

(A1) 4-ta*-CHUWEN (B1) 5-CHAM-wa (A2) u-TI'-HUN-na (B2) 9-ka-se-wa (A3) JUL (B3) la-ja (A4) u-ti-ya (B4) u-?-bi?-ch'-a-ji (A5) me?-TI' (B5) CH'O (A6) AJ (B6) K'AK' (C1) TE'-la (D1) u-KAB-ji-ya (C2) CHAK-ka (D2) 9 (C3) CHAAK (D3) po-o-AJAW

chan ta* chuwen ho' chamaw uti' huun baluun kaseew ju[h] laj u[h]tiy u...-b? ch'aaj me[m]? ti' ch'o? aj k'ahk'te'l uka-bjiy chak baluun chaak po' ajaw

“(On the day) 4 of Chuwen, (when) G5 (was the) Ti' Huun, (and) 9 Sek, he got pierced; it occurred at(?) the-b? Ch'aaj of Me(m?) Ti' Ch'o, he of K'ahk'te'l, it was conducted by Chak Baluun Chaak, lord of Tonina”.

The imagery and text are closely related to the piercing event conducted by Chak Baluun Chaak, an action that, however, remains enigmatic. Our understanding of the text is not completely clear. On the one hand, the text presents unusual syntax. On the other hand, there is one barely recognizable and still undeciphered glyph (B4) in this sequence. The passive construction *juhlay* “he/she/it got pierced” is here not followed by a subject or an object but instead it is immediately followed by the verbal phrase *uhtiy* “so/then it happened”. In addition, the following compound in B4, u-?-bi-ch'-a-ji remains difficult to understand due to a not yet deciphered (probably syllabic) sign. Tentatively, the compound records another verbal phrase, or, alternatively, it might record a certain place (as a guess, it could name the body part hit by the projectile, or, eventually, the place where the piercing event occurred). In any case, for now it seems best to leave the meaning of this compound open for debate. The text continues with the compounds *me?-TI'* (A5) and an animal head which likely represents a variant of the logogram CH'O “rat” (B5). The sequence probably forms a nominal phrase that is associated with the personal name of the victim who is, eventually, called Me(m?) Ti' Ch'o(?). This personal name is then followed by the epithet Aj K'ahk'te'l “He of the (place of) fire-sticks”. In sum, the phrase describes the event of the piercing of the victim that is also depicted in the imagery of this panel, an event that may have occurred at a place called the ...b? ch'aaj of Mem(?) Ti' Ch'o(?). The phrase *ukabjiy* then makes it explicit that the piercing event was commanded by Chak Baluun Chaak, the lord of Tonina.

In the next sentence, the distance number 1.11.9 leads over to the period ending 9.6.10.0.9 8 Ajaw 13 Pax, corresponding to the 27th of January, A.D. 564:

(C4) 9-11-WINIK-ji-ya (D4) 1-HAB (C5) u?-K'AL-TUN (D5) 8-ta-AJAW (C6) i (D6) u-ti baluun [he'w] buluch winikjiy jun haab[iiy] u(?)k'al tun waxak ta ajaw i'-u[h]ti

“9 days, 11 twenty-day scores and one year passed (until) the stone-presentation (for the) 8 of Ajaw, and then it happened”.

Given that the phrase *i'uhti* appears at the very end of this sequence it seems likely that the text continued on another panel that remains to be detected in the future.

As already mentioned, the small secondary text caption identifies the victim by means of a toponymic title as Aj K'ahk'te'l:

(E1) u-BAH (E2) AJ-K'AK'-TE'-la

u baah aj k'ahk'te'l

“this is the image of Aj K'ahk'te'l (He of the place of fire-sticks)”.

Very little is known about Tonina's Early Classic ruler Chak Baluun Chaak thus far (Martin and Grube 2008: 179). From a panel fragment exhibited in the *Museo Ventura Marín Azuaga* in the town of Emiliano Zapata, Tabasco, which records a visit of his tomb (*huli tu muk chak baluun chaak k'uh[ul] po' ajaw*), his reign was formerly placed prior to the year A.D. 589 (Grube, Martin and Zender 2002: 24, fig. 26; Mathews 2001). Nonetheless, since the recent identification of a new ruler named K'inich Muk(?) (Sánchez Gamboa and Beliaev 2018) it is known that the latter date overlaps with the reign of this ruler (Sánchez Gamboa, Krempel and Beliaev in press; Nielsen et al. 2019: 8). Thanks to the two calendar rounds recorded on Monument 186 described in the present note, the reign of Chak Baluun Chaak can securely be determined from A.D. 562 until 564. Yet, even though we are lacking clear evidence, it seems likely that his reign started earlier and continued after this very short time period (Sánchez Gamboa and Krempel in prep.). Monument 186 stands out due to the martial iconography and Teotihuacan-style paraphernalia and is, for the time being, the clearest example within the known Classic Maya corpus that depicts a projectile launched by a spearthrower, and the defeated, humiliated, and injured victim at the feet of the vanquisher, in this case the victorious lord of Tonina, Chak Baluun Chaak.

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- In prep. *A re-evaluation of Tonina's Early Classic monuments* (work title).
- Sánchez Gamboa, Ángel A., Guido Krempel and Dmitri Beliaev
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Contributions

Remote Sensing and Reconnaissance along the Lacantún River: The Lakamtuun Dynasty and the Sites of El Palma and Benemérito de las Américas, Primera Sección

Whittaker Schroder, Charles Golden, Andrew Scherer, Timothy M. Murtha and Omar Alcover Firpi

This paper provides an update of recent investigations along the lower Lacantún River in Chiapas, Mexico, which started in 2015, building on a foundation of research in the twentieth century (Fig. 1). The modern municipalities of Benemérito de las Américas and Marqués de Comillas and their surrounding landscapes have seen relatively little archaeological survey, compared to adjacent regions, including the Upper and Middle Usumacinta regions (Anaya Hernández 2002; Golden and Scherer 2013; Houston et al. 2003; Liendo 2003, 2011) and the Petexbatún (Demarest 2006; Demarest et al. 1997; Inomata 1997; O'Mansky and Dunning 2005). A long-term

research project is necessary to understand how the lower Lacantún area formed a link between these sub-regions of the Maya area, the Western Lowlands and the Petén. Furthermore, the documentation of the Lakamtuun emblem glyph in inscriptions from nearby dynastic centers, and the persistence of this title and place name into the Colonial period (A.D. 1525-1821) and the present suggests that this region was part of the territory of this Classic period (A.D. 250-830) minor kingdom (De Vos 1988, 1990; Stuart 2007a).

Alongside reconnaissance and preliminary excavations, our study has benefited from remote sensing data from

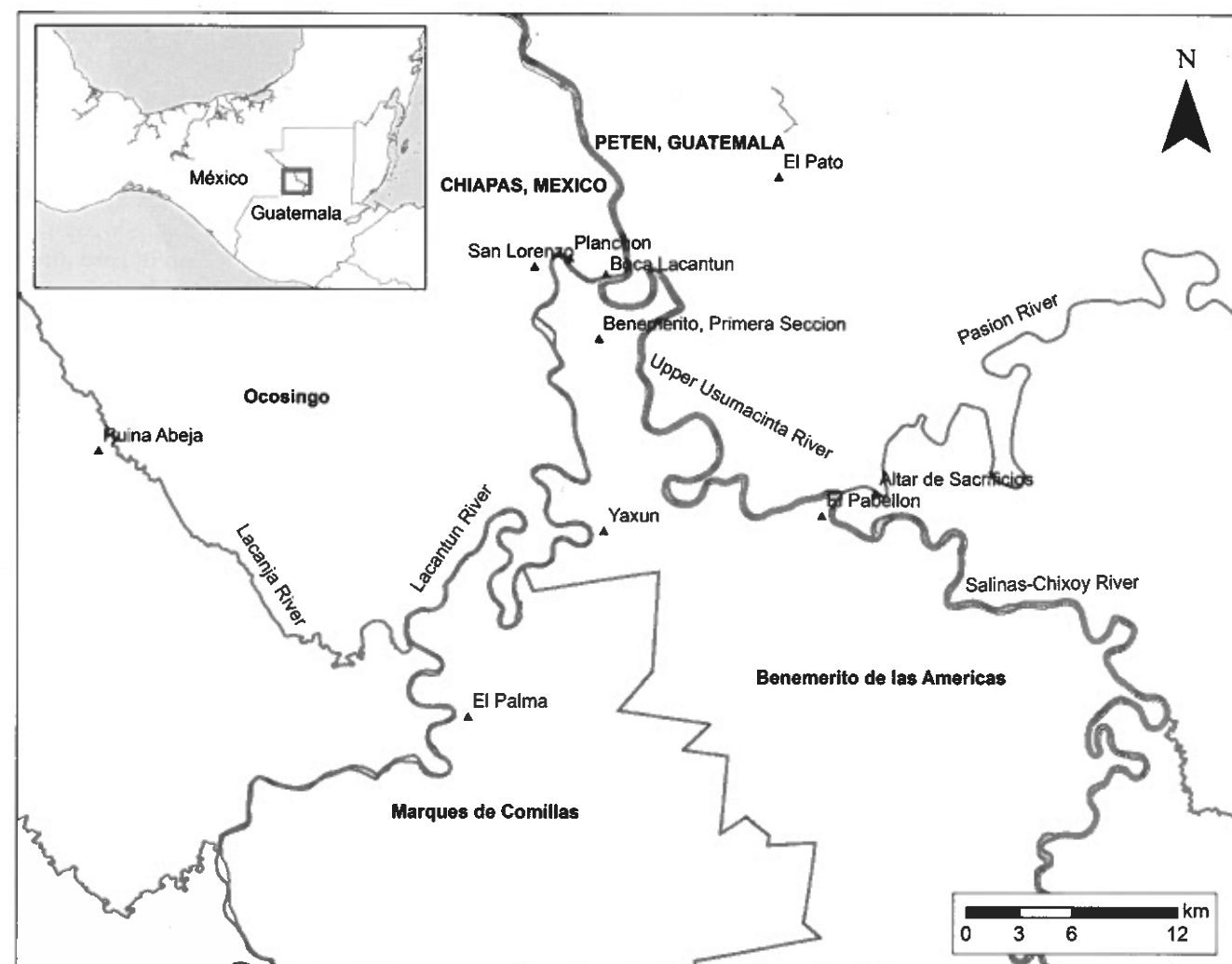


Figure 1. Archaeological sites in the study region (by Whittaker Schroder).

NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center GLiHT LiDAR system, reprocessed for archaeological applications (Golden et al. 2016). A series of transects passed over the site cores of known archaeological sites Benemérito de las Américas, Primera Sección and El Palma, as well as areas in between. These data provide the opportunity to begin to address questions of settlement and landscape change throughout the region and the hypothetical extent and integration of the Lakamtuun kingdom.

The Lakamtuun Kingdom

The Lakamtuun emblem glyph is known primarily from inscriptions at sites beyond the likely borders of the kingdom itself. In the Classic Cholan language of the inscriptions, Lakamtuun translates literally as "large/wide/banner stone," the word the Classic Maya used for stelae (Stuart 1996). This place name has persisted and is now applied to the Lacantún River, a major tributary of the Usumacinta River, the Selva Lacandona and Sierra Lacandona regions, as well as used in the names of linguistic and cultural groups, including the Lacandón and the Lacandón Ch'ol (Bassie-Sweet et al. 2015).

The first known mention of the Lakamtuun dynasty appears on Piedras Negras Panel 12, dated to the early sixth century (Stuart 2007a). This monument depicts Piedras Negras Ruler C with four captives displayed in a row. The final captive is identified with Lakamtuun, suggesting that at this time Ruler C was defining the extent of his influence as far south as the Lacantún River. Nearly a decade later, a subsidiary lord (*yajawte'*) from Lakamtuun is listed as a visitor or captive at Yaxchilan on Lintel 35 (Stuart 2007a). A later mention of the Lakamtuun dynasty is in the middle of the eighth century, again at Yaxchilan, where an individual Ik' Chij is depicted as a captive of Bird Jaguar IV in a ballgame scene on Step 7 of Hieroglyphic Stairway 2 (Biró 2011:201; Martin and Grube 2008:130). An unprovenanced panel, known as the Stokes Panel, records the capture of another individual from Lakamtuun in A.D. 780 (Biró 2011:237; Houston 1989). By the final decade of the eighth century, military campaigns from Yaxchilan against Lakamtuun continued, with a capture of a noble from Lakamtuun named on Yaxchilan's Hieroglyphic Stairway 5. This hierarchical relationship between Yaxchilan and Lakamtuun is confirmed in the Bonampak murals dating to the same period, where "his

messenger" (*y-ebeet*) from Lakamtuun is shown presenting tribute at either the site of Bonampak itself or at Yaxchilan (Biró 2011:255; Houston 2012; Houston, Stuart, and Taube 2006:227-251; Miller and Brittenham 2013:72). A Lakamtuun *ajaw* is also named on Itzán Stela 17 and El Palma Stela 5 (Stuart 2007b; Stuart and Houston 1994:37).

Intriguingly, while the historical records of Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan go silent after A.D. 810, Lakamtuun continued to occupy a significant position within the politics of the region for several more decades. In A.D. 849, Kan Waxak Ek', the *k'uhul ajaw* of Lakamtuun celebrated an anniversary at Ceibal, a site that was at the center of an effort at political reorganization, after the first effects of the Classic period collapse had reached much of the Petexbatun and Usumacinta regions (Guenther 2014:191; Martin and Grube 2008:227). The use of the toponym Lacam-Tun during the Colonial period at Laguna Miramar may show continuity from the Classic period or instead may describe the cliff that naturally protected that island settlement (De Vos 1990:15; Stuart and Houston 1994:37). Due to these frequent interactions among Lakamtuun, Yaxchilan, and other sites in the Selva Lacandona and Pasión River regions, as well as evidence from Itzán Stela 17 and El Palma Stela 5, David Stuart has suggested that the dynasty was centered somewhere along the Lacantún River, perhaps at or near the archaeological site of El Palma (Stuart 2007a, 2007b).

Benemérito de las Américas, San Lorenzo, and Planchón de las Figuras

Teobert Maler (1903:133) conducted the first archaeological reconnaissance in the region of the confluence of the Usumacinta and Lacantún Rivers at the turn of the twentieth century. He documented Planchón de las Figuras, an extensive bed of stratified limestone covered in petroglyphs on the north bank of the Lacantún River. Upstream, near the Tres Naciones settlement, he also explored the site of San Lorenzo, which he described as a collapsed temple and terraces.

A series of small-scale studies took place throughout the following century. In 1964, William Bullard, Jr. (1995) reestablished the locations of Planchón de las Figuras and San Lorenzo. Aside from a fragment of the head of a human sculpture, Maler (1903) had not noted any monuments at San Lorenzo, yet Bullard (1995) recorded two stelae flanking the stairway of an eastern structure (Structure 2); each stela depicting an individual facing toward the stair and the opposite monument. To the south, Structure 3 consists of twin temples, and to the north, Structure 1 is made up of four superstructures in a line. Other archaeologists have periodically photographed and sketched the many motifs and graffiti that appear on Planchón de las Figuras, which include various anthropomorphic and zoomorphic beings, circular designs, and a model of architecture oriented around a patio (García Moll 1995; Juárez Cossío 1994; Mülleried 1995; Stuart and Wilkerson 1995).

Although we have not yet surveyed the area north of the Lacantún River, we have identified the possible owner of the land on which San Lorenzo is located. NASA's GLiHT data reveals a small site on the northern bank of the Lacantún River, approximately 2.7 km downstream from Planchón de las Figuras and 1.3 km upstream from the confluence with

the Usumacinta River. This unregistered and unnamed site, for now called Boca Lacantún, consists of a small plaza delimited by at least two structures on the northern end and two structures on the eastern side (Fig. 2). Architecturally, the site most closely resembles a smaller scale version of sites along the Upper and Middle Usumacinta River, like Ijix Xajlel, Arroyo Jerusalén, or Boca Chinikihá that may have served partial functions as transshipment centers or portage locations (Maestri 2018; Schroder et al. 2017). The area north of the Lacantún River and east of the Carretera Fronteriza will be investigated in future seasons.

In 2001, Alejandro Tovalín and Victor Ortiz (2005) registered the archaeological site of Benemérito de las Américas, Primera Sección (Tovalín and Ortiz 2005) (Fig. 3). The archaeological site, from here on referred to as Benemérito, is located between the modern settlements of Benemérito de las Américas, a city of over 7,000 people, and Benemérito de las Américas, Primera Sección, an *ejido*, or communal land-holding village of approximately 200 people. Tovalín and Ortiz surveyed the main core or acropolis of the site, 4 km to the southwest of the confluence of the Lacantún and Usumacinta Rivers. This acropolis consists of at least four large substructures delimiting a plaza. Five stelae, not necessarily in their original locations, line the base of three western superstructures, with a fifth to the north of the plaza. This northern end of the plaza also has the remains of a hieroglyphic stairway, likely made of a single step with multiple panels. Four altars also accompany four of these stelae. Stela 2 appears to name a son of a certain Shield Jaguar, which may refer to one of the four rulers of Yaxchilan who carried that royal name.

The current project began as a sub-project of the Busiljá-Chocoljá Archaeological Project (PABC), located in Chiapas, Mexico. Working with the community, Charles Golden and Andrew Scherer began ground-truthing some of the features documented in the GLiHT data at Benemérito in 2015. In 2017, Whittaker Schroder was invited by Domingo Hernández Guillén, who manages the parcel to the east of the main acropolis, to photograph a previously undocumented monument, Stela 6, located face up in the middle of a patio group. This stela is highly fragmentary, but much of the carved area could be reconstructed, measuring 283 cm long by 113 cm wide, although when fully intact the stela likely measured nearly 3 m tall with a thickness of 27 cm (Schroder 2017).

The carving itself is in poor condition and highly eroded, although its original high relief is evident, allowing for some reconstruction of the image. The design is clearest in a photogrammetric model created with Agisoft Metashape, which reveals a likely lord of the site with an elaborate headdress and cape or kilt extending to the level of his knees (Fig. 4). Based on its style, reminiscent of Yaxchilan Stela 11, Benemérito Stela 6 likely dates to the second half of the eighth century (Simon Martin, personal communication 2019). The individual's body faces the front, while his face (covered by a mask) and arms are in profile, and he is shown holding various unclear objects in his hands. At the bottom left of the register are four unintelligible glyph blocks, arranged vertically.

Stela 6 appears to be largely in its original location, although the monument is fragmentary and many of these pieces were recovered a short distance away. Stela 6 lies approximately 250 m east of the main acropolis and would have faced

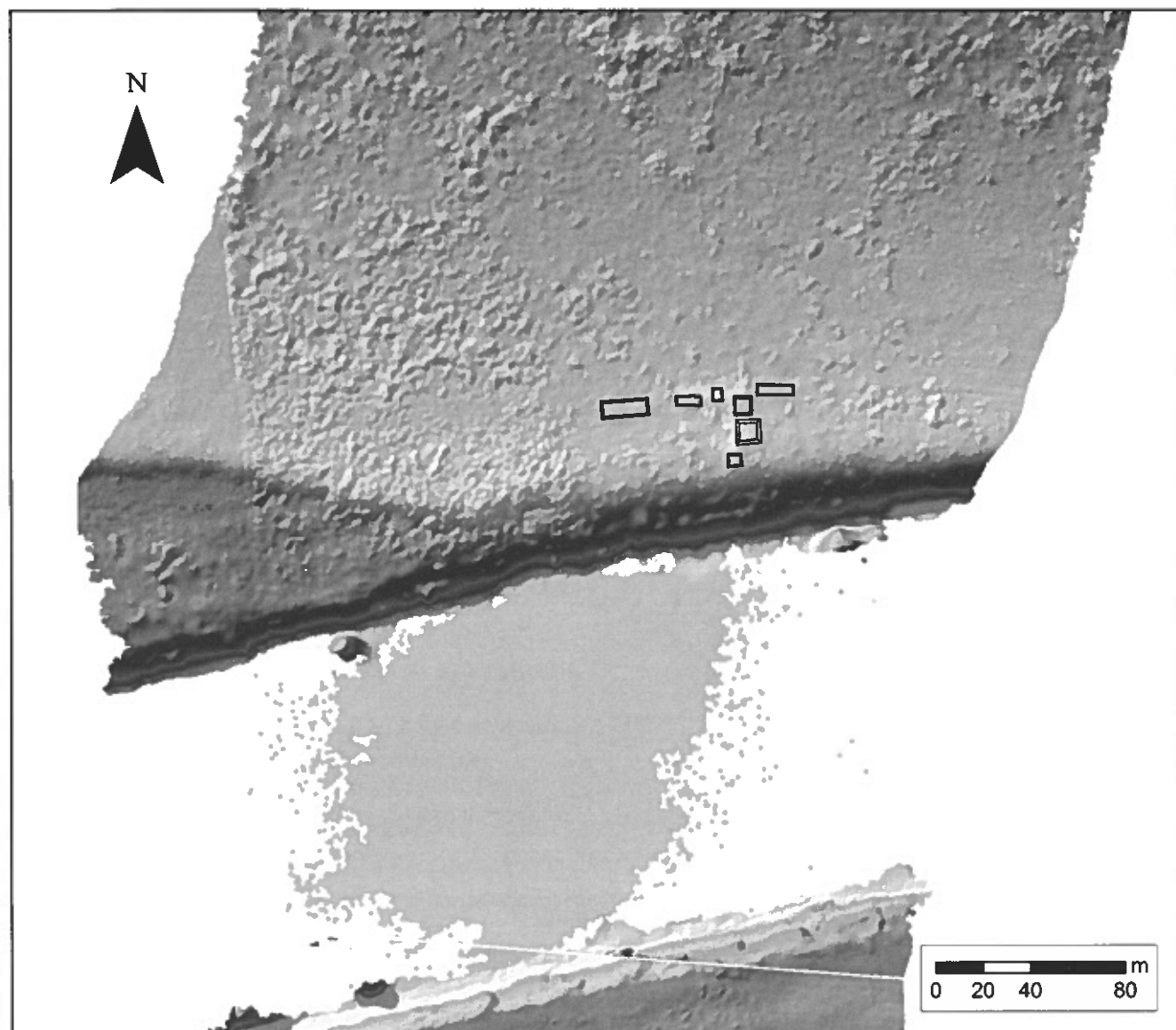


Figure 2. Map of Boca Lacantún based on the GLiHT data (by Whittaker Schroder).

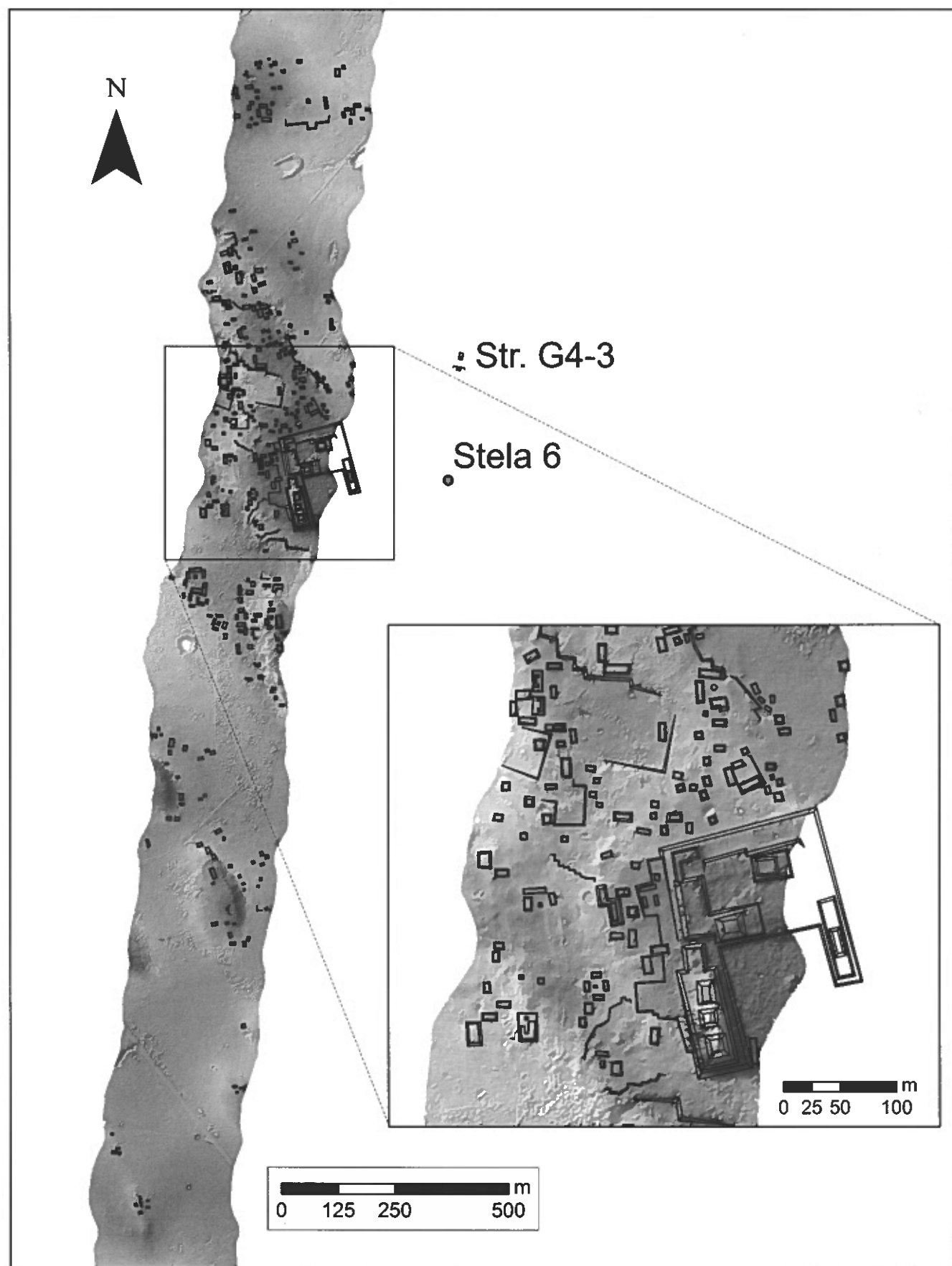


Figure 3. Map of Benemérito de las Américas, Primera Sección based on the GLiHT data (by Whittaker Schroder).

southeast, away from the site core. The patio groups in the area of Stela 6 are constructed with facing stones, consisting of yellowish and white limestone blocks carved on all sides, similar to the construction material used in the acropolis

(Tovalín and Ortiz 2005). Many of these patio groups consist of four structures oriented around a square platform altar. The quality of stonework, size of platforms, presence of Stela 6, and proximity to the main acropolis suggest that this area



Figure 4. Photogrammetric model of Benemérito Stela 6 (by Whittaker Schroder).

consisted of a number of elite households. Surface collections of ceramics point to a Terminal Classic period (A.D. 830–) occupation.

patio near the location of the hieroglyphic stair. This patio is a likely candidate for a “palace” area, perhaps not associated with the ruler’s residence but with other civic-ceremonial or political-ritual activities. To the west, nearby elite residences

In contrast, approximately 250 m to the north of Stela 6, platforms are lower (30–50 cm high) and appear to lack facing stones. In 2019, Schroder conducted excavations in this area to interpret this context. Excavations focused on a low, approximately 30 cm high residential, earthen platform (Structure G4-3). Earthen construction techniques are generally rare in the rugged Usumacinta region; however, the region surrounding the confluence of the Usumacinta and Lacantún Rivers is much flatter and located in a floodplain where appropriate earthen building materials may be abundant. In fact, similar earthen architecture has been documented at the site of El Kinel, Guatemala, located on a frequently flooded river terrace downstream from Benemérito (Houston et al. 2006).

In addition to this preliminary, on-site research, NASA’s GLiHT LiDAR data has aided in mapping much of the site core and settlement to the north and south. In total, the GLiHT data showed 362 structures over 85 ha (a density of 4.3 structures per hectare, although the highest density areas are between 15.9 and 17.9 structures per hectare), in addition to the two structures on the eastern side of the main plaza, the unmapped structure along the southern end of the main plaza, and abundant structures noted on the ground to the east. These data have allowed us to improve upon the details of Tovalín and Ortiz’s earlier map, especially clarifying much of the architecture at the northwestern corner of the acropolis, consisting of two L-shaped structures delimiting a small



Figure 5. Photo of El Palma Stela 5 (by Whittaker Schroder).

with C-shaped benches and circular platform altars, generally diagnostic of the Terminal Classic period across the Maya Lowlands, may represent living areas for the ruler and other members of the royal court (Bey et al. 1997; Bey and Ciau 2014; Freidel and Sabloff 1984; Halperin 2017; Mixter 2016; Rice 1986; Schwarz 2009). A small ballcourt may lie near the northwest corner of the main acropolis, discussed later in the paper.

El Palma and Yaxún

In addition to documenting Planchón de las Figuras and San Lorenzo in 1964, Bullard (1995) registered the site of Yaxún on the lagoon/oxbow lake of the same name (today more commonly known as the Laguna Oaxaca), near the modern village of Quiringuicharo. The site consists of an acropolis, made up of an enclosed plaza with a ballcourt to the north and the main Structure 1 to the west. Structure 1 is a large architectural complex rising 20 m above the main plaza, with an uncarved altar at its base. The summit, Structure 1-A is topped with twin temples, and an excavation unit uncovered a Postclassic period assemblage of incense burners, including a possible Mayapan-style effigy incense burner dating to the

Late Postclassic period (Bullard 1995:63). In 2019, Schroder determined the location of Yaxún from historical Google Earth satellite imagery but was only able to view the site from adjacent land, as the landowner could not be located. The eastern Structure 3 has been heavily damaged by machinery to collect building material. Large architecture also lies approximately 150 m to the north of the main acropolis. We have since identified the landowner and plan to conduct further reconnaissance in future seasons.

Ricardo Velázquez Valadez (1986) and members of the Yaxchilan Archaeological Project were notified of the site of El Palma near the modern community of Zamora Pico de Oro in 1976. Archaeologists sketched the core of the site, consisting of monumental architecture enclosing a large plaza. At the time, El Palma had 11 stelae, all located at the edges of the plaza or adjacent architecture, and the upper portion of a carved statue of a human figure, similar to the example from Yaxchilan's Structure 33. Most of the monuments are in poor condition, apart from Stela 5, which is well preserved and partially buried upright, at an angle that has so far protected the carving (Fig. 5).

In 2016, Omar Alcover Firpi, Charles Golden, Andrew Scherer, and other members of the PABC conducted recon-

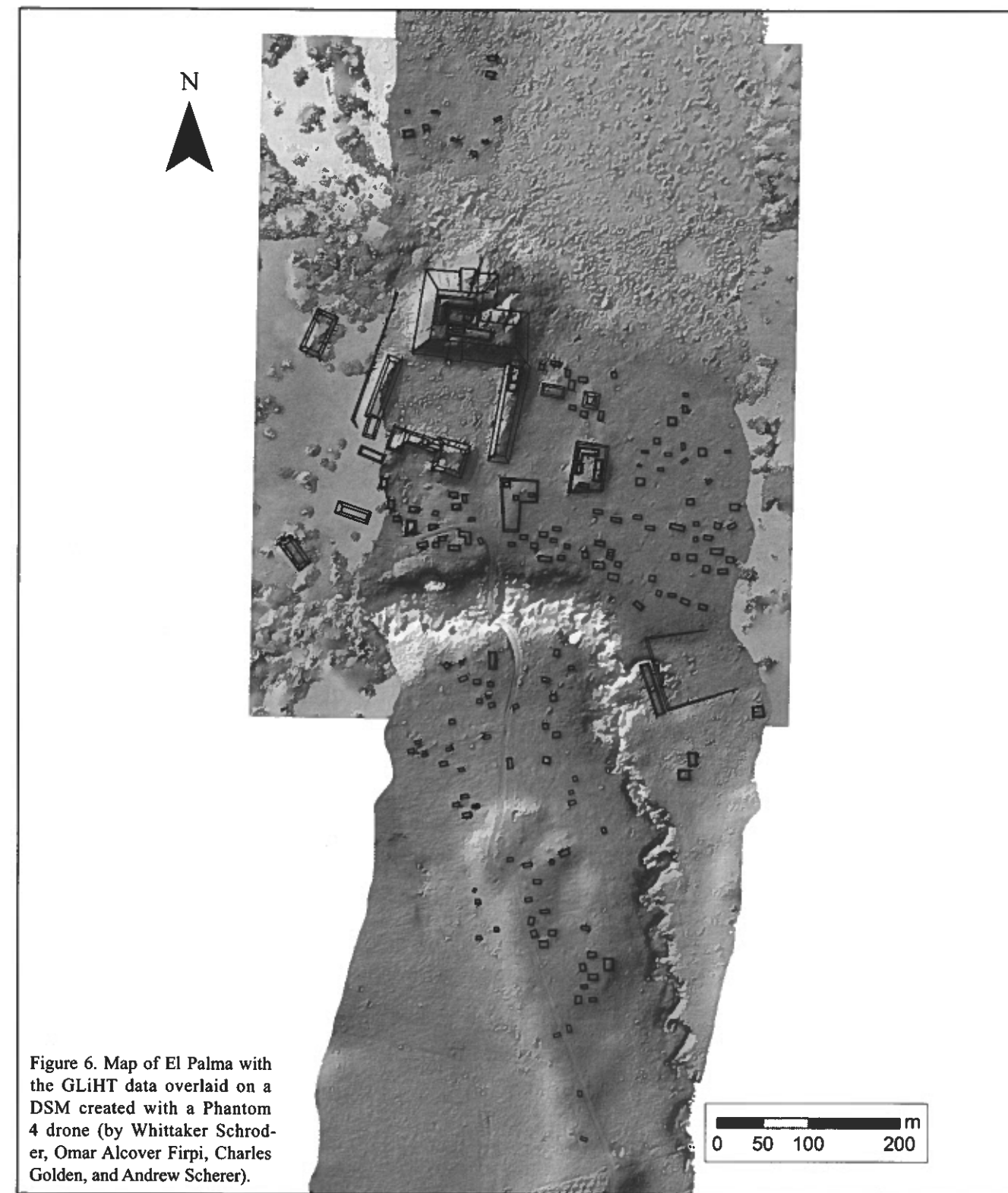


Figure 6. Map of El Palma with the GLiHT data overlaid on a DSM created with a Phantom 4 drone (by Whittaker Schroder, Omar Alcover Firpi, Charles Golden, and Andrew Scherer).

naissance at El Palma. Alcover produced a digital surface model of the site core with a DJI Phantom 4 drone. This map revealed a ballcourt at the southwestern corner of the main plaza, which was also confirmed on the ground. Large range structures were also mapped to the west, south, and southeast, along with an L-shaped substructure, seven patio groups to the east, and another, isolated patio group approximately 170 m to the north of the main acropolis. In addition to the stairway noted by Velázquez (1986) at the southern end of Structure 1, a second stairway appears to climb Structure 1's northern side.

The GLiHT data reveal a total of 177 structures over an area of 50 ha, in addition to five structures to the west revealed in the drone map, covering an additional 3.5 ha, resulting in a density of 3.4 structures per hectare (although highest density areas range from 15.3 to 17.2 structures per hectare). These LiDAR data improved other aspects of the map, especially clarifying the architecture on top of Structure 1 (Fig. 6). This area consists of a range structure to the south and an L-shaped structure to the west and north overlooking a sunken patio. As at Benemérito and Altar de Sacrificios, this patio may represent the "palace" area of the site (Wiley 1973:9). Additional

settlement is also evident to the south and north, marking the highest density of structures. Dense settlement also continues to the south of a dry arroyo or oxbow lake that bisects the northern and southern sectors of El Palma. However, this density drops off immediately 750 m to the south of the main acropolis. A large plaza or depression and range structure to the east of this arroyo will be investigated in the future as serving a partial function related to water management. Aside from the isolated patio group to the north of the main acropolis, no other settlement is apparent in this area or further north.

Conclusions

Based on this preliminary and ongoing research, we will begin to reconstruct the political geography of known sites along the Lacantún River. Additional reconnaissance and systematic survey, along with aerial remote sensing, will better define the extent of known sites and their associated settlement, while documenting other unknown sites and landscape features. In 2019, we captured unmanned drone LiDAR of the Benemérito site core as part of a broader examination of the technology in the region (see Murtha et al. 2019). We also expect that a more complete catalog of epigraphic monuments in the region, to be assembled in subsequent seasons, will improve our current understanding.

A selection of archaeological data from Benemérito, El Palma, Yaxún, San Lorenzo, and Boca Lacantún is summarized in Table 1, compiling various metrics calculated or approximated from the existing sources. The GLiHT data provided an exact value for a site's plaza size, tallest structure (measured from the adjacent plaza), spatial extent, and orientation in the cases of Benemérito, El Palma, and Boca Lacantún. Google Earth imagery provided horizontal data for Yaxún. Other data from Yaxún and San Lorenzo were approximated from the relevant sketch maps, which likely exaggerated some figures (Bullard 1995; Velázquez Valadez 1986). Site extent for Benemérito and El Palma are incomplete, as the GLiHT data only included a single transect measuring approximately 300 m wide from west to east. The northern and southern limits of these two sites, however, are clear from the GLiHT data, with Benemérito covering 2.6 km north to south and El Palma 1.2 km.

These data show that based on plaza size and number of monuments, Benemérito and El Palma can be considered peers in some respects, perhaps occupying positions as primary centers. In reality, El Palma is smaller, unless the site is later shown to extend further east or west (less likely as the Lacantún River passes less than 700 m west of the mapped portion of El Palma). Yaxún and San Lorenzo resemble secondary sites from other parts of the Usumacinta and Selva Lacandona region, with smaller plaza sizes and fewer monuments (Flores Esquivel 2011; Golden et al. 2008). Yaxún, in fact, occupies a midpoint between El Palma and Benemérito, while San Lorenzo is merely 5 km to the northwest of the latter site. The presence of a ballcourt at Yaxún suggests that ballcourts were not restricted to primary centers in this region, as they may have been within the Yaxchilan kingdom to the north (Scherer and Golden 2012:66). Boca Lacantún consists of two patios maximum and is characteristic of a lower-ranked community or village site.

Political integration among these sites is more difficult to test without excavations and epigraphic interpretation. Site orientations vary within 5-10° of the cardinal directions, likely influenced in part by local conditions and topography. El Palma and San Lorenzo reveal the same orientation, and are essentially mirror images of each other, with San Lorenzo's tallest structure at the southern end of the main plaza in contrast to El Palma's main structure positioned to the north of its plaza. Even a lower ranked site, Boca Lacantún, resembles a mirror image of Yaxún. Benemérito is unique in the 350° orientation of its main acropolis, although other nearby architecture matches El Palma's 10° orientation.

Similarities in site plans across all five of these sites also suggest a degree of regional integration. All sites, except for Boca Lacantún, consist of enclosed plazas surrounded by four substructures, and even Boca Lacantún has a clear patio defined by range structures on the north, a taller structure on the east, and the Lacantún River to the south. Benemérito and El Palma both have the most complex superstructures at the northern end of their plazas, perhaps serving some of the roles associated with palaces in the Maya area. Both El Palma and Benemérito have a sunken courtyard with an L-shaped structure at its northwest corner on these northern substructures.

In contrast to El Palma, Benemérito's tallest structure is part of the line of three temple-pyramids at the western end of the plaza, similar to the line of four temple-pyramids at San Lorenzo. This site plan also resembles certain sites along the Usumacinta River to the north like El Cayo and Arroyo Jerusalén (Scherer and Golden 2012; Schroder et al. 2017). Yaxún and San Lorenzo's twin pyramid designs also appear at El Chile and are more typical of the Postclassic than the Classic period (Scherer and Golden 2012). The position of Yaxún's ballcourt also calls to mind the possible small ballcourt at Benemérito; however, the presence of a platform at the edge of Benemérito's GLiHT transect at the southwestern corner of the main plaza could be part of a larger ballcourt, in the same position relative to the plaza as at El Palma, and similar to the southern position of the ballcourt at Altar de Sacrificios (Willey 1973:8). Ground-truthing will resolve this question next season.

The political history of the Western Lowlands is especially complex, but these sites all lie within the likely territory of the Lakamtuun dynasty. Following the interpretation that emblem glyphs were not necessarily tied to specific sites and could instead move across the landscape (Biró 2016; Martin 2005; Tokovinine 2011; 2013), we hypothesize that El Palma and Benemérito represented seats of the Lakamtuun dynasty at various times during the Late Classic period. Precedent for this hypothesis has been established elsewhere in the Southern Lowlands, in the Petexbatun region, the Hix Witz polity, and at sites like Bonampak, Lacanha, the Knot-Site, and Sak Tz'i' (Beliaev and Safronov 2009; Biró 2011; Fitzsimmons 2015; Martin and Grube 2008; Palka 1996). Lower tier sites within the territory of the Lakamtuun dynasty, like Yaxún, San Lorenzo, and Boca Lacantún were positioned strategically along the Lacantún River to extend the influence of the royal court and to control this important travel and trade corridor. In subsequent field seasons, we plan to test this hypothesis by first reconstructing site chronologies to be bolstered by epigraphic data to understand these political dynamics in a poorly understood minor kingdom of the Classic period.

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ABSTRACT: This paper addresses issues surrounding the political landscape in the Marqués de Comillas and Benemérito de las Américas regions near the confluence of the Usumacinta and Lacantún Rivers in Chiapas, Mexico. We interpret this area as associated with the poorly understood Lakamtun dynasty, known from inscriptions throughout the Usumacinta, Selva Lacandona, and Pasión River regions. Epigraphers have suggested that the archaeological site of El Palma is a strong candidate for one of the seats of the Lakamtun kingdom. We combine aerial remote sensing data from NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center's GLIHT LiDAR system, reprocessed for archaeological applications, with drone photogrammetry, reconnaissance, and preliminary excavations at El Palma and the nearby sites of Yaxún, San Lorenzo, Benemérito de las Américas, Primera Sección, and others. We present more complete and precise maps of El Palma and Benemérito de las Américas, Primera Sección and provide preliminary analysis. We suggest that El Palma and Benemérito de las Américas are primary centers within the region and that both sites could have served as seats of the Lakamtun dynasty (or another powerful polity) in a model of shifting capitals or political cycling.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG: Dieser Beitrag befasst sich mit Fragen der politischen Landschaft in den Regionen Marqués de Comillas und Benemérito de las Américas am Zusammenfluss der Flüsse Usumacinta und Lacantún in Chiapas, Mexiko. Wir interpretieren dieses Gebiet als Heimat der schlecht verstandenen Lakamtun-Dynastie, die aus den Inschriften der Usumacinta-Region, der Selva Lacandona und im Umkreis des Río de la Pasión bekannt ist. Epigraphen haben vorgeschlagen, dass die archäologische Stätte El Palma ein Kandidat für eine der Residenzen der Könige von Lakamtun gewesen sein könnte. Wir kombinieren Fernerkundungsdaten aus dem GLIHT Li-

DAR-System des Goddard Space Flight Center der NASA, das für archäologische Anwendungen aufbereitet wurde, mit Drohnenphotogrammetrie, Surveys und ersten Sondagegrabungen in El Palma und den nahegelegenen Orten Yaxún, San Lorenzo, Benemérito de las Américas, Primera Sección und anderen. Wir präsentieren vollständigere und präzisere Karten von El Palma und Benemérito de las Américas, Primera Sección und liefern erste Analysen. Wir präsentieren die Hypothese, dass El Palma und Benemérito de las Américas primäre Zentren innerhalb der Region gewesen sind und dass beide Orte als Sitz der Lakamtun-Dynastie (oder einer anderen bedeutenden politischen Einheit) in einem Modell mobiler politischer Zentren oder des zyklischer Hauptstädte hätten dienen können.

RESUMEN: Este artículo aborda problemas sobre el paisaje político en los municipios de Marqués de Comillas y Benemérito de las Américas, cerca de la confluencia de los Ríos Usumacinta y Lacantún en el estado de Chiapas,

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México. Sugerimos que el asentamiento de esta región estaba asociada con la poca estudiada dinastía Lakamtun, conocida por inscripciones en las regiones Usumacinta, Selva Lacandona, y Río Pasión. Epigrafistas han sugerido que el sitio arqueológico El Palma es un candidato fuerte para ser uno de los asientos del reino Lakamtun. Combinamos datos de teledetección aéreo, tal como el sistema de LiDAR del Goddard Space Flight Center de NASA, fotogrametría y mapeo con drón, en conjunto con reconocimiento, y excavaciones preliminares en El Palma y los sitios cercanos de Yaxún, San Lorenzo, Benemérito de las Américas, Primera Sección, y otros. Además, presentamos mapas más completos y precisos de El Palma y Benemérito de las Américas, Primera Sección, y proporcionamos un análisis preliminar. Sugerimos que El Palma y Benemérito de las Américas son centros primarios en la región y que ambos sitios posiblemente sirvieron como los asientos de la dinastía Lakamtun (u otra entidad política poderosa) en un modelo de capitales móviles o ciclismo político.

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