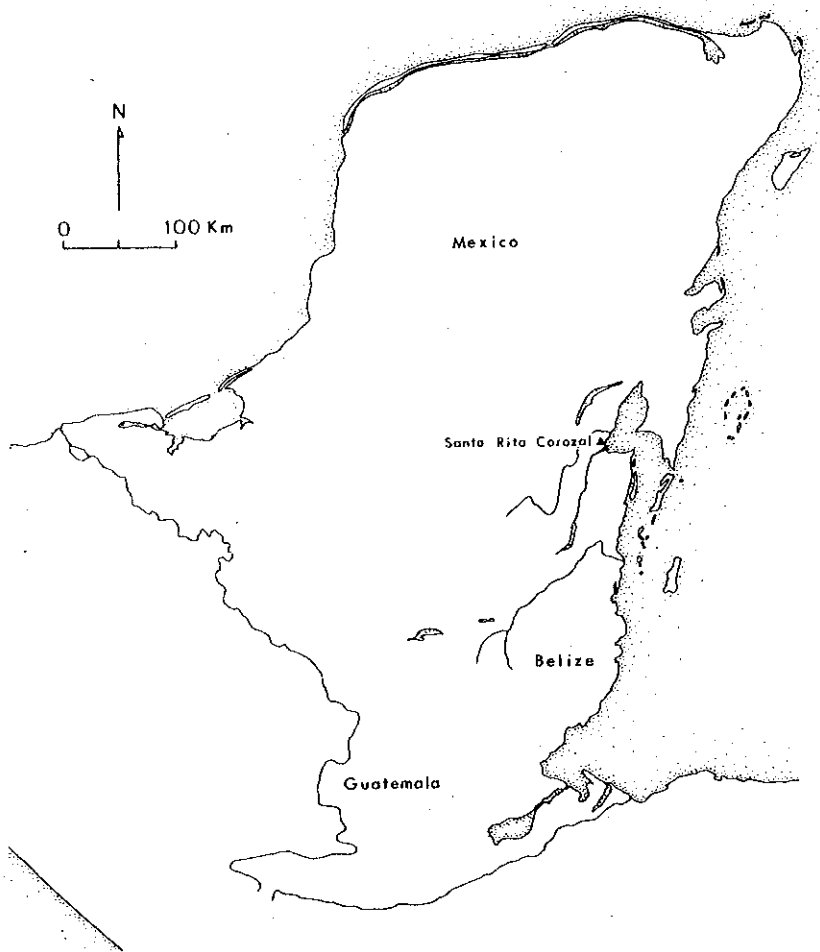


Offerings to the Gods:

Maya Archaeology at Santa Rita Corozal





Map of Mesoamerica and Belize.

Historic		
Late Postclassic		1530
Terminal Classic/ Early Postclassic		1300
Late Classic		900
Early Classic		600
		300
Late Preclassic	$\frac{AD}{BC}$	0
Middle Preclassic		300
		900
Early Preclassic		
		2000

Major Periods of Maya Prehistory.

Cover photo:
 Early Classic limestone bowl portraying God N emerging from a shell,
 recovered from 1985 tomb within Santa Rita Corozal Structure 7.
 Height = 8 cm.

**OFFERINGS TO THE GODS:
MAYA ARCHAEOLOGY AT
SANTA RITA COROZAL**

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THE MAYA

Geographically, the prehistoric Maya occupied the modern-day area of southern Mexico (especially Chiapas and the Yucatan Peninsula), all of Guatemala and Belize, and parts of Honduras and El Salvador. The descendants of these prehistoric Maya still exist today and, in fact, make up almost half of the modern population in Guatemala. There are villages where Mayan languages are spoken in most of the districts of Belize; however, the majority of Belize's population is a true mixture which includes Maya, Creole, Spanish, East Indian, Chinese, and Arab backgrounds.

Chronologically, the Maya preside over approximately 4000 years in the archaeological record of Central America. The Maya can be recognized archaeologically as a distinct people at about 2000 B.C.; these early finds have all been uncovered in northern Belize, specifically at the sites of Santa Rita Corozal, Cuello, and Colha. Maya development from these early beginnings until the Classic Period is referred to as the Preclassic Period and dates from 2000 B.C. until A.D. 300. The prehistoric Maya civilization is known primarily for its tall temples, carved monuments, and hieroglyphic writing system that date to the Classic Period, or from A.D. 300 to A.D. 900. Following the Classic Period, Maya society

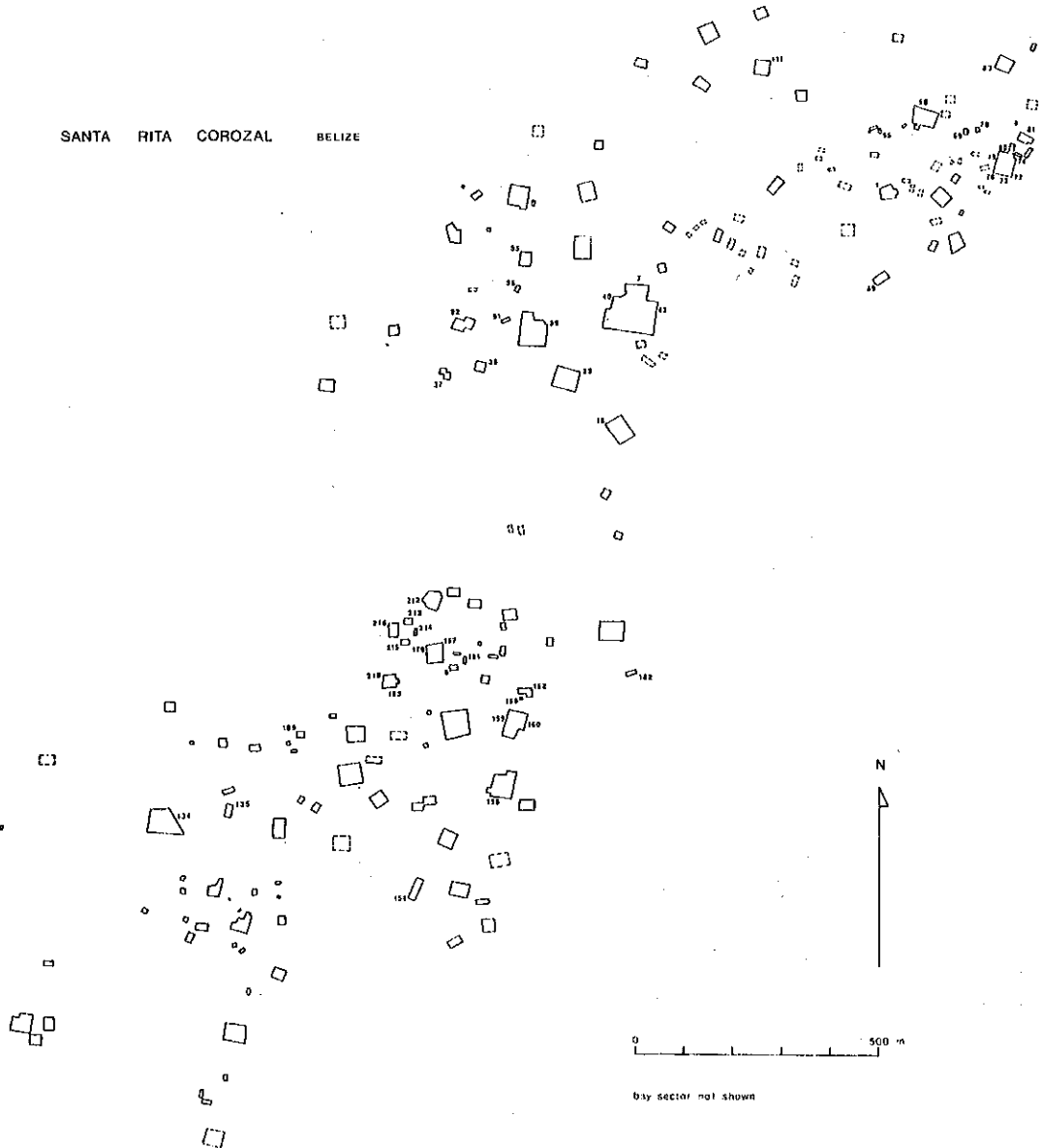
changed. No longer was there an emphasis on tall pyramids and elaborate sculptures of rulers; instead, the Maya built more ground level buildings and concentrated their art in painted, and perishable, stucco. This later span of time is referred to as the Postclassic Period and dates from the end of the Classic Period to the advent of the Spanish conquistadores, or from A.D. 900 until approximately A.D. 1530.

SANTA RITA COROZAL

The site of Santa Rita Corozal, located in the northern part of Belize, Central America, was occupied throughout Maya prehistory; in fact, the site continued into the Historic era and is occupied today by the inhabitants of Corozal Town, the third largest urban center in Belize.

Santa Rita Corozal was first excavated by Thomas Gann, a British medical doctor who resided in Corozal Town at the turn of the century. Even in 1900 Santa Rita Corozal was an endangered site, for its many mounds were a convenient source of both roadfill material and easily collectable stone for house foundations. Because of this constant exploitation of the site by an ever-expanding Corozal Town, the exact settlement pattern of the site can never be known. There is a long history of

SANTA RITA COROZAL BELIZE

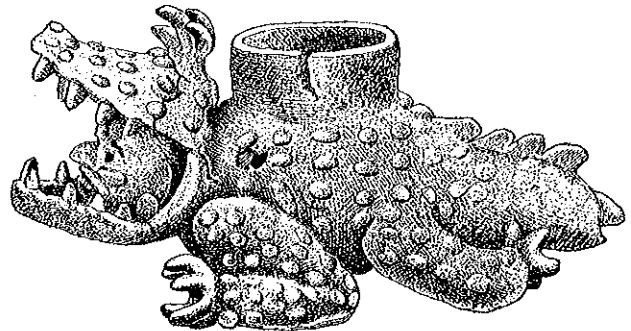


Sketch Map of Santa Rita Corozal.

excavation at the site, and these investigations largely fill this gap. Dr. Gann employed local townspeople to dig in more than half of the mounds known from the site at the turn of the century, examining some 42 structures. Fortunately, Gann made a partial record of many of these structures. Unfortunately, Gann was not a trained archaeologist; thus, his finds are generally only cursorily reported and not scientifically recorded. Through the simple descriptive publication of what he found, however, Gann did establish the fact that Santa Rita Corozal was an extremely important site during the Late Postclassic Period of Maya prehistory (A.D. 1300 - A.D. 1530). The elaborately painted Late Postclassic pottery cache figures that Gann unearthed were unparalleled in the Maya area until similar objects were found during the 1950s in excavations by the Carnegie Institution of Washington at the site of Mayapan, Yucatan, Mexico. Even these artifacts, however, pale beside those reported by Gann for Santa Rita Corozal.

Based upon native Maya chronicles, Mayapan was the primary Late Postclassic city in the northern lowlands prior to A.D. 1450; during its apogee, Mayapan must have been interested in Santa Rita Corozal as an important locale for establishing a port-of-trade or point of embarkation for places to the south. Investigations at

Santa Rita Corozal bespeak a close relationship between these two sites, at least in terms of the pottery. Both the ethnohistory and the archaeology also point to the florescence of Santa Rita Corozal after the recorded destruction of Mayapan circa A.D. 1450. In fact, Santa Rita Corozal rose to prominence as an independent polity only following the dissolution of Mayapan hegemony. From the recovered archaeology, it is clear that the site had few peers in the Protohistoric Period in the realms of trade and religion.

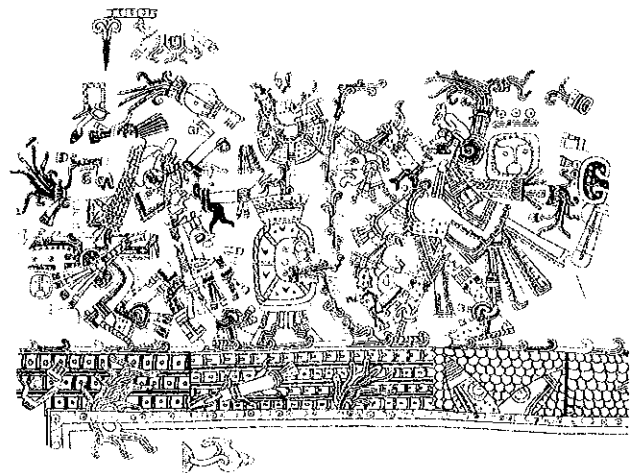


One of the caches recovered by Thomas Gann from Santa Rita Corozal. Length = ca. 39.5 cm.; from Gann.



MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITION - "MOODY," LINDSAY'S ASSISTANT, GANN, MORLEY, SMITH, LINDSAY

Dr. Thomas Gann, avocational archaeologist who first investigated the site of Santa Rita Corozal; from Gann.

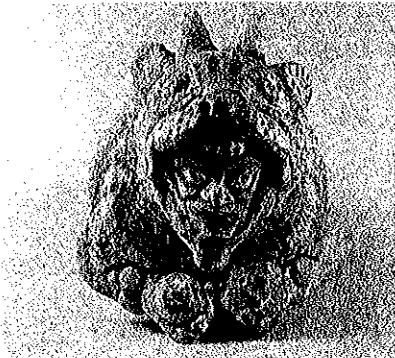


An illustration of one of the mural recovered by Thomas Gann from Structure 1 at Santa Rita Corozal. Height of figures = ca. 85 cm.; after Gann.

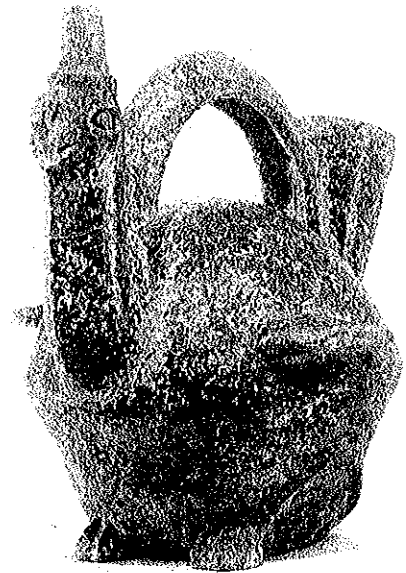
COROZAL POSTCLASSIC PROJECT

In order to place the spectacular finds made by Gann into an archaeological context, the Corozal Postclassic Project began investigation at Santa Rita Corozal in 1979. The purpose of the Corozal Postclassic project was threefold: first, to define and outline the archaeological history of Santa Rita Corozal; second, to attempt an understanding of what the Maya Postclassic Period was when it started, when it ended, and what it represented in terms of overall Maya history; and third, to attempt to understand the social, political, and religious organization of the Late Postclassic capital city of Santa Rita Corozal.

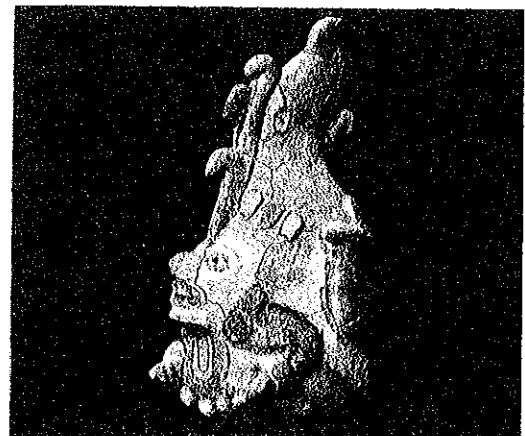
Excavation took place in two phases, with full seasons in 1979 and 1980 and, again, in 1984 and 1985 after the initial investigations had been preliminarily analyzed. During the first phase of the Corozal Postclassic Project, excavations were also undertaken at the site of Nohmul at a complex previously recognized as spanning the Classic to Postclassic transition. Investigations undertaken during Phase I at Santa Rita Corozal demonstrated that the site was much larger than had been previously supposed and that there was much more left to be discovered in spite of the disastrous effects of modernization. Mapping of the site was done during all excavation seasons as well as in 1982 and revealed that the site extended from the modern town of Paraiso to the



A Late Postclassic modeled and painted cache vessel from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 81, found during the 1980 season; it portrays a human head within the mouth of a jaguar-like creature and contained jadeite and *spondylus* shell beads, as well as a small piece of gold foil. Length = 15 cm.



Blackware stirrup-spouted vessel, representing a harpy eagle, found cached beneath the rear wall of Santa Rita Corozal Structure 81; the vessel dates to the Late Postclassic Period and likely comes from Ecuador. Height = ca. 19 cm.



A Late Postclassic modeled and painted cache vessel from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 37, found during the 1984 season; it portrays a composite human diving figure and earth-monster, and contained jadeite and *spondylus* beads as well as seeds and partial copper rings. Height = ca. 17 cm.

north of Corozal Town to Tony's Motel on the bay in the extreme southern part of Corozal Town. Almost 250 visible structures have been plotted onto the existing map; others have been removed in almost 100 years of modernization. It is also clear from excavation that many additional "invisible" structures exist at the site in areas of flat ground which provide no surface indications of having ever been occupied.

In the south-central part of the site, near the modern village of San Andres, archaeological remains were recovered that dated back to the dawn of Maya civilization. Other Preclassic Period remains were recovered from the whole of the site, often just below the surface. During the Early Classic Period, the archaeological evidence suggested that Santa Rita Corozal was a very active and booming center. Late Classic and Terminal Classic/Early Postclassic occupation was also uncovered in most areas of the site. More importantly, at least in terms of the overall research design, Postclassic materials were extremely copious and found in almost every excavation. Recovered caches revealed similar objects to those recovered by Gann and also hinted at the existence of patterns in the way in which these special deposits were placed at the site. The extent of Santa Rita's long-distance trade was hinted at by the recovery of a double-spouted blackware vessel, presumably coming from Ecuador in South America.

Whereas the majority of the Phase I archaeological work had concentrated in the northeastern portion of the site, Phase II archaeological work concentrated in the central and northwest portions of Santa Rita

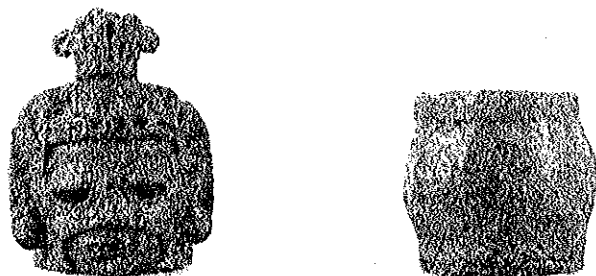
Corozal. Both Phase I and Phase II research was specifically designed to find remains dating to the Late Postclassic Period and was very successful in doing this. A Late Postclassic urban barrio had been defined for the northeastern portion of Santa Rita Corozal; it was hoped that intensive excavation in other parts of the site would allow for complementary barrio definitions. Although the material from Phase II is only now in the process of being analyzed, it is apparent that such definitions will emerge and that the recovered data will also allow for many new insights on the Maya of the Late Postclassic Period.

THE 1985 SEASON AT SANTA RITA COROZAL

The final season of the Corozal Postclassic Project at Santa Rita Corozal witnessed excavation in 16 locales. The excavation strategy that was used primarily concentrated on large-scale areal clearing to expose building plans and any associated trash. These horizontal investigations were integrated with trenching operations designed to reveal construction history and associated buried deposits. The research design was oriented toward the recovery of Late Postclassic occupation, and such data were recovered from 15 of the excavated locales. The vertical probes, or trenches, also yielded a host of materials and deposits that dated to time periods earlier than the Late Postclassic Period. Both the earlier and later materials recovered during 1985 can be related to data excavated during 1979, 1980, and 1984. Together, these data may be utilized to produce a coherent archaeological interpretation of the prehistory of Santa Rita Corozal.

THE PRECLASSIC PERIOD AT SANTA RITA COROZAL

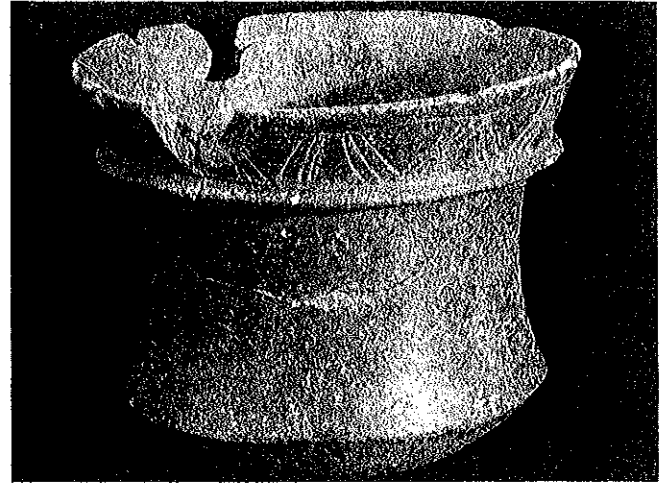
The Preclassic Period of northern Belize dates from roughly 2000 B.C. until A.D. 300; it may be subdivided into three facets: Early, Middle, and Late. The Early Preclassic material that is found at Santa Rita comes from the south-central or San Andres portion of the site; the pottery from this era, referred to in a general sense as "Swasey," was uncovered both by Thomas Gann and the Corozal Postclassic Project. The Corozal Postclassic Project uncovered several burials relating to the Early Preclassic Period in excavations undertaken into Santa



Copper rings recovered from a Late Postclassic burial in Santa Rita Corozal Structure 58 during the 1979 field season. Height of face = ca. 3.4 cm; height of other ring = 2.2 cm.



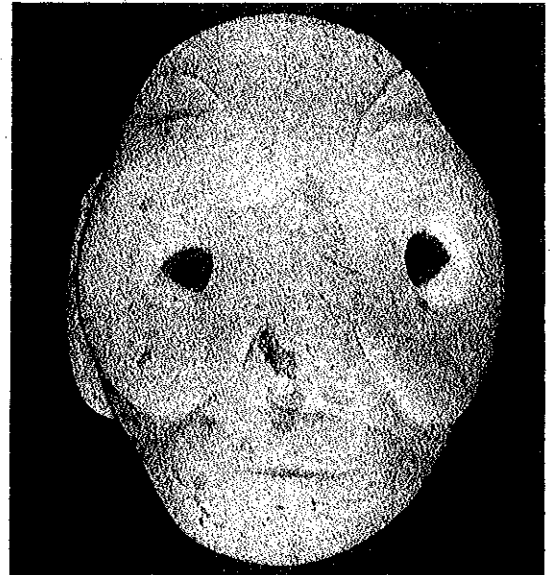
An Early Preclassic burial from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 134; it was excavated in 1980 and contained a single shallow redware dish as well as two shell bracelets and a shell necklace.



A small Late Preclassic redware florero with an incised chevron design around its neck; it was recovered from a burial beneath Santa Rita Corozal Structure 189 during the 1985 field season. Height = 11.8 cm.

Rita Corozal Structure 134. These deposits can be broken into two distinct phases, both in association with construction sequences. The earliest phase is represented by two burials, each accompanied with single low-walled, shallow dishes; these interments were placed directly on bedrock prior to the first construction in the area. The slightly later "Swasey" phase materials exhibit some characteristics of Middle Preclassic "Mamom" forms found in the Central Peten, but are very much a part of the early, regionalized ceramic tradition found in northern Belize and referred to, in general terms, as "Swasey." Besides being uncovered in Structure 134, deposits relating to the later part of the Middle Preclassic Period were also uncovered in Structure 92, located in the north-central portion of the site.

The Late Preclassic Period, roughly dating from 300 B.C. until A.D. 300, witnessed a minor population explosion at the site. Remains dating to the Late Preclassic Period appear to have become almost continuously scattered over the site and approached the limits of the site

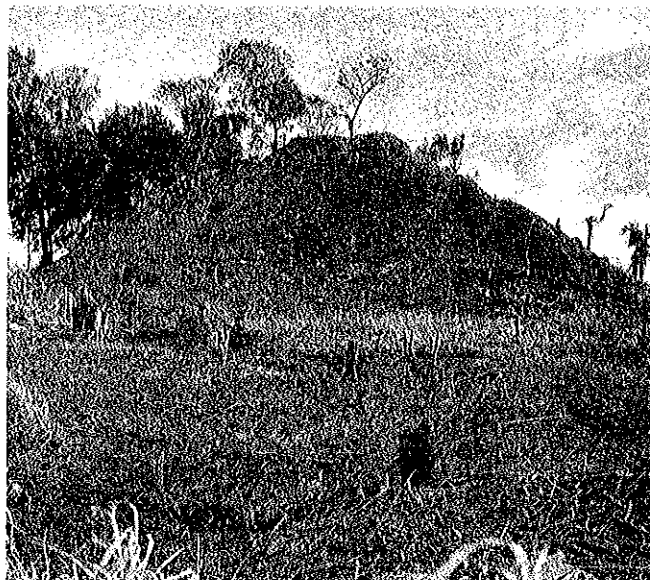


A carved shell bead in the form of a monkey's head; it dates to the Proclassic Period and was recovered from a burial just outside of Santa Rita Structure 182 during the 1985 field season. Height = ca. 2.5 cm.

in all directions. Late Preclassic deposits and constructions have been recovered within: Santa Rita Structures 134, 159, 182, and 189 in the south-central part of the site; Structures 35, 37, and 92 in the north-central part of the site; Santa Rita Structure 7 in the central part of the site; and Structure 58 in the northeast portion of the site. In general, the population of this era appears to have been resident agriculturalists and there is no recovered evidence for major ceremonial constructions, such as those found across the bay at the massive site of Cerros. During this span of time, Protoclassic influences also appear at Santa Rita; in pottery, this is seen in the presence of polychromy and tetrapods. The Protoclassic diagnostics that have been recovered from Santa Rita are all concentrated in the south-central and central portions of the site, having been recovered in or near Structures 23, 159, 182, and Chultun 13. Gann also uncovered Protoclassic remains in this portion of the site.



Santa Rita Corozal Structure 135-2nd, a semi-circular building with a rectangular antechamber dating to the Early Classic Period and excavated during the 1980 season.



Santa Rita Corozal Structure 7 prior to excavation in 1979.

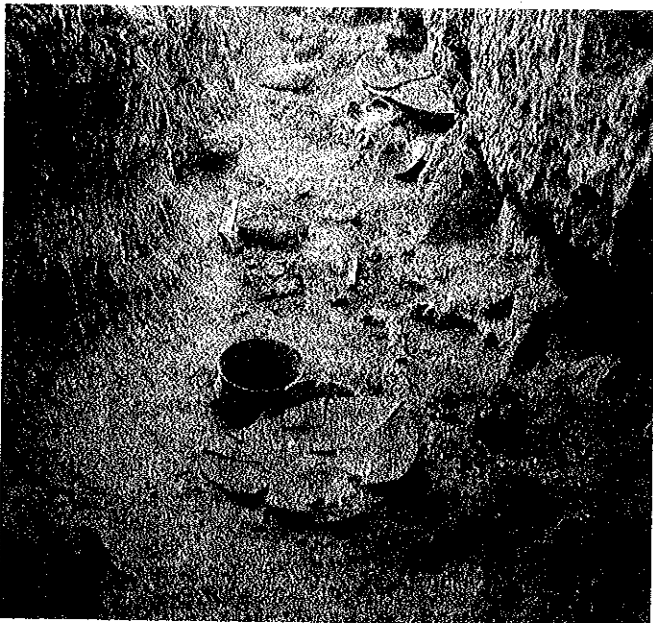


Santa Rita Corozal Structure 7 near the end of the 1985 field season.

THE EARLY CLASSIC PERIOD AT SANTA RITA COROZAL

Santa Rita Corozal came into its own during the Early Classic Period. Perhaps the appearance of the Proto-classic diagnostics at Santa Rita signal its participation in different spheres of influence than those participated in by the site of Cerros across the bay. Whatever the case, as Cerros waned during the Late Preclassic Period, Santa Rita blossomed forth, becoming a major site during the Early Classic Period. Early Classic Period remains have been recovered from the south-central (Structures 134 and 135), central (Structures 7 and 35), and northeast (Structures 58 and 80) sectors of the site. These remains consist of both burial and constructional activities. Most importantly, however, the Early Classic Period heralded the appearance of truly monumental architecture at Santa Rita, particularly as represented by Structure 7.

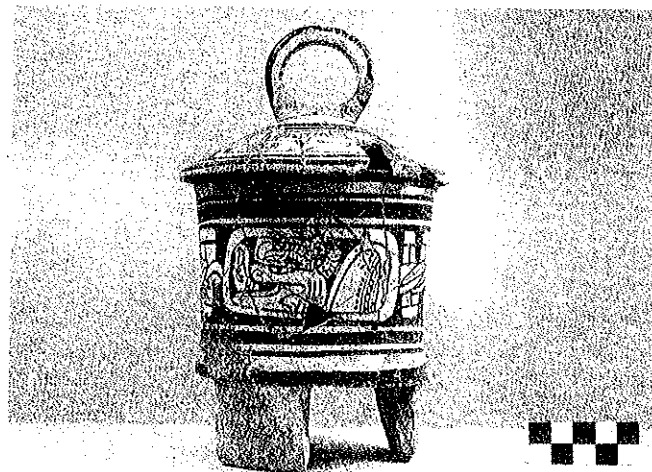
Santa Rita Corozal Structure 7 was and is the tallest Precolumbian construction at the site. The structure



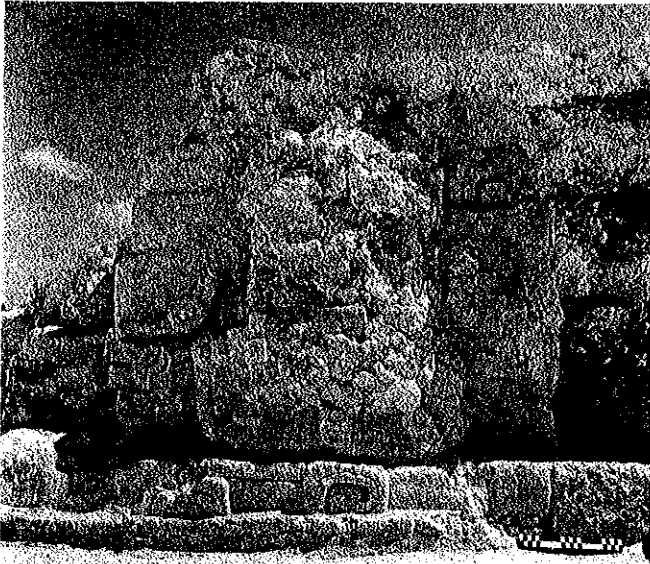
Elaborate burial associated with Santa Rita Corozal Structure 7-1st; it dates to the end of the Early Classic Period and was excavated during the 1979 field season.



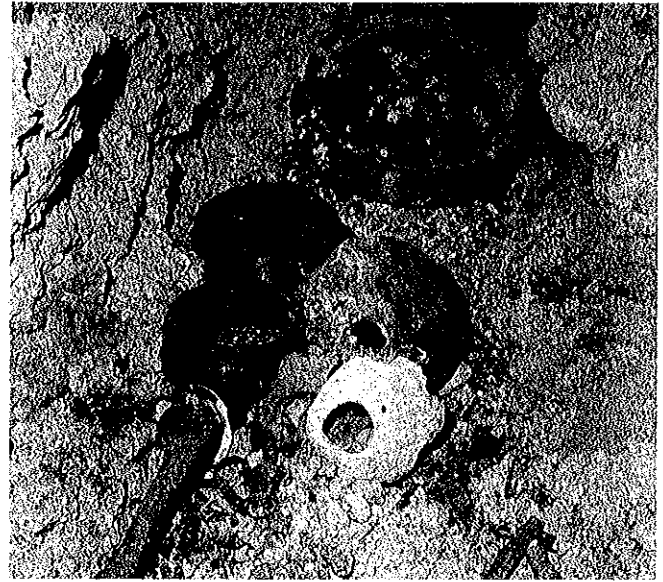
Architectural mask associated with the roof comb of Structure 7-3rd, recovered during excavations in 1979. Original height = ca. 110 cm.; height of visible portion = 55 cm.



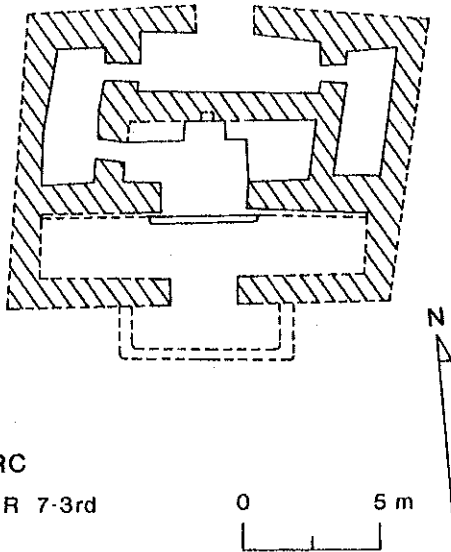
Black-and-White cylinder tripod with lid from the 1979 Structure 7 interment. Height = 13.5 cm. without lid.



The remains of an architectural mask associated with the building platform of Structure 7-2nd, recovered during excavations in 1985. Height = ca. 115 cm.

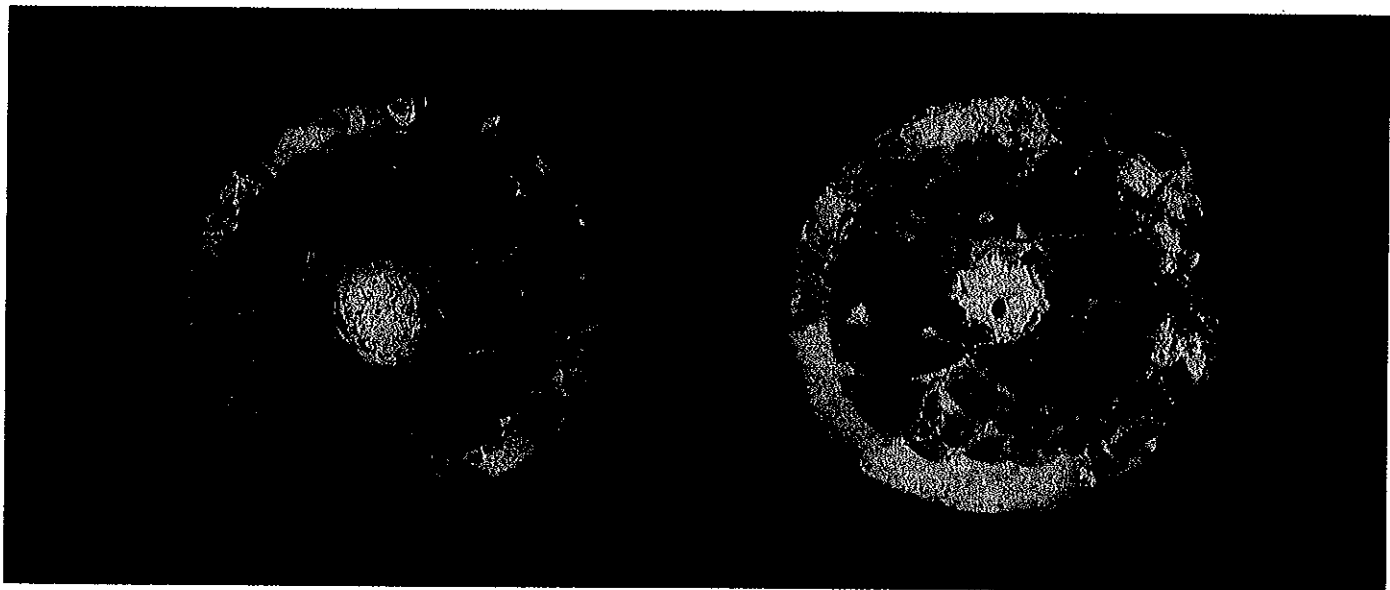


During the 1984 season, an Early Classic tomb containing the remains of an elderly female was found intruded through the floor of the central room of Structure 7-3rd.

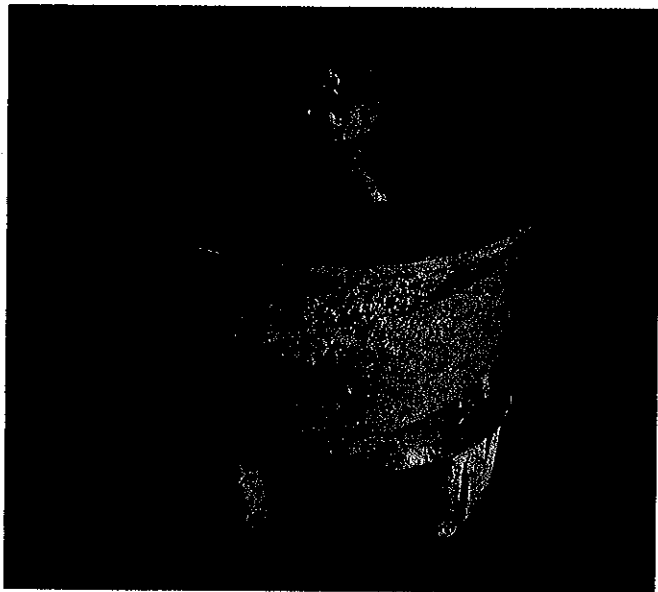


Plan of Santa Rita Corozal Structure 7-3rd.

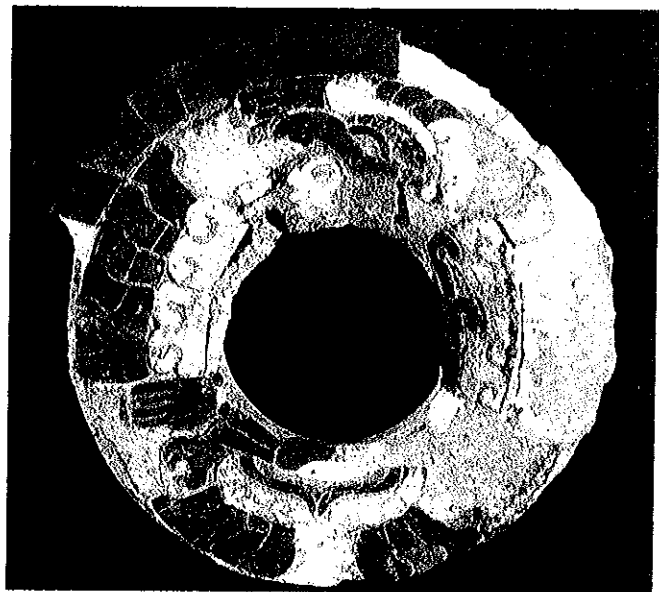
was first investigated by Thomas Gann, who recovered a cache and burial in its summit, but decided not to dig further into the construction because of the hard nature of its core; Gann's investigations removed what was left of the latest building phase (-1st) of Structure 7. Because he did not penetrate the core, however, his investigations missed a very elaborate interment, presumably of an adult female, that had been placed in the hearting of Structure 7-1st; this burial allows the latest construction of Structure 7 to be dated to the latest part of the Early Classic Period. Excavation by the Corozal Postclassic Project into Structure 7 in 1979 revealed not only the impressive burial, but also what was left of the building plan of Structure 7-2nd (an earlier building buried in the core of -1st), a roof mask relating to an even earlier building (-3rd), and a large quantity of Late Postclassic incense-burner fragments smashed on the remaining front steps of Structure 7-1st. All of this information served to demonstrate the long occupation and associated ceremonial activities accorded this very important location.



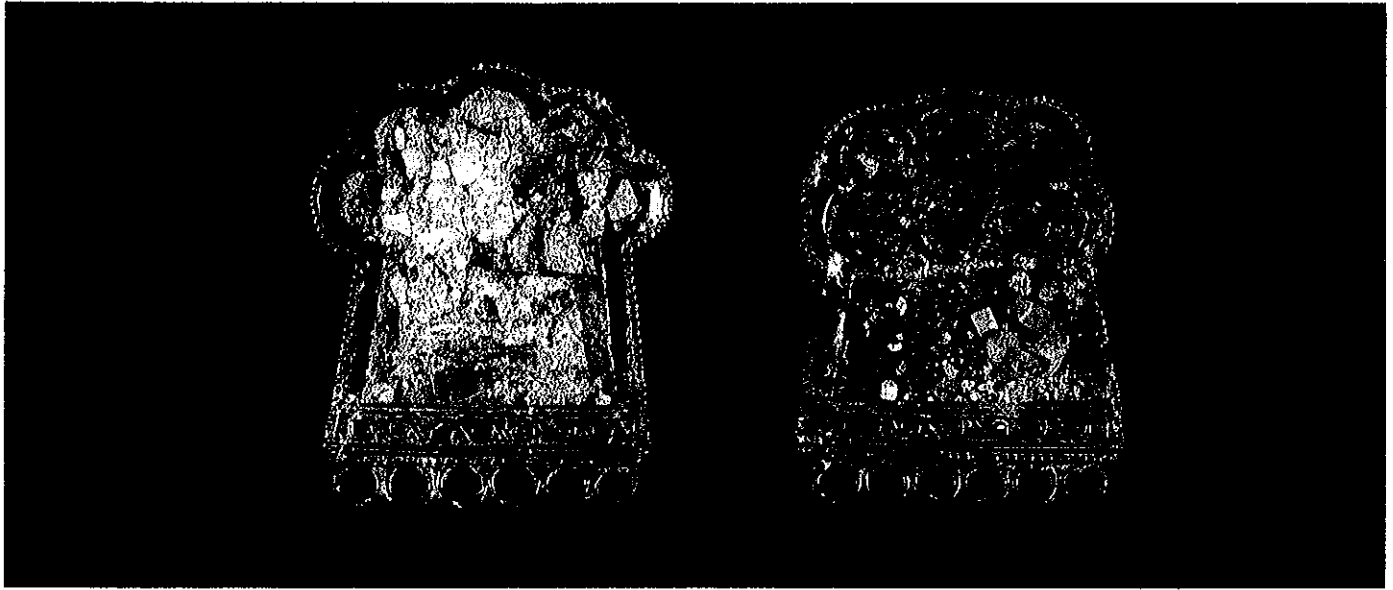
Jadeite mosaic earflares on shell backing with mica inlaid rim, from 1985 Structure 7 tomb. Diameter = ca. 4.2 cm.



Bichrome tripod cylinder with lid, painted with a swirl design in red and yellow and with a modeled human head serving as the handle for the lid, from the 1985 Structure 7 tomb. Height = 16 cm. without lid.

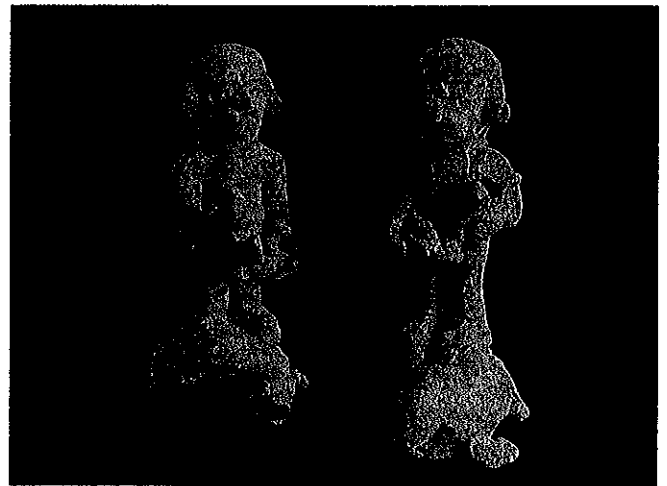


One of two earflares associated with the woman from the 1984 Structure 7 tomb. Diameter = ca. 8 cm.

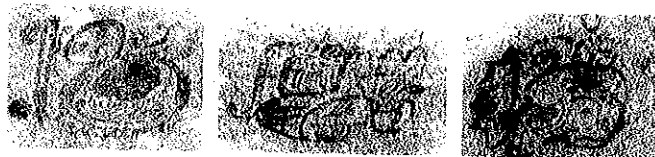


Gold and turquoise mosaic earflares, associated with the primary individual in the Late Postclassic burial in Santa Rita Corozal Structure 216; finely-worked gold bells dangled from each of the earflares. Height = ca. 6.2 cm without bells.

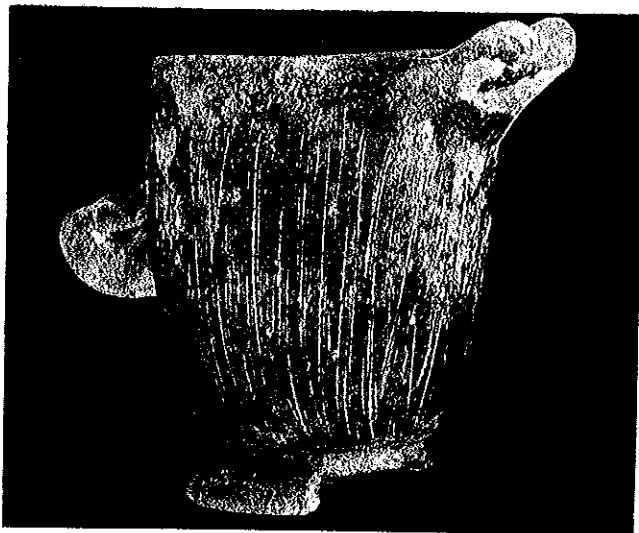
During the 1984 and 1985 field seasons of the Corozal Postclassic Project, excavation was again undertaken at the Structure 7 vicinity. These investigations resulted in the total excavation and exposure of Structure 7-3rd, which was then consolidated for public viewing. The building plan of Structure 7-3rd reveals a very complicated series of interconnecting doorways and rooms, the most important of which was the central room containing an interior wall niche. Ceremonial burning was found on the floor of both the front and central rooms; the central room also had pottery smashed on its floor and a cache of five vessels placed into the wall niche prior to the encasement of Structure 7-3rd in the fills for Structure 7-2nd. A close examination of the floors in the central room in 1984 revealed a patched floor area which led to the discovery of the small tomb of a very important female accompanied by 5 ceramic vessels, some very impressive mosaic earflares, and a whole carved *spondylus* shell. Excavation of the southernmost room in 1985 revealed a similar floor patch. Within the cut in the front room, however, the roof of a huge tomb was found some two meters below the floor of the room.



Two of the four blood-letters or *bacabs*, from the Late Postclassic cache under Santa Rita Corozal Structure 213. Height = 19.4 cm.

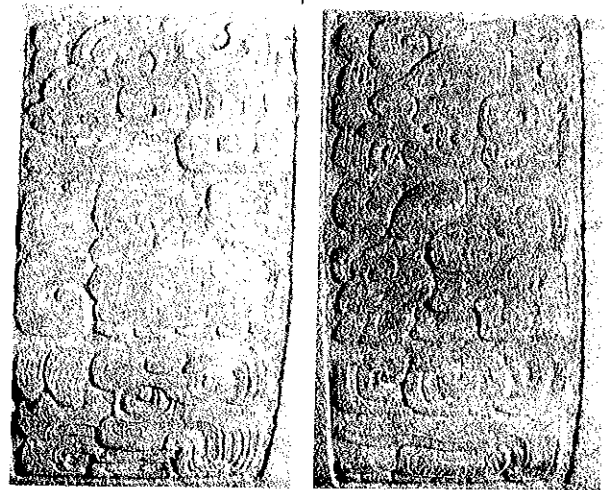


The three hieroglyphs associated with an Early Classic cache of six vessels located above the 1985 tomb of an adult male in the core of Structure 7-3rd; the six vessels were paired to form three lip-to-lip pairs, each of which was painted with a single glyph and each set of which contained shells and stingray spines. Width of each glyph = ca. 6 cm.



An Early Classic ceramic pitcher, reminiscent of those found in the Guatemalan highland site of Kaminaljuyu, from within the 1985 Structure 7 tomb. Height = 8.4 cm.

This tomb measured 4.25 m in length, 1.5 meters in width, and slightly over 2 meters in height. Benches partially lined its southern and western walls. A single adult male was laid out in this tomb accompanied by symbols of his importance (including a flint ceremonial bar, a complete *spondylus* shell, and a stingray spine) and by a host of artifacts that included 8 pottery vessels and 1 stone vessel as well as the remains of a jadeite mask and a very eroded codex. Certain objects within this tomb reveal a close affinity to objects and styles



The two glyptic panels from the limestone bowl, recovered from the 1985 Structure 7 tomb. Width of panels = 3.6 to 3.9 cm.

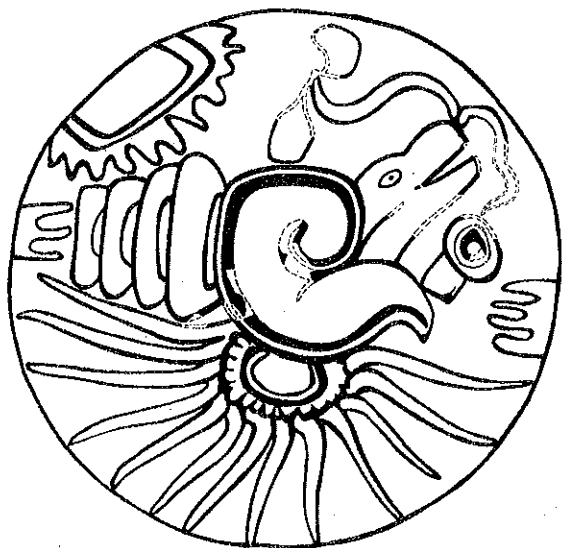


A carved jadeite head, recovered from the 1985 Structure 7 tomb. Height = 2.7 cm.

known from the sites of Kaminaljuyu in the highlands of Guatemala and the huge urban site of Teotihuacan in the basin of Mexico. Above the tomb at its southern end, but still within the same cut, a cache of six paired vessels, each set associated with a painted glyph and each set containing stingray spines and other small objects, was recovered immediately behind the steps that led into Structure 7-3rd. All of these deposits attest to the importance of the site of Santa Rita Corozal in northern Belize during the Early Classic Period.

THE LATE CLASSIC PERIOD AT SANTA RITA COROZAL

Extensive artifactual remains, but little architecture, dating to the Late Classic Period, or A.D. 600-900, have been recovered from Santa Rita Corozal. It is suspected that many of the taller, mounded buildings that have been removed from the site through years of "modernization" dated to this era. Late Classic deposits have been encountered in all parts of the site: Structures 134, 135, 154, 159, 179, 183, 212, and 216 in the south-central portion of the site; Structures 7, 35, 37, 39, and 91 in the north-central and central portions of the site; and, Structure 69 in the northeast sector of the site. The majority of these finds are from burials. What is known about Late Classic building techniques indicates that finely finished stone was utilized. The ceramics from Santa Rita Corozal that may be dated to the Late Classic Period indicate that this part of northern Belize was using one or more regionalized pottery tradition(s). Whereas the pottery of the Early Classic Period demonstrated that Santa Rita Corozal had close ties to the



A line drawing of a Late Classic ceramic plate, excavated during the 1985 season from the plaza area in front of Santa Rita Structure 183. Diameter of drawn interior design = ca. 23 cm.

Maya heartland in the central Peten of Guatemala, by the Late Classic Period these ties had decreased substantially and the pottery from Santa Rita Corozal represents an independent development. Subsequently, the site's ceramic tradition became more closely aligned with ceramic traditions found in the northern Lowlands.

The pottery that links the Classic Period to the Postclassic Period at Santa Rita Corozal indicates that the area of Chetumal Bay was clearly within the cultural sphere of the northern Lowlands. Because of the difficulty in separating the end of the Classic Period from the beginning of the Postclassic Period in northern Belize, this era is referred to as the Terminal Classic/Early Postclassic Period. Remains dating from this era have been encountered in all segments of the site, especially in the fills of Postclassic buildings (such as Structure 81 in the northeast sector of Santa Rita Corozal). It is clear that Late Postclassic peoples were mining these deposits for core material for their constructions. Structures 6, 38, 83, 91, 156, 179, 200, and 212 all provide remains datable to this temporal era.

While regional horizon markers of the Terminal Classic/Early Postclassic Period, such as double-mouth water jars, abound in northern Belize, other northern lowland ceramic markers, such as slateware and trickleware, made their appearance in domestic contexts by the end of the Late Classic Period. Excavations undertaken by ourselves at the site of Nohmul, 20 kilometers to the south of Santa Rita Corozal, have led us to postulate the actual presence of a Yucatec group at this site. Santa Rita Corozal does not have the architectural remains that Nohmul does, but its Terminal Classic/Early Postclassic pottery tradition indicates that it shared in the events that were happening there. The archaeology of northern Belize indicates that there was a continuous occupation in this region out of the Classic Period into the Postclassic Period. The "collapse" that is reported from the central Peten of Guatemala did not occur here, but it is important to note that the tall pyramids and the stelae and altar cult of the central Peten never made much of an impact in northern Belize. It may be that the differences that can be seen in the archaeology of these two regions hint at the reasons for northern Belize's florescence during the Postclassic Period.

THE POSTCLASSIC PERIOD AT SANTA RITA COROZAL

Without a doubt, Santa Rita Corozal was a very important locale during the Postclassic Period. By the Late Postclassic Period, it had become the capital of the Maya polity known as Chetumal and was in control of an area approximating 6000 square kilometers. As mentioned, Thomas Gann first brought the site of Santa Rita Corozal to the attention of the world with his publication of the spectacular remains he uncovered in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The murals encountered by Gann in Structure 1 have been labeled as "Mixteca-Puebla" style by art historians and have also led some to attribute the florescence of this region, and the east coast of the Yucatan Peninsula, to the direct influence of peoples from central Mexico in the Maya area during the Postclassic Period. This style, however, characterizes the Maya Postclassic from its inception and may alternatively be viewed as the result of an indigenous tradition with extensive exterior trade and communication networks. In fact, the cohesion in patterning between Classic and Postclassic Period caches and burials at Santa Rita Corozal is suggestive of continuities in religious beliefs that would not be duplicated in the case of foreign domination or intrusion.

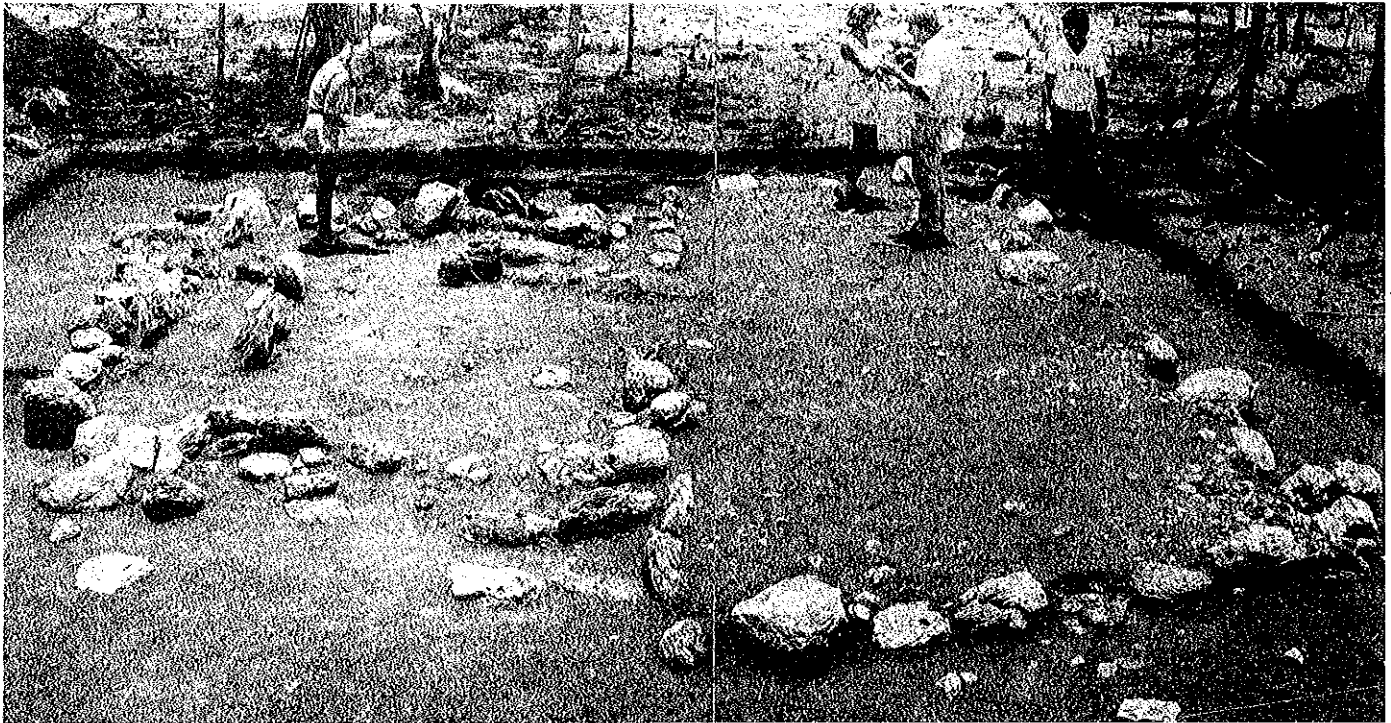
The excavations undertaken by the Corozal Postclassic Project at Santa Rita Corozal not only encountered the kind of remains found by Thomas Gann but also recovered other patterns and types of data not recorded from his earlier excavations. The southernmost portion of Santa Rita Corozal was apparently unoccupied during the Postclassic Period, but the rest of the site witnessed a denser occupation than in any previous period of time. Late Postclassic remains were recovered from Structures 6, 7, 35, 36, 37, 38, 58, 70, 73, 74, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 92, 156, 159, 160, 162, 166, 167, 179, 181, 182, 183, 189, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 218, and Chultun 12. The excavation into the majority of these structures recovered building plans, construction history, and associated deposits. The majority of these buildings are exceedingly low and barely visible from the surface of the ground, leading us to characterize the Postclassic Maya as the "invisible people." An early facet for the Late Postclassic period has been stratigraphically recognized in



A Late Postclassic cache from Santa Rita Structure 218, recovered during the 1985 field season. Length = 12 cm.

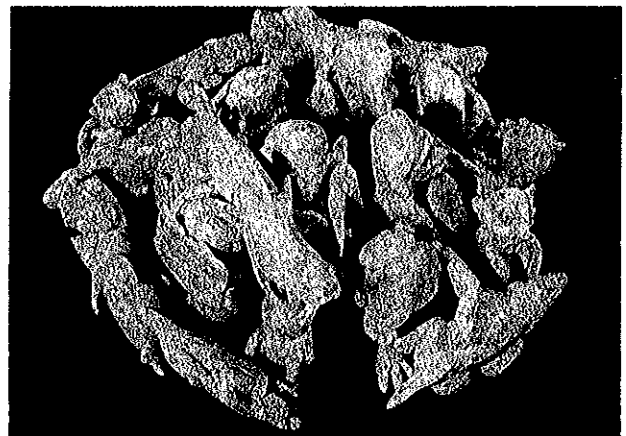


A Late Postclassic multiple burial from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 218, excavated during the 1985 field season.



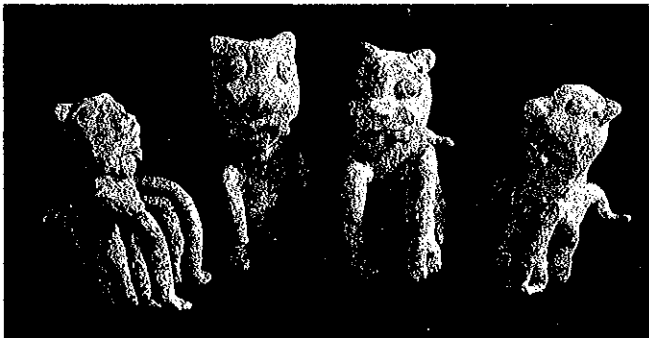
Santa Rita Corozal Structure 183, a Late Postclassic building excavated during the 1985 field season.

excavations into Structures 77 and 212. The materials recovered in these excavations indicate that the late facet Santa Rita Corozal ceramic materials, which show a close affinity to the ceramics of Mayapan, post-date the initial appearance of the Tulum Red style ceramics which characterize the East Coast of Yucatan. David Pendergast has previously suggested, based on his excavations at Lamanai some 45 kilometers south of Santa Rita Corozal, that the redware traditions of the northern lowlands ultimately originated in northern Belize. Based on the diversity of pottery traditions evident in northern Belize, on the earlier datings for certain of the Postclassic northern Belize redware traditions, and on the Santa Rita Corozal data, this may well be the case.

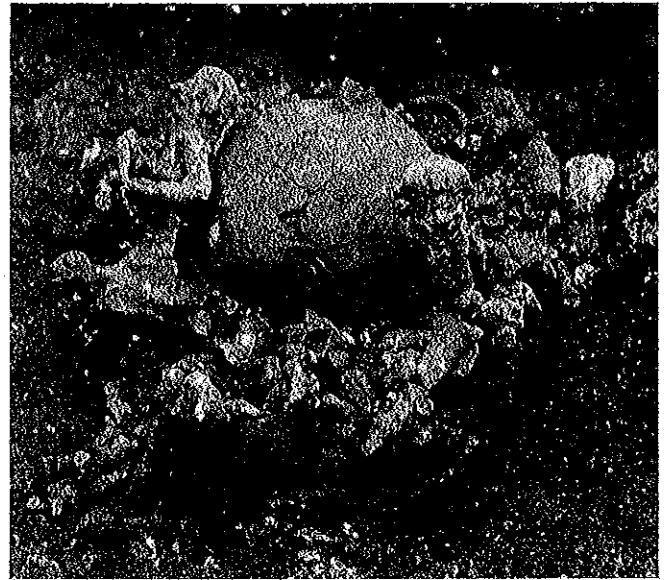


The figurines from the Late Postclassic cache within the core of Structure 183. Length of shark = ca. 16.5 cm.

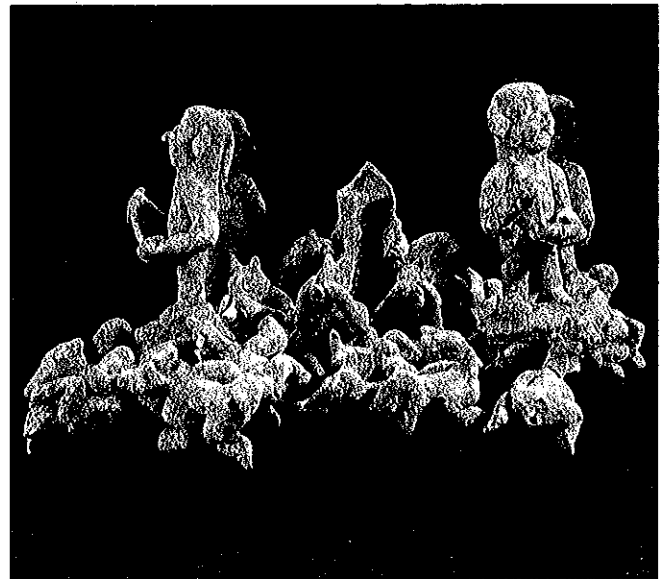
The 1985 excavations into Postclassic locales focused primarily on the south-central portion of Santa Rita Corozal. Structures 167, 182, 183, 189, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, and 218 all yielded complete Late Postclassic building plans. The majority of these remains were single phase constructions, but, in several cases, these buildings were constructed over earlier remains. Seven Late Postclassic caches were recovered from Structures 182, 183, 213, 215, and 218. Some of these caches consisted of individual effigy vessels, masquettes, or lidded urns containing animal remains. In general, the caches are similar to others found in previous seasons and accord well with the proposed ritual partitioning of the site into various cyclical patterns. The most spectacular of the 1985 caches came from Structures 183 and 213, each of which produced a "figurine" cache. Twenty-five figures occurred in the cache placed directly in the ground prior to the construction of Structure 213 and its associated platform; nine of these figures (the central one being a figure seated on throne either blowing a conch shell or, less likely, smoking a huge cigar) were carefully placed inside a lidded urn; the remaining sixteen figures were placed directly in the soil surrounding this urn. Four individuals standing on turtles performing blood sacrifice were placed about the urn; these figures probably represent the four *bacabs*, Maya deities who held up the sky and had escaped from a mythical flood which destroyed the world (probably on turtles). Twenty-eight figures were placed within a large urn in the core of Structure 183 in front of an altar; seven dif-



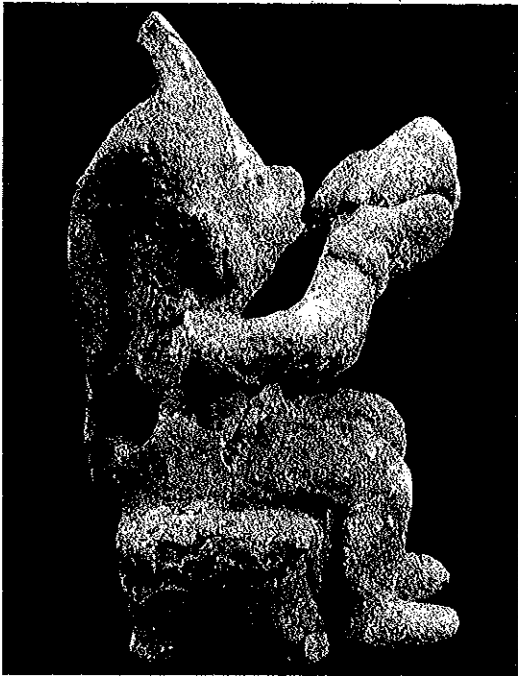
The four jaguar figurines from the Structure 183 Late Postclassic figurine cache. Height of each = ca. 9.5 cm.



Late Postclassic figurine cache in situ from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 213, excavated during the 1985 season.



The figurines from the Late Postclassic cache beneath Structure 213, arranged as found. Height of *bacab* = 19.4 cm.



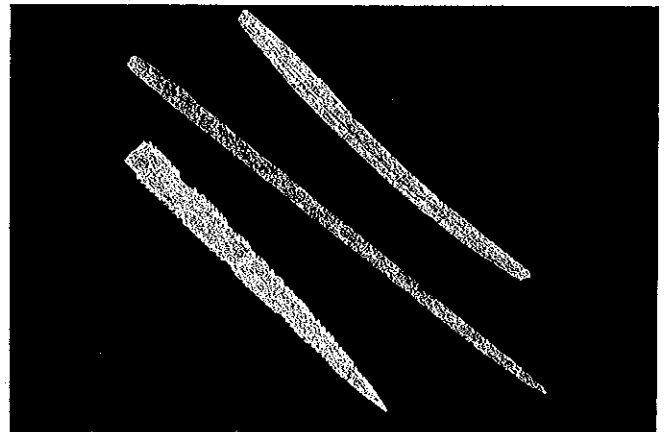
The central figurine, portraying a seated figure on a throne with a conch shell or possibly a cigar, from the Late Postclassic cache under Structure 213. Height = 14.2 cm.



One of the Late Postclassic incensarios from the multiple burial within the front stoop of Structure 213. Height = 33 cm.

ferent sets, consisting of four representations of similar figures, were carefully placed in this urn: women with mantles and warriors with spears and shields made up the central component; situated around them were birds, snakes, sharks, jaguars, and crocodiles.

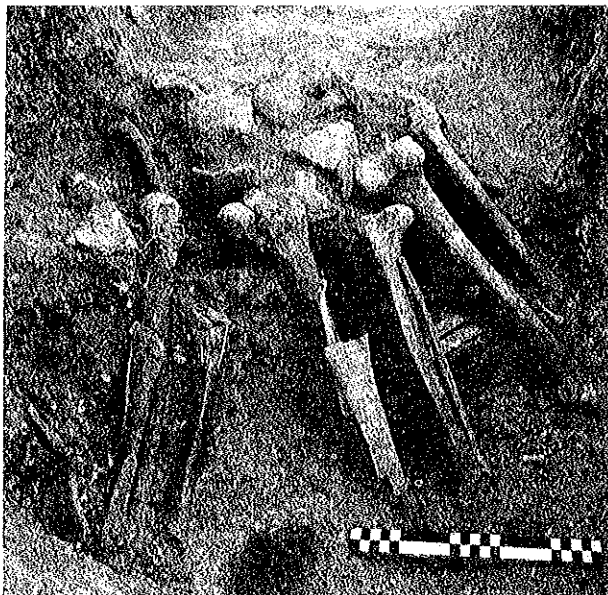
Apart from caches, the 1985 season also yielded numerous Postclassic Period burials. The majority of the recovered Postclassic Period burials contained multiple individuals. Within the front stoop of Structure 213, an interment containing five individuals was found; with this multiple burial were found the remains of two effigy incensarios, representing a female deity and a male deity (who may be identified as *Itzamna*), as well as five jadeite beads. Excavations in the vicinity of Structure 216, however, yielded a most important Postclassic burial consisting of two bundled individuals. The secondary individual in this interment was appar-



Two stingray spines and the copper needle associated with the secondary individual from the Late Postclassic burial in Structure 216. Length of copper needle = 13.9 cm.

ently a blood-sacrifice for the primary individual, as he was associated with a multitude of stingray spines and a long copper needle. The primary individual in the interment was accompanied by a jadeite and *spondylus* shell necklace, a *spondylus* shell bracelet, and a pair of turquoise mosaic earflares set on an obsidian backing in an elaborate gold frame. These gold and mosaic earflares were of non-local origin and of a kind referred to in the ethnohistory of central Mexico as restricted in use to the highest of Aztec society; it is likely, therefore, that the interred primary individual was a *halach uinic* and of such importance that he was able to wear the highest symbols of Aztec society some 750 miles away from the Basin of Mexico. The Aztecs were poised to conquer the Maya Lowlands before they were rudely interrupted by Hernando Cortez in A.D. 1519; these earflares may be indicative of both their influence and interest in the trade that passed through Late Postclassic Santa Rita Corozal.

All of the Late Postclassic deposits recovered from Santa Rita Corozal by the Corozal Postclassic Project

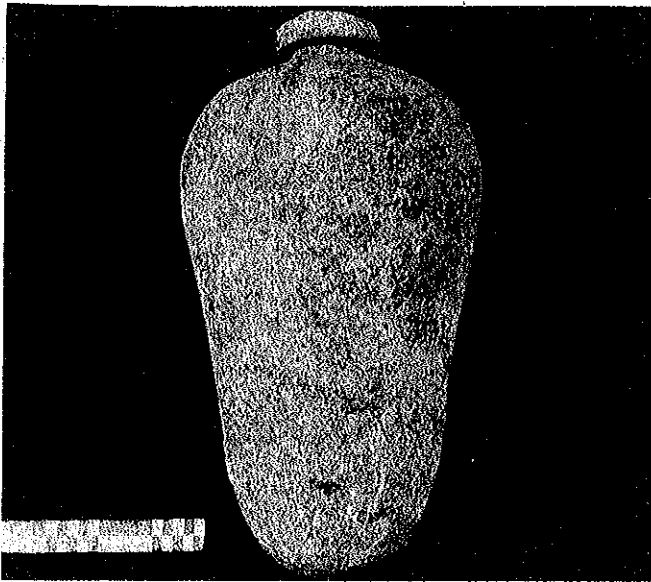


The Late Postclassic double burial of the presumed *halach uinic* from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 216, in situ.

since 1979 indicate that the site was extremely important. The kinds of remains that have been excavated are unknown from most other Postclassic sites with the exception of Lamanai and Mayapan. The contextual information from Santa Rita Corozal is just beginning to be analyzed and interpreted, but has already gone a long way towards revising past misconceptions about the Maya Postclassic Period. The Maya of Santa Rita Corozal clearly represent a vibrant culture with long-distance trade contacts and a highly structured society organized about a common religion which focused on the passage of cyclical time. The advent of the Old World in the New World affected, altered, and destroyed the rich Maya culture that flourished throughout the southern lowlands during the Postclassic Period. The Santa Rita excavations have done much to revive distant memories of this past grandeur.

THE HISTORIC PERIOD AT SANTA RITA COROZAL

The Spanish, under Davila, briefly occupied Santa Rita for 18 months in A.D. 1531-1532, which caused the final abandonment of the site by the Maya. Ironically, a Spanish sailor named Gonzalo Guerro, who had been shipwrecked in A.D. 1517 and had eventually become a Maya warchief in Chetumal, was responsible for this disruption of Spanish plans. Few Spanish artifacts have been excavated at Santa Rita Corozal, probably because of the brevity of the actual Spanish occupation and because of the apparent disdain of European trade items by the contact Maya. The beginnings of modern-day Corozal Town date back to the eighteenth century when northern Belize was settled by English logwood cutters. Artifactual remains dateable to the nineteenth century occupation of Corozal Town, when it began to thrive within the midst of an incipient sugar industry, have been recovered in excavations into Structures 58 and 156. Maya revolts against the Mexican government again caused the abandonment of Corozal/Santa Rita at the end of the nineteenth century when the city was overrun and physically occupied by the independent Maya. Following this brief interruption, however, Corozal Town thrived and has since become the third largest community in the country of Belize.



A Spanish olive jar from the vicinity of Santa Rita Corozal Structure 7. Height = 52 cm.

MAYA PREHISTORY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SANTA RITA COROZAL

The site of Santa Rita Corozal has a rich and varied history beyond its important role in the Postclassic Period. Archaeology has shown that the site was the locus of occupation in northern Belize for more than 3500 years. Santa Rita Corozal may also be identified as the most important locus in the northernmost portion of Belize at least twice in its history. During the Early Classic Period, Santa Rita Corozal dominated Chetumal Bay and probably controlled river trade up both the Hondo and New Rivers. During this time, the site was integrated into trade and political networks that extended deep into the Peten of Guatemala. Santa Rita Corozal had replaced Cerros, an important Late Pre-classic center located directly across the bay, by the onset of the Early Classic Period and may have been directly responsible for its reported abandonment at this time. During the ensuing regionalized Late Classic Period, Santa Rita Corozal was occupied but had seemingly lost its prestigious role in northern Belize. The Postclassic Period, however, witnessed a reversal of the

site's fortune. With the decline of Mayapan in the northern Yucatan Peninsula, Santa Rita Corozal became the capital of one of the 19 protohistoric polities noted by the Spanish and was called "Chactemal" or "Chetumal."

From a purely methodological standpoint, the archaeology undertaken at Santa Rita Corozal vividly demonstrates the importance of excavating in low mounds and so-called "vacant terrain." Many of the investigations undertaken by the Corozal Postclassic Project were in areas that would not normally be tested by archaeological projects in the Maya area. Had a traditional focus on mounds and test-pits been followed at Santa Rita Corozal, it is doubtful that bountiful interpretations about the structure of Postclassic Maya society would be possible, for much of the necessary data would not have been recovered. From a theoretical standpoint, the Santa Rita Corozal data are invaluable. Traditionally, Maya archaeologists dealing with the Classic Period have interpreted their data by analogy to either ethnographic sources or to ethnohistoric information provided by the Spaniards. But, over 500 years separate these two bodies of data. The Santa Rita Corozal data date primarily to a period of time directly preceding Spanish contact. The Maya of the Historic Period had new religious strictures and organizational structures imposed upon them by the Spanish; much of what composed their traditional society either disappeared or was transformed. The data on the Late Postclassic Maya from Santa Rita Corozal allow the archaeological material to be compared and contrasted with that recorded in the ethnohistory. Already, numerous discrepancies and differences between the two have been noted; in fact, the archaeology in many instances directly contradicts the ethnohistory or even corrects this data. Obviously, models for Classic Period social organization derived solely from ethnography and ethnohistory are in need of modification. As a protohistoric capital city, the data from Santa Rita Corozal will provide many new models and interpretations that can be better applied through analogy to the city-states of the Classic Period. The promise of the applicability of a direct historic approach to Maya society is perhaps the most important result to have emerged from excavations at Santa Rita Corozal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with any archaeological project, the funding to run it emanates from many sources. Phase II of the Corozal Postclassic Project was funded during 1984 and 1985 by National Science Foundation Grants Nos. BNS-8318531 and BNS-8509304 for archaeological work at Santa Rita Corozal, Belize. The 1984 season also received support from the Undergraduate Dean of The College of The University of Pennsylvania. The Division of Sponsored Research of the University of Central Florida has also been instrumental in providing post-season support for Phase II of the Corozal Postclassic Project. Phase I funding for the Corozal Postclassic Project came from a variety of sources. The initial 1979 season was funded by private donations, a Youth Activities Grant from the Philadelphia Chapter of the Explorer's Club, and Grant-in-Aids from the Dean of the College, the Department of Anthropology, and the University Museum, all of the University of Pennsylvania. The 1980 field season was funded by private donations, Sigma Xi, a Youth Activities Grant from the New York Chapter of the Explorer's Club, and The University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. A further 1981 in-field laboratory season was supported by a Grant-in-Aid from the Department of Anthropology of the University of Pennsylvania as well as by additional support from its Chairperson.

This publication was prepared in conjunction with an exhibit of the 1985 Santa Rita Corozal materials at the Loch Haven Art Center of Orlando, Florida. A. DuBois and H. Mulford of Loch Haven worked closely with us in the exhibit's physical layout and installation; W. Branch and J. Morris of the Belizean Department of Archaeology also involved themselves in the exhibit and aided it in many ways. L. Pantling graciously prepared several life-size color reproductions of figures from the murals on the outside of Santa Rita Corozal Structure 1 for the exhibit. R. DiCarlo conserved and restored the various sets of earflares that were recovered during excavations at Santa Rita Corozal and arranged for other necessary conservation. The UCF archaeology laboratory crew worked overtime to ensure that the Santa Rita Corozal artifacts would be ready for installation, as did the staff in UCF's Division of Instructional Resources. Especially

crucial in coordinating all of this activity, which as usual occurred in a flurry toward the final moments preceding the long-planned event, was R. Okoniewski.

The authors owe a major debt of gratitude for the aid offered by the Belizean Department of Archaeology, specifically to archaeological commissioners Elizabeth Graham (1979), Winnel Branche (1983-1985), and Harriot Topsey (1980-1983; 1985 to present). The people of Corozal Town have also aided the Project in many ways, especially the Miguel family, the Espat family, the Ramirez family, Ms. Jo Wilson, Mr. William Hall, and Mr. Orlando Margana. When in Belmopan, David and Liz Pendergast graciously allowed the use of their house. All of the staff members of the Corozal Postclassic Project must also be thanked for giving their time to Santa Rita Corozal without any monetary compensation; we only hope that all of them have the same fond memories that we do of Santa Rita Corozal.

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Back cover:

The 1985 Early Classic Period tomb found beneath the front room of Santa Rita Corozal Structure 7-3rd.



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