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## 5 *EXCHANGE, POLITICAL RELATIONS, AND REGIONAL INTERACTION: THE ANCIENT CITY OF PUSILHÁ IN THE LATE CLASSIC MAYA WORLD*

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*Since 2001, the Pusilhá Archaeological Project has conducted archaeological and epigraphic investigations at the ancient Maya city of Pusilhá, Toledo District, Belize. Previous papers published in the annual Belize Symposium volumes have addressed the theoretical goals of our project, have described the dynastic history of the city, have presented a preliminary ceramic chronology of the site, and have discussed both our excavations and settlement survey. Here, we present evidence for exchange and political connections between Pusilhá and other cities in the Maya area. The data we consider are drawn from Prager's analysis of the hieroglyphic corpus, Bill's study of ceramics, and Braswell's analyses of obsidian, ground stone, and other artifacts excavated at the site.*

### **Introduction**

Two important goals of the Pusilhá Archaeological Project, which began in 2001, are to understand secondary state formation processes in Toledo District during the Early to Late Classic transition, and to learn something about the roles played by political and economic interaction in these processes (Figure 1; Braswell et al. 2004, 2005b). Our research program, therefore, builds on but goes beyond Richard Leventhal's (1990, 1992) definition of southern Belize as a cultural region. Rather than emphasizing similarity within the Toledo District and difference between southern Belize and the rest of the Maya world, we are seeking to understand the history of Pusilhá in terms of both internal and external historical factors.

We began our project with two competing hypotheses (Braswell et al. 2004, 2005b). First, that Pusilhá was established near the end of the Early Classic as a small and independent polity, was absorbed into the rapidly expanding Copán state, and later - like Quiriguá - exerted its independence. In this first scenario, Pusilhá may be considered as an example of a province as described by Joyce Marcus' (1993)



**Figure 1.** The Southern Belize “Region,” showing principal archaeological sites dating to the Classic period.

Dynamic Model of state formation. While we were planning our project, several lines of evidence seemed to support this interpretation, or at least suggested that Pusilhá had important political and economic ties with the southeastern Maya region: (1) Since its discovery, Pusilhá has been known for zoomorphic altars somewhat like those at Quiriguá; (2) the main signs of the Quiriguá and Pusilhá

emblem glyphs are similar and differ primarily only in orientation; (3) The Pusilhá hieroglyphic corpus mentions two names also known from Copán; (4) polychrome pottery illustrated by the British Museum project resembles polychromes best known from western Honduras and El Salvador; and, finally, (5) chemical analyses conducted on sherds supposedly from Pusilhá matches Copador polychrome samples from Copán itself (Bishop and Beaudry 1994; Braswell et al. 2004, 2005b).

A second hypothesis that we considered at the beginning of our project was that Pusilhá was a minor vassal state of either Tikal or Calakmul, the two great competing “superpowers” of the sixth to ninth centuries. Based entirely on epigraphic analyses, Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube (1995, 2000) have posited that these two states each exerted hegemonic control over the central and southern Maya lowlands. Matthew Looper (1999) has suggested that Copán was an ally of Tikal, that Quiriguá gained its independence from Copán after gaining permission from Calakmul to battle that site. In this second scenario, Pusilhá - like Quiriguá - may have begun as a minor satellite in the orbit of Tikal and perhaps later switched allegiances.

As we have stressed in previous volumes of this series, we now believe that neither of these narratives is consistent with the epigraphic and archaeological data from Pusilhá (Bill and Braswell 2005; Braswell 2007). Instead, it seems most likely that Pusilhá was established by settlers from the southern - perhaps even southwestern - Petén, and that the site maintained political independence from its more powerful neighbors from the early 7<sup>th</sup> century until the early 9<sup>th</sup> century (Braswell et al. 2005a, 2005b).

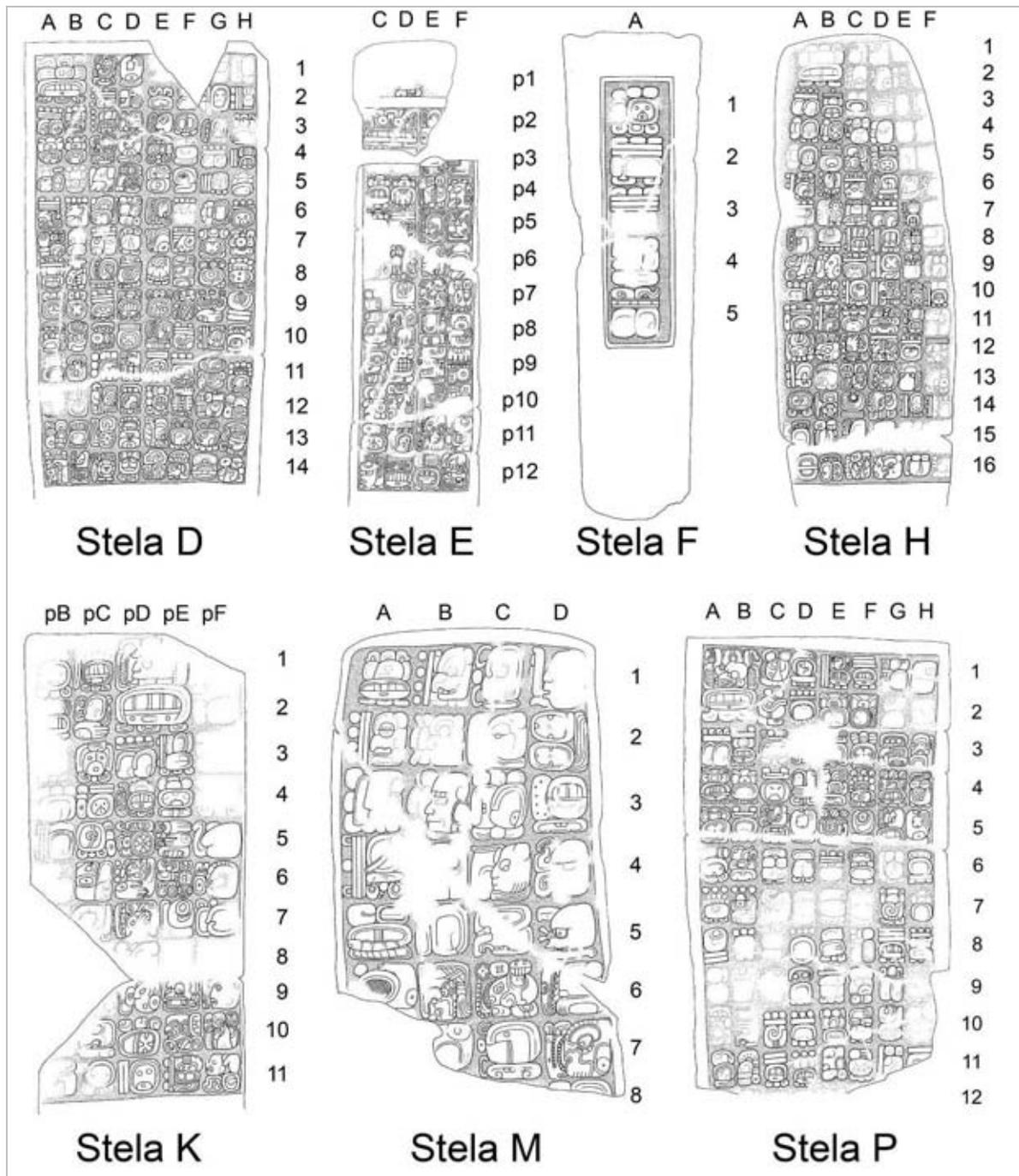
Our previous Belizean publications have focused on the dynastic history of Pusilhá (Braswell et al. 2004), the ceramic

chronology of the site (Bill and Braswell 2005), survey (Braswell 2007), and excavations (Braswell and Gibbs 2006). In this chapter, we focus on external economic and cultural relations as demonstrated through the analysis of hieroglyphic texts, ceramics, and lithic artifacts.

### **Epigraphy**

The hieroglyphic texts and figurative stela art of Pusilhá (Figure 2) reveal that the site participated in at least eight warfare events (Prager 2002, 2003). Curiously, not one emblem glyph of an archaeologically known site appears in the extensive texts. Nim Li Punit, Lubaantun, Quiriguá, Copán, Caracol, and the more distant Tikal and Calakmul are not mentioned even once in the Pusilhá hieroglyphic corpus. Moreover, the stone monuments of these and other sites contain no citation of the Pusilhá emblem glyph or the name of a known Pusilhá lord. With the exception of the Pusilhá monuments, just one artifact - of unknown provenience - uses the Pusilhá emblem glyph. It is distinctly possible that this artifact was looted from the site itself. Epigraphic clues of connections with known Maya sites, therefore, are indirect. Such evidence consists of personal names, two toponyms, a legendary celebration, and the name of a stela that also appears in the epigraphic record of another site (Braswell et al. 2005a; Prager 2003).

The first individual whose name is known at Pusilhá and elsewhere is nicknamed “Foliated,” “Decorated,” or “Leaf Ajaw.” Stela K of Pusilhá, erected by Ruler D, links the celebration of the 9.12.0.0.0 *k’atun* ending (A.D. 672) to a legendary celebration that took place at the “*Chi-Throne-Place*” on 8.6.0.0.0 (A.D. 159). That event was overseen or conducted by “Foliated Ajaw.” It is important to stress that this is a retrospective reference to a celebration conducted more than 400 years



**Figure 2.** Pusilhá stelae that are now, with the exception of Stela F, in the British Museum (drawings by Christian Prager).

before the founding of the Pusilhá polity. Hence, it should be considered as a legendary event and not as a historical occurrence.

At Copán, a reference to “Foliated Ajaw” appears on Stela I. This Late Classic monument also contains the retrospective date of 8.6.0.0.0 (A.D. 159). On the basis of this citation, Copán scholars hypothesize

that the monument refers to a “Predynastic king” who ruled the site centuries before the arrival of the dynastic founder *k'inich yax k'uk mo'* (Stuart 2004:223). Several more references to “Foliated Ajaw” and the celebration of the 8.6.0.0.0 *k'atun* ending, as well as to the “*Chi-Throne-Place*,” are now known from Tikal, Calakmul, and especially from Late Classic cylinder vases from the El Mirador basin.

Both Stanley Guenter (2003) and Nikolai Grube (2004) have analyzed texts referring to “Foliated Ajaw.” He may, indeed, have once been a living individual, as Guenter has argued. While this is speculative, it is clear that by the Late Classic period, “Foliated Ajaw” had become a legendary figure tied somehow with widely-shared Maya notions of kingship and calendrical celebration. In particular, references to “Foliated Ajaw” and the 8.6.0.0.0 *k'atun* ending at both Pusilhá and Copán do not indicate a direct relationship between the two sites. Instead, they point to a shared body of legend that may have its roots in the Petén.

Ruler B of Pusilhá began his rule in the early seventh century A.D. and died around A.D. 650. We read his name as *k'ak' u ti' chan* (Braswell et al. 2004, 2005b; Prager 2002, 2003). This hieroglyphic name is identical to that of Copán Ruler 11, known at that site by the nickname Butz' Chan. Because they both ruled at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, we once considered the intriguing possibility that they were one and the same person. But parentage statements of both men indicate that they had different fathers, and Prager's (2002) analysis reveals that Pusilhá Ruler B continued to live at least 20 years after the death of his namesake at Copán. Nonetheless, the overlapping appearance of the same royal name at two relatively close sites hints at some sort of interaction. We may speculate that perhaps Pusilhá Ruler B

was named after his older and more established counterpart at Copán.

The paternal grandfather of Ruler G of Pusilhá was named *hun ew chak muyal chan yoa:t ?ti' k'awil*. He was an important noble, but not from Pusilhá itself. Segments of this name phrase appear also at Naranjo, Copán and Quiriguá, suggesting that he came from an unknown site in the eastern or southeastern lowlands (Braswell et al. 2005; Prager 2003).

On Pusilhá Stela D the “Water-Scroll” toponym - seen so often in inscriptions from Aguateca and Seibal - is mentioned twice. It is not clear, however, if this toponym refers to a single place or to multiple locations; one might be in the southwestern Petén, a second somewhere in the vicinity of Naj Tunich, and a third, known to us as Altun Ha, in northern Belize. Also appearing on Stela D is a name connected to a warfare event on 9.8.1.12.8 (A.D. 594). This personal name contains a glyphic element seen in later inscriptions from the Petexbatun region (Braswell et al. 2004).

Stela Q of Pusilhá and Stela 1 of Caracol were both erected on the *k'atun* ending 9.8.0.0.0 (A.D. 593). Both stelae are given proper names and they are the same name. It is conceivable that this might indicate direct ties between the two sites, but it also might imply that the rulers and scribes of Caracol and Pusilhá merely participated in the same general cultural system.

In sum, although Pusilhá engaged in at least eight warfare events with adversaries from unknown sites, epigraphic evidence for political interaction with known polities is quite slim. There are a few suggestive indications of some sort of interaction with Copán or Quiriguá during the early history of Pusilhá, as well as with sites in the southwestern Petén. Other personal names

and toponyms point only to participation in a Petén-centric world.

### Ceramics

We have divided the ceramic chronology of Pusilhá into four phases (Bill and Braswell 2005). Material pertaining to the earliest phase, dating to the 7<sup>th</sup> century, is known to us primarily from only one context: Pottery Cave. The pottery we excavated from this disposal site was “mixed”; not only does it appear with later 8<sup>th</sup> century materials, but also it was recovered from the backfill of the British Museum project of the late 1920s. The vast majority of the sherds show close affinities with materials known from the Petén. In short, the ceramics from Pottery Cave may be considered a mixed Tepeu I/Tepeu II assemblage. Jars with striated or impressed designs, many of which closely resemble examples of Pantano Impressed from the southwestern Petén, are particularly common. Small quantities of ceramics, including examples of Masica Incised, almost certainly were imported from western Honduras, perhaps from Copán itself. Also found in this mixed Late Classic assemblage are a few examples of polychromes with the “twist and bud” motif, a design element known from eastern El Salvador and elsewhere in the southeastern Mesoamerican periphery. Most of the polychromes from Pusilhá, however, share forms and general surface-treatment attributes that are clearly related to established groups such as the Saxche-Palmar Orange polychromes of the Pasion and central Petén regions. None of the local ceramic types so well known from western Belize are present in either the mixed Tepeu I/II context of Pottery Cave, or in the many unmixed Tepeu II contexts that we have excavated.

Unlike materials from Pottery Cave, our unmixed 8<sup>th</sup> century Tepeu II ceramics

from Pusilhá - with the exception of one vessel - lack connections to Honduras and El Salvador. This may in part be due to surface preservation; materials from Pottery Cave are remarkably preserved while ceramics from most other contexts at the site are not. An interesting feature of the Late Classic and Terminal Classic ceramic assemblage is the presence of *comales* (Figure 3). These are relatively common at Pusilhá and at sites in the Upper Pasion Region and the Dolores Valley to the west. They are not described for nearby Lubaantun, have not been found at Uxbenka (Andrew Kindon, personal communication 2007), and are generally uncommon, rare, or unknown in the northern Petén. The presence of *comales* at Pusilhá and in parts of the southern Petén may indicate that a distinct food-way was practiced in this region. Moreover, the marked difference in this regard between Lubaantun/Uxbenka and Pusilhá may indicate that in ancient times, identity in Toledo District was as complex as it is today.



**Figure 3.** *Comales*, or tortilla griddles, from Pusilhá. This form is not found at Uxbenka or Lubaantun, suggesting that there were significant differences in food preparation practices within southern Belize during the Late Classic period.

The Terminal Classic ceramic assemblage of Pusilhá is dominated by

Tepeu III types, forms, and modes (Bill and Braswell 2005; Braswell 2007). Nevertheless, imports and copies of foreign vessels appeared during this period. For the first and only time in its history, ceramics from the Belize Valley, such as Belize Red, were brought to Pusilhá. Also fairly common during the Terminal Classic are copies, probably local, of Fine Orange vessels and forms from the northwestern Maya region.

The Pusilhá ceramic sequence ends with a Postclassic assemblage of uncertain date. The Postclassic pottery of Pusilhá is crude and unstandardized and therefore reminiscent of, but not necessarily related to, similar Postclassic assemblages from many sites in the Maya lowlands (Bill and Braswell 2005; Braswell et al. 2004).

In sum, the ceramics of Pusilhá firmly establish the site within the Late Classic Tepeu sphere of the Petén. The closest affinities appear to be with sites in the southeastern and, especially, southwestern Petén. During the 7<sup>th</sup> century, that is, the first 100 or so years of occupation, a very limited quantity of pottery was imported from western Honduras. Some, but by no means the majority, of the polychromes dating to this period have decorative elements that are much more reminiscent of eastern El Salvador and Honduras than of the Petén heartland. Thus, economic and cultural connections with sites to the southeast were strongest during the first half of the Late Classic and diminished during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Although there are many ceramic similarities shared between Lubaantun and Pusilhá, there are also some significant differences. We speculate that the presence of *comales* at Pusilha and the lack of this form at Lubaantun and Uxbenka imply both different site histories and identities.

### **Chipped Stone Lithic Artifacts**

Flaked lithic artifacts are common at Pusilhá. A total of 816 chert and 4,079 obsidian artifacts have been recovered to date by our project. Eighty-eight percent of the chert artifacts are either simple ad hoc percussion flakes or flake cores. Another three percent are percussion or pressure blades. Finally, nine percent of the chert sample consists of bifacially worked artifacts and thinning flakes. Most of the 59 bifacial tools are handheld knives, but a very small number may be large spear points. Most of these bifacial tools were extensively reworked and resharpened during their use life. Finally, two of the chert artifacts are eccentrics.

Sourcing chert artifacts by either visual or geochemical means is problematical. Quite simply, the Maya region is full of chert sources. It seems highly probable to us that all or nearly all of the ad hoc percussion tools and debitage are derived from local chert. The color range of these artifacts is quite extensive. In contrast, a more restrictive range of colors is visible among the formal bifaces; most are either a light gray or caramel color. According to Jason Barrett (personal communication 2007), a large anthropoid eccentric (Braswell and Gibbs 2006: Figure 11a) and perhaps one other piece comes from the famed Colha source. Lacking any further definitive data, we are nonetheless inclined to believe that most of the bifaces are made of local or at least regionally available chert.

Obsidian is much more abundant than chert at Pusilhá, despite the fact that the nearest high-quality sources are located roughly 200 km away. Nonetheless, Pusilhá is the closest major Belizean site to these sources. As a crude estimate, the density of obsidian at Pusilhá is roughly eight to ten times that found at sites in the Belize Valley. The vast majority of obsidian artifacts recovered from Pusilhá are prismatic blades

and blade related debitage. Bifacially worked tools are exceedingly rare. Only two have been recovered, and both of these come from the surface of the “Bulldozed Mound” (Braswell et al. 2004), a platform occupied in the Terminal Classic and Postclassic periods. One of these is a bifacially worked projectile point that was likely imported from central Mexico.

At least five geologically distinct obsidian sources have been identified in the collection (Figure 4). These are El Chayal, Ixtepeque, Zaragoza, Pachuca, and San Martín Jilotepeque. The fourteen black obsidian artifacts from the Zaragoza, Puebla, sources were identified both through visual sourcing and Neutron Activation Analysis. Four more artifacts - including the bifacial projectile point just mentioned and three eccentrics - have not yet been given source assignments, but all are likely made of obsidian from Zaragoza or one of the other Mexican sources of black obsidian.

Source	N	%
El Chayal, Guatemala	3730	91.4
Ixtepeque, Guatemala	311	7.6
Zaragoza, Puebla	14	0.3
S. M. Jilotepeque, Guatemala	12	0.3
Unknown	4	0.2
		0.1

**Figure 4.** The geological sources of obsidian artifacts recovered from Pusilhá.

Obsidian procurement patterns in the Maya area varied over both space and time. Throughout the Early and Late Classic periods, more than 90% of the obsidian consumed in the central Maya lowlands - including the Petén and western Belize - came from the source of El Chayal, located near modern Guatemala City. In contrast, approximately 95% of the obsidian consumed at Copán during these same periods came from the Ixtepeque source, located in the Department of Jalisco,

Guatemala. Our point is that when considered from a synchronic perspective, Pusilhá received most of its obsidian from the same source as other Petén-oriented sites. It did not receive much obsidian from Copán or other polities in the southeastern periphery.

There are some interesting diachronic patterns in the Pusilhá obsidian data set (Figure 5). Our earliest significant context, again, is Pottery Cave, which contains a mixture of Tepeu I and II pottery. Eighty-three obsidian artifacts were recovered from Pottery Cave, and just five, or about 6%, come from the Ixtepeque source. This is not significantly different from the relative frequency of Ixtepeque obsidian in the entire collection. That is, during the time period for which we have the strongest evidence (and it is not much) for ceramic ties with the southeastern periphery, the obsidian data do not support stronger economic links with Copán and other sites in that region.

The largest and best-dated obsidian sample comes from the royal tomb excavated in 2005 (Braswell and Gibbs 2006). Fully 761 obsidian artifacts were recovered from the tomb. These appear to have been placed originally as a bed of lithic debris above the capstones, a caching pattern very well known in the Petén but not practiced in the southeastern periphery. A ceramic date of the mid 8<sup>th</sup> century is indicated by the 14 vessels found in the tomb, and we have argued that it was the resting place of Pusilhá Ruler G, who died between A.D. 731 and A.D. 751 (Braswell et al. 2005a). All but three of the 761 obsidian artifacts recovered from the tomb come from the El Chayal source. These three are eccentrics that appear to be made of material from one or more central Mexican source. Most telling, absolutely no obsidian from Ixtepeque was recovered in this large sample.

During the Terminal Classic and Postclassic periods, obsidian procurement patterns changed at Pusilhá. A sample of 1,496 obsidian artifacts has been recovered either from Terminal Classic architecture or from mixed surface contexts containing at least some Tepeu III pottery. In these contexts, just 82.2% (N=1,231) of the obsidian comes from the El Chayal source, while 16.1% (N=241) comes from Ixtepeque. Put another way, fully 77.5% of the Ixtepeque obsidian we have collected comes from contexts containing Tepeu III or later pottery. By this time, Copán had collapsed, so increased access to the principal source of the southeastern periphery cannot be linked to more trade with that polity. It should be noted, as well, that throughout the Maya lowlands, the Terminal Classic to Postclassic transition is marked by an increase in the consumption of Ixtepeque obsidian. By the Middle Postclassic, more than 90% of the obsidian imported to the Maya lowlands came from this source (Braswell 2003).

Also present in contexts containing Terminal Classic and Postclassic pottery is a small but significant quantity of obsidian from the central Mexican sources of Zaragoza, Puebla, and Pachuca, Hidalgo. Ten of the 14 artifacts from the Zaragoza source come from these demonstrably late contexts, as do nine of the 12 Pachuca artifacts. Mexican source obsidian is particularly diagnostic of the Terminal Classic period across the Maya area. What is peculiar is the lack of obsidian from the Ucareo, Michoacan, source in the Pusilhá collection. Ucareo (followed closely by Pachuca) is the most commonly represented Mexican source in most Maya obsidian samples dating to the period of A.D. 800-1050 (Braswell 2003).

In sum, obsidian procurement data indicate that Pusilhá participated in an economic interaction sphere that included

most of the Maya lowlands, but not sites in the southeastern periphery of Honduras and El Salvador. During the Terminal Classic, procurement patterns changed somewhat, but reflect developments common throughout the Maya lowlands.

Source	Tepeu I/II	Tepeu II	T. Classic/ Postclassic
CHY	78 (94.0%)	758 (99.6%)	1231 (82.3%)
IXT	5 (6.0%)		241 (16.1%)
SMJ			2 (0.1%)
ZAR			10 (0.7%)
PAC			9 (0.6%)
UNK		3 (0.4%)	1 (0.1%)

**Figure 5.** Diachronic patterns in obsidian procurement patterns at Pusilhá. The mixed Tepeu I/II sample comes from excavations inside and immediately outside of Pottery Cave (Op. 1/16 and Op. 1/17). The “pure” Tepeu sample comes from Bu. 8/4 (Op. 8/9/3 and Op. 8/10/5), a royal tomb believed to date to between A.D. 731 and A.D. 751. The Terminal Classic/Postclassic sample comes from the fill and surface of the “Bulldozed Mound” (Op. 2/5-Op. 2/15) and floor contexts sealed by fallen architecture (Op. 3,4, 8, and 9).

### Ground Stone Artifacts

The ground stone artifacts of Pusilhá consist of *manos* and *metates*, doughnut stones, and other miscellaneous forms. In 2006, Dr. Brian Holland of Belize Minerals, Ltd. examined our ground stone. We are deeply indebted to him for sharing his many years of geological experience in Toledo District and elsewhere in Central America.

The *manos* and *metates* are made from several distinct materials, but the two most common are a porous pumice-like yet quite hard igneous rock and a fine-grained, calcareous sandstone. The sandstone is local and comes from the well-known Toledo Formation dating to the lower Eocene. The pumice-like rock dates to the late Tertiary or Quaternary periods and was imported from the volcanic highlands of Guatemala or Honduras. Also from the late Tertiary or Quaternary volcanic highlands

are *manos* and *metates* made of pink and green tuff. Less common materials used to make ground stone artifacts are non-local calcareous sandstones, some containing pebble size particles. Holland identified one such *metate* as probably coming from a geological formation in the Mountain Pine Ridge north of Caracol. In another case, the particles welded by the sandstone are of subrounded quartzite. Finally, local limestone was sometimes used for producing groundstone artifacts, especially doughnut stones.

Missing entirely from the assemblage are the old (about 285 Million years ago) Permian igneous rocks of the Maya Mountains. These include porphoritic granites, silicified ash and tuff, and volcanoclastic sedimentary rocks. Webster Shipley and Elizabeth Graham (1987) and, more recently, Marc Abramiuk and William Meurer (2006) have suggested that the Bladen Range was an important source for ground stone artifacts used in the Maya lowlands. It is somewhat surprising, then, that none from this region are found at nearby Pusilhá. It is important to note as well that all 18 ground stone artifacts from Lubaantun that have been studied are made of vesicular basalt from the Maya highlands (Abramiuk and Meurer 2006:347). Thus, neither Pusilhá nor Lubaantun received their ground stone from the Maya Mountains, and, in fact, the two sites imported different sorts of materials from the volcanic highlands of Guatemala.

One last aspect of the ground stone sample from Pusilhá is particularly worthy of note. *Metates* made of imported volcanic materials all have feet (Figure 6). Footed *metates* are quite common in the Maya Highlands (including at Copán) and in the southern Petén, but are either rare or unknown in the central and northern Maya lowlands. The presence of footed *metates* at Pusilhá suggests that they were exported

from the volcanic highlands of Guatemala as finished artifacts.



Figure 6. Footed *metates* from Pusilhá

## Conclusions

Richard Leventhal (1990, 1992) defined southern Belize as a region sharing many cultural traits, most notably in architecture. Although these observations still hold true, the definition of southern Belize as a cultural region has two unfortunate results. First, when accentuating those characteristics that are common to the region, it is easy to lose site of important economic or cultural ties with more distant sites outside of southern Belize. Second, the identification of shared traits may lead to the misconception of uniformity within the region. As we learn more about Pusilhá, Lubaantun, Nim Li Punit, and Uxbenka, it has become apparent that they had significantly different histories and cultural practices.

After six years of research at Pusilhá, we now know much more about the largest site in southern Belize than we once did. We now have a detailed dynastic history, comparable in richness to many of those from the Petén heartland. That history describes a kingdom that was part of the southern Maya lowlands yet stood at a distance from the political machinations of Tikal and Calakmul. We now have a ceramic chronology that demonstrates close cultural ties with the Petén, and only evanescent and minor 7<sup>th</sup> century connections with Copán and other sites in the southeastern periphery. Moreover, the ceramics of Pusilhá show very little interaction with peripheral western Belize until the Terminal Classic period. We now know that the obsidian procurement system also places Pusilhá squarely within a Petén interaction sphere. Finally, we see that the inhabitants of Pusilhá either made their *manos* and *metates* out of local materials, or received them in finished form from the volcanic highlands of Guatemala.

Results of the Pusilhá Archaeological Project also allow us to see important differences between that site and other important places of ancient southern Belize. Epigraphic data from Uxbenka suggest political ties between that site and Early Classic Tikal (Wanyerka 2005). It may even be that the ruling elite of Uxbenka came from the great metropolis far to the northwest. In contrast, there are no clear epigraphic ties between Pusilhá and the central lowlands. The Pusilhá ceramics imply closer relations with people from the southeastern and, especially, southwestern Petén. Speculating a bit, it may be that the Late Classic settlers of Pusilhá came from the west rather than from the northwest. Certain aspects of the Late Classic iconography of Nim Li Punit suggest ties between the rulers of that site and the southeastern Maya periphery. A glyphic

reference dating to the 8<sup>th</sup> century possibly hints at a political relationship between Nim Li Punit and Copán. By this late date, however, evanescent ties between Pusilhá and the southeastern Maya periphery had vanished. Thus the three sites of southern Belize that have substantial hieroglyphic texts seem to have had very different political histories.

The inhabitants of Pusilhá cooked on *comales*, so presumably made tortillas. The people of the city, then, shared a basic foodway with their neighbors in the southern Maya lowlands, but not with the inhabitants of Lubaantun or Uxbenka. We speculate that this difference may be linked to different identities. As of yet, there is no ceramic report for Nim Li Punit. It will be interesting to learn if the ceramic inventory of Nim Li Punit includes *comales*, like Pusilhá, or generally lacks them, like Lubaantun and Uxbenka.

Finally, the inhabitants of the southern Belize region participated in distinct interregional trade routes. Lubaantun received its ground stone implements from the volcanic Maya highlands and, so far as is known, used *manos* and *metates* made only of basalt. The people of Pusilhá made ground stone implements of local materials but also imported finished *manos* and *metates* from the volcanic highlands. None are made of basalt, so come from sources different than those represented at Lubaantun. Most interestingly, apparently neither site obtained ground stone implements from the nearby Bladen Range. It will be interesting to learn about ground stone procurement at Uxbenka and Nim Li Punit, as well.

As work progresses at Pusilhá, Uxbenka, and - we hope - at other sites of inland Toledo District, we will undoubtedly learn more about historical, political, and economic variation within the district, and also about interregional economic and

political affiliations beyond the southern Maya region.

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