



PROJECT MUSE®

6. Women in the Tlaloc Cult

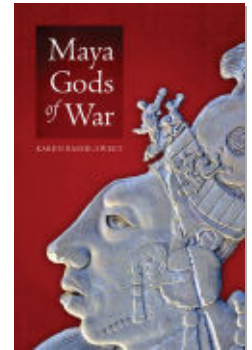
Published by

Bassie-Sweet, Karen.

Maya Gods of War.

University Press of Colorado, 2021.

Project MUSE. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/book.83713>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/83713>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

[189.251.250.194] Project MUSE (2025-03-02 23:54 GMT)

A number of women who carry the Kaloomte' title are illustrated in the guise of Tlaloc or performing rituals directed at him. While some of these women were married to Kaloomte' lords and may have attained their status from their husbands, several of these female Kaloomte' were not and must have attained their status by some other means. This chapter explores the Tlaloc cult at Yaxchilán and Naranjo and the Kaloomte' women associated with it.

THE TLALOC CULT AT YAXCHILÁN

The most abundant illustrations of both male and female Kaloomte' activities are found in the art of Yaxchilán. The early history of the site has been reconstructed from a retrospective narrative found on the lintels of Structure 12 (Mathews 1975; Martin and Grube 2008). It begins with the accession of K'inich Tatbu Skull II in AD 526 and then backs up in time to relate a list of the nine previous Yaxchilán kings, beginning with the founder, Yopaat Bahlam I (circa AD 359). The narrative also gives what appear to be the most prominent foreign lords captured during the reign of each of these ten Yaxchilán rulers. The Yaxchilán tradition of naming an important captive of a ruler is well documented in the name phrases of Late Classic kings like Shield Jaguar III, who is consistently named as the captor of Aj Nik, and his son Bird Jaguar IV, whose name phrases routinely specify his capture of Aj Uk.

DOI: 10.5876/9781646421329.coo6

The next four kings in the succession are less well-known, but the fifteenth ruler, Bird Jaguar III, acceded to the throne in AD 629 and was succeeded by his son Shield Jaguar III in AD 681. The narrative on Stela 12 states that Shield Jaguar III was the first change in the Kaloomte' office, and it can be inferred from this that his father, Bird Jaguar III, was the first Yaxchilán lord to attain this status. Shield Jaguar III's parentage statements note that his father was both a four *k'atun* Ajaw and a four *k'atun* Kaloomte' and that his mother, Lady Pakal, was a six *k'atun* Lady Kaloomte'. Shield Jaguar III is also named as a Kaloomte' lord in various narratives. Retrospective inscriptions refer to him as a five *k'atun* Ajaw, five *k'atun* Ch'ajom, and five *k'atun* Kaloomte'.

Shield Jaguar III had two wives (Lady K'abal Xook and Lady Ik' Skull) who carried the Kaloomte' title. Lady K'abal Xook was the daughter of a Sajal, while Lady Ik' Skull was originally from the Kaanul polity. Lady Ik' Skull is named specifically as an Ajk'uhuun, a Bakab, and an East Kaloomte'. Both women played prominent roles in the Tlaloc cult at Yaxchilán. Bird Jaguar IV (the son of Shield Jaguar III and Lady Ik' Skull) acceded to the throne in AD 752 at age forty-three. In the Yaxchilán record, there is a ten-year interim between the time of Shield Jaguar III's death and Bird Jaguar IV's succession. There is evidence from the site of Piedras Negras that a lord named Yopaat Bahlam II ruled during this period (Stuart cited in Martin and Grube 2008:127), and he may have been a son of Lady K'abal Xok.¹ The narratives concerning Bird Jaguar IV indicate that he was a three *k'atun* Ajaw, a three *k'atun* Kaloomte', and a West Kaloomte'.

Bird Jaguar IV had four wives. Chronologically, the first mentioned wife was Lady Great Skull, the mother of his successor, Shield Jaguar IV. The next wives were Lady Mut Bahlam, who was originally from Hix Witz, and Lady Wak Jalam Chan Ajaw from Motul de San José. Both wives were ritually active around the same time and are illustrated in Tlaloc costumes. The fourth wife was Lady Wak Tuun of Motul de San José, who appears in later scenes. She is the only wife of Bird Jaguar IV to carry the Kaloomte' title in her nominal phrases, and she is called an East Kaloomte' on Lintel 38.²

There is some evidence that the Yaxchilán kings were first inducted into the Tlaloc cult during the Early Classic reign of the seventh king, nicknamed named Moon Skull. Moon Skull is given special prominence in the Structure 12 narrative, for he is the first Yaxchilán king to be named with two captives (Piedras Negras Ruler A and another lord not known from other inscriptions). The only other surviving reference to Moon Skull is found on Lintel 21.³ This Late Classic lintel spans the central doorway of Structure 22, while four reset Early Classic lintels adorn its other entrances. Lintel 21 begins with the

dedication of the building in AD 454 and names it as the house of Moon Skull, the seventh king in the descent line from Yopaat Bahlam I and the holy lord of Yaxchilán (Stuart 1998b). The time frame then moves forward to May 12, AD 752, when the reigning king Bird Jaguar IV is said have been “seated” in Moon Skull’s house. This seating is not his accession as king, for that event is clearly stated on numerous other monuments to have occurred on May 3, nine days earlier. The notion that the king resided in a new building after his accession is recorded at Tikal, where Ruler B took up residence after his accession in a new building that was said to be owned by a deity (Zender 2005; Tokovinine 2013:29–30). It is from this place that he left Tikal to war against Naranjo, presumably under the protection of this god. Another example of a king and a building associated with war is seen on Tortuguero Monument 6. The narrative begins with the birth and accession of the Tortuguero king Bahlam Ajaw and then moves forward 105 days from his accession to a war event against the site of Uxte’k’uh. The text states that Bahlam Ajaw left for this war from the house of his flint and shield. One assumes this means from the structure that contained his *tok’-pakal*.

It is evident from the Yaxchilán Lintel 21 narrative that Moon Skull’s house had survived at this location and retained its association with him for nearly 300 years. The Early Classic lintels of Structure 22 are eroded and difficult to translate, but Lintel 18 includes a list of four youths who had some kind of relationship with a lord who carries the Kaloomte’ title. Given the fact that Bird Jaguar III was the first Kaloomte’ lord of Yaxchilán (accession date AD 629), it seems likely that the Lintel 18 Kaloomte’ was a foreigner who first initiated the Early Classic Yaxchilán lords into the Tlaloc cult. The Late Classic Structure 21 and Structure 23 were built adjacent to Structure 22. As will be discussed below, the art of Structure 23 depicts Tlaloc-themed rituals that were conducted by Shield Jaguar III and his wife Lady Kabal Xook, while Structure 21 featured similar ceremonies conducted by his wife Lady Ik’ Skull, their son Bird Jaguar IV, and his wives. The clustering of these three Tlaloc-related structures does not appear to be random. I speculate that the first initiation of a Yaxchilán lord into the Tlaloc cult happened during Moon Skull I’s reign, and that is why his building and their early lintels were preserved at Yaxchilán.⁴ The focus on a particular Early Classic ruler is also seen at Piedras Negras, where the ruler Turtle Tooth was held in great esteem because he was the first Piedras Negras ruler to be validated by a Kaloomte’ and inducted into the Tlaloc cult (AD 510), as noted in chapter 5. It is likely that the Early Classic Palenque ruler Ahkal Mo’ Nahb I (accession AD 501) was also revered for this same reason.

THE TLALOC EVENTS OF YAXCHILÁN STRUCTURE 23

The main plaza of Yaxchilán is on a strip of land that runs parallel to the Usumacinta River. Structure 23 is located on a low terrace on the south side of the plaza. The lintels spanning the three front doors of Structure 23 illustrate the king Shield Jaguar III and his wife Lady K'abal Xook performing joint ceremonies in AD 681, AD 709, and AD 724 (Lintel 24, Lintel 25, and Lintel 26). Their nominal phrases describe Shield Jaguar III as a four *k'atun* Ajaw (reflecting his age at the time of the building's dedication), captor of Aj Nik, a Bakab, and holy lord of Yaxchilán, while Lady K'abal Xook is characterized as a Lady Kaloomte'. The dedication and fire rituals of AD 723 and AD 726 that are recorded in the lintel narratives specifically state that Lady K'abal Xook was the owner of the building, although these events were carried out under the auspices of Shield Jaguar III (Stuart 1998a; McAnany and Plank 2001). The inscribed artifacts found in two of the burials under the floor of the structure belonged to this couple, and this has suggested that they are the graves of Shield Jaguar III (Tomb 2) and Lady K'abal Xook (Tomb 3), who died in AD 742 and AD 749, respectively (García Moll 2004; Hernández and Márquez 2006). There is some evidence that Tomb 2 might have been that of Lady K'abal Xook's son (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017).

Unfortunately, the inscription on the outer edge of Lintel 24 was destroyed, but the narrative on the underside begins in AD 709 and illustrates a standing Shield Jaguar III holding a burning torch that is referenced in the text above his head as his penance with a fiery spear (figure 6.1). Lady K'abal Xook kneels in a frontal pose beside him. She wears a tasseled Tlaloc headdress with a Ch'ajom insignia at its base, and she sports the ponytail of a Ch'ajom. A Black Witch Moth Tlaloc adorns the top of the headdress. Lady K'abal Xook holds a cord that she draws through a hole in her tongue. The cord has hook-shaped objects embedded in it that are thought to be either thorns or shards of obsidian. In either case, her act of bloodletting must have been extremely painful. Between Shield Jaguar III and Lady K'abal Xook is a woven bowl that contains two obsidian blades, one of which was probably used to cut her tongue. The fact that there are two blades hints at the likelihood that Shield Jaguar III had just performed a penis perforation or was about to do so. Such joint bloodletting is seen on Lintel 17, which depicts a kneeling Lady Mut Bahlam of Hix Witz (a wife of Bird Jaguar IV) (figure 6.2). She wears a Tlaloc headdress with the Ch'ajom insignia on her forehead while pulling a cord through her tongue. The main text, which runs across the bottom of the lintel, names her. Although badly eroded, the smaller caption text in the middle of the scene names the right figure as Bird Jaguar IV. He holds an object in his

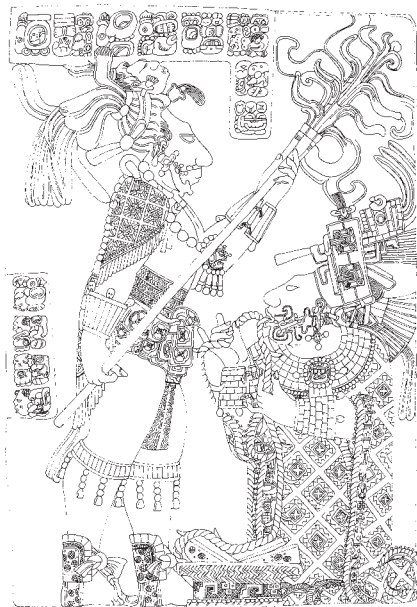


FIGURE 6.1. *Yaxchilán Lintel 24 (drawing after Ian Graham)*



FIGURE 6.2. *Yaxchilán Lintel 17 (drawing after Ian Graham)*

hands that appears to be a bloodletter, and he sits in a position that suggests penile bloodletting.

The outer edge of Lintel 25 begins with a distance number that links an AD 681 conjuring event at the *tahn ha' pa'chan* “the waterfront of Yaxchilán” to the dedication of the carving in AD 723 at the same location. The dedication phrase indicates that the building was owned by Lady K'abal Xok and names her as a Kaloomte'. It also states that the ceremony was under the auspices of Shield Jaguar III. The underside of the lintel illustrates Lady K'abal Xook at a climactic moment of the conjuring ritual, with a figure emerging from the upper head of a double-headed Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan (AD 681) (figure 6.3). The figure wears a Tlaloc mask and headdress. The kneeling Lady K'abal Xook again wears the Ch'ajom insignia and has the tied hair of a Ch'ajom. The text is in mirror image, which is a chiasmus device used to place emphasis on an event (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). Consequentially, the narrative begins in the upper right corner and moves to the left, in reverse of a normal reading pattern. The text states the calendar round date of Shield Jaguar III's accession but does not refer to this event. Instead, it relates the conjuring of the *tok'-pakal*

of the deity Aj K'ahk' O Chahk and the holy spear of Shield Jaguar III.

The smaller caption text in the scene is divided into two glyph blocks strategically placed to lead the reader past the Tlaloc figure emerging from the upper Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan head to Lady K'abal Xook. It consists of a standard impersonation phrase that first states the name of the impersonated deity or ancestor and then the name of the person doing the impersonation (Houston and Stuart 1996). In this case, it begins with the name Lady Ohl and the title Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom, followed by Lady K'abal Xook's name. It ends with a title for Lady K'abal Xook (*u yokte'el tahn ha' pa'chan* "the pillar of the waterfront of Yaxchilán"). Although I characterized Lady Ohl as a warrior goddess in an earlier analysis (Bassie-Sweet 2008:208), her Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom title indicates that she was human, although with some legendary status.

Most impersonation scenes illustrate the impersonator wearing a headdress that represents the name of the individual being impersonated. As an example, the ruler K'inich Janaab Pakal I is depicted as the central figure on the Palenque Temple XXI bench (see figure 0.3). The caption text that frames his head states that he is impersonating an ancestral figure (González Cruz and Bernal Romero 2004, 2012). K'inich Janaab Pakal I wears the Ch'ajom insignia, but he also sports a double-headed centipede headdress. The lower head is a typical centipede head, but the upper head is represented by the glyphic name of the ancestor he is impersonating. On

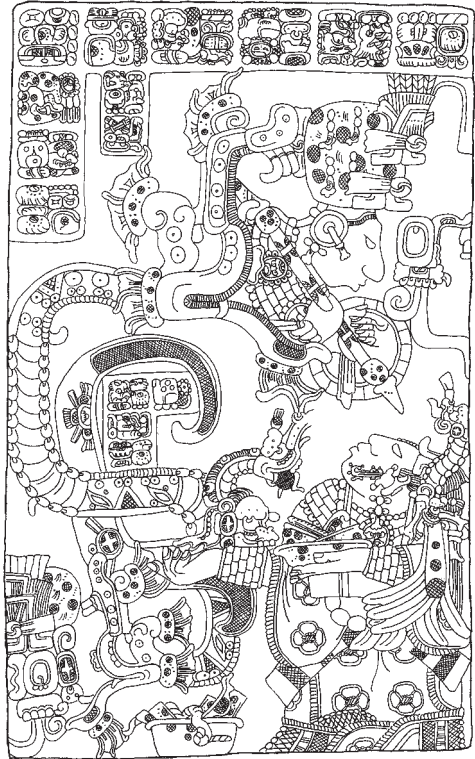


FIGURE 6.3. *Yaxchilán Lintel 25* (drawing after Ian Graham)

Lintel 25, Lady K'abal Xook wears a similar double-headed centipede, but its upper head is represented by a skull wearing Tlaloc's *k'an* cross earring. The same centipede skull with *k'an* cross earring is positioned on her right forearm, strategically overlapping the body of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan serpent and the entwined smoke curl. Given the parallels with other impersonation scenes, the skull with *k'an* cross earring must somehow represent Lady Ohl (Bassie-Sweet 2008:208–210, 2010). Given that this skull is not a representation of the word *ohl* “heart,” it seems highly likely that it represents the skull of Lady Ohl.

Evidence that ancestors were portrayed as skulls is seen in some examples of the ancestral effigy assemblage. On Yaxchilán Lintel 8, Bird Jaguar IV is shown in the heat of a battle, and the ancestor figure of his assemblage takes the form of a skull (see figure 0.12). A similar skull is seen on the belt of Shield Jaguar III in the Lintel 45 scene illustrating his capture of Aj Nik (see figure 1.6). Given these parallels where a skull can take the place of an ancestor's name, it seems reasonable to conclude that Lady K'abal Xook is not only impersonating Lady Ohl in the Lintel 25 scene but that she also holds Lady Ohl's skull in her hand (Bassie-Sweet 2008:208–210, 2010).

Whether it is Lady Ohl's actual skull or an effigy of her skull is unclear, but I think it may be her actual skull because the veneration of female ancestral remains is well documented, as on Piedras Negras Stela 40, discussed in chapter 5. Excavations at El Perú indicate that the tomb of a royal woman was reentered sometime after her corpse had decomposed, and her cranium and femora were removed (Piehl et al. 2014).⁵ The conjuring of deities and ancestors from bones is depicted in a number of scenes where the ceremonial bar held by the conjurer takes the form of a femur with centipedes emerging from it. A beautiful example is on a looted monument now in the de Young Museum (Miller and Martin 2004:fig. 35).

The figure emerging from the upper head of the Lintel 25 Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan carries a shield and an unusual double-headed spear and wears the Tlaloc bundle headdress and the Ch'ajom insignia and ponytail. It is likely that this double-headed spear and shield are the *tok'-pakal* of the deity Aj K'ahk' O Chahk that was mentioned in the main text. The figure also wears a Tlaloc mask that has the proboscis of the Black Witch Moth Tlaloc. In other words, this conjured Ch'ajom figure has taken on the guise of Tlaloc. Given that the caption text referring to the impersonation of Lady Ohl frames the figure and that the skull of Lady Ohl is juxtaposed with the body of the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan, I have concluded that the figure represents Lady Ohl (Bassie-Sweet 2008:208–210, 2010). The figure has most often been

characterized as a warrior, but the role of women as curators of war-related objects brings such identification into question.

A curious feature of Lintel 25 is that the scene depicts two bloodletting vessels, one held by Lady K'abal Xook and one positioned on the ground beside her. The upper bowl contains a stingray spine bloodletter and an obsidian bloodletter, while the lower one has a bloodletting cord and an obsidian bloodletter. The presence of the cord may allude to a tongue sacrifice to be performed by Lady K'abal Xook after this conjuring, similar to the one she is illustrated performing on Lintel 24. Given the juxtaposing of the upper bowl with the skull of Lady Ohl, it is possible that the bloodletting objects in this bowl originally belonged to Lady Ohl.

The third lintel of Structure 23 has an Initial Series date and Supplementary Series on its front edge that refers to a fire event that occurred in the building on June 26, AD 726 (Stuart 1998b; <https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=26&site=Yaxchilan&type=Lintel>). The scene on the underside of Lintel 26 illustrates Shield Jaguar III dressed in a stole-like vestment that is frequently worn in war scenes. A female stands adjacent to him, handing him a jaguar headdress and a flexible shield. The high-relief caption text that frames this action lacks a date but refers to the acquisition of the jaguar headdress by Shield Jaguar III (Tokovinine 2005). There is an incised text between the legs of the two figures that may have named the female, but it is eroded beyond recognition.⁶ Still, there is little doubt that the female is Lady K'abal Xook. The most obvious date for this dressing scene is either the Initial Series date of its front edge or Shield Jaguar III's accession, that is, the same time frame as the previous Lintel 25. If the latter, this scene would be another example of a king receiving a military headdress related to warfare on the occasion of his accession.

The use of the jaguar headdress by Shield Jaguar III after his accession is seen on Stela 20 and Lintel 46. The narrative on Stela 20 relates Shield Jaguar III's capture of Aj K'an Usja in AD 713. He is depicted wearing the jaguar headdress while Aj K'an Usja kneels before him in submission (Tate 1992:fig. 146). Lintel 46 also documents this capture event. Although the area around Shield Jaguar III's head is damaged, enough remains to suggest that he was wearing the jaguar headdress in this scene as well (<https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=46&site=Yaxchilan&type=Lintel>). This is in contrast to his depiction on Lintel 45 that illustrates his pre-accession capture of Aj Nik in AD 681 (see figure 1.6). In this scene, he wears a wide-rimmed headdress. It is important to note that the Lintel 26 scene does not contain any Tlaloc imagery. Lady K'abal Xook is no longer in the guise of Tlaloc or Lady Ohl

as she is depicted on Lintel 24 and Lintel 25. This jaguar headdress does not appear to be directly related to the Tlaloc cult.

Lintel 23, the fourth lintel of Structure 23, occurs over the doorway on the west side of the building. Its outer edge relates a dedication event in AD 724 and names Lady K'abal Xook, including her parentage statements and her relationship to other kinsmen. Unlike the undersides of the front lintels, the underside of Lintel 23 contains only text. The time frame moves forward to the 45th *tun* anniversary of Shield Jaguar III's accession on March 2, AD 726, and then relates the June 26 fire event that was recorded on Lintel 26. Although part of the text is eroded, it ends by naming Lady K'abal Xook and Shield Jaguar III. Lady K'abal Xook's nominal phrase includes the statement that she was a West Kaloomte'.

A final reference to Lady K'abal Xook is found in the three lintels of Structure 24, a building constructed on the west side of Structure 23. The three lintels of this house form a continuous text. Lintel 27 begins with the death of Lady Pakal in AD 705 and states that she was a Bakab and a six *k'atun* Kaloomte'. The time frame moves forward to the AD 742 death of her son Shield Jaguar III, who is also named as a Bakab. The lintel text ends with a distance number, indicating that the text continues on the next lintel over the central doorway of the building. Lintel 57 relates the death of Lady K'abal Xok in AD 749. Her nominal phrase extends onto the third lintel. Lintel 28 moves forward in time to the AD 751 death of Lady Ik' Skull (the second wife of Shield Jaguar III and the mother of his heir, Bird Jaguar IV). Lady Ik' Skull is named with her Lady Ajk'uhuun title. The narrative ends with the censuring of the tomb of Lady K'abal Xok in AD 755 but does not state who performed this action or why it was necessary to perform it. Given that the reigning king at the time was Bird Jaguar IV and that his mother, Lady Ik' Skull, was included in the narrative, it is likely that he oversaw this event.

At Yaxchilán, the lintel in the central doorway of a structure is invariably the focus of the narrative. Lady K'abal Xok is the only subject of the central lintel of Structure 24. Given that the story climaxes with the censuring of her tomb, she is clearly the focus of the story. The narrative attests to the importance of Lady K'abal Xok well after her death. The central lintel of Structure 23 is the impersonation of Lady Ohl by Lady K'abal Xok on the day of Shield Jaguar III's accession in AD 681. The mirror image of Lintel 25 places great visual focus on this ritual, indicating that it is the key event of the Structure 23 narrative. It is interesting that Lady K'abal Xok's tomb was constructed just inside this doorway.⁷

THE TLALOC EVENTS OF YAXCHILÁN STRUCTURE 21

Lady K'abal Xok was not the only Kaloomte' to have impersonated Lady Ohl at Yaxchilán. Her husband, Shield Jaguar III, Lady Ik' Skull, and Bird Jaguar IV are also illustrated in the guise of this Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom. The latter two depictions are found in Structure 21 located on the terrace to the east of Structure 23.

During excavations of Structure 21, it was discovered that the back wall of the central room was covered with a stucco mural. The upper section was destroyed when the building collapsed in antiquity, but enough remains to indicate that the scene featured five humans sitting on a bench in frontal pose (figure 6.4). The central figure is flanked on the left by a female and a male and on the right by two females. There were likely caption texts in the destroyed part of the mural that identified who they were. Given that the central lintel of the building depicts Bird Jaguar IV, the central figure of the mural is probably a portrait of him as well.

The bench below the central figure is decorated with a Tlaloc god in frontal pose wearing the typical *k'an* sign earrings and the jaguar bundle headdress decorated with the Mexican year sign. Two Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan serpents emerge above the headdress and arch across the base of the bench. The body of the right serpent is decorated in a similar fashion to the Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan on Lintel 25, while the left serpent is decorated with *k'an* signs. The reason for this contrast is not known. The head of the right Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan disgorges a Tlaloc in profile view. The left Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan head is mostly destroyed, and the area around its mouth is entirely gone. Whether it featured an image of Lady Ohl is unknown. Nevertheless, the Structure 21 mural clearly indicates that this building was also identified with Tlaloc-related events.

Stela 35 was discovered on the floor of the central room (figure 6.4). The front of this small stela features a scene that is thematically parallel to that on Lintel 25 and provides more information about this type of event. The narrative begins with a text at the bottom of the monument that describes the conjuring of K'awiil under the authority of four women and the creation/penance of Lady Ik' Skull on 9.15.10.0.1 4 Imix 4 Mol (July 1, AD 741), one day after the Period Ending. This date is just a year before the death of her husband, Shield Jaguar III, and eight years before Lady K'abal Xok's demise. Who these four women were is not clear. Lintel 14 of Structure 20 depicts Bird Jaguar IV's wife Lady Great Skull performing a ritual on this date, while the lintels of Structure 21 feature two other wives (Lady Wak Tuun and Lady Mut Bahlam, see below), albeit on different dates.

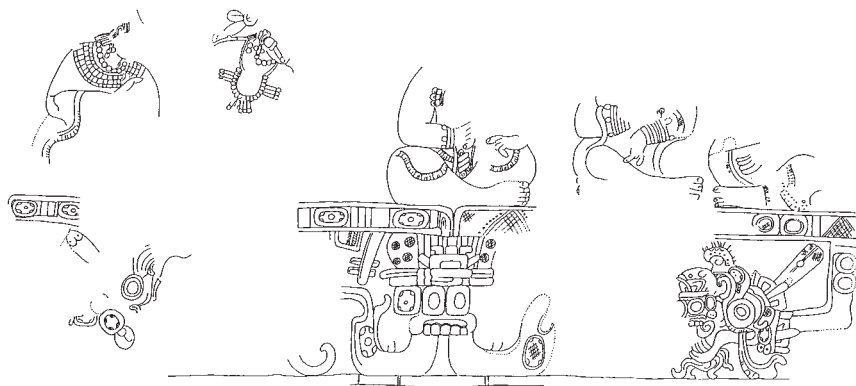


FIGURE 6.4. *Yaxchilán Structure 21 mural*

In the Stela 35 scene, Lady Ik' Skull holds up Lady Ohl's skull in her right hand while cradling a bowl with a bloodletting cord and stingray spine in her left arm. Her headgear is composed of a Tlaloc year sign headdress, Ch'ajom insignia, and the centipede-skull of Lady Ohl. The skull also wears a Tlaloc year sign headdress, indicating that Lady Ohl took on the guise of this deity (this headdress supports the interpretation that the conjured warrior figure who takes on the guise of Tlaloc on Lintel 25 is Lady Ohl). The double-headed Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan serpent rears up behind Lady Ik' Skull. Although the upper head is blocked by the feathers of Lady Ik' Skull's headdress, it appears to have only a Tlaloc emerging from it. This seems to represent a moment in the ritual sequence just before the appearance of Lady Ohl.

The narrative continues on the back of Stela 35 with an image of Lady Ik' Skull performing a tongue sacrifice with a burning incensario positioned beside her (figure 6.5). She is no longer wearing the Tlaloc headdress. The adjacent text states that the action is the *mayil* "sacrifice" of Lady Ik' Skull. Her nominal phrase includes her title as a Lady Ajk'uhuun and the statement that she is the mother of Bird Jaguar IV. This text does not include a date; hence, Lady Ik' Skull's impersonation of Lady Ohl and her tongue sacrifice were sequential acts that occurred on the same day (Bassie-Sweet 1991). Lady Ik' Skull's husband, Shield Jaguar III, is neither illustrated nor mentioned in the text on Stela 35. However, Lintel 39 illustrates their son Bird Jaguar IV performing a conjuring of K'awiil on the same day his mother took on the guise of Lady Ohl during a conjuring of K'awiil.⁸ It seems that Lady Ik' Skull's ritual was not in support of her husband but rather of her son.

The three doorways leading into the mural room had carved lintels. The left doorway is spanned by Lintel 15. The text refers to the conjuring of a deity called Yax Chit Noh Chan in AD 768, while the scene illustrates Bird Jaguar IV's wife Lady Wak Tuun kneeling before a serpent that disgorges a human figure (Stuart et al. 1999) (<https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=15&site=Yaxchilan&type=Lintel>). The center lintel (Lintel 16) illustrates the capture of a secondary lord of Santa Elena by Bird Jaguar IV in AD 752 (see figure 6.13). Lintel 17 spans the right doorway. While the text provides no date, the scene depicts Bird Jaguar IV and his wife Lady Mut Bahlam performing bloodletting rites with a sacrificial bowl at their feet (figure 6.2). Lady Mut Bahlam is dressed in a Tlaloc headdress as she draws a cord through her tongue. Bird Jaguar IV wears the centipede-skull headdress that represents the name of Lady Ohl. He has taken on her guise.

Lintel 17 and Lintel 24 illustrate events by Lady Mut Bahlam and Lady K'abal Xook and their respective husbands, Bird Jaguar IV and Shield Jaguar III, that are thematically parallel. Both women wear the Tlaloc tassell headdress while pulling cords through their tongues. However, in contrast to Lady Ohl's centipede-skull headdress worn by Bird Jaguar IV, Lady K'abal Xook's husband, Shield Jaguar III, wears a simple band with the head of a female attached to it (figure 6.1). The female has the bound ponytail of a Ch'ajom. The positioning of this head in a reclining orientation is highly

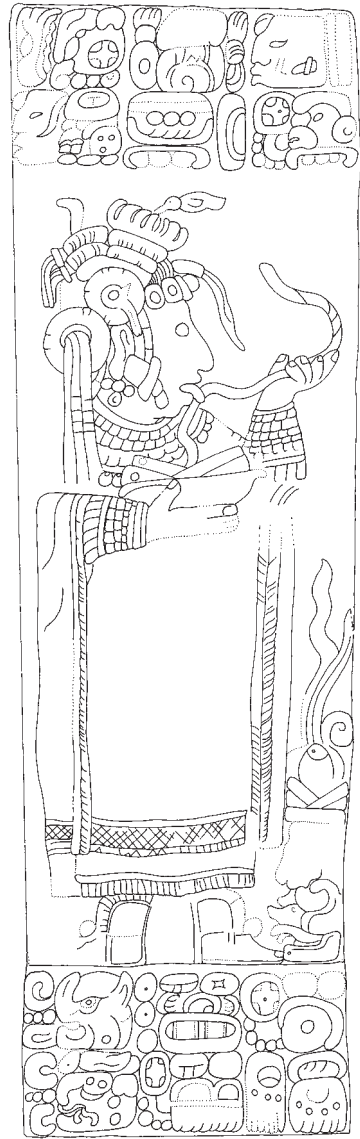


FIGURE 6.5. *Yaxchilán Stela 35 back*

unusual, as are her closed eyes, which are often used in iconography to indicate death. Surely, this is a representation of the deceased Lady Ohl.⁹ In brief, both Bird Jaguar IV and Shield Jaguar III have taken on the guise of Lady Ohl in these scenes.

THE MYSTERIOUS LADY OHL

Lady Ohl is an enigma. While she might have been a very ancient ancestor like the one K'inich Janaab Pakal I is illustrated impersonating on the Palenque Temple XXI bench, Lady Ohl is named as a Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom, which indicates her close association with the structure where Maya lords were initiated into the Tlaloc cult and where offerings to this god were made. If Moon Skull was the first Yaxchilán lord to be initiated into the Tlaloc cult and if Lady Ohl was from his time period, it is possible that she was his wife who had also been inducted into this cult. The importance of a wife in the Tlaloc cult is seen at Copán. The king Yax K'uk' Mo', who is the only other person known to carry the Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom title, was buried in the first phase of Structure 16, a *talud-tablero*-style building nicknamed Hunal (Bell et al. 2004). A female was subsequently buried in a double-chamber tomb in the structures built over Hunal. The two chambers were joined by a staircase that provided access to the mortuary room for a period of time after her interment, and both chambers were lavishly filled with grave goods, many of which were in Teotihuacán style. While no portraits or written references to K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's wife exist, it has been assumed that this rich tomb was hers. Her tomb demonstrates her close association with the Tlaloc cult and her revered status. Regrettably, unless other Yaxchilán inscriptions come to light related to Lady Ohl or her tomb is found, Lady Ohl's identity will remain a mystery.

What, if any, earlier phases of Structure 23 were discovered when the building was excavated by Roberto García Moll in the 1980s is unknown because, regrettably, he did not publish a detailed report. If no earlier structure was in place at the time of Lady K'abal Xook's impersonation of Lady Ohl in AD 681 (Lintel 25) and her husband's impersonation in AD 709 (Lintel 24), then we must obviously entertain the possibility that these events happened elsewhere. I suggest that Moon Skull's house would have been the likely location. In either case, I think the rituals illustrated in the art of Structures 21 and 23 are indicative of the types of ceremonies that were performed in these buildings. It is reasonable to suggest that the paraphernalia associated with these rituals was stored in these houses.

THE KALOOMTE' WOMEN OF YAXCHILÁN

Offices like Sajal and Ajk'uhuun were held by both queens and secondary lords, while the offices of Kaloomte' and Bakab were restricted to kings, heirs apparent, and queens. Queens appear to have attained their status in the latter two offices as the consorts and ritual assistants of the king. That is, when a lord became a Kaloomte' or a Bakab, so did his wife. Women who outlived their husbands retained their status in these offices. As an example, Lady Pakal survived her husband, Bird Jaguar III, by twenty-eight years, and her nominal phrase includes the title six *k'atun* Kaloomte'. Lady Pakal's role as a Kaloomte' during the reign of her son Shield Jaguar III is unknown, but two of his wives (Lady K'abal Xook and Lady Ik' Skull) were also afforded this title. Both wives survived Shield Jaguar III, who died in AD 742. Lady K'abal Xook's death in AD 749 was followed by Lady Ik' Skull's in AD 751. It would seem, then, that these women did not hold this office sequentially but held it in common. It may be significant that Lady K'abal Xook held the West Kaloomte' office while Lady Ik' Skull was designated an East Kaloomte'. Both women are also named with the Bakab title.

Lady K'abal Xook appears to have been the daughter of a local Sajal, but Lady Ik' Skull originated from the Kaanul polity, as noted on Yaxchilán Stela 10. The La Corona Panel 6 illustrates the daughter of the Kaanul king Tuun K'ab Hix arriving at La Corona to marry the La Corona king in AD 520 (Martin 2008). Lady Nah Ek is dressed in a Tlaloc costume atop a Tlaloc palanquin (see figure 3.20). The inference is that some royal women entered the Tlaloc cult prior to their marriages. It is possible, then, that Lady Ik' Skull received her initiation into the Tlaloc cult at her home site.¹⁰ A Tlaloc priestess would certainly be a more valuable bride and a more suitable wife for a Kaloomte'.

As discussed earlier, Lady Ik' Skull's son Bird Jaguar IV had four wives: Lady Great Skull, Lady Wak Tuun, Lady Mut Bahlam, and Lady Wak Jalam Chan Ajaw. Understanding their roles in the Tlaloc cult is more complicated. Lady Great Skull was the mother of Bird Jaguar IV's son and successor Shield Jaguar IV. There are significantly more depictions of this woman than of the other wives because her son illustrated her more often in his retrospective monuments. She is shown either conducting a conjuring or holding a bundle while her husband performs a ritual, and she is consistently named as a Lady Sajal. While we may not understand the nature of the Sajal office, it is one of very high status within the local hierarchy. Her nominal phrases never include the Kaloomte' title, and she is not depicted in Tlaloc-related scenes or dressed in Tlaloc costume.

In contrast, Lady Wak Tuun is named as an East Kaloomte', although her two portraits do not include Tlaloc imagery (Lintel 15 and Lintel 38). As

reviewed above, Lady Mut Bahlam wears the Tlaloc headdress on Lintel 17 (figure 6.2). On Lintel 8, Bird Jaguar IV is illustrated apprehending his most important war captive while dressed in the costume of the Black Witch Moth Tlaloc. The narrative on Lintel 41 refers to the same event. This scene shows Bird Jaguar IV dressed in the same costume and holding the same spear (see figure 3.1). His wife Lady Wak Jalam Chan Ajaw stands before him. She was likely holding a shield, but, regrettably, the lower portion of her portrait is damaged. The scene is thematically parallel to that of Lintel 26 and represents the dressing of the lord prior to battle. In addition to having the tied ponytail of a Ch'ajom, Lady Wak Jalam Chan Ajaw wears an interesting headdress. The main feature is similar to the Yajawk'ak' headdress worn by the captive on Piedras Negras Stela 12 (see figure 0.17). Above this element is a stylized Black Witch Moth wing with the obsidian zigzag design at its base. As discussed in chapter 5, Yajawk'ak' lords were in charge of the king's Tlaloc paraphernalia. It is possible that the wives of the Yaxchilán lords assumed the custodial duties of Yajawk'ak' lords. At the very least, Lintel 41 indicates that Tlaloc priestesses were intimately connected to their husbands' Tlaloc war regalia.¹¹

THE KALOOMTE' LADY SIX SKY OF DOS PILAS AND NARANJO

An example of a royal woman who held the office of Kaloomte' but whose husband was not a Kaloomte' was Lady Six Sky.¹² Her life is one of extraordinary circumstances. Lady Six Sky's father was the Tikal lord Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, who founded a new kingdom at Dos Pilas and broke with Tikal (Houston 1993; Martin and Grube 2008:56–58). Bajlaj Chan K'awiil warred with the Kaanul king Yuknoom Ch'een and with the Tikal king Nuun Ujol Chaak, who was likely his half-brother and who was also warring with Yuknoom Ch'een. At various points in the conflicts, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil was forced to flee Dos Pilas before returning and reestablishing himself. Eventually, he became aligned with Yuknoom Ch'een, and monuments at Dos Pilas refer to him as Yuknoom Ch'een's vassal. According to Dos Pilas Stela 9, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil then journeyed to Calakmul (almost 200 km north of Dos Pilas as the bird flies) to participate in its 9.12.10.0.0 Period Ending ceremonies (May 10, AD 682). After Yuknoom Ch'een's passing, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil returned to Calakmul in AD 686 to attend the accession of its new king Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk'. While no death date is recorded for Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, he was succeeded by his son Itzamnaaj K'awiil in AD 698, who, in turn, was succeeded by Ruler 3 in AD 727. Itzamnaaj K'awiil's parentage statement indicates that his mother was a woman from Itzan, but no parentage

statement exists for Ruler 3. Ruler 3 was militarily active during the reign of Itzamnaaj K'awiil, taking a Tikal lord as captive in AD 705. I think it is likely that he was Itzamnaaj K'awiil's brother.

Bajlaj Chan K'awiil and another one of his wives called Lady Bulu had a daughter named Lady Six Sky. Just three months after Bajlaj Chan K'awiil's AD 682 journey to Calakmul, Lady Six Sky arrived at Naranjo, presumably to marry into that lineage. Naranjo is located 125 km northeast of Dos Pilas. The history of Naranjo was complex. Its earliest known kings had a close association with Tikal (just 40 km to the northwest), but the Kaanul polity was intent on controlling the region east of Tikal. Naranjo came under its direct influence during the reign of Aj Wosal, who was placed on the Naranjo throne at the age of twelve under the auspices of the Kaanul king K'altuun Hix (AD 546) and ruled for almost seventy years (Martin and Grube 2008:71–72). The next Naranjo rulers came into conflict with the Kaanul polity and with Caracol, which was under the sway of the Kaanul king. At the time of Lady Six Sky's arrival, Naranjo's ruling dynasty appears to have been decimated. It has been proposed that Lady Six Sky was sent to Naranjo to marry a local Naranjo lord, reboot its lineage, and restore Kaanul control in the region (Houston 1993:108). She played a prominent role in the public monuments of Naranjo long after her son (K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak) was placed on the Naranjo throne at the age of five in AD 693.¹³ Despite researchers often characterizing Lady Six Sky as a queen, there is no evidence that her unnamed husband was ever a king of Naranjo or that she herself was ever seated in the office of Ajaw. She carries the Bakab title that indicates that she officiated at Period Ending ceremonies. What is curious is that Lady Six Sky is also named as a West Kaloomte' on Naranjo Stela 18.

In the early years of K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak's reign, control was reasserted over the region around Naranjo through a series of military attacks. The narrative on Stela 22 relates these successes. It begins with the birth of K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak in AD 688 and his accession in AD 693. The story then proceeds to a series of burning events against K'inchil Kab (693), Tuubal (693), and Bital (693), then the capture of a Tikal lord at Yellow Rabbit (695) and more burnings at Komkom (696), Bahlam Jol (697), and K'inchil Kab again (698). These military exploits end with the burning of Ucanal in AD 698 and the statement that they were done under the auspices of K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak. He is illustrated on the front of the monument performing the 9.13.10.0.0 Period Ending of AD 702, with the Ucanal ruler kneeling in submission before him. Given that K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak was only seven years old at the time of the Tikal lord's capture and fourteen at the time of Ucanal's burning, it

is unlikely that he was personally responsible for these acts. These military attacks were surely instigated by the Kaanul polity and Lady Six Sky's relatives from Dos Pilas and carried out with their support. It is interesting that Naranjo continued on with its military campaign despite the fact that the Tikal king Jasaw Chan K'awiil I had delivered a decisive blow against the Kaanul king Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk', capturing his patron god and forcing him to flee to La Corona in August AD 695 (Stuart et al. 2015b).

Naranjo Stela 24 also refers to the 9.13.10.0.0 Period Ending, but in contrast to Stela 22, the Stela 24 narrative is framed around the actions of Lady Six Sky. The narrative begins with her arrival at Naranjo in August AD 682 and the statement that she was a holy Ajaw of Dos Pilas. The time frame then moves forward to the AD 688 birth of K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak, who is named as a holy Naranjo lord and the 38th ruler in the Naranjo descent line. His birth is then joined to a deity impersonation that Lady Six Sky performed in AD 699. She is named as the daughter of Bajlaj Chan K'awiil of Dos Pilas and the West Kaloomte' Lady Bulu. The narrative ends with the wrapping of the Period Ending stone by Lady Six Sky on the 9.13.10.0.0 Period Ending.

Stela 29 is another monument focused on Lady Six Sky. It also begins with her arrival in AD 682 but provides more details about this event before proceeding to the AD 688 birth of her son. The time frame then moves forward to two Period Ending events in 9.13.3.0.0 (February 28, AD 695) and 9.14.3.0.0 (AD 714). At the time of this latter Period Ending event, Lady Six Sky's father had passed away, and her half-brother had taken the Dos Pilas throne. The narrative continues on the front of the monument, but, unfortunately, the carving is badly eroded. What is still legible is Lady Six Sky's parentage statement that states that her father was the three *k'atun* Ch'ajom, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, holy lord of Dos Pilas, West Kaloomte'. Her father is also named on Dos Pilas Hieroglyphic Staircase 3 as a Kaloomte'. The narratives on Lady Six Sky's other two monuments (Stela 18 and Stela 31) are too eroded to completely reconstruct, but Stela 31 illustrates her performing the 9.14.10.0.0 Period Ending event (AD 721), while Stela 18 refers to the 9.14.15.0.0 Period Ending (AD 726). This Period Ending is the last recorded event at Naranjo for both Lady Six Sky and K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaak. The latter's three *k'atun* title indicates that he lived until at least June 11, AD 727.

A hieroglyphic bench at Dos Pilas sheds light on Lady Six Sky's demise. The bench was found in Structure L4-41 of a building group that has been characterized as a palace for Lady GI-K'awiil, who was the wife of Dos Pilas Ruler 3 (Demarest 2006:58–59). Lady GI-K'awiil's tomb was found in the central room of this building in a similar manner to that of Lady K'abal Xook's

burial in Yaxchilán Structure 23. While the bench narrative focuses on Lady GI-K'awiil, it notes the death of Lady Six Sky in AD 741. This means that Lady Six Sky outlived her half-brother, the Dos Pilas king Itzamnaaj K'awiil, who died in AD 726, and that she died around the same time as his successor Ruler 3, whose death is recorded on Aguateca Stela 1 as June 1, AD 741. The fact that no inscriptions related to Lady Six Sky were recorded at Naranjo for the last fifteen years of her life but her death was noted on a Dos Pilas bench raises the possibility that Lady Six Sky spent the last years of her life back at Dos Pilas, specifically at the compound of Lady GI-K'awiil. If so, Lady Six Sky might have been in residency during Ruler 3's war against Seibal in AD 735, when the Seibal ruler was brought to Dos Pilas and adorned. Ruler 3 fought this war in the guise of Tlaloc, as demonstrated on Dos Pilas Stela 2, and Lady Six Sky may have supported him in this endeavour through her role as a Tlaloc priestess.

Dos Pilas Structure L5-49 dominates the central plaza, and it is probably the burial monument for Lady Six Sky's father, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil. There is a possible reference to Lady Six Sky on the very badly eroded Panel 18 that was found in the central temple of Structure L5-49 (Houston 1993:101). I believe Panel 10 of the structure likely illustrates Lady Six Sky. The origins of the panel are not known, but the fine grain quality of the limestone indicates that it was imported. The remains of an earlier carving are evident at the base of the monument. It has been speculated that the panel may have been brought from the nearby sites of Arroyo de Piedra or Tamarindito as a war trophy and re-carved at Dos Pilas (Houston 1993:72; Escobedo 2006). The re-carving illustrates a figure dressed in the jade costume of the deity One Ixim while cradling a double-headed serpent bar. The figure has the tied hair of a Ch'ajom. The panel lacks any hieroglyphic text, so the identity of the figure is open to debate. Marc Zender (2010) and Héctor Escobedo (2006) assumed that the figure was a male ruler, but the short stature and long skirt are more indicative of a female. Furthermore, the Panel 10 costume is the same one worn by Lady Six Sky on Naranjo Stelae 24, 29, and 31. The conjuring of a deity or an ancestor from a serpent bar is not seen on any other Dos Pilas monument, but such actions are common at Naranjo (Stelae 6, 7, 9, 12, 14, 20, 22, 25, and 31). On Panel 10, the upper entity emerging from the serpent bar is a K'awiil god, but a closer examination indicates that it represents the name Bajlaj Chan K'awiil (Zender 2010). I think that, in all likelihood, Panel 10 illustrates Lady Six Sky conjuring her father.

If the Kaloomte' office refers to political control over a region, then Lady Six Sky's father, Bajlaj Chan K'awiil, must have been afforded the Kaloomte' title

based on his hegemonic control over the Petexbatún region, despite the fact that he was a vassal of the Kaanul polity. In a similar fashion, Lady Six Sky may have been called a Kaloomte' if she had been responsible for the establishment of control over the Naranjo region in the early years of her son's rule. Although researchers have characterized Lady Six Sky as a warrior queen, she is not depicted carrying spears and shields like her son and other Naranjo rulers. While captives do appear at Lady Six Sky's feet on Stela 24 and Stela 29, her narratives are couched in terms of Period Ending events. In other words, she may have been presented with captives destined for the sacrifices of the Period Ending ceremonies, but she may not have been personally responsible for their capture. There are other examples of captives being handed over to an authority, such as the scene on Piedras Negras Stela 12 (see figure 0.17). Lady Six Sky's depicted actions involve conjuring and sacrifice. Although eroded, Naranjo Stela 24 illustrates her wearing a Tlaloc and a Ch'ajom headdress and cradling a bowl of sacrificial implements, much like the women of Yaxchilán (<https://www.peabody.harvard.edu/cmhi/detail.php?num=24&site=Naranjo&type=Stela>).

In addition to Stela 24, the presence of the Tlaloc cult at Naranjo is evident on several monuments. Stela 2 depicts Lady Six Sky's son K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak as a Tlaloc warrior circa AD 713, and Stela 19 illustrates K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak's son K'ahk' Ukalaw Chan Chaak (accession date AD 755) dressed in a feline headdress with Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan traits (see figures 3.10, 3.19).¹⁴ While these two Naranjo kings are not named as Kaloomte' lords, they most certainly participated in the Tlaloc cult of their mother and grandmother. I think it is likely that the Kaloomte' who inducted them into this cult was Lady Six Sky. Given the role of women in the curating of Tlaloc regalia, it is possible that Lady Six Sky was in charge of maintaining K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaak's Tlaloc insignia and that this paraphernalia was passed down to his son.

One has to wonder when Lady Six Sky herself was first inducted into the Tlaloc cult. It is not impossible that the young princess journeyed to Calakmul with her father in AD 682 and was initiated there. Whether she was inducted by the Kaanul king at Calakmul or her father, she likely arrived at Naranjo with effigies of Tlaloc, much like the Kaanul princess Lady Nah Ek, who arrived at La Corona as a Tlaloc priestess.

SUMMARY

The active role females played in the Tlaloc cult is well demonstrated in Maya art. In many of the Yaxchilán narratives, Lady Ohl is accorded a

privileged position as a venerated ancestor. Her depiction as a Wiinte'naah Ch'ajom holding weapons of war while in the guise of Tlaloc suggests that she played a major role in some earlier undocumented conflicts. At Yaxchilán, the Tlaloc cult appears to be centered on the three buildings situated on the south side of the main plaza (Structures 21, 22, and 23). Structure 23 is clearly labeled as the house of Lady K'abal Xook, and its artwork features this Kaloomte' queen performing Tlaloc rituals with her husband. The murals of Structure 22 continue this Tlaloc theme and illustrate a palace scene where the royal bench is adorned with Tlalocs being conjured from Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan caterpillar-serpents. In addition, Stela 35, which was found in this building, depicts another conjuring of Tlaloc from a Waxaklajuun Ub'aah Kan. It is not a great leap of faith to conclude that one of the activities conducted in these buildings was the conjuring and veneration of Tlaloc. I would venture to say that these Yaxchilán buildings were Wiinte'naah structures, even though they do not have the typical *talud-tablero* style of architecture.

The deeds of the Kaloomte' women of Yaxchilán are set within the narrative framework of either their husbands or their sons. The depictions celebrate these women's ability to conjure Tlaloc avatars and assist their husbands or their sons in their role as powerful warriors. The Naranjo monuments referencing Lady Six Sky are similar in that they consistently refer to her as the mother of the reigning king K'ahk'Tiliw Chan. These Kaloomte' women appear to have gained significant status from their Tlaloc cult duties.

La Corona Panel 6 indicates that as early as AD 520, Kaanul princesses were indoctrinated into the cult of Tlaloc as priestesses and sent to secondary sites to become the wives of local lords. The fact that Lady Nah Ek's arrival at La Corona was celebrated on a monument 200 years after the event indicates her enduring importance. One has to wonder if Lady Ohl of Yaxchilán might have originally been a Kaanul princess as well.

Andrea Stone (1989) argued that Maya rulers took on the guise of Tlaloc to demonstrate their validation and identification with a foreign power, specifically the great metropolis of Teotihuacán. The underlying assumption is that the Maya accepted and incorporated Tlaloc into their pantheon of deities. In this volume, I have argued that the lowland Maya specifically identified the highland god Tlaloc with the obsidian that was only procurable from highland sources while maintaining their association of flint with their local Chahk deities. The Maya believed that flint and obsidian were not inert stone but sacred substances implanted with the lightning and meteor essences of the Chahk deities and Tlaloc, respectively. By participating in the Tlaloc cult, the Maya elite claimed the ability to harness the supernatural power thought to

be inherent in these stones and owned by these gods. The fact that the Tlaloc cult endured long after the demise of Teotihuacán indicates how potent this concept was.

Despite the fact that the Maya identified the Teotihuacán god Tlaloc with obsidian, they obtained the majority of their obsidian not from Teotihuacán but from locations in highland Guatemala. Chapter 7 reviews the merchant deity God L and his association with the land between those sources and the lowlands.