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THE LINEAGE MODEL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA IN LATE CLASSIC  
NORTHWESTERN BELIZE

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Kinship and lineage were regarded as important topics of anthropological study from the 1940s through the 1970s, but were largely discredited during the 1980s. Recent scholarship, however, has indicated that kinship and lineage, when considered as the products of social activity, can make important contributions to studies of living and past populations. This paper explores the lineage as a model of social organization distinguished by specific activities practiced by members of Late Classic Maya social groups. This model is derived from cross-cultural literature on lineages, but practices associated with lineage organization are historically and culturally specific. A suite of archaeological correlates, based on practices endemic to the Late Classic Maya, is evaluated against a test case from northwestern Belize. The implications of a landscape populated by lineages during the Classic period argue that archaeological investigations of hinterland areas are an important complement to more traditional studies focused on nucleated site centers.

Aunque, los estudios antropológicos desde los años 30's a los 70's consideraban de gran importancia los aspectos de parentesco y linajes, estos fueron descreditados en los años 80's. Estudios recientes, sin embargo, han indicado que el parentesco y el linaje, cuando son considerados como el producto de actividades sociales, pueden ser importante contribuciones a los estudios de sociedades vivientes y del pasado. Este trabajo explora el linaje como un modelo de organización social que se distingue por actividades específicas practicadas por los miembros de grupos sociales mayas del Clásico Tardío. Los linajes ocupan un territorio corporativo, manifiestan una identidad de grupo, crean y mantienen inigualdad social dentro del grupo y veneran a los ancestros a través de festejos periódicos. Este modelo se deriva de la literatura sobre linajes de distintas culturas, pero las prácticas asociadas con la organización del linaje son histórica y culturalmente específicas. Un rango de evidencia arqueológica, basados en las prácticas endémicas de los Mayas del Clásico Tardío, es puesto a prueba en un caso del noroeste de Belice. En este ejemplo las implicaciones del modelo se ajustan al caso de estudio: un territorio corporativo está indicado por un territorio de amortiguamiento rodeado por un número de terrazas agrícolas, la identidad de grupo es expresada en la arquitectura doméstica, el tamaño de las casas también indica una inigualdad institucionalizada dentro de los bordes del territorio, y la veneración de los ancestros es sugerida por las cantidades de cerámica relacionada a la preparación y al servicio de comida consistente con la evidencia encontrada en aquellos lugares donde los Maya realizaron fiestas. Las implicaciones de un paisaje poblado por linajes durante el período Clásico implica que las investigaciones arqueológicas en áreas "marginales" son un complemento importante a los estudios más tradicionales en los centros nucleados.

Though “lineage” was widely used to describe social organization from the late 1930s until the early 1970s (Kuper 1973), the uncritical application of this concept led to misunderstandings of what a lineage actually was and the degree to which it could be applied across the globe. As part of the overall decline in the influence of British social anthropology and its emphasis on the study of kinship, “lineage” fell into general disuse and even outright disrepute (e.g., Kuper 1982). By the mid-1990s, however, the lineage reemerged as a useful means of characterizing and analyzing social organization. The importance of land tenure, power relations within and between social groups, and the influence of ancestors are recognized as relevant in a variety of temporal and geographical contexts, including issues faced by national and local governments (e.g., Rankin and Escherick 1990; Shipton 1994); the construction of individual and group identity (e.g., Chun 1996; McCall 1995); and studies of the past where these issues are investigated (e.g., Ebrey and Watson 1986; Fash 1983; Hendon 1991; McAnany 1995). To avoid problems that originally obviated the concept of lineage (e.g., Kuper 1982), scholars must explicitly define and test for the presence of this form rather than assume its widespread existence. The careful definition and operationalization of an ethnographically-based lineage model can be a positive contribution to the reconstruction of certain past societies through informing questions of land tenure, social group formation and maintenance, and ancestors.

For the purposes of this paper, “lineage” refers in part to the structural-functionalist segmentary lineage (e.g., Evans-Pritchard 1940; Fortes 1945), as critical elements of this construct are relevant. Their definition of that social structure as an abstraction that was static and external to the actions of individuals who passed through it, however, is not useful (e.g., Kuper 1982). Since the late 1970s, however, practice theorists (e.g., Bourdieu 1977;

Giddens 1979) have implemented a more dynamic view of social structure as created and maintained by individuals conducting their day-to-day activities. These activities occur in geographically meaningful places that frame activity and contribute to the construction of identity. Neither Giddens nor Bourdieu contested the existence of social groups such as lineages, but instead focused on the creation of, and change within, this social structure.

I believe it is useful to combine certain social relationships identified by structural-functionalists with insights on the nature of social change generated by practice theory. Different social structures may be invoked depending on the strategies and perceived needs of the individuals and groups involved, and these structures are reflected in on-the-ground activity (e.g., Salzman 1978). These can include reactions of very short duration, in the order of hours, days or weeks, or a longer-lived change, resulting in a structure that persists for generations. Choices are culturally specific and historically conditioned—people draw on their heritage and social memory in dealing with social situations. Social groups, then, consist variously of a range of daily activities, events of the “outside world,” and tradition.

I would like to avoid an over-reliance on the day-to-day aspect of the practice orientation, however, for two reasons. First, I believe that an emphasis on strategizing actors exists at the expense of social reproduction for the sake of tradition, particularly in societies that place great emphasis on ancestors (e.g., Kintz 1990:45, 53, 142-147). Second, practice theory was developed to examine living populations, and archaeologists work with things to which ethnographers may pay little attention. In dealing with extended occupational periods of 100 or 200 years in length, archaeologists may also have a difficult time differentiating “the daily” from “history and tradition.” Giddens (1985:200) defines tradition as the force

that represents the command that the “what went before” has over daily life. As Ortner (1984:150) has noted,

“Either because practice theorists wish to emphasize the activeness and intentionality of action, or because of a growing interest in change as against reproduction, or both, the degree to which actors really do simply enact norms because ‘that was the way of our ancestors’ may be duly undervalued.”

Ortner’s statement is directed at modern, living societies, but her message is even more important for scholars of pre-modern, pre-capitalist societies such as the prehispanic Maya. The influence that tradition exerts over behavior is stronger in societies without commodified labor, time, and land than in the modern experience (Giddens 1995:152-153). Rural contexts are even more conservative, particularly where agents live some distance from the locus of centralized political power (Giddens 1985:196). Though social structure is created and recreated by people’s activities, the people who “came before,” particularly in rural contexts, can be surprisingly powerful constraints on agency, and may contribute to relative long-term stability in social structure.

## OBJECTIVES

This paper has four objectives. First, I describe characteristics of a lineage model that is based on a broad, cross-cultural reading of the ethnographic literature. This reading identifies specific traits and activities that many societies featuring lineages have in common, and is based on a consideration of daily life as well as the accumulated behavioral detritus of several centuries. Second, I discuss material correlates for these lineage characteristics, emphasizing how these correlates would appear in a Late Classic Maya archaeological context. Both day-to-day activities and actions associated with a more long-term perspective

are considered. Third, a case study assesses the degree to which these archaeological correlates can be identified. This case is explored and evaluated using survey and excavation data as indicated by the archaeological correlates of lineage organization outlined above.

Fourth, I provide a description of some of the political and economic correlates and potential consequences of lineage organization. In our own capitalist society, politics, religion, and economy are often treated as exclusive realms of activity and interest; in pre-capitalist societies it does not appear that these aspects of society were delineated to quite the same degree (Giddens 1985).

This paper makes use of classic anthropological literature from the heyday of lineage theory, more recent work on lineage and kinship, and practice-oriented perspectives on group behavior. I hope that this contributes to an increased awareness of what lineages do, as well as emphasizing what “lineage” can contribute to an understanding of the Classic Maya.

#### LINEAGES IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Lineages tend to form in certain environmental and demographic contexts. In Imperial China, for example, lineages developed to protect resources in contexts of competition, uncertainty, and change. Areas only weakly controlled by the Imperial government were settled by lineages (Rankin and Escherick 1990:317). African lineages were often located in areas characterized by a “poverty of habitat,” and a consistent absence of centralized authority (Fortes 1953), particularly in areas of increasing population density (Shipton 1994:356). Collier (1975:73-78) noted that lineages emerged under conditions of moderate land shortage, whereas conditions of land surplus or extreme shortage resulted in competition among nuclear families. An increasing scarcity of resources in conjunction with



inconsistent political control, and perhaps increasingly dense populations, in addition to culturally-specific factors, may lead to lineage formation. But what, exactly, are lineages?

### Lineage Characteristics

First and foremost, lineages are corporate groups that own an inalienable economic resource, usually agricultural land (Fortes 1953:25; Giddens 1995:114; Goody 1961:5; Radcliffe-Brown 1950:41; Shipton 1994:352-356; Watson 1982:594). Members derive benefits from jointly-owned property and resources, and join in collective activities and engage in face-to-face interaction on a regular basis (Ebrey and Watson 1986:5; Fortes 1945:209; Watson 1982:594). Corporate property (or rights to corporate property) is inherited within the lineage (Goody 1961:5), so that land is held in trust by the living for those not yet born (Shipton 1994:349).

Second, regular face-to-face interaction and collective activities lead members to be highly conscious of themselves as a group (Fortes 1953; Goody 1961). A means of group identification is through a common name, sometimes that of the founding ancestor. Lineage names can also be derived from specific places or features on the landscape (Vogt 1976:99).

Third, members of a lineage tend to practice exogamous marriage, and rarely deviate from this pattern (Parkin 1997:19). Freedman (1958:3), for example, notes that Chinese lineages follow the rule of surname exogamy. These “rules” of structural-functionalist theory, however, are more productively thought of as generalities. The acceptability of a marriage is often contested, however, and is structured by culturally specific principles. Thus, the “rule” of exogamy is a guiding principle that may be adhered to or rejected.

Fourth, lineages are internally ranked (Fortes 1953:31). Within lineages, members have differential access to resources based on age, gender, genealogical distance from the

ancestor, or other social criteria (Goody 1961:4-5). Households within the lineage are ranked in relation to other households (Freedman 1958:34), and benefits derived from corporate property can be distributed accordingly. Lower ranked households tend to receive lower qualities and quantities of goods than do lineage heads (e.g., Freedman 1958:127).

Fifth, lineages reckon descent unilineally from a common ancestor. As with other aspects of social identity, descent is contested and negotiable, such that biological descent can be more or less correlated with social genealogy (Carsten 2000; Parkin 1997). The ancestor is typically the founder of the corporate group (Watson 1982:594), the first person who settled an area and cleared the land to create a cultural space (McCall 1995:258-259). Ancestors are in turn revered by the lineage through periodic group ritual, where a large proportion of the lineage membership gathers to celebrate rites of unity (Watson 1982:597).

Death does not end a person's participation in the life and activities of their lineage, but instead initiates a different mode of participation (Freedman 1958:85; Fortes 1976:5; McAnany 1995:162). Certain dead may become ancestors, who continue to look after the living. Elaborate funerary ceremonies expel and transform the deceased from a member of the world of the living into a being that is reincorporated into society in an ancestral and spiritual capacity (Fortes 1976:7). The reincorporation of the dead is made tangible in material objects, such as memorial tablets or shrines and altars, which are placed in the ancestral hall or lineage home (e.g., Chun 1996; Watson 1982). These structures are the material embodiment of the group within which the deceased are reinstated (Fortes 1976:7).

Ancestors are owed a debt for the gift of life and sustenance (Freedman 1958:88). Feasts maintain relationships between the living and ancestors. It is important that the feast

be conducted in the presence of the ancestors and their descendants. All, including those to whom the sacrifice is being made, must share the food (Fortes 1976:10).

In return for ritual upkeep, ancestors can help protect the living members of their lineage against natural and supernatural phenomena (Fortes 1976:13). Generally, an ancestor who is properly tended through feasting and other forms of veneration will help prevent or mitigate various forms of evil. Conversely, ancestors can punish their descendants in cases of neglect (e.g., not ‘feeding’ them) or for behaving in ways that are not consistent with those of the ancestors (Freedman 1958:99; Fortes 1976:13, Vogt 1981:125).

In summary, lineages can be thought of as social groups whose members do, minimally, five things. They own inalienable corporate property, have a group identity, marry out of the group, maintain unequal power relations within the group, and venerate ancestors. The presence of a single characteristic is insufficient to distinguish a lineage. A suite of characteristics more accurately reflects behavior consistent with “lineage,” and helps maintain validity in cross-cultural comparison. As social groups, lineages are at once economic resources and socially constructed and bounded places. Corporate territory creates an affinity of people and place (e.g., Watanabe 1992:96, 165-171). Daily practices include subsistence activities and house construction and maintenance, and are strongly influenced by tradition. Given the relatively coarse temporal resolution and exclusively material data available to archaeologists, however, models derived from sociocultural anthropology require the judicious use of middle range theory to create an appropriate set of archaeological correlates for “lineage.” Material traces of lineage organization should be developed along culturally specific lines.

## Archaeological Correlates of Late Classic Maya Lineages

Corporate Property. Corporate property, especially in densely settled areas, should be identifiable based on the presence of walls (Tourtellot et al. 1996), small rubble piles (Tourtellot and Sabloff 1994), or other boundary markers (Leventhal 1981:197) that served to delineate lands of different lineages across the landscape. Absent boundary markers, areas of difficult terrain or zones without settlement could have been a “no man’s land” (e.g., Fash 1983; Vogt 1969) separating lineage lands. A certain scale of boundary should be expected. Walls or settlement gaps that encompass several house groups are appropriate for a lineage.

Within these boundaries, certain feature classes can be expected. First, the heads of these lineages likely lived in the most elaborate residential unit. This unit in particular would be expected to be the focus of ancestor veneration rituals and the burials of the ancestors themselves within specialized mortuary architecture, such as a shrine. The shrine represents the group’s ancestral claim on the resources located within the corporate boundary.

Agricultural fields, particularly those associated with intensive agricultural practices, should be located near residences within lineage lands (e.g., McAnany 1995). Features such as terraces, raised/drained fields, and water storage features represent the subsistence and economic basis of the group. They also mark capital improvements to the landscape and are indicative of long-term ties to the land.

Lineage Name/Identity. The internal coherence and identity of the group may be expressed architecturally. Though modern Kekchi Maya are not organized in lineages, they are a different form of corporate group (Wilk 1990, 1991). Their “corporateness” may contribute to a better understanding of the lineage as a form of corporate group.

The houses of modern Kekchi Maya corporate groups are highly uniform in proportion and in construction. Group members will aid others in the construction of a house if the materials and proportions do not depart significantly from those used by the remainder of the group (Wilk 1990:38, 1991:189). Similarity of housemound attributes within a lineage territory may be distinct and therefore serve as an indicator of group solidarity and identity. Accordingly, the variation in metric and qualitative aspects of domestic architecture within the corporate territory should be lower than the variation for domestic architecture outside the boundary (González 1998; Pugh 1996).

Exogamy. DNA analysis of a large, statistically significant mortuary population could help identify genetic relationships. Very few such populations exist for the Classic Maya, and the degree to which they may contain viable DNA is highly variable. In any case, social relations that comprised a lineage may or may not have been linked biologically, in that adoption or other means of negotiating members into the group also occur (Fortes 1953; Parkin 1997).

Internal Rank. Within-group inequality may be expressed in the residential units within lineage lands (e.g., Hendon 1991). Lower-ranked member should have smaller houses, including those represented by the hidden universe of non-mounded settlement (e.g., Pyburn 1989; Johnston et al. 1992). Highly ranked lineage members should exhibit privileged access to resources, including larger houses (Vogt 1983:98).

Households of lineage heads should be among the largest buildings in the corporate landholding and include an architecturally distinct burial shrine. A distribution of house size should be unimodal and positively skewed (Figure 1). In other words, a lineage territory would indicate a large house (associated with the lineage head), with a few more houses of

smaller, yet intermediate sizes, followed by even more structures of even smaller dimensions. Lineage would not be suggested if abrupt modes appeared within this distribution (Figure 2), which might argue for the prevalence of social classes (e.g., Haviland 1981, 1992; Kowalewski et al. 1992). The volume of all structures within a territory could be used to assess the rank of houses vis-à-vis one another in the context of single-phase settlement. Residences with higher construction volumes can be interpreted as reflecting higher labor investment and hence higher social rank for the occupants of that house (Vogt 1983:98).

Ancestor Veneration. Practices of ancestor veneration should be manifest in the form of a specific shrine, most likely located in the house or residential unit of the lineage head (Fortes 1976:7; Freedman 1958:85; Leventhal 1983; Tozzer 1941:130,131). The shrine represents the lineage claim on nearby corporate resources. Becker's (1971, 1999) Tikal Plaza Plan 2 (PP2), a group consisting of three or more structures with a shrine or small pyramid on the east side of the plaza, is an example of a potential house of a lineage head. As the shrine is part of the material representation of the ancestors, and ancestors are typically celebrated in association with their symbol, artifacts associated with feasting and collective lineage ritual should be found in association with the residential group containing the shrine (Brown 2001:383-384).

The presence of the shrine is extremely significant, as the ethnohistorically-known Maya of Yucatán, buried people of "high esteem" in shrines. Lower-ranked individuals were buried "inside or in the rear of their houses" (Tozzer 1941:130, 131). If this practice is consistent through the Late Classic period, as Haviland (1997:3) and Gillespie (2000:473) suggest, ancestors would have been buried in a lineage's shrine (e.g., Goldstein 1981; Saxe

1970). The burials in this shrine may be distinctive compared to burials from beneath house floors or in other parts of the lineage territory.

Evidence of feasting, as a means of celebrating ancestors as well as recreating group identity and unity, would be present in midden deposits in the house of the lineage head. Feasting would be represented by higher proportions of vessel forms associated with preparing and serving large quantities of food (Brown 2001). Bowls and plates would be expected to occur with greater frequency than in the ceramic assemblages associated with other residential groups (Table 1; e.g., Fox 1996:490-491; Hayden 2001:Table 2.1; Hendon 1991; LeCount 2001). The courtyard of this house should be of appropriate size and accessibility to all members of the lineage.

Thus, four of five lineage characteristics are archaeologically visible (Table 2). By testing for these characteristics, archaeologists should be able to identify the presence of Late Classic Maya lineages on the landscape. A case study will serve to illustrate the identification of these characteristics in a rural settlement context in what is now northwestern Belize.

#### THE BARBA TERRITORY: AN EXAMPLE OF A LATE CLASSIC MAYA LINEAGE

The area illustrating an archaeologically described lineage is the Barba Territory, a .5-km<sup>2</sup> area (Figure 3) located in northwestern Belize. This area lies atop an escarpment rising 100 m above the alluvial plain to the east. The nearest center, Dos Hombres, is 2.5 km to the southeast, down the escarpment and across the Río Bravo River. The Barba Territory is bounded on the north, east, south, and west by rough, steep terrain, creating gaps in the settlement between 200 and 400 m wide. No obvious gap was located to the southwest. If

these gaps represent boundaries, some sort of perishable or other boundary may have existed to the southwest (e.g., Cameron 1998; Lawrence 1996; Pellow 1996).

The terrain here is crested by limestone hills broken by steep drainage channels. Soils are less than 30 cm deep and slopes are not conducive to agricultural production, but the inhabitants of this area were able to mitigate the steepness of a few hillslopes and drainage channels through the construction of terraces. In the absence of terracing, the slopes of the drainage surfaces in Figure 4 would have been between seven and nine degrees. After terracing the slope in these drainage surfaces is between one and three degrees (Beach et al. 1999; O'Neal 1999). The drainage to the south and east of the Barba Group contains four footslope and 18 cross-channel terraces. The construction and maintenance of terraces represents a large proportion of the corporate base of the group and a long-term commitment to this locality. Terraces also help regulate soil moisture, allowing for the production of an extra crop each year and an increase in the overall annual yield (Beach et al. 1999; Dunning and Beach 1994; Turner 1979; Wilken 1987).

Group identity, reflected by a relatively high degree of homogeneity in domestic architecture, can be assessed statistically by examining metric measurements of housemounds within a lineage territory and comparing them to similar measurements of housemounds outside that territory. Rather than measuring central tendency and comparing means, the issue here is a tight range of variation between populations, so a comparison of variance is more appropriate. Levene's test determines whether the variance between two samples is due to chance (Conover 1999). In addition, the likelihood that the mounds come from the same population can be assessed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) procedure tests the likelihood that the measurements came from the same population (Conover 1999:429-



430). Since unexcavated mounds may not reflect underlying architecture, an alpha of .10 is used.

The results for mound length are encouraging. Levene's test indicates that the difference in variance of mound length for the Barba sample and that of a sample collected outside (and adjacent to) the Barba territory is significantly different (Table 3). The K-S test yields similar results (Table 4).

The dimension of length for housemounds is substantially less variable for the mounds in the Barba Territory than it is for other mounds outside the boundary. Levene's test indicates that this difference is most likely the result of deliberate action rather than chance. This is further emphasized by the result of the K-S test, which indicates that the measurements come from two distinct populations. The use of excavated mounds would be preferable, and results would be more conclusive, but the results of this analysis still suggest that meaningful social distinctions were expressed in domestic architecture.

A plot of house volume in this area (Figure 5) indicates that one house stands out as having the highest volume (398 m<sup>3</sup>). Three others are of intermediate size (179 m<sup>3</sup>, 147 m<sup>3</sup>, and 113 m<sup>3</sup>) but most are very small (< 40 m<sup>3</sup>). The largest house also supports the only shrine in the area, and its layout is consistent with that of a Plaza Plan 2 residential unit (Figure 4) (Becker 1971, 1999). This house, called the Barba Group, is interpreted as being the house of the lineage head.

Ancestor veneration is indicated by two burials within the shrine. The first was highly deteriorated, and neither age nor sex could be estimated. A single, red-slipped bowl was found interred with this individual, however, and stylistically dates to about AD 650-700 (Fred Valdez, personal communication 1998). The second burial consisted of a prepared

chamber that was dug out of the bedrock. The deceased was a robust adult male, age 50+, buried in a flexed position (Frank and Julie Saul, personal communication 2002), and accompanied by five whole ceramic vessels. These include a Teotihuacan-style Japon Resist tripod cylinder, a polychrome ocellated turkey, and a shell-shaped vessel with the head, shoulders, and arms of a man emerging from the rim (Figure 6). These vessels appear to date to the late facet of the Early Classic (AD 450-550; Fred Valdez, Jr., personal communication 1998). The characteristics of this burial are consistent with what would be expected from that of a lineage founder (e.g., McCall 1995).

The pyramid is an important structure in Classic Maya politico-ritual expression. McAnany notes that pyramids “impart a notion of sacralization of place in that the construction of an artificial hill or *wits* converts a portion of the built environment into purely ritual space” (1998:279). Pyramids also sanctify the political power of rulers through the construction of this sacred space (Schele and Freidel 1990:72-73). Though the Barba Group shrine is much smaller than a royal pyramid and is located far from the monumental center of a major site, this shrine is an expression of local politico-religious power that marks the space of the group while contributing to the reproduction of within-group inequality.

Ancestor veneration is further indicated by the ceramics. Middens from three groups in the Barba Territory were tested, and formal analysis of ceramics indicated the presence of plates, bowls and jars. Initial analysis of the numbers of vessels represented indicates that the number of food serving and preparation vessels in the Barba Group differs dramatically from those in another group (Table 4). More than twice as many serving and prep vessels per storage vessel were found at the group containing the shrine (Barba) than at the groups lacking a shrine. This is in line with the ceramic counts at other Maya areas where feasting

has been discovered (Fox 1996:490-491; LeCount 2001:Table 3). The periodic reunion of the social group in the house where the ancestors are buried underlines the importance of tradition in the continuous production and reproduction of group social structure.

In sum, the Barba Territory fits the archaeological correlates for what may be expected of a Late Classic Maya lineage. Corporate territory seems to be topographically bounded on at least three sides, and evidence of intensive agriculture exists within the proposed territory. The proximity of the terrace complex to the house of the lineage head indicates that the practice of subsistence activities may have been a primary locus of face-to-face interaction among the population that lived here during the Late Classic. Structures are highly similar within the territory when compared to those outside. As part of day-to-day activity, individuals would have participated in the building and maintenance of the houses of fellow group members. The Barba Territory also appears to have been occupied by an internally ranked social group. The association of the largest house with the shrine is no accident; this is the material expression of legitimacy, grounded in tradition, that helps perpetuate relations of inequality along multiple lines (including gender) within the group. Finally, the shrine is used as the interment location for certain individuals, and feasting appears to have been conducted. The periodic conduct of collective ritual at the place where the ancestors are buried was an important part of the reproduction of social structure.

The presence of a single lineage raises the question of whether other lineages may have emerged in northwestern Belize during the Late Classic. At least two and as many as seven lineages have been identified in this area to date (Hageman and Lohse 2003; Hageman and Rich 2001). If conditions of resource scarcity due to environmental degradation (e.g., Rice and Rice 1980), weak or inconsistent political centralization (Ball and Taschek 1991;

Fox and Cook 1996), and increasing population density (Santley 1990) are widely recognized as being present in the Late Classic and earlier periods, then lineages may have emerged or become more prominent in similar areas in other parts of the Maya Lowlands.

#### ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF LINEAGE PRESENCE

An understanding of the presence or absence of lineages in a specific area can potentially inform larger questions of resource availability, political centralization, and social instability. This is particularly true of rural areas, which have traditionally been investigated to lesser degrees in Maya archaeology than large site centers. By focusing on elites living in site centers, archaeologists may have only sampled the uppermost 2% of the Late Classic population (Adams and Smith 1981:338; Sanders 1992:147). This sample is not representative of Maya settlement as a whole due to qualitative differences between urban and rural economic and political practices (e.g., Giddens 1995). Rural areas are more likely to have supported lineages than zones located near monumental precincts. Comparative data on the behavior of rural lineages in other parts of the world may illustrate potential economic and political relationships that may have been overlooked in the Classic period Maya Lowlands.

Ancestors and the corporate nature of the lineage form traditional axes along which products and labor of the lineage are distributed and organized. Lineages can often more effectively resist and overcome the effects of taxation and tribute than can individual households or other social groups, particularly if the lineage head is of high social rank, and inhibit the ability of centralized government to act locally (Freedman 1958; Gates 1996:107).

Given the association between the presence of lineages and resource scarcity and political instability, it is conceivable that lineages may have come into being in the wake of

major wars between sites, particularly the at the defeated site. Lineages would also effectively slow a return to centralized power, lengthening a recovery from defeat. Tikal, for example, experienced a “hiatus” between AD 562 and AD 695 after its defeat by Caracol (Houston 1987), possibly in allegiance with Calakmul (Martin and Grube 2000:39). If lineages crystallized near Tikal in the wake of this defeat, they may have also later contributed to difficulties experienced by subsequent rulers in their efforts at centralizing power. Unfortunately, little is known from the epigraphic record dating to this period at Tikal (Martin and Grube 2000:40-43).

These scenarios are not meant to suggest what actually occurred during the hiatus at Tikal, but are instead merely intended to indicate the potential role that lineages might have played on the larger political landscape, if they are found to have emerged at those times. The study of lineages in rural settings may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Late Classic political and economic process. This relates directly to the conception of lineage as land, power, tradition, and group solidarity in contexts of resource scarcity and political instability. Currently, epigraphic studies have answered many questions regarding the changing political fortunes of Maya sites. These studies are, in turn, creating new questions about political and economic processes, the answers to which may not be found in ancient Maya texts. Future investigation of hinterland areas and a better understanding of the social organization of rural populations may answer these new questions.

## CONCLUSION

The importance of understanding rural social organization complements the large body of data available on site centers, particularly epigraphic data. Texts do not tell all, but

instead leave gaps that can be filled through investigations focusing on the organization of rural Maya society. The Barba Territory represents a case of a rural social group evincing practices that are in line with what would be expected from a lineage: A corporate territory including 32 agricultural terraces was set off from nearby settlement; the mounds within this territory appear to reflect the expression of a group identity; the houses within this territory are indicative of the creation and maintenance of ranking within the territory; and ancestor veneration is strongly indicated through the presence of a shrine, burials within the shrine, and the ceramic assemblage found in association with the shrine. By incorporating elements of practice theory with insights of classic structural-functionalism, particularly in consideration of the requirements dictated by archaeological data, the concept of lineage can be useful in exploring and understanding the social organization of the Classic period Maya. Lineages are likely to have formed in areas where resources were scarce, and where centralized control was weak or absent. The lineage occupying the Barba Territory coalesced in a resource-poor area, on the edge of a steep escarpment and on the opposite side of the river from Dos Hombres, some 2.5 km distant. This rural zone is more likely to have supported people whose day-to-day activities are influenced by tradition (e.g., Giddens 1985, 1995). These activities revolved around agricultural land, the production and reproduction of the group and its identity, and the maintenance of institutionalized inequality within the group. The impact of tradition does not only constrain or enable daily activity, but it is reflected in the degree to which it transforms the landscape in the creation of a material axis about which the activities of the lineage revolve. As I have shown, the careful definition and operationalization of an ethnographically-based lineage model can be a positive contribution to the reconstruction of past societies where these conditions obtain. Though the lineage was

once largely discounted as a viable means of modeling social organization, this study adds to the growing body of work evincing the continued usefulness of this model.

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Figure 1. Hypothesized distribution of structure size in a lineage territory.

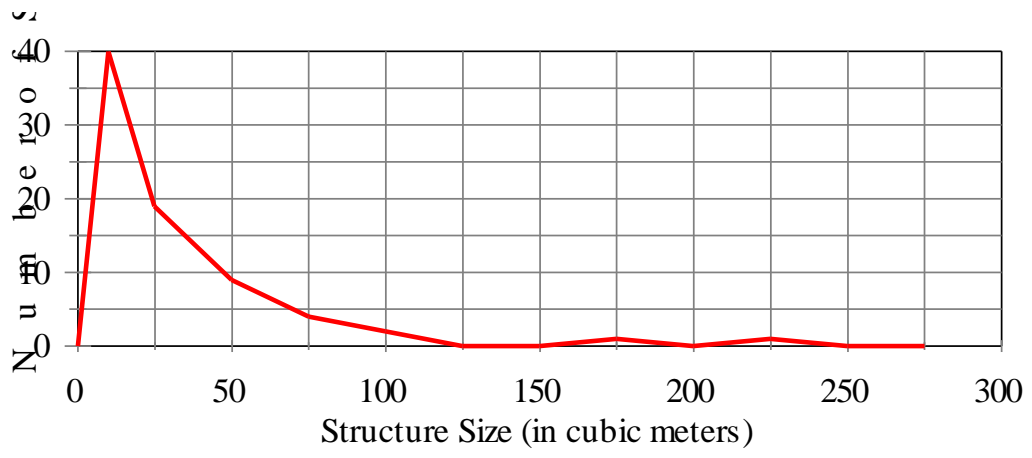
Figure 2. Hypothesized distribution of structure size for a zone characterized by three social classes.

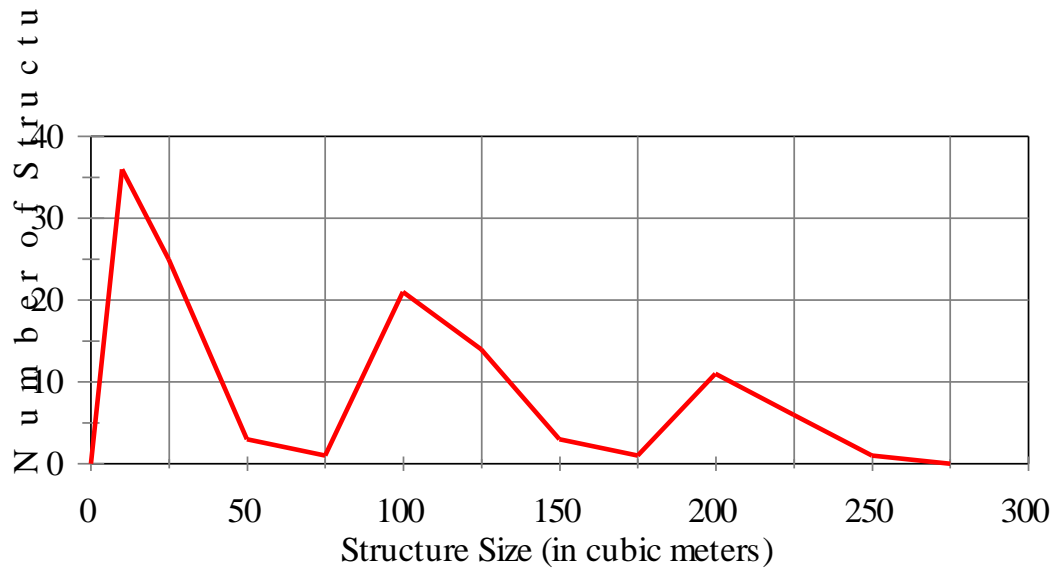
Figure 3. The Barba Territory, showing locations of courtyard groups mentioned in the text.

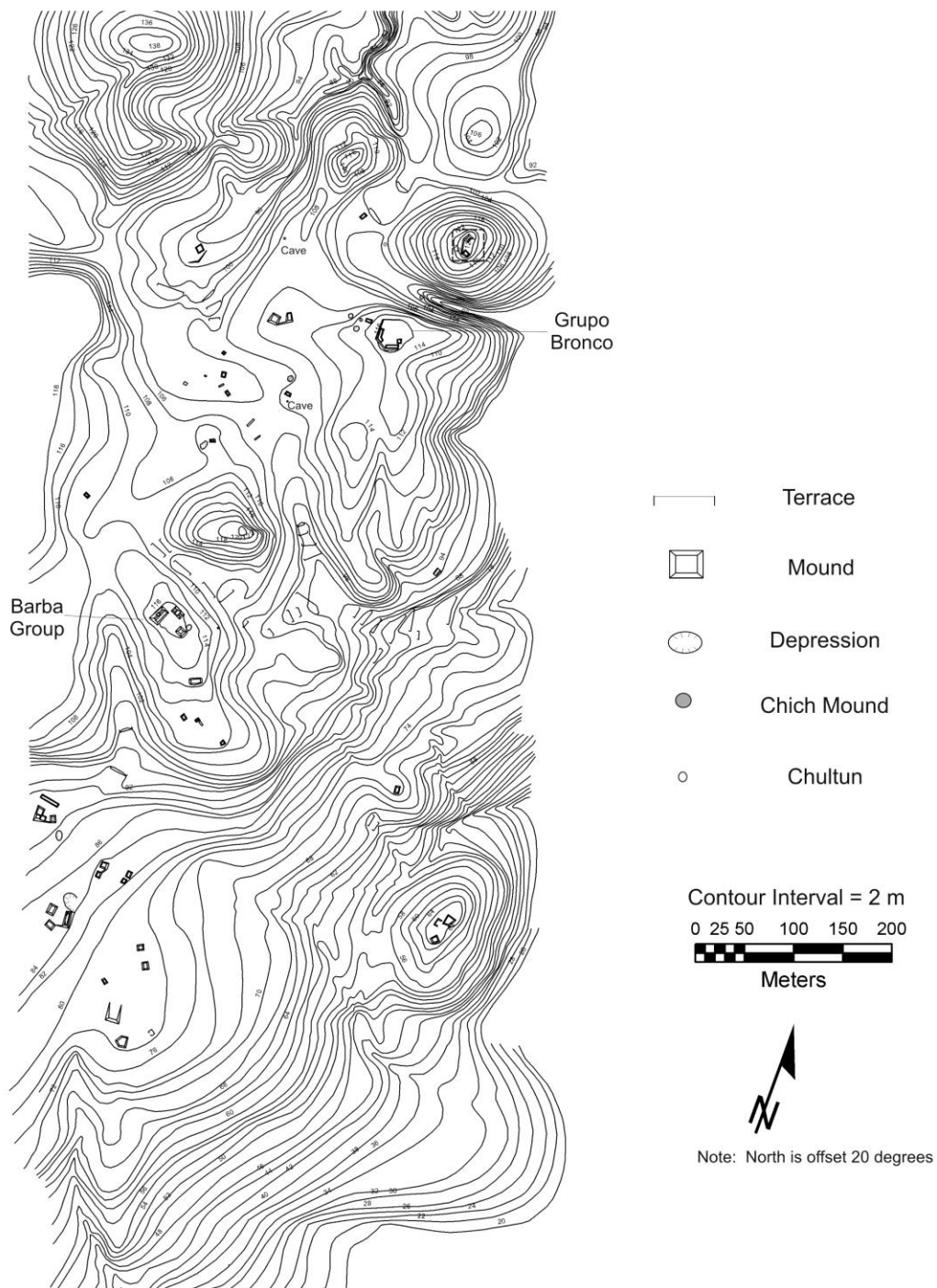
Figure 4. The Barba Group and its associated terrace complex.

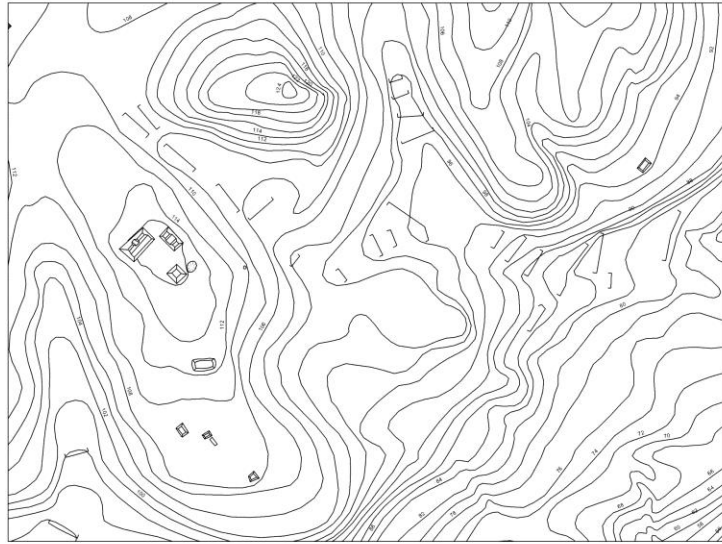
Figure 5. Frequency distribution of house volume, Barba Territory

Figure 6. Vessels recovered from burial in Barba Group shrine. Vessel at upper right has a rim diameter of 17.5 cm, while vessel at lower left has a rim diameter of 8.5 cm. The cylinder at the upper left is 25.2 cm tall.



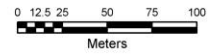






-  Terrace
-  Mound
-  Depression
-  Chultun

Contour Interval = 2 m



Note: North is offset 20 degrees



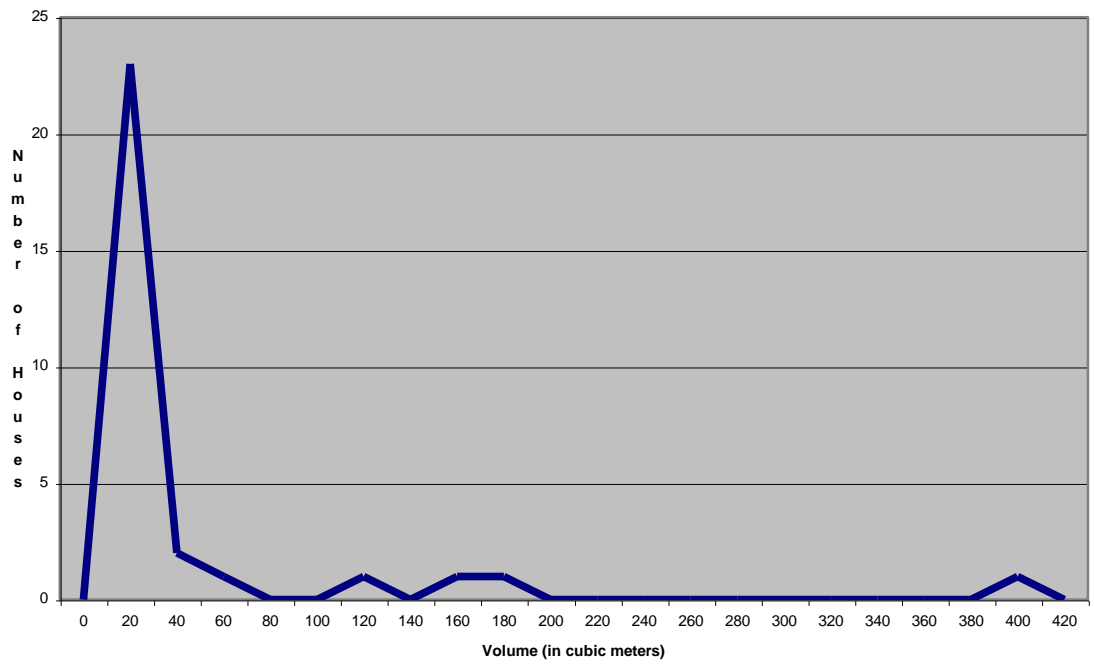


Table 1. Percentage composition of ceramic assemblages recovered from areas associated with ancient feasting and areas believed not to have been loci of feasting. Xunantunich Group D and the Paco 15 ballcourt both have a much larger proportion of bowls than areas where evidence of feasting is absent.

	Xunantunich Group D— contains shrine; locus of feasting (after LeCount 2001:Table 3) %	Paco 15 Ballcourt— locus of feasting (after Fox 1996:Fig 6) *Fox reports bottles, not plates. Bottles are listed here. %	Xunantunich Plazuelas —no shrine; feasting did not occur (after LeCount 2001:Table 3) %
Plates:	6.64	5.36*	3.94
Bowls:	65.81	58.9	46.46
Total food preparation and serving vessels:	<b>72.45</b>	<b>64.26</b>	<b>50.4</b>
Jars:	<b>26.5</b>	<b>27.7</b>	<b>48.82</b>

Table 2. Lineage Characteristics and their Late Classic Lowland Maya Correlates

<b>Lineage Characteristic</b>	<b>Archaeological Correlate</b>
Corporate	Boundaries or settlement 'gaps'
Named	Relatively homogeneous architecture
Exogamous	DNA or teeth from burials
Internally Ranked	Architectural volume
Ancestor Veneration	Ceramics, shrine present w/ burials

Table 3. Result of Levene's Test

	F- value	Significance	Difference due to chance?
Levene result for Barba/Comparative Sample	7.425	.01	No

Table 4. Result of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	Maximum Difference	Probability	Significantly Different?
K-S result for Barba/Comparative Sample	7.425	.10	Yes

Table 5. Percentage composition of ceramic assemblages recovered from areas associated with ancient feasting and areas believed not to have been loci of feasting. Grupo Barba has a much larger proportion of bowls than areas where evidence of feasting is thought to be absent. Compare with percentages from Table 1. (see Figure 3 for locations of these residences)

	Grupo Barba— contains shrine; locus of feasting	Grupo Bronco—no shrine; feasting not thought to occur here
	%	%
Plates:	8.87	7.84
Bowls:	61.29	45.10
Total food preparation and serving vessels:	<b>70.16</b>	<b>52.94</b>
Jars:	<b>29.84</b>	<b>47.06</b>