

# The Iguana Group: A Late Classic Maya Site

Emily G. Willis

Faculty Sponsor: Kathryn Reese-Taylor, Department of Sociology/Archaeology

## ABSTRACT

The Iguana Group, located in the southern Maya lowlands, is compared to four other similarly sized Late Classic (A.D. 600-900) Maya sites using visible architecture to determine if it was a village or an elite residential compound. Analysis of the architecture included the layout of groups and calculations of area and height. The architecture of the village of Bolsa Verde is found to be dissimilar to the Iguana Group. However, the architecture of the elite residential compounds of El Pedernal, Guijarral, and Las Abejas compare favorably to the Iguana Group. Based on these data, I conclude that the Iguana Group is an elite residential compound.

## INTRODUCTION

My goal is to compare the architectural remains of the Iguana Group, a small Late Classic (A.D. 600-900) Maya site, to four other similarly sized settlements in the southern Maya lowlands, in order to determine if the Iguana Group was a village or an elite residential compound. Elite residential compounds do not have public architecture, whereas a village does. The sites of Las Abejas, Cluster A of El Pedernal, and Courtyard Group A of Guijarral are considered to be elite residential compounds. The site of Bolsa Verde is considered to be a village. Estimates of area, height, and the layout of architecture of the above mentioned sites were calculated and then compared to the Iguana Group. Excavated data from these sites was also incorporated as related to structure types. I conclude that the Iguana Group shared more architectural characteristics with Las Abejas, Cluster A of El Pedernal, and Courtyard Group A of Guijarral, rather than the site of Bolsa Verde. Therefore, I hypothesize that the Iguana Group is an elite residential compound.

The area under study is located in the southern Maya lowlands (Figure 1). Specifically, I am looking at the sites within the Three Rivers Region and the Programme for Belize-



Figure 1. Map of the Maya Area

Archaeological Project (PfB-AP) lands (Figures 2 and 3). The Three Rivers Region is bounded by the Rio Azul on the north and west, the Booth's River to the east, and bifurcated by the Rio Bravo. The 250,000 plus acres of PfB-AP land lies in the northwestern corner of Belize.

Throughout the above areas and the southern Maya lowlands, architectural forms such as the village and the elite residential compound were spread through the deforested landscape. An elite residential compound is characterized by elaborate architecture, which is indicated by raised patio-platforms, stone sub-structures, cut-stone masonry, enclosed courtyards and special purpose features such as pyramids, chultuns, aguadas, and ramps.<sup>1</sup> The term, "compound," indicates a cohesive group of elite residences, usually in the form of one or more closely related courtyard groups (Reese-Taylor, personal communication 2000). The residents are believed to have been extended families (Hammond 1981:176) or lineages (Ashmore 1981:54; Willey 1981:399) of higher status.<sup>2</sup> The related residents would have also shared resources such as land and water.

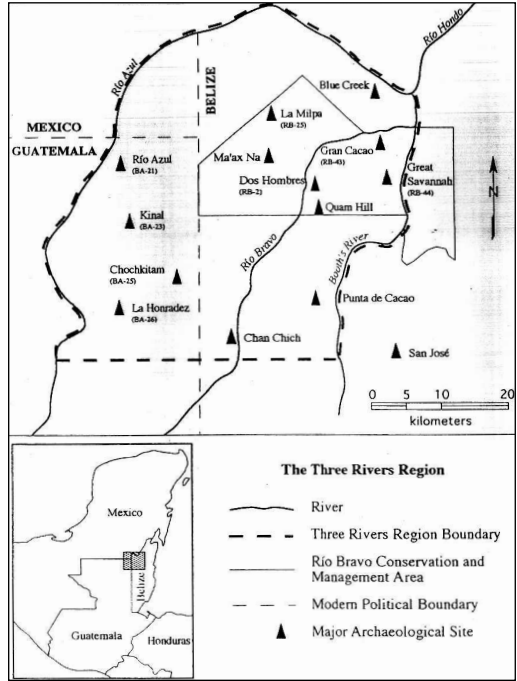


Figure 2. Map of the Three Rivers Region

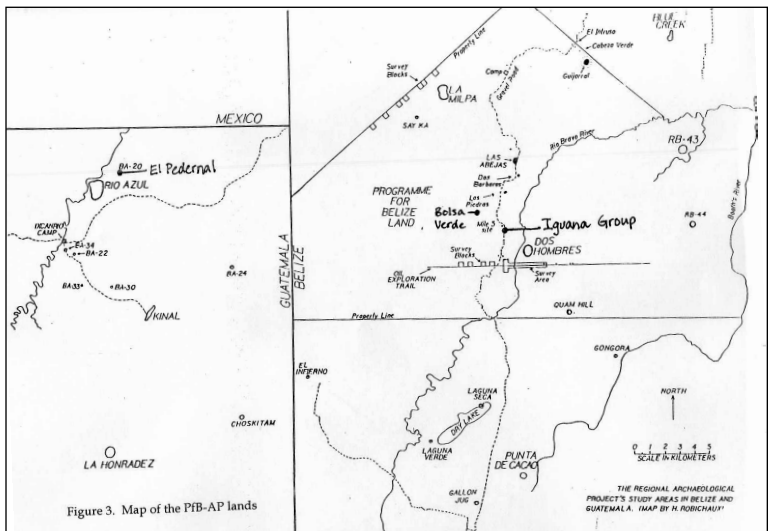
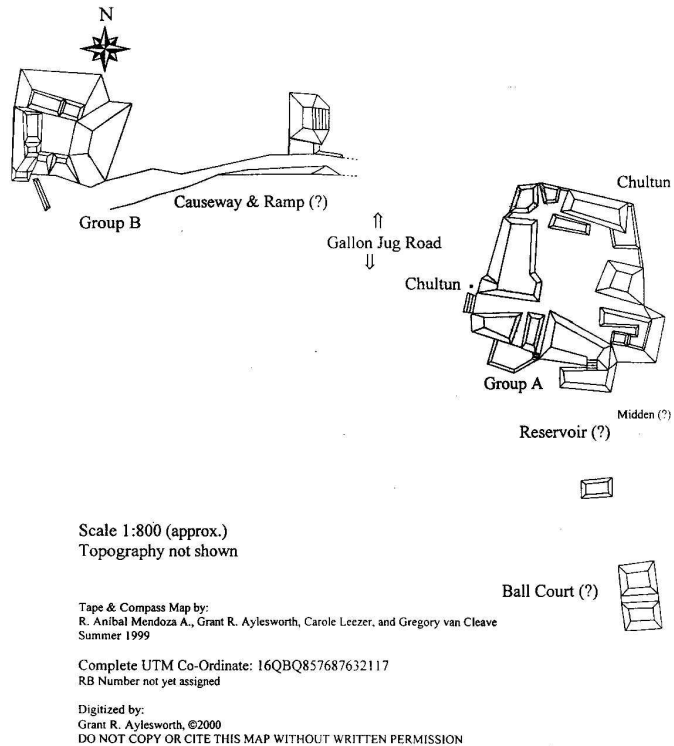


Figure 3. Map of the PfB-AP lands

On the other hand, a village has public architecture. This public architecture may be in the form of an open plaza/patio area or a pyramid. This pyramid would have functioned as a locus for community ceremonies. Villages are composed of extended families and/or unrelated people who also share resources such as land and water. What is important is the communal aspect between people who do not live in close quarters. This communal aspect can be seen in the arrangement of structure groups through open patios, different sizes of settlement in the area, and/or agricultural features such as terracing. The area of a village may be smaller or larger than an elite residential compound.

Preliminary Map of Site at UTM 16QBQ857632, Orange Walk, Belize  
Programme for Belize Archaeological Project



**Figure 4. Map of the Iguana Group**

Because there may be considerable overlap in area between a village and an elite residential compound, other factors also need to be taken into consideration when examining the architecture of structure groups. Correlations can be made through comparisons of size (area, volume and height) and layout of architecture between known group forms and unknown structure group forms in order to hypothesize the form of the unknown group (Ellis 1989). In this case, the form would manifest itself as a village or an elite residential compound.

## BACKGROUND

The prehispanic Maya people extended from the southeastern edge of Mexico including the Yucatan Peninsula, most of the Mexican states of Chiapas and Tabasco, the countries of Belize and Guatemala, and parts of Honduras and El Salvador (Sharer 1994:19) (Figure 1). This area is further divided into three cultural regions: (1) the Northern Lowlands, which includes the Yucatan Peninsula; (2) the Southern Lowlands, which includes Belize, western Honduras, northern Guatemala, the Mexican states of Tabasco and northern Chiapas; and (3)

the Highlands, which includes southern Guatemala, southern Chiapas, and parts of El Salvador. These regions encompass environmental differences and also some cultural differences, however, these boundaries are flexible, and the Maya interacted across them.

With the geographic/cultural boundaries recognized, we can move on to the time periods of the Maya. First, the Archaic period (7000-2000 B.C.) is characterized by slowly changing subsistence patterns and a greater reliance on domesticated plants (Henderson 1997:70). The Maya developed, or moved into the geographic Maya region, during the Preclassic period. The Preclassic period (2000 B.C.-A.D. 250) is identified by mixed farming and foraging economies and pottery (Henderson 1997:72). The Classic period (A.D. 250-900) is characterized by the institution of kingship, monumental architecture, the appearance of glyphs (writing), and large populations (Henderson 1997). This period is further broken down into the Early (A.D. 250-600) and Late (A.D. 600-900) Classic periods.

**METHODS**

The field methods consisted of mapping Group A of the Iguana Group during the summer of 1999 (Figure 5). Group A was mapped by David McDow, a graduate student from the University of Texas at Austin, myself and one to two field school students. First we cleared a magnetic North-South line through the vegetation around the site. Once this was established, we traversed, or circled, the outside of the group.

Deciding where the living quarters of the site were was quite simple because the site is situated around a patio, or open space, that is enclosed by structures. Group A can be further defined as a courtyard group, which implies a more formal, or planned, arrangement of structures.<sup>3</sup> While this courtyard is not the true boundary of the site’s domain; for instance, Group A may have associated features such as agricultural fields and terraces (future investigations will clarify this).

Outside the perimeter of the Group A, five traverse points were taken and on the patio floor inside, three more points were taken. These traverse points were taken using an Electronic Distance Measuring instrument or EDM. The traverse points function as established set points for the future mapping of structures.

From these points we ‘shot’ the approximate corners and tops of the structures. Three points were taken from the bottom, and two points were taken from

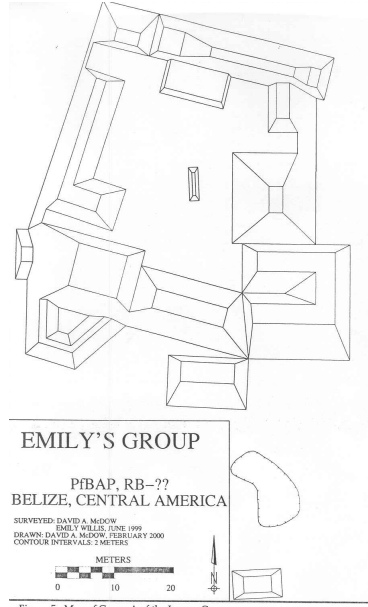
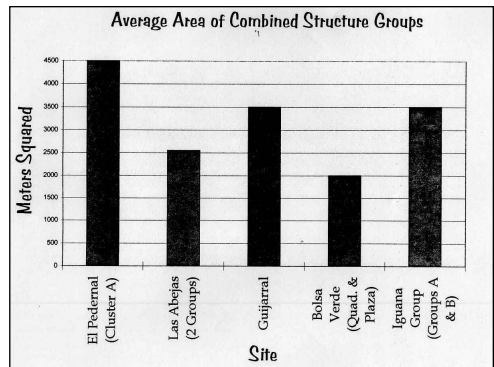


Figure 5. Map of Group A of the Iguana Group

**Figure 5. Map of Group A of the Iguana Group**



**Figure 6. Graph of Calculated Area**

the top in order to calculate the size and height of the structures. A total of ninety-seven points were shot at Group A using the EDM. From this instrument a rectified map was produced courtesy of David McDow (Figure 5).

Group B was mapped by Grant Aylesworth, a graduate student from Tulane University, and his crew later in the summer. A tape and compass map was created by him which also includes Group A (Figure 4).<sup>4</sup> Aylesworth and crew also walked around the edges of the two patio groups. He noted, but did not map many more outlying mounds (Aylesworth, personal communication 2000). These could be ancillary features, such as storage rooms, or residences.

The research methods utilized included examining the available site maps and reports on the sites of El Pedernal, Las Abejas, Bolsa Verde and Guijarral. From these maps, the approximate area of the main group (and some of the surrounding groups) was calculated (Figure 6). Area was calculated using the scale on the site maps and measuring structures, perimeters, and the patio areas. Next I multiplied the length times the width to determine area. Total area was determined by using the perimeter measurements. When elevations were available, I multiplied the length by width by height in order to calculate volume. Notes were extensively taken on the height, area, excavated data and orientation of structures when available. Other features, such as terraces, canals, chultuns, and aguadas were also noted.

## RESULTS

The contemporaneity of structures and structure groups is an important issue because of the scarcity of excavated data from the Iguana Group. Fortunately, ceramic data was retrieved from the looted pyramid by Lauren Sullivan in 1999. Sullivan, in her preliminary ceramic analysis, dated the ceramics to the Late Preclassic, the Early Classic and Tepeu 2-3 (L. Sullivan to G. Aylesworth to author, email, April 2000, Tulane University). Tepeu 2-3 ceramics are characteristic of a wide-spread regional ceramic style during the Late Classic (Henderson 1997:147). Tepeu 2-3 ceramics were found in all investigated sites, except for Cluster A of El Pedernal (see below for discussion). Consequently, these sites are contemporaneous with each other and can be compared.

Another pronouncement for contemporaneity can be seen in the peripheral settlement of La Milpa and Dos Hombres. In this periphery 83% of the test pits indicate Late-Classic settlement (Robichaux 1995:20). Along the same lines, the peripheral settlement of these two sites declined dramatically in the Terminal Classic period (A.D. 850-900). Although the four sites I am analyzing with the Iguana Group do not all fall within these peripheral zones, the conclusion remains the same—the visible architecture in much of the Southern Maya Lowlands dates to the Late Classic (Rice 1988:232; Tourtellot 1988:98).

### *Las Abejas*

Las Abejas is located approximately four and a half km north of the Iguana Group. Ground survey revealed that there were few above ground structures associated with Las Abejas (Figure 7) (Sullivan 1995:102). The site consists of a raised patio-group (approx. 47 m X 18 m) to the south, an enclosed group (approx. 19 m X 11 m) to the north, a formal group of small structures (approx. 10 m X 5 m) to the south-west, and four isolated structures (average of 150 m<sup>2</sup>) to the north of the patio-group. The patio-group is raised on a platform of limestone cobble and five structures partially enclose it. The area for this group is approximately 1900 square m. Excavations were executed in Structures 1, 4, 6 and 19.

Sullivan (1995:104) excavated a slipped plate in a cache under Structure 6, which she identified as an Early Classic orange. Structure 6 also contained Late Classic ceramics (Sullivan 1995:103). Late Classic ceramics were found in Structure 1, as well (Sullivan 1995:103).

Structure 1 is a pyramid, located on the south-eastern side of the patio and is approximately 22 m X 16 m. Excavations revealed a cache nearby which consisted of “unmodified and worked marine shell, three obsidian blades, greenstones in various stages of manufacturing, and a worked piece of stone identified in the field as hematite” (Sullivan 1995:103). Marine shell, an exotic item, and hematite, valued for its mirror-like properties, are both considered to be elite artifacts (Schele and Mathews 1998). These artifacts were found under two steps in front leading to the pyramid made of cut-marl blocks (Sullivan 1995:102). Cut-marl blocks were also located in Structures 4 and 19.

Sullivan (personal communication 2000) concludes that the residents of Las Abejas were of elite status. This is indicated through the cut-stone masonry, elite artifacts, pyramidal structure, and the raised platform of the patio-group. Las Abejas is considered to be an elite residential compound.

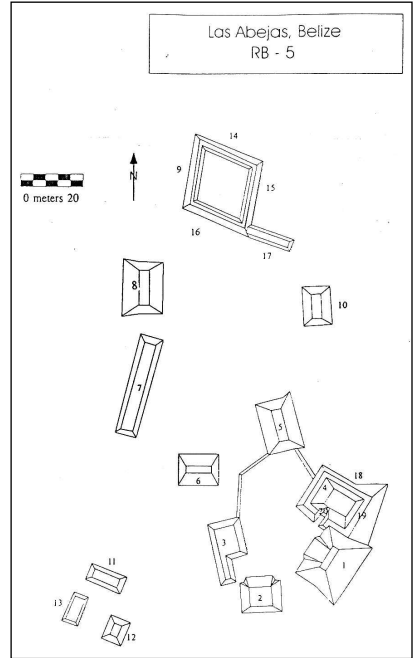


Figure 7. Map of Las Abejas

### ***Cluster A of El Pedernal***

El Pedernal is located approximately twenty-seven km west of the Iguana Group in Guatemala (Figure 8). The site is a small settlement associated with the larger site of Rio Azul, located less than two km away. The available site report concentrated on Clusters A and B of the site.

Cluster A of El Pedernal is composed of three groups (I, II, and III). Ellis (1989:149-50) believes that most of the structures were residential accompanied by some special purpose structures (Strs. 25, 26, and 27). Structure 25 is a pyramid approximately four meters tall. Structures 26 and 27 are rectangular structures flanking the pyramid. Structures in the enclosed courtyard of Group I range from three to four meters in height (Ellis 1989:138). Eight structures were recorded, and the average platform area was calculated as 52.9 m (Ellis 1989:149). Chultuns and two possible aguadas are also associated with this group. Groups I and II are connected by a raised road/walkway.

Group II is south-west of Group I and contains six structures ranging from two to four m in height. These structures are arranged around an elevated courtyard that appears to be very restricted (Ellis 1989:138). To the south-east of Group II lies Group III with similar sized structures as Groups I and II. However, its layout is distinctive in that it is arc-shaped. This seems to serve as a restricting element to the rest of Cluster A. To the south of Cluster A lies Cluster B of El Pedernal.

Cluster B, while not an elite residence, was excavated and datable ceramics were obtained. Ceramics from Group I of Cluster B date to the Tepeu 2 period, the major Late Classic occupation at Rio Azul (Ellis 1989:147). While not certain, we can assume that Cluster A was inhabited during the same period due to the high population during the Late Classic (Rice 1988; Tourtellot 1988).

Cluster A is unlike Cluster B in both its size of architecture and arrangement. Cluster B lacks the restricted access courtyards and has smaller structures than Cluster A. Furthermore, the surrounding settlement of El Pederal is even smaller in height and area than Cluster B. This gives more credence to the elite-status that Cluster A almost certainly enjoyed over its neighbors. Other indications of elite status come from a comparison with the B-56 complex from Rio Azul.

While the overall arrangement of Cluster A and B-56 is different, the sizes and configurations of structures in each are similar (Ellis 1989:150). Structures in the B-56 complex were found to have tombs and other high-status features (Ellis 1989:150). Therefore, Ellis (1989:150) suggests that the residents of Cluster A were also high status due to the similar appearance of visible architecture. Cluster A of El Pederal is considered to be an elite residential compound.

**Courtyard Group A of Guijarral**

The site of Guijarral is located approximately thirteen km north-east of the Iguana Group (Figure 9). The site area has been defined as 500,000 m<sup>2</sup> with a focus on Courtyard Group A (Hughbanks 1995:73). The area of this artificially elevated courtyard group is approximately 3500 m and includes two enclosed courtyards, A-1 and A-2. Courtyard Group A-1 is the largest of the two and contains six structures. One of these structures is a medium sized pyramid located near the center of Courtyard Group A.

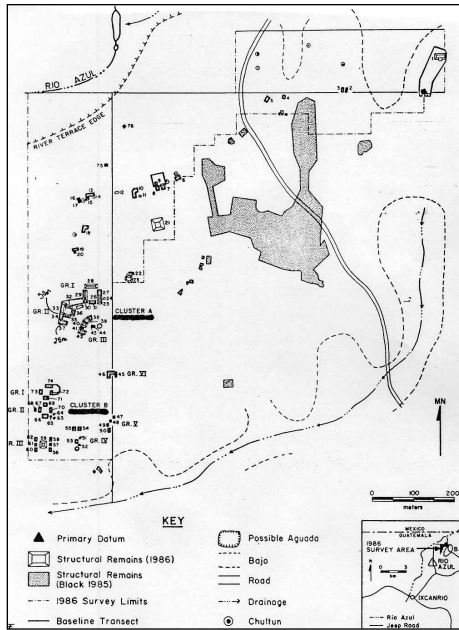


Figure 8. Map of El Pederal

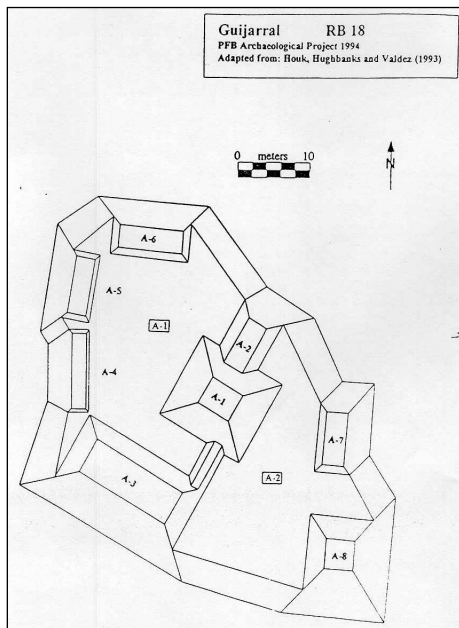


Figure 8. Map of Courtyard Group A of Guijarral

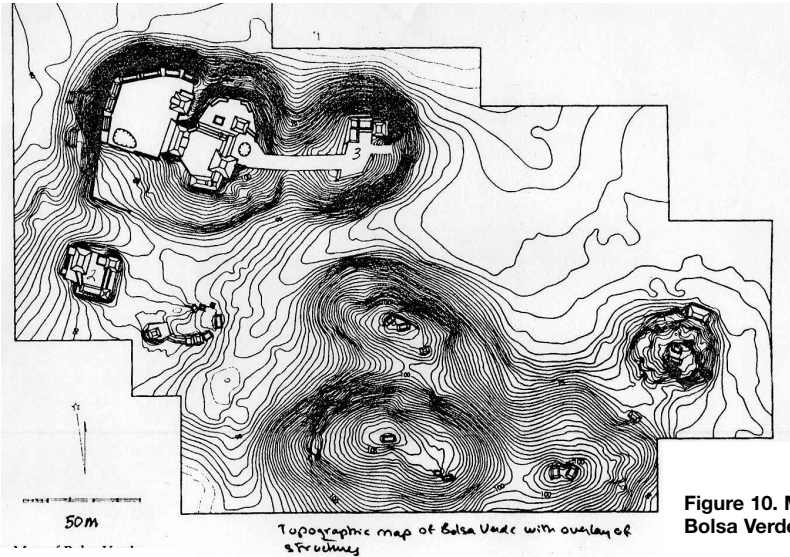


Figure 10. Map of Bolsa Verde

Within Courtyard Group A, Structures A-3 and A-5 were excavated. Structure A-3 was 9.25 m X 7.75 m and probably consisted of six rooms (Buttles 1995:79). Cut-stones were located in this structure, aiding in the room determination (Buttles 1995:79). Ceramics indicate a Tepeu 2-3 (Late to Terminal Classic) date for this structure and consequently for the courtyard group (Buttles 1995:80). Structure A-5 also contained cut-stone in the form of a faced platform (Buttles 1995:80). Measuring 9.1 m X 2.1 m, Structure A-5 is thought to have been a pole and thatch building with a stone substructure (Buttles 1995:80). Evidence from these excavations and the size and configuration of structures suggest that the residences of Courtyard Group A were of elite status (Buttles 1995:81). There is also surrounding settlement in the area, in the form of isolated mounds, informal and formal patio-groups (Wagner, personal communication 2000).

Guijarral is located less than ten km from La Milpa which makes it, “a good candidate for an outlier settlement of minor elites and peasant farmers, tied to the central elite of La Milpa economically and politically” (Hughbanks 1995:14). Courtyard Group A of Guijarral is considered to be an elite residential compound.

### ***Bolsa Verde***

Bolsa Verde is located approximately 2.5 km northwest from the Iguana Group (Figure 10). The site sits at the base of the La Lucha escarpment which hosts the large site of Ma’ax Na. The predominate architectural group “consists of two large linked plazas supporting several structures, with some additional, smaller structures on lower side terraces” (King et al. 1999:10). Bolsa Verde is associated with possible aguadas, intensive agriculture, and three distinct settlement areas (King et al. 1999).

The largest of these settlement areas is the Main/Upper and Main/Lower Plaza, together approximately 1650 m<sup>2</sup>. On the eastern side of the Main/Upper Plaza is a five meter high pyramid, accompanied by three range structures (King et al. 1999:10,12). Excavations into



the pyramid revealed a ceramic midden that contained ceramics dating to the end of the Early Classic to the Late Classic (King et al. 1999:12). Also found was a ritual deposit of a small, lidded cache vessel with an appliqué face similar to that of the Tlaloc warrior (King et al. 1999:13).<sup>5</sup>

In addition, this enclosed courtyard area appears to have been “mostly for ceremonial use, but was probably also a locus for residential and/or administrative activities” (King et al. 1999:12). More indications of administrative activities can be discerned from the western structure which has a dominating position over the lower plaza. Moreover, this western range structure contained a tomb carved into bedrock with a corbelled vault (King et al. 1999:12). This tomb contained a large burial urn and lid, jade inlaid teeth and a jade bead (King et al. 1999:12).

The Main/Lower Plaza also contains a pyramid, although located in the northeastern position rather than eastern. This pyramid is assumed to be ceremonial due to the surface cache of a Thorny Oyster shell, an obsidian blade, and a rectangular mirror; these are components that are associated with the symbolism of rebirth in the Maya belief system (King et al. 1999:13).<sup>6</sup> To the north and western sides of this pyramid, lie long and low structures that form an “L” shape. The amount of plaza area they partially surround is unusual in Maya sites (King et al. 1999:13). This suggests that the plaza was part of public activities. To the south of the Main/Lower Plaza is a quadrangle group situated on top of a knoll.

This quadrangle group has an approximate area of 400 m. Excavations revealed cut stone masonry and architectural decorations (King et al. 1999:11). Continually, finely-crafted material from a midden, suggests that the residents were probably local elites (King et al. 1999:11). This quadrangle is thought to be residential, dating from the end of the Early Classic and continuing through most of the Late Classic (King et al. 11).

Unlike the quadrangle, the third group in Bolsa Verde is connected to the Main/Upper Plaza by a low ramp-like feature. This third group has not been identified securely, however, it may have served a role in agricultural activities (King et al. 1999:11). Part of this hypothesis for the third area is due to the agricultural features documented in the area. For example, broad terraces with rock walls are visible on the escarpment, which were drained through canals and into aguadas for storage (King et al. 1999:15).

The combination of agricultural features, close association of very different structural aggregates (the three settlement areas), the size of the Main Plaza and associated ceremonial artifacts, such as jade, all indicate more than just a residential compound. Preliminary data argues that Bolsa Verde was an agricultural village rather than an elite residential compound (King et al. 1999).

### *The Iguana Group*

The Iguana Group is located approximately two and a half km northwest from the larger site of Dos Hombres (Figure 4). It consists of two groups, A and B, that are [presumably] connected by a low-ramp like feature.<sup>7</sup> Both groups are situated on artificially elevated platforms.

The platform of Group A is about one meter high, with structures ranging from 0.5 m to 3 m, with most being around one meter high. The tallest structure, a three meter pyramid on the eastern side, was looted. Ceramics gathered from this looters trench dated from the Late Pre-Classic to the Late Classic (Sullivan, personal communication 2000). This was the extent of excavations at the Iguana Group. Other observations include cut-stone masonry, two chultuns and a possible aguada closely associated with Group A.

Group A has an area of approximately 2700 m<sup>2</sup> and an estimated volume of 5500 m<sup>3</sup>. It is almost enclosed except for the northwestern corner where there seems to be an entrance. This entrance matches up to the ramp-like feature extending from Group B.

Group B is smaller in area (800 m<sup>2</sup>) than Group A. However, its pyramid, located on the eastern side, is higher measuring in at approximately five meters. The structures here are also arranged to enclose a courtyard, but they too are slightly higher (one to two meters) than those of Group A. Other observations around the Iguana Group include settlement of isolated mounds and informal and formal patio-groups. Agricultural features were not observed, however mapping was confined to Groups A and B, a depression (possible aguada) and four mounds.

Site	Avg. Area	Avg. Height of Stres.	Enclosed Courtyard	Late Classic	Cut-Stone	Pyramid
<b>El Pedernal</b>						
Cluster A	4500 m <sup>2</sup>	3-4 m	yes	unknown	unknown	yes
Cluster B	undetermined	50cm - 1.5 m	no	yes	unknown	no
<b>Lac Abejas</b>						
Main Group'	1900 m <sup>2</sup>	unknown	yes	yes	yes	yes
Outlying Strc.	650 m <sup>2</sup>	unknown	yes	unknown	unknown	no
<b>Gujarral</b>	3500 m <sup>2</sup>	unknown	yes (2)	yes	yes	yes
<b>Bolsa Verde</b>				yes		
Upper/Lower Plaza	1600 m <sup>2</sup>	unknown	yes/no**	yes	yes	yes
Quadrangle	400 m <sup>2</sup>	unknown	yes	yes	yes	no
3rd Group	undetermined	unknown	no	unknown	no	no
<b>Iguana Group</b>						
Group A	2700 m <sup>2</sup>	.5 - 3 m	yes	yes	yes	yes
Group B	800 m <sup>2</sup>	.75 - 2 m	yes	unknown	unknown	yes

\* As indicated by Tepeu 2-3 ceramics

\*\* One courtyard is enclosed; one is not (see Figure 10)

**Table 1. Architectural Results**

## CONCLUSIONS

The architecture of the Iguana Group suggest that the residents were in the elite class of Maya. The amount of labor required to construct these two groups was not small; the approximate area of the two groups combined equals 3500 m<sup>2</sup>. Add to this the volume of the structures (approx. 5500 m<sup>3</sup>), and you have a substantial amount of invested labor. In contrast to the peripheral residential settlement areas of La Milpa (with one exception) and Dos Hombres, the Iguana Group displays larger structures, in both area and volume, as well the organization of structures into more formal groups.<sup>8</sup> A formal group consists of several structures that are arranged in a planned manner with a central ambient space that is shared.

This 'formality' can be seen throughout the Maya Lowlands. Leventhal and Baxter state (1983:64), "The Late Classic household unit consists of several residences and associated structures grouped around a central plaza area. The function of many of these associated

structures was probably directly related to the domestic activities that took place within the group itself." Accordingly, the Iguana Group is considered a household unit.

This "household unit" is composed of structures, which may be the most revealing characteristics of households, because they are not portable (Tourtellot 1988:98). In addition, three explanations for structural variation can be, "differentiation of use, scaling of inhabitant's social status, or family growth" (Tourtellot 1988:98).

Ashmore and Wilk (1988:13) concur with this description; with Wilk (1988:146) stating that, for the modern Kekchi Maya, rank is directly reflected in the size and contents of their individual dwellings. This becomes even more apparent in rural areas where, "the feature that consistently distinguishes the elite in these settings is the number of servants, relatives, and clients attached to their households—or in other words, their size" (Wilk 1988:146). Rice and Puleston also correlate the size of structures to relative status/wealth: "...differences between groups and clusters, as manifest in numbers, size and characteristics of component structures, could well be accounted for by the relative status of kin or lineage groups within the immediate community, variable social importance, and access to wealth" (Rice and Puleston 1981:141). This demonstrates that the form of architecture has a positive correlation with wealth and/or status.

By looking at the general organization of the courtyard groups of the five sites discussed, conclusions can be drawn about their relative rank in society. For example, every site has a pyramid on the eastern side of the courtyard group, with the exception of Guijarral, whose pyramid tends toward the center. This eastern pyramid has been described by Marshall Becker, "Distinctive mortuary patterns and religious features are associated with this eastern structure, the most prominent being axial burials found beneath each structure. These structures are thought to have served as oratories, shrines, or chapels as places of worship, while the remainder of the structures in the group were residential in nature" (Becker 1971:208, 242).

Continually, the appearance of the eastern pyramid, or possible shrine, in courtyard groups, due to its size and special architecture, "may represent extended family groups of elevated status that live outside of site centers" (Lohse and Trachman 1999:19). An eastern pyramid indicates wealth, due to its construction; while also indicating ritual behavior between families, lineages, or communities.

Wealth and/or status can also be seen through the use of elevated platforms; the use of cut-stone masonry; and the formal arrangement of structures, for example the courtyard group. The MRU, or minimum residential unit, has been calculated as twenty square m of roofed space (Ashmore 1981:47). The structures within the courtyard groups of Las Abejas, El Pedernal, Guijarral, Bolsa Verde and the Iguana Group all exceed this requirement. Also, excavated data from the first four sites all indicate elite status among the residents of their respective courtyards.

Differentiation's can be made between an elite residential compound and a village. The fundamental element is the public architecture of a village. Public architecture indicates cohesiveness among the residents of the entire site, not only the residents of that particular courtyard group.

Bolsa Verde is the only site which fits this definition of a village. This is further elaborated due to the large amount of agricultural features at the site and the associated artifacts from the Main Plaza. Las Abejas, although partly open to the north, does not have much of a surrounding population, nor as many agricultural features as Bolsa Verde. This site's associated

artifacts and structures also indicate that it is an elite residential compound. Cluster A of El Pedernal and Courtyard Group A of Guijarral demonstrate restricted access and therefore not public architecture. Their associated artifacts and structures are also indicative of elite residential compounds.

Finally, there is the Iguana Group. The Iguana Group has restricted access courtyards, eastern pyramids, chultuns, cut-stone masonry, elevated platforms, and a ramp-like feature which all point toward an elite residential compound. In addition, compared to Las Abejas, Cluster A of El Pedernal, and Courtyard Group A of Guijarral, the Iguana Group shares more of their characteristics than the characteristics of the Bolsa Verde village. Consequently, I conclude that the Iguana Group consisted of a lineage or an extended family who resided in an elite residential compound.

## LIMITATIONS

The biggest obstacle in my research was the rainy weather. The EDM is very water sensitive and at the first drop of rain our crew was forced to cover the instrument. Unfortunately, the rainy season was on time and there were days when mapping was impossible. Fortunately, Group A was mapped extensively despite the weather. Another limitation was the amount of readily available hard data from peripheral areas in the Maya region. In many cases, when peripheral settlement is mentioned, adjectives such as small, low, and many were used to describe the structures and structure groups. However, these limitations are inherent in Maya archaeology and, in my opinion, did not effect the final outcome of my research.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research reported here was conducted under the auspices of the Programme for Belize Archaeological Project, under the direction of Fred Valdez, Jr. I would like to thank PfB-AP and Dr. Kathryn Reese-Taylor for the wonderful opportunity to dig Maya ruins in Belize. Thanks go to Dr. Kathryn Reese-Taylor for all her help and support during the last three years. Also, this would not have been possible without the assistance of the UW-La Crosse Undergraduate Research Grant I received, thank you. I would like to thank David McDow for all his help and support throughout the summer of 1999 and the school year; as well as the unlimited supply of adventure while mapping. Grant Aylesworth deserves thanks for the rendering of a map of both groups and his continued contribution. Thanks to Dr. Brett Houk for sending his doctoral dissertation. Thanks to Lauren Sullivan and Skye Wagner for insight into Las Abejas and Guijarral. And last but not least, thanks to my roommates for understanding my wall of maps and post-it notes in the hallway. It is with sincere appreciation that I acknowledge the support of these individuals and the of University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

## REFERENCES

- Ashmore, W., 1981 Some Issues of Method and Theory in Lowland Maya Settlement Patterns. In *Lowland Maya Settlement Patterns*, edited by W. Ashmore, pp. 37-68. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- Ashmore, W. and R. R. Wilk, 1988 *Household and Community in the Mesoamerican Past*. In *Household and Community in the Mesoamerican Past*, edited by R. R. Wilk and W.

- Ashmore, pp. 1-27. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- Becker, M. J., 1971 The Identification of a Second Plaza Plan at Tikal, Guatemala, and its Implications for Ancient Maya Social Complexity. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
- Buttles, P. J., 1995 Architectural Investigations at Guijarral (RB-18): The 1994 Season. The Programme for Belize Archaeological Project 1994 Interim Report. (edited by R. E. W. Adams and Fred Valdez Jr.) pp. 78-81. The Center for Archaeology and Tropical Studies and The University of Texas at San Antonio.
- Crapo, R. H., 1993 *Cultural Anthropology: Understanding Ourselves and Others*. 3rd edition. The Dushkin Publishing Group, Inc., Sluice Dock, Guilford, Connecticut.
- Ellis, B., 1989 The 1986 El Pedernal (BA-20) Settlement Survey. Rio Azul Reports Number 4, The 1986 Season (editor R. E. W. Adams), pp. 136-151. The University of Texas at San Antonio.
- Henderson, J. S., 1997 *The World of the Ancient Maya*. 2nd edition. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York.
- Hughbanks, P., 1995 An Investigation of Land, Water Use, and Social Organization at Guijarral, NW Belize. National Science Foundation Proposal. Tulane University, New Orleans.
- Hammond, N., 1981 Settlement Patterns in Belize. In *Lowland Maya Settlement Patterns*, edited by W. Ashmore, pp. 157-186. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- King, E., L. Shaw, B. Moses, 1999 Agricultural Production as Occupational Specialization: A case from the site of Bolsa Verde in northwestern Belize. Paper presented at the 64th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, Chicago.
- Lohse, J. C. and R. M. Trachman, 1999 Ancient Maya Conceptions of Space: Redefining the Great Tradition. Paper presented at the 98th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Chicago.
- Leventhal, R. M. and K. H. Baxter, 1988 The Use of Ceramics to Identify the Function of Copan Structures. In *Household and Community in the Mesoamerican Past*, edited by R. R. Wilk and W. Ashmore, pp.51-71. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- Rice, D. S. and D. E. Puleston, 1981 Ancient Maya Settlement Patterns in the Peten, Guatemala. In *Lowland Maya Settlement Patterns*, edited by W. Ashmore, pp. 121-156. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- Rice, D. S. 1988 Classic to Postclassic Maya Household Transitions in the Central Peten, Guatemala. In *Household and Community in the Mesoamerican Past*, edited by R. R. Wilk and W. Ashmore, pp. 227-247. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- Robichaux, H. R., 1995 Survey in the Peripheral Zones of the La Milpa and Dos Hombres Ancient Maya Sites in Northwestern Belize: The 1994 Season. The Programme for Belize Archaeological Project 1994 Interim Report. (edited by R. E. W. Adams and Fred Valdez, Jr.), pp. 18-24. The Center for Archaeology and Tropical Studies and The University of Texas at San Antonio.
- Schele, L. and P. Mathews, 1998 *The Code of Kings: The Language of Seven Sacred Maya Temples and Tombs*. Scribner, New York.
- Sharer, R. J., 1994 *The Ancient Maya*. 5th edition, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Sullivan, L. A., 1995 Las Abejas (RB-5): Preliminary Results of the 1994 Investigations. The Programme for Belize Archaeological Project 1994 Interim Report. (edited by R. E. W. Adams and Fred Valdez, Jr.) pp. 102-104. The Center for Archaeology and Tropical

- Studies and The University of Texas at San Antonio.
- Tourtellot, G., 1988 Developmental Cycles of Households and Houses at Seibal. In *Household and Community in the Mesoamerican Past*, edited by R. R. Wilk and W. Ashmore, pp. 97-120. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- Wilk, R. R., 1988 Maya Household Organization: Evidence and Analogies. In *Household and Community in the Mesoamerican Past*, edited by R. R. Wilk and W. Ashmore, pp. 135-151. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- Willey, G. R., 1983 Settlement Patterns and Archaeology: Some Comments. In *Prehistoric Settlement Patterns: Essays in Honor of Gordon R. Willey*, edited by E. Vogt and R. M. Leventhal, pp. 445-462. University of New Mexico Press, Peabody Museum and Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Chultuns are chambers cut into the bedrock and used by the Maya for storage. Aguadas are depressions in the ground which were used to store water.
- <sup>2</sup> A lineage is defined by Crapo (1993:160) as "a kinship group whose members can trace their lines of descent to the same ancestor." An extended family consists of "two or more nuclear families and often their parents, who reside together" (Crapo 1993:192).
- <sup>3</sup> A formal group consists of several structures arranged in a planned manner with a central ambient space that is shared by the residences of the structures (Ashmore 1981:49).
- <sup>4</sup> The "possible ball-court" indicated in Figure 4 is not considered to be a ball-court by the author.
- <sup>5</sup> Tlaloc is the Mexican rain deity.
- <sup>6</sup> These are components "consistent with the Quadripartite Badge (or Palenque Triad) symbolism of the different levels of the Maya world" (King et al. 1999:13).
- <sup>7</sup> The ramp-like feature extends from the eastern side of Group B towards Group A, however, when a gravel road was placed in the area, it cut through the two patio-groups thus concluding further surface analysis of the ramp-like feature.
- <sup>8</sup> Three kilometers from La Milpa lies a similar structure arrangement as the Iguana Group. A 5 m pyramid, small range structures, formal courtyard organizations, and the presence of several chultuns characterize this group, called Thompson's Group (Robichaux 1995:20). Robichaux states that Thompson's Group seem to be "an upper class settlement grouping which may have overseen intensive agricultural efforts in a nearby tinal zone (Robichaux 1995:20).