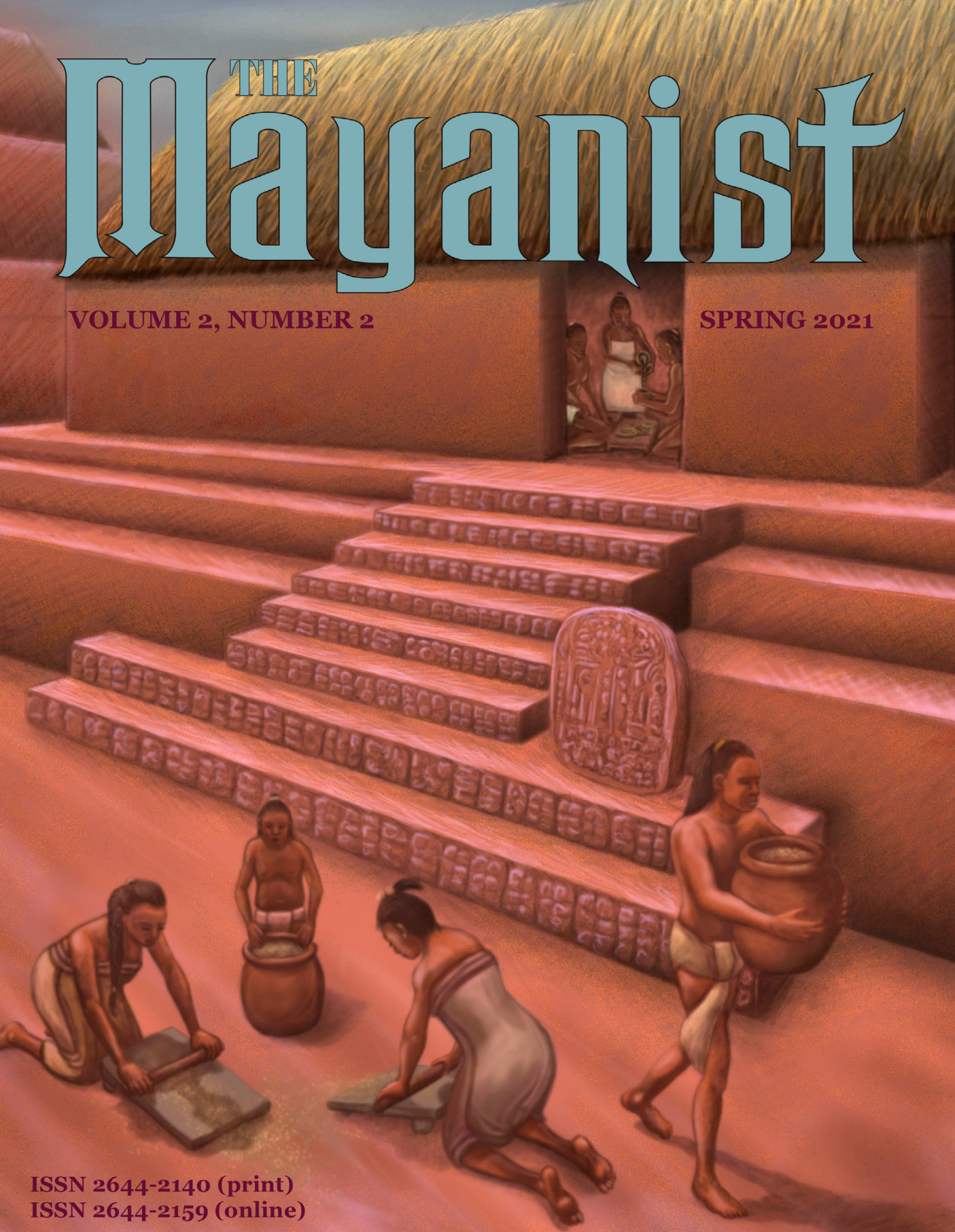


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The Editorial

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This past year has been a rocky one for basically anyone involved in academia, but it's probably been hardest on younger, emerging scholars – especially those with families. The pandemic state of things has seriously impacted all of our lives, adding grief, illness, stress, and anxiety to daily routines while simultaneously saturating our brains with pixels and axing our traditional social outlets. It has also endangered both our continued relationships with our Latin American colleagues and threatened the economic well-being of the many archaeological professionals based in the Maya world. Meanwhile, thanks to the marriage between the administrative overburden of higher education and an endemic fiscal austerity, job insecurity has reached a historical level across disciplines, disproportionately affecting emerging scholars. A certain relief has been provided by a handful of institutions, and colleges across the world have tried to provide technical support for all and to lower expectations for their tenured faculty. Yet, emerging, non-tenured scholars have had to continue investing time in writing dissertations, books, and papers, analyzing data, preparing and teaching online courses, while all applying for the same few jobs. These scores of weekly work hours are either underpaid or unpaid, and many even end up being wasteful. Weighing cautiously-optimistic-to-downright-fatalist thoughts about an uncertain future in academia against realistic perceptions of the extra-academic job market has thus become a ubiquitous balancing mental act for emerging scholars (even more so than before). While many senior scholars have helped by providing moral support and opportunities for their younger peers, they too face the same pandemic-related challenges and very personal trials.

The Mayanist cannot do much to alleviate this crisis. Yet, as a team, we endeavor to offer a thorough-yet-personable and attentive review and editorial process, an outlet for all scholars and,

most importantly, quality papers which are open for all to access. We are currently doing our best to elevate the voices of diverse authors, support artists, and encourage equitable practices in our discipline. We are also working hard to offer the same articles in both English and Spanish in order to increase access to scholarly resources for our colleagues in Latin America.

Despite the adverse conditions cited above, we are proud and happy to offer you the second issue of the second volume of *The Mayanist* – even if it is a little shorter than normal. This issue stems from our 14th annual *Maya at the Playa Conference* (M@P Web edition) which focused on indigenous Maya writing and literature. Fittingly, our three papers – further introduced below – straddle the ancient, colonial, and contemporary eras, highlighting the diversity, depth, and resilience of Maya writing traditions. This issue is beautifully illustrated by Michael Thomas, an art teacher at Davidson Day School and the artist behind the majority of the AFAR visuals. Before we give the floor to our instrumental guest editor, Jocelyne M. Ponce, we want to acknowledge the volunteers who allow us to make *The Mayanist* a reality: our layout maestro, Joel Skidmore; our copy editor, Jack Barry; and our several generous and punctual reviewers.

From our Guest Editor

It has been a privilege to be the guest editor of this fourth issue of *The Mayanist* and I am honored to introduce its articles. This issue gives a wonderful glimpse on indigenous Maya writing and literature from linguistic, archaeological, and contemporary perspectives. It has been a great pleasure to collaborate in this issue with Guatemalan and North American colleagues, including a Kaqchikel scholar. While I wish my Kaqchikel language skills were better, the time I spent learning the language and culture in Antigua, Guatemala, made me realize – more than ever – the inequalities that pervade academia in Latin America and beyond.

Maya archaeology in particular has been historically dominated by American, European, and non-indigenous Latin Americans. Academia has long been exclusionary, and the Maya continue to be underrepresented in academic circles and in interpreting their own historical past. Ideally, academia should serve society by forming future leaders that include a diverse array of scholars (see Dupree and Boykin 2021). The increased involvement of indigenous researchers in different fields is crucial to overcome the academic inequality that has pervaded anthropology and related fields around the globe. Different perspectives will help surpass western biases and will lead to richer interpretations. It is time for change, and it is our role to encourage and facilitate academic transformations. I look forward to being part of a more inclusive academic environment in which everyone's viewpoints will enhance our understandings of past and modern indigenous cultures.

I am delighted to see increased participation by Maya scholars in anthropological research in

Latin America and beyond. The 2020 M@P Conference was a step towards a more inclusive academic model through diverse participants that presented their perspectives and research on Maya writing and literature. The upcoming 2021 Maya at the Lago is yet another step in that direction. As a Guatemalan scholar, I am also delighted to see articles in *The Mayanist* being published both in English and Spanish. Open-access journals such as this one are instrumental for bridging the academic gap between scholars of different backgrounds. Prices on academic publications represent an enormous obstacle for access and production of knowledge. Publishing in both languages is a worthwhile effort and we will see results with the new generations of students.

Although the Covid-19 pandemic hindered us from an in-person M@P, it was not an obstacle for outstanding virtual presentations. The first paper in this volume “Voices and Narratives beyond Texts: The Life-History of a Classic Maya Building” is my contribution to the current issue written alongside Caroline A. Parris, Marcello A. Canuto, and Tomás Barrientos Q. Our paper presents a case study of a ceremonial building at La Corona, Guatemala. The study highlights how archaeologists can reconstruct Maya historical narratives without relying solely on epigraphic texts. While abundant epigraphic data at La Corona provide us with details on the political history and lives of ruling elites, we use a life-history approach to inform on different interpretations of the building by a broader range of participants.

In the following article, Judith Maxwell presents the use of Kaqchikel “zombie” words, or words that fell out of active use by the 1900’s and have come back to life for new purposes. Words taken from colonial texts have allowed a new generation of speakers to use Kaqchikel to express modern realities. Although not all words are currently used daily, these will slowly make their way through as Guatemalan education policies stimulate the use of the language and hopefully increase the number of new speakers. If the word *kematz’ib’* (letter-weaver) replaced computer, I wonder if Kaqchikel terms for tablets or smartphones will soon come into vernacular use.

Walter Paz Joj’s paper discusses the importance of Classic Maya writing for the contemporary Maya. Classic period texts are currently being used for political, social, and artistic purposes. His paper highlights how Maya scholars are increasingly adopting leading roles in epigraphic workshops, academic talks, and other educational outreach events that are key components of the cultural revitalization process. Walter Paz Joj emphasizes the importance of empowerment of indigenous scholars, as well as close collaborations with non-indigenous and foreign scholars. Lastly, Jillian Jordan presents a captivating book review on *The Real Business of Ancient Maya Economies: From Farmers’ Fields to Rulers’ Realms* edited by Marilyn A. Masson, David A. Freidel, and Arthur A. Demarest. Her review highlights the main contributions of this book which is perfect for both avid Maya readers and scholars interested in ancient economies more broadly.

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Voices and Narratives beyond Texts: The Life-History of a Classic Maya Building

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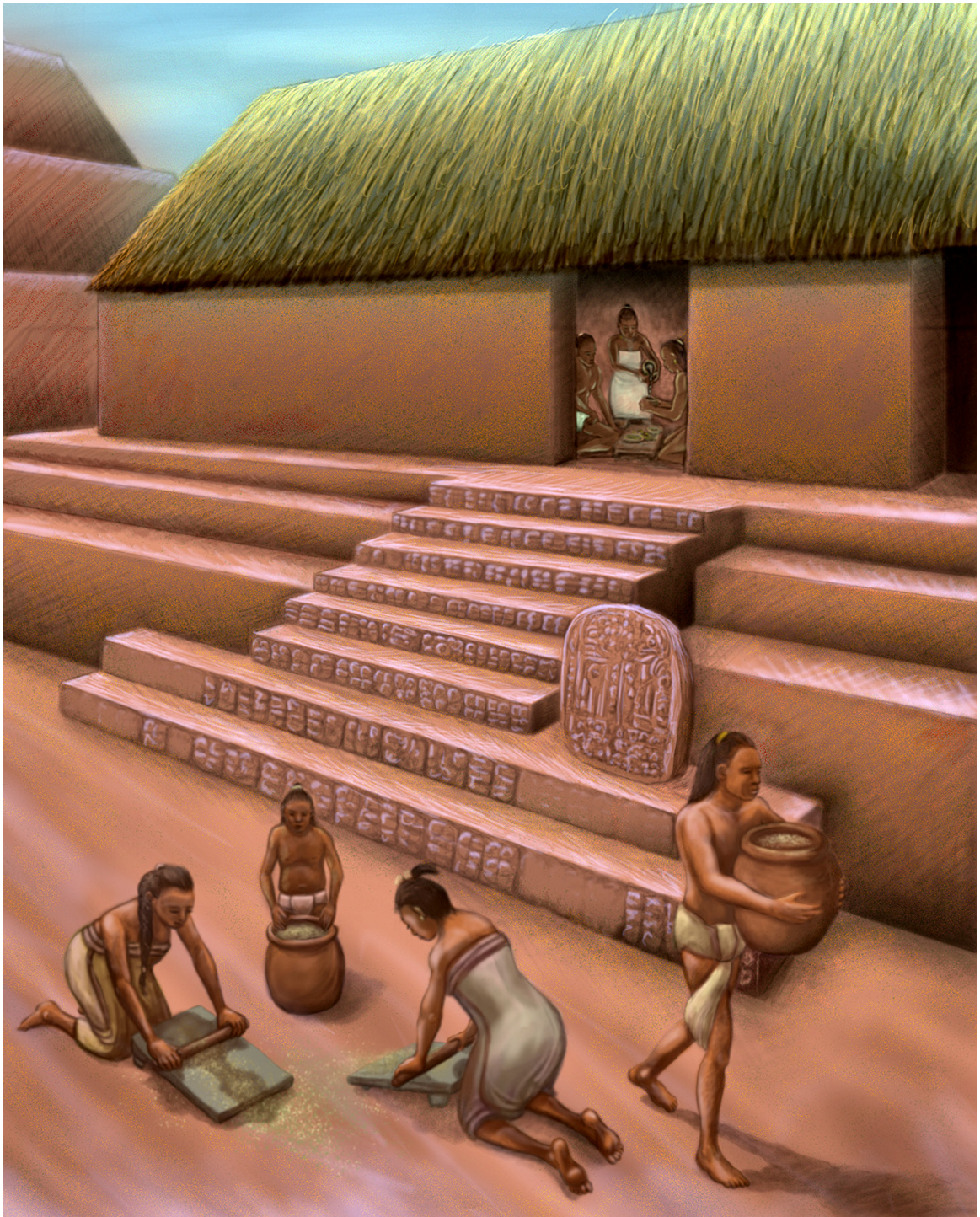
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This paper traces the life-history of a Classic Maya building at the site of La Corona in northwest Petén, Guatemala. Structure 13R-10 is a looted range structure located in La Corona's ceremonial core, the Coronitas Group. Structure 13R-10's construction stages and associated caching episodes, feasting deposits, and domestic refuse were used to reconstruct its life-history from its foundation in the Early Classic period until present day. While several archaeological life-history studies have typically focused on the shifting meanings of places, we use this approach to identify the active participation of groups underrepresented in elite-dominated hieroglyphic texts. By doing this we show how epigraphy and archaeology complement each other to offer a fuller historical narrative. La Corona's rich hieroglyphic record provides ample information on its sociopolitical history. As a heavily looted site, detailed archaeological research at La Corona has been key to reconstruct and differentiate between primary contexts, monuments in secondary contexts following relocation by the ancient Maya during spolia events, and recent looting activities. Shifts in the use of space and reinterpretation of the historical past are identified in this case study as mechanisms of biographical change.

Keywords: *life-histories; biographies; architecture; Maya Lowlands; Classic period*



People are inherently interconnected with material objects and their built environment. Archaeological artifacts reflect social relations and meanings through their depositional contexts, transformations, and movements across space and time. The archaeological study of biographies or life-histories of objects follows the ‘lives’ of things in the past from the procurement of raw material, use, and eventual deposition in the archaeological record (Gosden and Marshall 1999: 170; Joy 2009: 540; Kopytoff 1986; Shanks 1998). As objects are modified and moved around by people, they become vested with meaning. The biographies of buildings can also be followed through their initial foundation and subsequent construction, remodeling, and destruction (Ashmore 2002; Tringham 1994, 1995). As receptacles for communal memory, changes in architecture and the movements of portable artifacts can help identify how the built environment was perceived and experienced by different groups of people through time.

Studies from the Maya Lowlands show how architectural features can acquire histories as they are built, occupied, renovated, and abandoned (e.g. Abrams 1998; Brown and Garber 2008; Garber et al. 1998; Sharer et al. 1999). In this study we show how a biographical approach to a Classic Maya building at the site of La Corona, Guatemala, enables the recreation of narratives beyond elite-dominated epigraphic texts. Questions of how artifacts and built spaces acquire, accumulate, and change meanings through time are considered from a variety of perspectives as outlined below. But how can the biography of a building help identify the voices of different individuals and groups through time? At La Corona, detailed archaeological data has been key to reconstruct and differentiate the behaviors that led to: 1) primary construction episodes and deposition of artifacts and burials; 2) the movement of carved monuments by the ancient inhabitants; and 3) disturbed archaeological contexts by recent looting activities. Our study demonstrates how a biographical approach provides unique insight into the relations between people and their built environment through the experiences of diverse social strata that are not always identifiable through the epigraphic record alone. Despite the challenges associated with investigating looted contexts, we show how epigraphic and archaeological data complement each other for a more nuanced historical narrative.

The Biographies of Objects and Buildings

Archaeologists have used multiple approaches to discuss the life-histories of artifacts. An initial use-life approach was focused on the formation processes and morphological changes of artifacts through the application of Leroi-Gourhan’s (1945) concept of *chaîne opératoire*. From this functional perspective artifacts were considered mere reflections of behaviors and patterns in the archaeological record such as production, discard, and reuse (Joy 2009; LaMotta and Schiffer 2001; Schiffer 1987; Schiffer and Miller 1999; Tringham 1995). The use-life of buildings is observable through physical changes that signaled construction, occupation, maintenance, and abandonment. Use-life analysis documents how long an object or building was used and how it entered the archaeological record. However, the role of social interactions was overlooked, and objects were perceived as passive entities.

Subsequently, a biographic or life-history approach considered the roles of artifacts and buildings as dynamic and culturally vested with meanings (Appadurai 1988; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Kopytoff 1986; Thomas 1996; Tilley 1996). This paper explores the life-history of a Classic Maya

building from this perspective: Structure 13R-10 from La Corona. Drawn from anthropology, this perspective emphasizes how objects and places become imbued with significance through social interactions. Mechanisms of biographical change include exchange and circulation (e.g. Jennings 2014; Lillios 1999; Oras et al. 2017), performance (e.g. Gosden and Marshall 1999; Inomata 2006; Moore 1996), interment of the dead (e.g. Buikstra et al. 2004; Last 1998; McAnany 2014), and reinterpretations (e.g. Barrett 1999; Gillings and Pollard 1999; Moreland 1999). The meaning of artifacts and places can thus change diachronically and derive from events and people to which they were connected to at different points in time.

Built and natural places can also accumulate significance through personal and collective experiences (Bradley 1998; Ingold 1993; Low 2009; Thomas 2012). Social relations and the built environment are linked recursively as they are considered arenas in which individuals and groups actively construct and negotiate their histories (Ashmore 2002; Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Tringham 1994, 1995). A place may be perceived in a particular way individually, but social context highly influences the meanings and narratives that become dominant. As active repositories for communal memory, the same place may be experienced in diverse ways by different social classes, ages, genders, and factions (Crumley 2002; Ingold 1993).

Changes in the meanings of places are not necessarily driven by their physical transformations. While the act of building and rebuilding may reflect the dispositions of ruling elites, material remains can point to diverse uses and interpretations. Since places are experienced differently by diverse groups, it opens up an opportunity to make visible the behaviors of non-elites and other non-dominant groups (Meskell 2003; Mixter 2017). Shifts in the use of space and reinterpretation of the historical past are identified in our case study as mechanisms of biographical change.

Present Day Life-Histories

Artifact and building biographies do not end with their deposition and abandonment. Life-histories continue with modern activities such as discovery, retrieval, and archaeological analyses (Gillings and Pollard 1999; Holtorf 1998, 2002). The rigorous documentation of archaeological contexts allows field archaeologists to assemble detailed histories of the past through material remains. The missing contextual information from looted archaeological sites – which is pivotal for archaeological interpretations – poses difficulties for tracking life-histories (Brodie and Tubb 2003; Elia 1997; Mackenzie et al. 2019).

Copious information is lost through looting, but the study of plundered monuments, vessels, and other artifacts allows reattaching part of their life histories to contextual data. Context provides clues on broader events and relations, as has been the case at La Corona. One example is the Classic Maya Ik'-style cylinder vessels that share pink-hued calligraphy and the Ik' emblem glyph. Several of these looted vessels lack contextual data, but have been traced to Motul de San José and the Lake Petén Itzá region through epigraphic and Instrumental Neutron Activation Analysis (INAA; Foias and Emery 2012; Just 2012; Reents-Budet et al. 2012).

Conversely, the context of objects rather than the objects themselves can reveal significant information about past human behavior. For instance, burial goods provide information on the identity and status of interred individuals, which are lost if extracted from their context. Polychrome

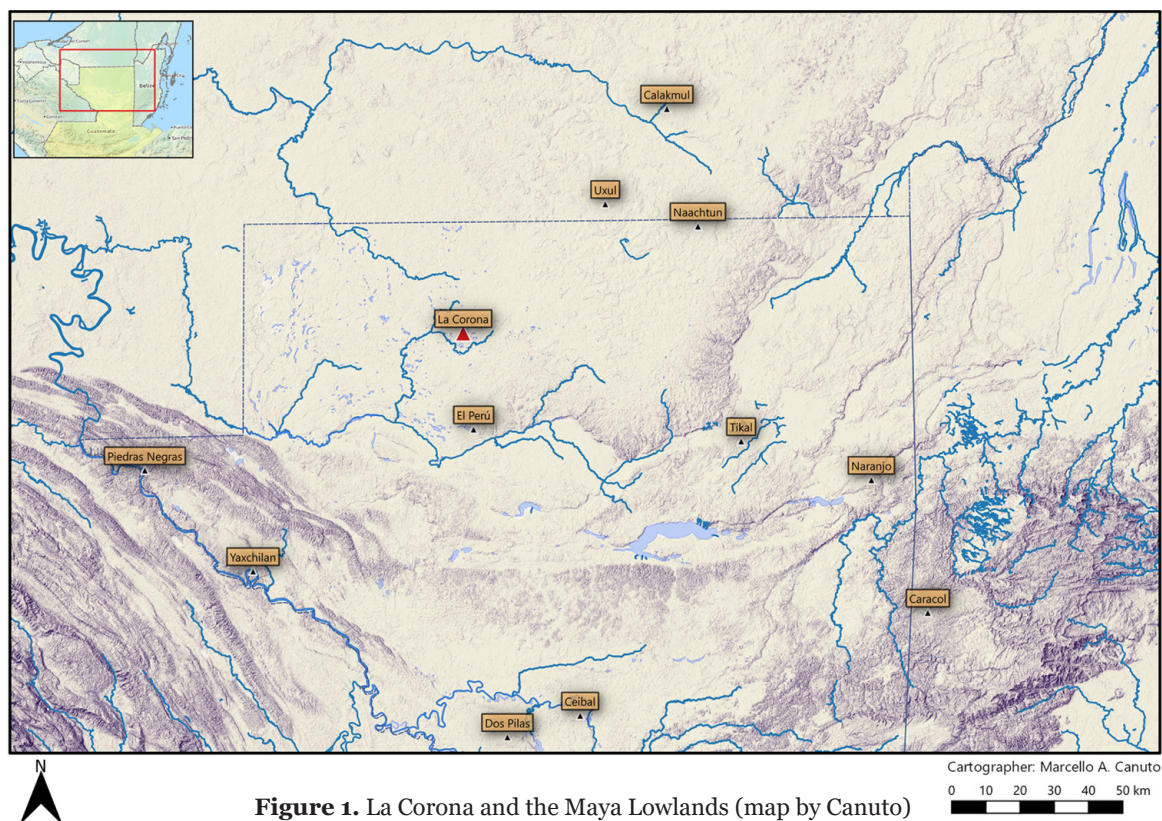


Figure 1. La Corona and the Maya Lowlands (map by Canuto)

vessels gifted between Maya elites for political alliances also exemplify the importance of archaeological context. The Komkom vase, for instance, was found at Baking Pot, Belize, and traced to the royal court of Naranjo, Guatemala (Helmke et al. 2018). The vase represents a material link between the two localities during the Late Classic period – a connection which is further supported by similar vessels recovered from neighboring sites such as Buenavista del Cayo (Audet and Awe 2005; Helmke and Awe 2012). Although these few contextualized examples do not allow us to fully understand the relationship between these royal courts, they effectively place artifacts within the chronology of their architectural setting, settlement, and region more broadly.

Thus, looting, archaeological research, and other modern activities have profound impacts on artifact and building life-histories. Given the extent of looting at La Corona, extensive detailed archaeological research was necessary for distinguishing primary and disturbed contexts. This work also tracked and contextualized the repositioning of carved monuments across the site in *spolia* events by the ancient inhabitants (Barrientos et al. 2016). *Spolia* refers to the reuse and repositioning of sculptures and other material elements as means to reinterpret and reference a historical past (Brilliant and Kinney 2011; Elsner 2000). While epigraphic analysis of the monuments provides ample information on La Corona's political history, it was archaeological excavations that identified the *spolia* events. Excavations in La Corona's central Coronitas Group were

instrumental for contextualizing this phenomenon and for reconstructing a more detailed history through material and architectural data.

La Corona and the Coronitas Group

La Corona is located in the Maya Biosphere Reserve in northwest Petén, Guatemala (Figure 1). The site displays a scattered settlement pattern with groups located in elevated areas surrounded by seasonal streams and rain-fed water basins or *civales*. The site was occupied from ca. 200-900 CE. Although relatively small, La Corona revealed many carved monuments that provide a rich historical record of the royal family and its sociopolitical relations with the Kaanul kingdom, whose political seat of power was first in Dzibanché and then Calakmul (Martin and Velásquez García 2016). This abundant epigraphic record indicates that La Corona forged a political alliance with Kaanul in 520 CE which lasted over two centuries.

La Corona was identified as the enigmatic ‘Site Q’ from which dozens of carved stone monuments were looted in the 1960s and 1970s (Canuto and Barrientos 2013; Matthews 1988; Schuster 1997). Some of the looted monuments were sawed with power tools to remove the carved surface and ease transport, leaving bulky carcasses behind. Since then, substantial efforts have been made to trace the monuments, many of which are currently in art museums and private collections throughout the world (Stuart et al. 2015).

The Coronitas Group is one of three main architectural groups located in La Corona’s core. Evidence from the group’s caches, burials, hieroglyphic texts, and feasting deposits suggest it was mainly used for ceremonial purposes. The Coronitas Group plaza is bounded on the east by five aligned funerary temples and to the northwest by five range structures and a pyramidal structure (Figure 2). The group was initially a necropolis for Kaanul-era rulers of la Corona. Plentiful archaeological and epigraphic data from the Coronitas Group indicate that Kaanul-era rulers undertook a program of political renovation and legitimation by associating themselves with patron deities in order to legitimize authority over historically established local lineages (Canuto and Barrientos 2020:190–193; Stuart et al. 2018). This paper focuses on data from Structure 13R-10, a 2.7 m-tall platform that measures 30 x 20 m and is flanked to the west by the pyramidal Structure 13R-9. As discussed below, material evidence from Structure 13R-10 supports the idea that Kaanul-era rulers used charismatic strategies to overcome traditional sources of authority by claiming La Corona as a place of ideological importance. Charismatic refers to religious and moral authority, where the ruler functioned as a medium between people and the supernatural realm (Canuto and Barrientos 2020: 190)

Archaeological research in the architectural complex began in 2008 with the discovery of hundreds of polychrome sherds associated with Structure 13R-9, which signaled its use by ruling elites (Acuña 2009). More research by the La Corona Archaeological Project discovered that Structure 13R-10 featured a hieroglyphic stairway (Ponce and Cajas 2013; Stuart and Baron 2013). The stairway was likely repositioned by the ancient inhabitants of the site and subsequently looted in the 1960s along with the carved monument known as Panel 6 or the Dallas Altar. Our narrative follows the life-history of Structure 13R-10, beginning with how it was initially vested with ideological



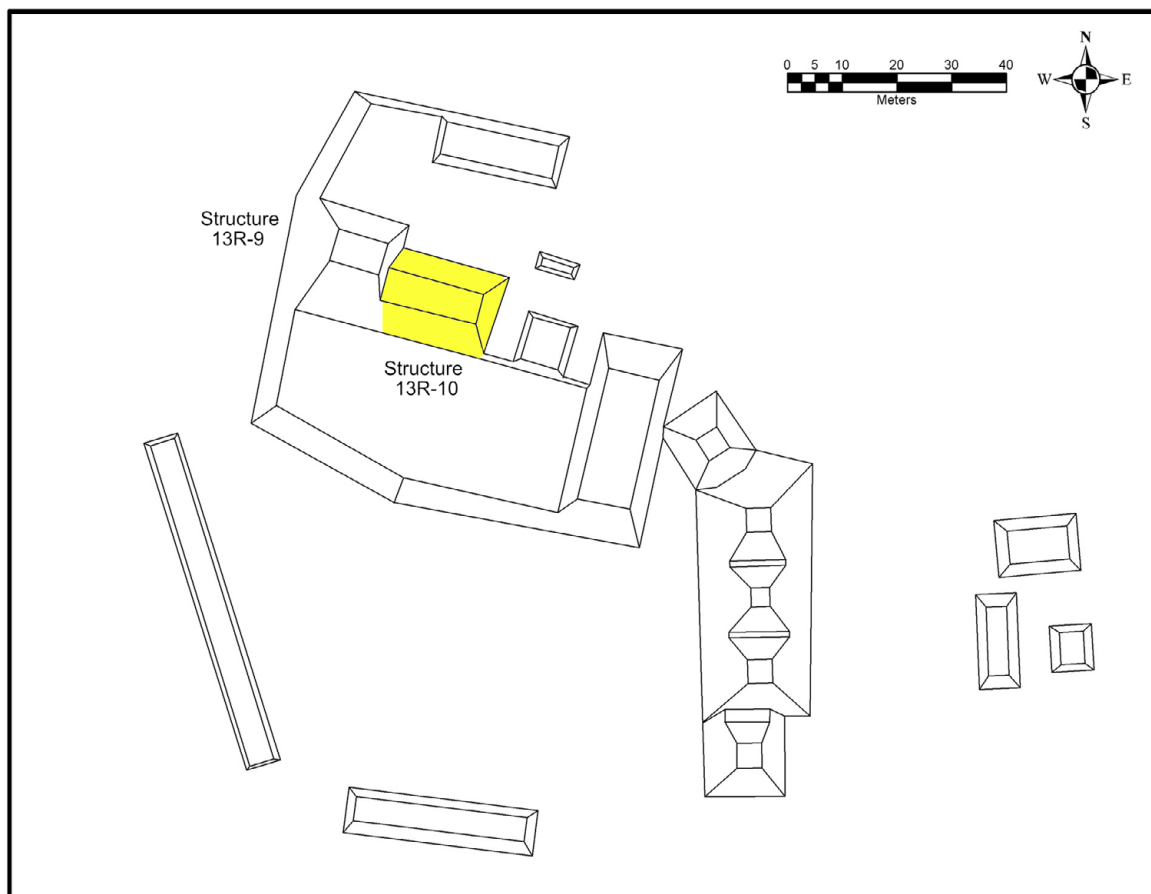


Figure 2. Structures 13R-9 and 13R-10 in the Coronitas Group (map by Canuto).

significance and how its associated materials signal different interpretations of the area through time.

The Birth of a Ceremonial Place: 4th-6th centuries CE

Structure 13R-10 was a ceremonial building during most of its lifetime. During the 3rd or 4th century CE, elites of La Corona commissioned the building of a low clay platform on the northwest side of the Coronitas Group. Since it predates most surrounding structures, its foundation likely dedicated a novel ceremonial place. The establishment was commemorated by an event materialized in a midden deposit along its central axis. The deposit contained around 1900 Late Preclassic and Protoclassic (300 BCE-250 CE) sherds and large amounts of charcoal (Parris and Barrientos 2014: 156–158). Additionally, over 50 freshwater snails were recovered in the fill, many of which were potential ornaments (Ponce 2014:93–97). This deposit included a cache composed of two lip-to-lip Aguila Naranja bowls containing a greenstone effigy (Figure 3). This deposit – which also

contained fragments of marine shell, a snail carved in stone, and ceramic seals – suggest a founding event where aquatic resources were used for commensal and ceremonial purposes.

The burial of a middle-aged woman was also found in this clay platform accompanied by an Ixcancario Orange Polychrome vessel (Patterson and Kate 2015:349–350; Ponce 2014:104–107). Given the dominant ancient Maya practice of placing burials for establishing physical connections with landscapes (McAnany 2014), this burial of a probable ancestor further imbued the building with meaning. A tangible link was thus established with past generations and Structure 13R-10 was born as an ideologically salient place.

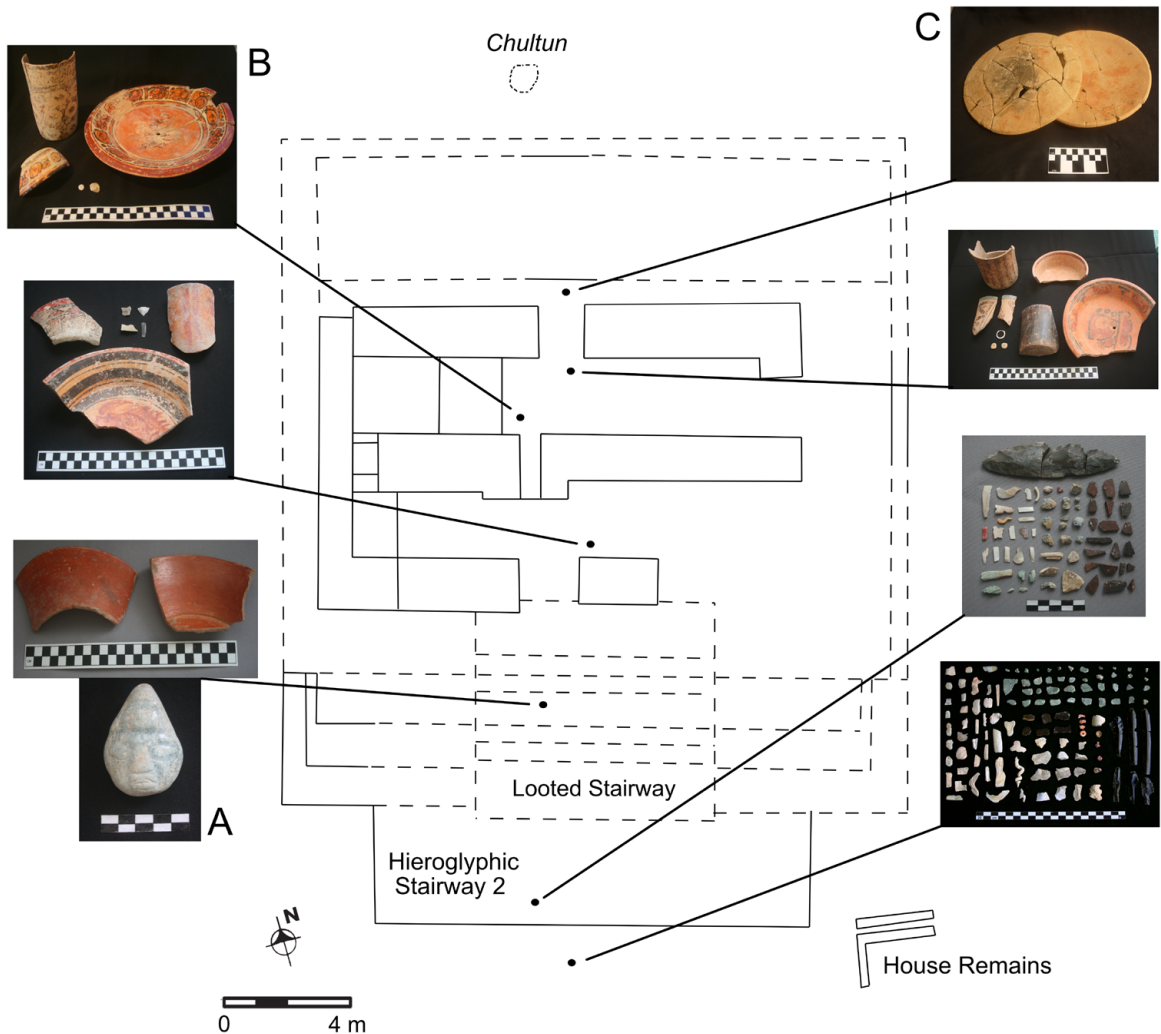


Figure 3. Caches in the central axis of Structure 13R-10 mentioned in the text. A) 4th century foundation cache. B) 7th century cache with plate from La Florida. C) 9th century cache of lip-to-lip comals (graphic by Ponce).

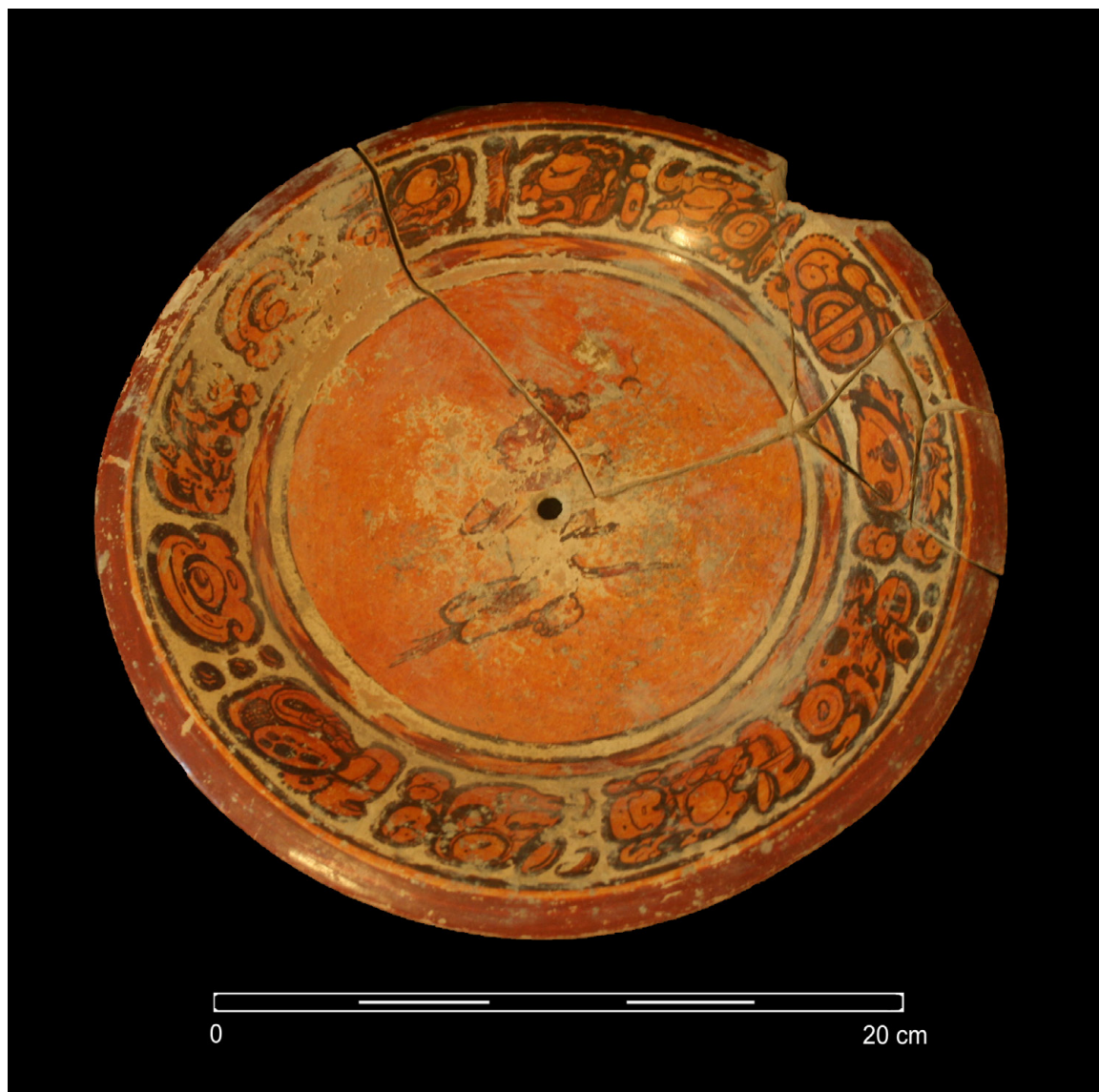


Figure 4. Plate from Namaan or La Florida (photo by Ponce).

Epigraphic evidence provides complementary data for this early life stage. Panel 1, an in-situ Late Classic hieroglyphic monument discovered in the Coronitas Group, records the arrival of a patron deity four millennia earlier, in 3805 BCE (Canuto and Barrientos 2020: 190; Stuart et al. 2014: 436). This panel and Altar 5, also found at Coronitas, indicate that the 6th century rulers associated themselves retrospectively with this early patron deity to claim authority over previously established lineages of La Corona (Canuto and Barrientos 2020: 190–193; Stuart et al. 2018). The

burial points to the potential significance of local ancestry for the community, but epigraphic evidence indicates that rulers intentionally associated themselves with deities instead of any historical local lineages as a political strategy. This suggests that rulers who commissioned these texts were clearly aiming to proliferate a specific narrative focused on mythological events, but archaeological data provides a different side of the story. Contrasting voices and intentions are thus perceivable when combining epigraphic and archaeological data.

The Growth of a Ceremonial Building: 7th- 8th centuries CE

During the 7th century Structure 13R-10 and the Coronitas Group were remodeled and grew as ceremonial places. The attached Structure 13R-9 was built in two episodes. The first episode's construction fill was found with a dense layer of polychrome sherds, faunal bones, and charcoal dated between 638 and 688 CE. This rich matrix points to a food consumption event associated with this new construction episode, itself reflecting a desire by ruling elites for more ceremonial space (Cajas 2013: 132). A cache in the final construction phase of Structure 13R-9 contained a polychrome vessel decorated with the image of the god K'awiil containing stingray spines, lightly used obsidian blades, coral, and shells (Gómez 2010: 179–185). The presence of these prestigious religious artifacts in this cache suggests that La Corona rulers may have been responsible for its deposition.

Seven additional dedicatory caches were placed in consecutive construction episodes of Structure 13R-10 (Ponce 2014, 2015). These successive dedicatory rituals were placed along the central axis of the building and signal continuous ceremonial events (see Figure 3). Several vessels displayed aquatic imagery, showing this ideological theme's enduring prevalence (Parris 2015; Parris and Barrientos 2014). Four of these caches contained a number of polychrome vessels, human bones and teeth pertaining to adults and children, shell, and jade (Patterson and Kate 2015:347–348). One of the cached vessels, a polychrome plate dated to phase Tepeu 1 (600-650 CE) from Namaan or La Florida represents a gift between ruling elites (Figure 4; Canuto and Barrientos 2014: 8). This suggests the involvement of non-local elites in the ceremonies.

At La Florida the vessel was likely originally used for ritual or serving purposes. Its meaning changed when it became a gift, henceforth materializing a link between the royal courts. This vessel was likely cached because of its foreign origin and the relationship that it represented between La Corona and La Florida elites. A kill hole in the middle of the plate signals that it was terminated before being deposited. Far from ending the vessel's life-history, its meaning remained and accumulated as reflected in repeating caching events. Each cached object's life-history eventually became part of the merged meaning of Structure 13R-10.

Architectural data also suggests that Structure 13R-10 was expanded during the 7th century CE. The plaza on the south side of Structure 13R-10 could have hosted a large number of people attending public events and the platform would have been ideal for staging purposes. As such, both elites and non-elites possibly participated as spectators of these events. It is likely that La Corona's Kaanul-era rulers used the complex to perform as intermediaries between the local community and patron deities, an idea supported both by epigraphic evidence from Panel 1 and Altar 5, and

archaeological evidence in the form of the dedicatory caches.

Three intrusive burials belonging to three women were placed throughout the 8th century. The most ostentatious one was Burial 13, which was placed between AD 700-720 in a cist carved in bedrock with over 300 greenstone beads, Spondylus shells, four vessels, weaving tools, and stingray spines that probably served as bloodletting implements (Ponce 2015: 243–250). One of the stingray spines featured the short carved inscription *Ix Yax ? K'ik'* (Blue/Green Blood Woman), which probably refers to the name of the buried individual (David Stuart, personal communication). This burial of a previously undocumented noble La Corona woman reiterates the importance of this building as a resting place for the site's ruling elites, following the ancestral veneration pattern established in the first construction phase.

Although the archaeological evidence points to Structure 13R-10 and its surroundings as a mostly elite space, non-elites held an important role in the construction and expansion of the building. The presence of construction bins in the 7th century fill of Structure 13R-10 shows organization of labor, possibly through different groups participating in the expansion of the building. This contrasts with the building's uniformly built early clay platform, evidencing the increasing investment in labor as the ceremonial space became more significant.

Death and Rebirth of a Ceremonial Place: 8th century CE

In the 8th century, the life of Structure 13R-10 as a ceremonial platform came to an end and it was reborn as an area for preparation of commensal events. This shift was probably related to broad political changes in which Kaanul's hegemonic influence diminished and affected strategic centers like La Corona. A large midden found in a *chultun* – a storage pit dug in bedrock – was found in the patio behind Structure 13R-10 (Fernández 2011). Recovered materials include over 6000 sherds, figurines, obsidian blades, chert fragments, fauna and paleoethnobotanical remains (Parris 2014). Similar deposits recovered from the temples on the east side of the complex point to multiple feasting events. Chablekal Fine Gray ceramics date these events to the end of the Late Classic (750-800 CE; Baron 2016; Perla Barrera 2013). These deposits share various commonalities including cooking, storage, and serving vessels, drums and censers, fragments of figurines, marine shells, chert, obsidian, and ashes. Additionally, deer, turtle, fish, mollusks, maize, chili, amaranth, and leafy greens were consumed during these events (Cagnato 2017a, 2017b; Fridberg 2015). These findings point to the continued symbolic importance of the complex through large numbers of people engaged in feasts.

Architecturally, Structure 13R-10 went from being an open platform for performance to a stepped building with private rooms. Based on the close proximity of Structure 13R-10 to the *chultun*, it is likely that this structure was used for preparation activities related to feasting. As mentioned earlier, Panel 1 records the arrival of a patron deity in 3805 BCE to which Kaanul-era rulers associated themselves (Stuart et al. 2014: 436). The feasts signal a broader communal involvement in activities related to the commemoration of patron deities, pointing to a shifting strategy of political legitimation by La Corona rulers (Baron 2016: 157–160). A cache with two lip-to-lip comals was found in the final construction phase of Structure 13R-10. In comparison to the

earlier prevalence of serving vessels in caches, the deposition of mundane cooking vessels points to the shifting function of the building. While in the 7th century ceremonial events featured mostly ruling elites participating in ritual performance atop the 13R-10 platform, the association with feasting events in the 8th century indicates a change in focus to broader community participation. The shifting use of space and widespread archaeological evidence for commensal events thus reveal activities and meanings assigned by people not recorded in the hieroglyphic texts. Evidence thus suggests that the Coronitas Group became increasingly accessible and meaningful to a broader range of La Corona's inhabitants.

As discussed above, archaeological research at La Corona indicates that many monuments were moved from their original location by the Late Classic inhabitants. Panels, stelae, altars, and hieroglyphic stairways were dismantled from their original locations in *spolia* events and repositioned across the site core including the northeast courtyard of the Regal Palace and Structure 13R-10 (Barrientos et al. 2016; Canuto et al. 2017; Canuto and Barrientos 2020; Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018: 127; Ponce 2013). A hieroglyphic stairway and the looted Panel 6 – a monument commemorating the marriage alliance between three Kaanul women and La Corona rulers – were repositioned on the façade of Structure 13R-10 (Figure 5; Canuto and Barrientos 2020:184; Martin 2008). The last recorded date on the monuments is 716 CE, and they were likely repositioned around 750 CE (Stuart and Baron 2013). The carcass of Panel 6 and most of the carved blocks were archaeologically recovered from looters' back dirt, which suggests the monuments were set in this building in antiquity and subsequently looted in the 1960s. However, looters missed the lowermost step (Hieroglyphic Stairway 2), which was excavated by the authors in 2012 (Ponce and Cajas 2013). The blocks originally came from at least five different sources, which makes it difficult to track their individual life-histories, and their texts generally relate to La Corona's relationship with Kaanul (Figure 6).

Archaeological excavations further support the idea that Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 was a later addition to Structure 13R-10. Excavations uncovered part of the original staircase of the building, composed of rustically carved blocks that contrast starkly with the high-quality carved limestone blocks from Hieroglyphic Stairway 2. Contextual data thus facilitate the interpretation of the stairway in its architectural setting and further informs on the *spolia* events. The panels of Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 seem to have been placed in sets with some intentionality, but not following their original arrangements. For example, the blocks in the corners were placed upside-down while blocks featuring Calakmul ruler Yuknoom Ch'een II and La Corona ruler Sak Maas comprise the center of the arrangement (Figure 7).

The long-held ideological significance of Structure 13R-10 and the Coronitas Group which materialized in activities related to political legitimation and ancestral and patron deity veneration made it an ideal location to reset the monuments. Variations in the backgrounds of participants and how space was experienced led to reinterpretations of Structure 13R-10, but shared meanings of the complex endured despite political changes. The building was probably also physically ideal in terms of space, access, and visibility. Although we cannot know where blocks were first set, their repositioning mode suggests that a group of non-royal elites or commoners, or even a new local elite were involved.



Figure 5. Panel 6 (Dallas Museum of Art) and its carcass (Element 54) found in looters' back dirt (photo by Ponce).

The resetting order indicates that while they may not have been fully aware of how the monuments were meant to be read or interpreted, they were entirely aware of their broad historical significance. The intent was unlikely to evoke a single narrative, but rather to transfer a collective history to Structure 13R-10. The way in which the historical past was referenced in this particular



Figure 6. La Corona's Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 (photo courtesy of David Stuart).



Figure 7. Elements 35 and 36 in the center of Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 (photo courtesy of David Stuart).

case suggests enduring social memory of La Corona's Kaanul-era history. Despite shifting identities and experiences, distinct groups made the Coronitas Group a significant venue with an overarching meaning predisposed for communal gatherings and the repositioning of the monuments.

New Voices and Final Life Changes: 9th century CE

Excavations in the last architectural phase of Structure 13R-10 yielded evidence of small-scale household activities through domestic refuse (Ponce 2013). In comparison to the feasting deposits, recovered ceramics were mostly for food preparation and storage. Fragments of Fine Orange ceramics date the last occupation to the Terminal Classic (> 800 CE) and indicate that it was not contemporary with the aforementioned feasts. This also indicates that the function of Structure 13R-10 shifted once again in the Terminal Classic, when it was reborn as a household. The exact reasons for this drastic change are unknown but are likely related to broad sociopolitical circumstances, in which the long-held alliance with Kaanul came to an end. Relatively equally distributed refuse in the structure's rooms and in a dwelling in the plaza point to the possibility of small groups using the area. The materials suggest this location was likely reinhabited by non-royal elites or commoners, once again incorporating people of different social backgrounds into our narrative.

The facts that the hieroglyphic stairway remained in place and that people chose to continue living in Structure 13R-10 and its immediate surroundings speak to the importance of this location for the local community. The presence of monuments signaled the memorialization of a historical past but did not dictate how this place was meant to be experienced or remembered. Rather, contextual data reflect diverse interpretations of the past by groups not mentioned in elite-dominated

texts. Performances by ruling elites and carved monuments were initially significant to establish a normative narrative. La Corona's community was subsequently incorporated as spectators and as participants in feasting events. *Spolia* and the reuse of Structure 13R-10 for household activities show how it was reinterpreted centuries later by non-royal elites and commoners. Altogether, these distinct sets of evidence juxtapose power dynamics and the voices of different social groups in events surrounding the life-history of Structure 13R-10.

Conclusions

In this study we have used epigraphic, architectural, and material data to reconstruct the life-history of La Corona's Structure 13R-10. A life-history approach offers a unique perspective on the relations between people, material culture, and their built environment. This case study highlights how the layering of meanings over time impacts interpretations of the built environment. Following the complex life-history of a single building also informs on activities and long-term renegotiations of meanings that are not recorded in hieroglyphic texts. Structure 13R-10 was initially a platform for ceremonies hosted by charismatic Kaanul-era rulers. Non-elites likely participated as



laborers in the expansion of the building and as participants of ceremonial events. During the 7th century it was used for the preparation of feasts for patron deities in which elites and non-elites likely participated. The feasts were part of a program of political legitimation by La Corona rulers. These events likely bonded people of different social strata and facilitated the remembrance of a common historical past. The repositioning of monuments in the façade in the 8th century and its reuse as a dwelling in the 9th century speak of broader sociopolitical changes. More importantly, they point to an

enduring social memory of La Corona's Kaanul-era history despite diverse local understandings and reactions to those changes. Structure 13R-10 was subsequently visited by Postclassic pilgrims and rediscovered in the 1960s by *chicleros* and looters. Since 2008, archaeological research has been undertaken by Guatemalan, North American, and European archaeologists by the La Corona Archaeological Project, who continue to transform this landmark and its meaning.

Relations with the built environment are not uniform. Built spaces may influence the communal experiences of people who in turn physically transform buildings based on their historic past and future desires. A biographical approach allowed us to identify power dynamics and the participation of different groups of people in the life cycle of Structure 13R-10. Hieroglyphic texts and rich iconographic data document the lives and roles of the ruling elites but provide limited information on non-dominant groups. In turn, archaeology can provide a glimpse into the activities and experiences of a more diverse group of people. A finer interpretation of the social characteristics of these groups is largely dependent on contextual data, but our study evidences how the same place was meaningful in different ways to people of diverse social strata. Lastly, this study shows that even with detailed historical data from abundant epigraphic texts, Classic Maya history is never complete without archaeology.

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Zombie Words: Kaqchikel Revitalizationists' Use of Colonial Texts to Repurpose Vocabulary

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In my 47 years working with Mayan languages, I have come to appreciate the range and variety of words that have fallen out of active use since the 1530s. In Kaqchikel, for example, some terms have died out as their referents are no longer extant, e.g. mun 'a branded slave', k'ulpatan 'tribute collector', ak'anima'q 'high-ranking nobleman'. Other forgotten words, however, have too clear modern referents, but have not been revived: e.g. lab'al 'warfare', aqlab'al 'soldier'. Many words have shifted their meanings: kej now means 'horse' rather than deer, äk' is 'chicken' not 'turkey'. Activists mining colonial period texts have brought back some words, with shifted meaning. Teleche' and alab'il, which in the 16th century named two ranks of slaves now form the basis of the couplet telechanem, alab'il 'exploitation'. Rajpopi' Amaq' lit. those-of-the mat-of nation, the council of leaders, is now applied to Congress. Phrases of authority such as q'aq'al tepewal "power and majesty" get read as "anger and mountains". Kipus, kinawal 'their divining power, their spirit-companion' are interpreted as 'their rust and their nahuales'. Daykeepers and other Maya activists and scholars are poring over the colonial texts in their newly published forms and rebuilding their understandings of their heritage and the spirit world. This paper will explore some of these adjustments as they reflect the new Kaqchikel Maya dawn in the 13th b'aqtun (pih).

Keywords: Kaqchikel, language revitalization, semantic shift, marking inversion, cultural reclamation



Introduction

In 2000, I began the process of translating a series of Kaqchikel documents from the 16th century into English, working with a team of eight native speakers. Unsurprisingly, after 500 years, there were many words in the text that were unknown to these speakers. At first, they tried interpretations based on modern homophones or similar sounding roots. But colonial era dictionaries soon proved to give more coherent translations, the most helpful of these being Thomas de Coto's (1983) *Thesaurus Verborum*, compiled between 1647 and 1656, as well as Pantaleón de Guzmán's (1984) *Compendio de Nombres en Lengua Cakchiquel*, which appeared in 1704.

These same references had been used sporadically in the late 1980s, as the Guatemalan Ministry of Education began to experiment with teaching in Mayan languages in select Mayan communities: the four *idiomas mayoritarias*, the most widely spoken indigenous languages (K'iche', Kaqchikel, Q'eqchi' and Mam) plus Q'anjob'al. Pedagogues needed vocabulary that wasn't an active part of vernacular usage. For the Kaqchikel, these colonial sources became fonts.



The first Ministry of Education neologism project ran between 1993 and 1998 with the goal of developing vocabulary to enable monolingual instruction for k-12 students, *preprimaria – diversificado*. Kaqchikel Cholchi', the Kaqchikel branch of the *Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala*, was chosen to do the initial creation. I worked as a consultant with Kaqchikel Cholchi' in 1993 and 1994. The vocabularies were vetted with educators, community linguists, elders and daykeepers from these linguistic groups. In the validation process, we found that new formations based on phonological and morphological rules sometimes met with pushback, but when these colonial texts and dictionaries were cited as sources, acceptance was nearly automatic.

In 1995 these same sources were mined for vocabulary during the translation of the Peace Accord that dealt with indigenous rights: *Acuerdo sobre Identidad y Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas*. Educators and activists continue to pore over the colonial documents, sometimes without the use of the colonial dictionaries, to re-activate words, often fitting them into new usages and niches.

In 2018 I was commissioned to translate the Xajil Chronicle into modern Kaqchikel to be used as a textbook in high school. My first draft, written with high school students in mind, was read by three Kaqchikel scholars with *licenciaturas*, of whom one was a sociolinguist. Even the scaled back language I had used needed to be revamped. More modern equivalences for archaic phrases and lexemes were needed. Since footnotes had been prohibited, new words were offered along with translations as couplets, triplets or quadruplets.

In 2019 and 2020 teachers from Oxlajuj Aj, an intensive Kaqchikel language and culture program that I have run for the past 33 years, read and taught from this modern translation. Despite their training, some vocabulary was still non-transparent. Teachers reverted to folk etymology. In part, this was due to an upstreaming of egalitarian values, militating against interpreting any words as showing distinctions of hereditary rank, be it “noble” or “enslaved.”

This paper examines prime examples of colonial era words that had fallen into disuse by the 1900s and which have been brought back to life to serve new purposes. The new referents may likewise be changed to fit contemporary needs.

I discuss four types of shift: (a) Loss of domain and reassignment, (b) marking reversal, (c) replacement of Spanish loans, and (d) grammatical shift and simplification.

Types of Semantic Shift

A. Domain Loss and Reassignment.

Perhaps the easiest shift to understand is the loss of domain. When the Spanish took over governance, they first used the indigenous ruling class and structures, but gradually replaced them and/or stripped them of their powers. We have terms for many indigenous noble titles, the actual duties and responsibilities of which aren't completely clear. Some of these titles, which have not been revived, are shown in Table 1.

Titles that are still in use, with some semantic drift included, are seen in Table 2.

Not only did the Spanish replace the nobility and abolish most of the indigenous governmental offices, their "pacification" also eliminated the warriors, their weapons, and regalia. War related terms that have disappeared appear in Table 3.

Of course, war did not disappear from Kaqchikel territory. Most prominently, a genocidal war was waged in Guatemala from 1960 to 1995. These old terms did not resurface, rather the Kaqchikel developed new ways of speaking about the warring factions. The government forces were referred to as *raxkeja'*, which could be taken as *räx* "green" + *kej* "horse" + *a'* "plural", given the color of

Table 1. List of colonial Kaqchikel noble titles and possible responsibilities.

| title | translation | charge |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| rajob' achi' | potentiality (desire) man | guard town roads |
| ajtz'alam | he (of) boards | care of buildings, apportion labor parties to maintain town and town lands |
| q'alel, q'al achi' | prince, crowned one | war leader, with some political power |
| k'amajay | lineage-bringer | organize the lineage |
| nimak'amajay | great-lineage-bringer | oversee the work, tribute and policies of the lineage |
| k'ulpatan | tribute-receiver | collect tribute |
| ch'ikb'al | survey | surveyor |
| te'ajaw | mother-lord | female ruler |
| Xoq'ojaw | woman-lord | female ruler |
| ajxit | he (of) jade | jade-worker, artisan |
| ajpwäq | he (of) metal/gold/silver/copper | metalworker, artisan |
| ajtz'ib' | he (of) writing | scribe |
| ajk'ot | he (of) sculpture | sculptor |

Table 2. Modern Kaqchikel titles with current responsibilities.

| title | translation | charge |
|--------------------|---|---|
| ajpop achi' | he (of) mat man | town councilor, principal |
| chinamital | ward leader, now <i>cantón</i> leader | organize town neighborhoods for work levies and tribute, now COVID-19 protection |
| rutza'm chinamital | his-nose ward leader | assistant ward leader, especially for dependents outside the town proper |
| samajel | today a worker or laborer, in colonial times, specifically a messenger | carry messages, especially between towns and polities |
| mama' | elder, councilor, today "large as an adjective". This is the root of <i>grandfather</i> . | Lead extended household |
| nimawinäq | noble, now anyone with money or power | leader for the municipality, traditionally there were four such leaders, per town |
| ajaw | ruler/owner, today only owner, or as Ajaw, God | Leader of the polity |
| k'ajol | noble/son of a man, today only son of a man | lieutenants of a ruler |

some of the uniforms. The guerrillas were variously known as *aj pa q'ayis* "those in the monte, the brush" or *b'atz'i* "howler monkeys". However, in the Peace Accords, the guerrilla got the much nicer appellative *molöj chupüy meb'a'il aj Iximulew* "the group that extinguishes poverty of Guatemala". It should be noted that *Iximulew* is a neologism adopted in 1995 by the working group appointed by the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala to produce the Kaqchikel translation of the *Acuerdo sobre Identidad y Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas*. The working group (personal communication) noted that corn is a mainstay of Mayan diet and culture and should be an emblem for the people and their nation.

With regard to weaponry, while the word for bow and arrow did not disappear, nor did slings and their names, new terms were needed for the European arms. Guns and other firearms have become known collectively simply as *q'aq'* "fire". These current weapon terms are seen in Table 4.

In addition to losing words of status for upper classes, words for the lower classes and slave ranks have also been lost. These lexemes are shown in Table 5.

Words for wealth or pre-contact regalia have also been lost, as seen in Table 6

Another arena where vocabulary has been lost is that surrounding animal pairs or spirit

Table 3. Colonial Kaqchikel warfare vocabulary fallen in desuetude.

| Colonial Kaqchikel term | gloss |
|-------------------------|--|
| ajlab'al | Warrior |
| xajpota' | Breastplate |
| pokob' | round armshield |
| b'oko' | full-body shield, still present as place name for Chimaltenango |
| to'j | Spear |
| tunatiw q'uq' | battle plumes |
| tunatiw k'ub'ul | battle armor |
| achkayupil | padded cotton armor (borrowing from Nahuatl (i)chca 'cotton'+ -yo: '-ness' + -pil) 'diminutive') N.B. Classical Nahuatl did not have an o/u distinction. Nahuatl words with back vowels are often borrowed into Kaqchikel with the u realization. Alternatively, Campbell (personal communication) suggests that the final two syllables may come from Nahuatl /wipil/ 'blouse'. |

Table 4. Current Kaqchikel weapon terms.

| Kaqchikel weapon term | gloss |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| ch'ab' | bow |
| ral ch'ab' | lit. child of the bow, arrow |
| ikäq' | sling |
| q'aq' | firearm |

Table 5. Colonial Kaqchikel terms for ranks of slaves and their modern reappropriations

| Kaqchikel term | colonial usage | modern usage |
|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| teleche' | slave | root of exploitation |
| alab'il | slave, captive | root of discrimination |
| mun | domestic slave, tattooed as such | root of "fruit" or "tasty treat" |

transforms. While the term "nawal" remains, used in both Spanish and Kaqchikel, the belief that someone with spiritual power, who is not a witch, can transform themselves into an animal pair is no longer common. Witches, of course, are known to transform themselves, but when they do so,

Table 6. Colonial Kaqchikel terms for wealth and regalia

| Kaqchikel term | colonial usage | modern usage |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| xit | jade, greenstone | largely unknown, use the Spanish word <i>jade</i> |
| pwäq | precious metal | money |
| k'wal | jewel | unknown, homophonous with “well, water source” |
| q'uq'uraxon | quetzal tail plume | unknown form, now use paraphrastic <i>nim rusum-al q'uq'</i> , lit. big feather quetzal |
| k'ub'ul | trogon feather | Unused |
| chaktit | red plume | Unknown |
| cholq'ij | 260-day calendar | 260-day calendar |
| mayq'ij | solar calendar | unknown, use <i>cholab'</i> , ordering of the year |
| q'inomal | riches | unknown, use <i>b'eyomal</i> “wealth”, recent suggestion to bring back <i>q'inomal</i> to mean “territorial dominion”, no uptake to date |

Table 7. Spiritual vocabulary

| Kaqchikel term | colonial usage | modern usage |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| pus | spiritual power | pus, suppuration |
| jaleb'äl | spirit transform, animal transform | none |
| nawal | animal transform | day sign associated with one's birth |

their animal self is not referred to as their nawal. The Kaqchikel term for nawal, *jaleb'äl*, is no longer in use. The spiritual power, *pus*, and the ability to transform oneself into one's animal counterpart, *nawal*, were qualities often attributed to pre-contact Kaqchikel leaders. However, these terms have different meanings today. *Pus* refers to ‘pus, suppuration’ and *nawal* refers to the day sign or signs associated with one's birthday in the 260-day ritual calendar. Compare these terms in Table 7.

B. Marking Reversal.

Marking reversal is a common process during language contact and is particularly obvious for the names of both endemic and intrusive animals. The Chuj word *kej*, which originally meant

Table 8. Marking reversals for Kaqchikel animals post-contact.

| English gloss | pre-contact Kaqchikel term | colonial Kaqchikel term | modern Kaqchikel term |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| turkey chicken | äk' Ø | äk' kaxlan äk' | qo'l/pi'y äk' |
| deer horse | kej Ø | kej kaxlan kej | masat (<Nahuatl) kej |
| jabalí pig | aq Ø | aq kaxlan aq | juyub'al aq aq |

Table 9. Kaqchikel wild animal names re-assigned to non-native counterparts.

| referent | original Kaqchikel | current Kaqchikel | literal translation |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| puma, cougar African lion | köj Ø | o nimames, juyub'al mes | big cat, moun- tain cat |
| danta, tapir elephant | tixli' Ø | juyub'al tix tixli' | m o u n t a i n elephant elephant |
| jaguar tiger, leopard | b'alam Ø | b'alam b'alam | jaguar jaguar |

“deer”, illustrates this well. Horses were introduced to the Maya world by the Spanish invaders. The Chuj dubbed this new animal a ‘Spanish deer’ *kaxtilanh kej*. Over time, horses became more prevalent, and deer were overhunted and became scarce. The more common animal then got the shorter name *kej* and “deer” became *k'ultakil kej* “wild horse”. Similarly, pre-contact K'iche' used *k(y)e:j* for “deer”; in the early Colonial period it polysemously for both “deer” and “horse”; once horses became more commonplace, “deer” became the more marked term *k'i:che:'k(y)e:j* literally, “forest horse”.

Kaqchikel animal names have undergone similar shifts following the introduction of new animals. Thus, *äk'* “turkey” went through a similar evolution. Chickens were first “Spanish turkey” *kaxlan äk'*, but now far outnumber turkeys and are just *äk'*, while turkeys now have onomatopoeic names, the tom being *qo'l*, the hen being *pi'y*. These marking reversals are shown in Table 8.

Interestingly some animals that were not brought over in large numbers have still displaced their native counterparts linguistically. Judging from the pictures chosen by k-12 teachers and Kaqchikel instructors in national and international university programs, *köj*, originally “puma”, now has the African lion as its primary reference, while *tixli'* “danta, or tapir” is now the elephant, either Asian or African. Even the culturally salient jaguar has stiff competition. *B'alam* is as likely to be illustrated with a picture of a leopard or a tiger as with a jaguar. Compare these terms in Table 9.

Table 10. Neologisms to replace loans.

| loanword | replacement | gloss |
|---------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| reloj 'clock' | q'ijob'äl | day-instrument |
| computadora | kematz'ib' | letter-weaver/ writing -weaver |
| teléfono | oyonib'äl | call-instrument |
| llave | jaqb'äl | open-instrument |

Table 11. Spanish loans resistant to replacement by neologisms.

| loanword | possible replacement | gloss |
|----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| kamixa <camisa | xajpo't | man-blouse |
| mexa < mesa | ch'atal | table |
| tumin, mero < tomin, medio | pwäq | precious meal |
| pale < padre | ajyuq' | shepherd, pastor, minister, priest |

Table 12. Current Kaqchikel kin terms.

| colonial Kaqchikel | gloss | modern Kaqchikel | gloss |
|--------------------|---|--|---|
| nuxib'al | my brother, my male cousin spoken by a female | nuxib'al nuch'utixib'al | my brother my male cousin |
| nunimal | my older same sex sibling, my older same sex cousin | nunimal nuch'utinimal | my older same sex sibling my older same sex cousin |
| nuchaq' | my younger same sex sibling, my younger same sex cousin | nuchaq' nuch'utichaq' | my younger same sex sibling my younger same sex cousin |
| wana' | my sister, my female cousin (male speaking) | wana' nuch'uti'ana' or ch'utiwana' | my sister my female cousin, (male speaking) |

Table 13. Kaqchikel terms for in-laws.

| Kaqchikel in-law terms | gloss |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| nujite' | my mother-in-law, male speaking |
| nujinan | my father-in-law, male speaking |
| walite' | my mother-in-law, female speaking |
| walinan | my father-in-law, female speaking |

C. Replacement of Spanish Loans.

Since the mid-1970s, Mayan educators and linguistic activists have been trying to eliminate Spanish loanwords from educational materials and from common parlance. Some loanwords are easy to identify and have been eagerly replaced. A few examples are given in Table 10.

Other words, though identified as loans, have resisted replacement, despite available Kaqchikel counterparts. A sample of these more resistant terms is shown in Table 11.

Interestingly, many households refer to the tables therein (Table 11) as *ch'atal*, while ritual altars throughout the countryside are referred to as *mexa'* by the locals and spiritual practitioners.

Spanish loanwords often survive even in Mayan ritual contexts. Many *ajq'ija'* refer to the spirit, the essence of themselves and their clients as *ruyosil*, *rusanto'il*. *Dios* itself is a resilient loanword, often simplified to *yos*.

In 2017, while speaking to the presidents of the 22 Mayan linguistic communities in the *Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala* (ALMG), I noted that in their efforts to get rid of Spanish loans, they had left one that was perhaps the most used, *matyöx* “thank you”, which derives from (*ru*)*ma dios* “because of, or due to god”. By early 2018, a replacement was being touted by the ALMG, *nink'awomaj chawe* “I thank you”; a form attested in the de Coto dictionary and listed in the Cojti' and colleagues' (1998) dictionary. The revivers of this term, perhaps realizing that its length might impede its adoption, suggested the shortened form *k'amo*. This is a neologism, which doesn't follow the general morphological rules of Kaqchikel, but it has, in fact, spread quickly. The short form attested in de Coto *k'ama'* was not salvaged and re-introduced.

As family structures change, family terms have also been replaced. *Te'ej tata'aj*, “mother and father”, are safe. However, whereas cousins would once have been seen as classificatory brothers, older *nimalaxel* or younger *chaq'laxel*, these terms have been replaced by *primo*. Likewise, aunts and uncles are now known by Spanish terms, except for the most avid language activists, though here they do retain the idea that the kinship term should not apply to those not consanguineous, so your father's brother is *tío*, but his wife is not *tía*. Neologisms have been created as equivalences for the Spanish kinship terms, but no effort has gone into trying to re-introduce the pre-contact classificatory kinship system.

The terms for in-laws have ceded ground. While most people do know the terms for mother- and father-in-law, they tend to use the Spanish terms. Sibling-in-law terms are well on their way out and are replaced in daily parlance by their Spanish terms. No one has yet sought to resuscitate these failing words. Note the terms in Table 13.

The term *wach'ali'* which was used between *consuegros*, the couples whose children wed each

Table 14. Guatemalan Spanish terms from Kaqchikel falsely identified as Spanish and replaced.

| Kaqchikel term | gloss | Guatemalan Spanish | possible replacement |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| majk'uy | <i>Lycianthes synanthera quileute</i> | makuy | kilete |
| ch'ip | last born child | chipe | ti k'isib'al |
| kolo'ch | ball, round | colocho | kolotz', kolokik |

Table 15. Colonial period adverbial phrases and modern simplifications.

| colonial form | rough gloss | modern form | rough gloss |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| ja öq | that is when | töq | When |
| ja k'a ri' | that then this | k'a ri' | then this |
| re' k'a | this (proximal) then | rere' | this |
| chi ri' k'a | at this then, there | chi ri' | there |
| (je) na wi pe | they still trace come, these exactly | je ~ rere' | they, these |
| we ta k'a | if irrealist then, if | we ~wi | if |

Table 16. *Pero* > *po* > *xa ja ri*.

| common modern Kaqchikel | gloss | activist alternative | gloss |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| <i>po</i> < <i>pero</i> | but | <i>xa ja ri'</i> | but |

other, has generalized to co-godparents, and to the ritual sponsors of those becoming *ajq'ija'*.

The zeal to eliminate loanwords has led to suggesting replacements for words that are originally Kaqchikel, but have been borrowed into local Spanish, compare the items in Table 14.

D. Grammatical Shift and Simplification.

After 500 years of exposure to and pressure from Spanish, Kaqchikel has undergone some structural changes, such as loss of focus antipassive, word order simplifications, loss of syntactic flexibility, and the partial elimination of *wi* traces for locative movement. We see structural changes interacting with the lexicon primarily in two places: (1) clause-introductory particles and (2) conjunctions.

(1) *Clause-introductory particles.* In Kaqchikel, a listener or reader's attention is directed through the narrative storyline largely by short adverbial particles. These particles tend to cluster at the beginning of clauses, indicating whether the action is foregrounded, backgrounded, shifting main actors, beginning or ending an episode. In colonial texts, discourse structure is clearly marked. Sections are introduced adverbially, often with *wa'e'*. This particle might be translated as "herein", and is particular to written accounts and histories. *Wa'e'* has dropped out of modern

usage. The related form *wawe'* “here” is a spatial locative rather than a discourse marker *per se*. Once an episode is launched by the introductory adverbial particles, pronouns that mark subjects and additional adverbs direct the reader’s attention through the narrative. Subsections of an episode are generally linked with particles, often time adverbs or subordinating conjunctions. A robust set of such particles was used in colonial texts and clustered together in complex opening adverbial phrases. Though many of the members of this set are still known today, they are seldom used in sequence, but tend to occur alone to link sections. Compare the terms in Table 15.

One multi-particle clause-introductory series still in active use is *xajari'* “just that this”. This particle string is being promoted by activists to replace the subordinating conjunction *pero* or its Kaqchikel apocopation *po*. The (r)evolution of *pero* can be seen in Table 16.

2. *Conjunctions*. One of the most pervasive borrowings from Spanish has been the coordinating conjunction *y*. This conjunction peppers Kaqchikel speech, coming between nouns, verbs, adjectives and even adverbs, as well as conjoining clauses. Activists have become sensitive to this tiny, but ubiquitous conjunction. They use a couple of strategies to depose *y*. In some instances, they substitute *-uk'in* ~ *-ik'in*, a relational noun with the approximate meaning of “with”.



This noun must be inflected for a possessor, the person or thing that would be the object of the preposition “with” in English. This can be seen in the examples below. The abbreviations used in the morpheme by morpheme gloss line are as follows: Imp = imperative, 1 = first person 2 = second person, 3 = third person, s = singular, p = plural, A = absolutive, E = ergative, comp = completive, incomp = incompletive, art = article, conj = conjunction, neg = negative, irr = irrealis, lig = ligature, ind = independent, d = deictic, pass = passive.

- 2.1. *Katam pe wuk'in!*
 K-at-an pe w-uk'in
 Imp-2sA-move come 1sE-with
 Come thither with me.

- 2.2. *Xb'e ruk'in.*
 X-Ø - b'e r-uk'in
 comp- 3sA – go 3sE-with
 He went with her.

- 2.3 *Yesamäj quk'in.*
 y-e-samäj q-uk'in
 incomp-3pA-work 1pE-with
 They work with us.

- 2.4 *Xeb'eb'iyaj kuk'in ri aj Pa Jotöl.*
 X-e-b'e-b'iyaj k-uk'in ri aj Pa Jotöl
 comp-3pAp-go-outing 3pE-with art one-of at north/high/The United States
 of America

They went on an outing with the gringos.

This gets repurposed as a conjunction so that a sentence like 2.5 (a) would be “corrected” to 2.5 (b).

- (a) *Ma Lu' i ma Xwan man xe'apon ta.*
 ma Lu' i ma Xwan man x-e-apon ta
 Mr. Pedro conj Mr. John neg comp-3pA-arrive/there irr
 Pedro and Juan didn't arrive there.
- (b) *Ma Lu' ruk'in ma Xwan man xe'apon ta.*
 ma Lu' r-uk'in ma Xwan man x-e-apon ta
 Mr. Pedro 3sE-with Mr. John neg comp-3pA-arrive/there irr
 Pedro and Juan didn't arrive there.

A second alternative to *y/i* has been *chuqa'* “also”, a word that isn't used once in the 92 folio pages of the Kaqchikel Chronicles, spanning the 1500s and early 1600s.

- 2.6 *Nqatik ixim, kinäq' chuqa'.*
 n-Ø-qa-tik ixim kinäq' chuqa'
 incomp-3sA-1pE-plant corn beans also
 We plant corn, beans also.
- 2.7 *Xqil kaqaxtän, ruq'a' ne'y chuqa'.*
 x-Ø-q-il käq-a-xtän ru-q'a' ne'y chuqa'
 comp-3sA-1pE-find red-lig-girl 3sE-hand/finger baby also
 We found red-girl-mushrooms, baby-finger mushrooms as well.

Chuqa' unlike *-uk'in* that requires a pronoun possessor and its optional noun referent, *chuqa'* can link other parts of speech and clauses.

- 2.8 *Rija' nim raqän, jeb'el chuqa' üt runa'oj.*
 rija' nim r-aqän jeb'el chuqa' üt ru-na'oj
 3sind big 3sE-leg pretty also good 3sE-personality
 She is tall, pretty and good-natured.
- 2.9 *Xulöq' kinäq' chuqa' saqmolo'.*
 x-Ø-u-löq' kinäq' chuqa' saqmolo'
 comp-3sA-3sE-buy beans also eggs
 She bought beans and eggs.
- 3.0 *Xuch'äj ri läq, xusu', chuqa' xuyäk kan.*
 x-Ø-u-ch'äj ri läq x-Ø-u-su' chuqa' x-Ø-u-yäk kan
 comp-3sA-3sE-wash art dish comp-3sA-3sE-wipe also com-3sA-3sE-place remain
 She washed the dishes, dried them and put them away.
- 3.1 *Xub'ös q'aq' pa ri tuj, chuqa' xuk'am pe jun q'e'l ya'.*
 x-Ø-u-b'ös q'aq' pa ri tuj
 comp-3sA-3sE-kindle fire in art sweatbath
 x-Ø-u-k'am pe jun q'e'l ya'
 comp-3sA-3sE-bring come one jug water
 She kindled the fire in the sweatbath and she brought a jug of water.

These replacements for *i/y* are common in the speech and writing of activists, such as the pedagogues and scholars of Kaqchikel Cholchi', the Kaqchikel branch of the ALMG. However, it must be pointed out that this is one place where they did not go back to the Colonial sources and replicate

the pattern, perhaps because there is no lexical equivalent. In colonial period documents we find that coordinating conjunction is achieved through juxtaposition.

3.2 *Je k'a k'oj kitzij ri Q'aq'awitz, Saktekaw.*

| | | | | | | |
|-----|------|-----------|----------|-----|------------|----------|
| je | k'a | k'oj | ki-tzij | ri | Q'aq'awitz | Saktekaw |
| 3pd | then | there/are | 3pE-word | art | Q'aq'awitz | Saktekaw |

These then are the words of Q'aq'awitz (and) Saktekaw. (Maxwell and Hill 2006: 6)

3.3 *Ja ri chiköp utiw, qo'ch kib'i'.*

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----|--------|--------|-------|----------|
| ja | ri | chiköp | utiw | qo'ch | ki-b'i' |
| 3sd | art | animal | coyote | crow | 3pE-name |

Thus the animal(s) coyote (and) crow (were) their-names. (Maxwell and Hill 2006: 10)

3.4 *Oxlajuj achi', kajlajuj k'a ixöq xüx.*

| | | | | | |
|-----------|-------|-----------|------|-------|----------------------|
| Ox-lajuj | achi' | kaj-lajuj | k'a | ixöq | x-Ø-Ø-üx |
| three-ten | man | four-ten | then | woman | comp-3sA-create-pass |

Thirteen men (and) fourteen then women were-created. (Maxwell and Hill 2006:12)

The syntactic pattern of Spanish has accustomed Kaqchikel speakers, even those for whom Spanish is a weak second language, to having an overt conjunction. For most speakers the borrowing *i/y* fulfills this function. Language activists seeking lexical purity replace the *i/y* with *-uk'in ~ -ik'in* or *chuaq'*, but they do not, or have not yet, reactivated the early colonial mechanism of juxtaposition, despite active consultation of these documents.

Conclusion

As Kaqchikel takes back domains that had for centuries been ceded to Spanish, they are making up for lost time in creating neologisms to fill gaps that have developed. Kaqchikel linguists, pedagogues and scholars, actively mine colonial texts, particularly the *Kaqchikel Chronicles* and the *Popol Wuj*. Access to the colonial dictionaries is more limited as copies of the de Coto dictionary are rare, and the new edition of Pantaleón de Guzmán (2001), sponsored by Kaqchkel Cholchi', was a limited run. The guidelines adopted by the ALMG for the creation of new words are:

- (a) Respect the grammatical rules of the language: phonological, morphological, and syntactic.
- (b) Respect the Maya worldview (eschew Euro-centric concepts)
- (c) Keep words short, not "kilometric". They should be lexemes, not phrases.
- (d) Retrieve old words fallen in disuse.
- (e) Repurpose old terms.
- (f) If words are borrowed rather than created or revived, borrow from Mayan languages first, then from Mesoamerican sources, then American indigenous sources, then other languages.

Spanish should be a last resort (Maxwell and Chacach 1995).

Notice that two of these recommendations promote the resuscitation of old lexemes. Field-testing the neologisms showed that teachers, students, parents, and *ajq'ija'* "daykeepers, Maya ritual specialists, spiritual guides" would accept unfamiliar words, even when their morphological make-up was non-transparent, if the words were shown to be in colonial texts. The language of these documents is taken to be authentic. Words from these documents rightfully belong to the

Table 17. Semantic widening.

| Kaqchikel | colonial reading | modern usage |
|------------------|-------------------------|--|
| tinamit | walled town | town |
| -b'ös | engender | arrive in a place (of people), hatch (of birds), kindle (fire) |
| xajan | ritual abstinence | taboo, mystical |
| achij | warrior | male, macho, tough |

Table 18. Semantic narrowing.

| Kaqchikel | colonial reading | modern usage |
|------------------|--|----------------------------|
| uxla' | breath, soul, honor, fame | breath |
| -wär | sleep, be defeated | sleep |
| -yakatäj | awaken, arise, rise from defeat, make a comeback | awaken, arise (from sleep) |
| -juruuj | pull out a thread, escape | sneak |

language and to their descendants. Repurposing the words, while expanding their meanings and usage, recapitulates the normal semantic drift of the language with widening and narrowing. Examples of semantic widening can be seen in Table 17.

Semantic narrowing can be seen in Table 18.

The new life breathed into these old words is allowing a new generation of speakers to use Kaqchikel to speak about their modern realities. Not all suggested words have made it into daily use, but the expanded teaching of Kaqchikel, given the 2010 Ministry of Education dictum that all schools (public and private) must offer the indigenous language of their region, is familiarizing more people with the new vocabulary. Expanding domains in public media and the ceaseless promotion of the language by Kaqchikel Cholchi' have enlivened these zombie lexemes, even succeeding in changing quotidian language routines. Some activists are now suggesting that Kaqchikel spiritual concepts replace Eurocentric ones. They suggest, for example, that the Kaqchikel belief in an animate universe should be acknowledged so that farewell blessings such as *Ri Ajaw tuya' ruq'a' raqän pan awi'* "May God place his hands and legs over you!" and *Ri Ajaw tujaqa' ri q'anab'ey, ri saqab'ey chawäch!* "May God open the yellow-road, the white-road before you!" be replaced by *Ri rajawala' tikiya' kiq'a', kaqän pan awi'! Tikijaqa' ri q'anab'ey, ri saqab'ey chawäch!* "May the spirit-owners place their arms and legs over you! May they open the yellow-road, the white-road before you!" Activists have already changed accepted modes of thanks-giving. Zombie words are making a comeback, they have already entered the brains of activists, schoolchildren, and through them, parents.

Matyöx chiwe! Thank you!..... oops! ? Nink'awomaj chiwe! K'amo!

I thank you! Thanks!

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Los mayas de hoy: reavivando el sistema de escritura antigua

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La herencia de la civilización maya clásica está presente en tiempos modernos a través de sus descendientes y la diversidad cultural que a través del tiempo surgió y se desarrolló con los primeros habitantes del área. La escritura jeroglífica es parte del legado maya que registró de forma visual el pensamiento, existencia y la palabra de esa civilización, cuyo vocablo antiguo es tz'ihb' que se traduce como "pintar/escribir".

Desde los primeros habitantes del territorio y su desarrollo como civilización, han sido varios los procesos históricos de la población maya incluyendo el desarrollo y posterior desuso de su sistema de escritura. A partir de las investigaciones surgidas a mediados del siglo XIX y años posteriores se comenzó a dilucidar cierta comprensión y posteriormente el desciframiento, funcionamiento y uso de los jeroglíficos.

En Guatemala durante los años 1980, varios especialistas en escritura jeroglífica comenzaron a desarrollar talleres dirigidos a mayas contemporáneos en Guatemala y Yucatán. Durante esos procesos los mayas comenzaron a aprender y a escribir textos jeroglíficos desde sus propios idiomas, como un acto de reivindicación cultural.

Después de muchos años de avances en el estudio de los jeroglíficos, siguen emergiendo nuevas generaciones de escribas mayas que presentan y desarrollan nuevas propuestas. A través del uso de herramientas y tecnologías diversas, que han contribuido al uso y socialización de la escritura jeroglífica maya desde lo artístico, político e histórico.

Palabras clave: jeroglíficos, estela, talleres, arte, escriba



El territorio y la escritura

El territorio maya fue habitado y sigue siendo habitado por pueblos que hablan idiomas mayas, con un registro aproximado de 31 idiomas de la familia mayense (Pérez Suárez 2011:75-79), dos de los cuales ya extintos: el ch'olti' y el chikomuselteko (Law 2013: 274). El número de idiomas mayas actuales es variable según ciertos criterios y otros autores, ya que algunos dialectos son considerados idiomas y otros, como en el caso del awakateko y el chalchiteko que son técnicamente el mismo idioma, por cuestiones políticas se les define actualmente como idiomas distintos (Mora Marín, comunicación personal).

Fuera de esta área geográfica determinada se encuentra el wasteko, un idioma de origen mayense hablado específicamente en el estado de San Luis Potosí en México.

Los lingüistas clasifican geográficamente a la familia mayense en dos grandes grupos como: lenguas de Tierras Altas (q'anjobal, q'eqchi', mam, k'iche', y tojolabal) y lenguas de Tierras Bajas (ch'olano, tzeltalano y yukatekano), cada uno con sus distintas ramas. Se ha argumentado que el grupo de Tierras Altas aún no presentan evidencia suficiente de presencia en los textos jeroglíficos antiguos (Kettunen y Helmke 2011:13) aunque poseen estructuras gramaticales y vocabulario similares por pertenecer a un tronco lingüístico en común, denominado Proto-maya (Voss N. 2002:1).

El idioma que presenta evidencia y mayor presencia en las inscripciones jeroglíficas es el llamado maya Clásico, de filiación ch'olana, perteneciente al grupo de Tierras Bajas.

A finales de los años 1970 y principios de 1980 como parte de los procesos de reivindicación de las poblaciones descendientes y hablantes de los idiomas mayas en Guatemala, el término maya dejó de ser solamente un vocablo acuñado por arqueólogos, lingüistas y antropólogos. El uso del término se extendió a varios sectores de la sociedad guatemalteca, que posteriormente se convirtió en un movimiento reivindicativo de identidad cultural (Bastos 2004:2). Esta entidad grupal ha permitido el posicionamiento y la visibilización de la población indígena en la construcción política, histórica, cultural, económica y social en sus propios territorios. El concepto "maya" no sólo refiere a las poblaciones indígenas de descendencia maya que habitan el territorio guatemalteco, sino también a las poblaciones mayas que se encuentran en otros territorios como México (en los estados de Tabasco, Chiapas, Campeche,



Yucatán y Quintana Roo), Belice, la parte occidental de Honduras y El Salvador (Cojtí Cuxil 1997:7, Izquierdo y de la Cueva 2011:17-18). Es decir, la concepción de una unidad maya sobrepasa las actuales fronteras políticas. Al tener un origen común no son sociedades idénticas y homogéneas, sino pluriculturales y con dinámicas propias en su articulación cultural y social (Bastos 2004:15).

Los procesos de reivindicación, histórico y cultural de los mayas actuales se manifiestan de diversas formas, como la de retomar el sistema de escritura jeroglífica.

Como otras culturas antiguas los mayas también desarrollaron un sistema de escritura propio. Velásquez García (2011:83) define un sistema de escritura como: "sistemas o tecnologías de comunicación cuya particularidad es que registran el lenguaje verbal, o fragmentos de él, mediante signos gráficos, permanentes, visibles y convencionales."

El desarrollo y uso del sistema de escritura jeroglífica maya en tiempos antiguos fue principalmente en las denominadas Tierras Bajas con sus ejemplos más tempranos pintados en la llamada Estructura 1, en el grupo "Las Pinturas" en San Bartolo, Petén Central, Guatemala, datados

alrededor del siglo III a. C. (Kettunen y Helmke 2011:12, Velásquez García 2011:84)

El sistema de escritura maya posee en su complejidad un repertorio de signos, recursos escriturarios y reglas de composición, cuyo funcionamiento se basa en una combinación de logogramas (palabras o morfemas que tienen significado completo) y silabogramas o también llamados fonogramas (signos fonéticos sin significado), dando como resultado una escritura logosilábica o mixta (Coe & Stone 2005:18, Grube 2001:121, Velásquez García 2011:86).

En los idiomas mayas modernos el término para designar a la escritura y en algunos casos a diseños pintados o tejidos es *tz'ib'*, en kaqchikel, *tz'ijb'* en ch'orti', *tz'iib'* en k'iche', entre otros idiomas mayas que comparten la misma raíz del maya Clásico *tz'ihb'* (Kaufman con Justeson 2003:56).

Kettunen y Helmke (2010:181, 2011:40 nota 31) registran la raíz sustantiva *tz'ihb'* como “pintura”, “escritura” y también el verbo *tz'ihb'-a* “pintar (algo)” o “escribir (algo)”. Pintura, por la técnica y el tratamiento que recibe la superficie de una vasija, mural o códice y escritura, por la representación de palabras del idioma maya Clásico a través de signos. Estos conceptos aún no están del todo claros para indicar con exactitud la diferencia entre lo que se considera escritura/dibujo/pintura en el caso maya en contraste a lo que sí tiene claras diferencias en la escritura alfabética. Los mayas del Clásico también registran el sustantivo “*uxul*”, el cual refiere a la técnica de decorar una superficie tallándola o grabándola y se podría traducir como “talla”, escultura, “grabado” (Kettunen y Helmke 2011:41). Entre otros términos relacionados a signos existe el término *wo'oj*, que se traduce como “glifo, letra” y *jahch*, término que aparece sobre objetos grabados, especialmente de concha y cuya interpretación es “objeto inciso” (Kettunen y Helmke 2010:182,183,169).

El uso del sistema de escritura jeroglífica duró teóricamente un aproximado de 2,000 años. Esta temporalidad está basada desde las primeras evidencias descubiertas en un bloque de piedra de las que sobrevivieron solamente 10 bloques jeroglíficos pintados, encontrados en el relleno de la pirámide “Las Pinturas” en San Bartolo, en la llamada fase de construcción Sub-V datada aproximadamente en el 200 al 300 a.C. (Saturno et al 2006:1281-1282), hasta el año 1697, fecha de la invasión castellana a Noj Petén, hoy la isla de Flores, Petén (Arias Ortiz 2013:173). Durante esos últimos años, es posible que la tradición de escribir con jeroglíficos permaneciera en zonas alejadas del control español (Grube 2001; 114, Kettunen y Helmke 2011:7, Velásquez García 2011:84) aunque las acusaciones y sentencias a escribas y “sacerdotes” mayas por el uso de la escritura jeroglífica tradicional permanecieron hasta 1720 (Mora Marín, comunicación personal).

Este sistema de escritura no se limitó a registrar solamente las actividades políticas, militares y sociales, sino también las formas de pensamiento, creencias, ciencia, calendario y otras actividades con distintos fines. Entre estos destacan las actividades rituales, basadas en la manera en que concebían la vida y su existir (Educación para la vida y el trabajo 2016:19).

Fueron varios acontecimientos los que provocaron el desuso de la escritura, siendo uno de los principales la persecución por los frailes y la imposición de un nuevo orden religioso. Es así como históricamente el sistema de escritura no pudo ser transmitido por tradición, sino redescubierto por las distintas ciencias dedicadas al estudio de las culturas humanas y con la participación de los descendientes mayas y sus idiomas. Diego de Landa, fraile de la orden franciscana quien como muchos otros religiosos de su época pretendían acabar con la “idolatría” y las creencias de los mayas, redacta un manuscrito como acto reparativo por orden de España en 1566 titulado “La Relación de las cosas de Yucatán”. El documento original es una fuente más extensa y ahora perdida que

recopila información sobre la vida y cultura de los mayas de la península de Yucatán de mediados del siglo XVI (Boot 2011:35-37). La copia resumida del manuscrito se encuentra actualmente en La Real Academia de la Historia en Madrid, España.

Landa menciona a dos posibles informantes para redactar su documento, dos *maya' winiko'b*, así llamados en su lengua los indígenas de Yucatán (Barrera Vásquez 1980:513) quienes han sido identificados como Gaspar Antonio Chi', perteneciente a los Xiw, Nachi' Kokom, después de bautizado llamado Don Juan Kokom perteneciente a los Kokom (Boot 2011:37). Fueron varios aportes importantes de estos dos personajes entre los que figuran algunos signos mayas que proporcionaron al fraile, conociéndose como el "Alfabeto de Landa". Este no era un alfabeto, sino un silabario incompleto que sirvió de base para la posterior comprensión y desciframiento de los jeroglíficos mayas. A mediados del siglo XIX se generó en Europa el interés por los mayas con el descubrimiento de un códice maya que ahora está en Dresden, Alemania, y varios documentos más. Estos documentos comenzaron a generar estudios que posteriormente en el siglo XX avanzaron con los aportes de un creciente número de investigadores que proporcionaron datos para la mejor comprensión del sistema de escritura y el calendario. Algunas de estas investigaciones fueron realizadas por personajes como J. Eric S. Thompson, Ernst Förstemann, Tatiana Proskouriakoff, Heinrich Berlin, entre otros. Uno de los investigadores más destacados fue el antropólogo y lingüista ruso Yuri Knorozov quien logró descifrar el sistema jeroglífico demostrando que la escritura maya sí representa y reproduce sonidos de la lengua maya (Stuart 2001:32-33, Grube 2001:117-120).

Las investigaciones sobre la escritura jeroglífica maya continúan hoy en día, siendo los mayas contemporáneos participantes importantes a través de sus contribuciones y actos de reivindicación cultural.

Sembrando la semilla

En junio de 1987 se llevó a cabo el "Taller de Lingüística Maya", organizado por el Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA) y el Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín (PLFM) en Antigua Guatemala. En este taller se abordaron los primeros temas sobre lingüística maya y epigrafía por expertos de Estados Unidos, siendo estas primeras actividades espacios de participación para personas de origen maya, al que asistieron también personas de otros países. Fue durante ese evento que los mayas presentes pudieron interesarse en el tema de los jeroglíficos y solicitaron un taller extra que posteriormente fue desarrollado por los lingüistas Kathryn Josserand y Nicolás Hopkins. Como parte de las actividades, se programó una visita de campo a la ciudad maya antigua de Copán, en Honduras. La visita guiada estuvo a cargo de la epigrafista Linda Schele por petición de uno de los lingüistas asistentes, principalmente Martín Chacach de origen kaqchikel y en ese tiempo director del Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín (PLFM). Después de la experiencia en Copán, los estudiantes más destacados, Martín Chacach y Narciso Cojtí, platicaron con Linda Schele para desarrollar otro taller de escritura jeroglífica en Antigua Guatemala. A pesar de la agenda académica ocupada de la epigrafista, pudieron acordar y desarrollar el taller del 20 al 22 de julio de 1987 con la ayuda de Kathryn Josserand, Nicolás Hopkins y Nora England. Ese taller fue compartido con 25 estudiosos mayas que representaban a siete comunidades lingüísticas de Guatemala. Ese mismo año se desarrolló también el primer taller

en la ciudad de Valladolid, Yucatán, México con mayas provenientes de varias comunidades de esa región (Grube y Fahsen 2002:216, Maya Antiguo para los Mayas, s.f.).

En el año de 1989 Linda Schele viajó nuevamente a Antigua Guatemala para desarrollar un nuevo taller de escritura maya organizado por el Proyecto Lingüístico Marroquín (PLFM). El taller tuvo cinco días de duración y se estudió el Tablero de los 96 Glifos de Palenque con la asistencia de varios mayas de distintas comunidades lingüísticas. Al final de la actividad, Martín Chacach escribió una carta de agradecimiento a Linda Schele usando su idioma materno, el kaqchikel (Figura 1). El documento fue redactado con jeroglíficos mayas, siendo este un ejemplo histórico en el que un idioma maya moderno es escrito con signos mayas antiguos (Grube y Fahsen 2002:219).

Estos primeros talleres de escritura maya se convirtieron en parte importante del conocimiento, formación histórica y cultural de los mayas contemporáneos en Guatemala, a los cuales se integraron posteriormente Federico Fahsen, epigrafista guatemalteco, y Nikolai Grube, epigrafista alemán. Después del fallecimiento de Linda Schele, ocurrido el 18 de abril de 1998, los talleres no se detuvieron y siguieron siendo desarrollados por Nikolai Grube, quien aún sigue compartiendo dicha formación a mayas de nuevas generaciones en Guatemala. Actualmente se ha diversificado la organización de distintos talleres y actividades para la población maya en Guatemala. Estos esfuerzos han estado a cargo del Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín, así como otras organizaciones como Maya Antiguo para los Mayas (MAM), el Centro de Investigación y Enseñanza de Epigrafía Maya Sak Chuwen y otras instituciones gubernamentales y no gubernamentales que trabajan en conjunto para la realización de estos eventos educativos, históricos y culturales (Figura 2).

Entre algunos de los primeros estudiantes de escritura y hoy profesionales mayas que a través de su trabajo han llevado estos procesos de formación a muchas poblaciones mayas, se pueden mencionar a los kaqchikeles Martín Chacach (QEPD), Narciso Cojtí (QEPD), Lolmay García Matzar, Pakal B'alam Rodríguez, Romelia Mó (poqomchi'), Crisanto Kumul (maya yucateco originario de Sisbicchen), Ajpub' Ixmatá (tz'utujil), Héctor Xol (q'eqchi') y Waykan Benito (poqomam).

Muchos de estos esfuerzos contribuyen actualmente a que más personas se interesen por el sistema de escritura maya, su estudio, valoración y su aporte cultural a la humanidad.

La milpa en crecimiento

En el año 2012, el llamado “Fin del Mundo” atrajo la atención de personas alrededor del mundo en una supuesta predicción anunciada por los antiguos mayas sobre el fin de la humanidad. Esto permitió que muchas personas se interesaran aún más por el estudio de la cultura maya. Muchos mayas contemporáneos erigieron varias estelas, adoptando la tradición de los mayas del Clásico, para conmemorar la finalización de un fin de período, el 13 *pik/pih* en maya Clásico o conocido como b'ak'tun (Kettunen y Helmke 2011:55). Varias estelas fueron erigidas en el territorio guatemalteco como Chi Iximché, Chwa' Nima Ab'äj, Patzicía, San Martín Jilotepeque, Patzún, Totonicapán, Momostenango, San Pedro La Laguna y Poptún. De igual manera, se erigieron estelas en el territorio de Yucatán como en Mérida y Valladolid (Matsumoto 2014:234, nota 7).

Una de estas estelas erigidas el 21 de diciembre del 2012 fue la del sitio antiguo de Chi Iximché, antigua capital de los kaqchikeles, ubicada en Tecpán, Chimaltenango, a 91 km de la Ciudad de Guatemala (Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes, s.f.) (Figura 3). Dicha inscripción relata la historia

— * ... * ...

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| | yín yó galan muy |
| | yiki ket ema |
| | estoy contento por |
| | etama rutzi saber su plática |
| | tabana utzil haga el favor |
| | na (ineq) Chile señora Chile |
| | kape chik venga otra vez |
| | jun b'äy' apo de aquí en el futuro |
| | matyox chawe gracias a usted |
| | nub'is' Kab'lajuj tijax |
| | mi nombre es 12 tijax |

Meh.

Figura 1. Carta escrita en idioma kaqchikel con jeroglíficos mayas en 1989 (cortesía de Elaine Schele).



Figura 2. Taller sobre códices mayas desarrollado por Nikolai Grube en Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, organizado por el Centro de Investigación y Enseñanza de Epigrafía Maya Sak Chuwen y la Escuela Ki'kotemal de Quetzaltenango (cortesía de Juan Vidal Luis).

del pueblo kaqchikel desde su fundación hasta la llegada de los castellanos, utilizando una mezcla de los idiomas kaqchikel y maya Clásico. En la creación de este monumento participaron varias personas mayas y extranjeras expertas en lingüística, epigrafía y arte, pero fueron los mayas quienes tuvieron a su cargo el proceso de diseño y creación del monumento. Algunos de ellos fueron: Iyaxel Cojtí Ren, Igor Xoyón, Pakal B'alam Rodríguez, Raxche' Rodríguez, además de otros miembros del grupo del Centro de Investigación y Enseñanza de Epigrafía Maya Sak Chuwen, Kaqchikel Winäq Kaji' Imox y el escultor Emerson Chicol (Matsumoto 2014: 236, 237).

La estela de Chi Iximche' es una muestra de ese proceso de reivindicación, arte y conmemoración histórica de un fin de período, para la valoración y fortalecimiento de los vínculos con el idioma y la historia del presente kaqchikel. Aunque las investigaciones no evidencian si los kaqchikeles antiguos usaron un sistema de escritura jeroglífico similar a los mayas del Clásico de Tierras Bajas, es importante mencionar que las representaciones pictóricas encontradas en sitios como Iximche' y Utatlán, tienen una variante de estilo mixteca-puebla (Carmack 2001:119,120,121), así también, Fray Bartolomé De Las Casas y Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán describen documentos con posibles ideogramas y pictogramas usados por kaqchikeles y k'iche', que consideraron similar a la escritura de los códices del centro de México. En manos de tz'utujiles también se encontró un



Figura 3. La estela de Chi Iximche', Tecpán, Guatemala (cortesía de Bruce Love y Maya Antiguo para los Mayas [MAM] 2013).

documento posiblemente pintado en épocas anteriores a la llegada de los españoles, que retrataba a 15 gobernantes tz'utujiles y sus residencias en Atitlán. Aún es complejo determinar lo limitada y desarrollada que fue la tradición de escribir en Tierras Altas de Guatemala en comparación a la tradición del Centro de México o las Tierras Bajas (Carmack 1973:16,17,18,19). La existencia de documentos escritos por mayas durante la colonia con escritura alfabética, permite pensar sobre la necesidad que tuvieron estos pueblos para seguir escribiendo su historia usando otro sistema de registro.

Para las poblaciones mayas actuales permanece aún esa importancia de plasmar su historia, pensamiento y expresiones en sus propios idiomas como parte de su pasado. Por eso, han adoptado el sistema de escritura jeroglífica maya por ser un desarrollo propio de los primeros habitantes del territorio y uno de los sistemas más conocidos, flexibilizando las clasificaciones que separan en temporalidad y áreas geográficas a las distintas poblaciones mayas y cuya relación aún se discuten






















| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  <p>Este "rizo" es un signo diacrítico contemporáneo. Debe infijarse en los silabogramas ya existentes del silabario maya /k-, k'-, y-/ para indicar al lector el cambio de sonido a /q-, q'-, r-/. Como ejemplo, la infijación de este signo se señala en rojo para indicar su posición alternativa dentro del silabograma antiguo.</p> | | qa | qe | qi | qo | qu | |
| | k- |  |  |  |  |  | |
| | k'- |  |  |  |  |  | |
| | y- |  |  |  |  |  | |
| | Igor Xoyón <i>et al.</i> proponen signos diacríticos nuevos para la escritura del maya kaqchikel con jeroglíficos para indicar: | Solamente la lectura de la consonante | | | | |  |
| | | Alto glotal (') | | | | |  |
| William García propone signos diacríticos nuevos para la escritura del maya ch'orti' con jeroglíficos para indicar: | Solamente la lectura de la consonante | | | | |  | |
| | Alto glotal (') | | | | |  | |
| | Lectura completa de la sílaba | | | | |  | |

Tabla 1. Propuestas de signos diacríticos contemporáneos. Dibujos del autor después de Kettunen y Helmke 2011:Apéndice I, Pitts 2008:18-23, Garay 2019. Dibujos de signos diacríticos del idioma ch'orti' cortesía de William García.

y plantean desde los análisis académicos.

Matsumoto (2014: 242) menciona que en la estela de Chi Iximche', algunos de los signos representados adaptan ciertos sonidos que no existen en el idioma maya Clásico como “la oclusiva uvular sorda /q/, la oclusiva uvular glotalizada /q'/ y la vibrante múltiple alveolar /r/”. La adaptación de estos sonidos contemporáneos se realiza con la infijación de un signo diferenciador o diacrítico que indica al lector sobre el cambio de sonido al momento de leer los bloques jeroglíficos (Tabla 1a.).




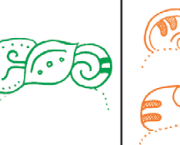
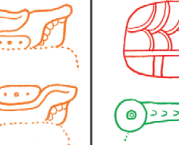


Este diacrítico es de invención reciente con los primeros estudiantes mayas de escritura jeroglífica en Guatemala para representar esos sonidos que no existen en el maya Clásico (Chonay y Rodríguez 1994:25). De la misma manera y por las mismas razones, el investigador ch'orti' William García propone tres signos diacríticos para su idioma y el investigador kaqchikel Igor Xoyón et. al., propone dos signos diacríticos para el kaqchikel (Garay 2019) (Tabla 1b.).

Otro de los recursos actuales utilizados para la innovación de signos en la escritura es la acrofonía. Mora-Marin (comunicación personal) lo define como “un signo cuyo referente lingüístico es una palabra que sirva para extraer un valor fonético (de un sonido o secuencia de sonidos) del tipo que se utiliza en la escritura dada”. Un ejemplo del maya Clásico de reducción acrofónica es el signo para la sílaba **b'a** cuya derivación proviene de la palabra *b'aah*, que significa “tuza” (*Orthogeomys hispidus*) y cuya motivación gráfica representa a este pequeño roedor (Zender 2009:1).

Algunos investigadores actuales proponen el uso de la acrofonía para signos que no aparecen en el silabario por estar aún sin descifrar (Tabla 2). La propuesta del arqueólogo yucateco Guillermo “Memo” Kantún Rivera, deriva silabogramas de palabras del maya yucateco (Kantún Rivera, comunicación personal). De igual manera, otros investigadores mayas de Guatemala derivan silabogramas de palabras en kaqchikel (Garay 2019).

Propuestas por reducción acrofónica: E.g., *b'aa* → **b'a** → 

Propuesta cortesía de Guillermo Kantún para la escritura del maya yucateco con jeroglíficos

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Ch'e'ej</i> 'sonido fuerte que lastima los oídos' ● <i>Ch'e'en</i> 'cueva, pozo' ● <i>Ch'eeb</i> 'inclinarse, ladearse' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Ch'iich'</i> 'pájaro, espulgar, recoger (como pájaro)' ● <i>Ch'ik</i> 'prender con alfileres, prendedor' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Ch'úu</i> 'racimos de frutos' ● <i>Ch'úuy</i> 'alzar, suspender' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>T'aan</i> 'palabra, hablar, idioma' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>T'eel</i> 'gallo, cresta' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ? 'Techo de guano de una casa' ● <i>T'ix</i> 'espina' (ch'orti') | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Xeej</i> 'vomitar' |
| ch'e | ch'i | ch'u | t'a | t'e | t'i | xe |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Propuesta cortesía de Igor Xoyón *et al.* para la escritura del maya kaqchikel con jeroglíficos













| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Ch'eken</i>, 'zompopo' ● <i>Ch'umil</i>, 'estrella' ● <i>K'ix</i>, 'güisquil, chayote' ● <i>T'arär</i>, 'vibrar' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>T'ex</i>, 'medida pequeña' ● <i>T'ison</i>, 'coser' ● <i>T'ot</i>, 'caracol' ● <i>Sok</i>, 'nido' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Tzeqeb'äl</i>, 'cinta para colgar' ● <i>Tzop</i>, 'picar' ● <i>Tz'etik</i>, 'vista' ● <i>Tz'o'</i>, 'nixtamal' | | | | | | | | | |
| ch'e | ch'u | k'i | t'a | t'e | t'i | t'o | so | tze | tzo | tz'e | tz'o |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Tabla 2. Propuestas de derivación de silabogramas contemporáneos por acrofonía. Dibujos cortesía de Guillermo Kantún Rivera e Igor Xoyón *et al.* Modificación de colores de dibujos por el autor.

Las propuestas presentadas por estos investigadores permiten visualizar la necesidad e importancia que posee la creación de nuevos signos en la escritura jeroglífica para idiomas mayas modernos (Tabla 1 y 2). Este tema es un inicio para futuras discusiones, estudios, análisis y la generación de más y nuevas propuestas para la escritura jeroglífica maya contemporánea, estando sujeto a factores lingüísticos y de otros sistemas de escritura que puedan influenciar en la innovación de signos.

Dentro de estos procesos experimentales gráficos también surgen nuevas creaciones por mayas actuales que conocen los jeroglíficos y los aplican en el arte y en su idioma maya, muchos de ellos con enfoques históricos, culturales, de reivindicación y resistencia como pueblos indígenas. Es así como se pueden observar jeroglíficos en distintos espacios y soportes, siendo pioneros en ese campo la editorial maya Cholsamaj en Guatemala quién a partir de 1994 comienza a utilizar jeroglíficos y número mayas en sus publicaciones (Matsumoto 2014:233). El uso de jeroglíficos

mayas en el contexto guatemalteco ha sido también socializado en los espacios de prácticas rituales y calendáricas tradicionales, la literatura, las organizaciones mayas, la educación y los textiles. En el textil, se presenta el trabajo de mujeres tz'utujiles tejedoras de Santiago Atitlán, Sololá, que en conjunto con el proyecto “3 Stones Place” desarrollado por Dave Schaefer, diseñan, tejen y bordan jeroglíficos del maya Clásico en su vestimenta a partir de la información y trabajo de investigación que realizan (Figura 4).

El auge y el creciente interés que muchas personas tienen por la escritura maya ha trascendido los contextos científicos, académicos y culturales. Como creación artística se ha incluido ya como parte de procesos creativos, utilizando distintas técnicas y herramientas, desde las tradicionales y experimentales hasta las digitales. Surge entonces una nueva generación de escribas contemporáneos que utilizan el sistema de escritura con una diversidad de fines, algunos rituales, otros sociales, políticos, otros más, muy distintos a los textos y obras producidos por los mayas Clásicos (Figura 5). Es importante mencionar la función actual que cumple el internet, especialmente las redes sociales, como medios y plataformas de difusión de la mayoría de estos trabajos que evidencian la producción artística de estos escribas emergentes. En Guatemala se pueden mencionar a algunos de estos jóvenes escribas como: Pop Lainez, Negma Coy, Juan Chavajay, William García, Tepeu Poz entre otros artistas más, entre los que se encuentra el autor de este artículo.

En Yucatán también emergen artistas escribas como Guillermo “Memo” Kantún Rivera, José Ángel Koyoc, Eduardo “Tlaloc” Puga, los hermanos Alfredo y Gregorio Hau Caamal del colectivo Ch'okwoj Maaya Ts'iib y la artista Patricia Martín Morales del Taller Los Ceibos.

Un artista del que no se tiene mayor información y que a través del anonimato presenta sus



Figura 4. Pieza textil tz'utujil contemporánea con jeroglíficos mayas (cortesía de Dave Schaefer).



Figura 5. Textos jeroglíficos contemporáneos: (a) cerámica policroma en estilo códice como regalo a Nikolai Grube (arte y fotografía cortesía de Pop Lainez); (b) texto jeroglífico sobre papel (arte e imagen cortesía de Guillermo Kantún); (c) texto jeroglífico sobre papel con modificaciones digitales (arte e imagen cortesía de Eduardo Tlaloc Puga); (d) iconografía y texto jeroglífico tallado sobre caracol marino (arte y fotografía cortesía de Sib'ik Yohl Waax).

obras es Sibik Yohl Waax, quien bajo este pseudónimo y a través de las redes sociales muestra textos jeroglíficos contemporáneos escritos en maya Clásico, plasmados con técnicas y herramientas antiguas sobre una gran variedad de objetos.

Como autor de este artículo, también describo parte del proceso creativo para la experimentación de mi obra con jeroglíficos e iconografía utilizando herramientas y plataformas digitales, interés surgido durante el año 2006 y cuyo fin busca la expresión artística y la valorización y uso de los idiomas mayas, el respeto por el pensamiento, expresiones y palabras de las poblaciones indígenas.

Una de las primeras obras, creadas a finales del año 2010, surgen como manifestación en contra de la violencia hacia los pueblos mayas de Guatemala y como tributo al artista kaqchikel Lisandro Guarcax González, secuestrado y asesinado el 25 de agosto del año 2010 (Diagonal Periódico 2010, Tu Corazón Florece 2011) (Figura 6).

La búsqueda en fuentes coloniales escritas por mayas también proveen recursos históricos y culturales que pueden ser representados con signos mayas, dependiendo el idioma en que está escrito el documento colonial que se estudia o usando el maya Clásico para representar esos sonidos. Por ejemplo, los nombres de Jun Kame y Wuqub' Kame, los señores supremos de Xib'alb'a (Colop 1999:58) según el Popol Wuj, libro escrito en idioma k'iche'. En este ejemplo el artista escribió los nombres de estos personajes en maya Clásico, mencionando también sus tronos creados con



Figura 6. Dibujo del autor en memoria de Lisandro Guarcax.

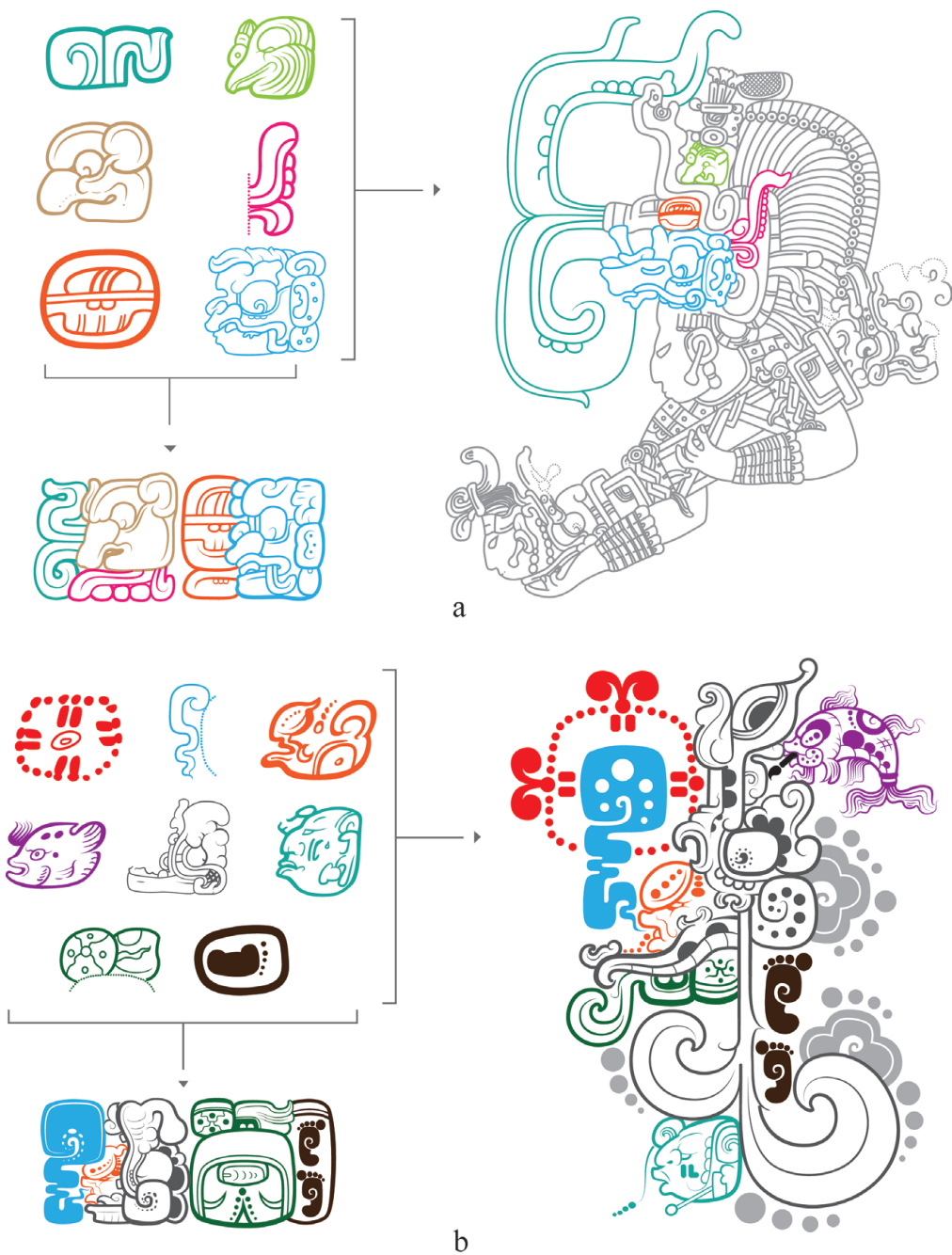


Figura 7. a) Identificación de jeroglíficos mayas Clásicos en el tocado de K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk (dibujos del autor después de Grube 2001:75, Kettunen 2014:4,7,12,31,38); (b) identificación de jeroglíficos en composición contemporánea experimental del autor (dibujos del autor después de Lacadena y Cases 2010:Apéndice I:9, Kettunen 2014:3,6,17,20,27,28,29).

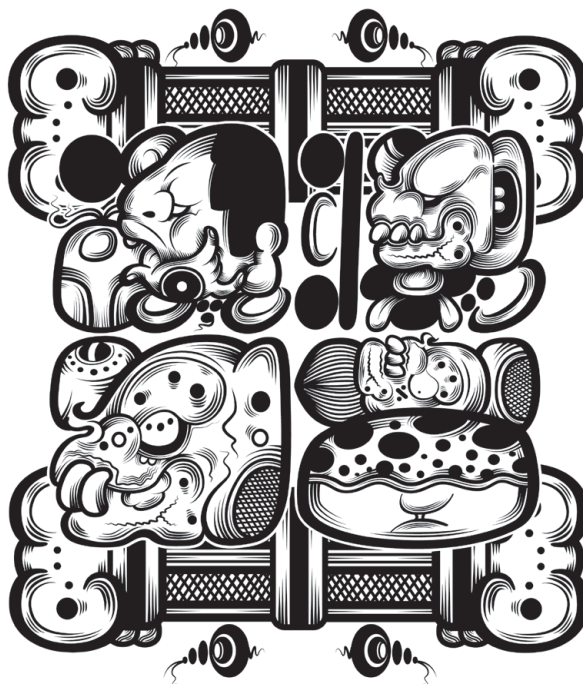


Figura 8. Jeroglíficos contemporáneos con los nombres de los señores de la muerte del Popol Wuj (dibujo del autor).

huesos desde los cuales se sientan para gobernar (Figura 8). La escritura de ese texto jeroglífico se inspira en los registros de otros personajes asociados a la muerte y enfermedades del arte maya Clásico (Stone y Zender 2011:43).

Conclusión

Los movimientos culturales y sociales de la población de origen maya, han buscado y siguen buscando espacios para seguir con la reivindicación de sus orígenes como una cultura viva que sigue construyendo el respeto a sus derechos y la generación de oportunidades en sus propios territorios. La escritura jeroglífica maya ha sido una pequeña parte de todos esos procesos surgidos con los primeros movimientos sociales indígenas a finales de los años 1980 y durante 1990. Muchas de esas acciones manifestaban la existencia e importancia histórica y social de los pueblos indígenas, sentando las bases para la creación de distintas organizaciones que se encargarían de los temas relacionados al idioma, el racismo, la educación, la justicia, la identidad, entre otros. Gracias a esto, las generaciones actuales tienen la oportunidad de tener el acceso necesario a su historia y seguir en su proceso de construcción en sus contextos y diversidad, formas de pensamiento e idiomas.

Así como el sistema de escritura tuvo su propio proceso de redescubrimiento desde los investigadores pioneros del siglo XIX y XX hasta los nuevos avances actuales, también la población maya demuestra esa misma dinámica, cuyos aportes son integrales para la escritura jeroglífica. Aunque

el sistema antiguo de escribir se dejó de usar por mucho tiempo, los mayas no abandonaron por completo el escribir, ya que lograron también aprender y usar el sistema alfabético, para dar fe de su historia, cultura, memoria y vida a través de sus documentos escritos durante la época colonial.

Así entonces la escritura jeroglífica maya es un pilar importante para el proceso de construcción del conocimiento que ha logrado llegar a nuevas generaciones. Con arte comienzan a generar nuevos procesos creativos y de experimentación gráfica enfocados a varios aspectos, sin dejar fuera la revaloración y revitalización de sus idiomas, cultura y pensamiento. Aún queda trabajo por realizar para lograr una mejor comprensión del sistema jeroglífico y el arte maya en general, y en ese proceso de redescubrimiento el escribir y compartir la información permite un acceso dinámico a la educación para los mayas y demás personas interesadas en acercarse al estudio de esta cultura.



Agradecimientos

Agradezco a los mayas que nunca han dejado de escribir y los que aún conservan sus idiomas y culturas, a mis maestras y maestros de epigrafía maya y demás personas que comparten sus conocimientos y permiten acercarnos a la historia antigua, y los que colaboraron con sus datos, información, imágenes, opiniones y comentarios para la realización de este artículo. A mi abuela Vidalia Cosme Queché (QEPD), Guillermo Joj Cosme (QEPD) y mi madre Rosa Joj Cosme por su apoyo y formarme en el pensamiento e idioma kaqchikel, a los revisores, a Mat Saunders y Maxime Lamoureux-St-Hilaire por su invitación.

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Book Review:

*The Real Business of Ancient Maya Economies:
From Farmers' Fields to Rulers' Realms.*

Edited by MARILYN A. MASSON, DAVID A. FREIDEL, and ARTHUR A.
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The Real Business of Ancient Maya Economies: From Farmers' Fields to Rulers' Realms brings together case studies from across the Maya world to inform on the “nuts and bolts” of ancient Maya economy. As Freidel and Masson point out in the introduction and conclusion, respectively, and Yoffee discusses in his comparison of “Maya-land” and Mesopotamia, Maya studies have come a long way from simplistic views of the economy that dominated the literature for decades. The twenty-four intervening chapters are divided into five parts: (1) theoretical approaches; (2) household and community economies and resources; (3) agriculture, climate, and land; (4) political elites, wealthy persons, and economic administration; and (5) economic exchange spheres: routes, facilities, and symbolic contexts. This subdivision of the volume provides thematic organization but does not mean the authors consider these aspects of Maya economies as separate and distinct from one another. Rather, the individual chapters discuss the interconnectedness of Maya economies and the many ways that items can get from producers to consumers.

The three opening theory chapters by Freidel, King, and Demarest et al. reference each of the chapters and set the stage for the case studies that follow. The length of this volume, which includes an exceptional appendix of indigenous plant foods compiled by Fedick, is necessary to document and explore variability but precludes a summary of each chapter in my review. I limit this review to some highlights that may pique the interest of readers with diverse interests.

The strongest chapters are those that address production in addition to distribution and consumption. Ringle et al. consider evidence for stone quarrying and lime production used in the construction of masonry residences in the Puuc Hills. They argue that masonry construction, as a kind of inalienable wealth, was part of the palace patronage system and the force behind economic, political, demographic expansion in the region. Woodfill's chapter on the production of salt at Salinas de los Nueve Cerros in Guatemala details salt production and derivative industries (e.g. salted fish, leather). The site was constructed to facilitate the production and exchange of salt on a massive scale under elite control while derivative industries showed no elite involvement. The volume includes chapters on interesting concepts not often included in discussions of the ancient Maya economy. Sheets considers the service economy and household obligations at Cerén. Golden

et al. discuss the importance of trust built through interactions with people beyond individual households, and multiple chapters examine labor as a commodity (Batún et al.; Tokovinine; Sheets). There are also many chapters on items that do not preserve in the tropics, but no doubt played an important role in ancient Maya economies: edible plants (Fedick; Wyatt), copal (Sheets), cotton and textiles (Reents-Budet and Bishop), and a tally system using wooden sticks (Tokovinine). Reents-Budet and Bishop use ceramic paste composition (Instrumental Neutron Activation Analysis) and archaeological data to understand exchange networks and acquisition tactics by Maya elites. These proxy measures identified three interaction networks each linking a major population center with a cotton-producing zone. Above all, the case studies use diverse datasets “to address a range of questions, drawing on many categories of material culture and their contextual and distributional analysis, taking into consideration variable political and social strategies and constraints” (Masson, p. 464).

A weakness of this volume is how few of its studies focused on the production and distribution of everyday household items. It is difficult to evaluate the nature and scale of economic systems if we do not understand how, where, and by whom these utilitarian items were produced. The geologic homogeneity of the region undoubtedly complicates provenance studies, but the nuts and bolts approach promoted in this volume provides vital information. Two chapters stand out as examples for how researchers can approach the production and distribution of utilitarian goods. Cap provides empirical evidence of the presence of a marketplace at Buena Vista del Cayo in the Belize River Valley. She includes a list of marketplace activities and the archaeological expectations for each so that researchers can identify markets at other sites. Cap concludes that limestone bifaces, obsidian blades, organics, and possibly ceramics were exchanged at the Buena Vista marketplace. Horowitz et al.’s chapter on the production of distribution of chert artifacts in the Belize Valley and at La Corona, Guatemala, point out that value is not intrinsic, and that production/exchange of everyday items varies by location.

This volume presents case studies on a range of locations, time periods, and datasets to explore the complexity of Maya economic systems and drives home the point that there are multiple ways for items to get from producers to consumers. This broad view of current research in the Maya region highlights the complex, diverse, and integrated economies which include market exchange in addition to other distributive mechanisms. Masson’s conclusion chapter skillfully incorporates each of the case studies to summarize the current state of economic anthropology within the field of Maya archaeology and the lingering questions that remain to be answered. Meanwhile, the introduction and conclusion chapters provide historical and theoretical context for readers unfamiliar with the research trajectory on Maya economies.

The edited volume is a must read for Maya scholars and students. Readers with different research goals and analytical specialties will find something in this volume relevant to their research. Interested avocational readers will also enjoy this book because the “nuts and bolts” approach provides a how-to guide for using archaeological datasets to answer diverse research questions. As Eppich (p.171) states, “we cannot return to a simplistic view of the Classic Maya economy”. I look forward to seeing how Mayanists incorporate the data and perspectives from *The Real Business of Ancient Economies* into their own work and how they employ different theoretical perspectives and analytical techniques to further understand ancient Maya economies.



Walter Amilcar Paz Joj

De origen kaqchikel, ajtz'ib' (escriba maya), diseñador gráfico, estudiante, investigador y maestro de arte, música y escritura jeroglífica maya. Sus intereses son la re-creación de textos y arte maya clásico combinado con el pensamiento e idioma kaqchikel contemporáneo a través del uso de herramientas digitales para la creación de sus obras gráficas, publicándolas en plataformas virtuales como una galería abierta al público.



Jocelyne M. Ponce

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Judith M. Maxwell, Ixq'anil

Dr. Judith M. Maxwell, Ixq'anil, is the Louise Rebecca Schawe and Williedell Schawe Professor of Linguistics and Anthropology at Tulane University. She began work in Guatemala in 1973 as a linguist for the Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquin, training native speakers of Chuj and Ixil to document their languages and to produce reference and pedagogical materials. Since then, in consultation with the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala and the Ministerio de Educación, Dr. Maxwell has worked with 13 of the 22 Mayan languages spoken in Guatemala and two more spoken in Mexico, publishing 35 pedagogical works, including methodologies for teaching the indigenous languages as L₁ and L₂. Lic. Ajpub' García Ixmata', Juan Rodrigo Guarchaj and she have just published

Kemchi' Wuj Pa Oxi' Ch'ab'äl: Kaqchikel, K'iche' chuqa' Tz'utujil –Gramática Arte de los tres idiomas Mayas: Kaqchikel, K'iche' y Tz'utujil, the first grammars of Mayan languages written in those languages, with a closing overview in Spanish summarizing the shared constructions and processes of these closely allied languages. For the past 11 years, Dr. Maxwell and students from Tulane have been collaborating with the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana to revitalize their previously sleeping language.



Editors from left to right: C. Mathew Saunders, Maxime Lamoureux-St-Hilaire (photo by Laura Mueller), and Jocelyne M. Ponce (photo by Sam Story).

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K'awil back cover artwork
by Walter Amilcar Paz Joj, *ajtz'ib'*

