Identity and Legitimization of the Itzá

Creation of communal identity and legitimization of rule in the iconography of the late- to postclassic Maya city of Chichén Itzá, Yucatán.

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Abstracts

Nederlandse samenvatting
Chichén Itzá was een laat- tot postklassieke Maya stad in het noorden van Yucatán, Mexico. Rond 800 trad er een vrij abrupte verandering op in de iconografische en architecturale stijl, die van oudsher werd toegeschreven aan een invasie van de Tolteken of de Tolteekse stijl. Recent onderzoek spreekt deze theorie tegen, en deze research master scriptie onderzoekt de mogelijkheid dat de Itzá zelf verantwoordelijk zijn voor deze verandering door religieuze en culturele elementen over te nemen uit centraal Mexico. Door in te gaan op recent onderzoek, de achtergrond en geschiedenis van de Itzá wordt de context van het probleem in kaart gebracht. Een korte studie van de theorie aangaande groepsidentiteit en collectief en cultureel geheugen schetst een beeld de onderliggende processen die een rol spelen bij het creëren van groepsidentiteit en het legitimeren van heerschappij. Een analyse van de iconografie en architectuur van een aantal gebouwen uit het ceremoniële centrum van Chichén Itzá focust op de algemene thema’s van de iconografie om te zien of die verband houden met legitimering van heerschappij en het creëren van groepsidentiteit. De resultaten laten zien dat de nieuwe stijl in Chichén Itzá inderdaad mede is gericht op deze processen. Door het aanpassen van de stijl werden collectief en cultureel geheugen aangepast, wat leidt tot een hechte nieuwe groepsidentiteit. Dit was nodig nadat de Itzá wegens politiek en militair conflict migreerden van het Petén gebied in het zuiden, naar het noorden waar zij Chichén Itzá stichtten. De resultaten benadrukken de zelfbewustheid en zelfstandigheid van de Itzá in het plannen en uitvoeren van identity politics. Tevens ondersteunen de resultaten het beeld van de Itzá als een zelfbeschikkend volk in tegenstelling tot het beeld van passieve vredevolle Maya’s dat voorheen gold.

English abstract
Chichén Itzá was a late- to postclassic Maya city in the north of Yucatán, Mexico. Around AD 800 a relatively abrupt change occurred in the iconographic and architectural style, which was traditionally ascribed to an invasion of the Toltecs or the Toltec style. Recent research contradicts this theory, and this research master thesis addresses the possibility that the Itzá themselves are responsible for the change by incorporating central Mexican religious and cultural elements into their own culture. The context of this issue will be established by examining recent research, the background, and history of the Itzá. A study in the theory of group identity, and collective and cultural memory will address the processes that play a role in the creation of group identity and the legitimization of rule. An analysis of the iconography and architecture of several structures in the ceremonial centre of Chichén Itzá focuses on the general themes of the iconography to establish whether they reflect the legitimization of rule and the creation of group identity. The results indicate that the new style at Chichén Itzá is indeed aimed at supporting these processes. By adapting the style, the collective and cultural memories were altered, leading to a firm new group identity. This was necessary after the Itzá migrated north from their homeland in the Petén area, driven away by political and military conflict, where they founded Chichén Itzá. The results emphasize the self consciousness and independence of the Itzá in planning and executing identity politics. Additionally, the results suggest the Itzá were an empowered people, contrary to the past traditional view of Maya as a peaceful and passive people.
Introduction

Why?

Chichén Itzá\(^1\) is a large late classic to postclassic archaeological Maya site in the northern part of the Yucatán peninsula of Mexico. It is generally dated to a period between 800 and 1200 A.D., but these dates may vary between different authors. The site is on the north eastern edge of a hilly region that is known as the Puuc\(^2\) region. The ruins lie about halfway between Mérida and Valladolid, near the small village of Pisté. The old highway between these two cities ran straight through the site, but nowadays a large toll highway just outside of the site replaces the old one.

The site features many structures, some of which are in the style of the Puuc region of which Chichén is a part. Other structures however are in a seemingly very different style that seems to share characteristics with the central Mexican region. Especially Tula, Hidalgo, an archaeological site over 1200 kilometres away to the northwest, has figured largely in comparisons with Chichén Itzá.

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\(^1\) For convenience and brevity I will often refer to Chichén Itzá just as Chichén. No difference in meaning occurs.

\(^2\) Also spelled Puuk
The motivation for the subject at hand stems from a profound fascination with the city of Chichén and its connection with Central Mexican style iconography. Why is it that the Itzá incorporated many style traits that originate from a completely different cultural area more than 1200 kilometres away in central Mexico? Did the Toltecs from Tula actually penetrate the northern Maya lowlands to conquer Chichén Itzá? Where did the Itzá come from? What sets Chichén apart from surrounding sites, where this central Mexican influence was also felt? The questions that can be asked about Chichén Itzá are endless.

Chichén is has a very long history, starting around the 9th century A.D., when it grew to be one of the largest cities in Yucatán, controlling a large area in the north and northwest of the peninsula. Even after its decline in the 13th century it was not completely deserted. Monumental building at the site had stopped, but there is evidence of people still living at the site. It remained a very important religious place, perhaps as a sacred historical place or in a sense a lieu de mémoire (Nora 1989), because people continued to make pilgrimages to the city to make offerings and record their presence inside the temples. Its importance and fame, continuing through to the 16th century drew Fray Diego de Landa to the site, as one of the first European conquerors to visit and describe the city. Only very late in its history was Chichén Itzá 'discovered' by modern European scholars.

Even though de Landa visited the city in the 16th century, his writings were lost until Brasseur de Bourbourg found a copy of an abridgement of the original text in and published it with a French translation 1864 (Kettunen & Helmke 2008:6). This created a lot of amateur and later scholarly interest in the site have constantly been high. Many people before me were intrigued by its beauty, its sheer size or its magnificent artefacts, with the Cenote of Sacrifice or Sacred Cenote containing so many rare wooden, gold, ceramic, and bone objects.

My interest in the site was spurred by the controversial theories that surrounded Chichén Itzá and its history. Where did the Itzá come from? When did they found Chichén? When did the change in style happen, and mostly how and why? Many comparable issues have been controversial throughout the history of research of the site, as I will show in a brief overview of research, further on in this thesis. My BA thesis, where I tried to find archaeological evidence for the origins of the Itzá and the city of Chichén Itzá (Liethof 2008), was the first result of my interest in the matter.

During my research of the subject my interest shifted away from the issue of the origins of the Itzá and the timing and reasons for the outside influence from Central Mexico. Instead I began to take an interest in the magnificent murals to be found at the site. I wondered what role they played in Itzá society, what they meant, why they were painted, why the style of these paintings resembled the codex style art from central Mexico.

I found myself thinking why researchers seem to think in terms of outside influence, in varying degrees. Even though the stigmatization of the Maya as peaceful scientists and the Toltec as aggressive warriors has been convincingly addressed by Lindsay Jones (Jones 1995), and the realization that the two different iconographical styles are mixed instead of separate (Smith 1971; Taube 1994), the idea remains that there was an influence from central Mexico, whether or not from Tula, that was the main cause for the changes in style in Chichén. The theories often still represent a west to east influence (Jones 1995:367)

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1 The ethnic marker Itzá will refer in this thesis to the group or groups of people that founded the city of Chichén Itzá.

4 The graffiti found inside the Upper Temple of the Jaguars is clear evidence of this.
If the bias is taken away from the view many scholars from the western tradition have had of the Maya and the Itzá, it is logical to accept that the Itzá were an independent people, entirely capable of making their own decisions. A culture is not like biological processes in the sense that they just move forward in a path determined by nature. So what if, instead attributing the change to outside influence, the change in style is seen as a choice made by the Itzá themselves? Why would a people radically change the iconographical programme at the heart of their city? Why was this new style a synthesis of traditional elements and traits from a very different culture far, far away? I believe the answer to this lies in a break with the past, an attempt of legitimization of rule and a need to create a communal identity to create cohesion in society.

**Research questions**

My main hypothesis is that the Itzá, a loose collective of multi-ethnic groups that moved to Yucatán as a result of the notorious Maya collapse, migrated to Chichén Itzá and needed a legitimate claim for power and a strong communal bond to survive. To achieve this, they looked to central Mexico; an area with which they already had close (trading) contact. In this region existed a ritual in which the right to rule is bestowed upon a person through an elaborate nose piercing ceremony. The Itzá imported and performed this ceremony to legitimize their rule, and incorporated the visual style from central Mexico into their architectural and iconographical programme, forging a new style and a new communal identity. Instead of being influenced from outside sources, the Itzá deliberately took these rituals and style traits to create a communal identity that bound them together as a people.

To support this hypothesis, I will review the background of the Itzá and the central Mexican nose piercing ceremony. But mainly I will analyze the architectural and iconographical programme of some structures in the main ceremonial district of Chichén in order to see how the process of identity creation is reflected in the visual environment. The main research question asked in this research will be:

- **Did the Itzá consciously create a new iconographical and architectural style as part of a strategy to legitimize rule and create a new communal identity?**

In order to answer this main research question, a number of sub-questions need to be formulated that address different aspects of this question. Why is the situation in Chichén Itzá different than in surrounding areas? How was rulership legitimized? What is communal identity and how can it be created? The history of Chichén Itzá should be reviewed because provides the physical context for the issue. The history of the Itzá prior to their arrival at Chichén Itzá also deserves attention because it forms the mental context for the Itzá. The analysis of the iconography should contribute to the main research question and therefore should be built up clearly and carefully, following a well argued methodology. With all this in mind I have drawn up some research sub-questions that address these issues and will eventually work together in answering the main research question:

- **What is so different in iconographical and architectural style in Chichén Itzá, compared to the surrounding area?**
- **What is the history, or social context of the Itzá, prior to the foundation of Chichén Itzá?**
The first chapter of this thesis will deal with a contextualization of the subject for the reader, as well as the researcher. It will discuss current knowledge of Chichén Itzá like previous and recent research at Chichén Itzá, the type of rulership that the city might have had, chronology, and architectural styles. This last subject will provide some clarity on the first research sub-question of what it is that sets Chichén Itzá apart.

The second chapter will discuss the second and third sub-questions stated above. It will provide a history of the Itzá, addressing their origins and migrations using ethnohistorical, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence. It will also discuss the role of the nose piercing ceremony in the legitimization of rule and its occurrence at Chichén Itzá.

In chapter three I will discuss the concepts of identity and memory. These form the theoretical basis of this thesis and therefore should be addressed clearly. The concepts of communal identity, collective memory, cultural memory, and identity creation are categories of these main concepts, and they are fundamental for the hypothesis that is integrated in the main research question.

Chapter four will be a preparation for the iconographical analysis. I found this necessary to include because it gives clarity on how the analysis will be done and will ensure that it is done systematically, giving readers the possibility to follow the line of reasoning of the researcher. The methodology devised in this chapter will be based on the work of Erwin Panofsky combined with hermeneutics.

In the fifth chapter I will analyze the iconography in mural painting, bas-relief and architecture of several structures from the main plaza of Chichén Itzá. This chapter will deal with the fourth research sub-question and will reveal the main iconographical themes which are used throughout these structures.

The final chapter will summarize and discuss the outcome of the previous chapters, and will combine knowledge from all of them in the effort of addressing the final research sub-question on how the main iconographical themes reflect the need to legitimize rulership and create a communal identity. When that is done, I can finally answer the main research question in a satisfactory manner.
History of Chichén Itzá

In order to interpret the architectural and iconographical programme more reliably, it is necessary to have a sound idea of the site and its history. The social, historical, and even spatial context of the iconography can all contribute to addressing the creation of identity at Chichén Itzá.

This chapter will give a short overview of the history of research. After that it will give a brief summary of the iconographical styles that are present at Chichén Itzá. I will argue that the style found at Chichén Itzá is a mix of central Mexican and Puuc Maya styles, rather than that the Puuc style was completely replaced by the central Mexican iconography. This matter will play a role in the eventual analysis of the iconography.

History of research

Early research
Fray Diego de Landa Calderón (1524 – 1579), the Franciscan bishop of Yucatan, was the first Spaniard to describe Chichén Itzá. In his Relación de las Cosas de Yucatan he describes the structures of the city and the way the city was ruled. The inhabitants of the surrounding areas, whom he calls the Itzá ('Izas'), told him that the city was either ruled by three brothers or by one great ruler called Kukulkan. This Kukulkan arrived from the west with, before or after the Itzá and that he returned to Mexico eventually. From this text scholars have taken the notion that the Itzá were not native to Yucatán (Boot 2005:7). But it was not until 1864 that this information became widely known to the public. The text was lost until 1862, when Charles Etienne Brasseur de Bourbourg found a copy of a short version of the text and published the first translation of it in 1864.

But before that, in the first half of the 19th century, John Lloyd Stephens (1805 – 1852), diplomat and explorer, travelled through Yucatán together with Frederick Catherwood (1799-1854), architect and artist. Among other ruined cities they visited Chichén; Stephens described it and Catherwood made very detailed drawings of some structures. In the village of Peto, Stephens obtained some indigenous documents. Among these was the book of Chilam Balam of Maní, which Stephens published as an appendix to his Incidents of Travel in Yucatan (1943) (Boot 2005:8-9).

Then, between 1853 and 1882 Claude-Joseph Désiré Charnay (1828 – 1915) travelled through Mexico and Guatemala, studying sites and making notes. A few months after visiting Tula, he arrived in Chichén Itzá. He is probably the first to explicitly note the similarities between the two distant cities and he does so at great length. He describes and compares structures and styles and illustrates them with very detailed drawings. He is the first to specify the origins of the main ceremonial structures to be Toltec (Jones 2005:4-5). He published his writing in The Ancient Cities of the New World. Being voyages and explorations in Mexico and Central America from 1857-1882 (1887).

The publications of these works in the late 19th century opened up the way for new scholars to research the ruins of Chichén Itzá at the start of the 20th century. One of the first to do so was Alfred Tozzer.

Alfred Marston Tozzer (1877 – 1954) was a very important Mayanist. His lifetime works are combined in the posthumously published Chichén Itzá and Its Cenote of Sacrifice: a Comparative Study of Contemporaneous Maya and Toltec (1957) (Jones 1995:21). One of the most important ideas
that partially defined Tozzer’s theory on the subject was that there was a great difference between ‘Mayan’ and ‘Mexican’ iconography, and this implied a difference in culture. In his 1957 work he starts off with a chronology of Chichén Itzá.

- Chichén I:  Late Classic Stage: Yucatán Maya (600-1000)
- Chichén II:  Toltec-Maya, Stage A (ca. 945 – ca. 1145)
- Chichén III:  Toltec-Maya, Stage B (ca. 1150 – 1260)
- Chichén IV:  Period of Dissolution (1280 – 1450)
- Chichén V:  Period of Abandonment (1460 – 1542)

(After Boot 2005:25)

In this time, the general view on the Maya was that they were a peaceful people living in the forest, led by priest-rulers. On the other hand, the Toltec were seen as a warlike Mexican people. These viewpoints speak to the imagination and it is clear to see how they lead to an idea of polarity between the Maya and the Toltec. This and the fact that in Chichén there were ‘Toltec’ structures while in Tula there was no Maya style present led Tozzer to think that the Toltec invaded and conquered (Boot 2005:26).

Tozzer’s version of Chichén history is that the city was being abandoned at the end of the Chichén I period. This is when, at A.D. 948, the Toltec Quetzalcoatl, also known as Kukulkan I arrived with the Toltec to conquer Chichén Itzá and start Chichén II. This marks the emergence of all the ‘Toltec’ buildings and bas-reliefs. This period lasted until 1145, when the Chichén III period started with the arrival of the Itzá. All that is known about these Itzá is that they were led by a leader, called Kukulkan II, from the area of Chakanputun and that ‘they spoke the language brokenly’. In the next period, Chichén IV, Mayapán was built and at the end of this period the Itzá were beaten by a rival Maya leader called Hunac Ceel. This marked the start of the Chichén V period, in which the Itzá migrated southwards, to settle in the Petén region (Boot 2005:25-26).

The idea that the Maya were a peaceful people that developed independently from the central Mexicans and the rest of the Mesoamerican world found its biggest propagator in the person of Sylvanus Morley. Morley was the director of the Chichén Itzá project of the Carnegie Institution of Washington (CIW), which ran from 1913 to 1929. Not only did the project excavate a large part of the ceremonial centre of Chichén under his leadership, he also brought the ruins and the Maya to the attention of the general public in his work The Ancient Maya (1946) (Jones 1995:33). As a part of the CIW project, Earl H. Morris excavated the Temple of The Warriors, and Anne Axtell Morris, Jean Charlot and Adela Breton documented, copied and analyzed the murals at the Temple of the Warriors, Temple of the Chac Mool, Temple of the Jaguars and the Northwest Colonnade which will play an important part in this thesis (Morris et al. 1931).

John Eric Sidney Thompson (1898 – 1975) was a student under Sylvanus Morley. In his book, Maya History and Religion (1970), he brought forward his well known Putun Hypothesis. The first three points of this hypothesis are most important to the theories on the history of Chichén. First, the Putun Maya were a Chontal speaking Maya people living in the southern Campeche area, just outside the classic Maya area and they were heavily influenced by central Mexican culture. Second, they were traders and seafarers who controlled the deltas of the Usumacinta and Grijalva rivers. Because they travelled around, a group settled on the island Cozumel and
maintained a port at Polé\(^5\), from where they conquered a number of places, including Chichén Itzá in A. D. 918. The third point of the Putun hypothesis is that after settling at Chichén, the colonizing Putun made contact with their homeland. There, because they were under the influence of central Mexican culture, they welcomed Quetzalcoatl-Kukulkan who was driven from his homeland. This person arrived at Chichén in a second group that came from the west and that brought the central Mexican influence with it (Thompson 1970:3-4).

The other 4 points deal with other Putun groups conquering a large area enveloping Yaxchilan, Altar de Sacrificios and Ucanal. Between A.D. 850 and A.D. 950 they controlled northern Tabasco, southern Campeche, Cozumel, Bakhalal and Chetumal on the east coast, and Chichén Itzá and perhaps other places in central Yucatán. After being overthrown, they settled in the region south of the Pasion River and named this land Acalan. They lived in this region until they lost their independence in A.D. 1695 (Thompson 1970:4-5).

All this research and theory combined led to a general idea that at the start of the Postclassic Chichén Itzá was a typical Puuc Maya town, living in peace. That is when a warlike people, the Itzá, conquer them after which Kukulkan arrives from Tula and they start building a new part of the city in a new 'Toltec' style, creating chronologically subsequent architecturally distinct parts of the city.

**Recent research**

More recently scholars have started to revise these two major hypotheses about the history of Chichén Itzá. Firstly, the way Tozzer and Thompson relate the central Mexican to conquest by the Toltec is problematic. The new style supposedly was brought in by invading Toltec warriors and forced upon the people. But in his thorough study of the iconography of Chichén, Karl Taube concludes that there is no clear division between the Puuc Maya and central Mexican styles, and that the styles are at least partly contemporaneous (Taube 2004). Taube suggests in his conclusion that the central Mexican style at Chichén is a “self-conscious synthesis of Maya and Toltec traditions (Taube 1994:244). Apparently the Maya and Toltec parts of the city were living together in relative peace.

The Putun Hypothesis was one of the most popular theories about Chichén Itzá. But as time passed more and more people grew sceptical of it. In 1994, twenty years after Thompson published his theories, Jürgen Kremer criticised Thompson’s theory extensively. He argues that the warriors that Thompson argued to be invaders do not seem to be invading anything in their depictions. There are neither archaeological nor ethnohistorical sources that confirm a large invasion of the east coast by the Itzá. Also, Kremer argues that it is unlikely that the so called Putun Empire where the Itzá came from existed, based on linguistic and political research. (Kremer 1994:290-294). Kremer concludes that Thompson did not critically analyze his sources and in some cases even alters them to fit to his theory (Kremer 1994:303).

In 1995, Lindsay Jones published *Twin City Tales: a hermeneutical reassessment of Tula and Chichén Itzá*. This is the first large work on the subject that does not seek to explain the connection between Chichén Itzá and Tula. Instead Jones takes a hermeneutical approach, investigating the way the architecture and city and its iconography are traditionally interpreted and how they should be interpreted within their own context.

\(^{5}\) Depending on spelling, this town is also known as Ppole (Boot 2005).
One of Jones’ main starting arguments is that the Maya – Mexican polarity that was ever present in mesoamerican scholarship is a result of the way the native peoples were depicted during the conquest. The reports that came back from the conquistadors were often contradictory and served the purpose of the people sending them. This invoked many discussions about what the native peoples actually were and how they should be treated. This can be illustrated by the Valladolid debate in 1550 between Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepulveda where De las Casas defends the intrinsic humanity and potential Christianity of the indigenous peoples and De Sepulveda uses Aristotle to argue that the Indians are by nature slaves (Jones 1995:24).

Here lies the start of a dichotomy that would subconsciously influence many, or even most researchers trying to explain the history of this area. The general idea existed that there were beautiful, literate peoples like the Maya and that there were raw war loving peoples; the central Mexicans (Jones 1997:286).

Jones’ approach takes a different viewpoint than most other researches before it. He sees archaeological sites as a collection of ritual-architectural events. A ritual-architectural event is the combination of architecture, humans that use it, and the ceremonial occasion that brings the first two together (Jones 1995:186). A structure is inseparably connected to the people who built, used and lived around it.

To define these ritual-architectural events, Jones has devised a complicated set of ritual-architectural priorities, the reasons for the constructing of certain structures, divided in three main groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation; the reason for having a ritual-architectural event</th>
<th>Commemoration; what are the ritual-architectural events about?</th>
<th>Ritual context; how ritual-architectural events are performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homology; a replica of the universe</td>
<td>Divinity; commemorates houses or Gods</td>
<td>Theatre; ritual performances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Convention; conforming to abstract principles or standardized rules</td>
<td>Sacred history; commemorates an important mythical episode</td>
<td>Contemplation; praying, meditation or devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astronomy; aligned to the stars</td>
<td>Politics; commemorates or legitimizes a political or social system</td>
<td>Propitiation; intended to please, appease of petition the sacred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dead; commemorates ancestors</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sanctuary; a refuge or perfection of purity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Lindsay Jones’ ritual-architectural priorities (based on George Cowgill 1997:467-468)

Jones concludes that the ritual-architectural priorities involved in the construction of Tula and Chichén Itzá are quite different. Tula is a city in a rough region; the city constantly needs to defend itself from aggressive neighbouring peoples. This is why themes of war and terror are widely used throughout the city, to give off a clear message to the people of Tula and their enemies; it binds the people of Tula in their struggle for existence. Chichén Itzá on the other hand did not have to worry so much about invading peoples. Instead, Chichén Itzá was a city
with a diverse people with a lot of different backgrounds and thoughts. The iconography reflects a message of unification, reconciliation in the ritual architectural events (Jones 1995:396-397).

Other research has also contested the influence of Tula, Hidalgo as the main donor for the central Mexican style at Chichén. Mary Miller notes that scholars always focus on the Tula – Chichén connection despite the absence of objects from Tula in the Cenote at Chichén and the lack of metallurgy at Tula, while it is present at Chichén (Miller 2007:619). Furthermore, neither Ralph Roys nor Marvin Cohodas was able to find a reference that clearly mentioned the Toltec conquest of Chichén Itzá in literature about the subject (Kowalski & Kristan-Graham 2007:20). Recent developments in the chronologies of Tula, Hidalgo and Chichén have shed new light on the connection between the two cities. The florescence of Tula, the *Tollan Phase*, is dated to a period of A.D. 950 – 1100, while that of Chichén lies between A.D. 700 – 1000 (Boot 2005:265-266). It would seem that Chichén flourished slightly before Tula.

The term Tollan, of which Tula is derived, is subject to discussion. Instead of accepting Tula, Hidalgo as the original Tollan that figures prominently in myth throughout Mesoamerica (Jiménez Moreno 1941), recently Tollan has been seen as a type of politico-religious centre connected to reeds and Quetzalcoatl. The term is a type of honorific title for places that were connected to ancestral beginnings and political power where rulers could be invested with royal titles and symbols (Kowalski & Kristan-Graham 2007:22). This does not mean that Tula was not Tollan, but that it one of many, spread across Mesoamerica geographically and temporally. Possible other Tollans are Cholula, Teotihuacan, Tenochtitlan, Tikal, and Copan (Boot 2005, Kowalski & Kristan-Graham 2007).

The site has traditionally been divided into two separate temporal and spatial sections, following Tozzer’s interpretation of the site. New ‘Toltec’ Chichén lies north of the old highway and old ‘Maya’ Chichén to the south of it. The structures that were part of new Chichén are: the Cenote of Sacrifice; the Castillo; the Great Ball Court with the Temple of the Warriors and the Tzompantli; the Temple of the Warriors; the Court of a Thousand Columns; the Mercado; the Platform of the Eagles and the Jaguars; and the Venus Platform. Old Chichén consisted of practically everything else, but the major structures are: the Caracol, The House of the Deer, the Casa Colorado, the Iglesia, the Monjas complex and the Akab-Dzib (Jones 1995:339).

Recently however, scholars are starting to see that both groups were integrated into the city as a whole and that the mixed iconographic style that incorporates both Maya and central Mexican elements is to be found throughout the site, both in its centre as well as outlying areas (Schmidt 2007).

Throughout the history of research at Chichén, views have slowly shifted from aggressive conquest by the Toltecs from Tula to Chichén being a multiethnic city independent from Tula but somehow influenced by a Tollan. This thesis continues research in that direction by arguing that the Itzá wilfully adapted their cultural memory by adding culture elements from central Mexico, but not specifically from Tula.

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6 A symbol for a multitude of people, or an allusion to the material from which the mats on which Mesoamerican rulers sat were made (Kowalski & Kristan-Graham 2007:22)
Figure 2. Map of Chichén Itzá (Schmidt 1998:431)
Government

The way Chichén was governed is still subject to debate. There are two major positions in this debate: some argue Chichén Itzá was governed by a paramount ruler like in the classic Maya area, others that the city was ruled by a more egalitarian council rule, known as multepal. A third position, arguing for a combined system is taken by Kowalski (Kowalski 2007:277).

At the start of the 1990’s the idea of a possible Multepal system at Chichén Itzá was propagated by several scholars. This type of government is known from the later phases of occupation of Mayapán, a Maya city in northern Yucatán, near Chichén Itzá. This system of government supposedly aided in the survival of Chichén Itzá of the Maya collapse, which caused the decline of many southern Maya polities with paramount rulership. By switching to a more egalitarian society they avoided the political conflict that caused the decline of many other cities(Kowalski 2007:277).

The idea of a Multepal system at Chichén is based on a number of arguments. Diego de Landa mentioned that Chichén was ruled by three brothers who came from the west (De Landa & Gates 1978[1937]:9). Next, in hieroglyphic texts at Chichén there is mention of several sets of brothers or siblings, which is thought to confirm de Landa’s statements. Also, several names mentioned in the texts could be found in historical sources⁷, supporting the veracity of these sources(Cobos 2007:318). Another argument for this is the focus of Chichén iconography less on a single paramount leader and more on various persons of different offices but with more equal status(Kowalski 2007:277), such as the figures depicted on the columns of the colonnade.

The argument for paramount rulership is based on ethnohistory and the refuting of arguments for the multepal system, combined with iconographical evidence. Although de Landa mentions the three brothers from the west, another ethnohistorical source states otherwise. In the Relaciones Histórico-geográficas de la Gobernación de Yucatán it is written that there was a single ruler who received tribute from northern Yucatán and places further away (Cobos 2007:317).

On top of that, the siblings that are found in the hieroglyphic texts might not be siblings at all. The glyph that identifies the siblings is proposed to be read as yitaaj. The first proposed meaning of this was ‘sibling of’, but recent interpretations have suggested that it might be a title of a certain rank to an act of witnessing or participating in an event together with someone else. A simplified interpretation gives the meaning ‘with’ or ‘and’ as the meaning of the glyph (Cobos:2007:319). This suggests that there is no blood relation necessary between the individuals this word connects. This way, the hieroglyphic texts do not confirm de Landa’s statement that three brothers ruled at Chichén.

The iconographical evidence for a paramount ruler at Chichén is centered on the main ceremonial centre. The scenes in the North Temple of the ballcourt and the Upper Temple of the Jaguars supposedly focus on the ascension to the throne of one single ruler. This ceremonial centre is mostly associated with feathered serpent iconography, which in turn is associated with the title Kukulkan and paramount rulership (Cobos 2007: 331-333).

The third position in this debate was taken by Jeff Kowalski (2007). I agree with Kowalski that the two seemingly opposite viewpoints on the governance of Chichén do not have to exclude each other. Kowalski opts for a model that can be compared to the twin rulership of the Aztecs. There, the ruling Huey Tlatoani is supported by the Cihuacoatl. These two in turn are advised by a council of nobles and war lords (Kowalski 2007:284).

⁷ Kak’ukpakal, Hunpiktok, and Kokom for example (Cobos 2007:318)
This argument is supported by evidence from Tayasal in the Petén Lake, an Itzá Maya island kingdom that persisted until 1697. The Itzá from Tayasal claimed descent from the Itzá that migrated back south from Chichén Itzá, after its decline (Kowalski 2007:284). Their government consisted out of one holy lord, the Ājāw Kan Ek’, assisted by his cousin the High Priest, or AjK’in Kan Ek’. They were seen as a dual complementary rulers, although only one bore the title of holy lord. Supporting them were eight high ranking rulers in senior-junior pairs. Below that were thirteen men representing outlying towns. The kingship was probably passed on from father to son and other brothers could be part of the eight supporting lords (Jones 1998:103 in Kowalski 2007:284).

Based on this account, Kowalski suggests a similar system for Chichén Itzá. The temple of the Chac Mool could be an example of a council house, with the central throne serving for the two rulers, and the daises or benches as seats for lower lords and advisors. The relief on the daises themselves would then represent these lords. This (slightly unequal) dual kingship then explains most of the contradicting evidence for either multeptal or paramount rulership. Chichén Itzá was governed by one supreme king, supported by a high priest (his cousin?). They were then advised by a council of lower lords (Kowalski 2007:296-297). This model of governance includes both the council rule system as the paramount ruler idea. And accounts for the iconography that portrays many ranking figures as well as the iconography associated with Kukulkan and rulership at the ballcourt. That is why this explanation appeals most to me.

Chronology
The chronology of Chichén is still subject to debate among scholars. In this section I will explain the most recent and most accepted chronologies of the city. This will be divided into four types: architectural chronology, hieroglyphic dates, radiocarbon (C14) dates, and ceramic sequences. The architectural chronology and the ceramic sequence are relative methods of dating while the hieroglyphic and radiocarbon dates are reasonably absolute. It is interesting to see the (sometimes large) discrepancies between the types of chronologies.

Architecture
George Kubler has made a relative chronology of the architecture of the Great Terrace, the main ceremonial centre that was formerly known as Toltec Chichén. He divides its history into three parts:

- Phase 1 up to A.D. 800
- Phase 2 A.D. 800-1050
- Phase 3 A.D. 1050-1200

Phase I includes the Caracol, the Castillo substructure, the original west colonnade and perhaps the Lower Temple of the Jaguars. Phase II contains the Chac Mool temple as well as the Temple of the Warriors, the outer façade of the Castillo, perhaps the High Priest’s Grave, and the Temple of the Tables. Phase III would then contain the main ballcourt buildings; the Upper Temple of the Jaguars, the North and South Temples, the Mercado, the platforms of the Eagles and the Cones, and the tzompantli (Kubler 1993:288).
Ceramics

Until recently, only two major published works were available on the ceramics of Chichén Itzá. In 1958, as part of the Carnegie Institution of Washington project, George W. Brainerd published *The Archaeological Ceramics of Yucatan*. In this volume he proposed new terms for the ceramic sequence in Yucatán (Anderson 1998:155, Brainerd 1958):

- **Yucatán Formative**: 900 B.C. – A.D. 200
- **Yucatán Regional**: A.D. 200 – 700
- **Yucatán Florescent**: A.D. 700 – 1000
- **Yucatán Mexican**: A.D. 1000 – 1500
- **Post Conquest**: A.D. 1500+

This sequence is problematic, because the CIW was focused on architectural reconstruction rather than on obtaining ceramic sequences. Because of the large amount of time between the excavation of the material and the publication combined with the poor storage conditions, the labels had largely disintegrated (Anderson 1998:155-156).

In 1971, Robert E. Smith published the second major work on Chichén ceramics. *The Pottery of Mayapan* was part of the CIW project at Mayapan, and attempted to clarify the regional ceramic sequence of Yucatán. As part of this, some excavations were executed at Chichén (Anderson 1998:156). The following sequence was a result of that (Smith 1971):

- **Ecab**: before 800 B.C.
- **Tihosuco**: 800 B.C. – A.D. 100
- **Chakan**: A.D. 100 – 300
- **Cochuah**: A.D. 300 – 600
- **Motul**: A.D. 600 – 800
- **Cehpech**: A.D. 800 – 1000
- **Sotuta**: A.D. 1000 – 1200
- **Hocabá**: A.D. 1200 – 1300
- **Tases**: A.D. 1300 – 1500
- **Chikinchel**: A.D. 1500 – 1600
- **Chauaca**: A.D. 1600+

But this sequence also is problematic. For data on the Cehpech and Sotuta complexes, which represent very important times in Chichén history, Smith turns to two other sites, Kabah and Uxmal. Because of this, he did not recognise a situation that was almost unique to Chichén Itzá (Anderson 1998: 156-157).

The Sotuta ceramic complex is very important to Chichén Itzá, and only there is it so dominantly present. In other archaeological sites in the region, such as Cobá, Yaxuná and Ek Balam, Sotuta ceramics are hardly present (Suhler et al. 1998, Bey III et al. 1998). Another interesting characteristic is that the Sotuta pottery has central Mexican influences (Smith 1971, Anderson 1998) and is therefore associated with the central Mexican style influence in Chichén.

Recently, the successive dating of Cehpech and Sotuta Ceramics has been criticised. At Chichén Itzá the Cehpech and Sotuta complexes seem to at least partly overlap (Anderson 1998; Boot 2005; Bey III et al. 1998; Cobos Palma 2004; Kepecs 1998; Ringle, Gallareta Negrón, and
Bey 1998; Schmidt 2007:194). In both earlier and later strata of the main occupation time at Chichén Itzá, associated with ‘old’ and ‘new’ Chichén, Sotuta ceramics dominate, but Cehpech ceramics are present throughout the strata in low quantities. (Anderson 1998:162, Schmidt 2007:194). There is no evidence that Cehpech ceramics predate Sotuta wares (Schmidt 2007:156). This means that Cehpech and Sotuta pottery were used at the same time in Chichén, but that Sotuta was much more popular.

The latest chronology of Chichén Itzá that was available at writing is the one made by Peter J. Schmidt as a result of excavation projects in the nineties. It is a preliminary chronology of the height of occupation at Chichén that suggests that the. It is important that this chronology is based on recent excavations at Chichén itself; it makes the sequence more plausible:

- Proto-Slate: A.D. 600 – 850
- Cehpech/Sotuta: A.D. 850 – 1100/1150
- Hocabá: A.D. 1100/1150+

(Schmidt 2007:157)

Schmidt’s conclusions are that there are some ceramics of preclassic date, and some Proto-Pizarra (Proto-Slate), suggesting that there is very few monumental occupation at Chichén prior to about A.D. 800/850. Then Cehpech and Sotuta emerge during the main construction phase at the site, with Sotuta being dominant. Then around A.D. 1100/1150 Hocabá ceramics appear in conjunction with the slow decline of the city (Schmidt 2007:194).

Hieroglyphic dates

Although there are not many hieroglyphic inscriptions at Chichén Itzá, there are some 30 dates to be found. The only complete long count date is to be found at the Temple of the Initial Series. All the other dates are calendar rounds that can be correlated to this date. The following list is a compilation of (reconstructed) dates taken from Erik Boot (2005). It shows the dates in chronological order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Long Count and Calendar Round</th>
<th>Julian Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water Trough Lintel</td>
<td>10.0.0.0.0, (katun) 7 ahaw</td>
<td>A.D. 810-830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hieroglyphic Jambs</td>
<td>10.0.2.7.13, 9 B’en 1Sak</td>
<td>July 31, A.D. 832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Ballcourt</td>
<td>10.1.15.3.6, 11 Kimi’ 14 Pax</td>
<td>November 13, A.D. 864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Trough Lintel</td>
<td>10.1.17?.0.0, (17th? tun of 3 ahaw)</td>
<td>A.D. 865-866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casa Colorada</td>
<td>10.2.0.1.9, 6 Muluk’ 12 Mak</td>
<td>September 11, A.D. 869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casa Colorada</td>
<td>10.2.0.15.3, 7 Ak’bal 1 Ch’en</td>
<td>June 12, A.D. 870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halakal</td>
<td>10.2.1.0.0, (1st tun of 1 ahaw)</td>
<td>A.D. 869-870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akab Dzib</td>
<td>10.2.1.0.0, (1st tun of 1 ahaw)</td>
<td>A.D. 869-870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yulá (L. 2)</td>
<td>10.2.4.2.1, 2 Imix, 4 Mak</td>
<td>September 2, A.D. 873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yulá (L. 1)</td>
<td>10.2.4.8.4, 8 K’an 2 Pop</td>
<td>January 3, A.D. 874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yulá (L. 2)</td>
<td>10.2.4.8.12, 3 Eb’ 10 Pop</td>
<td>January 11, A.D. 874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Series (Underside)</td>
<td>10.2.9.1.9, 9 Muluk’ 7 Sak</td>
<td>July 26, A.D. 878</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initial Series (Front) 10.2.10.0.0, (10\textsuperscript{th} tun of 1 ahaw) A.D. 878-879
Three Lintels (L. 3) 10.2.10.0.0, (10\textsuperscript{th} tun of 1 ahaw) A.D. 878-879
Las Monjas (L. 2-6) 10.2.10.11.17, 8 Manik’ 15 Wo’ February 14, A.D. 880
Akab Dzib 10.2.11.0.0, (11\textsuperscript{th} tun of 1 ahaw) A.D. 879-880
Four Lintels (L. 1, 3-4) 10.2.12.1.8, 9 Lamat 11Yax July 9, A.D. 881
Four Lintels (L. 2) 10.2.12.2.4, 12 K’an 7 Sak July 25, A.D. 881
Four Lintels (L. 2) 10.2.13.0.0, (13\textsuperscript{th} tun of 1 ahaw) A.D. 881-882
Caracol (Stela 1) 10.2.16.0.0, (16\textsuperscript{th} tun of 1 ahaw) A.D. 884-885
Caracol (Stela 1) 10.2.17.0.0, (17\textsuperscript{th} tun of 1 ahaw) A.D. 885-886
Caracol (Stela 1) 10.3.1.0.0, (1\textsuperscript{st} tun of 12 ahaw) A.D. 889-890
Casa Colorada (Stela 2) 10.3.1.0.0, (1\textsuperscript{st} tun of 12 Ahaw) A.D. 889-890
Osario 10.8.10.6.4, 10 K’an 2 Sotz’ February 1, A.D. 998
Osario 10.8.10.11.0, 2 ahaw, 18 Mol May 8, A.D. 998

Table 2. Hieroglyphic dates for La Casa Colorada and Las Monjas. (Adapted from Boot 2005:126)

It is interesting to notice that the dates are spread throughout the city on structures that have been assigned to both Puuc and ‘Toltec-Maya’ styles. This reconfirms that there is no hard line between ‘old’ and ‘new’ Chichén, and that the idea that hieroglyphic writing vanished with the arrival of the new style is incorrect.

The sequence of hieroglyphic dates spans a period of nearly 200 years, roughly between A.D. 810 – 998, in which presumably Chichén flourished. This is quite a short period for a city as large as Chichén Itzá, especially if the fact that the last two dates are more than 100 years after the one before that; without those two dates the hieroglyphic record spans less than a century.

**Radiocarbon dates**

To this date, radiocarbon dates of the site are rare. This is mostly due to the climate at Chichén; because of the hot and humid circumstances, there is little organic material left to be dated. The few dates that are available have mostly been taken from wooden lintels that remained in structures at the site. The dates available are compiled into the following table. Where possible I have indicated the uncalibrated date and the calibrated midpoint and 1 sigma range.

With the recent development of accelerated mass spectrometry, the samples of carbon needed to produce a solid date do not have to be so large as before. This technique would allow for carbon inclusions in mortar, where used, to be dated securely, taking away the risk of reused or old wood (Mathews 2001). This does not seem to have been applied to Chichén Itzá yet, but it could provide valuable extra dates.
There are two structures that provide us with both hieroglyphic dates as well as radiocarbon dates. These structures are the Casa Colorada and Las Monjas. The Casa Colorada has a calibrated midpoint of A.D. 666 with its sigma range up to A.D. 758, while its hieroglyphic dates provide the dates A.D. 869 and 870, and its stela A.D. 889-890. This gives quite a large time gap of at least 111 years. For the Monjas structure there is the radiocarbon date of A.D. 891 with quite a large range up to A.D. 1040. The hieroglyphic date for this structure is A.D. 880 so now the hieroglyphic date seems earlier. These discrepancies in dating can mean a few things. The structures could have been in use for a long time, sometimes more than a century. The radiocarbon date was taken from a different structural sequence than the hieroglyphic date, the hieroglyphic date was added later, or the dates are not as absolute as was thought. Nonetheless, it might be interesting to compare hieroglyphic and (new) radiocarbon dates, and perhaps to compare relative with absolute dating. But that is not the subject of this paper.

**Styles**

The research for this thesis deals with the mixture of central Mexican and Maya style at Chichén Itzá. Before we can analyze the iconography of the style, presence of this style throughout the city should be made clear. The central Mexican style is distinct from the Puuc style, which is native to the region. In order to get a clear what are the Puuc and central Mexican elements at Chichén Itzá, it is necessary to give a short description of both styles and then discuss the style at Chichén. That way it is possible to better appreciate the style that was developed in Chichén.

**Puuc**

The Puuc style is named after the area in which it is found, namely the Puuc hills, a low range of hills north of Champoton. It is dated by Paul Gendrop between AD 700 and the first decades of the 9th century AD (Gendrop 1998) and George Kubler gives it a time span from the Middle Classic to the end of the Late Classic (Kubler 1993:233) with a florescence of the two or three centuries before AD 1000 (Kubler 1993:234).

Instead of the classic Maya type of building which used slabs and blocks face with stucco, the Puuc builders faced rubble cores with thin squares of cut stone. The Puuc builders also applied round and square columns in architecture to allow for larger doorways and more lighting.
This was previously unknown to the Maya area but had been widely used in other parts of Mesoamerica such as Oaxaca and the central plateau (Gendrop 1998:142).

In Puuc architecture stucco exteriors as found in the south are replaced with geometric stonework mosaics in the upper facades (Kubler 1993:233). The lower half of the façade is relatively plain although there are exceptions such as the Codz Poop at Kabah and the Nunnery at Uxmal. An ornamental roof comb often decorates the top of the structures (Gendrop 1998:176).

Often the upper facades and sometimes the lower facades are decorated with colonettes. These are small stone columns set close together to form a ribbed surface. Kubler writes that they are supposed to resemble the wooden construction of Maya houses, with walls of tightly bound together saplings (Kubler 1993:269).

Certain other characteristics of the Puuc architectural style are: monumental archways; vertical facades; atadura (binder) mouldings; and storied or chambered pyramids, where each tier offers recessed chambers offering a storied effect to the pyramid. An example of this is structure 19 at Edzná (Kubler 1993:234).

Puuc itself is highly eclectic, taking traits from the more Maya-like Rio Bec and Chenes styles, local developments in the Puuc region and also from central Mexico (Jones 1995:346). For example Gendrop notes that in Xapecoipol on Cozumel Island Columns depicting persons with atlatls occur (Gendrop 1998:150) and in Labná Atlantean figures appear in a frieze (Gendrop 1998:163). An example of a trait from the Rio Bec and Chenes styles are the Zoomorphic entrances found in some Puuc sites (Kubler 1993:232). These masks often portray a stylized serpent mask, with the doorway as a gaping mouth. In the Puuc region these are found for example at Uxmal (House of the Magician) and Chichén (the Iglesia) (Kubler 1993:232).

The main difference between Rio Bec, Chenes, and Puuc architecture is that where Rio Bec and Chenes use ornamental forms to cover multiple stone facing blocks, the Puuc builders used smaller standardized specifically cut face stones individually to create elaborate mosaic facades (Kubler 1993:269).

Mural painting is rare in the Puuc region, although there are a few exceptions. One trait that is also present at Chichén is painted capstones that close the Maya vaults in structures. In Chichén several painted capstones have been found with figures representing deities painted on them.

**Central Mexican elements**

The central Mexican, previously known as ‘Toltec’, style found at Chichén (and other surrounding sites) is very distinct from the Puuc architecture. Among the elements found in Chichén Itzá that derive from this central Mexican style are the following iconographical and architectural traits.

In many structures at Chichén serpent columns are used to support wide doorways support lintels. There are galleries with roofs supported by columns, like the Northwest Colonnade in front of the Temple of the Warriors. Often a sloping bases can be found on the tiers of platforms outer walls of structures. In the interiors of certain rooms and in several colonnades there are benches or daises with bas-relief processions of warriors and other people. Structures with beam and mortar roofs supported by columns are also part of the central Mexican repertoire. Some of the most distinctive elements from central Mexico that is so remarkable reflected in Tula are the Chac Mool statues. Other central Mexican sculpture includes
Atlantean statues, standard bearers and columns with images of central Mexican warriors in relief. The typical central Mexican warrior is adorned with a 'pillbox' (possibly mosaic) hat with a down flying bird at the front. On his chest he wears a butterfly or bird pectoral, and on his back he carries a type of shield shaped like a small round mirror. His knees are adorned with furry knee bands. Perhaps the most typical of the central Mexican warrior type are his weapons: an atlatl or spear thrower and a bundle of darts. (Coe 1999:167; Kowalski 2007:274; Kristan-Graham & Kowalski 2007:13; Sharer 1994:399-402).

The central Mexican iconography includes frieze reliefs featuring prowling jaguars and eagles holding, or devouring, human hearts. Skull racks and depictions of skulls are to be found at Tula and the surrounding central Mexican area, but also at Chichén Itzá (Kowalski 2007:264, 266; Sharer 1994:402). The so-called ‘jaguar-serpent-bird’, or Tlahuizcalpantecuhlti iconography style that is found in central Mexico is also found at Chichén, and includes figures in sun disks and a human face in the mouth of an animal type of serpent, also known as the man-serpent-bird figure and reclining figures with diagonally upward pointing spears (Kowalski 2007:268-269; Kristan-Graham & Kowalski 2007:13; Sharer 1994:402), and low reliefs with processions of central Mexican warriors depicted in multiple registers can be found inside various structures. Mural painting includes symbolic and narrative works on the inside and sometimes outside walls of some structures (Coe 1999:167).

Chichén style
The style found at Chichén Itzá is neither Puuc nor central Mexican. The site represents a unique mixture of style elements taken from both styles and incorporated in something new. Therefore it I propose the name Chichén style, as something independent from both influencing styles.

At Chichén there are several examples of Puuc Maya and central Mexican styles featuring together within one structure. For example the temple of the warriors architectural plan is very much inspired by central Mexican style. The northwest colonnade that is attached to it features many columns with the images of central Mexican warriors, and there are daises with low relief processions of central Mexican characters. The temple has serpent columns that figure prominently behind a Chac Mool statue. The outside of the temple has battered walls, and the murals contain warriors in central Mexican attire. The rooms inside are large and contain many columns that hold up the roof.

But on the other hand, the columns in the rooms do support rows of Maya vaults and the outside walls bear Witz masks which come from the Puuc Maya style. Furthermore, the way the warriors on the columns are represented derives from the Maya area. The human figures on the columns are not only warriors, there are also figures that do not carry weapons but other paraphernalia and are depicted as people in different social or religious positions. These figures are bordered at top and bottom by smaller iconic, locative or ancestral imagery. In the temple of the Chac Mool, the columns portray Pawahtuns figures in this position, which are typically Maya. The square columns of the colonnades can be interpreted as being in the ‘multiple stela’ format where each face of the column is regarded as a stela, which is also a widespread Maya trait (Kowalski 2007:268).

In the Temple of the Jaguars, feathered serpents and prowling jaguars are found on the outside of the structure. This structure too has the large serpent columns. The murals add to the remarkable mixture of central Mexican and Puuc Maya styles; while the murals prominently portray many warriors in central Mexican style, below them there are Pawahtuns holding up the
scenes like they hold up the sky. So even within a single mural painting it is possible to see influences from both styles.

In sum, the iconography of what was previously seen as ‘Toltec’ Chichén is not just a representation of central Mexican ideology. It is an active blend of many traits taken from the central Mexican area and traditional Maya concepts and frameworks. The Chichén style shows cosmologic ideas from both central Mexico and the Maya area, creating a unique style for Chichén Itzá (Taube 1994:239). Because the Itzá were Maya in origin, the site contains many references to Classic Maya creation stories that served as a framework for the incorporation of foreign (central Mexican) traits (Kowalski 2007:297). I agree with Kowalski and Jones that the Itzá were not passive recipients of central Mexican culture, but active agents in the adaptation and creation of the Chichén style (Jones 1995; Kowalski:2007:297).
History of the Itzá

This chapter is based mostly on part of BA thesis which dealt with the origin of the Itzá and Chichén Itzá. It will give a general history of the Itzá as a people, as is known so far by various scholars. This history will make use of archaeological (ceramic) evidence and ethnohistorical sources; mostly the books of Chilam Balam. I will discuss what might be their area of origin, then deal with possible motifs for migration and a likely route and stages through which they made their way to the location of Chichén Itzá. Finally I will shortly give an account of the arrival and actions of Kukulcan, also known as Quetzalcoatl as is known from the Books of Chilam Balam.

Origins

Erik Boot has done a very thorough research into the provenance of the Itzá, and uses three different arguments to determine a possible region of origin for the Itzá. The first argument is based in hieroglyphic evidence from different sites throughout Yucatán. Occurrences of the words Itza’ and Chanek’/Kanek’ are supposedly connected to each other and their spatial distribution generally overlap. Itza’ in this case would mean “enchanted water” and could be a toponymical marker that refers to the region surrounding the Petén Lake (Boot 2005:37). Chanek’/Kanek’ is a type of royal title that according to Nikolai Grube can be equated to Kan Ek’, a post-conquest hereditary title for paramount Itzá rulers (Boot 2005:40). The presence of both these identity markers in a specific region in the terminal classic period of about 550-900 A.D. points to a possible place of origin.

Figure 3. The possible region of origin for the Itzá (taken from Liethof 2005:17, fig. 1; adapted from Boot 2005:47, map 2.2.)
The second argument is that this area mostly incorporates the area that is mentioned by post-conquest sources as territory of the Itzá. This territory is where they eventually moved to after they had been defeated and driven away from Chichén Itzá, where they still lived at the time of the final conquest by the Spaniards in 1697 (Boot 2005:48-49).

Third, an innovative iconographical complex in the same area can be associated with the Itzá’ area. It is a transition to a less fluid and more abstract way of depicting human figures and can be related to the distribution of the markers Itza’ and Chanek’/Kanek’. It first evolved at Machaquilá and subsequently was adopted in a larger area in the southern Maya lowlands (Boot 2005:78-79).

From these three arguments it is possible to conclude that the Itzá possibly inhabited a region around and southwest of the Petén Lake.

**Conflict**

At some point in time, at least some groups of Itzá moved from their homeland to the northern part of the Yucatán peninsula. The trigger for the Itzá to migrate may be shift of power from the larger hegemonic cities like Tikal and Calakmul to smaller cities in the south of the southern Maya lowlands and an increase in political conflict and warfare in the southern Maya lowlands. (Boot 2005:79). This could be seen as an early beginning or prelude of what has come to be called the Maya collapse.

Along the southern edge of what can be seen as the original Itzá territory, the Dos Pilas/Aguatéca dynasty was founded out of the Tikal dynasty. This happened in a period between A.D. 650 and 675, within the late classic period, and is accompanied by hieroglyphic recording of many bellicose events; on hieroglyphic stairways two and four of Dos Pilas there is mention of at least 15 acts of violence in a period of just over thirty years, between A.D. 648 and 679 (Boot 2005:80-81).

This increase in conflict is possibly reflected in the archaeological record of the Petén region. There are some changes in the body of ceramics which might indicate a rupture in the social structure of the area like political conflict and warfare, or a change in the ruling classes. For example in the Petén area in late classic times polychrome painted ceramics disappear and fine paste wares from the north western Uscumacinta region are introduced (Forsyth 2005:18), and in the terminal classic there seems to be an additional a rupture in the ceramic complexes of the area (Forsyth 2005:11). In the Petexbatun and Pasion regions from about A.D. 760 onwards fine paste ceramic wares emerge, associated with a new elite (Foias & Bishop 2005), perhaps indicating a period of internal regional conflict leading up to the emergence of this new elite. This is roughly the same period of the downfall of Tikal and the shift to power to Dos Pilas (O’Mansky & Dunning 2004:93-94).

Even though the dates may lie apart in some of these events, it is important to remember than very little archaeological dates from this region and these times are completely accurate. The given dates are always approximately. One should always be careful in combining separately dated events, that is why this sequence of events is preliminary and certainly should be investigated further.

Taking this into account, it is possible that an increase in conflict in or in regions directly bordering their territory led at least some groups of Itzá people to migrate away from the area. Even if the conflict didn’t directly affect them, it would have done so indirectly through, for
example, disrupted trading and social ties. So already in the late classic period around the start of the 8th century A.D., in an era of increased conflict that would eventually contribute to the Maya collapse, some groups of Itzá people moved away from their homeland to the northern Yucatán Peninsula.

**Migration**

The books of Chilam Balam are post-conquest ethnohistorical sources that contain chronicles of history of the northern Yucatán peninsula. The books of Chilam Balam of Chumayel, Tizimín, and Maní, named after their provenance, are most important in this case as they treat the history of the Itzá from before the foundation of Chichén until after the arrival of the Spanish.

The migrations of the groups of Itzá are described in these texts. The book from Chumayel mentions that the Itzá ‘discover’ a place called “uchicheenytza”, the mouth of the well of Itzá, in katun 6 ahaw. This would suggest a settling of Chichén Itzá in this period of time. Because of the cyclical nature of the calendar, the katun 6 ahaw can be tied to either of these periods: A.D. 435-455, A.D. 692-711, A.D. 948-968, A.D. 1204-1224 and A.D. 1461-1480 (Boot 2005:92). The period of A.D. 692-711 seems the most logical candidate, as the migration of the Itzá supposedly commenced around A.D. 650-675.

In addition, in the Chilam Balam of Tizimín this same event is assigned to 8 ahaw (Boot 2005:95) and the second Chumayel chronicle mentions 4 ahaw as the katun of discovery of Chichén. It is possible that this event spread over 3 consecutive katuns, 8 ahaw (A.D. 672-691), 6 ahaw (A.D. 692-711), and 4 ahaw, (A.D. 712-731) making the ‘discovery’ a process that took place between A.D. 672 and A.D. 731. This period of sixty years might seem a long time for a discovery, but I agree with Erik Boot in that this should be seen as a long period of many people migrating and settling (Boot 2005:96).

I have been writing about groups of Itzá rather than about the Itzá as one single group for a reason. In the same 8 ahaw that forms part of the period in which Chichén was settled, the Itzá also ‘discovered’ Tzukub’te Siyan Kan B’ak’halal, probably a place in the east near Chetumal, now known as Bacalar. This group of Itzá reigned here for 3 katuns (60 years) after which they also moved on to Chichén Itzá in katun 13 ahaw, A.D. 751-771 (Boot 2005:94).

This suggests more than one group being involved in the settlement of Chichén Itzá, and this might be reflected by the mention in the second Chumayel chronicle of a small and a great descent, respectively from the east and west. These descents consisted of four divisions that represent different cardinal directions and four different places of origins: one division from K’in Kolah Petén in the east, one from Na Kokob from the north, one from Holtún Suywá(h) in the west and one from Kanhek’ Witz B’olonte Witz which is not explicitly assigned to the south, but one can assume it should be (Boot 2005:99).

One of these names can be identified; Kanhek’ Witz B’olonte Witz can be interpreted to mean Kanhek’ Hill, Nine Hill. This might refer to a place known from colonial times: Volonteviz.

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8 The word in Yucatec Maya is **cax**. Munro S. Edmonson notes that this can be translated both as ‘find’ and ‘overthrow’ (Edmonson 1986:57) he chooses overthrow, while Boot clearly uses the other possibility. This shows the difficulties in translating these texts.

9 The chronicles are built up in consecutive katun periods, which represent twenty periods of 360 days. These katuns take the name of the day on which they end, which is always a number ranging from 1 to 13 and the name ahaw. These katun periods can be correlated to the Maya long count calendar, which in turn can be correlated to the western Gregorian calendar. But still, every katun returns approximately every 260 years. For a complete overview of the dating of katun periods, see Boot 2005:86-90
This town is now known as Salinas de los Nueve Cerros and is located in what used to be the extreme south west of Itzá territory, hence the southern connotation for this group. The reference to the Itzá hereditary title supports the hypothesis that at least some of the groups migrating north are Itzá (Boot 2005:100-102).

The great and small descents are further specified in the second Chumayel Chronicle. The great descent is the arrival of Kukulkan from the west, and the small descent is a smaller group of people arriving from the direction of Ppole in the east. The arrival of Kukulkan is discussed further on in this chapter, but the small descent deserves some attention here. The second Chumayel chronicle puts these descents in katun 4 ahaw, which is likely to be the katun following 8 and 6 ahaw. Ppole has been identified by Sánchez de Aguilar as a port on main coast, opposite the Island of Cozumel (Boot 2005:104).

The Maya were known to have large seaworthy canoes, by which the Itzá could have made the voyage to Ppole. There is even a direct route from lake Petén to the ocean, after which the way to Ppole is free (Boot 2005:104). From there they made their way to Chichén in katun 4 ahaw. It is even possible that the Itzá reached Bacalar in the same way, as it is also located on the coast, due south of Ppole. Even though these suggestions are interesting, archaeological proof for this is scarce.

In the archaeological record, there are some indications of migrations to the north of Yucatán trough the coastal regions. In 2005 Shirley Boteler Mock published an article dealing with late to terminal classic settlements in the coastal zone of Northern Belize. This is the region where the Itzá would have moved through on their way to the north, to Bacalar, Ppole and perhaps Chichén.

Mock argues that “although this area was occupied as early as the Late Preclassic period, the evidence suggests intensified settlement in the Late Classic around AD 650 steadily increasing until AD 800-900 (…) [and] that the Late Classic sites reflect displaced populations fleeing to this coastal frontier from social unrest and population overloads at interior sites. (…) During the Late Classic period, these “leap frog” movements along the coast included initial colonization, secondary colonization, or recolonization due to complex fluctuating coastal/interior populations, land/fuel shortages, civil unrest, and inheritance practices.” (Mock 2005:121).

This evidence supports a leap frog migration to and through this area in the same time that the Itzá supposedly started to migrate north. It is possible that they were (partly) responsible for the phenomenon reflected in the archaeological body of this area. Bacalar, for example is right at the Belizean-Mexican border, in the region that Boteler Mock researched, and Ppole is due north of this region.

Adoption of local heritage

The small descent that came from Ppole to Chichén in the katun 4 ahaw (A.D. 711-731) is very important for this thesis. When the Itzá were in this port town and while migrating to Chichén, some events took place that enabled the Itzá to eventually legally claim rule over Chichén Itzá.

The second Chumayel Chronicle describes these events as follows: “From some places they arrived at Ppoole; here increased the remainder of the Itzá. Then as mother they took the woman of Ppole. Then they arrived at Ak’é, there they were born at Ak’é. Ak’é was its name here, as they said. Then they arrived at Aladá; […]” (Boot 2005:106).

The text suggests that the Itzá took the woman of Ppole as mother. I agree with Boot that this can probably be taken literally; instead of taking the women of Ppole as wives, they
adopted a single woman as their mother. By doing this they secured a local descent from the area, and with that came possibilities for them and their offspring to claim land and titles in the region. Next, the text describes the migration to Cetelac which is identified as a ranch near Yaxuná, a site about 20 kilometres away from Chichén. From there they eventually ‘discovered’ Chichén Itzá (Boot 2005:106-109).

Before they reached Cetelac the group of Itzá stopped at a place called Sab’aknail, where they met with their maternal grandfather, Chel Na’. This family relation can be explained through the adoption of the woman of Ppole as their mother. This man could be her father and therefore the grandfather of the Itzá. This family relation later played a role at the founding of Chichén, but I will deal with that in its time. After this episode, the small descent finally arrives at Chichén in 4 ahaw.

So now there are at least three different groups of Itzá people migrating to the north. One group travelled directly to Chichén Itzá, and arrived possibly in katun 8 ahaw. In the same time period, another group migrated to Tzukub’te Siyan Kan B’ak’halal, also known as Bacalar, and moved on to Chichén Itzá three katun periods later. A third group migrated to Ppole. The timing of this is not exactly known but they remained there for a while to adopt local descent, after which they moved on to the city of Chichén. In total, the period of settling at Chichén took about sixty years.

**Foundation of Chichén Itzá**

The migrations of the Itzá and their settling of Chichén were recorded in the books of Chilam A.D. 751 and 771. The mat and throne can be seen as a universal mesoamerican symbol for the seat Balam, and so was the official founding of the city. Both the first katun chronicle of the Chumayel and the first one from the Tizimín give a term and a specific time for the event: in the katun 13 ahaw, the Itzá ‘set in order the mat’\(^{10}\). This katun is probably the one in which one group of Itzá arrived from the region of Bacalar, between of power\(^{11}\) (Boot 2005:109-111).

In the Chumayel, there is a passage that describes the arrival of a number of lords in the katun 11 ahaw in Ichkansihoo, a name that can apply both to Dzibilchaltún and Mérida. There, Chak’an\(^{12}\) received the Cotinga (yaxun) bird, which is of some importance in a legitimization ceremony. After this they populated and took possession of the lands. After this another group of people arrived from Holtún Ak’č’ and Sab’aknail, with which came the ‘first of the Na’ family. This person, could very well be Chel Na’, the adopted maternal grandfather of the Itzá. His presence at this ceremony could provide the Itzá with legitimate rule (Boot 2005:111).

The next reported event is the beginning of the arrival of tribute at the mouth of the well from four different peoples. These groups might be equated to the four groups or divisions that were involved in the ‘discovery’ of Chichén Itzá (Boot 2005:112)

So in two consecutive katuns, 13 ahaw and 11 ahaw (A. D. 751-791), there was a mat and throne founding ceremony in Ichkansihoo which might have played a role in the foundation of Chichén Itzá. An archaeological find in the 1920’s at Chichén supports the idea of a foundation ceremony at the city around this time.

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10 Yucatec Maya: tzolci p'op: ‘set in order was the mat’.
11 Across both Mayan and Mexican regions, ruling lords would be seated on straw mats. These mats can be found in all kinds of representations, from Mixtec codices, for example the Codex Bodley, to hieroglyphic inscriptions in the Maya area, to the accounts of the Spanish.
12 The region in which Mérida and Dzibilchaltún are located at the time of conquest (Boot 2005:111)
The Tenoned Disk is a stone slab with two iconographic scenes and a hieroglyphic text that was found in the Caracol structure at Chichén in the 1920’s. It would have been held in place by a tenon on the bottom side of the Disk.

Figure 4. The Tenoned Disk, taken from the Linda Schele Drawings Collection, #5085

The top scene may portray a foundational event; a scattering ceremony that includes a serpent protruding from a brazier with a human figure emerging from its mouth. The human figure is a founding ancestor dressed as a warrior. This scene is in Classic Maya Lowlands tradition with both the ancestral founder and the present dynastic leader present (Boot 2005:123). The figures on the left have their arms raised up in a friendly gesture. On the background there are several birds that might represent the Cotinga bird that was mentioned in the book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel, connecting it to a foundational event (Boot 2005:116).

The lower scene depicts five people, with the centre left person holding a burning torch. This might be a reference to the arrival of the lords at Chichén and a *ceremonia de posesión*, or founding ceremony (Boot 2005:120). The hieroglyphic inscription includes five names of lords, possible the five in the lower register. Then follows a date: the second tun (year) in katun 8 ahaw (A. D. 673-674), and three more references to the royal title *ahaw* (Boot 2005:122). This date is in accordance with the katun 8 ahaw in which the Itzá ‘discovered’ Chichén Itzá. This Tenoned disk might then refer to the foundation of Chichén Itzá itself (Boot 2005:123).

Most of these historical events pertaining to the Itzá have been taken from the various books of Chilam Balam. One must remember that these ethnohistorical sources were written...
down only after the conquest of Mexico. The information in them was passed on through
generations, orally and perhaps through sacred Maya codices that were lost during the conquest.
It is possible that some events have been accidentally or deliberately altered through time in the
process of handing the information down, leaving the dating of these events unsure.

Nevertheless, there is so little ethnohistorical information available that what there is
should be taken into account. I have tried to compare ethnohistorical events with archaeological
data, in order to reinforce their existence and give them a firmer base in history.

With that in mind, it is now possible to tentatively make a conclusion about the history of
the Itzá. Without taking the ethnohistorical sources at face value and corroborating them with
archaeological evidence, it is possible to say that the Itzá originally came from the Petén region
and moved north from there after regional political unrest. Several groups took several routes to
eventually arrive at what is now known as Chichén Itzá. One of these groups adopted local
heritage along the way by adopting a powerful woman as their mother. This new family tie later
played a role in the foundation of the city, perhaps as part of another ceremony at a place called
Ichkansihoo.

Kukulkan

The sources that are available about the arrival of Kukulkan in Chichén is purely ethnohistorical;
there are no hieroglyphic texts known that refer to someone that fits that description (Boot
2005:196). It is therefore necessary to keep in mind that these texts were created after the
conquest in a period of acculturation and that these texts were probably affected by social and
religious factors. These sources might eventually tell us more about their creators and the time in
which they lived than about actual history (Kowalski & Kristan Graham 2007:19). However, that
does not take away that there is some form of cultural continuity from the pre-colonial era to
colonial times. This means that the way of dealing with social and historical phenomena during
the conquest would be in line with a way of thinking that originates in pre-colonial times, and
therefore could provide valuable information about those times.

Kukulkan is mentioned in a number of texts; 2 katun chronicles from the books of
Chilam Balam, the Relación by Diego de Landa, several ‘Relaciones Geográficas’ and Lopez de
Cogolludo mention this evasive figure (Boot 2005:197). First up are the Books of Chilam Balam
of Chumayel and Tizimín. They name a number of events for the katun 4 ahaw; the arrival of the
Itzá, of the quetzal bird, of the cotinga, of Ah K’ante’nal13, of the vomit of blood14 and of
Kukulkan, after the Itzá (Boot 2005:197-200). This katun 4 ahaw could be connected to the
earlier dated arrival of the Itzá in the katuns 8 ahaw, 6 ahaw and 4 ahaw, placing it at a period of
A.D. 711- 731. This would mean that Kukulkan arrived at Chichén Itzá around that time. (Boot
2005:202)

Diego de Landa writes that three priests came from the west to reign over Chichén Itzá.
They were very religious and were responsible for many temples. (Boot 2005:203) He also writes
that Kukulkan was a God and that he reigned in Mayapan, after leaving Chichén Itzá. The time
separating the florescence of Chichén Itzá with that of Mayapan is too large to be survived by a
single man (Boot 2005:203-204). Perhaps Kukulkan was not a single historical figure, but a type
of religious specialist connected to authority with the godlike title Kukulkan.

13 This is probably a title belonging to Kukulkan, meaning 'he of the place of the seats/offices' (Boot 2005: 201)
14 According to Boot, this seems to refer to a disease (Boot 2005: 200)
Various ‘relaciones geograficas’ also have something to say about Kukulkan. The Relación de Muxuppipp states that 800 years ago Mexicans, led by Quetzalcoatl\textsuperscript{15}, arrived and introduced new idolatry and blood sacrifice. This source was written in A.D. 1581 so this makes the arrival of Quetzalcoatl dated to A.D. 781. The Relación de Chunhuhub (1581) confirms these events, only making it 1000 years ago instead of 800\textsuperscript{16}. There are several other ethnohistorical sources that confirm these events without daing them (Boot 2005:205).

According to López de Cogolludo in his Historia de Yucatán (1688), people arrived at Chichén from the west and from the east. With the people from the east came Zamná, “their priest”. Because of the parallels to the story of Kukulkan, Boot suggests that Zamná, Kukulkan and Quetzalcoatl might possibly be the same figure. Francisco Hernández, cited in the work of Bartolomé de las Casas, states that Kukulkan arrived with a small group of 20 people, named after 20 Mexican Gods. Furthermore, many accounts label Kukulkan as a god (Boot 2005:206-211). This also suggests Kukulkan was a godlike figure.

Furthermore, the Books of Chilam Balam of Chumayel, Tizimín and Maní all mention Kukulkan in a certain katun 8 ahaw. This specific katun has been assigned to A.D. 1185-1204, so this too suggests that there were more than just one Kukulkan, and that it was a sort of title (Boot 2005:211-214). William Ringle comes to the same conclusion in his article On the Political Organization of Chichén Itzá (Ringle 2004).

**Nose piercing ceremony**

For the reason of the arrival of Kukulkan at Chichén, I believe we should look to the nose piercing ceremony. In the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel, Kukulkan is referred to as Nacxit Xuchit, a person associated in particular with ‘ca kin’, translated as two-day rulership and associated with the mat and throne. Boot therefore sees Nacxit Xuchit as someone related to temporary paramount leadership. The title of provenance ‘Ah K’ante’nal’ connects this Nacxit to a place of seats or offices, referring to authority. This shows a parallel to a Nacxit mentioned in the sources of the Guatemalan highlands, the Popol Vuh (Boot 2005:210-217).

The Popol Vuh contain the origin story of the K’iche’ (Quiché) Maya. According to the story, the K’iche’ had migrated from somewhere in Mexico to the Guatemalan Highlands. There they did not have any rights to lordship, so they sent representatives to the east, to the territory of Nacxit, a city called Tulan. There, the representatives received the emblems or symbols of lordship (Boot 2005:217). Among these symbols were quetzal feathers, another green or blue bird’s feathers and a nose plug. These symbols also accompanied Kukulkan at his arrival at Chichén Itzá (Boot 2005:220).

This nose piercing is also found in the history of a local Mixtec ruler called 8 Deer in the Codex Bodley. Lord 8 Deer of Ñuu Tnoo (Tilantongo) goes on a campaign, conquering other places. After conquering Yucu Dzaa (Tututepec) and establishing himself as the leader, he receives a delegation of four Toltec ambassadors. They delivered words from their lord 4 Jaguar, the ruler of Tollan-Chollolan (Cholula). The next year, lord 8 Deer conquers the Yucu Yoo (Acatépec) fortress and captures and takes its lord to lord 4 Jaguar to be sacrificed (Jansen &

\textsuperscript{15} Quetzalcoatl is the Nahua name for Kukulkan. Both names mean quetzal bird serpent. The name is generally accepted to refer to the feathered serpent.

\textsuperscript{16} This difference may have originated in the Maya informant these sources used; Gaspar Antonio Chi. He was used to working with katuns, so he might have given a time of 3 katuns which is 768, roughly 800, years ago to one writer and 4 katuns which is 1024, roughly 1000 years ago to another. (Boot 2005: 206)
Pérez Jiménez 2005:63). “On the day Wind of the year 7 House (1097), Lord 8 Deer underwent the ceremony of Toltec rulership. We see him reclining on a jaguar throne; a Toltec nobleman perforated his septum and placed in his nose the turquoise ornament, symbol of royal status.” (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2005:63).

After this, lord 8 Deer returned home to deliver the sacred objects of power: the staff of rulership, the precious shield and the sacred bundle (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2005:63).

This ceremony seems very close to the type of ceremony mentioned before: a lord wants to legitimize his lordship over new territory, so he travels to a paramount lord in a place called Tollan, to receive the symbols of his new lordship. Erik Boot mentions the Relación de Cholula, which provides information on the role of Quetzalcoatl in the establishment of lordship. The temple of Quetzalcoatl at Cholula was “(...) pivotal in the legitimization of Lordship throughout the region.” (Boot 2005:222). Maarten Jansen identified lord 4 Jaguar as Nacxit Topiltzin (Boot 2005:239); perhaps this means that 4 Jaguar, Nacxit Topiltzin, and Kukulkan, are the same political and religious figure who is associated with the establishment of lordship.

Other Mexican sources confirm this role of Kukulkan/Quetzalcoatl/Nacxit in the establishment of lordship. Residing in a place called Tollam or Tullan, he receives representatives from lords wanting to legitimize their lordship in new territories. He gives them emblems of lordship, after which they return home (Boot 2005:239-242).

The Kukulkan that arrived at Chichén Itzá, came there to legitimize Itzá lordship at Chichén Itzá. He came from a distant place called Tollan, which is associated with paramount authority throughout Mesoamerica, to establish the power of the new rulers of Chichén Itzá. According to some sources he ruled for a while before returning to central Mexico. After his departure the temple of Kukulkan is built (Boot 2005:221-225). I believe that the Itzá sent for Kukulkan. After their episodes of migration away from the central Maya lowlands, they adopted local heritage through the woman of Ppole. That gave them the right to rule at Chichén Itzá, but they needed an official ceremony to confirm their official leadership. They knew this ceremony from central Mexico and chose to legitimize their rule this way.
Identity and Memory

The idea that the Itzá changed their iconographic style in order to legitimize their rule at Chichén and create a communal identity at first seems fairly straightforward statement. In reality, there are some complex theoretic concepts that underlie this process. For example, what is a communal identity? Or, to break it down even further, what is identity? How can this be created? What process maintains an identity?

This chapter will deal with these concepts that form the basis of the hypothesis posed in this thesis. The main theories that will be worked out here are those of (communal) identity, collective memory and cultural memory.

Communal identity

In order to delineate what the term communal identity means, it is necessary to first go into the basic principles of identity and group identity. To me, communal identity is group identity at the level of a whole community, in this case the community of Itzá with as their centre Chichén Itzá. The same principles apply to communal identity as to group identity; the term is mostly used here to stress the coherence of the group as a community or a people.

Identity is the way social subjects are constructed into relationships of taxonomic similarity and difference in comparison others. It is both personal and collective, imposed from external disciplining practices and institutionalized structures. Importantly, identity is generative rather than passive, which means identities can be managed. Practices of identification follow and reproduce the contours of social life (Voss 2008:13-14).

So, identities are constructed within the opposition of similarity and difference, and the process of identifying is establishing a relationship between one subject (whether thing or person) and another. The attention is drawn to similarities and because of that differences within a group are ignored or ‘erased’. To keep an identity, the coherence of relations of similarity needs to be maintained, usually through a multifaceted deployment of social power. This is not to say that differences do not play a role in identification; differentiation is an important part of identity. The concept of belonging or identifying with someone or something can just as much be constituted by ideas of ‘we’ and ‘us’ as by ideas of ‘them’, or ‘not us’ (Voss 2008:14). In fact, hermeneutic analysis sees the experience of alterity as formative for the concept of identity (Leerssen 2007:339).

There is still a distinction to be made between individual identity and group identity. Even though they share the basis of differentiating relations between the I and the other and they highly influence each other, there is a difference.

On the most basal level, identity means the autonomous existence of a sentient subject; the viewpoint from which one observes the world. This already seems to stem from the distinction of the I and the other and continues into self awareness (Leerssen 2007:337). The main difference between individual identity and group identity is that individual identity is constituted from the membership of different social groups. One person has different social environments they can belong to. These social environments in themselves can be seen as different identities or identity markers (archaeologist, son, brother, friend, football player, shop employee, etc.). These identities feed back into the individual identity; a person has multiple identities or identity markers. The multiple identities together constitute the identity which is contained in a single person.
Group identity on the other hand, is based on the similarities between its members and
differences from other groups. The social environments which together constitute individual
identities can in themselves be group identities, if there is a need for its members to stress the
similarities within and differences with others.

Perhaps there is not a large difference between individual identity and group identity, the
distinction is still there. It can also be seen as a difference determined by scale or viewpoint, as it
matters a lot for what purpose identity is researched. In the case of Chichén it is nearly
impossible to analyze individual identity because there is such a gap in time between now and
then, combined with a limited set of archaeological and ethnohistorical data. That is why the
focus of this thesis is on communal identity and the creation thereof.

But what are the main factors in the maintenance of communal identity, what makes a
group of people identify with each other and stay together? I agree with many other scholars that
one of the main factors is a shared tradition, or memory of the past (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995;
Assmann & Flügel 2008; Halbwachs 1980; Leerssen 2008). A shared historical awareness (a
cultural memory) is what binds people together (Leerssen 2008:336).

Collective memory
In the 1920's Maurice Halbwachs developed the concept of mémoire collective or collective memory
under the influence of Emile Durkheim (Assmann & Ballin 2003:162). His main point was that
what a person remembers is always remembered in relation to other people, whether they are real
or imagined. A memory always takes its place in a certain social group which shares a certain
relation or identity, be it large or small (Halbwachs 1980).

“A remembrance is gained not merely by reconstructing the image of a past event a piece at a time. That
reconstruction must start from shared data or conceptions. These are present in our mind as well as theirs, because
they are continually passed back and forth. This process occurs only because all have been and still are members of
the same group.” (Assmann & Ballin 2003:31).

A person can be a member of many different groups at the same time, remembering
different things in connection to different groups. Specifically, what someone remembers from a
specific situation is determined by the multiple social groups they are a part of. Even when two
persons share many social groups, their recollection of the situation still is different, because they
also are part of completely different social groups. This equates to the many identities an
individual can have, reinforcing the link between memory and identity.

So it is established that the ability to remember lies in continual contact with the social
group. When this idea is reversed, it becomes apparent that forgetting is also part of this social
phenomenon. When the close contact with the specific social group that remembers is lost, so
are the memories that were shared within this group (Halbwachs 1980). And when shared
memories are lost, the possibility to identify with this particular group is also lost. Here too,
remembrance or shared historical awareness is linked to identity.

But forgetting also plays a role in different aspects of social life. Forgetting can be useful in,
or even a tool for the active or unconscious shaping of identity. Paul Connerton describes seven
types of forgetting, each of them having a different role in society. One of these seven types, and
the most relevant for this thesis, is ‘forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new
identity’ (Connerton 2008:62). With this Connerton means that it is sometimes useful to discard
memories that are not useful in maintenance of a new identity. In that way forgetting becomes
part of the creation of a new identity by (un)consciously forgetting or letting go certain elements of a previous identity (Connerton 2008:63).

It can be concluded that remembrance and forgetting are both essential elements in maintaining a coherent social group; it is important for community members to remember what the similarities between them, and what the differences between them and other people are. But still it the individuals themselves as group members do the remembering, and some experience memories in different intensities than others (Connerton 2008:48). This is why, to keep a group identity, it is necessary to stress similarities and mute differences within the group or community.

There is an important final distinction to be made between collective memory and history. Halbwachs writes that general history only starts where tradition, or collective memory, ends. The collective memory of a certain event may have lost the support of the groups in which it is present. When this happens the only way to preserve remembrance of it is to write it down, because that will remain regardless of collective memory.

The main argument for a distinction between history and collective memory is that collective memory is seen as a continuous flow of events in living memory, whereas with history there is a break between the past events and the society reading the history; it is always a reconstruction (Halbwachs 1980:79; Nora 1989:8). In other terms, there is a type of embodied history (collective memory) that is continuously present within a society, and a external history (history), which is abstract and separated from living memory (Assmann & Flügel 2008). It might be possible for historians to bridge the gap between the past and the present, but no matter how detailed their description of the past, history can only be understood in terms of the present context (Halbwachs 1980:79)

Cultural Memory

Halbwachs’ idea of a collective memory led Jan Assmann to develop two related concepts that can go deeper into the group relations and the maintenance of group identity of cultures of the past. Following Nietzsche, Assmann writes that humans must find a way to maintain consistency throughout their generations (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995:126). The key for this is collective memory which Assmann divides into two parts: communicative memory and cultural memory.

Communicative memory is the part of collective memory that focuses on everyday communications, in other words it concentrates on oral history. These communications consist of non-specialized, reciprocal, and disorganized interactions between at least 2 individuals, in which the roles can easily change (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995:126-127). The context of the communication can often determine the subject, like market or household situations, but in principle the theme can vary widely. This is the type of communication that creates a collective memory that is socially mediated and group related (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995:127) and therefore creates the basis for a shared or group identity. The most important aspect of communicative memory is its limited time span: because it is a memory mediated purely by oral history it cannot be fixed to the ever expanding past and will not extend further than three or four generations or eighty to a hundred years (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995:127).

In order to move past this limited time span, it is necessary to move into a different field of memory that is not purely oral. This is the area of objectified culture, consisting of texts, images, rites, buildings, monuments, cities or even landscapes (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995:128). At first sight it appears as if memory crystallizes in objects and therefore is lost to history, but this is not
true. Because with organized or ceremonial communication there is a close link between groups and their identity that is also found in everyday memory. This way of preserving knowledge and memory is termed the concretion of identity:

“With this we mean that a group bases its consciousness of unity and specificity upon this knowledge and derives formative and normative impulses from it, which allows the group to reproduce its identity. In this sense, objectified culture has the structure of memory.” (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995:128).

This forms the basis for the concept of cultural memory. Whereas communicative memory is marked by its proximity to the everyday, cultural memory can address longer periods of time because of its transcendence, or distance from the everyday. Contrary to communicative memory, cultural memory can be fixed to the past; the fixing points are events of the past which can be remembered through objects of culture or ritualized communication, what Assmann calls ‘figures of memory’ (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995:129). To this category belong all of the things that remind people of their culture and identity, such as texts, images, rituals, ceremonies, monuments, architecture, and landscape among other things. These figures of memory are very similar, if not the same, as the lieux de mémoire that Pierre Nora elaborated in his work (Nora 1989).

Cultural memory attempts to relate the three aspects of memory, culture and the group together. Assmann lists a number of characteristics for cultural memory (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995:130-132):

1) **The concretion of identity.** Cultural memory keeps the knowledge from which a group constructs its identity alive.
2) **The capacity to reconstruct.** Cultural memory reconstructs the past because it is impossible to keep past events in communicative memory. In its reconstruction it always relates to the present. It gives a possibility to maintain certain events in memory, but it always places those in a new context.
3) **Formation.** The objectivation, or materialization of communicated meaning is enclosed in the term cultural memory and its transmission to other people. Assmann stresses that this is not solely dependent on writing, and that images and rituals function in the same way. I believe the complete adapted environment can act in the same way.
4) **Organization.** Communication is institutionally formalized, for example in ceremony, and there is a specialization in transmission of the cultural memory.
5) **Obligation.** The relation of the individual to the group identity creates a system of values and differentiations in importance. It creates a framework for people to behave in, in order to belong to the group. This is the normative aspect of cultural memory.
6) **Reflexivity.** Cultural memory is reflective in three ways: it is practice-reflexive, in that it recreates the world through certain actions or rituals; it is self-reflexive in that it turns to itself to judge events and situations that happen within its own context; and, finally, it is reflexive of its own image because it reflects the self-image of the group or society through a preoccupation of its social system. Basically, cultural memory has its own agency within itself.

To conclude with a concise description of cultural memory: “The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose “cultivation” serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image.” (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995:132).
Identity creation

All of the phenomena that I have described above, should be seen as processes that make up a communal identity. All of these processes influence each other in many ways, creating the dynamic communal identity of a society. Often these processes are largely obscured from the consciousness of the people; even today these processes continue throughout the world without being noticed by the majority of the population.

However, this does not mean that the process of acquiring a communal identity cannot be influenced by the people living in that society with that identity. The creation of lieux de mémoire or figures of memory, the objectified physical culture, is always done or commissioned by someone. By making decisions in which part of culture will be represented in material culture, which memories will be objectified, the processes of formation of identity are influenced. Whether these decisions are rational and conscious or more intuitive and unconscious, the process can be nudged into a certain direction.

Eric Hobsbawm, in his introduction to his work *The Invention of Tradition*, writes that old or ancient traditions or cultural elements are often used in a novel way to create a new tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1992:6). Through time, people build up a large quantity of cultural and historical baggage, an ‘elaborate language of symbolic practice and communication’ (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1992:6). What he points at is in fact a cultural memory that remains from a distant and perhaps dissociated past. By taking these elements from times past and using them in a novel way, ‘new’ traditions can be established which are legitimized by their apparent historicity. After all, often a tradition is widely held as more valid when it is set in a large historical framework. This creating of a tradition with historical validity is what Hobsbawm calls the invention of tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1992:1).

In the main hypothesis, I suggest that the Itzá were aware of their situation and consciously used these processes as a tool in order to establish their new identity as the Itzá of Chichén Itzá. But how were they able to do this? My suggestion is that they did it through playing on the remnants of collective and cultural memory that the Itzá shared before the time of the foundation of Chichén. They created a new social and cultural living environment through architecture, ritual, image and perhaps religion with elements that were known from a different time and place. The Itzá used a ceremony of accession to the throne that was already known a long time from central Mexico, and by using this ceremony the Itzá gave it a type of historicity and in essence legitimized their own legitimization in rule. This is what they needed to create the coherent flourishing community that would dominate a large part of the northern Yucatán peninsula.

How can I support these ideas with evidence? By analyzing the architecture and iconography of several structures that make up the ‘new’ style ceremonial centre of the city of Chichén Itzá.
Theory of iconographical analysis

In the analysis of the iconography of Mesoamerica, I feel that the researchers often do not follow a clear theory of iconographic interpretation. Sometimes a mixture of useful tools is synthesized from different theories, without a clear indication what parts were taken from where, and why. In order to avoid this, a chapter on the more theoretical aspects of the analysis of the visual image is included.

The methodology used in this thesis also takes different elements from different theories, but by explaining its pedigree I believe the use of this methodology will be justified. The methodology is based principally on the work by art-historian Erwin Panofsky, who divided the analysis of images into three levels. Therefore I will discuss the general idea of his theory first, and then some adaptations will be made to make the methodology more fitting for the interpretation of archaeological imagery. One other main theory that my methodology will be based on is that of hermeneutics. In the second part of this chapter I will explain the origins of this theory of interpretation and try to formulate how it is useful in the interpretation of sources of information or specifically iconography and architecture. Finally I will describe and explain the methodology that will be used specifically in this research.

Erwin Panofsky: Iconological analysis

In the fifties of the 20th century Erwin Panofsky, an art-historian focusing on renaissance art, devised a systematic way to analyze visual imagery. He distinguished three levels analysis of visual art. First, there is the primary or natural subject matter and is a purely formal analysis with regard to form, shape and colour; a pre-iconographical description of the work of art (Panofsky 1955:28). The second level is the secondary or conventional subject matter, where the meaning of the image itself is subject. The identification of images, stories and allegories, that takes place at this level, Panofsky calls iconography (Panofsky 1955:29). The third level is called intrinsic meaning or content (Panofsky 1955:30), and here the focus lies on the symbolic meaning of the complete work of art, the function within its context and the meaning in society. Panofsky terms this type of analysis iconology.

The difference between iconography and iconology is the level of analysis. Iconography is the description and classification of images and forms the basis of all further interpretation (Panofsky 1955:31), whereas iconology is the more in-depth interpretation of the meaning of an artwork or image within its context. Iconology is “a method of interpretation which arises from synthesis rather than hypothesis” (Panofsky 1955:32), meaning that it is a way of interpretation that is synthesized by the interpreter. In short, the three levels are pre-iconographical description, iconographical analysis and iconological interpretation (Panofsky 1955:33).

The correctness of these three levels depends on the social and intellectual position of the interpreter, so each of these levels needs a different level of correction to ensure a valid interpretation. The identification of the elements in the pre-iconographical level depends on the interpreter’s practical experience, in this case meaning the familiarity with objects and events that are portrayed visually. This helps the interpreter recognize the elements. The corrective principle for this level is called the history of style; an insight into the way in which objects and events are expressed are historically formed (Panofsky 1955:41). The correctness of iconographic description depends on the interpreters familiarity with specific concepts and contexts (Panofsky 1955:35) and how these were expressed throughout history; a history of style (Panofsky 1955:41).
To interpret a cultural element, it is necessary to know the cultural context, through experience or literary sources. Finally iconological interpretation goes into the basic principles which “underlie the choice and presentation of motifs, as well as the production and interpretation of images, stories and allegories” (Panofsky 1955:38). This is achieved by what Panofsky calls *synthetic intuition*, a kind of speculative interpretation, based on the essential tendencies of the human mind (Panofsky 1955:41), which should be corrected by a thorough knowledge of this *history of cultural symptoms*. A summarized overview of these principles of visual analysis will be given in the form of table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object of Interpretation</th>
<th>Act of interpretation</th>
<th>Equipment for Interpretation</th>
<th>Corrective Principle of Interpretation (<em>History of tradition</em>)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Primary or natural subject matter. Factural or expressional; constituting the world of artistic motifs</td>
<td>Pre-iconographical description and pseudo-formal analysis.</td>
<td>Practical experience; familiarity with objects and events</td>
<td>History of style; insight into the way objects and events were expressed by forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Secondary or conventional subject matter, constituting the world of images, stories, and allegories.</td>
<td>Iconographical analysis</td>
<td>Knowledge of literary sources; familiarity with specific themes and events</td>
<td>History of types; insight into the way specific themes or concepts were expressed by object and events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Intrinsic meaning or content, constituting the world of “symbolical” values.</td>
<td>Iconological analysis</td>
<td>Synthetic intuition; familiarity with the essential tendencies of the human mind. Conditioned by personal psychology and weltanschauung</td>
<td>History of cultural symptoms or “symbols” in general; insight into the way essential tendencies of the human mind were expressed by specific themes and concepts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. The levels of interpretation. (Based on Panofsky 1955:40-41).

But, as mentioned before, Panofsky was an art-historian focused on renaissance painting from Western Europe, and if one would apply this methodology straight to the iconography of. For example, the literary sources that need to be familiarized mostly lack in the situation of Chichén Itzá. The closest to it are the various books of Chilam Balam or the account of Fray Diego de Landa, all of them written in post-conquest Mesoamerica at least 300 years after the demise of Chichén Itzá. There are no contemporary literary sources, so it is necessary to turn to other ways of gathering contextual information.

On top of that, I believe that every research subject deserves an approach specifically adapted or fine tuned to fit within its context, to achieve the best possible results.
Hermeneutics

More recently, hermeneutics have become an important aspect of the interpretation of architecture and images. Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation (Leonardo 2003:229). The term is derived from the name of the Greek mythological figure Hermes, the messenger of the gods. Hermes used to interpret the messages of Zeus for the other gods and traditionally, Jews and Christians used to interpret their religious texts (Leonardo 2003:330). Hermeneutic analysis is necessary because of the divide between intention of the author and interpretation by others. Interpretation fills that gap and connects the two ends together (Leonardo 2003:331). So rather than being an actual methodology that can be applied to material it moves up a level to be a reflection on the interpretation of a subject by an agent, who is usually doing the interpreting.

The term originates in the early 19th century with Friedrich Schleiermacher, who used it to reflect on the interpretation of the bible, and later texts in general. Subsequently, William Dilthey shifted its meaning and use to a more general area, one of understanding and interpretation that was applicable to all human studies (Jones 1995:187).

Later Martin Heidegger added to the meaning of the term, bringing about a shift towards a view of the interpreter as subjective, because they always interpret from their own worldview. He also argued that by interpreting the interpreter is always in relation to the interpreted. Objectivity is not possible or even wanted in interpretation, because the subjective prior knowledge of the interpreter is essential in the process interpreting. In fact, Heidegger argues that hermeneutics is not only a method of interpreting and acquiring knowledge but an ontological phenomenon; it is present in the very essence of human beings. Everything in life is interpretation, so hermeneutic reflection is part of being human. (Jones 1995:187-189).

As a next stage in the development of hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer explored and supported Heidegger’s arguments and concludes that hermeneutical reflection is active in every acquisition of practical knowledge. It is an inescapable universal phenomenon that is part of the experience of the world (Jones 1995:189).

The last person I will mention that added significantly to hermeneutics is Paul Ricoeur. He argued that interpretation establishes a link between the material world and the world of human experience that both affect each other. In this way, interpretation is a dialogue between the interpreter and the interpreted, both transforming the other (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez nd:11).

In archaeology, hermeneutics are part of the postprocessual movement that came into being in the early 1990’s. It was a reaction on the positivistic ideas of processual archaeology. One of the main scholars that promoted this hermeneutic or interpretive archaeology was Ian Hodder. Another important work, specifically to this thesis is Twin City Tales: A Hermeneutical Reassessment of Tula and Chichen Itza (Jones 1995), which takes a hermeneutical approach to the interpretation of architecture at Chichén.

The hermeneutical approach in interpreting material culture can be characterized by a number of things; there is a concentration on meaning, transcending specific theoretical and methodological frameworks, which is accessible though experience and insight; it focuses on historical contexts and experiences and assumes that meaning is relative and can change over time; because interpretation is subjective, the hermeneutic approach analyzes the situation and context of the interpreter and his or her pre-understandings; interpretation is not a one way street, there is a dialogic relationship between interpreter and source, both influencing each other continually in what is called the hermeneutic circle (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez nd.:10-11).
In sum, interpretation is not an act performed by an objective all knowing scholar (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez nd:13). Scholars, or even people in general, can never be objective, for they always have pre-existing knowledge originating from their social environment and education. This is what enables them to make interpretations. This subjectivity directly affects the interpretation and therefore should be analyzed in itself. Furthermore, the interpretation is never an act; it is an ongoing process, a continuous dialogue of interpretation that goes on between the interpreter and the interpreted, where both entities can and should affect each other, provoking new questions to be asked and answered.

Methodology

Based on the previously mentioned theories, I have put together a specific methodology for the interpretation of the iconography and architecture of Chichén Itzá. In order to enable the reader to follow the process of interpretation and analysis that will unfold in the following chapter, I will try to explain the methodology as clearly as possible here.

If all personal experiences are subjective and objectivity is impossible, then I am subjective as well. This does not necessarily mean a lapse into absolute relativism and that research is useless because all information is colored. By accepting that I am subjective, I accept that my interpretations of iconography are probably influenced by my intellectual and cultural surroundings.

But there is a way to stay as close to original meaning as possible. By informing oneself in the cultural context of the iconographical body, it is possible to approach the viewpoint of the original subject closer. So by using contextual information about the society of the Itzá and knowledge about iconographical, architectural and cultural conventions from that time, it becomes possible for scholars to place themselves in the position of an Itzá, and engage in an interpretive dialogue with the iconography that is closer to the original (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez nd.).

Thus, in a similar way as Panofsky used a thorough knowledge of the histories of style, type, and cultural symptoms as correctional principles for the interpretation of artworks, I will use knowledge of the cultural, iconographical and architectural context as a correctional principle for the interpretation of the iconography of Chichén. By situating the images in their proper context, the material can be interpreted in a much more realistic manner, staying close to the original functions and meaning.

This is the reason why I include a considerable amount contextual information in this thesis. Especially the history of the Itzá prior to the foundation of Chichén is very important to sketch an outline of the social and cultural position of the Itzá at the time of the foundation of the city. It gives the interpreter a more thorough insight into the problems that were present along with the need for a solid community to be able to successfully survive. It also serves to give the reader the possibility to follow my reasoning and trace back my steps if necessary.

Based loosely on Panofsky’s work, the methodology at hand is also set up in three levels, two of which are comparable to those by Panofsky. They are: context, description, and interpretation. In my analysis of the iconography I will first work out the context of the iconography, to ensure the right setting and tendency of the interpretation. Next the iconography itself will be described, something that is comparable to Panofsky’s second level: the iconographical analysis. At the third level I will interpret the iconography, using the contextual information from the first level as a
sort of correctional or guiding principle. I will try to interpret the meaning of the imagery in its proper cultural and symbolical context.

**Context**
The structure in which the iconography is found forms the direct context of the iconography. Context is very important in interpretation, so the structure needs to be analyzed as well. By engaging in an interpretational dialogue with the structure, important contextual information is gained that can be essential in interpreting the iconography itself. In this way the hermeneutic circle finds its way into the present analysis of the reliefs and murals of Chichén Itzá.

In order to give a sound idea of the general context of the iconography, I will first describe the structure in which the murals and reliefs are located. This description will be twofold, focusing first on description and then on interpretation. In essence, this is an application of the two analytical levels that will also be used in the analysis of the iconography itself.

The structure will be formally described with attention to the location within the site, its dimensions, the general chronology, and general architectural elements. Finally, the general function of the building within the site will be discussed through an interpretation of the former description. Armed with this information, it is possible to move on to the iconographic description of the imagery itself.

**Description**
After the contextual description, the focus will shift to the iconography itself. The types of iconography present will be identified (reliefs, murals) and their location within the structure will be indicated. After that, a description and preliminary interpretation of the iconography will be given. With a preliminary interpretation, the identification of certain objects, events, actions and individuals in the iconography is meant.

This part is in accordance with Panofsky’s second level of iconographical analysis; that of iconographical analysis where the meaning of the image itself is under evaluation. This will not be a purely formal description, but an identification of the basic elements present in the iconography. I will describe the basic subjects and actions that are seen within the reliefs or murals, using culturally relevant information to identify subjects, objects and actions.

**Interpretation**
The final stage in the analysis is the interpretation of the general meaning of the iconography within its context. The general theme of the iconography will be discussed, together with the possible function of the structure in which it is found. By using the different types contextual information gathered in earlier stages, it is possible to discuss the meaning of the iconography within society on a more symbolical level. So rather than just focusing on the meaning of the iconography itself, the discussion will entail the function of the iconography within the society of Chichén Itzá. Who was the iconography meant for? What was the goal of the imagery? What could have been the effect of these images? Those are the kind of questions that will be addressed in the interpretation of the iconography. This is similar to Panofsky’s third level; iconological analysis.
Architecture and iconography at Chichén Itzá

This chapter will deal with the analysis of the iconographic body of Chichén Itzá. Using the theoretical framework of cultural memory as described in chapter 4 and the methodology developed in chapter 5 combined with the contextual framework that has been elaborated in the previous chapters, I will analyze part of the architecture and iconography which can be found in the main ceremonial centre, also known as the Great Terrace, previously known as ‘Toltec’ Chichén. The aim of this chapter is to find out whether the iconography of this part of Chichén Itzá supports the hypothesis of whether the change of style, including the new architectural elements and iconography, was consciously generated in order to create a new communal identity and legitimize rule at Chichén. The sub research questions that I intend to answer with this analysis are: What is the general theme of the iconography? And: How is the creation of identity reflected in the iconography at the site?

Sample definition

It is impossible to review all the iconographic sources of Chichén Itzá in the scope of a research master thesis. The sample I will use for this thesis encompasses structures with substantial murals or bas-reliefs of which I was able to obtain enough images of sufficient quality. I have tried to accumulate digital images of all the iconography. The iconography included in this research is taken from the Great Ballcourt: the Upper Temple of the Jaguars; the Lower Temple of the Jaguars; the North Temple; the South Temple; and the Ball Court Alley. The final two structures are the Temple of the Warriors in combination with the Northwest Colonnade and the Temple of the Chac Mool, the substructure of the Temple of the Warriors. These are all buildings that are in the new Chichén style, which is influenced by central Mexican culture, so these structures are very suitable to see whether the iconography supports my hypothesis. Because I consider the Northwest Colonnade to be an architectural feature of the Temple of the Warriors, I will discuss them together as one structure. Since some of these names a quite lengthy and will be repeated often, throughout this chapter I will use the following abbreviations for the names of these structures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure Name</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Great Ballcourt</td>
<td>GBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Upper Temple of the Jaguars</td>
<td>UTJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lower Temple of the Jaguars</td>
<td>LTJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The North Temple</td>
<td>NT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The South Temple</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Ballcourt Alley</td>
<td>GBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Temple of the Warriors</td>
<td>TOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Northwest Colonnade</td>
<td>NWC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Temple of the Chac Mool</td>
<td>TCM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Abbreviations for structure names.

The iconography of Chichén is characterized by two types of imagery: mural painting and (painted) bas-relief. I have decided to take both of these into account, because the bas-relief and mural painting often figure within the same structures, both adding to the complete visual
repertoire of the structure. It remains to see whether they can be analyzed together as a whole or if there is a significant difference between subjects of reliefs and murals.

Mural paintings are notoriously fragile; they usually are not resistant to being exposed to weather conditions. The murals and fragments of murals that we can access today are mostly recovered from being buried under rubble from collapsing structures, like in the Temple of the Warriors, or being covered with a superstructure, like in the Temple of the Chac Mool. A number of well preserved mural paintings are to be found at Cacaxtla, Bonampak, Mayapán, and at Chichén Itzá, among others. The level of conservation of murals at Chichén is exceptional especially in the Upper Temple of the Jaguars and the Temple of the Warriors. Still, many murals have been lost.

For example the largest mural fragments in the Temple of the Warriors are found on both sides of the dividing wall between the inner and outer chambers of the Temple. Smaller fragments have been found on the walls around both the inner and outer chamber, suggesting that the inner walls of the temple were completely covered in murals. Ann Axtell-Morris, in her descriptions of the murals of the Temple of the Warriors, mentions that on the north side of the pyramid base there were at least 131 layers of plaster coating, the 22nd of which was covered in polychrome paintings. The murals on the south side of the pyramid had been destroyed in antiquity (Axtell-Morris 1931aa:433, 436-437). So at one point the outside as well as the complete inside of the temple were covered in murals; what remain are just fragments of the complete body of mural paintings.

![Figure 6. Temple of the Warriors exterior murals (Axtell-Morris 1931a:432).](image)

On top of that, there is evidence that murals were repainted or painted over, as may have happened in the Upper Temple of the Jaguars (Breton 1906:166; Ringle 2009:20). This difference
in type of iconography and in durability can lead us to question whether there is a difference in meaning between low relief and mural iconography or not.

One important difference between low relief and mural painting is the durability. The low reliefs were cut into stone and then painted, while murals paintings were made on stucco which was applied to walls. Because of the materials used, low relief is more durable than mural painting and has therefore a more permanent character.

However, although reliefs are more durable than murals, they can often still be affected by the same processes that affected the murals: erosion and collapse. Many reliefs can be reconstructed after their structure collapses, but that always leaves damage. Weather conditions, especially rain, can also affect the reliefs. Sometimes they are almost completely eroded.

So when interpreting the murals and reliefs it is vital to keep in mind that they are part of a much wider iconographical context than is visible, and that the interpretation of these programs will always rely on reconstruction in one way or another.

The discussion of the iconography will be structured as chapter 5 elaborated. First I will specify the context of the murals. For this I will shortly discuss the structure in which they are found, and the position of the murals within the structure. Then I will describe the murals themselves, without deep interpretation of the imagery. And finally I will give my interpretation of the meaning of the murals. The full page images of the iconography can be found in the images appendix, and they will be indicated in the text by the label ‘image’. Detail images will appear in the text and they will be referred to as ‘figures’.

Iconographical analysis

The Great Ballcourt Complex (GBC)
The Great Ballcourt is the largest ballcourt in Mesoamerica. It is located to the northwest if the Castillo, forming the north-eastern edge of the Plaza. The structure I-shaped like typical ballcourts and is oriented northwest to southeast. The court measures about 150m in length and the side walls are about 30m apart. The Ballcourt rings are located high above ground level, on the approximately 82 m long and 8m high side walls (Coe 1999:175). The walls lining the court are vertical which is unusual for mesoamerican ballcourts, though not unique17. The outward facing sides of these walls are steeply sloped. The northwest and southeast ends of the ballcourt are closed off by temple platforms with the North Temple and South Temple. Located on the south end of the east court wall are the Upper Temple of the Jaguars, facing towards the court and the Lower Temple of the Jaguars at the lower level and on the outside.

The chronological sequence of the Great Ballcourt Complex is fairly clear according to George Kubler. The Lower Temple of the Jaguars was constructed first, then the two court walls, the north and South Temples and finally the Upper Temple of the Jaguars (Kubler 1993:296). But the absolute dating of the Great Ballcourt is still under debate. George Kubler gives a reasonably late date for the Ballcourt Complex, associating it with the Platform of the Eagles and the Tzompantli. The Tzompantli rests on the latest plaza floor, which places the construction of the Ballcourt Complex at the end of what Kubler terms the “Toltec” era; around 1200.

17 The late Classic ballcourt at Edzná also has vertical walls (Kubler 1993:295)
Figure 7. The Great Ballcourt Complex (Ringle 2009:16).
More recently William M. Ringle treated the dating of the Great Ballcourt elaborately, reviewing different opinions and techniques from different scholars. He explains that on basis of orientation, Earl H. Morris demonstrated that the Temple of the Chac Mool and the Outer Castillo were probably constructed around the same time. With the erection of the Temple of the Warriors on top of the Temple of the Chac Mool, the orientation was slightly changed, with the midline of the Temple of the Warriors aiming directly at the Upper Temple of the Jaguars. This suggests that the orientation was changed to align with the already existing Upper Temple of the Jaguars, meaning that the Temple of the Chac Mool and the Great Ballcourt were roughly contemporaneous (Ringle 2009:16). A chronology of architectural traits of serpent columns supports the idea that the Upper Temple of the Jaguars groups with the Temple of the Chac Mool and the Outer Castillo (Ringle 2009:16).

The architecture of the Great Ballcourt is very much in Chichén style, and the iconography is spread throughout the complex in all of its structures. In the Lower Temple of the Jaguars there are several painted bas reliefs, spread throughout the interior in several registers. In the Ball Court alley itself there are two sets of three bas reliefs dealing with the ballgame itself. Located in the North and South Temples there are also some bas reliefs and finally in the Upper Temple of the Jaguars we can find some doorjambs and a wooden lintel in bas relief and in the interior chamber there are seven large panels with mural painting. Because the Great Ballcourt Complex is so large and consists out of multiple structures, I will treat each structure individually according to the methodology of context, description and interpretation, following the structural sequence made by Kubler. Then I will discuss the overall function of the structure.

The Lower Temple of the Jaguars (LTJ)
The LTJ is a small structure containing one single room covered by one vault (Marquina 1951:864). The structure is different than the other GBC structures even though it is a part of the GBC, the entrance is at ground level and the building faces east, outward into the main ceremonial plaza. This gives it great accessibility and visibility. The facade is open and is supported by two large columns, dividing it into three openings. Inside the structure there was stone jaguar seat.

Figure 8. Facade, plan, and section of the LTJ (Schele & Mathews 1998:213).
According to George Kubler it is the oldest structure of the GBC, already in place when the GBC was constructed (Kubler 1993:296), making it probably the oldest structure that will be discussed in this research. The outside of the LTJ is remarkably bare of decoration which is in stark contrast with the elaborately decorated inside. The iconography of the LTJ is to be found on the north and south wall ends, the two columns, and covering the entire inside walls from side to side and top to bottom.

**Description**

**South & North wall ends**

On the south wall end of the LTJ (image 1 in the image appendix) there is an image of an old man, who is dressed in a large turtle shell. He is wearing an elaborate feathered headdress adorned with two large water lily flowers. Two fish seem to be eating the flowers. Around his neck he wears a necklace of beads with a type of elliptical pendant that could be a cut shell (Schele & Mathews 1998:214). In his right hand he carries a type of sceptre or rattle. His left arm is stretched downward and his hand is held horizontal. From his waist hang two elliptical pendants, adorned with crosshatching and beads. He wears decorated arm and ankle bands. On the ground next to him is a bowl with round balls that could be tamales. Besides his knees there are two almost abstract serpent heads facing outward. At waist level, there appear to be two eyes of the tape of the serpent heads attached to the frame of the image. At head height two more snake heads are facing outward. The man is standing on top of one register and below another, both depicting the frontal view of a type of creature. The creature is adorned with many feathers, has arms that end in what seem to be a bird’s claws and there is a human face with a nose bar inside what seems to be a frontal view of a serpent mouth.

The north wall end (image 2) also depicts a figure standing on top of a register with the same creature. The figure is damaged from the waist up, so there is not much to see. This figure is wearing a type of skirt tied up with a belt with a knot in the front. He also carries the sceptre or rattle but in his left hand, and he also has the two elliptical crosshatched and beaded pendants hanging from his waist. His lower legs seem to be wrapped in cloth, and a long striped object is hanging from his back. Perhaps this is a very long braid or part of the headdress. Next to his feet is the same bowl of tamales and above that is one of the serpent heads to be found on the south wall end. The frame on either side of this figure seems to have one large serpent eye to the left and one serpent upper jaw to the right attached to it.

**Columns**

The two supporting columns (images 3 & 4) are decorated on all four sides, giving a total of eight figures. All of them\(^1\) are standing on top of a register depicting birds, fish, turtles, and water lilies (Schele & Mathews 1998:214) that grow out of the eyes of a head with nose and earplugs. Out of the top of the head a serpent undulates upwards behind the main figure to end in a wide gaping serpent mouth that supports or out of which emerges the top register, which is also held up by the figures. This top register consists out of a head with two human figures

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\(^1\)The northern of two column has a damaged top, but it is relatively safe to assume the top is the same as that of the southern column since the bottom register is the also the same.
sticking out on either side out of which heads grows a type of plant. The main head is split open and out from it emerges a richly adorned figure.

The four figures on the south column (image 3) appear to be male, and all have the elliptical pendant hanging down from the waist and are wearing knee bands. On top of their pillbox headaddresses they have an upward pointing top. As far as the faces are visible, all figures look old. The first figure is wearing a turtle shell, like the figure on the south wall. The second figure is wearing a conch shell, the third is wearing what could be another type of shell, and the last one only seems to have a type of belt.

The north column (image 4) features four women with long dresses with high belts. They all wear mosaic collars and have a beaded necklace with a pendant on it, of which the first and third clearly have a face on them. The other two are eroded. It is possible to see their breasts under the necklaces. The first has a crosshatch beam and dot pattern on her skirt, the second has bands of crossed bones, the third again has the beams and dots, and the fourth has circles on the lower half and crossed bones on top. Only this last woman’s face is visible and it looks like a skull. She is wearing a headband with some type of animal head, possibly reptile, at the front.

**Main relief**

The south, west, and north walls are covered in a total of five registers displaying at least 113 (partly visible) figures (Image 5 & 6). Registers A-C (Bottom up) cover the back and side walls, while registers D and E are located in the sloping vault of the structure and they include the east wall above the open façade. The registers are divided by sets of intertwined serpents. I will describe the registers separately, working from the south wall to the north wall, from left to right on the images. Registers D and E will be described from the centre of the east wall above the open facade, where the starting figures are back to back. But first there is the Basal register.

**Basal Register**

A basal register (image 7) runs along all three walls, depicting five large water lilies. The two outer ones on the north and south walls feature a humanoid head, like the one from the basal registers of the columns, out of which the water lilies sprout. Fish are eating the flowers. The two on the outsides of the west wall depict the water lily vine emerging from a head with a long snout and a pillbox hat. Two tiny figures straddle and hold the vine in their hands, and at the ends towards the centre of the west wall a type of bird with a necklace borders the vine. The central west basal register features a head like the one in the top registers of the columns, which is split open with a human figure emerging from the break. Throughout the vine there are small humanoid faces to be found.

**Register A**

Register A (image 8) displays 24 human figures in a procession from two sides towards the centre of the west wall, which is the focal point of the temple. Hovering in the air, above many of the figures, there is a small sign which possibly be an identity marker. They are not traditional Maya glyphs, but a sort of universal name tag (Schele & Mathews 1998:221). I believe they are used to identify either name, lineage, or rank. Most figures carry a single long spear,

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19 The designation of the registers from A to E was first done by A. P. Maudslay (1895-1902) and will be followed here in description and interpretation.
which is typical for the Maya type warriors. The figures left of the centre, except the one just to the left of the central divide, all carry what appear to be long barbed spears. The figures to the right of the centre are carrying long spears with a type of feather decoration just below the spearhead. Many wear feathered headdresses, some wear animal masks, and the 24th figure carries a skull headdress and a staff with skulls. Some of the figures have volutes coming out of their mouth, suggesting they are speaking. Some figures carry round shields. As the figures come closer to the centre, they seem to be looking up towards register B. Because I think that in this scene the overall activity or event is more important than the individuals in procession towards the centre, I will not describe each figure separately. Also, that would be a study too detailed for the present thesis. The difference in attire probably signifies difference in rank, office or provenience.

**Register B**

Register B (image 9) also consists out of 24 figures, although some of them are severely damaged. The style of garments is very different from register A; here the individuals are dressed like central Mexican warriors. Many carry bundles of atlatl darts, some wear feather capes. There are no animal masks, and some appear to be carrying pillbox hats and some have the typical central Mexican two or more feathers sticking out from their headdresses. Others have a type of lobed double arcs hanging down from the back of their headdress. Some figures have butterfly pectorals and others carry back mirrors and some carry an (incense) pouch, which are both typical central Mexican elements. Many carry an object in their hands, which in the top right of figure 9 appears to be an atlatl, or spearthrower.

![Figure 9. Centre part of register B (Detail from Maudslay 1895-1902:Plate 48).](image)

The centre of register B (figure 9) is where the focus of the relief lies. All other figures of the relief are walking, or at least looking towards this scene. Left of the central figure is a man that carries a staff or blowpipe in his left hand. He has a back mirror, which is typically central Mexican. He has a nose bar and a headdress like a turban with large feathers sticking out and a

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20 Fourth figure: bird head, fifth figure: serpent; sixth figure: feathered serpent; twelfth: possibly fish.
serpent tied to the front. From his mouth speech volutes emerge. The central figure has Tlaloc
goggle eyes and a beard. He is wearing a central Mexican headdress with four feathers sticking
out and his arms are decorated with tasselled sleeves that is usual for ballplayers. He also wears a
ballgame yoke around his waist (Schele & Mathews 1998:222). He wears a disc pectoral and in his
left hand he is holding a disk with a decorated edge. From him emanate some type of rays. In
front of this central figure there is an elaborately decorated bowl or open bag (Schele & Mathews
1998:22). Behind the central figure there is a large feathered serpent that undulates upwards
through the barrier between registers B and C. In register C the mouth of the serpent emanates
volutes of speech or smoke.

To the right of this bowl there are two figures that carry a type of (scaled?) bundle. The
first figure has a mosaic pectoral necklace and an elaborate feathered headdress. Around his neck
is a long beaded necklace with a face pendant hanging down to his knees. In his left hand he
carries a long stick or a blowpipe and an incense pouch. From his mouth emanates a plant like
volute with many different flowers and above his head there is a reptile eye name glyph. The
second figure with a bundle also has an elaborate feathered headdress and also has the long
necklace but with a bird head. He does not have a mosaic pectoral necklace, but from his waist
are the same pendants as we saw with the figures on the wall ends and southern column. In his
left hand he carries a staff in the shape of a serpent. From his mouth also emanates a flowery
volute, although this one is smaller than the one with the first figure. His name glyph is six knot.

Register C

Register C (image 10) features at least 21 figures, and is one of the most damaged registers
in this relief. As they near the centre the figures bow down towards the serpent head that breaks
through from register B (Schele & Mathews 1998:223) or towards the central scene in register B.
Again most figures carry dart bundles and they are in central Mexican dress. In the row left of the
centre the figures wear high multi-tiered feather headdresses, and two figures (one is an old man)
carry bowls with offerings towards middle of the register. To the right of the centre the figures
mostly have butterfly pectorals21, and their headdresses have bundles of long feathers protruding
from the top; they differ from the figures left of the centre. The figures near the centre and the
serpent head have speech volutes coming from their mouths.

The central figures are interesting (figure 10). The figure to the left of the serpent head
appears to be female, with breasts showing. She is wearing a skirt made of serpents and a back
mirror, and carries a bundle of darts in one hand and an atlatl in the other that is pointed at the
serpent head. Her headdress is a pillbox hat with a frontal triangle, like the figures on the south
column. The headdress has two tiers of feathers and features a down flying bird, a typical central
Mexican trait. From the back two long feathers with smaller feathers branching off hang
downwards, something that looks like the lobed arcs in register B. Her speech volute is especially
elaborate, it fills up the space above the serpent head. The figure to the right of the serpent head
has ankle bands made of knotted snakes. One butterfly pectoral is on his chest and another on
his pillbox headdress. His arms are decorated with the ballplayer decoration and he carries a
bundle of darts and an atlatl. In front of him is a large abstract serpent head, separate from the
feathered serpent that emerges from register B. If this is a speech volute he might be speaking
about the feathered serpent.

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21 Some carry an additional one on their headdresses
Register D

This (image 11) is the first that circles the entire structure and it features 25 visible figures. The starting figures are back to back in the centre of the east wall. Almost all the figures carry bundles of darts and a back mirror. Some wear butterfly pectorals, and most have the atlatl that was seen in the other registers in one of their hands. Many figures are bent down.

Again the central figures (figure 11) of the register deserve to be mentioned separately. The left figure had a back mirror, butterfly pectoral, bundle of darts, atlatl and a headdress with two feathers (?) sticking out sideways from it. Accompanying this figure is a large mosaic serpent. The figure on the right has almost the same attire, but he has a mosaic or pillbox headdress with the triangle on it, like the woman from register C. Both figures are stooping down, looking at the central scene below.
Register E

Register E (image 12) is the top register of the relief in the LTJ. It is the most damaged of all the registers and displays only 18 visible figures. The figures are dressed in central Mexican style, with bundles of darts and an atlatl. In the centre there is a large sun disc enveloping a prominent figure (figure 12). To the right of this figure there are two figures that seem to emanate the same rays as the main figure in register B, as well as volutes. The right one of these two has a pillbox mosaic headdress with a down flying bird. From his back hang long feathers with rattle snake rattle, suggesting it is a feathered serpent headdress. The left figure has a butterfly pectoral and headpiece and one arm has the ballplayer padding. Both have the back mirror, knee bands, atlatl and darts of the central Mexican tradition.

The central figure is the only figure seated in the entire relief. He is seated on a platform raised on legs which has the head, paws and tail of a large feline attached to it. This could be a jaguar skin draped over the platform, or a way of showing that the platform is a type of jaguar throne. The figure is wearing a mosaic collar and a beaded necklace with a type of mosaic pendant. His head band is identified by Schele and Mathews as a Sak Hunal, the traditional Maya crown (Schele & Mathews 1998:225). The headdress is richly adorned with many feathers. The figure is stooping and gesturing downward and in front of his face there is a large abstract serpent head, the same as with the right central figure on register C (figure 10).

The two figures opposite to the figure in the sun disk are also interesting to mention. They are wearing the same elongated pendants as the two figures on the wall ends and the four figures on the south column, as well as the cut sell pendant the wall end figures wear. They have very elaborate headdresses, especially the right figure, and are holding intertwining ropes or something similar (figure 13).
Interpretation

The interpretation of the imagery in the Lower Temple of the Jaguars will roughly follow the structure of the description. I will deal with some parts of the iconography that deserve some explanation and then I will try to summarize the big picture of the Lower Temple of the Jaguars.

The two figures on the outer wall ends have been identified as Pawahtuns (Schele & Mathews 1998:214), Bacabs (Read & Gonzalez 2000:130) or God N in the Schellhas god list (Miller & Taube 1993:132). They are the old gods who hold up the corners of the sky, corresponding to the four cardinal directions and often they are wearing a conch shell or a turtle carapace, or sometimes a spider web (Miller & Taube 1993:132). They figure in the creation of the world in Maya cosmology (Read & Gonzalez 2000:130). In the book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel it is mentioned that on the day of creation the Pawaekub were the lords of the Itzá. Because of this, Schele and Mathews believe that the Pawahtuns are the patron deities of the Itzá (Schele & Mathews 1998:214). As we will see, Pawahtuns are almost omnipresent in the iconography of Chichén Itzá. The serpent head elements which are attached to the frame that surrounds these two figures suggest the scene should be seen as inside the mouth of a large vision serpent. The frontal creature that is depicted above and below the Pawahtuns is identified a type of man-serpent-bird, its primary association being warfare (Miller & Taube 1993:104). It reminded me of the vision serpent, an often feathered serpent with an ancestral human figure emerging from the mouth (Miller & Taube 1993:181-182). Because of its location here and elsewhere in Chichén Itzá I propose that it might be a combination between ancestral imagery and warfare, and from now on I will refer to this figure as the frontal vision serpent.

The iconography on the south supporting column shows four Pawahtuns in their recognisable position with their hands stretched out above their heads to hold up the sky. One has the same attire as the one on the south wall end, and all of them have the same large elliptical pendants as the figures on the ends, suggesting this is something specific for Pawahtuns. The women on the northern column have been identified as two different individuals. Recognized by her netted skirt is Sak Ixik, the moon goddess and the wife of the Maize God. The woman with a skull instead of a face wearing the skirt with circles is identified as Chak Chel, or Goddess O. She is the goddess of childbirth and the midwife of creation, and Sak Ixik is her helper (Schele & Mathews 1998:215).

The registers that are at the top and bottom of these columns represent the birth of the Maize God. In the bottom register we see personified mountains (Schele & Mathews 1998:215). They resemble the long nosed heads that are attached to facades throughout Chichén Itzá and the Puuc area. These are sometimes identified with Chaak, but I agree with the alternative interpretation as the symbol for a mountain, a witz (Miller 1999). From their eyes grow water lily stalks with flowers, which are surrounded by turtles, fish and birds. This is seen as the primordial swamp in which the mountain is located (Miller & Taube 1993:148; Schele & Mathews 1998:215). The serpent emerging from the crack in the head of the mountain might identify this mountain as serpent mountain or the mountain of sustenance, and the snake itself is seen as a vision serpent, a connection between the human world and that of the gods (Schele & Mathews 1998:215). From the wide open maw of this vision serpent emerges the top scene that represents the rebirth of the Maize god (figure 14).

The Maize God can be recognised by the maize stalk growing up from his head. Here he is emerging from a monstrous face, which is a personification of the earth. This earth monster is sometimes replaced by a tortoise shell representing the earth (Miller & Taube 1993:69).
Chaak, god of lightning and rain (Miller & Taube 1993:59), split open the cosmic turtle to enable the Maize God to be reborn. Here he grasps two plants that are emerging from two other figures on either end of the turtle, possibly bean and squash as they are often sown together (Schele & Mathews 1998:217).

The ends and columns of the LTJ seem to point at creation as a theme for the main scene. The Pawahtuns which were present at the creation of the world, the presence of the midwife of creation and her helper, the birth of the Maize God, one of the most important gods for the Maya, references to the primordial swamp in the columns and the basal register; all these elements seem to provide a setting of creation for the main scene on the back wall.

The registers of the main scene are divided by intertwined serpents. Schele and Mathews identify these serpents as the kuxan sum, the snakes that hold together the creation in a type of pre-world where the sun does not shine yet: Na-Ho-Kan. Here the paddler gods set up the first jaguar throne on the day of creation (Schele & Mathews 1998:217-218). This interpretation of these elements, combined with jaguar throne present in the LTJ underlines once more the theme of creation in the iconography of the LTJ.

For the main scene I propose an interpretation that focuses on the origins of Chichén Itzá. The five registers portray major events or generations in the history of the culture of the Itzá and Chichén Itzá as they envisioned it. I will try to explain this concept by working from the basal register upwards to register E.

The basal register points to the primordial swamp and thus creation, likely that of Chichén Itzá. Register A features many figures of high rank coming together and looking up to the major event that takes place in the centre of register B. The figures in register A are dressed differently than the other registers; they wear Maya weapons and gear. The figures left and right of the centre are still slightly different. This might suggest that at first they were Maya, from different factions or regions that came together at the creation of Chichén Itzá.

In register B the people are dressed in the central Mexican style and the most important event of the registers takes place in the central part of this register. The main figure is carrying a large round disk, probably a mirror, which were used to make contact with ancestors and gods (Schele & Mathews 1998:222). Behind this figure, shining with rays of power or light, there is the large feathered serpent, or Kukulkan, undulating upwards to the next register. This is one of the
most important religious and cultural symbol for the Itzá at Chichén Itzá; it is featured throughout the site. The central figures are performing a ritual, during which the feathered serpent appears as an important symbol to the Itzá. The main figure might be identified as the god-priest Kukulkan, bringing the feathered serpent and the associated religion to the Itzá. The figures to the left and right are participating in the ritual by speaking flowery words, or eloquent speeches. The figure on the right of the central scene in figure 9 has Pawahtun pendants, perhaps identifying him as one (Schele & Mathews 1998:222)

Register C does not seem to depict a single important event, but the scene suggests the veneration of the feathered serpent. In the centre, the head of this serpent protrudes from the lower register and the focus of the central figures is on the serpent. Many figures are speaking, the centre right figure seems to be speaking about the serpent itself. The figure to the left of the serpent head appears to be female and is wearing a serpent skirt, which Schele and Mathews identify as a prototype of Cihuacoatl who was in charge of wars in Tenochtitlan (Schele & Mathews 1998:224). There are figures carrying bowls with objects towards the centre, perhaps as an offering. Register C would then be about the acceptance of the feathered serpent and the start of its veneration or perhaps the acceptance of the Cihuacoatl figure in Chichén.

Register D features a different serpent. The central figure here carries or is in the company of a large mosaic serpent, also known as the war serpent (Miller & Taube 1993:141; Schele & Mathews 1998:225). If this register marks another important event, it could be the arrival of the war serpent and its incorporation into the cosmology of the Itzá, a next step towards completion of their cultural synthesis.

And then finally register E marks the present. The figure seated on a jaguar throne inside the sun cartouche is an ancestor. This is how they were represented with the Classic Maya (Boot 2003:107; Schele & Mathews 1998:225,252). This could then be an ancestral ruler who is overseeing the events that take place in the relief of the LTJ.

The events portrayed were without doubt a very important event and that justifies the presence of many high ranking military and religious people. The two figures opposite the sun disk might also be Pawahtuns. They are holding the intertwined rope at the end of the upper register, perhaps it portrays some kind of fastening of the scene, or perhaps the completion of the sequence of events portrayed in the registers. The purpose is not entirely clear.

The main scene in the LTJ is then about the origins of Chichén Itzá. The scene is set in a theme of creation because it deals with the creation of Chichén Itzá and perhaps links Chichén Itzá to the time of creation of people, giving the city extra historicity in the eyes of the audience. And this audience was quite large, taking into account the exposed location of the relief at the edge of the largest plaza of the site, for everyone to see.

The North Temple (NT)
The North Temple is a small structure that is located atop the northern end wall of the GBC. Two stairs on either side of the building lead up to the platform, from where a single stair leads into the temple, which has one (partly remaining) single vault (figure 17). The facade is open and the front is supported by two columns, as in the LTJ. The iconography is located on the stairway balustrades, the door jambs on either side of the entrance and the two supporting columns. The entire walls of the structure were covered in painted bas-reliefs.
Description

The balustrades

All of the balustrades, six in total, bear the same iconography (image 16). The balustrades are divided into two registers. In the lower register there is a large tree with flowers in its ample foliage. A flowery vine is spiralling up the trunk. Two birds and two butterflies are eating from the flowers. Another two birds are sitting in the treetop, under the top flower of the vine. The tree seems to be standing on top of a type of animal head, possibly bird, with jade eyes. The roots of the tree are intertwined with the eye and the head. In the top register there is the same frontal view of a feathered serpent with an ancestor in it that was present in the bottom registers of the north and south wall ends of the LTJ.

The door jambs

On either side of the facade two jambs are located (image 17). Each jamb has three sides but only three out of six figures have survived erosion enough for Linda Schele draw them. She drew one figure on the east jamb and two on the west side. The figure on the east is identical to one of the figures on the west, so it is likely that both jambs presented the same three figures.

The jamb panels are divided into three registers. The top and bottom registers show a head with plugs in both nostrils, elaborate earplugs, what appear to be crosses in large eyebrows, bared teeth with curled fangs and knot in its beaded hair.

The first figure on the west jamb is dressed in a skirt, has knee and armbands and beaded wristbands. He is wearing a long beaded necklace with a face pendant hanging down to his shins. This necklace is much like the ones seen in register B of the LTJ worn by the two figures to the right of the centre (figure 9). Like the left of those two figures, this figure is carrying what appears to be a blowgun. His headdress features a bird headband and several large rounded feathers extending from the top. Near the heads of both men there is part of a plant or vine.

The second figure, identical to the east figure, is wearing plain sandals, knee bands, beaded wristbands and a knotted loin cloth. He is also carrying a blowgun. His headdress is a type of turban, perhaps a pillbox hat, with a rattle snake wrapped around it. Like the other figure, rounded feathers are attached to it. He is wearing a long beaded earplug, a simple (perhaps knotted) necklace, and there is an elongated, hooked object attached to his chin. This figure resembles the figure to the left of the main scene of register B, to the left of the Kukulkan figure (figure 9). That person also has a serpent wrapped headdress with rounded feathers, a long earplug, a blowgun, a knotted loincloth and the hooked or curved object extending from the
chin. The only difference is that the man in figure 9 is wearing a back mirror. Both have speech volutes near their heads.

The Columns

The two columns (image 18) of the NT both depict the same scene (Schele & Mathews 1998:249-250). It depicts two individuals separated by two sets of intertwined vines. They are standing on top of a bottom register depicting two reclining figures. These figures are dressed in long skirts and their long hair is beaded, like the knotted hair of the faces of the top and bottom registers of the jambs. Speech volutes come out of their mouths and they hold up a serpent in their outstretched hands, which border the top scene. The heads of these serpents are pierced by a large flint knife.

The figure on the left is wearing a pillbox type headdress with plant like objects on top. He is carrying a serpent staff, much like the right figure on area 3 of the ballcourt stone and the second person to the right of the centre of register B in the LTJ (image 13). Like the latter, this person also has the long necklace with the face pendant and there are vines growing behind him. In front of his face is a glyph that has been interpreted as five knot (Schele & Mathews 1998:250). He seems to be wearing a chest plate or something like that over the beaded necklace.

The second figure has a reptile eye glyph above his head (Schele & Mathews 1998:251). He is very much similar to the left figure on the west jamb of the NT (image 17). They wear the same headdress with the protruding animal head and rounded feathers, the same face pendant necklace, both carry a blowgun, and wear a skirt that is shorter at the front. They also both wear the same kneebands and the same decorated sandals. This person also has plants growing behind him, visible between his legs and near his arm.

The vines have the same personified roots as the balustrades (image 16). They seem to be growing around and over round column (Schele & Mathews 1998:250)

The west wall

The west wall (image 19) is built up out of four registers. The basal register is very much similar to the basal register of the relief in the LTJ (image 7), with a humanoid figure between undulating vines with flowers and fruits. On top of that register is a large scene with seven visible figures in two horizontal rows. In the bottom left corner there are three figures. The left figure carries a staff or long spear and a hanging object from his back. His face seems not human, but perhaps this is due to the quality of the drawing. The next person to the right has a headdress with rounded feathers and is carrying a pointed object in his hand. The next person carries a bundle of spears and wears a chest pendant or mirror. There seem to be long elliptical pendants hanging from his waist.

To the right of these three figures there is a large tree with multiple branches, not unlike the vine seen in many other images. There is a bird visible in the branches. To the right of the tree there is a kneeling figure with a dog, sitting in front of a bowl and a vine is emerging from his mouth. Extending from his shoulder is a square wing like object.

In the top left corner there is a scene with three people. Of the left we only see that he is wearing a rounded feather headdress, the centre figure is kneeling and is wearing a chest disk. The third figure has his arms outstretched towards this centre figure. To the right of this last figure is either an extension of the tree or a type of new tree, seemingly standing on a reptilian head, perhaps personified roots. To the right of this there are parts of a large bird wearing a
headdress and something what could be part of an abstract serpent head. Above the eye of this head is what appears to be a star sign.

One figure seems to be breaking the barrier between the second and third register. He is wearing a round shield and a long tassel hangs from his back. Behind him is an eroded seated figure and a vine. In front of him is a zooanthropomorphic figure of a human with feathers attached to his arms and body. He is facing two figures seated before him, the first with a large feathered headdress. In the top register only a partial seated figure is visible, next to a standing figure with the same hanging tassel as the figure in the register below and a headdress with two hooked extensions and a diagonal band. He is standing in front of a type of tree with fruit.

The north wall

This is the most intricate imagery in the North Temple (image 20). There are two separate scenes; the main one is on the wall itself, the other is located in the vault. I will describe and interpret both scenes separately, referring to the lower scene as the north wall and the upper scene as the north vault.

The main scene of the north wall is resting on a basal register. It consists out of undulating vines as in the basal registers of the west wall of the NT and the walls of the LTJ. Three small figures are visible in this register, next to a large figure lying on its back. The left seems to be coming out of a conch shell or seated on a pillow. He is holding a long object in one hand, a bundle of something in the other and he is facing the large figure. The next smaller figure is clearly half inside a conch shell and is also facing the large figure. The third figure is seated on a pillow or large round stone and facing away. All three figures seem to be wearing the same headdress. The large figure is dressed in a long mosaic dress or gown with a waist band. There is a face pendant on the chest and the headdress is fairly simple, one row of mosaic stones perhaps, like the ones the smaller figures wear. From the waist band there is a two-headed feathered serpent emerging and stretching out towards head and feet. The snake heads wear a headband with a flint knife sticking out and from their mouths another knife is protruding.

The north wall features three rows of in total 47 people. The first two figures in the bottom row are wearing a bird outfit, like the one seen on the west wall. Schele & Mathews argue that this register continues onto the west wall, where more figures with bird outfits are visible. The bird person on the right has a cloth draped over his hand and he is speaking. To the right there are five figures, all of them have speech volutes. Four of them wear feather headdresses, one a flint knife, two carry atlatls and darts. One person is wearing a skirt and a sombrero like hat and carries a bowl with content. The right figure is dressed most elaborately with the largest headdress and a back mirror and what appears to be a serpent body extending behind him. He carries an object in his hand and his speech volute is bent down towards the throne before him. It is like a jaguar throne, only this one is feathered and has perhaps a turtle or reptilian face. Below the head of this throne is a large circle, perhaps a ball. To the right of this throne are five more figures with atlatl and darts and ball player padding on the left arm. The first of these figures is speaking about a plant, perhaps maize. The others all have back mirrors. The first three have two-tiered feathered headdresses of which two have down flying birds attached. The last two have a long feather Mohawk. To the right there is a house with a small step leading into it. Inside are to seated figures, one on a pillow. This figure is speaking and scattering small balls.

The middle row features 7 figures with turban headdresses with long feathers and diagonal bands, seated on pillows. All have butterfly pectorals. In the centre we find the main
event of the north wall, right above the empty throne. We see an individual standing with a long mosaic gown and a remarkable headdress. He is holding a flower in one hand and rays of power or sun emanate from him. Seated in front is another figure, wearing a simple headdress and a simple gown. Undulating behind this figure is a feathered serpent. Behind this figure are 5 more seated figures, like the ones on the left only without butterfly pectorals and with normal feathered headdresses. Behind these there are two figures standing on top of the roof of the building in the lower row. The left one has a padded ballplayer arm and he is speaking. Both are extending their left arm and hold a long pointy object in the other. Between them is a large bowl.

To the left of the middle and top rows there is a damaged scene with large bearded head with a person standing on top, speaking. There is a flying bird that may pertain to the bird men below.

In the top row there are four Chichén style warriors, one with a two-feathered headdress, the others with long feathered ones. Then a figure with a multiple-tiered feathered headdress and goggle eyes, and one with a two-feathered headdress from rays of power raise. This last figure is speaking to or in front of a figure seated on a jaguar throne in a feathered serpent cartouche, a stylized serpent head near his mouth. Below the cartouche a bird is visible. To the right there is a figure in Chichén style warrior outfit with down flying bird headdress and a large cloud snake curling upwards behind him. After this figure five more with ballplayer padding on the arm, atlatl and darts, and back mirrors are standing below a figure with a pillbox headdress appearing from swirly scrolls. To the right of these figures, a last one is facing away, towards the east wall. He is wearing a long cape and elaborate feathered headdress a square object on or near his chest.

The north vault

Two registers divide the north vault (image 21). I will first describe the bottom register and then the top. The bottom register shows two figures walking towards a body of water next to a tree with five birds flying above the scene. The right figure is carrying a bundle of objects in one hand and another object in the other hand. There is a serpent in his headdress. There is a celestial body in the air above the tree. Next we see a woman carrying a bowl behind a man with a turban headdress with rounded feathers apparently inserting a plug into his nose. In front of him are two seated figures and one standing, one of the seated figures holding a bowl.

To the right of this scene there is a kind of basin with two figures inside it. One seems to be sitting on the edge and is holding a bowl and a knife. Both are speaking. Above the left figure there is a symbol of some kind and above the right figure what appears to be a bird head.

A figure in a long gown is standing in front of a house, hand held up. Facing this figure is another, seemingly carrying a bag. From the roof of the house a scroll of volute rises. Two figures are on either side of a flowery tree with a personified root. The left figure is sitting, both are speaking. Another figure wearing a long gown with circles at the bottom is facing someone with a vessel in his hands. There is a glyph between them. The same symbol as at the left hand side is suspended above a tree with several birds. Underneath the tree a figure is shooting at the birds with a blowgun. Yet another hanging symbol is hanging above a person holding an stick, perhaps a blowgun.

In the top register, first there are two figures with serpent turban headdresses with rounded feathers. The first has a cut conch shell pendant and is facing a strange object and behind that are the contours of a tree with flowers. The second figure has bared his penis in front of an effigy of an erect penis on a pedestal. Next there is a figure pointing a stick at two dogs. His
headdress is most elaborate with what appears to be a spread wide open vertical crocodile or serpent head worked into it.

Next there is a scene involving two figures standing over a seated figure. The right figure is holding an object over the face of the seated figure, while the left figure is speaking. Above them a small figure appears in the air holding a flower or brush like object, with some signs to the right. To the right a person is holding a sheet of cloth up very high, or something like an arm is protruding from his head.

A figure is crouching in the doorway of one house. The figure is holding an object shaped like a penis. In front of another a figure with a turban is wrapping a lying person in cloth. Two figures, carrying spears similar to the ones right of the centre of LTJ register A, are facing towards the east wall. The left figure appears to have a scorpion stinger, the right figure is speaking and carries a flint knife. Between them is a tree with a bird in it. To their right is another house, partly visible on the north vault.

The east wall

Like the west and north walls, the east wall (image 22) has three rows of figures on top of the basal register. The wall is badly eroded so not much of the original scenes remain. On the bottom row seven figures remain partly visible. Next to the first four figures there is a tree with flowery branches. To the right a person is lying face up on the ground, dressed in a long gown. A person with a large collar is bending down over him, extending his arm to the face of the lying person and speaking. Behind him there is another person holding a type of bag and also speaking, volutes rising up to the bottom of the second row. Of this row not much is visible other than a partial headress or back rack and a figure speaking in front of a curly vine. Two legs of more people are visible on the right.

The top row depicts two figures, one standing and one reclined. The standing figure is speaking and has ballplayer padding. The reclining figure is beheaded with seven serpents protruding from his neck. Above him there is another vine and to the right a large circle, likely a rubber ball.

Interpretation

The images on the balustrades have been interpreted as world trees with personified roots and squash vines growing up their stems (Schele & Mathews 1998:248) This tree stood at the centre of the Maya universe. Perhaps their presence here is a reminder that the North Temple represents the state of the world. Another interpretation is that these images are an allusion to fertility (Boot 2003:101)

The jambs of the North Temple used to depict three figures each. The two figures visible are very similar to the two figures to the right and left of the Kukulkan figure in the centre register B of the LTJ (figure 9). Their headdresses, outfit and paraphernalia match exactly. In register B or the LTJ, there is a third figure part of the scene. Perhaps this figure was the third figure on the door jambs, completing a group of three important figures. Whether or not they are the same actual historical person, their presence both in the LTJ and here makes them very important figures. The head on the top and bottom registers has been identified by Schele and Mathews as possible ballgame trophy heads (Schele & Mathews 1998:249).

The columns continue the comparison between the NT and the LTJ. Here the two figures are named by name glyphs: reptile eye and five knot. The two figures to the right of the
centre in register by are named reptile eye and six knot, and again their outfits are the same. This again stresses the importance of these figures. The vine with the personified root provides the context for these figures. These figures have been identified as assistants (Schele & Mathews 1998: 251), perhaps to the main figure of LTJ register B, and important people entering the North Temple. The figures reclining in the bottom register of the columns are jade skirted maize gods, the serpents referring to either umbilical cords or sacrificial intestines, their position referring to Chac Mool statues and the sacrifice of the Maize God in the ballgame of the creation story (Schele & Mathews 1998:249). Their hair is beaded like the heads underneath the jamb images.

The west wall depicts multiple scenes. The basal register of the walls of the NT, like in the LTJ, connects it to the time of creation. In the bottom left there is a possible blood sacrifice ritual about to start, if the object the middle person is holding is a bone awl. To the right of the tree a kneeling person is offering something to the tree and speaking about plants. The critical part of the top left scene is eroded, but if the theme of offerings is continued it could be interpreted as another offering scene. The scene in the third register has been interpreted as a dance scene (Boot 2003:105; Schele & Mathews 1998:252), and the top register is not entirely clear.

The north wall then is the most elaborate scene of the NT. In the basal register the Maize God is lying on his back (Schele & Mathews 1998:244), feathered serpent emerging from his stomach, supporting the scene. Like in the bottom registers of the columns, the mouths of the serpents are pierced with flint knives. According to Schele & Mathews this image is a reference to the creation of the Maya world. In the creation story the maize god was sacrificed to create the earth and in his intestines form the sky umbilicus and the ecliptic, often depicted as serpents (Schele & Mathews 1998:375 Note 79). This would give the scene a connection to the Maya creation story, and gives the north wall scene a connection to creation.

In the bottom right there are two more bird dancers, possibly belonging to the scene on the west wall (Schele & Mathews 1998:252). The main event in the bottom row of the north wall is a ritual taking place around the empty throne, with many high ranking figures present, speaking and bearing offerings. Perhaps the left and right depict different lineages or factions, since their dress is different. The house scene on the right might be a divination ritual, involving the throwing of maize. This ritual is still performed in parts of Mesoamerica, for example among the Mixtec.

The second row is likely to be an accession scene (Boot 2003:107; Schele & Mathews 252). That would explain the empty throne in the row underneath. The soon to be ruler is seated, a feathered serpent accompanying him as a symbol of religion and power. The left figure, according to Schele and Mathews (1998:252) dressed in the jade gown of the Maize God, is heading the ritual. Rays of power emanate from him his body. The figures seated in front and behind these two main figures are seen as council lords of Chichén (Schele & Mathews 1998:252), or as successors and predecessors to the throne, like in Copán on the Temple 11 Bench and Altar Q (Boot 2003:106). The seated figures seem to be different groups on the left and right, like in the bottom row. Whatever their role, they were certainly important enough to be present with this very important event. The two figures to the right of the main scene are possibly doing a blood sacrifice with the long knives and the bowl that they have with them.

Above this scene we see a figure sitting on a jaguar throne in a feathered serpent cartouche. This reminds of the figure in the LTJ, except that there it is a sun disk. Perhaps this
also is the present ruler who commissioned the work, or an ancestor overseeing historic events. Next to him is a warrior with a different serpent than has figured in the murals so far: it seems to be a cloud serpent, as the fat scrolls attached to its body indicate. This serpent, also known as Mixcoatl, is sometimes identified as the milky way or the heavens and as a hunting god. Also, he is the father of Quetzalcoatl, or Kukulkan (Miller & Taube 1993:115-116). As such, this person could be the father of the acceding feathered serpent figure below. Again two different factions are on the left and right of this scene. There also are two ‘floaters’ above this top row, which in Maya art represent ancestors and deities materializing through ritual (Villela & Koontz 1993:4).

The north vault deals with more rituals and, I believe, travel. The water, birds and tree on the left of the lower register reminded me of the way toponyms are depicted Mixtec codices. The people to the left are perhaps travelling towards this place. In the next scene it is unclear if the person is removing the nose plug or putting it in. This has also been interpreted as a vomit ritual (Schele & Mathews 1998:253), the person bending down over a bowl seen as vomiting. To the right there is another possible toponym, perhaps another stop during the journey. There is a meeting with a person in front of a house that could be a sweat bath ritual (Schele & Mathews 1998:253), judging by the scroll of smoke or steam rising up and then some kind of ritual for the flowery tree. The next figure is possibly clothed in the jade mosaic dress of the Maize God, but its role here is unclear. The scene on the right end of the lower register shows someone with a blowgun shooting at birds in a tree. This reminds of a story in the Popol Vuh, where Hunahpu and Xbalanque shoot 7 Macaw at the beginning of his defeat (Tedlock 1985:89-94). At the foundation of a Keqchi Maya town in 1543, a re-enactment of the Popol Vuh story was performed. Perhaps that was regular for founding events (Villela & Koontz 1993:3).

The top register starts on the left with two rituals in front of effigies, the left one unclear the right one clearly an erect penis. The person in front of this effigy is perhaps performing a penis perforation ritual. Next is an event involving a person and two dogs. The next scene is one of the most important scenes in the North Temple iconography. It has been interpreted as a human sacrifice and subsequently as a nose piercing ceremony (Villela & Koontz 1993). In figure 18 the bone awl used in the perforation is just visible. Above this scene, there appears to be another floater.

Figure 16. The North Temple nose piercing ceremony. Drawing by Miguel Angel Fernandez (Villela & Koontz 1993:3).
As was discussed in chapter three nose piercing ceremonies were very important in the process of accession and legitimization of rule in central Mexico. To see an apparent nose piercing event in a temple that also contains a possible accession scene, connects these events to each other and to the North Temple. The figure standing to the right might be a part of this scene.

Next there might be another sweat bath ritual and then perhaps a dead body being wrapped into a bundle. The two figures on the extreme right remind of the people in register A of the LTJ, right of the centre (image 8). Perhaps these two figures are travelling.

The east wall again features the basal panel referring to creation. Above that a row of figures is badly damaged. To the right there is a scene that perhaps represents a burial, with the deceased person lying on the ground underneath a tree and two other persons speaking and performing rituals. At the top of what remains of the east wall there is a sacrificial scene that reminds of the GBA panels. A decapitated person sits before a standing speaking individual, seven snakes of blood coming from his neck. Next to this person is a large ball. This scene obviously refers to the ballgame and the associated sacrifices.

The central theme of the North Temple is accession to the throne. The central scene on the north wall probably is the accession event itself, while the north vault and east and west vaults portray rituals that form the preparation to the accession with among others a nose piercing ceremony where the ruler receives his nose plug, sweat bath rituals, a re-enactment of part of the creation story, and perhaps pilgrimages to other places. These rituals could have been necessary to legitimize the rule of this new ruler. All of this is set in a context of creation, connecting the creation story to accession, giving it a sense of historicity.

The presence of the persons that figure in the relief of the LTJ on the jambs and columns of the NT, might suggest that the ruler that they might have been assistants to would always be in their presence when he entered the North Temple. Perhaps the function of the North Temple was to host specific rituals having to do with accession and rulership. The connection to the ballgame in the relief on the east wall indicates that the ballgame was important in the process of accession and that explains the presence of the NT with its iconography on the north end of the largest ball court in Mesoamerica.

**Great Ballcourt Alley (GBA)**

The Great Ballcourt Alley is the playing area of the Great Ballcourt. It is an I-shaped area measuring about 145m in length and 30m in width in the alley. The sloping banks on either side of the alley are 96.5m long, 1.5m high, and 3m wide and the walls themselves measure 11m in height (Greene Robertson 1991:100). At the end zones the width nears 70m. The iconography that is found within this area consists of two rings with a diameter of 1.5m which are attached at a height of 10m in the side walls halfway in the alley (Greene Robertson 1991:100). A round stone with iconography and hieroglyphic inscriptions was found in 1923 by Miguel Angel Fernández in the south end of the GBA (Wren et al. 1989:23). And on the benches to the side of the alley there are six relief panels depicting ballplayers, 15.5m long (Greene Robertson 1991:100) and about 1.5m high. They are located in opposite pairs, at the north, centre and south parts of the playing alley.
Description

The rings

The GBA rings are decorated on either side with two intertwined feathered serpents which face each other. Between the coils eyes look outward into the alley (Schele & Mathews 1998:248). On the backside of the west ring there is a rim portraying fish all around the intertwined serpents.

The ballcourt stone

Three areas with iconography survive on the ballcourt stone (Image 13). In area one there are 6 figures, wearing ballplayer outfits and carrying ballgame paraphernalia. They wear elaborate headdresses with feathers, kneepads, what appears to be padding on one foot, a yoke or belt with a long object, like a bat, sticking out from their stomachs, carry a handstone, and in many figures one arm seems thicker, suggesting padding. In the centre there is a ball with an image of a skull on it. To the right of this ball is a figure standing up, decapitated. From his neck extend six serpents. To the left of the ball, opposite the decapitated figure is another figure holding a human head with beaded hair in its left hand. All figures except the one at the extreme left seem to be speaking. The figures are accompanied by two cartwheel like symbols; a circle with a cross and two spears crossing diagonally.

Area two joins area one but depicts a different (damaged) scene. Five figures are still partially visible. They also seem to be wearing a ballplayers outfit with kneepads, footpads, handstones, yokes and bats. Of the central figure only a small part remains; it appears to be a bundle of feathers or serpents, like the one protruding from the neck in area one. This scene could be a damaged repetition of area one.

In area three five figures are represented. Two figures on the left wear padding on one arm, but one carries a bundle of darts in one hand and there are no visible yokes or specific knee or foot padding. Large undulating serpents are framing them or are carried by them. A third figure is badly eroded, but the serpent framing him is still visible. The left snake seems to be a normal rattle snake, the middle one is a feathered serpent and the last one seems to have sun disk
elements to his body. These three figures are facing a fourth figure who also has a padded arm, possibly a bundle of darts and a double headed serpent staff, much like the one carried by the Pawahtun figure in figure 9. Below these four figures is a fifth, reclining and looking up towards the others.

On the rim of the stone there is a text of 24 hieroglyphs (Image 14).

The relief Panels

Out of the six relief panels on the sloping side of the bench in the GBA, of only two images were available. But because of the highly similar nature of the six panels it will suffice to only describe the east central panel (Image 15), which was least damaged throughout time.

The scenes are very much similar to areas one and two of the great ballcourt stone. The panels depict two groups of 7 figures facing each other. The figures are all dressed as ballplayers; all of them have their right foot wrapped up in padding and wear a knee pad on the same side. On their left foot there is a normal sandal and a knee band. They all wear a yoke and a pleated skirt. Tucked in their yokes is the long bat like object with different kinds of decoration: animal heads, complete animals, human heads, skulls etc. All of them wear a back mirror and both their arms are padded. In their right hand all except one carry the handstone as seen on the great ballcourt stone; reptile faces adorn them. The figures wear varying headdresses, almost all with long feathers hanging down. Many figures wear the long nose bar, but there is some variation in nose plugs.

Figure 18. Centre part of the west central panel of the GBA (Schele Drawing 5058).

There are two major differences between the figures on the left and right of the centre. The seven figures on the left wear large mosaic collars while the ones on the right do not. All the figures on the right, except the extreme left one, seem to be speaking, while only some of the left figures are.

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22 There is some variation: some have 14 players, while others have 15.
23 At least in the east and west central panels.
In the centre (figure 16) there is a large ball with a skull depicted on or in it. The figure to the right of the ball is kneeling and his head is missing. From his neck six serpents protrude, as well as a large plant with different kinds of flowers. The figure to the left of the ball carries a flint knife instead of a handstone and in his left hand he is holding the head of the decapitated figure, blood streaming from his neck.

Interpretation
The ballcourt and ballgame are very important to the story of the Hero Twins in the Popol Vuh. In the story, Hun (One) Hunahpu and his brother Vucub (Seven) Hunahpu were great ballplayers who were playing all day. Their play disturbed the lords of Xibalba, the underworld, and they were summoned there for a match against the lords. They were tricked into losing, and were sacrificed and subsequently buried in the ballcourt. Except for the head of Hun Hunahpu, which was stuck in a gourd tree and was slowly turning into a gourd (Miller & Taube 1993:135; Tedlock 1985).

When a young Xibalba goddess came too close, the head of Hun Hunahpu spat on her hand and impregnated her that way. She was cast out of Xibalba to live with the mother of Hun Hunahpu and Vucub Hunahpu, where she gave birth to the Hero twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque. Their grandmother hid their father’s ballgame equipment for them to keep them safe, but they found them and became very good ballplayers. Again the lords of Xibalba, gods of death, were disturbed and the Hero Twins were summoned to play in the underworld. Through trickery they passed most of the tests, but in one test Hunahpu stuck his head out of the hut too early and it was cut off and taken by the lords of Xibalba to play ball with. Xbalanque made a new head for Hunahpu with a gourd and through a trick he managed to swap it with his actual head during the game. Through further tricks they eventually beat the lords of death and sacrificed them. After that the Hero Twins dug up and revived their father and their uncle (Miller & Taube 1993:135; Tedlock 1985).

Hun Hunahpu is also a representation of the Maize god. On many ceramic vessels he is shown emerging from the ground like a stalk of corn sprouting from the soil (Miller & Taube 1993:98). The growing of maize then seems to be analogous to the resurrection of Hun Hunahpu from the dead.

The structure of the ballcourt itself appears to be bearing symbolic meaning. According to Schele & Mathews the section of the court resembles a crack in the earth, an idea undoubtedly inspired by the double meaning of the K’iche’ Maya word bom; it means both ball court and crevice in the Popol Vuh. As a crack of crevice in the earth it would provide access to the underworld (Schele & Mathews 1998:207). The apparent proximity of the ballcourt to Xibalba in the story of the Hero Twins supports this idea. The ballgame can be seen as a metaphor for life, death and regeneration (Miller & Taube 1993:43).

Now for the iconography of the ballcourt itself. The rings have so little decoration that it is hard to say anything about them. Some scholars think that the fish on the rings signify the primordial swamp and that the rings are portals to the other world (Schele & Mathews 1998:246), if this line of reasoning is followed, it is possible to see the intertwined serpents as the kuxcan sum and the rings as referring to the creation of the world.

The ballcourt stone areas one and two portray events similar to the large relief panels and therefore I will interpret them together. Area three appears to be a meeting of some sort between three important figures who bear three serpent figures: one normal rattle snake, one feathered
serpent and one sun serpent. They are meeting a figure who bears a serpent staff. Perhaps they are performing a ritual or ceremony that accompanies the ballgame. The role of the fifth, reclining, figure is not clear: area three is eroded too severely to make any conclusions about this figure.

The hieroglyphic text contains a calendar round date in positions 6 and 7 of 11 Cimi 14 Pax. Linnea Wren has suggested a long count equivalent of 10.01.15.03.06, or A.D. 864 (Wren et al. 1989:26). In position 5 a there is a supposed ‘ball game event’, as was found in other hieroglyphic texts at the site. In positions 21 and 22 a variant of the name Kakupacal appears, preceded by the “lu-bat” glyph that announces the sculptor. After the Kakupacal name, in position 24, there is another glyph that has been identified as the name glyph for Chichén Itzá, meaning “ruler of lords” (Wren et al. 1989:26-27). Wren et al. see the hieroglyphic text as a dedication of the ball court stone by its patron Kakupacal (Wren et al. 1989:27). For its function they refer to the iconography of the Temple of the Warriors, the Upper Temple of the Jaguars and Gold Disk H from the Cenote, where human sacrifice is being performed on a rounded stone, similar to the ball court stone (Wren et al. 1989:23).

The relief panels and areas 1 and 2 depict the end of a ballgame. We see seven or eight figures at either side of the centre, wearing a ballplayer outfit with paraphernalia. They are two teams: the left team is winning while the right team is losing. The victorious front man of the left team has decapitated the front man on the right. The latter is kneeling and from his neck six serpents and a type of vine emerge. The six snakes might refer to the great tree at the centre of the world, also known as \textit{Wak-kan}, “Six-Serpent”. This is the tree that the Maize God erected after his resurrection (Schele & Mathews 1998:246). But I tend to agree with the notion that the serpents are representations of blood streaming from the wound (Miller & Taube 1993:46), especially because for example in the North Temple, there are seven snakes and no vine. The vine represents new life originating in the actions performed. The ball in the centre depicts a skull interpreted as a \textit{way}, a ‘spirit companion’, because of the speech volutes and head fringe (Schele & Mathews 1998:246), or as the skull that the Maya put inside the rubber ball to reduce mass (Miller & Taube 1993: 44). I, however, believe that they refer to the head of Hunahpu in the story of the Hero Twins, being used as a ball by the lords of Xibalba after they had decapitated him.

The decapitation of the losing front man could therefore be a re-enactment of a part of the Hero Twins story. The decapitation was part of the story that led to the resurrection of the maize god and therefore life, represented here by the vine emerging from the decapitated person’s neck. I believe that the ballgame was a ritual ensuring the resurrection of maize and life. The ballgame and the sacrifices that came with it are a part of a regeneration cycle.

The South Temple (ST)
This structure is of course located on the south end of the great ballcourt. It sits on the platform that forms the end of the playing alley, with two stairs rising up on either side of the building from the outside of the ballcourt. It is a rectangular colonnaded building with an open facade and a single vault supported by six decorated columns. A Chac Mool found at the GBC was probably located between the third and fourth columns, in the centre of the building.
The iconography of the ST is located on the balustrades of the stairs, on both end walls, and on all four sides of six square columns. They have been restored to varying degrees and this research will include only the best preserved which is the second column, seen from the west. The back wall of the South Temple does not seem to have been decorated with bas-reliefs. Perhaps this wall was painted instead or was a relief lost by collapse and reconstruction.

**Description**

*The balustrades*

The balustrades of the South Temple (image 24) are nearly identical to the ones with the North Temple. Although only the balustrades of the east stairs were restored, but the west stair balustrades were likely to have had the same image on them (Schele & Mathews 1998:244). There is a tree with a personified root with a flowery vine winding up along the trunk of the tree. At the top of the tree there are two birds and next to the tree we see a butterfly. The ST balustrades also have a top register, but this one is different from the NT balustrades. There is a head with a head band with a small face on its forehead. The head has large earplugs and two nose plugs or a nose bar.

*The Chac Mool*

The Chac Mool of the ST (figure 20) was originally placed at the centre front of the building. He is lying on his side and leaning on one elbow, knees drawn up. He has wristbands that resemble ballplayer padding, knee or leg bands and simple sandals. He is wearing a mosaic collar with a feline, possibly jaguar, pendant. His hair is cut into a fringe and he is wearing a head band and large crosshatched earrings. On top of his head there are three black-tipped feathers (Schele & Mathews 1998:244). He holds a small cup or dish in his hands, in a horizontal position near his lap.

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Figure 19. Plan of the South Temple. Adapted from Schele & Mathews 1998:243.

Figure 20. The South Temple Chac Mool. Schele Drawing 5000.
The end walls

The end walls of the ST (image 25) depict 2 figures each in two registers. The two bottom registers are identical, showing a seated figure with ear plugs and a nose bar in a long dotted or beaded gown, so previously identified as the Maize God’s dress (Schele & Mathews 1998:244). From the mouth or nose of the seated figure a serpent emerges, undulating up towards the top register. The serpent itself has a stepped motif. It is not entirely clear but it is possible that the scene above emerges from the open maw of the serpent, as is the case with the serpents behind the figures on the columns of the LTJ (images 3 and 4). These snakes also have the stepped motif.

The top figure on the west wall is a warrior holding a long decorated spear in one hand and a square decorated shield in the other. His lower legs are wrapped in long sandals. He wears a loin cloth and a mosaic collar. He is wearing a serpent head mask with many long feathers. He is dressed in the typical Maya style.

The top figure of the east wall is also a warrior, but in the Chichén style. He is holding an atlatl in one hand and a bundle of spears in the other. He wears a mosaic collar or shirt and his headdress is very elaborate but it is damaged badly. Around him, on the edges of the panel, there are the same serpent elements as seen on the wall ends of the LTJ. This figure seems to be speaking.

The columns

Because the second column from the west is best preserved it will be described here. Of the other columns I did not have drawings available. The imagery on the other columns is similar to this one, however. The columns are divided in three registers. The bottom register features the frontal bird serpent with ancestor that was present in the top register of the NT balustrade (image 16) and the bottom register of the LTJ wall ends (images 3 and 4), as well as in many other structures of Chichén Itzá. The top registers are damaged, but it is just possible to make out a set of goggle eyes and curled fangs.

In the centre register standing figures are depicted in Chichén style, holding a bag and a curved instrument in one hand and crossing the other arm up across the chest. They wear ankle and knee bands and on their arms here are wrist bands that resemble very small versions of the ballplayer padding. They wear large butterfly pectorals, knotted loincloths, decorated back mirrors or shields, large mosaic collars and pillbox hats with two rounded feathers sticking up. Even though they are only visible with two figures, name glyphs were probably present above the heads of all figures. With one figure there is a snake and a star sign and with another it is a rodent (Schele & Mathews 1998:244; Boot 2003:102). There seem to be serpent attributes attached to the edges of the panels here too.

Interpretation

Like in the North Temple, the balustrades of the South Temple could either be representations of the world tree (Schele & Mathews 1998:248), reminding the audience of the importance of this structure with regard to the centre of the universe, or it could be referring to fertility and life (Boot 2003:101), as we have seen with the GBA panels and LTJ rebirth of the maize god. The top register has been interpreted as a flower-headed Itzá symbol (Schele & Mathews 1998:244).
The headdress reminds of a headdress seen on rulers, with flowers and sometimes a hummingbird eating from these flowers. The nectar is called itz in some Maya languages, and therefore it is thought that they serve as Itzá identity markers (Schele & Mathews 1998:229). The meaning of the face with jaguar features is unknown.

The Chac Mool is seen as a receptacle for sacrifices (Boot 2003: 101; Miller & Taube 1993:60) and this one appears to be a ballplayer of some importance (Schele & Mathews 1998:244), judging by the jaguar pendant. Perhaps this is the place where offerings were made to the ballgame, to the resurrection of the Maize God or to different causes associated with the GBC.

The difference between the east and west end panels is notable. Like in the LTJ register A, on one side there is the Maya style, and on the other the Chichén style. Perhaps these warriors represent the past and the present, both unified in one structure. Their emergence from a vision serpent from the breath of the Maize God stresses that both warriors originate from the same roots, that all people trace back to the Maize God. Schele and Mathews designate the Maize God as the instigator of holy wars (Schele & Mathews 1998:244), but it is not clear on what they base this interpretation.

One of the figures on the column bears a name that has been discussed in chapter three. The name of the figure with the serpent and the star can be translated into Maya as Kan (serpent) Ek’ (star). This is the hereditary title for rulers that was common in the area around the Petén Lake. Its presence here forms part of Erik Boots argument for the origins of the Itzá (Boot 2003:102). Here these figures are carrying a bag that is often labelled an incense bag, and it seems to belong to certain political offices (Schele & Mathews 1998:245).

The South Temple seems to mix different concepts together. There is the reference to fertility or the centre of the world, a link to past and present and warriors, and high ranking individuals. The Chac Mool provided a place for offering to one or all of these concepts. The placement of this structure on the south edge of the ball court, the association with high ranking individuals, and the fact that it is a very wide structure made it ideal for a number of (elite) individuals to watch the ballgame or the rituals associated with them. I believe the main function of this structure is as a type of high status seat for the attendance of events.

**The Upper Temple of the Jaguars (UTJ)**

The west platform of the GBC, forming the western edge of the playing alley had three small structures on top. Only their foundations remain. The eastern platform also had three structures, two small and one large (Boot 2003:107). The large structure is the Upper Temple of the Jaguars, and it is located on the southern side of the east platform, on top of the LTJ with its entrance facing towards the playing alley. It can be accessed via a narrow stairway leading up from the outside of the GBC, directly to the south of the LTJ. This leads onto the east platform, from where a broad staircase leads up to the entrance of the UTJ. The structure is built up with two vaults, and has two corresponding rooms. The facade is open and supported by two large serpent columns and a smaller doorway separates the outer from the inner room. A table or altar was found supported by fifteen small atlantean columns. This was probably located in the outer room of the UTJ (Schele & Mathews 1998:241).

Like the NT, the structure’s shape is derived from the Puuc Maya tradition, with a sloped batter supporting a high vertical wall with a very large frieze. The decoration, however, is taken
from central Mexican motifs, making this structure a good example of the Chichén style. This structure is most heavily decorated on the outside as well as on the inside.

![Figure 21. Plan and section of the UTJ. Adapted from Schele Drawing 5073 and Schele & Mathews 1998:228.](image)

The iconography of this structure extends around the facade, with the large frieze decorating the outside. There were three door jamb panels on either side of the entrance to the outer room, and five on each side for the inner room. The doorway to the inner room had a decorated lintel and two decorated columns supported the facade. In the outer room there was the atlantean altar and remains of mural painting have been found, but they are nearly all gone because the facade had collapsed (Breton 1906:166). In the inner room there are seven panels with extensive mural painting, recorded by Adela Breton at the start of the 20th century. Since then many of the murals have disintegrated further. The murals at some points extend to the vaults of the room.

**Description**

**The facade**

The balustrades of the stairs leading up from the platform to the open facade of the UTJ (image 27) bear a depiction of the frontal jaguar-bird-serpent with a human figure emerging from its maw. At the top of the balustrades there are feathered serpent heads. Their bodies circle all around the base of the structure and their tails end on the either end of the wide staircase. The columns are sculpted to resemble two large feathered serpents coming down from above. Their bodies are clearly feathered and the rattles of tails can be made out clearly. The tails end in feathers.

The frieze consists of multiple horizontal bands of decoration around the structure. I will describe them from the bottom up, as I have done elsewhere. First there are intertwined snakes like the ones dividing the registers in the LTJ and on the GBC rings. Like on the ballcourt rings there are eyes looking out from the spaces between the bodies. Above this there are prowling jaguars alternating with round decorated shields with tassels, which hang over the intertwined serpents below. This horizontal band is what gave the UTJ its name. Above this there is another band of intertwined serpents, followed by a bans of undulating feathered serpents. In the spaces
left by the bends in their bodies there are sets of three circles below and sets of colonettes above.
Next there is another set of intertwined snakes with eyes and then, mounted on the edge of the roof, there are round shields with three arrows or spears crossed in front of it and a type of decoration protruding from either side.

**The atlantean altar**

The altar was held up by fifteen so-called ‘atlanteans’ (image 28). This term refers to the small truncated sculpted figures that make up the legs of this large platform. Even though the figures appear to be similar, their costume varies from figure to figure. Most wear pillbox hats, some with a point and some with a down flying bird. Many have mosaic collars, although others have butterfly pectorals or other decoration on their chest. Varying loin cloths are worn by most of the figures, and nose plugs also vary. The only thing that is the same for all of them is their position with their arms raised up over their heads, supporting the big incised slab on top.

The surface of the slab is decorated with a very large bas-relief (image 29). This panel shows two figures, one partially damaged, one complete. The complete figure to the left seems to be lying down, legs pulled up but apart. In one hand he holds an atlatl and in the other a bundle of darts and a bent object, known as a ‘fending stick’. It was possibly used as a throwing stick (Schele & Mathews 1998:230, 374 note 72). One arm is padded with ballplayers’ padding and he wears knee bands and one ankle band. He wears a pillbox like hat combined with a feathered headdress, a large beaded collar and a back mirror. From his stomach there is an arrow or dart pointing up towards his face.

The figure to the right is standing up, wearing ankle bands. His left arm is padded and he is holding a bundle of darts. He seems to be bearded and wears a chest or ear disk with a face on it. Above him there is another atlatl, it is possible that this figure is extending his arm, holding the atlatl up. Behind him there is a large mosaic snake undulating upwards and at the top of the scene part of a serpent head is visible.

**Door jambs**

All of the door jambs depict figures standing between two registers that depict the flower-headed Itzá symbol that was also present on the balustrades of the South Temple. Of the six panels of the outer door jambs (image 29) of only four drawings were available, two on each side. Of the inner jambs (image 30) all but one panel on the north side have been drawn. All of the figures wear plan sandals, knee bands, back mirrors, and have two rounded feathers attached to their pillbox hats, in which there is some variation. All but one carry an atlatl. Above their heads hover name varying name glyphs. Many have a knotted loin cloth with a string of knots hanging down at the front.

The north outer jamb panels depict three figures24 with mosaic collars and butterfly pectorals. All have atlatl and a bundle of darts, but only the centre figure (to the right in image 29) has ballplayer padding on one arm and he wears a pointed pillbox hat. The outer and inner figures wear large round ear flares with faces on them, while the centre figure has an image of a Tlaloc head surmounted with a serpent head (Schele & Mathews 1998:229). The outer (left in image) figure bears a name glyph of a type of plant, perhaps a bundle of grass or reed, the centre

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24 Even though there is no image available of the third figure, it is described in Schele & Mathews 1998:229
figure bears a four part blossom as name, and the last has a top view of a frog as name (Schele & Mathews 1998:230), as seen with the 7th figure in register A of the LTJ (image 8).

The south outer jamb panels depict warriors with ‘incense bags’ as well as dart bundles. All of them wear mosaic collars and round ear flares. The left and centre figures have a jaguar pectoral (Schele & Mathews 1998:230), like the Chac Mool of the South Temple and the right figure has two fending sticks instead of atlatl and darts. The inner outer figure has a jaguar name (Schele & Mathews 1998:230), the centre one (left in image) a mosaic serpent and the outer figure has a speaking human head as name.

The figures of the north inner jamb can be described shortly as follows. The first has a butterfly pectoral, incense bag, and a type of cape. His name glyph is a flint knife with a flower and above him is a decorated disk, perhaps a stylized serpent eye. He is speaking. The second figure has a mosaic collar, one dart, a small head on the right near his feet and to the left a disk, what appears to be a butterfly pectoral and a pillbox hat. His name glyph is serpent and he is also speaking. The third figure has a pointed pillbox hat, a cape, an incense bag, a mosaic collar and a rattle snake tail near his feet. He is also speaking and his name is alligator. The fourth figure also has a cape, an incense bag, a mosaic collar and a flint collar, a butterfly pectoral on his pillbox hat, is speaking, and his name is 2 rodent or dog. The fifth figure has 2 feathers as name glyph (Schele & Mathews 1998:230).

The first south inner jamb figure is the same as the first north inner jamb, but without the cape. The second figure has the same name as his counterpart in the north, but he has a padded ballplayer arm with an arrowhead sticking out at the top, he carries an incense bag, and he has an ear bar instead of a flare. The third figure is speaking, has a type of vessel as name glyph and has a padded arm with arrow, a fending stick, darts, and a mosaic collar. The fourth is also speaking, he has a mosaic collar, a jaguar pectoral, a padded arm with arrow, an incense bag, and his name glyph is not entirely clear. The last figure has the same name as the fifth figure in the north and he is wearing a large butterfly pectoral and above the scene there is another stylized serpent eye.

The lintel

All three sides of the wooden lintel above the inner doorway (image 31) have survived. In the image, the bottom drawing represents the inner panel and the top is the outside panel. The inner panel is framed by two serpent heads with wide open mouths. On the left there is a large sun disk cartouche depicting a figure seated on a jaguar throne. He is carrying two atlatl darts and a feathered object, and he is wearing a mosaic collar, a large ear flare and bar and an elaborate beaded and feathered headdress. A speech volute with serpent characteristics hangs in front of his face. In the centre of the panel there is a large bowl with rounded objects, perhaps tamales, stacked up in it. Above this there is a face with flowery vines growing out of its eyes, reminding of the lower registers of the LTJ columns (images 3 & 4). On the right there is another figure, possibly in a seated position. He has a padded arm and is carrying an atlatl and darts. He is wearing what appears to be a beaded shirt and his headdress features two rounded feathers. Behind him there is a large feathered serpent facing towards the centre.

The central panel again features two figures. To the left a figure is seated, wearing a skirt beaded in a net pattern and a back mirror. He is holding an atlatl and a fending stick. His headdress is beaded and shows at least one rounded feather. He seems to be speaking and behind him there seems to be another feathered serpent. Behind him there is a large-nosed face. This is perhaps the same figure as on the other panel. In the centre there is another bowl with tamales
and to the right there is another sun disk with a figure inside. This is probably the same figure as in the inner panel. He is seated on a jaguar throne and is wearing a beaded and feathered headdress with the Sak Hunal band, a bar pectoral, a mosaic collar and a . In one hand he carries a fan or small sceptre and in the other a bundle of darts. Again he is accompanied with serpent featured volutes.

The outer panel depicts the same scene once more, with the seated feathered serpent backed figure, the bowl of offerings and face with flowery vine eyes and the sun disk with the Sak Hunal crowned figure seated on the jaguar throne, speaking of serpents.

The murals

The murals in the inner chamber of the UTJ are very elaborate and detailed. There are seven panels spread out over the walls and at least some of the vaults have also been painted. Of these vaults only part of the west and south vaults have been documented. Because of the large scale of the paintings, I will not discuss them in great detail. I will try to describe the main focal points and general layout of the murals, in order to keep the analysis clear and organized. I will start with the east panel, then move to the right around the room. The mural panels are divided by thick clear blue lines, and a red base line. All of the panels have a basal register on which the main scene rests. It is important to keep in mind that myself, as well as most researchers are mostly relying on the paintings by Adela Breton, who painted and partially reconstructed the original scenes.

The east panel

The east panel (image 33) is the only panel that shows only two figures. There is a basal register that depicts a figure lying on its back. The figure is wearing a green dotted shirt or dress and a green headdress. Above the head there is part of a yellow and green serpent. This reminds of the basal register of the north wall of the NT (image21), and perhaps of the lower panels of the end walls of the ST. The remains of a blue background are just visible around the head of the figure. This basal register differs from the rest of the basal registers, which show the same scene.

The lower part of the main scene depicts alternating blue and yellow vertical bands, perhaps they are wooden supports against a blue background, as the top part of the panel suggests. To the left there is one figure with a square green collar, long blond hair with green beads, a Sak Hunal headpiece, green wristbands and a headdress with long green feathers. He is carrying atlatl and darts and is speaking, while some yellow rays of power emanate from him. The right figure wears a large yellow disk on his chest and on his headdress, which is blue-red with three feathers sticking up. Seemingly yellow ornaments decorate his face, he wears a yellow or white arm band and also carries atlatl darts. He is accompanied with many yellow rays of power and small darts. He is backed by a large yellow-green feathered serpent. His hair is also blond. The lower half of these figures has been too damaged to be reconstructed.

The southeast panel

To the right of the east panel is the southeast panel (image 34). The basal register has suffered extensive damage, but there are remains of green and yellow scrolls visible with red accents. In the left top corner there is a red and white flower.

The scenes are set against a green background. Most of the lower half of the main panel has been damaged, with only fragments of the scene remaining. Several figures are partly visible
standing or walking directly on the blue divider. There is part of a spiked yellow roof visible in the centre, to the right of which a warrior is carrying a round shield and wearing a green collar. At the left about halfway up the panel there is part of person visible with his arms tied behind his back, wearing a red and blue headdress.

The bottom right area of the panel shows a row of warriors standing directly on the blue divider with round shields with red rims and blue or white inside, fending sticks and atlatl darts. One figure is seated. There is a small graffiti line drawing of a person holding out rounded objects, drawn over the mural.

Above this initial row, there is another row of figures, standing on a new base line. There are figures with fending sticks, round shields and atlatl darts. One figure is completely black and holding a spiked banner. One figure is wearing a butterfly pectoral, a type of fan, and a blue-red-yellow tiered headdress with long green feathers. He is speaking, his speech volutes red and yellow-blue. Next to him there is another black figure, and then a figure with a blue feathered headdress.

Above this row, there is a another base line that suggests hilly terrain. One figure wears a long cape, and another black figure is present. Two figures a seated atop a hill, one dressed in blue. Another blue figure is seated to the right. To the top left of this scene there are yellow, green, and blue scrolls underneath several ornately dressed, partially damaged figures.

In the mid section of the main mural panel two large red bands are accompanied by figures carrying round shields, atlatl darts and wearing headdresses with rounded feathers. One figure has his atlatl loaded and stretched above his head, aiming downwards into the damaged section.

Above this, the hilly terrain continues and there is a villages with many structures, some with extended spiked roofs. Many figures dressed in white are shown inside the houses, none carrying weapons, some women. In one of the centre houses a seated figure is wrapped in white cloth, and in front another house at the top left a bowl of offerings and an incense burner are depicted. To the left and right of the village forests are shown with large red trees and green leaves. Many animals figure inside these woods.

Emerging from the woods at the top left there are two warriors accompanied by red and white scrolls. The left warrior is surrounded by a yellow rimmed blue Venus sign and his volute is red and yellow. His headdress has a blue Mohawk and long green feathers. To his right, the other warrior has a green headdress with two white feathers and a large green (mosaic?) collar. His atlatl is stretched out backwards, ready to throw.

The south panel

This (image 35) is one of the best preserved mural panels in the UTJ. Apart from some damage to the left and to the basal register, most of the mural remained intact at the moment Adela Breton drew it. The basal register has a blue background and shows two reclining figures with their hands held up to the blue divider. They have elongated heads with red and green feathered headdresses. Around and between them there are vines with flowers.

On top of the dividing line there is a broad red band showing a row of figures and yellow houses with round pointed roofs. To the left three figures with white and blue capes are seated. Among them a blue vessel stands on the ground in front of what appears to be a set of banners. To the right some figures are standing and two are kneeling in front of a figure seated on a type

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25 Snakes, birds, monkeys, and an anthropomorphic jaguar or coyote at the top left.
of box with a fending stick, large green feathered headdress and a light blue butterfly pectoral. He is backed by a large yellow-green feathered serpent. In front of him tow figures seem to be carrying a blue-red vessel toward him. Above this scene a yellow-green disk hangs in the air.

Behind the seated feathered serpent figure, there are three more seated figures, two wearing butterfly pectorals and also sitting on boxes. Headdresses vary. At the right of the red band two figures are seated on boxes opposite each other. One has a butterfly pectoral and the other a yellow feathery cape. The right figure is speaking.

The top of the red band serves as the base line for the large scene above. The scene is a jumble of figures, many with round shields with rims and insides coloured red, blue or both, some have intricate designs and some have tassels as decoration. Again others are red with yellow rims and green or blue tipped yellow tassels or even red and blue tassels. There are many different designs. Many figures are carrying bundles of darts and have their atlatls loaded and ready to throw. Some darts are depicted separate from any figures, seemingly in mid-air or stuck in a figure’s body.

There are three large scaffold-like constructions visible in the main scene. The left one shows crossbeams on the bottom and above that a platform with a figure standing on it. This figure is accompanied by a large yellow-green feathered serpent. The middle tower is the largest with four levels. On the second floor there is a badly damaged figure that was accompanied by a feathered serpent that at least had a yellow underside, like the yellow-green feathered serpent. The figure on the fourth level has a beaded shirt and shield and wears a two feathered pillbox hat. He is holding a bundle of darts and his atlatl is stretched out backwards, ready to throw. He too is backed by a large feathered serpent. The third scaffold has three levels, with another feathered serpent warrior at the top, atlatl ready. One figure seems to be kneeling atop this third scaffold. What appear to be ladders are put up against the side. With all three scaffolds, figures appear to be attempting to climb them.

Between the first and second scaffold there is a long yellow like diagonal notched object resembling a tree trunk ladder, with a number of figures climbing and descending it. Left of the bottom of this ladder there is a figure seemingly depicted upside down as if he fell off. In the extended diagonal of the ladder there is a warrior, atlatl ready, who is backed by a red and white serpent.

At the same level on the right there is a large sun disk or cartouche that is very similar to the ones in the LTJ and NT. Inside it is a seated figure with an elaborate green feathered headdress who is holding a green feathered fan-like object. Attached to this there is a long red and yellow serpent with a red volute coming from its mouth. Apparently lying in one of its bends, is a figure surrounded by what appears to be the yellow rimmed blue Venus sign that was described in the southeast panel.

At the top of the south panel there are two neat rows of in total 11 house structures set against a blue background, some with seated figures inside. Figures with round shields are depicted between the houses. One figure appears to be female, wearing a long blue skirt, a white head cloth and no weapons. This figure appears to be working with a netted object. To the right, two sets of figures are seated opposite each other.

At the top of the scene, between the houses there appear to be three floaters or floating figures, similar to the ones seen in the North Temple. The left one is suspended in a green and

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26 North wall top left and right, north vault top centre.
The south vault

In the vault above the south panel a large fragment of the mural painting has been preserved and drawn by Linda Schele (image 36). At the base of the vault there is a row of figures. From the left a figure with a fending stick and an elaborate headdress is speaking and has his hand to the back of a plain figure, who in turn has his hands to the back of a figure with a simple turban or pillbox hat. This figure has his hands to the back of another plain figure who is speaking. In front of this figure there is a construction like an upturned house roof on three poles, with poles or banners sticking out from the top.

Behind these initial figures there are three poles or spears with rounded objects stuck in the ground. Behind these poles there is a jaguar with rays of power.

The next scene depicts a man reclining on a rounded stone. Two squatted figures are holding down his legs and arms and a standing figure is bent over him with his hand outstretched towards his chest. Behind the standing figure a large serpent with rays of power raises up, large volutes coming from his mouth. To the right there is a row of figures carrying shields, darts, atlatls, and a small bowl. Two figures wear horizontally striped capes.

Above this row there is a base line for another row of people. In the centre a figure is holding his round shield down and elaborate volutes come from his mouth. Opposite him is a figure with a large headdress, a feathered cape, darts and a round spiral shield. This figure is also speaking and is pointing his atlatl straight ahead at the first figure. Behind him is a figure with an elaborate headdress, atlatl, darts, and round shield looking and speaking backwards to another figure. The figure facing him has a down flying bird headdress and is also speaking. He is holding a fending stick and an atlatl, a shield and darts lie at his feet. Behind him there is another figure with shield and darts speaking. The figure to the right, as well as the ones above this row are all looking and climbing or jumping upwards, with atlatls and fending sticks stretched back.

The southwest panel

In the southwest panel (image 37), the basal register is the best preserved out of all the mural panels. Now the two reclining figures holding up the main mural are very evident, as well as the centre from which the flowery vines sprout. There is a small figure also emerging from this centre and there would probably have been one on the other side but that area was damaged.

Like in the south panel there is a band that sets the first row of figures apart from the rest of the scene, here green instead of red. In it there is a row of figures seating in front of yellow rounded structures, most with pointed roofs. Some are sitting on boxes, some are wrapped in white cloth, blue and green feathered headdresses alternate. In the doorway of a larger rounded yellow house without pointed roof, there are two figures with green feather capes, both speaking. Opposite the front figure in the doorway there is another seated figure with a blue feather headdress.
Directly next to this scene there is another pointed yellow house with a figure sitting in front of it, speaking. In front of this figure there is another figure with the same blue cap and white feather, holding a fending stick and stretching his padded arm forward. A large yellow and green feathered serpent seems to emerge from the house or behind this figure, and yellow scrolls or rays of power emanate from him. In front of him there is a large bowl with rounded objects and a large round rubber ball. Behind the ball is a banner construction on poles, similar to the one in the south vault. Next to it there is a white thatch roof on poles.

Facing this central scene there are three figures seated in front of two pointed roof houses. They are wearing white clothes and green pillbox hats with down flying birds and one white feather sticking out and they have green nose plugs. The front figure is speaking a red and yellow volute.

Behind them there are two banners on poles, another thatch roof, and perhaps another large ball. A figure is squatting in front of a blue-red vessel holding his hand up to his face, opposite a figure seated on a cushion. This figure has a yellow and blue feathered cape, is holding a bent stick and his other hand is pointing to the vessel and squatted figure. He also has a green feathered headdress with down flying bird. He is produces a large yellow-green and blue-red volute that is attached to a large yellow-green feathered serpent, who in turn has a yellow volute emerging from its mouth. Behind this figure there is another yellow pointed house with a figure dressed in white seated in front of it.

The top of the first band serves as the base line for the second row of figures. To the left there is a house structure with a round object inside. At the entrance a figure with a white head cloth and a blue skirt is seated on a pillow. The next scene portrays three people seated in front of a fourth. The first figure is speaking white and red to the second figure who is looking back and also speaks. The third figure is opposite the fourth, with the same blue-red vessel as in the bottom row between them. The fourth figure sits in front of a yellow rounded house with pointed roof. He is dressed in a yellow-blue feathered cape, wears a blue-green down flying bird headband and butterfly pectoral, holds a bent stick over the vessel and has a yellow-blue-red speech volute. Behind the house there is a similar scene with two figures sitting opposite each other with the red and blue vessel between them. The left figure is seated on a box, holding a bent stick and has an intricate yellow-blue-red volute.

The next scene depicts a seated figure opposite one with a yellow-green feathered cape who has a blue volute. He wears the same blue-green headband as seen before. Behind him sits a figure with a white two-feathered headdress, holding a bent stick. The last scene to the right also shows three figures. The middle figure has a green feathered cape, a yellow-red-blue volute, and a bent stick held over a blue-red vessel. The left figure face him and the right figure sits behind him dressed in white, with a white bent stick and a white volute.

In the bottom centre of the panel there is a large sun disk or cartouche as seen in the south panel and the NT and ST. The outer ring is red, the middle ring blue, and the inner ring is green. Inside there is a figure seated on a square box or seat. In one hand he holds a bundle of darts, in the other a green feathered fan. His large green feathered headdress seems to have an alligator snout, and he has a blue-green-yellow-red speech volute. From the cartouche itself a yellow-red and a yellow-red-blue volute sprout, and near the bottom two green flowers decorate the rim.

The main scene is a chaos of figures in loose rows. Their individual dress varies, but most carry a bundle of darts and have their atlatl loaded and stretched out behind them. All of them
carry round shields although the colour scheme varies, like in the south panel. Many have speech volutes near their faces, in varying colours. Near the centre, above and to the left of the cartouche, one figure appears to be depicted upside down.

In the lower half the figures mostly wear loin cloths, knee bands, back mirrors, ankle bands, and they are looking towards the upper half. In the upper half, the figures mostly wear white long shirts, a type of back rack, bulbous headdresses with two long blue feathers, shields with half moon designs and they are facing down, towards the other group of figures.

Some trees are depicted near the borders of the panel and near the top of the panel a large village is present. Between the houses white dressed warriors are shown, but also the figures with blue or red skirts and white shirts or head cloths. Some carry small bundles on their backs. In one house three figures sit in apparent conversation, the right figure holding a square red object. From another house a figure emerges holding a red rimmed bowl.

Several elaborately dressed individuals are shown throughout the panel. At the centre left one figure is has blue bands crossing his torso, he is carrying a red-rimmed yellow shield with green dots, a ready atlatl, and he is backed by a rectangular red panel and a large yellow-green feathered serpent with a yellow-red volute. From this figure yellow-red rays emanate. The same figure is depicted to the right of the main scene, with an elaborate green feathered headdress and a green feathered back rack. Behind this second feathered serpent figure there is a figure carrying a bundle of darts, an atlatl, a blue-green headdress with down flying bird and two rounded white feathers. He is also backed by a red rectangular panel, but he is also accompanied by a yellow white mosaic serpent with yellow-blue-red volutes. Yellow rays emanate from both figures.

At the top of the panel there two interesting figures. On is backed by a red rectangle, emanates yellow volutes or rays, and has a yellow-red volute. For the rest this figure is quite normal with a back mirror, atlatl, darts and headdress. To his right there is a partially damaged figure with a half moon shield seated on a square seat with yellow-blue volutes.

In the top right corner of the panel there is a small portion of another cartouche with green-yellow-blue-red volutes attached to it.

*The west panel*

The west panel (image 38) is the doorway to the outer room. The door jambs and lintel have been described elsewhere. What remains of the west mural is a register above the doorway and part of the vault mural.

In the register above the lintel there is one large figure lying on its back. The figure is dressed in a long brown gown with green dots. From the green waistband a yellow-green serpent emerges, stretching out towards the head and feet of the lying figure. Its bodies are adorned with yellow, blue and red flowers and the mouth of the left serpent is wide open and, presumably, so was the right serpent’s mouth. This figure reminds of what remains visible of the basal register of the east panel (image 33) and the basal register in the NT and the lower panels of the ST end walls.

Above this register, a small portion of the vault mural remains. There is a procession of figures, figures dressed in white holding or touching nude figures. The front figure carries a green-yellow-red object or banner. The central scene shows a figure lying on his back over a rounded stone, a kneeling figure holding his feet. Another figure is standing over the lying figure and a yellow-green serpent seems to be undulating behind the scene. This image is very similar to the base line of the south vault (image 36).
The northwest panel

The basal register scene of the northwest panel (image 39) is similar to that of the other panels, with two reclining figures amid elaborate flowery vines. In the bottom right corner a fish might be seen.

The basal band has been damaged, but the remains of a yellow round pointed house are visible, as well as a standard with banners, and some nude figures in front of two dressed figures with green feathered headdresses, one with a shield and darts. Behind them a blue figure is holding the head of a nude figure, but the scene to the right has been damaged. Three graffiti figures are visible on and near the yellow house.

The main scene is very complicated. In the lower half of the panel there are several blue painted figures with round shields. In the lower centre two blue figures hold a red bar and are standing behind a kneeling brown figure with his hands tied behind his back, the rope wrapped all around his body. To the right are several seated figures, one with an elaborately decorated red robe.

Left of the large banner there is a seated blue figure with a red volute conversing with a squatted normal figure. Above the banner there is a row of seated or squatted figures and to the right of them there are some standing figures, the most left of which has his hands tied behind his back.

Above these scenes there is a row of standing figures. In the centre of the panel, below the large red band there is a figure with an elaborate green feathered headdress and a yellow feathered cape. To his right there are two brown figures and one blue one with a red volute. To his right there is a figure with a bundle of darts, a yellow-red tasselled shield, a blue cape with white stripes and a green feathered headdress with one round red tipped white feather. To the right there are two figures in more elaborate dress, They have round shields, darts, and headdresses. Between them is a nude brown figure with his hands behind his back. Above them there is another more elaborate blue figure and perhaps an upside down brown figure.

A large reddish brown curved band separates a village from the lower half of the panel. Directly to the left of this band there is another banner stand. To the left of this banner stand there is a warrior in a yellow-blue Venus sign, backed by a yellow-red serpent. To his two yellow bowls with rounded objects stand on the ground. Above this a large yellow-red-green-blue cartouche depicts a yellow-green seated figure with a large green feathered headdress, green feathered fan in one hand, and yellow-white volutes near his mouth. The cartouche is decorated with stylized yellow-green-blue serpent heads, and a large green feathered ornament is attached to the bottom.

In the village there are many blue warriors with round shields and atlatls. Some seem to be holding brown figures by the head. One brown figure in the centre seems to be pierced by an atlatl dart. In the top right of the panel two figures with blue skirts and red shirts seem to be lying on the ground, a blue man standing over them with a large object held over his head. To the right a blue figure is grabbing a brown figure by the head and arm while speaking yellow-blue volutes. There are only three possible brown warriors present in the village and one of them, on the right, seems to be attacking and grabbing a blue skirted, presumably brown, figure.

At the top of the panel yellow-green-red volutes are partly visible.
The north panel

The basal register of the north panel (image 40) is almost completely gone but the partial green headdress visible suggests the same scene as in the other basal registers. The lower half of the main scene has been destroyed, and only fragments of the centre remain.

In the bottom left of the main panel there are some warriors with round shields and some banners visible, moving or looking up towards the central area of the panel. Above this, in the complete upper left section of the panel, the background shifts from green to blue.

In the centre there are many figures with rectangular, blue or yellow rimmed shields below two houses and a tree. On the right and upper right there are yellow caped figures with the familiar round shields, facing or moving towards the rectangular shielded warriors.

To the left of the houses there are four warriors with red backgrounds, as seen in the southwest and south panels. They are backed by yellow-blue-green scrolls. One of them seems to have a rectangular shield. In the top two warriors, the scrolls seem to form yellow-green-red-blue stylized serpents, the one at the top left being the most elaborate. Above the houses there are two more warriors with red backgrounds, supported by yellow-green-blue stylized serpent bodies, one standing, one seated or reclining. Above this there is another large pointed cartouche, its contents damaged. To the lower left of this, three more red background warriors are depicted. The top one is backed by a thin yellow-white serpent body, the left one by a yellow-green serpent, and the right one by a yellow-green feathered serpent. This last figure also carries a red-rimmed yellow round shield with green dots, very similar to the two figures to the left and right of the southwest panel.

The top section of the north panel containing these figures on a blue background is filled with coloured scrolls and volutes, and some more figures have been present but have been damaged too much to be recognized. In the top right there are three nude figures standing beneath a banner standard.

The northeast panel

Of the northeast panel, two different copies have been made: one by Adela Breton (image 41) and one by Teobert Maler (figure 22). The description will be based on both copies. The basal register of the northeast has completely been erased, but one can assume that it would have contained the same scene as in the other basal registers. The main scene has also suffered extensive damage but a central section has been preserved reasonably well. The scene is set on several red hills against a green background. Alongside trees, some cactuses are depicted, which is unique in the UTJ.

On the left there is a large yellow-white serpent, a round shielded warrior with back mirror and darts emerging from its jaws. Below this there is another partial round shield belonging to one of two warriors and the extension of the serpent body. The figures on the first red hill are crouched and facing these serpent warriors. One figure with a rectangular shield is about to throw a long spear towards them, and several spears appear to be in mid air. In the drawing by Teobert Maler it is clearly visible that these spears are aimed at the rectangular shielded warriors.
At the bottom of the hill there are several more rectangular shielded warriors in a row leading up the second hill. Some have headdresses with three sticks or straight narrow feathers sticking up. In the drawing by Maler, from below several spears are pointing upwards towards the last mentioned warriors.

On the third red hill more rectangular shielded warriors are facing the other way amid copious vegetation, some with long decorated spears held in their hands. From the top of the hill some figures are crossing some kind of bridge to the fourth red hill. To the right of this red hill there is one round shield visible, as well as part of a yellow-green serpent body.

Above the scene a figure is seen standing on a platform, apparently blowing some kind of horn.

**Interpretation**

The facade is what signals to the function of the structure to the outside world. The feathered serpent imagery refers to Kukulkan, as a deity or a particular political or military office at Chichén. The serpents on the frieze, on the basal platform and in the shape of large columns indicate that this was a very important political and religious structure. The jaguar too is a very important religious and political symbol throughout Mesoamerica. It was the most dangerous predator to man and its skin was often used on thrones and by powerful warriors. In combination with the tasselled shields it provides a very powerful military symbol, as is seen in Cholula and Teotihuacan (Boot 2005:267). The shield and spear emblems on the very top of the roof were called *tok'-pakal* in Maya and are symbols of war (Boot 2003:108; Schele & Mathews 1998:227). The facade of the UTJ sends out a very clear message of religious and military power.

The Atlantean altar is probably not an altar. It has been interpreted as a tabletop throne (Boot 2003:108) where one or more high ranking people may have seated. The Atlanteans themselves all are dressed individually, displaying different military or political ranks. They are literally positioned underneath the figures that would have been seated on top, in a supporting function to the seat of power. The image on the throne seat one bearded figure backed with a mosaic serpent standing over a lying figure. The mosaic serpent is the war serpent, and the
standing figure is perhaps standing victorious over the defeated enemy. This would be a very powerful image for political and military elite figures to be sitting on top of.

The door jambs all figure the flower-headed Itzá symbol in their top and basal registers (Schele & Mathews 1998:229), possibly identifying the depicted figures as Itzá. The strings of knots attached to the loincloths have been identified as a sign of penis bloodletting rituals (Schele & Mathews 1998:229), but even if that is true they do not seem to actually be in the middle performing the ritual, like the figure in the top register of the NT north vault (image 22). The figures in the door jambs seem to be figures in varying ranks named by the glyphs above them. These names probably represent individual or lineage names (Boot 2003:108; Schele & Mathews 199:230). I believe they represent lineage names because the same names reappear with multiple figures. The figures on the door jambs might have served as a elaboration of the military theme on the façade, as symbolic guards to the doorways or symbolic assistants to the people allowed inside the structure.

The lintel depicts three times the same scene. A feathered serpent backed warrior is sitting opposite what was earlier interpreted as a current ruler or ancestor figure seated on a jaguar throne in a sun disk or cartouche with a bowl of objects between them. The vine eyed head in the centre was earlier interpreted as personified mountains in the primordial swamp. Their presence here could mean that this scene takes place in a world other than the human one. The figure in the cartouche could then be an ancestor that is being consulted about important matters. Taking the Sak Hunal headband into account, it could also be the current supreme ruler, consulted in a ceremony requiring a ritual travel to another world. The ruler-ancestor is speaking a stylized serpent head, possibly a referral to the war serpent if the theme of the structure is taken into account.

The murals that remain are located in the inner room of the UTJ, where they were probably not visible from the outside. Access might have been reserved to high ranking individuals. I do not believe the mural panels depict a chronologic pattern depicting the trajectories of the sun and Venus (Coggins 1984). The mural panels probably depict separate sacred historical events, not in any clear chronological order.

The basal registers of all the panels except the east panel feature reclining Pawahtuns supporting the scene above, like they support the sky. Like the basal register of the LTJ (image 7), the flowery vine surrounding them and the remains of aquatic animals suggests that they are in the primordial swamp, connecting the panels to the creation of the world and of Chichén Itzá. The basal register of the east wall is similar to the basal register of the NT (image 21), with a figure identified as the Maize God (Schele & Mathews 1998:236) lying on his back wearing a long spotted or mosaic robe and two serpents emerging from the stomach. It is unclear whether the serpents here also feature flint knives in their mouths.

The east panel of the UTJ featured two figures. These have been identified as Captain Sun Disk and Captain serpent, the same figures as on the lintel (Coggins 1984:163). But I believe the Captain sun disk identity does not match in the east panel and the lintel. The serpent backed figure could be the same figure or someone in the same office but that is not necessarily so. This figure does seem to be wearing goggle eyes and perhaps a mouthpiece similar to the central figure in the LTJ relief, register B. That figure in the LTJ was interpreted as a Kukulkan, introducing the feathered serpent. The figure here too is intimately connected to the feathered serpent. The figure on the left has been associated with the sun because of his blonde hair and also with the yellow maize silk (Schele & Mathews 1998:233). But the fact that both figures seem to have blond hair
seems to suggest another explanation, although the precise meaning is uncertain. The left figure does wear a Sak Hunal headband, identifying him as of the ruling class. The lower part of the scene suggests that these figures are seated on a raised platform. Perhaps they were seated in conversation about important matters. Perhaps, if one continues the theme of the structure, they were discussing warfare.

The southeast panel depicts events taking place on a backdrop of hilly grass lands. The village in the upper area of the panel is located in a forest with a thriving wildlife. The yellow round houses with pointed roofs are probably temporary thatched houses or tents, used in military campaigns or travel. The scenes shown inside the houses could represent daily life going on inside these houses. Unlike interpretation of a peaceful scene near water (Coggins 1984:159; Schele & Mathews 1998:234), I agree with William Ringle that this is a battle scene; fragments show figures with arms and atlatls raised (Ringle 2009:24) and to the left of the scene one figure appears to have his arm bound.

The round shielded lower figures seem attacking the village of white dressed figures. The red curved bands are not canoes but defensive walls behind which the white dressed figures are defending themselves. To the left there are the outlines of what could be seen as a ladder used to climb these walls. The arm bound behind a back at the left of the panel might suggest that the victors took prisoners of war. From the top left two warriors enter the village, accompanied with red and white scrolls. Because of these scrolls these figures could have a supernatural aspect, being ancestors. Another possibility is that they are especially high ranking individuals. The left one is surrounded by the sign of Venus, specifying him as a special warrior or ancestor. The exact meaning of the Venus warrior is unknown.

The south panel depicts a large battle scene. The blue area in the village probably belongs to a previous layer of painting. As there are no clear borders to the blue and houses and people are located in the middle of it, I do not believe that water is depicted here as part of the battle scene. The red base above the blue divider represents the camp of the round shielded attackers that are coming from the bottom. Several meetings or conversations are taking place among the temporary houses, between the different war banners. The serpent warrior in the centre seems to be receiving gifts, perhaps tribute. The main scene shows an attack on a village, which apparently has a natural advantage or defense system because large siege towers and log ladders are needed in the assault (Ringle 2009:23). Boots suggestion that the scaffolds could be litters (Boot
(2003:110) does not seem logical because they are multi-storied, have no carriers and people seem to be climbing them in the middle of battle. The attackers are climbing up ladders and apparent hills to meet the defenders coming downhill, dressed similarly as their opponents. The figures atop the siege towers are serpent warriors, perhaps in function of leading the assault. The figure with the red-white serpent could be another high ranking warrior of a different order or rank than the feathered serpent warriors. The figure in the cartouche to the right could be an ancestor guiding the warriors in battle accompanied by the (supernatural) Venus warrior who seems to be floating on a yellow-red serpent. Above the scene three floaters, or ancestors look down onto the battle scene.

The vault has a base row similar to the wall panels in the UTJ. Here warriors are leading prisoners towards the centre, past war banners and a possible tzompantli scene; the rounded objects spiked on the spears could be interpreted as heads. The central scene depicts a possible sacrificial ceremony. The standing figure is performing the sacrifice and a large feathered serpent rises up from the scene. From the right ranking individuals are attending the ceremony or bringing gifts or offerings. Above this basal band another scene, warriors moving towards the missing top of the scene, brandishing. This could be another battle scene, but the lack of opponent makes a battle dance also a possibility. Especially in combination with the elaborately speaking high ranking individuals in the bottom centre above the sacrificial scene.

The southwest panel features another battle scene on relatively flat grassy land outside another village. The basal line again portrays the military camp of the attackers. Many negotiations or conversations are taking place outside and inside the temporary housing. In the centre a powerful feathered serpent warrior is seated with offerings in front of him below the war banners, with several people attending the apparent ceremony. Whether the serpent warrior is receiving gifts or if they are performing a ritual offering of the material is not entirely clear. On the right a feathered serpent warrior seems to be seated in front of a drum, speaking about feathered serpent related subjects. In the scene above at least two, possibly three, drums are depicted in scenes of conversation or deliberation, involving yellow-red-blue speech, similar to the colours of the drum. In the central cartouche an ancestor or ruler is also speaking yellow-red-blue, possibly encouraging the warriors in battle. The cartouche on the top right suggests another ancestor present in the events, or the same ancestor at a later time.

The familiar round shielded warriors are again attacking upwards, now advancing in lines. The white dressed, blue-feathered enemy is advancing to meet them outside the village. The attackers are supported by two instances of a very powerful feathered serpent warrior with a red-rimmed yellow shield with green crescents, similar to the shields on the façade of the UTJ. These figures might depict two individuals of the same high rank or they might be one (supernatural) figure depicted twice in the same battle. On the right this figure is accompanied by a figure backed by a white mosaic war serpent. In the village the long skirted figures with head cloths are women fleeing from the scene, carrying their possessions on their backs. From the top, like in the southeast panel, several warriors attack from a different side, one emanating rays of power and one seated. Perhaps some or all of these individuals are supernatural.

What remains of the imagery of the west vault is the same lying down figure that was located in the basal register of the east panel, directly opposite the west panel. Here the figure is better preserved with most of the body remaining and a large portion of the two serpents emerging from the stomach. The scene above shows a possible sacrificial scene, one figure being held down lying on his back on a rounded stone. Behind the standing figure a yellow-green
serpent rises up. To the left naked figures are being led to the central scene, perhaps to attend the ceremony or to serve as sacrifices.

The large lying down figure has been interpreted as a sacrificed Maize God at the creation of the world (Schele & Mathews 1998:236, 375 Note 79). Here this sacrificed Maize God figures directly underneath a sacrificial scene. Like from the stomach of the maize god, a yellow-green serpent emerges from the sacrificial scene. This sacrifice might be a re-enactment of the creation story, where the world was created after the sacrifice of the Maize God. This sacrifice was then connected to the creation of the world of the Itzá as well as to the battle scenes depicted in the UTJ.

The northwest panel shows an attack on a walled village. At the bottom line, there are the remains of a military camp just visible with war banners shown in the centre. Some of the round shielded attackers are painted blue, while other attackers, mostly elaborately dressed, are the normal brown colour. The village is protected by a bread red band as the ones shown in the southeast panel (image 34), probably a defensive wall. To the left of this wall more war banners are set up. In the village the opponents are as if taken by surprise, the lack of opposing warriors is striking. The blue figures attack women and men, taking many captives and holding weapons in the air above figures already lying on the ground. In the lower half of the panel there are many nude figures with their hands tied behind their back being ushered by the blue attackers. Because the blue warriors belong to the side of the round shielded attackers, I suggest that perhaps these blue figures are a type of warrior used especially for the taking of captives in battle.

To the top left of the scene there is another cartouche with an ancestor-ruler inside. This time the cartouche is even more elaborately decorated with stylized serpent heads. To his left there is another of the Venus warriors as seen in the southeast and south panels (images 34 and 35).

The north panel shows a very distinct opponent than was seen before. The familiar round shielded warriors are present in the lower area of the panel, again attacking upwards. Opposing them are many warriors with rectangular shields, many blue-rimmed with white centres. These warriors are centred around a small settlement of which two houses are visible.

The background to this battle scene poses a problem. The majority of the background shows traces of green paint, suggesting a setting of grass land or other vegetation. Like in the south panel (image 35), the upper area of the panel has a blue background. In the south panel this was interpreted as a previous layer of paint coming through the final layer of paint. But here there are no houses suspended in the blue area, only figures surrounded by scrolls. I believe that there is a possibility that the battle is set in a hilly region, shown against a background of blue sky. This would mean that the scrolled figures are in the air, suggesting that they are indeed supernatural figures like ancestral warriors supporting the battle from the spirit world. The cartouche in the centre top is empty, but one would expect the same ruler-ancestor as in the other cartouches.

The northeast panel shows a completely different landscape than the previous mural panels. These red hills have been suggested to represent the Puuc hills or southern Oaxaca, taking into account the vegetation and likeness to the Mixteca-Puebla style (Ringle 2009:25). Again the round-shielded warriors seem to be attacking upwards, although very few figures remain visible in the damaged mural. They are being led on by an important warrior emerging from the open mouth of a serpent, atlatl ready. The defenders have square shields like the figures in the north panel, although the rest of their outfit does not match. They are defending from the top of the red hills below the remains of what appears to be a stone platform of structure, perhaps the
reason for the attack. The remains of a round shield to the right of the red hills in combination with the spears from the left and below suggests that the round shielded warriors are attacking the rectangular shielded warriors from all sides.

The mural panels in the UTJ all except the east panel depict battle scenes. These battles generally show round shielded warriors with atlatls and darts as the attackers, usually attacking from the lower part of the mural panels, aided by possibly supernatural ancestor warriors. The identity of these round shielded warriors seems consistent throughout the several murals, making it possible to tentatively identify these warriors as the Itzá. The fact that the landscapes of the battle scenes and the opponents of the Itzá vary, suggests that these battles are individual episodes (Ringle 2009:22) rather than one single chronological campaign (Coggins 1984; Schele & Mathews 1998).

Judging by the iconography of the facade and the subject matter of the murals in the inner room, the theme of the UTJ undoubtedly is war. However it is not only war. The feathered serpent imagery brings in an aspect of religious and political power, and the reclining Maize Gods on the east and west walls point to a context of creation, as is present in all of the separate structures that make up the GBC. I agree with William Ringle that these battle scenes pertain to historical or sacred-historical battles of importance to the ruling elite of Chichén Itzá (Ringle 2009:21-22).

I believe that these battles served an important purpose. In Codex Bodley lord Eight Deer is offered the symbols of rulership by lord Four Jaguar (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2005:63), similar to events taking place in the NT. But Eight deer only came to the attention of Four Jaguar through conquests made, and after he received the symbols of power he again went on the war path to conquer various towns (Jansen & Pérez Jiménez 2005:62-63). At Chichén Itzá the concepts of accession and battle figure within the same architectural complex. So perhaps here too, as the UTJ seems to suggest, going into battle is connected to accession to the throne. It is as if the battles were a rite of passage for a ruler to legitimize his eventual rulership.

The Great Ballcourt Complex is made up out of five parts. The LTJ displays the historicity of Chichén Itzá to the people in the main plaza, showing the creation of Chichén Itzá in connection to the creation of the world. The NT shows the rituals and ceremonies surrounding accession to the throne at Chichén Itzá, again in a setting of creation. The Great Ballcourt Alley is a place for the ceremonial reenactment of the creation story of the Maya, as well as a point of contact between the normal world and the underworld. The South Temple is a place that connects past and present and reaffirms Chichén Itzá as located at the centre of the world through the world tree imagery. It also provides a location for offering to the different aspects of the GBC. And, finally, the UTJ continues the theme of creation but adds an aspect of legitimization of rulership through warfare.

**The Temple of the Warriors (TOW)**

The Temple of the Warriors is one of the largest structures adorned with serpent columns. The structure is in the Chichén style and is located on the north-eastern corner of the main plaza and, together with the West colonnade, forms the eastern edge of this plaza. The TOW was built over the temple of the Chac Mool, and its orientation was shifted slightly to have the entrance point directly at the UTJ, suggesting this structure is of later date than the GBC (Ringle 2009:16)
The Northwest Colonnade consists of four rows of sixteen columns and is attached to the east of the pyramid platform, to the front of the structure. Because the NWC was rebuilt to accompany the TOW (Kubler 1993:293-295), and it uses square instead of cylindrical columns I argue that this was an integral part of the TOW. These columns were decorated on all four sides with bas relief figures and supported a large vaulted roof, creating a roofed entrance area around the staircase leading up to the pyramid (Miller:266-267).

The summit structure of the TOW sits atop four talud-tablero style platforms with large sloping bases and narrow, almost frieze-like bands. The decoration of three sculptured bands has partly been recovered. The entrance to the temple is framed with two large serpent columns and a Chac Mool sculpture was placed just in front of the entrance (Morris, et al. 1931).

The temple structure is divided into two chambers; the inner and outer chamber. The outer chamber contains two rows of six columns, supporting three corbelled vaults running along the an approximate north – south axis. The inner chamber or inner sanctuary has two rows of four columns, also supporting three corbelled vaults on an east – west axis. Inside this inner room, against the back wall a tabletop throne like in the UTJ was located, supported by Atlantean columns. Along the side walls there were stone benches, decorated with bas-relief rows of warriors (Morris, et al. 1931).

The iconography is spread throughout the structures of the NWC and the TOW. The 60 columns of the NWC are all decorated on four sides with standing figures. A complete analysis falls outside the scope of the present thesis, and therefore I will discuss different types of figures, as identified by the Carnegie team (Morris et al. 1931), to get a basic idea of the colonnade iconography. Inside the colonnade, to the right of the stairway leading up the TOW there is a dais, decorated on three sides with bas relief figures and on top with a painted stone panel. And finally, on the back wall of the NWC some fragments of mural painting were found.

The TOW was decorated both outside and in. On the north and west sides of the basal platform traces of polychrome mural painting were found. The vertical edges of the platform tiers were decorated with bas-relief, three of which have been partly recovered. The facade of the structure was decorated with several anthropomorphic figures and the main entrance was framed with serpent columns and decorated door jambs.
Inside the TOW there were in total 20 columns supporting the vaults, decorated with human figures on all four sides. Like in the NWC, discussing all of them separately does not fall within the scope of the present work, so some examples will be discussed, again following the categories of the Carnegie team. In the inner room there were two benches and an Atlantean altar with little bas-relief imagery, but no extensive iconography remains on these objects.

The rooms of the TOW were decorated with elaborate mural paintings. Because the temple structure had collapsed, these murals have been largely lost, leaving fragments spread throughout the rubble. In their excavations, the Carnegie team divided the structure up in 36 areas between the columns. Based on their positions, the fallen stones with mural fragments were assigned to these areas (Axtell-Morris 1931b:382). I will use the area designations that Axtell-Morris devised, but in a different order.

Description
Because it is the structure surrounding the stairway leading up to the TOW, I will describe the Northwest Colonnade first. After that I will move on to the outside and subsequently the inside of the TOW. The Carnegie team divided the structure into areas in a systematic way that is inconvenient for the description of the mural fragments. I have chosen to start in the outer room and move clockwise along the walls of both rooms separately, starting left of the entrance. Therefore the numbers of the areas do not seem to be ordered logically, but the description moves along the wall, giving a sense of which fragments belong where on the wall. Figure 25 on this page can serve as a reference.

NWC jamb and columns
Because the northern edge of the northwest colonnade was walled, there is one decorated jamb that figures on the end of this wall (image 42). There are three registers. In the basal register the frontal vision serpent is depicted, with a human head emerging from its mouth. On top of this, in the middle register, there is a Pawahtun with an elaborate headdress, ear flare and nose plug. He is wearing a cut shell pendant, a large conch shell on his back, and two elliptical

![Figure 25. Plans of the Temple of the Warriors. Numbers indicate areas; letters indicate different artists. A: Adapted from Schele Drawing 5034 (redrawn from Morris et al. 1931); B: Axtell Morris 1931b:382, figure 272.](image-url)
PENDANTS ARE HANGING DOWN FROM HIS LOIN CLOTH. HE IS HOLDING UP THE TOP REGISTER WITH HIS HANDS. THIS FEATURES THE ERODED OUTLINE OF A HUMAN FIGURE, HOLDING WHAT APPEARS TO BE AN ATLATL AND A FENDING STICK.

THE NWC FEATURES IN TOTAL 61 COLUMNS, EACH DECORATED ON FOUR SIDES GIVING A TOTAL OF 244 FIGURES. DISCUSSING THEM INDIVIDUALLY WOULD TAKE UP A LOT OF TIME AND TEXT, SO I HAVE DECIDED TO DISCUSS A FEW EXAMPLES THAT ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FIGURES TO BE FOUND. JEAN CHARLOT RECOGNISED SEVERAL RECURRING TYPES OF PEOPLE AND NAMED THEM WARRIOR, SORCERER, PRIEST, DIGNITARY AND PRISONER. I WILL DESCRIBE COLUMNS 1, 8, 37, AND 60 IN ORDER TO PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF THESE FIVE TYPES OF FIGURES.

ALTHOUGH SOME COLUMNS HAVE ONLY PARTLY BEEN RECOVERED OR RESTORED, JUDGING BY THE REMAINS THAT ARE PRESENT IT SEEMS SAFE TO ASSUME THAT ALL OF THE COLUMNS FOLLOW THE SAME ICONOGRAPHICAL PATTERN. THEY ARE DIVIDED INTO THREE REGISTERS, LIKE THE JAMB DESCRIBED ABOVE. THE BASAL REGISTER FEATURES THE FRONTAL VISION SERPENT THAT FEATURES ON THE NWC JAMB AS WELL AS MANY OTHER STRUCTURES. THE CENTRAL REGISTER DEPICTS ONE INDIVIDUAL FROM ONE OF THE CATEGORIES MENTIONED, AND THE TOP REGISTER DISPLAYS A SUN CARTOUCHE FROM WHICH A HUMAN FIGURE DESCENDS, HOLDING AN ATLATL, DARTS AND A FENDING STICK. A TYPE OF SCROLLS ALSO FIGURE IN THE TOP REGISTER AND A VINE SEEMS TO EMERGE FROM THE FIGURES HEAD.

Figure 26. Plan of the NWC with identifications of the figures on the columns. Charlot 1931:268, figure 171.

COLUMN 1 (IMAGE 43) DISPLAYS FOUR FIGURES THAT CHARLOT HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS WARRIORS (SEE FIGURE 26). ALL WEAR SANDALS, ANKLE AND KNEE BANDS, BALL PLAYER PADDING ON ONE ARM, AND EAR FLARES AND THEY CARRY AN ATLATL IN ONE HAND AND DARTS AND A FENDING STICK IN THE OTHER. THE HEADDRESSES AND CHEST DECORATION VARY AND SOME HAVE SMALL GLYPH LIKE SIGNS FLOATING NEAR THEIR HEAD, SIGNIFYING RANK OR LINEAGE. THE FIRST FIGURE WEARS A HEADRESS WITH MANY ROUNDED FEATHERS, A MOSAIC COLLAR, A KNOTTED LOIN CLOTH AND SCROLLS NEAR HIS MOUTH SEEM TO SUGGEST SPEECH. THE SECOND FIGURE WEARS A LARGE COLLAR COVERED WITH A BUTTERFLY PECTORAL AND ALSO A KNOTTED LOINCLOTH. TWO ROUNDED FEATHERED PROTRUDE FROM HIS PILLBOX HAT. THE THIRD FIGURE WEARS A LONG FEATHERED CAPE AND HOLDS UP HIS ATLATL. HE ALSO WEARS A LARGE MOSAIC COLLAR AND A LONG FEATHERED HEADDRESS WITH ONE FEATHER PROMINENTLY POINTING UP. THERE IS A SMALL SPEECH SCROLL NEAR HIS MOUTH AND IN FRONT OF HIS FACE THERE ARE TWO BIRD HEADS. THE FOURTH FIGURE WEARS A LONG FEATHERED HEADDRESS WITH AN ELEMENT EXTENDING FROM THE FRONT AND WEARS A LONGER SKIRT OR GOWN. SMALL CIRCLES HOVER IN FRONT OF HIS FACE.
According to Charlot, column 8 (image 44) features three dignitaries and one sorcerer. All the figures wear (green) sandals and (green beaded) kneebands. Scrolls and perhaps identity markers hover above their heads. The first three wear a knotted skirt and a collar with a large disk on the chest, nose bar and ear flare, and seem to wear the same headdress with what looks like a bowtie or knot on the forehead. They carry what appears to be a (black/blue) club or stick with appendages. Figure one carries a rectangular shield with a yellow (feather?) rim, around a white rectangle with an orange edge and he appears to wear a long cape. Figure three also has the rectangular shield like figure one, only his skin is dark and his headdress seems slightly more elaborate. The fourth figure is very different. He wears a sombrero like headdress decorated with feathers, but different from one seen on the north wall of the NT (image 21). On his chest he wears a matted collar. He seems to be carrying a type of bag in one hand and a serpent staff in the other.

Prisoners, Charlot writes, are the subject of column 37 (image 45). And indeed, all four figures on this column appear to have bound hands. The last three figures wear a long colourful (feather) cape, but other than that the figures’ appearances vary. Figure one wears a feathered serpent headdress with its body undulating behind him, like many other figures throughout the previously mentioned structures. He wears a large chest disk like the figures on column 8. Pawahtun like pendants hang from his pleated skirt. Figure two has a butterfly pectoral, a zoomorphic nose plug, and a feathered headaddress featuring two rounded feathers and what seems to be foliage. He is speaking scrolls and a bird hovers above his head. Figure three has a regular nose bar, but his headdress seems to be shaped like a flower, with large leaves or feathers. The symbols above his head are unclear. The fourth figure wears a blue peaked headaddress or pillbox hat combined with a row of blue/red/yellow feathers. He wears a jaguar pectoral and a small nose plug. Above his head hovers what appears to be a small round shield with long tassels.

Column 60 (image 46) then, features four priests. All have long hair wear long skirts with wide belts, nose bars and ear flares, and they carry a bowl of objects or offerings in one hand, while the other hand seems to be placed on the chest. The first three wear a face pendant around their necks, for the fourth this is unclear. In front of their faces there are scrolls, but they seem to be directed towards them instead of emerging from their mouths. Figure one wears a red skirt with green dots and two intertwined rope pendants, and a peaked hat with feathers. Figure two has the same dotted skirt, but has a feather decoration hanging from his belt. His headdress is the same sombrero hat as figure four of column 8. Figure three wears the same hat, but his skirt is red with a yellow crosshatch pattern. The intertwined rope hangs from the front of the belt. Figure four also wears a dotted skirt and the same feather back decoration like figure two, but the headdress worn is more elaborate and seems to have turtle elements to it, like a small face and a shield pattern.

NWColonnade dais

The Northwest Colonnade features two daises, one on either side of the TOW main stairway. Only the one on the right was decorated and will be discussed here. It is shaped like the talud-tablero tiers of the pyramid platform, with a sloping base and a small vertical register topping it. The iconography is located on the north, west and south sides, as well as on top of the dais.

The north side (image 47) juts out from the wall. In the top register there are two large undulating yellow-green feathered serpents facing each other. Form their mouths human figures
with blue headdresses holding atlatls appear and between them there is a vessel containing certain objects. The main register displays eight figures with varying feather headdresses, facing towards the west side of the dais. Many carry atlatls and darts, as well as fending sticks. The first three figures wear back mirrors and seem to be speaking. The fourth, fifth and sixth figure are backed by large serpents, as found in the iconography of the Great Ball Court Complex. Figures five and six are carrying a rattle snake rattle in their right hands and figure five arm has ballplayer padding. Figure seven seems to be wearing a blue mask and his headdress features another green mask as well as elaborate decoration. He also carries a small blue stick in his right hand. Figure eight carries a round Itzá shield and to his right there is a serpent head just visible.

On the west side of the dais (images 48 & 49) there are 16 figures facing towards the centre of the main register. The top register features two serpents like on the north side. The human figures carry fending sticks and darts, and one figure seems to be holding a burning stick above the central vessel. All except three figures (11, 12 and 16) are backed by feathered serpents varying in colour between yellow-green, yellow-blue, yellow-white, and yellow-red. Although individual traits and colours may vary, most figures wear back mirrors, feathered headdresses, atlatls, and darts. Some figures wear chest disks, and some have padded ballplayer arms. Figure eleven is backed by a large yellow-blue swirl instead of a serpent, and figures 14 and 15 seem to be wearing a star sign much like the star warrior from the UTJ. The central scene shows a white rounded object with a blue band and three small supports. From the top three yellow rounded bars protrude. Speech volutes emerge from the mouths of the snakes backing the two central figures.

The south side of the dais (image 50) also portrays the two serpents in the top register with the human figures emerging from their mouths, only the central vessel seems to be more similar to the object in the centre of the main panel of the west side. In the main panel, the figures are again facing towards the west panel, as if they are forming the end of the procession or line. The first two figures carry blue decorated staffs, round shields and wear blue masks and mask headresses, like figure seven of the north side. Only figures three and six are backed by serpents, but figure four is backed by a vine in a similar way. Figures seven and eight wear serpent turban headdresses, as seen with some figures in the LTJ.

The top panel of the NWC dais (image 51) is depicts eight visible figures in two rows on a red background. The bottom left figure has a blue feathered headdress, is wearing a blue back mirror, and carries a feathered sceptre or perhaps atlatl, as seen with the ancestral ruling figures in the cartouches in the UTJ. The figure next to him is wearing a star like skirt, much like figures 14 and 15 on the west side of the dais. The figure carries an atlatl and is speaking, with extra yellow volutes surrounding him. To the right another figure carries the feathered sceptre and wears a red skirt, blue feathered headdress, and blue back mirror. The figure on the extreme right is carrying a dark blue wavy stick, wears a face pendant and a blue feathered skirt. His left arm is padded and he carries a fending stick and some atlatl darts. He is either wearing a mask or he has goggle eyes with a blue rim and a red centre. By his left hand there is a crosshatched yellow object. The first figure on the top row has a blue feather headdress and carries a fending stick. The figure next to him also has the blue feather headdress and carries darts in one hand and probably an atlatl in the other. Next there is one of the most elaborate figures, wearing a yellow rimmed star skirt and a headdress that differs slightly from the rest. He carries a feathered sceptre in one hand and fending stick and darts in the other, as well as the crosshatched object that the fourth figure of the bottom row had. A large yellow volute hovers above his head. To the right there is a figure
like the one below it, only his skin is dark blue too. He carries the sceptre and fending stick, has the blue-red goggle eye, an elaborate blue feathered headdress and is backed by a large dark blue volute that seems a continuation of the wavy staff of the figure below.

**NWC wall**

The back wall of the NWC, north of the main staircase apparently had remains of mural painting on it (figure 27). From the top of the bench along the wall there were four coloured bands of about 13cm in the following sequence: black, blue, red, and yellow. Above that, large undulating spiked serpent bodies were represented, its segments coloured yellow, blue, red, green, and white. Flowers decorated the body (Axtell-Morris 1931a:438).

![Figure 27. Fragment of mural painting on the back wall of the NWC. Morris et al. 1931 figure 294.](image)

**Exterior murals**

The outside of the TOW was covered in at least 131 layers of lime, the 22nd of which from the wall, was painted (Axtell-Morris 1931a:435). The painting was as large as the basal platform would allow (Axtell-Morris 1931a:437).

On the north side a large section of painting was recovered (image 52). On a red background, starting from the left of the remaining fragments, there is a figure holding an incense burner with flames seemingly coming out of it. The headdress is yellow with green feathers and a white disk on the forehead and the clothes are decorated with knots. A yellow/blue scroll hovers in front of the figure's face which shows signs of green goggle eye. Next there is a brown/white hairy creature standing on its back legs, wearing a red/blue band and back mirror. Ann Axtell-Morris described it as a compound animal of a bear and a coyote (Axtell-Morris 1931a:434). A yellow scroll hovers above its head. To its right there is a yellow skeletal figure wearing a blue garment and feathered decoration. It wears bowtie like blue ankle, knee, and wristbands. A blue Mohawk decorates the skull and a flint knife is stuck in the nose. In its right hand the skeleton holds a red flint knife and in its left it holds a human head by the hair. A blue/red flint knife is attached to its skirt and yellow volutes accompany the figure. Next there is a large white bird with spread out wings and legs, identified as a Harpy Eagle (Axtell-Morris 1931a:435). To the right there are the remains of a green feathered headdress. Next the next figure is a large white scorpion with a humanoid face, which is right next to a figure who is completely coloured yellow. The legs suggest another skeletal figure. From the skirt a flint like pendant hangs down and knotted bowties adorn ankles, knees and wrists. In its left hand there is a rounded object, and in the right another human head. To the right there are the coiled body of a serpent and the head of a hairy grey doglike creature.
On the south side of the pyramid, the same type of mural painting was absent due to an earlier collapse (Axtell-Morris 1931a:436-437). The fragments that remained were the heads of a furry dog like animal (figure 28), wearing a blue necklace. One wears an ear flare in the location where it would be on a human head.

![Figure 28. Exterior mural fragments from the south side of the TOW. Morris et al. 1931, plate 165.](image1)

Although some of the plaster on the exterior of the basal platform had remained in place, the only other location where mural painting has been found is on the top tier directly below the cornice on the north side of the pyramid (figure 29). Some painted red scrolls have been found in situ there (Axtell-Morris 1931a:437).

![Figure 29. Painted red scrolls on the upper tier of the basal platform of the TOW. Axtell-Morris 1931a:437 figure 293.](image2)

Facade

The facade of the TOW consists out of several architectural and iconographical elements. Here I will describe the balustrades of the main stairway, the three sculptured bands on the basal structure, the serpent columns, and the sculptural elements of the facade.

The balustrades of the TOW were engraved with bas-reliefs of large feathered serpents on either side of the stairway, leading up alongside it (figure 30). Only the tail sections were recovered. The rattle on the end of the tail is clearly visible, identifying the serpent as a rattle snake. On either side of the rattle there are two stylized serpent eyes, like the ones seen on the wall ends of the LTJ (images 1 & 2).
Three of the sculptured bands have been partially recovered (Image 53). All three seem to have been a repetition of the same scene, a human figure opposite a varying type of animal. There are three types of animal: one is an eagle much like the Harpy Eagle on the exterior murals of the TOW (image 52); one is a furry feline or canine creature with long nails and a short tail, also like the one found on the exterior murals; the third animal is much like the previous animal, only the skin appears to be less furry and it has a long tail. All these animals are squatting and holding a rounded object on one claw.

Opposite the animals there is a human figure reclining. They wear knotted ankle, knee and wristbands, much like the skeletal figures of the exterior murals. They have large ear flare bars and nose bars and goggle eyes. Their headdress is turban like with a broad band on the forehead and a knot at the top. A broad belt or waist band and a large collar are worn over a long gown or tunic. With some figures long beaded hair seems to hang down their backs. They hold a long stick decorated with the same knots as they wear and perhaps long feathers at the end. On the side that is held towards the animal there seems to be an incense burner, with many smoke scrolls emanating from it. The incense burner is also paralleled in the exterior murals, where the knotted skeletal figures wield them.

The facade of the temple structure (figure 31) itself is decorated with elaborate sculptural elements. The two serpent columns supporting the doorway into the temple have large sculptured heads protruding from the base of the columns. The column itself is entirely decorated with feathers and the tail again juts out and up from the tops of the columns. The rattles on the tail again are clearly visible. Although they were eroded badly, the tail pieces of the columns feathered to pairs of atlantean\(^{27}\) or Pawahun figures, much like the ones that will be discussed for the Temple of the Chac Mool (Charlot 1931:270).

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\(^{27}\) By that Charlot means figures with their raised above their heads.
The corners of the structure, as well as the central lines of the back and sides, are decorated with stacks of three anthropomorphic heads with long curled noses and elaborate ear flares and sharp teeth (figure 32A). They represent the Witz head that was discussed in the interpretation of the LTJ. In between the stacks of heads the central planes are filled in with the frontal vision serpent with the human figure emerging from its mouth (figure 32B), as features extensively on the columns in the NWC and in other locations. Here the image is recreated at large scale with a sculptural mosaic, making the image emerge from the wall in very high relief.

Figure 31. The entrance of the TOW, showing the serpent columns with the location of the atlanteans on the square panel at the top. The Chac Mool and other sculptural elements are also visible. Schele drawing 5007.

Jambs and columns

The TOW features four door jambs, two on either side of the doorways leading to the exterior and inner rooms. The north outer jamb (image 54) is made up of five panels showing three figures. The first and last panels are representations of flowery vines. The figures are standing on basal registers depicting the frontal vision serpent. All three figures have the
Pawahunt pendants hanging from their loincloths and a cut shell necklace around their necks. They appear to have old, bearded faces, nose bars, and ear flares and they are depicted holding up the top registers, which are mostly eroded. The first figure has knotted knee bands while the other two have beaded knee bands. The second figure wears a turtle shield and the third a conch shell. Their headdresses also vary but are eroded.

The south outer jamb (image 55) follows the same pattern of flowery vines, bearded men with cut shell necklaces and Pawahunt pendants, standing on the frontal vision serpent holding up the top register. Here the top register depicts the same descending figure as on the NWC columns. The left figure wears a conch shell, the middle one a turtle shield and the third seems to wear a star shape, similar to the one worn by several warriors on the UTJ murals and on the NWC dais top panel.

The north and south inner jambs (images 56 & 57) follow the same pattern with some minor variations. The flowery vines are there, as well as the basal and upper registers. Although because of erosion it is not entirely visible in the north inner jamb, the pattern of conch shell, turtle shield, and perhaps star outfit seems consistent, as well as the old bearded faces and the positions.

The columns of the TOW number 20 in total, yielding 80 figures. Like in the NWC, I will discuss four columns of the TOW that show the variation of types of figures on the columns: warrior, sorcerer, priest, dignitary, and god impersonator (figure 33). I will discuss columns 10, 11, 12, and 16.

Like the columns from the NWC, the columns of the TOW are divided into three parts: the basal register, the main register, and a top register. Like in the NWC, the basal register portrays the frontal vision serpent and in the top register the human figure descends through a sun cartouche, carrying weapons.

Figure 33. Plan of the TOW, indicating the location of types of figures. Charlot 1931:266, figure 170.
Column 10 (image 58), like the other columns, shows four figures: according to Charlot three ‘dignitaries’ and a ‘priest’. The first two carry a stick which is knotted at both ends diagonally across the chest, and a large square shield. They wear a skirt and a round chest plate, seen in profile. The first figure wears yellow and red bands on his lower legs and a face mask. His headdress has a chessboard pattern band and he appears to be speaking. The second figure has bare legs and a zoomorphic headdress. A small serpent seems to be wound around his neck and there appears to be a ring around his eye. Figure three also has this ring and the serpent around his neck or appearing from his mouth. He wears a serpent or reptile headdress and a collar with a face. Instead of the knotted stick he carries a shorter object with appendages, similar to the object the ‘dignitaries’ on column 8 of the NWC (Image 48) carry. In the inside of his elbow he carries two unidentified objects and his other arm is covered by a cape or possibly a shield of the type seen in figures one and two. His skin is striped, something that will return in other figures. The fourth figure is the ‘priest’, with a serpent staff. His face is old and he has a beard. His headdress is the sombrero like hat that was seen in the fourth figure of column 8 of the NWC.

Figure one of column 11 (image 59) is wearing a normal skirt, a green large collar, a long nosed face mask, and an elaborate feathered headdress. His face appears to be black. He carries, an atlatl and a round tasselled shield. Figure two wears the same mask, a large collar, a different feathered headdress with disks, a chest disk, an atlatl, darts, and a long yellow cape. The third figure carries a fending stick, and an atlatl. He wears a chest disk, a feathered headdress, a long feather skirt, a back mirror, and possibly a mask. The fourth figure again carries a round tasselled shield, but no clear atlatl or darts. His right hand is holding an object. He also wears a chest disk, a feathered headdress and possibly a mask.

The figures on column 12 (image 60) all wear long skirts, chest disks, a broad belt with a blue knot at the front, and they all carry a bowl. Figures one and two both have long beaded hair coming from under a sombrero like hat with long green feathers and a large collar and the content of their bowls are small round balls. The second figure has a green band with a birdlike head attached to the forehead and a crosshatched skirt, while the others have a circle pattern on theirs. Figure three wears a serpent wrapped turban as seen before with long feathers mounted on top, and has a blue ring around the eye. The objects in the bowls of figures three and four are elongated round blue and red shapes. Figure four wears the sombrero headdress.

The first three figures of column 16 (image 61) all seem to carry atlatls, darts and fending sticks, and they wear a back mirror. The first figure has a large collar, a blue butterfly pectoral, a padded arm, and a feather headdress with a small disk at the forehead. The second figure has a large blue collar, a slightly longer skirt, a different headdress, perhaps a blue peaked pillbox hat, and seems to be speaking. Figure three has a blue beaded collar, a feathered atlatl, and also seems to speak. The fourth figure is entirely different from the first three. It appears to be a toothless old woman or fat man in a blue skirt, carrying a staff or walking stick and an incense bag or ceramic vessel. The headdress is less elaborate and the legs are bare.

Mural painting

The outer and inner room of the TOW were covered in elaborate mural paintings. From the ground level to 1.07m there was a black painted zone. Then followed a blue band of 13cm, then a red band of 15cm, a yellow band of 13cm and a final black one of 18cm. The basal zone of the north wall of the exterior room was painted red for unknown reasons (Axtell-Morris 1931a:383). The mural paintings started above these bands and ended at the ceiling, the triangular
pieces of wall in the vaults painted as well (Axtell-Morris 1931a). For some of the larger scenes
the position of the mural fragments on the stones were reconstructed using different techniques
based on stone sizes, colouring and different artistic styles28.

Area 15-16

This is one of two large mural scenes that have been best preserved in the rubble of the
TOW (images 62 & 63). It was located on the dividing wall in the exterior room, to the left of the
doorway. On a broad red basal band there are several dark-skinned yellow-faced warriors with
round shields, fending sticks, and darts. Dress varies, but most wear a blue loin cloth, disk
pendants or square pendants, and varying headdresses with few white feathers. These figures are
leading nude striped figures with tufts of black hair on their heads, hands tied behind their backs.
Amidst the procession of prisoners a yellow-blue feathered serpent rears up from below.

Above this red band there is a large body of water with a white border like the scaly body
of a white serpent. In the bottom left corner there are two striped warriors, brandishing petaled
and tasselled shields and red clothing. One is holding up a fending stick and the other may be
holding an atlatl. Above them another striped warrior is depicted upside down without head,
similar to the centre of the south and southwest panels of the UTJ (images 35 & 37). To the right
there is a striped figure carrying a large load in the shape of a conch shell on his back. In the right
bottom corner of the water there is a zoomorphic representation of a jaguar walking on
its hind legs. In the centre of the water there is a canoe with an figure in it. A petaled shield is just
visible, identifying this figure as a striped one. At the top there is a white structure with a red
doorway and a frieze of colonettes standing in the water. Next to it there is a striped figure in
white clothing, with possibly a large red and white load on his back. In the top right corner there
is the end of another canoe. The rest of the water is filled with water creatures: a crab, a stingray,
fish, conch, and other shells.

To the right of the water there is a village scene set against a green (and red) background.
There are four regular thatch houses and one broad, low house with a frieze decorated with
colonettes. In the two doorways there are striped warriors with raised fending sticks, red and
white shirts, and petaled shields. They also seem to be holding red banners, but they are upside
down. On the roof or behind this structure two more striped warriors with petaled shields and
red and white shirts raise their fending sticks. To their left another striped figure is kneeling with
an load on his back. Above this scene there are the vague remains of a yellow-faced person and
another one right above that, in the red background. Also in the red background there is a
striped figure in a red skirt sitting inside a house. In the house to the right there is a striped figure
with a shield and an atlatl. On the roof there is a yellow-faced warrior kneeling, carrying a round
shield, darts, wearing a chest disk and a white feather headdress. Directly below there is a house
with a yellow-faced warrior inside. Two distinctive plants figure in the village as well as next to
the house in the water.

Area 17

Area 17 (image 64) is directly to the right of area 15-16 and a possible continuation of the
scene. The basal area was occupied with a similar red band as in area 15-16, with a green area

28 For a detailed discussion of the techniques used in the restoration of area 15-16, see Axtell-Morris 1931a:386-395
above and then another red area (Axtell-Morris 1931a:395). In it there are fragments of striped figures and black figures. Fragment A shows a black warrior with a round shield and darts, and above him a petalied shield against a red background. Fragment B shows two striped figures. The top figure is carrying a load on his back and of the lower figure only the head remains. Fragment C depicts the a striped figure against a red background. The figure is lying on his back and his knees are drawn up. There appears to be a notch or cut in the stomach. Fragment C shows the foot of a black figure set against the base of a white structure. To the right and top there is a striped figure lying on its stomach, head resting on the elbows. There is a cut below the left ear from which three streams of blood pour (Axtell-Morris 1931a:397). Fragment E shows a striped leg on a black base. Fragment F presents a banner and part of a bent striped knee, while fragment G depicts a reclining striped figure amongst plants. Fragment H possibly depicts the ends of darts and part of a structure base. Fragment I depicts a warrior with a padded arm and kneebands wearing the star skirt that has been discussed before. Fragment J originates from the vault of area 17 and depicts a separated human head and a foot in sandal (Morris et al. 1931, plate 162d text).

**Area 19**

Area 19 (image 65) also is one of the larger reconstructed remains of mural painting in the TOW. The scene on fragment E is similar to the scenes in the vaults of the doorway and the south wall of the UTJ (images 36 & 38). In this scene there are two kneeling black men with blue clothes holding a man down, outstretched on his back over the curving body of a yellow-green feathered serpent. The brown man appears to be nude and his hair is long, blond and decorated with green beads. Standing over this scene, there are the remains of a third black man with a sun disk headdress adorned with three black tipped white feathers. This person is holding a fending stick up in the air over the reclining figure. Behind this figure there is another, or the same feathered serpent, his mouth open and emanating yellow-blue scrolls. The scene takes place on a white area surrounded by a red background. Behind the standing black figure there is a white structure with a red doorway and a frieze with colonettes.

Fragments A-D are from the vault above area 19, indicating that the theme of feathered serpents and human figures continues. There is one black figure (C) and one kneeling striped figure (D). It is unclear whether the scenes in the vault were related to the wall scenes or not.

**Area 20-21**

These are some of the few areas (image 66) where fragments of mural painting have been found in situ (Axtell-Morris 1931a:398). On fragment A a body of water is visible, bordered by the same white band as in areas 15-16 (image 62 & 63). A figure with long blond hair with green beads is depicted on his back in the water. His genitals are clearly visible, indicating the figure is naked. Below this figure appears a red and white water creature. To the right there is a diagonal depiction of a canoe, in which three round shields are visible with blue rims and decorated yellow insides. Next a large white fish figures, and then part of another canoe. The other mural fragments from these areas figure on separate stones. Fragment B depicts brown bodies on a watery background. The arm of one brown figure is held behind his back by a black skinned figure. Parts of hat might be canoes are visible. Fragment C shows one of the brown skinned blond figures with arms tied behind his back, and possibly part of a canoe. Fragment D shows a colourful fish and what appears to be an oar, while fragment E depicts water plants, with green stems and a yellow-blue and green flower. In fragment F part of a feathered headdress is visible.
as well as part of a canoe, along with a conch shell, and in fragment G there is a black figure in white dress standing in the water, feet submerged, next to a fish and a ray of some sort. Fragments H and I show a fish and two more yellow haired figures, one of which is grabbed by the hair by a black arm protruding from a yellow shield in a gesture that is typical for taking captives.

From area 21 more fragments were recovered (image 67), some from the vault. Not all of them depict aquatic scenes, suggesting the delineation of the water scene. On fragment A there is water with some kind of snail along with a possible wicker hat to the left. Fragment B originates from the vault and shows a serpent head with wide open mouth. Fragment C comes from the top of the wall, showing a small portion of water with the white band around it. Against a red background part of a figure is visible, wearing ballplayer padding, an earplug, and a butterfly pectoral. He carries two darts and a bag or vessel. Fragments D-F are of the aquatic scene, D showing the white border and a fish tail. Fragment E depicts parts of two figures, one carrying a shield and darts and wearing a rounded feather headdress, and one a square pectoral (?), atlatl, and darts. Fragment F features the water border and a figure dressed in a long dotted robe, carrying a long stick.

**Area 14**

This is the last area to discuss from the exterior room, on the south wall of the temple to the right of area 21 (figure 34). Fragment A shows a miniature temple above what could be a thatch roof. Fragment B shows a thin serpent body against a background divided in green and red. To the right there is a hand holding a green object and part of a foot is just visible in the corner.

**Figure 34. Fragments from area 14. Morris et al 1931, A: plate 168e, B: plate 170c.**

**Area 28**

This is the first area in the inner room, directly after entering through the inner doorway. There is evidence that on either side of the doorway directly above the painted bands, there was a row of seated figures facing the doorway (Axtell-Morris 1931a:414). Figure 35 is an example of this: the figure is seated with knees drawn up, the face and arms are black, the figure wears a yellow cape like garment, and carries a shell like object.
Area 25

This is the area directly to the left of the inner doorway on the west wall. Both the walls and the triangular area of the vault were painted, leaving many mural fragments (image 68). Partly because there were so many fragments the Carnegie team was unable to assemble this area into a larger whole (Axtell-Morris 1931a:405). Fragment A shows a red background with a foot at the top, a partial yellow-blue volute at the right and an egg shaped head or object with an eye and feathers or vegetation. Fragment B represents a type of plant resembling the Agave on a black base against a green background. Fragment C depicts a large cactus on the same black base and green background, and fragment D shows a collection of leaves and fruit in the canopy of a tree against a red background. Fragment E, F and G probably pertain to the same scene. The black base line is represented in all three fragments, and against a red background there are various objects. There is a small tree and a white cloth (E), a bowl of round objects, a green feathered headdress or back rack and two more cloths (F), two more cloths and a banner like the one seen in the mural paintings of the UTJ (G). In fragment H, a striped figure with a sombrero headdress and face paint is wearing something very much like the back rack from fragment F. Fragment I depicts a face with a nose bar and ear bar and a Sak Hunal like head band, fragment J a head with white face paint and possibly a sombrero headdress, as well as a partial back rack of another figure. Fragment K has a squatting figure with a blue ear flare, blue feathered headdress, blue nose plug, blue collar, and white shirt. The figure in fragment L is also squatting, but is bare-chested and holding a rectangular object. Above his head there are the feet of a standing figure.

Area 25-22

Because areas 25 and 22 are directly next to each other, some fragments could not be assigned to either area (image 69). They will be discussed here. Fragment A features two partial figures on a red background. The left one has a green nose plug and his arm seems to be padded. In front of his face is a lobed object, reminiscent of the depiction of a heart. The second figure is carrying darts and wears a typical back mirror on a red belt. Fragment B shows the remains of three figures. Of one red and white striped figure only the feet remain, and of another figure only
the elaborate green feathered headdress is present. The third figure is wearing a sombrero headdress and a long red gown with green dots. At his front there is the edge of a yellow-red rimmed rectangular shield with a white centre. He appears to be carrying a long stick. Fragments C-F appear to originate from the triangular vault (Morris et al. 1931, plate 152 caption). Two matched stones form fragment C, depicting two figures with a back mirror, darts, fending stick, and padded arms. The second figure carries an atlatl and is wearing a more elaborate skirt. Behind him the roof of a house is just visible. Fragment D, according to Morris et al., depicts a fenced Agave field. Remains from other stones suggest that the field was square and fenced on all sides. Inside a figure was drawn to a very large scale (Morris et al. 1931, plate 152b caption). Fragment E is the cornice of a white temple with facade decoration like on the UTJ, and fragment F contains some water with a shell, a shore line and green bushes (Morris et al. 1931, plate 152d caption).

Area 22

This is the area in the corner of the west and north walls (image 70). Fragment A is a stone directly from the corner of the west wall, showing the delineation of the panel to the right (Morris et al. 1931, plate 150b caption). The zoanthropomorphic figure depicted to the left has a padded arm, but the hand is replaced by a claw holding a heart. The figure wears a red dotted skirt and a type of white shirt or armour. The skin of the face seems dotted red. In the top left corner of fragment B there is the black face of a warrior with a bird headdress. Instead of a hand he has a bird claw and the rest of his outfit is decorated with feathers. Another one of these bird figures appears in fragment C. Backed by a yellow-green feathered serpent there is a figure dressed in black feathers. Instead of hands and feet this figure has bird claws. He is also wearing a blue back-mirror on a red belt, two red flint knives adorn his plumage, and a white-green panel or disk covers his chest. His hair and face paint appear to be green. Fragment D comes from the north wall (Morris et al. 1931, plate 155 caption), and portrays a human figure with back mirror, a green skirt, and a red and white down flying bird headdress with blue feathers. Fragment E is from the same area and depicts an apparently red and white striped individual with a yellow bird headdress with green feathers. Fragment F shows the lower half of an individual wearing a long dotted skirt and a feathered back rack.

Area 23

Area 23 (image 71) is located at the centre of the north wall of the inner room of the TOW. Fragments A and B are the only human figures to be recovered from this area. The first has a large green mosaic collar and ear flare. His hair is long and blond and his headdress has two white rounded feathers. The second figure is dark skinned and wearing a white tunic. In one hand he carries a round shield, darts, fending stick and atlatl. His other arm and face are missing. Fragments C and D show the upper facade of a temple structure. It is decorated with a step fret motif and round faces decorate the top edge. Fragment E shows a lower portion of the same temple facade (Morris et al. 1931, plate 166c, caption), with spiked diamond shape decorations and a possible human or animal figure on the lower half of the fragment. Fragment F is a composition of multiple stone blocks from the vault triangle above either area 25 or 23. It features a temple platform with a large staircase, adorned with flint knives. At the foot the remains of vegetation are just visible and at the top of the stairs there is a large crouching jaguar next to a large ceramic vessel.
Area 24

This area forms the northeast corner of the inner room, and only two fragments of mural painting were recovered from this area (figure 36). Both fragments depict a variety of different coloured birds against a red background.

![Image A](image1.png) ![Image B](image2.png)

Figure 36. Fragments from area 24 of the TOW. Morris et al. 1931, A: plate 158c, B: plate 158d.

Area 27

The fragments of area 27 (image 72), can originate from either the wall, the vault, or the vault triangle, so they are a mixed representation of the murals from this area (Axtell-Morris 1931a:412). Fragment A features the top half of a figure with an elaborate blue, long nosed mask headdress. The figure has long blond hair and is holding one long decorated Maya type spear in his hand. Fragment B is a figure with no important distinguishable features but a large nose ornament. Fragment C is a red and white striped figure wearing a white star sign skirt with black line decoration and carrying darts. His face is dark with white spots and what remains of his headdress is a black and white crest. Fragment D shows a feathered serpent head in front of some architecture. Fragment E is another serpent head, but without architecture this time. Fragments F and G however indicate that more architecture was to be found in this area. F provides the corner and walls of a structure, and G shows the top of a stairway with a decorated balustrade, and part of a doorway at the top which is closed off by a piece of cloth (Axtell-Morris 1931a:413). Fragments H and I originate from the vault. Because they were high up and hard to see they were painted in a large scale (Axtell-Morris 1931a:413). The fragments show a portion of a large serpent body and a very schematic tree.

Area 30

Area 30 (image 73) is at the centre of the back wall of the inner room. This is where the atlantean altar was located. Unfortunately this altar did not contain any extensive remains of painting other than a band of serpents along the rim of the altar top. Above the altar on the wall, partially in situ, there was the body of a feathered serpent (figure 37). It is very irregular, the body is only done with yellow, and neither head nor tail was present (Axtell-Morris 1931a:415).
Fragment A depicts the green feathered back rack of a standing figure with a colourful belt against a red background. Fragment B and C show aquatic scenes, with a ray or jellyfish and an octopus (Morris et al. 1931, plate 149b,c caption). Fragment D features a familiar subject: a figure with a Venus or star sign skirt and a yellow-blue volute. A hint of what might have been the most important image of area 30 is seen on fragment E. Below naturalistic depiction of a snake there is the unmistakable rim of a sun cartouche, like the ones seen in the LTJ and UTJ, as well as on the capitals of the columns in the NWC and TOW. Fragment F shows a feathered serpent with its mouth wide open. From its mouth a figure in a black and white tunic appears, with a padded arm and fending stick. Fragment G features a similar feathered serpent with wide open mouth but instead of a figure emerging, it is a white piece of cloth. In fragment H, there are the feet of a standing figure with an elaborate back rack, or back crest, and in fragment I a hand is holding a staff or torch next to another back rack belonging to a different individual.

Area 33

Area 33 (image 74) possibly partly continues the aquatic scene from area 30. It probably represented a scene taking place on an island or peninsula: at least three different shorelines were found (Axtell-Morris 1931a:427). Fragment A shows two naked figures lying on a red background. The left figure is male an lying on his back, legs drawn up and arms stretched out above his head. One of his legs, his elbows and his face are painted blue, his eyes are closed, and there is a irregular circle drawn on his chest. Next to him a female figure lies on her side, breast clearly visible. Her leg and elbow and face are also painted blue. Fragment B probably depicts a skeletal figure, with the fleshless jaw, round eye and flint knife protruding from the nose (Morris et al. 1931, plate 150a caption). Above this figure possibly part of a white structure. Fragment C depicts a land mass bordered at least on two sides by a body of water. On the land there is a standard with two banners, much like the ones seen in the murals from the UTJ. A type of shell and fragments of two canoes are visible in the water. A large white serpent with black markings figures on fragment D with its mouth wide open. Fragment E shows more of the temple of which the base is seen in fragment B. Visible is the top of the platform with part of the temple structure. Just like the temple fragment from area 27 (image 72G), a curtain seems to block the entrance of the structure. In front of the entrance a number of vessels stand with, interpreted by Axtell-Morris as jars containing incense (Axtell-Morris 1931a:428). The aquatic nature of this area is continued on fragments F-H. Fragments F and G feature a canoe with a figure set off against watery background. Fragment H shows part of an figure holding an oar.
Area 29 & 32

Area 29 (figure 38A) is exactly in the centre of the inner room of the TOW. Therefore only one fragment of painting remains, originating from the vault. It shows a green man wearing a square pectoral crouching next to a white structure (Axtell-Morris 1931a:414).

![Figure 38. Fragments from area 29 (A) and 32 (B-C) of the TOW. Morris et al. 1931, A: plate 162c, B: 161a, C: 170d.](image)

Area 32 is located in the middle of the room, directly next to area 29. Therefore I will describe the two mural fragments that were found in this area here. The provenience of fragment B from figure 38 is unclear (Axtell-Morris 1931a:427). It depicts a figure dressed with long green feathers, wearing a distinctive headdress. He is holding the arm of a different, red striped figure. Fragment C from figure 38 is identified as part of the roof debris. Against a red background, it shows a serpent body with yellow ventral scales and a white back with many black markings. The other elements in this fragment remain unidentified.

Area 34-35

When the TOW collapsed, most of the south wall fell outward, where the mural fragments were exposed to the elements. Because of this areas 34 and 35 have yielded few mural fragments, and what remains are fragments from just above the painted bands and from the west wall of area 34 (figure 39) (Axtell-Morris 1931a:429). Fragment A depicts a seated figure dressed in white, holding an incense burner from which yellow scrolls arise. The background portrays a balustrade stairway, probably a temple platform. Fragment B shows a figure with a black face, also depicted against a white background, probably some kind of architecture. Another stairway figures in fragment C. Atop the stairs there is an entrance, blocked off by a piece of cloth as seen in area 27 and 33. Fragment D is the only fragment from area 35, and it depicts a figure holding an oar, dressed in a black and white tunic, inside a canoe on a body of water. In the top left of the fragment the long blond hair of another figure is just visible (Morris et al. 1931, plate 162a, caption).
Figure 39. Fragments from area 34 (A-C) and 35 (D) of the TOW. Morris et al. 1931, A: plate 157c, B: 167c, C: 168d, D: 162a.

Area 31

This is the second large scale reconstruction that was possible in the TOW (images 75 & 75). The image is divided into two main areas: a water scene at the bottom and above that a large village scene. The water is filled with various aquatic animals such as various shells, a turtle, fish, crabs, stingrays, and a hermit crab. In the water there are three canoes, each navigated by an oarsman dressed in a white skirt and holding an oar. The first canoe transports two warriors dressed in a brown shirt, a white cap and holding darts, fending stick, red rimmed white shield, and atlatl. The warriors in the second canoe also wear the white cap and carry the same shield but are dressed in a yellow-blue shirt and their darts seem to be longer. Their atlatls, if they are atlatls, are different too. The third set of warriors have the same shield and darts, but wear a green shirt. The atlatl of the first is like the ones from the warriors in the second canoe, while the second warrior carries one like the warriors from the first canoe, but his is white.

The village scene seems quite peaceful. I will describe the base line first and then move on to the upper area of the village. At the bottom left of the village there is a typical house with a porch seen in profile. Below it is a small tree. Next to the tree there is a kneeling figure doing something with a stick on the shore. To his right there is a red piece of cloth with a white line on the floor. Above this there is another house seen from the side with a ceramic vessel in front of it. To the left is the house a figure or object is too damaged to recognize. To the right there is another tree, and a figure dressed in a white loincloth holding a stick or staff, a round object perched on his head. Below this there are two types of banner. One is a long white one standing on two legs, the other is a blue-red fan, also raised up on two legs. To the right there are green feathers apparently not attached to anything. A figure is seated in front of a house seen from the front. Inside the doorway there is a basket with possibly yellow and green fish. To the right there are several different types of tree and a white bird, possibly a heron, and another white animal. To the right of the trees a figure dressed in white is sitting on the shore, near some piles of fish lying on the ground and a blue cloth with a white line and a red cloth with a black design on it. Above this there is a green thatch structure with two doorways, standing on a white base. Inside the left doorway, there is one seated figure, dressed in white. Another figure is just visible. In front of the right doorway a large yellow-green feathered serpent rises up above the structure. To the right of the structure there is a small bundle of the same green thatch that makes up the structure.
In the upper area of the village, starting from the left, there are several figures. The first figure is dressed in a white loincloth and carrying a walking stick or staff. On his back there is a large load wrapped in white cloth. In front of his face there is a yellow-blue volute. Above him there is a small object that looks like a miniature temple, with the blue doorway behind two white almond shapes. To the right there are two figures dressed in white gowns seated on the red ground. Above them are several rectangular pieces of cloth, two light orange and two blue, all with white bands. To their right there is another seated figure, but this one is dressed in a brown skirt and blue shirt. Above his head there is a large yellow volute and in front of him a yellow-blue one. This figure is facing a small house seen in profile. Above and to the right of this house yellow volutes seem suspended in the air, suggesting the presence of figures in the original mural, or perhaps these are emanating from the house. Another possibility is that the scrolls are emanating from the fire to the right of the little house. A seated figure in a brown skirt is sitting in front of a fire with a large ceramic vessel in it. Yellow-red scrolls indicate fire, and yellow scrolls rise up from the fire. To the right of the fire is another neat pile of possibly fish. Above and to the right of the fire there are three standing or walking figures, all in white loincloths. The second one has a walking stick, the third one carries a heavy load on his back, attached to the forehead with a strap. To the right there is another small house, with yellow-blue scrolls emanating from the roof. Above the house there is a kneeling figure dressed in a blue shirt and white skirt, and another tree.

Interpretation
The single jamb that forms the end of the back wall of the NWC depicts a Pawahtun. This is a common motif on door jambs in Chichén Itzá also seen at the LTJ, and UTJ, among others. It might refer to the origin and creation of their world, and may be a sign of the historicity of Chichén Itzá. The lower register presents a frontal vision serpent, making a connection to ancestors. The top register shows a figure descending through a sun disk, bearing weapons. If the sun disk or cartouche is related to ancestry, as suggested before, then the upper register depicts an ancestral figure descending from above. This motif is followed throughout the columns of the NWC and the TOW, connecting the different categories of figures and the structures to ancestry and power.

The categories of figures that Charlot devised for the columns of the NWC and TOW is based on the paraphernalia of the figures depicted. I do not entirely agree with all of the identifications that he made. For column 1 I agree with Charlot that the persons depicted are warriors. The atlatl, darts, and fending stick that they carry all have figured in the battle scenes in the UTJ, indicating that they are warriors. Their rank or lineage may vary along with other characteristics like name glyphs or various types of headdresses and dress.

The point where I disagree with Charlot are the dignitaries figuring on column 8. They do not carry atlatls, darts or fending sticks, but they do have a type of club and two of them carry a large rectangular shield. The fact that in the murals of the UTJ there are many warriors with rectangular shields, even though they apparently oppose the Itzá, leads me to believe that these ‘dignitaries’ are actually a type of warrior from a different order, descent, or rank or unit than the ones with atlatls and darts. The ‘sorcerer’ type, also present on this column, appears to be a kind of religious and perhaps political specialist, if he can be identified by the serpent staff. This possibly identifies them with the figures attending important events in the LTJ. The sombrero hat may be a specifying marker, of which the meaning is unknown.
The figures on column 37 indeed seem to be captives. Their dress varies, often the only feature connecting them is the fact that their hands are bound. Their location around the bottom of the main stairway to the temple might be significant in reminding people of the military power of the Itzá. The ‘priests’ that figure on the columns in the south of the NWC all carry bowls with possibly offerings, identifying them indeed as priest or a different kind of religious specialist.

The entrance to the TOW is surrounded by imagery of different types of warriors, religious specialists, and nearer to the stairs prisoners. This would have given anyone passing through this colonnade a sense of awareness of the political, religious and military power of the Itzá.

The feathered serpent on the dais is a reference to the frontal vision serpent, with an ancestral figure emerging from its mouth. The vessel between the two serpent heads might be an incense burner that provides a way of connecting to the world of the ancestors. The row of figures seated below these serpents might then be a reference to ancestral figures. The variation in this group of people is quite substantial, perhaps another reference to different offices, lineages and ranks all attending the events of the central scene. This might portray a ritual event connected to the frontal vision serpent, with a type of incense burner and ritual speech. The presence of many figures of many ranks and lineages on the dais, and even in the colonnade, suggests that this ritual had an inclusive character. The painting on the top of the dais does not present a clear focal point. The two figures on the right are reminiscent of the important figure with goggle eyes in the LTJ, but then again goggle eyes alone occur more often throughout the iconography. This, together with the presence of different types of figures on the altar supports the inclusive character of the dais and the NWC. Perhaps the imagery on the dais is a representation of the events that took place in the NWC. The benches along the wall is where different ranking figures could sit and attend a ritual concerning the summoning of a vision serpent and consulting ancestral figures, taking place on the small stage provided by the two daises on either side of the stairway.

The large painted serpent on the back wall of the NWC might have served to amplify the effect of the sense of power with such an important symbol of power and religion.

Moving on to the TOW, the exterior murals are somewhat of an anomaly. Of the many layers of lime that covered the face of the temple platform, only one layer had paint on it. The goggle eyed figure is burning incense, something done throughout Mesoamerica to communicate with the gods. The zooanthropomorphic hairy animal standing on hind legs reminds of the transformation of people to certain patron animals, another phenomenon that is known from Mesoamerica. The fact that this animal is wearing a back mirror identifies it as a warrior. The skeletal figures in Maya cosmology usually represent death or the death god. The way the figure holds the severed human head by the hair, is often seen in the act of taking captives. In his other hand he holds a sacrificial flint knife. Here the death gods holding the head by the hair and holding the flint knife might refer to war captives and possibly their sacrifice. The eagle was seen as a very powerful animal, reflected in its prominence in the iconography of Chichén Itzá. In central Mexico, from where the Itzá borrowed cosmological concepts, the eagle figured as a symbol for certain warrior classes and human sacrifice (Miller & Taube 1993:82-83). The scorpion body, interestingly enough, is made up of conventional rattlesnake rattles. If the eagle points at a certain type of warrior, then the scorpion might be an indication of a scorpion or scorpion-serpent warrior class. Basically the exterior of the TOW was meant as an open display.
of power and religion, showing powerful animal symbols and references to war, sacrifice and religious ritual and transformation.

The balustrades on the stairway repeat the motif of the feathered serpent, making the connection between the structure and the feathered serpent even stronger. The sculptured bands on the pyramid base then, seem to continue the theme from the one layer of exterior murals, or they might have been what inspired them. It features the same goggle eyed figure holding a long stick or incense burner with smoke rising up from one end. The animals facing these figures all are powerful animals, they appear to be holding human hearts, which are often depicted as lobed round objects throughout Chichén Itzá. The sculptured bands continue the theme of religious ritual and sacrifice.

The doorway in the façade is literally supported by one of the pillars of Itzá civilization: the feathered serpent. The stacked ‘Witz’ heads identify the temple as a representation of a mountain, the inside of the temple then being a cave, or entrance to the underworld. They provide an interesting contrast with the serpent columns, the first being a Puuc Maya trait, the latter being assimilated from central Mexico. This is a clear example of the deliberate synthesis of different styles into one new identity. The frontal vision serpent that adorns the empty spaces on the walls is made with the mosaic style that is typical for the Puuc area, and it is a continuation of the theme of communication with the spirit world, present throughout the TOW.

The jambs feature the conventionalized old Pawahunts that hold up the sky, reinforcing the idea that the temple is a representation of the world. The vines accompany the Pawahunts because they were also present in the primordial swamp at the creation of the world where the Pawahunts were also present. Even though the Pawahun jambs are conventionalized architectural traits, they still remind the observer of the time of creation and everything that this sacred event represents.

Like in the NWC the columns have basal and top registers depicting the frontal vision serpent and the descending ancestor. The figures on the columns include the ‘dignitary’-warrior, the ‘sorcerer’ or sombrero wearing religious specialist, ‘god-impersonators’ which through impersonation could transform into their companion being, or tonal (Miller & Taube 1993:77), ‘priests’ carrying bowls with offerings, some wearing sombrero headdresses, regular ‘warriors’, and a anomalous woman or fat man acting as a religious specialist. Their presence throughout the inside of the TOW again stresses the mixed military and religious and inclusive character of the structure.

The mural painting is hard to interpret because of its fragmented nature, but for the identification of the themes of the iconography of the TOW it is nonetheless very important.

Area 15-16 depicts a raid on a village. The village, in a green grassy land near a lake of some sort is being attacked by black painted, yellow faced warriors, who are leading captives away from the village. The striped people that inhabit the village are defending themselves, some appear to be fleeing. They also might be traders moving about the village, perhaps to show the natural, peaceful state of the village. One striped person has been killed and is depicted upside down next to the lake. The lake itself is represented with water life. The temple might be located on an island, explaining the depiction of it in the middle of the water. If this village is a reference to a historical event, it would be some way away from Chichén Itzá, taking into account the absence of lakes in Yucatán. Taking into account the colours, characters and style of area 17, this

29 For example on the platform of the jaguars and the eagles.
area might be a continuation of area 15-16, adding to the scene more striped and black figures, some striped battle victims, war banners and a star warrior.

Because of artistic reasons and subject matter areas 19, 20 and 21 probably belong to the same narrative (Axtell-Morris 1931a:398). Area 19 depicts a scene of sacrifice similar to the ones on the UTJ. In front of a large temple a serpent rises up behind the sacrifice of a figure with long blond hair, perhaps the serpent being the reason or result of the sacrifice itself. The vault of area 19 continues the theme of striped and black figures and feathered serpents. Area 20-21 shows a naval battle scene that might have led up to the sacrificial scene. In a watery environment there are multiple canoes, shorelines and figures. Some are black skinned with round decorated shields, some are fair skinned with long blond hair. The black figures are apparently winning, blond figures lying on their backs in the water or being taken captive by the black figures, their arms bound in some instances. Perhaps the blond figures were sacrificed after being taken captive.

Area 14 adds a reflection of religious life to the subject matter of the outer room, showing a miniature temple, but the remains are so little that it is very hard to interpret these.

The row of figures seated next to the doorway in the inner room (area 28) perhaps underlines the inclusive nature of the TOW, by depicting various figures sitting in attendance to an unknown event. Area 25 is located next to this area and depicts many fragments that hint at a variety of plant life, religious figures carrying bowls of offerings, and perhaps trade, if one accepts the cloths as merchandise, or tribute. Interestingly it is a striped figure wearing the sombrero hat and back rack. The scene apparently takes place under a night sky and many other figures are present in the scene. In the fragments that make up area 22-25 there are the remains of different types of warriors and one of the ‘dignitary’-warriors wearing a sombrero and carrying a rectangular shield. In the vault more warriors appear along with an agave field, a temple and some water, indicating another village. These elements together hint at a scene of military prowess and commerce or tribute, in combination with another village with an agave field.

Area 22 reminds of the zooanthropomorphic theme that was discussed before. Here too there are figures in transformation, holding hearts. These figures are also dressed as warriors, supporting the comparison between them and the figures from the exterior murals and sculptural bands. The north wall portion of this area shows different types of figures, both striped and normal and of different offices or ranks. In area 23 two warriors figure together with a large temple adorned with flint knives and a crouching jaguar at the top next to a large ceramic vessel. Area 24 shows many birds, perhaps in an attempt to depict a location or event or just the state of the world. In area 27 there are various figures of various rank or profession. The presence of a long decorated Maya style spear is unique in the mural remains, but it indicates that this type of weaponry, as seen in the Great Ballcourt Complex, was not completely a thing of the past. The presence of a striped star warrior could either mean that striped figure were not always enemies, or that the enemy had similar warriors and garments. The presence of warriors and various architectural elements in the murals suggest perhaps a battle or village scene.

The central area of the back wall contained the ‘altar’. Like with the dais and the back wall in the NWC, there is serpent iconography on the edge of the altar slab and on the wall above it. As in the UTJ, the altar slab was held up by atlantean columns, in the form of Pawahtun like warrior types. This is combination with the benches along the side walls of the inner room makes it a location for inclusive rituals with room for many people to attend events taking place on the room or on the altar or throne top. Above the serpent on the wall there are mural remains of an aquatic scene, star warriors, objects and figures emerging from serpent mouths, and perhaps most
importantly: a sun cartouche that is likely to have contained an important ancestral figure. This feeds into the main theme of frontal vision serpents, ancestors, and military and religious power.

Area 33 would have featured an aquatic island scene. There are war banners on land, canoes in the water, a black and white serpent, and a temple structure. The figures lying on their backs are likely to dead, following iconographic conventions throughout Mesoamerica. The marks the man's chest would be a cut, his closed eye a signal of death, and blue paint is a signal of sacrificial death (Axtell-Morris 1931a:429). Area 33 could then be another battle and sacrifice scene. Areas 29 and 32, in the vaults of the inner room continue the theme of war, taking captives and serpents.

Area 34 contained more scenes of architecture and a figure burning incense in front of that. It could have been a representation of the ritual and religious life surrounding temple architecture. Area 35 depicted an aquatic scene with an oarsman navigating a canoe. The precise nature of these scenes remains obscure.

Area 31 is the final area and the second large scale restoration of mural painting. It marks a difference from most interpreted scenes, by not showing a battle scene or raid. In the lower half of the mural there is a large body of water that is not enclosed. The presence of a turtle, stingrays, crabs and shells probably identifies it as a seashore. Along the shore there are three sets of different warriors being transported by oarsmen. On the coast there are several houses, animals and trees creating a lively village scene that appears to be buzzing with activity. People seem to be going about their daily business of trading, perhaps fishing, cooking, and performing rituals associated with the feathered serpent. Along the coast there are two banners that have previously been identified as war banners, but perhaps these are banners marking an identity which were taken into battle as a type of flags.

If the other scenes in the TOW depicted sacred historical events, then this might be one as well, although more a more peaceful one. The warriors with round shields in the canoes, if they are Itzá, would suggest an episode of migration. Especially if the history of the Itzá as described in the previous chapters is taken into account, this interpretation seems attractive.

The Temple of the Warriors has a very inclusive nature. The many varying types of figures present on the columns hint at the elaborated hierarchies that were present at Chichén Itzá. Different lineages, ranks, classes of warriors, religious specialists, and other people all made up the Itzá as a people. These were brought together as a group in structures such as the TOW, by depicting and accommodating them alongside each other in the same structure, attending certain ritual events.

The nature of these events might be explained by the subject nature of the iconography of the TOW. The many frontal vision serpents, especially combined with the descending ancestors, hint strongly at communication with the spirit world, the world of the ancestors. The many instances of goggle eyed figures burning incense support this idea. And on the other hand, there is a theme of sacrifice and transformation. The exterior murals, sculptured bands as well as the inner murals depict zooanthropomorphic figures, some holding what appear to be hearts. The Chac Mool in front of the entrance also ties in to this sacrificial theme, as do some of the scenes on the interior murals.

Warfare and battle seems to be another major theme of the TOW. Of course there many warriors portrayed on the columns of the NWC and in the temple itself suggest a militaristic theme, but the murals take this a step further. The interior murals appear to depict sacred historical events, mostly battles or raids on other peoples. Some of these might have had the
purpose of capturing people for sacrifice, taking into account the sacrificial scene on area 19 and the apparent sacrificial victims from area 33.

The main themes of the TOW are inclusion, communication or consultation with ancestors, military power and battle, and sacrifice. When combined, these themes suggest that the TOW was a location where various people could attend events in which the consultation of the ancestors was sought through certain rituals of offering and perhaps transformation. The reason for this consultation might be militaristic, in a sense that the opinion of the ancestors was asked regarding future battles, raids or wars.

**Temple of the Chac Mool (TCM)**

In 1926 the Carnegie team, when cleaning the exterior of the TOW of vegetation, discovered a block of stone with a bas-relief on it sticking out of the rubble. It turned out to be the top block of a column that stood in situ on a red polished floor. It belonged to what would become known as the Temple of the Chac Mool (Morris 1931:75-76).

![Figure 40. Plan of the TCM. Everything drawn in dotted lines is reconstructed. Adapted from Schele drawing 5034.](image)

At the construction of the TOW, the TCM was partly demolished and partly buried underneath the new temple platform. Only the south half of the structure was preserved, but even of that part the walls were demolished down to a height of 2.29m (Axtell-Morris 1931a:363). Because the remains of the TCM were buried underneath the TOW, the mural fragments and bas relief sculpture were preserved almost perfectly (Axtell-Morris 1931a:363; Charlot 1931:236).
George Kubler assigns this structure to the same period as the LTJ, making it one of the oldest structures discussed in this research (Kubler 1993:296). The fact that when the TOW was built on top of the TCM the orientation of the building was changed to match the UTJ (Ringle 2009:16) suggests at least that the TCM is older than the UTJ.

Like the TOW, the TCM had a colonnade with square columns in front of its entrance, that replaced a previous colonnade with round columns (Kubler 1993:293). The temple structure stands atop a temple platform with three tiers. These are in the central Mexican style, with battered slopes and panelled vertical friezes. The temple structure itself is made up of two chambers with two vaults each, supported by a single row of originally four columns, eight in total. This construction makes the TCM comparable to the TOW, albeit on a much smaller scale. In the TCM there would probably have been an atlantean altar, but it is missing.

The remaining iconography is to be found on the serpent columns, on the six remaining columns, the door jambs, the remains of the benches and the dais, and the mural painting.

Description

Columns and jambs

In the entrance of the TCM there were two serpent columns holding up the lintel. They are very similar to the serpent columns from the TOW, except that the decorated panel on the tail section is larger (Image 77). On column a there are three figures depicted in the typical Pawahtun positions, with arms outstretched to hold up the skies. The first figure is dressed in a conch shell, has a cut shell pendant, long hair and a beard and two volutes with flowery vines emerge on either side of him. A Pawahtun pendant like object is hanging between his legs. The second figure is dressed in a turtle shell and also wears a cut shell necklace and has two Pawahtun pendants. This figure also has a large volute to his side, but these are normal red and blue scrolls. The third figure is almost identical to the first, wearing the conch shell, cut shell pendant, Pawahtun pendant, and having a beard. Even the flowery volutes are the same.

The second serpent column has a slightly different repertoire. The first figure has cut shell pendant, two Pawahtun pendants, a beard and a pillbox headdress. He is backed by a large spider web and two flowery volutes emerge from his sides. The second figure is wearing a conch or other shell, it is portrayed from a different angle than usual. He has the same headdress and beard as figure one, and is also wearing a cut shell pendant and Pawahtun pendants. The third figure (figure 41) is wearing a normal conch shell on his back, but apart from that he is dressed the same way as the others, and has the yellow-blue flowery volutes to his sides.
In the demolition of the TCM the outer jambs were lost. The remaining inner jambs depict three figures each (Image 78). The top and bottom register depict the anthropomorphic face that was also present on the doorjambs of the UTJ. They are green faces with yellow lips, bare teeth and fangs, elaborate earplugs, red goggle eyes, blue eyebrows and a headdress made up of vertical bars. The top one has a type of split nose, while the bottom face has a round clown-like nose. Between these faces figures are shown.

The first figure of the north jamb has black legs, as if they are wrapped in something. He is carrying a fending stick and wearing a blue-red loincloth, black arm covering, a blue pectoral, nose plug, earplug and headdress with green feathers. His left hand is held on his right shoulder. The second figure has the same black legs, loin cloth, fending stick, nose plug and ear plug. He also wears a butterfly pectoral, ball player padding and a headdress with a blue crest and green feathers. His right hand is held up, index finger slightly bent. The third figure is dressed in a long garment of black/blue objects. He also has a fending stick and a type of blue pectoral, earplug and nose plug. He also has blue-red goggle eyes and a crested headdress with long feathers. His hand is in the same position as figure one.

The first figure on the south jamb has his lower legs wrapped in leather or textile bands and wears a blue-red loincloth. He carries a fending stick and wears a large blue-ish collar and nose- and earplugs. His headdress consists of a serpent and two black-tipped white feathers. His left hand is on his right shoulder. Figure two also carries a fending stick, and his hand is in the same position as figure two of the north jamb. Above his blue-red-green loincloth there are red spots on his body. He has a large blue collar, earplug and pillbox hat with down flying bird, a yellow crest, and long green feathers His nose plug is red and he seems to be speaking. The third figure is dressed in a garment made up of long red feathers and his fending stick appears to be blue. He has the same headdress as figure two, only without the down flying bird. And his wears a green nose bar instead of a nose plug.
Figure 42. Plan of the TCM, showing the types of figures and their locations. Charlot 1931, figure 147.

In the TCM only 6 of the 8 columns survived the demolition. Like in the NWC and TOW, Jean Charlot divided the figures on the columns types. I will discuss describe columns 1, 5, and 6 to cover all of these types except the priest type. No image of this column was available. Like most columns discussed until now, the columns were divided in a basal register, a main figure and a capital or top register. In the bottom and top registers there are varying instances of small ‘atlantean’ Pawahtun figures, most wearing a cut shell pendant and the Pawahtun pendants, which have a crosshatched elliptical body with beads or circles attached to one side. They appear in the well known position with their hands raised up to support either the main figure or the ceiling. Their main outfit varies, and will be mentioned in discussing the columns themselves.

In Column 1 (image 79) we see examples of what Charlot called warriors. All the figures wear the same yellow crested blue pillbox hat with down flying bird, long green feathers and a small white banner, sometimes decorated with small yellow feathers. All of them wear a blue back shield with long tassels, a large blue ear plug, a blue nose plug, a large blue collar, padding on one arm and knee and ankle bands. The last three figures have volutes at the height of their knees. With figure 1, both Pawahtuns wear conch shells and have volutes on either side. The figure wears a blue garment, carries a fending stick in his left hand and his right arm is held in front of his chest with the index finger stretched out. He has a blue dot on his cheek. Of figure two the bottom Pawahtun wears a conch shell and the top might too, but it is unclear. He carries one fending stick but up near his shoulder another in his other hand. His garment is decorated with yellow oval shapes, he also has a dot on his face. Figure 3 has two Pawahtuns that are backed by a spider web. He also carries two fending sticks, one near his shoulder and he is speaking. The last figure has a turtle shell Pawahtun at the bottom and a conch shell Pawahtun at the top. His earplug has a small face on it, he carries one fending stick, his other hand is near his shoulder, and he is also speaking.

On column 5 (image 80) all four figures are holding a long decorated spear and all of them have double lobe shaped pendants, possibly Pawahtun pendants, hanging down behind them from their waists. Three figures were identified by Charlot as god impersonators, and one
as a patriarch. Figure 1 has two conch shell Pawahtuns, although the top one is depicted differently and the lower one has volutes to its right. The main figure has red sandals, green kneebands, a yellow loincloth with green dots and black and white tassels at the back, and a protruding element in the belt. On his chest there is a disk with a red rim and possibly a black centre. He wears a headdress with a mask, although it is unclear because of the edge of the stone. His spear is yellow. Figure 2 is the ‘patriarch’ type. He has two spider web Pawahtuns with volutes, is striped red and white, slightly bent forward, and his spear could be a walking stick because it seems to lack a spearhead. His loincloth or skirt is dotted and it has beaded tassels at the back. His headdress is of the sombrero type and he wears a yellow chest disk. The top Pawahtun of figure 3 has a strange beaded outfit and a volute. The bottom Pawahtun wears a conch shell and has a green volute. The figure itself has a yellow spear, wrapped lower legs, a mosaic loincloth or skirt, and a round shield with green tassels. He wears a green-blue face mask and a tiered headdress with green feathers. Figure 4 has a possible turtle Pawahtun with flowery vines at the bottom and a spotted conch shell Pawahtun with volutes at the top. Figure 4 is striped red-white, holds a long yellow spear, a rectangular shield, wears a mosaic skirt, a mosaic collar, a green face mask, and a tiered headdress.

The figures on column 6 (image 81) all also wear the possible Pawahtun pendants, although they are only clearly visible in figure three. The first and last figures according to Charlot are god impersonators, the other two are patriarchs. Figure 1 is accompanied by a conch shell Pawahtun at the bottom and possibly a turtle one at the top. The figure itself is elaborately dressed with legs bound in red and yellow strips, green mosaic kneebands, a jaguar skirt with red decoration and a green belt with anthropomorphic faces, a large green mosaic collar, a green and blue face mask, and a red-yellow headdress with long green feathers. In one hand he holds the weapon like blue stick that Jean Charlot saw as part of the ‘dignitary’ outfit, in the other hand he holds a long spear or staff. Figure 2 has a turtle Pawahtun below and a conch shell one above him. His skin is white or grey and his legs are crossed with red bands. He wears a yellow cape with black dots, a black chest disk with a red rim, mosaic head cloth or hair, an old looking face with jaguar markings around the mouth and his tongue is sticking out. His headdress is red and blue with three black dots and long green feathers. He holds a long decorated spear in one hand, his other hand is held up at the waist, index finger pointing forward. A yellow-green volute figures near his legs to the right and other glyph like signs to the left of him. Figure 3 stands atop a conch shell Pawahtun and below a spider one. His Pawahtun pendants are very detailed and clear, he wears a white skirt and a cape with black and white stepped fret motif. His stomach is depicted as though he is quite chubby, although the drawing is unclear in this. He wears a bone as a pectoral, a long string of yellow beads in his ear, a yellow crosshatched head cloth, a white head band with another bone protruding from it, and some long green feathers. Above him at the top of the panel there is a stylized serpent eye, behind him a yellow-green volute, and at his knees another yellow-blue one. In one hand he holds a long staff or double headed spear, and in the other a yellow fan. Figure 4 is accompanied by a turtle Pawahtun below and a conch shell Pawahtun above. He has green bands on his legs, a jaguar skirt with red and green and a blue belt, a clack chest disk, a green mosaic collar, a white face mask with a curved blue nose, red eye, and yellow rim around the mouth, and a high tiered headdress with many green feathers. A yellow-blue volute is behind his head, and he holds a long black spear and a yellow fan.
Benches

In the TCM there were two benches attached to the north and south walls of the inner rooms. The north one was demolished along with part of the TCM, but the stones with fragments of painting were recovered in the rubble. The south bench remained in place with part of the painting preserved.

Figure 43. Plan of the TCM inner room, indicating sides of the benches and locations of figures. Adapted from Axtell-Morris 1931a, figure 271.

The north bench was demolished and therefore what remains of the painting is mostly fragmented. But part of side A could be restored (image 82). It shows a figure seated on a jaguar seat. He wears a red belt with a blue back mirror attached to it, holds a bundle of darts in one hand, and possibly an atlatl in the other. He wears a large blue collar and a blue pillbox headdress with a yellow crest and long green feathers. To his right part of a volute and a flowery vine are just visible. The rest of the painting that remain from the north bench is fragmented (image 83). Fragment A shows the lower legs of a seated figure and then the lower half of another figure sitting on a jaguar seat, its face apparently attached to its behind. The figure has ankle and knee bands, holds an atlatl and possibly darts, and wears a blue back mirror on a red band. To his right there is part of the back mirror decoration of another figure. Fragment B depicts the lower half of another seated figure with back mirror and darts, and this figure also carries a fending stick. Fragment C is part of the head and padded arm of a figure. He holds an atlatl, wears a blue collar, a nose plug, and has long blond hair or decoration from under his headdress. He speaks a green-yellow volute. Fragment D is different from most fragments, showing part of a large flowery next to the intertwined bodies of two yellow-green feathered serpents. One serpent head is visible. Fragment E is the head of a figure, with the same headdress and blond hair or yellow decoration. The last fragment (F) shows a seated figure facing opposite all previous figures. He wears a blue band around the waist with a ceramic vessel tied to his back and seems to be obese. A large yellow-brown flowery volute appears in front of his face, which is missing. Behind this figure there is a green flower just visible.

Of the south bench side A (image 84), more imagery remained. The first figure is seated, wears a red skirt with green dots, a large green mosaic collar, carries a red bowl with rounded yellow objects in it. Next to him is a rectangular shield with a white centre and red and yellow
rim. On his back there are many green feathers, like on a back rack. His face is missing. The next figure is also seated, with the same outfit and a back rack, holding a similar bowl. The face of this figure is old and he wears a nose bar. The reconstruction depicts him as sitting on a jaguar seat and wearing a large crown like headdress. There is a yellow-blue volute near his knees and a yellow-blue-green one partly visible in front of his face. The next figure is dressed the same and in the same position with the same volutes, only he carries a rectangular shield with a yellow centre and a blue-red rim. Above his head there is a serpent glyph. The next figure in line is seated on a jaguar seat. Wears a green belt, a mosaic collar, a yellow back crest, and a face mask with a blue nose and goggle eyes. His headdress is a stack of two similar masks, with a flower at the top. A small seated figure or monkey hovers above his head, a yellow-blue volute hangs in front of his headdress, a snake emerges from his mouth, and he holds a club that possibly ends in a serpent. In his other hand he holds a round tasselled shield with a face drawn on it. To his right a similar figure is seated. He wears a similar mask, headdress, collar, and carries the same club and a red rounded shield with a yellow rim. This figure is painted blue and yellow, like the body of a blue serpent with yellow scales on its stomach. This figure is also depicted with a serpent emerging from the mouth and above him a small seated figure with a blue bowl is hovering. The last figure is similar as the previous figure, only with a rounded race shield. Large elaborate yellow-blue scrolls hover in front of him, and above him black clouds and a face. Behind this figure there are the yellow-blue volutes of another figure.

Of side B and C (image 85), only the lower blocks were preserved. Side B shows three figures seated on jaguar seats. The first sits on a seat with a red band, has blue footwear, red and yellow bands on his lower legs, green mosaic kneepads, and a red back crest. The seat of the second figure has a green band, he wears green sandals, a jaguar skirt and red, yellow and blue feathers hang down behind him. The last figure has a red and white striped body, also wears a jaguar skirt and has a similar seat and feathers as figure two.

Side C only depicts two figures. The left figure ears a red and yellow back crest, is seated on a jaguar seat, has blue footwear, and red and yellow bands on his legs. A jaguar tail seems to hang down behind his legs. The right figure has green feathers hanging down from his back, sits on a jaguar seat and also has red and yellow bands on his legs, although his sandals are greenish and yellow.

Some loose fragments of the south bench (image 86) were also recovered in the rubble. Fragment A shows a masked face with a long curved nose. The headdress is the stack of heads that was seen elsewhere in side A of the bench. Fragment B shows the torso of one of the seated figures. The figure is holding a round tasselled shield and a ‘dignitary’ club. His skin is striped orange and red and his chest disk is black with a red rim (Morris et al. 1931, plate 162e caption). Fragment C is the tail section of a yellow-green feathered serpent from the vertical edge of the bench.

**Mural**

The mural painting that remained in the TCM at the time of excavation was very well preserved. In both inner and outer rooms there was a basal zone with bands of different colours. The first 81cm from the floor up were black, then followed bands in red, yellow, and blue, each 14cm wide. Above that there were large representations of originally eight undulating serpents against a red background (Axtell-Morris 1931a:163-364). In the vaults a floral pattern was painted.
In the fragments that were copied by the Carnegie team (image 87), there are some examples of this mural painting. Fragment A was found in the rubble fill of the TCM and might originate from the triangular vault wall ends (Morris et al. 1931, plate 138a caption). It shows blue, yellow, red, and green diagonal bands bordered by two blue horizontal bands. Above it there are representations of flowers, in black and white. Fragment B depicts the top basal bands and part of a serpent body. The serpent is spiked and its segments are blue, red, yellow, green, and white. Its body is decorated with long flowers with brown bases, blue stems and yellow petals, which is clear from other fragments. A part of the panel above the altar is visible in fragment C (Morris et al. 1931, plate 132a caption), next to the tongue and claw of one of the serpents. Part of the serpent body and its flower like appendages are visible above the basal bands in fragment D. Fragment E shows part of the head of one serpent and its birdlike claw, above the basal zone. A black and white restoration of one of the eight serpents is shown in fragment F, with flowery headdress, appendages and tail.

**Interpretation**

The serpent columns of the TCM are, like in other structures, perhaps a conventionalized way of shaping facade columns, but they do carry the reference to the political, religious and military power that the feathered serpent symbolizes. The atlanteans on the tail sections might also be convention, but they do refer to the origins of Chichén Itzá and the creation and current state of the world.

The door jambs of the TCM depict what was interpreted by Schele and Mathews as the flower-headed Itzá symbol, possibly identifying these figures as Itzá (Schele & Mathews 1998:229). The individuals on the jambs are possibly warriors, judging by their fending sticks, perhaps symbolically guarding the doorways of the TCM. Each figure of the columns is bordered at top and bottom by Pawaltuns, the sky bearing gods that attended the creation of the world which often figure in supporting roles. This is a further reference to the creation story and the historicity of Chichén Itzá. The meaning of the specific conch shell, turtle shell and spider type Pawaltuns is unknown. The figures themselves vary in type, but within types they vary in outfits and paraphernalia. Probably these are indicators of rank and/or lineage. Only the warrior type with fending stick and back mirror is represented in the outer room, perhaps in a similar function as the door jambs. In the inner room, there are different types of warriors, with rectangular as well as round shields and long spears. Religious specialists with masked faces, known as ‘god-impersonators’, as well as religious or other officials which Jean Charlot dubbed ‘patriarchs’ are also present on the inner room columns. The figures represent military, religious and perhaps political offices together in one room. It is interesting that on the columns and jambs there are no representations of atlatls and darts, the specific reason for this is unclear; perhaps it is a reference to a time when these weapons were not yet in use and these are ancestral figures, or it could be that the long spears belong to different offices than atlatls and darts and that the latter simple are not depicted here.

The benches depict rows of figures, on the south side seated on jaguar seats, in the north seated on jaguar seats. The figures vary in office, and perhaps rank, but all are important enough to sit on jaguar seats, which are often used in the depiction of the ruling elite. The presence of a feathered serpent on the benches itself and on their vertical upper edge panels underlines the importance of the feathered serpent as one of the main cultural symbols of Chichén Itzá.
The large serpents on the walls are not depicted as standard feathered serpents. Instead of green feathers they have flower like appendages. Ann Axtell-Morris suggests that these might be a conventionalized form of feathers (Axtell-Morris 1931a:364), but the presence of a true feathered serpent in the same room leads me to think that this is a different kind of serpent.

There is evidence that the TCM also had a colonnade in front of its entrance. It is unclear whether these columns were decorated like in the NWC, but the analogue to the TOW is interesting to note, especially when the layout with benches and (missing) altar is taken into account. If the TOW is a larger and more elaborate remodelling of the TCM, then the temples might have had similar uses. This means that the TCM probably also was meant to accommodate multiple individuals of high rank to attend certain meetings or rituals. This is a sign that the inclusive nature of Chichén Itzá society was already present in the construction of the TCM. Compared to the TOW, there is an absence in references to warfare, frontal vision serpents, religious ritual and communication with ancestral figures. This might indicate that with the construction of the TOW new functions were added to the repertoire of the structure, or possibly these references have gone missing with the demolition of the TCM.

Nonetheless, the Temple of the Chac Mool was a location of status and power where high ranking individuals from Itzá society could come together and discuss important matters concerning Chichén Itzá.
Discussion

At the end of this thesis, it is now time to revisit the research questions that were posed in the introduction. I will shortly summarize the results that the research into the sub-questions has yielded and then formulate an answer to the questions at hand. Finally I will use the combined answers of the sub-questions to address the main research questions. As a reminder, here are the research questions once again:

- Did the Itzá consciously create a new iconographical and architectural style as part of a strategy to legitimize rule and create a new communal identity?
- What is so different in iconographical and architectural style in Chichén Itzá, compared to the surrounding area?
- What is the history, or social context of the Itzá, prior to the foundation of Chichén Itzá?
- What is the role of the nose piercing ceremony in the legitimization of rule?
- What are the main themes in the iconography of Chichén Itzá?
- How do these main iconographical themes reflect the legitimization of rule and the creation of communal identity?

The region that Chichén Itzá is located in, is known as the Puuc region. This essentially is a continuation or further development of the Rio Bec and Chenes styles, which originate in classic Maya architecture. Although some fine examples of this style are present in Chichén, some of the structures of the main plaza depart from this style. Instead they exhibit many architectural and iconographical styles that originate in central Mexico. Although traditionally this was seen as evidence for a Toltec invasion of Chichén, it has now become clear that the style in Chichén Itzá is neither purely Puuc nor completely central Mexican. It is an active synthesis of traits from both culture areas, creating a new style that I have dubbed the Chichén style. It incorporates both religious, military and political ideas into a new style that can be seen in the main ceremonial districts of Chichén Itzá. Such a synthesis is likely to be the result of a deliberate attempt in creating a new style in a new city.

Ethnohistorical as well as archaeological evidence suggest that the Itzá were originally Maya people from the Petén area. Because of social and political conflict, possibly part of the Maya collapse, several groups of Itzá migrated away from their homeland, eventually arriving at Chichén Itzá as a collective of loose groups of people. In the books of Chilam Balam it is written that one of these groups, during their migration, adopted local heritage by taking a woman of one of the leading families as their mother. By doing this they made themselves of local descent, with a claim to rule in the area.

After the foundation of Chichén Itzá, which involved certain symbols of rulership, the ethnohistorical sources speak about the arrival of Kukulkan. Kukulkan is the Maya version of Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent. But Kukulkan is not only the feathered serpent, it is likely that it is also the name of a type of religious specialist that figures in the legitimization of rulership throughout Mesoamerica.

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30 I.e. the Iglesia, the Monjas Complex.
This religious figure had the power to bestow the official symbols of rulership on rulers. These are the symbols that lord 8 Deer would receive from lord 4 Jaguar, identified as Nacxit Topiltzin, after conquering several towns in the Mixteca region. The K’iche people also received the symbols of rulership from Nacxit when their rulership in the Guatemalan highlands needed to be legitimized. The nose piercing ceremony was a part of this ritual legitimization of rule. The arrival of Kukulkan probably means two things. One is the arrival of an actual figure, going by the title of Kukulkan and providing the legitimization of the Itzá rule at Chichén Itzá. The other meaning is more symbolic arrival if Kukulkan, the feathered serpent, as a religious symbol that would incorporated in the religion and art of the Itzá.

**Iconography**

In analyzing the iconography of the Great Ballcourt Complex, the Temple of the Warriors, and the Temple of the Chac Mool, several main themes emerged. I will shortly summarize the main themes of the structures as they have come up the analysis.

In the Lower Temple of the Jaguars, the focus lies on the ancient origins of Chichén Itzá. In my interpretation, the five registers depict important historical events in the history of Chichén Itzá that were attended by many high ranking individuals, portrayed in the presence of an ancestral ruler. These events are set in a framework of iconography that deals with the creation of the world in the beginning of time. This links the origin of Chichén Itzá to the origin of the world and provides a great sense of historicity to the events portrayed in the LTJ. The location of the LTJ, facing the large main plaza, ensures that the historical events connected to the origin of the world were very visible to a large audience.

The main theme of the Great Ballcourt Alley is renewal. The ballcourt an entrance to the underworld and is therefore a central location in the story of the hero twins. The story tells the history of the twins, that results in the decapitation and resurrection of the Maize God. The iconography suggests that the ballgame was partly a re-enactment of this story to ensure that the maize would grow. This story is part of the Maya legacy of the Itzá.

The North Temple is a very important link in the argumentation in this thesis. Its main theme is accession to the throne. The iconography includes the accession ceremony itself, as well as the necessary preparations, including a nose piercing ceremony. This is the most convincing evidence outside of the ethnohistorical sources that a nose piercing ceremony actually figured in the sacred narratives of Chichén Itzá. The scenes are, like in the LTJ, set in a framework of creation and origins, underlining the foundational nature of the accession to the throne.

The South Temple probably provided room for high ranking individuals to attend to the rituals taking place in the GBA. The framework of the world tree and high ranking individuals of different kinds perhaps draws attention to the importance of Chichén Itzá as the centre of the world, and the inclusive nature of the political hierarchy in the city.

The Upper Temple of the Jaguars depict a series of sacred historical battles between the Itzá and various opponents at different locations and perhaps different times. The facade continues the bellicose nature of the UTJ, in portraying weapons, serpents, and prowling jaguars. The hints at creation suggest that these battles had a foundational nature. These battles might be the sacred battles that were required as a rite of passage, before the ruler could receive the symbols of rulership.
The main themes of the Great Ballcourt, considering the individual structures, are inclusion, creation, foundation and legitimization of rulership. The entire structure seems to be dedicated to the origins of Chichén Itzá.

The Temple of the Warriors is very inclusive, more so than the ST. The presence of the many figures of varying rank, lineage, and office hints at the elaborate hierarchies that must have been present in Itzá society. The benches and altar in the inner room suggest that a variety of people could attend rituals taking place inside the room. The iconography of the TOW hints at the nature of these rituals. The main themes are communication with ancestors, transformation in to *tonals*, and sacrifice. Warfare, or taking captives is another important theme, reflected in the presence of many warriors on the columns, but mostly in the interior murals. The TOW might have been a location where the advice of ancestors and a governing council was sought relating to warfare, and perhaps sacrifice.

The Temple of the Chac Mool is comparable to the TOW in its layout, providing room for a council to attend and discuss matters of state. It has the same inclusive nature as the TOW, with many different figures of varying rank and office depicted on the columns and benches. It lacks the clear religious and military themes that are present in the TOW, but the many references to the powerful feathered serpent and Pawatuns does give the TCM a religious and cosmological undertone. Even though they might be conventionalized decorations, the Pawatuns still hint at the sky bearers which were present at the creation of the world, linking Chichén to the beginning of time.

The legitimization of rule at Chichén Itzá is reflected in the iconographic programme in different ways. In the Great Ballcourt legitimization rituals are actually present in the body of iconography. In the North Temple there are scenes of rites of passage depicted in bas-relief. In the north vault there are scenes of travel and an actual nose piercing ceremony where the ruler to be is given the symbols of his leadership. On the north wall, the main scene of the NT there is a scene that depicts the accession to the throne. The UTJ depicts ritual warfare that might have been a requirement, like a rite of passage for the new ruler.

These are somewhat direct references to the legitimacy of rule at Chichén, but there is another, more hidden way of ensuring that the ruler was accepted. The nose piercing and other ceremonies were not traditional for Maya people like the Itzá. In order to legitimize their rule they adopted a large part of the religious and cultural context that these rituals belonged to. I believe this is one of the main reasons why the previously Maya style of Chichén Itzá changed radically, incorporating architectural, iconographical, cosmological, and religious elements from central Mexico into a new combined style.

Because this would have been a fairly sudden change, their way of legitimizing their rule in fact had to be legitimized. By setting the main themes of the GBC in a framework of creation of the world and linking this clearly to the origins of Chichén Itzá, a sense of historicity was created, suggesting that this was the way it had always been since the beginning of time, the creation of the world. Especially the LTJ with the important, perhaps foundational, events in Chichén history, clearly set in a context of creation displays this to a large audience.

So how is the creation of communal identity reflected in the iconography of Chichén Itzá? As discussed in chapter three, identities are constructed within the opposition of similarity and difference. There are two factors that play a part in this. First there is similarity, which is created by things people have in common. Having things in common with enables people to identify with each other, creating a bond. In effect, difference does the same, but it does so by
setting off the common traits to individuals or groups that are different. This creation of ‘the other’ strengthens the communal bond.

This is exactly what the Chichén style accomplishes. By combining traits from central Mexico with concepts that they already were familiar with, the Itzá created a completely new style that sets them off from the surrounding people and their past in the Petén region, creating a style that the Itzá have in common and that lets them identify with each other.

As was written in chapter three, the main factor in maintaining a communal identity is a shared tradition, or memory of the past. And this posed a problem for the Itzá, since they created this new identity in a new city. This is where the argument turns back to historicity. The Itzá took cultural traits and a legitimization ceremony from a culture that they already knew from previous contact, rituals and elements that by then had had a long tradition. These elements gave the new Chichén style a profound sense of historicity, as did the references to the creation story that frame the central themes of the iconography of Chichén Itzá.

The change to a new style and its (false) sense of historicity are two main factors that contribute to the communal identity in Chichén Itzá, which is needed for the survival of the community. There is another factor that strengthens the communal identity: cultural memory. In chapter three I discussed collective memory, in a sense that memory can exist through the grace of shared experiences. Shared experiences define a group identity, and a memory of these provides a shared memory. This in turn strengthens the communal bond. Shared forgetting of differences stresses the things a group does have in common and therefore also strengthens group identity.

Cultural memory is created when the collective memory is transferred into objectified culture such as texts, images, rites, buildings, monuments, cities, or landscapes (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995:127) and it can subsequently outlive collective memory. Here I return to the iconographic programme of Chichén Itzá. By radically changing the iconography on the main ceremonial architecture the Itzá effectively changed their physical environment. The omnipresence of the new Chichén style affected the Itzá living in Chichén Itzá day in, day out. By executing the Chichén style throughout Chichén Itzá, the collective memory of the Itzá living among the structures was altered, and at the same instance a cultural memory was created. This then provided a real sense of tradition and historicity, which in turn reinforced the Itzá communal identity.

**Conclusion**

The Itzá were a collective of groups of people from the Petén area migrating away from social and political conflict as a part of the Maya collapse. The ties with their homeland were severed as they migrated northward. One of these groups realized that if they wanted to successfully settle an area where they could start over, they needed to be of local descent. They achieved this by adopting local heritage. Together with other groups of fugitives they founded Chichén Itzá. Here they received Kukulkan that gave them the official symbols of rulership, in order to legitimize their rule. To support the legitimacy of this new official rulership, they adopted the feathered serpent and other religious and cultural traits from central Mexico, where Kukulkan originated. The Itzá combined these new elements together with concepts of cosmology and religion that they traditionally had from the Maya area. This new style was different from surrounding peoples and from their original cultures in the Petén area. By radically changing their cultural and physical
surroundings, they had a clear break from their previous lives and they created an initial communal bond based on shared experience. This new lifestyle conveniently provided a way for the new ruler to securely legitimize his rule, as well as provided extra historicity by using well known cultural traits with a history of their own. Through this they strengthened their communal bond and ensured the survival of Chichén Itzá as a community.

In a wider context of Mesoamerica, the results of this research reflect the period of change in at least the Maya area. The infamous Maya collapse marked a period of collapse of the great classic Maya states and a migration away from the classic Maya Lowlands. Central Mexico was affected less by these social, economical and political hard times and must have seemed to be a more stable cultural factor which the Itzá could pull themselves out of troubled times. The Itzá represent an interesting example of how a people would deal with conflict in times of conflict and large scale population shifts. The results also show that it is important to see social, cultural, and demographic processes as a part of an empowered people, capable of deciding on their future rather than just a cultural phenomenon, a cultural horizon or the product of a natural flow of culture and its traits.

Based on the evidence of several lines of research, I believe that the Itzá indeed consciously created a new iconographical and architectural style as part of a strategy to legitimize their rule at Chichén Itzá and to create a new communal identity in order to survive.

It would be interesting to extend the line of research this thesis has followed, to include other structures on the platform called ‘La Gran Nivelación’. These are the remaining structures of what used to be known as ‘Toltec’ Chichén, including among others the Temple of Kukulkan, the Temple of the Tables, the Mercado, the Court of a Thousand Columns and various platforms. Because of the scope of this thesis research it was unfortunately not possible to include these structures, but they would undoubtedly shed more light on the central themes of architecture and iconography of Chichén Itzá.
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