' Tok's heir, Ukit Jol Ahkul dedicates a funerary monument on March 11, AD 830 which includes the ruler conjuring the figure of the dynastic founder. Column 1 which likely stood at the entrance to Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's funerary chamber depicts Ukit Jol Ahkul seated and encircled by a monstrous serpent emerging from the shell of a sea turtle. The founder of the Talol dynasty appears inside the fleshy open mouth of the serpent on the arched opening at the back of the mouth. Hun Pik Tok' recorded a fourth posthumous statement on Stela 1 (Fig. 1.10) dated to January 18, AD 840 depicting Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' above the ruler in an ancestral cartouche.

The Founding of Ek' Balam

In the sixteenth century *Relaciones histórico-geográficas de la Gobernación de Yucatán* (1983) Juan Gutiérrez Picón describes the founding of Ek' Balam, which is worth including here.

Coch Cal Balam, que quiere decir señor sobre todos...edificó él uno de los cinco edificios, el mayor y más suntuoso, y los cuatro fueron edificados por otros señores y capitanes; éstos reconocían al Coch Cal Balam por señor y él era el supremo...[Ibidem.]

Coch Cal Balam, which means lord of all...he built one of the five buildings, the largest [or greatest] and most lavish, and the four others were built by other lords and captains; they recognized the Coch Cal Balam as lord and he was supreme...[Ibid.]

Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges suggest two possible interpretations for the above text.

The first considers Picón's historical account as a reference to the original settlers at Ek' Balam.

He goes on to say “*vinieron de aquella parte del oriente,*” meaning, “they came from that part of the east” (Gutiérrez Picón 1983). In this light Picón’s description could refer to the earliest occupation of the site from the Middle Preclassic period (600 BC – 300 BC). The discovery of pottery types at the sites center associated with the Middle Preclassic settlement indicates that ceramics were produced locally and not imported; thus the original settlers arrived locally from the eastern portion of the peninsula to which Ek’ Balam belongs (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2006: 195). Few pot shards or other material evidence comes from the Late Preclassic and onward until Ek’ Balam emerged as a significant power in the Late Classic and Terminal Classic periods. Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges explain that the later evidence alludes to the greatest periods of activity and site building. This explanation imagines Picón’s text as a starting point in the collective consciousness of the site and the local historical lore.

The second interpretation takes into account the site’s later dynastic founding with the arrival of Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’. When Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges (2009) discovered a burial chamber inside the Sak Xok Naah of GT-1 faced with the unusually well-preserved example of a stucco Chenes portal it was clear that a king had been laid to rest in this sacred setting. The tomb contained a wide array of burial offerings in addition to the skeletal remains of an Ek’ Balam lord. Material goods included twenty-one ceramic vessels and over seven thousand pieces of jade, shell, bone, and pyrite. Other rare objects of great value included a gold pendant in the silhouette of a frog and three pearls (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2009: 93). Buried inside the entrance of a great zoomorphic earth monster the sovereign appeared to be symbolically positioned along a powerful axis connecting the earth, underworld, and divine ancestors. More recently scholars have used scientific, epigraphic, and iconographic analysis to confirm the occupant’s identity as the founder of the great Talol dynasty, Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’.

Isotopic analysis of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's dental remains revealed that he did not emigrate from the southern lowlands, the Petén region to the south or the north coast of Yucatán (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2006: 196). Chapter Four takes a closer look at the Chenes portal of GT-1, associated with the burial chamber of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' and how it relates to the identity and placemaking at Ek' Balam. I argue that the results of testing Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's dentition clearly indicate the regions from which the sovereign could not have migrated. In fact, the analysis isolates his birthplace to the Rio Bec and Chenes regions where zoomorphic portals like that of the Acropolis originate. Douglas Price and James Burton's testing and evaluation of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's dental remains isolate specific information regarding the specimen's age and demographic characteristics (2004). Morphologically the oral cavity contains the most reliable genetic source protected by the tooth's dentin and enamel coating. Consequently the genetic analysis of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's dentition verified that he was native to the peninsula but likely not the northern coastal region. Two inscriptions at Ek' Balam name the birthplace of the ruler as the city of Man, the location of which remains a mystery. It also limited the possible birthplace to the center of the peninsula – and it is here in the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands where zoomorphic portals like GT-1 proliferate the architectural landscape.

While isolating the nucleic acids of a single tooth does not pinpoint exactly where the sovereign originated it does offer a broad geographical region in the center of the peninsula. There are few sizable urban centers and settlements along this stretch of Yucatán with the exception of the Rio Bec and Chenes sites densely concentrated at the midpoint of the peninsula's southern most territory. It seems all too likely given the architectural anomalies at Ek' Balam, as addressed in Chapter Three and Chapter Four of this dissertation, that the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands represent this unidentified birthplace. If Picón's account refers to the

arrival of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' then it establishes the origin of a great dynasty. However, this interpretation presents some discrepancies including that the protagonist and their retinue came from the east. It seems more likely than that the sixteenth-century report refers to the original settlers from the Preclassic or Classic periods, though the ethnographic data presented by Picón regarding the site's architectural program seems ambiguous as well. The largest known structure at Ek' Balam is GT-1 (Fig. 1.3) and it would undoubtedly today be considered the most sumptuous as described by Picón's native informants. Archaeologists have not yet consolidated or explored GT-2 and GT-3 flanking the Acropolis to conclude whether they may exemplify the architectural greatness told of in the *relaciones*. We know that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' built GT-1 during the Late Classic period. Lacadena (2004) confirms that the Acropolis did exist in an earlier form half of its final height and two-thirds narrower, which I think a likely candidate for the building mentioned in Picón's account (116). Since hieroglyphic inscriptions securely attribute the ceremonial center to Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' the four other structures described in the *relaciones* "built by other lords and captains" are ambiguous as well.

Hieroglyphic texts further substantiate the genetic analysis of the tomb's occupant while also corroborating the colonial testimony of Picón's *relaciones*. Based on epigraphic evidence scholars believe that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' established the Talol dynasty and that he served as the most influential character in Ek' Balam's Late Classic and Terminal Classic history. In fact extant murals and carved inscriptions refer to him over twenty times at Ek' Balam and at least twice elsewhere (Lacadena 2004: 98). The corpus of texts describing Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' overwhelmingly validates him as a significant character at Ek' Balam describing his actions at the site and in the hinterland, in addition to the posthumous inscriptions connecting a later king to the sovereign they undoubtedly viewed as a divine ancestor. As discussed in Chapter One

Hun Pik Tok' depicts himself on Stela 1 (Fig. 1.10) with Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' seated in an ancestral cartouche. The inclusion of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' on both Hieroglyphic Serpents of the Main Acropolis also attaches an architectural complex to its maker. Picón's narrative describes an edifice that was both large and lavish, and even if it does not refer to GT-1, the carved texts found on the serpents flanking the main stairway demonstrate that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' actively transformed the built environment of his city. The fact that most structures are attributed to his rule again indicates his prominent station at the site.

Linguistic data also suggests Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's origin from the Yucatán peninsula. The language of the inscriptions at Ek' Balam corroborates the populations' ethnic affiliation and kinship ties. While the extravagant personality of the hieroglyphic texts at Ek' Balam underscores the scribes' virtuosity and creativity, agency was likely held by the sovereign, especially in statements where he appeared as the central protagonist. The agency of the scribes resides in their selection of the syllabic and logographic elements to comprise the text, but not in its subject matter. Some examples of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's name include the logogram for the number four, which prompted an important debate among scholars of its reading, either as *chan* in the Cholan language of the south, or *kan*, the Yucatecan equivalent. The Mural of the 96 Glyphs in Room 29-sub of the Acropolis applies the syllabic sequence **ka-na**, or *kan*, ultimately confirming the use of the Yucatecan dialect at the site.¹⁸ I judge the selection of Yucatec Maya as a meaningful marker of communal identity. The isotopic analysis of the skeleton's dentition revealed the peninsular origins of the occupant. While the indigenous population of the peninsula spoke Yucatec the selection of Yucatec Maya for Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's name also proves that he was likely from the peninsula as well. Therefore the use of the Yucatecan

¹⁸ This is one example of the scribe's agency. It also reveals the preferred language of the scribes and their ethnic affiliations.

language further reveals the ruler's peninsular heritage and authenticates the scientific analysis of the corpse's genetic makeup.

The Mural of the 96 Glyphs (Fig. 1.13) also presents the “arrival” event associated with the reign of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' and his rise to the rank of king. Whether or not his arrival parallels the migration chronicled by Picón remains unknown, but it does reflect a widespread predilection for the “arrival of strangers” (Proskouriakoff 1993: 4-10). The appearance of foreign lords often results in the founding of influential and long-lasting dynasties as seen to the south at Tikal in the Guatemalan highlands and Copán at the southernmost extreme of the ancient Maya world.¹⁹ Many arrival events correspond to the date 11 Eb' in the Maya calendrical system, perhaps representing the Maya consciousness and the day's association with auspicious and promising beginnings. At Ek' Balam the foreigners chose the same date demonstrating its significance to their own endeavors and dynastic aspirations. Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's name first appears in the Mural of the 96 Glyphs and it includes the two earliest known dates at the site, April 7, AD 770 and May 26, AD 770 (Lacadena 2004: 111). Lacadena (2004) explains the unusual properties of the painted inscription that appears in horizontal lines. The calligraphic quality of the text imparts an overall expressive character not present on inscribed stone monuments (111). Deterioration and the present quality of the painted glyphs make it difficult to translate many elements of the text. In addition, the scribes used an interesting mix of atypical verbal and polysemic forms that have not yet been deciphered. For these reasons the broader content of the text remains somewhat opaque. However, one of the most important

¹⁹ K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' arrived at Copán in AD 427. His depiction on Altar Q at Copán as the dynastic founder incorporates Teotihuacan-style elements leading many scholars to suggest that he disembarked the Central Mexican city. David Stuart questions his ethnicity as only later portraits emphasize his foreignness. The earliest known depiction of the king features purely Maya regalia. Isotopic analysis of the founder's remains from the Hunal tomb also suggests that he spent most of his life in the central lowlands. However, evidence indicates a lasting relationship with Teotihuacan. Stuart argues that the Central Mexican site functioned as a pilgrimage center related to the charter of rulership (Stuart 2005: 376).

components emerges in the selection of the 11 Eb' arrival date of the texts protagonist at Ek' Balam on 11 Eb' 10 Sotz', equivalent to April 7, AD 770 in the Gregorian calendar.

The 11 Eb' date casts a striking parallel to other 11 Eb' arrival events from the Classic period that are well documented by hieroglyphic inscriptions at Tikal and Uaxáctun.

Proskouriakoff (1993: 4-10) studied what she called “the arrival of strangers” to the Maya lowlands and identified the significance of the 11 Eb' date. Stela 31 at Tikal (Fig. 2.7), as well as Stela 5 and Stela 22 at Uaxáctun all include the 11 Eb' date paired with the sudden influx of foreigners from the west. David Stuart explains that the 11 Eb' tzolk'in involved the arrival of foreigners into the central Petén region (Stuart 2000: 472). On 11 Eb' 15 Mak (January 31, AD 378) Siyaj K'ak' arrived at Tikal, an episode of tremendous transformative power that brought the southern lowlands under the political and cultural influence of the central Mexican state of Teotihuacan located nearly 630 miles to the west. A blackware vessel (Fig. 2.8) from Tikal illustrates a contingent of foreigners clothed in the garb of Teotihuacan warriors grasping *atlatl*'s, the wooden sling for darts, and wearing feathered headdresses. They depart a structure with the characteristic sloping *talud* and the vertical *tablero* of the Teotihuacan architectural program and arrive at another temple with features typical of Maya architecture. Stuart argues for a more aggressive takeover, stating that arrivals were very rarely neutral events, but more often than not political agendas, overlords, and military conquests pervaded such episodes. “For the Maya, like other Mesoamerican cultures, ‘arrival’ was used in both a literal and metaphorical sense to describe the establishment of new dynasties” (Martin and Grube 2000: 29).

The Mural of the 96 Glyphs (Fig. 1.13) at Ek' Balam discloses the arrival and accession of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' beginning with the 11 Eb' date. The verb *huli*, meaning “to arrive” appears at C1 followed by the phrase *ta Ek' Balam* at E1, interpreted as the sites toponym by

Lacadena (2004: 111). Given the verb-subject order of intransitive statements the missing glyph at D1 likely furnished the newcomers name, but this remains to be seen. The main character and the subject of the arrival, Chak Jutuuw Chan Ek' appears in the opening lines of the inscription beginning at block H1 and I1, followed by an impressive collection of Classic Maya titles including the *k'uhul ajaw*, the "sacred king," *xaman kalo'mte'* or "Northern Kalo'mte'," and *b'aa' kab'*, the "prince of the earth" (Lacadena 2004: 111). The addition of *xaman* to the *kalo'mte'* title suggests Chak Jutuuw Chan Ek' settled at Ek' Balam via a northern administration. Based on the inscription Ehm or Emal may represent the overlord's home polity, however the site of Emal, just north of Ek' Balam on the coast hardly attained the political stature to control a site like Ek' Balam through a strategic takeover. In any case, the arrival of Chak Jutuuw Chan Ek' from the north does not complement Picón's ethnographic account. Indeed his *relaciones* either relates to an earlier group of immigrants that arrived from the east during the Middle Preclassic period or refers to another event of which we don't fully understand.

Most importantly, the foundation or re-foundation of a royal dynasty often corresponds to arrival events; hieroglyphic inscriptions at Tikal, Uaxáctun, and Copán, in addition to Ek' Balam all confirm this tendency. The seventh ruler of Tikal, Chak Tok Ich'aak died, "entering the water" on the same day as the arrival of Siyaj K'ak', a Kalo'mte' of the west believed to be from Teotihuacan (Stuart 2000: 478). Shortly thereafter a new king ascends to the throne; in the case of Tikal the grandson of Teotihuacan's Spearthrower Owl, Yax Nuun Ayiin I, rises to the rank of *ajaw*. A similar narrative occurs at Ek' Balam. A powerful northern Kalo'mte arrives, Chak Jutuuw Chan Ek', resulting in the accession of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' to the throne on May 26, AD 770. In fact, the text reveals that the arrival event behaved as a catalyst for the creation of a

ruling dynasty at Ek' Balam. The inscription describes a *b'aah tz'am*, meaning the “first throne,” or “first seat,” suggesting that the traveling coalition facilitated the founding or re-founding of a royal dynasty (Lacadena 2004: 111).

The text reveals the subordinate rank of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' upon his arrival to Ek' Balam. According to the Mural of the 96 Glyphs he participates in an indeterminate ritual, accompanied by Chak Jutuw Chan Ek', the result of which commemorates his accession to the throne. At X3 he is afforded the title of Sajal, defined by David Stuart as an elite title belonging to a subordinate lord (1985).²⁰ The completion of a later ceremonial rite alters his status yet again, but the translation of that ritual relies on a now marred glyph at S3 making a complete translation impossible. Lacadena offers a discussion of the possible interpretations, though they are entirely speculative based on linguistic analysis of the verb *tak'* appearing at S3 in the inscription. Possible explanations include “to join,” “to light,” or “to preach.”²¹ Regardless of its exact meaning the final outcome remains the same – Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' rises to the rank of king. The text concludes at D'3 with the phrase *i patlaj Talol ajaw*, a powerful marker of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's transition from underlord to sovereign translated as, “and then he became the king of Talol” (Lacadena 2004: 114). With the founding of the Talol dynasty by Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' the architectural landscape of Ek' Balam changed significantly.

Many polities throughout the ancient Maya world experienced this narrative, in which a foreign king transformed the urban environment of his new city to reflect the identity of the land

²⁰ In 1985 Stuart simply used the name “Subsidiary Title Glyph,” to define lesser rulers at dependant sites (1985: 68). While the exact meaning of *sajal* remains unclear, Stuart sees an interesting correlation to Yucatec Maya where *sah* means, “to fear.”

²¹ Lacadena explains that *tak'* presents many possible interpretations. It can mean “to join,” but also on a deeper level “to become a participant” as in a ritual event, and “to become a companion.” The latter introduces a kinship relationship between the actors. Derived from the verb *tak'ar* it can also refer to a ritual involving fire. Considering the abundance of documented fire-drilling and fire-entering rituals this would not be an unusual event in the context of the inscription. Lastly, Lacadena includes “to preach or encourage,” as a possible explanation. A public activity as recorded by the inscription would also include a sermon or public address (Lacadena 2004: 113).

from which he came. The Marcador (Fig. 2.9), perhaps one of the greatest finds at Tikal, records the entrada of AD 378 and the accession of Yax Nuun Ayiin I under the auspices of a Teotihuacan lord. Juan Pedro Laporte (1987) discovered the carved Marcador in a residential compound at Tikal built exclusively using the *talud-tablero* construction characteristic of the central Mexican center. Upon their arrival the Teotihuacan elite altered the architectural landscape at Tikal to reflect the characteristics of their home as seen in the residential structure housing the Marcador. I argue that a similar affair transformed the trivial pre-existing city at Ek' Balam creating a sense of communal identity and linking the new ruler to his homeland. Based on the genetic analysis of the tomb's occupant I believe this to be the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands. Even a quick glimpse at the architectural anomalies of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's city and its peninsular traits emerge – rounded corners, false stairs, and grand zoomorphic portals.

A Deformed King

Several depictions of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' exist, aiding in the identification of the skeletal remains discovered by Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges in Room 49 of GT-1.

Iconographical analysis paired with the pathology of the deceased ruler securely link Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' to the Acropolis and the most important feature he used to fashion a sacred place in the image of a distant homeland – the magnificent zoomorphic portal typically referred to as Chenes. Other examples connecting artistic portrayals to a tomb's occupant exist in Maya studies with successful results as the most famous example at Copán demonstrates. As such, a similar approach at Ek' Balam reveals the identity of the skeletal remains as Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. The depiction of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' on Altar Q at Copán (Fig. 2.10) portrays the dynastic founder concealing his right arm behind a small shield, likely screening injuries received in battle. Jane Buikstra's (2003) analysis of the skeletal remains discovered in the Hunal tomb at

Copán suggests that the inhabitant suffered severe injuries to the right distal ulna of the forearm. She argues that the blunt force trauma ultimately resulted in disuse and atrophy.²² K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' chose to obscure his physical impairment lest it be considered a sign of his limitations as a ruler (3). The severity and location of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's own disfigurements made it far more difficult to conceal.

A similar application can be used at Ek' Balam on an engraved bone portrait of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' depicting the ruler with a deformed physiognomy including a deviated jaw and partial upper lip. The diagnostic information retrieved by Vera Tiesler on the skeletal remains of GT-1 confirmed that the tomb's occupant had a noticeable defect of the mandible and marked asymmetry of the face. Tiesler corroborated several pathologies responsible for the physical deformities in her analysis of the skeletal remains, which multiple representations of the sovereign also uniquely illustrate (Tiesler Blos 2002). Analogous to Copán, the parallels between the physical and artistic evidence presents a compelling image of the ruler that is convincing and helps to craft a more complete impression of Ek' Balam's dynastic founder.

In addition to plaque psoriasis, Tiesler discovered that the ruler's mandible and maxilla contained a total of twenty-three cavities, some so severe as to effect the alveolar process, the dental bone containing the tooth sockets. Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' also suffered from three infections during his lifetime resulting in the loss of five teeth and reducing the height of the right mandible noticeably. The alveolar tissue never healed completely, which resulted in a perceptible asymmetry of the face. Gum disease increased the level of swelling and enhanced the prognathism of the lower jaw (Notimex 2009). A bone pendant displays these conditions (Fig.

²² Jane Buikstra explains that such trauma may result from a fall or a direct blow to the forearm with the arm raised to shield the face. The sternum also suffered blunt force trauma as well as the left shoulder, which likely caused severe arthritis. K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's range of motion with one or both arms would have been severely compromised (2003).

2.11) and shows the image of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. The artist used the natural curve of the bone to suggest the severe prognathism and asymmetry of the ruler's face. It is the only known image of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' depicting him as an aged sovereign perhaps just before he endured a fractured upper right maxilla and deadly stroke.

Several other images of the ruler exist portraying him as a vibrant youth, all of which include the same facial deformities found on the skeletal remains of GT-1. These painted and engraved representations not only describe the physical defects associated with the dentition of the tomb's occupant and how he would have appeared in life, but they identify the protagonist in hieroglyphic inscriptions as Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' and the ruler of Ek' Balam. Paired with the genetic analysis conducted by Tiesler on the sovereign's remains we can unquestionably identify the occupant of GT-1 as the dynastic founder. Discovered in Room 49 of the Acropolis, a cacao vessel depicts the ruler in two scenes atop his throne. The accompanying text (Fig. 2.12) describes the engraved cup, names its owner as Ukit Kan Le'k Tok', and its use for the ritual drinking of cacao. He receives a multitude of titles in an otherwise short inscription including "The Warrior who Cuts Hearts," "The Handsome One," "The Prince of the Earth," and perhaps most importantly "The Sacred King of Talol" (Lacadena 2004: 77).

Discovered *in situ* above the burial remains of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' Capstone 15 (Fig. 2.13) displays the image of the ruler in the guise of the ancient Maya god of maize alluding to his divine lineage and sacredness. Likewise Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's personification of the Maize God places him at the moment of creation and equates Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' to the resurrection of the Maize God from the underworld in the form of maize. It also locates the sovereign in a different temporal context at the moment of creation. The painted image of the ruler includes the disfigured upper maxilla and protruding mandible as found on the physical remains of the tomb's

occupant. The representation of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' on Capstone 15 also exhibits a physical defect of the facial tissue. Since human flesh decays quickly, the evidence presented by the skeletal remains cannot be used to verify the image. The depiction of the dynastic founder includes an observable split to the upper lip (Fig. 2.14). Known as a cleft lip, the artist portrayed the ruler with what appears to be two upper lips, a common birth defect in which the tissue does not fuse correctly before birth. Cleft lips are typically associated with a genetic defect. Based on the scientific analysis and iconographical information Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' would have had a recognizable countenance. The inscription also classifies the protagonist as the royal *ajaw* so we can propose with certainty that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' does indeed appear on the capstone. And since the capstone sits directly above the burial I argue that it functioned as a direct statement of the sovereign's royal station and sacredness.

The iconography of Capstone 15 also creates a powerful relationship between Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' and the Maize God. In fact, it articulates the importance of rebirth, vitality, and continuity to the ruler. Capstone 15 is remarkably well preserved despite some noticeable scratches and scores along its surface that fortunately do not affect the design or an interpretation of its significance. Located at the midsection of the vault in Room 49, directly above the burial of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok', the capstone depicts a powerful representation of a ruler channeling the divinity of the Maize God much like the depiction of K'inich Janaab' Pakal I on his sarcophagus lid at Palenque (Fig. 2.15). In both instances the Maize God iconography suggests continuous cycles of renewal and the regenerative power of death. On Capstone 15 the ruler's headdress includes maize attributes along with the cob-like silhouette of the ruler's elongated cranium. At Palenque the top of the sarcophagus portrays K'inich Janaab' Pakal I, known to have been eighty years old at his death, as an idealized youth in the guise of the Maize God and K'awiil. The

trunk of a cruciform tree bisects the composition at the base of which reclines the figure of K'inich Janaab Pakal I. His supine form appears suspended above the skeletal fleshless jaw of the underworld. The depiction of Pakal also parallels the cosmic tree as it signifies the concept of lineage with its roots buried in the earth just as blood links and nourishes descendants of the deceased in life. The recumbent form of Pakal mirrors that of an infant at birth as if he emerges from the skeletal maw rather than descending into its depths. His limbs seem to float in amniotic fluid. Moreover, in the guise of the Maize God he sprouts from the earth like a stalk of maize in an act akin to new birth. It visualizes the longevity and importance attributed to lineage in the ancient Maya world (Stuart and Stuart 2008: 175).

The sarcophagus lid is a perfect metaphor for the cyclical character of ancient Maya life. Martin and Grube explain the connection between kings and the Maize God. "From ancient times they were especially identified with the youthful Maize God, whose bounty of corn underpinned all civilization in Mesoamerica. Each stage of life – from birth to death to resurrection – found its parallel in the cycle of the maize plant and the myth that served as its metaphor" (Martin and Grube 2000: 14). Capstone 15 presents a similar narrative. The image reveals a youthful male sitting on an unusual throne in the shape of a mouse or rodents head, which represents the glyphic equivalent of **b'a**. The ruler's headdress evokes the representation of a corncob that when combined with the elongated plane of the face echoes that of the Maize God himself. Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges describe Room 49 as a grand mausoleum constructed for the ruler's remains and to guide the ruler's soul to the afterlife and Xibalbá (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2001: 415). Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' personifies the god of Maize through cranial modifications that gave his physiognomy an elongated appearance. As the Maize God he embodied continuity and rebirth just as the Maize God defeated death in the

underworld. The placement of the sovereign's burial directly below Capstone 15 strengthens its message. The theme of new birth signifies his return as a divine ancestor; Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' will live again.

Towards a Theory of Making Place

In light of the above evidence, I suggest the following reconstruction of Ek' Balam's history, which will prove useful and complementary to our understanding of the site's built landscape and unique architectural character. Ek' Balam was already well occupied during the Middle Preclassic period, colonized by a population from the east according to Picon's *relaciones*. Ceramic analysis confirms the early 600 BC occupation of the site, verifying that local craft production thrived even during the earliest days at Ek' Balam. Data also supports an early architectural presence at the site before the height of Ek' Balam during the Late Classic period. Picon's narrative communicates the presence of five principal structures. While evidence suggests that it functioned as a relatively small site from 600 BC to 300 BC, public architecture did indeed exist though in a modest and rather limited capacity in comparison to the final appearance of the site today. In fact, Ringle and Bey discovered a Preclassic substructure under the first level of the Acropolis containing an incomplete mural, though a later building enterprise later destroyed it to accommodate the main staircase. To date it is the only known structure conceived before the Late Classic period (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2006: 196).

After a span of inactivity during the Classic period a delegation arrived on April 7, AD 770 preceded over by a northern overlord known as Chak Jutuw Chan Ek'. Like other arrival events in the ancient Maya world his coming corresponded to the founding of a new dynasty under the rule of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' who ascended the throne on May 26, AD 770. The hieroglyphic record recounts a ritual affair resulting in the appointment of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' as

ruler of the Talol kingdom. Appearing on the Mural of the 96 Glyphs, the phrase *b'aahtz'am*, meaning, "first throne," or "first seat" corroborates the foundation of a new royal lineage. Based on the genetic analysis of the skeletal remains unearthed by Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges in GT-1 and hieroglyphic inscriptions I argue that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' migrated to the site as a foreigner from the south/southwestern Yucatán. Genetic markers confirmed that the ruler originated from the peninsula and it is probable that he was native to the southwestern region of the peninsula corresponding to modern day Campeche. Lacadena (2004) explains that the well-stocked tomb of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' and its intricate Chenes style façade represents a burial type uncommon and not known to any northern Maya site. It is however a style typically associated with Calakmul and the vicinity just south of Calakmul, a region now known as the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands where similar zoomorphic portals abound (116). With the accession of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' the built environment at Ek' Balam underwent a transformation from its modest beginnings.

The Preclassic iteration of GT-1 stood half the height of the present structure and two-thirds narrower. Based on Picon's ethnographic account only five structures existed during this time. Most importantly, the architectural persona at Ek' Balam took shape under the reign of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. During his rulership he channeled specific features of the northern Yucatecan styles of architecture known as the Rio Bec, the Chenes, and the Puuc, in order to fashion a distinctive aesthetic unique to Ek' Balam. Not only did Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' incorporate rounded corners, false stairs, and zoomorphic portals into the fundamental makeup of his city, but he used building types like the oval palace, the free standing arch, and the union of range-type structures with sacred architecture that were standard features of the Yucatecan styles. There are a total of three kings identified in the hieroglyphic inscriptions at Ek' Balam to

succeed Ukit Kan Le'k Tok', all of which viewed him as an ancestral founder. The conscious decisions made by Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' in designing his city created a formidable sense of identity, likely leaving a very strong impression on the rulers that followed. As Chapter Three of this dissertation demonstrates the architecture at Ek' Balam attributed to this powerful sovereign was unique and varied.

The palpable fusion of architectural styles at Ek' Balam strongly testifies to the social interactions both at the intra- and inter-site levels. Through the built environment Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' conveyed a specific message, one which we can begin to piece together through the scientific, hieroglyphic, and iconographical repertoire. Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's city became an architectural bricolage used to create a sense of place – a sense of the place from which he came. Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' actively created a sense of place by implementing styles of architecture from the peninsula and the place of his birth. Just as marriage functioned as a foundational act lending the necessary status and pedigree to a new dynastic line, the use of Rio Bec and Chenes architectural features at Ek' Balam creates a foundational act that naturalized and authenticated the rule of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok. Freestanding arches, round structures, zoomorphic portals, and a heavy borrowing from the Rio Bec and Chenes stylistic vocabulary combine to create a city that appears almost out of place amongst its neighbors with their Toltec Maya and Petén Maya traits. As previously discussed, the nucleic acids harvested from the ruler's teeth established a broad geographic region in the center of the peninsula from which he likely called home. Because his city incorporated a large array of Rio Bec and Chenes features, in addition to the evidence presented here, I argue that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' was not only familiar with Rio Bec and Chenes building elements, but that he was in fact from the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands.



Figure 2.1 Lintel 1, Halakal
(Beyer 1937)

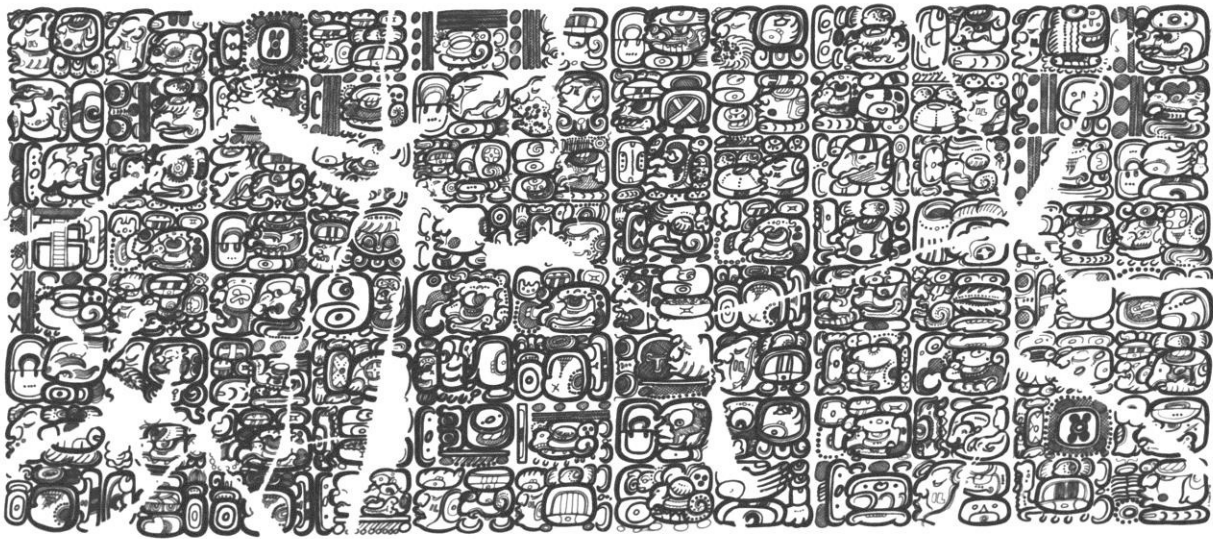


Figure 2.2 Tablet of the 96 Glyphs, Palenque
(Drawing by Linda Schele, Courtesy of FAMSI)

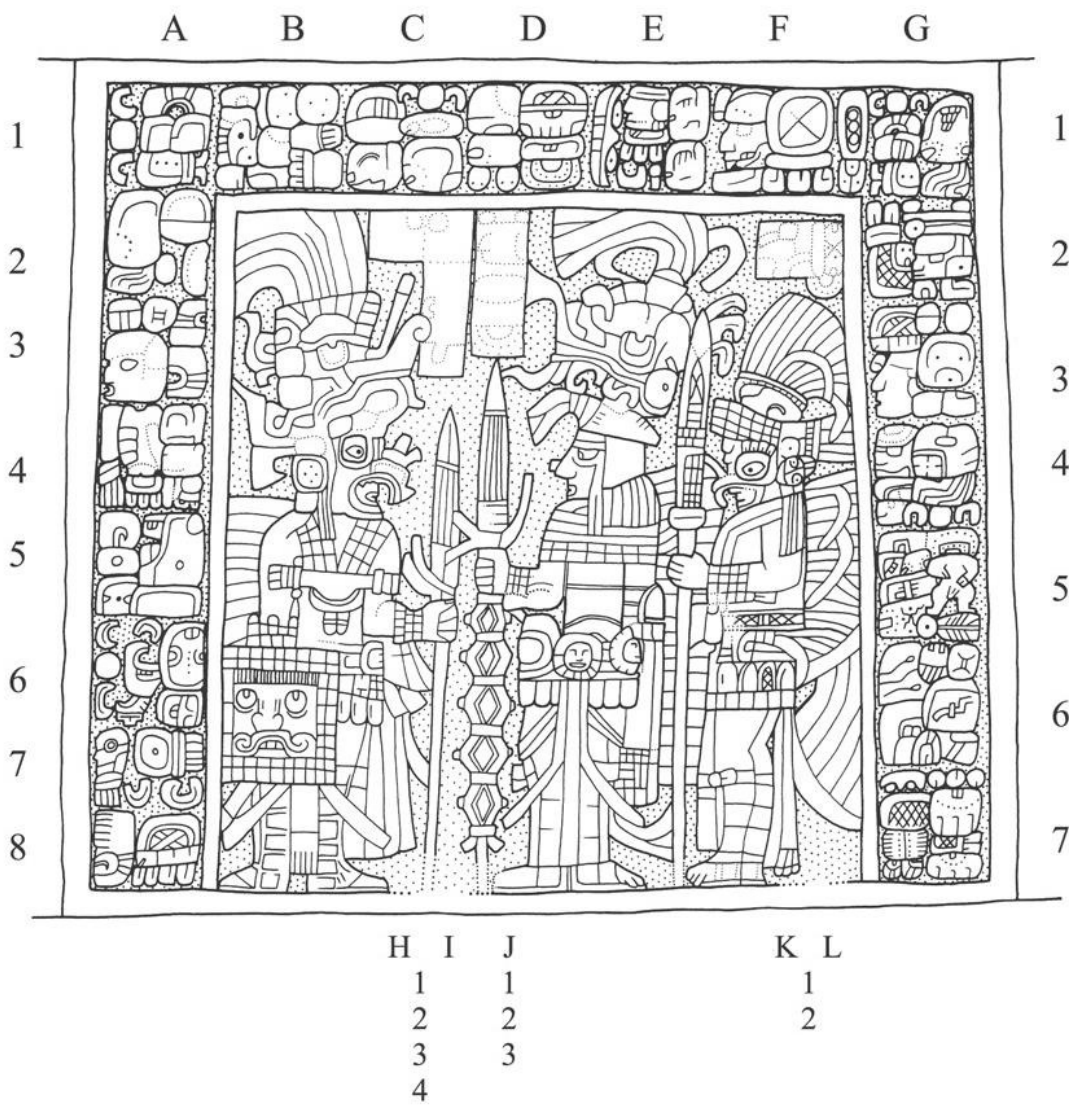


Figure 2.3 Detail of Lintel 1, Halakal
(Kowalski 2007: 218)

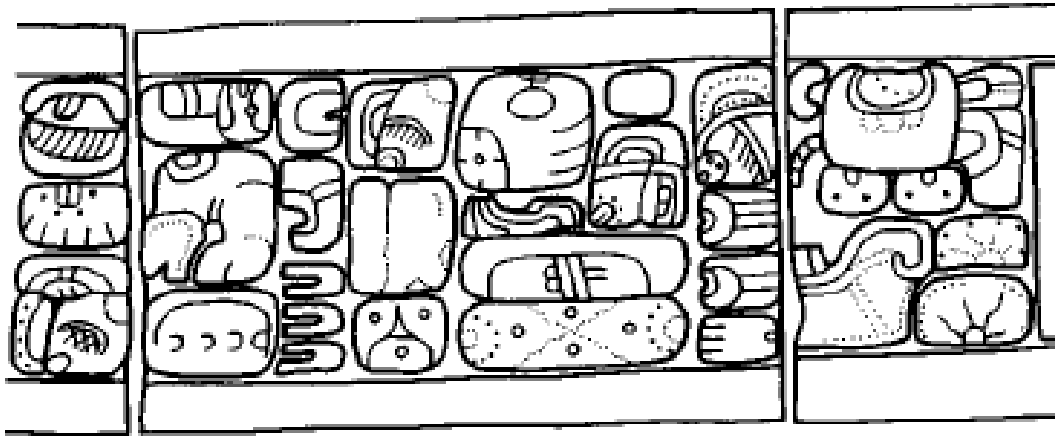


Figure 2.4 Detail of the Casa Colorada inscription, Chichén Itzá
(Voß and Eberl 1999: 127)

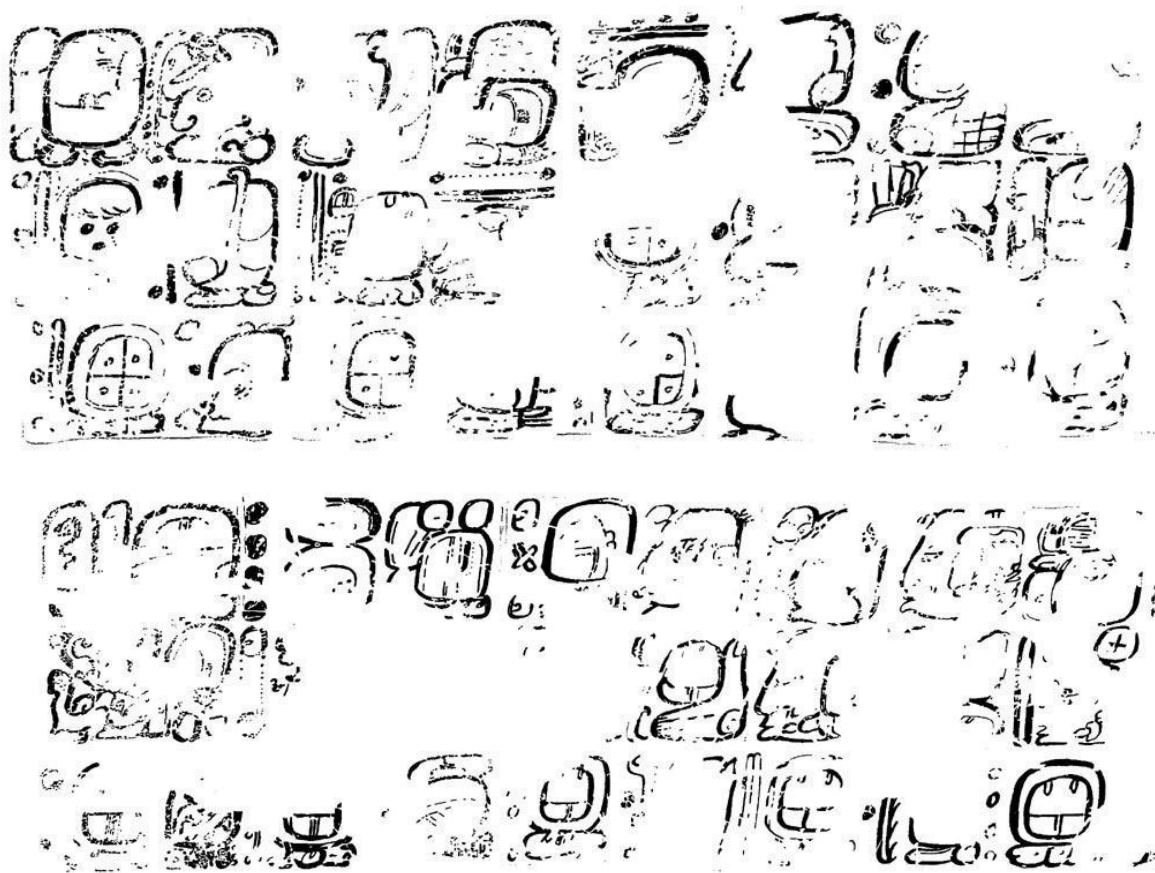


Figure 2.5 Mural of Room 22, Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Lacadena 2004: 63)



Figure 2.6 Femur bone carved into a perforator, Room 49, Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Lacadena 2004: 80)

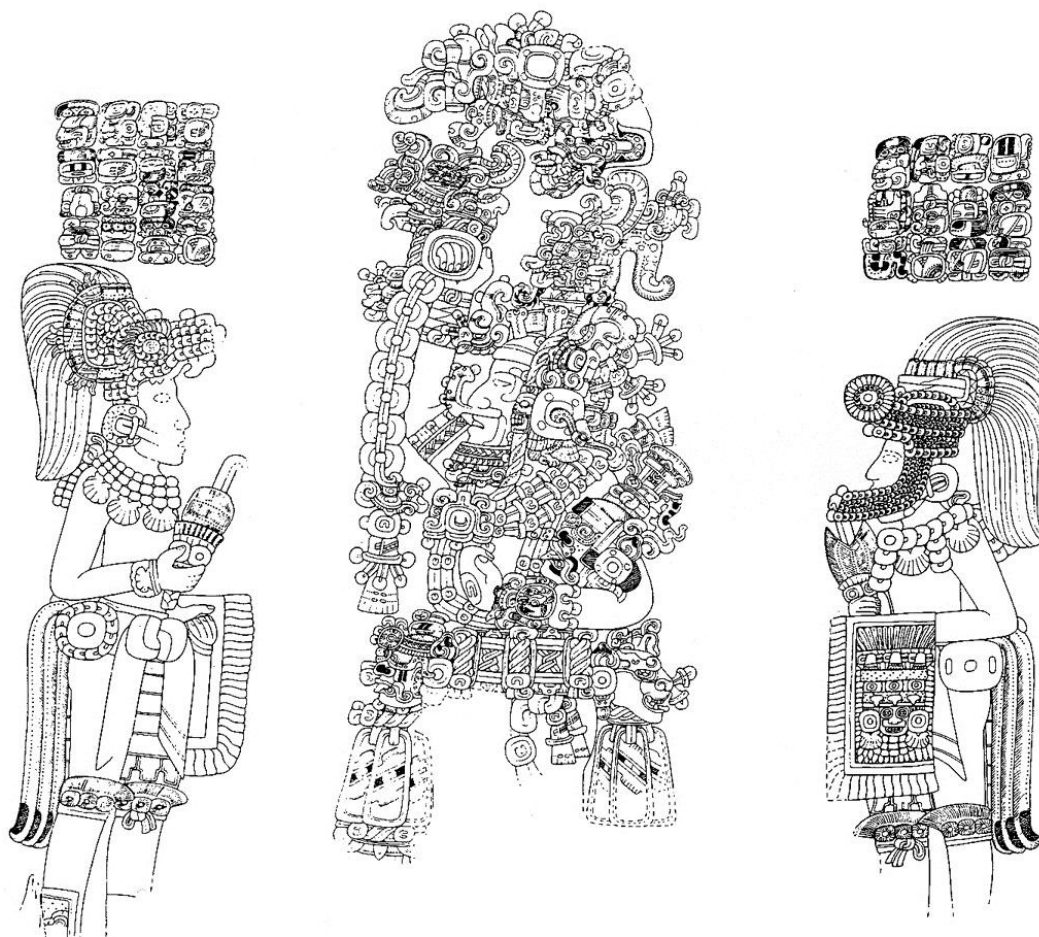


Figure 2.7 Stela 31 inscription showing 11 Eb' arrival, Tikal (Stuart 1998)



Figure 2.8 Blackware Vessel, Tikal
(Schele and Freidel 1990: 162)



Figure 2.9 Marcador, Tikal
(Drawing by Linda Schele, Courtesy of FAMSI)



Figure 2.10 Drawing of K'iniich Yax K'uk' Mo' on Altar Q,
Copán
(Drawing by Linda Schele, Courtesy of FAMSI)



Figure 2.11 Bone pendant depicting Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'
(Photo Courtesy of INAH)

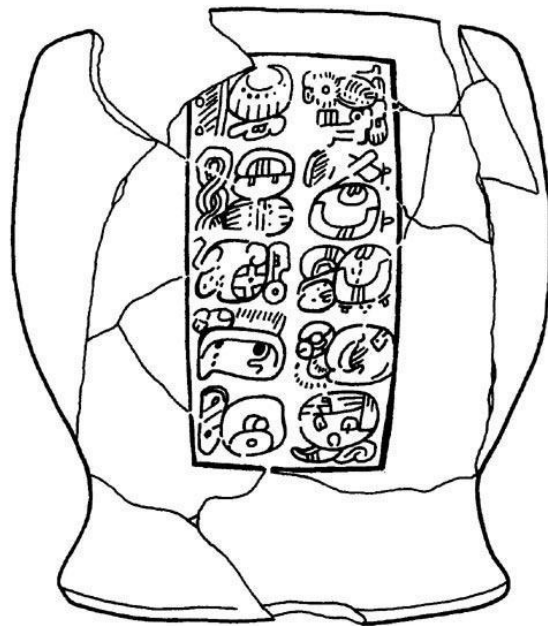
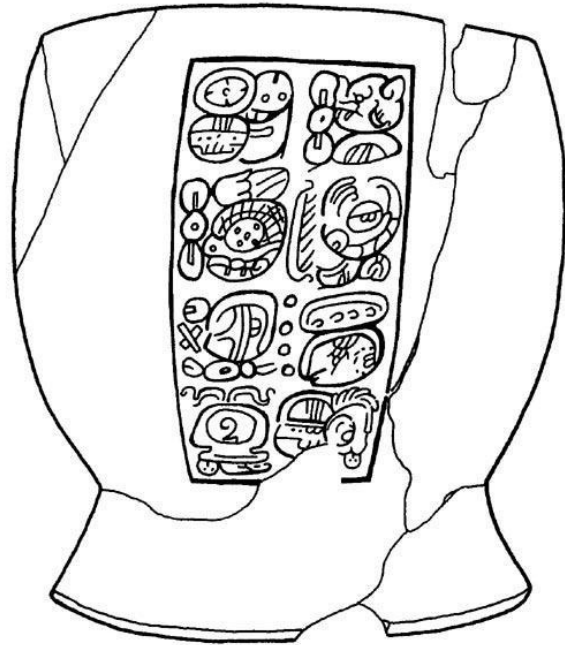


Figure 2.12 Cacao Vessel, Room 49, Structure 1, Ek' Balam (Lacadena 2004: 75)



Figure 2.13 Cover of Vault 15, Room 49, Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Lacadena 2004: 42)



Figure 2.14 Detail of Capstone 15, Room 49,
Structure 1, Ek' Balam
(Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2001:
415)

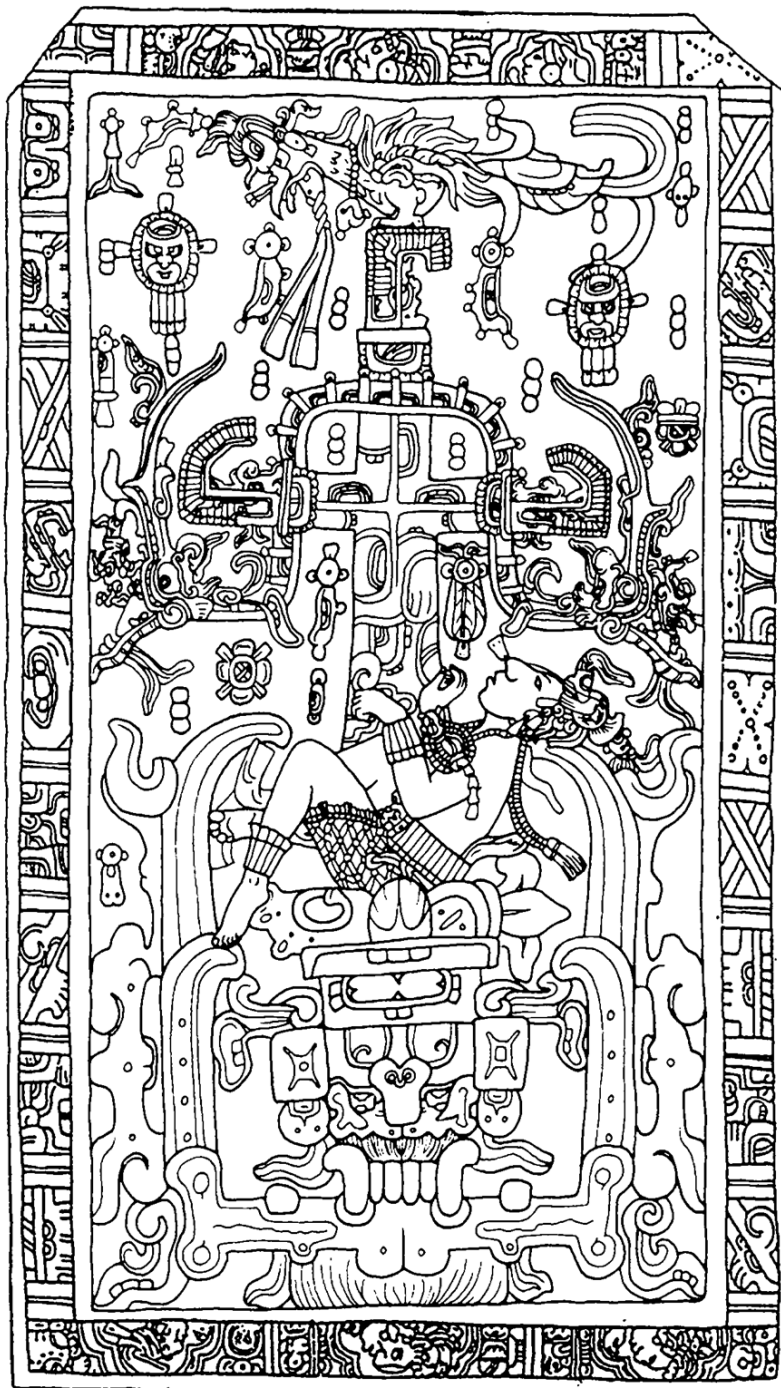


Figure 2.15 Sarcophagus lid of K'inich Janaab' Pakal I,
Palenque
(Drawing by Linda Schele, Courtesy of FAMSI)

CHAPTER THREE

THE ARCHITECTURAL BRICOLAGE AT EK' BALAM: UKIT KAN LE'K TOK' AS BRICOLEUR

Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges gave one of the most concise descriptions of Ek' Balam's architectural personality when they wrote that Ek' Balam was “un sitio que no se parece a ningún otro,” the essence of which captures the uniqueness of the site and contends that the artistic, epigraphic, and architectural repertoires make Ek' Balam a site unlike any other (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 1999b). The character of the hieroglyphic inscriptions and certain architectural features resemble the Petén region to the south, while other decorative elements recall the Rio Bec and Chenes regions to the immediate southwest. Still other features parallel the Puuc style of northwestern Yucatán (Fig. 3.1). But even the lead archaeologists of the *Proyecto Ek' Balam* will not assign a particular style to the site, believing instead that Ek' Balam does not manifest any of these styles singularly nor did it absorb any style haphazardly without purpose (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 1999b). Rather the creators of Ek' Balam's built environment assembled elements from Maya regional architectural styles that are typically discussed as autonomous, such as the Toltec Maya, Petén Maya, and the peninsular Rio Bec, Chenes, and Puuc styles to fashion a unique combination of forms particular to Ek' Balam. While the bricolage nature of Ek' Balam's architecture is perhaps more pronounced than at some other sites it is not alone in drawing from the diversity of Maya architectural traditions to craft its built environment. Indeed, the notion of autonomous regional styles figures so prominently in discussions of Maya architecture that it has likely led scholars to neglect the phenomenon of architectural bricolage as a whole; rather idiosyncratic features were noted and largely under explained. Examples in which planning and stylistic connections appeared too evident to dismiss, such as Chichén Itzá's resemblance to Tula, or Mayapán's mirroring of Chichén Itzá,

were viewed not from the vantage point of patrons deploying multiple styles to achieve a particular end, but rather, as instances of invasion and control. I argue that the bricolage seen at Ek' Balam and other sites conveys a socio-historical intertextuality where the relationships between sites with shared stylistic features provides meaning to a city's architectural forms. In essence, a structure gains meaning by referencing another; a clever strategy for ruler's in constructing their city. Claude Lévi-Strauss examined how societies created innovative solutions using knowledge already a part of the collective consciousness (1966). By studying the built environment through the lens of bricolage it becomes clear how and why someone like Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' mixed forms in the design of his city. Bricolage as a method of inquiry produces a far better understanding of the choices that actors made and the social or historical processes at work, rather than envisioning architectural selections as the result of conflict and warfare. It recalls a deeper practice in which the rulers actively inscribe meaning on the built environment.

The iconography and construction techniques associated with architectural styles become the primary tools of the bricoleur. This chapter concerns the bricolage effect crafted by Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' at Ek' Balam. It explains the many rare and interesting forms he selected for his city and compares them to other known examples, noting their similarities and differences. While some building types draw on the traditional forms associated with Maya architecture, like the ballcourt and the palace, others represent rare features, like freestanding arches and oval structures, and still others present stylistic features associated with the Rio Bec and Chenes styles, like rounded corners and false stairs. Lévi-Strauss describes the bricoleur and his process.

His first practical step is retrospective. He has to turn back to an already existent set made up of tools and materials, to consider or reconsider what it contains and, finally and above all, to engage in a sort of dialogue with it and, before choosing between them, to index the possible answers which the whole set can offer to his problem. He interrogates all the heterogeneous objects of which his treasury is composed to discover what each of them could “signify” and so contribute to the definition of a set which has yet to

materialize but which will ultimately differ from the instrumental set only in the internal disposition of its parts. But the possibilities always remain limited by the particular history of each piece and by those of its features which are already determined by the use for which it was originally intended or the modifications it has undergone for other purposes. The elements which the “bricoleur collects and uses are “pre-constrained” like the constitutive units of myth, the possible combinations of which are restricted by the fact that they are drawn from the language where they already possess a sense which sets a limit on their freedom of manoeuvre. And the decision as to what to put in each place also depends on the possibility of putting a different element there instead, so that each choice which is made will involve a complete reorganization of the structure, which will never be the same as one vaguely imagined nor as some other which might have been preferred to it (1966: 12).

When Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ designed Ek’ Balam’s ceremonial precinct he used a pre-existing set of styles. He joined architectural styles from a known corpus and engaged with their individual vocabularies to create a sense of place that would differ from the original models only in the combination of the parts. Lévi-Strauss says the elements are “pre-constrained” so that combinations are limited based on the meanings already attributed to those forms. For example, Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ selected the zoomorphic portal for his acropolis; its meaning already long established as a liminal space and its iconography representative of the earth monster. But in constructing his city other possibilities arose for the reorganization of parts, as in his four-sided freestanding portal, the only known example from the ancient Maya world. This chapter perceives Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ as the bricoleur. It identifies the architectural forms of his city and how Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ as bricoleur arranged traditional building types, used rare features, and stylistic elements from other peninsular styles to impart meaning.

Ek’ Balam’s architectural plan presents a compact ceremonial precinct. The site sits at the confluence of two powerful Late Classic regional centers – Chichén Itzá, approximately 51 kilometers to the northeast and Cobá nearly 60 kilometers to the northwest (Houck 2004: 25; Bond-Freeman 2007: 3). Covering up to thirteen square kilometers at its height, the site’s core offers the most visual example of Ek’ Balam’s architectural presence which includes an

assemblage of ten monumental structures and a small ballcourt (Fig. 1.2). Most importantly the built environment at Ek' Balam presents one example of the great architectural diversity comprising the northeastern region of the Yucatán peninsula. Accordingly, the city combines a number of regional styles characteristically perceived as independent. The decorative features and specific treatment of exterior façades are used to define regional styles of Maya architecture. Andrews further describes the concept of style as it relates to the Maya built landscape. “When it can be demonstrated that a particular constellation of architectural, construction, and decorative features has become so standardized that the same constellation appears over and over again in a large number of buildings, this combination of features becomes diagnostic for a specific style” (1995: 3). Puuc, Chenes, Rio Bec, Usumacinta, and Petén are quintessential examples of regional styles and their corresponding geographical locations. Regional styles imply a geographical boundary for a specific decorative treatment because the articulation of regional architectural vocabularies often offers local solutions to a community's needs. Sites with a strong stylistic presence like Chichén Itzá may influence other cities like Mayapán or not at all, as in the case of Ek' Balam. In that regard the Toltec character of Chichén Itzá and the Petén features of nearby Cobá fail to leave more than a faint echo at Ek' Balam whose architectural personality features its own distinct impression.

Ceramic analysis proves the site was occupied as early as the Late Preclassic period and that some structures were already present during that time; evidence even suggests an earlier construction existed on the same location as GT-1 (Kelly 1993: 69). Yet most of the monumental architecture developed with the Late Classic period building campaign now attributed to the dynastic founder, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. Vandenaabee et al (2005) explain that Maya rulers assembled artists, scribes, and masons to build and decorate their city. Architects

strived to craft a place unlike any other by designing a modern city with novel or innovative features in order to distinguish their urban character from that of their neighbors (2350). A closer look at Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's architecture reveals how he crafted an inimitable sense of place at Ek' Balam.

Focusing on Ek' Balam's architectural diversity, this chapter begins to examine how we might read the use of style within a complex architectural moment, while also questioning the autonomy of such styles by offering a case of liminality where the blueprints of style are temporarily sidestepped for a greater message, rules are ignored, and building traditions ease their harsh strictures to a specific cause. Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' separated and divorced regional styles from their geographic spheres, marginalized those forms to the periphery, and reformed them into a new aggregate ecology. Each building type discussed here represents an anomaly at Ek' Balam; but many also belong to a small class of architectural forms that rarely appear in the ancient Maya world. Freestanding arches, round structures, zoomorphic portals, and a heavy borrowing from the Rio Bec stylistic vocabulary combine to create an architectural bricolage that appears almost out of place amongst its neighbors with their Toltec Maya and Petén Maya traits.

Given that Ek' Balam and Chichén Itzá existed contemporaneously, I argue that the lack of Toltec influence on Ek' Balam's architectural landscape conveys the site's relative degree of freedom from its massive neighbor. Radiocarbon dates obtained from the wooden lintel of an eastern temple on the Acropolis at Ek' Balam provides a date range from AD 779 to AD 889 when Chichén Itzá was just beginning to assert its presence in the peninsula (Voß and Eberl 1999: 125). Ek' Balam flourished from AD 700 to AD 1100 making it a well-established city by the time Chichén Itzá reached its height in AD 900. Hieroglyphic inscriptions at Chichén Itzá provide a glimpse at the relationship maintained between the two Late Classic/Terminal Classic

centers. The use of Emblem Glyphs by sites like Ek' Balam, Dzibilchaltun, and Acanceh communicates their elevated status in the northern lowlands for Emblem Glyphs were a rare occurrence in the peninsula. Since Ek' Balam claimed sovereignty through the use of an Emblem Glyph, inscriptions at Chichén Itzá referring to the Talol kingdom deliver clues to the ascendancy of Ek' Balam in the political landscape of Yucatán. In addition to the occasional presence of Hun Pik Tok' during ritual activities at Chichén Itzá, previously discussed in Chapter Two, Ek' Balam also appears to have enjoyed a more permanent presence at the site of its Toltec Maya neighbor (Fig. 3.2); while the reverse may not be true, Ek' Balam's architectural character does assert itself at Chichén Itzá in the rounded corners and range-type features of Structure 6E3, also known as the Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jambs.

The Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jambs (Fig. 3.3) reveals a longer, more enduring presence of Ek' Balam elite at Chichén Itzá. Structure 6E3 is a rather isolated “gallery patio” structure with a hieroglyphic text inscribed on two of its doorjambs. Located 1.5 kilometers southeast of the ceremonial center, the Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jambs joins the central precinct via a *sacbe* that intersects the main platform. Karl Ruppert classified the elongated edifice as a “gallery patio” associated with non-Maya or Mexican prototypes. The columns and use of specialized vault stones led Ruppert to suggest it belonged to the twelfth century and similar Terminal Classic buildings (Ruppert 1950: 254). However, the date August 4, 832 AD inscribed on the jambs represents the earliest known calendrical record from the site of Chichén Itzá. The accompanying text includes the Talol emblem glyph and the phrase *u nabil ah tal*, meaning “the plaza of the one from Ek' Balam” (Voß and Eberl 1999: 127). Since the principle characteristics of the edifice share features often associated with the Toltec style, the early date of the structure sheds light on the significance of Ek' Balam during the ninth century and the

early days of Chichén Itzá before the Toltec Maya influence. In this light I argue that the characteristics that Ruppert associated with the Toltec style of architecture are more adequately seen as a reflection of the built environment at Ek' Balam with its rounded corners and columns derived from the Rio Bec and Chenes styles. The gallery style building recalls the range-type structures used by the Rio Bec style, in addition to the columns adjacent to the entrance. For example, the wings to either side of the false towers on Structure II at Hormiguero include a large embedded column topped by a quadrangular capital (Gendrop 1998: 59). Structure I at Xpuhil presents a similar arrangement with three columns defining the tripartite separation of space preferred by the Rio Bec style for their range-type edifice (Gendrop 1998: 57). Since the architecture at Chichén Itzá does not incorporate Toltec influences until after AD 900, the AD 832 date makes it possible that the Ek' Balamista living at the Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jambs borrowed forms from their city reminiscent of the Rio Bec style.

Hieroglyphic inscriptions at both sites provide greater insight into the political climate of northeastern Yucatán and the skillful play for power. Nikolai Grube and Ruth J. Krochok (2007) explain that the dated inscriptions at Ek' Balam and Chichén Itzá never overlap with the exception of the Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jambs (209). The latest date discovered at Ek' Balam belongs to Capstone 1 and Capstone 2, both with a date in AD 841; this date represents the end of written texts at Ek' Balam only nine years after the earliest dated records appear at Chichén Itzá on the Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jambs including references to Ek' Balam. Grube and Krochok explain that Ek' Balam dominated the Northern Plains two hundred years before the ascendancy of Chichén Itzá (2007: 209). At the nearby site of Ichmul de Morley Panel 1 (Fig. 3.4) depicts the ruler Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' as a ballplayer. The hieroglyphic inscription to the left of the sovereign's image identifies him. On Panel 1 two players confront

each other richly attired in plumed headdresses and the paraphernalia associated with the ballgame. The minor and little-known site of Ikil approximately 60 kilometers southwest of Ek' Balam includes two inscribed lintels with a dedication phrase and concludes with the Talol Emblem Glyph (Fig. 3.5).²³ Grube and Krochok believe that the named individual that appears after the dedication statement represents the lord of Talol overseeing the construction of Ikil's principal structure. Certainly this suggests that Ichmul de Morley and Ikil belonged to a network of sites under the political aegis of Ek' Balam.²⁴

Secondary or subsidiary sites like Ichmul de Morley often featured the representation of the powerful rulers that governed from afar and the vassal lords that managed local politics in the interests of the great kings. Grube and Krochok suggest that Ichmul de Morley, Halakal, and Ikil functioned as secondary sites under the reign of Ek' Balam. Similarly, the residence of a great Ek' Balam lord at Chichén Itzá during its formative days indicates that it too may have served as a subsidiary site governed by the powerful descendants of the dynasty established by Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' (Grube and Krochok 2007: 212). They explain that the presence of Ek' Balam lords at Ichmul de Morley, Halakal, Ikil, and Chichén Itzá served as “strong evidence that in its early phase Chichén Itzá was dominated by the hegemony of Ek' Balam, the “last traditional kingdom” of the Northern Plains (Grube and Krochok 2007: 212). Murals at Chichén Itzá give

²³ The main pyramid includes two lintels with hieroglyphic texts describing a dedication ritual. George F. Andrews and David Stuart (1968) describe the architectural features of the pyramid as characteristic of the Late Classic rather than the Terminal Classic period. Their description suggests that the masonry forms borrowed from the vocabulary found at Ek' Balam, representing a significant act of placemaking in the hinterland.

²⁴ The two lintels from Ikil include a total of ten glyph blocks. Grube and Krochok explain that the two lintels likely formed a single continuous text. It begins with the dedication of a *wayb'il* or “sleeping place” and the name of its female owner. Lintel 2 begins with the name of the individual dedicating the structure and concludes with the title *ajaw Talol*. Grube and Krochok explain that this unnamed lord of Ek' Balam oversaw the construction of the main temple (Grube and Krochok 2007: 210). Peter Biro suggests that the “sleeping place” belonged to an Ikil woman of elite status. She receives several titles including *yajawte'* and *yalchano*. Biro dates the lintels to the Late Classic period around AD 650 to AD 750 based on the archaeological survey of E. Wyllys Andrews and George Stuart, but he gives no further explanation (Biro 2003: 1). Because the inscription includes no calendrical data it is difficult to determine an exact date. If Biro is correct than the Ek' Balam lord present at the dedication ritual would be an unnamed lord prior to the arrival of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'.

further proof of Ek' Balam's dominion. A mural in Room 22 of Las Monjas (Fig. 3.6) depicts the warriors of Chichén Itzá attacking a double walled precinct, much like that found at Ek' Balam. The attack scene appears on the east end of the north vault. According to Bolles' description the battle scene of Room 22 presents the largest and best-preserved mural of the Las Monjas complex. In the scene warriors attack a town with large masonry structures surrounded by a double wall, some even hurling torches at the architectural forms. More warriors congregate behind a red wall bearing their shields and spears. Red volutes representing flames float in the sky above. No written texts exist to explain this battlescene, but it provides a compelling example of Chichén Itzá waging war on its overlords.²⁵ This moment may mark the turning point in the relationship between Chichén Itzá and Ek' Balam. Moreover the rise of Chichén Itzá and the fall of Ek' Balam also coincide historically (Grube and Krochok 2007: 240).

Structure 18: A Formal Arched Entrance

At its height during the Late Classic and Terminal Classic Periods (AD 700 – AD 1000) the city of Ek' Balam was enclosed by two concentric walls, which Ringle and Bey (1989) suggest lack any of the necessary features to function as a fortification. Instead they believe that the double enclosure fixed the boundary between the ceremonial and administrative centers found at the site's core from the city's urban population. Five causeways, known as *sacbes* by the ancient Maya, diverge from the center, four of which correspond more or less to the cardinal directions. Acting as the main arteries of transportation to and from the city, three of the paved roads extend well over a mile from the site's center. Settlement surveys proved the site was continuously

²⁵ During the 1800s Alfred Maudslay's work recorded the appearance of the murals in Room 22 of Las Monjas. "The chambers were all paved with cement, which, in some parts, is still fairly preserved. The walls and roof have been coated with plaster and painted with battlescenes and other designs; a very few small patches of these paintings still adhere to the walls, and it is just possible to make out figures of warriors 10 to 12 inches high, with shields and lances in their hands. Blue, red, orange, and green were the colors used" (Maudslay 1889: 15).

occupied within a ten to twelve square kilometer district (Bey, Hanson, and Ringle 1997: 239). The main entrance, both today and in ancient times, was via *sacbe* two leading directly to Structure 18, a four-sided passageway with intersecting vaults.²⁶ This freestanding arch once functioned as the formal entrance, but immediately it exposes the peculiarities that await visitors at the architectural core of the site.

There are few such portals in the ancient Maya world. Of the known examples, the freestanding passage at Ek' Balam is the only to consist of two intersecting arches in the shape of a cruciform with two points of ingress and two of egress. Four freestanding portal arches are known in the Puuc heartland of northwestern Yucatán at Kabah, Labna, Uxmal, and Xculoc. These four examples are intact or only partially collapsed and considered single freestanding vaults, though later additions at Labna altered its appearance as an isolated edifice. Additionally, Andrews (1988: 70) reports on a little known structure at Nohchen in the state of Campeche about 12 kilometers from the modern village of Xcupil. A relatively small site, Nohchen consists of several collapsed mounds situated on an artificially raised terrace. Andrews describes Structure 1 as the only partly standing edifice containing two large stone piers positioned on a 1.5 meter high platform (Fig. 3.8). While the vault remains partially intact, the springline and the two lowest stepped courses still demonstrate that a corbelled vault once joined the two piers. He explains that the stepped courses were cantilevered above the springline (Andrews 1988: 71).

²⁶ George F. Andrews describes the existence of several unique square towers in the Chenes region. Teobert Maler first photographed these unusual forms at Nocuchich and Chanchen in 1895. Another square tower can be found at El Tabasqueño. When Andrews visited Nocuchich in 1889 he described the tower-like construction. "After a short walk through the thicket we reached an open treeless area, and before us stood a giant figure which stared at us with its large almond-shaped eyes in calm superiority, and opposite this was a slender, tower-like monumental pillar. Although I had a long time since lost my conceit, this time I could not help a feeling of profound contentment that I had discovered at the same time two monuments standing entirely alone in Yucatán, perhaps in all America." Each tower represents a free-standing solid masonry form. As to their function Maler wrote, "What object the slender tower-like structure may have had – on these questions I scarcely dare to express an opinion." Andrews (1997) argues that the towers represent symbolic temples with high roof-combs (221). Paul Gendrop labeled the free-standing forms an "emblem-tower" that served a ritual or dynastic significance (1983). The square towers represent the closest form in the ancient Maya world to the four-sided portal at Ek' Balam.

With each course measuring .23 meters high the vault would have stood between 3 meters and 3.5 meters. Nohchen's vault spans 3.48 meters in comparison to the 4.32 meter span at Kabah (Fig. 3.9), making it only slightly smaller. The Nohchen portal represents the only known portal from the Chenes region.

John Lloyd Stephens first described Kabah in 1843 (Fig. 3.10) during his famous expedition to the peninsula accompanied by Frederick Catherwood. The two explorers recorded their observations in their well-known travelogue entitled *Incidents of Travel in Yucatán*. Stephens' thoughts are worth repeating as he ventures at the arches function in ancient Maya society:

There is one monument, perhaps more curious and interesting than any that has been presented. It is a lonely arch, of the same form with all the rest, having a span of fourteen feet. It stands on a ruined mound, disconnected from every other structure, in solitary grandeur. Darkness rests upon its history, but in that desolation and solitude, among the ruins around, it stood like the proud memorial of a Roman triumph. Perhaps, like the Arch of Titus, which at this day spans the Sacred Way at Rome, it was erected to commemorate victory over enemies (Stephens 2008, 1: 247).

Situated on the southern border of the Santa Elena district in the Puuc hills, Kabah is approximately 12 miles southeast of Uxmal, arguably the most prominent site in the area during the Terminal Classic period (AD 700 – AD 1000). It occupied an area about 1.2 square kilometers; in fact the ceremonial core even exceeded that of Uxmal, though archaeologists have yet to explore much of the western sector leaving only the smaller eastern precinct with its large platforms and terraces visible to modern visitors (Andrews 1975: 322). The core consists largely of smaller residential compounds and palace type buildings. A freestanding arch (Fig. 3.11), now known as Structure 1B1, and alternatively as the Arch, the Portal Vault, or El Arco, marks the conclusion of a 40 kilometer causeway passing through the sites of Nohpat and Uxmal at its northern extreme. While an important thoroughfare the causeway and its associated archway act

to divide Kabah roughly into two halves (Fig. 3.12). No strong relationship exists between the eastern and western sectors of the city. In addition, the presence of such a significant causeway indicates that Kabah likely functioned as a satellite center under the administration of Uxmal. However, there is no other evidence to corroborate this claim aside from the obvious significance of such an important channel of transit between the two sites.

Whereas the freestanding archway represents a rare architectural type its function at the site remains unclear. Situated atop a low platform, visitors climbed a small central stairway before passing through the large portal. Andrews writes, “While its function as a kind of “city gate” or “triumphal arch” may be debatable, there is little question that its unique form sets it apart from all other Maya structures” (1974: 45). For the ancient Maya the design of their cities hinged on the distribution of open plazas and the masses that inscribed them. Most prominent points of entry directed access to a major plaza, yet the arch at Kabah guides entrants between two unimpressive platforms before entering an insignificant courtyard to the southwest. The causeway passes through the minor compound and continues in a southerly direction terminating at a small isolated plaza and a moderate sized temple. Indeed the arches position must have functioned as a kind of boundary marginalizing the center, the ceremonial hub of Kabah, versus the periphery, or that which lay beyond in the forests of Yucatán. Even arrivals or departures via the vaulted portal marked a transitory state in which an individual passed into another domain. In many ways the arch simply served as an abstract symbol of crossing, or a kind of in-between, and Mesoamerican ideas involving entrances.

The site of Labna also includes a portal construction (Fig. 3.13), though visually unique from both the freestanding arch at Kabah and the four-sided example at Ek’ Balam. Labna is one of several sites sprinkled among the Ruta Puuc of northern Yucatán that flourished during the

Late Classic period. Located only a few miles from Kabah, Sayil, and Uxmal it shares their characteristically Puuc style architecture featuring mosaic-like construction with a thin veneer of stucco. While the urban planning lacks an overall sense of order, the rather modest architectural remains tend to characterize Labna as only a minor site. However, population estimates based on the quantity of *chultunes* used for storing water suggest the city thrived with a populace of over three thousand residents, thus marking Labna a major ceremonial center (Andrews 1975: 340). A large plaza separates the site into two distinct architectural groups though no internal sense of order exists aside from a casual relationship established by a paved thoroughfare bisecting the city (Fig. 3.14). The raised causeway intersects the main plaza dividing its six hundred feet nearly in half and connecting the Palace Group at the north to a large portal and its adjacent courtyards to the south. Indeed the structures located at the southern end of the plaza highlight the relaxed organization of the site overall.

Since a lack of cohesion subsists between the architectural groupings at Labna, the portal endures as an ambiguous anomaly whose function remains unknown, unlike Kabah where at least the *sacbe* signaled its role as an entry. Adjacent structures fail to reveal any clues to its use in ancient times. A loose arrangement of buildings sit at the southern end of the plaza including the large vaulted arch marking the transition between two small courtyards of similar size to the east and west. The causeway terminates in the western courtyard associated with the rear of the arch. It leads to an eastern courtyard containing the large temple known as El Mirador. Later renovations to the east and west courtyards altered the freestanding archway so that it served as the only point of entry to the eastern courtyard and El Mirador. Visually it appears as part of a small rectangular structure between the two modest plazas, however Andrews (1975) believes that the archway was once freestanding (344). During his 1843 expedition Stephens described

the archway (Fig. 3.15) as “remarkable for its beauty of proportions and grace of ornament” (2008: 34). The portal measured ten feet wide and according to Stephens its main façade faced north toward the plaza of El Mirador.

The arch at Uxmal is relatively understudied perhaps owing to its declining condition. Uxmal is located 80 kilometers south of Merida in the rolling Puuc hills. It functioned as a relatively large site with a ceremonial core of 250 acres and a settlement area of 8 square kilometers. Based on the Sayil Mapping Project Kowalski estimated a population of 32,600 dispersed between the civic and ceremonial precincts and the rural hinterland (1999: 95). Karl Ruppert and A. Ledyard Smith are the first to mention the freestanding portal in the scholarship; they noted the partially collapsed portal, but of significance reported that four stepped courses of the vault remained on one side allowing them to guess at its original appearance (1954). In terms of scale, the freestanding arch is nearly identical to the example at Kabah. It is located south of the site’s ceremonial core and allegedly connected to the Kabah vault 40 kilometers to the south. H.E.D. Pollock noted some skepticism regarding the roadways terminal location (1980: 276). In fact, his team hiked the *sacbe* from Nohpat to within 1 kilometer of Uxmal where they concluded that its trajectory would culminate at the Temple of the Old Woman. However, in 1990 Ramon Carrasco determined that the causeway terminated almost 3 kilometers from the site (1991). Andrews’ own explorations at Uxmal revealed that it passed through two masonry piers before ending at the vault in question. If Andrews is correct, the raised causeway connecting the masonry vaults at Uxmal and Kabah, and intersecting Nohpat, expresses an important inter-site relationship. Since it is the only known thoroughfare in the Puuc region connecting three principal sites it exemplifies the political stability of the northern Yucatán in the Late Classic

period and the development of a state level society capable of a large-scale regional project.

Like the Uxmal and Kabah examples the Ek' Balam portal served as a point of entry.

Structures 8 and 9: The Ballcourt

Together Structures 8 and 9 (Fig. 3.16) at Ek' Balam define the playing field associated with the ancient Maya ball game. Most ballcourts included an alley defined by parallel structures with or without end zones. From site to site ancient Mesoamerican ballcourts varied in size, positioning, and orientation. Regional differences and temporal variations explain the great degree of flexibility regarding the playing alley and its accompanying masonry structures. Just north of the arched entrance, the ballcourt marks the midpoint between the South Plaza and the Main Plaza to the north. It is a small, unassuming court, and a far cry from the massive proportions of the Great Ball Court at the nearby site of Chichén Itzá that surely envisioned the game on a cosmic scale. In fact, the playing alley at Ek' Balam does not include an end zone in the manner seen at Chichén Itzá. Instead the ballcourt inherited the style of other northern peninsular styles and featured a design with open ends. Courts with undefined end zones and sloping walls characterize the lowland regions of Campeche, Yucatán, Quintana Roo, northern Chiapas, the Petén, Belize and western Honduras. In contrast, playing alleys located in southern Chiapas, Guatemala, and southwestern Honduras feature closed end zones and sloping walls with a rather narrow arena for the spectacle of the Mesoamerican sport (Scarborough and Wilcox 1991).²⁷

²⁷ Ramzy Barrois (2006) wrote an extensive dissertation on ballcourt iconography throughout ancient Mesoamerica. He showed that the iconography could be grouped geographically. He also noted the mythological significance pervading much of the iconography. Scarborough and Wilcox (1991) examined the social, political, and religious component of masonry courts. Theodore Stern (1966) also described the multiple types of courts associated with regional and temporal differences. Many scholars have dealt with ballcourt architecture (Smith 1961; Acosta and Moedano Koer 1964; Taladoire 1981). John Gerard Fox (1996) explored the political ritual of the ballgame, while Mary Miller examined the cosmological associations and the courts symbolic realization of the Popol Vuh narrative of the Quiche Maya (1989).

The location of ballcourts illustrated their significance to the social, political, and cosmological beliefs of the ancient Maya. In Mesoamerica the ballcourt represented a liminal space, and as such the elite constructed arenas in the central precinct near temples and palace complexes (Schele and Miller 1986: 246). Typically playing fields functioned as a central element from which a city's architectural form unfolded. The court served as a ritual space as well as an important threshold between the earthly and supernatural realms. Mary Miller explains that many ancient sites aligned the playing alley with important sacred features of the ceremonial precinct (Miller 1989: 22). At Ek' Balam the ballcourt traces a path from the portals entry to the south of the arena to GT-1 to the north. Most importantly, the playing alley creates a powerful north-south axis oriented to the north-facing entry of the four-sided portal and Room 35 of the Acropolis. This alignment concludes not with the central stairway of GT-1, but with the fanged entry of the giant zoomorphic façade. It is a uni-directional path that commences as one enters the site, the four-sided arch presenting the first transitional moment from the outside to the inside – the periphery to the center. The ballcourt extends the ritual cycle inaugurated at the formal entrance with its quadripartite ordering of space.

In order to access the site a visitor must pass through the southern façade of the vaulted portal through its northern face. The northerly axis bisects the playing arena and continues unimpeded by endzones directly to the gaping sculpted maw of GT-1 and the burial chamber of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' located at the rear of Room 35. Courts oriented to the north and south, like that at Ek' Balam, also signify the passage from the world of the living to the world of the dead (Miller 1989: 23). Playing arenas lacking a distinct end zone further strengthened connotations to these axial openings into the supernatural and animate forces of the Maya cosmos. Marvin Cohodas (1991) explains that courts “emphasize the architectural symbolism of the world axis

which demarcates a cosmological passage through the earth's surface into the Underworld" (254). Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' even portrayed himself as a ball player on the panel found at Ichmul de Morley (Fig. 3.4) furthering the significance of the court and its orientation at the site, as if the sovereign as athlete transcended the sacred space of the arena to arrive at his burial chamber; he was reborn as his soul passed through the massive sculpted maw of the earth.

Although slight in scale the structures that demarcated the field of play also incorporated atypical architectural features. Of note, the rounded corners of Structure 8 (Fig. 3.17) stand in stark contrast to the rectilinear corners of Structure 9 (Fig. 3.18). Rounded corners are a quintessential element of the Rio Bec style. They create a subtle cadence when paired with the soft lines and gentle horizontal rhythm of their associated molding. These rounded features differ markedly from the Petén forms where thick apron moldings appear deeply recessed (Gendrop 1998: 40). Maurice de Périgny first identified the square towers and rounded corners as a feature of the Rio Bec style in 1906-1907 during his explorations of the southern Maya lowlands (Périgny 1908; Périgny 1909). Andrews' measurements of the rounded corners include a radii between 0.65 meters and 0.70 meters of which the Ek' Balam corners are consistent (1999: 93). No explanation can be given for the juxtaposition of Structure 8 and Structure 9 with their idiosyncratic unmatched corners until further archaeological analysis.

The Oval Palace

The Oval Palace (Fig. 3.19) dominates the South Plaza with its five elliptical shaped tiers juxtaposing its unique silhouette to the adjacent structures lining the perimeter of the plaza. Excavations at the palace revealed several construction phases that not only revised the structure's architectural profile, but also modified its function. While the earliest manifestation was purely ovoid in shape, later building phases incorporated rectangular living quarters on the

first and second floors, which reveal the palace's occupancy as an elite residence even though these later additions fail to complement the initial oval platforms. There is also a decided lack of harmony between the softness of the rounded tiers and the harshness of the later additions that disrupts the architectural coherence as a whole and results in a structural dissonance. Likewise, at a later date a rectangular shrine was added to the top for the use of ritual. Either the building's utility changed over time or the individuals residing at the palace were in sudden need of a consecrated space for worship. If the building functioned as an elite dwelling and as a location for the veneration of the sacred then it combined sacred and secular like much Rio Bec architecture from the southwest and other peninsular examples specific to the Late Classic and Terminal Classic periods that condensed architectural types into a single unit.

While the earliest examples of circular structures are known from the Middle Preclassic period (900 BC – 600 BC) in the Maya lowlands, Terminal Classic examples can be categorized separately because of their well-defined function and developed form. The Caracol at Chichén Itzá is the best-known example from the ancient Maya world and also the largest. Other round platforms are known at Uxmal in the northern Yucatán, Seibal in the Petén region of Guatemala, and Nohmul from northern Belize; these examples all date to the Terminal Classic period. Karl Taube (2001) highlights the connection between round temples and the movement of wind (113). Such temples are an embodiment of the god Ehecatl, a facet of the Aztec feathered serpent god Quetzalcoatl, animating the landscape through a hierophany of sound. Associated with wind and water, depictions of the plumed serpent often include conch shells, which recall the spiraled form of a snake but also produce a deafening sound when blown (Taube 2001: 111). Most importantly, structures built using a circular design plan facilitated the circulation of wind and strengthened their association to the god Ehecatl.

The round structures excavated in the Maya lowlands and central Mexico have been interpreted variously as dwellings, sweatbaths, burial chambers, accession monuments, and astronomical observatories. Regardless of its use the ancient occupants understood the animate features of the manmade forms. Esther Pasztory explains the rarity of circular structures in the Classic Period. “The sporadic appearance of round walls, platforms, and buildings in Yucatán and Oaxaca indicates an interest in continuous unbroken, contours instead of the harsh contrasts preferred in the architecture of the early Middle Classic period. Technical problems in the building of curving masonry walls and vaults over circular plans may account for the rarity of round structures despite their aesthetic appeal” (Pasztory 1978: 110).²⁸ While round structures may have presented certain difficulties to construct, I suggest that they had specific symbolic associations making their form necessary only under certain circumstances. As with all ancient Mesoamerican architecture, the masonry edifice functioned as far more than a neutral backdrop for utilitarian needs. Eleanor Harrison Buck suggests a symbolic equivalence between the circular silhouettes and caves, believing that the elliptical profiles mirrored natural features of the landscape such as caves, caverns, and other cavities below the surface, long understood as entrances to the underworld and the sacred backdrops for the ritual summoning of wind and rain (Harrison-Buck 2012: 73).

In 1988 Ian Graham discovered a small, round structure at the site of Uxmal (Fig. 3.20). Shortly thereafter, Kowalski published a detailed plan and in 1992 consolidated the structure with the aid of Alfredo Barrera Rubio, the Director of the *Centro Regional del Yucatán del INAH*. The Uxmal Round Structure, as it is now known, is located approximately twenty meters

²⁸ E. W. Andrews IV described a very unusual round tower at the site of Puerto Rico in the Chenes archaeological zone. It includes a solid, round masonry form with a stepped, pointed top. Smooth, intricately carved facing stones cover its surface. It measures 8.42 meters in diameter. Based on Andrews’ observations it served no astronomical functions (1968).

west from the Pigeon Group facing a second smaller ballcourt. Its circular basal platform measures approximately 18.2 meters in diameter to the east and west and 17.5 meters in diameter to the north and south. The platform consists of large rectangular blocks with a fill of small irregular stones. It measured approximately 2.3 meters high with slightly sloping walls and a central stairway on the northern façade. A round structure about ten meters in diameter sat atop the basal platform with a door oriented to the northeast (Kowalski et al 1996: 3). Through an analysis of the ceramic wares deposited at the Uxmal Round Structure Kowalski proposed a partial chronological overlap between Chichén Itzá and Uxmal during the Terminal Classic period (AD 800 – AD 1000). He suggested that Lord Chac at Uxmal constructed the round structure as a visual acknowledgment of Uxmal's political ties to the Toltec Maya at Chichén Itzá (10). Kowalski et al (1996) explain that the Uxmal Round Structure may visualize the relationship between Chichén Itzá and Uxmal. While Uxmal remained autonomous the addition of serpentine features at the Nunnery communicates the exchange of religious iconography. Uxmal also demonstrated their close tie to the cult of the feathered serpent and Chichén Itzá through the round temple that emulated the form of the Caracol (10).

The Caracol at Chichén Itzá (Fig. 3.21) is the most famous example of ancient Maya circular structures. While the ceremonial precinct at Chichén Itzá occupied an area over five square kilometers, the site and its residential architecture spread well beyond the center. The name means “the mouth of the well of the Itzá,” referring to the later occupation by the Itzá and the two *cenotes* located at the site. Maya architecture featuring Puuc influence corresponds to the earliest occupation from AD 700 to AD 800 (Sharer 2006: 562). Belonging to the later Toltec Maya phase of the site and constructed in AD 906 the Caracol comprises a circular tier and tower atop a rectangular platform 6 meters high and 52 meters in length by 67 meters in

width (Aveni 1975: 978). In 1945 J. Eric Thompson wrote the following description of the Caracol.

Every city sooner or later erects some atrocious building that turns the stomach: London has its Albert Hall; New York, its Grant's Tomb; and Harvard, its Memorial Hall. If one can free oneself of the enchantment which antiquity is likely to induce and contemplate this building in all its horror from a strictly esthetic point of view, one will find that none of these is quite so hideous as the Caracol at Chichen Itza...it stands like a two decker wedding cake on the square carton in which it came. Something was pretty clearly wrong with the taste of the architects that built it (1945: 10).

The Caracol represents the quintessential round structure (Fig. 3.22). The lower circular platform has a diameter of 11 meters and a height of 3.7 meters. Anthony Aveni's investigations into the astronomical alignment of the structure reveal no clear use for the lower platform. The Toltec Maya likely built the platform to honor the god Quetzalcoatl. Four doorways in the tower grant access to a circular passage also with four doorways entering into a smaller round passage circling the core by which a now ruined chamber sat at the top. Four windows in the tower served as sightlines to astronomical events; for example the west-facing window bisects the setting sun on the vernal equinox (Aveni 1975). Most importantly, Aveni's research shows that the structure marked the interval of time between significant astronomical happenings.

The five circular platforms that comprise the Oval Palace at Ek' Balam present a variant of the round structures found elsewhere in the ancient Maya world. While the addition of rectangular rooms to the north, east, and west altered the visual impact of the ovoid profile the platforms themselves and not the shrine are spherical (Fig. 3.23). In contrast, the Caracol included a rectangular basal platform with a round structure. Consequently the chamber that was used in the observance of astronomical events also included a circular design that priests and celebrants could physically occupy. At Ek' Balam performance and worship centered on the rectangular shrine at the peak of the five spherical platforms. The Oval Palace also included

residential features with the addition of living quarters along the lower tiers (Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2009: 92).²⁹ On the other hand, at Chichén Itzá the Caracol functioned only as a ceremonial structure. It never served a residential purpose as in the palace at Ek' Balam. In fact, no examples of round structures include multiple circular platforms, a temple, and residential chambers making the Oval Platform unique and its function obscure. While the Uxmal Round Structure may replicate the Caracol at Chichén Itzá and acknowledge a political alliance between the two, the dating of the Oval Palace suggests it belonged to the earlier Puuc Maya period at Chichén Itzá long before the circular observatory was built in AD 906. The uniqueness of the Oval Palace cannot be understated.

A Stepped Multi-Purpose Complex: Understanding GT-1 and its Many Uses

During the Late Classic Period in Yucatán the function of architecture, and building types in particular, began to moderate and lessen the barrier between the sacred and the secular. In the Rio Bec style and Chenes style the demise of temple and palace as freestanding independent structures becomes increasingly evident. Andrews explains the two basic prototypes for the grouping of structures in ancient Maya architecture. The temple group and the palace group represent the two standard complexes that can be replicated with almost infinite variations on the characteristic arrangement. Yet, in the northern lowlands a revolution occurs, even more so than in the central Maya region, combining the residential features of the palace and the sacred symbolic attributes of the temple into a single terraced multi-purpose complex. Andrews (1975) identifies a distinct class of architectural assemblages known as an acropolis group. He provides a standard definition, stating that an acropolis is “a settlement located on an eminence” (67).

According to Andrews the Maya Acropolis Group contained various structures of the palace and

²⁹ Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges suggest the residential character of the additions, but they give no further evidence (2009: 92).

temple type situated on a large series of platforms at various levels. Stairways located at strategic points granted access to the upper platforms of the acropolis and controlled access to the many residential groups and their restricted courtyards. The arrangement of structures along the elevation of the platform determined the level of access while the layout restricted movement based on a predetermined path that connected one space to another. Andrews (1975) explains the ultimate goal of such a design:

The sequence culminates in the most important building within the complex, usually a temple, and this building occupies a position which is the farthest removed from the plaza below both in terms of height and distance. The pre-eminence of this singular building is reinforced by the fact that it is likely to be at the highest point within the entire city as well as within its own context (67).

Gendrop (1998) presents a similar description of the acropolis group, instead titled a multi-purpose complex (63). The two authors differ in their approach to these grand complexes; Andrews' definition conveys notions of form, whereas Gendrop's definition addresses function. Gendrop also suggests a great degree of variation in the arrangement of multi-purpose structures. He believes that the façades of these grand multi-purpose complexes vary significantly and prominently, even to the extent that each façade appears at odds visually with the whole. At times a single façade presents two entirely dissimilar halves split by a central stair, creating the greatest sense of confusion and discord. Gendrop explains, "These curious "multi-functional" buildings combine their volumes in the most diverse ways, often alternating from one façade to another the full and empty spaces" (1998: 63). Various elevations along the structure reveal from the top a cascade of forms where the viewer can retrace the open spaces and the solid masonry masses. While the arrangements can vary significantly, order permeates the whole both physically and visually. Thus, purposeful order distinguishes the multi-storied complex and the hierarchical ordering of each element based on its position.

Order and the progression from public space to private space, or secular to sacred, characterizes the Acropolis at Ek' Balam. The multi-purpose Acropolis built to the north of the Main Plaza defines the civic center at the site and presents a complex arrangement of large and small groupings that reinforce the hierarchical ordering of the parts based on their overall position (Fig. 3.24). Also known as GT-1, the structure features a multi-level platform that supports several smaller plazas and superstructures. Its plaza-facing façade on the south includes a multi-storied palace-like complex to the west of a broad central stair and a range structure on the east fronting a wide upper terrace with various structures positioned on the platforms above. In essence, the complex integrates and unites sacred temples and elite residences with administrative and bureaucratic features. GT-1 has a stepped form on its south side that rises in six well-defined levels, the top tier now mostly in ruin (Fig. 3.25). A broad central stairway allowed access to the top level where only the lower walls of a temple still exist; no other points of ingress and egress are known on the west, east or north façades. The ten elongated chambers of the first level are entered via the Main Plaza, while ancillary stairs grant access to the second level with its plaza-facing rooms and wide terrace. Similar subsidiary stairs allowed entry to the third platform. Although the rooms of the first, second, and third tiers face the Main Plaza to the south, the chambers of the upper patio all face toward the interior. The patio can only be reached by stairs on the south side of the second tier and a more majestic stairway that descends from the east facing façade of Room 34 to the courtyard of the upper patio. Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's zoomorphic portal majestically sits on the fourth platform. From its doorway you can see the entire ceremonial core, GT-2 and GT-3 sitting adjacent on the east and west forming a great central plaza.

The design of the southern plaza-facing façade simulates the appearance of contemporaneous range type structures in Yucatàn, and most notably those of the Rio Bec style in the state of Campeche. Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' and his architect grasped the law of visual dislocation favored by the Rio Bec style in which an elongated palace complex received a series of breaks in the façade. These visual separations act to divide the structure into clearly delineated segments where the corners of each section either project forward or receive some visual emphasis as in the addition of columns or the appearance of pseudo-corners with a vertical carved recess suggesting the void between two closely-spaced structures (Fig. 3.26). Both the eastern and western portions of the first platform adhere to a symmetrical arrangement and present five distinct breaks emphasized by the presence of deliberately rounded corners. The effect divides the elongated range type façade into what deceptively appears to be five distinct structures abutting each other on both the eastern and western halves of the south face.

The north and east façades of GT-1 present a plain masonry wall of finely carved stones. Gendrop (1998) explains that most buildings of the Rio Bec style feature an unadorned rear façade accented by horizontal divisions and simple moldings (47). In contrast the west façade includes a rather narrow staircase that appears to intersect with the rear of the upper patio (Fig. 3.27). These stairs are characteristically Rio Bec in style being steep-sided and nonfunctional with ramps along both edges. Andrews (1999) clarifies that the risers of Rio Bec stairs traditionally featured two courses of stone, one narrow and in most cases projecting, the other higher (93). In addition, the simulated stairs of the Rio Bec are nearly impossible to traverse – the treads average 4½ inches and the risers 10½ inches. At Ek' Balam the stairs of the west façade measure approximately 4 inches making them impractical and ineffective as a means of ingress and egress to the upper courtyard. As in the Rio Bec region the masons carved slight

depressions on each tread barely adequate for the toes (Gendrop 1998: 43). At Ek' Balam the viewer experiences GT-1 as a traditional palace group true to the definition given by Andrews; the Acropolis combined sacred and secular functions with various levels of access and while nonfunctional the false stairs were granted some utility for reasons unknown. Altogether the false stairs present a curious arrangement.

While it is often difficult to recover the prototype for certain architectural conventions, making many features of the built environment difficult to understand, scholars can guess at the function of many building types based on a shared vocabulary and formal characteristics. The architectural landscape had many goals to achieve, but more often than not it presented a powerful narrative of the ruler and the manner in which they created a sense of place. It is without question that ancient Maya architecture conveyed social memory and expressed an historical narrative unique to the ruler. In fact, the vision of the city reinforced visually the veracity of the sovereign's claim to power as well as the Maya worldview and social order. The architectural tradition specifically reinforced the collective consciousness and shared histories. While the structures explored in this chapter offer an overview of the built environment at Ek' Balam and the architectural bricolage that defines its landscape, it also chronicled the many building types and forms with the goal of explaining, where possible, what meaning we can find in the decisions of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' when he constructed his own architectural narrative at Ek' Balam. This chapter showed how freestanding arches acknowledged transitional moments, round platforms fortified the manmade world with the animate forces of nature, and palace groups combined a range of functions to reinforce the authority of the king and enrich the station of rulership.

As the bricoleur Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' employed a corpus of architectural forms from his known world and exploited the styles that belonged to his reality. What represented the final product for others became the materials for his own campaign of meaning. As such he combined freestanding arches, oval platforms, and multi-tiered complexes with rounded corners, false stairs and zoomorphic portals. Irénée Scalbert (2011: 73) explains that only imagination and memory can limit bricolage. Chapter Four takes a deeper look at the Chenes portal of GT-1 and the story it tells through a detailed analysis of its iconography and use. When looking at the architectural landscape at Ek' Balam we certainly cannot fault Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' for a lack of imagination. But as I will demonstrate in Chapter Four memory did affect the final appearance of his grandest form. Scalbert believes that actors choose bricolage because of its unpredictability. She writes, "Sometimes tidy, sometimes untidy (when we are inclined to repress it), it invites much that is best in our creative capacity and it makes no presumption on the form of the outcome" (Scalbert 2011: 83). Ek' Balam's architectural landscape appears both practical to the needs of the city and quite strange. The product of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's efforts as bricoleur emerged as a significant act of meaning-making in the built environment that was both creative and unexpected.

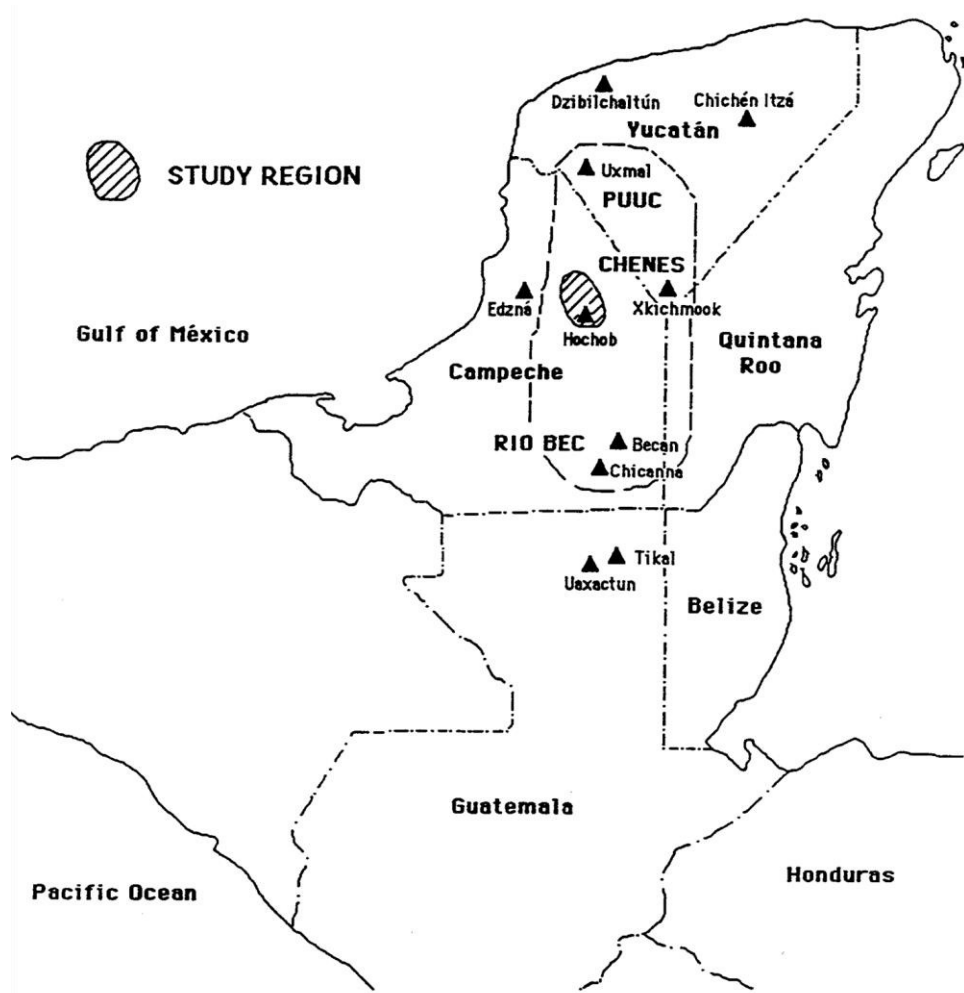


Figure 3.1 Map of Yucatán defining the regions of the Rio Bec, Chenes, and Puuc styles (Williams-Beck 1990: 133)

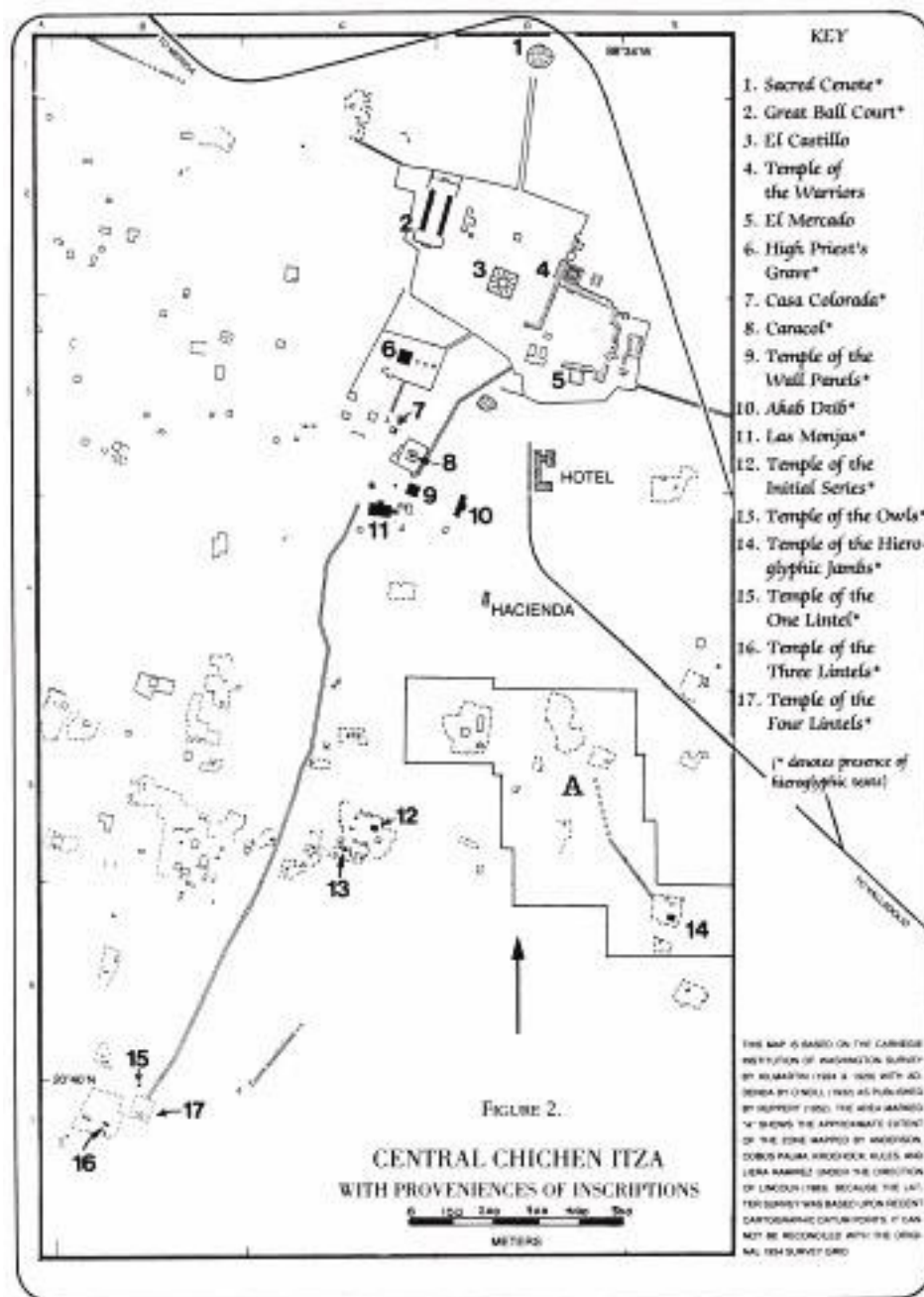


Figure 3.2 Map of Chichén Itzá
 (George Stuart 1989: 3)

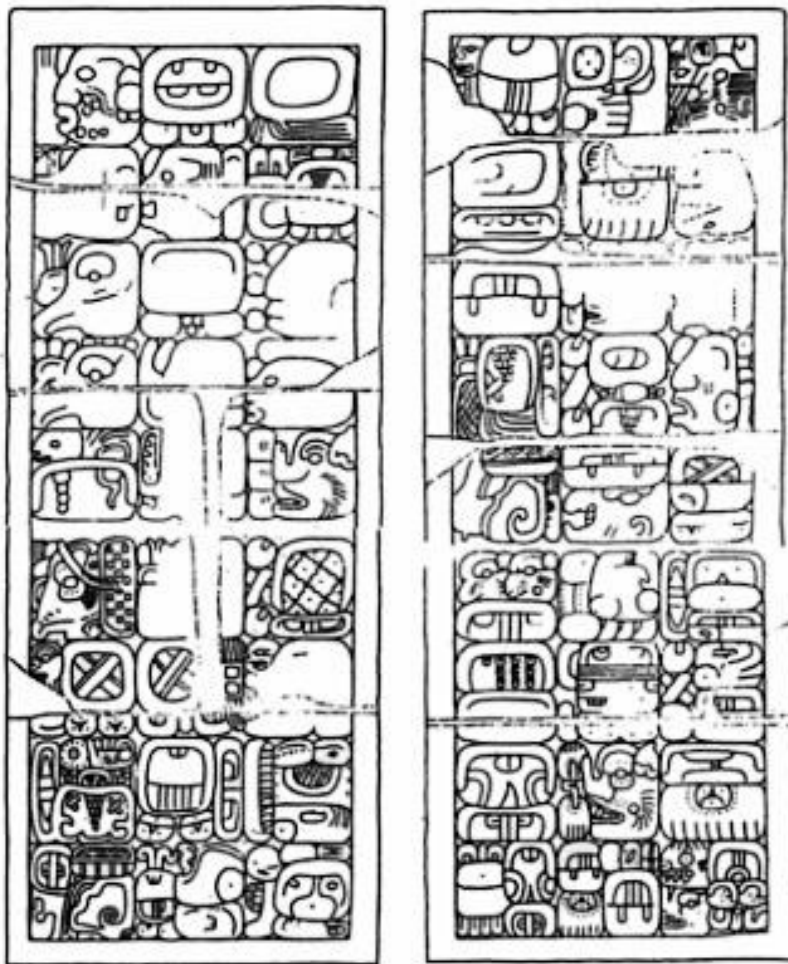


Figure 3.3 Temple of the Hieroglyphic Jamb, Chichén Itzá
(Grube and Krochok 2007: 213)

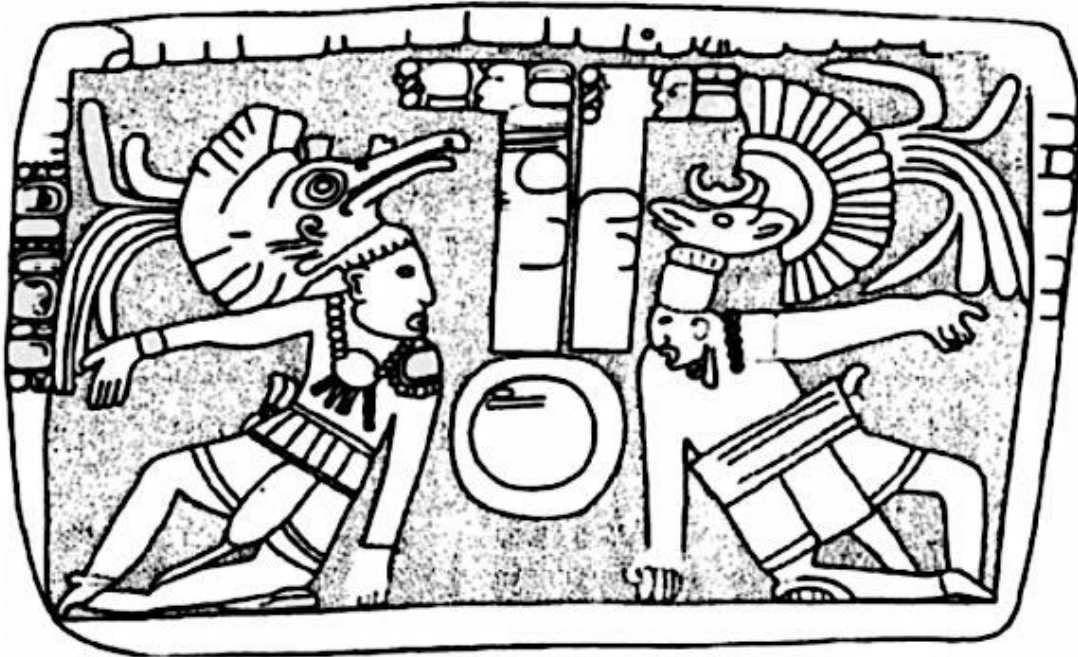


Figure 3.4 Panel 1, Ichmul de Morley
(Grube and Krochok 2007: 209)



Figure 3.5 The final passage of Ikil Panel 2
(Grube and Krochok 2007: 2010)



Figure 3.6 Mural of Room 22, Las Monjas, Chichén Itzá by Jean Charlot (Bolles 1977: 203)



Figure 3.7 Structure 18, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 3.8 Structure 1, Nohchen
(Andrews 1988: 72)

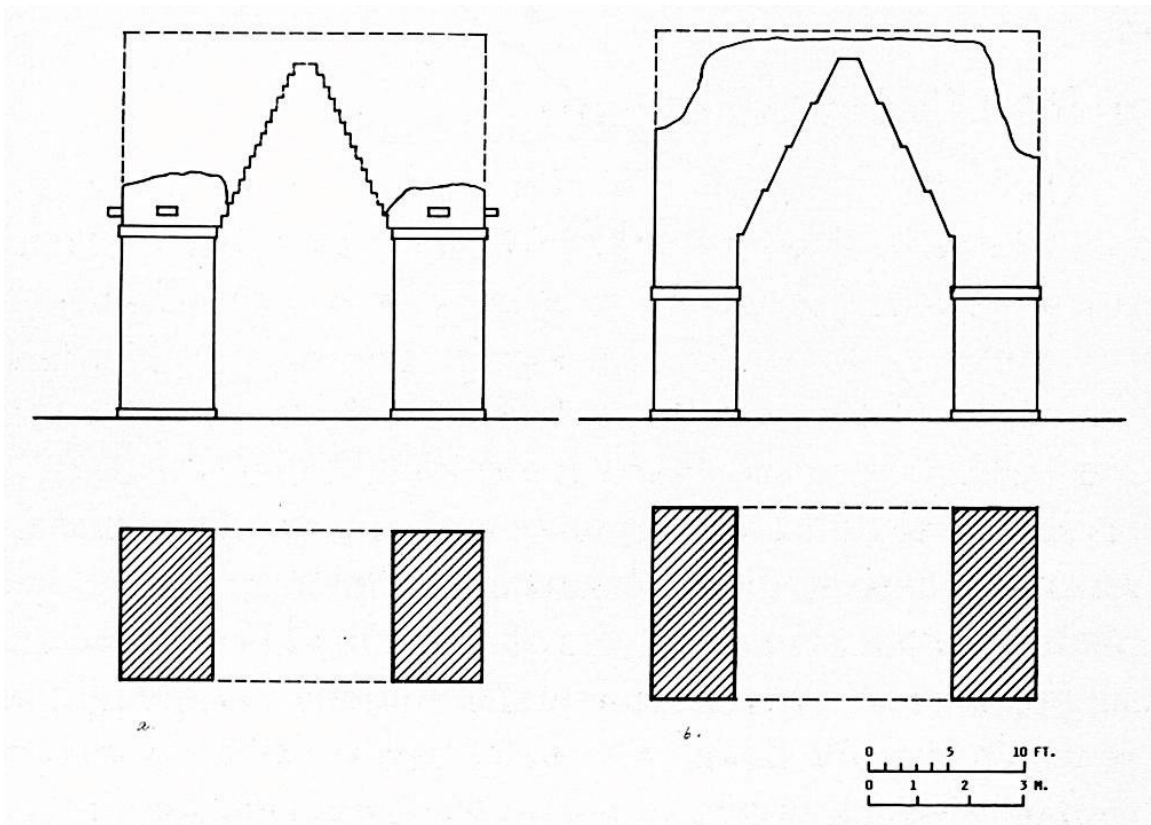


Figure 3.9 Comparison of portal vaults at Nohchen (left) and Kabah (right)
(Andrews 1988: 72)



Figure 3.10 Drawing of Structure 1B1 at Kabah by Frederick Catherwood
(Stephens 2008: 247)



Figure 3.11 Structure 1B1 at Kabah
(Photo by author: 06/2012)

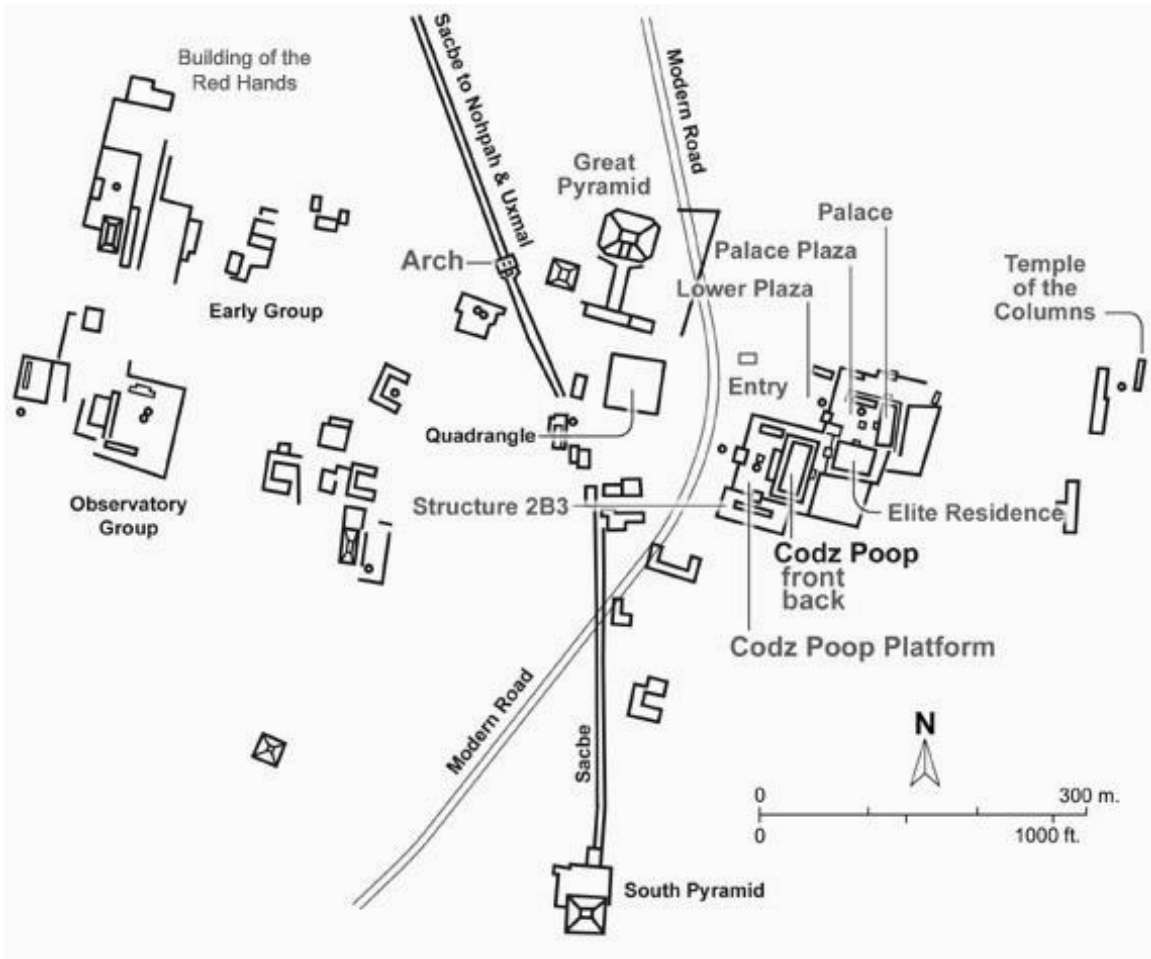


Figure 3.12 Map of Kabah
(Andrews 1975: 324-325)



Figure 3.13 Arch at Labna
(Photo by author: 06/2012)

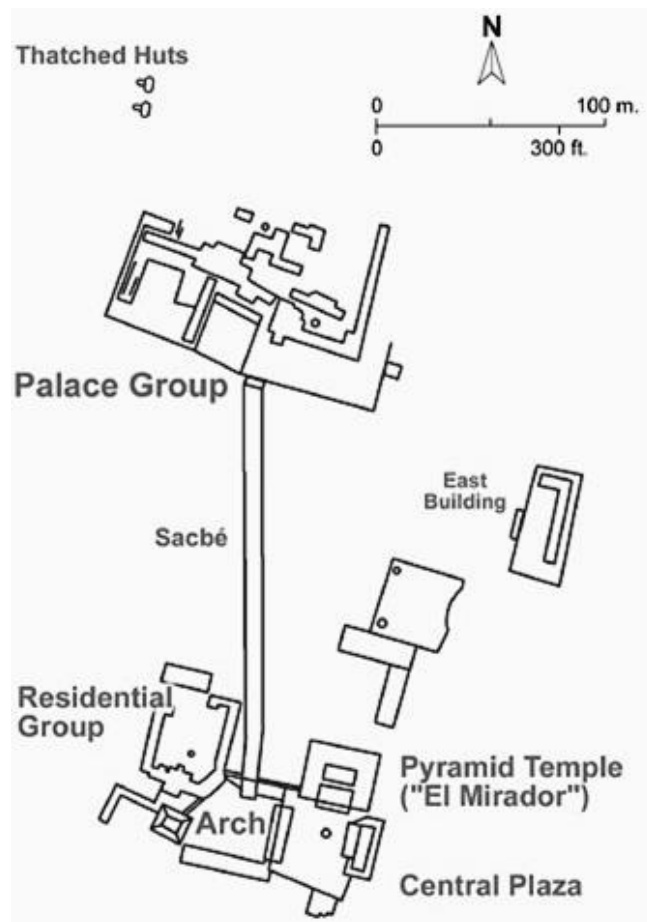


Figure 3.14 Map of Labna
(Andrews 1975: 342-343)



Figure 3.15 Drawing of the portal vault at Labna by Frederick Catherwood
(Stephens 2008: 33)



Figure 3.16 Ballcourt at Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 3.17 Structure 8 at Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 3.18 Structure 9 at Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 3.19 Structure 16, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)

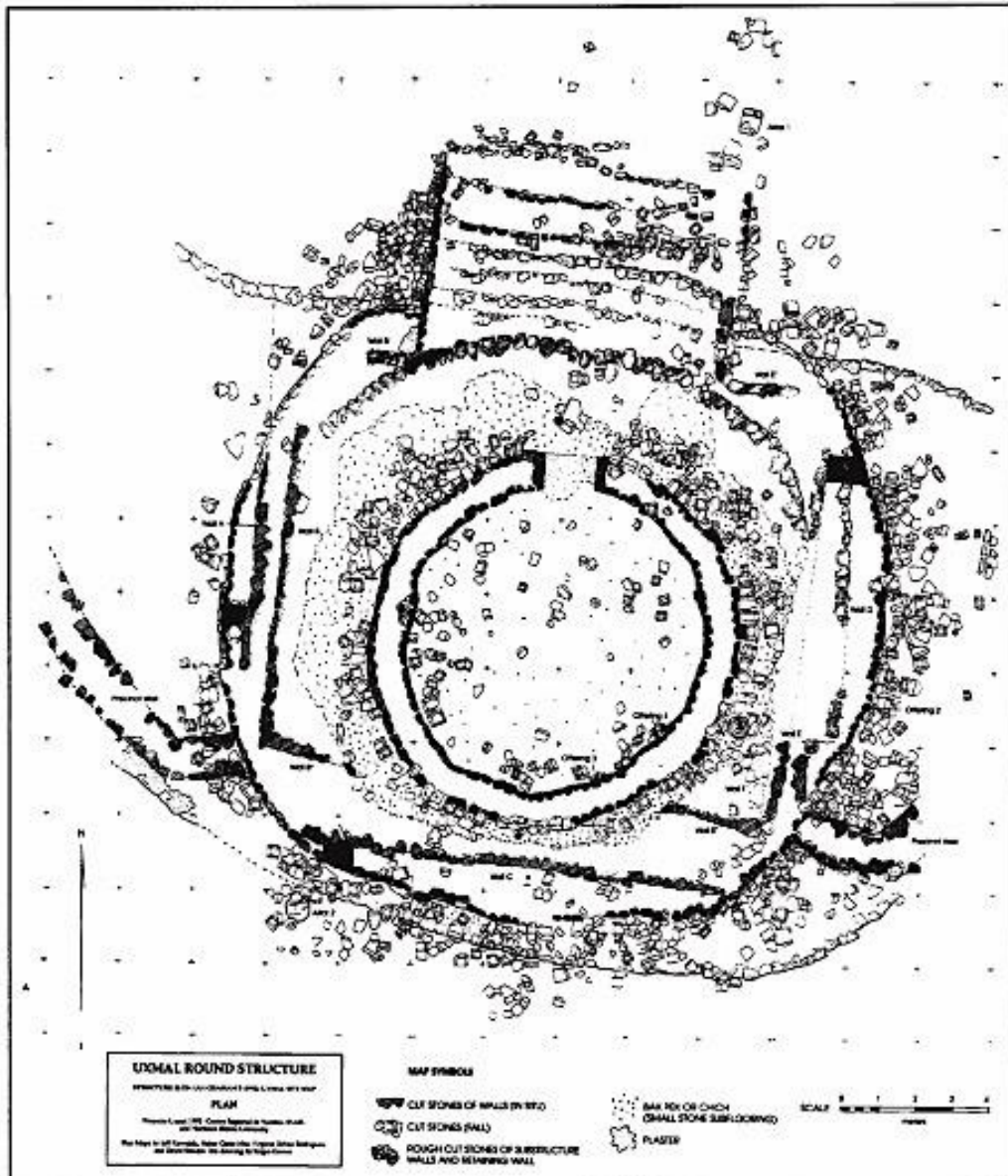


Figure 3.20 Plan of Uxmal Round Structure
 (Kowalski et al 1996: 4)



Figure 3.21 Caracol, Chichén Itzá
(Photo by author: 10/2015)

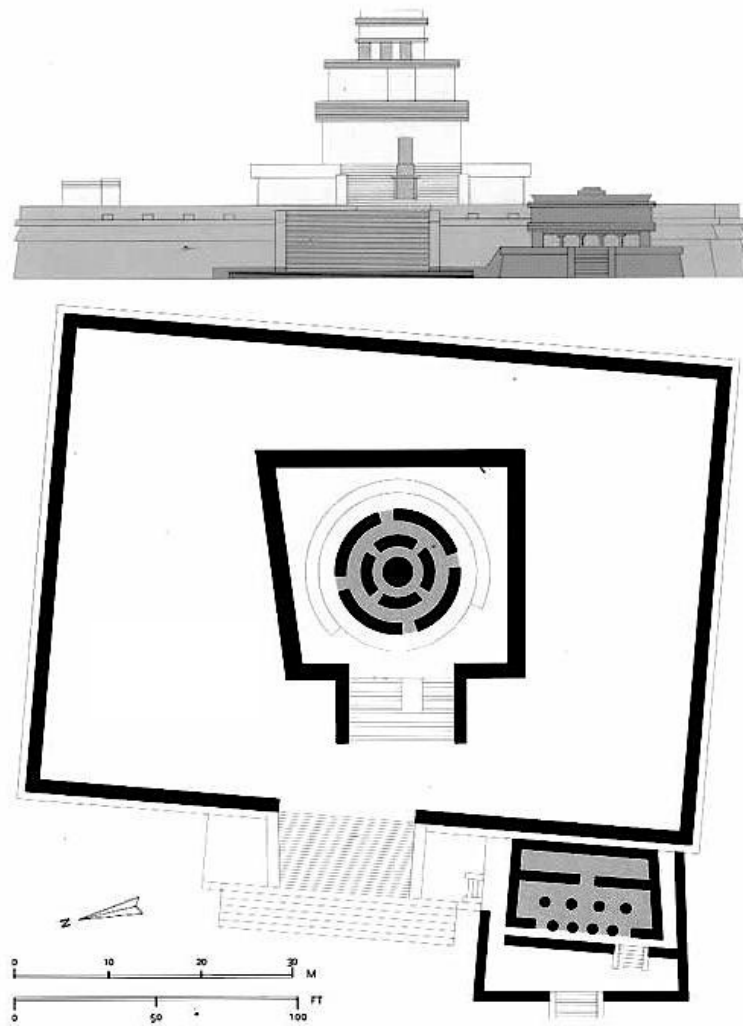


Figure 3.22 Section and Plan of Caracol, Chichén Itzá
(Ruppert 1935: 318)



Figure 3.23 North façade of Structure 16 showing later building phase
(Photo by author: 10/2015)

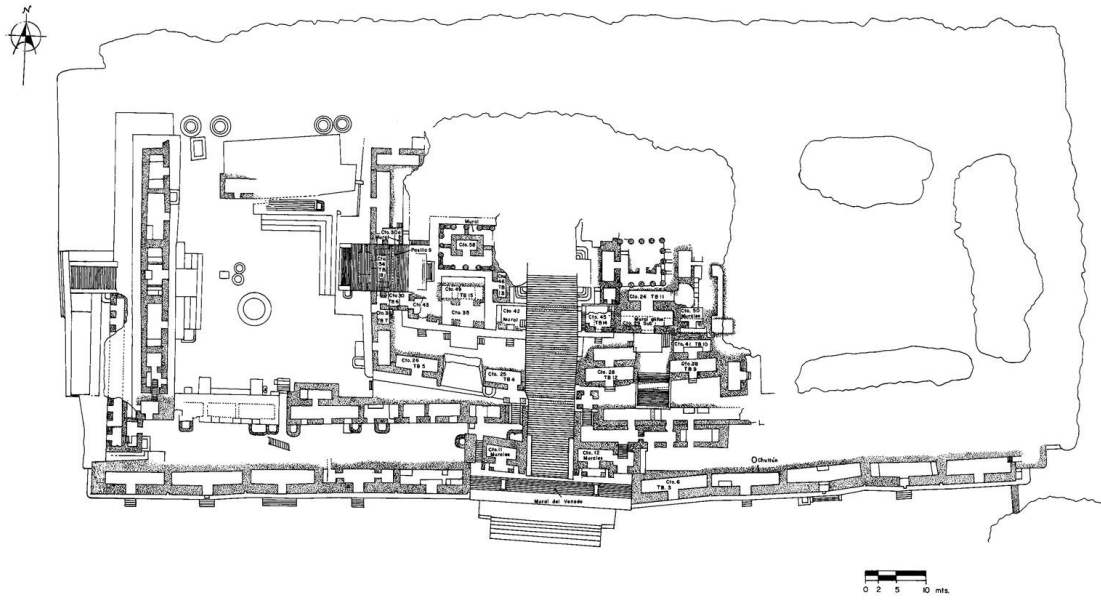


Figure 3.24 Plan of GT-1, Ek' Balam
(Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 2001: 48)



Figure 3.25 GT-1, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2016)



Figure 3.26 Visual dislocation of the lower range-type structure, GT-1, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 3.27 False stairs of the west façade, GT-1, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)

CHAPTER FOUR

TO BE OR NOT TO BE CHENES: RE-EVALUATING EK' BALAM AND THE FAÇADE OF GT-1

The climb up to Hochob was unexpected and magical. Instead of a dirt path littered with stones anchored into the muddy earth, the hillside had been terraced into overlapping circular steps, each covered with a brilliant green blanket of moss. At the top of the hill I paused to catch my breath while calculating the number of steps to the top, and then across the open plaza the portal of Structure II came into view. It is a beautifully intact example of the gaping jaws, giant incisors encircling the doorway with the mandible projecting out in front. If you didn't watch your step you would trip over the curving incisors of the topmost riser. With eight stacked masks at the corners it was a sizable portal indeed and it combined elements from nearly every portal I had visited during my regional survey of Campeche. Representations of the thatched Maya hut adorned the ends like smaller versions of Structure II at Chicanná, and a double headed serpent spanned the upper façade below the cornice, similar yet so different from Structure I at Payan. Traces of red paint clung to the deep crevices of volutes and scrolls of breath, just like every other portal except for Channa Sur which was undoubtedly white like the example at Ek' Balam. It contained every element in its own unique way. Gendrop (1998) sums up the experience of these giant masonry maws. "Upon gazing at these gigantic menacing jaws we can recall one of the invocations of Itzamna as Hapaycán: "the serpent that imbibes or swallows." And if to our Western eyes, this recalls some Dantean vision of hell, it must have been for the Mayas of the time a poetic and stimulating sign of life and hope" (72). After surveying the surviving portals of the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands it seemed that a standard vocabulary existed, and yet the elements could be exchanged and manipulated to an individual's likes and

dislikes. The zoomorphic portal allowed for a sense of freedom to make or remake the city; it was a marker of encounters and exchanges at the social level.

Often described by anthropologists as a collective activity, architecture invokes far more than just a practical shelter from the cold drafts of the night, the intensity of the blistering sun during the day, or the deluge of a harsh tropical storm. The built environment represents a frozen social process that captures the essence of group participation. At the same time it functions as a mechanism for organizing and representing the dominant social patterns. While architecture elaborates on the socio-historical sphere, it also depends upon local needs and available resources, which help to determine its final form. As Daniel Schavelzon explains, architecture depends upon the “availability of the necessary materials and techniques” (1978: 1). This chapter examines the Chenes façade of GT-1 (Fig. 4.1) at Ek’ Balam and its ideological implications. It explores the construction techniques that define the Chenes style of western Yucatán in order to question whether the ornamentation of GT-1, repeatedly labeled as Chenes in the scholarship, can truly be defined as Chenes. While the zoomorphic portal exemplifies a hallmark of the Chenes style, I argue that the monster mouth entrance of GT-1, a defining feature of the Chenes style, is in fact representative of a larger pan-Maya ideology regarding built forms and portal entrances.

The zoomorphic portal in the Maya world has a relatively small geographic distribution and is located at numerous cities in the Rio Bec and Chenes regions of the western and central Yucatán peninsula, with one example also at the southern extreme of the Maya world in northern Honduras at the site of Copán. While a mosaic-like technique characterized the Rio Bec and Chenes versions of the zoomorphic façade, the construction of stylized portals in the Petén and Guatemalan highlands used modeled stucco making the two regions visually distinct. Regardless

of its geographic location, all zoomorphic portals have one feature in common: large protruding fangs that encircle the central doorway, most with the incisors of the upper maxilla forming a “tau” typically associated with the Maya sun god. The “tau” is also a prominent feature of the Maya glyph IK’ (T503), meaning life, spirit, breath, or wind in Mayan languages. The IK’ glyph also represents the day of the same name appearing in the twenty-day cycle of the Maya calendar (Gendrop 1998: 71).

Chenes Portals and Construction Techniques

When John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood visited Yucatán in the 1840s their work helped to reveal the extent and distribution of the Chenes heartland. Derived from the Maya word meaning “well,” Chenes reflects the widespread use of *chultunes* and *cenotes* for water management in the peninsula. Located in the northern Maya lowlands, the Chenes region roughly corresponds to modern day northern Campeche. It is a rather loosely defined geographical region distinguished by the ancient Maya sites with features attributed to the Chenes style – including mosaic-like building elements executed in stone, the use of stucco over crudely carved stone armatures, zoomorphic portals, stacked long-nosed masks, and façades adorned in both the upper and lower wall zones. It is a relatively small area with indistinct borders that bleed into the Puuc region to the north and the Rio Bec region to the south and southeast. Monumental architecture within these intermediate zones contains an interesting mix of both regional styles from the adjoining region, resulting in an architectural hybrid that demonstrates visually how these areas interacted. The Chenes sites that have received the widest recognition and study include Santa Rosa Xtampak, Dzibilnocac, Hochob, and El Tabasqueño. Gendrop (1998), Kubler (1962a), and Andrews (1999) trace the peninsula’s occupation and stylistic influence as occurring from south to north, beginning with the Rio Bec. The Rio Bec

region extends from southern Campeche and Quintana Roo and measures approximately eighty kilometers from north to south. According to Gendrop (1998) zoomorphic portals and long-nosed masks first appeared in the Rio Bec region between AD 600 – AD 700 and migrated north into the Chenes region during the subsequent century. So while the monster mask façades are traditionally associated with the Chenes style, they likely originated in the Rio Bec. Because the Rio Bec offers better-preserved examples, my analysis is based on Structure II at Hormiguero, a site discovered in 1933 by Karl Ruppert (1933; 1943), and Structure II at Chicanná, discovered by Jack Eaton in the 1970s (1972; 1974).

In order to better understand GT-1 it is important to establish a blueprint based on construction techniques and iconography. J. Eric Thompson writes that, “Chenes is a restless, over ornate style. Most buildings acquire added beauty when they start to fall, but Chenes temples do not grow old gracefully. All look tawdry, with more than a touch of the decayed prostitute about them” (Thompson 1945: 12). While Thompson’s anecdote is colorful and imaginative, it also isn’t far from the truth – and while the complex mosaic façades were the epitome of architectural allure around AD 600 – AD 800 during the latter half of the Classic period, their dense groupings of tenoned stones and stucco ornament have also resulted in some of the greatest examples of decay in the Maya world. In fact, it is quite difficult to choose a Chenes façade displaying the quintessential zoomorphic portal to use as a prototype. The mouth of a celestial monster signifies the essential element. Decorative features include stacked long-nosed masks in both the lower and upper wall zones and monster masks surrounding the central doorways. Most of the details are executed in stucco over roughly carved stone armatures, while the long-nosed masks of the Puuc Mosaic style focus on carefully carved details in stone and later covered with a paper-thin coating of stucco. Furthermore, stacked masks in the lower wall

zone are unknown in classic Puuc buildings. It should be noted that the stones used in wall facings are relatively smaller than those used in classic Puuc buildings; stones are also more deeply tenoned into the concrete core.

While Gendrop (1998) makes the distinction between whole and partial zoomorphic façades, he categorizes both subsets of the zoomorphic entrance as representations of the creator deity, Itzamna (69). All zoomorphic façades include serpentine jaws and a wide frontal mask, though they do vary to some degree stylistically. Some like Structure XX at Chicanná have a rectilinear quality while others like Structure II at Chicanná display beautiful curvilinear lines with sinuous scrolls emerging from the giant maws like breath that enliven and animate the masonry forms. Chenes style façades are characterized by the use of a mosaic relief, but subtle stucco decorations enliven many examples and contribute to a greater three-dimensional quality, making Chenes zoomorphic entrances some of the most dynamic, energetic stages for public display and monumentality. For example, Structure II at Chicanná in the Rio Bec heartland incorporates subtle stucco embellishments, which accentuate the mandible and likely approximate the scales of a giant saurian earth monster. Other examples include delicate incisions approximating the appearance of eyelashes (Fig. 4.2). At Channa Sur where the forest is slowly reclaiming the ruins, hatching and cross-hatching in the stucco display lively details that enhance the grandness of the portal. Peeling back inches of dirt and vines and decaying leaves at the base of the façade revealed beautifully preserved eyelashes on a lid heavily projecting over the spiral shaped eye below. Similar decorative elements adorn the masks of the façade at GT-1. Around the oculus and inter-orbital space small spheres embody kernels of young maize (Fig. 4.3). The artist even adorned the brow with delicate zig-zag lines evoking eyelashes or the tiny follicles of facial hair.

As with any Maya temple the central doorway served as the focal point. Traditionally the central frieze received the greatest visual impact, most often adorned with the effigy of a deity as seen on Structure II at Hormiguero (Fig. 4.4 and 4.5) or a ruler as at Ek' Balam. While the Hormiguero example includes the partial remains of a stone figure, at nearby Chicanná (Fig. 4.6) only the tenoned supports for a comparable effigy remain. A giant bi-cephalic serpent passes behind the central figure spanning the width of the façade, its two open jaws terminating at the upper corners. The central mask and wide upper brow include a broad inter-orbital space, prominent nose, and spiral shaped eyes. Helices emerging from the angular crook of the upper jaw create the lively impression of a serpent's forked tongue. Volutes symbolizing new maize crown the large earspools that flank the sizable frontal mask, likely alluding to the ancient Maya belief in life after death and cosmic renewal. Its adjoining pendant in the silhouette of a "tau" bone was associated with death and the underworld – the visual equivalent of the idea "from death there is life."

Serpentine jaws surround the principal doorway personifying the central entrance as a monstrous mask. "With this uncommon zoomorphic entrance, which arouses a powerful and somewhat disquieting fascination, one's gaze is immediately captured by the effect that the large fangs around the doorway produce" (Gendrop 1998: 72). On both Structure II at Hormiguero and Structure II at Chicanná the central incisors also form a "tau," representing the life breath of the giant earth monster born of stone. While the upper fangs bend inward above the lintel, the gums merge with those of the two profile jaws flanking the entrance parallel to the doorjambs, making it one and three jaws at once. Rows of fangs edge the contours of the sinuous jaw lending to a greater three-dimensionality and producing a fearsome stage for public performance. Schele explains that, "People entering such buildings appeared to be walking into the gullet of

the monster” (Schele 1998: 482). Graceful coils emanate from the jaw and energize the mask, converging around the central door and highlighting the monstrous three-dimensional fangs of the access platform that contributes to the appearance of a lower mandible collapsed on the floor.

Structure II at Chicannà (Fig. 4.7) presents a useful model of the stacked mask elements adjacent to the central doorway from which to reconstruct a blueprint for the iconographical elements standard to most zoomorphic portals. A single mask sits in the corner of the serpentine jaws and offers a larger version of the smaller stacked masks along the corner of the façade. The fleshy gums and bifurcated tongue of the reptilian mouth demarcate the proportions of the single geometric mask to the left and right of the entrance. A round spiral eye rests in the folds of the bifurcated split tongue. Directly above the eye a rectangular molding represents the inter-orbital space supporting the strangely snail shaped nostrils with incised hairs. A bone shaped nosepiece protrudes from the tiny engraved follicles. While relatively unadorned, the brow and brow cover present a standard curvilinear arrangement edged with vegetal forms associated with young maize. The arrangement does vary throughout the Chenes heartland with either four or five stacked masks adorning the corners to the height of the medial molding – the upper façade being reserved for the wide upper brow and mask of the central being whose gaping jaws surround the main portal. Portals in the Rio Bec and Chenes regions like Structure II at Chicanná mark points of entry to elite courtyards.

The Zoomorphic Portal at Ek’ Balam: An Iconographical Analysis

Ek Balam’s GT-1, stylistically speaking, includes only a partial realization of the Chenes style. It incorporates many elements central to the Chenes zoomorphic portal, but supplements the traditional iconography with elements foreign to any monster-mouth façade in the Chenes heartland. Room 35 and the zoomorphic façade that adorns its southern face adhere in many

ways to the sculptural vocabulary consistent with Rio Bec and Chenes portals. A serpentine jaw with a wide frontal mask above complements the entrance, giving the central doorway the appearance of a giant gaping mouth. Following Gendrop's definition of the portal, Ek' Balam presents a "wholly zoomorphic entrance," which traditionally included large modeled teeth not only surrounding the central doorway, but also the lower mandible and incisors marked on the topmost riser of the central stairs (Gendrop 1998: 69). Unlike the purely geometric features of Rio Bec and Chenes examples, the stucco design of the façade at Ek' Balam includes the rounded proboscis of the reptilian earth monster directly above the principal door (Fig. 4.8). No other portal in the ancient Maya world incorporates such an unusual feature that adds to the three-dimensional quality of the façade. Rio Bec and Chenes examples incorporate a continuous row of teeth above the lintel defining the upper maxilla. At Hormiguero the central incisors even feature the "tau" shape. In contrast the teeth of the upper jaw at Ek' Balam do not include a continuous dentition, but rather the incisors frame the upper corners of the central doorway before rounding the sides up and around the three-dimensional proboscis.

The elongated snout provides ample staging for a three-dimensional figure above, most likely the dynastic founder Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' seated on his throne. A wide inter-orbital space also furnishes a prominent void with which the artist seated royal attendants perched on the scrolls that extend from the corners of the monsters gaping maw suggesting a serpent's forked tongue (Fig. 4.9). Earplugs appear adjacent to the wide upper brow and mask and feature standard Chenes elements including vegetal forms representing nascent maize and bone pendants associated with death and the underworld. Fleshy gums give emphasis to the smooth three-dimensionality of the upper teeth. The artist scattered snake scales across the wide inter-orbital plate that accentuates the reptilian features of the animate gateway (Fig. 4.3). To the left and

right of the upper brow and mask stand two sentinels with elaborate feathered back racks (Fig. 4.10), a curious anomaly since the Rio Bec and Chenes styles do not include full representational figures beyond a central effigy strategically positioned above the inter-orbital space. Known effigies represent deities and not historical figures. Curled nostrils lined with hair and adorned with bone nose rings appear below these strange characters.

Stylized pillars adorned with Pawahtuun heads at the midpoint (Fig. 4.11) parallel the frame of the door with its three-dimensional teeth and fleshy gums. The Pawahtuuns do not appear in the traditional Chenes style zoomorphic portals and present a unique addition to the standard formula. A pair of abstract stacked masks appears on either side of the main entrance mainly in keeping with the Chenes iconography, though far fewer than the four or five of the typical portal (Fig. 4.12). However, while Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' included many quintessential elements, the stacked masks appear rather confused, as if he understood the necessary elements but not the arrangement of all the parts. In many ways it shows that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' drew from a distant memory when he designed the zoomorphic façade of GT-1, but in fact too distant to be intimately aware of the particulars and specific decorative elements. While the top mask faces outward the lower mask stares toward the gaping jaws of the central doorway. The upper mask includes the curled nostrils with fine incisions indicating hair paired with a small rectangular inter-orbital space. A circular eye sits just behind the nostrils and above a prominent downturned nose. An elaborate brow floats high above to the left enhanced by the Saint Andrews cross, a feature found on the Hormiguero portal in the Chenes heartland. Other antecedents are found from Izapa along the Pacific piedmont and the northern Petén. Overall, the mask adheres to those of the Chenes heartland and includes many of the formulaic elements albeit in a less rigid and systematic presentation. The same can be said of the lower mask.

While the upper mask tends to follow the iconography associated with Chenes zoomorphic portals, the lower inward-facing mask presents a tangled puzzle of elements that hardly seem to amount to the features of a mask at all. In fact, even the spacing is amorphous – sometimes condensed so tightly that elements had to be eliminated and at other times so spread out that they barely make any sense to the viewer except to preserve a sense of symmetry. Gendrop explains the basic formula required for Chenes long-nosed masks appearing on zoomorphic portals. “The eye with its supra-orbital plate, the maxillar area full of fangs and ending in a more or less prominent “trunk” coming from the interorbital space, nostrils with or without nosepieces” (Gendrop 1998: 85). The inaccuracy of both masks to present the basic elements leads to an important question. Why did Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ modify the basic elements of the stacked masks? The lower mask depicts a more curious mix of motifs. A curvilinear nose projects toward the central entrance. The circular eye contains fine incisions in the stucco representing eyelashes. But the brow cover adorned with the familiar Saint Andrews cross sits well below the orbital space making it difficult to reconstruct the anatomical features of the stacked mask. While the upper mask contained both the nostrils and inter-orbital plate, the lower mask lacks both.

Two possible explanations exist for this interesting mix of elements found on the stacked masks of GT-1. The first explanation questions the agency of Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ as well as his architect and masons. The façade perhaps displays the conscious decisions of its designer whose goal was to stage a beautiful and harmonious arrangement of the parts. In many ways the organization of the undulating forms perfectly compliments the serpentine qualities and curvilinear elements - whether sinuous and twisting with an effortless ease, or abrupt and changing directions with a sharp angularity. Gendrop (1998) summarizes this sentiment.

“Within this world of subtle forms that move along together, meeting, crossing, and separating, harmonizing like complementary or counterpointed melodic lines, there are evident conventions” (87). Even the Chenes examples present drastic aesthetic departures. A nose-piece may emerge from the supra-orbital plate and not the typical snail-shaped nostrils. Tufts of hair can grow from any facial feature while twisted forms near earplugs and forehead represent vegetation or feathers. At Ek’ Balam the designer of the zoomorphic portal aimed for visual appeal rather than adherence to a standard formula.

On the other hand, the second explanation relies on memory recall. If Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ called the Rio Bec or Chenes heartland home it is possible that he understood the basic features of the zoomorphic portal from his childhood. It is difficult to say whether the sovereign knew of only one monster mouth façade from his place of birth or if he experienced a large array of the serpentine gateways from Campeche; in either case his experience of the zoomorphic portal provided a prime object from which to construct his own unique version. I argue that the founder of Ek’ Balam’s ruling dynasty experienced the Chenes zoomorphic portal firsthand, but the limits of his memory and the burdens of time erased many of the formulaic elements. He had a general idea of the building style that left a lasting impression from his place of birth. This frozen vision of the great zoomorphic portals could barely provide an exact blueprint after years collecting dust in the far reaches of his memory. The interesting array of elements, both visible and unaccounted for, represent the king’s version of a monumental building style from his past realized in the most complete version he could muster, considering he drew from a very distant memory. An exact formula for the stacked masks faded into the mist of time and left Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’s façade missing the geometric regularity and formulaic composition of the parts. And yet, it still recalls in all its glory the monster mouth façades since at least the principle element is

preserved – the giant serpentine jaws and well formed incisors encircling the central doorway. In contrast to the Rio Bec and Chenes portals the Ek' Balam example functioned as the entrance to the burial chamber of the sovereign himself.

The Zoomorphic Portal at Copán

Unlike the mosaic relief utilized by the northern Maya in the Puuc style and some Rio Bec and Chenes examples, the large majority of Classic Maya cities in the Petén, Chiapas, and Belize used a stone armature concealed with elaborately modeled and painted stucco (Schele 1998: 480). While sculptural programs requiring a stone armature to support larger stucco decorations were widely used in the southern Maya world, mosaic reliefs finished with a fine layer of plaster typify the sculptural programs of the Rio Bec, Chenes, and Puuc regions as well as many northern Yucatecan sites. However, this rule is hardly absolute. Copán and Quirigua offer two exceptions to the model based on geography and technique. Based on the current state of Maya archaeology, Copán appears to be the only site using both construction techniques throughout its history. Many early sculptural programs relied on three-dimensional plaster forms, whereas a large proportion of buildings constructed after AD 650 used the mosaic technique popular in the north. This formal transition in construction technique represents an interesting feature at Copán, especially considering the presence of two portals that bear striking resemblance to the Chenes style.

The Yax Hal Witznal, identified as the first mountain in Maya creation mythology, features prominently in the iconography of Temple 22-10L at Copán. Structure 22-10L (Fig. 4.13) is a large multi-chambered construction located on the East Court of the Acropolis adjacent to the eastern portion of the main plaza. It occupies an E-shaped platform with a central stairway and is flanked by two smaller structures to the east and west. Alfred Maudslay (1889) first

described the structure in 1885 including most notably the sculpted façade of Structure 22-10L, which was not consolidated by his team, but left exposed to the elements; in 1934 the structure collapsed during an earthquake and was restored during the 1935 and 1937 projects spearheaded by the Carnegie Institution and led by Aubrey S. Trik (1939). The thousands of fragmentary sculptures were never consolidated, but left in piles adjacent to the façade where they were originally found. In fact, Proskouriakoff offered a reconstruction drawing (Fig. 4.14) that imagined the zoomorphic portal framing the central doorway as it appeared during the Classic Maya period (1946). Stuart (1989) dates the structure to the reign of Copán's thirteenth ruler, Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil in AD 715.

A giant reptilian jaw surrounds the main entrance much in the spirit of Chenes zoomorphic portals (Fig. 4.15). The mandible defines the upper riser of the staircase along with massive incisors that project realistically from the topmost step. The sides of the mandible frame the central doorway comprising of circular motifs inscribed with the *cauac* glyph. The sculptor included the *cauac* motif as a principal element on the eyelids and molars that are associated with the *witz* monster and define the main portal as the jaws of a massive animate mound (Schele 1998: 494). Claude-François Baudez (1994) explains that the portal and accompanying *cauac* motifs of Structure 22-10L has “often been compared to the superimposed masks that adorn the Chenes buildings” (205). In fact, the Copán example also features the pronounced upturned snouts typical of Yucatecan architecture. While most masks of the peninsular styles are believed to represent the god Chaak the Copán equivalent depicts the cosmic monster in its earthly manifestation. Schele and Freidel (1990: 427) suggest that the *cauac* motif located on the stacked corner masks relate the architectural complex to a sacred mountain. Stuart's translation of the glyphic compounds decorating the stacked masks informs their interpretation. Stuart

(1987) argues that the T117 and T277 glyphic compounds typically found on the forehead present a translation equivalent to the “stone mountain.” Each mask incorporates the circular elements used to indicate stone and more broadly as a reference to the earth.

While a complete reconstruction of the upper façade is difficult based on its fragmentary state, it is clear that it included *cauac* masks using the mosaic technique also utilized by the Rio Bec, Chenes, and Puuc styles of the Yucatán peninsula. The corners featured two stacked *cauac* masks each measuring 1.15 meters high. Trik (1939) first identified the mosaic elements of the superimposed masks and accounted for nineteen carved stones in each. Two undulating scrolls decorate the forehead above half closed eyes with heavy lids and long eyelashes. Although the masks lack a lower jaw, the maxilla features two curved molars. Scrolls emanate from the corners of the mouth likely symbolizing breath. Vegetal forms emerge from the top of the prominent earplugs recalling the foliage of young maize, while a fleshless bone hangs from below, similar to the prototype at Hormiguero. The nose is a large downturned snout. Baudez says the “earthly nature of the monster is made clear by three circles placed on the forehead and on the snout” (1994: 202). It is also interesting to note that the façade included Maize God statues and statues of royal dignitaries, the *cauac* masks creating an elaborate mosaic backdrop.

In addition to the corner masks Maudslay identified the Maize God and human figures representing the king. According to Proskouriakoff (1946) the multiple male figures with the right hand lowered and the left hand raised represent Maize God impersonators (44). Some scholars suggest that recessed niches regularly spaced across the upper façade housed the Maize God figures (Miller 1988: 172-73; Proskouriakoff 1963). Archaeological excavations unearthed twenty Maize God figures and twenty *tuun witz*, or stone mountain motifs, indicating that perhaps these iconographical elements were paired. The stone mountain elements featured a

longer than average tenon measuring 80 centimeters possibly as a means to offset the weight of the Maize God busts (von Schwerin 2011: 280). Ancient Maya construction typically incorporated long tenons to support the heavy sculptural elements found on the entablature located between the medial molding and the cornice molding above. Jennifer von Schwerin's reconstruction (Fig. 4.16) places three Maize God busts on either side of the monster mouth portal (2011: 282).

At the symbolic level the zoomorphic façade represented the sacred stone mountain. In addition to the three stacked masks at each corner personifying the first mountain of creation, the main doorway anthropomorphized the inanimate stone to create the impression of a living, breathing cave entered through a giant gaping jaw complete with prominent curved incisors. Flowing volutes emerged from the monstrous reptilian jaws reminiscent of breath or the blood of sacrifice, probably marked with *yax*, meaning first, and *k'an*, meaning ripe, a glyphic combination associated with preciousness and creation. Together they equal a very powerful couplet juxtaposing birth and maturity. A total of twenty Maize Gods encircled the entablature of Structure 22-10L and emerged from stone mountain masks – the twenty figures tied to the first *k'atun*, equivalent to twenty years, that Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil reigned over the city of Copán (von Schwerin 2011: 282). In fact the construction of Temple 22-10L marked the *k'atun* anniversary of his accession to rulership. As an architectural metaphor, Temple 22-10L became the mountain of creation from which humanity was born.

The façade of Structure 22-10L at Copán shares the zoomorphic characteristics associated with the Chenes style in which the reptilian jaws bring to life the manmade mountains. Of the known Chenes façades, containing both partial and full zoomorphic portals, the Copán equivalent, while similar in its mosaic construction and iconography, differs in

function. The multi-chambered structure served as a residential palace for the royal dynasty, and according to the symbolism of its sculptural façade and hieroglyphic inscriptions Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil used it for sacred bloodletting rites. Dedicated on the king's *k'atun* anniversary of rulership scholars believe it represented accession and the divine right to rule through the sovereign's supernatural access to the underworld (von 2011: 277). As previously discussed (see Appendix), most Chenes portals mark significant points of ingress and egress, though there are a few examples that stand as part of a larger architectural complex. These monster mouth entrances marked a kind of metaphorical foyer that altered the fundamental state of an entrant's being. However, such portals behaved as mere entryways often standing alone or combined with a single roomed structure. The Chenes façade of GT-1 at Ek' Balam also solemnized the entrance to a royal tomb and a grand residential complex.

The use of the Chenes building technique and zoomorphic façade at Copán gives rise to many curious questions. Why did Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil incorporate such a monumental architectural feature into the corpus of his city? How did a structure similar in construction technique and iconography to Chenes style portals come to exist at Copán? And in fact, the answers may very well reveal similar processes to those at Ek' Balam and the building decisions conducted by Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. Grube and Martin (2000: 203), Patricia McAnany (1993), and Mary Miller (1993) explain that Copán benefited from trade in precious jade from the Motagua River, quetzal feathers from the Guatemalan highlands, and Ixtepeque obsidian. In fact, the trade in obsidian spread northward along the Motagua River as far as the Belizean coast, the Caribbean islands, and most notably the Yucatán peninsula and the Chenes heartland (von Schwerin 2011: 278). It is entirely likely based on their extensive trade networks that the people

of Copán encountered the stylistically complex portals of the Chenes style, in turn affecting the architectural landscape at home.

The construction of Temple 22-10L defined a quintessential moment in the building campaign of Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil, and even in the architectural heritage of Copán as a whole. In fact, I argue that placemaking politics functioned much in the same way as the construction of GT-1 at Ek' Balam. As a frozen social process we can understand Temple 22-10L as a complex architectural event that reveals the larger network of relations and social complexities inherent to the Late Classic period at the site of Copán. Von Schwerin states that “Temple 22 was designed as royal rhetoric to affirm order at a disorderly moment” and that it used “traditional and innovative forms to assert Copán’s leading role on the boundary of the Maya world” (2011: 271). Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil was the thirteenth ruler of Copán from AD 695 to AD 738, following in the footsteps of twelve very successful rulers that together formed a powerful dynasty with a leading role in the politics of the southern Maya realm. Miller says the city had an established pedigree (1999:9). Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil's father, K'ahk' Uti' Witz' K'awiil greatly expanded Copán's territory and strengthened political ties with the north. Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil's reign began during a time of significant political growth as well as reorganization, for the year of his ascension Tikal defeated its longtime rival, Calakmul. The effects were considerable as the political climate shifted to a period of uncertainty and insecurity.

If Waxaklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil had reservations about the world he inherited, he answered those fears with a building campaign attesting to the intra- and inter-site relationships that defined his world. Most importantly, he used architecture to communicate his personal agenda, one in which he was reborn like the god of maize. Ethnographic accounts explain that

the sixteenth century inhabitants of Copán credited a Yucatecan lord with the splendor of the ancient structures there. “A great lord from the Yucatán came, built these monuments, and then left” (Maudslay 1889: 5). While there may be little evidence to prove this claim, it indeed speaks to the agency of the ancient Maya in crafting their environment from a wide sphere of influence. Whether a lord from beyond the southwestern Maya region built the monster mouth façade remains an enigma, yet the zoomorphic building style likely represented an object of ideological exchange inherited from the north via the extensive trade networks developed by the twelfth ruler of Copán. Waxaklajuun Ub’aah K’awiil began his reign during a period of political anxiety and diffidence, and even though the rule of Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ marked the beginning of a new dynasty it began in a similar state of hesitancy and apprehensions for the future.

Just as Waxaklajuun Ub’aah K’awiil constructed Temple 22-10L as a testament of his authority, Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’s dynastic founding necessitated a powerful architectural agenda befitting the new king. Its location, design, and iconography featured both overt and subtle elements that positioned Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ at the center of the cosmic order. Indeed the spatial design, location, and access to Room 35 with its zoomorphic portal exploited a pan-Mesoamerican vocabulary in order to fashion an urban environment that echoed his power and political effectiveness. Located on the highest elevation, the Acropolis could be seen far to the south, east, and west. Its lofty position served as an authoritative testament to the king’s all-encompassing power. Throughout the Classic period the Maya used elevated platforms as symbolic evidence of the king’s divine rank. At the most basic level, GT-1 functioned as a phenomenological experience that reinforced the Maya social order. Representing the gaping jaws of the earth monster, the portal symbolized a rite of passage for Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’. Upon his death he entered the open maw to be reborn as a divine ancestor. The Chenes façade

reinforced this moment of separation from the world of the living, but at the same time it re-integrated Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' into the makeup of his city. On a daily basis the portal visualized the new birth of the sovereign and created a sense of place linked to the identity of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. Standing at the entrance to the zoomorphic portal Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' positioned himself both symbolically and physically within a mythological and historical place and time. Even for the subsequent rulers, GT-1 endured as Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's personal narrative of his rulership and his place symbolically, socially, and geographically within the ancient Maya world.

Pan-Mesoamerica Portal Ideology

Throughout ancient Mesoamerica the architectural portal symbolized far more than just the entry to an interior space. The zoomorphic passage was a unique class of portal that today marks a defining feature of Chenes architecture. However, these anthropomorphized portals marked a liminal space in the built environment that is well documented in the earlier sculptural forms of the Olmec culture located along the gulf lowlands. During the Preclassic period a coherent ideology formed in which the elements of a religious system were dispersed throughout ancient Mesoamerica as populations moved from an established center to the periphery. The migration of indigenous people and the exchange of ideas distributed a like worldview and its associated symbols throughout ancient Mesoamerica, though each culture and region institutionalized a core collection of motifs that were initially expressed in stone and later in architecture. Central to this ideology was the significance of caves and their relationship to a saurian earth monster, either snake or caiman in character, and the concept of birth and rebirth, both spiritually and physically, delineated by an intermediate space, either naturally occurring or manmade (Bassie-Sweet 1996).

During the Early Preclassic (1200 BC – 900 BC) caves and portals were visualized as the mouth of a supernatural beast often with saurian or feline attributes. For example, Altar 4 from

the Olmec site of La Venta (Fig. 4.17) portrays a ruler seated in a cave-like niche beneath the sharp incisors of a fearsome jaguar. Julia Guernsey's study (2010) of the quatrefoil in Mesoamerican art presents evidence that the motif evolved during the Early and Middle Preclassic periods (1200 BC – 600 BC) with a pedigree equating caves and portals to animal mouths. Caves personified supernatural animals and symbolically positioned a king into a supernatural context. Traditionally these entries alluded to divine access and communication with the ancestors (Guernsey 2010: 76-77).

Despite the fact that there are no monumental architectural maws associated with the Olmec culture, portable representations of a zoomorphic type exist. A striking vessel from the site of Xochipala in Guerrero (Fig. 4.18) accentuates the importance of the quatrefoil silhouette to the iconography of later zoomorphic portals. The underside of the vessel depicts an incised design featuring a quatrefoil shaped mouth bordered by a supernatural similar to that found on Altar 4 at La Venta. Most importantly, F. Kent Reilly (1995) remarked on the similarity of the Xochipala vessel and Monument 9 from Chalcatzingo (Fig. 4.19) in which the mouth of a supernatural occurs in the familiar quatrefoil configuration (164-165). Entering a zoomorphic portal was a ritualized activity that was practiced long before the occurrence of such architectural portals in the built environment. The quatrefoil motif of Monument 9 was large enough to accommodate an individual on hands and knees and shows evidence of wear on the lower lip indicating that it was likely used in such a manner (Guernsey 2010: 78). While the proportions of Monument 9 are significantly smaller than the monumental portals of the Chenes style and the similar façade at Ek' Balam, it was equally as visible to the general population installed vertically atop the largest platform at the site of Chalcatzingo.

Petroglyph 1, also from Chalcatzingo, illustrates the animate forces populating the geographical landscape in which it dwells. Discovered on the slopes of Cerro Chalcatzingo on the face of a large boulder, Petroglyph 1 (Fig. 4.20) depicts a ruler seated within an anthropomorphized cave. A frontal eye adorns the crest of the quatrefoil-shaped cavern in which stylized volutes project from what may represent the fleshless bones of the lower mandible. These swirling eddies are remarkably similar to the curvilinear patterns circling the zoomorphic portals of the Chenes style. In both examples, the volutes may directly reference the white flowery breath of the soul as it journeys along the path of the sun and is ultimately reborn, a concept still held by the contemporary Maya of Yucatán (Sosa 1985: 430, 442). Likewise, the position of Room 35 and the burial of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' behind the gaping serpentine jaws marks the curvilinear volutes as not only the white flowery breath, but the breath of the deceased sovereign on his journey to the afterlife.

Many Chenes style façades also included stacked corner masks with breath volutes emerging from the corners of their mouths. Likewise, the Chenes and Rio Bec styles are heavily populated by similar patterns issuing forth from the dark interiors of the grand zoomorphic portals like a supernatural breath from deep within the Flower Mountain of creation. Karl Taube (2004) writes that “Rather than simply being baroque-like ornamentation, such breath volutes have profound meaning, as they denote such temples as places infused with spiritual power and life” (85). Structure 1 at Tabasqueño (Fig. 4.21) includes a floral pattern above the brow of the zoomorphic portal clearly labeling the built environment as the equivalent of the Flower Mountain.

Similar examples exist in the Valley of Mexico suggesting a pan-Mesoamerican correlation that equates portals with some variant of a saurian-earth monster. From the later Post

Classic period (AD 1400 to AD 1500) the entrance to the main temple at Malinalco (Fig. 4.22) includes well-articulated eyes, teeth, tongue and mouth of a giant serpent. Located 118 kilometers south of Mexico City, Malinalco sat 125 meters above the valley floor (Mendoza 1976: 64). Carved directly from the granite tuff bedrock, the main temple at Malinalco enlivened the natural landscape with its anthropomorphized features. The serpentine jaws of Tlaltecuhltli, the Earth Monster, surround the central portal. Historically the idea of animate architectural forms is well documented. Perhaps one of the best representations, strikingly similar to the cave depiction found at Chalcatzingo, survives in the Codex Borgia (Fig. 4.23) where stylized teeth and the forward gaze of a single eye surround the entry.

The ancient Maya built the architectural landscape as a microcosmic replica of their cosmos and their sacred belief system. And yet the functional and practical use of the built environment was simply the byproduct of their larger ideological concerns in which the image received the main emphasis. If we adjust our way of thinking to include the Maya's emphasis on the symbolic elements of an object than the twentieth century principle of form follows function aptly parallels the Maya architectural philosophy. If the function is ideological, as it was for the ancient Maya, than the form that the built environment assumes must communicate the Maya's sacred design. While we have long connected the temple-pyramid complex in ancient Mesoamerica with sacred mountains and caverns linking the natural world to the underworld, the symbolic character of the architectural landscape relies more on its usefulness as a representational form. Therefore the impression that architecture is something more than just the comfort that an interior offers depends upon a larger metaphoric nexus between the concrete and the abstract. This idea is best explained by the soaring pyramids of Tikal in the Petén (Fig. 4.24) and the false pyramids (Fig. 4.25) characteristic of the Rio Bec region in central Yucatán.

Gendrop accurately explains the false temples of the Rio Bec as imitations of the grand temple-pyramids that typify the imposing architectural complexes at Tikal, approximately 120 miles south of the Rio Bec heartland. He writes in his 1983 study on Rio Bec, Chenes, and Puuc architecture, “The most obvious regional element...is that strange architectural complex that normally consists of a low, elongated building with two parallel rows of rooms, from whose main façade two tall, massive towers stand out like pylons...with the simulated sanctuary resting on the narrow upper platform” (Gendrop 1998: 35). In the Petén the ever-increasing grandeur of ornamental roofcombs imposed certain architectural restrictions that greatly diminished the proportions of interior spaces. The sanctuary of Temple V at Tikal, for example, measures 75 centimeters in width, while the inner chambers of House A at Nakum measure a scant 50 and 42 centimeters respectively (Gendrop 1998: 35). This demonstrates the final resolution of the ideological use of buildings with their formal characteristics. And ultimately the false temples of the Rio Bec style offer the architectural realization of the temple-pyramid’s symbolic function. Schele (1998) also concludes that the Rio Bec false temples are “model images” of cities to the south (487). Stephen Houston’s remarks prove useful to this idea. He writes that the Rio Bec were “abbreviated, synechdochic precincts,” creating a single powerful symbol that merged palace and pyramid (Schele 1998: 487).

It is possible then that the zoomorphic portal presents a similar synecdoche in which the condensed and abstracted representation of a masked face with a mouth-like entrance articulated by the presence of teeth prevails as a much larger emblem laced with ideological concerns regarding divine rule, politics, social order, and ancestor veneration. In the Rio Bec in particular the stylized facades and pseudo-pyramids with their false towers heightens the symbolic relevance of the zoomorphic façade as a representational entrance. The symbolic characteristic

prevails, especially in examples like Xpuhil Structure 1 (Fig. 4.26) where a recessed panel replicates the appearance of a door. The absence of an interior corresponds to the real utility of the temple and its zoomorphic façade. Entering the gaping jaws of the portal paralleled the entrance into the earth monster through which you were reborn (Schavelzon 1980: 14). The siting of the zoomorphic portal at Ek' Balam acknowledges its value as an entrance. While the tomb of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' shared in the nexus of the sacred order and signified the grandest transition from the natural world to the underworld it also recognized the ultimate notion of rebirth. Zoomorphic portals in the Rio Bec and Chenes regions functioned as ritual moments of incorporation as one passed from the exterior to the interior of the intimate courtyards and restricted patios through the prominent jaws. In addition, most monster mouth façades faced west including the portal at Channa Sur, Structure II at Chicanná, Structure III at Hochob, the Palace at Santa Rosa Xtampak, and Structure I at Xpuhil. My findings reveal that sites with more than one portal used a south facing façade for the subsidiary zoomorph, which was typically smaller in scale. The ancient Maya traditionally associated the west with the setting of the sun and death, whereas the east represented the rising of the sun and rebirth. My regional survey of zoomorphic façades reveals a strong affiliation for west-facing portals, which I argue mark the rebirth of the entrant as they emerge through the eastern side. At Ek' Balam the portal signifies both the incorporation of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' into the highest order of the universe, upon death he becomes a divine ancestor, and his disincorporation from the world of the living. Most importantly, the zoomorphic façade displays for the communal consciousness its role in integrating the power of the sovereign into the city itself.

Contemporary vernacular architecture in Yucatán continues to draw on the ancient principle of an animate landscape. The contemporary Maya of the Yucatán peninsula reveal the

extent to which the zoomorphic portal has endured in the lexicon superimposing human anatomy onto the structural components of their thatched dwellings. In 2009 during fieldwork in Santa Elena I discovered this shared vocabulary that positions the body and the house within a single spatial model. Gillespie (2000) records a similar vocabulary among the Quiche and Tzotzil Maya. For example, the door personifies the mouth of the Quiche house, while the porch posts equal the legs. In addition, the Tzotzil Maya terminology compares structural components of the house to the stomach, foot, ear, and head (143-44). This widespread personification of the house in Maya communities perhaps demonstrates a pan-Maya paradigm for understanding the animate energy of the world in which the Maya live.

The Yucatec Maya vocabulary is quite extensive and in addition to the head, mouth, and forehead of the house includes the *paach naj* or “stomach,” and the *ch’ala’atel naj*, the branches and twigs that represent the “ribs,” giving shape and support to the form of both the body and the house. Most importantly, the entry or *jool naj* literally translates as the “mouth of the house.” Virginia E. Miller (2003) summarizes the mapping of the human body onto the house and its significance to the ancient Maya. “The great open monster maws that form the doorways of Río Bec and Chenes-style buildings are hardly human, but certainly animate the structures they adorn and give concrete meaning to the conflation of “door” and “mouth” in modern Yucatec” (214).

Quatrefoil motifs throughout ancient Mesoamerica expressed political and cosmological associations. More importantly, they functioned as a stratagem for formalizing and sanctifying elite spheres of communication and transitional configurations in space. These examples prove that the zoomorphic portal expands on an important Mesoamerican concept regarding transitions – transitions that traditionally involve rites associated with caves and metaphorical earth monsters. And while the Chenes façade gives primacy to this motif in ancient Mesoamerica it is

not unique. I cannot guess why the Maya of the Rio Bec and Chenes regions chose to exaggerate the zoomorphic portal, but it is clear that it was selected for its symbolic associations. While the façade of GT-1 at Ek' Balam incorporates the zoomorphic portal popularized by the Chenes style, can it truly be considered a Chenes façade in light of the evidence stated here? And if so, how do we understand the question of architectural style when it occurs outside of a stylistic heartland? Is the stucco decoration of GT-1 Chenes based on iconography, making the zoomorphic portal an element of the Chenes architectural program regardless of where it is located geographically in the Maya world? Or does the fact that GT-1 lacks the mosaic technique associated with Chenes architecture label the façade as something other than Chenes? The answers to these questions will have an enormous impact on the question of style and whether the iconic elements often associated with the Chenes style are in fact a larger architectural category – a building type.

While the zoomorphic portal was expressed in multiple ways throughout ancient Mesoamerica, including rectilinear and curvilinear examples, as well as complete or partial, it was invoked broadly synchronically and diachronically as evidence of a deeply rooted, shared ideology. Whereas the Rio Bec and Chenes styles took great advantage of the form, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' manipulated the zoomorphic portal at Ek' Balam to serve a specific historical moment and adapted it to best suit his political agenda. The role of the gaping monster mouth relates mostly to its role within society and its monumental nature as a marker of incorporation, not in its aesthetic expression. Ultimately the zoomorphic portals expressed two significant themes – entrance and exodus. While the Chenes style façade at Ek' Balam fails to adhere to the same construction techniques as the portals of the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands and the iconography disrupts the standard elements of the zoomorphic façades in the region of Campeche, at its very

core it builds on a pan-Mesoamerican idea. It may be indebted to the Rio Bec and Chenes styles, which shaped a one thousand year old ideology into the most majestic and striking form.

Maudslay may have called the Chenes style “restless” and the zoomorphic portals “decayed prostitute(s)” but for the ancient Maya and Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ the monster mouth entrances showed a longstanding belief in transitions. Ukit Kan Le’k Tok’ brought the zoomorphic form to his city both as a personal representation of his transitional state at death, but more importantly as an ever-present reminder of his entry as a foreigner incorporating him into the political fold of the northeastern region of the peninsula and his figurative rebirth as the founder of a powerful dynasty.



Figure 4.1 Chenes style façade of Room 35, GT-1, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 4.2 Eyelash details carved into the stucco of the zoomorphic portal at Chicanná
(Photo by author: 10/2015)

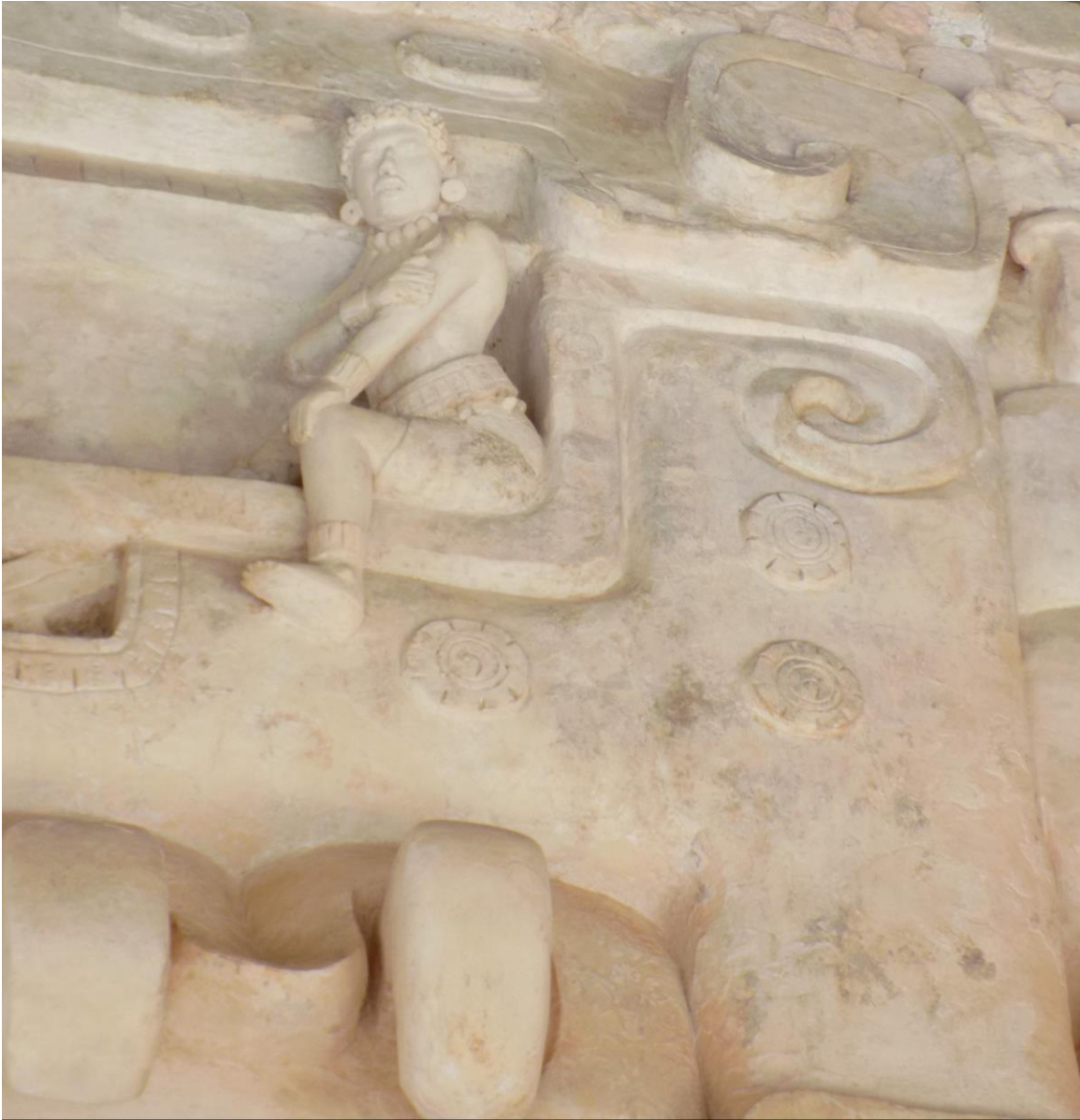


Figure 4.3 Scales carved into the stucco of the Chenes façade, GT-1, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 4.4 Structure II, Hormiguero
(Photo by author: 10/2015)

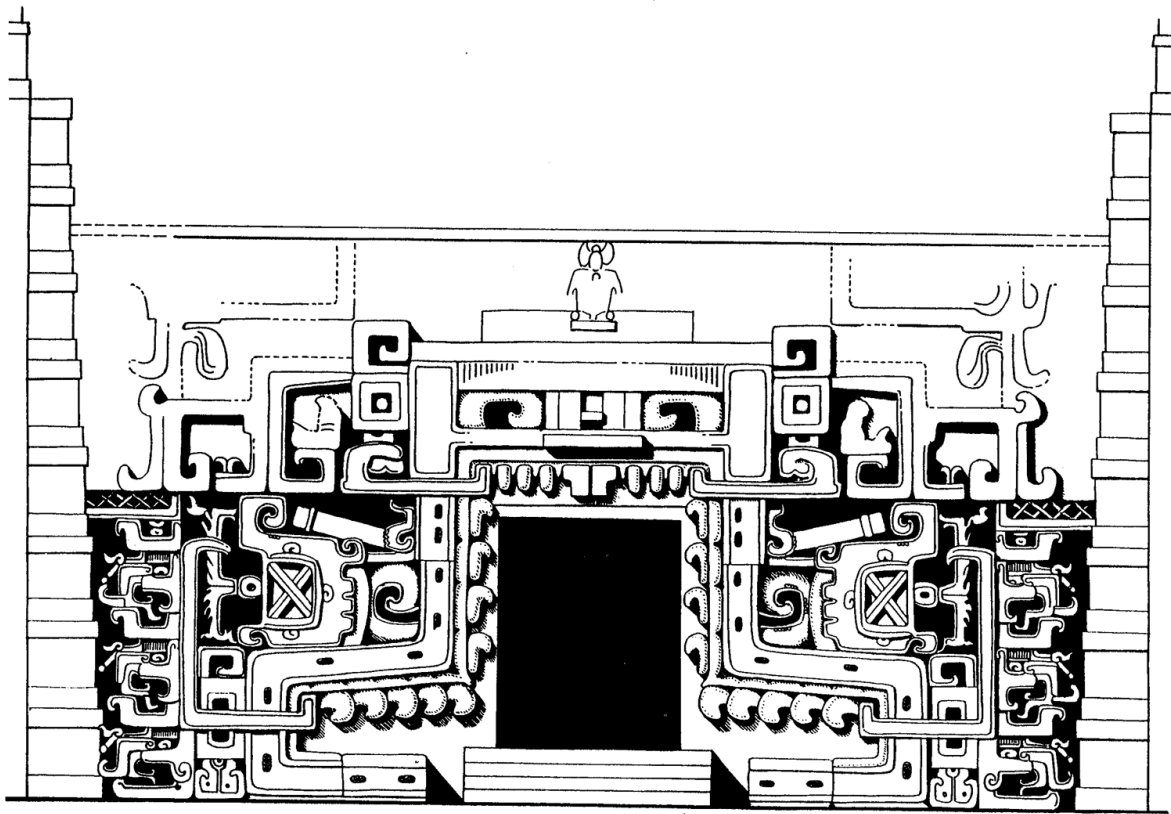


Figure 4.5 Reconstruction drawing of Structure II, Hormiguero
(Andrews 1999: 68)



Figure 4.6 Structure II, Chicanná
(Photo by author: 10/2015)

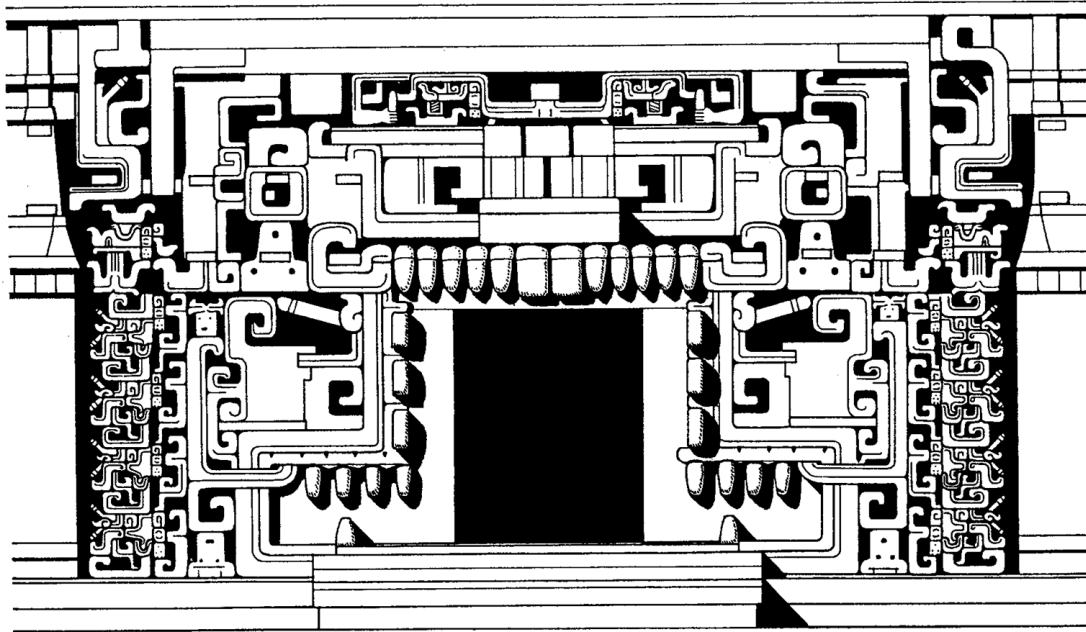


Figure 4.7 Reconstruction drawing of Structure II, Chicanná
(Andrews 1997: 203)



Figure 4.8 Proboscis of the reptilian earth monster above the central doorway, Room 35, GT-1, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)

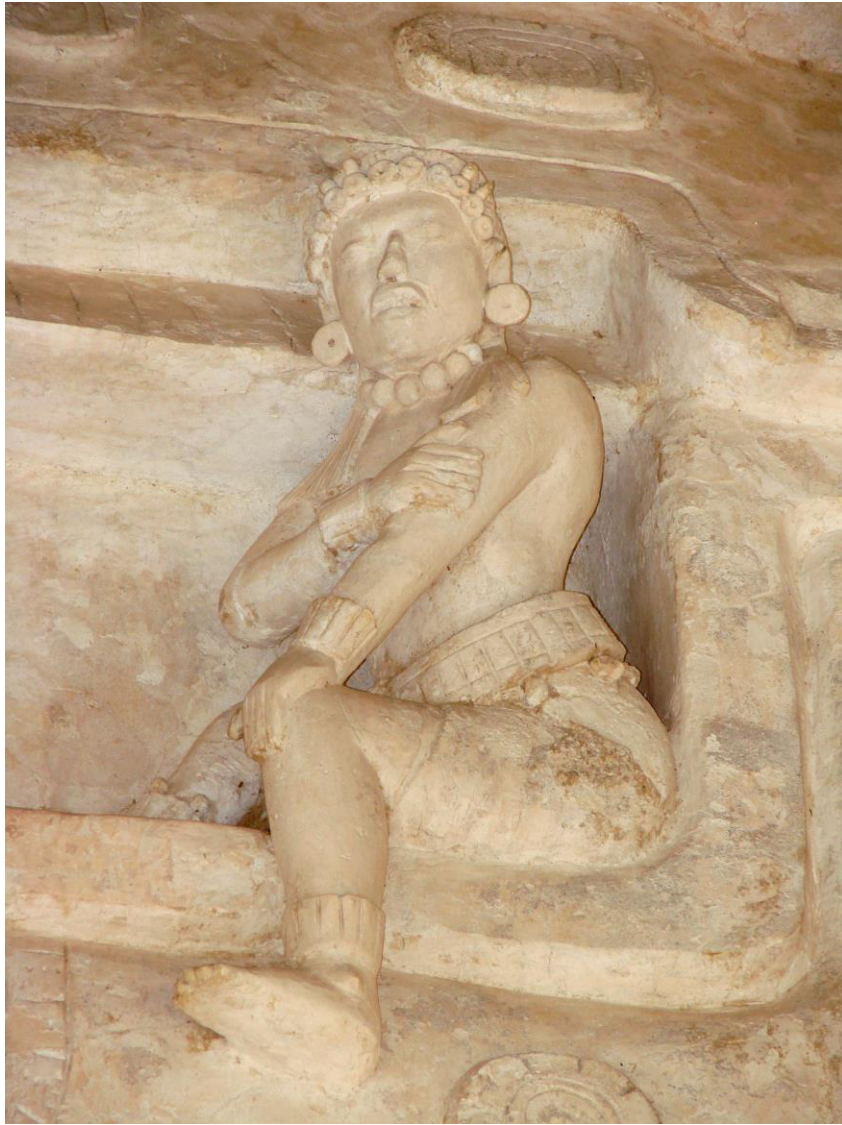


Figure 4.9 Wide inter-orbital space with seated royal attendants,
Room 35, GT-1, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 4.10 Sentinels with elaborate feather back-racks, Room 35, GT-1,
Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 4.11 Pawahtuuns adorning the lower façade, Room 35, GT-1,
Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 4.12 Stacked masks of the lower façade, Room 35, GT-1, Ek' Balam
(Photo by author: 10/2015)

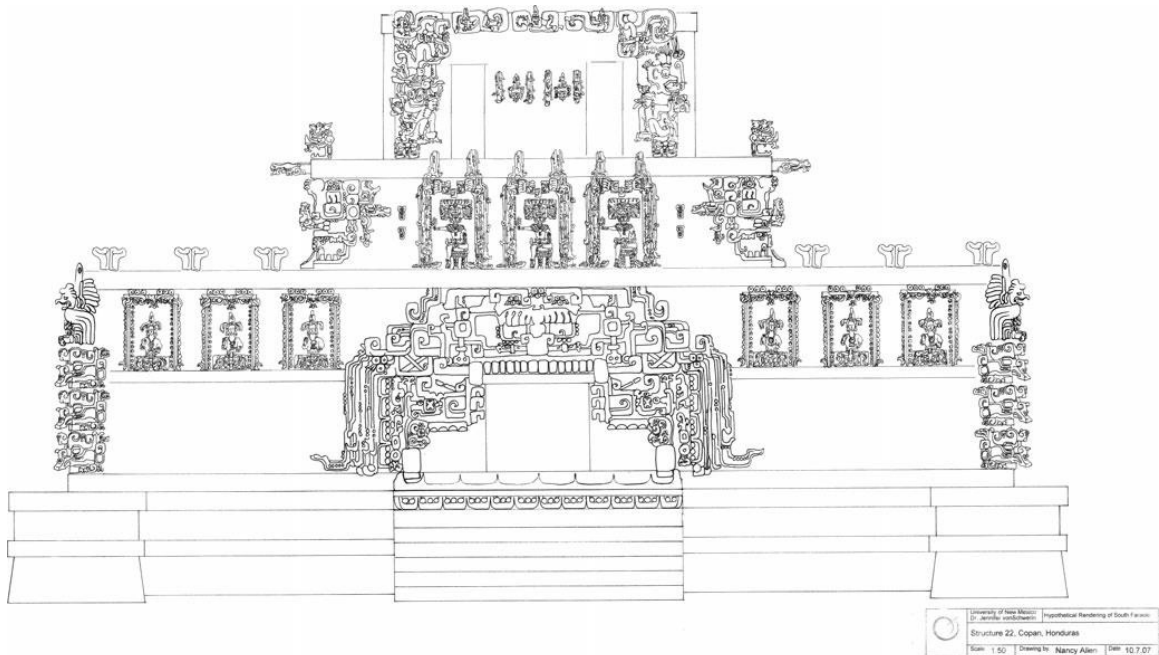


Figure 4.13 Structure 22-10L, Copán
(Von Schwerin 2011: 282)

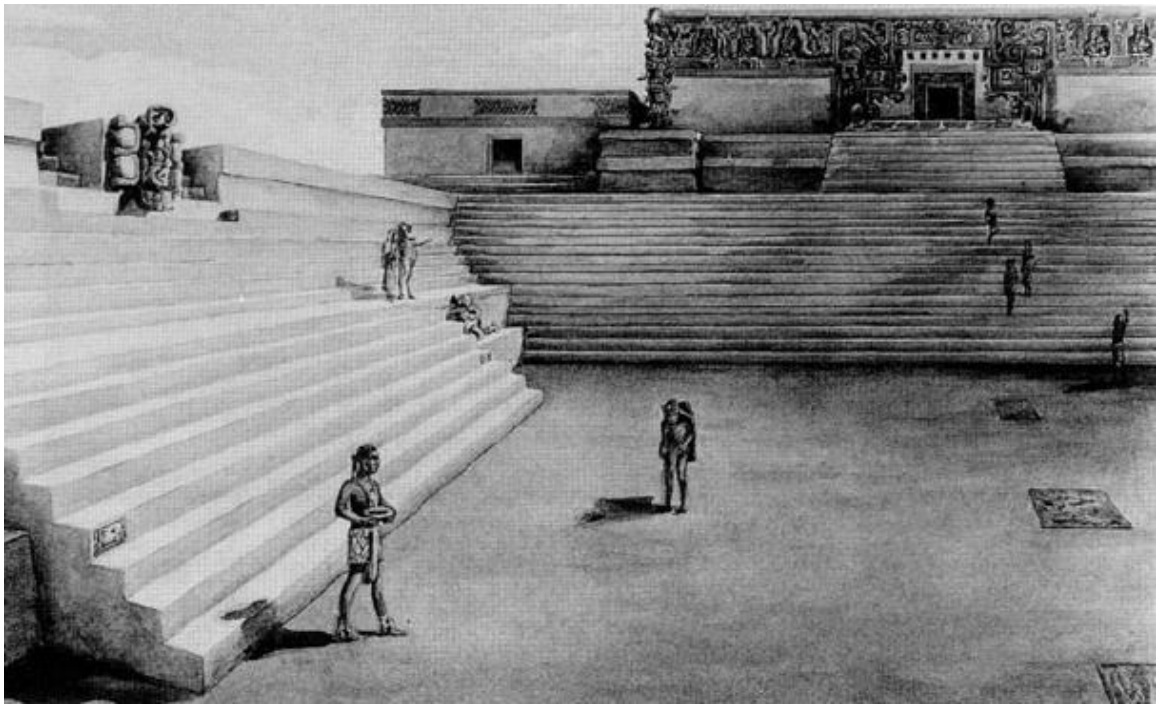


Figure 4.14 Reconstruction drawing of Structure 22-10L by Tatiana Proskouriakoff (Proskouriakoff 1963: 43)

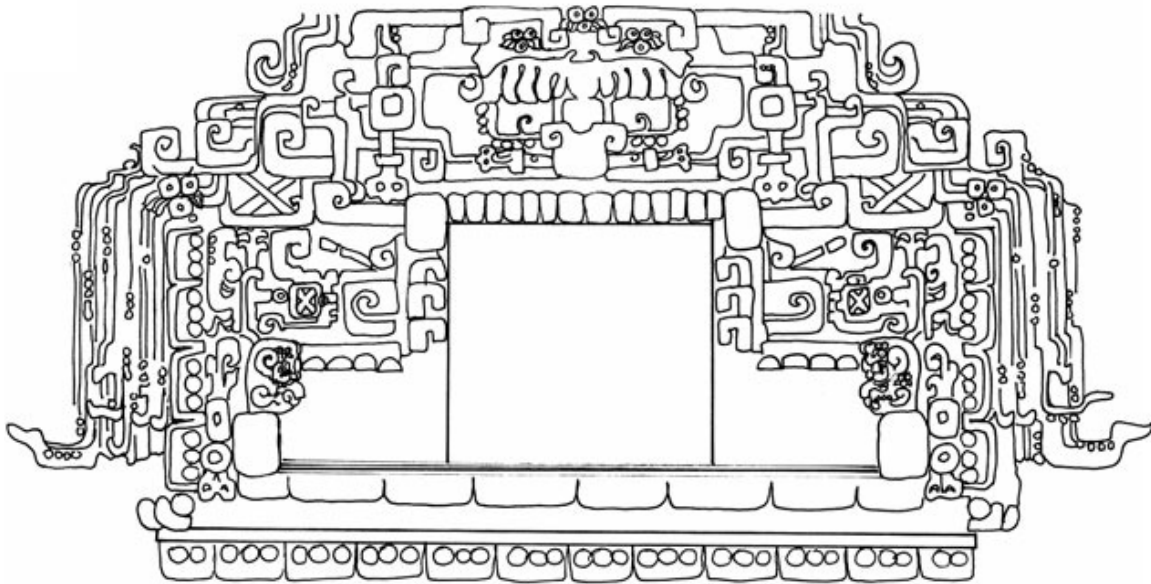


Figure 4.15 Reconstruction drawing of the central zoomorphic portal, Structure 22-10L,
Copán
(Von Schwerin 2011: 283)

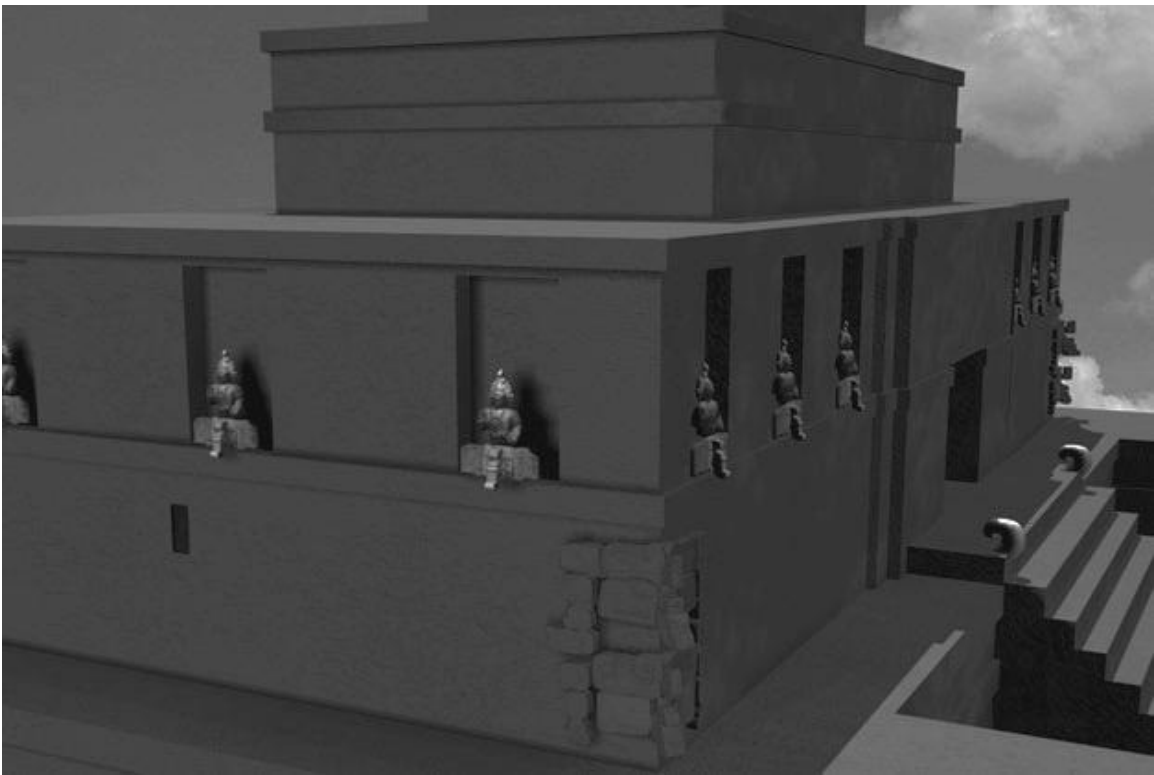


Figure 4.16 Reconstruction of Structure 22-10L showing Maize God busts
(Von Schwerin 2011: 281)



Figure 4.17 Altar 4, La Venta
(Photo by Linda Schele, Courtesy of FAMSI)



Figure 4.18 Xochipala Vessel
(Guernsey 2010: 77)



Figure 4.19 Monument 9, Chalcatzingo
(Photo by Linda Schele, Courtesy of FAMSI)



Figure 4.20 Petroglyph 1, Chalcatzingo
(Photo by Linda Schele, Courtesy of FAMSI)



Figure 4.21 Structure 1, Tabasqueño
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 4.22 Main Temple at Malinalco
(Aguilar-Moreno 2007: Fig. 256)



Figure 4.23 Page 14 of the Codex Borgia representation of a temple with animate features
(Graz 1976, Courtesy of FAMSI)



Figure 4.24 Temple V at Tikal
(Photo by Linda Schele, Courtesy of FAMSI)



Figure 4.25 False pyramid of the Rio Bec style
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure 4.26 Structure I, Xpuhil
(Photo by author: 10/2015)

CHAPTER FIVE

THE QUESTION OF STYLE: CONSTRUCTING AN ECOLOGY OF ARCHITECTURAL FORMS

In this chapter I want to return to the goals that I set forth in the introduction and respond to the questions that I asked in Chapter One. Through this monograph I aimed to situate Ek' Balam within the architectural, cultural, and political landscape of the Yucatán peninsula. Often a daunting task considering the lack of dated hieroglyphic texts in Yucatán, Ek' Balam's unusually large corpus of written texts provides a firm date for its occupation and dynastic rulers making it easier to place synchronically within the peninsula's history. However, the chronology of the peninsular styles remains one of the major impediments to an understanding of the architectural landscape, which I discuss below in greater detail. How does the Chenes-style façade at Ek' Balam fit into this larger architectural history? Because of the glyphic inscriptions it proves easy to compare the histories of Chichén Itzá and Uxmal to that of Ek' Balam. We already know that Ek' Balam attained its height before Chichén Itzá and that by the time Chichén Itzá reached its own apogee around AD 900 to AD 1000 that the dynasty established by Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' had already waned. But how does the Rio Bec and Chenes features at Ek' Balam fit into the peninsular styles chronology? To answer that question I must first introduce the unanswered debate concerning the dating of the Rio Bec, Chenes, and Puuc styles.

Peninsular Chronology: The Unsettled Debate

While scholars generally agree on the diagnostic features of the Rio Bec, Chenes, and Puuc architectural styles their chronological placement, including the extent to which each style borrowed from each other and the temporal overlap between styles remains largely unsettled. Even after decades of research and archaeological discoveries scholars still have a relatively weak understanding of the cultural interactions that occurred in Yucatán (Andrews 1995, 1997,

1999; Gendrop 1998; Kowalski 1987; Kubler 1962a; Pollock 1965, 1970, 1980; Potter 1976; Ruppert 1933; Thompson 1945). The Northern Plains border the northern boundary of the Puuc region along the Sierra de Ticul ridge beginning at Maxcanu and continuing for approximately 160 kilometers to Lake Chinchankanab in Quintana Roo (Fig. 5.1). The western boundary terminates at the coastline near the modern city of Campeche, while the western margins of the Rio Bec and Chenes appear less defined. Andrews explains that their western limits lie somewhere near a longitude of 90 degrees (1990: 247). While no distinct geographical feature defines the southern border of the Rio Bec as the Sierra de Ticul does for the Puuc in the north, its southern extreme borders the base of the Yucatán peninsula between Campeche and Guatemala. In geographical scope the Rio Bec, Chenes, and Puuc regions total approximately 32,000 square kilometers (Andrews 1990: 247).

While Stephens' explorations in northern Yucatán in the 1830s uncovered the distribution of the Chenes and Puuc styles, the Rio Bec remained largely unknown until its discovery in 1907 by Maurice de Périgny. The French archaeologist and explorer identified the tower complexes long considered a hallmark of the Rio Bec style in 1908 and noted that such structures featured solid square towers with rounded corners. Furthermore, Périgny coined the term "Río Beque," the name still associated with the archaeological sites Périgny visited on his original trip (Périgny 1909: 300-301). Gendrop summarizes the salient features of Rio Bec architecture, which includes a "strange architectural complex" combining a range-type structure with two, false towers, and a simulated sanctuary implied by a recessed niche (1998: 35). Rio Bec architecture typically includes a single-story range-type building with two symmetrically arranged towers, though three-tower and four-tower examples exist at Xpuhil, Structure 1, and Pueblo Viejo, Structure III respectively. Andrews explains that the hallmark of Rio Bec towers lie in their

steep-sided form resulting in a false pyramid topped with a temple-like sanctuary of solid masonry (1999: 49). In addition, these simulated platforms with their steep stairs are nearly impossible to traverse – the treads generally average 4.5 inches and the risers 10.5 inches. Thompson considers the decorative features, epitomized by the thin veneer masonry, the finest in the Maya area (1945: 11). Unlike the Puuc style, checkerboard, lattices, and stepped-fret motifs adorn only the lower façade of the Rio Bec range structures. Serpent masks, corner masks, and/or long-nosed gods traditionally adorn the façade of the false towers (Potter 1976: 441). Other important decorative treatments include roof combs with small mask panels on both faces, simulated temples with frontal masks above the artificial doorway and serpent jaws surrounding the main entry.

While Périgny discovered the first false pyramids of the Rio Bec in 1908, R. E. Merwin and Clarence L. Hay of the Peabody Museum located an additional five sites in 1912 (Merwin 1913; Hay 1935). The Carnegie Institution of Washington revealed the true extent of the Rio Bec region between 1932 and 1938 and unearthed a total of sixteen previously unknown sites all with structures in the Rio Bec style (Ruppert 1943). A transitional area lies between Pechal, the northernmost Rio Bec site, and Chunlimon, the southernmost Chenes site, where features of both can be found. The origins of the ornate zoomorphic masks and geometric checkerboard motifs remain unknown. Andrews argues for an *in situ* development, but the evidence of such has yet to be discovered. (1990: 262). Likewise, the rounded corners of the Rio Bec appear fully developed with no earlier models to explain its elaboration over time to its mature form. A number of writers have proposed a possible link between the Rio Bec towers and the pyramid-temples at Tikal (Gendrop 1998). The false temples of the Rio Bec represent the symbolic equivalent of the Petén temple-pyramids eliminating the ceremonial necessity of a physical

sanctuary. Discussed previously, the ever-increasing grandeur of ornamental roof combs in the Petén imposed architectural restrictions diminishing the proportions of interior spaces. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the sanctuary of Temple V at Tikal measures 75 centimeters in width, while the inner chambers of House A at Nakum measure a scant 50 and 42 centimeters respectively (Gendrop 1998: 36). This evidence has often been cited as proof that the Rio Bec false temple evolved from the Petén model.

The diminished proportions of the inner sanctuary perhaps demonstrates the evolution of Petén temple-pyramids toward the Rio Bec style and its symbolic realization of the false temple. In fact, Thompson writes, “They resemble and are probably meant to be miniature reproductions of pyramids on top of which are perched temples, complete with roof combs” (1945: 11). While the towering profile of Rio Bec false temples imitate the grand temple-pyramids that characterize the architectural complexes of Tikal approximately 120 miles south of the Rio Bec heartland, Gendrop argues that the architectural creativity of the Maya lowland styles, in fact, corresponds to the florescence of Tikal’s classic building program (Gendrop 1998: 36). Therefore, the contemporaneous building campaigns at Tikal and the Rio Bec region validate northern styles in their own right and not merely as exaggerated replicas of the Petén.

George Kubler explains the derivation of the word Chenes from the suffix *-chen* meaning a natural well (1962a: 232). In place names *-chen* refers to a locations close proximity to a *cenote* or manmade *chultun*. The Chenes heartland roughly corresponds to the modern day state of Campeche, though it is often identified as transitional both in terms of architectural style and geographical location between the Rio Bec and Puuc. Much debate still exists among scholars regarding the significance of the Chenes style, but the most accepted view sees a strong stylistic affiliation between Rio Bec and Chenes architecture (Gendrop 1998: 12). Overall, Rio Bec sites

are considered to be more elaborate and larger than their Chenes counterparts. The quintessential element is undoubtedly the façade representing the mouth of a celestial monster, though the zoomorphic portal characterizes the Rio Bec as well. Decorative features include stacked long-nosed masks in both the lower and upper wall zones and monster masks surrounding the doorways. Most of the details are executed in stucco over roughly carved stone armatures, while the long-nosed masks of the Puuc Mosaic style focus on carefully carved details in stone, and later covered with a paper-thin coating of stucco. Furthermore, stacked masks in the lower wall zone are unknown in classic Puuc buildings. It should be noted that the stones used in wall facings are generally smaller than those used in Classic Puuc buildings; stones are also more deeply tenoned into the concrete core.

Of the Rio Bec, Chenes, and Puuc regions, the Chenes contains the least sites, totaling approximately 32 in an area measuring 3,800 square kilometers. Andrews explains the primary reason for the smaller number of sites compared to the Rio Bec and Puuc. “One reason for this discrepancy may lie in the difference between the natural landscape in the Chenes region as opposed to that in the Puuc heartland” (Andrews 1990: 251). Large savannas pocket the landscape separated by low hills. The topography of the Puuc featured a gently rolling terrain with fertile low-lying valleys. Most importantly, the Maya did not consider the savannas appropriate for major building programs eliminating at least fifty percent of the region. Of the remaining landscape the Maya restricted their cities to locations near the natural aguadas that give the Chenes its name. Some scholars include a transitional Chenes-Puuc zone, which comprised 15 sites during Andrews’ survey in the 1970s and 1980s.

The term Puuc comes from the Maya word meaning “low range of hills” and refers to the landscape of the northern third of the peninsula beginning near Champoton on the west coast to

Maxcanu on the northeast and Lake Chichankanab to the southeast. The latest maps document over two hundred Puuc sites (Andrews 1990: 252). Because of its stylistic complexity Puuc architecture receives further differentiation identified as the Early Oxkintok, Proto-Puuc, Early Puuc, Colonnnette, Mosaic, and Late Uxmal styles. Puuc architecture, regardless of its classification in the overall Puuc chronology presents a recognizable treatment of the façade and construction techniques. Puuc buildings typically include an undecorated lower wall of concrete faced with carefully cut square blocks. Vault stones range from an irregular wedge-shape to a more refined boot-shape, which are deeply tenoned into the concrete hearting.

The later Colonnnette, Mosaic, and Late Uxmal styles present the best examples of Puuc architectural elements. While all three represent a mature Puuc design, the Mosaic and Colonnnette appear contemporaneously while the Late Uxmal originates later around AD 1000. The Colonnnette style includes Puuc buildings whose exterior ornament uses several varieties of half-round columnar forms. These “split columns,” as Andrews refers to them, are formed in sections with a short tenon on the back to bond the individual colonnnettes into the concrete hearting behind. Furthermore, complex three- to six-member moldings with angular profiles and short colonnnettes are typically found in the central members of medial moldings. The severely geometric vertical columns are a hallmark of the Colonnnette style (1995: 107). The Mosaic style describes Puuc buildings whose upper façades are decorated with geometric sculptural mosaics where small, individually carved stones are intricately fitted together to form larger designs and patterns. The essential differences between the Colonnnette and the Mosaic styles lie in the development of a true mosaic technique that was used in executing the geometric forms. The new design formula included stepped-frets, double G frets, lattices, long-nosed masks, mat symbols, and zig-zag patterns. The Late Uxmal stage only characterizes structures at the site of

Uxmal. In addition to the elements found in the Colonnette and Mosaic styles the Late Uxmal also incorporates foreign influences like the serpent motif and representations of Tlaloc from the site of Chichén Itzá who began adding Toltec influences around AD 900 (Andrews 1995: 112).

While scholars fully comprehend and appreciate the architectural and iconographical features of the Rio Bec, Chenes, and Puuc styles, their placement chronologically remains difficult to determine. Gendrop traces the peninsula's chronology and stylistic influence from south to north, beginning with the Rio Bec. He demonstrates that both the zoomorphic doorway masks and long-nosed Chac masks first appeared in the Rio Bec region sometime between AD 600 – AD 700 moving northward into the Chenes region during the next century, and finally arriving in the Puuc region not earlier than AD 830. Consequently the zoomorphic portals, traditionally associated with the Chenes style, likely originated in the Rio Bec region where corner masks and long-nosed gods represent traditional decorative features. Kubler uses radiocarbon dates from Becán to date the Rio Bec style during the Middle Classic period from at least AD 600 – AD 800 (1962a: 231). Likewise, Andrews provides a nearly identical projection from AD 650 to AD 850.

Henry Pollock offers additional commentary regarding the Rio Bec and Chenes debate, suggesting a stylistic affiliation between Rio Bec and Chenes styles. His map (Fig. 5.2) of the regional spheres visually implies a lack of decision regarding the origins or presence of both styles in a larger geographical or chronological framework (1965: 379, 1970: 80-81). Pollock at least distinguishes between the two styles based on contrasting construction technology where the Rio Bec includes a thicker coating of plaster (1965: 444). In a 1972 publication Ball maintains a sense of uncertainty referring to a combined Rio Bec-Chenes style, although he later agrees that the two regional architectural models bear some resemblance (1972: 39, 1974: 111).

Adding to the confusion, Potter and Lhuillier (1945: 89) argue that Rio Bec and Chenes architecture are essentially the same, except for the addition of towers in the former. Similarly, Kubler suggests that the Chenes may represent a northern province of the Rio Bec (1962a: 232). Scholars do generally agree on the contemporaneous nature of the Rio Bec and Chenes styles and that both predate the classic Puuc program.

A similar debate exists between the Chenes and Puuc styles. Andrews supplies extensive descriptions of thirteen sites bordering the Chenes and Puuc regions. He argues that the architecture of this “intermediate” zone represents a hybrid Chenes-Puuc style. This architectural hybrid, according to Andrews, offers significant implications for the chronological and cultural interaction between these northern Yucatecan regions. While Pollock (1970) viewed this border zone as a result of Puuc influence moving southward following the decline of the Chenes cities, Potter, Gendrop, and Andrews maintain that the Chenes-Puuc hybrid culture was an important precursor to the classic Puuc building style. Their model considers a movement from south to north, which is generally the most widely and currently accepted pattern. In contrast, Ball and Andrews V consider a late eighth century invasion of the Puuc region from the west coast. As such, influence moved south into the Rio Bec and Chenes regions. However, this suggestion would rely on an earlier dating of Puuc buildings. Andrews explains that the architectural record demonstrates the contemporaneous presence of a fully mature Rio Bec and Chenes style, which based on archaeological data paralleled the rise of the Early Puuc and Proto-Puuc styles (AD 550 – AD 775) and not the classic Puuc period, which likely only overlapped with the classic Rio Bec and Chenes by a century at most. Furthermore, Gendrop suggests that the diagnostic markers of the classic Puuc Colonnade and Mosaic styles were already quintessential features of the Rio Bec and Chenes decorative repertoires for several

hundred years. Andrews summarizes his position. “The Chenes-Puuc style buildings can be viewed as prototypes for the fully developed classic Puuc architectural styles,” and as such they are an important “stepping-stone between the south and the north” (Andrews 1999: 186).

Whereas the chronological debate remains polarized between a south to north or north to south model, I argue that the former presents a solid foundation from which to view the placement of GT-1 in the peninsula’s architectural history. Assuming that the styles evolved from the south to the north, which most scholars view as the most accurate timeline, than the Rio Bec and Chenes styles developed between AD 600 and AD 800 with the zoomorphic portal already present in the Rio Bec during the Middle Classic period (AD 600). While the zoomorphic portal of GT-1 at Ek’ Balam has never been analyzed iconographically prior to this dissertation, texts typically refer to its most distinguishing feature as its Chenes façade. Lynn V. Foster writes, “The city shared some cultural traits with the southern lowlands and the Chenes region, including an elaborate carved stucco façade” (2005: 108). More recently, Michael Coe wrote, “Near the summit of the Acropolis is the most astounding stucco bas-relief ever sculpted by the Maya. Heavily influenced stylistically by Chenes iconography, it is symbolically a Flower Mountain, the ‘cave’ of which is entered through a reptilian mouth, in this case surrounded on all four sides by huge fangs” (2012: 184-186). Thanks to a large corpus of hieroglyphic texts at Ek’ Balam the Acropolis and its zoomorphic portal can be successfully dated to around AD 770 or shortly thereafter. This date appears sound given the timeline presented by Gendrop for the Rio Bec and Chenes styles, which would have been well developed before the construction of GT-1.

Finding Meaning in the Built Environment

The architectural landscape at Ek' Balam represents a unique synthesis while at the same time recombining architectural styles into a new vocabulary of built forms. The zoomorphic portal of GT-1 marks a profound moment of articulation where Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' identifies himself and his heritage. It also signifies an essential moment in the architectural history of the ancient Maya as it gives physical form to and visualizes the connections between people and places. While the exact nature of the peninsula's chronology remains unknown, GT-1 and on a broader scale the built environment at Ek' Balam, must be viewed against this historical backdrop. In its historical context GT-1 served as a form of royal rhetoric to affirm the foreignness of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' and to assert his divine right to rule. The imported forms he selected for his grandest monument belonged to a regional style far removed from the Northern Plains and the site of Ek' Balam. Zoomorphic portals of the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands functioned as transitory passages for the elite, especially the ruling *ajaw* who appeared to be reborn through the mouth of the earth monster into restricted plazas and courtyards. The same can be said at Ek' Balam where the monster mouth façade renewed the presence of the dynastic founder by integrating and assimilating his ancestral spirit back into the city. Using both traditional and innovative forms Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' communicated Ek' Balam's prominent role in the Northern Plains of the Yucatán peninsula and his status as a divine ancestor.

Ancient Maya architecture achieved a number of distinct goals. As such it is essential to appreciate GT-1 as the product of various historical, social, and political conditions. At the most basic level, the meaning of GT-1 lies in its role as a residential structure for the sovereign and more importantly, its function as a burial chamber. So on one level it served to embody Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' buried in Room 35 of the Acropolis and to prevail as an enduring custodian of his

reign for perpetuity. On a broader level GT-1 demonstrates the authority of the king and his divine power. It also presents a grand narrative in which the achievements of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' were forever rewarded – up until its burial the zoomorphic portal performed on a public level the constant rebirth of the founding sovereign through the jaws of the earth monster. Two of the rulers to succeed Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' even depict the founder in the anthropomorphized jaws of a reptilian earth monster, acknowledging their awareness of the Chenes portal and its importance to the dynastic founder as well as their own claim to legitimacy. While Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' created a powerful dynasty with his arrival at Ek' Balam, the deeds of his life are anticlimactic when compared to the communal mindfulness that he fashions into the architectural forms of his city. Inhabitants were reminded on a daily basis of his position in the Maya cosmos. In essence, his achievements in life cannot compare to his rebirth as a divine ancestor. The monumental narrative captured by GT-1 placed Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' at the apex of existence in the ancient Maya worldview. Renewal and rebirth as a divine ancestor represented the greatest moment for any king, but their realization of this status relied on their own ability to articulate their sacred station to the world of the living. For Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' the zoomorphic portal functioned as a powerful and persistent reminder of his incorporation into the celestial sphere. Indeed he believed that such a moment could be captured architecturally and iconographically so that he himself loomed largely in the public consciousness for all time.

The architectural landscape does not signify a static moment but an active process in which the very notion of time and memory are present. Miller explains how architecture acts as a metaphor for social processes, ethnicity, and identity. She states that, “The mere suggestion of monumental stairs had become the sign for control and domination. Memory feeds on signs as well as on specific narrative” (1998: 218). Even though the false stairs of the Rio Bec style

present a nonfunctional form they exemplify restricted access and control. The same can be said at Ek' Balam with the false stairs found on the western façade of GT-1 and also in the upper plaza with its circuitous entry and various levels of access. Even if the general population never laid eyes on the elaborate portals of the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands the very notion of a zoomorphic portal already resonated in the public consciousness from a long history of personified entrances in ancient Mesoamerica. They communicated recognizable symbols much like the stairs and the concept of controlled access. The hieroglyphic inscriptions at Ek' Balam captured the specific narrative of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok', which he transferred visually into the built forms of his city. Architecture actively reinforces sociocultural change, and as such it denotes a visual form of communication that is the most social. More importantly, the built environment articulates identity and influences social structure and belief.

As I introduced at the beginning of this dissertation, the aberrations at Ek' Balam, while at first glimpse unusual, actually resemble a mutual process of placemaking used at other Yucatecan polities like Uxmal, Chichén Itzá and Mayapán. What first caught my eye as an eccentric mix of architectural forms now emerges as a conscious decision by the protagonist of each city to create meaning through the built environment. These placemaking strategies often articulated the “arrival of strangers,” to borrow Proskouriakoff's phrase. In designing their cities the rulers became agents of their own identity and cultural memory, emulating architectural forms from their place of origin. This new approach to the study of architecture sheds light on the architectural landscape, which no longer appears as an interesting amalgamation of forms, but rather a decision to create a specific sense of place. And yet the very presence of GT-1 with its Chenes style façade still represents a kind of anomaly appearing beyond the regional spheres associated with the style.

An Ecology of Architectural Forms

In Chapter Four I took a close look at the stucco portal at Ek' Balam, which has become widely known in the scholarship as the Chenes façade of GT-1. I asked, through an in-depth investigation of its iconography and techniques of construction, whether it could rightly be identified as Chenes. At the beginning of this chapter I explained the current debate surrounding the Rio Bec and Chenes styles. Which came first or are they merely one and the same? At the beginning of this dissertation I also questioned the usefulness of style when studying the ancient Maya built environment and compared it to the fire breaks in the jungle. Style as a methodology prevents a deeper understanding of the relationships occurring between viewers and the built environment, but an ecology of architectural forms broadens the discussion. It reveals the multiplicity of processes that occur and the constellation of social relationships that meet at a particular architectural moment. The idea of ecology in the visual arts first appeared in Susan Sontag's text *On Photography*. She coined the phrase, "an ecology of images" as a way to discuss how we understand and navigate the image world. Sontag writes:

Images are more real than anyone could have supposed. And just because they are an unlimited resource, one that cannot be exhausted by consumerist waste, there is all the more reason to apply the conservationist remedy. If there can be a better way for the real world to include the one of images, it will require an ecology not only of real things but of images as well (Sontag 1979: 180).

Her comments reflect on the relationship between images and reality. Since her ideas centered on the role of photography in society she concentrates on the goal of photography in overturning the Platonic philosophy regarding images and illusions. However, I argue that the concept of a visual ecology presents a useful methodology to explore the built environment as well, its representation as an image, and its reality. Ecology is a useful metaphor to consider the relationships and inter-relationships of things. At the scientific level ecology is defined as the

interactions between organisms and other organisms as well as organisms and their physical surroundings. In terms of the visual world it articulates how and why images function in certain environments. Michael Carrasco suggests that we should analyze visual culture using ecology, to appropriate from the biological discipline and systems theory (Bateson 1972). In terms of visual culture, ecology allows us to acknowledge the relationships between viewers and the built environment, as well as built forms and their connection to distant cities, and by extension local viewers to far off locales. Speaking in architectural terms, a building always exists in a set of contexts. Borrowing from the biological sciences, a masonry form represents the organism of study, which exists in a community and on a larger scale an eco-system. Each edifice relates to an image community, the network of formal, iconographical, technical, or aesthetic properties and content that it shares with other built forms.

Ecology embodies a hermeneutical approach that identifies the interactions between people and places. I argue that meaning is not inherent to the Chenes façade of GT-1 simply because it is Chenes-like, but because meaning is generated at the social level and arises from the relationships between images and their audiences. If we simply identify the façade of GT-1 as Chenes-like we may never fully comprehend the social processes at work and we may never understand that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' carefully selected and crafted the façade on his mission of making meaning at Ek' Balam. In Chapter Three I explained that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' crafted an architectural bricolage at Ek' Balam of built forms reminiscent of Rio Bec and Chenes cities. Based on the analysis of his skeletal remains, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' came from the west, further corroborated in hieroglyphic inscriptions at Ek' Balam and his arrival event at the site. This is how the ecology of architectural forms operates and it allows us to understand the network of

placemaking or identity building at one site and its connection to a much larger architectural landscape.

Through an ecological approach I argue that we can understand the process of placemaking in the built environment. Many studies analyze a single structure and its history as retrieved by archaeologists, art historians, and epigraphers. These studies reveal that the ancient Maya performed certain ceremonial events and rites to create a sense of place and inscribe meaning on the built environment. For example, the epigraphic and artistic repertoire might tell scholars what historical events occurred at GT-1 based on the inscriptions, painted murals, and capstones. But that only tells scholars about one building at one site and not how placemaking events like fire-drilling, or conjuring rituals at a single structure, or placemaking processes specific to a structure's formal and aesthetic properties, relate to the site as a whole or the larger ecosystem to which it belongs. Let me return to the discussion of Ek' Balam and its presence in the hinterland discussed in both Chapter Two and Chapter Three. We can analyze the Acropolis at Ek' Balam and its many hieroglyphic inscriptions to understand that Ek' Balam functioned as a significant political entity with a powerful ruler. Its ceremonial center, and GT-1 as the principal structure, attests to the power of the sovereign. The use of an Emblem Glyph on the Hieroglyphic Serpents of GT-1 marks Ek' Balam as a prominent polity in the peninsula where few sites shared such a status.

But I suggest that an ecological approach to the image world reveals Ek' Balam's authority as a leading polity in the Northern Plains during the Late Classic period. This serves as a microcosmic example of the ecology of images and its usefulness to the concept of placemaking. The depiction of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' as a ballplayer on Panel 1 at Ichmul de Morley not only places Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' at a nearby site but also demonstrates how he

constructed power through the depiction of a Talol sovereign at a hinterland site on the periphery. He manufactures meaning both at home and abroad through the use of his image, creating the illusion that Ichnul de Morley belongs to a larger Talol community and is subject to the Talol administration; therefore generating a sense of place and belonging. The inscription on a stone lintel at the minor site of Halakal describes a fire-entering ritual performed by the last known ruler of Ek' Balam, Hun Pik Tok'. Ceremonial rites both dedicated and transferred ownership of a specific edifice, serving as a significant act of placemaking in the hinterland.

Hun Pik Tok' also appears as a key protagonist in the ritual landscape at Chichén Itzá. The Casa Colorada text explain his presence at four fire-drilling events between the years AD 869 and AD 871. Most importantly, the Ichnul de Morley, Halakal and Chichén Itzá examples highlight the hegemony exerted by the rulers of Ek' Balam over subsidiary sites. On the most basic level the performance of dedicatory rites behaves as a placemaking process enacted by the lord of Talol. As a key protagonist in such ceremonial acts witnessed by the general population Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' and the rulers that followed inscribed meaning and crafted a sense of place for the hinterland populace – it communicated quite visually that they belonged to the much larger ecosystem under the aegis of Ek' Balam. The permanent monumental record of those acts, whether a figural representation of the king or a hieroglyphic text recording the ritual process, also functioned as a perpetual act of placemaking.

While the size of the built environment at Ek' Balam, the complexity of the Acropolis, population estimates, and the re-creation of its dynastic history all articulate the importance of Ek' Balam as a prominent site in the Northern Plains and even the peninsula as a whole, it cannot accomplish the same thing as the ecological approach using examples from Ichnul de Morley, Halakal, and Chichén Itzá. By using Ek' Balam and the ruler as the primary organism and the

hinterland sites as the larger community we can fully appreciate how Ek' Balam fits into the ecosystem of the Yucatán peninsula. Not only does this approach yield successful results, as I demonstrated through placemaking in the hinterland, but it also sheds light on the relationships between one person and the populace of Ek' Balam as well as the relationship between that person and subsidiary sites, and Ek' Balam with other peninsular cities.

Now that the ecology of images proves its usefulness to the study of placemaking in the ancient Maya world, I want to return to my main question of style and the utility of style when discussing the built environment. Again, I will demonstrate how an ecology of architectural forms presents a successful methodology with which to understand how the creators of the built environment inscribed meaning through forms. At the same time this ecology also demonstrates how rulers like Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' created a unique sense of place based on the relationships between forms and the larger architectural ecosystem. In fact, it will also answer the primary question of Chapter Four, can we view GT-1 as a Chenes portal even when it is located outside the Chenes heartland? Using Ek' Balam as the case study for this ecology of architectural forms I set forth three questions that define the ecological approach from organism to community to ecosystem. First, what does GT-1 tell us about Ukit Kan Lek' Tok'? Second, on a broader level what does GT-1 and the built environment tell us about Ek' Balam's relationship to other peninsular sites? And third, how does the use of a style, in this case the Chenes zoomorphic portal, relate to the larger architectural landscape of the ancient Maya world?

The Acropolis at Ek' Balam stands as an impressive sentinel over the ceremonial precinct. As the largest structure at the site it acts as a testament to the sovereign's omniscience and supreme rule. Its use as a royal palace combined the mundane acts of the natural world with the sacred acts of the cosmos practiced at the highest summit overlooking the city. Its upper

temple symbolized Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's divine status and his ability to commune with the supernatural. Yet he went beyond the combination of the sacred and secular spheres when he built his tomb at the Acropolis in direct alignment with the ballcourt and the four-sided arch giving access to his city. Through this he created a uni-directional sightline perpetually reminding those of his eternal rebirth through the jaws of the massive earth monster surrounding the entrance to his final resting place. On a daily basis GT-1 performed one of the most important acts of placemaking – it claimed Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' as divine through the architectural forms of the zoomorphic portal. The most important act incorporating Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' into his city lay in his dislocation from the natural world and his elevation to the status of divine ancestor.

For Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' this right of passage lay beyond the grave, and yet when he designed GT-1 he understood its function as a visual marker of his rulership. The zoomorphic portal became a symbolic representation of reality, the reality of kingship and the necessity for a legitimate claim to power. Since Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' migrated to Ek' Balam to found the Talol dynasty he crafted a potent and commanding message into its architectural presence. Each successive ruler could use this message fashioned by Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' to ensure their own success and legitimate their own reign. Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' assured not only his own success through the staging of the built environment but also the success of each sovereign to follow. Each descendant to his rule bolstered their claim to power by depicting themselves with the founding ancestor. Stela 1 demonstrates how Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' became a significant component of Hun Pik Tok's campaign of power. He depicted the dynastic founder in an ancestral cartouche visually linking his reign to that of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. Analyzing the significance of just one building already highlights the profound decisions made by Ukit Kan

Le'k Tok' in creating his city and inscribing it with meaning. If we expand our investigation to include the larger peninsular community, what then does GT-1 tell us about Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'?

GT-1 and its monster mouth façade reveal an even greater narrative when viewed through its relationship to other peninsular forms. While scholars generally refer to the zoomorphic portal at Ek' Balam as a Chenes style façade, its true significance lies in its staging of a liminal passage shaped from a monumental masonry form. It may or may not be useful to identify the portal as Chenes or Chenes-like, but in its presentation it visualizes the socio-historical context of the city. Although the portal symbolizes a pan-Mesoamerican concept, its dramatization glorifies the cyclical nature of Maya life – and it does so on the same scale and grandeur as the Rio Bec and Chenes portals. In that regard it is uniquely Chenes. However, the realization of its Chenes-like status should reveal far more than just an adherence to a particular style. I maintain that the façade of Room 35 cannot be defined as Chenes simply because it is aesthetically and iconographically similar to Chenes façades, but because its creator called the Rio Bec or Chenes heartland home. It is Chenes first and foremost because it recreates a sense of place and it illustrates the process of placemaking through the articulation of its forms.

When Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' became sovereign the success of his rule relied on his ability to legitimate his claim to power. In AD 770 uncertainty defined the attitude of the day and Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' built his city to eliminate all indecision concerning his divine authority. The zoomorphic portal of GT-1 functioned as a powerful component of his message that both expressed his identity and reinforced his claim to power. The ecological approach provides a much deeper understanding of the social and historical narratives built into the masonry forms of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's city. Finally only one question remains – to be or not to be Chenes. Without the ecology of architectural forms I'd say the zoomorphic portal at Ek' Balam presents

far too many incongruities to the iconographical blueprint of most Rio Bec and Chenes façades. In fact, it encapsulates a pan-Mesoamerican symbol far more successfully than its realization of the true Rio Bec and Chenes styles. However, the ecology of architectural forms articulates its relationship and the relationship of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' to the peninsular styles and leads me to argue that indeed it is Chenes.

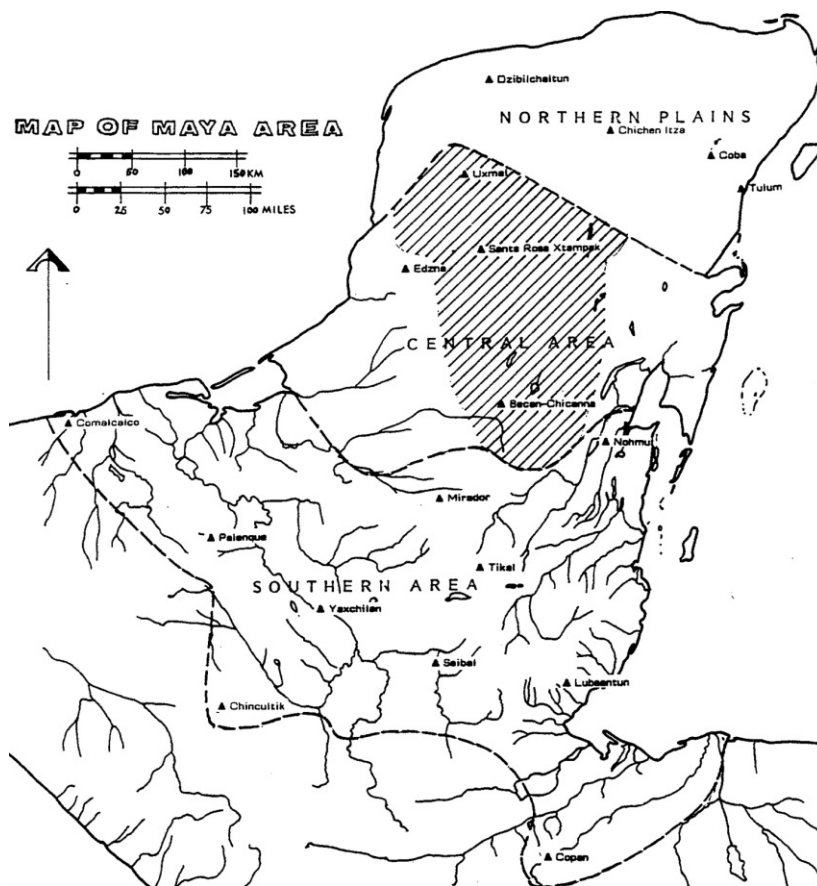


Figure 5.1 Map of the Northern Plains
(Andrews 1999: 298)

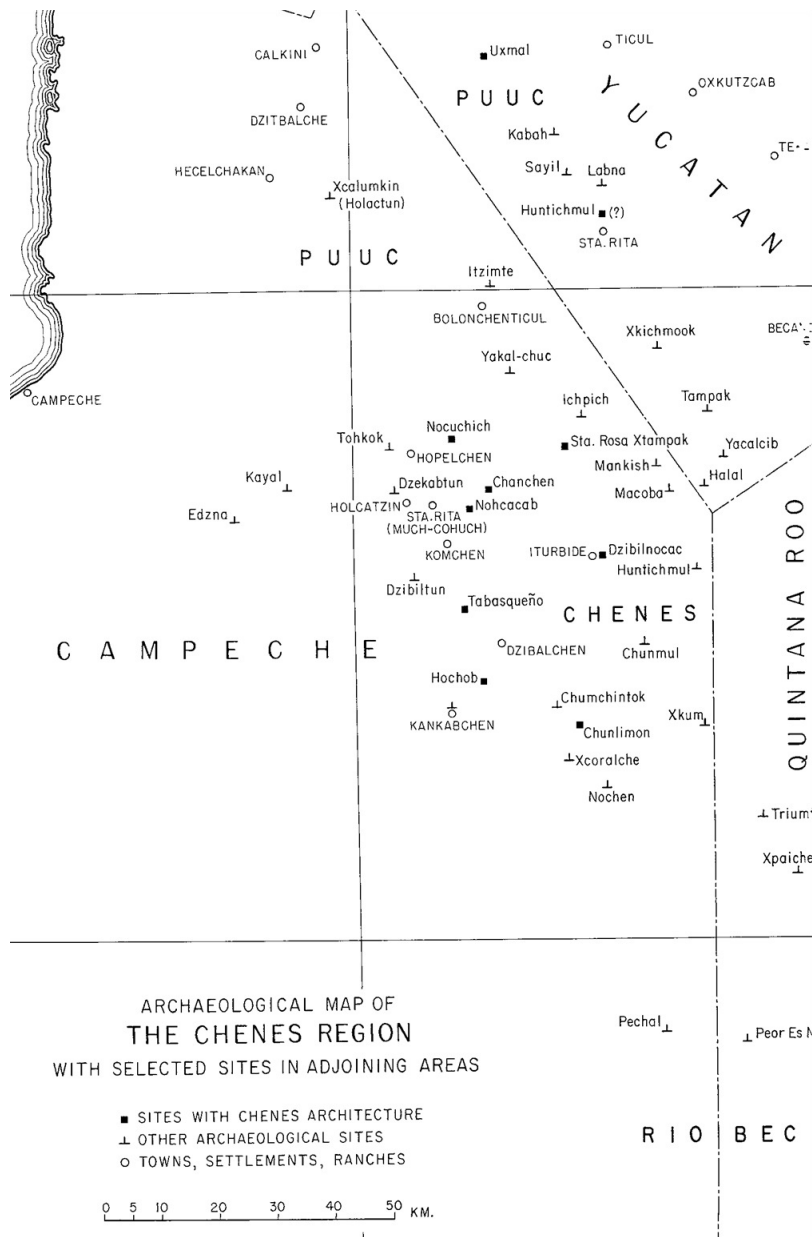


Figure 5.2 Harry Pollock's map of Yucatecan regions (Pollock 1970: 2)

CONCLUSION

With this dissertation I set out to examine the architectural significance of Ek' Balam during the Late Classic period under the aegis of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok'. Using placemaking, which I define as a process that involves the conscious acts of a creator to design, manage, and strategically shape the physical and social character of public spaces, I demonstrated how the use of style makes meaning in the built environment. At the same time, placemaking functions as a process that animates the architectural landscape and reveals how and why the dynastic founder, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok', designed his city to introduce a bricolage of peninsular forms. Through the systematic description and analysis of Ek' Balam's ceremonial precinct I documented the amalgamation of built forms purposefully divorced from their regional spheres and recombined at Ek' Balam to articulate the ruler's foreignness and reveal his peninsular heritage. I strove to identify comparable forms in the Yucatán peninsula where possible, to explore the meaning of these examples, and to determine how these permanent masonry artifacts act to ascribe identity and express memory.

I divided my investigation into three parts. The first section presented a biographical sketch of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' as creator, architect, and bricoleur. The second part described the various architectural features at Ek' Balam and included an iconographical analysis of the Chenes façade of GT-1. The third portion questioned the significance of style in the service of placemaking and proposed an ecological approach as a successful methodology with which to explore the relationships between an individual, a city, the hinterland, the peninsula, and the larger world of the ancient Maya. These three divisions correspond to the personal, social, and cultural spheres in which meaning begins. They also explain how identity at the inter-site and

intra-site levels permeate the built environment through conscious and mindful acts of placemaking.

First I addressed the identity of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok', presenting a biographical sketch of the dynastic founder. While other scholars (Lacadena 2004) have acknowledged Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's foreignness based on the epigraphic narrative of his arrival to Ek' Balam in the Late Classic period, I introduced new osteological data to argue that the ruler migrated from the modern-day region of Campeche associated with the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands. This connection to south-central Yucatán greatly affects our interpretation of the built environment at Ek' Balam and helps to explain how and why Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' created meaning through the use of and mixing of architectural styles. I showed that the osteological, stylistic, and epigraphic records proved Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's foreignness; his dentition included genetic markers foreign to the Northern Plains and coast as well as the Petén region to the far south, bestowing the dynastic founder with a peninsular heritage belonging to the southwestern region of Yucatán (Buikstra 2003). Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's heritage underlies the decisions he made in creating his city which helps us to understand the architectural bricolage at Ek' Balam. Because I connect the founder of Ek' Balam's ruling dynasty to the Rio Bec and Chenes regions I authenticate his acts of placemaking and the relationships he maintained throughout the peninsula. Based on the translations of the hieroglyphic texts by Lacadena (2004), the isotopic analysis of the king's skeletal remains by Buikstra (2003), and the ethnographic data compiled by Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges (2006) I demonstrated that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' called the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands home. This data provides justification for the palpable fusion of architectural styles at Ek' Balam and testifies to the social interactions both at the inter- and intra-site level.

Through the built environment Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' conveyed a specific message, one which we can begin to piece together through the scientific, hieroglyphic, and iconographical repertoire.

The second part of my research included an analysis of the architectural landscape at Ek' Balam, first broadly through the many masonry forms of the ceremonial precinct, and more closely through an iconographical study of the unique Chenes portal of GT-1. In examining the built environment of the city I imagined Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' as bricoleur creating a sense of place – a sense of the place from which he came. Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' actively created meaning at Ek' Balam by adapting styles of architecture from the peninsula and the place of his birth. Freestanding arches, round structures, zoomorphic portals, and a heavy borrowing from the Rio Bec and Chenes stylistic vocabulary combined to create a city that appears almost out of place amongst its neighbors with their Toltec Maya and Petén Maya traits. While some building types draw on the traditional forms associated with Maya architecture, like the ballcourt and the palace, others represent rare features, like freestanding arches and oval structures, and still others present stylistic features associated with the Rio Bec and Chenes styles, like rounded corners and false stairs.

When Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' designed Ek' Balam's ceremonial precinct he used a pre-existing set of styles from an established corpus and engaged with their individual vocabularies to create a sense of place that would differ from the original models only in the combination of the parts. For example, he selected the zoomorphic portal for his acropolis; its meaning already long established as a liminal space and its iconography representative of the earth monster. But in constructing his city other possibilities arose for the reorganization of the parts, as in his four-sided freestanding portal, the only known example from the ancient Maya world. As the bricoleur Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' employed a corpus of architectural forms from his known world

and exploited the styles that belonged to his reality. What represented the final product for others became the materials for his own campaign of meaning. As such he combined freestanding arches, oval platforms, and multi-tiered complexes with rounded corners, false stairs and zoomorphic portals. The product of Ukit Kan Le'k Tok's efforts as bricoleur emerged as a significant act of meaning-making in the built environment that was both creative and unexpected.

While Gendrop (1998) and Andrews (1997) describe the quintessential features of the Chenes zoomorphic portal, I present the first detailed iconographical analysis of these facades both in the Chenes heartland and at the site of Ek' Balam. I compared the construction techniques, ornamentation, and iconography to question whether GT-1 could truly be categorized as a Chenes façade. Although the zoomorphic portal exemplifies a hallmark of the Chenes style, I argued that the monster mouth entrance of GT-1 also represents a larger pan-Maya ideology regarding built forms and portal entrances. Whereas the Rio Bec and Chenes styles took great advantage of the quatrefoil form, Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' manipulated the zoomorphic portal at Ek' Balam to serve a specific historical moment and adapted it to best suit his political agenda. The role of the gaping monster mouth relates mostly to its role within society and its monumental nature as a marker of incorporation, not in its aesthetic expression. Ultimately the zoomorphic portals expressed two significant themes – entrance and exodus. I showed how the Chenes style façade at Ek' Balam failed to articulate the standard elements of the zoomorphic façades in the region of Campeche, and yet it was indebted to the Rio Bec and Chenes styles, which shaped a one thousand year old ideology into the most majestic and striking manifestation of the Mesoamerican interest in transitional spaces. Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' brought the zoomorphic form to his city both as a personal representation of his transitional state at death, leading to his burial

chamber, but more importantly as an ever-present reminder of his entry as a foreigner. It re-integrated him into the political fold of the Northern Plains and his figurative rebirth through the gaping jaws as the founder of a powerful dynasty.

Lastly, my dissertation situated Ek' Balam into the chronology of the Yucatán peninsula. Because Vlcek categorized the city as a minor site in the 1970s, Ek' Balam's peninsular significance has long been undervalued until the archaeological efforts of Bey, Ringle, Vargas de la Pena, and Castillo Borges in the 1980s and 1990s (Garza Tarazona de González and Kurjack 1980; Bey and Ringle 1989, 1994, 1995, 1998; Vargas de la Pena and Castillo Borges 1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2006). Assuming that the peninsular styles evolved from the south to the north than the Rio Bec and Chenes styles developed between AD 600 and AD 800 with the zoomorphic portal already present in the Rio Bec during the Middle Classic period (AD 600). While the zoomorphic portal of GT-1 at Ek' Balam has never been analyzed iconographically prior to this dissertation, texts typically refer to its most distinguishing feature as Chenes in style. Thanks to a large corpus of hieroglyphic texts at Ek' Balam, the Acropolis and its zoomorphic portal date to around AD 770 or shortly thereafter. This date appears sound given the timeline presented by Gendrop for the Rio Bec and Chenes styles, which would have been well developed before the construction of GT-1. As such, my research successfully locates Ek' Balam into the historical narrative of the Rio Bec, Chenes and Puuc styles of the Yucatán peninsula and the larger Maya world during the Late Classic period.

As I introduced at the beginning of this dissertation, the idiosyncratic combination of built forms at Ek' Balam, while at first glimpse unusual, actually resemble a mutual process of placemaking used at other Yucatecan polities like Uxmal, Chichén Itzá and Mayapán. What first caught my eye as an eccentric mix now emerges as a conscious decision by the protagonist of

each city to create meaning through the built environment. In designing their cities the rulers became agents of their own identity and cultural memory, emulating architectural forms from their place of origin. This new approach to the study of architecture sheds light on the architectural landscape, which no longer appears as an interesting amalgamation of forms, but rather a decision to create a specific sense of place. I introduced the concept of a visual ecology as a useful methodology to explore the built environment. Ecology represents a hermeneutical approach that identifies the interactions between people and places and considers the relationships between organisms and other organisms as well as organisms and their physical surroundings. In terms of the visual world it articulates how and why images function in certain environments. My research demonstrates this methodological approach at Ek' Balam and acknowledges the relationships between viewers and the built environment, as well as built forms and their connection to distant cities, and by extension local viewers to far off locales.

Meaning is not inherent to the Chenes façade of GT-1 simply because it is Chenes-like, but because meaning is generated at the social level and it arises from the relationships between images and their audiences. If we simply identify the façade of GT-1 as Chenes-like we may never understand the social processes at work and we may never understand that Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' carefully selected and crafted the façade on his mission of making meaning at Ek' Balam. While this research introduces a different methodological approach to the study of ancient Maya architecture, I believe that it also serves as an important foundation for addressing broader questions about the built environment that stylistic or iconographical studies alone cannot perceive. I also foresee a series of questions that could guide future research. How does architecture visualize relationships at the inter-site and intra-site levels? How do ruler's create meaning in the built environment through style? How does style become a marker of

placemaking and what does it reveal about the ancient Maya's planning, design, and management of their cities?

Though some questions remain unanswered I suggest that an ecological approach to the image world reveals Ek' Balam's authority as a leading polity in the Northern Plains during the Late Classic period. GT-1 and its monster mouth façade reveal an even greater narrative when viewed through its relationship to other peninsular forms. It may or may not be useful to classify the portal as Chenes or Chenes-like, but through the ecology of built forms I demonstrated how its dramatization ties Ukit Kan Le'k Tok' to his past and glorifies the cyclical nature of Maya life – and it does so on the same scale and splendor as the portals of the Rio Bec and Chenes heartlands. In that regard it is uniquely Chenes. However, the realization of its Chenes-like status should reveal far more than just an adherence to a particular style. I contend that the façade of Room 35 cannot be defined as Chenes simply because it is aesthetically and iconographically similar to Chenes façades, but because its creator called the Rio Bec or Chenes heartland home. It is Chenes first and foremost because it recreates a sense of place and illustrates the process of placemaking through the articulation of its forms.

APPENDIX A

FIELD NOTES FROM A REGIONAL SURVEY OF CAMPECHE

The following field notes were recorded as part of a regional survey in Campeche, Mexico from September 2015 through November 2015.

CHANNA SUR

Zoomorphic Portal

This is a truly grand portal that faces west (Fig. A.1). The sun was just rising as I arrived and its rays cut through the trunks of the trees as it peaked over the top of the crumbling façade and cast its geometric forms and weathered motifs in shadow. I truly felt like Stephens and Catherwood on today's hike through the brush and the surprises it revealed at its terminus. Some stucco survives which reveals an incredible amount detail. The eyelids project farther from their spiral shaped eyes than the example at Hormiguero (Fig. A.2). In addition, the presence of incised eyelashes conveys the original quality of the portal. These are lively details that enhance the grandness of the façade with such intimate details that it is easy to envision the lifeless masonry as a living animate force. The proportions of the stacked corner masks are larger than any example visited during my regional survey though only one full mask was visible and the top of another buried in the soft earth and rotting leaves. Peeling back inches of dirt and vines at the base of the façade revealed intricate incised details in the stucco, and much to my chagrin large creepy crawlers of the arachnid type (Fig. A.3). My impression was one of a free-standing portal much like at Kabah, though the zoomorphic façade at Channa Sur likely faced an open courtyard. A nearby ruin included the rounded corners of the Rio Bec and perhaps the characteristic silhouette of a once majestic pseudo pyramid like those at Xpuhil. It faces a large plaza that at one time marked a public space and the transition to a more private locale. Today it

is a secluded spot overrun by trees; even air fails to circulate through the thick foliage emphasizing the stillness and remoteness of the past. The elongated shapes of the gingiva are still visible and give credence to the belief that the façade represents one of the many examples of the zoomorphic variety. Sadly the upper façade and wide central mask are fully collapsed. While many portals include trace amounts of red pigment the example at Channa Sur appears unique and may have featured a white stucco façade much like that at Ek' Balam.

CHICANNÁ

Structure II

Structure II is the western range type building of the main plaza consisting of two standing and two collapsed structures (Fig. A.4). Six partially eroded teeth project from the topmost riser indicating a full zoomorphic portal. This is another grand portal like that of Hormiguero Structure II. Its features are more rectilinear in comparison and not quite as well preserved. The most remarkable finds include colored pigment and painted hieroglyphic inscriptions to the right of the central façade. Red pigment can be seen deep within the recesses of the spiral shaped eyes that comprise the inset masks of the commissures. The upper molding to the right and left of the central façade include red, blue, and yellow pigments while the thatched detailing above receives a similar treatment (Fig. A.5 and A.6). The preservation of the stucco and pigmentation gives a majestic presence to the monster mouth façade that certainly aids in the overall appeal and recreation of the portal, even if it's only within the viewer's imagination.

Above the central doorway there is a wide tenon support that may have once held a stone effigy of the kind seen at Hormiguero. The inter-orbital space is quite wide with spiral shaped eyes of almost equal width. Scrolls emerge from the upper maxillae and replicate the appearance of a serpent's forked tongue. While there are large ear spools the poor quality of the stucco

prevents further comment on the inclusion of maize foliage and bone pendant as seen on other examples. The central incisors also form the shape of a “tau” associated with death and the underworld.

Serpentine jaws surround the central doorway. The superior labium includes well-formed incisors that bend inward above the lintel while the gingiva flanks the entrance and merges with two profile jaws parallel to the doorjambs. Again, this creates the appearance of a single frontal jaw and two profile jaws. Rows of vertical fangs line the sinuous periodontium and wide gingiva lending to a fearsome aura (Fig. A.7). Angular coils emanate from the jaw energizing the mask that lends itself to a greater sense of three-dimensionality. The inset mask of the commissure is not well preserved but all elements appear present based on the standard iconography. This single inward-facing mask sits in the corner of the serpentine jaw and presents a larger version of the smaller stacked masks along the corner of the façade. A round spiral eye rests in the folds of the commissure with a small rectangular molding above representing the inter-orbital space and supporting the strange snail shaped nostrils with tiny incised hairs. A bone shaped nosepiece protrudes from the tiny engraved follicles. The brow and brow cover are partially eroded so it is difficult to determine the nature of the incised detailing that once existed. It is edged with the vegetal forms of young maize. Four stacked masks comprise the corners of the main façade.

Group D, Structure XX

The lower and upper portals of Structure XX include partial zoomorphic masks similar to the compressed layout of Structure V at Hormiguero, though it is possible that they originally included a lower mandible making the portals a unique dual stacked full zoomorphic façade (Fig. A.8). Both portals face south and allow entry to a palace type complex that is mostly in ruins. In addition, the portals each featured a single vaulted room that has since collapsed, as such the

maxillae and wide frontal masks are nonexistent. Both façades present a partial periodontium with a few incisors still intact (Fig. A.9). The commissures indicate the standard arrangement and enough of the inset masks exist to suggest that both pairs followed the standard iconography with oculus, inter-orbital space, nostrils, bone pendant, brow, brow plate, and ear spool adorned with vegetation reminiscent of maize. While the lower portal is better preserved very little stucco remains (Fig. A.10). The rectilinear supports give the façade a geometric quality that greatly contrasts the more curvilinear features of Structure II as well as the example of Structure II at Hormiguero. The nostrils and brow plates are incised demonstrating the amount of detail that once existed. To the left and right of the portal are the remains of a single corner mask at the base suggesting that corner masks originally adorned the façade, though there is no way to predict the original quantity.

The upper mask is less condensed and presents some variation to the standard format (Fig. A.11). As with the lower portal there is not enough stucco remaining for an accurate reconstruction. Yet it can be determined that the inset masks of the commissure include a wider degree of variability with larger ear spoons featuring vegetal forms and hanging bone pendants. Long serpentine scrolls also emerge from the lower mouth rising upward to enclose the inset masks. The scrolls are paired with a lower set that spiral into a great mass at the base to balance the masks of the commissure. The four scrolls enliven the façade and suggest breath as it emerges from the earth monster. Four incisors appear intact along the interior of the commissure. Fully three dimensional masks sit at the corners of the structure, and while only the remains of five on both the left and right sides are visible with their recognizable down-turned snouts, it is likely that they once totaled approximately eight masks. As with the lower façade the maxillae and wide frontal mask are non-existent; in fact the façade is fully collapsed.

HOCHOB

Structure II

Structure II is a range type structure comprised of three chambers (Fig. A.12). It faces south toward a large plaza and is adjacent to an eastern range type building also featuring a zoomorphic façade. It is a grand portal only slightly smaller in proportions to Structure II at Chicanná and Structure II at Hormiguero. Its style and quality of decoration are equal to the finest examples of the monster mouth façade. Five rectangular incisors project from the topmost riser indicating a full zoomorphic portal. The curvilinear characteristics are similar to those at Hormiguero. The preservation of the stucco gives a truly majestic presence and is perhaps the best in the Rio Bec and Chenes regions. The spiral shaped eye is beautifully finished in stucco and adorned with delicate eyelashes. Cross-hatching and hatching are visible on many elements as are circular incised motifs representing sacredness.

Above the central doorway a wide inter-orbital space appears, though it is now bare in its ornamentation, it is probable that it once held a stone effigy. Only the spiral shaped eyes survive and the scrolls emerging from the upper lintel to the left and right indicating a serpent's forked tongue. The carved teeth of the superior labium are noticeably missing. An intertwined snake spans the cornice above the central mask. Its coiled form is well articulated. The serpent has a three-dimensional quality and judging from the gaping mouth it appears livelier than the serpent that adorns the portal at Payan, which had a decidedly flat appearance. The circular eye is capped with a sinuous brow incised with striations representing follicles of hair. Its shape approximates the hieroglyphic form read as *yax* and meaning first or new.

Serpentine jaws surround the central doorway. Well-formed rectangular gingiva flank the entrance and include a total of six incisors. In its original state the rows of vertical fangs

must have afforded a fearsome visage. Angular coils emanate from the jaw and energize the mask as the sinuous forms of breath. The inset mask of the commissure is well preserved though the spiral shaped eye is much wider than those seen on similar portals (Fig. A.13). This single mask sits in the corner of the serpentine jaw and presents a larger version of the smaller stacked masks along the corner of the façade. A round spiral eye rests in the folds of the commissure with a small rectangular molding representing the inter-orbital space and supporting the strange snail shaped nostrils with tiny incised hairs. A bone shaped nosepiece protrudes from the tiny engraved follicles. It is edged with the vegetal forms of young maize. Four stacked masks comprise the corners of the main façade (Fig. A.14). Many of the deep crevices reveal trace amounts of red pigment which can also be seen around the spiral shaped eyes (Fig. A.15) and in the deep pockets surrounding the double headed serpent (Fig. A.16)

Structure III

Structure III faces west and is a range type structure (Fig. A.17). The main portal leads to a front and rear chamber lined with benches. Very little of the structure survives including the roof above the springline. As such there is no central mask. At least six or seven partial incisors can be seen along the topmost platform in front of the structure suggesting a full zoomorphic portal. Scrolls emanate from the left and right just below the commissure animating the nearly destroyed façade with the breath of life. Only the large spiral shaped eyes remain of the inset masks suggesting that it followed the standard iconography. Overall the portal is in a near state of ruin and is rather squat in proportion to Structure II. Its presence so close to a grander portal only heightens its shoddy appearance and smaller scale. It almost feels like the inhabitants of Structure III built their portal to keep pace with their neighbors.

HORMIGUERO

Structure II

This is a grand portal and standing in its company it is hard to ignore the feeling of being swallowed by the masonry forms into the gullet of the complex (Fig. A.18). It stands in stark contrast to the more intimate portal at Santa Rosa Xtampak and even the secondary portal at Hormiguero. Most likely it represents an example of a full zoomorphic façade. The stucco is largely preserved and includes delicate details like eyelashes, hair follicles, and beads of blood (Fig. A.19). A tenon support sits above the central doorway punctuated by the scant remains of a stone effigy. The central mask and wide upper brow includes a broad inter-orbital space, prominent nose and spiral shaped eyes. Helices emerge from the angular crook of the upper jaw creating the impression of a serpent's forked tongue. Large ear spools flank the frontal mask each crowned with volutes symbolizing new maize and a hanging bone pendant in the shape of a "tau." The central incisors also form the shape of a "tau" associated with death and the underworld.

The inset mask of the commissure is a beautiful curvilinear example with the profile of the face clearly articulated (Fig. A.20). A single mask sits in the corner of the serpentine jaw and presents a larger version of the smaller stacked masks along the corner of the façade. A round spiral eye rests in the folds of the commissure with a small rectangular molding above representing the inter-orbital space and supporting the strange snail shaped nostrils with tiny incised hairs. A bone shaped nosepiece protrudes from the tiny engraved follicles. The brow and brow cover at Hormiguero present a fanciful version of a curvilinear face well-defined and outlined in stucco even today. The cheek features the Saint Andrews cross also found on the example at Ek' Balam from the Northern Plains. It is edged with the vegetal forms of young

maize, which emerge from an ear spool with a knot-like motif and further enhanced by incised elements seen in the surviving stucco. Four or even five stacked masks comprise the corners of the main façade. The portal faces south and leads to a narrow complex of rooms.

Serpentine jaws surround the central doorway. The superior labium includes well-formed incisors that bend inward above the lintel while the gingiva flanks the entrance and merges with two profile jaws parallel to the doorjambs, making it one and three jaws at once. Rows of fangs edge the sinuous periodontium and wide gingiva lending to a greater sense of three-dimensionality and producing a fearsome stage (Fig. A.21). Graceful coils emanate from the jaw energizing the mask. At one time large three-dimensional fangs may have lined the topmost riser and contributed to the appearance of a lower mandible collapsed on the floor.

Structure V

Overall, the Structure V example is a small version of the larger mask at Structure II with very little remaining stucco (Fig. A.22). It is compressed laterally and accessible via a south-facing stairway. The portal gives access to a small temple with a single chamber. It faces an open insignificant courtyard that today lacks any strong cohesive feature. The surviving supports project heavily from the façade giving it a highly geometric appearance. It lacks the refinement of the larger nearby portal.

There is hardly enough space for the inset mask of the commissure, which appears smaller in scale than the stacked corner masks. The diagonal bone pendant on the right is still present and as with other examples is the easiest element to locate. The better preservation of the right mask makes it easier to reconstruct and even in its compact version all of the elements are included: a spiral shaped eye below a rectangular inter-orbital plate and snail shaped nostrils with attached bone pendant. While mostly destroyed, the tenoned supports adjacent to the eye would

suggest the brow and brow plate. The left inset mask of the commissure appears equal in its composition though it is in a lesser state of preservation.

The incisors are stacked vertically in a tight composition. There is no indication of a fleshy gingiva at the base of each incisor as seen on the portal of Structure II and other sites. The wide upper brow and central mask are almost completely in ruin, though it is clear from the tenoned supports that an effigy once appeared above the entrance at the center of the large mask. The incisors along the superior labium seem to indicate a “tau” shape though the quality is poor. At least six masks, though probably seven in total, are stacked at the corners of the temple façade.

PAYAN

Structure I

Structure I is a multi-chambered palace complex (Fig. A.23). The portal leads to an open courtyard surrounded by residential chambers in various states of ruin. While the wide central mask has fallen the upper façade partially remains with the original wooden lintels supporting what masonry still exists of the upper façade. The portal faces to the west and includes a double-headed serpent above the central doorway much like the example at Hochob. Most of the stucco is in such a poor state of preservation that the details are difficult to discern. Scrolls just above the central doorway to the left and right recall the helices of other zoomorphic portals that approximate the appearance of a serpent’s forked tongue. The stacked masks of the left are almost fully eroded, while the right reveals the quintessential elements including the eye, inter-orbital space, nostrils, bone pendant, brow and brow plate (Fig. A.24). At least two masks are visible in what I imagine to be the commissure of the giant mouth, making the Payan example unique from others. They are compressed spatially and recall Structure V at Hormiguero and

Structure XX at Chicanná. Traces of red pigment can be seen in the deep crevices (Fig. A.25). Back at my abode for the night I reviewed Ruppert's drawings of the Payan façade and noted discrepancies in the layout of the complex, graffiti locations, and decoration of the zoomorphic portal. Ruppert failed to notice the serpentine form above the central doorway; he even left that portion missing from the upper façade in his reconstruction drawings (Fig. A.26 and A.27).

SANTA ROSA XTAMPAK

The Building with the Serpent-Mouth Façade

The southern façade of Room 2 evenly projects from Room 1 on the left and Room 3 on the right creating a three-part division typical of Chenes architecture (Fig. A.28). While the façade appears to feature a partial zoomorphic portal, it is entirely possible that the lower platform once included incisors in the style of full zoomorphic portals as seen at Chicanná and Hochob. Its composition and iconography are similar to the monster mouth façade of the Palace to the southeast. Both are remarkably rectilinear in style in comparison to other examples. The portal faces south bordering the northern side of the Palace Plaza. Room 2 with its zoomorphic portal includes a half vault and originally led to the roof. Very little stucco remains. The stone supports are in relatively poor condition. The contours of the monster mouth around the central doorway are the best preserved and include the periodontium of the superior labium, soft tissue of the gingiva, and even a few incisors. There does not appear to be stacked masks at the corners as seen on a large majority of zoomorphic facades. The bone nose accessory remains of the masks directly adjacent to the central doorway demonstrating that the portal at least included the standard masked elements nestled in the angular corners of the commissure. Only the orbits remain above the central doorway suggesting the presence of a central mask as is common on Chenes style portals. My general impression is one of intimacy and not grandeur.

The Palace

The broad stairway on the eastern façade leads from the plaza to a zoomorphic portal on the third level (Fig. A.29). It functions as a point of entry to an interior courtyard and palace apartments. The grand eastern stairs appear to be a later addition over what was originally a Rio Bec false tower with its typical rounded corners. It is difficult to guess whether the portal was original to the tower or added later. At the top of the eastern stairs the zoomorphic façade represents a freestanding construction much like the freestanding arches of the Puuc region. It faces east and the rising sun. While the Building with the Serpent-Mouth Façade may represent a full zoomorphic portal as defined by Gendrop, the Palace example does not include any features to suggest that the incisors and mandible extended along the topmost riser and its associated platform. Although the superior labium no longer exists above the central doorway, the gingiva demarcates the corners of the mouth with very deep recesses for the dentition that is now entirely lacking. Two incisors can be found at the base of the palace under the shade of a tree giving the approximate size and shape of the incisors that once adorned the monster mouth façade. As with the portal to the northeast it features angular forms rather than the curvilinear character of most Chenes façades. The nose bone accessory represents the most prominent surviving element, testifying to the presence of the masks adjacent to the central doorway and nestled in the commissure of the monster mouth (Fig. A.30). Stacked masks do not adorn the corners of the façade. Unfortunately the central mask above the door is entirely destroyed.

EL TABASQUEÑO

Structure I

Like Structure V at Hormiguero and Structure XX at Chicanná the El Tabasqueño portal is compressed laterally and accessible via a central stairway (Fig. A.31). It sits on a one-story

platform and leads to an eight-chambered structure. Most of the supports survive and project heavily from the façade giving it a highly geometric appearance. There is barely enough space for the inset mask of the commissure which takes more of a vertical orientation given the lack of space. The diagonal bone pendant on both masks is still present and as with other examples is the easiest element to locate. Even in its compact organization all of the elements are present including a spiral shaped eye below a rectangular inter-orbital plate and snail shaped nostrils with attached bone pendant. The wide upper brow and central mask include the spiral shaped eye and enough support to suggest a large ear spool and maize-like foliage (Fig. A.32). The incisors are stacked vertically in a tight composition. The incisors along the superior labium form the familiar “tau” shape. At least eight masks are stacked at the corners of the temple façade.

XPUHIL

Structure 1

The zoomorphic portal of Structure I adheres to the true Rio Bec style (Fig. A.33). It is a west facing façade and adorns the upper false temple of the pseudo pyramid. Two similar towers adorn the eastern façade and although the upper portions are now completely in ruin Tatiana Proskouriakoff suggests that they were identical to the still intact model of the western façade. A recessed panel gives the impression of a doorway representing the form of the giant monster mouth façades of the Chenes and Rio Bec but with none of its functionality. Incisors border the lower façade and frame the central doorway suggesting that the portal represented only a partial realization of the zoomorphic style. Nothing of the upper façade and wide frontal mask remains. Some geometric stone supports exist of the masks inset into the commissure but it is in such a poor state of preservation making further comment impossible. A fleshy periodontium lines the

mandible and several vertical teeth are visible at least confirming the zoomorphic quality of the façade.



Figure A.1 Zoomorphic portal at Channa Sur
(Photo by author: 10/2015)

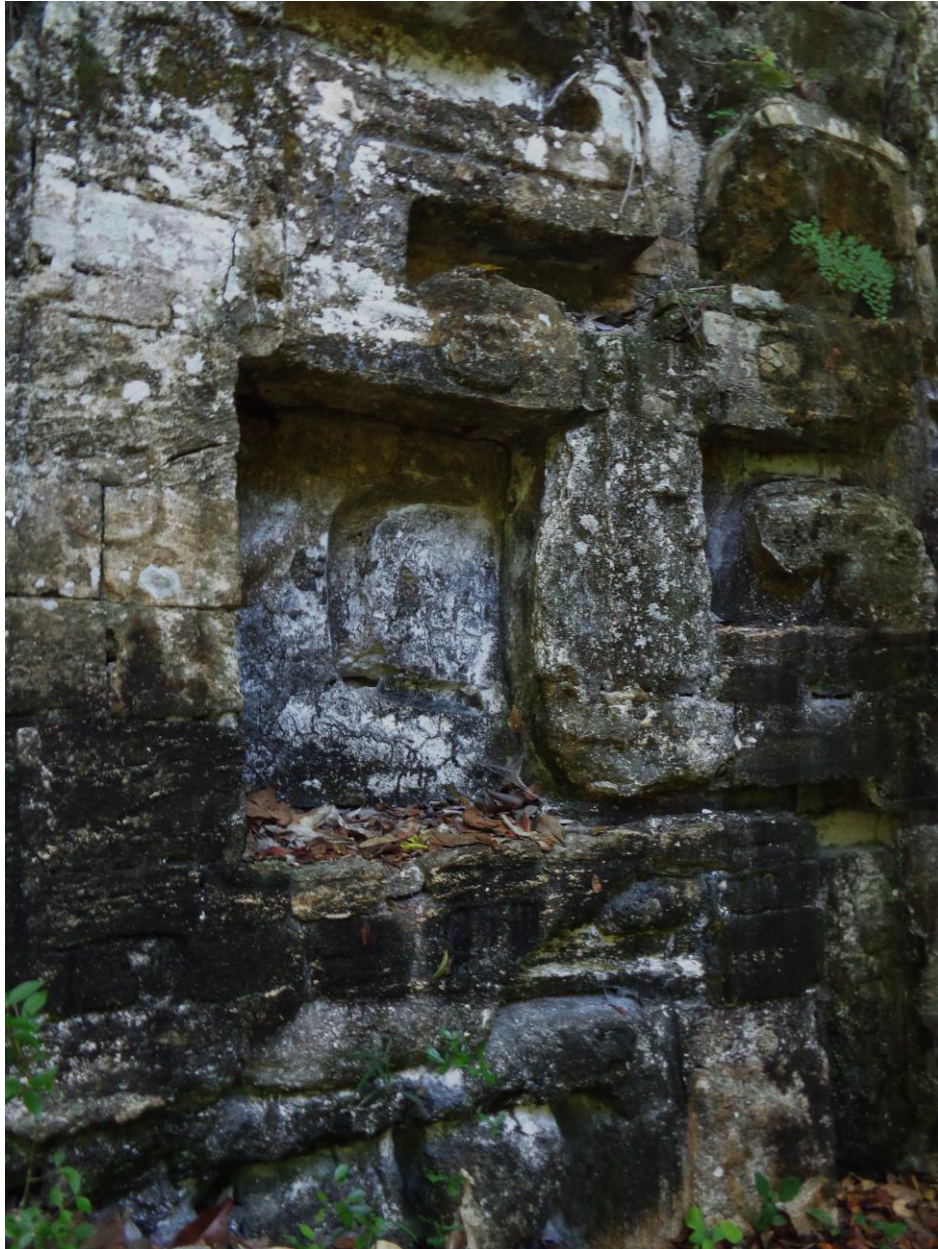


Figure A.2 Inset mask of the commissure, Channa Sur
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.3 Stacked masks showing stucco eyelash details, Channa Sur
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.4 Structure II, Chicanná
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.5 Traces of red, yellow, and blue pigment, Structure II, Chicanná
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.6 Red pigment surrounding the scrolling volutes of breath, Structure II, Chicanná
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.7 Incisors of the lower mandible, Structure II, Chicanná
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.8 Group D, Structure XX, Chicanná
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.9 Incisors of the lower mandible, Group D, Structure XX, Chicanná
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.10 Detail of the lower portal, Group D, Structure XX, Chicanná
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.11 Detail of the upper portal, Group D, Structure XX, Chicanná
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.12 Structure II, Hochob
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.13 Inset mask of the commissure, Structure II, Hochob
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.14 Stacked corner masks, Structure II, Hochob
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.15 Spiral shaped eye and eyelash details of the central mask and wide upper brow,
Structure II, Hochob
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.16 Detail of the double-headed serpent above the central mask, Structure II, Hochob
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.17 Structure III, Hochob
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.18 Structure II, Hormiguero
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.19 Eyelash detail, Structure II, Hormiguero
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.20 Inset mask of the commissure, Structure II, Hormiguero
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.21 Incisors of the lower mandible, Structure II, Hormiguero
(Photo by author: 10/2015)

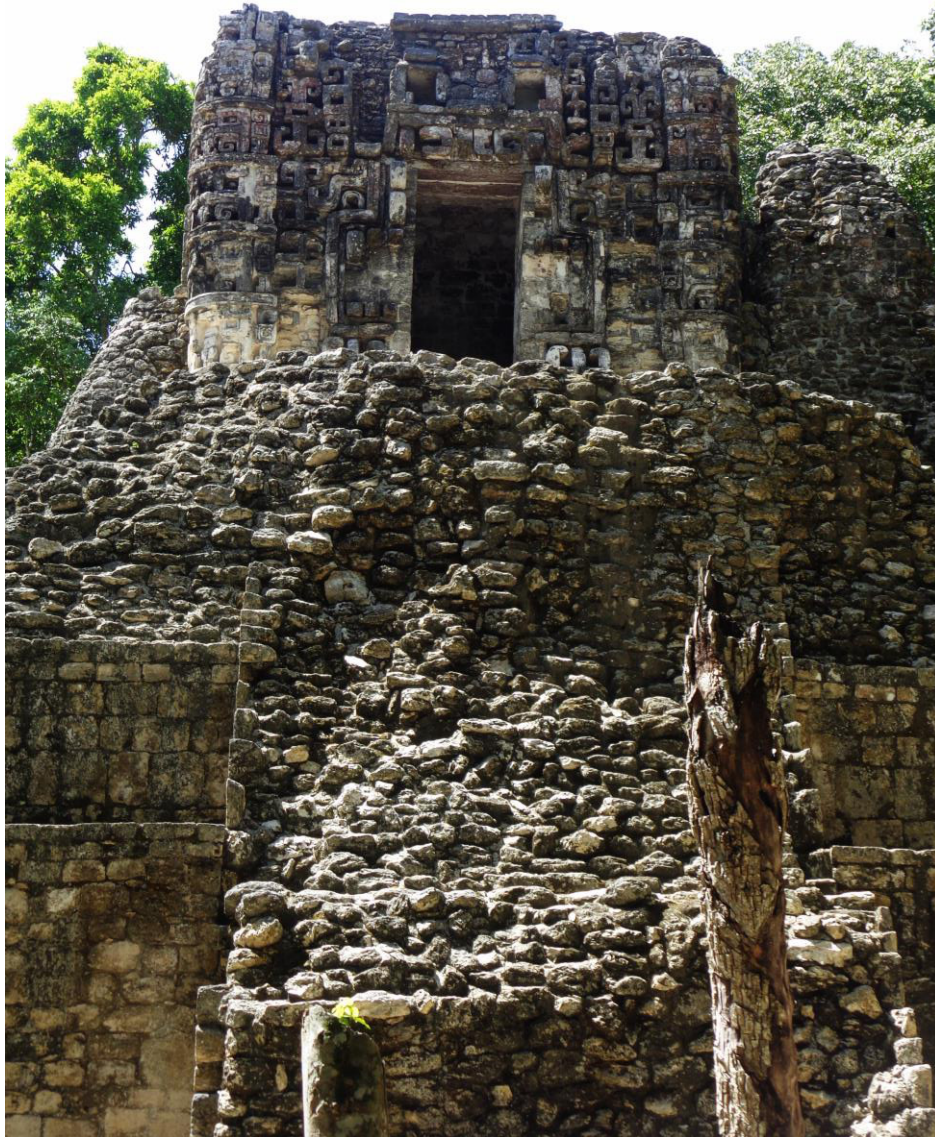


Figure A.22 Structure V, Hormiguero
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.23 Structure I, Payan
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.24 Detail of the stacked masks, Structure I, Payan
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.25 Stucco details, Structure I, Payan
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.26 Double-headed serpent (left side) above the central doorway, Structure I, Payan
Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.27 Double-headed serpent (right side) above the central doorway, Structure I, Payan
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.28 The Building with the Serpent Mouth Façade, Santa Rosa Xtampak
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.29 The Palace, Santa Rosa Xtampak
Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.30 Detail of the Palace, Santa Rosa Xtampak
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.31 Structure I, El Tabasqueño
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.32 Spiral shaped eye and eyelash detail, Structure I, El Tabasqueño
(Photo by author: 10/2015)



Figure A.33 Structure I, Xpuhil
(Photo by author: 10/2015)

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