

Postclassic Peten Interaction Spheres: The View from Tayasal

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The purpose of this essay is twofold, first to provide information on the Tayasal Project as it relates to the Postclassic period in the Maya area, and second to point out several problems in attempting to define a uniform archaeological situation for the central Peten of Guatemala. In reviewing the Maya Postclassic from the standpoint of Lake Peten (or Lake Peten-Itza) archaeological data, questions concerning ethnohistoric interpretation of the central Peten are also raised.

Tayasal Project Survey and Excavations

The University Museum—University of Pennsylvania Tayasal Project began in 1970 with its express purpose being the delineation of a Postclassic sequence for the central Peten of Guatemala. During May through August of 1971, a series of excavations was carried out in the Tayasal-Paxcaman Zone (fig. 1). These investigations resulted in the intensive excavation of 34 structures throughout the zone. An extensive sampling strategy, devised to test the large area called Tayasal (fig. 2), resulted in the overall sampling of 99 loci at that site (largely for dating purposes); most often, these tests were placed into the summits of structures. During the 1971 season, other excavations were also carried out at the sites of Cenote and Punta Nima. Reconnaissance undertaken in 1977 as a continuation of the project supplemented the original work in the zone and produced archaeological data from the islands in Lakes Peten and Quexil.

As a result of the 1971 and 1977 investigations, a general understanding has been gained of the extensive variability evident within the Tayasal-Paxcaman Zone (A. Chase 1979, 1983, 1984, 1985a, 1985b). Cenote proved to have a Preclassic to Late Classic occupation with a widespread Terminal Classic domestic overlay. Punta

Nima proved to have Preclassic to Postclassic occupation as did Tayasal. The majority of the mapped structures on the high ground forming the Tayasal Peninsula, however, were found to be Classic Period or earlier in date. Postclassic occupation was found at: (1) Punta Nima in both of the structures excavated, (2) Chaja to the northwest of Lake Quexil, (3) Tres Naciones, (4) the islands in Lakes Peten and Quexil, and (5) at Tayasal in widespread deposits, specifically bordering the shores of Lake Peten.

Postclassic Archaeology within the Tayasal-Paxcaman Zone

In order to provide a background to the archaeology of the Tayasal-Paxcaman Zone, the Postclassic occupation uncovered in its various parts will be reviewed with regard to matters of chronology and spatial variation. The Tayasal investigations are of primary concern here as Postclassic architectural remains were encountered along with occupational debris both in the site core and, more commonly, along the shores of Lake Peten-Itza. Special attention will be given to two of the excavated structures, Structure T100, located within the heart of the primarily Classic period Main Group at Tayasal, and Structure T19, one of a number of structures located near the edge of Lake Peten. These are important not only as indications of two distinct structure and construction types, but also for their associated features and relationships to other nearby constructions. A sketch of the Lake Peten area sequence is provided following a review of the extant archaeology. The review of the sequence, in light of the Postclassic archaeological data from the zone, leads to a larger discussion of spatial patterning within the central Peten.

POSTCLASSIC ARCHAEOLOGY AT TAYASAL: MAIN GROUP

The site of Tayasal (fig. 2) may be tentatively subdivided into 11 sectors (fig. 3). The majority of these sectors provided Postclassic archaeological remains, but a very evident dichotomy presents itself in the topography, for very few Postclassic period remains are found in the inland areas; in fact, only three loci within the upland terrain (fig. 3: Sectors 1, 2, and 11) produced Postclassic remains upon testing. While little Postclassic settlement was found on this higher ground, a plethora of platforms, structures, and other constructions dating to earlier time periods were encountered on the elevated peninsular spine; these comprise the bulk of the site known as "Tayasal" (fig. 2). The lakeside situation is somewhat different from the inland area; extensive remains, probably representing a Middle Postclassic village, were found in excavations at Ensenada Tayasal (fig. 3:

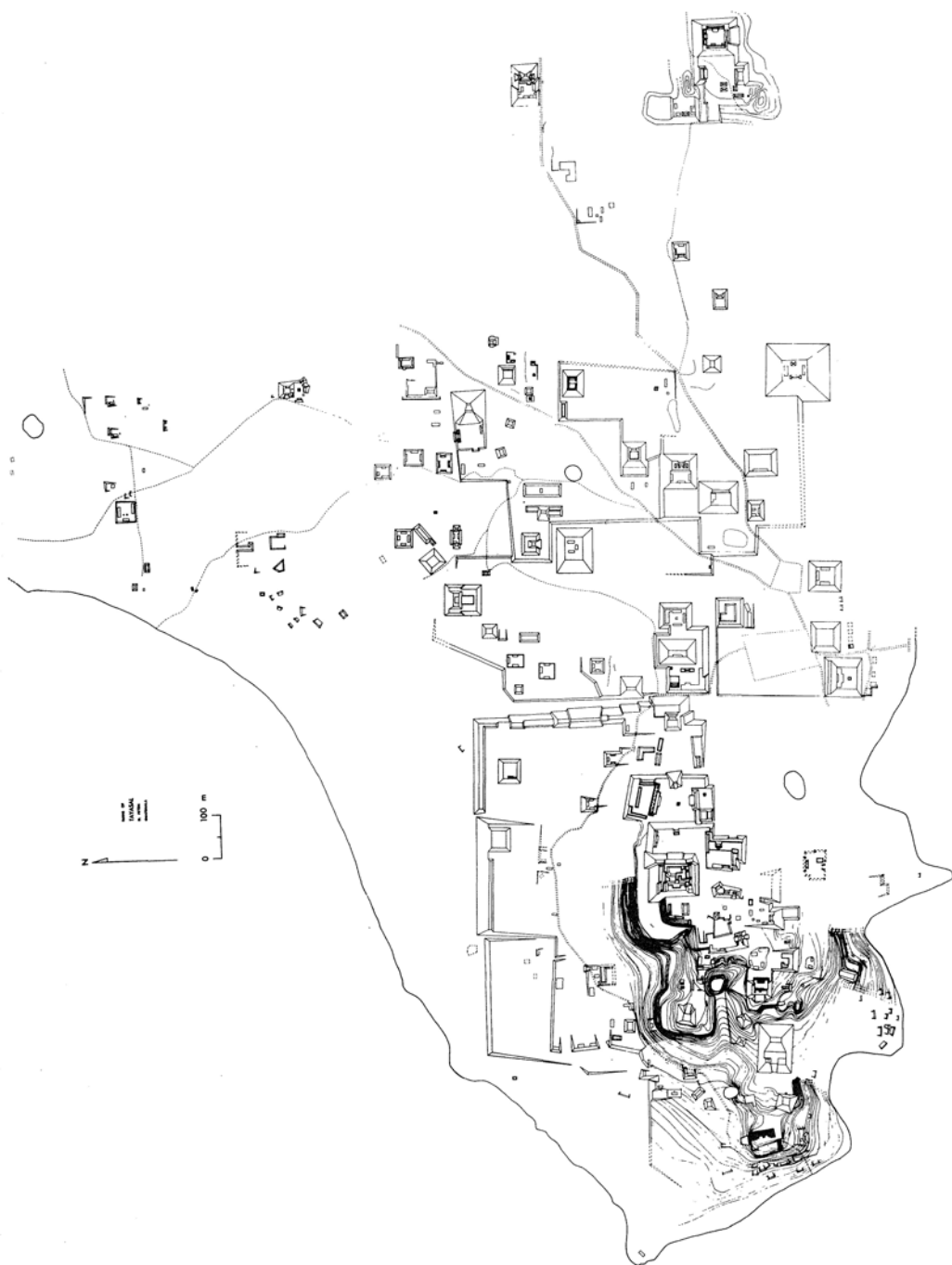


Fig. 2. The site of Tayasal, Peten, Guatemala; the majority of the structures and platforms on this map date to the Classic Period.

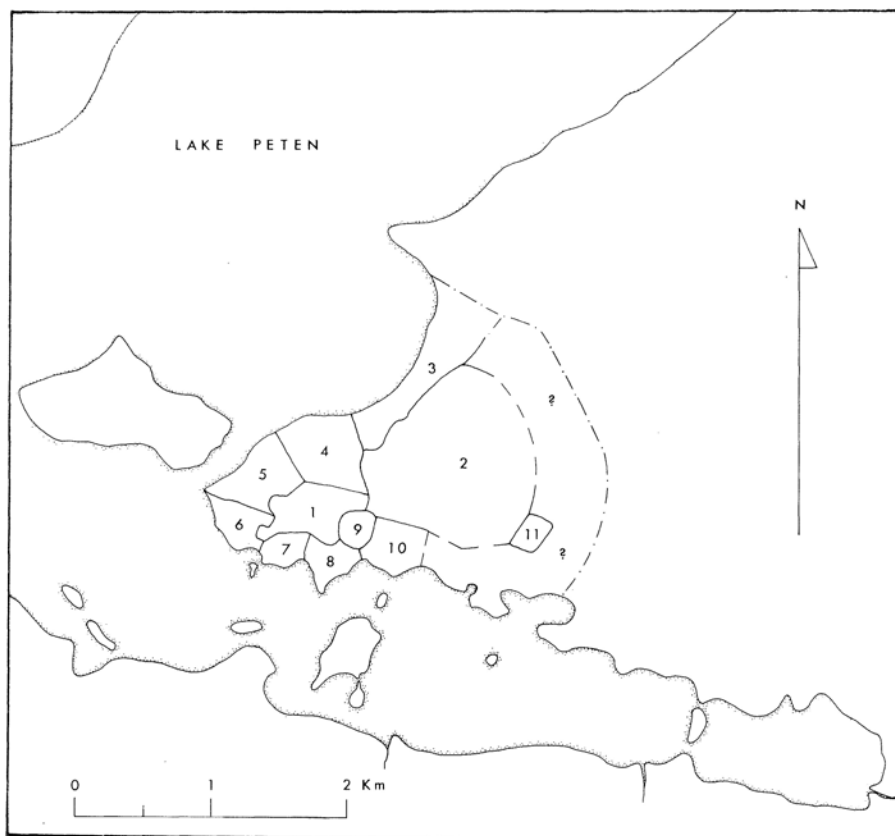


Fig. 3. The tip of the Tayasal Peninsula illustrating the different sectors of the site of Tayasal:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) Tayasal Main Group | (6) Southwest Tayasal |
| (2) North-Central Tayasal | (7) Punta Trapeche |
| (3) Ensenada Tayasal | (8) West San Miguel |
| (4) North Tayasal | (9) San Miguel Aguada |
| (5) Northwest Tayasal | (10) East San Miguel |
| | (11) El Joboito |

Sector 3) and all other lakeside sectors produced Postclassic materials in some abundance. While the areal extant of some of these Postclassic constructions is often considerable, most do not exhibit the height commonly found in structures or platforms of earlier periods.

The first construction to be excavated at Tayasal was located in the western portion of the site (fig. 3: Sector 1) and was a low mound approximately 1.5 meters in height, subsequently labeled Structure Troo (figs. 4 and 5). Its excavation revealed two significant facts: (1) it was an entirely Postclassic period building within the other-



Fig. 4. Photograph of Tayasal Structure 100, a Middle Postclassic ceremonial building from the western part of the Tayasal Main Group.

wise Classic period Tayasal Main Group; and (2) the recovered stratigraphy at the Structure T100 locus indicated that construction of plaza floors in this portion of the site spanned the Classic to Postclassic periods. Structure T100 was a two-phase construction. Its latest phase, or Structure T100-1st-A, was too decomposed to determine absolute building shape, but was most likely a heightened version of Structure T100-1st-B. In the hearting of the fill of Structure T100-1st-A was found a composite stone cist which, although empty, is reminiscent of similar cists found in the Postclassic construction of Piedras Negras Structure O-7 (Satterthwaite 1954, Part VI (4)). In fact, the stone cist—small rounded stone altar assemblage noted for Structure O-7 at Piedras Negras is also present at Structure T100. On the basis of the presence of similar miniature monuments in front of Structure D at Topoxte, it is posited that stone cists, similar to those at Tayasal and Piedras Negras, will be

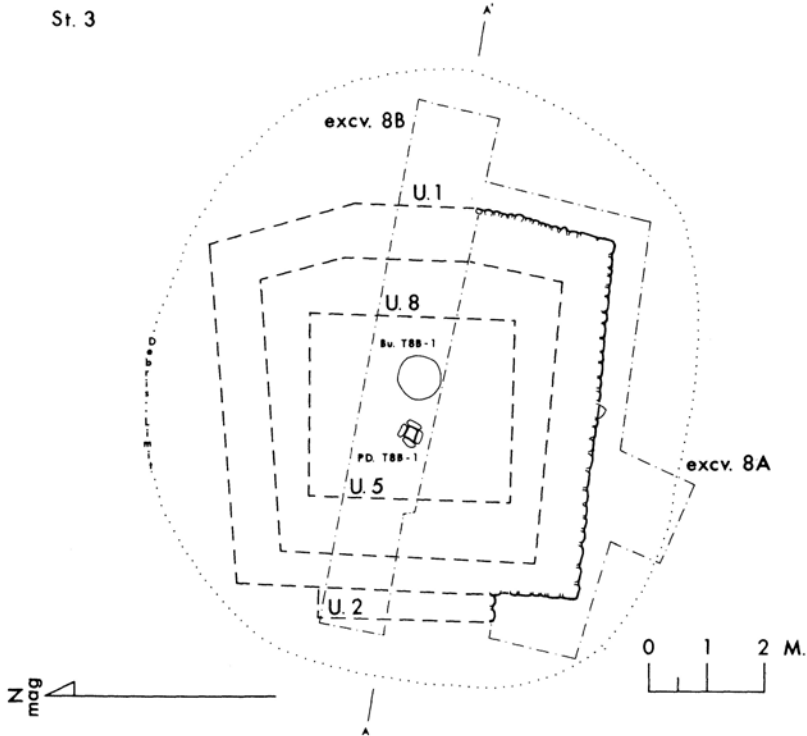


Fig. 5. Plan of Tayasal Structure 100.

encountered in excavation either in or in front of that building. Similar miniature round altars were found at Santa Rita (D. Chase 1981: 30, this volume), but the existence of stone cists in combination with them was not ascertained. Although the cist at Tayasal was apparently devoid of nonperishable remains, two of those at Piedras Negras were noted as probably having contained "cremated human remains" (Satterthwaite 1954, Part VI (4): 28). It may be hypothesized, on the basis of comments made by Landa (Tozzer 1941: 98, 130), that a recurring association of small altars with cists in Post-classic contexts could represent the veneration of important Post-classic individuals after their death, quite possibly by their own descendants.

Structure T100-1st-B had a protruding eastern side (rear) which gave it a hexagonal shape. A stairway was located on its west side. Excavation in Structure T100-1st-B revealed a centrally placed

flexed burial intruded into the underlying plaza floors at the time of construction. This burial dates to either late facet Chilcob phase or, more likely, the Middle Postclassic Cocahmut phase based on Pax-caman ceramics found in the core fill. Structure T100-1st-B was built over a well preserved plaza floor. This flooring contained only Augustine sherd material in its fill, implying a Chilcob phase, or Early Postclassic dating. An earlier construction, Structure T100-2nd, also surmounted this flooring and was buried under Structure T100-1st-B.

The placement of Structure T100 in a bounded plaza area is important for it implies that the western part of the Tayasal Main Group was utilized into the Postclassic period. Other surface indications from this part of the site would suggest that Structure T100 was not an isolated phenomenon, but may have been associated with the Postclassic use of this part of the site core, immediately following, or perhaps interdigitating with, the Terminal Classic. Other Postclassic use of this part of Tayasal is indicated by the repositioning of a Classic period stela, Tayasal Stela 3, northeast of Structure T100. This activity echoes that noted for Tikal (Satterthwaite 1958). The repositioning of a fragment of a Classic period monument in presumed association with a Postclassic structure in a central portion of Tayasal could be considered as evidence for a continuity in belief systems, if not population of the site, between the Classic and Postclassic periods.

POSTCLASSIC ARCHAEOLOGY AT TAYASAL: LAKESHORE OCCUPATION

Whereas Structure T100 is a mounded Postclassic structure on the higher bluff upon which the site core of Tayasal was built, the majority of the Postclassic material found in the western area of Tayasal came from lower lakeshore platforms or "vacant terrain" excavations. Stratigraphic information was recovered from the testing of approximately 42 Postclassic "lakeshore" buildings or activity loci at Tayasal and Punta Nima. Three Postclassic refuse deposits were located and partially excavated in the western portion of Tayasal. Analysis of the recovered stratigraphy and deposits associated with the excavated and tested platforms has allowed the definition of a temporal frame which spans from the Terminal Classic-Early Postclassic to historic times.

Investigations along the western lakeshore of Tayasal provided evidence for a sizeable Postclassic population strung out along the lake much like modern San Miguel is today. While testing operations revealed the remains of a Middle Postclassic village north of the peninsular spine (fig. 3: Sector 3), only three lakeside Postclassic

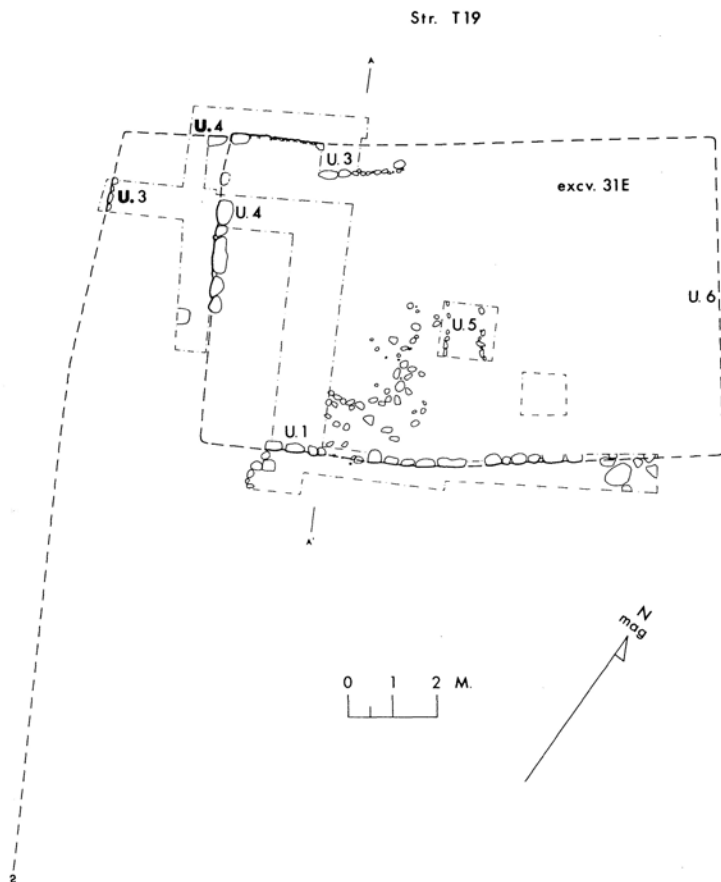


Fig. 6. Plan of Tayasal Structure 19, a Late Postclassic line-of-stone house platform from the lakeshore area, southwest of the Tayasal Main Group.

structures were areally exposed for their ground plans: Structure T112 in West Tayasal (fig. 3: Sector 5) and Structures T15 and T19 in Southwest Tayasal (fig. 3: Sector 6). As with most other known Postclassic buildings within the zone, all three of these structures consisted of lines of stone in rectangular form; these platforms had once been surmounted by perishable superstructures. The Tayasal substructure platforms exhibit a general similarity in form and construction technique to other known Postclassic house platforms from the lowlands (see D. Chase 1981, 1982a, n.d.; Johnson, this volume; P. Rice and D. Rice, this volume). Structure T19 (fig. 6), which

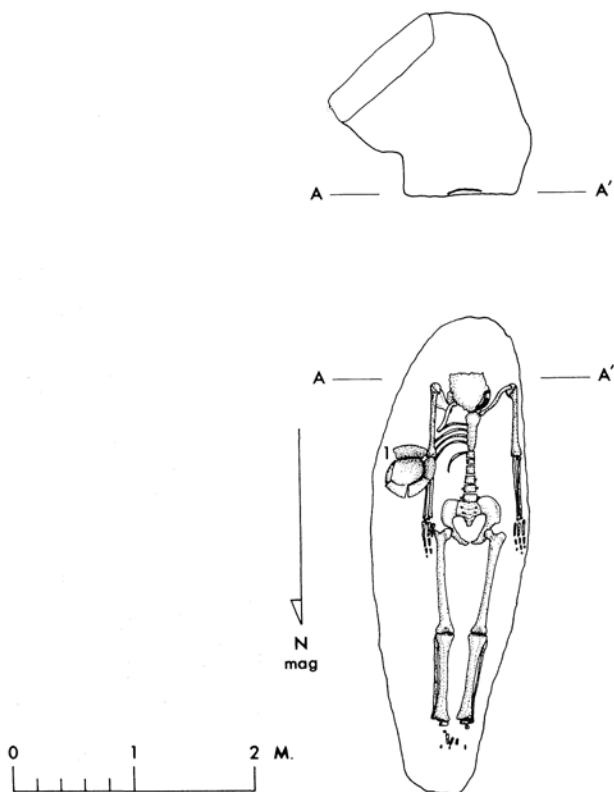


Fig. 7. Burial T9I-2 from the bluff immediately above eastern San Miguel.

is fairly representative of the Postclassic Tayasal platforms, was about 0.6 meter in height, 11 meters in length, and 7 meters in width.

An additional result of excavations in the lakeshore area in the northwestern portion of Tayasal was the definition of a burial pattern using Late Classic bowls in what appear to be Postclassic contexts. The body was intruded into or included in a low Postclassic construction with the killed vessel, of "Late Classic" form, being placed near the individual's head. This pattern also occurs in the area around the San Miguel Aguada.

Excavations in the San Miguel area of Tayasal to the east of the site core produced the same type of occupation dichotomy evident in the western part of Tayasal (fig. 3: Sector 10). A large platform on the bluff above the lake proved to be entirely of Postclassic construction. This platform, which supports Structures T205 and T206, measures 82 by 87 meters at its base. It is reminiscent of the large low

Postclassic platforms found at the site of Santa Rita, Belize (D. Chase 1981, 1982a). Structure T206, located on this platform, was investigated. From surface inspection and on the basis of its small size, it was believed to have functioned as a low shrine for the larger Structure T205 to its north. Excavation first showed the existence of a continuous plaster floor underneath which was found an earlier surface. Sealed beneath this earlier surface was a pit containing two individuals, cut into construction core. Upon excavation of this core, a nonintrusive burial crypt was found which contained an extended body, with an Augustine Red plate with effigy supports placed near the head of the individual (fig. 7). Structure T205 was also tested in 1971 and revealed an extended burial with a single Nohpek Unslipped vessel of unusual form. This burial had been burned following its deposition, a pattern also noted in other burials recovered in this portion of the site and ascribable to the early to middle part of the Postclassic period at Tayasal.

Investigations near the lake area in the modern town of San Miguel (fig. 3: Sectors 8 and 10) produced other living platforms and interments of Postclassic date. Two burials in this area were each accompanied by a single Postclassic vessel; one of these was a small tripod Plumbate jar. Recent historic period interments were also uncovered in the San Miguel excavations (fig. 3: Sector 8). These were identified as such by the presence of square coffin nails and were immediately reburied. One other Plumbate vessel was recovered in 1971. This was located in the core of Structure T120 which is on the lake bluff west of the San Miguel Aguada (fig. 3: Sector 1). This Tohil Plumbate vessel was seemingly intentionally cached in the latest phase of construction of Structure T120. If such is the case, it was apparently Terminal Classic in date based on contextual associations, and provides evidence for the overlap of the Terminal Classic and Early Postclassic pottery complexes in the Tayasal-Paxcaman Zone.

OTHER POSTCLASSIC ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE ZONE

Investigations at Punta Nima (see fig. 1) resulted in excavation of two Postclassic structures showing multiple rebuilding during the Postclassic. Although no special deposits were found at Punta Nima, the stratigraphy for both structures clearly demonstrates that Augustine ceramics preceded Paxcaman ceramics at this site. Widespread surface collections of material largely uprooted by modern sand diggings located at Nima showed the former site to have had a heavy Postclassic occupation. Although Chen Mul Modeled-style incensarios are reported to have been collected from this site (Cow-

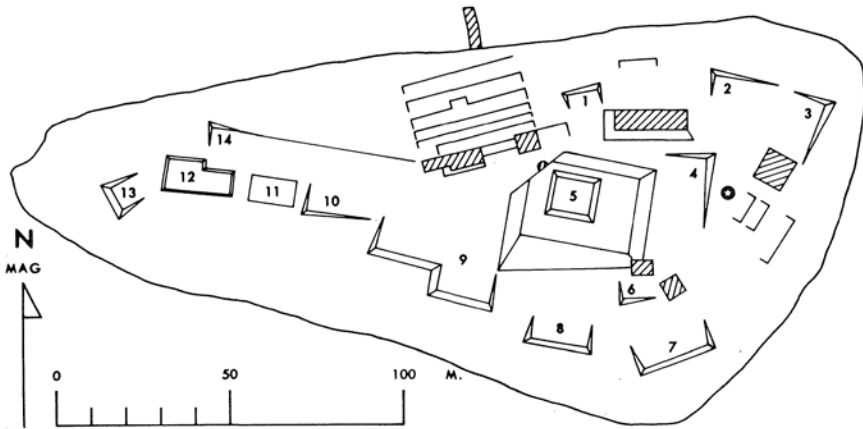


Fig. 8. Map of Islote Santa Barbara, showing the Postclassic (numbered platforms) and Modern (diagonal hatching) settlement distribution.

gill 1963: 51; M. Orrego, personal communication, 1979), no ceramics ascribable to this type were collected in either 1971 or 1977.

Other areas which evinced Postclassic activities were documented during the 1977 season (see fig. 1). Middle Postclassic remains were identified at Tres Naciones on the northern side of the Tayasal Peninsula. Other Postclassic remains were recovered from the surface of a single structure at Chaja and from the lakeshore of the north side of the Candelaria Peninsula in the western part of Lake Peten-Itza. Although the large site of Cenote was extensively excavated and surface collected (A. Chase 1983, 1985a), only one pottery support and one netsinker ascribable to the Postclassic period were recovered from that site. Further investigation at the site of Yachul may yield Postclassic activity in its northwestern portion where, on the basis of mapped surface features, it is likely that a stela may have been reset.

ISLANDS

An island survey was also undertaken in Lakes Peten-Itza and Quexil to augment the already sizeable Postclassic collection excavated from the adjacent Tayasal Peninsula in 1971. As Postclassic peoples appear to have had an affinity for inhabiting islands (Bullard 1970, 1973), one objective of this island survey was the identification of archaeological remains assignable to the Postclassic period. A second objective of this survey was to garner information which

would aid in the temporal and geographical placement of the ethno-historically known Itza peoples (Avendano y Loyola 1696; Means 1917; Thompson 1951; Cowgill 1963; Hellmuth 1977). Although the 1977 survey was superficial in that, with the exception of Flores, it consisted primarily of mapping and surface collections, it is possible to make several statements relevant to the Itza problem based on these data. All the islands in Lake Peten were visited. All were mapped save for Lepet and Flores for which topographical maps existed. The island of Santa Barbara (fig. 8) and Flores both showed evidence of Postclassic settlement. The other islands in Lake Peten either showed no evidence of occupation or only a slight amount of ceramic material conjoined with a few mounds or platforms. Sizeable sherd collections were obtained from various constructional activities on Flores; many of these may be related to recorded stratigraphy.

In general, it would seem that only Flores and Santa Barbara had any sizeable Postclassic populations. The material collected from Flores, consisting of about 5,000 sherds, suggests that this occupation occurred largely in the early and middle parts of the Postclassic period. Whereas the Santa Barbara ceramic material is largely Paxcaman, both Paxcaman and Augustine ceramics and Terminal Classic finewares (see A. Chase 1979) are in evidence on Flores. Effigy censers of the Chen Mul style also occur in small amounts, but from unknown contexts; a Mixtec incensario, similar to ones illustrated by Ball (1980: 79–81) for Chinkultic, was also recorded (A. Chase 1983: fig. 4–13). Building construction in the vicinity of the Flores church uncovered an hourglass incensario covered with blue painted stucco as well as a stela (fig. 9) portraying a diving individual and Chichen-style glyphs; the last glyph in the text (D2) occurs frequently on the jades of Chichen Itza (see Proskouriakoff 1974: 206, figs. 3, 4, 11, 14, 16). A tentative reading of the short count date on this monument places it at 9.19.5.0.0. (S. Houston, personal communication, 1983).

The stela was found within a buried structure which was sealed by various "plaza" floorings which run under the modern Flores church (M. Orrego, personal communication, 1979). When considered in combination with (1) Terminal Classic–Early Postclassic finewares on Flores as well as Yucatec Trickle ware, (2) the Plumbate finewares from the San Miguel mainland, (3) form and stylistic affinities between Pek Polychrome (Augustine Red ceramic group) and Yalton Black-on-Orange (Silho Fine Orange), and (4) the distribution of Dolorido Cream Polychrome (Trapeche Pink group) as a trade-ware in the Northern lowlands (see A. Chase 1979), this Chichen-style stela may indicate Terminal Classic–Early Postclassic Yucatec

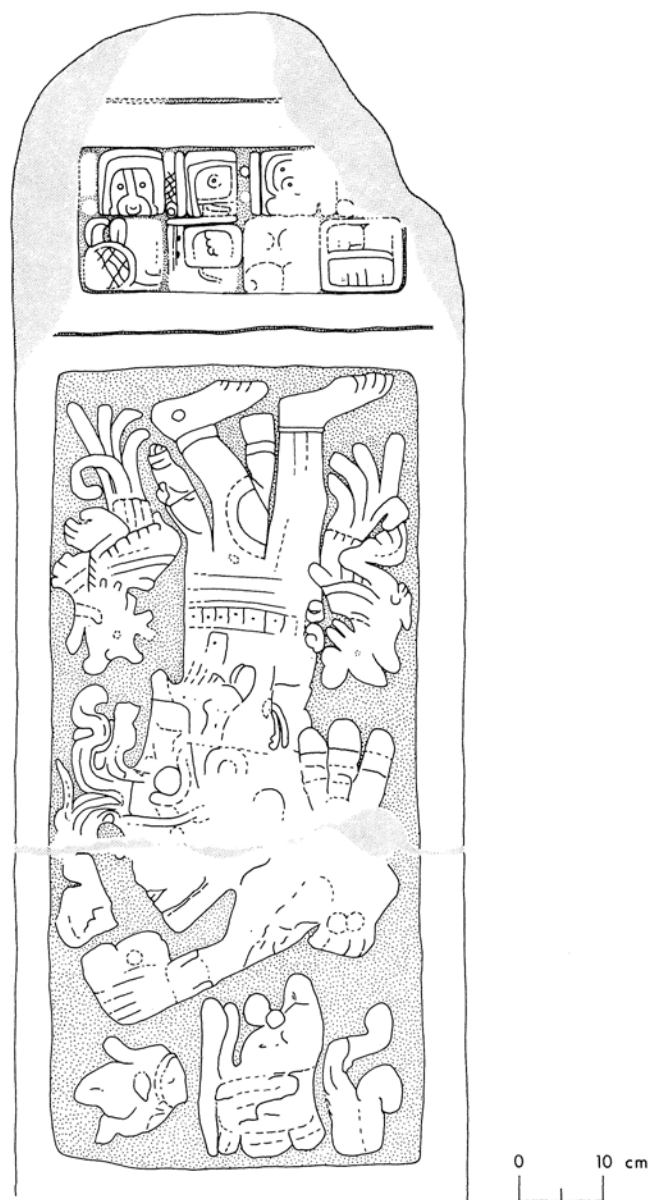


Fig. 9. Flores stela of a diving god associated with Chichen style glyphs, recovered during excavations in the vicinity of the modern church (re-drawn from an original drawing by Ian Graham and from photographs).

influence in the central Peten Tayasal area, perhaps having a bearing on the Classic Maya collapse. Such an interpretation would find support in recent archaeological evidence from Nohmul, Belize where a direct intrusion of Chichen-related peoples is suspected to have taken place on this same temporal horizon (D. Chase 1982a, 1982b; D. Chase and A. Chase 1982).

Some interpretations (see A. Chase 1976, 1982; as well as G. Jones, Rice, and Rice 1981) locate the Itza on the island of Flores and on the islands of Sacpuy and Quexil. Villagutierre (1701: 519) indicated that there were two islands in a lake called "Equexil" with much population and a house of idolatry. This lake called "Equexil" has been equated with the modern day "Quexil"; the two islands in Lake Quexil were assumed, therefore, to have a heavy Late Postclassic-early historic occupation. These two islands were visited and mapped in 1977 and revealed a heavy occupation which had transformed the islands through extensive terracing. These settlement remains are not as dense as those on Topoxte (D. Rice and P. Rice 1979, 1980a). Sherds were collected from the surface and from looters' trenches on each island; although the collections are fairly large, nothing later than Early Postclassic equivalent material could be discerned; no Augustine or Paxcaman sherds were found in 1977. The major occupation of Quexil islands appeared to be earlier, therefore, than the population ascribed to them. The Rices (1980b: fig. 12; 1982), however, reported that they recovered Postclassic material in all seven of their excavations; the material in at least two of these excavations was dated by them to the Late Postclassic period.

Tayasal Chronological Sequence

The Tayasal sequence was established largely on internal stratigraphy and contextual associations; to a smaller extent, cross-datings to other sites were employed. Although the major class of data used to establish the sequence was pottery, architecture and artifacts were also used whenever possible (A. Chase 1983, 1984). Of the 99 datable excavation loci at Tayasal, 44% revealed Late Classic (Hobo) occupation and 18% of these loci evinced Early Postclassic (Chilcob) occupation. In general, there appears to be continuity between the Classic and Postclassic periods; it is in fact possible that the early facet of Chilcob (Early Postclassic) overlaps temporally, and spatially interdigitates, with the late facet of Hobo (Terminal Classic; see A. Chase 1983, n.d.).

The early facet of the Chilcob phase in the Tayasal area appears to be denoted primarily by Augustine effigy support pieces and may

possibly include the introduction of Trapeche Pink (A. Chase 1979). There is apparently a continuity of plainware forms, such as the incurving bowl, from Terminal Classic into this Early Postclassic time period. If there was a population movement into the Lake Peten area, it occurred during this phase and presumably amalgamated with the resident population. It is hypothesized that Trapeche Pink is transitory through to true Paxcaman Red and probably represents an "experimental" ceramic type. Following the early facet of the Early Postclassic, there is heavier use of Augustine Red in jar and plate forms with the rare introduction of Paxcaman group Ixpop Polychrome plates and possibly decorated censers (?) of a probable hourglass form. A later variety of Trapeche Pink may exist during the end of this phase. If Augustine ever existed by itself, it would have been very early in the Postclassic, possibly prior to the use of Trapeche.

During the later facet of the Early Postclassic period, Augustine forms became more elaborate and resembled some of the flanged forms found at Lamanai which are dated to the Middle Postclassic period. Chalice-form incensarios and plates, both unslipped, also occurred along with low-necked plainware jars (Nohpek Unslipped) in this late facet of Chilcob. Toward the end of the Early Postclassic, Paxcaman Red appeared in the Tayasal sequence and burgeoned in frequency of use with the onset of the Middle Postclassic period. Paxcaman jar forms became popular along with the typical flat-bottomed redware plate and collared bowl forms which had first appeared in the Early Postclassic (but with slightly different modes). Augustine Red and Paxcaman Red seem to have coexisted in the Lake Peten area for some time with a gradual replacement of assemblage forms. Gradually, Paxcaman group ceramics appear to have become dominant. Hourglass and effigy incensarios are present in the sequence by the onset of the Late Postclassic and may have been introduced early during the Middle Postclassic Cocahmut phase; these latter forms, however, are extremely rare at Tayasal. Forty-one percent of the excavated loci at Tayasal evinced Middle Postclassic activity.

By the end of the Cocahmut phase, red line-work on the interior of plates (Macanche Red-on-Paste) appeared within the zone; this may have been due to possible Topoxte influence on a post-A.D. 1350 date. New plainware forms of oval incurved bowls and jars with strap handles, which are oval in section, occurred at Tayasal in the Late Postclassic Kauil phase. Paxcaman forms became cruder and a sandy paste began to replace the former dominant gray snail paste. Topoxte group pottery is also introduced into the Lake Peten area, but only in small amounts. There appears to have been a marked decrease in population in the Lake Peten area after the Middle Post-

classic period peak; only 9% of the excavated loci at Tayasal revealed securely dated Late Postclassic–early historic occupation.

The Tayasal–Paxcaman Zone shows no close resemblances to Mayapan–style civic architecture or ceramics. On the whole, the Lake Peten region does exemplify typological and stylistic overlap with the Barton Ramie Postclassic material through the middle part of its sequence. It is interesting to note the complete lack of red-line decoration in the Barton Ramie ceramics. This red-line tradition is prevalent at Topoxte and present as well at Macanche; it occurs late in the Tayasal sequence, implying that the Barton Ramie sequence may end earlier than Tayasal's sequence (A. Chase 1982). While P. Rice (1979: 80–81) had earlier suggested that Barton Ramie's sequence did not continue through the Middle or Late Postclassic periods, this conclusion had been premised upon the lack of effigy censerware at that site; as this material is also largely absent in the Tayasal collections, which continue through historic times, the suggestion may be made that the indigenous Postclassic peoples of the southern lowlands did not participate in the religious networks common in the northern lowlands during the Late Postclassic period.

In summary, the Lake Peten pottery exhibits close ties between Paxcaman and Augustine forms and with the Barton Ramie sample at least through the Middle Postclassic period. In the Late Postclassic, the Lake Peten Paxcaman tradition continued in only a slightly modified form, but saw the greater occurrence of red-line decoration. There is general continuity in the Tayasal–Paxcaman Zone from the Terminal Classic through the Late Postclassic.

Postclassic Peten Archaeological Comparisons

The recovered archaeological data pertaining to the Postclassic period in the Lake Peten area contrasts with that from the eastern Peten lakes. In the Macanche–Topoxte area, the pastes, especially in the Late Postclassic, are divergent from the more typically gray Paxcaman pastes which occur to either side of this area (P. Rice 1979, 1980; Sharer and Chase 1976; A. Chase 1982, personal observation). This eastern lakes region, centered on Topoxte, also witnessed an extensive use of red-line decoration which was often applied to different design areas on vessels (see P. Rice 1979: 31–42; Bullard 1970) than is found in the Tayasal–Paxcaman Zone. The red-on-cream and cream wares that appear on a later horizon in the eastern lakes (Bullard 1970; P. Rice 1979, n.d.b) seem to have had no counterparts in the Lake Peten area. Pottery form differences are also evident within the various Peten lake basins. As compared to Paxcaman and Au-

gustine group redware supports from the Lake Peten area, those in the Topoxte group are of a much smaller size; there also appears to be a predominance of the sag-bottom bowl form in this latter group as compared to the Augustine and Paxcaman groups of Lake Peten and Barton Ramie. At Macanche, intermediate between the Tayasal and Topoxte, the pottery bowls are the same size as those and Topoxte and are intermediate between being "sag" and "flat" bottomed (P. Rice, personal communication). It is probable that there are significant form differences in other members of the true Topoxte assemblage from Paxcaman forms. While the seemingly intrusive Topoxte pottery (A. Chase 1982) influences Late Postclassic Paxcaman pottery in the Tayasal-Paxcaman Zone, it does not appear to dominate it; although the sag-bottomed bowl is introduced into the Tayasal area in the Kauil phase, the typical flat-bottomed plate forms continue.

The eastern Peten lakes evince more affinities to the Northern lowlands in their Late Postclassic material remains than do the recovered archaeological remains from the Lake Peten area. Effigy censers, with overt Late Postclassic Northern Yucatec links, were seemingly found in abundance at Topoxte (Bullard 1970), but are not at all common in the Tayasal-Paxcaman Zone. The eastern Peten lakes also appear to be associated with Yucatecan-style architecture and Mayapan-type structural groupings (D. Rice and P. Rice 1981; Johnson, this volume) which do not occur in the Lake Peten area.

Interaction Spheres of the Postclassic Peten

On the basis of the data obtained through archaeological research in the central Peten by the Rices (P. Rice 1979, 1980; D. Rice and P. Rice 1979, 1980b, 1981, 1982) and Bullard (1970, 1973) at Topoxte, Macanche, and Salpeten, and by Cowgill (1963) and myself (A. Chase 1976, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985a) in the Lake Peten-Itza area, and Sharer and myself (1976) on the ceramics of Barton Ramie, two major regions may be defined for central Peten Postclassic archaeology. It is believed that these distributions are not merely of temporal significance, but may reflect regionalism among the populations of the central Peten, at least for the Late Postclassic (see A. Chase 1982). These two areas are geographically bounded and may be defined as the following: (1) the area including Lakes Salpeten, Macanche, and Yaxha, and possibly Lake Yalloch; and (2) the Lake Peten-Itza area and, peripherally, the Belize Valley area. While the artifactual complexes have not yet been fully defined for these two regions and thus cannot be compared, it is evident that these

two areas differ from each other ceramically and architecturally.

The archaeological differences evident between the two Late Postclassic areas may find ethnohistoric confirmation. Tozzer provides tantalizing bits of information when he (1913: 499) describes the Barrios Leal expedition of 1695 which "made vain attempts to reach Peten from Los Dolores, both by the river and by land, and came to the conclusion that there must be two places called Itza or Aitza." This notion, rejected off-hand by G. Jones, Rice, and Rice (1981: 531-532), may well be the solution to the problem of the geographical location of the "Itza." That two separate Itza locales existed can also be garnered from the account of a certain Martin Can.

Martin Can was a nephew of "Kin Canek" who had been sent to Merida, Yucatan, to offer Canek's submission in 1697. Upon his return to the Peten, Can was unable to return to his own village "eight leagues away" (Means 1917: 181; reported as 4 leagues by Cowgill 1963: 439) because it was under the rule of Cintanek or Quincanek (?), who was at war with Canek and who had already attacked the islands of Canek on account of Canek's friendly attitude toward the Spaniards. Martin Can's village was among those subject to Cintanek, a day away from Canek's area of rule (Villagutierre 1933: 336). According to Villagutierre (1933: 336), Quincanek was in control of the following areas: "Chaltuna, Sacpeten, Maconche, Saca, and Coba" while Canek was in control of "Oraptun, Zacui, Chee, Chacha, Sacsinil, Linil, Oboncox, Chulul, and Eckixil, which were all located on the same lake." This distribution of locales would bolster the interpretation of there being two locations called "Itza" and possibly two "Tayasal"s. Avendano y Loyola (1696: 41b) makes it clear that Chaltuna contains Tayasal; therefore, according to this distribution, Canek does not control Tayasal, but it is outside his region and to the east. While Sacpeten has often been equated with the Lake "Salpeten" in the modern Peten of Guatemala, the Fancourt map of 1854 locates a "Zacpeten" in the vicinity of Lake Yalloch, northeast of Lake Yaxha (fig. 10); this may, in fact, be the "Sacpeten" referred to above, especially if there was any conservative trend in place names. If "Maconche" is equated with Lake Macanche and "Sacpeten" with Lake Yalloch, Chaltuna, Saca, and Coba may be hypothesized to lie between these two extremes and may be equated with Lakes Yaxha and Sacnab and perhaps Chompoxte. Recent work by the Rices (1980b, 1982) would also indicate that Lake Salpeten fits into this sphere. Such an interpretation would accord well with the distribution of the archaeological remains, both ceramically and architecturally (A. Chase 1982). Only by assuming the nonexistence of ceramics in protohistoric Peten can one state that the archaeologi-

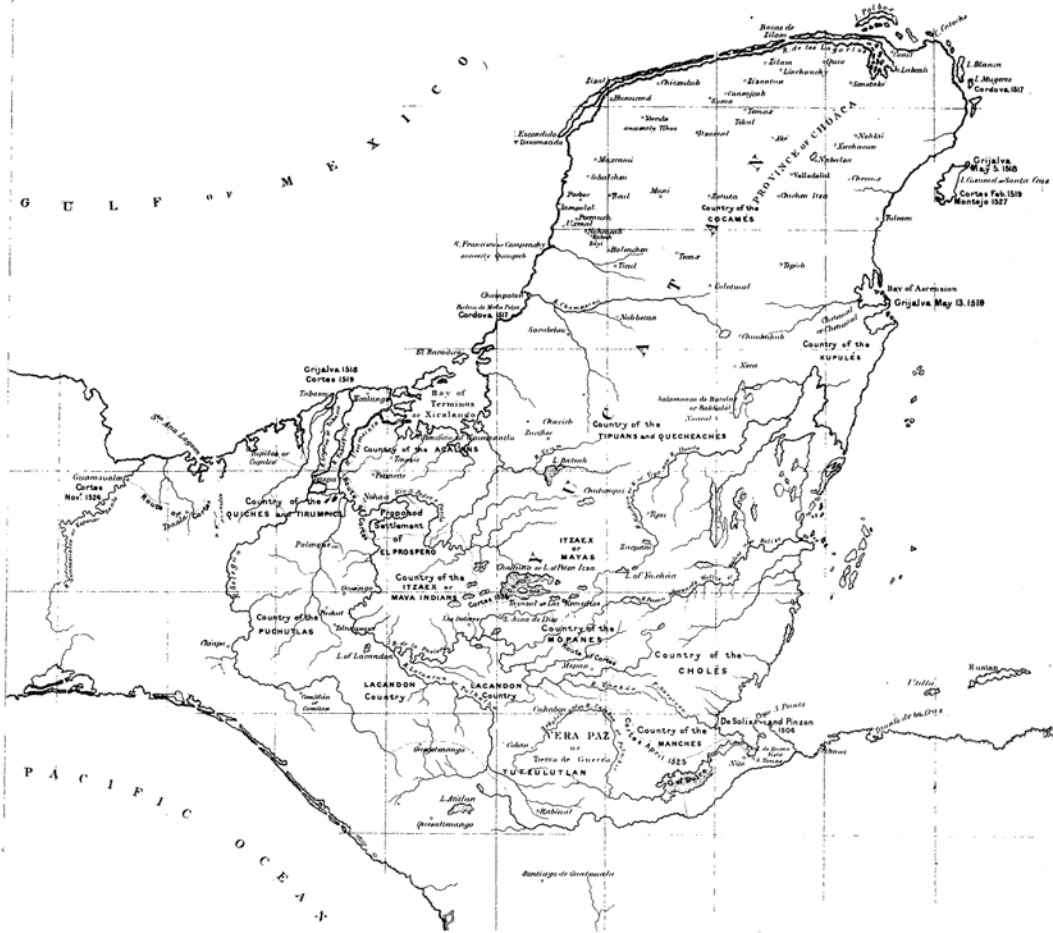


Fig. 10. Fancourt map of 1854 showing a Lake "Zacpeten" north of Lake "Yaxhaa."

cal pattern does not exist in historic times. On the basis of documented trade routes for the Itza and known protohistoric and historic pottery elsewhere, this is doubtful.

One other piece of ethnohistoric information is of interest to this discussion. Avendano y Loyola (1696: 38a–38b) presented a list of the various districts within the Itza domain. One of the listed subdivisions within the province was that of a *halach uinic*, who was not “King” Canek. The presence of a *halach uinic* within the Peten is suggestive of a Yucatec form of social organization; such a person would generally be the head of the entire province (Roys 1957; D. Chase n.d.). As the *halach uinic* was not in residence in Canek’s place of domicile and was listed as belonging elsewhere, it is possible that the *halach uinic* was in charge of Chaltuna (and concomitantly, Tayasal). This organizational division would also accord with Can’s reported Itza civil war.

The presence of a *halach uinic* within the Peten has other implications as well for it indicates that other Yucatec affinities should be expected within the Southern lowlands. It further suggests that Avendano y Loyola’s Canek was probably not the head of the Itza province, assuming conformity with the Yucatec organizational systems; that he was referred to by the Spaniards as “Rey” or “King” (while a *halach uinic* was also present) is probably indicative of their confusion over the local political system. Canek may have been referred to as a king due to a false belief on the part of the Spaniards that they were dealing with the head of the Itza territory or perhaps for political reasons. The division within the Itza province that appears to have been encountered by the Spaniards may have mirrored a deeply rooted organizational split within the south-central lowlands. This areal segmentation may ultimately be traceable to differences and tensions between indigenous Peten and intrusive Itza Postclassic populations; the temporal and spatial distributions of Postclassic archaeological remains within the Peten suggest that this may be the case.

Summary

The archaeology of the central Peten shows definite variation in material culture remains. This variation, however, is not just site by site, but appears to form regional patterns which must correspond to important cultural, political, and/or territorial divisions among the protohistoric Maya. While identification of the archaeological sites representing the legendary Itza occupation in the central Peten continues to lead to traditional settings and locations (G. Jones, Rice,

and Rice 1981), archaeological information from the Peten suggests alternative interpretations (A. Chase 1976, 1982, 1983). The true Itza, following their southern migration, most likely located themselves at Topoxte (A. Chase 1976, 1982); this is reflected both in architecture and in ceramics, both of which show resemblance to Postclassic Yucatec material culture (see also Johnson, this volume; P. Rice and D. Rice, this volume). It is hypothesized that the Itza gained control of a sizeable part of the eastern Peten, including Macanche and Salpeten. Peripheral control may have been gained over the indigenous populations of the Lake Peten region. In time, however, the term "Itza" was extended to refer to groups which were assimilated by the original Itza from Yucatan. This situation led to terminological problems, as documented by Means' (1917: Appendix I) list of 21 variants of the term, which have further obfuscated ethnohistoric interpretation. The archaeological evidence, however, clearly defines at least two distinct, although overlapping spheres of influence, only one of which derives its inspiration from Late Postclassic Yucatan.