DEDICATION

To the inhabitants
Both past and present

Of Blue Creek, Moho River

CHAPTER I

HOKEB HA CAVE: LOCATION AND EXCAVATION

The Archaeology Department of the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Cooperatives and Consumer Protection did salvage archaeology at the Hokeb Ha cave in June, 1973. Hokeb Ha in the Mopan Maya of today means "the place where the water comes out from". This describes the area at the point where the underground Rio Blanco emerges and continues at Blue Creek.

The Rio Blanco - Blue Creek is a tributary of the Moho River, which is a major drainage system that transects the lower Toledo District (See Fig. 1). The streams originate in areas of the eastern divide of the Maya Mountains. They flow through the Cretaceous karst of the Maya Mountains, their foothills, and down through to the coastal plain where they converge to form the main Moho River watercourse. The names of some of the tributaries reflect their various hues as interpreted by ingenious early explorers - examples are Rio Blanco, Blue Creek, and Black Creek.

Presently, there are more communities located in the basin of the Moho River than in that of other river systems in the Toledo District. Apart from providing potable water and food resources, its other attractions include the fact that it is navigable for large distances into the interior. These factors made the Moho River from Pre-Columbian times up until recently one of the major thoroughfares of traffic from the Peten, and western Toledo District to the Caribbean coast.

Tropical rain forest vegetation covers a large part of the Moho River basin. The topography is that of rolling to steep hills. The main soil sources are the calcareous rocks in the Maya Mountains and shale-sandstone nearer the coastal plain. Because of heavy rains the soil cover thoughout the area is thin. However, erosion from the mountains and foothills during the annual rainy season constantly enriches the soils in the valleys maintaining them with modest fertility.

The main crops grown through the milpa system in the area are corn, beans, and rice. It is also suited for cacao, a crop which was grown there in Pre-Columbian times and no doubt gave this part of the Maya lowlands a high priority for trading purposes.

Maya sites are found throughout the Moho River basin often joining the locations of present day communities. Notes on their location and excavation have been compiled and by Hammond (in preparation). About 2 kilometers northeast of Hokeb Ha is the small ceremonial centre of Blue Creek, where users of the cave no doubt lived.

The Blue Creek site is near the edge of the Mafredi swamp, a low extended catch-basin that gets filled when the Mojo River and Rio Grande flood over. It is an area that is rich in fish, ducks, and other riverine resources. This may account for the building of the small ceremonial centre nearby, the proximity to reliable aquatic resources over-ruling the fact that the area is infested with mosquitoes.

Hokeb Ha is almost equidistant from the two main ceremonial centres in the Toledo District, Lubaantun and Pusilha The former is about 14 kilometers northeast and the latter about 18 kilometers southwest. It was definitely influenced by the inhabitants of both sites, a fact that is corroborated by the contemporaneity of the occupation of between Hokeb Ha and the two sites. Hammond has placed the area of Hokeb Ha under the "region of control" of Lubaantun (Hammond, 1972: 40).

The cave had been reported to us by Peace Corps Volunteer Co-operative Officer Tim Kennedy. It was visited by Peace Corps Volunteer Spleologist Barbara MacCleod who confirmed the earlier reports. We then decided to carry out a salvage operat1on with labourers from San Jose Succotz as assistants.

On arrival at the village of Blue Creek we met the alcaldes and explained to them what our duties with government are and more specifically what we were going to do in the cave. The cooperation we subsequently received from the alcaldes and the villagers enabled us to accomplish our objectives. While we were preparing the items for the return trip to Belmopan, we took the opportunity of exhibiting them to the villagers and of explaining the need to protect them, especially from looters and traders. This was done amidst exclamations of "kishpan" (meaning "pretty") coming from the villagers as they admired the remarkably well preserved well preserved condition of the vessels.

The hill in which the cave chamber is located has itself been dissected by stream action in its geological history. These now appear as cave passages. To arrive at the chamber where we did the salvage operation we ascended the hill through these passages—until we reached a ledge on the hillside near the summit. From there one gets a commanding view of the Blue Creek as it gurgles while emerging from the underground. The last lap is a two-meter climb on a tree that grows on the hillside to the chamber entrance.

Throughout the climb within the cave passages, none of the ubiquitous sherds always to be found in caves used by the Maya were seen. It was that much more a surprise to see so many whole vessels on the chamber floor. The haunting feeling that they had been left behind by their depositors just yesterday could not escape us as we surveyed the area. The morning sun shone into a part of the chamber through the entrance we used, enabling us to see almost everything in the chamber without artificial lighting. There was another opening at the extreme west corner of the chamber leading to a sheer drop-off about four meters to the cave passage.

The floor plan of the chamber is represented in Fig.2. It consists of one open area roughly oriented east-west along its long axis. In the east corner there is a flattened platform in a crescent shape measuring 30 cm. in height from the cave floor, 165 cm. in length between the two extremities and 127 cm. at the widest. It is held in place one by a stone wall of river cobbles. Although nothing was found on it, it was most probably used as an altar where only perishable items had been placed.

The rest of the chamber floor is loose, chalky fill; it dips into a slight depression at the centre. At the southwest end, the floor narrows down into two terraces. Originally, this part of the floor had probably sloped too steeply down to the drop-off. To break the slope the Maya artificially flattened two edges, one below the other with a riser in between. Terrace 1 is four meters long and the riser 34 cm. high. Terrace 2 Is 260 cm. long and the riser 40 cm. high.

The operation consisted of the mapping of the floor chamber by tape and compass tying in the location of the vessels. They were then numbered and prepared for evacuation A test excavation of 50 cm. square and 30 cm. deep was tried on Terrace 1, which, like Terrace 2, had been deliberately flattened by the Maya. The objective of the excavation was to see (a) whether there was any evidence of earlier use of the chamber floor and (b) whether artificial fill had been used in the building of the terrace. There was no evidence to substantiate either of the objectives. About five sherds were found in the first 6 cm. level, which were from the same type of vessels as those found on the surface. There was no more artifactual material for the remaining 24 cm. The soil continued to be the dry, loose, chalky silt as that found on the surface.

In getting the items out of the chamber we found it practical to lower them in burlap bags down the dropoff. This is no doubt the manner in which the Maya had brought to them into the chamber. It would have been far more difficult to bring them through the main entrance and have them reach the chamber in such good condition. The people themselves who used the chamber would have climbed up the way we did, probably using a bush ladder or a conveniently placed tree.

Figure 2

CHAPTER 2

THE ARTEFACTS

All the items found at Hokeb Ha Cave were of pottery except 4 pieces of stone, 3 charcoal lumps, several charcoal flakes, ash, and two *Pachychilas glaphyrus* shells.

The four stone pieces and charcoal lumps were found in bowl No. 26, which was either an incensario or incensario component. Three of them are sandstone and one is lime-stone. They do not have any distinct tool characteristics and it is difficult to attribute any function to them. Parts of the former are blackened by fire and may have been used in the process of incense burning.

The three charcoal lumps were also found in bowl No.26. Several charcoal flakes and ash were found in incensario bowl No. 42. They are definitely a result of the burning of incense.

Two freshwater mollusc shells of *Pachychilas glaphyrus*, locally known as "jute", were found in incensario bowl No. 42. They are about the same size, the slightly larger one being 7.5 cm. long and 3.4 cm. at the widest. The spires had been cut off so that the meat could be extracted. These shells are reported from Maya sites, as for example at Barton Ramie (Willey, 1965 : 526) where they are found in refuse heaps. Thus, it is surprising that such a commonplace debitage would be found in a vessel where incense was burned.

Most of the pottery vessels were found erect; a few, mostly vases, were lying. No particular attention was paid to the position in which the vessels were found as it could have been disturbed by animals entering such an openly exposed chamber. An example of disturbance caused by animals was found in jar No.12, which was filled with dried grasses that had been placed in the vessel no doubt by small rodents.

Most of the vessels were placed separately. There were some instances however, when fragments of one vessel were deliberately separated and placed together with the fragments of another. In cases where this was observed, the sherds were designated as groups. In the large incensario bowl No. 42, fragments of incensario components Nos. 36, 38, and 39 were found. Beside it was placed a part of incensario pedestal base No.21 and incensario bowl No.15. Thus, incensario bowl No. 42 was the major item among a group of incensario components.

The rest of incensario bowl No. 15 were found along with vase No. 25 and incensario component group No. 35. Another part of pedestal base No. 21 was found as sherd No. 2. Parts of incensario component No. 37 were found next to vase No. 8. The deliberate scattering was not limited to incensarios. Fragments of polychrome vase No. 25 were found as a group next to incensario bowl No. 27.

There was evidence of the grouping of the types of vessels by the depositors. Closest to the altar were the incensarios and incensario components. Furthest away were the cylindrical vases. Between these groups but slightly closer to the bases were the jars. In some instances the grouping is quite obvious, as in the case of vessel Nos. 23 and 32, the only two plain jars with applique design, being placed side by side; or Nos. 19 and 33, the only two polychrome bowls, also being found near each other. Generally, however, the grouping was not exclusive and was more a tendency rather than a deliberate attempt at juxtaposing vessels of the same type. An inspection of the location of vessels is as seen in Fig. 2 will substantiate this observation.

Pottery Description

The vessel forms found at Hokeb Ha Cave are cylindrical vase, jar, bowl, and incensario. The definition of the vase, jar, and bowl forms is that of Pendergast (1971:

23). The incensario form is a designation based on the assumed function of this category of vessels.

The incensario form is divided into two groups: basic bowl forms with and without pedestal base, and incensario component forms. These are represented mostly in fragments, such as, flanges, modeled face, and barrel parts.

In cases where the temper can be observed it is almost always calcite. It is divided Into three categories based on the size of the grain as discerned by the naked eye. The smallest is described as "barely seen", the larger size as "plainly seen", and the largest size, in which the average grain is more than one fourth the thickness of the vessel, is described as "large".

The paste in most of the vessels is usually firm, although in some of the incensario components, it tends to be moderately firm to frangible.

Scan Fig 4

FIG. 4: Fluted cylindrical vase, almost complete, small rim fragment broken off.

FORM: Flattened round base; medium thick rounded sides.

There is a horizontal design in the upper part. It predominates the lower part where it is applied vertically.

SIZE: Vessel height 22.5 cm. Rim diameter 11.3 cm.

SURFACE: Slipped on the exterior in yellow, except on the base. There is a double black line on the exterior rim a part of which flows over the interior.

#TEMPER: Barely seen calcite grain.

PASTE: Firm; reddish brown in section.

FIG, 5: Small jar, complete.

FORM: Flattened base. Thick rounded sides forming a subglobular to globular profile. Rounded juncture between neck and sides. The vessel lists to one side from a defect in formation. Short neck. Restricted orifice. The rim flattens out to a slightly rounded lip.

SIZE: Rim diameter 8.6 cm. Orifice diameter 6.7 cm.

Neck height 2.8 cm.Vessel diameter 13.5 cm. Vessel thickness at rim 0.4 cm.

SURFACE: Exterior slipped, well burnished and painted red. At spots where the slip has eroded, there is revealed a coarse, unburnished surface. The neck exterior is uneven and lumpy at spots from lack of smoothing.

TEMPER AND PASTE: Not available.

FIG. 6: Cylindrical vase, complete.

FORM: Slightly convex base. Straight sides; pointed to slightly rounded lip. The sides have the widest diameter at the centre, giving the vessel almost a barrel-like profile.

SIZE: Rim diameter 9 cm. Vessel height 13.5 cm. Base diameter 8.5 cm.

SURFACE AND DECORATION: The interior is slipped in black. The background colour of the exterior is orange. There are vertical red lines alternating between a thick one and two thin ones. The lines are not drawn straight and are slightly wavy.

TEMPER: Barely soon calcite grains.

PASTE: Not available.

FIG. 9: Cylindrical vase, complete.

FORM: Flat base. The sides narrow slightly as they rise. Flattened lip.

SIZE: Rim diameter 10.5 cm. Vessel height 22.5 cm. Base diameter 11 cm.

SURFACE AND DECORATION: The exterior and upper part of the interior is slipped**,** polished and painted. There is a red band on the interior rim. The background colour on the exterior is reddish yellow 5 YR 6/8. On the exterior rim there is a wide black band and a narrow black line underneath. Immediately below there is a design of V's with extended arms. Shallow grooves run vertically from base to midway on exterior side. Above there are four horizontal grooves.

TEMPER AND PASTE: Not available.

FIG. 8: Cylindrical vase, complete.

FORM: Slightly convex tense, cylindrical form.

SIZE: Rim diameter 9 cm. Vessel height 17.3 cm.

SURFACE AND DECORATION: The exterior and upper part of interior slipped in light yellow. There are two sets of carving on the exterior surface. The upper consists of pseudo-glyphs. The lower is a vertical guilloche design between two rectanguloid forms. Between the carved panels cinnabar is stuck.

TEMPER AND PASTE: Not available.

FIG**.** 11: Jar, complete.

FORM: Small, slightly convex base. The medium thick sides rise widening gradually--the widest diameter being about 2/3 the distance from the base. This gives it a profile similar to that of an urn. Rounded juncture between the shoulder and neck. Medium height neck; flaring rim and pointed lip. Restricted orifice.

SIZE: Rim diameter 12.3 cm. Orifice diameter 8.4 cm. Maximum body diameter 25 cm. Vessel height 22.5 cm. Neck height 2.7 cm. Rim thickness 1.2 cm.

SURFACE AND DECORATION: The interior rim and neck and entire exterior, except the base, slipped and painted in black. High polish. Around the shoulder there is a row of pre-slip incisions between two lines. There are four sets of three vertical lines below the shoulder--the longest being 8.4 cm. and the shortest 7.1 cm. Flanking each set are six notches, three on each side. The notches are done by an implement that gouges slightly as it digs in.

TEMPER AND PASTE: Not available.

COMMENT: The best vessel in workmanship among the jars, also the most unusual in every aspect--most probably an imported vessel.

FIG. 12: Jar, complete.

FORM: Flat, slightly concave base. Globular body

slightly listing to one side. Rounded juncture between neck and rim. Medium neck height; restricted orifice. Slight flaring rim; sharp to rounded lip.

SIZE: Rim diameter 8.8 cm. Orifice diameter 6.2 cm. Vessel height 16.5 cm. Vessel diameter 18 cm.

SURFACE: Slipped and painted in red entire exterior and interior rim anti neck. High burnish. Some fire-clouding marks on one side. Punctate marks around shoulder done probably by reed with a triangular tip.

TEMPER AND PASTE: Not available

FIG. 14: Jar, complete.

FORM: Small, slightly concave base. The sides are rounded but one side extends out more from defect in formation. Medium thick sides. Rounded juncture between neck and shoulder. Long neck; wide orifice.

The rim flattens outward with a slight rise. Pointed to slightly rounded lip.

Subglobular profile.

SIZE: Rim diameter 15 cm. Maximum vessel diameter 24.5 cm. Vessel height 19 cm. Rim thickness 1 cm.

SURFACE: Plain. Uneven Smoothing and burnishing

Resulting in lumpy exterior. Distinct fire-clouding marks.

TEMPER AND PASTE: Not available.

FIG. 16: Jar, complete.

FORM: Small, rounded flattened base; medium thick sides; not too distinct junction between neck and shoulder. Although the neck is high, this is not too noticeable from the exterior as the neck slopes into the shoulder. The rim flattens out and ends in flattened to slightly rounded lip.

SIZE: Rim diameter 14 cm. Neck height 3.1 cm. Orifice diameter 10.4 cm. Vessel height 14 cm. Vessel diameter 16 cm.

SURFACE: Plain. Uneven smoothing resulting in exterior being lumpy, especially in the lower half. Uneven burnishing--well done in upper half appearing as if it were slipped and poorly done in lower half, being porous at spots. Patches of fire clouding. TEMPER AND PASTE: Not available.

FIG. 17: Jar, complete.

FORM: Small, flat slightly concave base. The sides are rounded, globular but slightly asymmetrical. Thin sides. Rounded juncture between neck and shoulder. Medium height neck. Restricted orifice. The rim flattens out and ends in slightly rounded lip. More globular profile than No. 16 but slightly asymmetrical.

SIZE: Rim diameter 11 cm. Orifice diameter 8.5 cm. Vessel diameter 17 cm. Neck height 2.4 cm. Vessel height 15 cm. Rim thickness 0.9 cm.

SURFACE: Plain. More even smoothing and burnishing than No. 16. Faint horizontal brushing marks. Pronounced fire-clouding especially on lower half. TEMPER AND PASTE: Not available.

FIG, 20: Cylindrical vase, complete.

FORM: Flat base, cylindrical form.

SIZE: Vessel height 23 cm. Rim diameter 11 cm. SURFACE AND DECORATION: Well burnished and polished. The interior is scrubbed horizontally. It is painted orange (now heavily eroded) about 3 cm. down from the rim. On the orange background there are two different kinds of design. The first, located higher, is a set of pseudo-glyphs in red with black borders. The lower design is a group of alternating columns, some in black and others in red**.** Each has four circles containing dots of the same colour as the column done in the reserve space technique.

TEMPER AND PASTE: Not available

FIG. 33: Polychrome bowl, complete.

FORM: Flattened base; medium thick sides; the rim is slightly outflaring and ends in slightly rounded lip.

SIZE: Rim diameter 14 cm. Vessel height 10 cm.

SURFACE AND DECORATION: Interior and exterior slipped. High burnish. Heavy pitting, especially on the base. The exterior is coated with an orange background on which there is a polychrome design on the upper half. The design consists of pseudo-glyphs in black on red with black line borders.

TEMPER AND PASTE: Not available.

COMMENT: A very well made vessel.

FIG. 38: Incensario component, modeled face with flange.

FORM: A fragment of an incensario with a modeled male face bordered by a flange. The face is below the upper jaw of an animal, probably a jaguar. The person is wearing a lip plug, an earflare, and a nose ornament. The head is backed by a cylindrical form that continued downward to another part of the component incensario format. The upper part of the flange is shaped into a rim.

SIZE: The whole fragment including the flare is 22.5 cm, at the largest and 15 cm. at the widest.

The cylindrical form is 11.5 cm. in diameter. The face itself is 9 cm. long and 9 cm. at the widest.

SURFACE: The face is slipped faintly in red. The rest is plain, roughly smoothed. There are modeled scroll designs on the bordering flare.

TEMPER: Large quartzite grains exposed by the smoothing.

PASTE: Frangible, grey in section.

FIG. 42: Incensario component, bowl.

FORM: Pedestal base with flaring edge. Thick sides. Angular junction between neck and shoulder· Flaring rim; flattened lip.

SIZE: Rim diameter 27.5 cm. orifice diameter 22 cm.

Vessel height with pedestal 16 cm. Pedestal height

4.5 cm. Rim thickness 1.9 cm.

SURFACE: The interior is plain, heavily covered with soot; lumps of charcoal found in it. On about one-third of the exterior the colour is mottled dark gray. The rest of the exterior is roughly slipped and painted in yellowish red 5 YR 5/6 as far as the pedestal and slightly flowing over to it.

TEMPER: Plainly seen calcite grains.

PASTE: Thick and firm, dark gray to red in-section.

COMMENT: A similar pattern of partially slipped exterior exterior is found on another incensario vessel No. 15.

TABLE I

Type	No.	State
Cylindrical Vase:		
1) Surface altered		
in green state		
fluted	4	Almost complete, small rim fragment broken off
	24	Almost complete, slight rim fragment chipped off
engraved	8	Complete
groove- Including	9	Complete
2) Polychrome	6	Complete
	7	Complete
	25	About 2/3 restored from fragments
	20	Complete
Jar:		
1) Plain	14	Complete
	16	Complete
	17	Complete
	22	Complete
2) Plain with appliqued	23	Almost complete, small rim fragment broken off
bosses		

	32	Complete
3) Slipped and painted	5	Complete
	11	Complete
	12	Complete
Bowl:		
Polychrome	19	Complete, restored from fragments
	33	Complete
Vessel form	27	Almost complete, slight rim fragment broken off
	28	Almost complete, slight rim fragment broken off
	29	Almost complete, slight rim fragment broken off
	42	Almost complete, slight rim fragment broken off
	26	Almost complete, slight rim fragment broken off
Components	15	Fragmented
	21	"
	34	"
	35	"
	36	"
	37	"
	38	"
	39	"
	40	"

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF THE POTTERY

Table I presents a breakdown of the type of vessel, its catalogue number and the state in which it was found. Of the 24 vessels, 16 are complete, 7 are almost complete, and 1 is almost two-thirds complete. They are divided into the categories of cylindrical vase, jar, bowl and incensario.

Cylindrical Vases

The Hokeb Ha cylindrical vases can be sub-divided into two main groups on the basis of the surface finish. The consists of alterations done on the exterior while the vessel is in the green state (Hodges, 1964 : 31). These include fluting, engraving, and grooving. The latter consists of painted designs, all polychrome.

Two vases are fluted, Nos. 4 and 24. The predominant pattern of fluting is vertical and covers about two-thirds of the body from the base. Above this pattern it is horizontal which in No. 4 is in one series involving one and flutes and in No. 24 it is in three series involving one and two flutes. Both vases are slipped in light yellow-orange on the exterior and the upper part of the interior.

Fluted vessels are found in strata Nos. 6, 5, and 4 at Pusilha Cave (Joyce 1929 : 445). It is not defined whether the flutes are horizontal or vertical. At Uaxactun either one pattern - horizontal or vertical- is found during Tepeu 2 on cylinders (Smith 1955 : Fig. 43). No vases from Uaxacun, Altar de Sacrificios, and Seibal are illustrated combining both horizontal and vertical fluting as the Hokeb Ha vessels.

The engraving technique observed at Hokeb Ha is referred to by Smith (1955 : 44) as the gouged-and-incised. The one vessel with this surface finish is No. 8. It is smaller in size than the other cylindrical vases. The base is slightly convex making it lean to one side. There are two distinct design panels. The lower consists of two guilloches between a set of two rectanguloid forms. Above this there is a panel of pseudo glyphs, including four St. Andrew crosses. The gouged areas are filled with cinnabar.

Vases with similar gouged-and-incised designs are reported from Uaxactun, including the cinnabar filling. (Smith 1955 : 45, Fig. 43, b (71). As in the case of the Hokeb Ha sample, the pseudo glyphic hand on Uaxactun vessels is filled with semigeometric figures. This technique is also reported from the Terro gouged-incised type of the Bayal Ceramic Complex of Seibal (Sabloff 19/5 : 185 - 187) not on straight sided cylinders but on barrel-shaped vases. At Seibal glyph, and pseudo glyph bands are also found below the rim.

Groove-incising as described by Smith (1955 : 37) is found on vessel No. 9. This pattern of grooves is similar to that on the fluted vases with the vertical predominating over the horizontal. Slightly below the rim there is a line of "V's" with extended arms.

The "V" design with extended arms as found on vase No. 9 is reported at Uaxactun during Tepeu 1 to 3 (Smith, 1955: 68). Also at Uaxactun (on Tepeu 2 cylinders) horizontal groove-incising is found (fig. 43, a(1-4).

One common feature of all the above vases is the presence of black lines or bands around the exterior rim - a characteristic they share with polychrome vases.

The polychrome vases can be sub-divided into three groups each one more sophisticated in design.

Vessel Nos. 6 and 25 depict the least sophisticated design which is lines, both thick and thin, applied both vertically and horizontally. In form both are slightly incurving. No direct similarities are seen between these vases and those illustrated from other sites.

Better workmanship is seen on vases Nos. 20 and 7. The special features of No. 20 are a row of pseudo glyphs and columns with dots done in the reserve space technique. At Uaxactun the latter technique is found most abundantly on vessels, including cylindrical vases (Smith 1955:61).

The Hokeb Ha vase, vessel No. 7, is in a special group by virtue of its superb workmanship in all aspects.

The jars are grouped into three categories on the basis of form and surface finish.

The first category included vessels Nos. 14, 16, 17, They share the following characteristics.

1) They are made from clay that burns to a dull red when fired.
2) They are generally a coarse ware and all are plain.
3) In body they are unevenly shaped but are generally subglobular in profile.
4) They have a small flat to concave base, high neck, wide orifice, flattened everted rim, and unevenly shaped lip.
5) The following defects in formation are noticeable:

a) uneven paste resulting in some smaller vessels being heavier than larger ones,

b) uneven burnishing; this is worse done on lower parts of the body which is porous. It is better done on the upper parts appearing to be partly slipped at spots,

c) uneven smoothing resulting in a lumpy exterior especially in the area of the neck and shoulder. There is little distinction between the neck and shoulder in two vessels, Nos. 16 and 22,
d) uneven firing - distinct fire clouding patches.

The greatest similarity in shape, size, surface, and overall coarseness is seen with jars of the Cambio Unslipped type of the Tepejilote Ceramic Complex of Seibal (Sabloff 1975 : 153 - 155, Figs. 291, 292). There is also some similarity to the Tepeu general jar forms in rims and necks (Smith 1955 : Fig. 46, b.)

Jars Nos. 23 and 32 are similar in most respects to the above jars except that they have applique bosses on the body. No. 32 is unusually rough on the exterior being very lumpy and 23 has deep horizontal raking marks. Comparable bosses on similarly shaped jars are seen on Tepeu general jars from Uaxactun, (Smith 1955 : Fig. 46, b).

The three jars that display the best workmanship are Nos. 5, 11, and 12. All have narrow orifices and are slipped and painted in monochrome. Although No. 12 was probably originally slipped, it is now eroded. Jar No. 11 appears in well polished black. The rim flares out with a sweep instead of having an angular junction with the neck. The three jars are decorated with punctate designs and incisions starting from the shoulder. In this respect No. 11 is again more distinctive, being richer in the punctate designs executed to complement its urn-like shape.

Comparable jars to No. 5 in surface, form, and paste are reported from the Seibal Tinaja Red of the Tepejilote Ceramic Complex. There is a similarity in form between jar No. 11 and Fig. (b) of Chart 10 from the Boca Complex of Altar de Sacrificios. This period is coeval with the late Tepeu 2 and early Tepeu 3. The pattern of punctates and incisions as seen on jars Nos. 11 and 12 is unusual, no comparable patterns being reported from Uaxactun. There is slight similarity between the punctates of jar No. 12 and those of the Pantana Impressed type of the Tepejilote Ceramic of Complex of Seibal (Sabloff 1975: 164 167, Fig. 312).

Bowls

Bowls Nos. 19 and 33 are both polychrome. They are a fine ware being both slipped and painted on the interior and exterior. The design on the exterior have the same basic colour scheme - black and red-on-light yellow. In form, both have slightly incurving sides and slightly everted rims.

Jar No. 19 has dots done in the reserve space technique on columns as in vase No. 20. Comparative material to bowl No. 33 in all aspects is seen in bowls from the fourth stratum of Pusilha Cave (Joyce 1929 : Plate XLI).

Incensarios and other types

The incensario category of vessels can be divided into main groups. The first consists of complete incensarios and the other of incensario components.

Under the first group fall vessels Nos. 27, 28, 29 and 42. Both vessels Nos. 27 and 28 share the same form of slightly convex base, straight outcurving sides, and flattened out rim. The paste is coarse.

No. 27 is the cruder of the two. It is unslipped and heavily blackened by soot both on the interior and exterior. There are some encrustations on the interior almost certainly of copal. Vessel No. 28 is larger and slipped both on the interior and exterior. The slip on the exterior is heavily pitted at spots; on the interior it is more evenly applied. It does not have any blackening; thus it was possibly a new vessel to be used.

There is a vessel illustrated by Mason from the Rio Frio area of the Cayo District that is similar to No. 27 (1928 : 36, Fig. 32). Vessel No. 28 is probably of the same general type. The concept of a component incensario described by Thompson (1931 : 311 - 12) from Tzimin Ka of the Hol ul V period. Although Nos. 27 and 28 could be independent incensarios, they could also form the receptacle component as described by Thompson. This may account for the flared rim on which the barrel component could be set,

Vessels Nos. 29 and 42 are basically bowl forms on a pedestal base. Both are a coarse ware, although No. 42 is partially slipped on the exterior. A special feature on No. 29 is perforations on the pedestal. Close similarities in paste, surface treatment, and shape (including the pedestal) are seen between these two vessels and the Miseria Appliqued type of the Bayal Ceramic Complex from Seibal (Sabloff 1975 : 174 - Fig. 332). The one difference is that there is a complete lack of spikes on the Hokeb Ha incensarios.

Vessel No. 26 is difficult to place within the two incensario groups, although it certainly belongs within the incensario category of vessels. It is a bowl form without any distinct rim, the sides coming to a jagged top. The base is convex. It is blackened on the exterior base with soot. There is no evidence of blackening in the interior, although stones and one charcoal lump were found in it. It could either be an independent incensario or most probably was placed on a pedestal. No comparable vessels were seen illustrated in the literature.

Within the group of incensario components are Nos. 15, 21, and 34. No. 21 is almost certainly a pedestal that got broken at the vessel base. It is plain and coarse in paste. Its special feature is rounded bosses applied near the broken part. Similar bosses are reported from Uaxactun during the Tepeu 2 and 3 (Smith 1955 : 50).

Item No. 15 is the substantial fragment of a bowl slipped at parts of the exterior. There are the remains of an indentation at the mid-Interior base, originally a deliberately made hole. As such, this incensario component stood on its own pedestal. The exterior is adorned with fillet strips in St. Andrew crosses embellished at the extremities and the centre with rounded bosses. A similar pattern of fillet strips is not seen in the literature, although incensarios are invariably decorated with modeled strips.

Item No. 34 is about two-thirds of the barrel form of a component incensario. It is coarse in paste but slipped on the exterior. The barrel form seen in the Tzimin Kax ncensario is a close resemblance.

Most of the sherd material is from incensarios. No. 38 is a modeled face bordered by a flange with modeled scroll esigns. The back is the cylindrical portion of a component incensario. Striking similarities are seen between this and the corresponding part of the Tzimin Kax incenario. Group No. 30 is four parts of the flange, two from the top and the others from the side. No. 39 is also a flange fragment with modeled scrolls. Item No. 13 is the back portion of the barrel part. Nos. 25 and 30 are barrel components.

The other sherd material are items Nos. 6, 18, 21, and 7. They would seem to be from the same vessel. Recontruction of the complete vessel from the fragments is difficult. The group designated as No. 3 is the only distinctive group of fragments from a utilitarian jar in the Hokeb Ha collection.

The other ceramic material found were a part of a cup with handle and a flattened fragment in a roughly rectanguloid form that could easily have been a lid.

CHAPTER 4

THE HOKER HA VASE

The Hokeb Ha Vase, vessel No. 7 deserves detailed treatment. The following is a description of it and an analysis of the portraiture. C. Goggins of Peabody Museum kindly assisted us with some useful hints in the discussion of this vessel.

The painting is of two men cross-legged facing each other. There are glyphs between them. They are gesturing one to another with outstretched hands - the left one his left hand and the other his right. In both instances the thumb is stretched out from the rest of the fingers. The one on the right has the forearm twisted in a rather forced manner.

The one on the left has a headdress the lower part of which is a cloth bonnet that fits snuggly over his head. A red cloth is tied around the bonnet; its knotted ends stick into the air. From the other end, feathers dangle to behind his waist. The highest part of the headdress is the end part of the bonnet that is wound. A thin thread from it leads to the bottom black line of the border as if it is tied to it.

The headdress of the other also starts off with a cloth bonnet ending in a string near the bottom black line of the upper margin. A red cloth is tied in a bow around the bonnet. There is a thin black line attached to a round tassel from

which feather-looking items emanate, some pointing upward and others downward. This probably is a conventionalized water lily.

FIG. 7: Polychrome vase with figure painting.

FORM: Flat base. Cylindrical form. Medium thick sides ending in flattened to slightly rounded lip. Uneven lip, one side slightly higher than the other.

SURFACE: Exterior and upper part of interior slipped and painted. Slight horizontal brushing marks on the interior. High burnish and polish on exterior. Background colour 7.5 YR 6/6 reddish yellow. Other colours: black, red, and yellow. No evidence of use in the interior.

DECORATION: The margin for the painting is black: on the top a black band and a narrow line, on the bottom a double black line and a band.

Both are wearing round earflares. Both are also wearing necklaces with elaborate central ornaments. These are of the same colour as the earflares, being of a yellowish gray colour, probably representing jade. The necklace of the one on the left extends down his back. Both wear brightly coloured skirts that start from the midriff and reach mdway on the thigh. The skirt of the one on the lft is yelllow, red, and black - the upper part being red geometric deesigns on yellow background and the lower part red bands and black lines on yellow. The other skirt is basic red with a yellow sash in the front.

There is a difference in the posture of the two men. The left is facing the other squarely; the other is sitting toward the viewer looking at the other over his right shoulder. This posture distinguishes him as the principal person.

The basic drawing technique of the artist is to outline the subject in black. He then fits in the detail with the appropriate colour. The human body is in red 2.5 YR 4/8. The apparel of the two men give the illustration its added colour. In the case of the glyphs, the artist uses the background orange colour; he passes a faint red on the glyphs and uses black lines to achieve the detail. The artist allows himself some licence as in tying the headdress of the one on the left to the lower line of the top black margin. He was probably going to do the same to the headdress of the other man but instead he left the string dangling near the black margin.

Despite the fact that the artist infuses some realism into the two men, one gets the impression that they exemplify some ideal personality type which is represented in other forms of Maya art. They are both strikingly handsome men demonstrating angular and rounded characteristics as dictated by the anatomy. The angular features include the sharp, linear nose, thin partly open lips, the straight upper eyefold, and the delicately outstretched palms of the hand. The rounded features are the lower eyefold that curves giving the eye a

slight slant, the arms, and the legs. No musculature is highlighted, the only bodily curvature being the pot bellies. Proskouriakoff observes a similar characteristic in Palenque sculpture, which she describes as "a calm, aristocratic beauty without marked sexual features." (1965 : 4/8).

The overall effect the viewer gets is that both men are captured in a dramatic moment. This is seen in the outstretched hands, the open mouth, and the intense look in the eyes. The outstretched hands appearing in a strained posture are not unusual in the representation of human figures in Maya art (Easby 1961 : 73). It will forever be speculation what action the artist captured. Was it special rite in a religious ceremony or just simply a discussion, as in the recounting of a highly charged story?

Coggins (personal communication) reports similarities between the Hokeb Ha Vase and vases from Burial 116 at Tikal. The design elements shared include: seated male figures, similarly outstretched hands and attires, headdresses with the water lily motiff, and functional glyphs. The Hokeb Ha Vase la smaller than those from Tikal and has fewer details, which would correspond to its context within a far less important site. Based on an overall comparison Coggins places a date of about 731 A.D. on the Hokeb Hi Vase.

The glyphs are sharply outlined and could provide nom, useful information on the action depicted on the vase. There is presently an ongoing attempt by specialists on the greater understanding of ceramic inscription. Coggins has suggested the following "very tentative" numbering for the glyphs based on Thompson's study. He prefaces this suggestion by explaining that Thompson's numbers can only be approximate since they were originally assigned on the basis of monumental inscriptions, which have a distant relationship to those on ceramic vessels.

A	B
1. 181.561 (sky variant.?) The subfix is probably not numerical	1000.181

2. Wing Skeletal Head: 136

3. 248.528 (Cauac)

Apart from the possible numerical attributes of the glyphs, in the case of at least one, some mythological significance can be discussed. Cauac represented in Glyph A3 is one of the glyphs of the water group, associated with rain-making celestial characters - dragons, snakes, or crocodiles (Thompson 1960 : 274-275). It may thus be possible to conclude that the action captured in the portrait may have some association with rain-making activities.

Symbolism more appropriate to the cave context of this vase is seen in the conventionalized water lily worn on the headdress of the principal figure. The water lily is the symbo1 of the underworld (Thompson 1960 : 279). Thompson also indicates some association with the jaguar god, the god of the interior of the earth, especially as he is the most common wearer of the water lily. Thus, the principal figure, as the wearer of the water lily, may be representing the jaguar god, the god of the underworld.

The other highly elaborate cylindrical vase from a cave in Belize is the Actun Balam Vase. Actun Balam is located in the Cayo District and was reported by Pendergast (1969: 41-52). The Actun Balam Vase is a more complicated vessel in its form, surface finish, and illustration. It would also seem to be from the later period Tepeu 3. The context of the discovery of the two vases is different. The one from Actun Balam was partially restored from pieces in a garbage pit in the cave among hundreds of other sherds. On the other hand, the Hokeb Ha Vase had been deposited intact along with other complete or almost complete vessels in a cave chamber.

Thus, the significance of the illustration on the Actun Balam Vase arose from its function on an above ground site while that of the Hokel) Ha Vase most probably arose from the nature of the ceremonies carried out in the cave. The difference in the vessels underlines the two main uses of caves and their parts - one as a place where vessels and their fragments were dumped and the other place where special ceremonies were held.

CHAPTER 5

USE OF THE CAVE CHAMBER

The Hokeb Ha Cave chamber is perched at the summit of the hill where the Blue Creek emerges from the underground. The fact that only a few sherds of a utilitarian vessel were found among the entire pottery collection indicates that the chamber was no doubt deliberately chosen by the Maya for ceremonial activity for two possible reasons. The first is the aesthetic qualities of the surrounding area as discerned from the chamber entrance. This is enhanced by the tremendous relief provided by the height of the hill over the landscape and the eerie sight and sound of the waters of the stream gurgling from the underground. The second reason stems from the two themes that pervade the of Maya ceremonial sites - the importance of water and the element of height. Both of these themes, that were artificially incorporated by the Maya into their ceremonial centres by at times digging reservoirs or altering ponds and by periodically increasing the height of their temples through rebuilding, were provided for them at Hokeb Ha by nature.

The type of ceremonial use was not to collect virgin water for ceremonies, an activity that has been attributed to caves by Thompson (1959 : 122 - 129). There is no evidence of cave formation that dripped water., Besides, the chamber floor is loose, chalky silt.

In attempting to reconstruct the nature of the ceremonial activity that was carried out, the pottery and the setting within the chamber provide some leads. The ceremony Involved the use of incensarios and three other types of vessels, cylindrical vases, small- to medium-sized jars, and bowls.

The altar in the corner was the focal point of the chamber. The setting of the incensarios nearest to it highlight their importance. At a spot, fragments of incensarios were placed together, either having been ritually broken there or brought already broken. The extensive use of incensarios in caves in the Classic period in the Cayo District was reported by Gann (Thompson, 1959: 122).

The rest of the vessels, being complete or almost complete, probably originally contained perishable objects or were left empty. Unlike the incensarios, these vessels show little evidence of use, mostly in the form of slight chips in the rim. They are thus in great contrast to those found in other caves in Belize, which are normally fragmented utilitarian vessels heavily blackened with charred organic material adhering to the interior. They were no doubt used in ceremonies in the chamber and left there as their final resting place. This probably could have been done at a period of cyclical renewal, a practice that was also done to utilitarian vessels as suggested by Thompson (1959 : 128) and Pendergast (1969 : 10).

Thompson discusses that rites held in caves included ceremonies to honour the jaguar god and to pray for rain (1959 : 122 - 124). There are evidences that both of these were carried out at Hokeb Ha. The modeled face on one of the incensario components is depicted within the jaws of a jaguar. We have already seen that the principal figure on the Hokeb Ha Vase may be representing the jaguar god. The evidence for rain-making ceremonies comes from the Cauac glyph which is associated with rain-making celestial characters.

The finding of so many complete and almost complete vessels at Hokeb Ha is certainly a blessing in this part of the Maya lowlands where little archaeological work has been done. Even when it has been done, the recording and description of the sherd material is found inadequate for cross-comparison with whole vessels. Nevertheless, some strong resemblances have been found between the Hokeb Ha vessels and those reported from neighbouring sites to indicate that there was interchange in pottery techniques and or items.

The cylindrical vases share similarities to those of the Uaxactun Tepeu 2 period. The jars show the closest similarities to those of the Cambio Unslipped and Tinaja Red of the Seibal Tepejilote Ceramic Complex. The bowls resemble some recovered from the Pusilha Cave.

It was more difficult to compare incensarios with those from other sites because they are usually recorded with the least detail among vessel forms in the literature. Two incensario bowl forms that could either be used independently or as the receptacle for a component incensario are comparable to ones reported from the Cayo District by Mason and at Tzimin Kax. The flange, modeled face, and barrel parts of the component incensario are comparable to those of the Miseria Appliqued type of the Bayal Ceramic Complex from Seibal, except that the former do not have spikes.

The time periods at the sites where ceramic similarities are found for the various Hokeb Ha vessel forms are the following - Uaxactun Tepeu 2 for cylindrical jars. SeibaI Tepejilote for the jars and Tzimin Kax Holmul V for the incensarios. These are all coeval and correspond to the middle Late Classic period between 750 to 850 A.D. Thus depositing of the vessels at Hokeb Ha represents an activity within a limited period, probably a short time span. The practice of the relatively short time use of the caves has been observed in others from the Chiquibul area of the Cayo District and the Sibun River basin in the Belize District (Thompson, 1959 : 128, and Pendergast 169 :

The use of Hokeb Ha Cave is contemporaneous with the occupation of the three main ceremonial centres in the Toledo District, Pusilha, Lubaantun, and Nim Li Tunit (Hammond 1976: 49-50). The close cultural relationship between Hokeb Ha and these sites combined with the geographical proximity provide us with a clearer picture of the pre-history of this part of the Maya lowlands. The Hokeb Ha ceramics highlight the Late Classic occupation of the Lower ?? District, an unusual phenomenon in the Maya area

remains are normally found covering a wide chronological span from the Pre-Classic period to the Postciassic.

The case of Lubaantun has been dealt with by Hammond (1972).

The cultural contacts extend further west and north into the Paten. The northern sites are Uaxactun and Tikal with which similarities mostly in vases are seen. The Western sites are Seibal and Altar de Sacrificios. The similarities are between the four plain Hokeb Ha jars and those from the Tepejilote Ceramic Complex of Seibal and one slipped and painted Hokeb Ha jar with those from the Boca Complex of Altar de Sacrificios. Both Seibal and Altar de Sacrificios are located on the Rio Pasión. Seibal has more similarities to Hokeb Ha in ceramics and is also geographically closer being about 160 kilometers in

a general westerly direction. The watershed of the Pasión tributaries are in the Maya mountains near the Guatemala - Belize border. Between that area of the Peten and southern Belize there have been up to today trade routes involving bush trails and waterways.

Trade between the Pusilha - Lubaantun area and Rio Pasión sites had already been suggested by Adams for Altar de Sacrificios (1971 : 235) to explain the distribution of the unit stamp pottery decoration. The similarities between the jars of Hokeb Ha and the Peten sites confirm the trade links. Within either group of Hokeb Ha jars (the plain or slipped) there are such strong affinities as to suggest that they were made either by one potter or at one place. A visual inspection of the Seibal jars would be helpful to substantiate the closeness of the similarities and probably one could suggest what direction the trade took. Excavations in intermediate sites such as Poptun would also be essential.

"Cobaneros" from El Peten are today seen walking through village by village in the Moho River basin selling trade goods. They follow waterways and treks through the Peten - Toledo forests that had no doubt been used by the Maya as far as the Classic period.

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