

ruler") or *k'uhl ajaw* ("holy lord," or supreme ruler), but in some texts we read of lords being "encircled" (*hoy*) in the rulership, reminding us of the account of the Mexica ruler surrounded by dancing dignitaries. To crown a Maya king was to tie on him a bejeweled headband of white bark paper (*sak-hu:n*), painted red at the forehead and adorned with a jade flower ornament. Modern Maya *cargo* officials in Chiapas wear red cloth headbands as a symbol of their status, a tradition perhaps traceable to the Classic period. In antiquity, the headband perhaps replicated the wrapping of a sacred bundle meant to contain and protect the royal self or soul.

In depictions of the headband rite, a secondary lord often presents a headband or headdress to the seated king. On inauguration, Mesoamerican kings often assumed a new royal name as an indicator of divine status. The Classic Maya called this *k'al-hu:n-il k'aba'* ("tie headband name").

Subordinate governors in Classic Maya society had accession rituals of their own which often replicated the language and symbolism found in the rites of high kings. Secondary rulers known as *sajals* were similarly "encircled" into their office, and military captains called *yajaw k'ak'* ("lords of fire") are said in their own inscriptions to have had headband "crowning" ceremonies. Some of these subordinate accessions followed soon after that of the supreme ruler, continuing what may have been lengthy processes of political transition within the polity.

[See also Rulers and Dynasties.]

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RULERS AND DYNASTIES. Rulers in Mesoamerica ranged from chiefs and petty princes with little authority and small domains to powerful kings and emperors commanding tens of thousands of subjects, supervising impressive bureaucracies, and enforcing their will through military might. The earliest direct evidence for rulership comes from the Formative-period Olmecs, whose para-

mount leaders apparently commissioned their portraits and those of their ancestors in massive stone carvings. The rulers of many other polities, however, remain anonymous, with few material indicators of their high office. Excavations of royal burials and presumed palaces give some clues, but written information—primarily from Early Colonial documents—provides specific insights into the political organization of several major Postclassic groups: the Aztec, Mixtec, Zapotec, and Tarascan peoples of Mexico, and the Maya of Guatemala and Yucatán. In addition, pre-Hispanic pictorial dynastic histories from a few Mixtec polities survive, and the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Classic Lowland Maya contain information on their rulers.

Rulership in Mesoamerica conformed to a general pattern of early states elsewhere in the world. Kings were supreme, hereditary rulers of complex (ranked or stratified) societies with the legitimate power to enforce their decisions. As occupants of the highest status position in society, they were responsible for all state functions—administrative, military, religious, judicial, and redistributive—although the relative importance of these functions varied from one culture to another. The king was often assisted by subsidiary officeholders, such as high priests, stewards, generals, and judges, who performed much of the actual work. Kings were the wealthiest individuals in the state owing to the proceeds of their landholdings, their control of foreign trade, and the tribute they received in commodities and labor; they were the protectors of their subjects, who owed them their obedience and service; and they represented the polity in external affairs. The most widespread symbol of rulership was the throne, which was often a woven mat or a seat with a high back; *petlatl*, *icpalli* ("the reed mat, the seat") was an Aztec metonym for the ruler.

The preeminent ideological role of the ruler was as law-giver. There was no codified legal system, and only the king had the sacral quality—a link to the divine and to the primordial past that was the pan-Mesoamerican source of authority—to create new rules and to pass judgment on wrongdoers. The sacrality of the king was manifested in various ways. In some instances, he embodied a patron deity or had a special relationship with a deity, especially the sun; in other societies, the ancestors of the ruling house were believed to have acquired powerful regalia from high gods. Palaces were frequently situated next to the temples of major gods or the tombs of semidivine ancestors. Consequently, inauguration ceremonies were highly ritual events, because a sacral quality and not just a political office was to be endowed upon a successor. Royal funerals were equally extravagant and ritually charged, in keeping with the sacrosanct status of kings. Furthermore, genealogies that linked the current para-

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mount leader to his putative forebears were of great importance. They were retained as oral history, or sometimes in written form. However, because they were crucial to the legitimation of an officeholder, dynastic histories were subject to manipulation and rewriting, especially following an interregnum or when the succession was disputed. This history was sometimes remembered or depicted in the abbreviated form of king lists, with no requirement to provide genealogical details linking individual kings as members of a single lineage.

Kingship was hereditary, but succession rarely followed a strict rule of primogeniture, and it occasionally allowed for female sovereigns. The common practice of "dynastic election" involved choosing the next ruler from a pool of eligible persons—generally close relatives of the king who already held high office—based on their exhibition of such qualities as military prowess. The Aztec successor was chosen on the death of the incumbent, while some Classic Maya kings apparently designated their heir-apparent when the latter was still a child. Royal marriages were arranged for strategic purposes: to increase access to titled positions, as when Mixtec kings married royal females from another polity so that their children could inherit from both parents; or to maintain those positions within the ruling line, the reason given for endogamy within the Tenochtitlan (Aztec) royal house. Several Central Mexican polities rotated the position of

paramount within a system of four interlinked ruling families.

The king represented the pinnacle of the noble estate, as opposed to the commoner estate; these were the two major endogamous, jurally defined societal divisions that incorporated differences in status, privileges, and obligations. The king, like other high-ranking lords, was the titular head of a patrimonial demesne (complex of holdings, privileges, and obligations) that consisted of the provision of agricultural, public works, manufacturing, and military services by commoners, tribute payments, the allegiance of lesser (including nontitled) nobility, and various other sumptuary privileges. The subroyal lords had their own hereditary demesnes, and in complex political systems they were rulers in their own right of smaller districts under the overarching supremacy of the king, replicating the functions and qualities of their overlord. "Lordship" (e.g., *tlatocayotl* in Nahuatl, *ahawal* in Quiché Maya) was therefore based on hereditary rights to certain attached commoners and vassal nobles, rather than on the ownership of land within a bounded territory. Military campaigns were undertaken primarily to increase dominion over tribute and services rather than to acquire land per se.

Within Aztec and related Central Mexican societies, each polity (*altepetl* in Nahuatl) was ruled by a *tlatoani* ("speaker"), who was a titled lord (*tecuhtli*) within the noble estate (*pilli*). He was the living representative of the *altepetl*'s patron deity; for Tenochtitlan, this was the warrior-sun god, Huitzilopochtli. When one *altepetl* conquered another, the defeated *tlatoani*, though subject to his overlord, often retained his office and patrimonial privileges; thus, obligations and loyalties owed by the subject population were not enjoyed solely by the supreme ruler. The paramounts of the largest Aztec cities—including the capital, Tenochtitlan—were referred to as *huey tlatoani* ("great speaker") in recognition of their sovereignty over many subordinate *tlatoque*. The *tlatoani* headed a large, multifaceted bureaucracy composed of other lords and lesser nobles, and his palace (*tecpan*, *tecalli*) was the principal government administration building. King lists and genealogical information for many Central Mexican polities were recorded in the Colonial period, especially for the nine pre-Hispanic *tlatoque* of Tenochtitlan, ending with Motecuhzoma.

This basic system of government was common in Mesoamerica. The West Mexican Tarascan Empire was ruled by a king (*irecha*, *cazonci* in Purepecha) from the capital, Tzintzuntzan. He was of the ruling dynasty (*uacusecha*) founded by the legendary Tariacuri, who established a special relationship with the warrior-sun deity, Curicaueri. The Tarascan king was figuratively master of all the land and its resources, which the hereditary nobil-



Detail of the Tizoc Stone depicting the seventh king of the Aztec Empire. (Diameter: 68 inches; height: 26 inches.) Courtesy of Museo Nacional de Antropología, México, D.F.

ity (*achaecha*) administered in his name. The nobility filled the government offices of Tzintzuntzan and other subsidiary administrative centers within the empire.

Postclassic Mixtec and Zapotec rulers of southern Mexico governed many smaller, nominally independent states, and Zapotec polities especially have been likened to principalities. Individual Mixtec kingdoms (*sina yya*) were governed by members of its ruling dynasty (*yya tnuhu*), including both male (*yya canu*) and female (*yyadzehe*) paramounts. They held the most productive agricultural lands, monopolized other important economic resources, and enjoyed many privileges shared with the other nobility (*tay toho*). Legitimacy of rule required that both parents be members of royalty, direct descendants of the ancestors who founded each kingdom, which necessitated marriages between the ruling houses of different polities and sometimes resulted in a temporary confederation of lordships under a single ruler. The head of a Postclassic Zapotec principality (*coquihalao*, "first lord") was similarly a member of the highest rank of the noble estate (*tijacoqui*). Zapotec lordship was more personal, and although he was assisted by other nobles, the paramount directly fulfilled many functions.

The supreme officeholder in Postclassic Yucatec Maya society was the *halach winik* ("real person"), drawn from a specific ruling house in each of the major polities in the peninsula. He and other members of the noble estate (*almehen*) monopolized the political and religious hierarchies. Individual towns were usually governed by a *batab*, the magistrate and military chief for the overlord, but some smaller polities too were ruled by independent *batabob* (plural of *batab*), who were not vassals of a *halach winik*. Their Quiché Maya counterparts in the Guatemalan highlands were ruled by the *ahpop* ("person of the mat [throne]") at the capital, Utatlan; he was a member of the ruling line that controlled the top political offices. Other titled nobility (*ahaw*, "lord") and vassals held subsidiary positions and headed their own patrimonial demesnes within the expanding Quiché state. The hieroglyphic inscriptions at Classic Lowland Maya sites indicate that the paramount of each independent kingdom was an *ahaw* ("lord") or *ch'ul ahaw* ("holy lord" in Cholan Maya), a title shared by other high-ranked nobility. The titles of some subsidiary officials and members of court have also been recognized.

[See also Marriage Alliances; Ruler Accession Rituals.]

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RUZ LHUILLIER, ALBERTO (1906–1979), Mexican archaeologist who, in 1952, discovered the tomb of King Pacal in the interior of the Pyramid at the Temple of the Inscriptions in Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico. This discovery is considered to be one of Mesoamerican archaeology's major achievements. Besides being a very competent field archaeologist, Ruz was also an accomplished writer and educator.

Ruz was born in Paris to a Cuban father and a French mother. He received his early education in France; in 1926 he moved to Cuba, began studies at the University of Havana, and began writing for local publications. His political views caused him to be imprisoned for six months. After his release from jail, in 1936 he moved to Mexico, where he traveled extensively and became fascinated with Mesoamerican antiquities. He later adopted Mexican nationality. In 1937, Ruz began his studies in anthropology. In 1945 he was the first student to obtain a professional degree in archaeology at the then recently founded Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico City. Many years later he would receive a doctorate from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. While still an undergraduate, he worked at Monte Albán under Alfonso Caso and at Tula with Jorge Acosta.

In 1943 he was appointed director of archaeology for the Mexican state of Campeche, and he explored several Maya sites along the Gulf Coast, which contributed significantly to a better archaeological understanding of this