

# Lady Six Sky and the Definition of Ritual Space at Naranjo

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Through a broad discussion on the full monumental program at Naranjo during the reigns of Lady Six Sky and her son K'ak Tiliw Chan Chaak, this article provides new information about the role of women in Late Classic Maya civilization (AD 600-900). A detailed exploration of the distinct trends in the monumental program from 682-741 AD supports the primary argument for Lady Six Sky's underlying importance in ritual representation. The author finds considerable evidence that suggests the transfer of power from mother to son during the latter years of Lady Six Sky. A concluding discussion of Naranjo focuses on spatial analysis of the monuments spread across the site core in relation to dual-gendered ritual space, as well as contrasting martial and mythological imagery.

## I. Introduction

Discussions of Classic Maya elite gender and power relations inevitably lead to one of the most influential and important women of the Late Classic Period (AD 600-900), Lady Six Sky of Naranjo. In the context of other Classic monumental depictions of female rulers at sites like Yaxchilan, Palenque, and Calakmul, Lady Six Sky stands out as the only ruling woman depicted on contemporaneous monuments. Because of this distinction and her dynastic ties to the Tikal and Dos Pilas lineages, Lady Six Sky becomes a very important focus for understanding the role of women as mothers, wives, and rulers in the turbulent political landscape of the Late Classic. After arriving at Naranjo, Lady Six Sky bore a son, K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak, who formally acceded to the throne of the kingdom as a child. Although her son retroactively claims military victories as young as age five, Lady Six Sky most likely held a considerable amount of power both before her son first assumed control and for at least fifteen years after his death. In order to explore Lady Six Sky's role as a dynastic founder, regent, and a ruler, the first part of this paper will examine the artistic program of Naranjo, in order to reach a synthesis of chronological and spatial analysis of monuments during her and her son's lifetimes. The discussion will then focus on the iconographic and epigraphic implications about gender roles by highlighting Lady Six Sky's self promotion and use of mythology in defining dual-gendered ritual space at Naranjo.

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<sup>1</sup> The author is grateful to Barbara Kerr and the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc. for permission to reprint original drawings and photographs of Mayan diagrams featured in the Linda Schele Drawing Collection and Steven Kerr Collection. The original authors retain copyright permissions for all the graphical figures in this article.

## II. The Monumental Program of Lady Six Sky and her son at Naranjo

Born at Tikal into the royal family, Lady Six Sky's father, B'alaj Chan K'awiil, left the city of Tikal to found a rival center at Dos Pilas in the Petexbatun region in the mid-seventh century. He claimed the same emblem glyph of the Tikal family, yet proclaimed himself the vassal of Yuknoom the Great of Calakmul, a great rival of Tikal. After several clashes between Tikal and a Dos Pilas/Calakmul contingent, Dos Pilas emerged victorious around the year 680. Around the same time, the entire ruling dynasty at Naranjo vanished in an unknown event, mostly likely due to a clash with the city of Caracol. In the wake of these events, Lady Six Sky traveled from her native Dos Pilas to the kingdom of Naranjo under the directives of both her father and his overlord in 682 (Martin and Grube 2000).

The story of her arrival survives in at least four texts; the two most legible are from Stela 24 and Stela 29 (Schele and Freidel 1990, 185). She arrived on August 27, 682: the glyphic phrase for 'arrival event' is linguistically very similar to the one at Tikal a few centuries earlier and implies dynastic foundation (Martin and Grube 2000, 74). Three days after her arrival, Lady Six Sky performed a dedication ritual at Naranjo involving her house on a pyramid presumably at the site core (Schele and Freidel 1990, 186). Thus, she established herself at Naranjo as the ruling body, though the record is unclear as to whether it was through direct usurpation or marriage into a noble family of the Naranjo region. Lady Six Sky certainly benefited from the patronage of her father and the rulers at Calakmul, who allowed her to hold power until she could safely enthrone her son ten years later. Multiple references to her son being a vassal lord of the ruler at Calakmul, as well as the presence of Dos Pilas royals in some of the later military campaigns both support this idea. Yet due to a lack of monuments describing events in the first ten years of Lady Six Sky's presence at Naranjo, the exact status she held after her arrival remains vague.

The earliest dedicated monument at Naranjo after Lady Six Sky's arrival is Stela 5, located north of Structure A-21, recording a ritual performed by K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak in 699.<sup>2</sup> This stela shows the young king in a frontal position, facing to his right. He holds a fan in his left hand that covers his midsection as the right hand reaches out in front of the ruler with a gesture of two fingers raised, as if in a position of ceremonial dance or other action. To the left of the ruler kneels a small figure that faces upward toward the ruler. It is unclear due to damage whether this figure is a dwarf court attendant or, more likely, a captive. The event of 699 is also commemorated on Stela 24, to be described later, where Lady Six Sky tramples a captive from Kinichil-Cab.

Stela 5 is most important because it contains the only explicit parentage statement of K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak (Looper 1992). The text on the left records a verbal phrase with K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak's name, which continues in the text on the top right. The key glyph is at position B2 – which Matthew Looper (1992) has identified as the "child of mother" glyph. Following this glyph in positions B3 and B4 is a royal title of a woman from Dos Pilas, similarly found on the glyphic Stela 18 in reference to Lady Six Sky (Looper 1992). No explicit statement exists about a father for K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak, which means it either has not survived on any of the texts, or the father was someone who was not as important as Lady Six Sky. This indicates that it was more important for Lady Six Sky to mention herself so prominently on

<sup>2</sup> See the original drawing of Stela 5 in Graham 1975, 21.

the earliest stela in her son's reign. Because K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak was 11 years old at the time of the stela's erection, his mother likely made many decisions regarding the rituals. Lady Six Sky acted as a regent for her son, and this is supported by texts from the first set of stelae containing calendric rituals, Stelae 1, 22, and 24.

Located on the north edge of Structure C-7, Stela 24 is the earliest dedicated monumental depiction of Lady Six Sky (Figure 1). The queen wears a headdress with a spray of long feathers, and a "trapeze-and-ray" war symbol in the center of the headdress (Looper 2002a, 183). She wears a necklace that falls on top of a large knot of fabric, which may or may not be part of the cape that falls behind her belt and skirt. Because of the damage to the stela, it is unclear whether she wears a shirt or not. A belt composed of vertical beads wraps around her hips, and culminates in a *xok*<sup>3</sup> monster head in the front. From the head dangles a spondylus shell that covers her genital area. A royal mat symbol connects the shell to a small effigy head of a long-nosed god. Finally, a floral element possibly containing bones dangles between her ankles. The belt assemblage is closely associated with the maize god and moon goddess, as seen on images like Figure 1.<sup>4</sup> Under the belt assemblage, Lady Six Sky wears a jade-netted skirt that reaches to her calves. The jade-netted skirt represents the turtle shell or the surface of the earth, and is closely associated with the moon goddess and femininity. Also, Reilly (2002) argues, "the jaded net overskirt takes its place among other costume details whose overall message is one of creation, resurrection, and fertility" (325). This costuming refers to Lady Six Sky impersonating the "captor, lady of the moon" or the moon goddess (Looper 2002a, 181). Appropriately as a 'captor,' she stands atop a nearly naked captive, an almost exclusively male action in Maya art (a position found only on a small number of stelae featuring women at Calakmul).

Celebrating the half k'atun<sup>5</sup> on January 4, 702, Stela 24 records four other key events: Lady Six Sky's arrival at Naranjo in 682; the birth of K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak on January 3, 688; the ritual mentioned on Stela 5 in 699, and the parentage of Lady Six Sky. The text on the stela face records Lady Six Sky in her full royal title<sup>6</sup> as she 'is passing atop' the captive three years prior



Figure 1. Stela 24 with Maize God Plate Detail from Figure 8.25b of Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Shark.

<sup>4</sup> Drawing by Linda Schele. © David Schele, courtesy Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., [www.famsi.org](http://www.famsi.org).

<sup>5</sup> Twenty-year period.

<sup>6</sup> Hewitt (1999, 255) stipulates, the lack of a *-Na* head prefix expresses "the unmarked components of Lady Six Sky's appellative phrases" as "a unique status. Her personal name is marked, but most of her emblem glyphs and all expressions of her *bacab* title are unmarked." Hewitt specifically refers to Stela 24 when she presents her argument that Lady Six Sky masculinized herself. Hewitt, however, fails to address the fact that even though only the four personal names are marked with the *na-* prefix, the final reference includes a *na-ajaw-mutal bacab* construction, which makes her gender quite apparent (Martin and Grube 2000, 30). The direct comparison that Hewitt makes to the women at Yaxchilan is a tenuous one, considering that on Lintel 41 (Schele and Miller 1986,

(Schele and Freidel 1990, 190). The text also mentions Lady Six Sky as the protagonist in the ending of the half-period, an important distinction because it is she who is still performing the calendric rituals, even though her son acceded almost ten years prior. This stela provides important subtle clues about the amount of power that Lady Six Sky held well into the reign of her son, to whom she dedicated stelae at the same time.

Stela 22 stood across the plaza in Group C from Stela 24, at the south face of Structure C-6.<sup>7</sup> This monument features K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak's accession, as marked by the Naranjo accession motif (Closs 1985, 71). The young king sits cross-legged atop an ornate jaguar skin pillow facing to the right. The headdress worn by the ruler is unique in that it contains the elements of his name (Figure Martin and Grube 2000, 77). Also in the top center, above the *ti(li)* glyph is a small floral/bone element, as well as a fan of feathers extending from the rear of the headdress. K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak holds a double-headed ceremonial bar, consisting of two serpent heads. Out of the snake head to the right comes a deity head, which could be K'awiil due to the smoke emanating from his forehead area, but the area is too damaged to discern a typical K'awiil smoking celt. From the opposite snake head comes a human head with hair piled on top of the head, a headband, ear flares, and a beaded collar. In addition, K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak wears a typical royal belt, consisting of three heads (presumably jade) connected by a royal mat sign. From the central head hang three jade celts, and below the celts hangs a *tzuk* partition monster face on the rest of the loincloth (Schele and Mathews 1998, 417). He thus marked himself as the center from which the partitions of the world were created, or a direct phallic representation of the world tree. To the left of the ruler, seated on two bones, is Shield-Jaguar of Ucanal, presented as a nearly naked bound captive (Schele and Freidel 1990, 190). He raises his hands towards the seated ruler as if in a gesture of pleading.

The text of Stela 22 records the first mention of the accession of K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak, recorded as May 28, 693. Presumably this five year-old ruler then embarked on a military campaign recorded in texts that read "like a conflagration of the eastern Peten" (Martin and Grube 2000, 76). Most likely, Lady Six Sky orchestrated all of these early campaigns in her son's name, and they were later recorded by K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak. Lady Six Sky waited at least ten years after her arrival to make any moves to consolidate power and control surrounding areas, but her actions were unnoticed until K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak recorded at least eight victories *ex post facto*. Perhaps this shows the wider social uncertainty involving a female ruler, as Lady Six Sky was unable to wage successful campaigns to subdue other polities until she had a viable male heir on the throne of Naranjo. The third stela dedicated in 702 also provides a clue about the level of control surrounding Lady Six Sky and her son.

Stela 1 stood to the south of Structure A-15, across the plaza from Stela 5. It is largely weathered, but it is contemporaneous with Stelae 22 and 24.<sup>8</sup> Stela 1 shows K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak in a frontal pose, facing to his left. In his right hand, he holds a spear and a round shield. Also, a long-lipped deity faces left in the lower register. The damaged text of Stela 1 holds one small but very important phrase describing K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak as the 'vassal lord' of

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plate 78), the woman is pictured dressing her husband for battle. Perhaps the *na-ajaw-siyaj-chan* NA-bacab title found at Yaxchilan (Martin and Grube 2000, 119) is reserved for wives of rulers, not rulers in their own right such as Lady Six Sky. Also, the lack of the *na-* head at Naranjo may be due to artistic license or space conservation.

<sup>7</sup> See the original drawing of Stela 22 in Graham 1975, 55.

<sup>8</sup> See the original drawing of Stela 1 in Graham 1975, 11.

Yich'aak K'ak' of Calakmul. Yich'aak K'ak' succeeded Yuknoom the Great, who was the overlord of K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak's grandfather. A particularly interesting fact about this reference in 702 to Yich'aak K'ak' is that he had been out of power at Calakmul and presumably dead since 695 (Martin and Grube 2000, 75). This illustrates the importance of Calakmul to the early reign of K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak, which was most likely perpetuated through maternal ties. Yet by the next major calendar junction, K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak had eclipsed his mother and had begun to perform calendric rituals as the ruler of Naranjo.

Closs (1985, 74) notes that the first calendric ritual performed by K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak in 704 reflects a shift of power from mother to son. This transition is earliest marked in Stela 21, located directly to the west of Stela 22, dedicated on December 29, 706.<sup>9</sup> It presents K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak in full warrior garb, as he stands atop a bound and semi-nude captive that has been identified as a conquest of the city of Yootz (Martin and Grube 2000, 76). As shown on the face of the stela dressed as the jaguar sun god, at the age of eighteen, K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak finally presided over key rituals involving wartime captives to exercise his rights as a full king, instead of a figurehead of his mother and a vassal of Calakmul.

Despite his new prominence, on Stela 23, dedicated December 3, 711 A.D., K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak again mentioned his vassal status to Yich'aak K'ak' of Calakmul.<sup>10</sup> Stela 23 is largely damaged, but pictures K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak wearing a feathered headdress, a pectoral, and probably the typical ruler belt complete with a *tzuk* monster head loincloth. Again, he stands on a captive, as the text records more defeats involving the kingdom of Yaxha to the west. Another interesting piece of epigraphic evidence about the battles with Yaxha is the presence of a warrior who was the sibling of K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak's mother, most likely Itzamnaaj K'awiil, the half brother of Lady Six Sky who was ruling Dos Pilas in the beginning of the eighth century.

This second posthumous naming of his former overlord on Stela 23 is even more curious than the one of 702, for a new ruler was firmly in place by this time at Calakmul. The allegiance to a deceased ruler of Calakmul is even more puzzling in the context of the wider political sphere, because Lady Six Sky's half brother was possibly present at the commemorated battles, and held ties with the current rulers of Calakmul (Martin and Grube, 2000, 59)<sup>11</sup>. The politically relevant text of Stela 23 also records K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak's marriage to a woman named Lady 'Baby Jaguar,' who was a royal woman from the city of Tuub'al, one of the first conquests of Naranjo under the newly recharged dynasty. K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak cemented his ability to carry on the dynastic line as he made his way to becoming a one-k'atun ruler of Naranjo, as celebrated by his next stela dedications.

In February of 713, K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak dedicated a pair of stelae to celebrate his twentieth year as ruler. Stela 2, located on the east side of Stela 1, shows him with a frontal pose,

<sup>9</sup> See the original drawing of Stela 21 in Graham 1975, 53.

<sup>10</sup> See the original drawing of Stela 23 in Graham 1975, 59.

<sup>11</sup> Perhaps a missing piece of the story would name Yich'aak K'ak' as more than a vassal lord. I conjecture that Yich'aak K'ak' could possibly have been the father of K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak based on: the close relationship between Yich'aak K'ak' and B'alaj Chan K'awiil (Schele and Freidel 1990, 181), the prominence of the K'ak' glyphic construction (common to both names) in the headdress in the accession Stela 22 (see figure), the posthumous mentioning of Yich'aak K'ak' as long as sixteen years after his death, and the coincidence that K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak would have been conceived on or very close to the celebration of the one-year anniversary of the accession of Yich'aak K'ak' to the throne at Calakmul. Also, a text from Stela 23 could mention an overlord of K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak as "the spouse of the Lady of Dos Pilas," but the interpretation is speculative.

dressed in warrior costume including feathered headdress, pectoral, feathered backrack, knotted belt, loincloth with a serpent or monster, skirt, and carrying spearthrowing darts and a flexible shield (Schele and Freidel 1990, 192).<sup>12</sup> An interesting detail about Stela 2 is the possible rattlesnake rattles dangling between his legs, a Mexican symbol for war.<sup>13</sup> Paired with Stela 2 is Stela 3, which portrays Lady Six Sky on her son's k'atun anniversary.<sup>14</sup> The accompanying text recalls the arrival of Lady Six Sky in relation to the one-k'atun anniversary of her son. Stela 3 also marks the first mention of Aj Wosal, who was a ruler at Naranjo in the late sixth and early seventh centuries. As Lady Six Sky celebrated her son's first k'atun of rulership, she compared it to the first k'atun anniversary of a great ruler of Naranjo from the past (Closs 1984, 70).

This comparison to Aj Wosal marks a new turn in the legitimating tactics of Lady Six Sky and her son. Before his first k'atun, K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak and his mother placed more emphasis on their relationships with the dynastic lines of his mother and their subsequent vassal status under Calakmul. But with Stelae 2 and 3 come a new focus on comparing the current rulers to rulers of the past dynasty of Naranjo. The new dynasty used the old dynasty as tools in their political propaganda of holding their power in the Naranjo kingdom by trying to present themselves as deeply rooted in the local lineage by creating kinship that was likely fictive. In fact, one year later, K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak dedicated two more stelae of mother and son directly in front of the monument depicting the accession of Aj Wosal (Closs 1985, 70).

Stelae 29 pictures Lady Six Sky wearing the same belt as she pictured herself wearing in Stela 24, complete with *xok* monster, spondylus shell, royal mat motif, long-nosed god, and floral/bone assemblage.<sup>15</sup> She stands atop a bound captive as she wears ankle cuffs and *pop* style sandals. Dedicated on November 17, 714, Stela 29 contains preserved text that records Lady Six Sky's parentage again.

On the same date as this stela, K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak erected Stela 30, one of the best-preserved monuments from Naranjo.<sup>16</sup> His left hand falls to his side and holds a three-lobed ceremonial flint; his right hand holds out a staff with knotted cloth at the top, middle, and bottom. These two items are reminiscent of similar items from Tikal Temple III Lintel 2 and Altar 5 associated with the exhumation of ancestral bones (Looper 2002a, 197).<sup>17</sup> Due to the associated iconography and considering the stelae are directly in front of Aj Wosal's stela of accession, K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak was connecting himself with the reign of the earlier Naranjo king. Also, Stelae 29 and 30 present the royal couple on captives as a couplet of monumental art and iconography, in an act of veneration ritually asserting that Aj Wosal is a fictitious ancestor of K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak. This idea is again reinforced by K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak's final stela erected in the same area.

<sup>12</sup> See the original drawing of Stela 2 in Graham 1975, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Headrick, in discussion with author, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> See the original drawing of Stela 3 in Graham 1975, 17.

<sup>15</sup> See the original drawing of Stela 29 in Graham 1978, 77.

<sup>16</sup> See the original drawing of Stela 30 in Graham 1978, 79.

<sup>17</sup> See Jones and Satterthwaite (1982), particularly Figure 23 and Figure 72.

Placed directly beside Stela 29, Stela 28 created a triad of stelae with Lady Six Sky in the center, faced by her son from both sides.<sup>18</sup> The text in Stela 28, erected in November of 716, once again refers to an anniversary of Aj Wosal's, supporting the hypothesis that the stelae on structure C-9 are ancestor venerations. This monument marks the end of the clear record of K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak' monumental activity. One partial stela, Stela 40, is also placed near a monument of Aj Wosal's in a hilltop plaza that is most likely a late attempt of K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak's to connect his authority with the former ruler.

Lady Six Sky placed Stela 31 directly beside Stela 30, creating two portraits of her and her son alternating in front of the monuments to Aj Wosal.<sup>19</sup> Dedicated in 721, the stela pictures the accession scene of Lady Six Sky. Her arms are folded inward to clutch the double-headed ceremonial serpent bar, the symbol of taking power. She also wears the same belt with the *xok* monster, spondylus shell, *pop* motif, long-nosed god, and floral/bone assemblage. The accompanying text reinforces the ancestral theme as Lady Six Sky relates her mid-k'atun celebration to a similar celebration of Aj Wosal almost 150 years prior (Closs 1985, 72).

Lady Six Sky took the bar of rulership between 721 and 726 and likely reigned as a ruler in her own right. Although no explicit record told of K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak's death, Stela 18 mentions him on February 7, 726. His son recorded him as a three-k'atun ruler, which would put his death after 728 (Martin and Grube 2000, 77). However, the posthumous timeline could be an exaggeration, for Lady Six Sky celebrates the period ending in April of 726 alone using the "ochk'in kalomte" title, a very powerful royal title.

I argue that one final stela is the work of Lady Six Sky in her later reign, the previously unrecognized Stela 37.<sup>20</sup> Found broken near the A group, Stela 37 pictures a woman in a full royal headdress, as her left arm is bent across her chest, seemingly holding one head of a serpent. The serpent lip flares up over her left shoulder, and from its mouth a small deity emerges with the glyph for 'yellow' and 'precious' in his tiny headdress. The jade-netted skirt and a belt are present containing the floral/bone symbol. An interesting detail about this jade skirt is that it apparently falls to just above her knees indicated by

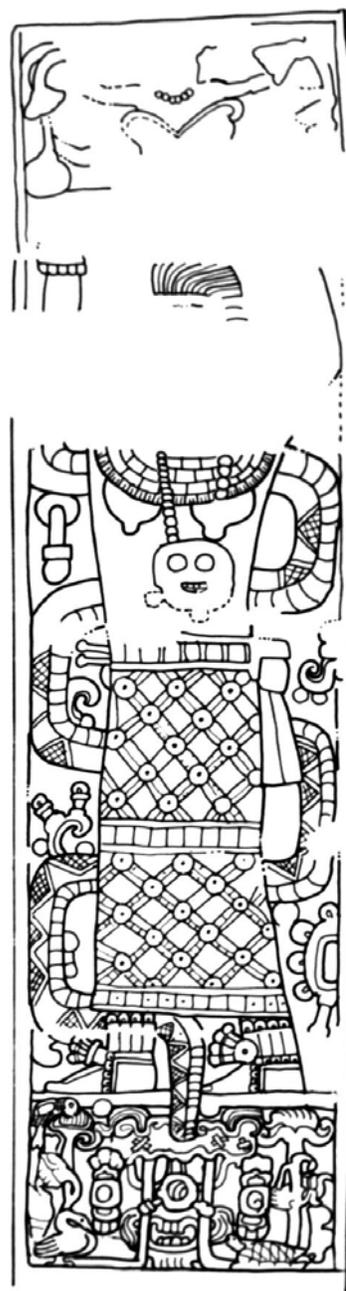


Figure 2. Column of the Moon Goddess, Chichen Itza from Figure 6.11.A3 of Schele and Mathews, 1998.

<sup>18</sup> See the original drawing of Stela 28 in Graham 1978, 75.

<sup>19</sup> See the original drawing of Stela 31 in Graham 1978, 83.

<sup>20</sup> See the original drawing of Stela 37 in Graham 1978, 95.

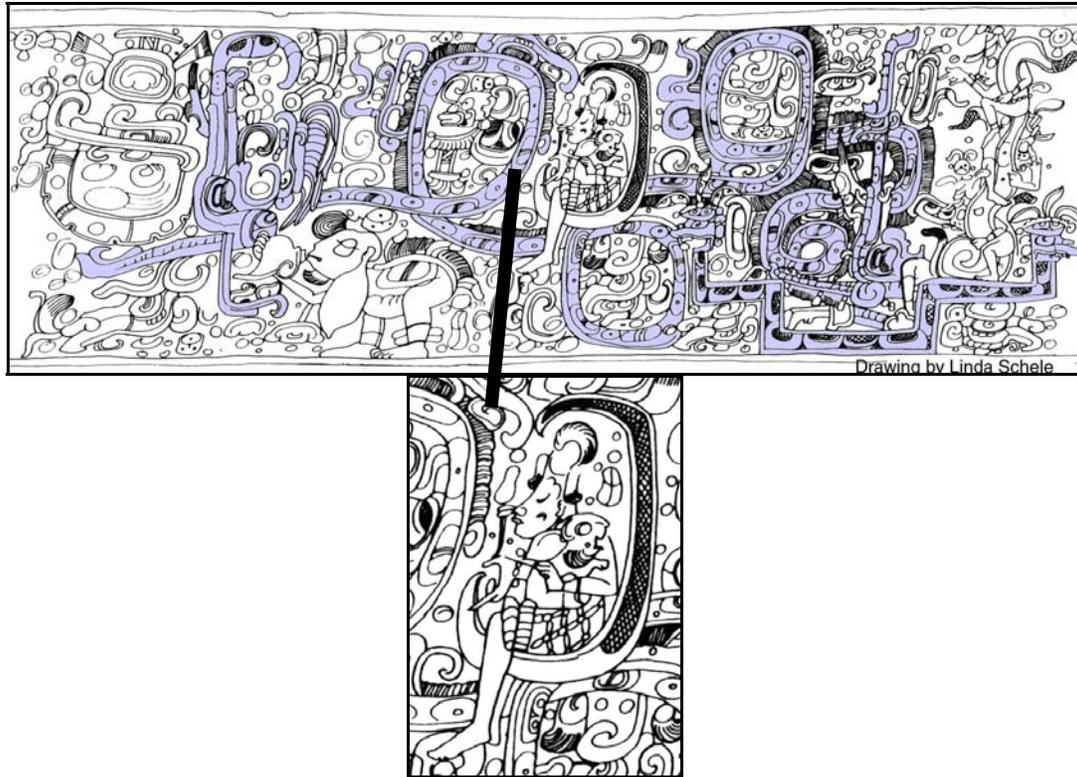


Figure 3. *Mayan Vase 2733 and Detail of Moon Goddess from the Kerr Collection, with serpents shaded by the author.*

curves in the legs, the shortest length of any known jade skirt on a female in the Maya area. Between her feet springs a two-sided scroll, the one to the right contains a diamond motif and the scroll to the left contains small circles with dots in the center.

These scrolls most likely represent snakes, one of whose heads lies above Lady Six Sky's left shoulder. Representations of snakes coiling around humans in this manner are found in scenes depicting the moon goddess, counterpart to the Maize God, on the inner columns of the ball court at Chichen Itza (Figure 2).<sup>21</sup> It is also interesting to note that the moon goddess at Chichen Itza holds her hands up to the sky, and a column near her features the four old gods known as Pawahtuns who hold up the world (Schele and Mathews 1998, 216-415). Lady Six Sky employs similar imagery as the moon goddess, and a *bacab* title on her other monuments, which has been read as 'first in the world, sky bearer.' She is probably paralleling some mythological event on Stela 37 that is reflected in the moon goddess column at Chichen Itza. Stela 37 most likely represents Lady Six Sky in her later reign as true ruler of Naranjo because of similarities in the costuming to Stela 31, as well as the association with the moon goddess and coiling serpents, similar to a scene on the vase show in Figure 3.<sup>22</sup> Grube and Martin (2004) argue that Stela 37 holds a calendar round date that places it on June 28, 672; but since stylistically it represents Lady Six Sky, of June 18, 712 is more probable.

Lady Six Sky died in the year 741, fifteen years after taking over the rule at Naranjo in her own right. Her successors did not record her death at Naranjo; instead, her half-brother's

<sup>21</sup> Drawing by Linda Schele. © David Schele, courtesy Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., [www.famsi.org](http://www.famsi.org).

<sup>22</sup> This enhanced graphical image is sourced from the Kerr Collection (© Justin Kerr, file number K2733).

son recorded her death at her native Dos Pilas, in a hieroglyphic bench (Martin and Grube 2000, 62). The ruler that succeeded her, presumably a grandson, was sacrificed to Tikal in 744. Another of her grandchildren acceded in 746, and yet another acceded in 755 (Martin and Grube 2000, 79-80). These rulers did not mention Lady Six Sky, but did mention K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak.

Because the later kings of Naranjo claimed legitimacy from her son, it seems that all mention of Lady Six Sky at Naranjo exists because of acts of self-promotion in the monumental activity. She assumed the role of dynastic founder and memorialized her "arrival" event, and sought to boost the prestige of her son by emphasizing her dynastic connections. She also began the comparison of herself and her son to great rulers of the past at the city of Naranjo. Finally, she took the bar of rulership herself and sought to use comparisons to female powers in nature, specifically the mythology of the moon goddess.

### III. Defining Ritual Space

First, I will explore iconographic implications of the definition of ritual space at Naranjo in three different important ways. Because the rulers mentioned the 'arrival' of Lady Six Sky at least four times, this event is clearly very important to the reestablishment of the ritual space and elite power. Schele and Freidel (1990, 185-186) cite the arrival and pyramid dedication as part of a ceremony to reopen "the portal to the Otherworld" and reestablish "the sacred connection to the ancestors," which is evident in the fact that Lady Six Sky's house contained the emblem glyph for the Naranjo polity. Thus, when she arrived at the site, Lady Six Sky played a pivotal role in securing sacred space in the city center at Naranjo.

The second aspect regarding ritual space, as defined by Lady Six Sky and K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak, is related to the argument of male, female, and dual-gendered groups.Looper (2002a, 197) argues that the C group of C-6, C-7, and C-9 "utilizes stela imagery to identify the flanking pyramids with male and female rulers, while the axial pyramid is associated with masculine and feminine genders."<sup>23</sup> Thus, Stelae 21-23 represent the male edge of the ritual space, Stela 24 represents the female edge, and Stelae 28-31 represent the dual-gendered representation of the power of Lady Six Sky and K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak. The evidence that K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak represents himself in Stela 21 as the jaguar sun god, and Lady Six Sky refers to herself as the moon goddess on Stela 24, supports the complementarity between the facing male and female monuments. Looper (2002b) asserts that the triadic arrangement of stelae in group C, the associated iconography, and the specific calendric rituals portray Lady Six Sky and her son in the same mythological role as the first creators

Additionally, I contend Lady Six Sky defined a tri-gendered ritual space in the western plaza labeled by Graham (1975) as group A.<sup>24</sup> Stela 5, K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak's first stela, represents the male edge of the A plaza and Stelae 1-3 represent the dual-gendered ancestral edge in front of structure A-15. Stela 37 shows Lady Six Sky placed to the east defining the female edge the plaza. The fact that this monument is most likely later than 712 shows that

<sup>23</sup> See the original map drawing of the monumental groups in Graham 1975.

<sup>24</sup> See the original map drawing of the monumental groups in Graham 1975.

Lady Six Sky made it a point to define the female space well into her son's reign, promoting herself and her power even further.

A third aspect of ritual space and monumental activity is related to contrasting mythological space with warfare-related space. In Group A, no stelae feature a captive (a prominent theme in the stelae of Naranjo) either under the feet of a ruler or in the lower register. Instead, Stelae 1, 2, and 3 feature different versions of a long-lipped deity. The deity from stela one is damaged, but it depicts the head with scrolls emitting from the front and rear of its face, ending in what could be flowers or fish. The eyeball and earflare are faintly evident in the face, and the curled upper lip seems to contain two teeth. A comb-like scroll comes out from the nose. This representation likely represents a version of the water-lily monster, due to the presence of the fish/flowers and scrolls.

The long-lipped deity from Stela 2 features an *ik* glyph in his forehead, symbolizing a portal. Above the bone earflare of the deity is a glyphic head, with a hand on its cheek, hair pulled back, and an earflare. This version of the long-lipped deity contains portal and death imagery, and the glyphic head presents an important detail also related to the sacrificial death god. The hand gripping the lower jaw, which may represent the removal of the jaw from a sacrificial victim, is associated with the personification of the number zero, one of the death gods. Schele and Miller (1986, 54) also relate the pulled-back hair to the hairdo of sacrificial victims to the "foul odors expelled" from the death god inhabitants of the underworld.

On Stela 3, dedicated to Lady Six Sky, rests the final representation of the long-lipped god in Group A. Because Stela 3 was dedicated at the same time as Stela 2, picturing K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak, it is clear that the artists made definite efforts to distinguish the two lower registers of each. Stela 3 contains the number four to the far left, directly in front of the head of the *tzuk* monster, once again marking the ruler as the center of the world. Central to the register is the long-lipped deity with a "squint-eye" that looks forward instead of down like on Stela 2. This deity has a clear association with the sun evident by the stylized god head and the number four, contrasting it with the death imagery present on Stela 2.

It appears that the long-lipped deity was very important for the ritual space related to structure A-15, and the different versions represented held specific purposes for the mid k'atun celebration on Stela 1, and the one k'atun anniversary of K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak celebrated on Stelae 2 and 3. However, examining Group C monuments of Lady Six Sky and her son, it is evident that captive representation was more prevalent. Captives are featured on Stelae 21-23, indicating that K'ak' Tiliw Chan Chaak placed a special emphasis on his wartime activities in relation to structure C-6. A captive is also shown under Lady Six Sky's feet on Stela 24 directly across the plaza, again indicating wartime connections.

The four stelae found on structure C-9, 28-31, contain not only gender pairings as discussed in defining dual-gendered ancestral space, but also lower register pairings containing captives and long-lipped deities. The simultaneous pair, Stelae 29 and 30, both contain captives in the lower registers, while the outer pair, 28 and 31, contains a smaller version of the long-lipped god. The deity on Stela 31 closely resembles the one on Stela 3. Its pairing with Stela 28 next to the earlier Stelae 29 and 30 shows the dual importance of mythology and war captives in the ritual space of structure C-9. Even though group C is associated with the public display of captives, the connection with ancestors evident on the stela group of C-9 is also relevant to the portrayal of the long-lipped deity.

Thus, not only did Lady Six Sky establish the ceremonial center by dedicating her pyramid upon her arrival, she also used the gender complementarity between her and her son to establish male, female, and dual-gendered ritual space. Also, the deliberate use of mythological and martial imagery added a distinction in definition between Naranjo Groups A and C. Because of the heavy emphasis on female power at Naranjo during the reign of Lady Six Sky, it is apparent that she was an extremely important figure in maintaining ritual elite power at Naranjo in the Late Classic.

## VII. Conclusion

During her fifty-nine year reign, Lady Six Sky of Naranjo resurrected a damaged Naranjo and established the ruling line that would take Naranjo into the ninth century. She did these things by dedicating the temple at Naranjo as her house, pairing herself in a mythological sense with her son as ruler, and acceding to the throne after his death. In order to legitimate both her and her son's rule, she drew on her connections among her esteemed family at Dos Pilas and the powerful overlords from Calakmul. With help from these foreign powers, Lady Six Sky defined the ritual space at Naranjo using public art that drew from the overall themes evident in costuming and patterns in iconographic content across the city. The unique status she created as a female ruler makes her one of the most important and powerful figures in the Late Classic. By studying aspects of Lady Six Sky's reign, we can begin to rethink paradigms about Maya rulership and the pivotal role of Maya art and religious iconography in establishing power and ritual space across the Maya world.

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