

Lorraine A. Williams-Beck, Bodil Liljefors Persson, Armando Anaya Hernández

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BACK TO THE FUTURE FOR PREDICTING THE PAST: *CUCHCABAL – BATABIL – CUCHTEEL* AND *MAY* RITUAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES ACROSS ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPES, IN ETHNOHISTORIC TEXTS, AND THROUGH COSMOLOGICAL TIME

**LORRAINE A. WILLIAMS-BECK¹, BODIL LILJEFORS PERSSON²,
ARMANDO ANAYA HERNÁNDEZ¹**

¹ *Universidad Autónoma de Campeche, México*

² *Malmö University, Sweden*

Abstract

The northwestern Yucatan Peninsula area offers a unique staging ground to assess diverse kinds of pre-Columbian religious and political practices through time. Those geopolitical units briefly reviewed in the Ah Canul Province coincide with Roy's *cuchcabal-batabil-cuchteel* classification scheme. Another variant, based upon cosmology and cyclical time, possibly provides a distinct charter for religious, political, and community organization and spatial morphology in Campeche's Canpech and Chakanputun Provinces. Archaeological, architectural, environmental, epigraphic, and ethnohistoric evidences suggest that *may* seats of power systematically rotated through time between pre-Columbian regional capitals Edzná, Acanmul, and Porfía – Pa'ilbox strategically located on two rivers connected by a vast hydraulic system within a 4800km². Combined evidence in this discretely defined geopolitical unit suggests a unified regional environmental and cultural entity for the study area. Architecture, archaeological contexts, and sculpted monuments at Edzná also reflect creation myths and *k'atun* prophesies from the books of Chilam Balam, stressing the suggested importance of religious and political power transmission through ritualized cycle practice in this area. Edzná probably was the Classic Horizon's religious, ritual, and political seat of power for the entire region. Acanmul, placed at the northern point in the aquatic circuit, possibly assumes the *k'atun* seat of religious ritual power during the Early Postclassic period, after Edzná's decline and partial abandonment in the eleventh century. Chakanputun's regional capital, located sixteen kilometers inland from the coast along the banks of the Champotón River, probably assumes the pre-Columbian ritual religious seat obligation during Mayapan's apogee after Acanmul and Chichén Itzá's cultural declines in the middle thirteenth century. A fourth place, Dzaptun/Ceiba Cabecera, as the central cog in this greater geopolitical built environment, survived Franciscan zeal and Colonial government authorities, and probably concludes the final *k'atun* cycle phase as central place and seat of religious ritual power in the Canpech-Chakanputun study region. Ceiba Cabecera's gradual abandonment after 1800, which coincides shortly after one *k'atun* cycle's hypothesized completion and replacement by Seybaplaya as religious doctrinal seat after 1818, probably is due to ecclesiastical administrative reasons. By 1860 the once thriving center was practically reduced to a ghost town.

Resumen

La zona noroeste de la península de Yucatán proporciona un área propicia para estimar la presencia de diversos tipos de prácticas religiosas y políticas a través del tiempo. Aquellas unidades geopolíticas revisadas brevemente para la provincia Ah Canul coinciden con las clasificaciones *cuchcabal* – *batabil* – *cuchteel* propuestas por Roys. Otra variación, basada en la cosmología y el tiempo cíclico, proporciona posiblemente un modelo distinto para la organización religiosa, política y comunitaria y la morfología espacial en las provincias Canpech y Chakanputun en Campeche. Las evidencias arqueológicas, arquitectónicas, ambientales, epigráficas y etnohistóricas sugieren que las sedes de poder religioso ritual *may* rotaron sistemáticamente entre las capitales regionales prehispánicas de Edzná, Acanmul y Porfía – Pa'ilbox localizadas estratégicamente en dos ríos conectados por un sistema hidráulico en un área de 4,800km². Datos combinados en esta unidad geopolítica discretamente delimitada sugieren una entidad unificada ambiental y culturalmente para el área de estudio. La arquitectura, los contextos arqueológicos y los monumentos esculpidos en Edzná reflejan también los mitos de creación y las profecías katúnicas de los libros de Chilam Balam, enfatizando la importancia inferida de la transmisión del poder religioso y político a través de los ciclos rituales practicados en esta área. Edzná probablemente fue la sede religiosa, ritual y política para la región entera durante el Horizonte Clásico. Acanmul, colocado en el punto norte del contorno acuático, asume posiblemente el poder ritual religioso durante el periodo Postclásico temprano, después del ocaso y abandono parcial de Edzná a partir del siglo XI. La capital regional de la provincia Chakanputun, ubicada a dieciséis kilómetros tierra adentro de la costa del Golfo de México por el río Champotón, asume probablemente la obligación de ser la sede de poder ritual religioso durante el apogeo de Mayapan, después del eclipse cultural de Acanmul y Chichén Itzá a mediados del siglo XIII. Un cuarto lugar, Dzaptun/Ceiba Cabecera, como el eje central en el paisaje edificado geopolítico mayor, sobrevivía el celo franciscano y de las autoridades del gobierno colonial y concluye probablemente el ciclo katúnico final como el lugar central y sede de poder ritual religioso en el área de estudio Canpech – Chakanputun. El abandono gradual de Ceiba Cabecera después de 1800, que coincidió pocos años después de que se finiquitara el ciclo katúnico propuesto, y el reemplazo por Seybaplaya como la sede religiosa de doctrina a partir de 1818 se debió probablemente a razones administrativas eclesiásticas. Para 1860 este centro una vez próspero fue reducido prácticamente a un pueblo fantasma.

INTRODUCTION

A research design not only provides frameworks for collecting and analyzing data, but also serves to select archaeological and architectural contexts that answer specific problems and interpret evidence when assessing topics such as settlement patterns, political process, and to what extent ancient peoples conceived, effectively harnessed, or irrationally exploited the natural environment in space through time. Almost four decades ago Clarke (1972) emphasized employing different lines of evidence as an efficient means from which to build models in order to catalogue, analyze, and predict tendencies in past societies. For better understanding socio political and community organization in the Northern Maya Lowlands, for example, assessing multiples sources of information is an essential analytical tool (Okoshi Harada *et al.* 2006). In this paper we combine direct analogy, regional environmental parameters, and symbolic theoretical frameworks in order to understand community organization, rotating periods of cultural and sociopolitical florescence, and sacred landscape recognition between two adjoining but allegedly autonomous political units, the Canpech and Chakanputun¹ provinces, whose inland hinterlands never have been completely identified or demarcated (Fig. 1). Those geopolitical units of classification are defined as such according to a *cuuchcabal* – *batabil* – *cuchteel* analytical method developed over a half century ago by Roys (1957), who identified geographic “provinces” and their borders through the presence of community toponyms (*cah*) related to specific extended family groups (*chibal*) residence trends noted in historic Spanish and indigenous early Colonial documents. In

¹ Roys (1957) originally designates the latter province's name as Champotón, from places mentioned in Early Colonial and ethnohistoric sources, such as the books of *Chilam Balam*. A distinct name for the province prior to Spanish contact is discussed in greater detail in the next section.

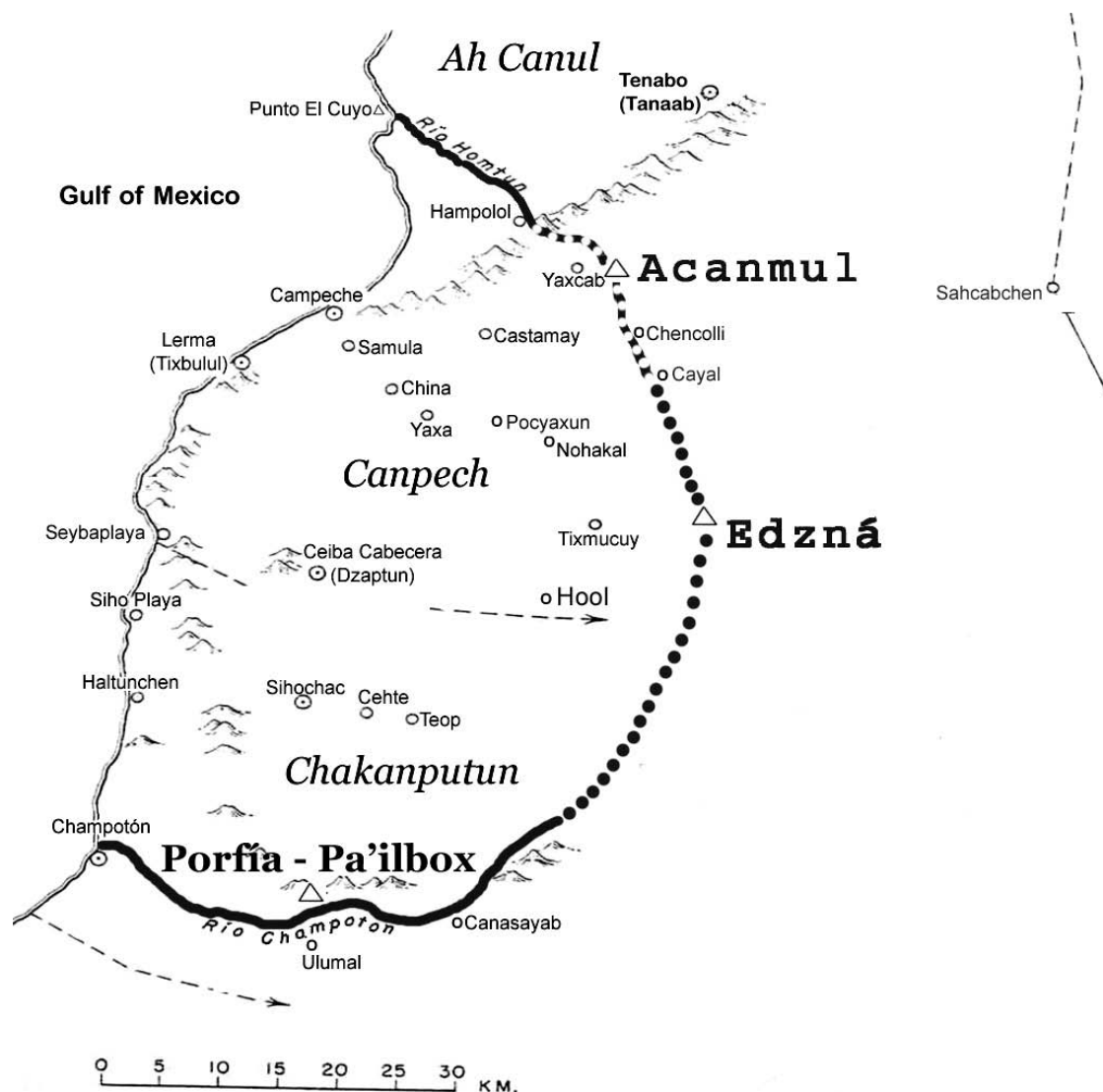


Figure 1. Canpech – Chakanputun Study Area. The “aquatic circuit” dotted regions, which connect Acanmul to Edzná, and the Champotón River’s terminus where it joins Nilum Lagoon and associated wetlands area in which Edzná’s Major Canal ends, are reconstructions of where those water courses either flowed or drained. The second instance is a more exact description of the Homtun River’s nature. Figure adapted from *Political Geography of the Yucatan Maya* (Roys 1957).

essence, Roys' classificatory scheme is a land-based one that describes the synchronic means through which Pre-Columbian peoples ordered their built space environments within delimited geographical confines. Roys also inferred from the documents a gamut of possible political processual strategies, including highly centralized individual heads-of-state entities, areas with decentralized and socially quasi-equitable governing bodies, known as council groups, formed through consanguineous ties, as well as other ephemeral aggregates and/or completely independent and hence not easily classifiable social units that congealed with or dispersed among other more institutionally organized neighbors within geographical proximity (Roys 1957; Okoshi *et al.* 2006; Quezada 1993).

The Canpech and Chakanputun provinces study area occupies a roughly 4,800km² geographical space delineated by two rivers united by a complex hydraulic system constructed around and to the southwest of Edzná during pre-Columbian times, perhaps as early as the late phase of the Middle Preclassic period (Forsyth 1983; Matheny *et al.* 1983; Williams-Beck 2008; Williams-Beck *et al.* 2009). Within this region three Pre-Columbian urban centers and one particular Colonial congregation town, or "*pueblo de indios*", display an equidistant placement and spatial configuration and exhibit successive periods of cultural florescence. Their conjoined existence and temporal prosperities suggest the presence of another kind of community organization distinct from Roys' model that may have functioned within an amazingly compacted territorial space. Whether those four sites can be defined as *cuchcabalob* provincial capital cities, or if their internal urban layout designs and architectural group content represent other kinds of sociopolitical or ritual ideological organizational structures are questions briefly addressed here, by defining the archaeological, architectural, and spatial signatures of *cuchcabal*, *batabil*, and *cuchteel* settlement segments. What the internal spatial disposition, regional placement and temporal parameters indicate for the Canpech – Chakanputun study area example is that other possible underlying factors may govern political and territorial organizational arrangements for the Classic to Postclassic lowland Maya. In the case for the Canpech and Chakanputun study area, a combined symbolic – cosmological – ethnohistoric – ecological model also successfully predicts the third pre-Columbian and fourth Colonial sites' locations within their immediate region (Williams-Beck *et al.* 2009).

New linguistic analyses and recently rediscovered ethnographic evidence for the study area's southernmost urban center's name not only offer a new moniker for the formerly described Champoton province as mentioned in the sources, but also yield a distinct location for its capital city as well, based upon the greater region's possible sacred geographical configuration. In this paper we also propose this area should be considered as one geopolitical entity constructed around a single, unifying symbolic – cosmological – ecological design, with distinct temporal facets for constituent monumental urban site members. An extension of symbolic reiteration from the area's unique quasi-quincunx design also might point to a particular sociopolitical power scheme that rotated among constituent monumental urban members according to calendar-based, ritual, and/or other cosmological precepts. In addition, other hierarchical social and political principles, based upon Roys' *cuuchcabal* – *batabil* – *cuuchteel* classificatory structure, also might be involved in ordering social and regional space. Preliminary archaeological and architectural data from three Pre-Columbian sites, and historic documents for the fourth community placed centrically within the combined geopolitical area, suggest specific, successive, temporal relationships between them, beginning in the East and from there cycling to the North, followed by the South, and then ending at the greater area's central place from Classic to Colonial times; the western flank might represent either the holy underworld (Carvajal Correa *et al.* 2009), or an abstract "point" of origins such as Zuyua, the place from which most all elite Maya people hailed. Each site's precise location, internal layout, and ideological design in conjunction with specific temporal frames for sociopolitical florescence also support a notion that they served as possible

seats of sacred power among greater regional constituents according to ritual calendar prophecies and additional cosmological undercurrents discussed in the Chilam Balams of Chumayel, Tizimin, Perez Codex, as well as other sources. Information contained in historic documents also indicates that the forth central place in the greater area may have survived as an Early Colonial *may* seat of power prior to Mexico's independence from Spain.

SOCIOPOLITICAL AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES IN THE NORTHWEST MAYA LOWLANDS: *CUCHTEEL* – *BATABIL* – *CUCHCABAL* AND COSMOLOGICAL SPATIAL DISPOSITIONAL PARAMETERS

Inferring models of political and community organizational structures from archaeological contexts have proved a difficult endeavor in Maya research (Ashmore 1981, 1989; Ashmore & Knapp 1999; Ashmore & Sabloff 2001; Ball 1993, 1994; Ball & Taschek 1991; Demarest 1992; Houston 1993; Marcus 1993; Martin & Grube 2008; Williams-Beck 2005). One obstacle involves an over dependence on single evidence tool kits, be they epigraphic, archaeological, architectural, historical, or environmental in nature. Such restricted data sets, and an almost exclusive focus on elite activity, yield insufficient information for reconstructing a more complete picture of lowland Maya political practice, as a means for organizing ideological factions in communities over natural and built landscapes through time. Here an approach substantiated by archaeological, architectural, epigraphic, and historical evidence involves complete complex components including archaeological features with artifact components, architecture compounds, and the spatial disposition of these over the built and natural landscape, in addition to references made to these places in the ethnohistoric literature. In this paper we also will focus on the archaeological, architectural, environmental, and urban layout signatures which suggest a plausible means for identifying these kinds of political building blocks in the Northwestern Maya Lowlands (Williams-Beck 2003, 2005, 2006).

An analogy for the first and least complex level, *cuchteel*, shows from one to several foundation braces in residential units, generally reflecting differing degrees of consanguineous or affinal ties such as those reported for shared extended family living quarters (Scholes & Roys 1968) arranged among other similar units in neighborhood residential wards (Williams-Beck 1999, 2003, 2005, 2006). The regional urban center *batabil* integrates several of these residential wards into concentrations of three to five sectors in the built space environment, shows more complex monumental architectural aggregations, and also may contain internal causeways which connect these domestic areas to centralized architectural compounds (Williams-Beck 1999; Fig. 2). The latter emphasize no domestic structural remains, but may house carved monuments or centralized spaces or platforms for carrying out group ritual activities. And finally, the *cuchcabal* level of political organization combines the former two organizational levels, as inferred through their urban layout and architectural content, with the addition of an ample place for mass assemblage and/or centralized ritual activity feature, such as a ballcourt, placed within the urban core (Figure 3). In the northwestern Yucatan Peninsula area, usually only *cuchcabal* sites with contiguous and/or extensive built space environments of 15 – 20km² or more in territorial size possess ballcourts in their urban layout (Williams-Beck 2005, 2006).

However, an interesting caveat to this spatial dispositional pattern at the site level is Jaina. Recent built space, burials content, and locational analyses in unique environmental niches report nine associated fresh water springs surrounding this artificially constructed island (Carvajal Correa *et al.* 2009). This exceptional site previously has been recognized as a fishing village and necropolis (Piña Chan 1968), a *cuchcabal* capital city with corresponding political jurisdiction by inscribed monuments

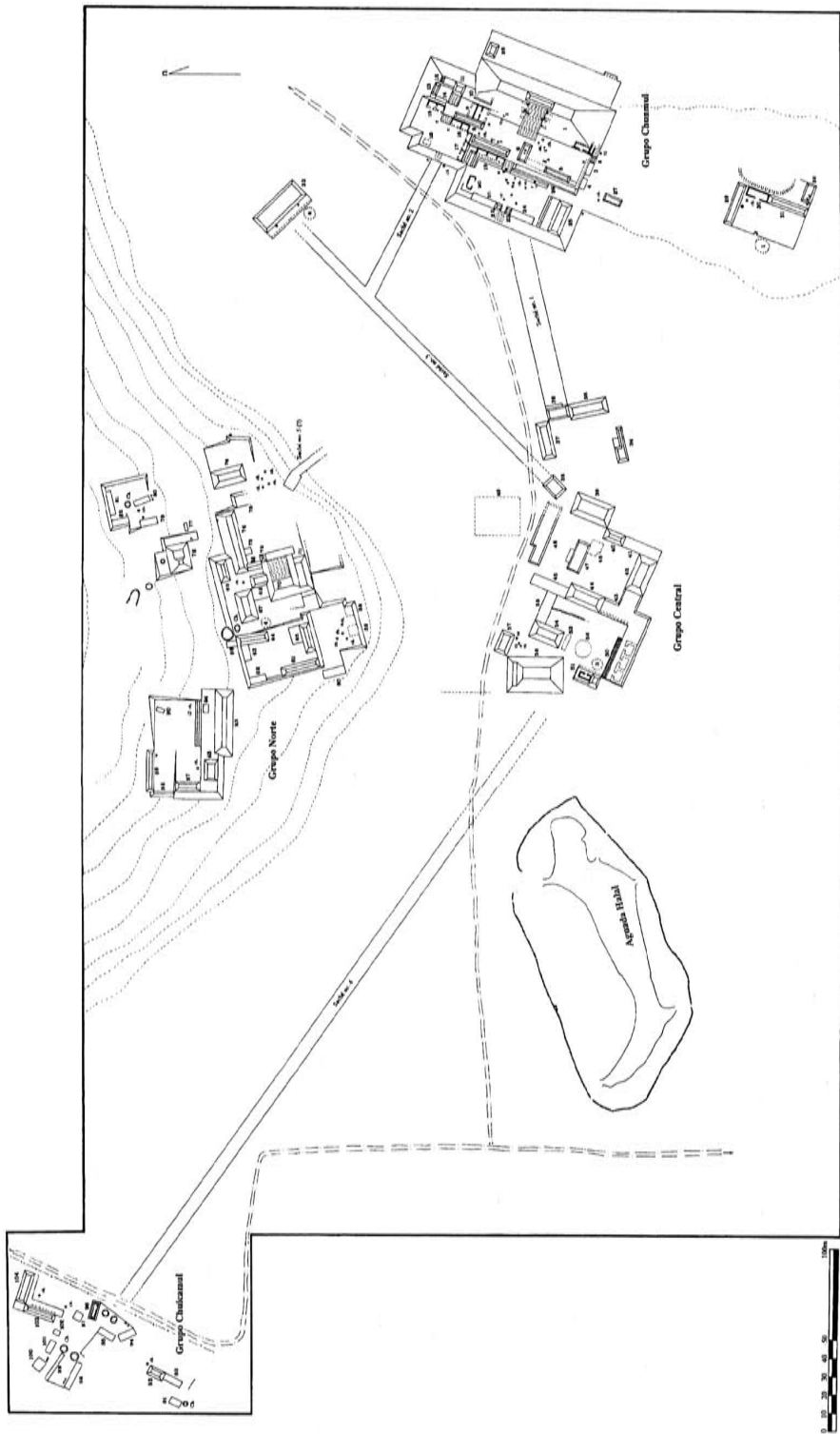


Figure 2. The spatial configuration of *cuchiteel* neighborhoods within a *batabil* site. Note five separate causeways, or *sacbeob*, connecting each neighborhood to the Central Group, located today in the middle of a mechanized field. Two neighborhoods possess identifying toponyms at Halal, Western Puuc Area, Hecelchakan Municipality. From Williams-Beck 1998.



Figure 3. *Cuchcabal* urban layout design at Edzná. Note the ballcourt (right side, mid photo), defining the southern limit of the Great Plaza. (Photo Williams-Beck 2010).

referring to an emblem glyph and possible governors (García Campillo 1998: 51-53), or a site like any other peninsular urban center with a ballcourt placed atop an artificial island whose surface area is just forty-two hectares (Benavides 2007). Our more recent analysis suggests a distinct functional nature for Jaina based on a specific religious ritual complex assemblage, in which more than eighty percent of the burials represent infants under six years of age and possibly served as symbolic offerings to the gods in exchange for the continuity of life, maize production, and community wellbeing (Carvajal Correa *et al.* 2009). Multiple sources including archaeological features, architectural compounds, urban design components, iconographic and epigraphic elements, and the ecological niches in which Jaina is located also suggest including this intentionally constructed space within a greater Canpech – Chakanputun unified geopolitical and/or possible ritual associates' landscape configuration through time (Ball 1978; Forsyth 1983; Williams-Beck 1999, 2001), rather than considering Jaina as a separate autonomous geopolitical entity in the Late Classic period (García Campillo 1998).

In order to construct bridges from synchronic *cuchcabal – batabil – cuchteel* built space environments into analytical elements as keys to identifying certain political organizational strategies in specific geographical contexts, a processual component must be included to account for how these schemes functioned and provided adjustments, checks, and balances to changing circumstances in an area over time (Rice 2004: 31-36). A possible solution integrates Maya cosmology's cyclical time and

spatial configurations into an equation which allows for recording, predicting, and reconstructing from past events, because "... time is cosmic order" (Farriss 1987: 574).

A cosmological, philosophical, and geopolitical series of propositions combined into a multi – faceted paradigm, known as the *may* model, melds together archaeological, architectural, epigraphic, ethnohistoric, iconographic, historic document, and other evidence (Rice 2004). Emphasizing flexible *a priori* and *a posteriori* hypothesis-driven means for analyzing and inferring social process from multiple data sets is an innovative research tool, particularly when timekeeping (Weeks *et al.* 2009), political intrigue, and competition to garner and maintain power (Martin & Grube 2008), in addition to cosmological and ritual observances (Farriss 1984, 1987; Rice 2004, 2008; Roys 1972), played such fundamental roles in ancient Maya society. While the *may* model combines those archaeological, architectural, epigraphic, ethnohistoric, iconographic, historic document, and other aspects of evidence into an integrated whole from which to assess specific sites or features within them (Rice 2004), the present study represents a point of departure from Rice's methodology by testing the model's predictive and comprehensive qualities within a specific regional context. As a cyclical model for understanding Maya political practice, the *may* borrows aspects from sacred territorial space, cosmological precepts, and the religious ritual calendar (Rice 2004: 51-83; Liljefors Persson 2000, 2009, 2011 [in press]). The driving force behind the model synchronizes thirteen *k'atuns* of twenty years each in a complete cycle in order to structure social life, rotate the obligations of ritual power, or *cuch* among elite constituents, and change places among the physical seats of government and power within a given region in a recursive process without end that permitted remembering the future and anticipating the past (Rice 2004; Farriss 1987; Liljefors Persson 2000, 2009). However, a clearer picture of what happens to the rest of the populace when the cities' elite assumes the *may*'s ritual obligation, and whether certain elite ideological factions rotate out of the scheme – as in the ethnographic example of the cargo system in Chiapas (Vogt 1961) – from one place to the next seat when the cycle of power terminates are aspects to this model still unknown. Independent of matters such as warp and weft in the Mayan social fabric, the model still successfully integrates tangible and intangible evidence for teasing out interpretive nuances, and serves as a positive first step to overcoming prior obstacles to understanding geopolitical practice.

However, a stronger case for using the *may* model stresses its quality for recognizing patterning, also a key premise to archaeological research. Because research in Maya studies, in general, tends to prioritize large urban centers or examines site-specific contexts, this "can't-see-the-forest-for-the-trees" focus disables it as a tool from which to detect forms that structurally repeat themselves in space and through time. Identifying certain kinds of patterning in the archaeological record requires revising various manifestations of complexity, from diverse levels of scrutiny starting at the feature, architectural compound, site, and including macro-regional levels (Clarke 1972). Those contexts recorded in extra-site or regional studies, which also compare or contrast multiple lines of evidence, may tend to provide a more complete data set from which to distinguish structural replication (Williams-Beck 2008).

Identifying this patterning in the archaeological and architectural record is not so difficult. According to the model's symbolic cosmological political design, described at length by Rice (2004:75-83), a *may* seat would concentrate ritual and ideally political power in a regional capital urban center or *cuchcabal* during a 256-year period. Once the complete *k'atun* cycle ended, the *may* would be reseated according to calendar prophecies at another ritual-sacred *cuchcabal* recognized with the appellative *siyan ca'an* or "born of heaven". In order to provide adequate infrastructure in which to receive and house the *may*'s ritual-sacred (*k'ul*) power insignias, the next place selected as a *may* seat would exhibit increased indices of massive public works programs in the archaeological and architectural records, or expand

or modify already existing structures or compounds or build new architectural groups.² Erecting and designing particular architectural complexes, providing a spacious central plaza, or *saklaktun*, for massive assembly purposes, and/or refurbishing specialized ritual contexts, that together would function as a religious crossroads, became the *may*'s physical and geographical umbilicus at the ritual seat for the entire political jurisdiction of associates during that particular seat's reign. Once the *k'atun* cycle came to an end, some architectural complexes, any internal or external access causeways to the seat of power or complexes in where it is wielded, and its principal idols or monuments would have to be ritually "terminated", as mentioned in the ethnohistoric literature, to show that this place no longer served as the ritual seat. In some instances the entire city or the elite residential compound, among other contexts directly associated with *may* power religious symbolism, also would be "ritually killed", dismantled, and/or partially or completely abandoned.

NEW HISTORICAL INSIGHTS AND LOCATIONAL CLUES FOR PRINCIPAL PLACES WITHIN THE CANPECH AND CHAKANPUTUN PROVINCES STUDY AREA

Roys must have faced a conundrum when he tentatively delineated the political jurisdictions for Chanputun and Canpech, perhaps the most enigmatic autonomous "provinces" of all identified in the Yucatan Peninsula at the time of Spanish contact (Roys 1957: 166-169). In attempting to define concrete boundaries between them and among other provincial peers from the documents, Roys mentions that an undisclosed "Mexican" source "... [describes] the entire region...[as] the 'province of Cochistan'" (Roys 1957: 167). This regional toponym possibly is derived from the Maya terms *coh*, *chii*, and *tan* figuratively meaning "precious edge of the sea containing all four directions or parts of the cosmos" (Arzápalo Marín 1995 (I): 129, 236, 699).

The natural environments for the combined areas Chakanputun and Canpech, which exhibit extensive savannah grasslands interspersed among wetlands, natural springs, and isolated, low topographical rises as if these spaces were "islands" in a vast aquatic or vegetative sea, provide a special ecological backdrop, shared by two sites placed along two separate rivers, another site situated at both river's subterraneous sources, and a fourth place as the central cog around which the other three were situated, from which to test the *may* model for rotational political process. Cultural and natural resources that fused together into a single united backdrop constitute a recognizable pattern throughout Mesoamerica for urban design since the Middle Formative Horizon to designate places of creation (Schele & Guernsey Kappelman 2001; Koontz *et al.* 2001). An appellative assigned to this trope as *siyan ca'an*, or "heaven born", is illustrated not only in any environmentally symbolic regional landscape (Ashmore 1989; Ashmore & Knapp 1999; Ashmore & Sabloff 2002), but also may be reiterated in each site's urban design, architectural repertoire, and spatial configuration (Williams-Beck 2008, in press; Williams-Beck *et al.* 2009).

While Roys discovered through documents the northernmost province's name as Canpech, recent research for the terms *canpech* or *canpech* and *ahkin pech* suggests they could be from a regional Maya linguistic variant, *Kampechta'an* (Voss 2007), with certain Cholan influences just prior to and shortly after the Spaniards arrival. *Akin pech* and *canpech* have been used synonymously and indiscriminantly in historic sources to refer to what was thought to be two distinct places in the immediate region (Lanz 1905; Piña Chan 1970, 1987; Williams-Beck & López 1999), but actually comprise a title and place.

² The action of providing adequate infrastructural accommodations for the *may*'s ritual religious power insignias also is narrated in the Books of Chilam Balam of Chumayel, Mani/Perez Codex, and Tzimin.



Figure 4. Homtun River estuary, Gulf of Mexico. El Cuyo Point, an underwater archaeological site (shown in the upper left-hand corner), is a possible port enclave for Acanmul, located sixteen kilometers inland. This river drainage and hydraulic system also serve as links to the Gulf of Mexico for Edzná, located some 65km inland and close to the river's freshwater spring source, and for the aquatic circuit's entire northern, eastern, and interior sectors. (Photo Williams-Beck 2010).

The first, *canpech*, corresponds to the province or politically autonomous territory including a Spanish Colonial town, San Francisco de Campeche, and another series of “*pueblos de indios*” Hampolol, Yaxcab, Imi, Castamay, Chencolli, Cayal, Tixmucuy, Nohacal, Pocyaxum, Chulul, Yaxa, China, and Samula. Roys tentatively identifies the border between Canpech and “Champoton” at Seybaplaya on the Gulf of Mexico coast and another “*pueblo de indios*” inland some twenty kilometers east at D’zaptun/Ceiba Cabecera (Roys 1957: 166-167). The province’s eastern terminus was never demarcated. The Calkiní Codex cites the border between neighboring Ah Canul and Canpech provinces beginning at the Homtun River (Fig. 4), and being “[the land’s jurisdictional limit for] those from Canpech” (Okoshi Harada 2009:91). It also specifies the southernmost community of Canpech’s political jurisdiction as D’zaptun, “... from where those from *chanpatun*’s lands begin” (*Ibid.*). The toponym *d’zaptun* would be transformed into Ceiba Cabecera, a congregation “*pueblo de indios*” in the Early Colonial period (Roys 1957: 167).

The terms *ahkin pech* or *kinpech* synonymously have been utilized as equivalent to *canpech* in historic sources due to erroneous interpretations of contact-era Spanish conquerer’s reports by both academic essays and local history buffs (Lanz 1905; Piña Chan 1970, 1987; Williams-Beck & López

1999). While in Yucatec Maya *pech* means “tick” and *ahkin* “he who reigns” (Barrera Vázquez *et al.* 1980: 401, 642) or “priest” (Arzápalo Marín 1995: 29, 635), *pech* in *Kampechta’an* means “quail” or small bird species (Voss 2007: 527), such as darters, rails, gallinules, coots, and crakes (Peterson & Chalif 1989: 84-88, 22, 88-94), more adapted to wetland environs. However, if *ahkin pech* were indeed a place, the term would also have to include a locative prefix or suffix such as *ti* or *il*, thereby creating a composite toponym. A new interpretation of nouns *ahkin* and *pech* produces “priest [patronym] Pech”, an expression which coincides with several cases from the Inquisition in Campeche and the Yucatan Peninsula between 1563 and 1697 (Chuchiak IV 2001).

For the regional expression Champoton as the study area’s Pre-Columbian southern portion, what recent research building upon previous investigations (Andrews 1943; Ruz Lhuillier 1969) has revealed as “Chakanputun” or “Chanpatun”, the prior name also can now be discarded due to more thorough ethnohistoric and philological analyses. The combined Maya lexes *chan*, *pot*, and *on* “they didn’t slip away [from us]” (Voss 2004:142), transformed themselves into a curious toponym coined shortly after Spanish Contact, that most probably refers to the 1517 conflict between natives and Spaniards located near the estuary resulting in Hernández de Córdoba impending demise. As a grandiose symbol of ethnic pride, the adopted term Champoton apparently replaced the area’s unknown previous appellative, which is not mentioned in documents after 1518 (Voss 2004).

However, three additional references suggest not only the southern portion’s former name and key role it played within the greater region, but also point to the political strategies that might have unified this area throughout time. In 1943 Andrews IV identifies a site as “Chakanputun” situated up river from the estuary, based upon Cyrus Lundell’s field notes (Lundell 1933). In them Lundell narrates finding two sculpted monuments housed beneath a thatched structure in a small, rural community located on the way to Calakmul. Local residents emphasized the “gods of Pustunich’s’ importance”, and Lundell adds that these sculptures could reveal more about the history of Chakanputun, a toponym used by those residents to designate the area located immediately to the northwest.

A sacred geographical model designed for the greater region, discussed by the first author at the Malmö WAYEB meeting in 2006, precisely locates Porfía and Pa’ilbox as possible neighborhoods belonging to Chakanputun’s regional capital urban center, tentatively dated by ceramic and architectural evidence to the Late Postclassic period (Williams-Beck in press [2011]; Williams-Beck 2008). Porfía and Pa’ilbox’s architectural compounds are situated atop steeply inclined natural and culturally modified hilltops some sixteen kilometers inland from the coast along the banks of the Champotón River. This distance upriver is homologous to that displayed by their northern peer, Acanmul, situated along the northern and southern banks of the Homtun River.

And finally, three different sources combine to assist in identifying the immediate region’s fourth site and central place, D’zaptun/Ceiba Cabecera, as a possible seat of ritual power during the early Colonial period (Fig. 5). First, the cosmological and spatial dispositional relationship it maintains with the other three Pre-Columbian sites also predicts its location. In addition, historic documents name this toponym as one of the first “*pueblos de indios*” in the actual state of Campeche. And, finally, remnants of a sixteenth-century *visita* open chapel placed 100m adjacent to another ruined mammoth stone masonry church, inaugurated in 1759³, are the only two standing examples of early Colonial religious architecture situated in one single “*pueblo de indios*” in the study region. The Pre-Columbian site components from which the “*pueblo de indios*” emerges, if they indeed exist, have yet to be completely located. However, the open

³ AM-A. 1788. Visitas Pastorales. Asunto: Santa Pastoral visita de los Pueblos de la Seyba, Sahcabchen, Cicbul, Rios, Tepettan, Teapa, Jalapa, Villahermosa, Conduacam, Jalpa, Nacajuca, Honuta, Palizada, Laguna y Sabancuy. Juez Visitador: El Señor Bachiller Don Juan de Meneses, Presbitero; Secretario y Notario de Visita: El Presbiterio Don Francisco Josef de Campos. Fs: 91.



Figure 5. “Pueblo de indios” Ceiba Cabecera. A) Stone masonry church, inaugurated in 1759, just under two *k’atuns* prior to the cycle’s completion. B) Fragments of the stone masonry church’s original hardwood plank portal access, facing towards the West. C) Mural painted interior structural column covered in black mold, highlighting a bouquet of *ceiba* branches arranged in a narrow-necked jar. None of the remaining mural fragment images depicts religious themes. D) Structural remains of the sixteenth-century open chapel *ramada* nave, most probably enclosed with masonry walls in the seventeenth century. (Photos Williams-Beck 2008, 2009).

chapel's structural remains provide a stark reminder of the clerical congregation and socio-ideological control policies in this region during the mid-sixteenth century.

ETHNOHISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR ROTATIONAL POLITICAL PROCESS: *K'ATUN* PROPHECIES FROM THE CHILAM BALAMS

Synchronic and diachronic bridges that fuse cosmology, cyclical time, and ritual religious discourse for identifying patterning are also found in the Books of Chilam Balam, excellent examples of Yucatec Maya emic historiography when viewed as links in an ongoing process of constructing meaningful cultural identity through time (Liljefors Persson 2000; 2009; in press [2011]). Nine different *chilam* are named after their towns of origin. The most elaborately detailed of these indigenous manuscripts hail from Chumayel, Mani (Perez Codex), and Kaua (Liljefors Persson 2000; Miram 1988, 1994). In this paper we will focus on the *k'atun* prophecies as examples of emic historical records written in accordance with the cyclical structure common in Maya scribal discourse over time. While the Books of Chilam Balam in their presently known form mostly date from the latter halves of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, their content harks back to the Spanish Conquest and early Colonial periods. Clear parallels link these manuscripts with the Postclassic Dresden and Paris Codices, allowing us in many cases to associate Colonial and Post-Colonial with Pre-Columbian sources (Treiber 1987: 92; Liljefors Persson 2009: 233). Parallels also invite nexus between Postclassic codices and the epigraphic record, particularly when reviewing Classic period calendar inscriptions and *k'atunob* or *k'atun* cycles (Treiber 1987; Houston personal communication 1999). Maya written and oral discourse are indeed ongoing examples of living historic tradition, with ritual religious and land title specimens still being produced or exhibited in public assembly from at least 1580 to 1720 (Chuchiak IV 2004) or even probably thereafter. Recent evidence supports that the Books of Chilam Balam were still read aloud by *hmenob* in Quintana Roo in the twentieth century (Sullivan 1989), and, because of these actions, should be regarded as long-term diachronic reflections of Yucatec Maya worldview (Farriss 1987: 581; Liljefors Persson 2000).

Prophecy is a dynamic dimension of ritual discourse, and among the Yucatec Maya prophecies play important roles throughout history, as illustrated by the twenty-year emic historiographic records in various books of Chilam Balam. In Pre-Columbian times oracles and divine forecasts were performed not only as important rituals of power in connection with the New Year-ceremonies, held annually during the five-day *Wayeb* periods, but also the *chilams* note quotidian, five-, ten-, and twenty-year predictions for social and community wellbeing. Prophetic discourse in the *k'atun* texts might point to forecasts intoned during certain ritual practices or divining acts. From an emic point of view, the *k'atun* prophecies in ritual contexts embrace cyclical notions of time.

Special phrasing, such as “the seating of the *k'atun*”, *u chun* meaning “principal, oldest, origin” in Yucatec Maya (Arzápalo Marín 1995: 251; Barrera Vázquez *et al.* 1980: 115), accompanies most all prophecies and indicates to which community ritual religious power corresponds during that specific time period. We might expect precisely pronounced examples of geopolitical power accompanied by ritual and religious inaugural annual, quarter-*k'atun* or five-year *hotunob*, and half-*k'atun* or *lajuntunob* and closing *may-cycle* ceremonialism. An analysis of these *k'atun* prophetic expressions provides an ideological and geopolitical record of how the Yucatec Maya navigated life's obstacles, promises, oracles, droughts, penitence, and periods of abundance and went through time.

For the Maya, history repeated those events recorded in one cycle to another once the exact same *k'atun* beginning and ending days reappeared. The recurrent nature of time recorded in the *k'atun* cycles, or *u kahlay katunob*, is illustrated in both the Chilam Balam of Chumayel examples

paraphrased below. Perhaps one of the most consistently clear and cited patterning of events occurs during the *k'atun* 8 *ahau* cycle from the Chumayel, retraced during four complete cycles spanning over a thousand years by scholars such as Ball (1986: 386-389), Bricker (1989), Edmonson (1982), Rivera Dorado (1986), Roys (1967 [1933]: 135-138 [ms74-77]) among others:

U kahlay u xocan katunob uchi u chictabal I Chichhenen Itza uchi lae
Lay dziban ti cab lae
uchebal yoheltabal tumen hiimac yohelte u xocol katun lae,

A record of the count of the *katuns* since the discovery of Chichen Itzá occurred. It is written for the town in order that it may be known by anyone who wishes to be informed of the count of the *katuns*. (*sic.*)

Uaxac Ahau paxci Chakanputun tumen Ah Itza uinicob.
Ca taliob u tzacle u yotochob tucaten.
Oxlahun uudz u katunil cahanob Chakanputunob tu yotochob.
Layli u katunil binciob Ah Itzaob yalan che, yalan haban,
yalan akti numyaob lae.

Eight Ahau was when Chakanputun was abandoned by the Itza men. Then they came to seek homes again. For thirteen folds of *katuns*, they have dwelt in their houses at Chakanputun. This was always the *katun* when the Itzá went beneath the trees, beneath the bushes, beneath the vines, to their misfortune. (*sic.*)

Uaxac Ahau paxci Ah Itza uinicob to yotochob tucaten tumen u kebanthan Hunac Ceel,
tumen u nahal uahob yetel Ah Itzmal.
Oxlahun uudz u katunil cahanobi,
ca paxiob tumen Hunac Ceel tumen u dzabal u naton Ah Itzaob lae.

Eight Ahau was when the Itza men again abandoned their homes because of the treachery of Hunac Ceel, because of the banquet with the people of Izamal. For thirteen folds of *katuns* they had dwelt there, when they were driven out by Hunac Ceel, because of the giving of the questionnaire of the Itza. (*sic.*)

Uaxac Ahay uchci puchh-tun Ic-paa Mayapan tumen u pach,
u paah tulum, tumen mul-tepal ich cah Mayapan lae.

Eight Ahau was when there was fighting with stones at Ich-paa Mayapan because of the seizure of the fortress. They broke down the city wall because of the joint government in the city of Mayapan. (*sic.* Roys 1967[1933]: 135-138)

During these different *katunob*, cities are destroyed, conflict occurs, people wander, suffer, and are driven from their homes and towns and/or left their homes and towns, in order to fulfill those actions foretold by the prophets, thereby legitimating them as well. According to Farriss (1987), linear and cyclical conceptions of time often coincided within similar cognitive systems in which to predict the future and anticipate the past (Liljefors Persson 2000, 2009).

MAY MODEL PREDICTIONS FOR AND SOLUTIONS TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD INCONSISTENCIES

Returning to methods for testing the *may* model's accuracy and efficiency for understanding political process, we turn once again to specific archaeological and architectural indicators that might suggest possible rotational power schemes in the archaeological, architectural, epigraphic and ethnohistoric records. According to calendric norms, once the *k'atun* came to an end, some architectural complexes, any access causeways to or from the seat of power, and its principal idols or monuments would be ritually "terminated" and/or destroyed, as foretold by the Books of Chilam Balam. A possible rotational governmental scheme predicted by the *may* model of political geography for the Canpech and Chakanputun study area now helps to explain some incoherencies noted in archaeological contexts, architectural elements, and sculpted monuments in two of the four central places identified for this immediate region, with research still to be undertaken in the remaining two. For example, at the northern capital Acanmul, the ballcourt, built sometime around the mid fifth- or early sixth-centuries, had its construction offering surgically removed during its first refurbishment sometime long after completion, and the vacant cache space was carefully filled with rock and marl before being sealed by the second and third stucco floors, each of which were painted red (Williams-Beck in press [2011]). Each one of these remodeling activities appears to coincide with a two-and-a-half-century temporal frame until the late tenth- or early eleventh centuries. At an undetermined later date, Acanmul's ballcourt was dismantled, leaving behind its megalithic court foundations, and the stucco access portal to the elite housing compound also suffered a similar and probably contemporary fate (Williams-Beck in press [2011]).⁴

At Edzná a possible geopolitical *may* model now clarifies the presence of several stone monuments commemorating *k'atun* endings ceremonies broken and buried at the foot of the Small Acropolis.⁵ The archaeological evidence and epigraphic data indicate that by the middle of the seventh century A.D. Edzná would reach a period of apogee, when this urban center's focus shifts from the central Peten to the Yucatan Peninsula, and more specifically to the Chenes and central Campeche and immediate coastal regions (Forsyth 1983; Benavides Castillo 1997; Williams-Beck 1999; Pallán Gayol 2008). However, between 900 and 1200⁶ A.D. all archaeological and epigraphic data indicate that Edzná's elite had abandoned the site and were replaced by a different group (Benavides Castillo 1997: 122; Williams-Beck 2001; Pallán Gayol 2008). Previously these actions had been interpreted as a violent conquest of Edzná. Now this destruction and dismantlement at both Edzná and Acanmul might be understood as part of the cyclical plan for ritual closure of *may* seats of power, and the architectural

⁴ Information regarding the free-standing stucco embellished access portal to the elite architectural compound's destruction at Acanmul was generously provided by Jennifer Taschek and Joseph Ball during discussions with the senior author in 2004.

⁵ Eight monuments record *k'atun* endings at Edzná, Stelae 23, 22, 18, 19, 3, 2, 5, and 9, spanning from 9.10.0.0.0 to 9.19.0.0.0 (AD 633 to 810).

⁶ Benavides places the final period of human activity in Edzná at AD 1200-1450, based on a series of incense burner and other ceramic fragments recovered from unspecified surface architectural contexts (Benavides Castillo 1997: 122-124). He also mentions unnamed "foreign ceramics" in unspecified archaeological contexts after AD 900. In the third appendix to the book (1997: 216-218) he lists the "foreign" ceramics recovered as Chichen Redware, Chichen Slateware, Chichen Unslipped Ware, Silho Fine Orange Ware as part of the *Catedral* Complex, and Mayapan Redware and Mayapan Unslipped Ware as part of the *Cuartel* Complex. Clearly neither represents complete component ceramic assemblages, which would support an ongoing presence of human activity in the site, but rather suggests ephemeral visitation and surface caching/offering activities to pay homage to the gods and ancestors.

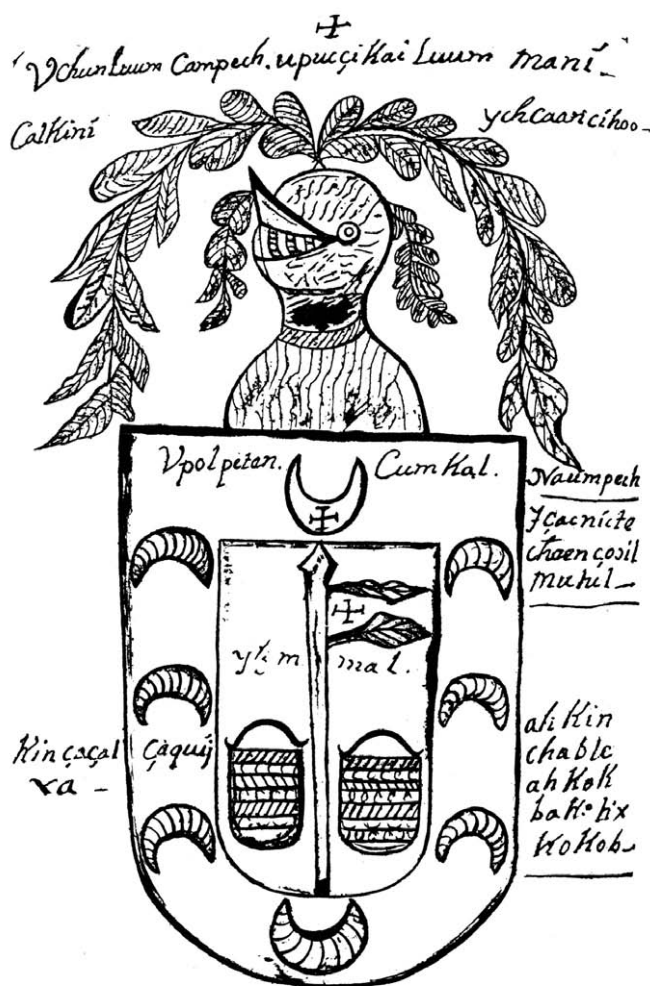


Figure 6. Early Colonial period coat of arms from the Chilam Balam of Chumayel (from Rivera Dorado 1986, Chapter 4 “*Notas calendáricas y astronómicas*”, p. 76). Note *Campech*’s role, *U chun luum* “land of origin”, written above possible *ceiba* branches emanating from the European-style chainmail helmet.

destruction or dismantlement of the places directly associated with where insignias were exhibited, as cold and calculated acts within precisely predictable historical time frames.

The Chilam Balam of Chumayel refers to the Campech area as “*u chun luum*”, the principal land of origin, and more specifically foretold the law of the land beginning there according to prophesy (Fig. 6). In the greater Campech – Chakanputun study area’s geopolitical confines, three Pre-Columbian urban centers placed at strategic points in dual river drainage systems, and the fourth Early Colonial site as central umbilicus may have been principal players in a far-reaching cosmological game of musical chairs. Archaeological evidence sustaining periods of cultural florescence, as well as massive or symbolic architectural public works projects have been documented at each of the four constituent members of this unified geopolitical entity. Working backwards in time from the year 1795, as the

period in which the hypothesized *k'atun* cycle ended in Ceiba Cabecera, gives the following scenario for rotational power shifts between constituent members.

Classic urban layout and major building activities identified in the Great Acropolis suggest Edzná – *Siyan ca'an* as the *may* calendar's point of departure from 771 to roughly 1027 A.D. At this moment in history, the immediate northern geopolitical region might have assumed the toponym Canpech – “Heavenly aquatic bird” from *kampecheta'an*. After 1027, power would be transferred to the aquatic circuit's northern sector in Acanmul, which, after Edzná's demise, had embarked already on large scale public works projects to receive the *may's* insignias, sharing structural ceramic affinities with its closest ally, Chichén Itzá and with the Campeche coastal plain and Western Puuc areas (Williams-Beck *et al.* 2005; Williams-Beck 1998, 2005). Late Classic monumental architecture in Acanmul is remodeled intentionally, filling Classic period vaults with stone and erecting massive pyramidal bases supporting C-shaped single or tandem single- or dual-facing rooms with cylindrical column doorways (Williams-Beck 2000, 2001). Archaeological evidence shows political and cultural florescence in this northern sub-regional area coincides with the end of the Classic Horizon and the beginning of the Early Postclassic period (Williams-Beck 2001). After yet another *k'atun* cycle, around 1283 the torch would be passed on to the Porfía and Pa'ilbox's immediate area in the greater region's southern sector, known as *chakan puut(ah) tun*, “precious stone that the savannah carries on its back” (Arzápalo Marín 1995: 228, 657, 731), a toponym whose essence is similar to the concept of carrying the burden of power *cuch* (Arzápalo Marín 1995: 141). Porfía - Pa'ilbox, Acanmul, and Edzná are all situated in the middle of wetlands where these cities of stone were erected. The religious cyclical mandate that places Pa'ilbox atop a topographical rise also coincides with another toponym *ichpaa-mayapan*, “sentinel with panoramic view as the seat of this water-place” (Arzápalo Marín 1995: 381, 489-490, 603). This location also mentioned in the *Chilam Balam de Chumayel* could refer to the Porfía - Pa'ilbox area, a discovery we hope to corroborate in the not too distant future.

The anchor, central cog, and umbilicus for this geopolitical realm is *d'zaptun*, from *ds'ap* “things placed on top of one another or in successive generations” or “set, fit or plant” and *tun* “precious stone” (Arzápalo Marín 1995: 213, 731). In Classic Maya inscriptions the verb *tz'ap* means to plant and *tun*, is stone. Thus *tz'aptun* literally means “to plant the stone, or setting a stone”, in this case the setting of a stela commemorating a *k'atun*. Because the second definition refers to that action as a fitting metaphor for how Classic period stelae were erected, this also brings further ritual relevance to a pre-Columbian place that might have received its ritual and religious mandate in a new seating of the Mayapan calendar promulgated in 1539 (Rice 2004:75), at a moment in history almost simultaneous to that of initial European encroachment in the region. When the Franciscan friars finally arrived in Champotón around 1538 (John Chuchiak IV, personal communication 2012) and settled shortly thereafter, also narrated in the *Chilam Balam of Chumayel* and other Colonial documents, they designate the Ulumal – Pa'ilbox area as a “*pueblos de indios*” and the first to have a convent and church by 1607 (López Cogolludo 1955: 412). “Visita” open chapels pertaining to this ecclesiastical jurisdiction were erected in D'zaptun, Haltunchen, and Sihochac, all pertaining to Ulumal's ecclesiastical jurisdiction (Cogolludo 1955: 412, and AM-A). La Zeiba⁷ (Ceiba Cabecera) replaces the name D'zaptun as the new Colonial period toponym, in honor of the place that paid homage to the ancestors and perpetuated indigenous

⁷ López Cogolludo emphatically mentions that the Spaniards, not the naturals, call this place by that name (López Cogolludo 1955: 412). In the “Minuta de Encomenderos de la Provincia de Yucatán”, in 1607, La Zeiba, which previously belonged to the Adelantado Don Francisco de Montejo and was later returned to the Crown after removing Montejo from his post and revoking his noble titles, was ordered to pay 19 rolls of cloth, 121 bushels of maize, and 76 hens biannually. This considerable quantity of goods suggests a robust resident population in Ceiba Cabecera at that time. AGI, Fondo: México, Sección: Gobierno, Subsección: Audiencia de México, Legajo 1841, Expediente 6, Fs: 8.

ritual religious fervor in the region right under the Spanish colonial authorities' noses. According to the *Chilam Balam of Chumayal*, it is the place in which "... the green tree [ceiba as precious tree] of abundance was placed in the center <of the world>, as a record of the destruction of the world" (Roys 1967 [1933]: 100). The *may* seat in this central place umbilicus would have united the cardinal directions, heavens, earth and otherworld in the macro region for another 256 years. After completing the ritual cycle plus one additional *k'atun* period, the doctrine seat designated by the Franciscans authorities at Ceiba Cabecera was transferred in 1818 to Seybaplaya some 20 kilometers distance to the west on the Gulf of Mexico coast of the Yucatan Peninsula.⁸ By 1860, Ceiba Cabecera is practically a ghost town compared to its former self.⁹

FINAL COMMENTARIES

Passages in the *Chilam Balam of Chumayal* (Roys 1967: 99-101), for example, refer to cyclical creation and world destruction myths, narrated in the struggle between Oxlahun-ti-ku and Bolon-ti-ku, and suggest another type of period ending scenario, which correlates precisely with the kinds of vandalism detected in stone monuments: defaced facial, corporal, or protagonists images and their accompanying accoutrements; smashed, broken, partially and/or totally interred, or surface-scattered broken monuments with intentionally destroyed insignias of power, such as *k'awiil* manikin scepters. Pattern recognition of intentionally vandalized and interred monuments found in Edzná graphically illustrates this passage description in the *Chumayal*. The archaeological contexts in which they were discovered, strewn around at the foot of the Small Acropolis, is tentatively dated to around 1000 A.D. (Williams-Beck [in press]). If the destruction recorded in other archaeological and architectural contexts documented at Edzná coincides with partial rather than total site abandonment, then the presence of these contexts in other associate *may* ritual member sites also could predict "part of the cyclical plan" of florescence and decline patterning experienced by *may* seats of power and their peers, as narrated in ethnohistoric documents. In places where stone monuments are absent, the patterning assessment process should focus on specific archaeological or architectural contexts, urban design indices of massive elite public works or renewal programs during specific time frames, activities which systematically dismantle special ritual or elite contexts, and/or other sources of symbolic meaning or structural replication at feature, site, semi-macro, and macro regional levels of inference (Williams-Beck in press [2011]).

The former examples of patterning identification discernable in the ethnohistoric literature, that correlated with features recorded in archaeological and/or architectural contexts, indicates manners in which a complete 256-year or modified 128- or 64-year *may* models can be tested in differing temporal frames, and not just those restricted to Postclassic or Contact-period horizons. Historic and urban design and settlement evidence for political practice can be inferred from such organizational concepts as *cuchteel*, *batabil*, and *cuchcabal* gleaned from sixteenth-century Maya ethnohistoric and other early Colonial sources (Okoshi Harada 1992, 2009; Okoshi Harada *et al.* 2006; Quezada 1993; Roys 1957; Williams-Beck 2008). Combined spatial correlations of these terms with other sources of information, such as archaeological materials or features, architectural complexes, and urban design components, not only structured data collection design and analysis, but also helped focus on the kinds of information recovered and the manner in which it was analyzed when addressing settlement patterns and resource

⁸ Information gleaned from AM-F. Mormon Familysearch Microfilms. Roll 29. Year: 1746-1844.

⁹ AGEY. Apartado: Poder Ejecutivo. Ramo: Gobernación. Vol. 14. Expediente 25. Estadística de estado civil de los curatos del partido de Seybaplaya, del segundo y tercer trimestre del año 1840. Seybaplaya, Diciembre de 9 de 1840. Fs: 5.

selection and use in the sixteenth-century Calkiní immediate political jurisdiction (Williams-Beck 2006, 2008). A similar methodological principle for data collection and analysis successfully assessed Terminal Classic period political practice and community organization in Campeche's Western Puuc region (Williams-Beck 1996, 1998, 2003, 2005).

However, the *cuchteel – batabil – cuchcabal* model for political practice in the Calkiní or Western Puuc regions could not adequately explain the presence of nor the different sequential florescence periods for three massive Pre-Columbian urban centers, Acanmul, Edzná, and Porfía-Pa'ilbox, as well as an early Colonial-period "*pueblo de indios*", D'zaptun, located in an adjacent pair of political jurisdictions, Canpech and Chakanputun, placed immediately to the south of the Ah Canul province (Williams-Beck 2008). Their combined 4,800km² geopolitical area is situated between the Homtun and Champotón Rivers to the north and south, bounded on the east by a Middle- to Late Preclassic period constructed system of canals which unites the two rivers' subterranean sources with Edzná's hydraulic system (Matheny *et al.* 1983), and delimited on the western flank by the Gulf of Mexico. A tentative chronological framework for postulating rotational organizational schemes of elite ritual and political seats of power uses *a priori* (archaeological contexts and features, architectural compounds, iconography, and massive urban renewal and public works projects) and *a posteriori* (historic and ethnohistoric documents) to suggest that Edzná could have been the Classic horizon supra-regional *may* seat of power at least from 770 to 1000 A.D. and probably before this time frame also. The elite ritual power scepter could have passed on to Edzná's contemporary "capital city" peer, Acanmul, situated 40km to the northwest on the banks of the Homtun River, sometime after Edzná's decline and partial abandonment around 1000 A.D. A more exact time frame of duration for the proposed *may* seat at Acanmul's different neighborhoods is still unknown, but one of us has postulated elsewhere (Williams-Beck 2001) that cultural florescence in Acanmul is contemporaneous with that of Chichén Itzá, and continues perhaps until the mid-thirteenth century A.D. The region's probable third *may* seat of ritual religious and political power at Porfía-Pa'ilbox coincides with its structural and socio-political peer, Mayapan, after Acanmul and Chichén Itzá's decline in the mid-thirteenth century. Porfía-Pa'ilbox's immediate area's cultural florescence appears to continue until shortly before Spanish and Franciscan colonization of the Champotón region in early sixteenth century. The combined archaeological, architectural, epigraphic, ethnohistoric, and iconographic sources data set in the Canpech – Chakanputun provinces study area not only successfully predicts the precise location of its Terminal Postclassic period capital city Porfía-Pa'ilbox area's equidistant geographical placement from the coast, mirroring that of its northern peer Acanmul only on the banks of the Champotón River, but also locates the hypothesized early Colonial period's final *may* seat of power in the greater immediate region. The Pre-Columbian place, D'zaptun, perhaps recognized as another seating of the Mayapan calendar in 1539 (Rice 2004: 75), later becomes La Zeiba (López Cogolludo 1955: 412) [Ceiba Cabecera], a "*pueblo de indios*" reduction town in colonial documents. An additional presence of thirty-some Franciscan *ramada* open chapels built in "*pueblos de indios*" congregation sites within the greater Canpech – Chakanputun region also suggests the survival of Pre-Columbian ritual religious activities associated with a continued *may* model observance of geopolitical practices. Spanish colonial and Franciscan ecclesiastic authorities also recognized continued religious fervor and strategically placed *ramada* chapels in those towns to monitor and quell idolatry in the immediate region. According to estimates in historic sources, these timely actions aimed to indoctrinate local native populations and convert them into new catholic parishioners in specific resettlement places, of which one, Ceiba Cabecera, continued to be a principle player. Replacing Pre-Columbian D'zaptun's¹⁰ toponym with Ceiba Cabecera also supports a hypothesis of now not-so-

¹⁰ Among possible translations for the toponym D'zaptun, one in particular means "seated or planted stone" (Barrera Vázquez *et al.* 1980: 878-879), a term that mirrors that reported in the Tzimin and *Chumayel* (Edmonson 1982: 62). This place name transformation from D'zaptun to Ceiba Cabecera is an obvious choice for an autonomous

hidden indigenous transcripts and patterning that were unbeknownst to Colonial period officialdom, despite having confiscated Maya religious materials (Chuchiak IV 2001) perhaps two *k'atun* cycles after the last *may* seat's probable founding in the immediate Champotón region. The proposed *may* cycle seat at Ceiba Cabecera probably ended sometime around the end of the eighteenth century, ironically just two *k'atun* cycles after inaugurating in 1759 a new monumental church with massive arched ceilings and naturalistic ceiba-branch mural paintings along both lateral nave walls. And shortly thereafter, possibly due to population decline among other administrative considerations, the Catholic Church transferred the doctrinal seat from there twenty-some kilometers distance to the west to Seybaplaya on the Gulf of Mexico coast by at least 1818. At that time Ceiba Cabecera only had two-hundred-forty-some souls permanently residing in this "*pueblo de indios*", while Seybaplaya's contemporary population almost quintupled that population figure¹¹.

A lack of specific epigraphic evidence to support adherence to a *may* model for political organization in the greater area is daunting. However, *k'atun* commemorative monuments broken and interred at the foot of the Small Acropolis in Edzná is not a mere coincidence. Furthermore, the ritual-political significance of the *may* cycle bears close similarities with the 52-year pan-Mesoamerican New Fire ceremony from Postclassic times. Ethnohistoric accounts of the New Fire rituals in the Mexican Central Highlands represented a simultaneous ending of old and the beginning of a new era. Possible origins for a similar *may* cycle could hail from Mexico's Central Highlands brought by "*Teotihuacanos*" venturing into the Maya lowlands. In 378 A.D., for example, Monument 16 at *Waka* – El Peru shows *Siyaj K'aak*, or "fire born", dressed in full Teotihuacan-like regalia sustaining a lit torch, as the bearer of a "sacred" fire that would inaugurate the "New Order". The arrival of the New Fire, as a powerful symbol of transformation, could mean the enthronement of a new ruler, the founding of a new urban center, or the beginning of a new world order (Nielsen 2006). After *Siyaj K'aak*'s arrival, the local king in Tikal is deposed and a new dynasty founded by *Yax Nun Ayin* depicted in Stela 4, again in full "*Teotihuacano*" dress and holding the sacred fire torch of the newly established order. Moreover, *Siyaj K'aak*' introduced into the Maya Lowlands a structure that represented a powerful symbol of renovated power, the *wite' naah*. Two crossed torches and a mirror form the diagnostic part of the *wite' naah* glyph, and, on this basis, Taube (1992) has suggested that the *wite' naah* represented a shrine where this renovating fire was adored. References to *wi'te' naah* structures are found in glyphic inscriptions in Copan, Tikal, and elsewhere. While the term can best be translated as "Tree-root House," these buildings seem to have been conceived of as "houses of origin" (Stuart 2000; 2004: 235-239; 2005: 377).

In the Canpech – Chakanputun study area the analogous quasi quincunx spatial placement for regional capitals and/or hypothesized ritual seats of power in precisely delimited geopolitical confines offers an element of symbolic reiteration that suggests the presence of possible rotational power schemes among peers through time. The *may* ritual calendar cyclical model for Maya political organization borrows aspects from sacred territorial space, cosmological precepts, and the religious ritual calendar. The geopolitical correlation of this pattern may exhibit differing levels of aggregation,

indigenous leadership in the *república de indios*, that could continue to "fly under the radar" of Spanish colonial and Franciscan authorities without being detected, yet still follow traditional religious and ritual practice agendas in a *pueblo* located a scant 30-40km as the crow flies from the doctrinal seats in both Champotón and San Francisco de Campeche.

¹¹ *El Espíritu Público*, a semi-official governmental newspaper reports that for 1869 Ceiba Cabecera (population 244) had approximately one fifth the residents as that of its costal counterpart, Seybaplaya (population 1,279). *El Espíritu Público*, Periódico semioficial del Gobierno del Estado de Campeche, Campeche, viernes 26 de febrero de 1869. Año IX, No. 171, p. 2. Clearly 244 people did not comprise a sufficient number of residents to maintain a doctrinal seat within an ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

from the architectural group, site, local area, to macro regional expressions. For example, on the macro level and from emblem glyphs Riese (1975), Berlin (1958), and Marcus (1976) considered Copan, Tikal, Calakmul and Palenque as directional capitals during the Classic Horizon. In Ceibal Stela 10, another four sites are mentioned: Ceibal, Tikal, Calakmul, and Motul de San José. And finally, Altar 3 from Altar de los Reyes is an intriguing monument, since it may be the only known record of the *may* cycle dating from Late Classic times. Although the top of the altar is badly eroded, an important individual sitting on a throne facing to the left is still observable. While an eroded inscription appears beneath this figure, the glyphs for *k'uhul kab uxlajun ka(?)* “Sacred land, thirteen land (?)” still can be read (Šprajc *et al.* 2002: 82). The sculpted monument’s side illustrates a much better preserved inscription containing a set of thirteen emblem glyphs of which those of Calakmul, Tikal, Palenque, Edzná and Motul de San Jose are easily recognizable (Šprajc *et al.* 2002, 20-21, 82-84). Noteworthy is the numeral thirteen in both the top inscription and the number of emblem glyphs, since it evokes the thirteen *k'atuns* of the *may* cycle, and, as Grube suggests, can be interpreted as a list of sacred places (Grube 2002: 83). If there are indeed several posited macro regional sacred geographical realms modeled on cosmological principals and represented by distant capital cities in the former glyphic and iconographic examples, then it seems plausible to also consider a localized quincunx pattern, modeled around a greater cosmological encircled cruciform layout design (Aveni 1980), where political obligations and religious ritual power would be rotated among political peers in successive complete *k'atun* cycles in a specific local geographical framework.

The archaeological, architectural, ethnohistorical and Colonial sources at Edzná, Acanmul, Pa'ilbox, and D'zaptun/Ceiba Cabecera suggest a new order for political organization in the Maya Lowlands which united Canpech and Chakanputun into a single geopolitical unit, perhaps known as Cochistan. We predict this organizational scheme followed a ritualized pattern that structured social life, rotated power among elite constituents, and changed physical seats of government and power in four sites within a given region in a recursive process without end that permitted remembering the future and anticipating the past.

In an attempt to better understand how the elite politically organized themselves and their subordinate communities, the *may* model offers an additional tool from which to structure research and analysis of tangible and intangible cultural practices in the Canpech – Chakanputun study area. Based on specific criteria for assessing the model’s problem solving qualities (Clarke 1972: 4), the *may*’s comprehensive attributes seamlessly integrate multiple sources of evidence, that allow for data interpolation and cross-checking results. The *may* model’s predictable qualities’ effectiveness for pattern recognition and comprehensive scope using multiple lines of inquiry weave together threads of information into a rich tapestry of ancient Maya elite practice that might not have been discernable through single evidence tool kits or other kinds of direct historical analogy from single or multiple sources.

A final reflection stresses carefully contemplating the power of theoretical models for predicting and understanding past activities in the archaeological record. No single paradigm will completely answer the entire gamut of driving forces involved in choosing certain landscapes for settlement, identifying those infrastructures and intangible phenomena that accompany rites and ceremonies commemorating life cycle completions, or elite power practices that consolidate consensual relationships with other associates. These kinds of social contracts increased or contracted in territorial size, nature and intensity depending on certain circumstances surrounding them, and can illustrate distinct forms of patterning that may or may not be discernable in the archaeological record. These relationships also stress that geopolitical territorial conformation are people-driven built spaces, rather than land-based constructs. Their spatial parameters are a secondary reflection of that personal relationship which also may or may not include all communities physically located within a specific regional or temporal frame (Williams-Beck 2006, 2008). However, applying a theoretical model to this particular case study area achieves a

sense of sustaining the hypothesis regarding rotational political practice, by substituting constructions out of known data for inferring other aspects of to date unknown information. Rotational political practice through disciplined observance of *k'atun* cycling as precepts for seating the insignias of ritual religious power among the ancient Maya elite indeed provides a valuable model for patterning recognition exhibited in the archaeological, architectural, epigraphic, ethnohistorical, and iconographic records. It also offers a springboard to postulating rotational political schemes of elite power and social and community organization based on ritual and cosmological observance in certain specific regional contexts within the Maya lowlands. Whether it can be extended to include the entire Maya lowland or highland areas, or is an underlying principle for elite rather than popular political factions, or pertains to certain places and time frames and was not utilized in others, are problems that need to be addressed region by region through time with specific research designs tailor-made to solve these particular cases.

ABBREVIATIONS

AGEC	Archivo General del Estado de Campeche
AGEY	Archivo General del Estado de Yucatán
AGI	Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain
AM-A	Archivo la Mitra, Arlington, Texas
AM-F	Archivo de los Mormones. Familysearch Microfilms

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