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CLASSIC LOWLAND MAYA (AD 250–900)

Introduction

The study of Pre-Columbian cultures is of great importance for the construction of multilinear and non-linear models of sociocultural evolution. The origin of the complex society in America was not connected with the Old World and its whole history demonstrates a strong tradition of independent sociocultural development. Among the Mesoamerican cultures of the Classic period Lowland Maya is the best documented one due to the extensive corpus of hieroglyphic inscriptions and richness of archaeological evidence.

Maya Lowlands is a vast area which includes the Mexican South (the states of Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, and Yucatan), the northern departments of Guatemala, Belize and a part of Honduras. It is a limestone plain about 90-200 m above the sea level. The major part of the area is covered with humid tropical forests. The main rivers flow in the west (Usumasinta), south (Pasion), and east (Hondo, Belize, and Motagua), while the center of the Maya area is full of swampy places and lakes.

The Lowlands are divided into five regions:

1. Peten, or Central region includes territories of the modern Guatemalan department of Peten, south of the Mexican state of Campeche, northern and central Belize. The main ancient cities here are Tikal, Uaxactun, Naranjo, Motul de San Jose, Yaxha, Rio Azul (all in Guatemala), Calakmul (Mexico), Caracol, Altun Ha (Belize).

2. Pasion River region, or Petexbatun comprises the drainages of Pasion and Chixoy Rivers with the cities of Altar de Sacrificios, Dos Pilas, Aguateca, Ceibal, Arroyo de Piedra and Tamarindito.

3. Usumasinta, or Western region is situated in the middle and low portions of the Usumasinta River drainage along the modern Mexican-Guatemalan frontier. Tonina, Palenque, Pomona, Piedras Negras, Yaxchilan, Bonampak and Lacanja are the most important centers.

4. Southeastern region embraces the Motagua River drainage (Copan, Quirigua) and southern parts of Belize (Pusilha).

5. Yucatan, or Northern Lowlands (on the contrary to four above mentioned regions forming Southern Lowlands). This is all the north of the Yucatan peninsula with a large number of different archaeological sites.

The majority of the written sources from the Classic period come from Southern Lowlands. There is no doubt that in the 1st mil. AD the Maya society in

Yucatan was not less developed than in the south. But Southern Lowlands, especially the Peten region, served as a center which influenced all other territories. Main characteristics of the Classic Maya civilization (hieroglyphic writing, calendar, architecture, art styles) were modeled and elaborated in Peten and later were distributed through all the Lowlands.

The initial stages of the complex society formation in Maya Lowlands became more or less clear only in recent times. A moderate picture of the Preclassic Maya society was radically changed by the discovery of several large and medium-sized Middle and Late Formative centers (Nacbe, El Mirador, Guiro, El Tintal) in Peten. There are also evidence for the development of the complex society in Northern Yucatan (Edzna, Dzibilchaltun, Komchen) and the Pasion region (Altar de Sacrificios, Ceibal). But we still lack of a regional context for these discoveries, and the settlement patterns which could serve as a basis for the analysis of the Formative Maya polities organization is not clear yet either. Late texts attribute the founding of the ruling dynasties to the Preclassic times, but they give no more than royal names from the genealogical tradition.

The appearance of multiple monumental inscriptions in the 4th century AD is a crucial moment. Although the hieroglyphic writing was well known in Maya Lowlands from the beginning of the 1st mil., Preclassic examples are still rare and not easy readable. "Monumental boom" probably marked a radical change in Maya Lowlands and formation of the Classic period society.

The family and the community. Inner-communal relations

For the post-primitive societies the community can be considered as the basic, substratum social unit. To a marked degree the community structure and inner-communal relations define the direction of social development. The Classic Maya community research is one of the most complicated problems in Maya studies as it is based only on the archaeological data without any supporting written or ethnographic evidence. Although Postclassic materials, recorded in the Early Colonial sources, were often used in the reconstruction of the Classic Maya social organization, nowadays scholars believe that they must be analyzed with a great care because of a significant chronological distance between the Classic and Postclassic periods. Nevertheless Postclassic materials still do form a substantial part of our sources.

The data presented below proceed from the parts of Maya Lowlands – Central Peten (Tikal, Uaxactun, Yaxha-Sacnab), Pasion River drainage (Ceibal, Dos Pilas), the Belize River valley (Buenavista, El Pilar), Northern Yucatan (Coba) and the Motagua River valley (Copan). We believe that such a selection could help to create more or less complete picture of the Classic Maya society.

The household was the basic unit of the Classic Maya settlement system. Archaeologically it is reflected as a group of structures (from one to five or six), situated on a common platform or arranged around a patio (small inner court). There are two main categories of households: consisted of 1 structure and of 2-6 structures.

In the core of Maya Lowlands the last category was the most widespread (Rice & Rice 1980: 451; Rice & Pulestone 1981: 149; Tourtellot 1988: 310-311), but the controversial situation is observed in the Belize River area (Ford 1991: 38).

Site	Solitary structures	Groups
Nuclear zone		
Tikal (Peten)	26%	74%
Yaxha area (Peten)	6%	94%
Ceibal (Pasion region)	15,5%	84,5%
Belize River area		
El Pilar	30%	70%
Yaxox	65%	35%
Bacab Na	90%	10%
Barton Ramie	95%	5%

These figures vary significantly, but it is evident that in the core of the Maya area (Northeast Peten and the Pasion River region) solitary structures are less frequent than in the Belize River valley. Yaxha and Barton Ramie data are quite surprising and probably reflected some local peculiarities, for example scarcity of the land.

Really, the number of the structures might be more than we can observe now on the surface. A part of them (30-50%) was constructed from perisha`ble materials and without observable rests. These were probably auxiliary buildings like storages and kitchens. According to the level of elaborateness, we are working mainly with residences and ceremonial structures.

Residences are relatively large structures (20-25 m^2) which usually consisted of more than two rooms. They are frequently accompanied by the rests of small buildings that were interpreted as "kitchens" because of the findings of *metates* (groundstones). The chemical analysis realized in the Classic Maya households at Coba (Quintana Roo, Mexico) demonstrated that the "kitchens" were actually rich in carbonates that reflected the process of food preparation. On the contrary, the nearby areas were rich in phosphates that represented food consumption. Excavations revealed three such cooking areas and four residential structures in two related households (Unit 2-14 and Unit 15-37) on the periphery of Coba (Manzanilla & Barba 1990: 42-44).

These data strongly support the idea that a residence was a house of a nuclear family. Thus, a household represents an extended family community which normally consisted of 3-4 nuclear families. The predominance of households of this type in the core area signifies that the extended family community was the basic social unit of the Classic Maya society, like of many other archaic and traditional societies. But the problem with a strange situation in the Belize River area is still unsolved. Annabel Ford supposed that a large number of the solitary structures implies a simpler socio-

political organization of the Belize River area Maya (Ford 1991: 38). But is the division of the nuclear family a trait of a simpler organization? Quite the opposite, it implies the disintegration of the extended family community that is usually considered as a result of intensive social-economical processes.

In the Bullard's three-tiered scheme of settlement hierarchy (Bullard 1960) 5-12 households (*"mound aggregates"*) were united into *clusters*, typically within the square of 200-300 m^2. Logically, this category may correspond to a large community: village in the rural area and *barrio* (quarter) within urban settlements. But the data from the excavations at Tikal – one of the major and most important Maya cities – showed that it was impossible to define clusters in the city zone. Some other Classic cities demonstrate a similar picture. At Dos Pilas (the Pasion region) groups (= households) were distributed all over the site without any clustering. At the same moment, we observe *mound groups* – settlement units of 5-20 households in the Mopan-Macal valley in Belize (Ball & Taschek 1991: 150-157), which are the lowest element of the settlement hierarchy. It is interesting that this correlates with a high percentage of the solitary structures (nuclear families) in the neighboring Upper Belize River area. Maybe the peripheral regions developed another way than the core area? But there is another explanation. Tourtellot, analyzing the typology of structures at Ceibal, noted that row houses (buildings several rooms wide) and range type structures (either two or more interconnected rooms deep and two or more wide) "*could be easily regularly multi-family rather that nuclear family dwellings*" (Tourtellot 1988: 356). In this case the Belize data really could be regarded as an evidence of modest life in this region.

The clusters of households (patio groups) also can be observed in the residential zone of Copan (the Motagua River valley, the Southeast region) where they consisted of 3-10 separated households. They could be considered as communities within the limits of the city. The nature of these units is far from being clear. Most of archaeologists see them as lineages and think that the communities tallied to kin groups. But this conclusion is not based on the genetic data analysis and therefore should be treated with care.

Every household had a special building with possible ritual functions – a kind of sanctuary or a shrine. They have small area and are characterized by the absence of chemical rests and relatively rich ornamentation. Practically all scholars agree that they served as ancestor's shrines and bloodletting rites were pereformed there. In the elite groups the small pyramids and mounds correspond to this type of structures.

Several examples from different regions of Maya Lowlands permit us to arrive at the conclusion that the community patriarchs controlled these shrines and therefore the ancestor's worship as such:

1. Coba. The group of two households (Unit 2-14 and Unit 15-37), which was mentioned earlier, was constructed between 600 and 800 AD by an extended family. Primarily it constructed two residential structures, several auxiliary buildings and a shrine (Unit 2-14). Later neighboring and attached Unit 15-37 with two residences

was built. These two units touched each other and were partly contemporaneous. They shared a route of access and had similar ceramic types. It is very well possible that the construction of the second household was an outcome of the family growth when one of its offspring married. But two units continued to use the same sanctuary that was situated in the founder's unit (Structure E12) and participated in domestic cults. Two earliest residences (E4 and E8) were the largest and had stuccoed floors while the late buildings (E15 and E32) were less elaborated (Manzanilla & Barba 1990: 42-44).

2. Copan. Group 9M-22 excavated by the *Proyecto Arqueologico Copan* in 1981-84 was situated in the Las Sepulturas residential zone to the northeast from the Main Group (Sheehy 1991). It was an intermediate between elite non-royal groups (like 9N-8) and simple households. Group 9M-22 consisted of three patios designated A, B, and C. The first one was the largest and the most important in 750-900 AD and consisted of 17 structures. According to the ceramic data, the possible founder of the shrine lived in 9M-22B. His successor built a residence (Structure 194-B), where his father was buried, and a small temple (197-3rd), and later placed the altar in the plaza center shifting the focus of leadership to the Group 9M-22A. About 780 AD there were two families in the group: monogamous (Str. 196) and possible polygamous leader's ones (194-B for himself and may be 193-2nd for his wives). The third-generation family head was the most important person. The ruler gave him the right to commission relief sculptures of the ancestors, mythological animals and deities on the facade of his residence (195-B). He possibly controlled the Patio B where the ancestor stucco head identical to those of Structure 195-B was found. In this period the extended family consisted of the leader's polygamous family (Str. 195-B and 193) and three monogamous (194, 196 and 245). On the incised schist plaque from the Temple 197 the man performing some ritual was depicted. This scene probably shows the third-generation leader performing an ancestor cult ritual because the protagonist holds a serpent – a symbol, associated with ancestors in the Maya art (Sheehy 1991: 4-12). We think that the entire Group 9M-22 at Copan represents a lineage which consisted of three extended families. The leadership belonged to the family of Patio A, which monopolized the ancestor's cults.

It seems that the leadership in the Classic extended families belonged to the eldest family. For example at Ceibal (the Pasion region, Guatemala) the largest and most elaborated dwellings were also the earliest (the so called "Class K structures"). At Copan (9M-22) the founder's residences were decorated with the stucco sculptures and turned to be small palaces (Sheehy 1991: 8-9). In the household clusters (communities) the authority was in the hands of privileged extended families. In the Mopan-Macal valley mound groups regularly included plazuela groups – more elaborated groups of structures with associated prestige goods (marine shells, polychrome ceramics etc.). They are often parts of settlements and therefore may be interpreted as the community headmen's households.

At Copan we have another interesting example. Group 9N-8 was the largest in the Las Sepulturas zone and consisted of 10 patio groups focused on Patio A. This was

the eldest compound constructed in the 6th century AD. Without doubt it was the household of some elite family connected with the royal court and its occupants even had a right to erect the hieroglyphic monuments. But the other patios (B, C and H) and J were more modest and possibly were occupied by the lateral lines of the lineage. The rest of the group, especially Patios D, E, H and J, were probably the residences of the servants and dependent persons.

So, the Classic Maya extended family community appears to be a hierarchical group typically consisting of 3-6 nuclear families. They were united by the common origin and ancestor's cult. The leadership was in the hands of the head of the eldest family that performed common ancestors' cult rituals. We can define the next level of the social organization – large communities from 5-12 extended families, although we do not have evidence for their existence from the core area of Maya Lowlands (Central Peten). In the regions where they existed (Southeast, Belize) they were also organized hierarchically. Community headmen had the access to prestige goods and according to the data from the Mopan-Macal valley; their status was close to that of the secondary elite.

Myth, history and hieroglyphic writing

Elaborated system of the hieroglyphic writing was one of the greatest achievements of the Maya culture. Although writing was created in the Preclassic epoch by the Olmecs, only Maya conserved it through 2000 years. Now the corpus of Maya inscriptions is enormous – thousands of monuments and ceramic vessels. The Maya hieroglyphic writing appeared in the 2nd half of the 1st mil. BC in the Guatemala Highlands. Having spread all over Maya Lowlands in the first centuries AD it conserved till the 16th century.

The main types of the hieroglyphic sources of the Classic period are monumental inscriptions. The texts were inscribed on stone or wooden monuments set on central squares of cities or inside buildings. All of them are "historic" by their content and tell about the deeds of the Classic Maya elite. In this sense they represent a materialized power of the royal dynasties of the Classic Maya kingdoms. For example at Piedras Negras (Usumasinta River drainage, nowadays in Guatemala) stelae that described the lives of local rulers were erected in series, each recording one reign. [8] Action was the focus of both the text and the scene. "*He did it*" or "*It is his image doing it*" – these are the main formulae of the Classic inscriptions.

It is very interesting that practically all the epigraphic texts are written from the third person: "*It is **his** image doing it*", "***He** did it*" and not "***I** did it*" as in the Ancient East. It seems that Maya scribes pretended to be objective, to create a "real" image of history. According to the Mesoamerican cyclical concept of time, the same events occur on the same dates. So, to record event signified to create the perpetual

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[8] This helped Tatiana Proskouriakoff in 1960 to define the dynastic chronology of Piedas Negras kings that became one of the key points in the study of hieroglyphic texts (Proskouriakoff 1960; 1963; 1964).

cycle in the future and on the contrary, to destroy a monument signified to destroy the future. When in 637 AD the Naranjo kingdom (Eastern Peten) was defeated by Caracol and Calakmul, the winners set a hieroglyphic stairway describing the history of the war. Fifty years later, when a Naranjo ruler in its turn won the war with Caracol, he ordered to reassemble the stairway in order to create a chronological and historical nonsense.

Another consequence of the cyclical concept of time was that the myth and history were brought together. All the mythological events (creation of the world, birth of the ancestor gods) had their exact dates. At Palenque (Usumasinta River drainage, Mexico) they are organically included into the history of the ruling dynasty. It was very important for Maya not only to connect a contemporary fact with its mythological prototype but also to set an exact chronological distance between them.

The key figure which united the myth and history was the ruler. In the ideal model it was the supreme ruler which represented all the polity and as the eldest person in the eldest lineage kept the relations between this world and the supernatural one, between ancestors and the living. He has only been a protagonist of the inscription that recorded his birth, genealogy, first bloodletting ceremony, first war, accession, etc. For example, we know a few names of the royal children which did not become rulers themselves. But this concept was realized different ways in different regions. In Peten and Pasion River drainage it was so and only supreme rulers commissioned monuments (with rare exceptions). On the periphery, where the influence of non-royal noblemen was stronger, they accompany supreme kings, especially in the case of usurpation. The unique opportunity for us to know the structure of power of Usumasinta polities was the result of struggle for the Yaxchilan throne in 742-752 AD. The winner, Yaxun Balam IV had to pay more attention to subsidiary lords (*sahaloob*). On the monuments they accompany him in battles and at ritual performances.

Nevertheless the influence of the tradition of "Singular" was so strong that even at Yucatan (Xkalumkin, Uxmal, Chich'en Itza), where polities without supreme rulers existed in the Terminal Classic (830-1000 AD), co-rulers were listed one by one. Their actions are not described as "*They* (Actors 1, 2, 3) *did it*" but rather "*He* (Actor 1) *did it together with him* (Actor 2), *together with him* (Actor 3)".

Monumental inscriptions disappeared together with the crisis of Classic Maya civilization in the Terminal Classic in 830-1000 AD. Late examples from Mayapan were only bad copies of early stelae. It seems that these two facts were directly connected. As some scholars believe, the crisis was a process of reorganization of Maya society, change of the direction and mode of evolution. New forms of socio-economic relations and political organization emerged and epigraphic inscriptions strongly connected with the old structure, were substituted by codices.

The structure of Classic Lowland Maya polities

The basic unit of the Classic Lowland Maya political system was a small polity

(kingdom). Rulers of these kingdoms were called *ahaw* (from Common Mayan *a:xa:w* "owner", "master").[9] The office was designated with a special term *ahawil* (later *ahawlel*) or "kingship". At the same time *ahaw* was the name for both the rank and office, and members of the ruling dynasty (sons, daughters, brothers and siblings) also bore this title. Therefore later the title *k'uhul ahaw* ("divine king") appeared for the supreme ruler and *ahaw* became a common designation for all noblemen meaning the "lord". The heir bore the title *ch'ok ahaw* or "unripe, young lord" (Stuart 1993: 322-332).

It seems that in the Classic Maya "political conception" all the kingdoms were considered equal and untouchable. In the Classic period no polity was deleted from the political landscape. Some kingdoms could lose their autonomy and be united under the power of one king, but in this case the supreme king received a complex title, in which all his supplementary titles were enumerated. Such examples are well known in the Usumasinta region in the Late Classic (600-900 AD): the Yaxchilan realm consisted of kingdoms of Siyahchan (proper Yaxchilan) and Pet, the Pomona realm also included two kingdoms (Pakabul and Pia), probably the same was the situation with Piedras-Negras (joined kingdoms of Yokib and K'inil). Sometimes names of polities coincided with their capitals' names, but it was not a common rule. Movement of the capital never led to a change of the polity name as it happened with pairs Bejucal – Motul de San Jose (Peten) and Tres Islas – Machaquila (the Pasion region). When descendants of the Tikal dynasty fled to the south and founded the new capital at Dos Pilas (Chanha), they preserved the ancient title *k'uhul Mutul ahaw* – "divine Mutul king" – and used it through all their history.

The internal structure of the Classic Maya polities is far from being clear. The data vary from region to region and even from polity to polity. The most interesting writing evidence proceed from the Usumasinta region but, in contrast, the most fruitful archaeological excavations were realized on the eastern side of the Maya area.

A number of epigraphic works in the 1960s–80s demonstrated that the western part of the Maya area – the Usumasinta region – was shared between several polities, sometimes united into weak hegemonies, but mostly independent (Proskouriakoff 1960; 1963; 1964; Mathews 1980; 1991; 1997; Schele 1991; for synthesis see Culbert 1988). The late tradition attributes the foundation of local dynasties to the 4th–5th centuries AD, but the hieroglyphic inscriptions, monumental sculpture and other indicators of the complex socio-political structure appeared only in the 6th–7th centuries. The main peculiarity of Usumasinta texts is a great attention their authors pay to non-royal nobility, especially to the category called *sahal* (Mathews & Schele 1991; Stuart 1993: 329-332). This title probably derived from Cholan *sah* ("small"). *Sahal*'s act like supreme rulers – they accede, wage wars and so on. We know about 8 "seatings" or "enterings" to this office (*sahalil*): 1) El Cayo (689, 729, 764 and 772

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[9] Titles *"the king of polity"* were called *"Emblem Glyphs"* by the Guatemalan scholar Heinrich Berlin (Berlin 1958).

AD) and an unknown town (730 AD) in Piedras Negras realm; 2) Laxtunich (in 786) in the Yaxchilan realm; 3) Lacanha (in 743) in the Bonampak realm. Frequently the *sahal* title is used in possessed construction *u-sahal* ("his *sahal* of the king"). The functions of *sahal* are the exact copy of the king's ones but in the smaller scale. It is evident that *sahal*'s were dependent "provincial" rulers; some of them could erect their own monuments. Several women from *sahal* families married kings. Inscriptions also mention titles "head *sahal*" and "young *sahal*", but the role of this difference is not clear (Stuart 1993: 328-332).

The office of a provincial lord could also be inherited. Such dynasties existed at El Cayo (a. 650-729 AD and 764 - a. 800 AD), Lacanha (a. 730 - a. 760 AD). What was the level of control of the supreme ruler over his underlords? Houston suggested that in the Piedras Negras polity they were replaced simultaneously and it could be timed to the king's accession. Also the post of the *sahal* could be not for life – for example the El Cayo ruler Chak Tun Ak Chamay (689-732) died 4 years after his successor acceded (Chinchilla & Houston 1992: 66-68). In some cases, when a kingdom lost its autonomy, the former king lost his status and could become a *sahal*.

The *sahal* of the Late Classic period strongly resembles the *batab* (provincial ruler) of Pre-conquest Yucatan, but we see a considerable difference. If for the Postclassic system it is possible to say that *batab* was it's key figure, it is totally incorrect for the Usumasinta valley polities. The Late Classic title and post did not exist independently, it was always connected with the "holy king". We think that the institute of *sahaloob* was artificial within the ancient Maya political organization. They partly replaced the *yahaw* category of Early Classic, changing the character of power structure. The data from Yaxchilan Early Classic "chronicle" on Lintels 60, 49, 37, 35 (CMHI 5, 103, 105, 107; Tate 1992: 170) may in some aspects reflect these processes. In this inscription the most important victories and captives are mentioned. First seven Yaxchilan rulers (320 – a.470) captured kings themselves, the 8th, 9th and 10th (a. 470 – a. 550) – with their subordinates called *u-yahawte* ("the lord from the lineage of"). Nobody is named *sahal* – they appeared only in the 7th century at Piedras Negras and in the 8th century at Yaxchilan. The change of structure from the system of vassals toward that of controlled provincial rulers is evident.

In the 7th–8th centuries AD the polities of the Usumasinta valley consisted of several "districts" which were governed by secondary rulers. Unfortunately written sources do not mention the lower elements of this system. In the Yaxchilan realm we can identify at least 4 districts: Chicozapote, Laxtunich, La Pasadita and Dos Caobas. All of them are situated 10-20 km far from Yaxchilan, and thus constitute the territory about 700-900 sq. km. The Piedras Negras realm consisted of 5 or 6 "sahaldoms", but we can identify only El Cayo. Moreover, some lesser kingdoms were subordinated to Piedras Negras, as, for example, La Mar. Its rulers were called the *ahaw*, and probably belonged to a lateral lineage of the main royal dynasty.

Excavations in the Belize River valley (Ball & Taschek 1991; Ford 1991) revealed several territorial communities (150-300 sq. km each) with complex

settlement and socio-economic patterns. With these new data the Mopan-Macal valley turns to be best archaeologically documented in respect to the settlement hierarchy and socio-political organization (Ball & Taschek 1991).

Mound group – the lowest element – consists of 5-20 households and probably reflects the community. They regularly include plazuela groups – community headmen's residential compounds. Associated artifacts (marine shell, ceramics etc.) indicate higher status of their occupants than among the commoners.

Plaza groups are larger and architecturally more elaborated compounds which occur both in rural area and in urban centers. They are also characterized by restricted access from the countryside. The material rests suggest high "absolute" status for their inhabitants but that group's elaborateness and monumentality reflects different "relative" positions.

Regal-residential center – isolated palace or an acropolis-like complex in the rural area. Ball and Taschek describe such centers as *"introverted"* sites *"of social-ceremonial, funerary and devotional activities as well as residence"* with the primary role as *"rural, high-level, elite-residence complex"* (Ibid: 151). They also provide housing for the serving dependent, lower status population, but associated significant "town" is absent. In contrast, the capital of the Mopan-Macal valley community Buenavista del Cayo was a multifunctional "urban" settlement (regal-ritual center). About 7% of its area was dedicated to craft activities including attached palace masters and non-elite urban specialists. These two latter types also have from one to four special buildings of probable administrative/adjudicative functions (Ibid: 150-157).

We see a very similar picture in the neighboring zones (El Pilar, Baking Pot, Pacbitun, Las Ruinas de Arenal). It seems that they all were territorial and not political units, and some of them were parts of the larger realm of Sa'il (Naranjo). This suggestion is supported by inscriptions on two polychrome vessels founded in an elite burial at Buenavista. Naranjo was one of the most important Peten kingdoms in the Late Classic period. Besides the Belize River valley, it included territories to the north down to Holmul River, which were governed by royal kinsmen, which resided in Holmul – the center, comparable to Buenavista by size and complexity. Naranjo, Holmul and Buenavista form a single ceramic group (Zacatel series). Each of these towns had a proper "palace school" which used local clays, technical and stylistic methods. It seems that subordinated lords had no right to erect hieroglyphic monuments and their ties with the overlord were reflected in the parade ceramics (Ball 1993: 249-252).

The socio-economic structure of the Naranjo polity was rather complex, too. The similarity of burial patterns at the plazuela and plaza groups indicates that the status of the community leaders and of the secondary elite were very close. Such "wealth" goods as obsidian was found in 56% of all households in the El Pilar "district". In the valley and uplands, where the majority of population lived, this proportion is even more – 78%. But the elite continued to control the obsidian

procurement (trade) and elaboration. A specialized obsidian-working complex, El Laton was situated 4.5 km south from El Pilar and was dominated by the elite residential compound like regal-residential centers of the Buenavista "district". In contrast, the pattern of chert production and distribution is highly decentralized – unfinished cores and hammers are mainly concentrated in the foothill zone. Probably chert tools – most important for rural utilitarian and agricultural needs – were produced on the household level by not full-time specialists (Ford 1991: 37, 42). The same picture we see in the ceramic industry – specialized workshops existed only in large urban centers and they were connected primarily with the elite's needs of polychrome vessels. The rest of the society used pottery made by non-attached communal craftsmen (Ball 1993: 258-260). All this corresponds to the model of Prudence Rice (1987): a decentralized system where the central power controls only the "prestige" sector of economics. In the "commodity" sector there were no full-time, barrio-like specialization and hierarchical distribution. The main role was played by local exchange, kinship ties networks and so on (Ibid.: 76-80).

Thus, a large polity centered at Naranjo consisted of 6 or 7 "districts" and occupied about 1500-2000 km^2. It had the settlement hierarchy of 5 levels with three central-place settlements between the capital and local communities. It seems that at least 2 elements of this hierarchy – regal-residential centers and plaza groups – were not connected with local "natural" growing of political organization. Plaza groups do not have enough space to place rural population during the religious ceremonies and all their ceremonial architecture is related only to the ancestors' cult rites of no more than one extended family. So it is more possible that plaza groups had only politico-administrative functions.

Territorial communities of the Belize River area strongly resemble "original" simple chiefdoms. We see the evolution of the Naranjo polity from such a chiefdom through the unification of neighboring chiefdoms to the early state. The evidence for the complex chiefdom organization are the first hieroglyphic inscriptions and construction of the new acropolis complex. In the beginning of its history Naranjo acts as a vassal of powerful Calakmul in its struggle with Tikal, but in 590–630 AD the new polity also claims for the hegemony in Peten. In this time the history of the Naranjo dynasty was rewritten. "Black Pecari?" was proclaimed as the official ancestor of the royal lineage which acceded in legendary times in the large text on Altar 1 (CMHI 2: 86-87). One of his descendants founded the city of Naranjo in 259 BC. All these changes were made during the long reign of Ah Sa… (late 6th century). The new concept of Naranjo history was emphasized by double genealogical tradition – he was named both 8th and 35th ruler of the dynasty. After the defeat of Naranjo by Caracol and Calakmul in 626-637 AD the Belize River chiefs regained independence and we may observe a short-term local splendor at Buenavista and Las Ruinas. The revitalization of Naranjo in the end of the 8th century was accompanied by the establishment of new settlement patterns in the Belize valley and spreading of political frontiers of the Naranjo state.

Comparing the rest of Peten, where most ancient and important Maya urban centers were situated, and the Usumasinta region, we assume that here the *sahal* title was practically unknown. In one case the *sahal* is mentioned in the context of bringing tribute to the Motul de San Jose lord. We do not know, if this office and rank were hereditary in Peten or not. Secondary centers rarely have monuments with carved inscriptions, and they date back to the beginning of Early Classic or Terminal Classic. It seems that the influence of this group of the elite was limited in Peten in comparison with the Usumasinta region.

Inscriptions provide some indirect data about the structure of the central Peten kingdoms. If secondary rulers were not members of the royal dynasties, they were simply called "he from". There is interesting title *ho' pet Oxhabte' bakab* ("the ruler of five parts of Oxhabte"), which refers to the kings of Rio Azul (northern Peten). The word *pet* or "part" sometimes is used in texts from other sites (Naranjo, Tikal). It is possible that it was a notion for the "districts" like territorial communities in the Belize River valley. There was another pattern in the northern portion of Peten, dominated by Calakmul. Different inscriptions mention local lords, who acceded into *ahawil* (*ahawlel*) or "kingship", but were not called kings of their own polities. Probably they were members of a larger Calakmul royal dynasty and governed subordinated centers. Although their office could be inherited, sometimes other rulers intervened between a father and a son.

Archaeologically, Peten secondary centers (also called "minor centers" or "towns") are very different. They vary from considerable multi-group sites with hieroglyphic monuments to small sites consisting only of modest civic-ceremonial nucleus and surrounding residential units. In this case it probably depended on the geographical position of the town, its history and relations with the central authority. But normally they can be detected by (1) small number of hieroglyphic inscriptions or by the presence of only plain stelae without texts;[10] (2) relatively small amount of monumental architecture. Of course, the best evidence are mentions of the interaction with the supreme king in the written sources, but this looks problematic now. We have a lot of ruins of secondary centers in the central Peten and a number of the local polities' names, but we are not able to connect these two sets of data.

In sum, the Peten polities differed from those of the Usumasinta region. The local elite was not so important and did not enjoy such prerogatives. It is clear that the level of centralization in Peten was much higher and kings had more power.

One of the most important titles frequently used all over Classic Maya Lowlands was the *ak'hun* or *ah k'uhun*. Earlier it was read *ah ch'ulna* or "courtier" (Houston 1993), but later the reading has been modified to *ah k'uhun* – "scribe" ("he of the sacred books") or *ak'hun* – "messenger" (from *ah ak'hun* – "he, who delivers a paper"). Recent research showed that they employed a very wide set of functions, mainly connected with the court life and administrative duties (Lacadena 1996;

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[10] Plain stelae also present in primary centers. Several scholars, basing on the rests of paint on some plain stelae, have suggested that texts on them had been painted.

Barrales 1999). According to the analysis of the polychrome vases' iconography, they served a king as scribes in different contexts inside the palace as well as in the reception of gifts and tribute. In the epigraphic records they could be military chiefs of various types, king's retainers, etc. Secondary rulers could also have their messengers, as it is evident from the inscriptions of Palenque. Although women also wore this title, they never performed any specific activity, connected with the *ak'hun* rank (Barrales 1999).

All these evidence indicate that the *ak'hun / ah k'uhun* constituted the administrative body of the Classic Maya kingdoms. It was a general notion for officials, without distinction between the court and central apparatus. It is unknown whether an administrative specialization of officials existed in the Classic period, but it seems doubtful. All the mentions of this institution are dated to the Late Classic (600-900 AD), simultaneously with the appearance of the *sahal*'s, but 300 years is too a short period for a well established functional specialization to develop. There are other titles and offices in the inscriptions, mainly connected with the court: the *ah sakhun bas* ("the keeper of the royal headband"), *yahaw k'ak'* ("lord of the fire", a kind of priest?), *ah teyub* ("he of the tribute"), *ah ts'ib* ("scribe-painter"), *ah uxul* ("sculptor"), etc. In the analysis of the administration and court of the Lowland Maya kingdoms it is important to distinguish titles of office, rank and occupation from each other. The *Ak'hun / ah k'uhun* was a rank and office, the *ah sakhun bas* and *yahaw k'ak'* were offices [11], and *ah ts'ib* and *ah uxul* were occupations. This difference can be traced by the use of the possessed forms: only officials could be *yak'hun / yah k'uhun* ("his messenger") of the ruler.

Iconography and hieroglyphic texts also provide some data that different groups of nobility had different rank markers. An indicator of the personal status was his headdress, and a common term for taking the office was *k'alah hun tuba'* ("it was tied the headband on his head"). The names of the royal items were *sakhun* ("white crown") and *bolon-tsakab k'ak'-xok hun* ("nine knots, fiery shark crown"); they usually had images of the gods and deified ancestors. The "Lord of fire" *yahaw k'ak'* wore *k'ak'hun* ("fiery headband"). Headdresses of simple officials consisted of a cotton band, but they were very specific due to brushes and a small bundle of paper.

There are dispersed mentions of tribute in the hieroglyphic texts. The *ah teyub* ("he of the tribute") title implies that there were special tribute collectors, but in the scene of the tribute presentation, such a person is depicted with the headdress of *ak'hun / ah k'uhun*. The hotions for tribute are *ikats* ("burden"), *yubte* ("bundle of the tribute"), *tohol* ("price"), but their concrete economic meaning is unknown. However, as it is seen from the scenes painted on the polichrome ceramics, this activity was also conducted by officials.

Kingdom interaction, hegemonies and territorial realms

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[11] The difference between the office and the title can be traced in the hieroglyphic inscriptions. There were special notions for offices (kingship, sahalship, etc.).

From the very beginning of the study of Maya epigraphy it became evident that the polities did not develop in isolation and were placed within a complex network of political and cultural interaction.

For a long time two models of the Classic Maya political organization were widespread among specialists. The first defended the existence of several large regional states with the administrative hierarchy of the first, second and third-level sites. It was based mainly on the archaeological data and "conditional reading" of the hieroglyphic inscriptions (Marcus 1976; 1993; Adams & Jones 1981). The most elaborated form it acquired in the recent work of Joyce Marcus. She claimed to create "*a model based on the Lowland Maya themselves*" (1993:116), but in our opinion made two important errors. First, she identified the apogee of political organization with a large centralized polity and, second, used the pre-conquest situation as the pattern for her constructions while such an essay should be based primarily on the information taken from the Classic writing sources.

Peter Mathews (see 1991) expressed another opinion, which was supported by the other epigraphers and archaeologists. According to this model, Classic Maya Lowlands consisted of several dozens of different political units sometimes united in weak hierarchies but mostly independent (see Sabloff 1986; Culbert 1988; Houston 1993; Stuart 1993). In latter cases the subordinated rulers kept their autonomy, expressed in "Emblem Glyphs". Their ties with the hegemon were designated by the title *yahaw*, "his lord" or "vassal". This title was personal and described the relationship between two individuals and not political structures. For example, in the inscription on the Stela 2 of Arroyo de Piedra (the Pasion River region) the local ruler is called *yahaw* of the deceased king of neighboring Dos Pilas. Typical hegemonies of this type existed in the Usumasinta region. The rapid growth of Tonina in the early 6th century can serve an illustration. In 711 K'an Hok' Chitam II of Palenque was captured and maybe sacrificed. His architectural projects were finished by a certain nobleman which did not belong to the ruling dynasty, and the heir to the Palenque throne Akal Mo'-Nab III did not accede till 722. In 715 the Bonampak ruler called himself *yahaw* of K'inich Baknal Chaak, holy lord of Tonina in his inscription. But by the end of the 720-s there were no more mentions of the Tonina dominance in the hieroglyphic texts of the Western region. At the peak of its expansion Tonina dominated its rival and neighbor for 12 years and controlled the territory as far as the Usumasinta River (about 100 km to the east). [12]

This view was radically changed by the works of Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube who demonstrated that in late 4th – late 7th centuries such hierarchical relations comprised practically all the Southern Lowlands. Now the political history of the Classic period seems to focus on the struggle for the hegemony in the Maya world between the most important kingdoms (Martin & Grube 1995; Grube 1996; Martin & Grube, 1998; in press).

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[12] The author earlier also supported this view on the Classic Maya political organization (see Beliaev 1998; 2000)

The first historically known large political unit appeared on the political scene of Maya Lowlands in the beginning of Early Classic (250-600 AD). It was situated in the central part of Peten and included the most ancient Maya cities (Tikal, Uaxactun, etc.). Although earlier it was widely accepted that it was created by Tikal kings who conquered Uaxactun at 378 AD and subsequently subdued neighboring Peten polities (Schele & Freidel 1991: 130-164; Sharer 1994: 185-191), now it is believed that originally Tikal was not the capital, but one of subordinated kingdoms (Stuart 1998).

The creation of the Peten "paramountcy" was accompanied by dynastic changes. Under 378 AD hieroglyphic inscriptions recorded that old Tikal dynasty was overthrown by force, and power was seized by a new group which brought new ideology, new iconographic style, and veneered deities with evident Teotihuacan origin.[13] One of the newcomers Siyah K'ak' became a paramount ruler of Peten with the title of *kalomte*.[14] Central Mexican connections of new dynasts gave a basis to consider them as foreigners. Recently Stuart, Grube, and Martin supposed that in fact they were directly from Teotihuacan. According to their interpretation, Siyah K'ak' was a military chief of the Teotihuacan king (known by the Maya name Hats'am Kuh, 374-439 AD) who invaded Peten and became its ruler. Nun Yax Ayin, a son of Hats'am Kuh, was inaugurated as the new Tikal king under the auspice of the elder kinsmen. Later Tikal lords called themselves *ochk'in kalomte* ("western hegemon"), underlining their "Mexican" origin (Stuart 1998; Martin & Grube, in press).

This proposition is still under evaluation and was criticized by some epigraphers. The "arrival of strangers" is too close to the myth about wanderings, so common in the Mesoamerican tradition. In the texts describing this event the main protagonist is Waxaklahun Uba' Chan ("Eighteen Images Serpent"), which was identified as an important Teotihuacan deity (so-called "Mosaic Serpent"). Waxaklahun Uba' Chan patronized the establishing of new rulers and provided them with sacral power. I agree that it is necessary to treat such accounts in the ancient texts carefully (see: Boot 1999). However, it rises the interesting problem of the role of foreign impact in Maya history. By 200-100 BC there have already been developed states in the Central Mexican Highlands. Relations with Teotihuacan considerably intensified the socio-political evolution of the Kaminaljuyu polity in Maya Highlands (Sanders & Michels 1977). In Maya Lowlands the Teotihuacan influence reflected in architectural forms can be traced well prior to 378 AD, but the mass spread of new artistic style and ideology began only from this date. It is clear that this complex was used by the Central Peten rulers to consolidate their positions and, possibly, to free themselves from community ties. Even if Tikal dominated Uaxactun before the "Mexican" dynasty establishing, the development of complex forms of political organization received a strong impulse. It seems that the importance of the "Arrival of

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[13] This event was previously considered as a mention of the conquest of Uaxactun by Tikal.

[14] This important title still lacks of any proper translation. Its general meaning is clear ("hegemon", "paramount king"), but the origin is unknown. It looks possible that it is connected with *kal* ("axe", "scepter"; "to clear field"?)

strangers" was a kind of the "epos of migration" to legitimize their power. Recently Belkov attracted the scholars' attention to this phenomenon, *i.e.* to the situation when rulers in traditional societies create a situation of "provoked dependency" and, loosing some attributes of their power, acquire a new, higher status (1996: 66-71).

The first Peten paramount ruler, Siyah K'ak' (378–402?) probably resided in Uaxactun, and other kings were his *yahaw* or vassals. He was replaced by Nun Yax Ayin I from Tikal who ruled till 420 AD and left his son to govern the city after his death. When the latter himself became *kalomte* (426 AD), he united both titles thus transforming the Peten "paramountcy" into the Tikal hegemony. During these and subsequent reigns (402 – ca. 500 AD) Tikal became the major city in Southern Lowlands and its authority was recognized up to Copan. In this time the title *k'uhul ahaw* ("divine king") appeared, referring to the Tikal rulers; the title *ochk'in kalomte* became a designation for the highest position in the Maya world. "Western hegemons" employed different methods to control subordinated territories, including marriages, royal visits and establishing sons as kings. The exact degree of the subordinated kings' autonomy is unknown, though officially the *yahaw* acceded by the order of overlord. Some vassal rulers even could be replaced, as it happened with the Copan lord about 530 AD. Manifestations of disobedience were suppressed with armed force.

Northern Peten seems to develop separately. Calakmul, an ancient city as well, was the dominant center in this region which never displayed so abundant Teotihuacan traits and stayed within the Maya tradition's limits. In 562 AD Calakmul defeated Tikal in alliance with its former underlord Yahawte K'inich from Caracol (Belize) and overthrew the "Mexican" dynasty. This caused an 80-year decline, during which no monuments were erected and few architectural projects were realized in the city. It would be interesting to see Calakmul as a center of "Maya" tradition opposing "Teotihuacans", but in fact by the 6th century the meaningful differences between them were lost. The new hegemony existed for about 130 years (562-695 AD) and controlled practically all Southern Lowlands, maybe except the Southeastern zone (Copan) and the far west (Palenque). We have no data for Northern Yucatan, but two polities in the central portion of the peninsula recognized the Calakmul authority in the mid-6th century. We do not know if the structure of this superpolity changed comparing to the previous epoch. The Calakmul kings accepted the whole set of methods used by their predecessors: royal visits, marriages, military raids, etc. The relative weakness of this system explains why they had to wage long wars – with Palenque (599-611) and Naranjo (626-631). In Central Peten hegemons made use of the help of Caracol lords who served as a kind of vice-governors in this area.

Tikal restored its positions by the 640-s and began a new cycle of wars. In this time the main Calakmul supporters were former Tikal rulers, who escaped to the south, to the Pasion region (Petexbatun) and founded the new Mutul[15] kingdom with the capital in Dos Pilas. This long conflict can be called "Maya World Wars" because

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[15] Mutul (probably, "Place of Birds") was the ancient name of the Tikal kingdom.

of their length and scale. Series of wars lasted for 50 years (ca. 645-695) and practically all the important Maya kingdoms from all the regions took their part in the struggle. Although Tikal twice (in 657 and 679) suffered severe defeats, finally the luck was on its side and the Calakmul hegemony collapsed. It marked the end of the epoch of large hegemonies in Maya Lowlands. It seems that the very concept of a paramount ruler was discredited. First, the title *ochk'in kalomte* lost its meaning – the "western (foreign) hegemon" and changed it to the "hegemon of the west". In this sense it was adapted in the Usumasints region and was frequently used in Yaxchilan. The rethinking of this idea led to appearance of the *lak'in kalomte* ("eastern hegemon") in Lamanai (Belize) and the *nal kalomte* ("northern hegemon") in Oxkintok (Northern Yucatan). The Copan kings also left the "western hegemon" title and called themselves the *nohol kalomte* ("southern hegemon"). Second, former peripheral kingdoms became officially independent and took an active part in the political history-making. The Palenque king, who supported Tikal, never mentioned any vassality to somebody. The Dos Pilas ruler in the beginning was a *yahaw* of Calakmul, but after the victory over Tikal in 679 AD he had the same rank as his former overlord. The 8th century seems to be the epoch of regionalization of Maya Lowlands. This conception was excellently expressed by Copan historians who in 731 AD called "four skies" or "four on high": the king of Copan, the king of Tikal, the king of Calakmul, and the king of Palenque.

It is very difficult to analyze the structure of Tikal and Calakmul hegemonies. They occupied very large territories – practically all Southern Lowlands and included dozens of second-level polities. At the same time, they were very amorphous, and sometimes kingdoms, subordinated to the same hegemon, attacked each other. The notions used in the inscriptions do not make the situation clear. For example, the same formula *u-chabhiy* ("he ordered it") is used to describe the king's actions in different contexts: the erection of monuments, conquests or capture of enemies, and inaugurations of subordinates. In the Usumasinta region we can suppose that the difference between the *sahal* and *yahaw* was that of the secondary ruler and vassal, but in Peten the political hierarchy consisted mainly of *yahaw*. Nevertheless, I think that carefully studying epigraphic accounts we can better understand the processes which occurred in Southern Lowlands in the 8th century. Central Peten will be taken as an example.

After 700 AD Tikal was the major power in the center of Peten. The only rival left was Naranjo in the eastern part of Peten. Naranjo, having strong ties with Calakmul and Dos Pilas, began to struggle with the polities situated around the lakes Peten-Itza, Yaxha and Sacnab, and by 715 AD occupied some of them, including Yaxha, which was the largest. The Yaxha king was forced to escape and the victors opened the royal tombs and threw their content into the lake. In order to strengthen his power, the king of Naranjo married a princess from another small kingdom, creating a system of dependent territories, which could be directly controlled. Tikal preserved very strong positions in the north and northeast, controlling such important centers as

Xultun, Rio Azul and different smaller towns. It is important to note that Xultun and Rio Azul were kingdoms, but all the evidence indicate that they were not independent. Until 771-780 AD very few hieroglyphic monuments were erected around Tikal (see Culbert 1991: 137). Very frequent were marital alliances between Tikal and other polities. Possibly there were two strategies: (1) loyal dynasts received wives from the royal lineage as the Yaxha king defeated by Naranjo, who married a Tikal princess, and (2) high kings and their kinsmen married women from dependent towns. The latter way had long dating back to Early Classic, but did not loose its place. For example, Sacpeten (near the Peten-Itza Lake) was co-ruled by a son of the supreme king and a local women.[16] The case of Uaxactun is especially interesting. In Early Classic Uaxactun had prerogatives of the first-rank center (stelae with inscriptions, large-scale construction, etc.). In Late Classic main buildings constructed in this site were palaces and not temples (Idem.). It is known that in the early 8th century the Uaxactun ruler was a son of a Tikal noble lord, not even the king (CMHI 5: 166). In 744-748 AD Naranjo was defeated and the kingdom disintegrated. Its rulers did not restore their position until 770-775 AD while Tikal control over Yaxha and other polities around the Lakes was restored and strengthened.

To mark his new status in the regional hierarchy, the Naranjo king Tiliw Chan Chaak (693 − ca. 730) took the title of *Wuk Tsuk* ("Seven Parts" − the ancient name for Eastern Peten), thus pretending to be the ruler of the whole region. His Tikal contemporary Hasaw Chan K'awil revived the tile *kalomte*, meaning that only he and his successors were real *kalomte*. What was new is that they invented the special office of *kalomtel*, rising themselves up to a new level in the power hierarchy. Another interesting indicator is that all over Central Peten only the Tikal king was called "divine", while in other regions it was a common title in all the kingdoms irrespective their size.

Formally, there is little difference between mechanisms of integration at the regional and supra-regional levels. But it was evidently easier to control neighboring polities than those situated on another side of Maya Lowlands. This fact contributed greatly to the evolution of the regional systems of polities into a single states. There was marked difference between the position of Motul de San Jose (also situated not far from Tikal) and Yaxha or Xultun. Although sometimes the Motul de San Jose kings were vassals of Tikal, they had the status of "divine kings" and used the title of *kalomte*. I believe that in Late Classic in Maya Lowlands true territorial realms, uniting different kingdoms, appeared. They were concentrated in the Peten (Tikal, Naranjo, Calakmul) and Pasion (Dos Pilas) regions. In the Usumasinta basin such political units did not exist and this region consisted of small kingdoms which were permanently struggling with each other.

Conclusions

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[16] Information provided personally by Simon Martin and Christian Prager.

Classic Maya polities represent an example of socio-political and cultural evolution along the line which is the most usual in the eyes of a great many of anthropologists: the local community – the simple chiefdom – the complex chiefdom – the early state. The main indicators of subsequent changes we see in hieroglyphic inscriptions and monumental architecture: their appearance signified the transition to the chiefdom and their institutionalization accompanied the institutionalization of the early state organization. According to the hieroglyphic and archaeological data, this process was like in the Oaxaca valley: the consolidation and centralization of power first began on the high levels of cultural complexity and only then was they were distributed on the lower levels (Kowalewski *et al.* 1995:133).

We understand the early state as one of the variants of the complex sociopolitical organization of the hierarchic type which not always precedes the mature state. Rather they are different sociopolitical and cultural forms, the most fundamental distinction between which lies is in the relative role of territorial and kinship ties. This interpretation is based on those of Claessen and Van de Velde (1987) and Bondarenko (1997: 13–14). In the Maya case the early state is characterized by: 1) a complex central politico-administrative apparatus; 2) a complex social stratification; 3) an ideology, which postulated the divine origin of the royal dynasty and primary elite; 4) the control over the long-distance trade, the production and distribution of prestigious goods by the elite; 5) the dominance of lineage groups in other sectors of the socio-economic subsystem.

The political landscape of Classic Maya Lowlands was not homogenous. The power hierarchy within small polities was represented by the king, which simultaneously was the ruler of the capital, on the one hand, and by hereditary secondary rulers, governors in subordinated lands, on the other hand. In Late Classic (600-900 AD) larger territorial realms (Tikal, Calakmul, Naranjo, Dos Pilas) appeared. It is especially well attested in the Tikal case, when several small and medium-size kingdoms were united under the power of Tikal rulers, who used the titles *kalomte* and "divine king" as designations of the supreme king's office.

It is difficult to apply here such a common characteristic of the state organization as hierarchy of the decision-making levels. Generally archaeologists have detected three or four-tiered settlement hierarchy in Maya Lowlands, but it seems that the actual picture depended on many different factors. Nevertheless, for defining the state, it is very important to note the existence of elements of the settlement hierarchy imposed by the royal power, as it was in the Naranjo kingdom. The state character of the Classic Maya polities is also supported by the existence of the central administrative apparatus, which consisted of officials (*ak'hun / ah k'uhun*). The functional specialization of the court and central administration members was not established. There was no division between the civil and military hierarchies. Unfortunately, our sources do not provide information about socio-economic relations within the kingdoms (tribute, gifts, etc.).

At present, the general model of politogenesis in Maya Lowlands can not be

constructed. The problem is that a lot of factors influenced this process. Our examples (Naranjo, Yaxchilan) represent cases of secondary state formation under the influence of ancient kingdoms of Central Peten (Tikal, Uaxactun, Calakmul). To understand the processes which led to the emergence of the state in Central Peten, we must attract Preclassic materials. But the archaeological study of the Preclassic Peten is only beginning and we are lack of a regional context for new findings. The "Teotihuacan problem", which we mentioned in connection with the formation of Tikal hegemony, also shows that all the models should take into account the fact that Maya Lowland did not develop in isolation, and inter-regional interaction was one of the most important evolutionary factors in Mesoamerica.

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