
11 **HOW THE OTHER-HALF LIVED: CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS OF THE ENIGMA THAT IS KA'KABISH, BELIZE**

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In 2007, preliminary research was presented from the site of Ka'Kabish, Orange Walk District. Discoveries at Ka'Kabish, initially presumed to be a secondary administrative centre for the larger site of Lamanai, proved the site to be more enigmatic than anticipated. Investigations revealed the site was not only considerably larger than initially predicted, based on an earlier 1995 survey, but ceramic analysis indicated that the site had a significantly longer history than expected (ranging from at least the early Late Formative Period through to the Middle Post-Classic Period). Due to the unexpected nature of the site it was possible only to investigate the section of the site lying to the south of the San Felipe-Indian Church road during the 2007 field season. This paper expands upon our understanding of this perplexing site by focusing on the discoveries made in the northern section of the site during the 2009 field season. It is hoped that with the continued addition of new information we may one day decipher the true nature of the site of Ka'Kabish and understand the role this curious site played in the ancient socio-political landscape of North-Central Belize.

Introduction

Investigations at archaeological sites, particularly those that are the recipients of incipient research projects, are an ever-changing canvass on which the presentation of new information continually causes us to redraw our perceptions about the ancient past. The southern portion of the core area of Ka'Kabish was surveyed and mapped as part of the Ka'Kabish Archaeological Research Project (KARP) in 2007 and the information garnered from that expedition was presented at the Belize Archaeological Symposium that same year (Haines 2008a). In 2009, the northern section of the core zone was surveyed and information from this portion of the site was combined with our previous data to enhance our overall understanding of the centre.

It is not the intent of this paper to reiterate all the work done at Ka'Kabish since the inception of the project. The purpose of this paper is to present new information collected during the 2009 survey. Consequently, the material included here will be largely restricted to that from the northern section of the core zone (for a discussion of the architecture of the southern section see Haines 2008a, 2008b).

Etymology of the Name 'Ka'Kabish'

Recently, confusion over the origin of the site name has emerged. Although the name Ka'Kabish appears to be derived from Yucatecan Maya, as no emblem glyph as yet to be uncovered it is unclear (and somewhat doubtful) if this is the original name of the site. David Pendergast first noted the name in the 1980's, when he and Claude Belanger toured the area while working at Lamanai (Pendergast and Belanger personal communications). Pendergast reported on the existence and state of the site in 1991, at this point the name was already part of the local lexicon and appears to have been in use for several generations (Pendergast 1991).

The name Ka'Kabish, like many Maya site names, is likely a composite word, and, without clear indications of root words or stems (or even intended orthography) various different translations are possible. In its use in the site name Ka'Kabisax (an archaeological ruin near Numk'ini, Campeche), Barrera Vasquez list the definition of 'ka'kab' as "aldea, asiento de población, tierra alta y fuerte" (Barrera V. 1995: 283). This root has much to recommend it as a possible basis for the name as the site was clearly at one point a "village, or population seat". The term 'ka'kab' is also listed separately as meaning

“suelo pardo oscuro, de rendzina, humocarbonatado, con poco contendido de humus y con inclusiones de roca caliza” (Barrera V. 1995: 283). This definition is also fitting as the soils on and around the site would definitely fit the definition of rendzina¹ and, as recent excavations have shown, the humus level in the site core is thin with a large layer of limestone cobble fill immediate below. Moreover, part of the site was once used as a limestone quarry during the construction of the road that bisects the site and connects the towns of San Felipe and Indian Church (Haines 2008a, 2008b, 2006; see also Guderjan 1996).

That this term also can imply high firm land makes it equally applicable to Ka'Kabish as the site is located on a ridge of high land; one of several such ridges that intrude upon the otherwise flat coastal plain in this part of north-central Belize (Hammond 1973; Romney et al. 1959). That it can be clearly seen from many points around the region (e.g., Blue Creek, the High Temple at Lamanai, as well as the entry point of the Indian Church Village) may have made its altitude a factor in its naming.

Assuming that ka'kab is the etymological root, the suffix is less clear in its application to the site as Barrera, in his explanation of the site name for Ka'Kabisax, Campeche, goes on to list “is” as meaning “*Ipomoea batatas*” (sweet potato) and ‘ax’ as “wart” (Barrera V. 1995: 283). Hypothesising, a possible variation of the name Ka'Kabish, Belize, as Ka'Kab'bis², then we can consider possible translations for the term ‘bis’ as either “manantial y agujero por donde mana del agua” or “carcoma y el agujero gue hizo” (Barrera V. 1995: 56). The former definition is highly possible as recent work documented two wells roughly 0.5 km south of the site (Haines, in prep.). According to local landowners, both of these wells (one now transformed in a small aguada for cattle) never diminish but maintain a constant water-level throughout the year. The second definition given for this term is intriguingly

enigmatic as the Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology in its definition of rendzina soils mentions that these soils consist of “a relatively thin soil consisting of an almost black calcareous mull humus formed entirely of worm casts.” This latter interpretation reinforces the second definition of ‘ka'kab’ discussed above.

Alternatively, the site name can be broken down into smaller constituent parts; ka', kab, and bis. Here, ‘ka’ can be taken to mean an indicator of a possession (“cosa nuestra [Barrera V. 1995: 277]), although it seems to be more commonly referenced as “número dos, segundo, hacer algo de nuevo or nuevamente” (Barrera V. 1995: 277). The term ‘kab’, also has a variety of applications including “el mundo, pueblo, o region”, as well as “abeja or colmena” (Barrera V. 1995: 277-278). Taken together the term ‘ka'kab’ can produce a similar definition to that mentioned previously, as potentially “our village”, although if the term has a modern origin as suspected than it seems unlikely that the current population of the area would refer to a long abandoned ruin in such a relativistic manner. If however, the name can be shown to have a pre-Hispanic genesis (something currently not possible), then this term has greater applicability.

If, however, the more commonly applied meaning of the term ‘ka’ is used in conjunction with the definition of ‘kab’ as village, then the term “second village” becomes possible. This is a highly probable interpretation given that the largest ruin in the area is Lamanai, and Ka'Kabish, based on its more modest size, may well have been considered a ‘second site’ in the area. The choice of translations for ‘kab’ is made more difficult by the prolific number of Africanized Bees, and bee hives, currently resident at the site. However, this would leave unresolved the matters of a suitable prefix (although ‘new bees’ has possibilities), and suffix for the name.

Based on the various definitions provided by Barrera, the possible translations deemed most likely (and favoured by this author) include ‘second

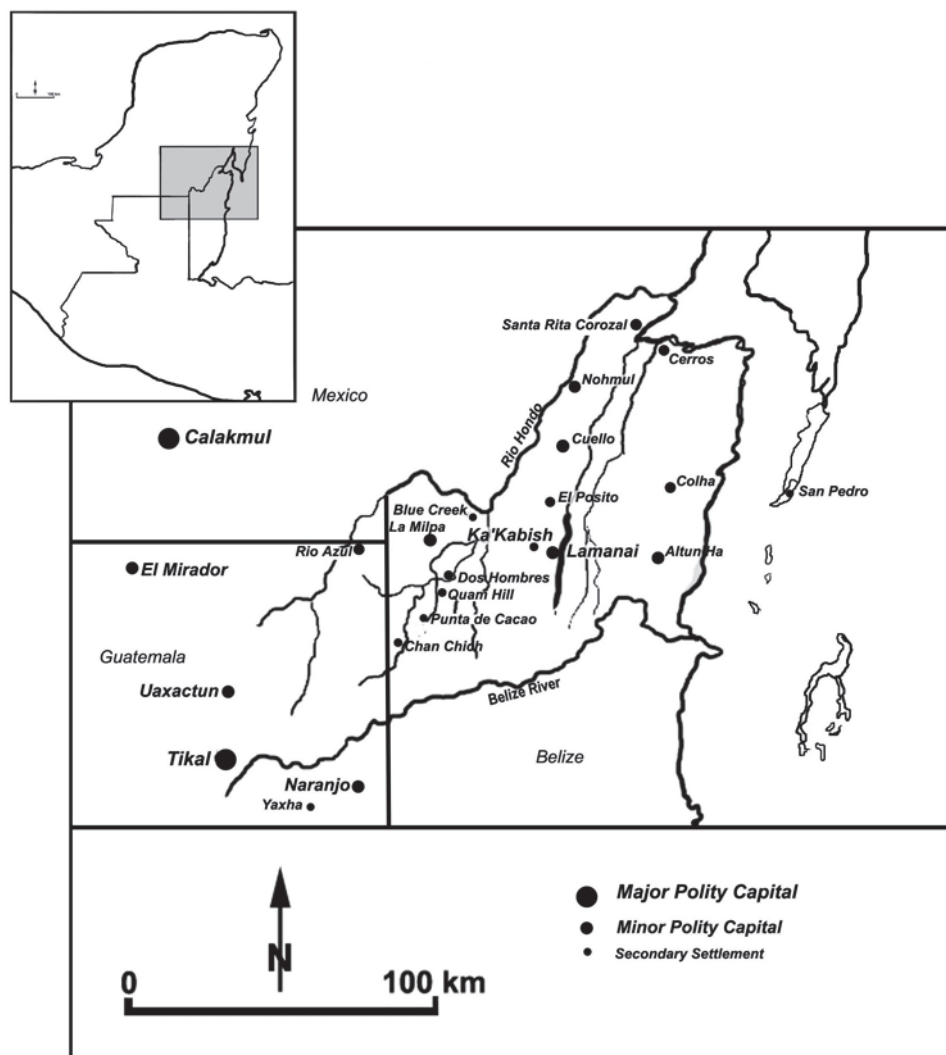


Figure 1. Map of Northern Belize.

village with springs’, or ‘high firm land with springs’. It should be acknowledged that the name also may be more prosaically based on a geological and geographic description of the soil and substrate, however, this seems more unlikely given its likely origin as a Maya appellation.

Location and Geographical Setting

Ka’Kabish is a modest-sized site located in northern Belize (Figure 1). It was constructed on a limestone ridge, one of several that undulate across this part of north-central Belize (Hammond 1973; Romney et al. 1959), and which may serve

as the basis for its name (see discussion above). It is roughly 10 kilometres in-land from Lamanai in a north-by-northwest direction, and it is clearly visible from the top of the High Temple.

In the latter part of the 20th century a graded, limestone/sascab road was created connecting the villages of San Felipe and Indian Church. This road, at least in regards to the portion between Ka’Kabish and Indian Church, appears to correspond to an early logging trail (Pendergast personal communication). The construction of the road directly impacted the site in two significant ways: (1) it bisected the core area

of the site into northern and southern sectors; and, (2) parts of two buildings and the south plaza were quarried for road fill before the plundering was halted. A secondary, but potentially no less significant impact of the creation of the roadway, was the increased accessibility to looters which, contrary to the efforts of the landowners is still occurring (Haines, in prep.). The majority of the looting, including some of the largest trenches, however, appears to have been conducted prior to Pendergast's and Belenger's visit to the site (see Pendergast 1991).

Using this road as a dividing point the site is broadly referred to in terms of the North Complex and the South Complexes. Although work conducted during the 2007 and 2009 seasons resulted in the renaming, and in many cases naming, of the various complexes encountered using an alphabetic system, for the purposes of general discussion the site is still referred to in terms of the Northern Half and Southern Half.

History of Archaeological Investigations

The first known visit to Ka'Kabish by an archaeologist was in the early 1980's by David Pendergast, who visited briefly while working at Lamanai. Mention of the site is included in his discussion of the illicit digging in the region (Pendergast 1991). The site had been visited earlier by the British Geographical Survey team who placed an elevation datum on the top of one of the pyramids in an out-lying plazuela group but no reference can be found to them recognizing the area as a Maya ruin.

In the mid-1990s, Ka'Kabish was visited by archaeologists from the Maya Research Program (MRP), including this author, who produced a functional, although rudimentary, map of the site core documenting the noteworthy buildings (see Guderjan 1996). At that time a total of 27 structures (divided into two areas by the modern road) were documented (Guderjan 1996). This map formed the basis for the initial investigations at Ka'Kabish and, using it as a guide, the site was assessed in

2005 for its potential for further archaeological research.

Full-scale clearing and survey work began at the site in 2007 under the aegis of the Ka'Kabish Archaeological Research Project (KARP). The results of this work were reported in the Belize Archaeological Report of 2008 (Haines 2008a) and will not be repeated here except to say that during that time five architectural groups (identified alphabetically as A to E) with a combined total of 42 structures were identified. In 2009, research focused primarily on mapping the area of the site that lies immediately to the north of the aforementioned San Felipe-Indian Church road, and resulted in the mapping of the single plaza which forms the northern portion of the core zone. At this time another 15 structures were mapped – many of which were present, albeit in slightly different configurations on the original map – bringing the total number of mapped structures to 57, more than doubling the size of the site.

Structures on the north side were classified as Group-F and investigations during the 2009 field season revealed that the architectural arrangement of these buildings, like those on the south side, is more complex than originally believed. With the removal of the underbrush the previously disparate structures coalesced into clear pattern. All of the structures mapped, with one exception, were arranged around a clear plaza with steep drop offs on the east and north-west sides. A somewhat damaged ramp on the south side of the Plaza likely served as the original point of entry to the plaza. The south-eastern portion of the plaza appeared to be torn away, probably a result of the same road construction activity that removed sections of two of the buildings on the south side (see Haines 2008a, 2008b).

The presence of a clearly defined plaza was not surprising as, not only is this fairly typical at Maya sites, we had seen it in regards to the buildings on the south side. What did come as a surprise was the discovery that the nine structures on the east

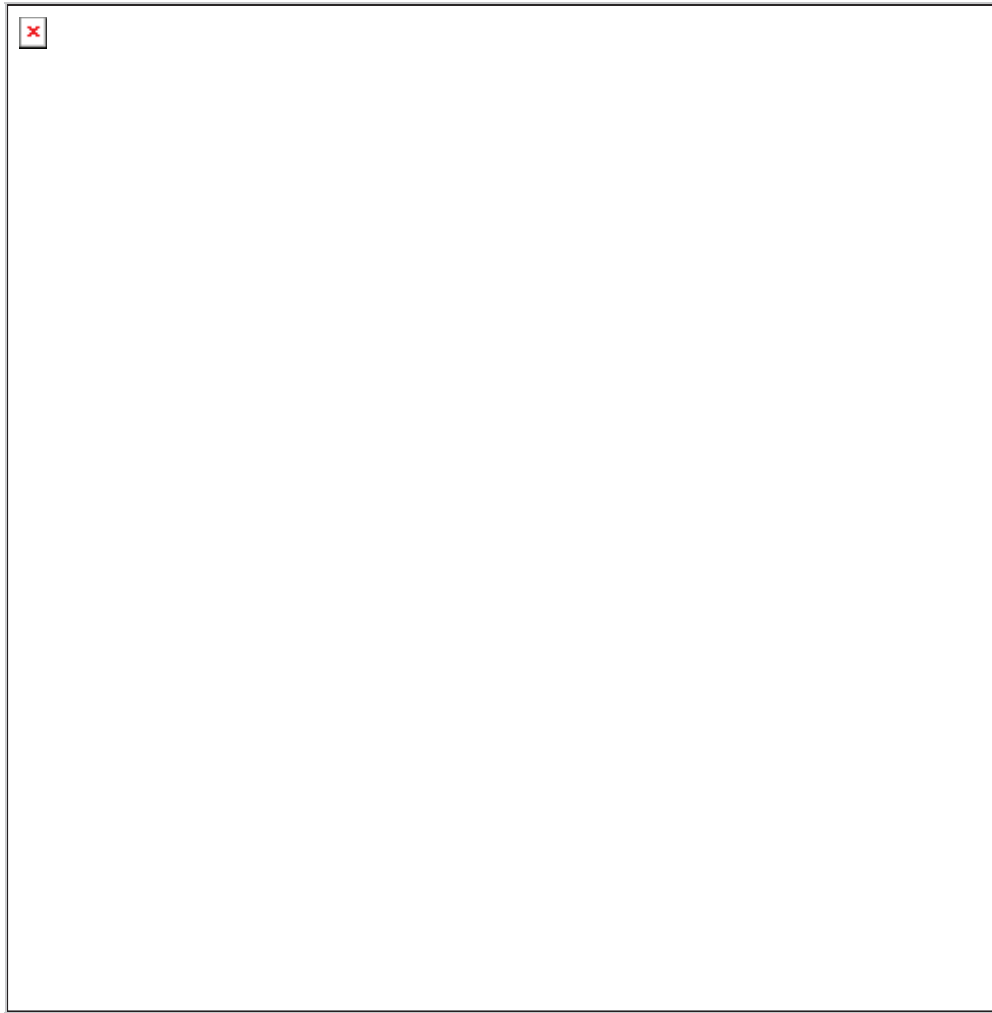


Figure 2. Map of Ka'Kabish.

side of the plaza were situated on a raised platform in an acropolis-like arrangement. A discussion of this grouping, as well as other significant structures located in Group F, will be the focus of the remainder of this paper.

Discussion of Structures

All of the structures mapped, with single exception, were determined to be associated as they were located on a single large plaza platform; consequently, all these structures were identified as belonging to Group F (Figure 2). The lone anomaly was a small, square outlying structure located in the forest to the south-east of the

acropolis. This structure may at one time have been located on the plaza surface, however, dense undergrowth and what appeared to be construction damage to the plaza, likely from the road, prevented a clear association from being made.

Group F Significant Plaza Structures

As one approaches the north group the first structures encountered are two pyramids (Structures F1 and F2 sequentially) each roughly 11 metres high. What makes these structures particularly noteworthy is that they are situated so closely to each other that they appear joined giving the outward impression of a buried Rio Bec-style temple-range building.

Guderjan reported that a looted vaulted tomb existed in each structure, however, these have yet to be re-located (Guderjan 1996:118).

These structures are located immediately to the north-west of the access ramp to the plaza; this access way channels people onto the plaza immediately to the east of these buildings. It is believed that these buildings were oriented in this direction as this would also face the acropolis. The western sides of these pyramids drop (albeit it negligibly) to a lower surface a scant metre below the plaza at this point. The plaza extends further to the north and west where it is ringed by three rather unremarkable, standard-looking range structures, and increasingly steeper plaza edges.

Group F – Acropolis Structures

Of greater note is the large platform that rises roughly three metres above the plaza floor and dominates the eastern side of Group F. The upper surface of this platform housed nine structures, arranged around all sides of the platform and in many cases merged with the back edges of the platform. Based on the arrangement of three temple pyramids (Structures FA-5, FA-6, and FA-8) arranged along the east side of the platform this area is currently believed to be an acropolis structure.

While these pyramidal structures exhibit certain similarities (i.e., the same east-west dimension [20 metres] and having the back of the structure merge with the edge of the acropolis forming a steep drop) they also demonstrate discrete collections of attributes that make them unique from one another. The front of the northern-most of the three pyramids (Structure FA-5) has a curved appearance suggestive of rounded corners. A rounded pyramidal structure was identified at the nearby Blue Creek Ruin (Haines 1995). Structure FA-6 appears to be a standard square temple-pyramid form and is distinct externally from its mates only in terms of its greater size. This structure, at approximately 27 metres wide and 9 metres tall, is roughly 10 metres wider and two

metres taller than each of its neighbours. The southern of the three pyramids (Structure FA-7) is also distinct in that it appears to have a small square structure abutting the front of the building. This appendage, which is approximately four metres lower than the main body of the pyramid, gives the structure a two-tiered effect. It is possible that this appended construction represents a later room added to the structure, similar to that found on Structure 21 at La Milpa (Hammond 2010 pers. comm.). Small structures appended to the front of temples also have been documented at Blue Creek where it appeared to have been used for ritual offerings (Driver 1999:27).

Two other structures that may also imply a ritual use for this platform are Structures FA-2 and FA-3. These structures, located in the northwest corner of the platform were discovered to be both similar in configuration (each is a rectangular structure 26 metres long) and in close, parallel proximity to each other (approximately 3 metres apart). It is speculated that these two buildings (Structures FA2 and FA3) may form a ball court. If so this would be the second court at the site, the first being found in Group D in the southern section of the site.

Structure FA-6 Tomb 1

Perhaps the most noteworthy discovery of the season resulted from the investigation of a tomb located deep inside Structure FA-6. Unfortunately, the tomb had been looted prior to its initial discovery in 1995 by the Maya Research Program. While the tomb lacked a body and mortuary offerings some valuable information could still be salvaged from the situation; in particular, valuable information about the architectural design and the potential political or social relationships of the individual(s) involved in its construction and use can still be gleaned from the remaining construction.

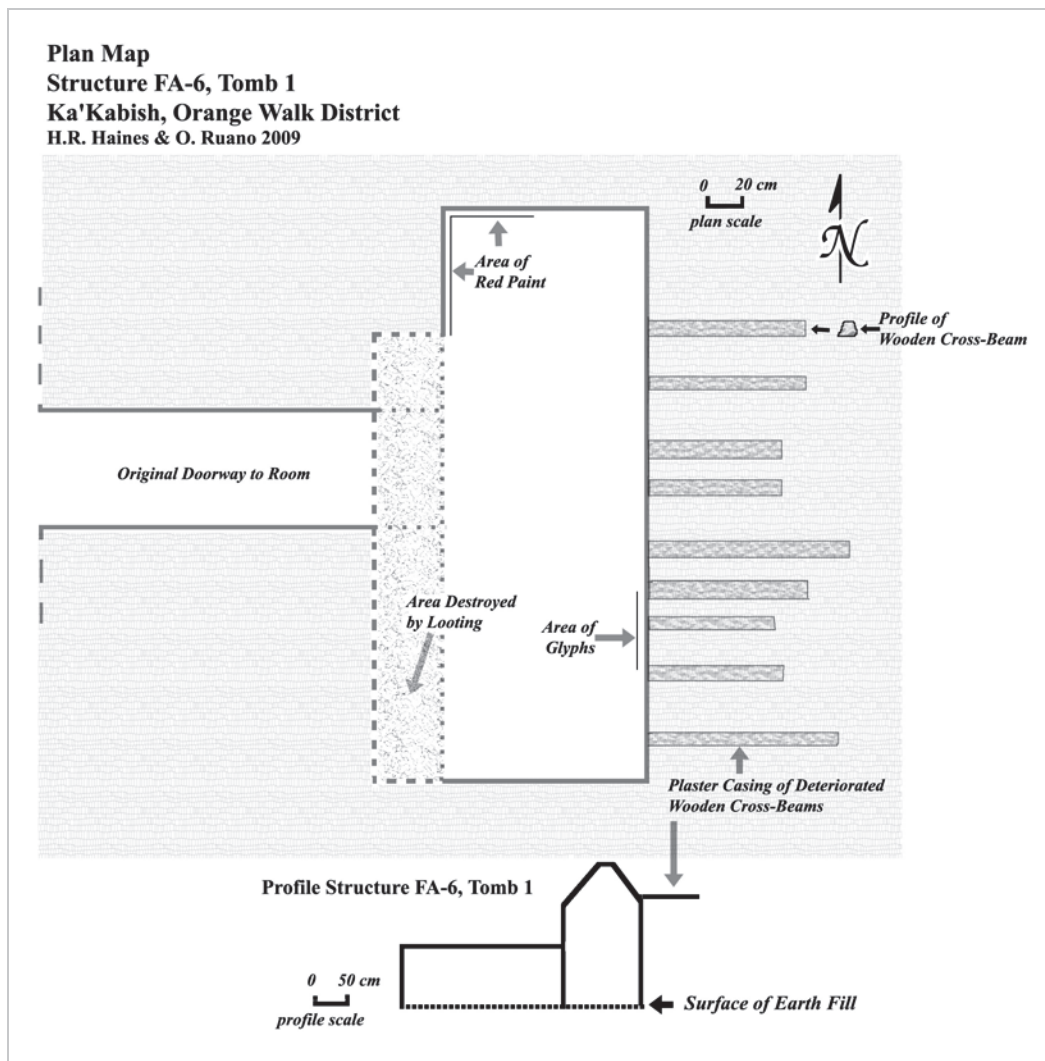


Figure 3. Plan Map of Tomb 1, FA-6.

Because it is situated on the east side of the building, the tallest in appearance due to the conjoining with the platform, the looters appear to have placed the tunnel at what they likely assumed was the mid-point of temple. In actual fact, the tunnel is quite low in the overall building configuration, entering the structure roughly at the same elevation as the current acropolis platform surface. The tunnel terminated at a small room that appears to have been used as tomb.

This room was quite spacious when compared to the previous tomb documented at Ka'Kabish (Haines 2008a). It measured roughly 3.5 metres north-south and 1.5

metres east west and was constructed with a corbelled vaulted ceiling. Several rows of voids were visible on the eastern wall of the vault. The interiors of these voids were lined with plaster, and impressions on the material indicated that they once held triangular shaped poles that have long since decayed.

To the west, opposite the looter's tunnel was a narrow passageway roughly 0.75 metres wide. The exposed portion of the tunnel was slightly less than one metre high, however, the original height of the passageway is unknown and may be considerably deeper depending on the nature and function of this passageway. The looters had continued excavating this

passageway to a distance of 2.5 metres, and only ceased their digging when the walls of the passageway ended.

The west wall of the room where the passageway connects to the room has been savagely destroyed to a depth of roughly half a metre, with portions of the wall littered around the room. Areas of the north and south walls had also been dug out, as had an area behind the west wall, suggesting that the looters may have been looking for, or removed, wall caches akin to the practice at Altun Ha in Tombs B-4/3 and B-4/4 (Pendergast 1982: 122-124, 130-136).

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

It is speculated, based on the passageway, that the structure may be a buried room that was re-entered and used at a later date as a tomb. This would account for the presence of both an, albeit narrow, entryway as well as the shaft in the roof. While it is possible that shaft was used for tomb re-entry (or "The Fire Enters His House" ritual), this type of behaviour is not documented from this area of Belize (see Stuart 1998 for a discussion of this ritual).

Visible in the shaft are a series of layers of different materials; charred wood chunks, obsidian, chert flakes, and snail shells, between which are thin layers of dirt and plaster flecks. This layering is consistent with that found at other tombs in the Maya area (Haines 1995; Guderjan 1991; Moholy-Nagy 1994, 1997; Trik 1963; Smith 1950, 1972). Burned wood taken from this shaft produced a calibrated C14 one-sigma date range of 417AD - 533AD with an intercept age of AD 475. While this date range is considered to accurately identify the period

when the shaft was constructed it is still unclear if the shaft is associated with construction of the tomb or a possible, but yet verified, re-entry activity.

The walls of the room appear to have been coated with red painted plaster and portions of this are found on the east wall and in the north-west corner. What is of particular note is that the east wall also appears to have been painted with dark red glyphs as is indicated by the remains of three glyph blocks (Figures 4 and 5). Christophe Helmke has proposed a tentative decipherment of the glyphs, and he believes that the glyphs conform to a nominal series, and perhaps provide the name of the individual that was lain to rest in the tomb (Helmke 2010, pers. comm.). Helmke's analysis of the spelling patterns indicate that the text was probably painted sometime before A.D. 747, and although no firmer means of dating the glyphs was found, this finding does dovetail with the C14 date recovered from the fill in the tomb shaft, which corresponds to the latter part of the Early Classic.

The combination of attributes (i.e., size, high vaulting, glyphs, passageway, and possible re-entry) are currently unlike any other tomb thus far documented at Ka'Kabish or in the immediate area. The overall impression of the tomb chamber corresponds most closely with the Painted Tomb Tradition noted at Rio Azul roughly 50 kilometres to the west. This design is significantly different from the first tomb documented by KARP in Structure D-5 (Haines 2008a). This tomb (Structure D-5 Tomb 1) appears to most closely resemble the cocoon tombs documented by Pendergast at Lamanai (Pendergast 1981: 38-39). Although both appear to date to the later facet of the Early Classic period they are clearly the products of different architectural programmes. The fact that they are architecturally distinct from each other, with one exhibiting features more closely paralleling those found in tombs in polities to the west, while the other mirrors a style previously known only at Lamanai to



Figure 4. Photo of Red Painted Glyphs in Tomb 1, FA-6.



Figure 5. Illustration of Red Painted Glyphs in Tomb 1, FA-6 (courtesy of C. Helmke)

the east, only adds to the enigmas at Ka'Kabish.

Discussion

While the 2009 exploration of the north side of the site did not expand the physical dimensions of the northern complex to the

same extent that the 2007 field season had done in the south it clarified the arrangement of the structures. The 2009 work delineated the northern architectural assemblage through the identification of plaza edges and the discovery that the structures on the eastern side, rather than being a dispersed

assortment of building, were not only part of a co-ordinated group but were arranged on a clearly defined acropolis-like platform.

Previous work at the site already has raised the possibility that Ka'Kabish was not a mere secondary administrative or minor centre bound to a larger primary centre assumed to be Lamanai. The size and scope of the architecture is clearly more in keeping with ideas of polity centres – albeit in this case one with a much smaller areal extent than its more famous cousins such as La Milpa, Lamanai, or Caracol. The discovery of an acropolis-like structure complete with a series of what appear to be mortuary temples arranged along the eastern side reinforces the idea that Ka'Kabish was a site with greater socio-political presence than previously believed.

The idea of Ka'Kabish as a completely independent capital, however, is hobbled by several factors, not the least of which is its close proximity to Lamanai, suggesting we must either reassess our ideas of polity size or look for other models to explain the role Ka'Kabish may have in the ancient Maya landscape. Several hypotheses derived from current ideas about ancient Maya socio-political organization are currently being entertained: (1) it was the centre for a mobile royal court from Lamanai; (2) it was the ideological or political seat for a heterarchically arranged polity with the economic seat being Lamanai (cf. Haines 2008a); (3) it was a suburban settlement for elites who may have 'worked' at Lamanai (cf. Haines and Patterson 2008); (4) it was an autonomous polity centre. Each of these models has something to recommend it as well as something to undermine its application.

In regards to the first model: it is possible that Ka'Kabish was the centre for a mobile royal court that moved to the city during the later part of the rainy season when Lamanai becomes excessively humid and mosquito ridden. The existence of mobile royal courts has been suggested for other parts of the Maya world (Ball and Taschek 2001). This model would explain the presence of ritual and elite architectural

arrangements that replicate those at Lamanai. It would also account for the presence of large temples and monumental structures at an otherwise small site. However, if Ka'Kabish was only a "summer palace", or temporary residence, then one would not expect to find an acropolis or rich tombs such as the ones indicated by the looted recorded at Ka'Kabish. The royalty, most likely, would be buried at the primary centre, either Lamanai or a hitherto unidentified capital.

The second theory, that Ka'Kabish was the ideological or political seat for a heterarchically arranged polity with the economic seat being Lamanai, would explain the presence of both royal or high status tombs and the monumental temple/ball court architectural grammar. However, Lamanai has tombs and a temple/ball court arrangement that is not only identical in layout to that at Ka'Kabish, but it exceeds those at Ka'Kabish in terms of size. If the former site was only an economic centre in a heterarchical system then one would expect that monumental ritual architecture would be lacking, or be considerably smaller than at the ritual capital; such is clearly not the case with Ka'Kabish and Lamanai.

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

It is also possible that Ka'Kabish was an autonomous centre with its own ruling elite and ritual activities. This would explain the monumental ceremonial architecture, elite

structures, and tombs. The high labour investment and elite ritual and residential architecture, particularly the presence of a ball court with marker, indicates that the elites at Ka’Kabish possessed many royal prerogatives. The close physical distance between Ka’Kabish and Lamanai is significantly less than what has been suggested for primary centres elsewhere in the Maya realm (Mathews 1991), and is closer to what has been suggested for causeway terminus groups (A. Chase and D. Chase 2001:274). Consequently, if Ka’Kabish was an autonomous centre then we must rethink what we have traditionally considered to be the geographic extent of polities for north-central Belize.

Another idea that was suggested to me recently by Debra Walker is that Ka’Kabish, not only corresponds to the Rio Azul tomb tradition but also may reflect its political trajectory – that of a small centre that rose to prominence rapidly during the Early Classic period before waning in the Late Classic period. This theory may be supported by the surprising discovery of a rich Late-Terminal Formative/Early Classic midden at the site coupled with a perplexing paucity of Late Classic material. While this lack of Late Classic material may be reflective of a larger political pattern, it may also reflect a sampling issue as the project has only just started excavations.

It is possible that the Ka’Kabish and Lamanai were engaged in a dynamic system that saw power shift between the two sites over time. The idea of inter-site relationships where power passed between sites within a region has been suggested previously for other area of the Maya world. The close relationship between Ka’Kabish and Lamanai cannot be discounted and is manifested perhaps most dramatically in the previously mentioned cocoon tomb.

Another possibility is that Maya polities more closely resemble city-states (see Marcus 1989, 1994; also Webster 1997); possessing a single ruling lineage situated in the sole urban centre these states would have a limited geographical or territorial extent under their immediate control. However,

this would not prevent them from creating hegemonies through the domination of other smaller city-states or polities, each with their own ruling elite.

I believe that the presence of hegemonic city-states is a political model that has not been adequately explored for the Maya area. The existence of autonomous, or semi-autonomous centres *dominated but not subjugated* by a larger or more power centre could explain the presence of elite architecture, monumental ritual constructions, and high-status tombs, as well as other indicators of royal prerogatives at smaller centres, while simultaneously accounting for close parallels in material culture between cities of disparate sizes. This model of hegemonic city-states could explain the architectural assemblage at Ka’Kabish as well as its close parallels in material cultural with that of Lamanai. Moreover, the variability found in the architectural programme and material assemblage could be accounted for if the site fell under the sway of different centres through time. It is this model, that Ka’Kabish was an autonomous centre dominated but not subjugated by Lamanai and/or other political capitals; that is currently favoured by this researcher.

Conclusions

What does this mean for Ka’Kabish in terms of status and power? Was it a leading cosmopolitan centre that attracted a series of diverse peoples? Or one that exercised power over its own polity and possibly beyond? Or was it a city that was subjected to the vagaries of the tides of political power that washed through the Maya lowlands? Status and power are not necessarily conflated and it is possible that the rulers of Ka’Kabish enjoyed a high level of social status – at least on the local level as evinced by the labour invested in creating the tombs – but that they exercised little power or influence in the grand scale of Maya politics and were instead allied to various different political factions through time.

If it seems like there are more questions than answers regarding

Ka'Kabish – it is because there are. Work at Ka'Kabish is still too new to answer these questions and our explorations of the north side have only served to make the history of Ka'Kabish more enigmatic. It is hoped that with the continued addition of new information we may one day decipher the true nature of the site of Ka'Kabish and understand the role this curious site played in the ancient socio-political landscape of North-Central Belize.

¹The term, now considered obsolete by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is generally defined as soil consisting of “a brown earth soil of humid or semi-arid grassland that has developed over calcareous parent material” (Allaby 2004).

²The idea that the site name may not be as inscribed in the currently literature is a possibility given that the name appears to have been strictly oral until the 1990s when it was writing down in an English language article (Pendergast 1991).

Acknowledgements. I would like to thank the Institute of Archaeology, NICH, for their assistance and permission to work in Belize. In particular I would like to thank Drs. Jaime Awe and John Morris for the advice and support. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Thomas Guderjan of the Maya Research Project for the loan of a vehicle, without which the 2009 work would not have been possible. My fellow archaeologists at the Lamanai Archaeology Project, Drs. Elizabeth Graham, Scott Simmons, and Linda Howie have been a great source of support and inspiration. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. James Aimers for being willing to take on the Ka'Kabish ceramics.

As archaeological work would not be possible without the co-operation of the local people who have as much invested in our work as we do, if not more, I would also like to thank the following individuals: Srs. Blanco, Che, and Magana for allowing access to their land; Roni Yanes, Oscar

Reyes, and the late and very lamented Jose Perez for their help to clear, map, and survey the site; Ben and Margaretha Dyck of the Blue Creek Community for helping with the logistics; and all the members of the various community that provided me with information and assistance in a variety of ways.

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