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‘THE HEART AND STOMACH OF A KING’: A STUDY OF THE REGENCY OF LADY SIX SKY AT NARANJO, GUATEMALA¹

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Abstract

In this paper the historical texts of Lady Six Sky, a prominent female regent of Naranjo, are explored in order to evaluate the interpersonal relationship that she maintained with *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, the heir and her long presumed son. This review suggests that she never in earnest relinquished the reins of power and continued to exert considerable influence on the court and its affairs, much after the ascendancy and majority of *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, even going on to outlive her progeny. This examination also bears out the influence and magnitude of retrospective texts and a close scrutiny of the corpus reveals that the long-reigning Lady Six Sky consolidated the power in her person and influenced the succession to favour what may have siblings, to rule in sequence, with the successor of *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk* having to bide his time and await the passing of Lady Six Sky. All of these events are evaluated and used as a basis for reconstructing the difficult and often strenuous relations that prevailed in the Naranjo court during the late seventh and eighth centuries.

Keywords: Maya, regency, Naranjo, Lady Six Sky, Maternal dominance, Epigraphy

Resumen

En esta contribución se exploran los textos históricos de la Señora Seis Cielo—una regente prominente de Naranjo—con el fin de evaluar la relación interpersonal que ella mantuvo con *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, el heredero que desde hace mucho tiempo se ha sospechado de ser su hijo. Esta revisión sugiere que ella nunca cedió de manera definitiva las riendas del poder y continuó ejerciendo una influencia considerable en la corte y sus asuntos, mucho después de la ascendencia y la mayoría de *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, incluso de sobrevivir a su progenie. Este examen también toma en cuenta la influencia y la magnitud de los textos retrospectivos. Un análisis detallado del corpus revela que a lo largo del reinado de la Señora Seis Cielo, el poder se consolidó en su persona, e influyó la sucesión a favor de los que pudieron haber sido hermanos, para que gobernaran sucesivamente. Por causa de esto, el sucesor de *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk* tuvo que esperar el momento oportuno y esperar el fallecimiento de la Señora Seis Cielo. Todos estos eventos se evalúan y se utilizan como base para la reconstrucción de las relaciones difíciles y, a menudo arduos que prevalecieron en la corte de Naranjo durante los finales del siglos VII y VIII.

Palabras clave: Maya, regencia, Naranjo, Señora Seis Cielo, dominancia materna, epigrafía

¹ The quote is attributed to the famous speech of Queen Elizabeth I, rousing her troops encamped at Tilbury, at the mouth of the Thames, in July 1588—during the Spanish Armada’s campaign—where she is said to have proclaimed, “I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king”. The transcript that is housed in the British Library (Shelfmark: Harley 6798, f.87) reads “*I have ye harte and sto=mark of a kinge*” (wherein the /y/ of *ye* is orthographic [ð]).