
17 **LAMANAI RELOADED: ALIVE AND WELL IN THE EARLY POSTCLASSIC**

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David M. Pendergast of the Royal Ontario Museum directed investigations at Lamanai from 1974 to 1986. The site was mapped, and excavations focused on a wide range of residential and monumental structures. A second phase of excavations was initiated in 1998, directed by Elizabeth Graham, which is aimed at clarifying periods of transition that are little known at other sites, but well represented at Lamanai. These are: the transition from the Late Preclassic period to the beginning of Maya florescence in Classic times (400 B.C. to A.D. 250); the time of the Maya collapse, from about A.D. 800 to 1000; and the transition from Precolumbian occupation to the Spanish Colonial period (1450 to 1700). This contribution presents a summary of recent investigations at the site, with special attention given to the buildings surrounding Plaza N10 [3], also known as the Ottawa Group.

Introduction

It will not be possible to cover as much as I would like in this chapter, but I will attempt to summarize some of the information bearing on the Classic to Postclassic transition that results from the excavations I began at Lamanai in 1998. My title focuses attention on the Early Postclassic, but this does not mean that Lamanai produces no information from other periods (see Table 1 for provisional chronology.) However, arguments have been put forward based on recent research to the effect that the Early Postclassic as it was originally understood –with a twelfth to thirteenth century florescence at Chichen Itza– no longer exists (Andrews et al. 2002). Although the concept of a hiatus may aptly describe the character of the occupational sequence in some areas, evidence from Lamanai indicates that activity associated with intensive occupation continues without interruption from Classic to Postclassic times (Pendergast 1982, 1986).

With regard to the character of occupation, however, there is little doubt at Lamanai that the Classic to Postclassic transition was distinguished by a socio-cultural dynamic of continuity and change.

Aspects of change in material culture, which I discuss below, suggest that those pulling the strings of power in the Early Postclassic had cultural, political, religious, and perhaps economic priorities that were different from those of Classic Period rulers, although key aspects of the way society was organized seem to have remained the same. Along the lagoon, dense and apparently continuous occupation –which remains to be fully investigated– from Early Postclassic to Historic times suggests that the Early Postclassic kick-started a vibrant period of economic revival in commerce and long-distance trade. I will hazard the statement that elite priorities changed –which could be a reflection of an influx of new people or new alliances (marriage or otherwise) of established elites, or a bit of everything– but non-elites seem to have maintained, or to have been allowed to maintain, significant integrity of organization by adjusting production (Howie-Langs 2001; Howie-Langs et al. 2002, 2003) to suit new needs and new priorities.

Research under the Lamanai Umbrella

Before discussing evidence for the Classic to Postclassic transition, I will first

summarize the results of research carried out by colleagues and students under the umbrella of the Lamanai Project.

The Stucco Frieze project

Thomas M. Shelby and Dorie Reents-Budet have been able to reconstruct significant portions of a stucco frieze that ornamented one of the buildings, Str. N10-28, of the Ottawa palace-courtyard group (Shelby 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Shelby and Reents-Budet 2001) (Figure 1). Over 2,000 fragments of the frieze had been recovered in 1981 from around the base of Str. N10-28's south and west sides, and most retained their blue, green, yellow, rose and specular hematite red paint. Shelby began preliminary studies in 1998, and in 1999 Shelby and Reents-Budet conducted further excavations to recover more stucco fragments. Their work included cataloguing all fragments, and an attempt was made to reconstruct the frieze to discover its pictorial contents and meaning.

The theme of the frieze as indicated by the reconstruction was rulership, an appropriate topic for what is believed to have been an administrative building. The imagery includes a full-figure rendering of a man who is likely to have been a Lamanai ruler; the large size of the figure suggests that it was the frieze's central image. Flanking the central image were secondary figures, possibly Lamanai's ruling elite, as well as captives, supernaturals, and symbols associated with kingship. Shelby and Reents-Budet's detailed report and catalogue of all recovered fragments is published on the FAMSI website (www.famsi.org, Report No. 98037).

Recent Perspectives on Str. N10-28

The frieze decorating Str. N10-28 was destroyed as part of a massive re-building effort in the Ottawa Group, nicknamed the 'Boulders' phase. The destruction of the frieze and the re-building activity probably

began sometime in the ninth century, but we will have more details on chronology once the radiocarbon dates of charcoal from various caches have been run. Str. N10-28 was razed in rather dramatic fashion (Figure 1), and at first it appeared that no structure replaced it. However, in 2002, as we excavated the north side of the Ottawa Group (Figures 2 and 3), we discovered what looked like the edge of a platform in the spot where N10-28 had once stood but was now buried. This 'platform', part of Str. N10-80 (Figure 3), turned out to be a partial-height wall of a perishable building with a platform addition. In fact, Str. N10-28's transformation turned out to be one of several wooden buildings of the Ottawa Group that replaced masonry structures. This pattern of replacing masonry administrative-residential buildings with wooden ones is a distinctive feature of the Terminal Classic Period at Lamanai in the zone of the Ottawa Group.

Chert Eccentrics as Flaked Stone Symbols

Richard Meadows (2001) completed a material cultural analysis of chert eccentrics that included the Lamanai sample. He was able to contextualize the emergence of a distinctive style of northern Belize symbolic lithics that has regional technological antecedents. His discovery of fabric and pigment residues led to the conclusion that eccentrics, as "flaked stone symbols" (Meadows 2001), were part of a complex production process that included painting and adorning prior to final deposition. Meadows also explored the meaning and symbolism represented by the various eccentric forms.

Preclassic to Early Classic Ceramics at Lamanai

Terry Powis (2002) carried out research on the Preclassic ceramics at Lamanai. He explored the idea that elaborate pottery became one of the means by which

Table 1. Preliminary Lamanai Chronology

	Present	Independence		Economic and cultural orientation changes to greater involvement with North and Spanish America; greater participation in global economy.
	1981	Self-Governing		Long-distance trade continues to be characterized by relationships with Britain.
	1964	British Colonial		Sugar mill constructed at Lamanai in mid-19 th century, widespread use of ceramics imported from Britain
A.D. B.C.	1700	Yglesias		Terminal Postclassic to Early historic period – distinctive ceramics, lithic change marked by widespread use of the bow and arrow, appearance of European pottery and metals after 1540
	1450	Spanish colonial		
		Cib		Late Postclassic – marked by concentration of activity along the lagoon, continuity in forms and ceramic motifs from the Early Postclassic – there is very likely a period of ceramic stylistic change that occurs between Cib and Yglesias, but it has yet to be securely defined.
	1250			
		Buk		Early Postclassic – marked by distinctive elite sub-complex of pottery that seems to replace Classic emphasis on polychromes, no hiatus from Terminal Classic apparent in the stratigraphy, continuity in organization of ceramic production (Howie 2003), residential buildings largely of wood, apparent increase in lagoon orientation
	1000			
		Terclerp		Terminal Classic – marked by extensive masonry platform construction, superstructures largely perishable, distinctive pottery, with some forms that herald Postclassic styles
	800			
		Tzunun		Late Classic – very little known about this period at Lamanai – ceramic change to Terminal Classic is gradual
	600			
		Shel		Provisional Middle Classic represented ceramically by Tzakol 3 polychromes, slab-footed cylinder vessels, stela iconographic elements
	250			
		Sac		Early Classic (A.D. 250-450)
	150		Late	Late facet of the Terminal Preclassic or Protoclassic (Powis 2002)
		Zotz		
0		Early	Early facet of the Terminal Preclassic (Powis 2002)	
100				
	Lag		Late Preclassic (Powis 2002)	
400				
		Late	Late facet of the Middle Preclassic (Powis 2002)	
600	Mesh			
		Early	Early facet of the Middle Preclassic (See Powis 2002)	
900				
	?		Provisional – based on radiocarbon dates from the ‘Harbour’ zone (Pendergast 2002)	
1500				

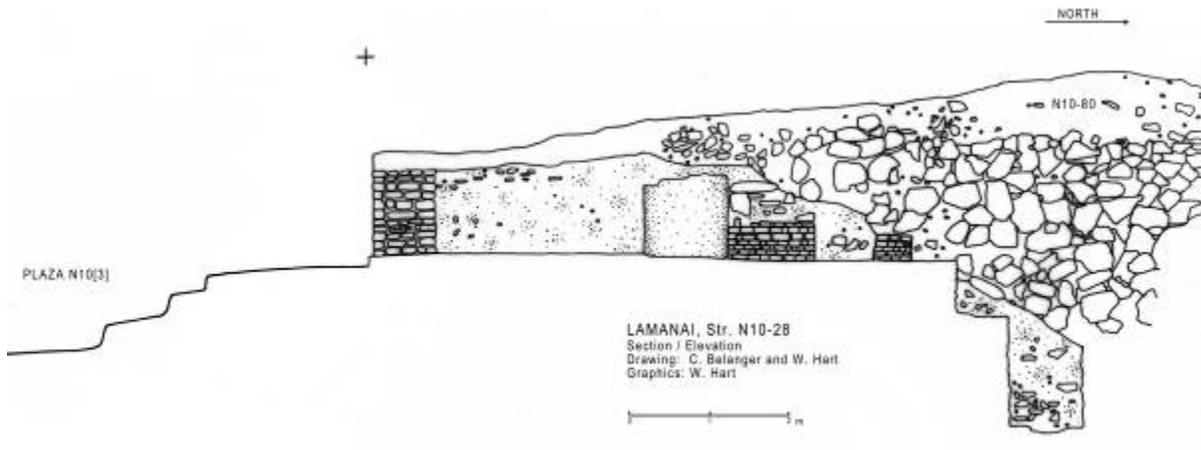


Figure 1. West section of axial north-south trench through Tulip, Str. N10-28, showing razed walls covered and sealed by dry boulder core of the “Boulders Phase”

Lamanai’s elites displayed their wealth and power, and he also carried out functional analyses (e.g., Powis et al. 2002). Given Pendergast’s data on elite and non-elite contexts, Powis was able to examine 140 complete Late Preclassic and Protoclassic vessels –400 B.C. to A.D. 250– from a variety of primary contexts such as burials, caches and primary middens. His results showed that during the Late Preclassic and Protoclassic periods, elites and commoners had a similar ceramic inventory with all segments of society having access to fine quality pottery, as well as to a range of more ordinary and utilitarian wares. It was not until the Early Classic was underway that distinctions began to appear in access to fine wares that reflected a burgeoning social inequality.

Ceramic Petrography and the Terminal Classic to Postclassic Transition

Ph.D. research undertaken by Linda Howie-Langs (Sheffield) is examining ceramic production technology at Lamanai from the Terminal Classic to the Early Postclassic. Howie-Langs is focusing on how continuity and change in the production and use of pottery reflect the larger, dramatic events of the Classic to Postclassic transition.

She has combined stylistic analysis with scientific techniques such as Thin Section Petrography, Neutron Activation Analysis and Scanning Electron Microscopy. She has also extensively sampled locally available raw materials such as clays and rocks used as tempering materials. The result is that Howie-Langs’s research is providing considerable insight into the nature of economic and ceramic production activities during the Classic to Postclassic transition (Howie-Langs 2001; Howie-Langs et al. 2002, 2003).

Postclassic Ceramic Iconography

Jenny Scarlin (UCL) is studying Postclassic ceramic iconography. Her preliminary conclusion is that the Early Postclassic symbols represented on Buk pottery reflect an elite semiotic code that replaced Classic Period symbolism. The code may reinforce military and messianic aspects new to the area. The repertoire of symbols reduces greatly from the Buk to the Cib Phase, although the style remains the same in terms of placement of motifs on vessels. With the onset of the Terminal Postclassic and Yglesias periods there was a stylistic break with Cib; the symbolism became figurative, which might reflect a loss

of understanding of the complex Early and Middle Postclassic code and a return to a visual language more easily read and understood.

Hieroglyphic Monuments Project

In addition to the studies listed above, a program of recording the hieroglyphic monuments at Lamanai was initiated in 2002, funded by the British Academy. Stuart Laidlaw of the Institute of Archaeology, UCL, has recently completed a photographic inventory of the Lamanai monuments. Study of the glyphic inscriptions is being undertaken by Simon Martin, with iconographic analysis by Dorie Reents-Budet. Of particular interest at Lamanai are the carved monuments that were re-used in construction that post-dated the Classic period.

The Field School at Lamanai

Laura Howard and I began a field school component at Lamanai in 1998 under the aegis of the Lamanai Field Research Center. Since 2001 the field school has been directed by Scott Simmons of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, and co-directed by Laura Howard. Excavations are centered around the Spanish Colonial Period residential zone, which was first excavated in 1984 (Pendergast 1991, 1993a, Pendergast and Graham 1993), and produced a large number of copper and alloyed copper artifacts. Ingots and artifact composition (Hosler 1994) suggested the presence of on-site metallurgy, and one of Simmons's primary efforts is aimed at elucidating the nature of metallurgy in the Southern Maya Lowlands, both before and after the Conquest. In 2001 and 2002, further compelling evidence for on-site metallurgy was recovered by Simmons and his team. To date the site's inventory of copper and bronze artifacts numbers 171 objects.

Faunal Remains

Analysis of faunal remains at Lamanai is being undertaken by Norbert Stanchly (UCL), with a particular focus on the Postclassic period. Stanchly has helped supervise the excavation of a number of late period structures and features at Lamanai, among them the Ottawa Group, the Str. N10-9 (Jaguar Temple) midden, the platform in the Jaguar Temple plaza, and Str. N10-27. The results of his analyses are informed by some exceptional stratigraphy and should yield a wide range of information on Terminal Classic to Postclassic resource use. Earlier faunal analysis at Lamanai and comparisons with Tipu were carried out by Kitty Emery (1999).

Human Skeletal Remains

The human skeletal remains excavated at Lamanai from 1974 to 1985 have been analysed by Hermann Helmut of Trent University. Christine White of the University of Western Ontario has recently assumed supervision of human skeletal studies at Lamanai for the excavations begun in 1998, and she carried out preliminary studies of the collection during the 2003 field season, which includes the material recovered during the TDP infra-structural construction, burials from the Ottawa Group, from Str. N10-27, and from Lamanai's second church cemetery excavated by Pendergast in 1985.

Periods of Transition

My focus at Lamanai has been on illuminating periods of transition. From the start of the work in 1998, however, as the result of conversations first with John Morris regarding recording and database analysis, and then with Allan Moore regarding the Stela Temple, N10-27, our research was integrated with plans for consolidation of structures for tourism. My recent excavations in the Ottawa Group were planned in concert with TDP (Tourism Development Project)

strategies for Lamanai in cooperation with Jaime Awe and Claude Belanger, and in concert with Lamanai Reserve park planning under the aegis of George Thompson, Ag. Archaeological Commissioner from 2001 to 2003.

My original research plan –which I now realize was overly ambitious– had been to explore the bridging period between the Classic and the Postclassic; to explore details of the transition from the Early to the Late Postclassic; and to expand our knowledge of the Terminal Postclassic to Historic/Colonial period. I had a good idea about where to look for this information (Figure 2) based on earlier work that had been reported by Pendergast (1981) on the Central Precinct, but also based on excavations I myself had carried out in the Camp Zone; in the area of Str. N10-27; and in the Spanish historic community.

Summary of Recent Investigations

Prior research and foundations critical information comes from Pendergast's early work on N10-9, N10-2 and N10-4 (Pendergast 1981) (Figure 2). These excavations first revealed the pottery and other material culture of what we now call the Buk (Figure 4) and Cib phases at Lamanai (Graham 1987; Pendergast 1982). Pendergast (1982) and I (Graham 1987) originally characterized Buk pottery as Middle Postclassic based on the decorative and formal attributes the pottery shared with suggested classifying Buk as Early Postclassic to bring it into line with terminology elsewhere, because the dating of its appearance in the eleventh or early twelfth century is more secure than its later end.

Radiocarbon dates from a cache with Buk pottery on N10-9 indicate that Buk was in full swing by AD 1100 (Pendergast 1981), but until Cib or related Tulum Red pottery is more precisely dated and contextualized, the full time span of Buk and its relation to Cib

remains unknown. What we do know is that for Buk and the phase that followed it, the lagoon shore was a hub of activity.

A staggering quantity of Postclassic and later ceramics has emerged recently as the result of TDP infra-structural construction along the lagoon. Sections dug to carry waste runoff for toilets reveal an intensively manipulated landscape, and possible quarrying for clays or clay minerals. The bulk of the ceramic material is in fact Late Postclassic, or Cib, with considerable Yglesias period material as well (see Table 1) (Graham 1987). Darcy Wiewall (UC Riverside) will include analysis of this material in her Ph.D. research on late-period households at Lamanai.

Str. N12-12, The Rectory

Information on the transition to the Historic period has come from excavations supervised by Laura Howard of what we call the "Rectory," Str. N12-12, which lies immediately north of the second church at Lamanai, and also from selected excavation of the areas around the first and second churches. Results are preliminary, and the Rectory is probably one of the most enigmatic structures at the site, but there is artifact, stratigraphic, and structural evidence to indicate that this building was used during and perhaps even beyond the Spanish historic period. Pendergast (1986) discovered that the second church, Str. N12-13 (YDL II), had been used as a smithy by the British during the sugar mill period, so perhaps it is not surprising to learn that the building next door had a life beyond that of housing the individuals who helped care for the church. The Rectory is also interesting from a tourist point of view, because it started out by incorporating good-quality Postclassic Maya stone masonry, but the various modifications and additions exhibit a peculiar style that we have come to associate with sixteenth century activity or later.

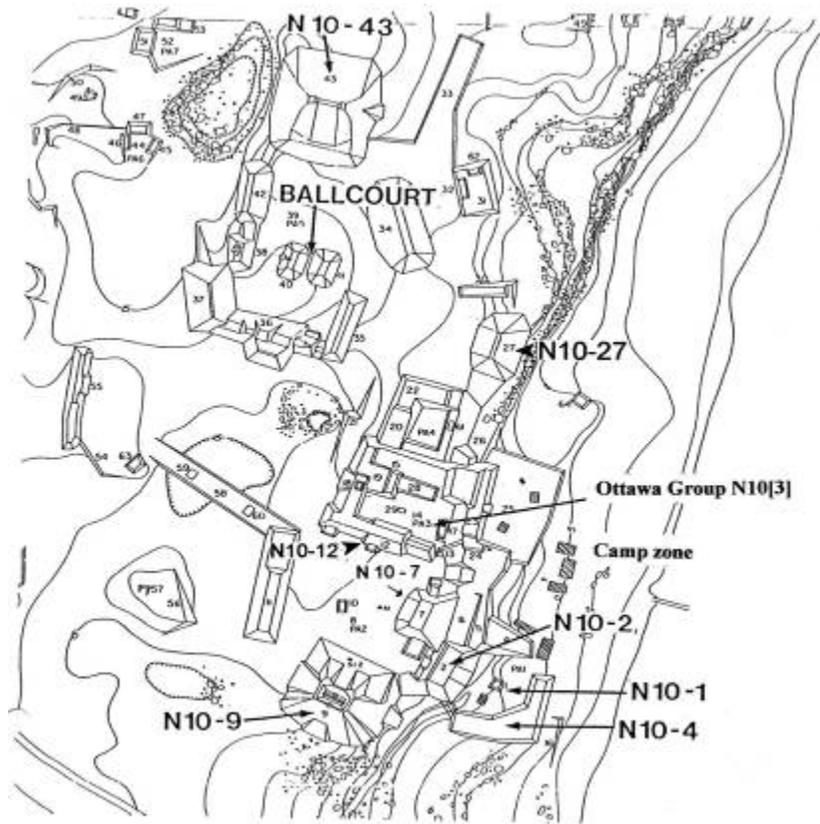


Figure 2. Square N10 showing the locations of the Ottawa Group, the Camp zone and other major buildings.

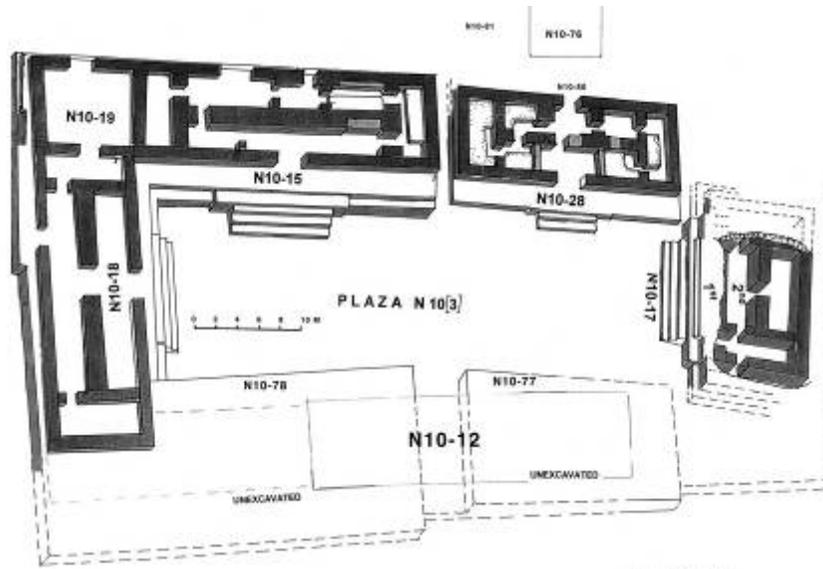


Figure 3. Plan of the Ottawa Group

Str. N10-27, The Stela Temple

Some of the most important information recovered since excavations began in 1998 helps to document the Classic to Postclassic transition. Our excavations around the lower courses and central stair of Str. N10-27, the Stela Temple, carried out in conjunction with the TDP Project, produced ceramics from special-activity midden, as well as stratigraphic information on continuity at a time when other sites in the Maya area were undergoing collapse and abandonment. There is little question that whatever purpose the Stela Temple served ended abruptly. Pendergast (1988) reported that the lower portion of the stela had shattered as the result of the effects of a fire at its base, although he posited that the shattering could have been accidental. Infilling of the doorways of the building that lay across the central stair seems to have ceased abruptly, and stratigraphic excavation of the midden abutting the lower terraces and burying the lower central stair showed that midden deposition began virtually immediately—that is, not long after the toppling of the upper portion of the stela as the result of the shattering of its base, and before the plaza surface or lower terrace faces had been exposed for any great period of time.

The bulk of our detailed stratigraphic information on midden deposition and its relationship to N10-27, described below, comes from the structure's southwest side. The midden is deeper and less heavily disturbed on this side than it is on the north and west sides of the structure. Indications are, as noted below, that the source of the activity that produced the midden lay south of the Stela Temple, possibly originating in the Ottawa Group, which may explain the heavier deposition of refuse on the Stela Temple's south and west sides. On the

northwest, the terrace face began to collapse soon after upkeep of N10-27 ceased, and collapse continued intermittently but apparently quite frequently as midden was deposited. As a result, stratigraphy is highly obscured on this side by the combination of early and relatively frequent deposition of collapse debris, root action, and other natural disturbances.

The Midden on the Southwest Side of the Stela Temple

The collapse of the upper portions of the building constructed across the central stair of the Stela Temple seems to have been rapid. The unusually large stones that formed the corners of the basal moulding of the upper zone at the south end toppled directly onto a clean plaza surface, and subsequent sediment deposition was rapid and water-laid, perhaps the result of exposure to rain. Deposition of the midden material—mostly ceramic fragments but also some lithics and bone—began after a period of rain, but before plant growth could alter sediment sorting or begin to disintegrate the plaza's surface.

Midden deposition was spotty and resulted in a highly idiosyncratic pattern of preservation. It was clear that material was tipped first against the lowermost terrace and stairside outset faces, but not evenly; deposition then continued outward from the structural elements and extended to include the central stair at the front. The midden ultimately formed a slope abutting N10-27, with its outer edges expectably thin, except for the portion of the midden burying the central stair and the toppled stela, which remained uniformly thick.

The best-preserved stratigraphy, perhaps not unexpectedly, was found near the junction of the southwest terrace face with the stairside outset. Ceramics from the midden are Terminal Classic (Terclerp) to Early Postclassic (Buk) in date, with

Terminal Classic material abutting the terrace and stairside outset faces, and underlying building collapse. Buk comprised the bulk of the remainder, including the material over the central stair.

There was also Late Postclassic activity in this zone, represented by pottery fragments, but we could make no sense of the ceramic deposition pattern. House platforms had been constructed in front of the Stela Temple, but we could not determine if they were Buk or later: Platform core material was Buk, but masonry characteristics were Late Postclassic. What we did learn, though, was that the area was re-used during the sixteenth century or perhaps later. There is a small structure just south of the Stela Temple that has a rough, single-course platform face that resembles the crude construction we know elsewhere (e.g. Str. N12-12) to be associated with buildings occupied or used in the Historic period. The architectural style – if you can call it that– is distinctive. In addition, Yglesias ceramics were recovered from the midden abutting the Stela Temple on its southwest side, but the Yglesias material was concentrated in the south part of the midden and thickened as it carried over to the small structure with the crude platform face.

An Yglesias burial was intruded into the midden just west of the terrace face of the Stela Temple near its southwest corner. The burial was that of a young child and contained Yglesias-period vessels, including a small grater bowl, a spindle whorl, a broken figurine or whistle, and a pitcher with a frog effigy spout. What we have then in Str. N10-27 is a building abandoned in terms of its primary use at the end of the Classic Period, but with ritual refuse deposited first in the Terminal Classic, and then throughout the period in which Buk pottery was made, possibly as the result of ritual activity centered farther to the south in the Ottawa Group.

The Stela Temple Midden and the Jaguar Temple (N10-9) Midden

In addition to the excavation of the midden abutting the Stela Temple, a contemporaneous midden was excavated just north and east of Str. N10-9, the Jaguar Temple. That the content of these middens was not the result of household activity is a conclusion of Howie-Langs, based on comparative data from household midden accumulation at Altun Ha. The Lamanai middens reflect non-household activity, but exactly what sort of activity or ritual remains unclear. Howie-Langs has been able to extract a good deal of stylistic information on the nature of change from the Terminal Classic through to the later facet of Buk, and we hope that this kind of information will expand our knowledge of Postclassic ritual life.

The Ottawa Palace Courtyard Group

A major contribution of the Ottawa Group research is what the excavations have to tell us about the period when sites in the Maya area such as Tikal are said to have collapsed and been abandoned. Lamanai was certainly not abandoned, but we remain unsure about how it was affected by collapse.

General description of ‘Boulders’ and Plaza N10[3]

The buildings surrounding Plaza N10[3] were designated as the ‘Ottawa Group’ in 1975 by the survey and mapping students working under the direction of H. Stanley Loten, of Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario. Six structures were given numeric designations: Structures N10-12, N10-15, N10-17, N10-18, N10-19 and N10-28 (Figure 3). Further architectural recording by Claude Belanger since 1998 has added important information to building plans and clarified aspects of the group’s configuration. Str. N10-12, for example, was found to overlie two earlier buildings, Str. N10-77 and

Str. N10-78. Structures N10-76, N10-80 and N10-81 were delineated in 2002 (Figure 3).

Belanger's architectural investigations—and the ingenious methods he devised for clearing the courtyard—enabled clarification of the general process by which the Classic period courtyard was filled, buildings razed and covered with “boulders,” and the entire platform extended to the north to support more buildings. Because of the distinctive use of undressed, randomly cut limestone as courtyard fill and as core of platforms during this phase, we've used the name “Boulders” to describe both the stones and the phase, although strictly speaking the stones were quarried.

“Boulders” Timing and Building Activity Associated with the Ottawa Platform Extension on the North

We originally hypothesized that the massive effort of filling the courtyard and extending the platform on the north must have taken a considerable period of time, and our original view seemed to be reinforced by the presence of Buk sherds in the boulder fill of both the courtyard and the platform extension. It appeared that the major infilling efforts went from south to north—that is, most of the Late Classic(?) masonry buildings around the courtyard were razed and covered, the courtyard was filled, and the entire area of the Ottawa Group was then extended northward. This scenario as well as the long period of time required are based partly on the fact that additions to Str. N10-15 and N10-19 (not shown in Figure 3) were constructed on the north sides of these buildings, which necessitated structural platform support on that side. Also, at least one of the buildings, Str. N10-76, which stood just north of Str. N10-28 on the extended platform surface (see Figure 3), had features that suggested it was Late Postclassic in construction. The Boulders phase began shortly after the stucco frieze of Str. N10-28

was destroyed and the building partially razed (Figure 1). Because the frieze is thought to be Late Classic in date (or later), and Terminal Classic pottery was found both as cache material (in Str. N10-17 and in the courtyard fill of Plaza N10[3]) and as fragments in the boulder core of the courtyard, we hypothesized that the Boulders phase began early in the Terminal Classic and continued into the Postclassic period, perhaps for a considerable period of time.

Str. N10-76

We initiated work in 2002 with the investigation of Str. N10-76 (Figure 3), supervised by Kip Andres of the Chau Hiix Project. We began by clearing the platform face, which was made difficult by the fact that large segments of the face had been pushed, presumably by root action, evenly and deceptively outward, making delineation of the true face a far more time-consuming task than we had anticipated. It was only through the expertise and persistence of Damasio Pop and German Aguilar that the original face was eventually exposed. This exposure revealed that we were mistaken about the features we thought were Late Postclassic. Str. N10-76's north side (not shown in Figure 3) appeared at first to display the characteristic double line of stones that represents a partially collapsed face of a Late Postclassic building platform. It turned out that there was a single, inset step on this north side, and its collapse mimicked Late Postclassic features.

We then looked for corner caches, because if Str. N10-76 was Late Postclassic, it might have had caches in each of the four corners as was the case with at least one Postclassic platform at Tipu (Kautz 1981); but no caches were found. We then excavated a trench across the primary axis, which as the result of Pop's and Aguilar's work we could now accurately situate, and there found an extended burial originally

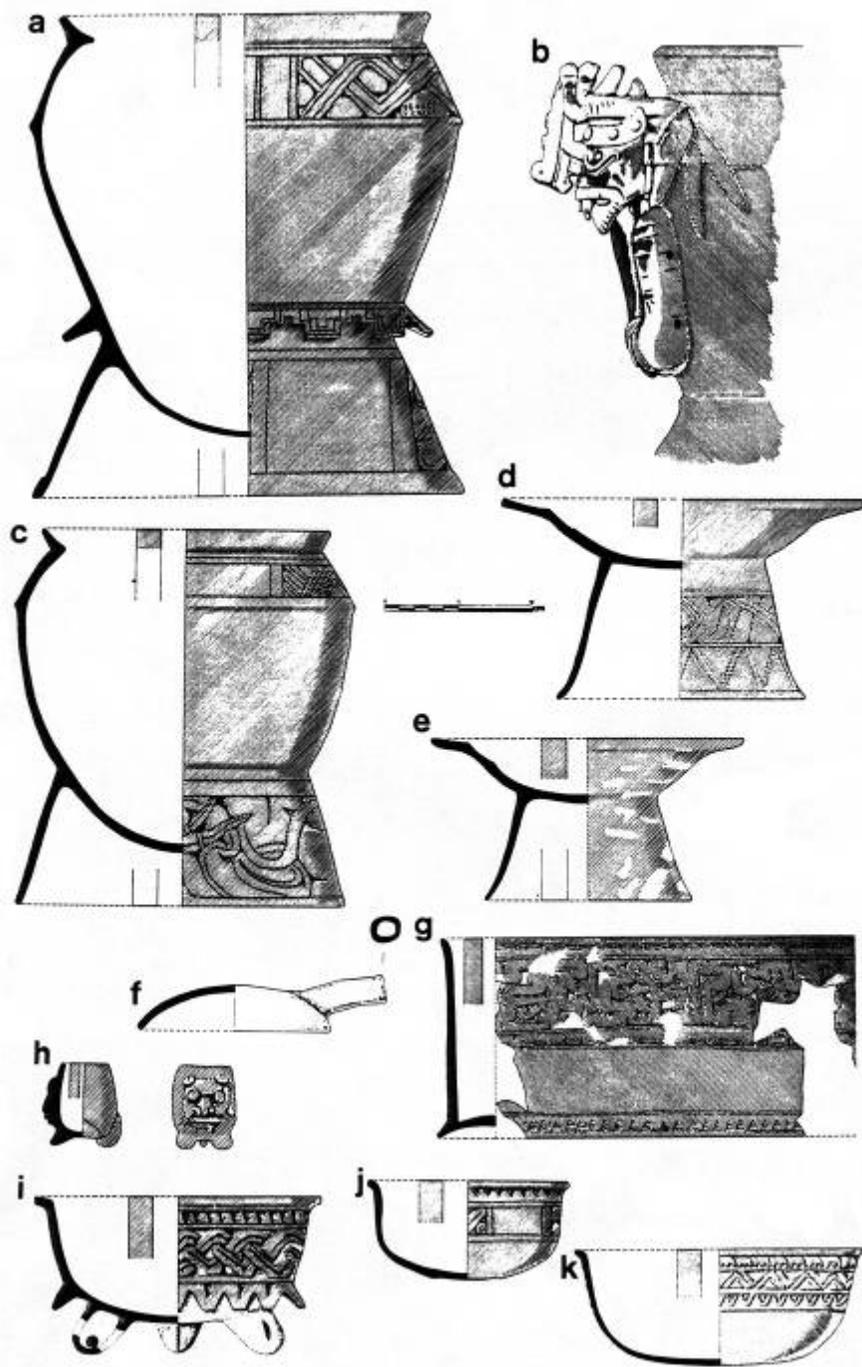


Figure 4. Examples of Early Postclassic, Buk Phase vessels, all from Lamanai (from Graham 1987:84).

placed on the boulder core of the platform extension on this side, and covered by the smaller more variably sized core stones of the N10-76 platform.

Marginella shells and several pottery vessels were buried with the individual, who lay on his back with head to the west. Because the boulders of the core had little earth matrix, however, many pieces of pottery had fallen through the spaces, as had pieces of bone, and it was not possible to retrieve all the burial contents. To our surprise, the vessels associated with the burial displayed features that suggested manufacture at the very end of the Classic Period and beginning of the Terminal Classic (e.g. glossy slips, small basal-break bowls, low pedestal bases).

A Summary of the Activity Associated with the North Platform Extension of the Ottawa Group

The date of the pottery in the Str. N10-76 burial clearly indicates that the Boulders expansion that we thought might have extended into the Postclassic Period had been completed much earlier –apparently in the first part of the Terminal Classic. We have no radiocarbon dates yet, but based on estimates elsewhere, Boulders construction and the building of Str. N10-76 could have to have been completed by, say, AD 850. In addition, we found that Str. N10-76 had incorporated into its construction an earlier wall, which seemed to be primary to the north platform extension. Features had also been added to Str. N10-76 that connected it to the perishable building I mentioned earlier, Str. N10-80, that was built on top of the razed Str. N10-28 (Figure 1).

It now appears that there were a number of variously shaped features and buildings –some of masonry (such as the additions to N10-19 and N10-15), but others largely of wood or part masonry, part wood, but built on low stone platforms (such as N10-76, N10-80)– that were constructed in

the Terminal Classic Period as part of continued occupation of the Ottawa Complex. There was also at least one small house platform, Str. N10-81 (Figure 3), which was built much later, probably in the 16th century based on the Yglesias ceramics recovered. All of these features give a good indication of the intensity of use of this zone during a period when many other sites were experiencing collapse.

Str. N10-12 and Str. N10-77

Across the Ottawa courtyard, on the south side, lie Strs. N10-12, and N10-77, which were our focus in 2002 and 2003. Str. N10-12 turned out to represent the remains of a succession of Terminal Classic to Postclassic buildings, largely of wood, that were built over the remains of two earlier buildings, N10-77 and N10-78. During the Boulders construction effort, an open access between N10-77 and N10-78 was filled with boulder core, and N10-12 was built to span the access and cover the two earlier buildings. We excavated only the portion of N10-12 that needed to be removed to expose the Central Access and one of the earlier buildings, N10-77. In consultation with the TDP, we adopted the strategy to consolidate only N10-77. N10-78 was left for archaeologists of the future, but also to stand as an example for site visitors of the full sequence of Classic to Postclassic construction at this location.

Early Postclassic

We discovered midden accumulation on Str. N10-12's northeast side that reflected Late Postclassic and even sixteenth century activity, but we were unable to distinguish any structural features that related to this period. The first recognizable structural features turned out to be part of the Early Postclassic period or Buk phase. A platform that was large in extent, but not particularly high (see Figure 3), was built up of both cut and uncut stones (N10-12, 2nd is our

preliminary designation for this phase). No mortar or plaster floor covering the platform was detected, but given that nothing protected these features, the preservation of plaster was not expected. It turned out that this Early Postclassic platform had been constructed immediately upon the dismantling of an earlier, Terminal Classic building, and cut stones as well as uncut stones from the Terminal Classic building were re-used in Early Postclassic construction (Figure 5).

Our Early Postclassic or Buk dating information comes from three burials that had been dug through the earlier Terminal Classic building's floor at the time the Early Postclassic platform was originally constructed. All burials (Burials N10-12/6, N10-12/7, N10-12/8) contained different combinations of fragmented Buk pottery – chalices, large pedestal-based jars, frying pan censers, and bowls with effigy feet. The burial position is distinctive and occurs at Lamanai (and on Ambergris Caye) in both the Early and Late Postclassic Periods. The body is laid face down with the legs bent back.

Terminal Classic

The Terminal Classic at Lamanai is characterized by a suite of vessels different from the Early Postclassic (Buk) assemblage. Many Terminal Classic features (Figure 6) were originally identified on the basis of comparisons with San José V and to some extent with San José IV (Thompson 1939:Plates 15,16,18,20,21), but some also appear in the Spanish Lookout and New Town phases at Barton Ramie (e.g, Gifford 1976:Fig.148,149,199). Common at Lamanai during this period and originally typed at Barton Ramie is Daylight Orange: Darknight Variety (Gifford 1976:301-302).

Probably the most distinctive Terminal Classic representatives at Lamanai are what we have been calling the Lamanai polychromes (Figure 7), because their design,

as far as we know, is unique to the site. These polychromes replace the more finely painted Late Classic polychromes, particularly the vases that served as social currency in maintaining elite social and political relationships (Reents-Budet 1994:88).

Unfortunately, we do not have a good enough handle on the Late Classic at Lamanai to propose what ended the Late Classic polychrome vase tradition. What we do know, based on present evidence, is that the well known, beautifully painted polychrome vases do not appear in the same contexts as the cartoonish Lamanai polychromes that mark Terminal Classic caching. Ultimately, even the Lamanai polychromes give way in the Early Postclassic to the Buk traditions of bright red-orange slip and elaborate and decorative fine-line incising. Most of the ceramic information by which we characterize the Terminal Classic has come from a wide range of caches found both in buildings (e.g., N10-17 excavated by Pendergast) and in the core of Boulders phase infilling, associated particularly with the filling of the Central Access between Strs. N10-77 and N10-78. The common cache vessel contents are obsidian blades and carbonized remains. The evidence recovered in 2002 and 2003 of Terminal Classic building remains was difficult to isolate and elusive in section (see Figure 5). There may have been at least three phases of the Terminal Classic building, but of these three, two are represented by highly limited features. The most distinctive remains consist of a highly fragmentary plaster floor and cut stones placed around the edge of the floor that seem once to have supported the pole walls of a superstructure (N10-12,1st) (Figure 5). This superstructure and its foundation rested on boulder core deposited as part of Boulders-phase construction, which also included stairs

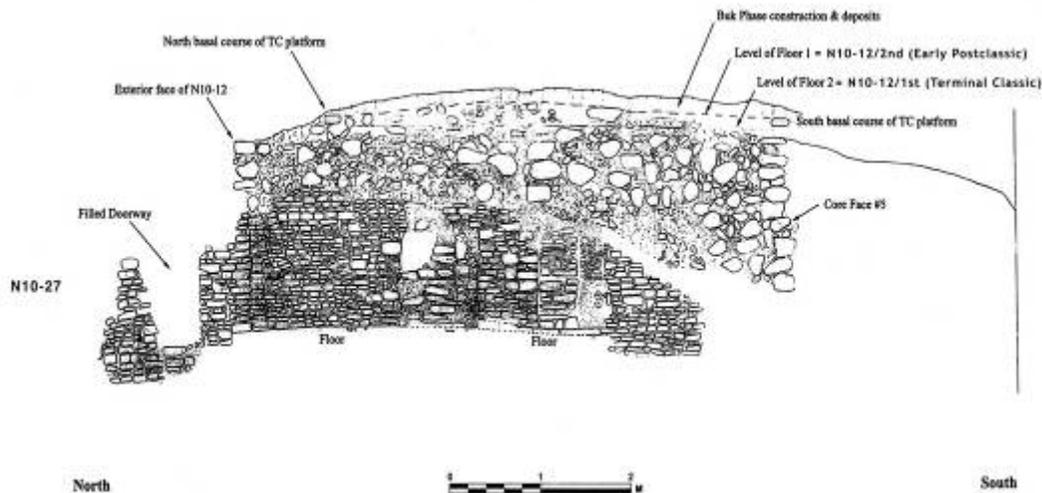


Figure 5. East section of north-south trench through Str. N10-12 in area of Central Access; shows Str. N10-12, 2nd, N10-12, 1st, and elevation of the west side of Str. N10-77.

and platform terrace additions that faced the Jaguar Temple, Str. N10-9, to the south (not shown, but these features lie just south of Core Face #5 in Figure 5). On the north side facing the courtyard, the boulder core of Str. N10-12 was retained by a low platform face (Figure 5). Beneath the boulder core of the Boulders phase lay the razed remains of Str. N10-77 (Figure 5).

Str. N10-77

My original idea, based on the style of construction of N10-77 as revealed by clearance of the courtyard, was that it, too, might be Terminal Classic rather than Late Classic in date. The doorways of Str. N10-77 open directly onto the courtyard, separated from the courtyard level by the height of a single step or two. Str. N10-77 does not appear to stand (in the expected Maya fashion) on a platform, as do the other buildings of the Ottawa group; nor does it have access to the courtyard via a platform stair. To this extent Str. N10-77 reminded me of the buildings straddling the wide platform stair of one of the structures of the Nunnery Quadrangle at Uxmal.

It turns out that the latest use of N10-77 dates to the Late Classic/Terminal Classic transition. This conclusion is based on several lines of evidence. Construction of the latest phase in the Late Classic is indicated by the style of a grooved, black-slipped vase recovered from a cache beneath the floor of the latest phase. At the end of this final phase, all room contents seem to have been burned as evidenced by the presence of carbonized remains on floors, and the heavy blackening of all floors and parts of walls. We have not interpreted this as hostile action because the penultimate building phase was also terminated by a burning event. But by the time Str. N10-77 was chopped, its rooms filled with *sascab* and the razed remains covered with Boulders, we know that the Terminal Classic was underway, because Terminal Classic sherds occur abundantly in the *sascab* room fill, particularly near the floor where they seem to have been dumped or swept into piles; sherds from Terminal Classic vessels were walked on and pressed into the floor as Maya builders prepared the rooms for filling; Terminal Classic vessels characterize the caches associated with the

razing of N10-77 and the subsequent Boulders activity; and in the one case in which a vessel seems to have been left on the floor before the room was burned, its style (see, e.g., Figure 6d or f) indicates a Terminal Classic date of manufacture.

At the time of writing we have just completed the 2003 field season, and I have no finished drawings that would help me to describe Str. N10-77 in any detail. Essentially, Str. N10-77 started out as two parallel E-W rooms that were originally open-plan, but were later subdivided by interior walls and benches. We were able to date the use of the later, final phase, as I noted above, to the Late to Terminal Classic transition, but we uncovered no primary deposits that indicated the date of the earlier phase. Although 17 caches were recovered from beneath room floors, only one contained datable pottery: Cache N10-77/4 with the grooved, black-slipped vase noted above. One, Cache N10-77/2, comprised tiny jade fragments, apparently debris from jade working. All other caches contained carbonized remains, which are scheduled to be subjected to identification and radiocarbon dating.

None of the benches yielded caches or burials. One, however, did contain fill of dark, midden-like soil with a high concentration of sherds, a good proportion of which pre-dated the Terminal Classic Period. Another internal room feature had been chopped back and covered by a later bench. The earlier feature appeared at first to be an antecedent bench, but instead turned out to be a red-painted, freestanding feature of some kind, possibly an altar.

Construction techniques characterizing the latest phase of Str. N10-77 match techniques exhibited by other structures around the Ottawa courtyard that are believed to have been contemporaneous with Str. N10-77. These are: even-numbered terraces and doorways; variable proportions

of features such as doorways or doorjambs within the same building; the use of robbed facing stones in uncoursed facades; and the distinctive use of vertically set stones in features such as stair risers.

Conclusion

The final phase of Str. N10-77 was marked by extensive burning –apparently of room contents– prior to the filling of the rooms and the deposition of boulder core to fill the courtyard and to support Str. N10-12.

The rooms, whose contents were burned just prior to the razing of Str. N10-77 to accommodate the Boulders construction effort, had Terminal Classic pottery scattered in the room fill. If I am correct in my inference that the blackware vase from the cache dates the latest construction phase of Str. N10-77, then this occupation phase clearly bridges Classic to Terminal Classic lifeways.

Str. N10-12 started out as a Terminal Classic building: Str. N10-12,1st. Str. N10-12,1st differed from Str. N10-77 in that its walls and roof were of perishable materials. Its style of construction –poles placed on-end on cut stone blocks around the perimeter of a plaster floor– might have cultural significance. Str. N10-12 was of substantial dimensions (see Figure 3), with an element or extension on the east side (not shown in Figure 3) that filled the corner space between Str. N10-77 and Str. N10-17 (refer to Figure 3). At some point in time, and possibly after Str. N10-12,1st had undergone some modification, Str. N10-12 was altered in a major way. Three graves were dug into the floor of Str. N10-12,1st and three individuals were interred, accompanied by fragmented and incomplete pottery vessels of styles, forms, and colours that are distinctively Buk (vessels in the style of those in Figure 4).

Str. N10-12,1st was then razed; cut and uncut stones used in its original construction were spread on its former floor

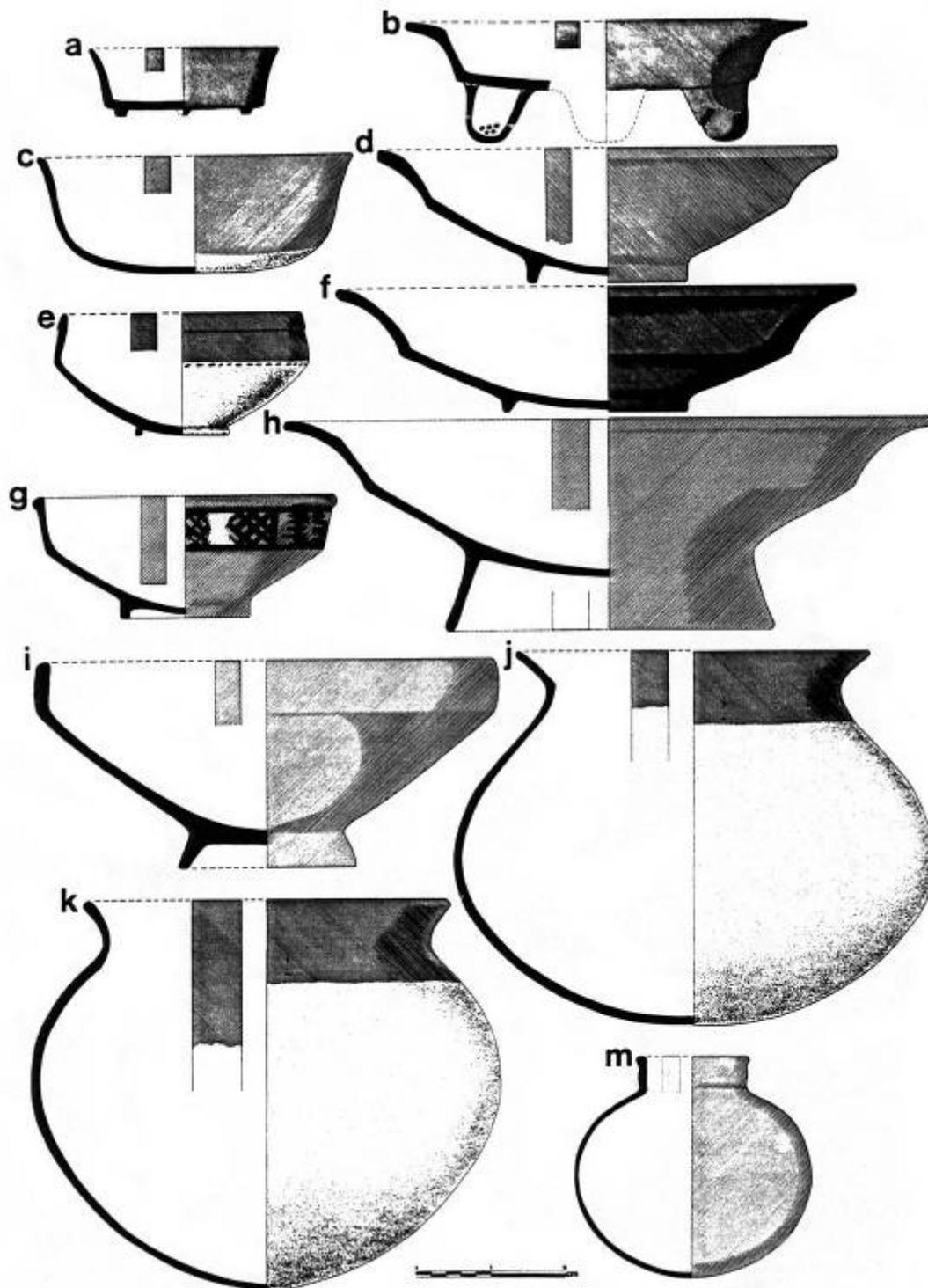


Figure 6. : Examples of Terminal Classic vessel forms/types found at Lamanai: a-e,i, and m are from Lamanai; f is from Actun Tzimin; g and h are from Altun Ha; j and k are from Actun Polbilche (from Graham 1987:77)



Figure 7. Example of a Lamanai polychrome. Illustration by Louise Belanger.

surface to form the core of a new, raised building platform, and we infer that a new perishable building, Str. N10-12,2nd, was built on the new platform. If a floor capped the platform, as it probably did, it was not preserved. Dating of this phase is based on the burials cut into the floor of Str. N10-12,1st as well as on the accumulation of Buk Phase sherds, apparently part of a midden, on N10-12's north and east sides. Buk sherds were also abundant in the platform core, although this context is heavily disturbed by root action.

Activity of the Buk Phase –the Early Postclassic– seems to have involved a shift in focus to the lagoon. Although Late Postclassic sherds were recovered from the north side of the N10-12 platform, they were not associated with structural remains that we could identify. The transition from the Early to the Late Postclassic, and from the Late

Postclassic to the Historic Period is better documented by settlement along the lagoon. Once the data from the Ottawa Group excavations are compared to Pendergast's results (1981) from Strs. N10-2 and N10-4 – the structures that produced the original Buk and Cib pottery– we should have a better idea of the events that carried the Maya from Terminal Classic to Late Postclassic times. Material that has resulted from TDP activity along the lagoon, as well as from early excavations in the Camp Zone, and possibly from the platform of the Mask Temple, will help flesh out the Late Postclassic picture as well as the transition to Historic times.

Lamanai has had a long life, and its resourceful inhabitants seem to have exhibited endless ability to adapt to changing circumstances. It is one of the sites in Belize in which the past meets the present because of its continuous occupation, and as such can offer researchers, teachers, and tourists both local and foreign a unique opportunity to learn about cultural survival.

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