

Gained But Not Forgotten: Late Postclassic Archaeology and Ritual at Santa Rita Corozal, Belize

DIANE Z. CHASE

Investigations at the site of Santa Rita Corozal were undertaken in order to garner a body of data concerning Late Postclassic period occupation. It was hoped that the material gathered by the Corozal Postclassic Project would provide information which could be compared with previously excavated and collected information concerning the Late Postclassic period in the Maya lowlands. The envisioned goal was to develop a data base from which temporal and spatial variation during the period, as well as possible reasons for this variation, could eventually be established. The site of Santa Rita was selected for excavation because of its known Late Postclassic remains (Gann 1900, 1918; Green 1973; Pring 1973; Hammond 1973; D. Rice 1974; Sidrys 1976, 1983) and the possibility that it functioned as the regional capital of Chetumal at the time of the conquest (Thompson 1972: 6; D. Chase 1981, 1982a).

The site map key (fig. 1) provides an indication of the extent of the site of Santa Rita; the shaded areas represent those portions of the site which have thus far been mapped. There appears to have been continuous occupation between mapped portions of the site; the area intervening between the north part of the site and the southwest portion of the site will be fully mapped once the Belizean government comes into possession of the land. There is evidence of Postclassic occupation, either from our own work at the site or from that of Thomas Gann, from all the known sectors of Santa Rita.

While the research thus far at Santa Rita has been oriented toward Postclassic occupation of the site, extensive earlier and some later remains have also been encountered. These include deposits and constructions dating from the Early Preclassic (Swasey equivalent) to the historic period. These are being analyzed by Arlen F. Chase and myself but will not be focused on in this essay. All these earlier remains are of interest, however, for their own value and as

comparative material to other nearby northern Belize sites such as Cerros (Freidel 1978, 1979), Cuella (Hammond various), Colha (Hester 1979; Hester, Eaton, and Shafer 1980), Nohmul (Hammond 1973, 1974, 1975, 1977; D. Chase 1982a, 1982b; D. Chase and A. Chase 1982), Altun Ha (Pendergast various), and Lamanai (Pendergast various); they also provide data pertinent to more generalized lowland Maya traditions and horizons.

Archaeological Research at Santa Rita

Santa Rita is located immediately to the north of modern Corozal Town in northern Belize. The site, first noted by Gann in 1894, manifests a long history of occupation but is most conspicuous for its Late Postclassic remains. In 1894, the site had already been partially destroyed to provide building material for nearby Corozal; however, thirty-two of the original mounds were noted as surviving intact. Gann (1900, 1918) roughly mapped the area of the site and

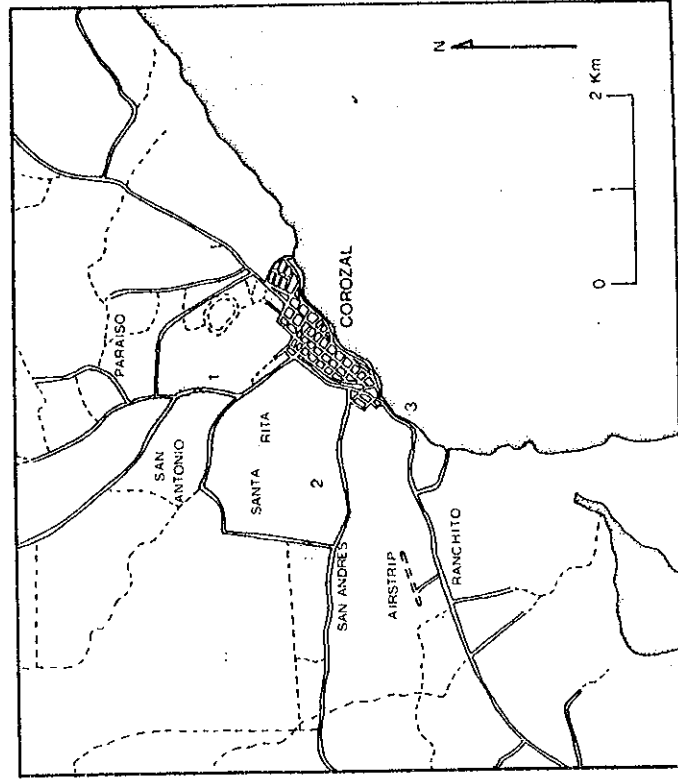


Fig. 1. Map key for Santa Rita Corozal.

subsequently excavated the majority of the structures he noted. His major contributions (1900: 662-663) to the archaeology of Santa Rita were his establishment of the site as Late Postclassic in date and his typology of mounds for Santa Rita: mounds constructed over buildings; mounds with a superficial deposit of pottery images and a deeper deposit of pottery vessels or a pottery urn; and mounds which could not be categorized or whose use was either unknown or doubtful. Although naive by modern standards, this represented the first attempt at functionally distinguishing Maya structures in northern Belize. Later excavations were carried out at the site by Green (1973), Pring (1973: 62-67; Hammond 1974: 24), and Sidrys (1976: 332-344; 1983: 124-159).

1979 SEASON

The 1979 Santa Rita reconnaissance and mapping program indicated that the site is much larger in both the number and the extent of mounds than had been previously realized, even given the great

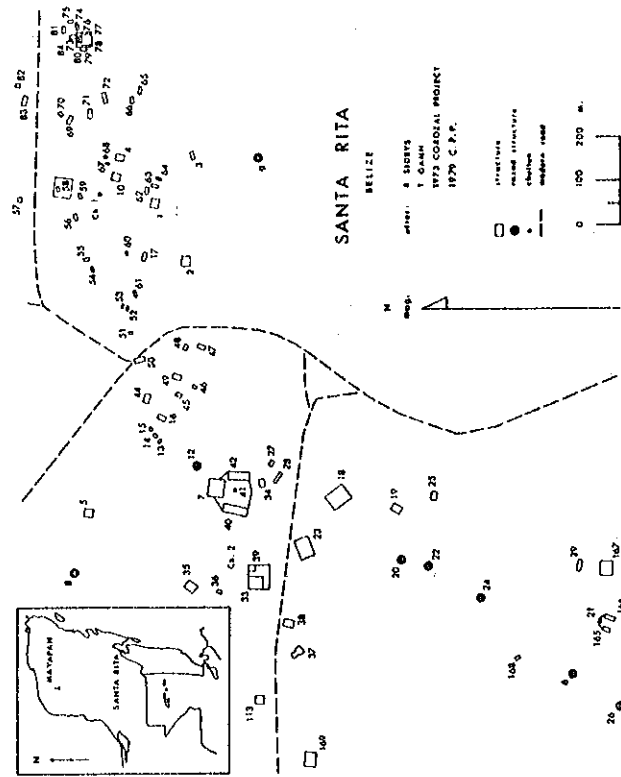


Fig. 2. Sketch map of the northern portion of Santa Rita.

amount of destruction at the site (see fig. 2 for a partial site map). Many of these mounds, however, are either low in height or outside the traditional site center. Occupation at Santa Rita also appears to blend geographically into that of the site of Aventura to the south, which is known to have large deposits of Terminal Classic pottery (Ball 1983; Sidrys 1976, 1983). It is probable that there was a shifting of occupation between Santa Rita and Aventura over time and that a clear understanding of population dynamics within the area (particularly during the Terminal Classic-Early Postclassic) will depend upon more information from both sites as well as from the area of lower mound density between the two sites.

All excavations undertaken in 1979 produced Postclassic remains; many produced evidence of earlier occupation as well. Investigation of Structure 7, which at 13 meters is the tallest remaining mound at Santa Rita, included trenching along with horizontal excavation. The recovered evidence of Postclassic activity consisted of an intensive censer deposit on the lower front stair. This deposit did not include other vessels generally found in Postclassic occupational refuse and may suggest the existence of a pilgrimage pattern of placement for some incensarios (see also Ball 1977: 175). Although the latest use of Structure 7 was during the Postclassic period, the latest building construction appears to have been considerably earlier, probably during the Middle Classic period.

Structure 58 excavations revealed a long low platform or terrace with outlines of a small structure above it. An almost identical construction has been illustrated for Dzibilchaltun (Andrews IV 1965: fig. 2) during the Late Postclassic period (Kurjak and Garza T. 1981: 292, fig. 11.2). The Postclassic Structure 58 and Platform 1 overlay earlier constructions. Late Postclassic deposits encountered during excavation included a modeled ceramic figure placed between an unslipped olla and a red-slipped tripod bowl (fig. 3). The modeled figure is a composite one. The head of a bearded man protrudes from the head of a horned jaguar, or possibly a bee. The body of the figure resembles a snail shell. The piece was originally stuccoed and elaborately painted, but only traces of color remain. Stopped inside the vessel were two small flat pieces of turquoise and one jadeite bead. The cache was located on an axis to the platform in front of the small structure, just below the eroded floor level.

Postclassic burials were also uncovered in the excavation. These had been intruded through an earlier plaster floor. While many of these interments were devoid of associated objects, one woman was found to have been buried with a jadeite and *Spondylus* necklace as well as two copper rings. An irregular arrangement of stones located

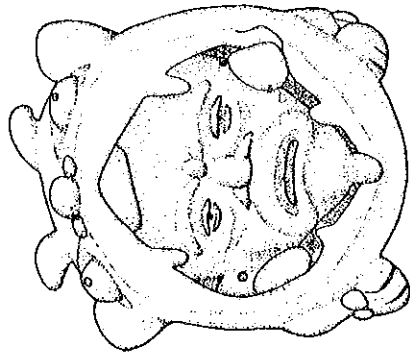


Fig. 3. Modeled ceramic figure from the Structure 58 cache at Santa Rita, 10.7 centimeters high.

above the interment may represent an altar constructed above it. Another Postclassic burial of a decomposed individual also included a single copper bell. Although there was much Late Postclassic artifactual material on the surface of the platform, no primary refuse deposit was found in association with this complex. Historic occupation was located to the south of Structure 58 and what appeared to be a nineteenth-century privy was excavated within the platform itself; this neatly cut through the legs of two individuals occupying an earlier Late Postclassic grave.

Excavations in Structure 69 revealed a small, poorly preserved construction with a complex history of occupation. Artifacts and stratigraphy date the use of this area from Early Classic times well into the nineteenth century. The nearby Structure 70, even lower than Structure 69, was better preserved. Although no special deposits were found in association with Structure 70, artifactual remains and stratigraphy suggest that its construction and use took place only during the Late Postclassic period.

An areal excavation was undertaken of Structure 74, a low foundation marked only by lines of stone on the surface (fig. 4). This Late Postclassic structure had a double line-of-stone back wall and well-preserved interior plaster floors. Associated with it were interesting combinations of artifacts, including redware ceramics, ceramic beads, and lithics, but no burials or caches.

South of Structure 74 is the large low Postclassic Platform 2. It measures roughly 47 meters by 40 meters, is approximately one

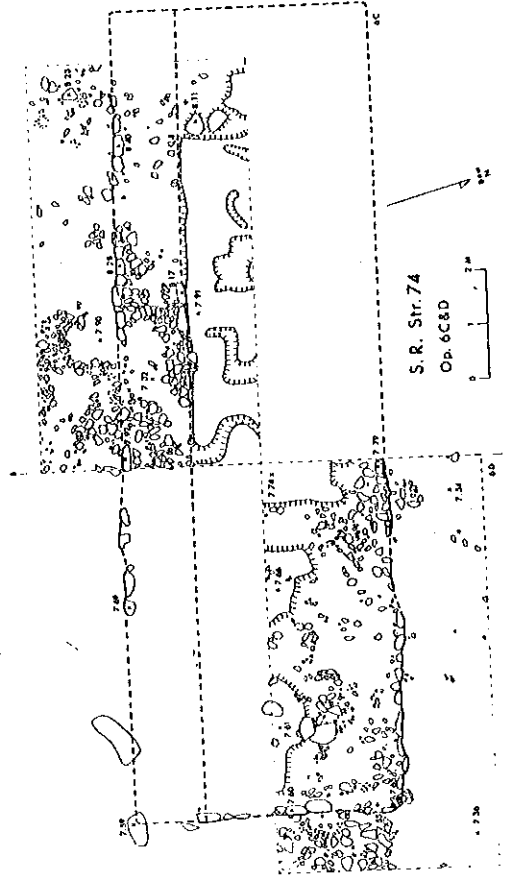


Fig. 4. Detailed plan of Santa Rita Structure 74, a simple line of stone construction with a double line of stone back wall.

meter high, and supports Structures 73 and 76 to 80. Excavations along the platform edges encountered extensive refuse deposits. In addition to the usual Late Postclassic pottery and lithics, these investigations produced faunal remains, ceramic beads, and a few pieces of green obsidian. The refuse deposit on the south side of Platform 2 also provided numerous examples of a modeled ceramic type called Cohokum Modeled. This unslipped ware resembles the better-known Chen Mul Modeled (Kol Modeled at Santa Rita) censerware in certain rim modes but can be easily distinguished from it; thus far, no Cohokum Modeled pieces have been found which show signs of burning. Cohokum Modeled also has a very limited distribution at Santa Rita; at present, it is known to occur only in the vicinity of Platform 2. An alignment of three stones, probably originally representing a low altar, was found near the southern extent of the platform; a multiple subadult interment was discovered immediately below this configuration and extending west of it. With the human bone were faunal remains and broken ceramics; the reconstructed vessels included a small unslipped tripod plate, unslipped cups with modeled faces (fig. 5), and a modeled foot-shaped cup. Further excavations were undertaken at this locus in 1980.

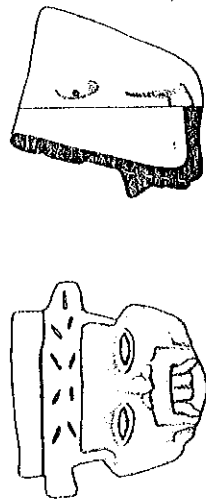


Fig. 5. *Tlaloc* "face cup" from Santa Rita, 7 centimeters high.

Structure 36, another small structure, had a relatively well-defined frontal terrace. Although there was relatively little Postclassic overlay, the construction proved to be entirely Late Postclassic in date with the discovery of a core cache of two modeled Postclassic vessels. The larger anthropomorphic vessel had the smaller one placed inside its mouth. While the outer vessel may represent an earth monster, the inner vessel was similar to the one encountered in Structure 58 and nearly identical to one found in Structure 81 in 1980.

Excavation of Structure 35 revealed a low, relatively large construction with a small structure on the western side. A sizeable Postclassic overlay was found on the surface of the platform, but the deposits within its core all dated to Terminal Classic times or earlier.

1980 SEASON

During the 1980 field season, the Corozal Postclassic Project resumed work on the transit map of the site and on the excavation of both known Postclassic structures and untested portions of the site.

Excavations were continued in the northeast sector of Santa Rita on Platform 2 and the overlying Structures 73 and 76 to 80. The trench through the north-south axis of the platform revealed buried Postclassic constructions and two Postclassic burials. Areal excavation at the southern extent of the platform was initiated in order to sample more of the unusual ceramic deposit located there in 1979 and to determine whether this deposit was distributed in spatially different patterns along the Platform 2 rear facing. This extensive deposit, which continued primarily to the east along the south platform wall, consisted of areas containing clusters of vessels, which possibly resulted from discrete activities. Nine face cups, resembling those located within the construction core of the platform during 1979 (see fig. 5 for one example of these cups; for similar examples recovered outside of Santa Rita see R.E. Smith 1971: figs.

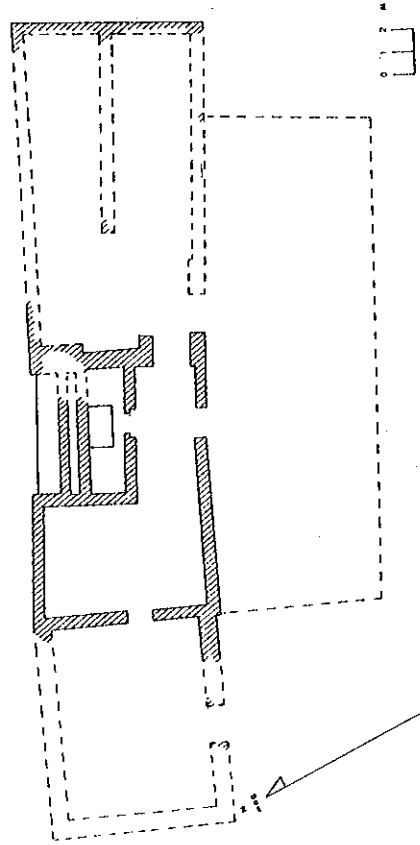


Fig. 6. Schematic plan of Santa Rita Structure 81.

31hh and 63), were recovered from within the deposit. Also in this deposit were faunal remains and a piece of sheet copper.

In addition to the refuse, seven distinct Late Postclassic interments were found south of Platform 2. All were flexed; the majority contained at least one object. Of these interments, two are of particular interest because of their associated artifacts. Both individuals were female. One had a copper ring on both hands. The other was buried with a quantity of ceramics, both red-slipped tinajas (water jars) and modeled redware pottery vessels. Most of the pottery had been smashed prior to deposition. One smaller tinaja had a kill hole in its base, a typical pattern in many Classic period burial vessels at Santa Rita.

Excavation in the looted Structure 77 provided a series of sealed Postclassic construction levels with associated artifacts. Pottery encountered in the deeply stratified deposits in this excavation has allowed faceting of the Late Postclassic ceramics at the site (D. Chase 1982a, 1984). Two interments were located west of the building below the level of the most recent platform floor. Ceramic beads, a stone turtle with traces of polychrome paint, and a large smashed red-slipped jar with an applied effigy head were located in the collapse of the latest construction. An alignment of three stones, possibly representing an altar, was also found west of Structure 77; a small headless pottery bird vessel was located beneath this feature near its presumed corner. Areal investigations were also made into other Late Postclassic structures on the summit of the platform, but

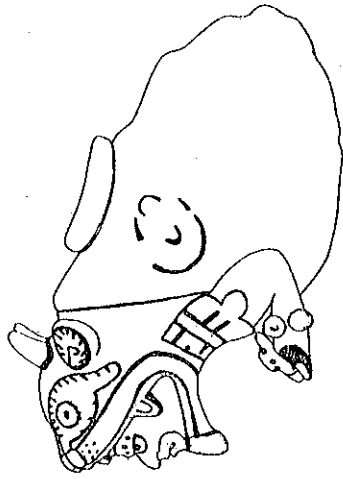


Fig. 7. Structure 81 Cao Modeled cache figure (15.2 centimeters in length).

they did not prove to have deposits associated with the terminal use of the platform surface.

One primary focus for excavation in 1980 was Structure 81 (fig. 6). This Late Postclassic building, located in the northeast part of Santa Rita, measured approximately 60 meters by 18 meters and proved to be the most elaborate Postclassic structure encountered in this portion of the site. Areal work revealed a multiroomed construction with a series of frontal doorways, an inner shrine, and many vessels smashed on the interior floor of the building. An axial trench encountered two caches and a burial. The latest cache consisted of two lip-to-lip unslipped vessels with a modeled and painted vessel between them. The inner vessel portrayed a bearded man with a horned jaguar head which protruded from a snail shell (fig. 7). The postfire paint was still intact on most of the piece, the colors being blue, white, black, and red. Within it were a number of smaller items: *Spondylus* beads, jadeite, and one thin piece of *tumbaga*. The earlier cache, located below the back wall of the shrine, consisted of a single black-slipped, double-spouted bird effigy vessel of nonlocal, possibly Peruvian, origin. An elaborate burial was found intruded into bedrock beneath the shrine-room altar; it contained the partially articulated remains of two adults enmeshed in broken ceramic vessels. Some of these vessels had apparently been smashed within the structure and had only been partially redeposited within the interment.

Earlier statements by Gann (1918) and Sidrys (1976) had noted that much of the coastal portion of Santa Rita had been encroached upon by the sea. A limited excavation in Structure 200, which had

been largely washed away by waves from Corozal Bay, encountered human skeletal material. The recovered Postclassic deposit consisted of two skulls placed side by side and located directly above a flexed burial.

Ritual Indicators and Santa Rita

Determining the function of archaeological deposits has always posed somewhat of a problem. In the Maya area of Mesoamerica there appears to be a general agreement that the presence of particular types of material culture remains is indicative of ritual and/or ceremonial activity. These include special structure types, various types of altars, nonresidential or nondomestic pottery such as censers, and special deposits such as caches. During the Late Postclassic period, there are ritual associations between other artifact types [Proskouriakoff 1962b: 331-335] and architectural configurations [Proskouriakoff 1962a: 89-91]. Most of these ritual indicators can be found at Santa Rita. We may ask, therefore, what the presence and/or distribution of these indicators suggests about ritual activity at Santa Rita during the Late Postclassic period.

ARCHITECTURE

Proskouriakoff (1962a) has dealt most extensively with defining Postclassic ritual buildings and assemblages. For Mayapan, she was able specifically to define two major configurations (1962a: 89-91). These were the basic ceremonial group, composed of a colonnaded hall, a raised shrine, and usually an oratory, and a temple assemblage, composed of a pyramid temple, one or more colonnaded halls, a shrine, a low platform in between the shrine and temple for holding stucco statues, and occasionally an oratory to the right of the temple. Twenty-six colonnaded halls are noted as existing at Mayapan; this building form is characterized by tandem long rooms with multiple front entrances, rear and side benches, and a central raised and square altar. Ten temples are noted to occur in epicentral Mayapan; this building form is characterized by a tall pyramidal structure supporting a small formal upper building (see Satterthwaite 1937 and 1944 for further discussion). A smaller ceremonial structure, the oratory, is also defined for Mayapan; this building form approximates a small temple, usually contains a bench, and is usually attached to other structures. Three kinds of shrines are defined for Mayapan: interior shrines, statue shrines, and raised shrines. Interior shrines are defined as enclosing altars, usually in a colonnaded hall. Statue shrines house a stucco figure and usually occur on stair-

ways or on low platforms in front of temples. Raised shrines are defined as small buildings standing on independent substructures.

While prime examples of Proskouriakoff's temple assemblage and basic ceremonial group may have once existed at Santa Rita, the depredations of time do not allow for their formal definition. Because the known architecture of Santa Rita varies from that at Mayapan in form, however, it is suggested that even if such groups were present, they would not formally follow the defined Mayapan examples. The closest building form to that of the Mayapan colonnaded hall is Santa Rita Structure 81, but it differs from those at Mayapan in significant ways (i.e., no raised substructure, no tangent end rooms, and a nonsymmetrical plan). While no temples are presently noted from the site, save for possibly the earlier Structure 7, which was used by Postclassic people, there were elevated temple constructions during Cann's time at the site (specifically the mural-decorated Structure 1). At least one building may be identified as an oratory (floored Structure 77) based on the 1979 and 1980 work at the site; others no doubt existed. An interior shrine was recovered from within Santa Rita Structure 81, and Santa Rita Structure 58 may represent a raised shrine type of construction. No definite statue shrines have thus far been located at Santa Rita, although they likely existed.

ALTARS, CENSERS, AND CACHES

Smaller ritual indicators also exist at Santa Rita. Three specific altar types can be defined for the site. The first kind of altar consists of a rounded stone which is not formally attached to a building. The second kind consists of a formal square construction usually attached to the rear wall of an interior shrine. The third kind is a low, square line of stone construction set in open areas, often in front of other, larger buildings. The site also evinces a well-defined censer complex and a highly developed caching complex. Three stone altar figures, also noted for Mayapan in thirty-eight instances (Proskouriakoff 1962b), have also been encountered in disparate locations at the site.

Rounded stone altars were found in three locations in northern Santa Rita: on Structure 79, at Structure 75, and west of Structure 58. Santa Rita Altar 1 was formed from several stone blocks probably originally bonded together to make a round altar; it rests on the approximate center line of Structure 79. Structure 79, constructed from finely faced blocks, is the central building substructure on the western side of Platform 2; it exhibited no stone superstructure and apparently faced east. No censers, caches, or altar figures were found

in association with either Structure 79 or Altar 1. Santa Rita Altar 2, associated with Structure 75, was composed of a single rounded stone. Structure 75 was unexcavated (and has since been bulldozed), but it was a relatively long substructure. It faced west and formed a group with Structures 81 and 74 north of Platform 2. Although it may have been associated with other material culture remains indicative of ritual activity, this is now impossible to ascertain. The complete rounded stone Altar 3, found west of Structure 58, was not associated with any construction or any censer deposition (at least as could be noted from the surface). It is probable that it was moved from its original placement on Santa Rita Platform 1, as no land-clearing activity was evident in the area near it which could account for a missing structure.

The only square architecturally constructed altar recovered from Santa Rita was encountered within the interior shrine associated with Structure 81. While no definite ancillary ritual indicators could be associated with the three round altars, the square architectural altar in Structure 81 is associated with two axial caches, a double burial, two smashed effigy censers (Kol Modeled), and a large number of other smashed ceramic vessels.

The third altar type at Santa Rita consists of a configuration of stones generally located on a platform exterior to any buildings. It is likely that these once formed small, slightly raised, square constructions. On Platform 1, an irregular composite stone feature had been raised above one of the Postclassic burials on an axis to Structure 58. On Platform 2, two such configurations were located; presently each consists of alignments of three or more stones and are located in front of Structure 77. Below and west of one of these was an interment of several disarticulated subadults; near the other a small headless bird vessel was found.

Late Postclassic censers at Santa Rita are of two distinct types. Kol Modeled censers are modeled effigy figures with an attached urn, similar to ones found at Mayapan (R. E. Smith 1971: fig. 32). Pum Modeled censers exhibit ring bases and are bowl or basin shaped. All Kol Modeled censers found thus far have been broken, but occasionally (and with much work) they may be nearly or completely reconstructed. At Santa Rita, Kol Modeled censers are found in pieces on abandoned buildings, in what may be formal groupings of two within buildings (such as in Structures 2, 5, 6, 17, and 81), and in refuse deposits. Pum Modeled censers apparently have a more limited distribution and are most clearly associated with Platform 2. Both of these censer types are found with evidence of burning and are associated with copal residue.

In addition to the two kinds of modeled censers discussed above, two other modeled ceramic forms also occur. Formally referred to as Kol Modeled face cups and Cohokum Modeled vessels, these do not appear to be domestic in function. These latter two vessel types are relatively common at Santa Rita but, like Pum Modeled censers, have thus far been encountered only in association with Platform 2. None of these four forms occurs within formal caches or is associated with the round kind of altar.

Caches at Santa Rita have thus far been encountered only on the axes of various structures at the site. Variation does, however, occur in the associated structure form and in the presence or absence of associated censers and square altars. The cache patterns encountered by the Corozal Postclassic Project are distinctive but also match surprisingly well with those illustrated and/or described by Gann (1900, 1918). This cache pattern usually includes one or more modeled ceramic figures or figurines encased in other ceramic vessels (see D. Chase 1982a for an extended discussion).

Patterning at Santa Rita

The archaeological materials thus far recovered from Santa Rita may be grouped into several patterns as follows:

1. Rounded, nonarchitectural altars appear to be found in association with buildings but do not appear to occur with other ritual paraphernalia.
 2. Square, architecturally constructed altars occurring within interior shrines appear to be associated with censers, caches, and burials.
 3. Alignments of stones located on platforms but exterior to buildings may form a third type of altar; these would appear to be associated with burials, and possibly with other types of special deposits, but are generally not directly associated with censer deposition.
 4. Two kinds of censers occur, one of which may be found either in pairs within a building or purposely smashed on an abandoned building or in refuse deposits; the other kind appears to have a more limited distribution and occurs either smashed in burials or in certain refuse deposits.
 5. Other nondomestic objects (i.e., Kol Modeled face cups and Cohokum Modeled vessels) have distinct spatial distributions at the site but appear in specialized refuse deposits.
 6. Caches may be located in a variety of structural types but invariably appear to be set on an axis.
- While it is not clear that these patterns will hold with further

excavation, the two seasons of investigation thus far undertaken at Santa Rita by the Corozal Postclassic Project and the data available from Gann (1900, 1918) for the site indicate that this will be the case. Upcoming field seasons will attempt to test these defined patterns further. Even assuming that the patterns do hold, it is still necessary to attempt to ascertain what they mean in terms of the larger cultural configuration of the site. Except for the Santa Rita Structure 81 locus, a superficial examination of the newly recovered data shows no apparent correlations between the various classes of ritual indicators at the site.

The problem involved in the formal identification of ritual activity at Santa Rita is further amplified if one considers individual deposits of ceramics associated with a single structure. For example, in Structure 81, while paired censers, two caches, and a square architectural altar occur, other ceramic vessels are also present. While certain of these vessels are slipped, modeled, and somewhat extraordinary, others are inseparable from what might otherwise be interpreted as domestic or residential pottery. Whether this means that these latter vessels were any less ritual in nature cannot be stated with certainty.

A similar problem was encountered at Mayapan. R.E. Smith (1971) attempted to define what was ceremonial as opposed to what was domestic pottery and to use this distinction to suggest the function of various structures. He attempted to solve the problem of using the same pottery vessel forms for dissimilar purposes by considering the associated frequencies of vessel forms with certain structural types. This solution is viable, however, only when large, elaborate deposits of pottery are encountered; as such deposits are not often recovered, this method is clearly not a universal means for denoting structural or ritual function. In fact, it may actually be accurate only in those cases that can be classified as being clearly ritual or domestic by simple visual inspection; in other words, the ceramic frequency method for determining function is not particularly useful, especially for deposits associated with smaller, amorphous structures. Work at Santa Rita would, however, support certain findings suggested by R.E. Smith (1971); water jars (tinajas) are found primarily associated with domestic contexts, and censers and more elaborately modeled wares are likely to be associated with some sort of ritual function. These latter two points, however, are more readily recognizable archaeologically in reconstructible vessels than with sherds and sherd frequencies.

While the determination of function for structures and/or deposits is made difficult by the use of the same vessel forms in both

ritual and domestic contexts, there is a similar problem with structures. These do not appear to have been utilized solely for one purpose or for a series of related activities. This is evident in the artifacts associated with Structure 81, one of the more ceremonial constructions at the site, by the presence of assorted flint tools and debitage as well as nested pottery vessels of probably primarily domestic function (Santa Crude) in one corner of the building.

Interpretation

Given the problems inherent in identifying ritual (or other) functions, the question of the interpretation of specified patterning is still present. As the site of Santa Rita is dated to Protohistoric times, based on the recovered archaeology and the known ethnohistory, it is suggested that the behavior responsible for the defined archaeological patterns may be elucidated through culling the available ethnohistoric sources relating to the early Historic Maya (see also D. Chase 1982a, n.d.). A brief review of the accounts pertaining to northern lowland Maya practices during early historic times, specifically those by Landa (Tozzer 1941), does in fact suggest that significant similarities can be found between the described behavior and the archaeologically defined patterns.

Three kinds of altars are described by Landa (Tozzer 1941: 119, 143): (1) stones of unspecified form associated with raised temples, (2) single round stones, and (3) piles of stones within a court; all were reportedly associated with blood sacrifice. Offerings of items, other than blood, appear to be primarily associated with idols rather than with altars (Tozzer 1941: 118, 147). No clear description is provided for altars actually being associated with idols, with the exception of the two heaps of stones found opposing each other at all four entrances to the town (Tozzer 1941: 139). It seems likely that the described rounded stone altar (possibly *acantun*) may be identified with the rounded single stones encountered archaeologically at Santa Rita. The third altar type described for Santa Rita, stone alignments, might be equivalent to one of the types of stone altars used in blood sacrifice, especially given their general proximity to shrines or oratories (and assumed proximity to temples, as at Chumyaxche) and their possible association with special deposits. The stratigraphic relationships for Santa Rita, however, indicate that interments possibly associated with these features were placed prior to their construction. At least one of these configurations (that in front of Structure 58) may be representative of the Postclassic practice, noted for high-

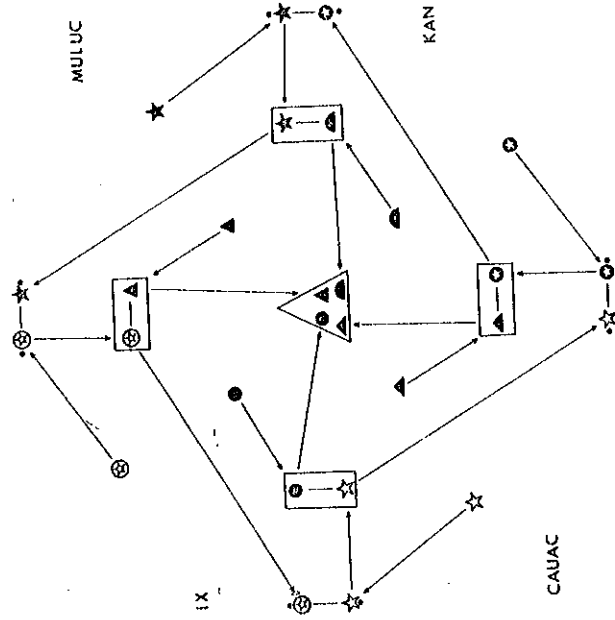


Fig. 8. Diagram of *uayeb* cycle.

land Guatemala, of erecting an altar above an important grave (see had a brazier for incense [called both an image and a statue; see Thompson 1939: 283–284; D. Chase 1982a].

Idols themselves were evidently made of wood, stone, and clay, although most were made of clay. According to Landa, numerous deities were portrayed in these idols (Tozzer 1941: 110). Many were actually effigy censers [Kol Modeled], "for it was the custom that each idol should have its little brazier in which they should burn their incense to it" (Tozzer 1941: 161). Idols have been described in several instances as the recipients of offerings, but two specific descriptions are of particular importance. In both cases, the presence of two or more idols is indicated.

During the *uayeb* (new year) ritual, a directionally rotating system for idols has been described (Landa in Tozzer 1941: 136–149; see also M. Coe 1965 for a review). These idols varied depending upon the year (Table 1, fig. 8), but generally at least two new idols, possibly representing different aspects of the same god, were made each year. One of these new images, which was made of pottery and

Table 1. *Uayeb* Rites and Their Various Associated Aspects

Aspect	Dominical Letter			Ik	Cauac
	Kan	Muluc	Sac-sini		
Augusty/ bacab	Hobnii	Cansicnal	Sac-sini	Ik	Hosan-ek
Image/ demon	Kan-uwayeyab	Chac-uwayeyab	Sac-uwayeyab	Ek-uwayeyab	
Stance/ demon	Bojon tz'acab	Kinchahau	Izamna	Vacmitun-ahau	
Standard	Kante	Chacte	Sac-hia	Yax-ek	
Dances (Old women)		Batel-okot, Holcan-okot	Alcab-tan, Kam-ahau	Xibalba-okot	
Stone	Kanal-acantun	Chac-acantun	Sac-acantun	Ekel-acantun	
Evil idols	Izamna-kauil	Yaxcoc-ahmut	Kinich-ahau Itzamna	Chichab-chob, Ahcanuol-cab, Ekbalam-chac, Ahbuluc-balam	

Tozzer 1941: 139, 140), was set with an old idol on one of the piles of stones at the edge of the town, probably to effect a transference of power from the older idol to the newer idol. The new idol was then moved from the pile of stones to the principal's house, where it was set face to face with a newly made statue; besides the acceptance of various sacrifices by these two images, this act was also probably intended to effect the transference of power and knowledge between these two images. Following the particular *uayeb* rites, the statue was then moved to the temple and the idol was moved to another entrance to the town (Tozzer 1941: 142). It seems likely that older idols were being moved during these times as well; Tozzer reports (1941: n. 674) that certain of them remained in the principal's house. Occasionally, other idols were made during the *uayeb* rites.

It is the association with the principal's house as well as other aspects of these rites (discussed below in relation to caches) that indicate that this pattern may be directly related to Structure 81 at Santa Rita. The heaps of stones at the four entrances to the town have no known archaeological analogues at Santa Rita, unless they are not always at the edge of town, in which case Structure 7 would be one archaeological candidate for the final resting place of idols no longer in circulation. Given the frequent occurrence of broken censers throughout Santa Rita and elsewhere, it is possible that the images and idols were purposefully smashed, often in other locales, fol-

lowing their period of usefulness, possibly to destroy any stored power within them.

In addition to idols of the *uayeb* rites, idols were also made to represent the lords of each *katun* (Tozzer 1941: 166-169); it is possible that the characteristics of the *katun* and *uayeb* idols may have been merged into a single image.

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 calamity of their twenty years. But for 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 to show him respect. When the twenty years of the first idol had passed, he began to be succeeded by the destinies of the second and to offer him sacrifices, and having taken away that first idol, they put another in its place to worship that for ten more years. (Tozzer 1941: 168)

The *katun* idol pattern is an extremely appealing one to use in making an analogy to Structures 81, 2, 5, 6, and 17 (each building being associated with two recovered effigy censers). It is suggested as well, however, that it may have been merged with the *uayeb* rites and idols to form a more cohesive pattern.

Use of abandoned structures to make offerings is also indicated ethnohistorically; although deposition of censers is not specifically described, the burning of copal is (Tozzer 1941: 110). Structure 7 clearly fits into this category. Cups are also referred to in relation to a series of calendric rituals (Tozzer 1941: 147) and while they are never described, unless they were of perishable material, these were undoubtedly the Kol Modeled face and foot cups at Santa Rita. Cohokum Modeled vessels (fig. 9) do not appear to have any direct analogue in Landa's account, but their similarity to a depiction on page 46 of the *Borgia Codex* (Seler 1963; fig. 10) may be suggestive. The only occurrence of Kol Modeled face cups and Cohokum Modeled vessels at Santa Rita is south of Platform 2 and occurs with Pum Modeled censers and partial Kol Modeled effigy censers; this could indicate that this archaeological locale may have been the final resting place for used idols and other ritual paraphernalia.

Offerings made between two vessels are not only a common archaeological pattern but are also prevalent in Landa's account (Tozzer 1941: 143, 165). One ethnohistoric description of a ritual, which involves the making of an offering between two vessels, is particularly similar to archaeological deposits recovered at Santa Rita. In

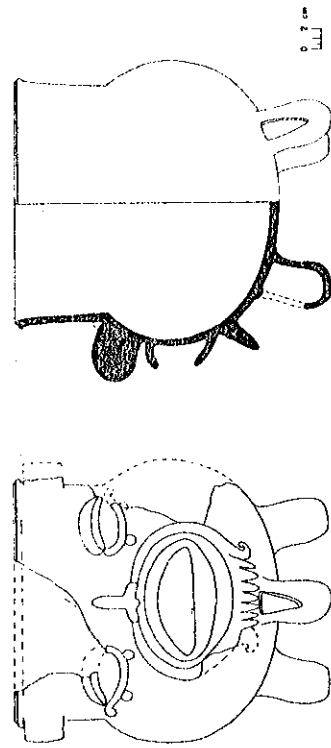


Fig. 9. Cohokum Modeled vessel.

the year described by Landa as indicated by "the dominical letter Kan" (p. 139) an "angel" was described as being part of the *uayeb* rites. These angels were "a sign of water" and were painted and "made frightful to look upon" (p. 141). As part of the traditional ceremonies for *kan* years, this angel was also a necessary component of rituals occurring after the new year ceremonies due to the occurrence of calamities.

The manner of sacrificing in this feast was different, since they built in the court of the temple a great pile of stones, and they placed the man or dog whom they were going to sacrifice on something higher than it, and throwing down the bound victim from the height onto the stones, those officials seized him and took out his heart with great quickness, and carried it to the new *idoi*, and offered it to him between two platters. . . . They said that an angel descended and received this sacrifice. (Tozzer 1941: 143)

The similarity and probable relationship between this description and many of the caches encountered during the various excavations at Santa Rita should be clear. This similarity may be further strengthened in the case of Structure 81. Page 69 of the Nuttall Codex [Nuttall 1902; fig. 11] reveals a figure which is reminiscent of the Cao Modeled cache figures of Santa Rita; this figure is depicted as descending to receive the heart of a sacrificed dog.

If caches at Santa Rita were primarily calendric in function, as seems likely given the above, then their distribution at the site in

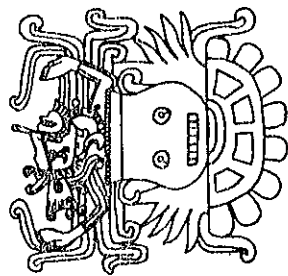


Fig. 10. Vessel in the Borgia Codex similar to Cohokum Modeled vessel.

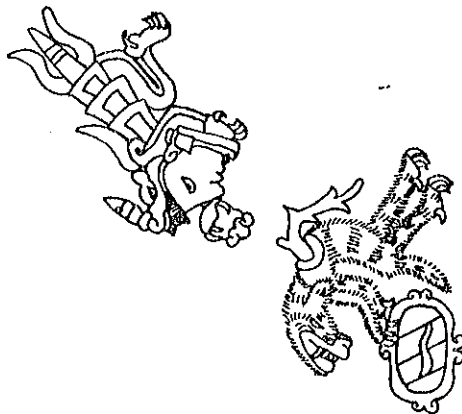


Fig. 11. Nuttall Codex figure thought to be equivalent to Cao Modeled vessels; see fig. 7.

different building types does not appear to be extraordinary; the frequent lack of association of the caches with other indicators of ritual activity is also explainable. The rare occurrence of these Cao Modeled cache figures outside of Santa Rita (in northern Belize at Laguna de On, Cerros, Lamanai, Douglas, and around Lake Bacalar; further north a related complex occurs at Mayapan) would be expected if Santa Rita were in fact a regional capital.

In summary, the various material remains recovered archaeologically at Santa Rita have a definite bearing on those described in the ethnography. The majority of the altars described by Landa are asso-

ciated not with idols but with blood sacrifice, thus implying that no distinct material remains would be expected in archaeological association with them, with the possible exception of interments [Landa in Tozzer 1941: 120]. The early historic "images," "idols," and "statues" very clearly include the archaeologically recovered pottery effigy censers. These censers appear to have been utilized for a number of purposes, at least two of them, those for the *wayeb* rites and those used as *katun* idols, are directly correlated with calendric as well as ceremonial activity. Censers, the prime archaeological indicators of ritual, have usually been associated by archaeologists with simple day-to-day religious activity or idolatry (Thompson 1970: 187-191); they may be more correctly associated with important rites associated with the cyclical passage of time. The ancient Maya practice of caching objects also appears to have analogues in early historic Maya activities, specifically in the making of an offering between two vessels. Certain cache patterns at Santa Rita may be correlated with practices undertaken during the *wayeb* rites, thereby suggesting that they are primarily associated with calendric ritual. Late Postclassic Maya caches may, in fact, have been deposited in a regular fashion in much the same way that the Classic Maya erected stelae.

Conclusions

Several implications may be derived from this comparison between archaeological and ethnohistoric patterns of ritual activity among the lowland Postclassic Maya. It is evident that an examination of ritual is one area where a correspondence may be found between Postclassic material culture remains, as excavated by the archaeologist, and descriptions of ceremonies, as recorded by the early Spaniards in the Maya area. While the defined archaeological patterns allow a tentative association to be established with ethnohistoric descriptions, the ethnohistoric detail provides further avenues for testing these patterns archaeologically. The presence of certain ritual indicators in diverse archaeological contexts may be taken to indicate the calendric nature of much ritual activity. From the archaeology, it is obvious that what would normally be considered to be ritual activity took place in contexts other than temples. This, however, is not interpreted as representing widespread, family-oriented, Postclassic idolatry as it has been in the past (Proskouriakoff 1955; A.L. Smith 1962: 268); it is instead interpreted as being indicative of the overall integration of Postclassic Maya society into a larger cohesive organization.

Acknowledgments

The major portion of this essay was presented at the 47th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in April 1982 in Minneapolis. Sections of papers given in November 1979 in Cincinnati (78th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association) and in May 1980 at Philadelphia (45th Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archaeology) have been juxtaposed with the more recent one to comprise the present article. Thanks are due to Arlen F. Chase for his encouragement and editorial comments as well as to all those who participated in or facilitated the field and laboratory progress of the Corozal Postclassic Project.