
The Politics of Ritual

The Emergence of Classic Maya Rulers¹

by Lisa J. Lucero

Emerging leaders may replicate and expand traditional rituals to integrate increasingly larger numbers of people, advance political agendas, and situate political change within known cultural constructs. Ritual events enable them not only to promote surplus production but, more significant, to appropriate it, and surplus funds an expanding political economy as well as ceremonies and other public events. Consequently, the relationship between resources, settlement, and surplus is critical. For the ancient Maya, the variable distribution of resources and people presented a challenge to those with aspirations to political power. Emerging rulers used domestic dedication, termination, and ancestor veneration rites for political integration. Chronological, stratigraphic, and contextual information on ritual deposits from diverse Maya sites and structures with long occupation histories before, during, and after the advent of Maya rulership indicates that their ritual histories are structurally and functionally similar.

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In the domain of knowledge, it is not a question of uni-directional influence of the environment on the cognitive subject, but rather of a process of interaction and integration.

— MARIO BUNGE

How did Classic Maya rulers (ca. A.D. 250–850)² acquire and maintain political power—the ability to exact tribute in the form of surplus goods and labor from subjects? I argue that it was through the replication and expansion of domestic rituals. As habitual, ceremonial, and physical manifestations of a worldview, rituals draw people together (Leach 1966). "Through ritual, beliefs about the universe come to be acquired, reinforced, and eventually changed" (Kertzer 1988:9).

Emerging Maya rulers expanded family-scale rites, especially dedication, termination, and ancestor veneration rituals, into larger communal ceremonies as part of the process that drew seasonal labor from farmsteads to civic-ceremonial centers. Incrementally, they conducted structurally and functionally similar domestic rites in progressively larger-scale settings (e.g., from houses to elite compounds to temples), incorporating ever larger groups of people (Cohen 1974:37–39; cf. Vogt 1970:101). This pattern became noticeable during the Late Preclassic (ca. 250 B.C.–A.D. 250) and culminated in large-scale royal rites in the Early Classic (ca. A.D. 250–550). By the Late Classic (ca. A.D. 550–850) a direct association had been established between royal families and the divine. I discuss this process and then show how archaeologists can identify it in the archaeological record. I argue that no matter what the route to political complexity, a material basis is required to support it and ritual is key to explaining it. My intention here is to show how people get other people to contribute to their political coffers.

The amount of surplus relates to where people live. Densely settled people are more easily integrated than dispersed ones (Gilman 1981). The success of early Maya rulers in integrating farmers largely depended on the degree of settlement nucleation, and this in turn was influenced by the distribution of water and agricultural resources. Settlement nucleation, especially on the scale seen at large Late Classic Maya centers, is facilitated by the concentration of natural resources, but it is also significantly conditioned by political factors. I present current evidence on ancient Maya ritual activities at commoner, elite, and royal structures from minor, secondary, and regional civic-ceremonial centers in different environmental settings with long occupation histories before, during, and after the advent of Maya rulership (ca. 400 B.C.–A.D. 950) to show that their ritual histories are structurally and functionally similar.

2. Maya dates are based on regional ceramic chronologies, most of which have been refined with radiocarbon dating (Andrews 1990). Some dates, especially those regarding political events, are based on deciphered inscriptions, some of which have been correlated with ceramic chronologies (e.g., Caracol).

The Acquisition of Political Power

Earle (1997) and Mann (1986) explain how competing interest groups acquire and maintain sociopolitical control. For Mann (1986) the four sources of social power are economic, ideological, military, and political. Earle (1997) views economy, ideology, and the military as sources of political power expressed in the expansion and domination of the political economy. While there are alternative pathways to power (e.g., Flannery 1972), more centralized political systems develop when more sources of power are controlled and integrated (Earle 1997: 210–11). The ultimate success and duration of different strategies depend on local circumstances (cf. Fried 1967: 37–38; Trigger 1991)—how people interact with other people and their surroundings. This interaction bears on the amount of goods and labor political leaders can extract from others.

Leach (1966) has argued that ritual pervades all aspects of human existence, and this is a claim that anthropologists generally accept. This being the case, it is not surprising that ambitious people transform ritual action into political fortune. Ritual can integrate religious, social, economic, and political life, for example, creating and maintaining alliances through marriage and long-distance trade (e.g., Friedman and Rowlands 1978), warfare (e.g., Carneiro 1970), and such integrative events as the construction of public works (e.g., Service 1975:96), religious ceremonies, political rallies (e.g., Kertzer 1988), and feasts (e.g., Hayden 1995, Hayden and Gargett 1990). Through ritual, political actors can incorporate people as active participants in political change. Leaders—lineage elders and heads of military societies, kinship groups, and religious sodalities—often promote political change because through ritual they can claim that their actions benefit all members of society (Godelier 1977:111–19; Kertzer 1988:30). They organize the building and maintenance of religious structures, subsistence technology including irrigation systems, and canoes or roads for trade and craft production facilities and lead raiding parties—all activities that typically involve ritual. Their actions presuppose their ability to lead and offer the potential for expanding their influence outside their particular groups.

Each group has special ties to an aspect of the supernatural world that can be appropriated by aspiring political agents (Bloch 1986). Emerging political elites claim closer ties to the supernatural world, particularly ancestors, and as descendants of founding ancestors they can reach out to more people (Bloch 1986:86; Friedman 1975). As intermediaries they receive offerings that once were made directly to ancestors (see, e.g., Friedman and Rowlands 1978, Helms 1998, McAnany 1995) and other supernatural forces (Friedman 1998:129):

This development is an internally determined evolution, the outgrowth of the operation of the political economy within a pre-structured kinship system. Thus, the transformation to ranked hierarchy can be explained without any external references. Nothing

new has been added, but certain relations have emerged as dominant on the social level which were previously only latent in the supernatural realm. A headman becomes a chief by taking on some of the properties formerly possessed only by the deities.

Surplus goods and labor become crucial for supporting rulers, their families, and their retainers and sponsoring integrative events (e.g., Hayden 1995, Hayden and Gargett 1990). Consequently, whatever the reason for political change, having the necessary resources to generate a surplus is a must (Engels 1964[1957]:274–75; Friedman and Rowlands 1978). Sponsors attract supporters and simultaneously create obligations that extend beyond the time frame of ritual activities, a strategy that has long-term economic benefits (e.g., debt relations) (Bourdieu 1977:191–95; 1990:125–26). These public events promote the production of surplus (Hayden 1995, Hayden and Gargett 1990) and enable political agents to acquire it.

These circumstances may eventually result in the development of centralized systems in which kinship ties are replaced by nonkin ties that at first take on the appearance of kinship relations and later require no such pretense (Cohen 1974:24; Earle 1997:4–6; Godelier 1977: 123). For example, T'ang (A.D. 618–906) imperial rites in China originated from earlier dynastic ones (e.g., Chou, 1121–220 B.C.) that themselves developed from earlier ancestral cults (McMullen 1987). These Confucian-sanctioned rites were central to the T'ang political system. Whereas domestic ancestral rites continued to be conducted privately, imperial ancestral ceremonies were conducted publicly on a much grander scale. Chinese emperors replicated and expanded household rites but did not restrict or replace them. All members of society conducted similar ancestral rites with increasing grandeur and scale.

In sum, while there are various ways of acquiring political power, an economic foundation, namely, surplus goods and labor, is required. Ritual expansion occurs in tandem with political change, both funded by surplus goods and services. Rituals express and explain the changes that are occurring. Ritual is not a source of political power in the same manner as the military, the economy, and ideology but rather advances political agendas based on these intersecting sources of power. It allows ambitious people to modify the worldviews and codes of social behavior that explain “why specific rights and obligations exist” (Earle 1997:8, 143–58; see Blanton et al. 1996; Wolf 1999:55).³

Focusing on the dynamic relationship between material and social factors avoids deterministic, causal statements and allows for the variability that exists in sociopolitical formations (Bunge 1959:274):

3. Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner (1980) argue against the significance of an integrative ideology, at least in feudal and early capitalist societies. Laborers, divorced from the means of production, had no choice but to participate or comply and an encompassing ideology was unnecessary. This argument does not appear to apply to earlier complex societies, which lacked the means to enforce compliance.

Most social processes of “historical importance” are at the same time strongly *self-determined* (internally determined by the structure of the social group itself). . . . The self-determination of sociohistorical events is here understood in the sense that factors external to the human group concerned (natural environment and contacts with neighbor cultures) are effective solely insofar as they succeed in changing the essential processes . . . those of material production, social relations, and spiritual life.

How does this process occur?

Ritual and Political Change

“The decisions of the individuals participating in a given historical event are motivated by biological, psychological, intellectual, and other factors—but they will be effective solely provided they fit a social scheme” (Bunge 1959:276). Bourdieu (e.g., 1977, 1990), Giddens (e.g., 1979, 1984), and others emphasize the importance of the dynamic relationship between structure (material and social) and practice. Structure provides choices and constraints or limits within which individuals practice or act but does not determine behavior. This leaves the door open for variability and change. Such behavior feeds back into the structure, transforming it, and as a result the process of social change is often incremental and frequently comes from *within* a social group (Giddens 1979: 223; 1984:247). As actions are reproduced, it is possible for agents to affect change. Traditional rituals are an ideal way for emerging rulers to insert and justify their own political agendas “just *because* of [their] conservative properties. New political systems borrow legitimacy from the old by nurturing the old ritual forms, redirected to new purposes” (Kertzer 1988:42). “Memories associated with . . . earlier ritual experiences color the experience of a new enactment of the rites. Rites thus have both a conservative bias and innovating potential” (p. 12). Thus, such strategic rituals are successful because they incorporate familiar, traditional beliefs and practices into more elaborate forms that situate the growing political power of particular interest groups (cf. Bourdieu 1990:109–10; Flannery 1972; Weber 1958[1930]:55). Abrupt or extreme change is much less likely to succeed because new ideas, beliefs, and practices are foreign and unacceptable. According to Webster (1976:824), for example, the first emperor (unifier) of China, Ch’in Shih Hwang Ti, “made an abrupt attempt to replace the prevailing Confucianist political philosophy, which emphasized moral precepts as the basis for social tranquillity of the state, with a strongly pragmatic legalist doctrine backed by centrally administered, coercive force. . . . This attempt was an abject failure and resulted in the destruction of the emperor’s administration and dynasty after only 15 years.”

Political aspirants incorporate existing “principles of legitimation” (Earle 1989) but do not expropriate them. The successful application of acceptable, albeit reinter-

preted, family or domestic ritual activities increases the prestige of sponsors and legitimizes political authority, including rulers’ control of critical resources and their ability to acquire surplus from others (Bourdieu 1977: 183–84; 1990:109–10; Cohen 1974:82; Giddens 1979: 188–95; 1984:257–61; see also Webster 1976). Such rituals integrate larger numbers of people than the small-scale household or community rites from which they derive. For example, when Enga big men of precolonial Papua New Guinea became increasingly involved in external exchange networks, the growing economic differences were situated within traditional ancestor and bachelor cult rituals (Wiessner and Tumu 1998:369):

Equality, reaffirmation of group structure, and improvement of group fortunes remained at their core, counteracting the inequalities and individualism fostered by growing exchange networks. As ancestral cults became linked to networks of exchange, however, tribal leaders did restructure them from inwardly oriented rituals to events that had bearing on issues of broad regional significance. Sacred rites for an exclusive circle of men were then reduced in proportion to public celebration, and the interdependence of male and female principles were more overtly expressed. Overall, though bachelor’s and ancestral cults did much to alter values and structure group relations, they never ruptured the ethics of potential equality of male clan members or the principles of symmetrical reciprocity between those who engaged in exchange.

When rulers sponsor public events (e.g., feasts and ceremonies), they touch emotions (Rappaport 1999:49, 226), but these events are temporary and soon forgotten. Political actors need strategies that result in long-term benefits. Therefore they typically associate themselves with rituals that revolve around vital elements of life (e.g., rain, agricultural fertility, and ancestor veneration) conducted according to set schedules in special places (Cohen 1974:135). Their association with traditional or social conventions leads to the sanctification or uncritical acceptance of their special powers (Rappaport 1971; 1999:281; see also Geertz 1980:129–31; Webster 1976) because subjects believe that the holders of exclusive knowledge and skill are closer to the supernatural realm (Friedman and Rowlands 1978). In time they become directly involved in the continuity of natural forces (e.g., Helms 1993:78–79). Participation in public rites does not mean that people are being hoodwinked: “*acceptance is not belief. . . . Acceptance . . . is not a private state, but a public act*” (Rappaport 1999:119–20). Public ceremony thus promotes solidarity, not to mention political agendas. As is illustrated by the T’ang rites mentioned above, however, domestic rituals never leave the home. Rulers replicate and expand them but do not replace or restrict them. While all members participate in the larger-scale ceremonies, everyone still performs the domestic rituals from which former ceremonies derived. Royal rites are

superimposed on traditional ones (e.g., Godelier 1977: 188).

The fact that everyone, high and low, performs the “same” rites promotes solidarity and a sense of belonging (e.g., Kertzer 1988:19). For example, in 19th-century Madagascar, all members of Merina society conducted new-year renewal ceremonies in which they called upon their ancestors to bless them, and the same ritual bath was repeated in every household, from commoner to royal (Bloch 1987). These rituals, which took place at the beginning of the agricultural season, involved blessings from superior to junior: master to servant, ancestors to elders to children, father to son, and king to subjects. They not only served to legitimize authority but, more significant, also provided a forum for advancing royal power, particularly after the often violent succession of a new king. In addition, gifts were presented from junior to senior, resulting in the king’s receiving large amounts of tribute. Kus and Raharijaona (1998, 2000) discuss the traditional rites and other features (e.g., palace layout, cardinal directions, sacred places, and objects) co-opted by Merina royals to emphasize their sanctified right to rule and their ties with their subjects.

Once in power, rulers can create new rituals for public as well as private or restricted consumption. For example, early Frankish kings in the Middle Ages were anointed with the same oil used to baptize the first Christian Frank, St. Clovis (Giesey 1985). The king’s first entrance into Paris was celebrated by enactments of Clovis’s baptism along his route. After 1550, however, the content of celebrations in Paris shifted to the king himself. In the 18th century the entrance into Paris was dropped, to be replaced by another set of rites revolving around the “cult of the Sun King.” Traditional rites were initially replicated, then expanded, and later transformed. When the French kings had acquired enough economic power they could replace earlier rites with both public and private/restricted ones.

Identifying Ancient Ritual

The most promising prehistoric evidence of the relationship between ritual and politics is the social *variability* resulting from the dynamic relationship between structure and practice and the way in which political aspirants expanded upon that variability (Walker and Lucero 2000). Variability and expansion leave telling evidence in the archaeological record (Schiffer 1976:7). For example, Flannery (1976) proposes that during the more egalitarian period in Oaxaca, all members of society practiced bloodletting using stingray spines. By the Middle Formative, however, “chiefly” individuals appear to have used jade spines, community leaders stingray spines, and the rest imitation spines made from mammal bones. Chiefs conducted bloodletting rites in increasingly public arenas. The temporal variability in artifacts and location may indicate the expansion of traditional rituals for larger-scale religious and presumably political activities. A similar scenario is observed in western Europe

from the Neolithic through the Iron Age. The contexts of ritual deposits did not change through the millennia, but the types of materials used and the quality of manufactured goods increased and “what started as an informal transaction between the living and the gods was transformed into one of the central political activities in prehistoric society” (Bradley 1990:202).

The material aspects of ritual that leave traces in the archaeological record include ceremonial and religious structures, temples, caches of ritual objects, and burials (e.g., Bradley 1990:10–14). Because the Maya performed rituals for nearly every construction phase during the building and rebuilding of houses, palaces, and temples, events in the life histories of structures result in the creation of interconnected sequential deposits including fill, artifacts in fill, floor features, and artifacts on floors (Walker and Lucero 2000). Ceramic vessels smashed and burned on floors differ ritually from whole vessels found in fill under floors. The pots themselves became part of the life history of the structure (e.g., Gillespie 2001) as their roles changed from domestic vessel to ritually deposited item, whole or broken (Thomas 1991:57, 63). “Utilitarian” versus “nonutilitarian” can thus be a false dichotomy (Walker 1998, 2002) and one to be avoided if our goal is to recognize “structured deposits” (Richards and Thomas 1984)—deposits created by repetitive, formalized actions or “purposeful deposition.”

Repetitive behaviors result in specific sequences in the archaeological record, and therefore the context of artifacts is key for identifying ritual activities (Walker 1995). Domestic objects such as cooking pots can become ritual items if they are taken out of a kitchen and used in a ceremony or if, as in the case of serving plates among the ancient Maya, they are removed from the house, rendered useless (ceremonially “killed”), and then offered as a dedicatory cache. Rather than just evaluating strata in terms of chronology, we can view them as reflecting sequences of (ritual) behaviors—more specifically, ritual replication, in which similar formal ritual activities took place in a variety of architectural contexts, from houses to palaces and temples. While the quality and quantity of goods may have changed from commoner house to elite compound to palace and temple, their context and ritual significance remained the same. This behavior resulted in functionally and structurally similar ritual deposits in houses, palaces, and temples.

Resources and Settlement among the Ancient Maya

The political elites of the Classic Maya southern lowlands (present-day northeastern Chiapas, eastern Tabasco, southern Campeche, and Yucatan in Mexico, north and central Guatemala, Belize, and western Honduras) were united in the use of a common calendar, writing system, and related iconography. The Classic period witnessed the occupation of the largest number of archaeologically identified sites. With roots dating to at

least 1200 B.C., the Late Classic period extends from ca. A.D. 550 to 850 (Andrews 1990; Ford 1986:59, 80–82; Hammond 1995) and is characterized by largely autonomous centers/polities, though some centers had rulers who integrated several centers.

Among the ancient Maya, as in other agricultural societies, the distribution of resources and people across the landscape affected the ability of rulers to communicate ideas, to conduct large-scale integrative activities (political rallies, feasts, and work parties) (Roscoe 1993), and to mobilize surplus through an expanding political economy. Dense settlement and ties to the land through investments in subsistence technology (e.g., plowed fields, canals, dams, agricultural terraces, fish ponds, transportation, storage facilities) facilitate the consolidation of power (Carneiro 1970, Gilman 1981, Hayden 1995) because political aspirants can more easily control access to critical resources, people, and surplus (Earle 1997:7; de Montmollin 1989:88–94).

Maya rulers were faced with integrating not only a dispersed, relatively self-sufficient populace but one that may have been somewhat seasonally mobile. Farmers used a combination of agricultural techniques to grow maize, beans, and squash, including house gardens, short-fallow infields, and long-fallow outfields (Flannery 1982, Harrison and Turner 1978, Killion 1990). To cope with marked wet and dry seasons, they used various water systems such as *aguadas* (rain-fed natural basins), artificial reservoirs, raised fields, dams, canals, and terraces (Dunning, Beach, and Rue 1997). The majority of farmers lived in farmsteads dispersed throughout the hinterlands on scattered pockets of fertile land and near or in centers (Dunning et al. 1998, Fedick and Ford 1990, Ford 1986, Rice 1993, Sanders 1977). Farmers might also seasonally inhabit field houses away from centers (Reina 1967; Lucero 2001:35–38; Webster, Sanders, and van Rossum 1992). Competition over land in the face of population growth resulted in the search for new land (Ford 1991, Tourtellot 1993), and it appears that scattered hinterland communities were largely economically self-sufficient (Lucero 2001). Emerging rulers defied this settlement pattern and brought people together by sponsoring public events derived from traditional household, agricultural, and water rituals. The scale to which Maya rulers used traditional rituals for political purposes⁴ was conditioned by the distribution of resources, since where people lived and worked affected how much surplus rulers could appropriate.

LATE CLASSIC MAYA POLITICAL POWER

The variety of political systems that existed at regional, secondary, and minor civic-ceremonial centers during the Late Classic period relates to the distribution of agricultural land, the scale of water systems, and settle-

4. This somewhat parallels aspects of the segmentary-state model, where rituals are replicated at varying degrees and scales including, for example, lineage-ancestor veneration (de Montmollin 1989, Fox and Cook 1996).

ment patterns (Lucero 2002a). Rulers of regional polities acquired and maintained political power through their ability to restrict concentrated resources and integrate densely settled farmers through ritual. Similarly, rulers at secondary centers attained power by dominating prestige-goods exchange and nearby agricultural land but to a lesser extent than the regional rulers because they were unable to control access to dispersed agricultural land and small-scale water systems, not to mention scattered farmers. Elites at minor centers relied on their wealth (as landowners, for example) to procure prestige goods and organize local ceremonies. A major problem for them was the inability to restrict extensive alluvium and integrate dispersed farmers. Because water was plentiful and farmers relied on the annual rise and fall of rivers for agriculture, they did not use water systems. A common element at all Maya centers, however, was the sponsorship of traditional rituals in large, public forums.

Minor centers such as Barton Ramie and Saturday Creek, located on the Belize River on the eastern periphery of the southern Maya lowlands (fig. 1), had dispersed settlement and relatively low structure densities (e.g., 100–151 structures/km² [Lucero et al. n.d.]); Rice and Culbert 1990:table 1.1]) that made it difficult for political aspirants to control resources and appropriate the surplus of others. Wealth differences rather than political power accounted for various-sized residences and other differences in material remains. In other words, elites compensated the workers who built their larger houses and worked their fields rather than exacting tribute. Elites sponsored local, small-scale public rituals and feasts at small temples and plazas and organized the construction of public works to promote solidarity in the face of differential access to wealth (Arie 2001; cf. Ringle 1999).

Regional centers such as Tikal, Calakmul, and Caracol are located in uplands with large pockets of dispersed fertile land that lacked permanent water sources but had artificial reservoirs located next to temples and palaces.⁵ Settlement was dense around centers (235–557 structures/km² [Culbert et al. 1990]) as well as in the hinterlands (up to 313 structures/km² [Folan et al. 1995]). People lived scattered throughout the landscape, and this made it challenging for rulers to organize work parties, feasts, and ceremonial events and extract surplus. Rulers funded large-scale rituals in public plazas and temples to attract, incorporate, and integrate farmers from the immediate area and beyond. They also organized the construction of public works, ball courts, large administra-

5. While sites such as Uaxactun, Nakbe, El Mirador, and others are located in similar settings, historical and environmental circumstances prevented their becoming major regional powers. In the former case, nascent rulers at the less powerful centers early on were subsumed by the political systems of their more powerful neighbors (e.g., Uaxactun/Tikal, Nakbe/Calakmul). In the latter case, shortage of agricultural land prevented large groups of people from settling some areas (Fedick and Ford 1990, Ford 1991). El Mirador, with one of the earliest massive temples (El Tigre) in the Preclassic, may have lost most of its inhabitants at the end of the Late Preclassic (Matheny 1987a), perhaps because of the silting up of reservoirs (Scarborough 1993).

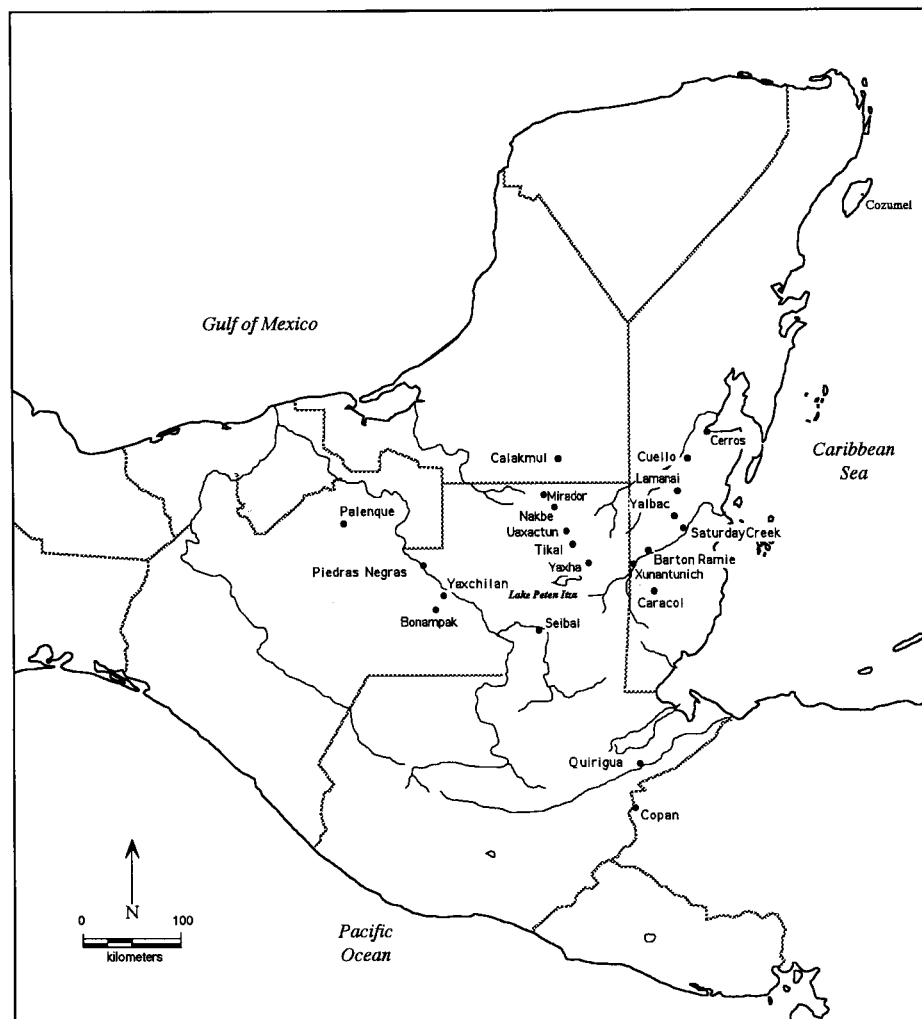


FIG. 1. The Maya lowlands, showing sites mentioned.

tive and private palaces, and funerary temples and used carved texts and emblem glyphs.

Regional rulers were able to collect tribute because they controlled access to water during the dry season, particularly from January through April or May, when for all intents and purposes rainfall was nonexistent (Folan et al. 1995; Ford 1996; Scarborough 1991, 1993, 1996; Scarborough and Gallopin 1991). Rulers performed rituals and organized the maintenance of reservoirs in exchange for dry-season surplus labor, goods, and food (Lucero 1999). Maya rulers appropriated water rites (and other traditional rites) and demonstrated their success in propitiating the gods (Fash n.d., Scarborough 1998). Rituals likely revolved around keeping standing water potable during the dry season, since standing water provides prime conditions for insects and parasites and can produce a concentration of noxious chemicals and organics (see Burton et al. 1979, Hammer and Kadlec 1980,

Nelson, Smith, and Best 1980).⁶ This may have prevented hinterland farmers in areas without water from building their own water catchment systems and developing an equally powerful political base. Large reservoirs also initially required more labor than may have been available in dispersed hinterland settlements. *Aguadas* are found throughout the hinterlands, but they are small and would not have supported large, nucleated populations throughout the year (especially since water was more likely to evaporate because natural *aguadas* are much smaller than artificial reservoirs) (Scarborough 1996).

Control of land was not as significant here as at re-

6. A sign of clean water is the presence of water lilies (*Nymphaea ampla*) on the surface of *aguadas* and reservoirs because they are sensitive hydrophytic plants that grow only in shallow (1–3 m), clean, still water (Conrad 1905:116; Lundell 1937:18, 26). The water lily was a symbol of royalty throughout the Maya lowlands (Rands 1953).

TABLE 1
Preclassic Ritual Deposits

Ritual Type, Site, Structure	Context and Materials	Date	Reference
Dedication			
Cuello			
Str. 307, commoner residence	In floor; lip-to-lip vessels with child's skull inside	250 B.C.–0	Hammond and Gerhardt (1991)
Str. 306, commoner residence	In floor; bowl	250 B.C.–0	Hammond and Gerhardt (1991)
Str. 305, commoner residence	In floor; child's skull under inverted bowl, lip-to-lip vessels with jade bead	0–A.D. 250	Hammond and Gerhardt (1991)
Str. 304, commoner residence	In floor; 2 bowls	0–A.D. 250	Hammond and Gerhardt (1991)
Str. 303, commoner residence	In floor; spindle-shaped limestone hammerstone, chalcedony flake, Colha-type biface tool	0–A.D. 250	Hammond and Gerhardt (1991)
Saturday Creek			
SC-78, elite residence	Fill; marine shell, obsidian blades, biface thinning flakes, core, tool, blade, burned fauna, cut-polished-burned bone	300–100 B.C. ^a	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002)
Tikal			
North Acropolis, Platform 5D-4-10th	Bedrock; disarticulated/redeposited adult; stingray spines	600–350 B.C.	Coe (1965 <i>a</i> ; 1990:24)
North Acropolis, 5D-26-5th, temple	Wall core; 2 perforated clam shells, obsidian blade fragments, 2 chert flakes, 4 bone fragments	A.D. 1–150	Coe (1990:275)
5C-54, temple	Stairway fill; lidded vessel with carved jade pendant (of a bearded man)	A.D. 1–50	Coe (1965 <i>a</i>)
North Acropolis, 5D-Sub.1-1st, temple	Top of platform stairway; lidded jar with shell and jade beads	A.D. 1–50	Coe (1965 <i>a</i>)
North Acropolis, 5D-26-4th, small temple	Small pit in floor; polychrome bowl sherds	A.D. 100–175	Coe (1990:279–80)
Termination			
Cuello			
Str. 317, commoner residence	On floor; perishable structure burned	250 B.C.–0	Hammond, Gerhardt, and Donaghey (1991)
Str. 307, commoner residence	Front terrace burned; pit with charcoal and sherds	250 B.C.–0	Hammond, Gerhardt, and Donaghey (1991)
Saturday Creek			
SC-3, temple	Foot of temple; burning, sherds	100 B.C.–A.D. 200/250 ^a	Jeakle, Lucero, and Field (2002)
SC-78, elite residence	Surface; burned sherds, burned areas, obsidian blade fragments, tool, groundstone fragments	A.D. 1–250 ^a	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002)
Tikal			
North Acropolis, 5D-Sub.14-1st	Platform; burned floors	350 B.C.–A.D. 1	Coe (1965 <i>a</i> ; 1990:202)
Ancestor veneration			
Cuello			
Str. 352, commoner residence	Burial 27; decapitated adolescent in floor; 2 vessels Burial 110; adult, in floor; 4 vessels Burial 112; adult, in floor; 2 vessels Burial 113; adult, in floor; vessel	250 B.C.–0	Robin and Hammond (1991)
Str. 304, commoner residence	Burial 83; adult, in floor; vessel Burial 81; adult, in floor; vessel Burial 85; adult, in floor; vessel	0–A.D. 250	Hammond, Gerhardt, and Donaghey (1991)

TABLE I
(Continued)

Ritual Type, Site, Structure	Context and Materials	Date	Reference
BR-123, elite residence	Burial 30; adult, in floor; 3 vessels, jade bead, 2 shell discs, 40 <i>Spondylus</i> shell beads	100 B.C.–A.D. 250	Willey et al. (1965:551)
	Burial 31; adult, in floor; 3 vessels, shell effigy jade pendant	100 B.C.–A.D. 250	Willey et al. (1965:551)
Tikal			
North Acropolis, 5D-4-10th, temple	Burial 121; adult, in bedrock; 8 shell pendants, 3 jade beads, 3 <i>Spondylus</i> beads	800–600 B.C.	Coe (1965a; 1990:22)
North Acropolis, Platform 5D-Sub.14-1st	Burial 123; adult, platform fill; vessel	350 B.C.–A.D. 1	Coe (1965a; 1990:203)
	Burial 122; infant, platform fill; vessel, large sherd	350 B.C.–A.D. 1	Coe (1965a; 1990:203)
North Acropolis, Platform 5D-Sub.10	Burial 166; 2 adults in corbel-vaulted chamber with red-painted walls and designs; 20 vessels (some with powdered cinnabar), jade and shell beads, carved shell pendant, stingray spines	ca. 50 B.C.	Coe (1965a)
North Acropolis, Platform 5D-4-7th	Burial 85; adult (missing skull) with severed legs in chamber; 26 vessels, cylindrical jade bead, greenstone mask with shell eye and teeth inlays, perforated marine shell, stingray spine, obsidian blade, stuccoed wood bowl, possible textile/mat remains	A.D. 1–150	Coe (1990:217–19)

^aDetermined using a ceramic chronology (type-variety) (Conlon and Ehret 2002).

gional centers such as Palenque and Copan, which were located along rivers with concentrated alluvium. Settlement was typically dense around centers (e.g., 1,449 structures/km² at Copan [Rice and Culbert 1990:table 1.1; Webster and Freter 1990]) and noticeably less dense beyond the alluvium (e.g., 28–99 structures/km² in rural Copan). Rulers collected tribute from densely settled farmers because they controlled concentrated resources. While they had access to nucleated settlements, they still needed to integrate people, justify their right to demand tribute, and promote solidarity in the face of political and economic inequality. For example, at Copan alluvial soils are found within a 24-km² area (Webster 1999). Rulers also monopolized trade with highland areas for jade and obsidian (Fash 1991). Copan's occupants also built reservoirs, which B. Fash (n.d.) argues, on the basis of their distribution and analysis of water symbolism, were managed and controlled by the political elite, especially during the dry season. Palenque is situated in the foothills of the Chiapas highlands overlooking fertile plains (de la Garza 1992:51–52). The inhabitants relied on several streams and springs and built aqueducts and canals to drain water away from the center.

Scenes on Late Classic polychrome vessels depict royal rites and ritual dances taking place “on the spacious

stairs and upper terraces of the palace complex” (Reents-Budet 2001:202). These buildings faced plazas in which large numbers of people could watch and participate in water and other traditional rites. Scenes on vessels and from iconography also depict feasts (Reents-Budet 2001) and tribute payments “often represented by *Spondylus* shells attached to heaped mantles . . . quantities of cacao beans . . . and heaps of tamales and bowls of pulque” (Houston and Stuart 2001:69).

Secondary centers such as Lamanai, Yalbac, Seibal, Quirigua, Bonampak, Cuello, Piedras Negras,⁷ Xunantunich, and Yaxchilan are found along rivers largely in upland areas with dispersed pockets of agricultural land that supported local hierarchical polities. Settlement was typically dense near centers (up to 275 structures/km² [Loten 1985, Tourtellot 1990]) and less dense in the hinterlands (145 structures/km² [Ashmore 1990; Rice and Culbert 1990:table 1.1]). Rulers acquired some tribute because they controlled critical resources (e.g., harbors,

7. Piedras Negras, which sits between two fertile valleys to the northwest and southeast (Houston et al. 1998), may turn out to be a regional capital. Cuello never rose to its full potential in the Late Classic, perhaps because of the more successful political histories at nearby secondary centers such as Lamanai.

nearby agricultural land) and prestige-goods exchange. Scattered, small-scale water systems indicate their lesser role in political machinations than regional polities'. The vibrant painted murals of Bonampak depict tribute payments (e.g., "five 8,000 bean counts of cacao" [Miller 2001:210]) and ritual dancing "on the adjacent plaza or possibly a courtyard" [p. 215]. The scenes also depict a major battle, sacrifice of captured victims, and the designation of an heir. These centers arose as "secondary" polities in which local rulers participated in the royal interaction sphere established by regional rulers through alliances, intercenter marriages, warfare, prestige-goods exchange, and royal dynastic rites.

In sum, at one end of the political spectrum were minor centers with extensive alluvium, dispersed farmers, and wealthy families or elites. At the other end of the political spectrum were regional centers in which rulers controlled domains of concentrated critical resources and densely settled farmers. Filling out the spectrum were secondary centers along trade routes (rivers) in hilly areas with dispersed small-scale water systems, agricultural land, and farmers, the histories of which are closely tied to those of regional centers (cf. Iannone 2002, Marcus 1998). A common feature among elites and royals was their use of ritual to integrate people and legitimate unequal access to wealth and political power.

MAYA RITUALS

The significance of Maya rituals is illustrated in ethnographic and ethnohistoric records. Household dedication, termination, and ancestor veneration rites in particular have a long tradition and leave clear evidence in the archaeological record. While there have been dramatic changes over the millennia (e.g., the abandonment of Maya centers and parts of the southern Maya lowlands in the 900s, the Spanish conquest in the 1500s, forced settlement nucleation, conversion to Christianity, and depopulation due to foreign diseases), the material expression of these rituals has continued from pre-Hispanic times to the present (Deal 1988).

Dedication rituals are performed to animate new houses and other objects. Part of such a ritual is the caching of objects under the house floor. For example, for the Zinacantan Maya of highland Chiapas, Vogt (1993:52–55) describes two stages of ritual for house construction. During construction, builders bury the heads of sacrificed chickens in the floor with other offerings. Afterward, a shaman performs rites to compensate the Earth Lord for the materials he has provided and "summon the ancestral gods to provide the house with an innate soul" (p. 52). Again, more offerings are buried in the floor of the new house (Vogt 1970:78, 98; see also Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:146; Wauchope 1938:143).

Termination rituals are performed to deactivate or deanimate houses or objects, thus releasing their souls. Such rituals include the breaking of objects, the partial destruction of houses, and the burning of incense (Garber 1986, 1989). Throughout Mesoamerica, ritually abandoning a house involves pulling down parts of the house

(e.g., corner posts, roof), burning incense, praying, and making offerings (Stross 1998).

Ancestor veneration rites are performed to honor and thank ancestors. "The powers whose influence on human affairs is continuous and unremitting are the ancestors, who represent the great moral force" (Bunzel 1952:269). For example, among the Zinacantecos, ancestors are the most important deities (Vogt 1970:6). Although ancestors live in sacred places such as caves or mountains, at least through colonial times their physical remains and offerings were kept close to home, buried in the floors of houses, as Bishop de Landa describes for colonial Yucatan (Tozzer 1941:130).

When a Maya temple was ritually destroyed, rulers and elites burned incense and left old, broken items as offerings, after which a new temple was constructed over the old and dedicated with the caching of new objects (Freidel and Schele 1989; Garber 1986, 1989; Schele and Freidel 1990:104–8). Although there is wide diversity in structure configuration, size, and function among commoner houses, elite compounds, palaces, and temples, current evidence suggests that they have structurally and functionally similar depositional [ritual] histories (Becker 1992; Gillespie 2000b; Haviland 1981, 1988; McAnany 1995:97; Walker and Lucero 2000; Willey et al. 1965) that can be attributed to common dedication, termination, and ancestor veneration rituals.

UNCOVERING ANCIENT MAYA RITUAL HISTORIES

I suggest that political aspirants began to expand domestic rituals during the Late Preclassic and continued to do so, producing large-scale royal rites (Early Classic) and a direct association of royal families with the supernatural or divine forces (Late Classic). If Maya rulers replicated and expanded household rituals, then we should find evidence for such rituals in commoner houses, elite residences, royal palaces, and temples beginning in the Late Preclassic. Rituals should be represented in depositional histories that are structurally and functionally similar but *increase in scale*. Differences between commoner, elite, and royal ritual deposits include differences in setting and increases in the quality, quantity, and diversity (of forms). For example, all members of Maya society cached exotic obsidian objects: commoners cached small blades in houses, elites more and longer blades in larger houses with small public courtyards, and royals more and longer blades as well as skillfully carved objects in palaces and temples facing large plazas (Krejci and Culbert 1995). Before the advent of rulers, all the members of the society cached more or less the same quantities of similarly shaped obsidian in their houses (Krejci and Culbert 1995). Thereafter there was increasing diversity in form and quantity between commoner, elite, and royal caches. The caching of obsidian never left the home but was taken to new levels in association with the rise of rulers in larger public forums (see, e.g., Hendon 1999, Ringle 1999).

Termination deposits and dedication caches are typically found in the centers of rooms (Garber 1986, 1989).

Burials are typically found in the southeast corners of small residences (Willey et al. 1965) and the eastern structures of elite plazuelas or compounds (e.g., in the Belize Valley and southeastern Petén) (Garber et al. 1998). In palaces and temples, caches, other ritual deposits, and burials are often located at the primary axis on top of or under floors and stairs (Ashmore 1991; Loten and Pendergast 1984:5; Pendergast 1998).

Dedication caches are found under floors and usually consist of burned or unburned whole objects such as jade, obsidian, and ceramic vessels (some lip-to-lip) (Becker 1992; Coe 1959:77–78; 1965c; see also Chase and Chase 1988; Garber 1989:98; Mock 1998). Major differences among commoner, elite, and royal caches include the quality, quantity, and diversity of offerings and location (for example, shell beads in houses, jade beads in elite structures, and more diverse forms and quantities of jade objects in public monumental contexts [Garber 1989:67]).

Termination deposits are found on top of floors and are typically broken and burned (Coe 1965c; Garber 1986, 1989; Rice 1999). Again, differences among commoner, elite, and royal deposits include the quality, quantity, and diversity of offerings and location (for example, a few smashed vessels in commoner houses, greater numbers and fancier polychrome vessels in elite residences, and more diverse forms and quantities of vessels with incised or painted hieroglyphs in monumental architecture). In addition, termination rituals in monumental public architecture are evidenced by the destruction of stone and stuccoed sculpture, the effacement of painted and carved portraits of rulers and deities, and the white-washing of painted walls (Becker 1992; Garber 1989:9).

Evidence for ancestor veneration rites consists of burials and offerings under structure floors (Gillespie 2000b; McAnany 1995:53–55). Major differences among commoner, elite, and royal burials include location (under house floors, in elite shrines, and in corbel-vaulted or “false” arch tombs in palaces and temples) and the quality, quantity, and diversity of grave goods.

Ancient Maya Ritual and Political Power

The increase in scale and the public setting of domestic ritual activities associated with the rise of Maya rulers can be seen in the archaeological record from domestic and monumental structures at two centers at opposite ends of the political spectrum, the minor center of Saturday Creek and the regional center of Tikal (fig. 1), both of which have long occupation histories spanning the periods before, during, and after the advent of rulers.

Saturday Creek is located along the Belize River on an extensive floodplain in central Belize. Settlement was dispersed (100–151 structures/km² [Lucero et al. n.d.]) and included solitary mounds, mound groups or plazuelas, a ball court, and small temples (up to ca. 10 m tall) (fig. 2). The site was occupied from at least 600 B.C. to A.D. 1500 (Conlon and Ehret 2002). To maximize the range of ritual activities revealed, we excavated several

structure types:⁸ two solitary mounds, SC-18 (10 × 8 m, 1.24 m high) and SC-85 (6 × 4 m, 1.34 m high), the eastern structure of an elite compound, SC-78 (29.4 × 9.5 m, 3.85 m high), and a temple ball court, SC-3 (temple 5 × 5 m, 2.4 m high, platform 48 × 24 m, 3 m high) (Lucero 2002b).

Tikal, a regional center located on top of an escarpment surrounded by swampy areas and large tracts of fertile land, is one of the best-known Maya centers. With no nearby lakes or rivers, its inhabitants depended on complex reservoir systems (Scarborough and Gallopin 1991). Tikal has one of the longest sequences of monumental architecture in the Maya lowlands. For example, more than 1,000 years of temple construction (20 plaster floors), destruction (smashed objects and defaced monuments), and rebuilding occur in the site’s North Acropolis. At the time of abandonment (10th century A.D.), it was approximately 100 × 80 m and 40 m high, though it began as a 6 × 6-m structure (Coe 1965a, b, 1990) (fig. 3). On the south it faces the Great Plaza (125 × 100 m), where an audience would probably have watched and participated in royal ritual performances.

THE PRECLASSIC

The Preclassic witnessed the appearance of wealth differences, the earliest indications of rulers, and the replication and expansion of traditional rites. The earliest southern lowland Maya elites emerged in the Middle Preclassic (ca. 900 B.C.) near critical resources such as water and fertile land, where they began to organize the building of monumental architecture including ball courts (e.g., Nakbe) and platforms (e.g., Cerros, Nakbe, Cuello, Lamanai, El Mirador) (Freidel and Schele 1988a, Hammond, Gerhardt, and Donaghey 1991, Hansen 1998a, Matheny 1987, Pendergast 1998), as well as small reservoirs (Scarborough 1998). As social, political, and economic stratification increased, high-ranking lineages were transformed into royal ones early in the Late Preclassic (McAnany 1995), when rulers may have assumed shamanistic characteristics to mediate between people, ancestors, and gods (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993). Monumental architecture became more standardized (Hansen 1998). Depictions of ceremonial events (e.g., succession) were carved or painted on portable objects (Mathews 1985; Schele and Miller 1986:109). Writing and the term *ahaw* (lord, ruler) had appeared by the first century B.C.

According to Krejci and Culbert (1995:111), “The primary characteristic of Preclassic caches is that they contain few objects and exhibit little variety.” The only clear evidence for dedication rites at Saturday Creek occurs in the elite structure, SC-78 (table 1). The thick clay construction fill, dating from 300 to 100 B.C., yielded a

8. The 2001 field season was funded by a National Science Foundation grant (BCS#0004410) and private donations by Berniece Skinner, Robert Vannix, and Robert Vitolo. Permission to work in Belize, which is greatly appreciated, was granted by the Belize Department of Archaeology, Ministry of Tourism and Culture. Special thanks go to Acting Archaeology Commissioner George Thompson.

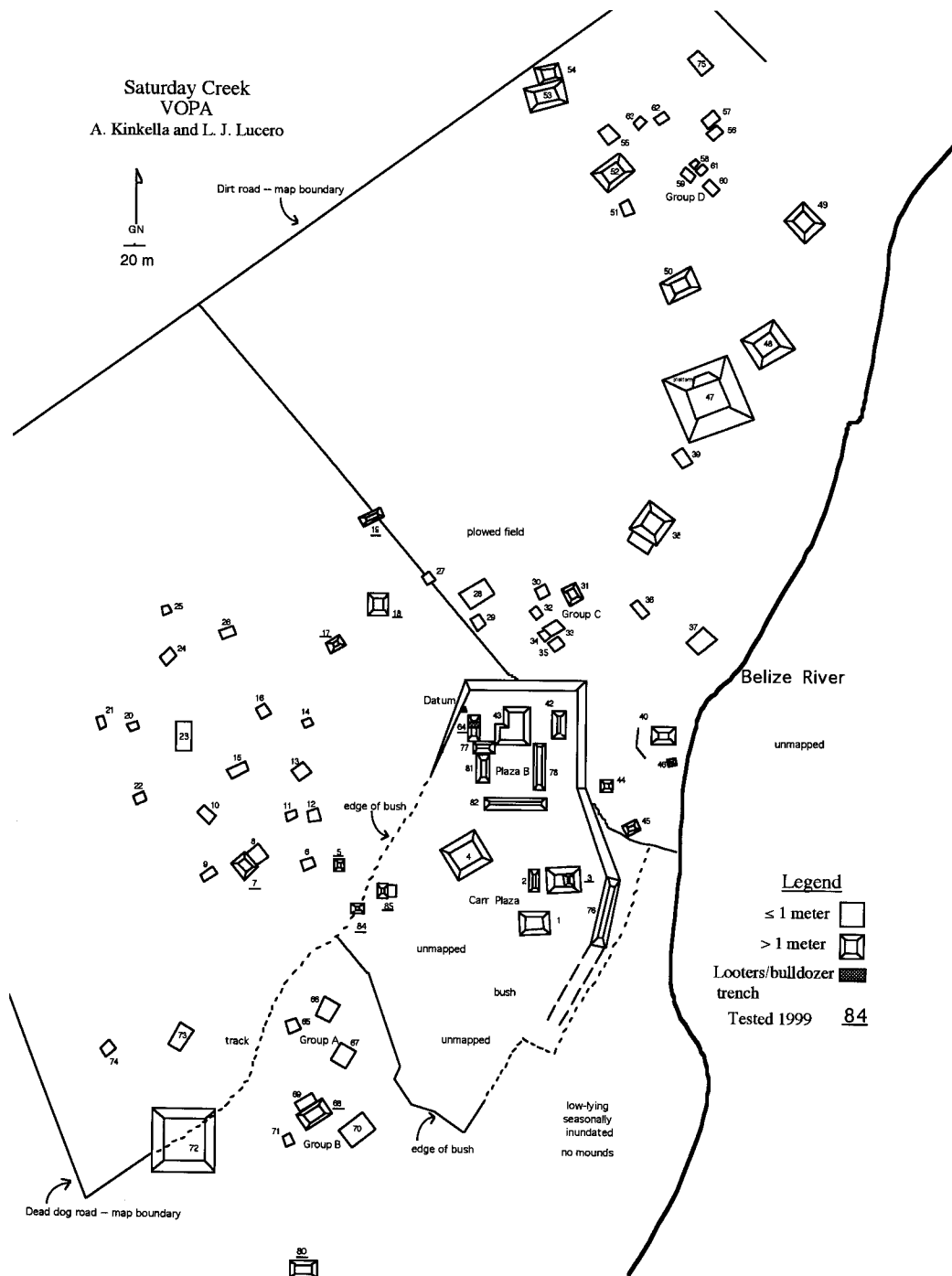


FIG. 2. *Saturday Creek*.

dedication cache that included marine shells, a cut and polished burned bone, obsidian blades, biface thinning flakes, a chert core, tool, and blade, and burned faunal remains (Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh 2002). The construction fill of small houses from the early secondary center of Cuello in northern Belize near the New River (fig. 1), however, yielded several caches—from a single

bowl and a spindle-shaped limestone hammerstone, chalcedony flakes, and a biface tool to two pairs of lip-to-lip vessels, one containing a child's skull and the other a jade bead (Hammond and Gerhardt 1991).

The only obvious Preclassic termination ritual at Saturday Creek consisted of smashed and burned sherds at the foot of the temple (SC-3) and at SC-78 on floor sur-

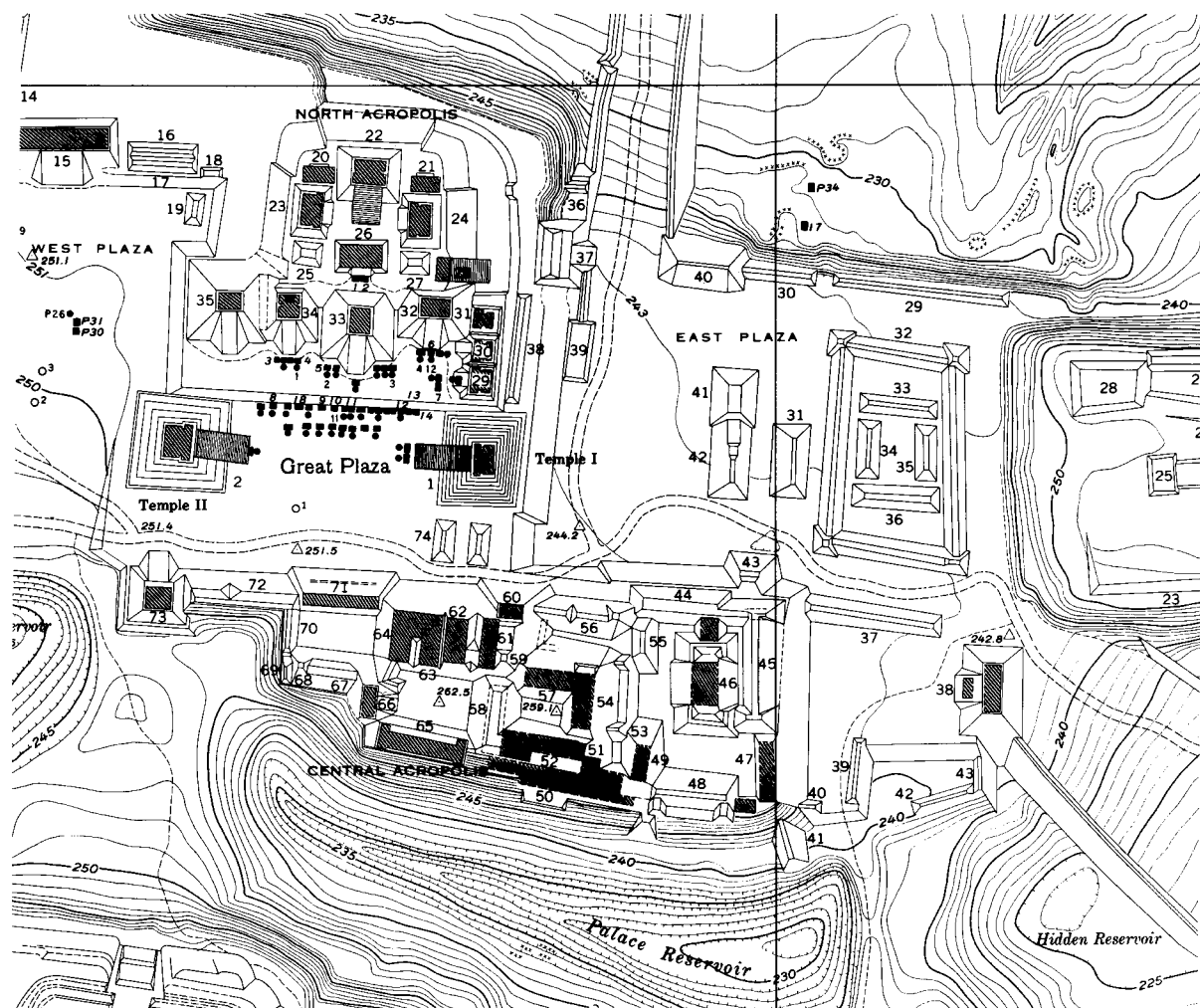


FIG. 3. North Acropolis, Great Plaza, and Central Acropolis, Tikal, after Carr and Hazard (1961). (University of Pennsylvania Museum Tikal Project, Negative # 2003-5-1.)

faces (burned sherds and areas, obsidian blade and chert tool fragments, and groundstone fragments). However, there is solid evidence for domestic termination rituals at Cuello. Throughout the several construction phases of residences (and temples), there are burned floors and destroyed architectural features beginning by at least 900 B.C. (Hammond, Gerhardt, and Donaghey 1991). Later the Maya would scatter jade beads on some burned residential surfaces (e.g., str. 317).

No Preclassic burials were recovered at Saturday Creek, but burial data from Cuello provide some of the best evidence available for Preclassic burial activities. During the Early Middle Preclassic (1200–700 B.C.), most burials are located in house floors with shell, ceramic, and some jade grave goods (Hammond 1995, 1999). A common grave good consisted of an inverted bowl placed over the head. In the Late Middle Preclassic (700–400 B.C.) jade is found only in burials of males. In addition, burials start to appear in ancillary structures and com-

munity courtyards. Finally, in the Late Preclassic (400 B.C.–A.D. 250) a large platform becomes the major locus for ceremonial activities and elite burials, the majority of which are males buried with exotic goods (Hammond, Gerhardt, and Donaghey 1991, Robin and Hammond 1991). Domestic burials, in contrast, remained similar to those of earlier periods.

Barton Ramie, a minor center along the Belize River, also yielded Preclassic elite burials. For example, the elite residence BR-123 (33 × 23 m, 2.75 m high) had some of the earliest “lavish” burials in the Belize Valley, dating to ca. 100 B.C.–A.D. 250, including the earliest Maya polychrome pottery and jade beads and pendants (Willey et al. 1965:531). For example, burial 30, an adult male, was buried with three vessels, a jade bead, two shell discs, and 40 *Spondylus* shell beads (p. 551).

At Tikal, the Maya began to build the North Acropolis sometime after 600 B.C. by digging several pits within which they placed a human skull and Preclassic ceram-

ics. The earliest substantial architecture (300–200 B.C.) includes three successive platforms (5D-Sub.14-3rd, -2nd, -1st) each comparable in size to a large thatched house on a stone platform, approximately 6 × 6 m, similar in size to SC-18 and SC-85. Coe (1965a:12–13) describes the last of these three temples (5D-Sub.14-1st) as follows:

The roof was probably of thatch with poles at the corners. . . . This building burned, then was re-floored, then charred again. . . . Beneath its floors were three burials, an infant and two adults who were partially protected by . . . large inverted Chuen [350 B.C.–A.D. 1] plates. Pits in bedrock in front of these platforms yielded other insights. One contained a young adult . . . with a necklace of shell pendants and imported jade and shell beads. . . . The other pit contained the incomplete disarticulated remains of an adult accompanied by fragments of one or more stingray spines [used for ceremonial bloodletting].

This pattern of the burning and destruction of earlier architectural features continues throughout the building of the North Acropolis (Coe 1990:506).

A lidded jar with shell and jade beads dated as early as ca. A.D. 1–50 was found on top of one of the platform stairways associated with str. 5D-Sub.1-1st. Beneath the base of the east stairway in a contemporary temple, str. 5C-54, was a large red lidded vessel that contained a carved jade pendant depicting a bearded man (Coe 1965a). In the wall core of an early temple dating to A.D. 1–150, str. 5D-26-5th, were two perforated clam shells, two obsidian blade fragments, two chert flakes, and four bone fragments (Coe 1990:275). In the next phase (5D-26-4th), dating to A.D. 100–175, the Maya dug a small pit in which they placed the sherds of a large polychrome bowl (pp. 279–80).

The earliest clearly elite or royal burial at the North Acropolis is associated with platform 5D-Sub.10 (burial 166), which dates to ca. 50 B.C. Two females were entombed in a corbel-vaulted chamber with painted designs on its red-plastered walls along with 20 vessels, some with powdered cinnabar, jade and shell beads, stingray spines, and a carved shell pendant (Coe 1965a). Another elite burial located within platform 5D-4-7th (no. 85, dating to A.D. 1–150) consisted of a simple chamber with small slabs as a roof within which was buried a bundled male without a skull and with severed legs. Twenty-six vessels were also interred, as well as a cylindrical jade bead, a greenstone mask with shell eye and dental inlays, a perforated marine shell, a stingray spine, an obsidian blade, a stuccoed wood bowl, possible cinnabar dust (perhaps all that remains of a red-painted textile or mat), and other objects (Coe 1990:217–19). Whether burials were public or private events, the fact that these burials were found in monumental buildings distinguishes them from residential burials.

EARLY CLASSIC

The Early Classic witnessed full-blown Maya rulership and the continued importance of domestic rituals conducted at home and in public, political forums. Genealogical succession and the role of *ahaw* were firmly established, carved onto stelae that included the first appearance of rulers holding the mannikin scepter (Freidel and Schele 1988a, Stuart 1996). The earliest regional rulers arose at centers such as Copan and Tikal; dated inscriptions indicate that royal events took place first at regional centers (ca. A.D. 292–435) and later at secondary centers (ca. A.D. 480 and later) (see Martin and Grube 2000). Rulers conflated the traditional practice of ancestor veneration with rulership (Gillespie 2000a; McAnany 1995:227) and emphasized the dynastic lineage and their closer ties to deified ancestors and other deities (rain, maize). These rituals were conducted on the tops of tall multitiered temples overlooking audiences in large plazas. Rulers, especially at Tikal, incorporated foreign themes such as the rain god, Tlaloc, and other elements from Teotihuacan (Schele and Miller 1986:213) that demonstrated their esoteric ties and knowledge. Inscriptions tell of monumental building dedications (e.g., at Tikal and Copan) (Schele and Freidel 1990). They also mention conquests and the capture of royal persons, royal visitations, succession, bloodletting, and period-ending rites at both regional and secondary centers (e.g., Tikal, Copan, Yaxchilan, and Piedras Negras).

At Saturday Creek, in commoner residence SC-85, dedicatory fill deposits dating to ca. A.D. 400–600 yielded chert cores, marine shell, obsidian blades, drilled marine shell, faunal remains, mano and metate fragments, perforated sherds, and ceramic sherd clusters (Lucero, McGahee, and Corral 2002b) (table 2). In addition to similar items found in SC-3 and SC-78 there were speleothems (stalagmite or stalactite fragments from caves, considered sacred to the Maya as portals to the underworld or Xibalba), chalcedony and obsidian cores, quartz pebbles, stone balls, and human phalanges (some twisted and deformed) found inside a concave sherd (Jeakle, Lucero, and Field 2002, Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh 2002). A partially reconstructable Early Classic (ca. A.D. 290–550) polychrome plate was found in the fill of the temple superstructure (SC-3).

Burned surfaces were recorded for every construction phase at Saturday Creek, including that over burials (e.g., burial 5). For example, there were at least two burning events at SC-3, the first consisting of a layer of burned corozo palm nuts at the base of the temple and the second of burned daub, fire-cracked chert, and charcoal-flecked soil on top of the partially collapsed (destroyed) platform substructure.

Both of the two Early Classic burials at Saturday Creek had grave goods. Burial 5 (A.D. 400–600) consisted of an adult buried under a floor (as were all burials at Saturday Creek) with mano and metate fragments and a deer antler (Sanchez and Piehl 2002). Burial 6 was an adult male buried with a plain plate inverted over the chest. No burials were found at SC-3 or SC-78. At the elite Barton

TABLE 2
Early Classic Ritual Deposits

Ritual Type, Site, Structure	Context and Materials	Date (A.D.)	Reference
Dedication			
Saturday Creek			
SC-85, commoner residence	Fill; burned materials (daub, charcoal, cobbles), perforated sherd, chert core, mano, marine shell, drilled marine shell, obsidian, fauna; burials 8, 10	400–600	Lucero, McGahee, and Corral (2002)
	Fill; obsidian, mano, metate fragments	400–600	Lucero, McGahee, and Corral (2002)
	Ballast; circular pit with ceramic cluster	400–600	Lucero, McGahee, and Corral (2002)
SC-78, elite residence	Fill; groundstone fragments, speleothem	400–600	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002)
	Fill; chalcedony core, obsidian core, marine shell	400–600	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002)
	Fill; chert core, quartz pebbles, marine shell, fauna	400–600	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002)
SC-3, temple	Fill; core, obsidian blades, stone balls, ceramic cluster, quartz flake	400–600	Jeakle, Lucero, and Field (2002)
	Looter's trench fill; basal-flange bowl sherds	290–550	Jeakle, Lucero, and Field (2002)
SC-3, platform	Fill; human feet and hand bones (phalanges inside a concave sherd, some twisted and deformed), metate fragment	400–600	Jeakle, Lucero, and Field (2002)
Tikal			
Group 4F-1, quarry 4F-1, small residential group	Fill; pair of lip-to-lip vessels	250–550	Haviland (1985:155–56)
	Fill; pair of lip-to-lip vessels		
	Fill; pair of lip-to-lip vessels		
North Acropolis, 5D-46, temple	Stairway fill; lidded vessel with hieroglyphs	ca. 350	Harrison (1999:77–78)
North Acropolis, 5D-26-1st, temple	Room 2 floor fill; incised obsidian, obsidian blades, eccentric cherts, mano fragment, large fauna, 22 sawfish spikes, marine shell, 27 porcupine fish spines, figurine head fragment, censer ladle with soot, tripod bowl sherds	250–550	Coe (1990:302)
	Room 1A floor fill; similar to room 2, as well as jade mosaic pieces, cinnabar-coated stingray spines, miniature clay head, 3 pointed bone fragments, soft sponge, sherds	250–550	Coe (1990:304–5)
Termination			
Saturday Creek			
SC-18, commoner residence	Fill; circular burned area over left arm of burial 5	400–600	Lucero and Brown (2002)
SC-78, elite residence	Surface; burning throughout, obsidian blade fragments, fauna (some burned)	400–600	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002)
SC-3, temple	Temple base; burned layer of corozo nuts	250–550	Jeakle, Lucero, and Field (2002)
	Top of destroyed temple platform, layer of burned daub, fire-cracked chert, charcoal-flecked soil	250–550	Jeakle, Lucero, and Field (2002)
Tikal			
Group 4F-2, 4F-15-3rd, small residence	Burned floors, censer sherds	250–550	Haviland (1985:63)
Group 4F-2, 4F-Sub.1-1st, small residence	Burned floors, burned stones	250–550	Haviland (1985:69)

TABLE 2
(Continued)

Ritual Type, Site, Structure	Context and Materials	Date (A.D.)	Reference
North Acropolis, 5D-22-3rd, temple	On floor; layer of charcoal with burned jade fragments, mica fragments, 97 chert flakes, bone fragments, and censer sherds from 2 vessels with burned copal	250–550	Coe (1990:359)
	On floor; charcoal, red-painted plaster fragments, sherds, 2 chert fragments	250–550	Coe (1990:360)
North Acropolis, 5D-26-1st, temple	Pit in fill; carved monument fragment (misc. stone 34), 5 chert chips	250–550	Coe (1990:314)
Ancestor veneration			
Saturday Creek			
SC-18, commoner residence	Burial 5; adult, in floor; mano and metate fragments, deer antler	400–600	Sanchez and Piehl (2002)
SC-85, commoner residence	Burial 6; adult, in floor; inverted plate	400–600	Sanchez and Piehl (2002)
Barton Ramie			
BR-123, elite residence	Burial 13; adult, in floor; 3 vessels, jade effigy pendant	300–400	Willey et al. (1965:550)
Tikal			
Group 4F-2, 4F-7, small residence	Burial 33; adult, outside structure; incomplete vessel	250–550	Haviland (1985:134)
Group 4F-1, quarry 4F-1 (under 4F-8, residence)	Burial 34; child, east of structure in pit; incomplete vessel, chert flakes	250–550	Haviland (1985:135)
	Burial 35; adult, east of structure in <i>chultun</i> ; 6 vessels, animal skull, obsidian blade		
	Burial 36; child, east of burial 35 in pit; 2 bifaces		
North Acropolis, 5D-33-1st, temple	Burial 48; 3 adults (including possible remains of ruler Siyah Chan K'awil and one missing the skull) placed on mats, bedrock chamber with painted hieroglyphs; 30 vessels, 400+ jade beads, metate, mano, hematite items, obsidian blades, quartzite pebbles, alabaster vessel, ca. 30 species of marine shell, 700 jade pieces	ca. 459	Coe (1990:118–19, 120–22), Harrison (1999:89–90)
North Acropolis, 5D-34, terrace	Burial 10; chamber tomb of ruler Yax Ain 1; 3 turtle carapaces, headless crocodile, 2 pygmy owls, green jay, ant tanager, stingray spines, <i>Spondylus</i> shells, jade crocodile-head ornament, 3 effigy vessels with Teotihuacan symbolism, ca. 25 vessels, and the remains of 3 individuals	ca. 420	Harrison (1999:83–87)

Ramie structure BR-123, however, a male adult (burial 13) was buried under a floor with three vessels and a jade effigy pendant (Willey et al. 1965:90, 550).

For the North Acropolis of Tikal, Coe (1965a:31) reports many ritual deposits, consisting of thousands of obsidian pieces, eccentric cherts, and marine objects (shell, especially carved *Spondylus*, sea-worms, stingray

spines), under floors, on the surface of floors, and in the fill. Lip-to-lip ceramic vessels with offerings were replaced by fancier lidded vases and other vessels, some of them incised or painted with hieroglyphs stating who lived in the structure (e.g., str. 5D-46) (Harrison 1999: 77–78). Within str. 5D-26-1st in the floor of one of the two rooms (room 2) archaeologists found incised obsid-

ian, obsidian blades, eccentric cherts, a mano fragment, large faunal remains, 22 sawfish spikes, marine shell, 27 porcupine-fish dermal spines, part of a tripod bowl, a censer ladle with soot, and a figurine head fragment (Coe 1990:302). They recovered similar items in the floor of room 1A, as well as jade mosaic pieces, a miniature clay head, three pointed bone fragments, soft sponge, and cinnabar-coated stingray spines (pp. 304–5). These caches contrast with those found in residences about 1 km to the northeast, which consist of single pairs of lip-to-lip vessels (Haviland 1985:155–56).

Termination rituals at Tikal homes are indicated by burned floors, noticeable on nearly every surface (Haviland 1985), and burned and smashed items including ceramics. Burning also occurred throughout Early Classic building events at the North Acropolis (Coe 1990). The Maya also incorporated into the fill of new monumental structures the destroyed remains of earlier carved building fragments (e.g., str. 5D-26-1st [p. 314]).

Residential burials at Tikal are similar to those at Saturday Creek. For example, burial 33, just south of str. 4F-7, was an adult male with an incomplete vessel (Haviland 1985:134). In contrast, burial 48, associated with temple 5D-33-1st of the North Acropolis, consisted of a chamber with a domed ceiling and walls painted with hieroglyphs (Coe 1990:118–19; Harrison 1999:89–90) that contained three individuals (possibly including the ruler Siyah Chan K'awil), one with a severed head, placed on mats or skins, along with 30 vessels, over 400 jade beads, a metate and mano, hematite items, obsidian blades, quartzite pebbles, an alabaster vessel, about 30 different species of marine shell, and nearly 700 jade pieces (perhaps part of a mosaic) (Coe 1990:120–22). Its location at the foot of an imposing temple facing a plaza may indicate a public ceremony venerating a royal ancestor.

LATE CLASSIC

The Late Classic witnessed the florescence of political power and domestic and public rituals. Inscriptions included the elevated status *k'ul ahaw* (divine or holy lord) (Houston and Stuart 1996). Inscriptions and iconography amply illustrate that Classic Maya rulers were considered closer to important Maya deities (e.g., lightning's power, ancestral spirits) and to the otherworld than the rest of Maya society (Marcus 1978, Peniche Rivero 1990, Schele and Freidel 1990). Rulers often impersonated gods (Houston and Stuart 1996), and their names embodied some of their qualities (e.g., K'inich [Sun God] Balam [Jaguar] of Palenque). Other inscriptions tell of "house censuring" or "house burning" (Stuart 1998) and illustrate the proliferation of royal or nondomestic rites, in addition to pan-Maya ones, that included ball games, royal marriages, period-ending rites, royal anniversaries, royal visitations, succession, sacrifice of royal captives, blood-letting, and other rites not yet understood (fish-in-hand, flapstaff) (Gossen and Leventhal 1993, Schele and Freidel 1990, Schele and Miller 1986). Rulers were entombed in

funerary temples facing plazas that could hold thousands of people (McAnany 1995:51).

At Saturday Creek, dedication caches were recovered from all four structures (table 3). Those found at the two commoner residences were similar to those of earlier time periods (e.g., obsidian blade fragments, mano and metate fragments, a polished stone, bone needles, a miniature jar, polished and shaped bone, drilled marine shell and bone, chert cores, spindle whorls, a polished celt, a bark beater, marine shell, burned and unburned faunal remains, small figurine fragments, ceramic discs, and a few small jade and hematite inlay/mosaic pieces) (Lucero and Brown 2002, Lucero, McGahee, and Corral 2002). In addition to items such as these, the elite structures, SC-3 and SC-78, yielded stacked vases, quartz pebbles and flakes, obsidian cores, ceramic beads, complete chert and obsidian blades, coral, white mica, speleothems, and the hand bones of a spider monkey (Jeakle, Lucero, and Field 2002, Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh 2002).

Termination deposits were also recovered from all four structures and are similar to those of earlier time periods (e.g., smashed, burned vessels on surfaces). The major difference between the commoner and elite deposits was the types of vessels smashed. At SC-18 and SC-85, smashed vessels usually consisted of plain or monochrome slipped bowls, jars, and plates (with only a few polychrome sherds), as well as figurine fragments, Colha chert, shaped serpentine, mano and metate fragments, obsidian pieces and cores, polished and shaped bone, and marine shell fragments. The elite structure and temple yielded, in addition to the above, drum vases, polychrome vessels, and molded ceramic pieces, as well as drilled and carved marine shell, powdered marl, burned plaster fragments, and human bone. For example, sometime during the 9th century A.D. the Maya at SC-78 burned an entire structure of wattle and daub. One wall collapsed on a deposit of several burned and smashed decorated vessels, a human ulna placed on top of a plate, shell, and an incised drilled marine shell pendant (fig. 4).

Eight burials were recovered from the two smaller residences, four with grave goods (Sanchez and Piehl 2002). The three burials at SC-18 all had grave goods, including an adult (sex unknown) interred with a bowl and an olla. One adult male was interred with a plate and the other with a large plate, an olla, a hammerstone, and small shell disc beads. The one burial with grave goods at SC-85 was of an adult male buried with a plate, an olla, and a polished bone.

At Barton Ramie, elite burials yielded, in addition to jade beads, at least three jade effigy pendants, as well as typically more goods per burial (Willey et al. 1965:90, 549–52). For example, grave goods from burial 3 (with one adult) at BR-260 (ca. 40 × 30 m, with four mounds up to 2 m high) included three vessels, three obsidian blades, three carved bones, a jaguar-shaped jade pendant, and a polished celt (pp. 267–70, 557).

Caching somewhat similar to that seen at Saturday Creek is evident among smaller residences at Tikal, contrasting dramatically with what has been revealed in monumental architecture. At str. 4F-3 of group 4F-1 (a

TABLE 3
Late Classic Ritual Deposits

Ritual Type, Site, Structure	Context and Materials	Date (A.D.)	Reference
Dedication			
Saturday Creek			
SC-85, commoner residence	Fill; obsidian, mano and metate fragments, polished stone, figurine fragment, marine shell, fauna (burned, deer, bird); burials 1, 3	700–900	Lucero, McGahee, and Corral (2002)
SC-18, commoner residence	Fill; bone needle, chert core, obsidian, spindle whorl, figurine fragment, shell	700–900	Lucero and Brown (2002)
	Fill; chert core, marine shell, obsidian pieces, fauna	800–900	Lucero, McGahee, and Corral (2002)
	Fill; ceramic disc, obsidian blades, fauna	600–800	Lucero, McGahee, and Corral (2002)
	Fill; obsidian, polished celt	800–900	Lucero and Brown (2002)
	Fill; plain miniature jar	600–700	Lucero, McGahee, and Corral (2002)
	Fill; burned-in design, marine shell, obsidian, ceramic disc, drilled marine shell, polished-shaped bone, drilled burned bone, turtle carapace pieces, fauna	600–700	Lucero and Brown (2002)
	Fill; marine shell, obsidian, bone needle, jade tooth inlay, hematite disc fragment, pieces of turtle carapace, bird bone	800–900	Lucero and Brown (2002)
SC-78, elite residence	Fill; groundstone fragment, bark beater, fauna	650–750	Lucero and Brown (2002)
	Fill; burned, plaster, charcoal, fauna (turtle), chert core, blade, obsidian, mano and metate fragments, quartz flake, ceramic bead, figurine fragment, 2 ceramic clusters	800–900	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002)
	Floor; burned area, mano, bone cluster (monkey feet/hand bones), speleothem	700–800	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002)
	Fill; 1 vase cluster, marine shell, chert core, obsidian	800–900	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002)
	Fill; 3 staked vases, 8 obsidian blades (2 complete), obsidian flakes, marine shell, metate	700–900	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002)
	Fill; burned plaster, obsidian flakes, groundstone fragments, chert core and blade	700–900	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002)
	Fill; chert blades, marine shell, groundstone fragments, obsidian blades, antler, bone	800–900	Jeakle, Lucero, and Field (2002)
SC-3, ball court	Fill; obsidian core	600–700	Jeakle, Lucero, and Field (2002)
	Alley fill; burned pit with organic matter	650–750	Jeakle, Lucero, and Field (2002)
	Fill; chert core and blade, white mica	800–900	Jeakle, Lucero, and Field (2002)
Tikal			
Group 4F-1, 4F-3, small residence	Near structure; 3 manos	ca. 800	Haviland (1985:156–57)
Group 4F-2, 4F-42, kitchen	Wall core; small bowl with sherds and charcoal inside	550–700	Haviland (1985:158)
Temple II, south of North Acropolis	Roof comb fill: carved monument fragment (misc. stone 54)	ca. 700	Coe (1965a)

TABLE 3
(Continued)

Ritual Type, Site, Structure	Context and Materials	Date (A.D.)	Reference
North Acropolis, 5D-33-2nd, temple	Fill, room 2; stela 31 (part of it burned), other carved monuments (pieces of stela 37, misc. stones 42, 45)	550–700	Coe (1990:512–13)
North Acropolis, 5D-26-1st, temple	Central axis pit in fill in platform at foot of temple; parts of stela 32, 2 eccentric cherts, 10 obsidian eccentrics, 1 green obsidian fragment, 8 obsidian cores, 279 obsidian blades and fragments (49 green), 47 obsidian flakes, 7 green obsidian biface fragments, 4 chert blades, 138 chert flakes, 16 slate pieces, travertine metate, quartz metate fragment, quartzite metate fragment, 3 pieces of jade, 1 jade bead, 3 <i>Spondylus</i> beads, 10 jade mosaic pieces, 7 shell mosaic pieces, 20 polished, burned, perforated <i>Spondylus</i> fragments, 10+ marine shell species, bone imitation stingray spine fragments, 30 pieces of turtle carapaces, fauna (deer, crocodile), human bone, sherds	Late 7th century	Coe (1990:324–25)
Termination Saturday Creek			
SC-18, commoner residence	On surface; 3 layers of smashed and burned vessels interspersed with possible burned mat/textile	650–750	Lucero and Brown (2002)
SC-85, commoner residence	Burned surface; Colha-chert tool, ceramic bird figurine fragment, obsidian, marine shell, shaped serpentine, groundstone fragment, 10 ceramic clusters (some not well-fired)	700–900	Lucero, McGahee, and Corral (2002)
	Surface; obsidian blades, mano and metate fragments, basal-flange bowl, ceramic clusters, burning	600–900	Lucero, McGahee, and Corral (2002)
	Burned pit; charcoal, marine shell, polished-shaped-burned bone, 3 clusters of smashed, burned ceramics	650–750	Lucero and Brown (2002)
	Pit in floor; burned soil, obsidian core	700–900	Lucero and Brown (2002)
	Surface; 3 layers of smashed burned sherds, marine shell, 2 burned bones	700–900	Lucero and Brown (2002)
	Surface; polychrome sherds, burning	700–900	Lucero and Brown (2002)
SC-78, elite residence	Floor; burned plaster (and daub)	700–900	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002)
	Floor; powdered marl on surface	700–900	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002)
	Surface; burned daub wall on top of ceramic cluster; human ulna on plate, drilled-carved marine shell pendant, slipped miniature jar	800–900	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002)

TABLE 3
(Continued)

Ritual Type, Site, Structure	Context and Materials	Date (A.D.)	Reference
SC-3, platform	On floor; ceramic drum sherd Surface; smashed ceramics Surface (foot of temple); in- verted plate, burning	650–750 700–900 800–900	Lucero, Graebner, and Pugh (2002) Jeakle, Lucero, and Field (2002) Jeakle, Lucero, and Field (2002)
Tikal			
Group 4F-1, 4F-4, small residence	Surface; tripod plate sherds, chert biface, burning	ca. 800	Haviland (1985:155)
Group 4F-1, 4F-42, kitchen	Floor; burned	ca. 650	Haviland (1985:73)
Group 4F-2, Platform 4F-8	Shallow pit in terrace steps; burned inside, burned jar fragment nearby	550–700	Haviland (1985:83)
North Acropolis, 5D-22-1st, temple	Surface; 2–3-cm layer of char- coal and dirt with censur sherds, monumental pieces	550–700	Coe (1990:513)
North Acropolis, Platform 5D-4-1st	Surface: censur sherds on burned floor	550–650	Coe (1990:151)
North Acropolis, 5D-33-1st, temple	Stairway surface; 10-cm layer of marl; lower steps burned	650–700	Coe (1990:529)
Ancestor veneration			
Saturday Creek			
SC-18, commoner residence	Burial 2; adult in floor; large plate, olla, hammerstone, shell disc bead anklet	800–900	Sanchez and Piehl (2002)
	Burial 7; adult in floor; bowl, olla	700–800	Sanchez and Piehl (2002)
	Burial 11; (age/sex unknown) in floor; plate	600–700	Sanchez and Piehl (2002)
SC-85, commoner residence	Burial 1; adult in floor; no grave goods	700–900	Sanchez and Piehl (2002)
	Burial 3; adolescent in floor; no grave goods	600–700	Sanchez and Piehl (2002)
	Burial 4; child in floor; no grave goods	800–900	Sanchez and Piehl (2002)
	Burial 8; adult in floor; plate, olla, polished bone	700–900	Sanchez and Piehl (2002)
	Burial 9; adult in floor; no grave goods	700–900	Sanchez and Piehl (2002)
Barton Ramie			
BR-260, elite residence	Burial 3; adult in floor; 3 ves- sels, 3 obsidian blades, 3 carved bones, jaguar-shaped jade pendant, polished celt	600–800	Willey et al. (1965:557)
BR-123, elite residence	Burial 18; adult in floor; 4 vessels, effigy tooth pen- dant, bone needle fragment	700–900	Willey et al. (1965:550)
Tikal			
Group 2G-1, 2G-58, small residence	Burial 57; adult in bedrock grave; 3 vessels	700–900	Haviland (1988:125)
Group 2G-1, 2G-59, small residence	Burial 54; adult in bedrock grave; broken vessel, clay bead	700–900	Haviland (1988:125)
Group 4F-1, 4F-43, small residence	Burial 31; adult in fill; vase, tripod plate, killed bowl, retouched chert flake, jaw fragment, 9 chert flakes	700–800	Haviland (1985:132–33)
Temple I, south of North Acropolis	Burial 116; vaulted chamber; tomb of ruler Hasaw Chan K'awil, laid to rest on jag- uar pelt; cinnabar painted circular design on cap- stone; lidded jade mosaic vase, jade necklace, brace- lets, anklets, and ear flares (16 lb. of jade), pearls, ala- baster dish, marine shell, slate plaque, stingray spines, over 20 ceramic vessels, etc.	ca. 734	Harrison (1999:143–45)

TABLE 3
(Continued)

Ritual Type, Site, Structure	Context and Materials	Date (A.D.)	Reference
5D-73, temple south of Temple I	Burial 196; possible chamber tomb of ruler Yik'in Chan K'awil; 25+ vessels, carved jade baby jaguar, lidded jade mosaic vase, jade necklace and bracelets, marine shell, stingray spines, etc.	ca. 750	Harrison (1999:162–64)

small residence) three complete manos were placed near the house in what Coe calls a “votive” deposit (1990: 156–57). In a gap in a wall of str. 4F-42 (another small residence) the Maya placed a small bowl containing sherds and charcoal (p. 158).

At Temple II (just south of the North Acropolis), miscellaneous stone 54, originally a Preclassic sculptural decoration, was refitted with another façade fragment and placed in Late Classic temple fill 800 years later (Coe 1965*a*). The Early Classic stela 31 was cached under the floor of the Late Classic temple construction of str. 5D-33-2nd (Coe 1990:512–13). Other offerings included large chert eccentrics, incised obsidian, stingray spines, jade items of all shapes and sizes, hematite objects, coral, various species of marine shell, and stuccoed objects (e.g., temple 5D-26-1st).

Termination rites, especially indicated by burned plaster floors and broken items, are evidenced throughout the small houses and monumental buildings at Tikal. For example, tripod sherds and a chert biface were found on a burned floor of str. 4F-4 (a commoner residence) (Haviland 1985:155). A residential platform (4F-8) contained a pit with burning on the inside and half a burned jar (p. 83). At the North Acropolis, Coe writes, “Fire and presumably incense appear to have been a functional constant” (1990:525). The Maya burned copal in censers and then broke them (e.g., temple 5D-22-1st, platform 5D-4-1st).

One of the most imposing temples at Tikal, Temple I (south of the North Acropolis), served as the funerary temple of Tikal’s most powerful ruler, Hasaw Chan K’awil (Heavenly Standard Bearer), who ruled from A.D. 682 until about A.D. 734 (burial 116). It overlooks a large plaza where subjects likely would have watched the interment of their deceased ruler. With him were entombed over 20 vessels, slate plaques, alabaster dishes, carved and incised bone, and over 16 lb. of jade items, including a mosaic-lidded vase (Harrison 1999:143–45). He was laid to rest on a jaguar pelt, a symbol of Maya rulership. In contrast, Late Classic burials found beneath the floors of one of the five structures of group 2G-1, a nonroyal Tikal residence less than 2 km northeast of the North Acropolis, are quite simple. Funerary rites likely involved family members only. For example, burial 57 consisted of a male placed in a “bedrock grave containing three vessels”; another male (burial 54) was buried with

only “a single broken vessel and a clay bead” (Haviland 1988:125). A similar pattern is found in Tikal residences located less than 1 km northeast of the North Acropolis. For example, groups 4F-1 and 4F-2 burials yielded polychrome bowls and some small jade pieces (Haviland 1985).

SUMMARY

At Saturday Creek, ritual deposits at commoner residences SC-18 and SC-85 remained basically the same throughout their entire occupation (ca. A.D. 400–1150). The earliest ritual deposits at the elite residence SC-78 (fill dating to ca. 300–100 B.C.) were similar in scale to those found at the two solitary commoner mounds, while later elite buildings had more, more diverse, and better goods. The evidence for ancestor veneration rites did not noticeably change at commoner residences in over 500 years. It appears that only select people were buried, particularly males (Sanchez and Piehl 2002; cf. Haviland 1997). These practices are similar to those seen at small residences at Cuello and Tikal.

The Maya conducted small-scale rituals inside the home, likely for family members. In the elite compound, some rituals were conducted privately and some probably involved community members. Its location on a terrace facing a plaza overlooking the majority of Saturday Creek’s inhabitants provided both privacy (it is not visible from below) and an arena for public participation. The more diverse and exotic offerings also distinguished the elites at SC-78. Communal labor likely built the temple ball court. There is evidence (faunal remains, decorated serving vessels) of feasting near or in the ball court alley, perhaps indicating public participation (see Fox 1996). Elites conducted dedication and termination rituals at the base of the temple, which was not visible from the ball court alley below.

Similar formation processes shaped small and monumental structures at Tikal. “In . . . almost constant renovation, razing, and renewed construction” (Coe 1965*a*: 13), ever-larger temple complexes grew over these early deposits. This process clearly resembles household rituals, albeit at an increasingly grand scale for larger audiences. Caches, burned deposits, destroyed objects, and burials are found throughout the depositional history of the North Acropolis and other monumental architecture.



FIG. 4. Human ulna on burned plate at SC-78.

Through time in elite and later royal contexts, ritual activities became more labor-intensive, exotic, political, and public but remained tied to tradition. Late Preclassic and Classic rulers of Tikal conducted the same rituals but on a much larger public scale. The life histories of monumental public buildings demonstrate ritual replication and expansion of dedication, termination, and ancestor veneration rites. These buildings face plazas in which hundreds of people would have participated in or witnessed ritual events. Elite and commoner residences show the same depositional histories but on a smaller scale more in line with those seen at Saturday Creek, Barton Ramie, and Cuello. The goods that elites and commoners interred or destroyed as offerings, however, were not as ornate as the items found in royal contexts.

Discussion and Conclusion

The archaeological evidence indicates that small and large Maya structures have structurally and functionally similar depositional histories (caches under floors, burned and broken objects on floors, and burials with grave goods), that there is a gradual increase in scale

through time of ritual activities, particularly at central, monumental public buildings, and that rituals never left the home. It is also apparent that commoners, elites, and royals conducted the “same” rites, albeit at an increasingly grand and public scale, over time, resulting in “solidarity without consensus” (Kertzer 1988:67–76). In other words, rituals integrated people but did not necessarily result in the same beliefs. Political agents sponsored ritual events to advance and situate political change within traditional cultural constructs. Such events increasingly solidified a ruler’s ability to acquire surplus through the creation of long-term obligations.

Although the pathways to political power in the southern Maya lowlands were similar, the scale of rituals varied with and was conditioned by local environmental and historical circumstances. For Saturday Creek and Barton Ramie, located on broad alluvial soils, this likely meant the rise of community leaders who sponsored local ceremonies and who may have been beholden to rulers at secondary or regional centers. Elites’ inability to control widely available and accessible resources and gain access to dispersed farmers prevented their acquiring the ability to extract surplus labor and goods from community members. They still, however, sponsored traditional ceremonies at small temples to allay conflict in the face of wealth differences and to increase their prestige. At Tikal and other centers relying on water management systems and large tracts of dispersed agricultural land, rulers replicated and expanded traditional rituals (domestic and water rites) on an increasingly grand scale in public arenas to attract and integrate dispersed farmers, promote solidarity, situate political change, and legitimate their rights to exact tribute. Through ceremonies, rulers were able to demonstrate their association with ancestors and the continuity of vital elements of life (e.g., water). Consequently, their power extended beyond the duration of the centripetal events, and ultimately their tribute rights became sanctified. While rulers at regional centers such as Palenque and Copan had access to densely settled farmers and their surplus, they still needed to integrate people, justify their rights to demand tribute, and promote solidarity in the face of political and economic inequality. Similarly, rulers at secondary centers used rituals to attract as many farmers as they could given their location in areas with more scattered resources.

There are also indications that some rulers may have been powerful enough to do away with traditional rites. For example, Chase and Chase (1998) note that not all Late Classic palace deposits at the regional center of Caracol have caches within their fill; instead, ritual deposits are typically found in front of structures in plazas. The absence of palace caches may indicate that rulers no longer had to perform public dedication ceremonies for palaces and that they performed different types of public rituals in plazas. Most restricted royal rites, however, were limited to small-scale activities not necessarily appropriate for public viewing or participation (e.g., tribute payments). Many of the Late Classic inscribed polychrome vessels found throughout the southern Maya lowlands depict private royal activities that took place

inside palaces (e.g., eating, drinking a ritual cacao beverage, making offerings, and greeting royal personages from other centers) (Reents-Budet 1994:84–99). Other events recorded include tribute payments, hunts, ball games, auto-sacrifice, and the sacrifice of captives (Reents-Budet 1994:262–64). Rulers also performed and recorded events more conducive to display in public arenas, including human sacrifice carried out on the tops of temples and recorded on stelae and the games played in the large ball courts (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993: 259, 355).

Maya rulers undoubtedly instituted new royal rituals and practices such as the use of hieroglyphic writing to record dynastic histories and elite warfare. However, most of these new rites and practices were still public, along with the dedication of stelae (caching beneath them and the caching of stelae themselves), the use of Teotihuacan imagery to bolster rulers' claims to special knowledge and skill, the use of special buildings as astronomical observatories, and the wearing of special costumes that allowed them to personify deities and demonstrate their closer ties to the gods.

Royal public rites were not exclusive or expropriated but superimposed on domestic and community ones. This does not, however, mean that traditional rituals did not change or that new ones were not added in response to political, social, or economic change (cf. Gossen and Leventhal 1993, Ringle 1999). Nor does it indicate that rituals came under royal central authority; everyone performed the same traditional rites. The core beliefs focused on the same issues of daily survival—fertility, rain, and ancestors—and consequently rituals related to these belief systems continued. Hinterland and commoner Maya conducted traditional rites in their homes as well as participating in elite and royal ceremonies. All members of society had the power to continue to conduct the same traditional rituals as did royals. The latter, however, demonstrated that they had special ties to the supernatural world that benefited everyone, and this enabled them to appropriate the surplus of others.

Adopting and expanding familiar, traditional rites allowed Maya rulers to connect to those with whom they wished to build and maintain an unequal relationship of sanctified rights and obligations that primarily benefited the sponsor. Emphasizing the positive aspects of unequal relations through ritual (better able to propitiate and communicate with ancestors, rain deities, etc.) was not so much manipulative as it was integrative. The Maya were not being led blindly—they had choices (disperse into the hinterlands, opt to contribute to other rulers) and participated in redefining their rights and obligations because kings demonstrated their success in acquiring wealth, funding larger ceremonies, and contacting the supernatural realm.

Anthropologists generally accept that social systems are dynamic, with the potential for change coming from within. We are still struggling, however, to understand the processes of change and its preconditions. I have suggested that emerging rulers used several types of traditional rituals in various settings as a means to acquire

and maintain political power. While the means of acquiring political power vary, the general processes of situating political change typically do not, and an economic foundation, namely, surplus goods and labor, is required. Ritual expansion occurs in tandem with political change, both funded by surplus goods and services. Rituals express and explain the changes that are occurring within familiar cultural constructs. Ritual is not a source of political power in the same manner as the military, economy, and ideology but rather advances political agendas. For the ancient Maya, the variable distribution of resources and people presented a challenge to ambitious people seeking power. While resources varied by area, the strategies used by rulers to achieve political power were similar, entailing the replication and expansion of traditional rituals.

Comments

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Lucero provides a welcome contribution to the issues of ritual and political power. She defines political power as “an ability to exact tribute in the form of surplus goods and labor from subjects.” The conclusion that she presents as a model is plausible, but control of resources and farmers is difficult to demonstrate archaeologically. What does Lucero mean by “control”? Does it imply some kind of legal claim or property/usufruct rights? Is there any additional archaeological evidence to support her argument for the sites she mentions? I agree with her that public rituals played an important role in integrating people politically and in the acquisition and maintenance of political power. I am less convinced that everyone, high and low, in ancient Maya society performed the same traditional rites and that this further promoted solidarity and a sense of belonging as Lucero speculates. Current evidence in the southern Maya lowlands does not indicate that all members or even all households of Maya society cached obsidian objects. At Saturday Creek, for example, no obsidian objects were found in Early Classic caches at the commoner residence SC-18. Moreover, I do not believe that everyone in Maya society practiced bloodletting. I have examined microwear patterns on 3,232 chipped-stone artifacts from Copán, Honduras, as well as 2,997 artifacts from Aguateca, Guatemala, under a high-powered microscope (Aoyama 1999, 2001a, 2003). Microwear and contextual analyses indicate that obsidian blades were valued mainly as utilitarian goods and used for a wide variety of everyday tasks and, to a much smaller degree, for bloodletting rituals. More important, the analyses suggest that only a portion of both elites and commoners conducted bloodletting.

The mode and degree of integration of Maya centers of different sizes are pending issues. It is debatable how strongly average farmers identified with the centers imposed on them by rulers. However, individuals directly experienced centralized authority especially when they congregated to witness public rituals in theatrical spaces such as palaces and ceremonial plazas in front of the temples (Inomata 2001). Here I present an example of public ritual related to obsidian deposition in a public plaza (Aoyama 1999:161–65). The Great Plaza of the Principal Group at Copán contained numerous stelae and other stone monuments and was certainly a space for theatrical performances. During the reign of either the 12th or the 13th ruler of Copán in the Late Classic period, a large cache of 700 unusually large macroblades (as long as 29.4 cm) and macroflakes (as wide as 15 cm), reduced directly from macrocores of Ixtepeque obsidian, was deposited in the middle of the Great Plaza. No large quantities of very large macroblades and macroflakes have been discovered either outside the Principal Group in the Copán Valley or in any other part of the Maya lowlands. The theatrical performance and dedication ritual involved in their deposition in the Great Plaza must have reinforced the ruler's great political and economic power.

On a more minor point, Lucero misinterprets Fash (1991) that Copán's rulers "monopolized" trade with highland areas for obsidian. Fash (1991:37) merely mentions Copán's unusual proximity to the Ixtepeque source in Guatemala (80 km in a straight line). On the basis of the diachronic analysis of 91,916 pieces of chipped stone from in and around Copán, I have shown that elite-sponsored trade of Ixtepeque obsidian blade cores and local prismatic blade production began at Copán as the result rather than the cause of socio-political development (Aoyama 2001b). The rulers of Copán managed the procurement and allocation of at least one utilitarian commodity (i.e., Ixtepeque obsidian blade cores) as part of the political or public economy in the Copán Valley. They also exported blade cores to local rulers of smaller centers in neighboring regions, such as El Abra in the La Entrada region 40 km from Copán. According to David Stuart (cited in Aoyama 2001b:355), an inscription on the alabaster vase from El Abra refers to a ritual dance of Copán's 16th ruler, Yax Pahasaj, upon the receipt of 17 tribute loads. I argue that the exchange of Ixtepeque obsidian blade cores was a way of exacting tribute. Because religion permeated every aspect of ancient Maya life, such exchange was more than an economic activity and had ritual components. The management of exchange of important utilitarian commodities such as Ixtepeque obsidian blade cores and associated rituals, along with other factors, played a significant role in the Copán dynasty's acquisition of political power and wealth. However, Copán's rulers did not "monopolize" trade for all types of obsidian. The distribution of obsidian from the La Esper-

anza source in Honduras, for example, does not appear to have been centralized (Aoyama 1999:135).

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I congratulate Lucero on this thoughtful exploration of the relationship among resources, people, surplus, and ritual behavior. In particular, the integrative role of Classic-period Maya ritual is very well illustrated. She shows that rituals afforded the times and places for rulers to exact labor and surplus production from a dispersed population with scattered environmental assets. The replication and expansion of traditional ritual provided predictable opportunities for them to gain political, ideological, and socioeconomic advantage. Ritual fomented the building of identity, social cohesion, and debt relations, but I question whether it was used to create political integration as Lucero argues. Her article clearly shows that ritual change occurs in tandem with such integration, but, as much as one might like to believe that the expansion and replication of traditional ritual profoundly affected the acquisition of power, the evidence offered seems inconclusive.

My concern in this respect is based on two particulars. The first regards the nature and sequence of ancient behaviors in the material presented. As Lucero shows, the quality and quantity of goods in ritual deposits are related to social and economic position, and overt political symbols are absent in them. Consequently, for understanding political development, settlement studies assume a key role. In turn, these are supported by other archaeological indicators such as variability in the monumental architecture (temples and palaces) and domestic spaces which, of course, constitute the wider setting for the depositional sequence of caches and offerings. Except in cases of dedicatory objects deposited during the construction of buildings, ritual activities clearly postdate these architectural settings. For the crucial Preclassic evidence, this perhaps minimal but important temporal difference between the ritual act and its setting is particularly meaningful with regard to the emergence of power, since some of its strongest material indicators precede the very rites argued to have been instrumental in its acquisition. For this reason, I wonder if early rituals substantially contributed to the emergent exercise of power or if they were being used as an integrative strategy to enhance previously existing means of tribute collection.

The second point, clearly related to the first, regards the mounting evidence for early contact between Olmec and early Maya elites. It seems to me that various kinds of interregional interaction should also be considered among the factors involved in the emergence of political power in the Maya area.

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I agree with this article and Lucero's other recent arguments that ritual was a major source of elite power that gradually developed from household rituals. For decades many Mayanists have been asserting this on the basis of the clear ideological component in Maya royal power and the replicative structure of Maya society (e.g., Coe 1981, 1988; Freidel 1979, 1981, 1992, 1998; Freidel and Schele 1988a, b; Demarest 1989, 1992a, b). The replication of household patterns at elite levels is a standard component of segmentary states and galactic polities (Tambiah 1976, 1977) long observed in ancient Maya society (Hammond 1991; Demarest 1984, 1992b; 2003: chaps. 5, 8; Sharer 1994:510–12). This article first reviews these traditional positions, but with more recent references to postmodernist or structural Marxist theory. The presentation of archaeological data parallels the theoretical presentation in citing new cache and termination-ritual evidence from Saturday Creek, along with comparisons with Tikal, to redemonstrate the importance of ritual for Maya leaders and the gradual development and increase in scale of such rituals as Maya centers evolved. The position on ritual power and its origins is sound and widely accepted. The *gradual* nature of such developments, however, is contradicted by recent evidence.

The problem is that Lucero's essay does not acknowledge that the emergence of elites, rulership, and public architecture at both Saturday Creek and Tikal is very late. The initial emergence of Maya rulership occurred *at least* several centuries earlier in other zones, particularly the Mirador Basin, where the *initial* development of Maya state power and urbanism does not appear to have followed the same trajectory that Lucero posits for Tikal and Saturday Creek. Notably, Hansen (1992, 1998b) also argues for ritual as a major component in the emergence of *ajaws* and the early Maya state at Nakbe and El Mirador. He and his colleagues admit, however, that this position remains speculative and that they still have not found *gradual* developmental antecedents in the Maya lowlands (1998b; Clark, Hansen, and Perez n.d.). They also see a more complex mix of factors involved in the Mirador Basin (Matheny 1987b, Hansen 2001, Clark, Hansen, and Perez n.d.). This initial development of huge centers by 600–300 B.C. certainly affected the later development of places like Tikal, and therefore processes may have been significantly different at these later centers.

Another point of disagreement concerns the role of water control in Maya leadership. In previous work Lucero (1999, 2002a) has cogently argued that water rituals were an important element in the power of Maya leaders. She has overreached, however, in generalizing at some points that "regional rulers were able to collect tribute because they controlled access to water during the dry season," that "rulers also monopolized trade with highland areas for jade and obsidian," and the like. Recent

extensive studies of Maya jade production (Kovacevich et al. 2001, 2002) reveal a complex process with multiple players, and the evidence from most Maya centers does *not* indicate rulers' monopolistic control of obsidian. Similarly, actual water control may have been important in some cases but not as a general process. Most early centers are located along and between rivers, lakes, and *aguadas*, where the importance of dry-season water control would have been minimal. Farther south in the Petén, rainfall increases to 3 m annually and the dry season shrinks to six weeks (e.g., Demarest and Barrientos 2003). Notably, contra Lucero's (2002a) association of water control, drought, and Maya collapse, some of the most heavily inundated and perennially watered areas in the Pasión-Usumacinta Valleys also experienced the earliest and most dramatic collapse between A.D. 750 and 800, with no evidence of drought or climate change (Demarest 1996, 1997, 2003; Demarest, Rice, and Rice 2003; Dunning, Beach, and Rue 1997; Dunning and Beach n.d.; Wright 1997; Wright and White 1996; Emery 1997, n.d.). The argument for real water control as the central source of power of Maya elites is, at best, an exaggerated extrapolation from some centers in a few regions.

While recent work in Maya archaeology has demonstrated the importance of ideology in ancient Maya culture, it has also revealed enormous variability. While I have long argued for a heavily ideological basis for Maya power (Demarest 1989, 1992a, b; cf. Conrad and Demarest 1984), my own research in the past decade has taught me that in some zones Maya power was largely military (e.g., Dos Pilas) while in others it was, in broad terms, "economic" (e.g., Cancuen). While the presentation of power often follows the traditional forms of the *ajaw* cult and ancestor veneration ritual, the actual basis of power was highly variable.

In any case, the *initial* emergence of Maya royal authority is best addressed by intensive excavation and continuing interpretation in those as yet poorly understood areas where Maya monumental architecture, concentrated populations, and state authority first emerged—several centuries prior to the sequences of data described in this article. Furthermore, only such exploration and interregional comparison can determine the degree to which lowland Maya royal power emerged locally or arrived with well-developed models from other zones in the late Middle Preclassic (Clark, Hansen, and Perez n.d.; cf. Hansen 2001).

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Lucero is to be congratulated for this important contribution. The archaeological study of ritual has come a long way from the early views of such activities as a closed system determined by preexisting religious beliefs or as epiphenomenal events conditioned by the infrastructure. Lucero's paper pushes us farther toward the

productive study of the active roles that ritual plays in politics and ecology. I would like to comment on two critical issues in such research: ritual as performance and the complex nature of its political effects.

I strongly agree with Lucero's central argument that ritual not only reflects preexisting social organizations and ideas but also creates and transforms social relations and perceptions. This is the main tenet of the performative approach to ritual developed by Bloch (1974), Tambiah (1979), Bell (1997), and others. By emphasizing the performative quality of ritual, they suggest that symbolic expressions in ritual create a sense of reality and act upon the real world as it is experienced by the participants. The theories of performance and performativity that crosscut diverse disciplines would provide stronger conceptual grounds for Lucero's work.

The study of performance also helps us to direct our inquiry to the theatricality of ritual and its communicative and emotional potentials. This means that we need to examine ritual as a process of interactions between performers and an audience even though most archaeological investigations, including Lucero's, tend to focus heavily on performers' acts reflected in such material remains as caches. Investigating interactions between actors and an audience poses a challenge to archaeologists, who cannot directly observe them, but important insights can be gleaned from the analysis of the physical qualities and historical contexts of the theatrical spaces that shaped and conditioned the patterns of those interactions. Such studies provide baseline information with which to examine what size of audience could be accommodated, how performers and an audience may have been positioned, and what kind of communication was possible among them (Inomata 2001, Moore 1996). In this regard, Maya archaeologists should direct more attention to the properties and history of plazas as the central elements of theatrical complexes. Although scholars often concentrate on temples and other buildings and see plazas simply as secondary spaces between them, these open areas should hold a key to these questions.

The importance of an audience implies the active role of nonelites in political changes (Inomata and Coben n.d.). This leads me to think that the political effects of ritual may not be as straightforward as Lucero suggests. Although there are many historical cases in which elites appropriated common rituals and transformed them for their political purposes, we should not overlook the motivation of the masses to maintain existing rituals or to demand more appealing ones. Instead of presupposing a one-directional imposition of agendas by political aspirants on the rest of society, scholars need to examine the political dynamics created by the sometimes conflicting and sometimes converging views and desires of the various parties involved.

This means that archaeologists should study community ritual as a precursor of royal ceremonies in addition to the appropriation of domestic rituals that Lucero emphasizes. Small, egalitarian groups as well as large, hierarchical societies actively engage in commu-

nity rituals and festivals. Such public events create a condition in which a central figure may emerge or may even be desired by an audience, be it a ritual practitioner, a theatrical actor, or a rock star. Such central figures, who have the potential to become political leaders, are in a sense created by the masses. The calendrical rituals, celebrations of victory in war, and ritual ballgames that the Classic Maya rulers so enthusiastically sponsored and participated in may have had deeper roots in communal, public events than in domestic rituals. Again, the study of the history of theatrical spaces centered on plazas should give us a better understanding of the development of communal events and its correlation with political changes.

Even after royal ritual is well established, it may not work simply to the advantage of rulers. Ritual, by definition, has a conservative element that binds its performers as well (consider, for example, the extensive data on African royal rituals, taboos, and regicide [Feeley-Harnik 1985]). Ritual may be a tool and a right of rulers and elites, but it may also be their duty and responsibility, restricting their power and limiting their political options.

We need to examine various possible avenues through which rulers might have emerged. Lucero describes a compelling, important model of such a pathway, though it is probably not the only one.

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Lucero presents a model for the rise of Maya rulership that combines aspects of political economy, behavioral archaeology, and practice theory. The crux of her argument is that Maya leaders replicated and expanded existing rituals to legitimize their authority but did not replace or restrict them. By emphasizing the structural and functional similarities between elite and commoner rituals, Lucero places her model squarely within practice theory. According to practice theorists, by "enacting routines, actors not only continue to be shaped by the underlying organizational principles of those practices, but continually re-endorse them in the world of public observation and discourse" (Ortner 1984:154-55). Because the concept of *habitus* suppresses the actor's ability to challenge the social order, the issue of culture change is a dilemma for practice theorists. For Ortner (p. 157) transformations derive as much from the workings of asymmetrical social relations as from the patterns of cooperation, reciprocity, and solidarity emphasized by Lucero.

Although I agree that public rituals consolidated community ties via group participation in Classic Maya rituals, I would contend that asymmetrical practices were also important in the emergence of leaders. While public rituals performed the delicate task of demonstrating the inclusion of commoners in the civic arena of political

action, they also celebrated elite prerogatives. At the same time, private rites could fully engage in exclusive strategies such as diacritical displays of prestige items and the practice of cryptic rituals that differentiated royalty from rival elites and commoners. Following this line of reasoning, I propose that not all of the contexts described by Lucero involved mass viewing. The standard two-room temples of the Classic period and royal or elite tombs were not public venues per se but sacred spaces, and access to them was limited to ritual participants. Here, in the inner sanctums of temples or tombs located on or embedded in imposing pyramidal structures, private ceremonies established the connection between individuals and the supernatural, most likely with the aid of ritual specialists.

Van Gennep (1961 [1959]) and Turner (1969) suggest that the ritual process involves the passage of individuals from one social state to another in three stages: separation from the group, transition to a new state, and reincorporation into the group. Therefore, rituals can be partitioned into two core segments—one private and highly religious, the second more public and celebratory—that form a basic set of recurring practices (LeCount 2001). Rituals commence with relatively private sacramental practices such as offerings and prayers that establish sacred connections between individuals and ancestors or gods. They end in public festivals in which ceremonies become stages for materializing social status and promoting community solidarity. In my study of these dual aspects of Late Classic Maya feasting, I found that the most highly charged political rituals occurred in restricted civic locations, spatially isolated from communal plazas where the business of state and lineage was negotiated. It is probable that leadership ceremonies became increasingly private and esoteric as the leader's position shifted from corporate negotiator in the Preclassic to *k'ul ahaw* (divine lord) in the Classic.

What I find interesting about leadership rites is not that they were bigger, fancier, and more public versions of traditional rites but that some set of rites must have been qualitatively different in form and content from those that every Maya could perform. Maya kings institutionalized practices that severed the bonds of kinship that had once linked leaders to community members (Marcus 1993) and elevated their sociopolitical position to that of divine lords. What innovative and esoteric rites were initiated by leaders to set themselves apart from immediate rivals and distantly related commoners, and how did they institutionalize these practices while maintaining tradition? Helms (1999:64) suggests that chiefs and aristocrats are recognized as living ancestors while still physically alive, thus constituting living links between commoners and ancestors. They stand in contrast to commoners as "Other" beings who exist beyond the kin-based houses of the general population. Their identification as foreign relative to the general populace legitimates their high social status and political authority. Such differentiating practices might help us understand how Maya leaders escalated an ideology that linked rulers to a sacred supernatural origin.

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I V O 3

This article explores a critical issue in studies of Maya religion: the interrelationship between ritual deposits in civic-ceremonial groups and those found in domestic contexts. Lucero suggests that parallels between ritual performances resulted as elites appropriated domestic rituals as a means of incorporating larger numbers of people into their fields of political control, thereby allowing them to obtain more tribute. She explains the rise of Maya social complexity in a manner similar to Friedman's (1975) classic paper concerning the Kachin of Burma. Given the oscillations in Maya history, this approach seems worthwhile. In order to present her case, Lucero describes archaeological evidence of ritual practices such as caching, burial, dedication, and termination. While I find the topic and archaeological data fascinating, I am disappointed with her use of materialism (var. New Archaeology) to interpret ritual performances. Such perspectives minimize the importance of ideology in society and in the process undermine their own ability to explain ideology.

Lucero suggests that rituals serve to integrate people through "habitual, ceremonial, and physical manifestations of a worldview." Many rituals do help to generate solidarity, but they can also entertain, help people to understand their history and the environment, make biological change appear controlled, help in healing processes, and so on. Perhaps the most overt characteristic of rituals is their symbolic content, an issue largely overlooked by this paper. What was the significance of domestic rituals that would have been useful to the creation of larger social boundaries? Lucero mentions that dedication rites brought ceremonial buildings to life but does not specify what was animated. For example, many Maya temple superstructures were dedicated as god houses, a point which raises several questions. If temples were houses of the gods, is it not reasonable that they would be dedicated as human houses were without the intervention of aspiring agents? Should not god-house and human-house rituals be dialectically related? God-house consecration involves establishing a link between cosmic planes. Do domestic rites perform this vital objective?

Additional shortcomings of materialism weaken the paper's central focus—ritual practitioners. The article evokes featureless silhouettes, some emblazoned with the words "political agent" and others with "political aspirant" or "ambitious person." Would these terms have adequately portrayed K'abal Xook of Yaxchilan as she drew a cord embedded with thorns through her tongue? The expressions, "appropriated" from post-modernism, are more vacuous than the usual appellation "social elite." The terms sterilize the agents of their social roles and identities, thereby facilitating the implantation of "natural" personalities (via materialism)—rational and selfish actors out to maximize

their returns. However, these “agents” were not investment bankers but shamanic rulers who communicated with supernatural beings, conducted divination, and chanted religious texts. Shamanism entails not simply another type of ritual specialist but a different worldview; I doubt that a model derived from industrial capitalism readily explains their motivations. This whitewashing of the agent also obscures the fact that ritual knowledge, participation in some events, and literacy were restricted to certain segments of the population and privileged statuses were generally inherited. Social stratification certainly puts a damper on ambition. Unfortunately, in archaeology in general—not just this paper—when one speaks of “agents” one is usually referring to the ruling class, and therefore I wonder whether the term really has a positive impact on archaeological theory.

Lucero indicates that Early Classic elites of Tikal used symbolism from Teotihuacan as evidence of esoteric knowledge that would reinforce their status. This assertion is an understatement; Tikal interacted with Teotihuacan, Kaminaljuyu, and other sites outside of the Maya lowlands, and these sites influenced each other’s symbols, ideology, and historical consciousness (Stuart 2000, Laporte 2002). Teotihuacan artifacts are frequently found in elite burials and caches in the Maya area, and dedication and termination rites occurred at the Central Mexican site. How can Lucero be certain that the elites appropriated these rites from domestic contexts rather than from some other powerful referent?

Studying ritual from a materialistic perspective is somewhat analogous to conducting brain surgery with an Oldowan chopper—materialism is simply the wrong tool for the job. This article would have strongly benefited from theory equipped to deal with ritual such as the work of Roy Wagner and Fredrik Barth. Lévi-Strauss’s notion of “house societies” (1982) via Susan Gillespie (2000a, b) might be of use to the fascinating data presented here as well. A return to the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, Clifford Geertz, Anthony Giddens, Maurice Godelier, and especially Jonathan Friedman in the conclusions would have also been helpful. Lucero has something important to say, but she has chosen a perspective ill-equipped to elucidate why dwellings recurrently become models for ceremonial space and, therefore, the entire polity.

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Depending at least in part on their theoretical persuasions, Maya archaeologists are either going to love this article or hate it. Alas, I find myself tending toward the latter view.

My concerns were raised in the first paragraph. Lucero takes a narrow view of “political power,” which she defines as the “ability to extract tribute in the form of

surplus goods and labor from subjects.” Later, we are told that in large regional polities, rulers acquired and maintained this power “through their ability to restrict concentrated resources and integrate . . . farmers through ritual.” At secondary centers, rulers gained power by “dominating prestige-goods exchange and nearby agricultural land,” while “elites at minor centers relied on their wealth, as landowners.” The body of the article focuses on dedication, termination, and ancestor veneration rituals—evidenced by caches and burials—at sites representing the two extremes of these settlement levels: a regional center (Tikal’s North Acropolis) and a few minor centers.

In addition to her *uber*-materialist theoretical slant, Lucero adopts a very mechanistic and quasi-evolutionary interpretation of complex social and political processes. Her article confuses possible decisions and choices of individual actors or aspiring elites with more general and longer-term processes of development of political complexity over periods of hundreds of years, leaving me utterly confused as to which she is trying to explain. Related to this but still more irritating are the infelicitous turns of phrase that result from this mechanistic viewpoint. Phrases such as “before the advent of rulers,” “the rise of rulers,” “emerging rulers,” “rulers arose,” “full-blown Maya rulership,” and so on permeate the article, and so readers are left to believe that Classic Lowland Maya civilization, the institution of sacred kingship, and/or individual *ajawob* somehow just “arose” or “emerged” in a classic (pardon the pun) example of *deus ex machina*.

Lucero says in her first paragraph that the acquisition and maintenance of “political power” come from the “replication and expansion of domestic rituals” because rituals draw people together as “habitual, ceremonial, and physical manifestations of a worldview.” But where do we find “worldview” discussed in this article? Answer: we don’t. True, there is brief mention in the conclusion of the continuation of rituals related to “core beliefs” surrounding fertility, rain, and ancestors, but the sumptuous Late Classic royal garb, rituals, and iconography that we know from carved or painted stelae, lintels, pottery, building facades, and other media simply cannot be explained solely with reference to surplus production, water management systems, and the like.

I found Lucero’s linking of domestic ritual and power an interesting idea, and the tabular data on caches and burials are also useful. This is, however, an extremely broad topic, and her narrow theoretical approach severely constrains the robustness of her oversimplified conclusions. Ultimately I’m not convinced that this article asks an important question or posits a useful answer, and I find little here that is new or enlightening concerning the long-debated relations between Maya politics and ritual.

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Lucero has placed the significance of ritual and its economic underpinnings in a context of explanatory rigor infrequently found in Maya archaeology. She provides a set of environmental circumstances that influenced the political economy of various ancient communities throughout the Maya lowlands, especially during the Late Classic period. She implies that aspects of social organization and control evolved slowly because of the overarching effects of fundamental ideological truths—Rappaport's (1999) ultimate sacred postulates—and their practical application through ritual. At the same time, she acknowledges what Leach (1961:234) noted for Pul Eliya years ago, that "the recognition of kinship [social organization] is constantly being adjusted to fit the ground." It is Lucero's ability to integrate these two perspectives—the "unquestionable truth and repetition of ritual" and the availability and diversity of resources in the Maya area—that permits a nuanced view of social control and aspects of political organization.

As with any fine contribution, the reader is compelled to probe the insights presented critically. From recent work immediately north of Lucero's research zone, several of us (Scarborough, Valdez, and Dunning 2003) propose a model to elucidate why centers were capable of drawing sizable populations into their grand plazas. We agree with Lucero that rulers controlled resources and used public ritual to reinforce that control. However, the precise economic mechanism supporting the political control emanating from these centers is unclear from her presentation. We propose the influence of resource-specialized communities that were connected to the sizable centers because of a regional population's need to exchange diverse sets of resources from predictable and centralized locations—locations designed to accommodate hundreds of people at a time. In this scenario, the unifying set of factors promoting the ritual integration of a region is the availability of resources from disparate areas not generally accessible to the entire population. Because of local limitations to the availability of resources—labor, land, and water—villages were seldom self-sufficient. As is apparent today in the Guatemalan and Mexican highlands, communities specialize in a very few items—pottery, textiles, varieties of vegetables, etc.—and frequently use a town's central plaza as a marketplace on a weekly basis. Several of us envision a highly integrated and interdependent adaptation of this behavior in the past between pilgrims and priests, merchants and kings, at a few centralizing communities—all sanctioned by a fundamental ideology and its manifestation in public ritual.

As does Lucero, we argue that the environment is fundamental in interpreting the past. In the ecologically diverse semitropical settings inhabited by the ancient Maya, species diversity is tremendous but there is less concentration of particular species than in more temperate or semiarid environs. This constraint stimulated niche spe-

cializations by humans. At Colha in northern Belize (Schafer and Hester 1983), for example, a relatively small ancient Maya community was almost entirely dedicated to the collection and crafting of the high-quality chert nodules found in the area. Although conditioned by variables other than biological species distribution, Colha represents a preserved example of the economic components undergirding Maya society. Through villagewide specialization such as is manifest at Colha, resource-specialized communities periodically converged at the sizable regional centers to exchange their products for those of others. Kingship was possible by coordinating and controlling these visitations to a sizable center and legitimized by appealing to a deeply embedded ideology and ritual.

Lucero adeptly incorporates ethnohistorical sources throughout. Her use of Bloch's (1987) pivotal examinations of the Merina of Madagascar is especially salient to an understanding of political ritual. Because the ancient Maya employed similar water ritual associations in a semitropical setting similar to that of 19th-century Madagascar, comparative analysis is warranted. According to Bloch (1987:287),

In fact the history of the Merina, like that of most other similar peoples, shows no such [lineage] continuity. Merina royal succession is a matter of who wins by intrigue or on the battlefield. The ritual obliterates the disreputable way in which Merina rulers gain power and replaces it by an ahistorical cycle of succession. In this way the consideration of the ritual of the bath brings us back to the idea of order. Not only does the ritual show the social, emotional and political processes to be continuous with the astronomical ones, but also the social processes themselves are revealed as implying a continuity which outflanks mere human time. It is the continuity of smooth replacement, of generation after generation, of king after king, who transfer to each other their power which therefore endures unchanging.

Lucero's approach not only has explanatory power but helps to unite the discipline. Her contribution integrates cultural anthropology's theoretical strengths with archaeology's meaningful time frames and material underpinnings. Studies like this represent a decisive turn for anthropology in the 21st century and draw on anthropology's robust history of cultural comparison and holism.

Reply

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I thank my colleagues for their comments, which are quite diverse in scope—a good and long-standing scholarly tradition. I want to begin by explaining my materialist stance with regard to political power. I deal with

the practical side of one aspect of a complex issue. No matter how unique individuals think, create, and act, they still need to live and interact with their material and social surroundings. If some people are not food producers, they have to be fed by others—that is, with surplus that farmers produce above and beyond their family/household needs. There are several ways to acquire surplus: (1) stealing it, (2) exchanging/bartering for it, (3) buying it, and (4) appropriating it (i.e., without equal compensation). The fourth strategy requires more than just wealth; it requires acquiring the right to demand tribute. How do a few people get others to contribute their labor and the fruits of their labor without compensating them equally? My definition of political power reflects a concern with the specifics of surplus appropriation, and therefore my perspective is necessarily materialist. Thus, I view resources as preconditions for rather than causes of political complexity.

How surplus is appropriated is, however, another matter in that it has both material and nonmaterial aspects. This is where ritual comes in. While the role of ritual in politics has long been accepted by many Mayanists (and other anthropologists), as Demarest states, it has largely been assumed rather than demonstrated. To sponsor increasingly larger and more public events, one needs wealth. Initially, wealthy individuals pay for them from their own pockets. Eventually, as they attract clients and create debt relations through gift-giving, feasting, and ceremonies by providing food in times of need and capital to repair subsistence systems damaged by flooding, and so on, people come to have few options but to contribute their labor to political leaders.

Material and nonmaterial factors are inextricably and dialectically linked (see, e.g., Bourdieu 1977:180–88; 1990:118–19). The only way to understand their relationship is by distinguishing them and illuminating them separately, which makes them appear static rather than dynamic entities. Once we understand the various factors, the challenge is to discuss them as an integrated, dialectical, and dynamic system. Perhaps I did not meet this challenge as well as I would have liked (see comments by Rice and Pugh).

Cyphers stresses the importance of distinguishing wealth/economic differences from political power and identifying this distinction in the archaeological record. Initially, I think, elites use their economic advantage to fund community ceremonies that foster “the building of identity, social cohesion, and debt relations.” The critical difference, however, between elites and the earliest rulers is that there are several elites (wealthy individuals/families) in any given community but only one ruler. Whereas elites compensate people for their work, the ruler is able to demand labor without compensation. We can identify the presence of wealth differences versus a ruler in architecture (e.g., several large houses versus a single palace), iconography (e.g., depictions of rulers alongside of the gods), writing or recording versus none, evidence of ceremonies (private royal rites versus traditional rites writ large), and so on. There is evidence, especially at Cuello and other Preclassic Maya centers, that

rituals existed before elites gained their wealth. If so, then elites expanded traditional domestic and community rituals—initially to promote solidarity and later, under certain circumstances, for political purposes. Finally, Cyphers makes a good point regarding the need to explore the role of Olmec people and ideas in the emergence of rulers in the Preclassic.

I do not suggest that people are automatons without a voice or that the implementation of rituals was unidirectional. As Inomata notes, the success of royal public events was in large part determined by how audience members and participants responded (Inomata and Coben n.d.), and I am sure that many an aspiring leader failed because he could not attract enough people to pay to see his show. People not only participate in creating how traditional rituals are to be writ large but also contribute to their own subordination (e.g., Joyce 2000, n.d.; Pauketat 2000). My focus on integration through ritual implies such interaction. Further, tribute obligations are not the only ones created. With rulership come responsibilities and duties (Scott 1990:104). Rulers must live up to the “idealized presentation of themselves to their subordinates” (p. 54), and this may limit or constrain their power (Inomata).

Pugh also mentions the performance aspects of ritual and their symbolic content and significance. While these topics are important, my concern is with how rituals bring people together. It is participation in them rather than the beliefs that revolve around them that promotes solidarity (Kertzer 1988:11, 62). For example, the sociologist Daniel B. Lee, describing the religious practices of the Weaverland Conference Old World Mennonites of New York and Pennsylvania, convincingly illustrates that social cohesion does not require the sharing of belief. “The symbols and rituals of Weaverland Mennonites sustain unity in the group because they completely transcend the individual beliefs of members” (Lee 2000:142). The important point is to “make it look right” (p. 5). Kertzer (1988:67) labels these integrative events “solidarity without consensus.” In other words, the same ritual can be explained by different people in different ways. Rituals (and symbols) can and do have multiple meanings (Cohen 1974:29, 36; Durkheim 1995[1912]:390). While archaeologists cannot elucidate these meanings, we can reveal the rituals’ scale and settings.

I focused on dedication, termination, and ancestor veneration rites rather than on community (Inomata), agricultural, water, and other domestic and traditional rituals because they leave clear evidence in the archaeological record (caches, surface deposits, burials). I am sure that many, if not most, traditional rites were replicated and expanded to various degrees by elites and later political leaders—by the former to allay conflict and by the latter to promote political agendas. Also, I do not claim that everyone practiced bloodletting (Aoyama) but only that obsidian items, whatever their function (cutting implements, small versions of “eccentrics,” bloodletting knives, etc.) were cached. The point is that people relinquished forever—sacrificed—valuable items acquired through long-distance exchange.

LeCount provides useful comments in her discussion of royal versus traditional rites. I have no doubt that rulers created new rites for their exclusive use; however, I think that they invented the most exclusive rites after they had achieved power. To acquire power, they used traditional ones. I agree with LeCount that the two-room structures on temple tops provided rulers the opportunity to perform secret rituals unseen by the audience below. The audience was quite aware that rulers were conducting rites that highlighted their special ties to the gods. Afterwards, the king emerged and inaugurated ceremonies and celebrations. It is important to keep in mind, though, that most of the monumental architecture at major Maya centers was for public uses and served multiple purposes—festivals, feasts, ceremonies, performances, social gatherings, alliance building, exchange, ball games, and the reenactment of the Maya origin myth (e.g., Fox 1996). I am not sure, however, that Maya rulers “severed the bonds of kinship . . . and elevated their . . . position to that of divine lords” as LeCount suggests. Royal ancestors were divine, but I do not know about living kings—though they undoubtedly had divine qualities (Houston and Stuart 1996).

Demarest mentions a few points that need clarifying. I do not claim that Tikal had the first rulers, though I do think that the first primary or regional rulers emerged there and at comparable centers. I use Tikal and Saturday Creek as examples because they have the data necessary to address ritual replication and expansion. I explain (n. 5) why I do not discuss earlier centers in the Mirador Basin—historical and material factors resulted in the abandonment of centers like El Mirador at the end of the Late Preclassic. We need more evidence for El Mirador and other centers, but I have no doubt that, given time and the right conditions, primary rulers would have emerged there. The first rulers of El Mirador could even have left it for greener pastures, such as Tikal. All these centers, however, began as minor centers similar to Saturday Creek. As for whether the emergence of rulers was gradual or abrupt, I am not sure that our chronology and our evidence are sufficiently refined to address this issue (Rice). My aim here is to explore how rulers emerged, not to determine actual dates when this happened.

The issue of water control is also a contentious one, and not only in the Maya area. As Demarest and Aoyama note, the monopolization of trade is insufficient explanation for the underwriting of rulers at centers along rivers. While I admit to back-pedaling on water control, I still think that water issues (e.g., annual fluctuations in rainfall, timing of seasons, damage caused by flooding, water shortages, etc.) are critical (Lucero n.d.), whether annual rainfall is 1 meter or 3 meters. For example, at Palenque, which gets over 3 meters of rain per year, inhabitants built aqueducts and drainage systems to drain water away from the site (Barnhart 2001). While rulers did not have to worry about providing water during the dry season, supplying capital to repair water and agricultural systems damaged by heavy rainfall was one of their major responsibilities. Too much water and subsequent damage are just as significant as dry-season wa-

ter storage in political histories. In contrast, Copan has a relatively low annual rainfall (ca. 1.3 m), even less than at centers not located on rivers (e.g., ca. 1.7 to 2.1 m) (Lucero 2002a). Fash and Davis-Salazar (n.d.) suggest that farmers near Copan relied on artificial reservoirs in the center during the height of the dry season, when the river was low and the water undrinkable. Further, water symbolism (e.g., water lilies) is prevalent at Palenque, Copan, and other river centers, pointing to its significance in daily religious and political life. My main point is that the more powerful rulers arose in areas with noticeable seasonal rainfall issues (Lucero n.d.).

I am in complete agreement with Demarest that there is enormous variability in the basis for political power. Dos Pilas has yielded some of the best historical evidence for a military basis, thanks largely to Demarest (1997) and his colleagues; it was founded by a branch of the royal family from Tikal that later allied itself with Tikal's enemies at Calakmul. These events suggest to me that the royal founders of Dos Pilas started out rich and were able to continue to support a (secondary) royal lifestyle by attracting people and appropriating their surplus. A military still requires sustenance, something provided by farmers who contributed food and labor (and were able to do so only because there was enough agricultural land and water).

Scarborough also questions the role of water control and calls for the recognition of varied economic sources of power as well. He points to the influence of “resource-specialized communities” that had exchange relations with larger centers. Colha chert items are indeed found throughout the Maya lowlands, but this is a unique case of site specialization; the chert is particularly fine, with a distinctive striated pattern of variously hued browns. The layout and setting of Colha bring to mind Saturday Creek (with the addition of *aguadas*). There is little doubt that Colha products entered the long-distance exchange system. The question remains, however, who profited—local elites and commoner lithic specialists or a royal seat of power (e.g., Lamanai, ca. 30 km distant)? In addition, there is no obvious evidence for markets, though I have no doubt that exchange occurred quite often within and between communities. It is a matter of scale. Does household or community specialization translate into political power? Or are specialization and exchange, particularly of nonprestige items, independent of political machinations for the most part? I lean toward the latter view, which is consistent with the separation of economic and political issues mentioned above and considerable economic self-sufficiency at the community level (Lucero 2001). My point is that economic specialization does not necessarily translate into political power.

To conclude, I still consider ritual and resources of critical importance in the emergence of political power, though my horizons have been expanded by the comments provided by my colleagues. The material world has an impact on day-to-day existence, including ritual life. Tomorrow I leave for Belize, where the rainy season has yet to begin and the dirt roads are dusty, water sup-

plies are low, and farmers may be starting to worry. Last year in mid-June a tropical storm came through, and Belize received half its annual rainfall in the space of two weeks. Agricultural fields were flooded, and it was impossible to get around; major highways were closed in parts, all-weather roads were flooded, and dirt roads and bridges were impassable, as were rivers, which were swift-moving and filled with debris. Too little or too much water can affect our daily lives—just as it did the ancient Maya's.

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