7 LATE POSTCLASSIC RITUAL AT SANTA RITA COROZAL, BELIZE: UNDERSTANDING THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF A MAYA CAPITAL CITY

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The site of Santa Rita Corozal was the focus of major excavation at two points during the twentieth century, first by Thomas Gann and subsequently by the Corozal Postclassic Project. These investigations demonstrated the importance of this site during the Late Postclassic Period and confirmed that Santa Rita Corozal was one of the few Late Postclassic capital cities in the Maya lowlands that have been excavated. Arguably the ancient Maya city of Chetumal, the combined excavations at Santa Rita Corozal provide substantial information on site organization, socio-political structure, and the ritual organization of a late Maya community. These data have impact on Postclassic ceramic history, on interpretations of intra- and inter-regional exchange and economies, and on calendric ritual. These investigations also can be used to refine and refute interpretations based solely on ethnohistoric data. This paper provides a synthesis of Postclassic Period archaeological data at Santa Rita Corozal relative to ritual caching practices and katun celebrations.

Introduction

Corozal Postclassic Project investigations at Santa Rita Corozal were initiated in order to elucidate and evaluate four research areas: (1) the relationship between the Classic and Postclassic Period Maya; (2) the models used to describe Postclassic Maya society; (3) archaeological identification of ethnic groups; and, (4) the congruence between ethnohistory and archaeology (D. Chase 1982:1-18). Subsequent research focused predominantly on testing models related to Late Postclassic site, ritual, and social organization (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988).

Forty-four structures were investigated in the vicinity of Corozal Town from 1979 through 1985 under the auspices of the Corozal Postclassic Project. Nearly an equivalent number had been investigated by Thomas Gann at the turn of the twentieth century (Gann 1900; 1918). Both projects focused on the site's largest remaining pyramid, Structure 7 (see D. Chase and A. Chase 2005). However, the majority of other investigation locales did not overlap. Limited survey, surface collecting, and test excavations were also undertaken by three short-term projects led by Ernestine Green (1973), Norman Hammond (Hammond 1973; Pring 1973), and Raymond Sidrys (1983). Thus, a substantial corpus of data has been gathered to effect interpretations of the site.

The first occupation at Santa Rita Corozal was during the Preclassic Period at approximately 900 BC, when the site's ceramics appear to be equivalent to Swasey materials at Cuello (D. Chase and A. Chase 2006; Hammond et al. 1995). Evidence for occupation of the site is well documented from the Preclassic Period through the present day (D. Chase 1981; D. Chase and A. Chase 1988). While there is a long history of occupation at the site, the majority of archaeological investigations that have been undertaken have produced Postclassic remains – the subject of this paper (for an overview of excavations and the history of occupation of Santa Rita Corozal, see D. Chase and A. Chase 1988 and 2004).

By the time the Corozal Postclassic Project began investigations at Santa Rita Corozal in 1979, many of the site's more sizeable constructions had been lost to urban sprawl and the majority of the remaining

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structures were low-lying platforms and line-of-stone edifices, often barely visible (or invisible) prior to excavation (D. Chase 1990). Thus, the Corozal Postclassic Project investigations, more than those of Thomas Gann, focused on what appeared to be unimposing buildings. Upon excavation, however, these "humble" constructions ranged from single room building pads to multiple room residences. Most of these buildings also were found to have been integrated into formal residential plaza groups, something that often could not be discerned based on surface indications alone. The low-lying nature of the constructions and the expansion of modern Corozal Town over the ancient site mean that the site map is very incomplete and that the full formal expression of the public buildings that once constituted Santa Rita Corozal will never be known.

In spite of being embedded beneath modern Corozal Town, the quantity and quality of excavated materials from ancient Santa Rita Corozal ("SRC") is impressive. An excellent indicator of the bountiful nature of the Santa Rita Corozal data is the number of effigy caches that have been recovered from the site. The 18 examples from Santa Rita Corozal compares well with the 17 known examples excavated at Mayapan during the Carnegie Institution of Washington investigations at that site (R.E. Smith 1971; A. L. Smith 1962). Perhaps even more impressive is the number of effigy cache or figurine vessels in these SRC caches. At 171 vessels, this total represents more than six times the 21 effigies or figurine cache vessels found at Mayapan (R.E. Smith 1971; A. L. Smith 1962; Milbrath and Peraza 2003). Apart from these caches, a substantial number of Postclassic interments also were recovered at Santa Rita Corozal and careful excavation and reconstruction of *in situ* debris has revealed an equally plentiful corpus of ceramic and other artifactual remains. For example, thirty-two (32) reconstructable vessels were recovered during the excavation of Structure 81, most from the floors of this important building (D. Chase and A. Chase 2000).

From an archaeological standpoint, perhaps the most interesting information from Santa Rita Corozal relates to Late Postclassic Period ritual organization. These data inform scholars not only about immediately pre-contact Maya practices, but also have a bearing on interpretations of earlier Maya remains and practices with regards to continuities and discontinuities.

Postclassic Caches at Santa Rita Corozal

Postclassic Period caches from Santa Rita Corozal are relatively abundant and, in contrast to most Classic or Preclassic Period caches, are somewhat easier to interpret and decode because they generally contain three dimensional figures as opposed to the abstract objects found in earlier caches. Nevertheless, symbolism is not always apparent.

At Santa Rita Corozal, caches appear to be located primarily in association with shrines. These shrines may consist of small free-standing buildings or may be incorporated into larger multiple room "palaces;" some shrines also may have been housed on taller substructures. In most cases, shrines appear to be located within or adjacent to residential groups. This follows Classic Period practices, as reported for Caracol (A. Chase and D. Chase 1994; D. Chase and A. Chase 1998), where caches are often located in residential groups and in special residential buildings. However, unlike many residential caches of the Classic Period, the function of most Postclassic caches does not appear to be related to ancestor veneration. Instead, Postclassic caches appear to relate to the observation and celebration of the calendar ritual. This

becomes particularly apparent when historic descriptions, Maya codices, and caching patterns are compared (D. Chase 1985a, 1985b).

Late Postclassic modeled figure caches are well known from Santa Rita Corozal due to the work of both Thomas Gann (Figure 1) and our own Corozal Postclassic Project (Figures 2-5). Gann (1900, 1911, 1914, 1918; Gann and Gann 1939) found 7 late effigy caches at the site in 7 different constructions (Structures 2, 5, 6, 24, 25, 26 and 27). While these excavations are summarized elsewhere in greater detail (D. Chase 1982: 29-74), the caches are referenced below relative to their location and numbering in Gann's 1900 report.

The Structure 2 cache found by Gann consisted of a Santa Unslipped urn, ten painted pottery figures, and two "leaf-shaped" flint spear points (Gann 1918:680-81; D. Chase 1982:37-9). The pottery figures were hollow with ceramic stoppers covering holes in their backs. Gann reported that the modeled figures consisted of 4 tigers, 5 turtles, and a double-headed alligator (one of the alligator heads also portrayed a human head inside its jaws). One of the turtles and the double-headed figure were located above the urn; the other figures were located about it. The word "turtle" is used loosely by Gann and actually refers to a composite creature with a human head between animal jaws.

The Structure 5 cache (Gann 1900:682-3; D. Chase 1982: 39-40) consisted of a Santa Unslipped urn and lid that contained a painted ceramic double-headed "alligator." Human heads protruded from both sets of alligator jaws.

Gann's Structure 6 cache was also localized within a lidded ceramic urn (Gann 1900: 683-5; D. Chase 1982: 41-2). This urn, however, had three supports (or feet). Within it were 19 figures: 4 tigers, 8 "alligators," and 4 humans covering their faces with veils, 1 double-headed alligator similar to that from Structure 2, 1 diving figure attached to a small vessel, and 1 bird.

The Structure 24 cache also was localized within an unslipped urn and lid (Gann 1918: 59-63 D. Chase 1982: 50-52). It consisted of 49 modeled and painted ceramic figures: 4 warriors, 4 standing figures, 4 lizards, 4 alligators, 4 snakes, 4 birds, 4 "dragon-like" creatures, 4 tigers, 14 quashes or *pisote*s, 3 seated humans undergoing penis perforation, and 1 ceramic penis along with beads of jadeite and *spondylus*, as well as a perforated alligator tooth. Thus there were 9 sets of 4 figures each, plus 14 *pisote*s.

Gann's (1918:63; D. Chase 1982: 52-54) Structure 25 investigations located a single modeled and painted ceramic alligator with a human head protruding from its jaws and two jade beads within it.

The Structure 26 investigations (Gann 1918:66; D. Chase 1982: 54-55) produced an urn with handles and a lid as well as 20 modeled and painted ceramic figures: 3 warriors, 1 seated human perforator, 4 alligators, 4 dragons, 6 quashes or *pisote*s, and 2 "serpent-like" creatures. No published illustrations of these figures exist.

The Structure 27 cache (Gann 1918:70; D. Chase 1982: 55-56) consisted of 2 small ceramic vessels. One of these had a handle on either side. The other had three supports and a modeled and painted human face. The effigy vessel held one green stone and one red shell bead.

Corozal Postclassic Project investigations at Santa Rita Corozal encountered ceramic caches dating to the Postclassic Period in 9 buildings (Structures 36, 37[2], 58, 81, 183, 213[2], 215, 218, and Platform 2[2]). Of 12 caches recovered in

Figure 1. Effigy caches and figurines recovered by Thomas Gann at Santa Rita Corozal. The effigy vessels and figurines shown here represent his entire published corpus.

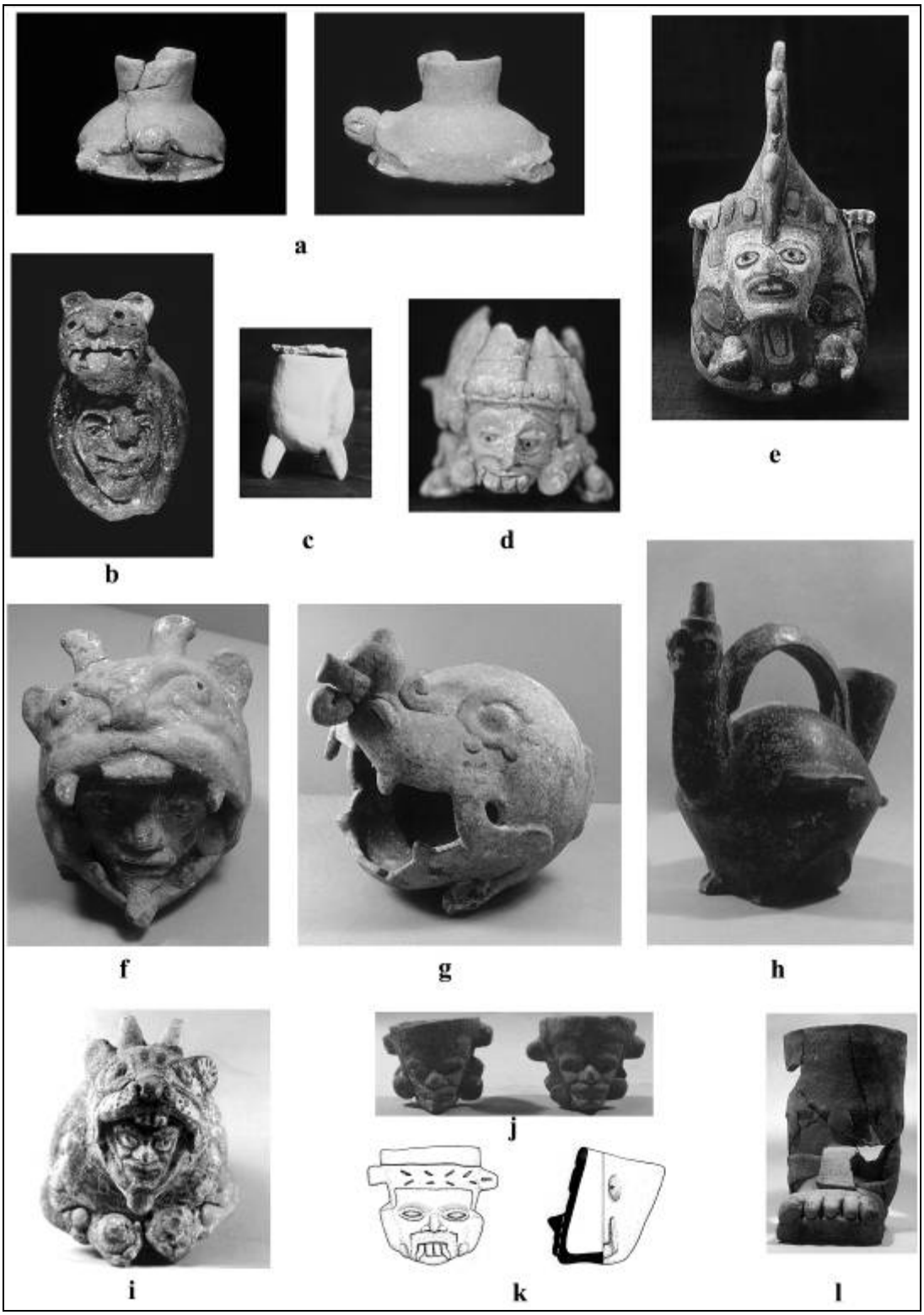

Figure 2. Ritual caches and vessels recovered by the Corozal Postclassic Project: a. Structure 213; b. Structure 218; c. Structure 215; d. and e. Structure 37; f. Structure 58; g. Structure 36; h. and i. Structure 81; j., k., and l. Platform 2.

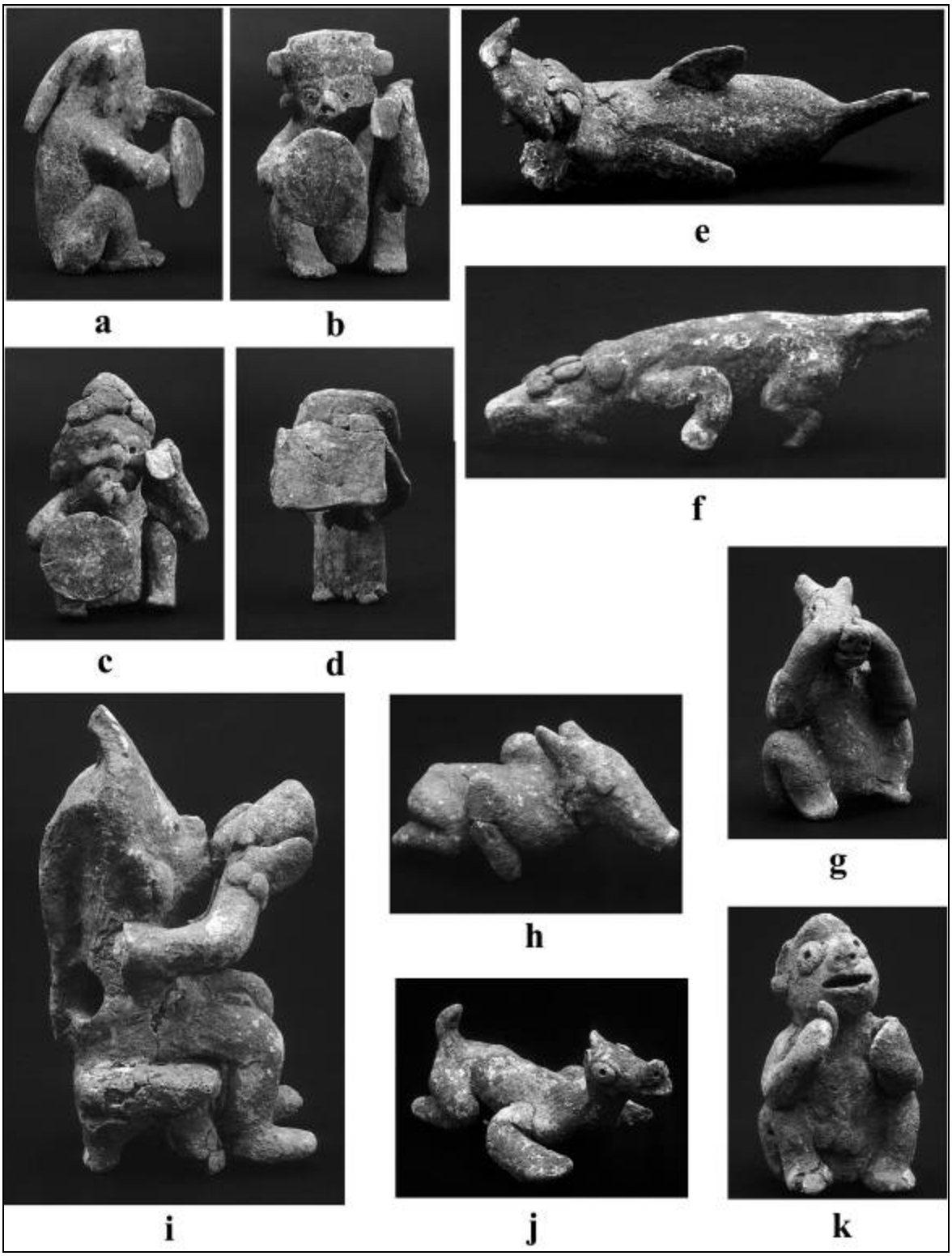

Figure 3. Ceramic figurines recovered by the Corozal Postclassic Project: a.-f. Structure 183; g.-k. Structure 213.

these constructions, 11 contained effigies (D. Chase 1982; D. Chase and A. Chase 1988). All were photographed and carefully recorded *in situ*. They include both multiple figure and single composite figure caches. The figures recovered in the Gann and Corozal Postclassic Project excavation samples are similar, but not identical. There is also variation in the composite figures (as described below). Special deposits, including both burials and other non-effigy caches, were also encountered in other investigations.

A construction core cache in Structure 36 (Operation P9) consisted of two Cao Modeled cache figures (D. Chase 1982: 183-184, Fig. 4-10; D. Chase and A. Chase 1988: 37-38). Both were modeled and post-fire painted. One vessel was found inside the mouth of the other. The exterior vessel is a Cauac monster with serpents emerging from either side of its mouth (Figure 2g). The interior vessel portrays a deity emerging from a horned jaguar which is in turn emerging from a snail shell. The interior vessel was hollow and had a stopper over the hole in its back, but there were no preserved offerings inside it.

Investigations into Structure 37 produced two Postclassic Period caches (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988: 39-40). A small cup with a diving god on its front (Figure 2d) and three stingray spines were found near the southeast corner of the building substructure. Dug into the core of the building was a second cache. Inside an unslipped urn and lid was yet another diving god figure (Figure 2e). It held offerings in each hand. The paint is exceedingly well preserved showing that the stoppered hole in the back of the diving god also served as the mouth of yet another creature with maize attributes. Inside the hole were pieces of *spondylus* shell, jadeite, and gold foil.

Structure 58 rested on Platform 1 and was the locus of substantial ritual activity during the Postclassic (D. Chase 1982: 189-227; D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:114-16). Besides a series of late burials, two caches were recovered. The earliest cache, consisting of animal bone, was placed prior to the earliest Postclassic construction. Carbon from this deposit indicates that the initial Postclassic building was constructed prior to AD 1400. A modeled cache was encountered barely below the surface and consisted of a Santa Unslipped olla and Rita Red dish that enclosed a Cao Modeled effigy vessel (Figure 2f). While distinct, the modeled effigy combined the deity, horned jaguar (or bee), and shell elements (also seen in vessels from Structures 36, 81, and 218). Within the hole in the back of the modeled figure were two turquoise pieces and a jadeite bead.

Figure 4. Set of four jaguar figurines from a cache in SRC Structure 183.

Structure 81 was a multiple room residence that probably served as a locus for pulque ceremonies and for prognostication (D. Chase 1982: 240-288; D. Chase and A. Chase 1988: 17-25). Below the back wall of the Late Postclassic Period shrine in Structure 81 was placed a black-slipped bird effigy of apparent non-local origin (Figure 2h). Centrally located in front of the Structure 81 altar, a later cache was intruded into the floor. Two unslipped vessels encased yet another example of deity

emerging from a shell (Figure 2i). It is nearly identical to the one encountered in Structure 36, except that more post-fire paint remained intact on its surface.

Figure 5. Two of the four *bacab* figurines from a cache in SRC Structure 213.

A cache uncovered in Structure 183 consisted of a lidded urn containing 28 figurines (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988: 56-59). These were carefully placed so that each of the four similar items was evenly spaced from the others. Four warriors with shields and spears (Figure 3a,b,c) were cardinally located within the center facing outward. Two of these warriors (those facing east and west) had human faces; the other two (those facing north and south) were portrayed as deities. Between them were four women with veils or mantles held over their faces (Figure 3d). Also carefully placed in similar fashion were 4 jaguars (Figure 4), 4 alligators (Figure 3f), 4 sharks (Figure 3e), 4 snakes, and 4 birds. Carbon inside the urn yielded a date of A.D. 1538±70.

Three Postclassic Period caches were uncovered in Structure 213 (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988: 47-48). An unslipped urn capped by an upside down ladle *incensario* centered the most elaborate of the caches. The urn was surrounded by sixteen modeled ceramic figures. Four deer (Figure 3h), 4 dogs (Figure 3j), and 4 *pisote*s (Figure 3g) were south of the urn. Four *bacab*s performing penis perforation while standing on sea turtles (Figure 5) were found nearly evenly spaced around it. Centered within the urn was a figure seated on a stool blowing on a conch shell (Figure 3i). Below him was a single triangular piece of jadeite and 4 small shells. Inside the urn, around the central seated figure were placed 4 male monkeys (Figure 3k) and 4 female creatures. In front of Structure 213 two other caches were recovered. One consisted of a single turtle effigy (Figure 2a) containing two small jadeite beads. The other cache consisted of turtle bone and one jadeite and one *spondylus* bead that had been placed inside an unslipped urn and capped by an inverted Rita Red tripod bowl. The association between identifiable turtles and Structure 213 in 3 separate caches is unusual and is reminiscent of the effigy turtle caches recovered from Mayapan (Smith 1971).

Structure 215 was in the same group as Structure 213. This building contained one of the most basic caches encountered (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988: 59-60), consisting of a small unslipped tripod cup capped by a large sherd (Figure 2e) and placed along the midline of the building. This kind of cache occurs repeatedly at Mayapan (Smith 1971).

A modeled cache in Structure 218 (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988: 59-61) consisted of a single (empty) hollow modeled ceramic figure similar to those from Structures 36, 58, and 81. Unlike these caches, however, a jaguar (or margay) head and paws encircled the human/deity face (Figure 2b). Like the others, the head is emerging from a snail shell.

A number of structures rested on and around Platform 2 in the northeastern

portion of Santa Rita Corozal (D. Chase 1982: 318-402; D. Chase and A. Chase 1988: 35-31). Among the items deposited to the south of the platform was a cache of three small ceramic cups. Each had a modeled face on its front. All wore earflares; two had the exaggerated teeth of "Chac" (Figure 2k). Similar cups (Figure 2j) were found elsewhere in the platform associated with a disarticulated interment, containing multiple subadults. These bones were located below a stone alignment that may have functioned as an altar. This deposit also contained a foot cup (Figure 2l), a small tripod bowl, several beads, and obsidian fragments. Thus, it may have also served as a cached offering. The cups with Chac faces are similar to ones recovered at Mayapan in caches and burials (Smith 1971).

Uayeb Rituals

Taken together, these caches provide reasonable insight into certain Late Postclassic ritual activities at Santa Rita Corozal. Several different kinds of modeled caches may be identified, specifically those that focus on one or two figures and those that contain multiple figures in a single cache. Single or double figure caches generally portray either a diving god or one of two composite figures, each of which contains a human or deity projecting from within the jaws of another creature – either a horned jaguar, or a bee (itself emerging from a shell), or an "alligator" or caiman.

We believe that the composite deity-jaguar/bee-shell figures served a similar symbolic function. We (D. Chase 1982: 588-9; D. Chase 1985a:122; D. Chase 1985b:228; D. Chase and A. Chase 1988: 73) have suggested that these figures represent the "angels" described by Landa (Tozzer 1941:143) who "descended and received the sacrifice" of the heart of a man or a dog that was offered during *Kan* year *Uayeb* ceremonies. That this association of composite figures with sacrifice was not limited to the northern lowlands is also suggested by an image from the Nuttall Codex that shows a similar figure descending to receive an animal heart (D. Chase 1985a: figure 11; Nuttall 1902). These have not been found in the same structures that contain multiple figure caches. Facial features of figures are similar to those thought to characterize Itzamna with only two dull protruding teeth on either side of the mouth and a bump above the nose. When paint is preserved there are scrolls and dots below the eyes.

Landa (Tozzer 1941: 141) described presumably similar angels as "painted," "frightful to look at," and as being symbolic of water. All of these descriptions easily fit these cache vessels with their vividly painted faces and conch shell bodies. While these angels are referenced specifically for the *Kan* years *Uayeb* rites by Landa, diving figures and perhaps the "angels" themselves were likely not limited to only these ritual events. Composite figures are present in other Postclassic Northern lowland contexts, specifically at Mayapan, Lamanai, and elsewhere in Belize. Diving gods are perhaps more widespread, being present on ceramic vessels (caches and *incensario*s) and as wall or building decorations in various Postclassic Period contexts (e.g., Madrid Codex page 35 [Lee 1975]; Mayapan – Winters 1955: Fig 3; Tulum – Miller 1982: Figs. 28, 37

Multiple figure caches contain clear quadripartite symbolism. This is apparent in the physical directional placement of figures in the caches as well as in the numerical repetition of specific cache figure types by multiples of 4 in both the Gann and the Corozal Postclassic Project sample. Single figure and/or artifacts are generally surrounded, covered, or elevated above multiple figures and artifacts. The specific

figures, the focus on directions, and the number of items reinforce interpretations that these caches reflect directionality, calendric ritual, and specifically New Years or *Uayeb* rites.

There are four distinct *Uayeb* rites and four deities or *bacab*s to whom these rites are dedicated (Landa in Tozzer 1941: 138-139). We have suggested specific correlations among Landa's descriptions, Madrid codex depictions, and archaeological contexts for several of these years (D. Chase 1982: 586-591; D. Chase 1985a: 118-124; D. Chase 1985b; D. Chase and A. Chase 1988: 71-75). Specific correlations among the Landa text, Madrid codex, and archaeology for *Muluc* year rituals include: the association of warriors, cloth, dogs or *pisote*s, and blood-letting (Table 1). The caches also include additional images that are not described or depicted in Landa or in the codices, suggesting that these activities may have been more varied than Landa suggests. Of interest also, is the actual timing of these *Uayeb* events and cache offerings. Were they made every year? Were they made at specific junctures of years? Were counts of these events kept? And, could the numbers and kinds of figures included in an offering be related to such a count?

By far the most common aspect of multiple figure caches is the 4 roughly cardinal and quadrant positioning conjoined with the placement of fifth elements in a position that is central, above, below, or surrounding other figures. This pattern is repeated in the caches found by both Gann and the Corozal Postclassic Project. It is seen clearly in SRC Structure 213 where a central seated figure sits above a single central jadeite triangle surrounded by 4 white shells and where the figure itself is surrounded by 4 male and female creatures, encased within an urn and lid, and then again surrounded by the other figures in the cache. Bacabs standing on the backs of turtles are positioned directionally around the world as represented by the urn and lid. It is also evident in SRC Structure 2 where a double-headed figure with a human head protruding from one set of alligator jaws and a turtle sit above a central urn that has paired figures on its 4 sides. The presence of carefully positioned and separated offerings conforms with the directionality and zenith centering believed to be key to ancient Maya world view (D. Chase and A. Chase 1998; Mathews and Garber 2004) and with descriptions of New Year's rites that require a sacred ceremonial passage from one of the four outskirt entrances of town to the central residences and then out again to a second exterior point (D. Chase 1985a; Coe 1965). Named *Uayeb* year bearers correlate with specific directions and colors. When combined with the presence of specific offerings mentioned in Landa's Muluc year's texts such as warriors, cloth, and dogs or with codex depictions of jaguar headresses, the picture appears to be complete. In question, however, are the specific patterns of individual caches. More figures are present than are directly accounted for by Landa's text, perhaps reflecting the variation in ritual from year-to-year, but with patterning that begs decipherment.

Beyond directionality and centering, the second most common aspect is the occurrence of at least one figure with symbolic water associations (Table 2). Five multiple figure caches contain sharks, caiman, or "turtles". Further, the majority of the composite figure caches incorporate conch shells, turtle shells, or caiman. Taube (1989), pointing toward the Santa Rita Corozal Structure 1 murals and one of the double-headed figures encountered by Gann, argues that the caimans not only represented the surface of the earth, but were also inextricably associated with calendric cycles

and the passage of time, thus also bolstering the interpretation of these caches.

These water and surface figures may not only represent the underworld and the surface of the current world, as Taube (1989) and others have indicated, but also the ability to move or exist between worlds (D. Chase and A. Chase in press). Caiman and turtles may be seen at the surface of the water, shark fins penetrate the water's surface, and shelled hermit crabs likewise exist on the shore and within the water itself. Significant in this juxtaposition also are the interments of caches in pits within the earth inside sacred built spaces and the placement of figures both within and surrounding cache vessels. In these contexts the urns and lids are not just containers, but also represent the surface of the world itself. And, cache figures are contained within or surround the "earth's" surface forming a microcosm of the world at large.

Katun Rituals

Further associations between the archaeological contexts and Landa's descriptions of calendar rites may be found in the distribution of incense burners at the site (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988: 72; D. Chase 1985a and 1985b). The majority of archaeological contexts from both Thomas Gann and the Corozal Postclassic Project investigations containing caches (particularly multiple figure caches) also encountered effigy incense burners. Twelve excavated structures can be associated with incense burners (Strs. 2, 5, 6, 7, 17, 25, 81, 92, 182, 183, 212, and 213); seven of these buildings had effigy caches. These incense burners generally were found in pairs of two, with one incense burner more complete than the other. In one case, the incense burners (Figure 6) were found in association with an enclosed shrine within a residence. This shrine also contained a false backroom that would have been suitable to hide a priest. Thus, the incensarios may have served as "talking idols" and the SRC shrine may have served like a similar oracle building recorded for Cozumel (D. Chase 1982: 300; Chase and Chase 2000).

The archaeological pattern of paired effigy incense burner matches descriptions of *Katun* idols that were paired (D. Chase 1982:591-3; D. Chase 1985a, 1985b; D. Chase and A. Chase 2004). Following Landa (Tozzer 1941:168), each idol "ruled" alone for a period of 10 years, but was paired with preceding and succeeding *Katun* idols for 10 years each, so that there was a transition of power from one to the other.

> *They had in the temple two idols dedicated to two of these characters. They worshipped and offered homage and sacrifices to the first, according to the count from the cross on the circle shown above, as a remedy for the calamities of their twenty years. But for the ten years which remained of the twenty of the first idol, they did not do anything for him more than to burn incense to him and show him respect. When the twenty years of the first idol had passed, he began to be succeeded by the destinations of the second and (they began) to offer him sacrifices, and having taken away that first idol, they put another in its place, in order to worship that for ten more years.*

The archaeological distribution of paired censers conform with this ethnohistoric description of a limited number of *Katun* idols and the orderly passage of power from one *Katun* idol to the next in accord with the passage of time. However, given the occurrence of effigies in twos, the precise timing may have been different than Landa indicated. Whether the data may be used to support Rice's (2004) structural model for Maya civilization as organized about the Short Count is still open for further investigation.

Both the descriptions and the archaeological patterns of calendar-

associated materials contradict descriptions by Landa and others (e.g., Freidel and Sabloff 1984) that suggest a model of dissipated family worship for the Postclassic Period.

> *They had such a great quantity of idols that even those of their gods were not enough: for there was not an animal or insect of which they did not make a statue and they made all these in the image of their gods and goddesses. (Tozzer 1941:110)*
> *The common people also had private idols to whom they sacrificed, each one according to his calling or occupation which he had.* (Relaciones de Yucatan 1898: 1:52).

Instead, the archaeology suggests a very orderly, purposeful, and regularized model of Postclassic ritual. Tedlock (1993) has suggested that the interpretation of Postclassic Maya ritual as consisting of blood sacrifice and a multitude of idols was exaggerated by Catholic priests seeking to find evidence of Maya non-conformance with the teachings of the Church. The archaeological data would bolster this interpretation.

Conclusion

In summary, investigations at Santa Rita Corozal show the possibilities for conjoining archaeology with historic materials in order to make interpretations about Postclassic ritual organization. These analyses suggest that ancient Maya ritual activities reflected both *Uayeb* and *Katun* rites. Postclassic effigy cache offerings can be correlated directly with descriptions made by Landa (Tozzer 1941) and with depictions in the Madrid Codex (Lee 1975) pertaining to rituals carried out particularly for the *Kan* and *Muluc* years (D. Chase 1985b). Thus, caches and the figures in them reflect offerings made for Postclassic calendric ritual rather than for ancestor veneration or for random idol worship. This is confirmed in the patterning found archaeologically related to paired incense burners that are believed to be associated with *Katuns.*

The similarity in cache contents and the pairing of incense burners suggests that the ceremonies surrounding the archaeologically-recovered rites were a significant means of communicating and performing unified ritual activity among the Postclassic Maya. While the specific offerings are quite different from those in the preceding Classic Period, the use of directionality and the centering of offerings are similar to epicentral caching practices at many Classic Period Maya sites (D. Chase and A. Chase 1998; Mathews and Garber 2004). Thus, while the venue for cache placement may have shifted from downtown to neighborhoods and while the symbolism of cache contents may have gone from abstract to explicit, general caching practices continued to serve much the same function relative to the community – suggesting as much continuity as difference in caching practices over time. These combined data and interpretations hint at the intricate social, ritual, and political organization of the pre-contact Maya and the importance of both context and large sample size for making interpretations.

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