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Like Water for Chocolate: Feasting and Political Ritual among the Late Classic Maya at Xunantunich, Belize

Subtle differences in the context of feasting and manners of food consumption can point to underlying levels of civil and social competition in state-level societies. Haute cuisine and high styles of dining are characteristic of societies with fully developed civil and social hierarchies such as Renaissance Europe and the Postclassic Aztec. Competitive yet socially circumscribed political and social organizations such as the Classic lowland Maya may have prepared elaborate diacritical meals that marked status, but the nature of feasting remained essentially patriarchal. Ancient Maya feasting is recognizable through archaeologically discernible pottery vessel forms that were used to serve festival fare such as tamales and chocolate. Comparison of ceramic assemblages across civic and household contexts at the site of Xunantunich, Belize, demonstrates that drinking chocolate, more so than eating tamales, served as a symbolic cue that established the political significance of events among the Classic Maya. [*feasting, ancient Maya, pottery analysis, chocolate*]

Anthropologists have long recognized that feasting encompasses a complex dialectic that defines and reifies an individual's position within the social, economic, and political order.¹ Feasting integrates and differentiates group members by providing the public backdrop for the construction and reproduction of social relations. Sponsoring a feast can benefit a host by creating obligations for future payments in kind, often with interest. Provisioning abundant food and drink at public gatherings bolsters partisan loyalty and crafts a strong group image critical in maintaining civil power. The prominent position of feasting, as a setting for the negotiation of social and political relations, derives both from the symbolic associations of superiority and inferiority when food is given and received and from the economic realities of food production and distribution (Wiessner 1996:6).

For archaeologists, the problem lies not only in grasping the anthropological significance of feasting but also in grappling with the issues of recognizing its ancient signatures and differentiating among feasting's many roles in past societies.² While some feasts differ quantitatively from daily commensal meals, even within modern complex societies they may remain qualitatively similar (Goody 1982: 78; Mennell 1996:32). Not surprisingly, archaeologists have found that feasting may best be identified in ancient societies that adopted specialty festival foods and serving vessels or maintained ritualized banquet locations that are highly visible and ascertainable in the archaeological record. Dietler calls such high cuisine and styles of consumption a "diacritical feasting pattern" (1996:98) and

suggests that they are symbolic devices for naturalizing concepts of ranked differences in social status. As exclusionary events, diacritical feasts are hosted by the wealthy and powerful members of society, and company is limited to those who command social and economic attention.

Diacritical feasts stand in opposition to the many kinds of inclusionary affairs in which hosts attempt to promote solidarity and equality by widely casting invitations to community members and supporters. Dietler's (1996:92–97) patron-role feasts, in which food is redistributed between a centralized authority and a supporting populace, and entrepreneurial feasts, in which food exchange is used as a means to incur indebtedness, are good examples of inclusionary feasts, as are Hayden's (1995:27) work party, solicitation, and reciprocal feasts. Although the purpose of inclusionary feasts can be significantly different, they generally attempt to create support by providing abundant amounts of commonly consumed foods. Inclusionary feasts can be very similar to daily commensal meals regarding the types of food and drink served and the style of consumption; however, they may be more public in nature and larger in scale.

The broad dichotomy between exclusionary and inclusionary feasts that I have just described does not adequately explain the intricacies of ancient feasting and the difficulties of finding feasting patterns in the archaeological record. It does, however, allow archaeologists to explore the commingled and not necessarily linear relationships among feasting patterns, social status, and political ritual. The basic assumption that underlies this view is that specialized

serving paraphernalia, much like the foods they are intended to hold and display, are political currency, and as such they are used by individuals to create and maintain power. Although underutilized, this is not a new approach. Dietler (1996) traces political interaction between European Bronze Age societies using wine drinking and storage vessels, and Brumfiel (1995) examines changes in Aztec women's status by charting patterns of food preparation using vessel forms. This study goes one step further, however, placing feasting patterns into recent models that show how political competition stimulates the production and distribution of prestige goods.³

The Late Classic Maya serve as an excellent case study to investigate the linkage between feasting patterns and political competition because evidence for these behaviors is readily available. Based on ethnographic and ethnohistoric data, Maya feasts are partitioned into two, often overlapping components: the private religious aspect that is centered around family, gods, and ancestors and the public festival aspect that is more political in nature. This distinction is recognizable in the archaeological record through specific vessel forms that were used to serve sacred and festival foods. Comparison of ceramic assemblages across two sets of contexts—elite versus common and public versus private—at the Late Classic Maya center of Xunantunich, Belize, illustrates subtle variation in diacritical feasting patterns. The conclusion suggests factors that may underlie the political significance of eating tamales and drinking chocolate among the ancient Maya.

Diacritical Feasting Patterns and Political Ritual

Diacritical feasting patterns are not universal across complex societies; nor do they assume a standard pattern. Goody (1982:99) and Mennell (1996:32) link elaboration and differentiation in the manners of feasting to highly stratified, hierarchical societies such as Han-period China, classical Rome, or Renaissance Italy. They suggest that in these literate societies, innovations in cuisine and styles of consumption were prompted by the escalating levels of social and political competition in the upper stratum of society and the emulation of courtly eating by the lower stratum. Haute cuisine is characterized by the utilization of prohibitively expensive or exotic items, technologically advanced methods of food preparation, and, oftentimes, privileged or guarded information concerning recipes. Not only is the food exquisite, the service and ambiance are too. Haute cuisine is served on the finest possible tableware, and its outstanding, if not utterly audacious, display denotes class and privilege.

Not all state-level societies, however, are characterized by diacritical feasting to mark social status. In his classic study of world cuisine, Goody (1982) found that nineteenth-century rulers of African kingdoms neither consumed haute cuisine nor owned special serving vessels. He

suggests that consumption patterns are related to differences in sociopolitical organization and the means of production (1982:213). Intensification of agriculture and the emergence of cultural hierarchies in Eurasian societies led to innovations and differentiation in food and styles of consumption. In African societies where the political hierarchy was based on divine rule, festival foods were used as framing devices, in Dietler's terms (1996:99), which establish the ritual significance of events. As symbolic cues, special foods, such as beer for the Gonja of northern Ghana or wedding cakes for Americans, are essential components of ceremonies that mark the completion or consummation of ritual action. Participants greatly anticipate these foods, and the weight of tradition demands serving them. In general, they are time consuming or expensive to make but are not so costly that they could not be eaten at daily meals. More importantly, festival foods are not restricted to the elite class, nor are they regarded as haute cuisine that marks status, although some people attempt to impress others with the size and grandeur of their feasts. Presumably, the stability of social hierarchy and the relatively limited number of noble rivals for political office in African hieratic societies did not encourage the innovation of high styles of food and serving vessels.

Goody's observations conform to recent political economy models that attempt to understand the role prestige goods play in creating and maintaining political power. Such models are based on three fundamental propositions first outlined by Douglas and Isherwood (1979:62) and summarized by Brumfiel (1987a:676). Consumption functions to classify people; therefore, it provides an effective means for validating social status. Consumption itself is inherently competitive, thereby making prestige good display and exchange a means for airing conflicting claims to political positions or social status. Consequently, the distribution of prestige goods varies depending on the openness of competition, and it is sensitive to changes in political structure. Based on these propositions, Brumfiel concludes that consumption of prestige goods should flourish in competitive political situations and languish in structured contexts when social and political rights are rigidly defined and relatively uncontested.

This large and growing body of theory suggests that variation in the distribution of prestige goods reflects ancient political strategies. Exclusionary strategies, such as diacritical feasting, are associated with what Blanton and colleagues (1996:5) call network-based political economies in which privileged individuals attempt to monopolize rights to social standing and political offices but also contend with powerful peers for such positions. In such competitive situations, ostentatious consumption and exchange are effective methods to recruit support and to craft a strong image (Cannadine 1985; Hayden 1995). In order to gain influence, competitors stimulate production of prestige goods for use in rival exchange networks. Luxury

items, however, may devalue rapidly if they can be imitated using less expensive raw materials or more efficient technologies. To keep a competitive edge, novel items or new fashions must be devised, ultimately inflating the production and diversity of prestige goods. This escalating process can be seen in the shift from medieval cookery to haute cuisine in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe when it would have been physically impossible for the nobility to eat quantitatively more than they already consumed at feasts. Increased demands on chefs to create elaborate meals and service began in the city-courts of Renaissance Italy and quickly spread to the noble houses of France. Later, the burgeoning bourgeoisie of England who could afford such fineries readily adopted the customs of royalty (Mennell 1996:33).

Blanton and colleagues (1996:7) suggest that in corporate political organizations in which collective representation and power sharing form the underpinning of governance, production of prestige goods should be reduced overall with a greater equity in wealth distributions. Leaders emphasize solidarity and interdependence between social and political groups, and rituals center around broad themes such as fertility and renewal. Goody (1982:207) makes the case that in many African states, marriage ties cut cross social strata, and there is a strong emphasis on cultural homogeneity rather than class. For Goody, however, the more inclusive nature of African feasting is based not just on social relations but also in the relations of production. Swidden agriculture limits possibilities for monopolizing land and agricultural products and has an equalizing effect on diet. Feasting among the Gonja of northern Ghana is therefore characterized by the consumption of large quantities of common foods such as beer or beef by the entire village. Nevertheless, the political primacy of the chief and his role in maintaining cosmological order are highlighted during communal feasts through protecting or hiding his eating (Goody 1982:77).

It is clear from this discussion that distinguishing between diacritical feasts that demarcate social class and the diacritical use of festival foods that signal ritual events relies on demonstrating both the differentiation and the contextualization of feasting patterns. It is also apparent that although serving paraphernalia may easily be viewed as prestige goods and their distribution may be operationalized to fit recent models, festival foods may not be. Festival foods range from commonly available dishes to exotic meals and, therefore, do not conform to typical definitions of prestige goods that emphasize the restricted nature of their distribution. Archaeologists must consider the context and ritual of eating in order to understand how ordinary food is transformed into festival fare.

The Late and Terminal Classic Maya of Xunantunich, Belize

Xunantunich is a medium-sized center located atop a high ridge overlooking the Mopan River just three kilometers east of the modern-day Guatemala–Belize border and less than 20 kilometers away from the large Classic Maya state of Naranjo (Figure 1). The site grew in size and architectural grandeur during the Hats' Chaak phase (670–780 C.E.) of the Late Classic period, when much of the architecture visible today was built.⁴ The political climax and collapse of the polity occurred during the Terminal Classic in the early portion of the Tsak' phase (780–850 C.E.) when Xunantunich's ruler proclaimed paramount authority in the upper Belize Valley by dedicating three public monuments and modifying major civic architecture.⁵ After 850 C.E., the site appears to have gone through a period of decline and diminution until it was abandoned sometime in the tenth century.

Xunantunich is situated on the eastern periphery of the central Petén, where large, centralized states such as those centered at Tikal and Caracol are located. Small kingdoms like Xunantunich are often characterized as decentralized polities with political structures redundantly organized across centers and dependencies.⁶ As such, integration was relatively weak both horizontally between factions of the same political rank and social standing and vertically among ruling nobility, subordinate elites, and their supporting populace. Elite lineages monopolized rights to social standing and political office, yet individuals competed against intrafactional challengers for specific positions. At the top of the political hierarchy the hereditary ruler assigned administrative offices to members within his own noble lineage and other closely related ranked lineages. Secondary elites in turn replicated this kingly model by forming loyal factions of their own complete with collaborators from lower ranked groups. Support for political ambitions depended on maintaining close relations with lineage members and persuading distant kin and foreign allies, often of equal rank, to join forces. Internal competition for kingship, tribute, and regional power is documented in historical inscriptions that describe intra- and interpolity warfare (Stuart 1993:332–336), social conflict (Fash 1991:175), and the rapid succession of rulers (Pohl and Pohl 1994:149).

Public feasting realized the delicate task of simultaneously demonstrating group inclusion of the commoner masses while celebrating elite prerogatives. Private negotiations, meanwhile, could fully engage exclusive strategies such as diacritical displays of prestige items, particularly specialty foods among the elite. Consideration of archaeological context is thus essential to understanding the political ramifications of ancient feasting. In order to elucidate feasting patterns, pottery samples are derived from five contexts that crosscut elite and commoner households

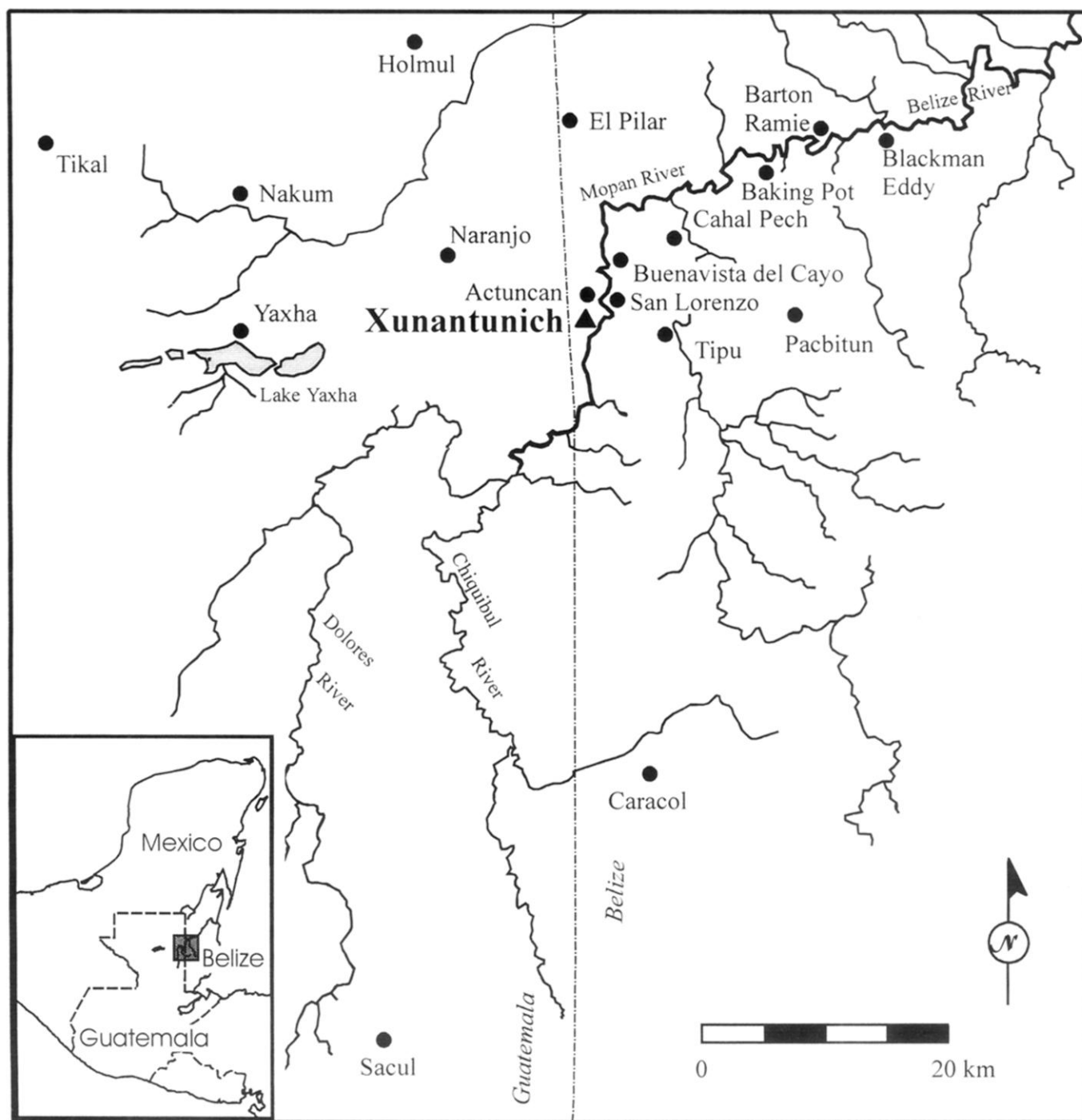


Figure 1. Classic period sites in the upper Belize Valley.

and public and private spaces at the regional center of Xunantunich. Architecture is considered the most reliable indicator of status among the Maya; therefore, the sizes of households and their locations in the community are used to suggest ancient social status. The archaeological contexts and inferences concerning the function of civic space and the status of households are described below.

Structure A-6 (known as El Castillo) was the primary focus of ritual and civic life in the community (Figure 2). Encircling the roof of this multiplatformed, multistored complex was an impressive plaster frieze, which still can easily be seen across the upper Belize Valley today. The frieze widely publicized a program of political legitimization by depicting acts of creation and ancestor worship

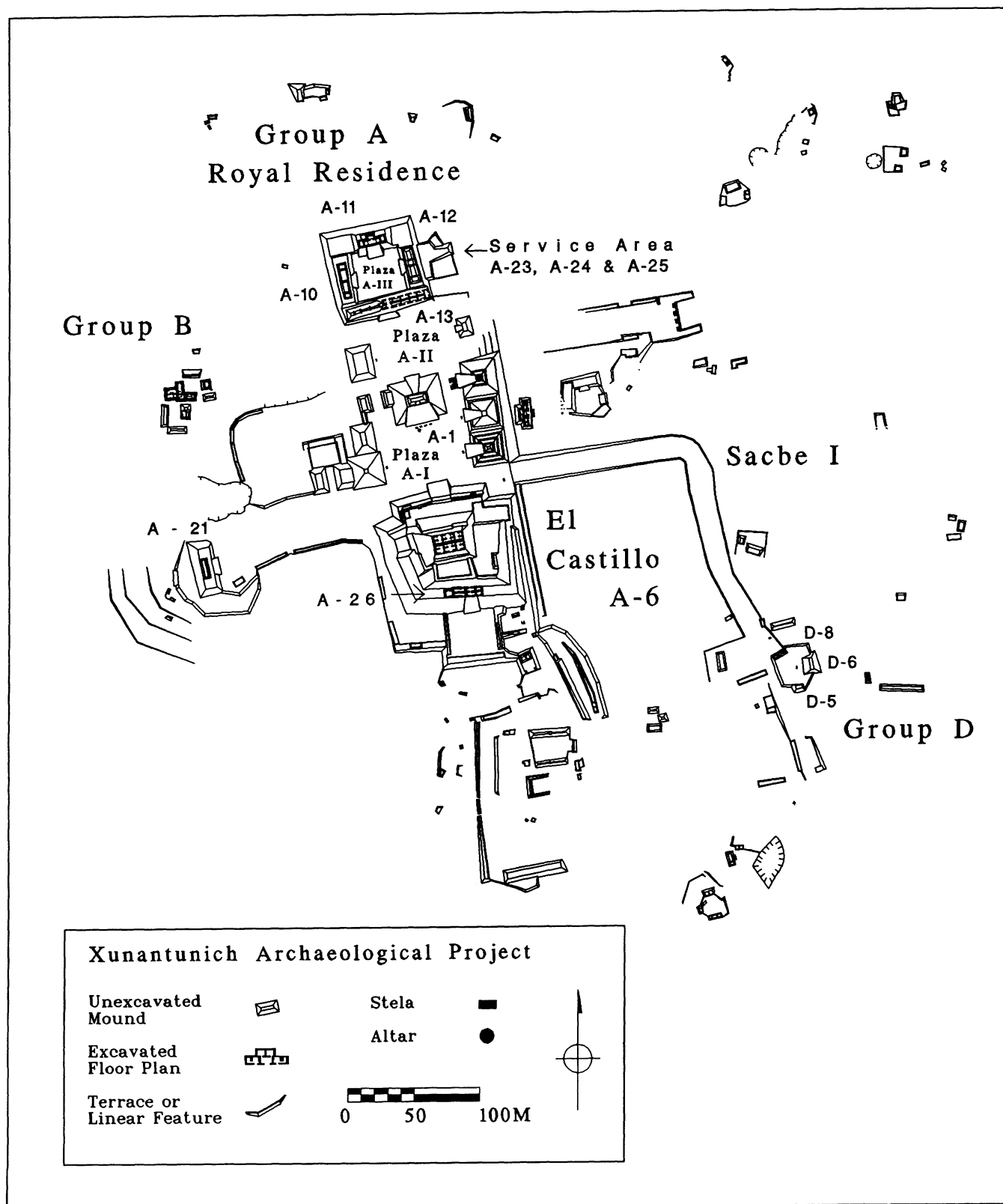


Figure 2. Classic period architecture of Xunantunich, Belize. Map prepared by Angela Keller and modified by the author.

(Fields 1994). Material from El Castillo derives from Structure A-26, a six-room palace structure with four doorways opening from the north and a single branching entrance to the south. Situated on the southern medial terrace, its restricted and private location would have insured that activities occurring inside were limited to resident elite individuals and to those visitors with official business.

Structure A-11, located at the far northern end of the compound, is generally considered to have been the royal residence. It consisted of a lower and upper gallery of rooms that mirrored in the architectural layout and sculptural design the two-story building topping El Castillo (Yaeger 1997:34). The remaining sides of the compound were formed around Plaza A-III by the addition of an *audencia*, Structure A-13, and two palace structures, Structures A-10 and A-12. Ceramics from Group A derive from Structures A-23, A-24, and A-25, a set of three low platforms interpreted as a service area for the royal residence (Jamison and Wolff 1994; LeCount 1996). Staircases connected the ancillary group to Structure A-12, and the alleyways between the two architectural groups contained the highest volume of utilitarian and highly decorated pottery at the site. I presume that this material was associated with private activity inside the royal compound and those public events sponsored by the royal family.

Group D, a nonroyal residential group, was located on the southeast periphery of the site and linked to the civic core by *sacbeob*, or raised causeways. Braswell (1998:30) suggests that the complex was the home of a nonroyal elite group because small pyramids (like Structure D-6) have been interpreted as ancestor shrines and because range structures, like those found around the central platform, have been interpreted as elite dwellings. Two uncarved stelae, which may have portrayed painted images of lineage leaders and possibly described their genealogical background, also attest to the elite status of the Group D occupants. Extensive excavations at 12 of the 14 mounds recovered occupation and midden material associated with domestic and ritual activities (Braswell 1998).

San Lorenzo, situated 1.5 kilometers northeast of Xunantunich, is a spatially discrete settlement cluster composed of seven patio groups (*plazuelas*) and nine mounds without patios (mound clusters). The site sits on a set of ancient alluvial terraces overlooking the Mopan River and its rich floodplains (Figure 3). Yaeger (2000) proposes that the community was composed of a group of related patrilineages not dissimilar to the *pet kahob* hamlets mentioned in colonial period documents (Marcus 1983) or to the kin groups that exist in many contemporary Maya communities (e.g., the *sna* of Zinacantan [Vogt 1983] or the *aldeas* of Chiquimula [Wisdom 1940]). Variation in the sizes of San Lorenzo households and their locations in the community can be linked to two ranked social statuses within the presumed commoner stratum.

Plazuelas are interpreted as homes to the descendants of the first families who founded the community and established control over local resources. Lineage heads who lived at these households held the highest social status and greatest authority within the community. Mound clusters were the residences of new families related by real or fictive ties to the founding families. Over time, gradual growth and fissioning processes related to the domestic developmental cycle created a community composed of several intermarrying localized patrilineages (Goody 1958). This developmental model is confirmed by ceramic analysis that dates initial construction of many plazuelas to the early portion of the Late Classic while mound clusters were built later. By the Terminal Classic mound clusters were already abandoned, but some plazuelas underwent at least one further episode of architectural modification. Data derive from six residences: three plazuela groups (SL-22, SL-24, and SL-25) and three mound clusters (SL-20, SL-31, and SL-34) that received extensive horizontal stripping of the last occupation surfaces to recover Late and Terminal Classic artifactual material (Yaeger 2000).

Food and Ritual among the Maya

Cuisine is a rapidly changing aspect of culture (Mintz 1985:122) and, like other forms of material culture, cannot be expected to remain stable. This is especially true for the Maya who, during the 1,000 years between the Late Classic period and the ethnographic present, lost substantial portions of their once complex society. It is apparent through a comparison of ethnographies and ethnohistories that ancient Maya feasting was more competitive, larger in scale, and broader in scope. This pattern is to be expected given that the sixteenth-century Yucatec Maya, like their Classic ancestors, lived in more hierarchical organized societies than modern groups. But, although scale and styles of consumption have clearly changed, examining the post-contact feasting literature may help to elucidate basic ritual patterns, such as the distinction between ritual and festival fare and the context of rituals, which can be used to create hypotheses about ancient Maya feasting.

Patterns of Modern Maya Feasting

Eating and drinking, processions and prayers, and offerings and sacrifices compose the basic set of recurring rituals that are combined to form a modern Maya ceremony (Vogt 1993:30). The replication of these ritual segments symbolically reproduces the key propositions concerning the nature of life and universe for the Maya. Rituals commence with relatively private sacramental meals that establish sacred connections between individuals and ancestors or gods. They end in public festivals where feasts become stages to materialize social status and arrange political matters. These two core ritual segments—the first private

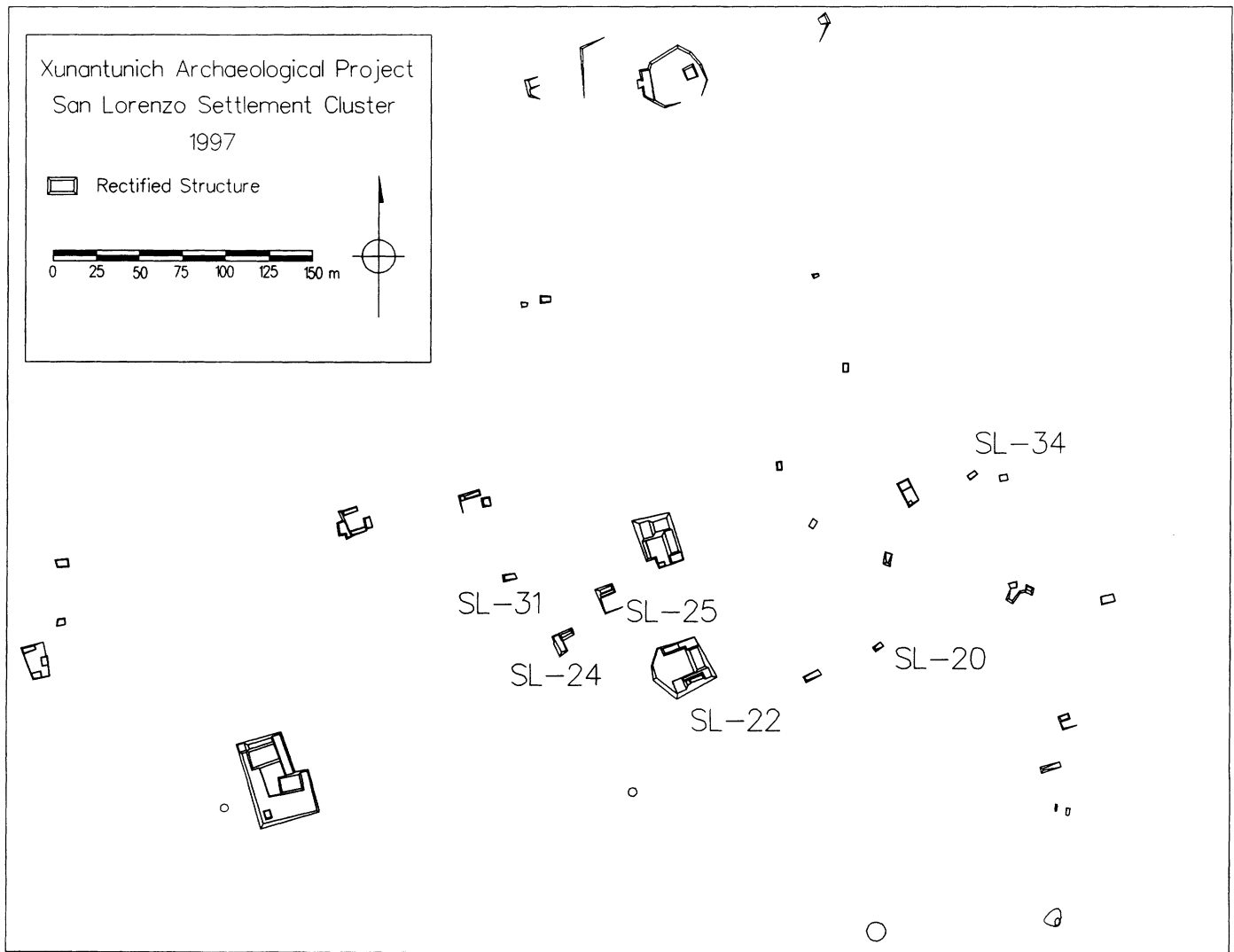


Figure 3. The community of San Lorenzo, Belize. Map prepared by Jason Yaeger and modified by the author.

and highly religious, the second more public and celebratory—have remained relatively stable despite Spanish intervention (Vogt 1993:192).

The sacramental aspect of Maya feasts can be divided into three parts: the invitation to gods or ancestors to receive offerings, the actual delivery of consecrated foods, and the subsequent dining on the food blessed for the gods (Bunzel 1952:226; Redfield and Rojas 1934:140; Wisdom 1940:305). Food is not merely eaten in commemoration of saints, gods, or the dead; rather, it is sacrificed and transformed into a sacred element, much like the sacrament of the Eucharist among Christians.

The small-scale, relatively private nature of sacramental meals is illustrated in the modern Yucatec Maya Cha-Chaac ceremony, where a series of consecrated foods marks ceremonial activities and ritual time. Rain ceremonies demand three full days of ritual activities (Redfield and Rojas 1934:140). On the first day, ritual specialists,

called *h-men*, erect an altar a slight distance from the public plaza where men of the village will congregate and partake in the ceremony. On the second day, ritualists arrange food on a mesa and offer the sacred meal to the gods at dawn, noon, three o'clock in the afternoon, seven in the evening, and twice again before two in the morning (Figure 4). After each offering a drink is distributed to men "some distance from the altar, keeping complete silence so as not to interrupt the feasting of the gods" (Redfield and Rojas 1934:142). After the gods are satiated, sanctified foods are consumed by ritual participants, and a small rack is constructed to hold minor food offerings. Throughout the ritual an endless array of modest portions of sacred food is presented to the gods in small individual bowls, later to be consumed a short distance from the shrine by participants.

More public festivals generally occur after the highly religious portion of the ritual ends. Although festivals are appropriately held on either holy or auspicious days and are

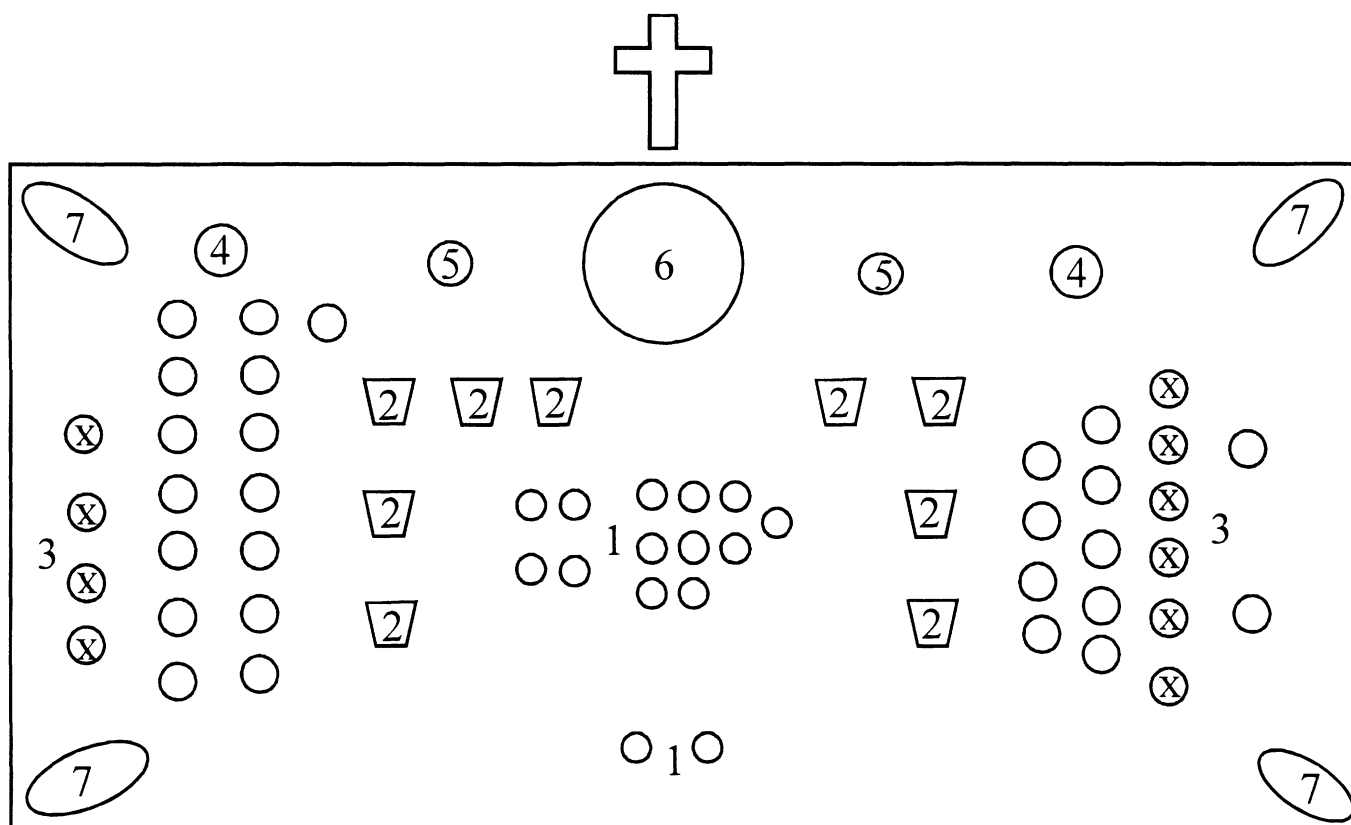


Figure 4. Illustration of ritual mesa for Cha-chaac ceremony demonstrating prescribed arrangement of food offerings. Redrafted from Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934: n. 14.

Key:

1. Thirteen *homa* (small bowls) and two shallow gourd dishes of *balché*
2. Nine pails of soup
3. Thirty-six *yah-uah* (ritual bread stuff); those marked with a cross contain chicken meat

4. Two *bolontz-uah* (ritual bread stuff)
5. Two *noh-uah* (ritual bread stuff)
6. One *holche-uah* (ritual bread stuff)
7. Four *yaxche-uah* (ritual bread stuff)

imbued with high religious meanings, essentially they are a time for renewing friendships, engaging in sport and profit, and indulging in food and drink. Families celebrate marriages (Wisdom 1940:300), funerals (Bunzel 1952:153; Wisdom 1940:305), first fruit ceremonies (Redfield and Rojas 1934:144), *novenas* or village festivals (Redfield and Rojas 1934:150), and days of the dead (Redfield and Rojas 1934:202–203) by hosting public fêtes. The male head of the household organizes the feast while women collaborate with female kinfolk to prepare the foods. Every family puts aside extra food and drink, striving to provide the best fiesta they can, for such public displays reflect the prosperity of the household. Community-based festivals such as saints' days and cargo ceremonies are more elaborate and incorporate greater numbers of people; however, their organization and structure are similar to those of household fêtes (Vogt 1990:127). The final day of community-wide festivals can feature markets, bullfights, fireworks, masked dances, and, of course, eating and heavy drinking (Bunzel 1959:192; Redfield and Rojas 1934:153–

154; Wisdom 1940:433–436). Ultimately the responsibility of providing for the festival lies with the principal organizers and a great deal of the food is purchased by them.⁷ In order to defray expenses, organizers may solicit food from community members and sponsor dances (Bunzel 1952:169, 255). In general, however, organizers absorb most of the cost themselves as this is one of the primary responsibilities and prestige-enhancing characteristics of the office.

Although lowland and highland Maya vary substantially in their repertoire of ritual cuisine, both groups make a distinction between sacramental foods and festival fare (Bunzel 1959:45; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:128; Wisdom 1940:387). Among the Yucatec Maya, a modern population closely related to ancient southern lowland groups, sacramental meals center around *zaca*, a maize gruel in which chicken may be added to make *kol*; *balché*, a fermented honey and tree bark drink; and *tuti-uah*, a variety of baked breads (Table 1). *Tuti-uah* are offered as consecrated food to the gods and are an essential ingredient in

Table 1. Modern Yucatec Maya cuisine.

Name	Preparation
Atole	Lime-soaked maize is ground and boiled in water, sometimes with sugar or honey.
Pinole	Toasted maize with cinnamon and other spices is ground, boiled like coffee, and sometimes beaten with cacao.
Tortillas	Lime-soaked maize is ground, shaped into cakes, and toasted on a <i>comal</i> (griddle).
Pozole	Coarsely ground, cooked maize meal mixed with cold water.
Beans	Boiled.
Meat	Boiled.
Tamales	<i>Nixtamal</i> is strained and cooked till thick, mixed with lard and meat, wrapped in banana leaves, and steamed in chicken broth.
Relleno negro	Chicken soup with maize meal dumplings, heavily spiced with roasted peppers.
Zaca	Ground, cooked corn (without lime) stirred into cold water.
Balché	Lonchocarpus tree bark is pounded, placed in a jar with water and honey, and left for three days to ferment.
Kol (yach)	Chicken soup seasoned and thickened with cornmeal bread (<i>uah</i>) baked in a <i>pib</i> (earthen oven).
Tuti-uah	Seven types of cornmeal breads made with ground squash seeds baked in a <i>pib</i> .
Chocolate	Cacao powder and water are beaten up in a wooden vessel with a wooden beater and sweetened with either sugar or honey; milk is not used.

Source: Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:37–41.

zaca. Many small containers of zaca, balché, and kol are placed on the altar or sacrificial mesa (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:141, 145). According to Redfield and Villa Rojas (1934:128–129), maize-based foods are suitable for gods, not simply because they are traditionally correct but because they evoke rain-giving functions of the gods and signify purity and divinity.

Festival foods also include maize-based foods and meat, though the dishes are distinct in style of preparation and ingredients. Festival foods common at Yucatec Maya celebrations include tamales, *relleno negro*, tortillas, *atole*, boiled chicken, roasted pigs, chocolate, and rum. These foods are considered “hot” rather than “cold,” like sacred fare. Foods, like plants, diseases, and lands, therefore belong to one of two fundamental states (hot or cold), a distinction the Yucatec Maya associate with the duality of nature (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:130).

Cacao is consumed more often at social and political events than at religious meals. As a drink, the highland Quiché serve a special atole containing cocoa butter and *sapuyul*, and new *alcaldes* are toasted with chocolate during the Ceremony of the Surrender of Office (Bunzel 1952:41, 228–247). The Chorti mix chocolate into unsweetened atole, a drink they call *chilate*, but they never sacrifice or offer it to the gods (Wisdom 1940:387). Among the lowland Yucatec Maya, chocolate is consumed at weddings, baptisms, and other Catholic rites but not during traditional rites (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:192). Cacao beans, however, are considered sacred, and the Quiché offer them to honored participants (Bunzel 1952:44). Bunzel (1952:44) suggests that cacao still retains its ancient role as money in highland society, for seeds are the first gift offered in negotiations for marriage and the last gift exchanged at the conclusion of initiation ceremonies. Similarly, the highland Zinacantecos trade in cacao beans, yet

there is no mention of chocolate as a ritual food. For modern Maya, chocolate drinks are consumed by high-ranking officials or honored individuals in more private rituals in which toasting cements social and political relations.

Reconstructing Ancient Maya Feasts

A review of sixteenth-century Yucatec rituals observed by Bishop Deigo de Landa clearly documents the broad scope and scale and differentiated nature of postcontact Maya feasting. Especially relevant are the descriptions of diacritical meals not seen in the ethnographic literature. In addition to the private/public, small-scale/large-scale dimensions explored in the previous ethnographic section, the following ethnohistoric section exams the inclusive versus exclusive nature of Maya feasting. All these lines of evidence are then used to reconstruct Classic Maya feasts.

At small-scale family rites, such as Pocam and Ihcil Ix Chel, Maya families celebrated life passages and personal health by hosting feasts. At larger rites, communities placated gods that governed bees, plants, or animals with food offerings at shrines. Tozzer (1941:163) suggests that the altars were temporary affairs erected at the time of the ritual and that few, if any, ceremonies took place in civic buildings. At the end of these rituals, participants “all ate the gifts and the food, which they had brought, and drank until they were sacks of wine” (Tozzer 1941:154). Annual ceremonies to deities such as Chac, god of rain, and Itzamna, high god of the Yucatec Maya, ended in communal festivals to help ensure a good year of rains (Tozzer 1941:163). Large-scale calendrical and political ceremonies involved many days of commensal feasting. Tonalamatl, which occurred every 65 or 260 days and marked *tun* (year) and *katun* (20-year) endings, lasted for three days with perfumings, offerings, and movable feasts attended by lords

and priests of lesser villages (Tozzer 1941:162). Five days of dancing, sacrifices, ceremonies, and feasts surrounded the festival for the cyclical departure of Kukulcan, a preternatural ruler of Chichén Itzá. The celebration culminated in separate village festivals that lasted until the month of Pop.

The distinction between inclusive, communal fêtes and competitive, diacritical feasts was clearly recognized by Bishop Landa. Presumably, this dichotomy extended back into the Classic period, for throughout this large period of time the Maya were organized into competing states. Bishop Landa stated that the sixteenth-century Yucatec Maya had two types of feasts:

The first, which is that of the nobles and of the principal people, obliges each one of the invited guests to give another similar feast. And to each guest they give a roasted fowl, bread and drink of cacao in abundance; and at the end of the repast, they were accustomed to give a manta to each to wear, and a little stand and vessel, as beautiful as possible. And if one of the guests should die, his household or his relations are obliged to repay the invitation. The second way of giving feasts was used among kinsfolk when they marry their children or celebrate the memory of the deeds of their ancestors, and this does not oblige the guests to give a feast in return, except if a hundred persons have invited an Indian to a feast, he also invites them all when he gives a banquet or marries his children. They have strong friendship and they remember for a long time these invitations, although they are far apart from one another. [Tozzer 1941:92]

Based on this passage, feasting appears to have been widespread across social groups and not confined to the elite class. Both commoner and elite lineage heads were expected to host festivals that marked group members' rites of passages and commemorated important ancestors. McAnany (1995:8) suggests that feasting, like other Maya rituals centered around ancestor worship, legitimized status and rights to lands and property through repetitive social performances and oral history. Among elites, household feasts were competitive and diacritical. Nobles and principal lords sponsored festivals where they provided lavish meals and exchanged prestige items such as cloth and pottery vessels with guests. These obligations were the responsibility of the lineage head, possibly even those from less privileged ranks, whose duty it was to uphold the social honor of the family.

Ancient festival foods described by Landa—"roasted fowl, bread and drink of cacao in abundance"—are remarkably similar to those still being served among the Maya today. Bread, in this situation, refers to tamales. Taube (1989), working with epigraphic and iconographic data, suggests that tamales, *wa* or *wah* (*uah* as cited in the ethnographic literature), were the main daily and ritual food in the central Maya lowlands. At least three different types of tamales have been identified through hieroglyphic texts: curled, notched, and loaf shaped (Taube 1989:42). Presumably these various kinds differed in the context of

consumption much like the tamale varieties made today by the modern Maya who prepare some types solely for religious ceremonies while they consume others in festival and secular contexts. Eating meat, specifically deer, peccary, turkey, and dog, was largely confined to public festivals in the sixteenth century, a pattern that according to Pohl and Feldman (1982:302) has Classic period precedents. Sacred foods also appear to have remained remarkably stable, although some new foods, most notably coffee and wheat bread, have been added to the list of foods consumed at contemporary Maya sacramental meals. The continued distinction between ancient sacred and festival foods exists partly because these meals symbolize the essential oppositions between individuality and communality that characterize Maya daily and spiritual life (Vogt 1993:42).

In contrast, everyday fare appears to have changed substantially since the early historic period, and it is thus the most difficult aspect of the cuisine to reconstruct in the archaeological past, especially given the simple nature of food preparation and the lack of prehispanic textual information concerning daily life. What we do know is that tortillas were not commonly eaten in the central lowlands until the Postclassic (Taube 1989), although they may have been introduced to ancient elites by the Late or Terminal Classic, for *comals* appear in the archaeological record at large lowland sites (Ashmore 1981; Brainerd 1958; Harrison 1970; Hendon 1987; Pendergast 1979; Smith 1971), including Xunantunich (LeCount 1996:255), at this time. *Comals* are generally associated with tortilla preparation, although they can be used to toast cacao or other seeds and nuts (Hendon 1987:350). Because elite diets contained greater amounts of meat than did commoner fare (Pohl 1990:167), it can be speculated that elites ate other festival items such as tamales and chocolate on a more regular basis also. The ancient commoner diet, however, was probably very similar to that consumed by the contemporary Maya whose daily diet relies heavily on tortillas, atole, beans, and chile. These food items are cooked by boiling or toasting with little additional elaboration in preparation or ingredients. Tamale making, conversely, requires labor-intensive preparation. Today women prepare tamales on Sundays or for special occasions, especially Christmas, Easter, and birthdays. Likewise, in the past tamales may have been considered a festival food, a pattern also suggested by Brumfiel (1995:239) for the Aztec. Daily food for the Classic Maya most likely consisted of simple atole and *pinole*.

Archaeological Markers of Feasting

Variation in feasting patterns among the ancient Maya of Xunantunich may be documented by the kinds of pottery vessel forms found in formal assemblages. Cooking and preparation pots are less specific indicators of feasting than serving ware because Maya cuisine, whether it was



Figure 5. Late Classic polychrome painted cylinder vase depicting the offering of food and drink at the court of the Lords of Xibalbá. Rollout photograph, copyright Justin Kerr 1976, file no. K504.

daily, sacred, or festival foods, essentially involved the same set of cooking techniques: soaking, mixing, boiling, and toasting.⁸ Such fundamental tasks could have been adequately accomplished in most open-mouthed jars and large bowls. Serving items, on the other hand, function predominantly in the public domain and are more likely to convey household wealth and status (Smith 1987:312). The display aspect of serving ware makes it a more sensitive marker of diacritical feasting patterns.

The ancient Maya appear to have distinguished among vessel forms and favored particular styles to serve ritual foods. Hieroglyphic texts along the rims of Classic period pictorial vessels make reference to pre-Columbian Maya functional categories (Houston et al. 1989; Reents-Budet 1994; Taube 1989). Some pottery vessels display hieroglyphs around the rim in a format called the Primary Standard Sequence (PSS), an elaborate name tag that generally includes the method of surface decoration, the name of the vessel type, its contents, as well as the social status of the owner. Based on this epigraphic data, Houston, Stuart, and Taube translate an emic classification of vessel types identifying vases as drinking vessels for cacao and plates and dishes as platters to serve tamales. Small bowls likely contained more aqueous foods such as atole that the Maya wished to keep cool (Houston et al. 1989:722). This hy-

pothesis is supported by substantial independent data. Pictorial scenes on Classic period vessels depict elite individuals seated on palace benches with vases in hand and platters stacked with *wah* (Figure 5),⁹ and often they are shown offering food or gifts to guests or dignitaries. Close examination of these vessels reveals heavy wear patterns on their surfaces; therefore, it can be assumed that their primary function involved repeated use (Reents-Budet 1994:75), even those items found in burial contexts. Finally, chemical analyses of organic residues found on the interior of vases from an elite tomb at Rio Azul (Stuart 1988) lend support to the proposal that vases were containers for chocolate drinking.

Characterization of ancient vessel forms is based on rim sherds given that archaeological types are defined by a ratio of vessel height to maximum diameter (Table 2). Five primary formal categories are defined: plates, dishes, bowls, vases, and jars. Plates and dishes are lumped into a single category called platters because the ancient Maya appear not to have distinguished functionally between the two etically derived forms. Bowls are divided secondarily into large (mean rim diameter = 30 centimeters) and small forms (mean rim diameter = 18 centimeters), for the Maya used them, unlike plates and dishes, for distinctly different purposes (LeCount 1996:251). Rims, rather than body

Table 2. Vessel form categories.

Primary Form	Formal Description
Plate	Height is less than one-fifth its maximum diameter.
Dish	Height is more than one-fifth but less than one-third its maximum diameter.
Bowl	Height is more than one-third but no more than its maximum diameter; orifice may be restricted (a rimmed bowl) or unrestricted.
Jar	Height is greater than maximum diameter, and it has a neck.
Vase	Height is greater than maximum diameter with a neck very narrow in comparison with its height and width.

Source: Sabloff 1975:227.

sherds, were used for analysis because they exhibit the critical attributes that define forms. Rims were refit before analysis resulting in counts of the maximum number of vessels per deposit. In an attempt to control for brokenness and completeness, only those rim sherds from refuse deposits qualified for analysis. For this analysis, it is assumed that all vessels of similar form have similar primary functions, even though some vessels lack intricately decorated surfaces.

The context of consumption may be as important as the material remains of meals in distinguishing ancient feasting patterns. Evidence for diacritical feasting among the ancient Maya may be documented by the kinds of vessel forms found in public and private contexts. Diacritical feasting to mark social status should be more prevalent in private contexts where sumptuous foods and splendid tableware would have been reserved for honored guests. Here elites could fully engage in the exclusive strategy of diacritical feasting without alienating valuable supporters. If Xunantunich elites engaged in diacritical feasting, high frequencies of vases and platters should be restricted to civic or elite households. If, however, formal assemblages across the site appear fairly homogenous with relatively similar frequencies of vessel types, then it could be suggested that feasting in the Late and Terminal Classic periods at Xunantunich was more inclusive. Both elite rulers and commoner lineage leaders may have presided over feasts, supplying sacred maize gruel in small bowls, serving tamales on platters, and distributing chocolate in vases. Such inclusive events would have emphasized commonality rather than differentiation by serving customary foods in appropriately autochthonous vessels.

Archaeological samples derive from single component excavation lots found in primary contexts such as middens, floors, and occupation debris and not from fill or collapse material. Single-component deposits are critical for analytical comparisons because they represent a discrete archaeological time frame and do not introduce temporal er-

ror. The use of primary contexts, rather than secondary deposits, increases the likelihood that the assemblage was the product of specific activities and not the result of commingling materials from many different activities. Such strict sampling criteria resulted in small sample sizes for commoner habitations; however, I argue these samples best represent ancient assemblages. Continued excavations at San Lorenzo (Yaeger 2000) and Chan N'ohol (Robin 1999) have yielded larger samples for plazuela and small mound groups associated with the greater Xunantunich polity. These studies report highly comparable data sets with those presented here and indicate the power of my small samples to draw conclusions concerning the larger population of commoner households.

Analysis and Discussion

Analysis of pottery forms delineates the existence of a diverse set of pottery assemblages that reflect significant variation in household feasting and important differences between public and private rituals (Table 3). The prerequisite domestic assemblage can be reconstructed by viewing the relative frequencies of forms at San Lorenzo mound clusters. These small, commoner families presumably owned the most basic set of cooking and serving ware. Comparison of the relative frequency of primary forms using the mound cluster assemblage as a base line illustrates the complexity of feasting in Late Classic Maya society.

Small bowls, proposed as individual food containers, exhibit distributions that appear to be heavily conditioned by social status. The highest relative frequencies of small bowls are found within elite assemblages. Such forms make up 8 percent of the assemblage associated with royal service area at Group A. El Castillo and Group D assemblages contain between 5 and 6 percent. Small bowls found on El Castillo may also be indicative of cloistered sacramental ceremonies performed there by priests during calendric events or possibly royal family ancestor worship. Their presence in elite households can also be used to suggest that individuals may have extended the contexts in which they could mark status. This pattern lends evidence to infer that elites used small bowls for both daily dining and sacred rituals. Commoner households, however, contained very few small bowls constituting less than 3 percent of the formal assemblages at plazuelas and mound clusters. Based on these data, it could be argued that sacramental rituals rarely occurred at commoner households; however, this negates ethnohistoric and ethnographic reports that clearly indicate that such ceremonies did take place among less privileged families. I suggest that commoners offered sacramental foods to gods in small gourds just as they do today.

Plates and dishes, proposed as serving platters for tamales, are surprisingly consistent across assemblages, whether contexts are public or private, elite or common. Relative

Table 3. Relative frequency of forms within ritual and household ceramic assemblages.

	El Castillo		Group A		Group D		Plazuelas		Mount Clusters	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Platters	18	6.64	50	5.57	16	6.84	5	3.94	0	0.00
Vases	37	13.65	39	4.34	2	0.85	1	0.79	1	1.33
Small bowls	13	4.80	76	8.46	15	6.41	1	0.79	2	2.67
Large bowls	90	33.21	324	36.08	139	59.40	58	45.67	44	58.67
Jars	113	41.70	409	45.55	62	26.50	62	48.82	28	37.33
Total rims	271		898		234		127		75	

Note: Derived from rims recovered from occupation contexts of the Hats' Chaak and early facet of the Tsak' phases.

$\chi^2 = 129.376$, $df = 16$, $p = .001$.

frequencies within elite assemblages at El Castillo, Group A, and Group D cluster tightly between 6 and 7 percent. Similarly, platters constitute 4 percent of the assemblage associated with large commoner households living at plazuelas. Only small families living at mound clusters had no such serving items. Small families may have participated in household rituals at the home of the lineage patriarch who was responsible for arranging food and providing tableware for feasts, thus they did not needing to acquire serving vessels until their obligations increased. This basic assemblage is also characteristic of rural households at hinterland communities in the upper Belize Valley (Robin 1999). Residents living at mound clusters may have lacked service ware because it was costly to obtain. Based on the widespread distribution of these platters, it can be suggested that serving tamales appears to have been an accepted practice that occurred at small family-based festivals, large public ceremonies, and private functions during Late Classic times.

Vases, proposed as drinking containers for chocolate, exhibit much more complex patterning. The highest relative frequency is found on El Castillo with nearly 14 percent of the assemblage composed of such forms. Fewer are found in the service area of the royal residence where they constitute less than 5 percent of the formal assemblage. Household assemblages found at Group D, plazuelas, and mound clusters all contain very low relative frequencies of vases, constituting 1 percent of the formal assemblage. Patterning indicates that chocolate drinking, like tamale eating, was customary at Maya rituals, yet it was more commonly associated with elite events.

Based on these data, I suggest that chocolate drinking was a highly charged political ritual among the Late Classic Maya, a critical act that consolidated political allegiance and cemented civic agreements between individuals, both elite and common. The highest frequency of vases at Xunantunich is found in elite, nonresidential locations removed from public space. Structure A-26, situated on the southern medial terrace of El Castillo, is visually and spatially isolated from the communal plazas. Here, elite men would have gathered in secluded rooms to conduct affairs

of state or lineage. At the royal service center vases may also have been associated with private events, as most were recovered from Structure A-25. Of the three platforms that form the royal service area, Structure A-25 is farthest from Plaza A-II. I have argued previously that the presence of vases at this structure could be interpreted as marking the preparation of chocolate drinks for consumption at large festivals in Plaza A-II (LeCount 1996:268). Nevertheless, it is also reasonable to assume that this preparation may have been for private consumption by royalty and their guests in palace structures within the royal compound itself. The consistent, yet extremely low frequencies of vases across households, even those of the least privileged, attests to the fact that all lineage heads may have owned at least one vase.

This archaeological pattern appears analogous to that described in the ethnographic literature, which documents chocolate drinking associated with rituals involving civil functions, such as the installation of new *alcaldes* (mayors) or marriage arrangements. Generally, these rituals are performed in private houses or offices, a pattern confirmed at Xunantunich and also seen depicted on Classic period pottery.¹⁰ According to Vogt (1993:35), a drink must accompany any kind of crucial transaction among the modern Maya of Zinacantan men.

The scenario above leads to the conclusion that chocolate drinking was a relatively private, possibly one-on-one activity between men in power. Houston et al. (1989) have long argued that the PSS found along the rim of pottery vessels makes proprietary statements that identify not only the owner of the vessel but his or her social status as well. Further, scenes painted on Classic vases may have depicted important historical events that occurred during an individual's lifetime (Chase 1985). Vases, particularly those prominently displaying name and rank, could therefore be considered inalienable possessions (Weiner 1992) that materialized an individual's rank at ritual events.

Summary and Conclusions

I have attempted to identify variation in ancient feasting patterns and link it to political rituals that maintain power in Late and Terminal Classic society. Interpreting the archaeological patterning from five contexts that cut across private, civic, elite, and common contexts at the Late and Terminal Classic Maya site of Xunantunich is challenging because the distribution of forms is not arranged into neatly defined sets of serving vessels. My approach to this complexity is to view individual vessel forms separately because I assume that each type informs us about specific ritual foods and their role in the religious, social, and political aspects of ancient feasting. Sacramental meals appear to be the most difficult aspect to investigate, for small bowls, the archaeological marker used to identify offerings of sacred food, also could have functioned as individual serving containers for elite secular dining. Commoners may have substituted perishable gourds for small bowls, a pattern seen today in modern Maya rituals. Celebratory feasting, in contrast, is more visible in the Maya archaeological record. The wide distribution of plates and vases lends evidence to suggest that most elite and large commoner households sponsored lineage-based feasts where tamales and at least a small amount of chocolate were consumed. Although headmen might have owned at least one chocolate drinking vessel, the high concentration of vases in Structure A-26 on El Castillo and elevated levels found in Group A indicate that drinking may have taken on special significance.

The political significance of chocolate has long been noted by Mesoamericanists, especially epigraphers such as Houston et al. (1989), whose reading of ethnohistorical and Classic period texts has shown that chocolate drinks were integral to dynastic ceremonies and to affirming important social contracts. The Xunantunich data, which focus on excavation materials, add yet another line of evidence to support this interpretation. But what makes chocolate different than other Maya drinks, such as *balché* or *chicha* (maize beer), as a locus of value (Netting 1964)? The significance of chocolate stems partly from its prominent place in the origin myth of the Maya, the Popol Vuh, in which gods created humans from maize and chocolate found in the Mountain of Sustenance. Chocolate, however, is unlike maize in the ways it is raised and processed (Coe and Coe 1996:42). Cacao trees are difficult to grow and require year-round moisture and specific soil conditions, such as those found in the Soconusco area on the Pacific coast or the Gulf Coast plain. Cacao beans themselves also demand extensive processing which limited coca production until 1815, when a Dutch chemist invented a process for the manufacture of powdered chocolate with a low fat content. Therefore, ancient people could not have been fed chocolate, unlike beer, chicha, or other beverages made from high-yielding crops at entrepreneurial feasts, work parties, or patron-role festivals. Presumably, the restricted nature

of cacao farming allowed Maya elites at some point in the distant past to seize control of its means of production and/or distribution. Such high-value and cosmologically significant prestige goods often served as political currencies (Earle 1991:7). For the ancient Maya, cacao condensed religious, economic, and social meaning into a single material referent and, as a drink, was the symbolic cue for the consummation of political rituals.

It could be argued that such strict interpretations of vessel functions are misleading. Elaborately painted and inscribed vases and plates could have functioned primarily as tribute items. Substantial archaeological evidence shows that some highly decorated vase styles were exchanged over long distances and did act as social currency (Reents-Budet 1994). Text along the rim of cylinder vases describe how these vessels were gifts from paramount leaders to lesser elites at smaller sites, presumably to establish or maintain social and political relations (Ball 1993; Houston et al. 1992; Schele and Mathews 1991). Other researchers suggest that cylinder vases, plates, and dishes might have also functioned for other less utilitarian and more prestigious purposes. Justin Kerr (personal communication, 1999) believes cylinder vases were containers for sacred offerings. He cites the text on vase no. K504 (see Figure 5) that reads "In the vessel are the seeds of the genitals" as evidence that the vase held corn kernels for the gods of the underworld. Coe (1978:11) has long argued that all pictorial vases are funerary in nature. When such forms are viewed solely as luxury objects, then it is clear from the Xunantunich data that vases and small bowls may have moved about society in limited elite circles. However, it is also evident that all forms were found widely distributed, albeit in small frequencies, at the site. I have concluded elsewhere (LeCount 1999) that pottery as a prestige item was a less specific indicator of ancient social status than other exclusive status markers, a conclusion elaborated below.

If the functional interpretation of vessels presented in this article is accepted, what can be gleaned from the archaeological record concerning the nature of feasting and its role as a marker of ancient political strategies among Late Classic Maya at Xunantunich? According to the model, when political bureaucracies are deeply stratified and the scale of competition is great, emulation and imitation of feasting patterns should lead to the innovation of haute cuisine and specialty serving vessels. On the other hand, when levels of power are relatively shallow and competition is restricted to a few elite lineages, feasting patterns should be less differentiated. At Xunantunich, little evidence exists for diacritical feasting to mark social status. Formal assemblages differed only in the quantity of primary forms, a pattern characteristic of inclusive feasting where public displays of generosity and hospitality extended across broad sectors of society. Although elite households clearly owned a greater amount of serving vessels and more highly decorated pieces, commoners also

possessed vases and platters and probably served the same basic fare at festivals. In fact, there is more variation in formal assemblages within social classes than between them. Studies elsewhere within the Maya area confirm that glyph and figural serving vases were found in moderate-sized plazuela groups (Beaudry 1987; Hansen et al. 1991), non-royal tombs (Chase 1985), and domestic trash piles (Fry 1979), illustrating how prevalent decorated serving ware had become in the Classic period.

Based on these data, it can be suggested that Late Classic Maya lacked a sufficiently complex, civil hierarchy that would have promoted truly high styles of food consumption. The relative simplicity of Classic Maya feasting is in stark contrast to that of the far more hierarchically organized Postclassic Aztec. According to conquistador Díaz del Castillo (1956:209–210), the daily cuisine of Motecuhzoma II consisted of 30 different dishes set on a low table with tablecloths of white fabric and napkins. He was attended by four women who erected a gold-gilded screen in front of him so that his dining was not seen by others. Sumptuary laws also restricted drinking of cacao and eating of exotic foods to nobles. Diacritical feasting among the Maya was clearly less developed, thus adding one more piece of information supporting the relatively decentralized nature of Late Classic Maya at small provincial centers.

Notes

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1. See Douglas 1966, Feeley-Harnik 1985, Goody 1982, Hocart 1970, Mennell 1996, Mintz 1985, Lévi-Strauss 1969, Richards 1960, Wiessner and Schiefenhovel 1996, and Young 1971.

2. See Blitz 1993; Brumfiel 1995; Clark and Blake 1994; Dietler 1990, 1996; Hastorf and Johannessen 1993; Hayden 1990, 1995, 1996; and Welch and Scarry 1995.

3. See Anderson 1994; Blanton et al. 1996; Brumfiel 1987b, 1994; DeMarrais et al. 1996; Brumfiel and Earle 1987; LeCount 1999; and Peregrine 1991.

4. Xunantunich ceramic complex names have recently changed (LeCount et al. n.d.). The previous phase names of Late Classic I, Late Classic II, and Terminal Classic have been changed to Samal, Hats' Chaak, and Tsak', respectively.

5. See Ashmore 1996; Ashmore and Leventhal 1993; LeCount et al. n.d.; Leventhal et al. 1993; and Leventhal and LeCount 1997.

6. For debates on the nature of Maya political organization and social integration, see Chase and Chase 1996, Culbert 1991, Demarest 1992, Freidel 1992, Hendon 1991, Pohl and Pohl 1994, Marcus 1993, Sabloff 1986, Sanders 1989, and Stuart 1993.

7. Organizers are the *cargador* (Redfield and Rojas 1934: 157), the *mayordomo* (Wisdom 1940:450), and the *cofradia* (Bunzel 1952:165). At the festival of Santiago, a group of about 50 Chorti women are appointed by the mayordomos to cook festival foods in large ovens and fireplaces located in the *cofradia* courtyard (Wisdom 1940:450). Most foodstuffs are contributed by individual families, but a great deal is purchased by mayordomos.

8. Cooking sacred meals, with the exception of *tuti-uah*, is similar to preparing everyday foods. Although *tuti-uah* is painstakingly prepared by men, who layer maize dough with various special ingredients, wrap the cake in leaves, and bake it in an earth oven or *pib* (Love 1989; Taube 1989), little archaeological evidence would remain to signal its preparation.

9. See Coe 1978: fig. 7; Coe 1994; Kerr 1990: file no. 2573, 1992: file nos. 3813, 1599, 1728, 1775; Reents-Budet 1994: figs. 1.25, 2.20, 3.2; and Taube 1989: fig. 7.

10. Scenes on Classic period vases depict elite men sitting on palace benches and offering drinks, sometimes in conjunction with food, other times solely extending cylinders of foaming chocolate to guests. For scenes in which drinking is divorced from eating, see Culbert 1993: fig. 75; Kerr 1989: file nos. 1563, 3827; and Reents-Budet 1994: figs. 1.6, 3.14c.

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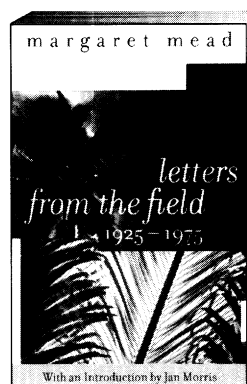
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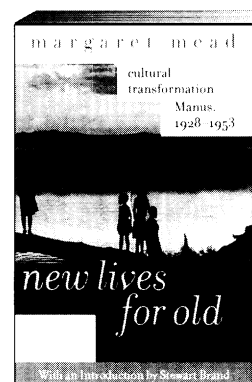
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