

VII. NOTES ON THE RUINS OF IXTUTZ, SOUTHEASTERN PETEN

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In July of 1970, while undertaking to record by rubbing the large Stela 1 at Ixkun, the existence of another ruin in the vicinity of Dolores was reported to me. My guide, Mirando Huil Obando, a Dolores Maya, indicated his family had known of the site for a long time, but he believed that no one else had visited the ruin. Accordingly, after completion of the work at Ixkun, we set out from Dolores to visit the new site. The site is located 8 kilometers southwest of Dolores. A trail leads through the pine forest surrounding Dolores down into the rain forest where a milpa was worked. From here, however, there was no trail and the way to the ruin was slow as passage way had to be hacked through thick underbrush. The jungle surrounding the site is very dense, effectively hiding construction from view even close at hand.

The site, known to the Huil family as Ixtutz, is 2 kilometers from the Poxté River and about 35 air kilometers from the Belize-Guatemalan border. The site is some 17 kilometers to the southwest of Ixkun, while the nearest large ceremonial site would be Pusilha, about 55 air kilometers to the southeast. The site lies just beyond the foothills of the Maya mountains in a humid rainforest in which there is an abundance of cacao and corozá palms.

The 1940 edition of the 1924 Blom-Ricketson Tulane archaeological map of the Maya area shows an unnamed archaeological site in the approximate vicinity of Ixtutz's location. As no other record of the site appears to be preserved, it is likely the site's existence was reported but never verified. Since we found sculptured monuments and other features of interest at the site, further investigation was called for, and in 1971 I revisited Ixtutz twice (1).

Site Layout

As is typical of Maya ceremonial centers, the ruins of Ixtutz consists of a series of distinctive architectural groups. Our explorations

revealed the existence of five groups, three of which were joined by causeways, and further exploration might reveal the existence of additional units.

Superstructures appear to have all been of perishable material with thatch roofs; no vault stones were observed in the clearing of mounds for mapping. Several stairways are preserved in good condition and are notable for their use of large well cut blocks. Artificial leveling of large areas of the site, by filling in low sections and bordering them with stone retaining walls, is another feature worthy of note.

The ruins can best be visualized by study of the accompanying map (Figure 1), to which a few supplementary observations can be made.

Plaza A of Group A appears to be the most important section of the site. This is a well confined space with the exception of the northwest corner where there is a large opening between Temples II and III. The highest of the Ixtutz temples (Temple II) is located here as well as the four carved stelae of the site. Evidence of still additional sculpture was found at Temple II where a series of 15 carved and inscribed blocks were found (Plate 5); the blocks may be parts of a wall panel and excavation should produce additional pieces.

Group B lies about 88 meters to the northeast of Plaza A and rests entirely upon a raised platform which reaches a height of 1.5 meters at its southeastern corner. This is also a well delimited space with entrances of no greater than two meters width at any corner.

The Western Acropolis of Group C occupies the 47 m. high summit of a large hill. Fairly gentle slopes provide approaches on the south and east sides while the north and west sides are comparatively steep. The hill is a natural outcropping of immense limestone blocks. Some of the blocks have been adapted and partly shaped to conform to associated constructions such as stairways or buildings.

Group D was the last section of the site to be investigated and may be more extensive than the map indicates.

An intriguing section of the site is the entire, roughly square area bounded by the Acropolis Causeway on the south, the North Causeway on the west, the Chapulte Causeway on the north, and the platform terrace of Group A on the east. The area is completely level without any mounds. It was not possible in the limited time available to satisfactorily investigate this area, and only a 24 x 7 m. zone could be mapped. This zone was 6 m. north of the Acropolis Causeway and parallel to it. The section contained four parallel rows of crudely cut stones about 20 x 30 cm. each which ran the entire 24 m. length, continuing an unknown distance both to the east and west. The first two parallel lines of stone were laid out 3 m. apart and the enclosed area was divided with similar stones at intervals of 3 and 2.5 m. as if divisions of market stalls. A third and fourth set of parallel stone lines were laid out 1 m. north of this series of enclosures and appeared to be designed in the same general pattern but with variations as to the size of the compartments. Further studies should be carried out in this region to determine the function of these interesting features.

Stelae

Six stelae have been found at Ixtutz, four of which are carved on one side and two of which are plain. One plain altar was found.

Stela 1.

Location: Standing erect in Plaza A in front of the south corner of Str. 10 at a distance of 4.5 m. from the base of the eastern terrace. Sculptured side facing west.

Association: None.

Date: Late Classic.

Condition: Poor; relief faint. Inscription illegible.

Material: Limestone.

Shape: Rectangular, squared top, irregular sides, not evened off.

Dimensions: Height: 2.73 m., Width at top: 1.10 m., Thickness: .40 m.

Carved Area: Front (west)carved. Back and sides plain.

Stela 1 with its wide plain border has a human figure carved on the front facing to the viewer's left. The body is slightly turned with the figure's left shoulder slightly raised. He appears to have a cape over the left shoulder. The figure's legs are spread widely apart and he wears sandals with large pom poms or bows. In his right hand he holds a ceremonial staff (Proskouriakoff's type L2) as depicted on Naranjo Stela 8, Bonampak Stela 1, and the Bonampak area stela in the Museum Rietberg, Zurich. His high, top heavy headdress is adorned with a mask on the front and large feathers to the rear. The figure stands upon a row of hieroglyphs beneath which a secondary figure is seated in a sharply reclining pose. The apparently bound smaller figure turns his head upward while his long switch of tightly tied hair hangs below.

Stela 2.

Location: Fallen in Plaza A in front of northwest corner of Structure 9 at a distance of 4.5 m. from the base of the eastern terrace. It was originally facing west and is 3.7 m. south of Stela 1.

Association: None.

Date: Late Classic.

Condition: Poor; relief shallow.

Material: Limestone.

Shape: Rectangular, top squared off but curved slightly at upper left corner and more rounded at upper right corner. It tapers at the base.

Dimensions: Height: 4.15 m., Width: 1.43 m., Thickness: .33 m.

Carved Area: Front (west) carved. Back and sides plain.

Stela 2 is a very tall monument on which is carved a human figure with body in front view but head turned to the viewer's left. The figure's legs are spread slightly apart, and he wears sandals with immense feather pom poms somewhat similar to those worn by the figure on the Itsimte Stela 4. His right hand holds a ceremonial staff with a manikin figure; the leg-appendage of the manikin falls in long flowing scrolls. The skirt has very large squared scrolls hanging to the side somewhat reminiscent of the apron scrolls on Seibal Stela 8 and somewhat like those of Polol Stela 4; however, on the latter the scrolls are

worn higher as if coming from the waist band. The large headdress has a panoply of feathers to the rear and a large lotus flower adorning the front. The figure stands on a double row of hieroglyphs beneath which the carving is too badly eroded to determine its nature.

Stela 3.

Location: Fallen in Plaza A in front of Structure 9 and 4.5 m. in front of the base of the eastern terrace. It originally faced west and is 2.9 m. south of Stela 2.

Association: Altar 3, uncarved, slightly conical in shape. Diam.:1.59 m., Thickness: .47 m.

Date: Late Classic.

Condition: Poor. Relief very deep but badly eroded.

Material: Limestone.

Shape: Rectangular, top rounded, tapers in slightly at base.

Dimensions: Height: 4.47 m., Width: 1.16 m., Thickness: .28 m.

Carved Area: Front (west) carved. Back plain, sides possibly carved but impossible to determine now.

Stela 3, the tallest at Ixtutz portrays a figure in animal attire, possibly a jaguar, standing in front body view with head turned toward the viewer's left and with the head slightly lowered, bringing the left shoulder higher as on Stela 1. The figure wears a mask which can be seen standing out from the face. His straight thin legs appear more animal than human, and his feet are animal. A long slim tail curves down behind and to the side. A distinctive feature is the claw-knife held in the left hand, reminiscent of the three-pronged claw knives held on the lintel of Temple III at Tikal as well as the Kaminaljuyu claw knife. A very unusual headdress is worn by the figure, and there appears to be a minikin held in the right hand. A large back cape completes the costume. The figure stands on a block which encloses another seated bound figure whose head is turned to the viewer's left and whose hair is reminiscent of that of a prisoner. A caption of 35 hieroglyphs is placed above the principal figure while a row of glyphs flank either side of the seated prisoner in the lower panel.

Stela 4.

Location: Fallen in the Plaza A in front of Structure 9. Originally in line with the other 3 stelae which were standing in front of the eastern terrace of the plaza.

Association: None

Date: 9.7.15.0.0

Condition: Inscription side in mint condition except for the bottom four hieroglyphs which are partially flaked off.

Material: Limestone.

Shape: Rectangular, squared top.

Dimensions: Height: 2.20 m., Width: 1.15 m., Thickness: .35 m.

Carved Area: A double row of almost mint condition hieroglyphs. Carved area: 1.55 m. x .445 m. The opposite side of the stela may have been carved, but is so eroded that it is impossible to determine original nature.

Inscribed Blocks of Temple II

Although portions of fifteen carved blocks were found along the base of Temple II, it was not possible to recover the entire sculpture without resorting to excavations. The blocks recovered cannot be fitted together and until additional parts of this feature are recovered, it is difficult to interpret. The blocks indicate that a single row of glyphs formed the border to a central composition, but insufficient details are present to determine the subject matter of the enframed center. The better preserved blocks are illustrated in Plate 5.

Notes

1. I returned to Ixtutz in March of 1971 for a visit of one month. Assisting in the explorations were Lawrence Robertson and a group of students: Tom Gardner, Arlen Chase, Kevin Monahan, and George Wing. A small group of laborers from Dolores were employed to clear portions of the site to facilitate mapping and study of the carved monuments. An additional brief visit was made in the following July to check certain map details. At this time a rubbing was also made of the underside of Stela 4, a monument which was turned by Ian Graham who visited the site in the interval between our explorations.

APPENDIX:
NOTES ON THE INSCRIPTION OF IX TUTZ STELA 4

John A. Graham

This important inscription opens with a very clear calendrical notation. At A1-B1 there is recorded 12 Ahau 8 te head-variant. At A2 is an extremely elaborate "5 haabs lacking" construction, indicating that the preceding calendar round is a period-ending declaration. Although the cleft-head feature of the personified month sign suggests a reading of "Pax," the "5 haabs lacking" statement places the date in the long count position of 9.7.15.0.0, 12 Ahau 8 Yax. Additional calendrical notations appear to have been present in the final blocks of the text, and it is a great misfortune that these blocks are almost entirely effaced.

The subject matter of the inscription is indicated by ritual phrases combined with a nominal phrase with emblem glyphs.

With respect to the emblem at A5b, it may be noted that Berlin (1958) originally defined T-778 as a Tikal emblem of the 9.14.0.0.0 to 9.16.0.0.0 epoch and suggested it was a personification of Tikal emblem T-569. Thompson, however, has referred to T-778 as the emblem of "Tikal and the Pasion confederation" (Thompson 1966:193). Glyph T-716 occurs frequently as an emblem in the texts of a number of Lower Pasion sites, but it is sometimes difficult to distinguish from T-778 and, as Thompson (1962:308) notes, seems to converge with T-778. Nevertheless, T-716 appears to be absent from Tikal and T-778 appears to be very rare in the Pasion although Tikal emblem T-569 is extremely well represented. Thompson's catalogue lists only two possible occurrences of T-778 in Pasion sites: at Aguateca on Stela 2 at F7 and a questionable example at Dos Pilas on Stela 2 at C6. The Aguateca example, however, lacks the "eye" of T-778 and I would regard it as T-716, assuming these really are separate glyphs. The Dos Pilas example (Stela 18 of the Guatemalan Dos Pilas expedition terminology; Navarrete and Lujan 1963) also lacks the "eye" and even more surely is T-716 which also occurs in a better state of preservation on the companion stela of the Dos Pilas ball court. Nevertheless, although I

question the two catalogue listings of T-778 for the Pasion, there is a well preserved example of T-778 upon the bottom step of the "proceSSIONal" hieroglyphic stairway (Structure 1) at Dos Pilas. As Tikal emblem T-569 also occurs in this text, it seems likely that T-778 is not just a zoomorphic form of T-716 but that they are separate glyphs. And if the "eye" is taken as an important diagnostic of T-778, then the emblem at A5b of Ixtutz Stela 4 must be that characteristic of the Pasion.

This fine inscription, preserving so many details of its very elaborate glyphs, is an important addition to the corpus of Maya hieroglyphic texts.

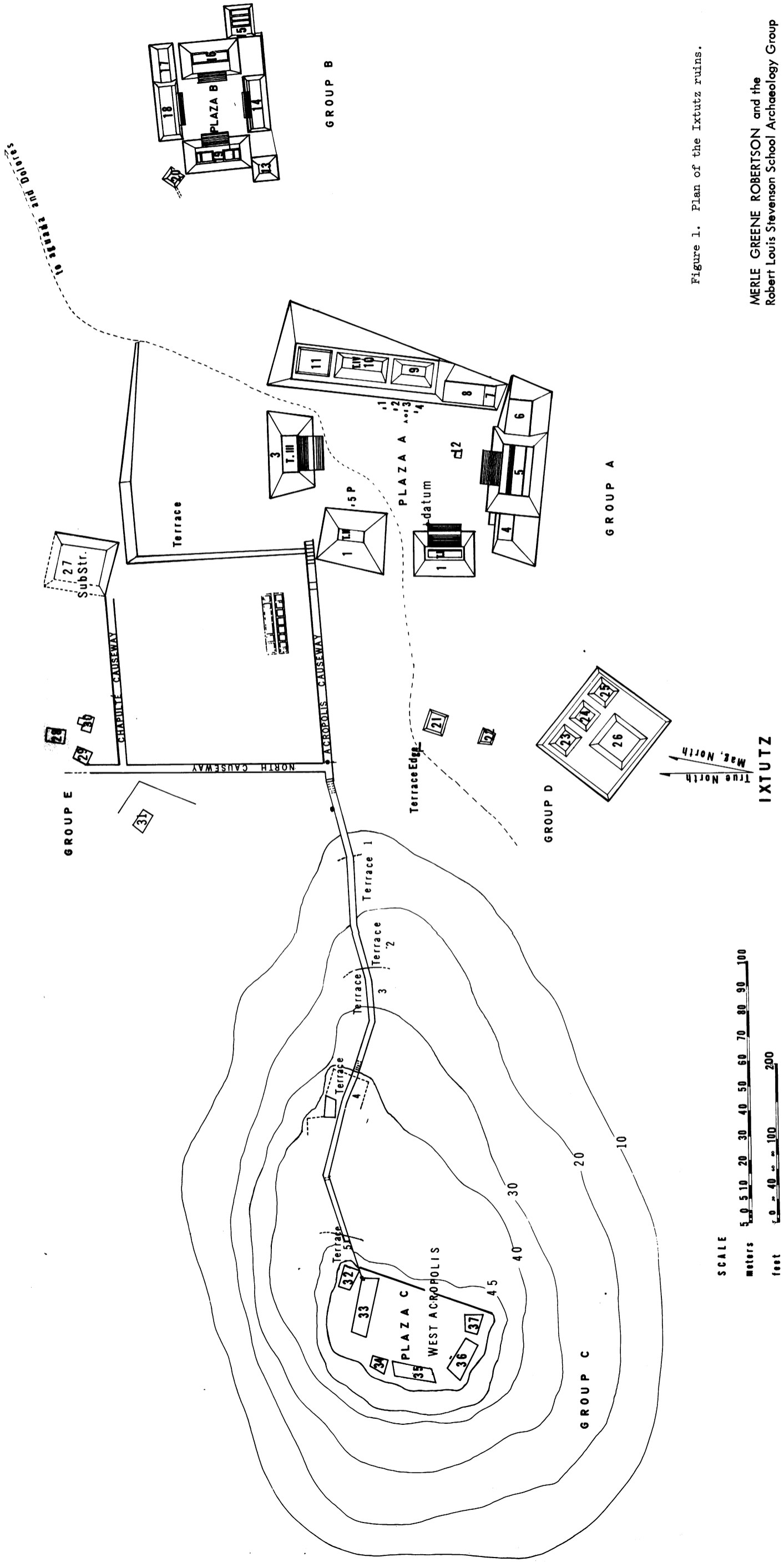


Figure 1. Plan of the Ixtutz ruins.

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March 1971

Peten, Guatemala

IXTUTZ



Plate 1. Ixtutz Stela 1.



Plate 2. Ixtutz Stela 2.



Plate 3. Ixtutz Stela 3.

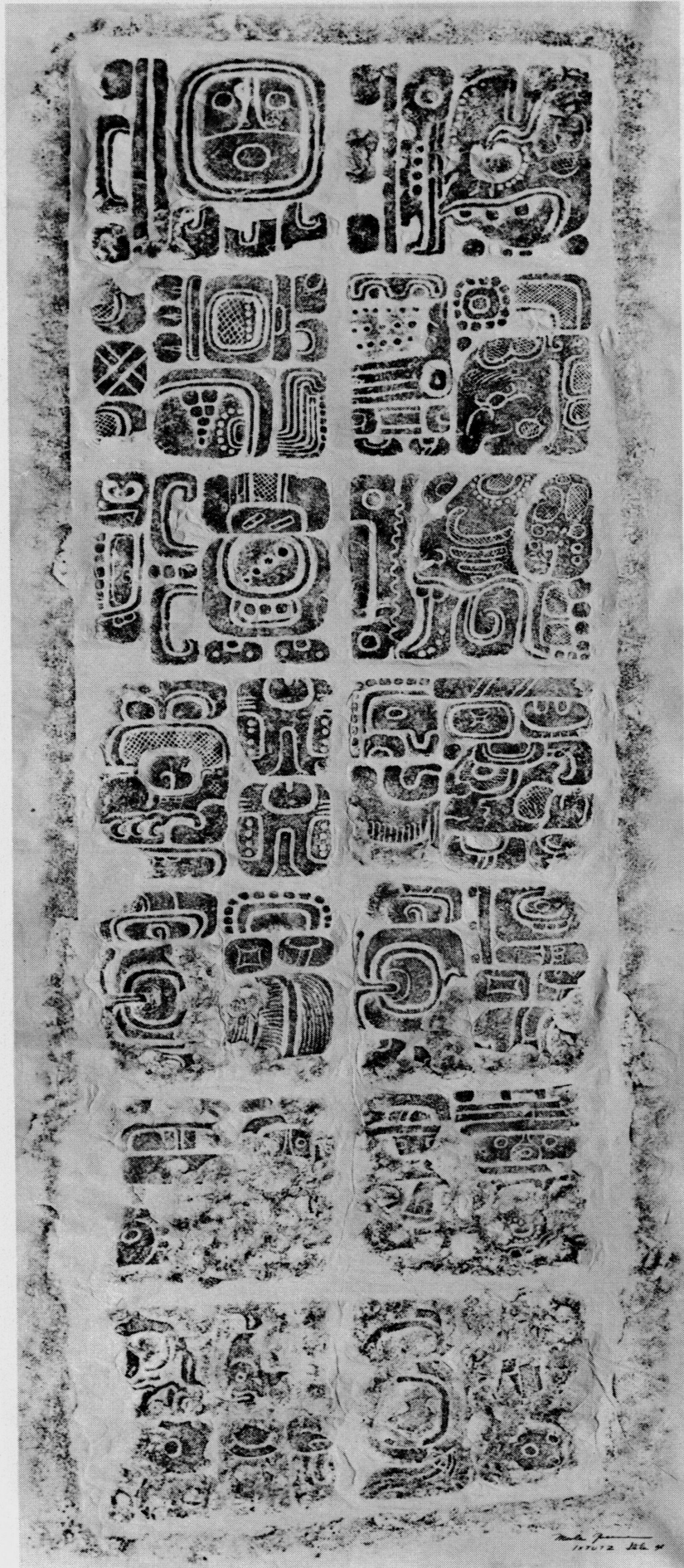
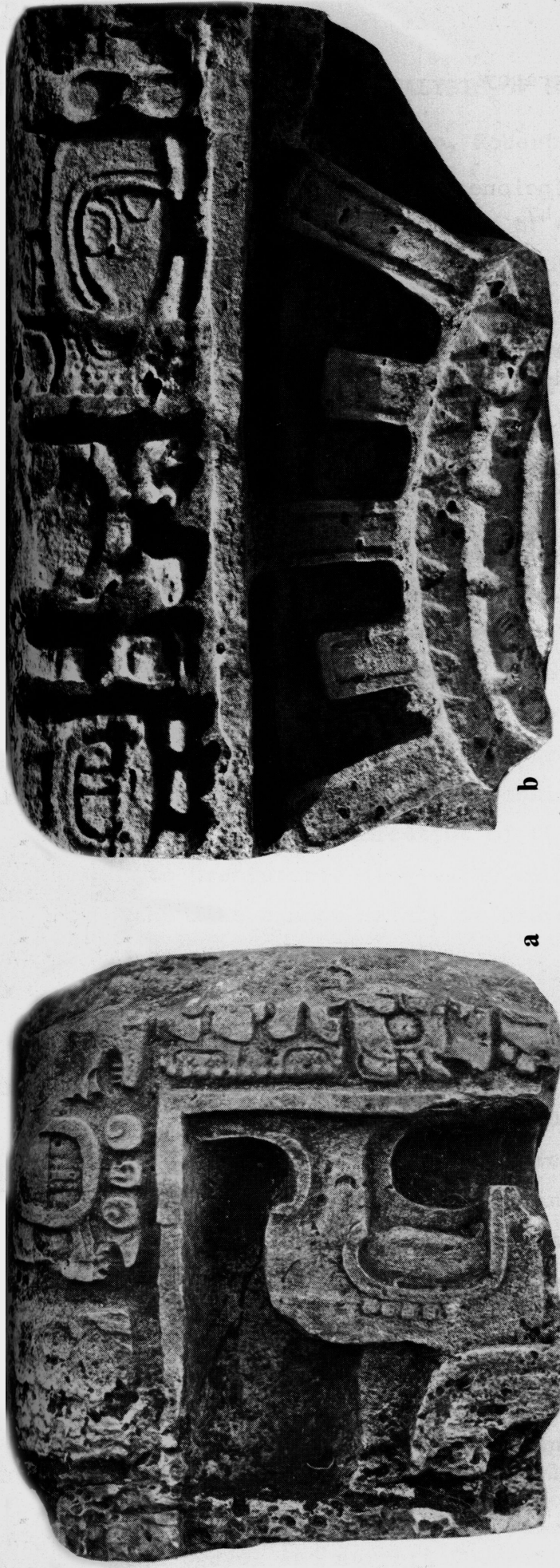


Plate 4. Ixtutz Stela 4.

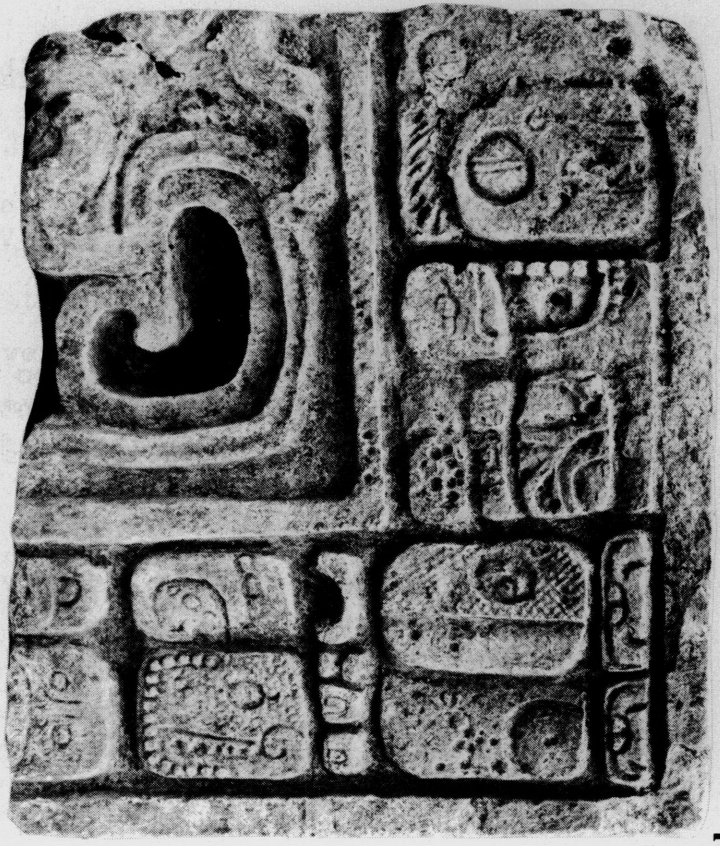


a

b



c



d

Plate 5. Inscribed blocks from Temple II. a, Block 6 (35.5 x 37 x 25.8 cm.); b, Block 3 (36 x 24.3 x 27.7 cm.); c, Block 5 (29.1 x 26.3 x 30.7 cm.); d, Block 2 (35.5 x 27.5 x 38 cm.).

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