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## **A GLIMPSE FROM EDZNA'S HIEROGLYPHICS: MIDDLE, LATE AND TERMINAL CLASSIC PROCESSES OF CULTURAL INTERACTION BETWEEN THE SOUTHERN, NORTHERN AND WESTERN LOWLANDS**

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### **Abstract**

From its advantageous location, Edzna readily interacted with different cultural regions of the lowlands and beyond. After four years of research, a new documentation and decipherment of its large hieroglyphic corpus (including over 32 stelae and two hieroglyphic stairways) has yielded important results, including the definition of a dynastic sequence comprising ten rulers and the 7th century “arrival” of a lady possibly from the Petexbatún region. In addition, further evidence detailing the role that Yuhkno’*m* the Great could have exerted as an “overlord” of Edzna will be discussed, along with formulae of subordination possibly linking Edzna to the vast political orbit of Calakmul. Under such an alliance, Edzna may have raised itself to a “golden age” as a major regional capital within an extended Puuc area. Emic geopolitical models discovered at both Tikal and Altar de los Reyes will be examined, within which Edzna appears to be mentioned along with other great lowland centers. The last part will deal with a series of wars waged against an enemy whose identity is preliminarily explored. Such events may have provoked Edzna to plunge into a possible “sculptural-hiatus”, a period ended only by another “arrival”, this time led by an individual whose very name and associated portraiture strongly evoke foreign origins within the western Gulf-coastal plains. Thus, in a manner not unlike Uxmal’s Xiu dynasty, reportedly from Nonohualco, and lineage-founding events that occurred at Ek’ Balam around AD 770, related to groups of probable Itza ancestry, Edzna seems to have been among the very first sites to see the advent of a new “world religion” or “Zuyuan order”, which fostered militarism, new religious cults, long-distance trade dynamics and the establishment or re-foundation of multiethnic centers.

### **Resumen**

Desde su emplazamiento privilegiado, Edzná interactuó ampliamente con diferentes regiones de las tierras bajas mayas e incluso más allá. Tras cuatro años de investigaciones, la documentación y desciframiento de su considerable corpus de monumentos jeroglíficos (que incluye más de 32 estelas y dos escalinatas jeroglíficas) ha permitido obtener algunos resultados importantes, incluyendo la delimitación de una secuencia dinástica conformada por diez gobernantes y la llegada en el siglo VII de una mujer procedente quizá de la distante región del Petexbatún. De la misma forma, se discute evidencia adicional que detalla el papel de autoridad que Yuhkno’*m* el Grande pudo ejercer sobre Edzná como un gobernante hegemónico, junto con fórmulas de subordinación que posiblemente vinculan a Edzná con la vasta órbita política de Calakmul. Tal alianza habría llevado a Edzná a alcanzar su era de esplendor como una capital regional, entre las principales dentro de una región Puuc cuya extensión habría sido mayor de lo que habitualmente se le concede. Serán examinados modelos geopolíticos émicos descubiertos en Tikal y en Altar de los Reyes, dentro de los cuales podría mencionarse a Edzná al lado de otras grandes capitales. La última parte aborda una serie de conflictos bélicos librados por Edzná en contra de

un enemigo cuya identidad será explorada en forma preliminar. Como resultado, Edzná parece haberse sumido en un posible hiato escultórico, periodo que concluiría con una nueva “llegada”, esta vez encabezada por un individuo cuyo nombre mismo y retratos asociados evocan fuertemente orígenes en la región occidental de las llanuras costeras del Golfo de México. Así, en forma no muy distinta al arribo del linaje de los Xiu procedentes al parecer de Nonohualco, y de los eventos de fundación dinástica que se verificaron en Ek’ Balam hacia 770 d.C., relacionados con los descendientes de una antigua rama de probable filiación itzá, Edzná parece ubicarse entre los primeros sitios en experimentar el advenimiento de un nuevo “orden mundial” o “zuyuano”, el cual fomentó el militarismo, en combinación con nuevos cultos religiosos, una nueva dinámica comercial de larga distancia y el establecimiento o refundación de poblaciones multiétnicas.

## INTRODUCTION

Edzna was beyond doubt one of the largest and more important sites within Campeche. Its imposing public architecture has prompted scholars such as Robert Sharer, Antonio Benavides and Alfonso Lacadena to see Edzna as the capital of a powerful but still little-known polity or regional state (Sharer 1994: 362; Benavides 1997: 121; Lacadena 1995: 69). Moreover, Edzna seems to have been located at an advantageous position (Fig. 1), not very far from the gulf coastal region of Mexico, but also in an area where different cultural traditions from the Maya world interacted and often juxtaposed. Thus, Edzna seems to have experienced over time the influence of the southeastern lowland Ch’olan or the northern Yukatek Maya centered in the Puuc area (Justeson *et al.* 1985: 69; Hammond & Ashmore 1981; Forsyth 1983: 226), but also of other groups, which several scholars have attempted to identify ethnically, as will be discussed later (see i.e. Thompson 1970: 5-47; Benavides 1996: 30, 1997: 18; Boot 2005, *passim*; Pallán 2009: 101-102, 217, 308).

As an aid for understanding Edzna’s Classic history, we have reconstructed the dynastic sequence of its rulers, based on our new documentation of the site’s inscriptions (Table 1; see also Pallán 2009: 64). So far, ten possible different rulers have been identified, spanning from at least AD 633 until possibly *ca.* AD 869.

## ARRIVALS FROM THE PETEXBATUN/PASION REGION? LADY *JUT CHANEK*<sup>1</sup>

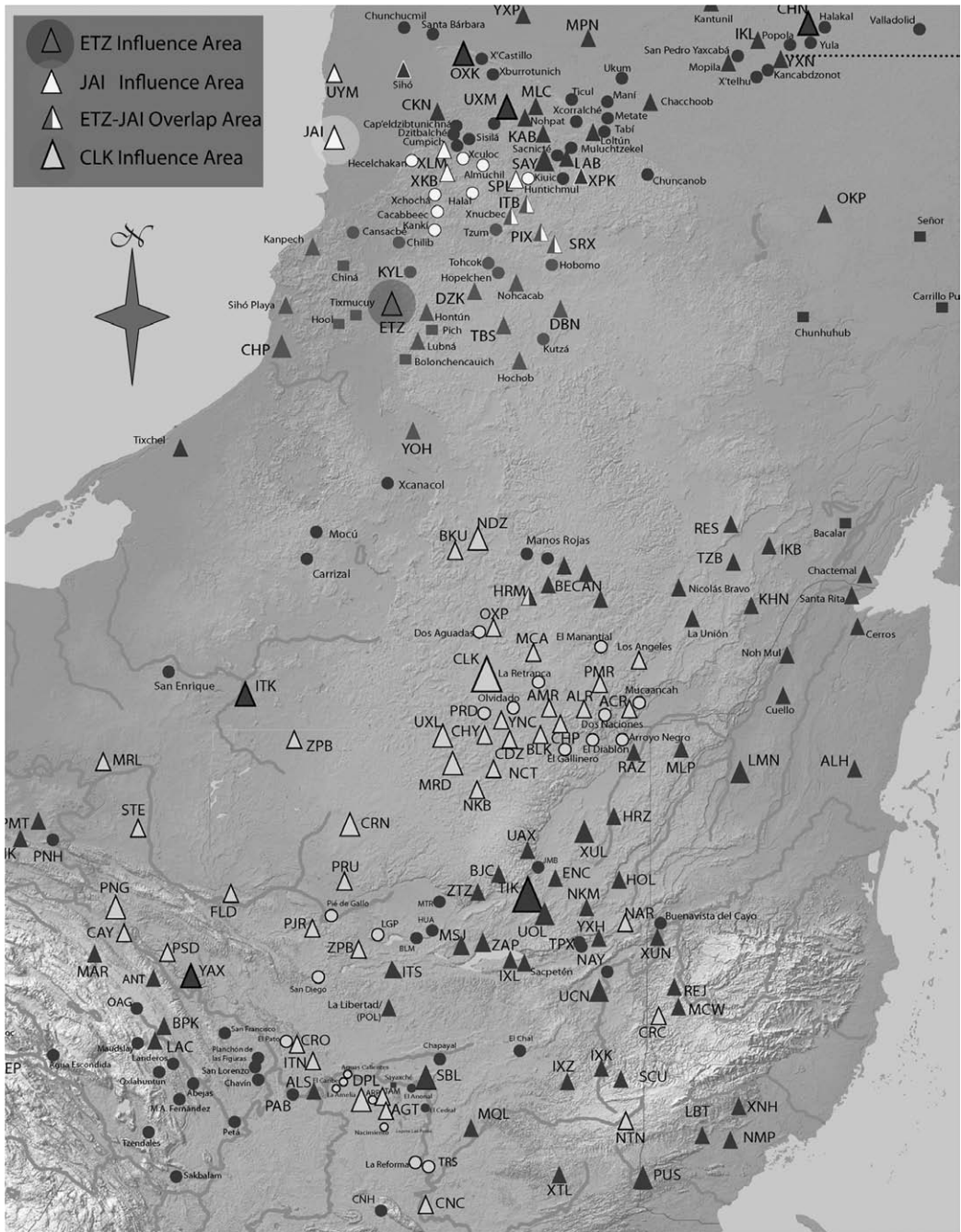
Datable written records at Edzna begin in the years prior to *ca.* AD 650, when existing evidence allows us to place the arrival of the wife of Ruler 2, considering she is named decades later on Stela 18<sup>1</sup> as “the mother of” (*yal*) Ruler 5 *Janaahb Yook K’inich*. Since the tenure of the latter’s father (Ruler 2: *Sihajiiy Chan K’awiil*) is deduced as previous to AD 649 (ETZ H.S. 1, p2<sup>2</sup>: see Pallán 2009: 69), in all likelihood Ruler 2’s wife must also have arrived before this date. On a wider scale, this period is characterized by the turbulent events stemming from Calakmul’s acquisition of maximum hegemony (with Yuhknoom the Great consolidating his power), which affected profoundly the central Peten and Petexbatun regions, as evidenced by Calakmul’s attack and subsequent control of the emergent Dos Pilas polity, by his new vassal – Mutu’l’s dynasty exile – *Bajlaj Chan K’awiil* (cf. Martin & Grube 2008: 56-57). The name of the Lady of Edzna seems to involve the sequence **K’UH(UL)-IXIK ju-tu CHAN-na EK**<sup>2</sup>, or Lady *Jut? Chanek*<sup>1</sup>. In other contexts, the term *Chanek*<sup>1</sup> – or alternatively *Kanek*<sup>1</sup> – has been discussed as a possible ethnonym or patronymic related to groups of Itza ethnic affiliation

<sup>1</sup> Stela 18 dates to 9.12.0.0.0 (AD 01.07.672).

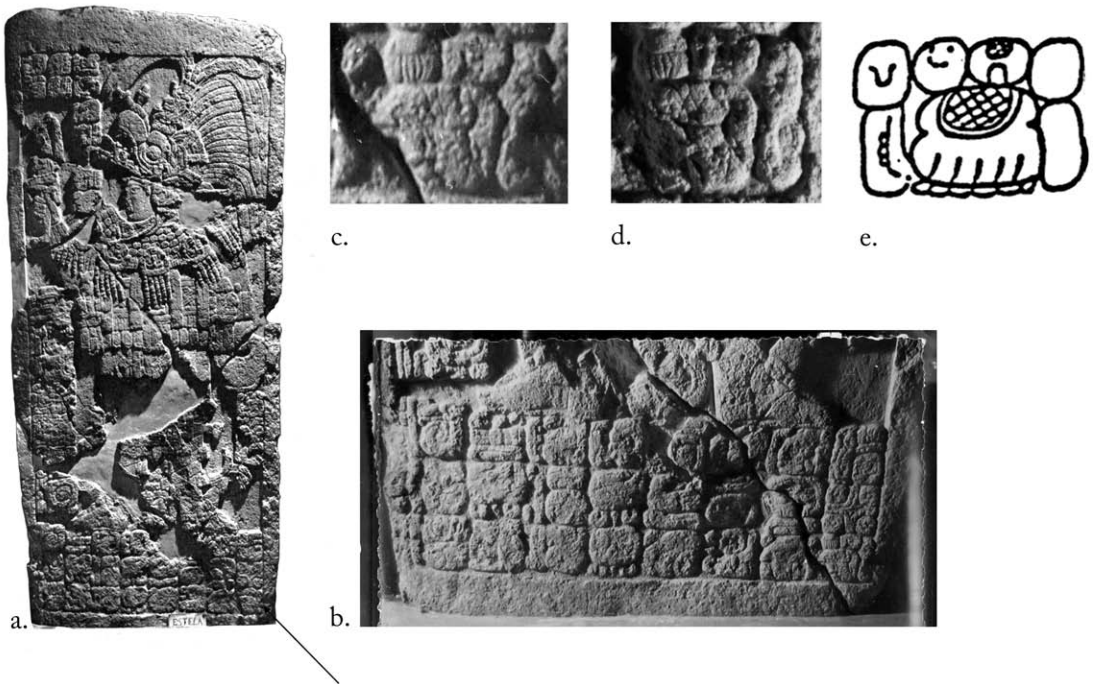
<sup>2</sup> For monument designation, I follow in this work the three-letter codes devised by Ian Graham for the CMHI/Harvard Project, thus, ETZ H.S. 1, p.2 stands for “Edzna, Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, position 2”. Updated correlations of codes with names of archaeological Maya sites have been presented elsewhere (i.e. Pallán 2009: Appendix: Table T1).

Table 1. Preliminary Dynastic Sequence of Edzna Rulers (after C. Pallán, 2009: 64).

A. Designation	B. Transcription	C. Transliteration	D. Associated Dates	E. Monuments	F. Additional Mentions
Ruler 1	u-UNEN?-K'AWIIL?	<i>Unen(?) K'awiil (?)</i>	*9.10.0.0.0? (*633?)	Stela 23	
Ruler 2	SIH-CHAN-K'AWIIL-la	<i>Sih[ajitiy] Chan K'awiil</i>	9.10.17.?.? (649 c.) 9.12.0.0.0 (672 retrosp.)		Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 Stela 18
Ruler 3	KAL-CHAN-na CHAAHK-ki	<i>Kal Chan Chaahk</i>	9.10.17.?.? (649 ca.) 9.11.0.0.0 (652) 9.11.10.0.0 (662)	Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 Stela 22 Stela 21	
Ruler 4 (possible wife of Ruler 3?)	IX-b'a [pa]k'a ?-li IX-T596-si	<i>Ixb'aah Pahk(?)</i>	9.10.17.?.? (649 ca.) 9.11.4.14.16 (657) ----- 9.12.0.0.0 (672) 9.13.0.0.0 (692)	Stela 20 Altar 1	Hieroglyphic Stairway 1
Ruler 5	ja-na-b'i yo-OOK K'IN-ni-chi	<i>Janaahb' Yook K'inich</i>		Stela 18	Stela 19
Ruler 6	HUL?-JAN?-*4-EK'?	<i>Hul Janaahb' (?) Chanek' (?)</i>	post 9.13.0.0.0 (post 692)	Stela 19	
Ruler 7	CHAN?-na CHUWAAJ?	<i>Chan...Chuwaj(?)</i>	9.14.0.0.0 (711) 9.14.10.0.0 (721) 9.15.0.0.0 (731) 869 (ca.) retrosp.	Stela 3 Stela 1 Stela 2	* Hieroglyphic Stairway 2? *
Ruler 8	AJ-ko-to? cho-wa NAAH-ka-KAAN	<i>Aj Kohl(?) Chowwa 'Nahkaan (?)</i>	790 810 -----	Stela 5 Stela 9 Stela *8?	*Stela 16 (possible)
Ruler *9 (based on stylistic/palaeographic considerations)	B' AHLAM?-ma K'UK' EK'?4	<i>B'ahlam? K'uk'Ek (?) Chan</i>	Terminal Classic before 10.1.0.0.0 (AD 849)	Stelae 6 and *12?	Stela 13(?)
Ruler *10	AJAN?	<i>?...Ajant(?)</i>	Terminal Classic Ca. 10.2.0.0.0 (ca. AD 869)	Hieroglyphic Stairway 2	*Itzimté-Bolonché, Stela 9 Stela 13(?)



**Figure 1.** Map showing hypothetical areas of influence for the following regional centers during the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD: Edzna (ETZ); Jaina (JAI); possible overlapping area Edzna-Jaina and Calakmul (CLK). After Pallán (2009: Fig. 7.4a.) partially based on cartographic data provided by Juan Ignacio Cases Martín. Major sites indicated by three-letter-codes devised by Ian Graham.



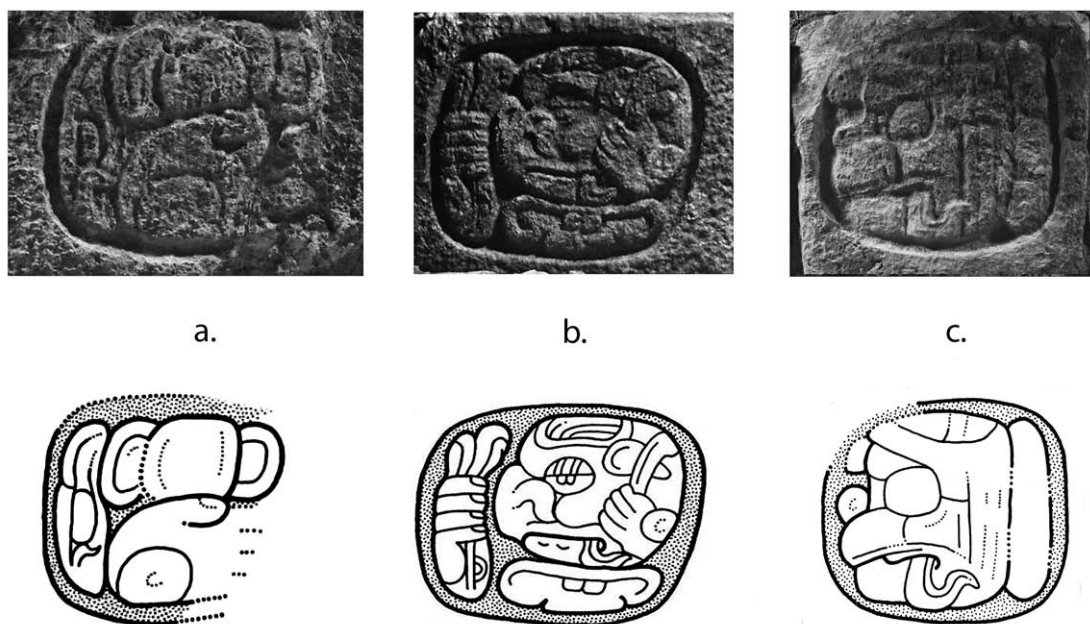
**Figure 2.** Possible emblem glyph of Itzan at Edzna, related to Lady Jut Chanek': Edzna, Stela 18 (9.12.0.0.10 Ajaw 7(8) Yaxk'in (July 1st, AD 672). a) Photograph from Andrews 1984: Plate 66); b) detail of hieroglyphic text (Photograph by C. Lizardi Ramos 1959 courtesy: Ajimaya/INAH/C.N.A./Archivo Técnico); c) detail of emblem-glyph at last position of text (Photograph by Carlos Pallán 2006 Courtesy: Ajimaya/INAH/C.N.A.); d) detail of emblem-glyph at last position of text (Photograph by C. Lizardi Ramos, 1959). Courtesy: Ajimaya/INAH/C.N.A./Archivo Técnico); e) Emblem-glyph of Itzan, Petexbatun, as depicted on Itzan Stela 6 (Drawing by Ian Graham, CMHI/Peabody Museum, Harvard © President and Fellows of Harvard College).

by such authors as Boot (2005: 36-49, 180) and Voss (2000, 2001). The primary reason we speak here of an "arrival" is the fact that Lady *Jut? Chanek'* used (as a personal title) an emblem glyph different to that of Edzna.

In a previous work (Pallán 2009: 70), I identified the emblem glyph in question with that of Itzan (Fig. 2), a site located well over 330 km south of Edzna, in the Petexbatun region. When comparing the signs in question with a particular variant of Itzan's emblem glyph,<sup>3</sup> it is worth noting that both share, among other diagnostic features, a "water" sign conflated with a vessel or gourd sign, followed by T87 **TE'** or "wood"/"tree" sign.

The location of Itzan is relatively close to a number of other sites in Peten and Petexbatun where individuals bearing the name or ethnonym *Chanek'* have been detected on hieroglyphic inscriptions. Based on previous research by Schele, Grube and Boot (1998); Erik Boot (2005, *passim*) and the author (2009: Map 6.9i), it is not unlikely that *Chanek'* or "Serpent-Star" functioned as a distinctive appellative, used by members of a particular ethnic group, in other words, a Classic-Maya *ethnonym*, following Nikolai Grube (2008).

<sup>3</sup> This variant appears at Itzan Stela 6



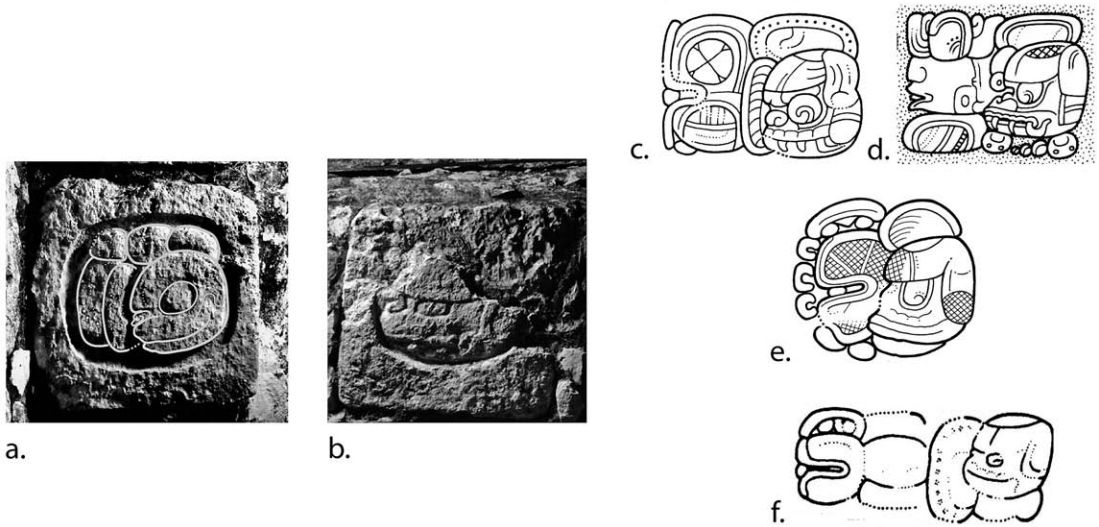
**Figure 3.** Blocks from Edzna Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 (Edzna H.S.1) which could conceivably be related to the accession of Ruler 3 *Kal Chan Chaahk*: a) Edzna H.S.1 p.17: sequence u-K'AL-HU'UN, “it is his tying of the white headband”; b) Edzna H.S.1 p.67: sequence ?-[KAL]CHAN-na; c) Edzna H.S.1 p.29: [?]CHAAHK-ki (all photographs by Carlos Pallán 2006, courtesy of Ajimaya/INAH/C.N.A.; all drawings by Sven Gronemeyer in Mayer 2004).

When charting the regional distribution of individuals bearing the ethnonym *Chanek'* on a map, we find that they correlate well with the distribution of another very special emblem or toponymic title, namely *itza'ajaw*, or “lord of Itza'” (Pallán 2009: Map 6.9i). What this pattern possibly implies is that, during the Early Classic, mentions of both Itza and *Chanek'* gravitate towards southern Peten and the Petexbatun, with the most significant overlap around the lake Peten-Itza region, at Motul de San Jose. Middle to Late Classic instances may occur at Nadzcaan and with more certainty at Edzna (*Ibid.*), while Terminal Classic mentions of *Chanek'* occur around Chichen Itza, as shown by authors such as Schele and Mathews (1998: 244-245) and Erik Boot (2005: 139, Fig. 2.49.), and Ek' B'alam, according to Alfonso Lacadena (2004: Fig. 18a). The existence of a route connecting the region of southern and central Peten (around Dolores) and Edzna is attested since at least colonial times, as shown on a map dating to 1783 (see Pallán 2009: 534-535, Maps 6.9 j,k), which also registers a colonial town named *Kanek'*<sup>4</sup>, a few kilometers northwest of the archaeological sites of Nadzcaan and Balamku, as one of a number of small villages along the road that passed through the colonial towns of Tixinucuy and Kayal, both in the vicinity of Edzna, then in ruins.

### EDZNA'S LATE-CLASSIC SPLENDOR: UNDER A POWERFUL PATRONAGE?

It is now well known that very few sites of the southern lowlands, if any at all, were completely independent during the Late Classic. In the well-known diagram of political interaction presented by

<sup>4</sup> Written as <Canek> in the standard Yukatek ortography on the original.



**Figure 4.** The emblem-glyph of *Kaanu'ul* at Edzna. a) Edzna, H.S. 1 p.35 (photograph by Carlos Pallán 2007, courtesy of Ajimaya/INAH/C.N.A.); b) Edzna, H.S. 1 p.58 (photograph and sketch-over highlight by Carlos Pallán 2007, 2009, courtesy of Ajimaya/INAH/C.N.A.); c) Emblem of *Kaanu'ul* similar to Fig. 4b associated with ruler Sky-Witness at Caracol, Stela 3 (drawing by Simon Martin at Martin and Stuart 2009: 59); d) Emblem of *Kaanu'ul* similar to Fig. 4b associated to ruler Yuhkno'm-“Head” at Naranjo (Caracol) H.S. 1, step VI (drawing by Ian Graham in Graham 1978 [CMHI Vol. 2: 109]); e) Emblem of *Kaanu'ul* similar to Fig. 4b associated with ruler Sky-Witness at Okop (Yo'okop), Sculptured Stone 2 (drawing by Simon Martin at Martin and Stuart 2009: 58); f) Emblem of *Kaanu'ul* similar to Fig. 4b associated with ruler Sky-Witness at Los Alacranes, Stela 1 (drawing by Nikolai Grube in Grube, 2005: Fig. 2).

Martin and Grube (2008: 21), the extent to which sites were interconnected is clearly seen, especially in relation to two main geopolitical poles overriding all others i.e.: those of Tikal and Calakmul. Nonetheless, further pathways of political interaction — not reflected in Martin and Grube's diagram, although see Grube (2003a) for a discussion on this issue—linking Peten with the northern Maya lowlands (in Campeche, Yucatan and Quintana Roo) did exist. In the author's view, precisely one such pathway could have connected Edzna with the network established by Calakmul, as is discussed below.

If we place the sites within Calakmul's orbit during the late Classic, particularly in the times of “Yuhknoom the Great” (*Yuhkno'm Ch'e'n?* II, AD 636-686) and “Jaguar Paw” (*Yuhkno'm Yich'aak K'ahk'*, 686-ca. AD 695), we will see that their rulers' interests extended far beyond their large inland domain – encompassing mainly southern Campeche and the El Mirador basin. The objective was to reach strategic resources in regions as distant as Moral-Reforma in Tabasco, far to the west, or Cancun, situated over 230 kilometres south. Under such perspective, it is not unreasonable to entertain the possibility that Calakmul could have had long-distance interests towards the north as well.

My understanding of the text on Edzna Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, at present, is that it may record the accession of Ruler 3 to power around AD 649/650 (Fig. 3). Although the 86-plus blocks that comprise this monument were discovered out of sequence, the text as a whole could be mentioning the main protagonist at least four times (Pallán 2009: 73: Table 4.3), whose name is best understood from other complete monuments as **KAL-CHAN-CHAAHK** or “the Rain God who opens the sky”. Possibly



related to this name is cartouche p.17, which records the verbal expression **u-K'AL-HU'UN**, “it is his tying of the royal headband” (Pallán 2009: 362, Fig. 4.2d).

Despite the loss of the original block-order, a structural analysis of Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 may reveal the presence of several basic components of a formulaic expression which Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube (1995: 44) have described as a “political patronage” statement (also called “subordination formula”) which establishes a hierarchical relationship between an “overlord” and his “vassal”. In such expressions, the accession or enthronement event of a local ruler, possessing a local emblem or title, is linked by means of the patronage statement (often **u-CHAB'-ya** or **u-CHAB'-ji-ya** “under the supervision of”/“he supervises it”) to an external ruler or “overlord”, whose emblem is mentioned at the end. The extent to which overlords from Calakmul and Tikal dominate all known instances of such formulae have led Martin and Grube (1995) to view both sites as ancient “superpowers” of the Classic Maya world.

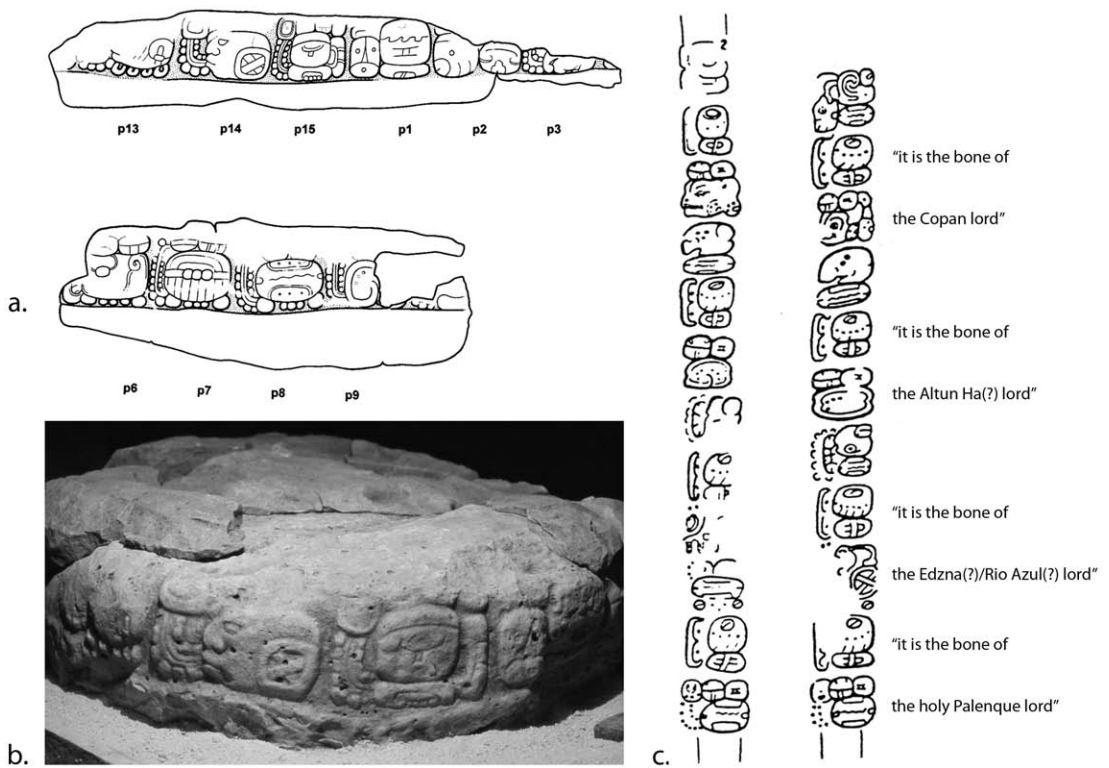
Indeed, at least two external emblem glyphs seem to occur on Edzna Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 (Fig. 4). One of them was first discussed by Nikolai Grube (2003a: 360, Fig. 17), and appears on block p58 (Fig. 4b). It consists of the head of a snake wearing the royal headband of Maya rulers. Judging from a number of very similar examples from the end of the Late Classic at sites such as Caracol/Naranjo, Yo'okop and Los Alacranes (Figs 4c-f), it seems possible to read the collocation at Edzna as **KAAN-AJAW**, “lord of *Kaanu'ul*”, following a recent suggestion by Dmitri Beliaev<sup>5</sup> as to the real name of this powerful polity or lineage. Since the examples from Caracol/Naranjo, Yo'okop and Los Alacranes all pre-date AD 630, we cannot relate them with certainty to Calakmul yet, considering that it is only after this date that *Kaanu'ul* controlled the site (*cf.* Martin 2005; Velásquez García & Pallán Gayol 2006). The example from Edzna differs from the above pattern, in that it dates, as noted, from AD 649/650, i.e., when Yuhkno'm the Great had already consolidated Calakmul as the seat of *Kaanu'ul*'s political power. By then, he had certainly reached a degree of hegemony throughout the lowlands which could have conceivably allowed him to exert political control over sites as large and remote as Edzna, or even larger and more distant.

Further confirmation of the working hypothesis that *Kaanu'ul* became Edzna's overlord appears on block p67 of Hieroglyphic Stairway 1, where yet another instance of the distinctive snake emblem yielded by the *Kaanu'ul* kings (Fig. 4a) has been identified, independently, by both the author (2006, *passim*; 2009: 78-79) and Ulrich Wölfel (2007: 44, Fig. 3.11). The reason why it was difficult to see this emblem in the past – apart from erosion – is that a number of blocks from Edzna stairway were displaced centuries after its construction, often requiring their images to be rotated in order to be properly understood.

Thus, when turning block p67 ninety degrees counterclockwise, and with the aid of night photography, the main sign in the form of a snake is revealed, along with a superfix whose shape clearly resembles that of T168 **AJAW**. The overall arrangement of the signs is compatible with that of typical examples of the Snake Emblem, namely the **K'UHUL** logograph and the **ka** syllable usually prefixed to the main sign to reinforce the **KAAN** reading. If correctly identified, these two plausible instances of the *Kaanu'ul* emblem would imply that Edzna played a role within Calakmul's political network, a possibility surely worth further exploration.

By the second half of the 7th century, Edzna seems to have shared to a certain extent the rhetoric of a number of sites in southern Campeche which belonged to the Calakmul hinterland. This could be an explanation for the inclusion of the Edzna emblem glyph (Fig. 5b) on an emic compilation of 13 “sacred lands” (Grube 2003b), as deciphered by Nikolai Grube on Altar 3 of Altar de los Reyes, Campeche (Fig. 5a), or as recently suggested, 13 “partitions” (*uxlaju'n tzuk*; Tokovinine n/d). As current evidence indicates sites such as Altar de los Reyes and Uxul were at that time subordinate

<sup>5</sup> Dmitri Beliaev, email communication to the author, Feb. 2009.

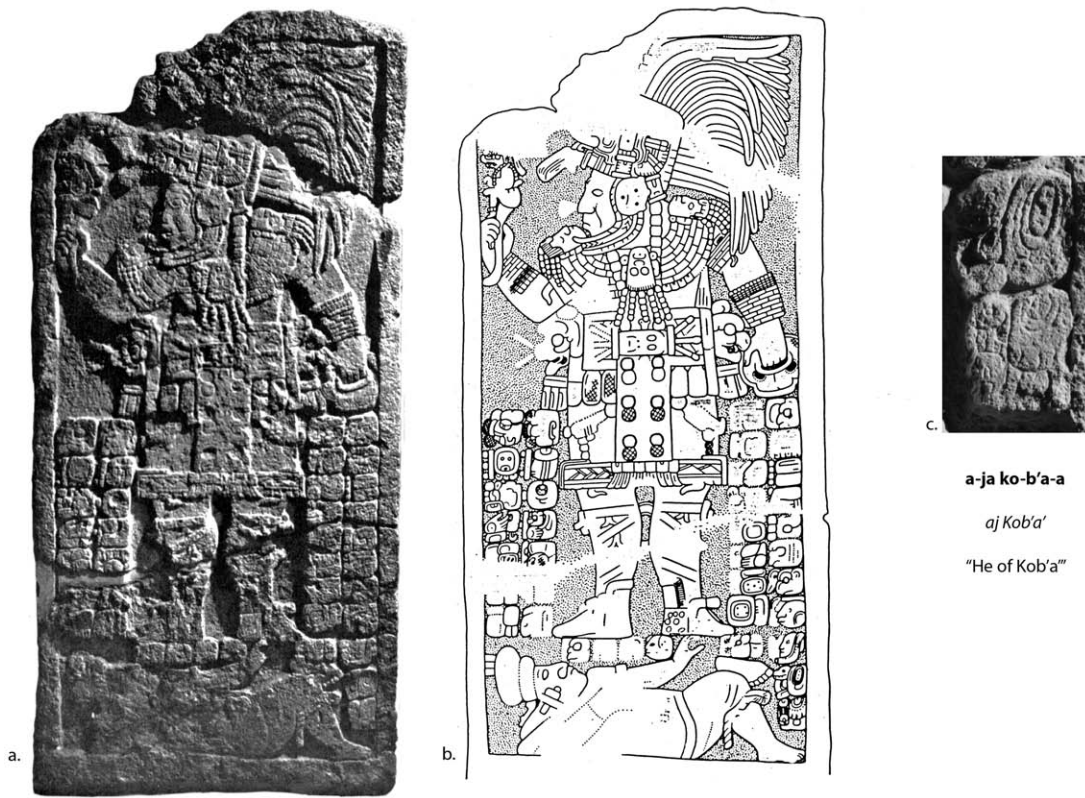


**Figure 5.** (Possible) external references to Edzna: a) Emic listing of Classic polities at Altar de los Reyes, Campeche, Altar 3 (drawing by Nikolai Grube); b) Edzna's emblem at Altar de los Reyes, Altar 3 (photograph by *Proyecto arqueológico reconocimiento del sureste de Campeche*, Šprajc 2003: Fig. 11b); c) Emic listing of Classic polities at Tikal, Burial 116, Bone Artifacts 4P-113(61i) and Misc. Text 42a (after drawings by Andy Sauffert from Moholy-Nagy 2008: Appendix 14, Figs. 194: c,d).

to Calakmul (Grube 2005; 2008), it seems significant that from the perspective of this region Edzna was considered among the most important sites. This also opens the possibility that Edzna could have conceivably interacted with some of the sites in southern Campeche through the Calakmul network.

Edzna Stela 19 shows Ruler 5 standing on top of a captive, possibly signaling an important military victory in AD 692 or earlier (Figs. 6a,b). According to Grube (2003a: 360, Fig. 18), the defeated captive is associated with a caption where his title of origin can be read with confidence as **AJ-ko-b'a-a** ("he of Koba' "). The orthography of this *Kob'a'* spelling at Edzna (**Fig. 6c**) exhibits a one-to-one correspondence with a panel found at the actual site of Coba, and it has been suggested that Coba could have been one of the sites that have retained their ancient pre-Columbian name until today (Grube & Stuart 1987: 10).

Interestingly, a very similar place name, possibly written as **ko-b'a-a'** can also be found on a pair of bones from Burial 116 at Tikal bearing a date of 9.13.3.13.15 (AD 695) and belonging to king Jasaw Chan K'awiiil (Martin & Stuart 2009: 82; Pallan 2009: 194-195). The associated captions describe the standing bound figure as, in my view, the "grandson" (*u-mam*) of "Split-Earth" of the Snake Dynasty. The main column seems to record a *jub'uuy* attack against *Kob'a'*, which occurred prior to —and would justify—the subsequent capture depicted, made either by *Kob'a'* or Tikal. Although

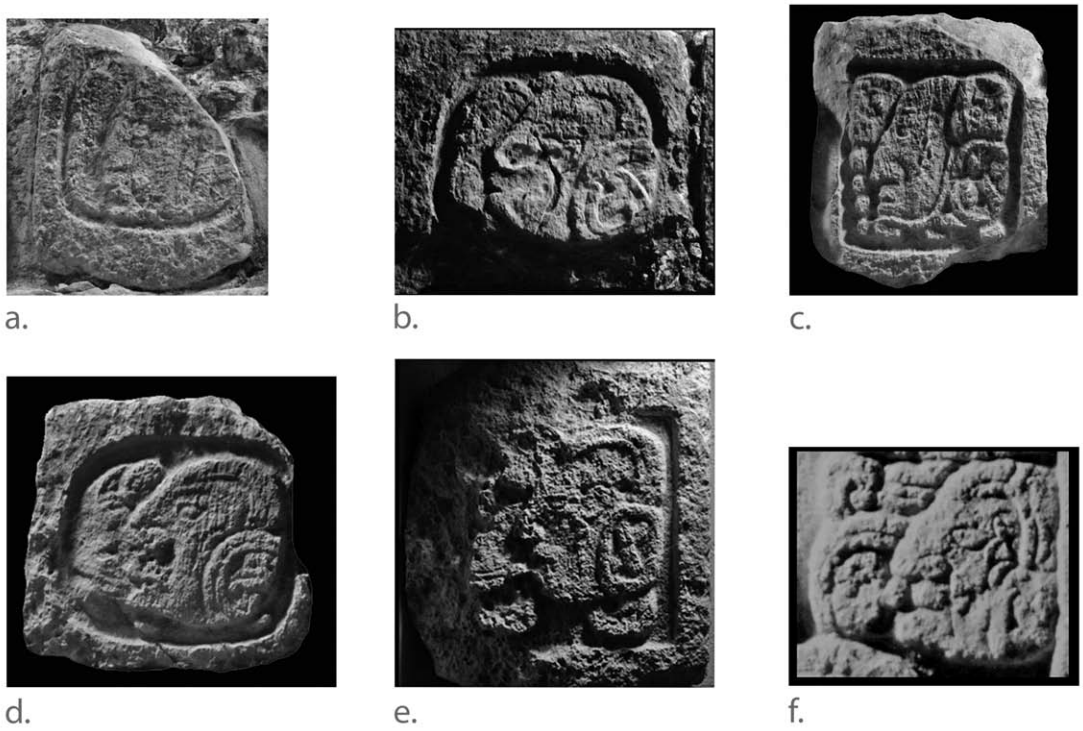


**Figure 6.** Edzna captures a warrior from *Kob'a'*: a) Edzna, Stela 18 (photograph from Andrews 1984: Plate 65); b) drawing of Stela 18 by Eric Von Euw (CMHL, Harvard), courtesy of Edzna Archaeological Project, INAH; c) Close-up of captive's caption identifying the captive's origin from *Kob'a'* through a toponymic-title (photograph by Carlos Pallán, 2006, courtesy of Ajimaya/INAH/C.N.A.).

more evidence is needed, these two retrospective references from Tikal and Edzna to war campaigns waged against a site called *Kob'a'* by either *Kaanu'ul* or its allies pose intriguing questions: could both mentions refer to a single war episode? And if so, what was the relation of *Kob'a'* to Tikal?<sup>6</sup> A further logical step along this line would be an attempt at correlating the place name *Kob'a'* with an archaeological site. So far, the only site bearing the glyphic name *Kob'a'* with proven links to an ancient settlement is the distant city of Coba in Quintana Roo (Grube & Stuart, *ibid.*). There might be some indirect indications favoring such identification (see i.e. Pallán 2009: 197), although further internal evidence from Coba is needed to clarify this issue.

At any rate, it is possible that awareness of Edzna and its geopolitical role could have existed at Tikal, as it could be one of the polities or cities mentioned on another significant pair of bones recovered from the same Burial 116 at Tikal (Fig. 5c). This possibility was first suggested to me by Alexander Tokovinine (pers. comm. 2006). Bone artifacts 61d and 61i show parallel "lists" involving

<sup>6</sup> An additional possible reference linking Tikal with *Kob'a'*—or another place called *Kob'al*—has been noted by Peter Biró (pers. comm. May/2011) and appears at Tikal's MT.10 (Moholy-Nagy 2008: Fig. 108c).



**Figure 7.** The emblem glyph of Edzna (principal internal mentions). a) Emblem at Edzna H.S. 1 p21; b) Emblem at Edzna H.S.1 p83; c) Emblem at H.S.2 ppF (formerly designated as H.S.1 p12); d) Emblem at Edzna H.S.1 p43; e) Emblem at H.S.2 ppG; f) emblem at Edzna St. 18 related to caption naming Ruler 2 (all photographs by Carlos Pallán, 2006-2008, courtesy of Ajimaya/INAH/C.N.A., except Figure 7f, photograph by C. Lizardi Ramos (1959) courtesy of INAH/C.N.A./Ajimaya/Archivo Técnico.

four important polities arranged towards the cardinal directions, thus forming another emic “model” – simultaneously geopolitical and cosmological – comparable to that of Altar de los Reyes discussed above. The first polity mentioned is Copan, the second could be Altun-Ha’ in Belize. The last polity is clearly Palenque in the west. Intriguingly, the third was previously believed to be Rio Azul, although close inspection might reveal an alternative identification as Edzna (Pallán 2009: 507, Fig. 6.5a). Indeed, comparison of most of the internal occurrences of Edzna’s emblem glyph (Fig. 7), shows that they closely correspond to the two possible external references discussed above, at both Altar de los Reyes and Tikal. The latter shows the same diagnostic crossed bands motif, along with a phonetic **la** complement, possibly spelling the term **WAHYWAL(?)**, a reading previously suggested for the main sign of Edzna’s emblem (Zender, pers. comm. 2006; Beliaev, pers. comm. 2006; Pallán 2009: 242-49).

If the identification of Edzna in both instances proves to be correct, it would confirm the assumption that the site played indeed a significant role within the geopolitical system of the lowlands. The suggestion here is that such role would be linked to Calakmul’s hegemony during at least the second part of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Among other implications, such interpretation would also help to explain further connections with sites as far north as Jaina and Uaymil (Pallán 2009: 159-161). These centres could

then be seen as part of a wider political and trade network that, at least in the period in question, could have been connected to Calakmul's hegemony, where Edzna could have acted as a facilitator or proxy for Calakmul's interests towards the north.

### TERMINAL CLASSIC PROCESSES AS SEEN FROM EDZNA

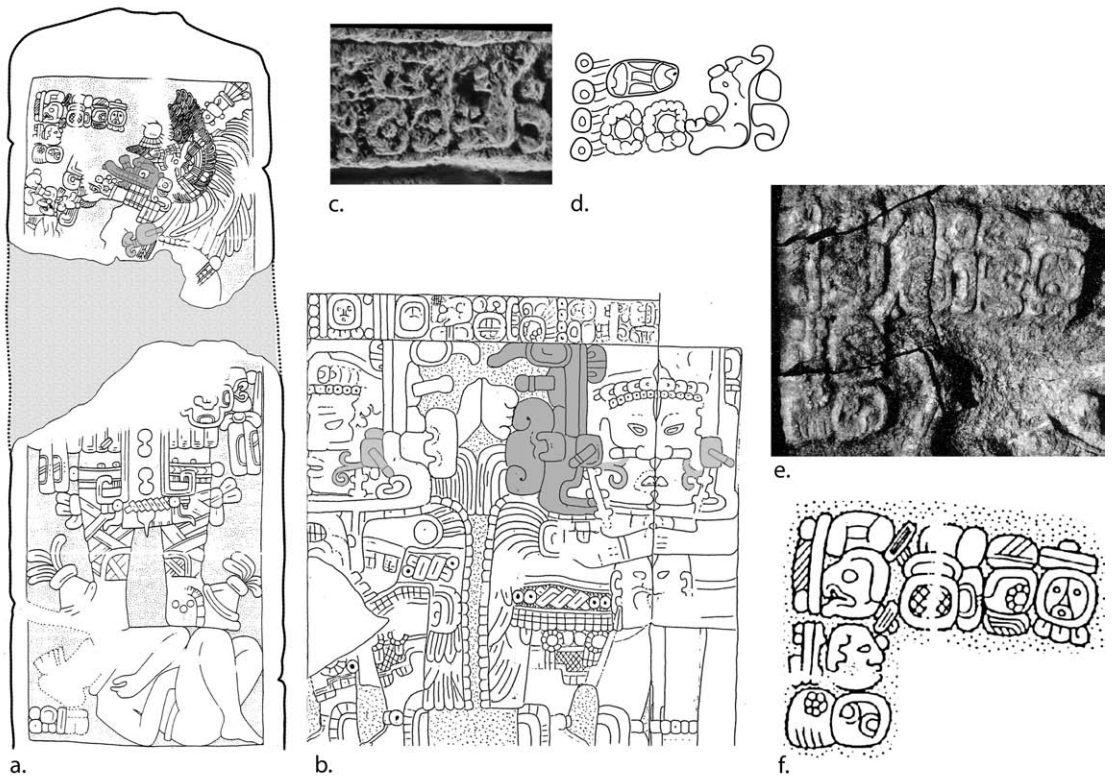
The years between AD 695 and 735 witnessed a steeping decline in Calakmul's power, as a consequence of two major military defeats against its nemesis Tika (Martin & Grube 2008: 109, 113). Many of the sites under Calakmul protective shadow suddenly found themselves in a more vulnerable position. It is during this time that Ruler 7 from Edzna assumes power, dedicating monuments in 711 and AD 721, which portray him victoriously standing on top of captives.

Some of these captives can be associated with the glyphic sequence **4-PET**, or *Chanpet(en)*, possibly a toponym meaning "four provinces" (Pallán 2009: 175). It may be significant that after these apparent initial victories of Edzna over Chanpet, we lack any records of monuments erected at Edzna during a crucial 70 year interval, which, combined with archaeological evidence of warfare and possibly intentional destruction and relocation of monuments, has led me to suggest the possibility of a military defeat, resulting in a sculptural hiatus (*ibid.*: 193, 307-308).

Elsewhere, I have proposed that Champoton was among the best candidates for the identification of the nominal **4-PET** site which fought against Edzna (*ibid.*: 177). Erik Boot (2005: 148-9) is one of the authors who have discussed possible associations of a similar Classic Maya term *Chanpet* with Chanputun or Chak'anputun. Ethnohistorical sources such as the *Paxbolon Maldonado* papers written in Acalan Chontal and some of the books of *Chilam Balam* strongly associate Champoton (or *Champutun*) with the Chontal or Putun groups settled around Laguna de Términos (cf. Vargas Pacheco 2001: 40). Archaeological research conducted by William Folan and his team indicate that precisely by AD 700. Champoton resurges as a center with intensive everyday occupation. Champoton's settlement shows a gradual shift from the coast towards further inland positions (Folan *et al.* 2007: 86). According to Fox (1980: 45) and Shuman (1977: 12), this type of shifts in settlement patterns were typical of Chontal-maya sites.

Apparently, Champoton was then becoming "invigorated" by new western influences stemming from Laguna de Términos, Potonchan, Tixchel and Xicalango (Carmack 1981; Justeson *et al.*, *ibid.*; Kowalski 2003: 236-37; McVicker 1985: 85, 92; Vargas Pacheco 2001: 49). Just as it happened previously in Chiapas, at sites such as Palenque<sup>7</sup>, multiple sources ranging from ceramics to architecture, linguistics and also epigraphy, indicate that between about AD 700 and 900 regions in northern Yucatan saw the arrival and later expansion of Maya Chontal groups, albeit this time accompanied by a stronger presence of non-Maya (possibly Nahuat-speaking) groups, from the Gulf coast region encompassing the Chontalpa/Nonohualco and part of Veracruz (cf. Boot 2005: 266; Bishop & Rands 1984; Carrasco & Pérez de Heredia 1996: 305; Foias & Bishop 1994; Holley 1984; Hruby & Child 2004; Justeson *et al.*, *ibid.*; Kowalski 2003: 246-47, 266).

<sup>7</sup> It has been suggested that Maya Chontal groups exerted strong influence in Palenque during the reign of K'inich Janaahb' Pakal and afterwards (Hruby & Child 2004). Recently, it has been proposed that the defeat of Palenque from the hands of Calakmul in AD 599 may have forced surviving court members to migrate temporarily to a place possibly located in the Chontal region of Tabasco (Beliaev, n/d) and the lineage was reconstructed by establishing relationships with elite members from the site of Uxte'k'uh (cf. Bernal Romero 2005), possibly located also in the Chontalpa region. In this light, the synchronicity of Palenque's splendor and expansion after AD 650 with the rapidly increasing Chontal presence in Xicalango, Acalan and Potonchan may not be entirely coincidental (cf. Vargas 2001: 55).



**Figure 8.** Possible foreign name and insignia related to Edzna's Ruler 8: a) Edzna, Stela 5; b) Edzna, Stela 9; Shading indicates parallel Alligator (SIPAK) headdresses and ear spools with fire scrolls on both monuments, unpublished drawings by Eric Von Euw donated to Proyecto Arqueológico Edzná, Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions, Peabody Museum, Harvard. © President and Fellows of Harvard University; c, d) Name of Ruler 8 written as **AJ?-ko-to?-cho-wa?** at Edzna Stela 9, photograph and drawing by Carlos Pallán, 2008 (courtesy of Ajimaya/INAH/C.N.A.); e, f) Name of Ruler 8 written as **AJ-ko-EAGLE cho-wa** at Edzna Stela 5; photograph by the Carnegie Institution of Washington and unpublished drawings by Eric Von Euw donated to Proyecto Arqueológico Edzná, Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions, Peabody Museum, Harvard. © President and Fellows of Harvard University.

It is within this context that we should understand the next set of monuments erected at Edzna. Stela 5 dates from AD 790 and depicts a ruler yielding the K'awiil-scepter standing on a defeated enemy (Fig. 8a), in a scene which could represent a new lineage taking control of the site at that time. While the overall style is still reminiscent of lowland Maya traditions, certainly a few unusual traits start to appear, as noted first by Proskouriakoff (1950: 158-59).

Close examination of the text associated with this image (Fig. 8e,f) reveals that Ruler 8 did not use any of the previous dynastic titles, such as Edzna's emblem glyph, which by itself may be a sign of dynastic disruption. In a somewhat unusual reading order, the text specifies that Stela 5 commemorated the period ending of 10 Ajaw (AD 790), and it was not dedicated by a *k'uhul ajaw* or Holy King, but a *b'aahkab* (Pallán 2009: 102), a title which, following Nikolai Grube (2007), implies actual territorial control and could be understood as "the principal of the land or territory". Furthermore, the name of this individual may have a title of origin composed by the agentive **AJ** followed by the syllable **ko** on

top of the head of a raptorial bird. The following signs spell the sequence **cho** and **wa**, with the head variant PX3<sup>8</sup> turning to the right (Pallán, *ibid.*).

In my understanding, an equivalent nominal sequence can be found at Edzna Stela 9 (Figs. 8c,d) dedicated on AD 810, that is, 20 years later, carved in a somewhat different style and slightly “aberrant” calligraphy. Following a suggestion by Alfonso Lacadena (pers. comm. July 2008), I interpret the first of the signs as a regional variant of the agentive pronoun **AJ** with four blobs, so that this sequence may be the combination **AJ?-ko-to? cho-wa?**, possibly to be read as *Aj(?) Koht(?) Chowa’ Naahkaan(?)*<sup>9</sup> (Pallán 2009: 106).

If this correlation proves correct and both personal names can be seen as equivalent, it would provide a solution for the decipherment of the raptorial bird sign on Stela 5 as **KOHT(?)** (Pallán 2009: 106), with the **ko** syllable acting here as an initial phonetic complement. The presence of the relatively uncommon “mandible” sign **cho** (T590b) in both cases helps to substantiate this correlation.

As for the meaning of **KOHT(?)**, in a number of lowland and highland Maya languages it is found with the meaning of “águila” or eagle, even “águila bicéfala” or “two-headed eagle” (Kaufman 2003: 608). The form *koh-ti* derives from Classic Nahuatl *kwa:w-tli* (Justeson *et al.* 1985: 61; Kaufman 2003: 608) and presents specific and distinctive phonological innovations of the Gulf coast Nahuatl. The possibility that this term was recorded in Edzna inscriptions from AD 790 and 810 is in agreement with the estimate formulated by Justeson *et al.* (*ibid.*) who states that “*the loan of koh-ti (from Gulf coast Nahuatl languages into Yucatecan languages) must have taken place no later than AD 800 ± 100 years*”.

That the term *koht* could have been indeed introduced into the Maya lowlands from somewhere in the Gulf coastal region is supported by the presence of a similar term on one of the bone artifacts (Pendant 14A/B) discovered by archaeologist Ricardo Armijo in the Funerary Urn 26 from the westernmost site of Comalcalco, well into the Chontalpa region (ref. in Pallán 2009: Fig. 4.8h). According to Marc Zender’s decipherment (2004: 254), it refers to an individual named *Chan Xob’te’ Chaahk* as a lord of Kotkab’ or Kohtkab’ and it can be dated to AD 775, 15 years before the term *koht* appears at Edzna. Although it has been suggested that *Kohtkab’* could refer to a “walled” or even “bricked” land, independent arguments based on the presence of the loanword *koht* have been offered in favor of its interpretation as a “land of eagles” (Pallán 2009: 209; Boot 2010: 156, note 32).

Returning to Ruler 8 *Aj Koht Chowa’ Naahkan*, it is likely that a second portrait of him could be found on Stela 9 as well (Fig. 8b). It shows some parallels to that of Stela 5. Remarkably, both share zoomorphic headdresses in the form of an alligator lacking the lower jaw, with the flaming eyebrows and other diagnostic features which, in my view, can be compared with **SIPAK** or “alligator” motifs found in the iconography of other northern Yucatan sites and also calendric day-signs from the Mexican highlands (Pallán 2009: Fig. 7.9). Despite their radically different artistic conventions, both portraits share other similar traits in their attire, such as the earflares with “flaming” scrolls (Figs. 8a,b). These abrupt artistic changes correlate well with the epigraphic evidence discussed above and the disrupting introduction of the Muralla ceramic complex around AD 800 (Forsyth 1983: 227) to suggest that we might be witnessing the arrival or *entrada* of a foreign ruler into Edzna, taking over the city and the territory, displacing the previous ruling dynasty and instituting a new political order.

<sup>8</sup> Following the system of the hieroglyphic catalog by Macri and Loope (2003: 368)

<sup>9</sup> As widely known, Naah Kaan or Noh Kan is part of the name of the so-called “Waterlily Serpent” (Houston & Stuart 1996: 299; Stuart 2007). My identification of this component within Ruler 8’s name (Pallán 2009: 103-104) may be related to the “Waterlily” motif on the headdress of this ruler as depicted on Stela 5.

It can be argued that the events at Edzna show a number of similarities with later events at Uxmal, the Terminal Classic capital of the Puuc region. According to Jeff Kowalski (2003: 247), by the late 8<sup>th</sup> and early 9<sup>th</sup> century Uxmal was under the leadership of the Xiu family, also of foreign origin, probably stemming from the Nonohualco/Chontalpa region. Although even earlier branches of the Xiu lineage may have their origins in Central Mexico, as suggested by the information in the *Relación de Tiab y Tiek'* dating from 1581 (De La Garza *et al.* 1983: 319) or the *Codice Perez* (Okoshi Harada 2001: 23, note 33).

Lineage founding events also occurred at Ek' Balam, Yucatan in AD 770, where according to Alfonso Lacadena (2004: Figs. 18a, 20b), the arrival of an individual called *Chak Jutuw Chanek'* resulted in the founding of a new lineage. The ethnonym Chanek' embedded into his personal name could relate him ethnically to the Itza (Boot 2005: 142; Pallán 2009: 327-328), who are not to be confused with the Chontal, although Thompson (1970: 10-11) regarded both as one and the same people.

This new order has been referred to as the "New International Order" or the "New Order of Zuyua" by authors such as William Ringle *et al.* (1998) and López Austin and López Luján (1999), and was gradually adopted by multiple regional elites throughout the Gulf coast and northern Yucatan in the aftermath of Teotihuacan's collapse. It included the dissemination of symbolism associated with the cult of the Feathered Serpent and a new religious credo based on the diad Tollan-Quetzalcóatl/K'uk'ulkan. Such a model explains the proliferation of Feathered Serpent imagery on the facades of temples such as Edzna Structure 512 (Benavides 2003: 192), but also throughout the Puuc and especially at Chichen Itza and Uxmal.

Additional manifestation of this "New International Order" in Edzna, Labna, Oxkintok, Uxmal and many northern Yucatan sites during the transition to the Epiclassic (cf. Pallán 2009: Figs. 7.11a,b) is the proliferation of representations of warriors attired according to emblematic military orders related to motifs of predatory birds (Adams & Adams 2003: 146). The origin of these motifs, according to Jesper Nielsen and Christophe Helmke (2008: 464), is found within the iconography of Teotihuacan.

Far from being restricted to religion and militarism, this new credo also incorporated emphasis on commerce. This is reflected by phenomena such as the distribution patterns of iconographic depictions of the merchant aspect of God L and its related deities across Mesoamerica. Associated imagery shows great similarities across fairly distant regions, as noted by Karl Taube at Santa Rosa Xtampak, and Dzehkabtun in the Puuc area (Taube 1992: Fig. 41b), or by Simon Martin in the central Mexican site of Cacaxtla (Martin 2006: Fig. 8.12). In effect, narrative scenes depicted on molded Fine Paste ceramics from the Mixtequilla region in the Gulf Coast show a new class of merchant elites. Similarly, a vessel from Río Blanco, Veracruz, shows a deity related to God L with a prominent beard and a wide sombrero with the usual feathery diagnostic attributes (Wyllie 2002: 277, Fig. 11.15). In the Puuc, our own work with Nikolai Grube and Antonio Benavides at the Campeche site of Sabana Piletas has allowed us to find hieroglyphic dates of AD 858 associated with these phenomena (Grube *et al.* 2009; 2010).

During the Terminal Classic, the degree of interaction between the Gulf-coastal Nahua from southern Veracruz and Chontal Maya from the Chontalpa/Nonohualco region in Tabasco became considerable (Carmack 1981; Justeson *et al.* 1985: 69), to the extent that a situation of *diglossia*, or bilingual elites conversant in both Nahua and Chontal languages has been proposed by a number of authors (cf. Scholes & Roys 1968: 398; Justeson *et al.*, *ibid.*; Vargas 2001: 49). The import of deities, merchant iconography, square day cartouches and molded/sculpted ceramics of the Fine Paste kind bear witness to undeniable influence from southern Veracruz and Tabasco over the Maya area (Andrews 1990: 261; Wyllie 2002: 305; Justeson *et al.*, *ibid.*; Foias & Bishop 1994). This allows us to explain why Pabellon molded-carved vessels found at Uxactun and Altar de Sacrificios bear very similar motives



to those encountered first in Veracruz, where this tradition clearly originated (Wyllie 2002: 296; Fig. 12.6) or why the same type of highly specific conventions for representing blood as snake-“racemes” are equally likely to be found on Stela 1 of Aparicio or the Mural from Las Higueras on Veracruz, the Great Ballcourt of Chichén Itzá, Yucatan and the distant Tiquisate wares from the Escuintla department of Guatemala (cf. Hellmuth 1978; Wyllie 2002: 310-312).

Similarly, a carved stone recently discovered by the Archaeological Project of Las Choapas, in central Veracruz, directed by Archaeologist Jaime Cortés Hernández,<sup>10</sup> depicts a deity arguably cognate to Maya God A, or the “Death God”. The overall composition is ostensibly similar to God A depicted at Chichen Itza Great Ballcourt relief, although judging from the associated ceramics the example from Las Choapas could actually be earlier.

Many more examples could be quoted to document cultural contact with the Gulf Coast area in Veracruz and Tabasco, which appear crucial for our understanding of wider Terminal Classic processes, whether in northern Yucatan, the Peten, or the Highlands (see i.e. Pascual Soto & Velásquez García, this volume). In this light, a phenomenon of the ruling lineage that assumed control at Edzna around AD 790-800 and was led by an individual, whose name incorporated possible Gulf-coastal Nahuatl elements can now be put in context. On the trans-regional scale, the complexity that this “international” or “multicultural” interaction reached during most of the 9<sup>th</sup> century is overpowering. The basic question remains: to what extent are such Epiclassic processes visible within the art and archaeology of the Maya lowlands? Are aspects such as ancient ethnicity registered in the archaeological records at all? Can we now begin to identify with confidence some of the groups as Maya Chontal, Maya Itza, or Gulf Coast Nahuatl? Investigations at sites strongly affected by such interactions, combining rich archaeological records with epigraphy, such as Edzna, may provide encouraging answers.

## FINAL REMARKS

During the Early and Middle Classic, Edzna remained under the influence of Eastern Ch’olan groups from the southern Maya lowlands, as manifested by the site’s sculptural, architectural and ceramic affiliations (cf. Benavides 1997: 111,119; Forsyth 1983: 216; Sharer 1994: 362; Pallán 2009: 292-295). This impact was part of a broader phenomenon that affected other sites of the Yucatan peninsula, including Oxkintok (Grube 2003a: 359; Rivera Dorado 2003). Although the specific source of southern influences is difficult to determine, indirect epigraphic evidence suggests on the one hand certain affinities with the southeastern Naranjo-Motul de San José Region (Pallán 2009: 75), while more direct links with the southern Petexbatún region would appear in the next stage.

The second half of the seventh century AD witnessed the heyday of Calakmul hegemony under the leadership of Yuhkno’om the Great (Martin & Grube 2008: 109). It was during that time that Edzna reached its climax, acquiring the status of a regional capital in western Campeche (Benavides 1997: 122). Among the events which set the stage for such developments figures the arrival of Lady *Jut* (?) *Chanek*<sup>2</sup>, quite probably—as noted above—from the site of Itzan in the Petexbatun. The following years witnessed the accession of the powerful Ruler 3, *Kal Chan Chaahk*, combined with the presence of a Lady bearing the paramount *Kalo’mt’e* title (Pallán 2009: 46; note 23; Pallán & Benavides 2007). Interestingly, during this period, Edzna displays Chenes-style architectural and ceramic affiliations (Forsyth 1983: 217, 227; Benavides 1997: 121-22). The presence of highly specialized ceramic types at

<sup>10</sup> This archaeological find was widely featured on diverse Mexican news media, Apr. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008 (see i.e. <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/cultura/55754.html>; <http://www.coatzadigital.net/2008/04/sorprenden-mayas-en-veracruz.html>)

the site may indicate its participation in a wider trade network, connecting it to such western peninsular sites as Oxkintok, Dzibilchaltún, possibly Jaina, Dzibilnocac and Santa Rosa Xtampak (Boucher 1993: 200; Reents-Budet *et al.* 1994: 188; Miller & Martin 2004: 146).

From the eighth century on, Calakmul's influence began to wane rapidly after being defeated twice by Tikal (Martin & Grube 2008: 45; 112-113). Contacts of Edzna with the Puuc region would become progressively more intense (cf. Forsyth 1983: 217), and it is to be noted that the origins of many traits that characterize the Puuc tradition can be traced down to the Gulf-coastal region, while they appear to have diffused to the Puuc, initially through existing trade routes and later by military force (Robles & Andrews 1986: 83). The most important events recorded in the epigraphy of Edzna involve conflicts against *Chanpeten*, a name which could possibly be associated with the site of Champotón, that appears to be revitalized after AD 700 (Folan *et al.* 2007: 86) by the influx of western groups of possible Chontal affiliation from the region of Laguna de Términos, Xicalango, Acalan and Potonchan (cf. Benavides 1997: 122; Vargas 2001: 55, 73). A real or apparent sculptural hiatus at Edzna, lasting 70 years, follows the string of conflicts (Pallán 2009: 307). This is followed by a disruptive period in the Terminal Classic, marked by an event best interpreted as an *entrada* or arrival of a foreign lineage, led by Ruler 8, *Aj Koht Naahkan*, whose glyphic name, attire elements, associated monuments and related changes in the archaeological record combine together to suggest his possible origins in the Chontalpa/Nonohualco region (Pallán 2009: 108, 318). A new political order, related to the new "World" or "Zuyuan" order (cf. Ringle *et al.* 1998; López Austin & López Luján 1999) is introduced then at Edzna, thus forming a pattern that parallels in certain ways the later arrival of the Xiu lineage and the establishing of its regional capital at Uxmal (Adams & Adams 2003: 146; Kowalski 2003: 247). From this point on, the fate of Edzna seems to be tied to overriding cultural processes affecting not only the Maya area, but larger portions of Mesoamerica.

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