

**THE 2009 SPRING MAPPING PROJECT
OF THE
KA'KABISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT (KARP)**

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INTRODUCTION

Ka'Kabish, is a presumed second tier site in north-central Belize located almost exactly 10 km from the larger centre of Lamanai at 311 degrees magnetic north (Figure 1). From the top of the High Temple at Lamanai, Ka'Kabish is clearly visible on the horizon (Figure 2). In contrast to the extensive research conducted at Lamanai (cf. Graham 2004; Pendergast 1981, 1985, 1986), little is known about the site of Ka'Kabish (Guderjan 1996; Haines 2006, 2008a, 2008b).

Situated at approximately 17° 48' 58" north latitude by 88° 43' 47" west longitude¹ the core area of Ka'Kabish was separated roughly in half by the construction of a road connecting the village of Indian Church to San Filipe (Figure 3). Using this road as a dividing point the site is broadly referred to in terms of the North Complex and the South Complexes. Although work conducted during the 2007 and 2009 seasons resulted in the renaming, and in many cases naming, of the various complexes encountered using an alphabetic system, for the purposes of general discussion the site is still referred to in terms of the North Half, and South Half.

Ka'Kabish was constructed on a limestone ridge, one of several that undulate across this part of north-central Belize (Hammond 1973; Romney et al. 1959). The site sustained damage during the construction of a modern road that links the towns of San Filipe and Indian Church; at least one building was allegedly completely destroyed while two other structures, along with a section of the south plaza, are known to have been removed during the brief succeeding use of the site as a quarry for road fill (Guderjan 1996). Additional damage to the site was caused by extensive illicit looting operations, although currently the greatest danger to the site is from the encroaching farmland. This last situation is undoubtedly exacerbated by the sites proximity to four growing communities – one in every direction (Figure 4).

This report details the work conducted by the Ka'Kabish Archaeological Research Project (KARP) under the direction of Dr. Helen R. Haines during the 2009 field season. This is the third

¹ This reading was taken from the centre of the road that bisects the site using a Magellan 100 handheld GPS unit.

season of investigations at the site, the previous two being conducted in 2005 and 2007. During the 2009 field season research focused primarily on mapping the area of the site that lies to the north of the aforementioned San Filipe-Indian Church road on land owned by Don Guadalupe Pech, Yo Creek, Orange Walk District, and Don Rufino Magana, San Filipe, Orange Walk District.

Structures on the north side were classified as Group-F and investigations during the 2009 field season revealed that the architectural arrangement of these buildings is more complex than originally indicated in the earlier survey work of 1994. The argument for an elite occupation at the site, identified in previous seasons, was further reinforced with the discovery that several of the structures on the north side were situated on what appears to be an acropolis with a series of temples arranged along the eastern edge (Structures FA5, FA6, and FA8). Furthermore, a second ball court possibly exists on the north-west corner of this acropolis (Structures FA2 and FA3). However, the configuration of these structures is more ambiguous than those in the ball court in Group-D and no central marker was noted. Further investigations are necessary to accurately determine the function and relationship of these two buildings.

Also during the 2009 field season, time was spent investigating the previously documented looted tomb in Structure FA6 (formerly Structure 25 in the 1994 map). It is believed that an earlier buried corbel vaulted room was reused for this tomb. New photographs of the remnants of the glyphs were taken and sent to Dr. Christophe Helmke for analysis. A wood sample was also taken from the burial shaft above the tomb with portions of the material being sent to the Arizona AMS laboratory for 14C dating and to Dr. David Goldstein, currently a Visiting Scholar at the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina, for botanical identification. The results of these analyses will be discussed in the Structure discussion in the following section.

With this additional information we are able to make headway in understanding the position this site may have held in the politics of North-Central Belize during the Formative and Classic periods. It is clear that Ka'Kabish had its own elite population; one prominent enough to construct powerful religious monuments such as ball courts and temple acropolises. However, substantial work

remains before we can explain why this site existed so close to the larger centre of Lamanai, or how, or even if, it survived with an independent royalty contemporaneously with that at Lamanai.

HISTORY OF RESEARCH AT KA'KABISH

The first known visit to Ka'Kabish by an archaeologist was in the early 1980's by David Pendergast, who visited briefly while working at Lamanai. He reported finding Early Post-Classic ceramics on low mounds in recently cleared milpa fields immediately outside of the site core (Pendergast 1997: personal communication). In the mid-1990s, Ka'Kabish was visited by archaeologists from the Maya Research Program (MRP), including this author, who produced a functional, although rudimentary, map of the site core (Guderjan 1996).

A total of 27 structures (divided into two areas by the modern road) had been documented in the previous MPR report (Figure 3). During the reconnaissance by the Maya Research Program team, ceramic and architectural evidence was uncovered that suggested Ka'Kabish had enjoyed a long history of occupation, spanning the Late Formative period (ca. BC 400 – AD 250) through the end of the Late Classic period (ca. AD 600 – 900) (Guderjan 1996). This preliminary inspection also encountered five looted tombs (two of which were vaulted and another with a plaster dome roof [Haines 2007b]), all of which were originally dated tentatively to the Late Classic period (Guderjan 1996). One of these tombs initially had red painted walls with dark red glyphs, but looting and subsequent exposure left them in a highly fragmented state. The size and proximity of the site to the larger site of Lamanai, coupled with the similarity in architectural arrangements led to the assumption that Ka'Kabish was a secondary centre within the larger Lamanai polity. It has been speculated that Ka'Kabish had been occupied by a cadre of lesser elite personages who helped to administer the commoner communities in the outer periphery of the Lamanai polity.

In June of 2005, Dr. Helen R. Haines applied for a permit to conduct a reconnaissance of the site to assess the viability of future work at the site. Working with two men from the village of Indian

Church (Luis Gonzales and Jaime Yanes) the land-owners were located and the site was surveyed over a three-week period (Haines 2006). This survey work took the form of an informal assessment of the area with minimal clearing, restricted to those areas necessary to create egress and exit points. Using the original 1995 Maya Research Program map as a guide the majority of the structures on the site core were relocated. Additionally, due to the clearing of the areas immediately adjacent to the site core since 1995 several outlying courtyard groups and low residential mounds were also identified.

The conclusion of the 2005 assessment was that, while the site had suffered additional looting in the intervening decade, it retained sufficient integrity to contribute valuable information regarding the organization of pre-Hispanic Maya polities in North-Central Belize. Furthermore, the recent exposure of a residential settlement zone in the surrounding area – that appear to include structures from a wide range of social strata – would permit future research to be conducted on a multi-scalar level not previously possible for the area.

In 2007, a team of six people returned to map the site; the team consisted of Dr. Helen Haines, Clifford Patterson (a PhD candidate at Western University, Ontario), Lorelei Friesen (an undergraduate at the University of Toronto, Ontario), Jaime Yanes and Oscar Reyes from Indian Church, and Jose Perez from San Carlos. Although the intention was to re-map the area included in the original 1994 survey, starting with the monumental architecture to the south of the road and moving to the northern half either later in the season, several new plazuala groups as well as scattered domestic residences in the surrounding cane fields were encountered resulting in the 2007 work focusing on the southern portion of the site. A total of five architectural groups of varying sizes, identified as Group-A through Group-E and containing 40 structures, along with three chultuns and an aguada were identified as belonging to the “site core”. A further fourteen potential domestic residences were mapped in the “settlement zone”; this is an area of cultivation immediately surrounding the forested core. Structures in the settlement zone, although impacted by agricultural activities do not appear to have been situated on substantial platform or plaza-like surface. Rather

they appear to have been single structures, or clusters of small structures. It is likely that Groups B and C were actually similar in design and occupation status to those in the settlement zone (neither of these appear to be on a plaza or large platform), however, being flanked by larger compounds these were spared clearing by the original Mennonite owners.

Additional work was conducted at a fortuitously timed cleared corn field to the south-east of the junction of the Shipyard and San Filipe-Indian Church roads. Although our survey was restricted to the ploughed area, which was roughly 0.18 km², it was clear that the settlement continued beyond this area. Immediately to the north of the road a tertiary-size site had been recorded (Baker 1995); this small plazuala-temple cluster likely served as the focus for low-level ritual activity for this settlement. The surveyed settlement was named Chomokeil (the place in the middle) and a total of 25 domestic units were identified; these included 8 mounds, 1 multi-mound group, and 16 scatters (Patterson 2007). As this area falls to the east of the Shipyard-Indian Creek road it was decided that they should rightly fall under the permit issued to Dr. Elizabeth Graham for the Lamanai Archaeological Project. Hence, all materials were turned over to the LAP in 2009.

At the conclusion of the 2007 field season it was abundantly clear that Ka'Kabish was not a secondary administrative centre subordinate to the larger centre of Lamanai. The monumental zone at Ka'Kabish is considerably larger and more complex than initially assumed, and the site is surrounded by domestic residences in the cleared fields to the south and south-east of the site, and likely to the west and north although this has yet to be confirmed. Dates from the ceramics collected ranged from the Late Formative period through the Terminal Classic period in the site core and from the Late Classic to the Middle Post-Classic periods in the domestic areas around the site (Aimers 2007).

Questions remain, however, as to the exact nature of the role Ka'Kabish had in the politics of north-central Belize in general and more specifically about its relationship with the larger site of Lamanai. In order to understand the nature of the centre it is important to fully document the extent of the site. With this end in mind the 2009 field season focused on mapping the remaining north portion of the site core. The following section discusses the results of the 2009 field season.

DETAILS OF THE 2009 FIELD WORK

The 2009 field team consisted of Dr. Helen R. Haines and three men from the local villages of Indian Church and San Carlos (Roni Yanes, Oscar Ruano, and Jose Perez). Work at the site commenced April 15, 2009, and lasted for four weeks, concluding May 8, 2009, under permit number IA/H/2/1/09(04). Only one carbon sample was collected during this season which was exported for plant analysis and C¹⁴ testing. No other artefacts were collected.

THE KA'KABISH SITE CORE – NORTH

Work conducted at Ka'Kabish in 2009 concentrated on the portion of the site core that lies to the north of the San Filipe-Indian Church Road (Figure 5). This area of monumental architecture is contained within a large forested area flanked by cane fields to the east, open grassy areas to the west and north-west currently being used for cattle, and a continuation of forest to the north-east. Additional courtyard complexes lie to the north and north-east in discrete forest clusters, however, due to distance and insufficient time these were not mapped during the 2009 season. A Sokkia digital DT-600 transit was used to survey the area with data being hand-recorded in a transit log.

All of the structures mapped were determined to be associated as, with one exception, they were located on a single large plaza platform; consequently, all these structures were identified as belong to Group F. Within this group a subset of structures were discovered to rest on a large, roughly three metre high platform situated on the eastern edge of the Group F plaza. This configuration took the form of an acropolis like grouping and was subsequently referred to as Group F Acropolis with all structures being identified with a FA prefix. A total of 15 structures were mapped; five were located directly on the Plaza F surface, nine were located on the acropolis platform, and one (the anomalous outlier) being located in the forest to the south-east of the acropolis. This structure may have been located on the plaza surface, however, dense undergrowth and what appeared to be construction damage, likely from the road, prevented a clear association from being

made. The overall dimension of the Group F plaza including the acropolis was 160 metres north-south by 176 metres east-west.

The plaza was accessed by a ramp or stairway on the south side that is angled up to the north-east; this ramp aligns with the north-west corner of Group D. The acropolis is accessed by a second ramp or staircase that was located on the west side of the structure; this ramp had a due east/west alignment. The remainder of this section will summarize these structures in numerical order starting.

Group F – Plaza Structures

Structures F1 and F2

As one approaches the north group the first structures of note are two pyramids each roughly 10.5 metres high. The two pyramids are located immediately adjacent to each other with F2 being immediately to the north of F1; the two structures are so closely situated that they appear joined and may in fact be similar to the Rio Bec style temple-range buildings. Future excavations are warranted to determine the exact configuration of these structures.

Three looters trenches were noted along the lower west side, one in Structure F1 and two in Structure F2. An additional two trenches were noted in the east side, one in the face of Structure F2 a few metres above the platform surface and the other near the top of Structure F1. Due to the instability of the fill and constricted entrances none of these were investigated to their ultimate extent.

These structures are located immediately to the north-west of the access ramp to the plaza; this access way channels people onto the plaza immediately to the east of these buildings. It is believed that these building were oriented to face east as this would also face the acropolis. The western sides of these pyramids drops (albeit it negligibly) to a lower surface a scant metre below the plaza at this point.

Structures F3 and F4

To the north of Structures F1 and F2 the plaza extends further to the west. On the original map Structures F3 and F4 were drawn as a single L-shaped structure in the north-west corner of the complex; based on the notable difference in height the two parts were separated out as different, albeit

conjoined, range structures on the 2009 map. These structures flank the north-west corner of the plaza which is some four to five metres above the lower surface at this point. The back sides of the buildings appear to merge with the plaza wall. Structure F3 has a latitudinal axis oriented roughly north-south; it is 24 metres east-west and 24 metres north-south and has a relatively flat upper surface. This building is just over two metres high as measured from the plaza surface. Structure F4 connects to F3 at the latter's north end and runs roughly east-west. It is squarer in shape than its mate measuring roughly 24 metres east-west and 20 metres north-south. It does not appear to have a flat upper surface. This building is roughly four metres high as measured from the plaza surface.

Structure F5

In the centre of the north side of the plaza is another range structure (F5). This discrete building was constructed abutting the north edge of the plaza and its' north wall continues off the plaza merging with the platform wall. Across its primary north-south axis it is approximately 16 metres wide, and it measures roughly 22 metres east-west and rises roughly 4.5 metres above the plaza surface.

Structure F6

Structure F6 is more problematic in determining if it is situated on the plaza surface. It is further to the south-east of all the structures found, and while it appears to be inline with the top edge of the ramp extensive secondary growth and what appeared to be damage from road construction hampered our ability to locate the south edge of the plaza. Therefore it is unclear exactly how this structure relates to the rest of those in Group F. It is a small, square building roughly 12 metres along each axis and roughly 1.5 metres tall. It has a large flat upper surface and was likely a platform, possibly supporting a perishable structure. This building could not be matched with any on the original 1994 map and based on its location and surrounding conditions it is likely a new addition to the architectural record.

Group F – Acropolis Structures

The east side of Plaza F is dominated by a large platform roughly three metres high. The surface dimensions of this platform measured roughly 108 metres north to south and 72 metres east to west and contained nine structures arranged around the edges of the platform. The structures were numbered clockwise starting with the first structure to the north of the access ramp; this access way was located on the western edge of the platform and connected the acropolis to the main plaza. The structures are prefaced with a FA prefix to identify them as belonging to the Group F Acropolis.

Structure FA1

Structure FA1 is a small range structure roughly 16 metres east-west, 10 metres north south, and 1.5 metres high. It is located immediately to the north of the access way to the acropolis and the western end of the building currently appears to abut the top edge of the plaza resulting in no access around the building to the west. The structure is a small, flat topped platform of indeterminate design or function.

Structures FA2 and FA3

Working around the acropolis in a clockwise direction the next building is Structure FA2. Structures FA2 and FA3 may form the second ball court at the site. Structure FA2 is a moderately high rectangular structure measuring 16 metres north-south by 26 metres east-west. It is separated from Structure FA3 by alleyway roughly three metres wide. Structure FA3 is somewhat taller than Structure FA2 but otherwise has a similar configuration; it measures eight metres north-south by 26 metres east-west. As with Structure FA1, both buildings appear to back onto the upper edge of the acropolis platform to the west. Structure FA3 also forms part of the north edge of the acropolis and lower plaza. The alleyway between the buildings narrows slightly toward the east thereby raising questions as to the association of these two structures; it is possible that this narrowing is due to structural collapse and excavations are warranted to clearly ascertain their functions.

Structure F4

In the northeast corner of the FA group is Structure FA4; partially connected to FA3 and, like this adjacent building, adjoining with the acropolis and platform edge, FA4 is somewhat problematic

in form. From the south, or acropolis platform side, the structure appears to be a standard range structure roughly 30 metres east-west and 4.5 metres high. At issue are the north-south dimensions as the configuration of the building suggests a range structure along the south-side with a lower, rectangular appurtenance on the north side. It is unclear at this time if this section is a different building that abuts a traditional range structure or if it is part of the original, and at present, undefined architectural form. Two shallow looters trenches, each roughly 1.2 metres wide, were found on the south face of the structure. Both trenches angle up the slope and do not possess any visible architecture to help with structural identifications.

The northern portion is a scant 1 metres lower than the crest of the southern range-building portion and is perfectly flat. The overall north-south dimension of the structure is 12 metres (four metres for the southern portion and eight metres for the northern 'addition'). The edges on the north and east sides blend with those of the acropolis and lower platform to form a continuous wall.

Structures F5

Immediately to the south of this Structure FA4, along the east edge of the acropolis is a series of three large temples; each with a slightly different configuration. The first and northern-most of these is Structure FA5, followed by FA6, then FA8. Between FA6 and FA8 is a small low platform, also abutting the acropolis edge that was identified as FA7.

FA5 is a tall temple-like structure roughly 20 meters east-west and 16 metres north south. It rises 7.5 metres above the acropolis floor. The eastern-side, or back of the structure, merges with the edge of the acropolis forming a steep drop. The front, or western side of the structure has a curved appearance suggesting that the corners of the building might be rounded; however, this is architectural characteristic requires excavation to confirm. A single looters' trench was noted in the north-west corner of the structure; a cursory examination of this trench revealed portions of architecture that would be worth future investigations.

Structure FA6

To the south a scant 4 metres away is Structure FA6. This is perhaps the most significant structure investigated this season. The building appears to be a traditional square temple-like

structure 27 metres north-south, 20 metres east-west, and 9 metres high. As with its neighbour to the north, the east wall of the building merges with the acropolis platform.

Three looters trenches were noted on the front (west) side of the structure, one trench was found on the south side, and another on the east side. The trench on the east side penetrates deep into the core of the building. Because it is situated on the east side of the building, the tallest in appearance due to the conjoining with the platform, the looters placed the tunnel at what they likely assumed was the mid-point of the temple. It actually appears to be quite low in the over all building, entering the structure roughly at the same elevation as the current acropolis surface. The tunnel terminated at a small room (Figure 6) that appears to have been re-used as a tomb.

The room measured 3.6 metres north-south and 1.3 metres east west. The room was originally constructed with a corbelled vault. Several rows of voids were visible on the eastern wall of the vault. Inspection of the lowest, and only accessible row, indicated that these voids once held triangular shaped poles that have long since decayed; plaster casing in the voids suggests that the poles were part of the original construction (Figure 7). Voids were not noted in the east wall; however, this is likely due to the post-construction damage sustained by this side of the vault.

To the west, opposite the looter's tunnel was a narrow passageway roughly 0.75 metres wide and, due to the fill on the floor of the room, only 0.96 metres high. The looters had continued excavating this passageway for roughly 2.5 metres when it ended at what is likely the original door to the building. The narrowness of the passageway and the depth of the walls suggest that the structure is Late Formative in date (Graham 2009, pers. comm.); no ceramics or other materials currently have been recovered to date the construction of this phase of the structure. The east wall of the room where the passageway connects to the room has been savagely destroyed to a depth of roughly 40 cm, with portions of the wall littered around the room. This suggest that the doorway may have been initially obscured and the looter ripped out the east wall initially to continue their ad hoc tunnel, but narrowed the scope of their digging to the passageway once its walls were encountered.

The room has a deep layer of what appears to be soft sandy fill on the floor. When the site was visited by the Maya Research Program in 1994 numerous obsidian blades were salvaged from the surface of the room and reported as part of this author's dissertation research (Haines 2000). These blades may have come from the ceiling of the room where a filled shaft is visible. This shaft enters the room to the east of the capstones suggesting that the damage to the eastern portion of the vault was pre-historic in nature.

Visible in the shaft are a series of layers of different materials; charred wood chunks, obsidian, chert flakes, and snail shells, between which are thin layers of dirt and plaster flecks. This layering is consistent with that found at other tombs in the Maya area (Haines 1995; Guderjan 1991; Moholy-Nagy 1994, 1997; Trik 1963; Smith 1950, 1972). Burned wood taken from this shaft produced a calibrated C¹⁴ date range of 417AD - 533AD with an intercept age of AD 475. As the wood was deemed 'mature' this date range is considered to accurately identify the period when the room was re-entered and reused as a tomb (Goldstein 2010, pers.comm.). Investigations as to the species of wood used are on-going.

Other indications that the room was reused as a tomb are the remnants of red paint and red-painted glyphs found on the walls. The room appears to have been coated with red painted plaster and portions of this are found on the east wall and in the north-west corner. The east wall also appears to have been painted with dark red glyphs as is indicated by the remains of three glyph blocks (Figures 8 and 9). Christophe Helmke has proposed a tentative decipherment of the glyphs and suggests that the remaining signs do tend to conform to a nominal series, perhaps providing the name of the individual that was laid to rest in the tomb (Helmke 2010, pers. comm.). His analysis of the spelling patterns preserved indicate that the text was probably painted sometime before A.D. 747, and although no firmer means of dating the glyphs was found, this finding does dovetail with the 14C date recovered from the fill in the tomb shaft, which corresponds to the latter part of the Early Classic (cal. A.D. 417 - 533). Helmke also noted that the glyphs appear to have been painted onto the red background while the latter was still wet as evinced by the bleeding of colours in some areas. This

somewhat hurriedly application would fit with the room being refurbished for a burial – an event that would likely need to be accomplished within a short period of time in the heat of the tropics.

Structure FA8

Immediately to the south of Structure FA6 is another temple, FA8; this is the third temple along the east edge of the acropolis. This temple has a different configuration than FA6. While the later appears to occupy a traditional square footprint, FA8 appears to have a small appurtenance on the front giving the structure a two-tiered effect. It is possible that this appended construction represents a later room, or pair of rooms, added to structure similar to that on Structure 21 at La Milpa (Hammond 2010 pers. comm.). The main structure is 18 metres north-south by 20 metres east-west with an elevation of roughly seven metres. The smaller structure on the front of the building measures roughly six metres north-south and ten metres east-west and is only three metres high.

Structure FA7

Between Structures FA6 and FA8 is a small platform roughly six metres north-south and six metres east-west dubbed FA7. It is only 1.5 metres high and originally was virtually invisible before the area was cleared. Three looters trenches were encountered in the eastern slope of the acropolis platform. One of these was immediately below, and partly in, Structure FA7, from which was recovered a near complete and articulated jaguar skeleton. This find led to the structure being colloquially dubbed “The Jaguar Temple” by the crew.

Structure FA9

The final structure on the acropolis, FA9 was a rectangular structure with what appeared to be rounded corners. This structure was set along the southern wall of the acropolis and the south side of the building merges with that of the acropolis and lower platform. The building measures 18 metres north-south and 22 metres east-west and rises almost four metres above the acropolis surface. There are no visible features or forms that would suggest the primary axial direction for the structure; however, based on its position on the platform it is assumed to have a north-south alignment. A single looters trench was noted low on the south side of the building, and may possibly intrude into the

platform rather than the building proper. This trench was not explored due to the presence of thick vegetation and an undetectable nest of Africanize Bees.

DISCUSSION OF THE KA'KABISH SITE

Investigations during the 2007 season revealed that the south side of Ka'Kabish was considerably larger and more complex than initially assumed. While the 2009 exploration of the north side of the site did not expand the physical dimensions of the northern complex to the same extent it clarified the arrangement of the structures. The 2009 work delineated the architectural assemblage through the identification of the plaza edges and discovered that the eastern cluster of structures, rather than being dispersed, were in fact grouped on an acropolis platform.

Previous work at the site had raised the possibility that Ka'Kabish was not a mere secondary administrative centre bound to a larger primary centre assumed to be Lamanai. The size and scope of the architecture was more in keeping with ideas of small polity centres. The discovery of an acropolis-like structure complete with a series of temples arranged along the eastern side reinforces the idea that Ka'Kabish was a site with larger socio-political presence than previously believed.

Four models derived from current ideas about ancient Maya socio-political organization are being investigated to explain the role Ka'Kabish may have in the ancient Maya landscape.

- Centre for a mobile royal court from Lamanai;
- Ideological or political seat for a heterarchically arranged polity with the economic seat being Lamanai (*cf.*Haines 2007a);
- Suburban settlement for elites who may have 'worked' at Lamanai (*cf.* Haines and Patterson 2008).;
- Autonomous polity centre.

Each of these models has something to recommend it as well as something to undermine its application. In regards to the first model: it is possible that Ka'Kabish was the centre for a mobile royal court that moved to the city during the later part of the rainy season when Lamanai becomes excessively humid and mosquito ridden. The existence of mobile royal courts has been documented in other parts of Belize (Ball and Taschek 2001). This model would explain the presence of ritual and elite architectural arrangements that replicate those at Lamanai. It would also account for the presence of large temples and monumental structures at an otherwise small site. However, if Ka'Kabish was only a "summer palace" then one would not expect to find an acropolis or rich tombs such as the ones indicated by the looted recorded at Ka'Kabish. The royalty, most likely, would be buried at the primary centre.

The second theory is favoured by Dr. Graham who feels that the tombs at Lamanai look more like rich merchants than divine elite (Graham 2009 pers. comm.). This theory would explain the presence of both royal or high status tomb and the monumental temple/ball court architectural grammar. However, Lamanai has tombs and a temple/ball court arrangement that is not only identical in layout to that at Ka'Kabish, but it exceeds the Ka'Kabish structures in terms of size. If the former site was only an economic centre in a heterarchical system then one would expect that monumental ritual architecture would be lacking or considerably smaller than at the ritual capital. Such is clearly not the case with Ka'Kabish and Lamanai.

The idea that Ka'Kabish is an early suburban settlement is tempting (Haines and Patterson 2008). The clear correlates between the sites in terms of the material culture thus far discovered suggests a close level of interaction between the two sites. Moreover, a high-ranking elite population who lived at Ka'Kabish would explain both the elite residential structures and the tombs. However, it does not explain the presence of ritual architecture. If Lamanai was the primary centre and the population were commuting there on a regular basis then one would expect such ritually powerful activities involving monumental structures such as ball courts to be restricted to the capital.

It is also possible that Ka'Kabish was an autonomous centre. This would explain the ritual monumental architecture, elite structures, and tombs. The high labour investment and elite ritual and residential architecture, particularly the presence of a ball court with marker, indicates that the elites at Ka'Kabish possessed many royal prerogatives. The evidence of architectural and occupational continuity, albeit preliminary, indicates that the political situation at Ka'Kabish was fairly stable, complete with regular minor additions and modifications through the lifetime of the site (Haines 2007b), unlike other smaller centres situated with reach of larger, more powerful centres, and whose history of fluctuating periods of autonomy and subordination is documented in their episodic construction programs (Culbert 1991; Grube 2000; Hammond 1991a; Iannone 2005; Martin and Grube 2000). The close physical distance between Ka'Kabish and Lamanai is significantly less than what has been suggested for primary centres elsewhere in the Maya realm (Mathews 1991), and is closer to what has been suggested for causeway terminus groups (Chase and Chase 2001:274). Consequently, either the geographic extent of polities in the north is significantly less than what is traditionally assumed or Ka'Kabish was not an autonomous centre.

Based on the contemporaneous occupation, intermediate connecting settlement area, and parallels in monumental and mortuary architecture, it seems that Ka'Kabish and Lamanai shared a higher degree of similarity with each other than with other sites in the area. Consequently, a fifth possibility is that Maya polities more closely resemble city-states (Marcus 1989, 1994; Thompson 1954; Webster 1997); possessing a single ruling lineage situated in the sole urban centre these states would have a limited geographical or territorial extent under their immediate control. However, this would not prevent them from creating hegemonies through the domination of other smaller city-states.

The presence of hegemonic city-states is a political model that has not been adequately explored for the Maya area. The existence of autonomous, or semi-autonomous centres dominated but not subjugated by a larger or more power centre could explain the presence of elite architecture, monumental ritual constructions, and high-status tombs, as well as other indicators of royal

prerogatives at smaller centres, while simultaneously accounting for close parallels in material culture between cities of disparate sizes. This model of hegemonic city-states would explain the architectural assemblage at Ka'Kabish as well as its close parallels in material cultural with that of Lamanai. It is this model, that Ka'Kabish was an autonomous centre dominated but not subjugated by Lamanai, that is currently favoured.

FUTURE RESEARCH

It is my intent to apply to the Institute of Archaeology, NICH, Belize, for a permit to continue investigating the site and surrounding area of Ka'Kabish. The next field season will begin to map the exposed architectural sequences in the major structures to gather chronological data as to their construction as well as begin an excavation unit in the main plaza to search for settlement chronology. Additional information regarding the settlement chronology is expected to come from a continuation of the survey of the immediate residential zone around the site as fields become clear. These research targets will form the basis for Master theses for three graduate students from Trent University.

I plan to apply for a permit for the 2010 summer season to conduct a six-week project at the site core followed by a two-week laboratory session. The goal of the this work is to create a more accurate picture of the occupation history and construction sequences at Ka'Kabish. To this end work will largely be concentrated around Group D and the settlement zone around the south area of the site. I expect these projects to consume the entirety of the 2010 field season

I expect that work in this area (site core, immediate settlement area, and extended settlement area) will, with the permission of the Institute of Archaeology, continue over the course of the next decade. To fund the various aspects of this research monies have been secured from the Social Science and Humanitarian Research Council of Canada which will support research during the 2010, 2011, and 2012 field seasons.

CONCLUSIONS

Ka'Kabish affords a unique opportunity to simultaneously add to the limited corpus of excavated sites in north-central Belize, and to investigate the dynamics of intra-polity socio-political organization. Recent evidence from the site suggests that the political structure for the polity may have been different from originally surmised; rather than being a secondary administrative centre Ka'Kabish may have participated in a more heterarchically political system (see Scarborough et al. 2003) or it may have been a semi-autonomous city under the influence of the larger centre of Lamanai in a hegemonic city-state system.

By virtue of the extensive research previously conducted and currently underway at Lamanai, future work at Ka'Kabish (under the Ka'Kabish Archaeological Reconnaissance Project [KARP]), presents the perfect situation for exploring and re-evaluating the nature of Classic period polity organisation. This work will contribute greatly to our understanding of the socio-political structure at both sites as well as yielding considerable information regarding Late Classic Maya polity dynamics in this part of the ancient Maya world.

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As archaeological work would not be possible without the co-operation of the local people who have as much invested in our work as we do, if not more, I would also like to thank the following individuals: Srs. Blanco, Che, and Magana for allowing access to their land; Roni Yanes, Jose Perez, and Oscar Reyes for helping to clear, map, and survey the site; the ladies of Las Orchidas for keeping us well fed; Ben and Margaretha Dyck of the Blue Creek Community for helping with the logistics; and all the members of the various community that provided me with information and assistance in a variety of ways.

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FIGURES

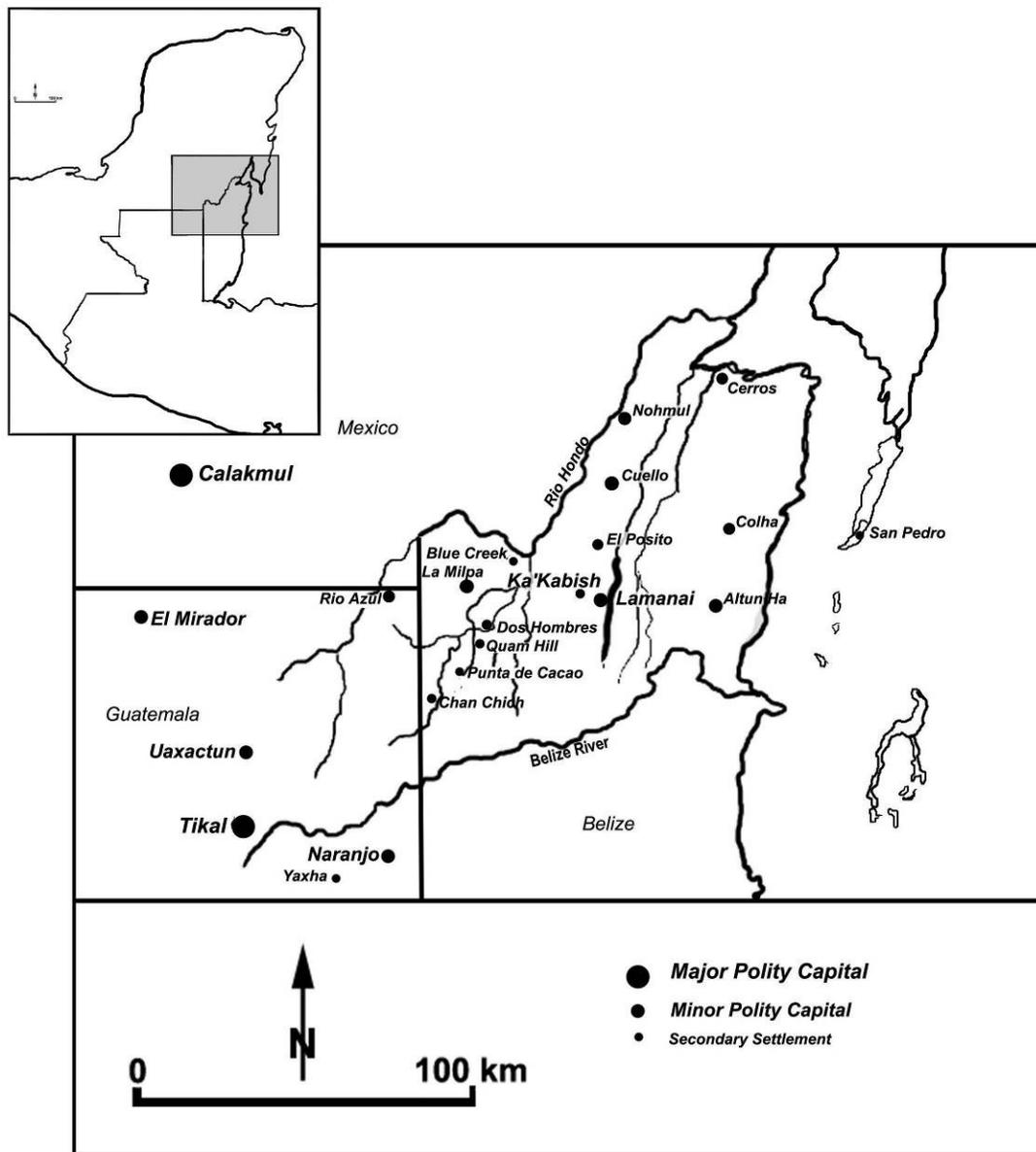


Figure 1. Map of Northern Belize and North-Eastern Guatemala Showing Key Archaeological Sites



Figure 2. Photo of Ka'Kabish from Lamanai.

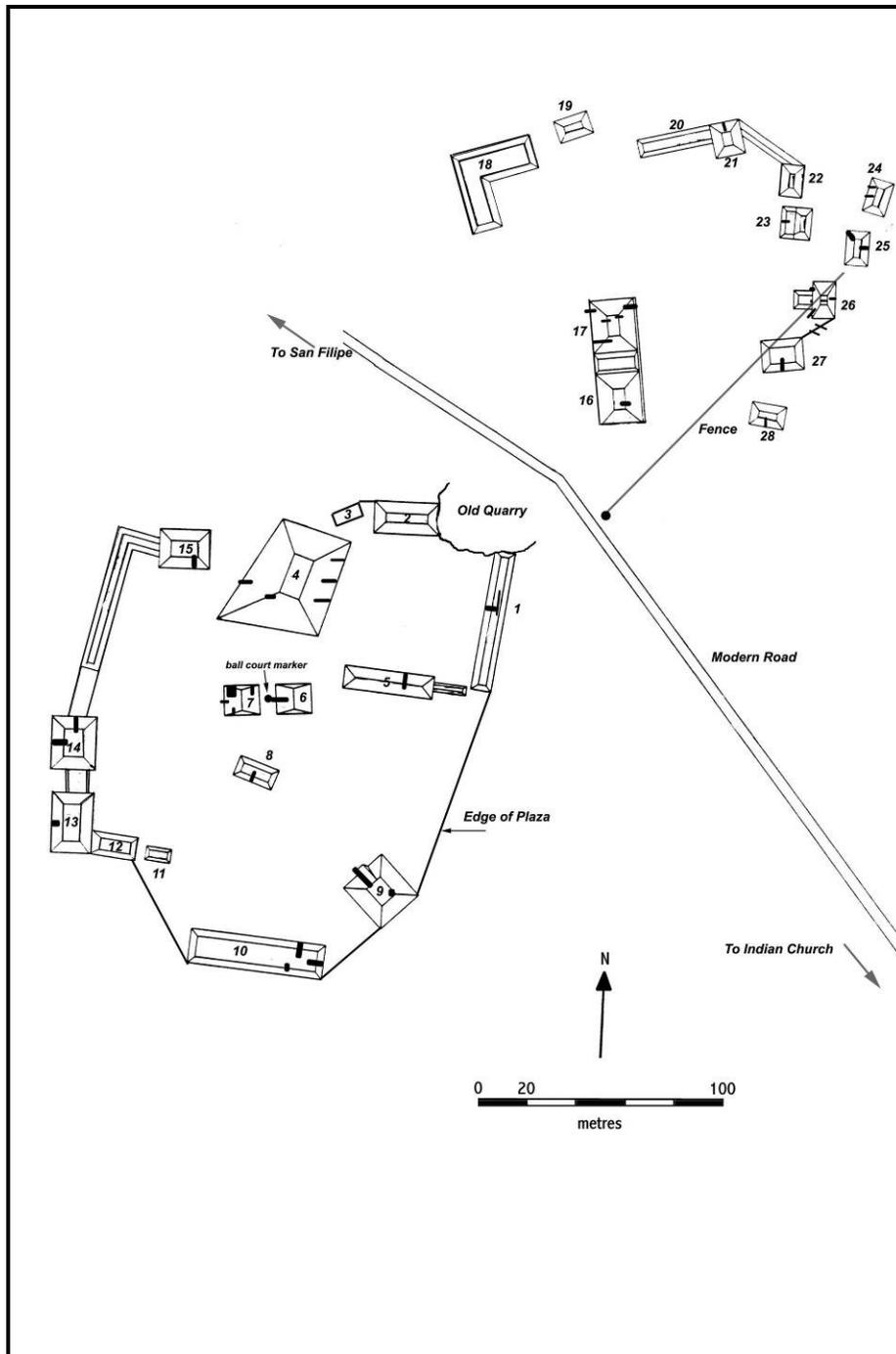


Figure 3. Original Map of Ka' Kabish Core Zone as based on 1994 MRP Survey



Figure 4. Aerial Photo Showing Archaeological Sites and Modern Towns.

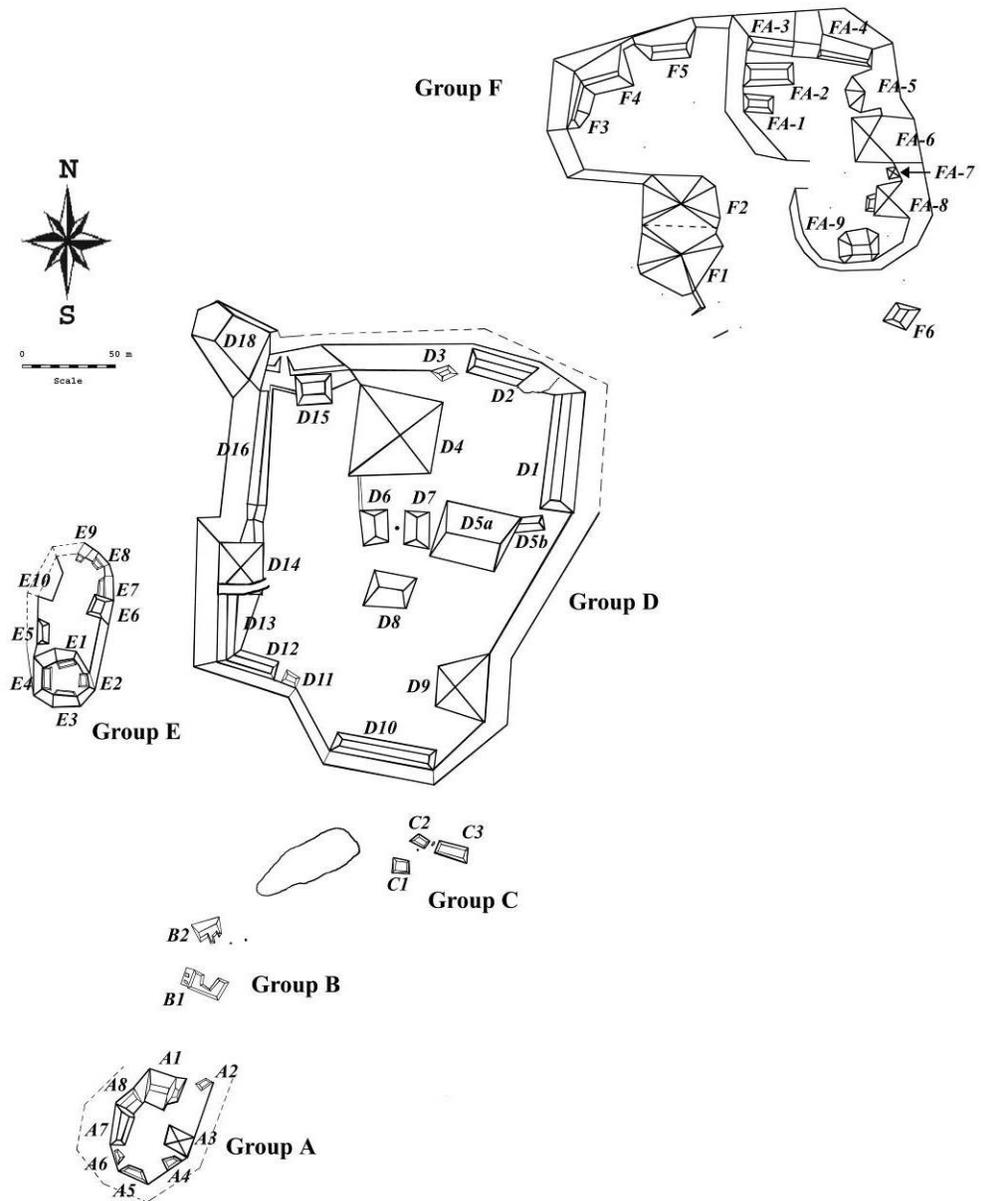


Figure 5. 2009 Map of Ka'Kabish

Plan Map
Structure FA-6, Tomb 1
Ka'Kabish, Orange Walk District
 H.R. Haines & O. Ruano 2009

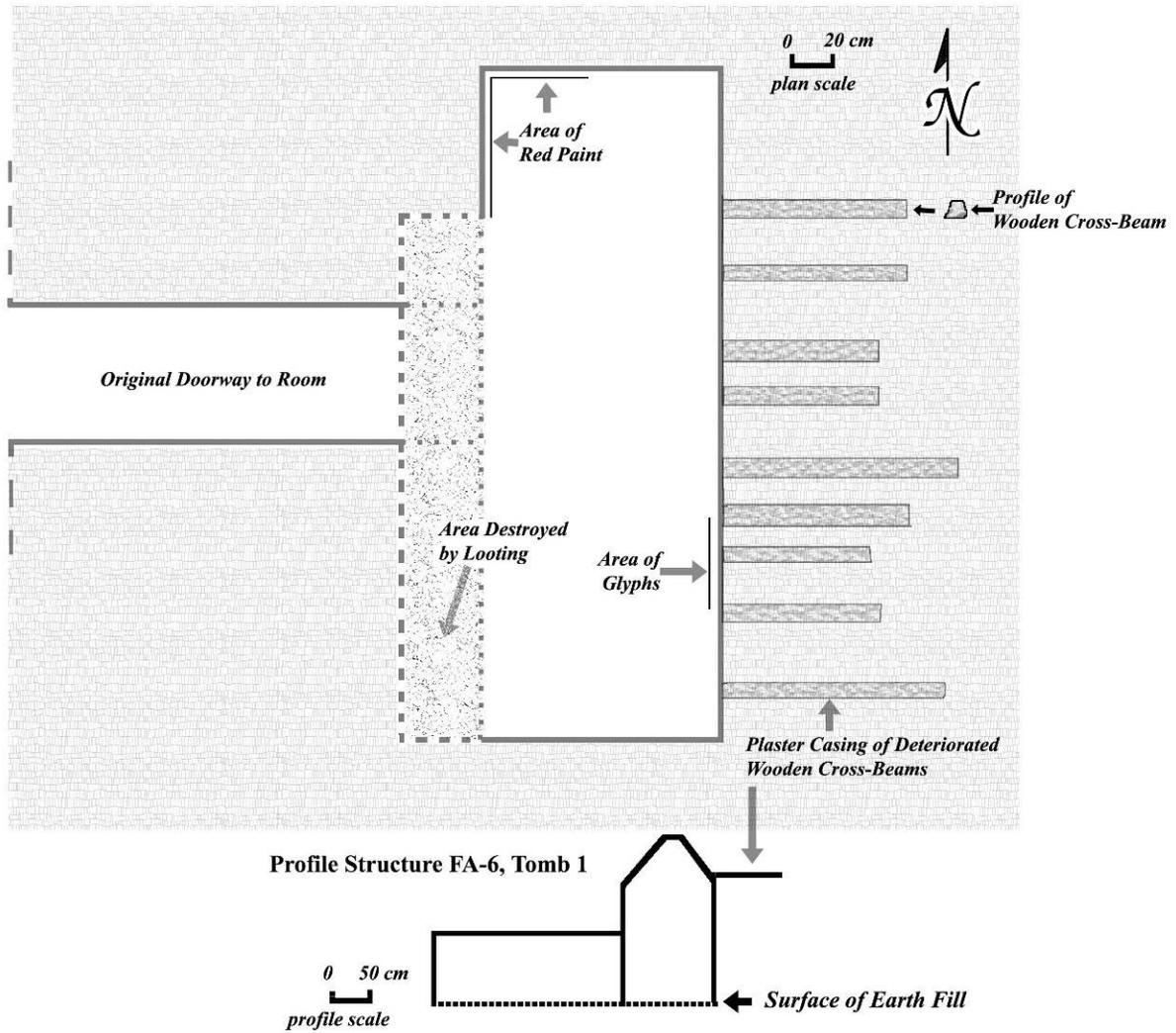


Figure 6. Room/Tomb in Structure FA6



Figure 7. Photos of Plaster Post Void



Figure 8. Composite Photo of Glyphs in Room/Tomb FA6 (Photos D. Boman & H. Haines; Compiled by C. Helmke).

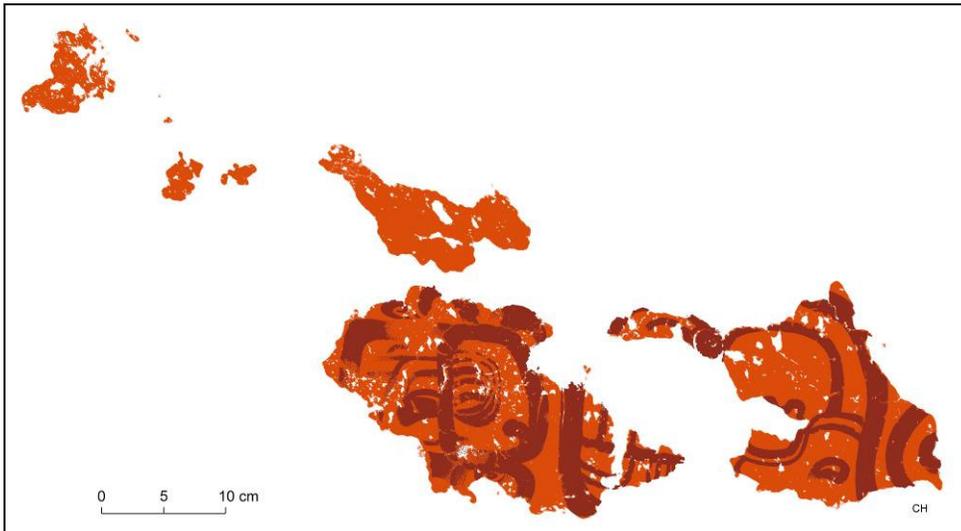


Figure 9. Drawing of Glyphs from FA6 (by C. Helmke)

