

# Worlds in Collision: The Maya/Spanish Encounter in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Belize

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**Summary.** Archaeological investigation at two Belize sites, Lamanai and Tipu, has produced the first body of information on sixteenth and seventeenth century native/Spanish interaction in the southern Maya Lowlands. Although the inventories of material culture from the sites are far less extensive than those from larger centres in closer proximity to foci of Spanish power, they permit fairly extensive characterization of the impact of European arrival on Maya life, both in the material and in the non-material spheres. The model based on the two communities informs us about the nature of acculturation and syncretism in a frontier setting, and in turn admits instructive comparison with a model of European/native interaction in a considerably more urban context.

THE IDENTIFICATION AND INVESTIGATION of two of Belize's known sixteenth and seventeenth century settlements marked the beginning of a focus on the archaeological record of early Spanish-period life in that country. The study now spans nearly two decades. Though frustratingly incomplete in many respects, the archaeological data produced by research since 1974 in a country that at the time of Spanish arrival lay largely within the Maya province of Dzuluinicob (Jones 1989) has begun to bring to light the dynamics of native/European interaction. Excavations at the sites of Lamanai and Tipu document both change and persistence in Maya technology and belief, in a context of limited European presence in northern and central Belize. At the same time, ethnohistorical data aid in

establishing the intellectual and operational frame in the southern Maya Lowlands within which Maya-Spanish interaction took place. The picture that has emerged from the combination of archaeological and ethno-historical investigations illustrates not only the significance of the European arrival to life at the village level, but also the degree to which the two types of research can provide complementary insights into the complex and multifaceted early colonial encounter. It permits, furthermore, some generalizations about the impact of foreign intrusion in frontier areas that were characterized by relatively few resources to attract the exploitative interest of the intruders. I propose here to examine a number of aspects of the characterization of native/European contact, and then insofar as possible to set the picture from Belize in a broader frame of Spanish-period investigations in North and Central America.

### The Structure of the Investigations

The recovery of data on the contact period began with work at Lamanai, in northern Belize (Figure 1), excavated between 1974 and 1986 (Pendergast 1981, 1986a, 1986b, 1991a). Tipu, near the country's western border, underwent investigation between 1980 and 1987 (Graham 1991; Graham and Bennett 1989; Graham et al. 1985), and further work at the site is contemplated. A very small amount of additional archaeological light has recently been shed by investigations at the site of San Pedro on Ambergris Caye (Pendergast and Graham 1991:2-3), a small settlement that is unrepresented in Spanish records, probably owing to its size and location. At this stage little can be said about the time span or the scope of Spanish effect on the community beyond the fact that European ceramics arrived at the southern part of the caye in limited quantities, most probably in the years just after the middle of the sixteenth century. An archaeological sample that in numerical terms constitutes approximately 8% of Belize's known contact-period sites, and is marked by identifiable gaps at the centres investigated, obviously imposes limitations on any attempt at generalization about the impact of European arrival on native life. There are, nevertheless, numerous aspects of the data from both Lamanai and Tipu that reveal facets of Maya/Spanish interaction with considerable clarity.

### **The register of Spanish colonial communities in Belize**

Among the many questions regarding employment of Lamanai and Tipu as models of the frontier contact situation in the southern Maya Lowlands,



**Figure 1** Map of present-day Belize, showing locations of Lamanai and Tipu, as well as other Spanish-period communities.

the issue of the number and distribution of European-influenced polities looms large. Any attempt to characterize the extent of the European impact on native life in Belize is affected by our imperfect information on the number of economic and political centres that functioned in the second half of the sixteenth century. This is a serious problem in the case of communities either established or controlled by the Spanish, and far more so as regards centres of native activity beyond the bounds of Spanish

influence. It is beyond question that the number of sites under Spanish hegemony identifiable in maps and documents of the period (Thompson 1977: map 2-1; Jones 1989: map 2) is highly unlikely to represent the full range of Spanish impact within and beyond the province of Dzuluinicob. In the absence of data on those native communities that succeeded in remaining outside the sphere of Spanish domination, it is clear that our understanding of the dynamics of Maya/Spanish contact will remain seriously flawed.

Lack of adequate data on site distribution also leaves us unable to describe in any definitive form the effects, both direct and indirect, that Spanish exertion of authority had on settlement pattern. This defect is likely to be irremediable for two reasons. First, any site occupied in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and in contact with communities within the Spanish sphere of influence, but without sufficient economic or political importance to warrant mention in the records of *entradas* or other European endeavours, will remain unidentified unless it chanced to be selected for excavation on grounds other than its contact-period characteristics. Second, a site that functioned entirely as a native community, without material culture interchange with European centres, will remain unidentifiable even if completely excavated. These limitations, caused as much by the character of Maya/Spanish interaction as by problems with archaeological and ethnohistorical documentation, dictate the maximum possible reliance on data that all too often seem maddeningly minimal.

### **Background and intersite comparisons**

Previous studies of the contact-period in the Maya lowlands are extremely few in number and small in scale. Apart from the results of surface survey, earlier investigations of Spanish-period sites in the Yucatan Peninsula north of Belize comprised only the preliminary work at Ecab carried out in 1970 (Benavides and Andrews 1979) and the 1972-1976 excavation of the chapel at Tancah (Miller 1982:32-38). In consequence, the much broader spectrum of investigations at Lamanai and Tipu gives the two sites an importance that is disproportionate to their significance in the sixteenth and seventeenth century European perception of the Maya world. Furthermore, the restricted nature of work at contact-period sites north of Belize provides opportunities for intersite comparisons only in a very small range of material culture categories.

It is equally true that the use of Lamanai and Tipu as the linchpins in a characterization of indigenous southern lowland Maya response to European presence is hampered by considerable differences in the composition of the two site samples. The sample from post-Conquest Lamanai

includes data on native as well as on European structures of the Spanish period, and on residential as well as communal architecture. It also comprises essentially full information on population dynamics and burial practice during part of the period in which Christianity held sway, albeit from a context that renders the information somewhat difficult to utilize for culture historical purposes. At this point the archaeological profile of sixteenth and seventeenth century Lamanai requires the addition of only one identified element, data on a second contact-period cemetery, to make the sample as complete as circumstances permit. In contrast, the sample from Tipu, though complete insofar as the Christian church and cemetery are concerned, and extensive in the area of Spanish-period residential construction, probably represents considerably less than one-half of the sixteenth and seventeenth century community. The limitations in the data base are greatly extended by a number of disparities between information from the two excavations. It has nevertheless proved possible, by and large, to blend parallel and complementary data from Lamanai and Tipu to establish a basis for preliminary characterization of Maya/Spanish relations in this part of the southern lowlands.

## Communities on the Frontier

The Maya province of Dzuluinicob appears to have been a frontier area even before the arrival of Europeans (Jones 1989), and what is today northern and central Belize clearly retained this status in Spaniards' thinking from the establishment of their first *encomienda* in the area in 1544 (Jones 1989:41-43, 301, 306) until the end of their domination less than a century later. The position of the area *vis-à-vis* power centres in the region more fully under Spanish control, coupled with the imposing nature of much of the Dzuluinicob from a tactical and logistic point of view, had a variety of significant effects on the relationships between the indigenous population and those who intruded into their lives. Appreciation of the complexities of those relationships is broadened considerably by the setting of events within the special frame that the frontier environment comprised.

### **The limitations of the frontier world**

Primary among the effects of frontier status in structuring Maya/Spanish interaction was the fact that distance from the primary centre of power at Mérida in the northern Yucatan Peninsula, and even from more southerly outposts of that power, reduced or removed the opportunity for continuous contact between native and foreigner. Interchange between the

two cultures remained constantly restricted both by the formidable difficulties of the journey into Belize from Salamanca de Bacalar, the southernmost Spanish *villa* (Figure 1), and by the small number of Europeans stationed in this comparatively remote outpost. The most immediate outcome of the lack of personnel and of the barriers to travel was the need to establish *visita* churches, which lacked the services of a resident clergy and were very often administered by either a European or a native sacristan who trod an exceedingly trying circuit when circumstances permitted (Cárdenas Valencia 1639). In the absence of a resident cleric, and frequently of even a peripatetic one, a community's needs were generally tended to by a native sacristan, a post sometimes occupied by a child (Peñalosa 1969:70). Such a system cannot have failed to dilute the effect of Spanish authority over matters both spiritual and temporal in Maya communities, and its employment raises real questions regarding the degree to which the Spanish maintained effective hegemony in the region.

### **The European individual in the frontier setting**

At the same time that the scarcity of European clerics diminished the potential for direct exercise of Spanish power in communities such as Lamanai and Tipu, the frontier setting augmented the impact of each individual who did manage to participate in attempts at conversion of the Maya. The same effect would also have characterized all Europeans engaged in secular pursuits in the region, but in this instance the effects as regards both the alteration of native life and the record of change are generally impossible to estimate. In all circumstances in which activities are carried out by small numbers of individuals far from centres of authority, the role of each person is magnified in direct proportion to the distance from such centres. In the case of priests, sacristans, and other Europeans whose focus was the transformation of Maya spiritual life, individuals also accrued increasingly greater power to adjust Catholic precept and practice to local circumstances as they moved southward. Thus, although a number of specifics of church construction were undoubtedly laid down by central authority, their adjustment to fit conditions in individual communities was, judging by evidence from Lamanai and Tipu, at the discretion of the cleric on the spot. The physical evidence of accommodation to local situations suggests that a priest or sacristan briefly resident in a community exercised similar discretionary power in many non-material aspects of religious endeavours as well.

Decision-making by individual clerics far from home was surely hedged round with the strongest possible framework of Christian belief, and hence is not likely to have extended to such matters as maintenance of the several

registers required by the Catholic Church (Scholes et al. 1938:29). It is highly probable, however, that although clerics would not generally have contemplated deviation from the prescribed practice as regards notation of births, baptisms, marriages and deaths, any arrangements for the care and maintenance of the registers would have been much more haphazard than they were in Mérida. Unfortunately we can only speculate that a native sacristan might have been more lax than a European in recording religious matters, or indeed that a European friar on the frontier might have been more inclined to laxity than he would have been in Mérida. We can, however, be sure that the vicissitudes of life and travel in the frontier setting took a heavier toll of the records; it may be for this reason alone, rather than because of looser observation of prescribed practice, that no registers are known to survive from Dzuluinicob. The lack of such material, and the scant documentary information of other types for Lamanai, force dependence on the archaeological record as the only available indicator of reciprocal influence between the indigenous Maya and the intruding culture. At the same time there are, of course, countless aspects of such reciprocity that would remain undescribed even if we possessed every written record produced throughout the Maya lowlands in the early Contact period. It is for these facets of life that the archaeological data have the greatest value.

## The Communities Prior to European Arrival

In order to appreciate the effects of the mid-sixteenth century collision between the Maya and Spanish worlds it is necessary to establish the pre-contact condition of the two communities. This is far more easily done for Lamanai than for Tipu, owing to the greater extent of the work at the former site and also to the character of European physical impact on Tipu. In addition, modern use of the Tipu terrain has destroyed some evidence and has restricted access to parts of the Spanish period occupation area.

### **Early sixteenth century Lamanai**

By the beginning of the 1500s Lamanai had undergone considerable change from the form and functions that had characterized it in earlier centuries. Clearly a major centre from the beginning of the Christian era through the ninth century, and a linchpin in the life of the southern Maya lowlands through the succeeding 600 years, the once great city had shrunk to a small town before 1500. Archaeological evidence indicates, however, that diminution in size was not accompanied by any significant reduction

in economic and political importance. Trade connections with the northern Yucatan Peninsula, in evidence by the twelfth century (Pendergast 1981:44, 48–49), may have been truncated by mid-fifteenth century events in the north rather than at Lamanai, which allowed ceramic links with the Tulum region to predominate. That external links were not an overwhelming force at Lamanai during the 1400s is attested by continuing local development in ceramics as well as in other areas of material culture. Finally, the emergence of a ceramic assemblage designated the Yglesias Phase (Graham 1987:91–95), probably near the beginning of the sixteenth century, combines with evidence of the development of metalworking (Pendergast 1991a:340) to document the vigour of the community on the eve of European arrival.

Unfortunately neither regional economic relations nor regional political structure in the immediate pre-contact period can be deduced from the Lamanai evidence. Except for evidence of thirteenth and fourteenth century date from the island site of Marco Gonzalez (Pendergast 1991b; 176–177; Graham and Pendergast 1989:13–14), links between Lamanai and neighbouring centres during the Postclassic have not yet been revealed by excavation. Nevertheless the economic strength of the community, especially as mirrored in Yglesias ceramics and in the cast celts and bells that were principal components of the metallurgical inventory, suggests the possibility of reasonably far-flung trade as a stabilizing force in the Lamanai polity. In the absence of ethnohistorical records, early sixteenth century community size remains unknown despite very extensive excavation in the site's pre-contact zone. One measure of polity size may be the accrual of very considerable wealth by community leaders, which is documented by the contents of an early sixteenth-century tomb that probably housed the remains of Lamanai's last prehispanic ruler (Pendergast 1984). The measure of intrapolity authority argues for exercise of concomitant power beyond the polity's bounds, but this can scarcely be classified as evidence for the sociopolitical structure that characterized northern Belize in the half century prior to Spanish arrival.

### **Tipu before contact**

The social, political, and economic situation at Tipu in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries must at present be assessed almost entirely through extrapolation from the contact-period evidence. The focus on the community's form and functions in the period of Spanish domination (Graham 1991) has produced moderate amounts of evidence, usually in the form of material redeposited in sixteenth and seventeenth century construction, that identifies Tipu as a polity of considerable economic

importance with a broad range of trade ties to centres within and beyond Belize. It is not yet possible, however, to say much about the town plan, population size, and the relative importance of local production systems versus importation of goods from other sources. As a result, the contrast between prehispanic and post-contact Tipu can only be affirmed in certain areas of material culture. Fortunately, however, the existence of a considerable amount of ethnohistorical documentation clothes the excavated data from the Contact period in some measure of humanity, and provides a fuller basis than exists at Lamanai for blending the written with the excavated record.

## The Impact of European Arrival

The principal defects in the evidence regarding Spanish impact on native material and non-material culture in sixteenth and seventeenth century Belize afflict both the excavated evidence and the documentary picture. On the archaeological side, the frontier context and the dearth of exploitable resources combined to make Lamanai and Tipu unlikely recipients of extensive Spanish largesse, just as location isolated the communities from continuous strong European intellectual pressure on spiritual and temporal life. The result is that the quantities of physical evidence recoverable in excavation are small in comparison with those from sites that occupied more central positions in power networks, especially in other portions of the Spanish-controlled New World. On the archival side, the fact that every document known to exist was penned by Europeans leaves us with a very serious imbalance if we seek to wrest information on the Maya point of view. The effect of bias in the written record is much easier to recognize and to characterize than is the problem in the realm of material culture, but this does nothing to redress the tilt of the scale in favour of a European window on the Maya world.

### **The European viewpoint and native culture**

European documentation of the contact experience had four basic purposes, none of which meshes well with the aim of reconstructing Maya psychological response to Spanish cultural influence, whether spiritual or temporal. The documents likewise offer little assistance in fleshing out the archaeological record with material-culture references. The first purpose of the written record was to provide accounts, for the information of Spanish authorities, in the New World and in Spain, of journeys aimed at exploration, conversion, pacification, or a combination of all three.

Although the first full version of such accounts may well have been a fairly rich document developed from notes taken en route, the necessity of communicating at reasonable length with a variety of readers unfamiliar with the area and its people dictated that the submitted version describe only the salient events in detail. In many cases the information most useful for cultural reconstruction is absent, or present only in the sketchiest possible form. It is almost impossible to extract from documents of this class any significant information on the Maya point of view, although a great many contain at least some data on material culture (Pendergast and Jones 1992).

The second class of European documents consists of the registers of births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths that were required by Catholic doctrine and were of both religious and civil importance. Demographic data are, of course, present in quantity in such documents, and it is occasionally possible to extract information on Maya response to Christianization. As we have seen, however, the regulations laid down in Mérida may not have been adhered to on the frontier, and even if they were, the frontier conditions conspired to rob us of this valuable source of information. The critical issue as regards such registers is that they, too, represent an exclusively European point of view because by their very nature they cannot contain data on individuals, families, or larger groups who remained beyond the grasp of conversion.

Third in the list are descriptions, often contained in documents of the first category but also prepared as individual efforts, of the continuing conflict between the indigenous belief system and that of the Europeans. The focus of much of this class of reporting is on the resurgence of "idolatry" and the *reducciones* (forced return of recalcitrant Mayas to communities under nominal Spanish control) that were the common response to the problem. Here the attitudes of the native population are clearly in evidence, but they are, inescapably, coloured heavily by the writers' antipathy towards troublemakers and by attempts to portray the Maya activities as darkly as possible in order to justify heavily repressive countermeasures.

Closely related to the third class of documentation are descriptions of Maya culture that were produced with the aim of instructing Europeans in the appropriate means of effecting change in native life. As in the other classes, the writers depicted a Maya world that was, with exceedingly rare exceptions, skeletonized and transformed by its reflection in Spanish eyes. Finally, wherever the issue of European imports to the Maya lowlands arises in any of the four classes of documents, the data are frustratingly slim. The results of the bias in all four classes of reporting are, within the sphere of our focus, two: first, Maya perception of events, whether of

European or native origin, is virtually impossible to extract from the documents; second, references to material culture, though occasionally present, are rarely detailed enough to amplify the archaeological record and are never descriptive of Maya or European goods as they were understood and utilized within the native cultural context.

### **European impact on native health**

Excavation of cemeteries within the naves of the churches at both Lamanai and Tipu has provided an extensive sample of the contact-period populations, from which we can extract data on the negative health effects of Spanish presence that are recognizable in human skeletons. Analysis of the Tipu population by a team of specialists directed by Dr Mark N. Cohen of SUNY Plattsburgh shows surprisingly few deleterious effects resulting from European intrusion. The frequency of porotic hypertosis, a good measure of anemia induced by dietary deficiencies, is low, and general health of the population as measured skeletally appears to have been good (Graham et al. 1989:1258). A marked contrast appears to exist between Tipu and Lamanai, where one study has shown anemia to have been rampant (White 1986:219, 298). Analysis of dental morphology suggests, however, that the two populations differed only slightly in genetic composition and in general state of health (Lang 1990). Differences in economic strategies at the two centres (Emery 1991) may have combined with disparate sociopolitical histories in the Spanish period to produce contrasting community health trajectories, in which Tipu's location farther from the sources of Spanish power is likely to have proved advantageous. It is nonetheless beyond doubt that, as was true throughout the Maya area (Clendinnen 1987:36; Farriss 1984:212), European diseases, many of which kill quickly and hence leave no skeletal traces, wrought considerable effects on both communities. The scythe of foreign illness surely reduced the ability of the two communities to maintain native social and technological strength so as to respond effectively to Spanish incursions, and just as surely was a further source of bias in the European view of Maya society as a stable and viable entity.

### **Maya material culture in the Spanish period**

Despite the impact of Spanish arrival on native populations, the internal economic strengths visible in the Lamanai polity prior to Spanish arrival, and surely present at Tipu as well during this period, are shown by excavation to have continued unabated after 1544. Local production of the late Precolumbian pottery assemblages, such as the Yglesias

Phase at Lamanai (Graham 1987:91–95), and of a variety of other pre-contact classes of artifacts never ceased to be the major source of domestic items at both sites. There is also evidence of continued trade within the immediate region, if not beyond, throughout most or all of the period. In this sphere conflict exists, however, between the ethnohistorically based model of survival of native interregional trade networks despite nominal Spanish control (Jones 1982:285–286), and archaeological indications that trade in at least one critical material, obsidian, was interrupted by Spanish presence (Graham and Pendergast 1988; Graham et al., 1989:1258). It is not particularly useful to examine the continuities in Maya material culture in detail except in those instances which provide specific evidence regarding the integration of European and native belief systems. Our concern is, instead, with the areas of material culture in which Spanish involvement can be documented, and the degree and nature of Spanish influence can be assessed. It is worth noting, however, the durability of the Maya tradition, a matter to which we shall return at various points in the consideration of evidence of European introductions to the native material-culture inventory.

### **The European impact on Maya culture**

Judging by the archaeological evidence, as we are forced to do because the written record is almost entirely silent on the point, the types of initial European/native interaction that characterized other parts of the Spanish-dominated New World rarely if ever developed as intruders penetrated ever farther southward in the southern Maya Lowlands. Whereas in other areas of New Spain European goods functioned as a medium for the establishment of relations with native groups, there is no evidence of such a function among Maya communities, and only limited indications of a related political function in later times in the area. Payment of guides, porters and providers of other services was also effected elsewhere with European commodities and is recorded at the end of the seventeenth century in the Guatemala Petén (Jones 1982:284), but again we have no clear indication of such activity at either Lamanai or Tipu. It is equally likely that the absence of indications of a Spanish disposition to provide goods in appreciable quantity, and for a variety of purposes, reflects the harsh economic realities of life in the Yucatan Peninsula. The frontier situation itself undoubtedly militated against importation of material in quantities of the sort encountered at St Augustine (Deagan 1983: Tables 5.1–5.3), Santa Catalina de Guale (Thomas 1988:97–104), or Santa Elena (South et al., 1988) in La Florida. It would, however, be reasonable to expect similarities with sites in peninsular Florida (Mitchem 1990), an area

as economically uninspiring to the Spaniards as the Maya lowlands, but even here the quantities of European goods far outstrip those recovered at Lamanai and Tipu. It is this contrast that suggests the importance of cultural factors in structuring both the Spanish perception of the need for prodigal dispersal of goods and the Maya perception of the desirability of acquiring such material.

Documentary evidence says very little about the amounts and kinds of European goods imported to the Maya lowlands, and is only slightly more helpful in the matter of motivations for transfer of such goods from Spanish to native hands. Bills of lading probably were drawn for much of the material exported from Spain, but once the material reached New Spain the Spanish very rarely committed to print even a minimal list of items passed on to the Maya. The best information on gifts presented to natives consists of a short list of objects brought to the Guatemalan Petén just before and after the Itzá conquest in 1697; its non-perishable components are earrings, necklaces, glass beads, axes, and machetes (Villagutierre Soto-Mayor 1983:16). Jones (1989:265–266) suggests that similar goods may have been transported to Tipu in 1696 by the ten secular priests who spent several months in the community in that year. The fact that examples of each of these classes of objects (except machetes) have emerged from the excavations at Tipu and Lamanai indicates that a fairly standard basic inventory of gifts may have existed throughout the southern Maya lowlands, if not over a wider area. At the same time, the existence of a broader range of material at both sites than appears in the Petén list indicates that the basic inventory was augmented as economic and political circumstances required.

In the context of limited importation of European goods to the Maya lowlands it appears at first glance that the basis for evaluating the significance of Spanish presence in material culture terms will inevitably remain severely limited. There is, however, an aspect of Spanish impact that is more easily deduced in circumstances of scarcity of European goods than in circumstances of abundance. This is the importance of European artifacts as evidence of non-material aspects of Maya/Spanish culture contact. The value of the artifacts derives specifically from the occurrence of limited numbers or single examples; if a class of objects occurs in uniform distribution, we know only that the objects were imported on a large scale, whereas a single object is likely to have much more specific significance. The context and character of an isolated European artifact may illuminate the status of the community in Spanish eyes, the rank or status of native individuals within the community and hence the social structure of the Historic-period polity, the character of specific occurrences of Maya/Spanish interaction, or all of these non-material matters.

Despite the fact that Lamanai and Tipu differ markedly as regards provenience of European materials, both centres offer opportunities for the use of single or scarce artifacts in reconstructing intangible elements of Maya/Spanish interaction. At Lamanai the preponderant portion of the European artifact inventory comes from a single structure, N11-18 (Figure 2), whereas at Tipu all European objects occurred either as burial accompaniments or as redeposited material in the fill of Historic-period platforms. Although the issue of sampling error clearly arises to some degree, the extensive nature of the Lamanai excavations leaves no question that presence of European material in construction core is not characteristic of the community. The intersite difference suggests the possibility that the two polities had contrasting social dynamics during the contact period, a view supported by ethnohistorical data (Graham et al. 1989:1257–1258). The archaeological situation may equally well be read, however, as evidence of more extensive construction over a longer period at Tipu than Lamanai, perhaps a reflection of the latter site's status as a colonial *reducción* community during a time when Tipu remained an essentially stable centre (Graham et al. 1989:1258; Jones 1989).



**Figure 2** Structure N11-18, Lamanai. The building, 22 metres long, was probably the cacique's residence.

*Continuity and change in architecture*

Neither at Lamanai nor at Tipu is there specific evidence that Europeans instituted or influenced transformation of the indigenous architectural tradition, despite the fact that much of the construction that post-dates Spanish arrival is distinguishable in numerous features from its Precolumbian antecedents. At Tipu in particular the colonial-period structures represent a considerable break with Precolumbian tradition in a number of respects (Graham 1991:323), but the changes are as likely to be attributable to internally generated shifts in community architectural tradition as to external influence. Here, as at Lamanai, it is also true that characteristics of pre-contact architecture, many of which were established in the late prehistoric period in response to dwindling material resources and possibly also to diminished labour supply, survived into the Historic period. Within the context of change and continuity, neither community appears to have boasted structures that were built to serve native purposes but included construction techniques or plan features derived from European models. It is only in the churches themselves, as one might expect, that the Spanish architectural tradition makes an appearance, and even then in conjunction with indigenous construction techniques.



**Figure 3** The church at Tipu, seen from the southwest; length 23.1 metres. Photograph courtesy of Elizabeth Graham.



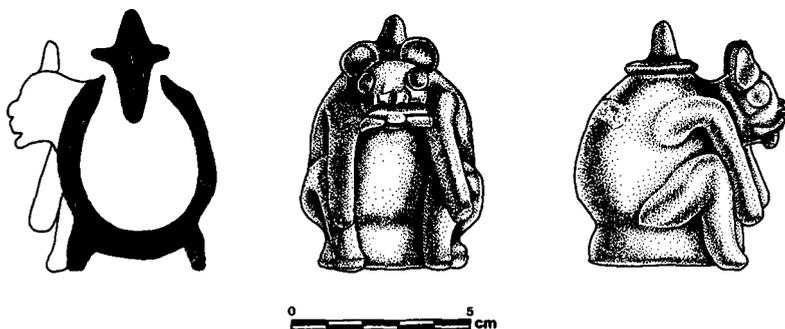
**Figure 4** The chancel of the second church at Lamanai, seen from the northwest. The quoins at the margins of the centre opening, which was probably arched, also occur at all four exterior corners.

The first church at Lamanai, probably built shortly after 1544, represents a full blend of European and indigenous solutions to construction problems, as does the closely parallel church at Tipu (Figure 3), likely to have been constructed a quarter century or more after the one at Lamanai. Lamanai's much grander second church (Figure 4), probably built at the beginning of the seventeenth century, represents greater departure from the Maya architectural tradition as regards techniques, surely as a result of the building's size and plan. Even in this instance, however, part of the European structure retained a considerable flavour of the durable Maya approach to building. Hence it can be said that, despite obvious Spanish direction of construction designed to serve Christian purposes, no wholly European building ever made an appearance in either community.

*European architecture and Mayan/Christian syncretism*

The first church at Lamanai supplanted a late prehistoric ceremonial structure in the Tulum tradition, and made use of portions of the Maya building as a base for the church platform. The technique of superposition, widely known in the Spanish Americas, was designed to facilitate conversion by minimizing the physical disruption occasioned by replacement of Maya religion with Christianity. It would surely be wrong, however, to imagine that the technique worked unfailingly, because defilement of the Precolumbian temple was a necessary precursor to Christian church construction, and demolition of a native sacred structure cannot have been an act accepted unquestioningly by the entire populace. Ultimately, however, the presence of a place of worship in a spot long identified with such activity very probably eased the transition from old to new, though in this instance there is archaeological evidence to show that not everyone willingly made the change from the Precolumbian belief system to the European.

While the platform for the new church was under construction, a worker chose a moment when supervision was lax to propitiate the native deity whose temple had been defiled. Selecting the spot where a figure or other object of worship had stood beside the temple entrance, he scooped out a small amount of core and deposited in the resulting hole a hollow jaguar effigy figurine, or zoomorphic vessel (Figure 5) in what was about to become Catholic consecrated ground. More than any other artifact from the Historic period at Lamanai, the figurine bespeaks the early conflict between Maya religion and Christianity as it stormed within a single individual. Faced with a new religion that denied the validity of the old (while at the same time it offered a pantheon that appeared in Maya eyes



**Figure 5** Jaguar figurine deposited in the first Lamanai church ca. 1544. Drawings of this and Figure 9 by Louise Belanger.

to resemble the ancient one), many of Lamanai's citizens must, like Mayas everywhere, have undergone a period of confusion. As we shall see, there is evidence that while they professed the new faith they, together with the people of Tipu, retained old beliefs and succeeded in blending the two systems into one reasonably coherent whole (see also Farriss, this volume). The persistence of old beliefs and practices was an ongoing concern for Spanish clerics, but it is only very rarely that their writings on the subject extend beyond basic details of Maya "idolatry". In the case of the Lamanai church offering we can surely see a concrete demonstration of this recurrent phenomenon, which documentary evidence generally shows us only in the abstract.

In their physical characteristics the Lamanai and Tipu churches are excellent manifestations of syncretism between indigenous and foreign traditions. The specific manner in which architectural syncretism took place appears to have been restricted to the southern lowlands, and is likely to be a further reflection of the distinctive character of the frontier world. The existence of closely similar churches at the two sites combines, however, with the structures' numerous resemblances to churches farther north in the Yucatan Peninsula (Andrews 1991), to indicate that the form is probably a pan-lowlands accommodation. It is clear that the church builders of the Yucatan were faced everywhere with the necessity of joining Spanish architectural interpretation of Christian practice to the requirements and exigencies of Maya lowland life. The Lamanai and Tipu churches contrast with the more northerly churches, however, in that they are not a fully syncretic mixture of European concepts and techniques with those of the Precolumbian Maya, but instead are European buildings as interpreted within the Maya architectonic tradition. This subregional class of mixture suggests at once the powerful influence of individual European priests on the frontier scene and the equally powerful indigenous force behind retention of existing models.

It was the particulars of Christian belief and practice that dictated the east-west orientation of the Lamanai and Tipu churches, as well as the dimensions of a number of elements including the nave and the sanctuary. Both churches lacked vestries and other spaces with specific uses in Catholic ritual, an absence that suggests the carrying out of a number of essential functions either in the general interior spaces of the church or in adjacent structures that have yet to be identified archaeologically. As one would expect, the churches are not marked by any plan characteristics that are specifically Maya in origin. In general form, in the character of their supporting platforms, and in construction technique the buildings were, however, fully Maya in nature. This suggests in turn that the exterior detailing of the buildings was a blend of European and Maya traits. The

same is likely to have been true of features of courtyards and other encompassing elements, which may have included some version of the stone and mud enclosure walls mandated by the Bishop of Yucatan, Francisco de Toral, in the 1560s (Scholes et al. 1938:29).

A principal reason for the distinctive nature of Maya/Spanish architectural syncretism at Lamanai and Tipu is very likely to have been the frontier situation, with limited presence of European clerics. A priest who brought or created plans for a church in this region might have found himself able to oversee the beginnings of construction, but is not likely to have remained to see the work through to completion. It is therefore probable that the task of translating plans and specifications into architectural reality was left in the hands of a native foreman, whose familiarity with European construction and with the requirements laid down by Christian precept must have been exceedingly limited in the early years of Spanish hegemony. The masons and other workers on the project were, of course, entirely Maya, and to some extent their concept of proper solutions to architectural problems must also have shaped the final product. The outcome of such an undertaking was, furthermore, influenced by the architectural talent, or lack thereof, that marked the European cleric. If skilled in such matters, he should have been able to keep his hand figuratively on the task even after his departure, whereas a lack of skill on his part might well have dictated heavier dependence on a native foreman, thus imparting an even more strongly Maya flavour to the structure. Whatever the mix of European and Maya skill and knowledge, however, the archaeological evidence makes it clear that local influence was strong enough to transform a building foreign to the Precolumbian tradition into something at least partly familiar in appearance.

By adopting local methods and pre-contact architectural features to produce a building dedicated to Christian use, the European clerics gave tangible form to the bidirectional change that characterized a large part of their relationship with the Maya. It appears unlikely, however, that departure from the European mode was a consciously adopted technique that paralleled the superposition of Christian structures on Precolumbian temples. Native acceptance of Christianity can hardly have been dependent on the architectural characteristics of the new temple, even though the Maya quality of the structure may have imbued it with some degree of attraction. The far stronger probability is that a cleric situated on the fringe of Spanish authority, and without the aid of European craftsmen, had no choice but to bend to the difficulties if he was ever to see a church take shape.

The commencement of the second church at Lamanai marked a true departure from the earlier pattern, not only in scale but also in construction technique. The much larger structure, which boasted a substantial

masonry sanctuary accompanied by a thatched nave, is of the class designated Open Ramada Church, of which other examples occur in both the northern and the southern parts of the Yucatan Peninsula beyond the Belize border (Andrews 1991:367–368). There can be no question that the greatly increased size and quality of the second church reflect an important shift in Spanish plans for the community. One aspect of the shift was indubitably a projected or actual increase in the number of parishioners to be served, but the specific motivation for the change remains open to question.

The new church, erected just north of the first, contrasted with its predecessor because, as is characteristic of Open Ramada Churches, one major component was an almost entirely European structure whereas the other was essentially a Maya building adapted for Christian use. The sanctuary, composed of an altar enclosure flanked by two rooms, is fully European in plan and equally non-indigenous in the general characteristics of the masonry and in the use of quoins and true arches (Figure 4). Surfacing plaster, which resembles that on access stairs to the nave of the first church, is likewise clearly distinguishable from the Precolumbian version on the basis of its yellowish colour and far more granular consistency. In contrast, the nave, which was almost surely not joined directly to the sanctuary, was entirely of native construction, with thatched roof and probably walls of poles or wattle-and-daub. Unfortunately the burning of the church in 1640–41 by an apostate Lamanai populace (López de Cogolludo 1971: Book 11, Chapter 13) left virtually no trace of this element, and hence we can only ascertain from sanctuary dimensions that the construction, though native in quality, would have been of unusual size by Maya standards.

Whatever the motives behind its creation, the second church suggests a change in Maya/Spanish relations. Whereas the initial structure submergled the European tradition with the local to create a homogenized product that was neither wholly native nor wholly foreign, its successor kept European and Maya units fully separate. The European quality of the sanctuary is undoubtedly evidence of a change in the degree of control maintained by the Spanish, for the unit could only have been created under the near-continuous supervision of a cleric or other foreigner with specific knowledge of European construction methods and architectural forms. It is tempting to see the church also as an architectural statement of a Spanish move towards separation from the Maya, but only the most optimistic reader of the archaeological record would be willing to push the data this far.

#### *Changes in settlement pattern*

With respect to community layout, Lamanai and Tipu differed significantly as regards Spanish impact. The difference may be partly a product of

topographic dissimilarity, but it may also be related to the different social and political functions of the two communities within the sphere of Spanish domination (Graham et al. 1989:1256, 1258). At Lamanai the colonial settlement was concentrated in the southern portion of the site, perhaps owing both to continuation of the gradual move southward that had marked the centuries before European arrival and to Spanish pressure to concentrate the populace around the church zone. The pressure did not, however, extend to revamping of the community on the principles of European town planning. Always a strip settlement along the western margin of a large lake, Lamanai retained its Precolumbian form throughout the period of Spanish presence. Because of the superposition of the first Christian church atop what was surely the main pre-contact temple, patterns of movement within the community are also very likely to have gone unchanged from the beginning of contact until the disappearance of Spanish influence.

Tipu also appears to have seen no significant concentration of its population away from the zone occupied before European arrival, but it did undergo extensive transformation of settlement to a town plan that was at least partially Spanish in character (Graham 1991:321-322). The level terrain on which Tipu was situated unquestionably facilitated Spanish reconfiguration of the community's centre, whereas at Lamanai both the presence of the lake and the uneven, rocky character of the locale would have made creation of a town laid out along European lines an exceedingly difficult task. Unfortunately neither excavation nor documentary evidence provides a basis for weighing the importance of topography against that of political concerns in the different settlement plan histories of the two communities.

### *Ceramics*

Sherds of Spanish glazed wares (Columbia Plain [both undecorated and with black decoration], Sevilla Blue on blue and Blue and white majolica, and green-glazed bowls or dishes) were recovered at both Lamanai and Tipu, but in both instances the number of vessels represented is truly miniscule. The vessel total at Tipu, where most of the sherd sample was found, is approximately ten, and at Lamanai a maximum of eight (Pendergast and Graham 1993). Even allowing for considerable sampling error at Tipu and some measure at Lamanai, the figures tell us unequivocally that Spanish importation of tablewares was never economically significant, and can never have had any impact on local ceramic production. It is equally clear that European pottery was not an important element in the list of gifts given to natives. At the same time, the

association of most of the ceramic sample with Structure N11-18 and a nearby important colonial-period structure at Lamanai (Pendergast 1991a:348) suggests that a few imported vessels were in Christianized Maya hands. The distribution of European pottery at Tipu appears to support the same conclusion (Graham 1991:323).

The very small number of vessels also argues that Europeans who spent periods at Lamanai and Tipu either arrived unequipped with a range of crockery sufficient to their needs, or were exceedingly careful with their tablewares during their sojourns in the community. The former interpretation seems the more plausible, and it in turn suggests the possibility that Europeans adopted locally made vessels for their household needs, a phenomenon known also at St Augustine (Deagan 1990:307, Table 20-1). If this sort of adaptation did in fact characterize the Belize situation it followed the pattern established in La Florida, where European influence on shape and decoration was rare; neither Lamanai nor Tipu has yielded any contact-period domestic pottery that departs from prehispanic traditions (Graham 1987:91-95, 1991:232).

The lone example of European influence on Maya pottery-making accompanied the burial of a 16 to 20 year old individual, probably female, that lay in the nave of the Tipu church (Graham et al. 1989:1257, Figure 3). The object (Figure 6) is identifiable on the basis of form as a thurible, and its presence in the girl's grave is very likely to identify her as a sacristan, whose duties would have included swinging the device to produce incense smoke during Mass. The syncretistic interpretation of a European form in local material and technique for European use does not, of course, document enduring Spanish impact on local ceramics. Instead, it tells us a great deal about bidirectional accommodation for a specific purpose, set in motion by the need to produce a replacement for an absent European thurible. There seems to have been no ecclesiastical prohibition against use of a locally made object, and it was unquestionably brought into being either through a priest's specific direction of the manufacturing process or through a Maya potter's recollection of objects she had seen in use during a priest's earlier visits. One could scarcely have a better physical statement of cultural interaction at this level, or a better example of the information potential of a single small object.

Also outside the domestic sphere, at least as regards the purpose behind their importation, are Spanish olive jars, represented at both Lamanai and Tipu in moderate to appreciable numbers, but not in huge quantity at either community. Although there continues to be considerable uncertainty regarding the vessels' multiple uses in the Maya area (see Lister and Lister 1987:132-137), their original use was the ecclesiastical one of transporting and storing the oil and wine used in the Catholic



**Figure 6** Thurible from a burial in the Tipu church; ht. 12.2 cm. Photograph courtesy of Elizabeth Graham.

sacraments. Once emptied of their contents, however, the jars must have held some attraction for the inhabitants of Lamanai and Tipu, though certainly not because of a lack of similar vessels in the local ceramic inventory. The attraction of the olive jars might have rested partly on greater durability than characterized Maya jars, but it is likely to have existed for no other reason than the jars' exotic origin. Unhappily neither at Lamanai nor at Tipu does the distribution of olive jar sherds shed light on uses to which the vessels might have been put.

The patterns of distribution of olive jar sherds at the two sites differ sharply, and constitute a strong argument for different uses of the vessels in the two communities. The 487 sherds from Lamanai, perhaps representing 40 to 60 jars (Pendergast 1991a:347) were all recovered from the church zone, but not in direct association with the churches themselves. Approximately half the lot comes from a midden sheet between the second church and the lake margin (see Pendergast 1991a:347–348), and a considerable portion of the remainder lay at the back of a structure that may, on grounds of its location rather than its architecture, be identifiable as a cleric's residence or other church-related building. No olive jar sherds were associated with either Structure N11–18, apparently the principal native residence during the colonial period, or nearby Structure N12–17.

The pattern suggests at first glance the retention of a specifically church-linked use for olive jars, but the occurrence of sherds in refuse deposits may indicate that the link was of a domestic rather than an ecclesiastic nature. In contrast, olive jars are represented at Tipu by sherds from a number of domestic structures near the church and around the plaza, a distribution that Graham (1991:323) sees as an indication of use by high-status Christianized Mayas as well as by Spaniards. As in other areas of material culture, the absence of a status relationship at Lamanai and the presence of such a putative link at Tipu may reflect the very different social dynamics that operated in the communities during Contact times.

### *European glass beads*

Even more than in the case of olive jars, the distribution of imported beads differs dramatically between Lamanai and Tipu. At Lamanai 91% of the 44 sixteenth century beads, presumably of Italian manufacture, were recovered within and around Structure N11-18, which on the basis of size and architectural characteristics (Fig. 2) is identifiable as the residence of a family of high status or rank, probably the community's native administrator. The variety of European goods associated with the structure, including beads of 11 types (Smith et al. 1993:Table 2), provides very effective reinforcement for the identification. We know that beads were brought, along with crosses, knives, needles and rosaries, as gifts by Fathers Fuensalida and Orbita on their journey to Tipu, via Lamanai, in 1618 (Jones 1989:136). The concentration of European material in a single structure appears, however, to raise the objects above the status of simple gifts. The beads, together with other classes of material we have yet to examine, probably helped to underscore the fact that the administrator's power no longer derived from indigenous considerations but rather now stood as an extended statement of Spanish authority over the region. This may indicate the motivation behind passage of the beads from Spanish to Maya hands, but in fact there is nothing specific about the contexts or the objects themselves that serves to identify the function of beads either in the household or in the community.

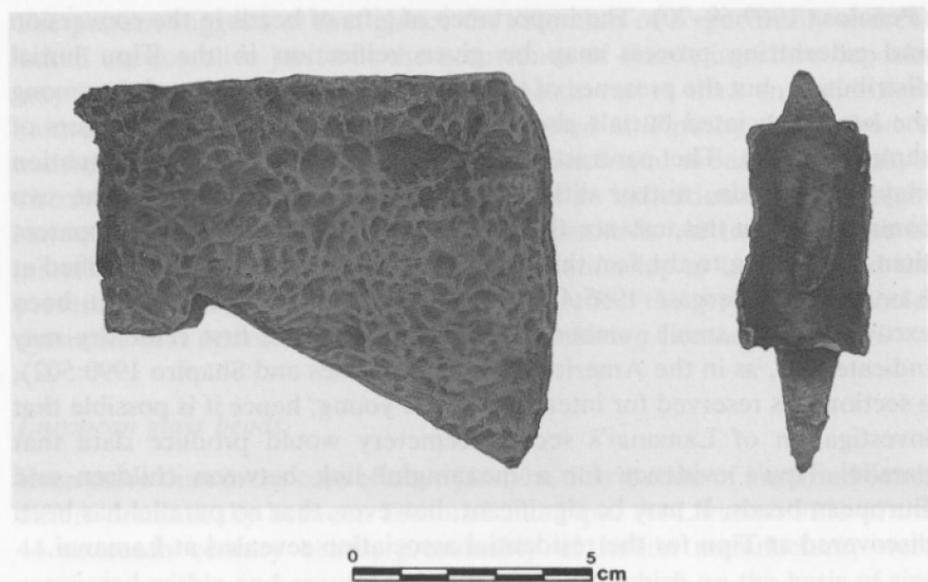
At Tipu, the great majority of the beads were found in association with 15 of the burials interred in the church nave. Among the burials are nine (60%) that range in age from three to 10-12 years, with whom more than 670 of the approximately 720 beads were associated (Smith et al. 1993: Table 1). The association probably reflects the special position that children enjoyed in Catholic church practice in New Spain (Mendieta 1945:Book II:64; Book III:72-73), both in the conversion process and in ritual, where they are served as singers, sacristans, and assistants at Mass

(Peñalosa 1969:69–70). The importance of gifts of beads in the conversion and catechizing process may be given reification in the Tipu burial distribution, but the presence of three male and three female adults among the bead-associated burials also suggests the use of beads as markers of rank or status. The contrast between this and the Lamanai situation may, once again, mirror differences in the social histories of the two communities. In this instance the contrast may, however, be more apparent than real, owing to the fact that the second of two cemeteries identified at Lamanai (Pendergast 1985:4, Figure 2, 1991a:350) has not yet been excavated. The small number of child burials in the first cemetery may indicate that, as in the American southeast (Jones and Shapiro 1990:502), a section was reserved for interment of the young; hence it is possible that investigation of Lamanai's second cemetery would produce data that parallel Tipu's evidence for a meaningful link between children and European beads. It may be significant, however, that no parallel has been discovered at Tipu for the residential association revealed at Lamanai.

### *Iron artifacts*

Only two iron objects have been revealed thus far by excavations at Tipu, whereas the Lamanai work has yielded a small but varied lot of such material, the majority of which comes from Structure N11–18. Lamanai has also produced a considerable quantity of handwrought nails, though nineteenth century British use of the area for sugar production creates some uncertainty about the age of virtually all of the specimens. As a result, it is not possible to characterize European technological impact on the Maya as regards construction techniques and materials used in impermanent structures except in N11–18 itself, where the presence of two spikes in one of the rooms, and of three mid-size nails in a midden adjoining the platform, suggests at least limited use of a European approach to domestic architecture.

Nine iron objects, in addition to the spikes, were encountered on interior and exterior floor surfaces of N11–18. Besides several artifacts of unidentified use, the group includes a possible knife handle and two knife blades, a fragment of what appears to be a horseshoe or ox shoe, and an axe (Figure 7). For a family of the size likely to have occupied N11–18 over nearly a century, the number of iron objects is very small, and the addition of two locks and a fragment of an apparent elaborate hinge from the church zone does little to give ironwork a numerical significance in contact-period Lamanai. Although there is ethnohistorical documentation of Tipuans' exchange of axes and machetes for Itzá cloth (Jones 1982:284), the extensive nature of the excavations indicates that the small sample size



**Figure 7** Axe from the probable cacique's residence at Lamanai. Photos of this and Figure 8 by Emil Hustiu.

from both Lamanai and Tipu is probably a real measure of the paucity of iron objects in Spanish-period Belize. Fortunately a good many of the objects demonstrate the principle enunciated earlier regarding scarcity as a factor that augments the significance of individual artifacts.

At Lamanai, the concentration of iron objects in N11–18 underscores the importance of the structure and its occupants, not as regards European impact on local technology but rather in terms of use of imported objects as physical manifestations of rank or status that derived from Spanish interests. The Spanish practice in Guatemala of distributing gifts of machetes, knives, needles, scissors, axes, hats, rings, blankets, and other Spanish goods to *caciques* (chiefs) who had accepted Christianity (van Oss 1986:16) is likely to be represented by the artifact inventory from N11–18, although it encompasses only a part of the gift list. Identification of the structure as the cacique's house is given an interesting additional twist by the presence of an apparent horse or ox shoe, but it would be foolhardy, especially in view of the scarcity of such animals in Yucatan Peninsula, to take the object as conclusive evidence that the Lamanai leader's rank was buttressed by a gift of a highly valuable draft animal.

From the church zone at Lamanai comes evidence, in the form of a hinge fragment from collapse material alongside the first church and of two large spikes from a similar context within the second church, for use of European metalwork in a European type of construction. This can scarcely

come as a surprise. The two locks are, however, somewhat surprising. The first was found just beneath the surface of the platform of the initial church, a context that may identify the object as part of a box or other container that was among the church fittings. Unfortunately nothing about the lock tells us whether it was part of a Spanish coffer or was imported to Lamanai to be fitted to a locally made container. The second lock (Figure 8), found in the sheet midden east of the later church, is identifiable on the basis of its ornamental shape and the positions of the keyholes as a lock from an elaborate Spanish *vargueño* chest/desk (see Burr 1964: Figures 129 and 185). Both of the locks encountered at Tipu, one in association with a burial in the church nave and the other in a residential midden, are fittings from chests or coffers of high quality, one possibly a *vargueño*. These occurrences may indicate that families of high rank enjoyed the use of some items of Spanish furniture, but they may also show that such families simply served as custodians of the containers and their contents in times when no Europeans were present.

#### *Other metals*

In addition to the parallels between gift lists and metal and other artifacts encountered at the two sites, Tipu has yielded copper, silver, and brass



**Figure 8** Lock (reverse surface of face plate) from the sheet midden east of the later church at Lamanai.

rings, as well as silver earrings that were generally associated with child burials (Graham 1991:327–328). Like other objects of unquestioned value beyond that imparted by their exotic origin, all of these classes of European goods appear to have served as markers of rank or status, with the possible exception of the earrings. Some of the silver ear ornaments occurred with burials of adults, but their predominant association with children may provide further support for the interpretation of jewellery as a reflection of Spanish clerics' conversion and catechizing efforts among the young.

From Lamanai, also from the interior of Structure N11–18, come single leaves from two hinges. Apparently of cast bronze, their gilt coating and elaborate ornamentation show that they must once have adorned objects of great importance. Both their form and their size identify them as book hinges, and the gilding and typical sixteenth–seventeenth century decoration indicate that they are very likely to be of the external type, attached over the binding. Exposed hinges were apparently in common use until about 1600, when they were replaced by simple concealed types (Penney 1967: Plates I, V, VI, IX, XV, XVII). More than any other artifacts, the hinge-leaves reveal an unexpected aspect of the expression of native authority in the Spanish period, for they show that at least one community leader counted books among his European possessions.

The books probably had a religious content, and their extreme rarity in New Spain unquestionably gave them the highest possible value in Spanish eyes. For a frontier Maya cacique, possession of such treasures seems an unimaginably majestic statement of power, especially as the volumes' contents were very probably unintelligible to him and to the entire community. The books' service as symbols of distant power is very likely to have had a foundation of religious belief, given the absence of any utilitarian purpose the volumes could have served. It may be, therefore, that it was the entrusting of the books to the care of the cacique that was the important symbolic act on the part of the Spanish. The act of placing the immensely valuable volumes in a leader's hands would surely have been among the more forceful statements of Spanish confidence in, and support for, the individual, and would also have served as a highly effective reminder of the responsibilities that service under the Spanish placed on one's shoulders.

## Aftermath

Spanish influence over life at Lamanai, though probably diminishing in its intensity with the passage of time, persisted in some respects until

rebellion became widespread in the southern lowlands. By 1638 the populace had thrown in its lot with those in revolt, and in a 1641 *entrada* Franciscan priests found that the church and associated structures had been burnt by apostate Maya who were reportedly in league with rebels at Tipu (Jones 1989:214–224; López de Cogolludo 1971: Book 11, Chapter 13). Yet, despite the Spaniards' loss of hold over Lamanai, post-1641 Maya occupants of the site appear to have continued to identify the second church as sacred space, and to have retained at least a portion of their Christian indoctrination. In what had been the nave, residents erected a Precolumbian stela with a fairly standard substela offering, and nearby they deposited several objects that in form and function are indistinguishable from those in use before Spanish arrival. Close to the stela they built a small altar in Precolumbian style, which must have served for an appreciable time as the focus of ritual activity. No physical evidence remains to identify the nature of the activity, but it is a reasonable guess that it embodied a syncretic intertwining of Christianity and Maya religion. To the Spaniards, Christianity seemed to have been vanquished as the Maya of Lamanai turned apostate; to the Maya, apostasy seems in fact to have been more a rejection of the Spaniards than a disavowal of their religion.

Spanish writers also lament the emergence of apostasy at Tipu, a community that held together through the period of rebellion, and in fact derived additional strength from the arrival of rebels from other towns as well as an alliance with the independent Itzá Maya of the central Petén. Here, too, the abandoned Christian church continued to serve as sacred space for Mayas who were no longer under Spanish influence (Graham et al. 1989:1257). Evidence of the maintenance of Catholic practice makes it highly probable that the Spaniards who recontacted the community in 1695, and maintained links with its people until the community was removed to the Petén in 1707 (Jones 1989:259–268, 270–272), found a surprising amount of earlier Christian teachings still intact among the supposedly apostate Tipuans. I shall not rehearse here the dynamics of Maya/Christian syncretism that led to this kind of modified Spanish success, for they have been tellingly explored elsewhere (Graham 1991: 329–332; Farriss, this volume).

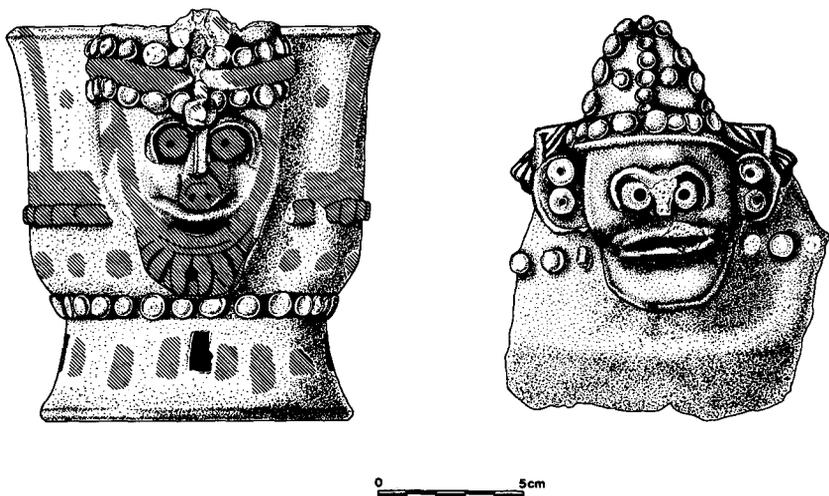
## Conclusions

Although the amount of ground broken by the Lamanai and Tipu excavations shows how extensive are the fields that remain to be ploughed, combination of data from the two sites gives us a surprisingly extensive

view of the mutual, multiple changes that took place when European and Maya cultures met. The picture that derives from the combination of archaeological and ethnohistorical data on Spanish-period Belize is likely to have considerable value as a predictive model, but it is impossible in the present state of our knowledge to establish the geographic limits within which the model may apply. On the broader stage of general New World native/Spanish interaction, however, the Belize model raises two related issues for examination. These, and a variety of narrower matters, would unquestionably benefit from examination within the entire compass of Spanish activity in the New World, but such a task is far beyond the scope of this presentation. I have therefore opted for discussion of the Belize model as it may relate to one derived from work in La Florida, which has been suggested to be generally applicable in the realm of Hispanic contact with New world native peoples.

The primary issue is the relationship, if any, of the Belize data to Deagan's (1983:271, 1990:240-241) model of early Colonial Spanish-Indian acculturation derived from her St Augustine work. The question here is not the degree of similarity or dissimilarity between the evidence from St Augustine and that from the Belize communities, for only the most ingenuous of analysts would expect close resemblance between a major town in an economically attractive area and two much smaller communities barely within the bounds of Spanish power in an impoverished region. It is, rather, whether the Belize data offer support for the St Augustine model, as evidence from Puerto Real, Haiti (Ewen 1991:117; Deagan, this volume) appears to do. The St Augustine model holds that in much of the New World, Spanish conquest had strongly alterative impact on native life predominantly in socially visible areas under male control such as iconography, architecture, and some areas of portable material culture. In contrast, areas dominated by females were characterized by a greater amount of Spanish/native acculturation and syncretism. As the foregoing discussion makes clear, both Tipu and Lamanai have yielded data that should in some measure illuminate the applicability of this suggested dichotomy to the frontier southern Maya lowlands.

European impact on iconography is scarcely in evidence at either Tipu or Lamanai, apart from the possibility that one might see the syncretic thurible from the Tipu church as a Christian replacement for native *incensarios*. The object is, however, clearly a blend of indigenous and European qualities, and the context in which it was employed gives the censer an equivocal quality as regards European content in the iconographic repertoire of the community. At Lamanai, Coggins's suggestion (Gallenkamp and Johnson 1985:230, Figure 207) that a pair of appliqué mask vessel ornaments from Lamanai (Figure 9) emphasize European



**Figure 9** Vessels from Lamanai suggested by Coggins to be representations of Europeans.

facial characteristics and may be Maya portraits of Europeans is an intriguing hint of Spanish impact on iconography, but the blending of indigenous techniques with some measure of foreign influence is the most that can be adduced in this instance. Furthermore, in the absence of a larger assemblage of such representations, the significance of the objects as evidence of Spanish alteration of iconographic canons is open to serious question. With the possible exception of these two objects, in fact, the pottery figurines from both Tipu and Lamanai that date from the period of Spanish influence and afterwards suggest continuity rather than change. The matter is made much more frustrating by the absence of descriptive information in the countless references to “idolatry” that pepper the ethnohistorical record (see Jones [1989:148–149, 190] for discussion of Maya backsliding at Tipu, and Graham [1991:328–330] for the setting of the matter of “idols” in culture historical perspective). If Catholic belief produced significantly European images of worship, or even alterations in Maya representations of their deities, no written word on the matter has yet come to light and none is likely to do so. Beyond the scant evidence for change itself, however, the fact remains that neither archaeological nor ethnohistorical data provide an adequate basis for association of gender with European iconographic impact. The Lamanai material embodies nothing in the way of gender-specific information, and the association of the Tipu thurible with an apparent young female can, all other issues aside, hardly be taken as refutation of the St Augustine model.

In the realm of architecture, European influence is, as we have seen, clearly—and expectably—identifiable in the three churches, but only in

the later structure at Lamanai is there an element that is of pure European form and features. If indeed some of the contact-period changes in native domestic architecture can be identified as a product of Spanish presence, their occurrence in heavily syncretic mixtures clearly cannot be linked to the St Augustine model. The data from the second Lamanai church might, on the other hand, be taken as weak verification of the model if we accept that architecture is most likely to have lain in the male domain in the Maya lowlands. The weakness lies in the obviously special nature of the churches, and in the lack of any solid indication at either site that European plan characteristics, architectural forms, or construction techniques played any significant role in domestic construction. The critical character of the domestic situation, which would illustrate the extent, if any, of European impact outside a purely European context, makes the problem with identification of handwrought nails at Lamanai all the more painful.

The other body of material culture evidence, which consists of jewellery, utilitarian objects, and a very small amount of Spanish domestic ceramics, provides a picture as clouded as does architecture. At Tipu, association of European glass beads with adult burials is split equally between males and females (Smith et al. 1993:Table 1), whereas at Lamanai the association of beads with the probable cacique's residence scarcely constitutes irrefutable evidence of exclusive male use of the objects. The same observation can be made with regard to all of the other European goods associated with the residence; although the reason for their presence may lie in Spanish material expression of power through a local representative, the real distribution and use of the objects within the household remains absolutely unclear. Furthermore, although the link between the concentration of imported objects and the Spanish-supported exercise of power by a native leader is a highly plausible one, the assumption that the community's affairs were uniformly overseen by males has no support other than Spanish documentary references—where one would be foolish not to recognize the great potential for bias.

If the evidence on the male side of the St Augustine model is generally equivocal, how does the female side fare? The answer is, regrettably, "No better". As we have seen, European impact was indeed limited in all areas of domestic life, as apparently in all areas of material goods production. Even in the circumstances of greatest presence of European goods, which involve storage jars and glass beads, local manufacture continued throughout the period of importation because of the severely restricted quantity of imports. It is abundantly clear that essentially undisturbed continuity, with no acculturative blending of local and introduced techniques, forms, or modes of decoration characterized both Tipu and Lamanai, and set

them sharply apart from St Augustine. Continuity was, in fact, by and large the norm in all aspects of material culture in the two communities. Where such continuity is present, it appears highly unlikely that male-female dichotomies as regards material culture will be recognizable in the archaeological record.

It is out of the inconclusive character of the Belize data as regards the St Augustine model that a second issue arises, which is the degree to which information derived from a frontier zone has broader application, whether in the assessment of models based on information from centres of power, or in the construction of models of the Native-Spanish contact experience that extend beyond the frontier context. The principal factors that underlie the issue are, first, the restrictive effects of distance from centres of power, a number of which we have already examined; second, the Spanish attitude towards control and exploitation of the frontier; and finally, the character of native polities in the frontier area.

The effects of separation from power centres inevitably include diminution of foreign control, both ecclesiastic and secular. Contact with individual polities is restricted, and as a result both the requirements and the opportunities for passage of European goods into native hands are reduced. The corresponding increase in the impact of individual Europeans may prove of great significance in many respects both positive and negative, but its archaeological expression outside of the architectural sphere is very likely to be minimized by the small quantities of goods introduced to the area. Finally, written records that might augment the excavated data may well be fewer in number than in more settled areas, and their preservation far poorer. These forces in themselves can be expected to produce a body of information far less rich than one could expect in areas under closer European control. Indeed even within the Maya area there are clear indications that the data on European impact will prove more extensive, both archaeologically and ethnohistorically, in centres of economic and political importance that were firmly within the sphere of Spanish influence (Gasco 1984, 1989).

Spanish attitudes towards control and exploitation of the frontier rested on a combination of features that included accessibility, availability of personnel who could be stationed in or near the region, active resistance or general intransigence of the population, known or probable potential for economic development, and political importance of the territory both in its own terms and in terms of broader expansionist interests. All but the first were obviously subject to fluctuation that was dependent both on circumstances in centres of power and on events within the frontier region itself. As a result it is not possible to develop a detailed characterization of the Spanish point of view vis-à-vis the frontier and its people; expressed

simply, the Spanish principle was the very effective one that the investment in time and material put into a region should be commensurate with guaranteed or expected results, both economic and religious. Given the limited resources available for the task, it is scarcely surprising that an outlying area such as Belize saw only sporadic Spanish presence and probably even more sporadic distribution of European goods. It is a reasonable guess that a good many Spaniards regarded even the material and energy investment in Belize as something that would never be repaid, and hence refrained as often as possible from pouring good money after bad.

Finally there is the question of the character of the native polities, not as the Spanish saw it but rather as we must assess it if we are to understand the dynamics of acculturation. Although there is good evidence from both Lamanai and Tipu that the Spanish made greater and more lasting inroads in the religious domain than they realized, there is equally good evidence that the Precolumbian tradition persisted in many areas of life throughout the period of Spanish hegemony. Many types of evidence beyond the two sites indicate that the indomitable nature of the Maya will was a major element in native/European contact from the outset, as indeed it remains to this day. Lamanai and Tipu can therefore be appreciated as examples of a pan-Maya phenomenon, but at the same time they may have differed from communities in many other parts of the Maya world because of the remoteness of their setting. At least a part of what is now northern and central Belize seems to have had a frontier quality prior to European arrival (Jones 1989), and it is possible to deduce from this that the area may have retained a particularly formidable character in the early contact period. Together with the other structuring factors, the people themselves may have contributed to an archaeological record of Spanish presence that is less than overwhelming.

It probably follows from what I have said that the use of Lamanai and Tipu as the basis for a model of Maya/Spanish interaction should be limited to the southern Maya lowlands, and perhaps even to a restricted portion of the territory. This is not to say that the data from the two sites are insufficient for the purpose of characterizing the conflict and accommodation between native and intrusive cultures, but rather that we should see the particulars of the two community histories as not necessarily reflective of the situation to be expected at sites farther north in the Yucatan Peninsula, or in other parts of the Maya lands. It is, however, likely that considerable predictive value inheres in the model of limited or nonexistent Spanish alternative effect in many areas of native culture, and of Maya perpetuation of Christian practise and precepts even after European influence in the matter was no longer directly felt. Precisely

where that value finds its limits as one moves away from Lamanai and Tipu is as open a question as is that of establishment of overarching models on the basis of information from any single site or area. As Wilson (1992:756) so aptly puts it, "no single model is adequate to explain the cultural interactions that produced a diversity of new and transformed cultures in the postconquest New World."

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