CONTENTS

Part I

CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVES

> Petén was surrounded by marginal areas, a hinterland within hinterlands.
>
> —NORMAN SCHWARTZ (1990: 39)

The three chapters in part I provide the cultural (including historical and linguistic) and environmental background contexts of the Itzas of Petén, northern Guatemala. Because peoples known in the literature as Itza lived throughout the Yucatán Peninsula, we begin with the greater Maya lowlands, a vast area of more than 200,000 km^2. The northern lowlands comprise the modern Mexican states of Campeche, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo. The southern lowlands encompass Petén, the Río Usumacinta drainage of Chiapas and Tabasco, Mexico, to the west, and Belize to the east. Northwestern Honduras in the southeast is accorded scant attention here.

The area of particular interest is the lakes region of the central Department of El Petén, which occupies about 36,000 km^2 or nearly 14,000 mi^2 (Schwartz 1987: 165, 253). Through the eighth century AD, Petén along with adjacent areas was the heartland of Classic Maya civilization, known for its pyramids and palaces of stone, elaborate mortuary ceremony, stelae and altars carved with hieroglyphic texts and dates calculated by multiple calendars, and the political institution of *k'ul* or *k'uhul ajawlel* (sacred, holy, or divine lordship). During the Late Postclassic period and into the twentieth century, however, much of this area was largely unpopulated.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the cultural and natural environments of the central Petén lakes region. Culturally, the Itzas are one of several groups with differing social and linguistic identities and, as is evident from Spanish documents, often incompatible political agendas. The Contact-period Itzas of Petén spoke the Itzaj dialect of the Yukatekan family of Mayan languages (chapter 2), but apparently a rather archaic form of it. Itzaj is endangered today but is still spoken in the community of San José on the northwestern shore of Lake Petén Itzá. The environment of the Petén Itzas can be contrasted most dramatically with that of their northern relatives by its richness, particularly in terms of biological productivity and access to water. Lake Petén Itzá, the largest body of water in the Maya heartland, has long been of interest to natural scientists for its long record of Holocene environmental and anthropogenic changes (chapter 3).

Irrespective of the underlying conflicts among the Postclassic inhabitants of the central Petén lake basins, they were likely united by shared cultural perceptions of, and practices in, their tropical lacustrine environment: "the marshlands; the aquatic foodstuffs; the reeds/rushes; the reed mats produced there, upon which both commoners and nobles sat; the canoes; the muddy earth; the canals" and other local features (Megged 2010: 186, writing about Lake Texcoco, central Mexico).

1

INTRODUCTION

The Itza Mayas and the Petén Itza Mayas, Their Environments and Their Neighbors

Prudence M. Rice and Don S. Rice

The lowland peoples known as Itza represented alliances of politically powerful family lines rather than a single biological or demographic unit. They and their ancestors dominated vast swathes of the Yucatán Peninsula from the late eighth through the middle fifteenth centuries in the north and through the seventeenth century in Petén in the south. Political control at the Itzas' two major northern cities, Chich'en Itza and Mayapán—and probably also at their southern island capital of Tayza—was underwritten, at least in part, by a politico-religious ideology centered on a Mesoamerican feathered-serpent supernatural known as Quetzalcoatl (Nahuatl, Mexico), K'uk'ulcan (Yukateko), and Gucumatz (highland K'iche', Guatemala). Economically, both northern and southern Itzas participated in and variably controlled parts of extended commercial networks that moved bulk and luxury goods overland (e.g., Rice and Rice 2016: 17–28) and along lucrative coastal routes stretching around the peninsula from central Mexico to Honduras. Wide-ranging trade contacts accessed turquoise from central and northern Mexico and gold from southern Central America (Andrews et al. 1988; Coggins and Shane 1984).

THE MAYA LOWLANDS: ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVES

Geologically (see chapter 3), the Yucatán Peninsula is a limestone shelf composed of porous, interbedded limestone ($CaCO_3$) and

dolomitic limestone (Ca-MgCO$_3$) interspersed with gypsum (CaSO$_4$) and marl. These sediments were deposited when the area was covered with seawater; the peninsula began to emerge by slow uplift about 30 million years ago (Weidie 1985).

Physiographically, the interior peninsula is an elevated karst plateau: bedrock characterized by subterranean drainage, sinkholes, caves, and haystack hills. From north to south, the karst rises from 150 m to ~400 m above sea level and covers most of northern Petén. The plateau terminates at a steep cliff where the terrain drops into the "Petén basin" of the broad, low Río San Pedro Mártir drainage (IGN 1970; Morley 1937–38, V: plate 179; Wadell 1938: 337). This basin stretches eastward from west of Paso Caballos to the Río Hondo and associated fault lines (figure 1.1). South of the central Petén lakes the terrain rises again through karst hills to the sierras or mountains of the Guatemalan highlands and, in the east-southeast, the granites and diorites of the Maya Mountains (IGN 1970).

The peninsula's vast shoreline, with its coasts, estuaries, and river mouths, gives access to marine resources of the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. The interior is punctuated by seasonal and permanent water bodies, including sinkholes or *cenotes* (Yuk. *dz'onot*). Little surface water or drainage exists in the north (see, e.g., Perry et al. 2003) and only the Río Champotón in the west, around 28 km long, is navigable. In the south, the hydrography includes lakes of various sizes and drainage basins of extensive river systems flowing east through Belize and northwest through Chiapas and Tabasco, Mexico, as well as the subterranean drainage of the karstic platform.

The lowlands experience a rainy season peaking between July and November (more broadly, late May into January), with the remaining months sunny and generally dry. Rainfall is highest in the southeastern lowlands (southern Belize, southeastern Petén) and decreases to the northwest around Mérida. Between 2000 and 2012, average monthly rainfall at Flores Island, Petén, ranged from 9 mm in April to 93 mm in July (http://www.worldweatheronline.com/Flores-weather-averages/Peten/GT.aspx). Average monthly high temperatures range from 26°C/79°F (December–February) to 32°C/90°F (May), although daily temperatures may be much higher; average lows vary from 17°C/62°F (January) to 22°C/72°F (June through September) (https://www .worldweatheronline.com/Flores-weather-averages/Peten/GT.aspx).

The peninsula's forest cover grades along a similar cline as rainfall, with high forest—trees greater than 15 m tall (FAO 1970)—in the south varying to semi-xerophytic, scrubby vegetation in the northwest. Tall, semi-deciduous tropical forests include the majestic ceiba (kapok; *Ceiba pentandra*) and the commercially valuable mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) and logwood (*Haematoxylum campechianum*), plus *cedro* (*Cedrela mexicana*), *ramon* (*Brosimum alicastrum*[1]), various figs (*Ficus* spp.), and many other trees in the middle and upper stories. Palms and vines dominate the understory. The forest was regularly—in times past and present—cut and burned as part of the swidden agricultural cycle, although ceibas, the Mayas' "world tree," were left standing. The lowlands were heavily logged by Europeans beginning in the eighteenth century, logwood and mahogany being favored species. Natural (non-anthropogenic)

FIGURE 1.1. *The Maya area (eastern Mesoamerica), showing physiography, major river systems, the lakes region (see figure 1.3), modern political boundaries, modern and colonial cities, major archaeological sites, and other features.*

oak-savanna grasslands are also found in the area, with several patches around Lake Petén Itzá and a much larger swath south of the hills bordering its southern basin (Rice and Rice 1979).

Terrestrial resources important in lowland Maya economies include forest products such as deer and feline pelts and teeth, game meats, feathers, honey and beeswax, allspice (*Pimenta dioica*), fruits and nuts (sapote, mamey, cherries), resins (e.g., copal; *Protium copal*), and wood for manufactured products (canoes, paddles, lintels, stools, clubs, scepters, effigies, etc.) (see Voorhies 1982: tables 1 and 2).[2] Lakes and rivers yield abundant fish, snails, waterfowl, and turtles. Cultigens included maize, beans, annatto or *achiote* (*Bixa orellana*), cacao (*Theobroma cacao*), cotton (for thread and manufactured textiles), and also dyes (e.g., indigo or *añil*; *Indigofera tinctoria*). Unfortunately these goods are perishable, and in the hot, damp climate of Petén most do not survive for centuries awaiting archaeological recovery. Locally available non-perishable goods include chert and chalcedony for chipped-stone tools, limestone and other stones (granite in the Maya Mountains) for ground-stone tools (e.g., manos and metates) and sculpture, and clay and minerals for pottery and pigments, including the special palygorskite clay used for Maya Blue near Lake Yaxhá (Cecil 2010).

WHO WERE THE ITZAS? ETYMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Who were the Itzas? The Itzas were, in some senses, creations of history: their identities were constructed and reconstructed over time by themselves and others, indigenous and foreign, with multiple perspectives and biases. Indigenous sources include archaeological and hieroglyphic data and the late northern "prophetic histories" known as the *Books of Chilam Balam* (see chapter 5). Spanish documents were penned by zealous military and religious personnel with contrasting views on the intransigent and "barbarian" Itzas, but both shared ethnocentric Christian perspectives and goals as well as an often self-justificatory authorial intent. *Itza* became little more than a label for a duplicitous, implacable "other." Scholars using these materials labeled the Itzas as Mayas, "Toltecs," "Mexicans," and "Putuns." Thus the "who" question can be answered in several ways. One is through etymology; another is through cultural history and examination of these sources, as discussed in part II.

The etymology and meaning of the term *itza* are perennial topics of discussion in Itza hagiography (see Jones 1998: 428–29nn8–9). Debates continue partly because sixteenth-century and later Spanish writers mentioned the Itzas of Petén and Yucatán using at least 21 orthographic variants (see Means 1974: appendix 1). One variable is the initial vowel (Itza or Ytza); others are seen in the plurals—Itzaob, Itzáex, Ytzaex[3]—and in the use of the masculine noun classifier *aj* (*a, ah*), as in Ajiça, Ahiza, Ahizaes, or Ahitzaes. Additional variants include the consonant *s* instead of *z* (Itza/Itsa) and diacritics: a glottal (Itsa') or Spanish accent (Itzá).

Other considerations pertain to the use of "Itza" to refer to a people versus a language versus a place. In nominal phrases *itza* may be a lineage reference or a title. Itza was a Postclassic patronym[4] in the Maya lowlands, and a highland Kaqchikel king even had a son named Ah Itza (Tozzer 1941: 20n123, citing Ralph Roys 1940). As a language in Petén it is known as Itzaj (chapter 2; Hofling with Tesucún 1997). As a toponym, it is

not clear if Itza referred to the island capital or to a larger geopolitical space (or both). Preceded by the locative *ta* '[at the] place of', the nominal becomes variably Taiza, Taitza, Tayza/Tayca/Tayça, Ta Itzha, and Tayasal/Tayazal, which (except for Tayasal) were sometimes used to refer to the province of the Itzas rather than to the island (e.g., Cortés 1986: 372–73; cf. Díaz del Castillo 1998: 472). The colonial Mexican historian Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl referred to both the island capital and the province of the Itzas as Tiácac (Castellanos Cambranes 1997: 4n7).

Two morphemes are of interest: *its/its'/itz* and *tza*. Concerning the latter, in Classic hieroglyphic texts in Petén *itza* is spelled with /'i/ (T679) infixed in /tza/ (T699), whereas at Chich'en Itza the nominal is spelled with /hi/ (T60) atop the /tza/ sign, and a final /'a/ (T229) may or may not be present (Voss 2001: 158; see also Boot 2005: 174). In fact, an early name of the Caracol structure (and/or perhaps Chich'en itself) may have been Tzaj or Tza' (Pérez de Heredia Puente and Bíró 2017). In glyphic form, *tza* visually resembles the cross-sectioned bowl-like "half-period" glyph (figure 1.2a, b) and may have the superfix *ma*, equivalent to *noh/noj* 'great', perhaps from Mixe-Zoquean (Macri and Looper 2003: 259, 292).

The *its/its'/itz* morpheme "is related to ideas of wisdom, magic, occult power" (Barrera Vásquez 1991: 272) and is frequently combined or associated with *a'/ha'* 'water'. In Kaqchikel Mayan *itz* or *ajitz* refers to a shaman (Jones 1998: 249n8; see also Porter 1988). In Colonial Yukateko, *its/its'/itz* referred to various fluid secretions (tears, sweat, dew, nectar, resins, sap) and to "sorcery, witchcraft; water-witch" (Barrera Vásquez 1991: 271–72; McDonald and Stross 2012: 98–100; Piña Chan 1980), for example in water divination. Teobert Maler (1910: 164; see also Jakeman 1946), drawing on presumed Nahuatl roots of *itza*, thought the term read in part "place of water" (Rockmore 1998: 5–6). *Itza* has been considered a "hydrographic toponym" meaning *emanada agua* ("water that has emanated from or come out [of some thing or place]") or, more broadly, a body of water such as a lake or cenote (Voss 2001: 158–59, 161). Thus *its'*, perhaps with *ha'*, may have been a name for Lake Petén Itzá: "enchanted water" (Schele and Mathews 1998: 362n27, citing N. Grube). To the southwest in Lacandon country, a name for Lake Petha is Itsanokuh (Palka 2009: 272): *itsa* + *no/noj* ('great') + *kuh* ('holy'). The agentive form *itsam* "signifies the magic of water, one who has and exercises occult powers in/of the water" (Barrera Vásquez 1991: 272).[5]

Itsam also recalls the reptilian-crocodilian earth symbol (Taube 1989) and the paramount creator deity, Itzamna (also the inventor of writing).[6] Similarly, the Classic-period title or epithet *its'at* (i-tz'a-ti) is usually translated as "sage, artist, scribe" with the general sense of "wisdom, knowledge, astuteness" and may be visually identified by a scribal headdress (Barrera Vásquez 1991: 273; Graña-Behrens 2012; Macri and Looper 2003: 98, 222; Makemson 1951: 115). The Classic Mayas maintained strong associations among creator gods, artistic creativity (especially painting and pottery making), and elite pursuits: the Paddler Gods, who placed the first of three throne-stones to begin cosmic creation, carried the title *its'at* (Reents-Budet 1998: 77). Painting and other kinds of creativity and artisanry were among the accomplishments of royal elites,
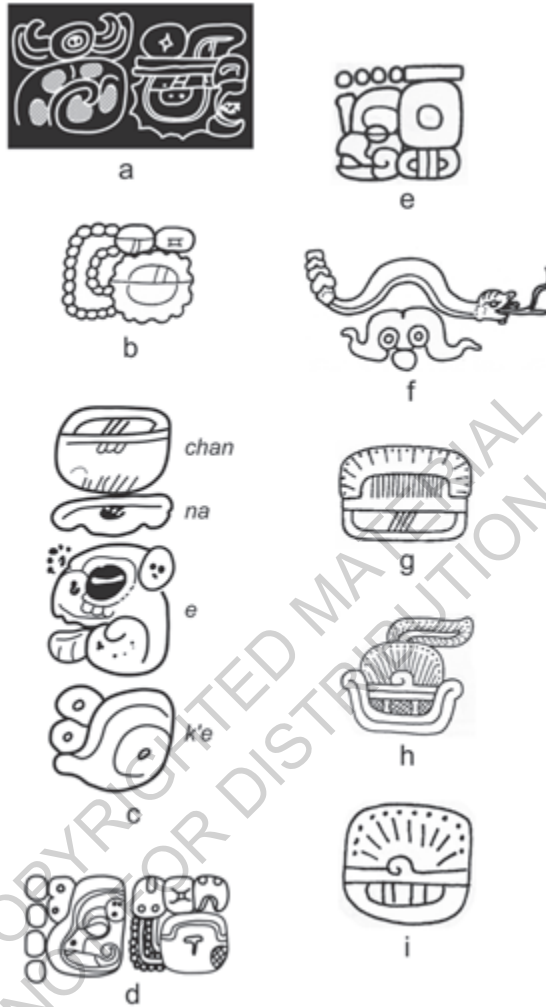
FIGURE 1.2. *Classic hieroglyphs and collocations relating to the Itzas (all redrawn from originals): (a) "child of the Itza lord" incised on the support of an unprovenienced Early Classic black cylinder tripod, K6417); (b) the Itza Emblem Glyph on Motul de San José Stela 2 (Tokovinine and Zender 2012: figure 2.1a); (c–f) glyphic "spellings" of Kan Ek': (c) unprovenienced carved vessel, K4909 (reading by M. Zender); (d) on Seibal Stela 10 with the Ik'a' (Motul de San José) Emblem Glyph (Schele and Mathews 1998: figure 5.13a); (e) "Kan Ek' Ho' Pet," identified with Ucanal on Seibal Stela 11, AD 830 (Schele and Mathews 1998: figure 5.9); (f) from pier 5 in the south ballcourt temple, Chich'en Itza (Schele and Mathews 1998: figure 5.13e); (g–i) puh/puj ("reeds") glyph: (g) (Macri and Looper 2003: 193); (h) from stucco frieze at Acanceh, Yucatán (Stuart 2000: figure 15.27b, left); (i) pu glyph, "reed, cattail" (Stuart 2000: figure 15.27b, right).*

a role seen in characters of the *Popol Vuh* creation myth (Tedlock 1996). Thus, the term *its'at* in dedication texts—the Primary Standard Sequence (PSS) or Standard Dedicatory Formula (SDF)[7]—on elaborately decorated pottery vessels indicated the painters thought to be members of royal families working in palace ateliers (MacLeod and Reents-Budet 1994; Rice 2009c).

A distant relationship between *itza* and the Nahuatl word *itz* ('obsidian, mirror') suggests further insights. The serpent-footed Maya God K/K'awil, patron of dynasties, and Mexican god Tezcatlipoca wore smoking mirrors on their foreheads; God K/K'awil was often depicted in profile in manikin scepters and obsidian eccentrics, and the avatar of Tezcatlipoca was Itzli ('obsidian') (Rice 2012). Mirrors were frequently indicated by, or decorated with, an *ak'bal* sign, meaning night or darkness but also *itz* (Macri and Vail 2009: 207), and mirrors were often used in divination (see Olivier 2003; Ringle et al. 1998: 226n33; Taube 1992: 31–34).

By Colonial times, the term *itza* had opposing senses, which were undoubtedly invoked and purposefully manipulated by writers of various texts. On the one hand, there are longstanding linguistic associations with wisdom and knowledge. But this relationship can be extended to occult knowledge, such as witchcraft, and the Itzas admitted being "sorcerers" (Caso Barrera and Aliphat 2006b: 294; see Porter 1988). In addition, they were often denigrated in the indigenous *chilam b'alam* books (and in Spanish writings) because of their sorcery, sodomy, and ferocity, including warfare and alleged cannibalism.

The origins of the lowland Maya groups known as Itza in the Contact and Colonial periods are largely lost under multiple layers of reworked mythic histories (chapter 5). A significant early point of contention was whether the Itzas were descendants of the occupants of the Classic Maya cities (Jakeman 1946) or foreigners—Mexicans/Putuns/"Mexicanized" Mayas—who built Chich'en Itza (Thompson 1945, 1970). More recently, especially with advances in epigraphy, more excavation data, and renewed interest in migration theory (chapter 4), scholars are returning to the former view (e.g., Kowalski and Kristan-Graham 2011; Lincoln 1990; Schele and Mathews 1998: 202–3). Given the aquatic associations, it is significant that the ancient homeland of some Itzas was in the western Lake Petén Itzá basin (Boot 1997a, 2005).

THE ITZAS OF PETÉN

The Lake Petén Itzá Basin

The central Petén lakes region encompasses a chain of eight lakes extending 80 km east–west in an area of 100–300 masl elevations (figure 1.3; table 1.1). Formed along a fault in the limestone platform at roughly 17° north latitude, they are closed drainages fed by rainfall and groundwater, and characterized by steep northern escarpments and gently sloping southern margins (chapter 3). Small, mostly seasonal streams empty into them. Many smaller water bodies—*lagunetas*, *juleques* (small water-filled sinkholes or cenotes), *aguadas* (waterhole, seasonally filled depressions),
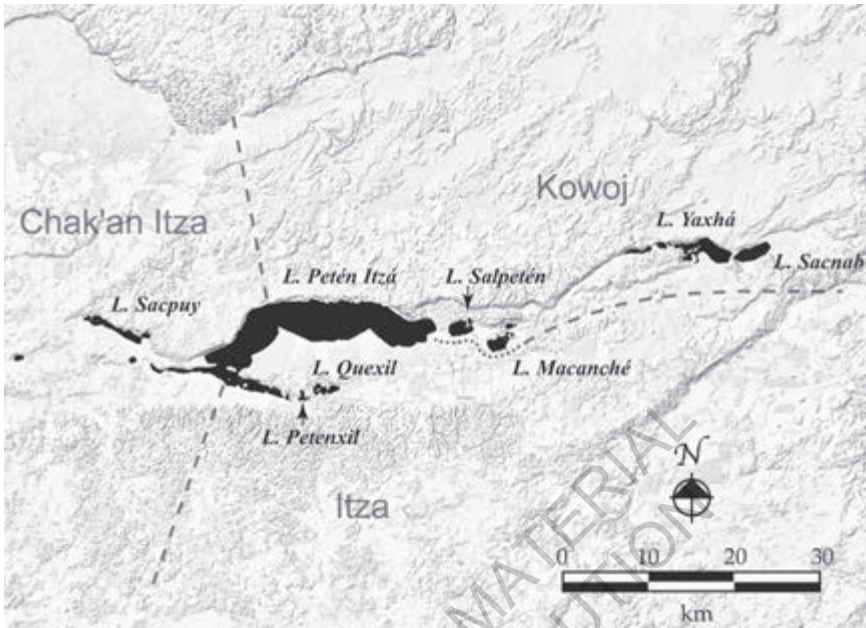
FIGURE 1.3. *The "chain" of eight central Petén lakes, showing terrain and the approximate area and boundaries of ethnopolitical territories during the Contact and Colonial periods (after Jones 1989: map 2). Note steep scarp on the northern basin edges and hills south of Lake Petén Itzá.*

ak'alches (wooded swamps), and *bajos* (swamps, usually seasonal)—dot the adjacent mainland.

The basin of Lake Petén Itzá (elev. 110 masl in 2015), the largest in the chain, covers an area of roughly 100 km². The lake's two sub-basins, north and south, are separated by two peninsulas, Tayasal and Candelaria. The large, deep (c. 165 m), northern body of water extends roughly 26 km (16 mi) straight-line distance from the Ensenada San Jerónimo on the west to the eastern edge near Remate. The much smaller and shallower southern lake basin has west and east extensions stretching about 15 km (9 mi): the narrow western "finger," south of the Candelaria Peninsula, is about 7 km long; the shorter, broader eastern "thumb" south of the Tayasal Peninsula encompasses numerous small islands,[8] including the Itza capital of Tayza (Flores Island) (figure 1.4). Water depths around Flores vary from 6 to 26 m (Hansen 1997a: 8).

Tiny Lakes Petenxil (elev. 116 m) and Quexil (120 m), just beyond the eastern thumb, were joined to the main lake by ancient canals easily traversed by canoe (Rice 1996). Vestiges of raised fields can be seen between the eastern tip of Lake Petén Itzá and Lake Petenxil, and at the shallow southeast edge of Lake Petenxil. More such agricultural engineering likely existed in the area but is now silted over by the continual lake level fluctuations (see chapters 9, 14).

TABLE 1.1. Names of the central Petén lakes

Lake	Other Names Or Spellings
Sacnab	Yacanab
Yaxhá	Yasja, Yaxa
Macanché	?
Salpetén	Sacpetén, Sucpeten, Petensuc, Aquioc
Petén Itzá	Noj-uk'ul, Chaltuna, Chaltunja, Lago San Andrés
Petenxil	Petench'el
Quexil	Equexil, Eckixil, Ek'el-xiw, Aquegil
Sacpuy	Cacpuy, Cazpui, Zacpui, Zacpuy, Seipuy, Ceypui

Several small streams (*ríos*, *riachuelos*) empty into Lake Petén Itzá. In the east, the Ríos Ixlú and Ixpop drain areas south and east of the main lake body and the Río Pixoy or Pixoyal on the west flows into the lake's small, narrow, southwestern finger. Two smaller streams flow through the modern towns of San Benito and Santa Elena on the southern shore of the lake opposite Flores.

The water levels of the central Petén lakes vary within annual cycles determined by rainy season precipitation, runoff, and evaporation. However, it is the unpredictable multidecadal cycles of 4–5-m rises and falls of the lake waters that most seriously affect the modern (and presumably also ancient) settlement histories of the islands, peninsulas, and shorelines of these basins (see chapter 14). The reasons for the fluctuations are unknown, and the role of the underlying karst in both seepage and groundwater inputs is not well understood. Changes are commonly linked to shifts in the lithology of the underlying porous limestone and blockage/drainage of subterranean water flow, and are sometimes attributed to movements related to earthquakes in the highlands and elsewhere.

Classic-Period Textual References

The temporal origins of the Petén Itzas—that is, the earliest people who may have self-identified as Itza in the southern lowlands—are unclear. Some Late Classic occupants of central Petén identified themselves as such (Boot 1995, 1997a, 1997b) and others might have migrated (back) into the area from the north in the Early Postclassic (table 1.2; see chapter 5).

Classic-period political identities were expressed in part through Emblem Glyphs (EGs; Barthel 1968; Berlin 1958; Marcus 1976), although exactly what an EG signified is still debated. The collocation appears to be a title denoting a "place of rulership," combining a personal title (*ajaw* or *k'ujul ajaw*) with a toponym (name of a geographic place). However, it is unclear whether the personal title refers to a specific ruler, a
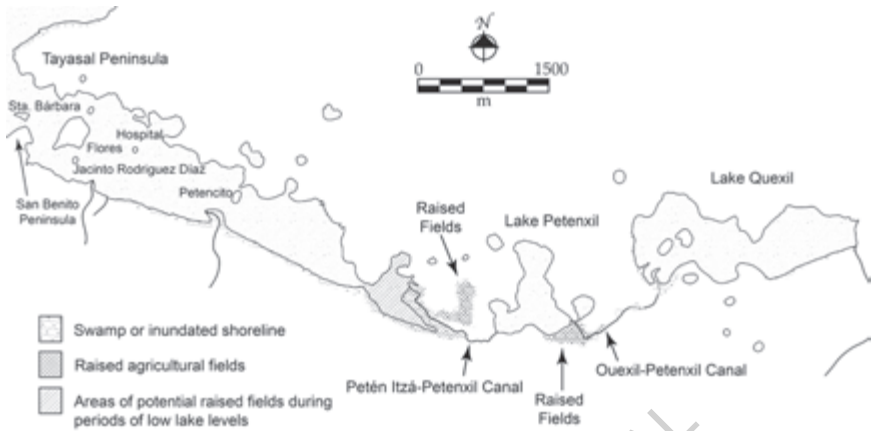
FIGURE 1.4. *The small eastern "thumb" of Lake Petén Itzá's southern basin, showing named islands, small streams feeding into the lake, and canals and raised fields extending east to Lakes Petenxil and Quexil. Lepete Island, not shown, is just west of the Tayasal Peninsula, and the two tiny islands north of San Benito, Pedregal and San Simeón, also are not shown. (See also figures 9.1 and 9.2.)*

particular dynasty or "royal house," or that dynasty's place of origin, and thus whether the EG refers to a single city/site or a greater polity (Bíró 2012b; Tokovinine 2008: 162–68). Moreover, a particular EG may be claimed by multiple cities, and some EGs and toponyms may refer to mythical places.

Itza and Kan Ek′ Nominals

Scattered evidence suggests that an Itza toponym and the name/title *Kan Ek′*—that of the Contact-period Petén Itza ruler—was recognized over a wide area in the southern lowlands in the Late Classic period, and possibly also in the Early Classic (figure 1.2; table 1.3; Boot 1997a, 2005: 35–41). The earliest textual reference to *itza* known to date comes from an unprovenienced Early Classic carved black cylinder tripod, where it appears as "*itza ajaw*" (figure 1.2a). Motul de San José Stela 2 (c. 771) shows the Itza toponym as an EG and refers to a lord from Itzimte (figure 1.2b; Tokovinine and Zender 2012: 55). And a possible reference to Itza′ (as people and/or place) appears on the Yaxchilan (Chiapas) Hieroglyphic Stairway, dated c. 796–800 (Tokovinine and Zender 2012: 56).

The name or title *Ajaw Kan Ek′* translates as "Lord Serpent Star"—Yukateko *kan* or Ch'olan *chan* 'serpent'; *ek′* 'star'—but it could have other meanings (e.g., "Sky Star"). The hieroglyphic "spellings" of *kan/chan* are based on substitutable homophonic signs meaning four (four dots; *kan/chan*), serpent (*kan/chan*), yellow or precious (*k′an*), or sky (*k′aan*) (table 1.4; Boot 2005: 40–41). *Ek′* may appear as "star, Venus" or "black, dark" (Boot 2005: 136–42; Schele and Mathews 1998: 244–45, 254).

TABLE 1.2. Chronology of the Itza region of Petén

Period	AD/BC	Gregorian Dates
Modern	AD	1970–
"La Chiclería"[a]		1890s–1970
Republican		1821–1890s
Colonial		1697–1821
(Mission)		(1697–~1750)
Contact		1525–1697
Late Postclassic		1400–1525
Middle Postclassic		1200–1400
Early Postclassic		950/1000–1200
Terminal Classic		800–950/1000
(Epiclassic[b])		700/800–900/1050
Late Classic		600–800
Early Classic		200–600
Late/Terminal Preclassic	BC	400/300 BC–AD 200
Middle Preclassic		900/800–400/300
Late Early Preclassic		~1100?–900/800

[a] Schwartz (1990: 137–98). See also Hernández (2008).
[b] In northern lowlands.

TABLE 1.3. Occurrences of *Itza* in Classic lowland inscriptions

Location	Object	Inscription	Date
Unprovenienced	Cylinder tripod	*Une Itza Ajaw*	Early Classic
Motul de San José	Stela 2	Itza Emblem Glyph	771
Motul de San José	Stela 1	*K'uhul Itza Ajaw Hun Tzak Tok'*	810
Chich'en Itza Caracol	Tenoned Disk	*Itza Ajaw*	?
Chich'en Itza Caracol	Stela 1	*Ah B'alun K'awil Ta' Itza*	885/886–889/890

The Kan Ek' name or title appears on sixth-century Stela D at Pusilhá in southern Belize (Boot 2005: 41–43; Van Akkeren 2012). On Seibal Stela 10 the name is spelled "4-*'e-k'e*"—four dots with a reptile (iguana?) head—and appears with the Ik'a' EG as one of four at the 10.1.0.0.0 (AD 849) period ending (figure 1.2d; Tokovinine and Zender 2012: 48). On Seibal Stela 11, the nominal is "Kan Ek' Ho' Pet, he of Ucanal" (figure 1.2e). PSS texts on two unprovenienced Late Classic black-and-white vessels (Kerr n.d.: nos. K4387 and K4909) and a carved cylinder (K8732) refer to a Chan/Kan Ek' as the vessels' owner in association with the EG of Xultun, northeast

TABLE 1.4. Late Classic and Terminal Classic hieroglyphic "spellings" of *Kan Ek'*

Inscription	Site	Place	Date (AD)	Comment
FOUR-'**e**-k'**e**	Pusilhá	Stela D	c. 593–594	Supervised event
FOUR-'**e**-k'**e**	Xultun(?)	Kerr #4387	c. 750–900	PSS[a], workshop
SKY-**na** 'e k'**e**	Xultun(?)	Kerr #4909	c. 750–900	PSS[a], workshop
SKY-**na** 'e k'**e**	Xultun(?)	Kerr #8732	c. 750–900	PSS[a], workshop
Serpent with star signs	Xultun	Stela 24	c. 750–900	Held by ruler
SKY-**na**-STAR	Yaxchilan	Stela 10	766	
SKY-STAR	Yaxchilan	Stela 21	766	Capture of Motul de San José lord
SERPENT-**na**-STAR	Ek Balam		c. 770	
SKY-BIRD-STAR	Ek Balam		c. 814	
FOUR-['**e**]k'**e**	Seibal	Stela 11	830	An Ucanal lord oversaw arrival
FOUR-['**e**]k'**e**	Seibal	Stela 10	849	With Ik'a' Emblem Glyph
SERPENT-STAR	Chich'en Itza	S. Ballct. Temple, Pier C4	c. 864–881	
SKY-**na**-STAR	Chich'en Itza	Monjas, L1	c. 880	

Source: Boot (2005: 180). For Kerr numbers, see http://research.mayavase.com/kerrmaya.html.

[a] Primary Standard Sequence

of Tikal.[9] On K8732 (figure 1.2c) it is a complex collocation with the 4-*e-k'e* spelling. At El Peru/Waka' west of Tikal, the artist who carved Stela 34 (dated AD 692) signed his name as Kan Ek' Balam (http://research.famsi.org/montgomery_selects. php?image_number=284).

In Yucatán, new readings of the inscriptions at Ek Balam and Chich'en Itza record the presence of one or more individuals bearing these nominals. At Ek Balam, Mural A of the Mural of the 96 Glyphs refers to the "arrival" of an individual named Chak Jutuw Chan Ek' on a day 11 Eb in 770, just before the completion of a K'atun 13 Ajaw in 771. This person, a *k'uhul ajaw*, also holds the poorly understood title "north k'alomte" (Boot 2005: 142; Lacadena García-Gallo 2003: 110).[10] Mural C of Room 29-sub refers to another arrival of an individual with the same name/title in 814, 40 years later. At Chich'en Itza, the South Temple of the Great Ballcourt has a colonnade of six carved-stone piers or pillars. One of the piers shows an elaborately attired warrior figure with a carved name above his head: a snake over a star sign, reading *Kan Ek'* (figure 1.2f; Schele and Mathews 1998: 244, figure 6.43). Kan Ek' is presumably among the city's founding lineages, and two objects cached in the Caracol structure refer to Itza (Boot 2005: 136–39).

Another patronym of interest is *Kokom*, that of the leading lineage or *ch'ib'al* of the northern Itza alliance (Gubler 2000/2001). *Kokom* is a Mopan and Southern Lacandon

word for "vine" (http://www.utexas.org/site/cilla3/Hofling_CILLA_III.pdf), which is depicted on the Temple of the Warriors at Chich'en Itza (Kristan-Graham 1989). A text on a Late Classic polychrome vase from the site of Buenavista del Cayo, in western Belize, displays a "doubled *ko* sign and dotted *mo*" suggesting a reading of "*kokom*" (Houston et al. 1992: 507n3; Tokovinine 2008: 248). *Kokom* may be the ancient name of that site, which was burned by Naranjo in the late seventh century (Tokovinine 2006: 378). Or, the term may refer to a hereditary title or office ("head of administration, auditor") based on *kokom* 'judge, *oidor*' (Boot 2005: 306).

Political Self-Referential Identities

Classic Maya rulers' parentage statements on carved monuments reveal that their personal and social identities were ascribed through kinship and descent, perhaps something akin to the ethnographically known *ch'ib'als*[11]—patrilineages or perhaps Levi-Straussian "houses"—of the northern peninsula. Their royal titles suggest that political legitimacy was based partly on biological descent, but also on systems of supernatural approbation and patronage conferring successes in warfare, for example. The deployment of EGs indicates that Classic-period royal political identities were also, at least partly, place-based. The monuments are silent, of course, about how common-ers derived their identities, although direct historical analogy would suggest it was through their *ch'ib'al* and town of birth, or *cah/kaj* (Restall 1997; 2004: 73–75).

Epigraphers have further explored self-referential place-based identities in Classic hieroglyphic texts (e.g., Houston and Stuart 2001; Stuart and Houston 1994; Tokovinine 2008, 2013). Alexandre Tokovinine (2008: 244–61, citing Dmitri Belaiev 2000), dis-cusses Classic southern lowland geopolitical collectivities in terms that resonate in the Postclassic period. These units represent an "ideational landscape" or "model of geopolitical order" referenced by the word *tzuk* (*tsuk*, *tzuc*). The literal meaning of *tzuk* is "partition or division,"[12] but here it may refer to provinces, allied dynasties and/or their polities or patron deities, "or even an ethnic identity that would be evoked only in certain contexts" involving "others" (Tokovinine 2008: 249).

Two important Classic groupings are the Seven Divisions and the Thirteen Divisions.[13] Seven Divisions (*huk tzuk*) has western and eastern entities associated with the Petén lakes area (including Naranjo) and western Belize (Caracol, Ucanal), respectively. These may have been recognized as early as the Early Classic period, and the Kokom nominal at Buenavista del Cayo is associated with the eastern sub-division (Tokovinine 2008: 246–48). Thirteen Divisions (*huxlajun tzuk*) comprise sites in central and northeastern Petén, including Tikal and Xultun. Something similar may be referenced by the inscription on the upper face of Altar 3 at the site of Altar de los Reyes, which reads "divine land(s) Thirteen Divisions" (Tokovinine 2008: 255).

A "group of Chan" or Four existed on the northwestern shore of Lake Petén, includ-ing Motul de San José (Ik'a') (Tokovinine 2008: 263). The basis for this identification is

unclear, but it may relate to the occurrence of the Ik'a' EG as one of four toponyms or EGs on an early Late Classic vessel (Tokovinine and Zender 2012: 36) and in the well-known inscription on Seibal Stela 10. In Classic texts, toponyms including *chan* tend to refer in some way to the sky or the celestial realm, often as a mythical or metaphorical location (Tokovinine 2008: 85). Interestingly, J. Eric S. Thompson (1977: 6–7) had earlier proposed a Colonial-period "Chan Maya Region" in the central Maya lowlands (see also Caso Barrera 2002: 146–54). This large region, possibly with roots in the Classic, encompassed nearly all of Belize, extreme southeastern Quintana Roo and Campeche, and northern Petén south to the Río Pasión. It thus incorporated Tokovinine's recently proposed Seven and Thirteen *tzuk* and possibly other Classic collectivities.

Other geopolitical groupings include eight provinces in the area of Tamarindito and Arroyo de Piedras in southwestern Petén (Tokovinine 2008: 251) and "the Twenty-eight," which unites lords of southern Petén and Belize—Machaquila, Ixtutz, Nim Li Punit, Dos Pilas, Seibal—through a connection with *wite' nah*[14] or with Early Classic Tikal rulers (Tokovinine 2008: 264–66). The Usumacinta polities do not appear to have participated in similar spatial collectivities (Tokovinine 2008: 261).

The Contact Period

Ethnohistorian Grant Jones (1998: 82–107; see also Rice and Rice 2018) reconstructed seventeenth-century Petén Itza political organization from colonial documents as a "strongly hierarchical" confederacy of elite lineages, highly nepotistic, and based on dualism at multiple levels. The polity operated with a well-developed governing bureaucracy similar to that at Mayapán (Peraza Lope and Masson 2014b: 55–56) and Utatlan (Carmack 1981: 14–17, 388–93) and possibly even earlier at Chich'en Itza (Ringle and Bey 2001). Jones (1998: 83) summarized the geopolitical system by concluding that the Itzas were:

> "ruled" by a small, exclusive set of closely related kin who shared power with other groups only at their convenience or as a matter of political strategy. Although the Itzas did integrate other groups by recognizing their leaders as weaker, subsidiary representatives on the ruling council, the royal family managed to control the joint kingship and all senior territorial rulership positions. I have suggested that Itza history hints at the possibility that this system coalesced through a policy of integration by conquest, in which the Itzas incorporated newly dominated groups by marrying them to existing elites and granting them positions on the ruling council as Ach Kat military-religious leaders.

Ajaw Kan Ek'

From the time of first Spanish contact—Hernán Cortés's *entrada* ('entry') in 1525—through the 1697 conquest, the ruler of the Petén Itzas was always known as Ajaw
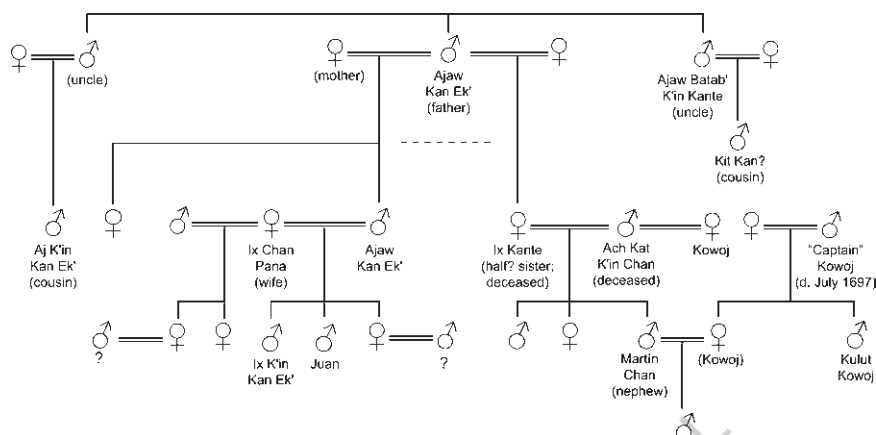
FIGURE 1.5. *The family and other relations of the Ajaw Kan Ek' at the time of conquest (from Jones 1998: 167, 467nn1, 2). A son-in-law is mentioned, but it is not known if that is the husband of one of his wife's daughters or if he had a married daughter. Another male cousin is also mentioned, but it is not clear who his father is. The diagram does not show the presumed three sons of the previous Ajaw Kan Ek' (see Jones 1998: 87).*

('lord') Kan Ek', who resided at the island capital. This appellative has generally been thought to be the ruler's compound personal surname, comprising royal matronym/matrilineage Kan and royal patronym/patrilineage/*ch'ib'al* Ek', both of which were common in the lowlands (see Jones 1998: 75–81). However, its longevity—dating back to the Classic period—suggests that *Kan Ek'* was also a title, likely passed down within families and possibly inherited through the matriline. Jones reserves the nominal *Kanek'* as a non-royal lineage name (early Spanish writers generally combined the Mayas' double surnames into one: *Canek*).

In 1697 the Ajaw Kan Ek' and his nephew, AjChan, son of the *ajaw's* older sister, claimed family ties to Chich'en Itza (Jones 1998: 11). Ajaw Kan Ek' ruled the Itza polity jointly—as a "dual social persona"—with his cousin (father's brother's son), the high priest AjK'in Kan Ek' (figure 1.5; Jones 1998: 92). Moreover, the Ajaw's uncle, Ajaw B'atab' K'in Kante, claimed rule over two important provinces in the region, Chak'an Itza and later Yalain, and was allied with the Itzas' rivals, the Kowojs in the eastern lakes (Jones 1998: 94–95; Rice and Rice 2009a). Secondary officials included Kuch Pop Kit Kan, who was likely the equivalent of the *holpop* in Yucatán: "head of the mat" (*pop*) and essentially the head of the governing council.

The Itza Governing Council

The provinces of the Itza realm were governed by eight men: four senior-junior pairs holding the respective titles *Ajaw B'atab'* and *B'atab'*. For example, the senior member

of one pair was Ajaw B'atab' K'in Kante, the uncle of Ajaw Kan Ek' and lord of Yalain. He was also ruler over Chak'an Itza through his junior partner, B'atab' AjTut, who was the head of Nich, the principal town of that western province. These provinces and their governing pairs are identified with the four cardinal directions: in the case of those just mentioned, Yalain was in the east and Chak'an Itza in the west. This quadri-partite organization is proposed for Tayza itself (see chapters 14, 15; Jones 1998: table 3.8), with these eight individuals residing on the island, perhaps in their directionally appropriate quarters.

The governing council of the Itza confederacy comprised these four *b'atab'* pairs plus 13 others known as *ach kats*. An *ach kat* was a representative of an outlying town or prov-ince and probably had dual military and priestly roles, the latter associated with calen-drical periods of approximately 20 Gregorian years known as *k'atuns* or *winikhaab's* (see the appendix). In Postclassic Yucatán 13 *k'atuns* constituted a ~256-year cycle dur-ing which each *k'atun* was "seated" in a different town. By analogy, then, the 13 *ach kats* in Petén represented those *k'atun* seats. Their military role is associated with another meaning of the word *k'atun*: "war, warrior." In colonial Yucatán the office of *b'atab'* was held for a term of 20 years (Restall 1997: 65; Thompson 1999: 256–67), suggesting the *b'atab's*—in addition to, or rather than, *ach kat*-equivalents—had a role in *k'atun*-based political cycling.[15]

Itza Territory

The question "Who were the Itzas?" is more problematic than it should be, partly because—and curiously, given Contact-period documentation—we are unsure exactly how the Itzas referred to themselves, to their island capital, to the lake in which it sits, or to the area they dominated politically. Cortés (1986: 372–73) simply men-tioned "the island," whereas his companion Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1998: 472) called it "Tayasal." Nearly a century later, visiting Franciscans Bartolomé de Fuensalida and Juan de Orbita also referred only to "the island" rather than using a Maya toponym, and named it San Pablo del Itza. In 1696 another Franciscan, Fray Andrés de Avendaño y Loyola, was told that the entire Itza "nation" ("*toda esta nación ytzalana*") lived on five *petenes* or islands in the lake (Avendaño y Loyola 1987: 42; Vayhinger-Scheer 1997: 45). Indeed, five habitable islands can be identified in the small eastern thumb of the lake's southern basin. Avendaño y Loyola (1987: 31, 43) obliquely referred to the largest island as "the Petén Ytzá [the *peten* or island of the Itzas] situated in the middle of the said lake" or as the "island in which we were."

It was not until 1702 that Mercedarian friar Diego de Rivas stated that the island's occupants called it "Noh Peten . . . because on it its ruler always lived and on it they also had the principal temples of their idols and carried out the most solemn functions of their idolatry" (in Jones 1998: 68–69). This term *Nojpeten—noj* 'big, great'—as the toponym of the Itza capital was applied by J. Eric S. Thompson (1981: 198) and contin-ued by ethnohistorian Grant D. Jones (1998).

But the meaning of *peten* is also problematic. It can refer not only to an island in water but to a "hammock"—a mound of hardwood trees in low grass or marsh. In a broader sense as "surrounded thing," *peten* also designated populated places surrounded by undifferentiated spaces that may be water, grassland, or forest (see Comparato 1987: 31–32n111). Moreover, the Spaniards often considered *peten* to mean "province." Avendaño y Loyola (1987: 43) reportedly was told that "all five islands were equal in people and districts to that in which we were"—that is, the *noj peten*—and that number was "as many Indians as they had hairs on their heads."

The small, low islands in southeastern Lake Petén could not possibly have supported a population equal to that of the capital (see note 8), and thus it is safer to conclude that in the Contact period a paramount with the title *Kan Ek'* ruled over five provinces. A polity with five provinces could have been conceptualized through an idealized quincunx model—the four directions plus the center, the island capital—with a Terminal Classic heritage, however, rather than literally five provinces.[16] Given the factionalism and westward expansion of the Kowojs, the Itzas' five provinces may have been largely a historical memory.

We call the prehispanic Itzas' island capital *Tayza*, as this is the term given in the 1604 Paxbolon-Maldonado Papers, which mention "the famous town of Tayza and other settlements subject to it" (Scholes and Roys 1968: 258). We occasionally employ "Nojpeten" (in quotes) as a toponym and "the *noj peten*" as a descriptor, reserving "Tayasal" (Bernal Díaz's corruption) for the Preclassic-to-Postclassic site on the Tayasal Peninsula of Lake Petén. *Tayasal* and *Tayza* toponyms are orthographic variants incorporating the locative prefix *ta-* '[at the] place of', plus *yza* 'Itza' (and the possessive suffix *–al*).

In 1695 a Mopan informant referred to residents of the Itza "nation" as *ahitzaes*, as distinct from *petenes* who lived on the islands (Jones 1998: 138; Ximénez 1929–30, III, bk. 5, ch. 58: 20). The residents of the two islands in Lake Equexil were known as *kanekes* because they were from the Kan Ek' (Canek) faction or political division (Villagutierre 1983: 343). Jones (1998: 7, 427–28n8) suggested that Itza territory was known as "Suyuja ['whirlpool'] Peten Itza," conjuring an image of violent waters, which is also raised by the possibility that the western lake basin or the lake itself was once called Ik'a', 'windy water' (Tokovinine and Zender 2012: 35). In the seventeenth century Fuensalida reported *Chaltuna* ('white rocks in water') as the Itzas' name for their lake, whereas later it was *Nohuken* or *Nohukum* according to Arturo Morelet (see Comparato 1983: 65n274, 70n301).

The geographical expanse controlled, in some way, by the Petén Itzas is not fully known and likely fluctuated with changing circumstances. The Itzas clearly dominated the central part of the southern lowlands, with small agricultural settlements, especially cacao orchards, extending far to the south (Caso Barrera and Aliphat 2006a, 2006b). Itza lands were bordered by several other politico-linguistic Maya groups, either descendants of the great Classic-period (AD 200–950) cities such as Calakmul to the north and Caracol to the east, or later residents pushed out of central Petén by

FIGURE 1.6. *Indigenous provinces in the Postclassic and Contact-period Maya lowlands.*

Postclassic Itza expansion. The Petén Itzas also interacted with other indigenous provinces at a greater distance in what are now Campeche, Quintana Roo, Chiapas, and Belize (figure 1.6; see chapter 2).

The extent to which any of the neighboring groups might have been members of the late Itza confederacy is difficult to assess. One member was the Chak'an faction of the Itzas, living around Lake Sacpuy immediately west of Lake Petén Itzá (figure 1.3). Another was the rival Kowoj faction that had encroached to the northeastern shore of Lake Petén, and controlled much of the eastern area. As discussed in the chapters in part III, by the seventeenth century, the powerful Itza confederacy in the lakes region was deeply factionalized and mired in civil war.

THE ITZAS OF THE NORTHERN LOWLANDS AND THEIR ALLIES

In the Postclassic northern lowlands, the Itzas were a group of allied *ch'ib'als* well known in the indigenous chronicles and ethnohistorical literature. Two important Itza

population centers were the archaeological sites of Chich'en Itza and Mayapán. Despite the prominence of coastal trade in the Postclassic period, these cities—like Tayza—flourished in the interior of the peninsula. In the north, such locations were decidedly unpropitious, given the scarcity of surface water in the limestone karst environment, and communities formed around sinkholes (cenotes) that held accessible water.

The Itzas at Epiclassic Chich'en Itza

The Itzas of the northern lowlands are particularly known through the Epiclassic and/ or Early Postclassic archaeological site of Chich'en Itza (Chichén Itzá), a toponym usually translated as "mouth (*chi'*) of the well (*ch'en, ch'e'en)* of the Itzas."[17] That well is, of course, the "Sacred Cenote," long of sacrificial virgins' fame, north of the site's main plaza.

Chich'en Itza became known to the Western world through the sixteenth-century writings of Franciscan friar and Bishop of Yucatán Diego de Landa. However, it was the 1924–40 Carnegie Institution of Washington research program, directed by Sylvanus Griswold Morley, that brought wider attention to the city. The Carnegie project identified two architectural precincts believed to represent two distinct periods and spaces of construction and occupation. The southern precinct featured typical western (Puuc-style) Maya architecture, succeeded by the ostensibly non-Maya features of a "Toltec" architectural zone in the north, closely resembling the highland central Mexican site of Tula. Famed northern structures include the Castillo, the Great Ballcourt, and the Caracol.

According to the Carnegie's long-influential scenario, "Toltec" Chich'en Itza was the product of a tenth-century or later in-migration or invasion of central Mexicans into the northern Maya lowlands: essentially, the Itzas *were* Toltecs. Recent archaeological and epigraphic investigations at Chich'en Itza, however, paint a different picture: the Toltec invasion scenario is largely disavowed and the chronologies of the precincts substantially overlap (see chapter 6). Nonetheless, the undeniable similarities to Tula in art and architectural design suggest long-lasting interactions, and the possibility that some central Mexicans may have visited or settled at Chich'en Itza should not be discounted (Kowalski 2011: 215; Martin and Grube 2008: 229).

From their capital at Chich'en since the eighth century and with a prominent port, Isla Cerritos, off the northern coast (Andrews et al. 1988), the Itzas dominated the eastern peninsula into the Colonial period. The city remained occupied after Spanish conquest, its *ch'en* a major destination for pilgrimages to bring rain. As mentioned, in the late seventeenth century the Ajaw Kan Ek' of Tayza had family ties to Chich'en Itza.

The Xiws at Uxmal

The Itzas in northern Yucatán were frequently at loggerheads with the other major alliance in the peninsula, the Xiws. The indigenous literature claims that the Xiws

arrived from the west—the Gulf coastal Chontal area, sometimes specifically Zuyua/Nonoualco (the *Chilam Balam of Maní*) or Champotón—in a K'atun 2 Ajaw, a 20-year interval dated by the Gregorian calendar at either 731–51 or 987–1007 (see Morley and Brainerd 1956: 148–49; Tozzer 1941: 30–40; Vargas Pacheco 2001: 85–88).[18] They are identified as Tutul Xiws, perhaps signifying "Toltec" Xiw, which may be the name of both their leader and the province they established (Blom 1928: 254). The ethnonym *Xiw* or *Xiu* is likely derived from Nahuatl *xiuh* 'reed' or *xiutl* 'plant, herb, turquoise, blue-green' (Cortez 2002: 203).

The Xiw capital was at the site of Uxmal, in the Puuc region of the northwestern part of the peninsula (later Maní province), from which they dominated the west from the late eighth century to about 950 (Carmean et al. 2004: 429; Kowalski 2011: 196–97; Schele and Mathews 1998: 258–60). Uxmal's monumental art and architecture programs display both "Maya" and "Toltec" (Chich'en Itza) traits such as feathered serpents (Kowalski 2011), and the two cities may have had some kind of alliance also hinted at by shared textual references (Carmean et al. 2004: 431–32). As discussed below, the Xiws were participants in "joint government" with the Itzas at Late Postclassic Mayapán.

Members of one patrilineage of the Postclassic Xiw alliance, the Kowojs (Couohs), migrated to central Petén and told the Spaniards they had left Mayapán about the time the Spaniards arrived. We suspect that contingents of Kowoj-Xiws had begun moving southward much earlier and their ancestors may have had a Classic-period homeland in the eastern lakes region (Rice 2009b). In Colonial times some Kowojs were leaders of the Gulf coastal province of Chanputun/Champotón (Roys 1957: 8), which was not incorporated into the Mayapán confederacy, hinting at factions within this *ch'ib'al*.

The Itzas at Late Postclassic Mayapán

Mayapán was founded sometime in the late twelfth century, possibly in a K'atun 8 Ajaw, 1185–1204, and sometime in the early to middle thirteenth century the Itzas established "joint rule" (*mul tepal*) with the Xiws there. Other references, plus architectural data—Puuc and Itza styles, including the formidable wall encircling the city—suggest that this represented a leadership alliance of, or peace treaty among, the rulers of Uxmal, Chich'en Itza, and Mayapán and their allies (Restall 1998: 24; see also Masson and Peraza Lope 2014c; Proskouriakoff 1962b: 132). One Itza lineage, the Kokoms (Cocoms), provided the primary lords of Mayapán and its "League," a confederacy of 10 or so provinces (*b'atab'ils*): Chak'an,[19] Kanul, Cehpech, Hocabá, Ah K'in Chel, Kupul, Tases, Maní (Tutul Xiw), Sotuta (Kokom), and Cochuah.

The traditional identification of 16 provinces in the northern peninsula and in the confederacy (Roys 1957) has not survived scrutiny. Numerous provinces (Canpech, Champotón, Chikinchel, Ecab, Chable, Cusamil/Cozumel?) remained outside or were

only marginally incorporated or late additions (Ah Kanul) to the League. The criteria for membership are not known, that is, whether the exclusion was voluntary or involuntary. Non-member provinces were distributed along the Gulf coast and northeastern coast of the peninsula, where they played key roles as entrepôts in coastal trade (Farriss 1984: 122–23). Thus the confederacy may have been established at least partially as an economic alliance of mostly landlocked polities to control interior trade and distribution of salt, cacao, and other valued goods.

Mayapán boasted well over 4,000 structures and housed perhaps 17,000 persons within its 2-m-high wall (Hare et al. 2014: 154). Although the city's location evidences some Preclassic and Terminal Classic/Epiclassic settlement, these remains are found primarily outside the walls and no early construction can be identified within. Epicentral Mayapán closely mimics the architectural forms and arrangements found at Chich'en Itza—a *castillo* dedicated to K'uk'ulcan/Quetzalcoatl, a round temple, colonnaded structures—but all in reduced size and surrounded by an interior wall. The city has no ballcourts, which abound at Chich'en Itza, but at least four *k'atun*-ending stelae were erected.

In the early fourteenth century Mayapán began a slow decline, culminating with collapse of the League of Mayapán, abandonment, and the return of the lords of the provinces to their homelands (Masson and Peraza Lope 2014d; see also Quezada 2014).

OTHER ALLIES AND NEIGHBORS

The families, patrilineages (*ch'ib'als*), or dynasties comprising the northern Itza alliance included the Kokoms, Kanuls, and Kupuls. The Kupul lineage, possibly from Mexico, lent its name to a large, land-locked province in northeastern Yucatán (Roys 1957: 114). The Kanuls ('guardians'), mercenaries hired by the Kokoms (Peraza Lope and Masson 2014b: 53), were latecomers to Mayapán. Often considered "Mexicans" from Tabasco, they have some Nahuatl patronyms but the *Crónica de Calkini* reports that they came from the east and from a place called "Peten Itza" (Roys 1957: 11–12, see 117).

The important Kokom patronym is referenced in three texts at Chich'en Itza (Boot 2005: 142, 306, 309; Grube and Krochock 2011: 172, 174). Interestingly, although early Spanish writers emphasized the connection between the Kokoms and Mayapán, the indigenous literature refers to the Itzas "and always in terms of extreme aversion" (Roys 1962: 81). Roys (1962: 81) suggests that the Kokoms identified as Itza until the Itzas "fell into serious disrepute" with the Mayapán collapse and may have been expelled from the city. These distinctions support the existence of multiple factions, probably lineage-based, within the northern Itza alliance. The Kokoms wished to distance themselves from their allies and, in a case of "ethnonymic transformation" (Weik 2014: 296), the term *Itza* became a pejorative. It is not known to what extent such distinctions might or might not have existed in Petén.

NOTES

1. Considerable debate has focused on contributions of the edible macadamia-sized seed or nut of the fruit of the *ramon* (breadnut) tree to the ancient Maya diet (Puleston 1968). The trees are common on Maya archaeological sites but the highly nutritious and protein-rich nut has been regarded as "famine food" in modern times. A bakery supported by outside sustainable-development groups began roasting and grinding fallen *ramon* nuts into a flour for use in cookies or bread for local consumption (especially school lunches) and export (see http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/latest?types=stories). The cookies, not overly sweetened, taste like American graham crackers.

2. In a study of Mesoamerican Postclassic economies within a world-systems framework, the southern lowlands were characterized as remote, isolated, unspecialized peripheries (Smith and Berdan 2003a; 2003b: 29). But Petén, and especially the lakes area, is similar to the "affluent production zone" of northern Belize, producing bulk goods and foodstuffs for local consumption and exchange, and for circulation in the later colonial tributary economy.

3. Some orthographic variants, such as *Ytzá*, *Ytzaex*, and *Ytzalan*a, were apparently introduced by the seventeenth-century historian Diego López de Cogolludo (Comparato 1987: 17n67).

4. Many Maya patrilines or patronyms and ethnonyms such as Itza and Chan may have originated as toponyms, an embodied remembrance of the ancestral past. This may extend back to the often confusing "ethno-topo" titles found in Classic Emblem Glyphs.

5. The *am* morpheme here recalls the Yucatec Mayas' small divining stones called *am* (Landa in Tozzer 1941: 154).

6. Besides *Itzamna* and *Chich'en Itza*, other toponyms might originally have been spelled with *its'*, including *Izamal*; the site of Edzna may have been derived from *itz-nah* 'house of the Itza' (Benavides Castillo 1997: 127).

7. The PSS/SDF is a formulaic hieroglyphic text on Late Classic vases, bowls, and plates, encircling the vessel under the rim. It has five main sections: presentation (dedication), surface treatment (e.g., carved, painted), vessel type (e.g., "his drinking vessel"), contents (e.g., cacao, *atole*), and closure (name and titles of the vessel's owner/patron) (MacLeod and Reents-Budet 1994: 109–21).

8. A tiny low, unnamed island lies east of Flores; it and all but the center of Lepete are submerged during times of high water. Other than Flores, today only Santa Bárbara, Hospital, Petencito, and part of Lepete are sufficiently large and high to have one or more *ranchos*.

9. On Xultun Stela 24 a serpent with inset star symbols is draped over the ruler's left arm (Boot 2005: 41, fig. 2.5).

10. This arrival on a day 11 Eb seems more than coincidental given the "arrival of strangers," ostensibly from central Mexico, at Tikal on a day 11 Eb in AD 378 (Stuart 2000). That fourth-century event also marked the introduction of the title *k'alomte* for a kind of supreme leader.

11. *Ch'ib'* refers to the vein of a leaf, and *ch'ib'al* can also have the sense of spinal column (Hofling with Tesucún 1997: 225). Matrilines may be called *tz'akab'* (Jones 1998: 80 [citing Roys], 446–47n51).

12. *Tzuk* might also refer to "small or low woods" (Marcus 1982: 264).

13. These numbers represent different things in Mesoamerican cosmopolitical histories. Thirteen is associated with thirteen *k'atuns* in a *k'atun* cycle, and "thirteen kings and gods who descended to govern in space-time" (Tokovinine 2008: 261). Seven carries symbolic loading throughout Mesoamerica "about shared point of origin and about organization of entire social groups" (Tokovinine 2008: 261; see Schele and Mathews 1998: 361n16). Both thirteen- and seven-part world orderings are referenced in the *Books of Chilam Balam*, including the syncretistic late "sevenfold creation" myth (Edmonson 1986: 35–37, 228–44).

14. *Wite' nah* (*nah* 'house') is a toponym associated with special knowledge, especially Teotihuacan related, and an ancestral or foundational place of pilgrimage within "a kind of master narrative in the history of royal dynasties" in the Classic period (Tokovinine 2008: 169, 275). In much the same way that migration stories constituted metanarratives in the Postclassic period, different Classic dynasties invoked *wite' nah* events as "defining moments in their history . . . [which] function as a pool of shared historical experience that can be brought back to present ideational landscapes in different contexts" (Tokovinine 2008: 289).

15. There is considerable variation from town to town in colonial Yucatán in the office of *b'atab'*, however, and in some towns a *teniente* (lieutenant) served below the *b'atab'* (Restall 1997: 65–66), perhaps analogous to the senior-junior pairs among the Itzas. In the Ah Kanul province the "deputies" of the *b'atab'* were called *ah kulels* 'speakers' (Roys 1957: 12). The adoption of the Spanish word *teniente* for this office highlights the ways the Mayas under colonial rule "adapted the form and structure" of the Spanish-imposed governing system and melded it with indigenous institutions in the new *repúblicas de indios*, while "practicing local politics more or less in the preconquest tradition" (Restall 1997: 311–12; see also Quezada 2014).

16. Terminal Classic Seibal Stela 10 recorded the nominal *kan ek' jo' pet* (fig. 1.2e), possibly "Kan Ek' (of) five *petens*." But this Kan Ek' was from Ucanal in the east, not Lake Petén Itza, suggesting the "province" rather than "island" meaning of the term. The names or titles of members of the Classic dynasties of Río Azul, Xultun, Naranjo, and Los Alacranes in northeastern Petén may end with the title *jo' pet* or *jo' pet hux haab te'*, the first part of which may be *jo' pet(en)* meaning five partitions or provinces (see Tokovinine 2008: 263, tables 4.9, 7.6; Tokovinine 2013: 17–18, 84, 130n6). Río Azul, Xultun, and Naranjo are also part of Tokovinine's (2008: 255) "Thirteen Divisions."

17. Recently *chi* has been glossed more generally as "vicinity of" or "surroundings" (Boot 2005: 91) and is sometimes interpreted toponymically as "place, seat" (Macri and Looper 2003: 109). The meanings of *ch'en* range from "hole/cave" to the dwelling place of a deity (Tokovinine 2008: 141, 146), to "built place," inhabited place or settlement, "a building, a group of buildings . . . or what we call 'city' in general" (Bíró 2011: 54, 66, 67; also Bíró 2007: 96; Tokovinine 2008: 210). The term frequently appears in the possessed form "followed by the name of the *ch'e'n* owner, human or divine" (Tokovinine 2008: 142), as in Chich'en Itza.

18. Something about the Xiws' distinct origins might be drawn from a study of dental morphometrics in eighteen skeletal collections from throughout the Maya lowlands. Materials from the Puuc and Campeche consistently grouped together but were outliers with regard to the other sites (Cucina 2015b).

19. In the middle sixteenth century the *cacique* of the Chak'an province in northwestern Yucatán was a Kokom (Roys 1962: 35).