Late Classic Politics and Ideology: A Case Study of Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 at

Yaxchilan, Chiapas, Mexico

Volume I

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ABSTRACT

This project examines Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 (HS. 2) at Yaxchilan, a Classic Maya city in Southern Mexico. Uncovered in 1975 as part of the clearing and consolidation of Structure 33, HS. 2 is made up of thirteen carved blocks which form the riser to the last step in the ascent to this building. The blocks depict thirteen different individuals (four female and nine male) in a series of elaborate ballgame rituals that demonstrated the legitimacy and power of Bird Jaguar IV, the ruler over Yaxchilan from 752-768 A.D.

In this study, the previous work conducted around this monument is examined, and argue that it has been insufficient to draw the conclusions commonly presented about it. A translation of the hieroglyphic inscriptions from all blocks is provided, where previously only translations from the central three blocks (VI, VII, VIII) have been made available. This study also provides an analysis of the imagery on the blocks to better understand the ideology of Late Classic Yaxchilan (530-830 A.D.). This work relies on the hieroglyphic and archaeological data available from the site to demonstrate the geographical and temporal variation in lowland Maya political organisation, and to provide a model for Late Classic Yaxchilan.

Overall, the author argues that the Late Classic political organisation of Yaxchilan underwent a period of centralisation followed by decentralisation and collapse. The contribution of this study to the literature is the conclusion that the representation of so many individuals on HS. 2 reveals that political power was being conferred upon the elite through 'empowering,' which led to a delocalisation of authority. This may also have led to dissatisfaction among the general population of the ideology of kingship, which may have caused the community to reject uncharismatic rulers.

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Special thanks go to: Carlos Pallan for his painstaking help in finding unpublished drawings of monuments and calendar reconstructions; to Dr Marc Zender and Dr Peter Mathews for our conversations at EMC; the Brussels EMC Board for allowing me to test out my ideas in front of a knowledgeable audience; the staff at the Albert Sloman Library for all their help sourcing obscure texts; and to Christian Prager, without whose comments and suggestions I would have been unable to complete this project.

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LIST OF FIGURES (SEE VOLUME 2)

Chapter 5: The Archaeological and Physical Context of HS. 2

Chapter 6: Epigraphic Analysis of HS. 2

Chapter 7: Iconographic Analysis of HS. 2

INTRODUCTION

This research began as an exploration into the local ideology of Yaxchilan through a discussion of the 'three-conquest' narrative on block VII of Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 (henceforth referred to as HS. 2). As per the conventions set out by the updated *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions* website[1] Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 is referred to as HS. 2, and the individual panels are referred to as blocks (block I, block II, etc). In Graham's (1982) original *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions 3:3*, in which HS. 2 features, the blocks were referred to as 'steps' (step I, step II, etc). In later literature, there have been inconsistencies as to how the individual blocks that make up HS. 2 are made reference to: Freidel et al (1993) call them 'panels' while Tate (1992) calls them 'steps'. This author will use the updated nomenclature of 'step' to refer to the stairway as a whole, and 'block' to refer to the individually carved risers (of which there are thirteen).

In the original analysis of HS. 2, the author concluded that the three supernatural creatures mentioned were all aspects of the Classic period Maize god, one of the most important deities in the Maya pantheon. However, like other scholars, this study did not uncover the reasons as to how this was connected to the ballgame scenes depicted alongside the story, other than to suppose that they were 'divine patrons' of the game. It became clear that HS. 2 lacked a full and comprehensive analysis, and that the tendency of scholars to focus on block VII and the 'three-conquest' story failed to adequately consider the stairway as a whole monument, or understand the geographical and political context in which it was made.

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1 www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/, accessed 27/03/2010

Many writers on the topic have presented different analyses of certain sections of the monument, and there has been little consensus as to its meanings and functions (for examples, see Coe 2003; Colas and Voss 2006; Freidel et al 1993; Tate 1992; Tokovinine 2002, among others). Many of the blocks have been largely ignored due to their state of preservation: the outer blocks, in particular, have suffered high levels of erosion since their creation in the eighth century, and - more worryingly - since they were uncovered during archaeological investigations in the 1970's. Some blocks are now damaged to the point that many of the hieroglyphics and much of the imagery is difficult or impossible to make out. Despite this HS. 2 offers the discerning scholar insight into the political organisation and the ideology of Late Classic Yaxchilan.

HS. 2 records the greatest number of individuals, both rulers and elite, of any other monument from Yaxchilan (discussions of 'ruling' and 'elite' can be found in Chapter 2: Political Organisation, Power, and Ideology of the Classic Maya). It displays themes of ancestor veneration, supernatural involvement in and sanction of events, the creation of sacred space, captive taking, the ballgame, and organisation of the political hierarchy. The following research will explore these themes in the context of HS. 2 and Yaxchilan, and demonstrate that this monument needs to be considered as a cohesive narrative in order to be fully understood.

Aims of the Research

The principle aim of this project is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the whole of HS. 2. This study will offer a hieroglyphic translation (Appendix B) and analysis (Chapter 6) and a breakdown of the key aspects of the iconography used in

the monument (Chapter 7). In doing so, literature is reviewed, and short introductions to some key themes is presented, including Yaxchilan, the political organisation of the Classic Maya, and the ballgame.

The intention of providing this data is to develop an understanding of the political organisation of Yaxchilan during the reign of Bird Jaguar IV (752-768; see table 3.3 and 3.4 for important dates of his reign). HS. 2 provides an excellent focus for this research, and it demonstrates concepts of political hierarchy and community ideology among the Maya. The author presents an in-depth analysis of the inscriptions and iconography of the stairway to illustrate that Late Classic Yaxchilan had a growing number of elite that held increasingly diluted political power. The author argues that HS. 2, and its surrounding ritual space, was used not only to narrate the ballgame ritual and related events, but to elevate elite allies of the ruler, Bird Jaguar IV, within the political organisation of the site, similar to that of other Classic Maya sites, such as La Corona and Tipan (Helmke et al 2015).

Through this analysis, this study also demonstrates the need for the use of site-specific approaches in understanding the Classic Maya political landscape and political organisation. There is considerable debate as to how Maya polities were structured internally and in relation to one another, and many scholars have attempted to define the political organisation of the Maya as a whole, or failed to adequately take temporal changes into account. Yaxchilan provides an excellent case study for this debate. The author argues that Yaxchilan went through a process of political centralisation, which may have conflicted with the underlying ideology of kingship. The increased delegation of power among an elite led to the progressive decentralisation and eventual breakdown of the political structure. By the end of *K'inich Tatbu* Skull IV's reign, in the ninth century,

this led to a failure in the traditional systems of government and kingship at Yaxchilan, which has been often termed the 'collapse' in the wider context of the Maya lowlands.

This study will also consider how HS. 2 demonstrates the ideology of political organisation within Yaxchilan. Because of the complicated nature of Classic Maya kingship, research on the political organisation needs to take into account the wide variation in ideologies shared among the Maya, and the changing nature of those ideologies through time. Conclusions drawn around Yaxchilan should not be applied to other urban centres across the lowlands without site-specific research because other areas may have placed emphasis on different relationships or events to underpin kingship. For examples, military successes were an integral part of defining successful rulers according to the hieroglyphic record of Yaxchilan, whereas this is not prevalent at Tikal (Houston et al 2006: 204).

This study will provide an analysis of HS. 2, and consider the monument's significance as a whole, including its archaeological/geographical context. A full analysis has yet to be published, and although HS. 2 is cited in a number of works on the ballgame, captive-taking, supernatural creatures, and the importance of women (among other topics), the whole context of this information is rarely considered. It is this author's belief that the research will help to illuminate the purpose of HS. 2, both real and supernatural.

Maya Hieroglyphic Writing: Decipherment Procedures and Orthography

As this study contains a translation and hieroglyphic analysis of HS. 2, an outline of the orthography used will be presented here. The names of Maya individuals

are written in English where possible. Names written in the Maya language, nicknames, and those identified by numbers (for example, Ruler 4 of Piegras Negras), represent current levels of decipherment. It is also necessary before proceeding to acknowledge some of the issues within hieroglyphic decipherment to make the reader aware of the difficulties. Kettunen and Helmke (2011: 7-8) succinctly summarise the problems with the changing and inconsistent conventions of orthography in Maya studies and among scholars. A key example is as follows:

> Maya words have been and still are written in a sundry fashion. One illuminating example is the numerously used word for 'lord' or 'king' which appears at least in five different forms in the Maya literature: ahau, ahaw, ajau, ajaw and 'ajaw. (Ibid.: 7)

Matters are made more complicated with the wide variation in pronunciation of Maya words. For example, the 'h' in *ahau* is soft, whereas the 'j' in *ajaw* is hard. Glottal stops provide another area of great variation and disagreement among scholars, along with long vowels (for example, conflicting use of *chan* and *chaan*). In the following chapters, there is consistency in the use of such words (for example, the use of *ajaw* and *chan*). However, choices by other scholars that have been cited within this work have not been changed (for example, Josserand: 2007 uses *xok* where I use *xook*, meaning "shark"). In reference to names of historical individuals, I follow Martin and Grube (2008) for spelling conventions.

The Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala (Guatemalan Academy of Mayan Languages) has worked to categorise and standardise the twenty-two Maya languages spoken within Guatemala, and shall be used in this study. Since the publication of official alphabets for Guatemalan Maya languages, most Maya scholars use the new alphabet in their publications (Kettunen and Helmke 2011: 7). However,

this is still not universal. Within this thesis, the following conventions of translation and transliteration as set out by George Stuart (1988a) are adhered to:

1. Transliterations are represented in **boldface** letters.

2. Logograms are written in **BOLDFACE UPPERCASE** letters.

3. Syllabograms are written in **boldface lower case** letters.

4. Question marks are used when the reading of a glyph (either in part of a full glyph, or a full glyph itself) is not known.

5. Transcriptions are written in *italics*.

Stuart (ibid.) succinctly summarises further guides to style and content in Maya hieroglyphic writing, including conflation (see figure 1.5), reading order (figure 1.6), and affixes.

T-Numbers are used throughout this study where applicable. These refer to the numerical classification in Thompson's (1962) *A Catalog of Maya Hieroglyphs*, which includes over 800 meticulously recorded hieroglyphic signs. Each different hieroglyph is assigned its own T-Number, to help differentiate the glyphs in a practical and methodical way.

Furthermore, this study follows the following phonetic orthography in representing lexical items in Classic Maya: ', a, b', ch, ch', e, h, i, j, k, k', l, m, n, o, p, p', s, t, t', tz, tz', u, w, x, and y. While this is not a linguistic study, it also follows Grube (2004) in the representation of glottal stops where appropriate.[2]

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[2] Orthography used in secondary literature is not altered when being referenced.

Data

For the analysis of HS. 2 from Yaxchilan, the following sets of data will be used:[3]

○ High resolution photographs taken by the author during field work in September 2010.

○ Photographs made and drawings made published in Graham's (1982) *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions: Vol 3.*

○ Drawings made by Linda Schele and John Montgomery (found in Appendix A).

The erosion of HS. 2 (and other monuments) is due to a general lack of in-situ conservation at archaeological sites such as Yaxchilan. Excavation of HS. 2 took place in 1975, where the plaza in front of Structure 33 was fully cleared, and the stairway uncovered (García Moll 1975). However, it has been noted that the excavation of such monuments is a "fundamentally destructive process" (Jans et al 2002: 343). By uncovering artefacts, the natural equilibrium that has preserved them in the state that they are found is disturbed. While reburial is always an option – and sometimes the only option – many Maya sites have been investigated and excavated for the purpose of tourism. Thus, reburial is not, in most cases, a viable option.

HS. 2 is currently exposed, and the protective shelter that has been erected covering it in situ is insufficient (as are many throughout Central America). This is primarily due to a lack of resources by the government agencies that are responsible for the maintenance of the archaeological sites (Parks et al 2006: 430). What should have

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[3] It is important to note that a high level of eriosion has occured since Graham's (1982) work. To some extent, advancement in photographic quality has helped to mititgate this, although this does not help in all cases.

been temporary measures for short term protection has instead turned into long term, inadequate solutions (Demas and Agnew 2006: 68). The kinds of shelters used cannot protect the monuments from the heavy rains that occur during the wet season, or damage caused by animals digging around them and urinating on them (Aslan 1997: 18). As a result of poor conservation, it is evident that HS. 2, among many other monuments – both at Yaxchilan and elsewhere – have suffered degradation since discovery.

Hieroglyphic decipherment of HS. 2 has been completed by the author (see Appendix B), and it will become the first full translation of all thirteen blocks made available in one location. Other authors have published short extracts from the inscription, focusing principally on the central three blocks (see Freidel et al 1993; Lopes and Davletshin 2004; Martin and Grube 2008; Tate 1992; Tokovinine 2002). However, none have attempted a full scale decipherment. Consequently, understanding of HS. 2 is lacking. The translation presented in Chapter 6 will acknowledge previous translations, and explain any changes that have been presented in detail.

Plan of the Study

This study has been broken down into seven chapters to explore the research topic, and provide analyses thereof. Chapter 1 discusses the existing literature that has been written on Yaxchilan, from the first papers presented by Proskouriakoff (1963, 1964) on the historical nature of the hieroglyphic inscriptions, to some of the most recent discussion on Yaxchilan's archaeological context and political organisation. The aim of this section is to introduce the difficulties of the topic, and explore how scholars have attempted to solve the complex issues of the Maya political and ritual landscape. This

then moves on to a brief history of decipherment, to illustrate some of the problems of interpretation and the reading of the Maya hieroglyphics. This section also offers some explanation of hieroglyphic grammar and narrative structure, and the use of emblem glyphs, all of which appear in the inscriptions of the monument in question.

In Chapter 2, the methods of the present research are explored, in particular outlining the translation conventions that are employed, and the data that will be used in this research will be discussed. The major conventions in reading Maya imagery are introduced, and the ways in which this is vital to understanding how imagery and text work together to present a comprehensive narrative of events. Principally, this author follows Barthes' (1977) theories of text/image relationships, as other Mayanists have done in the past (Miller and Houston 1987). This chapter then moves on to the theoretical frameworks of political organisation within the Late Classic Maya lowlands, and discusses the importance of understanding Late Classic ideology in this context. In this chapter, the structure of the royal court is also outlined, including the ruler and royal court, and other members of this group.

Chapter 3 presents a brief outline of the history of Yaxchilan, primarily to introduce the historical context in which HS. 2 was created, and to outline the most important individuals that were recorded within the hieroglyphic inscriptions there. Tables 3.1-3.4 show the key rulers, accession and death dates, and important ceremonies and rituals. The development of the site of Yaxchilan is discussed, from a relatively unimportant centre in the Early Classic period, through to its florescence in the Late Classic. It is noted that there is a rise in the number of different individuals represented on the sculpted monuments of the site, as political allies to the rulers, during this time. The study then outlines the later years of Shield Jaguar III's reign,

the interregnum, and the early years of Bird Jaguar IV's rule, in order to understand the role HS. 2 played in solidifying Bird Jaguar IV's position within the ideological and political structure of Yaxchilan.

Further context for this study is given in Chapter 4, and briefly outlines the Maya hip ballgame. Eleven of the thirteen blocks of HS. 2 directly reference a ballgame event, showing the individuals represented playing with a large rubber ball. This chapter discusses the ballgame courts, both 'I' shaped and 'stepped' (and if, indeed, they were different courts or ball games at all), and the protective clothing worn by players. It provides a basis for the discussions on imagery found in Chapter 7.

Chapter 5 outlines the archaeological and geographical context of HS. 2. Structure 33 is discussed, along with the monuments which make up the ritual space surrounding it. This includes stelae, lintels, the building itself, and the position of HS. 2 within this context. It is argued that the ritual space was deliberately created to evoke the different layers of the cosmos, and that HS. 2 was designed to represent the transition between the terrestrial, celestial, and Underworld. This is done not only through the iconography of the stairway (discussed in Chapter 7), but the physical placement of it atop the thirteen undecorated blocks, directly below the entrances to Structure 33, a building constructed to represent a sacred mountain.

Chapters 6 and 7 move on to the core analysis of HS. 2. In Chapter 6 the hieroglyphic analysis of the inscriptions is presented, discussing the narrative of the text. Where there is a large degree of erosion on individual blocks, the author is confidently able to infer the structure of inscriptions from the level of consistency across the other blocks. The translation reveals that HS. 2 represents a number of individuals from across the spectrum of the political hierarchy in Late Classic Yaxchilan, which

is analysed in more detail in the concluding remarks of the chapter in relation to the discussions presented in Chapter 3. This section of the study then moves on to an investigation of the inscriptions seen on the rubber balls on HS. 2, and discusses the possible interpretations for the 'ball compound' (*nab*), and the identification of the prisoners on blocks VI, VII, and VIII. The arguments follow current thought that the [number]-*nab* inscriptions are a measurement of ball size (Boot 2003; Coe 2003; Zender 2004a) and suggest directions for further research on the subject.

Chapter 7 presents an analysis of the key aspects of the iconography found on the stairway. Specifically, the following are discussed: the Ceremonial Bars on blocks II and III; the dwarfs on block VII; the prisoner-as-ball motif seen on blocks VI, VII, and VIII; the women on blocks I, II, III, and XI; the location of the 'stepped' ballcourt shown on HS. 2; and the ceremonial aspects of the male ball players' costumes. This chapter also offers identification for the women where the hieroglyphic inscriptions have proved insufficient. This chapter supports research by previous scholars, and their suggestions that the iconography of HS. 2 was used to evoke an Otherworld. However, this is furthered in this work by clarifying the need to avoid making assumptions based on Western ideology. Specifically, arguments against the prisoner-as-ball motif as being a metaphor for captive sacrifice are presented, and it is instead proposed that prisoner-as-ball imagery was a means to demonstrate economic and military strength (following Graham 2011).

The concluding remarks summarise the main arguments that have been made throughout. This research shows that HS. 2 is representative of the political organisation of Yaxchilan during the reign of Bird Jaguar IV; the monument shows the different levels of political hierarchy within the royal court at Yaxchilan, and helps to illuminate

the roles which the rulers and elite played in maintaining political and ideological balance. It demonstrates that both living allies and dead ancestors were vital to the maintenance of political authority. The representation of thirteen individuals on one monument reveals that there was a growing number of elite that commanded power to be important enough to not only take part in the ballgame ritual, but be commemorated doing so. These conclusions demonstrate a model for political organisation during Late Classic Yaxchilan, and illustrate that power was distributed through downward delegation (Barnes 1988), whereby elite members of the royal court were given political authority to act in the *k'uhul ajaws* stead. It is argued that this was maintained through the charisma of Bird Jaguar IV, who managed a growing number of elite by acknowledging them within his monumental programme. By representing them within the images at the heart of the ceremonial city, the ruler was incorporating them into the ideology of the site, thus giving them independent political authority. Futhermore, it is suggested that this may have led to an overall decentralisation of power at Yaxchilan, which later rulers were unable to manage effectively, leading (at least in part) to the collapse of this city in the ninth century.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORIOGRAPHY AND DECIPHERMENT

Period	Division	Dates
Preclassic	Early Preclassic	2000–1000 BC
	Middle Preclassic	1000–350 BC
	Late Preclassic	350 BC–AD 250
Classic	Early Classic	AD 250–550
	Late Classic	AD 550–830
	Terminal Classic	AD 830–950
Postclassic	Early Postclassic	AD 950–1200
	Late Postclassic	AD 1200–1539

Table 1.1 - A chronology of the Maya eras (adapted from Estrada-Belli 2011: 3)

Existing Literature on Yaxchilan

As one of the most important Classic polities of the ancient Maya (both in terms of the available corpus and archaeological investigation), Yaxchilan has been the subject of much research since its rediscovery, and a full treatment of all early visitors to the site can be found in Mathews (1988: 23-37, vol 1). This study will mention only briefly the most significant of these visitors to the understanding of Yaxchilan. Furthermore, Mathews (1988: 38-45) provides an excellent overview of the earliest literature on Yaxchilan. The present study will not reiterate any of the work outlined by Mathews (ibid.) before Proskouriakoff (1960, 1963, 1964) as it bears little relevance to the discussions on the ideology of political organisation of the site.

British pioneer Alfred P. Maudslay (1883, 1889-1902) was the first Western explorer to document Yaxchilan, when he arrived there in 1882. Drawings and photographs of the site, along with descriptions of the ruins, were published in Maudslay's (1889-1902) *Biologia Centrali Americana*. Teobert Maler spent two

months at Yaxchilan in 1897, where he made a number of drawings and took detailed

photographs, which he would later publish, along with further field observations in

1900, in his work *Researches in the Central Portion of the Usumatsintla* [sic] *Valley:*

Report of Explorations for the Museum, 1898-1900 (1903). Thanks to the accurate and

detailed reproductions within this work, it is still an important source of research on

Yaxchilan today.

Sylvanus Morley also recorded some of the inscriptions of the site in 1914

(Morley 1937-1938); however he was primarily concerned with calendrical notations,

and left other glyphs undocumented. Morely also publised a full report of the site,

a site plan, and architectural and monument notes (Morley 1931). Scholars have,

since Proskouriakoff's early work (1963, 1964), spent considerable time discussing

the dynastic history of the site (Bardsley 1994; Josserand 2007; Martin and Grube

2008; Schele and Freidel 1990), its archaeological and epigraphic record (Martin 2004;

Mathews 1988; Schele and Miller 1986; Tate 1992), and its interactions with other

Classic Maya Lowland polities (Golden et al 2008; Grube 1998; Munson and Macri

2009). This research has ensured that our understanding of the site and its history is

well developed, thanks to the archaeological and epigraphic record.

However, there is still a great deal that remains unknown. Late Classic

Yaxchilan is an enigma in many ways, not least because of the ten year interregnum that

split the reigns of Shield Jaguar III and his son, Bird Jaguar IV (Grube 1998). Despite

this interregnum, Yaxchilan does not appear to have suffered a great deal of hardship.

On Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, for example, Bird Jaguar IV makes no attempt to disguise

how long Yaxchilan was without an enthroned ruler. Nor is there archaeological

evidence of conflict during this period such as we see in a similar transitional period at

El Mirador, where "opportunistic warring" occurred (Reese-Taylor and Walker 2002: 100). It would not be unrealistic to expect conflict and civil unrest at Yaxchilan during a political vacuum such as the interregnum. However, no evidence of such has been found archaeologically, nor is there evidence of monumental destruction, defacing of monuments, or short-term abandonment of the ceremonial city or the periphery area.

Quite the contrary, the rules of Shield Jaguar III and Bird Jaguar IV are considered by scholars to be the most prosperous of any period in Yaxchilan's history, and there appears to have been strong continuity between the two rulers' periods of control. Bird Jaguar IV's epigraphic record is extensive, and, more importantly, explicit in stating his prolific activity at Yaxchilan during the interregnum, despite not being the enthroned ruler. While it must always be remembered that the hieroglyphic monuments provided the possibility of political propaganda for the ancient Maya rulers, it rarely, if ever, contradicts records at other sites. This suggests that the Maya were cautious not to fabricate events that they recorded. We can therefore assume that Bird Jaguar IV was not only politically and ritually active in Yaxchilan during this time, but he was so on the expectation that he would become the next ruler of the polity. Thus, continuity rather than disruption is conveyed (Tate 1992). Bird Jaguar IV's depictions of himself in battle, taking captives, and engaged in ritual activities should not only be seen as propaganda, but as "memorials to defend honour and exhortations to future conduct" (Houston et al 2006: 203). Houston et al (ibid.: 204) argue that honour was an important part of Maya society (i.e. timocracy), especially among smaller sites with fewer warriors, as evidenced by the higher concentration of 'captor of' and 'he of X captives' titles at such ceremonial cities (there are none at Tikal and Calakmul).

This period of prosperity – from Shield Jaguar III's reign, through the interregnum, and reaching to the end of Bird Jaguar IV's reign – has been explored by many scholars, whose arguments and ideas contribute to our understanding of the political organisation of Yaxchilan in the Late Classic period (Martin and Grube 2008: 123-133; Mathews 1988; Schele and Freidel 1990; Tate 1992). Influential hypotheses put forward in the early literature, however, have coloured much of the work that has followed. In particular, Proskouriakoff's (1963: 163; see below) suggestion that the interregnum was a time of conflict. The influence of this early speculation has led to continuing assumptions not fully supported by the epigraphic and archaeological evidence. Worse still, the interregnum has occasionally been misrepresented as a time when Bird Jaguar IV had to fight to claim the right to the throne (Montgomery 2002: 274-276). Yet, there is no reference whatsoever in the inscriptions of conflict. As such, it is important to approach the record with caution, and put these assumptions aside in order to begin with as unbiased a view of Late Classic Yaxchilan as possible.

While conjecture can be useful in building hypotheses concerning the political situation at Yaxchilan, conjectural scenarios should serve to predict what additional evidence we would expect to find if the proposed scenario were true. Instead, one argument dominates the literature: that Bird Jaguar IV was in some way a usurper. However, what we can see (at least from the epigraphic record) is that Bird Jaguar IV was extremely active politically and ritually during the interregnum, which would have helped to support his accession when the time came. It should be noted that the monuments which describe this activity were erected directly after Bird Jaguar IV's accession to the throne, rather than during the interregnum. However, as previously discussed, it is unlikely that these events were fabricated after his enthronement.

This is not to propose that Bird Jaguar IV was not a usurper but simply that the evidence is not conclusive. The reason this view seems to have been adopted unchallenged is primarily because of a lack of epigraphic evidence in relation to who was in power during the interregnum; the argument supporting the idea that the interregnum represents a period in which a non-heir designate had to legitimate his claim helps to explain something that, as yet, is inexplicable.

While it is almost certain that Bird Jaguar IV was not the only candidate for kingship (Josserand 2007; Martin and Grube 2008; Proskouriakoff 1964; Tate 1992), the epigraphic record leaves us without a doubt that his influence, in terms of his actions during the interregnum and his political allies, ensured the continued prosperity of Yaxchilan. The numerous monuments produced directly after his enthronement give scholars a detailed documentation of his actions before his reign,[4] and there is evidence that scribes who worked at the ceremonial city during his father's reign continued to produce monuments under Bird Jaguar IV's supervision (Tate 1992: loc 3800), suggesting cultural continuity. HS. 2 is one such monument, and forms part of what has been suggested as being Bird Jaguar IV's accession monument, Structure 33 (Mathews 1988; Schele and Freidel 1990). An alternative hypothesis is that Structure 33 represents a monument dedicated to Shield Jaguar III, and was completed after Bird Jaguar IV's death by his son Shield Jaguar IV (Martin and Grube 2008; Pallan, personal communication 2012).

The following discussion focuses on evaluating how scholars have interpreted the political situation of Yaxchilan in the Late Classic period, with HS. 2 in mind. A

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[4] Monuments ascribed to Bird Jaguar IV include: Stelae 1, 3/33, 6, 9, 10, 11 & 35; Lintels 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 38, 39, 40, 50? & 59; Temple 8 Tablet; Hieroglyphic Stairways 1, 3 & 4; Altars 1?, 3, 4 & 9; Dos Caobas stela 2 (Martin and Grube 2008; Tate 1992); Retaltelco lintel (Houston et al 2006).

full scale analysis of HS. 2 has not been previously completed, and is thus the focus

of the thesis that follows. Perhaps the greatest contribution to our understanding of

Yaxchilan to date comes from Proskouriakoff (1963, 1964). These two papers followed

the author's ground-breaking decipherment of monuments at the site of Piedras Negras,

where she proved beyond doubt that historical information had been recorded within the

Maya inscriptions (Proskouriakoff 1960). The hieroglyphic inscriptions at Yaxchilan

also contained historical information, and Proskouriakoff (1963, 1964) detailed the

reigns of two rulers, Shield Jaguar (Shield Jaguar III) and Bird Jaguar (Bird Jaguar IV).

While new evidence has since proved some of her suggestions erroneous, the work still

stands as essential reading for anyone interested in the history of Yaxchilan. However,

it appears that it was Proskouriakoff's tentative suggestion based on speculation, rather

than historical fact, which has had the most lasting influence on the scholarship of

Yaxchilan:

> Bird Jaguar, the next great ruler of Yaxchilan did not accede to power until 11 years had passed, and there are no records that we can definitely ascribe to his period. Perhaps, as often happens after a long and distinguished reign, it was a time of conflict, when various pretenders competed for the chief's office, and perhaps that is why Bird Jaguar, on his accession, seems to have taken great pains to document his legitimacy. (Proskouriakoff 1963: 163)

Indeed, it is true that Bird Jaguar IV spent a great deal of time and effort in

stating his legitimacy, and that of his son and heir. However, a significant problem with

this approach is that internal conflict does not explain the period of florescence that

Yaxchilan enjoyed during the Late Classic period, and the reigns of Shield Jaguar III

and Bird Jaguar IV (Martin and Grube 2008: 123-133; Mathews 1988; Sharer 2006:

421-451; Schele and Freidel 1990; Tate 1992). Proskouriakoff's (1963, 1964) work,

more than any other, demonstrates the flurry of activity during the Late Classic period at Yaxchilan, and shows that the rulers of this period were active and engaged in the safeguarding of their polity. Bird Jaguar IV was clearly a dynamic force in Yaxchilan before his accession, and Proskouriakoff's works clearly show his various engagements through ritual in the political sphere, as documented in the inscriptions of the site. This is highly significant to the arguments of this study, and will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

Work on the inscriptions was continued by Peter Mathews (1988), which carefully documents the known monumental sculpture of the site, and offers some insights as to what these sculptures can tell us. Perhaps most concretely, Mathews (1988: 369) added to Proskouriakoff's suggestion that military achievements were central to strong leadership at Yaxchilan. We can see that captive-taking, and its recording through the 'captor of…' title (Stuart 1985), was essential to the title sequence of Yaxchilan rulers. It is through title sequences that we are given an insight into the political, social, and ideological ties of a site or polity. Preoccupations with martial achievements are most evident during the reign of Bird Jaguar IV's heir, Shield Jaguar IV (Martin and Grube 2008: 134-135). Monuments erected by Bird Jaguar IV principally commemorated his military actions (Mathews 1988: 203-237). The recording of warfare was clearly a developing trend during the reigns of the previous rulers. However, Shield Jaguar IV, unlike his predecessors, was clearly not as preoccupied with reaffirming his lineage and legitimacy (perhaps this having already been sufficiently achieved by his father, Bird Jaguar IV) or reaffirming Yaxchilan's independence and strength (as achieved by his grandfather, Shield Jaguar III, during the later years of his reign). The subjects of inscriptions through time, along with the importance of the titles that are found at

Yaxchilan will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, where the author discusses the development of Yaxchilan and the reign of Bird Jaguar IV.

Mathews (1988) also added to our understanding of the florescence of Yaxchilan in his chapter on Bird Jaguar III. Bird Jaguar III was the king before, and father of, Shield Jaguar III. Mathews argues that Bird Jaguar III was a key driving force in the increase in power and prestige of Yaxchilan in the Classic period (Mathews 1988: 141). This inadvertently supports arguments that Bird Jaguar IV was not an interloper, or unworthy contender for the throne. Bird Jaguar IV paid homage to Bird Jaguar III in his commissioned monuments, reaffirming his own links with his namesake. This method of legitimisation was employed by Bird Jaguar IV in order to demonstrate an unbroken line of stability and strength between rulers. However, this continuity was not necessarily required; Bird Jaguar IV could have instead rewritten or ignored this part of his supposed heritage had he indeed been an interloper. Instead, Mathews (1988) demonstrates that Bird Jaguar IV associates himself with this long dead ruler, implying a strong dynastic relationship. In this way, Bird Jaguar IV was able to further support his position as ruler using the legitimisation his ancestors would have granted him.

It is the discussion of Bird Jaguar IV's relationships that makes *A Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya* by Linda Schele and David Freidel important to the study of Yaxchilan. This book, published in 1990, is a strange mix of fact and fiction, and – at times – is overly coloured by Schele and Freidel's personal views on the Maya, and by the early literature by Proskouriakoff. However, it is their approach that led them to look upon Bird Jaguar IV in a more personal way, considering his motivations and actions as a man. In this way, they attempt to piece together his personality and thus the reasoning behind his decisions as a

ruler. Schele and Freidel put particular emphasis on Bird Jaguar IV's motivations in honouring Lady *K'abal Xook*, the principle wife of his father, Shield Jaguar III, alongside his own mother, whom they designate Lady *Ik'* Skull. Lady *K'abal Xook* was clearly of political importance to Yaxchilan during the reign of her husband (Josserand 2001; Martin and Grube 2008; Tate 1987). However, her importance appears to have gone beyond being the principle wife, as Bird Jaguar IV makes political reference to her even after his father's death. Clearly, she was an important figure at Yaxchilan in her own right, or by association with her own lineage, which Bird Jaguar IV did not share.

Bird Jaguar IV not only mentions this woman – who was not his mother – in his own texts, but he goes on to model all future representations of women after her depiction in previous monuments. Structure 23 at Yaxchilan is located in the main plaza, overlooking the ball court and the river. The building appears to have been entirely dedicated to Lady *K'abal Xook* (Foster 2002: 288; Martin and Grube 2008: 126; Schele and Freidel 1990: 271). The royal woman appears as the main protagonist on each of the most famous Maya lintels, 24, 25, and 26. These exquisitely carved and beautifully preserved lintels depict Lady *K'abal Xook* taking the lead in a number of rituals for Shield Jaguar III (figure 1.1; Tate 1992: loc 3573-3649). Bird Jaguar IV would later use this same narrative style on Structure 21, depicting women from his reign in an identical way, on lintels 17 and 15 (See figure 1.2).

In discussions of the political organisation of Yaxchilan prior to the accession of Bird Jaguar IV, Schele and Freidel (1990) represent a problematic source. Many of the arguments do not stand up to rigorous testing, either epigraphic or archaeological. Assumptions made regarding the interregnum, or political relationships with other

Maya polities, such as Piedras Negras, or Calakmul, are based much more on inference from a *lack* of record, rather than an existing one.

Caroline Tate (1992)[5] pushed the boundaries of understanding of Yaxchilan in her monograph on the subject, *Yaxchilan: The Design of a Maya Ceremonial City*. This book provides an excellent overview of the site, along with a detailed list of its buildings, monuments and features. While it is now clear that some of the research presented in the book is out of date or incorrect, a good deal holds true and relevant to this study. Tate (1992: loc 1061-1219) discusses the terminology used by scholars to define the built environment in which ancient Maya structures, temples, palace complexes, and monuments have been found. The historiography of references to these urban landscapes is inconsistent, although Tate (ibid.: loc 1089) argues that "an adequate characterization of the Mesoamerica urban form must be congruent with Mesoamerican ideology, and it should be added that a new definition must also consider issues of self-identity and emic concepts of social and environmental order." Wheatley (1969) puts forward that in many contexts, the "political elite… were often largely coincident with the sacred elite." Furthermore, all activities were imbued with ideological norms (ibid.), suggesting that there can be no differentiation between secular and ceremonial activity within an area. It is generally agreed among scholars that Maya urban centres contained groups of people from a range of social backgrounds, from the royal court to commoners (Tate 1992: loc1068). Carrasco (2000: 65) supports this in his discussion of the traditional city, which could serve as a marketplace, military centre, and administrative hub, and he goes on to acknowledge that in the Mesoamerican context, these centres functioned alongside ritual and religious activities, as evidenced by the conclusions that the buildings and monuments that remain today had primarily political

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[5] Note, that in references, loc (location) is used in place of page numbers due to the edition used for this study.

and religious functions. It should be noted, however, that archaeologically, there is little evidence of 'markets' or perishable economic nuclei at the heart of Maya cities (Lucero 1999a: 232). As such, Tate (1992: loc 1061-1219) suggests that scholars adopt the term 'ceremonial city' to define central areas of stone structures and monuments that represent the central built landscapes of the Maya.

New research into ancient Maya markets and marketplaces has been published in King's (2015) *The Ancient Maya Marketplace: The Archaeology of Transient Space*. In this edited volume, archaeological and linguistic evidence for marketplaces are evaluated. It should be noted that there are no archaeological remains of marketplaces yet discovered at Yaxchilan, however given it's size and location, it was almost certainly an urban hub of activity. This author uses the term 'ceremonial city' within this study: 'ceremonial' is used to indicate the ritual and ideological function of the site, where 'city' acknowledges the urban and active nature of the area and that it was a 'lived in' space. This follows work by Wheatley (1969) and Carrasco (2000) in defining ceremonial cities as centres of spatial order and kingship, as well as instuments for political, social, economic and ideological maintenance.

Tate (1992) offers a discussion and identification of individual artists who may have worked on the carved monuments of the site and to the orientation of the key buildings (ibid.: loc 1533-1792; following Tate 1985). Also presented is a history of the two most well documented rulers of the site, Shield Jaguar III and Bird Jaguar IV. Tate (ibid.: loc 3493) correlates the data in two different, complementary ways: "the *absolute chronology* of the site to the events and images *in the order in which they were recorded*" (emphasis in original). Most importantly for this thesis, Tate presents a more critical view of the political situation at Late Classic Yaxchilan:

> Bird Jaguar IV initiated his reign with the erection of several stelae, altars, groups of lintels, and many buildings... It could be argued that he only accelerated the already swift pace of construction that had occurred in the past two *k'atuns*. However, some authors have taken this explosion of artistic labour as cause for suspicion of the new king's legitimacy… [None of these] authors made the parallel suggestion that the seven lintels, six hieroglyphic steps, three stelae, one altar, and at least two buildings erected by Shield Jaguar between 9.14.0.0.0 and 9.15.5.0.0 were also products of an insecure reign. (ibid.: loc 3722-3747)

While Tate agrees that there may have been several contenders for rulership of Yaxchilan, she suggests that Bird Jaguar IV knew he would be king for several years prior to his accession and that he felt it was more appropriate to wait for the death of his own mother before acceding to the throne (ibid.: loc 3760). This implies that there may not have been such a long gap between the death of Shield Jaguar III and Bird Jaguar IV actively attaining power over Yaxchilan; merely that there were ten years without an *enthroned* ruler.

One final point that Tate (ibid.: loc 4258) notes regarding the political development of Yaxchilan is that "warfare increased markedly toward the end of the Classic Period has been generally accepted for many years." It is time that this idea is challenged. While it may still prove to be correct, this study proposes that scholars should be more cautious in making such an assumption. A more accurate conclusion to draw from the epigraphic record would be that the *representation* of warfare increased toward the end of the Classic Period. By using this framework, we might better understand the ideological shifts which occurred in the Late Classic era, and resulted in a collapse of the hierarchical institutions present in the Southern Lowlands. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2 (see Table 3.4 for a breakdown of events depicted on monuments at Yaxchilan during the Later Classic period).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, scholarship on Yaxchilan moved towards trying to solve the issue of the interregnum. This was, in part, thanks to developments in epigraphy, which began to reveal a complex picture of political relationships between Maya sites. In particular, monuments at Dos Pilas and Piedras Negras were known to hold clues as to what happened during the ten years without an enthroned ruler of Yaxchilan. Nikolai Grube (1998) pays particular attention to Hieroglyphic Stairway 3, step III at Dos Pilas. Martin and Grube posit a highly centralised political structure across the Southern Lowlands during the Classic period (Grube 1998, 2000, 2005; Martin and Grube 1995, 1998, 2008). Using this model, he suggests that Dos Pilas and Piedras Negras worked together, under the instruction of Calakmul, to ensure a particular ruler acceded to the Yaxchilan throne (Grube 1998). Dos Pilas took the first step, by capturing a Yaxchilan individual, who is assumed to be ruler of the site (ibid.: 117-119). This was followed by Piedras Negras overseeing the installation of Bird Jaguar IV as King, who also happened to be the son of Lady *Ik'* Skull, who Grube argues was a royal woman from Calakmul (ibid.: 124).

Martin and Grube (1995; 1998; 2008) argue governance of many of the Classic period sites were under the control of one or two extremely powerful and far reaching ruling lineages, in particular Calakmul and Tikal. This model of political organisation is known as "Super-states", and will be discussed in Chapter 2. However, this author suggests that should these arguments be accurate, there would be more epigraphic evidence of Yaxchilan's subordination to any of the three conspiring sites: Dos Pilas, Piedras Negras, or – more likely, as the most powerful of the three – Calakmul. However, when Bird Jaguar IV comes into power, he does not mention any of these three respectfully in his monuments, except within his mother's title sequence, where

she is given the Calakmul emblem glyph (on stela 10, see also Martin and Grube 2008: 126; Sharer 2006: 436). For a discussion on emblem glyphs and their significance, see below (pp. 27-52).

As will be argued in Chapter 2, it was improbable that the political situation of the Maya lowlands during the Late Classic period was as centralised as Martin and Grube suggest. There were clearly political forces at play in the region; however it is unlikely that Dos Pilas and Piedras Negras were allied closely enough to pull off the coup on Yaxchilan between 742-752 – especially as it appears to have failed to secure dominance for Calakmul after the accession of Bird Jaguar IV. We know that any influence Piedras Negras had on Bird Jaguar IV and Yaxchilan alluded to in Panel 3 (from Piedras Negras) was dramatically reversed when, in 759 A.D., the Yaxchilan *k'uhul ajaw* took a Piedras Negras *k'inil ajaw* captive (Martin and Grube 2008: 131). This event would suggest a much more decentralised political model than Grube (1998) argues in favour of; if Yaxchilan had indeed come under the sway of Calakmul during the middle of the eighth century, there should have been measures in place to prevent this from happening, or at the least, consequences, of which there appears to be none.

Martin and Grube's (2008) book *Chronicle of the Maya Kings and Queens: Deciphering the Dynasties of the Ancient Maya* (originally published in 2000, and revised and reprinted in 2008) provides an overview of the dynastic and political history of Yaxchilan, along with other sites, including Piedras Negras, Dos Pilas, Calakmul, and others. In this book, they briefly highlight an important point about Classic Maya politics: that the Late Classic period was very different to the Early Classic period (ibid. 2008: 17). Many previous authors have only made a clear distinction between the Preclassic and the Classic periods. However, recent epigraphic and archaeological

evidence suggests that even this divide has been overstated, and that the foundations of Classic Maya Kingship were being laid throughout the Preclassic era (Freidel 2008; Schele and Freidel 1988). Martin and Grube (2008: 17) emphasise that the differences between the Early Classic and the Late Classic eras were just as great, if not greater, than the differences between the Preclassic and the Classic periods, in particular in terms of the underpinning ideology. It should be kept in mind that the terms 'Preclassic'. 'Early Classic', 'Late Classic', and so on, are retroactively applied to the period, by scholars of the Maya culture. They are, therefore, arbitrary periods of time, based on much slower ideological, political, and archaeological changes.

As Martin and Grube (ibid.: 17) suggest, this culminated in the Late Classic period with a greater emphasis on the *king* as an individual, rather than the institution of *kingship* more generally, as in the Pre- and Early Classic periods. The importance of this point to this thesis cannot be overstated. It could be argued that Bird Jaguar IV advocated the individual, but not just himself. He spent a vast amount of space and resources in his monuments in honouring individuals both of the royal family – such as Lady *K'abal Xook*, his mother, Lady *Ik'* Skull, and his son, the future Shield Jaguar IV – and of the elite – those with the title *sajal*, including Lord Great Skull, the brother of Bird Jaguar IV's wife, Lady Great Skull. It is the individuals we see at Yaxchilan that are of utmost importance to understanding the political organisation of the ceremonial city, and the political sphere of influence it had as a whole. This policy, therefore, was a development of a growing Classic era trend. This will help shape a deeper understanding of the iconography that was produced.

The book also provides a range of visualisations as to how the Late Classic political landscape could have been organised. The authors provide an interesting, and brief

summary of the historiography of ancient Maya politics, concluding that there are a range of possible models. While they shy away from a fully centralised models and theories of 'overkingship', which they favour in other works (Grube 1998, 2000; Martin and Grube 1995, 1998), they do suggest a complex series of relationships between ceremonial cities and political centres, which sees two polities claiming the most prominent status and a system of 'overkingship': Calakmul and Tikal (Martin and Grube 2008: 19-21). Tikal and Calakmul had a complex and long standing rivalry. Tikal appears to have had the upper hand during the Early Classic period. However, towards the end of the Classic era, Calakmul gained considerable ground. An interesting reinterpretation of this relationship based on Maya calendrical information and the seating of the *May* can be found in Rice (2004), although this is not a widely accepted model.

Also of note are the authors' suggestions that it was not territorial borders that defined Maya political regions, but that instead there was a ceremonial and *commercial* focus (emphasis mine) (Martin and Grube 2008: 20). There are a vast number of ceramics that depict goods exchange and tribute giving between allied members of the royal court, predominantly between an *ajaw* or *k'uhul ajaw* and his/her subordinates, such as a *y-ajaw* or *sajal*. While tribute is rarely dealt with on carved monuments, such as HS. 2, these types of record may help to indicate what the subordinate members of the political hierarchy received in exchange for offering tribute and allegiance to a ruler. Rights to perform, or be part of, important rituals, commemoration and – by extension – veneration, may have been important factors in securing political influence over a wider area for the Maya rulers.

It is in Bardsley's (1994) article 'Rewriting History at Yaxchilan: Inaugural Art of Bird Jaguar IV' that it is explicitly stated that Bird Jaguar IV may have completely

fabricated some of the immediate past preceding his accession. This article adds little to the literature surrounding the political situation of Late Classic Yaxchilan. However, it does offer an interesting alternative to the problem of the interregnum. While scholars must always be careful to read the hieroglyphic texts left as historical accounts with caution, as yet there have been no clear cases where the remaining accounts have been entirely fictitious. Texts, even between sites, do not contradict one another, and the epigraphic record has, where possible, been corroborated with the archaeological one (in particular at the site of Copan).

At no point are Maya monuments "assumed to be objective historical accounts" (Bardsley 1994: 92); but nor have they proved to be inaccurate. We know that the political landscape of Yaxchilan was highly dependent on the elite during the Late Classic period. Monuments throughout this period suggest that the rulers were reliant on their *sajals* (discussion on the meaning of this title can be found in Chapter 2); these elite are present in many monuments, a sign that they enjoyed a large amount of political, military, and perhaps even economic power. It would be unlikely, therefore, that a ruler during this period would be able to entirely fabricate a part of history, just as Bird Jaguar IV was unable to simply ignore the interregnum. Put simply, if Bird Jaguar IV could rewrite history for his own purposes, why did he not rewrite the interregnum altogether?

In discussions about the possibility of there being another heir in the epigraphic record at Yaxchilan, Kathryn Josserand posits that lintel 23 reveals the name of a son of Lady *K'abal Xook*, the principle wife of Shield Jaguar III. Lintel 23 forms part of a later renovation to Structure 23, the building at Yaxchilan directly dedicated to Lady *K'abal Xook*. The existence of another heir to the throne of Yaxchilan would provide

concrete epigraphic support for early theories of dynastic upheaval and conflict during the interregnum. This, in turn, would provide a key insight into ancient Maya political structures, and how civil conflict may be dealt with epigraphically. It would also say something interesting as to destruction of monuments – if Bird Jaguar IV was trying to 're-write' the dynastic history of Yaxchilan, he would make sure that there were no records of another legitimate ruler during the ten-year period.

Josserand (2007: 7, figure 2) breaks down the structure of the text in an attempt to prove that the final glyphic statement reads "his mother (of) Lord Tzik [is] **Lady Xok**" (emphasis in original). While the argument is certainly compelling, and would help to shed light on the obscure history of the interregnum, it is unfortunately difficult to support with known ancient Maya grammatical construction. A more logical reading for the text would be that the relationship phrase found at L1 on the text (which could be a 'mother of' phrase) refers instead to the woman directly before at K1. This would make the text read "Lady Flaming Stone, Lady *Kab*, mother of He of *'Aan'* [and] Lady [*k'a?*] *Bal* Shark" (Zender, personal communication 2012) (If the reading of the female name is indeed Lady *K'abal* Shark, then it should be clarified that this *is not* the same Lady *K'abal* Shark that was the principle wife of Shield Jaguar III). Grammatically, this would make more sense than the text looping back to discussion of Lady *K'abal Xook*, who appears as the main protagonist for the text at D1, without a second reference to her. Thus, the presence of an interregnum ruler is still only alluded to by texts at Piedras Negras and Dos Pilas. This will be elaborated further in Chapter 3.

In the article 'Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan: Divergent Political Trajectories in Adjacent Maya Polities,' Golden et al (2008) argue that Yaxchilan developed very differently to the site of Piedras Negras politically. This difference in development

may have been due to the relationships that it had with its vassal or periphery sites, and it was certainly reflected in the epigraphic and archaeological record of those relationships (ibid.: 249-274). This research is done using both epigraphic and archaeological evidence, and focuses on areas of research such as mortuary practises, architecture, ceramics and defensive features. They argue that at the end of the Preclassic Period and at the beginning of the Early Classic Period, there was a migration of the population from the countryside into the ceremonial cities (in this case, Yaxchilan and Piedras Negras) (ibid.: 252). This led to the development of a centralised political model in the Usumacinta Basin. This appears to have developed similarly at both Yaxchilan and Piedras Negras.

However, the political model developed differently between the sites into the Late Classic Period. Golden et al (2008: 249-274) argue that the political model used in Piedras Negras was significantly less centralised and less tightly controlled by the super ordinate site than was the political sphere of Yaxchilan. Thus, there is less evidence of Piedras Negras' control in the secondary sites, such as El Cayo. In contrast, monuments of secondary sites of Yaxchilan, such as Bonampak (in the Late Classic) and La Pasadita, often depict the rulers of their super ordinate site on their monuments (either in image or text). This study is particularly interesting for the present research project as it helps to unravel the political model used at Yaxchilan during the Early to Late Classic Periods. Golden et al essentially argue for a centralised political model at Yaxchilan, albeit with the cautionary note that this is not a ubiquitous model for the whole of the Maya area, or even the Usumacinta Basin. Piedras Negras appears to have developed in a very different direction, under a less centralised model (ibid.).

However, this article does not develop arguments as to exactly *why* these two polities developed differently. The study is by no means conclusive, or even complete, as attested by the authors themselves (ibid.). There are many explanations as to why the political landscape may develop, or appear to develop, differently between sites. For example, it could be argued that these contrasting political models developed more because of the political situation at the secondary, tertiary, and quaternary sites themselves, rather than the primary centres. Mathews has suggested that the secondary sites that came under the political sphere of Piedras Negras were already well defined by the Classic Period (Mathews, personal communication 2012). In contrast, Yaxchilan dedicated a huge amount of effort in establishing new sites that they could control, particularly in the frontier zone, between Yaxchilan and Piedras Negras. This would have meant that Piedras Negras were negotiating with established, locally powerful rulers for political and economic control, whereas subordinate sites to Yaxchilan owed a great deal of their own power to their primary centre.

The existing literature on the political models of the ancient Maya and on Yaxchilan is broad. A great deal has stemmed from original writings on the subject, and relies heavily on it, and thus lacks vigorous testing and questioning. Too many assumptions have been made, which may have hindered further development in understanding of the site. The literature also raises a number of key questions:

1. What caused and happened during the interregnum?

2. How were Yaxchilan and its periphery sites organised, politically and economically, during the Late Classic period?

3. What were the motivations of Bird Jaguar IV when he acceded to the throne officially?

It is the aim of this study that these questions will be addressed in the following chapters, and some alternative propositions presented. These questions have a great bearing on the overall design of Yaxchilan, and, consequently, the content and context of HS. 2.

A Brief History of Decipherment

The process of deciphering ancient Maya hieroglyphic writing began when the Spanish arrived in Central America in the early sixteenth century. The first methodical attempt to translate a Maya language came from Spanish Bishop Diego de Landa, whose systematic destruction of the Maya culture saw him recalled to Spain for excessive abuses against the indigenous people. Perhaps in response to these accusations, Diego de Landa (1959) wrote his *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* around 1566 (although the original has since been lost), within which he constructed what has become known as the 'Landa Alphabet', a series of Maya glyphs that 'correlate' to the equivalent letters in the Spanish alphabet. This text would later become vital in attempts to decipher the Maya hieroglyphics more systematically (for example, see Knorozov 1952, 1956).

Despite these early beginnings in the process of decipherment, and the continued work of scholars from all over the world today, some ancient Maya hieroglyphs still elude solid reading and there remain a great many questions that are yet unanswered. It is the purpose of this chapter to offer a brief history of decipherment and introduce the most pertinent questions still remaining in relation to this study. For example, what is the significance of the 'ball compound'? What is the purpose of the 'Grand Long Count' (Stuart 2011: 231)? What do emblem glyphs represent? HS. 2 demonstrates these, and a number of other issues, which may help to explain its relative lack of study to date.

The history of Maya hieroglyphic decipherment has been the subject of a number of studies by preeminent Maya scholars, and will not be recounted in great detail here. Montgomery (2002), and Coe and Van Stone (2001) present brief historiographies in their books discussing and teaching the topic, *How to Read Maya Hieroglyphs* and *Reading the Maya Glyphs,* respectively. Peter Mathews (1988) provided an excellent overview in his PhD thesis, *The Sculpture of Yaxchilan*, on the history of epigraphic study of Yaxchilan, in particular. However, the most comprehensive history of decipherment is that written by Michael Coe (1994), in *Breaking the Maya Code*. So well received was this work that it has since been adapted into an engaging documentary, released in 2008. The following paragraphs will provide a very brief overview of the key issues around decipherment today so that it may be examined more closely. This will help to frame the problems demonstrated by HS. 2 and provide a platform from which to proceed to begin solving some of those issues.

Before embarking on a discussion of the historiography of ancient Maya hieroglyphic decipherment, a note of caution should be presented. The term 'decipherment' means 'to read, or interpret' a text; in the context of this thesis, to read or interpret ancient Maya hieroglyphics. While many hieroglyphs can now be understood, or interpreted in context, many *readings* remain elusive (Knorozov 1958). This is to say, there are uncertainties as to how particular glyphs actually *sound*. To provide an example; Yaxchilan has two emblem glyphs. Both are known to represent Yaxchilan. One is read *k'uhul pa'chaan ajaw* ('divine split-sky lord') (Martin 2004: 1-7). The other still lacks an accurate reading. The second emblem glyph follows the same structure as the first. However, the main sign (see below), while understood to

mean (semantic) the site that we designate is Yaxchilan, lacks a reading; that is to say, we do not know how it sounded (phonetic), or, specifically, what it could be translated as meaning.

Alternatively, scholars may know the pronunciation and etymology of a hieroglyph, but not have a secure understanding of its *meaning*. Once again, we see a key example at Yaxchilan. The glyph read as *yete'* (T78:514v) appears in multiple places at Yaxchilan (and indeed other sites), and is clearly some form of relationship clause (Josserand and Hopkins 2011: 87; Kettunen and Helmke 2011: 44; Martin and Grube 2008: 118). However, scholars have yet to fully understand what the relationship might be (for further discussion on *yete'* and its implications for Yaxchilan see Chapter 3).

An additional problem has emerged since the turning point in hieroglyphic decipherment of the 1960's (discussed in more detail further on). A number of texts are now understood, both in how they are read (phonetics) and their semantic meanings. However, those texts still pose an issue as to understanding the messages they present *in context*. This is to say that while scholars understand what is being said, they do not have a grasp of the culturally significant meanings that are being imparted to the reader (Miller 1989: 179; Stone and Zender 2011: 23; see Chapter 2). Scholars of the ancient Maya are not the intended audience for the writings; therefore they do not have the cultural background to be able to accurately interpret a text. On block VII, of HS. 2, a series of *ch'akab'* events occur. This glyph is thought to mean 'decapitation', and can be used as a general verb meaning 'self-sacrifice' (Montgomery 2006: 74; for greater discussion, see Chapter 6). In this context, the glyph is associated with three protagonists on the block, each of whom is referred to as 'he of three conquests'. Thus, we know the phonetic reading, and the semantic reading, but out of context, we do not understand the

ideological or historical significance of this event (discussed in Chapter 6). As illustrated by the above examples, the process of deciphering ancient Maya texts is still underway.

The history of decipherment is well known among scholars of the Maya, and is discussed in detailed in Coe (1992), Kelley (1962, 1976), Mathews (1988), and Thompson (1950). The present study will discuss this briefly, focusing on where the history is pertinent to the understanding of the hieroglyphic inscriptions at Yaxchilan, and more specifically to HS. 2.

On the eve of the conquest of Central America, the Maya people had stopped inscribing their written language onto the stone monuments that have become so famous since their (re)discovery (see discussion in Chapter 2). Hieroglyphic writing appeared only on bark-paper manuscripts, or codices, of which only four remain today (Coe 2011: 219): the Dresden codex, coming to light for academic study in 1739; the Madrid Codex, discovered in Spain in the 1860's in two halves; the Paris Codex, appearing in France in 1832; and the Grolier Codex, surfacing in the 1970's, although this codex's authenticity is still debated (Vail 2006). During the conquest of Central America, however, understanding of the complex Maya writing system was all but eradicated due to the belief by Old World priests that the glyphs contained heretical and barbaric teachings.

As mentioned previously, Diego de Landa (c. 1566) made some attempts in the latter half of the sixteenth century to translate the Maya language and document its use.[6] The 'Landa alphabet', however, was incomplete and poorly realised; Landa

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6 The original manuscript was written c. 1566, and has since been translated and republished a number of times, including by Tozzer (1941). This study uses a translation published in 1959 (see bibliography for details).

himself attempted to ascribe Latin letters to specific glyphs, although this is incomplete and confusing - there are, for example, multiple signs for 'a', but none for 'v' (Coe 1992: 97). In fact, the 'letters' that the bishop deciphered were phonetic signs (Coe 2011: 239-241, see figure 15a for an illustration). However, he was unaware of this (he was not a linguist), and it would not be recognised until well into the twentieth century. Today, Maya groups speak derivations of the ancient languages (Yucatec, Ch'ol, Tzeltal, and K'iche' to name a few) (see figure 1.3), whereas the language of the Classic Maya monuments and texts is a dialect of Ch'olti (Houston et al 2000). Subsequently, the process of decipherment of the ancient Maya hieroglyphic texts has been a long and slow process, only gathering momentum in the mid-twentieth century. As Coe (1992: 54) points out, early scholars of the ancient Maya writing system did not consider the enduring Maya languages to be of use in the decipherment of the hieroglyphic texts, which further hindered progress.

The drawings of the glyphs from Landa (1959) and the various publications of these have been discussed in depth by Stuart (1988b). Stuart (ibid.: 26) outlines the main issues, in particular the wide range of languages the work has been published in (including French, English, and Russian) with no consistency in orthography, and that not all publications provide a full account of the original text or all of the accompanying drawings. In addition, we see in the comparison of drawings that Stuart provides (ibid.: 27, figure 2) that there is a lack of consistency or standardisation in the detail of the drawings published in the different versions. As Stuart (ibid.: 27) summarises:

> "Virtually all the editions… to varying extents, re-arranged the textual
> material or the sequence of calendrical glyphs; and, more often than not,

editing the number of drawings. In short, *none* of the existing editions of Landa's *Relacion* fulfills *all* the needs of the scholar…" (emphasis in the original)

Thus, scholars must be careful about which version of Landa's *Relación* is used, and to what extent it depicts an accurate account of the original text (which itself is a copy of a lost original manuscript). Those looking to study in English (or even English and Spanish) have further difficulties, as editions published in this language are among the most unreliable (ibid.).

Mathews (1988: 45-50) divides the history of decipherment into three periods: from the 1880's to the 1910's; from the 1910's to the 1950's; and from the 1950's onward. It may be necessary to now add an additional 'period' to this, from the 1950's to the 1980's, and then from the late 1980's onward. This marks a change in the focus of Maya hieroglyphic decipherment since Mathews' (1988) study towards the understanding of the grammar of the ancient texts (see Bricker 1986; Harris and Stearns 1997; Houston et al 2001; Coe and Van Stone 2001; Kettunen and Helmke 2011). Below will follow a brief description of each phase in decipherment, with particular focus on the later periods.

In 1810, five pages of the Dresden Codex were published by Alexander von Humboldt (1810). This was the first ever publication of any of the codices, and the first time that the hieroglyphics had been represented accurately and thus suitable for serious study (Coe 1992: 80). The gradual publication of more of the codices and the hieroglyphics they contained allowed a number of breakthroughs throughout the nineteenth century, and particularly from the 1880's (see Mathews 1988: 45). How the Maya represented numbers, the dating system, the beginning of the current world age

according to Maya belief (August 11, 3114 B.C.E.), the correlation to the Gregorian calendar (Thompson 1927, 1935), and other discoveries were all made during this time (Coe 1992).

In the 1880's, British archaeologist Alfred P. Maudslay travelled through the Maya regions with a glass plate camera documenting the inscriptions he found during his explorations. His records were of excellent quality, and are still used for comparisons today, and were eventually published as part of his *Biologia Centrali-Americana* (1889-1902). Maya decipherment could now begin in earnest, and the focus for decipherment shifted from the codices to the monuments carved in stone (Mathews 1988: 45). The major tasks were deciphering the dates on the monuments (ibid.), and it was quickly (and incorrectly) decided that there could be nothing but dates and phrases related to the passage of time within the inscriptions (Thompson 1950: 155).

The main advocate of this argument, Englishman Eric J. Thompson, was an archaeologist and epigrapher who became one of the most influential names in Maya studies. In 1925, Thompson began working under Sylvanus Morley (a renowned American archaeologist and Maya scholar) at Chichén Itzá. Thompson used this work in his book, *A Catalogue of Maya Hieroglyphs* (1962), which was to be the first of its kind, providing catalogue numbers for all the known glyphs, today known as 'T-numbers' ('Thompson Numbers'), and is still widely used in Maya studies today.[7] Thompson came to believe that the ancient Maya were a peaceful culture, concerned only with astronomy and astrology, and the passage of time. He felt that the glyphs contained nothing more than the veneration of time, and that the figures and iconography were nothing more than priests and gods (Thompson 1950: 155). It was not until Tatiana

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[7] T-numbers will be used where appropriate within this study.

Proskouriakoff joined the Peabody Museum in 1958 that this perception would be successfully challenged.

Proskouriakoff started her career as a Maya scholar making architectural reconstructions of temples and sculptures at the archaeological site of Piedras Negras. When she joined the Peabody Museum, she was able to work on the stelae of Piedras Negras. Proskouriakoff found that there was a repetition of certain glyphs, which she suggested were events – "birth" and "accession" (Proskouriakoff 1960). With a detailed analysis of several monuments, and identification of repeated glyphs, Proskouriakoff was able to prove unequivocally that the monuments did not just contain astronomical data, but information on the historical lives of the royal inhabitants of the site (1960, also see 1963 and 1964). However, while Proskouriakoff correctly extrapolated the semantics of the glyphs she identified, she never attempted to provide a phonetic reading of them.

Also during this time, Heinrich Berlin published a paper identifying 'emblem glyphs' in the Maya inscriptions, and commenting on their possible geographical implications (Berlin 1958: 22). Berlin did not comment conclusively on their significance, however, leaving that to future scholars to debate this important issue. Emblem glyphs have since become part of the core evidence in attempting to decipher ancient Maya political organisation (see Chapter 2).

Beyond the West, another scholar was taking an interest in the problem of deciphering the Maya glyphs. Russian linguist Yuri Knorozov (1952) published his seminal work, 'Ancient Writings of Central America' ('Drevnyaya pis'mennost' Tsentral'noy Ameriki'). In this paper, he suggested phonetic readings for a number of glyphs in the Dresden Codex. He argued that the 'Landa Alphabet' could be used

– at least in part – to help decipher Maya script, by providing not an alphabet, but an incomplete syllabary. Despite the huge advancement that this work represented, Thompson refused to acknowledge his approach, and used the errors that Knorozov had made in his decipherment to discredit the study as a whole, calling it a "Marxist hoax and propaganda ploy." (Coe 1992: 145) Fortunately, other such scholars could see the merit in Knorozov's work, and one such - David Kelley - applied much of the Russian's theory to decipherment of monumental carvings, identifying personal names of historical figures at the site of Chichén Itzá (Coe 1992: 148-152; Kelley 1976).

Today, students of Maya writing do not dispute the phoneticism of the hieroglyphics, or the presence of history within the narratives, and scholars are now fully aware that ancient Maya texts contain a combination of logographic (signs which represent a word) and syllabic (signs which represent sounds) signs. Of those texts that have been discovered, scholars are able to read nearly 80% of the glyphs to some extent or another (Sharer 2006: 137). Other key figures in the process of decipherment include Linda Schele (1979; Schele and Miller 1986) who identified dynastic history at Palenque; Stuart (1987) who recognised the use of substitution in Maya writing (figure 1.4); Martin and Grube (2008) who have explored a number of political relationships between sites across the Classic Maya Lowlands; Houston (1997) who discusses the use of tense; and Houston et al (2000) who have identified the language of the Maya hieroglyphics to name but a few.

A very brief overview of some of the key advancements in the history of decipherment have been presented here. It is clear that the pattern of development has moved from numerical through to semantic and linguistic decipherment. Today, difficulty in understanding now comes predominantly from understanding the grammar

of Maya texts. While it is not possible to fully list here all the scholars working in this area, the following demonstrate some of the key figures working on the issues of grammar within the hieroglyphs: Bricker (1986), Josserand (2007), Houston et al (1998), Robinson (2010), and Wichmann (2004). This list is by no means exhaustive, nor does it fully demonstrate all of the excellent work going on in the field. For a more comprehensive list see Coe (1992), and Kettunen and Helmke (2011). Key to the investigations are issues in and aspect, deixis, and voice (Bricker 2000; Houston 1997). While there are obviously still ongoing investigations into these problems of decipherment, it is not within the scope of this study to deal with them in any real detail. The text on HS. 2, while unusually structured (see Chapter 6), are not overtly complicated in themselves. Thus, grammar will take a minor role within the analysis; content is the more significant focus.

The 'Grand Long Count'

HS. 2 and a rare few other monuments present additional challenges when deciphering the ancient Maya calendrical information. The Long Count date presented on HS. 2 and other inscriptions document cycles beyond the *bak'tun* (the traditional count of 144,000 days). These were first identified and discussed by Sylvanus Morley (1914: 114-117), and were designated great cycles (period of 20 *bak'tuns*), great-great cycles (20^2 *bak'tuns*), and great-great-great cycles (20^3 *bak'tuns*). Long (1923) elaborates on Morley's (1914) work with further discussion on great cycles, and their appearance on other monuments. Today, these are known as *piktun* (a great cycle), *kalabtun* (great-great cycle), *k'inichiltun* (great-great-great cycle), and *alawtun* (great-

great-great cycle, or 20^4 *bak'tuns*), although these names were never used by the Maya

(Stuart 2011: 231). To put this into context, a single *alawtun* is a cycle of approximately

64 million years (ibid.). Since Morley's discussions on these additional Long Count

cycles, other inscriptions have been discovered which depict even greater cycles of

time. Thus, it is clear that "the standard five-part Long Count is actually a truncated

version of a far, far larger system," which David Stuart has designated the Grand Long

Count (ibid. 2011: 231).

The longest of these Long Counts are known from the northern Yucatan site of

Coba, where stelae 1 and 5 both depict the date (the standard Long Count is in bold):

13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.**13.0.0.0.0** 4 *Ajaw*
8 *Kumk'u* (Stuart 2011: 235-236)

This date correlates to 11 August, 3114 B.C.E.,[8] or the beginning of the current

'era' in Maya mythology. In contrast, the Grand Long Count date depicted on HS. 2 (to

be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6) reads (the standard Long Count is in bold):

13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.**9.15.13.6.9** 3 *Muluk* 17 *Mak* (see figure A.7, in
Appendix A)

The meanings of the additional cycles in the Grand Long Count are still

debated. The dates on the Coba stelae represent the beginning of the current 'age' or

era represented in Grand Long Count form. However, as Stuart points out, based on the

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[8] 584,283 GMT correlation constant.

mathematical calculations involved in the Grand Long Count, the Maya believed the

"true zero", or start point of the world was:

0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0.0 4 *Ajaw* 18 *Pax* (Stuart 2011:

239) (Note: this date has *never* appeared on a Maya monument – it is a modern

reconstruction).

Thus, the ancient Maya believed that their "creation" date (11 August,
3114 B.C.E.) is "more than 28 octillion years after the *true* initial base
date in the incomprehensible past" (emphasis in original) (Stuart 2011:
237-241).

Some scholars, however, believe that the '13s' of the Grand Long Count as

seen on the monuments are "functionally zero" (Schele and Miller 1986: 321). Mark

Van Stone warns us that "comprehending such conceptions is *very* tricky" (emphasis

in original) (Van Stone 2010: 42), although even he argues that the '13s' representing

the higher cycles were not "conceived as real-world intervals" by the Maya (ibid.: 42).

Instead, he suggests that the "magic number 13" was used in these kinds of inscriptions

in a symbolic way (ibid.: 42). Polte (2012: 3) supports this notion, suggesting that Maya

scribes used the Grand Long Count to include arbitrarily high units of time without the

need to change the Calendar Round dates.

Conversely, there is some evidence to suggest that the ancient Maya did not

use the number '13' symbolically at all, and were anticipating even the greatest of

cycles in the Grand Long Count to tick over in a similar way to the smaller, more

common ones. An illustration of this comes from the site of Palenque, and the Temple of

Inscriptions, where a section of the inscription *describes* the turning of the next *piktun*.

This represents a rare piece of mythology that has been projected into the future, which

correlates to the date 13 October, 4772 A.D. (Stuart 2011: 242-243) This text describes the upcoming *piktun* period as 1 *piktun*, suggesting that '13', while the most common number *at the moment*, will change when enough time has passed for the larger cycles of time to turn over. In the case of HS. 2, Chapter 6 will discuss the question of the Grand Long Count date on HS. 2 block VII, and consider why it shows only eight additional cycles *above* the *bak'tun*, rather than the full Grand Long Count of nineteen.

Grammar, Sentence and Narrative Structure

While this thesis is not a linguistic one, it is important to consider some of the recent advances, as well as the limitations, of our understanding of the grammar and structure of Maya inscriptions. Unlike the English language, where word order is usually SVO (subject-verb-object), the Maya languages (both ancient and modern) follow the VOS (verb-object-subject) pattern. However, sentence construction and order is still much debated in Maya studies (see discussions around Josserand 2007 above), which can lead scholars to different interpretations of the texts. Most simply, Maya texts follow temporal-verb-subject structure, reading from left to right in double columns (figure 1.6). In more complex texts, an object may appear after the subject, and the reading order can change.

Without understanding of the grammatical structure of the inscriptions, it becomes difficult to ascertain *how* a text was supposed to be read. By not being able to easily understand the grammatical structure, it is more difficult to establish the narrative, or "event" line within Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions (Josserand 1991: 13). Not all texts follow a linear chronological order as we might expect. Some will stop, loop

backwards and forwards in time, and connect to dates before or after in the text. Others, such as HS. 2, provide an even greater challenge to Maya scholars. HS. 2 represents such a problem because the first date presented to the audience is a Calendar Round that appears, not at the beginning of the text, but on block VI. Even the eroded glyphs on the previous blocks bear no indication that any dates are recorded. Therefore, the narrative structure must be somehow tied to the central block, rather than the physical beginning of the 'story'.

The structure of the text on block VII (as well as blocks II, III, IV, VI, VIII, and XII) also needs to be considered in terms of grammar and structure. The text is inscribed on both the left and right hand sides of the block, and is physically broken by the image shown in the centre (see figure A.7, Appendix A). There is no clear indication on the block as to how these two sections of text are connected (or, indeed, if they are at all). Similar concerns are raised with blocks VI and VIII (text on the other blocks appears to have been divided due to the space needed for the hieroglyphs; see Chapter 6). Should we consider the text on block VII to be one 'story', or two distinct and wholly separate texts? Without further markers of grammar or punctuation, this can be difficult to ascertain.

As we will see in Chapter 6, only three blocks of HS. 2 have temporal markers (blocks VI and VIII contain Calendar Rounds only; block VII includes a shortened Grand Long Count, a Calendar Round, although this appears in the second half of the inscription), and only two feature an object. Furthermore, only four contain a locative marker, and it is interesting to note that all of them appear to be ritual/supernatural places. The grammatical and narrative structure of Maya hieroglyphic writing is therefore the subject of a great deal of analysis and has, in many ways, become the focus

of epigraphic research in recent years. The syntactic structure of HS. 2 will therefore feature as a key discussion in Chapter 6.

Emblem and Toponym Glyphs, and Titles

Heinrich Berlin (1958) first identified emblem glyphs in ancient Maya inscriptions in the late 1950's. It was a huge leap forward in decipherment and, coupled with Proskouriakoff's discovery of glyphs with historical implications, the breakthrough meant that political and historical messages could be identified in Maya hieroglyphic writing. Since their identification, over forty emblem glyphs have been recognised (Martin and Grube 2008: 19).

Identification of emblem glyphs in the Southern Lowlands is relatively simple thanks to most having a standard construction. They are commonly made up of three components: a 'water-group' prefix (Thompson 1950: 274-277), an *ajaw* superfix, and a 'main sign' (for an illustrated example, see Houston 1986: figure 1). These components are read as *k'uhul [toponym] ajaw*, or "divine [place] lord"; for example, *k'uhul pa'chan ajaw*, or "Divine Split Sky [Yaxchilan] Lord". It should be noted that emblem glyphs were not used in the same way, and with the same conventions, throughout space and time. For example, the *k'uhul* prefix was not always employed when scribes referred to a foreign ruler, although of course there are exceptions to this (such as on Dos Pilas Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, where the inscriptions refer to a *k'uhul ajaw* of Yaxchilan as their captive). Similarly, emblem glyphs were used less frequently, and in less standardised forms in the Northern Lowlands (Graña-Behrens 2006: 117-119).

Yaxchilan provides an interesting and rare case of emblem glyphs in ancient Maya inscriptions. The site is associated with two separate and distinct emblem glyphs, which were first identified by Berlin (1958) as Y-1 and Y-2. More recently, Tokovinine (2013: 69) has suggested the readings of "holy *Pa' Chan* lord" (Y-1) and "holy *Kaaj* lords" (Y-2), although the latter is an unverified reading ('holy' and 'divine' appear interchangeably within the literature). Some scholars have argued that the addition of a second emblem glyph suggests the assimilation of a second site into the political sphere of Yaxchilan control, whether by conquest or for other reasons (Graña-Behrens 2006: 106). Schüren (1992) argues that the presence of the two emblems suggests an "association of two formerly autonomous polities." Another, not necessarily mutually exclusive, theory is that Yaxchilan shares the *pa' chaan*, or "split-sky", emblem glyph with another Maya site, El Zotz. El Zotz is around 80 miles North-East of Yaxchilan, in the Petén Basin, and approximately twelve miles West of Tikal. There is evidence that the *pa'chaan* emblem glyph originated in El Zotz and was thus used in Yaxchilan *after* the glyph's 'creation' (Houston 2008b: 1). Houston (ibid.:1-4) suggests that this reveals close ties between the dynasties at each site, and that both were claiming the prerogative to use the title. In terms of their usage in the context of Yaxchilan, Tokovinine states:

> *Kaaj* is never mentioned in direct context at Yaxchilan or at any other Usumacinta region site. On the other hand, *Pa' Chan* appears in texts and toponymic registers of Yaxchilan monuments (YAX Ln 25, St 4, 7, HS 3:3T) with and without the locative *tahn ha'*. It is also cited in inscriptions of Bonampak as the sole name for the seat of Yaxchilan rulers (BPK SCS 4, 5). Therefore, *Pa' Chan* should be the name for the whole archaeological site of Yaxchilan or its section. (Tokovinine 2013: 69-70)

Terms such as *chan* (meaning 'sky') and *kab* (meaning 'land/earth') appear often in ancient Maya place names (Stuart and Houston 1994). Tokovinine's (2013)

monograph on place and identity in Classic hieroglyphics gives a detailed account of their frequency. Importantly, he notes that place names that include the *chan* glyph are most probably not just descriptive, but "index a particular relationship between the place and the celestial realm." (ibid.: 11). The split-sky place, then, is not a description of Yaxchilan's physical characteristics, but its relationship to the Otherworlds. That the split-sky glyph was used outside of the ceremonial city of Yaxchilan may also be telling: its relationship to the celestial realm as evident by the *pa'chaan* glyph was a defining feature by non-residents of the site.

Emblem glyphs have become the focus of discussions on the political organisation of the ancient Maya, although their meaning and significance is not fully understood. Their distribution and use within inscriptions at sites across the lowlands hints at how the Classic Maya saw themselves both individually, and in relation to other ceremonial cities. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. At this stage, however, it is important to note that the sites of Yaxchilan and El Zotz both have *two* identified emblem glyphs. Clearly, while emblem glyphs were important in identifying a particular place or lineage, they were *not* (at least in the Early Classic Period) considered static.

Emblem glyphs most commonly appear in the title sequences of rulers and elites depicted on monumental and ceramic representation, particularly when the *k'uhul* or "divine" prefix is attached. In this way, emblem glyphs can form part of the information denoting the influence of power that the wielder of the title held (Stuart and Houston 1994: 19-33), or possibly control over particularly important structures (ibid.: 44). Stuart and Houston have demonstrated, for example, that place names referred to at Dos Pilas refer to specific areas of the ceremonial city (ibid.: 19-20). Tokovinine (2013:

71) has concluded that "there is no strong evidence to support the idea that place names in emblem glyphs may denote Classic Maya polities as territorial/spacial domains." He argues instead that they refer to the specific archaeological site, or as this study has denoted, a ceremonial city. Where they are used out of geographical context, they point not to control but to dynastic origin (as in the case of Bird Jaguar IV's mother, see Chapter 3). Other titles have also proved difficult to fully understand. Similarly, while scholars have deciphered clear readings and meanings for others, their *significance* remains elusive. Once again, HS. 2, and the site of Yaxchilan, offers examples of these issues.

Common titles at Yaxchilan, as previously discussed, are the "captor of…" and "he of X captives". These titles appeared with increasing frequency and emphasis towards the Late Classic period and some scholars have suggested their use offers an insight into the military preoccupations of ancient Maya polities. I, however, approach this interpretation with caution. Do these titles represent an increase in actual warfare, or an increase in its *representation*? Thus, does this title, and its frequency, represent an actual shift in Maya politics towards more conflict driven relationships, or does it instead represent a change in ideology within the royal court?

Other titles are poorly understood because of difficulties in translating them. The glyph *b'akab'* (T501.25:501) is understood to be a royal title, given to both men and women in Maya inscriptions (it appears for both men and women on HS. 2). Readings of this glyph include "the standing one" (Montgomery 2006: 41), "head of the land" or "first of the earth" (Kettunen and Helmke 2011: 81), or a reference to the *b'akab'*'s who hold up the sky (Coe and Van Stone 2001: 78), demonstrating a lack of consensus. Other titles cause similar problems, and will be discussed fully in later chapters.

While not necessarily titles, statements of impersonation are also important to this study, in particular to the analysis of HS. 2 blocks IV, V, X, and XII. The expression **'u-BAH-hi** > *ubah[il]* means "the image/self" (Boot 2009b: 26).[9] Stone (1991: 195) first suggested that *k'oh* could be the Maya word for the impersonation of deities, although there was little evidence of this other than contemporary translations for 'mask'. The iconography of deity (or supernatural) impersonation is often seen through the use of the 'x-ray mask' (Stone 1991; Houston and Stuart 1996). This phrase is followed by the name of the supernatural or deity that the subject is impersonating (see Chapter 6 for a discussion of which deities are impersonated by the individuals on HS. 2). While not directly a title, it is possible that this expression acts in a similar way - to demarcate special privileges given to the individual. Helmke (2010) outlines arguments that certain ritual privileges were transferred to individuals through the giving of specific items. It is possible, therefore, that the right to impersonate particular deities was given through the gifting of the masks themselves (or some other transfer of power; see Barnes 1988). Thus, in the hieroglyphic record, the impersonation expression may have acted as a kind of title, demonstrating to the reader the political or ideological importance of the individual in question.

One final note on titles: it was not only people who received titles. Objects may also have titles. Some Maya iconography shows such items inscribed with glyphs of their own, 'naming' them in some abstract way. The images on HS. 2 show a ballgame in progress. Ten of the thirteen blocks depict the balls. Of these, seven are inscribed with a single glyph with a numerical classifier. It could be that these glyphs represent the titles, or names, of the balls in use. These glyphs, their reading, and their meaning will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6: Ball Inscriptions.

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[9] For discussion of the linguistic root, see Boot 2009b.

HS. 2 includes on it thirteen different historical individuals who played important political roles within Yaxchilan throughout the middle years of the eighth century, and each of these people have their own titles carved into the hieroglyphic inscriptions alongside them. This section has outlined some of the main considerations for these titles, to be developed in greater detail and context in Chapter 6. Of particular importance are the use of emblem glyphs and their variations, the *sajal* title (outlined in Chapter 2: Political Organisation, Power, and Ideology), and the impersonation expression, *ubah[il],* touched upon above.

Conclusions

This section has aimed to summarise how Maya scholars know what they know regarding the hieroglyphic writing system, and the stage at which epigraphers find themselves today. As is evident, there are still a great many questions surrounding the glyphs, and the messages they sought to impart to their audience. Problematic glyphs, such as emblem glyphs, titles, and certain cycles of the calendar provide challenges in many stages of decipherment. This may help to explain why HS. 2 has yet to be fully understood. Adding to this, the issues of narrative structure and a still poor understanding of ancient Maya grammar serve to leave HS. 2 and its story obscure. Chapter 2 will expand on many of these issues, discussing the current theories and literature surrounding them, grounding the current thesis within this context.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY

Reading Maya Art: Principles and Methods

The successful interpretation of Maya art has been greatly helped by advances in hieroglyphic decipherment. This section will discuss the theory of 'reading' Maya iconography, and lay a framework that this study will follow in the analysis of the art of HS. 2 (Chapter 7). Two main considerations will follow: the relationship between image and text within Maya art; and the relationship between monumental imagery (both text and image) and audience. Over the course of Maya studies, core methods for 'reading' Maya iconography have developed. However, as with decipherment procedures and orthography in hieroglyphic writing, these methods are far from universal. Until recently, the theory of reading Maya iconography has been principally based upon that developed and applied to other ancient cultures (Griffin 1976; Winter 1985). Principles of image analysis from other areas of research have greatly contributed to our understanding and ability to 'read' Maya art (Barthes 1977; Kubler 1969).

Martin (2006) presents a discussion of the pre-Columbian narrative and the use and meaning of art within different cultural contexts, with a focus on the Classic Maya. The study reminds us that imagery is layered with cultural significance that is integral to the successful and full understanding of the temporal and societal context in which it was created (ibid.; Stone and Zender 2011: 23). The focus of this study, HS. 2, makes explicit that the Maya were not a homogeneous group; there were conflicting and differing ideologies, traditions, and experiences among different societal groups of the Maya, from Palenque, to Yaxchilan, to Copan, and Uxmal.

Different ceremonial centres represented different 'interpretive communities', (Fish 1980) and visitors may not have had the same cultural understanding of the community and the visual narrative it created, even if it were contemporaneous. Fish (1980) proposes that an audience can only fully understand text in which it is part of the interpretive community; in other words, we can only fully appreciate and understand prose (whether fiction or non-fiction) that was created in a time and space in which we fully understand the nuances, metaphors, explicit and implicit meanings, and fundamental language. Applying this theory to art, Martin (2006) legitimately argues that because we (as scholars) are not *of* the Classic Maya (and never can be), we cannot fully understand Maya imagery (see below); we are not part of the "culture's collective consciousness that take[s] the form of accrues statements or stories" which we can use to interpret such works (ibid.: 60).

These scholars have considered the relationship between text and image in artworks from across the world, and across time. Winter (1985) investigates the stela of Vultures from Mesopotamia (figure 2.1), and concludes that the text and image work both with and independently of one another. Barthes (1977), who has also discussed this relationship defines it in terms of 'anchorage' - the process of directing the audience "towards a meaning [of any image] chosen in advance" (ibid.: 40) - and 'relay' - whereby the text and image "stand in a complementary relationship" (ibid.: 41). While his work is regarding the role of image and text in modern advertisements, Miller and Houston (1987) have made compelling arguments that the principles he puts forward can be adapted in discussions on Maya art. On the rhetoric of images, Barthes (1977: 32) argues that language and the understanding of images are fundamentally connected, something that Stone and Zender (2011) elaborate on more fully (see below).

The principles of Maya iconography of the Classic period have its roots in the Preclassic era (Freidel and Schele 1988). As the Early Classic era developed, artistic representation focused more on individuals who held political, social, and religious power within the royal court. However, while the individual ruler became the focus of much of the iconography, many scholars are reluctant to describe the overall style of Maya art as naturalistic or realistic (Griffin 1976; Miller and Houston 1987). Griffin's (1976) work on the sculpture of Palenque, for example, strongly supports the arguments that there were rarely 'portraits' of rulers in the traditional, European sense (that is, produced from life and representative of a person's naturalistic features). While there may be subtle differences between the representations of different rulers, their individualism stemmed primarily from their attire and the accompanying texts, rather than their physical features (ibid.). Similarly, Miller and Houston (1987: 48) argue that Maya iconography is only considered to be realistic because of its "apparent naturalism and its attention to human body proportions that roughly coincide with western canons." While it is considered that Maya iconography is not as realistic or as individualistic as European art, it does develop in the Late Classic period to include greater naturalism (Stone and Zender 2011: 13).

It was during the Preclassic period that the model for Classic era Kingship developed, and, alongside it, iconography associated with the legitimisation of political and social power was formulated (Freidel and Schele 1988: 85). During the Early Classic era, iconographic representation of individuals was marked by its formality and restrictions (figure 2.2; Miller 2001a: 112). Rulers were presented in stiff poses conducting very formulaic rituals, and there was little diversity of style and composition within sites. However, as the Classic era progressed, variation in form and content

increased dramatically. Many sites are well now known for their individual styles throughout the Late Classic period, and Yaxchilan is considered particularly distinctive.

The iconography of Yaxchilan during the reigns of Shield Jaguar III and Bird Jaguar IV saw some key developments for the Usumacinta polity, and region as a whole. One of the most well known implementations is the 'cookie cutter' effect on monumental art (see figures 1.1a-c). Maya sculpture was most commonly executed in low relief, on a single plane. However, at Yaxchilan we see sculpture carved into "two distinct and removed planes." (ibid.: 146) This method of representation effectively gives the *illusion* of a three dimensional sculpture, although there is no detailing on the side of the raised plane.

Yaxchilan is also well known for its use of a more dynamic composition in the Late Classic period (ibid.: 148). Individuals are often represented in 'active' poses rather than static ones. Rulers are depicted in the process of taking or presenting captives (figure 1.2c; Miller and Houston 1987: 50), participating in a ball game (such as on HS. 2, where we see ten male figures all in the act of making contact with a large ball, see Appendix A), or engaged in specific rituals (such as on lintel 17, figure 1.2a, where we see Bird Jaguar IV in the act of piercing his penis for a bloodletting ritual). This contrasts with contemporary art produced at sites such as Palenque (the Tablets of the Temple of the Cross Group) or Copan (Stela A; figure 2.3) where the protagonists are represented as stationary figures in stiff poses. Alongside the development of more dynamic poses, Yaxchilan and its periphery sites became pioneers in the representation of multiple people in the iconography, unlike sites of the Central Petén regions (for example, see figure 4.5; Miller 2001a: 150).

Women are also an important feature of Classic Maya iconography (Berlin 1982; Miller 1988; Proskouriakoff 1961; Schele and Freidel 1993) and appear in the

Late Classic iconographic record of Yaxchilan more so than at any other site, other than Naranjo (Miller 2001a: 151). It was thanks to advances in epigraphy that the presence of women in the inscriptions was identified, and thus their presence in the iconographic record was recognised. The women of Yaxchilan have been discussed by several authors (Hughes 2008; Martin and Grube 2008; Tate 1987), and it is clear that women are given unprecedented attention at the site during the Late Classic period (Mathews 1988), which is particularly interesting given that none were rulers in their own right (see Hardman 2011 for a discussion of Classic Maya female rulers in art). The role of women and their importance within the political organisation will be further elaborated on in Chapter 3. Women feature heavily in HS. 2, and their role in ritual and the ballgame will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

The iconography of Yaxchilan follows the Maya Classic development of the inclusion of more non-Maya features. These inclusions first appeared in the Early Classic period (Freidel and Schele 1988: 86-87), and in particular saw the addition of Tlaloc inspired features to the iconography (Miller 2001a: 148). This is probably due to the arrival of a Teotihuacano to Tikal in the Early Classic period, and the enthronement of a son of a Teotihuacano at the Maya site (Coe 2011: 99; Martin and Grube 2008: 31). Along with this 'invasion' came the introduction of Teotihuacano iconography, in particular the goggle-eyed supernatural (Tlaloc) (figure 2.4; Martin and Grube 2008: 32). Tlaloc imagery disseminated throughout the Maya lowlands through the Classic period, and was re-appropriated with vigour in Late Classic Yaxchilan, probably because of its highly military connotations, and so that the iconography might "empower a new generation" (figure 2.5; Miller 2001a: 148).

Having discussed some of the developments of Maya iconography throughout the Classic period, and at Yaxchilan in particular, this study then moves onto the

theoretical tools for iconographic analysis. While there are a great number of excellent discussions of specific Maya monuments and their iconography, there are few texts that lay out the basic principles needed for understanding Maya art. Most recently, Stone and Zender (2011) have published an excellent text on the subject *Reading Maya Art*. This book explains some of the key iconographic markers that can be found in Maya art, and helps to explain the relationship between the logographs of Maya text and iconographic representation. They discuss the Maya tendency to embed hieroglyphic symbols onto artistically rendered objects to label them, which they term "property qualifiers" (ibid.: 13). The identification and understanding of property qualifiers is just one way in which advancements in hieroglyphic decipherment have aided the reading of Maya art. Logographs appear frequently embedded within Maya compositions to help direct the audiences' identification. Figure 2.6 illustrates this process: the basal register of Stela 1, at Bonampak, shows the Maize God emerging from a personified sacred mountain. Key iconographic elements of the *witz* glyph (meaning "mountain") can be seen decorating the mountain on the stela.

Syllabic hieroglyphs never appear in such situations (Stone and Zender 2011:19). This might suggest that the inclusion of syllabographs within Maya hieroglyphic writing was a later development, added into the textual repertoire to help distinguish between a growing number of logographic signs. Eventually, syllabic signs may have been commonly understood well enough to appear independent of a logograph (for example, for the name of *Pakal*: the logograph reads **PAKAL-la**, with a phonetic/syllabic accompaniment; the fully syllabic hieroglyph reads **pa-ka-la**, and contains no logograph). It should be noted here that syllabic signs, or even whole glyphs, never make up an entire text; that is, syllabic writing "never developed to the exclusion of logographs." (ibid.: 19)

Another key aspect in understanding iconography is the Maya use of metaphor, and the expression of many levels of meaning (Miller and Taube 1997: 31-32). Metaphor is prevalent within Maya art. For example, the logograph *nahb*, meaning 'water lily', or an image of water lilies, may be used to imply water, rather than the physical presence of a water lily itself (Stone and Zender 2011: 173). Caution must be used when attempting to ascribe metaphor within Maya iconography. Understanding metaphor within art requires the audience to be educated within the cultural system of the reference, in order to fully understand it (Stone and Zender 2011: 23). As not only outsiders in space but in time, scholars should be aware that they can easily misrepresent a concept, or ascribe too much (or, less often, too little) importance to an image using its metaphorical coding.

In a similar way, it should be noted that personification is also common within Maya iconography (figure 2.5a; Stone and Zender 2011: 22). The Maya tradition of representing inanimate objects with human characteristics can be confusing to the modern audience. However, this stems from the Maya belief that all things were living and contained a spiritual essence, to the point that, when the owner of a particular item of importance died, the object underwent a termination ritual (see, for example, Freidel et al 1998).

To further understand some of the basic principles of Maya iconography, it is important to discuss composition. As mentioned earlier, development in composition at Yaxchilan during the Late Classic saw the inclusion of multiple individuals within a scene, and the use of dynamic poses. However, it is also necessary to make clear that a single Maya image did not represent a linear narrative, or a single point in time (or even space). Instead, images often make reference to a number of events, and draw on the

importance of similar events that came before it. Key examples of this are Yaxchilan lintels 24, 25, and 26 (figures 1.1a-c). Each scene depicts a part of a single event, and, taken as a whole, can be interpreted as a single ritual. However, we know (thanks to the accompanying text) that the lintels represent a single kind of ritual, but one performed thrice throughout time. Each lintel draws on the other two to impart meaning to it as an individual work. Similarly, while an image may depict a single event – such as a ballgame on HS. 2, or a capture – what it *represents* is a series of events; those leading up to the depicted scene, and those that follow it (Miller and Houston 1987: 50; Houston and Stuart 2000: 56). Thus, Maya monumental art is not linear, nor can a specifically represented scene act independently of its context.[10] Once again, we return to the problem made explicit by Stone and Zender (2011: 23): without understanding the cultural specifics of a particular situation, it is very difficult for scholars to fully comprehend the image presented. In other words, while we are able to infer stages in a particular ritual sequence (such as the ballgame or captive taking), we are unable to fully understand each moment. We may, as outsiders in space and time, fail to identify each stage in a ritual, or the significance thereof, thus missing some part of the implied meaning of the iconography.

For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to return to the consideration of the role of the combination of image and text within Maya monuments. Winter (1985: 23) discusses this in the context of Mesopotamia, arguing that the images and text of a given monument (the Stela of the Vultures) are designed for different audiences: non-literate and literate respectively. The information presented in each form in this context is similar, and can be read both independently of, and in conjunction with, one another.

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[10] This is not necessarily true for scenes on decorated ceramics; however it is not within the scope of this study to discuss the narrative structure of Classic Maya ceramic art.

However, as Berlo (1983a) reminds us (and as demonstrated above), the ancient Maya did not distinguish clearly between the mediums of imagery and hieroglyphic writing. The glyph *tz'ib* is used to describe both writing and painting (Coe and Van Stone 2001: 94-97; Kettunen and Helmke 2011: 123; Montgomery 2006: 32;), suggesting that, in the designation of an artisan proficient in such skills, there was considered no difference between an individual who constructed hieroglyphic texts or images. We should assume, therefore, that a person trained in such was expected to be able to fulfil both roles in a monument's production: artist and scribe.

This in itself has implications beyond the skills of the artisan. If art and writing were considered one and the same (or at least sharing a set of fundamental skills) then there would have been less of a distinction between the literate and non-literate audiences, and which 'part' of a composition was designed for each. Stone and Zender (2011: 13) support this argument: hieroglyphs were embedded in images to help inform an audience of an object's properties, so that, by extension, one could suggest even the most illiterate of members of society were able to understand at least some of the hieroglyphic texts through symbol association and a cultural understanding. Tate (1992: loc 491-516) also discusses the concept of 'art' in ancient Maya culture, and that the concept is more than an aesthetic one; it is also a philosophical and magical one. That, at times, text and art appear to be interchangeable (as presented by Stone and Zender 2011), so then Maya texts are surely not just informative, but also somehow spiritual.

The interaction between text and image has been given a number of names throughout Maya scholarship. Following Barthes' (1977) designation of 'anchorage' and 'relay', Miller and Houston (1987: 51) include the term 'resonance' to describe how texts and images 'overlap' in their meaning through time. In other words, a particular

scene represented or event glyph used not only refers to that specific event, but all those leading to it, and as a consequence of it. Stone and Zender (2011: 27) discuss overt relationships between text and image, whereby one directly connects to another (and this is made explicit visually) 'pointing'.

It is clear, then, that Maya text and images do not follow the same conventions as those of Mesopotamia; the text is not *only* for the literate audience, and the images are not *only* for the illiterate audience. Stone and Zender (ibid.: 15-16) demonstrate this further, by explaining that some inscriptions are 'finished off' by their accompanying images. For example, a monument could read "and then it happened" textually, but demonstrate *what* happened within the image given. HS. 2 is a prime example of text and image telling two different stories. Not all of the text on each block refers to the scene depicted in the accompanying image. In other words, different messages are being presented on each. Thus, while there may have been no practical distinction between scribe and artist, there was some differentiation between the messages presented to literate and non-literate audiences.

Similarly, Classic Maya monumental imagery presents a 'narrative vacuum' (Martin 2006: 93). The presence of (predominantly) static scenes, and text that tells the audience only of the conclusions of an event, rather than the process (for example, of a capture, not the story of conflict), suggests that the Classic Maya world was one of certainty, without the need for elaboration, "well suited to notions of reified and unchallengeable authority." (ibid.) Royal authority was, therefore, absolute, embedded within the very fabric of ideological and political norms, and was displayed through the unarguable 'truths' represented within art. To this extent, it mattered little who the audience was (literate or non-literate), the message remained the same, an undeniable fact of the society and the cosmos as a whole.

HS. 2 (and many other structurally complex monuments) brings to the forefront the question of access in terms of the audience. Considerations of access, or who would view a particular monument, are important in considering the function of text and image, and their relationship. Thus, we must ask ourselves: to what extent was Maya iconography truly 'public'? It is here that the definition in the field of research is lacking. 'Public' concerns a group of people as a whole, rather than segregated or elite groups, and 'to be public' suggests that all people can view the object in question. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, HS. 2 is mounted on the top most step of a grand stairway leading up to Structure 33. This was not space for day-to-day living, but a building used by the royal court that was designed to transport the user to an Otherworld. HS. 2 cannot be seen from the main plaza below (nor, in fact, can many of the monuments associated with Structure 33, such as the lintels, statue, or stela 31). The question remains: who would have had access to the building, and its monuments? Was the building 'public', the 'concern of people as a whole', or just an elite few?

Recent research into pedestrian movement at Copan, among other smaller sites, has helped developed an understanding into socio-spatial interaction between a site and its inhabitants (Morton et al 2012). However, there is still little understanding as to *who* might travel through a site; in particular the users of its most important and prominent buildings. Research into Palenque suggests that the Palace complex and its main buildings was reserved for the royal court and their rituals, rather than being open to the wider public. House E, at least, was probably used as a place of inauguration (Robertson 1985: 35). House E is relatively small, and would not have allowed the general populace to view such a ritual. The Palace is risen up from the plaza floor, and enclosed on four sides; it was a place of power, but also of privacy. It was not open to

public view, and it was unlikely that just anyone could walk in and around. Structure 33 is similar: it sits atop a high plateau, blocking much of it from view from directly below. The small plaza directly in front of the building (below the final thirteen blocks) was not large enough to accommodate a great number of people. Thus, the building functioned much in the same way as the Palenque Palace – as a *private* ceremonial area. 'Private' implies the royal court, most of whom were probably literate, and able to read the text on the monuments for themselves, or were read the text by a designated orator as part of the ritual.

While the public/private space discussion may appear out of place, it is important to understanding the *purpose* of the texts and images presented, and thus the interaction between the two. Clearly more research must be conducted in this area to make any definitive progress. However, as a cursory introduction to such investigation, it is interesting to note that on many of the truly publicly placed stela of Yaxchilan, the text describes the overall message depicted in the accompanying images (for example, stelae 1, 3 and 4; see Tate 1991). In contrast, images and texts of non-public monuments (monuments viewed principally by the royal court only) do not correspond so easily (HS. 2; lintels 24, 25, and 26).

Maya iconography, then, is difficult to read, and changes not only through time (such as from the reign of one ruler to the reign of another), but also through space, both in terms of site-to-site *and* in terms of the physical location of a monument *within* a site. Maya text and image both are layered with metaphor and symbolism that we, as a non-Maya non-Classic era audience, have difficulty in understanding to its fullest potential. There is little wonder that Maya iconography has eluded definitive understanding for so long, and is likely to do so for long into the future. However,

there are key themes which scholars have learnt to identify, such as warfare, captive taking, and Tlaloc representation as discussed here. Hieroglyphic decipherment has also brought with it huge leaps in understanding the iconographic record, and is vital to unlocking the layers of meaning within an image. Personification and considerations of composition and narrative are all key in reading Maya iconography. These principles, as well as further discussions of audience, resonance and the supernatural will be applied to 'deciphering' HS. 2 in Chapters 5 (the context of HS. 2) and 7 (discussions on the specific iconography of HS. 2).

Political Organisation, Power, and Ideology of the Classic Maya

The following section briefly outlines some of the main models by which the political organisation of Classic Maya has been understood. This is, however, a complicated topic that has been the subject of a great deal of literature and considerable debate among scholars. An excellent discussion of the different models has been presented by Lucero (1999a), and has more recently been summarised by Rice (2004: 22-55). Both scholars include a historiography of the topic, clearly demonstrating that despite decades of hieroglyphic decipherment and archaeological investigation, scholars are no closer to forming a consensus on the issue of how Classic Maya politics was organised or maintained. What has become apparent through research, however, is that there were regional and temporal differences throughout the Classic Maya lowlands. As such, the interpretations of the political organisation within this study of Yaxchilan are strongly rooted within the political landscape and ideology of that specific ceremonial city. Conclusions drawn should not, at this stage in the research, be applied elsewhere.

Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions and archaeological investigation have not revealed the exact structures by which Classic era government functioned. It is important here to discuss what will be meant by royal, elite and non-elite within this study. The *k'uhul ajaw* was the principle ruler or king of a site. Recognition of the presence of this title within the hieroglyphic inscriptions led to the realisation that there existed other elite positions within site hierarchy (Houston 1993: 127-36; Stuart 1992). An excellent discussion of some of the formal titles for the 'elite' - non-royal individuals who held important political offices within the Maya court who represented a small percentage of the population of the community - can be found in Jackson (2013). She identifies five titles in particular: *ajk'uhuun* (often referred to as the "God C title"), *sajal* (referred to by Stuart 1985 as the "subsidiary title"), *ti'huun* or *ti'sakhuun*, *y-ajaw k'ahk'*, and "banded bird". Of these, *sajal* is perhaps the most significant in the context of Yaxchilan and HS. 2. In this study, the term 'royal court' encompasses these two groups - ruler and elite - as well as the *k'uhul ajaw*'s immediate family (or the 'royal family)', captives/ prisoners, visitors, attendants, dwarfs, ancestors, and others who may appear on the carved monuments and painted ceramics of the Classic Maya (see Houston and Stuart 2000; Inomata 2000; Jackson 2013). 'Non-elite' refers to commoners, or those who held no official or publicly recognised political office ('everyone else').

Classic Maya society made no distinction between the secular and spiritual aspects of the community, and 'political elite' (including the ruler) were seen as coexistent with 'sacred elite' (see Wheatley 1969). Rulers were as responsible for ensuring the success for a ceremonial city and its polity through the acquisition of tribute (Graham 2011: 47) as communicating with the gods and ancestors to intercede on the community's behalf (Stuart 2005a: 264-265). As Carrasco (2000: 71) suggests,

rulers emphasised their status "through an intensification of communication and identification with the divinities and sacred forces of the cosmos." Stuart (2005a) presents an excellent (if brief) summary of the role of ideology within Classic Maya kingship, reminding scholars that the term 'ideology' should not be used synonymously with 'religion' (ibid.: 258). With this in mind, 'ideology' is used to mean the shared body of ideas and beliefs that informs decision making on social, moral, political, and economic issues within a group. Religion, on the other hand, refers specifically to the system of faith and worship held by a particular group. Within this work, the term 'religion' is avoided, and instead 'ideology' is used, supporting Graham (2009: 22-25) in her assertion that 'religion' "did not originate as a term of inclusion in that it was *not* an attempt to explain or to describe a *relationship one shared with the natural/ supernatural or with the ancestors or with the cosmos*." (Emphasis added)

Ideology underpinned every aspect of life within all areas of the community, whether the royal court or subsistence farmers. The royal court held legitimate authority, demonstrable through their ability to uphold (and be upheld by) the ideology of the group. That authority was, as Martin (2006) suggests, unchallengeable by the very way in which it was presented to society through art and ideology (see above). By 'authority', it is meant having the power to produce intended and foreseen effects on others (following Barnes 1988). Thus, political organisation, and the political landscape, was inescapably dependent on the ideologies within the polity. It is also important to consider that there existed no *single* ideology among the ancient Maya. While aspects of the ideology were shared (such as ancestor veneration, gods, and supernatural forces), different ceremonial cities emphasised the importance of difference aspects of the ideology as a whole. An excellent example can be seen in the emphasis that Palenque placed on

the Triad of gods known as GI, GII, and GIII. While these deities appear elsewhere in the Maya lowlands (in particular GII, or God K; see Chapter 7), greater importance was given to these three supernatural entities within the hieroglyphic inscriptions and iconography at Palenque than anywhere else. Looper (1997) has similarly identified a Venus god as patron deity of the ceremonial city of Quiriguá. The distribution of titles can also help to underpin this point: Houston et al (2006: 204) demonstrate that military titles such as 'captor of' and 'he of X captives' are common at ceremonial cities such as Yaxchilan, but do not appear at all at Tikal. This may suggest that military conquest played a more important role within the ideology of the former polity than it did in the latter.

In the Preclassic and Classic Maya lowlands, the ideology of divine kingship developed alongside political complexity. Rituals performed by kings were vital to the political order of the community, and ritual power *was* political power. As Morrison (2008: 267) argues, it is important to see "ritual action of the [polity] as fully constituting the [polity] itself." Thus, Maya kings were actors in perpetuating their positions of political power; their power was "discursive, involving both assertion and acceptance" within the community ideology (Houston and Stuart 2000: 55). The ideology of Maya kingship has been well laid out by Schele and Miller (1986) and Stuart (2005b), and in Demarest and Conrad (1992) and Inomata and Houston (2000). Inomata (2001) and Lohse (2007) have presented discussions on ideologies surrounding commoner trade and organisation respectively. Further discussions on concepts of ideology more generally can be found in Therborn (1980), Shanks and Tilley (1982), and Knapp (1988). A full analysis of the topic is outside the scope of this study, and as such will only be discussed in the following chapters where necessary.

Hieroglyphic inscriptions from the Classic period

The corpus of hieroglyphic inscriptions has provided an insight into the relationships between different individuals and ceremonial cities (see Martin and Grube 2008). The discovery of emblem glyphs (see Chapter 1) has allowed scholars to decipher political interactions across the wider geographical area. For example, at Bonampak, Stela 2 indicates an alliance by marriage between *Y-ajaw Chan Muwaahn II*, the *k'uhul ajaw* of Bonampak, and *Ix Yax Chiit Ju'n Witz' Noh Kan*, a *Pa'chan* (Yaxchilan) woman (Bíró 2011a: 4); HS. 2 block VII shows that Bird Jaguar IV had been in conflict with (and taken prisoner) an elite person from Lakamtuun. Emblem glyphs also reveal that the political organisation of the Maya was not solely anchored in our understanding of what is 'real'. Rulers at Yaxchilan attained a second emblem glyph after acceding to the throne (*Kaaj*), which Tokovinine (2013: 73-74) suggests may have been reference to a mythological location "associated with the latest creation event." Helmke (2012) further demonstrates that there was a group of emblem glyphs that referred to "otherworldly" locations. These titles played a significant role in the legitimisation of rulers in the Classic period (ibid.) and should be considered important when analysing the political organisation of the Maya. They clearly demonstrate that ideology underpinned the distribution of authority in Classic Maya ceremonial cities, and that political organisation was as reliant on supernatural forces as it was on real forces. Emblem glyphs have been used to advocate both centralised and decentralised models of political organisation.

Other titles held by those who appeared on hieroglyphic monuments can also be revealing. By the Late Classic period, distinctions that were not evident in the Early

and Preclassic periods were made between ruling offices. Notably, *ajaws* (Lords) became distinguished between *ajaws* and *k'uhul ajaws* (Divine Lords) by the Late Classic. Other titles were only held by the rulers and the royal family: *kalomte'* ("overlord"?) (Rice 2004: 36) and *b'akab'* ("first of the earth"?) (Kettunen and Helmke 2011: 81). There were other titles held by the elite during the late Classic period, who, like the ruler, acceded to their office through a process of 'seating' (Houston and Inomata 2009: 142-143). These include the title of *sajal*, meaning "regional governor" (Schele 1991: 7; Stuart 1985: 17-18), "war captain" (Schele 1991: 10), and "feared one" (Grube and Nahm 1991). Other titles that appear in the corpus are *ajk'uhuun* (or the 'God C Title'), *yajaw k'ahk'* ("lord of the fire", Stuart 2005b: 18), and *ti'sakhuun* ("the edge/mouth of the white paper", Jackson 2013: 14) (for further discussions see Jackson 2013: 10-15).

Despite the range of titles present within the hieroglyphic inscriptions, this data cannot be used to build a definitive model for political organisation for the Classic Maya lowlands as a whole. Titles, emblem glyphs, and political relationships had distinct temporal and geographical differences. For example, *kalomte'* was used only in a select few ceremonial cities, and was not given to all *k'uhul ajaws* (Grube 2005: 97). That is not to say that those rulers who held this title were superior to all those who did not. It is possible that, like the "he of X captives" title (above), *kalomte'* was not part of the ideology of certain ceremonial cities. However, this kind of information can be helpful when reconstructing the kinds of relationships held by Classic Maya kings. HS. 2 demonstrates a number of these relationships and as such is an important source of information on the political organisation of Late Classic Yaxchilan. Information revealed about this ceremonial city should not then be applied to another ceremonial city (such as Piedras Negras, which is nearby) without first considering the corpus of

titles and stated relationships there (see Golden et al 2008 for an example of how those two ceremonial cities may have had a different political organisation).

Other sources of information

There are a number of other sources of information that are used to reconstruct the political organisation of the Classic Maya:

- ○ Native texts, from the Postclassic and Colonial periods (Rice 2004: 7-19);

- ○ Spanish Colonial documents (ibid.);

- ○ Dictionaries (both Colonial and modern) (ibid.);

- ○ Modern ethnography (ibid.);

- ○ Archaeological data (Smith 2003: 78-111)

Postclassic and colonial documents, such as the codices, the books of *chilam b'alam*, the Popol Vuh, and Landa's *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatan* (Tozzer 1941), can help inform the trajectory that political organisation took through those periods. However, we must be cautious in applying this information to the Classic period. As has been stressed above, there were clearly regional and temporal differences, as recorded by the Classic Maya themselves. Thus, information from Postclassic sources should only be applied to the areas in which the documents were produced. Colonial sources may only record what the Spanish *thought* the Maya were doing and how they were organised, rather than how they *actually* implemented political power. Dictionaries can be of some use as they "can offer insights into native categorisation of polities through the presence, absence, quantities, varieties, and etymologies of words that denote territorial units and decision-making personnel." (Rice 2004: 17). However,

there are a range of dictionaries for different dialects (Yucatec, K'iche', Pokom, Itzaj, Chul, Chol, Ch'orti', and Tzaltal, to name a few; see famsi.org/mayawriting/dictionary. htm), and these have been produced using colonial and modern sources. Ethnography is similarly problematic, with the Maya people of today and those of the Classic era being separated not only by five centuries, but by the cultural disruptions imposed by the European colonists.

Archaeological data can help to illuminate the political organisation both within and between ceremonial cities. Investigations into burials (see Rathje 1970), household archaeology (see Robin 2003), and economic production and exchange (see Masson and Freidel 2002) can allow scholars to build a picture of everyday life and trade. Such information can be used alongside Classic Maya inscriptions to demonstrate relationships and networks within and between ceremonial cities.

Models of political organisation

The different models of political organisation among the Classic Maya traditionally fall within two categories: centralised and decentralised models. Discussions of the emergence of the Classic Maya organisation, landscape, and underlying ideology can be found in Schele and Freidel (1988), Reese-Taylor and Walker (2002), Stuart (2005a), and Sharer (2006) (among others). Strongly centralised political systems include:

- Regional states (e.g. Chase and Chase 1996; Culbert 1991b; Marcus 1976)
- Super-states (e.g. Grube 2000, 2005; Grube and Martin 1995)

Chase and Chase (1996: 805) argue that the typical Maya polity spanned

approximately 8000km², within which "hierarchically ordered centres" were integrated. Their work is based within Caracol, Belize, although they have attempted to apply this theory beyond that area. Grube and Martin (1995) use the term super-state to refer to a system of "overkingship", whereby a larger ceremonial city controlled smaller sites in terms of a leader-vassal relationship. Their investigation is primarily concerned with Calakmul and Tikal, although they suggest that the political influence of these ceremonial cities reaches as far as Yaxchilan and Piedras Negras (ibid.: 45; see also Martin and Grube 2008: 21). Evidence for this (in particular the connection with Yaxchilan) is limited, and thus caution should be used.

Weakly centralised systems include:

○ Theatre-states (e.g. Demarest 1992)

○ Segmentary states (e.g. Fox et al. 1996; McAnany 1995; Montmollin 1995, 1997)

○ City-states (e.g., Abrams 1995; Webster, 1997)

○ Feudal states (e.g., Adams 1995)

Demarest (1992) suggests that the cohesion of the Classic Maya polity was dependent on the king's ability to perform elaborate rituals in order to communicate with the gods and ancestors, and through which status differences could be expressed. This model is highly reliant on the underlying ideology of the community, and the role that it played in the maintenance of political power, which this author supports. However, Demarest (ibid.; see also Lucero 1999: 213) argues that this was necessary to the political organisation of the Maya because "economic control was not an option", which this author does not support. Segmentary state models are closely linked to lineage-based systems of rulership (ibid.), and Fox et al (1996), among others, have

argued that allegiances formed between lineages results in an increase in power, and thus a segmentary state. There is some merit to this model, especially as it allows for the fluid change of alliances through time and space, and demonstrates a high degree of flexibility. Webster (1997: 136) argues that central to the political organisation of the Maya were polities "organised around a single, large autonomous central place that is differentiated from lesser places in its hinterland, over which it extends political, economic, and cultural dominance." Political landscapes varied from place to place, resulting in a more segmentary system. Adams (1995) proposes feudal states based on rank size of ceremonial cities, where larger numbers of courtyards demonstrate greater political and administrative powers.

A core problem of the models presented above is the use of the term 'state'. Smith (2003: 84-102) discusses the difficulties in using 'state/State' terminology. Scholars defining 'state' organisation among the Classic Maya have failed to adequately define what they mean by the term, and thus their models become confusing. Ideas about, and concern with, the state in terms of political organisation, is "a relatively recent focus for political description and analysis." (ibid.: 84) Smith outlines four main reasons for avoiding the term in discussions of political analysis for early complex societies:

1. Denotation: as a term, 'state' is without a clear point of reference, and scholars risk imposing existing theoretical emphasis onto new research of slightly different terms (e.g. 'segmentary state' vs. 'city-state') (ibid.: 95-96);

2. Epistemology and illusion: the State cannot be understood as an object, but a set of methods for ordering social practice. Thus, the State is "not a real dimension of political life, but, rather, represents a fetishization of twentieth-century political ideology" (ibid.: 96-98);

3. Critical praxis: Smith argues that the State has a "questionable capacity to support critical reflection" in discussion of politics and political authority (ibid.: 98-100);

4. Ontology and space: traditional studies of State have been separated from space and actors within that space (ibid.: 100-102);

Thus, Smith argues that the conceptual framework of political life within early complex societies should focus on the political life and environment of those within the system. 'Authority', therefore, is a more appropriate term for the group of concepts that emphasise the point of convergence of space and time in political practice (ibid. 102). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the term 'state' will be avoided to describe the political organisation of the Classic Maya where possible, and instead focus on more general terms such as 'power' and authority' to build a picture of the political organisation of Yaxchilan during the Late Classic period.

This section has briefly outlined some interpretations of political organisation, and the importance of ideology in understanding the political structure in the Classic period. For these models, the limitations have been presented. The use of hieroglyphic inscriptions in illuminating the political structure of a ceremonial city, in particular in the range of titles delineating rank that can be found there, has been outlined. This is important for the arguments presented in Chapter 6 regarding the different individuals that are represented on HS. 2. This section has also clearly defined the terminology that is central to the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3: A BRIEF HISTORY OF YAXCHILAN

In this chapter, a brief overview of the history of the ceremonial city of Yaxchilan is presented. The development of Yaxchilan as a political power through the Classic period, and provide an overview of the political organisation of the Late Classic era reign of Bird Jaguar IV are discussed. It is argued that Yaxchilan experienced a period of political decentralisation in the Late Classic that led to the political structure of the site declining to the point of collapse in the ninth century.

The archaeological site of Yaxchilan's ceremonial city is situated on the southern bank of the Usumacinta River, in Chiapas, Mexico (figure 3.1). In ancient times it was at the heart of the Southern Lowlands, a little over thirty miles southeast of the ceremonial city of Piedras Negras, its biggest rival. Its location along the bank of the Usumacinta River is no doubt part of why Yaxchilan rose to prominence and prospered during the Classic period. The ceremonial city was built at the tip of an omega (Ω) shaped bend in the river, in a position that was easily defensible from attack, and well situated for trade routes that relied on the river to transport goods. There is evidence to suggest that Yaxchilan controlled a bridge which crossed the Usumacinta River at the north of the ceremonial city (Canter and Pentecost 2007: 4; Miller 2003: 129; O'kon 2003); ruined piles of deliberately placed rubble on the river bed attest to such engineering (figure 3.2). A bridge at this location could have supported a toll or river tax system, and would have given inhabitants of the ceremonial city year round access to the alluvial plains to the north of the river, which would have provided agricultural goods to the main site, despite the wet season swelling of the Usumacinta River by up to fifteen meters (O'kon 2003). Maudslay (1883: 200) wrote that the site was undoubtedly

a "crossing-place between Maya cities" in the north and south, supporting the need for a reliable way to cross the river.

During the Preclassic era, Yaxchilan appears to have been unimportant compared to other Preclassic sites such as El Mirador, Tikal and Uaxactun, and had little in the way of significant monumental construction (Golden et al 2008: 252; Martin and Grube 2008: 118; Sharer 2006: 431). It was not until Early Classic times that Yaxchilan saw a rise in prominence, and epigraphic records reveal the first ruler acceded to power in 359 A.D., in the dynasty that arguably lasted unbroken nearly five centuries (Martin and Grube 2008: 118). All references to this ruler are posthumous, as are those of many of his descendants, and made by the sixth century ruler *K'inich Tatb'u* Skull II, the tenth of this line (ibid.: 121), suggesting that the Early Classic ruling lineage at Yaxchilan did not have enough power to demand the labour and materials necessary to produce its own monumental records.

Yaxchilan had many periods of tumult during its long history, suggested by the hieroglyphic record at other ceremonial cities. However, there were also eras of great stability and development. The polity had strong continuity across the reigns of consecutive rulers, including its unbroken dynasty and a number of military successes recorded for each ruler. Unlike many of its contemporaneous ceremonial cities, Yaxchilan never recorded subservience to another polity, such as Calakmul (which lay to the north), or Tikal (to the northwest), on its monuments, although there are some clues as to its conflicts and allegiances in the epigraphic record of other sites. Other ceremonial cities in proximity to Yaxchilan, including Piedras Negras and Dos Pilas, document their fealty to one or other of these major political centres at various points in time. Yaxchilan, however, appears to have remained independent – at least according to its own history.

The Emblem Glyphs of Yaxchilan

The epigraphic record at Yaxchilan only presents part of the historical picture of the site, and is tightly bound with that of other ceremonial cities in the lowlands. Of particular interest to the Preclassic origins of Yaxchilan is recent epigraphic research conducted on El Zotz, a ceremonial city located twelve miles west of Tikal (figure 3.3). Emblem glyph analysis of El Zotz suggests that the Yaxchilan ruling lineage originated or had close connections with this site (Houston 2008a: 7), as both ceremonial cities appear to share the 'split sky' glyph as the main sign.[11]

The 'split sky' glyph has been identified as a standard *chan* glyph (meaning 'sky') with the top physically 'split' into two halves (see figure 3.4b). Thompson (1962: 450) assigned this the number T299, and nicknamed it 'split'. Boot (2004) has since presented the argument that this glyph was used as the logographic **PA'** (although he offers no semantic reading). Martin (2004: 6) furthers this research in the context of Yaxchilan, arguing that the split device used within the emblem glyph at the site "undoubtedly represents a portal for the birth or rebirth of deities in Maya iconography," and may relate to the Maize God, or perhaps K'awiil.

The hypothesis that the use of the 'split sky' at different sites links the two in terms of the royal lineage is purely speculative, as there is no archaeological evidence of an early enough era to definitively prove at which ceremonial city the lineage first appeared, nor further epigraphic record of any relationship between the two sites (ibid.). Further work surely needs to be conducted on the possible connections between Yaxchilan and El Zotz. However, for now it can perhaps be suggested that the lineage

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[11] There is also an example of the "split sky" emblem glyph at Uaxactun (see Graham 1986: 136), although this is not well preserved.

or dynasty associated with the "split sky" emblem glyph migrated and took the use of the glyph with them to one or other of these sites. This supports theories that emblem glyphs were not tied to a particular place, but instead were lineage markers or social identifiers (Gronemeyer 2012). Tokovinine (2013: 85) argues that sites sharing an emblem glyph should not be considered as competing, but instead stating a shared heritage or origin that "act as a kind of political confederacy."

By the Late Classic period, Yaxchilan monumental inscriptions often depicted two emblem glyphs within a ruler's title sequence (figure 3.4). This was not the case in the Early Classic, when only the *pa'chan* (or 'split sky') emblem was used. Lintels 11, 49, 37, and 35 were commissioned by *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II during his reign (526 A.D. – c. 537 A.D.) and list the first ten rulers of Yaxchilan. Each ruler was given a single emblem glyph, an early variant of the *Pa'chan*. It is interesting to note that these emblem glyphs do not have the *k'uhul* or 'water drops' prefix that appears in the later versions, supporting Graña-Behrens' (2006: 106) suggestion that they were archaic forms of emblem glyphs (see Chapter 1). It is not until the Late Classic period that the second emblem glyph appears alongside the 'split sky' variation as part of title sequences of rulers, and is then used in retrospective reference to previous kings (Martin and Grube 2008: 119). The use of two emblem glyphs at other ceremonial cities can represent a political bond between two difference sites. At Bonampak, inscriptions include both the Bonampak and Lacanha emblem glyphs (Culbert 1991a: 142). These relationships tend to be a larger and a smaller site (ibid.), however the second emblem glyph that appears at Yaxchilan in the Late Classic has been proposed as referring to a mythological place (Tokovinine 2013). Furthermore, that the second of the emblem glyphs are applied retroactively to previous rulers indicates the possibility of something

more complex at work than the alliance of two groups with different emblem glyphs. A detailed discussion of emblem glyphs and their meaning is, however, beyond the scope of this research (see Bíró 2012a and 2012b; Graña-Behrens 2006; Grube 2005; Helmke 2012; Marcus 1976; Mathews 1991; Tokovinine 2013, among others).

Reconstructing the Dynastic History of Yaxchilan

Reconstruction of the dynastic history of Yaxchilan has been achieved through the discovery of monuments that retroactively refer to the royal lineage. Little is known of the early rulers of the site because contemporaneous records were never commissioned, have not survived, or simply have not yet been discovered. For the first ten rulers at Yaxchilan, scholars rely on an early 'king list' commissioned by *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II in the mid sixth century. *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II had political motives for commissioning the lintels listing a long and unbroken line of succession. His brother, Knot-eye Jaguar I, was defeated by Piedras Negras c. 518 and may have been forced into subjugation by Ruler C (Martin and Grube 2008: 121-122), although there is no mention of such subordination at either Piedras Negras or Yaxchilan.[12] *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II may have commissioned the king list as a reaction against this defeat, to recount past grandeur of Yaxchilan (ibid.). These lintels – read in order 11, 49, 37, and 35 – contain just two calendar round dates (and no long count dates) so the list of succession can only be reconstructed loosely. Later rulers at Yaxchilan are recounted on a second dynastic history found on Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, commissioned (as a re-carving of an existing hieroglyphic stairway) by Bird Jaguar IV in the eight century. While this monument contains dates for each ruler, the

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[12] Panel 12 at Piedras Negras indicates that Ruler C took three prisoners, one of which was the ruler of Yaxchilan (Martin and Grube 2008: 141).

level of erosion has meant that many details are indeterminable. Reconstruction of the general framework is possible due to the use of a standardised narrative by the artists, but some glyphs, such as the name of Ruler 14, are illegible.

Due to the posthumous nature of these two king lists, there is currently no way to corroborate the dynastic histories presented. The Early Classic lintels and the Late Classic stairway support one another. However, it has been argued that the nature of both king lists has been, at least in part, to enable the commissioning ruler to 'rewrite' the dynastic history at the site (Martin and Grube 2008: 121, 130; Mathews 1997; Sharer 2006: 431). Others have suggested that Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 was re-carved as a 'conquest' stairway (Nahm 1997: 65) – a previous hieroglyphic stairway taken as tribute from another site, and reset and re-carved at Yaxchilan to commemorate the event. While the latter hypothesis still requires more substantiating evidence, the theory looks beyond the confines of traditional views on Yaxchilan and its history. It is clear that the contents of the Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions were at least in part propaganda, although there is still good evidence to suggest that the texts were consistent, and did not entirely fabricate events (see Chapter 1).

Because of undecipherable information on Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 and the succinct nature of the king list lintels, reconstructing relationships between the rulers of Yaxchilan is difficult. Where information cannot be found elsewhere at the ceremonial city, or on inscriptions at other sites, scholars are forced to assume that rulership passed from father to son. For example, Knot-eye Jaguar I and his successor, *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II, were both sons of a previous ruler, *Bird Jaguar II*. However, we have no record of the first successor's mother, although we know that *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II was born to a Lady *Chuwen*. Knot-eye Jaguar II, who acceded after *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II, was

given no parentage information at all (Martin and Grube 2008: 120). For lack of further evidence, do we assume that Knot-eye Jaguar II was the son of Knot-eye Jaguar I, or son of *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II? We might look to naming conventions of Maya kings for an answer, but it is less than definitive. Fathers and sons of the ruling lineage rarely shared names, and it never happens at Yaxchilan in its long history (unless Knot-eye Jaguar I and II are the exception); rather, names tended to be passed from grandfather to grandson (in the cases of Bird Jaguar III and IV, and Shield Jaguar II and III).

The king lists also give some information on the political interactions with other polities during the Early Classic period. On Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 Yaxchilan rulers were connected with individuals from other sites through a relationship glyph, *yete'*.[13] The glyph *yete'* appears in a number of texts across the ancient Maya lowlands. It can appear in its full form, with the prefix *ye* and the suffix *te'* or can appear just as *te'* indicating that it has been under-spelled (figure 3.5). The decipherment of this glyph is vital for understanding the relationship that Yaxchilan rulers held towards the rulers and lesser lords of other sites. Unfortunately, its meaning is unclear. *Yete'* has been suggested to mean "in the company of", or perhaps "under the authority of" (Montgomery 2006: 292-293), however this is tentative at best. Kettunen and Helmke (2011: 109) present a more general reading of the "agent to martial actions", or "his/ her work/doing" (ibid.: 44). To read *yete'* as "under the authority of" suggests that each ruler of Yaxchilan was actually a vassal lord of other rulers or even *y-ajawte'* (lesser lords of another ruler), from sites such as Bonampak, Lacanha, Piedras Negras, Calakmul and Tikal, and that Yaxchilan spent the whole of its early history under the control of other powers. However, it seems unlikely that the ruler who commissioned

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[13] It should be noted that this decipherment is still very much in doubt.

the lintels would have desired to advertise Yaxchilan's servitude when, arguably, he was instead attempting to recount the past greatness of the site. Thus, "under the authority of" is improbable.

'In the company of' implies a more equal relationship, indicating that the rulers of other sites, or their vassal lords, were witnesses to accessions at Yaxchilan. These would have surely not been the *only* guests invited to witness the ceremonies of accession, but may have been the most important. Should this be the case, *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II, in commissioning the lintels and stating these relationships, may have been sending a message not just to his own people, but also to those from other sites. "In the company of" implies a positive relationship that is mutually beneficial. Stuart has tentatively suggested that the glyph is an agency expression, or means "by" or "with" (in Chase et al 1991: 10), implying that those mentioned as *yete'* attended the accession rituals of the Yaxchilan rulers. By recounting all of the past allies that Yaxchilan enjoyed, the contemporary ruler was actually making a threatening statement, attempting to ensure (through propaganda) that Yaxchilan remain unmolested after his brother's death. However, recounting past allies would have been of little benefit unless they were also present allies, which many of them were not.

Because of the nature of the text and the importance of military events seen at Yaxchilan, a more probable reading for *yete'* is one to do with the taking of prisoners. This is not the traditional "captive/captor of" hieroglyph that appears often in Yaxchilan inscriptions, and so cannot be read definitively as such. However, it would be sensible to suggest that the king lists include a prominent military victory of each of the rulers, to further glorify Yaxchilan and its ancestors. The *yete'* glyph is found in the inscriptions at other sites, in particular Tonina and Caracol, where it sits between two names, one of

captive and the other of captor (ibid.). Martin and Grube (2008: 118) state that *yete'* refers to the included names as prisoners. Thus, it is clear that *yete'* implies a superior-subordinate relationship between the rulers of Yaxchilan and the actors that follow the glyph.

While this is the most probable semantic reading for the glyph, there are still issues with this interpretation. Namely, the tenth ruler at Yaxchilan in the sequence is documented as *yete'* of the contemporary ruler of Calakmul, *K'an I* (as well as Knot-eye Jaguar from the site of *Ake'*, or Bonampak, and an individual from Lacanha) (Zender, personal communication: 2012). If this is the case, Yaxchilan suffered no retribution at the hands of Calakmul for this defeat in the latter site's florescence, when the succeeding rulers (*Y-ajaw Te' K'inich II*, and Knot *Ajaw*) undertook a series of successful campaigns, including the sacking of Palenque (Martin and Grube 2008: 160). Why, then, would these militarily successful rulers leave Yaxchilan alone if it had been the perpetrator of the defeat of *K'an I*? While the reading of *yete'* as a military relationship (superior-subordinate) is the most probable, it is far from definitive, and further work needs to be done.

Because of a lack of a firm reading of *yete'* the political stability and structure of much of Early Classic Yaxchilan remains obscure. The fact that Early Classic monuments have yet to be discovered (if they have survived at all) adds to the frustration of scholars in their understanding of this key period of development at the ceremonial city. With this in mind, the following section will present a brief summary of the development of Yaxchilan from the Preclassic into the Classic period, using the evidence available. This will help illustrate how Yaxchilan became a major political centre in the Late Classic era, and the foundations on which Bird Jaguar IV was to build.

A Brief History of the Early Classic Kings of Yaxchilan

As discussed above, Yaxchilan's early history is obscure, and monumental records have not been discovered dating to before the sixth century, almost two centuries after *Yopaat* Jaguar I is said to have acceded to rulership over the site. It is probable that a small settlement grew at the location of Yaxchilan as early as the Preclassic era (Sharer 2006: 421). Scholars are thus forced to summarise Early Classic period history in accordance with the lintels which detail the first ten kings. Table 3.1 lists the Early Classic rulers of Yaxchilan (359 A.D. to 537 A.D.)

Ruler	Accession	Death
Yopaat Jaguar I	359 A.D.	Unknown
Shield Jaguar I	Unknown	Unknown
Bird Jaguar I	378 A.D.	389 A.D.
Yax Deer-Antler Skull	389 A.D.	402 A.D.
Ruler 5	402 A.D.	Unknown
K'inich Tatb'u Skull I	Unknown	Unknown
Moon Skull	454 A.D.	467 A.D.
Bird Jaguar II	467 A.D.	Unknown
Knot-eye Jaguar I	508 A.D.	518 A.D.
K'inich Tatb'u Skull II	526 A.D.	537 A.D.

Table 3.1: Early Classic kings of Yaxchilan, reconstructed using lintels 11, 49, 37, and 35, Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, Martin and Grube (2008), Mathews (1988), and Sharer (2006)

Understanding of Early Classic political relationships also relies on these posthumous dynastic histories for their reconstruction (discussed above). It is clear that Yaxchilan had a tumultuous relationship with Piedras Negras throughout its history, probably because of rivalry over trade routes along the Usumacinta River (Sharer 2006: 431). Lintel 11 describes the first Yaxchilan ruler, *Yopaat* Jaguar I (or "Progenitor Jaguar I", the first of his lineage) as *yete'* to another person named *Ak'*, or "turtle",

who is connected with Piedras Negras (Martin and Grube 2008: 119). As mentioned previously, each of the first ten rulers of Yaxchilan are listed as *yete'* with/to another individual. Table 3.2 lists these relationships.

While Piedras Negras is mentioned more frequently than any other site in reference to the *yete'* relationship with rulers of Yaxchilan, it is not the only important site mentioned. Calakmul and Bonampak were both considerable powers during the Classic period, although we know from later inscriptions that Yaxchilan and Bonampak were political allies through much of the Late Classic period, and in particular during the reign of Bird Jaguar IV. Calakmul, on the other hand, may have been the place of origin of Bird Jaguar IV's mother. The fluid nature of relationships between ceremonial cities adds to problems in defining a Classic Maya political structure, as it is clear that the Maya saw political relationships as fundamentally dynamic.

Ruler	*yete'*: name	*yete'*: site of origin
Yopaat Jaguar I	Ak'	Piedras Negras
Shield Jaguar I	Muwaan B'alam	Piedras Negras [?]
Bird Jaguar I	Sak jal k'an b'an	16 Tamales Place [?]
Yax Deer-Antler Skull	Hand of Sun [?]	Bird Cloud Place [?]
Ruler 5	[?]	[?]
K'inich Tatb'u Skull I	Bird Jaguar	Bonampak
Moon Skull	Ruler A	Piedras Negras
Bird Jaguar II	Ruler B [?]	Piedras Negras
Knot-eye Jaguar I	Turtle Spine	Piedras Negras [Tikal]
K'inich Tatb'u Skull II	K'an I	Calakmul
	[?]	Bonampak
	[?]	Lacanha

Table 3.2: List of first ten kings of Yaxchilan with the subject of their *yete'* and the associated ceremonial city, as indicated by Hieroglyphic Stairway 1. Note: Knot-eye Jaguar I was *yete'* to a person from Piedras Negras; that person, in turn, had links to Tikal.

Archaeologically, Early Classic structures are relatively unexplored compared to Late Classic equivalents, particularly at Yaxchilan, mostly because of the conventions in construction of the ancient Maya. The Late Classic period has a wealth of architectural and epigraphic remains, so little investigation has been done into what lies underneath these later structures. For the ancient Maya, when a new structure was commissioned, it would often be built over the top of a previous one, rather than demolish the original structure and start over (see figure 3.6). This means that, in many cases, Early Classic constructions remain obscured underneath Late Classic modifications, and subsequently remain undocumented. It is possible that earlier constructions contain hieroglyphics and iconography that could help to unravel the beginnings of Yaxchilan's development. However, due to the unfortunately destructive nature of archaeology in these circumstances, at the present time it is impossible to know.

It was during the reign of Knot-eye Jaguar I that the first hieroglyphic monument, stela 27, was commissioned to mark the *k'atun* ending celebration on 9.4.0.0.0 (524 A.D.). Knot-eye Jaguar I is depicted wearing an elaborate costume and headdress, including a belt ornament depicting his father, *Bird Jaguar II* (Martin and Grube 2008: 120). Stela 27 is particularly interesting as – at some point in its history – it sustained considerable damage, and was subsequently restored and reworked during the reign of Bird Jaguar IV (ibid.; also see Martin 2000). That the Late Classic ruler Bird Jaguar IV took pains to restore this monument, and incorporate it into the ritual space of his own greatest architectural achievement is of importance. This suggests that Bird Jaguar IV was making a deliberate connection between himself and his ancestors, in particular Bird Jaguar II and Knot-eye Jaguar I. This tool of representation will be discussed in more detail below.

Knot-eye Jaguar I had a successful military career, capturing important elites from Piedras Negras, Bonampak, and Tikal (Martin and Grube 2008: 120; Sharer 2006: 432) before falling victim to Piedras Negras c. 514 A.D. (Martin and Grube 2008: 141). This event is not recorded at Yaxchilan, but on Panel 12 at the victorious site. Another stela, 14, was erected at Yaxchilan in the early 520's A.D., which scholars assume belonged to Knot-eye Jaguar I (Martin and Grube 2008: 121; Miller 1991; Schele and Mathews 1998). While the name of the protagonist has eroded beyond recognition, Bird Jaguar II is once again mentioned as the ruler's father (Martin and Grube 2008: 121), and the date of the monument (521 A.D. according to Martin and Grube 2008: 121, or 523 A.D. according to Tate 1992: loc 2147) falls before the accession of the next Yaxchilan ruler.

In 526 A.D. another of Bird Jaguar II's sons acceded to the throne; *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II. The gap of around ten years between rulers bears similarities to the Late Classic interregnum. It is possible that the tenth ruler at Yaxchilan, *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II, did not take office immediately after the defeat of his predecessor because Knot-eye Jaguar I was still alive, and ruling Yaxchilan as a vassal centre for Piedras Negras (and possibly erected stela 14) (Martin and Grube 2008: 121). There is no way to know what happened to Knot-eye Jaguar I, or how he died, without further records being uncovered. Presumably, when he died so did any subordination Yaxchilan suffered under Piedras Negras. Whether this death was of natural causes or not is impossible to know at this time; he may have been forcibly removed from office to free Yaxchilan of their bondage of tribute to Piedras Negras.

K'inich Tatbu Skull II quickly set about repairing the damage done by his brother's defeat, and commissioned the lintels 11, 49, 37, and 35 to honour the

successes of his lineage. These are considered among the finest examples of carving during this time anywhere in the Maya lowlands (ibid.). *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II also recorded a long and successful military career, taking many prisoners during his reign, including lords from Lakamtuun, Bonampak, and the 'Snake' Kingdom (ibid.). *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II clearly made a huge effort to overcome the difficulties faced by Yaxchilan during the reign of his brother, and sought to erase past dishonour at the hands of Piedras Negras with his own successes (which became an embodiment of the successes of his lineage).

The next four rulers are poorly understood due to a lack of surviving records at Yaxchilan. Knot-eye Jaguar II succeeded *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II; however there is no information as to his parentage. This begs the question: was he the son of the fallen ruler, Knot-eye Jaguar I, or the ruler who pulled Yaxchilan back from subordination, *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II? It has been argued that we must look to naming conventions for an indication, and that this suggests the latter; that Knot-eye Jaguar II was the son of *K'inich Tatbu* Skull II. This marks a divergence in the line of succession, away from the apparent tradition of father to son (insofar that a son of Knot-eye Jaguar I did not inherit). This is highly significant during the Late Classic period, and the reign of Bird Jaguar IV, who associated himself with Knot-eye Jaguar I (see Chapter 5) to suggest parallels between these early events and the events surrounding the interregnum (see below).

Ruler	Accession	Death
Knot-eye Jaguar II	564 A.D.	Unknown
Shield Jaguar II	c. 599 A.D.	Unknown
K'inich Tatbu Skull III	Unknown	Unknown
Ruler 14	Unknown	Unknown
Bird Jaguar III	629 A.D.	c. 669 A.D.
Shield Jaguar III (Shield Jaguar the Great)	681 A.D.	742 A.D.
Bird Jaguar IV (Bird Jaguar the Great)	752 A.D.	c. 768 A.D
Shield Jaguar IV (previously *Chel Te'Chan K'inich*)	c. 769 A.D.	Unknown
K'inich Tatbu Skull IV	c. 800 A.D.	Unknown

Table 3.3: Late Classic kings of Yaxchilan, reconstructed using Martin and Grube (2008), Mathews (1988), and Sharer (2006) (for a family tree of Shield Jaguar III, Bird Jaguar IV, and Shield Jaguar IV, see Appendix D).

Date	Long count	Calendar round	Participant(s)	Event
Oct 681	9.12.9.8.1	5 Imix 4 Mak	Shield Jaguar III	**Acceded** to the throne of Yaxchilan
Nov 689	(9.12.17.12.0)	13 Ajaw 3 Muan	Shield Jaguar III	Captive taking event
Mar 692	9.13.0.0.0	8 Ajaw 8 Wo	Shield Jaguar III	Celebrated a period ending
Nov 701	(9.13.9.14.14)	6 Ix 17 Kankin	Shield Jaguar III	Captive taking event
Jan 702	9.13.10.0.0	7 Ajaw 3 Kumku	Shield Jaguar III	Celebrated a period ending
Sep 705	(9.13.13.12.5)	6 Chikchan 8 Yax (?)	Lady Pakal	**Died**
Aug 709	9.13.17.12.10	8 Ok 13 Yax	Bird Jaguar IV	**Was born**
Oct 709	(9.13.17.15.12)	5 Eb 15 Mak	Shield Jaguar III and Lady K'abal Xook	Blood letting ritual
Oct 709	(9.13.17.15.13)	6 Ben 16 Mak	Shield Jaguar III and Lady Ik' Skull	Blood letting ritual
Nov 713	(9).14.(1.17.14)	5 Ix 17 Kankin	Shield Jaguar III	Captive taking event
Jul 729	(9.14.17.15.11)	2 Chuen 14 Mol	Shield Jaguar III	Captive taking event
Aug 731	(9.15.0.0.0)	4 Ajaw 13 Yax	Shield Jaguar III	Blood letting ritual
Apr 732	(9.15.0.12.0)	10 Ajaw 8 Zotz	Shield Jaguar III	Captive taking event
Jun 732	(9.15.0.15.3)	8 Akbal 11 Yaxkin	Shield Jaguar III	Blood letting ritual
Jun 735	(9.15.3.16.6)?	6 Kimi (?) 19 Yaxkin	Shield Jaguar III	Danced in a flap-staff ritual
Jun 736	(9.15.4.16.11)?	7 Chuen (?) 19 Yaxkin	Shield Jaguar III	Danced in a flap-staff ritual
Dec 740	9.15.9.8.1	12 Imix 9 Pax	Shield Jaguar III	Celebrated his three k'atun ajaw anniversary
Jun 741	9.15.9.17.16	12 Cib 19 Yaxkin	Shield Jaguar III and Bird Jaguar IV	Danced in a flap-staff ritual (exchanged staff/ power?)
Jun 741	9.15.10.0.1	4 Imix 4 Mol	Lady Ik' Skull	Blood letting ritual

Jun 742	(9.15.10.17.14)	6 Ix 12 Yaxkin	Shield Jaguar III	**Died**
Oct 744	9.15.13.6.9	3 Muluk 17 Mac	Bird Jaguar IV	Played in a ballgame ritual (HS. 2)
M a y 746	(9.15.15.0.0)	9 Ajaw 18 Xul	Shield Jaguar III *u cab* Bird Jaguar IV	Blood letting ritual
Jun 747	(9.15.16.1.6)	5 Kimi 19 Yaxkin	Bird Jaguar IV	Danced in a flap-staff ritual
Mar 749	(9.15.17.15.14)	3 Ix 17 Zip	Lady K'abal Xook	**Died**
Mar 751	(9.15.19.15.3)	10 Akbal 16 Wo	Lady Ik' Skull	**Died**
Feb 752	(9.16.0.13.17)	6 Caban 5 Pop	Bird Jaguar IV	Captive taking event
Feb 752	(9.16.0.14.5)	1 Chikchan 13 Pop	Shield Jaguar IV	Was born
Feb 752	(9.16.0.14.5)	1 Chikchan 13 Pop	Bird Jaguar IV and Lady Great Skull	Blood letting ritual
Apr 752	9.16.1.0.0	11 Ajaw 8 Zec	Bird Jaguar IV	**Acceeded** to the throne of Yaxchilan
Jun 752	(9.16.1.2.0)	12 Ajaw 8 Yaxkin	Bird Jaguar IV and Lady Six Sky (of Ik')	Danced in a bird-cross staff ritual
Oct 752	(9.16.1.8.6)	8 Kimi 14 Mak	Bird Jaguar IV and K'an Tok Wayib	Danced in a jaguar-paw staff ritual
Oct 752	(9.16.1.8.8)	10 Lamat 16 Mak	Bird Jaguar IV and Lady Mut Bahlam	Danced in a k'awil scepter ritual
Mar 755	(9.16.3.16.19)	4 Kawak 12 Sip	Lady Wak Tuun	Blood letting ritual
M a y 755	(9.16.4.1.1)	7 Imix 14 Sek	Bird Jaguar IV and K'an Tok Wayib	Captive taking event
Apr 756	(9.16.5.0.0)	8 Ajaw 8 Sotz'	Bird Jaguar IV and K'in Mo' Ajaw	Danced in a k'awil scepter ritual
Apr 757	(9.16.6.0.0)	4 Ajaw 3 Sotz'	Bird Jagaur IV and Shield Jaguar IV	Danced in a bird-cross staff ritual
Mar 761	9.16.10.0.0	1 Ajaw 3 Zip	Bird Jagaur IV	Blood letting ritual
Jun 763	(9.16.12.5.14)	3 Ix 7 Mol	Lady Wak Tuun	Blood letting ritual
Feb 766	(9.16.15.0.0)	7 Ajaw 18 Pop	Bird Jaguar IV and Shield Jaguar IV	Danced in a k'awil scepter ritual
Jun 768	(9.16.17.6.12)	1 Eb 0 Mol	Bird Jaguar IV and Great Skull	Danced in a flap-staff ritual
Oct 768	(9.16.17.12.10)	2 Ok 18 Mak	Bird Jaguar IV and K'an Tok Wayib	Celebrated four k'atun ajaw anniversary
768-769	Unknown	Unknown	Bird Jaguar IV	**Died**
768-769	Unknown	Unknown	Shield Jaguar IV	**Acceeded** to the throne of Yaxchilan
Feb 769			Shield Jaguar IV	Presided over a fire-making ritual at a provincial centre

Table 3.4: List of key events recorded at Yaxchilan leading up to, during, and after the Interregnum, reconstructed using Graham (1982), Houston (2006), Martin and Grube (2008), Mathews (1988), Tate (1992). For a more comprehensive list of events before and after the dates shown here, see Tate (1992: loc 6163-6178).

The Late Classic period at Yaxchilan eventually saw unprecedented growth and development as the ceremonial city became one of the most impressive and influential in the Maya lowlands. This was thanks to the policies of two rulers in particular, Shield Jaguar III (681 – 742 A.D.) and his successor Bird Jaguar IV (752 – 768 A.D.). However, Bird Jaguar III (629 – c. 669 A.D.), the first of the Late Classic rulers, is known of only through retrospective references and 'recreated monuments' posthumously carved; Bird Jaguar III's history can be read on Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, stelae 3 and 6, and throne 2, all commissioned during the reign of Bird Jaguar IV (Martin and Grube 2008: 123; Sharer 2006: 432). From these records we know that he took at least two captives, and married Lady *Pakal*, a woman that lived to nearly one hundred years of age (ibid.) and was important enough to appear on many monuments, including HS. 2. Because of a lack of epigraphic evidence from this period scholars argue that Yaxchilan suffered a setback during this reign (Sharer 2006: 434) or was subordinate to another, more powerful site in the Usumacinta area. Piedras Negras underwent a period of political stability and monumental construction during this period, leading Miller (1991) to suggest that the ceremonial city held superiority over Yaxchilan at this time. Alternatively, Martin and Grube (2008: 123, 170, 183) suggest that Palenque, or even Tonina, may have demanded subordination of the Yaxchilan ruler.

That Palenque had some measure of control over Yaxchilan seems most probable. In August of 654 A.D. (9.11.1.16.3), *K'inich Janaab Pakal I* of Palenque took a captive of Yaxchilan who they named as a *yitaaj* of Shield Jaguar III (Schele and Freidel 1990: 477). The naming of this relationship is highly significant: Shield Jaguar III must have already been designated as heir to the throne of Yaxchilan for Palenque

to have seen fit to name their captive as *yitaaj* to a boy not yet the ruler (ibid.: 265). Once thought to mean 'sibling', *yitaaj* is now considered a more general relationship clause, perhaps meaning 'together with' or 'companion of' (Munson and Macri 2009: 426),'sibling' in a sense of extended family (Harris and Stearns 1997: 66), or 'friends of' (Stone 1995: 174).

As scholars, we often assume that succession to rulership in Classic Maya politics always fell to the eldest male child. However, we must be cautious with this presumption. Lady *Pakal* gave birth to Shield Jaguar III "at the very end of her child-bearing years" (Martin and Grube 2008: 122). When the captive was taken by Palenque, Shield Jaguar III was around eleven years old (Schele and Freidel 1990: 265), probably too young to participate in the event himself. However, if we take *yitaaj* to mean 'sibling', does this mean that the captive was an older brother of the future ruler? Or was he perhaps simply a childhood companion, or a cousin? Once again we are faced with difficulties in understanding the nuances of relationship clauses within Classic Maya texts that force us into caution when making assumptions about the political and cultural environment at that time.

The last recorded date of Bird Jaguar III's life was in 669 A.D., twelve years before his successor, Shield Jaguar III acceded to the throne. We have no date of death for this ruler, and no way to know what happened at Yaxchilan in the large gap in the records. We must, at this point, assume that nothing of note happened, and are forced to speculate that this may have been due to Yaxchilan's subordination to another ceremonial city. Alternatively, if Shield Jaguar III was not the oldest of Bird Jaguar III's sons, perhaps there was a period of conflict before the heir (already designated, as evidenced by the Palenque record) could officially accede. Interestingly, few scholars

draw parallels between this and the interregnum (discussed below) between Shield Jaguar III and Bird Jaguar IV, perhaps because Bird Jaguar III's death is not so well documented.

Shield Jaguar III acceded to the throne in October of 681 A.D. Little is known of this ruler's early life (other than the war event with Palenque, discussed above) or the early period of his reign. Like his mother, Lady *Pakal*, he would live a long time, and he achieved a great deal, although mostly after 723 A.D. His first captive is recorded to have been taken in 680 A.D., which has been suggested by scholars to provide a necessary sacrifice to consecrate his accession (Sharer 2006: 436). However, the need for a sacrificial victim seems less probable than other, practical consequences of taking a captive prior to accession. Yaxchilan as a ceremonial city dedicated a huge amount of time and effort to partaking in and recounting war events that resulted in captive taking. It was clearly vital for a ruler to prove himself as a capable warrior, and warfare may have functioned to demonstrate a number of important kingly qualities. Importantly, a captive signalled the opportunity for economic gain in the form of tribute (Graham 2011: 47; Graham 2013), which may have been necessary to fund a celebration such as accession. Taking captives demonstrated a ruler's command of economic power, which was vital to the ideology of kingship and role of king at Yaxchilan.

A lack of written records from the early years of Shield Jaguar III's rule has led scholars, once again, to speculate about Yaxchilan's independence during this time (Martin and Grube 2008: 123). Presumably Shield Jaguar III married his first wife, Lady *K'abal Xook*, a woman also from Yaxchilan. According to hieroglyphic records contemporaneous to Shield Jaguar III's reign, he also had a second wife, Lady *Sak Biyaan*, although her heritage is unknown, and there are no clues as to when she and

the king were married. One epigraphic source delineates her as *ixik ch'ok*, or 'young woman' (Martin and Grube 2008: 126), suggesting that she was taken as a wife to an ageing king when she was relatively young. According to posthumous records, Shield Jaguar III also had a third wife, Lady *Ik'* Skull, who gave birth to his successor, Bird Jaguar IV, on 9.13.17.12.10 8 *Ok* 13 *Yax* (August 23, 709).

The last years of Shield Jaguar III's life were extremely productive for Yaxchilan (see Table 3.4 for selected overview). The early years of 720 A.D. saw him record a number of military triumphs, and he erected many temples and monuments commemorating his achievements. It is not clear why Shield Jaguar III became so active in the waning years of his life. It is possible that something led Yaxchilan to experience a newfound political freedom not previously enjoyed which allowed Shield Jaguar III to act with more autonomy. This event may have been the capture of a Yaxchilan lieutenant by the ceremonial city's long held rivals Piedras Negras (Grube 1998: 121), although alternative theories suggest that the power of Piedras Negras was waning at this time, allowing Yaxchilan to enjoy a florescence (Sharer 2006: 435). Perhaps Shield Jaguar III has taken a captive which secured significant wealth and prestige to justify such development.

Yaxchilan saw a dramatic change in its physical landscape after 720 A.D. Shield Jaguar III commissioned many new temples in the ceremonial city. Temple 44, dedicated in 732 A.D., commemorated the ruler's military successes between his accession and the structures' completion. Temple 26 was dedicated in 726 A.D., and marked the importance of Lady *K'abal Xook*, Shield Jaguar III's principle wife (although some of the carvings within the temple were commissioned as early as 723 A.D.; see Martin and Grube 2008). Particularly interesting to the study of Late Classic

politics at Yaxchilan is the prevalence of women within the epigraphic and iconographic records. Lady *K'abal Xook* made a number of significant appearances on monuments, not only alongside Shield Jaguar III, but independently, performing important rituals in his place. Temple 23 demonstrates the high level of political power she commanded. The structure contains a short dynastic history for her lineage, and three of the most impressive carved lintels of the Classic period Maya lowlands.

The first lintel in sequence, lintel 24 (figure 1.1a), depicts Lady *K'abal Xook* performing a bloodletting ritual under the guidance and authority of her husband. Lintel 25 (figure 1.1b), goes on to show her summoning a Vision Serpent through her bloodletting. Finally, lintel 26 (figure 1.1c) depicts Lady *K'abal Xook* alongside Shield Jaguar III, after the completion of a bloodletting ritual. While the iconography of these three lintels suggests a continuous narrative, the accompanying hieroglyphic inscriptions give the audience a completely different perspective. The events of lintel 24 actually occurred at Shield Jaguar III's accession, in 681 A.D. The vision rite performed on lintel 25 occurred in 709 A.D., after the birth of the future Bird Jaguar IV. Lintel 26 depicts events from the dedication of the temple, in 726 A.D.

What the lintels of temple 23 achieve is a complicated narrative that demonstrates a single ritual - that of bloodletting, summoning of visions, and dedication - that was employed in three very different situations across the space of nearly half a century. This narrative technique would be employed by the following ruler, Bird Jaguar IV, in a number of monuments commissioned during his reign. Another of Shield Jaguar III's wives, Lady *Sak Biyaan* is also associated with her own building. Structure 11 is a monument to this woman (Martin and Grube 2008: 126), although Tokovinine's (2013: 37, figure 22d) work on categories of landscape suggests that while Structure

11 was the "home", or *otoot*, of Lady *Sak Biyaan*, ownership "should be understood within a broader context of the king's authority over the city and the lands." While the building and lintels may have been dedicated to the queen, then, the king still 'owned' them, and they are ultimately under his control. The role of women in politics and ritual is discussed further in Chapter 7.

Bird Jaguar IV

Bird Jaguar IV acceded to the throne in 752 A.D., ten years after the death of Shield Jaguar III. Possible reasons for the interregnum are varied, and there is currently no way to know which is the most legitimate. Principle among them is the argument first suggested by Proskouriakoff that the interregnum was a time of conflict (Proskouriakoff 1963: 63; Schele and Freidel 1990: 264). While this theory is possible, as discussed in Chapter 1, academic investigation needs to be more critical of such assumptions. Others have argued that Bird Jaguar IV went to great lengths to fabricate a more favourable history of Yaxchilan, destroying and rewriting records that indicated he was not the legitimate heir to the throne (Martin and Grube 2008; Grube 1998; Bardsley 1994; Josserand 2007). However, the hieroglyphic records are consistent, and it was not the first time in Yaxchilan's history that there existed a large gap between a rulers' death and a successors' accession (see above). Without a firm death date for Bird Jaguar III, we might suggest that there was a long interregnum before Shield Jaguar III came to power (perhaps as many as twelve years; see table 3.3). Furthermore, epigraphic records show that Bird Jaguar IV was politically active during the interregnum. As Tate (1992: loc 3793) has argued:

it is improbable that the community could be fooled about Bird Jaguar's [IV] suitability for the throne. If he manipulated the facts to gain power, he must have been in league with a larger council of powerful elites, for a lack of verity on monuments intended to honour the ancestors and sun would be perceived as threatening to the social welfare.

If Bird Jaguar IV was 'in league' with such a powerful group, one questions why it took so long for him to officially accede to power. If he had such strong political support, his accession would have been more quickly assured. Tate presents an important point: in order to have the authority to rule, Bird Jaguar IV could not have fabricated his legitimacy. The social structure of the Maya was such that lies about ones' parentage would have been difficult, if not impossible, to maintain (ibid.: loc 3777).

Bird Jaguar IV's reign began and continued with remarkable stability, and he constantly developed the ceremonial city throughout his reign. Over the course of his rulership, he commissioned seven stelae, nineteen carved lintels, three hieroglyphic stairways, and four altars, as well as other inscribed monuments at Yaxchilan and other ceremonial cities, and a number of buildings (Martin and Grube 2008: 128-133). Many of these monuments documented his actions throughout the interregnum, and he acknowledged that he was not enthroned as the ruler during this time. If he sought to rewrite the history of Yaxchilan (as argued by Bardsley 1994) surely he would have simply rewritten the interregnum from the records. Furthermore, there is a remarkable continuity between the reigns of Shield Jaguar III and Bird Jaguar IV in the presence of Lady *K'abal Xook*. Both rulers went to great lengths to include this woman in their monuments. Temple 23 was erected as a monument to her during the reign of Shield Jaguar III, and Bird Jaguar IV recorded her death on lintel 59, and conducted a memorial

rite in her honour, recorded on lintel 28. It is interesting that Bird Jaguar IV honoured

this woman in his own monuments. She was not his mother, and if, as Josserand (2007)

suggests, Lady *K'abal Xook* had a child who was the 'missing heir' it is unlikely he

would have continued to honour her after a period of conflict with her lineage.

Evidence instead points to the probability that the interregnum was a period

of consolidation for Bird Jaguar IV, and that he was in political control of Yaxchilan

during that time (Mathews 1988: 215; Sharer 2006: 245). Reconstructions of this ruler's

activities during the interregnum are well documented (see Martin and Grube 2008,

Mathews 1988; Schele and Freidel 1990) and are presented in a number of monuments

that he commissioned before or just after his accession. This presents an interesting

question: if Bird Jaguar IV was politically active during the interregnum, why did he

not accede to the throne?

There are a number of theories regarding this conundrum, even if we set aside

arguments of conflict. It is possible that Bird Jaguar IV was unable to take the throne

while Lady *K'abal Xook* was alive. This woman had played an active role in the political

situation of Yaxchilan for a number of years, and it has been speculated that Structure

23 was not only a homage to her and her lineage, but also a way of securing support for

Bird Jaguar IV as Shield Jaguar III's heir (Schele and Freidel 1990: 270). It is possible

that Bird Jaguar IV's designation as heir was a compromise that Shield Jaguar IV had

needed to make to gain the support of two powerful noble houses at Yaxchilan. Lady

K'abal Xook was honoured through the construction of Structure 23, and her family

given a lasting place in the ceremonial city's memory. Shield Jaguar III secured the

allegiance of Lady *Ik'* Skull's family by naming her son as his heir. In respect for this

alliance made by his father, Bird Jaguar IV did not accede to the throne immediately

upon his father's death, but waited until Lady *K'abal Xook* had also died. In doing so, he was biding his time whilst also consolidating his position. He took part in a number of important rituals including the ritual on HS. 2 in 744 A.D., a period ending ritual in 746 A.D. (recorded on stela 11), a flapstaff ritual in 747 A.D. (recorded on lintel 33), captive taking in 750 A.D. and in 752 A.D (again recorded on stela 11). Finally, on February 10 752 A.D. Bird Jaguar IV's son, *Chel Te' Chan K'inich* (the future Shield Jaguar IV) was born, before he acceded to the throne seventy five days later. During the interregnum, both Lady *K'abal Xook* and Lady *Ik'* Skull died, in 749 A.D. and 751 A.D. respectively.

That Bird Jaguar IV was so active during the interregnum indicates that this was not a time of conflict, but consolidation. A number of monuments were dedicated shortly after his accession, suggesting that they had already been under construction well before he was enthroned. In order to commission such works, Bird Jaguar IV must have been in a position to appoint labour to the tasks and afford such expense (Webster 1998), which demonstrates his control over Yaxchilan well before his official accession ceremony. Questions remain as to why Bird Jaguar IV did not take office immediately after his father's death, but there appear to have been mitigating factors in the form of Lady *K'abal Xook* and the importance of her family.

Bird Jaguar IV acceded to the throne of Yaxchilan on the long count date of 9.16.1.0.0 (April 29, 752 A.D., from Martin and Grube 2008). By this time, he had married a local woman, Lady Great Skull, fathered a son, *Chel Te' Chan K'inich*, and secured the support of a number of elite individuals, which he commemorated in his monumental program. These included other individuals with the *Pa'chan Ajaw* and *K'uhul Ajaw* titles from other ceremonial cities, such as Bonampak. Bird Jaguar

IV also honoured a number of individuals with the *sajal* title, both from Yaxchilan (such as K'an Tok Wayib) and from the surrounding area, including *Tiloom* from La Pasadita (Martin and Grube 2008: 131). Structure 33, long considered Bird Jaguar IV's 'accession' monument (Mathews 1988; Schele and Freidel 1990), contains references to at least ten different political allies, including three different wives.

Like Shield Jaguar III, Bird Jaguar IV honoured his wives within monumental inscriptions in order to secure and advertise them (and their own lineages) as allies to the Yaxchilan king. Bird Jaguar IV recorded four wives throughout his reign: Lady Great Skull, Lady *Wak Tuun* of Motul de San José, Lady *Wak Jalam Chan Ajaw* of Motul de San José, Lady *Mut B'alam* of Hix Witz (Martin and Grube 2008: 131). At least three of these appear within the ritual space of Structure 33, alongside his mother, Lady *Ik'* Skull and grandmother, Lady *Pakal* (see Chapter 7), implying that those women all played an important role in Bird Jaguar IV's accession. Bird Jaguar IV also commissioned monuments depicting Lord Great Skull, his wife's brother and his son's *yichan*, or "uncle", demonstrating the importance of his wife's family.

Political Organisation of Yaxchilan during the Late Classic (and a Theory of the Collapse of Divine Kingship at the Site)

Recording so many other individuals with the *k'uhul ajaw*, *ajaw*, and *sajal* titles, along with important women and their relations tells us a great deal about the political organisation of Late Classic Yaxchilan during the reign of Bird Jaguar IV. Appearing on public architecture and monuments offered the elite honour and prestige, and represented a public affirmation of their power within the ceremonial city. The

elite had power and influence enough - either within the ceremonial city itself, or over Bird Jaguar IV - to command such a place of importance. Due to the long interregnum, and the events (both recorded and obscure) that occurred during that time, it could be suggested that the elite held such a position in relation to the ruler himself. While they must have held a position of authority within Yaxchilan before being commemorated on monuments, this may not have been within the sphere of kingship and its connected ideology. By being depicted alongside the *k'uhul ajaw* of Yaxchilan, engaging in rituals previously only shown involving the divine lord, their status was being elevated. Similarly, they were being incorporated into the ideology of kingship, as legitimate actors on the *k'uhul ajaws* behalf in matters of (supernatural and real) political organisation.

As discussed in Chapter 2, kingship evolved throughout the Classic period to become more dependent on the role of individual kings, rather than the institution as a whole. Political authority became intrinsically linked to the charisma of rulers. This is clearly evident at Yaxchilan, where Bird Jaguar IV demonstrated his abilities as king by recording himself engaging in a huge number of rituals, and as having the ability to command a growing number of elite. An unpopular ruler would have been unable to gain the support of such a wide range of people who held their own authority within the community. He further proved his prowess in taking a large number of captives (even if many of these were of little political importance, see Martin and Grube 2008: 117, 130).

Hieroglyphic monuments commissioned by Shield Jaguar IV (the former *Chel Te' Chan K'inich*) at Yaxchilan, and monuments that mention both him and his sister at other ceremonial cities (ibid.: 135), demonstrate that political allies in the form of

sajals and rulers from sites such as Bonampak, Laxtunich, and La Pasadita, were just as important during his reign as they were during his father's rule. The representation of Yaxchilan's range of supporters and subordinates further illustrates the high level of stratification among the elite. In addition, Shield Jaguar IV, and his successor, *K'inich Tatbu* Skull IV, record a number of military successes (ibid.: 135-137), showing that such events were still rooted deeply within the ideology of kingship at the site.

The consistency of the last three rulers of Yaxchilan in recording an increased number of political allies both within and outside polity can give an indication as to the nature of the collapse in the traditional political organisation of the ceremonial city. Maya kings did not enjoy unchecked power (Freidel 2008), and that the status of 'divine kings' provided no assurance of complete control, or even "the perpetuation of the institute of divine kingship itself." (Morrison 2008: 267) The Postclassic era saw the florescence of a number of ceremonial cities, including Chichén Itzá, which saw a shift towards an ideology focused more on the celebration of gods themselves (Freidel 2008: 200-201), rather than individual rulers. Wren and Schmidt (1991: 213) demonstrate that "it is impossible to identify a contemporary ruler at Chichén Itzá, [and] it is impossible to reconstruct a dynastic sequence between individuals named in the texts." Concepts of divine kinship collapsed, but not the complex societies that had built up around them. Krochock (n.d., in ibid.) has suggested that the political organisation "moved toward the development of some sort of ruling class with the emphasis on the relationships of the co-rulers to each other and perhaps the status differences among them", rather than emphasising the divine merits of the individual. Martin and Grube (2008: 137) point out that at Yaxchilan, after the reign of *K'inich Tatbu* Skull IV, the carved monuments dedicated to previous kings were broken up and

used as the foundations for "simple houses [in] the now redundant plazas." The previous hierarchy of the ceremonial city was thus rejected, and the political landscape changed drastically. No longer did *k'uhul ajaws* command complete authority. It is possible that, as Krochock suggests, co-rulership was implemented instead. Alternatively, there may have been a return to Preclassic rules of defining authority, whereby positions of political power were occupied by those who acquired and controlled a prerequisite amount of wealth, in the form of resources and control of trade routes (see Rathje 1970).

While archaeological evidence reveals that the political landscape at Yaxchilan changed dramatically in the ninth century, it does not indicate *why*. The general theories of the Maya 'collapse' are succinctly summarised by Aimers (2007: 333, table 1). Foias (2004) and others (Foias and Bishop 1997; Webster and Houston 2003) have argued that the decline of Yaxchilan may have been linked to an increase in warfare, which led to the disruption and eventual collapse of trade and tribute networks. It has been argued in Chapter 1 that while there may have been an increase in the representation of warfare at the ceremonial city, there is (as yet) little archaeological evidence to support this. Captive-taking was a system to *increase* tribute networks. Thus, these arguments appear to be both counter intuitive and pre-emptive.

Returning to the hieroglyphic and iconographic evidence that *is* available, it is proposed that the representation of an increasing number of elite at Yaxchilan indicates what Barnes (1988: 71) describes as the "downward delegation" of power through a process of "empowering." In the case of the Classic Maya, *k'uhul ajaws* conferred power upon their subordinates in exchange for their political support. This power may have come in the form of the right to take captives, and thus secure tribute,

in a particular geographical area. This is demonstrated by the joint campaign of Shield Jaguar IV of Yaxchilan and *Y-ajaw Chan Muwaan* of Bonampak-Lacanha against *Sak Tz'i*, commemorated on Lintel 2 at Bonampak (Martin and Grube 2008: 135-137). Alternatively, it may have been given in the form of a regency for a young ruler, as was the case for Lord Great Skull at Yaxchilan in the later years of Bird Jaguar IV (ibid.: 132). In all cases, this manifested in the elite's presence on public monuments commemorating the rituals they were privy to. As mentioned above, prior to the Late Classic, such rituals (captive taking, accession, and heir designation) were the sole responsibility of the kings themselves. Representing the elite in such a capacity elevated their status and encapsulated them within the ideology of kingship. This may have contributed to the collapse of the political organisation at Yaxchilan in two ways: firstly, there may have been a negative reaction towards such a shift in ideology among the community as a whole; secondly, the delegation of power may have resulted in its "delocalisation" (Barnes 1988: 81), which led to the decentralisation of political organisation and its eventual collapse.

It is well documented that the Classic period saw a rise in the population across the Maya lowlands (for example, see Folan et al 2000; Sharer 2006; Scherer 2007). As the community as a whole increased in population, so too did the number of elites. McAnany (1993) argues that the florescence of Classic period ceremonial cities was a direct consequence of an increase in elite households, and "the channelling of elites into artisan roles." Artisans became a rising middle class, unable to accrue political power due to strict control of the political landscape by the rulers. By including a larger proportion of elite within their monuments, kings forced greater social stratification: those whom they elevated, and those they did not. It is possible that this evolving

ideology was rejected by the rising middle class, fracturing the political authority held by kings. Rulers may have been 'divine', but they did not have the authority to elevate other, elite, to positions of power. The kings of Yaxchilan were forced into a situation whereby they needed political support in order to stay in power, but by acknowledging such support they were further alienating their community and destabilising the very ideology which underpinned their authority. This became a vicious circle, until eventually they were unable to maintain power altogether.

Another possible, although not mutually exclusive, theory for the collapse of Classic period kingships at Yaxchilan can be explained through Barnes' (1988) theories of "downward delegation" in the form of "empowering." Barnes (ibid.: 71) posits that "when an agent is empowered, discretion in the direction of a body of… activity is transferred to him." At Yaxchilan, we see this in the form of Bird Jaguar IV's allies conducting rituals alongside, and independent, of him. This delegation is made public (in the case of the Maya, on carved monuments) "which results in his [the empowered individual] indeed possessing it." (ibid.) Barnes elaborates that:

> The empowered agent is expected to further the objectives of the power-holder, but enjoys discretion in the use of power in order to further those objectives… He is, in effect, an authentic power-holder in his own right, even if in some cases the delegator continues to make use of the delegated powers directly, overriding his delegate whenever he so chooses. (ibid.)

At Yaxchilan, Bird Jaguar IV, Shield Jaguar IV, and *K'inich Tatbu* Skull IV could be said to have empowered their subordinates in exchange for their support. Such devolution results in an overall *increase* in the amount of power available, but eventually leads to a delocalisation (decentralisation) of power as a whole (ibid.: 81). Scholars have documented that political decentralisation may have contributed to the collapse of Classic

Maya kingship at other ceremonial cities across the lowlands (Fash et al 2004; Fox et al: 1996; LeCount and Yaeger 2010a: 337; Sharer 2006: 515; Suck 2011: 25; Tainter 1990: 166), as traditional political organisation disintegrated. We might thus be able to draw the conclusion that Yaxchilan suffered this process, perhaps at the same time the middle classes and non-elite *not* honoured with a role in authority became disillusioned with the role of *those particular kings* within their ideology. It is possible that before the eventual abandonment of the ceremonial city (as indicated by Martin and Grube 2008: 137) the community returned to a system of kingship that placed greater emphasis on the role of the king, rather than the charisma of the individual.

Conclusions

In this chapter, a brief history of the ceremonial city of Yaxchilan, and its rise to florescence in the Late Classic period, has been presented. The nature of kingship at Yaxchilan has been discussed, and the relationships that were formed between the rulers and their rivals and supporters, and how this may have shaped the political organisation of the polity. It has been argued that Yaxchilan kingship became inexorably linked to the charisma of the kings themselves, and their abilities to communicate with importance ancestors and gods and perform rituals for the benefit of the community as a whole. While this is similar to Demarest's (1992) theatre-state model of political organisation, the term 'state' is avoided in this study because it has been conterminously used to represent the individual (as in Demarest 1992) and geographical extent of a polity (as in the "Super-state" model, see Grube and Martin 1995), and thus lacks the necessary specificity to be useful.

I went on to present a model for the political organisation of Yaxchilan and its satellite ceremonial cities, whereby centralised power was delegated among chosen elite who were responsible for furthering the objectives of the king. This kind of delegation had two simultaneous effects: to polarise the non-elite *not* honoured in such a way, and cause social conflict between different groups within the community due to the ruler's attempts to manipulate the ideology which underpinned his authority; and to cause decentralisation of power. This eventually led to the collapse of kingship as it had evolved in the Classic period at the ceremonial city, and led to a (poorly documented) period of political organisation that no longer relied on the personality of individual rulers for success.

The object of this chapter has been to introduce the topics of Yaxchilan's political organisation, hierarchy, and the presence of a wide variety of elite individuals within the sculpted monuments of the site in preparation for the analysis of HS. 2 in subsequent sections. These are themes that will be returned to when the political implications of the carved stairway are analysed.

CHAPTER 4: THE BALLGAME

Eleven of the thirteen blocks of HS. 2 depict direct references to a version of the Maya hip ballgame. Before embarking on an analysis of these blocks, it is important to provide some context of the ballgame, and its significance in the Maya lowlands in the Classic period. A full treatment of the ballgame is outside the scope of this thesis, due to the volume of literature available on the subject. As this study is concerned primarily with the political and ideological implications of HS. 2, these are the areas that will be focused on in this chapter. Thus, the rules of play and paraphernalia of the game will only be touched on briefly. Some general observations of gear worn by ballgame players can be found below, whereas an iconographic analysis of the most significant aspects of the costume worn by the players on HS. 2 can be found in Chapter 7. In terms of physical play, ballcourt locations will be analysed. The rubber ball will be analysed in Chapter 6 (the inscribed ball) and Chapter 7 (the prisoner-as-ball motif). For a full summary of the ballgame, and review of the vast amounts of previous literature, see Banerjee (2013).

This chapter will also outline some of the metaphors of the ballgame, its importance in Classic Maya ideology, and what can be inferred regarding its importance in terms of political organisation. This author concedes that a much deeper understanding of the ballgame is needed before any decisive conclusions can be drawn. As Banerjee (ibid.) argues, there have been few studies of the ballgame from an evolutionary or regional perspective, and there is a huge amount of temporal and geographical diversity that is, in general, very poorly understood. Stuart (2005a) also points out that while scholars tend to speak of a single cosmology or ideology of the Maya, we should instead think in terms of multiple cosmologies. Classic Maya beliefs

and world-views were richly diverse, and this should be reflected in our approach. Like the political organisation and ideology of the Maya, it is clear that while there were underlying themes of continuity in the ballgame between ceremonial cities and wider regions, there were also distinct regional differences. Understanding local variations in any aspect of Maya ideology and politics is vital to developing understanding of the culture as a whole. Thus, while this chapter seeks to draw some general conclusions about the ballgame and its significance, it will do so with the focus on HS. 2.

In ancient times ballgames were played throughout the Americas (see Stern 1949). While many sources today speak of *the* Maya ballgame, there were in fact several ballgames played by the Maya throughout their history. Even the Maya hip ballgame may have had at least two versions: one played within the traditional 'I' shaped ballcourt, and another played against a set of steps (see below for discussion on ballcourts). HS. 2 demonstrates a group of players fielding balls against the stepped 'court', and has been cited by many authors seeking to explain the importance of the game and its metaphors. However, a lack of comprehensive study has led to a number of erroneous assumptions and generalisations being made about the game.

Accounts of the Hip Ballgame

Despite the wealth of literature on the subject, very little about the Maya hip ballgame is understood. Parallels are often drawn between the Maya and Aztec versions of the game, as a good amount of sixteenth century accounts survive of the latter version. Significantly, the Aztec version of the game is also discussed within indigenous literature. A number of Postclassic codices, such as in the Codex

Borgia, contain references to the ballgame played within an 'I' shaped court. Spanish accounts also survive from the conquest period. One such account, written by Diego Durán in his *Book of the Gods and Rites* (written 1574–1576), is particularly detailed and complimentary of the Aztec version of the game. Durán (1971: 313) wrote that the ballgame was played for the "entertainment and amusement of the people", and lasted around an hour, all the while "the ball did not stop bouncing from one end [of the court] to the other." The game was played "using only the buttocks [and knees], never touching it [the ball] with the hand, foot, calf, or arm." The players were "esteemed by the sovereigns", and there was regular "competition between the two [types of communities]." (ibid.: 314) He goes onto compare the ballgame with military feats, saying that "the main players stood in the centre facing the ball, and so did the opponents, since the game was carried out similarly to the way they fought in battle." (ibid.: 315). While we should be cautious about drawing too many conclusions from accounts of the Aztec game, some parallels can be made. By comparing images of Aztec and Maya ballgames, scholars can see that some aspects of the sport were clearly shared (see figures 4.1a and 4.1b for examples of the Aztec ballgame).

In contrast, the only surviving colonial account of the Maya hip ballgame comes from Diego de Landa, who briefly mentioned a game he observed, but offered no details as to how it was played (Tozzer 1941: 124). A small number of Postclassic accounts of the ballgame also survive. The Maya Dresden Codex, a twelfth century document from the Yucatec region, alludes to the game, showing the rain god Chahk sitting atop a ballcourt that contains a rubber ball (figure 4.2). This image has allowed Houston (1983a) to identify the glyph for the rubber balls (figure 4.9), and helped to inform the research conducted by Nadal et al (1993) into how ancient rubber balls were manufactured.

The main source of information of the Maya ballgame, however, undoubtedly comes from the Popol Vuh. The original manuscript was written by indigenous K'iche' Maya, and recounts the creation of the world, the gods, and people (Tedlock 1996: 24). While the language of the text suggests that the content may have originally been an oral history (see ibid.: 91), the indigenous authors of the text, although completely anonymous, tell us that there was originally a hieroglyphic version of the narrative which remained hidden to prevent its destruction, perhaps at the hands of the Spanish (ibid.: 63). A copy written in the K'iche' language but in Latinate script was translated into Spanish at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Dominican missionary friar Francisco Ximénez (Quiroa 2002). This copy was not rediscovered by European scholars until the mid-nineteenth century.

The Popol Vuh is comprised of five sections. It begins with the story of creation, and the gods' experiments in trying to create people. The narrative then shifts to the early adventures of the Hero Twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, and their defeat of Zipacna and Seven Macaw. The story then rewinds to introduce the Hero Twin's father, One Hunahpu and his brother Seven Hunahpu (summarised below). This section contains the framework that scholars have used to understand ballgame representations across the Maya lowlands, as it provides a narrative of a number of ballgames that occurred before the creation of humans (see Tedlock 1996: 91-144). Part four of the Popol Vuh details how humans were finally created, and the beginnings of the K'iche' people. Finally, section five discusses the genealogy of the different Maya groups at the time the Spanish arrived in the New World.

The third section of the Popol Vuh describes how One Hunahpu and his brother Seven Hunahpu played the ballgame together, along with One Hunahpu's

eldest sons, One Monkey and One Artisan. They caused so much noise on the surface of the earth, they were summoned to the Underworld by the Lords of Xibalba. Once there, the brothers were tricked and killed, and buried at the Place of the Ballgame Sacrifice (ibid.: 91-98). One Hunahpu's head was placed in a calabash tree, where it was happened upon by Blood Moon, a daughter of one of the Lords of Xibalba. When she approached the tree, One Hunahpu's skull spat in her hand, and she became pregnant. Afraid of her father's reaction, Blood Moon fled to the earth's surface, where she gave birth to the Hero Twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque (ibid.: 98-106). When the Hero Twins were grown, they found their father's gaming equipment, and they too began playing the ballgame at the court. Again, the Lords of Xibalba were disturbed, and summoned the Hero Twins to the Underworld (ibid.: 112-116). There, the boys played ball against the Underworld Lords, using the Lord's own ball (called 'White Dagger') and won. Despite their victory, they allowed themselves to be killed, and their ashes were thrown in the river (ibid.: 116-131).

Five days later, the Hero Twins reappeared in the Underworld as catfish, and a day later emerged from the river as vagabonds (ibid.: 132). They used tricks and magic to impress the denizens there, until eventually they were summoned by the Lords to perform for them. None recognised them, and the Hero Twins were able to play a trick on One Death and Seven Death: they killed them, and refused to resurrect them at the end of the performance (ibid.: 136). Thus the Lords of the Underworld were defeated. Once their victory was proclaimed, the twins went to the Place of the Ballgame Sacrifice, and returned their father's head to his body so that he could be resurrected (ibid.: 141). Eventually, One Hunahpu was reborn as the young Maize God, and became a patron of the ballgame.

This account bears a striking resemblance to some of the iconography found within the Maya lowlands. For example, the Princeton Vase (figure 4.3) depicts a scene in a lavish palace, where an old lord is being served by beautiful women. Outside the palace a male figure stands over another individual, striking his neck with an axe. This vase is believed to represent the point in the Popol Vuh when Hunahpu and Xbalanque are building a reputation for their magic, and One Death hears of it from his courtiers (Kerr and Kerr 2005). Another representation can be seen on the central ballcourt marker at Copan, where Hunahpu and a Lord of the Underworld are kneeling either side of a rubber ball (figure 4.4).

Mythological and non-mythological ballgame scenes are also seen on a large number of polychrome vessels (see figures 4.7 and 4.14), and on monumental sculpture (for example, HS. 2; also see figures 4.4, 4.6, 4.8, and 4.11c). HS. 2 provides a unique perspective on the ballgame, with the greatest number of individual scenes presented as a more cohesive narrative than any other representation in the Maya area. The stairway demonstrates the continuity between ballgame representations: the blocks show a similar stepped court seen in many ceramic examples; the players on HS. 2 wore similar attire to other sculpted monuments (even where a court - stepped or 'I' shaped - is not visible, such as on figure 4.8); and the glyphic expressions used to denote the ballcourt are similar to those found in the codices (for comparison, see figures 4.2 and 4.9b). The following discussions examine these areas of the ballgame - the ballcourt, protective wear, hieroglyphic representations, as well as rules of play - with specific reference to HS. 2, and how the monument can inform the research.

Ballcourts

While some hip ballgame representations do not include a court (for example in figures 4.4 and 4.8), other examples show the ballgame being played against a set of steps (HS. 2, Appendix A; also see figures 5.7b and 5.14a). There are no Maya examples of iconography of the 'I' shaped court, although almost all ceremonial cities have one of this type (see Taladoire 2001). Yaxchilan has two such ballcourts (Tate 1992: loc 4907), the most prominent of which is Structure 14 (figure 4.5), which is located in the main plaza of the ceremonial city. Aztec examples of the 'I' shaped ballcourt (figure 4.1) demonstrate that the hip ballgame was indeed played in such an arena, and it has been assumed that similar games took place in these areas. Ballcourts in the Maya lowlands varied greatly in size. Structure 14, at Yaxchilan, has a playing area of 18.41 by 3.76 meters (Tate 1992: loc 4907), whereas the playing field of the Great Ballcourt at Chichén Itzá measures 96.5 meters by 30 meters (Taladoire 2001: 103). Similarly, the number of ballcourts within different ceremonial cities varied considerably: Kurjack et al (2001: 150) identify thirteen ballcourts at Chichén Itzá; Day (2001: 75) argues that there were eighteen at El Tajín; there are just two at Yaxchilan; and ballcourts are absent at Bonampak and Tortuguero (Taladoire 2001: 99). The *type* of 'I' shaped ballcourt also varied between sites: some were open-ended, whereas others were semi-enclosed, or enclosed (ibid.: 108, table 3). The variation in ballcourt size and type has led some scholars to speculate that different sized courts may have had different rules of play: some courts contained ballcourt markers, which the ball may have been bounced on to score points; others contained rings, and the ball may have had to pass through the inner circle (Stone and Zender 2011: 101; Miller and Taube 1997: 43). In

contrast, despite ballgame iconography showing the 'stepped' court, no stairways have been definitively identified as arenas for the game. An 'I' shaped ballcourt is relatively easy to identify; a 'stepped' court could be any stairway within a ceremonial city.

The variety of court sizes, and the many different representations of courts, has led Coe (2003: 202) to suggest that the version against steps was distinctly separate from that played in the 'I' shaped court, whereas other scholars have argued they are part of the same game (Schele and Miller 1986: 247; Hellmuth 1987a: 273; Miller and Houston 1987: 50). Colas and Voss (2006: 190) suggest that the 'stepped' court and the 'I' shaped court are actually the same arena, portrayed from a different angle, and that the steps are simply an aesthetic choice. It is possible that K1209 (figure 4.7) demonstrates this, showing a tiered 'end zone' beside stepped sides that may flank the players. This is a rare example, however, and many ballcourts have sloped (not stepped) sides. Similarly, Taladoire (1981: 360) has argued that the steps shown on HS. 2 represent 'general conventions' for architecture, and do not refer to a specific architectural environment such as different location for the ballgame. Zender (2004b) suggests that steps seen in ballgame scenes were steps leading up from the end zones of sunken ballcourts, although it should be noted that not all ballcourts have such structures, such as the Structure 14, at Yaxchilan. It is clear that without further iconographic examples, or the discovery of hieroglyphic differentiations, a consensus will not be reached. For now, this study follows the arguments that the two courts were the arenas for separate, but related, games which could form part of a single 'ballgame ritual'. It is important to remember the role of 'resonance' within Maya iconography (Miller and Houston 1987; see Chapter 1), and, as will be demonstrated in Chapters 6 and 7, HS. 2 makes more of the 'stages' of the ritual explicit.

Montmollin (1997: 30) proposes that "variations in ballcourt densities would hold that different cultures have shifting degrees of customary attachment to ballgames" and that larger numbers of ballcourts could reflect a more decentralised political system. Fox (1996: 489) similarly suggests that differences in ballcourt construction may reflect varying degrees of political centralisation. Greater number of ballcourts could indicate a higher level of political decentralisation as different political powers or elite groups sought to publicly affirm their status through architectural and monumental programs. Scholars cite examples such as Postclassic Chichén Itzá, which has thirteen courts and lacks representation of a defined ruling lineage (see Chapter 2), comparing it to ceremonial cities of the Classic period, such as Yaxchilan and Palenque, which have long dynastic histories (see Martin and Grube 2008) but only two and one ballcourts respectively. This may imply greater centralisation of power in the latter areas because there were fewer members of the community with the wealth and labour forces to construct a ballcourt. This may also indicate that the ballgames played on such courts was more strictly controlled by the rulers, and thus formed part of the royal identity.

The 'I' Shaped Ballcourt

Taladoire (1981) and Fox (1994) have provided comprehensive analyses of ballcourts from an archaeological perspective, including discussion on typologies and classification of the 'I' shaped court. Because of the public nature of the 'I' shaped court, and their centrality within ceremonial cities, it is clear that the events held there were more than 'games'. They were politically and ideologically charged rituals. As Lévi-Strauss (1962: 20) explains:

All games are defined by a set of rules which in practice allow the playing of any number of matches. Ritual, which is also 'played', is on the other hand, like a favoured instance of a game, remembered from among the possible ones because it is the only one which results in a particular type of equilibrium between the two sides.

The 'I' shaped court may have also held other rituals and events, such as wrestling, pageants, and dramas (Day 2001: 73). Fox (1996: 493) speculates that some ballcourts were never actually used for play, but instead were public arenas "in which power relations were negotiated, reproduced, and occasionally transformed through rituals." There is no evidence to suggest that ballcourts were *not* used for the ballgame, however it is probable that other events were held there, and they may have been locations where politically important decisions were made. 'I' shaped ballcourts were public ritual spaces that were ideologically associated with places of great importance to the creation of mankind and cosmic order (see below). Thus, decisions made or disputes resolved there took on cosmic meaning and importance. Fox (ibid.: 485) discusses the ideological nature of the 'I' shaped ballcourt, and reminds us that buildings, such as ballcourts, "were animate entities subject to their own rites of passage." They acted as "symbols for community identity", and there was an "intimate association between ballcourts and the social landscape" (ibid.).

The 'I' shaped ballcourt also recreated the sacred landscape of Maya ideology. These ballcourts were built with two platforms running either side of the playing field (see figure 4.5). This created a dip, or low point, in the ballcourt, which some scholars have likened to the cleft at the top of a sacred mountain (Schele and Freidel 1991: 308; Schele 1998: 496). Stone and Zender (2011: 139) argue that "although the lowland Maya were basically flatlanders, the concept of the sacred mountain was a fundamental tenet

of their religion since it was rooted in pan-Mesoamerican traditions that transcended local topography." The Maya rulers overcame the lack of 'real' mountains by 'creating' them: on stela, basal registers could be designed to represent hills or mountains, for example at Quirigua (Looper 2009: 91), and it is well documented that the Maya conceived of temples as mountains (Schele and Mathews 1998: 43; Sharer 2006: 454; Coe 2011: 124). Mountains were considered places where gods and ancestors resided (Stone and Zender 2011: 139), and where maize originated (Coe 2011: 124; Miller and Taube 1997: 120). *Xmucane*, the grandmother of the Hero Twins, ground maize from the Mountain of Sustenance in order to create the first humans (Tedlock 1996 139-140). This creation story parallels the resurrection of the Maize God from the jagged crack in the earth seen on many Classic era ceramics (Grofe 2007: 9). On K1892, the Maize God emerges from the crack in a turtle shell (a metaphor for the earth), accompanied by his sons, the Hero Twins (figure 4.16).

The 'I' shaped ballcourt was conceived of as a living manifestation of the interior of the sacred mountain. The 'cleft' of the alley represented an entrance into the sacred mountain, and thus an entrance into the Underworld (Stone and Zender 2011: 101). The court was thus associated with fertility, the gods, and ancestors, while also being a dangerous and dark place of death and rebirth (McKillop 2004: 214). This has led scholars to suggest that the ballcourt represented a place where rebirth and the cycle of life was re-enacted, causing many to assume that human sacrifice was a common and inevitable end to the game (Schele and Miller 1986: 241; Schele and Freidel 1990: 126; Miller and Taube 1997: 43). While this author does not follow the latter assumption (see Chapter 7), this study does support that the 'I' shaped ballcourt was a sacred space in which death and rebirth occurred and where the cosmic balance was addressed.

Rules for play on the 'I' shaped court may have differed between the Northern Lowlands and Southern Lowlands (see Kurjack et al 2001; and Agrinier 1991). Different methods of scoring may be indicated by the presence of ballcourt markers or rings (see above). Freidel et al (1993: 341-345) suggest that the ball could not fall onto the alley of the court, and could only be fielded against the walls. Different sized courts may have also meant different rules (Montmollin 1997: 32), and would have certainly meant different numbers of players that could participate at any given time. Scholars have argued that there were two teams, of two to three players in each, meaning four to six players in total (Miller and Taube 1997: 43). There are, however, a number of ballgame representations that show just two players, for example figures 4.4, 4.7a, 4.8a and 4.8b, and 4.11b. These examples show two players on a designated court (neither 'I' shaped, nor 'stepped'). The Great Ballcourt reliefs at Chichén Itzá show many individuals, but they do not appear to be actively playing the game, rather they are participating in a later ritual. Other representations, showing multiple players, depict a 'stepped' court (discussed below).

The 'Stepped' Ballcourt

Even less is understood about the ballgame played on the 'stepped' court. There is no indication of the method of scoring, and less is understood regarding the ideological implications of the game. Miller and Taube (1997: 43) argue that the ballgame could only be played by men and gods, thus there are no examples of female ball players in the Maya lowlands. This study argues, along with Colas and Voss (2006: 187), that HS. 2 depicts two women playing the ballgame (see Chapter 7), and it should

be noted that female ball players can be found in Olmec and Huastec iconography (for example, see figure 4.15; also Bradley 2001).

While HS. 2 represents eleven players of the ballgame (nine male, two female), it has always been assumed that they are playing independent games from one another; eleven (or nine, if one only counts the male players) does not split evenly into two teams. Other examples of play on the 'stepped' court show different numbers of players: there are six ballplayers on K3814 (figure 4.7b), four on K2803 (figure 4.14b), and four on K2803 (figure 4.14a). Representations of two players opposite one another also exist (see above), however, this author would argue that in many examples, only two individuals are actually *playing* the game; other figures wearing ballgame attire may only have been observing. For example, on K1871 (figure 4.13b), one player is shown down on one knee, in an 'action' pose. A second player, facing the kneeling individual, stands with one heel raised off the floor, traditionally indicative of dancing (Harris and Stearns 1997: 54; Foster 2002: 341; Looper 2010). This 'dance' pose may indicate a second, active, participant in the game, and could also suggest that the ballgame represented similar ritual activities to dancing. The other individuals dressed in ballgame attire on K1871 are shown standing, with no indications of movement. Other examples of two active ball players come from carved panels, such as those at La Corona (figure 4.7a) and Tonina (figure 4.7b), and the ballcourt markers at Copan (figure 4.4), all showing two players opposite one another.

It is possible, then, that the ballgame played against the 'stepped' court could be played alone (as on HS. 2), or against a single opponent. Play may have involved not allowing the ball to hit the ground, or only allowing it to bounce once. Points may have been scored in this way, similar to modern day squash or tennis. Ballgame players are often presented in 'action' poses (see Chapter 2), wearing well padded protective gear

(see below), indicating that play was vigorous and dangerous. The position of players (for example, see figures 4.4, 4.8 and HS. 2) suggests that the ball could only be fielded using the hips or chest, and that use of hands and feet were against the rules (Freidel et al 1993: 341-345), as these are often shown well away from the ball.

As an architectural space, 'stepped' ballcourts would have functioned very differently to 'I' shaped courts. They may still have been a public arena, although it is possible that games could have taken place in other, less accessible areas (such as the small plaza in front of HS. 2 at Yaxchilan). Unlike 'I' shaped courts, steps would not function as locales for feasts and festivities, but they still had a dual purpose: both in hosting the ballgame ritual, and in providing access to a particular structure or space. The meaning of the steps then became multi-layered: ascending into an important building also meant reconnecting with the victory enjoyed during the ballgame hosted there. The steps would also have functioned as the metaphorical sacred mountain. More generally, steps were used to recreate sacred mountains within ceremonial cities by providing access to structures built above plazas. Thus, playing the ballgame against a set of steps may have recalled similar mythological locations as the 'I' shaped court.

Playing Gear

A full analysis of ballgame gear and paraphernalia can be found in Hellmuth (1987a), and detailed descriptions of individual items can be found in (on balls) Nadal (2001), Nadal et al (1993), (on attire) Thompson (1941), Miller (1989), Scott (2001), and Whittington (2001), among others.

Table 4.1 (below) gives a breakdown of the clothing worn by the male players on HS. 2.

Block	Headdress	Mask	Armbands	Sandals	Kneepad	Deflector	Backrack	Skirt	Shorts	Necklace	Earspool	Apron
I												
II												
III												
IV	x	x	x			x	x	x			x	
V	x	x			x	x	x		x		x	x
VI	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
VII	x			x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
VIII	x		x	x	x	x	x				x	x
IX	x		x		x	x	x				x	x
X	x	x	x			x	x				x	x
XI												
XII	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x
XIII	x					x	x				x	

Table 4.1

As can be seen, almost all the players wear all of the gear listed, and missing items are probably due to high levels of erosion (except for masks, see Chapter 7). This section will give a brief description of the function and meaning of the core gaming gear. Further information on the specific iconography of the headdresses, backracks, and masks can be found in Chapter 7.

Deflector

Deflectors, belts and yokes tend to fall into the same category when scholars discuss protective ballgame wear (see Thompson 1941). Most Maya ball players wore such an item around their waist, just above their hips. In many representations, these are relatively plain items, made up of two or three 'bars'. In others, such as on HS. 2 blocks VI and VII, they are more elaborately designed, with iconographic markers.

Many stone yokes have been found in the course of archaeological investigation in Mexico, and they are often highly decorated (figure 4.10, see Whittington 2001), however it should be noted that there are fewer examples across the Northern and Southern Lowlands. Hellmuth (1987a: 291-292), who has worn such items in pursuit of his research, has argued that even those made of stone were a manageable weight, and could be worn with relative ease by a trained and physically fit individual.

The ball players on HS. 2 appear instead to be wearing padded deflectors, which are also commonly seen throughout the Southern Lowlands (figure 4.11a-d). This is an item of protective clothing that is worn by ball players high on the chest, normally made up of vertically arranged pieces. Bird Jaguar IV (block VII) and Shield Jaguar III (block VI) wear elaborately decorated versions, indicating their high status.

Where yokes may have provided protection for the waist, the deflector protected the waist and chest. They were probably made from lightweight, malleable materials, such as wood and cloth, so as to provide protection without unduly inhibiting play. The presence of such items lends support to the argument that the ballgame could be dangerous. It may also indicate that players in areas where the deflector was prevalent (rather than the yoke) could use their whole torso to field the ball.

Skirt

Many ball players are often seen wearing a beaded and tasselled skirt, however once again there are distinct variations. Only Bird Jaguar IV appears to be wearing a netted skirt, although erosion is high on the other blocks. This skirt is frequently worn by individuals who are dressed as the Maize God (Taube 1985: 174; Freidel et al 1993: 277-278; Carol 2005: 48-49), and is associated with agricultural fertility and the gathering of maize (Milbrath 2000: 140). It is possible that the netted skirt is also associated with the Hero Twins. In the Popol Vuh, Xmucane orders Blood Moon to gather maize to prove she is carrying her grandchildren. Blood Moon takes a net, and, thanks to the guardians of food and the "genius" of the unborn Hero Twins (Tedlock 1996: 104), she fills the net with ears of corn. Thus, the net and agricultural abundance is similarly connected to the Hero Twins, as well as their father (who becomes the Maize God).[14] Bird Jaguar IV further recalls the Hero Twins using the iconography on his backrack (see Chapter 7) (Schele and Miller 1986: 249).

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[14] Although it should be noted that the Popol Vuh is a colonial source, and can be problematic in its application to Classic Maya examples. However, there are Classic period equivalents to the stories found within, which is why they are applied in this context.

Apron

The apron did not serve a specific protective function, but appears to have been a decorative item. An apron is worn by every ball player on HS. 2. There are both loincloth aprons and deflector aprons, although at times it can be difficult to distinguish between the two due to levels of erosion. Bird Jaguar IV on block VII, for example, wears an elaborate deflector apron, whereas the player on block V appears to wear a loincloth apron. Bird Jaguar III on block VIII is clearly wearing an apron of some kind, although because of the perspective it is impossible to determine which. The apron is a strip of cloth that hangs down from another item of clothing; in this case either the loincloth or the deflector. On HS. 2, these have been decorated with foliation designs, net patterns, and tassels (see figure 4.12).

Kneepad

Most often, players are seen to only wear one knee protector, normally present on their right knee. Often, these are pads worn with tassels or adornments hanging down from them. In representations of ballgames in progress, players in 'action' poses (see Chapter 2) are often kneeling on the knee covered by this garment. Clearly it was a protective piece of gear.

A kneepad is worn by every ball player on HS. 2. This can even be seen where erosion would be too great to make out specific details (such as on blocks V and XIII). Where these players' right knees meet the court floor is slightly elevated, suggesting that their bare skin is not touching the ground, but there is a protective buffer of the kneepad shielding them from the worst of the impact.

<u>Sandals</u>

Many players wear elaborate beaded sandals, as do the three main protagonists on HS. 2 blocks VI, VII, and VIII (figure 4.13a-c). They appear to be decorated with beads and feathers, and are knotted on the front. The sandals are significant because they indicate that the blocks were carved by a number of different artists. The knot on the sandal on block VIII (figure 4.13c) is distinctly different from those on blocks VI and VII (figures 4.13a and 4.13b). Similarly, the representation of the foot is very different. Each of Bird Jaguar III's toes have been shown individually on his left foot, whereas the other two ruler's feet do not show this level of detail. These stylistic differences in representation suggest at least two different artists worked on the images of HS. 2. Further examples of aesthetic variation can also be found in hieroglyphic inscriptions across Yaxchilan (see Tate 1992: 1536-1791).

<u>Accessories</u>

While not specifically ballgame attire, there are certain accessories that recur amongst ball players that are worth noting. Anklets, necklaces, arm and leg decorations, ear spools and nose piercings adorned with beads and jade are all common accessories worn by ball players. On HS. 2, Shield Jaguar III wears a beaded necklace with a pectoral. This is eroded, but may contain the face of the Sun God, *K'inich Ajaw*, which is a royal symbol with roots back to the mid-5th century (Miller and Taube 1997: 106).

This section has briefly outlined the traditional ballgame attire worn by the players on HS. 2, and has presented some cursory information regarding its ideological

implications. Importantly, the ballgame gear worn by players, both on HS. 2 and across the lowlands, was both protective and decorative. While much of the costume (in particular the headdresses and backracks) would have been cumbersome and impossible to play in, it may have been worn immediately before or after the game, given the 'resonance' of the images (see Chapter 2). Despite looking restrictive, the deflectors were actually protective items, worn to ensure the players were not fatally injured. This has implications for the representation of the ball itself (see Chapter 6). Overall, the iconography of the playing gear was that of fertility: the netted skirt and foliated aprons recall this association. The 'I' shaped ballcourt was a metaphor for the origin of maize and human kind (see above: Ballcourts), and the general costume worn by the ball players was used to reaffirm this association.

Conclusions

The ballgame represented a huge range of ideologies for the Classic period lowland Maya. As can be seen, the ballcourt evoked the Mountain of Sustenance, a place of fertility and creation. However, it also had Underworld connotations, a dangerous and dark place, associated with death and rebirth (McKillop 2004: 214). The ballcourt represented a duality, a place where rebirth and the cycle of life was enacted. This is reflected in some scholars' understanding that the ballgame was a metaphor for the movement of heavenly bodies, such as the sun, the moon, and Venus (Miller 1992: 220; Foster 2002).

In a practical sense, the ballcourt was an arena for social and political interaction. In them, power relationships could be negotiated and reproduced. As

Lévi-Strauss (1962: 21) points out, "games had a disjunctive effect: they end in the establishment of a difference between individual players or teams where originally there was no indication of inequality." The ballcourt could also have acted as an arena for other rituals, pageants, and events that brought the community together as "symbols for community identity" (Fox 1996: 285), while at the same time reasserting the social hierarchies within the ceremonial city.

The ballgame was also a ritual re-enactment of military actions such as gladiatorial combat and warfare (Gutierrez 1990; Schele 1998). It may have allowed different political organisations to play out conflict without the need for full scale warfare. Miller (1989: 30-31) goes as far to say that the ballgame was integral to "other rituals and historical events - warfare, the coming of age, fertility rituals, and… death." Play was highly symbolic, and the clothes worn recalled gods of agricultural fertility, and those vital in the creation of humans. In this, the ballgame was used to show that the cosmic balance, and the continued survival of the Maya people, could be influenced and was cared for by those that played it: rulers.

CHAPTER 5: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF HS. 2

The archaeological context of HS. 2 is extremely interesting, and has not been discussed in depth in previous literature. Below is a description of the buildings and monuments that make up the ritual space surrounding the carved stairway, and a brief analysis of the ideological implications. This will lay the foundations of the hieroglyphic and iconographic analysis which will follow in Chapters 6 and 7. The context of HS. 2 is politically and ritually significant to its function as a carved monument at Yaxchilan. Discussions of some of the issues around 'audience' can be found in Chapter 1. This will be elaborated on with specific reference to HS. 2 later in this chapter.

HS. 2 was excavated in 1975, where the plaza in front of Structure 33 was fully cleared, and the stairway uncovered (García Moll 1975). It now resides in situ, protected by a plastic shelter, in the heart of the site of Yaxchilan. Table 5.1 lists the monuments connected with HS. 2, and lists the associated dates and protagonists (where known).

Monument	Long count	Date	Protagonist(s)
HS. 2	No date		Block I: A lesser wife of Bird Jaguar IV
	No date		Block II: Lady Pakal
	No date		Block III: Lady Ik' Skull
	No date		Block IV: A Yaxchilan Lord
	No date		Block V: Unknown
	9.15.12.2.9 (?)	Aug 743	Block VI: Shield Jaguar III
	9.15.13.6.9	Oct 744	Block VII: Bird Jaguar IV
	9.10.3.11.8 (?)	Aug 636	Block VIII: Bird Jaguar III
	No date		Block IX: A Divine Yaxchilan Lord
	No date		Block X: K'an Tok Wayib
	No date		Block XI: A lesser wife of Bird Jaguar IV
	No date		Block XII: A Yaxchilan Prince (?)
	No date		Block XIII: A Divine Yaxchilan Lord
Structure 33	9.16.6.0.0	Apr 757	Bird Jaguar IV (?)

Stela 2	9.9.0.0.0	May 613	K'inich Tatbu Skull III
Altar 9	9.16.0.0.0	Apr 757	Bird Jaguar IV (?)
Altar 10	9.15.3.1.5	Aug 734	Unknown
Stela 31	Unknown		Divine Yaxchilan Lord, other unknown male, unknown female
Lintel 1	9.16.1.0.0	Apr 752	Bird Jaguar IV and Lady Great Skull
Lintel 2	9.16.6.0.0	Apr 757	Bird Jaguar IV and Shield Jaguar IV
Lintel 3	9.16.5.0.0	Apr 756	Bird Jaguar IV and K'in Mo' Ajaw
Statue	Unknown		Bird Jaguar IV
Throne	9.16.6.0.0	Apr 757	

Table 5.1: The monuments within the ceremonial space of HS. 2, including dates and protagonists (Graham 1977, 1979, 1982; Martin and Grube 2008; Tate 1992)

Location

HS. 2 is comprised of thirteen carved blocks which form the riser of the top most step of a stairway leading into Structure 33 (figure 5.1). Today, it is protected with a corrugated plastic cover, but remains in situ. This stairway is comprised of thirteen blocks, and leads from a small plaza, which can be reached by the Grand Stairway. The structure, and thus HS. 2, is central to the ceremonial city of Yaxchilan. For the purposes of this section, it is important to note that the number thirteen was significant to the Maya. Thirteen was the number of layers in the heavens, and there was a specific deity of the number thirteen (Robertson 2011) (see below). Clearly these associations are important, and serve to place the stairway in a particular supernatural location.

Structure 33

Structure 33 stands almost centrally within the main body of the site, and is one of the largest structures at Yaxchilan (figure 5.1). It faces the main plaza, towards

the river to the north of the ceremonial city (see figure 4.2). Structures 25 and 26 flank Structure 33's east side while Structures 27 and 28 stand to the north. Structure 33 was set back from the ridge on which these other four buildings sit, and is on a higher elevation. Structures 25, 26, and 27 have been the subject of limited archaeological study, and they have not been fully excavated (Tate 1992: loc 5427). Structures 35 and 36, which sit to the southwest of Structure 33, and further away from the river are, on the other hand, unlike any other buildings found at Yaxchilan (ibid.: loc 5614). According to Tate, they are:

> Basically square-based stepped pyramidal platforms, but with a complex system of inward and outward-projecting stones at the corners, as though a square bite had been taken from the massive stones at the corners of each course of masonry. (ibid.)

Similar to 25, 26 and 27, little excavation has been conducted on these structures, so their purpose is unclear. It is unsurprising that they have garnered little attention. The site's location has made it difficult to study comprehensively in the past, and Structure 33 demands attention due to its size and contents. In contrast to Structure 33 no inscriptions, painting, or stucco have been identified on the other buildings in the immediate area.

Structure 33 was built on a ridge that rises up from the bank of the Usumacinta River, directly above the floodplain (Mathews 1988: 3). Its base is elevated 154 meters from the water level, and stands 180 meters from the bank. According to Tate (1985; Tate 1992: loc 5457), it is orientated 48 to 50 degrees from the doorways, and the central door is exactly 50 degrees. This makes it orientated somewhere between North East and East North East, allowing the sun to illuminate the façade, roofcomb, and doorways as it rises. At certain times of the year, the sun would also set directly behind

the structure, light splaying out behind it. This may have been used for effect during rituals at these times of the year.

Today, trees and vegetation cover the site. However, during its peak, Yaxchilan would have been clear, so that the buildings and monuments could have been seen easily and without obstruction. Structure 33 would have been visible from the river, and risen up above the buildings in front of and behind it. For Bird Jaguar IV, it would have stood out as a crowning achievement during his reign. According to Maler, the size and location would have made it one of the most imposing structures in the city (Maler 1903: 158). Even today, this is the case, and the building has drawn many visitors to Yaxchilan (Tate 1992: loc 5457). For further discussion of Structure 33's function, see Chapter 3.

The Grand Stairway and Stela 2

The Grand Stairway leads up from a long plaza to a smaller plaza in front of Structure 33 (figure 5.3). Near the base of the stairway, INAH has reset the Early Classic Stela 2 (Tate 1992: loc 5565). From the bottom of the Grand Stairway, little of Structure 33 is visible; only the roofcomb can be seen clearly. This was surely deliberate, making the top of the Grand Stairway and the small plaza (discussed below) a more private space, accessible only to those explicitly sanctioned by Bird Jaguar IV.

Stela 2 is in poor condition, and is not contemporaneous with Structure 33, being carved much earlier (figure 5.4). It is currently the only known monument from the reign of *K'inich Tatbu* Skull III (although more may be found with further archaeological investigation), and is dated 613 A.D. (9.9.0.0.0) (Martin and Grube

2008: 121). The stela depicts a warrior (Tate 1992: loc 5501) (probably a ruler; perhaps *K'inich Tatbu* Skull III), and incorporates the first 'basal monster' design used at Yaxchilan (ibid.: loc 2162). Tate (ibid.: loc 2155) suggests that the basal monsters were often "puns on the Split Sky toponym for Yaxchilan."

The Small Plaza, Altars, and Thirteen Stepped Stairway

At the pinnacle of the Grand Stairway, there is a small plaza approximately two meters in width. Stela 31 stands slightly off to the right within the plaza (figure 5.5, see below). Beyond the plaza, there are a final set of thirteen steps which lead up to the three doorways of Structure 33 (HS. 2 forms the riser of the thirteenth and final step). At the base of these steps, two circular altars stand covered in moss and vegetation (figures 5.6a and 5.6b), so that the details are no longer discernible. Martin and Grube (2008: 133) suggest that these two altars are on either side of the steps leading into Structure 33 (figure 5.7), although it is clear that one has now been moved. Figure 5.6a shows that the altar to the far north of the plaza is now in the centre. Graham (1977: 6-7) indicates that there was only one altar within the plaza, Altar 9, although this is no longer the case. Pallan (personal communication, 2012) believes that Altars 9 *and* 10 are now in front of Structure 33, whereas Tate (1992: loc 5493) suggests that Altar 10 is at the bottom of the Grand Stairway, beside a caiman sculpture, to the West of Stela 2. Photographs taken (figure 5.11) demonstrate that Altar 10 was still in situ beside the caiman sculpture in 2004. Given previous locations of the monuments, one of the altars is almost certainly Altar 9. However, without further field work, and restoration of the monuments in the small plaza, it is

impossible to know definitively which altars they are. It is unclear when and why the monuments have been moved.

The plaza is not visible from the base of the Grand Stairway, as can be seen from figure 5.3, thus it probably represented a private ritual space, not open to the general population of Yaxchilan. The final thirteen steps leading into Structure 33 mirror the number of HS. 2 blocks. HS. 2 is placed on the uppermost step of this stairway, directly below the three entrances to Structure 33. As previously mentioned, the number thirteen is significant, being the number of layers in the celestial realm. More detailed discussion can be found below. Clearly, there was cosmological significance on placing the carved blocks on this step. This will be discussed below, and it was probably used to place Structure 33 in an Otherworld.

Stela 31

Stela 31, shown in figure 5.5, is a carved stalactite, and is of unknown importance. Although the stalactite is incised with three figures and some glyphs, no dates survive on the monument and it is now in very poor condition, with much of the carved sections of the formation broken off or missing. This degradation appears to be natural so we can assume that the stela and its message were not maliciously destroyed by either ancient Maya or contemporary looters.

What little carving has survived appears at the base of the stela (probably where the inscriptions were protected by burial over time). We can see that there may have been at least three columns of glyphs carved on the Stela, and a short row along the top, along with a number of images. Due to the condition of the stela both the

iconography and the hieroglyphs are difficult to interpret and a full understanding may never be reached. It is clear, however, that some of the glyphs refer to a single ruler, or perhaps group of rulers, of Yaxchilan. One set of glyphs that remain clearly reads *k'uhul Pa' chan Ajaw* (Divine *Pa'chan* Lord), *b'akab'*, *kalomte'*. Although the glyphs above this have broken away, it is clear that this section of glyphs describes a member of the royal family at Yaxchilan, although perhaps not a king (there is no indication of the Divine *Kaaj* Lord title; see Chapter 1). Due to the proximity of the glyphs to one of the standing figures, it is logical to assume that these glyphs refer to this figure (see Chapter 2). This ruler is accompanied by a second standing male, wearing an elaborate backrack. The two standing figures face inward, towards a third, seated figure whose attire suggests she is female. Beside the woman is a woven basket, and in front of her is another container, which bears mat sign, **JAL**, meaning woven cloth (Stone and Zender 2011: 81). The Divine *Pa'Chan* Lord is letting blood, which is being collected below ready for burning.

Frieze and Roofcomb

Structure 33 has a huge roofcomb that is visible from the main plaza below the Grand Stairway (see figures 5.3 and 5.7). The roofcomb visible today is smaller than it would have been when the building was new (for comparison, see figures 5.12 and 5.7). The frieze below it is solid, and is decorated with a repeating geometric design alternating with niches, in which there is evidence of figural statues. Along the river facing frieze only two partial figures remain; to the farthest southeast of the structure, the figure is completely missing; of the central figure, only the torso remains; and

of the northwest figure, only the torso, shoulders and thighs are evident. Given the nature of the building, and the presence of the statue within (discussed below), the author suggests that these figures represented important rulers or members of the royal family of Yaxchilan. These could well have been Bird Jaguar IV's ancestors, such as his father, and grandfather; the presence of these figures on the frieze would mirror their presence on HS. 2. The pattern continues along the sides of the building, where there also appear to be niches that may have contained figures. No evidence remains, however, to confirm this.

The upper façade of the roofcomb is honeycombed to reduce the weight of the overall construction. Tate (1992: loc 5468) has suggested that this (along with the rest of the roofcomb) may have been used to hang sacrificed corpses as a warning to those travelling along the river. This, however, is not probable; there is little evidence for such displays elsewhere at Yaxchilan, or even among the Classic period Lowland Maya in general. There are representations of scaffold sacrifice on a select few stela and polychromes. Scaffolds in ancient Maya architecture are considered to be temporary constructions, most associated with accession rituals in the Classic Maya lowlands. Perhaps the most famous examples of this scaffold appear on the monuments of Piedras Negras, as first discussed by Proskouriakoff (1960) (see also Taube 1988b).

The upper roofcomb has a larger statue in the centre of the construction, which sits above the central doorway of the structure. The figure would have been visible from a great distance, despite much of the ritual space in front of Structure 33 being obscured from public view. It may well have been a huge representation of *Bird Jaguar IV,* who commissioned this structure, and whose life-sized statue sits within the building

itself (see below). Artists at Yaxchilan could have regularly replaced the decoration on the roofcomb to celebrate different rituals throughout the year. Unfortunately, this suggestion is impossible to prove, as stucco preserves poorly in the climate, and there is no longer any evidence of paint on the roofcombs (although it would undoubtedly have been painted when it was originally constructed).

Lintels

Above each of the three entrances into Structure 33 is an elaborately carved lintel depicting both a ritual scene and a series of glyphs (Schele and Freidel 1990: 264, fig 7.2a). These have been designated lintels 1, 2 and 3 (figures 5.8a, 5.8b, and 5.8c). Each of the lintels shows Bird Jaguar IV engaged in a different ritual, with a different accompanying figure (see Graham 1977: 13-17). The identity of Bird Jaguar IV's companions on these lintels helps to give an indication as to the purpose of Structure 33, and complements the range of other figures seen on other monuments, such as HS. 2. A full treatment of the lintels can be found elsewhere (Mathews 1988; Schele and Freidel 1990; Tate 1992), although they are also discussed briefly below.

Lintel 1 shows Bird Jaguar IV holding a K'awiil sceptre, alongside his principle wife, Lady Great Skull. The calendar round given is 11 Ajaw 8 Sek, which has been reconstructed to 9.16.1.0.0 (Apr 752) (Tate 1992: loc 5588). Lintel 2 shows Bird Jaguar alongside his son, *Chel Te' Chan K'inich* (the future Shield Jaguar IV), on 4 Ajaw 3 Sotz' (9.16.6.0.0, Apr 757) (ibid.). Finally, lintel 3 shows Bird Jaguar IV opposite his *sajal,* K'in Mo' Ajaw, on 8 Ajaw 8 Sotz' (9.16.5.0.0, Apr 756) (ibid.).

Statue and Throne/Altar

Entering Structure 33 through the central door (with lintel 2 above) one is confronted with a life-size statue, now without its head, seated in the largest of the niches within the building (figure 5.9a). The head has been placed nearby in an adjacent niche. With the head attached, the statue is 2.20 meters tall. The figure sits cross-legged, and is raised up on a low platform, facing the entrance way. The identity of the figure is still debated, and will be discussed below. The figure wears an elaborate necklace with a ceremonial bar attached, a decorated belt, leg and arm bands, and a large splayed headdress made from a jaguar's skull. It should be noted that the back of the statue is carved with a hieroglyphic inscription. This inscription is not accessible to visitors of the site due to the way the statue has been displayed; the back of the body, and the back of the head, are very close to the walls behind them. As such, reconstructions used by Tate (1992: loc 5560) have been used (figure 5.9b).

While at the site in 1984, Tate and her team observed an interesting phenomenon relating to this statue. On the 20th June, the Summer Solstice, they observed the sunrise "though a pronounced notch in the hills at 62.5 degrees East of North" (Tate 1985: 99). When the sunlight hit Structure 33, it fell directly onto the statue, illuminating it for around seven minutes before it once again fell into shadow (ibid.). This helped to support Tate's investigations into Summer Solstice ceremonies preformed at Yaxchilan. This may suggest that the statue somehow played an important role in summer solstice celebrations. Also, it is worth making explicit that each morning at dawn, HS. 2 is illuminated by the sun.

Also inside Structure 33, to the left, there is a raised bench, which may have served as a throne or a platform for offerings such as incense and auto-sacrifice (figure

5.10). This is undecorated, but may have been painted, or covered with perishable or removable decorations when in use.

Other Monuments

In addition to the Grand Stairway, Stelae 2 and 31, Altars 9 and 10 (see above), Lintels 1, 2, and 3, HS. 2, and the statue and plain bench within the building, Tate (1992: loc 5455) associates Stela 1, and Altars 11, 12, and 16 with the ritual space of Structure 33. It is also possible that a sculpture depicting a caiman is part of this space, although Tate (ibid.: loc 5493) does not make this explicit. The stela and altars are placed well away from the Grand Stairway (see figure 5.2), and while they are contemporaneous to Structure 33, these have not been included in the analysis of the ritual space. They are not immediately connected to the building, and as such may not have been part of the message of the space surrounding it. They neither support nor disprove the arguments presented here that the monuments surrounding Structure 33 were used to evoke an Otherworld, and as such are not analysed here.

Discussions

The ritual space of Structure 33 was carefully designed to evoke concepts of an Otherworld. As has been mentioned previously, HS. 2 is not visible from the Main Plaza below the Grand Stairway; only Structure 33's roofcomb and stela 2 are visible from this position. This strongly suggests that the Small Plaza and its contents, including HS. 2, were not public monuments and architecture (see Chapter 2: Theory

for discussions on 'audience' and purpose), but commissioned for a restricted audience including the royal court. The private nature of the plaza, and thus access to Structure 33, delineates it as 'separate' or 'other' or, as it will be argued, 'Otherworldly', and the composition and contents of the plaza mark it out as a non-terrestrial space.

Classic period political structure was highly dependent on the king as an individual, rather than king as an institution (Freidel 2008; Demarest 1992; see Chapter 2). This was more pronounced in the Late Classic era. The iconographic focus on the individual (not just the ruler, but other members of the elite, such as *sajal* and *y-ajaw*) suggests that the personalities, achievements and actions of such individuals were believed to be crucial to political stability during this time. Thus, the display of such individuals, both real and representative, was important. During the Classic era this was often achieved through processions and rituals involving the monuments and temples within a ceremonial city (Demarest 1992: 148; Sanchez 2007; Morton 2012). Rulers would publicly ascend great stairways leading up to important structures and enter to perform important ceremonies or rituals.

It is well documented that the Maya conceived of temples as mountains (Schele and Mathews 1998: 43; Sharer 2006: 454; Coe 2011: 124), and used iconography to recall such geographical locations on stela where basal registers could be designed to represent hills or mountains, for example at Quirigua (Looper 2009: 91). Stone and Zender (2011: 139) argue that "although the lowland Maya were basically flatlanders, the concept of the sacred mountain was a fundamental tenet of their religion since it was rooted in pan-Mesoamerican traditions that transcended local topography." Mountains were considered places where gods and ancestors resided (ibid.) and where maize originated (Coe 2011: 124; Miller and Taube 1997: 120). Xmucane, the grandmother

of the Hero Twins, ground maize from the Mountain of Sustenance in order to create the first humans (Tedlock 1996: 139-140). Thus they were highly significant and sacred locations. Rulers built great structures to represent such places and Structure 33 is one such example.

Concepts of divine power appeared to change during the Late Classic period. Research conducted at Xunantunich demonstrates that political power shifted from public display to being more private and thus mysterious and inaccessible. Structure A6 underwent many iterations throughout its history (Leventhal and Ashmore 2004) and the final building program shows there was a shift in the demonstration of royal power. The later constructions of Structure A6 show that the rulers no longer ascended the great stairway at the front of the structure directly, as they did previously. Instead later constructions meant that rulers or members of the elite would only ascend the visible stairway at the front of Structure A6 a third of the way to the top, before turning onto a path that twisted around the side of the building and removed the person from view. This side path led to the top of the building, where they would then reappear for the audience. Leventhal (2009) argues that this change demonstrates that the mystical process of becoming divine simply by ascending the pyramid was no longer enough. This suggests that during the Late Classic period there was a shift in the fundamental concepts of rulership. Power may not have been accepted on face value – there had to be something more 'magical' about the divine transformation of the ruler. Kings began to demonstrate this divinity in Xunantunich by 'disappearing' on the ascent of a structure, to reappear 'transformed' at the top.

It is possible that a similar process was evoked in the construction of Structure 33 at Yaxchilan. Bird Jaguar IV would have passed Stela 2 as he ascended Structure 33.

This stela depicted an ancestor, *K'inich Tatbu* Skull III, presented as a warrior (guard?). Passing this monument, Bird Jaguar IV would have demonstrated ancestral sanction as he travelled to the top of the Grand Stairway, metaphorically ascending the sacred mountain where his ancestors (including *K'inich Tatbu* Skull III) resided. Once he arrived at the top of the stairway/mountain he would disappear from view as though he had been physically transported to an Otherworld, where he enacted rituals away from his audience in the presence of his ancestors and the gods. Making such acts private sanctified them, and obscured their meaning. Only those who accompanied the king would be privy to the sacred events. One can imagine that the audience below would see only the hints of smoke from burnt offerings, and hear the sounds of the rituals above. All that would be visible to them would be the great statue on the roofcomb, and the stela below, bearing the images of Bird Jaguar IV and his predecessor, drawing parallels between them.

Those that arrived at the top of the stairway would have found themselves within a ritual space deliberately composed to evoke an Otherworld (figure 5.12). The iconography and construction of the Small Plaza was carefully designed to create a ritual space that transcended space and time. Stela 31 is key to this identification. Placed in the Small Plaza, in front of Structure 33, it acted as a locative marker. Vogt and Stuart (2005: 156) suggest that "for the Ancient Maya, one could argue that… ceremonial centres were literally constructed as arrays of mountain-pyramids and cave-temples." They go on to argue that:

> By their very structure, caves… are passageways between the visible world of the earth's surface and the interior of mountains and the nether regions of the Underworld. In this borderline position, caves are prime examples of the boundary between the natural and the

supernatural, between the human and the superhuman domains of the Maya cosmos. (ibid.: 179)

Stela 31 is a carved stalactite, a type of speleothem that is formed hanging from the top of limestone caves. By using this in place of traditional limestone to create the stela the artist/commissioner deliberately evoked the connotations of its origin - a cave - in the area it was erected. The creation of a 'cave' at the top of the Grand Stairway made the Small Plaza an entrance into the Underworld and perhaps into the heart of the Mountain of Sustenance itself. In this way, Bird Jaguar IV had access to the source of agricultural fertility and the place where people were created.

A full analysis of Stela 31 is impossible due to its poor level of preservation. As discussed above, there are three individuals on the stela (figure 5.5b). Proskouriakoff (1993: 118) describes two male figures, one "more robust" than the other, and a single seated female figure. Due to the levels of degradation, it is difficult to determine the relative size of the two males. Proskouriakoff (ibid.) describes the activity of the smaller male figure as that of 'divination' (Simpson 1972), although it is now generally seen as a bloodletting ritual (Tate 1992: loc 4054). Although many of the hieroglyphs are now missing, it is possible to identify the Divine Yaxchilan Lord title alongside the male that is letting blood, his hands down-turned emitting droplets of liquid marked with *yax* and *k'an* glyphs (Proskouriakoff 1993: 118), which Stuart (1984) has identified as blood. The blood falls on to an altar and woven cloth, where it will then be placed in the basket by the female figure, perhaps to be burned to summon a Vision Serpent. Houston (2014: 83) has suggested that this is *k'uh*, what he describes as "both… a transcendent quality and a specific identity." *K'uh* is something tangible within the blood and identities of the Classic Maya rulers. It demonstrates their power and authority, and their supernatural

connections. In the case of their blood, the *k'uh* is that within the blood that 'feeds' the gods, and is offered up to those deities through autosacrifice (ibid.)

Unfortunately, no firm identification of the three individuals on Stela 31 can be offered, although it is possible to suggest that the monument was commissioned in the Late Classic period due to stylistic markers. Tate (1992: loc 4054) identifies the male wearing a GI diadem as Bird Jaguar IV, and associates this monument with the dedication of Structure 33 on 9.16.0.0.0. Despite the damage, the quality of this monument is exceptional, and would have provided a challenge to the artist, to carve such intricate detail on a three dimensional, uneven surface.

Two altars are now in place behind Stela 31 at the base of the small stairway. However, for the purposes of this discussion, analysis in this study is restricted to Altar 9 (figure 5.13) as this is the only monument of this type agreed upon by all scholars to have been in the Small Plaza originally. Altar 9 was carved only along the top surface (Mathews 1988: 10, table 1-2) although many of the glyphs are badly damaged. It bears the date 9.16.0.0.0 2 Ajaw, 13 Zec (ibid.; Tate 1992: loc 5587), 360 days before Bird Jaguar IV acceded to the throne at Yaxchilan. There are no images on the altar, but given the date, it is most likely a period-ending celebration monument commemorating the completion of the sixteenth *k'atun*. Period ending ceremonies were recorded across the Maya area, particularly on stelae (see Tate 1991). Marking the passage of time in the terrestrial realm was an important task assigned to rulers. Despite not being enthroned on 9.16.0.0.0, Bird Jaguar IV still chose to commemorate the event, and include the monument as part of Structure 33's ritual space (arguably his accession monument; see Chapter 3). It is probable that this modest altar may have represented the terrestrial realm, or the connection between the terrestrial and celestial realms, within the ritual space of Structure 33.

From the Underworld (Stela 31), to the terrestrial realm (Altar 9), Bird Jaguar IV would then have ascended the smaller stairway leading up to Structure 33, the top step of which was made up of HS. 2. This short stairway has thirteen steps, mirroring HS. 2's thirteen blocks. Thirteen was a highly significant number, not only because it represented the number of lunar months in the yearly cycle. Thirteen was also the number of layers in the celestial realm (Morley 1946: 523; Stuart 2011: 153), and, like most numbers, was associated with a particular god: the Water Lily Monster (also known as the Water Lily Serpent) (Miller and Taube 1997: 184). Merle Green Robertson identified this deity in 1990. In her concluding statements, she summarises that:

> This god is… many gods who take on the manifestations of the day *Muluc*, the day *Imix* and its water lily attributes, the *uinal* (month) sign, *tun* (year) sign, the earth and the sky and the watery underworld as well as the moon. (Robertson 2011: 6)

By using the number thirteen in the construction of this space, Bird Jaguar IV reinforced its Otherworldly nature. Significantly, HS. 2 forms the riser of the thirteenth step leading into the building and there are thirteen carved steps depicting ancestors and political allies of Bird Jaguar IV. Robertson (ibid.: 3-4) identifies several characteristics of the celestial god of the number thirteen, including "the water lily pad tied around the head" and "fish in association", and goes on to state that these aspects are necessary to its identification. These features are prominent within the iconography of HS. 2, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6. Overall, it is clear that HS. 2 is deliberately placed to evoke associations with Gods and Otherworldly locations and the stairway, of which it is a part, provides the iconographic transition to the celestial realm.

From HS. 2 Bird Jaguar IV would have entered Structure 33 proper. The rising roof comb above was further indication that the building was conceived of as the

inner realms of a sacred mountain, and that Structure 33 marked the pinnacle of such a location (see above). Inside, lintels 1, 2, and 3 greeted those entering, reaffirming the security of Bird Jaguar IV's lineage. Lintel 1 (figure 5.8a) shows the ruler bearing a God K sceptre, a mark of rulership (see Chapter 7 for discussion on God K), beside his principle wife, Lady Great Skull. Lintel 2 depicts Bird Jaguar IV alongside his son, *Chel Te' Chaan K'inich* (who would eventually become Shield Jaguar IV at his accession). It is noteworthy that on this monument, Bird Jaguar IV's title sequence includes both emblem glyphs (*k'uhul kaaj ajaw* and *k'uhul pa'chan ajaw*, O4-P1, figure 5.8b), whereas *Chel Te' Chaan K'inich*'s is only afforded the *k'uhul kaaj ajaw* glyph in his name (J3, figure 5.8b). When Bird Jaguar IV's title sequence appears with only one glyph, such as on lintel 8, he is given the *Pa'chan* emblem (E3, figure 5.14). This supports Tokovinine (2013: 69-80) in his arguments that *Pa'chan* was the name for the archaeological site of Yaxchilan (Bird Jaguar IV always bears this emblem glyph where an emblem appears with his name) but calls into question the significance of the *Kaaj* emblem. Why does *Chel Te' Chaan K'inich* bear this title? Is the *Pa'chan* emblem only given after accession, and if so why? Such questions are outside the scope of this research, but further research is clearly required. Lintel 3 shows Bird Jaguar IV holding a God K sceptre, this time accompanied by a *sajal*, K'in Mo' Ajaw (F1-F4, figure 5.8c). K'in Mo' Ajaw was one of three *sajals* Bird Jaguar IV oversaw during his reign, (Schele 1991: 78) the other two being K'an Tok Wayib (seen on block IX of HS. 2, and discussed in Chapter 6) and Great Skull (or Chak Jol), Bird Jaguar IV's brother-in-law and uncle to *Chel Te' Chaan K'inich* (seen opposite his nephew on lintels 9 and 58; Jackson 2013: 49).

Bird Jaguar IV depicted himself alongside his principle wife, son, and one of his *sajals* to demonstrate a clear message - his lineage was strong, the succession

was secure, and he had powerful allies. Their placement inside Structure 33 (or in the entrance of the sacred mountain) ideologically connects them to the ancestors (*Chel Te' Chaan K'inich*'s grandfather, great grandfather, etc) and the gods, sanctifying their place within the cosmos and at Yaxchilan. This author argues that Lady Great Skull (lintel 1), *Chel Te' Chaan K'inich* (lintel 2), nor K'in Mo' Ajaw (lintel 3) appear on HS. 2 below. Structure 33 and the ritual space surrounding it was deliberately created to include as many of Bird Jaguar IV's allies as possible, and it would have been inefficient for him include any one ally more than once.[15]

Once inside Structure 33, Bird Jaguar IV and his attendants were faced with the life-sized statue inside the central doorway and the raised area to the left. There is little doubt that the raised area was used as an altar for offerings directed to the ancestors and gods which resided in the sacred mountain, which the structure embodied. Martin and Grube (2008: 132) argue that the statue was a "cult statue" created by Bird Jaguar IV to venerate his father, Shield Jaguar III. They suggest that Shield Jaguar III's name can be seen in the headdress, although it is not clear. The headdress certainly contains the upper section of a jaguar's head (*b'alam*), but the "shield" glyph is not evident. Beside the jaguar's head, there are *ajaw* glyphs and the headdress appears to be lined with feathers (suggesting *yaxuun*) or fronds. It is more probable that the statue was commissioned by Bird Jaguar IV as a representation of himself, and completed towards the end of his reign, or by his son, Shield Jaguar IV after his death. Tate (1992: loc 5532) identifies one of the glyphs on the back of the sculpture (figure 5.9b) as *aj ja bak*, meaning "he of twenty/many captives," one of Bird Jaguar IV's military titles, that

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[15] Following this logic, Stela 31 may have depicted Bird Jaguar IV alongside a different ally again, although the woman may still have been his principle wife, or perhaps his mother (the former appearing on lintel 1, the latter on HS. 2; see Chapter 7).

Shield Jaguar III never held. It should be noted that the inscription is badly eroded, and little else can be determined.

By placing a life-size statue of himself within Structure 33 Bird Jaguar IV was making the statement that he was *always* within the sacred mountain and thus always connected to the gods and ancestors. Inanimate objects were believed to have been able to hold the souls of those who owned them (Stuart 1998b: 296; Vogt 1969: 370-371). The Maya were so concerned by this that some items have been found with "kill holes" to ensure the soul did not become trapped after the owner died (see Parsons et al 1989: 97, fig 66; Guderjan 2007: 82). Perhaps, by creating a likeness that permanently resided within Structure 33, Bird Jaguar IV was imbuing the statue with a piece of his own soul (making it a *way*; see Houston and Stuart 1989). After his death Bird Jaguar IV remained within the ritual heart of Yaxchilan through the statue's presence, enabling his descendants to communicate 'directly' with him through this medium.

It is possible that the large human figure on the roofcomb (figure 5.1) also represented Bird Jaguar IV, ensuring that he was always looking over Yaxchilan, and indicated to the community that he had already attained his place within the celestial realm even before his death. There are also remnants of smaller figural sculptures within two of the three the niches along the frieze (there was probably a third); these may have represented Bird Jaguar IV's ancestors.

HS. 2

HS. 2 was placed within the centre of the ritual space discussed above. Each of the thirteen blocks depicts an individual engaged in some part of a ballgame ritual.

Each individual is accompanied by a number of hieroglyphs, although the number and condition of them is variable. The stairway is aligned to the same direction as the front of Structure 33 (North East and East North East), which means that it too is directly illuminated by the rising sun in the morning. Here, a brief description of each is presented, to be analysed in detail in Chapters 6 and 7. Images of the blocks, can be found in Appendix A.

Scholars have discussed the blocks since their discovery in 1975, although there have been no published accounts of *all* of the blocks and their significance as a whole. Studies have centred around their use in understanding the Maya ballgame (for example, Barrois and Tokovinine 2004; Coe 2003; Colas and Voss 2001; Schele and Freidel 1991; Tokovinine 2002), how they illuminate the ideology of Yaxchilan (for example, Freidel et al 1993: 356-362; Josserand 2001; Tate 1992), how they demonstrate political relationships among the royal court of Yaxchilan (for example, Dillon 1982; Jackson 2013; Tate 1992). Because of the number of hieroglyphs included on the blocks (in particular the central three, blocks VI, VII, and VIII), they have also been studied for their epigraphic value in terms of place names (Stuart and Houston 1994), monument names (Tremblay 2007), and names of individuals (Kettunen 2005).

The outlines below are compositional in nature only. These observations have been made from data collected during this author's field work, and from the use of photographs and drawings made by Graham (1982), Freidel at al (1993) and Montgomery. A discussion of the text across all of the blocks can be found in Chapter 6, while a detailed analysis of the imagery on HS. 2 can be found in Chapter 7.

Block I (Appendix A.1; Graham 1982: 3:156)

A woman is sitting cross-legged with her lower body front-facing, her head turned to her left in profile. Her left arm is outstretched and her hand is articulated to represent the action of putting the inscribed ball into play against a stairway with four undecorated steps visible. The hieroglyphic inscription can be seen on the woman's right.

Block II (Appendix A.2; Graham 1982: 3:156)

Another woman sits in a similar pose to block I, although her arms are held across her body, and she holds a double headed serpent. To the figure's right a large serpent maw is open at a right angle. The glyphs are well enough preserved to identify the woman and can be seen along the top of the block.

Block III (Appendix A.3; Graham 1982: 3:157)

Although badly eroded, this block depicts a third woman in an identical pose to that in block II although the figure is turned to her right hand side. To the woman's left is another serpent maw, mirroring that on block II and again the inscription can be seen along the top of the block.

Block IV (Appendix A.4; Graham 1982: 3:157)

This block shows a male figure wearing ballgame paraphernalia leaning down towards an inscribed ball that has come to rest at the bottom of a stairway with three undecorated steps visible. He is facing his right hand side, in profile. The imagery of this block implies that the figure is wearing a mask as part of his costume, offering an 'x-ray' view of his face. The glyphs run along the top of the block.

Block V (Appendix A.5; Graham 1982: 3:158)

The male figure in this block is also in profile, kneeling and facing to his right. He is also in ballgame costume, and appears to be fielding a ball against a stairway with five/six steps visible. The ball was probably inscribed when the monument was new (see Chapter 7). The ball itself is aloft, between the second and third step. Like the player on block IV, this individual is wearing a mask, although his face is visible underneath (x-ray). The hieroglyphic inscription is on the player's left, along the top right of the block.

Block VI (Appendix A.6; Graham 1982: 3:159)

The male ball player (Shield Jaguar III) kneels in profile to his right hand side, arms stretched to his left. The 'prisoner-as-ball' is in play against a stairway with three steps visible. The steps are inscribed with hieroglyphics. There are further hieroglyphs to the player's left.

Block VII (Appendix A.7; Graham 1982: 3:160-161)

This is the most elaborate block of the monument, depicting a male ball player (Bird Jaguar IV) fielding a 'prisoner-as-ball' against a stairway. This stairway is decorated with a hieroglyphic inscription, and consists of six steps. Atop the stairway is a smaller scene which appears to replicate the imagery of the block. The ball player is kneeling, turned in profile to his right. To the ball player's left stand two dwarfs, in profile facing to their right, watching play. They are enclosed within a further hieroglyphic inscription which runs above them, and down the right side of the block. Additional glyphs are placed within the composition, directly above the smaller dwarf and in front of the larger one.

Block VIII (Appendix A.8; Graham 1982: 3:162)

This block represents the only deviation for the male ball players. The figure (Bird Jaguar III) is kneeling, with his back to the audience to reveal his backrack. He is facing to his right, with his arms stretched to his left. The 'prisoner-as-ball' is aloft, travelling towards (or away from) a stairway consisting of six visible steps. These steps are inscribed with a hieroglyphic inscription that begins on the left of the block.

Block IX (Appendix A.9; Graham 1982: 3:163)

The male ball player is facing his left hand side, in profile. He is kneeling, with his left hand planted on the ground (probably for balance). The inscribed ball has been fielded against a stairway with five steps visible and can be seen on the second step. The inscription is along the left side of the block.

Block X (Appendix A.10; Graham 1982: 3:163)

Block X is identical in composition to block IX with the exception that the ball player's right arm is outstretched above his head, and the inscribed ball touches the third step. The inscription runs along the left and top of the block.

Block XI (Appendix A.11; Graham 1982: 3:164)

The final woman on HS. 2 appears on this block. She is sitting with crossed legs front-facing, with her torso, arms and head in profile. Her right arm is outstretched and appears to be putting a ball into play against a stairway with three steps visible. The hieroglyphic inscription runs along the top left of the block although it is possible there are further glyphs in the top right.

Block XII (Appendix A.12; Graham 1982: 3:164)

An inscribed ball is fielded against a stairway with three visible steps by a male figure in an identical pose to that on block X. This figure is also wearing an x-ray mask as part of his costume. There are hieroglyphs along the left of the block and in the top right corner.

Block XIII (Appendix A.13; Graham 1982: 3:164)

The final ball player is kneeling in profile, facing his right hand side. Both arms appear to be stretched towards his left side. The inscribed ball appears to be bouncing against a solid wall (not a stairway). The hieroglyphic inscription can be seen on the left side of the block.

There has been no comment (to this authors knowledge) that previous scholars have seen the significance of the fact that HS. 2 is comprised of thirteen panels. Thirteen is an important number within Maya ideology (see above), and clearly there is a connection between the number of blocks mirroring the number of steps (the 'final stairway', see above) leading up to this final, hieroglyphic step. Rice (2004: 257) suggests that the thirteen blocks each represent a different period-ending ballgame ritual that, like the narrative structure of lintels 24, 25 and 26, do not happen at the same time but correspond to a repeating series of events. She further elaborates that this is in some way connected to the seat of the thirteen *k'atuns* and the *may* cycle (ibid.), although specifies that the dates of HS. 2 span half a *may* (128 years; it should be noted that she does not provide a reconstruction of possible dates, nor accounts for the missing dates and differing participants and compositions of all of the blocks). However, there is

little evidence of this and none of the dates on HS. 2 (see Chapter 6) correspond to the period endings for the *may* cycle. It is probable that images on the thirteen blocks refer to a single event, although the hieroglyphic text references different points in history, to demonstrate continuity throughout Yaxchilan's history.

Conclusions

The discussion above demonstrates that Structure 33 and its surrounding monuments were designed to create an Otherworldly space that incorporated all the layers of the cosmos. The Grand Stairway allowed users of the temple to ascend the sacred mountain, where they would be transported into the Underworld, within the Mountain of Sustenance, to communicate with the ancestors of Yaxchilan and the gods. Structure 33, along with the small stairway and HS. 2 in front of it, represented the celestial realm, which was presided over by thirteen gods. According to Morley (1946: 523) the Underworld, terrestrial realm, and the celestial realm "were not bounded, but rather, formed a continuum. This, then, is [an] example of the Maya's not recognising the clear distinction we see between the natural and supernatural realms." Maya kings (and other members of the Late Classic royal court) were able to cross between the layers of the cosmos in order to communicate with the ancestors and Gods (Foster 2002: 178). Structure 33 was an example where rulers - both living and deceased - could cross this liminal space and interact with one another in a tangible way. This process, and the rituals associated with it, was conducted away from the public eye, to ensure that it remained secret, and sacred, in the Late Classic period.

It is important to remember that Structure 33 was not just an 'accession monument' as some authors have stated (Martin and Grube 2008; Mathews 1988; Proskouriakoff 1963, 1964a; Tate 1992). It is clear that Bird Jaguar IV used this monument to extol his legitimacy as ruler. His centrality to the monument, in the three tiered self portraiture of HS. 2, the statue, and the huge figure on the roofcomb, clearly demonstrated his ability to traverse the different layers of the cosmos. However, the inclusion of his ancestors not only serves to extol his legitimacy, but places the structure firmly in the Other realms, demonstrating the divine nature of kingship.

CHAPTER 6: A HIEROGLYPHIC ANALYSIS OF HS. 2

The narrative structure of the thirteen blocks of Yaxchilan's HS. 2 is not consistent across all of the carved risers. Blocks II and III discuss manifestation, a part of a wider ritual of commemoration or dedication. Blocks VI, VII, and VIII describe three rituals that take part at ball courts: VI and VIII are ballgames, whereas VII is a vision/manifestation at a ball court. These three rituals all take place on different historical dates. They are displayed in a similar manner to lintels 24, 25, and 26; the events are similar, and narrated in sequence, and so the structure implies continuity. Block X implies further ritual - a deity impersonation - and while the hieroglyphs on blocks IV, V, and XII are too damaged to read, it is probable that they too discuss the deity's masks worn by the players present (Chapter 7). The remaining blocks may only give the names and titles of the figures portrayed. Details of the hieroglyphic inscriptions will be discussed below. Analysis of the carved images upon the blocks can be found in Chapter 7.

This narrative structure is unusual of Maya monuments of its type. By 'type', the author refers to hieroglyphic stairways which include carved images as well as hieroglyphic text. Yaxchilan has two such hieroglyphic stairways, although the site has six hieroglyphic stairways in total; three consisting of hieroglyphic inscriptions only, and one that is yet undocumented (Pallan, personal communication, 2010). The stairways containing both hieroglyphics and images are HS. 2 and HS. 3. The images of HS. 3 complement the full narrative of the hieroglyphic inscription (found on the treads of blocks I, II, III, V, and VI). They serve to help illustrate the text, but not be a direct and complete representation of it. La Corona Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 is another

example of a one that includes images. At least five of the blocks depict members of the royal court engaged in various activities, accompanied by hieroglyphic texts. Initial readings of the texts suggest that they discuss both the protagonist and the actions taking place within the block (Barrois and Tokovinine 2004).

All the blocks of HS. 2 include both text and images, to varying degrees of complexity and craftsmanship. In an aesthetic analysis of the hieroglyphic writing, it is clear that multiple hands contributed to the carving. Other scholars have completed analysis of different scribes' styles and markers on other monuments from the Maya regions (Tate 1992; Coe 1977a). For HS. 2, the lack of finesse on the blocks further along in the sequence (in particular block XII) suggests lesser members of the scribal 'school' were used in production of the monument. A fuller analysis is beyond the scope of this study, and perhaps impossible given the level of erosion across the outer blocks. The translation and transliteration of HS. 2 can be found in Appendix B.

Unreadable Blocks

There are three blocks which are too badly damaged to discern any useful epigraphic data from (see Appendix A: A.3, A.5, and A.11). Photographs taken in 2011 demonstrate that there has been further degradation of these blocks since Graham's (1982) photographs and drawings (compare A.5 with figure 6.6 for example). Unfortunately, the stairway lacks quality conservation (as do most Maya monuments left in-situ), and the levels of erosion and degradation will only increase while the problem is left un-addressed.

Discussions: Main Inscriptions

Below is a discussion of the hieroglyphic inscriptions found on the thirteen blocks of HS. 2, and the choices made in decipherment. The analysis of the inscriptions on the rubber balls can be found after that of the main texts on each block. For the iconographic discussion of the 'captive' balls (seen on blocks VI, VII, and VIII), see Chapter 7. Three scholars have published drawings of HS. 2: Linda Schele (in Freidel et al, 1993), Ian Graham (1982), and John Montgomery (2006; although only block VII). The following analysis considers these along with the author's own field work (photography and drawings) where the three other scholars disagree (see Appendix A).

Schele (Freidel et al 1993: 356) and Graham (1982: 156) differ in their representations of the hieroglyphs on **block I** (Appendix A.1). Specifically, Schele has not included a glyph at A4 in her drawing. Graham has, although he has made it clear that this is extremely eroded and difficult to read. This author agrees with Graham in that there is a glyph at A4 (figure 6.1), and that this glyph follows the pattern of the title sequences in subsequent blocks. This means that the glyph is the end of the title sequence, possibly Lady *B'akab'*, a high ranking royal title that is not yet fully understood. The pattern - 'name', Lady *Kaaj Ajaw*, Lady *Pa'chan Ajaw*, Lady *B'akab'* - definitely appears on blocks II and VII, although it is also possible that a variation including *b'akab'* is also found on blocks III and XI. blocks I, II, III, and XI all show women, and block VII depicts the contemporaneous ruler of Yaxchilan, Bird Jaguar IV. It is possible that *b'akab'* was used to elevate the status of the women on HS. 2 for political reasons. The presence of *b'akab'* on block I is indicated by the

small protrusion in the top left hand corner of the eroded A4, suggesting a tuft of hair commonly appearing on the *ix* glyph. The woman, placing a ball into play against a set of steps, is clearly of great importance and it follows that she could have this high ranking title, especially as the block II also portrays a woman with this designation. It is also possible that the glyph at A3 tells us where she is *ajaw* from, although the toponym is now impossible to read due to erosion.

Block II (Appendix A.2) is better preserved, and the name and titles of the figure are more easily recognised. The woman is Lady *Pakal*, Bird Jaguar IV's paternal Grandmother. While the end of the title sequence is badly eroded, drawings by both Schele (Freidel et al 1993: 356) and Graham (1982: 156) indicate a *b'a* syllabogram in the final position at H1, which is probably the final syllable of the *b'akab'* title. Lady *Pakal* was an important member of the political hierarchy in Yaxchilan during the Classic period, and lived to be 98 years of age (Sharer 2006: 432; Martin and Grube 2008: 122). She is given the title of Lady *b'akab'* on other monuments commissioned by *Bird Jaguar IV*, including the record of her death on lintel 27.

In this inscription, Lady *Pakal* is described as manifesting something (perhaps a dance staff?) from *k'ak' naab'* (E1) - "the fiery watery place" (Montgomery 2006: 144), or "fire pool" (Stone and Zender 2011: 157, 173), which may have been meant as "ocean/sea/large bodies of salt water" (Kettunen and Helmke 2011: 114; Boot 2009: 102). Once again, Schele (Freidel et al 1993: 356) and Graham (1982: 156) have drawn what remains of the glyph differently, although this makes little difference to the reading. Field research has allowed me to corroborate Graham's representation (figure 6.2). This place of fire and water may not have been a terrestrial place, but a

metaphor for the primordial waters that exist in the Otherworld. Across much of the Yucatan peninsula, the sun can appear to rise from the Caribbean Sea and set into the Gulf of Mexico (Finamore and Houston 2010: 15). To the onlooker, the process of the sun rising and setting into the distant waters could seem as though the water itself was on fire. As the sun journeyed across the sky and into the Underworld, creating the *k'ak naab'*, it was between worlds: not quite in the Underworld, but leaving the terrestrial one. Lady *Pakal* would have had direct access to this place because she was deceased at the time the main ballgame of HS. 2 was played (see discussions of blocks VI, VII, and VIII). As such, she was able to straddle the terrestrial and Other realms to manifest important objects for the ballgame ritual from the "fiery pool/water" place.

The name of the item manifested by Lady *Pakal* appears at B1. The glyph here is very badly eroded, although both Schele and Graham agree on the overall shape (figure 6.3). The 'upturned nose' element indicates that the glyph could read as *xuk* or *xukup*, which is the proper name of the dance staff, a name used specifically at Yaxchilan (Montgomery 2006: 277; Mathews and Bíró 2006). *Bird Jaguar IV* is seen dancing with this staff on lintel 5, alongside one of his wives, Lady Six Sky (Tremblay 2007: 66). Tremblay argues that "the use of *Xuk Nah Ajaw*, 'the lord of the dancing staff building,' as a title suggests that there is a specific building that is associated with this staff" (ibid.). If the staff is associated with its own building, it is entirely plausible that it has its own specific name and titles. It is possible, then, that Lady *Pakal* manifests this staff, with its titles 8-? and 8-?-moon, from the primordial waters, so that it can serve some purpose in the ballgame ritual.

The ancient (and modern day) Maya believed that inanimate objects could be endowed with their own spirits (Thompson 1970: 200), and could take on

characteristics and titles of their own (see Tedlock 1996: 116-131). According to the Maya, all things - people, animals, as well as objects - contained souls. 'Fire entering' rituals take place soon after a building is completed to give the space a soul of its own (Stuart 1998b: 393), and even objects of ritual importance and daily life possessed souls, often referred to as *ch'ulel* (Stuart 1998b: 296; Vogt 1969: 370-371). They were so concerned that objects could contain souls (particularly after death) that some items have been found with 'kill holes' to release a trapped soul (see Parsons et al 1989: 97, fig 66; Guderjan 2007: 82). According to Tate (1992: loc 2204), the staff is an abstract representation of the axis mundi, a bird-topped tree, such as that found on the famous sarcophagus lid in Palenque. Manifesting the axis mundi as part of the ballgame ritual complements the importance of the royal lineage, and ruler, as the centre of the cosmos.

Alternatively, it is possible that B1 depicts a head glyph. Figure 6.4 has been enhanced, perhaps showing the face of an elderly male figure - possibly a god or other venerated ancestor of Yaxchilan. This portrait appears to have a hooked nose and protrusion from his head perhaps representing Itzamnaaj, also known as God D, the most important god in the Maya pantheon (Stone and Zender 2011: 47). This figure could have its own titles (8-? and 8-?-moon, as with the *xuk* glyph). However, it should be stressed that either reading of B1 (*xuk* or Itzamnaaj) is tentative at best due to the levels of erosion. Worse still, block II clearly demonstrates that the levels of degradation on HS. 2 have increased since Graham's (1982) photographs. The glyph at B1, as well as some of the bicephalic serpent, has suffered water damage in the intervening years due to poor levels of conservation.

Schele (Freidel et al 1993: 356) and Graham (1982: 157) agree on the numbers of glyphs on **block III** (ten glyph blocks), and on the levels of erosion (Appendix A.3). They also mostly agree on the shapes of the glyphs. Only one reading can be suggested at G1: *ch'am*, meaning 'to receive.' This could be in reference to a ceremonial item, or perhaps a vision, or some other part of the ballgame ritual of which she is part. This is, however, highly tentative, and does not appear in the translation presented in Appendix B. More probably, the glyph at G1 is part of the title sequence of the individual presented (see below).

Despite the lack of identifiable information, there are some assumptions that can be made regarding the inscription. Firstly, it is probable that three to five of the glyphs state the name and titles of the woman. That she is holding a bicephalic serpent, a parallel action to that of Lady *Pakal* on block II, suggests that she too is deceased at the time of the ballgame ritual. Thirdly, the remaining glyphs may explain *what* or *who* she is manifesting or what her vision is of. Given the hieroglyphs and iconography of the block, this author suggests that the woman is Lady *Ik'* Skull, Bird Jaguar IV's mother (see Chapter 7; also Schele and Freidel 1991: 305).

Block IV (Appendix A.4) marks the narrative move towards the male ball players on HS. 2. Schele (Freidel et al 1993: 357) and Graham (1982: 157) agree on the information that remains, and from this it is possible to identify four glyphs. This block is severely damaged, and the bottom right corner of the limestone block is completely missing (figure 6.5). This damage reaches up to the top right of the block, meaning that there may be glyphs missing along the right hand side (following on from D1). Given the narrative structure of blocks VI, VIII, X, and XII, it is suggested that the title

Pa'chan Ajaw, or *Pa'chan* (Yaxchilan) Lord, marks the end of the glyphic sequence on this block (there appears to be no *k'uhul* as part of the glyph) at D1. On the four glyph blocks mentioned, the last glyph is the locative title designating the (male) figure as originating from Yaxchilan (see Chapter 1). Block IV is the first to show a ballplayer wearing a mask (see Chapter 7). Other blocks depicting this iconography are V, X, and XII. Block X (see below) reveals that the mask represents the impersonation of the Wind God (Tokovinine 2000). It is possible that the glyphs on block IV (and V and XII) also designate the identity of the deity being impersonated. However, the glyph block at A1 appears to be *ucha'n*, meaning 'the guardian' (Boot 2009: 47-48). If this is that case, the glyph at B1 would almost certainly be the name of the captive. It would follow that the name of the protagonist of the block, and the guardian of the individual named at B1, would appear at C1.

Block V (Appendix A.5) has very little information remaining. Drawings by Schele (Freidel et al 1993: 357) and Graham (1982: 158) and this author's own photographs taken during field work (figure 6.6) only reveal a possible *ja* in the final position of B1, and a head glyph followed by *aj* at C3. If the narrative structure of the other blocks is consistent, it is possible to suggest the following: glyphs A1-B1 would be the *ucha'n* expression followed by the captive's name, and C1-C3 would contain name and titles of the ballplayer shown on the block.

Block VI marks the first of the three central blocks (VI, VII, and VIII) which depict the three most important figures on HS. 2. It contains the third largest number of glyph blocks, and is the first of three blocks of HS. 2 (when viewed left to right)

that contain a prisoner-as-ball (see Chapter 7). The block shows Shield Jaguar III (the glyph block naming him at E4) (Tate: loc 5588), Bird Jaguar IV's father. The glyphs preceding the name at E2-E3 are poorly preserved. It is possible that they may contain within them a parentage statement or relationship clause (Prager, personal communication 2015), however this is unlikely given the overall narrative structure of HS. 2, and the individuals following on blocks VII and VIII (Bird Jaguar IV and Bird Jaguar III respectively).

The inscription on block VI offers the first date on HS. 2: (A1) 5 [day sign], (B1) 2 *Yax*. The *tzolk'in* is unfortunately too eroded to decipher, however the Maya calendar is such that there are only four possibilities based on the *haab'* of *Yax*. Thus, the calendar round date could be:

5 *K'an*   2 *Yax*

5 *Muluk*   2 *Yax*

5 *Ix*   2 *Yax*

5 *Kawak*   2 *Yax*

This calendar round date is different from the date given on block VII (3 *Muluk*, 17 *Mak'*) or block VIII (9 *Lamat*, 16 *Yax*). Thus, we know that the ballgame event described on block VI occurs at a different point in time to the event on blocks VII and VIII. It is therefore probable that block VI serves to introduce the subject of HS. 2 proper and the three central blocks act in a similar manner to lintels 24, 25, and 26 in terms of narrative structure. Given the possible variations of calendar round, there are many possible long count dates for this ballgame. All possibilities for *b'aktun* 9 are listed in Appendix C. The most probable variations are listed below (correlation GMT 584283):

9.14.18.17.4 5 *K'an*, 2 *Yax*   7 Aug 730

9.15.12.2.9   5 *Muluk*, 2 *Yax*   4 Aug 743

9.16.5.5.14   5 *Ix*, 2 *Yax*   31 Jul 756

9.16.18.8.19 5 *Kawak*, 2 *Yax*   28 Jul 769

Of these four dates, it is most probably that the ballgame ritual described on block VI took place on 9.15.12.2.9 5 *Muluk*, 2 *Yax* (4 Aug 743), just over a year after Shield Jaguar III's death (9.15.10.17.14), and before Bird Jaguar IV officially acceded to the throne. This is corroborated by the glyph at F3, which gives Shield Jaguar III the title of 'five *K'atun* Lord.' This title designates Shield Jaguar III's age (he had entered his fifth *k'atun*), and was only given to him posthumously (monuments constructed during his reign only give him the title of 'four *K'atun* Lord'). This would mean that the ballgame depicted on HS. 2 happened during the interregnum. As discussed in Chapter 3, Bird Jaguar IV portrayed himself as being ritually active during this time, implying that he held political power, if not political office. Whether or not this is a true representation of his activities during this period will never be known, however it is unlikely that he completely fabricated this information. Playing the ballgame with deceased relatives seems - to the modern, western observer - to be a fictitious rendition of events. However, the Maya did (and still do) believe in a very real connection between the terrestrial, celestial, and Otherworld, and that both spiritual and physical contact between them was a very real possibility given the correct rituals. Dead ancestors played (and play) a genuinely important and tangible role in the lives of their descendants.

Shield Jaguar III took part in the ballgame mentioned in the text at *ti wak eb'*, or 'on the six-stepped stairway' (F1) (Boot 2009: 62). The glyph bears remarkable

similarity to the object upon which Chahk sits on page 41a of the Dresden Codex, complete with a ball in the centre. The glyph denotes a ball court in a cross section view (Chapter 4). There are no ballcourts at Yaxchilan known as the 'six-stepped stairway.' The ceremonial city of Yaxchilan only has two ball courts, one of which is Structure 14 (figure 5.5, Tate 1992: loc 4907), and neither of these are associated with a particular name. It is possible that other locations were used as 'courts' for different aspects of the ballgame ritual. HS. 2 shows a ballgame that takes place upon a set of steps, rather than an 'I' shaped ball court (see the discussion of the ballgame ritual in Chapter 5). Freidel et al (1993: 239) suggest this arena was a 'false ball court', probably Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 (ibid.: 252). Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 leads up to Structure 5, a long platform at the southeast end of the main plaza (Tate 1992: loc 4610), and consists of six steps with inscribed treads. Miller (2001b: 83) suggests that the stairway mentioned on block VI was probably part of Structure 33, even though the Grand Stairway is many more than six steps high, and the smaller stairway contains the significantly numbered thirteen steps. Alternatively, there is also the possibility that the 'six stairway' place was not present on the terrestrial realm, but in an Otherworld. For further discussion of the iconographic identification of the six-stepped stairway on which the HS. 2 ballgame was played, see Chapter 7.

A captive of Shield Jaguar III is depicted as the prisoner-as-ball. The ball is inscribed with a short caption (G1-H1) naming the unlucky victim. The glyphs are poorly preserved, but G1 appears to be the *ucha'n* glyph ('guardian of'), signalling the name of the captive at G2. It is probable that glyph blocks H1 and H2 name Shield Jaguar III, and offer one of his Divine Lord titles.

Schele (Freidel et al 1993: 356), Graham (1982: 160), and Montgomery (2000) have all produced drawings of **block VII**, the largest and most well preserved of the thirteen. There is some damage (breakages, rather than erosion) occurring in the top right area of the block. This has led to damage to Bird Jaguar IV's face, and the prisoner-as-ball, including the prisoner's head and part of the inscription upon the ball. The glyph block at P1 has also been damaged beyond recognition, although the glyphs around it are well preserved.

The text will be discussed in three sections: glyphs A1-H6, on the left side of the block; glyphs I1-R7, on the right hand side of the block; and glyphs T1-X (the inscription on the prisoner-as-ball will be discussed with the other rubber ball inscriptions in the following section of the chapter).

The narrative of glyphs A1-H6 mirrors the structure of the blocks VI, VII, and VIII, which all relate to ballgame events occurring at different points in time, with different protagonists. There are three calendar rounds within this text, and two distance numbers separating them:

13 *Manik* 5 *Pax*

5.9.0.17 —>

9 *Kan*   12 *Xul*

3.8.10.14.11 —>

1 *Ajaw*   13 *Xul*

The events connected with these dates involve three individuals named at B2, C2, and E4-F4. These will be discussed below with some tentative suggestions as to their identity. This author has argued previously that these three entities are all aspects of the Maize God (Nolan 2009; see also Colas and Voss 2001: 187). The Maize God

has several aspects, two of which are well known: the Tonsured Maize God and the Foliated Maize God, each representing a different stage in the maturity of the maize plant (Taube 1985). However, deities often took on many different personas and could be referred to in multiple ways within the same text.

The name for the Maize God proper is given at B2, according to Freidel et al (1993: 354). The glyph block itself is made up of a human head lying atop the phonetic *li* sign. These two segments are overlaid onto a *nal* logograph so that only the top, a tight curl with foliation, is visible. The *li* glyph acts as a phonetic complement to *nal*, suggesting that the head separating the two glyph segments is an alternative to the full *nal* logogram. The head incorporates a line of dots, reminiscent of corn kernels and, as Freidel et al (1993: 354) demonstrate, the head is similar to the severed head of the maize god that has foliation sprouting from his forehead found on a sacrificial plate (ibid.: fig 8:12d). While this linguistic reading of the glyph at B2 is still generally uncorroborated, there is little doubt that it represents the Maize God. Hieroglyphic representations of the deity that include the curl and foliation motif (*nal*) are often the Tonsured Maize God (Taube 1985: 173, figure 2). Taube (1985: 175, figure 5) also demonstrates a number of examples of severed heads of the Postclassic God E - the Tonsured Maize god - in his treatment of the Classic era equivalent.

The second of the three names appears at C2. Freidel et al (1993: 354, figure 8:12b) read this glyph as *Tz'a-Chan*, although do not attempt to assign a meaning. Tate (1992: loc 6409) simply designates the glyph as "lizard head", but does not attempt a translation, or explanation of what this could mean in context. The glyph *chan* (T764) means "snake", a common animal in Central America. Stone and Zender (2011: 201) illustrate that the most defining feature of the hieroglyph are fangs protruding down

from the upper jaw. This feature must be present in order to read the glyph as 'snake'. It is possible to suggest an alternative reading for this glyph, another reptile common to the Maya lowlands: *ayin* (T844), meaning 'caiman.' The glyph for *chan* often appears with a crosshatched area along the top of the head, recalling the snake's scales (figure 6.7a). The glyph for *ayin*, however, has dots along the top of the head (figure 6.7b), a "common marker of rough texture" (ibid.: 183, ills. 1 and 4). As we can see from figure 6.7c, the reptile head at C2 is clearly marked with dots along the top of the head, with a central fang more reminiscent of the glyph for *ayin* than that for *chan* (which normally has a single fang at the front of the mouth).

Norman Hammond has suggested that an alternative reading for this could be *ahk*, or 'turtle' (personal communication, 2014). The reptilian head is rarely used to represent the turtle in the hieroglyphic record as it can be ambiguous, sharing characteristics with frogs, toads, and serpents (Stone and Zender 2011: 207). However, given the unique narrative presented on HS. 2, it is possible that the artists chose to use the rarer form of *ahk* to demonstrate the uniqueness of the story. The turtle is a common partner to the Maize God in representations of the latter's resurrection. The Maize God emerges from the carapace of a turtle, which represents the earth, in a number of Classic period polychrome pots (for example, K4681, K5226 and K5761). A turtle's skin is also hard and leathery, in keeping with this author's arguments on the purpose of the dots along the top of the head, made above. Given the rarity of this form, however, this author continues to support the reading of *ayin*, rather than *ahk*. Miller and Taube (1993: 48) comment that the Maya identified the caiman with creator gods, and that the reptile was a metaphor for the earth, which according to the Maya floated upon a primordial sea. Stone and Zender (2011: 183) elaborate on this, also explaining that

the caiman not only represents the earth's surface, but can also act as the "axis of the universe, much like the World Tree." Alternatively, the turtle was similarly significant, also being used as a representation for the earth (Miller and Taube 1997: 174-175).

On the forehead of the head glyph, there is a small design consisting of four tiny circles surrounding a dot. On this, all drawings of the block agree (although Freidel et al, 1993, omit the dot in the centre of the design). It is possible that this small feature of C2 is used to mark the supernatural being out as a divine creature, reaffirming its role as an aspect of the Maize God. Alternatively, this could be a small version of the glyph *mo* (T582), a phonetic marker that can mean 'macaw' (also T743v) (Kettunen and Helmke 2011: 117), and represents the dotted eye of the full head glyph version (Stone and Zender 2011: 211). As this glyph is a dotted circle it could also be read as *muyal*, or 'cloud' (T632v) (ibid.: 143), although it lacks the inner "s" shape (perhaps because the glyph is too small, or it has eroded). While these are very different readings, both *mo* and *muyal* suggest some association with the heavens or sky.

The final part of the glyph at C2 is *tz'a* (T366v) meaning 'to give' (Montgomery 2006: 247). This presents the reader of block VII with a significant problem in fully understanding the entity named at C2. For the purposes of this study, the translation has been left at 'caiman?' (see Appendix B), although this individual is undoubtedly an aspect of the Maize God, as discussed above.

At E4 and F4, the third entity is named (figure 6.8). Tate (1992: loc 6409) interprets this as "Great Jewelled Lord," while Freidel et al (1993: 354) read this as "First Maize Seed Earth Lord," although Schele's drawing (ibid.: 354, figure 8:12d) is significantly different than Montgomery's (2000) and Graham's (1982: 160), particularly in the detail of the first half of the glyph at F4. Whereas Montgomery and

Graham only hint at the lost detail within the main sign of F4a, Schele goes as far as to draw the necessary details to identify the glyph as *kab'an*, meaning 'earth' (Freidel et al 1993: 354, fig 8.11c). Erosion in this area of the text has made the details difficult to corroborate on photographs taken in 2010. However, in photographs taken for Graham's (1982: 160) corpus and by Schele herself (see the Linda Schele Photo Collection, on FAMSI), more detail can be discerned than either Montgomery or Graham attest to in their drawings (see figure 6.9). This detail, however, is clearly not *kab'an*. Instead, it could be a derivation of the full *nal* logogram, complete with stylised maize kernels. The second logogram is a head variant of the *ajaw* glyph (T1000d), 'lord.' F4, then, could be read as "Maize Lord."

Returning to E4, the beginning of the name, the glyph block begins with the superfix *yax* (T16), meaning 'green or blue,' or as Freidel et al (1993: 354) posit, 'first.' In agricultural terms, 'first' and 'green' are synonymous as young and new shoots are green in colour (maize develops into cobs of yellow). The second part of this glyph block is a human head edged in dots (figure 6.10). Freidel et al (ibid.) suggest the interpretation 'seed,' meaning it should be read *yutal* (Montgomery 2006: 205) or *hinaj* (Mathews and Bíró 2006). As discussed above, the phonetic sign *mo* (T582) is drawn as a circle made up of other, smaller, circles. This could have been combined with a head glyph which could be read beginning with *m-* or ending in *-m*, explaining the presence of the dots. The dots may instead refer to *muyal*, meaning "cloud" (T632v; see above; Stone and Zender 2011: 143).

However, in 2009, the author chose instead to identify the dots as a marker, designating the entity as *k'uhul* (T32), meaning 'sacred or divine.' It was further argued that the head surrounded by the *k'uhul* marker allowed the reader to place the entity

within the supernatural, even divine, setting, marking it as a deity figure (Nolan 2009). While this is by no means a perfect reading, it allows for the widest interpretation at this stage in decipherment. It should be noted that both head glyphs, at E4b and F4b, have a single dot carved into the cheek, reminiscent of glyph T1001. These dots were often markers of death, and in particular associated with one of the Hero Twins, *Hunahpu* (known as *Hun Ajaw* in the Classic period) (Stone and Zender 2011: 45). *Hun Ajaw* was an expert ballplayer, and had strong connotations with beheading and sacrifice through his adventures in the Underworld. The Hero Twins were also the Maize God's sons, and were instrumental in his resurrection. It is possible that a reading of *yax k'uhul(?) nal ajaw*, the First Divine-? Maize Lord could be tentatively suggested. At this stage of understanding, it is the most neutral of readings, allowing room for further decipherment later.

The events that occur around these three supernaturals are *ch'akab,'* meaning to "self decapitate or self sacrifice" (Montgomery 2006: 74), "was axed" (Vail and Hernández 2007: 132-4), "axe sacrifice" (Tate 1992: loc 6409), or "chops-self" (Stuart 2005b: 69). The latter reading shares a similar metaphoric analogy with the former ones, meaning - more generally - that these three supernatural entities underwent a bloody ritual. Kremer and Flores (1996: 82) discuss this glyph at length, concluding that *ch'akba* "takes on the nature of an intransitive verbal stem with the meaning of something like 'to self wound'." They go on to discuss the medicinal properties of the *ek b'alam* plant, which is and was used to stem bleeding in major wounds suffered, particularly in agricultural contexts (ibid.: 87-89). They conclude that the process of *ch'akba* was a form of auto-sacrifice that was not self-decapitation (as this is impossible), but a near-fatal form of bloodletting that - if survived - would bring great prestige and respect

(ibid.: 89). An example of this form of auto-sacrifice can be seen on K2942 (figure 6.11), where one of the dancers cuts into his neck with a stone knife. It is possible that the three entities engaging in this form of bloodletting - the Maize God, the Caiman aspect, and the First Divine Maize Lord - did not survive this process, deliberately, in order to recreate the sacrifice made by Hun Hunahpu when he was dismembered and decapitated by the Lords of the Underworld, and resurrected so that he could eventually provide the corn needed to create human kind. Death in this manner would also mirror the harvesting of maize, as the cutting of the cob 'heads' from the plant 'body' recalls decapitation, in order that the food be used to sustain human life. It is worth noting as well that the Hero Twins, after their defeat at the hands of the Lords of the Underworld and subsequent resurrection, performed decapitation and resurrection rituals for the amusement of the denizens of the Underworld. They would sacrifice one another and return to life through the use of magic.

The three *ch'akab'* form part of the *ahaal* story of block VII. The first two occurrences of this glyph (found at B3 and C3) read *ahaal*, with the final occurrence (appearing at E5) reading *ox ahaal*. Schele and Freidel (1991: 304) have previously interpreted this glyph as 'manifested,' although have since conceded that the reading of 'vanquish' is just as likely, and believe the two should be read in tandem (Freidel et al 1993: 485). Tate (1992: loc 6409) supports the latter reading, interpreting the glyph as "defeated one," and Kettunen and Helmke (2011: 94) translate it as "to create, awaken." Schele and Freidel (1991: 302) have also suggested "creation" or "maker." Mathews and Bíró (2006) suggest "conquest", and Tokovinine (2002: 5) points towards "the conquered one." E5 could also be "thrice said" or "thrice manifested" (Montgomery 2006: 198), suggesting that B3 and C3 be read "said" or "manifested".

Given the context of the three aspects of the Maize God, it is possible to propose a further possible reading of *ahaal*. In the Paris codex (a poorly preserved Postclassic Maya text), there are a series of prophecies. Each page has a linear design consisting of three sets of hieroglyphs, a human figure identified as a Lord or Priest, and a caiman or crocodile throne (Love 1994). A series of other, smaller figures may also be present, although these are now too damaged to identify clearly. On page nine, among the *tun* prophecies, there is an event that Love has translated as a famine. His 'rough' interpretation is "famine -? - Maize God; thrice captured Maize God; death year, death year…" (ibid.: 30). Love (ibid.) remarks that this is not an historical narrative, but a prediction for the future. However, the detail of the Maize God being 'thrice captured' may have some connection to the three aspects of the Maize God, and the events on HS. 2. While caution should be used here - the text is Postclassic, and has yet to have a Classic era equivalent discovered - it is possible, if not probable, that it had a Classic era, or even Preclassic era precursor, in the same way that we see Classic period examples of the Popol Vuh stories. This has also been convincingly argued in the case of the thirteen *k'atun*'s referred to in the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel, where Lacadena (2007) has found similar genres in Late Classic inscriptions (see Tokovinine 2013: 108). In this case, the reference to 'thrice-captured' may help to inform the *ox ahaal* story, if not provide a translation for it, keeping Freidel et al's (1993) suggestion that multiple meanings could be interpreted concurrently.

My own reading for the three events on the first half of the block VII narrative is (see Appendix B):

On thirteen Manik five Pax the Maize God self-wounded and he was the first to be conquered/captured. Seventeen k'in, zero winik, nineteen tun, five k'atun until it

happened on nine Kan twelve Xul the caiman? self-wounded and he was the second to be conquered/captured. Eleven k'in, fourteen winik, ten tun, eight k'atun, three bak'tun until it happened on one Ajaw thirteen Xul the First Divine Maize Lord self-wounded…

Such events did not happen contemporaneously with the ballgames depicted on HS. 2. The dates associated with the events are calendar rounds, thus constructing long counts for these calendar rounds is nearly impossible - without knowing what *bak'tun* they occurred in, there are simply far too many possibilities to make a feasible guess. This is further illustrated by the large distances between the dates of the *ch'akab'* events. The distance number given between the *ch'akab'* of the Maize God and the caiman is seventeen days and 100 years (5.9.0.17 written as a distance number). The distance number given between the *ch'akab'* of caiman and the First Divine Maize Lord is much longer - 291 days and 1360 years later (3.8.10.14.11 written as a distance number). Importantly, the text specifically states that these events occur three *bak'tuns* apart. There is no explanation given as to why these events occur over such a long period of time - almost 1500 years in total. The large periods of time between these *ox ahaal* events does support the argument that they happened in the very distant past, long before the ballgame on HS. 2. A similar series of events can be found at Palenque, great distances of time apart. GI, GII, and GIII (the Palenque Triad) are all born, with long periods of time between them (Stuart 2005b)

This section of the text on block VII continues from the the First Divine Maize Lord's self-wounding, by naming the place - the three conquest stairway (E5-F5) - on which the sacrifices occurred. Several 'three conquest stairways' are now known within the Maya lowlands, although their significance is still debated (Tokovinine 2002). E6-H6 describe the three entities 'entering the road' (E6: *och bi[h]jiy*), which is a metaphor

for death (Boot 2009: 139), at the Black Hole Place (G5: *ek' way nal*) (Montgomery 2006), a "locus of ballplaying in mythological time." (Stuart and Houston 1994: 71)

G6-H6 are less clear. Tate (1992: loc 9414; see also Appendix B: Part II) suggests that G6 could be part of a count to 6, and H6 reads "its location in the light and darkness." H6 is clear, and combines the glyphs for 'light/sun' (*k'in*) and 'darkness' (*ak'ab*), although its semantic meaning is still unclear. It is possible that this further associates the sacrifices in a mythological space, 'of sun and darkness' (see Appendix B), or, less likely, it may be a distance number introductory glyph (Prager, personal communication 2015).

In the second half of the text on block VII, Bird Jaguar IV is said to impersonate (Q3: *ubah[i]l*) Yax Chit Ju'n Naah Kan (R3-R4), the Water Lily Serpent as part of the ritual performed on the date 9.15.13.6.9 3 *Muluk* 17 *Mak* (M1-P2) (which corresponds to October 21 744, just over fourteen months after the possible date given on block VI). This is connected to the *ox ahaal* stairway (R1), which was 'struck' (Q1) presumably by the ball that Bird Jaguar IV has just fielded against the steps opposite on him in the accompanying image (Zender 2004a: 8). It is possible that the stairway against which Bird Jaguar IV is playing has become the physical representation of the *ox ahaal* stairway through the inscription of the *ox ahaal* story being carved upon it. Thus, the game in play is able to cross temporal and spatial boundaries, offering Bird Jaguar IV access to places (such as the Black Hole Place, see above) of ritual and mytho-historical significance.

The Long Count on the second half of block VII is part of a Grand Long Count (for discussion, see Chapter 1), including eight cycles above the *bak'tun*: the *?-tun*, *?-tun*, *ixtun*, *naltun*, *k'intun*, *ajawtun*, *k'alabtun*, and *piktun*. The 'full' Grand Long Count recalls

nineteen cycles above the *bak'tun*, and it is interesting that there are only eight on HS. 2. Spacial considerations are certainly a possibility as to why only eight were included, as are aesthetic preferences of the artist or commissioner (Bird Jaguar IV) of the monument. It has been argued that the Grand Long Count was a symbolic count (Van Stone 2010: 42). Alternatively, it has been suggested that it represents a count from an initial base date of the Maya calendar from the incomprehensible past (Stuart 2011: 237-241). Polte (2012: 3) presents an interesting analysis of the Grand Long Count, and demonstrates that the mathematics of its use allowed Maya scribes to add "arbitrarily high time units" without shifting the Calendar Round dates, thus allowing the calendar to represent the distant past without affecting the basic Calendar Round dates.

For HS. 2, this study argues that the extended Long Count/shortened Grand Long Count refers back to the events described on the left hand side of the block. The presence of the eight higher cycles serves as context, placing the 'axing' events in the long distant past, and at the same time situating the events of the right hand side of the block firmly in the historical present. In this case, this author follows Van Stone (2010) in his suggestion that the use of extended cycles is symbolic, rather than literal. Fewer than half of the cycles of the Grand Long Count have been included on HS. 2, meaning that it is not a 'true' Grand Long Count. Instead, it serves to indicate the presence of higher cycles, demonstrating the vast amounts of time between the events of the left and right hand sides of the inscriptions:

13.13.13.13.13.13.13.13.9.15.13.6.9 "and it happened" on 3 *Muluk* 17 *Mak*

It is interesting that there is no ISIG (Initial Series Introductory Glyph) on HS. 2. This is because the ISIG is most commonly used to introduce the first Long Count of a hieroglyphic text. However, because HS. 2 introduces a number of Calendar Rounds

before giving a Long Count date, the scribes clearly did not feel the need to mark the Long Count date on block VII with an ISIG. While not unusual in Maya hieroglyphic texts, the lack of an ISIG serves to illustrate the complicated nature of the narrative presented on HS. 2. A similar argument could be made for the lack of a Supplementary or Lunar series, or Lord of the Night glyphs. This calendrical information is secondary to the importance of including the shortened Grand Long Count because of the role the latter plays in contextualising the 'wounding' events in the first half of the text. Given the limited amount of space available to the artists/scribes, the lack of these additional calendrical markers should not be surprising.

The traditional Long Count date of block VII falls on October 19, 744, two years after the death of Shield Jaguar III, but eight years before Bird Jaguar IV is known to have acceded to rulership. The text then refers back to the *ox ahaal* (R1) story, with Bird Jaguar IV impersonating the Water Lily Serpent at the conquest stairway while playing a version of the ballgame.

Block VII also has two caption texts within the composition: one in front of the dwarfs (T1-U3), and one above them (V-X). Glyph blocks V-X introduce the dwarfs (*ch'at*, see Chapter 7), stating that they "receive" something (X). The caption at T1-U3 has suffered severe damage, in particular along the T column (the damage to this area of the block is greater today than it was in 1982 - Bird Jaguar IV's left foot is now completely missing, whereas it is present in Graham's (1982) photographs). U1 may read "he received the star", U2 is a head glyph superfixed with a *li* syllabic sign, and U3 is *chan*, "sky". The presence of the star and sky glyphs implies a celestial meaning, and the position of the caption suggests that it is connected to *Bird Jaguar IV* himself, and perhaps his relationship to the dwarfs.

Block VIII introduces Bird Jaguar III, Shield Jaguar III's father. His name and titles appear in the second half of the text, inscribed upon the stairway that is represented on this block. The first half of the text discusses a ballgame event: *pi[']tzjiy*, meaning 'ball-played was' (Boot 2009: 150). Some of the key components to the text are poorly preserved, due to erosion. The calendar round given is 9 *Lamat* 16 ? at the start of the text on the left hand side of the block (see Appendix C for reconstructions). Tate (1992: loc 5588) has reconstructed this as 9.10.3.11.8 9 *Lamat* 16 *Ch'en*, which corresponds to 25 August 636 A.D. (see also Jackson 2013: 239) While this date falls within his reign, the *haab'* is unclear in the original images. Bird Jaguar III ruled from 629, although all mentions of this ruler are retrospective, made by his descendants well after his death (Martin and Grube 2008: 122). Shield Jaguar III acceded to the throne in October 681. While it is possible that this text refers to a ballgame that this ruler played during the latter part of his reign, it may also function in a similar way to the game played by Shield Jaguar III on block VI. Another possible date for this game is 9.15.14.2.8 9 *Lamat* 16 *Ch'en*, July 25, 745 A.D. This is three years after Shield Jaguar III played his game, which we recall was the year following his death. It is possible that Bird Jaguar IV evoked the presence of his grandfather in another ballgame to continue to reaffirm his legitimacy and familial connection to the ruling lineage of Yaxchilan.

Block VIII is the third to make reference to the ballgame in some way within the text itself (the others being blocks VI and VII, see above). This ties the narrative of the three central blocks together, mirroring the three Maize God aspects and the three *ahaal* events discussed on block VII, along with the three captive balls, each representing an act of conquest (see Chapter 7 for discussion). The use of groups of three in narrative is well documented in Maya culture, such as the Palenque Triad and

the three temples that make up the Cross Group at Palenque, as well as Yaxchilan's common use of three monuments to make up a narrative structure (for example lintels 24, 25, and 26 of Structure 23, and lintels 15, 16 and 17 of Structure 21). It is possible that, like the Palenque Triad (GI, GII, and GIII), the Maize God and the other two 'persona's', the caiman and the First Divine Maize Lord, are three local deities, specifically important at Yaxchilan (perhaps only adopted by Bird Jaguar IV as part of his program of construction and legitimisation). Different aspects of the Maize God have been identified with Homul Dancers, young lords wearing elaborate costumes presented in dance poses (Houston et al 2006; Reents-Budet 1991). This author argues that it is possible that the three central figures on HS. 2 would each be associated with a different aspect of the Maize God presented on block VII in a similar way. The Homul Dancers are identified with the aspects of the Maize God through their back racks. It should be noted that block VIII makes the imagery of the back rack explicit by presenting the back view of Bird Jaguar III, the player. The iconography of this will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

Much of the text is dedicated to relating Bird Jaguar III's titles (B6-C4; E4-G4). He is given the titles of 'he of the upright stone' (E4: *aj wak tun*; Johnson 2013: 260; this is one of Bird Jaguar III's most common titles, and has been traditionally read 'he of six stone', Martin and Grube 2008: 122) and 'first of the staff (warrior)' (G3: *bah te'*; (Boot 2009: 31). The ruler also bears the title 'Seven Centipede Sun-faced ruler' (G1-F2: *huk chapat k'inich ajaw*) which is the name of the war serpent (Johnson 2013: 327), which is associated with fire and warfare, although is "notably rare" within Classic Maya representation (Taube 1992: 83). It is possible that Bird Jaguar III was being referred to in such a way to increase his prestige and thus his legacy, as Martin

and Grube (2008: 123) suggest that much of his life was recreated posthumously in a positive light due to marked disruption during his reign.

Block IX is also poorly preserved, and the design returns to relief carving, rather than the 'cookie cutter' design. There is little information available, and the iconography does not allow inferences to be made (such as identifying markers on the headdress, or the presence of a mask). There are nine glyphs within the main text, suggesting that the individual depicted is of high importance at Yaxchilan when the monument was commissioned. The glyphs blocks would have contained his name glyph and titles, and perhaps some additional information as to the role he is playing in the ballgame ritual. It is probable that the glyph at A4 is the title of Divine *Pa'chan* Lord (*k'uhul pa'chan ajaw*).

The glyphs on **block X** are in much better condition. The inscriptions present the name and titles of the figure depicted, along with some information regarding his costume. A1 and A2 read *ubah[i] ik' k'uh*, meaning 'his image the Wind God,' (Boot 2009: 26, 75) or 'he impersonated the Wind God." This corresponds to the costume this individual is wearing, in particular the mask (see Chapter 7). The inscription goes on to give the individual's name, K'an Tok Wayib (*k'antokwayib*, at B1), and his title as 'the first *sajal*' (*bah sajal*, at C1). While the glyph at A3 is badly damaged, it is possible to suggest that this is 'guardian of', as Kokte' Ajaw (*kokte'ajaw*) appears at A4, a captive known to have been taken by K'an Tok Wayib (see Lintel 8 from Yaxchilan; Tate 1992: loc 6206).

The *sajal* title is not well understood, although is most common in the Usumacinta region. Stuart (2013b) discusses the difficulty in understanding the term,

and tentatively presents the possibility that the roots of the word *sah* could mean "to fear." Schele (1991: 10) has suggested the reading of 'war captain', although as Jackson (2013: 54) points out, *sajals* are recorded within the hieroglyphic inscriptions of multiple sites taking part in a variety of of events, both military and administrative. As a result of the confusion around this title, this study does not offer a semantic reading of it. K'an Tok Wayib was certainly an ally of Bird Jaguar IV, and an important member of Yaxchilan's royal court. It is interesting to note that K'an Tok Wayib did not always hold the position of 'first sajal,' but was referred to as such after 9.16.1.8.6 8 Kimi 14 Mak (12 Oct, 752) (seen from Lintel 6) (ibid.), suggesting that he acceded into the role after Bird Jaguar IV become the Divine Yaxchilan Lord (see Houston and Inomata 2009: 142-143).

Block XI is the final block depicting a woman, and it appears that there are no more than six or seven glyph blocks carved onto the surface. Due to the levels of erosion, this is difficult to corroborate, and a good portion of the top and right hand side of the block is severely damaged. This block appears to parallel block I, with a female protagonist putting an inscribed ball into play against a set of steps. The accompanying hieroglyphic inscription would probably also parallel this, by introducing the figure with her name and titles.

As the women on blocks I and XI actively place the ball into play, it is probable that these two women were alive at the time of the ballgame on HS. 2, as opposed to the women on blocks II and III, who were probably deceased (Lady *Pakal* certainly was, and it has been argued that the woman on block II is as well, see above). This is impossible to know for sure without knowing the names of the women. However, it has

been argued that the women on blocks II and III are ancestors of Bird Jaguar IV; they have important roles in the ballgame ritual while not directly participating in play, and are integral to communication with supernatural entities (see Chapter 7). The women on blocks I and XI, however, seem to have a more active role, and may have actively participated in the playing of the physical ballgame through their roles as adjudicators or in starting play. Thus, it is more probable they were alive at the time of the game so they could actively and physically interact with the ball. Given Bird Jaguar IV's other building programs and monuments, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that these two women were wives/consorts. Furthermore, it is probable that they may even have been secondary and tertiary wives/consorts (i.e. not Lady Great Skull, Bird Jaguar IV's principle wife and mother to his heir) as a method of honouring their families as political allies. Lady Great Skull was mother to Shield Jaguar IV. It may have been that Bird Jaguar IV did not include her on HS. 2 to mirror his own mother's lack of mention by Shield Jaguar III. In other words, being the mother of the heir to Yaxchilan's throne was honour enough. Lesser wives, however, needed other, more visible methods of elevating their status, and by extension the status of their families, and thus the ruler's political allies (see Chapter 3).

The narrative returns to male ball players on blocks XII and XIII. **block XII** is relatively well preserved, showing four glyphs introducing the male figure. Despite damage to the upper left corner of the block, there does not appear to be a glyph missing, and neither Schele (Freidel at al 1993: 356) or Graham (1982: 164) indicate a glyph (see figure 6.12 for confirmation). The figure is as a young *Pa'chan* Lord (B1-C1). At B1, the player is given the title of *ch'ok*, meaning 'youth' (Boot 2009: 61). This

probably suggests the age of the player. Mathews and Bíró (2006) indicate that this title can also be used in the names of heirs to the throne, although it is not exclusively used as such, and it is possible that the use of *ch'ok* in this context could mean 'prince' (Prager, personal communication 2015). If this was the case, this individual may have been *Chel Te' Chan K'inich*, the future Shield Jaguar IV. *Chel Te' Chan K'inich* appears above HS. 2, on lintel 2. However, there he is given the title Divine *Kaaj* Lord. It seems improbable that he would appear on HS. 2 only bearing the *Pa'chan* Lord title, when he is clearly of greater importance. This individual may have been an important member of the elite within Yaxchilan, but not a member of the ruling family.

The glyph at A1 is eroded, but it is still possible to identify a *u* (T1) and it is probable that this is an *ucha'n*, or 'guardian of' phrase, followed by the name of the captive at A2 (perhaps Cham, see Appendix B). There is no indication in the text who this young lord is impersonating, despite the image on the block clearly showing him wearing a mask (discussed in Chapter 7).

Block XIII completes the narrative of HS. 2 with the depiction of a three *k'atun* Lord (A2) (a designation of his age) whose titles sequence includes the title *aj k'an* (A3), meaning "he of precious" or "he of yellow". Furthermore, this figure is a Divine *Pa'chan* Lord (B3), the highest highest rank in the political hierarchy of Yaxchilan. Unfortunately, the name of this figure appears at A1 and/or B1, which is badly eroded. It is possible that this figure is contemporaneous with Bird Jaguar IV. While he holds the Divine *Pa'chan* Lord title, he does not have the Divine *Kaaj* Lord title. If we follow Tokovinine (2013: 69-70), this might suggest that this individual was a high ranking member of Yaxchilan "or its section", but was not a member of the

ancient *Kaaj* line, which may have referred to a mythological place (ibid.: 73-74). This could suggest that despite his royal status, he was not a member of the ruling lineage.

Alternatively, it is possible that may be some indication from the inscription upon the rubber ball, which contains the *at* glyph (T761b) meaning "penis" in Yucatec Maya. The penis was used as a metaphor for the founder of a lineage. Thus, it is possible that block XIII depicts *Yopaat* Jaguar I, the originator of the lineage at Yaxchilan, which explains the presence of the Divine *Pa'chan* Lord title (B3). However, this does not explain why the *Kaaj* title was omitted. Bird Jaguar IV applied this title to his other ancestors on HS. 2 (see above), and on the re-carved HS. 1. It appears to have been an integral mark of rulers of the ceremonial city. Perhaps, then, this title was given to a member of another elite family that supported Bird Jaguar IV in his accession, or of a lesser member of the royal family that did not have claim to the *Kaaj* title (a cousin, or distant relative, for example).

Discussion: Rubber Ball Inscriptions

Of the eleven carvings of rubber balls on HS. 2, ten contain hieroglyphic writing. Three of these texts - on blocks VI, VII, and VIII - contain more than one glyph block (four, three, and three respectively). These three balls also contain within them the images of bound human males. The remaining seven balls are inscribed with a single glyph block (henceforth known as inscribed balls). In the case of HS. 2, each of the inscribed ball glyph blocks consists of a numerical prefix, a superfix, and a main sign. It should be noted here that the single ball without an inscription of any kind (on block V) has probably suffered degradation, in particular the left hand side, where the ball is placed, rendering the inscription missing (rather than absent originally).

Inscribed balls appear at other archaeological sites, and in other media, for example, on polychrome pottery: K2803 depicts four ball players in costume playing the ball game against a set of blocks with a ball inscribed with 12 (?) *naab'*; K9215 shows a geometric pattern suggesting a ball court with two inscribed balls, neither with numerical classifiers. At Copan, the central ball court marker of court A IIb shows two players either side of a ball inscribed with *k'a[h]n-tu:n* "flat (bench?) stone," meaning 'marker' (Tokovinine 2002: 2). It is clear from these few examples that the inscriptions upon the rubber ball representations are hugely varied, although the glyph block seen on HS. 2 is a common one that is found throughout the lowlands. A full account of the glyph blocks found on rubber ball representations can be found in Eberl and Bricker (2004: 25-27, Table 1).

Bound prisoners are abundant in Maya art, and it is possible that Tikal altar 8 shows a 'captive ball' (see Dillon 1982). However, 'captives-as-balls' are less common that inscribed balls, although there are many examples of skulls within balls, such as in the Great Ball Court at Chichén Itzá, and there are references to 'heads-as-balls' in the Popol Vuh. The iconography and significance of the 'captive balls' will be discussed in Chapter 7. On HS. 2, blocks VI, VII, and VIII all contain bound captives inside the large balls used in play, and each contains a short caption: four, three, and three glyph blocks respectively (see figure 6.13; Graham 1982: 3:160 suggests that there are four glyphs on block VII, S1-4, although this is unlikely).

The ball carving and inscriptions on block VI are poorly preserved. The glyphs on block VII have also suffered damage, particularly to S1 and S3. These glyphs identify a Lakamtuun Lord, named Tun Chil. Lakamtuun is a polity near Río Lacantun in Chiapas (Stuart 1996: 154), located just over a day's travel south of Yaxchilan, by

foot. The glyphs on block VIII are also eroded and damaged, although it is possible that they name someone with *chan* in their titles (this figure may also appear on Hieroglyphic Stairway 3, Structure 44).

These glyph captions clearly name the figures presented within the prisoner-as-ball motif on blocks VI, VII, and VIII. They are probably important prisoners taken by the main protagonists of each block, and may have demonstrated the reach of the rulers of Yaxchilan (in particular if each captive was from a different place). Unfortunately, the missing portions of the glyphs on blocks VI and VIII make identifying the original location of these prisoners impossible.

Readings for the inscribed balls can be found in Appendix B. Each begins with a numerical prefix, and is followed by **NAB-ba**, *nab*, most likely meaning 'hand-span' (see below for discussion).

Early suggestions for a reading of the compound come from Schele and Miller (1986: 255), although this is now largely ignored by scholars due to its highly speculative nature, and because it fails to consider the numerical prefix and main sign in a cohesive manner. Stone and Zender (2011: 173) suggest that the glyph could be read *ha'* or *ja'*, although this still fundamentally represents a water lily leaf, and is the basis for the logograph *nahb*, meaning "pool". A Late Classic painted vase also contains the **HA'** logograph, preceded by the numerical prefix of seven, in bar and dot form (ibid.: 173, ill. 3). This combination of seven, **HA'**, and rain symbols also present, identifies the image as a 'mythic location' (ibid.).

The inscription could also name or title the ball. The Popol Vuh illustrates the existence of ball names ('White Dagger', see Chapter 4), and Freidel et al (1993: 361) suggest that stela 2 at La Amelia reveals that the 9 *nab* ball is called "the guardian of

the jaguar." Ballgame steps from La Corona (Site Q) make an interesting substitute for the *nab* glyph by infixing the details of the glyph into the head sign of *ajaw* (see figure 6.14). There are two such steps, one with the numerical classifier nine, and the other with fourteen. Whittington (2001: 238-239) argues that the presence of the number nine, along with *ajaw,* is indicative of the Hero Twins. Stone (1995: 15) explores the ballgame scenes from the Naj Tunich caves, and argues that the inscribed balls (although these are painted) reading nine *nab* represent Xbalanque, one of the Hero Twins, suggesting that the ball in play is actually his head.

Cohodas (1991) has argued that the inscribed ball compound of a number followed by *nab* represent titles for God L, and aged god of the Underworld, and wealth. God L is associated with rabbits (Kerr and Kerr 2005: 73), which Cohodas connects to the rabbit that pretends to be the ball in the ballgame of the Hero Twins against the Lords of the Underworld. This is a tenuous and, at times, not fully coherent, argument, and has not been taken up by other scholars. However, it should be acknowledged that God L and the Hero Twins have an extremely close link with the ballgame, and the steps from La Corona, at least, testify to the possibility that the ballgame compound should be read as a name, or title. Different numerical classifiers could represent different aspects, or versions, of the named entities, or refer to different locations.

HS. 2 inscribed balls are classified with numbers thirteen, nine, and twelve. Erosion on block XI is high, and as such only two bars, ten, are clear. However, it is probably that the number was originally intended to be twelve. Nine is the most common number associated with this glyph across all inscribed balls of the Maya lowlands, although representations at Yaxchilan favour the number twelve (Cohodas 1991: 261). Thirteen and nine are important celestial numbers for the Maya, the

former being the number of layers of the celestial realm (or the sky's "apex", Stone and Zender 2011: 149), and the latter being the number of layers in the Underworld. It is significant that the only inscribed balls with these numerical classifiers (on blocks I and IV) should be placed either side of blocks II and III, which depict deceased women (see Chapter 7). These women are connected to each layer of the cosmos through their deaths and the iconography on their blocks, and are thus flanked by further celestial information. The final five steps (IX, X, XI, XII, XIII) are inscribed with the numerical classifier twelve. The head glyph for the number twelve wears a *chan* (meaning "sky") headdress (Montgomery 2006), and is therefore clearly associated with the celestial realms.

The glyph *naab'* can also mean "to daub", "to varnish" or "to anoint", as though with paint or pigment (Alfredo Barrera Vasquez 1980: 546 in Schele and Miller 1986: 141-142; see also Boot 2009: 133), making it possible that the inscription refers to a particular type of decoration or process by which the ball is made part of the ballgame ritual.

The level of erosion on HS. 2 makes the ball inscriptions difficult to decipher. However, some scholars suggest that the superfix to the *nab* glyph is not just the syllabic accompaniment *na* (T23), but is actually a human hand, 'holding' the main sign. Boot has done considerable work on the use of hand motifs in Classic Maya inscriptions. He suggests that the main logograph of the glyph block is **b'a** (*b'a*, T501) and that of the superfix (a hand symbol) is read *na*, so that the reading becomes **na-b'a**, for *nab'*:

> When used it is subfixed with the T501 **b'a** and generally preceded by
> a numeral. The sign depicts a C-shaped human hand which is opened

or spread wide, the index finger on the left and the thumb on the right as if spanning a certain distance. In ballgame contexts this hand sign is substituted by other hand signs. (Boot, 2003: 11)

Boot points out that this could indicate the size of the ball (ibid.), or perhaps the version of the ballgame played (ibid., cf. Tokovinine 2000). In discussions of a rarer hand sign associated with the ballgame (on Kerr no. 5435), Boot posits that there is precedent for recording the score of the game, "five palms given by the hand" (Boot 2003: 20). Macri and Looper (2000) agree that the inscription could refer to the number of blows to the ball allowed during the game, or represent the distance the ball must fall away from the striker in order to score points. They argue that the glyphic phrase "almost certainly refers to some aspect of how the game was played." (ibid.: 3)

Rice (2004: 256) suggests that a hand-span is eight to nine inches, making a nine *nab* ball approximately 81 inches/205 cm in circumference. Zender (2004a: 3) follows this reading, citing more examples of *nab* being read as a 'count of hand spans', from Ch'ol, Tzeltal, Mopan, and Itzaj (ibid. 2004a: 3). Coe also argues that the *nab* glyph, prefixed with a numerical classifier, specifically indicates the circumference of the ball used, expressed as hand-spans (Coe 2003). He suggests:

In English, a *palmo* is a "handspan", the distance between the tip of the thumb and the little finger with hand outstretched. The old Spanish linear measure *vara* was 83.6 cm; if a *palmo* was 1/4 of a *vara*, it would be a span of about 21cm or 8 1/4 inches. (ibid.: 200)

A *vara* is an old Spanish measurement that is largely considered to be the equivalent of a yard. This would mean the following measurements for the balls represented on HS. 2 (see Table 6.1):

Numerical Prefix	Proposed Circumference	Proposed Diameter
9	76.5 inches / 194.3 cm	24.4 inches / 61.9 cm
12	102 inches / 259 cm	32.5 inches / 82.5 cm
13	110.5 inches / 280.7 cm	35.2 inches / 89.3 cm

Table 6.1: Ball size

This table, while produced independently, matches that of Zender (2004a: 3). Both this author's own and Zender's calculations differ from Coe's (2003: 200); ours being 6% higher in all cases. This appears to be because Coe used rounded numbers for his calculations, where as both Zender and this author used results to several decimal places, and then rounded the final results appropriately. It is worth noting that a modern day football has a circumference of 27-28 inches/68-70 cm, making the smallest ballgame ball (with a numerical prefix of nine) over double the size of a modern football.

It is possible to calculate the weight of solid rubber balls using the proposed measurements in table 6.1. The formula necessary to calculate the weight of a rubber ball based on radius is:

$4/3$ x pi x r^3 x .95

(Coe 2003: 197; 0.95 is the specific gravity of the rubber that is found in the Mesoamerican regions)

Using this calculation, we can work out the proposed weight of a solid rubber ball, if the inscription designates a balls size:

Numerical Prefix	Proposed Diameter	Proposed Weight
9	24.4 inches / 61.9 cm	259.5 lbs / 117.7 kg
12	32.5 inches / 82.5 cm	615.1 lbs / 279.0 kg
13	35.2 inches / 89.3 cm	782.0 lbs / 354.7 kg

Table 6.2: Ball weight

The smallest of the ball sizes would weigh as much as a well-built adult male, meaning that ball players would have to field a solid object as heavy, if not heavier, than themselves, using their hips, arms, legs and torso. Clearly, this would have been impossible, particularly as the weights increased (to twelve and thirteen hand balls). Coe (2003: 202) argues that the iconographic representations of rubber balls in Maya iconography are accurate and, because of this, that the balls must be hollow, and may have been inflated. This would allow the ballgame to be played against a set of steps, and bounce when fielded (ibid.: 200). If the balls were hollow (and thus not as heavy), we are left with a number of questions. Firstly, why was a deflector necessary as a piece of protective gear (see Chapter 4)? Secondly, archaeologists Nadal et al (1993: 8) have found that rubber balls uncovered in the ceremonial city of Tenochtitlan were produced by "rolling the threads of rubber into a circle in a concentric fashion", and that they are solid. This supports iconographic evidence found in the Dresden Codex, and the hieroglyph for the rubber ball (see Chapter 4). What would be the connection between the ball glyph and the inflated rubber ball?

Stone (1995: 152) points out that there is huge variety in ball size, relative to players and the numerical prefixes assigned to the inscribed balls. If we follow the work by Coe (2003; Zender 2004a; Boot 2003), we would have to assume that the ballgames on HS. 2 all use different sized balls, for undisclosed reasons. It is possible that different sized balls represent different challenges, and varying rigours of play. Other than the location relative to other blocks, however, there is no common factor in uniting those players using the different sized balls, such as title or rank, or age.

Conclusions

There are still a number of discrepancies between iconographic and glyphic representation and archaeological evidence of rubber balls. Despite this, it is probable that the most accurate interpretation for the inscribed ball is to denote the 'hand-spans' and thus size of the ball in play. The prisoner-as-ball motif was not literal, but served as a metaphor to indicate the military and economic strength of the ruler who took the prisoner. Without further evidence breaking down the stages of the ballgame ritual, this author has avoided making the assumption that the prisoners were killed or 'sacrificed' at the end of the game. Considering theories of resonance and metaphor within Maya iconography, theories such as this are based too much on assumption and comparison with other, different, cultures and ceremonial cities. It has been argued throughout this thesis that scholars should not use wide generalisations in ideology within Maya lowland polities: there were clearly distinct and important regional differences which have to be considered.

The ball, whether captive or inscribed, appears to be more widely representative as an offering or homage to ancestors, honouring them and including them within the ongoing rituals of the ceremonial city. The inscribed balls are marked with numerical designations of their size, perhaps suggesting the rigour or version of play. Prisoner-as-balls, on the other hand, may be metaphors of warfare, and the representation of prisoners used to honour the ceremonial city by associating it with strength and military success. These successes were shared among the ancestors of the ceremonial city, and reaffirm the political authority of the ruler.

The main hieroglyphic inscriptions of HS. 2 reveal that a number of rulers, members of the royal court took part in the ballgame ritual within Late Classic Yaxchilan.

These individuals held the ranked titles outlined in table 6.3. At least five of these were Divine *Pa'chan* Lords, suggesting that they were part of the royal family within Yaxchilan in the Late Classic period. Two of those, Shield Jaguar III (block VI) and Bird Jaguar III (block VIII), were deceased at the time the monument was commissioned. It should be noted that of the five who held that title, only three also held the Divine *Kaaj* Lord title, which has been convincingly argued to denote Lordship over a mythological place (Helmke 2012; Tokovinine 2013). It is possible that this title was specifically attributed to the kings of the ceremonial city, to illustrate their divine lordship over both physical and supernatural landscapes. The males on blocks IX and XIII were only attributed political authority over the *terrestrial* realm surrounding Yaxchilan.

Rank Title	Individual	Block
Divine *Pa'chaan* Lord	Shield Jaguar III	VI
	Bird Jaguar IV	VII
	Bird Jaguar III	VIII
	Male	IX
	Male	XIII
Divine *Kaaj* Lord	Shield Jaguar III	VI
	Bird Jaguar IV	VII
	Bird Jaguar III	VIII
Pa'chaan Lord	Male	IV
	Ch'ok	XII
B'akab'	Woman	I
	Lady Pakal	II
	Lady Ik' Skull	III
Sajal	K'an Tok Wayib	X

Table 6.3 - the different titles of rank that appear on HS. 2

The men on blocks IV and XII are *Pa'chan* Lords, but there is no '*Kaaj Ajaw*' title anywhere on the monument (or indeed elsewhere at Yaxchilan), further indicating that the *kaaj* location was somewhere other than the physical geography. These two

individuals were Lords (although not 'divine') of Yaxchilan and the surrounding area, indicating that there was a further difference within the political hierarchy of the site. Further titles that indicate political rank include *b'akab'*, held only by Bird Jaguar IV and his two maternal relations, and *sajal*, held only by K'an Tok Wayib on block X. The former titles use may have been reserved for these individuals to further elevate the status of Lady *Ik'* Skull as part of Bird Jaguar IV's program of legitimisation (see Chapter 3).

The men and women on HS. 2 can thus be ordered in importance into the following hierarchy:

○ Bird Jaguar IV: as the ruler who commissioned the monument, he holds both the Divine *Pa'chan* Lord and Divine *Kaaj* Lord titles, along with the *b'akab'* title;

○ Shield Jaguar III and Bird Jaguar III: both previous rulers of Yaxchilan hold both the Divine *Pa'chan* Lord and Divine *Kaaj* Lord titles;

○ Lady *Pakal* and Lady *Ik'* Skull: these ancestral women hold the *b'akab'* title, and probably held a locative title such as Lady *Pa'chan* Lord (former) and Lady *Kaan* Lord (latter);

○ The two women from blocks I and XI may have ranked on the same level as the women above: the woman on block I may have held the *b'akab'* title;

○ Males from blocks IX and XIII: both of these individuals hold the title of Divine *Pa'chan* Lord, but *not* the Divine *Kaaj* Lord title;

○ The male from block IV and *Ch'ok*: both men hold the title of *Pa'chan* Lord;

K'an Tok Wayib: holds the title of 'first *sajal*,' making him subordinate to Bird Jaguar IV (and the 'first' in rank of three *sajals* that Bird Jaguar commanded, Schele 1991: 78).

From HS. 2 alone, we see at least seven *different* ranks within the structure of political hierarchy at Yaxchilan.[16] Of those that were still alive at the time the monument was built, and thus could provide real-world political support to Bird Jaguar IV, there are five different levels within the hierarchy. As has been argued in Chapter 5, this was by no means the extent of the political allies mentioned within the ritual sphere of Structure 33.

This evidence illustrates the arguments that have been presented in Chapter 3, whereby a political model for Late Classic Yaxchilan has been outlined. It has been argued that an increase in the population during the Late Classic period led to a rise in the number of elite. This may have put stress on the traditional political structure, as there were an increased number of the community with wealth and perhaps social power, but with no way to exercise political authority. Other factors, such as increased pressure on resources through intensive farming and a series of detrimental weather patterns, pressure from nearby rivals (such as Piedras Negras and Dos Pilas), and the policies of previous rulers, may have contributed to a need for Bird Jaguar IV to delegate an increased amount of power to his subordinates and political supporters. HS. 2 visually exemplifies this process, by representing some of those individuals to whom Bird Jaguar IV delegated power. The range of titles displaying rank further illustrates the stratification of Late Classic political organisation at the ceremonial city.

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[16] More may have been present, but levels of erosion make it impossible to tell.

CHAPTER 7: ANALYSIS OF THE IMAGERY ON HS. 2

Having examined the hieroglyphic inscription of HS. 2, this chapter presents an iconographic analysis of the blocks. The narrative represented in the imagery of the stairway complements that of the hieroglyphs, although it is not completely representative of the text. This chapter will refer back to the preliminary research summarised in Chapter 2. It is important to keep in mind theories of metaphor (Miller and Taube 1997; Stone and Zender 2011), as well as principles of 'resonance' (Miller and Houston 1987; see Chapter 2), whereby a single scene is not only representative of itself, but of all those leading to and from it as it would have happened. This is particularly important when analysing HS. 2 given the limited number of scenes depicted - over thirteen blocks, only three different events are represented. This should not limit our analysis to what is happening in these three scenes, but we should, instead, consider the resonances of those scenes and what other interlinked events may have occurred.

This analysis will examine the key iconographic features of the HS. 2 blocks, including the male ballplayers: their costume, posture, and actions; the female participants: their clothing and significance to the ballgame; the ball court: the use of steps in the ballgame; "captive" balls (glyphic balls are discussed in Chapter 6); and other supernatural components to the ballgame iconography on HS. 2: dwarfs, vision serpents, and maws/portals.

For a preliminary description of each block, see Chapter 5. Each block depicts a different individual taking part in an aspect of the ballgame ritual. These individuals are identified through the hieroglyphic inscriptions accompanying them (although

erosion of the glyphs has made a number of these impossible to identify). While it is

clear that the individuals are all participating in the same ballgame *ritual* (unlike, for

example, the events shows on lintels 24, 25 and 26, where Lady *K'abal Xook* is taking

part in three separate but similar bloodletting events over the course of many years), the

roles of the male and female participants are very different. Furthermore, it is not clear

if the players of the ballgame (all male) are playing the game at the same time, on the

same team (or even against an opponent at all), or on the same designated area of play.

Before discussing the details of these blocks, including specific aspects of clothing,

ballgame paraphernalia, gender, and supernatural figures, an overview of themes of the

iconography will be presented.

Other than the male and female participants of the ballgame ritual, and the

captive ball representations, there are three other entities that need to be considered

to fully understand the iconography of HS. 2. Two women (on blocks II and III) hold

double headed centipedes. Tate (1992: loc 2799) and Freidel et al (1993: 357) identify

these supernatural creatures as Vision Serpents. On each of these two blocks, there is

also a single large maw open at 90˚. These maws, when viewed as part of a single scene,

mirror one another, and thus serve to enclose the narrative space of blocks II and III.

Given that block I shows a seated woman putting a ball into play against a set of blocks,

and block IV then shows a male ballplayer actively participating in the ballgame, it is

possible to suggest that blocks II and III serve to disrupt the narrative sequence because

the events they represent take part simultaneously with the act of the ballgame. If both

of the women were already deceased at the time of the ballgame, then it stands to reason

that their participation would not have been a physical act within the main ritual (that

which has been represented the most on HS. 2), but in their ability to communicate with

supernatural entities, either through their spiritual connections or locale. The maws are thus portals to the Otherworld, a common iconographic representation of such cross-world contact.

The third and final creatures that need discussion are the two dwarfs that appear on block VII, below the hieroglyphic text on the onlookers left, facing towards Bird Jaguar IV as he fields the captive ball against the steps inscribed with glyphs. These dwarfs serve an important function in providing the ballgame with cosmic approval and significance, and their placement serves as a locative marker. This will be discussed in full below.

Ceremonial Bars on Blocks II and III

The two Ceremonial Bars on HS. 2 have been previous identified as serpents (Freidel et al 1993: 357; Tate 1992: loc 2799), although they are more probably conflated centipede creatures. Maya imagery demonstrates huge variation in serpent representations, suggesting that it was the most important type of fauna in ancient Maya ideology (Miller and Taube 1997: 148). Snakes are prevalent in the Maya regions, and can be found in all areas of Maya cosmology: on the earth's surface, representing the terrestrial; within trees, high above the ground, representing the celestial; and in water and caves, representing the Underworld. Thus, they were seen as conduits which linked all layers of the cosmos. The natural shedding of their skin, indicative of rebirth, makes them function as symbols for transformation, both physical and metaphorical (Wanyerka 1996: 77). Of the four common snakes found in the Maya geographical areas - boa constrictors, bothrop asper, rattlesnakes, and lachesis (ibid.) - three are venomous,

with untreated bites being fatal (primarily due to necrosis of the surrounding tissue and resulting blood clots). The boa constrictor, in contrast, is rarely fatal to human beings, instead constricting its prey (small mammals and birds). It is not always clear which species of snake is shown in Maya iconography, and many are "composite reptilian creatures" designed to evoke a number of different serpentine-like animals at once (Rice 1983: 866). These can be snakes, and also a conflation of serpents, centipedes, crocodiles, and other animals such as sharks (Kettunen and Davis 2004: 13). Kettunen and Davis (ibid.) point out that these composite creatures are a worldwide phenomenon, and occur in a number of unrelated ancient cultures, including in Asia and Europe. To acknowledge their multi-species representation in Maya iconography, some scholars use the term "bearded dragon" to describe them (see Taube 2003).

Snakes take on a huge number of meanings in Maya iconography. In hieroglyphic writing, *chan*, *kan*, *chaan* (T561) can all mean 'snake, sky, or four' (Thompson 1962: 363-365). Their connection with the sky is well documented within the literature (see Milbrath 2000). According to Schele and Mathews (1998: 114) the Maya associated "snakes with the sky and the umbilical cord that connected Maya lords to the sky realm." Milbrath (2000) documents a number of different celestial connections between snakes and the sky, including Venus (ibid.: 35-36), the Milky Way (ibid.: 40-43) and the so-called skeletal snake constellation (ibid.: 264-266), among others. Clearly, snakes were closely associated with the sky, but as Taube points out, their celestial connotations were connected to the "bright, daylight realm of the sky" (Taube 2003: 419). Stone and Zender (2011: 201) widen the number of connections, including ropes, penises, and lightning (based on similarities in composition), cosmic paths, and open ended journeys. Moreover, they suggest that snakes and women were linked due to the "elemental forces of nature and

the earth's generative powers" (ibid.). Miller and Taube (1997: 130) suggest that serpents can further act as conduits for water and the sky, and open-mouthed can represent caves and the Underworld. As conduits for power, serpent imagery is often used to demonstrate journeys and cross-realm communications between the gods, ancestors, and the living. In many images, serpents "belch gods, ancestors, and other nobles" (ibid.: 181) providing a means for face-to-face communication.

Snakes, then, have a diverse range of meanings in Maya iconography. However, there is a growing body of literature that suggests that previous iconographic identifications of serpents may have been misinformed. Centipedes, in particular, have been explored in research by Grube and Nahm (1994), Boot (1999), Taube (2003), Kettunen and Davis (2004) and Stone and Zender (2011: 178-179). Centipedes and serpents have similar connotations. Stone and Zender (ibid.: 179) describe them as "a symbol of transformation and rebirth," and that they, too, had "frequent solar associations." Centipedes are carnivorous arthropods that live in the earth, rotten logs, and under stones (Kettunen and Davis 2004: 14). They require a high degree of moisture, as they can dry out and die, and as such in the dry months burrow underground to conserve water (Mundkur 1983: 93; Voigtländer 2011: 311). Through this habitat, they are associated with the Underworld and dark realms beneath the earth. Taube (2003: 406) points out that this links them closely with death and darkness, and that while they are associated with the sun, it is the nocturnal sun (ibid.: 411). As the sun makes its journey across the sky, it eventually sets, where it descends into the Underworld to become the skeletal jaguar sun, which is reborn for its journey across the sky each morning. Taube (ibid.: 406) notes that this is diametrically opposed to the serpent, whose associations are with the day-time sky.

Other authors have noted that serpentine imagery on the Maya monuments does not represent any one particular entity, but is very often a conflation of different animals that form composite creatures of the imagination (Kettunen and Davis 2004: 10-13). This is clearly evident in many Maya monuments, such as lintel 25 at Yaxchilan (Figure 7.1), where a serpent is conflated with a centipede. Kukulkan, the Maya plumed serpent, is another example of such a creature, although these are comparatively late innovations within Maya art.

In Maya art, there are a number of different key types of conflated-serpent creatures. Many are bicephalic, or double-headed, with one or more snake-like maws, serpentine forms, and are decorated with celestial imagery. Three, in particular, are of importance in this study: the Cosmic Monster, the Vision Serpent, and the Ceremonial Bar. Tate (1992: loc 2799) suggests that the serpents held by the women on HS. 2 blocks II and III, are either Vision Serpents, or, more generally, bicephalic serpents. As will be demonstrated, this is not the case. They are, instead, Ceremonial Bars, held to denote the women's power of rulership and as ancestors. Furthermore, the large maws that open on opposing sides of the two blocks are designed to juxtapose the serpentine imagery, and are, in fact, centipede maws. This discussion will begin by defining the three types of serpent stated above, and analyse the iconography of HS. 2 accordingly.

The Vision Serpent is easiest to identify and define (figure 7.2). Vision Serpents appear on many monuments at Yaxchilan, and composite-serpent creatures provide a conduit for communication between the Maya rulers and gods and ancestors. Unlike the Cosmic Monster and the Ceremonial Bar (below), the Vision Serpent is normally depicted along the vertical axis, rather than horizontal, although it is possible that there are a few exceptions (Schele and Miller 1986: 180, also see 192 and 203, plate 67 for a

Preclassic example of horizontal Vision Serpent representation). Also unlike the other two categories, the Vision Serpent can have either a single head (as in figure 7.2), or be double-headed (such as in figure 7.1). The upper head is usually serpentine, with an open jaw, from which emerges another entity - either a deity or ancestor. The lower head can either be similar to the upper, with a second head emerging, although more commonly it is simply a supernatural head in place of the tail.

Vision Serpents were manifested through sacrificial rites of bloodletting, and the burning of incense, and served as a conduit for communication with ancestors and gods. They were not just representative of hallucinations from chemical changes within the body, but indicative of the belief that the god or ancestor genuinely appeared to the ruler conducting the ritual (Schele and Miller 1986: 183). Vision Serpents rarely appear touching the ground (Miller and Taube 1997: 182), but appear rising from the smoke of the burned offerings of incense and blood. They provide a metaphor for ancestral power, and may have been considered companion spirits to Maya rulers (Wanyerka 1996: 77; also see Houston and Stuart 1989). In summary, the Vision Serpent, while associated with the general connotations of serpents, serves as a conduit for communication between realms, and is representative of the power of the Maya rulers.

The Cosmic Monster is a multi-faceted entity with a range of attributes and meanings, making it one of the most difficult composite-serpents to define.[17] Stone (1985: 39) draws attention to the difficulties in understanding this creature, and demonstrated the range of terms used to describe it in literature, including 'the cosmic motif,' the 'Celestial Monster,' the 'Two-headed Dragon,' the 'Bicephalic Monster,' and the

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[17] Stuart (2003: 1) points out that there are multiple aspects of this 'critter', one of which is the "starry deer crocodile". This aspect, specifically, could be the Milky Way, as well as having connotations with the earth (Ibid: 2). See below (Male Ballplayers' Costumes) for further discussion.

'Cosmic Caiman' (Velásquez García 2006). The Cosmic Monster is often adorned with sky-band symbols, and in the Paris codex serves to provide a conduit, or link, between a number of deities (Milbrath 2000: 275). In the Dresden Codex, the Cosmic Caiman is decapitated and the water that spills forth ends the world age (Velásquez García 2006), thus it is closely associated with water. In eighth century Palenque, equivalent myths describe the liquid as blood, (ibid.) another 'precious liquid' suggesting that blood and water are not 'opposites' but are "complementary illustrations of a conceptual whole." (Stuart 2003b: 3). The Cosmic Monster can also be associated with the Milky Way (ibid. 2000: 277), rain and storms (Thompson 1970: 89), water (McDonald and Stross 2012: 74; Stone 1983: 39), and clouds (Milbrath 2000: 279). Wanyerka (1996: 76) suggests that the front head of the Cosmic Monster is identified with Venus, whereas the rear head with the fleshless head of the sun, making the entity representative of the path between the natural and supernatural worlds. It is interesting to note that the fleshless head of the sun is also the Underworld sun, which Taube suggested was associated not with serpents, but centipedes (see above). Clancy (1994: 32) argues that the Cosmic Monster is the "iconographic twin" of the Ceremonial Bar (discussed below), and its purpose was principally "to support, to frame, and thereby contextualise whatever is depicted on top, beneath, or within."

In contrast, the Ceremonial Bar (see figure 7.3; Clancy 1994: 15, figure 3 a-d) is an object to be held and supported (ibid.: 32). It does not serve to provide contextual information, but instead is confined by its context, in the arms of the figure holding it. Unlike the Vision Serpent, the Ceremonial Bar is usually depicted on the horizontal axis, although it is sometimes seen held diagonally across the body. It is always being held, either by a member of the royal family, or a supernatural creature. Clancy (ibid.:

24) notes that at Yaxchilan, Palenque, and Piedras Negras, there are no examples of rulers holding the Ceremonial Bar, the honour instead being reserved for "others" - elite, and women. Furthermore, Tate (1992: loc 2045) suggests that the Ceremonial Bar appears most frequently in Late Classic Yaxchilan in association with ancestors, and specifically deceased individuals.

In other ceremonial cities, the Ceremonial Bar is often depicted being held by living rulers (Miller and Taube 1997: 58), and has been considered proof of office and a king's "ability to manifest spirits" (Stone and Zender 2011: 201). Iconography decorating the Ceremonial Bar is often cosmological in nature, leading many to conclude that, by holding it in their arms, rulers can contain and hold the sky and cosmos (Miller and Taube 1997: 51; Stone 1991: 197). Miller and Taube (1997: 59) elaborate further, by suggesting that the Ceremonial Bar "symbolises the role the Maya ruler plays in supporting the cosmos and nurturing the Gods." This idea of 'nurturing' has developed from investigations into the bar's genealogy, whereby scholars argue that the holding of the bar is representative of cradling a child (Clancy 1994; Stone 1991). Stone (ibid.: 200) concludes that male rulers holding the Ceremonial Bar were attempting to absorb concepts of female fertility into their own masculine identities, to further solidify their roles as kings. Holding the Ceremonial Bar, evoking parents cradling a child, which is also covered in celestial iconography, not only suggests support, but guardianship, caring, and protection, not of a specific child but of the cosmic order (ibid.: 197-198).

If this is indeed the case, then individuals holding the Ceremonial Bar are displaying divine ability to nurture and protect the cosmic order, evoking concepts of fertility and strength, and ultimate authority. Clancy (1994) examines this object in detail within iconography and concludes that it is also associated with

water, religious rank and power, and the divine right to rule, and is "consistently associated with primordial energy" (ibid.: 11-13). His survey of Ceremonial Bars in monumental carving shows that a high proportion of women (20% of examples) are seen holding the bar across the Maya lowlands (ibid.: 18), and the angle of the bar denotes the actual moment of ritual being represented. According to Clancy (ibid.: 20), a diagonally held Ceremonial Bar represents the action of manifesting an ancestor or deity, whereas the horizontal bar shows the act completed. Miller and Taube (1997: 59) argue that by the Late Classic era, Ceremonial Bars are depicted as rigid objects, rather than the undulating serpent bodies of earlier periods. However, as we can see at Yaxchilan, from HS. 2 and lintels 38, 39, and 40, this is not always the case at this ceremonial city.

The discussion above has identified the key iconographic markers and purposes of serpents and centipedes, Vision Serpents, the Cosmic Monster, and Ceremonial Bars. While the bicephalic serpents, and open maws on blocks II and III of HS. 2 are poorly preserved, it is still possible to suggest identities for these creatures. This author argues that the large, open maws framing the combined composition of the blocks are centipedes, not serpents. Both display the markers described by Kettunen and Davis (2004: 4) as being indicative of centipedes, including additional fangs, large eyes, prominent forehead and skeletal features. Centipedes are associated with death, darkness, and caves (entrances to the Underworld). As we know that Lady *Pakal* died in 705 A.D., and it is argued below (Women of HS. 2) that the woman on block III is also deceased at the time the monument was commissioned. Therefore, the centipede maws are acting as portals between worlds, enabling the living players and the two women to communicate as part of the wider ballgame ritual.

The presence of the centipede maws is contrasted by the use of bicephalic serpents which are held by the women (see above, Taube 2003). Although these have been identified as Vision Serpents by Tate (1992: loc 2799), the discussion presented here shows that this is not the case. They are being held by the women in a horizontal position, and have not been manifested through burning offerings, which do not appear at all on HS. 2. Thus, they fail to adhere to two major diagnostic traits of the Vision Serpent. Instead, the gesture by which they are held recalls the discussion on Ceremonial Bars by Clancy (1994). The women cradle the undulating serpent bodies as one might hold a child - one arm to support the infant's body, the other outstretched to support the head. As the discussions above have indicated, serpents and women were closely connected (Stone and Zender 2011: 201). Given that the Ceremonial Bar was also associated with fertility, in particular the nurturing of young children, it is not surprising that we see the women of blocks II and III holding them. Tate (1992: loc 2045) has already made explicit that serpent bars were held exclusively by ancestors at Yaxchilan. Blocks II and III demonstrate that women were an integral part of the cosmic order at Yaxchilan. These two women were clearly deceased at the time of the HS. 2 ritual - identification of the woman on block II as Lady *Pakal* supports this, along with the presence of the centipede maws to the Underworld, which implies cross-realm communication. As has already been argued, the woman on block III is also deceased, and most probably either Lady *Kabal Xook* (Shield Jaguar III's principle wife) or Lady *Ik'* Skull (Bird Jaguar IV's mother). Given the Ceremonial Bar's association with fertility, and connotations with support and guardianship, this is almost certainly Lady *Ik'* Skull, who was mother to the ruler of Yaxchilan. As discussed in Chapter 3, Lady *Ik*' Skull was not mentioned at all by Shield Jaguar III, but their son, Bird Jaguar IV

made a point of including her in his own monumental program (interestingly, he also mentioned Lady *Kabal Xook*). Including his mother, and his grandmother, on HS. 2 holding the Ceremonial Bar, not only reaffirms their roles in the Yaxchilan dynasty, but supports a sense of continuity through the power of women in Yaxchilan's history.

As the women face one another in the composition, so too do the Ceremonial Bars. The frontal heads both have open jaws, from which emerge gods (see discussion below). The heads are clearly composite creatures, including diagnostic traits from snakes (the upper maw fangs and the large, rounded eye), centipedes (lower jaw fangs, and bone (see figure 7.5 f), and a prominent forehead ridge (reminiscent of the caiman and centipede). The rear heads replace the tips of the tails, although it is possible to propose that there are markings suggestive of a rattlesnake's tail. Figures 7.4a and 7.4b show the details of the tail on the Ceremonial Bar on blocks II and III respectively. The tails curl upwards, and the supernaturals heads are seen at the ends. As can be seen, four dots make up the end of the tail on figure 7.4a, and although there are only three at the end of the tail on figure 7.4b, it is possible there are supposed to be four (given the level of erosion). While the number is not overly significant, the fourth dot would mean there was a continuous line from the tip of the tail to the top of the supernatural's head, making it more probable that the snake could be identified as a rattlesnake. Figure 7.4c and 7.4d are other examples of rattlesnakes in Maya iconography. Unfortunately, without further iconographic markers, such as indications of snake's skin, firm identification of the serpents on HS. 2 is impossible. The rear head of the serpent on block II (figure 7.4a) has a long snout, a high forehead, and a snaggle-tooth. Given the level of detail alluded to by Graham (1982: 156), it is possible to make out some lizard features of this head, in particular in comparison with figure 6.7a. The creature on block III has a roman nose, a chin that juts out, and a foliated/smoke headdress.

The supernatural heads emerging from the front jaws of the Ceremonial Bars are less badly eroded (figures 7.5a and 7.5b). The supernatural heads emerge from the open jaws of the serpents, facing one another in the overall composition. Figure 7.5c shows the head glyph of God K, demonstrating the diagnostic traits used to identify the supernaturals on blocks II and III. God K is identified as having a zoomorphic head, large eyes, an upturned snout, and attenuated serpent tooth (Taube 1992: 69-79). Furthermore, he is often depicted with a smoking cigar or torch on his forehead, and one foot replaced with a serpent. Figures 7.5a and 7.5b have zoomorphic heads, large eyes, a serpent (or snaggle?) tooth, and have mirrors on the forehead from which smoke emerges. They also appear to have the oval details along the side/back of the head seen in figure 7.5c, although erosion (particularly on figure 7.5b) makes this tentative. Both supernaturals also appear to be wearing feathered/ frond headdresses, and have protrusions from their lower jaw/neck. In the case of 7.5a, this could be identified as a leaf due to the shape, although details are lacking.

Tate (1992: loc 2799) describes the entity on block II as "a foliated God K type image", and that on block III as "a portrait of God K". Given the level of degradation, it is probable that they are both God K. God K, originally thought to be a manifestation of *Itzam Na K'awiil* (Thompson 1970: 224), is now widely accepted as being *K'awiil*, a deity associated with a wide range of concepts. God K has also been identified as GII of the Palenque Triad (Tate 1992: loc 1912; Taube 1989b: 39). Milbrath (2000: 231) argues that God K is nocturnal in nature, and it could be suggested that this likens it to the centipede. If this is the case, this author argues that his presence in the jaws of the Ceremonial Bar (a serpent) is designed to further juxtapose the day- and night-time aspects of the sun, perhaps to suggest that those that hold the Ceremonial Bar are needed for the support of the day- and night-time skies.

Milbrath (ibid.) goes on to state that, in her opinion, "God K is a planet linked with meteorological phenomena, especially storms and lightning." Such phenomena are essential to the agricultural cycle and fertility. According to Taube (1989: 46) God K is the "personification of sustenance," and is closely associated with the Tonsured Maize God (ibid.: 39). In the case of HS. 2, this is supported by the presence of sprouting maize foliation on the Ceremonial Bar seen on block II. Figure 7.5d shows the maize curl seen in the **NAL** logograph, meaning 'maize,'[18] which is nearly identical to the foliation seen in figure 7.5e (also see Taube 1985: 173, figure 2). The corresponding iconography on block III is different to that of block II (figure 7.5f). While it appears to be foliation (perhaps water?) flowing down from the neck of the serpent's head, the connecting symbol is quite different.

This association with fertility and identification as GII has led Tate (1992: loc 1939) to argue that God K was considered the origin of all royal lineages (also see Milbrath 2000: 232). As is argued above, the images of Lady *Pakal* and Lady *Ik'* Skull holding the Ceremonial Bar evoked concepts of continuity within the royal family at Yaxchilan. God K's presence serves to solidify this association, and further ideas of divine patronage for Bird Jaguar IV's rule. God K also played a vital role in agricultural fertility, and "engendering supernaturals into the earthly realm" via lightning (Stone and Zender 2011: 49). God K and serpents, then, were associated through their ability to provide connections between realms, and communicative powers. These abilities, as well as their connotations with fertility, mean that they were well placed alongside women in the visual metaphors of monumental carving (see Chapter 7).

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[18] More specifically, this refers to elote, or corn that is on the cob.

Finally, while not directly associated with the text on block VII, it should be noted that GII is associated with the 'three-conquest' story at Palenque. On the Tablet of the Foliated Cross, God K/GII is the *ox ahaal k'u* (Schele and Freidel 1991: 305), or the 'third divine conquest.' It is worth noting, then, that God K is somehow connected to this narrative, and that this event can include a wide range of deities. This example is outside of Yaxchilan, although it should be noted that there was contact between Palenque and Yaxchilan throughout the Classic period (see Chapter 3). It is probable that despite both sites having somewhat different focuses and agendas within their political ideology, they both used the *ox ahaal* narrative within their own context.

Dwarfs on Block VII

Two dwarfs appear alongside Bird Jaguar IV on HS. 2, block VII. They are dressed simply, with basic belts and loin cloths, bracelets, anklets, and beaded necklaces. Their headdresses are mostly undecorated, and are the tied cloth caps seen worn by many Classic Maya dwarf figures (Jones 1977, in Miller 1985: 148). While erosion makes it difficult to tell, it is possible that the larger of the two dwarfs (the one closest to Bird Jaguar IV) has a small knotted ponytail, whereas the smaller of the two has no hair. Atop their heads, they have protrusions. Both also wear different earspools which are connected with different deities (Chahk and the Maize God, see below), and bear the *ek'* (T510af) glyph under their arms. These adornments help to identity the dwarfs, and allude to their significance within the scene. This section discusses the significance of dwarfs within Classic Maya ideology and culture, and presents some conclusions as to the dwarfs on HS. 2 identities.

Dwarfs are depicted in the art of many Mesoamerican cultures, throughout their histories. They are found on Olmec carved monuments, in West Mexican ceramics, as well as on monuments and polychrome ceramics of the ancient Maya. There are also a number of written accounts of dwarfs in Aztec codices from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, although scholars should be cautious about making ethnographic analogy between these groups, and the ancient Maya's treatment of them (Miller 1985: 142). There are no surviving conquest era accounts of dwarfs in the Maya regions, meaning that it is difficult to draw meaningful comparisons.

During the Classic period, the Maya depicted dwarfs, hunchbacks, and other deformed figures in figurines, polychrome vases, and on monumental sculpture, as well as on jade plaques and other decoratively worn items. Commonly, dwarfs are shown with the following features: small stature, large disproportioned head and prominent brow, short fleshy limbs, pot-belly, and dropped lower lip (Miller 1985: 141). These characteristics have led scholars to identify the majority of dwarfs in Maya representation as having achondroplasia (Inomata 2000; Miller 1985; Prager 2006), a cause of dwarfism that accounts for 80% of overall cases and affects 1 in 25,000 births (Wynn et al 2007). Achondroplasia is a result of a spontaneous mutation on fibroblast growth factor receptor 3, and can be passed on genetically - a person with achondroplasia has a 50% chance of passing it on to their offspring (ibid.). Representation in Maya imagery suggests that this was a well known condition within the culture, and that it was positively regarded by society, and was considered a boon rather than a curse. The two dwarfs on HS. 2 share the characteristics of achondroplasia.

As yet, there has been little archaeological evidence of dwarfs in the Maya lowlands (although it is possible that an abnormally short male found at Tikal could

have had a form of dwarfism - see Inomata 2000). Representation, therefore, may have overemphasised the number of dwarfs in Classic Maya society. It is possible that figurines, such as those found at Jaina, were created as substitutes for actual dwarfs when there were none (or perhaps not enough) in courts and society. That dwarfs were overrepresented within Maya imagery suggests they were highly valued within the royal court, and their presence – whether real or figurative – was sought after. It is clear from representations in the Classic period Maya Lowlands that dwarfs held a privileged and important part in the administrative and ritual activities of royal courts (Prager 2001; Wanyerka 1996:81). It is possible that the two dwarfs on HS. 2 were not historical figures, but metaphorical representatives with layered meaning and may have been mythological, like many dwarfs in Classic Maya art (Houston 1992; Miller 1985: 153).

In Maya art, dwarfs were shown providing entertainment for the nobility through dance (Wanyerka 1996: 81), serving food to the rulers or elite, and they had a wide range of administrative duties including taste testing and assessing the quality of tribute (Prager 2006: 278). Prager (ibid.: 278-279) argues that dwarfs are often shown as passive onlookers to ritual acts being completed by rulers, and that their presence "could call forth a medium through which gods could participate in earthly life." Their presence may have been used to indicate celestial sanction for the events that took place.

Very often, dwarfs were depicted alongside rulers (such as on HS. 2) and it is interesting to note that there are several occasions where two dwarfs were present, such as on a Jaina figurine, on a carved column from Campeche (see Miller 1985: 144, fig. 8 and 146, fig. 14), and on HS. 2. Furthermore, on the Jaina figurine, the dwarfs

accompany a ball player. It is possible that in certain ritual activities, two dwarfs are required/preferred. It should be noted, however, that there are many cases where only a single dwarf accompanies the ruler or main protagonist. Although not within the scope of this study, it would be interesting to examine in what situations two dwarfs are present (as opposed to a single dwarf), and whether or not these representations correspond to historical or mythological dwarf persons. According to Prager (2006: 279), for example, the Maya associated the presence of two dwarfs with an as yet undiscovered constellation. Clearly, then, dwarfs were of supernatural and cosmic importance.

Houston and Stuart (1989) have suggested that dwarfs could act as a co-essence to a Maya ruler, an entity that "is believed to share in the consciousness of the person who owns it." (ibid.: 1-2) The Maya believed that a person's 'soul' is made up of a number of different parts, and that a person's way can hold one or more of these parts. Dwarfs, then, could be seen to be keepers of parts of a person's - most likely a member of the ruling nobility - soul. It is possible that the more dwarfs a ruler can 'own', the stronger or more powerful his way, or soul, was.

In Maya art, dwarfs were also shown accompanying Maya Gods, in particular the Maize and Sun gods (Houston 1992; Inomata 2000; Miller 1985; Miller and Taube 2003; Prager 2001; Storniolo 2009; Wanyerka 1996), and rulers accompanied by dwarfs could take on the roles of those deities (Prager 2001: 279). At El Peru, for example, Na Kan Ajaw (a royal woman) is dressed as the Maize God and accompanied by a richly adorned dwarf (Wanyerka 1996: 73, figure 1). Their connection with the Maize god suggests that they were closely linked with fertility, and Joralemon (in Taube 2004: 57) notes that in Olmec representation, dwarfs bear maize imagery and are often seen carrying ears of corn (Joralemon 1971: 52 fig. 20f). Taube (2004: 58) goes on to say that

an Olmec dwarf found in the Dumbarton Oaks collection "may have been considered a symbolic 'maize bringer'." The Maya believed that dwarfs were the children of the four Chahks (rain gods) (Miller and Taube 2003: 82), and that four dwarfs originally raised the vault of heaven (Prager 2001: 279). The importance of the presence of four entities has long been discussed in literature on the Maya (four directions, four colours, four pillars of the world, four corners of the earth etc). Dwarfs were not only supernatural; they were relatives of some of the most significant gods to the Classic Maya.

Chahk himself was also closely connected with the Maize God as a bringer of sustenance. The Maya rely on the annual rains to water crops, which Chahk was responsible for. The importance of this deity has endured until today, where in contemporary Maya belief he is responsible for breaking open great rocks that contained maize (Miller and Taube 1997: 60). In ancient Maya belief, Chahk took on the role of "splitter", splitting open the mountain which contained maize, bringing the people sustenance (Stone and Zender 2011: 41). In art and imagery, he is seen wielding an obsidian axe, and metaphor for lightning, which he uses to decapitates his victims, and he is closely associated with serpents (see below). As Stone and Zender (ibid.) explain, his "dual personality, part macho aggression, part fertility bearer, made him a superb model for Classic Maya Kings."

The two dwarfs on HS. 2 wear different earspools (although only one earspool on each dwarf can be seen). The larger of the two dwarfs wears a spondylus shell earflare that refers to Chahk (Freidel et al 1993: 361). Chahk is seen wearing such an earspool in his name glyph (see Coe and Van Stone 2001: 111; also see K521, K555, and K1152, among others, for examples of Chahk wearing the earspool). It is interesting that only one of the dwarfs bears this mark. The second, smaller dwarf

wears an earspool that may refer to the young Maize god. The Maize god is often accompanied by dwarfs (Prager 2001: 279), and they appear often on polychrome pottery together, for example on: K517, K633, K1837, K3388, K3400, K4619, among others. On several of these polychrome pieces, the dwarfs accompanying the Maize god (or Maize god impersonators) wear earspools identical to that worn by the dwarf on HS. 2. Classic Maya dwarfs were not only associated with Chahk, but connected with rain and lightning in their own right. They appear frequently on Homul style polychrome vessels, such as on K4989 and K853, bearing water fowl or cormorant head extensions (perhaps part of the headdress). Braakhuis (2009: 23) notes that one of the Copan ball court markers depicts a ballplayer wearing a "bird-headed 'rain dwarf' as a frontal adornment." While Braakhuis goes into no further detail about which ball court marker this may be, it is possible that he is referring to the ball court AIIb markers, specifically the centre marker. 'Rain dwarf' refers to the Mexican belief of dwarfs who can act as water spirits, and are possibly responsible for lightning, and/or the guarding of wild animals (Staller and Stross 2013: 143). While we should be careful about making too many ethnographic connections to the Mexican 'rain dwarf' (who can also be responsible for bringing an illness called 'cave air,' Neilsen and Helmke 2011: 358), in K'iche' oral narratives, there is reference to a White Dwarf and Red Dwarf who carry "lightning striking stone hatchets and whose epithets clearly identify [them] as a Mayan version of the central Mexican rain dwarf." (Staller and Stross 2013: 143). 'Rain dwarfs' are "said to live in mountain caves" (Neilsen and Helmke 2011: 358), sacred locales to the Maya and other Mesoamerican cultures, and where Xmucane, mother to the Maize God before he was resurrected, ground the maize to make the first humans (Tedlock 1996: 139-140). Caves were and are vital to Maya

ritual practises, and there is considerable archaeological evidence indicating that real caves were used for a number of practises dating back to the Middle Preclassic period (Stone and Zender 2011: 133). Caves are often represented on monumental sculpture and painting as zoomorphs (ibid.), in particular the open mouths of centipedes (such as those seen on blocks II and III). Caves represent sources of fertility (see Chapter 5), and also provided portals to the Underworld or Otherworld. Dwarfs were closely associated with the Underworld (Prager 2001; Looper 2010: 121), and were clearly considered to be divine creatures, linked to a number of supernatural entities.

The two dwarfs on HS. 2 each wear headdresses, and while levels of erosion make them difficult to identify, they bear striking resemblance to those worn by 'rain dwarfs' on polychrome ceramics such as K4989 and K8533. The slender protrusions seem to end in animal heads, which probably represent birds. Thus, it could be argued that these dwarfs are intimately connected to rain, lightning, fertility, and maize. Furthermore, their presence within a 'glyphic cave' (Storniolo 2009: 22) recalls this association. The hieroglyphic text (departing from the mythological story carved into the steps on the left of the composition, and becoming an historical narrative) forms an enclosed space around the dwarfs (along the top and right hand side) that is reminiscent of Chalcatzingo Monument 1, and side-views of niches seen at sites such as Piedras Negras (such as Stela 6 and 11). Thus, they are further associated with caves, which are often considered entrances to the realm below the earth's surface.

Both dwarfs have the ek' (T510af) glyph placed in their right armpit:

EK' (*ek'/Ek'*) (T510af) 1> n. "star"; represents one-half of the full "star" glyph (Kettunen and Helmke 2011: 84)

It is without a doubt that the presence of this glyph on the bodies of the dwarfs is a glyphic indicator (see Chapter 1; Stone and Zender 2011). However, the generally poor understanding of this glyph (beyond its most basic meaning 'star') makes understanding its context on HS. 2 difficult. Tate (1992: loc 4038) suggests that the use of *ek'* as a glyphic marker connects the two dwarfs on HS. 2 with Jupiter's appearance in the night sky on the last calendar round date inscribed upon the monument, when Bird Jaguar IV plays the ballgame depicted. On this date (9.15.13.6.9 3 *Muluc* 17 *Mac*), Jupiter passed by Castor and Pollux (the two brightest stars in Gemini), which Tate suggests could be represented by the two dwarfs on block VII (ibid.; Milbrath 2000: 268). Alternatively, Prager (2006: 279) suggests that the two dwarfs on HS. 2 could represent a yet undeciphered/undiscovered constellation, as the *ek'* markers denotes them of the sky or upper realm.

Stone and Zender (2011: 61) have made a strong argument that *ek'* was a (general) marker for a constellation or star: Venus is referred to in inscriptions as *chak ek'* ("great/red planet"); Orion denoted as *aak ek'* ("turtle constellation"); Scorpio possibly named *sinan ek'*. I follow this interpretation, and believe that the ek' glyph is there to reaffirm the celestial importance of the dwarfs. It is interesting to note the homophonic connection between 'dwarf' and 'star' in *aak*.[19] Miller (1985: 152) suggests that the *ek'* markers denote the dwarfs as 'astral' entities, implying that they are mythological, rather than historical, creatures. Perhaps more probable, *ek'* refers in some way to the dwarfs' roles as onlookers to the ritual conducted by Bird Jaguar IV on HS. 2. Marking them with the star glyph could be a deliberate and explicit link

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[19] It is interesting to note that aak can mean both dwarf, or represent a constellation: either Gemini (Roys 1965; Milbrath 2000: 267) or Orion (Foster 2005: 161; Bricker 1992: 171; Freidel et al 1993: 80). It is possible that this homophony (see Houston 1984) represents an innate connection between the two beings - dwarf and stars - that suggest the cosmic significance of the former.

to the heavens, or celestial realms, suggesting that they have a close connection to the deceased ancestors that also appear on the other HS. 2 blocks. It is similarly possible (and not exclusive) that the presence of the *ek'* glyph is designed to contrast the dwarfs' association with the Underworld (Prager 2001; Wanyerka 1996: 88), ensuring that they have been represented as entities of all layers of the cosmos.

On HS. 2, at Yaxchilan, the presence of the dwarfs served a number of functions in the support of the ruler Bird Jaguar IV. Their attendance as watchers of the ballgame played by Bird Jaguar IV gave the ritual divine approval. Furthermore, their presence suggested to onlookers that the authority with which Bird Jaguar IV ruled Yaxchilan was supported by the Maize God and Chahk, whom the dwarfs also represented. These two gods were ideal models for Maya rulers on which to base their authority given their associations with both strength and fertility.

The headdresses worn by the dwarfs, and contrast of the *ek'* glyphs and placement within the cave constructed from hieroglyphs, suggest that they were supernatural creatures which could touch and influence every layer of the Maya universe. Water birds access each layer of the cosmos, and it is possible that their presence alluded to the dwarfs' ability to emulate this. Placement within the cave further suggests a connection to the Underworld, as well as fertility, and perhaps further recalls the Maya belief that maize originated within a cave, and was 'broken free' by the god Chahk. Thus, the dwarfs were metaphors for stars, the earth, and the Underworld, as well as sustenance, and strength.

For Bird Jaguar IV, this meant that the ballgame ritual and his rulership was supported at each layer of the Maya universe, and that he was able to call on supernatural supporters to attend and watch his most important rituals. Through this

visual composition, he was also connecting himself to each layer of the cosmos. Finally, the dwarfs alone served as a method for reinforcing his right and capacity to rule over Yaxchilan, at a time when his legitimacy may have been in question.

Prisoner-as-ball on Blocks VI, VII, and VIII

Blocks VI, VII, and VIII deviate from showing the inscribed ball, and instead depict so-called 'captive-balls' (Schele and Miller 1986; Miller 2001b; Tokovinine 2000, 2002) being fielded against the steps by Shield Jaguar III, Bird Jaguar IV, and Bird Jaguar III respectively (see Figures 6.13 1-c; Appendix A, images A.6-A.8). It should come as no surprise that the three most important ball players on HS. 2 are also in possession of the three most elaborate and significant balls of HS. 2. The three humans-as-balls are shown within the balls themselves, each with accompanying hieroglyphs that have been discussed in Chapter 6. These hieroglyphs name the tied-up figures, and probably designate the ceremonial city of their origin. Each figure is shown in a similar pose: their arms are bound behind them, with rope around the forearms, and legs pulled behind with rope tying them just below the knee. These bindings appear to have 'hog-tied' the captives. Their heads are pulled back, and their hair bound and messy. Each of the three men wear a loin cloth, with a small apron, a necklace (or rope around the neck?) and ear spools (not apparent on block VI). It is interesting that each is shown from a different 'side': the body of the tied male on block VI faces out from the block, with his head turned to his right; the body of the corresponding figure on block VII is shown in left side profile; and the one block VIII is shown in right side profile. In all cases, the human-as-ball physically face the captor, or ballplayer, present on their corresponding block.

These human-as-ball serve an important function within the composition of the ballgame scenes. They are active participants in the ballgame, and as such have significant roles beyond spectators. These figures are clearly human, and none bears the markings of 1 *Ajaw*, who was reborn as the Maize God, and is often associated with men in their position (Houston et al 2006: 204). They have retained their humanity (through representation of their physical bodies), whilst also being dehumanised by their portrayal as tools of the game, rather than players. In this, they are not willing participants, or even the enemy which needs to be defeated by the rightful winners (Shield Jaguar III, Bird Jaguar IV, and Bird Jaguar III), but apparatus necessary for the players to engage in the ritual. It is unclear in the iconography, or the accompanying hieroglyphic text, whether or not part of their role is to be executed as part of the ritual. By dehumanising the figures (by showing them in a role as 'object, and by physically stepping on that object each time the stairway is used), but giving them the "dignity of personal names and titles," the victorious rulers absorbed their identities into their own (ibid.: 204). Such relationships are common at Yaxchilan (see Chapter 3), and demonstrate a clear interdependence between superior and inferior figures.

The terms 'captives' and 'sacrifices' have been avoided as much as possible thus far. There is a great amount of debate surrounding the imagery and understanding of these terms, much of which stems from the concepts of warfare, religious ritual, and sacrifice amongst the ancient Maya. Many scholars have assumed that the motif of human-as-ball, is a literal representation of some aspect of the Maya ballgame, and that the figures depicted in such uncomfortable positions (hog-tied and bound within/ as a ball) are the sacrificial victims killed in the final aspect of the ballgame ritual (see Coe 2003: 201; Miller and Taube 1997: 44; Schele and Miller 1986: 249; Freidel

et al 1993: 358; Rice 2004: 254 among others). Dillon's (1982) dated but excellent treatment of bound figures in Maya iconography provides a much needed distinction between "captives" and "prisoners". He differentiates between the two by defining the formers as "individuals under restraint immediately after their capture", and the latter as "captives who have survived their initial capture" (Dillon 1982: 28). These human-as-ball figures seen on HS. 2, then, are not captives, but prisoners, rendering the description of "prisoner-as-ball" more appropriate. Dillon suggests that the imagery of the bound prisoner "*metaphorically* testifies to the successful completion of some militaristic act." (Emphasis added, ibid.: 27). While this author does not necessarily agree with the necessity of the act being militaristic in nature (it is possible that the iconography could be a metaphor for some other form of relationship, whereby the superior has dealt a societal, economic, or political blow to the inferior), it is important to recognise that the prisoner-as-ball motif is most probably a metaphorical representation of a culmination of events that preceded and follow the actual act of play against a set of steps (see Chapter 2, Barthes 1977, and Miller and Houston 1987).

The problem with the term 'human sacrifice' stems from the definition: to slaughter a victim as an offering to a deity. This is a fundamentally religious act, and considered an act of worship to a higher power. HS. 2 gives no indication that these prisoner-as-balls were 'sacrificial' victims, just as the three participants of 'self-wounding' within the inscription on block VII were not stated to have engaged in self-sacrificial rites for a particular cause or entity. Thus, defining the prisoner-as-ball imagery as representative of human sacrifice fails to take into account the epigraphic evidence, and, worse, ignores the metaphorical nature of Maya iconography. Rice (2004: 254) unconvincingly argues that ballgames ended in sacrifice (also see Wilkerson

1991), although she does state that the reverse hog-tie of bound prisoners displays the individual's vulnerability (also see Dillon 1982). It seems more probable that it was the purpose to depict the defeated person as unguarded and submissive, rather than being a literal interpretation of events that the figure suffered.

Arguments that the reverse hog-tie pose was used on prisoners to turn them into a literal ball for the ballgame against steps begs more practical questions. Scholars that suggest this regularly argue that the bound prison is thrown *down* a set of steps, as part of the ballgame ritual (Miller and Taube 1997: 44). However, it is clear from HS. 2 that the prisoners-as-balls are not falling down the steps, but have been actively fielded against them by the ballplayers. This is indicated by the 'active' poses of the three royal players and the relative position of the balls (see Chapter 7). The players are engaged in a game *with* the balls, not simply awaiting them at the bottom of the steps, and the position of the balls implies contact *against* the steps, rather than down them. However, with whole human bodies tied and bound in such a way, it would have been impossible to play such a game. Thus we are faced with a conundrum: are the prisoners-as-balls a metaphor for defeat in another, non-ballgame set of events? Alternatively, is the ballgame depicted itself a metaphor for a wider ritual? Returning to the discussions presented in Chapter 2 can be useful in answering this question.

Miller and Houston (1987: 50) clearly lay out that the narrative of the image is not just representative of a single event, but all those connected that lead up to, involve, and occur after the actual event shown. To interpret the prisoners-as-ball as literal depictions fails to take this into account - why should the hip ballgame played against a set of steps be part of a wider group of events, but the actual representation of the ball be condensed to one single option? The reverse hog-tie pose is shown by

Dillon (1982) to represent prisoners, not captives, as defined above. While he goes on to suggest that this type of binding could represent a prisoner that is already dead (ibid.: 28, see also Rice 2004: 254), his second suggestion (rarely taken up by other scholars for no discernible reason) is that the prisoner has just arrived at his captors 'stronghold' (and was thus in need of restraint) (Dillon 1982: 28-29).

Keeping such in mind, it would more prudent argue that the prisoner-as-ball motif does not necessarily denote the death of the prisoner in question, and certainly does not indicate ritual sacrifice. Instead, the iconography alludes to the prisoner's capture, movement to the captor's ceremonial city (in this case, Yaxchilan), and their subsequent participation in rituals to commemorate the victor's honour and prestige (see Chapter 1). As there are no records of the prisoners taken by the rulers of Yaxchilan at their sites of origin, nor is it explicitly stated what became of them, this author refrains from making the assumption that they were sacrificed or executed (although it is probable that they did not remain at Yaxchilan indefinitely; see Chapter 3).

The Women on Blocks I, II, III, and XI

There has been a lot of 'womanist' (Joyce and Claassen 1997) study surrounding the ancient Maya (for example Tate 1987; Proskouriakoff 1961; Tuszyńska 2009; Hughes 2008; Hewitt 1999; Joyce 2001). Yaxchilan has provided a focal point for such work thanks to the large number of surviving records of women at the site. Over the course of nearly three centuries, eight women appeared in the hieroglyphic record between 526 and 808 A.D. (Tate 1987: 807). Of those eight women, seven were included in monuments commissioned by Bird Jaguar IV: Lady *Pakal*, his grandmother;

Lady *Ik'* Skull, his mother; Lady *K'abal Xook*, his father's principle wife; and Lady Great Skull, Lady *Mut B'alam*, Lady *Wak Tuun*, and Lady *Wak Jalam Chan Ajaw*, his own wives.

While the representation of females on Maya monumental sculpture is less than that of males, they are still recorded as holding important political positions, including titles such as *k'uhul ajaw*, *ajaw*, and *b'akab'*. Traditionally, a woman's importance was derived from her status as a mother to eminent offspring (Schele and Miller 1986; Miller 1988; Hewitt 1999: 251) although there are notable exceptions (rulers at Palenque and Naranjo, although the latter two were mentioned only posthumously, Hewitt 1999: 255), and according to Tate (1987: 822), by 9.4.0.0.0 (October 16, 514 A.D.) "women were as important as men in genealogical documentation." Interestingly, many of the women mentioned at Yaxchilan have no maternal parentage statements attached to their names or title sequences (ibid.: 808). Of these women, the most significant is undoubtedly Lady *K'abal Xook*, principle wife of Shield Jaguar III. Her eminence at Yaxchilan, both in inscriptions and monuments alongside her husband, and independently (the lintels of Structure 23 being one of the most significant examples), demonstrates that women played an important political and ritual role in Classic Maya politics.

Gender studies of the Maya often stress the complementarity of the sexes (for example Stockett 2005). That is, male and female roles in Maya society act in unison to form a whole. Within the royal and political spheres, this meant that both genders brought necessary aspects in order to maintain balance within the supernatural forces that governed them, which might be manifested in the feminisation of male rulers (Stone 1991: 195). Stela H of Copan, for example, depicts *Waxaklajun Ubah K'awiil* (18 images of K'awiil, colloquially known as 18 Rabbit) wearing female attire, which

has led to some mistakenly identifying the male ruler as a woman (Maudsley 1889-1902: 5, 50; Hewitt 1999: 260). Male rulers would take on feminine aspects, such as the knee-length netted skirt of the Moon Goddess (Goddess O) in order to demonstrate their ability to unify the male and female aspects of life, in particular fertility. Ascribing themselves with female characteristics did not diminish male rulers' masculinity, but instead emphasised their abilities to provide for their communities, and communicate with the Otherworlds.

Tate (1999) and Dornan (2004) have both argued that women were inescapably connected with the supernatural world through menstruation, and their ability to bleed without dying each month. Blood, for the Maya, was and is a life-giving substance that was shed to literally feed the gods and give birth to them, and in Late Classic Yaxchilan, women would let blood to nourish God K (Tate 1987: 822). Similarly, bloodletting was a method of feeding and summoning the ancestors, to ask their wisdom and blessings over certain events. At Yaxchilan, women were often seen in bloodletting rituals. Bird Jaguar IV even goes so far as to mimic female menstruation through penis perforation, depicted on lintel 17. In doing so, this male ruler takes on both male and female aspects of fertility by demonstrating his ability to produce both life-giving fluids (semen and blood) from his genitals. Tate (1987: 822) summarises by stating that "female as well as male sacrificial involvement was necessary to the maintenance of the cosmic connection between humans and the ancestral and supernatural forces". The necessary paraphernalia for bloodletting, such as pottery and paper, are also tied to the Moon Goddess, and their manufacture is considered to be a female activity (Tate 1999; Dornan 2004; Hughes 2008).

Maya ballgame representations never depict women as actual players of the game itself (there may be a female ballplayer among the Jaina figures), although

women are associated with the ballgame at El Opeño (Day 2001), and Oaxaca (Whittington 2001), and were represented as players in Olmec figurines (Bradley 2001). In Aztec mythology, the goddess Xochiquetzal even presided over the game (Miller and Taube 1997: 43). Yaxchilan's HS. 2 clearly demonstrates that women had a role within the ballgame ritual as a whole. This role was vital thanks to their innate connection with the supernatural and their ability to call upon the ancestors and gods for support and blessings. It is possible that the ballgame ritual always included the participation of women. As discussed in Chapter 2, Maya monuments show a narrative of events within a single scene; a single image represents the events that preceded, are shown, and that follow. Thus, ballgame representations often exclude female participation in an explicit way because it is implied simply by the occurrence of the game itself. HS. 2 has broken down the ballgame ritual into more (but not, arguably, all) of its constituent stages. Alternatively, Bird Jaguar IV commissioned HS. 2 to make explicit the importance of those particular women in the ballgame ritual, and at Yaxchilan more generally. Below, it is argued that this is most certainly the case, for political and ideological reasons.

Of the four women shown on HS. 2, only one is identifiable from the accompanying hieroglyphic inscription: Lady *Pakal*, on block II. blocks I, III, and XI are all too badly eroded to discern the names in this way (see Chapter 6). Blocks II and III are clearly a narrative pair, and it is probable that blocks I and XI were designed to complement one another, and contrast blocks II and III. In the following paragraphs, it is argued that Lady *Pakal* is accompanied in the Otherworld by Lady *Ik'* Skull, Bird Jaguar IV's mother, and that blocks I and XI probably depict two of Bird Jaguar IV's lesser wives Lady *Mut B'alam*, Lady *Wak Tuun*, or Lady *Wak Jalam Chan Ajaw*.

Blocks II and III mirror one another in composition. Each woman holds a Ceremonial Bar, and the overall image is framed by the two open centipede maws. The identification of Lady *Pakal* along with the presence of these maws - a metaphorical reference to an entrance to the Underworld - means that the woman on block III is almost certainly also deceased at the time the blocks were commissioned. Given her parallel with Lady *Pakal*, and the fact that she holds a Ceremonial Bar, this woman is almost certainly Lady *Ik'* Skull, Bird Jaguar IV's mother. This is further supported by the presence of Shield Jaguar III on block VI, and Bird Jaguar III on block VIII. Bird Jaguar IV has chosen to include his deceased father and grandfather, and his grandmother, on HS. 2. Given this pattern, his mother would also be included. By representing his parents and grandparents on HS. 2, who played a vital role in the florescence of Yaxchilan, Bird Jaguar IV was not only demonstrating a continued and uninterrupted ancestry, but proving he was able to 'channel' their political and spiritual strength in order to assert his legitimacy to rule.

Lady *Pakal* died in 705 A.D., whereas Lady *Ik'* Skull did not die until 751 A.D. (Martin and Grube 2008: 129), *after* the ritual depicted on block VII occurred (in 744 A.D.), but before the monument was commissioned (probably around Bird Jaguar IV's accession, in 752 A.D.). Given the message designed to be imparted by HS. 2, and the parallels in showing parents and grandparents, Lady *Ik'* Skull was shown posthumously, rather than alive (as she would have been in 744 A.D.). There are no other known women in Yaxchilan history who were important enough to show in this role, alongside Lady *Pakal*.[20] Perhaps Bird Jaguar IV was using the same

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[20] The only other women of great enough importance was Lady *K'abal Xoc*, Shield Jaguar III's principle wife. However, she was not an ancestor of Bird Jaguar IV, and while she was important during his father's reign, she would have played little role in politics once he came to power.

technique as seen on lintels 24, 25, and 26, to depict events spaced throughout time. While Lady *Ik' Skull* was alive at the time of the ritual on block VII, she is shown as deceased because she died before the narrative, or story, could end, with her son's accession in 752 A.D.

Identification of the women on blocks I and XI is more difficult, and more tentative. As seen in Chapter 6, the accompanying hieroglyphics are not in an adequate condition to ascertain their identities, and the iconography is similarly poorly preserved. Unlike Lady *Pakal* and Lady *Ik' Skull*, these two women were probably alive at the time the monument was commissioned. They occupy the same realm as the other, living ballgame players, and are actively participating in the main focus of the ritual. Their arms are outstretched, and the large rubber balls are shown mid-air, moving towards or away from a set of steps. In many respects they resemble the uppermost figure on K5435, who stands on the fifth step, arm outstretched as though he has just thrown the ball into play (see figure 7.6, also see Chapter 5). The women on blocks I and XI of HS. 2 are clearly not traditional players. They are seated, rather than depicted in 'action' poses, and they wear long garments that cover their bodies and legs entirely. Joyce (2000: 65) argues that this choice in costume de-sexualised women, in contrast to male clothing which emphasised virility and fertility. Feminist scholars have argued that female costume was designed to "replace" the body "with a densely ornamented textile surface which deflects attention from distinctive physiological features and cloaks them in cosmological spatial images" (Joyce 2000: 66, 83). The damage to HS. 2 is too great to know if this was the case. However, as we shall see, these women were displayed on public works of iconography to "acknowledge prestige, wealth and power befitting [their] station." (Stone and Zender 2011: 35).

The composition of these blocks implies that the large rubber balls are 'travelling'; they are not static. The women are clearly involved in the movement of the ball, either by throwing it against the steps, or perhaps catching it as it comes towards them. It has been suggested that these women are putting the ball into play (Schele and Freidel 1991: 305; Josserand 2002: 136). However, if this were the case, they would not be seated. Instead, they would be depicted as standing, so that they can get out of the way quickly as play begins (as with the male depicted directly above the ball on K5435 - he may be throwing the ball down the steps, but is well placed to be out of the way of the ballplayers and ensuing play). The women on blocks I and XI sit at the base of the steps, and not the top, meaning that if they were putting the ball into play for this kind of game, they would quickly obstruct the players: there are two possible explanations for this choice of representation.

The first is the limitations of composition. The blocks are not high (0.4m and 0.38m respectively, Tate 1992: loc 5560). Depicting an adult standing would mean that they would appear dwarfed in comparison to the other individuals, much like the two dwarfs seen on block VII. Maya iconography often made individuals smaller than others to denote those that were dead (Schele 1979: 1) or those of lesser status (Joyce 2000). Therefore, they would have been cautious to use such representation if it were not necessary (especially given the presence of actual dwarfs on block VII) and to avoid diminishing the status of the women, and as a result made the aesthetic choice to show the women seated. However, if this were the case, it may have been more probable for the artist to show the women bent over (a less 'active' pose, implying motion), again reminiscent of the male above the ball on K5435. The second is the possibility that these two women were not simply putting the ball into play for the male

players. Instead, they were engaging symbolically with the game, perhaps fielding the ball against the steps and catching it themselves, in a kind of pseudo-play. Given the lack of representation of female figures playing the ballgame in the Maya lowlands, it is probable that there were some restrictions in line with cultural gender roles. Thus, the women on blocks I and XI would not be shown in the familiar 'action' poses, or the protective and ritual costume, of play.

Here, we should recall the connotations of the ballgame as a metaphor for warfare (Miller and Houston 1987; Gutierrez 1990), for death and rebirth (McKillop 2004: 214), and the movement of heavenly bodies, such as the sun, moon, and Venus (Miller 1992: 220). Falcon (2001) demonstrates that there is a strong connection between women and warfare, and women may have been necessary in the rituals surrounding it (Josserand 2002: 143). Some have gone as far as to argue that women were responsible for imbuing men's armour with "sacred magical power" before battle (Hardman 2008). At Yaxchilan, the connection between women and warfare is further attested to as Lady *Pakal* held the title 6 *k'atun na bate'*, meaning "6-score woman warrior" (Hewitt 1999: 253). It stands to reason that if women had such a vital role in military ritual, and could hold militaristic titles (implying they entered battle themselves, at least metaphorically), so too would they be involved in the ballgame, and could potentially 'play' the ballgame. Bradley (2001: 37) points out that the Olmec ballgame was closely associated with the ability to create life from death. Women's roles in bloodletting rituals, and magical powers accumulated through menstruation (i.e. the ability to bleed each month while fertile) is indicative of this, and thus were almost certainly connected to the ballgame in this way.

The main reason for this suggestion comes from a broad identification of these two women. On lintels 15, 16 and 17, Bird Jaguar IV emulates the depictions of Lady

K'abal Xook on lintels 24, 25, and 26. He shows two of his lesser wives, Lady *Mut B'alam* and Lady *Wak Tuun*, letting blood and summoning a Vision Serpent prior to a military event. Interestingly, he has chosen not to represent his principle wife and mother to his heir, Lady Great Skull, here. This is a direct parallel to the choices made by his father for lintels 24, 25, and 26. Lady *K'abal Xook* was given a prominent role in the rituals depicted, whereas Bird Jaguar IV's mother, Lady *Ik'* Skull, was not portrayed on Shield Jaguar III's monuments at all. This may have been because Lady *Ik'* Skull, and by extension her family, were guaranteed status and prestige as the mother of the heir. Lady *K'abal Xook*, on the other hand, would play no further role in government when Bird Jaguar IV acceded to the throne, as she was not directly related to him. Bird Jaguar IV's principle wife, Lady Great Skull, gave birth to a male heir in 752 A.D. As such, it is possible Bird Jaguar IV chose not to represent her in the same capacity as his other wives, in order to show equal favour among his political allies. Bearing this in mind, it could be suggested that the two women from blocks I and XI on HS. 2 are two of Bird Jaguar IV's lesser wives, Lady *Mut B'alam*, Lady *Wak Tuun*, and Lady *Wak Jalam Chan Ajaw*. To balance their appearance on HS. 2, the king shows himself alongside his principle wife, Lady Great Skull, their son *Chel Te' Chan K'inich*, and the *sajal* K'in Mo' Ajaw on lintels 1, 2, and 3 respectively. The lintels are not public monuments; few people would have access to them, or the interior of Structure 33. Lady Great Skull and Great Skull's inclusion on them is not a public declaration of favour, as this was unnecessary given their status as mother and uncle to the heir. HS. 2 is more public, being outward facing and easily seen from anywhere on the small plaza, thus an excellent place to include political allies of lesser status.

The 'Stepped' Ballcourt on HS. 2

Of the thirteen blocks, eleven show the ballgame being played against a set of steps. The significance of this type of ballgame has been discussed in Chapter 5. In the case of HS. 2, the hieroglyphic inscriptions may help identify where this aspect of the ballgame ritual takes place. Block VI tells us that Shield Jaguar III played a ballgame on 9.15.12.2.9 5 *Muluk*, 2 *Yax* (743 A.D., a year after his death) at the "six ballcourt" or "six stairway" (see Chapter 6). On block VII, Bird Jaguar IV then summons the First Father on 9.15.13.6.9 3 *Muluk* 17 *Mak* (744 A.D.) at the "ballgame stairway". Finally, block VIII informs us that Bird Jaguar III also played the ballgame on 9 *Lamat* 16 *Yax* (perhaps in 668 A.D.), although there is no indication as to where this took place (this may be because of erosion). It is possible that these three locations were the same. Freidel et al (1993: 239) have posited that this is Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, which leads to Structure 5. This stairway provides a list of rulers at Yaxchilan, and was commissioned by Bird Jaguar IV (Martin and Grube 2008: 129). It consists of six steps, with risers carved, leading to the building above. If the text on HS. 2 refers to the locale of Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, then we must assume they were commissioned at a similar time.

The use of Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 as a stepped 'court' for the ballgame ritual is significant because of the dynastic information present there. That Shield Jaguar III was summoned there, where his own dynasty was reconstructed as a strong and uninterrupted lineage, to play a ballgame in support of his son's legitimacy, is even more so. Block VI is the only one to make explicit reference to the "six ballcourt/stairway" place; blocks VII and VIII are vaguer. However,

blocks VII and VIII depict six-stepped stairways iconographically instead. The connection between the steps represented and Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 may have been made more explicit by carving the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the steps into the iconographic stairways.

None of the other blocks showing stairways have inscribed steps. This may be because they played the game at a different location to the games shown on blocks VI, VII, and VIII. Alternatively, it was not as important to represent them as playing the game on Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, as they were not directly connected to the dynastic history that was presented there, unlike Shield Jaguar III, Bird Jaguar IV, and Bird Jaguar III. This may also have been an ideological choice, given the presence of the prisoner-as-balls motif on blocks VI, VII, and VIII. These balls denoted honour and prestige, which could have been transferred to Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 (and by extension, the ancestors recorded there) through 'play'.

On the top left hand corner of block VII, we see a miniature version of a ballgame taking place against a set of six steps (figure 7.7). This may be a replica of the block as a whole, although details are difficult to ascertain due to the level of damage. The significance of this secondary scene is similarly obscure. It is possible that it was designed to signify play happening at the top of the "six stairway", or perhaps used to indicate the timelessness of the ritual taking place (if we presume that, at the top of the stairway in the miniature, another ballgame scene was intended or implied). There are no markings that indicate who the person playing the ballgame is, although there is some general resemblance to the main image of Bird Jaguar IV and his elaborate costume on block VII.

Male Ballplayer's Costumes

Of the thirteen figures on HS. 2, nine are male. All of these are engaged in actively playing a ballgame against a set of steps, and are dressed in traditional paraphernalia associated with the game. Of the costumes, they are all wearing a backrack, deflector and an elaborate headdress. Erosion has made identification of some of the aspects of the costume impossible; however there appears to be a high level of consistency across all of the costumes which can allow scholars to make some assumptions as to their form and composition. A full treatment of all of the ballgame costumes worn by the players will not be given here (see Chapter 5). This section will discuss the significance of the masks (blocks IV, V, X, and XII), headdresses (all blocks), and backracks (all blocks).

Backracks

In many cases, backracks and headdresses are difficult to separate in Maya monumental sculpture. Fronds, or feathers, splaying out from both meld together without the defining colours that were surely present when the monument was new. On HS. 2, we are fortunate that Bird Jaguar III, on block VIII, has been depicted facing away from the audience, so that his backrack is on full display. From here it is possible to determine key features of the backrack and headdress separately, which we can use to differentiate between the two on the other blocks. For blocks VI, VII, and VIII, the areas highlighted in figure 7.8a-c are all part of the backracks. As we can see from figure 7.10a-f, the backracks from the other players are very poorly preserved,

and little details can be garnered from them. Tokovinine (2002: 7) suggests that the male ballplayers on blocks IV, V, IX, X, XII, and XIII wear normal, more 'functional' ballgame gear than the Yaxchilan lineage players on blocks VI, VII, and VIII.

The backrack worn by Shield Jaguar III on block VI is mostly obscured, although there is detail of the 'square-nosed serpent' or 'square-nosed beastie'. Stone and Zender (2011: 227) point out that this entity often emerges from a flower or foliation, and it is clear that the backrack is made up of palm fronds (Hellmuth 1987: 258). This creature is often seen as a glyph, and is used at Naranjo to represent the patron deity of the ceremonial city there (Martin and Grube 2008: 78-79). More generally, however, the 'square-nosed serpent' (a composite, abstract creature, rather than an actual serpent) could be used in place of the stamen of the white flower of the ceiba tree (Freidel et al 1993: 394; Looper 2009: 42), which is known to represent the World Tree. The 'square-nosed serpent' can also be used as branches for the world tree, as seen on *K'inich Janaab' Pakal*'s sarcophagus lid, at Palenque (figure 7.13, Schele and Mathews 1998: 113; Stone and Zender 2011: 227). Clearly, this creature has cosmological connotations, and is closely connected to the earth and celestial realm. Stone and Zender (ibid.) also suggest that it embodies a "radiant life force", and is connected with women and bloodletting (ibid.). Interestingly, Lady *K'abal Xook* wears the creature on an ear spool on Lintel 24. Perhaps by wearing it on his backrack, Shield Jaguar III is evoking the memory of his principle wife, while also being seen as an embodiment of the World Tree.

Bird Jaguar IV on block VII wears a similar backrack to his father, although with a different creature head. Tate (1992: loc 2451) calls this creature the 'long-snouted-beast', but offers no further elaboration. Given the nature of the monument, and the

other iconographic choices made, this creature must have celestial, terrestrial, and/or Underworld association. It is probable that the creature on block VII was supposed to contrast and complement associations with the earth and sky realms, such as the 'square-nosed serpent' on block VI. Given the form of the creature, and the rest of the clothing Bird Jaguar IV wears,[21] the author tentatively suggests that this could be the head of a catfish, or other underwater creature. The creature has long 'fins' along the top of its head, and lines across the cheek like a moustache, much like the whiskers on a catfish. In the Popol Vuh, the Hero Twins reappear after their sacrifice as catfish, having "germinated" in the water (Tedlock 1996: 132). Freidel et al (1993: 360) support this association, and it may be that Bird Jaguar IV was evoking this process of rebirth, and connections with multiple layers of the cosmos in using this motif on his backrack.

The most elaborately depicted backrack comes from block VIII, worn by Bird Jaguar III. There are a number of theories as to what this backrack represents, although most commonly scholars identify it as a Cosmic Monster (Freidel et al 1993: 360; Stuart and Houston 1994: 57; Tate 1992: loc 2103; for discussion on the Cosmic Monster, see above: Ceremonial Bars of blocks II and III), and Wright (2011: 259) specifically identifies it as the 'Starry Deer Crocodile'. The creature is bicephalic: the upper head wears a pointed hat (perhaps representative of a stingray spine), and the lower head is that of a caiman, which is holding maize (or has it emerging from its head), and has a *yax* symbol on the tip of its nose. *Yax* means 'blue-green' (Seler 1888, in Macri and Looper 2003: 244) and is associated with water, and perhaps 'new or pure' (Stone and

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[21] Bird Jaguar IV's role as a ball player connects him to the Hero Twins, who played the ballgame in the Underworld, and subsequently helped their father, *Hun Hunahpu*, be reborn as the Maize God. He is also wearing a net skirt, which is often associated with the First Father, or Maize God (Freidel et al 1993: 360). However, in the Popol Vuh, it was thanks to the Hero Twins power that Blood Moon, their mother, was able to fill the net full of corn and prove her sincerity to Xmucane (Tedlock 1996: 102-104). In this, then, the Hero Twins are also associated with abundance, fertility, and the net design.

Zender 2011: 123) and 'first' (Kettunen and Helmke 2011: 126; Macri and Looper 2003: 244). At the bottom of the 'Starry Deer Crocodile' is a *jal* bar, flanked by two *sak* glyphs. Commonly used to denote weaving, *jal* is also a symbol of royalty (Stone and Zender 2011: 206), and *sak* often used to denote something as "white" or "pure", although as Kettunen and Helmke (2011: 36) point out, "*sak* is difficult to elucidate outside of syntactical context".

The 'Starry Deer Crocodile' on HS. 2 appears to be the same entity seen on tread III of HS. 3 at the site (figure 7.8c, Miller and Houston 1987: 54), which Stuart and Houston (1994: 57) describe as a "complex iconographic assemblage including the image of the 'Cosmic Monster' and a deity portrait within a thick cartouche." For an illustration of this Cosmic Monster, see figure 7.9a. Emerging from the top of the head is a long spout of water. This deluge bears remarkable similarity to that found on page 74 of the Dresden Codex (figure 7.11), and is clearly marked with water-band symbols (figure 7.9b; see Lopes 2004: 1; Stone and Zender 2011: 141). The 'Starry Deer Crocodile' can often be seen with a stingray spine (Schele and Miller 1986: 45) and is closely associated to the blood sacrifice of Maya rulers (Stuart 1984: 15-16; Velasquez Garcia 2006). At Palenque the 'Starry Deer Crocodile' (or multiple aspects of this creature) engages in a similar *ch'akab'* event as the aspects of the Maize god seen on HS. 2 block VII (Stuart 2005b: 68), and as Velásquez García (2006) demonstrates, the 'Starry Deer Crocodile' is the same entity that, when decapitated, spews forth blood which ends a previous world age.

The cartouche inside the body of the Cosmic Monster on block VII has few details, although Tate (1992: loc 2013) argues that it is a jade plaque that is worn as a pectoral by Bird Jaguar IV on other monuments, and that it is of a jaguar, his namesake

(ibid.: loc 2451). Perhaps this pendant was originally Bird Jaguar III's, and the later king adopted it to demonstrate continuity within the ruling lineage at Yaxchilan. The representation of the Cosmic Monster on HS3 contains within it the Sun God (Wright 2011: 259) wearing a centipede headdress, representing the night-time aspect of the sun. Miller and Houston (1987: 54) suggest that this is an opening to the Underworld, and Stuart (2005b: 168) argues that the composition represents the sun being consumed by the caiman at night, to be reborn the next morning. The caiman was closely linked to cosmic order and the World Tree (Stone and Zender 2011: 183) which rulers were believed to embody (Foster 2002: 182). If the cartouche does indeed contain the jade plaque frequently worn by Bird Jaguar IV, it is possible to suggest that this object is of cosmic and ritual significance, and has been 'reborn' in the service of the later ruler. It may be that the plaque was buried with Bird Jaguar III, or ritually 'killed' when he died. Bird Jaguar IV later re-appropriated it (or perhaps a replica) to represent the two rulers' relationship.

Masks

Four out of the nine male figures are wearing masks. Even with erosion levels, it does not seem probable that the other ballplayers were wearing masks. The male figures wearing masks are:

- A Lord of Yaxchilan, block IV

- Another important figure in Yaxchilan, probably a Lord, block V

- K'an Tok Wayib, the 'first' *sajal* of Yaxchilan, block X

- A youthful Lord (Prince?) of Yaxchilan, block XII

On only one of these blocks (block X) does the accompanying text shed any light on the reason for the mask. Here, K'an Tok Wayib is said to impersonate the Wind God (A1: *ubah[i]l* / A2: *ik' k'uh*, see Appendix B). This decipherment will be used to inform the understanding of the other three blocks (VI, V, and XII) and show that each of the individuals are impersonating deities. This is discussed here (rather than Chapter 6) due to the levels of erosion on the glyphs making decipherment impossible - instead the imagery is used to understand the blocks.

The wearing of masks by ballplayers is found throughout Mesoamerica, by players of a wide range of different ballgames (see Chapter 5), and masks are a part of the Hero Twins' ball playing gear in the Popol Vuh (Scott 2001: 70). Veracruz ballgame sculpture shows a large number of human players wearing coyote masks (Whittington 2001: 1999), and at San Lorenzo most ballplayer figurines wear a 'half-mask' covering the lower part of their face (Bradley 2001: 34). Bradley (ibid.: 35) argues that these masks represent a deity "expressing the Mesoamerican principle of duality." While the wearing of masks is often considered to demonstrate deity impersonation (Houston et al 2006: 270; Tokovinine 2000), or the impersonation of other Otherworldly beings (Freidel et al 1993: 239; Schele and Freidel 1991: 305), clear distinctions were made on the part of the artists and sculptors between actual godly transformation, and simply masquerading. The so-called 'x-ray' view of individuals in masks alluded to the wearer being imbued with the spiritual power and energy of the deity/supernatural creature represented in the mask (Looper 2009: 28), while still retaining his (or more rarely her) historical identity (Houston et al 2006: 271; Bradley 2001: 35). Thus, the four ball players on HS. 2 are not only infused with the power and authority of the entities they are impersonating through the wearing of the mask, but they maintain their mortal power and authority.

It is interesting to note that none of the players on HS. 2 that wear the mask are "divine lords" of Yaxchilan, but instead are only *ajaw* or *sajal*. The representation of these individuals wearing masks could be a political tool to increase the power and prestige of those people, in order to "empower" them (Mann 1986; see Chapter 2). The masks allow the wearers to take on aspects and power of the deities/supernaturals they are impersonating. On block X, K'an Tok Wayib wears the mask of the wind god, *Ik K'u* (Tokovinine 2000), which can be discerned from the inscription. Unfortunately, the other blocks are too badly eroded to make out the names of the other gods being impersonated. On block IV, this glyph probably appears at C1. On block V, it is difficult to tell which glyph block may have named the god in question. On block XII, the glyph may have been at A2, and the god may have something to do with death (see Chapter 6).

Tokovinine (2000) speculates that the other god masks could be *K'ahk'-O'-Chahk*, the Yaxchilan version of the rain god Chahk, to complement the presence of the wind god. *K'ahk'-O'-Chahk* was a patron deity of Yaxchilan, and has not been found anywhere else in the Maya areas (Stuart 2013a). The murals of Bonampak room 1 also display humans wearing masks, similar to those on HS. 2. Schele and Freidel (1991: 304) suggest that the masks represent creatures of the earth and water, whereas Schele and Miller (1986: 86-87) identifies them as wind deities. Earth, wind, and water, are all aspects of fertility, and this could be one of the concepts evoked through the wearing of the masks. The wearing of the masks could also have been designed to mark the players as impersonating denizens of the Underworld (Freidel et al 1993: 239; Day 2001: 70), or perhaps a combination of all of the above.

<u>Headdresses</u>

Each individual on HS. 2 wears a headdress, including the women. They all contain feather, or palm frond, decorations. As with the backracks, many are in too poor a condition to analyse effectively. The woman on block I, and Lady *Pakal* on block II both appear to wear a headdress with the face of a supernatural or god on the front. These creatures have long noses, large eyes, and the one on block I shows a protrusion from its forehead. It is possible that these are representative of God K, the principle deity of the Maya ruling lineage.

The four ballplayers wearing masks are also wearing water lilies with small fish attached. These motifs are either attached to the front of the headdresses (most probable), or the top of the masks. The significance of the water lily is detailed in Chapter 6. The water lily is closely connected to the Water Lily Monster (the patron god of the number thirteen, see Chapter 4), the movement of the sun, the progress of time, the Underworld, and fertility. Stone and Zender (2011: 191) suggest that the presence of the fish nibbling at the water lily does little more than "qualify the aquatic location" of the entity wearing the symbol. However, I believe that the presence of the fish instead alludes to fertility (Puleston 1976: 5-6). Caves and cenotes, both entrances to the Underworld, are significant locations with connections to fertility, maize, and sustenance (see Chapter 5).

Freidel et al (1993: 239), and Cano and Hellmuth (2008: 1) argue that a water lily on a headdress, or costume, indicated that the wearer was a denizen of the Underworld, or is deceased (Schele 1979: 21). While I do not subscribe to this view, I do believe that the presence of the water lily and fish motif indicates that the wearer can

traverse the different layers of the world, including the Underworld, just as the sun does each day. It is perhaps significant that two of the players wearing this motif on HS. 2 are located on either side of the blocks showing Lady *Ik' * Skull and Shield Jaguar III, who are deceased at the time the monument was commissioned. The other two male players bearing this iconography are either side of the final female player, which may allude to the woman's ability to commune with the ancestors, and let blood. Interestingly, the highest rank among the male players on blocks IV, V, X, and XII is *ajaw* (not *k'uhul ajaw*). Houston (2010: 75-75) suggests that the use of the water lily in costume not only marks the presence of the watery Underworld, but also "to highlight the service of courtiers: tireless supporters of the royal and Herculean supporters of the world itself." When we consider the purpose of HS. 2 - in part, to garner political support for Bird Jaguar IV through in the inclusion of a number of his elite - we can see that connotations of purity, fertility, and the Underworld, were ascribed to the ruler's supporters to further imbue the ruler himself with such qualities. This may also give further clues as to the distribution of metaphorical power, and command over the cosmos that is closely linked with the downward delegation of power discussed in Chapter 2.

On block VI, Shield Jaguar III wears an elaborate headdress with the face of a deity on the front. The details of this entity are eroded, although there is a *k'in* sign on its forehead, representing "sun". This may indicate that the face is that of the sun god, God G, *k'inich ajaw*, although the degradation makes it difficult to discern any other markers for this identification. Behind the god's head, there is the upper section of a serpent's head. Serpents in Maya iconography are discussed above, in the context of the Ceremonial Bar. Once again, the author would reiterate that serpents are associated with the sky, fertility, ancestors, and communication between worlds. The presence of

the serpent's head here evokes all of these meanings, in particular given that Shield Jaguar III is deceased at the time of the ballgame on HS. 2. The headdress is also covered in palm fronds, which radiate out from the player's head, perhaps to evoke the rays of the sun.

Bird Jaguar IV's headdress on block VII is far more elaborate, although there is some damage to the front area, meaning that the protrusion over his face is obscured. In the upper part of the headdress there is a small bird, which is probably a reference to his name (*Bird* Jaguar). Much of the headdress is decorated with symbols of a military helmet (see Stone and Zender 2011: 84), giving his costume a military theme in line with the connotations of the ballgame (Chapter 5). The whole ensemble appears to be some kind of zoomorphic or conflated animal head, with an upturned nose and unidentifiable protrusion erupting from its large open maw. On *its* head is a secondary 'saddle shaped' headdress,[22] decorated with shell plates.

The headdress worn by Bird Jaguar III on block VIII contains a bicephalic serpent, perhaps a reference to the Cosmic Monster he wears on his back. It is made up of a layered material, similar to that seen worn by *Waxaklajun Ubah K'awiil* (18 images of K'awiil) on Copan stela A (ibid.: 75, ill. 4), and contains further *jal* symbols, complementing those on his backrack, topped with another *sak* glyph. Once more, the artist is evoking his status as royalty, purity, and protector of the cosmic balance. The layering of these meanings into his costume may be further support for the argument that Yaxchilan may have been under the yoke of another political power during Bird Jaguar III's reign (Martin and Grube 2008: 123; Miller 1991).

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[22] This is similar to the mounting for the fish-nibbling-water-lily motif seen on block X. The details on block X are no longer present, but it could be that it too was decorated with shell plates. This indicates water, and the composition could represent a watery cave, an entrance to the Underworld, especially when coupled with the water lily motif.

Conclusions

The iconography of HS. 2 connected the ballgame and manifestation rituals discussed on blocks VI, VII, and VIII to all levels of the Maya cosmos. Through the physical location of these rituals on Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, the players were able to play alongside and communicate with Bird Jaguar III, Shield Jaguar III, Lady *Pakal* and Lady *Ik'* Skull, and transfer the honour and prestige of the ritual to the other ancestors recounted on the stairway. Bird Jaguar IV recalled his direct ancestors, as well as employing the support of his wives, *sajals*, and other political supporters, to engage in a militaristic pageant that reaffirmed the strength and power of the ruling lineage throughout its history, and further supported his own claim for legitimacy and right to rule.

This chapter has explored the key aspects of the iconography, and offered some insights into its use. Through an analysis of the carved imagery, this study has proposed an identification for the four women seen on the stairway. The hieroglyphic analysis of Chapter 6 illustrated that Lady *Pakal*, Bird Jaguar IV's grandmother, was shown on block II. The iconography on this block matches that on block III, and the two clearly form a matching pair. The two women both hold Ceremonial Bars, demonstrating their roles in maintaining balance in the cosmos, and nurturing the gods and the royal lineage of Yaxchilan. These associations suggest that the woman on block III was also dead at the time the monument was commissioned, and that she played a pivotal role in the dynastic history, probably being a member of the matrilineal line. Because of this, the author has proposed that the woman is Lady *Ik'* Skull, Bird Jaguar IV's mother.

In contrast, this study has put forward the argument that the women on blocks I and XI were alive at the time the monument was commissioned, and probably took part

in the ballgame proper. The author has suggested that these women may have been Bird Jaguar IV's wives (although not the mother of his heir) to further venerate their position within the political structure of Yaxchilan, and reaffirm their support for the ruler.

The presence of the dwarfs on block VII demonstrate that Bird Jaguar IV felt he had divine sanction for the ballgame ritual he played (and the manifestation ritual discussed in the hieroglyphic text; see Chapter 6), and by extension his rule over Yaxchilan as a whole. These dwarfs look on the ballgame from a cave, a place of darkness often associated with the Underworld. This is contrasted by the presence of *ek'* glyphs on their arms, a marker for stars or constellations. It is possible that the iconography of the dwarfs as a whole was designed to further evoke the inner caverns of the sacred mountain which Structure 33 and the ritual space around it was designed to represent (see Chapter 5).

This is further supported by the imagery of fertility across the male ball players costumes, including the water lily and fish motif on blocks IV, V, X, and XII, the square-nosed serpent on Shield Jaguar III's backrack, and the catfish on Bird Jaguar IV's backrack. The latter iconography is similarly important in evoking ideas of the Hero Twins, and their rebirth in the Underworld and their eventual defeat of the Underworld Lords. The 'Starry Deer Crocodile' on block VIII is similarly connected to fertility (in particular water and bloodletting), as well as the journey of the sun across the sky during the day, and through the Underworld at night. It's presence on HS. 2 demonstrates the ability of the players (in particularly the wearer, Bird Jaguar III) to traverse across the different realms of the universe.

Overall, the iconography of HS. 2 was engineered to evoke an Otherworld where the players could engage in the ritual alongside important ancestors from

Yaxchilan. It reaffirmed the legitimacy of the king, Bird Jaguar IV, by demonstrating his ability to call upon the ancestors for aid, to manifest the gods (see also Chapter 6) and supernatural creatures (the dwarfs) to sanctify his rule, to take prisoners to ensure economic networks remained strong, and to engage in rituals that helped to nurture the gods and ancestors and balance the cosmos.

CONCLUSIONS

HS. 2 and the Political Organisation of Yaxchilan

Chapter 2 outlined the models of political organisation among the Classic Maya, and in Chapter 3 the arguments were introduced that Yaxchilan relied upon a system of downward delegation and 'empowering' to maintain political authority during the Late Classic period. Chapters 6 and 7 discussed the hieroglyphic inscriptions and carved images of HS. 2, and illustrated the different individuals that Bird Jaguar IV had chosen to represent. The monument was an important tool for Bird Jaguar IV to honour and empower his supporters (both alive and dead, real and supernatural). The representations of his mother and father, grandmother and grandfather, as well as his wives, other *k'uhul ajaw*, *ajaw*, and *sajal* illustrate an intricate and considerable structure of power and authority at Yaxchilan. The Late Classic Yaxchilan elite were greater in number than during the Early Classic era, and demanded (either implicitly or explicitly) greater representation and prestige. While this initially resulted in an increase in power, the further dilution of authority through delegation led to its de-localisation and thus the decentralisation of political authority. This may have been a major contributing factor to the decline of Yaxchilan its eventual collapse in the early years of the ninth century.

Central to this author's arguments of the political organisation at Yaxchilan is the understanding that it was constantly evolving and adapting through time, and as a result HS. 2 provides just a small snapshot of this during the Late Classic period. It is possible that during the later years of Shield Jaguar III's reign, the ceremonial

city controlled a small, but centralised polity. However, this ruler left a number of issues unresolved for his successor, causing Bird Jaguar IV to experience delays with his accession, resulting in the ten-year interregnum. Exactly why the interregnum occurred, or why it lasted for so long, we cannot know, but Bird Jaguar IV's response to this was to build a network of allies around himself, using the underlying ideology of the community and personal charisma. Political systems reliant on the latter are notably unstable. It is possible that Shield Jaguar IV had to continue delegating power, diluting his own authority in order to maintain his rulership after his own succession. The situation did not (indeed could not) endure, and the eventual collapse of the traditional political organisation of the ceremonial city occurred in (or shortly after) the reign of his son, *K'inich Tatbu* Skull IV, possibly due to external challenges from other members of the Yaxchilan community. While HS. 2 has been used as an example for this political model, there are a number of other monuments that support this argument, in particular the many lintels at Yaxchilan (for example, 1, 2, and 3, and 15, 16, and 17), and others from surrounding ceremonial cities (such as at Bonampak).

HS. 2 and the Ideology of Yaxchilan

HS. 2 represents a range of ideologies held by the Late Classic Maya at Yaxchilan (including those that upheld the political structure of the site). Chapters 6 and 7 have highlighted those that were illustrated in the hieroglyphics and images on HS. 2. More so than many other ceremonial cities in the Late Classic lowlands, women, and their roles in ritual and politics, are central to understanding the ideology of Yaxchilan. Women at Yaxchilan held the same offices to men (*b'akab'* and *ajaw*;

although there are no *k'uhul ajaw* women at the site), and were considered vital to the successful balance of the cosmos. Men took on roles of fertility, both human and agricultural, were responsible for the continued movement of heavenly bodies, and were supporters of the World Tree. The elite (*ajaw* and *sajal* and other non-ruling members of the royal court) were also important to the maintenance of the cosmic order, and held enough authority to be represented as impersonators of gods and supernatural creatures. In this way, they helped to locate the events of HS. 2 within the Otherworld, showing that they too could cross the cosmic boundaries between the terrestrial and spiritual realms.

This study has argued against blithely using the term 'human sacrifice' throughout this work. Military conquest, however, did play an important role within Late Classic ideology and Yaxchilan. HS. 2 makes this explicit, not only in the prevalent use of 'guardian of' titles throughout the inscriptions, but the inclusion of three prisoner-as-balls across the central blocks. These ball representations reveal the dynamics between captor and captive, and the role the latter placed in commemorating the victor's prestige, thereby increasing his legitimacy.

The iconography of HS. 2 also demonstrates the importance of divine sanction to the position of Maya kings. Bird Jaguar IV surrounds himself with imagery recalling the Hero Twins (backracks), Chahk (dwarfs), the Maize God (block VII text), and K'awiil (Ceremonial Bars), among other supernatural creatures to demonstrate that he had the support of, and a connection to, some of the most important deities at Yaxchilan. In doing so, he also reaffirmed his own divinity and his ability to influence (in particular) the agricultural fertility of the polity.

<u>Limitations of the Research</u>

The author has argued that the political organisation of Yaxchilan was predicated, in part, on the charisma of the ruler at the site. His ability to command support (both real and supernatural) was necessary to the maintenance of his authority. However, there are no accounts of ruler's personalities, or records of meetings with or between such individuals. There is no way to know how charismatic Maya kings were, or how this affected the political organisation of a ceremonial city. The inherent problems with the theatre state model (Demarest 1992) still cause issues within this research. That is not to say that this line of thought is not fruitful. The benefit of the understanding Classic Maya kingship in terms of the personality of the king is that it very much incorporates concepts of ideology, legitimacy, and authority in ways glossed over or ignored by other models of political organisation, particularly those that only rely on single sources of information, such as emblem glyph distribution, ethnographic sources, or archaeological data of economic exchange.

A core limitation of this research is that it cannot be applied as a blanket model across the Maya lowlands. The author has argued that political organisation, ideologies, beliefs and concepts varied from polity to polity. It should be noted that Classic Maya ceremonial cities shared an underlying culture. Concepts of divine kingship were fundamentally universal, as was the calendrical system, hieroglyphic monumental language, and many gods and supernaturals. As a result, it is possible that this study has overstressed the need for independent political models. However, even if this is the case, this research has been a step in the right direction: site-specific models can be applied more easily to other ceremonial cites, than large, overarching models

can accommodate anomalous ones. Limiting the research to such focused areas can result in important cultural information being overlooked. As it has been demonstrated in this research, however, wider concepts, both non-Yaxchilan and, in some cases, non-Maya, can be used to inform the investigation.

Directions for Future Research

The present research has explored the concept of political organisation within Late Classic Yaxchilan using HS. 2 to exemplify these ideas. In doing so, the author has argued that there is a great deal of temporal variation at the ceremonial city, and it has been stressed that there is a need to recognise geographical variation across the Maya lowlands. As such, the approach of this study has been highly site-specific. This study has indicated that the delegation of power, as defined by Barnes (1988), and fundamental ideological change in the Late Classic period led to instability within the political organisation of Yaxchilan, which led to a collapse of that organisation.

During the ninth and tenth centuries A.D., many ceremonial cities in the Maya lowlands saw a decline in population and monumental construction, and the use of hieroglyphic writing in the public sphere. Other areas, such as coastal Belize, coastal Yucatan, Campeche and Tabasco, saw an expansion of activity, particularly in mercantile trade and production, at this time, demonstrating that the so-called 'collapse' did not occur in the same way, at the same time, throughout the lowlands. It has been argued that the decline in central areas was due to various factors, including drought and climate change (Gill 2000; Webster 2002; Lucero 2006), ecological collapse (Demarest 2004), foreign invasion (Braswell 2003), and an increase in warfare over resources

(Rice 2004). Scholars now concede to a combination of factors; however the relative significance of each is still under debate.

Further study is needed into the process of 'collapse' in the Maya lowlands. Projects that track the development and decline of kingship within specific ceremonial cities will reveal a more accurate map of the transition from the Classic to the Postclassic period. Investigation into the inclusion of elite within the monuments and the fundamental role that individual rulers played within the ideology of different sites, would help to build a greater picture of the differences and similarities between political organisations and landscapes in the Late Classic period Maya lowlands.

Final Comments

The preceding pages have been dedicated to an in depth analysis of a single monument within the rich corpus of Yaxchilan. This study has focused only on the research necessary to understanding HS. 2, and how it can help illuminate the politics and ideology of the era in which it was created. This contributes to growing (but as yet insufficient) body of literature that investigates Classic Maya civilisation on a site-by-site basis. It is telling that previous monographs on Yaxchilan have focused on the site as a whole, and as a result lack the necessary rigour in analysing the monuments and archaeological data found there. Mathews' (1988) dissertation spans over 400 pages, but primarily presents the archaeological and calendrical data for the ceremonial city. What analysis is presented is tentative, laid out for future development and investigation. Tate's (1992) seminal work *Yaxchilan: The Design of a Maya Ceremonial City* discusses the site over 300 pages, and although

influential and still highly useful to the student of Yaxchilan, areas of the research have been found wanting.

This research has reinforced the realisation that studies of the ancient Maya must become more focused if we are to fully understand the nature of their society and culture. Individual monuments, or specific building programs, provide rich data to be investigated. Yaxchilan, as an example, cannot be fully understood without careful and detailed analysis of such programs, such as the work presented here, and the growing number of papers on specific lintels, stela, and altars. Meticulous examination must be applied carefully and systematically to other ceremonial cities before a broader picture of 'Classic Maya politics' or the 'ideology of kingship' can be fully realised.