Numerous hieroglyphic texts indicate that Kaloomte’ lords had regional control over larger territories than a typical Ajaw. The political nature of the Kaloomte’ title as a designation of a high king with vassal states under his control is well established. A number of narratives refer to the violent means by which rulers and their communities were brought under the authority of a Kaloomte’. The implication is that these vassal states had to provide some form of tribute or access to resources or trade routes. This chapter is an overview of the first Kaloomte’ lords and their priestly and military attributes related to Tlaloc.

The Kaloomte’ title was phonetically deciphered by David Stuart and his collaborators (1989) based on a syllabic rendering of the title on Copán Stela 19. The logograph of the title incorporates the axe of Chahk (figure 4.1a), and Late Classic examples feature an actual portrait of Chahk holding a flint axe over his ear while in the act of throwing this weapon (figure 4.1b, 4.1c). There has been much discussion about the value of the root kal and its possible meanings related to the function of Chahk’s axe, from splitting trees to clearing weeds. Simply because a portrait of Chahk is used to represent the word kal in Late Classic examples, it does not necessarily follow that the title identifies the holder of the title as an axe-throwing thunderbolt god. Given that the etymology of the name is still unclear (as is the case with most titles), it is necessary to examine the contexts in which the title occurs and the men and
women who held this office to better understand its nature. It is my contention that a defining feature of the Kaloomte’ lords and ladies was their role as high priests and priestesses of the Tlaloc cult.

**THE FIRST KALOOMTE’ LORD OF THE KAANUL POLITY**

A great deal of information about Early Classic history is gleaned from retrospective texts written in the Late Classic. Such examples are seen at Palenque and Yaxchilán, where several Late Classic narratives on temple panels and lintels provide Early Classic king lists. Some of Tikal’s history has been recovered from king lists painted on pottery vessels (Martin and Grube 2008; Grube 2016). The histories of smaller sites where monumental sculptures are limited have also been recovered from painted texts, such as Motul de San José. The retrospective narratives on monuments we rely on to reconstruct Early Classic histories are very limited for the Kaanul polity that was first centered at Dzibanché and then at Calakmul, in part because their monuments were made of soft limestone and are badly eroded (Martin and Grube 2008). Fortunately, twelve Late Classic vessels refer to a series of early Kaanul kings (Robicsek and Hales 1981:97–100; Martin 1997, 2017; Martin and Beliaev 2017). Although there are issues with some of the dates and syntax, the order of rulers remains the same on all the vessels. Ruler 2 was the first Kaanul lord to carry the Kaloomte’ title, and he is consistently named with this title on ten of the vessels. Despite lacking Long Count dates for most of these kings, tentatively reconstructed dates between AD 128 and AD 232 have been established for this first Kaloomte’ king based on average life spans for rulers (Martin 2017). Evidence for such an early period contact with Teotihuacán is seen at Altun Ha, where the third-century royal Tomb F-8/1 included 23 pieces of Teotihuacán-style pottery and 248 Pachuca obsidian objects, including projectile points and...
figurines, in addition to a massive offering of chert debitage (8,100 pieces), chert tools, a jade pendant, jade beads, *Spondylus* shells, five puma teeth, and two dog teeth (Pendergast 2003).

The most complete narrative concerning Kaanul rulers (K6751) refers to a sequence of nineteen kings. While Ruler 2 is named as a holy lord of Kaanul and a Kaloomte’ on this vessel, the next sixteen rulers are only named as holy Kaanul lords. The dynastic list then ends with Ruler 19, who like Ruler 2 is named as both a holy lord of Kaanul and a Kaloomte’. While it is possible that the intervening kings between Ruler 2 and Ruler 19 were not Kaloomte’ lords, it is far more likely that the scribe of the narrative simply named the first king to have the Kaloomte’ title and then included the title in the name of Ruler 19 to indicate that all the intervening kings were also Kaloomte’ lords. Evidence that these Early Classic Kaanul kings were Kaloomte’ lords is seen on Dzibanché Lintel 3, which records the accession of Ruler 16 (K’ahk’ Ti’ Ch’ich’) into the office of Kaloomte’ in AD 550 (Martin 2005, 2017; Martin and Beliaev 2017). In addition to these Early Classic kings, references to later Kaanul kings with this title, such as Yuknoom Ch’een (accession AD 636), are found in many secondary sites like La Corona, Uxul, and Cancuén (Martin 2005; Martin and Velásquez 2016). There are no data to indicate when the Kaanul lords were first initiated into the Tlaloc cult or how Ruler 2 attained the status of Kaloomte’. As will be discussed below, the Copán ruler K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ attained his status in the Tlaloc cult through a pilgrimage to Teotihuacán; therefore it is possible that Ruler 2 also made such a journey. It is conceivable that the Altun Ha ruler of Tomb F-8/1 journeyed to Teotihuacán for a similar validation and that the Pachuca obsidian from his interment was part of the insignia he received.

The first noted involvement of Kaanul polity females in the Tlaloc cult is documented on La Corona Panel 6. La Corona was a small site 200 km southwest of Dzibanché that had a long history of close interaction with the Kaloomte’ lords of the Kaanul polity. Simon Martin (2008) noted that the looted panel documents the arrival of Kaanul females at the La Corona court in AD 520, AD 679, and AD 721. Each woman was the daughter of the reigning Kaanul king, and each had been sent to La Corona to become the wife of its ruling lord. The scene on the panel illustrates two palanquins. The left palanquin takes the form of a temple decorated with the Waterlily Serpent. Within its enclosure stands a female holding a K’awiil scepter. The text that frames her indicates that she is Lady Ix Ti’kanal Ajaw, the third of the Kaanul polity princesses. The enclosure of the right palanquin is formed by a giant feline with Waxaklajuun Ub’aah Kan traits (see figure 3.20). The feline carries
a Black Witch Moth Tlaloc on its back. The female on this palanquin holds an incense bag and the hooked scepter associated with Tlaloc. She wears a Tlaloc headdress with the Ch’ajom element and the Ch’ajom ponytail. She also wears an owl-like pendant and an obsidian earring with the sacrificed heart motif at its tip. The text that frames this Tlaloc priestess identifies her as the first Kaanul princess Lady Nah Ek, who was the daughter of the Kaanul king Tuun K’ab Hix. Who initiated Lady Nah Ek into the Tlaloc cult is unknown, but in all likelihood it was her father.

TIKAL AND THE KALOOMTE’ FOLIATED JAGUAR

Tikal Stela 31 is an Early Classic monument that was found broken and cached in Structure 5D-33-2nd. The stela is missing its lower section; consequently, portions of its narrative are incomplete, but what remains is in pristine condition. Stela 31 records important events in the life of the Tikal king Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II, who acceded to the throne on 8.18.15.11.0 3 Ajaw 13 Sak (November 27, AD 411) and who was the sixteenth king in the Tikal succession. The front of the stela illustrates Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II wearing an elaborate costume (figure 4.2). The narrative begins on the back of the monument with the 9.0.10.0.0 Period Ending (October 19, AD 445) and recites a long list of Maya deities who were honored by Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II on this occasion. It is likely that this is the event depicted on the front of the stela. The narrative then moves back in time to relate the Period Endings of three earlier Tikal rulers. Each of these three Period Ending statements begins with an introductory phrase and ends with a reference to where the Period Ending occurred (Stuart and Houston 1994). The section of the text that refers to the first Period Ending is damaged, but the second and third Period Endings are complete. They give the introductory phrase, the name of the Tikal ruler, the tzolk’in date of the Period Ending, the verb of the Period Ending, a phrase indicating what Period Ending it was, and the place name. These are the 8.14.0.0.0 Period Ending (AD 317) of the ruler Unen Bahlam (the twelfth Tikal ruler) and the 8.17.0.0.0 Period Ending (AD 376) of the ruler Chak Tok Ich’aak I (the fourteenth Tikal ruler).

Regarding the first Period Ending statement, the introductory phrase is intact, but the name of the ruler and the Period Ending information is completely damaged. The next section contains a nominal phrase composed of the name Foliated Jaguar, the Kaloomte’ title, and the location of the Period Ending event. Foliated Jaguar is merely a nickname. His nominal phrase is composed of a jaguar wearing a headdress that is intimately related to the
Tlaloc cult (this type of headdress and its relationship to the Tlaloc cult will be discussed below and in chapter 5). Despite the fact that the Kaloomte’ Foliated Jaguar does not appear anywhere else in the Tikal corpus, some researchers have concluded that he was a Tikal ruler who performed this Period Ending. This seems very unlikely, given that the names of the other two rulers appear right after the introductory phrase and not at the end of the Period Ending statements. Who, then, might have performed this first Period Ending? The logical answer is the eleventh Tikal king, who preceded Unen Bahlam. That happens to be Sihyaj Chan K’awiil I. The importance of this ruler to the Stela 31 narrative is demonstrated on the front of Stela 31, where Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II wears a headdress that spells out Sihyaj Chan K’awiil I’s name. In other words, he has taken on the guise of his namesake. Further evidence that Sihyaj Chan K’awiil I was a particularly important Early Classic king is demonstrated on the Late Classic vessel K4679, where he begins a list of three Early Classic kings. Other references to Sihyaj Chan K’awiil I are rare, but he is featured on a small stela from El Encanto. Although the monument is badly eroded, it records an event by Sihyaj Chan K’awiil I that occurred sometime between AD 305 and AD 308 (Martin 2000). This time frame strongly suggests that the first Period Ending on Stela 31 was 8.13.0.0.0 9 Ajaw 3 Sak (December 14, AD 297) and that it was performed by Sihyaj Chan K’awiil I.

Figure 4.2. Tikal Stela 31 front (drawing after Christopher Jones)
Several Late Classic narratives at Palenque, Yaxchilán, and Piedras Negras focus on the Early Classic king who was first initiated into the Tlaloc cult (see below and chapter 5). It is highly probable that Sihyaj Chan K’awiil I was the first ruler at Tikal to acquire this status and that the Kaloomte’ who initiated him was Foliated Jaguar. I suspect that the missing glyphs that preceded Foliated Jaguar’s name detailed this initiation or alluded to it, and that is why he is mentioned in this Period Ending text.

TIKAL AND THE KALOOMTE’ SIHYAJ K’AHK’

Competition between Tikal and the Kaanul polity has been identified as a key factor in many of the military conflicts of the Classic period, but the first major Tikal war event involving a Kaloomte’ that is documented in surviving texts was not with the Kaanul polity but rather with a foreigner named Sihyaj K’ahk’ who carried this title (Stuart 2000a). Following the 8.17.0.0.0 Period Ending of Chak Tok Ich’aak I, the Stela 31 narrative moves forward to the arrival of Sihyaj K’ahk’ at Tikal on January 16, AD 378, and the death of Chak Tok Ich’aak I on the same day. Most researchers have concurred with Stuart’s conclusion that Chak Tok Ich’aak I was killed by Sihyaj K’ahk’. At this point in time, Chak Tok Ich’aak I had been on the Tikal throne for eighteen years. Other hieroglyphic inscriptions at Tikal, El Perú, Uaxactún, Bejucal, Naachtún, and Homul-La Sufricaya also record historical events concerning Sihyaj K’ahk’ and another Kaloomte’ by the name of Spearthrower Owl, who was Sihyaj K’ahk’s apparent ally (Stuart 2000a, 2004a, 2004b, 2014; Martin 2003; Braswell 2003; Estrada-Belili et al. 2009).

The nominal phrase of Sihyaj K’ahk’ is composed of a T740 birth sign (sihyaj) and a T122 fire sign (k’ahk’) that can be loosely translated as “born from fire.” His Kaloomte’ title is only prefixed with west in one retrospective text from the Late Classic period (Tikal Burial 116, MT. 34). On Stela 31, he is also called a west K’awiil. It has been proposed that Uaxactún Stela 5 and El Perú Stela 16 are depictions of Sihyaj K’ahk’ (Freidel et al. 2007), but the badly eroded condition of these stelae precludes such an identification. Sihyaj K’ahk’ is named and illustrated on a Late Classic stucco vessel of unknown provenance from the Museo VICAL de Arte Precolombino y Vidrio Moderno in Guatemala City although which of the two figures on this vessel is Sihyaj K’ahk’ is debatable (Beliaev et al. 2017) (figure 4.3). In a format commonly found on Late Classic vessels, two figures are depicted in profile view, and they are separated from one other by caption texts that name them. Both are dressed in Tlaloc regalia. One of the figures is dressed as a warrior carrying a spear, shield, and
incense bag. He wears a bird of prey headdress that I think is likely an owl. The caption text in front of this warrior is composed of the name Sihyaj K’ahk’, the title Ch’ajom, and the toponym Wiinte’naah. It is curious that this nominal phrase does not include Sihyaj K’ahk’s Kaloomte’ title. Although eroded, the second figure wears what seems to be a Waxaklajuun Ub’aah Kan headdress.1 He carries an incense bag and a Waxaklajuun Ub’aah Kan scepter with dramatic fiery scrolls emitting from its mouth. When lords wear Waxaklajuun Ub’aah Kan helmets, they often also carry a scepter in the form of this fire and meteor caterpillar-serpent, such as Piedras Negras Ruler 1 and the Bonampak lord Chan Muwaan.2 This second figure on the VICAL vessel occupies more space than the warrior figure because of the large size of his scepter scrolls, and this is a common convention used in Maya art to emphasize a figure. The caption text in front of him is a nominal phrase that Dmitri Beliaev and his collaborators (2017) have deciphered as either Kuko’m Yohl Ahiin “the heart of the crocodile will be rolled up” or Kupo’m Yohl Ahiin “the heart of the crocodile will be cut.” Such an individual is not known from other inscriptions, but Beliaev and collaborators think Yohl Ahiin may have been the founder of a new Petén lineage under the auspices of Sihyaj K’ahk’.

In standard reading order, the caption text in front of an individual’s face usually names that person, but Beliaev and collaborators (2017) believe that in the case of the Museo VICAL vessel, it is the caption text behind each figure’s back that refers to them. They base their interpretation on the close proximity of the caption texts to the back of the figures. Although their proposal is not unreasonable, their drawing of the scene is somewhat deceptive in that the front fire scroll of the Waxaklajuun Ub’aah Kan scepter is the same distance...
from Yohl Ahiin’s caption text as the back of the warrior figure in the original. I believe the vessel follows standard convention and that Yohl Ahiin is the Waxaklajuun Ub’aah Kan figure and Siyahaj K’ahk’ is the warrior. This topic will be further explored in chapter 5, but for now it is sufficient to say that no matter which figure on the Museo VICAL vessel is Siyahaj K’ahk’, he was depicted dressed in Tlaloc regalia.

The various narratives referring to Siyahaj K’ahk’ do not contain any genealogical information that would shed light on his identity or ethnicity. Most researchers have characterized him as a Teotihuacano or an ethnic Maya with strong Teotihuacán connections. The first chronological event concerning Siyahaj K’ahk’ is recorded on the inscribed bone from Burial 116 (MT34), the tomb of the Late Classic Tikal king Jasaw Chan K’awiil I. It cryptically states that on 9 Manik 10 Xul (8.17.0.15.7 AD 377), Siyahaj K’ahk’, the West Kaloomte’, descended. Although it does not state from where he descended, a parallel text on another inscribed bone from the tomb (MT35) refers to the descent from a structure known as Wiinte’naah, so it is likely that Siyahaj K’ahk’ also descended from such a structure (see below for a discussion of this kind of structure). The act of descending from a structure clearly does not relate to the simple act of exiting a building but likely refers to the conclusion of whatever ceremony the individual underwent within the structure. It is highly probable that this Wiinte’naah descent refers to either Siyahaj K’ahk’s initiation into the Tlaloc cult or his accession as Kaloomte’.

The next recorded event of Siyahaj K’ahk’ is found on El Perú Stela 15. El Perú is a small site that is located 80 km west of Tikal and 8 km north of the San Pedro Mártir River. This river was a major route into the central Petén from the west. Although Stela 15 celebrates the 8.19.0.0.0 11 Ajaw 13 Kayab (March 25, AD 416) Period Ending event of the El Perú king, its narrative also records that thirty-eight years earlier, on 8.17.1.4.12 11 Eb 15 Mak (January 16), Siyahaj K’ahk’ arrived at Tikal (Stuart 2000a:479-480; Freidel et al. 2007). Monuments at Tikal, Uaxactún, and La Sufricaya indicate that eight days later, on 8.17.1.4.12 11 Eb 15 Mak (January 16), Siyahaj K’ahk’ arrived at Tikal (Stuart 2000a, 2014; Estrada-Belí et al. 2009). The narratives indicate that he brought with him a number of deities, including a west Waxaklajuun Ub’aah Kan deity. Presumably, Siyahaj K’ahk’ transported effigies of these gods to Tikal, and it is likely that these deities were thought to have facilitated Siyahaj K’ahk’s subsequent victory over the Tikal king. The texts referring to Siyahaj K’ahk’ are succinct and give no indication of who accompanied him on his trek to Tikal, but it has been assumed that he was accompanied by warriors with the intent of overthrowing the Tikal king.
A badly eroded monument (Stela 24) recently found at Naachtún (65 km north of Tikal) also documents the arrival of Sihyaj K’ahk’ at Tikal:

As the project epigraphers Alfonso Lacadena and Ignacio Cases note, Stela 24 names a local ruler of Naachtun who is said to be the *y-ajaw* or *y-ajawte’* (“vassal,” roughly) of Sihyaj K’ahk’ himself. The inscription references the dates 8.17.1.4.10 9 Ok 13 Mak and 8.17.1.4.11 10 Chuen 14 Mac—two sequential days before the stated arrival of Sihyaj K’ahk’ to Tikal on 8.17.1.4.12 11 Eb 15 Mac. One might surmise that this indicates Sihyaj K’ahk’s actual presence at Naachtún as he was making his way to Tikal, but it should be cautioned that the text merely states a political relationship, not an itinerary. This is itself important, for the inscription might well imply that Sihyaj K’ahk’ had some sort of political infrastructure in place in the Peten *before* his arrival at Tikal. (Stuart 2014)

While it is difficult to know what local Petén lords were supporters of Sihyaj K’ahk’ prior to his arrival at Tikal, Stuart makes an excellent point. It is likely that there was a good deal of political machinations and collusions beforehand. In addition, the presence of Teotihuacán influence in the Petén prior to Sihyaj K’ahk’ actions is well documented.

According to the narrative on Tikal Stela 31, a year and ten months after the death of Chak Tok Ich’aak I, a new king named Yax Nuun Ahiin I took the Tikal throne under the authority of Sihyaj K’ahk’. Yax Nuun Ahiin I is specifically referred to as the son of Spearthrower Owl and the vassal of Sihyaj K’ahk’. The Tikal Marcador text also notes that a secondary Tikal lord was also a vassal of Sihyaj K’ahk’. References to Sihyaj K’ahk’ were not limited to Tikal, Naachtún, and El Perú. A Bejucal stela documents the 8.17.4.16.18 11 Etz’nab 1 Yaxk’in (September 3, AD 381) accession and the 8.17.17.0.0 11 Ajaw 3 Sek (July 24, AD 393) minor Period Ending event of an El Zotz/Bejucal lord and notes that he was a vassal of Sihyaj K’ahk’ (Schele and Grube 1994; Houston 2008). El Zotz is 20 km due west of Tikal, on the route between El Perú and Tikal. Sihyaj K’ahk’s presence is also recorded at Uaxactún, where he performed a Period Ending on 8.18.0.0.0 12 Ajaw 8 Zotz (July 8, AD 396) with the Uaxactún ruler. Uaxactún is located 20 km north of Tikal. The vassal statements referring to Sihyaj K’ahk’ suggest that the Kaloomte’ title designates a politically superior lord, and he has been characterized as the high king of the region (Stuart 2000a, 2004b; Martin 2003; Martin and Grube 2008). The corpus of hieroglyphic texts records no activities for Sihyaj K’ahk’ after the AD 396 Period Ending, and no death date for him has survived. Whether he remained in the Petén region or withdrew is not known.
THE KALOOMTE’ SPEARTHROWER OWL

A number of Early Classic inscriptions refer to an individual nicknamed Spearthrower Owl (Stuart 2000a:483; Martin and Grube 2008:31; Nielsen 2003; Nielsen and Helmke 2008). Although no illustrations of Spearthrower Owl have been positively identified, there are several possibilities, like a stucco head that was cached with the Tikal Marcador sculpture. On Tikal Stela 18, Yax Nuun Ahiin I wears an ancestral effigy belt assemblage that may be a portrait of his father. He also carries a rectangular shield emblazoned with the portrait of an individual dressed as Tlaloc on Stela 31. It is conceivable that this Tlaloc impersonator is Spearthrower Owl.

Chronologically, the first noted event related to Spearthrower Owl is his accession into rulership on 8.16.17.9.0 11 Ajaw 3 Wayeb (May 5, 374 AD). He is said to be a Jo’Tinam Witz Kaloomte’ and the fourth ruler in the succession. His accession as ruler is in contrast to Siyaj K’ahk’, who is only ever named as a Kaloomte’. The narratives concerning Spearthrower Owl do not relate his birth date, his parentage, the name of his wife, or the birth date of his son Yax Nuun Ahiin I, much less where these events occurred. The narrative on Tikal Stela 31 indicates that Yax Nuun Ayiin I took the throne on September 13, AD 379, and was subsequently succeeded by his son Siyaj Chan K’awiil II on November 27, AD 411. Tikal Stela 31 records the death of Spearthrower Owl on 9.0.3.9.18 12 Etz’nab 11 Sip (June 11, AD 439), sixty-five years after his own accession and well into the Tikal reign of his grandson. An inscription on a looted earring possibly from Río Azul names a Maya lord as the vassal of Spearthrower Owl, as does the Early Classic stucco vessel K7538.

A primary source of information on Spearthrower Owl is the narrative on the Tikal Marcador sculpture, an Early Classic limestone monument that was recovered from a talud-tablero platform known as Structure Sub-4B, Group 6C-XVI (Fialko 1988; Laporte and Fialko 1990). Although carved from one piece of stone, the monument can be divided into four sections: a disc decorated with a feathered medallion, a sphere, feathers, and a column base (figure 4.4). A similar type of stone sculpture was found in the La Ventilla group at Teotihuacán, but this sculpture is composed of four separate pieces of stone fitted together (Arroyo de Anda 1963). Such an object is also illustrated in a Teotihuacán mural depicting a ball game. Fragments of murals within Tikal Group 6C-XVI also feature ball games; thus, the Marcador has been characterized as a ballcourt marker (Fialko 1988). It has also been interpreted to be an effigy of a war banner (Freidel et al. 1993:299; Schele and Grube 1994). Its specific function is discussed below.
The narrative of the Marcador begins on the column base with an Initial Series Long Count date and a Supplementary Series that refers to the arrival of Sihyaj K’ahk’ at Tikal (AD 378), and it notes that this event was “witnessed” (yitah) by Spearthrower Owl (Stuart 2000a:483, 508). It is argued that the action of yitah refers not to the viewing of an event but rather to sanctioning or endorsing it. Although the meaning of some of the glyphs is opaque, the text indicates that Sihyaj K’ahk’ arrived with a number of gods, including a west Waxaklajuun Ub’aah Kan. The narrative continues on the rear of the column and moves back in time to the accession of Spearthrower Owl (AD 374), then joins this event to the dedication of the Marcador sculpture on 8.18.17.14. 9 12 Muluk 12 K’ank’in (January 24, AD 414). This dedication occurred during the reign of Spearthrower Owl’s grandson Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II. The text specifically states that the Marcador was the property of Spearthrower Owl and that the dedication happened under the supervision of a lord named Ch’amak, who was both the caretaker of the Marcador and a vassal of Sihyaj K’ahk’. Ch’amak may have been a Yajawk’ak’ lord (see chapter 5 for a discussion of this office).

In the dedication phrase, the hieroglyphic sign representing the Marcador sculpture is a stylized version of Tlaloc’s face set in a round cartouche followed by Spearthrower Owl’s name (figure 4.5a). The feathered medallion on the front of the Marcador is inscribed with this same Tlaloc cartouche, so it is apparent that the Maya scribe used this feature of the Marcador as the *pars pro toto* representation for the sculpture and that this feature was its key

**Figure 4.4. Tikal Marcador**
characteristic (figure 4.5b). Such abbreviations are common conventions in Mayan hieroglyphic writing. Many objects are inscribed with the name of the object followed by the name of the owner (Mathews 1979; Stuart 1995). While the front medallion of the Marcador disk features the Tlaloc face, the medallion on the back is a rendering of Spearthrower Owl’s name (figure 4.5c). The glyphs of the medallions thus function as a name tag that reiterates the information from the column text that the Marcador was the property of Spearthrower Owl (Nielsen 2003).

As discussed in chapter 1, tok’-pakal was the term for an object composed of a flint and a shield. In Postclassic Mesoamerica where bows and arrows were an important weapon, a parallel metonym for the flint-shield couplet was arrow-shield. At Teotihuacán, where the spear thrower was the dominant weapon, the metonym was dart-shield. A Teotihuacán motif composed of an owl, two crossed darts, and a shield was nicknamed the “lechuza y armas” (owl and weapons) by Hasso von Winning (1948, 1987) (figure 4.6a). He argued that it was an emblem for war and a symbol for warriors. The juxtaposing of the owl
Figure 4.6.
a. Teotihuacán lechuza y armas, b. Tikal Stela 31 lechuza y armas medallion
with the dart-shield is, in essence, a Teotihuacán version of GIII’s *tok’-pakal*, that is, it does not represent a generic dart-shield but one that belonged to a specific individual, in this case an owl. In several cases, the shield of the *lechuza y armas* is decorated with a hand or a hand grasping a dart. Such motifs beg to be read as the dart-shield of someone called Striker Owl. As stated earlier, the Tikal ruler Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II was the grandson of Spearthrower Owl. On the front of Tikal Stela 31, Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II holds an assemblage in his right hand, which is composed of the Itzamnaaj bird (the avian manifestation of the creator grandfather Itzamnaaj), an earring in the form of the ancestor Yax Eb Xook, and a *lechuza y armas* medallion (figure 4.6b). The assemblage has been characterized as a headdress, but this is by no means certain. The medallion is composed of an owl juxtaposed with a dart and a shield fringed with the Teotihuacán zigzag pattern used to denote obsidian. It is not a reference to Spearthrower Owl per se but to his dart-shield.

I suggest that the Marcador represents Spearthrower Owl’s dart-shield in which the sculptor has merged these two weapons. The Marcador medallion is a feathered shield. Darts have fletching on their shafts. In many illustrations, there is a circular-shaped fletching below the dart blade. Long spears that are handheld are also decorated with this blade fletching, and prime examples are GIII’s spears on the Tablet of the Sun and the Piedras Negras spears (spears were the preferred weapon in the Maya region). When we compare the Marcador sculpture to the various types of blade fletching, it is apparent that the sphere and feathers of the Marcador replicate the blade fletching while the column base is the shaft of the weapon. The Marcador is just a different type of juxtaposing of a dart and shield. The sculpture is a stone replica of Spearthrower Owl’s dart-shield. As noted in chapter 1, Yaxchilán Lintel 45 illustrates Shield Jaguar III’s captive making his submission to the *tok’-pakal* of the ancestor Knot-eye Jaguar. It is believed that the Tikal Marcador was originally placed on Structure Sub-4B, Group 6C-XVI. One has to wonder if captives were forced to make public submission in front of Spearthrower Owl’s dart-shield effigy before their ritual deaths. The Palenque Tablet of the Sun indicates that the six-year-old K’inich Kan Bahlam II performed a ritual during his heir designation that involved the acquisition of his *tok’-pakal*. He is pictured holding his *tok’-pakal* before the *tok’-pakal* effigy of the deity GIII. It would not be surprising if the young lords of Tikal performed similar rituals before the dart-shield effigy of Spearthrower Owl.

In its logographic configuration, the nominal phrase Spearthrower Owl is composed of a hand holding an atlatl (spear thrower) and an owl (figure
4.5a, 4.5c). In one example, the owl has the goggle eyes of Tlaloc. Unlike the instances of Spearthrower Owl’s name from the Marcador column narrative where the two components of his name are depicted side by side, the medallion nominal phrase shows the spear thrower positioned over the wing of the owl. This foregrounding of the spear thrower highlights Spearthrower Owl’s identification with the primary weapon of Tlaloc. It is visually reminiscent of the juxtaposing of the Waxaklajuun Ub’aah Kan meteor serpent and the Tlaloc Owl wing on Piedras Negras Stela 9 (figure 4.7). This is a powerful image of the deadly force of the owl, but it also emphasizes the fact that Spearthrower Owl was identified with these weapons and avatars of Tlaloc. In other words, Spearthrower Owl was named after the qualities of Tlaloc, just like many Maya rulers were named after the qualities of the Chahk thunderbolt gods.
THE TIKAL KING YAX NUUN AHIIN I

Yax Nuun Ahiin I (“first?-crocodile”) is featured in the narratives of Tikal Stelae 4, 18, and 31. As noted above, he became the new Tikal king a year and ten months after the death of Chak Tok Ich’aak I (8.17.2.16.17 10 Kaban 10 Yaxk’in, September 13, AD 379). Two events related to Yax Nuun Ahiin I during this long interim period are recorded on Tikal Stela 31 and MT 35 from Tikal Burial 116. Although the Stela 31 passage is more difficult to translate because of missing portions, it refers to the ascent of Yax Nuun Ahiin I into a Wiinte’naah building on an 8 Men date (either February 8 or October 26 of AD 378). The Tikal Burial 116 text indicates that Yax Nuun Ahiin I came down from a Wiinte’naah structure on 8.17.2.3.16 4 Kib 14 Keh (December 26, AD 378), just 261 days before his accession (Stuart 2000a:493). The implication is that Yax Nuun Ahiin I was sequestered at this temple for a period of time.

Following the Wiinte’naah passage on Stela 31, the narrative moves forward to the accession of Yax Nuun Ahiin I on 8.17.2.16.17 10 Kaban 10 Yaxk’in (September 13, AD 379). His accession is highlighted by the use of a Supplementary Series. The story specifically states that his accession occurred at the Wiinte’naah structure, that the throne came with the acquisition of twenty-eight “provinces,” and that it was accomplished under the authority of Sihyaj K’ahk’ (Tokovinine 2008:266). The time frame then moves forward sixteen years to the 8.18.0.0.0 12 Ajaw 8 Zotz (July 8, AD 396) Period Ending at Tikal, which is said to have been conducted under the authority of Yax Nuun Ahiin I. As noted above, Sihyaj K’ahk’ was at Uaxactún during this Period Ending.

The Stela 31 narrative notes that Yax Nuun Ahiin I’s Period Ending happened specifically at a location called the Seven Place Fire Mountain. The Seven Place location is frequently paired with another mountain called the Nine Place (Kubler 1977). These two place names appear to refer to mythological locations that were replicated in the local landscape and used for pre-accession, accession, and Period Ending ceremonies. Although very fragmentary, Tikal Stela 18 also refers to Yax Nuun Ahiin I’s Period Ending event, as well as his vassal relationship with Sihyaj K’ahk’. What remains of Yax Nuun Ahiin I’s portrait on this monument shows him holding a Teotihuacan-style object. He sits on a motif that represents the Seven Place Fire Mountain.

Moving forward from the 8.18.0.0.0 Period Ending, the Stela 31 narrative discusses more events in the life of Yax Nuun Ahiin I, including what may be a reference to his death on 8.18.8.1.2 2 Ik’ 10 Sip (June 18, AD 404). The Stela 31 narrative next recounts the Period Ending on 8.18.10.0.0 11 Ajaw 18 Pop (May 17, AD 406), followed by the accession to the Tikal throne of Yax Nuun
Ahiin I’s son Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II on 8.18.15.11.0 3 Ajaw 13 Sak (November 27, AD 411). Unlike Yax Nuun Ahiin I’s accession at the Wiinte’naah, the accession of Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II is said to have occurred at the sky/cave of the deity GIII. This is parallel to the Late Classic Palenque texts that indicate that the king K’inicn Kan Bahlam II underwent an accession ritual at a GIII shrine as well (Bassie-Sweet 1991; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). The Stela 31 narrative then relates the 8.19.10.0.0 9 Ajaw 3 Muwan (February 1, AD 426) Period Ending of Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II before arriving at what are clearly the climactic events of the story. This section is greatly highlighted by the use of a Long Count date notation that includes an Initial Series Introductory Glyph and a Supplementary Series. It records the all-important katun Period Ending of 9.0.0.0.0 8 Ajaw 13 Keh (December 11, AD 435), conducted under the authority of Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II, that heralded the start of the ninth bak’tun. The timeframe then moves forward from the Period Ending to the 9.0.3.9.18 12 Etz’nab 11 Zip (June 11, AD 439) death of Spearthrower Owl (Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II’s grandfather). It seems reasonable to suggest that the story would have ended with a restatement of the 9.0.10.0.0. Period Ending that began the narrative, but all that is left at the bottom of the monument is the eroded remains of a distance number. Nevertheless, the fact that Spearthrower Owl is featured near the end of this long narrative as well as in the caption texts on the sides is significant, and it indicates his importance in this Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II narrative. Despite his genealogical descent from Spearthrower Owl, Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II is said to have been the sixteenth ruler of Tikal in a count that begins with the Tikal founder Yax Ehb Xook (Martin and Grube 2008; Martin 2003).

As noted, the front of Stela 31 is an elaborate portrait of Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II, and it is likely that the event portrayed is the 9.0.10.0.0 Period Ending that begins the narrative on the back of the monument. The visual focus of his portrait is the assemblage he holds in his right hand. Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II wears a large earring with a water bird draped through its center hole. Above the earring is a motif representing the name of the Tikal founder Yax Ehb Xook (Martin 2003:15). It may function in this context as a label naming Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II’s earring as an heirloom owned by Yax Ehb Xook.

Hovering above Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II is a motif composed of a square-eyed god with the Sun God attributes, although it lacks the diagnostic k’in element trait of that deity. Unlike the Sun God, this Stela 31 god has a hand over his mouth (figure 4.2). The god holds a serpent that disgorges a small owl representing the name of an early Tikal king (Stuart 2007b), and he wears a headdress that represents the name Yax Nuun Ahiin I. This “sun god” has been interpreted to be a deified portrait of Yax Nuun Ahiin I.
Both sides of Stela 31 illustrate a full-figure portrait of Yax Nuun Ahiin I in a naturalistic form, with a caption text above his head identifying him (figure 4.8). On the left side, the sixteen blocks of caption text state that Yax Nuun Ahiin I was a one *k'atun* lord of Tikal, the vassal of the Kaloomte’ (Sihyaj K’ahk’), and the son of Spearthrower Owl. The twelve glyph blocks of the right caption text repeat some of this basic information, but in a briefer form and in reverse order. The text first states that Yax Nuun Ahiin I was the child of Spearthrower Owl and then says he was a vassal of the Kaloomte’ and a
lord of Tikal. These two caption texts form a couplet in chiasmus form, a common literary device found in Mayan hieroglyphic inscriptions and formal language (Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). Yax Nuun Ahiin I is illustrated as a significantly shorter figure than the depiction of his son on the front of the monument. In fact, he only reaches the height of his son’s shoulder. As argued by Stuart (2000a:487), Yax Nuun Ahiin I’s title of one k’atun lord in the caption text indicates that he was under the age of twenty in these illustrations and that he came to the Tikal throne as a youth.

In both of his portraits, Yax Nuun Ahiin I is dressed in Teotihuacán-style costumes. On the left side of the stela, he is shown in profile view with the right side of his body facing the viewer. He carries a square shield and a spear thrower. A motif composed of a mirror and three long black-tipped tails hangs from his belt. These tails have been identified as coyote tails (Stone 1989; Nielsen 2003, 2004), but given that a large number of wolves have been found in Teotihuacán burials, I think it is more likely that they are wolf tails (Sugiyama and Cabrera 2000; Sugiyama 2005). Yax Nuun Ahiin I’s headdress is in the form of what is likely a stylized wolf, given its long muzzle. In other words, Yax Nuun Ahiin I is illustrated as a wolf warrior. Why he has three such tails is a mystery, but the three-tail motif is a common costume element in Teotihuacán murals (Miller 1973:figs. 149, 173, 176, 177). Yax Nuun Ahiin I’s headdress also has three flaming torches stuck in it, with the flames depicted in Teotihuacán fashion.

The right portrait of Yax Nuun Ahiin I is again in a profile view, but now the left side of his body is featured. Although he wears the same gaiters and three wolf tails, his headdress, necklace, mirror, and spear thrower take different forms, and his rectangular shield faces the viewer. The helmet-like headdress he sports is a well-known type seen in numerous scenes that are closely associated with war and Teotihuacán imagery. The base of the fan of feathers above the helmet is decorated with the obsidian zigzag design.

Given that the main text refers to two events in the life of the young Yax Nuun Ayin I (his sequestering at a Wiinte’naah building, followed some time later by his accession), the simplest answer as to why he is portrayed twice on this monument is that they are illustrations of him on these two occasions. A clear argument can be made for this interpretation based on Yax Nuun Ayin I’s accession statement from Tikal Stela 4. A slight digression is in order to discuss this topic.

As noted in the introduction, the headdress of kingship is a flexible headband of bark paper known as the sak huun “white headband.” The Palenque Temple XIX platform depicts the ruler K’inich Ahkal Mo’ Nahb III in the
process of accepting the sak huun headband (see figure 0.11). In hieroglyphic writing, the T678 logograph of the war helmet worn by Yax Nuun Ayiin I has phonetic substitutions that indicate it is read ko’haw. In a sixteenth-century Tzotzil dictionary, the Spanish terms quijote (armor that covers the thigh) and armadura (suit of armor) are described using the Tzotzil term kovov tak’in (Laughlin 1988:224; 1051). Kovov is a cognate of ko’haw, and tak’in refers to metal. Robert Laughlin translated kovov as helmet rather than armor because headdresses were the primary regalia of Tzotzil warriors. Although cognates of ko’haw are only found in Tzotzil, this example confirms the military nature of the ko’haw helmet. A ko’haw helmet sits on a stand beside K’inich Ahkal Mo’ Nahb III. Although the Temple XIX platform illustrates the moment K’inich Ahkal Mo’ Nahb III received his sak huun headdress of rulership, the placement of the ko’haw helmet next to him implies that he will receive this object next. The Tablet of the Slaves indicates that this was the case. This monument illustrates K’inich Ahkal Mo’ Nahb III receiving a ko’haw helmet on the day of his accession, but the text that describes this action refers to the ko’haw helmet merely as a huun “headdress” (Wald 1997; Bassie-Sweet et al. 2012) (see chapter 5 for a further discussion of this monument). The juxtaposing of the sak huun headdress and ko’haw helmet on the Temple XIX platform monument clearly indicates that the ko’haw helmet represents a different office than that of king.

The scene on the Palace Tablet illustrates K’inich K’an Joy Chitam II flanked by his father and mother, who hand him a similar ko’haw helmet headdress as well as a tok’-pakal (see figure 5.1). The focus of the scene is on the action of his father. The episode of the caption text that frames this action states that the name of this helmet headdress was ux yop huun (“three leaf headdress”) (Bassie-Sweet et al. 2012; Bassie-Sweet and Hopkins 2017). The main text of Tikal Stela 31 describes the accession of Yax Nuun Ayiin I on 8.17.2.16.17 10 Kaban 10 Yaxkin (September 13, AD 379). This same date appears in the narrative on Tikal Stela 4, but here the action is stated to be the taking of an ux yop huun headdress by Yax Nuun Ayiin I (Stuart 2012:128). So what can be concluded from this Stela 4 statement is that Yax Nuun Ayiin I received the ko’haw helmet called ux yop huun on the day of his accession, just like K’inich Ahkal Mo’ Nahb III. I believe it is safe to conclude that the right side of Stela 31 that depicts Yax Nuun Ayiin I wearing the ko’haw headdress represents a portrait of Yax Nuun Ayiin I on the day of accession after he has donned his ux yop huun headdress. By default, the left side of Stela 31 should illustrate his regalia on the day of his Wiinte’naah ceremony.

In summary, Sihyaj Chan K’awiil II’s monument stresses his relationship with his father, Yax Nuun Ayiin I, and his grandfather, Spearthrower Owl. Yax
Nuun Ayiin I is specifically depicted on the occasion of his Wiinte’naah ceremony and accession wearing the Tlaloc-related costumes he acquired during these events. During the interim between Chak Tok Ich’aak I’s death and Yax Nuun Ayiin I’s accession, Sihyaj K’ak’ actively consolidated control over the region that had been under Chak Tok Ich’aak I’s sway in the eastern Petén (the twenty-eight provinces). A fragment of the stela unearthed at the site of El Achiotal (30 km northeast of El Perú) indicates that he was also operating in the western Petén (Canuto et al. 2017). Meanwhile, the young Yax Nuun Ayiin I was being initiated into the Tlaloc cult and prepared for his future role as king.

The motivation for Sihyaj K’ak’h’s actions against Chak Tok Ich’aak I is not known. At a recent Dumbarton Oaks conference on Teotihuacán, there was some consensus among researchers that his actions may have been in retaliation for something the Tikal polity had done rather than a simple act of conquest. There are also no inscriptions that indicate what the Kaanul polity was doing during this period or whether they played a role in these events. It is highly unlikely that they were passive observers.

THE COPÁN KING K’INICH YAX K’UK’ MO’

During the later part of Sihyaj Chan K’awiil’s reign at Tikal and Spearthrower Owl’s reign at Jo’ Tinam Witz, a lord named K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’, whose identity and prestige were also centered on the Tlaloc cult, founded a new dynasty at Copán (Stuart 2004a). In the narratives of his successors, he is called a West Kaloomte’ lord, and he is portrayed three times wearing the goggle eyes of Tlaloc. The pre-accession name of K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ was K’uk’ Mo’ Ajaw (Stuart 2004a). The k’uk’ (quetzal) and mo’ (macaw) components of these nominal phrases are represented by a logograph of a bird head that is a conflation of the features of a quetzal (crest of feathers) and the eye and beak of a macaw.

The first phase of Copán Structure 16 (nicknamed Hunal) was a modest construction in the talud-tablero style of Teotihuacán, and it was used to house the tomb of K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ (Burial 92–2) (Bell et al. 2004.). His burial included many objects with Teotihuacán traits that further demonstrate his close association with this culture. Nevertheless, strontium isotope analysis of his remains indicates that he was raised in the Petén (Buikstra et al. 2004). Uxwitz’a “Three Mountain Water” is a Caracol place name, and K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ is named on Copán Stela J and Stela 63 as an Uxwitz’a Ch’ajom and a Uxwitz’a Lord (Stuart 2007a). From this evidence, Stuart has concluded that K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’s place of origin in the Petén was Caracol.
K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's accession name as well as his pre-accession name of K'uk' Mo' Ajaw (“quetzal macaw lord”) is a curious pairing of a quetzal and a macaw. Quetzal–macaw conflations are seen in the murals of Teotihuacán Zona 5-A (Conjunto del Sol, Palace of the Sun), which illustrate a series of men dressed in bird costumes (Taube 2003b, 2006; Chinchilla 2010; Nielsen and Helmke 2015). The bird-men in the murals are presented in a diving position with outstretched arms. They have human faces, hands, and legs. Their costume consists of a bird worn like a cape over the head and shoulders, with the wings of the bird decorating the men’s outstretched arms. Four juvenile quetzal–macaw heads in profile view decorate each wing of the birds. On each of their human legs, the bird-men wear a similar juvenile quetzal–macaw head like a gaiter, and a bird in frontal pose decorates the tail. Similar supernatural birds are found on sculpture from the Copán ballcourt (Taube 2003b:fig. II.3). It is thought that K'inich Yax K'uك Mo was named after these bird-men. If viewed from the perspective of a metonym related to trade feathers, the name quetzal–macaw represents a combination of the most highly prized mountain bird (the quetzal) and the most valued lowland bird (the macaw). Given that Copán is just 50 km from the prime quetzal habitat of the Alta Verapaz and that its valley location is suitable for macaw rearing, it is possible that it was the bird and feather trade that initially brought K’uk’ Mo’ Ajaw from the Petén to the Copán region.

As was the custom across the Maya region, the Hunal structure was eventually filled in and another building was constructed on top of it. Known as Yehnal, this structure was, in turn, covered by yet another, known as Margarita, and so forth. In the Late Classic period, the Copán ruler Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat placed an altar at the base of the Structure 16 staircase commemorating his role as the sixteenth successor of K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’. The narrative on this altar begins with the date 8.19.10.10.17 5 Kaban 15 Yaxk’in (September 6, AD 426) and states that K’uk’ Mo’ Ajaw received a K’awiil at a Wiinte’nahah building (Stuart 2004a). The holding of a K’awiil scepter on the date of accession ceremonies is well-known at other sites, and Stuart has suggested that this Wiinte’nahah event represents K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’s accession. Three days later he left the Wiinte’nahah as the newly named K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ and journeyed for 152 days before arriving at Copán on 8.19.11.0.13 5 Ben 11 Muwan (February 9, AD 427). The narrative then moves forward to the Copán ruler Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat’s Period Ending on 9.17.5.0.0 6 Ajaw 13 K’ayab (December 22, AD 775) and the 9.17.5.3.4 5 Kan 12 Wo (March 2, AD 776) dedication of Altar Q, which is said to be an altar stone for K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’. The sides of Altar Q illustrate all sixteen of the Copán rulers in sequential order, four on each side. The narrative on the sides begins on the west with the
The calendar round date of Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat’s accession. The second Copán ruler and K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ sit on the left facing the calendar round date, while Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat and the fifteenth Copán ruler sit facing the date on the right. K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ is depicted wearing the goggle eyes of Tlaloc. He also wears a small square shield over his right hand while extending to Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat what Karl Taube (2004b) interprets to be a burning dart (figure 4.9). All the other kings on this monument appear to hold what Taube believes are fire bundles. If a viewer moved to the right around the monument to the south, east, and north sides, they would see illustrations of the other Copán kings in descending order of succession. Conversely, if they moved to the left, they would see the succession of kings in ascending order. What is most interesting about this monument is that Structure 16 retained its association with the Kaloomte’ K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ throughout the centuries and that he continued to be identified as a manifestation of Tlaloc into the eighth century.

**WHERE IN THE WORLD IS JO’ TINAM WITZ?**

The Marcador text indicates that Spearthrower Owl was a Jo’ Tinam Witz Kaloomte’, and later in the narrative, there is a reference to a Jo’ Tinam Witz Waxaklajuun Ub’aah Kan. Witz means mountain, and there are many examples of mountain place names in Teotihuacán art and in the Maya corpus. The place name Jo’ Tinam Witz does not occur in any other Maya inscriptions known to date. It has been proposed that Jo’ Tinam Witz is the Mayan name for Teotihuacán and that Spearthrower Owl was its king (Stuart 2000a,
In this hypothesis, Spearthrower Owl was both the king and Kaloomte’ of Teotihuacán, while Sihyaj K’ahk’ became the Kaloomte’ of the central Petén region presumably after his successful campaign there. It has been further suggested that Spearthrower Owl sent Sihyaj K’ahk’ to defeat Tikal and subsequently had his own young son Yax Nuun Ahiin I installed there as the new king (Stuart 2000a). In such a scenario, the Kaloomte’ lords Spearthrower Owl and Sihyaj K’ahk’ would not have been equals; rather, Sihyaj K’ahk’ would have been a “general” of Spearthrower Owl who was simply doing Spearthrower Owl’s bidding. One of the issues with the interpretation of Spearthrower Owl as the monarch of Teotihuacán is the fact that there is little evidence that Teotihuacán was ever ruled by a single king (Fash 2017). There is, however, ample evidence of a bellicose merchant-warrior class. This raises the possibility that Spearthrower Owl and Sihyaj K’ahk’ were leaders of Teotihuacán merchant-warriors, who participated in that city’s Tlaloc cult and traded with the Maya region. Jo’Tinam Witz may refer to a neighborhood or even a Teotihuacán hinterland controlled by Spearthrower Owl, such as the Pachuca obsidian deposits.

Another issue with Stuart’s hypothesis and acknowledged by him in his later publications is that strontium isotope testing of Yax Nuun Ahiin I’s teeth indicates that he spent the first years of his life in the Petén region (Wright 2005). There are many scenarios that could explain why Spearthrower Owl’s son was born at Tikal. For example, Spearthrower Owl could have been part of a trading venture to Tikal prior to his accession, formed a marriage alliance with a Tikal lineage, and fathered a child before returning alone to Teotihuacán. Such a scenario makes one wonder if Yax Nuun Ayiin I’s presence at Tikal precipitated Sihyaj K’ahk’s killing of the Tikal king Chak Tok Ich’aak I or was at least part of the strategy for defeating him. While we can speculate at length, we may never know the answers to these fundamental questions unless more inscriptions pertaining to this time period are uncovered. However, the identification of Spearthrower Owl, Sihyaj K’ahk’, and Yax Nuun Ayiin I with Teotihuacán-style warfare imagery is indisputable.

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS THE WIINTE’NAAH?

Although the etymology of the term is unclear, the Wiinte’naah logogram incorporates two bundles of firewood that are placed in a crossed formation ready for burning (Stuart 2000a, 2004a; Taube 2004b; Fash et al. 2009; Estrada-Belli and Tokovinine 2016) (figure 4.10). It has been argued that Wiinte’naah structures were locales of new fire ceremonies related to
solar mythology and the rebirth of the sun (Taube 2004b; Fash et al. 2009). Nevertheless, Wiinte’naah buildings were intimately associated with Tlaloc. As an example, there is a structure at the site of Río Amarillo that is labeled as a Wiinte’naah, and it is decorated with Tlaloc motifs (Saturno 2000; Stuart 2000a:493; Taube 2004b:273). In addition, some examples of the Wiinte’naah place name actually incorporate Tlaloc’s face, goggle eyes, or headdress. Copán Structure 16 has been identified as a Wiinte’naah, and its final form is swathed in Tlaloc imagery (Fash et al. 2009).

As discussed above, Sihyaj K’ahk’, Yax Nuun Ayiin I, and K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ were involved in events at a Wiinte’naah. Various texts refer to Spearthrower Owl, Sihyaj K’ahk’, and Yax K’uk’ Mo’ as Wiinte’naah Ajaws, and K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ is also called a Wiinte’naah Ch’ajom. A reference
to another Wiinte’naah Ch’ajom is found in a caption text on Yaxchilán Lintel 25 of Structure 23 (see chapter 6). The juxtaposing of Ch’ajom insignia and Tlaloc headdresses was discussed in chapter 3. The obvious conclusion is that the individuals wearing both the Tlaloc and Ch’ajom headdresses were Wiinte’naah Ch’ajoms and that these individuals specifically attended to the incense offerings made to the ancestors and Tlaloc deities associated with Wiinte’naah structures. Given that Tagetes lucida was an element of the Tlaloc headdress, it is likely that the incense offered by a Wiinte’naah Ch’ajom was Tagetes lucida or this flower combined with copal.

Based on the association of Wiinte’naah structures with Teotihuacán imagery, it has been reasonably suggested that the prototype or prototypes for the Wiinte’naah structures found in the Maya area were buildings at Teotihuacán (Fash et al. 2009). The Copán Altar Q narrative indicates that the journey of K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ from the Wiinte’naah structure of his accession to Copán took over five months. Pilgrimages to a foreign center for political and religious validation have a long history in Mesoamerica, and this lengthy journey by K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ suggested to William Fash and his collaborators (2009) that his accession event happened at Teotihuacán. Although the distance between Teotihuacán and Copán is over 1,100 km as the crow flies, it would not have taken five months for such a journey. In fact, there is no location in Mesoamerica that would have taken five months to reach unless significant battles or stops had to be made along the way. As an example, it took the Spanish expedition led by the conquistador Pedro Alvarado a mere two months to travel from Tenochtitlan to Guatemala in the quest to subjugate the southern kingdoms of the highland Maya.

Noting the function of the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacán as a fire and solar temple, Fash and his collaborators (2009) have proposed that the Wiinte’naah structure where K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ was invested as king was the Pyramid of the Sun. The Conjunto del Sol structures containing the quetzal–macaw bird-men for whom K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ was named are located at the foot of the Pyramid of the Sun. These scholars further argued that Copán Temple 16 and its numerous renovations replicate the Pyramid of the Sun. In their interpretation, K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ built a modest replica of the Pyramid of the Sun at Copán and was later buried in this structure. They also argued that the Wiinte’naah events of Spearthrower Owl, Sihyaj K’ahk’, and Yax Nuun Ajil I occurred at Teotihuacán.

While their interpretation is very appealing, Teotihuacán-style architecture and cultural artifacts predate the AD 378 arrival of Sihyaj K’ahk’ at Tikal, so it is not impossible that there was a Wiinte’naah building at Tikal even before
this time and that this is where at least some of the various Wiinte’naah events occurred. The Tikal Stela 31 narrative specifically states that Yax Nuun Ayin I took the Tikal throne under the authority not of his father, Spearthrower Owl, but of Siyaj K’ahk’, who was situated in the Petén region at the time. It is also curious that although Spearthrower Owl was allegedly a ruler of Teotihuacán at the time of the accession of K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’, he is not mentioned in the Copán narratives.

THE LATER KALOOMTE’ LORDS

There is a considerable time gap between the events of Spearthrower Owl, Siyaj K’ahk’, and K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ in the late fourth century to early fifth century and the next records concerning Kaloomte’ lords. As noted above, the Kaanul ruler K’ahk’ Ti’ Ch’ich’ attained the office of Kaloomte’ in AD 550. Another early Kaloomte’ lord is mentioned on Piedras Negras Panel 2 and an inscribed wooden box that detail the AD 510 induction of the Early Classic Piedras Negras ruler Turtle Tooth into the Tlaloc cult (see chapter 5 for further discussion of the box). The ceremony was overseen by a West Kaloomte’ lord named Tajoom Uk’ab Tuun at a Wiinte’naah structure. The identity of this Kaloomte’ is somewhat of a mystery. Based on his West Kaloomte’ title, it has been proposed that Tajoom Uk’ab Tuun was a Teotihuacano (Anaya et. al 2003). Given Piedras Negras’s latter affiliation with the Kaanul polity, it is not impossible that Tajoom Uk’ab Tuun was affiliated with that site.

In the sixth century, the Kaanul polity embarked on an enterprise to control trade routes to the southern highlands that were under Tikal’s sway. Their strategy was to establish domination of the sites to the east, south, and west of Tikal that had traditionally had alliances with Tikal. In doing so, they weakened Tikal’s economic position and made it vulnerable to direct military attack from all sides. Their efforts culminated in AD 562 when the Kaanul king Sky Witness defeated the Tikal king Wak Chan K’awiil and then placed his own son K’inich Waw on the Tikal throne (Grube 2016). While the Kaanul polity prospered, Tikal suffered a long period of foreign control (the so-called hiatus). Tikal lords began to reassert themselves during the reign of the Tikal king Nuun Ujol Chaak, and the narratives of his three successors (his son, grandson, and great-grandson) emphasize their accessions into the office of Kaloomte’ rather than that of Ajaw: Jasaw Chan K’awiil I (AD 682), Yik’in Chan K’awiil (AD 734), and Yax Nuun Ahiin II (AD 768).

Jasaw Chan K’awiil I’s most illustrious accomplishment was the defeat of the Kaanul king Yuknoom Yich’aak K’ahk’ and the capture of one of the Kaanul
patron gods in AD 695 (Stuart 2000a:490; Martin and Grube 2008:110–111). Lintel 3 of Jasaw Chan K’awiil I’s burial temple details this triumph and illustrates the Kaanul patron god on a palanquin. The caption text also refers to a conjuring performed by Jasaw Chan K’awiil I forty days later on the thirteenth k’atun anniversary of Spearthrower Owl’s death and then backs up in time to recount Jasaw Chan K’awiil I’s accession as Kaloomte’. Although the caption text on Lintel 2 is destroyed, the image illustrates another palanquin, but this one is festooned with images of Waxaklajuun Ub’aah Kan caterpillar-serpents. The tomb of Jasaw Chan K’awiil I contained a cache of inscribed bones that celebrate the ceremonies of Sihyaj K’ahk’ and Yax Nuun Ayiin I and the conjuring of a Waxaklajuun Ub’aah Kan that further reinforce his connection to this Tlaloc cult. In short, regaining the status of Kaloomte’ brought with it the power of the Tlaloc gods and subsequent military victories.

The capturing of an enemy’s patron god is a feature of many war narratives, as seen on Tikal Temple IV Lintel 2 (Martin 1996; Martin and Grube 2008:49, 78–79). This lintel details the “star war” event conducted by the Tikal king Yik’in Chan K’awiil against the Naranjo king Yax Mayuy Chan Chaahk and the capture of the latter’s patron god in AD 744. The lintel displays this captured patron god. Like those of his father, Jasaw Chan K’awiil I, the monuments of Yik’in Chan K’awiil emphasize his accession into the office of Kaloomte’, and his nominal phrases consistently name him as a Kaloomte’ lord. The implication is that the Tlaloc god of the Kaloomte’ was stronger than the patron god of Naranjo. The Kaloomte’ was not only the supreme warrior, but his Tlaloc god was the supreme war god. In other words, in the hierarchy of war gods, Tlaloc was thought to ultimately trump patron gods.

During the Late Classic period, the Kaloomte’ title appears in the nominal phrases of the rulers of Dos Pilas–Aguateca, Palenque, Yaxchilán, Quiriguá, Machaquilá, Lamanai, Ucanal, Motul de San José, Seibal, Pusilha, Dzibilchaltún, and Ek’ Balam. The wives and daughters of Kaloomte’ lords also held this office.

SUMMARY

The narratives concerning the Kaloomte’ Sihyaj K’ahk’ indicate that he arrived at Tikal with Tlaloc deities. The religious nature of the office is clearly tied to the worship of Tlaloc as a war god and the military advantages associated with that deity complex. As is discussed more fully in chapter 5, the Kaloomte’ functioned as a high priest or priestess of the Tlaloc cult, given that it was the Kaloomte’ who initiated others into the cult and provided
their regalia. What additional qualities and duties set the Kaloomte’ lords and ladies apart from others who took on the guise of Tlaloc are not obvious but may rest in their ability to conjure this god and the ancestors associated with this cult in times of war. The Spanish chroniclers Torquemada and Durán both noted that Aztec kings studied the heavens for omens, and across Mesoamerica meteors were omens of death and war (Aveni 1980:14–15). In the Maya region, Tlaloc was specifically identified with meteors, so it is likely that one of duties of the Kaloomte’ was to interpret these celestial omens as messages from this god and from the ancestors who took on this guise in the afterlife. This overview of Kaloomte’ lords and their activities provides a framework for a discussion about Tlaloc regalia and the other offices associated with the cult in chapters 5 and 6.