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Winter 2020

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Ancient Maya Queenship

Generations of Crafting State Politics and Alliance Building from Kaanul to Waka'

OLIVIA C. NAVARRO-FARR, KEITH EPPICH, DAVID A. FREIDEL,
AND GRISELDA PÉREZ ROBLES

Ancient Maya history recounts the contest between the hegemonies of Tikal and Calakmul, the Kaanul kingdom. In their respective clashes, they struggled to control trade and wealth and to demonstrate control over cosmic forces, the legitimacy of their ancestors, and the veracity of their own definitions of royal rule. Evident from these patchwork narratives is the role of royal women, named as both daughters of Kaanul kings and as queens throughout Petén (Martin 2008; Martin and Grube 2008). The actions and lives of these women formed a key component of Kaanul's brand of statecraft (Baron 2016b; Freidel 2014; Freidel and Guenter 2003;Looper and Polyukhovych 2016; Marcus 1972, 1976; Martin and Grube 2008; Reese-Taylor et al. 2009; Teufel 2008). The actions of Kaanul women constituted a unique strategy that provided an effective means of political integration. At Waka', recent research reveals striking textual and archaeological evidence of their influence, much of which is reflected in the creation and manipulation of monumental sculpture and architecture through time. This includes an extensive post-royal period during which fractured images featuring royal insignia were reassembled and reutilized in efforts to reverentially observe and muster elements of this successful legacy. In fact, ancient Waka' built their core monumental landscape as a physical expression of Kaanul's ties to Waka' for generations. We underscore that those ties would not have been possible without generations of Kaanul women. Moreover, the archaeological and epigraphic records convey examples of Waka' continued reverence for these powerful women and the realm

from whence they came. Therefore, to frame any discussion about Kaanul without emphasizing the key role of female dynasts limits our best possible understanding of how these ancient Maya northerners consolidated power.

WAKA' AND THE KAAANUL HEGEMONY

Today Waka' is located in the heart of the Laguna del Tigre National Park, in the Maya Biosphere Reserve (Figure 10.1; see also Figure 1.1) in the northwestern part of the Department of Petén. In the late 1960s, Ian Graham (1988) first documented the remains of its complex political history. Forty years later, the Proyecto Arqueológico Waka' follows his work. Two central historical narratives undergird this research, an Early Classic one involving Teotihuacan and a Late Classic one with Calakmul and the Kaanul polity.

Archaeologically, we know more about the Late Classic narrative. However, these distinct histories are intertwined; Late Classic rulers acted while informed by a deeply rooted understanding of the events of the Early Classic. The Early Classic monuments hold a history that involves the heavily debated events of the Teotihuacan *entrada* of the fourth and fifth centuries. Sihyaj K'ahk', translated by David Stuart (2000) as "Fire-is-born," arrived at Waka' on January 7, 387 (Guenter 2014). He was fêted, and, importantly, he presided over ritual events at a Wite Naah, a fire shrine (Freidel et al. 2007). Then, eight days later, he presided over a heavily debated change of rulership at Tikal and the construction of the "New Order" hegemony of Maya cities (Estrada-Belli et al. 2009; Grube and Martin 2001; Martin and Grube 2008; Schele and Freidel 1990; Stuart 2014; see also Braswell 2003).

Waka's Late Classic narrative centers on the city's affiliation with Kaanul, cemented through the marriage of Waka' ruler K'inich B'ahlam II to a princess of Kaanul who bore the title Ix Kaloomte' K'abel, recorded on El Perú Stela 34. The Kaloomte' title is rarely afforded to women (the prefix "Ix" is a female designation) and, in Waka's thus known recorded history, it is only associated with one other figure, Kaloomte' Sihyaj K'ahk'. The alliance of Ix Kaloomte' K'abel and K'inich B'ahlam II marked a golden age for Waka' and Kaanul.

To understand Kaanul's interest in Waka', one must consider its geopolitical characteristics. Waka' is a citadel city sitting high atop an escarpment varying from 100 to 164 m above sea level (Escobedo and Freidel 2004) that overlooks a strategic choke point on a riverine transport route leading to the central karstic uplands of the Mirador plateau. Based on recent lidar data, the site's urban core is approximately 1.34 km², with the ceremonial

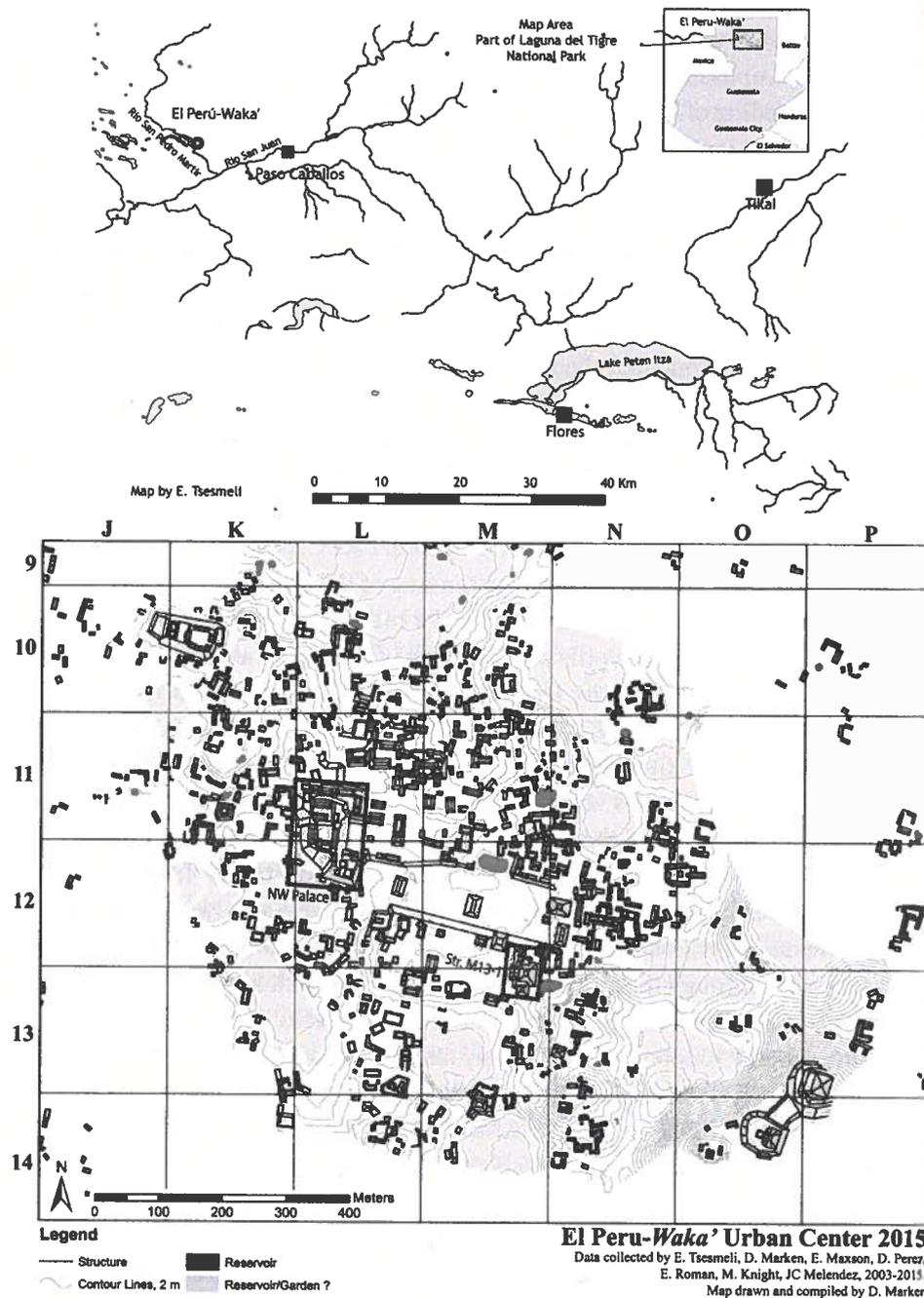


Figure 10.1. Map of northwestern Petén (top) with Waka' site map (below) highlighting locations of the Northwest Palace, Structure M13-1, and the Chok Group (images by E. Tsismeli, courtesy of Proyecto Arqueológico Waka' and the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Guatemala).

center along a roughly east–west axis (Marken and Pérez 2018). Waka's urban core is, to date, one of the most densely nucleated in northwestern Petén (Marken 2015; Marken and Pérez 2018).

The site's occupation history includes some 13 centuries spanning from the Preclassic, ca. 300 BCE, through the Terminal Classic, ca. 1000 CE (Eppich 2011; Eppich et al. 2005). Terminal Classic Waka' experienced a time of continued settlement. This contrasts with other southern lowland sites that saw their populations decline steadily in this period. Rather, at Waka' we see robust populations and significant political transformations that we are just beginning to understand. Another distinction of Waka's lengthy occupation is that its inhabitants did not engage in regicide at the failure of institutional kingship at the city in the early ninth century, as has been noted elsewhere (see Iannone et al. 2016). The institution of Classic kingship failed, but we see reverential manipulation of carved portraits and their installation into the city temple ritually revisited for generations following the decline of kingship. This work and the associated transition of governing authority may have been overseen by a lineage of religious authorities residing at the Chok Group (Eppich 2011).

Ancient Wakeños built their city adjacent to the confluence of the San Juan and San Pedro Mártir Rivers, which flow from the eastern karstic uplands of the Mirador region westward toward the Usumacinta. The city is strategically positioned where this riverine network intersects with a proposed north–south trade artery referred to as the “Great Western Route” (Demarest and Fahsen 2002; Woodfill and Andrieu 2012). This proposed trade artery would have connected the Maya Highlands to the northern lowlands as a major commercial route of the Maya world employing both overland (through the Western Highlands) and riverine (via the Pasión–Usumacinta riverine network [see Arnould 1990; Demarest et al. 2008; Woodfill and Andrieu 2012]) pathways and figured prominently in the western Petén regional economy. Given Waka's prominence on the landscape and its proximity to this network, it was in an ideal position of dominance within this critical economic landscape. As such, there could be no greater argument for keeping Waka' loyal to Kaanul. Kaanul's regents made it their goal to ensure that the cities and towns along this route were loyal to them. A critical strategy employed to ensure political loyalty was marriage alliances, pairing royal women from Calakmul with local kings in key locations (see Canuto and Barrientos, Chapter 9 this volume). In tandem with the conquest of Naranjo and marriage alliance with Caracol (Helmke and Awe 2016b), both to the east, Kaanul rulers could implement their strategy

of marriage alliance at a regional scale to control the region both politically and economically, spreading their influence and enveloping their rival, Tikal. This strategy positioned women like K'abel as not only a wife and consort but as a political actor establishing a key connection between Waka' and Kaanul by embracing her new city while representing the interests of the dynasts to which she was most loyal. The Kaanul hegemony sought support in three ways: commercially (we presume largely via control of trade in jade, obsidian, and other items moving along the western route), militarily, and politically. Of these, our focus is on the power and personality of the royal women whose hypogamous marriage alliances translated into key political support for Kaanul (see also Canuto and Barrientos, this volume).

Recent research not only provides key insights into their diplomatic importance but also demonstrates that Ix Kaloomte' K'abel was one of multiple generations of Snake queens who cemented an enduring political relationship between Waka' and Kaanul. In fact, we know of three Waka' Snake queens of Kaanul pedigree. They are, in chronological order, Queen Ikoom, Ix Kaloomte' K'abel, and a wife of King B'ahlam Tz'am whose name has been lost. A final queen named Pakal is associated with the Bat emblem glyph, which may affiliate her with Calakmul, though not necessarily Kaanul (Martin 2005; see also Canuto and Barrientos, this volume). We have discovered tombs with evidence linking the interred with two of these four historical figures. These are Burial 8 from the Northwest Palace Acropolis (Lee 2005, 2012), likely corresponding to Queen Ikoom, and Burial 61 (Navarro-Farr et al. 2013), discovered in a buried phase of Structure M13-1 that we believe to be the remains of Ix Kaloomte' K'abel.

The diplomatic positions of royal women like Ix Kaloomte' K'abel and Ikoom of Waka' would have required political insights and knowledgeable negotiations on the part of these women. They cannot have been in doubt of the implications of their marital alliances as political strategies and how these would affect both Kaanul and the polities they ruled through marriage. In other words, we do not believe Kaanul women to have been devoid of agency or as akin to pawns in a game—controlled entirely by the male members of their Kaanul families. Rather, we assert that they understood the social roles they were tasked with playing and did so intentionally and purposefully. We discern this from the construction of Waka's monumental landscape, which reflects how Wakeños thought about this alliance and these “outsider” queens, including the city's primary public civic-ceremonial building, termed Structure M13-1, and from evidence at the Northwest Palace. The architecture and associated monumental history indicate that

the Snake queens were revered by Wakeños in numerous ways. This evidence derives from various events of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, including resetting carved monuments, mortuary contexts, and ritual activity at a monumental scale.

RESETTING CARVED MONUMENTS

Because the examples of Late-Terminal Classic Wakeños resetting stelae in all the site's main plazas as well as on and inside structures are so numerous, we focus on the particularly dramatic efforts at Structure M13-1. Each example represents a clear intention to renegotiate the terms of the original positioning of these monuments, their images, and their texts. This selective retelling of the past serves as a window to how the final inhabitants of the site, under the direction of those exerting post-royal authority, understood these references to Late and Early Classic rulers, emblems of power, and ties to Kaanul and even distant Teotihuacan.

Structure M13-1 is one of the largest buildings at the site and likely served as the primary public civic-ceremonial complex (see Figure 10.1). In its final iteration, it features a north-south in-line triadic formation with northern and southern terraces with superstructures. The building, however, is markedly asymmetrical in plan. The central summit temple is one of the highest points at the site center. The building is fronted by an attached platform or *adosada*, a rare architectural feature in the Maya area. Structure M13-1 spans the width of one the largest open plazas at Waka' and would have been a well-known focal point on Waka's sacred monumental landscape for inhabitants of that polity.

Stela 9

Stela 9 consists of numerous large fragments, ruptured in antiquity, recovered from the front of Structure M13-1. We noted the lower fragments of this monument had been dragged and placed in association with this building, which was also covered in dense deposit remains accompanying that building's final phases (Navarro-Farr 2009, 2016). The stela dates to the sixth century (Guenter 2014), and the lower fragments feature the legs of a standing ruler poised atop a fiery mountain god or K'ahk' Witz. Next to the ruler's right leg is a finely incised text that makes direct reference to a Wite Naah. This term has been translated as “Tree Root House” and glossed by Stuart (2004:232, 237) as “Origin House.” This term has also been discussed by William Fash and colleagues (2009) as having referenced physical loci

for fire ceremonialism such as had been practiced by the Mexica-Aztec (see Anders et al. 1991). Fash and colleagues (2009) further argue that the original location for this ceremony was the summit of *adosada* of the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan. That the Late-Terminal Classic Wakeños dragged this monument with this Wite Naah reference of a ruler standing atop a fiery mountain to Structure M13-1's *adosada* prompted the hypothesis that this building was understood as having some significant association with fire ceremonialism. We set to test this in our subsequent investigations of the building's *adosada*. In exposing the basal façade of the final *adosada*, our excavations revealed additional portions of Stela 9, including its upper section (Figure 10.2, Plate 10.1). This large component of the stela had fallen forward in antiquity. Our team recorded its position and then re-erected it to its intended upright position facing west toward Plaza 2.

Stela 9's upper section features eroded inscriptions on the superior face and additional well-preserved inscriptions along the sides. The ruler standing atop the K'ahk' Witz faces forward, wearing a massive plumed headdress with a bird's face at the center. The plumage surrounding the figure indicates he wears a backrack. This upper section only features the top portion of this headdress. These fragments of Stela 9 aggregated and/or reset into the terminal façade base of the building's *adosada*—including a fire mountain, a personified maize cob (not pictured), and a massive feathered avian headdress—suggest that these emblems of power and rulership were selected for their narrative purposes during the period in which they were installed at Structure M13-1, sometime during the eighth to ninth centuries CE. We therefore are not implying that these elements of the composition are meant to tell the “exact same story” as Stela 9 once did when whole. Rather, we suggest that those elements selected for reinclusion symbolize elements of sacred power and reference the fire mountain we believe this building represented for ancient Waka'—at least during the eighth to ninth centuries.

Structure M13-1 likely served important regal-ritual functions throughout its life-history prior to the decline of Waka's royal court. It may have been dedicated to royal power through fire rituals originating from Sihyaj K'ahk himself, who notably passed through the site prior to his arrival to Tikal, as recorded on El Perú Stela 15. This remains to be tested further. Nevertheless, it appears the late eighth and ninth century Wakeños reused both structure and stela to reinforce the importance of fire rituals at this key building within the site's ceremonial and political landscape. This narrative continues to the *adosada*'s southern sector, where fragments of a different

FWW - WKOp. 01: Str. M13-1
Terminal Adosada Facade - View looking East
Illustration by Juan Carlos Pérez Calderon,
Griselda Pérez Robles, Olivia Navarro-Farr
and Francisco Castañeda
Digital trace by Cyrus Hulen
June 2012

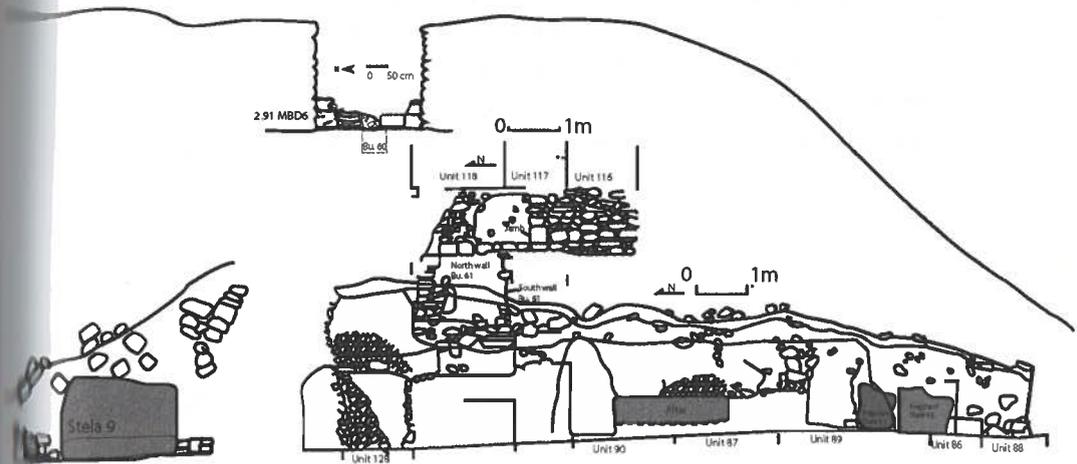


Figure 10.2. Front profile of Structure M13-1 *adosada* face. Stelae 9 and 43 fragments seen in situ. Drawing by Juan Carlos Pérez, Griselda Pérez Robles, Francisco Castañeda, and Olivia Navarro-Farr. Digital trace by Cyrus Hulen. Images courtesy of Proyecto Arqueológico Waka' and the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Guatemala.

monument were selected for inclusion in analogous fashion into the terminal architecture.

Stela 43

Stela 43 consists of a series of fragments placed on the southern side of Structure M13-1's terminal *adosada* (see Figure 10.2, Plate 10.2). Dating to the Late Classic, the fragments represent less than half of the original monument. It is likely the monument was broken in antiquity and then reaggregated and set within the final lower terrace wall of the *adosada* as was Stela 9 (see Skaggs et al. 2017). The fragments form a fragmentary picture of a standing ruler looking left and clutching a ceremonial bar with serpent imagery emerging from at least one end. Stanley Guenter's initial analysis of the monument indicates that it dates to 702 CE and likely features K'inich B'ahlam II (Navarro-Farr et al. 2013). Although not named, K'inich B'ahlam II ruled in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. His marriage to Ix



Plates 10.1 (top) and 10.2 (bottom). Waka' Stela 9 upper section (photo by Francisco Castañeda) and Stela 43 in situ (photo by Juan Carlos Pérez). Images courtesy of Proyecto Arqueológico Waka' and the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Guatemala.

Kaloomte' K'abel, a princess of the Kaanul realm, was vital to maintaining the vassal relationship between Waka' and Kaanul. Guenter (personal communication, 2012) notes that the stela was dedicated on 7 Ahau 3 Cumku, or January 20, 702, and commemorates the 7 Ahau date as there are two earlier iterations of 7 Ahau referenced on these fragments, one in 317 CE and one in 573 CE. The latter of the two dates is associated with a woman named Lady Ikoom, an earlier previously unknown Waka' ruler. Guenter (personal communication, 2012) observed that the damaged inscription on the right side of the stela references the accession date of the Kaanul king Yuknoom Took' K'awiil in 698 CE. Yuknoom Took' K'awiil's rule extended from 702 to 731 CE (Martin and Grube 2008).

Of the five fragments of this monument, the two largest were set on the south end of the front of the terrace, facing toward the plaza just like the upper section of Stela 9. These images feature an element of a headdress with a fish nibbling a water lily; this fragment was set upside down, positioned so the nibbling fish and water lily emerge from one end of the double-headed serpent bar wielded by the ruler in the adjacent fragment. The ruler's belt featuring two remaining god heads is also visible. We recovered one small fragment of the monument from the excavated sediment. On the south of the stair side, we documented the other two fragments. One had fallen out of the wall and featured a fragment of text. The other fragment was set near the base of the wall and included part of the ruler's shoulder, feathered headdress, and earspool. Interestingly, this piece was thinner than the others, indicating it had been removed from the primary limestone block in some other period.

These fragments are notable because those who reset them appeared most interested in making iconographic juxtapositions. Nevertheless, we also believe those who reset these pieces were knowledgeable about the ancient historical connections to Kaanul described in the texts. We estimate their resetting to have occurred about two and a half generations after K'inich B'ahlam II's rule (see Arnauld et al. 2017 for more on generational chronology-building). As such, we infer the strong social memories attached to the ties to Kaanul exhibited thereupon would have informed on their inclusion in this narrative. This is analogous to the ways that the avian and fire mountain imagery and the Wite Naah reference informed Stela 9's inclusion within the same narrative. For while the images do not bear visages of rulers, there is a textual reference to Queen Ikoom, a Kaanul woman of an earlier generation. Moreover, we believe those directing the manipulation of these fragments knew that the primary person featured

on Stela 43 was K'inich B'ahlam II—husband to K'abel. Even if those acting here could not read the inscriptions referencing the history, we believe they knew who the historical persons represented were (see Canuto and Barrientos, this volume, for more examples of manipulating fragmented monuments which feature Kaanul-era history). This suggests to us that, in the post-royal ninth century, Wakeños may have been concerned with making symbolic references to well established and understood emblems of power, fertility, and deified ancestry. In addition, they were aware of the historical relationship between Kaanul and its importance for the perpetuation of these symbols. Even without rulers (no visages are present in these images), Wakeños revered the structure as a place of ritual power and the stelae as emblems of its royal history made possible through relationships with ancestral queens of that great realm.

Placing these massive fragments in association with the terminal architecture of this building's final *adosada* constituted a major effort on part of the Late-Terminal Classic population to narrate and reshape their monumental landscape. This is particularly noteworthy when considering that this undertaking was overseen by the nonroyal governing body at that time. This and other architectural and monumental manipulations effectively reshaped material narratives of ancient Waka' in an effort to revive and invoke symbols associated with power and vitality; that these were attached to Kaanul is significant.

Stela 44

Stela 44 was discovered by Griselda Pérez (Pérez Robles and Navarro-Farr 2013) while continuing and consolidating an east-west centerline tunnel. The monument was reset on an angle through the plaza floor as part of an intense construction event that included the entombment of Queen K'abel, the construction of the new *adosada*, and the establishment of the building's new centerline. The monument dates to the sixth century, and Stanley Guenter deciphered the preserved glyphs on the upper sides of the monument (Pérez Robles and Navarro-Farr 2013). The preserved text yields new information about Waka's history and the greater regional politics of the Classic period.

Stela 44, dedicated in 564 CE by the Waka' king Wa'oom Uch'ab Tz'ikin, features a standing ruler with arms cradling a ceremonial bundle. Wa'oom Uch'ab Tz'ikin acceded to the throne in 556 CE. Based on Guenter's reading, it seems likely another man named on the monument, Chak Tok

Ich'aak Wak Ahau, Great Fiery Claw, was Wa'oom Uch'ab Tz'ikin's father. Chak Tok Ich'aak Wak Ahau died just prior to his son's accession. Given that the name Chak Tok Ich'aak was a famous Tikal royal name, it might suggest that Chak Tok Ich'aak of Waka' was a namesake of Tikal's Chak Tok Ich'aak, referencing the two cities' past alliance. Stela 44 also states that Wa'oom Uch'ab Tz'ikin's accession was witnessed by a woman named Ikoom, the same named on Stela 43. On Stela 44, Ikoom bears the royal epithets *sak wayis* and *k'uhul chatan winik*, titles closely associated with Kaanul (Martin 1993, 1997, 2008) and, according to Canuto and Barrientos (this volume), identify Waka' as it does La Corona, as a subordinate to Kaanul. Lady Ikoom was therefore also affiliated with La Corona and Kaanul. She was the queen consort of Chak Tok Ich'aak of Waka' and the mother of Wa'oom Uch'ab Tz'ikin. If that is the case, and if her husband was a one-time vassal of Tikal, then perhaps Lady Ikoom, in marrying Chak Tok Ich'aak, brought Waka' into the Kaanul fold.

Stela 44 indicates that Queen Ikoom preceded Ix Kaloomte' K'abel by at least two centuries and was affiliated with Kaanul. In 2004, David Lee and his colleagues discovered Burial 8 in Structure L11-38 of the Northwest Palace, the interment of a royal queen (Lee 2012; Lee and Piehl 2014). This rich burial dates to the early sixth century and was ritually reentered during the mid- to late-eighth century (Eppich 2011). Given the sex of the interred, her wealth, and the burial's location, together with the date and the evident importance of the interment, this ancient queen was likely Ikoom herself. We believe that her importance, like K'abel, was intrinsically linked to her identity as a royal woman affiliated with Kaanul.

FUNERARY RITUALS

To date, there are three known Snake queens at Waka' (a fourth, Lady Pakal, is associated with the Bat dynasty, which may link her with Calakmul though not necessarily with Kaanul), and investigators have discovered two of their tombs. Lady Ikoom likely laid in the Northwest Palace. Lady K'abel rested in Burial 61 in the *adosada* of Structure M13-1. Although separated by some 150 years, key components of the offerings and construction surrounding their tombs speak to the reverence held for these ancient queens. Their tombs became important markers on the sacred monumental landscapes of the ancient city, containers not just for their earthly remains but for collective memory. This memory served as a mechanism for

their commemoration and veneration. The tombs, and the funerary ritual surrounding them, became focal points for these acts of commemoration and veneration, all of which have been documented archaeologically.

Lady Ikoom

Burial 8 is located in palace Structure L11-38 (Lee 2005, 2012) and included the remains of a middle-aged female laid on a dais in a narrow chamber inside the building (see Lee and Piehl 2014:Figure 5.1). The skull, mandible, and femora were missing, indicating the burial was reentered in antiquity. This behavior was a noted act of reverence involving the invocation of sacred memory associated with a divine ancestor (McAnany 1995). We believe reentering Queen Ikoom's tomb was a testament to her enduring influence at Waka'. During reentry, in addition to manipulating the remains, Wakeños added a single Chablekal Fine Grey vessel to the existing majority Early Classic assemblage as well as an exquisitely crafted *huunal* jewel dating stylistically to the Late Classic (see Lee and Piehl 2014:Figure 5.2a).

Keith Eppich (2011) identifies the initial interment as dating to around 500–550 CE and the reentry approximately 770–820 CE. The date range for the initial interment plus Jennifer Piehl's (2009; see also Lee 2012) report on strontium isotope analysis with possibly overlapping values with those for Calakmul suggest this important royal woman is Stela 44's Lady Ikoom. Moreover, the elaborately carved *huunal* jewel demonstrates it was manufactured with obsidian just as those reported at La Corona (Melgar Tisoc and Andrieu 2016). This manufacturing parallel noted from microanalyses suggests that Burial 8 *huunal* was carved at La Corona. Neighboring La Corona was also closely allied with *Kaanul* (Canuto and Barrientos 2013, this volume; Freidel and Guenter 2003; Martin 2008). From a narrative viewpoint, the idea is that this jewel was produced at La Corona specifically for its inclusion in a reentry ritual into Burial 8. This precious artifact symbolizing power and deified status was a gift for Ikoom some two centuries after her interment. We therefore understand Ikoom to have been considered a living ancestress for both Wakeños and La Coronans.

Ix Kaloomte' K'abel

Ix Kaloomte' K'abel's tomb dates to between the early- to mid-eighth century based on ceramic evidence (Plate 10.3); her death likely occurred around 701–711 CE. The inclusion of numerous funerary vessels and sacred objects reveal an ancient woman of great political and spiritual importance. These objects include sumptuous jades, a painted mirror, numerous



Plate 10.3. Burial 61, Waka'. Photo by Francisco Castañeda. Images courtesy of Proyecto Arqueológico Waka' and the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Guatemala.

stingray spines, two mosaic assemblages, a garment studded with *Spondylus* plaques, two *Spondylus* bivalve halves, and a small alabaster effigy paint jar with the queen's name. The objects do not just indicate her elevated status but seem to be sacred ritual tools used by an active practitioner of the numinous arts. In short, they match the figure of the queen portrayed on El Perú Stela 34, also known as the Cleveland Stela, a potent, larger-than-life figure holding scepter and shield, with her own magic dwarf and royal, plumed headdress.

Her tomb was built into the stairway of Structure M13-1 Adosada Sub II (Figure 10.3). When Sub II's stairs were dismantled to permit the inclusion of the Burial 61 vaulted chamber, the entire building was subsequently built over, and the upper section of the façade was cut short to permit construction of the new *adosada* phase and repositioning of the building's centerline. This action included the resetting of Stela 44, which was built into the staircase of the subsequent phase. The cementing of many of the associated vessels to the surface of the funerary bench and the presence of textile impressions on the once wet mortar indicates that, from start to finish, K'abel's interment was a rapid affair. We presume that her inclusion into one of the most prominent ritual structures at the site, the rapidity of her burial, and the subsequent construction events were associated with the ceremonial importance of the building. The construction events following her burial, which were likely commissioned by her husband, K'inich B'ahlam II, included the building of the ensuing phase termed Structure M13-1 Adosada Sub I, which consists of two adjoining I-shaped rooms. The westernmost of these rooms opens to three treads leading to a west-facing landing. The three treads are built directly over the top section of Stela 44; specifically, these treads cover the face of the figure featured on the stela, which was reset at an east-leaning angle into the thick plaster floor (see Figure 10.3). After this, Sub II and Sub I were built over by the final terracing. The *adosada* summit incorporates a monumental fire shrine probably built by the successor of K'inich B'ahlam II and K'abel, B'ahlam Tz'am, to commemorate Queen K'abel and situate her as the heart of Structure M13-1. Since this section of the structure was built after K'abel's interment to incorporate a massive monumental hearth, we interpret this feature, which was a significant alteration to the monumental landscape of Waka', as a Late-Terminal Classic revival of the Wite Naah fire cult at Waka's primary public *adosada* building.

B'ahlam Tz'am was defeated not long after the construction of the fire shrine by Tikal's star war in 743 CE; this event is noted on Tikal Lintel 3

PAW - WK OP1 - Str. M13-1
Adosada North Profile
Drawing and Digitalization by
Griselda Pérez Robles
and Juan Carlos Pérez Calderon
Re-traced by Cyrus Hulén
May 2012

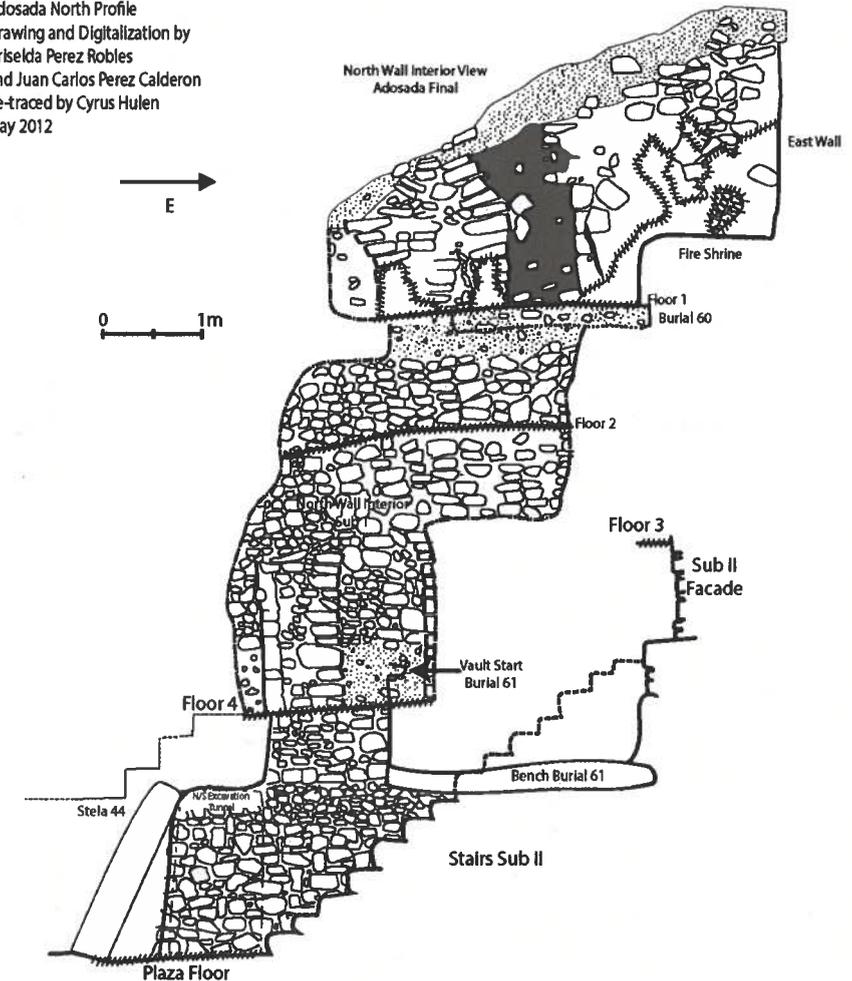


Figure 10.3. North profile of Structure M13-1 *adosada* construction sequence. Drawing and digitization by Juan Carlos Pérez and Griselda Pérez Robles. Digital trace by Cyrus Hulén. Images courtesy of Proyecto Arqueológico Waka' and the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Guatemala.

recounting the capture of one of Waka's patron deities (likely the Akan Death God noted as one of three patron deities on El Perú Stelae 44 and 16). This capture would have weakened the court significantly. The court struggled forward as there are two subsequent royal pairs including Lady Pakal affiliated with the Bat dynasty and her unknown husband referenced on El Perú Stela 32, followed by the brief rule of Aj Yax Chow Pat, who

presumably also married (although this queen is not named or known to us) referenced on Stela 39 (Guenter 2014). The date associated with the final rulers is hazy and either references 760 or 801 CE (Guenter 2014).

RITUAL ACTIVITY AT A MONUMENTAL SCALE

Fire Ceremony and Late-Terminal Classic Deposits

Excavations at the summit of the *adosada* were carried out to define surviving architecture. Just below the ground surface excavators revealed numerous life-sized fragments of modeled stucco in various forms including busts and heads of human and god-like figures likely originating from an architectural façade. This 20 m³ deposit filled the U-shaped masonry shrine, opening west toward the plaza below. The infilled space included a heavily burned architectural feature at the far eastern end that had undergone multiple burning episodes before being reconstructed into a covered throne feature. This throne was assembled with large flat limestone flag stones, covered in stucco, and painted. Subsequently, it was reopened, those flat stones were overturned, and the entire area was heavily burned and infilled again with the above-mentioned stucco. The original fire shrine, before it was converted into a bench and reopened and refired, included a sequence of strata comprising ash lenses embedded between capping layers of packed limestone (Figure 10.4). Flotation analyses of macrobotanical remains therein conducted by Clarissa Cagnato (2013, 2015) revealed the inclusion of maize, *Chenopodium*, and other weedy plants as well as minute fragments of wood, which had preserved paint layers.

The evidence suggests this fire shrine was built to ritually burn botanicals and other objects, including painted wooden relics dating to the early part of the seventh century (Cagnato et al. 2017). We believe this ceremonialism was a revival of the *Wite Naah* fire cult known from the Early Classic and referenced on the repositioned Stela 9 fragments. The commissioning of this architectural space, presumably by B'ahlam Tz'am, would have followed the aforementioned Structure M13-1 Adosada Sub I room group and the staircase encompassing Stela 44, which was likely planned by K'abel's husband, K'inich B'ahlam II, in her honor. The location of her interment encompasses the *Wite Naah*, supporting our assertion that she was considered its heart in the Late Classic and Late Terminal Classic periods at the site.

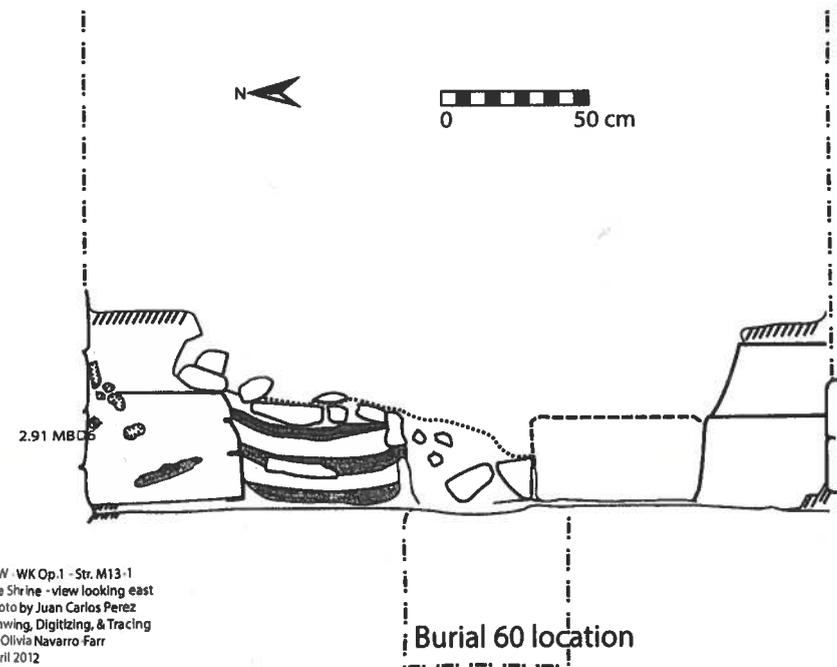


Figure 10.4. Photo (above) and profile drawing (below) of Fire Shrine at Structure M13-1 (view looking east). Photo by Juan Carlos Pérez. Illustration by Olivia Navarro-Farr. Images courtesy of Proyecto Arqueológico Waka' and the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Guatemala.

These recent investigations at Structure M13-1 provide greater interpretive context for the vast and diverse deposits discussed at length by Olivia Navarro-Farr (2009, 2016) and Navarro-Farr and Ana Lucía Arroyave Prera (2014) that were carried out by nonroyal Wakaños throughout the ninth and tenth centuries. These deposits represent numerous cumulative ritual revisitations by non-elite people in reverence for and in memory of this great queen and her important role as an ancestress of Waka'. They are part of the ritual palimpsest of this building and served as a locus for the installation of emblems of royal power and fecundity.

Palace Deposits

Excavations in 2006 at the Northwest Palace inside a gallery of rooms (Structure L12-4), over which a terminal staircase was eventually built providing access from Plaza 4 westward toward the main upper patio, uncovered the Ofrenda de Tambores. This deposit was so named due to the presence of numerous fragments of these instruments and other ceramics underneath a vast layer of elaborately rendered stucco fragments (Lee and Gámez 2007). Interpretations of this deposit have been challenging due to the complexity of the stratigraphy, evidence for reentry episodes, and the epigraphic data of the period(s).

Continued investigation of Structure L12-4 (Pérez Robles et al. 2018) reveals the Ofrenda de Tambores to be increasingly complex. Archaeologists discovered an earlier and distinct six-tread stairway that once gave access to the gallery. The lowermost blocks of this staircase had been torn out in antiquity. This was therefore likely the original location of the carved and inscribed stairway blocks associated with King K'inich B'ahlam II when he was vassal to Kaanul-regime king Yich'aak K'ahk' in the late seventh century CE. The inscribed blocks were later reset in various proximate locales (Piehl and Guenter 2005) in memory of this earlier history by the final king, Aj Yax Chow Pat. Griselda Pérez Robles and colleagues (2018) discovered additional drums, cylinders, pitchers, bowls, plates, figurines, whistles, macrobotanical materials, bone needles, flint knives, and obsidian flakes and cores (Figure 10.5) as well as two sacrificial burials of young men, areas of intense burning, and the construction of nonformal walls. Both Lee (2012) and Pérez Robles and colleagues (2018) see the events at the palace, resulting in this massive multiroom deposit, as evidence of transformative events at Waka' during the eighth and ninth centuries.

In 743 CE Tikal's king Yik'in Chan K'awiil defeated Waka' and marked his victory on wooden Lintel 3 set inside Tikal's Temple 4 (Martin and

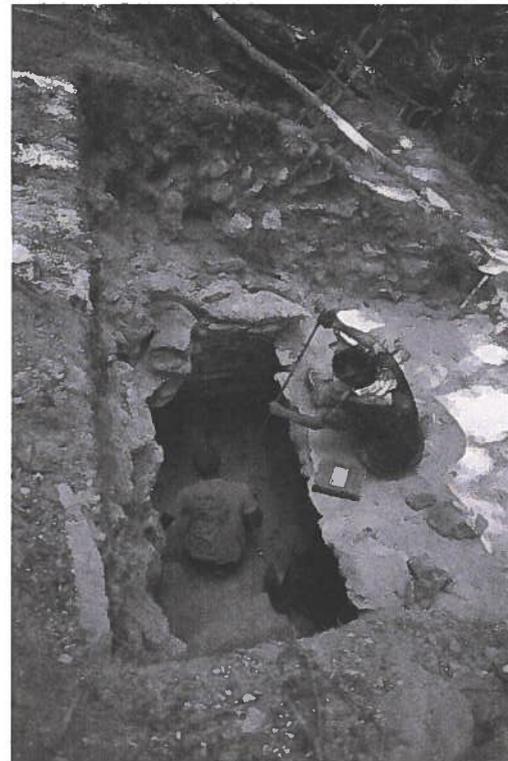
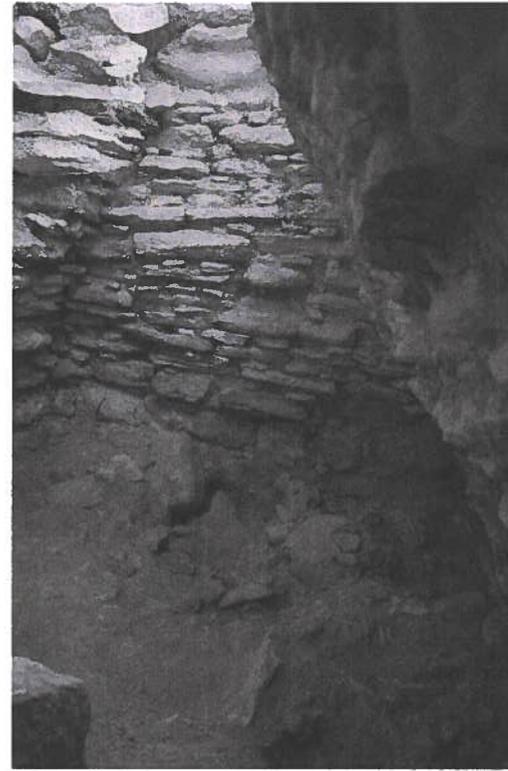


Figure 10.5. Recent investigations of the Ofrenda de Tambores. Photos by Juan Carlos Pérez. Images courtesy of Proyecto Arqueológico Waka' and the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Guatemala.

Grube 2008). Pérez Robles and colleagues' (2018) work on the Ofrenda de Tambores, building on Lee's work (2012), determined the palace's eastern façade, overlooking a gallery of rooms, was once ornately adorned with brightly colored modeled stucco. This façade was destroyed in a destructive termination event following Waka's 743 CE defeat. This destroyed place was later ritually healed by a subsequent ruler, again likely Aj Yax Chow Pat. Therefore, what Lee and Laura Gámez (2007) initially discovered was ultimately understood by Pérez Robles and colleagues (2018) to be carefully relayed depositions that included the removed stucco elements from the destroyed façade reaching up to rooms' vaulted roofs. The stucco elements were laid atop the deposits of fragmented drums and other objects, which were in turn redeposited atop the remains of the two intrusive sacrificial burials. The burials and relating events were accompanied by intense and episodic burning. Once infilled, the entire area was built over with a new structure and staircase. That final staircase included some of the aforementioned repurposed hieroglyphic blocks at its base. Some blocks featured ballplayers, including Kaanul ruler Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk', and one block featured the inscription "K'uhul Kaanul Ajaw Ix Kaloomte'" translating to "holy Kaanul ruler, lady supreme warrior." This title, with the female "Ix" prefix, certainly refers to Ix Kaloomte' K'abel and similarly designates her as a supremely powerful figure looming larger than her husband. The re-configuration of this and other blocks in the palace's final stairway, in ways similar to stelae repurposing at Structure M13-1, underscores the attachment to strong social memory associated with these Kaanul-era women at Waka'.

The events Pérez Robles and colleagues (2018) reconstructed were meant not only to encapsulate the terminated space but may also signal a kind of ideological recovery in the decades following Waka's defeat by Tikal in 743 CE. The final phase of these activities, the construction of the final staircase, is temporally associated with the site's last ruler, Aj Yax Chow Pat, whose brief reign followed that of Lady Pakal and her unknown husband. However, as Eppich's (2011) work at the Chok Group, a short distance from Structure M13-1, indicates, these efforts were not successful in the long term. Palace-based governance faded during the ninth century. The findings from the Chok Group (Eppich 2011; Eppich and Haney 2018) suggest power was wielded by elites there following the decline of the court. We suggest a transition of power took place after Aj Yax Chow Pat's rule from divine kingship to a kind of corporately held governance.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The ways in which ancient Wakeños revered the symbols associated with the Kaanul-affiliated rulers of their city underscore the success of that regime. That regime and Waka's place in it centered on the generations of Snake queens who lived their lives in that city among its people. We can imagine, from the long-revered memories held by its inhabitants, that these ancient queens, notably K'abel and Ikoom among them, were regarded for their political and spiritual abilities, their powerful roles as ancestresses of the populace, and undoubtedly for their prowess in the arts of war. Despite the defeat of Waka' by Tikal, Wakeños persevered in the preservation of the memories of these queens through continued manipulation and transformation of the city's monumental landscape, revisiting their interments, ritually enshrining their resting places, and making continued efforts to reshape the fragments of sculpture that spoke to their legacy.

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