



ИСТОРИЯ ДОКОЛУМБОВОЙ АМЕРИКИ THE HISTORY OF PRE-COLUMBIAN AMERICA

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Military and political expansion of Uaxactun in the beginning of the Early Classic (4th century AD)

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Abstract. The subject of the study is related to the study of the dynastic history of Uaxactun, one of the most important political centers of the ancient Maya of the Late Formative and Early Classic periods. The relevance of the study is due to a new analysis of hieroglyphic inscriptions, conducted within the framework of a comprehensive program of redocumentation of Uaxactun monuments, carried out by the Regional Archaeological Project under the direction of prof. Milan Kovač (University of Bratislava), which allowed us to propose a new reconstruction of the history of Uaxactun. The study aims to reconstruct the events of the military and political history associated with the Uaxactun dynasty in the 4th cent. AD, based on new epigraphic data. The main part of the study is devoted to the analysis of the hieroglyphic inscriptions of Uaxactun of the 4th cent. AD, based on which previously unknown events of the dynastic history of the city were reconstructed. It was determined that in 323 AD, with the accession of a ruler named “Trophy-Skull Jaguar“, there was a revival of the Uaxactun dynasty, as indicated on Stela 9. In 356 AD, he was succeeded on the throne by king Tz’akbu-Usiij (356 — c. 375 AD), who undertook a military campaign against El Zotz and other cities in the southwest. Thus, the authors determined that by 370/375 AD, Uaxactun had become one of the most powerful Maya political entities in Central Petén, entering into conflict with Tikal. Around 375 AD, Tzakbu-Usiij was defeated and probably captured by his Tikal rival Chak-Tok-Ich’aak II (360–378 AD). Within the framework of existing concepts, the study’s conclusion is important that the defeat of Uaxactun and the establishment of Tikal’s hegemony in Central Petén could have been one of the main factors that provoked the Teotihuacan invasion of the Central Maya Lowlands in 378 AD.

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Keywords: Ancient Maya, epigraphy, Early state, dynastic history, military history

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Военно-политическая экспансия Вашактуна в начале раннеклассического периода (IV в.)

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Аннотация. Тема исследования связана с изучением династической истории Вашактуна — одного из важнейших политических центров древних майя позднего формативного и раннего классического периодов. Актуальность исследования обусловлена новым анализом иероглифических надписей, проведенным в рамках комплексной программы редокументации монументов Вашактуна, осуществленной Региональным археологическим проектом под руководством профессора Милана Ковача (Братиславский университет), что позволило предложить новую реконструкцию истории Вашактуна. Цель исследования — восстановить события военно-политической истории, связанные с династией Вашактуна в IV в., на основании новых эпиграфических данных. Основная часть исследования посвящена анализу иероглифических надписей Вашактуна IV в. н.э., по которым были реконструированы ранее неизвестные события династической истории города. Было определено, что в 323 г. с воцарением правителя по имени «Трофейноголовый Ягуар» происходит возрождение династии Вашактуна, так как это указано на Стеле 9. На троне его сменил царь Цакбу-Усих (356 — ок. 375 г. н.э.), который предпринял военную кампанию против Эль-Соца и других городов на юго-западе. Таким образом, определено, что к 370/375 г. н.э. Вашактун стал одним из наиболее могущественных политических образований майя в Центральном Петене, вступившим в конфликт с Тикалем. Около 375 г. н.э. Цакбу-Усих был побежден и, вероятно, захвачен своим противником из Тикаля Чак-Ток-Ичааком II (360–378 гг. н.э.). В рамках существующих концепций

важен вывод исследования, что поражение Вашактуна и установление гегемонии Тикаля в Центральном Петене могло стать одним из главных факторов, спровоцировавших вторжение Теотиуакана в Центральные низменности майя в 378 г. н.э.

Ключевые слова: древние майя, эпиграфика, раннее государство, династическая история, военная история

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Introduction

In 1916 American archaeologist, epigrapher and spy Sylvanus Morley from the Carnegie Institute of Washington discovered new Maya site called Uaxactun. The name was based on the identification of the early calendar date from the baktun 8 (*uaxac* in Maya) on one of the stone stelae (*tun* in Maya). From that time the site became the center of the research of the archaeologists of the Carnegie Institute who realized surveys and excavations in the 1920s and 1930s. Later, in the 1970s, the site was part of the settlement survey program of the Tikal Project by the University of Pennsylvania Museum. In the 1980s there were two Guatemalan archaeological projects led by Juan Antonio Valdés from Tikal National Project (1983–1985) and salvage project in Group D in 1988–1989.

Uaxactun is one of the most important Ancient Maya sites in the history of Maya archaeology. The thesis about the ancient origin of Uaxactun went through several phases in the past. Initially, due to Morley's observations, Uaxactun was considered the oldest Maya city in general [1]. Thanks to the astronomic complex of Group E, it was considered to form the beginnings of Maya astronomy; due to the monumental painting in Group B, it was believed to represent the beginning of mural painting; and thanks to the supposedly first use of corbeled arches it was considered to constitute the beginning of Classic Maya architecture. Even after some corrections, the “origins” model lived its own life, and Uaxactun became an archaeological model or matrix for the classification of ceramics, architecture, etc. Everything related to the “archetype” — Uaxactun — though

it was becoming clearer that this fame was rather due to its pioneer position in the history of Maya archaeology than to Maya history as such. Archaeologists gradually found older Maya astronomic complexes, older Maya inscriptions, older paintings, older architecture, older ceramics, and Uaxactun's fame faded into oblivion. It is one of the reasons why once perhaps the most famous Maya town stopped being interesting for research projects, and has started to be overgrown by the jungle since 1980s. Starting in 2009 Uaxactun Regional Project under the direction of Milan Kováč greatly expanded our understanding of the ancient history of Uaxactun. The project focused on the most ancient history of the city, it seeks to verify this label of antiquity, first attributed to Uaxactun with great glory of which it was later silently deprived [2; 3].

Uaxactun consists of eight large groups marked from A to H. Groups A, B and C are situated to the northwest from the actual village of Uaxactun, Groups D and E — to the northeast, Groups F and H to the southeast and Group G to the southwest. Recent studies continued previous excavations in the Groups A, B, C and H south and for the first time included excavations in Groups F south, F north, G and H north.

The original chronological model for Uaxactun in the Late Preclassic was elaborated by Guatemalan archaeologists Juan Pedro Laporte and Juan Antonio Valdés. They suggested that the first settlement appeared in Group E in the Middle Preclassic. Monumental construction started in the beginning of the Late Preclassic when the first E-Group (or astronomic complex) was built. After this new architectural form — triadic complex — appeared. Group E continued its history until 150–100 BC when it was abandoned, and the center of the site moved to Group H South where it remained for 400 years. About 250 AD the center again returned to Group E but only for half a century. In 300 AD Maya abandoned original groups and constructed new buildings in Group A that became the center of the city until the end of its history [4; 5]. New studies demonstrated that this scheme was not so linear. In the peak of the Late Preclassic (ca. 100 BC) all four large groups (E, H South, H North and F North) were the loci of architectural, ceremonial and political activities. Large triadic complexes coexisted. Although Group E and F North were earlier than the others, relocation model does not reflect the complexity of Uaxactun history.

In 2013 a fragment of stela (Stela 28) was discovered in the front part of the H North triadic complex. Partly preserved inscription due to its paleography dates to the Late Preclassic times. Further exploration of the archaeological context showed that it was probably created around the year 100 BC or earlier [6]. What raises attention is the fine carving and the red color of the signs preserved until today. Stela 28 must have been a witness of violence between 100 and 50 BC when the royal inscription, normally sacred among the Maya, was destroyed and desecrated by being used as a common stone block in a building constructed around 50 BC.

In 2015 during the excavations of Structure H-XVI, a pyramidal structure on the southern side of the lower platform in Group H North (21 m x 16 m and 5 m in height) a cache below the center of substructure was discovered. It included several ritual vessels, greenstone bead, ceremonial axe, zoomorphic figurine and the scepter/bloodletter with hieroglyphic inscription [7]. Its unusual form makes it one of the most surprising objects from the Late Preclassic. Glyphs are very peculiar and demonstrate that Uaxactun had its own tradition of hieroglyphic writing already in the Late Preclassic.

Uaxactun was also a key site in the early research of Maya political history. Tatiana Proskouriakoff noted that the date 11 Eb was mentioned in both Uaxactun and Tikal. However, its own dynastic history was much less known than that of other Classic Maya polities. One of the important objectives of the Regional Uaxactun Archaeological Project was to redocument monumental corpus of the site using various methods (traditional photography, rubbings, photogrammetry, RTI and others). Combining redocumented materials, old photographs from the Carnegie Project made by Sylvanus Morley and the photographs and drawings by Ian Graham published in the “Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions” [8; 9], it became possible to obtain new scheme of the development of Uaxactun from the Late Preclassic (350 BC — 200 AD) to Terminal Classic (830–1000 AD).

The corpus on inscribed monuments of Uaxactun includes 28 stelae and 8 altars [10]. Our study of Uaxactun hieroglyphic inscriptions started in 2014 with the identification of the dynastic count on Stela 3. Early 6th century ruler Witznal carried a title *ʔu-lajchaʔ winaak tzʔakbʔuul Wak Kabʔ Yokʔin ʔAjaw*, (“32nd successor of Wak Kabʔ Yokʔin Ajaw”) (UAX: St.3, C4–D5). Taking the average reign length of 25 years, the founding of Uaxactun dynasty by Wak Kabʔ Yokʔin Ajaw could be dated between 275 and 250 BC [6; 11; 12]. Thus, epigraphic data that reflect later historical memory correspond well with the archaeological materials and permit to place and the formation of the early state in the beginning of the Late Preclassic (ca. 300 BC) [13. P. 400, 403].

By 100–50 BC Uaxactun became a regional political center that probably controlled neighboring Tikal. The excavations of Northern Acropolis at Tikal revealed extensive burning that between 100 and 50 BC [14]. Although some scholars consider that it had a ritual meaning, we believe that it could be a result of a war event. Redating of the massive earthworks separating Uaxactun and Tikal that were discovered by Dennis Puleston in the 1960s [15] opened a possibility that their construction started in Protoclassic times [16. P. 22–28].

The decline of Preclassic Uaxactun polity coincides with collapse that spread through all the Southern Lowlands between 100 and 150 AD. All central groups of the site were abandoned by 150 AD. Early Classic ceramics were not found directly above the Preclassic levels but were separated by the humus strata that measured between 0.15 and 0.35 m. It covered some of the buildings that were already abandoned and corresponded to the gap of about 100 years. Later there is evidence of ceremonial re-use of many buildings that dated to the beginning of the Early Classic [17].

Re-establishing the dynasty in the Early Classic

After the beginning of Tzacol 1 phase (250–300 AD) the central area of Uaxactun was reoccupied. A new ritual complex was constructed in Group E on top of the Preclassic E-Group, new elite burials were placed in the main groups. An important adult female was buried in front of the Str. E-10 (PNT-191). She was accompanied by a *Spondylus* conch carved with zoomorphic designs, a shell plaque and two stingray spines but did not have any ceramics. The tomb was later covered by a great deposit of lithics (429 obsidian and 17 chert flakes) [5. P. 25–28]. Since the buried woman already gave a birth to a child, she could be a progenitor of new Uaxactun ruling lineage.

In the beginning of Tzacol 2 phase (300–378 AD) new ritual and political core of Uaxactun was constructed in Group A, 1,5 km away from the old epicenter. It was placed on a hill (a prominent and defensible location) and connected to the cave El Respiradero studied in 2010–2011. The cave is unique because of its natural trait: the wind emanates permanently from it, literally a “breath of the cave”. Complex A-V, a temple and palace complex became the place of the rest of Uaxactun kings for about a century [5. P. 28–35]. At the same time, we see the appearance of the tradition of stelae dedication.

The main location of the monumental activity in Early Classic Uaxactun was the central plaza of Group E. It is possible that the first Early Classic Uaxactun Stela 9 (Fig. 1) was originally erected there but in the Terminal Classic was moved to Group A. It is a new type of a sculpture, relatively tall (2.54 m), carved on two sides and bearing an Initial Series [9. P. 155–157]. The Initial Series is damaged, and several possible solutions of the Long Count were proposed. Sylvanus Morley chose 8.14.10.13.15 8 Men 8 Kayab (September 24, 327 AD) [1. P. 153–156]. However, he noted that the numeral coefficients in A4, B4 and A5 in fact look different [1. P. 154]. Fahsen, Valdes and Escobedo accepted Morley’s interpretation, although editor’s note 1 states that Ian Graham’s drawing looks different [5. P. 30]. We propose a new reconstruction of a Long Count as 8.14.5.12.16 9 Kib 14 Kayab (April 19, 323 AD). As many other early Maya stelae, the inscription did not mark a Period Ending but rather recorded the accession of new ruler whose nominal sequence consisted of the early version of “Trophy-Skull” sign and **BAHLAM** logogram. The name ... *Bahlam* (“Trophy-Skull Jaguar”) was quite common among the royal dynasties of the Western region of the Maya Lowlands in the Late Classic. The text also contained parentage statements including reference to the maternal grandfather (*mam*) and ruler’s mother. The text ends with the earliest place-name formula known in the Maya inscription: *’uhti K’anwitz chanch’ee’n*, “it happened at the high city of *K’anwitz*”. We know that *K’anwitz* or “Yellow Hill” was one of the toponyms related to Uaxactun [18. P. 424–425].

The image on the front side of the Stela 9 presents a new theme in Classic Maya art. It represents a triumphant ruler holding *k’awiil* head overseeing a kneeling

captive. The figure of the captive was eroded, but we can discern a complex headdress and bounded hands. To our knowledge this is the first Maya stela with captive presentation scene.

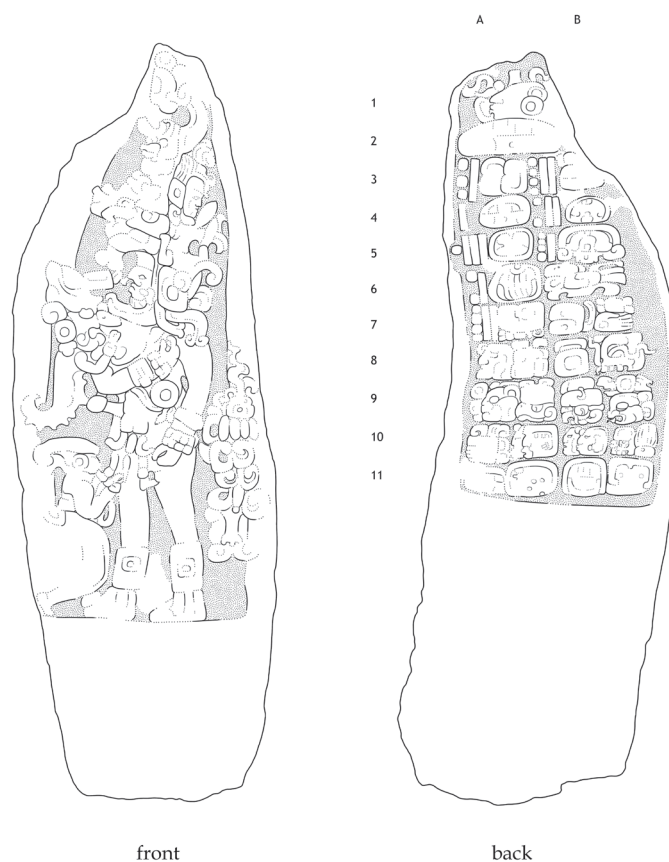


Figure 1. Uaxactun, Stela 9, front and back sides
Source: drawing by A. Safronov.

First Period Ending stelae at Uaxactun are Stelae 18 and 19. They were discovered in the Main Plaza of Group E as a part of astronomical complex (E-Group), on the west side of Structure E-2. Both monuments were eroded, Stela 19 was split into three large fragments. For a long time only the Long Count date 8.16.0.0.0 3 Ajaw 3 K'ank'in (357 AD) was clear. Valdes, Fahsen and Escobedo assumed that the name glyphs on Stelae 18 and 19 that were dedicated on the same date were different and probably there were two co-ruling lineages in Early Classic Uaxactun [5. P. 34–35]. Our reconstruction of the texts of both monuments led to quite different conclusions.

The main text of Stela 18 (Fig. 2) following the Initial Series recorded two events: (B7) **K'AL-TUN -TZ'AK-b'u-'USIJ?** (A8) ... **5-...-...** (B8) **K'AN-WITZ**

... (A9) 17-WINIK 1-²AJAW^{DAY} (B9) CHUM-li K'AHK'-... / K'AWIL-..., *k'altuun ... Tz'akb'u Usij ... ho' ... K'anwitz ... huklaju'n winik ju'n ²Ajaw chumli [iy] K'ahk' ... / k'awiil*, (“stela dedication [of] Tz'akbu Usij ... 5th ... at K'an Witz ... 17 months [passed] since the day 1 Ajaw when he sat at the fiery ... / with *k'awiil*”).

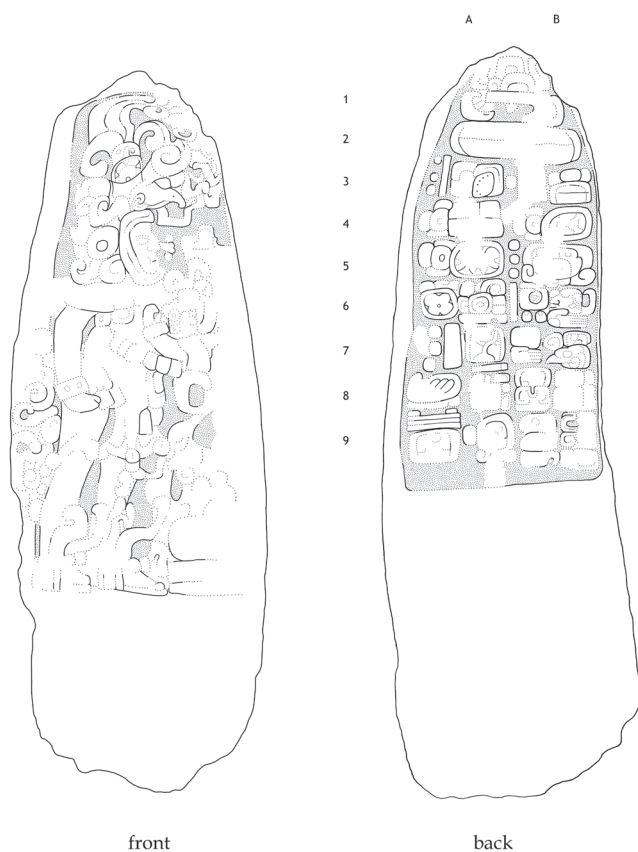


Figure 2. Uaxactun, Stela 18, front and back sides
Source: drawing by A. Safronov.

After the Period Ending and stela dedication event the narrative goes back to the accession that took place 340 days before, on 8.15.19.1.0 1 Ajaw 13 Muwan (February 29, 356). This is a second known accession date at Uaxactun. The nominal glyph of the protagonist consists of the collocation **TZ'AK-b'u** and the bird head, probably a vulture (²USIJ?). The same name appears in the text of the Stela 19 (Fig. 3): (B7b) **K'AL?-TUN?** (A8) **TZ'AK-b'u-²USIJ?** (B8) **K'AN-WITZ?** ²**AJAW?-wa?** (A9) ²**IL-li-²AJ ...-HUN?** (B9) **...-ma?** **yo?-...** (A10) **TZUTZ?-...** 16 (B10) **WINAK-HAB'** ... (A11) **...-CHA'** ... (B11) **K'AN-...-WITZ?**, *k'altuun Tz'akb'u ²Usij? K'an Witz ²ajaw (?) 'ilaj ... huu'n ...m yo... tzutz [uuy] waklaju'n-winaakhaab' ... Cha' ... K'an Witz*, (“stela dedication [of] Tz'akbu Usij ... lord (?), and he witnessed ... The 16th katun got terminated ...; [it happened at] *Cha'* ... *K'an Witz*”).

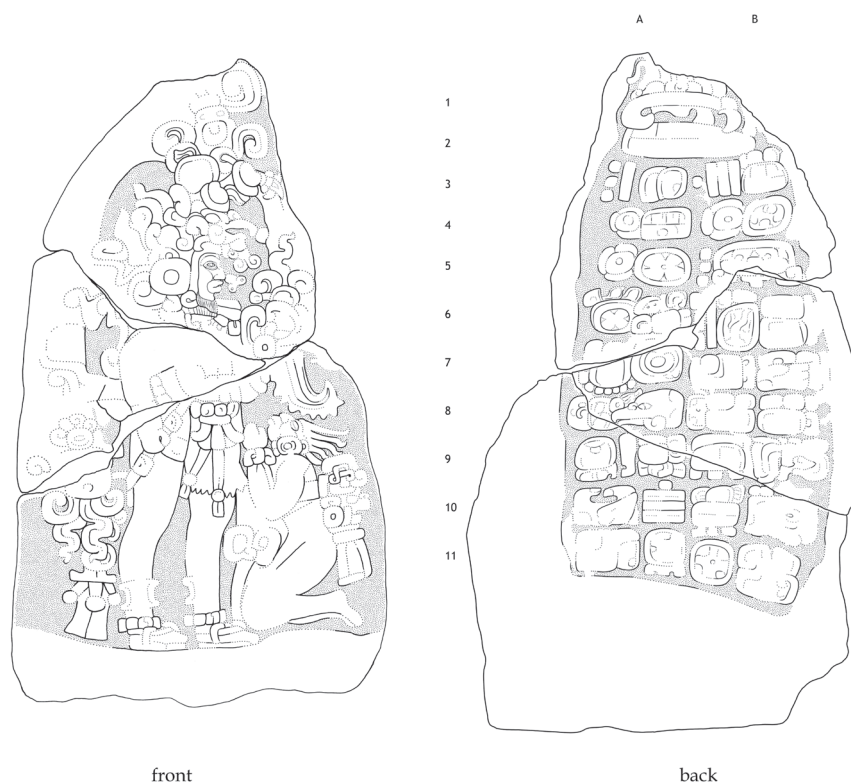


Figure 3. Uaxactun, Stela 19, front and back sides
Source: drawing by A. Safronov.

We suggest that *Tz'akbu Usij* who ruled from 356 AD was the successor of “Trophy-Skull Jaguar” who, in his turn, ruled from 323 to 356 AD. On Stela 19 *Tz'akbu Usij* was possibly called *K'an Witz 'ajaw* (“lord of Yellow Hill”), the same title probably appeared on Stela 18. The final passage of Stela 19 includes the reference to the Period Ending ceremony (“the 16th katun got terminated”) and names an extended toponym *Cha' ... K'an Witz* (“Cliff ... Yellow Hill”), again referring to Uaxactun.

The iconography of Stela 18 and 19 is different. On the first monument we observe only the ruler's figure holding ancestral head. Stela 19 presents a triumphal theme with a kneeling captive with bound hands looking up to the ruler. Captive's hair are loose, and his belt mask is topped by a nominal glyph that includes the early form of **WAY** logograph and fish-like head (probably **XOK**). This name looks very much alike the name mentioned in unprovenanced Early Classic fragment preserved in the library of Sylvanus Morley Museum in Tikal National Park (Guatemala) that was first documented in 1989 by Karl Herbert Mayer [19. Plate 165] and in 2013 was redocumented by the Project “Atlas Epigráfico de Petén” directed by Dmitri Beliaev. The fragment should come from some of the neighboring sites. The date of the war is not recorded but it could not be far from the royal accession in 356 AD.

The portrait of the king on Stela 19 is quite unusual. He has a specific nose ornamentation and beard. The same traits can be found in the portrait of the captive depicted on Tikal Stela 39 (Fig. 4). As we noted previously, the nominal glyph inscribed into the headdress of the captive is the same **TZ'AK-b'u-'USIJ?** [12. P. 155–156].



Figure 4. Tikal, Stela 39, front side detail

Source: drawing by L. Schele; from FAMSI The Linda Schele Drawing Collection.

The conflict between Tikal and Uaxactun should take place around 375 AD because Stela 39 was dedicated to commemorate the Period Ending in 376 AD (8.17.0.0.0). Currently it is the first recorded important Ancient Maya warfare that was very important for the future of the Maya Lowlands.

Stela 20 and the problem of dating Early Classic Uaxactun rulers

One of the most interesting but at the same time problematic Early Classic Uaxactun monuments is Stela 20 (Fig. 5). It was discovered by the Sixth Central American Expedition of the Carnegie Institution in 1922 standing on the western side of the Group E Main Plaza at the foot of the eastern stairway of Temple E-VII [1. P. 188–189]. The condition of a relief can be estimated as average, however some parts are damaged, in particular the bottom left corner on front and a middle part of inscription on the back. However, many details of the relief were destroyed. It is one of the rare monuments of Uaxactun, which was carved on each of the four sides, as well as the Early Classic Stelae 5 and 10. On the front there is a full-figure frontal image of the ruler holding short “Serpent Bar” that ends with two serpent heads with opened mouths. Ancestor or deity heads coming out of the serpent jaws are damaged. The ruler wears large archaic-style headdress with a long protruding vertical element that includes nominal glyph. In the lower right corner there is a figure of the kneeling captive with bound hands, the damaged

lower left corner contained the image of another captive. On the right and left sides of the stela there are images of four kneeling captives and their respective glyphic captions. The back side contains the inscription of 18 eroded glyphic blocks.

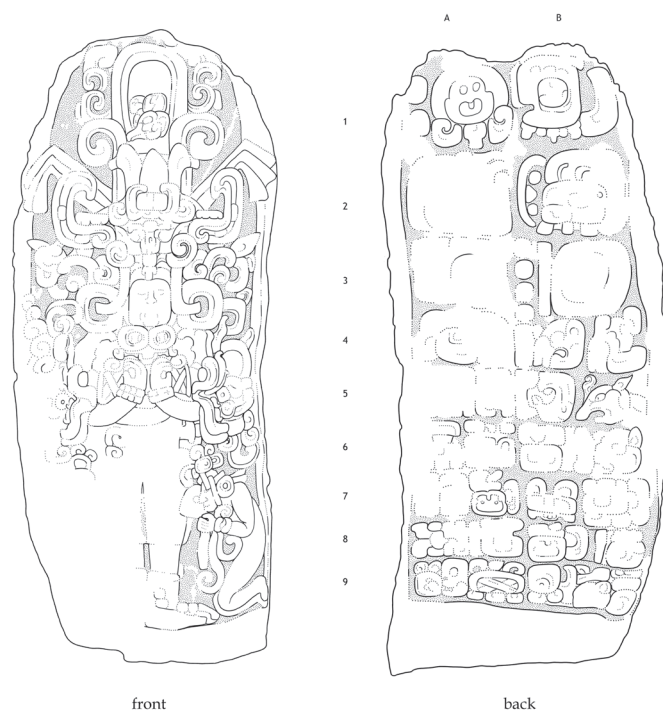


Figure 5. Uaxactun, Stela 20, front and back sides
Source: drawing by A. Safronov.

The principal text on the back side of Stela 20 starts with the dedication event: (A1) 2-[?]AJAW^{DAY} (B1) WA[?]-la-ja (A2) ... (B2) [?]u-K'ABA[?]-ba, (A3) ..., [ta] cha[?] [?]Ajaw wa[?]laj ... [?]u-k'aba[?] [[?]u-lakamtuun] ... (“On the day 2 Ajaw it stood up ... — it is the name of [the stela]”). The middle section of the text is very eroded, although we can see some zoomorphic heads. The text becomes more clear in the final section: (A7) ... [?]OCH-CH'EN-ja (B7) PA[?]-CHAN[?]-na WI[?] (?) -ja (A8) ...-... (B8) [?]OCH-CH'EN-ja ...-...-... (A9) ...-JOL[?] ya-[?]AT-je[?] (B9) WI[?] (?) -ja ...-BAHLAM[?] ...-..., [?]och-ch'enaj Pa[?]chan (?) wi[?]aj (?) ... [?]och-ch'enaj [?]aj ... [?]jol yatej wi[?]aj (?) ... Bahlam ... (“He invaded the city of Pa'chan; ... became food / was eaten (?). He invaded the city of ... Jol. After he did it, ... Bahlam ... became food / was eaten (?)”).

Twice in the text we find the verb [?]OCH-CH'EN-ja, [?]och-ch'enaj. The compound [?]och-ch'en means “invasion” and is formed from the phrase [?]ochi [?]u-ch'ee[?]n “he entered its city” “to enter the city” or “to invade” (Fig. 6) [20. P. 105–109]. The form [?]och-ch'enaj is an intransitive verb derived with verbalizing suffix -aj / -ij [21].



Figure 6. Early Classic *'och-ch'ee'n* phrases: a — ***'OCH-CH'EN-ja***, *'och-ch'enaj* on Uaxactun, Stela 20, blocks A7, B8; b — ***'u-'OCH-CH'EN***, *'och (i) 'u-ch'ee'n* on Dzibanche, Monument 11, block
Source: a — drawing by A.V. Safronov; b — drawing by S. Martin [20. P. 106].

The second verb is the most frequent in the text and appears six times, twice in the main text (B7b and B9a) and four times on the sides. It is written as **WI' (?) -ja** using possibly the earliest form of logogram **WI'** studied by Alfonso Lacadena [21]. Although the internal graphic elements are eroded, several diagnostic traits of this sign can be recognized, including the internal encircled area and the element in the form of **wa** sign attached (as Lacadena showed, here it is a part of the sign). Lacadena suggested that *wi'[a]j* is a derived intransitive verb “to eat, to become feed”) [21. P. 44–45]. However, based on the context, we propose that it is inchoative verb “to become food [of the gods]” or a non-standard passive form “was eaten [by the gods]”. The fate of the captive to be sacrificed and to become the food of the gods is confirmed by the final passage from the Early Classic Yaxchilan royal list: ***'u-WE'-ji-ya 'o-CHAHK K'AN-WI'-CHUWAJ***, *'u-wejiy 'O Chaahk K'an Wi' Chuwaaj*, (“O Chahk and K'an Wi' Chuwaj ate them (the captives)”) (YAX: Lnt. 35, D7–D8).

The first military passage *'och-ch'enaj Pa'chan (?) wi'aj (?) ...* is unique because it mentions the object of the invasion, *Pa'chan*. This toponym is known as the ancient name of the site of Yaxchilan but, as Stephen Houston demonstrated, it also was a name for the important Peten site of El Zotz' (Fig. 7) whose rulers also used the Emblem Glyph *Pa'chan 'ajaw* [22. P. 23–24]. We suggest that the passage of Stela 20 describes the war between Uaxactun and El Zotz'. The object of *wi'aj* verb whose name was recorded in position A8 could be El Zotz' dynasty or war leader taken as captive and sacrificed to the gods.



Figure 7. *Pa'chan* toponym: a — UAX:St.20, block B7; b — K5465, block I; c — Bagaces mirror, block B3; d — Canberra vessel (K8458), block D7; e — Yaxchilan, Stela 12, block C6
Source: drawing by a — A. Safronov; b — Stephen Houston; c — J. Porter; d — P. Mathews; e — L. Schele.

Excavations at El Zotz' and the study of Buenavista Valley directed by Stephen Houston demonstrated that this site was the capital of important Early Classic polity. It replaced the Preclassic center of El Palmar that was abandoned during the Late Preclassic to Early Classic transition (200–300 AD) and controlled the Buenavista Valley until the end of the Classic period [23]. One of the striking elements of Buenavista Valley settlement patterns is the complex system of defensive features that included citadels, surveillance platforms, moats, and ramps for rapid ascent and descent on high ridges and hilltops. Stephen Houston and Thomas Garrison connected the construction of this system with the conflict with Tikal and date them to the times of *Teotihuacan* entrada in 378 AD [24]. However, numerous watchtowers were constructed north from El Zotz' controlling the enemy coming from that direction and not from the west, where Tikal is situated. Uaxactun which is placed to the northeast, is another good candidate for the aggressor.

Unfortunately, the object of the second attack mentioned in the main inscription of Stela 20 cannot be recognized. The place name contains two glyphic blocks (B8b–A9a) and possibly ends with *Jol*. Fahsen, Valdés y Escobedo [5. P. 61] suggested that in position A9b a collocation **ya-²AT-na**, *yatan* (“his wife”) was written. However, no female names or titles can be found in the surrounding text. Moreover, redocumentation of the monument showed that the bottom sign is not **na** but the sign consisting of three circular elements like **ma** or **je**. We suggest that it is the compound **ya-²AT-je²** that spells the term *yatej* attested in the inscription on the Hieroglyphic Stairway at Dzibanche [20. P. 109–114] where it is also connected to *’och-ch’ee’n*. It seems to be a cognate to more widespread *yetej* and is related to military activities. Although its precise meaning is still unknown, recently two interpretations of this glyphic compound were proposed [25;26. P. 83–86]. Albert Davletshin (personal communication, 2022) suggested that here *yatej* is a perfective verb (*y-at-ej*) and opens a final phrase of the inscription. The last phrase starting with *wi²aj* verb should name the sacrificed captive; his name include the feline head sign (probably **B’AHLAM**).

The images and hieroglyphic inscriptions on the sides of the monument complement the main text. We observe four kneeling captives with bound hands still wearing their headdresses (Fig. 8). Each is accompanied by a short glyphic caption, and the hieroglyphic signs on the left side were inverted:

(C1) **5-²EHB^{DAY} WI² (?) -ja** (C2) **YAX-... ti-...-... , ho² ²Ehb wi²aj (?) Yax ... ti...**

(C3) **7-HIX^{DAY} WI² (?) -ja** (C4) **’AJ-6-chi² ...-...-... , huk Hiix wi²a [j] (?) ²Aj Wak Chi [j] ...**

(“On the day 5 Eb Yax ... Ti... became food / was eaten. On the day 7 Hix Aj Wak Chij ... became food / was eaten”).

(D1) **TZ’IKIN^{DAY}-8 (D2) ...-...-... ja-WI² (?) , waxak Tz’ikin wi²aj (?) ...**

(D3) [?]AJAW^{DAY}-13 (D4) YAX-TUN? ja-WI[?] (?), *huuxlajuⁿ [?]Ajaw wi[?]aj (?) Yax Tuun?*

(“On the day 8 Men ... became food / was eaten. On the day 13 Ajaw Yax Tuun became food / was eaten”).

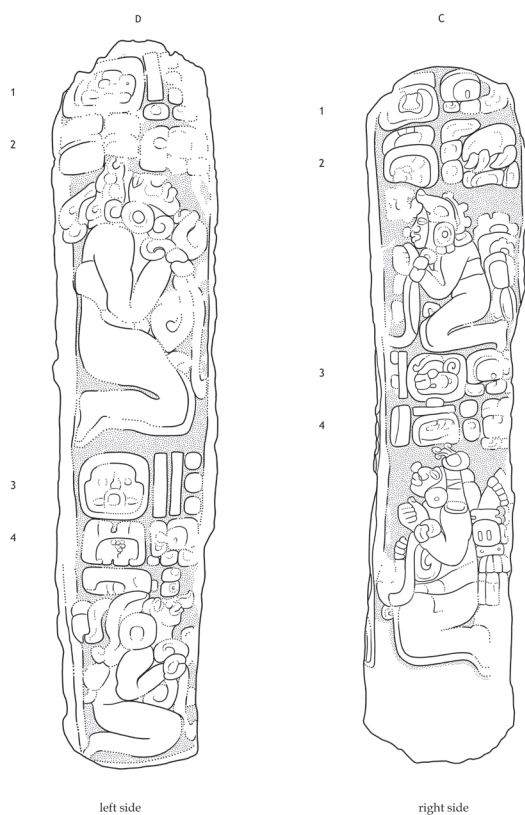


Figure 8. Uaxactun, Stela 20, left and right sides
Source: drawing by A. Safronov.

It is very important that all four days (*Tzolk'in*) mentioned in this part of the inscription are all placed within the same *trecena* (13-day period) that closes the 260-day cycle: 5 Eb (day 252), 7 Hix (day 254), 8 Men (day 255) and 13 Ajaw (day 260). There is no doubt that human sacrifices were connected to the termination of the sacred 260-day period.

Altogether, the final passages of the inscription of Stela 20 and the inscription on the sides represent a rare example of the extended triumphal narrative describing a single military campaign that included the invasions to the cities or towns (*'och-ch'enaj*) and the ceremonies of human sacrifices (*wi[?]aj*). It was a result of the successful attack of Uaxactun king against *Pa[?]chan* kingdom (El Zotz') and neighboring towns. If we consider all the references to be a part of the same campaign, it should be directed to the southwest of Uaxactun.

The main problem is the date of Stela 20. The date on the back side is written only marking the day (*tzolk'in*) position 2 Ajaw. Morley [1. P. 188–189] suggested that this date refers to the Period Ending 9.3.0.0.0 2 Ajaw 18 Muwan (January 30, 495 AD). This identification was supported by other scholars [5. P. 58–61]. However, the figures of the captives are depicted in archaic style and are similar to the captive from the Stela 19 and to the captives of the Dzibanche stairs that recently were redated to 400–450 AD [27]. Therefore, we cannot exclude the possibility that the stela was made during Tzakol 2 phase to commemorate earlier Period Ending.

The nominal glyph of the ruler was written in the center of his headdress that is common to Early Classic Uaxactun monuments [28]. It has the form of a bird head with additional elements on top (Fig. 9a). Originally we nicknamed it as “Bird Head” and suggested that the same block appears on the head of the father or ancestor on the belt mask of the 32nd Uaxactun king ... Witznal on Stela 3 (507 AD) (Fig. 9b). If “Bird Head” was 31st king who ruled in the late 5th century, proving the correctness of Morley’s date for Stela 20 as 495 AD [11. P. 520–521].

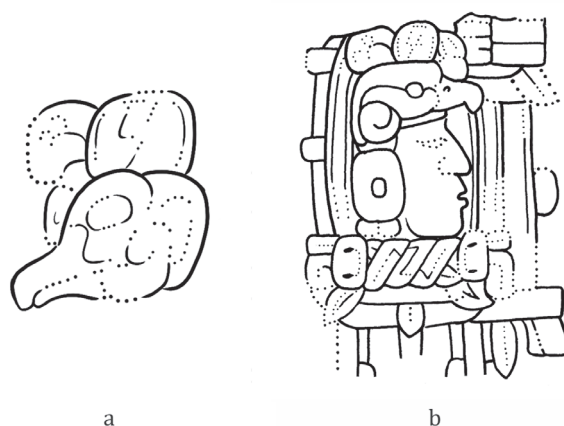


Figure 9. The nominal glyphs on Stela 3 and Stela 20: a — Uaxactun, Stela 20, front side detail; b — Uaxactun, Stela 3, left and right sides
Source: drawing by A. Safronov.

However, working with photogrammetric model of Stela 20 made by Carlos Pallan, we identified additional details in the nominal glyph identical to those from the name of Tz’akbu Usij. So, it is possible that there were two kings bearing this name, Tz’akbu Usij I (356 — ca. 375 AD) and Tz’akbu Usij II (late 5th century AD). But in this case, we cannot be sure which ruler ordered to dedicate Stela 20. The best option for the early dating would be 8.16.10.0.0 2 Ajaw 18 Sak (December 13, 366 AD) that fits well the reconstructed reign of Tz’akbu Usij I (357 — ca. 375 AD).

If we keep traditional date of the stela (9.2.0.0.0 2 Ajaw 18 Muwan), the closest preceding positions of the dates recorded on the sides would be 9.2.19.13.12 5

Eb 10 Sak (November 3rd, 494), 9.2.19.13.14 7 Hix 12 Sak (November 5th, 494), 9.2.19.13.15 8 Men 13 Sak (November 6th, 494) and 9.2.19.14.0 13 Ajaw 18 Sak (November 11th, 494). If we accept the earlier date 8.16.10.0.0 2 Ajaw 18 Sak, the corresponding dates should be 8.16.9.13.12 5 Eb 10 Yaxk'in (September 15, 366), 8.16.9.13.14 7 Hix 12 Yaxk'in (September 17, 366), 8.16.9.13.15 8 Men 13 Sak (September 18, 366) and 8.16.9.14.0 13 Ajaw 18 Yaxk'in (September 23, 366).

Conclusions

Redating Stela 20 to 366 AD permits us to place the military campaign against El Zotz' into a better historical context. After the re-establishment of a dynasty in the early 4th century Uaxactun rulers also tried to restore their former regional domination. However, another pretendent to the regional domination was Tikal that survived the crisis during the Preclassic to Early Classic transition. Tz'akbu Usij (356 — ca. 375 AD) who succeeded "Trophy-Skull Jaguar" (323–356 AD) continued the military politics. 10 years after his accession he undertook a successful military campaign against El Zotz' and other neighboring southwestern towns. It is tempting to try to identify the massive sacrifice of the captives taken in 366 AD among the known Early Classic Uaxactun deposits containing human remains.

By 370/375 AD Uaxactun became one of the most important Maya polities in the Central Petén. But its expansion led to the conflict with Tikal. Not long after the El Zotz' triumph Tz'akbu Usij was defeated and probably captured by his Tikal rival Chak Tok Ich'aak II (360–378 AD). Very bad preservation of the earliest Uaxactun monuments could be result of their destruction by Tikal conquerors after this.

The defeat of Uaxactun and the establishment of Tikal hegemony in the Central Peten could be one of the main factors causing the Teotihuacan invasion to the Maya Lowlands in 378 AD. We know that the main aim was Tikal, and several Maya polities like El Peru and Naachtun supported Teotihuacan. Uaxactun seems to live very well under the Teotihuacan power. Uaxactun king "Sun Raiser" who ruled until the early 5th century paid a lot of attention to Teotihuacan overlords and highlighted his good relations with them. The Teotihuacan invasion continued to be remembered at Uaxactun until the late 5th century, several decades longer than at Tikal.

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