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A Chak’an Itza Center at Nixtun-Ch’ich’, Petén, Guatemala

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Recent excavations conducted by Proyecto Itza investigated a Late Postclassic (A.D. 1400–1525) community at Nixtun-Ch’ich’, Petén, Guatemala. This community was likely occupied by a faction of Itza Mayas called the Chak’an Itzas. Recent work focused on the community’s civic-ceremonial architecture and nearby residences. The former was dominated by two colonnaded halls standing abreast. These buildings, believed to have been popul najoob (council houses), likely represented socio-political dualism in Chak’an society. The halls included various sculptures that seem largely associated with the deity Itzamna mounted into architecture so that they were clearly on display. Most sculptures were associated with one of the two halls suggesting that one faction was more powerful and more strongly advertised its connections with Yucatán. Excavations also revealed the avoidance of masonry in residential areas, which differentiated Chak’an residences from their civic-ceremonial areas and also distinguished Chak’an residences from those of their neighbors.

Keywords: Maya, Postclassic, Architecture, Ritual, Itza

The Itza Archaeological Project is investigating the Late Postclassic (A.D. 1400–1525), (Spanish) Contact (1525–1697), and Colonial (1697–1821) periods of the Itza Mayas of central Petén, Guatemala. This project continues earlier archaeological work of Proyectos Lacustre, Maya Colonial, subsequent projects (Rice and Rice 1980, 1990; Rice and Rice 2009), and builds on the archival research by ethnohistorian Grant Jones in reconstructing the 17th century political geography of the region. Recent work has focused on the large Classic center of Nixtun-Ch’ich’ on the western edge of Lake Petén Itzá (FIG. 1) in what was Chak’an Itza territory. The site includes a colonial mission (San Jerónimo) and at least two large Late Postclassic or Contact period communities, one of which is our focus here.

Specifically, we are exploring how the Chak’an Itzas, a faction within the Itzas of Petén, constructed themselves in relation to both the dominant faction and to the Kowojs, the main rivals of the Itzas. Historical documents suggest that Chak’an Itza leadership was dualistic, and that they were one of several factions in the Itza confederacy. As defined by Elizabeth Brumfiel (1994: 4), factions are “structurally and functionally similar groups which, by virtue of their similarity, compete for resources and positions of power or prestige” within a larger social unit. They may be characterized as “an informal, leader-focused organization” with leaders drawn from prominent social sectors, or as “groups whose single function appears to be gaining access to limited physical and social resources” (Brumfiel 1994: 3–4). Competition between and among factions is generally a “zero-sum game in which one party’s gain is another’s loss … debate generally centers upon the relative legitimacy of each faction’s claims” (Brumfiel 1994: 5). The origins of the factionalism in Postclassic central Petén are murky and complex, but by the 17th century the competition was intensified by the chaos attendant to the religious and military demands of Spanish interlopers.

The Chak’an Itzas and the Spaniards

Several Spanish entradas or ‘intrusions’ into Petén Itza territory passed near or through Nixtun-Ch’ich’ beginning with Hernán Cortés in 1525, and later Fray Pedro Lorenzo in 1580 and Fray Andrés de Avendaño y Loyola in 1696, Avendaño, who spent some time at the Itza island capital of Nojpeten (‘big island,’ modern Flores Island), noted that the Chak’an Itzas controlled the area west of Lake Petén Itzá and were ruled by a senior-junior pair of lords called b’atab oob’ (sing. b’atab’): K’in Kante’ and AjTut. The Chak’an province comprised several small towns and its central settlement, called Ch’ich’ or Nich, was governed by AjTut (Avendaño 1987: 30; Jones 1998: 95). This province was one of four Itza provinces in
Petén, each ruled by paired b’at’ab’oob’. A fifth and central pair, Ajaw Kan Ek’ and priest AjK’in Kan Ek’, ruled the entire region from Nojpeten (Jones 1998:60–61), but their control over the provinces seems weak.

In Yucatán, the b’at’ab’oob’ were “local town heads” beneath the central rulers or overlords known as halach winikob’ (Coe 1965:103; Quezada 2014). B’at’ab’oob’ ruled provinces including other towns within the provinces, forming a second level in the political hierarchy. Maya political offices rotated, perhaps to deter factionalization. They and other nobles were blood relatives of the halach winik, but the former position was determined by both bloodline and the decision of the ruler and/or the central ruling council (Coe 1965:112; Farriss 1984:237–250). Itza politics were complicated by the fact that b’at’ab’oob’ sometimes fought with the ruling halach winik for control of the polity. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the b’at’ab’oob’ of late 17th century Petén had the same roles as those of 16th century Yucatán. Nevertheless, the paired second tier nobles jointly ruled quadripartitely organized domains.

Another important community leader was the kuch pop, which paralleled the holpop or “head of the mat” of Yucatán (Jones 1998:89). The holpop served as the steward of the popal naj (lit. ‘mat [pop] house’, council house) described below. This position appears to have rotated and was held by a member of the most powerful family of the group, who was appointed by a b’at’ab’ or halach winik (Coe 1965:105–106; Ringle 1990:239–240; Roys 1943:64).

The Chak’ans gained considerable influence over the main Itza province and over the Kowojs to the east. B’at’ab’ K’in Kante’ also claimed to rule the main province and at least some occupants accepted his claim, denouncing that of Itza ruler Ajaw Kan Ek’ at Nojpeten (Jones 1998:95–99). Although K’in Kante’ was the uncle of Kan Ek’, the two were at war over disagreements about how to respond to Spanish demands for submission. In 1696, Ajaw Kan Ek’ agreed to submit to Spanish rule if the Spaniards would defeat the Chak’ans (Avendaño 1987:53). He had already sent emissaries to Merida to negotiate with the Spaniards, a move that likely instigated a Chak’an /Kowoj attack on Nojpeten, burning numerous buildings. This alliance opposed Ajaw Kan Ek’s efforts to establish relations with the Spaniards, as it would have enhanced that central ruler’s power (Jones 1998:192). Conflict within the Itza confederacy suggests that it was partially decentralized—though not to the point of a segmentary state—and the threat of Spanish encroachment did not seem to have unified the Itza. Rather, as elsewhere (Hill 1998:155–157), contact with the Spaniards seems to have enhanced factionalism.

In the 17th century, the Chak’ans likely controlled western trade routes to the Gulf coast and Yucatán along the Río San Pedro Mártir and possibly the Río Pasion, which increased the power of this faction. These routes were lucrative in the Classic period (see Demarest et al. 2014) as well as in the Postclassic and Contact periods, when they were dominated by Chontal traders in Acalan. The Itzas
eventually controlled the trade in cacao, annatto, salt, cloth, and red shell beads, which traveled through these networks (Caso Barrera and Aliphat 2006: 31; Gasco and Berdan 2003: 113). It is likely that control was in the hands of the Chak’an faction and AjTut.

Despite efforts at negotiation for peace, Yucatán interim governor Martín de Ursúa y Arizmendi planned an attack on Nojpeten in early 1697 (Jones 1998). With an army of 300–500 men from Campeche, he encamped in the area of Nixtun-Ch’ich’ for two weeks, by which time the Chak’an community of Nich had been abandoned. The Spaniards assembled a galeota, a small boat with oars and a sail, and attacked Nojpeten on March 13, 1697. After they defeated the Petén Itzas, the Spaniards transferred Ajaw Kan Ek’ and AjK’in Kan Ek’ to Santiago de Guatemala in 1699. In 1702, 16 families were resettled on the tip of the Candelaria Peninsula at the newly established mission of San Jerónimo, which had a church and 36 houses. In 1734, the mission settlement was moved near present-day San Andrés, on the northwestern lake shore (Jones 1998: 394).

After conquest the Chak’an Itzas continued their struggle for power in central Petén. They fought with the Kowoj, but also sometimes allied with them against the Spaniards. They established a new capital at Chun Ajaw, near Lake Sacpuy, and installed a new ajaw and a new ajk’in (Jones 1998: 383–384). The new regime organized resistance to the Spaniards, led by AJTut and his brother AJK’ixaw, which included an allied Chak’an Itza/Kowoj revolt in 1704 to overthrow them. This alliance also targeted Mayas living in communities established by the Spaniards (Jones 1998: 381–405). Chun Ajaw’s location would have allowed continued access to trade routes to and from the north while bypassing Spanish control, and this underground polity likely existed until at least 1745 (Pugh et al. in press).

Previous Work at Nixtun-Ch’ich’

Proyecto Maya Colonial, directed by Don and Prudence Rice, rediscovered Nixtun-Ch’ich’ in 1995, confirming the existence of a large mainland site at the base of the Candelaria Peninsula hinted at in earlier surveys (Cowgill 1963: 60–61; Chase 1983: 1164–1168; Morley 1937–38: Plate 181). The site at the western end of Lake Petén Itzá is bordered by the lake to the south and east, and karstic hills to the north. The land here is relatively flat, especially when compared with hilly Tayasal to the east. Nixtun-Ch’ich’ receives fairly intense wind, perhaps because it lies west of the largest body of the lake and is on level terrain, making peculiar weather patterns, such as dust devils, common. Indeed, during the Late Classic period places in the western lake basin, and perhaps Lake Petén Itzá itself, were known as Ik’á or “windy water” (ik’ ‘wind’; Tokovinine and Zender 2013: 31, 35).

Relatively undisturbed, Nixtun-Ch’ich’ is one of the largest archaeological sites in the Petén lakes region, with an architectural core of >2 sq km (FIG. 1). Initial surveys and mapping, plus subsequent work, indicate that it was occupied from pre-Mamom times or late Early Preclassic (beginning c. 1100 B.C.) through the early 18th century A.D. The site’s 450+ structures include more than 20 elevated groups, several large “temple” sub-structural pyramids, two ballcourts, and a defensive wall-ditch complex at the base of the peninsula. For spatial control of archaeological investigations, we divided the site map into 52 alphabetically labeled sectors from A (northwest) to ZZ (southeast). The 1995 survey and excavations revealed the presence of a large Postclassic community in southern Sector QQ.

Proyecto Arqueológico Itzá del Petén (PAIP), directed by Prudence Rice, returned to Nixtun-Ch’ich’ in 2006 to investigate Late Postclassic and Contact period occupation known from documentary sources and earlier archaeological work. That research identified the most likely locations of the town of Ch’ich’/Nich and the mission of San Jerónimo on the Candelaria Peninsula. A 355 m-long wall-and-ditch defensive system (Structure XX4) separating the peninsula from the mainland included a wall rising 5 m from the ditch on its west side and 2 m from the platform to the east. The community of Ch’ich’/Nich is represented by several structures on this eastern platform, at least one of which, Structure XX1, yielded Contact and/or Colonial period artifacts. In addition, a large Postclassic community west of the wall complex included an exceptionally large open hall measuring 35 × 7 m (Structure CC1) and Group WW, which included various ceremonial and domestic structures.

The mission of San Jerónimo was established on the extreme eastern tip of the peninsula in Sector ZZ. This sector included a large, two-tiered platform (ZZ1), with a low defensive wall just to its west. An axial trench into the south side of Mound ZZ1 reached bedrock and yielded radiocarbon dates and artifacts revealing that occupation in the area may have begun around 1000 B.C. (Rice 2009: 407–409). The top of the platform had been bulldozed by the landowner, destroying the mission church reported to exist there (N. Schwartz, personal communication 2007). Excavations on the lower terrace revealed domestic structures and a massive refuse deposit on its slope. Most of the objects in the refuse were of indigenous manufacture, but early Colonial artifacts included iron knives, a stone marble, a copper fishhook, Punta
Nixtun-Ch’ich’ Sector QQ
Postclassic remains have been found in the upper levels of almost every context excavated at Nixtun-Ch’ich’. Hence, the site’s Postclassic occupation seems very extensive. Excavations revealed ceramics diagnostic of the Itzas (the Paxcaman ceramic group made of characteristic snail-inclusion paste) and very few (<3%) Kowoj-specific ceramics (the Topoxté ceramic group, made of marly clay from around Lake Yaxhá to the east). Thus far, Contact and Colonial period remains have only been identified in the peninsular portion of the site. Our most productive horizontal excavations, in terms of Postclassic through Contact period remains, took place in southern Sectors QQ, CC, WW, and XX. In 1995 and 2013, excavations in Sector QQ and adjacent areas investigated a Middle to Late Postclassic period community.

Sector QQ is located in the southwest portion of Nixtun-Ch’ich’ (FIGS. 1 and 2). The most prominent feature in this sector is an east–west line of elevated buildings that extends into Sectors RR, SS, and TT to the east. North of this ridge, the terrain is relatively level (except for architecture), but to the south it slopes to the lake edge. During hard rains in 2013, ground and surface water pooled behind Structure QQ1/1 and drained south in a stream that formed along the building’s western edge. It is likely that this pooling began in the Late Postclassic period, when Structure QQ1/1 was constructed and interrupted normal drainage. One wonders if the pooling was intentional and part of the building’s landscape.

Structure QQ1/1
The Postclassic occupation of Sector QQ centered on a pair of open or colonnaded halls on a large U-shaped substructural platform identified as Structure QQ1/1. The halls face south toward a small, narrow finger of Lake Petén Itzá, approximately 100 m away. The occupation history of the Group QQ area matches that of the site in general, with moderate use during the Late to Terminal Classic period (A.D. 600–900), little Early Classic period (A.D. 200–600) occupation, and substantial Chicanel (B.C. 300–A.D. 200) and Mamom (600–300 B.C.) construction, the last being widespread at Nixtun-Ch’ich’. Behind Structure QQ1/1 stand a pair of shrine-like buildings. Neither seemed important during the Postclassic period, although one had minor but undetermined use, and both were stripped of their facing stones, likely for use in Structure QQ1/1.

Open halls are rectangular buildings with widths 2.5 to 3.5 times their depth (TABLE 1), and open on one long side. They typically have interior benches around low stone walls topped by perishable materials and perishable roofs. The interior benches lining two or three of the walls created distinctive L- or C-shaped masonry structures, and are usually broken in the rear by a central feature such as a niche or shrine. Second in frequency only to raised shrines, open halls are the most consistent component of Late Postclassic civic-ceremonial architectural assemblages in Petén (Rice 1986), as well as in the Guatemalan highlands (Carmack 1981: 287–290) and in the northern Maya lowlands (Proskouriakoff 1962b: 89–90). The forms of open halls are fairly regular in both the Itza and Kowoj regions: the open side usually faced north or south, and sometimes east, but only rarely to the west; none of the halls at Zacpetén, Tayasal, or Nixtun-Ch’ich’ face west. Thus halls resemble residences—at least those of Zacpetén, which clearly were constructed to avoid facing west (Pugh 2009: 189). Apparently, many residences of colonial Yucatán were similarly oriented (Tozzer 1941: 86). This directional avoidance contrasts halls and residences with Postclassic temples, which usually face west in Petén. Like most ceremonial architecture, the open hall form did not survive Spanish conquest.

Columns or colonnades supported the wide, open entrances to halls. The columns in Petén structures were generally perishable posts, distinguishing them...
from many sites in Yucatán where the colonnades are composed of stacked sculpted limestone cylinders. Petén halls also often contain low rectangular table-like features. At Zacpetén, shrines faced into one side of the hall toward the masonry “doors,” suggesting that they were architectural focal points, although their significance is uncertain. They also appear to have been added during the life cycle of these buildings (Pugh 2001a: 386). Open halls in Petén appear to have been consistently cleaned (Pugh and Rice 2009: 165). Refuse is often found behind halls, but one cannot necessarily assume that it represents materials used in the halls; refuse from nearby buildings could have been deposited there as well.

The form of open halls is shared with that of typical Postclassic residences, which were “tandem” structures with front and back rooms. The front room or vestibule was the social or reception area; it was typically plastered and included a C-shaped bench interrupted by a passage into the back room (Jones 1998: 71; De Landa 1941[1566]: 86). The back room was rectangular and typically had an earthen floor (Pugh 2009: 175). On the other hand, the niches and shrines of open halls seem to be vestigial doorways to imaginary back rooms inaccessible by humans (Pugh and Rice 2009: 165). Open halls can be seen to “quote” the vestibule of the tandem residence in form and in orientation, an architectural quotation that is both symbolic and functional. The presence of a residential façade on a public building joined society at large to symbolic and functional. The presence of a residential façade on a public building joined society at large to societal bonds. We have considered elsewhere (Pugh et al. 2009: 213) whether this and other evidence indicates a “house society” (sensu Levi-Strauss 1982: 163-187), but we do not have sufficient evidence to support such a designation—at least not in the strict usage of the term. Colonnaded vestibules vanished from residences over the course of the Colonial period (Wauchope 1938: 100), perhaps in part because of Spanish restrictions on private gatherings (Hanks 2010: 37-39). Such restrictions would have also curtailed the use of open halls.

Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1962b: 89-90) suggested that Postclassic halls were used as lodging for men in training for religious or military service, analogous to the Aztec telpochcalli or calmecac. They also likely served as a popol naj, structures used for community councils and ritual preparations (Coe 1965: 105; Robicsek 1975: 50-51) and possibly also marriages and alliances (Carmack 1981: 160, 192-193). If so, the front room, the social and reception area of residences, would have been transformed for more political purposes in housing group councils. For example, late architectural modifications of tandem Structure 719 at Zacpetén, with its 11 seats on a freshly painted bench in the front room, may have transformed it into a popol naj (Pugh et al. 2009: 211-212). Mats were central politico-religious symbols in Classic and Postclassic Petén and throughout the lowlands, likely representing community, social power, and governance (Rice 1983: 877; Robicsek 1975: 51). They appear on decorated ceramics, often paired with reptilian motifs (Rice 1983: 870), and worn as breastplates by male deities depicted on effigy censers (Pugh 2001a: 199). Because mats were “woven from bulrushes” or reeds (puh) (Roys 1943:47), they may have also signified Tollan, the place of reeds—a creation place.

**Structures QQ1/1-1 and QQ1/1-2**

The two open halls of Structure QQ1—Structure QQ1/1-1 on the east and QQ1/1-2 on the west—rest end to end (FIG. 3, 4). This architectural juxtaposition raises the possibility of some sort of social or political duality, perhaps architectural parallels of the paired ajaw b’atab’ and b’atab of the northern Itza province.

The two QQ halls at Nixtun-Ch’ich’ were C-shaped and colonnaded, with L-shaped transverse rooms on the east and west sides and interior shrines, but they differ in their orientations and construction. Both face south, but the eastern hall’s open side is oriented 174.5° east of true north, whereas the orientation of the western hall varies from 176° (walls) to 181° (bench face) (TABLE 1). The masonry also varies (FIG. 5). Except for the north side of the north (back) wall of eastern hall QQ1/1-1, the bench, walls, and columns are faced by small (ca. 15–20 cm) cut soft limestone blocks laid as stretchers in a running bond pattern. This hall was constructed on a partially exposed limestone outcrop, but the fine (soft cut) blocks were borrowed from earlier structures, possibly Classic in date.

The western hall QQ1/1-2 tends to be faced by larger cut soft limestone blocks laid as a veneer in a two-piece pattern. The two pieces include a larger lower element topped by a smaller upper element—generally the upper element is a third of the height of the lower element. In addition, the eastern wall of QQ1/1-2 (bordering the eastern hall) has a running bond pattern, and the relative proportions of upper and lower elements were inconsistent in the western hall.

The columns in the eastern hall, QQ1/1-1, were composed of small soft limestone blocks set as a running bond around a circular feature, presumably a decayed wooden post. There were likely two rows of four columns. Masonry columns were not encountered in the western hall, as excavation did not extend substantially into the open area. The eastern hall has a medial shrine roughly in the center of the north bench, with an altar set into the bench and a low step at its base. The front of the altar was
composed of hard limestone rubble, contrasting it with the masonry of the step and the adjacent bench, which were composed of cut soft limestone. It was likely once covered with plaster. We assume that a sculpted stone “altar turtle” (see below) that lay nearby formerly decorated this altar. The western hall also has a medial shrine, albeit poorly preserved and discernible only because it was inset. Fragments of stucco painted with dark blue pigments and a smaller sculpted limestone turtle lay nearby.

The two halls do not appear to have been built as a unified effort; rather, they were likely constructed at the different times or by two different groups. Moreover, the variations in masonry and wall orientation indicate that the construction of the western hall was not as well managed as that of the eastern hall, QQ1/1-1. Nevertheless, although differently oriented, their back walls were similarly constructed of large limestone rubble. Clearly the fine blocks were reserved for visible portions of the building, as seen elsewhere (Pugh 2001a: 534). By comparison, the façade masonry of many other halls in Petén was partially composed of hard limestone rubble. The benches of halls at Zacpetén generally included a course of facing stones of vertical limestone slabs that were sometimes capped by a course or two of smaller rubble. Some halls at Zacpetén included around 50% soft limestone—including the seating divisions on the bench in Structure 719—but neither the hard or soft stone was as well shaped as that of Nixtun-Ch’ich’. And although the soft limestone in halls at both sites tended to be placed in visible areas, patches of remnant plaster indicate that it was once hidden.

**Associated Sculptures**

The facades of the QQ1/1 halls were decorated with tenoned heads, including an avian (FIG. 6) and a
reptile (FIG. 7). It is uncertain whether the avian represents a macaw (mo) or a smaller species of parrot (tuut). Macaws are well known in Maya iconography, particularly as Seven Macaw in the Popol Vuh creation myth, and a painted tripod dish from Flores features a similar avian head. Yet one wonders if the sculpture might have represented a tuut or white-fronted parrot (Amazona albifrons) (see Anderson 2000: 139), given that one of the Chak’an rulers was named AjTut. Interestingly, the word ch’ich’, one version of the Postclassic community’s name, refers to “bird” as a general class (Anderson 2000: 152).

Three-dimensional parrot sculptures are fairly rare; in fact few if any other examples exist from Petén, although Flores Stela 5 shows birds flanking a diving figure.

Reptiles and especially serpents, on the other hand, are very common sculptured elements in Postclassic constructions and as Postclassic decorative motifs, particularly at the sites of Mayapán and Chich’en Itza in the northern lowlands. In Petén, decorative architectural elements depicting reptiles have also been encountered at Topoxté (Hermes and Quintana 2000: 65) and Flores, though these were larger sculptures, likely placed at the base of stairways. Crocodiles and alligators are earth symbols, sometimes a guise of Itzamna, and may have calendrical significance (Taube 1989). They seem to have been part of an esoteric “international style” that elites deployed to associate themselves with distant places and are likely tied to a widespread Quetzalcoatl cult (Ringle et al. 1998: 192–203). Those that decorated columns could have had a range of significance including references to Quetzalcoatl, the world tree (Pugh et al. A Chak’an Itza Center at Nixtun-Ch’ich’, Petén, Guatemala

Table 1 Characteristics of a Sample of Open Halls Excavated in Petén

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Structure No.</th>
<th>Nixtun-Ch’ich’ QO1/1-1</th>
<th>Nixtun-Ch’ich’ QO1/1-2</th>
<th>Zacpetén 606A</th>
<th>Zacpetén 606B</th>
<th>Zacpetén 615</th>
<th>Zacpetén 767</th>
<th>Tayasal 99A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Azimuth (true north)</td>
<td>174.5°</td>
<td>181°</td>
<td>179.25°</td>
<td>178.75°</td>
<td>82.15°</td>
<td>5.25°</td>
<td>102.5°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior width, excluding transverse room (m)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior depth (m)</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6.74</td>
<td>8.67</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior Depth to Width (m)</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medial Feature</td>
<td>Shrine</td>
<td>Shrine</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Niche</td>
<td>Niche</td>
<td>Niche</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circular Masonry Columns</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rectangular Masonry “Tables”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transverse Room</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5 Masonry Comparison of Structure QO 1/1-1 and QO1/1-2, Nixtun-Ch’ich’, Petén, Guatemala (section drawing by Samuel Rose).

Figure 6 Sculpted Bird Head, Structure QO 1/1-1, Nixtun-Ch’ich’, Petén, Guatemala.
2001b: 253), vision serpents (Freidel et al. 1993: 140, 152), the sky, and the number 4 (Houston 1984: 790–803). A stone phallus (FIG. 8) was found on the bench of the eastern structure. Phalli appear to have been associated with open halls in Petén. Three of the five open halls excavated by the first author contained small stone phalli, which were not encountered in any other structure type. Such objects, including stela-sized specimens, have been found in many parts of the Maya area and are especially common in the northern lowlands. It is possible that the phallus at Nixtun-Ch’ich’ was tenoned and mounted into the east wall of this hall, as an “attached” rather than a “portable” phallus (see Amrhein 2001: 46–51). Phalli attached to architecture were present at several sites in the northern lowlands, including a building at Chich’en Itza decorated with mat motifs (Amrhein 2001: 140). In addition, phalliform vessel supports appeared with deep tripod bowls very late at Lamanai, Belize (Graham 1987: figs. 8, 10). Amrhein (2001: 141–142) suggests that phallic imagery shifted to more public locations in the Terminal Classic period and was used by rulers to tie themselves to their ancestral lineages. The objects also may be associated with bloodletting, water, militarism, and the naturalization of “male dominance” (Ardren 2012: 60–62). In Yucatán, phallic imagery is often found in association with that of turtles (Amrhein 2001: 120).

**Altar Turtles**

Although the upper surfaces of the interior shrines of Structures QQ1/1-1 and QQ1/1-2 had been desecrated, both were once decorated with carved limestone “altar turtles.” Turtle sculptures in stone or clay are found throughout the Middle to Late Postclassic Maya lowlands and the animals are believed to represent the earth as a round mass (pet, peten) surrounded by water. The turtle may be one of the signs in the Maya zodiac, perhaps the rising constellation of Orion in the east in early June (Bricker 1997: 169). The animals were often associated with the “skybearer” God N or Pawahtun (Taube 1988: 186; Miller and Taube 1993: 175), which may be an “aspect of Itzamna” (Bassie-Sweet 2008: 130–140; Knowlton and Vail 2010: 717). Painted or sculpted turtle heads sometimes represent God N or the head of that deity is represented in the turtle’s open mouth, a motif also frequently seen in small, lidded turtle effigy pottery cache vessels in Postclassic Belize and Quintana Roo. This turtle was likely yax kok, the first, central turtle, which was also linked to Itzamna (see Knowlton and Vail 2010: 717).

Sculptured stone altar turtles were associated with the k’atun or winikhaab’, a temporal unit of 7200 days or roughly 20 years, always ending on a day named Ajaw. Thirteen k’atus comprised a cycle of slightly less than 256 solar years, dubbed a may (‘cycle’) by Munro Edmonson (1979, 1982: 6n44, 1986: 4, 22n3315). At least one altar turtle at Mayapán depicted 13 Ajaw glyphs on its outer scutes (Proskouriakoff 1962a: fig. 1 g; Taube 1988: 183–189), a physical representation of the 13 k’atus of this cycle. Although living turtles do not have 13 scutes on the edge of the carapace (there are around 25), they tend to have 13 larger scutes inside the outer ring. Hence, these numbers may have helped with the temporal association. Regardless of whatever Yukateko term designated this temporal cycle, it structured Postclassic and Contact period geopolitical transitions in northern Yucatán and likely also in Petén (Jones 1998: 101–107; Rice 2013: 687–690). These time-space transitions would have involved new rituals and the termination of old socio-religious buildings and the construction of new ones.

As earth symbols, a sculptured turtle carapace was frequently modified in various ways to extend this
symbolism. Some sculptures have a cross motif on the carapace signifying the four quarters of the ordered world (Taube 1988: 199, 2010b: 212–213). The Maya Maize God was reborn by emerging through a crack in the shell of the earth turtle (Freidel et al. 1993: 65), hence this motif represents rebirth and renewal (Miller and Taube 1993: 175). The cracked carapace symbol was carved into altar turtles at Mayapán (Proskouriakoff 1962b: figs. 1, 2), Topoxté (Hermes 2000: 85–86), and Santa Rita Corozal (Chase and Chase 1988: fig. 9). The carapace was also considered to be “the vault of the archetypical house” (Carrasco and Hull 2002: 31).

In addition, sculpted altar turtles frequently have a circular cavity in the carapace, likely both a symbol (the pet glyph consists of concentric circles) and a cache container. A carved, stuccoed, and blue-and-black painted limestone turtle (Offering 20) was found in front of a bench at the back of Structure E-2 at Topoxté Island, with the head of Pawahtun/Itzamna emerging from its mouth. Associated offerings included greenstone, unspecified lithics, and sherds with copal (Hermes 2000: 85–86, fig. 63; Wurster 2000: Lám. 3). In the shrine of a colonnaded hall at Mayapán, one carapace cache likely included obsidian blades and a stingray spine, leading Proskouriakoff (1962a: 333; also Taube 2010a) to conclude that altar turtles were related to bloodletting. In the Madrid Codex, a turtle or altar turtle plays a part in a bloodletting rite (Knowlton and Vail 2010: 719; Taube 1988: 193). Five deities participate in the rite and Itzamna stands in the center with the turtle upon an altar. Bloodletting and creation/recreation rituals also accompanied calendrical period endings so the altar turtles have multiple interrelated meanings.

At the Nixtun-Ch’ich’ QQ1/1 halls, the turtles had been removed from their altars. The altar turtle of eastern Structure QQ1/1-1 was large and rather abstract (FIG. 9). The circular carapace cavity, bordered by a rectangular design (see also Taube 1988: 195), had been opened and its contents removed. The smaller turtle near the shrine of the western hall in Structure QQ1/1-2 was more realistic in its composition and lacked a carapace cavity (FIG. 10); its base was painted dark blue. The altar turtle of Structure QQ1/1-1, in other words, was once activated or “ensouled” (see Mock 1998: 4; Stross 1998: 32–33) by the placement of the offering, and its removal signified ritual killing or termination. As such, these sculptures were “living” representations of the first, central earth turtle (yax kok) as well as communal time and space.

The removal of the altar turtles and destruction of their altars in Structure QQ1/1 likely signaled the structure’s termination and may indicate that the cycle of time, space, and social unit embodied by the turtle had ended as well. We consider it unlikely, however, that these buildings were used for an entire 256-year cycle. We did not encounter sufficient architectural modifications, artifact variation, or large amounts of refuse that would attest to such a lengthy period of time. It is more likely that the altar turtles, the actual altars, and the buildings were dedicated according to shorter Maya temporal cycles of bâtunooob’/winikhaab’oob’, or perhaps 64-year quarterly
or 128-year half segments of the maj (see Rice 2013: 691–692).

Artifacts

Patterned artifact distributions were rare in Structure QQ1/1. The lack of substantial de facto refuse is typical of halls in Petén. Scattered fragments of ceramic effigy censers lay in front of the shrine of the eastern hall. One censer depicted God D or Itzamna (fig. 11), an elderly deity that Karl Taube (1992: 31) calls “the major god” of the Classic and Postclassic periods. He was the shaman-priest-ruler of the gods, associated with the world tree, the earth, the sky, esoteric knowledge, and writing (Taube 1992: 34–41). Also linked with turtles (Knowlton and Vail 2010: 719) and, perhaps, calendrics, Itzamna was one of the most common deities represented at Mayapán along with Chaak (Milbrath 2007: 5; Milbrath et al. 2008: fig. 2), although Chaak was more common at Zacpetén (Pugh 2001a: 535). Besides this scatter, no other ceramic concentrations were found in the two halls in Sector QQ.

Another informative item in the eastern hall was a piece of coral, found on the building’s bench. This object was obviously imported from the coast, likely the Atlantic, and almost certainly was once contained in a cache. Coral was found in caches at both Zacpetén and Tayasal (Pugh et al. 2012: 15), though the QQ1/1 fragment is much larger. Coral is not uncommon in caches in central Petén and seems to occur earliest in the Early Classic period. It likely represented large bodies of water, such as the ocean (Maxwell 2000: 91–95), and probably had a similar significance in the Postclassic period. The ocean, particularly the Atlantic or the Caribbean Sea to the east, may have been linked to Otherworldliness, creation, human origins, and Tulan/Tollan (Sachse 2008: 132–155). Similar to other ocean products, coral may have signified the Primordial Sea (adapted Bozarth and Guderjan 2004: 213).

Coral and similar marine objects such as stingray spines, Strombus (conch) shell, and Spondylus shell also likely represented distance and connections to faraway places. Knowledge of how to travel to distant places often shrouds up political and religious legitimacy. Things from such places can likewise be considered powerful and be incorporated into ritual activities because they present solid evidence of one’s travels and knowledge of the outer world (DeBoer 2004: 101; Helms 1988: 131–171; Lucero 2003: 544; Thomas 1991: 143). Acquiring such objects was a power practice that established one as a broker with external worlds.

Termination

Other than the back (north) wall, Structure QQ1/1 with was covered by a large quantity of soil and limestone rubble (generally at least 30 cm thick). Similar buildings found elsewhere in Petén at sites such as Tayasal and Zacpetén, upon which soil naturally accumulated, were covered with much thinner deposits. Even low-lying plazas typically accumulated only about 8 to 15 cm of soil. No building was constructed upon this fill, thus QQ1/1 appears to have simply been covered as part of the same termination event that brought about the destruction of the altars. Building abandonment, cosmic destruction, and death are paralleled and require the proper rite to “desoul” them (Stross 1998: 38). This correlation also reveals that the liminality of temporal cycle endings, building terminations, and the end of human life manifest cosmic destruction “en miniature” (after Sullivan 1988: 63). Hence, each termination and dedication was tied to primordial time/space.

Residential Excavations near Structure QQ1/1

Several residential areas surrounded the double open hall complex, but their exact number is unknown as they were constructed on and near earlier platforms. Of these, two, Structures RR4/1 and QQ2/1, were selected for intensive horizontal cleaning. These excavations revealed that the residences were constructed with perishable materials and had little stone masonry. The lack of substantial masonry walls in the residences in and around Group QQ is puzzling. The Itzas’ neighbors, the Kowojs, had a clear tradition of constructing residences with masonry walls in identifiable patterns (Pugh 2004: 361–362; 2009: 187–191). Furthermore, the Late Postclassic masonry encountered in the double open halls was more elaborate and better dressed
than most of that encountered in Postclassic Petén, with the exception of Topoxté. The availability of limestone was not an issue as Sector QQ occupies a limestone outcrop. What is more, masonry blocks could easily have been borrowed from Classic and Preclassic constructions and used to construct residential walls, as was the case in the construction of the double hall.

Besides thin plaster floors, the only discernible features in residences were caches of pomacea or apple snail (*Pomacea flagellata*) shell found in both of the excavated residences. Pomacea are fresh water mussels that inhabit Lake Petén Itzá and other lakes in Petén (Moholy-Nagy 1978: 66). In each of the two residences, 60 to 80 complete pomacea shells were cached and in one (Structure RR4) the cache also included fragments of marine shell. No such caches were found in the open halls, so this practice appears to have been limited to house dedication. The cache of Structure RR4/1 was set into a circle of stones indicating that it was not simply a refuse pit. The use of pomacea in caches was common enough at Classic Tikal for Moholy-Nagy (1978: 70) to suggest that they, along with crocodile and turtles, formed a “fresh water animal votive complex.” Although crocodile and turtles were represented in the sculpted art of Structure QQ1/1, they do not appear to have played a role in caches. A pomacea cache was found on Flores Island (Chase 1983: 1079), and pomacea were part of the dedicatory cache of the baptismal font of the church of the San Bernabé mission, reinforcing a water association (Pugh et al. in press). Caches primarily composed of pomacea were not found at Tayasal or Zacpetén, although the shells were abundant in refuse deposits at Zacpetén.

The residential excavations around QQ1/1 encountered artifacts consistent with domestic production and subsistence activities such as lithic scatters, faunal refuse, ceramics, net weights, and so on. Analysis of these artifacts is ongoing. Several green (n = 11) (central Mexican) obsidian artifacts were recovered, primarily in Structures QQ2/1 (n = 6; near the two center walls) and Structure QQ1/4 (n = 4) in a refuse deposit east of the structure that also yielded several Late to Terminal Classic figurine fragments. One blade was recovered in refuse behind Structure QQ1/1. The concentration of green obsidian artifacts in the western part of the excavated area, particularly in Structure QQ2/1, suggests that its occupants may have been higher status persons with greater access to trade with central Mexico. Green obsidian was rarely encountered in Classic and Postclassic contexts in the lakes district, and the various excavations at Nixtun-Ch’ich’ have yielded more than any other site or lake basin.

Relative frequencies of ceramic types differ between the ceremonial and domestic areas. Ixkamik Unslipped and Chilo Unslipped sherds tended to be more strongly correlated with each other than with other Postclassic ceramic types. They were also more strongly associated with excavations in domestic areas than in the QQ1/1 ceremonial complex. On the other hand, Paxcaman Red slipped and Pozo Unslipped tended to co-occur and were more frequent in Group QQ1/1. The occurrence of red-slipped ceramics in ceremonial areas is not surprising, but that a particular unslipped ware is found there is puzzling. What is clear is that activities in Group QQ1/1, in a context more laden with overt religious symbolism, differed from those in domestic areas. Given that we believe this structure to have been a *popol naj*, we assume these ceramics once composed serving wares for feasts.

No human burials were recovered in these structures during the 2013 excavations. Low frequencies of primary burials dated to the Postclassic period are typical of the many sites in the Petén lakes region— with Tayasal being a notable exception.

**Summary and Conclusions**

The area of Nixtun-Ch’ich’ centered by Structure QQ1/1 provided an opportunity to investigate archaeologically the ways in which one historically known faction of Itzas in Petén, the Chak’an Itzas, constructed themselves in relation to both the dominant faction at Nojpeten and to the Kowojs. It is not known when the Chak’ans emerged as a significant force challenging the power of the Itzas at Nojpeten or when they forged an alliance with the Kowojs. They may have separated as a consequence of conflicts about dealing with the Spaniards or that conflict may have exacerbated a pre-existing schism about competing claims to power and leadership.

Investigations focused on the construction and use of both civic-ceremonial and domestic space in the Chak’an faction, as well as on sculpture and artifact assemblages. Documentary sources report that the Petén Itza elites of Nojpeten claimed familial relations with the Itzas of Chich’en Itzá in northern Yucatán. The large I-shaped ballcourt at Nixtun-Ch’ich’ certainly suggests a connection between the sites, as do the altar turtles, tenoned heads, and tenoned phallus recovered in Chak’an Structure QQ1/1. Thus both Itza factions asserted ties to a common heritage. Moreover, the leadership of both factions was closely related: the *ajaw b’atab* of the Chak’an faction was the uncle of Ajaw Kan Ek’ of the dominant Nojpeten faction.

With respect to domestic architecture, although our sample is small, initial findings suggest that perishable materials, rather than stone, were preferred for
construction of Chak’an Itza residences. Colonial relaciones from Yucatán indicate that some groups believed that residences composed of wood, vines, and thatch were healthier than those of stone. The lack of masonry in residences differentiated the group from the Kowojs, their neighbors and intermittent allies/enemies.

Civic-Ceremonial Space

With respect to civic-ceremonial space, Structure QQ1/1 was certainly monumental: its stones were well placed, decorative, and “borrowed” from the past, and it was prominently sited. Although it was not constructed like the houses that surrounded and were centered by it, it resembled residences in Postclassic Yucatán and of the ancestors. Masonry might have been recycled into Chak’an Itza ceremonial buildings as an overt connection to the ways of the ancestors.

Open halls are common Postclassic structures throughout the lowlands, and the possibility that they were men’s houses is not necessarily ruled out by their being administratively powerful buildings. They could be both, particularly as the organization of ritual spaces began to disintegrate during the destabilizing circumstances of Spanish contact. As in the case of modern Lacandon god houses, ceremonial structures may have had multiple uses: Lacandon god houses were places of deity veneration and social interaction among males (McGee 1990: 49; Davis 1978: 55–59). If women were excluded from councils, then the halls would have largely been men’s houses. Whether the stone phalli identified the building as a “men’s house” is a matter of speculation. Phalli possess no necessary meaning. For example, phalli venerated in Japan vary significantly in their meanings by community, though they tend to signify sexual activity or fertility (Quejada 1998: 83–84).

Excavations in the QQ1/1 area revealed masonry and sculpted animal imagery associated with Itzamna as well as a higher frequency of decorated ceramics and a specific type of unslipped ware. The proposed Itzamna theme of the halls and absence of such a program in the excavated residences could relate to the deity’s association with esoteric knowledge and rulership, both of which would have been practiced in the halls. Of course, one might assert that “Itzamna is everywhere”—after all, he is the earth and sky. Sculpted animals included a serpent or crocodile, avians (a macaw or parrot), turtles, and a human (the phallus). Hence, the non-human animals included no mammals. Other than being oviparous (egg-laying), these creatures have little overtly in common. However, turtles and some birds are associated with Itzamna, and all three are associated with the world tree (Knowlton and Vail 2010: 717–720). Birds were represented in the Paris Codex as a “bird-form” of Itzamna involved in k’atun ceremonies (Bassie-Sweet 2008: 132). Itzamna is also frequently depicted as the earth crocodile (Taube 1992: 36–40). Perhaps we are weighing the presence of a portion of an effigy censer depicting Itzamna a little too heavily, but the halls do seem to display an Itzamna program. In any case, these sculptures tied the building to international styles and faraway and powerful places.

Burial as a part of ritual termination of structures was not uncommon in Mesoamerica, as many groups used earlier buildings as the core for later buildings. Burial as a metaphor for death seems especially obvious, especially when “killing” in the form of defacement or destruction of use value is also present. In the Maya area, termination frequently occurred through the covering of building or objects with white marl (Duncan and Schwarz 2014: 164; Wagner 2006), which may be the basis for later rebuilding (e.g., Preclassic structures at Mound ZZ1; Rice 2009: 410–411). Elisabeth Wagner (2006: 61) notes that the most central buildings were those chosen for ritual sealing. Structure QQ1/1 was covered by soil and stone rubble which, although lacking the purifying aspects of the white marl (Wagner 2006: 64), signified the death of the halls. Constructions and terminations were timed according to calendrical endings as was the deposition of ritual and household objects (De Landa 1941[1566]: 151, 161; Love 1986: 177). Not only were buildings and ritual objects terminated and renewed according to temporal cycles, but political offices such as that of the b’atab’ were also cyclically rotated (Coe 1965: 109–110) and, likewise, terminated and (re)appointed. In the end, the inhabitants of Structure QQ1/1 moved elsewhere, perhaps to another Postclassic settlement that we have identified a kilometer to the east in Group WW. The covering of the structure signified the end of the community as well as its reconsolidation elsewhere.

Sociopolitical Dualism

The simple presence of two ceremonial buildings with the same (inferred) functions standing side by side suggests dualism in ceremonial activities. Because we believe halls to have been council houses, the dualism was also likely socio-political, reminding us of the paired ajaw b’atab’ and b’atab’ of the Chak’an Itza province. No other known open halls in Petén are constructed side by side, although Ixlu includes a “basic ceremonial group” variant with two smaller halls facing into a single larger hall on the other side of the plaza (Rice and Rice 2016). Kowoj “dual hall” temple assemblages tend to include two open halls suggesting that the groups incorporated social dualism (Pugh 2003: 423) and at Zacpetén the two temple assemblages are mirror images. Of course,
open halls constructed abreast are seen outside of Petén. Structure Q97 in the ceremonial core of Mayapán includes two halls standing side by side, both facing west (see Proskouriakoff 1962b). To be fair, however, we must at least consider the possibility that the two QQ1/1 halls at Nixtun-Ch’ich’ were built at different times with one replacing the other in accordance with cyclical reconstruction or refurbishment of ceremonial buildings. This notion is possible though unlikely given that the masonry of both buildings was left intact and both were covered by the same fill event.

The fact that halls often occur in pairs in Postclassic Petén indicates the importance of sociopolitical duality in this area, as in other parts and earlier times in Mesoamerica (see Becker 1975, 1975–1976). In fact, the possibility of dual rulership has been raised in connection with the Late Classic Ik’ polity in the region (Velásquez García 2011). The pairing of the halls likely allowed the celebration of duality within the social whole, perhaps symbolized as a complementary opposition as seen at Zacpetén (Pugh 2003: 424–426). Nevertheless, although the celebration of natural and necessary oppositions might present the impression of complementarity and static systemic equilibrium, two social units, whether lineages, noble houses (see Gillespie 2000), or some other division within a social group, would most certainly have been in competition: holding their councils and performing their rituals side by side would have led to competitive performances. All the sculptures, with the exception of the small turtle sculpture, were found in the eastern hall indicating that this social unit clearly highlighted its connection with Yucatán and the international style. Yet, we did not excavate most of the southern edge of the western hall, where one would expect tenoned façade decoration to have been deposited. The Itzamna censer and the coral were also found in the eastern hall, perhaps tying this group to distant places, esoteric knowledge, and rulership. In the complex political world of Postclassic Petén, the two social groups probably cooperated in competition with other groups (such as the Kowoj and central Itzas), though each likely played slightly different roles and had different strategies and objectives in the larger political arena.

The halls of Sector QQ are unique in Petén because instead of facing into a ceremonial group, they face outward toward the lake. They were part of a larger U-shaped complex, but their lacustrine orientation distinguishes them from halls at Zacpetén, Tayasal, Ixlu, Muralla de León, Yalain, and Topoxté, which seem rule-bound toward facing across a plaza into an opposing ceremonial building such as a shrine or smaller hall. Facing the lake could reflect the freshwater focus of domestic votive offerings. However, the buildings’ facades would have been clearly visible to those traveling on the lake and Nojpeten would have been visible across the lake at their entrance. Thus, their ostentatious display would have promoted the ceremonial power of the Chak’an Itza lords. It is further possible that the outward facing halls represented the linkage of the province to the larger Itza social network through the lake. Canoe travel on the lake would have been the quickest route to the capital and the other provinces.

The dual-quincunx is a common trope among the Postclassic through Colonial period Mayas. Paired “two heaps of stone” and crosses were described at the four entrances of settlements. The “cosmogram” on pages 75 and 76 of the Madrid Codex represents five cardinally located pairs of gods (Bricker 2010: 320–321). Paired hollow clay deity effigies, likely censers, played roles in yearly wayeb’ rites, one new censer and one from the previous year (Coe 1965: 100). Correspondingly, paired incense burners found at some sites include one relatively new censer and a second censer with heavier burning residue reflecting a longer use life (Chase and Chase 1988: 72). Such pairing is not simply an interesting aesthetic rendering, but like many central representations, acts as affective “models for and models of” society (adapting Geertz 1994). Jones (1998: 96–99) suggested that the eight b’atob’oo’ were tied to the paired deity images and that they correspondingly shifted offices yearly. As the halls of rotating b’atob’oo’, one would expect some rotation in use. The decoration and censer use found in the eastern hall and lack thereof in the west hall could very well have represented the b’atob’ in office and the b’atob’ out of office, respectively, at the time of the termination of the halls.

Dualism is a frequent arrangement in sociopolitical organizations. For example, it was a principal theme in Inka political structure (Moore 1995). Yet, pairings are simple arrangements that can have a variety of meanings. While the dual-quincunx was common in Mesoamerica, all of the pairs were not the same, even within the same system. The Itza central pair involved “contrapuntal paramouncy” with religious and political leaders, while the b’atob’oo’ co-ruled a province (adapting Goody 1979: 5).

Structure QQ1/1 was the heart of community, time, and space. The destruction/death of the monumental may at first seem to undermine an aura of permanence. Nevertheless, physical stasis is not the only possible symbol of permanence and may be viewed by some communities as an undesired state. In some societies, “multigenerational structural maintenance” represents permanence (Blake and Smith 2000: 367). Such seems to have been the case of the Mayas who choreographed building construction and termination on the stage of cyclical time. The melding of the
building’s and society’s life cycles into such larger rhythms likewise inscribed them into mythic time-space.

It is well known that political power rotated during the Postclassic period, but it is also known that the most powerful families generally held the rotated positions. In other words, cooperation in rotation was the end but competition was the means. The Chak’an Itzas certainly vied with Ajaw Kan Ek’ for rulership and their outwardly facing political goals seem reified in the Structure QQ1 paired facades complete with Yucatecan-style paraphernalia. Thus the paired open halls were not just choreographed by cyclical time. They were also one of the means through which the Chak’an Itzas struggled with the central Itzas for hegemony.

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